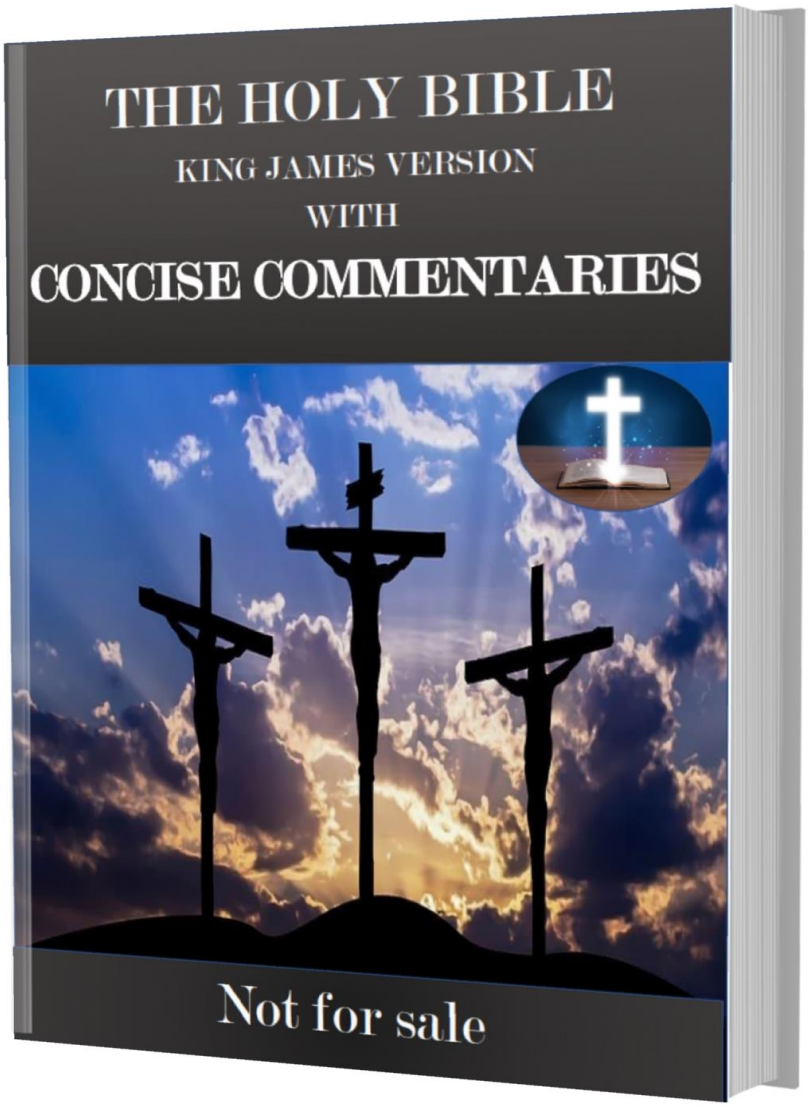
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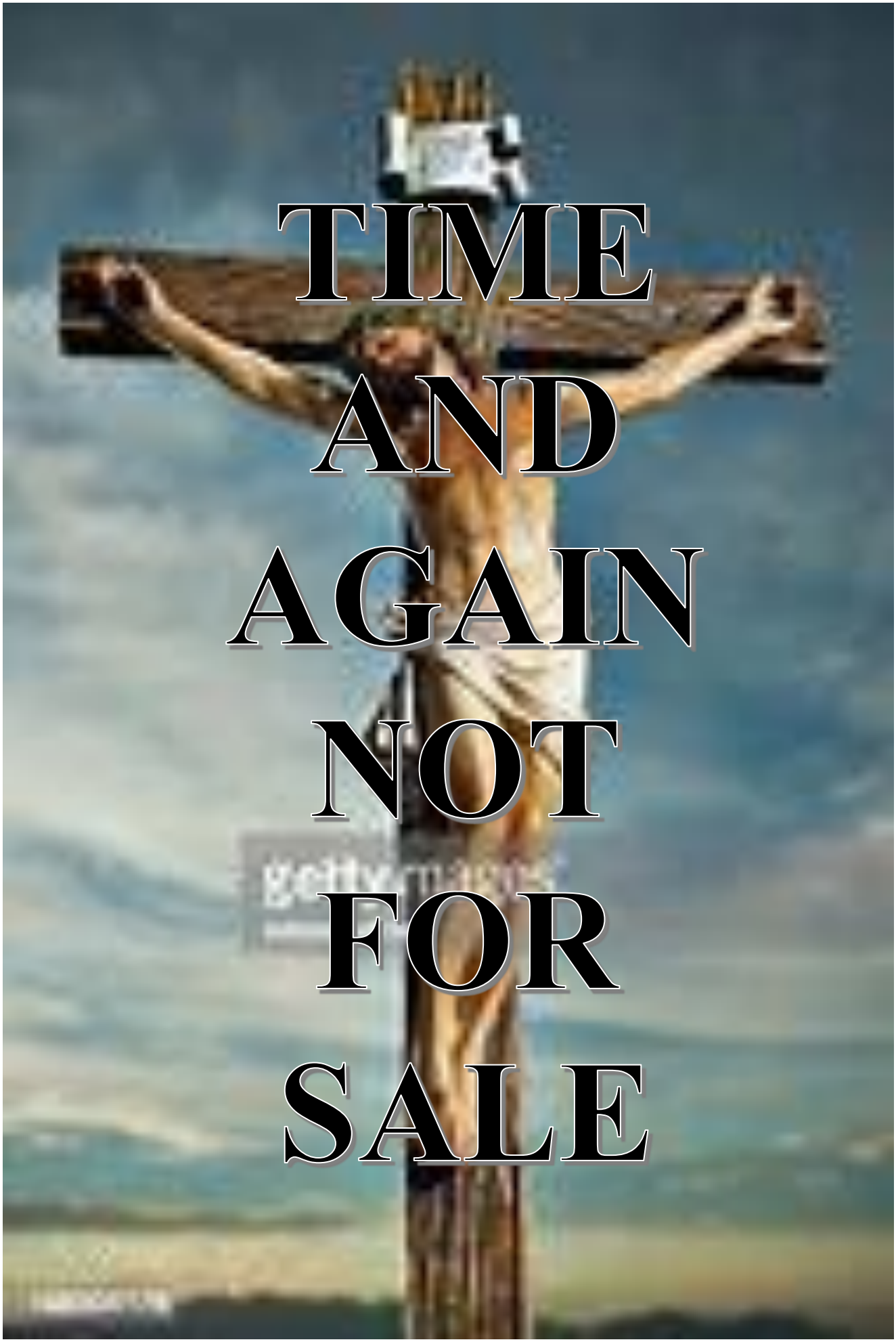
TIME
AND
AGAIN
NOT
FOR
SALE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Then the spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot, and Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, how can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. Acts 8:29-31.

The man happened to have been reading one of the great prophecies about the coming of Christ and his suffering, and Philip had the privilege of telling the Ethiopian the good news about Jesus. When the Ethiopian in the chariot said, "How can I [understand Isaiah], unless someone explains it to me?" he displayed the curiosity and teach-ability that is essential for all followers of Jesus. In that moment, Philip was a kind of commentary for a man who simply needed help with the historical and linguistic meanings of the text of Isaiah.

A Bible commentary is a series of notes explaining the meaning of passages of scripture. A commentary may explain the language used in a section of text. Or it may discuss the historical background. Almost all commentaries attempt to explain the passage in terms of some system of theology. Since a Bible commentary is written by human authors, it will reflect the beliefs and perspective of those writers.

Through a personal narrative, Bible commentaries provide deeper understanding and insight into the Bible and can be used to assist both casual readers of the Bible and those who pursue serous study.

Commentaries are widely used in personal Bible study. The advantage of a Bible commentary is that one can quickly gain perspective on the text's meaning, as understood by the commentary's author. One caution concerning Bible commentaries is that they should not be used instead of personal study; rather, they are designed for use in addition to personal study. Since the commentary itself is not Scripture, it's important for a reader to weigh what he reads against other sources, as well as his own Spirit-led analysis. As the products of fallible people, commentaries are not necessarily correct in every word.

When we read the Bible, we can have complete confidence that is God speaking and not man. The phrase "thus says the Lord" or "tell the people" appears over a thousand times in the Bible because it is God speaking through the authors of the Bible. Even when a prophet of God spoke, they never once spoke for themselves but only for God. The Apostle Paul knew that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction,

and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3: 16-17). All scripture includes the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The Apostle Peter would agree with Paul's statement as he wrote that "no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever Produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20-21) peter considered Paul's writings as Scripture as peter wrote of Paul's letters or epistles, "there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction as they do the other Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:16) so this shows clearly that, Scripture includes the New Testament too. We trust the Bible over anything that anyone else writes but what about study Bibles or Bible Commentaries? Can we trust them?

Bible commentaries are not inspired by God. They might be written by inspired men who have the spirit of God but that is never going to be equal to Scripture. It cannot override Scripture. It is only a man who writes and not God who inspires the words. Their comments might be inspiring but they are not inspired. These commentaries can be written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit but they are not God-breathed like the Bible itself is. Commentaries are never "thus says the Lord" in value. When you are not sure about a subject or need clarity or background on a verse or paragraph in a chapter, commentaries can be a great help in bringing understanding to the verses but their understanding can never contradict what the Scriptures say or you've got the wrong Bible commentary. If you're not sure about a Bible passage and you don't agree with or aren't sure about a commentators comments, then it's best to just wait, move on, or find a trusted Christian mentor, elder, deacon, teacher, or pastor. The reading, understanding, and application of biblical truth have always been functions of the Christian community. The words of the prophets and apostles were directed at God's people (plural) at the start, and must be a community endeavor now. That is why we do personal Bible study, but we engage with others in Bible studies in homes and office buildings and schools and churches.

It is advisable to have as many Bible commentaries as possible because it is so helpful to see how other men view certain passages and to see if anyone can learn something from them. They might have insight that he doesn't have. They might have read something in the passage that he missed. Like the proverb that says "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed" (Prov. 15:22) and in a similar manner, the wise counsel that is often found in study Bible's or commentaries can help us make better decisions when the Bible appears to be silent on a particular subject. It's a great idea for those who desire the office of a pastor, deacon, elder, or teacher to have as many Bible study resources as they can get like Bible atlas', Bible concordances, Bible dictionaries, Greek or Hebrew lexcons, but also a study Bible or Bible commentary. Some call them study Bibles but they are usually the same thing since they have footnotes and comments concerning different Bible verses. Some study Bible's or Bible commentaries might even include Scriptures to support the commentator's comments.

In general, there are four types of Bible commentaries, each useful for the intended purpose to aid in the study of Scripture.

1. Expository: expository commentaries are typically written by pastors and expository Bible teachers who teach verse by verse through the Bible. These commentaries usually include teaching notes, outlines, illustrations and practical applications of the authors' study and teaching on the books of the Bible.

2. Exegetical: exegetical commentaries are typically written by Bible scholars and theologians. They are more technical academic in nature, concentrating on the original languages, context or grammar of the text. These commentaries are written by some of the most knowledgeable theologians in church history.

3. Devotional: devotional commentaries are designed to enhance the readers' personal reflection and practical application of the Bible text. They are geared for times of soul-searching and listening for the voice and heart of God through the text.

4. Cultural: cultural commentaries are meant to help readers gain an understanding of the cultural background of the Bible text.

Bible commentaries usually come in massive volumes – one for each book of the Bible! The print version of all volumes of word Biblical Commentary series would take up seven feet on our bookshelf. This is probably one of the biggest reasons that most people are in love with electronic Bible resources.

When we're doing in-depth study of biblical passages, we should read two or three or more commentaries, making notes as we read. We will quickly see where the commentators agree on the meaning and the emphases of texts, and we will gather numerous details not obvious with the simple reading of the text. We collect, for instance, these concise commentaries from Mathew Henry's Complete Commentary (MHC), Albert Barnes' New Testament Notes, Expository Notes with Practical Observations on the New Testament by William Burkitt, Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and David Brown Bible Commentary (JFB), The People's New Testament (PNT), John Wesley's Notes on the Bible and others.

When it comes to choosing which specific commentaries to use, we note the type of commentary suited to our purpose (above). Then, we should note the theological assumptions of the commentators. Some scholars look at the Bible simply as one more human text, and they analyze it on purely linguistic and historical bases. On the other hand, scholars who believe in the divine inspiration and unique character of scripture will take

things like miracles and the resurrection of Christ as historical realities, and will look for the cohesive themes of the revelation of God in Holy Scripture.

Most commentators agree on many issues; but sometimes they might be even reproached for heresies. For example, Albert Barnes had been tried (but not convicted) for heresy in 1836, mostly due to the views he expressed in Notes on Romans (1834) of the imputation of the sin of Adam, original sin, and the atonement. Therefore, just as we would prayerfully evaluate a sermon, evaluate the contents of any resource we read.

FINALLY, NO MATTER WHICH VERSION OF STUDY BIBLE OR COMMENTARY WE USE TRUST ONLY THE WORD OF GOD. FOR VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, TILL HEAVEN AND EARTH PASS, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE SHALL IN NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW, TILL ALL BE FULFILLED. WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL BREAK ONE OF THESE LEAST COMMANDMENTS, AND SHALL TEACH MEN SO, HE SHALL BE CALLED THE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL DO AND TEACH THEM, THE SAME SHALL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. MATH 5:18-19.

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THE WORD OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The First Book of Moses, Called

Genesis

[Genesis]

GENESIS is the book of beginnings. It records not only the beginning of the heavens and the earth, and of plant, animal, and human life, but also of all human institutions and relationships. Typically, it speaks of the new birth, the new creation, where all was chaos and ruin. With Genesis begins also that progressive self-revelation of God which culminates in Christ. The three primary names of Deity, Elohim, Jehovah, and Adonai, and the five most important of the compound names, occur in Genesis; and that in an ordered progression which could not be changed without confusion. The problem of sin as affecting man's condition in the earth and his relation to God, and the divine solution of that problem are here in essence. Of the eight great covenants which condition human life and the divine redemption, four, the Edenic, Adamic, Noahic, and Abrahamic Covenants are in this book; and these are the fundamental covenants to which the other four, the Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants, are related chiefly as adding detail or development. Genesis enters into the very structure of the New Testament, in which it is quoted above sixty times in seventeen books. In a profound sense, therefore, the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here. The inspiration of Genesis and it character as a divine revelation are authenticated by the testimony of Christ (Matthew 19:4-6; 24:37-39; Mark 10:4-9; Luke 11:49-51; 17:26-29,32 ; John 1:5; 7:21-23; 8:44,56). Genesis is in five chief divisions:

Creation (1:1-2:25)

The fall and redemption (3:1-,7).

The Diverse Seeds, Cain and Seth, to the Flood (4:8-7:24).

The Flood to Babel (8:1-11:9).

From the call of Abram to the death of Joseph (11:10-50:26).

Genesis -1

The Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

In its epitome, Ge 1:1, where we find, to our comfort, the first article of our creed, that God the Father Almighty is the Maker of heaven and earth, and as such we believe in him.

1. Observe, in this verse, four things:--

(1.) The effect produced--the heaven and the earth, that is, the world, including the whole frame and furniture of the universe, the world and all things therein, Ac 17:24. The world is a great house, consisting of upper and lower stories, the structure stately and magnificent, uniform and convenient, and every room well and wisely furnished. It is the visible part of the creation that Moses here designs to account for; therefore he mentions not the creation of angels. But as the earth has not only its surface adorned with grass and flowers, but also its bowels enriched with metals and precious stones (which partake more of its solid nature and more valuable, though the creation of them is not mentioned here), so the heavens are not only beautified to our eye with glorious lamps which garnish its outside, of whose creation we here read, but they are within replenished with glorious beings, out of our sight, more celestial, and more surpassing them in worth and excellency than the gold or sapphires surpass the lilies of the field. In the visible world it is easy to observe,

[1.] Great variety, several sorts of beings vastly differing in their nature and constitution from each other. Lord, how manifold are thy works, and all good!

[2.] Great beauty. The azure sky and verdant earth are charming to the eye of the curious spectator, much more the ornaments of both. How transcendent then must the beauty of the Creator be!

[3.] Great exactness and accuracy. To those that, with the help of microscopes, narrowly look into the works of nature, they appear far more fine than any of the works of art.

[4.] Great power. It is not a lump of dead and inactive matter, but there is virtue, more or less, in every creature: the earth itself has a magnetic power.

[5.] Great order, a mutual dependence of beings, an exact harmony of motions, and an admirable chain and connection of causes.

[6.] Great mystery. There are phenomena in nature which cannot be solved, secrets which cannot be fathomed nor accounted for. But from what we see of heaven and earth we may easily enough infer the eternal power and Godhead of the great Creator, and may furnish ourselves with abundant matter for his praises. And let our make and place, as men, remind us of our duty as Christians, which is always to keep heaven in our eye and the earth under our feet.

(2.) The author and cause of this great work--GOD. The Hebrew word is Elohim, God (a-4) Heb. Elohim, the plural of Eloah, 'the Supreme'. It is Deity in the absolute sense, which bespeaks,

[1.] The power of God the Creator. El signifies the strong God; and what less than almighty strength could bring all things out of nothing?

[2.] The plurality of persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This plural name of God, in Hebrew, which speaks of him as many though he is one, was to the Gentiles perhaps a savour of death unto death, hardening them in their idolatry; but it is to us a savour of life unto life, confirming our faith in the

doctrine of the Trinity, which, though but darkly intimated in the Old Testament, is clearly revealed in the New. The Son of God, the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, was with him when he made the world (Pr 8:30), nay, we are often told that the world was made by him, and nothing made without him, Joh 1:3,10,Eph 3:9,Col 1:16,Heb 1:2. O what high thoughts should this form in our minds of that great God whom we draw nigh to in religious worship, and that great Mediator in whose name we draw nigh!

(3.) The manner in which this work was effected: God created it, that is, made it out of nothing. There was not any pre-existent matter out of which the world was produced. The fish and fowl were indeed produced out of the waters and the beasts and man out of the earth; but that earth and those waters were made out of nothing. By the ordinary power of nature, it is impossible that anything should be made out of nothing; no artificer can work, unless he has something to work on. But by the almighty power of God it is not only possible that something should be made of nothing (the God of nature is not subject to the laws of nature), but in the creation it is impossible it should be otherwise, for nothing is more injurious to the honour of the Eternal Mind than the supposition of eternal matter. Thus the excellency of the power is of God and all the glory is to him.

(4.) When this work was produced: In the beginning, that is, in the beginning of time, when that clock was first set a going: time began with the production of those beings that are measured by time. Before the beginning of time there was none but that Infinite Being that inhabits eternity. Should we ask why God made the world no sooner, we should but darken counsel by words without knowledge; for how could there be sooner or later in eternity? And he did make it in the beginning of time, according to his eternal counsels before all time. The Jewish Rabbies have a saying, that there were seven things which God created before the world, by which they only mean to express the excellency of these things:--The law, repentance, paradise, hell, the throne of glory, the house of the sanctuary, and the name of the Messiah. But to us it is enough to say, In the beginning was the Word, Joh 1:1.

2. Let us learn hence,

(1.) That atheism is folly, and atheists are the greatest fools in nature; for they see there is a world that could not make itself, and yet they will not own there is a God that made it. Doubtless, they are without excuse, but the god of this world has blinded their minds.

(2.) That God is sovereign Lord of all by an incontestable right. If he is the Creator, no doubt he is the owner and possessor of heaven and earth.

(3.) That with God all things are possible, and therefore happy are the people that have him for their God, and whose help and hope stand in his name, Ps 121:2,124:8.

(4.) That the God we serve is worthy of, and yet is exalted far above, all blessing and praise, Ne 9:5,6. If he made the world, he needs not our services, nor can be benefited by them (Ac 17:24,25), and yet he justly requires them, and deserves our praise, Re 4:11. If all is of him, all must be to him.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

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3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

We have here a further account of the first day's work, in which observe,

1. That the first of all visible beings which God created was light; not that by it he himself might see to work (for the darkness and light are both alike to him), but that by it we might see his works and his glory in them, and might work our works while it is day. The works of Satan and his servants are works of darkness; but he that doeth truth, and doeth good, cometh to the light, and coveteth it, that his deeds may be made manifest, Joh 3:21. Light is the great beauty and blessing of the universe. Like the first-born, it does, of all visible beings, most resemble its great Parent in purity and power, brightness and beneficence; it is of great affinity with a spirit, and is next to it; though by it we see other things, and are sure that it is, yet we know not its nature, nor can describe what it is, or by what way the light is parted, Job 38:19,24. By the sight of it let us be led to, and assisted in, the believing contemplation of him who is light, infinite and eternal light (1Jo 1:5), and the Father of lights (Jam 1:17), and who dwells in inaccessible light, 1Ti 6:16. In the new creation, the first thing wrought in the soul is light: the blessed Spirit captives the will and affections by enlightening the understanding, so coming into the heart by the door, like the good shepherd whose own the sheep are, while sin and Satan, like thieves and robbers,

climb up some other way. Those that by sin were darkness by grace become light in the world.

2. That the light was made by the word of God's power. He said, Let there be light; he willed and appointed it, and it was done immediately: there was light, such a copy as exactly answered the original idea in the Eternal Mind. O the power of the word of God! He spoke, and it was done, done really, effectually, and for perpetuity, not in show only, and to serve a present turn, for he commanded, and it stood fast: with him it was dictum, factum--a word, and a world. The world of God (that is, his will and the good pleasure of it) is quick and powerful. Christ is the Word, the essential eternal Word, and by him the light was produced, for in him was light, and he is the true light, the light of the world, Joh 1:9,9:5. The divine light which shines in sanctified souls is wrought by the power of God, the power of his word and of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, opening the understanding, scattering the mists of ignorance and mistake, and giving the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, as at first, God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, 2Co 4:6. Darkness would have been perpetually upon the face of fallen man if the Son of God had not come, and given us an understanding, 1Jo 5:20.

3. That the light which God willed, when it was produced, he approved of: God saw the light that it was good. It was exactly as he designed it, and it was fit to answer the end for which he designed it. It was useful and profitable; the world, which now is a palace, would have been a dungeon without it. It was amiable and pleasant. Truly the light is sweet (Ec 11:7); it rejoiceth the heart, Pr 15:30. What God commands he will approve and graciously accept; he will be well pleased with the work of his own hands. That is good indeed which is so in the sight of God, for he sees not as man sees. If the light is good, how good is he that is the fountain of light, from whom we receive it, and to whom we owe all praise for it and all the services we do by it!

4. That God divided the light from the darkness, so put them asunder as that they could never be joined together, or reconciled; for what fellowship has light with darkness? 2Co

6:14. And yet he divided time between them, the day for light and the night for darkness, in a constant and regular succession to each other. Though the darkness was now scattered by the light, yet it was not condemned to a perpetual banishment, but takes its turn with the light, and has its place, because it has its use; for, as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night, and draw the curtains about us, that we may sleep the better. See Job 7:2. God has thus divided time between light and darkness, because he would daily remind us that this is a world of mixtures and changes. In heaven there is perfect and perpetual light, and no darkness at all; in hell, utter darkness, and no gleam of light. In that world between these two there is a great gulf fixed; but, in this world, they are counterchanged, and we pass daily from one to another, that we may learn to expect the like vicissitudes in the providence of God, peace and trouble, joy and sorrow, and may set the one over-against the other, accommodating ourselves to both as we do to the light and darkness, bidding both welcome, and making the best of both.

5. That God divided them from each other by distinguishing names: He called the light day, and the darkness he called night. He gave them names, as the Lord of both; for the day is his, the night also is his, Ps 74:16. He is the Lord of time, and will be so, till day and night shall come to an end, and the stream of time be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. Let us acknowledge God in the constant succession of day and night, and consecrate both to his honour, by working for him every day and resting in him every night, and meditating in his law day and night.

6. That this was the first day's work, and a good day's work it was. The evening and the morning were the first day. The darkness of the evening was before the light of the morning, that it might serve for a foil to it, to set it off, and make it shine the brighter. This was not only the first day of the world, but the first day of the week. I observe it to the honour of that day, because the new world began on the first day of the week likewise, in the resurrection of Christ, as the light of the world, early in the morning. In him the day-spring from on high has visited the

world; and happy are we, forever happy, if that day-star arise in our hearts.

4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

God said—This phrase, which occurs so repeatedly in the account means: willed, decreed, appointed; and the determining will of God was followed in every instance by an immediate result. Whether the sun was created at the same time with, or long before, the earth, the dense accumulation of fogs and vapors which enveloped the chaos had covered the globe with a settled gloom. But by the command of God, light was rendered visible; the thick murky clouds were dispersed, broken, or rarefied, and light diffused over the expanse of waters. The effect is described in the name "day," which in Hebrew signifies "warmth," "heat"; while the name "night" signifies a "rolling up," as night wraps all things in a shady mantle.

5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

day The word "day" is used in Scripture in three ways:

(1) that part of the solar day of twenty-four hours which is light Genesis 1:5,14; John 9:4; 11:9.

(2) Such a day, set apart for some distinctive purpose, as, "day of atonement" (Leviticus 23:27); "day of judgment" Matthew 10:15.

(3) a period of time, long or short, during which certain revealed purposes of God are to be accomplished, as "day of the Lord." evening The use of "evening" and "morning" may be held to limit "day" to the solar day; but the frequent parabolic use of natural phenomena may warrant the conclusion that each creative "day" was a period of time marked off by a beginning and ending.

6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

day The word "day" is used in Scripture in three ways:

(1) that part of the solar day of twenty-four hours which is light Genesis 1:5,14; John 9:4; 11:9.

(2) Such a day, set apart for some distinctive purpose, as, "day of atonement" (Leviticus 23:27); "day of judgment" Matthew 10:15.

(3) a period of time, long or short, during which certain revealed purposes of God are to be accomplished, as "day of the Lord." evening The use of "evening" and "morning" may be held to limit "day" to the solar day; but the frequent parabolic use of natural phenomena may warrant the conclusion that each creative "day" was a period of time marked off by a beginning and ending.

7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so.

The third day's work is related in these verses--the forming of the sea and the dry land, and the making of the earth fruitful. Hitherto the power of the Creator had been exerted and employed about the upper part of the visible word; the light of heaven was kindled, and the firmament of heaven fixed: but now he descends to this lower world, the earth, which was designed for the children of men, designed both for their habitation and for their maintenance; and here we have an account of the fitting of it for both, and building of their house and the spreading of their table. Observe,

How the earth was prepared to be a habitation for man, by the gathering of the waters together, and the making of the dry land to appear. Thus, instead of the confusion which there was (Ge 1:2) when earth and water were mixed in one

great mass, behold, now, there is order, by such a separation as rendered them both useful. God said, Let it be so, and it was so; no sooner said than done.

1 The waters which had covered the earth were ordered to retire, and to gather into one place, namely, those hollows which were fitted and appointed for their reception and rest. The waters, thus cleared, thus collected, and thus lodged, in their proper place, he called seas.

The world was to be rendered a terraqueous globe, and this was effected by a volcanic convulsion on its surface, the upheaving of some parts, the sinking of others, and the formation of vast hollows, into which the waters impetuously rushed, as is graphically described (Ps 104:6-9) [HITCHCOCK]. Thus a large part of the earth was left "dry land," and thus were formed oceans, seas, lakes, and rivers which, though each having its own bed, or channel, are all connected with the sea (Job 38:10; Ec 1:7).

Though they are many, in distant regions, and washing several shores, yet, either above ground or underground, they have communication with each other, and so they are one, and the common receptacle of waters, into which all the rivers flow, Ec 1:7. Waters and seas often, in scripture, signify troubles and afflictions, Ps 42:7,69:2,14,15. God's own people are not exempted from these in this world; but it is their comfort that they are only waters under the heaven (there are none in heaven), and that they are all in the place that God has appointed them and within the bounds that he has set for them. How the waters were gathered together at first, and how they are still bound and limited by the same Almighty had that first confined them, are elegantly described, Ps 104:6-9, and are there mentioned as matter of praise. Those that go down to the sea in ships ought to acknowledge daily the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, in making the great waters serviceable to man for trade and commerce; and those that tarry at home must own

themselves indebted to him that keeps the sea with bars and doors in its decreed place, and stays its proud waves, Job 38:10,11.

2 The dry land was made to appear, and emerge out of the waters, and was called earth, and given to the children of men. The earth, it seems, was in being before; but it was of no use, because it was under water. Thus many of God's gifts are received in vain, because they are buried; make them to appear, and they become serviceable. We who, to this day, enjoy the benefit of the dry land (though, since this, it was once deluged, and dried again) must own ourselves tenants to, and dependents upon, that God whose hands formed the dry land, Ps 95:5,Jon 1:9.

10 And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called the Seas: and God saw that *it was* good.

11 And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

Matthew Hennery Bible commentary(MHC):

How the earth was furnished for the maintenance and support of man, Ge 1:11,12. Present provision was now made, by the immediate products of the upstart earth, which, in obedience to God's command, was no sooner made than it became fruitful, and brought forth grass for the cattle and herb for the service of man. Provision was likewise made for time to come, by the perpetuating of the several kinds of vegetables, which are numerous, various, and all curious, and every one having its seed in itself after its kind, that, during the continuance of man upon the earth, food might be fetched out of the earth for his use and benefit. Lord, what is man, that he is thus visited and regarded--that such care should be taken, and such provision made, for the support and preservation of those guilty and obnoxious lives which have been a thousand times forfeited! Observe here,

1. That not only the earth is the Lord's, but the fullness thereof, and he is the rightful owner and sovereign disposer, not only of it, but of all its furniture. The earth was emptiness (Ge 1:2), but now, by a word's speaking, it has become full of God's riches, and his they are still--his corn and his wine, his wool and his flax, Ho 2:9. Though the use of them is allowed to us, the property still remains in him, and to his service and honour they must be used.

2. That common providence is a continued creation, and in it our Father worketh hitherto. The earth still remains under the efficacy of this command, to bring forth grass, and herbs, and its annual products; and though, being according to the common course of nature, these are not standing miracles, yet they are standing instances of the unwearied power and unexhausted goodness of the world's great Maker and Master.

3. That though God, ordinarily, makes use of the agency of second causes, according to their nature, yet he neither needs them nor is tied to them; for, though the precious fruits of the earth are usually brought forth by the influences of the sun and moon (De 33:14), yet here we find the earth bearing a great abundance of fruit, probable ripe fruit, before the sun and moon were made.

4. That it is good to provide things necessary before we have occasion to use them: before the beasts and man were made, here were grass and herbs prepared for them. God thus dealt wisely and graciously with man; let not man then be foolish and unwise for himself.

5. That God must have the glory of all the benefit we receive from the products of the earth, either for food or physic. It is he that hears the heavens when they hear the earth, Hos 2:21,22. And if we have, through grace, an interest in him who is the fountain, when the streams are dried up and the fig-tree doth not blossom we may rejoice in him.

Scofield Bible commentary:

It is by no means necessary to suppose that the life-germ of seeds perished in the catastrophic judgment which overthrew the primitive order. With the restoration of dry land and light the earth would "bring forth" as described. It was "animal" life which perished, the traces of which remain as fossils. Relegate fossils to the primitive creation, and no conflict of science with the Genesis cosmogony remains.

12 And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

This is the history of the fourth day's work, the creating of the sun, moon, and stars, which are here accounted for, not as they are in themselves and in their own nature, to satisfy the curious, but as they are in relation to this earth, to which they serve as lights; and this is enough to furnish us with matter for praise and thanksgiving. Holy Job mentions this as an instance of the glorious power of God, that by the Spirit he hath garnished the heavens (Job 26:13); and here we have an account of that garniture which is not only so much the beauty of the upper world, but so much the blessing of this lower; for though heaven is high, yet has it respect to this earth, and therefore should have respect from it. Of the creation of the lights of heaven we have an account,

In general, Ge 1:14,15, where we have

1 The command given concerning them: Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven. God had said, Let there be light (Ge 1:3), and there was light; but this was, as it were, a chaos of light, scattered and confused: now it was collected and modelled, and made into several luminaries, and so rendered

both more glorious and more serviceable. God is the God of order, and not of confusion; and, as he is light, so he is the Father and former of lights. Those lights were to be in the firmament of heaven, that vast expanse which encloses the earth, and is conspicuous to all; for no man, when he has lighted a candle, puts it under a bushel, but on a candlestick (Lu 8:16), and a stately golden candlestick the firmament of heaven is, from which these candles give light to all that are in the house. The firmament itself is spoken of as having a brightness of its own (Da 12:3), but this was not sufficient to give light to the earth; and perhaps for this reason it is not expressly said of the second day's work, in which the firmament was made, that it was good, because, till it was adorned with these lights on the fourth day, it had not become serviceable to man.

2 The use they were intended to be of to this earth.

(1.) They must be for the distinction of times, of day and night, summer and winter, which are interchanged by the motion of the sun, whose rising makes day, his setting night, his approach towards our tropic summer, his recess to the other winter: and thus, under the sun, there is a season to every purpose, Ec 3:11.

(2.) They must be for the direction of actions. They are for signs of the change of weather, that the husbandman may order his affairs with discretion, foreseeing, by the face of the sky, when second causes have begun to work, whether it will be fair or foul, Mt 16:2,3. They do also give light upon the earth, that we may walk (Joh 11:9), and work (Joh 9:4). According as the duty of every day requires. The lights of heaven do not shine for themselves, nor for the world of spirits above, who need them not; but they shine for us, for our pleasure and advantage. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus regarded! Ps 8:3,4. How ungrateful and inexcusable are we, if, when God has set up these lights for

us to work by, we sleep, or play, or trifle away the time of business, and neglect the great work we were sent into the world about! The lights of heaven are made to serve us, and they do it faithfully, and shine in their season, without fail: but we are set as lights in this world to serve God; and do we in like manner answer the end of our creation? No, we do not, our light does not shine before God as his lights shine before us, Mt 5:14. We burn our Master's candles, but do not mind our Master's work.

15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also.

1. Observe, The lights of heaven are the sun, moon, and stars; and all these are the work of God's hands.

(1.) The sun is the greatest light of all, more than a million times greater than the earth, and the most glorious and useful of all the lamps of heaven, a noble instance of the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness, and an invaluable blessing to the creatures of this lower world. Let us learn from Ps 19:1-6 how to give unto God the glory due unto his name, as the Maker of the sun.

(2.) The moon is a less light, and yet is here reckoned one of the greater lights, because though, in regard to its magnitude and borrowed light, it is inferior to many of the stars, yet, by virtue of its office, as ruler of the night, and in respect of its usefulness to the earth, it is more excellent than they. Those are most valuable that are most serviceable; and those are the greater lights, not that have the best gifts, but that humbly and faithfully do the most good with them. Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, Mt 20:26.

(3.) He made the stars also, which are here spoken of as they appear to vulgar eyes, without distinguishing between the planets and the fixed stars, or accounting for their number,

nature, place, magnitude, motions, or influences; for the scriptures were written, not to gratify our curiosity and make us astronomers, but to lead us to God, and make us saints. Now these lights are said to rule (Ge 1:16,18); not that they have a supreme dominion, as God has, but they are deputy-governors, rulers under him. Here the less light, the moon, is said to rule the night; but in Ps 136:9 the stars are mentioned as sharers in that government; The moon and stars to rule by night. No more is meant than that they give light, Jer 31:35. The best and most honourable way of ruling is by giving light and doing good: those command respect that live a useful life, and so shine as lights.

2. Learn from all this,

(1.) The sin and folly of that ancient idolatry, the worshipping of the sun, moon, and stars, which, some think, took rise, or countenance at least, from some broken traditions in the patriarchal age concerning the rule and dominion of the lights of heaven. But the account here given of them plainly shows that they are both God's creatures and man's servants; and therefore it is both a great affront to God and a great reproach to ourselves to make deities of them and give them divine honours. See De 4:19.

(2.) The duty and wisdom of daily worshipping that God who made all these things, and made them to be that to us which they are. The revolutions of the day and night oblige us to offer the solemn sacrifice of prayer and praise every morning and evening.

The "greater light" is a type of Christ, the "Sun of righteousness" Malachi 4:2. He will take this character at His second advent. Morally the world is now in the state between; Genesis 1:3-16; Ephesians 6:12; Acts 26:18; 1 Peter 2:9. The sun is not seen, but there is light. Christ is that light John 1:4,5,9 but "shineth in darkness," comprehended only by

faith. As "Son of righteousness" He will dispel all darkness. Dispensationally the Church is in place as the "lesser light," the moon, reflecting the light of the unseen sun. The stars Genesis 1:16 are individual believers who are "lights"; Philippians 2:15,16; John 1:5.

Made The word does not imply a creative act; vs. Genesis 1:14-18 are declarative of function merely.
In consequence of the day being reckoned as commencing at sunset—the moon, which would be seen first in the horizon, would appear "a great light," compared with the little twinkling stars; while its pale benign radiance would be eclipsed by the dazzling splendor of the sun; when his resplendent orb rose in the morning and gradually attained its meridian blaze of glory, it would appear "the greater light" that ruled the day. Both these lights may be said to be "made" on the fourth day—not created, indeed, for it is a different word that is here used, but constituted, appointed to the important and necessary office of serving as luminaries to the world, and regulating by their motions and their influence the progress and divisions of time.

17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,
18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that *it was* good.
19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl *that* may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

Each day, hitherto, has produced very noble and excellent beings, which we can never sufficiently admire; but we do not read of the creation of any living creature till the fifth day, of which these verses give us an account. The work of creation not only proceeded gradually from one thing to another, but rose and advanced gradually from that which was less excellent to that which was more so, teaching us to press towards perfection and endeavour that our last works may be our best works. It was on the fifth day that the fish

and fowl were created, and both out of the waters. Though there is one kind of flesh of fishes, and another of birds, yet they were made together, and both out of the waters; for the power of the first Cause can produce very different effects from the same second causes. Observe,

1 The making of the fish and fowl, at first, Ge 1:20,21. God commanded them to be produced. He said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly; not as if the waters had any productive power of their own, but, "Let them be brought into being, the fish in the waters and the fowl out of them." This command he himself executed: God created great whales, &c. Insects, which perhaps are as various and as numerous as any species of animals, and their structure as curious, were part of this day's work, some of them being allied to the fish and others to the fowl. Mr. Boyle (I remember) says he admires the Creator's wisdom and power as much in an ant as in an elephant. Notice is here taken of the various sorts of fish and fowl, each after their kind, and of the great numbers of both that were produced, for the waters brought forth abundantly; and particular mention if made of great whales, the largest of fishes, whose bulk and strength, exceeding that of any other animal, are remarkable proofs of the power and greatness of the Creator. The express notice here taken of the whale, above all the rest, seems sufficient to determine what animal is meant by the Leviathan, Job 41:1 The curious formation of the bodies of animals, their different sizes, shapes, and natures, with the admirable powers of the sensitive life with which they are endued, when duly considered, serve, not only to silence and shame the objections of atheists and infidels, but to raise high thoughts and high praises of God in pious and devout souls, Ps 104:25, &c.

2 The blessing of them, in order to their continuance. Life is a wasting thing. Its strength is not the strength of stones. It is a candle that will burn out, if it be not first blown out; and therefore the wise Creator not only made the individuals, but

provided for the propagation of the several kinds; God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, Ge 1:22. God will bless his own works, and not forsake them; and what he does shall be for a perpetuity, Ec 3:14. The power of God's providence preserves all things, as at first his creating power produced them. Fruitfulness is the effect of God's blessing and must be ascribed to it; the multiplying of the fish and fowl, from year to year, is still the fruit of this blessing. Well, let us give to God the glory of the continuance of these creatures to this day for the benefit of man. See Job 12:7,9. It is a pity that fishing and fowling, recreations innocent in themselves, should ever be abused to divert any from God and their duty, while they are capable of being improved to lead us to the contemplation of the wisdom, power, and goodness, of him that made all these things, and to engage us to stand in awe of him, as the fish and fowl do of us.

21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

22 And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

We have here the first part of the sixth day's work. The sea was, the day before, replenished with its fish, and the air with its fowl; and this day were made the beasts of the earth, the cattle, and the creeping things that pertain to the earth. Here, as before,

1. The Lord gave the word; he said, Let the earth bring forth, not as if the earth had any such prolific virtue as to produce these animals, or as if God resigned his creating power to it; but, "Let these creatures now come into being upon the earth, and out of it, in their respective kinds, conformable to the

ideas of them in the divine counsels concerning their creation."

2. he made them all after their kind, wild animals, whose ravenous natures were then kept in check; not only of divers shapes, but of divers natures, manners, food, and fashions--some to be tame about the house, others to be wild in the fields--some living upon grass and herbs, others upon flesh--some harmless, and others ravenous--some bold, and others timorous--some for man's service, and not his sustenance, as the horse--others for his sustenance, and not his service, as the sheep--others for both, as the ox--and some for neither, as the wild beasts. In all this appears the manifold wisdom of the Creator.

25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Matthew Hennery Commentary:

We have here the second part of the sixth day's work, the creation of man, which we are, in a special manner, concerned to take notice of, that we may know ourselves. Observe,

I. That man was made last of all the creatures, that it might not be suspected that he had been, anyway, a helper to God in the creation of the world: that question must be forever humbling and mortifying to him, Where wast thou, or any of thy kind, when I laid the foundations of the earth? Job 38:4. Yet it was both an honour and a favour to him that he was made last: an honour, for the method of the creation was to advance from that which was less perfect to that which was more so; and a favour, for it was not fit he should be lodged

in the palace designed for him till it was completely fitted up and furnished for his reception. Man, as soon as he was made, had the whole visible creation before him, both to contemplate and to take the comfort of. Man was made the same day that the beasts were, because his body was made of the same earth with theirs; and, while he is in the body, he inhabits the same earth with them. God forbid that by indulging the body and the desires of it we should make ourselves like the beasts that perish!

II. That man's creation was a more signal and immediate act of divine wisdom and power than that of the other creatures. The narrative of it is introduced with something of solemnity, and a manifest distinction from the rest. Hitherto, it had been said, "Let there be light," and "Let there be a firmament," and "Let the earth, or waters, bring forth" such a thing; but now the word of command is turned into a word of consultation, "Let us make man, for whose sake the rest of the creatures were made: this is a work we must take into our own hands." In the former he speaks as one having authority, in this as one having affection; for his delights were with the sons of men, Pr 8:31. It should seem as if this were the work which he longed to be at; as if he had said, "Having at last settled the preliminaries, let us now apply ourselves to the business, Let us make man." Man was to be a creature different from all that had been hitherto made. Flesh and spirit, heaven and earth, must be put together in him, and he must be allied to both worlds. And therefore God himself not only undertakes to make him, but is pleased so to express himself as if he called a council to consider of the making of him: Let us make man. The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about it and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Into that great name we are, with good reason, baptized, for to that great name we owe our being. Let him rule man who said, Let us make man.

III. That man was made in God's image and after his likeness, two words to express the same thing and making each other the more expressive; image and likeness denote the likest image, the nearest resemblance of any of the visible creatures. Man was not made in the likeness of any creature that went before him, but in the likeness of his Creator; yet still between God and man there is an infinite distance. Christ only is the express image of God's person, as the Son of his Father, having the same nature. It is only some of God's honour that is put upon man, who is God's image only as the shadow in the glass, or the king's impress upon the coin. God's image upon man consists in these three things:--

1. In his nature and constitution, not those of his body (for God has not a body), but those of his soul. This honour indeed God has put upon the body of man, that the Word was made flesh, the Son of God was clothed with a body like ours and will shortly clothe ours with a glory like that of his. And this we may safely say, That he by whom God made the worlds, not only the great world, but man the little world, formed the human body, at the first, according to the platform he designed for himself in the fullness of time. But it is the soul, the great soul, of man, that does especially bear God's image. The soul is a spirit, an intelligent immortal spirit, an influencing active spirit, herein resembling God, the Father of Spirits, and the soul of the world. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. The soul of man, considered in its three noble faculties, understanding, will, and active power, is perhaps the brightest clearest looking-glass in nature, wherein to see God.

2. In his place and authority: Let us make man in our image, and let him have dominion. As he has the government of the inferior creatures, he is, as it were, God's representative, or viceroy, upon earth; they are not capable of fearing and serving God, therefore God has appointed them to fear and serve man. Yet his government of himself by the freedom of

his will has in it more of God's image than his government of the creatures.

3. In his purity and rectitude. God's image upon man consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Eph 4:24, Col 3:10. He was upright, Ec 7:29. He had a habitual conformity of all his natural powers to the whole will of God. His understanding saw divine things clearly and truly, and there were no errors nor mistakes in his knowledge. His will complied readily and universally with the will of God, without reluctance or resistance. His affections were all regular, and he had no inordinate appetites or passions. His thoughts were easily brought and fixed to the best subjects, and there was no vanity nor ungovernableness in them. All the inferior powers were subject to the dictates and directions of the superior, without any mutiny or rebellion. Thus holy, thus happy, were our first parents, in having the image of God upon them. And this honour, put upon man at first, is a good reason why we should not speak ill one of another (Jam 3:9), nor do ill one to another (Ge 9:6), and a good reason why we should not debase ourselves to the service of sin, and why we should devote ourselves to God's service. But how art thou fallen, O son of the morning! How is this image of God upon man defaced! How small are the remains of it, and how great the ruins of it! The Lord renew it upon our souls by his sanctifying grace!

Scofield Commentary:

Make man in our image Man. Genesis 1:26, 27, gives the general, Genesis 2:7, 21-23 the particular account of the creation of man. The revealed facts are:

(1) Man was created not evolved. This is

(a) expressly declared, and the declaration is confirmed by Christ Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:6,

(b) "an enormous gulf, a divergence practically infinite" (Huxley) between the lowest man and the highest beast, confirms it;

(c) the highest beast has no trace of God-consciousness--the religious nature;

(d) Science and discovery have done nothing to bridge that "gulf."

(2) That man was made in the "image and likeness" of God. This image is found chiefly in man's tri-unity, and in his moral nature. Man is "spirit and soul and body" 1 Thessalonians 5:23. "Spirit" is that part of man which "knows" 1 Corinthians 2:11 and which allies him to the spiritual creation and gives him God-consciousness. "Soul" in itself implies self-consciousness life, as distinguished from plants, which have unconscious life. In that sense animals also have "soul" Genesis 1:24. But the "soul" of man has a vaster content than "soul" as applied to beast life. It is the seat of emotions, desires, affections Psalms 42:1-6. The "heart" is, in Scripture usage, nearly synonymous with "soul." Because the natural man is, characteristically, the soulual or physical man, "soul" is often used as synonymous with the individual, e.g. Genesis 12:5. The body, separable from spirit and soul, and susceptible to death, is nevertheless an integral part of man, as the resurrection shows; John 5:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 15:47-50; Revelation 20:11-13. It is the seat of the senses (the means by which the spirit and soul have world-consciousness) and of the fallen Adamic nature. Romans 7:23, 24. us Genesis 11:7

JFB Commentary:

The last stage in the progress of creation being now reached—God said, Let us make man—words which show the peculiar importance of the work to be done, the formation

of a creature, who was to be God's representative, clothed with authority and rule as visible head and monarch of the world.

In our image, after our likeness—This was a peculiar distinction, the value attached to which appears in the words being twice mentioned. And in what did this image of God consist? Not in the erect form or features of man, not in his intellect, for the devil and his angels are, in this respect, far superior; not in his immortality, for he has not, like God, a past as well as a future eternity of being; but in the moral dispositions of his soul, commonly called original righteousness (Ec 7:29). As the new creation is only a restoration of this image, the history of the one throws light on the other; and we are informed that it is renewed after the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness (Col 3:10; Eph 4:24).

27 So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

That man was made male and female, and blessed with the blessing of fruitfulness and increase. God said, Let us make man, and immediately it follows, So God created man; he performed what he resolved. With us saying and doing are two things; but they are not so with God. He created him male and female, Adam and Eve--Adam first, out of earth, and Eve out of his side, Ge 2:21-23. It should seem that of the rest of the creatures God made many couples, but of man did not he make one? (Mal 2:15), though he had the residue of the Spirit, whence Christ gathers an argument against divorce, Mt 19:4, 5. Our first father, Adam, was confined to one wife; and, if he had put her away, there was no other for him to marry, which plainly intimated that the bond of marriage was not to be dissolved at pleasure. Angels were not made male and female, for they were not to propagate their kind (Lu 20:34-36); but man was made so, that the nature might be propagated and the race continued. Fires and candles, the luminaries of this lower world, because they waste, and go out, have a power to light more; but it is not

so with the lights of heaven: stars do not kindle stars. God made but one male and one female, that all the nations of men might know themselves to be made of one blood, descendants from one common stock, and might thereby be induced to love one another. God, having made them capable of transmitting the nature they had received, said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. Here he gave them,

1. A large inheritance: Replenish the earth; it is this that is bestowed upon the children of men. They were made to dwell upon the face of all the earth, Ac 17:26. This is the place in which God has set man to be the servant of his providence in the government of the inferior creatures, and, as it were, the intelligence of this orb; to be the receiver of God's bounty, which other creatures live upon, but do not know it; to be likewise the collector of his praises in this lower world, and to pay them into the exchequer above (Ps 145:10); and, lastly, to be a probationer for a better state.

2. A numerous lasting family, to enjoy this inheritance, pronouncing a blessing upon them, in virtue of which their posterity should extend to the utmost corners of the earth and continue to the utmost period of time. Fruitfulness and increase depend upon the blessing of God: Obed-edom had eight sons, for God blessed him, 1Ch 26:5. It is owing to this blessing, which God commanded at first, that the race of mankind is still in being, and that as one generation passeth away another cometh.

That God gave to man, when he had made him, a dominion over the inferior creatures, over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air. Though man provides for neither, he has power over both, much more over every living thing that moveth upon the earth, which are more under his care and within his reach. God designed hereby to put an honour upon man, that he might find himself the more strongly obliged to bring honour to his Maker. This dominion is very much

diminished and lost by the fall; yet God's providence continues so much of it to the children of men as is necessary to the safety and support of their lives, and God's grace has given to the saints a new and better title to the creature than that which was forfeited by sin; for all is ours if we are Christ's, 1Co 3:22.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

We have here the third part of the sixth day's work, which was not any new creation, but a gracious provision of food for all flesh, Ps 136:25. He that made man and beast thus took care to preserve both, Ps 36:6. Here is,

Food provided for man, Ge 1:29. Herbs and fruits must be his meat, including corn and all the products of the earth; these were allowed him, but (it should seem) not flesh, till after the flood, Ge 9:3. And before the earth was deluged, much more before it was cursed for man's sake, its fruits, no doubt, were more pleasing to the taste and more strengthening and nourishing to the body than marrow and fatness, and all the portion of the king's meat, are now. See here,

1. That which should make us humble. As we were made out of the earth, so we are maintained out of it. Once indeed men did eat angels' food, bread from heaven; but they died (Joh 6:49); it was to them but as food out of the earth, Ps 104:14. There is meat that endures to everlasting life; the Lord evermore give us this.

2. That which should make us thankful. The Lord is for the body; from him we receive all the supports and comforts of this life, and to him we must give thanks. He gives us all

things richly to enjoy, not only for necessity, but plenty, dainties, and varieties, for ornament and delight. How much are we indebted! How careful should we be, as we live upon God's bounty, to live to his glory!

3. That which should make us temperate and content with our lot. Though Adam had dominion given him over fish and fowl, yet God confined him, in his food, to herbs and fruits; and he never complained of it. Though afterwards he coveted forbidden fruit, for the sake of the wisdom and knowledge he promised himself from it, yet we never read that he coveted forbidden flesh. If God give us food for our lives, let us not, with murmuring Israel, ask food for our lusts, Ps 78:18; see Da 1:15.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so.

Food provided for the beasts, Ge 1:30. Doth God take care for oxen? Yes, certainly, he provides food convenient for them, and not for oxen only, which were used in his sacrifices and man's service, but even the young lions and the young ravens are the care of his providence; they ask and have their meat from God. Let us give to God the glory of his bounty to the inferior creatures, that all are fed, as it were, at his table, every day. He is a great housekeeper, a very rich and bountiful one that satisfies the desire of every living thing. Let this encourage God's people to cast their care upon him, and not to be solicitous respecting what they shall eat and what they shall drink. He that provided for Adam without his care, and still provides for all the creatures without their care, will not let those that trust him want any good thing, Mt 6:26. He that feeds his birds will not starve his babes.

31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

We have here the approbation and conclusion of the whole work of creation. As for God, his work is perfect; and if he begin he will also make an end, in providence and grace, as well as here in creation. Observe,

I The review God took of his work: He saw everything that he had made. So he does still; all the works of his hands are under his eye. He that made all sees all; he that made us sees us, Ps 139:1-16. Omniscience cannot be separated from omnipotence. Known unto God are all his works, Ac 15:18. God has hereby set us an example of reviewing our works. Having given us a power of reflection, he expects we should use that power, see our way (Jer 2:23), and think of it, Ps 119:59. When we have finished a day's work, and are entering upon the rest of the night, we should commune with our own hearts about what we have been doing that day; so likewise when we have finished a week's work, and are entering upon the Sabbath-rest, we should thus prepare to meet our God; and when we are finishing our life's work, and are entering upon our rest in the grave, that is a time to bring to remembrance, that we may die repenting, and so take leave of it.

II The complacency God took in his work. When we come to review our works we find, to our shame, that much has been very bad; but, when God reviewed his, all was very good. He did not pronounce it good till he had seen it so, to teach us not to answer a matter before we hear it. The work of creation was a very good work. All that God made was well-made, and there was no flaw nor defect in it.

1. It was good. Good, for it is all agreeable to the mind of the Creator, just as he would have it to be; when the transcript came to be compared with the great original, it was found to be exact, no errata in it, not one misplaced stroke. Good, for it answers the end of its creation, and is fit for the purpose for which it was designed. Good, for it is serviceable to man, whom God had appointed lord of the visible creation. Good, for it is all for God's glory; there is that in the whole visible creation which is a demonstration of God's being and perfections, and which tends to beget, in the soul of man, a religious regard to him and veneration of him.

2. It was very good. Of each day's work (except the second) it was said that it was good, but now, it is very good. For,

(1.) Now man was made, who was the chief of the ways of God, who was designed to be the visible image of the Creator's glory and the mouth of the creation in his praises.

(2.) Now all was made; every part was good, but all together very good. The glory and goodness, the beauty and harmony, of God's works, both of providence and grace, as this of creation, will best appear when they are perfected. When the top-stone is brought forth we shall cry, Grace, grace, unto it, Zec 4:7. Therefore judge nothing before the time.

III. The time when this work was concluded: The evening and the morning were the sixth day; so that in six days God made the world. We are not to think but that God could have made the world in an instant. He said that, Let there be light, and there was light, could have said, "Let there be a world," and there would have been a world, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as at the resurrection, 1Co 15:52. But he did it in six days, that he might show himself a free-agent, doing his own work both in his own way and in his own time,--that his wisdom, power, and goodness, might appear to us, and be meditated upon by us, the more distinctly,--and that he might set us an example of working six days and resting the seventh; it is therefore made the reason of the fourth commandment. So much would the Sabbath conduce to the keeping up of religion in the world that God had an eye to it in the timing of his creation. And now, as God reviewed his work, let us review our meditations upon it, and we shall find them very lame and defective, and our praises low and flat; let us therefore stir up ourselves, and all that is within us, to worship him that made the heaven, earth, and sea, and the fountains of waters, according to the tenour of the everlasting gospel, which is preached to every nation, Re 14:6, 7. All his works, in all places of his dominion, do bless him; and, therefore, bless thou the Lord, O my soul!

Genesis -2

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

We have here, I The settlement of the kingdom of nature, in God's resting from the work of creation, Ge 2:1, 2. Here observe,

1 The creatures made both in heaven and earth are the hosts or armies of them, which denotes them to be numerous, but marshalled, disciplined, and under command. How great is the sum of them! And yet everyone knows and keeps his place. God uses them as his hosts for the defence of his people and the destruction of his enemies; for he is the Lord of hosts, of all these hosts, Da 4:35.

2 The heavens and the earth are finished pieces, and so are all the creatures in them. So perfect is God's work that nothing can be added to it nor taken from it, Ec 3:14. God that began to build showed himself well able to finish.

3. After the end of the first six days God ceased from all works of creation. He has so ended his work as that though, in his providence, he worketh hitherto (Joh 5:17), preserving and governing all the creatures, and particularly forming the spirit of man within him, yet he does not make any new species of creatures. In miracles, he has controlled and overruled nature, but never changed its settled course, nor repealed nor added to any of its establishments.

4. The eternal God, though infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, yet took a satisfaction in the work of his own hands. He did not rest, as one weary, but as one well-pleased with the instances of his own goodness and the manifestations of his own glory.

2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

Man in the Garden of Eden

4 These *are* the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,

The history or account of their production. Whence did Moses obtain this account so different from the puerile and absurd fictions of the heathen? Not from any human source, for man was not in existence to witness it; not from the light of nature or reason, for though they proclaim the eternal power and Godhead by the things which are made, they cannot tell how they were made. None but the Creator Himself could give this information, and therefore it is through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God (Heb 11:3).

Here is a name given to the Creator which we have not yet met with, and that is Jehovah--the LORD, in capital letters, which are constantly used in our English translation to intimate that in the original it is Jehovah. All along, in the first chapter, he was called Elohim--a God of power; but now Jehovah Elohim--a God of power and perfection, a finishing God. As we find him known by his name Jehovah when he appeared to perform what he had promised (Ex 6:3), so now we have him known by that name, when he had perfected what he had begun. Jehovah is that great and incommunicable name of God which denotes his having his being of himself, and his giving being to all things; fitly therefore is he called by that name now that heaven and earth are finished.

LORD (Heb. Jehovah)

(1) The primary meaning of the name LORD (Jehovah) is the "self-existent One." Literally (as in Exodus 3:14), "He that is who He is, therefore the eternal I AM:" But Havah, from which Jehovah, or Yahwe, is formed, signifies also "to

become," that is, to become known, thus pointing to a continuous and increasing self-revelation. Combining these meanings of Havah, we arrive at the meaning of the name Jehovah. He is "the self- existent One who reveals Himself." The name is, in itself, an advance upon the name "God" (El, Elah, Elohim), which suggests certain attributes of Deity, as strength, etc., rather than His essential being.

(2) It is significant that the first appearance of the name Jehovah in Scripture follows the creation of man. It was God (Elohim) who said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26); but when man, as in the second chapter of Genesis, is to fill the scene and become dominant over creation, it is the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim) who acts. This clearly indicates a special relation of Deity, in His Jehovah character, to man, and all Scripture emphasizes this.

(3) Jehovah is distinctly the redemption name of Deity. When sin entered and redemption became necessary, it was Jehovah Elohim who sought the sinning ones Genesis 3:9-13 and clothed them with "coats of skins" Genesis 3:21 a beautiful type of righteousness provided by the Lord God through sacrifice Romans 3:21,22. The first distinct revelation of Himself by His name Jehovah was in connection with the redemption of the covenant people out of Egypt Exodus 3:13-17. As Redeemer, emphasis is laid upon those attributes of Jehovah which the sin and salvation of man bring into exercise. These are:

(a) His holiness Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:1,220:26; Habakkuk 1:12,13

(b) His hatred and judgment of sin ; Deuteronomy 32:35-42; Genesis 6:5-7; Psalms 11:4-6; 66:18; Exodus 34:6,7

(c) His love for and redemption of sinners, but always righteously; Genesis 3:21; 8:20, 21; Exodus 12:12, 13;

Leviticus 16:2, 3; Isaiah 53:5, 6, 10 Salvation by Jehovah apart from sacrifice is unknown to Scripture.

(4) In his redemptive relation to man, Jehovah has seven compound names which reveal Him as meeting every need of man from his lost state to the end. These compound names are:

(a) Jehovah-Jireh, "the Lord will provide" Genesis 22:13,14 i.e., will provide a sacrifice;

(b) Jehovah-rapha, "the Lord that healeth" Exodus 15:26. That this refers to physical healing the context shows, but the deeper healing of soul malady is implied.

(c) Jehovah-nissi, "the Lord our banner" Exodus 17:8-15. The name is interpreted by the context. The enemy was Amalek, a type of the flesh, and the conflict that day stands for the conflict of Galatians 5:17 the war of the Spirit against the flesh. Victory was wholly due to divine help.

(d) Jehovah-Shalom, "the Lord our peace," or "the Lord send peace" Judges 6:24. Almost the whole ministry of Jehovah finds expression and illustration in that chapter. Jehovah hates and judges sin Genesis 2:1-5. Jehovah loves and saves sinners Genesis 2:7-18 but only through sacrifice Genesis 2:19-21 see also; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 1:20.

(e) Jehovah-ra-ah, "the Lord my shepherd" (Psa 23.). In Ps. 22 Jehovah makes peace by the blood of the cross; in Ps 23. Jehovah is shepherding His own who are in the world. (See Scofield "John 10:7")

(f) Jehovah-tsidkenu, "the Lord our righteousness" Jeremiah 23:6. This name of Jehovah occurs in a prophecy concerning the future restoration and conversion of Israel. Then Israel will hail him as Jehovah-tsidkenu--"the Lord our righteousness."

(g) Jehovah-shammah, "the Lord is present" Ezekiel 48:35. This name signifies Jehovah's abiding presence with His people ; Exodus 33:14,15; 1 Chronicles 16:27,33; Psalms 16:11; 97:5; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5

5 and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb
of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain
upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground.

Further notice taken of the production of plants and herbs, because they were made and appointed to be food for man, Ge 2:5, 6. Here observe,

1 The earth did not bring forth its fruits of itself, by any innate virtue of its own but purely by the almighty power of God, which formed every plant and every herb before it grew in the earth. Thus grace in the soul, that plant of renown, grows not of itself in nature's soil, but is the work of God's own hands.

2. Rain also is the gift of God; it came not till the Lord God caused it to rain. If rain be wanted, it is God that withholds it; if rain come plentifully in its season, it is God that sends it; if it come in a distinguishing way, and it is God that causeth it to rain upon one city and not upon another, Am 4:7.

3. Though God, ordinarily, works by means, yet he is not tied to them, but when he pleases he can do his own work without them. As the plants were produced before the sun was made, so they were before there was either rain to water the earth or man to till it. Therefore though we must not tempt God in the neglect of means, yet we must trust God in the want of means.

4. Some way or other God will take care to water the plants that are of his own planting. Though as yet there was no rain, God made a mist equivalent to a shower, and with it watered the whole face of the ground. Thus he chose to fulfil his purpose by the weakest means that the excellency of the power might be of God. Divine grace descends like a mist, or silent dew, and waters the church without noise, De 32:2.

6 But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

7 And the Lord God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

A more particular account of the creation of man, Ge 2:7. Man is a little world, consisting of heaven and earth, soul and body. Now here we have an account of the origin of both and the putting of both together: let us seriously consider it, and say, to our Creator's praise, We are fearfully and wonderfully made, Ps 139:14. Elihu, in the patriarchal age, refers to this history when he says (Job 33:6), I also am formed out of the clay, and (Job 33:4), The breath of the Almighty hath given me life, and (Job 32:8), and There is a spirit in man. Observe then,

1 The mean origin, and yet the curious structure, of the body of man.

(1.) The matter was despicable. He was made of the dust of the ground, a very unlikely thing to make a man of; but the same infinite power that made the world of nothing made man, its master-piece, of next to nothing. He was made of the dust, the small dust, such as is upon the surface of the earth. Probably, not dry dust, but dust moistened with the mist that went up, Ge 2:6. He was not made of gold-dust, powder of pearl, or diamond dust, but common dust, dust of the ground. Hence he is said to be of the earth, choikos--dusty, 1Co 15:47. And we also are of the earth, for we are his offspring, and of the same mould. So near an affinity is there between the earth and our earthly parents that our mother's womb, out of which we were born, is called the earth (Ps 139:15), and the earth, in which we must be buried, is called our mother's womb, Job 1:21. Our foundation is in the earth, Job 4:19. Our fabric is earthly, and the fashioning of it like that of an earthen vessel, Job 10:9. Our food is out of the earth, Job 28:5. Our familiarity is with the earth, Job 17:14. Our fathers are in the

earth, and our own final tendency is to it; and what have we then to be proud of?

(2.) Yet the Maker was great, and the make fine. The Lord God, the great fountain of being and power, formed man. Of the other creatures it is said that they were created and made; but of man that he was formed, which denotes a gradual process in the work with great accuracy and exactness. To express the creation of this new thing, he takes a new word, a word (some think) borrowed from the potter's forming his vessel upon the wheel; for we are the clay, and God the potter, Isa 64:8. The body of man is curiously wrought, Ps 139:15, 16. Materiam superabat opus--The workmanship exceeded the materials. Let us present our bodies to God as living sacrifices (Ro 12:1), as living temples (1Co 6:19), and then these vile bodies shall shortly be new-formed like Christ's glorious body, Php 3:21.

2 The high origin and the admirable serviceableness of the soul of man.

(1.) It takes its rise from the breath of heaven, and is produced by it. It was not made of the earth, as the body was; it is a pity then that it should cleave to the earth, and mind earthly things. It came immediately from God; he gave it to be put into the body (Ec 12:7), as afterwards he gave the tables of stone of his own writing to be put into the ark, and the urim of his own framing to be put into the breast-plate. Hence God is not only the former but the Father of spirits. Let the soul which God has breathed into us breathe after him; and let it be for him, since it is from him. Into his hands let us commit our spirits, for from his hands we had them.

(2.) It takes its lodging in a house of clay, and is the life and support of it. It is by it that man is a living soul, that is, a living man; for the soul is the man. The body would be a worthless, useless, loathsome carcase, if the soul did not animate it. To God that gave us these souls we must shortly

give an account of them, how we have employed them, used them, proportioned them, and disposed of them; and if then it be found that we have lost them, though it were to gain the world, we shall be undone forever. Since the extraction of the soul is so noble, and its nature and faculties are so excellent, let us not be of those fools that despise their own souls, by preferring their bodies before them, Pr 15:32. When our Lord Jesus anointed the blind man's eyes with clay perhaps he intimated that it was he who at first formed man out of the clay; and when he breathed on his disciples, saying, Receive you the Holy Ghost, he intimated that it was he who at first breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. He that made the soul is alone able to new-make it.

8 And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

A description of the garden of Eden, which was intended for the mansion and demesne of this great lord, the palace of this prince. The inspired penman, in this history, writing for the Jews first, and calculating his narratives for the infant state of the church, describes things by their outward sensible appearances, and leaves us, by further discoveries of the divine light, to be led into the understanding of the mysteries couched under them. Spiritual things were strong meat, which they could not yet bear; but he writes to them as unto carnal, 1Co 3:1. Therefore he does not so much insist upon the happiness of Adam's mind as upon that of his outward state. The Mosaic history, as well as the Mosaic law, has rather the patterns of heavenly things than the heavenly things themselves, Heb 9:23. Observe,

1 The place appointed for Adam's residence was a garden; not an ivory house nor a palace overlaid with gold, but a garden, furnished and adorned by nature, not by art. What little reason have men to be proud of stately and magnificent buildings, when it was the happiness of man in innocency that he needed none! As clothes came in with sin, so did houses. The heaven was the roof of Adam's house, and never was any roof so curiously ceiled and painted. The earth was his floor, and

never was any floor so richly inlaid. The shadow of the trees was his retirement; under them were his dining-rooms, his lodging-rooms, and never were any rooms so finely hung as these: Solomon's, in all their glory, were not arrayed like them. The better we can accommodate ourselves to plain things, and the less we indulge ourselves with those artificial delights which have been invented to gratify men's pride and luxury, the nearer we approach to a state of innocency. Nature is content with a little and that which is most natural, grace with less, but lust with nothing.

2 The contrivance and furniture of this garden were the immediate work of God's wisdom and power. The Lord God planted this garden, that is, he had planted it--upon the third day, when the fruits of the earth were made. We may well supposed to have been the most accomplished place for pleasure and delight that ever the sun saw, when the all-sufficient God himself designed it to be the present happiness of his beloved creature, man, in innocency, and a type and a figure of the happiness of the chosen remnant in glory. No delights can be agreeable nor satisfying to a soul but those that God himself has provided and appointed for it; no true paradise, but of God's planting. The light of our own fires, and the sparks of our own kindling, will soon leave us in the dark, Isa 50:11. The whole earth was now a paradise compared with what it is since the fall and since the flood; the finest gardens in the world are a wilderness compared with what the whole face of the ground was before it was cursed for man's sake: yet that was not enough; God planted a garden for Adam. God's chosen ones shall have distinguishing favours shown them.

3. The situation of this garden was extremely sweet. It was in Eden, which signifies delight and pleasure. The place is here particularly pointed out by such marks and bounds as were sufficient, I suppose, when Moses wrote, to specify the place to those who knew that country; but now, it seems, the curious cannot satisfy themselves concerning it. Let it be our care to make sure a place in the heavenly paradise, and then we need

not perplex ourselves with a search after the place of the earthly paradise. It is certain that, wherever it was, it had all desirable conveniences, and (which never any house nor garden on earth was) without any inconvenience. Beautiful for situation, the joy and the glory of the whole earth, was this garden: doubtless it was earth in its highest perfection.

Eden—was probably a very extensive region in Mesopotamia, distinguished for its natural beauty and the richness and variety of its produce. Hence its name, signifying "pleasantness." God planted a garden eastward, an extensive park, a paradise, in which the man was put to be trained under the paternal care of his Maker to piety and usefulness.

9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Tree of life—so called from its symbolic character as a sign and seal of immortal life. Its prominent position where it must have been an object of daily observation and interest, was admirably fitted to keep man habitually in mind of God and futurity.

Tree of the knowledge of good and evil—so called because it was a test of obedience by which our first parents were to be tried, whether they would be good or bad, obey God or break His commands.

The trees with which this garden was planted.

(1.) It had all the best and choicest trees in common with the rest of the ground. It was beautiful and adorned with every tree that, for its height or breadth, its make or colour, its leaf or flower, was pleasant to the sight and charmed the eye; it was replenished and enriched with every tree that yielded fruit grateful to the taste and useful to the body, and so good for food. God, as a tender Father, consulted not only Adam's profit, but his pleasure; for there is a pleasure consistent with innocency, nay, there is a true and transcendent pleasure in

innocency. God delights in the prosperity of his servants, and would have them easy; it is owing to themselves if they be uneasy. When Providence puts us into an Eden of plenty and pleasure, we ought to serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of the good things he gives us. But,

(2.) It had two extraordinary trees peculiar to itself; on earth there were not their like.

[1.] There was the tree of life in the midst of the garden, which was not so much a memorandum to him of the fountain and author of his life, nor perhaps any natural means to preserve or prolong life; but it was chiefly intended to be a sign and seal to Adam, assuring him of the continuance of life and happiness, even to immortality and everlasting bliss, through the grace and favour of his Maker, upon condition of his perseverance in this state of innocency and obedience. Of this he might eat and live. Christ is now to us the tree of life (Re 2:7, 22:2), and the bread of life, Joh 6:48, 53.

[2.] There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so called, not because it had any virtue in it to beget or increase useful knowledge (surely then it would not have been forbidden), but, First, Because there was an express positive revelation of the will of God concerning this tree, so that by it he might know moral good and evil. What is good? It is good not to eat of this tree. What is evil? It is evil to eat of this tree. The distinction between all other moral good and evil was written in the heart of man by nature; but this, which resulted from a positive law, was written upon this tree. Secondly, Because, in the event, it proved to give Adam an experimental knowledge of good by the loss of it and of evil by the sense of it. As the covenant of grace has in it, not only Believe and be saved, but also, Believe not and be damned (Mk 16:16), so the covenant of innocency had in it, not only "Do this and live," which was sealed and confirmed by the tree of life, but, "Fail and die," which Adam was assured of by this other tree: "Touch it at your peril;" so that, in these two trees, God set

before him good and evil, the blessing and the curse, De 30:19. These two trees were as two sacraments.

10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from
thence it was parted, and became into four heads.
11 The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the
whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold;
12 and the gold of that land is good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx
stone.
13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same *is* it that
compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.
14 And the name of the third river *is* Hiddekel: that *is* it which goeth
toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river *is* Euphrates.
15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of
Eden to dress it and to keep it.

The placing of man in this paradise of delight, Ge 2:15, where observe,

1. How God put him in possession of it: The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden; so Ge 2:8, 15.

Note here,

(1.) Man was made out of paradise; for, after God had formed him, he put him into the garden: he was made of common clay, not of paradise-dust. He lived out of Eden before he lived in it that he might see that all the comforts of his paradise-state were owing to God's free grace. He could not plead a tenant-right to the garden, for he was not born upon the premises, nor had anything but what he received; all boasting was hereby forever excluded.

(2.) The same God that was the author of his being was the author of his bliss; the same hand that made him a living soul planted the tree of life for him, and settled him by it. He that made us is alone able to make us happy; he that is the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits, he, and none but he, can effectually provide for the felicity of both.

(3.) It adds much to the comfort of any condition if we have plainly seen God going before us and putting us into it. If we have not forced providence, but followed it, and taken the hints of direction it has given us, we may hope to find a paradise where otherwise we could not have expected it. See Ps 47:4.

2. How God appointed him business and employment. He put him there, not like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein, but to dress the garden and to keep it. Paradise itself was not a place of exemption from work. Note, here,

(1.) We were none of us sent into the world to be idle. He that made us these souls and bodies has given us something to work with; and he that gave us this earth for our habitation has made us something to work on. If a high extraction, or a great estate, or a large dominion, or perfect innocency, or a genius for pure contemplation, or a small family, could have given a man a writ of ease, Adam would not have been set to work; but he that gave us being has given us business, to serve him and our generation, and to work out our salvation: if we do not mind our business, we are unworthy of our being and maintenance.

(2.) Secular employments will vary well consist with a state of innocency and a life of communion with God. The sons and heirs of heaven, while they are here in this world, have something to do about this earth, which must have its share of their time and thoughts; and, if they do it with an eye to God, they are as truly serving him in it as when they are upon their knees.

(3.) The husbandman's calling is an ancient and honourable calling; it was needful even in paradise. The garden of Eden, though it needed not to be weeded (for thorns and thistles were not yet a nuisance), yet must be dressed and kept. Nature, even in its primitive state, left room for the improvements of art and industry. It was a calling fit for a state of innocency, making

provision for life, not for lust, and giving man an opportunity of admiring the Creator and acknowledging his providence: while his hands were about his trees, his heart might be with his God.

(4.) There is a true pleasure in the business which God calls us to, and employs us in. Adam's work was so far from being an allay that it was an addition to the pleasures of paradise; he could not have been happy if he had been idle: it is still a law, He that will not work has no right to eat, 2Th 3:10, Pr 27:23.

3. The command which God gave to man in innocency, and the covenant he then took him into. Hitherto we have seen God as man's powerful Creator and his bountiful Benefactor; now he appears as his Ruler and Lawgiver. God put him into the garden of Eden, not to live there as he might list, but to be under government. As we are not allowed to be idle in this world, and to do nothing, so we are not allowed to be willful, and do what we please. When God had given man a dominion over the creatures, he would let him know that still he himself was under the government of his Creator.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

Observe here,

I. God's authority over man, as a creature that had reason and freedom of will. The Lord God commanded the man, who stood now as a public person, the father and representative of all mankind, to receive law, as he had lately received a nature, for himself and all his. God commanded all the creatures, according to their capacity; the settled course of nature is a law, Ps 148:6, Ps 104:9. The brute-creatures have their respective instincts; but man was made capable of performing reasonable service, and therefore received, not only the command of a Creator, but the command of a Prince and Master. Though Adam was a very great man, a very good man, and a very happy man, yet the Lord God commanded him; and the command was no disparagement to his greatness, no

reproach to his goodness, nor any diminution at all to his happiness. Let us acknowledge God's right to rule us, and our own obligations to be ruled by him; and never allow any will of our own in contradiction to, or competition with, the holy will of God.

II The particular act of this authority, in prescribing to him what he should do, and upon what terms he should stand with his Creator. Here is,

1. A confirmation of his present happiness to him, in that grant, Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat. This was not only an allowance of liberty to him, in taking the delicious fruits of paradise, as a recompence for his care and pains in dressing and keeping it (1Co 9:7,10), but it was, withal, an assurance of life to him, immortal life, upon his obedience. For the tree of life being put in the midst of the garden (Ge 2:9), as the heart and soul of it, doubtless God had an eye to that especially in this grant; and therefore when, upon his revolt, this grant is recalled, no notice is taken of any tree of the garden as prohibited to him, except the tree of life (Ge 3:22), of which it is there said he might have eaten and lived for ever, that is, never died, nor ever lost his happiness. "Continue holy as thou art, in conformity to thy Creator's will, and thou shalt continue happy as thou art in the enjoyment of thy Creator's favour, either in this paradise or in a better." Thus, upon condition of perfect personal and perpetual obedience, Adam was sure of paradise to himself and his heirs forever.

2. A trial of his obedience, upon pain of the forfeiture of all his happiness: "But of the other tree which stood very near the tree of life (for they are both said to be in the midst of the garden), and which was called the tree of knowledge, in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" as if he had said, "Know, Adam, that thou art now upon thy good behaviour, thou art put into paradise upon trial; be observant, be obedient,

and thou art made for ever; otherwise thou wilt be as miserable as now thou art happy." Here,

(1.) Adam is threatened with death in case of disobedience: Dying thou shalt die, denoting a sure and dreadful sentence, as, in the former part of this covenant, eating thou shalt eat, denotes a free and full grant. Observe

[1.] Even Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening; fear is one of the handles of the soul, by which it is taken hold of and held. If he then needed this hedge, much more do we now.

[2.] The penalty threatened is death: Thou shalt die, that is, "Thou shalt be debarred from the tree of life, and all the good that is signified by it, all the happiness thou hast, either in possession or prospect; and thou shalt become liable to death, and all the miseries that preface it and attend it."

[3.] This was threatened as the immediate consequence of sin: In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die, that is, "Thou shalt become mortal and capable of dying; the grant of immortality shall be recalled, and that defence shall depart from thee. Thou shalt become obnoxious to death, like a condemned malefactor that is dead in the law" (only, because Adam was to be the root of mankind, he was reprieved); "nay, the harbingers and forerunners of death shall immediately seize thee, and thy life, thenceforward, shall be a dying life: and this, surely; it is a settled rule, the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

(2.) Adam is tried with a positive law, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Now it was very proper to make trial of his obedience by such a command as this,

[1.] Because the reason of it is fetched purely from the will of the Law-maker. Adam had in his nature an aversion to that which was evil in itself, and therefore he is tried in a thing

which was evil only because it was forbidden; and, being in a small thing, it was the more fit to prove his obedience by.

[2.] Because the restraint of it is laid upon the desires of the flesh and of the mind, which, in the corrupt nature of man, are the two great fountains of sin. This prohibition checked both his appetite towards sensitive delights and his ambitions of curious knowledge, that his body might be ruled by his soul and his soul by his God.

Thus easy, thus happy, was man in a state of innocency, having all that heart could wish to make him so. How good was God to him! How many favours did he load him with! How easy were the laws he gave him! How kind the covenant he made with him! Yet man, being in honour, understood not his own interest, but soon became as the beasts that perish.

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat
of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
18 And the Lord God said, *it is* not good that the man should be
alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

Here we have, an instance of the Creator's care of man and his fatherly concern for his comfort, Ge 2:18. Though God had let him know that he was a subject, by giving him a command, (Ge 2:16,17), yet here he lets him know also, for his encouragement in his obedience, that he was a friend, and a favourite, and one whose satisfaction he was tender of. Observe,

1. How God graciously pitied his solitude: It is not good that man, this man, should be alone. Though there was an upper world of angels and a lower world of brutes, and he between them, yet there being none of the same nature and rank of beings with himself, none that he could converse familiarly with, he might be truly said to be alone. Now he that made him knew both him and what was good for him, better than he did himself, and he said, "It is not good that he should continue thus alone."

(1.) It is not for his comfort; for man is a sociable creature. It is a pleasure to him to exchange knowledge and affection with those of his own kind, to inform and to be informed, to love and to be beloved. What God here says of the first man Solomon says of all men (Ec 4:9, 10, &c.), that two are better than one, and woe to him that is alone. If there were but one man in the world, what a melancholy man must he needs be! Perfect solitude would turn a paradise into a desert, and a palace into a dungeon. Those therefore are foolish who are selfish and would be place alone in the earth.

(2.) It is not for the increase and continuance of his kind. God could have made a world of men at first, to replenish the earth, as he replenished heaven with a world of angels: but the place would have been too strait for the designed number of men to live together at once; therefore God saw fit to make up that number by a succession of generations, which, as God had formed man, must be from two, and those male and female; one will be ever one.

2. How God graciously resolved to provide society for him. The result of this reasoning concerning him was this kind resolution, I will make a help-meet for him; a help like him (so some read it), one of the same nature and the same rank of beings; a help near him (so others), one to cohabit with him, and to be always at hand; a help before him (so others), one that he should look upon with pleasure and delight. Note hence,

(1.) In our best state in this world we have need of one another's help; for we are members one of another, and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, 1Co 12:21. We must therefore be glad to receive help from others, and give help to others, as there is occasion.

(2.) It is God only who perfectly knows our wants, and is perfectly able to supply them all, Php 4:19. In him alone our help is, and from him are all our helpers.

(3.) A suitable wife is a help-meet, and is from the Lord. The relation is then likely to be comfortable when meetness directs and

determines the choice, and mutual helpfulness is the constant care and endeavour, 1Co 7:33, 34.

(4.) Family-society, if it is agreeable, is a redress sufficient for the grievance of solitude. He that has a good God, a good heart, and a good wife, to converse with, and yet complains he wants conversation, would not have been easy and content in paradise; for Adam himself had no more: yet, even before Eve was created, we do not find that he complained of being alone, knowing that he was not alone, for the Father was with him. Those that are most satisfied in God and his favour are in the best way, and in the best frame, to receive the good things of this life, and shall be sure of them, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good.

19 And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature that *was* the name thereof.

An instance of the creatures' subjection to man, and his dominion over them (Ge 2:19,20): Every beast of the field and every fowl of the air God brought to Adam, either by the ministry of angels, or by a special instinct, directing them to come to man as their master, teaching the ox betimes to know his owner. Thus God gave man livery and seisin of the fair estate he had granted him, and put him in possession of his dominion over the creatures. God brought them to him, that he might name them, and so might give,

1. A proof of his knowledge, as a creature endued with the faculties both of reason and speech, and so taught more than the beasts of the earth and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, Job 35:11. And,

2. A proof of his power. It is an act of authority to impose names (Da 1:7), and of subjection to receive them. The inferior creatures did now, as it were, do homage to their prince at his inauguration, and swear fealty and allegiance to him. If Adam had continued faithful to his God, we may suppose the creatures themselves would so well have known

and remembered the names Adam now gave them as to have come at his call, at any time, and answered to their names. God gave names to the day and night, to the firmament, to the earth, and to the sea; and he calleth the stars by their names, to show that he is the supreme Lord of these. But he gave Adam leave to name the beasts and fowls, as their subordinate lord; for, having made him in his own image, he thus put some of his honour upon him.

An instance of the creatures' insufficiency to be a happiness for man: But (among them all) for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. Some make these to be the words of Adam himself; observing all the creatures come to him by couples to be named, he thus intimates his desire to his Maker:--"Lord, these have all helps meet for them; but what shall I do? Here is never a one for me." It is rather God's judgment upon the review. He brought them all together, to see if there were ever a suitable match for Adam in any of the numerous families of the inferior creatures; but there was none. Observe here, 1 The dignity and excellency of the human nature. On earth there was not it's like, nor its peer to be found among all visible creatures; they were all looked over, but it could not be matched among them all. 2 The vanity of this world and the things of it; put them all together, and they will not make a help-meet for man. They will not suit the nature of his soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy it's just desires, nor run parallel with its never-failing duration. God creates a new thing to be a help-meet for man--not so much the woman as the seed of the woman.

20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him.

21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

deep sleep—probably an ecstasy or trance like that of the prophets, when they had visions and revelations of the Lord,

for the whole scene was probably visible to the mental eye of Adam, and hence his rapturous exclamation.

The making of the woman, to be a help-meet for Adam. This was done upon the sixth day, as was also the placing of Adam in paradise, though it is here mentioned after an account of the seventh day's rest; but what was said in general (Ge 1:27), that God made man male and female, is more distinctly related here. Observe,

1. That Adam was first formed, then Eve (1Ti 2:13), and she was made of the man, and for the man (1Co 11:8,9), all which are urged there as reasons for the humility, modesty, silence, and submissiveness, of that sex in general, and particularly the subjection and reverence which wives owe to their own husbands. Yet man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made after Adam, and out of him, puts an honour upon that sex, as the glory of the man, 1Co 11:7. If man is the head, she is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth.

2. That Adam slept while his wife was in making, that no room might be left to imagine that he had herein directed the Spirit of the Lord, or been his counsellor, Isa 40:13. He had been made sensible of his want of a meet help; but, God having undertaken to provide him one, he does not afflict himself with any care about it, but lies down and sleeps sweetly, as one that had cast all his care on God, with a cheerful resignation of himself and all his affairs to his Maker's will and wisdom. Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide when and whom he pleases. If we graciously rest in God, God will graciously work for us and work all for good.

3. That God caused a sleep to fall on Adam, and made it a deep sleep, that so the opening of his side might be no grievance to him; while he knows no sin, God will take care he shall feel

no pain. When God, by his providence, does that to his people which is grievous to flesh and blood, he not only consults their happiness in the issue, but by his grace he can so quiet and compose their spirits as to make them easy under the sharpest operations.

4. That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Adam lost a rib, and without any diminution to his strength or comeliness (for, doubtless, the flesh was closed without a scar); but in lieu thereof he had a help meet for him, which abundantly made up his loss: what God takes away from his people he will, one way or other, restore with advantage. In this (as in many other things) Adam was a figure of him that was to come; for out of the side of Christ, the second Adam, his spouse the church was formed, when he slept the sleep, the deep sleep, of death upon the cross, in order to which his side was opened, and there came out blood and water, blood to purchase his church and water to purify it to himself. See Eph 5:25, 26.

22 And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

The marriage of the woman to Adam. Marriage is honourable, but this surely was the most honourable marriage that ever was, in which God himself had all along an immediate hand. Marriages (they say) are made in heaven: we are sure this was, for the man, the woman, the match, were all God's own work; he, by his power, made them both, and now, by his ordinance, made them one. This was a marriage made in perfect innocency, and so was never any marriage since,

1. God, as her Father, brought the woman to the man, as his second self, and a help-meet for him. When he had made her, he did not leave her to her own disposal; no, she was his child, and she must not marry without his consent. Those are likely to settle to their comfort who by faith and prayer, and a humble

dependence upon providence, put themselves under a divine conduct. That wife that is of God's making by special grace, and of God's bringing by special providence, is likely to prove a help-meet for a man.

2. From God, as his Father, Adam received her (Ge 2:23): "This is now bone of my bone. Now I have what I wanted, and which all the creatures could not furnish me with, a help meet for me." God's gifts to us are to be received with a humble thankful acknowledgment of his wisdom in suiting them to us, and his favour in bestowing them on us. Probably it was revealed to Adam in a vision, when he was asleep, that this lovely creature, now presented to him, was a piece of himself, and was to be his companion and the wife of his covenant. Hence some have fetched an argument to prove that glorified saints in the heavenly paradise shall know one another. Further, in token of his acceptance of her, he gave her a name, not peculiar to her, but common to her sex: She shall be called woman, Isha, a she-man, differing from man in sex only, not in nature--made of man, and joined to man.

23 And Adam said, this *is* now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
she shall be called Woman [*Heb.* Isha], because she was taken out of
Man [*heb.* Ish].

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall
cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

The institution of the ordinance of marriage, and the settling of the law of it, Ge 2:24. The Sabbath and marriage were two ordinances instituted in innocency, the former for the preservation of the church, the latter for the preservation of the world of mankind. It appears (by Mt 19:4, 5) that it was God himself who said here, "A man must leave all his relations, to cleave to his wife;" but whether he spoke it by Moses, the penman, or by Adam (who spoke, Ge 2:23), is uncertain. It should seem, they are the words of Adam, in God's name, laying down this law to all his posterity.

1. See here how great the virtue of a divine ordinance is; the bonds of it are stronger even than those of nature. To whom

can we be more firmly bound than the fathers that begat us and the mothers that bore us? Yet the son must quit them, to be joined to his wife, and the daughter forget them, to cleave to her husband, Ps 45:10, 11.

2. See how necessary it is that children should take their parents' consent along with them in their marriage, and how unjust those are to their parents, as well as undutiful, who marry without it; for they rob them of their right to them, and interest in them, and alienate it to another, fraudulently and unnaturally.

3. See what need there is both of prudence and prayer in the choice of this relation, which is so near and so lasting. That had need be well done which is to be done for life.

4. See how firm the bond of marriage is, not to be divided and weakened by having many wives (Mal 2:15) nor to be broken or cut off by divorce, for any cause but fornication, or voluntary desertion.

5. See how dear the affection ought to be between husband and wife, such as there is to our own bodies, Eph 5:28. These two are one flesh; let them then be one soul.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

An evidence of the purity and innocency of that state wherein our first parents were created, Ge 2:25. They were both naked. They needed no clothes for defense against cold nor heat, for neither could be injurious to them. They needed none for ornament. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Nay, they needed none for decency; they were naked, and had no reason to be ashamed. They knew not what shame was, so the Chaldee reads it. Blushing is now the colour of virtue, but it was not then the colour of innocency. Those that had no sin in their conscience might well have no shame in their faces, though they had no clothes to their backs.

Genesis -3

The story of this chapter is perhaps as sad a story (all things considered) as any we have in all the Bible. In the foregoing chapters we have had the pleasant view of the holiness and happiness of our first parents, the grace and favour of God, and the peace and beauty of the whole creation, all good, very good; but here the scene is altered. We have here an account of the sin and misery of our first parents, the wrath and curse of God against them, the peace of the creation disturbed, and its beauty stained and sullied, all bad, very bad. "How has the gold become dim, and the finest gold changed!" O that our hearts were deeply affected with this record! For we are all nearly concerned in it; let it not be to us as a tale that is told. The general contents of this chapter we have (Ro 5:12), "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." More particularly, we have here,

I The innocent tempted, Ge 3:1-5.

II The tempted transgressing, Ge 3:6-8.

III. The transgressors arraigned, Ge 3:9, 10.

IV. Upon their arraignment, convicted, Ge 3:11-13.

V. Upon their conviction, sentenced, Ge 3:14-19.

VI. After sentence, reprieved, Ge 3:20, 21.

VII. Notwithstanding their reprieve, execution in part done, Ge 3:22-24.

And, were it not for the gracious intimations here given of redemption by the promised seed, they, and all their degenerate guilty race, would have been left to endless despair.

Man's Disobedience

1 Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

We have here an account of the temptation with which Satan assaulted our first parents, to draw them into sin, and which proved fatal to them. Here observe,

I The tempter, and that was the devil, in the shape and likeness of a serpent.

1. It is certain it was the devil that beguiled Eve. The devil and Satan is the old serpent (Re 12:9), a malignant spirit, by creation an angel of light and an immediate attendant upon God's throne, but by sin become an apostate from his first state and a rebel against God's crown and dignity. Multitudes of the angels fell; but this that attacked our first parents was surely the prince of the devils, the ring-leader in the rebellion: no sooner was he a sinner than he was a Satan, no sooner a traitor than a tempter, as one enraged against God and his glory and envious of man and his happiness. He knew he could not destroy man but by debauching him. Balaam could not curse Israel, but he could tempt Israel, Re 2:14. The game therefore which Satan had to play was to draw our first parents to sin, and so to separate between them and their God. Thus the devil was, from the beginning, a murderer, and the great mischief-maker. The whole race of mankind had here, as it were, but one neck, and at that Satan struck. The adversary and enemy is that wicked one.

2. It was the devil in the likeness of a serpent. Whether it was only the visible shape and appearance of a serpent (as some think those were of which we read, Ex 7:12), or whether it was a real living serpent, actuated and possessed by the devil, is not certain: by God's permission it might be either. The devil chose to act his part in a serpent,

(1.) Because it is a specious creature, has a spotted dappled skin, and then went erect. Perhaps it was a flying serpent, which seemed to come from on high as a messenger from the upper world, one of the seraphim; for the fiery serpents were flying, Isa 14:29. Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in gay fine colours that are but skin-deep, and seems to come from above; for Satan can seem an angel of light. And,

(2.) Because it is a subtle creature; this is here taken notice of. Many instances are given of the subtlety of the serpent, both to do mischief and to secure himself in it when it is done. We are directed to be wise as serpents. But this serpent, as actuated by the devil, was no doubt more subtle than any other; for the devil, though he has lost the sanctity, retains the sagacity of an angel, and is wise to do evil. He knew of more advantage by making use of the serpent than we are aware of. Observe, There is not anything by which the devil serves himself and his own interest more than by unsanctified subtlety. What Eve thought of this serpent speaking to her we are not likely to tell, when I believe she herself did not know what to think of it. At first, perhaps, she supposed it might be a good angel, and yet, afterwards, she might suspect something amiss. It is remarkable that the Gentile idolaters did many of them worship the devil in the shape and form of a serpent, thereby avowing their adherence to that apostate spirit, and wearing his colours.

II The person tempted was the woman, now alone, and at a distance from her husband, but near the forbidden tree. It was the devil's subtlety,

1. To assault the weaker vessel with his temptations. Though perfect in her kind, yet we may suppose her inferior to Adam in knowledge, and strength, and presence of mind. Some think Eve received the command, not immediately from God, but at

second hand by her husband, and therefore might the more easily be persuaded to discredit it.

2. It was his policy to enter into discourse with her when she was alone. Had she kept close to the side out of which she was lately taken, she would not have been so much exposed. There are many temptations, to which solitude gives great advantage; but the communion of saints contributes much to their strength and safety. 3. He took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree, and probably gazing upon the fruit of it, only to satisfy her curiosity. Those that would not eat the forbidden fruit must not come near the forbidden tree. Avoid it, pass not by it, Pr 4:15. 4. Satan tempted Eve that by her he might tempt Adam; so he tempted Job by his wife, and Christ by Peter. It is his policy to send temptations by unsuspected hands, and theirs that have most interest in us and influence upon us.

III. The temptation itself, and the artificial management of it. We are often, in scripture, told of our danger by the temptations of Satan, his devices (2Co 2:11), his depths (Re 2:24), his wiles, Eph 6:11. The greatest instances we have of them are in his tempting of the two Adams, here, and Mt 4:1-11. In this he prevailed, but in that he was baffled. What he spoke to them, of whom he had no hold by any corruption in them, he speaks in us by our own deceitful hearts and their carnal reasonings; this makes his assaults on us less discernible, but not less dangerous. That which the devil aimed at was to persuade Eve to cut forbidden fruit; and, to do this, he took the same method that he does still. He questioned whether it was a sin or no, Ge 3:1. He denied that there was any danger in it, Ge 3:4. He suggested much advantage by it, Ge 3:5. And these are his common topics.

1. He questioned whether it was a sin or no to eat of this tree, and whether really the fruit of it was forbidden. Observe,

He said to the woman, Yea, hath God said, You shall not eat? The first word intimated something said before, introducing this, and with which it is connected, perhaps some discourse Eve had with herself, which Satan took hold of, and grafted this question upon. In the chain of thoughts one thing strangely brings in another, and perhaps something bad at last. Observe here,

[1.] He does not discover his design at first, but puts a question which seemed innocent: "I hear a piece of news, pray is it true? Has God forbidden you to eat of this tree?" Thus he would begin a discourse, and draw her into a parley. Those that would be safe have need to be suspicious, and shy of talking with the tempter.

[2.] He quotes the command fallaciously, as if it were a prohibition, not only of that tree, but of all. God had said, Of every tree you may eat, except one. He, by aggravating the exception, endeavours to invalidate the concession: Hath God said, You shall not eat of every tree? The divine law cannot be reproached unless it be first misrepresented.

[3.] He seems to speak it tauntingly, upbraiding the woman with her shyness of meddling with that tree; as if he had said, "You are so nice and cautious, and so very precise, because God has said, You shall not eat." The devil, as he is a liar, so he is a scoffer, from the beginning: and the scoffers of the last days are his children.

[4.] That which he aimed at in the first onset was to take off her sense of the obligation of the command. "Surely you are mistaken, it cannot be that God should tie you out from this tree; he would not do so unreasonable a thing." See here, That it is the subtlety of Satan to blemish the reputation of the divine law as uncertain or unreasonable, and so to draw people to sin; and that it is therefore our wisdom to keep up a a firm belief of, and a high respect for, the command of God. Has God said, "You shall not lie, nor take his name in vain, nor be

drunk," &c.? "Yes, I am sure he has, and it is well said, and by his grace I will abide by it, whatever the tempter suggests to the contrary."

Scofield:

The serpent The serpent, in his Edenic form, is not to be thought of as a writhing reptile. That is the effect of the curse Genesis 3:14. The creature which lent itself to Satan may well have been the most beautiful as was the most "subtle" of creatures less than man. Traces of that beauty remain despite the curse. Every movement of a serpent is graceful, and many species are beautifully coloured. In the serpent, Satan first appeared as "an angel of light" 2 Corinthians 11:14.

Jamieson Fausset Brown /JFB/ Bible Commentary:

The serpent—The fall of man was effected by the seductions of a serpent. That it was a real serpent is evident from the plain and artless style of the history and from the many allusions made to it in the New Testament. But the material serpent was the instrument or tool of a higher agent, Satan or the devil, to whom the sacred writers apply from this incident the reproachful name of "the dragon, that old serpent" [Re 20:2]. Though Moses makes no mention of this wicked spirit—giving only the history of the visible world—yet in the fuller discoveries of the Gospel, it is distinctly intimated that Satan was the author of the plot (Joh 8:44; 2Co 11:3; 1Jo 3:8; 1Ti 2:14; Re 20:2). More subtile—Serpents are proverbial for wisdom (Mt 10:16). But these reptiles were at first, probably, far superior in beauty as well as in sagacity to what they are in their present state. He said—There being in the pure bosoms of the first pair no principle of evil to work upon, a solicitation to sin could come only from "without," as in the analogous case of Jesus Christ (Mt 4:3); and as the tempter could not assume the human form, there being only Adam and Eve in the world, the agency of an inferior creature had to be

employed. The dragon-serpent [BOCHART] seemed the fittest for the vile purpose; and the devil was allowed by Him who permitted the trial, to bring articulate sounds from its mouth. unto the woman—the object of attack, from his knowledge of her frailty, of her having been but a short time in the world, her limited experience of the animal tribes, and, above all, her being alone, unfortified by the presence and counsels of her husband. Though sinless and holy, she was a free agent, liable to be tempted and seduced. Yea, hath God said?—Is it true that He has restricted you in using the fruits of this delightful place? This is not like one so good and kind. Surely there is some mistake. He insinuated a doubt as to her sense of the divine will and appeared as an angel of light (2Co 11:14), offering to lead her to the true interpretation. It was evidently from her regarding him as specially sent on that errand, that, instead of being startled by the reptile's speaking, she received him as a heavenly messenger.

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

In answer to this question the woman gives him a plain and full account of the law they were under, Ge 3:2, 3. Here observe,

[1.] It was her weakness to enter into discourse with the serpent. She might have perceived by his question that he had no good design, and should therefore have started back with a Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me. But her curiosity, and perhaps her surprise, to hear a serpent speak, led her into further talk with him.

Note, It is a dangerous thing to treat with a temptation, which ought at first to be rejected with disdain and abhorrence. The garrison that sounds a parley is not far from being surrendered. Those that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. See Pr 14:7, 19:27.

[2.] It was her wisdom to take notice of the liberty God had granted them, in answer to his sly insinuation, as if God has

put them into paradise only to tantalize them with the sight of fair but forbidden fruits. "Yea," says she, "we may eat of the fruit of the trees, thanks to our Maker, we have plenty and variety enough allowed us." Note, To prevent our being uneasy at the restraints of religion, it is good often to take a view of the liberties and comforts of it.

[3.] It was an instance of her resolution that she adhered to the command, and faithfully repeated it, as of unquestionable certainty: "God hath said, I am confident he hath said it, You shall not eat of the fruit of this tree;" and that which she adds, Neither shall you touch it, seems to have been with a good intention, not (as some think) tacitly to reflect upon the command as too strict (Touch not, taste not and handle not), but to make a fence about it: "We must not eat, therefore we will not touch. It is forbidden in the highest degree, and the authority of the prohibition is sacred to us."

[4.] She seems a little to waver about the threatening, and is not so particular and faithful in the repetition of that as of the precept. God has said, In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die; all she makes of that is, Lest you die. Note, Wavering faith and wavering resolutions give great advantage to the tempter. In doubting God's warnings she yielded to Satan.

the woman said, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden—In her answer, Eve extolled the large extent of liberty they enjoyed in ranging at will amongst all the trees—one only excepted, with respect to which, she declared there was no doubt, either of the prohibition or the penalty. But there is reason to think that she had already received an injurious impression; for in using the words "lest ye die," instead of "ye shall surely die" [Ge 2:17], she spoke as if the tree had been forbidden because of some poisonous quality of its fruit. The tempter, perceiving this, became bolder in his assertions.

3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

He denies that there was any danger in it, insisting that, though it might be the transgressing of a precept, yet it would not be the incurring of a penalty: You shall not surely die, Ge 3:4. "You shall not dying die," so the word is, in direct contradiction to what God had said. Either,

(1.) "It is not certain that you shall die," so some. "It is not so sure as you are made to believe it is." Thus Satan endeavours to shake that which he cannot overthrow, and invalidates the force of divine threatenings by questioning the certainty of them; and, when once it is supposed possible that there may be falsehood or fallacy in any word of God, a door is then opened to downright infidelity. Satan teaches men first to doubt and then to deny; he makes them sceptics first, and so by degrees makes them atheists. Or,

(2.) "It is certain you shall not die," so others. He avers his contradiction with the same phrase of assurance that God had used in ratifying the threatening. He began to call the precept in question (Ge 3:1), but, finding that the woman adhered to that, he quitted that battery, and made his second onset upon the threatening, where he perceived her to waver; for he is quick to spy all advantages, and to attack the wall where it is weakest: You shall not surely die. This was a lie, a downright lie; for,

[1.] It was contrary to the word of God, which we are sure is true. See 1Jo 2:21, 27. It was such a lie as gave the lie to God himself.

[2.] It was contrary to his own knowledge. When he told them there was no danger in disobedience and rebellion he said that which he knew, by woeful experience, to be false. He had broken the law of his creation, and had found, to his cost, that he could not prosper in it; and yet he tells our first parents they shall not die. He concealed his own misery, that he might draw them into the like: thus he still deceives sinners into their own ruin. He tells them that, though they sin, they shall not die; and

gains credit rather than God, who tells them, The wages of sin is death. Note, Hope of impunity is a great support to all iniquity, and impenitency in it. I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, De 29:19.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die:
5 for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

He promises them advantage by it, Ge 3:5. Here he follows his blow, and it was a blow at the root, a fatal blow to the tree we are branches of. He not only would undertake that they should be no losers by it, thus binding himself to save them from harm; but (if they would be such fools as to venture upon the security of one that had himself become a bankrupt) he undertakes they shall be gainers by it, unspeakable gainers. He could not have persuaded them to run the hazard of ruining themselves if he had not suggested to them a great probability of bettering themselves.

(1.) He insinuates to them the great improvements they would make by eating of this fruit. And he suits the temptation to the pure state they were now in, proposing to them, not any carnal pleasures or gratifications, but intellectual delights and satisfactions. These were the baits with which he covered his hook.

[1.] "Your eyes shall be opened; you shall have much more of the power and pleasure of contemplation than now you have; you shall fetch a larger compass in your intellectual views, and see further into things than now you do." He speaks as if now they were but dim-sighted, and short-sighted, in comparison of what they would be then.

[2.] "You shall be as gods, as Elohim, mighty gods; not only omniscient, but omnipotent too;" or, "You shall be as God himself, equal to him, rivals with him; you shall be sovereigns and no longer subjects, self-sufficient and no longer dependent." A most absurd suggestion! As if it were possible

for creatures of yesterday to be like their Creator that was from eternity.

[3.] "You shall know good and evil, that is, everything that is desirable to be known." To support this part of the temptation, he abuses the name given to this tree: it was intended to teach the practical knowledge of good and evil, that is, of duty and disobedience; and it would prove the experimental knowledge of good and evil, that is, of happiness and misery. In these senses, the name of the tree was a warning to them not to eat of it; but he perverts the sense of it, and wrests it to their destruction, as if this tree would give them a speculative notional knowledge of the natures, kinds, and originals, of good and evil. And,

[4.] All this presently: "In the day you eat thereof you will find a sudden and immediate change for the better." Now in all these insinuations he aims to beget in them, First, Discontent with their present state, as if it were not so good as it might be, and should be. Note, No condition will of itself bring contentment, unless the mind be brought to it. Adam was not easy, no, not in paradise, nor the angels in their first state, Jude 1:6. Secondly, Ambition of preferment, as if they were fit to be gods. Satan had ruined himself by desiring to be like the Most High (Isa 14:14), and therefore seeks to infect our first parents with the same desire, that he might ruin them too.

(2.) He insinuates to them that God had no good design upon them, in forbidding them this fruit: "For God doth know how much it will advance you; and therefore, in envy and ill-will to you, he hath forbidden it:" as if he durst not let them eat of that tree because then they would know their own strength, and would not continue in an inferior state, but be able to cope with him; or as if he grudged them the honour and happiness to which their eating of that tree would prefer them. Now,

[1.] This was a great affront to God, and the highest indignity that could be done him, a reproach to his power, as if he feared

his creatures, and much more a reproach to his goodness, as if he hated the work of his own hands and would not have those whom he has made to be made happy. Shall the best of men think it strange to be misrepresented and evil spoken of, when God himself is so? Satan, as he is the accuser of the brethren before God, so he accuses God before the brethren; thus he sows discord, and is the father of those that do so.

[2.] It was a most dangerous snare to our first parents, as it tended to alienate their affections from God, and so to withdraw them from their allegiance to him. Thus still the devil draws people into his interest by suggesting to them hard thoughts of God, and false hopes of benefit and advantage by sin. Let us therefore, in opposition to him, always think well of God as the best good, and think ill of sin as the worst of evils: thus let us resist the devil, and he will flee from us.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Here we see what Eve's parley with the tempter ended in. Satan, at length, gains his point, and the strong-hold is taken by his wiles. God tried the obedience of our first parents by forbidding them the tree of knowledge, and Satan does, as it were, join issue with God, and in that very thing undertakes to seduce them into a transgression; and here we find how he prevailed, God permitting it for wise and holy ends.

I. We have here the inducements that moved them to transgress. The woman, being deceived by the tempter's artful management, was ringleader in the transgression, 1Ti 2:14. She was first in the fault; and it was the result of her consideration, or rather her inconsideration.

1. She saw no harm in this tree, more than in any of the rest. It was said of all the rest of the fruit-trees with which the garden of Eden was planted that they were pleasant to the sight, and good for food, Ge 2:9. Now, in her eye, this was like all the

rest. It seemed as good for food as any of them, and she saw nothing in the colour of its fruit that threatened death or danger; it was as pleasant to the sight as any of them, and therefore, "What hurt could it do them? Why should this be forbidden them rather than any of the rest?"

Note, When there is thought to be no more harm in forbidden fruit than in other fruit sin lies at the door, and Satan soon carries the day. Nay, perhaps it seemed to her to be better for food, more grateful to the taste, and more nourishing to the body, than any of the rest, and to her eye it was more pleasant than any. We are often betrayed into snares by an inordinate desire to have our senses gratified. Or, if it had nothing in it more inviting than the rest, yet it was the more coveted because it was prohibited. Whether it was so in her or not, we find that in us (that is, in our flesh, in our corrupt nature) there dwells a strange spirit of contradiction. Nitimur in vetitum--We desire what is prohibited.

2. She imagined more virtue in this tree than in any of the rest, that it was a tree not only not to be dreaded, but to be desired to make one wise, and therein excelling all the rest of the trees. This she saw, that is, she perceived and understood it by what the devil had said to her; and some think that she saw the serpent eat of that tree, and that he told her he thereby had gained the faculties of speech and reason, whence she inferred its power to make one wise, and was persuaded to think, "If it made a brute creature rational, why might it not make a rational creature divine?" See here how the desire of unnecessary knowledge, under the mistaken notion of wisdom, proves hurtful and destructive to many. Our first parents, who knew so much, did not know this--that they knew enough. Christ is a tree to be desired to make one wise, Col 2:3,1Co 1:30. Let us, by faith, feed upon him, that we may be wise to salvation. In the heavenly paradise, the tree of knowledge will not be a forbidden tree; for there we shall know as we are known. Let us therefore long to be there, and,

in the meantime, not exercise ourselves in things too high or too deep for us, nor covet to be wise above what is written.

II The steps of the transgression, not steps upward, but downward towards the pit--steps that take hold on hell.

1. She saw. She should have turned away her eyes from beholding vanity; but she enters into temptation, by looking with pleasure on the forbidden fruit. Observe, A great deal of sin comes in at the eyes. At these windows Satan throws in those fiery darts which pierce and poison the heart. The eye affects the heart with guilt as well as grief. Let us therefore, with holy Job, make a covenant with our eyes, not to look on that which we are in danger of lusting after, Pr 23:31, Mt 5:28. Let the fear of God be always to us for a covering of the eyes, Ge 20:16.

2. She took. It was her own act and deed. The devil did not take it, and put it into her mouth, whether she would or no; but she herself took it. Satan may tempt, but he cannot force; may persuade us to cast ourselves down, but he cannot cast us down, Mt 4:6. Eve's taking was stealing, like Achan's taking the accursed thing, taking that to which she had no right. Surely she took it with a trembling hand.

3. She did eat. Perhaps she did not intend, when she looked, to take, nor, when she took, to eat; but this was the result. Note, The way of sin is downhill; a man cannot stop himself when he will. The beginning of it is as the breaking forth of water, to which it is hard to say, "Hitherto thou shalt come and no further." Therefore it is our wisdom to suppress the first emotions of sin, and to leave it off before it be meddled with. Obsta principiis--Nip mischief in the bud.

4. She gave also to her husband with her. It is probable that he was not with her when she was tempted (surely, if he had, he would have interposed to prevent the sin), but came to her when she had eaten, and was prevailed upon by her to eat

likewise; for it is easier to learn that which is bad than to teach that which is good. She gave it to him, persuading him with the same arguments that the serpent had used with her, adding this to all the rest that she herself had eaten of it, and found it so far from being deadly that it was extremely pleasant and grateful. Stolen waters are sweet. She gave it to him, under colour of kindness--she would not eat these delicious morsels alone; but really it was the greatest unkindness she could do him. Or perhaps she gave it to him that, if it should prove hurtful, he might share with her in the misery, which indeed looks strangely unkind, and yet may, without difficulty, be supposed to enter into the heart of one that had eaten forbidden fruit. Note, Those that have themselves done ill are commonly willing to draw in others to do the same. As was the devil, so was Eve, no sooner a sinner than a tempter.

5. He did eat, overcome by his wife's importunity. It is needless to ask, "What would have been the consequence if Eve only had transgressed?" The wisdom of God, we are sure, would have decided the difficulty, according to equity; but, alas! The case was not so; Adam also did eat. "And what great harm if he did?" say the corrupt and carnal reasonings of a vain mind. What harm! Why, this act involved disbelief of God's word, together with confidence in the devil's, discontent with his present state, pride in his own merits, and ambition of the honour which comes not from God, envy at God's perfections, and indulgence of the appetites of the body. In neglecting the tree of life of which he was allowed to eat, and eating of the tree of knowledge which was forbidden, he plainly showed a contempt of the favours God had bestowed on him, and a preference given to those God did not see fit for him. He would be both his own carver and his own master, would have what he pleased and do what he pleased: his sin was, in one word, disobedience (Ro 5:19), disobedience to a plain, easy, and express command, which probably he knew to be a command of trial. He sinned against great knowledge, against many mercies, against light and love, the clearest light and the dearest love that ever sinner sinned against. He had no

corrupt nature within him to betray him; but had a freedom of will, not enslaved, and was in his full strength, not weakened or impaired. He turned aside quickly. Some think he fell the very day on which he was made; but I see not how to reconcile this with God's pronouncing all very good in the close of the day. Others suppose he fell on the Sabbath day: the better day the worse deed. However, it is certain that he kept his integrity but a very little while: being in honour, he continued not. But the greatest aggravation of his sin was that he involved all his posterity in sin and ruin by it. God having told him that his race should replenish the earth, surely he could not but know that he stood as a public person, and that his disobedience would be fatal to all his seed; and, if so, it was certainly both the greatest treachery and the greatest cruelty that ever was. The human nature being lodged entirely in our first parents, henceforward it could not but be transmitted from them under an attainder of guilt, a stain of dishonour, and an hereditary disease of sin and corruption. And can we say, then, that Adam's sin had but little harm in it?

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

The ultimate consequences of the transgression. Shame and fear seized the criminals, ipso facto--in the fact itself; these came into the world along with sin, and still attend it.

1. Shame seized them unseen, Ge 3:7, where observe,

(1.) The strong convictions they fell under, in their own bosoms: The eyes of them both were opened. It is not meant of the eyes of the body; these were open before, as appears by this that the sin came in at them. Jonathan's eyes were enlightened by eating forbidden fruit (1Sa 14:27), that is, he was refreshed and revived by it; but theirs were not so. Nor is it meant of any advances made hereby in true knowledge; but the eyes of their consciences were opened, their hearts smote them for what they had done. Now, when it was too late, they saw the folly of eating forbidden fruit. They saw the happiness

they had fallen from, and the misery they had fallen into. They saw a loving God provoked, his grace and favour forfeited, his likeness and image lost, dominion over the creatures gone. They saw their natures corrupted and depraved, and felt a disorder in their own spirits of which they had never before been conscious. They saw a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, and captivating them both to sin and wrath. They saw, as Balaam, when his eyes were opened (Nu 22:31), the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and perhaps they saw the serpent that had abused them insulting over them. The text tells us that they saw that they were naked, that is,

[1.] That they were stripped, deprived of all the honours and joys of their paradise-state, and exposed to all the miseries that might justly be expected from an angry God. They were disarmed; their defence had departed from them.

[2.] That they were shamed, forever shamed, before God and angels. They saw themselves disrobed of all their ornaments and ensigns of honour, degraded from their dignity and disgraced in the highest degree, laid open to the contempt and reproach of heaven, and earth, and their own consciences. Now see here, First, What a dishonour and disquietment sin is; it makes mischief wherever it is admitted, sets men against themselves disturbs their peace, and destroys all their comforts. Sooner or later, it will have shame, either the shame of true repentance, which ends in glory, or that shame and everlasting contempt to which the wicked shall rise at the great day. Sin is a reproach to any people. Secondly, What deceiver Satan is. He told our first parents, when he tempted them, that their eyes should be opened; and so they were, but not as they understood it; they were opened to their shame and grief, not to their honour nor advantage. Therefore, when he speaks fair, believe him not. The most malicious mischievous liars often excuse themselves with this that they only equivocate; but God will not so excuse them.

(2.) The sorry shift they made to palliate these convictions, and to arm themselves against them: They sewed, or platted, fig-leaves together; and to cover, at least, part of their shame from one another, they made themselves aprons. See here what is commonly the folly of those that have sinned.

[1.] That they are more solicitous to save their credit before men than to obtain their pardon from God; they are backward to confess their sin, and very desirous to conceal it, as much as may be. I have sinned, yet honour me.

[2.] That the excuses men make, to cover and extenuate their sins, are vain and frivolous. Like the aprons of fig-leaves, they make the matter never the better, but the worse; the shame, thus hidden, becomes the more shameful. Yet thus we are all apt to cover our transgressions as Adam, Job 31:33.

8 And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

Fear seized them immediately upon their eating the forbidden fruit, Ge 3:8. Observe here,

(1.) What was the cause and occasion of their fear: They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. It was the approach of the Judge that put them into a fright; and yet he came in such a manner as made it formidable only to guilty consciences. It is supposed that he came in a human shape, and that he who judged the world now was the same that shall judge the world at the last day, even that man whom God has ordained. He appeared to them now (it should seem) in no other similitude than that in which they had seen him when he put them into paradise; for he came to convince and humble them, not to amaze and terrify them. He came into the garden, not descending immediately from heaven in their view, as afterwards on mount Sinai (making either thick darkness his pavilion or the flaming fire his chariot), but he came into the garden, as one that was still willing to be

familiar with them. He came walking, not running, not riding upon the wings of the wind, but walking deliberately, as one slow to anger, teaching us, when we are ever so much provoked, not to be hot nor hasty, but to speak and act considerately and not rashly. He came in the cool of the day, not in the night, when all fears are doubly fearful, nor in the heat of day, for he came not in the heat of his anger. Fury is not in him, Isa 27:4. Nor did he come suddenly upon them; but they heard his voice at some distance, giving them notice of his coming, and probably it was a still small voice, like that in which he came to enquire after Elijah. Some think they heard him discoursing with himself concerning the sin of Adam, and the judgment now to be passed upon him, perhaps as he did concerning Israel, Ho 11:8, 9. How shall I give thee up? Or, rather, they heard him calling for them, and coming towards them.

(2.) What was the effect and evidence of their fear: They hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God--a sad change! Before they had sinned, if they had heard the voice of the Lord God coming towards them, they would have run to meet him, and with a humble joy welcomed his gracious visits. But, now that it was otherwise, God had become a terror to them, and then no marvel that they had become a terror to themselves, and were full of confusion. Their own consciences accused them, and set their sin before them in its proper colours. Their fig-leaves failed them, and would do them no service. God had come forth against them as an enemy, and the whole creation was at war with them; and as yet they knew not of any mediator between them and an angry God, so that nothing remained but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. In this fright they hid themselves among the bushes; having offended, they fled for the same. Knowing themselves guilty, they durst not stand a trial, but absconded, and fled from justice. See here,

[1.] The falsehood of the tempter, and the frauds and fallacies of his temptations. He promised them they should be safe, but

now they cannot so much as think themselves so; he said they should not die, and yet now they are forced to fly for their lives; he promised them they should be advanced, but they see themselves a based--never did they seem so little as now; he promised them they should be knowing, but they see themselves at a loss, and know not so much as where to hide themselves; he promised them they should be as gods, great, and bold, and daring, but they are as criminals discovered, trembling, pale, and anxious to escape: they would not be subjects, and so they are prisoners.

[2.] The folly of sinners, to think it either possible or desirable to hide themselves from God: can they conceal themselves from the Father of lights? Ps 139:7-13, &c.; Jer 23:24. Will they withdraw themselves from the fountain of life, who alone can give help and happiness? Jon 2:8.

[3.] The fear that attends sin. All that amazing fear of God's appearances, the accusations of conscience, the approaches of trouble, the assaults of inferior creatures, and the arrests of death, which is common among men, is the effect of sin. Adam and Eve, who were partners in the sin, were sharers in the shame and fear that attended it; and though hand joined in hand (hands so lately joined in marriage), yet could they not animate nor fortify one another: miserable comforters they had become to each other!

9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?

The startling question with which God pursued Adam and arrested him: Where art thou? Not as if God did not know where he was; but thus he would enter the process against him. "Come, where is this foolish man?" Some make it a bemoaning question: "Poor Adam, what has become of thee?" "Alas for thee!" (so some read it) "How art thou fallen, Lucifer, son of the morning! Thou that wast my friend and favourite, whom I had done so much for, and would have done so much more for; hast thou now forsaken me, and ruined thyself? Has it come to this?" It is rather an upbraiding

question, in order to his conviction and humiliation: Where art thou? Not, In what place? But, In what condition? "Is this all thou hast gotten by eating forbidden fruit? Thou that wouldest vie with me, dost thou now fly from me?" Note,

1. Those who by sin have gone astray from God should seriously consider where they are; they are afar off from all good, in the midst of their enemies, in bondage to Satan, and in the high road to utter ruin. This enquiry after Adam may be looked upon as a gracious pursuit, in kindness to him, and in order to his recovery. If God had not called to him, to reclaim him, his condition would have been as desperate as that of fallen angels; this lost sheep would have wandered endlessly, if the good Shepherd had not sought after him, to bring him back, and, in order to that, reminded him where he was, where he should not be, and where he could not be either happy or easy. Note,

2. If sinners will but consider where they are, they will not rest till they return to God.

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

The trembling answer which Adam gave to this question: I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, Ge 3:10. He does not own his guilt, and yet in effect confesses it by owning his shame and fear; but it is the common fault and folly of those that have done an ill thing, when they are questioned about it, to acknowledge no more than what is so manifest that they cannot deny it. Adam was afraid, because he was naked; not only unarmed, and therefore afraid to contend with God, but unclothed, and therefore afraid so much as to appear before him. We have reason to be afraid of approaching to God if we be not clothed and fenced with the righteousness of Christ, for nothing but this will be armour of proof and cover the shame of our nakedness. Let us therefore put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then draw near with humble boldness.

Apparently, a confession—the language of sorrow; but it was evasive—no signs of true humility and penitence—each tries to throw the blame on another. His hypocrisy appears in that he hid the cause of his nakedness, which was the transgression of God's commandment.

11 And he said, who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

We have here the offenders found guilty by their own confession, and yet endeavouring to excuse and extenuate their fault. They could not confess and justify what they had done, but they confess and palliate it. Observe,

How their confession was extorted from them. God put it to the man: Who told thee that thou wast naked? Ge 3:11. "How camest thou to be sensible of thy nakedness as thy shame?" Hast thou eaten of the forbidden tree? Note, Though God knows all our sins, yet he will know them from us, and requires from us an ingenuous confession of them; not that he may be informed, but that we may be humbled. In this examination, God reminds him of the command he had given him: "I commanded thee not to eat of it, I thy Maker, I thy Master, I thy benefactor; I commanded thee to the contrary." Sin appears most plain and most sinful in the glass of the commandment, therefore God here sets it before Adam; and in it we should see our faces.

The question put to the woman was, What is this that thou hast done? Ge 3:13. "Wilt thou also own thy fault, and make confession of it? And wilt thou see what an evil thing it was?" Note, It concerns those who have eaten forbidden fruit themselves, and especially those who have enticed others to eat it likewise, seriously to consider what they have done. In eating forbidden fruit, we have offended a great and gracious God, broken a just and righteous law, violated a sacred and most solemn covenant, and wronged our own precious souls by forfeiting God's favour and exposing ourselves to his wrath and curse: in enticing others to eat of it, we do the devil's work,

make ourselves guilty of other men's sins, and accessory to their ruin. What is this that we have done?

12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

How their crime was extenuated by them in their confession. It was to no purpose to plead not guilty. The show of their countenances testified against them; therefore they become their own accusers: "I did eat," says the man, "And so did I," says the woman; for when God judges he will overcome. But these do not look like penitent confessions; for instead of aggravating the sin, and taking shame to themselves, they excuse the sin, and lay the shame and blame on others.

1. Adam lays all the blame upon his wife. "She gave me of the tree, and pressed me to eat of it, which I did, only to oblige her"--a frivolous excuse. He ought to have taught her, not to have been taught by her; and it was no hard matter to determine which of the two he must be ruled by, his God or his wife. Learn, hence, never to be brought to sin by that which will not bring us off in the judgment; let not that bear us up in the commission which will not bear us out in the trial; let us therefore never be overcome by importunity to act against our consciences, nor ever displease God, to please the best friend we have in the world.

But this is not the worst of it. His wickedness and lack of true repentance appears in this that he blamed God because he had given him a wife. He not only lays the blame upon his wife, but expresses it so as tacitly to reflect on God himself: "It is the woman whom thou gavest me, and gavest to be with me as my companion, my guide, and my acquaintance; she gave me of the tree, else I had not eaten of it." He blames God [CALVIN]. As the woman had been given him for his companion and help, he had eaten of the tree from love to her; and perceiving she was ruined, was determined not to survive her [M'KNIGHT]. Thus he insinuates that God was accessory to his sin: he gave him the woman, and she gave him the fruit; so that he seemed to have it at but one remove from God's own

hand. Note, There is a strange proneness in those that are tempted to say that they are tempted of God, as if our abusing God's gifts would excuse our violation of God's laws. God gives us riches, honours, and relations, that we may serve him cheerfully in the enjoyment of them; but, if we take occasion from them to sin against him, instead of blaming Providence for putting us into such a condition, we must blame ourselves for perverting the gracious designs of Providence therein.

2. Eve lays all the blame upon the serpent: The serpent beguiled me. Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own, a sign that it is a scandalous thing. Those that are willing enough to take the pleasure and profit of sin are backward enough to take the blame and shame of it. "The serpent, that subtle creature of thy making, which thou didst permit to come into paradise to us, he beguiled me," or made me to err; for our sins are our errors. Learn hence,

(1.) That Satan's temptations are all beguilings, his arguments are all fallacies, his allurements are all cheats; when he speaks fair, believe him not. Sin deceives us, and, by deceiving, cheats us. It is by the deceitfulness of sin that the heart is hardened. See Ro 7:11, Heb 3:13.

(2.) That though Satan's subtlety drew us into sin, yet it will not justify us in sin: though he is the tempter, we are the sinners; and indeed it is our own lust that draws us aside and entices us, Jam 1:14. Let it not therefore lessen our sorrow and humiliation for sin that we are beguiled into it; but rather let it increase our self-indignation that we should suffer ourselves to be beguiled by a known cheat and a sworn enemy. Well, this is all the prisoners at the bar have to say why sentence should not be passed and execution awarded, according to law; and this all is next to nothing, in some respects worse than nothing.

Beguiled—cajoled by flattering lies. This sin of the first pair was heinous and aggravated—it was not simply eating an

apple, but a love of self, dishonor to God, ingratitude to a benefactor, disobedience to the best of Masters—a preference of the creature to the Creator.

13 And the Lord God said unto the woman, what *is* this *that* thou
hast done? And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I
did eat.

14 And the Lord God said unto the serpent,
because thou hast done this,
thou *art* cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field;
upon thy belly shalt thou go,
and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

The Judge pronounces a doom: first, on the material serpent, which is cursed above all creatures. From being a model of grace and elegance in form, it has become the type of all that is odious, disgusting, and low [LE CLERC, ROSENMULLER]; or the curse has converted its natural condition into a punishment; it is now branded with infamy and avoided with horror; next, on the spiritual serpent, the seducer. Already fallen, he was to be still more degraded and his power wholly destroyed by the offspring of those he had deceived.

The prisoners being found guilty by their own confession, besides the personal and infallible knowledge of the Judge, and nothing material being offered in arrest of judgment, God immediately proceeds to pass sentence; and, in these verses, he begins (where the sin began) with the serpent. God did not examine the serpent, nor ask him what he had done nor why he did it; but immediately sentenced him,

1. Because he was already convicted of rebellion against God, and his malice and wickedness were notorious, not found by secret search, but openly avowed and declared as Sodom's.

2. Because he was to be forever excluded from all hope of pardon; and why should anything be said to convince and humble him who was to find no place for repentance? His wound was not searched, because it was not to be cured. Some

think the condition of the fallen angels was not declared desperate and helpless, until now that they had seduced man into the rebellion.

The sentence passed upon the tempter may be considered as lighting upon the serpent, the brute-creature which Satan made use of which was, as the rest, made for the service of man, but was now abused to his hurt. Therefore, to testify a displeasure against sin, and a jealousy for the injured honour of Adam and Eve, God fastens a curse and reproach upon the serpent, and makes it to groan, being burdened. See Ro 8:20. The devil's instruments must share in the devil's punishments. Thus the bodies of the wicked, though only instruments of unrighteousness, shall partake of everlasting torments with the soul, the principal agent. Even the ox that killed a man must be stoned, Ex 21:28, 29. See here how God hates sin, and especially how much displeased he is with those who entice others into sin. It is a perpetual brand upon Jeroboam's name that he made Israel to sin. Now,

1 The serpent is here laid under the curse of God: Thou art cursed above all cattle. Even the creeping things, when God made them, were blessed of him (Ge 1:22), but sin turned the blessing into a curse. The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field (Ge 3:1), and here, cursed above every beast of the field. Unsanctified subtlety often proves a great curse to a man; and the more crafty men are to do evil the more mischief they do, and, consequently, they shall receive the greater damnation. Subtle tempters are the most accursed creatures under the sun.

2. He is here laid under man's reproach and enmity.

(1.) He is to be forever looked upon as a vile and despicable creature, and a proper object of scorn and contempt: "Upon thy belly thou shalt go, no longer upon feet, or half erect, but thou shalt crawl along, thy belly cleaving to the earth," an expression of a very abject miserable condition, Ps 44:25;

"and thou shalt not avoid eating dust with thy meat." His crime was that he tempted Eve to eat that which she should not; his punishment was that he was necessitated to eat that which he would not: Dust thou shalt eat. This denotes not only a base and despicable condition, but a mean and pitiful spirit; it is said of those whose courage has departed from them that they lick the dust like a serpent, Mic 7:17. How sad it is that the serpent's curse should be the covetous worldling's choice, whose character it is that he pants after the dust of the earth! Am 2:7. These choose their own delusions, and so shall their doom be.

(2.) He is to be forever looked upon as a venomous noxious creature, and a proper object of hatred and detestation: I will put enmity between thee and the woman. The inferior creatures being made for man, it was a curse upon any of them to be turned against man and man against them; and this is part of the serpent's curse. The serpent is hurtful to man, and often bruises his heel, because it can reach no higher; nay, notice is taken of his biting the horses' heels, Ge 49:17. But man is victorious over the serpent, and bruises his head, that is, gives him a mortal wound, aiming to destroy the whole generation of vipers. It is the effect of this curse upon the serpent that, though that creature is subtle and very dangerous, yet it prevails not (as it would if God gave it commission) to the destruction of mankind. This sentence pronounced upon the serpent is much fortified by that promise of God to his people, Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder (Ps 91:13), and that of Christ to his disciples, They shall take up serpents (Mk 16:18), witness Paul, who was unhurt by the viper that fastened upon his hand. Observe here, The serpent and the woman had just now been very familiar and friendly in discourse about the forbidden fruit, and a wonderful agreement there was between them; but here they are irreconcilably set at variance. Note, Sinful friendships justly end in mortal feuds: those that unite in wickedness will not unite long.

15 and I will put enmity between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed;
it shall bruise thy head,
and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This sentence may be considered as levelled at the devil, who only made use of the serpent as his vehicle in this appearance, but was himself the principal agent. He that spoke through the serpent's mouth is here struck at through the serpent's side, and is principally intended in the sentence, which, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a dark side towards the devil and a bright side towards our first parents and their seed. Great things are contained in these words.

1. A perpetual reproach is here fastened upon that great enemy both to God and man. Under the cover of the serpent, he is here sentenced to be,

(1.) Degraded and accursed of God. It is supposed that the sin which turned angels into devils was pride, which is here justly punished by a great variety of mortifications couched under the mean circumstances of a serpent crawling on his belly and licking the dust. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! He that would be above God, and would head a rebellion against him, is justly exposed here to contempt and lies to be trodden on; a man's pride will bring him low, and God will humble those that will not humble themselves.

(2.) Detested and abhorred of all mankind. Even those that are really seduced into his interest yet profess a hatred and abhorrence of him; and all that are born of God make it their constant care to keep themselves, that this wicked one touch them not, 1Jo 5:18. He is here condemned to a state of war and irreconcilable enmity.

(3.) Destroyed and ruined at last by the great Redeemer, signified by the breaking of his head. His subtle politics shall all be baffled, his usurped power shall be entirely crushed, and he shall be forever a captive to the injured honour of divine

sovereignty. By being told of this now he was tormented before the time.

2. A perpetual quarrel is here commenced between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil among men; war is proclaimed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. That war in heaven between Michael and the dragon began now, Re 12:7. It is the fruit of this enmity,

(1.) That there is a continual conflict between grace and corruption in the hearts of God's people. Satan, by their corruptions, assaults them, buffets them, sifts them, and seeks to devour them; they, by the exercise of their graces, resist him, wrestle with him, quench his fiery darts, and force him to flee from them. Heaven and hell can never be reconciled, nor light and darkness; no more can Satan and a sanctified soul, for these are contrary the one to the other.

(2.) That there is likewise a continual struggle between the wicked and the godly in this world. Those that love God account those their enemies that hate him, Ps 139:21, 22. And all the rage and malice of persecutors against the people of God are the fruit of this enmity, which will continue while there is a godly man on this side heaven, and a wicked man on this side hell. Marvel not therefore if the world hate you, 1Jo 3:13.

3. A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan. Though what was said was addressed to the serpent, yet it was said in the hearing of our first parents, who, doubtless, took the hints of grace here given them, and saw a door of hope opened to them, else the following sentence upon themselves would have overwhelmed them. Here was the dawning of the gospel day. No sooner was the wound given than the remedy was provided and revealed. Here, in the head of the book, as the word is

(Heb 10:7), in the beginning of the Bible, it is written of Christ, that he should do the will of God. By faith in this promise, we have reason to think, our first parents, and the patriarchs before the flood, were justified and saved and to this promise, and the benefit of it, instantly serving God day and night, they hoped to come. Notice is here given them of three things concerning Christ:--

(1.) His incarnation, that he should be the seed of the woman, the seed of that woman; therefore his genealogy (Lu 3:1-38) goes so high as to show him to be the son of Adam, but God does the woman the honour to call him rather her seed, because she it was whom the devil had beguiled, and on whom Adam had laid the blame; herein God magnifies his grace, in that, though the woman was first in the transgression, yet she shall be saved by child-bearing (as some read it), that is, by the promised seed who shall descend from her, 1Ti 2:15. He was likewise to be the seed of a woman only, of a virgin, that he might not be tainted with the corruption of our nature; he was sent forth, made of a woman (Ga 4:4), that this promise might be fulfilled. It is a great encouragement to sinners that their Savior is the seed of the woman, bone of our bone, Heb 2:11, 14. Man is therefore sinful and unclean, because he is born of a woman (Job 25:4), and therefore his days are full of trouble, Job 14:1. But the seed of the woman was made sin and a curse for us, so saving us from both.

(2.) His sufferings and death, pointed at in Satan's bruising his heel, that is, his human nature. Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, to draw him into sin; and some think it was Satan that terrified Christ in his agony, to drive him to despair. It was the devil that put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, of Peter to deny him, of the chief priests to prosecute him, of the false witnesses to accuse him, and of Pilate to condemn him, aiming in all this, by destroying the Savior, to ruin the salvation; but, on the contrary, it was by death that Christ destroyed him that had the power of death, Heb 2:14. Christ's heel was bruised when his feet were pierced and nailed to the

cross, and Christ's sufferings are continued in the sufferings of the saints for his name. The devil tempts them, casts them into prison, persecutes and slays them, and so bruises the heel of Christ, who is afflicted in their afflictions. But, while the heel is bruised on earth, it is well that the head is safe in heaven.

(3.) His victory over Satan thereby. Satan had now trampled upon the woman, and insulted over her; but the seed of the woman should be raised up in the fullness of time to avenge her quarrel, and to trample upon him, to spoil him, to lead him captive, and to triumph over him, Col 2:15. He shall bruise his head, that is, he shall destroy all his politics and all his powers, and give a total overthrow to his kingdom and interest. The serpent wounds the heel that crushes him; and so Satan would be permitted to afflict the humanity of Christ and bring suffering and persecution on His people. Christ baffled Satan's temptations, rescued souls out of his hands, cast him out of the bodies of people, dispossessed the strong man armed, and divided his spoil: by his death, he gave a fatal and incurable blow to the devil's kingdom, a wound to the head of this beast, that can never be healed. As his gospel gets ground, Satan falls (Lu 10:18) and is bound, Re 20:2. By his grace, he treads Satan under his people's feet (Ro 16:20) and will shortly cast him into the lake of fire, Re 20:10. And the devil's perpetual overthrow will be the complete and everlasting joy and glory of the chosen remnant.

The serpent's poison is lodged in its head; and a bruise on that part is fatal. Thus, fatal shall be the stroke which Satan shall receive from Christ, though it is probable he did not at first understand the nature and extent of his doom.

16 Unto the woman he said,
I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;
in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;
and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband,
and he shall rule over thee.

We have here the sentence passed upon the woman for her sin. Two things she is condemned to: a state of sorrow, and a state

of subjection, proper punishments of a sin in which she had gratified her pleasure and her pride.

I. She is here put into a state of sorrow, one particular of which only is specified, that in bringing forth children; but it includes all those impressions of grief and fear which the mind of that tender sex is most apt to receive, and all the common calamities which they are liable to. Note, Sin brought sorrow into the world; it was this that made the world a vale of tears, brought showers of trouble upon our heads, and opened springs of sorrows in our hearts, and so deluged the world: had we known no guilt, we should have known no grief. The pains of child-bearing, which are great to a proverb, a scripture proverb, are the effect of sin; every pang and every groan of the travailing woman speak aloud the fatal consequences of sin: this comes of eating forbidden fruit. Observe,

1 The sorrows are here said to be multiplied, greatly multiplied. All the sorrows of this present time are so; many are the calamities which human life is liable to, of various kinds, and often repeated, the clouds returning after the rain, and no marvel that our sorrows are multiplied when our sins are: both are innumerable evils. The sorrows of child-bearing are multiplied; for they include, not only the travailing throes, but the indispositions before (it is sorrow from the conception), and the nursing toils and vexations after; and after all, if the children prove wicked and foolish, they are, more than ever, the heaviness of her that bore them. Thus are the sorrows multiplied; as one grief is over, another succeeds in this world.

2. It is God that multiplies our sorrows: I will do it. God, as a righteous Judge, does it, which ought to silence us under all our sorrows; as many as they are, we have deserved them all, and more: nay, God, as a tender Father, does it for our necessary correction, that we may be humbled for sin, and weaned from the world by all our sorrows; and the good we get by them, with the comfort we have under them, will

abundantly balance our sorrows, how greatly soever they are multiplied.

II. She is here put into a state of subjection. The whole sex, which by creation was equal with man, is, for sin, made inferior, and forbidden to usurp authority, 1Ti 2:11,12. The wife particularly is hereby put under the dominion of her husband, and is not sui juris--at her own disposal, of which see an instance in that law, Nu 30:6-8, where the husband is empowered, if he please, to disannul the vows made by the wife. This sentence amounts only to that command, Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; but the entrance of sin has made that duty a punishment, which otherwise it would not have been. If man had not sinned, he would always have ruled with wisdom and love; and, if the woman had not sinned, she would always have obeyed with humility and meekness; and then the dominion would have been no grievance: but our own sin and folly make our yoke heavy. If Eve had not eaten forbidden fruit herself, and tempted her husband to eat it, she would never have complained of her subjection; therefore it ought never to be complained of, though harsh; but sin must be complained of, that made it so. Those wives who not only despise and disobey their husbands, but domineer over them, do not consider that they not only violate a divine law, but thwart a divine sentence.

III. Observe here how mercy is mixed with wrath in this sentence. The woman shall have sorrow, but it shall be in bringing forth children, and the sorrow shall be forgotten for joy that a child is born, Joh 16:21. She shall be subject, but it shall be to her own husband that loves her, not to a stranger, or an enemy: the sentence was not a curse, to bring her to ruin, but a chastisement, to bring her to repentance. It was well that enmity was not put between the man and the woman, as there was between the serpent and the woman.

17 And unto Adam he said,

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife,
and hast eaten of the tree,
of which I commanded thee, saying,
Thou shalt not eat of it:
cursed is the ground for thy sake;
in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;

We have here the sentence passed upon Adam, which is prefaced with a recital of his crime: Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, Ge 3:17. He excused the fault, by laying it on his wife: She gave it me. But God does not admit the excuse. She could but tempt him, she could not force him; though it was her fault to persuade him to eat, it was his fault to hearken to her. Thus men's frivolous pleas will, in the day of God's judgment, not only be overruled, but turned against them, and made the grounds of their sentence. Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Observe,

I. God put marks of his displeasure on Adam in three instances:--

His habitation is, by this sentence, cursed: Cursed is the ground for thy sake; and the effect of that curse is, Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee. It is here intimated that his habitation should be changed; he should no longer dwell in a distinguished, blessed, paradise, but should be removed to common ground, and that cursed. The ground, or earth, is here put for the whole visible creation, which, by the sin of man, is made subject to vanity, the several parts of it being not so serviceable to man's comfort and happiness as they were designed to be when they were made, and would have been if he had not sinned. God gave the earth to the children of men, designing it to be a comfortable dwelling to them. But sin has altered the property of it. It is now cursed for man's sin; that is, it is a dishonourable habitation, it bespeaks man mean, that his foundation is in the dust; it is a dry and barren habitation, its spontaneous productions are now weeds and briers, something nauseous or noxious; what good fruits it produces must be extorted from it by the ingenuity and industry of man.

Fruitfulness was its blessing, for man's service (Ge 1:11, 29), and now barrenness was its curse, for man's punishment. It is not what it was in the day it was created. Sin turned a fruitful land into barrenness; and man, having become as the wild ass's colt, has the wild ass's lot, the wilderness for his habitation, and the barren land his dwelling, Job 39:6,Ps 68:6. Had not this curse been in part removed, for aught I know, the earth would have been for ever barren, and never produced anything but thorns and thistles. The ground is cursed, that is, doomed to destruction at the end of time, when the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up for the sin of man, the measure of whose iniquity will then be full, 2Pe 3:7,10. But observe a mixture of mercy in this sentence.

(1.) Adam himself is not cursed, as the serpent was (Ge 3:14), but only the ground for his sake. God had blessings in him, even the holy seed: Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it, Isa 65:8. And he had blessings in store for him; therefore he is not directly and immediately cursed, but, as it were, at second hand.

(2.) He is yet above ground. The earth does not open and swallow him up; only it is not what it was: as he continues alive, notwithstanding his degeneracy from his primitive purity and rectitude, so the earth continues to be his habitation, notwithstanding its degeneracy from its primitive beauty and fruitfulness.

(3.) This curse upon the earth, which cut off all expectations of a happiness in things below, might direct and quicken him to look for bliss and satisfaction only in things above.

We must not go off from this sentence upon our first parents, which we are all so nearly concerned in, and feel from, to this day, till we have considered two things:--

1. How fitly the sad consequences of sin upon the soul of Adam and his sinful race were represented and figured out by

this sentence, and perhaps were more intended in it than we are aware of. Though that misery only is mentioned which affected the body, yet that was a pattern of spiritual miseries, the curse that entered into the soul.

(1.) The pains of a woman in travail represent the terrors and pangs of a guilty conscience, awakened to a sense of sin; from the conception of lust, these sorrows are greatly multiplied, and, sooner or later, will come upon the sinner like pain upon a woman in travail, which cannot be avoided.

(2.) The state of subjection to which the woman was reduced represents that loss of spiritual liberty and freedom of will which is the effect of sin. The dominion of sin in the soul is compared to that of a husband (Ro 7:1-5), the sinner's desire is towards it, for he is fond of his slavery, and it rules over him.

(3.) The curse of barrenness which was brought upon the earth, and its produce of briars and thorns, are a fit representation of the barrenness of a corrupt and sinful soul in that which is good and its fruitfulness in evil. It is all overgrown with thorns, and nettles cover the face of it; and therefore it is nigh unto cursing, Heb 6:8.

(4.) The toil and sweat bespeak the difficulty which, through the infirmity of the flesh, man labours under, in the service of God and the work of religion, so hard has it now become to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Blessed be God, it is not impossible.

(5.) The embittering of his food to him bespeaks the soul's want of the comfort of God's favour, which is life, and the bread of life. (6.) The soul, like the body, returns to the dust of this world; its tendency is that way; it has an earthy taint, Joh 3:31.

2. How admirably the satisfaction our Lord Jesus made by his death and sufferings answered to the sentence here passed upon our first parents.

(1.) Did travailing pains come in with sin? We read of the travail of Christ's soul (Isa 53:11); and the pains of death he was held by are called odinai (Ac 2:24), the pains of a woman in travail.

(2.) Did subjection come in with sin? Christ was made under the law, Ga 4:4.

(3.) Did the curse come in with sin? Christ was made a curse for us, died a cursed death, Ga 3:13.

(4.) Did thorns come in with sin? He was crowned with thorns for us.

(5.) Did sweat come in with sin? He for us did sweat as it were great drops of blood.

(6.) Did sorrow come in with sin? He was a man of sorrows, his soul was, in his agony, exceedingly sorrowful.

(7.) Did death come in with sin? He became obedient unto death. Thus is the plaster as wide as the wound. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;
and thou shalt eat the herb of the field:
19 in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,
till thou return unto the ground;
for out of it wast thou taken:
for dust thou *art,* and unto dust shalt thou return.

Man became mortal; although he did not die the moment he ate the forbidden fruit, his body underwent a change, and that would lead to dissolution; the union subsisting between his soul and God having already been dissolved, he had become liable to all the miseries of this life and to the pains of hell for

ever. What a mournful chapter this is in the history of man! It gives the only true account of the origin of all the physical and moral evils that are in the world; upholds the moral character of God; shows that man, made upright, fell from not being able to resist a slight temptation; and becoming guilty and miserable, plunged all his posterity into the same abyss (Ro 5:12). How astonishing the grace which at that moment gave promise of a Savior and conferred on her who had the disgrace of introducing sin the future honor of introducing that Deliverer (1Ti 2:15).

His employments and enjoyments are all embittered to him.

(1.) His business shall henceforth become a toil to him, and he shall go on with it in the sweat of his face, Ge 3:19. His business, before he sinned, was a constant pleasure to him, the garden was then dressed without any uneasy labour, and kept without any uneasy care; but now his labour shall be a weariness and shall waste his body; his care shall be a torment and shall afflict his mind. The curse upon the ground which made it barren, and produced thorns and thistles, made his employment about it much more difficult and toilsome. If Adam had not sinned, he had not sweated. Observe here,

[1.] That labour is our duty, which we must faithfully perform; we are bound to work, not as creatures only, but as criminals; it is part of our sentence, which idleness daringly defies.

[2.] That uneasiness and weariness with labour are our just punishment, which we must patiently submit to, and not complain of, since they are less than our iniquity deserves. Let not us, by inordinate care and labour, make our punishment heavier than God has made it; but rather study to lighten our burden, and wipe off our sweat, by eyeing Providence in all and expecting rest shortly.

(2.) His food shall henceforth become (in comparison with what it had been) unpleasant to him.

[1.] The matter of his food is changed; he must now eat the herb of the field, and must no longer be feasted with the delicacies of the garden of Eden. Having by sin made himself like the beasts that perish, he is justly turned to be a fellow-commoner with them, and to eat grass as oxen, till he know that the heavens do rule.

[2.] There is a change in the manner of his eating it: In sorrow (Ge 3:17). and in the sweat of his face (Ge 3:19) he must eat of it. Adam could not but eat in sorrow all the days of his life, remembering the forbidden fruit he had eaten, and the guilt and shame he had contracted by it. Observe, First, That human life is exposed to many miseries and calamities, which very much embitter the poor remains of its pleasures and delights. Some never eat with pleasure (Job 21:25), through sickness or melancholy; all, even the best, have cause to eat with sorrow for sin; and all, even the happiest in this world, have some allays to their joy: troops of diseases, disasters, and deaths, in various shapes, entered the world with sin, and still ravage it. Secondly, That the righteousness of God is to be acknowledged in all the sad consequences of sin. Wherefore then should a living man complain? Yet, in this part of the sentence, there is also a mixture of mercy. He shall sweat, but his toil shall make his rest the more welcome when he returns to his earth, as to his bed; he shall grieve, but he shall not starve; he shall have sorrow, but in that sorrow he shall eat bread, which shall strengthen his heart under his sorrows. He is not sentenced to eat dust as the serpent, only to eat the herb of the field.

His life also is but short. Considering how full of trouble his days are, it is in favour to him that they are few; yet death being dreadful to nature (yea, even though life be unpleasant) that concludes the sentence. "Thou shalt return to the ground

out of which thou wast taken; thy body, that part of thee which was taken out of the ground, shall return to it again; for dust thou art." This points either to the first original of his body; it was made of the dust, nay it was made dust, and was still so; so that there needed no more than to recall the grant of immortality, and to withdraw the power which was put forth to support it, and then he would, of course, return to dust. Or to the present corruption and degeneracy of his mind: Dust thou art, that is, "Thy precious soul is now lost and buried in the dust of the body and the mire of the flesh; it was made spiritual and heavenly, but it has become carnal and earthly." His doom is therefore read: "To dust thou shalt return. Thy body shall be forsaken by thy soul, and become itself a lump of dust; and then it shall be lodged in the grave, the proper place for it, and mingle itself with the dust of the earth," our dust, Ps 104:29. Earth to earth, dust to dust. Observe here,

(1.) That man is a mean frail creature, little as dust, the small dust of the balance--light as dust, altogether lighter than vanity--weak as dust, and of no consistency. Our strength is not the strength of stones; he that made us considers it, and remembers that we are dust, Ps 103:14. Man is indeed the chief part of the dust of the world (Pr 8:26), but still he is dust.

(2.) That he is a mortal dying creature, and hastening to the grave. Dust may be raised, for a time, into a little cloud, and may seem considerable while it is held up by the wind that raised it; but, when the force of that is spent, it falls again, and returns to the earth out of which it was raised. Such a thing is man; a great man is but a great mass of dust, and must return to his earth.

(3.) That sin brought death into the world. If Adam had not sinned, he would not have died, Ro 5:12. God entrusted Adam with a spark of immortality, which he, by a patient continuance in well-doing, might have blown up into an everlasting flame; but he foolishly blew it out by willful sin: and now death is the wages of sin, and sin is the sting of death.

20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve [living]; because she was the mother of all living.

God having named the man, and called him Adam, which signifies red earth, Adam, in further token of dominion, named the woman, and called her Eve, that is, life. Adam bears the name of the dying body, Eve that of the living soul. The reason of the name is here given (some think, by Moses the historian, others, by Adam himself): Because she was (that is, was to be) the mother of all living. He had before called her Ishah--woman, as a wife; here he calls her Evah--life, as a mother. Now,

1. If this was done by divine direction, it was an instance of God's favour, and, like the new naming of Abraham and Sarah, it was a seal of the covenant, and an assurance to them that, notwithstanding their sin and his displeasure against them for it, he had not reversed that blessing wherewith he had blessed them: Be fruitful and multiply. It was likewise a confirmation of the promise now made, that the seed of the woman, of this woman, should break the serpent's head.

2. If Adam did it of himself, it was an instance of his faith in the word of God. Doubtless it was not done, as some have suspected, in contempt or defiance of the curse, but rather in a humble confidence and dependence upon the blessing.

(1.) The blessing of a reprieve, admiring the patience of God, that he should spare such sinners to be the parents of all living, and that he did not immediately shut up those fountains of the human life and nature, because they could send forth no other than polluted, poisoned, streams.

(2.) The blessing of a Redeemer, the promised seed, to whom Adam had an eye, in calling his wife Eve--life; for he should be the life of all the living, and in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, in hope of which he thus triumphs.

21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

We have here a further instance of God's care concerning our first parents, notwithstanding their sin. Though he corrects his disobedient children, and put them under the marks of his displeasure, yet he does not disinherit them, but, like a tender father, provides the herb of the field for their food and coats of skins for their clothing. Thus the father provided for the returning prodigal, Lu 15:22. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have done this for them. Observe,

1. That clothes came in with sin. We should have had no occasion for them, either for defence or decency, if sin had not made us naked, to our shame. Little reason therefore we have to be proud of our clothes, which are but the badges of our poverty and infamy.

2. That when God made clothes for our first parents he made them warm and strong, but coarse and very plain: not robes of scarlet, but coats of skin. Their clothes were made, not of silk and satin, but plain skins; not trimmed, nor embroidered, none of the ornaments which the daughters of Sion afterwards invented, and prided themselves in. Let the poor, that are meanly clad, learn hence not to complain: having food and a covering, let them be content; they are as well done to as Adam and Eve were. And let the rich, that are finely clad, learn hence not to make the putting on of apparel their adorning, 1Pe 3:3.

3. That God is to be acknowledged with thankfulness, not only in giving us food, but in giving us clothes also, Ge 28:20. The wool and the flax are his, as well as the corn and the wine, Ho 2:9.

4. These coats of skin had a significancy. The beasts whose skins they were must be slain, slain before their eyes, to show them what death is, and (as it is Ec 3:18) that they may see that they themselves were beasts, mortal and dying. It is supposed that they were slain, not for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the great sacrifice, which, in the latter end of the world, should

be offered once for all. Thus the first thing that died was a sacrifice, or Christ in a figure, who is therefore said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. These sacrifices were divided between God and man, in token of reconciliation: the flesh was offered to God, a whole burnt-offering; the skins were given to man for clothing, signifying that, Jesus Christ having offered himself to God a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, we are to clothe ourselves with his righteousness as with a garment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear. Adam and Eve made for themselves aprons of fig-leaves, a covering too narrow for them to wrap themselves in, Isa 28:20. Such are all the rags of our own righteousness. But God made them coats of skins; large, and strong, and durable, and fit for them; such is the righteousness of Christ. Therefore put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:

And God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us—not spoken in irony as is generally supposed, but in deep compassion. The words should be rendered, "Behold, what has become [by sin] of the man who was as one of us"! Formed, at first, in our image. How sad his condition now.

How they were justly discarded, and shut out of paradise, which was a part of the sentence implied in that, Thou shalt eat the herb of the field. Here we have,

1 The reason God gave why he shut man out of paradise; not only because he had put forth his hand, and taken of the tree of knowledge, which was his sin, but lest he should again put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life (now forbidden him by the divine sentence, as before the tree of knowledge was forbidden by the law), and should dare to eat of that tree, and so profane a divine sacrament and defy a divine sentence, and yet flatter himself with a conceit that thereby he should live forever. Observe,

(1.) There is a foolish proneness in those that have rendered themselves unworthy of the substance of Christian privileges to catch at the signs and shadows of them. Many that like not the terms of the covenant, yet, for their reputation's sake, are fond of the seals of it.

(2.) It is not only justice, but kindness, to such, to be denied them; for, by usurping that to which they have no title, they affront God and make their sin the more heinous, and by building their hopes upon a wrong foundation they render their conversion the more difficult and their ruin the more deplorable.

23 therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

The method God took, in giving him this bill of divorce, and expelling and excluding him from this garden of pleasure. He turned him out, and kept him out.

He turned him out, from the garden to the common. This is twice mentioned: He sent him forth Ge 3:23), and then he drove him out, Ge 3:24. God bade him go out, told him that that was no place for him, he should no longer occupy and enjoy that garden; but he liked the place too well to be willing to part with it, and therefore God drove him out, made him go out, whether he would or no. This signified the exclusion of him, and all his guilty race, from that communion with God which was the bliss and glory of paradise. The tokens of God's favour to him and his delight in the sons of men, which he had in his innocent estate, were now suspended; the communications of his grace were withheld, and Adam became weak, and like other men, as Samson when the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him. His acquaintance with God was lessened and lost, and that correspondence which had been settled between man and his Maker was interrupted and broken off. He was driven out, as one unworthy of this honour and incapable of this service. Thus he and all mankind, by the fall, forfeited and lost communion with God. But whither did

he send him when he turned him out of Eden? He might justly have chased him out of the world (Job 18:18), but he only chased him out of the garden. He might justly have cast him down to hell, as he did the angels that sinned when he shut them out from the heavenly paradise, 2Pe 2:4. But man was only sent to till the ground out of which he was taken. He was sent to a place of toil, not to a place of torment. He was sent to the ground, not to the grave,--to the work-house, not to the dungeon, not to the prison-house,--to hold the plough, not to drag the chain. His tilling the ground would be recompensed by his eating of its fruits; and his converse with the earth whence he was taken was improvable to good purposes, to keep him humble, and to remind him of his latter end. Observe, then, that though our first parents were excluded from the privileges of their state of innocency, yet they were not abandoned to despair, God's thoughts of love designing them for a second state of probation upon new terms.

24 So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

He kept him out, and forbade him all hopes of a re-entry; for he placed at the east of the garden of Eden a detachment of cherubim, God's hosts, armed with a dreadful and irresistible power, represented by flaming swords which turned every way, on that side the garden which lay next to the place whither Adam was sent, to keep the way that led to the tree of life, so that he could neither steal nor force an entry; for who can make a pass against an angel on his guard or gain a pass made good by such force? Now this intimated to Adam,

[1.] That God was displeased with him. Though he had mercy in store for him, yet at present he was angry with him, was turned to be his enemy and fought against him, for here was a sword drawn (Nu 22:23); and he was to him a consuming fire, for it was a flaming sword.

[2.] That the angels were at war with him; no peace with the heavenly hosts, while he was in rebellion against their Lord and ours.

[3.] That the way to the tree of life was shut up, namely, that way which, at first, he was put into, the way of spotless innocency. It is not said that the cherubim were set to keep him and his forever from the tree of life (thanks be to God, there is a paradise set before us, and a tree of life in the midst of it, which we rejoice in the hopes of); but they were set to keep that way of the tree of life which hitherto they had been in; that is, it was henceforward in vain for him and his to expect righteousness, life, and happiness, by virtue of the first covenant, for it was irreparably broken, and could never be pleaded, nor any benefit taken by it. The command of that covenant being broken, the curse of it is in full force; it leaves no room for repentance, but we are all undone if we be judged by that covenant. God revealed this to Adam, not to drive him to despair, but to oblige and quicken him to look for life and happiness in the promised seed, Jesus Christ, by whom the flaming sword is removed. God and his angels are reconciled to us, and a new and living way into the holiest is consecrated and laid open for us.

Genesis -4

Cain and Abel

1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain [gotten, *or* acquired], and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters, Ge 5:4. But Cain and Abel seem to have been the two eldest. Some think they were twins, and, as Esau and Jacob, the elder hated and the younger loved. Though God had cast our first parents out of paradise, he did not write them childless; but, to show that he had other blessings in store for them, he preserved to them the benefit of that first blessing of increase. Though they were sinners, nay, though they felt the humiliation and sorrow of

penitents, they did not write themselves comfortless, having the promise of a Savior to support themselves with. We have here,

I The names of their two sons.

1. Cain signifies possession; for Eve, when she bore him, said with joy, and thankfulness, and great expectation, I have gotten a man from the LORD. Observe, Children are God's gifts, and he must be acknowledged in the building up of our families. It doubles and sanctifies our comfort in them when we see them coming to us from the hand of God, who will not forsake the works and gifts of his own hand. Though Eve bore him with the sorrows that were the consequence of sin, yet she did not lose the sense of the mercy in her pains. Comforts, though alloyed, are more than we deserve; and therefore our complaints must not drown our thanksgivings. Many suppose that Eve had a conceit that this son was the promised seed, and that therefore she thus triumphed in him, as her words may be read, I have gotten a man, the LORD, God-man. If so, she was wretchedly mistaken, as Samuel, when he said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before me, 1Sa 16:6. When children are born, who can foresee what they will prove? He that was thought to be a man, the LORD, or at least a man from the LORD, and for his service as priest of the family, became an enemy to the LORD. The less we expect from creature s, the more tolerable will disappointments be.

2. Abel (Heb. Hebhel), a breath, or vanity. Some translation "a breath," "vapor," "transitoriness," which are suggestive of his brief existence and tragic end. When she thought she had obtained the promised seed in Cain, she was so taken up with that possession that another son was as vanity to her. To those who have an interest in Christ, and make him their all, other things are as nothing at all. It intimates likewise that the longer we live in this world the more we may see of the vanity of it. What, at first, we are fond of, as a possession, afterwards we see cause to be dead to, as a trifle. The name given to this son is put upon the whole race, Ps 39:5. Every man is at his best

estate Abel--vanity. Let us labour to see both ourselves and others so. Childhood and youth are vanity.

2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

The employments of Cain and Abel. Observe,

1. They both had a calling. Though they were heirs apparent to the world, their birth noble and their possessions large, yet they were not brought up in idleness. God gave their father a calling, even in innocency, and he gave them one. Note, It is the will of God that we should every one of us have something to do in this world. Parents ought to bring up their children to business. "Give them a Bible and a calling (said good Mr. Dod), and God be with them."

2. Their employments were different, that they might trade and exchange with one another, as there was occasion. The members of the body politic have need one of another, and mutual love is helped by mutual commerce.

3. Their employments belonged to the husbandman's calling, their father's profession--a needful calling, for the king himself is served of the field, but a laborious calling, which required constant care and attendance. It is now looked upon as a mean calling; the poor of the land serve for vine-dressers and husbandmen, Jer 52:16. But the calling was far from being a dishonour to them; rather, they were an honour to it.

4. It should seem, by the order of the story, that Abel, though the younger brother, yet entered first into his calling, and probably his example drew in Cain.

5. Abel chose that employment which most befriended contemplation and devotion, for to these a pastoral life has been looked upon as being peculiarly favourable. Moses and David kept sheep, and in their solitudes conversed with God.

Note, That calling or condition of life is best for us, and to be chosen by us, which is best for our souls, that which least

exposes us to sin and gives us most opportunity of serving and enjoying God.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

Here we have,

The devotions of Cain and Abel. In process of time, when they had made some improvement in their respective callings (Heb. At the end of days, either at the end of the year, when they kept their feast of in-gathering or perhaps an annual fast in remembrance of the fall, or at the end of the days of the week, the seventh day, which was the Sabbath)--at some set time, Cain and Abel brought to Adam, as the priest of the family, each of them an offering to the Lord, for the doing of which we have reason to think there was a divine appointment given to Adam, as a token of God's favour to him and his thoughts of love towards him and his, notwithstanding their apostasy. God would thus try Adam's faith in the promise and his obedience to the remedial law; he would thus settle a correspondence again between heaven and earth, and give shadows of good things to come. Observe here,

1. That the religious worship of God is no novel invention, but an ancient institution. It is that which was from the beginning (1Jo 1:1); it is the good old way, Jer 6:16. The city of our God is indeed that joyous city whose antiquity is of ancient days, Isa 23:7. Truth got the start of error, and piety of profaneness.

2. That is a good thing for children to be well taught when they are young, and trained up betimes in religious services, that when they come to be capable of acting for themselves they may, of their own accord, bring an offering to God. In this nurture of the Lord parents must bring up their children, Ge 18:19, Eph 6:4.

3. That we should every one of us honour God with what we have, according as he has prospered us. According as their employments and possessions were, so they brought their offering. See 1Co 16:1, 2. Our merchandize and our hire, whatever they are, must be holiness to the Lord, Isa 23:18. He

must have his dues of it in works of piety and charity, the support of religion and the relief of the poor. Thus we must now bring our offering with an upright heart; and with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

4. That hypocrites and evil doers may be found going as far as the best of God's people in the external services of religion. Cain brought an offering with Abel; nay, Cain's offering is mentioned first, as if he were the more forward of the two. A hypocrite may possibly hear as many sermons, say as many prayers, and give as much alms, as a good Christian, and yet, for want of sincerity, come short of acceptance with God. The Pharisee and the publican went to the temple to pray, Lu 18:10.

4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

The different success of their devotions. That which is to be aimed at in all acts of religion is God's acceptance: we speed well if we attain this, but in vain do we worship if we miss of it, 2Co 5:9. Perhaps, to a stander-by, the sacrifices of Cain and Abel would have seemed both alike good. Adam accepted them both, but God, who sees not as man sees, did not. God had respect to Abel and to his offering, and showed his acceptance of it, probably by fire from heaven; but to Cain and his offering he had not respect. We are sure there was a good reason for this difference; the Governor of the world, though an absolute sovereign, does not act arbitrarily in dispensing his smiles and frowns.

1. There was a difference in the characters of the persons offering. Cain was a wicked man, led a bad life, under the reigning power of the world and the flesh; and therefore his sacrifice was an abomination to the Lord (Pr 15:8); a vain oblation, Isa 1:13. God had no respect to Cain himself, and therefore no respect to his offering, as the manner of the expression intimates. But Abel was a righteous man; he is called righteous Abel (Mt 23:35); his heart was upright and his life was pious; he was one of those whom God's countenance beholds (Ps 11:7) and whose prayer is therefore his delight, Pr 15:8. God had respect to him as a holy man, and therefore to

his offering as a holy offering. The tree must be good, else the fruit cannot be pleasing to the heart-searching God.

2. There was a difference in the offerings they brought. It is expressly said (Heb 11:4), Abel's was a more excellent sacrifice than Cain's: either,

(1.) In the nature of it. Cain's was only a sacrifice of acknowledgment offered to the Creator; the meat-offerings of the fruit of the ground were no more, and, for aught I know, they might be offered in innocency. But Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, the blood whereof was shed in order to remission, thereby owning himself a sinner, deprecating God's wrath, and imploring his favour in a Mediator. Or,

(2.) In the qualities of the offering. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, any thing that came next to hand, what he had not occasion for himself or what was not marketable. But Abel was curious in the choice of his offering: not the lame, nor the lean, nor the refuse, but the firstlings of the flock--the best he had, and the fat thereof--the best of those best. Hence the Hebrew doctors give it for a general rule that everything that is for the name of the good God must be the goodliest and best. It is fit that he who is the first and best should have the first and best of our time, strength, and service.

3. The great difference was this, that Abel offered in faith, and Cain did not. There was a difference in the principle upon which they went. Abel offered with an eye to God's will as his rule, and God's glory as his end, and in dependence upon the promise of a Redeemer; but Cain did what he did only for company's sake, or to save his credit, not in faith, and so it turned into sin to him. Abel was a penitent believer, like the publican that went away justified: Cain was unhumbled; his confidence was within himself; he was like the Pharisee who glorified himself, but was not so much as justified before God.

5 but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

Cain's displeasure at the difference God made between his sacrifice and Abel's. Cain was very wroth, which presently

appeared in his very looks, for his countenance fell, which bespeaks not so much his grief and discontent as his malice and rage. His sullen churlish countenance, and a down-look, betrayed his passionate resentments: he carried ill-nature in his face, and the show of his countenance witnessed against him. This anger bespeaks,

1. His enmity to God, and the indignation he had conceived against him for making such a difference between his offering and his brother's. He should have been angry at himself for his own infidelity and hypocrisy, by which he had forfeited God's acceptance; and his countenance should have fallen in repentance and holy shame, as the publican's, who would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, Lu 18:13. But, instead of this, he flies out against God, as if he were partial and unfair in distributing his smiles and frowns, and as if he had done him a deal of wrong. Note, It is a certain sign of an unhumbled heart to quarrel with those rebukes which we have, by our own sin, brought upon ourselves. The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then, to make bad worse, his heart fretteth against the Lord, Pr 19:3.

2. His envy of his brother, who had the honour to be publicly owned. Though his brother had no thought of having any slur put upon him, nor did now insult over him to provoke him, yet he conceived a hatred of him as an enemy, or, which is equivalent, a rival. Note,

(1.) It is common for those who have rendered themselves unworthy of God's favour by their presumptuous sins to have indignation against those who are dignified and distinguished by it. The Pharisees walked in this way of Cain, when they neither entered into the kingdom of God themselves nor suffered those that were entering to go in, Lu 11:52. Their eye is evil, because their master's eye and the eye of their fellow-servants are good.

(2.) Envy is a sin that commonly carries with it both its own discovery, in the paleness of the looks, and its own punishment, in the rottenness of the bones.

6 And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?

God is here reasoning with Cain, to convince him of the sin and folly of his anger and discontent, and to bring him into a good temper again, that further mischief might be prevented. It is an instance of God's patience and condescending goodness that he would deal thus tenderly with so bad a man, in so bad an affair. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Thus the father of the prodigal argued the case with the elder son (Lu 15:28-32, &c.), and God with those Israelites who said, The way of the Lord is not equal, Eze 18:25.

God puts Cain himself upon enquiring into the cause of his discontent, and considering whether it were indeed a just cause: Why is thy countenance fallen? Observe,

1. That God takes notice of all our sinful passions and discontents. There is not an angry look, an envious look, nor a fretful look, that escapes his observing eye.

2. That most of our sinful heats and disquietudes would soon vanish before a strict and impartial enquiry into the cause of them. "Why am I wroth? Is there a real cause, a just cause, a proportionable cause for it? Why am I so soon angry? Why so very angry, and so implacable?"

Cain ("acquisition") is a type of the mere man of the earth. His religion was destitute of any adequate sense of sin, or need of atonement. This religious type is described in 2Pe 2. Seven things are said of him:

(1) he worships in self-will

(2) is angry with God

(3) refuses to bring a sin offering

(4) murders his brother

(5) lies to God

(6) becomes a vagabond

(7) Is, nevertheless, the object of the divine solicitude.

. . . Cain's bloodless offering of the fruit of his own works, and proclaims, in the very infancy of the race, the primal truth that "without shedding of blood is no remission" ; Hebrews 9:22; 11:4.

7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door: and unto thee shall *be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

To reduce Cain to his right mind again, it is here made evident to him,

1. That he had no reason to be angry at God, for that he had proceeded according to the settled and invariable rules of government suited to a state of probation. He sets before men life and death, the blessing and the curse, and then renders to them according to their works, and differences them according as they difference themselves--so shall their doom be. The rules are just, and therefore his ways, according to those rules, must needs be equal, and he will be justified when he speaks.

(1.) God sets before Cain life and a blessing: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? No doubt thou shalt, nay, thou knowest thou shalt;" either,

[1.] "If thou hadst done well, as thy brother did, thou shouldst have been accepted, as he was." God is no respecter of persons, hates nothing that he had made, denies his favour to none but those who have forfeited it, and is an enemy to none but those who by sin have made him their enemy: so that if we come short of acceptance with him we must thank ourselves, the fault is wholly our own; if we had done our duty, we should not have missed of his mercy. This will justify God in the

destruction of sinners, and will aggravate their ruin; there is not a damned sinner in hell, but, if he had done well, as he might have done, had been a glorious saint in heaven. Every mouth will shortly be stopped with this. Or,

[2.] "If now thou do well, if thou repent of thy sin, reform thy heart and life, and bring thy sacrifice in a better manner, if thou not only do that which is good but do it well, thou shalt yet be accepted, thy sin shall be pardoned, thy comfort and honour restored, and all shall be well." See here the effect of a Mediator's interposal between God and man; we do not stand upon the footing of the first covenant, which left no room for repentance, but God had come upon new terms with us. Though we have offended, if we repent and return, we shall find mercy. See how early the gospel was preached, and the benefit of it here offered even to one of the chief of sinners.

(2.) He sets before him death and a curse: But if not well, that is, "Seeing thou didst not do well, didst not offer in faith and in a right manner, sin lies at the door," that is, "sin was imputed to thee, and thou wast frowned upon and rejected as a sinner. So high a charge had not been laid at thy door, if thou hadst not brought it upon thyself, by not doing well." Or, as it is commonly taken, "If now thou wilt not do well, if thou persist in this wrath, and, instead of humbling thyself before God, harden thyself against him, sin lies at the door," that is,

[1.] Further sin. "Now that anger is in thy heart, murder is at the door." The way of sin is down-hill, and men go from bad to worse. Those who do not sacrifice well, but are careless and remiss in their devotion to God, expose themselves to the worst temptations; and perhaps the most scandalous sin lies at the door. Those who do not keep God's ordinances are in danger of committing all abominations, Le 18:30. Or,

[2.] The punishment of sin. So near akin are sin and punishment that the same word in Hebrew signifies both. If sin be harboured in the house, the curse waits at the door, like a bailiff, ready to arrest the sinner whenever he looks out. It lies

as if it slept, but it lies at the door where it will be soon awaked, and then it will appear that the damnation slumbered not. Sin will find thee out, Nu 32:23.

Yet some choose to understand this also as an intimation of mercy. sin-offering. In Hebrew the same word is used for "sin," and "sin- offering," thus emphasizing in a remarkable way the complete identification of the believer's sin with his sin offering (cf) John 3:14; 2 Corinthians 5:21. Here both meanings are brought together. "Sin lieth at the door," but so also "a sin-offering croucheth at the tent door." It is "where sin abounded" that "grace did much more abound" Romans 5:20. "If thou doest not well, sin (that is, the sin-offering), lies at the door, and thou mayest take the benefit of it." The same word signifies sin and a sacrifice for sin. "Though thou hast not done well, yet do not despair; the remedy is at hand; the propitiation is not far to seek; lay hold on it, and the iniquity of thy holy things shall be forgiven thee." Christ, the great sin-offering, is said to stand at the door, Re 3:20. And those well deserve to perish in their sins that will not go to the door for an interest in the sin-offering. All this considered, Cain had no reason to be angry at God, but at himself only.

2. The high distinction conferred by priority of birth is described (Ge 27:29); and it was Cain's conviction, that this honor had been withdrawn from him, by the rejection of his sacrifice, and conferred on his younger brother—hence the secret flame of jealousy, which kindled into a settled hatred and fell revenge.

He had no reason to be angry at his brother: "Unto thee shall be his desire, he shall continue his respect to thee as an elder brother, and thou, as the first-born, shalt rule over him as much as ever." God's acceptance of Abel's offering did not transfer the birth-right to him (which Cain was jealous of), nor put upon him that excellency of dignity and of power which is said to belong to it, Ge 49:3. God did not so intend it; Abel did not so interpret it; there was no danger of its being improved to

Cain's prejudice; why then should he be so much exasperated? Observe here,

(1.) That the difference which God's grace makes does not alter the distinctions which God's providence makes, but preserves them, and obliges us to do the duty which results from them: believing servants must be obedient to unbelieving masters. Dominion is not founded in grace, nor will religion warrant disloyalty or disrespect in any relation.

(2.) That the jealousies which civil powers have sometimes conceived of the true worshippers of God as dangerous to their government, enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and provinces (on which suspicion persecutors have grounded their rage against them) are very unjust and unreasonable. Whatever may be the case with some who call themselves Christians, it is certain that Christians indeed are the best subjects, and the quiet in the land; their desire is towards their governors, and these shall rule over them.

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

Cain talked with Abel his brother—Under the guise of brotherly familiarity, he concealed his premeditated purpose till a convenient time and place occurred for the murder (1Jo 3:12; Jude 11).

We have here the progress of Cain's anger, and the issue of it in Abel's murder, which may be considered two ways:--

I. As Cain's sin; and a scarlet, crimson, sin it was, a sin of the first magnitude, a sin against the light and law of nature, and which the consciences even of bad men have startled at. See in it,

1 The sad effects of sin's entrance into the world and into the hearts of men. See what a root of bitterness the corrupt nature is, which bears this gall and wormwood. Adam's eating

forbidden fruit seemed but a little sin, but it opened the door to the greatest.

2. A fruit of the enmity which is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. As Abel leads the van in the noble army of martyrs (Mt 23:35), so Cain stand in the front of the ignoble army of persecutors, Jude 1:11. So early did he that was after the flesh persecute him that was after the Spirit; and so it is now, more or less (Ga 4:29), and so it will be till the war shall end in the eternal salvation of all the saints and the eternal perdition of all that hate them. 3. See also what comes of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; if they be indulged and cherished in the soul, they are in danger of involving men in the horrid guilt of murder itself. Rash anger is heart-murder, Mt 5:21, 22. Much more is malice so; he that hates his brother is already a murderer before God; and, if God leave him to himself, he wants nothing but an opportunity to render him a murderer before the world. Many were the aggravations of Cain's sin.

(1.) It was his brother, his own brother, that he murdered, his own mother's son (Ps 50:20), whom he ought to have loved, his younger brother, whom he ought to have protected.

(2.) He was a good brother, one who had never done him any wrong, nor given him the least provocation in word or deed, but one whose desire had been always towards him, and who had been, in all instances, dutiful and respectful to him.

(3.) He had fair warning given him, before, of this. God himself had told him what would come of it, yet he persisted in his barbarous design.

(4.) It should seem that he covered it with a show of friendship and kindness: He talked with Abel his brother, freely and familiarly, lest Abel should suspect danger, and keep out of his reach. Thus Joab kissed Abner, and then killed him. Thus Absalom feasted his brother Amnon and then killed him. According to the Septuagint [a Greek version of the Old Testament, supposed to have been translated by seventy-two

Jews, at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, above 200 years before Christ], Cain said to Abel, Let us go into the field; if so, we are sure Abel did not understand it (according to the modern sense) as a challenge, else he would not have accepted it, but as a brotherly invitation to go together to their work. The Chaldee paraphrast adds that Cain, when they were in discourse in the field, maintained that there was no judgment to come, no future state, no rewards and punishments in the other world, and that when Abel spoke in defence of the truth Cain took that occasion to fall upon him. However,

(5.) That which the scripture tells us was the reason why he slew him was a sufficient aggravation of the murder; it was because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous, so that herein he showed himself to be of that wicked one (1Jo 3:12), a child of the devil, as being an enemy to all righteousness, even in his own brother, and, in this, employed immediately by the destroyer. Nay,

(6.) In killing his brother, he directly struck at God himself; for God's accepting Abel was the provocation pretended, and for this very reason he hated Abel, because God loved him.

(7.) The murder of Abel was the more inhuman because there were now so few men in the world to replenish it. The life of a man is precious at any time; but it was in a special manner precious now, and could ill be spared.

II. As Abel's suffering. Death reigned ever since Adam sinned, but we read not of any taken captive by him till now; and now,

1 The first that dies is a saint, one that was accepted and beloved of God, to show that, though the promised seed was so far to destroy him that had the power of death as to save believers from its sting, yet still they should be exposed to its stroke. The first that went to the grave went to heaven. God would secure to himself the first-fruits, the first-born to the dead that first opened the womb into another world. Let this take off the terror of death, that it was betimes the lot of God's chosen, which alters the property of it. Nay,

2 The first that dies is a martyr, and dies for his religion; and of such it may more truly be said than of soldiers that they die on the bed of honour. Abel's death has not only no curse in it, but it has a crown in it; so admirably well is the property of death altered that it is not only rendered innocent and inoffensive to those that die in Christ, but honourable and glorious to those that die for him. Let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, nor shrink if we be called to resist unto blood; for we know there is a crown of life for all that are faithful unto death.

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where *is* Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am* I my brother's keeper?

We have here a full account of the trial and condemnation of the first murderer. Civil courts of judicature not being yet erected for this purpose, as they were afterwards (Ge 9:6), God himself sits Judge; for he is the God to whom vengeance belongs, and who will be sure to make inquisition for blood, especially the blood of saints. Observe,

I The arraignment of Cain: The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? Some think Cain was thus examined the next Sabbath after the murder was committed, when the sons of God came, as usual, to present themselves before the Lord, in a religious assembly, and Abel was missing, whose place did not use to be empty; for the God of heaven takes notice who is present at and who is absent from public ordinances. Cain is asked, not only because there is just cause to suspect him, he having discovered a malice against Abel and having been last with him, but because God knew him to be guilty; yet he asks him, that he may draw from him a confession of his crime, for those who would be justified before God must accuse themselves, and the penitent will do so.

II. Cain's plea: he pleads not guilty, and adds rebellion to his sin. For,

1. He endeavours to cover a deliberate murder with a deliberate lie: I know not. He knew well enough what had become of Abel, and yet had the impudence to deny it. Thus,

in Cain, the devil was both a murderer and a liar from the beginning. See how sinners' minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: those are strangely blind that think it possible to conceal their sins from a God that sees all, and those are strangely hard that think it desirable to conceal them from a God who pardons those only that confess.

2. He impudently charges his Judge with folly and injustice, in putting this question to him: Am I my brother's keeper? He should have humbled himself, and have said, Am not I my brother's murderer? But he flies in the face of God himself, as if he had asked him an impertinent question, to which he was no way obliged to give an answer: "Am I my brother's keeper? Surely he is old enough to take care of himself, nor did I ever take any charge of him." Some think he reflects on God and his providence, as if he had said, "Art not thou his keeper? If he be missing, on thee be the blame, and not on me, who never undertook to keep him."

Note, A charitable concern for our brethren, as their keepers, is a great duty, which is strictly required of us, but is generally neglected by us. Those who are unconcerned in the affairs of their brethren, and take no care, when they have opportunity, to prevent their hurt in their bodies, goods, or good name, especially in their souls, do, in effect, speak Cain's language. See Le 19:17, Php 2:4.

10 And he said, what hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

The conviction of Cain, Ge 4:10. God gave no direct answer to his question, but rejected his plea as false and frivolous: "What hast thou done? Thou makest a light matter of it; but hast thou considered what an evil thing it is, how deep the stain, how heavy the burden, of this guilt is? Thou thinkest to conceal it, but it is to no purpose, the evidence against thee is clear and incontestable: The voice of thy brother's blood cries." He speaks as if the blood itself were both witness and prosecutor, because God's own knowledge testified against him and God's own justice demanded satisfaction. Observe here,

1. Murder is a crying sin, none more so. Blood calls for blood, the blood of the murdered for the blood of the murderer; it cries in the dying words of Zechariah (2Ch 24:22), The Lord look upon it and require it; or in those of the souls under the altar (Re 6:10), How long, Lord, holy, and true? The patient sufferers cried for pardon (Father, forgive them), but their blood cries for vengeance. Though they hold their peace, their blood has a loud and constant cry, to which the ear of the righteous God is always open.

2 The blood is said to cry from the ground, the earth, which is said to open her mouth to receive his brother's blood from his hand, Ge 4:11. The earth did, as it were, blush to see her own face stained with such blood, and therefore opened her mouth to hide that which she could not hinder. When the heaven revealed Cain's iniquity, the earth also rose up against him (Job 20:27), and groaned on being thus made subject to vanity, Ro 8:20, 22. Cain, it is likely, buried the blood and the body, to conceal his crime; but "murder will out." He did not bury them so deep but the cry of them reached heaven.

3. In the original the word is plural, thy brother's bloods, not only his blood, but the blood of all those that might have descended from him; or the blood of all the seed of the woman, who should, in like manner, seal the truth with their blood. Christ puts all on one score (Mt 23:35); or because account was kept of every drop of blood shed. How well is it for us that the blood of Christ speaks better things than that of Abel! Heb 12:24. Abel's blood cried for vengeance, Christ's blood cries for pardon.

11 And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

The sentence passed upon Cain: And now art thou cursed from the earth, Ge 4:11. Observe here,

1. He is cursed, separated to all evil, laid under the wrath of God, as it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Ro 1:18. Who knows the extent and weight of a divine curse, how far it reaches, how deep it pierces? God's pronouncing a man cursed makes him so; for

those whom he curses are cursed indeed. The curse for Adam's disobedience terminated on the ground: Cursed is the ground for thy sake; but that for Cain's rebellion fell immediately upon himself: Thou art cursed; for God had mercy in store for Adam, but none for Cain. We have all deserved this curse, and it is only in Christ that believers are saved from it and inherit the blessing, Ga 3:10, 13.

2. He is cursed from the earth. Thence the cry came up to God, thence the curse came up to Cain. God could have taken vengeance by an immediate stroke from heaven, by the sword of an angel, or by a thunderbolt; but he chose to make the earth the avenger of blood, to continue him upon the earth, and not immediately to cut him off, and yet to make even this his curse. The earth is always near us, we cannot fly from it; so that, if this is made the executioner of divine wrath, our punishment is unavoidable: it is sin, that is, the punishment of sin, lying at the door. Cain found his punishment where he chose his portion and set his heart. Two things we expect from the earth, and by this curse both are denied to Cain and taken from him: sustenance and settlement.

(1.) Sustenance out of the earth is here withheld from him. It is a curse upon him in his enjoyments, and particularly in his calling: When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee its strength. Note, Every creature is to us what God makes it, a comfort or a cross, a blessing or a curse. If the earth yield not her strength to us, we must therein acknowledge God's righteousness; for we have not yielded our strength to him. The ground was cursed before to Adam, but it was now doubly cursed to Cain. That part of it which fell to his share, and of which he had the occupation, was made unfruitful and uncomfortable to him by the blood of Abel. Note, The wickedness of the wicked brings a curse upon all they do and all they have (De 28:15-68, &c.), and this curse embitters all they have and disappoints them in all they do.

(2.) Settlement on the earth is here denied him: A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. By this he was condemned,

[1.] To perpetual disgrace and reproach among men. It should be ever looked upon as a scandalous thing to harbour him, converse with him, or show him any countenance. And justly was a man that had divested himself of all humanity abhorred and abandoned by all mankind, and made infamous.

[2.] To perpetual disquietude and horror in his own mind. His own guilty conscience should haunt him wherever he went, and make him Magormissabib, a terror round about. What rest can those find, what settlement, that carry their own disturbance with them in their bosoms wherever they go? Those must needs be fugitives that are thus tossed. There is not a more restless fugitive upon earth than he that is continually pursued by his own guilt, nor a viler vagabond than he that is at the beck of his own lusts.

This was the sentence passed upon Cain; and even in this there was mercy mixed, inasmuch as he was not immediately cut off, but had space given him to repent; for God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment *is* greater than I can bear.

Matthew Hennery Commentary:

Here is Cain's complaint of the sentence passed upon him, as hard and severe. What an overwhelming sense of misery; but no sign of penitence, nor cry for pardon. He burdens God as a cruel judge because he punished him so severely. Some make him to speak the language of despair, and read it, My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven; and so what he says is a reproach and affront to the mercy of God, which those only shall have the benefit of that hope in it. There is forgiveness with the God of pardons for the greatest sins and sinners; but those forfeit it who despair of it. Just now Cain made nothing

of his sin, but now he is in the other extreme: Satan drives his vassals from presumption to despair. We cannot think too ill of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable. But Cain seems rather to speak the language of indignation: My punishment is greater than I can bear; and so what he says is a reproach and affront to the justice of God, and a complaint, not of the greatness of his sin, but of the extremity of his punishment, as if this were disproportionable to his merits. Instead of justifying God in the sentence, he condemns him, not accepting the punishment of his iniquity, but quarrelling with it. Note, Impenitent unhumbled hearts are therefore not reclaimed by God's rebukes because they think themselves wronged by them; and it is an evidence of great hardness to be more concerned about our sufferings than about our sins. Pharaoh's care was concerning this death only, not this sin (Ex 10:17); so was Cain's here. He is a living man, and yet complains of the punishment of his sin, La 3:39. He thinks himself rigorously dealt with when really he is favourably treated; and he cries out of wrong when he has more reason to wonder that he is out of hell. Woe unto him that thus strives with his Maker, and enters into judgment with his Judge. Now, to justify this complaint, Cain descants upon the sentence.

1. He sees himself excluded by it from the favour of his God, and concludes that, being cursed, he is hidden from God's face, which is indeed the true nature of God's curse; damned sinners find it so, to whom it is said, Depart from me you cursed. Those are cursed indeed that are forever shut out from God's love and care and from all hopes of his grace.

2. He sees himself expelled from all the comforts of this life, and concludes that, being a fugitive, he is, in effect, driven out this day from the face of the earth. As good have no place on earth as not have a settled place. Better rest in the grave than not rest at all. 3. He sees himself excommunicated by it, and cut off from the church, and forbidden to attend on public ordinances. His hands being full of blood, he must bring no more vain oblations, Isa 1:13, 15. Perhaps this he means when he complains that he is driven out from the face of the earth; for being shut out of the church, which none had yet deserted,

he was hidden from God's face, being not admitted to come with the sons of God to present himself before the Lord. 4. He sees himself exposed by it to the hatred and ill-will of all mankind: It shall come to pass that every one that finds me shall slay me. Wherever he wanders, he goes in peril of his life, at least he thinks so; and, like a man in debt, thinks every one he meets a bailiff. There were none alive but his near relations; yet even of them he is justly afraid who had himself been so barbarous to his brother. Some read it, Whatsoever finds me shall slay me; not only, "Whosoever among men," but, "Whatsoever among all the creatures." Seeing himself thrown out of God's protection, he sees the whole creation armed against him.

Note, Unpardoned guilt fills men with continual terrors, Pr 28:1, Job 15:20-21, Ps 53:5. It is better to fear and not sin than to sin and then fear. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this word of Cain should be read as a wish: Now, therefore, let it be that any that find me may kill me. Being bitter in soul, he longs for death, but it comes not (Job 3:20-22), as those under spiritual torments do, Re 9:5-6.

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown (JFB) Commentary:

Everyone that findeth me shall slay me—This shows that the population of the world was now considerably increased.

14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me.

15 And the Lord said unto him, therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

Matthew Hennery Commentary:

Here is God's confirmation of the sentence; for when he judges he will overcome, Ge 4:15. Observe,

1. How Cain is protected in wrath by this declaration, notified, we may suppose, to all that little world which was then in being: Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold, because thereby the sentence he was under (that he should be a fugitive and a vagabond) would be defeated. Condemned prisoners are under the special protection of the law; those that are appointed sacrifices to public justice must not be sacrificed to private revenge. God having said in Cain's case, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, and it would have been a daring usurpation for any man to take the sword out of God's hand, a contempt put upon an express declaration of God's mind, and therefore avenged seven-fold.

Note, God has wise and holy ends in protecting and prolonging the lives even of very wicked men. God deals with some according to that prayer, Slay them not, lest my people forget; scatter them by thy power, Ps 59:11. Had Cain been slain immediately, he would have been forgotten (Ec 8:10); but now he lives a more fearful and lasting monument of God's justice, hanged in chains, as it were.

2. How he is marked in wrath: The Lord set a mark upon Cain, to distinguish him from the rest of mankind and to notify that he was the man that murdered his brother, whom nobody must hurt, but everybody must hoot at. God stigmatized him (as some malefactors are burnt in the cheek), and put upon him such a visible and indelible mark of infamy and disgrace as would make all wise people shun him, so that he could not be otherwise than a fugitive and a vagabond, and the off-scouring of all things.

Scofield Bible Commentary:

Mark i.e. for Cain's protection. The law of Genesis 9:6 was not yet enacted.

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown (JFB) Commentary:

Whosoever slayeth Cain—By a special act of divine forbearance, the life of Cain was to be spared in the then small state of the human race.

Set a mark—not any visible mark or brand on his forehead, but some sign or token of assurance that his life would be preserved. This sign is thought by the best writers to have been a wild ferocity of aspect that rendered him an object of universal horror and avoidance.

Geneva Commentary:

Not for the love he had for Cain, but to suppress murder, which was some visible sign of God's judgment, that others should fear by it.

16 And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

He tamely submitted to that part of his sentence by which he was hidden from God's face; for (Ge 4:16) he went out from the presence of the Lord, that is, he willingly renounced God and religion, and was content to forego its privileges, so that he might not be under its precepts. He forsook Adam's family and altar, and cast off all pretensions to the fear of God, and never came among good people, nor attended on God's ordinances, any more. Note, Hypocritical professors, that have dissembled and trifled with God Almighty, are justly left to themselves, to do something that is grossly scandalous, and so to throw off that form of godliness to which they have been a reproach, and under colour of which they have denied the power of it. Cain went out now from the presence of the Lord, and we never find that he came into it again, to his comfort. Hell is destruction from the presence of the Lord, 2Th 1:9. It is a perpetual banishment from the fountain of all good. This is the choice of sinners; and so shall their doom be, to their eternal confusion.

He endeavoured to confront that part of the sentence by which he was made a fugitive and a vagabond; for,

He chose his land. He went and dwelt on the east of Eden, somewhere distant from the place where Adam and his religious family resided, distinguishing himself and his accursed generation from the holy seed, his camp from the camp of the saints and the beloved city, Re 20:9. On the east of Eden, the cherubim were, with the flaming sword, Ge 3:24. There he chose his lot, as if to defy the terrors of the Lord. But his attempt to settle was in vain; for the land he dwelt in was to him the land of Nod (that is, of shaking or trembling), because of the continual restlessness and uneasiness of his own spirit.

Note, Those that depart from God cannot find rest anywhere else. After Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, he never rested. Those that shut themselves out of heaven abandon themselves to a perpetual trembling. "Return therefore to thy rest, O my soul, to thy rest in God; else thou art for ever restless."

17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

He built a city for a habitation, Ge 4:17. He was building a city, so some read it, ever building it, but, a curse being upon him and the work of his hands, he could not finish it.

Or, as we read it, he built a city, in token of a fixed separation from the church of God, to which he had no thoughts of ever returning. This city was to be the head-quarters of the apostasy. Observe here,

(1.) Thinking by this to be safe, and to have less reason to fear God's judgments against him. Cain's defiance of the divine sentence. God said he should be a fugitive and a vagabond. Had he repented and humbled himself, this curse might have been turned into a blessing, as that of the tribe of Levi was, that they should be divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel; but his impenitent unhumbled heart walking contrary to God, and resolving to fix in spite of heaven, that which might have been a blessing was turned into a curse.

(2.) See what was Cain's choice, after he had forsaken God; he pitched upon a settlement in this world, as his rest for ever. Those who looked for the heavenly city chose, while on earth, to dwell in tabernacles; but Cain, as one that minded not that city, built himself one on earth. Those that are cursed of God are apt to seek their settlement and satisfaction here below, Ps 17:14.

(3.) See what method Cain took to defend himself against the terrors with which he was perpetually haunted. He undertook this building, to divert his thoughts from the consideration of his own misery, and to drown the clamours of a guilty conscience with the noise of axes and hammers. Thus many baffle their convictions by thrusting themselves into a hurry of worldly business. It has been in cities that the human race has ever made the greatest social progress; and several of Cain's descendants distinguished themselves by their inventive genius in the arts.

(4.) See how wicked people often get the start of God's people, and out-go them in outward prosperity. Cain and his cursed race dwell in a city, while Adam and his blessed family dwell in tents. We cannot judge of love or hatred by all that is before us, Ec 9:1, 2.

18 And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and
Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech.

His family also was built up. Here is an account of his posterity, at least the heirs of his family, for seven generations. His son was Enoch, of the same name, but not of the same character, with that holy man that walked with God, Ge 5:22. Good men and bad may bear the same names: but God can distinguish between Judas Iscariot and Judas not Iscariot, Joh 14:22. The names of more of his posterity are mentioned, and but just mentioned; not as those of the holy seed (Ge 5:1-32), where we have three verses concerning each, whereas here we have three or four in one verse. They are numbered in haste, as not valued or delighted in, in comparison with God's chosen.

19 And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one *was*
Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

His marrying two wives. It was one of the degenerate race of Cain who first transgressed that original law of marriage that two only should be one flesh. Hitherto one man had but one wife at a time; but Lamech took two. From the beginning it was not so. Mal 2:15, Mt 19:5. See here,

1. Those who desert God's church and ordinances lay themselves open to all manner of temptation.

2. When a bad custom is begun by bad men sometimes men of better characters are, through unwariness, drawn in to follow them. Jacob, David, and many others, who were otherwise good men, were afterwards ensnared in this sin which Lamech begun.

20 And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of *such as have* cattle.

21 And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.

His happiness in his children, notwithstanding this. Though he sinned, in marrying two wives, yet he was blessed with children by both, and those such as lived to be famous in their generation, not for their piety, no mention is made of this (for aught that appears they were the heathen of that age), but for their ingenuity. They were not only themselves men of business, but men that were serviceable to the world, and eminent for the invention, or at least the improvement, of some useful arts.

1. Jabal was a famous shepherd; he delighted much in keeping cattle himself, and was so happy in devising methods of doing it to the best advantage, and instructing others in them, that the shepherds of those times, nay, the shepherds of after-times, called him father; or perhaps, his children after him being brought up to the same employment, the family was a family of shepherds.

2. Jubal was a famous musician, and particularly an organist, and the first that gave rules for the noble art or science of music. When Jabal had set them in a way to be rich, Jubal put

them in a way to be merry. Those that spend their days in wealth will not be without the timbrel and harp, Job 21:12, 13. From his name, Jubal, probably the jubilee-trumpet was so called; for the best music was that which proclaimed liberty and redemption. Jabal was their Pan and Jubal their Apollo.

3. Tubal Cain was a famous smith, who greatly improved the art of working in brass and iron, for the service both of war and husbandry. He was their Vulcan. See here,

(1.) That worldly things are the only things that carnal wicked people set their hearts upon and are most ingenious and industrious about. So it was with this impious race of cursed Cain. Here were a father of shepherds and a father of musicians, but not a father of the faithful. Here was one to teach in brass and iron, but none to teach the good knowledge of the Lord. Here were devices how to be rich, and how to be mighty, and how to be merry, but nothing of God, nor of his fear and service, among them. Present things fill the heads of most people.

(2.) That even those who are destitute of the knowledge and grace of God may be endued with many excellent and useful accomplishments, which may make them famous and serviceable in their generation. Common gifts are given to bad men, while God chooses to himself the foolish things of the world.

22 And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer
in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain *was* Naamah.

23 And Lamech said unto his wives,
Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
For I have slain a man to my wounding,
and a young man to my hurt.

Matthew Hennery Commentary (MHC):

By this speech of Lamech, which is here recorded, and probably was much talked of in those times, he further appears

to have been a wicked man, as Cain's accursed race generally were. Observe,

1. How haughtily and imperiously he speaks to his wives, as one that expected a mighty regard and observance: Hear my voice, you wives of Lamech. No marvel that he who had broken one law of marriage, by taking two wives, broke another, which obliged him to be kind and tender to those he had taken, and to give honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel. Those are not always the most careful to do their own duty that are highest in their demands of respect from others, and most frequent in calling upon their relations to know their place and do their duty.

2. How bloody and barbarous he was to all about him: I have slain, or (as it is in the margin) I would slay a man in my wound, and a young man in my hurt. He owns himself a man of a fierce and cruel disposition, that would lay about him without mercy, and kill all that stood in his way; be it a man, or a young man, nay, though he himself were in danger to be wounded and hurt in the conflict. Some think, because (Ge 4:24) he compares himself with Cain, that he had murdered some of the holy seed, the true worshippers of God, and that he acknowledged this to be the wounding of his conscience and the hurt of his soul; and yet that, like Cain, he continued impenitent, trembling and yet unhumbled. Or his wives, knowing what manner of spirit he was of, how apt both to give and to resent provocation, were afraid lest somebody or other would be the death of him. "Never fear," says he, "I defy any man to set upon me; whosoever does, let me alone to make my part good with him; I will slay him, be he a man or a young man." Note, It is a common thing for fierce and bloody men to glory in their shame (Php 3:19), as if it were both their safety and their honour that they care not how many lives are sacrificed to their angry resentments, nor how much they are hated, provided they may be feared. Oderint, dum metuant--Let them hate, provided they fear.

3. How impiously he presumes even upon God's protection in his wicked way, Ge 4:24. He had heard that Cain should be

avenged seven-fold (Ge 4:15), that is, that if any man should dare to kill Cain he should be severely reckoned with and punished for so doing, though Cain deserved to die a thousand deaths for the murder of his brother, and hence he infers that if anyone should kill him for the murders he had committed God would much more avenge his death. As if the special care God took to prolong and secure the life of Cain, for special reasons peculiar to his case (and indeed for his sorer punishment, as the beings of the damned are continued) were designed as a protection to all murderers. Thus Lamech perversely argues, "If God provided for the safety of Cain, much more for mine, who, though I have slain many, yet never slew my own brother, and upon no provocation, as he did." Note, The reprieve of some sinners, and the patience God exercises towards them, are often abused to the hardening of others in the like sinful ways, Ec 8:11. But, though justice strike some slowly, others cannot therefore be sure but that they may be taken away with a swift destruction. Or, if God should bear long with those who thus presume upon his forbearance, they do but hereby treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

Now this is all we have upon record in scripture concerning the family and posterity of cursed Cain, till we find them all cut off and perishing in the universal deluge.

Geneva Bible Commentary:

His wives seeing that all men hated him for his cruelty, were afraid, therefore he brags that there is none strong enough to resist, even though he was already wounded.

24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.

25 And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth [appointed, *or* put]: For God, *said she,* hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.

This is the first mention of Adam in the story of this chapter. No question, the murder of Abel, and the impenitence and apostasy of Cain, were a very great grief to him and Eve, and the more because their own wickedness did now correct them

and their backslidings did reprove them. Their folly had given sin and death entrance into the world; and now they smarted by it, being, by means thereof, deprived of both their sons in one day, Ge 27:45. When parents are grieved by their children's wickedness they should take occasion thence to lament that corruption of nature which was derived from them, and which is the root of bitterness. But here we have that which was a relief to our first parents in their affliction.

God gave them to see the re-building of their family, which was sorely shaken and weakened by that sad event. For,

1. They saw their seed, another seed instead of Abel, Ge 4:25. Observe God's kindness and tenderness towards his people, in his providential dealings with them; when he takes away one comfort from them, he gives them another instead of it, which may prove a greater blessing to them than that was in which they thought their lives were bound up. This other seed was he in whom the church was to be built up and perpetuated, and he comes instead of Abel, for the succession of confessors is the revival of the martyrs and as it were the resurrection of God's slain witnesses. Thus we are baptized for the dead (1Co 15:29), that is, we are, by baptism, admitted into the church, for or instead of those who by death, especially by martyrdom, are removed out of it; and we fill up their room. Those who slay God's servants hope by this means to wear out the saints of the Most High; but they will be deceived. Christ shall still see his seed; God can out of stones raise up children for him, and make the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church, whose lands, we are sure, shall never be lost for want of heirs. This son, by a prophetic spirit, they called Seth (that is, set, settled, or placed), because, in his seed, mankind should continue to the end of time, and from him the Messiah should descend. While Cain, the head of the apostasy, is made a wanderer, Seth, from whom the true church was to come, is one fixed. In Christ and his church is the only true settlement.

2. They saw their seed's seed, Ge 4:26. To Seth was born a son called Enos, that general name for all men, which bespeaks the weakness, frailty, and misery, of man's state. The best men are

most sensible of these, both in themselves and their children. We are never so settled but we must remind ourselves that we are frail.

26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.

God gave them to see the reviving of religion in their family: Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord, Ge 4:26. It is small comfort to a good man to see his children's children, if he do not, withal, see peace upon Israel, and those that come of him walking in the truth. Doubtless God's name was called upon before, but now,

1 The worshippers of God began to stir up themselves to do more in religion than they had done; perhaps not more than had been done at first, but more than had been done of late, since the defection of Cain. Now men began to worship God, not only in their closets and families, but in public and solemn assemblies. Or now there was so great a reformation in religion that it was, as it were, a new beginning of it. Then may refer, not to the birth of Enos, but to the whole foregoing story: then, when men saw in Cain and Lamech the sad effects of sin by the workings of natural conscience,--when they saw God's judgments upon sin and sinners,--then they were so much the more lively and resolute in religion. The worse others are the better we should be, and the more zealous.

2 The worshippers of God began to distinguish themselves. The margin reads it, Then began men to be called by the name of the Lord, or to call themselves by it. Now that Cain and those that had deserted religion had built a city, and begun to declare for impiety and irreligion, and called themselves the sons of men, those that adhered to God began to declare for him and his worship, and called themselves the sons of God. Now began the distinction between professors and profane, which has been kept up ever since, and will be while the world stands.

Genesis -5

The Descendants of Adam

1 This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

The first words of the chapter are the title or argument of the whole chapter: it is the book of the generations of Adam; it is the list or catalogue of the posterity of Adam, not of all, but only of the holy seed who were the substance thereof (Isa 6:13), and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came (Ro 9:5), the names, ages, and deaths, of those that were the successors of the first Adam in the custody of the promise, and the ancestors of the second Adam. The genealogy begins with Adam himself. Here is,

His creation, Ge 5:1, 2, where we have a brief rehearsal of what was before at large related concerning the creation of man. This is what we have need frequently to hear of and carefully to acquaint ourselves with. Observe here,

1. That God created man. Man is not his own maker, therefore he must not be his own master; but the Author of his being must be the director of his motions and the center of them.

2. That there was a day in which God created man. He was not from eternity, but of yesterday; he was not the first-born, but the junior of the creation.

3. That God made him in his own likeness, righteous and holy, and therefore, undoubtedly, happy. Man's nature resembled the divine nature more than that of any of the creatures of this lower world.

4. That God created them male and female (Ge 5:2), for their mutual comfort as well as for the preservation and increase of their kind. Adam and Eve were both made immediately by the

hand of God, both made in God's likeness; and therefore between the sexes there is not that great distance and inequality which some imagine.

5. That God blessed them. It is usual for parents to bless their children; so God, the common Father, blessed his. But earthly parents can only beg a blessing; it is God's prerogative to command it. It refers chiefly to the blessing of increase, not excluding other blessings.

6. By giving them both one name, he notes the inseparable conjunction of man and wife. That he called their name Adam. Adam signifies earth, red earth. Now,

(1.) God gave him this name. Adam had himself named the rest of the creatures, but he must not choose his own name, lest he should assume some glorious pompous title. But God gave him a name which would be a continual memorandum to him of the meanness of his original, and oblige him to look unto the rock whence he was hewn and the hole of the pit whence he was digged, Isa 51:1. Those have little reason to be proud who are so near akin to dust.

(2.) He gave this name both to the man and to the woman. Being at first one by nature, and afterwards one by marriage, it was fit they should both have the same name, in token of their union. The woman is of the earth earthy as well as the man.

2 male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called
their name Adam, in the day when they were created.
3 And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begat *a son* in his
own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth:

The birth of his son Seth, Ge 5:3. He was born in the hundred and thirtieth year of Adam's life; and probably the murder of Abel was not long before. Many other sons and daughters were born to Adam, besides Cain and Abel, before this; but no notice is taken of them, because an honourable mention must be made of his name only in whose loins Christ and the church were. But that which is most observable here concerning Seth is that

Adam begat him in his own likeness, after his image. Adam was made in the image of God; but, when he was fallen and corrupt, he begat a son in his own image, sinful and defiled, frail, mortal, and miserable, like himself; not only a man like himself, consisting of body and soul, but a sinner like himself, guilty and obnoxious, degenerate and corrupt. Even the man after God's own heart owns himself conceived and born in sin, Ps 51:5. This was Adam's own likeness, the reverse of that divine likeness in which Adam was made; but, having lost it himself, he could not convey it to his seed. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does. A sinner begets a sinner, but a saint does not beget a saint.

4 and the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters:

5 and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

His age and death. He lived, in all, nine hundred and thirty years, and then he died, according to the sentence passed upon him, To dust thou shalt return. Though he did not die in the day he ate forbidden fruit, yet in that very day he became mortal. Then he began to die; his whole life afterwards was but a reprieve, a forfeited condemned life; nay, it was a wasting dying life: he was not only like a criminal sentenced, but as one already crucified, that dies slowly and by degrees.

It must chiefly be resolved into the power and providence of God. He prolonged their lives, both for the more speedy replenishing of the earth and for the more effectual preservation of the knowledge of God and religion, then, when there was no written word, but tradition was the channel of its conveyance. All the patriarchs here, except Noah, were born before Adam died; so that from him they might receive a full and satisfactory account of the creation, paradise, the fall, the promise, and those divine precepts which concerned religious worship and a religious life: and, if any mistake arose, they might have recourse to him while he lived, as to an oracle, for the rectifying of it, and after his death to Methuselah, and others, that had conversed with him: so great was the care of Almighty God to

preserve in his church the knowledge of his will and the purity of his worship.

6 And Seth lived a hundred and five years, and begat Enos:
7 and Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters:
8 and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.
9 And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan:
10 and Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters:
11 and all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.
12 And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel:
13 and Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters:
14 and all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.
15 And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared:
16 and Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters:
17 and all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died.
18 And Jared lived a hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch:
19 and Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:
20 and all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.
21 And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah:

The accounts here run on for several generations without any thing remarkable, or any variation but of the names and numbers; but at length there comes in one that must not be passed over so, of whom special notice must be taken, and that is Enoch, the seventh from Adam: the rest, we may suppose, did virtuously, but he excelled them all, and was the brightest star of the patriarchal age. It is but little that is recorded concerning him; but this little is enough to make his name great,

greater than the name of the other Enoch, who had a city called by his name. Here are two things concerning him:--

His gracious conversation in this world, which is twice spoken of: Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah (Ge 5:22), and again, Enoch walked with God, Ge 5:24. Observe,

The nature of his religion and the scope and tenour of his conversation: he walked with God, which denotes,

(1.) True religion; what is godliness, but walking with God? The ungodly and profane are without God in the world, they walk contrary to him: but the godly walk with God, which presupposes reconciliation to God, for two cannot walk together except they be agreed (Am 3:3), and includes all the parts and instances of a godly, righteous, and sober life. To walk with God is to set God always before us, and to act as those that are always under his eye. It is to live a life of communion with God both in ordinances and providences. It is to make God's word our rule and his glory our end in all our actions. It is to make it our constant care and endeavour in everything to please God, and nothing to offend him. It is to comply with his will, to concur with his designs, and to be workers together with him. It is to be followers of him as dear children.

(2.) Eminent religion. He was entirely dead to this world, and did not only walk after God, as all good men do, but he walked with God, as if he were in heaven already. He lived above the rate, not only of other men, but of other saints: not only good in bad times, but the best in good times.

(3.) Activity in promoting religion among others. Executing the priest's office is called walking before God, 1Sa 2:30, 35, and see Zec 3:7. Enoch, it should seem, was a priest of the most high God, and like Noah, who is likewise said to walk with God, he was a preacher of righteousness, and prophesied of Christ's second coming. Jude 1:14, Behold, the Lord cometh

with his holy myriads. Now the Holy Spirit, instead of saying, Enoch lived, says, Enoch walked with God; for it is the life of a good man to walk with God. This was,

[1.] The business of Enoch's life, his constant care and work; while others lived to themselves and the world, he lived to God.

[2.] It was the joy and support of his life. Communion with God was to him better than life itself. To me to live is Christ, Php 1:21.

22 and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters:

The date of his religion. It is said (Ge 5:21), he lived sixty-five years, and begat Methuselah; but (Ge 5:22) he walked with God after he begat Methuselah, which intimates that he did not begin to be eminent for piety till about that time; at first he walked but as other men. Great saints arrive at their eminence by degrees.

The continuance of his religion: he walked with God three hundred years, as long as he continued in this world. The hypocrite will not pray always; but the real saint that acts from a principle, and makes religion his choice, will persevere to the end, and walk with God while he lives, as one that hopes to live for ever with him, Ps 104:33.

23 and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

Enoch, "translated that he should not see death" Hebrews 11:5 before the judgment of the Flood, is a type of those saints who are to be translated before the apocalyptic judgments 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. Noah, left on the earth, but preserved through the judgment of the Flood, is a type of the Jewish people, who will be kept through the apocalyptic judgments ; Jeremiah 30:5-9; Revelation 12:13-16 and brought as an earthly people to the new heaven and new earth ; Isaiah 65:17-19; 66:20-22; Revelation 21:1.

24 and Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not; for God took him.

His glorious removal to a better world. As he did not live like the rest, so he did not die like the rest (Ge 5:24): He was not, for God took him; that is, as it is explained (Heb 11:5), He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him. Observe,

1. When he was thus translated.

(1.) What time of his life. It was when he had lived but three hundred and sixty-five years (a year of years), which, as men's ages went then, was in the midst of his days; for there was none of the patriarchs before the flood that did not more than double that age. But why did God take him so soon? Surely, because the world, which had now grown corrupt, was not worthy of him, or because he was so much above the world, and so weary of it, as to desire a speedy removal out of it, or because his work was done, and done the sooner for his minding it so closely. Note, God often takes those soonest whom he loves best, and the time they lose on earth is gained in heaven, to their unspeakable advantage.

(2.) What time of the world. It was when all the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were living, except Adam, who died fifty-seven years before, and Noah, who was born sixty-nine years after; those two had sensible confirmations to their faith other ways, but to all the rest, who were or might have been witnesses of Enoch's translation, it was a sensible encouragement to their faith and hope concerning a future state.

2. How his removal is expressed: He was not, for God took him.

(1.) He was not any longer in this world; it was not the period of his being, but of his being here: he was not found, so the apostle explains it from the LXX.; not found by his friends, who sought him as the sons of the prophets sought Elijah (2Ki 2:17); not found by his enemies, who, some think, were in quest of him, to put him to death in their rage against him for his eminent piety. It appears by his prophecy that there were then

many ungodly sinners, who spoke hard speeches, and probably did hard things too, against God's people (Jude 1:15), but God hid Enoch from them, not under heaven, but in heaven.

(2.) God took him body and soul to himself in the heavenly paradise, by the ministry of angels, as afterwards he took Elijah. He was changed, as those saints will be that shall be found alive at Christ's second coming. Whenever a good man dies God takes him, fetches him hence, and receives him to himself. The apostle adds concerning Enoch that, before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God, and this was the good report he obtained. Note,

[1.] Walking with God pleases God.

[2.] We cannot walk with God so as to please him, but by faith.

[3.] God himself will put an honour upon those that by faith walk with him so as to please him. He will own them now, and witness for them before angels and men at the great day. Those that have not this testimony before the translation, yet shall have it afterwards.

[4.] Those whose conversation in the world is truly holy shall find their removal out of it truly happy. Enoch's translation was not only an evidence to faith of the reality of a future state, and of the possibility of the body's existing in glory in that state; but it was an encouragement to the hope of all that walk with God that they shall be forever with him: signal piety shall be crowned with signal honours.

In Heb 11:5, we are informed that he was translated to heaven—a mighty miracle, designed to effect what ordinary means of instruction had failed to accomplish, gave a palpable proof to an age of almost universal unbelief that the doctrines which he had taught (Jude 14, 15) were true and that his devotedness to the cause of God and righteousness in the midst of opposition was highly pleasing to the mind of God.

This shows that there was a better life prepared and is a testimony of the immortality of souls and bodies. To inquire where he went is mere curiosity.

25 And Methuselah lived a hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech:

Concerning Methuselah observe,

1 The signification of his name, which some think was prophetical, his father Enoch being a prophet. Methuselah signifies, he dies, or there is a dart, or, a sending forth, namely, of the deluge, which came the very year that Methuselah died. If indeed his name was so intended and so explained, it was fair warning to a careless world, a long time before the judgment came. However, this is observable, that the longest liver that ever was carried death in his name, that he might be reminded of its coming surely, though it came slowly.

2. His age: he lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, the longest we read of that ever any man lived on earth; and yet he died. The longest liver must die at last. Neither youth nor age will discharge from that war, for that is the end of all men: none can challenge life by long prescription, nor make that a plea against the arrests of death. It is commonly supposed that Methuselah died a little before the flood; the Jewish writers say, "seven days before," referring to Ge 7:10, and that he was taken away from the evil to come, which goes upon this presumption, which is generally received, that all the patriarchs mentioned in this chapter were holy good men. I am loth to offer any surmise to the contrary; and yet I see not that this can be any more inferred from their enrollment here among the ancestors of Christ than that all those kings of Judah were so whose names are recorded in his genealogy, many of whom, we are sure, were much otherwise: and, if this be questioned, it may be suggested as probable that Methuselah was himself drowned with the rest of the world; for it is certain that he died that year.

26 and Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters:

27 and all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.

28 And Lamech lived a hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son:

His name, with the reason of it: Noah signifies rest; his parents gave him that name, with a prospect of his being a more than ordinary blessing to his generation: This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed. Here is,

1. Lamech's complaint of the calamitous state of human life. By the entrance of sin, and the entail of the curse for sin, our condition has become very miserable: our whole life is spent in labour, and our time filled up with continual toil. God having cursed the ground, it is as much as some can do, with the utmost care and pains, to fetch a hard livelihood out of it. He speaks as one fatigued with the business of this life, and grudging that so many thoughts and precious minutes, which otherwise might have been much better employed, are unavoidably spent for the support of the body.

2. His comfortable hopes of some relief by the birth of this son: This same shall comfort us, which denotes not only the desire and expectation which parents generally have concerning their children (that, when they grow up, they will be comforts to them and helpers in their business, though they often prove otherwise), but an apprehension and prospect of something more. Very probably there were some prophecies that went before of him, as a person that should be wonderfully serviceable to his generation, which they so understood as to conclude that he was the promised seed, the Messiah that should come; and then it intimates that a covenant-interest in Christ as ours, and the believing expectation of his coming, furnish us with the best and surest comforts, both in reference to the wrath and curse of God which we have deserved and to the toils and troubles of this present time of which we are often complaining. "Is Christ ours? Is heaven ours? This same shall comfort us."

29 and he called his name Noah [rest *or* comfort], saying, this *same*
shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands,
because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.
30 And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five
years, and begat sons and daughters:
31 and all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven
years: and he died.
32 And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem,
Ham, and Japheth.

His children, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These Noah begat (the eldest of these) when he was 500 years old. It should seem that Japheth was the eldest (Ge 10:21), but Shem is put first because on him the covenant was entailed, as appears by Ge 9:26, where God is called the Lord God of Shem. To him, it is probable, the birth-right was given, and from him, it is certain, both Christ the head, and the church the body, were to descend. Therefore he is called Shem, which signifies a name, because in his posterity the name of God should always remain, till he should come out of his loins whose name is above every name; so that in putting Shem first Christ was, in effect, put first, who in all things must have the pre-eminence.

Genesis -6

The Wickedness of Mankind

1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the
earth, and daughters were born unto them,

The sons of God saw the daughters of men—By the former is meant the family of Seth, who were professedly religious; by the latter, the descendants of apostate Cain. Mixed marriages between parties of opposite principles and practice were necessarily sources of extensive corruption. The women, religious themselves, would as wives and mothers exert an influence fatal to the existence of religion in their household, and consequently the people of that later age sank to the lowest depravity that having more respect for their beauty and worldly considerations than for their manners and godliness.

For the glory of God's justice, and for warning to a wicked world, before the history of the ruin of the old world, we have a full account of its degeneracy, its apostasy from God and rebellion against him. The destroying of it was an act, not of an absolute sovereignty, but of necessary justice, for the maintaining of the honour of God's government. Now here we have an account of two things which occasioned the wickedness of the old world:--

1 The increase of mankind: Men began to multiply upon the face of the earth. This was the effect of the blessing (Ge 1:28), and yet man's corruption so abused and perverted this blessing that it was turned into a curse. Thus sin takes occasion by the mercies of God to be the more exceedingly sinful. Pr 29:16, When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth. The more sinners the more sin; and the multitude of offenders emboldens men. Infectious diseases are most destructive in populous cities; and sin is a spreading leprosy. Thus in the New-Testament church, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring (Ac 6:1), and we read of a nation that was multiplied, not to the increase of their joy, Isa 9:3. Numerous families need to be well-governed, lest they become wicked families.

2. Mixed marriages (Ge 6:2): The sons of God (that is, the professors of religion, who were called by the name of the Lord, and called upon that name), married the daughters of men, that is, those that were profane, and strangers to God and godliness. The posterity of Seth did not keep by themselves, as they ought to have done, both for the preservation of their own purity and in detestation of the apostasy. They intermingled themselves with the excommunicated race of Cain: They took them wives of all that they chose. But what was amiss in these marriages?

(1.) They chose only by the eye: They saw that they were fair, which was all they looked at.

(2.) They followed the choice which their own corrupt affections made: they took all that they chose, without advice and consideration. But,

(3.) That which proved of such bad consequence to them was that they married strange wives, were unequally yoked with unbelievers, 2Co 6:14. This was forbidden to Israel, De 7:3, 4. It was the unhappy occasion of Solomon's apostasy (1Ki 11:1-4), and was of bad consequence to the Jews after their return out of Babylon, Ezr 9:1, 2. Note, Professors of religion, in marrying both themselves and their children, should make conscience of keeping within the bounds of profession. The bad will sooner debauch the good than the good reform the bad. Those that profess themselves the children of God must not marry without his consent, which they have not if they join in affinity with his enemies.

2 that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they *were* fair;
and they took them wives of all which they chose.
3 And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for
that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

This comes in here as a token of God's displeasure at those who married strange wives; he threatens to withdraw from them his Spirit, whom they had grieved by such marriages, contrary to their convictions: fleshly lusts are often punished with spiritual judgments, the sorest of all judgments. Or as another occasion of the great wickedness of the old world; the Spirit of the Lord, being provoked by their resistance of his motions, ceased to strive with them, and then all religion was soon lost among them. This he warns them of before, that they might not further vex his Holy Spirit, but by their prayers might stay him with them. Observe in this verse,

I. God's resolution not always to strive with man by his Spirit. The Spirit then strove by Noah's preaching (1Pe 3:19,20), Christ, as God, had by His Spirit inspiring Enoch, Noah, and perhaps other prophets (1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 2:5; Jude 14), preached repentance to the antediluvians; but they were incorrigible, and

by inward checks, but it was in vain with the most of men; therefore, says God, He shall not always strive. Note,

1 The blessed Spirit strives with sinners, by the convictions and admonitions of conscience, to turn them from sin to God.

2. If the Spirit be resisted, quenched, and striven against, though he strive long, he will not strive always, Ho 4:17. 3. Those are ripening apace for ruin whom the Spirit of grace has left off striving with.

II The reason of this resolution: For that he also is flesh, that is, incurably corrupt, and carnal, and sensual, so that it is labour lost to strive with him. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? He also, that is, All, one as well as another, they have all sunk into the mire of flesh. Note,

1. It is the corrupt nature, and the inclination of the soul towards the flesh, that oppose the Spirit's strivings and render them ineffectual.

2. When a sinner has long adhered to that interest, and sided with the flesh against the Spirit, the Spirit justly withdraws his agency, and strives no more. None lose the Spirit's strivings but those that have first forfeited them.

III. A reprieve granted, notwithstanding: Yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years; so long I will defer the judgment they deserve, and give them space to prevent it by their repentance and reformation. Justice said, Cut them down; but mercy interceded, Lord, let them alone this year also; and so far mercy prevailed, that a reprieve was obtained for six-score years.

Note, The time of God's patience and forbearance towards provoking sinners is sometimes long, but always limited: reprieves are not pardons; though God bear a great while, he will not bear always.

4 There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* to them, the same became mighty men which *were* of old, men of renown.

Matthew Hennery commentary (MHC):

We have here a further account of the corruption of the old world. When the sons of God had matched with the daughters of men, though it was very displeasing to God, yet he did not immediately cut them off, but waited to see what would be the issue of these marriages, and which side the children would take after; and it proved (as usually it does), that they took after the worst side. Here is,

The temptation they were under to oppress and do violence. They were giants, and they were men of renown; they became too hard for all about them, and carried all before them, 1. With their great bulk, as the sons of Anak, Nu 13:33. 2. With their great name, as the king of Assyria, Isa 37:11. These made them the terror of the mighty in the land of the living; and, thus armed, they daringly insulted the rights of all their neighbours and trampled upon all that is just and sacred. Note, Those that have so much power over others as to be able to oppress them have seldom so much power over themselves as not to oppress; great might is a very great snare to many. This degenerate race slighted the honour their ancestors had obtained by virtue and religion, and made themselves a great name by that which was the perpetual ruin of their good name.

Scofield Commentary:

Sons of God -- Some hold that these "sons of God" were the "angels which kept not their first estate" Jude 1:6. It is asserted that the title is in the O.T. exclusively used of angels. But this is an error Isaiah 43:6. Angels are spoken of in a sexless way. No female angels are mentioned in Scripture, and we are expressly told that marriage is unknown among angels. Matthew 22:30. The uniform Hebrew and Christian

interpretation has been that verse Genesis 6:2 marks the breaking down of the separation between the godly line of Seth and the godless line of Cain, and so the failure of the testimony to Jehovah committed to the line of Seth Genesis 4:26. For apostasy there is no remedy but judgment; Isaiah 1:2-7, 24, 25; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31. Noah, "a preacher of righteousness," is given 120 years, but he won no convert, and the judgment predicted by his great- grandfather fell; Jude 1:14, 15; Genesis 7:11.

5 And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

The charge exhibited and proved against them, Ge 6:5. The evidence produced was incontestable. God saw it, and that was instead of a thousand witnesses. God sees all the wickedness that is among the children of men; it cannot be concealed from him now, and, if it be not repented of, it shall not be concealed by him shortly. Now what did God take notice of?

1. He observed that the streams of sin that flowed along in men's lives, and the breadth and depth of those streams: He saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. Observe the connection of this with what goes before: the oppressors were mighty men and men of renown; and, then, God saw that the wickedness of man was great. Note, The wickedness of a people is great indeed when the most notorious sinners are men of renown among them. Things are bad when bad men are not only honoured notwithstanding their wickedness, but honoured for their wickedness, and the vilest men exalted. Wickedness is then great when great men are wicked. Their wickedness was great, that is, abundance of sin was committed in all places, by all sorts of people; and such sin as was in its own nature most gross, and heinous, and provoking; it was committed daringly, and with a defiance of heaven, nor was any care taken by those that had power in their hands to restrain and punish it. This God saw. Note, All the sins of sinners are known to God the Judge. Those that are most conversant in the world, though they see much wickedness in it, yet they see but

little of that which is; but God sees all, and judges aright concerning it, how great it is, nor can he be deceived in his judgment.

2. He observed the fountain of sin that was in men's hearts. Any one might see that the wickedness of man was great, for they declared their sin as Sodom; but God's eye went further: He saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually--a sad sight, and very offensive to God's holy eye! This was the bitter root, the corrupt spring: all the violence and oppression, all the luxury and wantonness, that were in the world, proceeded from the corruption of nature; lust conceived them, Jam 1:15. See Mt 15:19.

(1.) The heart was naught; it was deceitful and desperately wicked. The principles were corrupt, and the habits and dispositions evil.

(2.) The thoughts of the heart were so. Thought is sometimes taken for the settled judgment or opinion, and this was bribed, and biased, and misled; sometimes it signifies the workings of the fancy, and these were always either vain or vile, either weaving the spider's web or hatching the cockatrice's egg.

(3.) The imagination of the thoughts of the heart was so, that is, their designs and devices were wicked. They did not do evil through mere carelessness, as those that walk at all adventures, not heeding what they do; but they did evil deliberately and designedly, contriving how to do mischief. It was bad indeed; for it was only evil, continually evil, and every imagination was so. There was no good to be found among them, no, not at any time: the stream of sin was full, and strong, and constant; and God saw it; see Ps 14:1-3.

6 And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

Here is,

God's resentment of man's wickedness. He did not see it as an unconcerned spectator, but as one injured and affronted by it; he saw it as a tender father sees the folly and stubbornness of a rebellious and disobedient child, which not only angers him, but grieves him, and makes him wish he had been written childless. The expressions here used are very strange: It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, that he had made a creature of such noble powers and faculties, and had put him on this earth, which he built and furnished on purpose to be a convenient, comfortable, habitation for him; and it grieved him at his heart. These are expressions after the manner of men, and must be understood so as not to reflect upon the honour of God's immutability or felicity.

1. This language does not imply any passion or uneasiness in God (nothing can create disturbance to the Eternal Mind), but it expresses his just and holy displeasure against sin and sinners, against sin as odious to his holiness and against sinners as obnoxious to his justice. He is pressed by the sins of his creatures (Am 2:13), wearied (Isa 43:24), broken (Eze 6:9), grieved (Ps 95:10), and here grieved to the heart, as men are when they are wronged and abused by those they have been very kind to, and therefore repent of their kindness, and wish they had never fostered that snake in their bosom which now hisses in their face and stings them to the heart. Does God thus hate sin? And shall we not hate it? Has our sin grieved him to the heart? And shall we not be grieved and pricked to the heart for it? O that this consideration may humble us and shame us, and that we may look on him whom we have thus grieved, and mourn! Zec 12:10.

2. It does not imply any change of God's mind; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? With him there is not variableness. But it expressed a change of his way. When God had made man upright, he rested and was refreshed (Ex 31:17),

and his way towards him was such as showed he was pleased with the work of his own hands; but, now that man had apostatized, he could not do otherwise than show himself displeased; so that the change was in man, not in God. God repented that he had made man; but we never find him repenting that he redeemed man (though that was a work of much greater expense), because special and effectual grace is given to secure the great ends of redemption; so that those gifts and callings are without repentance, Ro 11:29.

7 And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

God's resolution to destroy man for his wickedness, Ge 6:7. Observe,

1. When God repented that he had made man, he resolved to destroy man. Thus those that truly repent of sin will resolve, in the strength of God's grace, to mortify sin and to destroy it, and so to undo what they have done amiss. We do but mock God in saying that we are sorry for our sin, and that it grieves us to the heart, if we continue to indulge it. In vain do we pretend a change of our mind if we do not evidence it by a change of our way.

2. He resolves to destroy man. The original word is very significant: I will wipe off man from the earth (so some), as dirt or filth is wiped off from a place which should be clean, and is thrown to the dunghill, the proper place for it. See 2Ki 21:13. Those that are the spots of the places they live in are justly wiped away by the judgments of God. I will blot out man from the earth (so others), as those lines which displease the author are blotted out a book, or as the name of a citizen is blotted out of the rolls of the freemen, when he is dead or disfranchised.

3. He speaks of man as his own creature even when he resolves upon his ruin: Man whom I have created. "Though I have created him, this shall not excuse him," Isa 27:11. He that made

him will not save him; he that is our Creator, if he be not our ruler, will be our destroyer. Or, "Because I have created him, and he has been so undutiful and ungrateful to his Creator, therefore I will destroy him:" those forfeit their lives that do not answer the end of their living.

4. Even the brute-creatures were to be involved in this destruction--Beasts, and creeping things, and the fowls of the air. These were made for man, and therefore must be destroyed with man; for it follows: It repenteth me that I have made them; for the end of their creation also was frustrated. They were made that man might serve and honour God with them; and therefore were destroyed because he had served his lusts with them, and made them subject to vanity.

5. God took up this resolution concerning man after his Spirit had been long striving with him in vain. None are ruined by the justice of God but those that hate to be reformed by the grace of God.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

We have here Noah distinguished from the rest of the world, and a peculiar mark of honour put upon him.

1. When God was displeased with the rest of the world, he favoured Noah: But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, Ge 6:8. This vindicates God's justice in his displeasure against the world, and shows that he had strictly examined the character of every person in it before he pronounced it universally corrupt; for, there being one good man, he found him out, and smiled upon him. It also magnifies his grace towards Noah that he was made a vessel of God's mercy when all mankind besides had become the generation of his wrath: distinguishing favours bring under peculiarly strong obligations. Probably Noah did not find favour in the eyes of men; they hated and persecuted him, because both by his life and preaching he condemned the world. But he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and this was honour and comfort enough. God made more account of Noah than of all the world besides,

and this made him greater and more truly honourable than all the giants that were in those days, who became mighty men and men of renown. Let this be the summit of our ambition, to find grace in the eyes of the Lord; herein let us labour, that, present or absent, we may be accepted of him, 2Co 5:9. Those are highly favoured whom God favours.

2. When the rest of the world was corrupt and wicked, Noah kept his integrity: These are the generations of Noah (this is the account we have to give of him), Noah was a just man, Ge 6:9. This character of Noah comes in here either,

(1.) As the reason of God's favour to him; his singular piety qualified him for singular tokens of God's loving-kindness. Those that would find grace in the eyes of the Lord must be as Noah was and do as Noah did; God loves those that love him: or,

(2.) As the effect of God's favour to him. It was God's good-will to him that produced this good work in him. He was a very good man, but he was no better than the grace of God made him, 1Co 15:10. Now observe his character.

[1.] He was a just man, that is, justified before God by faith in the promised seed; for he was an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, Heb 11:7. He was sanctified, and had right principles and dispositions implanted in him; and he was righteous in his conversation, one that made conscience of rendering to all their due, to God his due and to men theirs. Note, None but a downright honest man can find favour with God. That conversation which will be pleasing to God must be governed by simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, 2Co 1:12. God has sometimes chosen the foolish things of the world, but he never chose the knavish things of it.

[2.] He was perfect, not with a sinless perfection, but a perfection of sincerity; and it is well for us that by virtue of the

covenant of grace, upon the score of Christ's righteousness, sincerity is accepted as our gospel perfection.

[3.] He walked with God, as Enoch had done before him. He was not only honest, but devout; he walked, that is, he acted with God, as one always under his eye. He lived a life of communion with God; it was his constant care to conform himself to the will of God, to please him, and to approve himself to him. Note, God looks down upon those with an eye of favour who sincerely look up to him with an eye of faith. But,

[4.] That which crowns his character is that thus he was, and thus he did, in his generation, in that corrupt degenerate age in which his lot was cast. It is easy to be religious when religion is in fashion; but it is an evidence of strong faith and resolution to swim against a stream to heaven, and to appear for God when no one else appears for him: so Noah did, and it is upon record, to his immortal honour.

Noah Makes the Ark

9 These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and*
perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God.
10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
11 The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled
with violence.

In the absence of any well-regulated government it is easy to imagine what evils would arise. Men did what was right in their own eyes, and, having no fear of God, destruction and misery were in their ways.

The wickedness of that generation is here again spoken of, either as a foil to Noah's piety--he was just and perfect, when all the earth was corrupt; or as a further justification of God's resolution to destroy the world, which he was now about to communicate to his servant Noah.

1. All kinds of sin was found among them, for it is said (Ge 6:11) that the earth was,

(1.) Corrupt before God, that is, in the matters of God's worship; either they had other gods before him, or they worshipped him by images, or they were corrupt and wicked in despite and contempt of God, daring him and defying him to his face.

(2.) The earth was also filled with violence and injustice towards men. There was no order nor regular government; no man was safe in the possession of that which he had the most clear and incontestable right to, no, not the most innocent life; there was nothing but murders, rapes, and rapine.

Note, Wickedness, as it is the shame of human nature, so it is the ruin of human society. Take away conscience and the fear of God, and men become beasts and devils to one another, like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less. Sin fills the earth with violence, and so turns the world into a wilderness, into a cock-pit.

2 The proof and evidence of it were undeniable; for God looked upon the earth, and was himself an eye-witness of the corruption that was in it, of which before, Ge 6:5. The righteous Judge in all his judgments proceeds upon the infallible certainty of his own omniscience, Ps 33:13.

3. That which most aggravated the matter was the universal spreading of the contagion: All flesh had corrupted his way. It was not some particular nations or cities that were thus wicked, but the whole world of mankind were so; there was none that did good, no, not one besides Noah. Note, When wickedness has become general and universal ruin is not far off; while there is a remnant of praying people in a nation, to empty the measure as it fills, judgments may be kept off a great while; but when all hands are at work to pull down the fences by sin,

and none stand in the gap to make up the breach, what can be expected but an inundation of wrath?

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

God here makes Noah a monument of sparing mercy, by putting him in a way to secure himself in the approaching deluge, that he might not perish with the rest of the world: I will destroy them, says God, with the earth, Ge 6:13. "But make thee an ark; I will take care to preserve thee alive." Note, Singular piety shall be recompensed with distinguishing salvations, which are in a special manner obliging. This will add much to the honour and happiness of glorified saints that they shall be saved when the greatest part of the world is left to perish. Now,

1. God directs Noah to make an ark, Ge 6:14-16. This ark was like the hulk of a ship, fitted not to sail upon the waters (there was no occasion for that, when there should be no shore to sail to), but to float upon the waters, waiting for their fall. God could have secured Noah by the ministration of angels, without putting him to any care, or pains, or trouble, himself; but he chose to employ him in making that which was to be the means of his preservation, both for the trial of his faith and obedience and to teach us that none shall be saved by Christ but those only that work out their salvation. We cannot do it without God, and he will not without us. Both the providence of God, and the grace of God, own and crown the endeavours of the obedient and diligent. God gave him very particular instructions concerning this building, which could not but be admirably well fitted for the purpose when Infinite Wisdom itself was the architect.

(1.) It must be made of gopher-wood. Noah, doubtless, knew what sort of wood that was, though we now do not, whether cedar, or cypress, or what other.

(2.) He must make it three stories high within.

(3.) He must divide it into cabins, with partitions, places fitted for the several sorts of creatures, so as to lose no room.

(4.) Exact dimensions were given him, that he might make it proportionable, and might have room enough in it to answer the intention and no more. Note, Those that work for God must take their measures from him and carefully observe them. Note, further, It is fit that he who appoints us our habitation should fix the bounds and limits of it.

(5.) He must pitch it within and without--without, to shed off the rain, and to prevent the water from soaking in--within, to take away the bad smell of the beasts when kept close. Observe, God does not bid him paint it, but pitch it. If God gives us habitations that are safe, and warm, and wholesome, we are bound to be thankful, though they are not magnificent or nice.

(6.) He must make a little window towards the top, to let in light, and (some think) that through that window he might behold the desolations to be made in the earth.

(7.) He must make a door in the side of it, by which to go in and out.

Here it appears indeed that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God's favour to him was plainly intimated in what he said of him, Ge 6:8-10, where his name is mentioned five times in five lines, when once might have served to make the sense clear, as if the Holy Ghost took a pleasure in perpetuating his memory; but it appears much more in what he says to him in these verses--the informations and instructions here given him.

God here makes Noah the man of his counsel, communicating to him his purpose to destroy this wicked world by water. As,

afterwards, he told Abraham his resolution concerning Sodom (Ge 18:17, Shall I hide from Abraham?) so here "Shall I hide from Noah the thing that I do, seeing that he shall become a great nation?" Note, The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him (Ps 25:14); it was with his servants the prophets (Am 3:7), by a spirit of revelation, informing them particularly of his purposes; it is with all believers by a spirit of wisdom and faith, enabling them to understand and apply the general declarations of the written word, and the warnings there given. Now,

1. God told Noah, in general, that he would destroy the world (Ge 6:13): The end of all flesh has come before me; I will destroy them; that is, the ruin of this wicked world is decreed and determined; it has come, that is, it will come surely, and come quickly. Noah, it is likely, in preaching to his neighbours, had warned them, in general, of the wrath of God that they would bring upon themselves by their wickedness, and now God seconds his endeavours by a particular denunciation of wrath, that Noah might try whether this would work upon them. Hence observe,

(1.) That God confirmeth the words of his messengers, Isa 44:26.

(2.) That to him that has, and uses what he has for the good of others, more shall be given, more full instructions.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15 And this is *the fashion* which thou shalt make it *of:* The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; *with* lower, second, and third *stories* shalt thou make it.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; *and* everything that *is* in the earth shall die.

He told him, particularly, that he would destroy the world by a flood of waters: And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, Ge 6:17. God could have destroyed all mankind by the sword of an angel, a flaming sword turning every way, as he destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and the camp of the Assyrians; and then there needed no more than to set a mark upon Noah and his family for their preservation. But God chose to do it by a flood of waters, which should drown the world. The reasons, we may be sure, were wise and just, though to us unknown. God has many arrows in his quiver, and he may use which he please: as he chooses the rod with which he will correct his children, so he chooses the sword with which he will cut off his enemies. Observe the manner of expression: "I, even I, do bring a flood; I that am infinite in power, and therefore can do it, infinite in justice, and therefore will do it."

(1.) It intimates the certainty of the judgment: I, even I, will do it. That cannot but be done effectually which God himself undertakes the doing of. See Job 11:10.

(2.) It intimates the tendency of it to God's glory and the honour of his justice. Thus he will be magnified and exalted in the earth, and all the world shall be made to know that he is the God to whom vengeance belongs; methinks the expression here is somewhat like that, Isa 1:24, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

God here makes Noah the man of his covenant, another Hebrew periphrasis of a friend (Ge 6:18): But with thee will I establish my covenant.

1 The covenant of providence, that the course of nature shall be continued to the end of time, notwithstanding the interruption which the flood would give to it. This promise was immediately made to Noah and his sons, Ge 9:8-11, &c. They

were as trustees for all this part of the creation, and a great honour was thereby put upon him and his.

2 The covenant of grace, that God would be to him a God and that out of his seed God would take to himself a people. Note,

(1.) When God makes a covenant, he establishes it, he makes it sure, he makes it good; his are everlasting covenants.

(2.) The covenant of grace has in it the recompence of singular services, and the fountain and foundation of all distinguishing favours; we need desire no more, either to make up our losses for God or to make up a happiness for us in God, than to have his covenant established with us.

God promises Noah that he and his shall be preserved alive in the ark (Ge 6:18): Thou shalt come into the ark. Note, What we do in obedience to God, we ourselves are likely to have the comfort and benefit of. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself. Nor was he himself only saved in the ark, but his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives. Observe,

(1.) The care of good parents; they are solicitous not only for their own salvation, but for the salvation of their families, and especially their children.

(2.) The happiness of those children that have godly parents. Their parents' piety often procures them temporal salvation, as here; and it furthers them in the way to eternal salvation, if they improve the benefit of it.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every *sort* shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep *them* alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

God here makes Noah a great blessing to the world, and herein makes him an eminent type of the Messiah, though not the Messiah himself, as his parents expected, Ge 5:29.

1. God made him a preacher to the men of that generation. As a watchman, he received the word from God's mouth, that he might give them warning, Eze 3:17. Thus, while the long-suffering of God waited, by his Spirit in Noah, he preached to the old world, who, when Peter wrote, were spirits in prison (1Pe 3:18-20), and herein he was a type of Christ, who, in a land and age wherein all flesh had corrupted their way, went about preaching repentance and warning men of a deluge of wrath coming.

2. God made him a saviour to the inferior creatures, to keep the several kinds of them from perishing and being lost in the deluge, Ge 6:19-21. This was a great honour put upon him, that not only in him the race of mankind should be kept up, and that from him should proceed a new world, the church, the soul of the world, and Messiah, the head of that church, but that he should be instrumental to preserve the inferior creatures, and so mankind should in him acquire a new title to them and their service.

(1.) He was to provide shelter for them, that they might not be drowned. Two of every sort, male and female, he must take with him into the ark; and lest he should make any difficulty of gathering them together, and getting them in, God promises (Ge 6:20) that they shall of their own accord come to him. He that makes the ox to know his owner and his crib then made him know his preserver and his ark.

(2.) He was to provide sustenance for them, that they might not be starved, Ge 6:21. He must victual his ship according to the number of his crew, that great family which he had now the charge of, and according to the time appointed for his confinement. Herein also he was a type of Christ, to whom it is owing that the world stands, by whom all things consist, and who preserves mankind from being totally cut off and ruined by sin; in him the holy seed is saved alive, and the creation rescued from the vanity under which it groans. Noah saved those whom he was to rule, so does Christ, Heb 5:9.

20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind; two of every *sort* shall come unto thee, to keep *them* alive.

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather *it* to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

22 Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

That is, he obeyed God's commandment in all points without adding or taking away. Noah's care and diligence in building the ark may be considered,

1. As an effect of his faith in the word of God. God had told him he would shortly drown the world; he believed it, feared the threatened deluge, and, in that fear, prepared the ark. Note, We ought to mix faith with the revelation God has made of his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; the threatenings of the word are not false alarms. Much might have been objected against the credibility of this warning given to Noah. "Who could believe that the wise God, who made the world, should so soon unmake it again, that he who had drawn the waters off the dry land (Ge 1:9, 10) should cause them to cover it again? How would this be reconciled with the mercy of God, which is over all his works, especially that the innocent creatures should die for man's sin? Whence could water be had sufficient to deluge the world? And, if it must be so, why should notice be given of it to Noah only?" But Noah's faith triumphed over all these corrupt reasonings.

2. As an act of obedience to the command of God. Had he consulted with flesh and blood, many objections would have been raised against it. To rear a building, such a one as he never saw, so large, and of such exact dimensions, would put him upon a great deal of care, and labour, and expense. It would be a work of time; the vision was for a great while to come. His neighbours would ridicule him for his credulity, and he would be the song of the drunkards; his building would be called Noah's folly. If the worst came to the worst, as we say, each would fare as well as his neighbours. But these, and a thousand

such objections, Noah by faith got over. His obedience was ready and resolute: Thus did Noah, willingly and cheerfully, without murmuring and disputing. God says, Do this, and he does it. It was also punctual and persevering: he did all exactly according to the instructions given him, and, having begun to build, did not leave off till he had finished it; so did he, and so must we do.

3. As an instance of wisdom for himself, thus to provide for his own safety. He feared the deluge, and therefore prepared the ark. Note, When God gives warning of approaching judgments, it is our wisdom and duty to provide accordingly. See Ex 9:20-21, Eze 3:18. We must prepare to meet the Lord in his judgments on earth, flee to his name as a strong tower (Pr 18:10), enter into our chambers (Isa 26:20, 21), especially prepare to meet him at death and in the judgment of the great day, build upon Christ the Rock (Mt 7:24), go into Christ the Ark.

4. As intended for warning to a careless world; and it was fair warning of the deluge coming. Every blow of his axes and hammers was a call to repentance, a call to them to prepare arks too. But, since by it he could not convince the world, by it he condemned the world, Heb 11:7.

Genesis -7

The Flood

1 And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.

Here is, a gracious invitation of Noah and his family into a place of safety, now that the flood of waters was coming, Ge 7:1.

1 The call itself is very kind, like that of a tender father to his children, to come in doors, when he sees night or a storm

coming: Come thou, and all thy house, that small family that thou hast, into the ark. Observe,

(1.) Noah did not go into the ark till God bade him; though he knew it was designed for his place of refuge, yet he waited for a renewed command, and had it. It is very comfortable to follow the calls of Providence, and to see God going before us in every step we take.

(2.) God does not bid him go into the ark, but come into it, implying that God would go with him, would lead him into it, accompany him in it, and in due time bring him safely out of it. Note, Wherever we are, it is very desirable to have the presence of God with us, for this is all in all to the comfort of every condition. It was this that made Noah's ark, which was a prison, to be to him not only a refuge, but a palace.

(3.) Noah had taken a great deal of pains to build the ark, and now he was himself preserved alive in it. Note, What we do in obedience to the command of God, and in faith, we ourselves shall certainly have the comfort of, first or last.

(4.) Not he only, but his house also, his wife and children, are called with him into the ark. Note, It is good to belong to the family of a godly man; it is safe and comfortable to dwell under such a shadow. One of Noah's sons was Ham, who proved afterwards a bad man, yet he was saved in the ark, which intimates,

[1.] That wicked children often fare the better for the sake of their godly parents.

[2.] That there is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies on earth, and we are not to think it strange. In Noah's family there was a Ham, and in Christ's family there was a Judas. There is no perfect purity on this side heaven.

(5.) This call to Noah was a type of the call which the gospel gives to poor sinners. Christ is an ark already prepared, in whom alone we can be safe when death and judgment come. Now the burden of the song is, "Come, come;" the word says, "Come;" ministers say, "Come;" the Spirit says, "Come, come into the ark."

2 The reason for this invitation is a very honourable testimony to Noah's integrity: For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Observe,

(1.) Those are righteous indeed that are righteous before God, that have not only the form of godliness by which they appear righteous before men, who may easily be imposed upon, but the power of it by which they approve themselves to God, who searches the heart, and cannot be deceived in men's characters.

(2.) God takes notice of and is pleased with those that are righteous before him: Thee have I seen. In a world of wicked people God could see one righteous Noah; that single grain of wheat could not be lost, no, not in so great a heap of chaff. The Lord knows those that are his.

(3.) God, that is a witness to, will shortly be a witness for, his people's integrity; he that sees it will proclaim it before angels and men, to their immortal honour. Those that obtain mercy to be righteous shall obtain witness that they are righteous.

(4.) God is, in a special manner, pleased with those that are good in bad times and places. Noah was therefore illustriously righteous, because he was so in that wicked and adulterous generation.

(5.) Those that keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity God will keep safe in times of common calamity; those that partake not with others in their sins shall not partake with them in their plagues; those that are better than others are, even in this life, safer than others, and it is better with them.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that *are* not clean by two, the male and his female.

Here are necessary orders given concerning the brute-creatures that were to be preserved alive with Noah in the ark, Ge 7:2, 3. They were not capable of receiving the warning and directions themselves, as man was, who herein is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven--that he is endued with the power of foresight; therefore man is charged with the care of them: being under his dominion, they must be under his protection; and, though he could not secure every individual, yet he must carefully preserve every species, that no tribe, no, not the least considerable, might entirely perish out of the creation. Observe in this,

1. God's care for man, for his comfort and benefit. We do not find that Noah was solicitous of himself about this matter; but God consults our happiness more than we do ourselves. Though God saw that the old world was very provoking, and foresaw that the new one would be little better, yet he would preserve the brute creatures for man's use. Doth God take care for oxen? 1Co 9:9. Or was it not rather for man's sake that this care was taken?

2. Even the unclean beasts, which were least valuable and profitable, were preserved alive in the ark; for God's tender mercies are over all his works, and not over those only that are of most eminence and use. 3. Yet more of the clean were preserved than of the unclean.

(1.) Because the clean were most for the service of man; and therefore, in favour to him, more of them were preserved and are still propagated. Thanks be to God, there are not herds of lions as there are of oxen, nor flocks of tigers as there are of sheep.

(2.) Because the clean were for sacrifice to God; and therefore, in honour to him, more of them were preserved, three couple

for breed, and the odd seventh for sacrifice, Ge 8:20. God gives us six for one in earthly things, as in the distribution of the days of the week, that in spiritual things we should be all for him. What is devoted to God's honour, and used in his service, is particularly blessed and increased.

3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep
seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty
days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made
will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

A week for a world to repent! What a solemn pause! Did they laugh and ridicule his folly still? He whose eyes saw and whose heart felt the full amount of human iniquity and perverseness has told us of their reckless disregard (Lu 17:27).

Here is notice given of the now imminent approach of the flood: Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain, Ge 7:4.

1. "It shall be seven days yet, before I do it." After the hundred and twenty years had expired, God grants them a reprieve of seven days longer, both to show how slow he is to anger and that punishing work is his strange work, and also to give them some further space for repentance: but all in vain; these seven days were trifled away, after all the rest; they continued secure and sensual until the day that the flood came.

2. "It shall be but seven days." While Noah told them of the judgment at a distance, they were tempted to put off their repentance, because the vision was for a great while to come; but now he is ordered to tell them that it is at the door, that they have but one week more to turn them in, but one Sabbath more to improve, to see if that will now, at last, awaken them to consider the things that belong to their peace, which otherwise will soon be hidden from their eyes. But it is common for those that have been careless of their souls during the years of their health, when they have looked upon death at a distance, to be as careless during the days, the seven days, of their sickness,

when they see it approaching, their hearts being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him.

Here is Noah's ready obedience to the commands that God gave him. Observe,

1. He went into the ark, upon notice that the flood would come after seven days, though probably as yet there appeared no visible sign of its approach, no cloud arising that threatened it, nothing done towards it, but all continued serene and clear; for, as he prepared the ark by faith in the warning given that the flood would come, so he went into it by faith in this warning that it would come quickly, though he did not see that the second causes had yet begun to work. In every step he took, he walked by faith, and not by sense. During these seven days, it is likely, he was settling himself and his family in the ark, and distributing the creatures into their several apartments. This was the conclusion of that visible sermon which he had long been preaching to his careless neighbours, and which, one would think, might have awakened them; but, not obtaining that desired end, it left their blood upon their own heads.

2. He took all his family along with him, his wife, to be his companion and comfort (though it should seem that, after this, he had no children by her), his sons, and his sons' wives, that by them not only his family, but the world of mankind, might be built up. Observe, Though men were to be reduced to so small a number, and it would be very desirable to have the world speedily repeopled, yet Noah's sons were each of them to have but one wife, which strengthens the argument against having many wives; for from the beginning of this new world it was not so: as, at first, God made, so now he kept alive, but one woman for one man. See Mt 19:4, 8.

3. The brute creatures readily went in with him. The same hand that at first brought them to Adam to be named now brought them to Noah to be preserved. The ox now knew his owner, and the ass his protector's crib, nay, even the wildest creatures

flocked to it; but man had become more brutish than the brutes themselves, and did not know, did not consider, Isa 1:3.

6 And Noah *was* six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

7 And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

8 Of clean beasts, and of beasts that *are* not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creepeth upon the earth,

9 there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

There went in two and two—Doubtless they were led by a divine impulse. The number would not be so large as at first sight one is apt to imagine. It has been calculated that there are not more than three hundred distinct species of beasts and birds, the immense varieties in regard to form, size, and color being traceable to the influence of climate and other circumstances. There went in two and two—Doubtless they were led by a divine impulse. The number would not be as large as at first sight one is apt to imagine. It has been calculated that there are not more than three hundred distinct species of beasts and birds, the immense varieties in regard to form, size, and color being traceable to the influence of climate and other circumstances.

God compelled them to present themselves to Noah, as they did before to Adam, when he gave them names, Ge 2:19.

10 And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

11 In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Here is, I The date of this great event; this is carefully recorded, for the greater certainty of the story.

It was in the 600th year of Noah's life, which, by computation, appears to be 1656 years from the creation. The years of the old world are reckoned, not by the reigns of the giants, but the lives of the patriarchs; saints are of more account with God than princes. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

Noah was now a very old man, even as men's years went then. Note,

(1.) The longer we live in this world the more we see of the miseries and calamities of it; it is therefore spoken of as the privilege of those that die young that their eyes shall not see the evil which is coming, 2Ki 22:20.

(2.) Sometimes God exercises his old servants with extraordinary trials of obedient patience. The oldest of Christ's soldiers must not promise themselves a discharge from their warfare till death discharge them. Still they must gird on their harness, and not boast as though they had put it off. As the year of the deluge is recorded, so,

2. We are told that it was in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, which is reckoned to be about the beginning of November; so that Noah had had a harvest just before, from which to victual his ark.

12 And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

The second causes that concurred to this deluge. Observe,

1. In the self-same day that Noah was fixed in the ark, the inundation began. Note,

(1.) Desolating judgments come not till God has provided for the security of his own people; see Ge 19:22, I can do nothing till thou become thither: and we find (Re 7:3) that the winds are held till the servants of God are sealed.

(2.) When good men are removed judgments are not far off; for they are taken away from the evil to come, Isa 57:1. When they are called into the chambers, hidden in the grave, hidden in heaven, then God is coming out of his place to punish, Isa 26:20, 21.

2. See what was done on that day, that fatal day to the world of the ungodly.

(1.) The fountains of the great deep were broken up. Perhaps there needed no new creation of waters; what were already made to be, in the common course of providence, blessings to the earth, were now, by an extraordinary act of divine power, made the ruin of it. God has laid up the deep in storehouses (Ps 33:7), and now he broke up those stores. As our bodies have in themselves those humours which, when God pleases, become the seeds and springs of mortal diseases, so the earth had in it bowels those waters which, at God's command, sprang up and flooded it. God had, in the creation, set bars and doors to the waters of the sea, that they might not return to cover the earth (Ps 104:9,Job 38:9-11); and now he only removed those ancient land-marks, mounds, and fences, and the waters of the sea returned to cover the earth, as they had done at first, Ge 1:9. Note, All the creatures are ready to fight against sinful man, and any of them is able to be the instrument of his ruin, if God do but take off the restraints by which they are held in during the day of God's patience.

(2.) The windows of heaven were opened, and the waters which were above the firmament were poured out upon the world; those treasures which God has reserved against the time of trouble, the day of battle and war, Job 38:22,23. The rain, which ordinarily descends in drops, then came down in streams, or spouts, as they call them in the Indies, where clouds have been often known to burst, as they express it there, when the rain descends in a much more violent torrent than we have ever seen in the greatest shower. We read (Job 26:8) that God binds up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them; but now the bond was loosed, the cloud was rent, and such rains descended as were never known before nor since, in such abundance and of such continuance: the thick cloud was not, as ordinarily it is, wearied with waterings (Job 37:11), that is, soon spent and exhausted; but still the clouds returned after the rain, and the divine power brought in fresh recruits. It

rained, without intermission or abatement, forty days and forty nights (Ge 7:12), and that upon the whole earth at once, not, as sometimes, upon one city and not upon another. God made the world in six days, but he was forty days in destroying it; for he is slow to anger: but, though the destruction came slowly and gradually, yet it came effectually.

3. Now learn from this,

(1.) That all the creatures are at God's disposal, and that he makes what use he pleases of them, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, as Elihu speaks of the rain, Job 37:12, 13.

(2.) That God often makes that which should be for our welfare to become a trap, Ps 69:22. That which usually is a comfort and benefit to us becomes, when God pleases, a scourge and a plague to us. Nothing is more needful nor useful than water, both the springs of the earth and the showers of heaven; and yet now nothing was more hurtful, nothing more destructive: every creature is to us what God makes it.

(3.) That it is impossible to escape the righteous judgments of God when they come against sinners with commission; for God can arm both heaven and earth against them; see Job 20:27. God can surround men with the messengers of his wrath, so that, if they look upwards, it is with horror and amazement, if they look to the earth, behold, trouble and darkness, Isa 8:21, 22. Who then is able to stand before God, when he is angry?

(4.) In this destruction of the old world by water God gave a specimen of the final destruction of the world that now is by fire. We find the apostle setting the one of these over against the other, 2Pe 3:6, 7. As there are waters under the earth, so Ætna, Vesuvius, and other volcanoes, proclaim to the world that there are subterraneous fires too; and fire often falls from heaven, many desolations are made by lightning; so that, when the time predetermined comes, between these two fires the

earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up, as the flood was brought upon the old world out of the fountains of the great deep and through the windows of heaven.

13 In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

14 they, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

Though all enmities and hostilities between the creatures ceased for the present, and ravenous creatures were not only so mild and manageable as that the wolf and the lamb lay down together, but so strangely altered as that the lion did eat straw like an ox (Isa 11:6, 7), yet, when this occasion was over, the restraint was taken off, and they were still of the same kind as ever; for the ark did not alter their constitution. Hypocrites in the church, that externally conform to the laws of that ark, may yet be unchanged, and then it will appear, one time or other, what kind they are after.

15 And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life.

16 And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.

It is added (and the circumstance deserves our notice), The Lord shut him in, Ge 7:16. As Noah continued his obedience to God, so God continued his care of Noah: and here it appeared to be a very distinguishing care; for the shutting of this door set up a partition wall between him and all the world besides. God shut the door,

1. To secure him, and keep him safe in the ark. So that God's secret power defended him against the rage of the mighty waters. The door must be shut very close, lest the waters should break in and sink the ark, and very fast, lest any without should break it down. Thus God made up Noah, as he makes up his jewels, Mal 3:17.

2. To exclude all others, and keep them forever out. Hitherto the door of the ark stood open, and if any, even during the last seven days, had repented and believed, for aught I know they might have been welcomed into the ark; but now the door was shut, and they were cut off from all hopes of admittance: for God shutteth, and none can open.

There is much of our gospel duty and privilege to be seen in Noah's preservation in the ark. The apostle makes it a type of our baptism, that is, our Christianity, 1Pe 3:20, 21. Observe then,

1. It is our great duty, in obedience to the gospel call, by a lively faith in Christ, to come into that way of salvation which God has provided for poor sinners. When Noah came into the ark, he quitted his own house and lands; so must we quit our own righteousness and our worldly possessions, whenever they come into competition with Christ. Noah must, for a while, submit to the confinements and inconveniences of the ark, in order to his preservation for a new world; so those that come into Christ to be saved by him must deny themselves, both in sufferings and services.

2. Those that come into the ark themselves should bring as many as they can in with them, by good instructions, by persuasions, and by a good example. What knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest thus save thy wife (1Co 7:16), as Noah did his? There is room enough in Christ for all comers.

3. Those that by faith come into Christ, the ark, shall by the power of God be shut in, and kept as in a strong-hold by the power of God, 1Pe 1:5. God put Adam into paradise, but he did not shut him in, and so he threw himself out; but when he put Noah into the ark he shut him in, and so when he brings a soul to Christ he ensures its salvation: it is not in our own keeping, but in the Mediator's hand.

4. The door of mercy will shortly be shut against those that now make light of it. Now, knock and it shall be opened; but the time will come when it shall not, Lu 13:25.

17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth.

We are here told,

How long the flood was increasing--forty days, Ge 7:17. The profane world, who believed not that it would come, probably when it came flattered themselves with hopes that it would soon abate and never come to extremity; but still it increased, it prevailed. Note,

1. When God judges he will overcome. If he begin, he will make an end; his way is perfect, both in judgment and mercy.

2 The gradual approaches and advances of God's judgments, which are designed to bring sinners to repentance, are often abused to the hardening of them in their presumption.

18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

What became of Noah's ark when the waters thus increased: It was lifted up above the earth (Ge 7:17), and went upon the face of the waters, Ge 7:18. When all other buildings were demolished by the waters, and buried under them, the ark alone subsisted. Observe,

1 The waters which broke down everything else bore up the ark. That which to unbelievers is a savour of death unto death is to the faithful a savour of life unto life.

2 The more the waters increased the higher the ark was lifted up towards heaven. Thus sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions; and as troubles abound consolations much more abound.

19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that *were* under the whole heaven, were covered.

To what degree they increased: they rose so high that not only the low flat countries were deluged, but to make sure work, and that none might escape, the tops of the highest mountains were overflowed--fifteen cubits, that is, seven yards and a half; so that in vain was salvation hoped for from hills or mountains, Jer 3:23. None of God's creatures are so high but his power can overtop them; and he will make them know that wherein they deal proudly he is above them. Perhaps the tops of the mountains were washed down by the strength of the waters, which helped much towards the prevailing of the waters above them; for it is said (Job 12:15), He sends out the waters, and they not only overflow, but overturn, the earth. Thus the refuge of lies was swept away, and the waters overflowed the hiding-place of those sinners (Isa 28:17), and in vain they fly to them for safety, Re 6:16. Now the mountains departed, and the hills were removed, and nothing stood a man instead but the covenant of peace, Isa 54:10. There is no place on earth so high as to set men out of the reach of God's judgments, Jer 49:16, Ob 1:3, 4. God's hand will find out all his enemies, Ps 21:8. Observe how exactly they are fathomed (fifteen cubits), not by Noah's plummet, but by his knowledge who weighs the waters by measure, Job 28:25.

20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

Twenty-two and a half feet above the summits of the highest hills. The language is not consistent with the theory of a partial deluge.

21 And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

Here is, I The general destruction of all flesh by the waters of the flood. Come, and see the desolations which God makes in the earth (Ps 46:8), and how he lays heaps upon heaps. Never did death triumph, from its first entrance unto this day, as it did then. Come, and see Death upon his pale horse, and hell following with him, Re 6:7, 8.

All the cattle, fowl, and creeping things, died, except the few that were in the ark. Observe how this is repeated: All flesh died, Ge 7:21. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was on the dry land, Ge 7:22. Every living substance, Ge 7:23. And why so? Man only had done wickedly, and justly is God's hand against him; but these sheep, what have they done? I answer,

(1.) We are sure God did them no wrong. He is the sovereign Lord of all life, for he is the sole fountain and author of it. He that made them as he pleased might unmake them when he pleased; and who shall say unto him, What doest thou? May he not do what he will with his own, which were created for his pleasure?

(2.) God did admirably serve the purposes of his own glory by their destruction, as well as by their creation. Herein his holiness and justice were greatly magnified; by this it appears that he hates sin, and is highly displeased with sinners, when even the inferior creatures, because they are the servants of man and part of his possession, and because they have been abused to be the servants of sin, are destroyed with him. This makes the judgment the more remarkable, the more dreadful, and, consequently, the more expressive of God's wrath and vengeance. The destruction of the creatures was their deliverance from the bondage of corruption, which deliverance the whole creation now groans after, Ro 8:21, 22. It was likewise an instance of God's wisdom. As the creatures were made for man when he was made, so they were multiplied for him when he was multiplied; and therefore, now that mankind was reduced to so small a number, it was fit that the beasts should proportionally be reduced, otherwise they would have had the dominion, and would have replenished the earth, and the remnant of mankind that was left would have been overpowered by them. See how God considered this in another case, Ex 23:29, Lest the beast of the field multiply against thee.

22 all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that *was* in the dry *land,* died.

23 And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained *alive,* and they that *were* with him in the ark.

All the men, women, and children, that were in the world (except that were in the ark) died. Every man (Ge 7:21 and Ge 7:23), and perhaps they were as many as are now upon the face of the earth, if not more. Now,

(1.) We may easily imagine what terror and consternation seized on them when they saw themselves surrounded. Our Savior tells us that till the very day that the flood came they were eating and drinking (Lu 17:26,27); they were drowned in security and sensuality before they were drowned in those waters, crying Peace, peace, to themselves, deaf and blind to all divine warnings. In this posture death surprised them, as 1Sa 30:16, 17. But O what an amazement were they in then! Now they see and feel that which they would not believe and fear, and are convinced of their folly when it is too late; now they find no place for repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears.

(2.) We may suppose that they tried all ways and means possible for their preservation, but all in vain. Some climb to the tops of trees or mountains, and spin out their terrors there awhile. But the flood reaches them, at last, and they are forced to die with the more deliberation. Some, it is likely, cling to the ark, and now hope that this may be their safety which they had so long made their sport. Perhaps some get to the top of the ark, and hope to shift for themselves there; but either they perish there for want of food, or, by a speedier despatch, a dash of rain washes them off that deck. Others, it may be, hoped to prevail with Noah for admission into the ark, and pleaded old acquaintance, Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? Hast thou not taught in our streets? "Yes," might Noah say, "that I have, many a time, to little purpose. I called but you refused; you set at nought all my counsel (Pr 1:24, 25), and now it is not in my power to help you: God has shut the door, and I

cannot open it." Thus it will be at the great day. Neither climbing high in an outward profession, nor claiming relation to good people, will bring men to heaven, Mt 7:22, 25:8-9. Those that are not found in Christ, the ark, are certainly undone, undone forever; salvation itself cannot save them. See Isa 10:3.

(3.) We may suppose that some of those that perished in the deluge had themselves assisted Noah, or were employed by him, in the building of the ark, and yet were not so wise as by repentance to secure themselves a place in it. Thus wicked ministers, though they may have been instrumental to help others to heaven, will themselves be thrust down to hell.

Let us now pause awhile and consider this tremendous judgment! Let our hearts meditate terror, the terror of this destruction. Let us see, and say, It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; who can stand before him when he is angry? Let us see and say, It is an evil thing, and a bitter, to depart from God. The sin of sinners will, without repentance, be their ruin, first or last; if God be true, it will. Though hand join in hand, yet the wicked shall not go unpunished. The righteous God knows how to bring a flood upon the world of the ungodly, 2Pe 2:5. Eliphaz appeals to this story as a standing warning to a careless world (Job 22:15,16), Hast thou marked the old way, which wicked men have trodden, who were cut down out of time, and sent into eternity, whose foundation was overflown with the flood?

24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days.

Genesis -8

1 And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that *was* with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

The divine purpose in this awful dispensation had been accomplished, and the world had undergone those changes necessary to fit it for becoming the residence of man under a new economy of Providence.

Here is, an act of God's grace: God remembered Noah and every living thing. This is an expression after the manner of men; for not any of his creatures (Lu 12:6), much less any of his people, are forgotten of God, Isa 49:15, 16. But,

1 The whole race of mankind, except Noah and his family, was now extinguished, and driven into the land of forgetfulness, to be remembered no more; so that God's remembering Noah was the return of his mercy to mankind, of whom he would not make a full end. It is a strange expression, Eze 5:13, When I have accomplished my fury in them, I will be comforted. The demands of divine justice had been answered by the ruin of those sinners; he had eased him of his adversaries (Isa 1:24), and now his spirit was quieted (Zec 6:8), and he remembered Noah and every living thing. He remembered mercy in wrath (Hab 3:2), remembered the days of old (Isa 63:11), remembered the holy seed, and then remembered Noah.

2. Noah himself, though one that had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, yet seemed to be forgotten in the ark, and perhaps began to think himself so; for we do not find that God had told him how long he should be confined and when he should be released. Very good men have sometimes been ready to conclude themselves forgotten of God, especially when their afflictions have been unusually grievous and long. Perhaps Noah, though a great believer, yet when he found the flood continuing so long after it might reasonably be presumed to have done its work, was tempted to fear lest he that shut him in would keep him in, and began to expostulate. How long wilt thou forget me? But at length God returned in mercy to him, and this is expressed by remembering him. Note, Those that remember God shall certainly be remembered by him, how desolate and disconsolate soever their condition may be. He will appoint them a set time and remember them, Job 14:13.

3. With Noah, God remembered every living thing; for, though his delight is especially in the sons of men, yet he rejoices in all his works, and hates nothing that he has made. He takes special care, not only of his people's persons, but of their possessions--of them and all that belongs to them. He considered the cattle of Nineveh, Jon 4:11. A beautiful illustration of Mt 10:29.

2 The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.

An act of God's power over wind and water, both of which are at his beck, though neither of them is under man's control. Observe,

1. He commanded the wind, and said to that, Go, and it went, in order to the carrying off of the flood: God made a wind to pass over the earth. See here,

(1.) What was God's remembrance of Noah: it was his relieving him. Note, Those whom God remembers he remembers effectually, for good; he remembers us to save us, that we may remember him to serve him.

(2.) What a sovereign dominion God has over the winds. He has them in his fist (Pr 30:4) and brings them out of his treasuries, Ps 135:7. He sends them when, and whither, and for what purposes, he pleases. Even stormy winds fulfil his word, Ps 148:8. It should seem, while the waters increased, there was no wind; for that would have added to the toss of the ark; but now God sent a wind, when it would not be so troublesome. Probably, it was a north wind, for that drives away rain. However, it was a drying wind, such a wind as God sent to divide the Red Sea before Israel, Ex 14:21.

2. He remanded the waters, and said to them, Come, and they came.

(1.) He took away the cause. He sealed up the springs of those waters, the fountains of the great deep, and the windows of heaven. Note,

[1.] As God has a key to open, so he has a key to shut up again, and to stay the progress of judgments by stopping the causes of them: and the same hand that brings the desolation must bring the deliverance; to that hand therefore our eye must ever be. He that wounds is alone able to heal. See Job 12:14.

[2.] When afflictions have done the work for which they are sent, whether killing work or curing work, they shall be removed. God's word shall not return void, Isa 55:10, 11.

(2.) Then the effect ceased; not all at once, but by degrees: The waters abated (Ge 8:1), returned from off the earth continually, Heb. they were going and returning (Ge 8:3), which denotes a gradual departure. The heat of the sun exhaled much, and perhaps the subterraneous caverns soaked in more.

Note, As the earth was not drowned in a day, so it was not dried in a day. In the creation, it was but one day's work to clear the earth from the waters that covered it, and to make it dry land; nay, it was but half a day's work, Ge 1:9, 10. But, the work of creation being finished, this work of providence was effected by the concurring influence of second causes, yet thus enforced by the almighty power of God. God usually works deliverance for his people gradually, that the day of small things may not be despised, nor the day of great things despaired of, Zec 4:10. See Pr 4:18.

3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated.

4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

Here we have the effects and evidences of the ebbing of the waters.

1 The ark rested. This was some satisfaction to Noah, to feel the house he was in upon firm ground, and no longer movable. It rested upon a mountain, whither it was directed, not by Noah's prudence (he did not steer it), but by the wise and gracious providence of God, that it might rest the sooner.

Note, God has times and places of rest for his people after their tossing's; and many a time he provides for their seasonable and comfortable settlement without their own contrivance and quite beyond their own foresight. The ark of the church, though sometimes tossed with tempests, and not comforted (Isa 54:11), yet has its rests, Ac 9:31.

2 The tops of the mountains were seen, like little islands, appearing above the water. We must suppose that they were seen by Noah and his sons; for there were none besides to see them.

Upon the mountains of Ararat—or Armenia, as the word is rendered (2Ki 19:37; Isa 37:38). The mountain which tradition points to as the one on which the ark rested is now called Ara Dagh, the "finger mountain." Its summit consists of two peaks, the higher of which is 17,750 feet and the other 13,420 above the level of the sea.

5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the
tenth *month,* on the first *day* of the month, were the tops of the
mountains seen.
6 And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the
window of the ark which he had made:
7 and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the
waters were dried up from off the earth.

We have here an account of the spies which Noah sent forth to bring him intelligence from abroad, a raven and a dove. Observe here,

That though God had told Noah particularly when the flood would come, even to a day (Ge 7:4), yet he did not give him a

particular account by revelation at what times, and by what steps, it should go away,

1. Because the knowledge of the former was necessary to his preparing the ark, and settling himself in it; but the knowledge of the latter would serve only to gratify his curiosity, and the concealing of it from him would be the needful exercise of his faith and patience. And,

2. He could not foresee the flood, but by revelation; but he might, by ordinary means, discover the decrease of it, and therefore God was pleased to leave him to the use of them.

8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground.

That though Noah by faith expected his enlargement, and by patience waited for it, yet he was inquisitive concerning it, as one that thought it long to be thus confined. Note, Desires of release out of trouble, earnest expectations of it, and enquiries concerning its advances towards us, will very well consist with the sincerity of faith and patience. He that believes does not make haste to run before God, but he does make haste to go forth to meet him, Isa 28:16. Particularly,

1. Noah sent forth a raven through the window of the ark, which went forth, as the Hebrew phrase is, going forth and returning, that is, flying about, and feeding on the carcases that floated, but returning to the ark for rest; probably not in it, but upon it. This gave Noah little satisfaction; therefore,

2. He sent forth a dove, which returned the first time with no good news, but probably wet and dirty; but, the second time, she brought an olive-leaf in her bill, which appeared to be first plucked off, a plain indication that now the trees, the fruit-trees, began to appear above water. Note here,

(1.) The raven and the dove have been thought to stand for the believer's two natures: the "old man" satisfied with a world

under judgment; the "new man" finding satisfaction only in the things of the new creation.

(2.) That Noah sent forth the dove the second time seven days after the first time, and the third time was after seven days too; and probably the first sending of her out was seven days after the sending forth of the raven. This intimates that it was done on the Sabbath day, which, it should seem, Noah religiously observed in the ark. Having kept the Sabbath in a solemn assembly of his little church, he then expected special blessings from heaven, and enquired concerning them. Having directed his prayer, he looked up, Ps 5:3.

(3.) The dove is an emblem of a gracious soul, which finding no rest for its foot, no solid peace or satisfaction in this world, this deluged defiling world, returns to Christ as to its ark, as to its Noah. The carnal heart, like the raven, takes up with the world, and feeds on the carrions it finds there; but return thou to thy rest, O my soul, to thy Noah, so the word is, Ps 116:7. O that I had wings like a dove, to flee to him! Ps 55:6. And as Noah put forth his hand, and took the dove, and pulled her in to him, into the ark, so Christ will graciously preserve, and help, and welcome, those that fly to him for rest.

(4.) The olive-branch, which was an emblem of peace, was brought, not by the raven, a bird of prey, nor by a gay and proud peacock, but by a mild, patient, humble dove. It is a dove-like disposition that brings into the soul earnests of rest and joy.

(5.) Some make these things an allegory. The law was first sent forth like the raven, but brought no tidings of the assuaging of the waters of God's wrath, with which the world of mankind was deluged; therefore, in the fullness of time, God sent forth his gospel, as the dove, in the likeness of which the Holy Spirit descended, and this presents us with an olive-branch and brings in a better hope.

9 But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark.

11 And the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth *was* an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

Her flight, judging by the time she was abroad, was pursued to a great distance, and the newly plucked olive leaf, she no doubt by supernatural impulse brought in her bill, afforded a welcome proof that the declivities of the hills were clear.

12 And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him anymore.

We perceive a wisdom and prudence far superior to the inspiration of instinct—we discern the agency of God guiding all the movements of this bird for the instruction of Noah, and reviving the hopes of his household.

13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first *month*, the first *day* of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.

Here is,

1 The ground dry (Ge 8:13), that is, all the water carried off it, which, upon the first day of the first month (a joyful new-year's-day it was), Noah was himself an eye-witness of. He removed the covering of the ark, not the whole covering, but so much as would suffice to give him a prospect of the earth about it; and a most comfortable prospect he had. For behold, behold and wonder, the face of the ground was dry. Note,

(1.) It is a great mercy to see ground about us. Noah was more sensible of it than we are; for mercies restored are much more affecting than mercies continued.

(2.) The divine power which now renewed the face of the earth can renew the face of an afflicted troubled soul and of a distressed persecuted church. He can make dry ground to appear even where it seemed to have been lost and forgotten, Ps 18:16.

2 The ground dried (Ge 8:14), so as to be a fit habitation for Noah. Observe, Though Noah saw the ground dry the first day of the first month, yet God would not suffer him to go out of the ark till the twenty-seventh day of the second month. Perhaps Noah, being somewhat weary of his restraint, would have quitted the ark at first; but God, in kindness to him, ordered him to stay so much longer.

Note, God consults our benefit rather than our desires; for he knows what is good for us better than we do for ourselves, and how long it is fit our restraints should continue and desired mercies should be delayed. We would go out of the ark before the ground is dried: and perhaps, if the door be shut, are ready to remove the covering, and to climb up some other way; but we should be satisfied that God's time of showing mercy is certainly the best time, when the mercy is ripe for us and we are ready for it.

Noah removed the covering of the ark—probably only as much of it as would afford him a prospect of the earth around. Yet for about two months he never stirred from his appointed abode till he had received the express permission of God. We should watch the leading of Providence to direct us in every step of the journey of life.

14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

15 And God spake unto Noah, saying,

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should watch the leading of Providence to direct us in every step of the journey of life.

16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee.

17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that *is* with thee, of all flesh, *both* of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.

18 And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

Noah's departure when he had his dismission. As he would not go out without leave, so he would not, out of fear or humour, stay in when he had leave, but was in all points observant of the heavenly vision. Though he had been now a full year and ten days a prisoner in the ark, yet when he found himself preserved there, not only for a new life, but for a new world, he saw no reason to complain of his long confinement. Now observe,

1. Noah and his family came out alive, though one of them was a wicked Ham, whom, though he escaped the flood, God's justice could have taken away by some other stroke. But they are all alive. Note, When families have been long continued together, and no breaches made among them, it must be looked upon as a distinguishing favour, and attributed to the Lord's mercies.

2. Noah brought out all the creatures that went in with him, except the raven and the dove, which, probably, were ready to meet their mates at their coming out. Noah was able to give a very good account of his charge; for of all that were given to him he had lost none, but was faithful to him that appointed him, pro hac vice--on this occasion, high steward of his household.

19 every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

20 And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

Here is, Noah's thankful acknowledgment of God's favour to him, in completing the mercy of his deliverance, Ge 8:20.

1. He built an altar. Hitherto he had done nothing without particular instructions and commands from God. He had a particular call into the ark, and another out of it; but, altars and sacrifices being already of divine institution for religious worship, he did not stay for a particular command thus to express his thankfulness. Those that have received mercy from God should be forward in returning thanks, and do it not of constraint, but willingly. God is pleased with free-will offerings, and praises that wait for him. Noah was now turned out into a cold and desolate world, where, one would have thought, his first care would have been to build a house for himself; but, behold, he begins with an altar for God: God, that is the first, must be first served; and he begins well that begins with God.

2. He offered a sacrifice upon his altar, of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl--one, the odd seventh that we read of, Ge 7:2, and 3. Here observe,

(1.) He offered only those that were clean; for it is not enough that we sacrifice, but we must sacrifice that which God appoints, according to the law of sacrifice, and not a corrupt thing.

(2.) Though his stock of cattle was so small, and that rescued from ruin at so great an expense of care and pains, yet he did not grudge to give God his dues out of it. He might have said, "Have I but seven sheep to begin the world with, and must one of these seven be killed and burnt for sacrifice? Were it not better to defer it till we have greater plenty?" No, to prove the sincerity of his love and gratitude, he cheerfully gives the seventh to his God, as an acknowledgment that all was his,

and owing to him. Serving God with our little is the way to make it more; and we must never think that wasted with which God is honoured.

(3.) See here the antiquity of religion: the first thing we find done in the new world was an act of worship, Jer 6:16. We are now to express our thankfulness, not by burnt-offerings, but by the sacrifices of praise and the sacrifices of righteousness, by pious devotions and a pious conversation.

21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done.

God's gracious acceptance of Noah's thankfulness. It was a settled rule in the patriarchal age: If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? Noah was so. For,

1. God was well pleased with the performance, Ge 8:21. He smelt a sweet savour, or, as it is in the Hebrew, a savour of rest, from it. As, when he had made the world at first on the seventh day, he rested and was refreshed, so, now that he had new-made it, in the sacrifice of the seventh he rested. He was well pleased with Noah's pious zeal, and these hopeful beginnings of the new world, as men are with fragrant and agreeable smells; though his offering was small, it was according to his ability, and God accepted it. Having caused his anger to rest upon the world of sinners, he here caused his love to rest upon this little remnant of believers.

2. Hereupon, he took up a resolution never to drown the world again. Herein he had an eye, not so much to Noah's sacrifice as to Christ's sacrifice of himself, which was typified and represented by it, and which was indeed an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, Eph 5:2. Good security is here given, and that which may be relied upon,

That this judgment should never be repeated. Noah might think, "To what purpose should the world be repaired, when,

in all probability, for the wickedness of it, it will quickly be in like manner ruined again?" "No," says God, "it never shall." It was said (Ge 6:6), It repented the Lord that he had made man; now here he speaks as if it repented him that he had destroyed man: neither means a change of his mind, but both a change of his way. It repented him concerning his servants, De 32:36. Two ways this resolve is expressed:--

[1.] I will not again curse the ground, Heb. I will not add to curse the ground any more. God had cursed the ground upon the first entrance of sin (Ge 3:17), when he drowned it he added to that curse; but now he determines not to add to it any more.

[2.] Neither will I again smite any more every living thing; that is, it was determined that whatever ruin God might bring upon particular persons, or families, or countries, he would never again destroy the whole world till the day shall come when time shall be no more. But the reason of this resolve is very surprising, for it seems the same in effect with the reason given for the destruction of the world: Because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, Ge 6:5. But there is this difference--there it is said, The imagination of man's heart is evil continually, that is, "his actual transgressions continually cry against him;" here it is said, It is evil from his youth or childhood. It is bred in the bone; he brought it into the world with him; he was shapen and conceived in it. Now, one would think it should follow, "Therefore that guilty race shall be wholly extinguished, and I will make a full end." No, "Therefore I will no more take this severe method; for," First, "He is rather to be pitied, for it is all the effect of sin dwelling in him; and it is but what might be expected from such a degenerate race: he is called a transgressor from the womb, and therefore it is not strange that he deals so very treacherously," Isa 48:8. Thus God remembers that he is flesh, corrupt and sinful, Ps 78:39. Secondly, "He will be utterly ruined; for, if he be dealt with

according to his deserts, one flood must succeed another till all be destroyed." See here,

1. That outward judgments, though they may terrify and restrain men, yet cannot of themselves sanctify and renew them; the grace of God must work with those judgments. Man's nature was as sinful after the deluge as it had been before.

2. That God's goodness takes occasion from man's sinfulness to magnify itself the more; his reasons of mercy are all drawn from himself, not from anything in us.

The Lord said in heart The Third Dispensation: Human Government. Under Conscience, as in Innocency, man utterly failed, and the judgment of the Flood marks the end of the second dispensation and the beginning of the third. The declaration of the Noahic Covenant subjects humanity to a new test. Its distinctive feature is the institution, for the first time, of human government--the government of man by man. The highest function of government is the judicial taking of life. All other governmental powers are implied in that. It follows that the third dispensation is distinctively that of human government. Man is responsible to govern the world for God. That responsibility rested upon the whole race, Jew and Gentile, until the failure of Israel under the Palestinian Covenant (Deu 28. - 30:1-10) brought the judgment of the Captivities, when "the times of the Gentiles" (See); Luke 21:24; Revelation 16:14 began, and the government of the world passed exclusively into Gentile hands; Daniel 2:36-45; Luke 21:24; Acts 15:14-17. That both Israel and the Gentiles have governed for self, not God, is sadly apparent. The judgment of the confusion of tongues ended the racial testing; that of the captivities the Jewish; while the Gentile testing will end in the smiting of the Image (Da 2.) and the judgment of the nations Matthew 25:31-46.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

That the course of nature should never be discontinued (Ge 8:22): "While the earth remaineth, and man upon it, there shall be summer and winter (not all winter as had been this last year), day and night," not all night, as probably it was while the rain was descending. Here,

[1.] It is plainly intimated that this earth is not to remain always; it, and all the works in it, must shortly be burnt up; and we look for new heavens and a new earth, when all these things must be dissolved. But,

[2.] As long as it does remain God's providence will carefully preserve the regular succession of times and seasons, and cause each to know its place. To this we owe it that the world stands, and the wheel of nature keeps it track. See here how changeable the times are and yet how unchangeable. First, The course of nature always changing. As it is with the times, so it is with the events of time, they are subject to vicissitudes--day and night, summer and winter, counterchanged. In heaven and hell it is not so, but on earth God hath set the one over against the other. Secondly, Yet never changed. It is constant in this inconstancy. These seasons have never ceased, nor shall cease, while the sun continued such a steady measurer of time and the moon such a faithful witness in heaven. This is God's covenant of the day and of the night, the stability of which is mentioned for the confirming of our faith in the covenant of grace, which is no less inviolable, Jer 33:20, 21. We see God's promises to the creatures made good, and thence may infer that his promises to all believers shall be so.

Genesis -9

God's Covenant with Noah

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

We read, in the close of the foregoing chapter, the very kind things which God said in his heart, concerning the remnant of mankind which was now left to be the seed of a new world. Now here we have these kind things spoken to them. In general, God blessed Noah and his sons (Ge 9:1), that is, he assured them of his good-will to them and his gracious intentions concerning them. This follows from what he said in his heart. Note, All God's promises of good flow from his purposes of love and the counsels of his own will. See Eph 1:11, 3:11. And compare Jer 29:11. I know the thoughts that I think towards you. We read (Ge 8:20) how Noah blessed God, by his altar and sacrifice. Now here we find God blessing Noah. Note, God will graciously bless (that is, do well for) those who sincerely bless (that is, speak well of) him. Those that are truly thankful for the mercies they have received take the readiest way to have them confirmed and continued to them.

Now here we have the Magna Charta--the great charter of this new kingdom of nature which was now to be erected, and incorporated, the former charter having been forfeited and seized.

The grants of this charter are kind and gracious to men. Here is,

A grant of lands of vast extent, and a promise of a great increase of men to occupy and enjoy them. The first blessing is here renewed: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth (Ge 9:1), and repeated (Ge 9:7), for the race of mankind was, as it were, to begin again. Now,

(1.) God sets the whole earth before them, tells them it is all their own, while it remains, to them and their heirs. Note, The earth God has given to the children of men, for a possession and habitation, Ps 115:16. Though it is not a paradise, but a wilderness rather; yet it is better than we deserve. Blessed be God, it is not hell.

(2.) He gives them a blessing, by the force and virtue of which mankind should be both multiplied and perpetuated upon earth, so that in a little time all the habitable parts of the earth should be more or less inhabited; and, though one generation should pass away, yet another generation should come, while the world stands, so that the stream of the human race should be supplied with a constant succession, and run parallel with the current of time, till both should be delivered up together into the ocean of eternity. Though death should still reign, and the Lord would still be known by his judgments, yet the earth should never again be dispeopled as now it was, but still replenished, Ac 17:24-26.

2 And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth *upon* the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered.

A grant of power over the inferior creatures, Ge 9:2. He grants,

(1.) A title to them: Into your hands they are delivered, for your use and benefit.

(2.) A dominion over them, without which the title would avail little: The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast. This revives a former grant (Ge 1:28), only with this difference, that man in innocence ruled by love, fallen man rules by fear. Now this grant remains in force, and thus far we have still the benefit of it,

[1.] That those creatures which are any way useful to us are reclaimed, and we use them either for service or food, or both, as they are capable. The horse and ox patiently submit to the bridle and yoke, and the sheep is dumb both before the shearer and before the butcher; for the fear and dread of man are upon them.

[2.] Those creatures that are any way hurtful to us are restrained, so that, though now and then man may be hurt by some of them, they do not combine together to rise up in rebellion against man, else God could by these destroy the world as effectually as he did by a deluge; it is one of God's sore judgments, Eze 14:21. What is it that keeps wolves out of our towns, and lions out of our streets, and confines them to the wilderness, but this fear and dread? Nay, some have been tamed, Jam 9:7.

3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things.

A grant of maintenance and subsistence: Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, Ge 9:3. Hitherto, most think, man had been confined to feed only upon the products of the earth, fruits, herbs, and roots, and all sorts of corn and milk; so was the first grant, Ge 1:29. But the flood having perhaps washed away much of the virtue of the earth, and so rendered its fruits less pleasing and less nourishing, God now enlarged the grant, and allowed man to eat flesh, which perhaps man himself never thought of, till now that God directed him to it, nor had any more desire to than a sheep has to suck blood like a wolf. But now man is allowed to feed upon flesh, as freely and safely as upon the green herb. Now here see,

(1.) That God is a good master, and provides, not only that we may live, but that we may live comfortably, in his service; not for necessity only, but for delight.

(2.) That every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, 1Ti 4:4. Afterwards some meats that were proper enough for food were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but

from the beginning, it seems, it was not so, and therefore is not so under the gospel.

4 But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.

The precepts and provisos of this character are no less kind and gracious, and instances of God's good-will to man. The Jewish doctors speak so often of the seven precepts of Noah, or of the sons of Noah, which they say were to be observed by all nations, that it may not be amiss to set them down. The first against the worship of idols. The second against blasphemy, and requiring to bless the name of God. The third against murder. The fourth against incest and all uncleanness. The fifth against theft and rapine. The sixth requiring the administration of justice. The seventh against eating of flesh with the life. These the Jews required the observance of from the proselytes of the gate. But the precepts here given all concern the life of man.

Man must not prejudice his own life by eating that food which is unwholesome and prejudicial to his health (Ge 9:4): "Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof shall you not eat, as the beasts of prey do." It was necessary to add this limitation to the grant of liberty to eat flesh, lest, instead of nourishing their bodies by it, they should destroy them. God would hereby show,

(1.) That though they were lords of the creatures, yet they were subjects to the Creator, and under the restraints of his law.

(2.) That they must not be greedy and hasty in taking their food, but stay the preparing of it; not like Saul's soldiers (1Sa 14:32), nor riotous eaters of flesh, Pr 23:20.

(3.) That they must not be barbarous and cruel to the inferior creatures. They must be lords, but not tyrants; they might kill them for their profit, but not torment them for their pleasure,

nor tear away the member of a creature while it was yet alive, and eat that.

(4.) That during the continuance of the law of sacrifices, in which the blood made atonement for the soul (Le 17:11), signifying that the life of the sacrifice was accepted for the life of the sinner, blood must not be looked upon as a common thing, but must be poured out before the Lord (2Sa 23:16), either upon his altar or upon his earth. But, now that the great and true sacrifice has been offered, the obligation of the law ceases with the reason of it.

5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

1. Man must not take away his own life: Your blood of your lives will I require, Ge 9:5. Our lives are not so our own as that we may quit them at our own pleasure, but they are God's and we must resign them at his pleasure; if we in any way hasten our own deaths, we are accountable to God for it.

2. The beasts must not be suffered to hurt the life of man: At the hand of every beast will I require it. To show how tender God was of the life of man, though he had lately made such destruction of lives, he will have the beast put to death that kills a man. This was confirmed by the law of Moses (Ex 21:28), and I think it would not be unsafe to observe it still. Thus God showed his hatred of the sin of murder, that men might hate it the more, and not only punish, but prevent it. And see Job 5:23.

3. Willful murderers must be put to death. This is the sin which is here designed to be restrained by the terror of punishment

(1.) God will punish murderers: At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man, that is, "I will avenge the blood of the murdered upon the murderer." 2Ch 24:22.

When God requires the life of a man at the hand of him that took it away unjustly, the murderer cannot render that, and therefore must render his own in lieu of it, which is the only way left of making restitution. Note, The righteous God will certainly make inquisition for blood, though men cannot or do not. One time or other, in this world or in the next, he will both discover concealed murders, which are hidden from man's eye, and punish avowed and justified murders, which are too great for man's hand.

(2.) The magistrate must punish murderers (Ge 9:6): Whoso sheddeth man's blood, whether upon a sudden provocation or having premeditated it (for rash anger is heart-murder as well as malice prepense, Mt 5:21,22), by man shall his blood be shed, that is, by the magistrate, or whoever is appointed or allowed to be the avenger of blood. There are those who are ministers of God for this purpose, to be a protection to the innocent, by being a terror to the malicious and evildoers, and they must not bear the sword in vain, Ro 13:4. Before the flood, as it should seem by the story of Cain, God took the punishment of murder into his own hands; but now he committed this judgment to men, to masters of families at first, and afterwards to the heads of countries, who ought to be faithful to the trust reposed in them. Note, Willful murder ought always to be punished with death. It is a sin which the Lord would not pardon in a prince (2Ki 24:3, 4), and which therefore a prince should not pardon in a subject. To this law there is a reason annexed: For in the image of God made he man at first. Man is a creature dear to his Creator, and therefore ought to be so to us. God put honour upon him, let not us then put contempt upon him. Such remains of God's image are still even upon fallen man as that he who unjustly kills a man defaces the image of God and does dishonour to him. When God allowed men to kill their beasts, yet he forbade them to kill their slaves; for these are of a much more noble and excellent nature, not only God's creatures, but his image, Jam 3:9. All men have something of the image of God upon them; but magistrates have, besides, the image of his

power, and the saints the image of his holiness, and therefore those who shed the blood of princes or saints incur a double guilt.

6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.
7 And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.
8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,
9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

Here is, the general establishment of God's covenant with this new world, and the extent of that covenant, Ge 9:9, 10. Here observe,

1. That God is graciously pleased to deal with man in the way of a covenant, wherein God greatly magnifies his condescending favour, and greatly encourages man's duty and obedience, as a reasonable and gainful service.

2. That all God's covenants with man are of his own making: I, behold, I. It is thus expressed both to raise our admiration--"Behold, and wonder, that though God be high yet he has this respect to man," and to confirm our assurances of the validity of the covenant--"Behold and see, I make it; I that am faithful and able to make it good."

3. That God's covenants are established more firmly than the pillars of heaven or the foundations of the earth, and cannot be disannulled.

4. That God's covenants are made with the covenanters and with their seed; the promise is to them and their children.

5. That those may be taken into covenant with God, and receive the benefits of it, who yet are not capable of restipulating, or giving their own consent. For this covenant is made with every living creature, every beast of the earth.

10 and with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there anymore be a flood to destroy the earth.

The particular intention of this covenant. It was designed to secure the world from another deluge: There shall not anymore be a flood. God had drowned the world once, and still it was as filthy and provoking as ever, and God foresaw the wickedness of it, and yet promised he would never drown it anymore; for he deals not with us according to our sins. It is owing to God's goodness and faithfulness, not to any reformation of the world, that it has not often been deluged and that it is not deluged now. As the old world was ruined to be a monument of justice, so this world remains to this day, a monument of mercy, according to the oath of God, that the waters of Noah should no more return to cover the earth, Isa 54:9. This promise of God keeps the sea and clouds in their decreed place, and sets them gates and bars; hitherto they shall come, Job 38:10, 11. If the sea should flow but for a few days, as it does twice every day for a few hours, what desolation would it make! And how destructive would the clouds be, if such showers as we have sometimes seen were continued long! But God, by flowing seas and sweeping rains, shows what he could do in wrath; and yet, by preserving the earth from being deluged between both, shows what he can do in mercy and will do in truth. Let us give him the glory of his mercy in promising and of his truth in performing. This promise does not hinder,

1. But that God may bring other wasting judgments upon mankind; for, though he has here bound himself not to use this arrow any more, yet he has other arrows in his quiver.

2. Nor but that he may destroy particular places and countries by the inundations of the sea or rivers.

3. Nor will the destruction of the world at the last day by fire be any breach of his promise. Sin which drowned the old world will burn this.

12 And God said, this *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

Articles of agreement among men are usually sealed, that the covenants may be the more solemn, and the performances of the covenants the more sure, to mutual satisfaction. God therefore, being willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his councils, has confirmed his covenant by a seal (Heb 6:17), which makes the foundations we build on stand sure, 2Ti 2:19. The seal of this covenant of nature was natural enough; it was the rainbow, which, it is likely, was seen in the clouds before, when second causes concurred, but was never a seal of the covenant till now that it was made so by a divine institution. Now, concerning this seal of the covenant, observe,

1. This seal is affixed with repeated assurances of the truth of that promise of which it was designed to be the ratification: I do set my bow in the cloud (Ge 9:13); it shall be seen in the cloud (Ge 9:14), that the eye may affect the heart and confirm the faith; and it shall be the token of the covenant (Ge 9:12,13), and I will remember my covenant, that the waters shall no more become a flood, Ge 9:15. Nay, as if the Eternal Mind needed a memorandum, I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, Ge 9:16. Thus here is line upon line, that we might have sure and strong consolation who have laid hold of this hope.

2 The rainbow appears when the clouds are most disposed to wet, and returns after the rain; when we have most reason to fear the rain prevailing, then God shows this seal of the promise that it shall not prevail. Thus God obviates our fears

with such encouragements as are both suitable and seasonable.

3. The thicker the cloud the brighter the bow in the cloud. Thus, as threatening afflictions abound, encouraging consolations much more abound, 2Co 1:5.

4. The rainbow appears when one part of the sky is clear, which intimates mercy remembered in the midst of wrath; and the clouds are hemmed as it were with the rainbow, that they may not overspread the heavens, for the bow is coloured rain or the edges of a cloud gilded.

5. The rainbow is the reflection of the beams of the sun, which intimates that all the glory and significancy of the seals of the covenant are derived from Christ the Sun of righteousness, who is also described with a rainbow about his throne (Re 4:3), and a rainbow upon his head (Re 10:1), which intimates, not only his majesty, but his mediatorship.

6. The rainbow has fiery colours in it, to signify that though God will not again drown the world, yet, when the mystery of God shall be finished, the world shall be consumed by fire.

7. A bow bespeaks terror, but this bow has neither string nor arrow, as the bow ordained against the persecutors has (Ps 7:12, 13), and a bow alone will do little execution. It is a bow, but it is directed upwards, not towards the earth; for the seals of the covenant were intended to comfort, not to terrify.

8. As God looks upon the bow, that he may remember the covenant, so should we, that we also may be ever mindful of the covenant, with faith and thankfulness.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that
the bow shall be seen in the cloud:
15 and I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you
and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more
become a flood to destroy all flesh.

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I
may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every
living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.
17 And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I
have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

Noah's Drunkenness

18 And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and
Ham, and Japheth: and Ham *is* the father of Canaan.
19 These *are* the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth
overspread.
20 And Noah began *to be* a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

Noah's sin and shame: He planted a vineyard; and, when he had gathered his vintage, probably he appointed a day of mirth and feasting in his family, and had his sons and their children with him, to rejoice with him in the increase of his house as well as in the increase of his vineyard; and we may suppose he prefaced his feast with a sacrifice to the honour of God. If this was omitted, it was just with God to leave him to himself, that he who did not begin with God might end with the beasts; but we charitably hope that it was not: and perhaps he appointed this feast with a design, at the close of it, to bless his sons, as Isaac, Ge 27:3, 4, That I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee. At this feast he drank of the wine; for who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit of it? But he drank too liberally, more than his head at this age would bear, for he was drunk. We have reason to think he was never drunk before nor after; observe how he came now to be overtaken in this fault. It was his sin, and a great sin, so much the worse for its being so soon after a great deliverance; but God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah (2Ch 32:31), and has left this miscarriage of his upon record, to teach us,

1. That the fairest copy that ever mere man wrote since the fall had its blots and false strokes. It was said of Noah that he was perfect in his generations (Ge 6:9), but this shows that it is meant of sincerity, not a sinless perfection.

2. That sometimes those who, with watchfulness and resolution, have, by the grace of God, kept their integrity in the midst of temptation, have, through security, and carelessness, and neglect of the grace of God, been surprised into sin, when the hour of temptation has been over. Noah, who had kept sober in drunken company, is now drunk in sober company. Let him that thinks he stands take heed.

3. That we have need to be very careful, when we use God's good creatures plentifully, lest we use them to excess. Christ's disciples must take heed lest at any time their hearts be overcharged, Lu 21:34. Now the consequence of Noah's sin was shame. He was uncovered within his tent, made naked to his shame, as Adam when he had eaten forbidden fruit. Yet Adam sought concealment; Noah is so destitute of thought and reason that he seeks no covering. This was a fruit of the vine that Noah did not think of. Observe here the great evil of the sin of drunkenness.

(1.) It discovers men. What infirmities they have, they betray when they are drunk, and what secrets they are entrusted with are then easily got out of them. Drunken porters keep open gates.

(2.) It disgraces men, and exposes them to contempt. As it shows them, so it shames them. Men say and do that when drunk which when they are sober they would blush at the thoughts of, Hab 2:15, 16.

21 and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

Noah was by his calling led to trade in the fruits of the earth. He began to be a husbandman, that is, sometime after his departure out of the ark, he returned to his old employment, from which he had been diverted by the building of the ark first, and probably afterwards by the building of a house on dry land for himself and family. For this good while he had been a carpenter, but now he began again to be a husbandman.

Observe, Though Noah was a great man and a good man, an old man and a rich man, a man greatly favoured by heaven and honoured on earth, yet he would not live an idle life, nor think the husbandman's calling below him. Note, Though God by his providence may take us off from our callings for a time, yet when the occasion is over we ought with humility and industry to apply ourselves to them again, and, in the calling wherein we are called, faithfully to abide with God, 1Co 7:24.

22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

Ham's impudence and impiety: He saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren, Ge 9:22. To see it accidentally and involuntarily would not have been a crime; but,

1. He pleased himself with the sight, as the Edomites looked up on the day of their brother (Ob 1:12), pleased, and insulting. Perhaps Ham had sometimes been himself drunk, and reproved for it by his good father, whom he was therefore pleased to see thus overcome. Note, It is common for those who walk in false ways themselves to rejoice at the false steps which they sometimes see others make. But charity rejoices not in iniquity, nor can true penitents that are sorry for their own sins rejoice in the sins of others.

2. He told his two brethren without (in the street, as the word is), in a scornful deriding manner, that his father might seem vile unto them. It is very wrong,

(1.) To make a jest of sin (Pr 14:9), and to be puffed up with that for which we should rather mourn, 1Co 5:2. And,

(2.) To publish the faults of any, especially of parents, whom it is our duty to honour. Noah was not only a good man, but had been a good father to him; and this was a most base disingenuous requital to him for his tenderness. Ham is here called the father of Canaan, which intimates that he who was

himself a father should have been more respectful to him that was his father.

23 And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

The pious care of Shem and Japheth to cover their poor father's shame, Ge 5:23. They not only would not see it themselves, but provided that no one else might see it, herein setting us an example of charity with reference to other men's sin and shame; we must not only not say, A confederacy, with those that proclaim it, but we must be careful to conceal it, or at least to make the best of it, so doing as we would be done by.

1. There is a mantle of love to be thrown over the faults of all, 1Pe 4:8.

2. Besides this, there is a robe of reverence to be thrown over the faults of parents and other superiors.

24 And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

Noah comes to himself: He awoke from his wine. Sleep cured him, and, we may suppose, so cured him that he never relapsed into that sin afterwards. Those that sleep as Noah did should awake as he did, and not as that drunkard (Pr 23:35) who says when he awakes, I will seek it yet again.

25 And he said, Cursed *be* Canaan;
a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

He pronounces as a prophet the curse of God against all those who do not honour their parents: for Ham and his posterity were cursed.
The spirit of prophecy comes upon him, and, like dying Jacob, he tells his sons what shall befall them, Ge 49:1.

He pronounces a curse on Canaan the son of Ham (Ge 9:25), in whom Ham is himself cursed, either because this son of his was now more guilty than the rest, or because the posterity of

this son was afterwards to be rooted out of their land, to make room for Israel. This people being made their "servants" either by conquest, or, like the Gibeonites, by submission [Jos 9:25]. And Moses here records it for the animating of Israel in the wars of Canaan; though the Canaanites were a formidable people, yet they were of old an accursed people, and doomed to ruin. The particular curse is, A servant of servants (that is, the meanest and most despicable servant) shall he be, even to his brethren. Those who by birth were his equals shall by conquest be his lords. This certainly points at the victories obtained by Israel over the Canaanites, by which they were all either put to the sword or put under tribute (Jos 9:23,Jdg 1:28,30,33,35), which happened not till about 800 years after this. Note,

(1.) God often visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially when the children inherit the fathers' wicked dispositions, and imitate the fathers' wicked practices, and do nothing to cut off the entail of the curse.

(2.) Disgrace is justly put upon those that put disgrace upon others, especially that dishonour and grieve their own parents. An undutiful child that mocks at his parents is no more worthy to be called a son, but deserves to be made as a hired servant, nay, as a servant of servants, among his brethren.

(3.) Though divine curses operate slowly, yet, first or last, they will take effect. The Canaanites were under a curse of slavery, and yet, for a great while, had the dominion; for a family, a people, a person, may lie under the curse of God, and yet may long prosper in the world, till the measure of their iniquity, like that of the Canaanites, be full. Many are marked for ruin that are not yet ripe for ruin. Therefore, Let not thy heart envy sinners.

26 And he said,
Blessed *be* the Lord God of Shem;
and Canaan shall be his servant.

He entails a blessing upon Shem and Japheth.

He blesses Shem, or rather blesses God for him, yet so that it entitles him to the greatest honour and happiness imaginable, Ge 9:26. Observe,

[1.] He calls the Lord the god of Shem; and happy, thrice happy, is that people whose God is the LORD, Ps 144:15. All blessings are included in this. This was the blessing conferred on Abraham and his seed; the God of heaven was not ashamed to be called their God, Heb 11:16. Shem is sufficiently recompensed for his respect to his father by this, that the Lord himself puts this honour upon him, to be his God, which is a sufficient recompence for all our services and all our sufferings for his name.

[2.] He gives to God the glory of that good work which Shem had done, and, instead of blessing and praising him that was the instrument, he blesses and praises God that was the author. Note, The glory of all that is at any time well done, by ourselves or others, must be humbly and thankfully transmitted to God, who works all our good works in us and for us. When we see men's good works we should glorify, not them, but our Father, Mt 5:16. Thus David, in effect, blessed Abigail, when he blessed God that sent her (1Sa 25:32, 33), for it is an honour and a favour to be employed for God and used by him in doing good.

[3.] He foresees and foretells that God's gracious dealings with Shem and his family would be such as would evidence to all the world that he was the God of Shem, on which behalf thanksgivings would by many be rendered to him: Blessed be the Lord God of Shem.

[4.] It is intimated that the church should be built up and continued in the posterity of Shem; for of him came the Jews, who were, for a great while, the only professing people God had in the world.

[5.] Some think reference is here had to Christ, who was the Lord God that, in his human nature, should descend from the loins of Shem; for of him, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

[6.] Canaan is particularly enslaved to him: He shall be his servant. Note, Those that have the Lord for their God shall have as much of the honour and power of this world as he sees good for them.

27 God shall enlarge Japheth,
and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem;
and Canaan shall be his servant.

He blesses Japheth, and, in him, the isles of the Gentiles, which were peopled by his seed: God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, Ge 9:27. Now,

[1.] Some make this to belong wholly to Japheth, and to denote either, First, His outward prosperity, that his seed should be so numerous and so victorious that they should be masters of the tents of Shem, which was fulfilled when the people of the Jews, the most eminent of Shem's race, were tributaries to the Grecians first and afterwards to the Romans, both of Japheth's seed. Note, Outward prosperity is no infallible mark of the true church: the tents of Shem are not always the tents of the conqueror. Or, Secondly, It denotes the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church; and then we should read it, God shall persuade Japheth (for so the word signifies), and then, being so persuaded, he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, that is, Jews and Gentiles shall be united together in the gospel fold. After many of the Gentiles shall have been proselyted to the Jewish religion, both shall be one in Christ (Eph 2:14,15), and the Christian church, mostly made up of the Gentiles, shall succeed the Jews in the privileges of church-membership; the latter having first cast themselves out by their unbelief, the Gentiles shall dwell in their tents, Ro 11:11-24, &c. Note, It is God only that can bring those again into the church who have separated themselves from it. It is the power of God that

makes the gospel of Christ effectual to salvation, Ro 1:16. And again, Souls are brought into the church, not by force, but by persuasion, Ps 110:3. They are drawn by the cords of a man, and persuaded by reason to be religious.

[2.] Others divide this between Japheth and Shem, Shem having not been directly blessed, Ge 9:26.

First, Japheth has the blessing of the earth beneath: God shall enlarge Japheth, enlarge his seed, enlarge his border. Japheth's prosperity peopled all Europe, a great part of Asia, and perhaps America. Note, God is to be acknowledged in all our enlargements. It is he that enlarges the coast and enlarges the heart. And again, many dwell in large tents that do not dwell in God's tents, as Japheth did.

Secondly, Shem has the blessing of heaven above: He shall (that is, God shall) dwell in the tents of Shem, that is "From his loins Christ shall come, and in his seed the church shall be continued." The birth-right was now to be divided between Shem and Japheth, Ham being utterly discarded. In the principality which they equally share Canaan shall be servant to both. The double portion is given to Japheth, whom God shall enlarge; but the priesthood is given to Shem, for God shall dwell in the tents of Shem: and certainly we are more happy if we have God dwelling in our tents than if we had there all the silver and gold in the world. It is better to dwell in tents with God than in palaces without him. In Salem, where is God's tabernacle, there is more satisfaction than in all the isles of the Gentiles.

Thirdly, They both have dominion over Canaan: Canaan shall be servant to them; so some read it. When Japheth joins with Shem, Canaan falls before them both. When strangers become friends, enemies become servants.

28 And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years.

Here see,

1. How God prolonged the life of Noah; he lived 950 years, twenty more than Adam and but nineteen less than Methuselah: this long life was a further reward of his signal piety, and a great blessing to the world, to which no doubt he continued a preacher of righteousness, with this advantage, that now all he preached to were his own children.

2. How God put a period to his life at last. Though he lived long, yet he died, having probably first seen many that descended from him dead before him. Noah lived to see two worlds, but, being an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, when he died he went to see a better than either.

29 And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.

Genesis -10

The Descendants of the Sons of Noah

1 Now these *are* the generations of the sons of Noah; Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood.

Moses begins with Japheth's family, either because he was the eldest, or because his family lay remotest from Israel and had least concern with them at the time when Moses wrote, and therefore he mentions that race very briefly, hastening to give an account of the posterity of Ham, who were Israel's enemies and of Shem, who were Israel's ancestors; for it is the church that the scripture is designed to be the history of, and of the nations of the world only as they were some way or other related to Israel and interested in the affairs of Israel. Observe,

1. Notice is taken that the sons of Noah had sons born to them after the flood, to repair and rebuild the world of mankind which the flood had ruined. He that had killed now makes alive.

2 The posterity of Japheth were allotted to the isles of the Gentiles (Ge 10:5), which were solemnly, by lot, after a survey, divided among them, and probably this island of ours among the rest; all places beyond the sea from Judea are called isles (Jer 25:22), and this directs us to understand that promise (Isa 42:4), the isles shall wait for his law, of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ.

2 The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.
3 And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah.
4 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.
5 By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.
6 And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan.

Sons of Ham—emigrated southward, and their settlements were: Cush in Arabia, Canaan in the country known by his name, and Mizraim in Egypt, Upper and Lower. It is generally thought that his father accompanied him and personally superintended the formation of the settlement, whence Egypt was called "the land of Ham" [Ps 105:23, 27; 106:22].

7 And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.
8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.

Nimrod—mentioned as eclipsing all his family in renown. He early distinguished himself by his daring and successful prowess in hunting wild beasts. By those useful services he earned a title to public gratitude; and, having established a permanent ascendancy over the people, he founded the first kingdom in the world [Ge 10:10].

Mighty one in the earth - meaning, a cruel oppressor and tyrant.

Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD - meaning, his tyranny came into a proverb as hated both by God and man: for he did not cease to commit cruelty even in God's presence.

That which is observable and improvable in these verses is the account here given of Nimrod, Ge 10:8-10. He is here represented as a great man in his day: He began to be a mighty one in the earth, that is, whereas those that went before him were content to stand upon the same level with their neighbours, and though every man bore rule in his own house yet no man pretended any further, Nimrod's aspiring mind could not rest here; he was resolved to tower above his neighbours, not only to be eminent among them, but to lord it over them. The same spirit that actuated the giants before the flood (who became mighty men, and men of renown, Ge 6:4), now revived in him, so soon was that tremendous judgment which the pride and tyranny of those mighty men brought upon the world forgotten.

Note, There are some in whom ambition and affectation of dominion seem to be bred in the bone; such there have been and will be, notwithstanding the wrath of God often revealed from heaven against them. Nothing on this side hell will humble and break the proud spirits of some men, in this like Lucifer, Isa 14:14, 15. Now,

Nimrod was a great hunter; with this he began, and for this became famous to a proverb. Every great hunter is, in remembrance of him, called a Nimrod.

1. Some think he did good with his hunting, served his country by ridding it of the wild beasts which infested it, and so insinuated himself into the affections of his neighbours, and got to be their prince. Those that exercise authority either are, or at least would be called, benefactors, Lu 22:25.

2. Others think that under pretence of hunting he gathered men under his command, in pursuit of another game he had to play, which was to make himself master of the country and to bring them into subjection. He was a mighty hunter, that is, he was a

violent invader of his neighbours' rights and properties, and a persecutor of innocent men, carrying all before him, and endeavouring to make all his own by force and violence. He thought himself a mighty prince, but before the Lord (that is, in God's account) he was but a mighty hunter. Note, Great conquerors are but great hunters. Alexander and Cesar would not make such a figure in scripture-history as they do in common history; the former is represented in prophecy but as a he-goat pushing, Da 8:5. Nimrod was a mighty hunter against the Lord, so the LXX; that is,

(1.) He set up idolatry, as Jeroboam did, for the confirming of his usurped dominion. That he might set up a new government, he set up a new religion upon the ruin of the primitive constitution of both. Babel was the mother of harlots. Or,

(2.) He carried on his oppression and violence in defiance of God himself, daring Heaven with his impieties, as if he and his huntsmen could out-brave the Almighty, and were a match for the Lord of hosts and all his armies. As if it were a small thing to weary men, he thinks to weary my God also, Isa 7:13.

9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said,
Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.

10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and
Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

Nimrod was a great ruler: The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Ge 10:10. Some way or other, by arts or arms, he got into power, either being chosen to it or forcing his way to it; and so laid the foundations of a monarchy, which was afterwards a head of gold, and the terror of the mighty, and bade fair to be universal. It does not appear that he had any right to rule by birth; but either his fitness for government recommended him, as some think, to an election, or by power and policy he advanced gradually, and perhaps insensibly, into the throne. See the antiquity of civil government, and particularly that form of it which lodges the sovereignty in a single person. If Nimrod and his neighbours began, other

nations soon learned to incorporate under one head for their common safety and welfare, which, however it began, proved so great a blessing to the world that things were reckoned to go ill indeed when there was no king in Israel.

11 Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah,

Nimrod was a great builder. Probably he was architect in the building of Babel, and there he began his kingdom; but, when his project to rule all the sons of Noah was baffled by the confusion of tongues, out of that land he went forth into Assyria (so the margin reads it, Ge 10:11) and built Nineveh, &c., that, having built these cities, he might command them and rule over them. Observe, in Nimrod, the nature of ambition.

1. It is boundless. Much would have more, and still cries, Give, give.

2. It is restless. Nimrod, when he had four cities under his command, could not be content till he had four more.

3. It is expensive. Nimrod will rather be at the charge of rearing cities than not have the honour of ruling them. The spirit of building is the common effect of a spirit of pride.

4. It is daring, and will stick at nothing. Nimrod's name signifies rebellion, which (if indeed he did abuse his power to the oppression of his neighbours) teaches us that tyrants to men are rebels to God, and their rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

Note: and builded Nineveh—opposite the town of Mosul, on the Tigris, and the other towns near it. This raid into Assyria was an invasion of the territories of Shem, and hence the name "Nimrod," signifying "rebel," is supposed to have been conferred on him from his daring revolt against the divine distribution.

12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same *is* a great city.

13 And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and

Naphtuhim,
14 and Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim.
15 And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth,

Observe here, 1 The account of the posterity of Canaan, of the families and nations that descended from him, and of the land they possessed, is more particular than of any other in this chapter, because these were the nations that were to be subdued before Israel, and their land was in process of time to become the holy land, Immanuel's land; and this God had an eye to when, in the meantime, he cast the lot of that accursed devoted race in that spot of ground which he had selected for his own people; this Moses takes notice of, De 32:8, When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

2. By this account it appears that the posterity of Canaan were numerous, and rich, and very pleasantly situated; and yet Canaan was under a curse, a divine curse, and not a curse causeless. Note, Those that are under the curse of God may yet perhaps thrive and prosper greatly in this world; for we cannot know love or hatred, the blessing or the curse, by what is before us, but by what is within us, Ec 9:1 The curse of God always works really and always terribly: but perhaps it is a secret curse, a curse to the soul, and does not work visibly, or a slow curse, and does not work immediately; but sinners are by it reserved for, and bound over to, a day of wrath. Canaan here has a better land than either Shem or Japheth, and yet they have a better lot, for they inherit the blessing.

16 and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite,
17 and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite,
18 and the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad.
19 And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha.
20 These *are* the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, *and* in their nations.

21 Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were *children* born.

The description of Shem, v. 21. We have not only his name, Shem, which signifies a name, but two titles to distinguish him by:--

1. He was the father of all the children of Eber. Eber was his great grandson; but why should he be called the father of all his children, rather than of all Arphaxad's, or Salah's, &c.? Probably because Abraham and his seed, God's covenant-people, not only descended from Heber, but from him were called Hebrews; Ge 14:13, Abram the Hebrew. Paul looked upon it as his privilege that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Php 3:5. Eber himself, we may suppose, was a man eminent for religion in a time of general apostasy, and a great example of piety to his family; and, the holy tongue being commonly called from him the Hebrew, it is probable that he retained it in his family, in the confusion of Babel, as a special token of God's favour to him; and from him the professors of religion were called the children of Eber. Now, when the inspired penman would give Shem an honourable title, he calls him the father of the Hebrews. Though when Moses wrote this, they were a poor despised people, bond-slaves in Egypt, yet, being God's people, it was an honour to a man to be akin to them. As Ham, though he had many sons, is disowned by being called the father of Canaan, on whose seed the curse was entailed (Ge 9:22), so Shem, though he had many sons, is dignified with the title of the father of Eber, on whose seed the blessing was entailed. Note, a family of saints is more truly honourable than a family of nobles, Shem's holy seed than Ham's royal seed, Jacob's twelve patriarchs than Ishmael's twelve princes, Ge 17:20. Goodness is true greatness.

2. He was the brother of Japheth the elder, by which it appears that, though Shem is commonly put first, he was not Noah's first-born, but Japheth was older. But why should this also be put as part of Shem's title and description, that he was the

brother of Japheth, since it had been, in effect, said often before? And was he not as much brother to Ham? Probably this was intended to signify the union of the Gentiles with the Jews in the church. The sacred historian had mentioned it as Shem's honour that he was the father of the Hebrews; but, lest Japheth's seed should therefore be looked upon as forever shut out from the church, he here reminds us that he was the brother of Japheth, not in birth only, but in blessing; for Japheth was to dwell in the tents of Shem. Note,

(1.) Those are brethren in the best manner that are so by grace, and that meet in the covenant of God and in the communion of saints.

(2.) God, in dispensing his grace, does not go by seniority, but the younger sometimes gets the start of the elder in coming into the church; so the last shall be first and the first last.

22 The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram.
23 And the children of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Mash.
24 And Arphaxad begat Salah; and Salah begat Eber.
25 And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one *was* Peleg [division]; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.

The reason of the name of Peleg (Ge 10:25): Because in his days (that is, about the time of his birth, when his name was given him), was the earth divided among the children of men that were to inhabit it; either when Noah divided it by an orderly distribution of it, as Joshua divided the land of Canaan by lot, or when, upon their refusal to comply with that division, God, in justice, divided them by the confusion of tongues: whichsoever of these was the occasion, pious Heber saw cause to perpetuate the remembrance of it in the name of his son; and justly may our sons be called by the same name, for in our days, in another sense, is the earth, the church, most wretchedly divided.

26 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazar-maveth, and

Jerah,
27 and Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah,
28 and Obal, and Abimael, and Sheba,
29 and Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab: all these *were* the sons of Joktan.
30 And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar, a mount of the east.
31 These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations.
32 These *are* the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

Genesis -11

The Tower of Babel

1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

The descendants of Noah, united by the strong bond of a common language, had not separated, and notwithstanding the divine command to replenish the earth, were unwilling to separate. The more pious and well-disposed would of course obey the divine will; but a numerous body, seemingly the aggressive horde mentioned (Ge 10:10), determined to please themselves by occupying the fairest region they came to.

The close of the foregoing chapter tells us that by the sons of Noah, or among the sons of Noah, the nations were divided in the earth after the flood, that is, were distinguished into several tribes or colonies; and, the places having grown too strait for them, it was either appointed by Noah, or agreed upon among his sons, which way each several tribe or colony should steer its course, beginning with the countries that were next them, and designing to proceed further and further, and to remove to a greater distance from each other, as the increase of their several companies should require. Thus was the matter well settled, one hundred years after the flood, about the time of Peleg's birth; but the sons of men, it should seem, were loth to disperse into distant places; they thought the more the merrier and the safer, and therefore they

contrived to keep together, and were slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of their fathers had given them (Jos 18:3), thinking themselves wiser than either God or Noah. Now here we have,

I The advantages which befriended their design of keeping together,

1. They were all of one language, Ge 11:1. If there were any different languages before the flood, yet Noah's only, which it is likely was the same with Adam's, was preserved through the flood, and continued after it. Now, while they all understood one another, they would be the more likely to love one another, and the more capable of helping one another, and the less inclinable to separate one from another.

2. They found a very convenient commodious place to settle in (Ge 11:2), a plain in the land of Shinar, a spacious plain, able to contain them all, and a fruitful plain, able, according as their present numbers were, to support them all, though perhaps they had not considered what room there would be for them when their numbers should be increased. Note, Inviting accommodations, for the present, often prove too strong temptations to the neglect of both duty and interest, as it respects futurity.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

The method they took to bind themselves to one another, and to settle together in one body. Instead of coveting to enlarge their borders by a peaceful departure under the divine protection, they contrived to fortify them, and, as those that were resolved to wage war with Heaven, they put themselves into a posture of defence. Their unanimous resolution is, Let us build ourselves a city and a tower. It is observable that the first builders of cities, both in the old world (Ge 4:17), and in the new world here, were not men of the best character and reputation: tents served God's subjects to dwell in; cities were first built by those that were rebels against him and revolters from him. Observe here,

1. How they excited and encouraged one another to set about this work. They said, Go to, let us make brick (Ge 11:3), and again, (Ge 11:4), Go to, let us build ourselves a city; by mutual excitements they made one another more daring and resolute. Note, Great things may be brought to pass when the undertakers are numerous and unanimous, and stir up one another. Let us learn to provoke one another to love and to good works, as sinners stir up and encourage one another to wicked works. See Ps 122:1, Isa 2:3, 5, Jer 50:5.

2. What materials they used in their building. The country, being plain, yielded neither stone nor mortar, yet this did not discourage them from their undertaking, but they made brick to serve instead of stone, and slime or pitch instead of mortar. See here,

(1.) What shift those will make that are resolute in their purposes: were we but zealously affected in a good thing, we should not stop our work so often as we do, under pretence that we want conveniences for carrying it on.

(2.) What a difference there is between men's building and God's; when men build their Babel, brick and slime are their best materials; but, when God builds his Jerusalem, he lays even the foundations of it with sapphires, and all its borders with pleasant stones, Isa 54:11-12,Re 21:19.

3. For what ends they built. Some think they intended hereby to secure themselves against the waters of another flood. God had told them indeed that he would not again drown the world; but they would trust to a tower of their own making, rather than to a promise of God's making or an ark of his appointing. If, however, they had had this in their eye, they would have chosen to build their tower upon a mountain rather than upon a plain, but three things, it seems, they aimed at in building this tower:--

(1.) It seems designed for an affront to God himself; for they would build a tower whose top might reach to heaven, which bespeaks a defiance of God, or at least a rivalship with him. They would be like the Most High, or would come as near him as they could, not in holiness but in height. They forgot their place, and,

scorning to creep on the earth, resolved to climb to heaven, not by the door or ladder, but some other way.

(2.) They hoped hereby to make themselves a name; they would do something to be talked of now, and to give posterity to know that there had been such men as they in the world. Rather than die and leave no memorandum behind them, they would leave this monument of their pride, and ambition, and folly. Note,

[1.] Affectation of honour and a name among men commonly inspires with a strange ardour for great and difficult undertakings, and often betrays to that which is evil and offensive to God.

[2.] It is just with God to bury those names in the dust which are raised by sin. These Babel-builders put themselves to a great deal of foolish expense to make themselves a name; but they could not gain even this point, for we do not find in any history the name of so much as one of these Babel-builders. Philo Judæus says, They engraved everyone his name upon a brick, in perpetuam rei memoriam--as a perpetual memorial; yet neither did this serve their purpose.

(3.) They did it to prevent their dispersion: Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. "It was done" (says Josephus) "in disobedience to that command (Ge 9:1), Replenish the earth." God orders them to disperse. "No," say they, "we will not, we will live and die together." In order hereunto, they engage themselves and one another in this vast undertaking. That they might unite in one glorious empire, they resolve to build this city and tower, to be the metropolis of their kingdom and the centre of their unity. It is probable that the band of ambitious Nimrod was in all this. He could not content himself with the command of a particular colony, but aimed at universal monarchy, in order to which, under pretence of uniting for their common safety, he contrives to keep them in one body, that, having them all under his eye, he might not fail to have them under his power. See the daring presumption of these sinners. Here is,

[1.] A bold opposition to God: "You shall be scattered," says God. "But we will not," say they. Woe unto him that thus strives with his Maker.

[2.] A bold competition with God. It is God's prerogative to be universal monarch, Lord of all, and King of kings; the man that aims at it offers to step into the throne of God, who will not give his glory to another.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

Meaning, that he declared by effect, that he knew their wicked enterprise; for God's power is everywhere, and neither ascends nor descends. The cognizance God took of the design that was on foot: The Lord came down to see the city, Ge 11:5. It is an expression after the manner of men; he knew it as clearly and fully as men know that which they come to the place to view. Observe,

1. Before he gave judgment upon their cause, he enquired into it; for God is incontestably just and fair in all his proceedings against sin and sinners, and condemns none unheard.

2. It is spoken of as an act of condescension in God to take notice even of this building, which the undertakers were so proud of; for he humbles himself to behold the transactions, even the most considerable ones, of this lower world, Ps 113:6. 3. It is said to be the tower which the children of men built, which intimates,

(1.) Their weakness and frailty as men. It was a very foolish thing for the children of men, worms of the earth, to defy Heaven, and to provoke the Lord to jealousy. Are they stronger than he?

(2.) Their sinfulness and obnoxiousness. They were the sons of Adam, so it is in the Hebrew; nay, of that Adam, that sinful disobedient Adam, whose children are by nature children of disobedience, children that are corrupters.

6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

The counsels and resolves of the Eternal God concerning this matter; he did not come down merely as a spectator, but as a judge, as a prince, to look upon these proud men, and abase them, Job 40:11-14. Observe,

1. He suffered them to proceed a good way in their enterprise before he put a stop to it, that they might have space to repent, and, if they had so much consideration left, might be ashamed of it and weary of it themselves; and if not that their disappointment might be the more shameful, and every one that passed by might laugh at them, saying, These men began to build, and were not able to finish, that so the works of their hands, from which they promised themselves immortal honour, might turn to their perpetual reproach. Note, God has wise and holy ends in permitting the enemies of his glory to carry on their impious projects a great way, and to prosper long in their enterprises.

2. When they had, with much care and toil, made some considerable progress in their building, then God determined to break their measures and disperse them. Observe,

The righteousness of God, which appears in the considerations upon which he proceeded in this resolution, Ge 11:6. Two things he considered:--

[1.] Their oneness, as a reason why they must be scattered: "Behold, the people are one, and they have all one language. If they continue one, much of the earth will be left uninhabited; the power of their prince will soon be exorbitant; wickedness and profaneness will be insufferably rampant, for they will strengthen one another's hands in it; and, which is worst of all, there will be an overbalance to the church, and these children of men, if thus incorporated, will swallow up the little remnant of God's children." Therefore it is decreed that they must not be one. Note, Unity is a policy, but it is not the infallible mark of a true church; yet, while the builders of Babel, though of different families, dispositions, and interests, were thus unanimous in opposing

God, what a pity is it, and what a shame, that the builders of Sion, though united in one common head and Spirit, should be divided, as they are, in serving God! But marvel not at the matter. Christ came not to send peace.

[2.] Their obstinacy: Now nothing will be restrained from them; and this is a reason why they must be crossed and thwarted in their design. God had tried, by his commands and admonitions, to bring them off from this project, but in vain; therefore he must take another course with them. See here, First, The sinfulness of sin, and the willfulness of sinners; ever since Adam would not be restrained from the forbidden tree, his unsanctified seed have been impatient of restraint and ready to rebel against it. Secondly, See the necessity of God's judgments upon earth, to keep the world in some order and to tie the hands of those that will not be checked by law.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

By this great plague of the confusion of tongues appears God's horrible judgment against man's pride and vain glory.

The wisdom and mercy of God in the methods that were taken for the defeating of this enterprise (Ge 11:7): Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language. This was not spoken to the angels, as if God needed either their advice or their assistance, but God speaks it to himself, or the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost. They said, Go to, let us make brick, and Go to, let us build a tower, animating one another to the attempt; and now God says, Go to, let us confound their language; for, if men stir up themselves to sin, God will stir up himself to take vengeance, Isa 59:17, 18. Now observe here,

[1.] The mercy of God, in moderating the penalty, and not making it proportionable to the offence; for he deals not with us according to our sins. He does not say, "Let us go down now in thunder and lightning, and consume those rebels in a moment;" or, "Let the earth open, and swallow up them and their building, and let those go down quickly into hell who are climbing to heaven the wrong way." No; only, "Let us go down, and scatter them." They deserved death, but are only banished or transported;

for the patience of God is very great towards a provoking world. Punishments are chiefly reserved for the future state. God's judgments on sinners in this life, compared with those which are reserved, are little more than restraints.

[2.] The wisdom of God, in pitching upon an effectual expedient to stay proceedings, which was the confounding of their language, that they might not understand one another's speech, nor could they well join hands when their tongues were divided; so that this would be a very proper method both for taking them off from their building (for, if they could not understand one another, they could not help one another) and also for disposing them to scatter; for, when they could not understand one another, they could not take pleasure in one another. Note, God has various means, and effectual ones, to baffle and defeat the projects of proud men that set themselves against him, and particularly to divide them among themselves, either by dividing their spirits (Jdg 9:23), or by dividing their tongues, as David prays, Ps 55:9.

8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

The execution of these counsels of God, to the blasting and defeating of the counsels of men, Ge 11:8,9. God made them know whose word should stand, his or theirs, as the expression is, Jer 44:28. Notwithstanding their oneness and obstinacy, God was too hard for them, and wherein they dealt proudly he was above them; for who ever hardened his heart against him and prospered? Three things were done:--

Their language was confounded. God, who, when he made man, taught him to speak, and put words into his mouth fit to express the conceptions of his mind by, now caused these builders to forget their former language, and to speak and understand a new one, which yet was common to those of the same tribe or family, but not to others: those of one colony could converse together, but not with those of another. Now,

(1.) This was a great miracle, and a proof of the power which God has upon the minds and tongues of men, which he turns as the rivers of water.

(2.) This was a great judgment upon these builders; for, being thus deprived of the knowledge of the ancient and holy tongue, they had become incapable of communicating with the true church, in which it was retained, and probably it contributed much to their loss of the knowledge of the true God.

(3.) We all suffer by it, to this day. In all the inconveniences we sustain by the diversity of languages, and all the pains and trouble we are at to learn the languages we have occasion for, we smart for the rebellion of our ancestors at Babel. Nay, and those unhappy controversies which are strifes of words, and arise from our misunderstanding one another's language, for aught I know are owing to this confusion of tongues.

(4.) The project of some to frame a universal character, in order to a universal language, how desirable soever it may seem, is yet, I think, but a vain thing to attempt; for it is to strive against a divine sentence, by which the languages of the nations will be divided while the world stands.

(5.) We may here lament the loss of the universal use of the Hebrew tongue, which from this time was the vulgar language of the Hebrews only, and continued so till the captivity in Babylon, where, even among them, it was exchanged for the Syriac.

(6.) As the confounding of tongues divided the children of men and scattered them abroad, so the gift of tongues, bestowed upon the apostles (Ac 2:1-13), contributed greatly to the gathering together of the children of God, who were scattered abroad, and the uniting of them in Christ, that with one mind and one mouth they might glorify God, Ro 15:6.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Their building was stopped: They left off to build the city. This was the effect of the confusion of their tongues; for it not only incapacitated them for helping one another, but probably struck such a damp upon their spirits that they could not proceed, since

they saw, in this, the hand of the Lord gone out against them. Note,

(1.) It is wisdom to leave off that which we see God fights against.

(2.) God is able to blast and bring to nought all the devices and designs of Babel-builders. He sits in heaven, and laughs at the counsels of the kings of the earth against him and his anointed; and will force them to confess that there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord, Pr 21:30,Isa 8:9,10.

The builders were scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth, Ge 11:8, 9. They departed in companies, after their families, and after their tongues (Ge 10:5,20,31), to the several countries and places allotted to them in the division that had been made, which they knew before, but would not go to take possession of till now that they were forced to it. Observe here,

(1.) The very thing which they feared came upon them. That dispersion which sought to evade by an act of rebellion they by this act brought upon themselves; for we are most likely to fall into that trouble which we seek to evade by indirect and sinful methods.

(2.) It was God's work: The Lord scattered them. God's hand is to be acknowledged in all scattering providences; if the family be scattered, relations scattered, churches scattered, it is the Lord's doing.

(3.) Though they were as firmly in league with one another as could be, yet the Lord scattered them; for no man can keep together what God will put asunder.

(4.) Thus God justly took vengeance on them for their oneness in that presumptuous attempt to build their tower. Shameful dispersions are the just punishment of sinful unions. Simeon and Levi, who had been brethren in iniquity, were divided in Jacob, Ge 49:5, 7, Ps 83:3-13.

(5.) They left behind them a perpetual memorandum of their reproach, in the name given to the place. It was called Babel,

confusion. Those that aim at a great name commonly come off with a bad name.

(6.) The children of men were now finally scattered, and never did, nor ever will, come all together again, till the great day, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations shall be gathered before him, Mt 25:31, 32.

The Descendants of Shem

10 These *are* the generations of Shem: Shem *was* a hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad two years after the flood:

Generations of Shem Genesis 11. And 12. Mark an important turning point in the divine dealing. Heretofore the history has been that of the whole Adamic race. There has been neither Jew nor Gentile; all have been one in "the first man Adam." Henceforth, in the Scripture record, humanity must be thought of as a vast stream from which God, in the call of Abram and the creation of the nation of Israel, has but drawn off a slender rill, through which He may at last purify the great river itself. Israel was called to be a witness to the unity of God in the midst of universal idolatry Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10-12 to illustrate the blessedness of serving the true God Deuteronomy 33:26-29 to receive and preserve the divine revelations ; Romans 3:1,2; Deuteronomy 4:5-8 and to produce the messiah ; Genesis 3:15; 21:12; 28:10,14; 49:10; 2 Samuel 7:16,17; Isaiah 4:3,4; Matthew 1:1. The reader of scripture should hold firmly in mind:

(1) That from Gen 12. to Matthew 12:45 the Scriptures have primarily in view Israel, the little rill, not the great Gentile river; though again and again the universality of the ultimate divine intent breaks into view (e.g. ; Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 2:2,4; 5:26; 9:1,2; 11:10-1242:1-6; 49:6,12; Isaiah 52:15; 54:3; 55:5; 60:3,5,11-16; 61:6,9 ; 62:2; 66:12,18,19; Jeremiah 16:19; Joel 3:9,10; Malachi 1:11 Ro 9. 10. 11. Galatians 3:8-14.

(2) that the human race, henceforth called Gentile in distinction from Israel, goes on under the Adamic and Noahic covenants;

and that for the race (outside Israel) the dispensations of Conscience and of Human government continue. The moral history of the great Gentile world is told in Romans 1:21-32 and its moral accountability in Romans 2:1-16. Conscience never acquits: it either "accuses" or "excuses." Where the law is known to the Gentiles it is to them, as to Israel, "a ministration of death," a "curse"; Romans 3:19, 20; 7:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 3:7; Galatians 3:10. A wholly new responsibility arises when either Jew or Gentile knows the Gospel ; John 3:18,19,36; 15:22-24 ; 16:9; 1 John 5:9-12.

11 and Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

12 And Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat Salah:

We have here a genealogy, not an endless genealogy, for here it ends in Abram, the friend of God, and leads further to Christ, the promised seed, who was the son of Abram, and from Abram the genealogy of Christ is reckoned (Mt 1:1-17, &c.); so that put Ge 5:1-32,11:10-26,Mt 1:1-17, together, and you have such an entire genealogy of Jesus Christ as cannot be produced, for aught I know, concerning any person in the world, out of his line, and at such a distance from the fountain-head. And, laying these three genealogies together, we shall find that twice ten, and thrice fourteen, generations or descents, passed between the first and second Adam, making it clear concerning Christ that he was not only the Son of Abraham, but the Son of man, and the seed of woman. Observe here, 1. Nothing is left upon record concerning those of this line but their names and ages, the Holy Ghost seeming to hasten through them to the story of Abram. How little do we know of those that have gone before us in this world, even those that lived in the same places where we live, as we likewise know little of those that are our contemporaries in distant places! We have enough to do to mind the work of our own day, and let God alone to require that which is past, Ec 3:15. 2. There was an observable gradual decrease in the years of their lives. Shem reached to 600 years, which yet fell short of the age of the patriarchs before the flood; the next three came short of 500; the next three did not reach to 300; after them we read not of any that attained to 200, except Terah; and, not many ages after this, Moses reckoned seventy, or eighty, to be the utmost men ordinarily arrive at. When the earth began to be replenished,

men's lives began to shorten; so that the decrease is to be imputed to the wise disposal of Providence, rather than to any decay of nature. For the elect's sake, men's days are shortened; and, being evil, it is well they are few, and attain not to the years of the lives of our fathers, Ge 47:9. 3. Eber, from whom the Hebrews were denominated, was the longest-lived of any that was born after the flood, which perhaps was the reward of his singular piety and strict adherence to the ways of God.

13 And Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah four hundred and three
years, and begat sons and daughters.
14 And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber:
15 and Salah lived after he begat Eber four hundred and three years,
and begat sons and daughters.
16 And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg:
17 and Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years,
and begat sons and daughters.
18 And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu:
19 and Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and
begat sons and daughters.
20 And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug:
21 and Reu lived after he begat Serug two hundred and seven years,
and begat sons and daughters.
22 And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor:
23 and Serug lived after he begat Nahor two hundred years, and begat
sons and daughters.
24 And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah:
25 and Nahor lived after he begat Terah a hundred and nineteen years,
and begat sons and daughters.
26 And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and
Haran.

The Descendants of Terah

27 Now these *are* the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram,
Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot.

Here begins the story of Abram, whose name is famous, henceforward, in both Testaments. We have here,

I. His country: Ur of the Chaldees. This was the land of his nativity, an idolatrous country, where even the children of Eber themselves had degenerated. Note, Those who are, through grace, heirs of the land of promise, ought to remember what was the land of their nativity, what was their corrupt and sinful state by nature, the rock out of which they were hewn.

II. His relations, mentioned for his sake, and because of their interest in the following story.

1. His father was Terah, of whom it is said (Jos 24:2) that he served other gods, on the other side of the flood, so early did idolatry gain footing in the world, and so hard is it even for those that have some good principles to swim against the stream. Though it is said (Ge 11:26) that when Terah was seventy years old he begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran (which seems to tell us that Abram was the eldest son of Terah, and was born in his seventieth year), yet, by comparing Ge 11:32, which makes Terah to die in his 205th year, with Ac 7:4 (where it is said that he was but seventy-five years old when he removed from Haran), it appears that he was born in the 130th year of Terah, and probably was his youngest son; for, in God's choices, the last are often first and the first last. We have,

2. Some account of his brethren.

(1.) Nahor, out of whose family both Isaac and Jacob had their wives.

(2.) Haran, the father of Lot, of whom it is here said (Ge 11:28) that he died before his father Terah. Note, Children cannot be sure that they shall survive their parents; for death does not go by seniority, taking the eldest first. The shadow of death is without any order, Job 10:22. It is likewise said that he died in Ur of the Chaldees, before the happy removal of the family out of that idolatrous country. Note, It concerns us to hasten out of our natural state, lest death surprise us in it.

28 And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity,
in Ur of the Chaldees.

Ur—now Orfa; that is, "light," or "fire." Its name probably derived from its being devoted to the rites of fire-worship. Terah and his family were equally infected with that idolatry as the rest of the inhabitants (Jos 24:15).

29 And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife *was* Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.

30 But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child.

31 And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

Terah - The name means delay.

Though the oracle of God came to Abram, yet the honour is given to Terah, because he was the father.

His departure out of Ur of the Chaldees, with his father Terah, his nephew Lot, and the rest of his family, in obedience to the call of God, of which we shall read more, Ge 12:1-20, &c. This chapter leaves them in Haran, or Charran, a place about mid-way between Ur and Canaan, where they dwelt till Terah's head was laid, probably because the old man was unable, through the infirmities of age, to proceed in his journey. Many reach to Charran, and yet fall short of Canaan; they are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither.

32 And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

Genesis -12

God's Call to Abram

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:

We have here the call by which Abram was removed out of the land of his nativity into the land of promise, which was designed both to try his faith and obedience and also to separate him and set him apart

for God, and for special services and favours which were further designed. The circumstances of this call we may be somewhat helped to the knowledge of from Stephen's speech, Ac 7:2, where we are told,

1. That the God of glory appeared to him to give him this call, appeared in such displays of his glory as left Abram no room to doubt the divine authority of this call. God spoke to him afterwards in divers manners; but this first time, when the correspondence was to be settled, he appeared to him as the God of glory, and spoke to him.

2. That this call was given him in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran; therefore we rightly read it, The Lord had said unto Abram, namely, in Ur of the Chaldees; and, in obedience to this call, as Stephen further relates the story (Ac 7:4), he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran, or Haran, about five years, and thence, when his father was dead, by a fresh command, pursuant to the former, God removed him into the land of Canaan. Some think that Haran was in Chaldea, and so was still a part of Abram's country, or that Abram, having staid there five years, began to call it his country, and to take root there, till God let him know this was not the place he was intended for. Note, If God loves us, and has mercy in store for us, he will not suffer us to take up our rest any where short of Canaan, but will graciously repeat his calls, till the good work begun be performed, and our souls repose in God only. In the call itself we have a precept and a promise.

2 and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

A trying precept: Get thee out of thy country, Ge 12:1. Now,

By this precept he was tried whether he loved his native soil and dearest friends, and whether he could willingly leave all, to go along with God. His country had become idolatrous, his kindred and his father's house were a constant temptation to him, and he could not continue with them without danger of being infected by them; therefore Get thee out, lk-lk--Vade tibi, Get thee gone, with all

speed, escape for thy life, look not behind thee, Ge 19:17. Note, Those that are in a sinful state are concerned to make all possible haste out of it. Get out for thyself (so some read it), that is, for thy own good. Note, Those who leave their sins, and turn to God, will themselves be unspeakable gainers by the change, Pr 9:12. This command which God gave to Abram is much the same with the gospel call by which all the spiritual seed of faithful Abram are brought into covenant with God. For,

(1.) Natural affection must give way to divine grace. Our country is dear to us, our kindred dearer, and our father's house dearest of all; and yet they must all be hated (Lu 14:26), that is, we must love them less than Christ, hate them in comparison with him, and, whenever any of these come in competition with him, they must be postponed, and the preference given to the will and honour of the Lord Jesus.

(2.) Sin, and all the occasions of it, must be forsaken, and particularly bad company; we must abandon all the idols of iniquity which have been set up in our hearts, and get out of the way of temptation, plucking out even a right eye that leads us to sin (Mt 5:29), willingly parting with that which is dearest to us, when we cannot keep it without hazard of our integrity. Those that resolve to keep the commandments of God must quit the society of evil doers, Ps 119:115,Ac 2:40.

(3.) The world, and all our enjoyments in it, must be looked upon with a holy indifference and contempt; we must no longer look upon it as our country, or home, but as our inn, and must accordingly sit loose to it and live above it, get out of it in affection.

By this precept he was tried whether he could trust God further than he saw him; for he must leave his own country, to go to a land that God would show him. He does not say, "It is a land that I will give thee," but merely, "a land that I will show thee." Nor does he tell him what land it was, nor what kind of land; but he must follow God with an implicit faith, and take God's word for it, in the general, though he had no particular securities given him that he should be no loser

by leaving his country, to follow God. Note, Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust; we must quit the things that are seen for things that are not seen, and submit to the sufferings of this present time in hopes of a glory that is yet to be revealed (Ro 8:18); for it doth not yet appear what we shall be (1Jo 3:2), any more than it did to Abram, when God called him to a land he would show him, so teaching him to live in a continual dependence upon his direction, and with his eye ever towards him.

3 and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Here is an encouraging promise, nay, it is a complication of promises, many, and exceedingly great and precious. Note, All God's precepts are attended with promises to the obedient. When he makes himself known also as a rewarder: if we obey the command, God will not fail to perform the promise. Here are six promises:--

1. I will make of thee a great nation. When God took him from his own people, he promised to make him the head of another; he cut him off from being the branch of a wild olive, to make him the root of a good olive. This promise was,

(1.) A great relief to Abram's burden; for he had now no child. Note, God knows how to suit his favours to the wants and necessities of his children. He that has a plaster for every sore will provide one for that first which is most painful.

(2.) A great trial to Abram's faith; for his wife had been long barren, so that, if he believe, it must be against hope, and his faith must build purely upon that power which can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and make them a great nation. Note,

[1.] God makes nations: by him they are born at once (Isa 66:8), and he speaks, to build and plant them, Jer 18:9. And,

[2.] If a nation be made great in wealth and power, it is God that makes it great. [3.] God can raise great nations out of dry ground, and can make a little one to be a thousand.

2. I will bless thee, either particularly with the blessing of fruitfulness and increase, as he had blessed Adam and Noah, or, in general, "I will bless thee with all manner of blessings, both of the upper and the nether springs. Leave thy father's house, and I will give thee a father's blessing, better than that of they progenitors." Note, Obedient believers will be sure to inherit the blessing.

3. I will make thy name great. By deserting his country, he lost his name there. "Care not for that," says God, "but trust me, and I will make thee a greater name than ever thou couldst have had there." Having no child, he feared he should have no name; but God will make him a great nation, and so make him a great name. Note,

(1.) God is the fountain of honour, and from him promotion comes, 1Sa 2:8.

(2.) The name of obedient believers shall certainly be celebrated and made great. The best report is that which the elders obtained by faith, Heb 11:2.

4. Thou shalt be a blessing; that is,

(1.) "Thy happiness shall be a sample of happiness, so that those who would bless their friends shall only pray that God would make them like Abram;" as Ru 4:11. Note, God's dealings with obedient believers are so kind and gracious that we need not desire for ourselves or our friends to be any better dealt with: to have God for our friend is blessedness enough.

(2.) "Thy life shall be a blessing to the places where thou shalt sojourn." Note, Good men are the blessings of their country, and it is their unspeakable honour and happiness to be made so.

5. I will bless those that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee. This made it a kind of a league, offensive and defensive, between God and Abram. Abram heartily espoused God's cause, and here God promises to interest himself in his.

(1.) He promises to be a friend to his friends, to take kindnesses shown to him as done to himself, and to recompense them accordingly. God will take care that none be losers, in the long run, by any service done for his people; even a cup of cold water shall be rewarded.

(2.) He promises to appear against his enemies. There were those that hated and cursed even Abram himself; but, while their causeless curses could not hurt Abram, God's righteous curse would certainly overtake and ruin them, Nu 24:9. This is a good reason why we should bless those that curse us, because it is enough that God will curse them, Ps 38:13-15.

6. In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed? This was the promise that crowned all the rest; for it points at the Messiah, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. Note,

(1.) Jesus Christ is the great blessing of the world, the greatest that ever the world was blessed with. He is a family blessing, by him salvation is brought to the house (Lu 19:9); when we reckon up our family blessings, let us put Christ in the imprimis--the first place, as the blessing of blessings. But how are all the families of the earth blessed in Christ, when so many are strangers to him? Answer,

[1.] All that are blessed are blessed in him, Ac 4:12.

[2.] All that believe, of what family soever they shall be, shall be blessed in him.

[3.] Some of all the families of the earth are blessed in him.

[4.] There are some blessings which all the families of the earth are blessed with in Christ; for the gospel salvation is a common salvation, Jude 1:3.

(2.) It is a great honour to be related to Christ; this made Abram's name great, that the Messiah was to descend from his loins, much more than that he should be the father of many nations. It was Abram's honour to be his father by nature; it will be ours to be his brethren by grace, Mt 12:50.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

Here is, Abraham's removal out of his country, out of Ur first and afterwards out of Haran, in compliance with the call of God: So Abram departed; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but did as he was bidden, not conferring with flesh and blood, Ga 1:15,16. His obedience was speedy and without delay, submissive and without dispute; for he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb 11:8), but knowing whom he followed and under whose direction he went. Thus God called him to his foot, Isa 41:2.

His age when he removed: he was seventy-five years old, an age when he should rather have had rest and settlement; but, if God will have him to begin the world again now in his old age, he will submit. Here is an instance of an old convert.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

The company and cargo that he took with him.

1. He took his wife, and his nephew Lot, with him; not by force and against their wills, but by persuasion. Sarai, his wife, would be sure to go with him; God had joined them together, and nothing should

put them asunder. If Abram leave all, to follow God, Sarai will leave all, to follow Abram, though neither of them knew whither. And it was a mercy to Abram to have such a companion in his travels, a help meet for him. Note, It is very comfortable when husband and wife agree to go together in the way to heaven. Lot also, his kinsman, was influenced by Abram's good example, who was perhaps his guardian after the death of his father, and he was willing to go along with him too. Note, Those that go to Canaan need not go alone; for, though few find the strait gate, blessed be God, some do; and it is our wisdom to go with those with whom God is (Zec 8:23), wherever they go.

2. They took all their effects with them--all their substance and movable goods, that they had gathered. For,

(1.) With themselves they would give up their all, to be at God's disposal, would keep back no part of the price, but venture all in one bottom, knowing it was a good bottom.

(2.) They would furnish themselves with that which was requisite, both for the service of God and the supply of their family, in the country whither they were going. To have thrown away his substance, because God had promised to bless him, would have been to tempt God, not to trust him.

(3.) They would not be under any temptation to return; therefore they leave not a hoof behind, lest that should make them mindful of the country from which they came out.

3. They took with them the souls that they had gotten, that is,

(1.) The servants they had bought, which were part of their substance, but are called souls, to remind masters that their poor servants have souls, precious souls, which they ought to take care of and provide food convenient for.

(2.) The proselytes they had made, and persuaded to attend the worship of the true God, and to go with them to Canaan: the souls which (as one of the rabbin expresses it) they had gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty. Note, Those who serve and follow God themselves should do all they can to bring others to serve and follow him too. These souls they are said to have gained. We must reckon ourselves true gainers if we can but win souls to Christ.

Here is their happy arrival at their journey's end: They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; so they did before (Ge 11:31), and then took up short, but now they held on their way, and, by the good hand of their God upon them, to the land of Canaan they came, where by a fresh revelation they were told that this was the land God promised to show them. They were not discouraged by the difficulties they met with in their way, nor diverted by the delights they met with, but pressed forward. Note,

1. Those that set out for heaven must persevere to the end, still reaching forth to those things that are before.

2. That which we undertake in obedience to God's command, and a humble attendance upon his providence, will certainly succeed, and end with comfort at last.

Abram reached his destination in safety, and thus the first promise was made good.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite *was* then in the land.

Canaanite [was] then in the land - Which was a cruel and rebellious nation, by whom God kept his in continual exercise.

One would have expected that Abram having had such an extraordinary call to Canaan some great event should have followed upon his arrival there, that he should have been introduced with all

possible marks of honour and respect, and that the kings of Canaan should immediately have surrendered their crowns to him, and done him homage. But no; he comes not with observation, little notice is taken of him, for still God will have him to live by faith, and to look upon Canaan, even when he was in it, as a land of promise; therefore observe here,

I. How little comfort he had in the land he came to; for,

1. He had it not to himself: The Canaanite was then in the land. He found the country peopled and possessed by Canaanites, who were likely to be but bad neighbours and worse landlords; and, for aught that appears, he could not have ground to pitch his tent on but by their permission. Thus the accursed Canaanites seemed to be in better circumstances than blessed Abram. Note, The children of this world have commonly more of it than God's children.

2. He had not a settlement in it. He passed through the land, Ge 12:6. He removed to a mountain, Ge 12:8. He journeyed, going on still, Ge 12:9. Observe here,

(1.) Sometimes it is the lot of good men to be unsettled, and obliged often to remove their habitation. Holy David had his wanderings, his flittings, Ps 56:8.

(2.) Our removes in this world are often into various conditions. Abram sojourned, first in a plain Ge 12:6, then in a mountain, Ge 12:8. God has set the one over-against the other.

(3.) All good people must look upon themselves as strangers and sojourners in this world, and by faith sit loose to it as a strange country. So Abram did, Heb 11:8-14.

(4.) While we are here in this present state, we must be journeying, and going on still from strength to strength, as having not yet attained.

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

Unto thy seed will I give this land—God was dealing with Abram not in his private and personal capacity merely, but with a view to high and important interests in future ages. That land his posterity was for centuries to inhabit as a peculiar people; the seeds of divine knowledge were to be sown there for the benefit of all mankind; and considered in its geographical situation, it was chosen in divine wisdom as the fittest of all lands to serve as the cradle of a divine revelation designed for the whole world.

How much comfort he had in the God he followed; when he could have little satisfaction in converse with the Canaanites whom he found there, he had abundance of pleasure in communion with that God who brought him thither, and did not leave him. Communion with God is kept up by the word and by prayer, and by these, according to the methods of that dispensation, Abram's communion with God was kept up in the land of his pilgrimage.

God appeared to Abram, probably in a vision, and spoke to him good words and comfortable words: Unto thy seed will I give this land. Note,

(1.) No place nor condition of life can shut us out from the comfort of God's gracious visits. Abram is a sojourner, unsettled among Canaanites; and yet here also he meets with him that lives and sees him. Enemies may part us and our tents, us and our altars, but not us and our God. Nay,

(2.) With respect to those that faithfully follow God in a way of duty, though he lead them from their friends, he will himself make up that loss by his gracious appearances to them.

(3.) God's promises are sure and satisfying to all those who conscientiously observe and obey his precepts; and those who, in compliance with God's call, leave or lose anything that is dear to them, shall be sure of something else abundantly better in lieu of it. Abram had left the land of his nativity: "Well," says God, "I will give thee this land," Mt 19:29.

(4.) God reveals himself and his favours to his people by degrees; before he had promised to show him this land, now to give it to him: as grace is growing, so is comfort.

(5.) It is comfortable to have land of God's giving, not by providence only, but by promise.

(6.) Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents. "I will give it, not to thee, but to thy seed;" it is a grant in reversion to his seed, which yet, it should seem, Abram understood also as a grant to himself of a better land in reversion, of which this was a type; for he looked for a heavenly country, Heb 11:16.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-
el, and pitched his tent, *having* Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the
east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon
the name of the Lord.

Abram attended on God in his instituted ordinances. He built an altar unto the Lord who appeared to him, and called on the name of the Lord, Ge 12:7, 8. Now consider this,

(1.) As done upon a special occasion. When God appeared to him, then and there he built an altar, with an eye to the God who appeared to him. Thus he returned God's visit, and kept up his correspondence with heaven, as one that resolved it should not fail on his side; thus he acknowledged, with thankfulness, God's kindness to him in making him that gracious visit and promise; and thus he testified his confidence in and dependence upon the word which God had spoken. Note, An active believer can heartily bless God for a promise the performance of which he does not yet see, and build an

altar to the honour of God who appears to him, though he does not yet appear for him.

(2.) As his constant practice, whithersoever he removed. As soon as Abram had got to Canaan, though he was but a stranger and sojourner there, yet he set up, and kept up, the worship of God in his family; and wherever he had a tent God had an altar, and that an altar sanctified by prayer. For he not only minded the ceremonial part of religion, the offering of sacrifice, but made conscience of the natural duty of seeking to his God, and calling on his name, that spiritual sacrifice with which God is well pleased. He preached concerning the name of the Lord, that is, he instructed his family and neighbours in the knowledge of the true God and his holy religion. The souls he had gotten in Haran, being discipled, must be further taught.

Note, Those that would approve themselves the children of faithful Abram, and would inherit the blessing of Abram, must make conscience of keeping up the solemn worship of God, particularly in their families, according to the example of Abram. The way of family worship is a good old way, is no novel invention, but the ancient usage of all the saints. Abram was very rich and had a numerous family, was now unsettled and in the midst of enemies, and yet, wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar. Wherever we go, let us not fail to take our religion along with us.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

Abram in Egypt

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

JFB Commentary:

He did not go back to the place of his nativity, as regretting his pilgrimage and despising the promised land (Heb 11:15), but withdrew for a while into a neighboring country.

Matthew Hennry Commentary:

Here is, a famine in the land of Canaan, a grievous famine. This was a new trial of Abram's faith: by which we see that the end of one affliction is the beginning of another. That fruitful land was turned into barrenness, not only to punish the iniquity of the Canaanites who dwelt therein, but to exercise the faith of Abram who sojourned therein; and a very sore trial it was; it tried what he would think,

1. Of God that brought him thither, whether he would not be ready to say with his murmuring seed that he was brought forth to be killed with hunger, Ex 16:3. Nothing short of a strong faith could keep up good thoughts of God under such a providence.

2. Of the land of promise, whether he would think the grant of it worth the accepting, and a valuable consideration for the relinquishing of his own country, when, for aught that now appeared, it was a land that ate up the inhabitants. Now he was tried whether he could preserve an unshaken confidence that the God who brought him to Canaan would maintain him there, and whether he could rejoice in him as the God of his salvation when the fig-tree did not blossom, Hab 3:17,18. Note,

(1.) Strong faith is commonly exercised with divers temptations, that it may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, 1Pe 1:6,7.

(2.) It pleases God sometimes to try those with great afflictions who are but young beginners in religion.

(3.) It is possible for a man to be in the way of duty, and in the way to happiness, and yet meet with great troubles and disappointments.

Scofield Commentary:

famine A famine was often a disciplinary testing of God's people in the land. (Cf) Genesis 26:1; 42:5; Ruth 1:1; 2 Samuel 24:13; Psalms 105:16.

The resort to Egypt (the world) is typical of the tendency to substitute for lost spiritual power the fleshly resources of the world, instead of seeking, through confession and amendment, the restoration of God's presence and favour.

11 And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou *art* a fair woman to look upon:

Abram's removal into Egypt, upon occasion of this famine. See how wisely God provides that there should be plenty in one place when there was scarcity in another, that, as members of the great body, we may not say to one another, I have no need of you. God's providence took care there should be a supply in Egypt, and Abram's prudence made use of the opportunity; for we tempt God, and do not trust him, if, in the time of distress, we use not the means he has graciously provided for our preservation: We must not expect needless miracles. But that which is especially observable here, to the praise of Abram, is that he did not offer to return, upon this occasion, to the country from which he came out, nor so much as towards it. The land of his nativity lay north-east from Canaan; and therefore, when he must, for a time, quit Canaan, he chooses to go to Egypt, which lay south-west, the contrary way, that he might not so much as seem to look back. See Heb 11:15, 16. Further observe, When he went down into Egypt, it was to sojourn there, not to dwell there. Note,

1. Though Providence, for a time, may cast us into bad places, yet we ought to tarry there no longer than needs must; we may sojourn where we may not settle.

2. A good man, while he is on this side heaven, wherever he is, is but a sojourner.

12 therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This *is* his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

A great fault which Abram was guilty of, in denying his wife, and pretending that she was his sister. The scripture is impartial in relating the misdeeds of the most celebrated saints, which are

recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition, that he who thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall. His conduct was culpable and inconsistent with his character as a servant of God: it showed a reliance on worldly policy more than a trust in the promise; and he not only sinned himself, but tempted Sarai to sin also. By this we learn not to use unlawful means nor to put others in danger to save ourselves, Ge 12:20. Though it may appear that Abram did not fear death, so much as dying without children, he acts as though God's promise had not taken place; in which appeared a weak faith.

1. His fault was dissembling his relation to Sarai, equivocating concerning it, and teaching his wife, and probably all his attendants, to do so too. What he said was, in a sense, true (Ge 20:12), but with a purpose to deceive; he so concealed a further truth as in effect to deny it, and to expose thereby both his wife and the Egyptians to sin.

2. That which was at the bottom of it was a jealous timorous fancy he had that some of the Egyptians would be so charmed with the beauty of Sarai (Egypt producing few such beauties) that, if they should know he was her husband, they would find some way or other to take him off, that they might marry her. He presumes they would rather be guilty of murder than adultery, such a heinous crime was it then accounted and such a sacred regard was paid to the marriage bond; hence he infers, without any good reason, They will kill me.

Note, The fear of man brings a snare, and many are driven to sin by the dread of death, Lu 12:4, 5. The grace Abram was most eminent for was faith; and yet he thus fell through unbelief and distrust of the divine Providence, even after God had appeared to him twice. Alas! what will become of the willows, when the cedars are thus shaken?

13 Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

14 And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she *was* very fair.

Here is, the danger Sarai was in of having her chastity violated by the king of Egypt: and without doubt the peril of sin is the greatest peril we can be in. Pharaoh's princes (his pimps rather) saw her, and,

observing what a comely woman she was, they commended her before Pharaoh, not for that which was really her praise--her virtue and modesty, her faith and piety (these were no excellencies in their eyes), but for her beauty, which they thought too good for the embraces of a subject. They recommended her to the king, and she was presently taken into Pharaoh's house, as Esther into the seraglio of Ahasuerus (Es 2:8), in order to her being taken into his bed.

Now we must not look upon Sarai as standing fair for preferment, but as entering into temptation; and the occasions of it were her own beauty (which is a snare to many) and Abram's equivocation, which is a sin that commonly is an inlet to much sin. While Sarai was in this danger, Abram fared the better for her sake. Pharaoh gave him sheep, oxen, &c. (Ge 12:16), to gain his consent, that he might the more readily prevail with her whom he supposed to be his sister. We cannot think that Abram expected this when he came down into Egypt, much less that he had an eye to it when he denied his wife; but God brought good out of evil. And thus the wealth of the sinner proves, in some way or other, to be laid up for the just.

15 The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before
Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.
16 And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and
oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she
asses, and camels.
17 And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues,
because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

The deliverance of Sarai from this danger. For if God did not deliver us, many a time, by prerogative, out of those straits and distresses which we bring ourselves into by our own sin and folly, and which therefore we could not expect any deliverance from by promise, we should soon be ruined, nay, we should have been ruined long before this. He deals not with us according to our deserts.

God chastised Pharaoh, and so prevented the progress of his sin. Note, Those are happy chastisements that hinder us in a sinful way, and effectually bring us to our duty, and particularly to the duty of restoring that which we have wrongfully taken and detained.

Observe, Not Pharaoh only, but his house, was plagued, probably those princes especially that had commended Sarai to Pharaoh. Note, Partners in sin are justly made partners in the punishment. Those that serve others' lusts must expect to share in their plagues. We are not told particularly what these plagues were; but doubtless there was something in the plagues themselves, or some explication added to them, sufficient to convince them that it was for Sarai's sake that they were thus plagued.

18 And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What *is* this *that* thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife?

Pharaoh reproved Abram, and then dismissed him with respect.

The reproof was calm, but very just: What is this that thou hast done? What an improper thing! How unbecoming a wise and good man! Note, If those that profess religion do that which is unfair and disingenuous, especially if they say that which borders upon a lie, they must expect to hear of it, and have reason to thank those that will tell them of it. We find a prophet of the Lord justly reproved and upbraided by a heathen ship-master, Jon 1:6. Pharaoh reasons with him: Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? intimating that, if he had known this, he would not have taken her into his house. Note, It is a fault too common among good people to entertain suspicions of others beyond what there is cause for. We have often found more of virtue, honour, and conscience, in some people than we thought they possessed; and it ought to be a pleasure to us to be thus disappointed, as Abram was here, who found Pharaoh to be a better man than he expected. Charity teaches us to hope the best.

19 Why saidst thou, She *is* my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take *her,* and go thy way.

The dismission was kind and very generous. He restored him his wife without offering any injury to her honour: Behold thy wife, take her, Ge 12:19.

Note, Those that would prevent sin must remove the temptation, or get out of the way of it. He also sent him away in peace, and was so far from any design to kill him, as he apprehended, that he took

particular care of him. Note, We often perplex and ensnare ourselves with fears which soon appear to have been altogether groundless. We often fear where no fear is. We fear the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy, when really there is no danger, Isa 51:13. It would have been more for Abram's credit and comfort to have told the truth at first; for, after all, honesty is the best policy. Nay, it is said (Ge 12:20), Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him, that is,

[1.] He charged them not to injure him in anything. Note, It is not enough for those in authority to do no hurt themselves, but they must restrain their servants, and those about them, from doing hurt. Or,

[2.] He appointed them, when Abram was disposed to return home, after the famine, to conduct him safely out of the country, as his convoy. Probably he was alarmed by the plagues (Ge 12:17), and inferred from them that Abram was a particular favourite of Heaven, and therefore, through fear of their return, took special care he should receive no injury in his country. Note, God has often raised up friends for his people, by making men know that it is at their peril if they hurt them. It is a dangerous thing to offend Christ's little ones. Mt 18:6. To this passage, among others, the Psalmist refers, Ps 105:13-15, He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not my anointed. Perhaps if Pharaoh had not sent him away, he would have been tempted to stay in Egypt and to forget the land of promise.

Note, Sometimes God makes use of the enemies of his people to convince them, and remind them, that this world is not their rest, but that they must think of departing.

Lastly, Observe a resemblance between this deliverance of Abram out of Egypt and the deliverance of his seed thence: 430 years after Abram went into Egypt on occasion of a famine they went thither on occasion of a famine also; he was fetched out with great plagues on Pharaoh, so were they; as Abram was dismissed by Pharaoh, and enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians, so were they. For God's care of his people is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

20 And Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Genesis -13

Abram and Lot Separate

1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

Here is Abram's return out of Egypt, Ge 13:1. He came himself and brought all his with him back again to Canaan. Note, Though there may be occasion to go sometimes into places of temptation, yet we must hasten out of them as soon as possible. See Ru 1:6.

2 And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

His wealth: He was very rich, Ge 13:2. He was very heavy, so the Hebrew word signifies; for riches are a burden, and those that will be rich do but load themselves with thick clay, Hab 2:6. There is a burden of care in getting them, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and a burden of account, at last, to be given up concerning them. Great possessions do but make men heavy and unwieldy. Abram was not only rich in faith and good works, and in the promises, but he was rich in cattle, and in silver and gold. His great riches gotten in Egypt, did not hinder him in following his vocation. Note,

1. God, in his providence, sometimes makes good men rich men, and teaches them how to abound, as well as how to suffer want.

2 The riches of good men are the fruits of God's blessing. God has said to Abram, I will bless thee; and that blessing made him rich without sorrow, Pr 10:22.

3. True piety will very well consist with great prosperity. Though it is hard for a rich man to get to heaven, yet it is not

impossible, Mk 10:23, 24. Abram was very rich and yet very religious. Nay, as piety is a friend to outward prosperity (1Ti 4:8), so outward prosperity, if well-managed, is an ornament to piety, and furnishes an opportunity of doing so much the more good.

Very rich—compared with the pastoral tribes to which Abraham belonged. An Arab sheik is considered rich who has a hundred or two hundred tents, from sixty to a hundred camels, a thousand sheep and goats respectively. And Abram being very rich, must have far exceeded that amount of pastoral property. "Gold and silver" being rare among these peoples, his probably arose from the sale of his produce in Egypt.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;

His removal to Beth-el, Ge 13:3, 4. Thither he went, not only because there he had formerly had his tent, and he was willing to go among his old acquaintance, but because there he had formerly had his altar: and, though the altar was gone (probably he himself having taken it down, when he left the place, lest it should be polluted by the idolatrous Canaanites), yet he came to the place of the altar, either to revive the remembrance of the sweet communion he had had with God in that place, or perhaps to pay the vows he had there made to God when he undertook his journey into Egypt. Long afterwards God sent Jacob to this same place on that errand (Ge 35:1), Go up to Beth-el, where thou vowedst the vow. We have need to be reminded, and should take all occasions to remind ourselves, of our solemn vows; and perhaps the place where they were made may help to bring them afresh to mind, and it may therefore do us good to visit it.

4 unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

There Abram called on the name of the Lord — He felt a strong desire to reanimate his faith and piety on the scene of his former worship: it might be to express humility and penitence for his misconduct in Egypt or thankfulness for deliverance from

perils—to embrace the first opportunity on returning to Canaan of leading his family to renew allegiance to God and offer the typical sacrifices which pointed to the blessings of the promise.

His devotion there. His altar was gone, so that he could not offer sacrifice; but he called on the name of the Lord, as he had done, Ge 12:8. Note,

1. All God's people are praying people. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living Christian without prayer.

2. Those that would approve themselves upright with their God must be constant and persevering in the services of religion. Abram did not leave his religion behind him in Egypt, as many do in their travels.

3. When we cannot do what we would we must make conscience of doing what we can in the acts of devotion. When we want an altar, let us not be wanting in prayer, but, wherever we are, call on the name of the Lord.

5 And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

We have here an unhappy falling out between Abram and Lot, who had hitherto been inseparable companions (see Ge 13:1, and Ge 12:4), but now parted.

The occasion of their quarrel was their riches. We read (Ge 13:2) how rich Abram was; now here we are told (Ge 13:5) that Lot, who went with Abram, was rich too; and therefore God blessed him with riches because he went with Abram. Note,

1. It is good being in good company, and going with those with whom God is, Zec 8:23.

2. Those that are partners with God's people in their obedience and sufferings shall be sharers with them in their joys and

comforts, Isa 66:10. Now, they both being very rich, the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell comfortably and peaceably together. So that their riches may be considered,

(1.) As setting them at a distance one from another. Because the place was too strait for them, and they had not room for their stock, it was necessary they should live asunder. Note, Every comfort in this world has its cross attending it. Business is a comfort; but it has this inconvenience in it, that it allows us not the society of those we love, so often, nor so long, as we could wish.

(2.) As setting them at variance one with another. Note, Riches are often an occasion of strife and contention among relations and neighbours. This is one of those foolish and hurtful lusts which those that will be rich fall into, 1Ti 6:9. Riches not only afford matter for contention, and are the things most commonly striven about, but they also stir up a spirit of contention, by making people proud and covetous. Meum and tuum--Mine and thine, are the great make-bates of the world. Poverty and travail, wants and wanderings, could not separate between Abram and Lot; but riches did. Friends are soon lost; but God is a friend from whose love neither the height of prosperity nor the depth of adversity shall separate us.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land.

The immediate instruments of the quarrel were their servants. The strife began between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, Ge 13:7. They strove, it is probable, which should have the better pasture or the better water; and both interested their masters in the quarrel. Note, Bad servants often make a great deal of mischief in families, by the pride and passion, their lying slandering, and tale-bearing. It is a very wicked thing for servants to do ill offices

between relations and neighbours, and to sow discord; those that do so are the devil's agents and their masters' worst enemies.

The aggravation of the quarrel was that the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the land; this made the quarrel,

1. Very dangerous. If Abram and Lot cannot agree to feed their flocks together, it is well if the common enemy do not come upon them and plunder them both. Note, The division of families and churches often proves the ruin of them.

2. Very scandalous. No doubt the eyes of all the neighbours were upon them, especially because of the singularity of their religion, and the extraordinary sanctity they professed; and notice would soon be taken of this quarrel, and improvement made of it, to their reproach, by the Canaanites and Perizzites. Note, The quarrels of professors are the reproach of profession, and give occasion, as much as anything, to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Who seeing their contention, might blaspheme God and destroy them.

And there was a strife—Abraham's character appears here in a most amiable light. Having a strong sense of religion, he was afraid of doing anything that might tend to injure its character or bring discredit on its name, and he rightly judged that such unhappy effects would be produced if two persons whom nature and grace had so closely connected should come to a rupture [Ge 13:8]. Waiving his right to dictate, he gave the freedom of choice to Lot. The conduct of Abraham was not only disinterested and peaceable, but generous and condescending in an extraordinary degree, exemplifying the Scripture precepts (Mt 6:32; Ro 12:10, 11; Php 2:4).

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we *be* brethren.

He cuts off the opportunity for contention: therefore the evil ceases.

The making up of this quarrel was very happy. It is best to preserve the peace, that it be not broken; but the next best is, if differences do happen, with all speed to accommodate them, and quench the fire that has broken out. The motion for staying this strife was made by Abram, though he was the senior and superior relation, Ge 13:8.

1. His petition for peace was very affectionate: Let there be not strife, I pray thee. Abram here shows himself to be a man,

(1.) Of a cool spirit, that had the command of his passion, and knew how to turn away wrath with a soft answer. Those that would keep the peace must never render railing for railing.

(2.) Of a condescending spirit; he was willing to beseech even his inferior to be at peace, and made the first overture of reconciliation. Conquerors reckon it their glory to give peace by power; and it is no less so to give peace by the meekness of wisdom. Note, The people of God should always approve themselves a peaceable people; whatever others are for, they must be for peace.

2. His plea for peace was very cogent.

(1.) "Let there be no strife between me and thee. Let the Canaanites and Perizzites contend about trifles; but let not thee and me fall out, who know better things, and look for a better country." Note, Professors of religion should, of all others, be careful to avoid contention. You shall not be so, Lu 22:26. We have no such custom, 1Co 11:16. "Let there be no strife between me and thee, who have lived together and loved one another so long." Note, The remembrance of old friendships should quickly put an end to new quarrels which at any time happen.

(2.) Let it be remembered that we are brethren, Heb. we are men brethren; a double argument.

[1.] We are men; and, as men, we are mortal creatures--we may die to-morrow, and are concerned to be found in peace. We are rational creatures, and should be ruled by reason. We are men, and not brutes, men, and not children; we are sociable creatures, let us be so to the uttermost.

[2.] We are brethren. Men of the same nature, of the same kindred and family, of the same religion, companions in obedience, companions in patience. Note, The consideration of our relation to each other, as brethren, should always prevail to moderate our passions, and either to prevent or put an end to our contentions. Brethren should love as brethren.

9 *Is* not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

His proposal for peace was very fair. Many who profess to be for peace yet will do nothing towards it; but Abram hereby approved himself a real friend to peace that he proposed an unexceptionable expedient for the preserving of it: Is not the whole land before thee? Ge 13:9. As if he had said, "Why should we quarrel for room, while there is room enough for us both?"

(1.) He concludes that they must part, and is very desirous that they should part friends: Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. What could be expressed more affectionately? He does not expel him, and force him away, but advises that he should separate himself. Nor does he charge him to depart, but humbly desires him to withdraw. Note, Those that have power to command, yet sometimes, for love's sake, and peace' sake, should rather beseech as Paul besought Philemon, Philemon 1:8, 9. When the great God condescends to beseech us, we may well afford to beseech one another, to be reconciled, 2Co 5:20.

(2.) He offers him a sufficient share of the land they were in. Though God had promised Abram to give this land to his seed (Ge 12:7), and it does not appear that ever any such promise

was made to Lot, which Abram might have insisted on, to the total exclusion of Lot, yet he allows him to come in partner with him, and tenders an equal share to one that had not an equal right, and will not make God's promise to patronize his quarrel, nor, under the protection of that, put any hardship on his kinsman.

(3.) He gives him his choice, and offers to take up with his leavings: If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right. There was all the reason in the world that Abram should choose first; yet he recedes from his right. Note, It is a noble conquest to be willing to yield for peace' sake; it is the conquest of ourselves, and our own pride and passion, Mt 5:39, 40. It is not only the punctilios of honour, but even interest itself, that in many cases must be sacrificed to peace.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

We have here the choice that Lot made when he parted from Abram. Upon this occasion, one would have expected,

1. That he should have expressed an unwillingness to part from Abram, and that, at least, he should have done it with reluctancy.

2. That he should have been so civil as to have remitted the choice back again to Abram. But we find not any instance of deference or respect to his uncle in the whole management. Abram having offered him the choice, without compliment he accepted it, and made his election. Passion and selfishness make men rude. Now, in the choice which Lot made, we may observe,

How much he had an eye to the goodness of the land. He beheld all the plain of Jordan, the flat country in which Sodom stood, that it was admirably well watered everywhere (and perhaps the strife had been about water, which made him particularly

fond of that convenience), and so Lot chose all that plain, Ge 13:10,11. That valley, which was like the garden of Eden itself, now yielded him a most pleasant prospect. It was, in his eye, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; and therefore he doubted not but that it would yield him a comfortable settlement, and that in such a fruitful soil he should certainly thrive, and grow very rich: and this was all he looked at.

But what came of it? Why, the next news we hear of him is that he is in the briars among them, he and his carried captive. While he lived among them, he vexed his righteous soul with their conversation, and never had a good day with them, till, at last, God fired the town over his head, and forced him to the mountain for safety who chose the plain for wealth and pleasure.

Note, Sensual choices are sinful choices, and seldom speed well. Those who in choosing relations, callings, dwellings, or settlements are guided and governed by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life, and consult not the interests of their souls and their religion, cannot expect God's presence with them, nor his blessing upon them, but are commonly disappointed even in that which they principally aimed at, and miss of that which they promised themselves satisfaction in. In all our choices this principle should overrule us, That that is best for us which is best for our souls.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east:
and they separated themselves the one from the other.

A choice excellent from a worldly point of view, but most inexpedient for his best interests. He seems, though a good man, to have been too much under the influence of a selfish and covetous spirit: and how many, alas! Imperil the good of their souls for the prospect of worldly advantage.

This was done by God's providence, that only Abram and his seed might dwell in the land of Canaan.

12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of
the plain, and pitched *his* tent toward Sodom.

13 But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

How little he considered the wickedness of the inhabitants: But the men of Sodom were wicked, Ge 13:13. Lot thinking to get paradise, found hell. Note,

1. Though all are sinners, yet some are greater sinners than others. The men of Sodom were sinners of the first magnitude, sinners before the Lord, that is, impudent daring sinners; they were so to a proverb. Hence we read of those that declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not, Isa 3:9.

2. That some sinners are the worse for living in a good land. So the Sodomites were: for this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness; and all these were supported by the great plenty their country afforded, Eze 16:49. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them.

3. That God often gives great plenty to great sinners. Filthy Sodomites dwell in a city, in a fruitful plain, while faithful Abram and his pious family dwell in tents upon the barren mountains.

4. When wickedness has come to the height, ruin is not far off. Abounding sins are sure presages of approaching judgments. Now Lot's coming to dwell among the Sodomites may be considered,

(1.) As a great mercy to them, and a likely means of bringing them to repentance; for now they had a prophet among them and a preacher of righteousness, and, if they had hearkened to him, they might have been reformed, and the ruin prevented. Note, God sends preachers, before he sends destroyers; for he is not willing that any should perish.

(2.) As a great affliction to Lot, who was not only grieved to see their wickedness (2Pe 2:7, 8), but was molested and persecuted by them, because he would not do as they did. Note,

It has often been the vexatious lot of good men to live among wicked neighbours, to sojourn in Mesech (Ps 120:5), and it cannot but be the more grievous, if, as Lot here, they have brought it upon themselves by an unadvised choice.

14 And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God paid to Abram, to confirm the promise to him and his. Observe,

When it was that God renewed and ratified the promise: After that Lot was separated from him, that is,

1. After the quarrel was over; for those are best prepared for the visits of divine grace whose spirits are calm and sedate, and not ruffled with any passion.

2. After Abram's humble self-denying condescensions to Lot for the preserving of peace. It was then that God came to him with this token of his favour. Note, God will abundantly make up in spiritual peace what we lose for the preservation of neighbourly peace. When Abram had willingly offered Lot one-half of his right, God came, and confirmed the whole to him.

3. After he had lost the comfortable society of his kinsman, by whose departure his hands were weakened and his heart was saddened, then God came to him with these good words and comfortable words. Note, Communion with God may, at any time, serve to make up the want of conversation with our friends; when our relations are separated from us, yet God is not.

4. After Lot had chosen that pleasant fruitful vale, and had gone to take possession of it, lest Abram should be tempted to envy him and to repent that he had given him the choice, God comes to him, and assures him that what he had should remain to him and his heirs forever; so that, though Lot perhaps had the better

land, yet Abram had the better title. Lot had the paradise, such as it was, but Abram had the promise; and the event soon made it appear that, however it seemed now, Abram had really the better part.

So extensive a survey of the country, in all directions, can be obtained from no other point in the neighborhood; and those plains and hills, then lying desolate before the eyes of the solitary patriarch, were to be peopled with a mighty nation "like the dust of the earth in number," as they were in Solomon's time (1Ki 4:20).

15 for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever.

The promises themselves with which God now comforted and enriched Abram. Two things he assures him of--a good land, and a numerous issue to enjoy it.

1. Here is the grant of a good land, a land famous above all lands, for it was to be the holy land, and Immanuel's land; this is the land here spoken of.

(1.) God here shows Abram the land, as he had promised (Ge 12:1), and afterwards he showed it to Moses from the top of Pisgah. Lot had lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of Jordan (Ge 13:10), and he had gone to enjoy what he saw: "Come," says God to Abram, "now lift thou up thy eyes, and look, and see thy own." Note, That which God has to show us is infinitely better and more desirable than anything that the world has to offer our view. The prospects of an eye of faith are much more rich and beautiful than those of an eye of sense. Those for whom the heavenly Canaan is designed in the other world have sometimes, by faith, a comfortable prospect of it in their present state; for we look at the things that are not seen, as real, though distant.

(2.) He secures this land to him and his seed forever (Ge 13:15): To thee will I give it; and again (Ge 13:17) I will give it unto thee; every repetition of the promise is a ratification of it. To

thee and thy seed, not to Lot and his seed; they were not to have their inheritance in this land, and therefore Providence so ordered it that Lot should be separated from Abram first, and then the grant should be confirmed to him and his seed. Thus God often brings good out of evil, and makes men's sins and follies subservient to his own wise and holy counsels. To thee and thy seed--to thee to sojourn in as a stranger, to thy seed to dwell and rule in as proprietors. To thee, that is, to thy seed. The granting of it to him and his forever intimates that it was typical of the heavenly Canaan, which is given to the spiritual seed of Abram forever, Heb 11:14.

(3.) He gives him livery and seisin of it, though it was a reversion: "Arise, walk through the land, Ge 13:17. Enter, and take possession, survey the parcels, and it will appear better than upon a distant prospect."

Note, God is willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his covenant, and the inestimable worth of covenant blessings. Go, walk about Sion, Ps 48:12.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, *then* shall thy seed also be numbered.

Here is the promise of a numerous issue to replenish this good land, so that it should never be lost for want of heirs (Ge 13:16): I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, that is, "They shall increase incredibly, and, take them altogether, they shall be such a great multitude as no man can number." They were so in Solomon's time, 1Ki 4:20, Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude. This God here gives him the promise of. Note, The same God that provides the inheritance provides the heirs. He that has prepared the holy land prepares the holy seed; he that gives glory gives grace to make meet for glory.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed *his* tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which *is* in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the

Lord.

Lastly, We are told what Abram did when God had thus confirmed the promise to him, Ge 13:18.

1. He removed his tent. God bade him walk through the land, that is, "Do not think of fixing in it, but expect to be always unsettled, and walking through it to a better Canaan:" in compliance with God's will herein, he removes his tent, confirming himself to the condition of a pilgrim.

2. He built there an altar, in token of his thankfulness to God for the kind visit he had paid him. Note, When God meets us with gracious promises, he expects that we should attend him with our humble praises.

the renewal of the promise was acknowledged by Abram by a fresh tribute of devout gratitude.

Genesis -14

Abram Rescues Lot

1 And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations;

2 *that these* made war with Bera king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

3 All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

4 Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

5 And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that *were* with him, and smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

6 and the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-paran, which *is* by the wilderness.

7 And they returned, and came to En-mishpat, which *is* Kadesh, and
smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that
dwelt in Hazezon-tamar.
8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah,
and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of
Bela, (the same *is* Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale
of Siddim;
9 with Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of
nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar;
four kings with five.
10 And the vale of Siddim was *full of* slime pits; and the kings of Sodom
and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to
the mountain.

The progress and success of the war. The four kings laid the neighboring countries waste and enriched themselves with the spoil of them (Ge 14:5-7), upon the alarm of which it had been the wisdom of the king of Sodom to submit, and desire conditions of peace; for how could he grapple with an enemy thus flushed with victory? But he would rather venture the utmost extremity than yield, and it sped accordingly. Quos Deus destruet eos dementat--Those whom God means to destroy he delivers up to infatuation.

1 The forces of the king of Sodom and his allies were routed; and, it should seem, many of them perished in the slime-pits who had escaped the sword, Ge 14:10. In all places we are surrounded with deaths of various kinds, especially in the field of battle.

2 The cities were plundered, Ge 14:11. All the goods of Sodom, and particularly their stores and provisions of victuals, were carried off by the conquerors. Note, When men abuse the gifts of a bountiful providence to gluttony and excess, it is just with God, and his usual way, by some judgment or other to strip them of that which they have so abused, Ho 2:8,9. 3. Lot was carried captive, Ge 14:12. They took Lot among the rest, and his goods. Now Lot may here be considered,

(1.) As sharing with his neighbours in this common calamity. Though he was himself a righteous man, and (which is here expressly noticed) Abram's brother's son, yet he was involved with the rest in all this trouble.

Note, All things come alike to all, Ec 9:2 The best of men cannot promise themselves an exemption from the greatest troubles in this life; neither from our own piety nor our relation to those that are the favourites of heaven will be our security, when God's judgments are abroad. Note, further, Many an honest man fares the worse for his wicked neighbours. It is therefore our wisdom to separate ourselves, or at least to distinguish ourselves, from them (2Co 6:17), and so deliver ourselves, Re 18:4.

(2.) As smarting for the foolish choice he made of a settlement here. This is plainly intimated when it is said, They took Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom. So near a relation of Abram should have been a companion and disciple of Abram, and should have abode by his tents; but, if he choose to dwell in Sodom, he must thank himself if he share in Sodom's calamities.

Note, When we go out of the way of our duty we put ourselves from under God's protection, and cannot expect that the choices which are made by our lusts should issue to our comfort. Particular mention is made of their taking Lot's goods, those goods which had occasioned his contest with Abram and his separation from him.

Note, It is just with God to deprive us of those enjoyments by which we have suffered ourselves to be deprived of our enjoyment of him.

11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom,
and his goods, and departed.
13 And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew;
for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol,
and brother of Aner: and these *were* confederate with Abram.

We have here an account of the only military action we ever find Abram engaged in, and this he was prompted to, not by his avarice or ambition, but purely by a principle of charity; it was not to enrich himself, but to help his friend. Never was any military expedition undertaken, prosecuted, and finished, more honourably than this of Abram's. Here we have,

The tidings brought him of his kinsman's distress. Providence so ordered it that he now sojourned not far off, that he might be a very present help.

1. He is here called Abram the Hebrew, that is, the son and follower of Heber, in whose family the profession of the true religion was kept up in that degenerate age. Abram herein acted like a Hebrew--in a manner not unworthy of the name and character of a religious professor.

2 The tidings were brought by one that had escaped with his life for a prey. Probably he was a Sodomite, and as bad as the worst of them; yet knowing Abram's relation to Lot, and concern for him, he implores his help, and hopes to speed for Lot's sake.

Note, The worst of men, in the day of their trouble, will be glad to claim acquaintance with those that are wise and good, and so get an interest in them. The rich man in hell called Abram Father; and the foolish virgins made court to the wise for a share of their oil.

God removed them to join Abram, and preserves him from their idolatry and superstitions.

His allies and confederates in this expedition. He prevailed with his neighbours, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre (with whom he kept up a fair correspondence) to go along with him. It was his prudence thus to strengthen his own troops with their auxiliary forces; and probably they saw themselves concerned, in interest, to act, as they could, against this formidable power, lest their own turn should be next. Note,

1. It is our wisdom and duty to behave ourselves so respectfully and obligingly towards all men as that, whenever there is occasion, they may be willing and ready to do us a kindness.

2. Those who depend on God's help, yet, in times of distress, ought to make use of men's help, as Providence offers it; else they tempt God.

14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained *servants,* born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued *them* unto Dan.

The preparations he made for this expedition. The cause was plainly good, his call to engage in it was clear, and therefore, with all speed, he armed his trained servants, born in his house, to the number of three hundred and eighteen--a great family, but a small army, about as many as Gideon's that routed the Midianites, Jdg 7:7. He drew out his trained servants, or his catechised servants, not only instructed in the art of war, which was then far short of the perfection which later and worse ages have improved it to, but instructed in the principles of religion; for Abram commanded his household to keep the way of the Lord. This shows that Abram was,

1. A great man, who had so many servants depending upon him, and employed by him, which was not only his strength and honour, but gave him a great opportunity of doing good, which is all that is truly valuable and desirable in great places and great estates.

2. A good man, who not only served God himself, but instructed all about him in the service of God. Note, Those that have great families have not only many bodies, but many souls besides their own, to take care of and provide for. Those that would be found the followers of Abram must see that their servants be catechised servants.

3. A wise man for, though he was a man of peace, yet he disciplined his servants for war, not knowing what occasion he might have, sometime or other, so to employ them. Note, Though our holy religion teaches us to be for peace, yet it does not forbid us to provide for war.

15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which *is* on the left hand of Damascus.

His courage and conduct were very remarkable.

1. There was a great deal of bravery in the enterprise itself, considering the disadvantages he lay under. What could one family of husbandmen and shepherds do against the armies of four princes, who now came fresh from blood and victory? It was not a vanquished, but a victorious army, that he was to pursue; nor was he constrained by necessity to this daring attempt, but moved to it by generosity; so that, all things considered, it was, for aught I know, as great an instance of true courage as ever Alexander or Caesar was celebrated for. Note, Religion tends to make men, not cowardly, but truly valiant. The righteous is bold as a lion. The true Christian is the true hero.

2. There was a great deal of policy in the management of it. Abram was no stranger to the stratagems of war: He divided himself, as Gideon did his little army (Jdg 7:16), that he might come upon the enemy from several quarters at once, and so make his few seem a great many; he made his attack by night, that he might surprise them. Note, Honest policy is a good friend both to our safety and to our usefulness. The serpent's

head (provided it be nothing akin to the old serpent) may well become a good Christian's body, especially if it have a dove's eye in it, Mt 10:16.

16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

His success was very considerable, Ge 14:15, 16. He defeated his enemies, and rescued his friends; and we do not find that he sustained any loss. Note, Those that venture in a good cause, with a good heart, are under the special protection of a good God, and have reason to hope for a good issue. Again, It is all one with the Lord to save by many or by few, 1Sa 14:6. Observe,

1. He rescued his kinsman; twice here he is called his brother Lot. The remembrance of the relation that was between them, both by nature and grace, made him forget the little quarrel that had been between them, in which Lot had by no means acted well towards Abram. Justly might Abram have upbraided Lot with his folly in quarrelling with him and removing from him, and have told him that he was well enough served, he might have known when he was well off; but, in the charitable breast of pious Abram, it is all forgiven and forgotten, and he takes this opportunity to give a real proof of the sincerity of his reconciliation. Note,

(1.) We ought to be ready, whenever it is in the power of our hands, to succour and relieve those that are in distress, especially our relations and friends. A brother is born for adversity, Pr 17:17. A friend in need is a friend indeed.

(2.) Though others have been wanting in their duty to us, yet we must not therefore deny our duty to them. Some have said that they can more easily forgive their enemies than their friends; but we shall see ourselves obliged to forgive both if we consider, not only that our God, when we were enemies, reconciled us, but also that he passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, Mic 7:18.

2. He rescued the rest of the captives, for Lot's sake, though they were strangers to him and such as he was under no obligation to at all; nay, though they were Sodomites, sinners before the Lord exceedingly, and though, probably, he might have recovered Lot alone by ransom, yet he brought back all the women, and the people, and their goods, Ge 14:16.

Note, As we have opportunity we must do good to all men. Our charity must be extensive, as opportunity offers itself. Wherever God gives life, we must not grudge the help we can give to support it. God does good to the just and unjust, and so must we, Mt 5:45. This victory which Abram obtained over the kings the prophet seems to refer to, Isa 41:2, Who raised up the righteous man from the east, and made him rule over kings? And some suggest that, as before he had a title to this land by grant, so now by conquest.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and of the kings that *were* with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

This paragraph begins with the mention of the respect which the king of Sodom paid to Abram at his return from the slaughter of the kings; but, before a particular account is given of this, the story of Melchizedek is briefly related, concerning whom observe,

Who he was. He was king of Salem and priest of the most high God; and other glorious things are said of him, Heb 7:1-10, &c.

1 The rabbin, and most of our rabbinical writers, conclude that Melchizedek was Shem the son of Noah, who was king and priest to those that descended from him, according to the patriarchal model. But this is not at all probable; for why

should his name be changed? And how came he to settle in Canaan?

2. Many Christian writers have thought that this was an appearance of the Son of God himself, our Lord Jesus, known to Abram, at this time, by this name, as, afterwards, Hagar called him by another name, Ge 16:13. He appeared to him as a righteous king, owning a righteous cause, and giving peace. It is difficult to imagine that any mere man should be said to be without father, without mother, and without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, Heb 7:3. It is witnessed of Melchizedek that he liveth, and that he abideth a priest continually (Heb 7:3, 8); nay (Heb 7:13, 14), the apostle makes him of whom these things are spoken to be our Lord who sprang out of Judah. It is likewise difficult to think that any mere man should, at this time, be greater than Abram in the things of God, that Christ should be a priest after the order of any mere man, and that any human priesthood should so far excel that of Aaron as it is certain that Melchizedek's did. 3. The most commonly received opinion is that Melchizedek was a Canaanitish prince, that reigned in Salem, and kept up the true religion there; but, if so, why his name should occur here only in all the story of Abram, and why Abram should have altars of his own and not attend the altars of his neighbour Melchizedek who was greater than he, seem unaccountable. Mr. Gregory of Oxford tells us that the Arabic Catena, which he builds much upon the authority of, gives this account of Melchizedek, That he was the son of Heraclim, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, and that his mother's name was Salathiel, the daughter of Gomer, the son of Japheth, the son of Noah.

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and
he *was* the priest of the most high God.
19 And he blessed him, and said,
Blessed be Abram of the most high God,
possessor of heaven and earth:

What he did.

1. He brought forth bread and wine, for the refreshment of Abram and his soldiers, and in congratulation of their victory. This he did as a king, teaching us to do good and to communicate, and to be given to hospitality, according to our ability; and representing the spiritual provisions of strength and comfort which Christ has laid up for us in the covenant of grace for our refreshment, when we are wearied with our spiritual conflicts.

2. As priest of the most high God, he blessed Abram, which we may suppose a greater refreshment to Abram than his bread and wine were. Thus God, having raised up his Son Jesus, has sent him to bless us, as one having authority; and those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. Christ went to heaven when he was blessing his disciples (Lu 24:51); for this is what he ever lives to do.

What he said, Ge 14:19, 20. Two things were said by him:-- 1. He blessed Abram from God: Blessed be Abram, blessed of the most high God, Ge 14:19. Observe the titles he here gives to God, which are very glorious.

(1.) The most high God, which bespeaks his absolute perfections in himself and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures; he is King of kings. Note, It will greatly help both our faith and our reverence in prayer to eye God as the most high God, and to call him so.

(2.) Possessor of heaven and earth, that is, rightful owner, and sovereign Lord, of all the creatures, because he made them. This bespeaks him a great God, and greatly to be praised (Ps 24:1), and those a happy people who have an interest in his favour and love. 2. He blessed God for Abram (Ge 14:20): and blessed be the most high God. Note,

(1.) In all our prayers, we must praise God, and join hallelujahs with all our hosannahs. These are the spiritual sacrifices we must offer up daily, and upon particular occasions.

(2.) God, as the most high God, must have the glory of all our victories, Ex 17:15,1Sa 7:10,12,Jdg 5:1,2,2Ch 20:21. In them he shows himself higher than our enemies (Ex 18:11), and higher than we; for without him we could do nothing.

(3.) We ought to give thanks for others' mercies as for our own, triumphing with those that triumph.

(4.) Jesus Christ, our great high priest, is the Mediator both of our prayers and praises, and not only offers up ours, but his own for us. See Lu 10:21.

20 and blessed be the most high God,
which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.
And he gave him tithes of all.

What was done to him: Abram gave him tithes of all, that is, of the spoils, Heb 7:4. This may be looked upon,

1. As a gratuity presented to Melchizedek, by way of return for his tokens of respect. Note, Those that receive kindness should show kindness. Gratitude is one of nature's laws.

2. As an offering vowed and dedicated to the most high God, and therefore put into the hands of Melchizedek his priest. Note,

(1.) When we have received some signal mercy from God, it is very fit that we should express our thankfulness by some special act of pious charity. God must always have his dues out of our substance, especially when, by any particular providence, he has either preserved or increased it to us.

(2.) That the tenth of our increase is a very fit proportion to be set apart for the honour of God and the service of his sanctuary.

(3.) That Jesus Christ, our great Melchizedek, is to have homage done him, and to be humbly acknowledged by every one of us as our king and priest; and not only the tithe of all, but all we have, must be surrendered and given up to him.

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

We have here an account of what passed between Abram and the king of Sodom, who succeeded him that fell in the battle (Ge 14:10), and thought himself obliged to do this honour to Abram, in return for the good services he had done him. Here is,

The king of Sodom's grateful offer to Abram (Ge 14:21): Give me the soul, and take thou the substance; so the Hebrew reads it. Here he fairly begs the persons, but as freely bestows the goods on Abram. Note,

1. Where a right is dubious and divided, it is wisdom to compound the matter by mutual concessions rather than to contend. The king of Sodom had an original right both to the persons and to the goods, and it would bear a debate whether Abram's acquired right by rescue would supersede his title and extinguish it; but, to prevent all quarrels, the king of Sodom makes this fair proposal.

2. Gratitude teaches us to recompense to the utmost of our power those that have undergone fatigues, run hazards, and been at expense for our service and benefit. Who goes a warfare at his own charges? 1Co 9:7. Soldiers purchase their pay dearer than any labourers, and are well worthy of it, because they expose their lives.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

Abram's generous refusal of this offer. He not only resigned the persons to him, who, being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, ought to have served Abram, but he restored all the goods too. He would not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, not the least thing that had ever belonged to the king of Sodom or any of his. Note, A lively faith enables a man to look upon the wealth of this world with a holy contempt, 1Jo 5:4. What are all the ornaments and delights of sense to one that has God and heaven ever in his eye? He resolves even to a thread and a shoe-latchet; for a tender conscience fears offending in a small matter. Now,

1. Abram ratifies this resolution with a solemn oath: I have lifted up my hand to the Lord that I will not take anything, Ge 14:22. Here observe,

(1.) The titles he gives to God, The most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, the same that Melchizedek had just now used, Ge 14:19. Note, It is good to learn of others how to order our speech concerning God, and to imitate those who speak well in divine things. This improvement we are to make of the conversation of devout good men, we must learn to speak after them.

(2.) The ceremony used in this oath: I have lifted up my hand. In religious swearing we appeal to God's knowledge of our truth and sincerity and imprecate his wrath if we swear falsely, and the lifting up of the hand is very significant and expressive of both.

(3.) The matter of the oath, namely, that he would not take any reward from the king of Sodom, was lawful, but what he was not antecedently obliged to.

[1.] Probably Abram vowed, before he went to the battle, that, if God would give him success, he would, for the glory of God and the credit of his profession, so far deny himself and his own

right as to take nothing of the spoils to himself. Note, the vows we have made when we are in pursuit of a mercy must be carefully and conscientiously kept when we have obtained the mercy, though they were made against our interest. A citizen of Zion, if he has sworn, whether it be to God or man, though it prove to his own hurt, yet he changeth not, Ps 15:4. Or,

[2.] Perhaps Abram, now when he saw cause to refuse the offer made him, at the same time confirmed his refusal with this oath, to prevent further importunity. Note, First, There may be good reason sometimes why we should debar ourselves of that which is our undoubted right, as St. Paul, 1Co 8:13,1Co 9:12. Secondly, That strong resolutions are of good use to put by the force of temptations.

23 that I will not *take* from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take anything that *is* thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

He backs his refusal with a good reason: Lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich, which would reflect reproach,

(1.) Upon the promise and covenant of God, as if they would not have enriched Abram without the spoils of Sodom. And,

(2.) Upon the piety and charity of Abram, as if all he had in his eye, when he undertook that hazardous expedition, was to enrich himself. Note,

[1.] We must be very careful that we give no occasion to others to say things which they ought not.

[2.] The people of God must, for their credit's sake, take heed of doing anything that looks mean or mercenary, or that savours of covetousness and self-seeking. Probably Abram knew the king of Sodom to be a proud and scornful man, and one that would be apt to turn such a thing as this to his reproach afterwards, though most unreasonably. When we have to do with such men, we have need to act with particular caution.

24 save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

He did not want his liberality to be hurtful to others.

He limits his refusal with a double proviso, Ge 14:24. In making vows, we ought carefully to insert the necessary exceptions, that we may not afterwards say before the angel, It was an error, Ec 5:6. Abram here excepts,

(1.) The food of his soldiers; they were worthy of their meat while they trod out the corn. This would give no colour to the king of Sodom to say that he had enriched Abram.

(2.) The shares of his allies and confederates: Let them take their portion. Note, Those who are strict in restraining their own liberty yet ought not to impose those restraints upon the liberties of others, nor to judge of them accordingly. We must not make ourselves the standard to measure others by. A good man will deny himself that liberty which he will not deny another, contrary to the practice of the Pharisees, Mt 23:4. There was not the same reason why Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, should quit their right, that there was why Abram should. They did not make the profession that he made, nor were they, as he was, under the obligation of a vow. They had not the hopes that Abram had of a portion in the other world, and therefore, by all means, let them take their portion of this.

Genesis -15

A Son Promised to Abram

1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward.

Observe here,

I The time when God made this treaty with Abram: After these things. 1. After that famous act of generous charity which Abram had done, in rescuing his friends and neighbours out of distress, and that, not for price nor reward. After this, God made him this gracious visit. Note, Those that show favour to men shall find favour with God. 2. After that victory which he had obtained over four kings. Lest Abram should be too much elevated and pleased with that, God comes to him, to tell him he had better things in store for him. Note, A believing converse with spiritual blessings is an excellent means to keep us from being too much taken up with temporal enjoyments. The gifts of common providence are not comparable to those of covenant love.

II The manner in which God conversed with Abram: The word of the Lord came unto Abram (that is, God manifested himself and his will to Abram) in a vision, which supposes Abram awake, and some visible appearances of the Shechinah, or some sensible token of the presence of the divine glory. Note, The methods of divine revelation are adapted to our state in a world of sense.

III. The gracious assurance God gave him of his favour to him.

1. He called him by name--Abram, which was a great honour to him, and made his name great, and was also a great encouragement and assistance to his faith. Note, God's good word does us good when it is spoken by his Spirit to us in

particular, and brought to our hearts. The word says, Ho, every one (Isa 55:1), the Spirit says, Ho, such a one.

2. He cautioned him against being disquieted and confounded: Fear not, Abram. Abram might fear lest the four kings he had routed should rally again, and fall upon him to his ruin: "No," says God, "Fear not. Fear not their revenges, nor thy neighbour's envy; I will take care of thee." Note,

(1.) Where there is great faith, yet there may be many fears, 2Co 7:5.

(2.) God takes cognizance of his people's fears though ever so secret, and knows their souls, Ps 31:7.

(3.) It is the will of God that his people should not give way to prevailing fears, whatever happens. Let the sinners in Sion be afraid, but fear not, Abram.

3. He assured him of safety and happiness, that he should forever be,

(1.) As safe as God himself could keep him: I am thy shield, or, somewhat more emphatically, I am a shield to thee, present with thee, actually caring for thee. See 1Ch 17:24. Not only the God of Israel, but a God to Israel. Note, The consideration of this, that God himself is, and will be, a shield to his people to secure them from all destructive evils, a shield ready to them and a shield round about them, should be sufficient to silence all their perplexing tormenting fears.

(2.) As happy as God himself could make him: I will be thy exceedingly great reward; not only thy rewarder, but thy reward. Abram had generously refused the rewards which the king of Sodom offered him, and here God comes, and tells him he shall be no loser by it. Note,

[1.] The rewards of believing obedience and self-denial are exceedingly great, 1Co 2:9.

[2.] God himself is the chosen and promised felicity of holy souls--chosen in this world, promised in a better. He is the portion of their inheritance and their cup.

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

His fear was not only lest he should not have children, but lest the promise of the blessed seed should not be accomplished in him.

Abram's repeated complaint, Ge 15:2, 3. This was that which gave occasion to this promise. The great affliction that sat heavy upon Abram was the want of a child; and the complaint of this he here pours out before the Lord, and shows before him his trouble, Ps 142:2. Note, Though we must never complain of God, yet we have leave to complain to him, and to be large and particular in the statement of our grievances; and it is some ease to a burdened spirit to open its case to a faithful and compassionate friend: such a friend God is, whose ear is always open. Now his complaint is four-fold:--

1. That he had no child (Ge 15:3): Behold, to me thou hast given no seed; not only no son, but no seed; if he had had a daughter, from her the promised Messiah might have come, who was to be the seed of the woman; but he had neither son nor daughter. He seems to lay an emphasis on that, to me. His neighbours were full of children, his servants had children born in his house. "But to me," he complains, "thou hast given none;" and yet God had told him he should be a favourite above all. Note, Those that are written childless must see God writing them so. Again, God often withholds those temporal comforts from his own children which he gives plentifully to others that are strangers to him.

2. That he was never likely to have any, intimated in that I go, or "I am going, childless, going into years, going down the hill apace; nay, I am going out of the world, going the way of all the

earth. I die childless," so the LXX. "I leave the world, and leave no child behind me."

3. That his servants were for the present and were likely to be to him instead of sons. While he lived, the steward of his house was Eliezer of Damascus; to him he committed the care of his family and estate, who might be faithful, but only as a servant, not as a son. When he died, one born in his house would be his heir, and would bear rule over all that for which he had laboured, Ec 2:18, 19, and 21. God had already told him that he would make of him a great nation (Ge 12:2), and his seed as the dust of the earth (Ge 13:16); but he had left him in doubt whether it should be his seed begotten or his seed adopted, by a son of his loins or only a son of his house. "Now, Lord," says Abram, "if it be only an adopted son, it must be one of my servants, which will reflect disgrace upon the promised seed, that is to descend from him." Note, While promised mercies are delayed our unbelief and impatience are apt to conclude them denied.

4. That the want of a son was so great a trouble to him that it took away the comfort of all his enjoyments: "Lord, what wilt thou give me? All is nothing to me, if I have not a son." Now,

(1.) If we suppose that Abram looked no further than a temporal comfort, this complaint was culpable. God had, by his providence, given him some good things, and more by his promise; and yet Abram makes no account of them, because he has not a son. It did very ill become the father of the faithful to say, What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, immediately after God had said, I am thy shield, and thy exceedingly great reward. Note, Those do not rightly value the advantages of their covenant-relation to God and interest in him who do not think them sufficient to balance the want of any creature-comfort whatever. But,

(2.) If we suppose that Abram, herein, had an eye to the promised seed, the importunity of his desire was very commendable: all was nothing to him, if he had not the earnest

of that great blessing, and an assurance of his relation to the Messiah, of which God had already encouraged him to maintain the expectation. He has wealth, and victory, and honour; but, while he is kept in the dark about the main matter, it is all nothing to him. Note, Till we have some comfortable evidence of our interest in Christ and the new covenant, we should not rest satisfied with anything else. "This, and the other, I have; but what will all this avail me, if I go Christless?" Yet thus far the complaint was culpable, that there was some diffidence of the promise at the bottom of it, and a weariness of waiting God's time. Note, True believers sometimes find it hard to reconcile God's promises and his providences, when they seem to disagree.

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord *came* unto him, saying, this shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

God's gracious answer to this complaint. To the first part of the complaint (Ge 15:2) God gave no immediate answer, because there was something of fretfulness in it; but, when he renews his address somewhat more calmly (Ge 15:3), God answered him graciously.

Note, If we continue instant in prayer, and yet pray with a humble submission to the divine will, we shall not seek in vain.

1. God gave him an express promise of a son, Ge 15:4. This that is born in thy house shall not be thy heir, as thou fearest, but one that shall come forth out of thy own bowels shall be thy heir. Note,

(1.) God makes heirs; he says, "This shall not, and this shall;" and whatever men devise and design, in settling their estates, God's counsel shall stand.

(2.) God is often better to us than our own fears, and gives the mercy we had long despaired of.

2. To affect him the more with this promise, he took him out, and showed him the stars (this vision being early in the morning, before day), and then tells him, So shall thy seed be, Ge 15:5.

(1.) So numerous; the stars seem innumerable to a common eye: Abram feared he should have no child at all, but God assured him that the descendants from his loins should be so many as not to be numbered.

(2.) So illustrious, resembling the stars in splendour; for to them pertained the glory, Ro 9:4. Abram's seed, according to his flesh, were like the dust of the earth (Ge 13:16), but his spiritual seed are like the stars of heaven, not only numerous, but glorious, and very precious.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Abram's firm belief of the promise God now made him, and God's favourable acceptance of his faith, Ge 15:6.

1. He believed in the Lord, that is, he believed the truth of that promise which God had now made him, resting upon the irresistible power and the inviolable faithfulness of him that made it. Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Note, Those who would have the comfort of the promises must mix faith with the promises. See how the apostle magnifies this faith of Abram, and makes it a standing example, Ro 4:19-21. He was not weak in faith; he staggered not at the promise; he was strong in faith; he was fully persuaded. The Lord work such a faith in every one of us! Some think that his believing in the Lord respected, not only the Lord promising, but the Lord promised, the Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. He believed in him, that is, received and embraced the divine revelation concerning him, and rejoiced to see his day, though at so great a distance, Joh 8:56.

2. God counted it to him for righteousness; that is, upon the score of this he was accepted of God, and, as the rest of the patriarchs, by faith he obtained witness that he was righteous, Heb 11:4. This is urged in the New Testament to prove that we are justified by faith without the works of the law (Ro 4:4,Ga 3:6); for Abram was so justified while he was yet uncircumcised. If Abram, that was so rich in good works, was not justified by them, but by his faith, much less can we, that are so poor in them. This faith, which was imputed to Abram for righteousness, had lately struggled with unbelief (Ge 15:2), and, coming off a conqueror, it was thus crowned, thus honoured.

Note, A fiducial practical acceptance of, and dependence upon, God's promise of grace and glory, in and through Christ, is that which, according to the tenour of the new covenant, gives us a right to all the blessings contained in that promise. All believers are justified as Abram was, and it was his faith that was counted to him for righteousness.

7 And he said unto him, I *am* the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

8 And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

This is a particular motion of God's Spirit, which is not lawful for all to follow, in asking signs: but was permitted for some by a peculiar motion, as to Gideon and Ezekiel.

9 And he said unto him, Take me a heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.

God directs Abram to make preparations for a sacrifice, intending by that to give him a sign, and Abram makes preparation accordingly (Ge 15:9-11): Take me a heifer, &c. Perhaps Abram expected some extraordinary sign from heaven; but God gives him a sign upon a sacrifice. Note, Those that would receive the assurances of God's favour, and would have their faith confirmed, must attend instituted ordinances, and expect to meet with God in them. Observe,

1. God appointed that each of the beasts used for this service should be three years old, because then they were at their full growth and strength: God must be served with the best we have, for he is the best.

2. We do not read that God gave Abram particular directions how to manage these beasts and fowls, knowing that he was so well versed in the law and custom of sacrifices that he needed not any particular directions; or perhaps instructions were given him, which he carefully observed, thought they are not recorded: at least it was intimated to him that they must be prepared for the solemnity of ratifying a covenant; and he well knew the manner of preparing them.

3. Abram took as God appointed him, though as yet he knew not how these things should become a sign to him. This was not the first instance of Abram's implicit obedience. He divided the beasts in the midst, according to the ceremony used in confirming covenants, Jer 34:18, 19, where it is said, They cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts.

4. Abram, having prepared according to God's appointment, now set himself to wait for the sign God might give him by these, like the prophet upon his watch-tower, Hab 2:1. While God's appearing to own his sacrifice was deferred, Abram continued waiting, and his expectations were raised by the delay; when the fowls came down upon the carcases to prey upon them, as common and neglected things, Abram drove them away (Ge 15:11), believing that the vision would, at the end, speak, and not lie.

Note, A very watchful eye must be kept upon our spiritual sacrifices, that nothing be suffered to prey upon them and render them unfit for God's acceptance. When vain thoughts, like these fowls, come down upon our sacrifices, we must drive them away, and not suffer them to lodge within us, but attend on God without distraction.

On occasions of great importance, when two or more parties join in a compact, they either observe precisely the same rites as Abram did, or, where they do not, they invoke the lamp as their witness. According to these ideas, which have been from time immemorial engraven on the minds of Eastern people, the Lord Himself condescended to enter into covenant with Abram. The patriarch did not pass between the sacrifice and the reason was that in this transaction he was bound to nothing. He asked a sign, and God was pleased to give him a sign, by which, according to Eastern ideas, He bound Himself. In like manner God has entered into covenant with us; and in the glory of the only-begotten Son, who passed through between God and us, all who believe have, like Abram, a sign or pledge in the gift of the Spirit, whereby they may know that they shall inherit the heavenly Canaan.

10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.

11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him.

The time when God came to him with this discovery: When the sun was going down, or declining, about the time of the evening oblation, 1Ki 18:36,Da 9:21. Early in the morning, before day, while the stars were yet to be seen, God had given him orders concerning the sacrifices (Ge 15:5), and we may suppose it was, at least, his morning's work to prepare them and set them in order; when he had done this, he abode by them, praying and waiting till towards evening. Note, God often keeps his people long in expectation of the comforts he designs them, for the confirmation of their faith; but though the answers of prayer, and the performance of promises, come slowly, yet they come surely. At evening time it shall be light.

The preparatives for this discovery.

1. A deep sleep fell upon Abram, not a common sleep through weariness or carelessness, but a divine ecstasy, like that which the Lord God caused to fall upon Adam (Ge 2:21), that, being hereby wholly taken off from the view of things sensible, he might be wholly taken up with the contemplation of things spiritual. The doors of the body were locked up, that the soul might be private and retired, and might act the more freely and like itself.

2. With this sleep, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. How sudden a change! But just before we had him solacing himself in the comforts of God's covenant, and in communion with him; and here a horror of great darkness falls upon him. Note, The children of light do not always walk in the light, but sometimes clouds and darkness are round about them. This great darkness, which brought horror with it, was designed,

(1.) To strike an awe upon the spirit of Abram, and to possess him with a holy reverence, that the familiarity to which God was pleased to admit him might not breed contempt. Note, Holy fear prepares the soul for holy joy; the spirit of bondage makes way for the spirit of adoption. God wounds first, and then heals; humbles first, and then lifts up, Isa 6:5, 6, &c.

(2.) To be a specimen of the methods of God's dealings with his seed. They must first be in the horror and darkness of Egyptian slavery, and then enter with joy into the good land; and therefore he must have the foretaste of their sufferings, before he had the foresight of their happiness.

(3.) To be an indication of the nature of that covenant of peculiarity which God was now about to make with Abram. The Old-Testament dispensation, which was founded on that covenant, was a dispensation,

[1.] Of darkness and obscurity, 2Co 3:13, 14.

[2.] Of dread and horror, Heb 12:18, &c.

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that *is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

The suffering state of Abram's seed for a long time, Ge 15:13. Let not Abram flatter himself with the hopes of nothing but honour and prosperity in his family; no, he must know, of a surety, that which he was loth to believe, that the promised seed should be a persecuted seed. Note, God sends the worst first; we must first suffer, and then reign. He also lets us know the worst before it comes, that when it comes it may not be a surprise to us, Joh 16:4. Now we have here,

(1.) The particulars of their sufferings.

[1.] They shall be strangers; so they were, first in Canaan (Ps 105:12) and afterwards in Egypt; before they were lords of their own land they were strangers in a strange land. The inconveniences of an unsettled state make a happy settlement the more welcome. Thus the heirs of heaven are first strangers on earth, a land that is not theirs.

[2.] They shall be servants; so they were to the Egyptians, Ex 1:13. See how that which was the doom of the Canaanites (Ge 9:25), proves the distress of Abram's seed: they are made to serve, but with this difference, the Canaanites serve under a curse, the Hebrews under a blessing; and the upright shall have dominion in the morning, Ps 49:14.

[3.] They shall be suffers. Those whom they serve shall afflict them; see Ex 1:11. Note, Those that are blessed and beloved of God are often sorely afflicted by wicked men; and God foresees it, and takes cognizance of it.

(2.) The continuance of their sufferings--four hundred years. This persecution began with mocking, when Ishmael, the son of an Egyptian, persecuted Isaac, who was born after the Spirit, Ge 21:9, and Gal 4:29. It continued in loathing; for it was an abomination to the Egyptians to eat bread with the Hebrews, Ge

43:32; and it came at last to murder, the basest of murders, that of their new-born children; so that, more or less, it continued 400 years, though, in extremity, not so many. This was a long time, but a limited time.

14 and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

The judgment of the enemies of Abram's seed: That nation whom they shall serve, even the Egyptians, will I judge, Ge 15:14. This points at the plagues of Egypt, by which God not only constrained the Egyptians to release Israel, but punished them for all the hardships they had put upon them. Note,

(1.) Though God may suffer persecutors and oppressors to trample upon his people a great while, yet he will certainly reckon with them at last; for his day is coming, Ps 37:12, 13.

(2.) The punishing of persecutors is the judging of them: it is a righteous thing with God, and a particular act of justice, to recompense tribulations to those that trouble his people. The judging of the church's enemies is God's work: I will judge. God can do it, for he is the Lord; he will do it, for he is his people's God, and he has said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay. To him therefore we must leave it, to be done in his way and time.

The deliverance of Abram's seed out of Egypt. That great event is here foretold: Afterwards shall they come out with great substance. It is here promised,

(1.) That they should be enlarged: Afterwards they shall come out; that is, either after they have been afflicted 400 years, when the days of their servitude are fulfilled, or after the Egyptians are judged and plagued, then they may expect deliverance. Note, The destruction of oppressors is the redemption of the oppressed; they will not let God's people go till they are forced to it.

(2.) That they should be enriched: They shall come out with great substance; this was fulfilled, Ex 12:35, 36. God took care

they should have, not only a good land to go to, but a good stock to carry with them.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

Abram's peaceful quiet death and burial, before these things should come to pass, Ge 15:15. As he should not live to see that good land in the possession of his family, but must die, as he lived, a stranger in it, so, to balance this, he should not live to see the troubles that should come upon his seed, much less to share in them. This is promised to Josiah, 2Ki 22:20. Note, Good men are sometimes greatly favoured by being taken away from the evil to come, Isa 57:1. Let this satisfy Abram, that, for his part,

(A) He shall go to his fathers in peace. Note,

[1.] Even the friends and favourites of Heaven are not exempted from the stroke of death. Are we greater than our father Abram, who is dead? Joh 8:53.

[2.] Good men die willingly; they are not fetched, they are not forced, but they go; their soul is not required, as the rich fool's (Lu 12:20), but cheerfully resigned: they would not live always.

[3.] At death we go to our fathers, to all our fathers that have gone before us to the state of the dead (Job 21:32, 33), to our godly fathers that have gone before us to the state of the blessed, Heb 12:23. The former thought helps to take off the terror of death, the latter puts comfort into it.

[4.] Whenever a godly man dies, he dies in peace. If the way be piety, the end is peace, Ps 37:37. Outward peace, to the last, is promised to Abram, peace and truth is his days, whatever should come afterwards (2Ki 20:19); peace with God, and everlasting peace, are sure to all the seed.

(B) He shall be buried in a good old age. Perhaps mention is made of his burial here, where the land of Canaan is promised him, because a burying place was the first possession he had in it. He shall not only die in peace, but die in honour, die, and be buried decently; not only die in peace, but die in season, Job 5:26. Note,

[1.] Old age is a blessing. It is promised in the fifth commandment; it is pleasing to nature; and it affords a great opportunity for usefulness.

[2.] Especially, if it be a good old age. Theirs may be called a good old age,

First, That are old and healthful, not loaded with such distempers as make them weary of life.

Secondly, That are old and holy, old disciples (Ac 21:16), whose hoary head is found in the way of righteousness (Pr 16:31), old and useful, old and exemplary for godliness; theirs is indeed a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full.

Though God tolerates the wicked for a time, yet his vengeance falls on them when the measure of their wickedness is full.

Their happy settlement in Canaan, Ge 15:16. They shall not only come out of Egypt, but they shall come hither again, hither to the land of Canaan, wherein thou now art. The discontinuance of their possession shall be no defeasance of their right: we must not reckon those comforts lost forever that are intermitted for a time. The reason why they must not have the land of promise in possession till the fourth generation was because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. Israel cannot be possessed of Canaan till the Amorites be dispossessed; and they are not yet ripe for ruin. The righteous God has determined that they shall not be cut off till they have persisted in sin so long, and arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that there may appear some

equitable proportion between their sin and their ruin; and therefore, till it come to that, the seed of Abram must be kept out of possession. Note,

(1.) The measure of sin fills gradually. Those that continue impenitent in wicked ways are treasuring up unto themselves wrath.

(2.) Some people's measure of sin fills slowly. The Sodomites, who were sinners before the Lord exceedingly, soon filled their measure; so did the Jews, who were, in profession, near to God. But the iniquity of the Amorites was long in the filling up.

(3.) That this is the reason of the prosperity of wicked people; the measure of their sins is not yet full. The wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power, while God is laying up their iniquity for their children, Job 21:7, 19. See Mt 23:32, De 32:34.

17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

Here is, the covenant ratified (Ge 15:17); the sign which Abram desired was given, at length, when the sun had gone down, so that it was dark; for that was a dark dispensation.

The smoking furnace signified the affliction of his seed in Egypt. They were there in the iron furnace (De 4:20), the furnace of affliction (Isa 48:10), labouring in the very fire. They were there in the smoke, their eyes darkened, that they could not see to the end of their troubles, and themselves at a loss to conceive what God would do with them. Clouds and darkness were round about them.

The passing of these between the pieces was the confirming of the covenant God now made with him, that he might have strong consolation, being fully persuaded that what God promised he would certainly perform. It is probable that the furnace and lamp, which passed between the pieces, burnt and consumed them, and so completed the sacrifice, and testified God's

acceptance of it, as of Gideon's (Jdg 6:21), Manoah's (Jdg 13:19,20), and Solomon's, 2Ch 7:1. So it intimates,

(1.) That God's covenants with man are made by sacrifice (Ps 50:5), by Christ, the great sacrifice: no agreement without atonement.

(2.) God's acceptance of our spiritual sacrifices is a token for good and an earnest of further favours. See Jdg 13:23. And by this we may know that he accepts our sacrifices if he kindle in our souls a holy fire of pious and devout affections in them.

18 In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

The covenant repeated and explained: In that same day, that day never to be forgotten, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, that is, gave a promise to Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, Ge 15:18. Here is,

1. A rehearsal of the grant. He had said before, To thy seed will I give this land, Ge 12:7, Ge 13:15. But here he says, I have given it; that is,

(1.) I have given the promise of it, the charter is sealed and delivered, and cannot be disannulled. Note, God's promises are God's gifts, and are so to be accounted.

(2.) The possession is as sure, in due time, as if it were now actually delivered to them. What God has promised is as sure as if it were already done; hence, it is said, He that believes hath everlasting life (Joh 3:36), for he shall as surely go to heaven as if he were there already.

2. A recital of the particulars granted, such as is usual in the grants of lands. He specifies the boundaries of the land intended hereby to be granted, Ge 15:18. And then, for the greater certainty, as is usual in such cases, he mentions in whose tenure

and occupation these lands now were. Ten several nations, or tribes, are here spoken of (Ge 15:19-21) that must be cast out, to make room for the seed of Abram. They were not possessed of all these countries when God brought them into Canaan. The bounds are fixed much narrower, Nu 34:2-12. &c. But,

(1.) In David's time, and Solomon's, their jurisdiction extended to the utmost of these limits, 2Ch 9:26.

(2.) It was their own fault that they were not sooner and longer in possession of all these territories. They forfeited their right by their sins, and by their own sloth and cowardice kept themselves out of possession.

(3.) The land granted is here described in its utmost extent because it was to be a type of the heavenly inheritance, where there is room enough: in our father's house are many mansions. The present occupants are named, because their number, and strength, and long prescription, should be no hindrance to the accomplishment of this promise in its season, and to magnify God's love to Abram and his seed, in giving to that one nation the possessions of many nations, so precious were they in his sight, and so honourable, Isa 43:4.

covenant The Abrahamic Covenant as formed Genesis 12:1-4 and confirmed ; Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1-7-7 17:1-8 is in seven distinct parts:

(1) "I will make of thee a great nation." Fulfilled in a threefold way:

(a) In a natural posterity--"as the dust of the earth Genesis 13:16; John 8:37, viz. the Hebrew people.

(b) In a spiritual posterity--"look now toward heaven . . . so shall thy seed be" John 8:39; Romans 4:16, 17; 9:7, 8; Galatians 3:6, 7, 29 viz. all men of faith, whether Jew or Gentile.

(c) Fulfilled also through Ishmael Genesis 17:18-20 (2) "I will bless thee." Fulfilled in two ways:

(A) temporally Genesis 13:14,15,17; 15:18; 24:34,35

(B) spiritually ; Genesis 15:6; John 8:56

(3) "And make thy name great." Abraham's is one of the universal names.

(4) "And thou shalt be a blessing" Galatians 3:13,14

(5) "I will bless them that bless thee." In fulfilment closely related to the next clause.

(6) "And curse him that curseth thee." Wonderfully fulfilled in the history of the dispersion. It has invariably fared ill with the people who have persecuted the Jew--well with those who have protected him. The future will still more remarkably prove this principle Deuteronomy 30:7; Isaiah 14:1,; Joel 3:1-8; Micah 5:7-9; Haggai 2:22; Zechariah 14:1-3; Matthew 25:40,45.

(7) "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed?" This is the great evangelic promise fulfilled in Abraham's Seed, Christ Galatians 3:16; John 8:56-58. It brings into greater definiteness the promise of the Adamic Covenant concerning the Seed of the woman Genesis 3:15 NOTE.--The gift of the land is modified by prophecies of three dispossessions and restorations Genesis 15:13,14,16; Jeremiah 25:11,12; Deuteronomy 28:62-65; 30:1-3.

Two dispossessions and restorations have been accomplished. Israel is now in the third dispersion, from which she will be restored at the return of the Lord as King under the Davidic Covenant ; Deuteronomy 30:3; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Ezekiel 37:21-25; Luke 1:30-33; Acts 15:14-17

19 the Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,
20 and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaim,

21 and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Genesis -16

Hagar and Ishmael

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Hagar.

We have here the marriage of Abram to Hagar, who was his secondary wife. Herein, though some excuse may be made for him, he cannot be justified, for from the beginning it was not so; and, when it was so, it seems to have proceeded from an irregular desire to build up families for the speedier peopling of the world and the church. Certainly it must not be so now. Christ has reduced this matter to the first institution, and makes the marriage union to be between one man and one woman only. Now,

The maker of this match (would one think it?) was Sarai herself: she said to Abram, I pray thee, go in unto my maid, Ge 16:2. Note,

1. It is the policy of Satan to tempt us by our nearest and dearest relations, or those friends that we have an opinion of and an affection for. The temptation is most dangerous when it is sent by a hand that is least suspected: it is our

wisdom therefore to consider, not so much who speaks as what is spoken.

2. God's commands consult our comfort and honour much better than our own contrivances do. It would have been much more for Sarai's interest if Abram had kept to the rule of God's law instead of being guided by her foolish projects; but we often do ill for ourselves.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

She owned God's providence in this affliction: The Lord hath restrained me from bearing. It seems that she had respect for God's promise, which could not be accomplished without issue. She fails by limiting God's power to the common order of nature, as though God could not give her children in her old age. Note,

(1.) As, where children are, it is God that gives them (Ge 33:5), so where they are wanted it is he that withholds them, Ge 30:2.

(2.) It becomes us to acknowledge this, that we may bear it, and improve it, as an affliction of his ordering for wise and holy ends.

She used this as an argument with Abram to marry his maid; and he was prevailed upon by this argument to do it. Note,

(1.) When our hearts are too much set upon any creature-comfort, we are easily put upon the use of indirect methods for the obtaining of it. Inordinate desires commonly produce irregular endeavours. If our wishes be not kept in a submission to God's providence, our pursuits will scarcely be kept under the restraints of his precepts.

(2.) It is for want of a firm dependence upon God's promise, and a patient waiting for God's time, that we go out of the way of our duty to catch at expected mercy. He that believes does not make haste.

Abram's compliance with Sarai's proposal, we have reason to think, was from an earnest desire of the promised seed, on whom the covenant should be entailed. God had told him that his heir should be a son of his body, but had not yet told him that it should be a son by Sarai; therefore he thought, "Why not by Hagar, since Sarai herself proposed it?" Note,

(1.) Foul temptations may have very fair pretences, and be coloured with that which is very plausible.

(2.) Fleshly wisdom, as it anticipates God's time of mercy, so it puts us out of God's way.

(3.) This would be happily prevented if we would ask counsel of God by the word and by prayer, before we attempt that which is important and suspicious. Herein Abram was wanting; he married without God's consent. This persuasion came not of him that called him.

Hagar is a type of the law "which gendereth to bondage" Galatians 4:24, 25.

3 And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

"Wife" is here used to describe an inferior, though not degrading, relation, in countries where polygamy prevails. In the case of these female slaves, who are the personal property of his lady, being purchased before her marriage or given as a special present to her, no one can become the husband's secondary wife without her mistress consent or permission. This usage seems to have prevailed in patriarchal times;

and Hagar, Sarai's slave, of whom she had the entire right of disposing, was given by her mistress' spontaneous offer, to be the secondary wife of Abram, in the hope of obtaining the long-looked-for heir. It was a wrong step—indicating a want of simple reliance on God—and Sarai was the first to reap the bitter fruits of her device.

4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

We have here the immediate bad consequences of Abram's unhappy marriage to Hagar. A great deal of mischief it made quickly. When we do not well both sin and trouble lie at the door; and we may thank ourselves for the guilt and grief that follow us when we go out of the way of our duty. See it in this story.

Sarai is despised, and thereby provoked and put into a passion, Ge 16:4. Hagar no sooner perceives herself with child by her master than she looks scornfully upon her mistress, upbraids her perhaps with her barrenness, insults over her, to make her to fret (as 1Sa 1:6), and boasts of the prospect she had of bringing an heir to Abram, to that good land, and to the promise. Now she thinks herself a better woman than Sarai, more favoured by Heaven, and likely to be better beloved by Abram; and

therefore she will not submit as she has done. Note,

1. Mean and servile spirits, when favoured and advanced either by God or man, are apt to grow haughty and insolent, and to forget their place and origin. See Pr 29:21, Pr 30:21-23. It is a hard thing to bear honour aright.

2. We justly suffer by those whom we have sinfully indulged, and it is a righteous thing with God to make those instruments of our trouble whom we have made instruments of our sin, and to ensnare us in our own evil counsels: this stone will return upon him that rolleth it.

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee.

Abram is clamoured upon, and cannot be easy while Sarai is out of humour; she upbraids him vehemently, and very unjustly charges him with the injury (Ge 16:5): My wrong be upon thee, with a most unreasonable jealousy suspecting that he countenanced Hagar's insolence; and, as one not willing to hear what Abram had to say for the rectifying of the mistake and the clearing of himself, she rashly appeals to God in the case: The Lord judge between me and thee; as if Abram had refused

to right her. Thus does Sarai, in her passion, speak as one of the foolish women speaketh. Note,

1. It is an absurdity which passionate people are often guilty of to quarrel with others for that of which they themselves must bear the blame. Sarai could not but own that she had given her maid to Abram, and yet she cries out, My wrong be upon thee, when she should have said, What a fool was I to do so! That is never said wisely which pride and anger have the inditing of; when passion is upon the throne, reason is out of doors, and is neither heard nor spoken.

2. Those are not always in the right who are most loud and forward in appealing to God. Rash and bold imprecations are commonly evidences of guilt and a bad cause.

This punishment declares what they gain if they attempt anything against the word of God.

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid *is* in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Hagar is afflicted, and driven from the house, Ge 16:6. Observe,

1. Abram's meekness resigns the matter of the maid-servant to Sarai, whose proper province it was to rule that part of the family: Thy maid is in thy hand. Though she was his wife, he would not countenance nor protect her in anything that was disrespectful to Sarai, for whom he still retained the same affection that ever he had. Note, Those who would keep up peace and love must return soft answers to hard accusations. Husbands and wives particularly should agree, and endeavour not to be both angry together. Yielding pacifies great offenses. See Pr 15:1.

2. Sarai's passion will be revenged upon Hagar: She dealt hardly with her, not only confining her to her usual place and work as a servant, but probably making her to serve with rigour.

Note, God takes notice of, and is displeased with, the hardships which harsh masters unreasonably put upon their servants. They ought to forbear threatening, with Job's thought, Did not he that made me make him? Job 31:15.

3. Hagar's pride cannot bear it, her high spirit having become impatient of rebuke: She fled

from her face. She not only avoided her wrath for the present, as David did Saul's, but she totally deserted her service, and ran away from the house, forgetting,

(1.) What wrong she hereby did to her mistress, whose servant she was, and to her master, whose wife she was. Note, Pride will hardly be restrained by any bonds of duty, no, not by many.

(2.) That she herself had first given the provocation, by despising her mistress. Note, Those that suffer for their faults ought to bear their sufferings patiently, 1Pe 2:20.

7 And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

Here is the first mention we have in scripture of an angel's appearance. Hagar was a type of the law, which was given by the disposition of angels; but the world to come is not put in subjection to them, Heb 2:5. Observe,

How the angel arrested her in her flight, Ge 16:7. It should seem, she was making towards her own country; for she was in the way to Shur, which lay towards Egypt. It were well if our afflictions would make us think of our

home, the better country. But nothing except pride, passion, and sullen obstinacy, could have driven any solitary person to brave the dangers of such an inhospitable wild; and she would have died, had not the timely appearance and words of the angel recalled her to reflection and duty. But Hagar was now out of her place, and out of the way of her duty, and going further astray, when the angel found her. Note,

1. It is a great mercy to be stopped in a sinful way either by conscience or by Providence.

2. God suffers those that are out of the way to wander awhile, that when they see their folly, and what a loss they have brought themselves to, they may be the better disposed to return. Hagar was not stopped till she was in the wilderness, and had set down, weary enough, and glad of clear water to refresh herself with. God brings us into a wilderness, and there meets us, Ho 2:14.

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

How he examined her, Ge 16:8. Observe,

1. He called her Hagar, Sarai's maid,

(1.) As a check to her pride. Though she was Abram's wife, and, as such, was obliged to return, yet he calls her Sarai's maid, to humble her. Note, Though civility teaches us to call others by their highest titles, yet humility and wisdom teach us to call ourselves by the lowest.

(2.) As a rebuke to her flight. Sarai's maid ought to be in Sarai's tent, and not wandering in the wilderness and sauntering by a fountain of water. Note, It is good for us often to call to mind what our place and relation are. See Ec 10:4.

2 The questions the angel put to her were proper and very pertinent.

(1.) "Whence comest thou? Consider that thou art running away both from the duty thou wast bound to and the privileges thou wast blessed with in Abram's tent." Note, It is a great advantage to live in a religious family, which those ought to consider who have that advantage, yet upon every slight inducement are forward to quit it.

(2.) "Whither wilt thou go? Thou art running thyself into sin, in Egypt" (if she return to that people, she will return to their gods), "and into danger, in the wilderness," through which she must travel, De 8:15. Note, Those who are forsaking God and their duty would do well to remember not only whence they have fallen, but whither they are falling. See Jer 2:18, What hast thou to do (with Hagar) in the way of Egypt? Joh 6:68.

3. Her answer was honest, and a fair confession: I flee from the face of my mistress. In this,

(1.) She acknowledges her fault in fleeing from her mistress, and yet,

(2.) Excuses it, that it was from the face, of displeasure, of her mistress. Note, Children and servants must be treated with mildness and gentleness, lest we provoke them to take any irregular courses and so become accessory to their sins, which will condemn us, though it will not justify them.

4. How he sent her back, with suitable and compassionate counsel: "Return to thy

mistress, and submit thyself under her hand, Ge 16:9. Go home, and humble thyself for what thou hast done amiss, and beg pardon, and resolve for the future to behave thyself better." He makes no question but she would be welcome, though it does not appear that Abram sent after her. Note, Those that have gone away from their place and duty, when they are convinced of their error, must hasten their return and reformation, how mortifying soever it may be.

9 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

10 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

We may suppose that the angel having given Hagar that good counsel (Ge 16:9) to return to her mistress she immediately promised to do so, and was setting her face homeward; and then the angel went on to encourage her with an assurance of the mercy God had in store for her and her seed: for God will meet those with mercy that are returning to their duty. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest, Ps 32:5. Here is,

A prediction concerning her posterity given her for her comfort in her present distress. Notice is taken of her condition: Behold, thou art with

child; and therefore this is not a fit place for thee to be in. Note, It is a great comfort to women with child to think that they are under the particular cognizance and care of the divine Providence. God graciously considers their case and suits supports to it. Now,

1 The angel assures her of a safe delivery, and that of a son, which Abram desired. This fright and ramble of hers might have destroyed her hope of an offspring; but God dealt not with her according to her folly: Thou shalt bear a son. She was saved in child-bearing, not only by providence, but by promise.

2. He names her child, which was an honour both to her and it: Call him Ishmael, God will hear; and the reason is, because the Lord has heard; he has, and therefore he will.

Note, The experience we have had of God's seasonable kindness to us in distress would encourage us to hope for similar help in similar exigencies, Ps 10:17. He has heard thy affliction, Ge 16:11.

Note, Even where there is little cry of devotion, the God of pity sometimes graciously hears the

cry of affliction. Tears speak as well as prayers. This speaks comfort to the afflicted, that God not only sees what their afflictions are, but hears what they say.

Note, further, Seasonable succours, in a day of affliction, ought always to be remembered with thankfulness to God. Such a time, in such a strait, the Lord heard the voice of my affliction, and helped me. See De 26:7, Ps 31:22.

3. He promises her a numerous offspring, (Ge 16:10): I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, Heb. multiplying, I will multiply it, that is, multiply it in every age, so as to perpetuate it. It is supposed that the Turks at this day descend from Ishmael; and they are a great people. This was in pursuance of the promise made to Abram: I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, Ge 13:16.

Note, Many that are children of godly parents have, for their sakes, a very large share of outward common blessings, though, like Ishmael, they are not taken into covenant: many are multiplied that are not sanctified.

4. He gives a character of the child she should bear, which, however it may seem to us, perhaps was not very disagreeable to her (Ge 16:12): He will be a wild man; a wild ass of a man (so the word is), rude, and bold, and fearing no man--untamed, untractable living at large, and impatient of service and restraint.

Note, The children of the bondwoman, who are out of covenant with God, are, as they were born, like the wild ass's colt; it is grace that reclaims men, civilizes them, and makes them wise, and good for something. It is foretold,

(1.) That he should live in strife, and in a state of war: His hand against every man--this is his sin; and every man's hand against him--this is his punishment.

Note, Those that have turbulent spirits have commonly troublesome lives; those that are provoking, vexatious, and injurious to others, must expect to be repaid in their own coin. He that has his hand and tongue against every man shall have every man's hand and tongue against him, and he has no reason to complain of it. And yet,

(2.) That he should live in safety, and hold his own against all the world: He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren; though threatened and insulted by all his neighbours, yet he shall keep his ground, and for Abram's sake, more than his own, shall be able to make his part good with them. Accordingly we read (Ge 25:18), that he died, as he lived, in the presence of all his brethren.

Note, Many that are much exposed by their own imprudence are yet strangely preserved by the divine Providence, so much better is God to them than they deserve, when they not only forfeit their lives by sin, but hazard them.

11 And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou *art* with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael [God shall hear]; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

Like other Hebrew names, this had a signification, and it is made up of two words—"God hears." The reason is explained.

12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will *be* against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

he will be a wild man

—literally, "a wild ass man," expressing how the wildness of Ishmael and his descendants resembles that of the wild ass. his hand will be against every man

—descriptive of the rude, turbulent, and plundering character of the Arabs. dwell in the presence of all his brethren

—dwell, that is, pitch tents; and the meaning is that they maintain their independence in spite of all attempts to extirpate or subdue them.

13 And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

common in ancient times to name places from circumstances; and the name given to this well was a grateful recognition of God's gracious appearance in the hour of Hagar's distress. Hagar's pious reflection upon this gracious appearance of God to her, Ge 16:13. Observe in what she said,

1. Her awful adoration of God's omniscience and providence, with application of it to herself: She called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, that is, thus she made confession of his name, this she said to his praise, Thou God seest me: this should be, with her, his name for ever, and this his memorial, by which she will know him and remember him while she lives, Thou God seest me. Note,

(1.) The God with whom we have to do is a seeing God, and all-seeing God. God is (as the ancients express it) all eye.

(2.) We ought to acknowledge this with application to ourselves. He that sees all sees me, as David (Ps 139:1), O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

(3.) A believing regard to God, as a God that sees us, will be of great use to us in our returns to him. It is a proper word for a penitent:--

[1.] "Thou seest my sin and folly." I have sinned before thee, says the prodigal; in thy sight, says David.

[2.] "Thou seest my sorrow and affliction;" this Hagar especially refers to. When we have brought ourselves into distress by our own folly, yet God has not forsaken us.

[3.] "Thou seest the sincerity and seriousness of my return and repentance. Thou seest my secret mournings for sin, and secret motions towards thee."

[4.] "Thou seest me, if in any instance I depart from thee," Ps 44:20, 21. This thought should always restrain us from sin and excite us to duty: Thou God seest me.

2. She rebukes her own dullness and acknowledges God's graces, who was present with her everywhere. Her humble admiration of God's favour to her: "Have I here also looked after him that seeth me? Have I here seen the back parts of him that seeth me?" so it might be read, for the word is much the same with that, Ex 33:23. She saw not face to face, but as through a glass darkly, 1Co 13:12. Probably she knew not who it was that talked with her, till he was departing (as Jdg 6:21, 22, 13:21), and then she looked after him, with a reflection like that of the two disciples, Lu 24:31, 32. Or, Have I here seen him that sees me? Note,

(1.) The communion which holy souls have with God consists in their having an eye of faith towards him, as a God that has an eye of favour towards them. The intercourse is kept up by the eye.

(2.) The privilege of our communion with God is to be looked upon with wonder and admiration,

[1.] Considering what we are who are admitted to this favour. "Have I? I that am so mean, I that am so vile?" 2Sa 7:18.

[2.] Considering the place where we are thus favoured--"here also? Not only in Abram's tent and at his altar, but here also, in this wilderness? Here, where I never expected it, where I was out of the way of my duty? Lord, how is it?" Joh 14:22. Some make the answer to this question to be negative, and so look upon it as a penitent reflection: "Have I here also, in my distress and affliction, looked after God? No, I was a careless and unmindful of him as ever I used to be; and yet he has thus visited and regarded me:" for God often anticipates us with his favours, and is found of those that seek him not, Isa 65:1.

14 Wherefore the well was called Beer-lama-roi [the well of him that liveth *and* seeth me]: behold, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

The name which this gave to the place: Beer-lahai-roi, The well of him that liveth and seeth me, Ge 16:14. It is probable that Hagar put this name upon it; and it was retained long after, in perpetuam rei memoriam--a lasting memorial

of this event. This was a place where the God of glory manifested the special cognizance and care he took of a poor woman in distress. Note,

1. He that is all-seeing is ever-living; he lives and sees us.

2. Those that are graciously admitted into communion with God, and receive seasonable comforts from him, should tell others what he has done for their souls, that they also may be encouraged to seek him and trust in him.

3. God's gracious manifestations of himself to us are to be had in everlasting remembrance by us, and should never be forgotten.

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

It is here taken for granted, though not expressly recorded, that Hagar did as the angel commanded her, returning to her mistress and submitting herself; and then, in the fullness of time, she brought forth her son. Note, Those who obey divine precepts shall have the comfort of divine promises. This was the son of the bond-woman that was born after the flesh (Ga 4:23), representing the unbelieving Jews, Ga 4:25. Note,

1. Many who can call Abraham father are yet born after the flesh, Mt 3:9.

2 The carnal seed in the church are sooner brought forth than the spiritual. It is an easier thing to persuade men to assume the form of godliness than to submit to the power of godliness.

16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

Genesis -17

Circumcision the Sign of the Covenant

1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

The time when God made Abram this gracious visit: When he was ninety-nine years old, full thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael.

1. So long, it should seem, God's extraordinary appearances to Abram were intermitted; and all the communion he had with God was only in the usual was of ordinances and providences. Note, There are some special comforts which are not the daily bread, no, not of the best saints, but they are favoured with them now and then. On this side heaven they have convenient food, but not a continual feast.

2. So long the promise of Isaac was deferred.

(1.) Perhaps to correct Abram's over-hasty marrying of Hagar. Note, The comforts we sinfully anticipate are justly delayed.

(2.) That Abram and Sarai being so far stricken in age God's power, in this matter, might be the more magnified, and their faith the more tried. See De 32:36, Joh 11:6, 15.

(3.) That a child so long waited for might be an Isaac, a son indeed, Isa 54:1.

2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

The general scope and summary of the covenant laid down as the foundation on which all the rest was built; it is no other than the covenant of grace still made with all believers in Jesus Christ, Ge 17:1. Observe here,

1. What we may expect to find God to us: I am the Almighty God. By this name he chose to make himself known to Abram rather than by his name Jehovah, Ex 6:3. He used it to Jacob, Ge 28:3, 43:14, 48:3. It is the name of God that is mostly used throughout the book of Job, at least in the discourses of that book. After Moses, Jehovah is more frequently used, and this, El-shaddai, very rarely; it bespeaks the almighty power of God, either,

(1.) As an avenger, from sdh he laid waste, so some; and they think God took this title from the destruction of the old world. This is countenanced by Isa 13:6, and Joe 1:15. Or,

(2.) As a benefactor s for asr who, and dy sufficient. He is a God that is enough; or, as our old English translation reads it here very significantly, I am God all-sufficient. Note, The God with whom we have to do is a God that is enough.

[1.] He is enough in himself; he is self-sufficient; he has everything, and he needs not anything.

[2.] He is enough to us, if we be in covenant with him: we have all in him, and we have enough in him, enough to satisfy our most enlarged desires, enough to supply the defect of everything

else, and to secure to us a happiness for our immortal souls. See Ps 16:5, 6, 73:25.

2. What God requires that we should be to him. The covenant is mutual: Walk before me, and be thou perfect, that is, upright and sincere; for herein the covenant of grace is well-ordered that sincerity is our gospel perfection. Observe,

(1.) That to be religious is to walk before God in our integrity; it is to set God always before us, and to think, and speak, and act, in everything, as those that are always under his eye. It is to have a constant regard to his word as our rule and to his glory as our end in all our actions, and to be continually in his fear. It is to be inward with him, in all the duties of religious worship, for in them particularly we walk before God (1Sa 2:30), and to be entire for him, in all holy conversation. I know no religion but sincerity.

(2.) That upright walking with God is the condition of our interest in his all-sufficiency. If we neglect him, or dissemble with him, we forfeit the benefit and comfort of our relation to him.

(3.) A continual regard to God's all-sufficiency will have a great influence upon our upright walking with him.

3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

The posture Abram put himself into upon this occasion: He fell on his face while God talked with him, Ge 17:3.

1. As one overcome by the brightness of the divine glory, and unable to bear the sight of it, though he had seen it several times before. Daniel and John did likewise, though they were also acquainted with the visions of the Almighty, Da 8:17, 10:9, 15, Re 1:17. Or,

2. As one ashamed of himself, and blushing to think of the honours done to one so unworthy. He looks upon himself with humility, and upon God with reverence, and, in token of both,

falls on his face, putting himself into a posture of adoration. Note,

(1.) God graciously condescends to talk with those whom he takes into covenant and communion with himself. He talks with them by his word, Pr 6:22. He talks with them by his Spirit, Joh 14:26. This honour have all his saints.

(2.) Those that are admitted into fellowship with God are, and must be, very humble and very reverent in their approaches to him. If we say we have fellowship with him, and the familiarity breeds contempt, we deceive ourselves.

(3.) Those that would receive comfort from God must set themselves to give glory to God and to worship at his footstool.

4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

The promise here is introduced with solemnity: "As for me," says the great God, "behold, behold and admire it, behold and be assured of it, my covenant is with thee;" as before (Ge 17:2), I will make my covenant. Note, The covenant of grace is a covenant of God's own making; this he glories in (as for me), and so may we. Now here,

I. It is promised to Abraham that he should be a father of many nations; that is, 1. That his seed after the flesh should be very numerous, both in Isaac and Ishmael, as well as in the sons of Keturah: something extraordinary is doubtless included in this promise, and we may suppose that the event answered to it, and that there have been, and are, more of the children of men descended from Abraham than from any one man at an equal distance with him from Noah, the common root. 2. That all believers in every age should be looked upon as his spiritual seed, and that he should be called, not only the friend of God, but the father of the faithful. In this sense the apostle directs us to understand this promise, Ro 4:16, 17. He is the father of those in every nation that by faith enter into covenant with God, and (as the Jewish writers express it) are gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty.

5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham [father of a great multitude]; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

In token of this his name was changed from Abram, a high father, to Abraham, the father of a multitude. This was,

1. To put an honour upon him. It is spoken of as the glory of the church that she shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name, Isa 62:2. Princes dignify their favourites by conferring new titles upon them; thus was Abraham dignified by him that is indeed the fountain of honour. All believers have a new name, Re 2:17.

In Eastern countries a change of name is an advertisement of some new circumstance in the history, rank, or religion of the individual who bears it. The change is made variously, by the old name being entirely dropped for the new, or by conjoining the new with the old; or sometimes only a few letters are inserted, so that the altered form may express the difference in the owner's state or prospects. It is surprising how soon a new name is known and its import spread through the country. In dealing with Abraham and Sarai, God was pleased to adapt His procedure to the ideas and customs of the country and age. Instead of Abram, "a high father," he was to be called Abraham, "father of a multitude of nations" (see Re 2:17).

2. To encourage and confirm the faith of Abraham. While he was childless perhaps even his own name was sometimes an occasion of grief to him: why should he be called a high father who was not a father at all? But now that God had promised him a numerous issue, and had given him a name which signified so much, that name was his joy. Note, God calls things that are not as though they were. It is the apostle's observation upon this very thing, Ro 4:17. He called Abraham the father of a multitude because he should prove to be so in due time, though as yet he had but one child.

6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.

Here is, the continuance of the covenant, intimated in three things:--

1. It is established; not to be altered nor revoked. It is fixed, it is ratified, it is made as firm as the divine power and truth can make it.

2. It is entailed; it is a covenant, not with Abraham only (then it would die with him), but with his seed after him, not only his seed after the flesh, but his spiritual seed.

3. It is everlasting in the evangelical sense and meaning of it. The covenant of grace is everlasting. It is from everlasting in the counsels of it, and to everlasting in the consequences of it; and the external administration of it is transmitted with the seal of it to the seed of believers, and the internal administration of it by the Spirit of Christ's seed in every age.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

The contents of the covenant: it is a covenant of promises, exceedingly great and precious promises. Here are two which indeed are all-sufficient:--

1. That God would be their God, Ge 17:7,8. All the privileges of the covenant, all its joys and all its hopes, are summed up in this. A man needs desire no more than this to make him happy. What God is himself, that he will be to his people: his wisdom theirs, to guide and counsel them; his power theirs, to protect and support them; his goodness theirs, to supply and comfort them. What faithful worshippers can expect from the God they serve believers shall find in God as theirs. This is enough, yet not all.

2. That Canaan should be their everlasting possession, Ge 17:8. God had before promised this land to Abraham and his seed, Ge 15:18. But here, where it is promised for an everlasting possession, surely it must be looked upon as a type of heaven's happiness, that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God, Heb 4:9. This is that better country to which Abraham had an eye, and the grant of which was that which answered to the vast extent and compass of that promise, that God would be to them a God; so that, if God had not prepared and designed this, he would have been ashamed to be called their God, Heb 11:16. As the land of Canaan was secured to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, so heaven is secured to all his spiritual seed, by a covenant, and for a possession, truly everlasting. The offer of this eternal life is made in the word, and confirmed by the sacraments, to all that are under the external administration of the covenant; and the earnest of it is given to all believers, Eph 1:14. Canaan is here said to be the land wherein Abraham was a stranger; and the heavenly Canaan is a land to which we are strangers, for it does not yet appear what we shall be.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.

The token of the covenant, and that is circumcision, for the sake of which the covenant is itself called the covenant of circumcision, Ac 7:8. It is here said to be the covenant which Abraham and his seed must keep, as a copy or counterpart, Ge 17:9, 10. It is called a sign and seal (Ro 4:11), for it was,

1. A confirmation to Abraham and his seed of those promises which were God's part of the covenant, assuring them that they should be fulfilled, that in due time Canaan would be theirs: and the continuance of this ordinance, after Canaan was theirs, intimates that these promises looked further to another Canaan, which they must still be in expectation of. See Heb 4:8.

2. An obligation upon Abraham and his seed to that duty which was their part of the covenant; not only to the duty of accepting the covenant and consenting to it, and putting away the corruption of the flesh (which were more immediately and primarily signified by circumcision), but, in general, to the observance of all God's commands, as they should at any time hereafter be intimated and made known to them; for circumcision made men debtors to do the whole law, Ga 5:3. Those who will have God to be to them a God must consent and resolve to be to him a people. Now,

(1.) Circumcision was a bloody ordinance; for all things by the law were purged with blood, Heb 9:22. See Ex 24:8. But, the blood of Christ being shed, all bloody ordinances are now abolished; circumcision therefore gives way to baptism.

(2.) It was peculiar to the males, though the women were also included in the covenant, for the man is the head of the woman. In our kingdom, the oath of allegiance is required only from men. Some think that the blood of the males only was shed in circumcision because respect was had in it to Jesus Christ and his blood.

(3.) It was the flesh of the foreskin that was to be cut off, because it is by ordinary generation that sin is propagated, and with an eye to the promised seed, who was to come from the loins of Abraham. Christ having not yet offered himself to us, God would have man to enter into covenant by the offering of some part of his own body, and no part could be better spared. It is a secret part of the body; for the true circumcision is that of the heart: this honour God put upon an uncomely part, 1Co 12:23, 24.

(4.) The ordinance was to be administered to children when they were eight days old, and not sooner, that they might gather some strength, to be able to undergo the pain of it, and that at least one Sabbath might pass over them.

(5.) The children of the strangers, of whom the master of the family was the true domestic owner, were to be circumcised (Ge 17:12, 13), which looked favourably upon the Gentiles, who should in due time be brought into the family of Abraham, by faith. See Ga 3:14.

(6.) The religious observance of this institution was required under a very severe penalty, Ge 17:14. The contempt of circumcision was a contempt of the covenant; if the parents did not circumcise their children, it was at their peril, as in the case of Moses, Ex 4:24, 25. With respect to those that were not circumcised in their infancy, if, when they grew up, they did not themselves come under this ordinance, God would surely reckon with them. If they cut not off the flesh of their foreskin, God would cut them off from their people. It is a dangerous thing to make light of divine institutions, and to live in the neglect of them.

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a
token of the covenant betwixt me and you.
12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every
man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or
bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed.
13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money,
must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh
for an everlasting covenant.
14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not
circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath
broken my covenant.
15 And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call
her name Sarai, but Sarah [princess] *shall* her name *be*.

The ratification of this promise was the change of Sarai's name into Sarah (Ge 17:15), the same letter being added to her name that was to Abraham's, and for the same reasons. Sarai signifies my princess, as if her honour were confined to one family only. Sarah signifies a princess--namely, of multitudes, or signifying that from her should come the Messiah the prince, even the prince of the kings of the earth.

16 And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother* of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Here is, the promise made to Abraham of a son by Sarai, that son in whom the promise made to him should be fulfilled, that he should be the father of many nations; for she also shall be a mother of nations, and kings of people shall be of her, Ge 17:16. Note,

1. God reveals the purposes of his good-will to his people by degrees. God had told Abraham long before that he should have a son, but never till now that he should have a son by Sarai.

2 The blessing of the Lord makes fruitful, and adds no sorrow with it, no such sorrow as was in Hagar's case. "I will bless her with the blessing of fruitfulness, and then thou shalt have a son of her."

3. Civil government and order are a great blessing to the church. It is promised, not only that people, but kings of people, should be of her; not a headless rout, but a well-modelled well-governed society.

17 Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall *a child* be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

Abraham's joyful, thankful, entertainment of this gracious promise, Ge 17:17. Upon this occasion he expressed,

1. Great humility: He fell on his face. Note, The more honours and favours God confers upon us the lower we should be in our own eyes, and the more reverent and submissive before God.

2. Great joy: He laughed. It was a laughter of delight, not of distrust. Note, Even the promises of a holy God, as well as his performances, are the joys of holy souls; there is the joy of faith as well as the joy of fruition. Now it was that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day. Now he saw it and was glad (Joh 8:56); for,

as he saw heaven in the promise of Canaan, so he saw Christ in the promise of Isaac.

3. Great admiration: Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old? He does not here speak of it as at all doubtful (for we are sure that he staggered not at the promise, Ro 4:20), but as very wonderful and that which could not be effected but by the almighty power of God, and as very kind, and a favour which was the more affecting and obliging for this, that it was extremely surprising, Ps 126:1, 2.

18 And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

Abraham's prayer for Ishmael: O that Ishmael might live before thee! Ge 17:18. This he speaks, not as desiring that Ishmael might be preferred before the son he should have by Sarah; but, dreading lest he should be abandoned and forsaken of God, he puts up this petition on his behalf. Now that God is talking with him he thinks he has a very fair opportunity to speak a good word for Ishmael, and he will not let it slip. Note,

1. Though we ought not to prescribe to God, yet he gives us leave, in prayer, to be humbly free with him, and particular in making known our requests, Php 4:6. Whatever is the matter of our care and fear should be spread before God in prayer.

2. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, for all their children, as Job, who offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all, Job 1:5. Abraham would not have it thought that, when God promised him a son by Sarah, which he so much desired, then his son by Hagar was forgotten; no, still he bears him upon his heart, and shows a concern for him. The prospect of further favours must not make us unmindful of former favours.

3. The great thing we should desire of God for our children is that they may live before him, that is, that they may be kept in covenant with him, and may have grace to walk before him in their uprightness. Spiritual blessings are the best blessings, and

those for which we should be most earnest with God, both for ourselves and others. Those live well that live before God.

19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him.

20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

God's answer to his prayer; and it is an answer of peace. Abraham could not say that he sought God's face in vain.

Common blessings are secured to Ishmael (Ge 17:20: As for Ishmael, whom thou art in so much care about, I have heard thee; he shall find favour for thy sake; I have blessed him, that is, I have many blessings in store for him.
(1.) His posterity shall be numerous: I will multiply him exceedingly, more than his neighbours. This is the fruit of the blessing, as that, Ge 1:28.

(2.) They shall be considerable: Twelve princes shall he beget. We may charitably hope that spiritual blessings also were bestowed upon him, though the visible church was not brought out of his loins and the covenant was not lodged in his family.

Note, Great plenty of outward good things is often given to those children of godly parents who are born after the flesh, for their parents' sake.

21 But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Covenant blessings are reserved for Isaac, and appropriated to him, Ge 17:19, 21. If Abraham, in his prayer for Ishmael, meant that he would have the covenant made with him, and the promised seed to come from him, then God did not answer him in the letter, but in that which was equivalent, nay, which was every way better.

(1.) God repeats to him the promise of a son by Sarah: She shall bear thee a son indeed. Note, Even true believers need to have

God's promises doubled and repeated to them, that they may have strong consolation, Heb 6:18. Again, Children of the promise are children indeed.

(2.) He names that child--calls him Isaac, laughter, because Abraham rejoiced in spirit when this son was promised him. Note, If God's promises be our joy, his mercies promised shall in due time be our exceeding joy. Christ will be laughter to those that look for him; those that now rejoice in hope shall shortly rejoice in having that which they hope for: this is laughter that is not mad.

(3.) He entails the covenant upon that child: I will establish my covenant with him. Note, God takes whom he pleases into covenant with himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. See Ro 9:8, 18. Thus was the covenant settled between God and Abraham, with its several limitations and remainders, and then the conference ended: God left off talking with him, and the vision disappeared, God went up from Abraham. Note, Our communion with God here is broken and interrupted; in heaven it will be a continual and everlasting feast.

22 And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

23 And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.

We have here Abraham's obedience to the law of circumcision. He himself and all his family were circumcised, so receiving the token of the covenant and distinguishing themselves from other families, that had no part nor lot in the matter.

1. It was an implicit obedience: He did as God had said to him, and did not ask why or wherefore. God's will was not only a law to him, but a reason; he did it because God told him.

2. It was a speedy obedience: In the self-same day, Ge 17:23, 26. Sincere obedience is not dilatory, Ps 119:60. While the

command is yet sounding in our ears, and the sense of duty is fresh, it is good to apply ourselves to it immediately, lest we deceive ourselves by putting it off to a more convenient season.

3. It was a universal obedience: He did not circumcise his family and excuse himself, but set them an example; nor did he take the comfort of the seal of the covenant to himself only, but desired that all his might share with him in it. This is a good example to masters of families; they and their houses must serve the Lord. Though God's covenant was not established with Ishmael, yet he was circumcised; for children of believing parents, as such, have a right to the privileges of the visible church, and the seals of the covenant, whatever they may prove afterwards. Ishmael is blessed, and therefore circumcised.

4. Abraham did this though much might be objected against it. Though circumcision was painful,--though to grown men it was shameful,--though, while they were sore and unfit for action, their enemies might take advantage against them, as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites,--though Abraham was ninety-nine years old, and had been justified and accepted of God long since,--though so strange a thing done religiously might be turned to his reproach by the Canaanite and the Perizzite that dwelt then in the land,--yet God's command was sufficient to answer these and a thousand such objections: what God requires we must do, not conferring with flesh and blood.

24 And Abraham *was* ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.
25 And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.
26 In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son.
27 And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

Genesis -18

The Birth of Isaac Promised

1 And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

How Abraham expected strangers, and how richly his expectations were answered (Ge 18:1): He sat in the tent-door, in the heat of the day; not so much to repose or divert himself as to seek an opportunity of doing good, by giving entertainment to strangers and travellers, there being perhaps no inns to accommodate them. Note,

1. We are likely to have the most comfort of those good works to which we are most free and forward.

2. God graciously visits those in whom he has first raised the expectation of him, and manifests himself to those that wait for him. When Abraham was thus sitting, he saw three men coming towards him. These three men were three spiritual heavenly beings, now assuming human bodies, that they might be visible to Abraham, and conversable with him. Some think that they were all created angels, others that one of them was the Son of God, the angel of the covenant, whom Abraham distinguished from the rest (Ge 18:3), and who is called Jehovah, Ge 18:13. The apostle improves this for the encouragement of hospitality, Heb 13:2. Those that have been forward to entertain strangers have entertained angels, to their unspeakable honour and satisfaction. Where, upon a prudent and impartial judgment, we see no cause to suspect ill, charity teaches us to hope well and to show kindness accordingly. It is better to feed five drones, or wasps, than to starve one bee.

2 and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them,* he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

When the visitor is an ordinary person, the host merely rises; but if of superior rank, the custom is to advance a little towards

the stranger, and after a very low bow, turn and lead him to the tent, putting an arm round his waist, or tapping him on the shoulder as they go, to assure him of welcome.

3 and said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant:

The hospitalities offered are just of the kind that are necessary and most grateful, the refreshment of water, for feet exposed to dust and heat by the sandals, being still the first observed among the pastoral people of Hebron.

4 let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

How Abraham entertained those strangers, and how kindly his entertainment was accepted. The Holy Ghost takes particular notice of the very free and affectionate welcome Abraham gave to the strangers.

1. He was very complaisant and respectful to them. Forgetting his age and gravity, he ran to meet them in the most obliging manner, and with all due courtesy bowed himself towards the ground, though as yet he knew nothing of them but that they appeared graceful respectable men. Note, Religion does not destroy, but improve, good manners, and teaches us to honour all men. Decent civility is a great ornament to piety.

2. He was very earnest and importunate for their stay, and took it as a great favour, Ge 18:3, 4. Note,

(1.) It becomes those whom God has blessed with plenty to be liberal and open-hearted in their entertainments, according to their ability, and (not in compliment, but cordially) to bid their friends welcome. We should take a pleasure in showing kindness to any; for both God and man love a cheerful giver. Who would eat the bread of him that has an evil eye? Pr 23:6, 7.

(2.) Those that would have communion with God must earnestly desire it and pray for it. God is a guest worth entertaining.

3. His entertainment, though it was very free, was yet plain and homely, and there was nothing in it of the gaiety and niceness of our times. His dining-room was an arbour under a tree; no rich table-linen, no side-board set with plate. His feast was a joint or two of veal, and some cakes baked on the hearth, and both hastily dressed up. Here were no dainties, no varieties, no forced-meats, no sweet-meats, but good, plain, wholesome food, though Abraham was very rich and his guests were very honourable. Note, We ought not to be curious in our diet. Let us be thankful for food convenient, though it be homely and common; and not be desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat to those that love them and set their hearts upon them.

4. He and his wife were both of them very attentive and busy, in accommodating their guests with the best they had. Sarah herself is cook and baker; Abraham runs to fetch the calf, brings out the milk and butter, and thinks it not below him to wait at table, that he might show how heartily welcome his guests were. Note,

(1.) Those that have real merit need not take state upon them, nor are their prudent condescensions any disparagement to them.

(2.) Hearty friendship will stoop to anything but sin. Christ himself has taught us to wash one another's feet, in humble love. Those that thus abase themselves shall be exalted. Here Abraham's faith showed itself in good works; and so must ours, else it is dead, Jam 2:21, 26. The father of the faithful was famous for charity, and generosity, and good house-keeping; and we must learn of him to do good and to communicate. Job did not eat his morsel alone, Job 31:17.

5 and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.

6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead *it*, and make cakes upon the hearth.

7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave *it* unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

8 And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

The host himself, even though he has a number of servants, deems it a necessary act of politeness to stand while his guests are at their food, and Abraham evidently did this before he was aware of the real character of his visitors.

For as God gave them bodies for a time, so he gave them the abilities of them, to walk, to eat and drink, and such like.

9 And they said unto him, Where *is* Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

Care is taken that Sarah should be within hearing. She must conceive by faith, and therefore the promise must be made to her, Heb 11:11. It was the modest usage of that time that the women did not sit at meat with men, at least not with strangers, but confined themselves to their own apartments; therefore Sarah is here out of sight: but she must not be out of hearing. The angels enquire (Ge 18:9), Where is Sarah thy wife? By naming her, they gave intimation enough to Abraham that, though they seemed strangers, yet they very well knew him and his family. By enquiring after her, they showed a friendly kind concern for the family and relations of one whom they found respectful to them. It is a piece of common civility, which ought to proceed from a principle of Christian love, and then it is sanctified. And, by speaking of her (she over-hearing it), they drew her to listen to what was further to be said. Where is Sarah thy wife? say the angels. "Behold in the tent," says Abraham. "Where should she be else? There she is in her place, as she uses to be, and is now within call." Note, 1 The daughters of Sarah must learn of her to be chaste, keepers at home, Tit 2:5. There is nothing got by gadding. 2. Those are most likely

to receive comfort from God and his promises that are in their place and in the way of their duty, Lu 2:8.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard *it* in the tent door, which *was* behind him.

The promise is then renewed and ratified, that she should have a son (Ge 18:10): "I will certainly return unto thee, and visit thee next time with the performance, as now I do with the promise." God will return to those that bid him welcome, that entertain his visits: "I will return thy kindness, Sarah thy wife shall have a son;" it is repeated again, Ge 18:14. Thus the promises of the Messiah were often repeated in the Old Testament, for the strengthening of the faith of God's people. We are slow of heart to believe, and therefore have need of line upon line to the same purport. This is that word of promise which the apostle quotes (Ro 9:9), as that by the virtue of which Isaac was born. Note,

1 The same blessings which others have from common providence believers have from the promise, which makes them very sweet and very sure.

2 The spiritual seed of Abraham owe their life, and joy, and hope, and all, to the promise. They are born by the word of God, 1Pe 1:23.

11 Now Abraham and Sarah *were* old *and* well stricken in age; *and* it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

Sarah thinks this too good news to be true, and therefore cannot as yet find in her heart to believe it: Sarah laughed within herself, Ge 18:12. It was not a pleasing laughter of faith, like Abraham's (Ge 17:17), but it was a laughter of doubting and mistrust. Note, The same thing may be done from very different principles, of which God only, who knows the heart, can judge. The great objection which Sarah could not get over was her age: "I am waxed old, and past childbearing in the course of nature, especially having been hitherto barren, and

(which magnifies the difficulty) my lord is old also." Observe here,

1. Sarah calls Abraham her lord; it was the only good word in this saying, and the Holy Ghost takes notice of it to her honour, and recommends it to the imitation of all Christian wives. 1Pe 3:6, Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, in token of respect and subjection. Thus must the wife reverence her husband, Eph 5:33? And thus must we be apt to take notice of what is spoken decently and well, to the honour of those that speak it, though it may be mixed with that which is amiss, over which we should cast a mantle of love.

2. Human improbability often sets up in contradiction to the divine promise. The objections of sense are very apt to stumble and puzzle the weak faith even of true believers. It is hard to cleave to the first Cause, when second causes frown. 3. Even where there is true faith, yet there are often sore conflicts with unbelief, Sarah could say, Lord, I believe (Heb 11:11), and yet must say, Lord, help my unbelief.

Long delay seems to have weakened faith. Sarah treated the announcement as incredible, and when taxed with the silent sneer, she added falsehood to distrust. It was an aggravated offense (Ac 5:4), and nothing but grace saved her (Ro 9:18). For she believed the order of nature, rather than believing the promise of God.

13 And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

The angel reproves the indecent expressions of her distrust, Ge 18:13, 14. Observe,

1. Though Sarah was now most kindly and generously entertaining these angels, yet, when she did amiss, they reproved her for it, as Christ reproved Martha in her own house, Lu 10:40, 41. If our friends be kind to us, we must not therefore be so unkind to them as to suffer sin upon them.

2. God gave this reproof to Sarah by Abraham her husband. To him he said, Why did Sarah laugh? perhaps because he had not told her of the promise which had been given him some time before to this purport, and which, if he had communicated it to her with its ratifications, would have prevented her from being so surprised now. Or Abraham was told of it that he might tell her of it. Mutual reproof, when there is occasion for it, is one of the duties of the conjugal relation.

3. The reproof itself is plain, and backed with a good reason: Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Note, It is good to enquire into the reason of our laughter, that it may not be the laughter of the fool, Ec 7:6. "Wherefore did I laugh?" Again, Our unbelief and distrust are a great offence to the God of heaven. He justly takes it ill to have the objections of sense set up in contradiction to his promise, as Lu 1:18.

4. Here is a question asked which is enough to answer all the cavils of flesh and blood: Is anything too hard for the Lord? (Heb. too wonderful), that is,

(1.) Is anything so secret as to escape his cognizance? No, not Sarah's laughing, though it was only within herself. Or,

(2.) Is anything so difficult as to exceed his power? No, not the giving of a child to Sarah in her old age.

14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

Sarah foolishly endeavours to conceal her fault (Ge 18:15): She denied, saying, I did not laugh, thinking nobody could contradict her: she told this lie, because she was afraid; but it was in vain to attempt concealing it from an all-seeing eye; she was told, to her shame, Thou didst laugh. Now,

1. There seems to be in Sarah a retraction of her distrust. Now she perceived, by laying circumstances together, that it was a divine promise which had been made concerning her, she renounced all doubting distrustful thoughts about it. But,

2. There was withal a sinful attempt to cover a sin with a lie. It is a shame to do amiss, but a greater shame to deny it; for thereby we add iniquity to our iniquity. Fear of a rebuke often betrays us into this snare. See Isa 57:11, Whom hast thou feared, that thou hast lied? But we deceive ourselves if we think to impose upon God; he can and will bring truth to light, to our shame. He that covers his sin cannot prosper, for the day is coming which will discover it.

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom:
and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.
17 And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I
do;
18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty
nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

The messengers from heaven had now despatched one part of their business, which was an errand of grace to Abraham and Sarah, and which they delivered first; but now they have before them work of another nature. Sodom is to be destroyed, and they must do it, Ge 19:13. Note, As with the Lord there is mercy, so he is the God to whom vengeance belongs. Pursuant to their commission, we here find,

1. That they looked towards Sodom (Ge 18:16); they set their faces against it in wrath, as God is said to look unto the host of the Egyptians, Ex 14:24. Note, Though God has long seemed to connive at sinners, from which they have inferred that the Lord does not see, does not regard, yet, when the day of his wrath comes, he will look towards them.

2. That they went towards Sodom (Ge 18:22), and accordingly we find two of them at Sodom, Ge 19:1. Whether the third was the Lord, before whom Abraham yet stood, and to whom he drew near (Ge 18:23), as most think, or whether the third left them before they came to Sodom, and the Lord before whom Abraham stood was the shechinah, or that appearance of the divine glory which Abraham had formerly seen and conversed with, is uncertain. However, we have here,

I The honour Abraham did to his guests: He went with them to bring them on the way, as one that was loth to part with such good company, and was desirous to pay his utmost respects to them. This is a piece of civility proper to be shown to our friends; but it must be done as the apostle directs (3Jo 1:6), after a godly sort.

II The honour they did to him; for those that honour God he will honour. God communicated to Abraham his purpose to destroy Sodom, and not only so, but entered into a free conference with him about it. Having taken him, more closely than before, into covenant with himself (Ge 17:1-23), he here admits him into more intimate communion with himself than ever, as the man of his counsel. Observe here,

God's friendly thoughts concerning Abraham, Ge 18:17-19, where we have his resolution to make known to Abraham his purpose concerning Sodom, with the reasons of it. If Abraham had not brought them on their way, perhaps he would not have been thus favoured; but he that loves to walk with wise men shall be wise, Pr 13:20. See how God is pleased to argue with himself: Shall I hide from Abraham (or, as some read it, Am I concealing from Abraham) that thing which I do? "Can I go about such a thing, and not tell Abraham?" Thus does God, in his counsels, express himself, after the manner of men, with deliberation. But why must Abraham be of the cabinet-council? The Jews suggest that because God had granted the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed therefore he would not destroy those cities which were a part of that land, without

his knowledge and consent. But God here gives two other reasons:--

(1.) Abraham must know, for he is a friend and a favourite, and one that God has a particular kindness for and great things in store for. He is to become a great nation; and not only so, but in the Messiah, who is to come from his loins, All nations of the earth shall be blessed. Note, The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him, Ps 25:14, Pr 3:32. Those who by faith live a life of communion with God cannot but know more of his mind than other people, though not with a prophetical, yet with a prudential practical knowledge. They have a better insight than others into what is present (Ho 14:9,Ps 107:43), and a better foresight of what is to come, at least so much as suffices for their guidance and for their comfort.

(2.) Abraham must know, for he will teach his household: I know Abraham very well, that he will command his children and his household after him, Ge 18:19. Consider this,

[1.] As a very bright part of Abraham's character and example. He not only prayed with his family, but he taught them as a man of knowledge, nay, he commanded them as a man in authority, and was prophet and king, as well as priest, in his own house. Observe,

First, God having made the covenant with him and his seed, and his household being circumcised pursuant to that, he was very careful to teach and rule them well. Those that expect family blessings must make conscience of family duty. If our children be the Lord's, they must be nursed for him; if they wear his livery, they must be trained up in his work.

Secondly, Abraham took care not only of his children, but of his household; his servants were catechized servants. Masters of families should instruct and inspect the manners of all under their roof. The poorest servants have precious souls that must be looked after.

Thirdly, Abraham made it his care and business to promote practical religion in his family. He did not fill their heads with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation; but he taught them to keep the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice, that is, to be serious and devout in the worship of God and to be honest in their dealings with all men.

Fourthly, Abraham, herein, had an eye to posterity, and was in care not only that his household with him, but that his household after him, should keep the way of the Lord, that religion might flourish in his family when he was in his grave.

Fifthly, His doing this was the fulfilling of the conditions of the promises which God had made him. Those only can expect the benefit of the promises that make conscience of their duty.

[2.] As the reason why God would make known to him his purpose concerning Sodom, because he was communicative of his knowledge, and improved it for the benefit of those that were under his charge.

Note, To him that hath shall be given, Mt 13:12, 25:29. Those that make a good use of their knowledge shall know more.

19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

20 And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous,

God's friendly talk with Abraham, in which he makes known to him purpose concerning Sodom, and allows him a liberty of application to him about the matter.

(1.) He tells him of the evidence there was against Sodom: The cry of Sodom is great, Ge 18:20. Note, Some sins, and the sins of some sinners, cry aloud to heaven for vengeance. The

iniquity of Sodom was crying iniquity, that is, it was so very provoking that it even urged God to punish.

(2.) The enquiry he would make upon this evidence: I will go down now and see, Ge 18:21. Not as if there were any thing concerning which God is in doubt, or in the dark; but he is pleased thus to express himself after the manner of men,

[1.] To show the incontestable equity of all his judicial proceedings. Men are apt to suggest that his way is not equal; but let them know that his judgments are the result of an eternal counsel, and are never rash or sudden resolves. He never punishes upon report, or common fame, or the information of others, but upon his own certain and infallible knowledge.

[2.] To give example to magistrates, and those in authority, with the utmost care and diligence to enquire into the merits of a cause, before they give judgment upon it.

[3.] Perhaps the decree is here spoken of as not yet peremptory, that room and encouragement might be given to Abraham to make intercession for them. Thus God looked if there were any to intercede, Isa 59:16.

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

The scene described is full of interest and instruction—showing in an unmistakable manner the efficacy of prayer and intercession. (See also Pr 15:8; Jas 5:16). Abraham reasoned justly as to the rectitude of the divine procedure (Ro 3:5, 6), and many guilty cities and nations have been spared on account of God's people (Mt 5:13; 24:22).

Communion with God is kept up by the word and by prayer. In the word God speaks to us; in prayer we speak to him. God had revealed to Abraham his purposes concerning Sodom; now from this Abraham takes occasion to speak to God on Sodom's behalf. Note, God's word then does us good when it furnishes us with matter for prayer and excites us to it. When God has spoken to us, we must consider what we have to say to him upon it. Observe,

The solemnity of Abraham's address to God on this occasion: Abraham drew near, Ge 18:23. The expression intimates,

1. A holy concern: He engaged his heart to approach to God, Jer 30:21. "Shall Sodom be destroyed, and I not speak one good word for it?"

2. A holy confidence: He drew near with an assurance of faith, drew near as a prince, Job 31:37. Note, When we address ourselves to the duty of prayer, we ought to remember that we are drawing near to God, that we may be filled with a reverence of him, Le 10:3.

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein?

Here is great charity.

(1.) A charitable opinion of Sodom's character: as bad as it was, he thought there were several good people in it. It becomes us to hope the best of the worst places. It is better to err in that extreme than to condemn one righteous along with the wicked.

(2.) A charitable desire of Sodom's welfare: he used all his interest at the throne of grace for mercy for them. We never find him thus earnest in pleading with God for himself and his family, as here for Sodom.

Here are great boldness and believing confidence.

(1.) He took the liberty to pitch upon a certain number of righteous ones which he supposed might be in Sodom. Suppose there be fifty, Ge 18:24.

(2.) He advanced upon God's concessions, again and again. As God granted much, he still begged more, with the hope of gaining his point.

(3.) He brought the terms as low as he could for shame (having prevailed for mercy if there were but ten righteous ones in five cities), and perhaps so low that he concluded they would have been spared.

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Here is great faith; and it is the prayer of faith that is the prevailing prayer. His faith pleads with God, orders the cause, and fills his mouth with arguments. He acts faith especially upon the righteousness of God, and is very confident.

(1.) That God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, Ge 18:23. No, that be far from thee, Ge 18:25. We must never entertain any thought that derogates from the honour of God's righteousness. See Ro 3:5, 6. Note,

[1.] The righteous are mingled with the wicked in this world. Among the best there are, commonly, some bad, and among the worst some good: even in Sodom, one Lot.

[2.] Though the righteous be among the wicked, yet the righteous God will not, certainly he will not, destroy the righteous with the wicked. Though in this world they may be involved in the same common calamities, yet in the great day a distinction with be made.

(2.) That the righteous shall not be as the wicked, Ge 18:25. Though they may suffer with them, yet they do not suffer like

them. Common calamities are quite another thing to the righteous than what they are to the wicked, Isa 27:7.

(3.) That the Judge of all the earth will do right; undoubtedly he will, because he is the Judge of all the earth; it is the apostle's argument, Ro 3:5, 6. Note,

[1.] God is the Judge of all the earth; he gives charge to all, takes cognizance of all, and will pass sentence upon all.

[2.] That God Almighty never did nor ever will do any wrong to any of the creatures, either by withholding that which is right or by exacting more than is right, Job 34:10,11.

26 And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

The general scope of this prayer. It is the first solemn prayer we have upon record in the Bible; and it is a prayer for the sparing of Sodom. Abraham, no doubt, greatly abhorred the wickedness of the Sodomites; he would not have lived among them, as Lot did, if they would have given him the best estate in their country; and yet he prayed earnestly for them. Note, Though sin is to be hated, sinners are to be pitied and prayed for. God delights not in their death, nor should we desire, but deprecate, the woeful day.

1. He begins with a prayer that the righteous among them might be spared, and not involved in the common calamity, having an eye particularly to just Lot, whose disingenuous carriage towards him he had long since forgiven and forgotten, witness his friendly zeal to rescue him before by his sword and now by his prayers.

2. He improves this into a petition that all might be spared for the sake of the righteous that were among them, God himself countenancing this request, and in effect putting him upon it by his answer to his first address, Ge 18:26. Note, We must pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also; for we are members

of the same body, at least of the same body of mankind. All we are brethren.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes:

Here is great humility. By this we learn, that the nearer we approach to God, the more our miserable estate appears, and the more we are humbled.

(1.) A deep sense of his own unworthiness (Ge 18:27): Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes; and again, Ge 18:31. He speaks as one amazed at his own boldness, and the liberty God graciously allowed him, considering God's greatness--he is the Lord; and his own meanness--but dust and ashes. Note,

[1.] The greatest of men, the most considerable and deserving, are but dust and ashes, mean and vile before God, despicable, frail, and dying.

[2.] Whenever we draw near to God, it becomes us reverently to acknowledge the vast distance that there is between us and God. He is the Lord of glory, we are worms of the earth.

[3.] The access we have to the throne of grace, and the freedom of speech allowed us, are just matter of humble wonder, 2Sa 7:18.

(2.) An awful dread of God's displeasure: O let not the Lord be angry (Ge 18:30), and again, Ge 18:32. Note,

[1.] The importunity which believers use in their addresses to God is such that, if they were dealing with a man like themselves, they could not but fear that he would be angry with them. But he with whom we have to do is God and not man; and, whoever he may seem, is not really angry with the prayers of the upright (Ps 80:4), for they are his delight (Pr 15:8), and he is pleased when he is wrestled with.

[2.] That even when we receive special tokens of the divine favour we ought to be jealous over ourselves, lest we make ourselves obnoxious to the divine displeasure; and therefore we must bring the Mediator with us in the arms of our faith, to atone for the iniquity of our holy things.

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy *it*.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.

30 And he said *unto him,* Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it,* if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

If God did not refuse the prayer for the wicked Sodomites, even to the sixth request, how much more will he grant the prayers of the godly for the afflicted Church?

33 And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

1. God's general good-will appears in this, that he consented to spare the wicked for the sake of the righteous. See how swift God is to show mercy; he even seeks a reason for it. See what great blessings good people are to any place, and how little those befriend themselves that hate and persecute them.

2. His particular favour to Abraham appeared in this, that he did not leave off granting till Abraham left off asking. Such is the power of prayer. Why then did Abraham leave off asking, when he had prevailed so far as to get the place spared it there were but ten righteous in it? Either,

(1.) Because he owned that it deserved to be destroyed if there were not so many; as the dresser of the vineyard, who consented that the barren tree should be cut down if one year's trial more did not make it fruitful, Lu 13:9. Or,

(2.) Because God restrained his spirit from asking any further. When God has determined the ruin of a place, he forbids it to be prayed for, Jer 7:16, 11:14, 14:11.

Here is the breaking up of the conference, Ge 18:33.

1. The Lord went his way. The visions of God must not be constant in this world, where it is by faith only that we are to set God before us. God did not go away till Abraham had said all he had to say; for he is never weary of hearing prayer, Isa 59:1,

2. Abraham returned unto his place, not puffed up with the honour done him, nor by these extraordinary interviews taken off from the ordinary course of duty. He returned to his place to observe what that event would be; and it proved that his prayer was heard, and yet Sodom was not spared, because there were not ten righteous in it.

Genesis -19

The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

1 And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the
gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing *them* rose up to meet them; and he
bowed himself with his face toward the ground;
2 and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your
servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye
shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we
will abide in the street all night.

These angels, it is likely, were two of the three that had just before been with Abraham, the two created angels that were sent to execute God's purpose concerning Sodom. Observe here,

1. There was but one good man in Sodom, and these heavenly messengers soon found him out. Wherever we are, we should enquire out those of the place that live in the fear of God, and should choose to associate ourselves with them. Mt 10:11, Enquire who is worthy, and there abide. Those of the same country, when they are in a foreign country, love to be together.

2. Lot sufficiently distinguished himself from the rest of his neighbours, at this time, which plainly set a mark upon him. He that did not act like the rest must not fare like the rest.

(1.) Lot sat in the gate of Sodom at even. When the rest, it is likely, were tippling and drinking, he sat alone, waiting for an opportunity to do good.

(2.) He was extremely respectful to men whose mien and aspect were sober and serious, though they did not come in state. He bowed himself to the ground, when he met them, as if, upon the first view, he discerned something divine in them.

(3.) He was hospitable, and very free and generous in his invitations and entertainments. He courted these strangers to his house, and to the best accommodations he had, and gave them all the evidences that he could of his sincerity; for,

[1.] When the angels, to try whether he was hearty in the invitation, declined the acceptance of it, at first (which is the common usage of modesty, and no reproach at all to truth and honesty), their refusal did not make him more importunate; for he pressed upon them greatly (Ge 19:3), partly because he would by no means have them to expose themselves to the inconveniences and perils of lodging in the street of Sodom, and partly because he was desirous of their company and converse. He had not seen two such honest faces in Sodom this great while. Note, Those that live in bad places should know how to value the society of those that are wise and good, and earnestly desire it.

[2.] When the angels accepted his invitation, he treated them nobly; he made a feast for them, and thought it well-bestowed on such guests. Note, Good people should be (with prudence) generous people.

3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

entered into his house—On removing to the plain, Lot intended at first to live in his tent apart from the people [Ge 13:12]. But he was gradually drawn in, dwelt in the city, and he and his family were connected with the citizens by marriage ties.

4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter:

Now it appeared, beyond contradiction, that the cry of Sodom was no louder than there was cause for. This night's work was enough to fill the measure. For we find here,

That they were all wicked, Ge 19:4. Wickedness had become universal, and they were unanimous in any vile design. Here

were old and young, and all from every quarter, engaged in this riot; the old were not past it, and the young had soon come up to it. Either they had no magistrates to keep the peace, and protect the peaceable, or their magistrates were themselves aiding and abetting.

Note, When the disease of sin has become epidemical, it is fatal to any place, Isa 1:5-7.

5 and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

7 and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

That they had arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness; they were sinners before the Lord exceedingly (Ge 13:13); for,

1. It was the most unnatural and abominable wickedness that they were now set upon, a sin that still bears their name, and is called Sodomy. They were carried headlong by those vile affections (Ro 1:26,27), which are worse than brutish, and the eternal reproach of the human nature, and which cannot be thought of without horror by those that have the least spark of virtue and any remains of natural light and conscience. Note, Those that allow themselves in unnatural uncleanness are marked for the vengeance of eternal fire. See Jude 1:7.

2. They were not ashamed to own it, and to prosecute their design by force and arms. The practice would have been bad enough if it had been carried on by intrigue and wheedling; but they proclaimed war with virtue, and bade open defiance to it. Hence daring sinners are said to declare their sin as Sodom, Isa 3:9. Note, Those that have become impudent in sin generally prove impenitent in sin; and it will be their ruin. Those have hard hearts indeed that sin with a high hand, Jer 6:15.

3. When Lot interposed, with all the mildness imaginable, to check the rage and fury of their lust, they were most insolently

rude and abusive to him. He ventured himself among them, Ge 19:6. He spoke civilly to them, called them brethren (Ge 19:7), and begged of them not to do so wickedly; and, being greatly disturbed at their vile attempt, he unadvisedly and unjustifiably offered to prostitute his two daughters to them, Ge 19:8. It is true, of two evils we must choose the less; but of two sins we must choose neither, nor ever do evil that good may come of it. He deserves praise for defending his guests, but he is to be blamed for seeking unlawful means.

He reasoned with them, pleaded the laws of hospitality and the protection of his house which his guests were entitled to; but he might as well have offered reason to a roaring lion and a raging bear as to these head-strong sinners, who were governed only by lust and passion. Lot's arguing with them does but exasperate them; and, to complete their wickedness, and fill up the measure of it, they fall foul upon him.

(1.) They ridicule him, charge him with the absurdity of pretending to be a magistrate, when he was not so much as a free-man of their city, Ge 19:9. Note, It is common for a reprover to be unjustly upbraided as a usurper; and, while offering the kindness of a friend, to be charged with assuming the authority of a judge: as if a man might not speak reason without taking too much upon him.

(2.) They threaten him, and lay violent hands upon him; and the good man is in danger of being pulled in pieces by this outrageous rabble. Note,

[1.] Those that hate to be reformed hate those that reprove them, though with ever so much tenderness. Presumptuous sinners do by their consciences as the Sodomites did by Lot, baffle their checks, stifle their accusations, press hard upon them, till they have seared them and quite stopped their mouths, and so made themselves ripe for ruin.

[2.] Abuses offered to God's messengers and to faithful reprovers soon fill the measure of a people's wickedness, and bring destruction without remedy. See Pr 29:1, and 2Ch 36:16. If reproofs remedy not, there is no remedy. See 2Ch 25:16.

8 Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.

9 And they said, Stand back. And they said *again,* this one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.

10 But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door.

That nothing less than the power of an angel could save a good man out of their wicked hands. It was now past dispute what Sodom's character was and what course must be taken with it, and therefore the angels immediately give a specimen of what they further intended.

1. They rescue Lot, Ge 19:10. Note, He that watereth shall be watered also himself. Lot was solicitous to protect them, and now they take effectual care for his safety, in return for his kindness. Note further, Angels are employed for the special preservation of those that expose themselves to danger by well-doing. The saints, at death, are pulled like Lot into a house of perfect safety, and the door shut for ever against those that pursue them.

2. They chastise the insolence of the Sodomites: They smote them with blindness, Ge 19:11. This was designed,

(1.) To put an end to their attempt, and disable them from pursuing it. Justly were those struck blind who had been deaf to reason. Violent persecutors are often infatuated so that they cannot push on their malicious designs against God's messengers, Job 5:14, 15. Yet these Sodomites, after they were

struck blind, continued seeking the door, to break it down, till they were tired. No judgments will, of themselves, change the corrupt natures and purposes of wicked men. If their minds had not been blinded as well as their bodies, they would have said, as the magicians, This is the finger of God, and would have submitted.

(2.) It was to be an earnest of their utter ruin, the next day. When God, in a way of righteous judgment, blinds men, their condition is already desperate, Ro 11:8, 9.

11 And they smote the men that *were* at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place:

He is directed to give notice to his friends and relations, that they, it they would, might be saved with him (Ge 19:12): "Hast thou here any besides, that thou art concerned for? If thou hast, go tell them what is coming." Now this implies,

1 The command of a great duty, which was to do all he could for the salvation of those about him, to snatch them as brands out of the fire. Note, Those who through grace are themselves delivered out of a sinful state should do what they can for the deliverance of others, especially their relations.

2 The offer of great favour. They do not ask whether he knew any righteous ones in the city fit to be spared: no, they knew there were none; but they ask what relations he had there, that, whether righteous or unrighteous, they might be saved with him. Note, Bad people often fare the better in this world for the sake of their good relations. It is good being akin to a godly man.

13 for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.

Notice is given him of the approach of Sodom's ruin: We will destroy this place, Ge 19:13. Note, The holy angels are ministers of God's wrath for the destruction of sinners, as well as of his mercy for the preservation and deliverance of his people. In this sense, the good angels become evil angels, Ps 78:49.

14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons-in-law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.

He applies himself accordingly to his sons-in-law, Ge 19:14. Observe, 1 The fair warning that Lot gave them: Up, get you out of this place. The manner of expression is startling and quickening. It was no time to trifle when the destruction was just at the door. They had not forty days to repent in, as the Ninevites had. Now or never they must make their escape. At midnight this cry was made. Such as this is our call to the unconverted, to turn and live. 2 The slight they put upon this warning: He seemed to them as one that mocked. They thought, perhaps, that the assault which the Sodomites had just now made upon his house had disturbed his head, and put him into such a fright that he knew not what he said; or they thought that he was not in earnest with them. Those who lived a merry life, and made a jest of everything, made a jest of this warning, and so they perished in the overthrow. Thus many who are warned of the misery and danger they are in by sin make a light matter of it, and think their ministers do but jest with them; such will perish with their blood upon their own heads.

15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

The kindly interest the angels took in the preservation of Lot is beautifully displayed. But he "lingered." Was it from sorrow at the prospect of losing all his property, the acquisition of many years? Or was it that his benevolent heart was paralyzed by thoughts of the awful crisis? This is the charitable way of accounting for a delay that would have been fatal but for the friendly urgency of the angel.

16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

With what a gracious violence Lot was brought out of Sodom, Ge 19:16. It seems, though he did not make a jest of the warning given, as his sons-in-law did, yet he lingered, he trifled, he did not make so much haste as the case required. Thus many that are under some convictions about the misery of their spiritual state, and the necessity of a change, yet defer that needful work, and foolishly linger. Lot did so, and it might have been fatal to him it the angels had not laid hold of his hand, and brought him forth, and saved him with fear, Jude 1:23. Herein it is said, The Lord was merciful to him; otherwise he might justly have left him to perish, since he was so loth to depart. Note,

(1.) The salvation of the most righteous men must be attributed to God's mercy, not to their own merit. We are saved by grace.

(2.) God's power also must be acknowledged in the bringing of souls out of a sinful state. If God had not brought us forth, we had never come forth.

(3.) If God had not been merciful to us, our lingering had been our ruin.

17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

With what a gracious vehemence he was urged to make the best of his way, when he was brought forth, Ge 19:17.

(1.) He must still apprehend himself in danger of being consumed, and be quickened by the law of self-preservation to flee for his life. Note, A holy fear and trembling are found necessary to the working out of our salvation.

(2.) He must therefore mind his business with the utmost care and diligence. He must not hanker after Sodom: Look not behind thee. He must not loiter by the way: Stay not in the plain; for it would all be made one dead sea. He must not take up short of the place of refuge appointed him: Escape to the mountain. Such as these are the commands given to those who through grace are delivered out of a sinful state.

[1.] Return not to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom.

[2.] Rest not in self and the world, for that is staying in the plain. And,

[3.] Reach towards Christ and heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain, short of which we must not take up.

18 And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord:

What a strange want of faith and fortitude, as if He who had interfered for his rescue would not have protected Lot in the mountain solitude.

The fixing of a place of refuge for him. The mountain was first appointed for him to flee to, but,

1. He begged for a city of refuge, one of the five that lay together, called Bela, Ge 14:2, 19:18-20. It was Lot's weakness to think a city of his own choosing safer than the mountain of God's appointing. And he argued against himself when he pleaded, Thou hast magnified thy mercy in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain; for could not be that plucked him out of Sodom, when he lingered, carry him safely to the mountain, though he began to tire? Could not be that saved him from greater evils save him from the less? He insists much in his petition upon the smallness of the place: It is a little one, it is not? Therefore, it was to be hoped, not as bad as the rest. This gave a new name to the place; it was called Zoar, a little one. Intercessions for little ones are worthy to be remembered.

2. God granted him his request, though there was much infirmity in it, Ge 19:21, 22. See what favour God showed to a true saint, though weak.

(1.) Zoar was spared, to gratify him. Though his intercession for it was not, as Abraham's for Sodom, from a principle of generous charity, but merely from self-interest, yet God granted him his request, to show how much the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails.

(2.) Sodom's ruin was suspended till he was safe: I cannot do anything till thou shalt have come thither. Note, The very presence of good men in a place helps to keep off judgments. See what care God takes for the preservation of his people. The winds are held till God's servants are sealed, Re 7:3, Eze 9:4.

19 behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

20 behold now, this city *is* near to flee unto, and it *is* a little one: O, let me escape thither, (*is* it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

he errs by choosing another place than the angel had appointed him.

21 And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken.

22 Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar [little].

The ruin of Sodom was suspended till he was secure. What care God does take of His people (Re 7:3)! What a proof of the love which God bore to a good though weak man!

23 The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

It is taken notice of that the sun had risen when Lot entered into Zoar; for when a good man comes into a place he brings light along with him, or should do.

24 Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah
brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

Then, when Lot had got safely into Zoar, then this ruin came; for good men are taken away from the evil to come. Then, when the sun had risen bright and clear, promising a fair day, then this storm arose, to show that it was not from natural causes. Concerning this destruction observe,

1. God was the immediate author of it. It was destruction from the Almighty: The Lord rained--from the Lord (Ge 19:24), that is, God from himself, by his own immediate power, and not in the common course of nature. Or, God the Son from God the Father; for the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Note, He that is the Savior will be the destroyer of those that reject the salvation.

2. It was a strange punishment, Job 31:3. Never was the like before nor since. Hell was rained from heaven upon them. Fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, were the portion of their cup (Ps 11:6); not a flash of lightning, which is destructive enough when God gives it commission, but a shower of lightning. Brimstone was scattered upon their habitation (Job 18:15), and then the fire soon fastened upon them. God could have drowned them, as he did the old world; but he would show that he has many arrows in his quiver, fire as well as water.

3. It was a judgment that laid all waste: It overthrew the cities, and destroyed all the inhabitants of them, the plain, and all that grew upon the ground, Ge 19:25. It was an utter ruin, and irreparable. That fruitful valley remains to this day a great lake, or dead sea; it is called the Salt Sea, Nu 34:12. Travellers say that it is about thirty miles long and ten miles broad; it has no living creature in it; it is not moved by the wind; the smell of it is offensive; things do not easily sink in it. The Greeks call it Asphaltites, from a sort of pitch which it casts up. Jordan falls into it, and is lost there.

4. It was a punishment that answered to their sin. Burning lusts against nature were justly punished with this preternatural burning. Those that went after strange flesh were destroyed by strange fire, Jude 1:7. They persecuted the angels with their rabble, and made Lot afraid; and now God persecuted them with his tempest, and made them afraid with his storm, Ps 83:15.

5. It was designed for a standing revelation of the wrath of God against sin and sinners in all ages. It is, accordingly, often referred to in the scripture, and made a pattern of the ruin of Israel (De 29:23), of Babylon (Isa 13:19), of Edom (Jer 49:17, 18), of Moab and Ammon, Zep 2:9. Nay, it was typical of the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7), and the ruin of all that live ungodly (2Pe 2:6), especially that despise the gospel, Mt 10:15. It is in allusion to this destruction that the place of the damned is often represented by a lake that burns, as Sodom did, with fire and brimstone. Let us learn from it,

(1.) The evil of sin, and the hurtful nature of it. Iniquity tends to ruin.

(2.) The terrors of the Lord. See what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!

25 and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the
inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.
26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar
of salt.

This also is written for our admonition. Our Savior refers to it (Lu 17:32), Remember Lot's wife. As by the example of Sodom the wicked are warned to turn from their wickedness, so by the example of Lot's wife the righteous are warned not to turn from their righteousness. See Eze 3:18, 20. We have here,

I The sin of Lot's wife: She looked back from behind him. This seemed a small thing, but we are sure, by the punishment of it, that it was a great sin, and exceedingly sinful.

1. She disobeyed an express command, and so sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, which ruined us all.

2. Unbelief was at the bottom of it; she questioned whether Sodom would be destroyed, and thought she might still have been safe in it.

3. She looked back upon her neighbours whom she had left behind with more concern than was fit, now that their day of grace was over, and divine justice was glorifying itself in their ruin. See Isa 66:24.

4. Probably she hankered after her house and goods in Sodom, and was loth to leave them. Christ intimates this to be her sin (Lu 17:31, 32); she too much regarded her stuff.

5. Her looking back evinced an inclination to go back; and therefore our Savior uses it as a warning against apostasy from our Christian profession. We have all renounced the world and the flesh, and have set our faces heaven-ward; we are in the plain, upon our probation; and it is at our peril if we return into the interests we profess to have abandoned. Drawing back is to perdition, and looking back is towards it. Let us therefore fear, Heb 4:1.

II The punishment of Lot's wife for this sin. She was struck dead in the place; yet her body did not fall down, but stood fixed and erect like a pillar, or monument, not liable to waste nor decay, as human bodies exposed to the air are, but metamorphosed into a metallic substance which would last perpetually. Come, behold the goodness and severity of God (Ro 11:22), towards Lot, who went forward, goodness; towards his wife, who looked back, severity. Though she was nearly related to a righteous man, though better than her neighbours, and though a monument of distinguishing mercy in her deliverance out of Sodom, yet God did not connive at her disobedience; for great privileges will not secure us from the wrath of God if we do not carefully and faithfully improve them. This pillar of salt should

season us. Since it is such a dangerous thing to look back, let us always press forward, Php 3:13, 14.

27 And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord:

28 and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

Our communion with God consists in our gracious regard to him and his gracious regard to us; we have here therefore the communion that was between God and Abraham, in the event concerning Sodom, as before in the consultation concerning it, for communion with God is to be kept up in providences as well as in ordinances.

I. Here is Abraham's pious regard to God in this event, in two things:--

1. A careful expectation of the event, Ge 19:27. He got up early to look towards Sodom; and, to intimate that his design herein was to see what became of his prayers, he went to the very place where he had stood before the Lord, and set himself there, as upon his watch tower, Hab 2:1. Note, When we have prayed we must look after our prayers, and observe the success of them. We must direct our prayer as a letter, and then look up for an answer, direct our prayer as an arrow, and then look up to see whether it reach the mark, Ps 5:3. Our enquiries after news must be in expectation of an answer to our prayers.

2. An awful observation of it: He looked towards Sodom (Ge 19:28), not as Lot's wife did, tacitly reflecting upon the divine severity, but humbly adoring it and acquiescing in it. Thus the saints, when they see the smoke of Babylon's torment rising up for ever (like Sodom's here), will say again and again, Alleluia, Re 19:3. Those that have, in the day of grace, most earnestly interceded for sinners, will, in the day of judgment, be content to see them perish, and will glorify God in their destruction.

II. Here is God's favourable regard to Abraham, Ge 19:29. As before, when Abraham prayed for Ishmael, God heard him for Isaac, so now, when he prayed for Sodom, he heard him for Lot. He remembered Abraham, and, for his sake, sent Lot out of the overthrow. Note,

1. God will certainly give an answer of peace to the prayer of faith, in his own way and time; though, for a while, it seem to be forgotten, yet, sooner or later, it will appear to be remembered.

2 The relations and friends of godly people fare the better for their interest in God and intercessions with him; it was out of respect to Abraham that Lot was rescued: perhaps this word encouraged Moses long afterwards to pray (Ex 32:13), Lord, remember Abraham; and see Isa 63:11.

29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

30 And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

Here is, I The great trouble and distress that Lot was brought into after his deliverance, Ge 19:30.

1. He was frightened out of Zoar, durst not dwell there; probably because he was conscious to himself that it was a refuge of his own choosing and that herein he had foolishly prescribed to God, and therefore he could not but distrust his safety in it; or because he found it as wicked as Sodom, and therefore concluded it could not long survive it; or perhaps he observed the rise and increase of those waters which after the conflagration, perhaps from Jordan, began to overflow the plain, and which, mixing with the ruins, by degrees made the Dead Sea; in those waters he concluded Zoar must needs perish

(though it had escaped the fire) because it stood upon the same flat. Note, Settlements and shelters of our own choosing, and in which we do not follow God, commonly prove uneasy to us.

2. He was forced to betake himself to the mountain, and to take up with a cave for his habitation there. Methinks it was strange that he did not return to Abraham, and put himself under his protection, to whom he had once and again owed his safety: but the truth is there are some good men that are not wise enough to know what is best for themselves. Observe,

(1.) He was now glad to go to the mountain, the place which God had appointed for his shelter. Note, It is well if disappointment in our way drive us at last to God's way.

(2.) He that, a while ago, could not find room enough for himself and his stock in the whole land, but must jostle with Abraham, and get as far from him as he could, is now confined to a hole in a hill, where he has scarcely room to turn himself, and there he is solitary and trembling. Note, It is just with God to reduce those to poverty and restraint who have abused their liberty and plenty. See also in Lot what those bring themselves to, at last, that forsake the communion of saints for secular advantages; they will be beaten with their own rod.

31 And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father *is* old, and *there is* not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:

His daughters laid a very wicked plot to bring him to sin; and theirs was, doubtless, the greater guilt. They contrived, under pretence of cheering up the spirits of their father in his present condition, to make him drunk, and then to lie with him, Ge 19:31, 32.

(1.) Some think that their pretence was plausible. Their father had no sons, they had no husbands, nor knew they were to have any of the holy seed, or, if they had children by others, their father's name would not be preserved in them. Some think that

they had the Messiah in their eye, who, they hoped, might descend form their father; for he came from Terah's elder son, who separated from the rest of Shem's posterity as well as Abraham, and was now signally delivered out of Sodom. Their mother, and the rest of the family, were gone; they might not marry with the cursed Canaanites; and therefore they supposed that the end they aimed at and the extremity they were brought to, would excuse the irregularity. Thus the learned Monsieur Allix. Note, Good intentions are often abused to patronize bad actions. But,

(2.) Whatever their pretence was, it is certain that their project was very wicked and vile, and an impudent affront to the very light and law of nature. Note,

[1.] The sight of God's most tremendous judgments upon sinners will not of itself, without the grace of God, restrain evil hearts from evil practices: one would wonder how the fire of lust could possibly kindle upon those, who had so lately been the eye-witnesses of Sodom's flames.

[2.] Solitude has its temptations as well as company, and particularly to uncleanness. When Joseph was alone with his mistress he was in danger, Ge 39:11. Relations that dwell together, especially if solitary, have need carefully to watch even against the least evil thought of this kind, lest Satan get an advantage.

32 come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

1. Lot himself, by his own folly and unwariness, was wretchedly overcome, and suffered himself so far to be imposed upon by his own children as, two nights together, to be drunk, and to commit incest, Ge 19:33, &c. Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves! See here,

(1.) The peril of security. Lot, who not only kept himself sober and chaste in Sodom, but was a constant mourner for the wickedness of the place and a witness against it, was yet, in the mountain, where he was alone, and as he thought quite out of the way of temptation, shamefully overtaken. Let him therefore that thinks he stands, stands high and stands firm, take heed lest he fall. No mountain, on this side the holy hill above, can set us out of the reach of Satan's fiery darts.

(2.) The peril of drunkenness. It is not only a great sin itself, but it is the inlet of many sins; it may prove the inlet of the worst and most unnatural sins, which may be a perpetual wound and dishonour. A man may do that without reluctance, when he is drunk, which, when he is sober, he could not think of without horror.

(3.) The peril of temptation from our dearest relations and friends, whom we love, and esteem, and expect kindness from. Lot, whose temperance and chastity were impregnable against the batteries of foreign force, was surprised into sin and shame by the base treachery of his own daughters: we must dread a snare wherever we are, and be always upon our guard.

2. In the close we have an account of the birth of the two sons, or grandsons (call them which you will), of Lot, Moab and Ammon, the fathers of two nations, neighbours to Israel, and which we often read of in the Old Testament; both together are called the children of Lot, Ps 83:8. Note, Though prosperous births may attend incestuous conceptions, yet they are so far from justifying them that they rather perpetuate the reproach of them and entail infamy upon posterity; yet the tribe of Judah, of which our Lord sprang, descended from such a birth, and Ruth, a Moabitess, has a name in his genealogy, Mt 1:3, 5.

Lastly, Observe that, after this, we never read any more of Lot, nor what became of him: no doubt he repented of his sin, and was pardoned; but from the silence of the scripture concerning him henceforward we may learn that drunkenness, as it makes

men forgetful, so it makes them forgotten; and many a name, which otherwise might have been remembered with respect, is buried by it in contempt and oblivion.

34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, *and* lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

37 And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same *is* the father of the Moabites unto this day.

38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same *is* the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

Genesis -20

Abraham and Abimelech

1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

Here is,

1. Abraham's removal from Mamre, where he had lived nearly twenty years, into the country of the Philistines: He sojourned in Gerar, Ge 20:1. We are not told upon what occasion he removed, whether terrified by the destruction of Sodom, or because the country round was for the present prejudiced by it, or, as some of the Jewish writers say, because he was grieved at Lot's incest with his daughters, and the reproach which the Canaanites cast upon him and his religion, for his kinsman's sake: doubtless there was some good cause for his removal.

Note, In a world where we are strangers and pilgrims we cannot expect to be always in the same place. Again, Wherever we are, we must look upon ourselves but as sojourners.

2. His sin in denying his wife, as before (Ge 12:13), which was not only in itself such an equivocation as bordered upon a lie, and which, if admitted as lawful, would be the ruin of human converse and an inlet to all falsehood, but was also an exposing of the chastity and honour of his wife, of which he ought to have been the protector. But, besides this, it had here a two-fold aggravation:--

(1.) Fear of the people among whom he was, tempted him to equivocate. His conduct was highly culpable. It was deceit, deliberate and premeditated—there was no sudden pressure upon him—it was the second offense of the kind [see on Ge 12:13] —it was a distrust of God every way surprising, and it was calculated to produce injurious effects on the heathen around. Its mischievous tendency was not long in being developed. He had been guilty of this same sin before, and had been reproved for it, and convinced of the folly of the suggestion which induced him to it; yet he returns to it.

Note, It is possible that a good man may, not only fall into sin, but relapse into the same sin, through the surprise and strength of temptation and the infirmity of the flesh. Let backsliders repent then, but not despair, Jer 3:22.

(2.) Sarah, as it should seem, was now with child of the promised seed, or, at least, in expectation of being so quickly, according to the word of God; he ought therefore to have taken particular care of her now, as Jdg 13:4. 3. The peril that Sarah was brought into by this means: The king of Gerar sent, and took her to his house, in order to the taking of her to his bed.

Note, The sin of one often occasions the sin of others; he that breaks the hedge of God's commandments opens a gap to he

knows not how many; the beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water.

2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She *is* my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou *art but* a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she *is* a man's wife.

It appears by this that God revealed himself by dreams (which evidenced themselves to be divine and supernatural) not only to his servants the prophets, but even to those who were out of the pale of the church and covenant; but then, usually, it was with some regard to God's own people as in Pharaoh's dream, to Joseph, in Nebuchadnezzar's, to Daniel, and here, in Abimelech's, to Abraham and Sarah, for he reproved this king for their sake, Ps 105:14,15.

God gives him notice of his danger (Ge 20:3), his danger of sin, telling him that the woman is a man's wife, so that if he take her he will wrong her husband; his danger of death for this sin: Thou art a dead man; and God's saying so of a man makes him so.

Note, Every willful sinner ought to be told that he is a dead man, as the condemned malefactor, and the patient whose disease is mortal, are said to be so. If thou art a bad man, certainly thou art a dead man.

4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

He pleads ignorance that Abraham and Sarah had agreed to impose upon him, and not to let him know that they were any more than brother and sister, Ge 20:6. See what confidence a man may have towards God when his heart condemns him not, 1Jo 3:21. If our consciences witness to our integrity, and that, however we may have been cheated into a snare, we have not knowingly and wittingly sinned against God, it will be our rejoicing in the day of evil. He pleads with God as Abraham had done, Ge 18:23. Wilt thou slay a righteous nation? Ge

20:4. Not such a nation as Sodom, which was indeed justly destroyed, but a nation which, in this matter, was innocent.

5 Said he not unto me, she *is* my sister? And she, even she herself said, He *is* my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

God gives a very full answer to what he had said.

1. He allows his plea, and admits that what he did he did in the integrity of his heart: Yea, I know it, Ge 20:6. Note, It is matter of comfort to those that are honest that God knows their honesty, and will acknowledge it, though perhaps men that are prejudiced against them either cannot be convinced of it or will not own that they are.

2. He lets him know that he was kept from proceeding in the sin merely by the good hand of God upon him: I withheld thee from sinning against me. Abimelech was hereby kept from doing wrong, Abraham from suffering wrong, and Sarah from both. Note,

(1.) There is a great deal of sin devised and designed that is never executed. As bad as things are in the world, they are not so bad as the devil and wicked men would have them.

(2.) It is God that restrains men from doing the ill they would do. It is not from him that there is sin, but it is from him that there is not more sin, either by his influence upon men's minds, checking their inclination to sin, or by his providence, taking away the opportunity to sin.

(3.) It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin; of this God must have the glory, whoever is the instrument, 1Sa 25:32, 33.

7 Now therefore restore the man *his* wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore *her* not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that *are* thine.

He charges him to make restitution: Now therefore, not that thou art better informed, restore the man his wife, Ge 20:7. Note, Ignorance will excuse no longer than it continues. If we have entered upon a wrong course through ignorance this will not excuse our knowingly persisting in it, Le 5:3-5. The reasons why he must be just and kind to Abraham are,

(1.) Because he is a prophet, near and dear to God, for whom God does in a particular manner concern himself. God highly resents the injuries done to his prophets, and takes them as done to himself.

(2.) Being a prophet, he shall pray for thee; this is a prophet's reward, and a good reward it is. It is intimated that there was great efficacy in the prayers of a prophet, and that good men should be ready to help those with their prayers that stand in need of them, and should make, at least, this return for the kindnesses that are done them. Abraham was accessory to Abimelech's trouble, and therefore was obliged in justice to pray for him.

(3.) It is at thy peril if thou do not restore her: Know thou that thou shalt surely die. Note, He that does wrong, whoever he is, prince or peasant, shall certainly receive for the wrong which he has done, unless he repent and make restitution, Col 3:25. No injustice can be made passable with God, no, not by Caesar's image stamped upon it.

8 Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

He has a caution for his servants, Ge 20:8. Abraham himself could not be more careful than he was to command his household in this matter. Note, Those whom God has convinced of sin and danger ought to tell others what God has

done for their souls, that they also may be awakened and brought to a like holy fear.

9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, what hast thou done unto us? And what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

In what a humiliating plight does the patriarch now appear—he, a servant of the true God, rebuked by a heathen prince. Who would not rather be in the place of Abimelech than of the honored but sadly offending patriarch! What a dignified attitude is that of the king—calmly and justly reproving the sin of the patriarch, but respecting his person and heaping coals of fire on his head by the liberal presents made to him.

The serious reproof which Abimelech gave to Abraham, Ge 20:9, 10. His reasoning with Abraham upon this occasion was very strong, and yet very mild. Nothing could be said better; he does not reproach him, nor insult over him, does not say, and “Is this your profession? I see, though you will not swear, you will lie. If these be prophets, I will beg to be freed from the sight of them:" but he fairly represents the injury Abraham had done him, and calmly signifies his resentment of it.

(1.) He calls that sin which he now found he had been in danger of a great sin. Note, Even the light of nature teaches men that the sin of adultery is a very great sin: be it observed, to the shame of many who call themselves Christians, and yet make a light matter of it.

(2.) He looks upon it that both himself and his kingdom would have been exposed to the wrath of God if he had been guilty of this sin, though ignorantly. Note, The sins of kings often prove the plagues of kingdoms; rulers should therefore, for their people's sake, dread sin.

(3.) He charges Abraham with doing that which was not justifiable, in disowning his marriage. This he speaks of justly, and yet tenderly; he does not call him a liar and cheat, but tells

him he had done deeds that ought not to be done. Note, Equivocation and dissimulation, however they may be palliated, are very bad things, and by no means to be admitted in any case.

(4.) He takes it as a very great injury to himself and his family that Abraham had thus exposed them to sin: "What have I offended thee? If I had been thy worst enemy, thou couldst not have done me a worse turn, nor taken a more effectual course to be revenged on me." Note, We ought to reckon that those do us the greatest unkindness in the world that any way tempt us or expose us to sin, though they may pretend friendship, and offer that which is grateful enough to corrupt nature.

(5.) He challenges him to assign a cause for his suspecting them as a dangerous people for an honest man to live among: "What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? Ge 20:10. What reason hadst thou to think that if we had known her to be thy wife thou wouldst have been exposed to any danger by it?" Note, A suspicion of our goodness is justly reckoned a greater affront than a slight upon our greatness.

10 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?

11 And Abraham said, because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

The poor excuse that Abraham made for himself. From the horrible vices of Sodom he seems to have taken up the impression that all other cities of Canaan were equally corrupt. There might have been few or none who feared God, but what a sad thing when men of the world show a higher sense of honor and a greater abhorrence of crimes than a true worshipper!

(1.) He pleaded the bad opinion he had of the place, Ge 20:11. He thought within himself (though he could not give any good reason for his thinking so), "Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and then they will slay me."

[1.] Little good is to be expected where no fear of God is. See Ps 36:1.

[2.] There are many places and persons that have more of the fear of God in them than we think they have: perhaps they are not called by our dividing name, they do not wear our badges, they do not tie themselves to that which we have an opinion of; and therefore we conclude they have not the fear of God in their hearts, which is very injurious both of Christ and Christians, and makes us obnoxious to God's judgment, Mt 7:1.

[3.] Uncharitableness and censoriousness are sins that are the cause of many other sins. When men have once persuaded themselves concerning such and such that they have not the fear of God, they think this will justify them in the most unjust and unchristian practices towards them. Men would not do ill if they did not first think ill.

(2.) He excused it from the guilt of a downright lie by making it out that, in a sense, she was his sister, Ge 20:12. Some think she was own sister to Lot, who is called his brother Lot (Ge 14:16), though he was his nephew; so Sarah is called his sister. But those to whom he said, She is my sister, understood that she was so his sister as not to be capable of being his wife; so that it was an equivocation, with an intent to deceive.

(3.) He clears himself from the imputation of an affront designed to Abimelech in it by alleging that it had been his practice before, according to an agreement between him and his wife, when they first became sojourners (Ge 20:13): "When God caused me to wander from my father's house, then we settled this matter." Note,

[1.] God is to be acknowledged in all our wanderings.

[2.] Those that travel abroad, and converse much with strangers, as they have need of the wisdom of the serpent, so it is requisite that that wisdom be ever tempered with the

innocence of the dove. It may, for aught I know, be suggested that God denied to Abraham and Sarah the blessing of children so long to punish them for this sinful compact if they will not own their marriage, why should God own it? But we may suppose that, after this reproof which Abimelech gave them, they agreed never to do so again, and then presently we read (Ge 21:1,2) that Sarah conceived.

12 And yet indeed she *is* my sister; she *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

(See on Ge 11:31). What a poor defense Abraham made. The statement absolved him from the charge of direct and absolute falsehood, but he had told a moral untruth because there was an intention to deceive (compare Ge 12:11-13). "Honesty is always the best policy." Abraham's life would have been as well protected without the fraud as with it: and what shame to himself, what distrust to God, what dishonor to religion might have been prevented! "Let us speak truth every man to his neighbor" [Zec 8:16; Eph 4:25].

13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This *is* thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He *is* my brother.

14 And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and women servants, and gave *them* unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

Here is,

The kindness of a prince which Abimelech showed to Abraham. See how unjust Abraham's jealousies were. He fancied that if they knew that Sarah was his wife they would kill him; but, when they did know it, instead of killing him they were kind to him, frightened at least to be so by the divine rebukes they were under.

1. He gives him his royal licence to dwell where he pleased in his country, courting his stay because he gives him his royal gifts (Ge 20:14), sheep and oxen, and (Ge 20:16) a thousand pieces of silver. This he gave when he restored Sarah, either,

[1.] By way of satisfaction for the wrong he had offered to do, in taking her to his house: when the Philistines restored the ark, being plagued for detaining it, they sent a present with it. The law appointed that when restitution was made something should be added to it, Le 6:5. Or,

[2.] To engage Abraham's prayers for him; not as if prayers should be bought and sold, but we should endeavour to be kind to those of whose spiritual things we reap, 1Co 9:11. Note, It is our wisdom to get and keep an interest with those that have an interest in heaven, and to make those our friends who are the friends of God.

[3.] He gives to Sarah good instruction, tells her that her husband (her brother he calls him, to upbraid her with calling him so) must be to her for a covering of the eyes, that is, she must look at no other, nor desire to be looked at by any other. Note, Yoke-fellows must be to each other for a covering of the eyes. The marriage-covenant is a covenant with the eyes, like Job's, Job 31:1.

15 And Abimelech said, Behold, my land *is* before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

16 And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand *pieces* of silver: behold, he *is* to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that *are* with thee, and with all *other:* thus she was reproved.

God caused this heathen king to reprove her because she concealed her identity, seeing that God had given her a husband as her veil and defence.

17 So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare *children.*

The kindness of a prophet which Abraham showed to Abimelech: he prayed for him, Ge 20:17, 18. This honour God would put upon Abraham that, though Abimelech had restored Sarah, yet the judgment he was under should be removed upon the prayer of Abraham, and not before. Thus God healed Miriam, when Moses, whom she had most affronted, prayed for her (Nu 12:13), and was reconciled to Job's friends when Job, whom they had grieved, prayed for them (Job 42:8-10),

and so did, as it were, give it under his hand that he was reconciled to them. Note, The prayers of good men may be a kindness to great men, and ought to be valued.

18 For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Genesis -21

The Birth of Isaac

1 And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

The fulfilling of God's promise in the conception and birth of Isaac, Ge 21:1, 2. Note, God's providences look best and brightest when they are compared with his word, and when we observe how God, in them all, acts as he has said, as he has spoken.

1. Isaac was born according to the promise. The Lord visited Sarah in mercy, as he had said. Note, No word of God shall fall to the ground; for he is faithful that has promised, and God's faithfulness is the stay and support of his people's faith. He was born at the set time of which God had spoken, Ge 21:2. Note, God is always punctual to his time; though his promised mercies come not at the time we set, they will certainly come at the time he sets, and that is the best time.

2. He was born by virtue of the promise: Sarah by faith received strength to conceive Heb 11:11.

God therefore by promise gave that strength. It was not by the power of common providence, but by the power of a special promise, that Isaac was born. A sentence of death was, as it were, passed upon the second causes: Abraham was old, and Sarah old, and both as good as dead; and then the word of God took place. Note, True believers, by virtue of God's promises, are enabled to do that which is above the power of human nature, for by them they partake of a divine nature, 2Pe 1:4.

2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

He named him, as God commanded him, Ge 21:3. God directed him to a name for a memorial, Isaac, laughter; and Abraham, whose office it was, gave him that name, though he might have designed him some other name of a more pompous signification. Note, It is fit that the luxuriancy of human invention should always yield to the sovereignty and plainness of divine institution; yet there was good reason for the name, for,

(1.) When Abraham received the promise of him he laughed for joy, Ge 17:17. Note, When the sun of comfort has risen upon the soul it is good to remember how welcome the dawning of the day was, and with what exultation we embraced the promise.

(2.) When Sarah received the promise she laughed with distrust and diffidence. Note, When God gives us the mercies we began to despair of we ought to remember with sorrow and shame our sinful distrusts of God's power and promise, when we were in pursuit of them.

(3.) Isaac was himself, afterwards, laughed at by Ishmael (Ge 21:9), and perhaps his name bade him expect it. Note, God's favourites are often the world's laughing-stocks.

(4.) The promise which he was not only the son, but the heir of, was to be the joy of all the saints in all ages, and that which would fill their mouths with laughter.

4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

He circumcised him, Ge 21:4. The covenant being established with him, the seal of the covenant was administered to him; and though a bloody ordinance, and he a darling, yet it must not be omitted, no, nor deferred beyond the eighth day. God had kept time in performing the promise, and therefore Abraham must keep time in obeying the precept.

5 And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, *so that all* that hear will laugh with me.

It filled her with joy (Ge 21:6): "God has made me to laugh; he has given me both cause to rejoice and a heart to rejoice." Thus the mother of our Lord, Lu 1:46, 47. Note,

(1.) God bestows mercies upon his people to encourage their joy in his work and service; and, whatever is the matter of our joy, God must be acknowledged as the author of it, unless it be the laughter of the fool.

(2.) When mercies have been long deferred they are the more welcome when they come.

(3.) It adds to the comfort of any mercy to have our friends rejoice with us in it: All that hear will laugh with me; for laughing is catching. See Lu 1:58. Others would rejoice in this instance of God's power and goodness, and be encouraged to trust in him. See Ps 119:74.

7 And she said, who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? For I have borne *him* a son in his old age.

It filled her with wonder, Ge 21:7. Observe here,

(1.) What it was she thought so wonderful: That Sarah should give children suck, that she should, not only bear a child, but be so strong and hearty at the age as to give it suck. Note, Mothers, if they be able, ought to be nurses to their own children.

Sarah was a person of quality, was aged; nursing might be thought prejudicial of herself, or to the child, or to both; she had choice of nurses, no doubt, in her own family: and yet she would do her duty in this matter; and her daughters the good wives are while they thus do well, 1Pe 3:5,6. See La 4:3.

(2.) How she expressed her wonder: "Who would have said it? The thing was so highly improbable, so near to impossible, that if anyone but God had said it we could not have believed it." Note, God's favours to his covenant-people are such as surpass both their own and others' thoughts and expectations. Who could imagine that God should do so much for those that deserve so little, nay, for those that deserve so ill? See Eph 3:20,2Sa 7:18, 19. Who would have said that God should send his Son to die for us, his Spirit to sanctify us, his angels to attend us? Who would have said that such great sins should be pardoned, such mean services accepted, and such worthless worms taken into covenant and communion with the great and holy God?

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the *same* day that Isaac was weaned.

A short account of Isaac's infancy: The child grew, Ge 21:8. Special notice is taken of this, though a

thing of course, to intimate that the children of the promise are growing children. See Lu 1:80, Lu 2:40. Those that are born of God shall increase of God, Col 2:19. He grew so as not always to need milk, but was able to bear strong meat, and then he was weaned. See Heb 5:13, 14. And then it was that Abraham made a great feast for his friends and neighbours, in thankfulness to God for his mercy to him. He made this feast, not on the day that Isaac was born, that would have been too great a disturbance to Sarah; nor on the day that he was circumcised, that would have been too great a diversion from the ordinance; but on the day that he was weaned, because God's blessing upon the nursing of children, and the preservation of them throughout the perils of the infant age, are signal instances of the care and tenderness of the divine providence, which ought to be acknowledged, to its praise. See Ps 22:9, 10, Ho 11:1.

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking.

Ishmael himself gave the occasion by some affronts he gave to Isaac his little brother, some think on the day that Abraham made the feast for joy that Isaac was safely weaned, which the Jews say was not till he was three years old, others say five. Sarah herself was an eye-witness of the abuse: she saw the son of the Egyptian mocking (Ge 21:9), mocking Isaac, no doubt, for it is said, with reference to this (Ga 4:29), that he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit. Ishmael was aware of

the great change in his prospects, and under the impulse of irritated or resentful feelings, in which he was probably joined by his mother, treated the young heir with derision and probably some violence. Mocking - He derided God's promise made to Isaac which the apostle calls persecution (Ga 4:29).

Ishmael is here called the son of the Egyptian, because, as some think, the 400 years' affliction of the seed of Abraham by the Egyptians began now, and was to be dated hence, Ge 15:13. She saw him playing with Isaac, so the LXX., and, in play, mocking him. Ishmael was fourteen years older than Isaac; and, when children are together, the elder should be careful and tender of the younger: but it argued a very base and sordid disposition in Ishmael to be abusive to a child that was no way a match for him. Note,

1. God takes notice of what children say and do in their play, and will reckon with them if they say or do amiss, though their parents do not.

2. Mocking is a great sin, and very provoking to God.

3. There is a rooted remaining enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. The children of promise must expect to be mocked. This

is persecution, which those that will live godly must count upon.

4. None are rejected and cast out from God but those who have first deserved it. Ishmael is continued in Abraham's family till he becomes a disturbance, grief, and scandal to it.

10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *even* with Isaac.

Sarah made the motion: Cast out this bond-woman, Ge 21:10. This seems to be spoken in some heat, yet it is quoted (Ga 4:30) as if it had been spoken by a spirit of prophecy; and it is the sentence passed on all hypocrites and carnal people, though they have a place and a name in the visible church. All that are born after the flesh and not born again, that rest in the law and reject the gospel promise, shall certainly be cast out. It is made to point particularly at the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, who, though they were the seed of Abraham, yet, because they submitted not to the gospel covenant, were unchurched and disfranchised: and that which, above anything, provoked God to cast them off was their mocking and persecuting the gospel church, God's Isaac, in its infancy, 1Th 2:16. Note, There are many who are familiarly conversant with the children of God in this world, and yet shall not partake with them in the inheritance of sons. Ishmael might be Isaac's play-fellow and school-fellow, yet not his fellow-heir.

11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

Abraham was averse to it: The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, Ge 21:11.

1. It grieved him that Ishmael had given such a provocation. Note, Children ought to consider that the more their parents love them the more they are grieved at their misconduct, and particularly at their quarrels among themselves.

2. It grieved him that Sarah insisted upon such a punishment. "Might it not suffice to correct him? Would nothing less serve than to expel him?" Note, Even the needful extremities which must be used with wicked and incorrigible children are very grievous to tender parents, who cannot thus afflict willingly.

12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed.

God determined it, Ge 21:12, 13. We may well suppose Abraham to be greatly agitated about this matter, loth to displease Sarah, and yet loth to expel Ishmael; in this difficulty God tells him what his will is, and then he is satisfied. Note, A good man desires no more in doubtful cases than to know his duty, and what God would have him do; and, when

he is clear in this, he is, or should be, easy. To make Abraham so, God sets this matter before him in a true light, and shows him,

1. That the casting out of Ishmael was necessary to the establishment of Isaac in the rights and privileges of the covenant: In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Both Christ and the church must descend from Abraham through the loins of Isaac; this is the entail of the promise upon Isaac, and is quoted by the apostle (Ro 9:7) to show that not all who come from Abraham's loins were the heirs of Abraham's covenant. Isaac, the promised son, must be the father of the promised seed; therefore, "Away with Ishmael, send him far enough, lest he corrupt the manners or attempt to invade the rights of Isaac." It will be his security to have his rival banished. The covenant seed of Abraham must be a peculiar people, a people by themselves, from the very first, distinguished, not mingled with those that were out of covenant; for this reason Ishmael must be separated. Abraham was called alone, and so must Isaac be. See Isa 51:2. It is probable that Sarah little thought of this (Joh 11:51), but God took what she said, and turned it into an oracle, as afterwards, Ge 27:10.

2. That the casting out of Ishmael should not be his ruin, Ge 21:13. He shall be a nation, because he is thy seed. We are not sure that it was his eternal ruin.

It is presumption to say that all those who are left out of the external dispensation from all his mercies: those may be saved who are not thus honoured. However, we are sure it was not his temporal ruin. Though he was chased out of the church, he was not chased out of the world. I will make him a nation. Note,

(1.) Nations are of God's making: he founds them, he forms them, he fixes them.

(2.) Many are full of the blessings of God's providence that are strangers to the blessings of his covenant.

(3.) The children of this world often fare the better, as to outward things, for their relation to the children of God.

14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave *it* unto Hagar, putting *it* on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

Here is, I The casting out of the bond-woman, and her son from the family of Abraham, Ge 21:14. Abraham's obedience to the divine command in this matter was speedy--early in the morning, we may suppose immediately after he had, in the night's visions, received orders to do this. It was also submissive; it was contrary to his judgment, at least to his own inclination, to do it; yet as soon as he perceives that it is the mind of God he makes no

objections, but silently does as he is bidden, as one trained up to an implicit obedience. In sending them away without any attendants, on foot, and slenderly provided for, it is probable that he observed the directions given him. If Hagar and Ishmael had conducted themselves well in Abraham's family, they might have continued there; but they threw themselves out by their own pride and insolence, which were thus justly chastised. Note, By abusing our privileges we forfeit them. Those that know not when they are well off, in such a desirable place as Abraham's family, deserve to be cashiered, and to be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them.

15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

They were reduced to great distress there. Their provisions were spent, and Ishmael was sick. He that used to be full fed in Abraham's house, where he waxed fat and kicked, now fainted and sunk, when he was brought to short allowance. Hagar is in tears, and sufficiently mortified. Now she wishes for the crumbs she had wasted and made light of at her master's table. Like one under the power of the spirit of bondage, she despairs of relief, counts upon nothing but the death of the child (Ge 21:15,16), though God had told her, before he was born, that he should live to be a man, a great man. We are apt to forget former promises, when present

providences seem to contradict them; for we live by sense.

16 And she went, and sat her down over against *him* a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against *him*, and lifted up her voice, and wept.

17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, what aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he *is*.

In this distress, God graciously appeared for their relief: he heard the voice of the lad, Ge 21:17. We read not of a word he said; but his sighs, and groans, and calamitous state, cried aloud in the ears of mercy. An angel was sent to comfort Hagar, and it was not the first time that she had met with God's comforts in a wilderness; she had thankfully acknowledged the former kind visit which God made his in such a case (Ge 16:13), and therefore God now visited her again with seasonable succours.

(1.) The angel assures her of the cognizance God took of her distress: God has heard the voice of the lad where he is, though he is in a wilderness (for, wherever we are, there is a way open heaven-ward); therefore lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand, Ge 21:18. Note, God's readiness to help us when we are in trouble must not slacken, but quicken, our endeavours to help ourselves.

(2.) He repeats the promise concerning her son, that he should be a great nation, as a reason why she

should bestir herself to help him. Note, It should engage our care and pains about children and young people to consider that we know not what God has designed them for, nor what great use Providence may make of them.

(3.) He directs her to a present supply (Ge 21:19): He opened her eyes (which were swollen and almost blinded with weeping), and then she saw a well of water. Note, Many that have reason enough to be comforted go mourning from day to day, because they do not see the reason they have for comfort. There is a well of water by them in the covenant of grace, but they are not aware of it; they have not the benefit of it, till the same God that opened their eyes to see their wound opens them to see their remedy, Joh 16:6, 7. Now the apostle tells us that those things concerning Hagar and Ishmael are allegoroumena (Ga 4:24), they are to be allegorized; this then will serve to illustrate the folly,

[1.] Of those who, like the unbelieving Jews, seek for righteousness by the law and the carnal ordinances of it, and not by the promise made in Christ, thereby running themselves into a wilderness of want and despair. Their comforts are soon exhausted, and if God save them not by his special prerogative, and by a miracle of mercy open their eyes and undeceive them, they are undone.

[2.] Of those who seek for satisfaction and happiness in the world and the things of it. Those that forsake the comforts of the covenant and communion with God, and choose their portion in this earth, take up with a bottle of water, poor and slender provision, and that soon spent; they wander endlessly in pursuit of satisfaction, and, at length, sit down short of it.

18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.
19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.
20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

The settlement of Ishmael, at last, in the wilderness of Paran (Ge 21:20, 21), a wild place, fittest for a wild man; and such a one he was, Ge 16:12. Those that are born after the flesh take up with the wilderness of this world, while the children of the promise aim at the heavenly Canaan, and cannot be at rest till they are there. Observe, 1. He had some tokens of God's presence: God was with the lad; his outward prosperity was owing to this. 2. By trade he was an archer, which intimates that craft was his excellency and sport his business: rejected Esau was a cunning hunter. 3. He matched among his mother's relations; she took him a wife out of Egypt: as great an archer as he was, he did not think he could take his aim well, in the business

of marriage, if he proceeded without his mother's advice and consent.

21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him
a wife out of the land of Egypt.

The Covenant between Abraham and Abimelech

22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the
chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God *is* with
thee in all that thou doest:

The inducement to it was God's favour to Abraham (Ge 21:22): "God is with thee in all that thou doest, and we cannot but take notice of it." Note,

(1.) God in his providence sometimes shows his people such tokens for good that their neighbours cannot but take notice of it, Ps 86:17. Their affairs do so visibly prosper, and they have such remarkable success in their undertakings, that a confession is extorted from all about them of God's presence with them.

(2.) It is good being in favour with those that are in favour with God, and having an interest in those that have an interest in heaven, Zec 8:23. We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. We do well for ourselves if we have fellowship with those that have fellowship with God, 1Jo 1:3.

23 now therefore swear unto me here by God, that thou wilt not deal
falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: *but*

according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

The tenour of it was, in general, that there should be a firm and constant friendship between the two families, which should not upon any account be violated. This bond of friendship must be strengthened by the bond of an oath, in which the true God was appealed to, both as a witness of their sincerity and an avenger in case either side were treacherous, Ge 21:23. Observe,

(1.) He desires the entail of this league upon his posterity and the extension of it to his people. He would have his son, and his son's son, and his land likewise, to have the benefit of it. Good men should secure an alliance and communion with the favourites of Heaven, not for themselves only, but for theirs also.

(2.) He reminds Abraham of the fair treatment he had found among them: According to the kindness I have done unto thee. As those that have received kindness must return it, so those that have shown kindness may expect it.

24 And Abraham said, I will swear.

It is consented to by Abraham, with a particular clause inserted about a well. In Abraham's part of this transaction observe,

1. He was ready to enter into this league with Abimelech, finding him to be a man of honour and conscience, and that had the fear of God before his eyes: I will swear, Ge 21:24. Note,

(1.) Religion does not make men morose and unconversable; I am sure it ought not. We must not, under colour of shunning bad company, be sour to all company, and jealous of everybody.

(2.) An honest mind does not startle at giving assurances: if Abraham say that he will be true to Abimelech, he is not afraid to swear it; an oath is for confirmation.

2. He prudently settled the matter concerning a well, about which Abimelech's servants had quarrelled with him. Wells of water, it seems, were choice goods in that country: thanks be to God, that they are not so scarce in ours.

(1.) Abraham mildly told Abimelech of it, Ge 21:25. Note, If our brother trespass against us, we must, with the meekness of wisdom, tell him his fault, that the matter may be fairly accommodated and an end made of it, Mt 18:15.

(2.) He acquiesced in Abimelech's justification of himself in this matter: I wot not who has done this

thing, Ge 21:26. Many are suspected of injustice and unkindness that are perfectly innocent, and we ought to be glad when they clear themselves. The faults of servants must not be imputed to their masters, unless they know of them and justify them; and no more can be expected from an honest man than that he be ready to do right as soon as he knows that he has done wrong.

(3.) He took care to have his title to the well cleared and confirmed, to prevent any disputes or quarrels for the future, Ge 21:30. It is justice, as well as wisdom, to do thus, in perptuam rei memoriam--that the circumstance may be perpetually remembered.

25 And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.
26 And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I *of it*, but today.
27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant.

He made a very handsome present to Abimelech, Ge 21:27. It was not anything curious or fine that he presented to him, but that which was valuable and useful--sheep and oxen, in gratitude for Abimelech's kindness to him, and in token of hearty friendship between them. The interchanging of kind offices is the improving of love: that which is mine is my friend's.

28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.
29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What *mean* these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?

30 And he said, for *these* seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand,
that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well.
31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba [the well of the oath];
because there they sware both of them.

He ratified the covenant by an oath, and registered it by giving a new name to the place (Ge 21:31), Beer-sheba, the well of the oath, in remembrance of the covenant they swore to, that they might be ever mindful of it; or the well of seven, in remembrance of the seven lambs given to Abimelech, as a consideration for his confirming Abraham's title to that well. Note, Bargains made must be remembered, that we may make them good, and may not break our word through oversight.

32 Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: then Abimelech rose up,
and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into
the land of the Philistines.
33 And *Abraham* planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the
name of the Lord, the everlasting God.

Observe,

1. Abraham, having got into a good neighbourhood, knew when he was well off, and continued a great while there. There he planted a grove for a shade to his tent, or perhaps an orchard of fruit-trees; and there, though we cannot say he settled, for God would have him, while he lived, to be a stranger and a pilgrim, yet he sojourned many days, as many as would consist with his character, as Abraham the Hebrew, or passenger.

2. There he made, not only a constant practice, but an open profession, of his religion: There he called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, probably in the grove he planted, which was his oratory or house of prayer. Christ prayed in a garden, on a mountain.

(1.) Abraham kept up public worship, to which, probably, his neighbours resorted, that they might join with him. Note, Good men should not only retain their goodness wherever they go, but do all they can to propagate it, and make others good.

(2.) In calling on the Lord, we must eye him as the everlasting God, the God of the world, so some. Though God had made himself known to Abraham as his God in particular, and in covenant with him, yet he forgets not to give glory to him as the Lord of all: The everlasting God, who was, before all worlds, and will be, when time and days shall be no more. See Isa 40:28.

34 And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

Genesis -22

Abraham Commanded to Offer Isaac

1 And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I *am*.

Here is the trial of Abraham's faith, whether it continued so strong, so vigorous, so victorious, after a long settlement in communion with God, as it was at first, when by it he left his country: then it was made to appear that he loved God better than his father; now that he loved him better than his son. Observe here,

I The time when Abraham was thus tried (Ge 22:1): After these things, after all the other exercises he had had, all the hardships and difficulties he had gone through. Now, perhaps, he was beginning to think the storms had all blown over; but, after all, this encounter comes, which is sharper than any yet. Note, Many former trials will not supersede nor secure us from further trials; we have not yet put off the harness, 1Ki 20:11. See Ps 30:6, 7.

II The author of the trial: God tempted him, not to draw him to sin, so Satan tempts (if Abraham had sacrificed Isaac, he would not have sinned, his orders would have justified him, and borne him out), but to discover his graces, how strong they were, that they might be found to praise, and honour, and glory, 1Pe 1:7. Thus God tempted Job that he might appear not only a good man, but a great man. God did tempt Abraham; he did lift up Abraham, so some read it; as a scholar that improves well is lifted up, when he is put into a higher form. Note, Strong faith is often exercised with strong trials and put upon hard services.

III. The trial itself. God appeared to him as he had formerly done, called him by name, Abraham, that name which had been given him in ratification of the promise. Abraham, like a good servant, readily answered, "Here am I; what says my Lord unto

his servant?" Probably he expected some renewed promise like those, Ge 15:1, and Ge 17:1. But, to his great amazement, that which God has to say to him is, in short, Abraham, Go kill thy son; and this command is given him in such aggravating language as makes the temptation abundantly more grievous. When God speaks, Abraham, no doubt, takes notice of every word, and listens attentively to it; and every word here is a sword in his bones: the trial is steeled with trying phrases. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict? No, it is not; yet, when Abraham's faith is to be tried, God seems to take pleasure in the aggravation of the trial, Ge 22:2. Observe,

1 The person to be offered.

(1.) "Take thy son, not thy bullocks and thy lambs;" how willingly would Abraham have parted with them by thousands to redeem Isaac! "No, I will take no bullock out of thy house, Ps 50:9. I must have thy son: not thy servant, no, not the steward of thy house, that shall not serve the turn; I must have thy son." Jephthah, in pursuance of a vow, offered a daughter; but Abraham must offer his son, in whom the family was to be built up. "Lord, let it be an adopted son;" "No,

(2.) Thy only son; thy only son by Sarah." Ishmael was lately cast out, to the grief of Abraham; and now Isaac only was left, and must he go too? Yes,

(3.) "Take Isaac, him, by name, thy laughter, that son indeed," Ge 17:19. Not "Send for Ishmael back, and offer him;" no, it must be Isaac. "But, Lord, I love Isaac, he is to me as my own soul. Ishmael is not, and wilt thou take Isaac also? All this is against me:" Yea,

(4.) That son whom thou lovest. It was a trial of Abraham's love to God, and therefore it must be in a beloved son, and that string must be touched most upon: in the Hebrew it is expressed more emphatically, and, I think, might very well be read thus: Take now that son of thine, that only one of thine, whom thou lovest,

that Isaac. God's command must overrule all these considerations.

2 The place: In the land of Moriah, three days' journey off; so that he might have time to consider it, and, if he did it, must do it deliberately, that it might be a service the more reasonable and the more honourable.

3. The manner: Offer him for a burnt-offering. He must not only kill his son, but kill him as a sacrifice, kill him devoutly, kill him by rule, kill him with all that pomp and ceremony, with all that sedateness and composure of mind, with which he used to offer his burnt-offerings.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

We have here Abraham's obedience to this severe command. Being tried, he offered up Isaac, Heb 11:17. Observe,

I The difficulties which he broke through in this act of obedience. Much might have been objected against it; as,

1. It seemed directly against an antecedent law of God, which forbids murder, under a severe penalty, Ge 9:5, 6. Now can the unchangeable God contradict himself? He that hates robbery for burnt-offering (Isa 61:8) cannot delight in murder for it.

2. How would it consist with natural affection to his own son? It would be not only murder, but the worst of murders. Cannot Abraham be obedient but he must be unnatural? If God insist upon a human sacrifice, is there none but Isaac to be the offering, and none but Abraham to be the offerer? Must the father of the faithful be the monster of all fathers?

3. God gave him no reason for it. When Ishmael was to be cast out, a just cause was assigned, which satisfied Abraham; but here Isaac must die, and Abraham must kill him, and neither the one nor the other must know why or wherefore. If Isaac had been to die a martyr for the truth, or his life had been the ransom of some other life more precious, it would have been another matter; of if he had died as a criminal, a rebel against God or his parents, as in the case of the idolater (De 13:8, 9), or the stubborn son (Ge 21:18, 19), it might have passed as a sacrifice to justice. But the case is not so: he is dutiful, obedient, hopeful, son. "Lord, what profit is there in his blood?"
4. How would this consist with the promise? Was it not said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called? But what comes of that seed, if this pregnant bud be broken off so soon?

5. How should he ever look Sarah in the face again? With what face can he return to her and his family with the blood of Isaac sprinkled on his garments and staining all his raiment? "Surely a bloody husband hast thou been to me" would Sarah say (as Ex 4:25, 26), and it would be likely to alienate her affections forever both from him and from his God. 6. What would the Egyptians say, and the Canaanites and the Perizzites who dwelt then in the land? It would be an eternal reproach to Abraham, and to his altars. "Welcome nature, if this be grace." These and many similar objection might have been made; but he was infallibly assured that it was indeed a command of God and not a delusion, and this was sufficient to answer them all. Note, God's commands must not be disputed, but obeyed; we must not consult with flesh and blood about them (Ga 1:15, 16), but with a gracious obstinacy persist in our obedience to them.

II The several steps of obedience, all which help to magnify it, and to show that he was guided by prudence, and governed by faith, in the whole transaction.

1. He rises early, Ge 22:3. Probably the command was given in the visions of the night, and early the next morning he set himself about the execution of it--did not delay, did not demur, did not take time to deliberate; for the command was peremptory, and would not admit a debate. Note, Those that do the will of God heartily will do it speedily; while we delay, time is lost and the heart hardened.

2. He gets things ready for a sacrifice, and, as if he himself had been a Gibeonite, it should seem, with his own hands he cleaves the wood for the burnt-offering, that it might not be to seek when the sacrifice was to be offered. Spiritual sacrifices must thus be prepared for.

3. It is very probable that he said nothing about it to Sarah. This is a journey which she must know nothing of, lest she prevent it. There is so much in our own hearts to hinder our progress in duty that we have need, as much as may be, to keep out of the way of other hindrances.

4. He carefully looked about him, to discover the place appointed for this sacrifice, to which God had promised by some sign to direct him. Probably the direction was given by an appearance of the divine glory in the place, some pillar of fire reaching from heaven to earth, visible at a distance, and to which he pointed when he said (Ge 22:5), "We will go yonder, where you see the light, and worship."

5. He left his servants at some distance off (Ge 22:5), lest they should interpose, and create him some disturbance in his strange oblation; for Isaac was, no doubt, the darling of the whole family. Thus, when Christ was entering upon his agony in the garden, he took only three of his disciples with him, and left the rest at the garden door. Note, It is our wisdom and duty, when we are going to worship God, to lay aside all those thoughts and cares which may divert us from the service, leave them at the bottom of the hill that we may attend on the Lord without distraction.

6. He obliged Isaac to carry the wood (both to try his obedience in a smaller matter first, and that he might typify Christ, who carried his own cross, Joh 19:17), while he himself, though he knew what he did, with a steady and undaunted resolution carried the fatal knife and fire, Ge 22:6.

Note, Those that through grace are resolved upon the substance of any service or suffering for God must overlook the little circumstances which make it doubly difficult to flesh and blood.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father: and he said, here *am* I, my son. And he said, behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

Without any ruffle or disorder, he talks it over with Isaac, as if it had been but a common sacrifice that he was going to offer, Ge 22:7, 8.

(1.) It was a very affecting question that Isaac asked him, as they were going together: My father, said Isaac; it was a melting word, which, one would think, would strike deeper into the breast of Abraham than his knife could into the breast of Isaac. He might have said, or thought, at least, "Call me not thy father who am now to be thy murderer; can a father be so barbarous, so perfectly lost to all the tenderness of a father?" Yet he keeps his temper, and keeps his countenance, to admiration; he calmly waits for his son's question, and this is it: Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? See how expert Isaac was in the law and custom of sacrifices. This it is to be well-catechised: this is,

[1.] A trying question to Abraham. How could he endure to think that Isaac was himself the lamb? So it is, but Abraham, as yet, dares not tell him so. Where God knows the faith to be armour of proof, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent, Job 9:23.

[2.] It is a teaching question to us all, that, when we are going to worship God, we should seriously consider whether we have everything ready, especially the lamb for a burnt-offering. Behold, the fire is ready, the Spirit's assistance and God's acceptance; the wood is ready, the instituted ordinances designed to kindle our affections (which indeed, without the Spirit, are but like wood without fire, but the Spirit works by them); all things are now ready, but where is the lamb? Where is the heart? Is that ready to be offered up to God, to ascend to him as a burnt-offering?

(2.) It was a very prudent answer which Abraham gave him: My son, God will provide himself a lamb. This was the language, either,

[1.] Of his obedience. "We must offer the lamb which God has appointed now to be offered;" thus giving him this general rule of submission to the divine will, to prepare him for the application of it to himself very quickly. Or,

[2.] Of his faith. Whether he meant it so or not, this proved to be the meaning of it; a sacrifice was provided instead of Isaac. Thus,

First, Christ, the great sacrifice of atonement, was of God's providing; when none in heaven or earth could have found a lamb for that burnt-offering, God himself found the ransom, Ps 89:20.

Secondly, All our sacrifices of acknowledgment are of God's providing too. It is he that prepares the heart, Ps 10:17. The

broken and contrite spirit is a sacrifice of God (Ps 51:17), of his providing.

8 And Abraham said, my son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

With the same resolution and composedness of mind, after many thoughts of heart, he applies himself to the completing of this sacrifice, Ge 22:9, 10. He goes on with a holy willfulness, after many a weary step, and with a heavy heart he arrives at length at the fatal place, builds the altar (an altar of earth, we may suppose, the saddest that ever he built, and he had built many a one), lays the wood in order for his Isaac's funeral pile, and now tells him the amazing news: "Isaac, thou art the lamb which God has provided." Isaac, for aught that appears, is as willing as Abraham; we do not find that he raised any objection against it, that he petitioned for his life, that he attempted to make his escape, much less that he struggled with his aged father, or made any resistance: Abraham does it, God will have it done, and Isaac has learnt to submit to both, Abraham no doubt comforting him with the same hopes with which he himself by faith was comforted. Yet it is necessary that a sacrifice be bound. The great sacrifice, which in the fullness of time was to be offered up, must be bound, and therefore so must Isaac. But with what heart could tender Abraham tie those guiltless hands, which perhaps had often been lifted up to ask his blessing, and stretched out to embrace him, and were now the more straitly bound with the cords of love and duty! However, it must be done. Having bound him, he lays him upon the altar, and his hand upon the head of his sacrifice; and now, we may suppose, with floods of tears, he gives, and takes, the final farewell of a parting kiss: perhaps he takes another for Sarah from her dying son. This being done, he resolutely forgets the bowels of a father, and puts on the awful gravity of a sacrificer. With a fixed heart, and an eye lifted up to heaven, he takes the knife, and stretches out his hand to give a fatal cut to Isaac's throat. Be astonished, O

heavens! At this; and wonder, O earth! Here is an act of faith and obedience, which deserves to be a spectacle to God, angels, and men. Abraham's darling, Sarah's laughter, the church's hope, the heir of promise, lies ready to bleed and die by his own father's hand, who never shrinks at the doing of it. Now this obedience of Abraham in offering up Isaac is a lively representation,

(1.) Of the love of God to us, in delivering up his only-begotten Son to suffer and die for us, as a sacrifice. It pleased the Lord himself to bruise him. See Isa 53:10, Zec 13:7. Abraham was obliged, both in duty and gratitude, to part with Isaac, and parted with him to a friend; but God was under no obligations to us, for we were enemies.

(2.) Of our duty to God, in return for that love. We must tread in the steps of this faith of Abraham. God, by his word, calls us to part with all for Christ,--all our sins, though they have been as a right hand, or a right eye, or an Isaac--all those things that are competitors and rivals with Christ for the sovereignty of the heart (Lu 14:26); and we must cheerfully let them all go. God, by his providence, which is truly the voice of God, calls us to part with an Isaac sometimes, and we must do it with a cheerful resignation and submission to his holy will, 1Sa 3:18.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, here *am* I.

Hitherto this story has been very melancholy, and seemed to hasten towards a most tragical period; but here the sky suddenly clears up, the sun breaks out, and a bright and pleasant scene opens. The same hand that had wounded and cast down here heals and lifts up; for, though he cause grief, he will have compassion. The angel of the Lord, that is, God himself, the eternal Word, the angel of the covenant, who was to be the great Redeemer and comforter, he interposed, and gave a happy issue to this trial.

I. Isaac is rescued, Ge 22:11, 12. The command to offer him was intended only for trial, and it appearing, upon trial, that Abraham did indeed love God better than he loved Isaac, the end of the command was answered; and therefore the order is countermanded, without any reflection at all upon the unchangeableness of the divine counsels: Lay not thy hand upon the lad. Note,

1. Our creature-comforts are most likely to be continued to us when we are most likely to be continued to us when we are most willing to resign them up to God's will.

2. God's time to help and relieve his people is when they are brought to the greatest extremity. The more imminent the danger is, and the nearer to be put in execution, the more wonderful and the more welcome is the deliverance.

II. Abraham is not only approved, but applauded. He obtains an honourable testimony that he is righteous: Now know I that thou fearest God. God knew it before, but now Abraham had given a most memorable evidence of it. He needed do no more; what he had done was sufficient to prove the religious regard he had to God and his authority. Note,

1. When God, by his providence, hinders the performance of our sincere intentions in his services, he graciously accepts the will for the deed, and the honest endeavour, though it come short of finishing.

2 The best evidence of our fearing God is our being willing of serve and honour him with that which is dearest to us, and to part with all to him or for him.

12 And he said, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son,* from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and

took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

Another sacrifice is provided instead of Isaac, Ge 22:13. Now that the altar was built, and the wood laid in order, it was necessary that something should be offered. For,

1. God must be acknowledged with thankfulness for the deliverance of Isaac; and the sooner the better, when here is an altar ready.

2. Abraham's words must be made good: God will provide himself a lamb. God will not disappoint those expectations of his people which are of his own raising; but according to their faith it is to them. Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established.

3. Reference must be had to the promised Messiah, the blessed seed.

(1.) Christ was sacrificed in our stead, as this ram instead of Isaac, and his death was our discharge. "Here am I (said he,) let these go their way."

(2.) Though that blessed seed was lately promised, and now typified by Isaac, yet the offering of him up should be suspended till the latter end of the world: and in the meantime the sacrifice of beasts should be accepted, as this ram was, as a pledge of that expiation which should one day be made by that great sacrifice. And it is observable that the temple, the place of sacrifice, was afterwards built upon this mount Moriah (2Ch 3:1); and mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, was not far off.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said *to* this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

A new name is given to the place, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of all believers, to the end of the world, cheerfully to trust in God in the way of obedience: Jehovah-jireh, The Lord will provide (Ge 22:14), probably alluding to

what he had said (Ge 22:8), God will provide himself a lamb. It was not owing to any contrivance of Abraham, nor was it in answer to his prayer, though he was a distinguished intercessor; but it was purely the Lord's doing. Let it be recorded for the generations to come,

1. That the Lord will see; he will always have his eye upon his people in their straits and distresses that he may come in with seasonable succour in the critical juncture.

2. That he will be seen, be seen in the mount, in the greatest perplexities of his people. He will not only manifest, but magnify, his wisdom, power, and goodness, in their deliverance. Where God sees and provides, he should be seen and praised. And, perhaps, it may refer to God manifest in the flesh.

15 And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven
the second time,
16 and said, by myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou
hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son,*

Abraham's obedience was graciously accepted; but this was not all: here we have it recompensed, abundantly recompensed, before he stirred from the place; probably while the ram he had sacrificed was yet burning God sent him this gracious message, renewed and ratified his covenant with him. All covenants were made by sacrifice, so was this by the typical sacrifices of Isaac and the ram. Very high expressions of God's favour to Abraham are employed in this confirmation of the covenant with him, expressions exceeding any he had yet been blessed with.

Note, Extraordinary services shall be crowned with extraordinary honours and comforts; and favours in the promise, though not yet performed, ought to be accounted real and valuable recompences. Observe,

1. God is pleased to make mention of Abraham's obedience as the consideration of the covenant; and he speaks of it with an

encomium: Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, Ge 22:16. He lays a strong emphasis on this, and (Ge 22:18) praises it as an act of obedience: in it thou hast obeyed my voice, and to obey is better than sacrifice. Not that this was a proportionable consideration, but God graciously put this honour upon that by which Abraham had honoured him.

2. God now confirmed the promise with an oath. It was said and sealed before; but now it is sworn: By myself have I sworn; for he could swear by no greater, Heb 6:13. Thus he interposed himself by an oath, as the apostle expresses it, Heb 6:17. He did (to speak with reverence) even pawn his own life and being upon it (As I live,) that by all those immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, he and his might have strong consolation. Note, If we exercise faith, God will encourage it. Improve the promises, and God will ratify them.

3. The particular promise here renewed is that of a numerous offspring: Multiplying, I will multiply thee, Ge 22:17.

Note, Those that are willing to part with anything for God shall have it made up to them with unspeakable advantage. Abraham has but one son, and is willing to part with that one, in obedience to God. "Well," said God, "thou shalt be recompensed with thousands and millions." What a figure does the seed of Abraham make in history! How numerous, how illustrious, were his known descendants, who, to this day, triumph in this, that they have Abraham to their father! Thus he received a thousand-fold in this life, Mt 19:29. 4. The promise, doubtless, points at the Messiah, and the grace of the gospel. This is the oath sworn to our father Abraham, which Zacharias refers to, Lu 1:73-75, &c. And so here is a promise,

(1.) Of the great blessing of the Spirit: In blessing, I will bless thee, namely, with that best of blessings the gift of the Holy Ghost; the promise of the Spirit was that blessing of Abraham

which was to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, Ga 3:14.

(2.) Of the increase of the church, that believers, his spiritual seed, should be numerous as the stars of heaven.

(3.) Of spiritual victories: Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. Believers, by their faith, overcome the world, and triumph over all the powers of darkness, and are more than conquerors. Probably Zacharias refers to this part of the oath (Lu 1:74), That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear. But the crown of all is the last promise.

(4.) Of the incarnation of Christ: In thy seed, one particular person that shall descend from thee (for he speaks not of many, but of one, as the apostle observes, Ga 3:16), shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, or shall bless themselves, as the phrase is, Isa 65:16. In him all may be happy if they will, and all that belong to him shall be so, and shall think themselves so. Christ is the great blessing of the world. Abraham was ready to give up his son for a sacrifice to the honour of God, and, on that occasion, God promised to give his Son a sacrifice for the salvation of man.

17 that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply
thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon
the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;
18 and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because
thou hast obeyed my voice.
19 So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and
went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.
20 And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham,
saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also borne children unto thy
brother Nahor;
21 Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of
Aram,
22 and Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel.

23 And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor,
Abraham's brother.
24 And his concubine, whose name *was* Reumah, she bare also Tebah,
and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.

Genesis -23

Abraham Buys a Burial Ground for Sarah

1 And Sarah was a hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these*
were the years of the life of Sarah.
2 And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same *is* Hebron in the land of
Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for
her.

She died in the land of Canaan, where she had been above sixty years a sojourner.

3 And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the
sons of Heth, saying,

Here is, the humble request which Abraham made to his neighbours, the Hittites, for a burying-place among them, Ge 23:3, 4. It was strange he had this to do now; but we are to impute it rather to God's providence than to his improvidence, as appears Ac 7:5, where it is said, God gave him no inheritance in Canaan. It were well if all those who take care to provide burying-places for their bodies after death were as careful to provide a resting-place for their souls. Observe here,

1 The convenient diversion which this affair gave, for the present, to Abraham's grief: He stood up from before his dead. Those that find themselves in danger of over-grieving for their dead relations, and are entering into that temptation, must take heed of poring upon their loss and sitting alone and melancholy. There must be a time of standing up from before their dead, and ceasing to mourn. For, thanks be to God, our happiness is not bound up in the life of any creature. Care of the funeral may, as here, be improved to divert grief for the death at first, when it is most in danger of tyrannizing. Weeping must not hinder sowing.

2 The argument he used with the children of Heth, which was this: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you, therefore I am unprovided, and must become a humble suitor to you for a burying-place." This was one occasion which Abraham took to confess that he was a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth; he was not ashamed to own it thus publicly, Heb 11:13. Note, The death of our relations should effectually remind us that we are not at home in this world. When they are gone, say, "We are going."

3. His uneasiness till this affair was settled, intimated in that word, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. Note, Death will make those unpleasant to our sight who while they lived were the desire of our eyes. The countenance that was fresh and lively becomes pale and ghastly, and fit to be removed into the land of darkness. While she was in his sight, it renewed his grief, which he would prevent.

4 I *am* a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

5 And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

The generous offer which the children of Heth made to him, Ge 23:5, 6. They compliment him,

1. With a title of respect: Thou art a prince of God among us, so the word is; not only great, but good. He called himself a stranger and a sojourner; they call him a great prince; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted. God had promised to make Abraham's name great.

2. With a tender of the best of their burying-places. Note, Even the light of nature teaches us to be civil and respectful towards all, though they be strangers and sojourners. The noble generosity of these Canaanites shames and condemns the closeness, and selfishness, and ill-humour, of many that call themselves Israelites. Observe, These Canaanites would be glad to mingle their dust with Abraham's and to have their last end like his.

6 Hear us, my lord: thou *art* a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

7 And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

The particular proposal which Abraham made to them, Ge 23:7-9. He returns them his thanks for their kind offer with all possible decency and respect; though a great man, an old man, and now a mourner, yet he stands up, and bows himself humbly before them, Ge 23:7.

Note, Religion teaches good manners; and those abuse it that place it in rudeness and clownishness. He then pitches upon the place he thinks most convenient, namely, the cave of Machpelah, which probably lay near him, and had not yet been used for a burying-place. The present owner was Ephron. Abraham cannot pretend to any interest in him, but he desires that they would improve theirs with him to get the purchase of that cave, and the field in which it was. Note, A moderate desire to obtain that which is convenient for us, by fair and honest means, is not such a coveting of that which is our neighbour's as is forbidden in the tenth commandment.

8 And he communed with them, saying, if it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar,

9 that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which *is* in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me for a possession of a burying place amongst you.

10 And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, *even* of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying,

The present which Ephron made to Abraham of his field: The field give I thee, Ge 23:10, 11. Abraham thought he must be entreated to sell it; but, upon the first mention of it, without entreaty, Ephron freely gives it. Some men have more generosity than they are thought to have. Abraham, no doubt, had taken all occasions to oblige his neighbours, and do them any service that lay in his power; and now they return his kindness: for he that watereth shall be watered also himself. Note, If those that profess religion adorn their profession by eminent civility and serviceableness to all, they shall

find it will rebound to their own comfort and advantage, as well as to the glory of God.

11 Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that *is* therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

12 And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land.

Abraham's modest and sincere refusal of Ephron's kind offer, Ge 23:12, 13. Abundance of thanks he returns him for it (Ge 23:12), makes his obeisance to him before the people of the land, that they might respect Ephron the more for the respect they saw Abraham give him (1Sa 15:30), but resolves to give him money for the field, even the full value of it. It was not in pride that Abraham refused the gift, or because he scorned to be beholden to Ephron; but,

1. In justice. Abraham was rich in silver and gold (Ge 13:2) and was able to pay for the field, and therefore would not take advantage of Ephron's generosity. Note, Honesty, as well as honour, forbids us to sponge upon our neighbours and to impose upon those that are free. Job reflected upon it with comfort, when he was poor, that he had not eaten the fruits of his land without money, Job 31:39.

2. In prudence. He would pay for it lest Ephron, when this good humour was over, should upbraid him with it, and say, I have made Abraham rich (Ge 14:23), or lest the next heir should question Abraham's title (because that grant was made without any consideration), and claim back the field. Thus David afterwards refused Araunah's offer, 2Sa 24:24. We know not what affronts we may hereafter receive from those that are now most kind and generous.

13 And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou *wilt give it,* I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take *it* of me, and I will bury my dead there.

14 And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him,

The price of the land fixed by Ephron but not insisted on: The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver (about fifty pounds of our money), but what is that between me and thee? Ge 23:14, 15. He would rather oblige his friend than have so much money in his pocket. Herein Ephron discovers,

1. A great contempt of worldly wealth. "What is that between me and thee? It is a small matter, not worth speaking of." Many a one would have said, "It is a deal of money; it will go far in a child's portion." But Ephron says, "What is that?"

Note, It is an excellent thing for people to have low and mean thoughts of all the wealth of this world; it is that which is not, and in the abundance of which a man's life does not consist, Lu 12:15.

2. Great courtesy, and obligingness to his friend and neighbour. Ephron was not jealous of Abraham as a resident foreigner, nor envious at him as a man likely to thrive and grow rich. He bore him no ill-will for his singularity in religion, but was much kinder to him than most people now-a-days are to their own brothers: What is that between me and thee?

Note, No little thing should occasion demurs and differences between true friends. When we are tempted to be hot in resenting affronts, high in demanding our rights, or hard in denying a kindness, we should answer the temptation with this question: "What is that between me and my friend?"

15 My lord, hearken unto me: the land is *worth* four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead.

16 And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current *money* with the merchant.

We have here the conclusion of the treaty between Abraham and Ephron about the burying-place. The bargain was publicly made before all the neighbours, in the presence and audience of the sons of Heth, Ge 23:16, 17.

Note, Prudence, as well as justice, directs us to be fair, and open, and above-board, in our dealings. Fraudulent contracts hate the light, and choose to be clandestine; but those that design honestly in their bargains care not who are witnesses to them. Our law

countenances sales made in market-overt, and by deed enrolled. Observe,

1. Abraham, without fraud, covin, or further delay, pays the money, Ge 23:16. He pays it readily, without hesitation,--pays it in full, without diminution,--and pays it by weight, current money with the merchant, without deceit. See how anciently money was used for the help of commerce; and see how honestly money should be paid where it is due.

Observe, Though all the land of Canaan was Abraham's by promise, yet, the time of his possessing not having come, what he had now occasion for he bought and paid for.

Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. The saints' title to an eternal inheritance does not entitle them to the possessions of this world, nor justify them in doing wrong.

2. Ephron honestly and fairly makes him a good title to the land, Ge 23:17, 18, and 20. The field, with all its appurtenances, is conveyed to Abraham and his heirs forever, in open court, not by writing (it does not appear that writing was then used), but by such a public solemn declaration before witnesses as was sufficient to pass it. Note, As that which is bought must be honestly paid for, so that which is sold must be honestly delivered and secured.

3. Abraham, thereupon, takes possession, and buries Sarah in the cave or vault (whether framed by nature or art is not certain) which was in the purchased field. It is probable that Abraham had buried servants out of his family since he came to Canaan, but the graves of the common people (2Ki 23:6) might suffice for them; now that Sarah was dead a peculiar place must be found for her remains. It is worth noting,

(1.) That a burying-place was the first spot of ground Abraham possessed in Canaan. Note, When we are entering into the world it is good to think of our going out of it; for, as soon as we are born, we begin to die.

(2.) That it was the only piece of land he ever possessed, though the country was all his own in reversion. Those that have least of this earth find a grave in it. Abraham provided, not cities, as Cain and Nimrod, but a sepulchre,

[1.] To be a constant memorandum of death to himself and his posterity, that he and they might learn to die daily. This sepulchre is said to be at the end of the field (Ge 23:9); for, whatever our possessions are, there is a sepulchre at the end of them.

[2.] To be a token of his belief and expectation of the resurrection; for why should such care be taken of the body if it be thrown away forever, and must not rise again? Abraham, in this, said plainly that he sought a better country, that is, a heavenly. Abraham is content to be still flitting, while he lives, but secures a place where, when he dies his flesh may rest in hope.

17 And the field of Ephron, which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field, and the cave which *was* therein, and all the trees that *were* in the field, that *were* in all the borders round about, were made sure
18 unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city.
19 And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre: the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan.
20 And the field, and the cave that *is* therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth.

Genesis -24

A Wife Obtained for Isaac

1 And Abraham was old, *and* well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.

The care he took of a good son, to get him married, well married. It was high time to think of it now, for Isaac was

about forty years old, and it had been customary with his ancestors to marry at thirty, or sooner, Ge 11:14, 18, 22, and 24. Abraham believed the promise of the building up of his family, and therefore did not make haste; not more haste than good speed. Two considerations moved him to think of it now (Ge 24:1):--

1. That he himself was likely to leave the world quickly, for he was old, and well-stricken in age, and it would be a satisfaction to him to see his son settled before he died; and, 2. That he had a good estate to leave behind him, for the Lord had blessed him in all things; and the blessing of the Lord makes rich. See how much religion and piety befriend outward prosperity. Now Abraham's pious care concerning his son was,

(1.) That he should not marry a daughter of Canaan, but one of his kindred. He saw that the Canaanites were degenerating into great wickedness, and knew by revelation that they were designed for ruin, and therefore he would not marry his son among them, lest they should be either a snare to his soul, or at least a blot to his name.

(2.) That yet he should not leave the land of Canaan, to go himself among his kindred, not even for the purpose of choosing a wife, lest he should be tempted to settle there. This caution is given Ge 24:6, and repeated, Ge 24:8. "Bring not my son thither again, whatever comes of it. Let him rather want a wife than expose himself to that temptation."

Note, Parents in disposing of their children, should carefully consult the welfare of their souls, and their furtherance in the way to heaven. Those who through grace have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and have brought up their children accordingly, should take heed of doing anything by which they may be again entangled therein and overcome, 2Pe 2:20. Beware that you bring them not thither again, Heb 11:15.

2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled
over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:
3 and I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the
God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the
daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

The charge he gave to a good servant, probably Eliezer of Damascus, one of whose conduct, fidelity, and affection to him and his family, he had had long experience. He trusted him with this great affair, and not Isaac himself, because he would not have Isaac go at all into that country, but marry there by proxy; and no proxy so fit as this steward of his house. This matter is settled between the master and the servant with a great deal of care and solemnity.

1 The servant must be bound by an oath to do his utmost to get a wife for Isaac from among his relations, Ge 24:2-4. Abraham swears him to it, both for his own satisfaction and for the engagement of his servant to all possible care and diligence in this matter. Thus God swears his servants to their work, that, having sworn, they may perform it. Honour is here done to the eternal God; for he it is that is sworn by, to whom alone these appeals ought to be made. And some think honour is done to the covenant of circumcision by the ceremony here used of putting his hand under his thigh. Note, Swearing being an ordinance not peculiar to the church, but common to mankind, is to be performed by such signs as are the appointments and common usages of our country, for binding the person sworn.

2. He must be clear of this oath if, when he had done his utmost, he could not prevail. This proviso the servant prudently inserted (Ge 24:5), putting the case that the woman would not follow him; and Abraham allowed the exception, Ge 24:8. Note, Oaths are to be taken with great caution, and the matter sworn to should be rightly understood and limited, because it is a snare to devour that which is holy, and, after vows, to make the enquiry which should have been made before.

4 but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.
5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?
6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.
7 The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

The confidence he put in a good God, who, he doubts not, will give his servant success in this undertaking, Ge 24:7. He remembers that God had wonderfully brought him out of the land of his nativity, by the effectual call of his grace; and therefore doubts not but he will succeed him in his care not to bring his son thither again. He remembers also the promise God had made and confirmed to him that he would give Canaan to his seed, and thence infers that God would own him in his endeavours to match his son, not among those devoted nations, but to one that was fit to be the mother of such a seed. "Fear not therefore; he shall send his angel before thee to make thy way prosperous." Note,

1. Those that carefully keep in the way of duty, and govern themselves by the principles of their religion in their designs and undertakings, have good reason to expect prosperity and success in them. God will cause that to issue in our comfort in which we sincerely aim at his glory.

2. God's promises, and our own experiences, are sufficient to encourage our dependence upon God, and our expectations from him, in all the affairs of this life.

3. God's angels are ministering spirits, sent forth, not only for the protection, but for the guidance, of the heirs of promise,

Heb 1:14. "He shall send his angel before thee, and then thou wilt speed well."

8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

10 And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

Abraham's servant now begins to make a figure in this story; and, though he is not named, yet much is here recorded to his honour, and for an example to all servants, who shall be honoured if, by faithfully serving God and their masters, they adorn the doctrine of Christ (compare Pr 27:18, Tit 2:10); for there is no respect of persons with God, Col 3:24, 25. A good servant that makes conscience of the duty of his place, and does it in the fear of God, though he make not a figure in the world nor have praise of men, yet shall be owned and accepted of God and have praise of him. Observe here,

How faithful Abraham's servant approved himself to his master. Having received his charge, he with all expedition set out on his journey, with an equipage suitable to the object of his negotiation (Ge 24:10), and he had all the goods of his master, that is, a schedule or particular account of them, in his hand, to show to those with whom he was to treat; for, from first to last, he consulted his master's honour. Isaac being a type of Christ, some make this fetching of a wife for him to signify the espousing of the church by the agency of his servants the ministers. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife, Re 21:9. Christ is the bridegroom, and ministers are the friends of the bridegroom (Joh 3:29), whose work it is to persuade souls to consent to him, 2Co 11:2 The spouse of Christ must not be of the Canaanites, but of his own kindred, born again from above. Ministers, like Abraham's servant, must lay out themselves with the utmost wisdom and care to serve their master's interest herein.

11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water.*

12 And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham.

How devoutly he acknowledged God in this affair, like one of that happy household which Abraham had commanded to keep the way of the Lord, &c., Ge 18:19. He arrived early in the evening (after many days' journeying) at the place of his destination, and reposed himself by a well of water, to consider how he might manage his business for the best. And,

He acknowledges God by a particular prayer (Ge 24:12-14), wherein,

(1.) He petitions for prosperity and good success in this affair: Send me good speed, this day. Note, We have leave to be particular in recommending our affairs to the conduct and care of the divine Providence. Those that would have good speed must pray for it. This day, in this affair; thus we must, in all our ways, acknowledge God, Pr 3:6. And, if we thus look up to God in every undertaking which we are in care about, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty, whatever the issue be.

(2.) He pleads God's covenant with his master Abraham: O God of my master Abraham, show kindness to him. Note, As the children of good parents, so the servants of good masters, have peculiar encouragement in the prayers they offer to God for prosperity and success.

(3.) He proposes a sign (Ge 24:14), not by it to limit God, nor with a design to proceed no further if he were not gratified in it; but it is a prayer,

[1.] That God would provide a good wife for his young master, and this was a good prayer. He knew that a prudent wife is from the Lord (Pr 19:14), and therefore that for this he will be enquired of. He desires that his master's wife might be humble and industrious woman, bred up to care and labour, and willing to put her hand to any work that was to be done; and that she might be of a courteous disposition, and charitable to strangers. When he came to seek a wife for his master, he did not go to the playhouse or the park, and pray that he might meet one there, but to the well of water, expecting to find one there well employed.

[2.] That he would please to make his way, in this matter, plain and clear before him, by the concurrence of minute circumstances in his favour. Note,

First, It is the comfort, as well as the belief, of a good man, that God's providence extends itself to the smallest occurrences and admirably serves its own purposes by them. Our times are in God's hand; not only events themselves, but the times of them.

Secondly, It is our wisdom, in all our affairs, to follow Providence, and folly to force it. Thirdly, It is very desirable, and that which we may lawfully pray for, while in the general we set God's will before us as our rule, that he will, by hints of providence, direct us in the way of our duty, and give us indications what his mind it. Thus he guides his people with his eye (Ps 32:8), and leads them in a plain path, Ps 27:11.

13 Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the
men of the city come out to draw water:
14 and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down
thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink,
and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be* she *that* thou hast
appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou
hast showed kindness unto my master.

15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

God owns him by a particular providence. He decreed the thing, and it was established to him, Job 22:28. According to his faith, so was it unto him. The answer to this prayer was,

(1.) Speedy--before he had made an end of speaking (Ge 24:15), as it is written (Isa 65:24), While they are yet speaking, I will hear. Though we are backward to pray, God is forward to hear prayer.

(2.) Satisfactory: the first that came to draw water was, and did, in everything, according to his own heart.

[1.] She was so well qualified that in all respects she answered the characters he wished for in the woman that was to be his master's wife, handsome and healthful, humble and industrious, very courteous and obliging to a stranger, and having all the marks of a good disposition. When she came to the well (Ge 24:16), she went down and filled her pitcher, and came up to go home with it. She did not stand to gaze upon the strange man and his camels, but minded her business, and would not have been diverted from it but by an opportunity of doing good. She did not curiously nor confidently enter into discourse with him, but modestly answered him, with all the decorum that became her sex. What a degenerate age do we live in, in which appear all the instances of pride, luxury, and laziness, the reverse of Rebekah's character, whose daughters few are! Those instances of goodness which were then in honour are now in contempt.

[2.] Providence so ordered it that she did that which exactly answered to his sign, and was wonderfully the counterpart of his proposal: she not only gave him drink, but, which was

more than could have been expected, she offered her services to give his camels drink, which was the very sign he proposed.

Note, First, God, in his providence, does sometimes wonderfully own the prayer of faith, and gratify the innocent desires of his praying people, even in little things, that he may show the extent of his care, and may encourage them at all times to seek to him and trust in him; yet we must take heed of being over-bold in prescribing to God, lest the event should weaken our faith rather than strengthen it.

Secondly, It is good to take all opportunities of showing a humble, courteous, charitable, disposition, because, sometime or other, it may turn more to our honour and benefit than we think of; some hereby have entertained angels, and Rebekah hereby, quite beyond her expectation at this time, was brought into the line of Christ and the covenant.

Thirdly, There may be a great deal of obliging kindness in that which costs but little: our Savior has promised a reward for a cup of cold water, Mt 10:42.

Fourthly, The concurrence of providences and their minute circumstances, for the furtherance of our success in any business, ought to be particularly observed, with wonder and thankfulness, to the glory of God: The man wondered, Ge 24:21. We have been wanting to ourselves, both in duty and in comfort, by neglecting to observe Providence.

[3.] Upon enquiry he found, to his great satisfaction, that she was a near relation to his master, and that the family she was of was considerable, and able to give him entertainment, Ge 24:23-25. Note, Providence sometimes wonderfully directs those that by faith and prayer seek direction from heaven in the choice of suitable yoke-fellows: happy marriages those are likely to be that are made in the fear of God; and these, we are sure, are made in heaven.

16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.
17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.
18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.
19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.
20 And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.
21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.
22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold;

He acknowledges God in a particular thanksgiving. He first paid his respects to Rebekah, in gratitude for her civility (Ge 24:22), obliging her with such ornaments and attire as a maid, especially a bride, cannot forget (Jer 2:32), which yet, we should think, ill suited the pitcher of water; but the ear-rings and bracelets she sometimes wore did not make her think herself above the labours of a virtuous woman (Pr 31:13), who works willingly with her hands; nor the services of a child, who, while under age, differs nothing from a servant, Ga 4:1. Having done this, he turns his wonder (Ge 24:21) into worshipping: Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, Ge 24:26, 27. Observe here,

(1.) He had prayed for good speed (Ge 24:12), and now that he had sped well he gives thanks. Note, What we win by prayer we must wear with praise; for mercies in answer to prayer lay us under particular obligations.

(2.) He had as yet but a comfortable prospect of mercy, and was not certain what the issue might prove; yet he gives

thanks. Note, When God's favours are coming towards us we must meet them with our praises.

(3.) He blesses God for success when he was negotiating for his master. Note, We should be thankful for our friend's mercies as for our own.

(4.) He gives thanks that, being in the way, at a loss what course to steer, the Lord had led him. Note, In doubtful cases, it is very comfortable to see God leading us, as he led Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire.

(5.) He thinks himself very happy, and owns God in it, that he was led to the house of his master's brethren, those of them that had come out of Ur of the Chaldees, though they had not come to Canaan, but remained in Haran. They were not idolaters, but worshippers of the true God, and inclinable to the religion of Abraham's family. Note, God is to be acknowledged in providing suitable yoke-fellows, especially such as are agreeable in religion.

(6.) He acknowledges that God, herein, had not left his master destitute of his mercy and truth. God had promised to build up Abraham's family, yet it seemed destitute of the benefit of that promise; but now Providence is working towards the accomplishing of it. Note,

[1.] God's faithful ones, how destitute soever they may be of worldly comforts, shall never be left destitute of God's mercy and truth; for God's mercy is an inexhaustible fountain, and his truth an inviolable foundation.

[2.] It adds much to the comfort of any blessing to see in it the continuance of God's mercy and truth.

23 and said, whose daughter *art* thou? Tell me, I pray thee: is there
room *in* thy father's house for us to lodge in?
24 And she said unto him, I *am* the daughter of Bethuel the son of

Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor.
25 She said moreover unto him, we have both straw and provender
enough, and room to lodge in.
26 And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord.
27 And he said, blessed *be* the Lord God of my master Abraham, who
hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I *being*
in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.
28 And the damsel ran, and told *them of* her mother's house these
things.
29 And Rebekah had a brother, and his name *was* Laban: and Laban
ran out unto the man, unto the well.
30 And it came to pass, when he saw the earring, and bracelets upon
his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his
sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me, that he came unto the
man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well.
31 And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest
thou without? For I have prepared the house, and room for the
camels.
32 And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and
gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his
feet, and the men's feet that *were* with him.
33 And there was set *meat* before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat,
until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

How intent he was upon his business; though he had come off a journey, and come to a good house, he would not eat, till he had told his errand, Ge 24:33. Note, The doing of our work, and the fulfilling of our trusts, either for God or man, should be preferred by us before our necessary food: it was our Saviour's meat and drink, Joh 4:34.

34 And he said, I *am* Abraham's servant.

He gives a short account of the state of his master's family, Ge 24:34-36. He was welcome before, but we may suppose him doubly welcome when he said, I am Abraham's servant. Abraham's name, no doubt, was well known among them and respected, and we might suppose them not altogether ignorant of his state, for Abraham knew theirs, Ge 22:20-24. Two things he suggests, to recommend his proposal: -- [1.] That his

master Abraham, through the blessing of God, had a very good estate; and, [2.] That he had settled it all upon Isaac, for whom he was now a suitor.

35 And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.

36 And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

37 And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell:

He tells them the charge his master had given him, to fetch a wife for his son from among his kindred, with the reason of it, Ge 24:37, 38. Thus he insinuates a pleasing hint, that, though Abraham had removed to a country at so great a distance, yet he still retained the remembrance of his relations that he had left behind, and a respect for them. The highest degrees of divine affection must not divest us of natural affection. He likewise obviates an objection, That, if Isaac were deserving, he needed not send so far off for a wife: why did he not marry nearer home? "For a good reason," says he; "my master's son must not match with a Canaanite." He further recommends his proposal, [1.] From the faith his master had that it would succeed, Ge 24:40. Abraham took encouragement from the testimony of his conscience that he walked before God in a regular course of holy living, and thence inferred that God would prosper him; probably he refers to that covenant which God had made with him (Ge 17:1), I am God, all-sufficient, walk before me. Therefore, says he the God before whom I walk will send his angel. Note, While we make conscience of our part of the covenant, we may take the comfort of God's part of it; and we should learn to apply general promises of particular cases, as there is occasion. [2.] From the care he himself had taken to preserve their liberty of giving or refusing their consent, as they should see cause, without incurring the guilt of perjury (Ge 24:39-41), which showed him, in general, to be a cautious man, and particularly careful that their consent might not be forced, but be either free or not at all.

38 but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

39 And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me.

40 And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

41 then shalt thou be clear from *this* my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee *one,* thou shalt be clear from my oath.

42 And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

He relates to them the wonderful concurrence of providences, to countenance and further the proposal, plainly showing the finger of God in it.

[1.] He tells them how he had prayed for direction by a sign, Ge 24:42-44. Note, It is good dealing with those who by prayer take God along with them in their dealings.

[2.] How God had answered his prayer in the very letter of it. Though he did but speak in his heart (Ge 24:45), which perhaps he mentions, lest it should be suspected that Rebekah had overheard his prayer and designedly humoured it. "No," says he, "I spoke it in my heart, so that none heard it but God, to whom thought are word, and from him the answer came," Ge 24:46,47.

[3.] How he had immediately acknowledged God's goodness to him therein, leading him, as he here expresses it, in the right way. Note, God's way is always the right way (Ps 107:7), and those are well led whom he leads.

43 behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw *water,* and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

44 and she say to me, both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: *let* the same *be* the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.

45 And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew *water:* and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

46 And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her *shoulder,* and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

47 And I asked her, and said, whose daughter *art* thou?And she said, the daughter of Bethuel, Nahors son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

48 And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

49 And now, if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

He fairly refers the matter to their consideration, and waits their decision (Ge 24:49): "If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, well and good: if you will be sincerely kind, you will accept the proposal, and I have what I came for; if not, do not hold me in suspense." Note, Those who deal fairly have reason to expect fair dealing.

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, the thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

They freely and cheerfully close with the proposal upon a very good principle (Ge 24:50): "The thing proceedeth from the Lord, Providence smiles upon it, and we have nothing to say against it." They do not object distance of place, Abraham's forsaking them, or his having no land in possession, but personal estate only: they do not question the truth of what this man said; but,

[1.] They trust much to his integrity. It were well if honesty did so universally prevail among men that it might be as much an act of prudence as it is of good nature to take a man's word.

[2.] They trust more to God's providence, and therefore by silence give consent, because it appears to be directed and disposed by Infinite Wisdom. Note, A marriage is then likely to be comfortable when it appears to proceed from the Lord.

51 Behold, Rebekah *is* before thee; take *her*, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken.

52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, *bowing himself* to the earth.

Abraham's servant makes a thankful acknowledgment of the good success he had met with, [1.] To God: He worshipped the Lord, Ge 24:52. Observe, First, As his good success went on, he went on to bless God. Those that pray without ceasing should in everything give thanks, and own God in every step of mercy. Secondly, God sent his angel before him, and so gave him success, Ge 24:7, 40. But when he has the desired success, he worships God, not the angel. Whatever benefit we have by the ministration of angels, all the glory must be given to the Lord of the angels, Re 22:9. [2.] He pays his respects to the family also, and particularly to the bride, Ge 24:53. He presented her, and her mother, and brother, with many precious things, both to give a real proof of his master's riches and generosity and in gratitude for their civility to him, and further to ingratiate himself with them.

53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

54 And they did eat and drink, he and the men that *were* with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, send me away unto my master.

Abraham's servant presses for a dismission. Though he and his company were very welcome, and very cheerful there, yet he said, Send me away (Ge 24:54), and again, Ge 24:56. He knew his master would expect him home with some impatience; he

had business to do at home which wanted him, and therefore, as one that preferred his work before his pleasure, he was for hastening home. Note, Lingering and loitering no way become a wise and good man; when we have despatched our business abroad we must not delay our return to our business at home, nor be longer from it than needs must; for as a bird that wanders from her nest so is he that wanders from his place, Pr 27:8.

55 And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us *a few* days, at the least ten; after that she shall go.

Rebekah's relations, from natural affection and according to the usual expression of kindness in that case, solicit for her stay some time among them, Ge 24:55. They could not think of parting with her on a sudden, especially as she was about the remove so far off and it was not likely that they would ever see one another again: Let her stay a few days, at least ten, which makes it as reasonable a request as the reading in the margin seems to make it unreasonable, a year, or at least ten months. They had consented to the marriage, and yet were loth to part with her. Note, It is an instance of the vanity of this world that there is nothing in it so agreeable but it has its alloy. Nulla est sincera voluptas--There is no unmingled pleasure. They were pleased that they had matched a daughter of their family so well, and yet, when it came to the last, it was with great reluctance that they sent her away.

56 And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.

57 And they said, we will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth.

Rebekah herself determined the matter. To her they appealed, as it was fit they should (Ge 24:57): Call the damsel (who had retired to her apartment with a modest silence) and enquire at her mouth. Note, As children ought not to marry without their parents' consent, so parents ought not to marry them without their own. Before the matter is resolved on, "Ask at the damsel's mouth;" she is a party principally concerned, and therefore ought to be principally consulted. Rebekah consented, not only to go, but to go immediately: I will go, Ge 24:58. We may hope that the notice she had taken of the

servant's piety and devotion gave her such an idea of the prevalence of religion and godliness in the family she was to go to made her desirous to hasten thither, and willing to forget her own people and her father's house, where religion had not so much the ascendant.

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant, and his men.

Hereupon she is sent away with Abraham's servant; not, we may suppose, the very next day after, but very quickly: her friends see that she has a good heart on it, and so they dismiss her,

(1.) With suitable attendants--her nurse (Ge 24:59), her damsels, Ge 24:61. It seems, then, that when she went to the well for water it was not because she had not servants at command, but because she took a pleasure in works of humble industry. Now that she was going among strangers, it was fit she should take those with her with whom she was acquainted. Here is nothing said of her portion. Her personal merits were a portion in her, she needed none with her, nor did that ever come into the treaty of marriage.

(2.) With hearty good wishes: They blessed Rebekah, Ge 24:60. Note, When our relations are entering into a new condition, we ought by prayer to recommend them to the blessing and grace of God. Now that she was going to be a wife, they prayed that she might be a mother both of a numerous and of a victorious progeny. Perhaps Abraham's servant had told them of the promise God had lately made to his master, which it is likely, Abraham acquainted his household with, that God would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and that they should possess the gate of their enemies (Ge 22:17), to which promise they had an eye in this blessing, Be thou the mother of that seed.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister; be thou the *mother* of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country.

Isaac was well employed when he met Rebekah: He went out to meditate, or pray, in the field, at the even-tide, Ge 24:62, 63. Some think he expected the return of his servants about this time, and went out on purpose to meet them. But, it should seem, he went out on another errand, to take the advantage of a silent evening and a solitary field for meditation and prayer, those divine exercises by which we converse with God and our own hearts. Note,

1. Holy souls love retirement. It will do us good to be often left alone, walking alone and sitting alone; and, if we have the art of improving solitude, we shall find we are never less alone than when alone.

2. Meditation and prayer ought to be both our business and our delight when we are alone; while we have a God, a Christ, and a heaven, to acquaint ourselves with, and to secure our interest in, we need not want matter either for meditation or prayer, which, if they go together, will mutually befriend each other.

3. Our walks in the field are then truly pleasant when in them we apply ourselves to meditation and prayer. We there have a free and open prospect of the heavens above us and the earth around us, and the host and riches of both, by the view of which we should be led to the contemplation of the Maker and owner of all.

4. The exercises of devotion should be the refreshment and entertainment of the evening, to relieve us from the fatigue

occasioned by the care and business of the day, and to prepare us for the repose and sleep of the night.

5. Merciful providences are then doubly comfortable when they find us well employed and in the way of our duty. Some think Isaac was now praying for good success in this affair that was depending, and meditating upon that which was proper to encourage his hope in God concerning it; and now, when he sets himself, as it were, upon his watch-tower, to see what God would answer him, as the prophet (Hab 2:1), he sees the camels coming. Sometimes God sends in the mercy prayed for immediately, Ac 12:12.

63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming.

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

Rebekah behaved herself very becomingly, when she met Isaac: understanding who he was, she alighted off her camel (Ge 24:64), and took a veil, and covered herself (Ge 24:65), in token of humility, modesty, and subjection. She did not reproach Isaac for not coming himself to fetch her, or, at least, to meet her a day's journey or two, did not complain of the tediousness of her journey, or the difficulty of leaving her relations, to come into a strange place; but, having seen Providence going before her in the affair, she accommodates herself with cheerfulness to her new relation. Those that by faith are espoused to Christ, and would be presented as chaste virgins to him, must, in conformity to his example, humble themselves, as Rebekah, who alighted when she saw Isaac on foot, and must put themselves into subjection to him who is their head (Eph 5:24), as Rebekah, signifying it by the veil she put on, 1Co 11:10.

65 For she *had* said unto the servant, what man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us?And the servant *had* said, it *is* my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death.*

They were brought together (probably after some further acquaintance), to their mutual comfort, Ge 24:67. Observe here,

1. What an affectionate son he was to his mother: it was about three years since her death, and yet he was not, till now, comforted concerning it; the wound which that affliction gave to his tender spirit bled so long, and was never healed till God brought him into this new relation. Thus crosses and comforts are balances to each other (Ec 7:14), and help to keep the scale even.

2. What an affectionate husband he was to his wife. Note, Those that have approved themselves well in one relation, it may be hoped, will do so in another: She became his wife, and he loved her; there was all the reason in the world why he should, for so ought men to love their wives even an themselves. The duty of the relation is then done, and the comfort of the relation is then enjoyed, when mutual love governs; for there the Lord commands the blessing.

Genesis -25

Abraham's Descendants through Keturah

1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah.

An account of his children by Keturah, another wife whom he married after the death of Sarah. He had buried Sarah and married Isaac, the two dear companions of his life, and was now solitary. He wanted a nurse, his family wanted a governess, and it was not good for him to be thus alone. He therefore marries Keturah, probably the chief of his maid-servants, born in his house or bought with money. Marriage is not forbidden to old age. By her he had six sons, in whom the promise made to Abraham

concerning the great increase of his posterity was in part fulfilled, which, it is likely, he had an eye to this marriage. The strength he received by the promise still remained in him, to show how much the virtue of the promise exceeds the power of nature.

2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.
3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.
4 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these *were* the children of Keturah.
5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.

The disposition which Abraham made of his estate, Ge 25:5, 6. After the birth of these sons, he set his house in order, with prudence and justice.

1. He made Isaac his heir, as he was bound to do, in justice to Sarah his first and principal wife, and to Rebekah who married Isaac upon the assurance of it, Ge 24:36. In this all, which he settled upon Isaac, are perhaps included the promise of the land of Canaan, and the entail of the covenant. Or, God having already made him the heir of the promise, Abraham therefore made him heir of his estate. Our affection and gifts should attend God's.

2. He gave portions to the rest of his children, both to Ishmael, though at first he was sent empty away, and to his sons by Keturah. It was justice to provide for them; parents that do not imitate him in this are worse than infidels. It was prudence to settle them in places distant from Isaac, that they might not pretend to divide the inheritance with him, nor be in any way a care or expense to him. Observe, He did this while he yet lived, lest it should not be done, or not so well done, afterwards.

Note, In many cases it is wisdom for men to make their own hands their executors, and what they find to do to do it while they live, as far as they can. These sons of the concubines were sent into the country that lay east from Canaan, and their posterity were called the children of the east, famous for their numbers, Jdg. 6:5, 33. Their great increase was the fruit of the promise made to Abraham, that God would multiply his seed. God, in dispensing his blessings, does as Abraham did; common

blessings he gives to the children of this world, as to the sons of the bond-woman, but covenant-blessings he reserves for the heirs of promise. All that he has is theirs, for they are his Isaacs, from whom the rest shall be forever separated.

6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

The Death and Burial of Abraham

7 and these *are* the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, a hundred threescore and fifteen years.

The age and death of Abraham, Ge 25:7, 8. He lived 175 years, just 100 years after he came to Canaan; so long he was a sojourner in a strange country. Though he lived long and lived well, though he did good and could ill be spared, yet he died at last. Observe how his death is here described.

1. He gave up the ghost. His life was not extorted from him, but he cheerfully resigned it; into the hands of the Father of spirits he committed his spirit.

2. He died in a good old age, an old man; so God had promised him. His death was his discharge from the burdens of his age: an old man would not so live always. It was also the crown of the glory of his old age.

3. He was full of years, or full of life (as it might be supplied), including all the conveniences and comforts of life. He did not live till the world was weary of him, but till he was weary of the world; he had had enough of it, and desired no more. Vixi quantum satis est--I have lived long enough. A good man, though he should not die old, dies full of days, satisfied with living here, and longing to live in a better place.

4. He was gathered to his people. His body was gathered to the congregation of the dead, and his soul to the congregation of the blessed.

Note, Death gathers us to our people. Those that are our people while we live, whether the people of God or the children of this world, are the people to whom death will gather us.

8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old
man, and full *of years;* and was gathered to his people.
9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of
Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite,
which *is* before Mamre;

His burial, Ge 25:9, 10. Here is nothing recorded of the pomp or ceremony of his funeral; only we are told,

1. Who buried him: His sons Isaac and Ishmael. It was the last office of respect they had to pay to their good father. Some distance there had formerly been between Isaac and Ishmael; but it seems either that Abraham had himself brought them together while he lived, or at least that his death reconciled them.

2. Where they buried him: in his own burying-place, which he had purchased, and in which he had buried Sarah. Note, Those that in life have been very dear to each other may not only innocently, but laudably, desire to be buried together, that in their deaths they may not be divided, and in token of their hopes of rising together.

10 the field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was
Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.
11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed
his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi.

The Descendants of Ishmael

12 Now these *are* the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom
Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:
13 and these *are* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names,
according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth;
and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,
14 and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,
15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

16 these *are* the sons of Ishmael, and these *are* their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.
17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, a hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people.
18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that *is* before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: *and* he died in the presence of all his brethren.

The Birth of Esau and Jacob

19 And these *are* the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:
20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

That they were prayed for. Their parents, after they had been long childless, obtained them by prayer, Ge 25:20, 21. Isaac was forty years old when he was married; though he was an only son, and the person from whom the promised seed was to come, yet he made no haste to marry. He was sixty years old when his sons were born (Ge 25:26), so that, after he was married, he had no child for twenty years.

Note, Though the accomplishment of God's promise is always sure, yet it is often slow, and seems to be crossed and contradicted by Providence, that the faith of believers may be tried, their patience exercised, and mercies long waited for may be the more welcome when they come. While this mercy was delayed, Isaac did not approach to a handmaid's bed, as Abraham had done, and Jacob afterwards; for he loved Rebekah, Ge 24:67. But,

1. He prayed: he entreated the Lord for his wife. Though God had promised to multiply his family, he prayed for its increase; for God's promises must not supersede, but encourage, our prayers, and be improved as the ground of our faith. Though he had prayed for this mercy very often, and had continued his supplication many years, and it was not granted, yet he did not leave off

praying for it; for men ought always to pray, and not to faint (Lu 18:1), to pray without ceasing, and knock till the door be opened, He prayed for his wife; some read it with his wife. Note, Husbands and wives should pray together, which is intimated in the apostle's caution, that their prayers be not hindered, 1Pe 3:7. The Jews have a tradition that Isaac, at length, took his wife with him to mount Moriah, where God had promised that he would multiply Abraham's seed (Ge 22:17), and there, in his prayer with her and for her, pleaded the promise made in that very place.

2. God heard his prayer, and was entreated of him. Note, Children are the gift of God. Those that continue instant in prayer, as Isaac did, shall find, at last, that they did not seek in vain, Isa 45:19.

21 And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she *was* barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, if *it be* so, why *am* I thus?And she went to inquire of the Lord.

That they were prophesied of before they were born, and great mysteries were wrapped up in the prophecies which went before of them, Ge 25:22, 23. Long had Isaac prayed for a son; and now his wife is with child of two, to recompense him for his long waiting. Thus God often outdoes our prayers, and gives more than we are able to ask or think. Now Rebekah being with child of these two sons, observe here,

1. How she was perplexed in her mind concerning her present case: The children struggled together within her. The commotion she felt was altogether extraordinary and made her very uneasy. Whether she was apprehensive that the birth would be her death, or whether she was weary of the intestine tumult, or whether she suspected it to be an ill omen, it seems she was ready to wish that either she had not been with child or that she might die immediately, and not bring forth such a struggling brood: If it be so, or, since it is so, Why am I thus? Before, the want of children was her trouble, now, the struggle of the children is no less so. Note,

(1.) The comforts we are most desirous of are sometimes found to bring along with them more occasion of trouble and uneasiness

that we thought of; vanity being written upon all things under the sun, God thus teaches us to read it.

(2.) We are too apt to be discontented with our comforts, because of the uneasiness that attends them. We know not when we are pleased; we know neither how to want nor how to abound. This struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb represents the struggle that is maintained between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan,

[1.] In the world. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been contending ever since the enmity was put between them (Ge 3:15), and this has occasioned a constant uneasiness among men. Christ himself came to send fire on earth, and this division, Lu 12:49, 51. But let not this be offence to us. A holy war is better than the peace of the devil's palace.

[2.] In the hearts of believers. No sooner is Christ formed in the soul than immediately there begins a conflict between the flesh and spirit, Ga 5:17. The stream is not turned without a mighty struggle, which yet ought not to discourage us. It is better to have a conflict with sin than tamely to submit to it.

2. What course she took for her relief: She went to enquire of the Lord. Some think Melchizedek was now consulted as an oracle, or perhaps some Urim or Teraphim were now used to enquire of God by, as afterwards in the breast-plate of judgment. Note, The word and prayer, by both which we now enquire of the Lord, give great relief to those that are upon any account perplexed. It is a great relief to the mind to spread our case before the Lord, and ask counsel at his mouth. Go into the sanctuary, Ps 73:17.

3. The information given her, upon her enquiry, which expounded the mystery: Two nations are in thy womb, Ge 25:23. She was now pregnant, not only with two children, but two nations, which should not only in their manners and dispositions greatly differ from each other, but in their interests clash and contend with each other; and the issue of the contest should be that the elder should serve the younger, which was fulfilled in the

subjection of the Edomites, for many ages, to the house of David, till they revolted, 2Ch 21:8. Observe here,

(1.) God is a free agent in dispensing his grace; it is his prerogative to make a difference between those who have not as yet themselves done either good or evil. This the apostle infers hence, Ro 9:12.

(2.) In the struggle between grace and corruption in the soul, grace, the younger, shall certainly get the upper hand at last.

23 And the Lord said unto her,
two nations *are* in thy womb,
and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels;
and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people;
and the elder shall serve the younger.

That when they were born there was a great difference between them, which served to confirm what had been foretold (Ge 25:23), was presage of the accomplishment of it, and served greatly to illustrate the type.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, *there were* twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

There was a great difference in their bodies, Ge 25:25. Esau, when he was born, was rough and hairy, as if he had been already a grown man, whence he had his name Esau, made, reared already. This was an indication of a very strong constitution, and gave cause to expect that he would be a very robust, daring, active man. But Jacob was smooth and tender as other children. Note,

(1.) The difference of men's capacities, and consequently of their condition in the world, arises very much from the difference of their natural constitution; some are plainly designed by nature for activity and honour, others as manifestly marked for obscurity. This instance of the divine sovereignty in the kingdom of providence may perhaps help to reconcile us to the doctrine of the divine sovereignty in the kingdom of grace.

(2.) It is God's usual way to choose the weak things of the world, and to pass by the mighty, 1Co 1:26, 27.

26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac *was* threescore years old when she bare them.

There was a manifest contest in their births. Esau, the stronger, came forth first; but Jacob's hand took hold of his heel, Ge 25:26. This signified,

(1.) Jacob's pursuit of the birthright and blessing; from the first, he reached forth to catch hold of it, and, if possible, to prevent his brother.

(2.) His prevailing for it at last, that, in process of time, he should undermine his brother, and gain his point. This passage is referred to (Ho 12:8), and hence he had his name, Jacob, a supplanter.

Esau Sells His Birthright

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob *was* a plain man, dwelling in tents.

They were very unlike in the temper of their minds, and the way of living they chose, Ge 25:27. They soon appeared to be of very different dispositions.

(1.) Esau was a man for this world. He was a man addicted to his sports, for he was a hunter; and a man who knew how to live by his wits, for he was a cunning hunter. Recreation was his business; he studied the art of it, and spent all his time in it. He never loved a book, nor cared for being within doors; but he was a man of the field, like Nimrod and Ishmael, all for the game, and never well but when he was upon the stretch in pursuit of it: in short, he set up for a gentleman and a soldier.

(2.) Jacob was a man for the other world. He was not cut out for a statesman, nor did he affect to look great, but he was a plain man, dwelling in tents, an honest man that always meant well, and dealt fairly, that preferred the true delights of solitude and retirement to all the pretended pleasure of busy noisy sports: he dwelt in tents,

[1.] As a shepherd. He was attached to that safe and silent employment of keeping sheep, to which also he bred up his children, Ge 46:34. Or,

[2.] As a student. He frequented the tents of Melchizedek, or Heber, as some understand it, to be taught by them divine things. And this was that son of Isaac on whom the covenant was entailed.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Their interest in the affections of their parents was likewise different. They had but these two children, and, it seems, one was the father's darling and the other the mother's, Ge 25:28.

(1.) Isaac, though he was not a stirring man himself (for when he went into the fields he went to meditate and pray, not to hunt), yet loved to have his son active. Esau knew how to please him, and showed a great respect for him, by treating him often with venison, which gained him the affections of the good old man, and won upon him more than one would have thought.

(2.) Rebekah was mindful of the oracle of God, which had given the preference to Jacob, and therefore she preferred him in her love. And, if it be lawful for parents to make a difference between their children upon any account, doubtless Rebekah was in the right, that loved him whom God loved.

29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint:

His appetite was very strong, Ge 25:29, 30. Poor Jacob had got some bread and pottage (Ge 25:29) for his dinner, and was sitting down to it contentedly enough, without venison, when Esau came from hunting, hungry and weary, and perhaps had caught nothing. And now Jacob's pottage pleased his eye better than ever his game had done. Give me (says he) some of that red, that red, as it is in the original; it suited his own colour (Ge 25:25), and, in reproach to him for this, he was ever afterwards called Edom, red. Nay, it should seem, he was so faint that he could not feed himself, nor had he a servant at hand to help him, but entreats his brother to feed him. Note,

(1.) Those that addict themselves to sport weary themselves for very vanity, Hab 2:13. They might do the most needful business, and gain the greatest advantages, with half the pains they take, and half the perils they run into, in pursuit of their foolish pleasures.

(2.) Those that work with quietness are more constantly and comfortably provided for than those that hunt with noise: bread is not always to the wise, but those that trust in the Lord and do good, verily they shall be fed, fed with daily bread; not as Esau, sometimes feasting and sometimes fainting.

(3.) The gratifying of the sensual appetite is that which ruins thousands of precious souls: surely, if Esau was hungry and faint, he might have got a meal's meat cheaper than at the expense of his birthright; but he was unaccountably fond of the colour of this pottage, and could not deny himself the satisfaction of a mess of it, whatever it cost him. Never better can come of it, when men's hearts walk after their eyes (Job 31:7), and when they serve their own bellies: therefore look not thou upon the wine, or, as Esau, upon the pottage, when it is red, when it gives that colour in the cup, in the dish, which is most inviting, Pr 23:31. If we use ourselves to deny ourselves, we break the forces of most temptations.

30 and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red
pottage; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom [red].

We have here a bargain made between Jacob and Esau about the birthright, which was Esau's by providence but Jacob's by promise. It was a spiritual privilege, including the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power, as well as the double portion, Ge 49:3. It seemed to be such a birthright as had then the blessing annexed to it, and the entail of the promise. Now see,

Jacob's pious desire of the birthright, which yet he sought to obtain by indirect courses, not agreeable to his character as a plain man. It was not out of pride or ambition that he coveted the birthright, but with an eye to spiritual blessings, which he had got well acquainted with in his tents, while Esau had lost the scent of them in the field. For this he is to be commended, that he coveted earnestly the best gifts; yet in this he cannot be justified, that he

took advantage of his brother's necessity to make him a very hard bargain (Ge 25:31): Sell me this day thy birthright. Probably there had formerly been some communication between them about this matter, and then it was not so great a surprise upon Esau as here it seems to be; and, it may be, Esau had sometimes spoken slightly of the birthright and its appurtenances, which encouraged Jacob to make this proposal to him. And, if so, Jacob is, in some measure, excusable in what he did to gain his point. Note, Plain men that have their conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity, and without worldly wisdom, are often found wisest of all for their souls and eternity. Those are wise indeed that are wise for another world. Jacob's wisdom appeared in two things:--

1. He chose the fittest time, took the opportunity when it offered itself, and did not let it slip.

2. Having made the bargain, he made it sure, and got it confirmed by Esau's oath: Swear to me this day, Ge 25:33. He took Esau when he was in the mind, and would not leave him a power of revocation. In a case of this nature, it is good to be sure.

31 And Jacob said, sell me this day thy birthright.

Esau's profane contempt of the birthright, and the foolish sale he made of it. He is called profane Esau for it (Heb 12:16), because for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright, as dear a morsel as ever was eaten since the forbidden fruit; and he lived to regret it when it was too late. Never was there such a foolish bargain as this which Esau now made; and yet he valued himself upon his policy, and had the reputation of a cunning man, and perhaps had often bantered his brother Jacob as a weak and simple man. Note, There are those that are penny-wise and pound-foolish, cunning hunters that can out-wit others and draw them into their snares, and yet are themselves imposed upon by Satan's wiles and led captive by him at his will. Again, God often chooses the foolish things of the world, by them to confound the wise. Plain Jacob makes a fool of cunning Esau. Observe the instances of Esau's folly.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

His reasoning was very weak (Ge 25:32): Behold, I am at the point to die; and, if he were, would nothing serve to keep him alive but this pottage? If the famine were now in the land (Ge 26:1), as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, we cannot suppose Isaac so poor, or Rebekah so bad a house-keeper, but that he might have been supplied with food convenient, other ways, and might have saved his birthright: but his appetite has the mastery of him; he is in a longing condition, nothing will please him but this red this red pottage, and, to palliate his desire, he pretends he is at the point to die. If it had been so, was it not better for him to die in honour than to live in disgrace, to die under a blessing than to live under a curse? The birthright was typical of spiritual privileges, those of the church of the first-born. Esau was now tried how he would value them, and he shows himself sensible only of present grievances; may he but get relief against them, he cares not for his birthright. Better principled was Naboth, who would lose his life rather than sell his vineyard, because his part in the earthly Canaan signified his part in the heavenly, 1Ki 21:3.

(1.) If we look on Esau's birthright as only a temporal advantage, what he said had something of truth in it, namely, that our worldly enjoyments, even those we are most fond of, will stand us in no stead in a dying hour (Ps 49:6-8); they will not put by the stroke of death, nor ease the pangs nor remove the sting: yet Esau, who set up for a gentleman, should have had a greater and more noble spirit than to sell even such an honour so cheaply.

(2.) But, being of a spiritual nature, his undervaluing it was the greatest profaneness imaginable. Note, It is egregious folly to part with our interest in God, and Christ, and heaven, for the riches, honours, and pleasures, of this world, as bad a bargain as his that sold a birthright for a dish of broth.

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

Repentance was hidden from his eyes (Ge 25:34): He did eat and drink, pleased his palate, satisfied his cravings, congratulated himself on the good meal's meat he had had, and then carelessly

rose up and went his way, without any serious reflections upon the bad bargain he had made, or any show of regret. Thus Esau despised his birthright; he used no means at all to get the bargain revoked, made no appeal to his father about it, nor proposed to his brother to compound the matter; but the bargain which his necessity had made (supposing it were so) his profaneness confirmed ex post facto--after the deed; and by his subsequent neglect and contempt he did, as it were, acknowledge a fine, and by justifying himself in what he had done he put the bargain past recall. Note, People are ruined, not so much by doing what is amiss, as by doing it and not repenting of it, doing it and standing to it.

Genesis -26

Isaac at Gerar

1 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

Here, I. God tried Isaac by his providence. Isaac had been trained up in a believing dependence upon the divine grant of the land of Canaan to him and his heirs; yet now there is a famine in the land, Ge 26:1. What shall he think of the promise when the promised land will not find him bread? Is such a grant worth accepting, upon such terms, and after so long a time? Yes, Isaac will still cleave to the covenant; and the less valuable Canaan in itself seems to be the better he is taught to value it,

1. As a token of God's everlasting kindness to him; and,

2. As a type of heaven's everlasting blessedness. Note, The intrinsic worth of God's promises cannot be lessened in a believer's eye by any cross providences.

2 And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of.

3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

He directed him under this trial by his word. Isaac finds himself straitened by the scarcity of provisions. Somewhere he must go for supply; it should seem, he set out for Egypt, whither his father went in the like strait, but he takes Gerar in his way, full of thoughts, no doubt, which way he had best steer his course, till God graciously appeared to him, and determined him, abundantly to his satisfaction.

1. God bade him stay where he was, and not go down into Egypt: Sojourn in this land, Ge 26:2, 3. There was a famine in Jacob's days, and God bade him go down into Egypt (Ge 46:3, 4), a famine in Isaac's days, and God bade him not to go down, a famine in Abraham's days, and God left him to his liberty, directing him

neither way. This variety in the divine procedure (considering that Egypt was always a place of trial and exercise to God's people) some ground upon the different characters of these three patriarchs. Abraham was a man of very high attainments, and intimate communion with God; and to him all places and conditions were alike. Isaac was a very good man, but not cut out for hardship; therefore he is forbidden to go to Egypt. Jacob was inured to difficulties, strong and patient; and therefore he must go down into Egypt, that the trial of his faith might be to praise, and honour, and glory. Thus God proportions his people's trials to their strength.

2. He promised to be with him, and bless him, Ge 26:3. As we may go anywhere with comfort when God's blessing goes with us, so we may stay anywhere contentedly if that blessing rest upon us.

3. He renewed the covenant with him, which had so often been made with Abraham, repeating and ratifying the promises of the land of Canaan, a numerous issue, and the Messiah, Ge 26:3, 4.

Note, Those that must live by faith have need often to review, and repeat to themselves, the promises they are to live upon, especially when they are called to any instance of suffering or self-denial.

4. He recommended to him the good example of his father's obedience, as that which had preserved the entail of the covenant in his family (Ge 26:5): "Abraham obeyed my voice; do thou do so too, and the promise shall be sure to thee." Abraham's obedience is here celebrated, to his honour; for by it he obtained a good report both with God and men. A great variety of words is here used to express the divine will, to which Abraham was obedient (my voice, my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws), which may intimate that Abraham's obedience was universal; he obeyed the original laws of nature, the revealed laws of divine worship, particularly that of circumcision, and all the extraordinary precepts God gave him, as that of quitting his country, and that (which some think is more especially referred to) of the offering up of his son, which Isaac himself had reason enough to remember. Note, Those only shall have the benefit and comfort of God's covenant with

their godly parents that tread in the steps of their obedience.

4 and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed:

5 because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

6 And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

Isaac had now laid aside all thoughts of going to Egypt, and, in obedience to the heavenly vision, sets up his staff in Gerar, the country in which he was born (Ge 26:6), yet there he enters into temptation, the same temptation that his good father had been once and again surprised and overcome by, namely, to deny his wife, and to give out that she was his sister. Observe,

How he sinned, Ge 26:7. Because his wife was handsome, he fancied the Philistines would find some way or other to take him off, that some of them might marry her; and therefore she must pass for his sister. It is an unaccountable thing that both these great and good men should be guilty of so strange a piece of dissimulation, by which they so much exposed both their own and their wives' reputation. But we see,

1. That very good men have sometimes been guilty of very great faults and follies. Let those therefore that stand take heed lest they fall, and those that have fallen not despair of being helped up again.

2. That there is an aptness in us to imitate even the weaknesses and infirmities of those we have a value for. We have need therefore to keep our foot, lest, while we aim to tread in the steps of good men, we sometimes tread in their by-steps.

7 And the men of the place asked *him* of his wife; and he said, she *is* my sister: for he feared to say, *she is* my wife; lest, *said he,* the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she *was* fair to look upon.

8 And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac *was* sporting with Rebekah his wife.

How he was detected, and the cheat discovered, by the king himself. Abimelech (not the same that was in Abraham's days, Ge 20:1-18, for this was nearly 100 years after that, but this was the common name of the Philistine kings, as Cæsar of the Roman emperors) saw Isaac more familiar and pleasant with Rebekah than he knew he would be with his sister (Ge 26:8): he saw him

sporting with her, or laughing; it is the same word with that from which Isaac had his name. He was rejoicing with the wife of his youth, Pr 5:18. It becomes those in that relation to be pleasant with one another, as those that are pleased with one another. Nowhere may a man more allow himself to be innocently merry than with his own wife and children. Abimelech charged him with the fraud (Ge 26:9), showed him how frivolous his excuse was and what might have been the bad consequences of it (Ge 26:10), and then, to convince him how groundless and unjust his jealousy of them was, took him and his family under his particular protection, forbidding any injury to be done to him or his wife upon pain of death, Ge 26:11. Note,

1. A lying tongue is but for a moment. Truth is the daughter of time; and, in time, it will out.

2. One sin is often the inlet to many, and therefore the beginnings of sin ought to be avoided.

3. The sins of professors shame them before those that are without.

4. God can make those that are incensed against his people, though there may be some colour of cause for it, to know that it is at their peril if they do them any hurt. See Ps 105:14, 15.

9 And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she *is* thy wife: and how saidst thou, She *is* my sister? And Isaac said unto him, because I said, lest I die for her.

10 And Abimelech said, what *is* this thou hast done unto us? One of the people might lightly have lain with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.

11 And Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.

The tokens of God's good-will to Isaac. He blessed him, and prospered him, and made all that he had to thrive under his hands.

1. His corn multiplied strangely, Ge 26:12. He had no land of his own, but took land of the Philistines, and sowed it; and (be it observed for the encouragement of poor tenants, that occupy other people's lands, and are honest and industrious) God blessed him with a great increase. He reaped a hundred fold; and there seems to be an emphasis laid upon the time: it was that same year when there was a famine in the land; while others scarcely reaped at all, he reaped thus plentifully. See Isa 65:13, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry, Ps

37:19, In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

2. His cattle also increased, Ge 26:14. And then,

3. He had great store of servants, whom he employed and maintained. Note, As goods are increased those are increased that eat them, Ec 5:11.

13 And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he
became very great:
14 for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great
store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

The tokens of the Philistines' ill-will to him. They envied him, Ge 26:14. It is an instance,

1. Of the vanity of the world that the more men have of it the more they are envied, and exposed to censure and injury. Who can stand before envy? Pr 27:4. See Ec 4:4. 2. Of the corruption of nature; for that is a bad principle indeed which makes men grieve at the good of others, as if it must needs be ill with me because it is well with my neighbor.

(1.) They had already shown their ill-will to his family, by stopping up the wells which his father had digged, Ge 26:15. This was

spitefully done. Because they had not flocks of their own to water at these wells, they would not leave them for the use of others; so absurd a thing is malice. And it was perfidiously done, contrary to the covenant of friendship they had made with Abraham, Ge 21:31, 32. No bonds will hold ill-nature.

(2.) They expelled him out of their country, Ge 26:16, 17. The king of Gerar began to look upon him with a jealous eye. Isaac's house was like a court, and his riches and retinue eclipsed Abimelech's; and therefore he must go further off. They were weary of his neighbourhood, because they saw that the Lord blessed him; whereas, for that reason, they should the rather have courted his stay, that they also might be blessed for his sake. Isaac does not insist upon the bargain he had made with them for the lands he held, nor upon his occupying and improving them, nor does he offer to contest with them by force, though he had become very great, but very peaceably departs thence further from the royal city, and perhaps to a part of the country less fruitful. Note, We should deny ourselves both in our rights and in our conveniences, rather than quarrel: a wise and a good man will rather retire into obscurity, like

Isaac here into a valley, than sit high to be the butt of envy and ill-will.

15 For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

16 And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

17 And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

His constancy and continuance in his business still.

1. He kept up his husbandry, and continued industrious to find wells of water, and to fit them for his use, Ge 26:18, &c. Though he had grown very rich, yet he was as solicitous as ever about the state of his flocks, and still looked well to his herds; when men grow great, they must take heed of thinking themselves too big and too high for their business. Though he was driven from the conveniences he had had, and could not follow his husbandry with the same ease and advantage as before, yet he set himself to make the best of the country he had come into, which it is every man's prudence to do. Observe,

(1.) He opened the wells that his father had digged (Ge 26:18), and out of respect to his father called them by the same names that he had given them. Note, In our searches after truth, that fountain of living water, it is good to make use of the discoveries of former ages, which have been clouded by the corruptions of later times. Enquire for the old way, the wells which our fathers digged, which the adversaries of truth have stopped up: Ask thy elders, and they shall teach thee.

(2.) His servants dug new wells, Ge 26:19. Note, Though we must use the light of former ages, it does not therefore follow that we must rest in it, and make no advances. We must still be building upon their foundation, running to and fro, that knowledge may be increased, Da 12:4.

(3.) In digging his wells he met with much opposition, Ge 26:20, 21. Those that open the fountains of truth must expect contradiction. The first two wells which they dug were called Esek and Sitnah, contention and hatred. See here,

[1.] What is the nature of worldly things; they are make-bates and occasions of strife.

[2.] What is often the lot even of the most quiet and peaceable men in this world; those that avoid striving yet cannot avoid being striven with, Ps 120:7. In this sense, Jeremiah was a man of contention (Jer 15:10), and Christ himself, though he is the prince of peace.

[3.] What a mercy it is to have plenty of water, to have it without striving for it. The more common this mercy is the more reason we have to be thankful for it.

(4.) At length he removed to a quiet settlement, cleaving to his peaceable principle, rather to fly than fight, and unwilling to dwell with those that hated peace, Ps 120:6. He preferred quietness to victory. He dug a well, and for this they strove not, Ge 26:22. Note, Those that follow peace, sooner or later, shall find peace; those that study to be quiet seldom fail of being so. How unlike was Isaac to his brother Ishmael, who, right or wrong, would hold what he had, against all the world! Ge 16:12. And which of these would we be found the

followers of? This well they called Rehoboth, enlargements, room enough: in the two former wells we may see what the earth is, straitness and strife; men cannot thrive, for the throng of their neighbours. This well shows us what heaven is; it is enlargement and peace, room enough there, for there are many mansions.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, the water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek [contention]; because they strove with him.

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah [hatred].

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth [room]; and he said, for now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

23 And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba.

He continued firm to his religion, and kept up his communion with God. (1.) God graciously appeared to him, Ge 26:24. When the Philistines expelled him, forced him to remove from place to place, and gave him continual molestation, then God visited him, and gave him fresh assurances of his favour. Note, When men are found false and unkind, we may comfort ourselves that God is faithful and gracious; and his time to show himself so is when we are most disappointed in our expectations from men. When Isaac had come

to Beer-sheba (Ge 26:23) it is probable that it troubled him to think of his unsettled condition, and that he could not be suffered to stay long in a place; and, in the multitude of these thoughts within him, that same night that he came weary and uneasy to Beer-sheba God brought him his comforts to delight his soul. Probably he was apprehensive that the Philistines would not let him rest there: Fear not, says God to him, I am with thee, and will bless thee. Those may remove with comfort that are sure of God's presence with them wherever they go.

(2.) He was not wanting in his returns of duty to God; for there he built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord, Ge 26:25. Note,

[1.] Wherever we go, we must take our religion along with us. Probably Isaac's altars and his religious worship gave offence to the Philistines, and provoked them to be the more troublesome to him; yet he kept up his duty, whatever ill-will he might be exposed to by it.

[2.] The comforts and encouragements God gives us by his word should excite and quicken us to every exercise of devotion by which God

may be honoured and our intercourse with heaven maintained.

24 And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

25 And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

26 Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

Abimelech pays a friendly visit to Isaac, in token of the respect he had for him, Ge 26:26. Note, When a man's ways please the Lord he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him, Pr 16:7. Kings' hearts are in his hands, and when he pleases he can turn them to favour his people.

27 And Isaac said unto them, wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

Isaac prudently and cautiously questions his sincerity in this visit, Ge 26:27. Note, In settling friendships and correspondences, there is need of the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove; nor is it any transgression of the law of meekness and love plainly to signify our strong perception of injuries received, and to stand upon our guard in dealing with those that have acted unfairly.

28 And they said, we saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, *even* betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;

Abimelech professes his sincerity, in this address to Isaac, and earnestly courts his friendship, Ge 26:28, 29. Some suggest that Abimelech pressed for this league with him because he feared lest Isaac, growing rich, should, sometime or other, avenge himself upon them for the injuries he had received. However, he professes to do it rather from a principle of love.

1. He makes the best of their behaviour towards him. Isaac complained they had hated him, and sent him away. No, said Abimelech, we sent thee away in peace. They turned him off from the land he held of them; but they suffered him to take away his stock, and all his effects, with him.

Note, The lessening of injuries is necessary to the preserving of friendship; for the aggravating of them exasperates and widens breaches. The unkindness done to us might have been worse.

2. He acknowledges the token of God's favour to him, and makes this the ground of their desire to be in league with him: The Lord is with thee, and thou art the blessed of the Lord.

As if he had said, "Be persuaded to overlook and pass by the injuries offered thee; for God had abundantly made up to thee the damage thou receivedst." Note, Those whom God blesses and favours have reason enough to forgive those who hate them, since the worst enemy they have cannot do them any real hurt. Or, "For this reason we desire thy friendship, because God is with thee." Note, It is good to be in covenant and communion with those who are in covenant and communion with God, 1Jo 1:3; present address to him was the result of mature deliberation: We said, Let there be an oath between us. Whatever some of his peevish envious subjects might mean otherwise, he and his prime-ministers of state, whom he had now brought with him, designed no other than a cordial friendship. Perhaps Abimelech had received, by tradition, the warning God gave to his predecessor not to hurt Abraham (Ge 20:7), and this made him stand in such awe of Isaac, who appeared to be as much the favourite of Heaven as Abraham was.

29 that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as
we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away
in peace: thou *art* now the blessed of the Lord.

30 And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink.

Isaac entertains him and his company, and enters into a league of friendship with him, Ge

26:30, 31. Here see how generous the good man was,

1. In giving: He made them a feast, and bade them welcome.

(2.) In forgiving. He did not insist upon the unkindnesses they had done him, but freely entered into a covenant of friendship with them, and bound himself never to do them any injury. Note, Religion teaches us to be neighbourly, and, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.

31 And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another:
and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.
32 And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told
him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him,
we have found water.

Providence smiled upon what Isaac did; for the same day that he made this covenant with Abimelech his servants brought him the tidings of a well of water they had found, Ge 26:32, 33. He did not insist upon the restitution of the wells which the Philistines had unjustly taken from him, lest this should break off the treaty, but sat down silent under the injury; and, to recompense him for this, immediately he is enriched with a new well, which, because it

suited so well to the occurrence of the day, he called by an old name, Beer-sheba, The well of the oath.

33 And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city *is* Beer-Sheba unto this day.

34 And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:

Here is,

1. Esau's foolish marriage--foolish, some think, in marrying two wives together, for which perhaps he is called a fornicator (Heb 12:16), or rather in marrying Canaanites, who were strangers to the blessing of Abraham, and subject to the curse of Noah, for which he is called profane; for hereby he intimated that he neither desired the blessing nor dreaded the curse of God.

2 The grief and trouble it created to his tender parents.

(1.) It grieved them that he married without asking, or at least without taking, their advice and consent: see whose steps those children tread in who either contemn or contradict their parents in disposing of themselves.

(2.) It grieved them that he married the daughters of Hittites, who had no religion among them; for Isaac remembered his father's care concerning him, that he should by no means marry a Canaanite.

(3.) It should seem, the wives he married were provoking in their conduct towards Isaac and Rebekah; those children have little reason to expect the blessing of God who do that which is a grief of mind to their good parents.

35 which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

Genesis -27

Jacob Obtains Isaac's Blessing

1 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, my son: and he said unto him, Behold, here *am* I.

Here is,

Isaac's design to make his will, and to declare Esau his heir. The promise of the Messiah and the land of Canaan was a great trust, first committed to Abraham, inclusive and typical of spiritual and eternal blessings; this, by divine direction, he transmitted to Isaac. Isaac, being now old, and not knowing, or not understanding, or not duly considering, the divine oracle concerning his two sons, that the elder should serve the younger, resolves to entail all the honour and power that were wrapped up in the promise upon Esau his eldest son. In this he was governed more by natural affection, and the common method of settlements, than he ought to have been, if he knew

(as it is probable he did) the intimations God had given of his mind in this matter.

Note, We are very apt to take our measures rather from our own reason than from divine revelation, and thereby often miss our way; we think the wise and learned, the mighty and noble, should inherit the promise; but God sees not as man sees. See 1Sa 16:6, 7.

2 And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

He tells him upon what considerations he resolved to do this now (Ge 27:2): "I am old, and therefore must die shortly, yet I know not the day of my death, nor when I must die; I will therefore do that at this time which must be done some time." Note,

(1.) Old people should be reminded by the growing infirmities of age to do quickly, and with all the little might they have, what their hand finds to do. See Jos 13:1.

(2.) The consideration of the uncertainty of the time of our departure out of the world (about which God has wisely kept us in the dark) should quicken us to do the work of the day in its day. The heart and the house should both be set, and kept, in order, because at such an hour as we think not the Son of man comes; because we know not the day of our death, we are concerned to mind the business of life.

3 now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me *some* venison;

He bids him to get things ready for the solemnity of executing his last will and testament, by which he designed to make him his heir, Ge 27:3, 4. Esau must go a hunting, and bring some venison, which his father will eat of, and then bless him. In this he designed, not so much the refreshment of his own spirits, that he might give the blessing in a lively manner, as it is commonly taken, but rather the receiving of a fresh instance of his son's filial duty and affection to him, before he bestowed

this favour upon him. Perhaps Esau, since he had married, had brought his venison to his wives, and seldom to his father, as formerly (Ge 25:28), and therefore Isaac, before he would bless him, would have him show this piece of respect to him. Note, It is fit, if the less be blessed of the greater, that the greater should be served and honoured by the less. He says, That my soul may bless thee before I die. Note,

(1.) Prayer is the work of the soul, and not of the lips only; as the soul must be employed in blessing God (Ps 103:1), so it must be in blessing ourselves and others: the blessing will not come to the heart if it do not come from the heart.

(2.) The work of life must be done before we die, for it cannot be done afterwards (Ec 9:10); and it is very desirable, when we come to die, to have nothing else to do but to die. Isaac lived above forty years after this; let none therefore think that they shall die the sooner for making their wills and getting ready for death.

4 and make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

The carnal affection he had for his son made him forget what God spoke to his wife. Ge 25:23.

5 And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt *for* venison, *and* to bring *it*.

6 And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

She prized the blessing as invaluable; she knew that God intended it for the younger son [Ge 25:23]; and in her anxiety to secure its being conferred on the right object—on one who cared for religion—she acted in the sincerity of faith; but in crooked policy—with unenlightened zeal; on the false principle that the end would sanctify the means.

7 Bring me venison, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death.

8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

9 Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

Rebekah is here contriving to procure for Jacob the blessing which was designed for Esau; and here,

I The end was good, for she was directed in this intention by the oracle of God, by which she had been governed in dispensing her affections. God had said it should be so, that the elder should serve the younger; and therefore Rebekah resolves it shall be so, and cannot bear to see her husband designing to thwart the oracle of God. But,

II This trickery is worthy of blame because she should have waited for God to perform his promise. The means were bad, and no way justifiable. If it was not a wrong to Esau to deprive him of the blessing (he himself having forfeited it by selling the birthright), yet it was a wrong to Isaac, taking advantage of his infirmity, to impose upon him; it was a wrong to Jacob too, whom she taught to deceive, by putting a lie into his mouth, or at least by putting one into his right hand. It would likewise expose him to endless scruples about the blessing, if he should obtain it thus fraudulently, whether it would stand him or his in any stead, especially if his father should revoke it, upon the discovery of the cheat, and plead, as he might, that it was nulled by an error personæ--a mistake of the person. He himself also was aware of the danger, lest (Ge 27:12), if he should miss of the blessing, as he might probably have done, he should bring upon himself his father's curse, which he dreaded above anything; besides, he laid himself open to that divine curse which is pronounced upon him that causeth the blind to wander out of the way, De 27:18. If Rebekah, when she heard Isaac promise the blessing to Esau, had gone, at his return from hunting, to Isaac, and, with humility and seriousness, put him in remembrance of that which God had said concerning their sons,--if she further had shown him how Esau had forfeited the blessing both by selling his birthright

and by marrying strange wives, it is probable that Isaac would have been prevailed upon knowingly and wittingly to confer the blessing upon Jacob, and needed not thus to have been cheated into it. This would have been honourable and laudable, and would have looked well in the history; but God left her to herself, to take this indirect course, that he might have the glory of bringing good out of evil, and of serving his own purposes by the sins and follies of men, and that we might have the satisfaction of knowing that, though there is so much wickedness and deceit in the world, God governs it according to his will, to his own praise. See Job 12:16, With him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceiver are his. Isaac had lost the sense of seeing, which, in this case, could not have been imposed upon, Providence having so admirably well ordered the difference of features that no two faces are exactly alike: conversation and commerce could scarcely be maintained if there were not such a variety. Therefore she endeavours to deceive,

1. His sense of tasting, by dressing some choice pieces of kid, seasoning them, serving them up, so as to make him believe they were venison: this it was no hard matter to do. See the folly of those that are nice and curious in their appetite, and take a pride in humouring it. It is easy to impose upon them with that which they pretend to despise and dislike, so little perhaps does it differ from that to which they give a decided preference. Solomon tells us that dainties are deceitful meat; for it is possible for us to be deceived by them in more ways than one, Pr 23:32.

2. His sense of feeling and smelling. She put Esau's clothes upon Jacob, his best clothes, which, it might be supposed, Esau would put on, in token of joy and respect to his father, when he was to receive the blessing. Isaac knew these, by the stuff, shape, and smell, to be Esau's. If we would obtain a blessing from our heavenly Father, we must come for it in the garments of our elder brother, clothed with his righteousness, who is the first-born among many brethren. Lest the smoothness and

softness of Jacob's hands and neck should betray him, she covered them, and probably part of his face, with the skins of the kids that were newly killed, Ge 27:16. Esau was rough indeed when nothing less than these would serve to make Jacob like him. Those that affect to seem rough and rugged in their carriage put the beast upon the man, and really shame themselves, by thus disguising themselves. And, lastly, it was a very rash word which Rebekah spoke, when Jacob objected the danger of a curse: Upon me be thy curse, my son, Ge 27:13. Christ indeed, who is mighty to save, because mighty to bear, has said, Upon me be the curse, only obey my voice; he has borne the burden of the curse, the curse of the law, for all those that will take upon them the yoke of the command, the command of the gospel. But it is too daring for any creature to say, Upon me be the curse, unless it be that curse causeless which we are sure shall not come, Pr 26:2.

10 and thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

It is remarkable that his scruples were founded, not on the evil of the act, but on the risk and consequences of deception.

12 my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

13 And his mother said unto him, upon me *be* thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

The assurance of God's decree made her bold.

14 And he went, and fetched, and brought *them* to his mother: and his mother made savory meat, such as his father loved.

15 And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

16 and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

17 and she gave the savory meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18 And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I; who *art* thou, my son?

The scheme planned by the mother was to be executed by the son in the father's bedchamber; and it is painful to think of the deliberate falsehoods, as well as daring profanity, he resorted to. The disguise, though wanting in one thing, which had nearly upset the whole plot, succeeded in misleading Isaac; and while giving his paternal embrace, the old man was roused into a state of high satisfaction and delight.

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19 And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

Observe here, I The art and assurance with which Jacob managed this intrigue. Who would have thought that this plain man could have played his part so well in a design of this nature? His mother having put him in the way of it, and encouraged him in it, he dexterously applied himself to those methods which he had never accustomed himself to, but had always conceived an abhorrence of. Note, Lying is soon learnt. The psalmist speaks of those who, as soon as they are born, speak lies, Ps 58:3, Jer 9:5. I wonder how honest Jacob could so readily turn his tongue to say (Ge 27:19), I am Esau thy first-born; nor do I see how the endeavour of some to bring him off with that equivocation, I am made thy first-born, namely by purchase, does him any service; for when his father asked him (Ge 27:24), Art thou my very son Esau? He said, I am. How could he say, I have done as thou badest me, when he had received no command from his father, but was doing as his mother bade him? How could he say, Eat of my venison, when he knew it came, not from the field, but from the fold? But especially I wonder how he could have the assurance to

father it upon God, and to use his name in the cheat (Ge 27:20): The Lord thy God brought it to me. Is this Jacob? Is this Israel indeed, without guile? It is certainly written, not for our imitation, but for our admonition. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of those graces for which they have been most eminent.

20 And Isaac said unto his son, how *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, because the Lord thy God brought *it* to me.

21 And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou *be* my very son Esau or not.

22 And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

Isaac was at first dissatisfied, and would have discovered the fraud if he could have trusted his own ears; for the voice was Jacob's voice, Ge 27:22. Providence has ordered a strange variety of voices as well as faces, which is also of use to prevent our being imposed upon; and the voice is a thing not easily disguised nor counterfeited. This may be alluded to illustrate the character of a hypocrite. His voice is Jacob's voice, but his hands are Esau's. He speaks the language of a saint, but does the works of a sinner; but the judgment will be, as here, by the hands.

23 And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

At length he yielded to the power of the cheat, because the hands were hairy (Ge 27:23), not considering how easy it was to counterfeit that circumstance; and now Jacob carries it on dexterously, sets his venison before his father, and waits at table very officiously, till dinner is done, and the blessing comes to be pronounced in the close of this solemn feast. That which in some small degree extenuates the crime of Rebekah and Jacob is that the fraud was intended, not so much to hasten the fulfilling, as to prevent the thwarting, of the oracle of God: the blessing was just going to be put upon the wrong head, and they thought it was time to bestir themselves. Now let us see how Isaac gave Jacob his blessing, Ge 27:26-29.

(1.) He embraced him, in token of a particular affection to him. Those that are blessed of God are kissed with the kisses of his mouth, and they do, by love and loyalty, kiss the Son, Ps 2:12.

(2.) He praised him. He smelt the smell of his raiment, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed, that is, like that of the most fragrant flowers and spices. It appeared that God had blessed him, and therefore Isaac would bless him.

(3.) He prayed for him, and therein prophesied concerning him. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. And thus, as well as by their baptism, to do what they can to preserve and perpetuate the entail of the covenant in their families. But this was an extraordinary blessing; and Providence so ordered it that Isaac should bestow it upon Jacob ignorantly and by mistake, that it might appear he was beholden to God for it, and not to Isaac. Three things Jacob is here blessed with:--

[1.] Plenty (Ge 27:28), heaven and earth concurring to make him rich.

[2.] Power (Ge 27:29), particularly dominion over his brethren, namely, Esau and his posterity.

[3.] Prevalency with God, and a great interest in Heaven: "Cursed by every one that curseth thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee. Let God be a friend to all thy friends, and an enemy to all thy enemies." More is certainly comprised in this blessing than appears prima facie--at first sight. It must amount to an entail of the promise of the Messiah, and of the church; this was, in the patriarchal dialect, the blessing: something spiritual, doubtless, is included in it.

First, That from him should come the Messiah, who should have a sovereign dominion on earth. It was that top-branch of his family which people should serve and nations bow down to. See Nu 24:19, Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, the star and sceptre, Nu 24:17. Jacob's dominion over Esau was to be only typical of this, Ge 49:10.

Secondly, That from him should come the church, which should be particularly owned and favoured by Heaven. It was part of the blessing of Abraham, when he was first called to be the father of the faithful Ge 12:3), I will bless those that bless thee; therefore, when Isaac afterwards confirmed the blessing to Jacob, he called it the blessing of Abraham, Ge 28:4. Balaam explains this too, Nu 24:9.

Note, It is the best and most desirable blessing to stand in relation to Christ and his church, and to be interested in Christ's power and the church's favours.

24 And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau?And he said, I *am*.
25 And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.
26 And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.
27 And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed:

The aromatic odors of the Syrian fields and meadows, often impart a strong fragrance to the person and clothes, as has been noticed by many travellers.

28 therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven,
and the fatness of the earth,
and plenty of corn and wine:

Yet it was far short of Jacob's blessing. For him God had reserved some better thing.

[1.] In Jacob's blessing the dew of heaven is put first, as that which he most valued, and desired, and depended upon; in Esau's the fatness of the earth is put first, for it was this that he had the first and principal regard to.

[2.] Esau has these, but Jacob has them from God's hand: God give thee the dew of heaven, Ge 27:28. It was enough to Esau to have the possession; but Jacob desired it by promise, and to have it from covenant-love.

[3.] Jacob shall have dominion over his brethren: hence the Israelites often ruled over the Edomites. Esau shall have dominion, that is, he shall gain some power and interest, but shall never have dominion over his brother: we never find that the Jews were sold into the hands of the Edomites, or that they oppressed them. But the great difference in that there is nothing in Esau's blessing that points at Christ, nothing that brings him or his into the church and covenant of God, without which the fatness of the earth, and the plunder of the field, will stand him in little stead. Thus Isaac by faith blessed them both according as their lot should be. Some observe that Jacob was blessed with a kiss (Ge 27:27), so was not Esau.

29 let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

30 And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31 And he also had made savory meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

32 And Isaac his father said unto him, Who *art* thou? And he said, I *am* thy son, thy firstborn, Esau.

33 And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, who? Where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him?Yea, *and* he shall be blessed.

34 And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, bless me, *even* me also, O my father.

The covenant-blessing denied to Esau. He that made so light of the birthright would now have inherited the blessing, but he was rejected, and found no place of repentance in his father, though he sought it carefully with tears, Heb 12:17. Observe,

How carefully he sought it. He prepared the savoury meat, as his father had directed him, and then begged the blessing which his father had encouraged him to expect, Ge 27:31. When he understood that Jacob had obtained it surreptitiously, he cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry, Ge 27:34. No man could have laid the disappointment more to heart than he did; he made his father's tent to ring with his grief, and again (Ge 27:38) lifted up his voice and wept.

Note, The day is coming when those that now make light of the blessings of the covenant, and sell their title to them for a thing of nought, will in vain be importunate for them. Those that will not so much as ask and seek now will knock shortly, and cry, Lord, Lord. Slighters of Christ will then be humble suitors to him.

This he desired: Bless me also, Ge 27:34. Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? Ge 27:36. Note,

(1.) The worst of men know how to wish well to themselves; and even those who profanely sell their birthright seem piously to desire the blessing. Faint desires of happiness, without a right choice of the end and a right use of the means, deceive many into their own ruin. Multitudes go to hell with their mouths full of good wishes. The desire of the slothful and unbelieving kills them. Many will seek to enter in, as Esau, who shall not be able, because they do not strive, Lu 13:24.

(2.) It is the folly of most men that they are willing to take up with any good (Ps 4:6), as Esau here, who desired but a second-rate blessing, a blessing separated from the birthright. Profane hearts think any blessing as good as that from God's oracle: Hast thou but one? As if he had said, "I will take up with any: though I have not the blessing of the church, yet let me have some blessing."

35 And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

How he was rejected. Isaac, when first made sensible of the imposition that had been practised on him, trembled exceedingly, Ge 27:33. Those that follow the choice of their own affections, rather than the dictates of the divine will, involve themselves in such perplexities as these. But he soon recovers himself, and ratifies the blessing he had given to Jacob: I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed; he might, upon very plausible grounds, have recalled it, but now, at last, he is sensible that he was in an error when he designed it for Esau. Either himself recollecting the divine oracle, or rather having found himself more than ordinarily filled with the Holy Ghost when he gave the blessing to Jacob, he perceived that God did, as it were, say Amen to it. Now,

(1.) Jacob was hereby confirmed in his possession of the blessing, and abundantly satisfied of the validity of it, though he obtained it fraudulently; hence too he had reason to hope that God graciously overlooked and pardoned his misconduct.

(2.) Isaac hereby acquiesced in the will of God, though it contradicted his own expectations and affection. He had a mind to give Esau the blessing, but, when he perceived the will of God was otherwise, he submitted; and this he did by faith (Heb 11:20), as Abraham before him, when he had solicited for Ishmael. May not God do what he will with his own?

(3.) Esau hereby was cut off from the expectation of that special blessing which he thought to have preserved to himself

when he sold his birthright. The Jews, like Esau, hunted after the law of righteousness (Ro 9:31), yet missed of the blessing of righteousness, because they sought it by the works of the law (Ro 9:32); while the Gentiles, who, like Jacob, sought it by faith in the oracle of God, obtained it by force, with that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers. See Mt 11:12.

That those who undervalue their spiritual birthright, and can afford to sell it for a morsel of meat, forfeit spiritual blessings, and it is just with God to deny them those favours they were careless of. Those that will part with their wisdom and grace, with their faith and a good conscience, for the honours, wealth, or pleasures, of this world, however they may pretend a zeal for the blessing, have already judged themselves unworthy of it, and so shall their doom be.

36 And he said, is not he rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

In Ge 25:26 he was so called because he held his brother by the heel, as though he would overthrow him: and therefore he is here called an overthrower, or deceiver.

37 And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38 And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

39 And Isaac his father answered and said unto him,
Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth,
and of the dew of heaven from above;

It was a good thing, and better than he deserved. It was promised him,

[1.] That he should have a competent livelihood--the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven. Note, Those that come short

of the blessings of the covenant may yet have a very good share of outward blessings. God gives good ground and good weather to many that reject his covenant, and have no part nor lot in it.

[2.] That by degrees he should recover his liberty. If Jacob must rule (Ge 27:29), Esau must serve; but he has this to comfort him, he shall live by his sword. He shall serve, but he shall not starve; and, at length, after much skirmishing, he shall break the yoke of bondage, and wear marks of freedom. This was fulfilled (2Ki 8:20, 22) when the Edomites revolted.

40 and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother:
and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion,
that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Jacob Flees from Esau

41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father
blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for
my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

That those who lift up hands in wrath lift them up in vain. Esau, instead of repenting of his own folly, reproached his brother, unjustly charged him with taking away the birthright which he had fairly sold to him (Ge 27:36), and conceived malice against him for what he had now done, Ge 27:41. Those are not likely to speed in prayer who turn those resentments upon their brethren which they should turn upon themselves, and lay the blame of their miscarriages upon others, when they should take shame to themselves.

Here is, the malice Esau bore to Jacob upon account of the blessing which he had obtained, Ge 27:41. Hypocrites only abstain from doing evil for fear of men. Thus he went in the way of Cain, who slew his brother because he had gained that acceptance with God of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Esau's hatred of Jacob was,

1. A causeless hatred. He hated him for no other reason but because his father blessed him and God loved him. Note, The happiness of saints is the envy of sinners. Whom Heaven blesses, hell curses.

2. It was a cruel hatred. Nothing less would satisfy him than to slay his brother. It is the blood of the saints that persecutors thirst after: I will slay my brother. How could he say that word without horror? How could he call him brother, and yet vow his death? Note, The rage of persecutors will not be tied up by any bonds, no, not the strongest and most sacred.

3. It was a politic hatred. He expected his father would soon die, and then titles must be tried and interests contested between the brothers, which would give him a fair opportunity for revenge. He thinks it not enough to live by his sword himself (Ge 27:40), unless his brother die by it. He is loth to grieve his father while he lives, and therefore puts off the intended murder till his death, not caring how much he then grieved his surviving mother. Note,

(1.) Those are bad children to whom their good parents are a burden, and who, upon any account, long for the days of mourning for them.

(2.) Bad men are long held in by external restraints from doing the mischief they would do, and so their wicked purposes come to nought.

(3.) Those who think to defeat God's purposes will undoubtedly be disappointed themselves. Esau aimed to prevent Jacob, or his seed, from having the dominion, by taking away his life before he was married; but who can disannul what God has spoken? Men may fret at God's counsels, but cannot change them.

42 And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him,

Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself,
purposing to kill thee.

He hopes to recover his birthright by killing his brother. That those who seek not till it is too late will be rejected. This was the ruin of Esau, he did not come in time. As there is an accepted time, a time when God will be found, so there is a time when he will not answer those that call upon him, because they neglected the appointed season. See Pr 1:28. The time of God's patience and our probation will not last always; the day of grace will come to an end, and the door will be shut. Then many that now despise the blessing will seek it carefully; for then they will know how to value it, and will see themselves undone, forever undone, without it, but to no purpose, Lu 13:25-27. O that we would therefore, in this our day, know the things that belong to our peace!

Poor woman! She now early begins to reap the bitter fruits of her fraudulent device; she is obliged to part with her son, for whom she planned it, never, probably, seeing him again; and he felt the retributive justice of heaven fall upon him heavily in his own future family.

43 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to
Laban my brother to Haran;
44 and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

For the wicked son will kill the godly: and the plague of God will later come on the wicked son. She gave Jacob warning of his danger, and advised him to withdraw for a while, and shift for his own safety. She tells him what she heard of Esau's design, that he comforted himself with the hope of an opportunity to kill his brother, Ge 27:42. Would one think that such a bloody barbarous thought as this could be a comfort to a man? If Esau could have kept his design to himself his mother would not have suspected it; but men's impudence in sin is often their infatuation; and they cannot accomplish their wickedness because their rage is too violent to be concealed, and a bird of the air carries the voice. Observe here,

(1.) What Rebekah feared--lest she should be deprived of them both in one day (Ge 27:45), deprived, not only of the murdered, but of the murderer, who either by the magistrate, or by the immediate hand of God, would be sacrificed to justice, which she herself must acquiesce in, and not obstruct: or, if not so, yet thenceforward she would be deprived of all joy and comfort in him. Those that are lost to virtue are in a manner lost to all their friends. With what pleasure can a child be looked upon that can be looked upon as no other than a child of the devil?

(2.) What Rebekah hoped--that, if Jacob for a while kept out of sight, the affront which his brother resented so fiercely would by degrees go out of mind. The strength of passions is weakened and taken off by the distances both of time and place. She promised herself that his brother's anger would turn away. Note, Yielding pacifies great offences; and even those that have a good cause, and God on their side, must yet use this with other prudent expedients for their own preservation.

45 until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

She impressed Isaac with an apprehension of the necessity of Jacob's going among her relations upon another account, which was to take a wife, Ge 27:46. Another pretext Rebekah's cunning had to devise to obtain her husband's consent to Jacob's journey to Mesopotamia; and she succeeded by touching the aged patriarch in a tender point, afflicting to his pious heart—the proper marriage of their younger son. She would not tell him of Esau's wicked design against the life of Jacob, lest it should trouble him; but prudently took another way to gain her point. Isaac saw as uneasy as he was to Esau's being unequally yoked with Hittites; and therefore, with a very

good colour of reason, she moves to have Jacob married to one that was better principled.

Note, One miscarriage should serve as a warning to prevent another; those are careless indeed that stumble twice at the same stone. Yet Rebekah seems to have expressed herself somewhat too warmly in the matter, when she said, What good will my life do me if Jacob marry a Canaanite? Thanks be to God, all our comfort is not lodged in one hand; we may do the work of life, and enjoy the comforts of life, though everything do not fall out to our mind, and though our relations be not in all respects agreeable to us. Perhaps Rebekah spoke with this concern because she saw it necessary, for the quickening of Isaac, to give speedy orders in this matter. Observe, Though Jacob was himself very towardly, and well-fixed in his religion, yet he had need to be put out of the way of temptation. Even he was in danger both of following the bad example of his brother and of being drawn into a snare by it. We must not presume too far upon the wisdom and resolution, no, not of those children that are most hopeful and promising; but care must be taken to keep them out of harm's way.

Genesis -28

1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

Jacob had no sooner obtained the blessing than immediately he was forced to flee from his country; and, as it if were not enough that he was a stranger and sojourner there, he must go to be more so, and no better than an exile, in another country. Now Jacob fled into Syria, Ho 12:12. He was blessed with plenty of corn and wine, and yet he went away poor, was blessed with government, and yet went out to service, a hard service. This was,

1. Perhaps to correct him for his dealing fraudulently with his father. The blessing shall be confirmed to him, and yet he shall smart for the indirect course he took to obtain it. While there is such an alloy as there is of sin in our duties, we must expect an alloy of trouble in our comforts.

However,

2. It was to teach us that those who inherit the blessing must expect persecution; those who have peace in Christ shall have tribulation in the world, Joh 16:33. Being told of this before, we must not think it strange, and, being assured of a recompence hereafter, we must not think it hard. We may observe, likewise, that God's providences often seem to contradict his promises, and to go cross to them; and yet, when the mystery of God shall be finished, we shall see that all was for the best, and that cross providences did but render the promises and the accomplishment of them the more illustrious. Now Jacob is here dismissed by his father,

2 Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

With a solemn charge: He blessed him, and charged him, Ge 28:1, 2. Note, Those that have the blessing must keep the charge annexed to it, and not think to separate what God has joined. The charge is like that in 2Co 6:14, Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; and all that inherit the promises of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, must keep this charge, which follows those promises, Save yourselves from this untoward generation, Ac 2:38-40. Those that are entitled to peculiar favours must be a peculiar people. If Jacob be an heir of promise, he must not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; those that profess religion should not marry those that are irreligious.

3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

With a solemn blessing, Ge 28:3, 4. He had before blessed him unwittingly; now he does it designedly, for the greater

encouragement of Jacob in that melancholy condition to which he was now removing. This blessing is more express and full than the former; it is an entail of the blessing of Abraham, that blessing which was poured on the head of Abraham like the anointing oil, thence to run down to his chosen seed, as the skirts of his garments. It is a gospel blessing, the blessing of church-privileges, that is the blessing of Abraham, which upon the Gentiles through faith, Ga 3:14. It is a blessing from God Almighty, by which name God appeared to the patriarchs, Ex 6:3. Those are blessed indeed whom God Almighty blesses; for he commands and effects the blessing. Two great promises Abraham was blessed with, and Isaac here entails them both upon Jacob.

1 The promise of heirs: God make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, Ge 28:3. (1.) Through his loins should descend from Abraham that people who should be numerous as the stars of heaven, and the sand of the sea, and who should increase more than the rest of the nations, so as to be an assembly of people, as the margin reads it. And never was such a multitude of people so often gathered into one assembly as the tribes of Israel were in the wilderness, and afterwards. (2.) Through his loins should descend from Abraham that person in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and to whom the gathering of the people should be. Jacob had in him a multitude of people indeed, for all things in heaven and earth are united in Christ (Eph 1:10), all centre in him, that corn of wheat, which falling to the ground, produced much fruit, Joh 12:24.

2 The promise of an inheritance for those heirs: That thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings, Ge 28:4. Canaan was hereby entailed upon the seed of Jacob, exclusive of the seed of Esau. Isaac was now sending Jacob away into a distant country, to settle there for some time; and, lest this should look like disinheriting him, he here confirms the settlement of it upon him, that he might be assured that the discontinuance of his possession should be no defeasance of his right.

Observe, He is here told that he should inherit the land wherein he sojourned. Those that are sojourners now shall be heirs forever: and, even now, those do most inherit the earth (though they do not inherit most of it) that are most like strangers in it. Those have the best enjoyment of present things that sit most loose to them. This promise looks as high as heaven, of which Canaan was a type. This was the better country, which Jacob, with the other patriarchs, had in his eye, when he confessed himself a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, Heb 11:13.

Jacob, having taken leave of his father, was hastened away with all speed, lest his brother should find an opportunity to do him a mischief, and away he went to Padan-aram, Ge 28:5. How unlike was his taking a wife thence to his father's! Isaac had servants and camels sent to fetch his; Jacob must go himself, go alone, and go afoot, to fetch his: he must go too in a fright from his father's house, not knowing when he might return.

Note, If God, in his providence, disable us, we must be content, though we cannot keep up the state and grandeur of our ancestors. We should be more in care to maintain their piety than to maintain their dignity, and to be as good as they were than to be as great. Rebekah is here called Jacob's and Esau's mother. Jacob is named first, not only because he had always been his mother's darling, but because he was now make his father's heir, and Esau was, in this sense, set aside. Note, The time will come when piety will have precedency, whatever it has now.

4 and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with
thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger,
which God gave unto Abraham.
5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban,
son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and
Esau's mother.
6 When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away
to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he

blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;

This passage concerning Esau comes in in the midst of Jacob's story, either, 1. To show the influence of a good example. Esau, though the greater man, now begins to think Jacob the better man, and disdains not to take him for his pattern in this particular instance of marrying with a daughter of Abraham. The elder children should give to the younger an example of tractableness and obedience; it is bad if they do not: but it is some alleviation if they take the example of it from them, as Esau here did from Jacob. Or, 2. To show the folly of an after-wit. Esau did well, but he did it when it was too late, He saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not his father, and he might have seen that long ago if he had consulted his father's judgment as much as he did his palate. And how did he now mend the matter? Why, truly, so as to make bad worse.

(1.) He married a daughter of Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, who was cast out, and was not to inherit with Isaac and his seed, thus joining with a family which God had rejected, and seeking to strengthen his own pretensions by the aid of another pretender.

(2.) He took a third wife, while, for aught that appears, his other two were neither dead nor divorced.

(3.) He did it only to please his father, not to please God. Now that Jacob was sent into a far country Esau would be all in all at home, and he hoped so to humour his father as to prevail with him to make a new will, and entail the promise upon him, revoking the settlement lately made upon Jacob. And thus,

[1.] He was wise when it was too late, like Israel that would venture when the decree had gone forth against them (Nu 14:40), and the foolish virgins, Mt 25:11.

[2.] He rested in a partial reformation, and thought, by pleasing his parents in one thing, to atone for all his other

miscarriages. It is not said that when he saw how obedient Jacob was, and how willing to please his parents, he repented of his malicious design against him: no, it appeared afterwards that he persisted in that, and retained his malice.

Note, Carnal hearts are apt to think themselves as good as they should be, because perhaps, in some one particular instance, they are not so bad as they have been. Thus Micah retains his idols, but thinks himself happy in having a Levite to be his priest, Jdg 17:13.

7 and that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;

8 and Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

9 then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

God Appears to Jacob at Beth-el

10 And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

His departure from his father's house was an ignominious flight; and for fear of being pursued or waylaid by his vindictive brother, he did not take the common road, but went by lonely and unfrequented paths, which increased the length and dangers of the journey.

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them for* his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

A hard lodging (Ge 28:11), the stones for his pillows, and the heavens for his canopy and curtains. As the usage then was, perhaps this was not so bad as it seems how to us; but we should think,

1. He lay very cold, the cold ground for his bed, and, which one would suppose made the matter worse, a cold stone for his pillow, and in the cold air.

2. Very uneasy. If his bones were sore with his day's journey, his night's rest would but make them sorer.

3. Very much exposed. He forgot that he was fleeing for his life; or had his brother, in his rage, pursued, or sent a murderer after him, here he lay ready to be sacrificed, and destitute of shelter and defence. We cannot think it was by reason of his poverty that he was so ill accommodated, but,

(1.) It was owing to the plainness and simplicity of those times, when men did not take so much state, and consult their ease so much, as in these later times of softness and effeminacy.

(2.) Jacob had been particularly used to hardships, as a plain man dwelling in tents; and, designing now to go to service, he was the more willing to inure himself to them; and, as it proved, it was well, Ge 31:40.

(3.) His comfort in the divine blessing, and his confidence in the divine protection, made him easy, even when he lay thus exposed; being sure that his God made him to dwell in safety, he could lie down and sleep upon a stone.

12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

The encouraging vision Jacob saw, Ge 28:12. He saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, the angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself at the head of it. Now this represents the two things that are very comfortable to good people at all times, and in all conditions:--

(1.) The providence of God, by which there is a constant correspondence kept up between heaven and earth. The counsels of heaven are executed on earth, and the actions and affairs of this earth are all known in heaven are executed on earth, and the actions and affairs of this earth are all known in heaven and judged there. Providence does its work gradually,

and by steps. Angels are employed as ministering spirits, to serve all the purposes and designs of Providence, and the wisdom of God is at the upper end of the ladder, directing all the motions of second causes to the glory of the first Cause. The angels are active spirits, continually ascending and descending; they rest not, day nor night, from service, according to the posts assigned them. They ascend, to give account of what they have done, and to receive orders; and then descend, to execute the orders they have received. Thus we should always abound in the work of the Lord, that we may do it as the angels do it, Ps 103:20, 21. This vision gave very seasonable comfort to Jacob, letting him know that he had both a good guide and a good guard, in his going out and coming in,--that, though he was made to wander from his father's house, yet still he was the care of a kind Providence, and the charge of the holy angels. This is comfort enough, though we should not admit the notion which some have, that the tutelar angels of Canaan were ascending, having guarded Jacob out of their land, and the angels of Syria descending to take him into their custody. Jacob was now the type and representative of the whole church, with the guardianship of which the angels are entrusted.

(2.) The mediation of Christ. He is this ladder, the foot on earth in his human nature, the top in heaven in his divine nature: or the former in his humiliation, the latter in his exaltation. All the intercourse between heaven and earth, since the fall, is by this ladder. Christ is the way; all God's favours come to us, and all our services go to him, by Christ. If God dwell with us, and we with him, it is by Christ. We have no way of getting to heaven, but by this ladder; if we climb up any other way we are thieves and robbers. To this vision our Savior alludes when he speaks of the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man (Joh 1:51); for the kind offices the angels do us, and the benefits we receive by their ministration, are all owing to Christ, who has reconciled things on earth and things in heaven (Col 1:20), and made them all meet in himself, Eph 1:10.

But whether the image presented to the mental eye of Jacob were a common ladder, or such a mountain pile as has been described, the design of this vision was to afford comfort, encouragement, and confidence to the lonely fugitive, both in his present circumstances and as to his future prospects. His thoughts during the day must have been painful—he would be his own self-accuser that he had brought exile and privation upon himself—and above all, that though he had obtained the forgiveness of his father, he had much reason to fear lest God might have forsaken him. Solitude affords time for reflection; and it was now that God began to bring Jacob under a course of religious instruction and training. To dispel his fears and allay the inward tumult of his mind, nothing was better fitted than the vision of the gigantic ladder, which reached from himself to heaven, and on which the angels were continually ascending and descending from God Himself on their benevolent errands (Joh 1:51).

That Jacob might be at no loss to know the purport of the vision, he heard the divine voice; and the announcement of His name, together with a renewal of the covenant, and an assurance of personal protection, produced at once the most solemnizing and inspiriting effect on his mind.

13 And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I *am* the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

The encouraging words Jacob heard. God now brought him into the wilderness, and spoke comfortably to him, spoke from the head of the ladder; for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven come through Jesus Christ.

(1.) The former promises made to his father were repeated and ratified to him, Ge 28:13,14. In general, God intimated to him that he would be the same to him that he had been to Abraham and Isaac. Those that tread in the steps of their godly parents

are interested in their covenant and entitled to their privileges. Particularly,

[1.] The land of Canaan is settled upon him, the land whereon thou liest; as if by his lying so contentedly upon the bare ground he had taken livery and seisin of the whole land.

[2.] It is promised him that his posterity should multiply exceedingly as the dust of the earth--that, though he seemed now to be plucked off as a withered branch, yet he should become a flourishing tree, that should send out his boughs unto the sea. These were the blessings with which his father had blessed him (Ge 28:3, 4), and God here said Amen to them, that he might have strong consolation.

[3.] It is added that the Messiah should come from his loins, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Christ is the great blessing of the world. All that are blessed, whatever family they are of, are blessed in him, and none of any family are excluded from blessedness in him, but those that exclude themselves.

(2.) Fresh promises were made him, accommodated to his present condition, Ge 28:15.

[1.] Jacob was apprehensive of danger from his brother Esau; but God promises to keep him. Note, Those are safe whom god protects, whoever pursues them.

[2.] He had now a long journey before him, had to travel alone, in an unknown road, to an unknown country; but, behold, I am with thee, says God. Note, Wherever we are, we are safe, and may be easy, if we have God's favourable presence with us.

[3.] He knew not, but God foresaw, what hardships he should meet with in his uncle's service, and therefore promises to

preserve him in all places. Note, God knows how to give his people graces and comforts accommodated to the events that shall be, as well as to those that are.

[4.] He was now going as an exile into a place far distant, but God promises him to bring him back again to this land. Note, He that preserves his people's going out will also take care of their coming in, Ps 121:8.

[5.] He seemed to be forsaken of all his friends, but God here gives him this assurance, I will not leave thee. Note, Whom God loves he never leaves. This promise is sure to all the seed, Heb 13:5.

[6.] Providences seemed to contradict the promises; he is therefore assured of the performance of them in their season: All shall be done that I have spoken to thee of. Note, Saying and doing are not two things with God, whatever they are with us.

14 and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread
abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the
south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth
be blessed.
15 And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither
thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not
leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.
16 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, surely the Lord is
in this place; and I knew *it* not.

God manifested himself and his favour to Jacob when he was asleep and purely passive; for the spirit, like the wind, blows when and where he listeth, and God's grace, like the dew, tarrieth not for the sons of men, Mic 5:7. But Jacob applied himself to the improvement of the visit God had made him when he was awake; and we may well think he awaked, as the prophet did (Jer 31:26), and behold his sleep was sweet to him. Here is much of Jacob's devotion on this occasion.

He expressed a great surprise at the tokens he had of God's special presence with him in that place: Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not, Ge 28:16. Note,

1. God's manifestations of himself to his people carry their own evidence along with them. God can give undeniable demonstrations of his presence, such as give abundant satisfaction to the souls of the faithful that God is with them of a truth, satisfaction not communicable to others, but convincing to themselves.

2. We sometimes meet with God where we little thought of meeting with him. He is where we did not think he had been, is found where we asked not for him. No place excludes divine visits (Ge 16:13, here also); wherever we are, in the city or in the desert, in the house or in the field, in the shop or in the street, we may keep up our intercourse with Heaven if it be not our own fault.

17 And he was afraid, and said, how dreadful *is* this place! This *is* none other but the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven.

It struck an awe upon him (Ge 28:17): He was afraid; so far was he from being puffed up, and exalted above measure, with the abundance of the revelations (2Co 12:7), that he was afraid. Note, The more we see of God the more cause we see for holy trembling and blushing before him. Those to whom God is pleased to manifest himself are thereby laid, and kept, very low in their own eyes, and see cause to fear even the Lord and his goodness, Ho 3:5. He said, How dreadful is this place! That is, "The appearance of God in this place is never to be thought of, but with a holy awe and reverence. I shall have a respect for this place, and remember it by this token, as long as I live:" not that he thought the place itself any nearer the divine visions than other places; but what he saw there at this time was, as it were, the house of God, the residence of the divine Majesty, and the gate of heaven, that is, the general rendezvous of the inhabitants of the upper world, as the meetings of a city were in their gates; or the angels ascending

and descending were like travellers passing and re-passing through the gates of a city. Note,

1. God is in a special manner present where his grace is revealed and where his covenants are published and sealed, as of old by the ministry of angels, so now by instituted ordinances, Mt 28:20.

2. Where God meets us with his special presence we ought to meet him with the most humble reverence, remembering his justice and holiness, and our own meanness and vileness.

The mere setting up of the stone might have been as a future memorial to mark the spot; and this practice is still common in the East, in memory of a religious vow or engagement. But the pouring oil upon it was a consecration. Accordingly he gave it a new name, Beth-el, "the house of God" (Ho 12:4); and it will not appear a thing forced or unnatural to call a stone a house, when one considers the common practice in warm countries of sitting in the open air by or on a stone, as are those of this place, "broad sheets of bare rock, some of them standing like the cromlechs of Druidical monuments" [STANLEY].

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

He took care to preserve the memorial of it two ways:

1. He set up the stone for a pillar (Ge 28:18); not as if he thought the visions of his head were any way owing to the stone on which it lay, but thus he would mark the place against he came back, and erect a lasting monument of God's favour to him, and because he had not time now to build an altar here, as Abraham did in the places where God appeared to him, Ge 12:7. He therefore poured oil on the top of this stone, which probably was the ceremony then used in dedicating their

altars, as an earnest of his building an altar when he should have conveniences for it, as afterwards he did, in gratitude to God for this vision, Ge 35:7. Note, Grants of mercy call for returns of duty, and the sweet communion we have with God ought ever to be remembered.

2. He gave a new name to the place, Ge 28:19. It had been called Luz, an almond-tree; but he will have it henceforward called Beth-el, the house of God. This gracious appearance of God to him put a greater honour upon it, and made it more remarkable, than all the almond-trees that flourished there. This is that Beth-el where, long after, it is said, God found Jacob, and there (in what he said to him) he spoke with us, Ho 12:4. In process of time, this Beth-el, the house of God, became Beth-aven, a house of vanity and iniquity, when Jeroboam set up one of his calves there.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el [the house of God]:
but the name of that city *was called* Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will
keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and
raiment to put on,

21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the
Lord be my God:

He made a solemn vow upon this occasion, Ge 28:20-22. By religious vows we give glory to God, own our dependence upon him, and lay a bond upon our own souls to engage and quicken our obedience to him. Jacob was now in fear and distress; and it is seasonable to make vows in times of trouble, or when we are in pursuit of any special mercy, Jon 1:16,Ps 66:13,14,1Sa 1:11,Nu 21:1-3. Jacob had now had a gracious visit from heaven. God had renewed his covenant with him, and the covenant is mutual. When God ratifies his promises to us, it is proper for us to repeat our promises to him. Now in this vow observe,

1. Jacob's faith. God had said (Ge 28:15), I am with thee, and will keep thee. Jacob takes hold of this, and infers, "Seeing God will be with me, and will keep me, as he hath said, and

(which is implied in that promise) will provide comfortably for me,--and seeing he has promised to bring me again to this land, that is, to the house of my father, whom I hope to find alive at my return in peace" (so unlike was he to Esau who longed for the days of mourning for his father),--"I depend upon it." Note, God's promises are to be the guide and measure of our desires and expectations.

2. Jacob's modesty and great moderation in his desires. He will cheerfully content himself with bread to eat, and raiment to put on; and, though God's promise had now made him heir to a very great estate, yet he indents not for soft clothing and dainty meat. Agur's wish is his, Feed me with food convenient for me; and see 1Ti 6:8. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less. Those that have most have, in effect, no more for themselves than food and raiment; of the overplus they have only either the keeping or the giving, not the enjoyment: if God give us more, we are bound to be thankful, and to use it for him; if he give us but this, we are bound to be content, and cheerfully to enjoy him in it. 3. Jacob's piety, and his regard to God, which appear here,

(1.) In what he desired, that God would be with him and keep him. Note, We need desire no more to make us easy and happy, wherever we are, than to have God's presence with us and to be under his protection. It is comfortable, in a journey, to have a guide in an unknown way, a guard in a dangerous way, to be well carried, well provided for, and to have good company in any way; and those that have God with them have all this in the best manner.

(2.) In what he designed. His resolution is,

[1.] In general, to cleave to the Lord, as his God in covenant: Then shall the Lord be my God. Not as if he would disown him and cast him off if he should want food and raiment; no, though he slay us, we must cleave to him; but "then I will rejoice in him as my God; then I will more strongly engage

myself to abide with him." Note, Every mercy we receive from God should be improved as an additional obligation upon us to walk closely with him as our God.

[2.] In particular, that he would perform some special acts of devotion, in token of his gratitude. First, "This pillar shall keep possession here till I come back in peace, and then it shall be God's house," that is, "an altar shall be erected here to the honour of God." Secondly, "The house of god shall not be unfurnished, nor his altar without a sacrifice: Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee, to be spent either upon God's altars or upon his poor," both which are his receivers in the world. Probably it was according to some general instructions received from heaven that Abraham and Jacob offered the tenth of their acquisitions to God. Note,

1. God must be honoured with our estates, and must have his dues out of them. When we receive more than ordinary mercy from God we should study to give some signal instances of gratitude to him.

2 The tenth is a very fit proportion to be devoted to God and employed for him, though, as circumstances vary, it may be more or less, as God prospers us, 1Co 16:2,2Co 9:7.

22 and this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

Genesis -29

Jacob Serves Laban for Rachel and Leah

1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

All the stages Israel's march to Canaan are distinctly noticed, but no particular journal is kept of Jacob's expedition further than Beth-el; no, he had no more such happy nights as he had at Beth-el, no more such visions of the Almighty. That was

intended for a feast; he must not expect it to be his daily bread. But, 1. We are here told how cheerfully he proceeded in his journey after the sweet communion he had with God at Bethel: Then Jacob lifted up his feet; so the margin reads it, Ge 29:1. Then he went on with cheerfulness and alacrity, not burdened with his cares, nor cramped with his fears, being assured of God's gracious presence with him. Note, After the visions we have had of God, and the vows we have made to him in solemn ordinances, we should run the way of his commandments with enlarged hearts, Heb 12:1.

2 And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone *was* upon the well's mouth.

3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

Those that have flocks must look well to them, and be diligent to know their state, Pr 27:23. What is here said of the constant care of the shepherds concerning their sheep (Ge 29:2,3,7,8) may serve to illustrate the tender concern which our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, has for his flock, the church; for he is the good Shepherd, that knows his sheep, and is known of them, Joh 10:14. The stone at the well's mouth, which is so often mentioned here, was either to secure their property in it (for water was scarce, it was not there usus communis aquarum--for every one's use), or it was to save the well from receiving damage from the heat of the sun, or from any spiteful hand, or to prevent the lambs of the flock from being drowned in it.

Separate interests should not take us from joint and mutual help; when all the shepherds came together with their flocks, then, like loving neighbours, at watering-time, they watered their flocks together.

4 And Jacob said unto them, my brethren, whence *be* ye? And they said, Of Haran *are* we.

It becomes us to speak civilly and respectfully to strangers. Though Jacob was no courtier, but a plain man, dwelling in tents, and a stranger to compliment, yet he addresses himself

very obligingly to the people he met with, and calls them his brethren, Ge 29:4. The law of kindness in the tongue has a commanding power, Pr 31:26. Some think he calls them brethren because they were of the same trade, shepherds like him. Though he was now upon his preferment, he was not ashamed of his occupation.

5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, we know *him*.

6 And he said unto them, is he well?And they said, *He is* well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

How happily he arrived at his journey's end. Providence brought him to the very field where his uncle's flocks were to be watered, and there he met with Rachel, who was to be his wife. Observe, The divine Providence is to be acknowledged in all the little circumstances which concur to make a journey, or other undertaking, comfortable and successful. If, when we are at a loss, we meet seasonably with those that can direct us--if we meet with a disaster, and those are at hand that will help us--we must not say that it was by chance, nor that fortune therein favoured us, but that it was by Providence, and that God therein favoured us. Our ways are ways of pleasantness, if we continually acknowledge God in them.

7 And he said, Lo, *it is* yet high day, neither *is it* time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go *and* feed *them*.

Those that show respect have usually respect shown to them. As Jacob was civil to these strangers, so he found them civil to him. When he undertook to teach them how to despatch their business (Ge 29:7), they did not bid him meddle with his own concerns and let them alone; but, though he was a stranger, they gave him the reason of their delay, Ge 29:8. Those that are neighbourly and friendly shall have neighbourly and friendly usage.

8 And they said, we cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and *till* they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

9 And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

10 And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.
11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.
12 And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's brother, and that he *was* Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.
13 And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.
14 And Laban said to him, Surely thou *art* my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.
15 And Laban said unto Jacob, because thou *art* my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought?Tell me, what *shall* thy wages *be*?

Here is, the fair contract made between Laban and Jacob, during the month that Jacob spent there as a guest, Ge 29:14. It seems he was not idle, nor did he spend his time in sport and pastime; but like a man of business, though he had no stock of his own, he applied himself to serve his uncle, as he had begun (Ge 29:10) when he watered his flock. Note, Wherever we are, it is good to be employing ourselves in some useful business, which will turn to a good account to ourselves or others. Laban, it seems, was so taken with Jacob's ingenuity and industry about his flocks that he was desirous he should continue with him, and very fairly reasons thus: "Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought? Ge 29:15. No, what reason for that?" If Jacob be so respectful to his uncle as to give him his service without demanding any consideration for it, yet Laban will not be so unjust to his nephew as to take advantage either of his necessity or of his good-nature. Note, Inferior relations must not be imposed upon; if it be their duty to serve us, it is our duty to reward them. Now Jacob had a fair opportunity to make known to Laban the affection he had for his daughter Rachel; and, having no worldly goods in his hand with which to endow her, he promises him seven years' service, upon condition that, at the end of the seven years, he would

bestow her upon him for his wife. It appears by computation that Jacob was now seventy-seven years old when he bound himself apprentice for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep, Ho 12:12. His posterity are there reminded of it long afterwards, as an instance of the meanness of their origin: probably Rachel was young, and scarcely marriageable, when Jacob first came, which made him the more willing to stay for her till his seven years' service had expired.

16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

17 Leah *was* tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored.

18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

19 And Laban said, *It is* better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her.

Jacob's honest performance of his part of the bargain, Ge 29:20. He served seven years for Rachel. If Rachel still continued to keep her father's sheep (as she did, Ge 29:9), his innocent and religious conversation with her, while they kept the flocks, could not but increase their mutual acquaintance and affection (Solomon's song of love is a pastoral); if she now left it off, his easing her of that care was very obliging. Jacob honestly served out his seven years, and did not forfeit his indentures, though he was old; nay, he served them cheerfully: They seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her, as if it were more his desire to earn her than to have her. Note, Love makes long and hard services short and easy; hence we read of the labour of love, Heb 6:10. If we know how to value the happiness of heaven, the sufferings of this present time will be as nothing to us in comparison of it. An age of work will be but as a few days to those that love God and long for Christ's appearing.

21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast.

23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

The base cheat which Laban put upon him when he was out of his time: he put Leah into his arms instead of Rachel, Ge 29:23. This was Laban's sin; he wronged both Jacob and Rachel, whose affections, doubtless, were engaged to each other, and, if (as some say) Leah was herein no better than an adulteress, it was no small wrong to her too. But it was Jacob's affliction, a damp to the mirth of the marriage-feast, when in the morning behold it was Leah, Ge 29:25. It is easy to observe here how Jacob was paid in his own coin. He had cheated his own father when he pretended to be Esau, and now his father-in-law cheated him. Herein, how unrighteous soever Laban was, the Lord was righteous; as Jdg 1:7. Even the righteous, if they take a false step, are sometimes thus recompensed on the earth. Many that are not, like Jacob, disappointed in the person, soon find themselves, as much to their grief, disappointed in the character. The choice of that relation therefore, on both sides, ought to be made with good advice and consideration, that, if there should be a disappointment, it may not be aggravated by a consciousness of mismanagement.

24 And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid *for* a handmaid.

25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah: and he said to Laban, What *is* this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

26 And Laban said, it must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

The excuse and atonement Laban made for the cheat. 1 The excuse was frivolous: It must not be so done in our country, Ge 29:26. We have reason to think there was no such custom of his country as he pretends; only he banters Jacob with it, and laughs at his mistake. Note, Those that can do wickedly and then think to turn it off with a jest, though they may deceive themselves and others, will find at last that God is not mocked. But if there had been such a custom, and he had resolved to observe it, he should have told Jacob so when he undertook to serve him for his younger daughter. Note, As saith the proverb of the

ancients, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked, 1Sa 24:13. Those that deal with treacherous men must expect to be dealt treacherously with. 2. His compounding the matter did but make bad worse: We will give thee this also, Ge 29:27. Hereby he drew Jacob into the sin, and snare, and disquiet, of multiplying wives, which remains a blot in his escutcheon, and will be so to the end of the world. Honest Jacob did not design it, but to have kept as true to Rachel as his father had done to Rebekah. He that had lived without a wife to the eighty-fourth year of his age could then have been very well content with one; but Laban, to dispose of his two daughters without portions, and to get seven years' service more out of Jacob, thus imposes upon him, and draws him into such a strait by his fraud, that (the matter not being yet settled, as it was afterwards by the divine law, Le 18:18, and more fully since by our Savior, Mt 19:5) he had some colourable reasons for marrying them both. He could not refuse Rachel, for he had espoused her; still less could he refuse Leah, for he had married her; and therefore Jacob must be content, and take two talents, 2Ki 5:23. Note, One sin is commonly the inlet of another. Those that go in by one door of wickedness seldom find their way out but by another. The polygamy of the patriarchs was, in some measure, excusable in them, because, though there was a reason against it as ancient as Adam's marriage (Mal 2:15), yet there was no express command against it; it was in them a sin of ignorance. It was not the product of any sinful lust, but for the building up of the church, which was the good that Providence brought out of it; but it will by no means justify the like practice now, when God's will is plainly made known, that one man and one woman only must be joined together, 1Co 7:2 The having of many wives suits well enough with the carnal sensual spirit of the Mahomedan imposture, which allows it; but we have not so learned Christ.

27 Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which
thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel
his daughter to wife also.

29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be
her maid.
30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more
than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

The Children Born to Jacob

31 And when the Lord saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her
womb: but Rachel *was* barren.

We have here the birth of four of Jacob's sons, all by Leah. Observe, that Leah, who was less beloved, was blessed with children, when Rachel was denied that blessing, Ge 29:31. See how Providence, in dispensing its gifts, observes a proportion, to keep the balance even, setting crosses and comforts one over-against another, that none may be either too much elevated or too much depressed. Rachel wants children, but she is blessed with her husband's love; Leah wants that, but she is fruitful. Thus it was between Elkana's two wives (1Sa 1:5); for the Lord is wise and righteous. When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, that is, loved less than Rachel, in which sense it is required that we hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ (Lu 14:26), then the Lord granted her a child, which was a rebuke to Jacob, for making so great a difference between those that he was equally related to,--a check to Rachel, who perhaps insulted over her sister upon that account,--and a comfort to Leah, that she might not be overwhelmed with the contempt put upon her: thus God giveth abundant honour to that which lacked, 1Co 12:24.

32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son; and she called his name
Reuben [see, a son]: for she said, surely the Lord hath looked
upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

The names she gave her children were expressive of her respectful regards both to God and to her husband.

(1.) She appears very ambitious of her husband's love: she reckoned the want of it her affliction (Ge 29:32); not upbraiding him with it as his fault, nor reproaching him for it, and so making herself uneasy to him, but laying it to heart as her grief,

which yet she had reason to bear with the more patience because she herself was consenting to the fraud by which she became his wife; and we may well bear that trouble with patience which we bring upon ourselves by our own sin and folly. She promised herself that the children she bore him would gain her the interest she desired in his affections. She called her first-born Reuben (see a son), with this pleasant thought, Now will my husband love me; and her third son Levi (joined), with this expectation, Now will my husband by joined unto me, Ge 29:34. Mutual affection is both the duty and comfort of that relation; and yoke-fellows should study to recommend themselves to each other, 1Co 7:33, 34.

(2.) She thankfully acknowledges the kind providence of God in it: The Lord hath looked upon my affliction, Ge 29:32. "The Lord hath heard, that is, taken notice of it, that I was hated (for our afflictions, as they are before God's eyes, so they have a cry in his ears), he has therefore given me this son."

Note, Whatever we have that contributes either to our support and comfort under our afflictions or to our deliverance from them, God must be owned in it, especially his pity and tender mercy. Her fourth she called Judah (praise), saying, Now will I praise the Lord, Ge 29:35. And this was he of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Note,

[1.] Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Fresh favours should quicken us to praise God for former favours. Now will I praise the Lord more and better than I have done.

[2.] All our praises must centre in Christ, both as the matter of them and as the Mediator of them. He descended from him whose name was praise, for he is our praise. Is Christ formed in my heart? Now will I praise the Lord.

33 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, because the
Lord hath heard that I *was* hated, he hath therefore given me this
son also: and she called his name Simeon [hearing].

34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have borne him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi [joined].

35 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah [praise]; and left bearing.

Genesis -30

1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

An unhappy disagreement between him and Rachel (Ge 30:1, 2), occasioned, not so much by her own barrenness as by her sister's fruitfulness. Rebekah, the only wife of Isaac, was long childless, and yet we find no uneasiness between her and Isaac; but here, because Leah bears children, Rachel cannot live peaceably with Jacob.

Rachel frets. She envied her sister, Ge 30:1. Envy is grieving at the good of another, than which no sin is more offensive to God, nor more injurious to our neighbour and ourselves. She considered not that it was God that made the difference, and that though, in this single instance her sister was preferred before her, yet in other things she had the advantage. Let us carefully watch against all the risings and workings of this passion in our minds. Let not our eye be evil towards any of our fellow-servants because our master's is good. But this was not all; she said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. Note, We are very apt to err in our desires of temporal mercies, as Rachel here.

(1.) One child would not content her; but, because Leah has more than one, she must have more too: Give me children.

(2.) Her heart is inordinately set upon it, and, if she have not what she would have, she will throw away her life, and all the comforts of it. "Give them to me, or else I die," that is, "I shall fret myself to death; the want of this satisfaction will shorten my days." Some think she threatens Jacob to lay violent hands upon herself, if she could not obtain this mercy.

(3.) She did not apply to God by prayer, but to Jacob only, forgetting that children are a heritage of the Lord, Ps 127:3. We wrong both God and ourselves when our eye is more to men, the instruments of our crosses and comforts, than to God the author. Observe a difference between Rachel's asking for this mercy and Hannah's, 1Sa 1:10, 11, &c. Rachel envied; Hannah wept. Rachel must have children, and she died of the second; Hannah prayed for one child, and she had four more. Rachel is importunate and peremptory; Hannah is submissive and devout. If thou wilt give me a child, I will give him to the Lord. Let Hannah be imitated, and not Rachel; and let our desires be always under the direction and control of reason and religion.

2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, *Am* I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

Jacob chides, and most justly. He loved Rachel, and therefore reproved her for what she said amiss, Ge 30:2. Note, Faithful reproofs and products and instances of true affection, Ps 141:5, Pr 27:5, 6. Job reproved his wife when she spoke the language of the foolish women, Job 2:10. See 1Co 7:16. He was angry, not at the person, but at the sin; he expressed himself so as to show his displeasure. Note, sometimes it is requisite that a reproof should be given warm, like a medical potion; not too hot, lest it scald the patient; yet not cold, lest it prove ineffectual. It was a very grave and pious reply which Jacob gave to Rachel's peevish demand: Am I in God's stead? The Chaldee paraphrases it well, Dost thou ask sons of me? Oughtest thou not to ask them from before the Lord? The Arabic reads it, "Am I above God? Can I give thee that which God denies thee?" This was said like a plain man. Observe,

(1.) He acknowledges the hand of God in the affliction which he was a sharer with her in: He hath withheld the fruit of the womb. Note, Whatever we want, it is God that withholds it, a sovereign Lord, most wise, holy, and just, that may do what he will with his own, and is debtor to no man, that never did, nor ever can do, any wrong to any of his creatures. The keys of the clouds, of the heart, of the grave, and of the womb, are four keys which God had in his hand, and which (the rabbin say) he entrusts neither with angels nor seraphim. See Re 3:7, Job 11:10, 12:14.

(2.) He acknowledges his own inability to alter what God had appointed: "Am I in God's stead? What! dost thou make a god of me?" Deos qui rogat ille facit--He to whom we offer supplications is to us a god. Note,

[1.] There is no creature that is, or can be, to us, in God's stead. God may be to us instead of any creature, as the sun instead of the moon and stars; but the moon and all the stars will not be to us instead of the sun. No creature's wisdom, power, and love, will be to us instead of God's.

[2.] It is therefore our sin and folly to place any creature in God's stead, and to place that confidence in any creature which is to be placed in God only.

3 And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

At the persuasion of Rachel, he took Bilhah her handmaid to wife, that, according to the usage of those times, his children by her might be adopted and owned as her mistress's children, Ge 30:3-8, &c. She would rather have children by reputation than none at all, children that she might fancy to be her own, and call her own, though they were not so. One would think her own sister's children were nearer akin to her than her maid's, and she might with more satisfaction have made them her own if she had so pleased; but (so natural is it for us all to be fond of power) children that she had a right to rule were more desirable to her than children that she had more reason

to love; and, as an early instance of her dominion over the children born in her apartment, she takes a pleasure in giving them names that carry in them nothing but marks of emulation with her sister, as if she had overcome her,

(1.) At law. She calls the first son of her handmaid Dan (judgement), saying, "God hath judged me" (Ge 30:6), that is, "given sentence in my favour."

(2.) In battle. She calls the next Naphtali (wrestlings), saying, I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed (Ge 30:8); as if all Jacob's sons must be born men of contention. See what roots of bitterness envy and strife are, and what mischief they make among relations.

4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in
unto her.
5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.
6 And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my
voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan
[judging].
7 And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second
son.
8 And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my
sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali [my
wrestling].
9 When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her
maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

At the persuasion of Leah, he took Zilpah her handmaid to wife also, Ge 30:9. Rachel had done that absurd and preposterous thing of giving her maid to her husband, in emulation with Leah; and now Leah (because she missed one year in bearing children) does the same, to be even with her, or rather to keep before her. See the power of jealousy and rivalship, and admire the wisdom of the divine appointment, which unites one man and one woman only; for God hath called us to peace and purity, 1Co 7:15. Two sons Zilpah bore to Jacob, whom Leah looked upon herself as entitled to, in token of which she called one Gad (Ge 30:11), promising

herself a little troop of children; and children are the militia of a family, they fill the quiver, Ps 127:4,5. The other she called Asher (happy), thinking herself happy in him, and promising herself that her neighbours would think so too: The daughters will call me blessed, Ge 30:13.

Note, It is an instance of the vanity of the world, and the foolishness bound up in our hearts, that most people value themselves and govern themselves more by reputation than either by reason or religion; they think themselves blessed if the daughters do but call them so. There was much amiss in the contest and competition between these two sisters, yet God brought good out of this evil; for, the time being now at hand when the seed of Abraham must begin to increase and multiply, thus Jacob's family was replenished with twelve sons, heads of the thousands of Israel, from whom the celebrated twelve tribes descended and were named.

10 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.
11 And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.
12 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.
13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed:
and she called his name Asher [happy].
14 And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found
mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah.
Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's
mandrakes.
15 And she said unto her, *is it* a small matter that thou hast taken my
husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also?
And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy
son's mandrakes.
16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out
to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have
hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.
17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob
the fifth son.

Here is, Leah fruitful again, after she had, for some time, left off bearing. Jacob, it should seem, associated more with Rachel than with Leah. The law of Moses supposes it a

common case that, if a man had two wives, one would be beloved and the other hated, De 21:15. But at length Rachel's strong passions betrayed her into a bargain with Leah that Jacob should return to her apartment. Reuben, a little lad, five or six years old, playing in the field, found mandrakes, dudaim. It is uncertain what they were, the critics are not agreed about them; we are sure they were some rarities, either fruits or flowers that were very pleasant to the smell, So 7:13. Note, The God of nature has provided, not only for our necessities, but for our delights; there are products of the earth in the exposed fields, as well as in the planted protected gardens, that are very valuable and useful. How plentifully is nature's house furnished and her table spread! Her precious fruits offer themselves to be gathered by the hands of little children. It is a laudable custom of the devout Jews, when they find pleasure, suppose in eating an apple, to lift up their hearts, and say, "Blessed be he that made this fruit pleasant!" Or, in smelling a flower, "Blessed be he that made this flower sweet." Some think these mandrakes were jessamine flowers. Whatever they were, Rachel could not see them in Leah's hands, where the child had placed them, but she must covet them. She cannot bear the want of these pretty flowers, but will purchase them at any rate. Note, There may be great sin and folly in the inordinate desire of a small thing. Leah takes this advantage (as Jacob had of Esau's coveting his red pottage) to obtain that which was justly due to her, but to which Rachel would not otherwise have consented. Note, Strong passions often thwart one another, and those cannot but be continually uneasy that are hurried on by them. Leah is overjoyed that she shall have her husband's company again, that her family might yet further be built up, which is the blessing she desires and devoutly prays for, as is intimated, Ge 30:17, where it is said, God hearkened unto Leah. The learned bishop Patrick very well suggests here that the true reason of this contest between Jacob's wives for his company, and their giving him their maids to be his wives, was the earnest desire they had to fulfil the promise made to Abraham (and now lately renewed to Jacob), that his seed should be as

the stars of heaven for multitude, and that in one seed of his, the Messiah, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And he thinks it would have been below the dignity of this sacred history to take such particular notice of these things if there had not been some such great consideration in them. Leah was now blessed with two sons; the first she called Issachar (a hire), reckoning herself well repaid for her mandrakes, nay (which is a strange construction of the providence) rewarded for giving her maid to her husband.

Note, We abuse God's mercy when we reckon that his favours countenance and patronize our follies. The other she called Zebulun (dwelling), owning God's bounty to her: God has endowed me with a good dowry, Ge 30:20. Jacob had not endowed her when he married her, nor had he wherewithal in possession; but she reckons a family of children not a bill of charges, but a good dowry, Ps 113:9. She promises herself more of her husband's company now that she had borne him six sons, and that, in love to his children at least, he would often visit her lodgings. Mention is made (Ge 30:21) of the birth of a daughter, Dinah, because of the following story concerning her, Ge 34:1-31. Perhaps Jacob had other daughters, though their names are not registered.

18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given
my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar [an
hire].
19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.
20 And Leah said, God hath endued me *with* a good dowry; now will
my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons: and
she called his name Zebulun [dwelling].
21 And afterward she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.
22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and
opened her womb.

Rachel fruitful at last (Ge 30:22): God remembered Rachel, whom he seemed to have forgotten, and hearkened to her whose prayers had been long denied; and then she bore a son.

Note, As God justly denies the mercy we have been inordinately desirous of, so sometimes he graciously grants, at length, that which we have long waited for. He corrects our folly, and yet considers our frame, and does not contend forever. Rachel called her son Joseph, which in Hebrew is akin to two words of a contrary signification, Asaph (abstulit), He has taken away my reproach, as if the greatest mercy she had in this son was that she had saved her credit; and Jasaph (addidit), The Lord shall add to me another son, which may be looked upon either as the language of her inordinate desire (she scarcely knows how to be thankful for one unless she may be sure of another), or of her faith--she takes this mercy as an earnest of further mercy. "Has God given me his grace? I may call it Joseph, and say, He shall add more grace! Has he given me his joy? I may call it Joseph, and say, He will give me more joy. Has he begun, and shall he not make an end?"

23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

24 and she called his name Joseph [adding]; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son.

The Trickery of Laban and Jacob

25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

Jacob's thoughts of home. He faithfully served his time out with Laban, even his second apprenticeship, though he was an old man, had a large family to provide for, and it was high time for him to set up for himself. Though Laban's service was hard, and he had cheated him in the first bargain he had made, yet Jacob honestly performs his engagements. Note, A good man, though he swear to his own hurt, will not change. And though others have deceived us this will not justify us in deceiving them. Our rule is to do as we would be done by, not as we are done by. Jacob's term having expired, he begs leave to be gone, Ge 30:25. Observe,

1. He retained his affection for the land of Canaan, not only because it was the land of his nativity, and his father and mother were there, whom he longed to see, but because it was the land of promise; and, in token of his dependence upon the promise of it, though he sojourn in Haran he can by no means think of settling there. Thus should we be affected towards our heavenly country, looking upon ourselves as strangers here, viewing the heavenly country as our home, and longing to be there, as soon as the days of our service upon earth are numbered and finished. We must not think of taking root here, for this is not our place and country, Heb 13:14.

2. He was desirous to go to Canaan, though he had a great family to take with him, and no provision yet made for them. He had got wives and children with Laban, but nothing else; yet he does not solicit Laban to give him either a portion with his wives or the maintenance of some of his children. No, all his request is, Give me my wives and my children, and send me away, Ge 30:25, 26.

Note, Those that trust in God, in his providence and promise, though they have great families and small incomes, can cheerfully hope that he who sends mouths will send meat. He who feeds the brood of the ravens will not starve the seed of the righteous.

26 Give *me* my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, *tarry: for* I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.

Laban's desire of his stay, Ge 30:27. In love to himself, not to Jacob or to his wives or children, Laban endeavours to persuade him to continue his chief shepherd, entreating him, by the regard he bore him, not to leave him: If I have found favour in thy eyes, tarry. Note, Churlish selfish men know how to give good words when it is to serve their own ends. Laban found that his stock had wonderfully increased with Jacob's good management, and he owns it, with very good

expressions of respect both to God and Jacob: I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for thy sake. Observe,

1. Laban's learning: I have learned by experience. Note, There is many a profitable good lesson to be learned by experience. We are very unapt scholars if we have not learned by experience the evil of sin, the treachery of our own hearts, the vanity of the world, the goodness of God, the gains of godliness, and the like. 2. Laban's lesson. He owns,

(1.) That his prosperity was owing to God's blessing: The Lord has blessed me. Note, worldly men, who choose their portion in this life, are often blessed with an abundance of this world's goods. Common blessings are given plentifully too many that have no title to covenant-blessings.

(3.) That Jacob's piety had brought that blessing upon him: The Lord has blessed me, not for my own sake (let not such a man as Laban, that lives without God in the world, think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, Jam 1:7), but for thy sake. Note,

[1.] Good men are blessings to the places where they live, even where they live meanly and obscurely, as Jacob in the field, and Joseph in the prison, Ge 39:23.

[2.] God often blesses bad men with outward mercies for the sake of their godly relations, though it is seldom that they have either the wit to see it or the grace to own it, as Laban did here.

28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give *it*.

The new bargain they came upon. Laban's craft and covetousness took advantage of Jacob's plainness, honesty, and good-nature; and, perceiving that Jacob began to be won upon by his fair speeches, instead of making him a generous offer and bidding high, as he ought to have done, all things considered, he puts it upon him to make his demands (Ge

30:28): Appoint me thy wages, knowing he would be very modest in them, and would ask less than he could for shame offer. Jacob accordingly makes a proposal to him, in which,

1. He shows what reason he had to insist upon so much, considering,

(1.) That Laban was bound in gratitude to do well for him, because he had served him not only faithfully, but very successfully, Ge 30:30. Yet here observe how he speaks, like himself, very modestly. Laban had said, The Lord has blessed me for thy sake; Jacob will not say so, but, The Lord has blessed thee since my coming. Note, Humble saints take more pleasure in doing good than in hearing of it again.

(2.) That he himself was bound in duty to take care of his own family: Now, when shall I provide for my own house also? Note, Faith and charity, though they are excellent things, must not take us off from making necessary provisions for our own support, and the support of our families. We must, like Jacob, trust in the Lord and do good, and yet we must, like him, provide for our own houses also; he that does not the latter is worse than an infidel, 1Ti 5:8.

2. He is willing to refer himself to the providence of God, which, he knew, extends itself to the smallest things, even the colour of the cattle; and he will be content to have for his wages the sheep and goats of such and such a colour, speckled, spotted, and brown, which should hereafter be brought forth, Ge 30:32,33. This, he thinks, will be a most effectual way both to prevent Laban's cheating him and to secure himself from being suspected of cheating Laban. Some think he chose this colour because in Canaan it was generally most desired and delighted in; their shepherds in Canaan are called Nekohim (Am 1:1), the word here used for speckled; and Laban was willing to consent to this bargain because he thought if the few he has that were now speckled and spotted were separated from the rest, which by agreement was to be

done immediately, the body of the flock which Jacob was to tend, being of one colour, either all black or all white, would produce few or none of mixed colours, and so he should have Jacob's service for nothing, or next to nothing. According to this bargain, those few that were party-coloured were separated, and put into the hands of Laban's sons, and sent three days' journey off; so great was Laban's jealously lest any of them should mix with the rest of the flock, to the advantage of Jacob. And now a fine bargain Jacob has made for himself! Is this his providing for his own house, to put it upon such an uncertainty? If these cattle bring forth, as usually cattle do, young ones of the same colour with themselves, he must still serve for nothing, and be a drudge and a beggar all the days of his life; but he knows whom he has trusted, and the event showed,

(1.) That he took the best way that could be taken with Laban, who otherwise would certainly have been too hard for him. And,

(2.) That it was not in vain to rely upon the divine providence, which owns and blesses honest humble diligence. Those that find men whom they deal with unjust and unkind shall not find God so, but, some way or other, he will recompense the injured, and be a good pay-master to those that commit their cause to him.

29 And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

30 For *it was* little which thou hadst before I *came,* and it is *now* increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming: and now, when shall I provide for mine own house also?

31 And he said, what shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed *and* keep thy flock.

32 I will pass through all thy flock today, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the

sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and *of such* shall be my hire.

33 So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

34 And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

35 And he removed that day the he goats that were ring-streaked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, *and* every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons.

36 And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

37 And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which *was* in the rods.

Here is Jacob's honest policy to make his bargain more advantageous to himself than it was likely to be. If he had not taken some course to help himself, it would have been a bad bargain indeed, which he knew Laban would never consider, or rather would be well pleased to see him a loser by, so little did Laban consult any one's interest but his own. Now Jacob's contrivances were,

1. To set peeled sticks before the cattle where they were watered, that, looking much at those unusual party-coloured sticks, by the power of imagination they might bring forth young ones in like manner party-coloured, Ge 30:37-39. Probably this custom was commonly used by the shepherds of Canaan, who coveted to have their cattle of this motley colour.

Note, It becomes a man to be master of his trade, whatever it is, and to be not only industrious, but ingenious in it, and to be versed in all its lawful arts and mysteries; for what is a man but his trade? There is a discretion which God teaches the husbandman (as plain a trade as that is), and which he ought to learn, Isa 28:26.

2. When he began to have a stock of ringstraked and brown, he contrived to set them first, and to put the faces of the rest towards them, with the same design as in the former contrivance; but would not let his own, that were of one colour, Ge 30:40. Strong impressions, it seems, are made by the eye, with which therefore we have need to make a covenant.

3. When he found that his project succeeded, through the special blessing of God upon it, he contrived, by using it only with the stronger cattle, to secure to himself those that were most valuable, leaving the feebler to Laban, Ge 30:41, 42. Thus Jacob increased exceedingly (Ge 30:43), and grew very rich in a little time. This success of his policy, it is true, was not sufficient to justify it, if there had been anything fraudulent or unjust in it, which we are sure there was not, for he did it by divine direction (Ge 31:12); nor was there anything in the thing itself but the honest improvement of a fair bargain, which the divine providence wonderfully prospered, both in justice to Jacob whom Laban had wronged and dealt hardly with and in pursuance of the particular promises made to him of the tokens of the divine favour,

Note, Those who, while their beginning is small, are humble and honest, contented and industrious, are in a likely way to see their latter end greatly increasing. He that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more. He that is faithful in that which is another man's shall be entrusted with something of his own. Jacob, who had been a just servant, became a rich master.

38 And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted.

40 And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ring-streaked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.
41 And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters that they might conceive among the rods.
42 But when the cattle were feeble, he put *them* not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.
43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

Genesis -31

1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that *was* our father's; and of *that* which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

Jacob is here taking up a resolution immediately to quit his uncle's service, to take what he had and go back to Canaan. This resolution he took up upon a just provocation, by divine direction, and with the advice and consent of his wives.

Upon a just provocation; for Laban and his sons had become very cross and ill-natured towards him, so that he could not stay among them with safety or satisfaction.

1. Laban's sons showed their ill-will in what they said, Ge 31:1. It should seem they said it in Jacob's hearing, with a design to vex him. The last chapter began with Rachel's envying Leah; this begins with Laban's sons envying Jacob. Observe,

(1.) How greatly they magnify Jacob's prosperity: He has gotten all this glory. And what was this glory that they made so much ado about? It was a parcel of brown sheep and speckled goats (and perhaps the fine colours made them seem more glorious), and some camels and asses, and such like trading; and this was

all this glory. Note, Riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, while to all those that are conversant with heavenly things they have no glory in comparison with the glory which excelleth. Men's over-valuing worldly wealth is that fundamental error which is the root of covetousness, envy, and all evil.

(2.) How basely they reflect upon Jacob's fidelity, as if what he had he had not gotten honestly: Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. Not all, surely. What had become of those cattle which were committed to the custody of Laban's sons, and sent three days' journey off? Ge 30:35, 36. They mean all that was committed to him; but, speaking invidiously, they express themselves thus generally. Note,

[1.] Those that are ever so careful to keep a good conscience cannot always be sure of a good name.

[2.] This is one of the vanities and vexations which attend outward prosperity, that it makes a man to be envied of his neighbors (Ec 4:4), and who can stand before envy? Pr 27:4. Whom Heaven blesses hell curses, and all its children on earth.

2. Laban himself said little, but his countenance was not towards Jacob as it used to be; and Jacob could not but take notice of it, Ge 31:2, 5. He was but a churl at the best, but now he was more churlish than formerly. Note, Envy is a sin that often appears in the countenance; hence we read of an evil eye, Pr 23:6. Sour looks may do a great deal towards the ruin of peace and love in a family, and the making of those uneasy of whose comfort we ought to be tender. Laban's angry countenance lost him the greatest blessing his family ever had, and justly.

2 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it *was* not toward him as before.

3 And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

The direction he had from Heaven is more fully related in the account he gives of it to his wives (Ge 31:10-13), where he tells them of a dream he had about the cattle, and the wonderful increase of those of his colour; and how the angel of God, in that dream (for I suppose the dream spoken of Ge 31:10 and that Ge 31:11 to be the same), took notice of the workings of his fancy in his sleep, and instructed him, so that it was not by chance, or by his own policy, that he obtained that great advantage; but,

1. By the providence of God, who had taken notice of the hardships Laban had put upon him, and took this way to recompense him: "For I have seen all the Laban doeth unto thee, and herein I have an eye to that." Note, There is more of equity in the distributions of the divine providence than we are aware of, and by them the injured are recompensed really, though perhaps insensibly. Nor was it only by the justice of providence that Jacob was thus enriched, but,

2. In performance of the promise intimated in what is said Ge 31:13, I am the God of Beth-el, This was the place where the covenant was renewed with him. Note, Worldly prosperity and success are doubly sweet and comfortable when we see them flowing, not from common providence, but from covenant-love, to perform the mercy promised--when we have them from God as the God of Beth-el, from those promises of the life which now is that belong to godliness. Jacob, even when he had this hopeful prospect of growing rich with Laban, must think of returning. When the world begins to smile upon us we must remember it is not our home. Now arise (Ge 31:13) and return,

(1.) To thy devotions in Canaan, the solemnities of which had perhaps been much intermitted while he was with Laban. The times of this servitude God had winked at; but now, "Return to the place where thou anointedst the pillar and vowedst the vow. Now that thou beginnest to grow rich it is time to think of an altar and sacrifices again."

(2.) To thy comforts in Canaan: Return to the land of thy kindred. He was here among his near kindred; but those only he must look upon as his kindred in the best sense, the kindred he must live and die with, to whom pertained the covenant.

Note, The heirs of Canaan must never reckon themselves at home till they come thither, however they may seem to take root here.

4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

5 and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

He sent for Rachel and Leah to him to the field (Ge 31:4), that he might confer with them more privately, or because one would not come to the other's apartment and he would willingly talk with them together, or because he had work to do in the field which he would not leave. Note, Husbands that love their wives will communicate their purposes and intentions to them. Where there is a mutual affection there will be a mutual confidence. And the prudence of the wife should engage the heart of her husband to trust in her, Pr 31:11. Jacob told his wives,

(1.) How faithfully he had served their father, Ge 31:6. Note, If others do not do their duty to us, yet we shall have the comfort of having done ours to them.

(2.) How unfaithfully their father had dealt with him Ge 31:7. He would never keep to any bargain that he made with him, but, after the first year, still as he saw Providence favour Jacob with the colour agreed on, every half year of the remaining five he changed it for some other colour, which made it ten times; as if he thought not only to deceive Jacob, but the divine Providence, which manifestly smiled upon him. Note, Those that deal honestly are not always honestly dealt with.

(3.) How God had owned him notwithstanding. He had protected him from Laban's ill-will: God suffered him not to hurt me. Note, Those that keep close to God shall be kept safely by him. He had also provided plentifully for him, notwithstanding Laban's design to ruin him: God has taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me, Ge 31:9. Thus the righteous God paid Jacob for his hard service out of Laban's estate; as afterwards he paid the seed of Jacob for their serving the Egyptians, with their spoils. Note, God is not unrighteous to forget his people's work and labour of love, though men be so, Heb 6:10. Providence has ways of making those honest in the event that are not so in their design. Note, further, The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Pr 13:22.

(4.) He told them of the command God had given him, in a dream, to return to his own country (Ge 31:13), that they might not suspect his resolution to arise from inconstancy, or any disaffection to their country or family, but might see it to proceed from a principle of obedience to his God, and dependence on him.

6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.
7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.
8 If he said thus, the speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, the ring-streaked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ring-streaked.
9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me.
10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle *were* ring-streaked, speckled, and grizzled.
11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, *saying*, Jacob: and I said, Here *am* I.
12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle *are* ring-streaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

13 I *am* the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, *and* where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

His wives cheerfully consented to his resolution. They also brought forward their grievances, complaining that their father had been not only unkind, but unjust, to them (Ge 31:14-16), that he looked upon them as strangers, and was without natural affection towards them; and, whereas Jacob had looked upon the wealth which God had transferred from Laban to him as his wages, they looked upon it as their portions; so that, both ways, God forced Laban to pay his debts, both to his servant and to his daughters. So then it seemed,

(1.) They were weary of their own people and their father's house, and could easily forget them. Note, This good use we should make of the unkind usage we meet with from the world, we should sit the more loose to it, and be willing to leave it and desirous to be at home.

(2.) They were willing to go along with their husband, and put themselves with him under the divine direction: Whatsoever God hath said unto thee do. Note, Those wives that are their husband's meet helps will never be their hindrances in doing that to which God calls them.

14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, is *there* yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

15 Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

16 For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that *is* ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Jacob Flees from Laban

17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

18 and he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had
gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-
aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.
19 And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the
images that *were* her father's.

Here is, Jacob's flight from Laban. We may suppose he had been long considering of it, and casting about in his mind respecting it; but when now, at last, God had given him positive orders to go, he made no delay, nor was he disobedient to the heavenly vision. The first opportunity that offered itself he laid hold of, when Laban was shearing his sheep (Ge 31:19), that part of his flock which was in the hands of his sons three days' journey off. Now,

1. It is certain that it was lawful for Jacob to leave his service suddenly, without giving a quarter's warning. It was not only justified by the particular instructions God gave him, but warranted by the fundamental law of self-preservation, which directs us, when we are in danger, to shift for our own safety, as far as we can do it without wronging our consciences.

2. It was his prudence to steal away unawares to Laban, lest, if Laban had known, he should have hindered him or plundered him.

3. It was honestly done to take no more than his own with him, the cattle of his getting, Ge 31:18. He took what Providence gave him, and was content with that, and would not take the repair of his damages into his own hands. Yet Rachel was not so honest as her husband; she stole her father's images (Ge 31:19) and carried them away with her. The Hebrew calls them teraphim. Some think they were only little representations of the ancestors of the family, in statues or pictures, which Rachel had a particular fondness for, and was desirous to have with her, now that she was going into another country. It should rather seem that they were images for a religious use, penates, household-gods, either worshipped or consulted as oracles; and

we are willing to hope (with bishop Patrick) that she took them away not out of covetousness of the rich metal they were made of, much less for her own use, or out of any superstitious fear lest Laban, by consulting his teraphim, might know which way they had gone (Jacob, no doubt, dwelt with his wives as a man of knowledge, and they were better taught than so), but out of a design hereby to convince her father of the folly of his regard to those as gods which could not secure themselves, Isa 46:1,2.

20 And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

21 So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face *toward* the mount Gilead.

22 And it was told Laban on the third day, that Jacob was fled.

23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

Laban's pursuit of Jacob. Tidings were brought him, on the third day, that Jacob had fled; he immediately raises the whole clan, takes his brethren, that is, the relations of his family, that were all in his interests, and pursues Jacob (as Pharaoh and his Egyptians afterwards pursued the seed of Jacob), to bring him back into bondage again, or with design to strip him of what he had. Seven days' journey he marched in pursuit of him, Ge 31:23. He would not have taken half the pains to have visited his best friends. But the truth is bad men will do more to serve their sinful passions than good men will to serve their just affections, and are more vehement in their anger than in their love. Well, at length Laban, overtook him, and the very night before he came up with him God interposed in the quarrel, rebuked Laban and sheltered Jacob, charging Laban not to speak unto him either good or bad (Ge 31:24), that is, to say nothing against his going on with his journey, for that it proceeded from the Lord. The same Hebraism we have, Ge 24:50. Laban, during his seven day's march, had been full of rage against Jacob, and was now full of hopes that his lust should be satisfied upon him (Ex 15:9); but God comes to him, and with one word ties his hands, though he does not turn his heart. Note,

1. In a dream, and in slumberings upon the bed, God has ways of opening the ears of men, and sealing their instruction, Job 33:15, 16. Thus he admonishes men by their consciences, in secret whispers, which the man of wisdom will hear and heed.

2 The safety of good men is very much owing to the hold God has of the consciences of bad men and the access he has to them.

3. God sometimes appears wonderfully for the deliverance of his people when they are upon the very brink of ruin. The Jews were saved from Haman's plot when the king's decree drew hear to be put in execution, Es 9:1.

24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

25 Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives *taken* with the sword?

27 Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

As a renegade that had unjustly deserted his service. To represent Jacob as a criminal, he will have it thought that he intended kindness to his daughters (Ge 31:27,28), that he would have dismissed them with all the marks of love and honour that could be, that he would have made a solemn business of it, would have kissed his little grandchildren (and that was all he would have given them), and, according to the foolish custom of the country, would have sent them away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp: not as Rebekah was sent away out of the same family, above 120 years before, with prayers and blessings (Ge 24:60), but with sport and merriment, which

was a sign that religion had very much decayed in the family, and that they had lost their seriousness. However, he pretends they would have been treated with respect at parting.

Note, It is common for bad men, when they are disappointed in their malicious projects, to pretend that they designed nothing but what was kind and fair. When they cannot do the mischief they intended, they are loth it should be thought that they ever did intend it. When they have not done what they should have done they come off with this excuse, that they would have done it. Men may thus be deceived, but God cannot. He likewise suggests that Jacob had some bad design in stealing away thus (Ge 31:26), that he took his wives away as captives. Note, Those that mean ill themselves are most apt to put the worst construction upon what others do innocently. The insinuating and the aggravating of faults are the artifices of a designing malice, and those must be represented (though never so unjustly) as intending ill against whom ill is intended. Upon the whole matter,

(1.) He boasts of his own power (Ge 31:29): It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt. He supposes that he had both right on his side (a good action, as we say, against Jacob) and strength on his side, either to avenge the wrong or recover the right. Note, Bad people commonly value themselves much upon their power to do hurt, whereas a power to do good is much more valuable. Those that will do nothing to make themselves amiable love to be thought formidable. And yet,

(2.) He owns himself under the check and restraint of God's power; and, though it redounds much to the credit and comfort of Jacob, he cannot avoid telling him the caution God had given him the night before in a dream, Speak not to Jacob good nor bad. Note, As God has all wicked instruments in a chain, so when he pleases he can make them sensible of it, and force them to own it to his praise, as protector of the good, as Balaam did. Or we may look upon this as an instance of some

conscientious regard felt by Laban for God's express prohibitions. As bad as he was he durst not injure one whom he saw to be the particular care of Heaven. Note, A great deal of mischief would be prevented if men would but attend to the caveats which their own consciences give them in slumberings upon the bed, and regard the voice of God in them.

28 And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Thou hast now done foolishly in *so* doing.

29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

30 And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, *yet* wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

As a thief, Ge 31:30. Rather than own that he had given him any colour of provocation to depart, he is willing to impute it to a foolish fondness for his father's house, which made him that he would needs begone; but then (says he) wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? Foolish man! To call those his gods that could be stolen! Could he expect protection from those that could neither resist nor discover their invaders? Happy are those who have the Lord for their God, for they have a God that they cannot be robbed of. Enemies may steal our goods, but not our God. Here Laban lays to Jacob's charge things that he knew not, the common distress of oppressed innocency.

31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

Jacob's apology for himself. Those that commit their cause to God, yet are not forbidden to plead it themselves with meekness and fear.

1. As to the charge of stealing away his own wives he clears himself by giving the true reason why he went away unknown to Laban, Ge 31:31. He feared lest Laban would by force take away his daughters, and so oblige him, by the bond of his affection to his wives, to continue in his service. Note, Those

that are unjust in the least, it may be suspected, will be unjust also in much, Lu 16:10. If Laban deceive Jacob in his wages, it is likely he will make no conscience of robbing him of his wives, and putting those asunder whom God has joined together. What may not be feared from men that have no principle of honesty?

2. As to the charge of stealing Laban's gods he pleads not guilty, Ge 31:32. He not only did not take them himself (he was not so fond of them), but he did not know that they were taken. Yet perhaps he spoke too hastily and inconsiderately when he said, "Whoever had taken them, let him not live;" upon this he might reflect with some bitterness when, not long after, Rachel who had taken them died suddenly in travail. How just soever we think ourselves to be, it is best to forbear imprecations, lest they fall heavier than we imagine.

32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before
our brethren discern thou what *is* thine with me, and take *it* to
thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the
two maidservants' tents; but he found *them* not. Then went he out
of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

The diligent search Laban made for his gods (Ge 31:33-35), partly out of hatred to Jacob, whom he would gladly have an occasion to quarrel with, partly out of love to his idols, which he was loth to part with. We do not find that he searched Jacob's flocks for stolen cattle; but he searched his furniture for stolen gods. He was of Micah's mind, You have taken away my gods, and what have I more? Jdg 18:24. Were the worshippers of false gods so set upon their idols? Did they thus walk in the name of their gods? And shall not we be as solicitous in our enquires after the true God? When he has justly departed from us, how carefully should we ask, Where is God my Maker? O that I knew where I might find him! Job 23:3. Laban, after all his searches, missed of finding his gods, and was baffled in his enquiry with a sham; but our God will not only be found of

those that seek him, but they shall find him their bountiful rewarder.

34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found *them* not.

35 And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women *is* upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

36 And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

The power of provocation. Jacob's natural temper was mild and calm, and grace had improved it; he was a smooth man, and a plain man; and yet Laban's unreasonable carriage towards him put him into a heat that transported him into a heat that transported him into some vehemence, Ge 31:36, 37. His chiding with Laban, though it may admit of some excuse, was not justifiable, nor is it written for our imitation. Grievous words stir up anger, and commonly do but make bad worse. It is a very great affront to one that bears an honest mind to be charged with dishonesty, and yet even this we must learn to bear with patience, committing our cause to God.

37 Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set *it* here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

38 This twenty years *have* I *been* with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

The comfort of a good conscience. This was Jacob's rejoicing, that when Laban accused him his own conscience acquitted him, and witnessed for him that he had been in all things willing and careful to live honestly, Heb 13:18. Note, Those that in any employment have dealt faithfully, if they cannot obtain the credit of it with men, yet shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms.

39 That which was torn *of beasts* I brought not unto thee; I bare the

loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night.

The character of a hard master. Laban had been such a one to Jacob. Those are bad masters, 1. Who exact from their servants that which is unjust, by obliging them to make good that which is not damaged by any default of theirs. This Laban did, Ge 31:39. Nay, if there has been a neglect, yet it is unjust to punish above the proportion of the fault. That may be an inconsiderable damage to the master which would go near to ruin a poor servant.

40 *Thus* I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

The character of a good servant, and particularly of a faithful shepherd. Jacob had approved himself such a one, Ge 31:38-40.

1. He was very careful, so that, through his oversight or neglect, the ewes did not cast their young. His piety also procured a blessing upon his master's effects that were under his hands. Note, Servants should take no less care of what they are entrusted with for their masters than if they were entitled to it as their own.

2. He was very honest, and took none of that for his own eating which was not allowed him. He contented himself with mean fare, and coveted not to feast upon the rams of the flock. Note, Servants must not be dainty in their food, nor covet what is forbidden them, but in that, and other instances, show all good fidelity.

3. He was very laborious, Ge 31:40. He stuck to his business, all weathers; and bore both heat and cold with invincible patience. Note, Men of business, that intend to make something of it, must resolve to endure hardness. Jacob is here an example

to ministers; they also are shepherds, of whom it is required that they be true to their trust and willing to take pains.

Those also are bad masters who deny to their servants that which is just and equal. This Laban did, Ge 31:41. It was unreasonable for him to make Jacob serve for his daughters, when he had in reversion so great an estate secured to him by the promise of God himself; as it was also to give him his daughters without portions, when it was in the power of his hands to do well for them. Thus he robbed the poor because he was poor, as he did also by changing his wages.

42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

The care of providence for the protection of injured innocence, Ge 31:42. God took cognizance of the wrong done to Jacob, and repaid him whom Laban would otherwise have sent empty away, and rebuked Laban, who otherwise would have swallowed him up. Note, God is the patron of the oppressed; and those who are wronged and yet not ruined, cast down and yet not destroyed, must acknowledge him in their preservation and give him the glory of it. Observe,

1. Jacob speaks of God as the God of his father, intimating that he thought himself unworthy to be thus regarded, but was beloved for the father's sake.

2. He calls him the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac; for Abraham was dead, and had gone to that world where perfect love casts out fear; but Isaac was yet alive, sanctifying the Lord in his heart, as his fear and his dread.

43 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These* daughters *are* my daughters, and *these* children *are* my children, and *these* cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest *is* mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have borne?

We have here the compromising of the matter between Laban and Jacob. Laban had nothing to say in reply to Jacob's remonstrance: he could neither justify himself nor condemn Jacob, but was convicted by his own conscience of the wrong he had done him; and therefore desires to hear no more of the matter He is not willing to own himself in a fault, nor to ask Jacob's forgiveness, and make him satisfaction, as he ought to have done. But,

He turns it off with a profession of kindness for Jacob's wives and children (Ge 31:43): These daughters are my daughters. When he cannot excuse what he has done, he does, in effect, own what he should have done; he should have treated them as his own, but he had counted them as strangers, Ge 31:15. Note, It is common for those who are without natural affection to pretend much to it when it will serve a turn. Or perhaps Laban said this in a vain-glorious say, as one that loved to talk big, and use great swelling words of vanity: "All that thou seest is mine." It was not so, it was all Jacob's, and he had paid dearly for it; yet Jacob let him have his saying, perceiving him coming into a better humour. Note, Property lies near the hearts of worldly people. They love to boast of it, "This is mine, and the other is mine," as Nabal, 1Sa 25:11, my bread and my water.

44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and
let it be for a witness between me and thee.
45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up *for* a pillar.
46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took
stones, and made a heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.
47 And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha [the heap of witness]: but
Jacob called it Galeed [the heap of witness].
48 And Laban said, this heap is a witness between me and thee this
day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed,
49 and Mizpah [a beacon *or* watchtower]; for he said, The Lord watch
between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.
50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take *other* wives
beside my daughters, no man *is* with us; see, God *is* witness betwixt
me and thee.

He proposes a covenant of friendship between them, to which Jacob readily agrees, without insisting upon Laban's submission, much less his restitution.

Note, When quarrels happen, we should be willing to be friends again upon any terms: peace and love are such valuable jewels that we can scarcely buy them too dearly. Better sit down losers than go on in strife. Now observe here,

1 The substance of this covenant. Jacob left it wholly to Laban to settle it. The tenour of it was,

(1.) That Jacob should be a good husband to his wives, that he should not afflict them, nor marry other wives besides them, Ge 31:50. Jacob had never given him any cause to suspect that he would be any other than a kind husband; yet, as if he had, he was willing to come under this engagement. Though Laban had afflicted them himself, yet he will bind Jacob that he shall not afflict them. Note, Those that are injurious themselves are commonly most jealous of others, and those that do not do their own duty are most peremptory in demanding duty from others.

(2.) That he should never be a bad neighbour to Laban, Ge 31:52. It was agreed that no act of hostility should ever pass between them, that Jacob should forgive and forget all the wrongs he had received and not remember them against Laban or his family in after-times. Note, We may resent an injury which yet we may not revenge.

51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

52 this heap be witness, and *this* pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

The ceremony of this covenant. It was made and ratified with great solemnity, according to the usages of those times.

(1.) A pillar was erected (Ge 31:45), and a heap of stones raised (Ge 31:46), to perpetuate the memory or the thing, the way of recording agreements by writing being then either not known or not used.

(2.) A sacrifice was offered (Ge 31:54), a sacrifice of peace-offerings. Note, Our peace with God is that which puts true comfort into our peace with our friends. If parties contend, the reconciliation of both to him will facilitate their reconciliation one to another.

(3.) They did eat bread together (Ge 31:46), jointly partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice, Ge 31:54. This was in token of a hearty reconciliation. Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together. It was in the nature of a love-feast.

(4.) They solemnly appealed to God concerning their sincerity herein,

[1.] As a witness (Ge 31:49): The Lord watch between me and thee, that is, "The Lord take cognizance of everything that shall be done on either side in violation of this league. When we are out of one another's sight, let his be a restraint upon us, that wherever we are we are under God's eye." This appeal is convertible into a prayer. Friends at a distance from each other may take the comfort of this, that when they cannot know or succour one another God watches between them, and has his eye on them both.

[2.] As a Judge, Ge 31:53. The God of Abraham (from whom Jacob descended), and the God of Nahor (from whom Laban descended), the God of their father (the common ancestor, from

whom they both descended), judge betwixt us. God's relation to them is thus expressed to intimate that they worshipped one and the same God, upon which consideration there ought to be no enmity between them. Note, Those that have one God should have one heart: those that agree in religion should strive to agree in everything else. God is Judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously; whoever does wrong, it is at his peril.

(5.) They gave a new name to the place, Ge 31:47, 48. Laban called it in Syriac, and Jacob in Hebrew, the heap of witness; and (Ge 31:49) it was called Mizpah, a watch-tower. Posterity being included in the league, care was taken that thus the memory of it should be preserved. These names are applicable to the seals of the gospel covenant, which are witnesses to us if we be faithful, but witnesses to us if we be faithful, but witnesses against us if we be false. The name Jacob gave this heap (Galeed) stuck by it, not the name Laban gave it. In all this reencounter, Laban was noisy and full of words, affecting to say much; Jacob was silent, and said little. When Laban appealed to God under many titles, Jacob only swore by the fear of his father Isaac, that is, the God whom his father Isaac feared, who had never served other gods, as Abraham and Nahor had done. Two words of Jacob's were more memorable than all Laban's speeches and vain repetitions: for the words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools, Ec 9:17.

54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

Lastly, After all this angry parley, they part friends, Ge 31:55. Laban very affectionately kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them, and then went back in peace. Note, God is often better to us than our fears, and strangely overrules the

spirits of men in our favour, beyond what we could have expected; for it is not in vain to trust in him.

Genesis -32

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

Jacob, having got clear of Laban, pursues his journey homewards towards Canaan: when God has helped us through difficulties we should go on our way heaven-ward with so much the more cheerfulness and resolution. Now,

1. Here is Jacob's convoy in his journey (Ge 32:1): The angels of God met him, in a visible appearance, whether in a vision by day or in a dream by night, as when he saw them upon the ladder (Ge 28:12), is uncertain. Note, Those that keep in a good way have always a good guard; angels themselves are ministering spirits for their safety, Heb 1:14. Where Jacob pitched his tents, they pitched theirs about him, Ps 34:7. They met him, to bid him welcome to Canaan again; a more honourable reception this was than ever any prince had, that was met by the magistrates of a city in their formalities. They met him to congratulate him on his arrival, as well as on his escape from Laban; for they have pleasure in the prosperity of God's servants. They had invisibly attended him all along, but now they appeared to him, because he had greater dangers before him than those he had hitherto encountered. Note, When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts. We should think it had been more seasonable for these angels to have appeared to him amidst the perplexity and agitation occasioned first by Laban, and afterwards by Esau, than in this calm and quiet interval, when he saw not himself in any imminent peril; but God will have us, when we are in peace, to provide for trouble, and, when trouble comes, to live upon former observations and experiences; for we walk by faith, not by sight. God's people, at death, are returning to Canaan, to their Father's house; and then the angels of God will meet them, to

congratulate them on the happy finishing of their servitude, and to carry them to their rest.

2 The comfortable notice he took of this convoy, Ge 32:2. This is God's host, and therefore,

(1.) It is a powerful host; very great is he that is thus attended, and very safe that is thus guarded.

(2.) God must have the praise of this protection: "This I may thank God for, for it is his host." A good man may with an eye of faith see the same that Jacob saw with his bodily eyes, by believing that promise (Ps 91:11), He shall give his angels charge over thee. What need have we to dispute whether every particular saint has a guardian angel, when we are sure he has a guard of angels about him? To preserve the remembrance of this favour, Jacob gave a name to the place from it, Mahanaim, two hosts, or two camps. That is, say some of the rabbin, one host of the guardian angels of Mesopotamia, who conducted Jacob thence, and delivered him safely to the other host of the angels of Canaan, who met him upon the borders where he now was. Rather, they appeared to him in two hosts, one on either side, or one in the front and the other in the rear, to protect him from Laban behind and Esau before, that they might be a complete guard. Thus he is compassed with God's favour. Perhaps in allusion to this the church is called Mahanaim, two armies, So 6:13. Here were Jacob's family, which made one army, representing the church militant and itinerant on earth; and the angels, another army, representing the church triumphant and at rest in heaven.

2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This *is* God's host: and he called
the name of that place Mahanaim [two hosts *or* camps].
3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto
the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

Now that Jacob was re-entering Canaan God, by the vision of angels, reminded him of the friends he had when he left it, and thence he takes occasion to remind himself of the enemies he had, particularly Esau. It is probable that Rebekah had sent him word of Esau's settlement in Seir, and of the continuance of his enmity to him. What shall poor Jacob do? He longs to see his

father, and yet he dreads to see his brother. He rejoices to see Canaan again, and yet cannot but rejoice with trembling because of Esau.

He sends a very kind and humble message to Esau. It does not appear that his way lay through Esau's country, or that he needed to ask his leave for a passage; but his way lay near it, and he would not go by him without paying him the respect due to a brother, a twin-brother, an only brother, an elder brother, a brother offended. Note,

1. Though our relations fail in their duty to us, yet we must make conscience of doing our duty to them. 2. It is a piece of friendship and brotherly love to acquaint our friends with our condition, and enquire into theirs. Acts of civility may help to slay enmities. Jacob's message to him is very obliging, Ge 32:4, 5.

(1.) He calls Esau his lord, himself his servant, to intimate that he did not insist upon the prerogatives of the birthright and blessing he had obtained for himself, but left it to God to fulfil his own purpose in his seed. Note, Yielding pacifies great offences, Ec 10:4. We must not refuse to speak in a respectful and submissive manner to those that are ever so unjustly exasperated against it.

(2.) He gives him a short account of himself, that he was not a fugitive and a vagabond, but, though long absent, had had a certain dwelling-place, with his own relations: I have sojourned with Laban, and staid there till now; and that he was not a beggar, nor did he come home, as the prodigal son, destitute of necessaries and likely to be a charge to his relations; no, I have oxen and asses. This he knew would (if anything) recommend him to Esau's good opinion. And,

(3.) He courts his favour: I have sent, that I might find grace in thy sight. Note, It is no disparagement to those that have the better cause to become petitioners for reconciliation, and to sue for peace as well as right.

4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:
5 and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.
6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

He receives a very formidable account of Esau's warlike preparations against him (Ge 32:6), not a word, but a blow, a very coarse return to his kind message, and a sorry welcome home to a poor brother: He comes to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. He is now weary of waiting for the days of mourning for this good father, and even before they come he resolves to slay his brother.

1. He remembers the old quarrel, and will now be avenged on him for the birthright and blessing, and, if possible, defeat Jacob's expectations from both. Note, malice harboured will last long, and find an occasion to break out with violence a great while after the provocations given. Angry men have good memories.

2. He envies Jacob what little estate he had, and, though he himself was now possessed of a much better, yet nothing will serve him but to feed his eyes upon Jacob's ruin, and fill his fields with Jacob's spoils. Perhaps the account Jacob sent him of his wealth did but provoke him the more.

3. He concludes it easy to destroy him, now that he was upon the road, a poor weary traveller, unfixed, and (as he thinks) unguarded. Those that have the serpent's poison have commonly the serpent's policy, to take the first and fairest opportunity that offers itself for revenge.

4. He resolves to do it suddenly, and before Jacob had come to his father, lest he should interpose and mediate between them. Esau was one of those that hated peace; when Jacob speaks, speaks peaceably, he is for war, Ps 120:6, 7. Out he marches,

spurred on with rage, and intent on blood and murders; four hundred men he had with him, probably such as used to hunt with him, armed, no doubt, rough and cruel like their leader, ready to execute the word of command though ever so barbarous, and now breathing nothing but threatenings and slaughter. The tenth part of these were enough to cut off poor Jacob, and his guiltless helpless family, root and branch. No marvel therefore that it follows (Ge 32:7), then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, perhaps the more so from having scarcely recovered the fright Laban had put him in.

Note, Many are the troubles of the righteous in this world, and sometimes the end of one is but the beginning of another. The clouds return after the rain. Jacob, though a man of great faith, yet was now greatly afraid.

Note, A lively apprehension of danger, and a quickening fear arising from it, may very well consist with a humble confidence in God's power and promise. Christ himself, in his agony, was sorely amazed.

7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that *was* with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

8 and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

He puts himself into the best posture of defence that his present circumstances will admit. It was absurd to think of making resistance, all his contrivance is to make an escape, Ge 32:7, 8. He thinks it prudent not to venture all in one bottom, and therefore divides what he had into two companies, that, if one were smitten, the other might escape. Like a tender careful master of a family, he is more solicitous for their safety than for his own. He divided his company, not as Abraham (Ge 14:15), for fight, but for flight.

9 And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

Our rule is to call upon God in the time of trouble; we have here an example to this rule, and the success encourages us to follow this example. It was now a time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall

be saved out of it; and here we have him praying for that salvation, Jer 30:7. In his distress he sought the Lord, and he heard him.

Note, Times of fear should be times of prayer; whatever frightens us should drive us to our knees, to our God. Jacob had lately seen his guard of angels, but, in this distress, he applied to God, not to them; he knew they were his fellow-servants, Re 22:9. Nor did he consult Laban's teraphim; it was enough for him that he had a God to go to. To him he addresses himself with all possible solemnity, so running for safety into the name of the Lord, as a strong tower, Pr 18:10. This prayer is the more remarkable because it won him the honour of being an Israel, a prince with God, and the father of the praying remnant, who are hence called the seed of Jacob, to whom he never said, Seek you me in vain. Now it is worth while to enquire what there was extraordinary in this prayer, that it should gain the petitioner all this honour.

The request itself is one, and very express: Deliver me from the hand of my brother, Ge 32:11. Though there was no human probability on his side, yet he believed the power of God could rescue him as a lamb out of the bloody jaws of the loin. Note,

1. We have leave to be particular in our addresses to God, to mention the particular straits and difficulties we are in; for the God with whom we have to do is one we may be free with: we have liberty of speech (parresia) at the throne of grace.

2. When our brethren aim to be our destroyers, it is our comfort that we have a Father to whom we may apply as our deliverer.

10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

The pleas are many, and very powerful; never was cause better ordered, Job 23:4. He offers up his request with great faith, fervency, and humility. How earnestly does he beg! Deliver me, I pray thee, Ge 32:11. His fear made him importunate. With what holy logic does he argue! With what divine eloquence does he plead! Here is a noble copy to write after.

1. He addresses himself to God as the God of his fathers, Ge 32:9. Such was the humble self-denying sense he had of his own unworthiness that he did not call God his own God, but a God in covenant with his ancestors: O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac; and this he could the better plead because the covenant, by divine designation, was entailed upon him. Note, God's covenant with our fathers may be a comfort to us when were are in distress. It has often been so to the Lord's people, Ps 22:4, 5. Being born in God's house, we are taken under his special protection.

2. He produces his warrant: Thou saidst unto me, Return unto thy country. He did not rashly leave his place with Laban, nor undertake this journey out of a fickle humour, or a foolish fondness for his native country, but in obedience to God's command. Note, (1.) We may be in the way of our duty, and yet may meet with trouble and distress in that way. As prosperity will not prove us in the right, so cross events will not prove us in the wrong; we may be going whither God calls us, and yet may think our way hedged up with thorns. (2.) We may comfortably trust God with our safety, while we carefully keep to our duty. If God be our guide, he will be our guard.

3. He humbly acknowledges his own unworthiness to receive any favour from God (Ge 32:10): I am not worthy; it is an unusual plea. Some would think he should have pleaded that what was now in danger was his own, against all the world, and that he had earned it dear enough; no, he pleads, Lord, I am not worthy of it. Note, Self-denial and self-abasement well become us in all our

addresses to the throne of grace. Christ never commended any of his petitioners so much as him who said, Lord, I am not worthy (Mt 8:8), and her who said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table, Mt 15:27. Now observe here,

(1.) How magnificently and honourably he speaks of the mercies of God to him. We have here, mercies, in the plural number, and inexhaustible spring, and innumerable streams; mercies and truth, that is, past mercies given according to the promise, and further mercies secured by the promise. Note, What is laid up in God's truth, as well as what is laid out in God's mercies, is the matter both of the comforts and the praises of active believers. Nay, observe, it is all the mercies, and all the truth; the manner of expression is copious, and intimates that his heart was full of God's goodness.

(2.) How meanly and humbly he speaks of himself, disclaiming all thought of his own merit: "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, much less am I worthy of so great a favour as this I am now suing for." Jacob was a considerable man, and, upon many accounts, very deserving, and, in treating with Laban, had justly insisted on his merits, but not before God. I am less than all thy mercies; so the word is. Note, The best and greatest of men are utterly unworthy of the least favour from God, and just be ready to own it upon all occasions. It was the excellent Mr. Herbert's motto, Less than the least of all God's mercies. Those are best prepared for the greatest mercies that see themselves unworthy of the least.

4. He thankfully owns God's goodness to him in his banishment, and how much it had outdone his expectations: "With my staff I passed over this Jordan, poor and desolate, like a forlorn and despised pilgrim;" he had no guides, no companions, no attendants, no conveniences for travel, but his staff only, nothing else to stay himself upon; "and now I have become two bands, now I am surrounded with a numerous and comfortable retinue of children and servants:" though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note,

(1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it.

(2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases ought, with humility and thankfulness, to remember how small their beginning was. Jacob pleads, "Lord, thou didst keep me when I went out with only my staff, and had but one life to lose; wilt thou not keep me now that so many are embarked with me?"

5. He urges the extremity of the peril he was in: Lord, deliver me from Esau, for I fear him, Ge 32:11. The people of God have not been shy of telling God their fears; for they know he takes cognizance of them, and considers them. The fear that quickens prayer is itself pleadable. It was not a robber, but a murderer, that he was afraid of; nor was it his own life only that lay at stake, but the mothers' and the children's, that had left their native soil to go along with him. Note, Natural affection may furnish us with allowable acceptable pleas in prayer.

6. He insists especially upon the promise God had made him (Ge 32:9): Thou saidst, I will deal well with thee, and again, in the close (Ge 32:12): Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good. Note,

(1.) The best we can say to God in prayer is what he has said to us. God's promises, as they are the surest guide of our desires in prayer, and furnish us with the best petitions, so they are the firmest ground of our hopes, and furnish us with the best pleas. "Lord, thou saidst thus and thus; and wilt thou not be as good as thy word, the word upon which thou had caused me to hope?" Ps 119:49.

(2.) The most general promises are applicable to particular cases. "Thou saidst, I will do thee good; Lord, do me good in this matter." He pleads also a particular promise, that of the multiplying of his seed. "Lord, what will become of that promise, if they be all cut off?" Note,

[1.] There are promises to the families of good people, which are improvable in prayer for family-mercies, ordinary and extraordinary, Ge 17:17, Ps 112:2, Ps 102:28.

[2.] The world's threatenings should drive us to God's promises.

11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the
hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, *and*
the mother with the children.
12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as
the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.
13 And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which
came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;
14 two hundred she goats and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and
twenty rams,

Jacob, having piously made God his friend by a prayer, is here prudently endeavouring to make Esau his friend by a present. He had prayed to God to deliver him from the hand of Esau, for he feared him; but neither did his fear sink into such a despair as dispirits for the use of means, nor did his prayer make him presume upon God's mercy, without the use of means.

Note, When we have prayed to God for any mercy, we must second our prayers with our endeavours; else, instead of trusting god, we tempt him; we must so depend upon God's providence as to make use of our own prudence. "Help thyself, and God will help thee;" God answers our prayers by teaching us to order our affairs with discretion. To pacify Esau,

I. Jacob sent him a very noble present, not of jewels or fine garments (he had them not), but of cattle, to the number of 580 in all, Ge 32:13-15. Now,

1. It was an evidence of the great increase with which God had blessed Jacob that he could spare such a number of cattle out of his stock.

2. It was an evidence of his wisdom that he would willingly part with some, to secure the rest; some men's covetousness loses them more than ever it gained them, and, by grudging a little expense, they expose themselves to great damage; skin for skin, and all that a man has, if he be a wise man, he will give for his life.

3. It was a present that he thought would be acceptable to Esau, who had traded so much in hunting wild beasts that perhaps he was but ill furnished with tame cattle with which to stock his new conquests. And we may suppose that the mixed colours of Jacob's cattle, ring-straked, speckled, and spotted, would please Esau's fancy.

4. He promised himself that by this present he should gain Esau's favour; for a gift commonly prospers, which way soever it turns (Pr 17:8), and makes room for a man (Pr 18:16); nay, it pacifies anger and strong wrath, Pr 21:14. Note,

[1.] We must not despair of reconciling ourselves even to those that have been most exasperated against us; we ought not to judge men unappeasable, till we have tried to appease them.

[2.] Peace and love, though purchased dearly, will prove a good bargain to the purchaser. Many a morose ill-natured man would have said, in Jacob's case, "Esau has vowed my death without cause, and he shall never be a farthing the better for me; I will see him far enough before I will send him a present:" but Jacob forgives and forgets.

II. He sent him a very humble message, which he ordered his servants to deliver in the best manner, Ge 32:17, 18. They must call Esau their lord, and Jacob his servant; they must tell him the cattle they had was a small present which Jacob had sent him, as a specimen of his acquisitions while he was abroad. The cattle he sent were to be disposed of in several droves, and the servants that attended each drove were to deliver the same message, that the present might appear the more valuable, and his submission, so often repeated, might be the more likely to influence Esau. They must especially take care to tell him that Jacob was coming after (Ge 32:18-20), that he might not suspect he had fled through fear.

Note, A friendly confidence in men's goodness may help to prevent the mischief designed us by their badness: if Jacob will seem not to be afraid of Esau, Esau, it may be hoped, will not be a terror to Jacob.

15 thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine and ten bulls,
twenty she asses and ten foals.
16 And he delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by
themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and
put a space betwixt drove and drove.
17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother
meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, whose *art* thou?And whither
goest thou? And whose *are* these before thee?
18 Then thou shalt say, *they be* thy servant Jacob's; it *is* a present sent
unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he *is* behind us.
19 And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that
followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto
Esau, when ye find him.
20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he
said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and
afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.
21 So went the present over before him; and himself lodged that night in
the company.

Jacob Wrestles at Peniel

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two
women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford
Jabbok.
23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over
that he had.
24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until
the breaking of the day.

How Jacob and this angel engaged, Ge 32:24. It was a single combat, hand to hand; they had neither of them any seconds. Jacob was now full of care and fear about the interview he expected, next day, with his brother, and, to aggravate the trial, God himself seemed to come forth against him as an enemy, to oppose his entrance into the land of promise, and to dispute the pass with him, not suffering him to follow his wives and children whom he had sent before. Note, Strong believers must expect divers temptations, and strong ones. We are told by the prophet (Ho 12:4) how Jacob wrestled: he wept, and made supplication; prayers and tears were his weapons. It was not only a corporal,

but a spiritual, wrestling, by the vigorous actings of faith and holy desire; and thus all the spiritual seed of Jacob, that pray in praying, still wrestle with God.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

What was the success of the engagement. Jacob kept his ground; though the struggle continued long, the angel, prevailed not against him (Ge 32:25), that is, this discouragement did not shake his faith, nor silence his prayer. It was not in his own strength that he wrestled, nor by his own strength that he prevailed, but in and by strength derived from Heaven. That of Job illustrates this (Job 23:6), Will he plead against me with his great power? No (had the angel done so, Jacob had been crushed), but he will put strength in me; and by that strength Jacob had power over the angel, Ho 12:4. Note, We cannot prevail with God but in his own strength. It is his Spirit that intercedes in us, and helps our infirmities, Ro 8:26.

The angel put out Jacob's thigh, to show him what he could do, and that it was God he was wrestling with, for no man could disjoint his thigh with a touch. Some think that Jacob felt little or no pain from this hurt; it is probable that he did not, for he did not so much as halt till the struggle was over (Ge 32:31), and, if so, this was an evidence of a divine touch indeed, which wounded and healed at the same time. Jacob prevailed, and yet had his thigh put out. Note, Wrestling believers may obtain glorious victories, and yet come off with broken bones; for when they are weak then are they strong, weak in themselves, but strong in Christ, 2Co 12:10. Our honours and comforts in this world have their alloys.

26 And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

The angel, by an admirable condescension, mildly requests Jacob to let him go (Ge 32:26), as God said to Moses (Ex 32:10), Let me alone. Could not a mighty angel get clear of Jacob's grapples? He could; but thus he would put an honour on Jacob's faith and prayer, and further try his constancy. The king is held in the galleries (So 7:5); I held him (says the spouse) and would not let him go, So 3:4. The reason the angel gives why he would be gone

is because the day breaks, and therefore he would not any longer detain Jacob, who had business to do, a journey to go, a family to look after, which, especially in this critical juncture, called for his attendance. Note, Everything is beautiful in its season; even the business of religion, and the comforts of communion with God, must sometimes give way to the necessary affairs of this life: God will have mercy, and not sacrifice.

Jacob persists in his holy importunity: I will not let thee go, except thou bless me; whatever becomes of his family and journey, he resolves to make the best he can of this opportunity, and not to lose the advantage of his victory: he does not mean to wrestle all night for nothing, but humbly resolves he will have a blessing, and rather shall all his bones be put out of joint than he will go away without one. The credit of a conquest will do him no good without the comfort of a blessing. In begging this blessing he owns his inferiority, though he seemed to have the upper hand in the struggle; for the less is blessed of the better. Note, Those that would have the blessing of Christ must be in good earnest, and be importunate for it, as those that resolve to have no denial. It is the fervent prayer that is the effectual prayer.

27 And he said unto him, what *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

The angel puts a perpetual mark of honour upon him, by changing his name (Ge 32:27, 28): "Thou art a brave combatant" (says the angel), "a man of heroic resolution; what is thy name?" "Jacob," says he, a supplanter; so Jacob signifies: "Well," says the angel, "be thou never so called anymore; henceforth thou shalt be celebrated, not for craft and artful management, but for true valour; thou shalt be called Israel, a prince with God, a name greater than those of the great men of the earth." He is a prince indeed that is a prince with God, and those are truly honourable that are mighty in prayer, Israel's, Israelites indeed. Jacob is here knighted in the field, as it were, and has a title of honour given him by him that is the fountain of honour, which will remain, to his praise, to the end of time. Yet this was not all; having power with God, he shall have power with men too. Having prevailed for a blessing from heaven, he shall, no doubt, prevail for Esau's favour. Note, Whatever enemies we have, if we can but make God our friend, we are well off; those that by faith have power in heaven have thereby as much on earth as they have occasion for.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name?And he blessed him there.

He dismisses him with a blessing, Ge 32:29. Jacob desired to know the angel's name, that he might, according to his capacity, do him honour, Jdg 13:17. But that request was denied, that he might not be too proud of his conquest, nor think he had the angel at such an advantage as to oblige him to what he pleased. No, "Wherefore dost thou ask after my name? What good will it do thee to know that?" The discovery of that was reserved for his death-bed, upon which he was taught to call him Shiloh. But, instead of telling him his name, he gave him his blessing, which was the thing he wrestled for: He blessed him there, repeated and ratified the blessing formerly given him. Note, Spiritual blessings, which secure our felicity, are better and much more desirable than fine notions which satisfy our curiosity. An interest in the angel's blessing is better than an acquaintance with his name. The tree of life is better than the tree of knowledge. Thus Jacob carried his point; a blessing he wrestled for, and a blessing he had; nor did ever any of his praying seed seek in vain. See how wonderfully God condescends to countenance and crown importunate prayer: those that resolve, though God slay them, yet to trust in him, will, at length, be more than conquerors.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [the face of God]: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

Jacob gives a new name to the place; he calls it Peniel, the face of God (Ge 32:30), because there he had seen the appearance of God, and obtained the favour of God. Observe, The name he gives to the place preserves and perpetuates, not the honour of his valour or victory, but only the honour of God's free grace. He does not say, "In this place I wrestled with God, and prevailed;" but, "In this place I saw God face to face, and my life was preserved;" not, "It was my praise that I came off a conqueror, but it was God's mercy that I escaped with my life." Note, It becomes those whom God honours to take shame to themselves, and to admire the condescensions of his grace to them. Thus

David did, after God had sent him a gracious message (2Sa 7:18), Who am I, O Lord God?

31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

The memorandum Jacob carried of this in his bones: He halted on his thigh (Ge 32:31); some think he continued to do so to his dying-day; and, if he did, he had no reason to complain, for the honour and comfort he obtained by this struggle were abundantly sufficient to countervail the damage, though he went limping to his grave. He had no reason to look upon it as his reproach thus to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Ga 6:17); yet it might serve, like Paul's thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of the revelations. Notice is taken of the sun's rising upon him when he passed over Penuel; for it is sunrise with that soul that has communion with God. The inspired penman mentions a traditional custom which the seed of Jacob had, in remembrance of this, never to eat of that sinew, or muscle, in any beast, by which the hip-bone is fixed in its cup: thus they preserved the memorial of this story, and gave occasion to their children to enquire concerning it; they also did honour to the memory of Jacob. And this use we may still make of it, to acknowledge the mercy of God, and our obligations to Jesus Christ, that we may now keep up our communion with God, in faith, hope, and love, without peril either of life or limb.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not *of* the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

Genesis -33

Jacob and Esau Reconciled

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

Here, I. Jacob discovered Esau's approach, Ge 33:1. Some think that his lifting up his eyes denotes his cheerfulness and confidence, in opposition to a dejected countenance; having by

prayer committed his case to God, he went on his way, and his countenance was no more sad, 1Sa 1:18. Note, Those that have cast their care upon God may look before them with satisfaction and composure of mind, cheerfully expecting the issue, whatever it may be; come what will, nothing can come amiss to him whose heart is fixed, trusting in God. Jacob sets himself upon his watch-tower to see what answer God will give to his prayers, Hab 2:1.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

He put his family into the best order he could to receive him, whether he should come as a friend or as an enemy, consulting their decency if he came as a friend and their safety if he came as an enemy, Ge 33:1, 2. Observe what a different figure these two brothers made. Esau is attended with a guard of 400 men, and looks big; Jacob is followed by a cumbersome train of women and children that are his care, and he looks tender and solicitous for their safety; and yet Jacob had the birthright, and was to have the dominion, and was every way the better man. Note, It is no disparagement to very great and good men to give a personal attendance to their families, and to their family affairs. Jacob, at the head of his household, set a better example than Esau at the head of his regiment.

3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Jacob bowed to Esau, Ge 33:3. Though he feared Esau as an enemy, yet he did obeisance to him as an elder brother, knowing and remembering perhaps that when Abel was preferred in God's acceptance before his elder brother Cain, yet God undertook for him to Cain that he should not be wanting in the duty and respect owing by a younger brother. Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him, Ge 4:7. Note, (1.) The way to recover peace where it has been broken is to do our duty, and pay our respects, upon all occasions, as if it had never been broken. It is the remembering and repeating of matters that separates friends and perpetuates the separation.

(2.) A humble submissive carriage goes a great way towards the turning away of wrath. Many preserve themselves by humbling themselves: the bullet flies over him that stoops.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Esau embraced Jacob (Ge 33:4): He ran to meet him, not in passion, but in love; and, as one heartily reconciled to him, he received him with all the endearments imaginable, embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him. Some think that when Esau came out to meet Jacob it was with no bad design, but that he brought his 400 men only for state, that he might pay so much the greater respect to his returning brother. It is certain that Jacob understood the report of his messengers otherwise, Ge 32:5, 6. Jacob was a man of prudence and fortitude, and we cannot suppose him to admit of a groundless fear to such a degree as he did this, nor that the Spirit of God would stir him up to pray such a prayer as he did for deliverance from a merely imaginary danger: and, if there was not some wonderful change wrought upon the spirit of Esau at this time, I see not how wrestling Jacob could be said to obtain such power with men as to denominate him a prince. Note,

(1.) God had the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them when and how he pleases, by a secret, silent, but resistless power. He can, of a sudden, convert enemies into friends, as he did two Sauls, one by restraining grace (1Sa 26:21, 25), the other by renewing grace, Ac 9:21, 22.

(2.) It is not in vain to trust in God, and to call upon him in the day of trouble; those that do so often find the issue much better than they expected.

They both wept. Jacob wept for joy, to be thus kindly received by his brother whom he had feared; and Esau perhaps wept for grief and shame, to think of the bad design he had conceived against his brother, which he found himself strangely and unaccountably prevented from executing.

5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children, and said, who are those with thee? And he said, the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

About Jacob's retinue, Ge 33:5-7. Eleven or twelve little ones, the eldest of them not fourteen years old, followed Jacob closely: Who are these? Says Esau. Jacob had sent him an account of the increase of his estate (Ge 32:5), but made no mention of his children; perhaps because he would not expose them to his rage if he should meet him as an enemy, or would please him with the unexpected sight if he should meet him as a friend: Esau therefore had reason to ask, Who are those with thee? to which common question Jacob returns a serious answer, such as became his character: They are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant. It had been a sufficient answer to the question, and fit enough to be given to profane Esau, if he had only said, "They are my children;" but then Jacob would not have spoken like himself, like a man whose eyes were ever towards the Lord. Note, It becomes us not only to do common actions, but to speak of them, after a godly sort, 3Jo 1:6. Jacob speaks of his children,

1. As God's gifts; they are a heritage of the Lord, Ps 128:2, and Ps 112:9.Ps 107:41.

2. As choice gifts; he hath graciously given them. Though they were many, and now much his care, and as yet but slenderly provided for, yet he accounts them great blessings. His wives and children, hereupon, come up in order, and pay their duty to Esau, as he had done before them (Ge 33:6, 7); for it becomes the family to show respect to those to whom the master of the family shows respect.

6 Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

7 And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

8 And he said, what meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, *these are* to find grace in the sight of my lord.

9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.

Esau modestly refused it because he had enough, and did not need it, Ge 33:9. Note, Those who wish to be considered men of honour will not seem to be mercenary in their friendship: whatever influence Jacob's present had upon Esau to pacify him, he would not have it thought that it had any, and therefore he refused it. His reason is I have enough, I have much (so the word is), and so much that he was not willing to take anything that was his brother's. Note,

(1.) Many that come short of spiritual blessings, and are out of covenant, yet have much of this world's wealth. Esau had what was promised him, the fatness of the earth and a livelihood by his sword.

(2.) It is a good thing for those that have much to know that they have enough, though they have not so much as some others have. Even Esau can say, I have enough.

(3.) Those that are content with what they have must show it by not coveting what others have. Esau bids Jacob keep what he had to himself, supposing he had more need of it. Esau, for his part, needs it not, either to supply him, for he was rich, or to pacify him, for he was reconciled: we should take heed lest at any time our covetousness impose upon the courtesy of others, and meanly take advantage of their generosity.

10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast Pleased with me.

Jacob affectionately urges him to accept it, and prevails, Ge 33:10, 11. Jacob sent it, through fear (Ge 32:20), but, the fear being over, he now importunes his acceptance of it for love, to

show that he desired his brother's friendship, and did not merely dread his wrath; two things he urges:--

(1.) The satisfaction he had in his brother's favour, of which he thought himself bound to make this thankful acknowledgment. It is a very high compliment that he passes upon him: I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, that is, "I have seen thee reconciled to me, and at peace with me, as I desire to see God reconciled." Or the meaning is that Jacob saw God's favour to him in Esau's: it was a token for good to him that God had accepted his prayers. Note, Creature-comforts are comforts indeed to us when they are granted as answers to prayer, and are tokens of our acceptance with God. Again, It is matter of great joy to those that are of a peaceable and affectionate disposition to recover the friendship of those relations with whom they have been at variance.

(2.) The competency he had of this world's goods: God has dealt graciously with me. Note, If what we have in this world increase under our hands, we must take notice of it with thankfulness, to the glory of God, and own that therein he has dealt graciously with us, better than we deserve. It is he that gives power to get wealth, De 8:18. He adds, "And I have enough; I have all," so the word is. Esau's enough was much, but Jacob's enough was all. Note, a godly man, though he have but little in the world, yet may truly say, "I have all,"

[1.] Because he has the God of all, and has all in him; all is yours if you be Christ's, 1Co 3:22.

[2.] Because he has the comfort of all. I have all, and abound, Php 4:18. He that has much would have more; but he that thinks he has all is sure he has enough. He has all in prospect; he will have all shortly, when he comes to heaven: upon this principle Jacob urged Esau, and he took his present.

Note, It is an excellent thing when men's religion makes them generous, free-hearted, and open-handed, scorning to do a thing that is paltry and sneaking.

11 Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took *it*.

12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

13 And he said unto him, my lord knoweth that the children *are* tender, and the flocks and herds with young *are* with me; and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.

About the progress of their journey.

1. Esau offers himself to be his guide and companion, in token of sincere reconciliation, Ge 33:12. We never find that Jacob and Esau were so sociable with one another, and so affectionate, as they were now. Note, As for God his work is perfect. He made Esau, not only not an enemy, but a friend. This bone that had been broken, being well set, became stronger than ever. Esau has become fond of Jacob's company, courts him to Mount Seir: let us never despair of any, nor distrust God in whose hand all hearts are. Yet Jacob saw cause modestly to refuse this offer (Ge 33:13, 14), wherein he shows a tender concern for his own family and flocks, like a good shepherd and a good father. He must consider the children, and the flocks with young, and not lead the one, nor drive the other, too fast. This prudence and tenderness of Jacob ought to be imitated by those that have the care and charge of young people in the things of God. They must not be over-driven, at first, by heavy tasks in religious services, but led, as they can bear, having their work made as easy to them as possible. Christ, the good Shepherd, does so, Isa 40:11. Now Jacob will not desire Esau to slacken his pace, nor force his family to quicken theirs, nor leave them, to keep company with his brother, as many would have done, that love any society better than their own house; but he desires Esau to march before, and promises to follow him leisurely, as he could get forward.

Note, It is an unreasonable thing to tie others to our rate; we may come with comfort, at last, to the same journey's end, though we do not journey together, either in the same path or with the same pace. There may be those with whom we cannot fall in and yet with whom we need not fall out by the way. Jacob intimates to him that it was his present design to come to him to Mount Seir; and we may presume he did so, after he had settled his family and concerns elsewhere, though that visit is not recorded. Note, When we have happily recovered peace with our friends we must take care to cultivate it, and not to be behind-hand with them in civilities.

2. Esau offers some of his men to be his guard and convoy, Ge 33:15. He saw Jacob but poorly attended, no servants but his husbandmen and shepherds, no pages or footmen; and therefore, thinking he was as desirous as himself (if he could afford it) to take state upon him, and look great, he would needs lend him some of his retinue, to attend upon him, that he might appear like Esau's brother; but Jacob humbly refuses his offer, only desiring he would not take it amiss that he did not accept it: What needeth it?

(1.) Jacob is humble, and needs it not for state; he desires not to make a fair show in the flesh, by encumbering himself with a needless retinue. Note, It is the vanity of pomp and grandeur that they are attended with a great deal of which it may be said, What needeth it?

(2.) Jacob is under the divine protection, and needs it not for safety. Note, Those are sufficiently guarded that have God for their guard and are under a convoy of his hosts, as Jacob was. Those need not be beholden to an arm of flesh that have God for their arm every morning. Jacob adds, "Only let me find grace in the sight of my lord; having thy favour, I have all I need, all I desire from thee." If Jacob thus valued the good-will

of a brother, much more reason have we to reckon that we have enough if we have the good-will of our God.

14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant; and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

15 And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee *some* of the folk that *are* with me. And he said, what needeth it? Let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

16 So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.

1. Jacob comes to Succoth. Having in a friendly manner parted with Esau, who had gone to his own country (Ge 33:16), he comes to a place where, it should seem, he rested for some time, set up booths for his cattle, and other conveniences for himself and family. The place was afterwards known by the name of Succoth, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan (it signifies booths), that when his posterity afterwards dwelt in houses of stone, they might remember that the Syrian ready to perish was their father, who was glad of booths (De 26:5); such was the rock whence they were hewn.

2. He comes to Shechem; we read it, to Shalem, a city of Shechem; the critics generally incline to read it appellatively: he came safely, or in peace, to the city of Shechem. After a perilous journey, in which he had met with many difficulties, he came safely, at last, into Canaan. Note, Diseases and dangers should teach us how to value health and safety, and should help to enlarge our hearts in thankfulness, when our going out and coming in have been signally preserved. Here,

(1.) He buys a field, Ge 33:19. Though the land of Canaan was his by promise, yet, the time for taking possession not having yet come, he is content to pay for his own, to prevent disputes with the present occupants. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have heaven on free-cost must not expect to have earth so.

(2.) He builds an altar, Ge 33:20.

[1.] In thankfulness to God, for the good hand of his providence over him. He did not content himself with verbal acknowledgments of God's favour to him, but made real ones.

[2.] That he might keep up religion, and the worship of God, in his family. Note, Where we have a tent God must have an altar, where we have a house he must have a church in it. He dedicated this altar to the honour of El-elohe-Israel--God, the God of Israel, to the honour of God, in general, the only living and true God, the best of beings and first of causes; and to the honour of the God of Israel, as a God in covenant with him.

17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house, and made
booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called
Succoth [booths].
18 And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which *is* in the land
of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent
before the city.
19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at
the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred
pieces of money.
20 And he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel [God the
God of Israel].

Genesis -34

The Defilement of Dinah Avenged

1 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went
out to see the daughters of the land.

Dinah was, for aught that appears, Jacob's only daughter, and we may suppose her therefore the mother's fondling and the darling of the family, and yet she proves neither a joy nor a credit to them; for those children seldom prove either the best or the happiest that are most indulged. She is reckoned now but fifteen or sixteen years of age when she here occasioned so much mischief. Observe,

Her vain curiosity, which exposed her. She went out, perhaps unknown to her father, but by the connivance of her mother, to see the daughters of the land (Ge 34:1); probably it was at a ball, or on some public day. Being an only daughter, she thought herself solitary at home, having none of her own age and sex to converse with; and therefore she must needs go abroad to divert herself, to keep off melancholy, and to accomplish herself by conversation better than she could in her father's tents.

Note, It is a very good thing for children to love home; it is parents' wisdom to make it easy to them, and children's duty then to be easy in it. Her pretence was to see the daughters of the land, to see how they dressed, and how they danced, and what was fashionable among them. She went to see, yet that was not all, she went to be seen too; she went to see the daughters of the land, but, it may be, with some thoughts of the sons of the land too. I doubt she went to get an acquaintance with those Canaanites, and to learn their way.

Note, The pride and vanity of young people betray them into many snares.

2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

The loss of her honour by this means (Ge 34:2): Shechem, the prince of the country, but a slave to his own lusts, took her, and lay with her, it should seem, not so much by force as by surprise.

Note, Great men think they may do anything; and what more mischievous than untaught and ungoverned youth? See what came of Dinah's gadding: young women must learn to be chaste, keepers at home; these properties are put together, Tit 2:5, for those that are not keepers at home expose their chastity. Dinah went abroad to look about her; but, if she had looked about her as she ought, she would not have fallen into this snare.

Note, The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. How great a matter does a little fire kindle! We should therefore carefully avoid all occasions of sin and approaches to it.

3 And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

The court Shechem made to her, after he had defiled her. This was fair and commendable, and made the best of what was bad; he loved her (not as Amnon, 2Sa 13:15), and he engaged his father to make a match for him with her, Ge 34:4.

4 And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.

The tidings brought to poor Jacob, Ge 34:5. As soon as his children grew up they began to be a grief to him. Let not godly parents, that are lamenting the miscarriages of their children, think their case singular or unprecedented. The good man held his peace, as one astonished, that knows not what to say: or he said nothing, for fear of saying amiss, as David (Ps 39:1, 2); he smothered his resentments, lest, if he had suffered them to break out, they should have transported him into any indecencies. Or, it should seem, he had left the management of his affairs very much (too much I doubt) to his sons, and he would do nothing without them: or, at least, he knew they would make him uneasy if he did, they having shown themselves, of late, upon all occasions, bold, forward, and assuming. Note, Things never go well when the authority of a parent runs low in a family. Let every man bear rule in his own house, and have his children in subjection with all gravity.

5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

6 And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

7 And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard *it:* and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had

wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.

Jacob's sons, when they heard of the injury done to Dinah, showed a very great resentment of it, influenced perhaps rather by jealousy for the honour of their family than by a sense of virtue. Many are concerned at the shamefulness of sin that never lay to heart the sinfulness of it. It is here called folly in Israel (Ge 34:7), according to the language of after-times; for Israel was not yet a people, but a family only. Note,

1. Uncleanness is folly; for it sacrifices the favour of God, peace of conscience, and all the soul can pretend to that is sacred and honourable, to a base and brutish lust.

2. This folly is most shameful in Israel, in a family of Israel, where God is known and worshipped, as he was in Jacob's tents, by the name of the God of Israel. Folly in Israel is scandalous indeed. 3. It is a good thing to have sin stamped with a bad name: uncleanness is here proverbially called folly in Israel, 2Sa 13:12. Dinah is here called Jacob's daughter, for warning to all the daughters of Israel, that they betray not themselves to this folly.

8 And Hamor communed with them, saying, the soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife.

9 And make ye marriages with us, *and* give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you.

10 And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein.

11 And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give.

Hamor came to treat with Jacob himself, but he turns him over to his sons; and here we have a particular account of the treaty, in which, it is a shame to say, the Canaanites were more honest than the Israelites.

Hamor and Shechem fairly propose this match, in order to a coalition in trade. Shechem is deeply in love with Dinah; he will have her upon any terms, Ge 34:11, 12. His father not only consents, but solicits for him, and gravely insists upon the advantages that would follow from the union of the families, Ge 34:9, 10. He shows no jealousy of Jacob, though he was a stranger, but rather an earnest desire to settle a correspondence with him and his family, making him that generous offer, The land shall be before you, trade you therein.

12 Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as
ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.
13 And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father
deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister:
14 and they said unto them, we cannot do this thing, to give our sister to
one that is uncircumcised; for that *were* a reproach unto us:
15 but in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we *be,* that
every male of you be circumcised;

Jacob's sons basely pretend to insist upon a coalition in religion, when really they designed nothing less. If Jacob had taken the management of this affair into his own hands, it is probable that he and Hamor would soon have concluded it; but Jacob's sons meditate only revenge, and a strange project they have for the compassing of it--the Shechemites must be circumcised; not to make them holy (they never intended that), but to make them sore, that they might become an easier prey to their sword.

1 The pretence was specious. "It is the honour of Jacob's family that they carry about with them the token of God's covenant with them; and it will be a reproach to those that are thus dignified and distinguished to enter into such a strict alliance with those that are uncircumcised (Ge 34:14); and therefore, if you will be circumcised, then we will become one people with you," Ge 34:15, 16. Had they been sincere herein their proposal of these terms would have had in it something commendable; for Israelites should not intermarry with Canaanites, professors with profane; it is a

great sin, or at least the cause and inlet of a great deal, and has often been of pernicious consequence. The interest we have in any persons, and the hold we have of them, should be wisely improved by us, to bring them to the love and practice of religion (He that winneth souls is wise); but then we must not, like Jacob's sons, think it enough to persuade them to submit to the external rites of religion, but must endeavour to convince them of its reasonableness, and to bring them acquainted with the power of it.

2 The intention was malicious, as appears by the sequel of the story; all they aimed at was to prepare them for the day of slaughter. Note, Bloody designs have often been covered, and carried on, with a pretence of religion; thus they have been accomplished most plausibly and most securely: but this dissembled piety is, doubtless, double iniquity. Religion is never more injured, nor are God's sacraments more profaned, than when they are thus used for a cloak of maliciousness. Nay, if Jacob's sons had not had this bloody design, I do not see how they could justify their offering the sacred sign of circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, to these devoted Canaanites, who had no part nor lot in the matter. Those had no right to the seal that had no right to the promise. It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs: but Jacob's sons valued not this, while they could make it serve their turn.

16 then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

17 But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

18 And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem Hamor's son.

1. Hamor and Shechem gave consent themselves to be circumcised, Ge 34:18, 19. To this perhaps they were moved, not only by the strong desire they had to bring about this match, but by what they might have heard of the sacred and honourable intentions of this sign, in the family of Abraham, which, it is probable, they had some confused

notions of, and of the promises confirmed by it, which made them the more desirous to incorporate with the family of Jacob, Zec 8:23.

Note, Many who know little of religion, yet know so much of it as makes them willing to join themselves with those that are religious. Again, If a man would take upon him a form of religion to gain a good wife, much more should we embrace the power of it to gain the favour of a good God, even circumcise our hearts to love him, and, as Shechem here, not defer to do the thing.

2. They gained the consent of the men of their city, Jacob's sons requiring that they also should be circumcised.

(1.) They themselves had great influences upon them by their command and example. Note, Religion would greatly prevail if those in authority, who, like Shechem, are more honourable than their neighbours, would appear forward and zealous for it.

(2.) They urged an argument which was very cogent (Ge 34:23), Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours? They observed that Jacob's sons were industrious thriving people, and promised themselves and their neighbours advantage by an alliance with them; it would improve ground and trade, and bring money into their country. Now,

[1.] It was bad enough to marry upon this principle: yet we see covetousness the greatest matchmaker in the world, and nothing designed so much, with many, as the laying of house to house, and field to field, without regard had to any other consideration.

[2.] It was worse to be circumcised upon this principle. The Shechemites will embrace the religion of Jacob's family only in hopes of interesting themselves thereby in the riches of that family. Thus there are many with whom gain is

godliness, and who are more governed and influenced by their secular interest than by any principle of their religion.

19 And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he *was* more honorable than all the house of his father.

20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying,

21 These men *are* peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, *it is* large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.

Thus many pretend to speak for a public profit, when in reality they are only speaking for their own private gain and convenience.

22 Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they *are* circumcised.

23 *Shall* not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us.

24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.

25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

Slaying the inhabitants of Shechem--all the males, Hamor and Shechem particularly, with whom they had been treating in a friendly manner but the other day, yet with a design upon their lives. Some think that all Jacob's sons, when they wheedled the Shechemites to be circumcised, designed to take advantage of their soreness, and to rescue Dinah from among them; but that Simeon and Levi, not content with that, would themselves avenge the injury--and they did it with a witness. Now,

(1.) It cannot be denied but that God was righteous in it. Had the Shechemites been circumcised in obedience to any

command of God, their circumcision would have been their protection; but when they submitted to that sacred rite only to serve a turn, to please their prince and to enrich themselves, it was just with God to bring this upon them. Note, As nothing secures us better than true religion, so nothing exposes us more than religion only pretended to.

(2.) But Simeon and Levi were most unrighteous.

[1.] It was true that Shechem had wrought folly against Israel, in defiling Dinah; but it ought to have been considered how far Dinah herself had been accessory to it. Had Shechem abused her in her own mother's tent, it would have been another matter; but she went upon his ground, and perhaps by her indecent carriage had struck the spark which began the fire: when we are severe upon the sinner we ought to consider who was the tempter.

[2.] It was true that Shechem had done ill; but he was endeavouring to atone for it, and was as honest and honourable, ex post facto--after the deed, as the case would admit: it was not the case of the Levite's concubine that was abused to death; nor does he justify what he has done, but courts a reconciliation upon any terms.

[3.] It was true that Shechem had done ill; but what was that to all the Shechemites? Does one man sin, and will they be wroth with all the town? Must the innocent fall with the guilty? This was barbarous indeed.

[4.] But that which above all aggravated the cruelty was the most perfidious treachery that was in it. The Shechemites had submitted to their conditions, and had done that upon which they had promised to become one people with them (Ge 34:16); yet they act as sworn enemies to those to whom they had lately become sworn friends, making as light of their covenant as they did of the laws of humanity. And are

these the sons of Israel? Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce.

[5.] This also added to the crime, that they made a holy ordinance of God subservient to their wicked design, so making that odious; as if it were not enough for them to shame themselves and their family, they bring a reproach upon that honourable badge of their religion; justly would it be called a bloody ordinance.

The people are punished because of their wicked princes.

26 And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

Seizing the prey of Shechem, and plundering the town. They rescued Dinah (Ge 34:26), and, if that was all they came for, they might have done that without blood, as appears by their own showing (Ge 34:17); but they aimed at the spoil; and, though Simeon and Levi only were the murderers, yet it is intimated that others of the sons of Jacob came upon the slain and spoiled the city (Ge 34:27), and so became accessory to the murder. In them it was manifest injustice; yet here we may observe the righteousness of God. The Shechemites were willing to gratify the sons of Jacob by submitting to the penance of circumcision, upon this principle, Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours? (Ge 34:23), and see what was the issue; instead of making themselves masters of the wealth of Jacob's family, Jacob's family become masters of their wealth.

Note, Those who unjustly grasp at that which is another's justly lose that which is their own.

27 The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.

28 They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field,

29 and all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that *was* in the house.

30 And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I *being* few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

This atrocious outrage perpetrated on the defenseless citizens and their families made the cup of Jacob's affliction overflow. We may wonder that, in speaking of it to his sons, he did not represent it as a heinous sin, an atrocious violation of the laws of God and man, but dwelt solely on the present consequences.

Here is Jacob's resentment of this bloody deed of Simeon and Levi, Ge 34:30. Two things he bitterly complains of:--

1 The reproach they had brought upon him thereby: You have troubled me, put me into a disorder, for you have made me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, that is, "You have rendered me and my family odious among them. What will they say of us and our religion? We shall be looked upon as the most perfidious barbarous people in the world."

Note, The gross misconduct of wicked children is the grief and shame of their godly parents. Children should be the joy of their parents; but wicked children are their trouble, sadden their hearts, break their spirits, and make them go mourning from day to day. Children should be an ornament to their parents; but wicked children are their reproach, and are as dead flies in the pot of ointment: but let such children know that, if they repent not, the grief they have caused to their parents, and the damage religion has sustained in its reputation through them, will come into the account and be reckoned for.

2 The ruin they had exposed him to. What could be expected, but that the Canaanites, who were numerous and formidable, would confederate against him, and he and his

little family would become an easy prey to them? I shall be destroyed, I and my house. If all the Shechemites must be destroyed for the offence of one, why not all the Israelites for the offence of two? Jacob knew indeed that God had promised to preserve and perpetuate his house; but he might justly fear that these vile practices of his children would amount to a forfeiture, and cut off the entail.

Note, When sin is in the house, there is reason to fear ruin at the door. The tender parents foresee those bad consequences of sin which the wicked children have no dread of. One would think this should have made them to relent, and they should have humbled themselves to their good father, and begged his pardon; but, instead of this, they justify themselves, and give him this insolent reply, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot? No, he should not; but, if he do, must they be their own avengers? Will nothing less than so many lives, and the ruin of a whole city, serve to atone for an abuse done to one foolish girl? By their question they tacitly reflect upon their father, as if he would have been content to let them deal with his daughter as with a harlot.

Note, It is common for those who run into one extreme to reproach and censure those who keep the mean as if they ran into the other. Those who condemn the rigour of revenge shall be misrepresented, as if they countenanced and justified the offence.

31 And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlt?

Genesis -35

God Blesses Jacob at Beth-el

1 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

God reminds Jacob of his vow at Beth-el, and sends him thither to perform it, Ge 35:1. Jacob had said in the day of his distress, If I come again in peace, this stone shall be God's house, Ge 28:22. God had performed his part of the bargain, and had given Jacob more than bread to eat and raiment to put on--he had got an estate, and had become two bands; but, it should seem, he had forgotten his vow, or at least had too long deferred the performance of it. Seven or eight years it was now since he came to Canaan; he had purchased ground there, and had built an altar in remembrance of God's last appearance to him when he called him Israel (Ge 33:19,20); but still Beth-el is forgotten.

Note, Time is apt to wear out the sense of mercies and the impressions made upon us by them; it should not be so, but so it is. God had exercised Jacob with a very sore affliction in his family (Ge 34:1-31), to see if this would bring his vow to his remembrance, and put him upon the performance of it, but it had not this effect; therefore God comes himself and puts him in mind of it: Arise, go to Beth-el. Note,

1. As many as God loves he will remind of neglected duties, one way or other, by conscience or by providences.

2. When we have vowed a vow to God, it is best not to defer the payment of it (Ec 5:4), yet better late than never. God bade him go to Beth-el and dwell there, that is, not only go himself, but take his family with him, that they might join with him in his devotions.

Note, In Beth-el, the house of God, we should desire to dwell, Ps 27:4. That should be our home, not our inn. God reminds him not expressly of his vow, but of the occasion of it: When thou fleddest from the face of Esau.

Note, The remembrance of former afflictions should bring to mind the workings of our souls under them, Ps 66:13, 14.

2 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that *were* with him, Put away the strange gods that *are* among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

Jacob commands his household to prepare for this solemnity; not only for the journey and remove, but for the religious services that were to be performed, Ge 35:2, 3. Note,

1. Before solemn ordinances, there must be solemn preparation. Wash you, make you clean, and then come, and let us reason together, Isa 1:16-18.

2. Masters of families should use their authority for the promoting of religion in their families. Not only we, but our houses also, should serve the Lord, Jos 24:15. Observe the commands he gives his household, like Abraham, Ge 18:19.

(1.) They must put away the strange gods. Strange gods in Jacob's family! Strange things indeed! Could such a family, that was taught the good knowledge of the Lord, admit them? Could such a master, to whom God had appeared twice, and oftener, connive at them? Doubtless this was his infirmity. Note, Those that are good themselves cannot always have those about them so good as they should be. In those families where there is a face of religion, and an altar to God, yet many times there is much amiss, and more strange gods than one would suspect. In Jacob's family, Rachel had her teraphim, which, it is to be feared, she secretly made some superstitious use of. The captives of Shechem brought their gods along with them, and

perhaps Jacob's sons took some with the plunder. However they came by them, now they must put them away.

(2.) They must be clean, and change their garments; they must observe a due decorum, and make the best appearance they could. Simeon and Levi had their hands full of blood, it concerned them particularly to wash, and to put off their garments that were so stained. These were but ceremonies, signifying the purification and change of the heart. What are clean clothes, and new clothes, without a clean heart, and a new heart? Dr. Lightfoot, by their being clean, or washing themselves, understands Jacob's admission of the proselytes of Shechem and Syria into his religion by baptism, because circumcision had become odious.

3. They must go with him to Beth-el, Ge 35:3. Note, Masters of families, when they go up to the house of God, should bring their families with them.

3 and let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar
unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was
with me in the way which I went.

4 And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their
hand, and *all their* earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid
them under the oak which *was* by Shechem.

His family surrendered all they had that was idolatrous or superstitious, Ge 35:4. Perhaps, if Jacob had called for them sooner, they would sooner have parted with them, being convicted by their own consciences of the vanity of them.

Note, Sometimes attempts for reformation succeed better than one could have expected, and people are not so obstinate against them as we feared. Jacob's servants, and even the retainers of his family, gave him all the strange gods, and the ear-rings they wore, either as charms or to the honour of their gods; they parted with all.

Note, Reformation is not sincere if it be not universal. We hope they parted with them cheerfully, and without reluctance, as Ephraim did, when he said, What have I to do any more with idols? (Ho 14:8), or that people that said to their idols, Get you hence, Isa 30:22. Jacob took care to bury their images, we may suppose in some place unknown to them, that they might not afterwards find them and return to them.

Note, We must be wholly separated from our sins, as we are from those that are dead and buried out of our sight, cast them to the moles and the bats, Isa 2:20.

5 And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

He removes without molestation from Shechem to Bethel, Ge 35:5. The terror of God was upon the cities. Though the Canaanites were much exasperated against the sons of Jacob for their barbarous usage of the Shechemites, yet they were so restrained by a divine power that they could not take this fair opportunity, which now offered itself, when they were upon their march, to avenge their neighbours' quarrel.

Note, The way of duty is the way of safety. While there was sin in Jacob's house, he was afraid of his neighbours; but now that the strange gods were put away, and they were all going together to Bethel, his neighbours were afraid of him. When we are about God's work, we are under special protection. God is with us, while we are with him; and, if he be for us, who can be against us? See Ex 34:24, No man shall desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before the Lord. God governs the world more by secret terrors on men's minds than we are aware of.

6 So Jacob came to Luz which *is* in the land of Canaan, that *is,* Beth-el, he and all the people that *were* with him.

7 And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el [the God of Beth-el]; because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

There he built an altar (Ge 35:7), and no doubt offered sacrifice upon it, perhaps the tenth of his cattle, according to his vow, I will give the tenth unto thee. With these sacrifices he joined praises for former mercies, particularly that which the sight of the place brought afresh to his remembrance; and he added prayers for the continuance of God's favour to him and his family. And he called the place (that is, the altar) El-beth-el, the God of Bethel. As, when he made a thankful acknowledgment of the honour God had lately done him in calling him Israel, he worshipped God by the name of El-elohe Israel; so, now that he was making a grateful recognition of God's former favour to him at Bethel, he worships God by the name of El-beth-el, the God of Beth-el, because there God appeared to him.

Note, The comfort which the saints have in holy ordinances is not so much from Bethel, the house of God, as from El-beth-el, the God of the house. The ordinances are but empty things if we do not meet with God in them.

8 But Deborah Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth [the oak of weeping].

There he buried Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, Ge 35:8. We have reason to think that Jacob, after he came to Canaan, while his family dwelt near Shechem, went himself (it is likely, often) to visit his father Isaac at Hebron. Rebekah probably was dead, but her old nurse (of whom mention is made Ge 24:59) survived her, and Jacob took her to his family, to be a companion to his wives, her country-women, and an instructor to his children; while they were at Bethel, she died, and died lamented, so much lamented that the oak under which she was buried was called Allon-bachuth, the oak of weeping. Note,

1. Old servants in a family, that have in their time been faithful and useful, ought to be respected. Honour was done to this nurse, at her death, by Jacob's family, though she was not related to them, and though she was aged. Former services, in such a case, must be remembered.

2. We do not know where death may meet us; perhaps at Beth-el, the house of God. Therefore let us be always ready.

3. Family-afflictions may come even when family-reformation and religion are on foot. Therefore rejoice with trembling.

9 And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.

There God appeared to him (Ge 35:9), to own his altar, to answer to the name by which he had called him, The God of Beth-el (Ge 35:7), and to comfort him under his affliction, Ge 35:8.

Note, God will appear to those in a way of grace that attend on him in a way of duty. Here, 1. He confirmed the change of his name, Ge 35:10. It was done before by the angel that wrestled with him (Ge 32:28), and here it was ratified by the divine Majesty, or Shechinah, that appeared to him. There it was to encourage him against the fear of Esau, here against the fear of the Canaanites. Who can be too hard for Israel, a prince with God? It is below those who are thus dignified to droop and despond.

2. He renewed and ratified the covenant with him, by the name El-shaddai. I am God Almighty, God all-sufficient (Ge 35:11), able to make good the promise in due time, and to support thee and provide for thee in the meantime. Two things are promised him which we have met with often before:--

(1.) That he should be the father of a great nation, great in number--a company of nations shall be of thee (every tribe of Israel was a nation, and all the twelve a company of nations), great in honour and power--kings shall come out of thy loins.

(2.) That he should be the master of a good land (Ge 35:12), described by the grantees, Abraham and Isaac, to whom it was

promised, not by the occupants, the Canaanites in whose possession it now was. The land that was given to Abraham and Isaac is here entailed on Jacob and his seed. He shall not have children without an estate, which is often the case of the poor, nor an estate without children, which is often the grief of the rich; but both. These two promises had a spiritual signification, of which we may suppose Jacob himself had some notion, though not so clear and distinct as we now have; for, without doubt, Christ is the promised seed, and heaven is the promised land; the former is the foundation, and the latter the top-stone, of all God's favours.

3. He then went up from him, or from over him, in some visible display of glory, which had hovered over him while he talked with him, Ge 35:13.

Note, The sweetest communions the saints have with God in this world are short and transient, and soon have an end. Our vision of God in heaven will be everlasting; there we shall be ever with the Lord; it is not so here.

10 And God said unto him, Thy name *is* Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel.

11 And God said unto him, I *am* God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply: a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

12 and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

13 And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, *even* a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

There Jacob erected a memorial of this, Ge 35:14.

1. He set up a pillar. When he was going to Padan-aram, he set up for a pillar that stone on which he had laid his head. This was agreeable enough to his low condition and his hasty flight; but

now he took time to erect one more stately, more distinguishable and durable, probably placing that stone in it. In token of his intending it for a sacred memorial of his communion with God, he poured oil and the other ingredients of a drink-offering upon it. His vow was, This stone shall be God's house, that is, shall be set up for his honour, as houses to the praise of their builders; and here he performs it, transferring it to God by anointing it.

2. He confirmed the name he had formerly given to the place (Ge 35:15), Beth-el, the house of God. Yet this very place afterwards lost the honour of its name, and became Beth-aven, a house of iniquity; for here it was that Jeroboam set up one of his calves. It is impossible for the best man to entail upon a place so much as the profession and form of religion.

15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

The Death of Rachel

16 And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor.

We have here the story of the death of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob.

1. She fell in travail by the way, not able to reach to Bethlehem, the next town, though they were near it; so suddenly does pain sometimes come upon a woman in travail, which she cannot escape, or put off. We may suppose Jacob had soon a tent up, convenient enough for her reception.

2. Her pains were violent. She had hard labour, harder than usual: this was the effect of sin, Ge 3:16. Note, Human life begins with sorrow, and the roses of its joy are surrounded with thorns.

3. The midwife encouraged her, Ge 35:17. No doubt she had her midwife with her, ready at hand, yet that would not secure her. Rachel had said, when she bore Joseph, God shall add another son, which now the midwife remembers, and tells her words were made good. Yet this did not avail to keep up her spirits; unless God command away fear, no one else can. He only says as one having authority, Fear not. We are apt, in extreme perils, to comfort ourselves and our friends with the hopes of a temporal deliverance, in which we may be disappointed; we had better found our comforts on that which cannot fail us, the hope of eternal life.

4. Her travail was to the life of the child, but to her own death. Note, Though the pains and perils of childbearing were introduced by sin, yet they have sometimes been fatal to very holy women, who, though not saved in childbearing, are saved through it with an everlasting salvation. Rachel had passionately said, Give me children, or else I die; and now that she had children (for this was her second) she died. Her dying is here called the departing of her soul. Note, The death of the body is but the departure of the soul to the world of spirits.

5. Her dying lips called her new-born son Ben-oni, The son of my sorrow. And many a son, not born in such hard labour, yet proves the son of his parent's sorrow, and the heaviness of her that bore him. Children are enough the sorrow of their poor mothers in the breeding, bearing, and nursing of them; they should therefore, when they grow up, study to be their joy, and so, if possible, to make them some amends. But Jacob, because he would not renew the sorrowful remembrance of the mother's death every time he called his son by his name, changed his name, and called him Benjamin, The son of my right hand; that is, "very dear to me, set on my right hand for a blessing, the support of my age, like the staff in my right hand."

6. Jacob buried her near the place where she died. As she died in child-bed, it was convenient to bury her quickly; and

therefore he did not bring her to the burying-place of his family. If the soul be at rest after death, it matters little where the body lies. In the place where the tree falls, there let it be. No mention is made of the mourning that was at her death, because that might easily be taken for granted. Jacob, no doubt, was a true mourner. Note, Great afflictions sometimes befall us immediately after great comforts. Lest Jacob should be lifted up with the visions of the Almighty with which he was honoured, this was sent as a thorn in the flesh to humble him. Those that enjoy the favours peculiar to the children of God must yet expect the troubles that are common to the children of men. Deborah, who, had she lived, would have been a comfort to Rachel in her extremity, died but a little before. Note, When death comes into a family, it often strikes double. God by it speaks once, yea, twice. The Jewish writers say, "The death of Deborah and Rachel was to expiate the murder of the Shechemites, occasioned by Dinah, a daughter of the family."

7. Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave, so that it was known, long after, to be Rachel's sepulchre (1Sa 10:2), and Providence so ordered it that this place afterwards fell in the lot of Benjamin. Jacob set up a pillar in remembrance of his joys (Ge 35:14), and here he sets up one in remembrance of his sorrows; for, as it may be of use to ourselves to keep both in mind, so it may be of use to others to transmit the memorials of both: the church, long afterwards, owned that what God said to Jacob at Bethel, both by his word and by his rod, he intended for their instruction (Ho 12:4), There he spoke with us.

17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.

18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Benoni [the son of my sorrow]: but his father called him Benjamin [the son of the right hand].

19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which *is* Bethlehem.

20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that *is* the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

21 And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.

Jacob's removal, Ge 35:21. He also, as his fathers, sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, and was not long in a place. Immediately after the story of Rachel's death he is here called Israel (Ge 35:21, 22), and not often so afterwards: the Jews say, "The historian does him this honour here because he bore that affliction with such admirable patience and submission to Providence." Note, Those are Israels indeed, princes with God, that support the government of their own passions. He that has this rule over his own spirit is better than the mighty. Israel, a prince with God, yet dwells in tents; the city is reserved for him in the other world.

The Sons of Jacob

22 And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard *it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

The sin of Reuben. A piece of abominable wickedness it was that he was guilty of (Ge 35:22), that very sin which the apostle says (1Co 5:1) is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. It is said to have been when Israel dwelt in that land; as if he were then absent from his family, which might be the unhappy occasion of these disorders. Though perhaps Bilhah was the greater criminal, and it is probable was abandoned by Jacob for it, yet Reuben's crime was so provoking that, for it, he lost his birthright and blessing, Ge 49:4. The first-born is not always the best, nor the most promising. This was Reuben's sin, but it was Jacob's affliction; and what a sore affliction it was is intimated in a little compass, and Israel heard it. No more is said--that is enough; he heard it with the utmost grief and shame, horror and displeasure. Reuben thought to conceal it, that his father should never hear of it; but those that promise themselves secresy in sin are generally disappointed; a bird of the air carries the voice.

23 the sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun:

A complete list of the sons of Jacob, now that Benjamin the youngest was born. This is the first time we have the names of these heads of the twelve tribes together; afterwards we find them very often spoken of and enumerated, even to the end of the Bible, Re 7:4, 21:12.

24 the sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin:
25 and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali:
26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher. These *are*
the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram.

The Death of Isaac

27 And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of
Arba, which *is* Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

The visit which Jacob made to his father Isaac at Hebron. We may suppose he had visited him before since his return, for he sorely longed after his father's house; but never, till now, brought his family to settle with him, or near him, Ge 35:27. Probably he did this now upon the death of Rebekah, by which Isaac was left solitary, and not disposed to marry again.

28 And the days of Isaac were a hundred and fourscore years.

The age and death of Isaac are here recorded, though it appears, by computation, that he died not till many years after Joseph was sold into Egypt, and much about the time that he was preferred there. Isaac, a mild quiet man, lived the longest of all the patriarchs, for he was 180 years old; Abraham was but 175. Isaac lived about forty years after he had made his will, Ge 27:22. We shall not die an hour the sooner, but abundantly the better, for our timely setting our heart and house in order. Particular notice is taken of the amicable agreement of Esau and Jacob, in solemnizing their father's funeral (Ge 35:29), to show how wonderfully God had changed Esau's mind since he vowed his brother's murder immediately after his father's death, Ge 27:41. Note, God has many ways of preventing bad men from doing the mischief they intended; he can either tie their hands or turn their hearts.

29 And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, *being* old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Genesis -36

The Descendants of Esau

1 Now these *are* the generations of Esau, who *is* Edom.

Concerning Esau himself, Ge 36:1. He is called Edom (and again, Ge 36:8), that name by which was perpetuated the remembrance of the foolish bargain he made, when he sold his birthright for that red, that red pottage. The very mention of that name is enough to intimate the reason why his family is turned off with such a short account. Note, If men do a wrong thing they must thank themselves, when it is, long afterwards, remembered against them to their reproach.

2 Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

3 and Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

Concerning his wives, and the children they bore him in the land of Canaan. He had three wives, and, by them all, but five sons: many a one has more by one wife. God in his providence often disappoints those who take indirect courses to build up a family; yet here the promise prevailed, and Esau's family was built up.

4 And Adah bare to Esau Eliphaz, and Bashemath bare Reuel;

5 and Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these *are* the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan.

Concerning his removal to mount Seir, which was the country God had given him for a possession, when he reserved Canaan for the seed of Jacob. God owns it, long afterwards: I gave to Esau mount Seir (De 2:5, Jos 24:4), which was the reason why the Edomites must not be disturbed in their possession. Those that have not a right by promise, such as Jacob had, to Canaan, may have a very good title by providence to their estates, such as Esau had to mount Seir. Esau had begun to settle among his wives' relations, in Seir, before Jacob came from Padan-aram, Ge 32:3. Isaac, it is likely, had sent him thither (as Abraham in his life-time

had sent the sons of the concubines from Isaac his son into the east country, Ge 26:6), that Jacob might have the clearer way made for him to the possession of the promised land. During the life of Isaac, however, Esau had probably still some effects remaining in Canaan; but, after his death, he wholly withdrew to mount Seir, took with him what came to his share of his father's personal estate, and left Canaan to Jacob, not only because he had the promise of it, but because Esau perceived that if they should continue to thrive as they had begun there would not be room for both. Thus dwelt Esau in Mount Seir, Ge 36:8. Note, Whatever opposition may be made, God's word will be accomplished, and even those that have opposed it will see themselves, sometime or other, under a necessity of yielding to it, and acquiescing in it. Esau had struggled for Canaan, but now he tamely retires to mount Seir; for God's counsels shall certainly stand, concerning the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation.

6 And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the
persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his
substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the
country from the face of his brother Jacob.
7 For their riches were more than that they might dwell together;
and the land wherein they were strangers could not bear them
because of their cattle.
8 Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau *is* Edom.
9 And these *are* the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in
mount Seir:

That only the names of Esau's sons and grandsons are recorded, only their names, not their history; for it is the church that Moses preserves the records of, not the record of those that are without. Those elders that lived by faith alone obtained a good report. It is Sion that produces the men of renown, not Seir, Ps 87:5. Nor does the genealogy go any further than the third and fourth generation; the very names of all after are buried in oblivion. It is only the pedigree of the Israelites, who were to be the heirs of Canaan, and of whom were to come the promised seed, and the holy seed, that is drawn out to any length, as far as there was occasion for it, even of all the tribes till Canaan was divided among them, and of the royal line till Christ came.

10 these *are* the names of Esau's sons; Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife
of Esau, Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau.

11 And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam,
and Kenaz.
12 And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to
Eliphaz Amalek: these *were* the sons of Adah Esau's wife.
13 And these *are* the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah,
and Mizzah: these were the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife.
14 And these were the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah the
daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and
Jaalam, and Korah.
15 These *were* dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the
firstborn *son* of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke
Kenaz,

That these sons and grandsons of Esau are called dukes, Ge 36:15-19. Probably they were military commanders, dukes, or captains, that had soldiers under them; for Esau and his family lived by the sword, Ge 27:40. Note, Titles of honour have been more ancient out of the church than in it. Esau's sons were dukes when Jacob's sons were but plain shepherds, Ge 47:3. This is not a reason why such titles should not be used among Christians; but it is a reason why men should not overvalue themselves, or others, for the sake of them. There is an honour that comes from God, and a name in his house that is infinitely more valuable. Edomites may be dukes with men, but Israelites indeed are made to our God kings and priests.

We may suppose those dukes had numerous families of children and servants that were their dukedoms. God promised to multiply Jacob, and to enrich him; yet Esau increases, and is enriched first. Note, It is no new thing for the men of this world to be full of children, and to have their bellies too filled with hidden treasures, Ps 17:14. God's promise to Jacob began to work late, but the effect of it remained longer, and it had its complete accomplishment in the spiritual Israel.

16 duke Korah, duke Gatam, and duke Amalek: these *are* the dukes
that came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom: these *were* the sons of
Adah.
17 And these *are* the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Zerah,
duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these *are* the dukes *that came* of Reuel
in the land of Edom: these *are* the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife.

18 And these *are* the sons of Aholibamah Esau's wife; duke Jeush, duke
Jaalam, duke Korah: these *were* the dukes *that came* of Aholibamah
the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife.
19 These *are* the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these *are* their dukes.
20 These *are* the sons of Seir the Horite, who inhabited the land;
Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah,
21 and Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these *are* the dukes of the
Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom.

In the midst of this genealogy of the Edomites here is inserted the genealogy of the Horites, those Canaanites, or Hittites (compare Ge 26:34), that were the natives of Mount Seir. Mention is made of them, Ge 14:6, and of their interest in Mount Seir, before the Edomites took possession of it, De 2:12, 22. This comes in here, not only to give light to the story, but to be a standing reflection upon the Edomites for intermarrying with them, by which, it is probable, they learned their way, and corrupted themselves. Esau having sold his birthright, and lost his blessing, and entered into alliance with the Hittites, his posterity and the sons of Seir are here reckoned together.

Note, Those that treacherously desert God's church are justly numbered with those that were never in it; apostate Edomites stand on the same ground with accursed Horites. Particular notice is taken of one Anah who fed the asses of Zibeon his father (Ge 36:24), and yet is called duke Anah, Ge 36:29. Note, Those that expect to rise high should begin low. An honourable descent should not keep men from an honest employment, nor a mean employment hinder any man's preferment. This Anah was not only industrious in his business, but ingenious too, and successful; for he found mules, or (as some read it) waters, hot-baths, in the wilderness. Those that are diligent in their business sometimes find more advantages than they expected.

22 And the children of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's
sister *was* Timna.
23 And the children of Shobal *were* these; Alvan, and Manahath, and
Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.
24 And these *are* the children of Zibeon; both Ajah, and Anah: this *was*
that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses
of Zibeon his father.

25 And the children of Anah *were* these; Dishon, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah.
26 And these *are* the children of Dishon; Hemdan, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran.
27 The children of Ezer *are* these; Bilhan, and Zaavan, and Akan.
28 The children of Dishan *are* these; Uz, and Aran.
29 These *are* the dukes *that came* of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah,
30 duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan: these *are* the dukes *that came* of Hori, among their dukes in the land of Seir.
31 And these *are* the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

By degrees, it seems, the Edomites wormed out the Horites, obtained full possession of the country, and had a government of their own. They were ruled by kings, who governed the whole country, and seem to have come to the throne by election, and not by lineal descent; so bishop Patrick observes. These kings reigned in Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel, that is, before Moses's time, for he was king in Jeshurun, De 33:5. God had lately promised Jacob that kings should come out of his loins (Ge 35:11), yet Esau's blood becomes royal long before any of Jacob's did. Note, In external prosperity and honour, the children of the covenant are often cast behind, and those that are out of covenant get the start. The triumphing of the wicked may be quick, but it is short; soon ripe, and as soon rotten: but the products of the promise, though they are slow, are sure and lasting; at the end it shall speak, and not lie. We may suppose it was a great trial to the faith of God's Israel to hear of the pomp and power of the kings of Edom, while they were bond-slaves in Egypt; but those that look for great things from God must be content to wait for them; God's time is the best time.

32 And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah.
33 And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead.
34 And Jobab died, and Husham of the land of Temani reigned in his stead.

35 And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who smote Midian
in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city
was Avith.
36 And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead.
37 And Samlah died, and Saul of Rehoboth *by* the river reigned in his
stead.
38 And Saul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his
stead.
39 And Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his
stead: and the name of his city *was* Pau; and his wife's name *was*
Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.
40 And these *are* the names of the dukes *that came* of Esau, according to
their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke
Alvah, duke Jetheth,
41 duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon,
42 duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar,

They were afterwards governed by dukes, again here named, who, I suppose, ruled all at the same time in several places in the country. Either they set up this form of government in conformity to the Horites, who had used it (Ge 36:29), or God's providence reduced them to it, as some conjecture, to correct them for their unkindness to Israel, in refusing them a passage though their country, Nu 20:18. Note, When power is abused, it is just with God to weaken it, by turning it into divers channels. For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof. Sin brought Edom from kings to dukes, from crowns to coronets. We read of the dukes of Edom (Ex 15:15), yet, long afterwards, of their kings again.

Mount Seir is called the land of their possession, Ge 36:43. While the Israelites dwelt in the house of bondage, and their Canaan was only the land of promise, the Edomites dwelt in their own habitations, and Seir was in their possession. Note, The children of this world have their all in hand, and nothing in hope (Lu 16:25); while the children of God have their all in hope, and next to nothing in hand. But, all things considered, it is better to have Canaan in promise than mount Seir in possession.

43 duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these *be* the dukes of Edom, according to
their habitations in the land of their possession: he *is* Esau the father
of the Edomites.

Genesis -37

Joseph Sold into Egypt

1 And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in
the land of Canaan.

> Moses has no more to say of the Edomites, unless as they happen to fall in Israel's way; but now applies himself closely to the story of Jacob's family: These are the generations of Jacob. His is not a bare barren genealogy as that of Esau (Ge 36:1), but a memorable useful history. Here is, 1. Jacob a sojourner with his father Isaac, who has yet living, Ge 37:1. We shall never be at home, till we come to heaven.

2 These *are* the generations of Jacob.
Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his
brethren; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons
of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their
evil report.

> Joseph, a shepherd, feeding the flock with his brethren, Ge 37:2. Though he was his father's darling, yet he was not brought up in idleness or delicacy. Those do not truly love their children that do not inure them to business, and labour, and mortification. The fondling of children is with good reason commonly called the spoiling of them. Those that are trained up to do nothing are likely to be good for nothing.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was*
the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colors.
4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than
all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably
unto him.

Joseph beloved by his father (Ge 37:3), partly for his dear mother's sake that was dead, and partly for his own sake, because he was the greatest comfort of his old age; probably he waited on him, and was more observant of him than the rest of his sons; he was the son of the ancient so some; that is, when he was a child, he was as grave and discreet as if he had been an old man, a child, but not childish. Jacob proclaimed his affection to him by dressing him finer than the rest of his children: He made him a coat of divers colours, which probably was significant of further honors intended him. Note, Though those children are happy that have that in them which justly recommends them to their parents' particular love, yet it is the prudence of parents not to make a difference between one child and another, unless there be a great and manifest cause given for it by the children's dutifulness or undutifulness; paternal government must be impartial, and managed with a steady hand.

Joseph hated by his brethren,

(1.) Because his father loved him; when parents make a difference, children soon take notice of it, and it often occasions feuds and quarrels in families.

(2.) Because he brought to his father their evil report. Jacob's sons did that, when they were from under his eye, which they durst not have done if they had been at home with him; but Joseph gave his father an account of their bad carriage, that he might reprove and restrain them; not as a malicious tale-bearer, to sow discord, but as a faithful brother, who, when he durst not admonish them himself, represented their faults to one that had authority to admonish them. Note,

[1.] It is common for friendly monitors to be looked upon as enemies. Those that hate to be reformed hate those that would reform them, Pr 9:8.

[2.] It is common for those that are beloved of God to be hated by the world; whom Heaven blesses, hell curses. To those to whom God speaks comfortably wicked men will not speak peaceably. It is said here of Joseph, the lad was with the sons of Bilhah; some read it, and he was servant to them, they made him their drudge.

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told *it* his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 for, behold, we *were* binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

Joseph relates the prophetical dreams he had, Ge 37:6, 7,9,10. Though he was now very young (about seventeen years old), yet he was pious and devout, and well-inclined, and this fitted him for God's gracious discoveries of himself to him. Joseph had a great deal of trouble before him, and therefore God gave him betimes this prospect of his advancement, to support and comfort him under the long and grievous troubles with which he was to be exercised. Thus Christ had a joy set before him, and so have Christians. Note, God has ways of preparing his people beforehand for the trials which they cannot foresee, but which he has an eye to in the comforts with which he furnishes them. His dreams were,

1. That his brethren's sheaves all bowed to his, intimating upon what occasion they should be brought to do homage to him, namely, in seeking to him for corn; their empty sheaves should bow to his full one.

2. That the sun, and moon, and eleven stars, did obeisance to him, Ge 37:9. Joseph was more of a prophet than a politician, else he would have kept this to himself, when he could not but know that his brethren did already hate him and that this would but the more exasperate them. But, if he told it in his simplicity, yet God directed it for the mortification of his brethren.

Observe, Joseph dreamed of his preferment, but he did not dream of his imprisonment. Thus many young people, when they are setting out in the world, think of nothing but prosperity and pleasure, and never dream of trouble.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

His brethren take it very ill, and are more and more enraged against him (Ge 37:8): Shalt thou indeed reign over us? See here,

1. How truly they interpreted his dream that he should reign over them. Those become the expositors of his dream who were enemies to the accomplishment of it, as in Gideon's story (Jdg 7:13, 14); they perceived that he spoke of them, Mt 21:45. The event exactly answered to this interpretation, Ge 42:6, &c.

2. How scornfully they resented it: "Shalt thou, who are but one, reign over us, who are many? Thou, who are the youngest, over us who are older?" Note, The reign and dominion of Jesus Christ, our Joseph, have been, and are, despised and striven against by a carnal and unbelieving world, who cannot endure to think that this man should reign over them. The dominion also of the upright, in the morning of the resurrection, is thought of with the utmost disdain.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, what *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

His father gives him a gentle rebuke for it, yet observes the saying, Ge 37:10, 11. Probably he checked him for it, to lessen the offence which his brethren would be apt to take at it; yet he took notice of it more than he seemed to do: he insinuated that it was but an idle dream, because his mother was brought in,

who had been dead some time since; whereas the sun, moon, and eleven stars, signify no more than the whole family that should have a dependence upon him, and be glad to be beholden to him. Note, The faith of God's people in God's promises is often sorely shaken by their misunderstanding the promises and then suggesting the improbabilities that attend the performance; but God is doing his own work, and will do it, whether we understand him aright or no. Jacob, like Mary (Lu 2:51), kept these things in his heart, and no doubt remembered them long afterwards, when the event answered to the prediction.

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.
12 And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.
13 And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed *the flock* in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, here *am I*.

Here is, the kind visit which Joseph, in obedience to his father's command, made to his brethren, who were feeding the flock at Shechem, many miles off. Some suggest that they went thither on purpose, expecting that Joseph would be sent to see them, and that then they should have an opportunity to do him a mischief. However, Joseph and his father had both of them more of the innocence of the dove than of the wisdom of the serpent, else he had never come thus into the hands of those that hated him: but God designed it all for good. See in Joseph an instance,

1. Of dutifulness to his father. Though he was his father's darling, yet he was made, and was willing to be, his father's servant. How readily does he wait his father's orders! Here I am, Ge 37:13. Note, Those children that are best beloved by their parents should be most obedient to their parents; and then their love is well-bestowed and well-returned.

2. Of kindness to his brethren. Though he knew they hated him and envied him, yet he made no objections against his father's commands, either from the distance of the place or the danger

of the journey, but cheerfully embraced the opportunity of showing his respect to his brethren.

Note, It is a very good lesson, though it is learnt with difficulty and rarely practised, to love those that hate us; if our relations do not their duty to us, yet we must not be wanting in our duty to them. This is thank-worthy. Joseph was sent by his father to Shechem, to see whether his brethren were well there, and whether the country had not risen upon them and destroyed them, in revenge of their barbarous murder of the Shechemites some years before. But Joseph, not finding them there, went to Dothan, which showed that he undertook this journey, not only in obedience to his father (for then he might have returned when he missed them at Shechem, having done what his father told him), but out of love to his brethren, and therefore he sought diligently till he found them. Thus let brotherly love continue, and let us give proofs of it.

14 And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 And a certain man found him, and, behold, *he was* wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, what seekest thou?

16 And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed *their flocks.*

17 And the man said, they are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

18 And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

The bloody and malicious plot of his brethren against him, who rendered good for evil, and, for his love, were his adversaries. Observe, how deliberate they were in the contrivance of this mischief: when they saw him afar off, they conspired against him, Ge 37:18. It was not in a heat, or upon a sudden provocation, that they thought to slay him, but from malice prepense, and in cold blood. Note, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; for he will be one if he have an

opportunity, 1Jo 3:15. Malice is a most mischievous thing, and is in danger of making bloody work where it is harboured and indulged. The more there is of a project and contrivance in a sin the worse it is; it is bad to do evil, but worse to devise it.

19 And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

1. How cruel they were in their design; nothing less than his blood would satisfy them: Come, and let us slay him, Ge 37:20. Note, The old enmity hunts for the precious life. It is the blood-thirsty that hate the upright (Pr 29:10), and it is the blood of the saints that the harlot is drunk with.

2. How scornfully they reproached him for his dreams (Ge 37:19): This dreamer cometh; and (Ge 37:20), We shall see what will become of his dreams. This shows what it was that fretted and enraged them. They could not endure to think of doing homage to him; this was what they were plotting to prevent by the murder of him. Note, Men that fret and rage at God's counsels are impiously aiming to defeat them; but they imagine a vain thing, Ps 2:1-3. God's counsels will stand.

3. How they agreed to keep one another's counsel, and to cover the murder with a lie: We will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; whereas in thus consulting to devour him they proved themselves worse than the most evil beasts; for evil beasts prey not on those of their own kind, but they were tearing a piece of themselves.

20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

21 And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.

Reuben's project to deliver him, Ge 37:21, 22. Note, God can raise up friends for his people, even among their enemies; for he has all hearts in his hands. Reuben, of all the brothers, had most reason to be jealous of Joseph, for he was the first-born, and so entitled to those distinguishing favours which Jacob was conferring on Joseph; yet he proves his best friend.

Reuben's temper seems to have been soft and effeminate, which had betrayed him to the sin of uncleanness; while the temper of the next two brothers, Simeon and Levi, was fierce, which betrayed them to the sin of murder, a sin which Reuben startled at the thought of.

Note, Our natural constitution should be guarded against those sins to which it is most inclinable, and improved (as Reuben's here) against those sins to which it is most averse. Reuben made a proposal which they thought would effectually answer their intention of destroying Joseph, and yet which he designed should answer his intention of rescuing Joseph out of their hands and restoring him to his father, probably hoping thereby to recover his father's favour, which he had lately lost; but God overruled all to serve his own purpose of making Joseph an instrument to save much people alive. Joseph was here a type of Christ. Though he was the beloved Son of his Father, and hated by a wicked world, yet the Father sent him out of his bosom to visit us in great humility and love. He came from heaven to earth, to seek and save us; yet then malicious plots were laid against him. He came to his own, and his own not only received him not, but consulted against him: This is the heir, come let us kill him; Crucify him, crucify him. This he submitted to, in pursuance of his design to redeem and save us.

22 And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stripped Joseph out of his coat, *his* coat of *many* colors that *was* on him;

We have here the execution of their plot against Joseph. They stripped him, each striving to seize the envied coat of many colours, Ge 37:23. Thus, in imagination, they degraded him from the birthright, of which perhaps this was the badge, grieving him, affronting their father, and making themselves sport, while they insulted over him. "Now, Joseph, where is the fine coat?" Thus our Lord Jesus was stripped of his seamless coat, and thus his suffering saints have first been industriously

divested of their privileges and honours, and then made the off-scouring of all things.

They went about to starve him, throwing him into a dry pit, to perish there with hunger and cold, so cruel were their tender mercies, Ge 37:25. Note, Where envy reigns pity is banished, and humanity itself is forgotten, Pr 27:4. So full of deadly poison is malice that the more barbarous anything is the more grateful it is. Now Joseph begged for his life, in the anguish of his soul (Ge 42:21), entreated, by all imaginable endearments, that they would be content with his coat and spare his life. He pleads innocence, relation, affection, submission; he weeps and makes supplication, but all in vain. Reuben alone relents and intercedes for him, Ge 42:22. But he cannot prevail to save Joseph from the horrible pit, in which they resolve he shall die by degrees, and be buried alive. Is this he to whom his brethren must do homage? Note, God's providences often seem to contradict his purposes, even when they are serving them, and working at a distance towards the accomplishment of them.

24 and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit *was* empty, *there was* no water in it.

They slighted him when he was in distress, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; for when he was pining away in the pit, bemoaning his own misery, and with a languishing cry calling to them for pity, they sat down to eat bread, Ge 37:25.

(1.) They felt no remorse of conscience for the sin; if they had, it would have spoiled their appetite for their meat, and the relish of it. Note, A great force put upon conscience commonly stupefies it, and for the time deprives it both of sense and speech. Daring sinners are secure ones. But the consciences of Joseph's brethren, though asleep now, were roused long afterwards, Ge 42:21.

(2.) They were now pleased to think how they were freed from the fear of their brother's dominion over them, and that, on the

contrary, they had turned the wheel upon him. They made merry over him, as the persecutors over the two witnesses that had tormented them, Re 11:10. Note, Those that oppose God's counsels may possibly prevail so far as to think they have gained their point, and yet be deceived. 4. They sold him. A caravan of merchants very opportunely passed by (Providence so ordering it), and Judah made the motion that they should sell Joseph to them, to be carried far enough off into Egypt, where, in all probability, he would be lost, and never heard of more.

(1.) Judah proposed it in compassion to Joseph (Ge 37:26): "What profit is it if we slay our brother? It will be less guilt, and more gain, to sell him." Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should consider the unprofitableness of it. It is what there is nothing to be got by.

(2.) They acquiesced in it, because they thought that if he were sold for a slave he would never be a lord, if sold into Egypt he would never be their lord; yet all this was working towards it. Note, The wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain, Ps 76:10. Joseph's brethren were wonderfully restrained from murdering him, and their selling him was as wonderfully turned to God's praise. As Joseph was sold by the contrivance of Judah for twenty pieces of silver, so was our Lord Jesus for thirty, and by one of the same name too, Judas. Reuben (it seems) had gone away from his brethren, when they sold Joseph, intending to come round some other way to the pit, and to help Joseph out of it, and return him safely to his father. This was a kind project, but, if it had taken effect, what had become of God's purpose concerning his preferment in Egypt?

Note, There are many devices in man's heart, many devices of the enemies of God's people to destroy them and of their friends to help them, which perhaps are both disappointed, as these were; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

Reuben thought himself undone, because the child was sold: I, whither shall I go? Ge 37:30. He being the eldest, his father would expect from him an account of Joseph; but, as it proved, they would all have been undone if he had not been sold.

25 And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt.

26 And Judah said unto his brethren, what profit *is it* if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?

27 Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh: and his brethren were content.

28 Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

29 And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he rent his clothes.

30 And he returned unto his brethren, and said, the child *is* not; and I, whither shall I go?

31 And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood;

Joseph would soon be missed, great enquiry would be made for him, and therefore his brethren have a further design, to make the world believe that Joseph was torn in pieces by a wild beast; and this they did,

1. To clear themselves, that they might not be suspected to have done him any mischief. Note, We have all learned of Adam to cover our transgression, Job 31:33. When the devil has taught men to commit one sin, he then teaches them to conceal it with another, theft and murder with lying and perjury; but he that covers his sin shall not prosper long. Joseph's brethren kept their own and one another's counsel for some time, but their villany came to light at last, and it is here published to the world, and the remembrance of it transmitted to every age.

2. To grieve their good father. It seems designed by them on purpose to be revenged upon him for his distinguishing love of Joseph. It was contrived on purpose to create the utmost vexation to him. They sent him Joseph's coat of many colours, with one colour more than it had had, a bloody colour, Ge 37:32. They pretended they had found it in the fields, and Jacob himself must be scornfully asked, Is this thy son's coat? Now the badge of his honour is the discovery of his fate; and it is rashly inferred from the bloody coat that Joseph, without doubt, is rent in pieces. Love is always apt to fear the worst concerning the person beloved; there is a love that casteth out fear, but that is a perfect love. Now let those that know the heart of a parent suppose the agonies of poor Jacob, and put their souls into his soul's stead. How strongly does he represent to himself the direful idea of Joseph's misery! Sleeping or waking, he imagines he sees the wild beast setting upon Joseph, thinks he hears his piteous shrieks when the lion roared against him, makes himself tremble and grow chill, many a time, when he fancies how the beast sucked his blood, tore him limb from limb, and left no remains of him, but the coat of many colours, to carry the tidings. And no doubt it added no little to the grief that he had exposed him, by sending him, and sending him all alone, on this dangerous journey, which proved so fatal to him. This cuts him to the heart, and he is ready to look upon himself as an accessory to the death of his son. Now,

(1.) Endeavours were used to comfort him. His sons basely pretended to do it (Ge 37:35); but miserable hypocritical comforters were they all. Had they really desired to comfort him, they might easily have done it, by telling him the truth, "Joseph is alive, he is indeed sold into Egypt, but it will be an easy thing to send thither and ransom him." This would have loosened his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness presently. I wonder their countenances did not betray their guilt, and with what face they could pretend to condole with Jacob on the death of Joseph, when they knew he was alive.

Note, The heart is strangely hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. But,

(2.) It was all in vain: Jacob refused to be comforted, Ge 37:35. He was an obstinate mourner, resolved to go down to the grave mourning. It was not a sudden transport of passion, like that of David, Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son! But, like Job, he hardened himself in sorrow. Note,

[1.] Great affection to any creature does not prepare for so much the greater affliction, when it is either removed from us or embittered to us. Inordinate love commonly ends in immoderate grief; as much as the sway of the pendulum throws one way, so much it will throw the other way.

[2.] Those consult neither the comfort of their souls nor the credit of their religion that are determined in their sorrow upon any occasion whatsoever. We must never say, "We will go to our grave mourning," because we know not what joyful days Providence may yet reserve for us, and it is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to Providence.

[3.] We often perplex ourselves with imaginary troubles. We fancy things worse than they are, and then afflict ourselves more than we need. Sometimes there needs no more to comfort us than to undeceive us: it is good to hope the best.

32 and they sent the coat of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their
father; and said, this have we found: know now whether it *be* thy
son's coat or no.
33 And he knew it, and said, *it is* my son's coat; an evil beast hath
devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.
34 And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and
mourned for his son many days.
35 And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but
he refused to be comforted; and he said, for I will go down into the
grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

36 And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, *and* captain of the guard.

The Ishmaelites and Midianites having bought Joseph only to make their market of him, here we have him sold again (with gain enough to the merchants, no doubt) to Potiphar, Ge 37:36. Jacob was lamenting the loss of his life; had he known all he would have lamented, though not so passionately, the loss of liberty. Shall Jacob's freeborn son exchange the best robe of his family for the livery of an Egyptian lord, and all the marks of servitude? How soon was the land of Egypt made a house of bondage to the seed of Jacob! Note, It is the wisdom of parents not to bring up their children too delicately, because they know not to what hardships and mortifications Providence may reduce them before they die. Jacob little thought that ever his beloved Joseph would be thus bought and sold for a servant.

Genesis -38

Judah and Tamar

1 And it came to pass at that time that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name *was* Hirah.

Judah's foolish friendship with a Canaanite-man. He went down from his brethren, and withdrew for a time from their society and his father's family, and got to be intimately acquainted with one Hirah, an Adullamite, Ge 38:1. It is computed that he was now not much above fifteen or sixteen years of age, an easy prey to the tempter. Note, When young people that have been well educated begin to change their company, they will soon change their manners, and lose their good education. Those that go down from their brethren, that despise and forsake the society of the seed of Israel, and pick up Canaanites for their companions, are going down the hill apace. It is of great consequence to young people to choose

proper associates; for these they will imitate, study to recommend themselves to, and, by their opinion of them, value themselves: an error in this choice is often fatal.

2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.

His foolish marriage with a Canaanite-woman, a match made, not by his father, who, it should seem, was not consulted, but by his new friend Hirah, Ge 38:2. Many have been drawn into marriages scandalous and pernicious to themselves and their families by keeping bad company, and growing familiar with bad people: one wicked league entangles men in another. Let young people be admonished by this to take their good parents for their best friends, and to be advised by them, and not by flatterers, who wheedle them, to make a prey of them.

3 And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er.

4 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan.

5 And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

His children by this Canaanite, and his disposal of them. Three sons he had by her, Er, Onan, and Shelah. It is probable that she embraced the worship of the God of Israel, at least in profession, but, for aught that appears, there was little of the fear of God in the family. Judah married too young, and very rashly; he also married his sons too young, when they had neither wit nor grace to govern themselves, and the consequences were very bad.

(1.) His first-born, Er, was notoriously wicked; he was so in the sight of the Lord, that is, in defiance of God and his law; or, if perhaps he was not wicked in the sight of the world, he was so in the sight of God, to whom all men's wickedness is open; and what came of it? Why, God cut him off presently (Ge 38:7): The Lord slew him. Note, Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners, and takes them away in his wrath, when they are but just setting out in a wicked course of life.

(2.) The next son, Onan, was, according to the ancient usage, married to the widow, to preserve the name of his deceased brother that died childless. Though God had taken away his life for his wickedness, yet they were solicitous to preserve his memory; and their disappointment therein, through Onan's sin, was a further punishment of his wickedness. The custom of marrying the brother's widow was afterwards made one of the laws of Moses, De 25:5. Onan, though he consented to marry the widow, yet, to the great abuse of his own body, of the wife that he had married, and of the memory of his brother that was gone, he refused to raise up seed unto his brother, as he was in duty bound. This was so much the worse because the Messiah was to descend from Judah, and, had he not been guilty of this wickedness, he might have had the honour of being one of his ancestors. Note, Those sins that dishonour the body and defile it are very displeasing to God and evidences of vile affections.

(3.) Shelah, the third son, was reserved for the widow (Ge 38:11), yet with a design that he should not marry so young as his brothers had done, lest he die also. Some think that Judah never intended to marry Shelah to Tamar, but unjustly suspected her to have been the death of her two former husbands (whereas it was their own wickedness that slew them), and then sent her to her father's house, with a charge to remain a widow. If so, it was an inexcusable piece of prevarication that he was guilty of. However, Tamar acquiesced for the present, and waited the issue.

6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name *was* Tamar.
7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and
the Lord slew him.
8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and
marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother.
9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass,
when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the
ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.
10 And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore he
slew him also.

11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren *did*. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

12 And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

13 And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

14 And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which *is* by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

It is a very ill-favoured story that is here told concerning Judah; one would not have expected such folly in Israel. Judah had buried his wife; and widowers have need to stand upon their guard with the utmost caution and resolution against all fleshly lusts. He was unjust to his daughter-in-law, either through negligence or design, in not giving her his surviving son, and this exposed her to temptation.

Tamar wickedly prostituted herself as a harlot to Judah, that, if the son might not, the father might raise up seed to the deceased. Some excuse this by suggesting that, though she was a Canaanite, yet she had embraced the true religion, and believed the promise made to Abraham and his seed, particularly that of the Messiah, who was to descend from the loins of Judah, and that she was therefore thus earnestly desirous to have a child by one of that family that she might have the honour, or at least stand fair for the honour, of being the mother of the Messiah. And, if this was indeed her desire, it had its success; she is one of the four women particularly named in the genealogy of Christ, Mt 1:3. Her sinful practice was pardoned, and her good intention was accepted, which magnifies the grace of God, but can by no means be admitted to justify or encourage the like. Bishop Patrick thinks it probable that she hoped Shelah, who was by right her husband, might have come along with his father, and that he might have

been allured to her embraces. There was a great deal of plot and contrivance in Tamar's sin.

1. She took an opportunity for it, when Judah had a time of mirth and feasting with his sheep-shearers. Note, Time of jollity often prove times of temptation, particularly to the sin of uncleanness; when men are fed to the full, the reins are apt to be let loose.

2. She exposed herself as a harlot in an open place, Ge 38:14. Those that are, and would be, chaste, must be keepers at home, Tit 2:5. It should seem, it was the custom of harlots, in those times, to cover their faces, that, though they were not ashamed, yet they might seem to be so. The sin of uncleanness did not then go so barefaced as it does now.

15 When Judah saw her, he thought her *to be* a harlot; because she had covered her face.

Judah was taken in the snare, and though it was ignorantly that he was guilty of incest with his daughter-in-law (not knowing who she was), yet he was willfully guilty of fornication: whoever she was, he knew she was not his wife, and therefore not to be touched. Nor was his sin capable, in the least, of such a charitable excuse as some make for Tamar, that though the action was bad the intention possibly might be good. Observe,

1. Judah's sin began in the eye (Ge 38:15): He saw her. Note, Those have eyes, and hearts too, full of adultery (as it is 2Pe 2:14), that catch at every bait that presents itself to them and are as tinder to every spark. We have need to make a covenant with our eyes, and to turn them from beholding vanity, lest the eye infect the heart.

2. It added to the scandal that the hire of a harlot (than which nothing is more infamous) was demanded, offered, and accepted--a kid from the flock, a goodly price at which her chastity and honour were valued! Nay, had the consideration been thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, it had not been a valuable consideration. The favour of God, the

purity of the soul, the peace of conscience, and the hope of heaven, are too precious to be exposed to sale at any such rates; the Topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them: what are those profited that lose their souls to gain the world?

3. It turned to the reproach of Judah that he left his jewels in pawn for a kid. Note, Fleshly lusts are not only brutish, but sottish, and ruining to men's secular interests. It is plain that whoredom, as well as wine, and new wine, takes away the heart first, else it would never take away the signet and the bracelets.

16 And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she *was* his daughter-in-law:) and she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?

17 And he said, I will send *thee* a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give *me* a pledge, till thou send *it?*

18 And he said, what pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that *is* in thine hand. And he gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

19 And she arose, and went away, and laid by her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

20 And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not.

21 Then he asked the men of that place, saying, where *is* the harlot, that *was* openly by the wayside? And they said, there was no harlot in this *place.*

22 And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, *that* there was no harlot in this *place.*

23 And Judah said, Let her take *it* to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

He lost his jewels by the bargain; he sent the kid, according to this promise, to redeem his pawn, but the supposed harlot could not be found. He sent it by his friend (who was indeed his back-friend, because he was aiding and abetting in his evil deeds) the Adullamite, who came back without the pledge. It is a good account (if it be but true) of any place which they here gave, there is no harlot in this place; for such sinners are

the scandals and plagues of any place. Judah sits down content to lose his signet and his bracelets, and forbids his friend to make any further enquiry after them, giving this reason, lest we be shamed, Ge 38:23. Either,

1. Lest his sin should come to be known publicly, and be talked of. Fornication and uncleanness have ever been looked upon as scandalous things and the reproach and shame of those that are convicted of them. Nothing will make those blush that are not ashamed of these.

2. Lest he should be laughed at as a fool for trusting a strumpet with his signet and his bracelets. He expresses no concern about the sin, to get that pardoned, only about the shame, to prevent that.

Note, There are many who are more solicitous to preserve their reputation with men than to secure the favour of God and a good conscience; lest we be shamed goes further with them than lest we be damned.

24 And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she *is* with child by whoredom. And Judah said, bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

Judah's rigour against Tamar, when he heard she was an adulteress. She was, in the eye of the law, Shelah's wife, and therefore her being with child by another was looked upon as an injury and reproach to Judah's family: Bring her forth therefore, says Judah, the master of the family, and let her be burnt; not burnt to death, but burnt in the cheek or forehead, stigmatized for a harlot. This seems probable, Ge 38:24. Note, it is a common thing for men to be severe against those very sins in others in which yet they allow themselves; and so, in judging others, they condemn themselves, Ro 2:1, 14:22. If he designed that she should be burnt to death, perhaps, under pretence of zeal against the sin, he was contriving how to get rid of his daughter-in-law, being loath to marry Shelah to her. Note, It is a common thing, but a very bad thing, to cover

malice against men's persons with a show of zeal against their vices.

25 When she *was* brought forth she sent to her father-in-law, saying,
By the man, whose these *are, am* I with child: and she said, Discern,
I pray thee, whose *are* these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff.

Judah's shame, when it was made to appear that he was the adulterer. She produced the ring and the bracelets in court, which justified the fathering of the child upon Judah, Ge 38:25, 26.

Note, The wickedness that has been most secretly committed, and most industriously concealed, yet sometimes is strangely brought to light, to the shame and confusion of those who have said, No eye sees. A bird of the air may carry the voice; however, there is a destroying day coming, when all will be laid open. Some of the Jewish writers observe that as Judah had said to his father, See, is this thy son's coat? (Ge 37:32) so it was now said to him, "See, are these thy signet and bracelets?" Judah, being convicted by his own conscience,

1. Confesses his sin: She has been more righteous than I. He owns that a perpetual mark of infamy should be fastened rather upon him, who had been so much accessory to it. Note, Those offenders ought to be treated with the greatest tenderness to whom we have any way given occasion of offending. If servants purloin, and their masters, by withholding from them what is due, tempt them to it, they ought to forgive them.

2. He never returned to it again: He knew her again no more. Note, Those do not truly repent of their sins that do not forsake them.

26 And Judah acknowledged *them,* and said, She hath been more
righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And
he knew her again no more.

27 And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins
were in her womb.

28 And it came to pass, when she travailed, that *the one* put out *his* hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, this came out first.

The building up of Judah's family hereby, notwithstanding, in the birth of Pharez and Zarah, from whom descended the most considerable families of the illustrious tribe of Judah. It should seem, the birth was hard to the mother, by which she was corrected for her sin. The children also, like Jacob and Esau, struggled for the birthright, and Pharez obtained it, who is ever named first, and from him Christ descended. He had his name from his breaking forth before his brother: This breach be upon thee, which is applicable to those that sow discord, and create distance, between brethren. The Jews, as Zarah, bade fair for the birthright, and were marked with a scarlet thread, as those that came out first; but the Gentiles, like Pharez, as a son of violence, got the start of them, by that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers, and attained to the righteousness of which the Jews came short. Yet, when the fullness of time is come, all Israel shall be saved. Both these sons are named in the genealogy of our Savior (Mt 1:3), to perpetuate the story, as an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. Some observe that the four eldest sons of Jacob fell under very foul guilt, Reuben and Judah under the guilt of incest, Simeon and Levi under that of murder; yet they were patriarchs, and from Levi descended the priests, from Judah the kings and Messiah. Thus they became examples of repentance, and monuments of pardoning mercy.

29 And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, how hast thou broken forth? *This* breach *be* upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez.

30 And afterward came out his brother that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

Genesis -39

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither.

Joseph bought (Ge 39:1), and he that bought him, whatever he gave for him, had a good bargain of him; it was better than the merchandise of silver. The Jews have a proverb, "If the world did not know the worth of good men, they would hedge them about with pearls." He was sold to an officer of Pharaoh, with whom he might get acquainted with public persons and public business, and so be fitted for the preferment for which he was designed. Note, 1. What God intends men for he will be sure, some way or other, to qualify them for. 2. Providence is to be acknowledged in the disposal even of poor servants and in their settlements, and therein may perhaps be working towards something great and important.

2 And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

God prospered him, Ge 39:2, 3. Perhaps the affairs of Potiphar's family had remarkably gone backward before; but, upon Joseph's coming into it, a discernible turn was given to them, and the face and posture of them altered on a sudden. Though, at first, we may suppose that his hand was put to the meanest services, even in those appeared his ingenuity and industry; a particular blessing of Heaven attended him, which, as he rose in his employment, became more and more discernible. Note,

(1.) Those that have wisdom and grace have that which cannot be taken away from them, whatever else they are robbed of. Joseph's brethren had stripped him of his coat of many colours, but they could not strip him of his virtue and prudence.

(2.) Those that can separate us from all our friends, yet cannot deprive us of the gracious presence of our God. When Joseph had none of all his relations with him, he had his God with him, even in the house of the Egyptian. Joseph was separated from his brethren, but not from his God; banished from his father's house, but the Lord was with him, and this comforted him.

(3.) It is God's presence with us that makes all we do prosperous. Those that would prosper must therefore make God their friend; and those that do prosper must therefore give God the praise.

3 And his master saw that the Lord *was* with him, and that the
Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he
made him overseer over his house, and all *that* he had he put into
his hand.

His master preferred him, by degrees made him steward of his household, Ge 39:4. Note,

(1.) Industry and honesty are the surest and safest way both of rising and thriving: Seest thou a man prudent, and faithful, and diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings at length, and not always before mean men.

(2.) It is the wisdom of those that are in any sort of authority to countenance and employ those with whom it appears that the presence of God is, Ps 101:6. Potiphar knew what he did when he put all into the hands of Joseph; for he knew it would prosper better there than in his own hand.

(3.) He that is faithful in a few things stand fair for being made ruler over many things, Mt 25:21. Christ goes by this rule with his servants.

(4.) It is a great ease to a master to have those employed under him that are trusty. Potiphar was so well satisfied with Joseph's conduct that he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat, Ge 39:6. The servant had all the care and trouble of the estate; the master had only the enjoyment of it: an example not to be imitated by any master, unless he could be sure that he had one in all respects like Joseph for a servant.

5 And it came to pass from the time *that* he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord
Was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

God favoured his master for his sake (Ge 39:5): He blessed the Egyptian's house, though he was an Egyptian, a stranger to the true God, for Joseph's sake; and he himself, like Laban, soon learned it by experience, Ge 30:27. Note, (1.) Good men are the blessings of the places where they live; even good servants may be so, though mean, and lightly esteemed. (2.) The prosperity of the wicked is, one way or other, for the sake of the godly. Here was a wicked family blessed for the sake of one good servant in it.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat.
And Joseph was a goodly person, and well-favored.

7 And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, lie with me.

A most shameful instance of impudence and immodesty in Joseph's mistress, the shame and scandal of her sex, perfectly lost to all virtue and honour, and not to be mentioned, nor thought of, without the utmost indignation. It was well that she was an Egyptian; for we must have shared in the confusion if such folly had been found in Israel. Observe,

Her sin began in the eye: She cast her eyes upon Joseph (Ge 39:7), who was a goodly person, and well-favored, Ge 39:6. Note,

(1.) Remarkable beauty, either of men or women, often proves a dangerous snare both to themselves and others, which forbids pride in it and commands constant watchfulness against the temptation that attends it; favour is deceitful--deceiving.

(2.) We have great need to make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1), lest the eye infect the heart. Joseph's mistress had a husband that ought to have been to her for a covering of the eyes from all others, Ge 20:16.

8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what *is* with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

His resistance of the temptation was very brave, and the victory truly honourable. The almighty grace of God enabled him to overcome this assault of the enemy,

(1.) By strength of reason; and wherever right reason may be heard, religion no doubt will carry the day. He argues from the respect he owed both to God and his master, Ge 39:8, 9.

[1.] He would not wrong his master, nor do such an irreparable injury to his honour. He considers, and urges, how kind his master had been to him, what a confidence he had reposed in him, in how many instances he had befriended him, for which he abhorred the thought of making such an ungrateful return. Note, We are bound in honour, as well as justice and gratitude, not in any thing to injure those that have a good opinion of us and place a trust in us, how secretly soever it may be done. See how he argues (Ge 39:9): "There is none greater in this house than I, therefore I will not do it."

Note, Those that are great, instead of being proud of their greatness, should use it as an argument against sin. "Is none greater than I? Then I will scorn to do a wicked thing; it is below me to serve a base lust; I will not disparage myself so much."

[2.] He would not offend his God. This is the chief argument with which he strengthens his aversion to the sin. How can I do this? Not only, How shall I? Or, How dare I? But, How can I? Id possumus, quod jure possumus--We can do that which we can do lawfully. It is good to shut out sin with the strongest bar, even that of an impossibility. He that is born of God cannot sin, 1Jo 3:9. Three arguments Joseph urges upon himself.

First, He considers who he was that was tempted. "I; others may perhaps take their liberty, but I cannot. I that am an Israelite in covenant with God, that profess religion, and relation to him: it is next to impossible for me to do so."

Secondly, What the sin was to which he was tempted: This great wickedness. Others might look upon it as a small matter, a peccadillo, a trick of youth; but Joseph had another idea of it. In general, when at any time we are tempted to sin, we must consider the great wickedness there is in it, let sin appear sin (Ro 7:13), call it by its own name, and never go about to lessen it. Particularly let the sin of uncleanness always be looked upon as great wickedness, as an exceedingly sinful sin, that wars against the soul as much as any other.

Thirdly, Against whom he was tempted to sin--against God; not only, "How shall I do it, and sin against my master, my mistress, myself, my own body and soul; but against God?" Note, Gracious souls look upon this as the worst thing in sin that it is against God, against his nature and his dominion, against his love and his design. Those that love God do for this reason hate sin

9 *there is* none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

She was daring and shameless in the sin. With an impudent face, and a harlot's forehead, she said, Lie with me, having already, by her wanton looks and unchaste desires, committed adultery with him in her heart.

Note, Where the unclean spirit gets possession and dominion in a soul, it is as with the possessed of the devils (Lu 7:27, 29), the clothes of modesty are thrown off and the bands and fetters of shame are broken in pieces. When lust has got head, it will stick at nothing, blush at nothing; decency, and reputation, and conscience, are all sacrificed to that Baal-peor. 3. She was urgent and violent in the temptation. Often she had been denied with the strongest reasons, and yet as often renewed her vile solicitations. She spoke to him day by day, Ge 39:10. Now this was,

(1.) Great wickedness in her, and showed her heart fully set to do evil.

(2.) A great temptation to Joseph. The hand of Satan, no doubt, was in it, who, when he found he could not overcome him with troubles and the frowns of the world (for in them he still held fast his integrity), assaulted him with soft and charming pleasures, which have ruined more than the former, and have slain their ten-thousands.

10 And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

11 And it came to pass about this time, that *Joseph* went into the house to do his business; and *there was* none of the men of the house there within.

Here is a most illustrious instance of virtue and resolved chastity in Joseph, who, by the grace of God, was enabled to resist and overcome this temptation; and, all things considered, his escape was, for aught I know, as great an instance of the divine power as the deliverance of the three children out of the fiery furnace.

The temptation he was assaulted with was very strong. Never was a more violent onset made upon the fort of chastity than this recorded here.

(1.) The sin he was tempted to was uncleanness, which considering his youth, his beauty, his single state, and his plentiful living at the table of a ruler, was a sin which, one would think, might most easily beset him and betray him.

(2.) The tempter was his mistress, a person of quality, whom it was his place to obey and his interest to oblige, whose favour would contribute more than anything to his preferment, and by whose means he might arrive at the highest honours of the court. On the other hand, it was at his utmost peril if he slighted her, and made her his enemy.

(3.) Opportunity makes a thief, makes an adulterer, and that favoured the temptation. The tempter was in the house with him; his business led him to be, without any suspicion, where she was; none of the family were within (Ge 39:11); there appeared no danger of its being ever discovered, or, if it should be suspected, his mistress would protect him.

(4.) To all this was added importunity, frequent constant importunity, to such a degree that, at last, she laid violent hands on him.

12 And she caught him by his garment, saying, lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

By stedfastness of resolution. The grace of God enabled him to overcome the temptation by avoiding the tempter.

[1.] He hearkened not to her, so much as to be with her, Ge 39:10. Note, Those that would be kept from harm must keep themselves out of harm's way. Avoid it, pass not by it. Nay,

[2.] When she laid hold of him, he left his garment in her hand, Ge 39:12. He would not stay so much as to parley with the temptation, but flew out from it with the utmost abhorrence; he

left his garment, as one escaping for his life. Note, It is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience.

13 And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

14 that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

Joseph's mistress, having tried in vain to make him a criminal, now endeavours to represent him as one; so to be revenged on him for his virtue. Now was her love turned into the utmost rage and malice, and she pretends she cannot endure the sight of him whom a while ago she could not endure out of her sight. Chaste and holy love will continue, though slighted; but sinful love, like Amnon's to Tamar, is easily changed into sinful hatred.

1. She accused him to his fellow servants (Ge 39:13-15) and gave him a bad name among them. Probably they envied him his interest in their master's favour, and his authority in the house; and perhaps found themselves aggrieved sometimes by his fidelity, which prevented their purloining; and therefore they were glad to hear anything that might tend to his disgrace, and, if there was room for it, incensed their mistress yet more against him. Observe, When she speaks of her husband, she does not call him her husband, or her lord, but only he; for she had forgotten the covenant of her God, that was between them. Thus the adulteress (Pr 7:19) calls her husband the good man. Note, Innocence itself cannot secure a man's reputation. Not everyone that keeps a good conscience can keep a good name.

2. She accused him to his master, who had power in his hand to punish him, which his fellow servants had not, Ge 39:17, 18. Observe,

(1.) What an improbable story she tells, producing his garment as an evidence that he had offered violence to her, which was a plain indication that she had offered violence to him. Note,

Those that have broken the bonds of modesty will never be held by the bonds of truth. No marvel that she who had impudence enough to say, Lie with me, had front enough to say, "He would have lien with me." Had the lie been told to conceal her own crime it would have been bad enough, yet, in some degree, excusable; but it was told to be revenged upon his virtue, a most malicious lie. And yet,

(2.) She manages it so as to incense her husband against him, reflecting upon him for bringing this Hebrew servant among them, perhaps at first against her mind, because he was a Hebrew. Note, It is no new thing for the best of men to be falsely accused of the worst of crimes by those who themselves are the worst of criminals. As this matter was represented, one would have thought chaste Joseph a very bad man and his wanton mistress a virtuous woman; it is well that there is a day of discovery coming, in which all shall appear in their true characters. This was not the first time that Joseph's coat was made use of as a false witness concerning him; his father had been deceived by it before, now his master.

15 and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and
cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.
16 And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.
17 And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The
Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto
me to mock me:
18 and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his
garment with me, and fled out.
19 And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife,
which she spake unto him, saying, after this manner did thy servant
to me; that his wrath was kindled.

Joseph wronged by his master. He believed the accusation, and either Joseph durst not make his defence by telling the truth, as it would reflect too much upon his mistress, or his master would not hear it, or would not believe it, and there is no remedy, he is condemned to perpetual imprisonment, Ge 39:19, 20. God restrained his wrath, else he had put him to death; and that

wrath which imprisoned him God made to turn to his praise, in order to which Providence so disposed that he should be shut up among the king's prisoners, the state-prisoners. Potiphar, it is likely, chose that prison because it was the worst; for there the iron entered into the soul (Ps 105:18), but God designed to pave the way to his enlargement. He was committed to the king's prison, that he might thence be preferred to the king's person. Note, Many an action of false imprisonment will, in the great day, be found to lie against the enemies and persecutors of God's people. Our Lord Jesus, like Joseph here, was bound, and numbered with the transgressors.

20 And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison.

21 But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Joseph owned and righted by his God, who is, and will be, the just and powerful patron of oppressed innocence. Joseph was at a distance from all his friends and relations, had not them with him to comfort him, or to minister to him, or to mediate for him; but the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, Ge 39:21. Note,

(1.) God despises not his prisoners, Ps 69:33. No gates nor bars can shut out his gracious presence from his people; for he has promised that he will never leave them.

(2.) Those that have a good conscience in a prison have a good God there. Integrity and uprightness qualify us for the divine favour, wherever we are. Joseph is not long a prisoner before he becomes a little ruler even in the prison, which is to be attributed, under God,

[1.] To the keeper's favour. God gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Note, God can raise up friends for his people even where they little expect to find them, and can make

them to be pitied even of those that carry them captive, Ps 106:46.

[2.] To Joseph's fitness for business. The keeper saw that God was with him, and that everything prospered under his hand; and therefore entrusted him with the management of the affairs of the prison, Ge 39:22, 23. Note, Wisdom and virtue will shine in the narrowest spheres. A good man will do good wherever he is, and will be a blessing even in bonds and banishment; for the Spirit of the Lord is not bound nor banished, witness St. Paul, Php 1:12, 13.

22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of *it*.

23 The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that *was* under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and *that* which he did, the Lord made *it* to prosper.

Genesis -40

Joseph Interprets the Prisoners' Dreams

1 And it came to pass after these things, *that* the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.

2 And Pharaoh was wroth against two *of* his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

We should not have had this story of Pharaoh's butler and baker recorded in scripture if it had not been serviceable to Joseph's preferment. The world stands for the sake of the church, and is governed for its good. Observe,

1. Two of the great officers of Pharaoh's court, having offended the king, are committed to prison.

Note, High places are slippery places; nothing more uncertain than the favour of princes. Those that make God's favour their

happiness, and his service their business, will find him a better Master than Pharaoh was, and not so extreme to mark what they do amiss. Many conjectures there are concerning the offence of these servants of Pharaoh; some make it no less than an attempt to take away his life, others no more than the casual lighting of a fly into his cup and a little sand into his bread. Whatever it was, Providence by this means brought them into the prison where Joseph was.

2 The captain of the guard himself, who was Potiphar, charged Joseph with them (Ge 40:4), which intimates that he began now to be reconciled to him, and perhaps to be convinced of his innocence, though he durst not release him for fear of disobliging his wife. John Baptist must lose his head, to please Herodias.

3 And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph *was* bound.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

5 And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which *were* bound in the prison.

Observe, the special providence of God, which filled the heads of these two prisoners with unusual dreams, such as made extraordinary impressions upon them, and carried with them evidences of a divine origin, both in one night. Note, God has immediate access to the spirits of men, which he can make serviceable to his own purposes whenever he pleases, quite beyond the intention of those concerned. To him all hearts are open, and anciently he spoke not only to his own people, but to others, in dreams, Job 33:15. Things to come were thus foretold, but very obscurely.

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they *were* sad.

The impression which was made upon these prisoners by their dreams (Ge 40:6): They were sad. It was not the prison that

made them sad (they were pretty well used to that, and perhaps lived jovially there), but the dream. Note, God has more ways than one to sadden the spirits of those that are to be made sad. Those sinners that are hardy enough under outward troubles, and will not yield to them, yet God can find out a way to punish; he can take off their wheels, by wounding their spirits, and laying loads upon them.

7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that *were* with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, wherefore look ye *so* sadly to day?

Joseph's great tenderness and compassion towards them. He enquired with concern, Wherefore look you so sadly to-day? Ge 40:7. Joseph was their keeper, and in that office he was mild. Note, It becomes us to take cognizance of the sorrows even of those that are under our check. Joseph was their companion in tribulation, he was now a prisoner with them, and had been a dreamer too. Note, Communion in sufferings helps to work compassion towards those that do suffer. Let us learn hence,

1. To concern ourselves in the sorrows and troubles of others, and to enquire into the reason of the sadness of our brethren's countenances; we should be often considering the tears of the oppressed, Ec 4:1. It is some relief to those that are in trouble to be taken notice of.

2. To enquire into the causes of our own sorrow, "Wherefore do I look so sadly? Is there a reason? Is it a good reason? Is there not a reason for comfort sufficient to balance it, whatever it is? Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

8 And they said unto him, we have dreamed a dream, and *there is* no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, *do* not interpretations *belong* to God? Tell me *them,* I pray you.

The dreams themselves, and the interpretation of them. That which troubled these prisoners was that being confined they could not have recourse to the diviners of Egypt who pretended to interpret dreams: There is no interpreter here in the prison, Ge 40:8. Note, There are interpreters which those that are in

prison and sorrow should wish to have with them, to instruct them in the meaning and design of Providence (Elihu alludes to such, when he says, If there be an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, Job 33:23, 24), interpreters to guide their consciences, not to satisfy their curiosity. Joseph hereupon directed them which way to look: Do not interpretations belong to God? He means the God whom he worshipped, to the knowledge of whom he endeavours hereby to lead them. Note, It is God's prerogative to foretell things to come, Isa 46:10. He must therefore have the praise of all the gifts of foresight which men have, ordinary or extraordinary. Joseph premises a caveat against his own praise, and is careful to transmit the glory to God, as Daniel, Da 2:30. Joseph suggests, "If interpretations belong to God, he is a free agent, and may communicate the power to whom he pleases, and therefore tell me your dreams." Now,

1 The chief butler's dream was a happy presage of his enlargement, and re-advancement, within three days; and so Joseph explained it to him, Ge 40:12, 13. Probably it had been usual with him to press the full-ripe grapes immediately into Pharaoh's cup, the simplicity of that age not being acquainted with the modern arts of making the wine fine. Observe, Joseph foretold the chief butler's deliverance, but he did not foresee his own. He had long before dreamt of his own honour, and the obeisance which his brethren should do to him, with the remembrance of which he must now support himself, without any new or fresh discoveries. The visions that are for the comfort of God's saints are for a great while to come, and relate to things that are very far off, while the foresights of others, like this recorded there, look but three days before them.

2 The chief baker's dream portended his ignominious death, Ge 40:18, 19. The happy interpretation of the other's dream encouraged him to relate his. Thus hypocrites, when they hear good things promised to good Christians, would put in for a share, though they have no part nor lot in the matter. It was not Joseph's fault that he brought him no better tidings. Ministers

are but interpreters, they cannot make the thing otherwise than it is; if therefore they deal faithfully, and their message prove unpleasing, it is not their fault. Bad dreams cannot expect a good interpretation.

9 And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, in my dream, behold, a vine *was* before me;

10 and in the vine *were* three branches: and it *was* as though it budded, *and* her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

11 and Pharaoh's cup *was* in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

12 And Joseph said unto him, this *is* the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:

13 yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place; and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

The improvement Joseph made of this opportunity to get a friend at court, Ge 40:14, 15. He modestly bespoke the favour of the chief butler, whose preferment he foretold: But think of me when it shall be well with thee. Though the respect paid to Joseph made the prison as easy to him as a prison could be, yet none can blame him for being desirous of liberty. See here,

1. What a modest representation he makes of his own case, Ge 40:15. He does not reflect upon his brethren that sold him; he only says, I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, that is, unjustly sent thence, no matter where the fault was. Nor does he reflect on the wrong done him in this imprisonment by his mistress that was his prosecutrix, and his master that was his judge; but mildly avers his own innocence: Here have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon. Note, When we are called to vindicate ourselves we should carefully avoid, as much as may be, speaking ill of others. Let us be content to

prove ourselves innocent, and not be fond of upbraiding others with their guilt.

2. What a modest request he makes to the chief butler: "Only, think of me. Pray do me a kindness, if it lie in your way." And his particular petition is, Bring me out of this house. He does not say, "Bring me into Pharaoh's house, get me a place at court." No, he begs for enlargement, not preferment. Note, Providence sometimes designs the greatest honours for those that least covet or expect them.

15 for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also *was* in my dream, and, behold, *I had* three white baskets on my head:

17 and in the uppermost basket *there was* of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

18 And Joseph answered and said, this *is* the interpretation thereof: The three baskets *are* three days:

19 yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

20 And it came to pass the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

The verifying of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, on the very day prefixed. The chief butler and baker were both advanced, one to his office, the other to the gallows, and both at the three days' end.

Note, Very great changes, both for the better and for the worse, often happen in a very little time, so sudden are the revolutions of the wheel of nature. The occasion of giving judgment severally upon their case was the solemnizing of Pharaoh's birth-day, on which, all his servants being obliged by custom

to attend him, these two came to be enquired after, and the cause of their commitment looked into. The solemnizing of the birth-day of princes has been an ancient piece of respect done them; and if it be not abused, as Jeroboam's was (Ho 7:5), and Herod's (Mk 6:21), is a usage innocent enough: and we may all profitably take notice of our birth-days, with thankfulness for the mercies of our birth, sorrow for the sinfulness of it, and an expectation of the day of our death as better than the day of our birth. On Pharaoh's birth-day he lifted up the head of these two prisoners, that is, arraigned and tried them (when Naboth was tried he was set on high among the people, 1Ki 21:9), and he restored the chief butler, and hanged the chief baker. If the butler was innocent and the baker guilty, we must own the equity of Providence in clearing up the innocency of the innocent, and making the sin of the guilty to find him out. If both were either equally innocent or equally guilty, it is an instance of the arbitrariness of such great princes as pride themselves in that power which Nebuchadnezzar set up for (Da 5:19, whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive), forgetting that there is a higher than they, to whom they are accountable.

21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

22 but he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

The disappointing of Joseph's expectation from the chief butler: He remembered not Joseph, but forgot him, Ge 40:23.

(1.) See here an instance of base ingratitude; Joseph had deserved well at his hands, had ministered to him, sympathized with him, helped him to a favourable interpretation of his dream, had recommended himself to him as an extraordinary person upon all accounts; and yet he forgot him. We must not think it strange if in this world we have hatred shown us for our love, and slights for our respects.

(2.) See how apt those that are themselves at ease are to forget others in distress. Perhaps it is in allusion to this story that the prophet speaks of those that drink wine in bowls, and are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Am 6:6. Let us learn hence to cease from man. Joseph perhaps depended too much upon his interest in the chief butler, and promised himself too much from him; he learned by his disappointment to trust in God only. We cannot expect too little from man nor too much from God.

Some observe the resemblance between Joseph and Christ in this story. Joseph's fellow-sufferers were like the two thieves that were crucified with Christ--the one saved, the other condemned. (It is Dr. Lightfoot's remark, from Mr. Broughton.) One of these, when Joseph said to him, Remember me when it shall be well with thee, forget him; but one of those, when he said to Christ, Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, was not forgotten. We justly blame the chief butler's ingratitude to Joseph, yet we conduct ourselves much more disingenuously towards the Lord Jesus. Joseph had but foretold the chief butler's enlargement, but Christ wrought out ours, mediated with the King of kings for us; yet we forget him, though often reminded of him, though we have promised never to forget him: thus ill do we requite him, like foolish people and unwise.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.

Genesis -41

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dream

1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

The delay of Joseph's enlargement. It was not till the end of two full years (Ge 41:1); so long he waited after he had entrusted the chief butler with his case and began to have some prospect of relief. Note, We have need of patience, not only bearing, but waiting, patience. Joseph lay in prison until the time that his word came, Ps 105:19. There is a time set for the deliverance of God's people; that time will come, though it seem to tarry; and, when it comes, it will appear to have been the best time, and therefore we ought to wait for it (Hab 2:3), and not think two full years too long to continue waiting.

2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well-favored kine and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

The means of Joseph's enlargement, which were Pharaoh's dreams, here related. If we were to look upon them as ordinary dreams, we might observe from them the follies and absurdities of a roving working fancy, how it represents to itself tame cows as beasts of prey (nay, more ravenous than any, eating up those

of their own kind), and ears of corn as devouring one another. Surely in the multitude of dreams, nay, even in one dream, there are divers vanities, Ec 5:7. Now that God no longer speaks to us in that way, I think it is no matter how little we either heed them or tell them. Foolish dreams related can make no better than foolish talk. But these dreams which Pharaoh dreamed carried their own evidence with them that they were sent of God; and therefore, when he awoke, his spirit was troubled, Ge 41:8. It cannot but put us into a concern to receive any extraordinary message from heaven, because we are conscious to ourselves that we have no reason to expect any good tidings thence. His magicians were puzzled, the rules of their art failed them: these dreams of Pharaoh, it seems, did not fall within the compass of them, so that they could not offer at the interpretation of them. This was to make Joseph's performance by the Spirit of God the more admirable. Human reason, prudence, and foresight, must be nonplussed, that divine revelation may appear the more glorious in the contrivance of our redemption, 1Co 2:13, 14. Compare with this story, Da 2:27, 4:7, 5:8. Joseph's own dreams were the occasion of his troubles, and

now Pharaoh's dreams were the occasion of his enlargement.

3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favored and lean-fleshed; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

4 And the ill-favored and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, *it was* a dream.

8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there was* none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

The recommending of Joseph to Pharaoh for an interpreter. The chief butler did it more in compliment to Pharaoh, to oblige him, than in gratitude to Joseph, or in compassion for his case. He makes a fair confession (Ge 41:9): "I remember my faults this day, in forgetting Joseph."

Note, It is best to remember our duty, and to do it in its time; but, if we have neglected that, it is next best to remember our faults, and repent of them, and do our duty at last; better late than never. Some think he means his faults against

Pharaoh, for which he was imprisoned; and then he would insinuate that, though Pharaoh had forgiven him, he had not forgiven himself. The story he had to tell was, in short, That there was an obscure young man in the king's prison, who had very properly interpreted his dream, and the chief baker's (the event corresponding in each with the interpretation), and that he would recommend him to the king his master for an interpreter.

Note, God's time for the enlargement of his people will appear at last to be the fittest time. If the chief butler had at first used his interest for Joseph's enlargement, and had obtained it, it is probable that upon his release he would have gone back to the land of the Hebrews again, which he spoke of so feelingly (Ge 40:15), and then he would neither have been so blessed himself, nor such a blessing to his family, as afterwards he proved. But staying two years longer, and coming out now upon this occasion, at last, to interpret the king's dreams, way was made for his very great preferment. Those that patiently wait for God shall be paid for their waiting, not only principal but interest, La 3:26.

10 Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:

11 and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each
man according to the interpretation of his dream.
12 And *there was* there with us a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the
captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our
dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.
13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he
restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.
14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily
out of the dungeon: and he shaved *himself,* and changed his raiment,
and came in unto Pharaoh.

The introducing of Joseph to Pharaoh. The king's business requires haste. Joseph is sent for out of the dungeon with all speed; Pharaoh's order discharged him both from his imprisonment and from his servitude, and made him a candidate for some of the highest trusts at court. The king can scarcely allow him time, but that decency required it, to shave himself, and to change his raiment, Ge 41:14. It is done with all possible expedition, and Joseph is brought in, perhaps almost as much surprised as Peter was, Ac 12:9. So suddenly is his captivity brought back that he is as one that dreams, Ps 126:1. Pharaoh immediately, without enquiring who or whence he was, tells him his business, that he expected he should interpret his dream, Ge 41:15. To which, Joseph makes him a very modest decent reply, (Ge 41:16), in which,

(1.) He gives honour to God. "It is not in me, God must give it." Note, Great gifts appear most graceful and illustrious when those that have them use them humbly, and take not the praise of them to themselves, but give it to God. To such God gives more grace.

(2.) He shows respect to Pharaoh, and hearty good-will to him and his government, in supposing that the interpretation would be an answer of peace. Note, Those that consult God's oracles may expect an answer of peace. If Joseph be made the interpreter, hope the best.

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there is* none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, *that* thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *it is* not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, in my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

Pharaoh relates his dream. He dreamt that he stood upon the bank of the river Nile, and saw the kine, both the fat ones and the lean ones, come out of the river. For the kingdom of Egypt had no rain, as appears, Zec 14:18, but the plenty of the year depended upon the overflowing of the river, and it was about one certain time of the year that it overflowed. If it rose to fifteen or sixteen cubits, there was plenty; if to twelve or thirteen only, or under,

there was scarcity. See how many ways Providence has of dispensing its gifts; yet, whatever the second causes are, our dependence is still the same upon the first Cause, who makes every creature that to us that it is, be it rain or river.

18 and, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed
and well-favored; and they fed in a meadow:
19 and, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very
ill-favored and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of
Egypt for badness:
20 and the lean and the ill-favored kine did eat up the first seven fat
kine:
21 and when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they
had eaten them; but they *were* still ill-favored, as at the beginning.
So I awoke.
22 And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one
stalk, full and good:
23 and, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, *and* blasted with the east
wind, sprung up after them:
24 and the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told *this* unto
the magicians; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me.
25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh *is* one: God
hath showed Pharaoh what he *is* about to do.
26 The seven good kine *are* seven years; and the seven good ears *are*
seven years: the dream *is* one.
27 And the seven thin and ill-favored kine that came up after them *are*
seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall
be seven years of famine.
28 This *is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God *is*
about to do he showeth unto Pharaoh.
29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the
land of Egypt:

Joseph interprets his dream, and tells him that it signified seven years of plenty now

immediately to ensue, which should be succeeded by as many years of famine. Observe,

1 The two dreams signified the same thing, but the repetition was to denote the certainty, the nearness, and the importance, of the event, Ge 41:32. Thus God has often shown the immutability of his counsel by two immutable things, Heb 6:17, 18. The covenant is sealed with two sacraments; and in the one of them there are both bread and wine, wherein the dream is one, and yet it is doubled, for the thing is certain.

2. Yet the two dreams had a distinct reference to the two things wherein we most experience plenty and scarcity, namely, grass and corn. The plenty and scarcity of grass for the cattle were signified by the fat kine and the lean ones; the plenty and scarcity of herb for the service of man by the full ears and the thin ones.

3. See what changes the comforts of this life are subject to. After great plenty may come great scarcity; how strong soever we may think our mountain stands, if God speak the word, it will soon be moved. We cannot be sure that to-

morrow shall be as this day, next year as this, and much more abundant, Isa 56:12. We must learn how to want, as well as how to abound.

4. See the goodness of God in sending the seven years of plenty before those of famine, that provision might be made accordingly. Thus he sets the one over-against the other, Ec 7:14. With what wonderful wisdom has Providence, that great housekeeper, ordered the affairs of this numerous family from the beginning hitherto! Great variety of seasons there have been, and the produce of the earth is sometimes more and sometimes less; yet, take one time with another, what was miraculous concerning the manna is ordinarily verified in the common course of Providence, He that gathers much has nothing over, and he that gathers little has no lack, Ex 16:18.

5. See the perishing nature of our worldly enjoyments. The great increase of the years of plenty was quite lost and swallowed up in the years of famine; and the overplus of it, which seemed very much, yet did but just serve to keep men alive, Ge 41:29-31. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them, 1Co 6:13. There is

bread which endures to everlasting life, which shall not be forgotten, and which it is worth while to labour for, Joh 6:27. Those that make the things of this world their good things will find but little pleasure in remembering that they have received them, Lu 16:25.

6. Observe, God revealed this beforehand to Pharaoh, who, as king of Egypt, was to be the father of his country, and to make prudent provision for them. Magistrates are called shepherds, whose care it must be, not only to rule, but to feed.

30 and there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the
plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall
consume the land;
31 and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that
famine following; for it *shall be* very grievous.
32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; *it is* because
the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to
pass.
33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and
set him over the land of Egypt.

The good advice that Joseph gave to Pharaoh, which was,

1. That in the years of plenty he should lay up for the years of famine, buy up corn when it was cheap, that he might both enrich himself and supply the country when it would be dear and scarce. Note, Fair warning should always

be followed with good counsel. Therefore the prudent man foresees the evil, that he may hide himself. God has in his word told us of a day of trial and exigence before us, when we shall need all the grace we can get, and all little enough, "Now, therefore, provide accordingly." Note, further, Times of gathering must be diligently improved, because there will come a time of spending. Let us go to the ant, and learn of her this wisdom, Pr 6:6-8.

2. Because that which is everybody's work commonly proves nobody's work, he advises Pharaoh to appoint officers who should make it their business, and to select some one person to preside in the affair, Ge 41:33. Probably, if Joseph had not advised this, it would not have been done; Pharaoh's counsellors could no more improve the dream than his magicians interpret it; therefore it is said of him (Ps 105:22) that he taught the senators wisdom. Hence we may justly infer with Solomon (Ec 4:13), Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king.

34 Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

Joseph Made Ruler over Egypt

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this *is,* a man in whom the Spirit of God *is?*

The great honour that Pharaoh did to Joseph. 1. He gave him an honourable testimony: He is a man in whom the Spirit of God is; and this puts a great excellency upon any man; such men ought to be valued, Ge 41:38. He is a nonsuch for prudence: There is none so discreet and wise as thou art, Ge 41:39. Now he is abundantly recompensed for the disgrace that had been done him; and his righteousness is as the morning-light, Ps 37:6.

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, *there is* none so discreet and wise as thou *art:*

40 thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

He put him into an honourable office; not only employed him to buy up corn, but made him prime-minister of state, comptroller of the household--Thou shalt be over my house, chief justice of the kingdom--according to thy word shall all my people be ruled, or armed, as some read it, and then it bespeaks him general of the forces. Him commission was very ample: I

have set thee over all the land of Egypt (Ge 41:41); without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot (Ge 41:44); all the affairs of the kingdom must pass through his hand. Nay (Ge 41:40), only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer those, and the happiness of people to have those preferred, to places of power and trust, in whom the Spirit of God is. It is probable that there were those about the court who opposed Joseph's preferment, which occasioned Pharaoh so often to repeat the grant, and with that solemn sanction (Ge 41:44), I am Pharaoh. When the proposal was made that there should be a corn-master-general nominated, it is said (Ge 41:37), Pharaoh's servants were all pleased with the proposal, each hoping for the place; but when Pharaoh said to them, "Joseph shall be the man," we do not read that they made him any answer, being uneasy at it, and acquiescing only because they could not help it. Joseph had enemies, no doubt, archers that shot at him, and hated him (Ge 49:23), as Daniel, Da 6:4.

41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

He put upon him all the marks of honour imaginable, to recommend him to the esteem and respect of the people as the king's favourite, and one whom he delighted to honour.

(1.) He gave him his own ring, as a ratification of his commission, and in token of peculiar favour; or it was like delivering him the great seal.

(2.) He put fine clothes upon him, instead of his prison garments. For those that are in kings' palaces must wear soft clothing; he that, in the morning, was dragging his fetters of iron, before night was adorned with a chain of gold.

(3.) He made him ride in the second chariot to his own, and ordered all to do homage to him: "Bow the knee, as to Pharaoh himself."

(4.) He gave him a new name, to show his authority over him, and yet such a name as bespoke the value he had for him, Zaphnath-paaneah--A revealer of secrets.

(5.) He married him honourably to a prince's daughter. Where God had been liberal in giving

wisdom and other merits, Pharaoh was not sparing in conferring honours. Now this preferment of Joseph was,

[1.] An abundant recompense for his innocent and patient suffering, a lasting instance of the equity and goodness of Providence, and an encouragement to all good people to trust in a good God.

[2.] It was typical of the exaltation of Christ, that great revealer of secrets (Joh 1:18), or, as some translate Joseph's new name, the Savior of the world. The brightest glories of the upper world are put upon him, the highest trust is lodged in his hand, and all power is given to him both in heaven and earth. He is gatherer, keeper, and disposer, of all the stores of divine grace, and chief ruler of the kingdom of God among men. The work of ministers is to cry before him, "Bow the knee; kiss the Son."

43 and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him *ruler* over all the land of Egypt.

44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I *am* Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

46 And Joseph *was* thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.
47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.
48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which *was* round about every city, laid he up in the same.

The performance of Joseph's trust. He was found faithful to it, as a steward ought to be. 1. He was diligent in laying up, while the plenty lasted, Ge 41:48, 49. He that thus gathers is a wise son.

49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for *it was* without number.
50 And unto Joseph were born two sons, before the years of famine came: which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.
51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh [forgetting]: For God, *said he,* hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

The building of Joseph's family in the birth of two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, Ge 41:50-52. In the names he gave them, he owned the divine Providence giving this happy turn to his affairs,

1. He was made to forget his misery, Job 11:16. We should bear our afflictions when they are present as those that know not but Providence may so outweigh them by after-comforts as that

we may even forget them when they are past. But could he be so unnatural as to forget all his father's house? He means the unkindness he received from his brethren, or perhaps the wealth and honour he expected from his father, with the birthright. The robes he now wore made him forget the coat of divers colours which he wore in his father's house.

2. He was made fruitful in the land of his affliction. It had been the land of his affliction, and in some sense it was still so, for it was not Canaan, the land of promise. His distance from his father was still his affliction. Note, Light is sometimes sown for the righteous in a barren and unlikely soil; and yet if God sow it, and water it, it will come up again. The afflictions of the saints promote their fruitfulness. Ephraim signifies fruitfulness, and Manasseh forgetfulness, for these two often go together; when Jeshurun waxed fat, he forgot God his Maker.

52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim [fruitful]: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

The accomplishment of Joseph's predictions. Pharaoh had great confidence in the truth of them, perhaps finding in his own mind, beyond what another person could, an exact correspondence between them and his dreams, as between the key and the lock; and the event showed that he was not deceived. The seven plenteous years came (Ge 41:47), and, at length, they were ended, Ge 41:54. Note, We ought to foresee the approaching period of the days both of our prosperity and of our opportunity, and therefore must not be secure in the enjoyment of our prosperity nor slothful in the improvement of our opportunity; years of plenty will end, therefore, Whatever thy hand finds to do do it; and gather in gathering time. The morning cometh and also the night (Isa 21:12), the plenty and also the famine. The seven years of dearth began to come, Ge 41:54. See what changes of condition we are liable to in this world, and what need we have to be joyful in a day of prosperity and in a day of adversity to consider, Ec 7:14. This famine, it seems, was not only in Egypt, but in other lands, in all lands, that is, all the neighbouring countries; fruitful lands are soon turned into barrenness for the iniquity of those that dwell therein, Ps 107:34. It is here said that in the land

of Egypt there was bread, meaning probably, not only that which Joseph had bought up for the king, but that which private persons, by his example, and upon the public notice of this prediction, as well as by the rules of common prudence, had laid up.

55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

He was prudent and careful in giving out, when the famine came, and kept the markets low by furnishing them at reasonable rates out of his stores. The people in distress cried to Pharaoh, as that woman to the king of Israel (2Ki 6:26), Help, my lord, O king: he sent them to his treasurer, Go to Joseph. Thus God in the gospel directs those that apply to him for mercy and grace to go to the Lord Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells; and, What he saith to you, do. Joseph, no doubt, with wisdom and justice fixed the price of the corn he sold, so that Pharaoh, whose money had bought it up, might have a reasonable profit, and yet the country might not be oppressed, nor advantage taken of their prevailing necessity; while he that withholdest corn when it is dear, in hopes it will yet grow dearer, though people perish for want of it, has many a curse for so doing (and it is not a curse causeless), blessings shall be upon

the head of him that thus selleth it, Pr 11:26. And let the price be determined by that golden rule of justice, to do as we would be done by.

56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy *corn;* because that the famine was *so* sore in all lands.

Genesis -42

Joseph's Brethren Come to Egypt for Grain

1 Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?

The orders he gave them to go and buy corn in Egypt, Ge 42:1, 2. Observe,

1 The famine was grievous in the land of Canaan. It is observable that all the three patriarchs, to whom Canaan was the land of promise, met with famine in that land, which was not only to try their faith, whether they could trust God though he should slay them, though he should starve them, but to teach them to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly, Heb 11:14-16. We have need of something to wean us from this world, and make us long for a better.

2. Still, when there was famine in Canaan, there was corn in Egypt. Thus Providence orders it, that one place should be a succour and supply to another; for we are all brethren. The Egyptians, the seed of accursed Ham, have plenty, when God's blessed Israel want: thus God, in dispensing common favours, often crosses hands. Yet observe, The plenty Egypt now had was owing, under God, to Joseph's prudence and care: if his brethren had not sold him into Egypt, but respected him

according to his merits, who knows but he might have done the same thing for Jacob's family which now he had done for Pharaoh, and the Egyptians might then have come to them to buy corn? But those who drive away from among them wise and good men know not what they do.

3. Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt; he saw the corn that his neighbours had bought there and brought home. It is a spur to exertion to see where supplies are to be had, and to see others supplied. Shall others get food for their souls, and shall we starve while it is to be had?

4. He reproved his sons for delaying to provide corn for their families. Why do you look one upon another? Note, When we are in trouble and want, it is folly for us to stand looking upon one another, that is, to stand desponding and despairing, as if there were no hope, no help,--to stand disputing either which shall have the honour of going first or which shall have the safety of coming last,--to stand deliberating and debating what we shall do, and doing nothing,--to stand dreaming under a spirit of slumber, as if we had nothing to do, and to stand delaying, as if we had time at command. Let it never be said, "We left that to be done to-morrow which we could as well have done to-day."

5. He quickened them to go to Egypt: Get you down thither. Masters of families must not only pray for daily bread for their families, and food convenient, but must lay out themselves with care and industry to provide it.

2 And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get
you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live,
and not die.
3 And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.
4 But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren;
for he said, lest peradventure mischief befall him.
5 And the sons of Israel came to buy *corn* among those that came: for
the famine was in the land of Canaan.

Their obedience to these orders, Ge 42:3. They went down to buy corn; they did not send their servants, but very prudently went themselves, to lay out their own money. Let none think themselves too great nor too good to take pains. Masters of families should see with their own eyes, and take heed of leaving too much to servants. Only Benjamin went not with them, for he was his father's darling. To Egypt they came, among others, and, having a considerable cargo of corn to buy, they were brought before Joseph himself, who probably expected they would come; and, according to the laws of courtesy, they bowed down themselves before him, Ge 42:6. Now their empty sheaves did obeisance to his full one. Compare this with Isa 60:14, Re 3:9.

6 And Joseph *was* the governor over the land, and he *it was* that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and Bowed down themselves before him *with* their faces to the earth.

7 And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, whence come ye?And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.

We may well wonder that Joseph, during the twenty years that he had now been in Egypt, especially during the last seven years that he had been in power there, never sent to his father to acquaint him with his circumstances; nay, it is strange that he who so often went throughout all the land of Egypt (Ge 41:45, 46) never made an excursion to Canaan, to visit his aged father, when he was in the borders of Egypt, that lay next to Canaan. Perhaps it would not have been above three or four days' journey for him in his chariot. It is a probable conjecture that his whole management of himself in this affair was by special direction from Heaven, that the purpose of God concerning Jacob and his family might be accomplished. When Joseph's brethren came, he knew them by many a satisfactory token, but they knew not him, little thinking to find him there, Ge 42:8. He remembered the dreams (Ge 42:9), but they had forgotten them. The laying up of God's oracles in our hearts will be of excellent use to us in all our conduct. Joseph had an eye to his dreams, which he knew to be divine, in his

carriage towards his brethren, and aimed at the accomplishment of them and the bringing of his brethren to repentance for their former sins; and both these points were gained.

8 And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.

He showed himself very rigorous and harsh with them. The very manner of his speaking, considering the post he was in, was enough to frighten them; for he spoke roughly to them, Ge 42:7. He charged them with bad designs against the government (Ge 42:9), treated them as dangerous persons, saying, You are spies, and protesting by the life of Pharaoh that they were so, Ge 42:16. Some make this an oath, others make it no more than a vehement asseveration, like that, as thy soul liveth; however it was more than yea, yea, and nay, nay, and therefore came of evil.

Note, Bad words are soon learned by converse with those that use them, but not so soon unlearned. Joseph, by being much at court, got the courtier's oath, By the life of Pharaoh, perhaps designing hereby to confirm his brethren in their belief that he was an Egyptian, and not an Israelite. They knew this was not the language of a son of Abraham. When Peter would prove himself no disciple of Christ, he cursed and swore. Now why was Joseph thus hard upon his brethren? We may be sure it was not from a spirit of revenge, that he might now trample upon those who had formerly trampled upon him; he was not a man of that temper. But,

1. It was to enrich his own dreams, and complete the accomplishment of them.

2. It was to bring them to repentance.

3. It was to get out of them an account of the state of their family, which he longed to know: they would have discovered him if he had asked as a friend, therefore he asks as a judge. Not seeing his brother Benjamin with them, perhaps he began to suspect that they had made away with him too, and therefore

gives them occasion to speak of their father and brother. Note, God in his providence sometimes seems harsh with those he loves, and speaks roughly to those for whom yet he has great mercy in store.

9 And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye *are* spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

10 And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come.

They, hereupon, were very submissive. They spoke to him with all the respect imaginable: Nay, my lord (Ge 42:10)--a great change since they said, Behold, this dreamer comes. They very modestly deny the charge: We are no spies. They tell him their business, that they came to buy food, a justifiable errand, and the same that many strangers came to Egypt upon at this time. They undertake to give a particular account of themselves and their family (Ge 42:13), and this was what they wanted.

11 We *are* all one man's sons; we *are* true *men;* thy servants are no spies.

12 And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

13 And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest *is* this day with our father, and one *is* not.

14 And Joseph said unto them, That *is it* that I spake unto you, saying, Ye *are* spies:

15 hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

16 Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any* truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye *are* spies.

17 And he put them all together into ward three days.

He clapped them all up in prison for three days, Ge 42:17. Thus God deals with the souls he designs for special comfort and honour; he first humbles them, and terrifies them, and brings them under a spirit of bondage, and then binds up their wounds by the Spirit of adoption.

18 And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; *for* I fear God:

He concluded with them, at last, that one of them should be left as a hostage, and the rest should go home and fetch Benjamin. It was a very encouraging word he said to them (Ge 42:18): I fear God; as if he had said, "You may assure yourselves I will do you no wrong; I dare not, for I know that, high as I am, there is one higher than I." Note, With those that fear God we have reason to expect fair dealing. The fear of God will be a check upon those that are in power, to restrain them from abusing their power to oppression and tyranny. Those that have no one else to stand in awe of ought to stand in awe of their own consciences. See Ne 5:15, So did not I, because of the fear of God.

19 if ye *be* true *men,* let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:

20 but bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

21 And they said one to another. We *are* verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

They remembered with regret the barbarous cruelty wherewith they persecuted him: We are verily guilty concerning our brother. We do not read that they said this during their three days' imprisonment; but now, when the matter had come to some issue and they saw themselves still embarrassed, now they began to relent. Perhaps Joseph's mention of the fear of God (Ge 42:18) put them upon consideration and extorted this reflection. Now see here,

(1.) The office of conscience; it is a remembrancer, to bring to mind things long since said and done, to show us wherein we have erred, though it was long ago, as the reflection here mentioned was above twenty years after the sin was committed. As time will not wear out the guilt of sin, so it will not blot out the records of conscience; when the guilt of this sin of Joseph's brethren was fresh they made light of it, and sat

down to eat bread; but now, long afterwards, their consciences reminded them of it.

(2.) The benefit of affliction; they often prove the happy and effectual means of awakening conscience, and bringing sin to our remembrance, Job 13:26.

(3.) The evil of guilt concerning our brethren; of all their sins, it was this that conscience now reproached them for. Whenever we think we have wrong done us, we ought to remember the wrong we have done to others, Ec 7:21, 22.

22 And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

Reuben alone remembered, with comfort, that he had been an advocate for his brother, and had done what he could to prevent the mischief they did him (Ge 42:22): Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child? Note,

(1.) It is an aggravation of any sin that it was committed against admonitions.

(2.) When we come to share with others in their calamities, it will be a comfort to us if we have the testimony of our consciences for us that we did not share with them in their iniquities, but, in our places, witnessed against them. This shall be our rejoicing in the day of evil, and shall take out the sting.

23 And they knew not that Joseph understood *them;* for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

24 And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Joseph's tenderness towards them upon this occasion. He retired from them to weep, Ge 42:24. Though his reason directed that he should still carry himself as a stranger to them, because they were not as yet humbled enough, yet natural affection could not but work, for he was a man of a tender spirit. This represents the tender mercies of our God towards

repenting sinners. See Jer 31:20, Since I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still. See Jdg 10:16.

The imprisonment of Simeon, Ge 42:24. He chose him for the hostage probably because he remembered him to have been his most bitter enemy, or because he observed him now to be least humbled and concerned; he bound him before their eyes to affect them all; or perhaps it is intimated that, though he bound him with some severity before them, yet afterwards, when they were gone, he took off his bonds.

25 Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

26 And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence.

27 And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth.

28 And he said unto his brethren, my money is restored; and, lo, *it is* even in my sack: and their heart failed *them,* and they were afraid, saying one to another, what *is* this that God hath done unto us?

The dismission of the rest of them. They came for corn, and corn they had; and not only so, but every man had his money restored in his sack's mouth. Thus Christ, our Joseph, gives out supplies without money and without price. Therefore the poor are invited to buy, Re 3:17, 18. This put them into great consternation (Ge 42:28): Their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done to us?

1. It was really a merciful event; for I hope they had no wrong done to them when they had their money given them back, but a kindness; yet they were thus terrified by it. Note,

(1.) Guilty consciences are apt to take good providences in a bad sense, and to put wrong constructions even upon those things that make for them. They flee when none pursues.

(2.) Wealth sometimes brings as much care along with it as want does, and more too. If they had been robbed of their

money, they could not have been worse frightened than they were now when they found their money in their sacks. Thus he whose ground brought forth plentifully said, What shall I do? Lu 12:17.

2. Yet in their circumstances it was very amazing. They knew that the Egyptians abhorred a Hebrew (Ge 43:32), and therefore, since they could not expect to receive any kindness from them, they concluded that this was done with a design to pick a quarrel with them, and the rather because the man, the lord of the land, had charged them as spies. Their own consciences also were awake, and their sins set in order before them; and this put them into confusion. Note,

(1.) When men's spirits are sinking everything helps to sink them.

(2.) When the events of Providence concerning us are surprising it is good to enquire what it is that God has done and is doing with us, and to consider the operation of his hands.

29 And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan,
and told him all that befell unto them; saying,
30 The man, who *is* the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took
us for spies of the country.
31 And we said unto him, we *are* true *men;* we are no spies:
32 we *be* twelve brethren, sons of our father; one *is* not, and the
youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan.
33 And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, hereby shall I
know that ye *are* true *men;* leave one of your brethren *here* with me,
and take *food for* the famine of your households, and be gone:
34 and bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye
are no spies, but *that* ye *are* true *men: so* will I deliver you your brother,
and ye shall traffic in the land.
35 And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every
man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and
their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

Here is, 1 The report which Jacob's sons made to their father of the great distress they had been in in Egypt; how they had

been suspected, and threatened, and obliged to leave Simeon a prisoner there, till they should bring Benjamin with them thither. Who would have thought of this when they left home? When we go abroad we should consider how many sad accidents, that we little think of, may befall us before we return home. We know not what a day may bring forth; we ought therefore to be always ready for the worst.

2 The deep impression this made upon the good man. The very bundles of money which Joseph returned, in kindness to his father, frightened him (Ge 42:35); for he concluded it was done with some mischievous design, or perhaps suspected his own sons to have committed some offence, and so to have run themselves into a præmunire--a penalty, which is intimated in what he says (Ge 42:36): Me have you bereaved. He seems to lay the fault upon them; knowing their characters, he feared they had provoked the Egyptians, and perhaps forcibly, or fraudulently, brought home their money. Jacob is here much out of temper.

(1.) He has very melancholy apprehensions concerning the present state of his family: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; whereas Joseph was in honour and Simeon in the way to it. Note, We often perplex ourselves with our own mistakes, even in matters of fact. True griefs may arise from false intelligence and suppositions, 2Sa 13:31. Jacob gives up Joseph for gone, and Simeon and Benjamin as being in danger; and he concludes, All these things are against me. It proved otherwise, that all these were for him, were working together for his good and the good of his family: yet here he thinks them all against him. Note, Through our ignorance and mistake, and the weakness of our faith, we often apprehend that to be against us which is really for us. We are afflicted in body, estate, name, and relations; and we think all these things are against us, whereas these are really working for us the weight of glory.

(2.) He is at present resolved that Benjamin shall not go down. Reuben will undertake to bring him back in safety (Ge 42:37),

not so much as putting in, If the Lord will, nor expecting the common disasters of travellers; but he foolishly bids Jacob slay his two sons (which, it is likely, he was very proud of) if he brought him not back; as if the death of two grandsons could satisfy Jacob for the death of a son. No, Jacob's present thoughts are, My son shall not go down with you. He plainly intimates a distrust of them, remembering that he never saw Joseph since he had been with them; therefore, "Benjamin shall not go with you, by the way in which you go, for you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Note, It is bad with a family when children conduct themselves so ill that their parents know not how to trust them.

36 And Jacob their father said unto them, me have ye bereaved *of my children:* Joseph is not, and Simeon *is* not, and ye will take Benjamin away*:* all these things are against me.

37 And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

38 And he said, my son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Genesis -43

Joseph's Brethren Return with Benjamin

1 And the famine was sore in the land.

2 And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

3 And Judah spake unto him, saying, the man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.

Here, 1. Jacob urges his sons to go and buy more corn in Egypt, Ge 43:1,2 The famine continued; and the corn they had bought was all spent, for it is meat that perisheth. Jacob, as a good master of a family, is in care to provide for those of his own house food convenient; and shall not God provide for his children, for the household of faith? Jacob bids them go again and buy a little food; now, in time of scarcity, a little must suffice, for nature is content with a little.

2. Judah urges him to consent that Benjamin should go down with them, how much soever it went against his feelings and previous determination.

Note, It is not at all inconsistent with the honour and duty which children owe their parents humbly and modestly to advise them, and, as occasion is, to reason with them. Plead with your mother, plead, ho 2:2.

(1.) He insists upon the absolute necessity they were under of bringing Benjamin with them, of which he, who was a witness to all that had passed in Egypt, was a more competent judge than Jacob could be. Joseph's protestation (Ge 43:3) may be alluded to show upon what terms we must draw nigh to God; unless we bring Christ along with us in the arms of our faith, we cannot see the face of God with comfort.

(2.) He engages to take all possible care of him, and to do his utmost for his safety, Ge 43:8, 9. Judah's conscience had lately smitten him for what he had done a great while ago against Joseph (Ge 42:21); and, as an evidence of the truth of his repentance, he is ready to undertake, as far as a man could do it, for Benjamin's security. He will not only not wrong him, but will do all he can to protect him. This is restitution, as far as the case will admit; when he knew not how he could restore Joseph, he would make some amends for the irreparable injury he had done him by doubling his care concerning Benjamin.

4 If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee
food:
5 but if thou wilt not send *him*, we will not go down: for the man said
unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you.
6 And Israel said, wherefore dealt ye *so* ill with me, *as* to tell the man
whether ye had yet a brother?
7 And they said, the man asked us straitly of our state, and of our
kindred, saying, *is* your father yet alive?Have ye *another* brother?
And we told him according to the tenor of these words: Could we
certainly know that he would say, bring your brother down?
8 And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we
will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we, and thou,
and also our little ones.
9 I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I
bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear
the blame for ever:
10 for except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second
time.
11 And their father Israel said unto them, if *it must be* so now, do this;
take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down
the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh,
nuts and almonds:

Jacob's persuasibleness. He would be ruled by reason, though they were his inferiors that urged it. He saw the necessity of the case; and, since there was no remedy, he consented to yield to the necessity (Ge 43:11): "If it must be so now, take your brother. If no corn can be had but upon those terms, we may as well expose him to the perils of the journey as suffer ourselves and families, and Benjamin amongst the rest, to perish for want of bread." Skin for skin, and all that a man has, even a Benjamin, the dearest of all, will he give for his life. No death so dreadful as that by famine, La 4:9. Jacob had said (Ge 42:38), My son shall not go down; but now he is over-persuaded to consent. Note, It is no fault, but our wisdom and duty, to alter our purposes and resolutions when there is a good reason for our so doing. Constancy is a virtue, but obstinacy is not. It is God's prerogative not to repent, and to make unchangeable resolves.

12 and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand; peradventure it *was* an oversight.

Jacob's prudence and justice, which appeared in three things:--

1. He sent back the money which they had found in the sacks' mouths, with this discreet construction of it, Peradventure it was an oversight. Note, Honesty obliges us to make restitution, not only of that which comes to us by our own fault, but of that which comes to us by the mistakes of others. Though we get it by oversight, if we keep it when the oversight is discovered, it is kept by deceit. In the stating of accounts, errors must be excepted, even those that make for us as well as those that make against us. Jacob's words furnish us with a favourable construction to put upon that which we are tempted to resent as an injury and affront; pass it by, and say, Peradventure it was an oversight.

2. He sent double money, as much again as they took the time before, upon supposition that the price of corn might have risen,--or that if it should be insisted upon they might pay a ransom for Simeon, or his prison-fees,--or to show a generous spirit, that they might be the more likely to find generous treatment with the man, the lord of the land. 3. He sent a present of such things as the land afforded, and as were scarce in Egypt--balm and honey, &c. (Ge 43:11), the commodities that Canaan exported, Ge 37:25. Note,

(1.) Providence dispenses its gifts variously. Some countries produce one commodity, others another, that commerce may be preserved.

(2.) Honey and spice will never make up the want of bread-corn. The famine was sore in Canaan, and yet they had balm and myrrh, &c. We may live well enough upon plain food without dainties; but we cannot live upon dainties without

plain food. Let us thank God that that which is most needful and useful is generally most cheap and common.

(3.) A gift in secret pacifies wrath, Pr 21:14. Jacob's sons were unjustly accused as spies, yet Jacob was willing to be at the expense of a present, to pacify the accuser. Sometimes we must not think it too much to buy peace even where we may justly demand it, and insist upon it as our right.

13 Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man:
14 and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved *of my children,* I am bereaved.

Jacob's piety appearing in his prayer: God Almighty give you mercy before the man! Ge 43:14. Jacob had formerly turned an angry brother into a kind one with a present and a prayer; and here he betakes himself to the same tried method, and it sped well. Note, Those that would find mercy with men must seek it of God, who has all hearts in his hands, and turns them as he pleases.

Jacob's patience. He concludes all with this: "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved; If I must part with them thus one after another, I must acquiesce, and say, The will of the Lord be done." Note, It is our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to the sorest afflictions, and make the best of them; for there is nothing got by striving with our Maker, 2Sa 15:25,26.

15 And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

Jacob's sons, having got leave to take Benjamin with them, were observant of the orders their father had given them, and went down the second time into Egypt to buy corn. If we should ever know what a famine of the word means, let us not think it much to travel as far for spiritual food as they did for corporal food. Now here we have an account of what passed between them and Joseph's steward, who, some conjecture, was in the secret, and knew them to be Joseph's

brethren, and helped to humour the thing; I rather think not, because no man was permitted to be present when Joseph afterwards made himself known to them, Ge 45:1. Observe, 1. Joseph's steward has orders from his master (who was busy selling corn, and receiving money) to take them to his house, and make ready for their entertainment. Though Joseph saw Benjamin there, he would not leave his work at working-time, nor trust another with it. Note, Business must take place of civility in its season. Our needful employments must not be neglected, no, not to pay respect to our friends.

16 And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring *these* men home, and slay, and make ready; for *these* men shall dine with me at noon.

17 And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

18 And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

Even this frightened them: They were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house, Ge 43:18. The just challenges of their own consciences, and Joseph's violent suspicions of them, forbade them to expect any favour, and suggested to them that this was done with a bad design upon them. Note, Those that are guilty and timorous are apt to make the worst of everything. Now they thought they should be reckoned with about the money in the sacks' mouths, and should be charged as cheats, and men not fit to be dealt with, who had taken advantage of the hurry of the market to carry off their corn unpaid for. They therefore laid the case before the steward, that he, being apprized of it, might stand between them and danger; and, as a substantial proof of their honesty, before they were charged with taking back their money they produced it. Note, Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, and will clear themselves as the light of the morning.

19 And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house,

20 and said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

21 and it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our
sacks, and, behold, *every* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack,
our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our
hand.
22 And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food:
we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.
23 And he said, Peace *be* to you, fear not: your God, and the God of
your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your
money. And he brought Simeon out unto them.

The steward encouraged them (Ge 43:23): Peace be to you, fear not; though he knew not what his master drove at, yet he was aware these were men whom he meant no harm to, while he thus amused them; and therefore he directs them to look at the divine Providence in the return of their money: Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks. Observe,

(1.) Hereby he shows that he had no suspicion at all of dishonesty in them: for of what we get by deceit we cannot say, "God gives it to us."

(2.) Hereby he silences their further enquiry about it. "Ask not how it came thither; Providence brought it to you, and let that satisfy you."

(3.) It appears by what he said that, by his good master's instructions, he was brought to the knowledge of the true God, the God of the Hebrews. It may justly be expected that those who are servants in religious families should take all fit occasions to speak of God and his providence with reverence and seriousness.

(4.) He directs them to look up to God, and acknowledge his providence in the good bargain they had. We must own ourselves indebted to God, as our God and the God of our fathers (a God in covenant with us and them) for all our successes and advantages, and the kindnesses of our friends; for every creature is that to us, and no more, which God

makes it to be. The steward encouraged them, not only in words but in deeds; for he made very much of them till his master came, Ge 43:24.

24 And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender.

25 And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

The great respect that Joseph's brethren paid to him. When they brought him the present, they bowed themselves before him (Ge 43:26); and again, when they gave him an account of their father's health, they made obeisance, and called him, Thy servant our father, Ge 43:28. Thus were Joseph's dreams fulfilled more and more: and even the father, by the sons, bowed before him, according to the dream, Ge 37:10. Probably Jacob had directed them, if they had occasion to speak of him to the man, the lord of the land, to call him his servant.

27 And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is* your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? *Is* he yet alive?

28 And they answered, Thy servant our father *is* in good health, he *is* yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

29 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, *Is* this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

The great kindness that Joseph showed to them, while they little thought it was a brotherly kindness. Here is,

1. His kind enquiry concerning Jacob: Is he yet alive?--a very fit question to be asked concerning any, especially concerning old people; for we are dying daily: it is strange that we are yet alive. Jacob had said many years before, I will go to the grave to my son; but he is yet alive: we must not die when we will.

2 The kind notice he took of Benjamin, his own brother.

(1.) He put up a prayer for him: God be gracious unto thee, my son, Ge 43:29. Joseph's favour, though he was the lord of the land, would do him little good, unless God were gracious to him. Many seek the ruler's favour, but Joseph directs him to seek the favour of the ruler of rulers.

(2.) He shed some tears for him, Ge 43:30. His natural affection to his brother, his joy to see him, his concern at seeing him and the rest of them in distress for bread, and the remembrance of his own griefs since he last saw him, produced a great agitation in him, which perhaps was the more uneasy because he endeavoured to stifle and suppress it; but he was forced to retire into his closet, there to give vent to his feeling by tears. Note,

[1.] Tears of tenderness and affection are no disparagement at all, even to great and wise men.

[2.] Gracious weepers should not proclaim their tears. My soul shall weep in secret, says the prophet, Jer 13:17. Peter went out and wept bitterly. See Mt 26:75.

30 And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there.

31 And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, set on bread.

His kind entertainment of them all. When his weeping had subsided so that he could refrain himself, he sat down to dinner with them, treated them nobly, and yet contrived everything to amuse them.

(1.) He ordered three tables to be spread, one for his brethren, another for the Egyptians that dined with him (for so different were their customs that they did not care to eat together),

another for himself, who durst not own himself a Hebrew, and yet would not sit with the Egyptians. See here an instance,

[1.] Of hospitality and good house-keeping, which are very commendable, according as the ability is.

[2.] Of compliance with people's humours, even whimsical ones, as bishop Patrick calls this of the Egyptians not eating with the Hebrews. Though Joseph was the lord of the land, and orders were given that all people should obey him, yet he would not force the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews, against their minds, but let them enjoy their humours. Spirits truly generous hate to impose.

[3.] Of the early distance between Jews and Gentiles; one table would not hold them.

(2.) He placed his brethren according to their seniority (Ge 43:33), as if he could certainly divine. Some think they placed themselves so, according to their custom; but, if so, I see not why such particular notice is taken of it, especially as a thing they marvelled at.

(3.) He gave them a very plentiful entertainment, sent messes to them from his own table, Ge 43:34. This was the more generous in him, and the more obliging to them, because of the present scarcity of provisions. In a day of famine, it is enough to be fed; but here they were feasted. Perhaps they had not had such a good dinner for many months. It is said, They drank and were merry; their cares and fears were now over, and they ate their bread with joy, concluding they were now upon good terms with the man, the lord of the land. If God accept our works, our present, we have reason to be cheerful. Yet when we sit, as they here did, to eat with a ruler, we should consider what is before us, and not indulge our appetite, nor be desirous of dainties, Pr 23:1-3. Joseph gave them to understand that Benjamin was his favourite; for his

mess was five times as much as any of theirs, not as if he would have him eat so much more than the rest, for then he must eat more than would do him good (and it is no act of friendship, but rather an injury and unkindness, to press any either to eat or drink to excess), but thus he would testify his particular respect for him, that he might try whether his brethren would envy Benjamin his larger messes, as formerly they had envied himself his finer coat. And it must be our rule, in such cases, to be content with what we have, and not to grieve at what others have.

32 And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

33 And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marveled one at another.

34 And he took *and sent* messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

Genesis -44

The Missing Cup

1 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks *with* food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth.

Joseph heaps further kindnesses upon his brethren, fills their sacks, returns their money, and sends them away full of gladness; but he also exercises them with further trials. Our God thus humbles those whom he loves and loads with benefits. Joseph ordered his steward to put a fine silver cup which he had (and which, it is likely, was used at his table when they dined with him) into Benjamin's sack's mouth, that it might seem as if he had stolen it from the table, and put it

here himself, after his corn was delivered to him. If Benjamin had stolen it, it had been the basest piece of dishonesty and ingratitude that could be and if Joseph, by ordering it to be there, had designed really to take advantage against him, it had been in him most horrid cruelty and oppression; but it proved, in the issue, that there was no harm done, nor any designed, on either side.

2 And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

3 As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

4 *And* when they were gone out of the city, *and* not *yet* far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

5 *Is* not this *it* in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

How the pretended criminals were pursued and arrested, on suspicion of having stolen a silver cup. The steward charged them with ingratitude--rewarding evil for good; and with folly, in taking away a cup of daily use, and which therefore would soon be missed, and diligent search made for it; for so it may be read: Is not this it in which my lord drinketh (as having a particular fondness for it), and for which he would search thoroughly? Ge 44:5. Or, "By which, leaving it carelessly at your table, he would make trial whether you were honest men or no."

6 And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words.

7 And they said unto him, wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing:

8 behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

How they pleaded for themselves. They solemnly protested their innocence, and detestation of so base a thing (Ge 44:7),

urged it as an instance of their honesty that they had brought their money back (Ge 44:8), and offered to submit to the severest punishment if they should be found guilty, Ge 44:9, 10.

9 With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen.

10 And he said, now also *let* it *be* according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

11 Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack.

12 And he searched, *and* began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

How the theft was fastened upon Benjamin. In his sack the cup was found to whom Joseph had been particularly kind. Benjamin, no doubt, was ready to deny, upon oath, the taking of the cup, and we may suppose him as little liable to suspicion as any of them; but it is in vain to confront such notorious evidence: the cup is found in his custody; they dare not arraign Joseph's justice, nor so much as suggest that perhaps he that had put their money in their sacks' mouths had put the cup there; but they throw themselves upon Joseph's mercy.

13 Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city.

14 And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he *was* yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

15 And Joseph said unto them, What deed *is* this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?

16 And Judah said, what shall we say unto my lord?What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we *are* my lord's servants, both we, and *he* also with whom the cup is found.

Here is their humble submission, Ge 44:16.

1. They acknowledge the righteousness of God: God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants, perhaps referring to the injury they had formerly done to Joseph, for which they thought God was now reckoning with them. Note, Even in those afflictions wherein we apprehend ourselves wronged by

men yet we must own that God is righteous, and finds out our iniquity.

2. They surrender themselves prisoners to Joseph: We are my lord's servants. Now Joseph's dreams were accomplished to the utmost. Their bowing so often, and doing homage, might be looked upon but as a compliment, and no more than what other strangers did; but the construction they themselves, in their pride, had put upon his dreams was, Shalt though have dominion over us? (Ge 37:8), and in this sense it is now at length fulfilled, they own themselves his vassals. Since they did invidiously so understand it, so it shall be fulfilled in them.

17 And he said, God forbid that I should do so: *but* the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Joseph, with an air of justice, gives sentence that Benjamin only should be kept in bondage, and the rest should be dismissed; for why should any suffer but the guilty? Perhaps Joseph intended hereby to try Benjamin's temper, whether he could bear such a hardship as this with the calmness and composure of mind that became a wise and good man: in short, whether he was indeed his own brother, in spirit as well as blood; for Joseph himself had been falsely accused, and had suffered hard things in consequence, and yet kept possession of his own soul. However, it is plain he intended hereby to try the affection of his brethren to Benjamin and to their father. If they had gone away contentedly, and left Benjamin in bonds, no doubt Joseph would soon have released and promoted him, and sent notice to Jacob, and would have left the rest of his brethren justly to suffer for their hard-heartedness; but they proved to be better affected to Benjamin than he feared. Note, We cannot judge what men are by what they have been formerly, nor what they will do by what they have done: age and experience may make men wiser and better. Those that had sold Joseph would not now abandon Benjamin. The worst may mend in time.

18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou *art* even as Pharaoh.

We have here a most ingenious and pathetic speech which Judah made to Joseph on Benjamin's behalf, to obtain his discharge from the sentence passed upon him. Perhaps Judah was a better friend to Benjamin than the rest were, and more solicitous to bring him off; or he thought himself under greater obligations to attempt it than the rest, because he had passed his word to his father for his safe return; or the rest chose him for their spokesman, because he was a man of better sense, and better spirit, and had a greater command of language than any of them. His address, as it is here recorded, is so very natural and so expressive of his present feelings that we cannot but suppose Moses, who wrote it so long after, to have written it under the special direction of him that made man's mouth.

A great deal of unaffected art, and unstudied unforced rhetoric, there is in this speech. 1. He addresses himself to Joseph with a great deal of respect and deference, calls him his lord, himself and his brethren his servants, begs his patient hearing, and ascribes sovereign authority to him: "Thou art even as Pharaoh, one whose favour we desire and whose wrath we dread as we do Pharaoh's." Religion does not destroy good manners, and it is prudence to speak respectfully to those at whose mercy we lie: titles of honour to those that are entitled to them are not flattering titles.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?
20 And we said unto my lord, we have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

He represented Benjamin as one well worthy of his compassionate consideration (Ge 44:20); he was a little one, compared with the rest of them; the youngest, not acquainted with the world, nor ever inured to hardship, having always been brought up tenderly with his father. It made the case the

more pitiable that he alone was left of his mother, and his brother was dead, namely, Joseph. Little did Judah think what a tender point he touched upon now. Judah knew that Joseph was sold, and therefore had reason enough to think that he was alive; at least he could not be sure that he was dead: but they had made their father believe he was dead; and now they had told that lie so long that they had forgotten the truth, and begun to believe the lie themselves.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22 And we said unto my lord, the lad cannot leave his father: for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

24 And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

25 And our father said, Go again, *and* buy us a little food.

26 And we said, we cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother *be* with us.

He urged it very closely that Joseph had himself constrained them to bring Benjamin with them, had expressed a desire to see him (Ge 44:21), and had forbidden them his presence unless they brought Benjamin with them (Ge 44:23, 26), all which intimated that he designed him some kindness; and must he be brought with so much difficulty to the preferment of a perpetual slavery? Was he not brought to Egypt, in obedience, purely in obedience, to the command of Joseph? And would he not show him some mercy? Some observe that Jacob's sons, in reasoning with their father, had said, We will not go down unless Benjamin go with us (Ge 43:5); but that when Judah comes to relate the story he expresses it more decently: "We cannot go down with any expectation to speed well." Indecent words spoken in haste to our superiors should be recalled and amended.

27 And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two *sons:*

28 and the one went out from me, and I said, surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since:
29 and if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

The great argument he insisted upon was the insupportable grief it would be to his aged father if Benjamin should be left behind in servitude: His father loveth him, Ge 44:20. This they had pleaded against Joseph's insisting on his coming down (Ge 44:22): "If he should leave his father, his father would die; much more if now he be left behind, never more to return to him." This the old man, of whom they spoke, had pleaded against his going down: If mischief befall him, you shall bring down my gray hairs, that crown of glory, with sorrow to the grave, Ge 44:29. This therefore Judah presses with a great deal of earnestness: "His life is bound up in the lad's life (Ge 44:30); when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will faint away, and die immediately (Ge 44:31), or will abandon himself to such a degree of sorrow as will, in a few days, make an end of him." And, lastly, Judah pleads that, for his part, he could not bear to see this: Let me not see the evil that shall come on my father, Ge 44:34.

Note, It is the duty of children to be very tender of their parents' comfort, and to be afraid of everything that may be an occasion of grief to them. Thus the love that descended first must again ascend, and something must be done towards a recompense for their care.

30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad *be* not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;
31 it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad *is* not *with us,* that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.
32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, if I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father forever.
33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

Judah, in honour to the justice of Joseph's sentence, and to show his sincerity in this plea, offers himself to become a bondsman instead of Benjamin, Ge 44:33. Thus the law would be satisfied; Joseph would be no loser (for we may suppose Judah a more able-bodied man than Benjamin, and fitter for service); and Jacob would better bear the loss of him than of Benjamin. Now, so far was he from grieving at his father's particular fondness for Benjamin, that he was himself willing to be a bondman to indulge it.

Now, had Joseph been, as Judah supposed him, an utter stranger to the family, yet even common humanity could not but be wrought upon by such powerful reasonings as these; for nothing could be said more moving, more tender; it was enough to melt a heart of stone. But to Joseph, who was nearer akin to Benjamin than Judah himself was, and who, at this time, felt a greater affection both for him and his aged father than Judah did, nothing could be more pleasingly nor more happily said. Neither Jacob nor Benjamin needed an intercessor with Joseph; for he himself loved them.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad *be* not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Upon the whole matter let us take notice,

1. How prudently Judah suppressed all mention of the crime that was charged upon Benjamin. Had he said anything by way of acknowledgment of it, he would have reflected on Benjamin's honesty, and seemed too forward to suspect that; had he said anything by way of denial of it, he would have reflected on Joseph's justice, and the sentence he had passed: therefore he wholly waives that head, and appeals to Joseph's pity. Compare with this that of Job, in humbling himself before God (Job 9:15), Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer; I would not argue, but petition; I would make supplication to my Judge.

2. What good reason dying Jacob had to say, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise (Ge 49:8), for he excelled

them all in boldness, wisdom, eloquence, and especially tenderness for their father and family.

3. Judah's faithful adherence to Benjamin, now in his distress, was recompensed long after by the constant adherence of the tribe of Benjamin to the tribe of Judah, when all the other ten tribes deserted it.

4. How fitly does the apostle, when he is discoursing of the mediation of Christ, observe, that our Lord sprang out of Judah (Heb 7:14); for, like his father Judah, he not only made intercession for the transgressors, but he became a surety for them, as it follows there (Ge 44:22), testifying therein a very tender concern both for his father and for his brethren.

Genesis -45

Joseph Makes Himself Known to His Brethren

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

Judah and his brethren were waiting for an answer, and could not but be amazed to discover, instead of the gravity of a judge, the natural affection of a father or brother.

Joseph ordered all his attendants to withdraw, Ge 45:1 The private conversations of friends are the most free. When Joseph would put on love he puts off state, and it was not fit his servants should be witnesses of this. Thus Christ graciously manifests himself and his loving-kindness to his people, out of the sight and hearing of the world.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

Tears were the preface or introduction to his discourse, Ge 45:2. He had dammed up this stream a great while, and with

much ado: but now it swelled so high that he could no longer contain, but he wept aloud, so that those whom he had forbidden to see him could not but hear him. These were tears of tenderness and strong affection, and with these he threw off that austerity with which he had hitherto carried himself towards his brethren; for he could bear it no longer. This represents the divine compassion towards returning penitents, as much as that of the father of the prodigal, Lu 15:20, Ho 14:8, 9.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I *am* Joseph; doth my father yet
live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were
troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you.
And they came near. And he said, I *am* Joseph your brother, whom
ye sold into Egypt.

He very abruptly (as one uneasy till it was out) tells them who he was: I am Joseph. They knew him only by his Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneah, his Hebrew name being lost and forgotten in Egypt; but now he teaches them to call him by that: I am Joseph; nay, that they might not suspect it was another of the same name, he explains himself (Ge 45:4): I am Joseph, your brother. This would both humble them yet more for their sin in selling him, and would encourage them to hope for kind treatment. Thus when Christ would convince Paul he said, I am Jesus; and when he would comfort his disciples he said, It is I, be not afraid. This word, at first, startled Joseph's brethren; they started back through fear, or at least stood still astonished; but Joseph called kindly and familiarly to them: Come near, I pray you. Thus when Christ manifests himself to his people he encourages them to draw near to him with a true heart. Perhaps, being about to speak of their selling him, he would not speak aloud, lest the Egyptians should overhear, and it should make the Hebrews to be yet more an abomination to them; therefore he would have them come near, that he might whisper with them, which, now that the tide of his passion was a little over, he was able to do, whereas at first he could not but cry out.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye
sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the there *shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest.

He endeavours to assuage their grief for the injuries they had done him, by showing them that whatever they designed God meant it for good, and had brought much good out of it (Ge 45:5): Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves. Sinners must grieve, and be angry with themselves, for their sins; yea, though God by his power brings good out of them, for no thanks are due to the sinner for this: but true penitents should be greatly affected when they see God thus bringing good out of evil, meat out of the eater. Though we must not with this consideration extenuate our own sins and so take off the edge of our repentance, yet it may be well thus to extenuate the sins of others and so take off the edge of our angry resentments. Thus Joseph does here; his brethren needed not to fear that he would avenge upon them an injury which God's providence had made to turn so much to his advantage and that of his family. Now he tells them how long the famine was likely to last--five years; yet (Ge 45:6) what a capacity he was in of being kind to his relations and friends, which is the greatest satisfaction that wealth and power can give to a good man, Ge 45:8. See what a favourable colour he puts upon the injury they had done him: God sent me before you, Ge 45:5, 7. Note,

1. God's Israel is the particular care of God's providence. Joseph reckoned that his advancement was not so much designed to save a whole kingdom of Egyptians as to preserve a small family of Israelites: for the Lord's portion is his people; whatever becomes of others, they shall be secured.

2. Providence looks a great way forward, and has a long reach. Even long before the years of plenty, Providence was preparing for the supply of Jacob's house in the years of famine. The psalmist praises God for this (Ps 105:17): He sent a man before them, even Joseph. God sees his work from the beginning to the end, but we do not, Ec 3:11. How admirable are the projects of providence! How remote its tendencies! What wheels are there within wheels, and yet all directed by the eyes in the wheels, and the spirit of the living creature! Let us therefore judge nothing before the time.

3. God often works by contraries. The envy and contention of brethren threaten the ruin of families, yet, in this instance, they prove the occasion of preserving Jacob's family. Joseph could never have been the shepherd and stone of Israel if his brethren had not shot at him, and hated him; even those that had wickedly sold Joseph into Egypt yet themselves reaped the benefit of the good God brought out of it; as those that put Christ to death were many of them saved by his death.

4. God must have all the glory of the seasonable preservations of his people, by what way soever they are effected. It was not you that sent me hither, but God, Ge 45:8. As, on the one hand, they must not fret at it, because it ended so well, so on the other hand they must not be proud of it, because it was God's doing, and not theirs. They designed, by selling him into Egypt, to defeat his dreams, but God thereby designed to accomplish them. Isa 10:7, Howbeit he meaneth not so.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it *was* not you *that* sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9 Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

He promises to take care of his father and all the family during the rest of the years of famine.

1. He desires that his father may speedily be made glad with the tidings of his life and dignity. His brethren must hasten to Canaan, and must inform Jacob that his son Joseph was lord of all Egypt; (Ge 45:9): they must tell him of all his glory there, Ge 45:13. He knew it would be a refreshing oil to his hoary head and a sovereign cordial to his spirits. If anything would make him young again, this would. He desires them to give themselves, and take with them to their father, all possible satisfaction of the truth of these surprising tidings: Your eyes see that it is my mouth, Ge 45:12. If they would

recollect themselves, they might remember something of his features, speech, &c., and be satisfied.

2. He is very earnest that his father and all his family should come to him to Egypt: Come down unto me, tarry not, Ge 45:9. He allots his dwelling in Goshen, that part of Egypt which lay towards Canaan, that they might be mindful of the country from which they were to come out, Ge 45:10. He promises to provide for him: I will nourish thee, Ge 45:11. Note, It is the duty of children, if the necessity of their parents do at any time require it, to support and supply them to the utmost of their ability; and Corban will never excuse them, Mk 7:11. This is showing piety at home, 1ti 5:4. Our Lord Jesus being, like Joseph, exalted to the highest honours and powers of the upper world, it is his will that all that are his should be with him where he is, Joh 17:24. This is his commandment, that we be with him now in faith and hope, and a heavenly conversation; and this is his promise, that we shall be forever with him.

10 and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near
unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and
thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:
11 and there will I nourish thee; for yet *there are* five years of famine;
lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to
poverty.
12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin,
that *it is* my mouth that speaketh unto you.
13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that
ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.
14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and
Benjamin wept upon his neck.

Endearments were interchanged between him and his brethren. He began with the youngest, his own brother Benjamin, who was but about a year old when Joseph was separated from his brethren; they wept on each other's neck (Ge 45:14), perhaps to think of their mother Rachel, who died in travail of Benjamin. Rachel, in her husband Jacob, had been lately weeping for her children, because, in his apprehension, they were not--Joseph gone, and Benjamin

going; and now they were weeping for her, because she was not. After he had embraced Benjamin, he, in like manner, caressed them all (Ge 45:15); and then his brethren talked with him freely and familiarly of all the affairs of their father's house. After the tokens of true reconciliation follow the instances of a sweet communion.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

16 And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

The kindness of Pharaoh to Joseph, and to his relations for his sake: he bade his brethren welcome (Ge 45:16), though it was a time of scarcity, and they were likely to be a charge to him. Nay, because it pleased Pharaoh, it pleased his servants too, at least they pretended to be pleased because Pharaoh was. He engaged Joseph to send for his father down to Egypt, and promised to furnish them with all conveniences both for his removal thither and his settlement there. If the good of all the land of Egypt (as it was not better stocked than any other land, thanks to Joseph, under God) would suffice him, he was welcome to it all, it was all his own, even the fat of the land (Ge 45:18), so that they need not regard their stuff, Ge 45:20. What they had in Canaan he reckoned but stuff, in comparison with what he had for them in Egypt; and therefore if they should be constrained to leave some of that behind them, let them not be discontented; Egypt would afford them enough to make up the losses of their removal. Thus those for whom Christ intends shares in his heavenly glory ought not to regard the stuff of this world: The best of its enjoyments are but stuff, but lumber; we cannot make sure of it while we are here, much less can we carry it a way with us; let us not therefore be solicitous about it, nor set our eyes or hearts upon it. There are better things reserved for us in that blessed land whither our Joseph has gone to prepare a place.

17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;

18 and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

19 Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

20 Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt *is* yours.

21 And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

The kindness of Joseph to his father and brethren. Pharaoh was respectful to Joseph, in gratitude, because he had been an instrument of much good to him and his kingdom, not only preserving it from the common calamity, but helping to make it considerable among the nations; for all their neighbours would say, "Surely the Egyptians are a wise and an understanding people, that are so well stocked in a time of scarcity." For this reason Pharaoh never thought anything too much that he could do for Joseph. Note, There is a gratitude owing even to inferiors; and when any have shown us kindness we should study to requite it, not only to them, but to their relations. And Joseph likewise was respectful to his father and brethren in duty, because they were his near relations, though his brethren had been his enemies, and his father long a stranger. He furnished them for necessity, Ge 45:21. He gave them wagons and provisions for the way, both going and coming; for we never find that Jacob was very rich, and, at this time, when the famine prevailed, we may suppose he was rather poor.

22 To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

23 And to his father he sent after this *manner;* ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

He furnished them for ornament and delight. To his brethren he gave two suits apiece of good clothes, to Benjamin five suits, and money besides in his pocket, Ge 45:22. To his father he sent a very handsome present of the varieties of Egypt, Ge 45:23. Note, Those that are wealthy should be generous, and devise liberal things; what is an abundance good for, but to do good with it?

24 So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

He dismissed them with a seasonable caution: See that you fall not out by the way, Ge 45:24. He knew they were but too apt to be quarrelsome; and what had lately passed, which revived the remembrance of what they had done formerly against their brother, might give them occasion to quarrel. Joseph had observed them to contend about it, Ge 42:22. To one they would say, "It was you that first upbraided him with his dreams;" to another, "It was you that said, Let us kill him;" to another, "It was you that stripped him of his fine coat;" to another, "It was you that threw him into the pit," &c. Now Joseph, having forgiven them all, lays this obligation upon them, not to upbraid one another. This charge our Lord Jesus has given to us, that we love one another, that we live in peace, that whatever occurs, or whatever former occurrences are remembered, we fall not out. For,

(1.) We are brethren, we have all one Father.

(2.) We are his brethren, and we shame our relation to him who is our peace, if we fall out.

(3.) We are guilty, verily guilty, and, instead of quarrelling with one another, have a great deal of reason to fall out with ourselves.

(4.) We are, or hope to be, forgiven of God whom we have all offended, and therefore should be ready to forgive one another.

(5.) We are by the way, a way that lies through the land of Egypt, where we have many eyes upon us, that seek occasion and advantage against us, a way that leads to Canaan, where we hope to be forever in perfect peace.

25 And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father,

26 and told him, saying, Joseph *is* yet alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

We have here the good news brought to Jacob. 1 The relation of it, at first, sunk his spirits. When, without any preamble, his sons came in, crying, Joseph is yet alive, each striving which should first proclaim it, perhaps he thought they bantered him, and the affront grieved him; or the very mention of Joseph's name revived his sorrow, so that his heart fainted, Ge 45:26. It was a good while before he came to himself. He was in such care and fear about the rest of them that at this time it would have been joy enough to him to hear that Simeon was released, and that Benjamin had come safely home (for he had been ready to despair concerning both these); but to hear that Joseph is alive is too good news to be true; he faints, for he believes it not. Note, We faint, because we do not believe; David himself had fainted if he had not believed, Ps 27:13.

27 And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

28 And Israel said, *it is* enough; Joseph my son *is* yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

The confirmation of it, by degrees, revived his spirit. Jacob had easily believed his sons formerly when they told him, Joseph is dead; but he can hardly believe them now that they tell him, Joseph is alive. Weak and tender spirits are influenced more by fear than hope, and are more apt to receive impressions that are discouraging than those that are encouraging. But at length Jacob is convinced of the truth of the story, especially when he sees the waggons which were sent to carry him (for seeing is believing), then his spirit revived. Death is as the waggons which are sent to fetch us to Christ: the very sight of it approaching should revive us. Now Jacob is called Israel (Ge 45:28), for he begins to recover his wonted vigour.

(1.) It pleases him to think that Joseph is alive. He says nothing of Joseph's glory, of which they told him; it was enough to him that Joseph was alive. Note, Those that would be content with less degrees of comfort are best prepared for greater.

(2.) It pleases him to think of going to see him. Though he was old, and the journey long, yet he would go to see Joseph, because Joseph's business would not permit him to come to see him. Observe, He says, "I will go and see him," not, "I will go and live with him;" Jacob was old, and did not expect to live long; "But I will go and see him before I die, and then let me depart in peace; let my eyes be refreshed with this sight before they are closed, and then it is enough, I need no more to make me happy in this world." Note, It is good for us all to make death familiar to us, and to speak of it as near, that we may think how little we have to do before we die, that we may do it with all our might, and may enjoy our comforts as those that must quickly die, and leave them.

Genesis -46

Jacob and His Family in Egypt

1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-
sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

How he acknowledged God in this way. He came to Beersheba, from Hebron, where he now dwelt; and there he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac, Ge 46:1. He chose that place, in remembrance of the communion which his father and grandfather had with God in that place. Abraham called on God there (Ge 21:33), so did Isaac (Ge 26:25), and therefore Jacob made it the place of his devotion, the rather because it lay in his way. In his devotion,

1. He had an eye to God as the God of his father Isaac, that is, a God in covenant with him; for by Isaac the covenant was entailed upon him. God had forbidden Isaac to go down to Egypt when there was a famine in Canaan (Ge 26:2), which perhaps Jacob calls to mind when he consults God as the God of his father Isaac, with this thought, "Lord, though I am very desirous to see Joseph, yet if thou forbid me to go down to Egypt, as thou didst my father Isaac, I will submit, and very contentedly stay where I am."

2. He offered sacrifices, extraordinary sacrifices, besides those at his stated times; these sacrifices were offered,

(1.) By way of thanksgiving for the late blessed change of the face of his family, for the good news he had received concerning Joseph, and for the hopes he had of seeing him. Note, We should give God thanks for the beginnings of mercy, though they are not yet perfected; and this is a decent way of begging further mercy.

(2.) By way of petition for the presence of God with him in his intended journey; he desired by these sacrifices to make his peace with God, to obtain the forgiveness of sin, that he might take no guilt along with him in this journey, for that is a bad companion. By Christ, the great sacrifice, we must reconcile ourselves to God, and offer up our requests to him.

(3.) By way of consultation. The heathen consulted their oracles by sacrifice. Jacob would not go till he had asked God's leave: "Shall I go down to Egypt, or back to Hebron?" Such must be our enquiries in doubtful cases; and, though we cannot expect immediate answers from heaven, yet, if we diligently attend to the directions of the word, conscience, and providence, we shall find it is not in vain to ask counsel of God.

2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said,
Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here *am* I.

How God directed his paths: In the visions of the night (probably the very next night after he had offered his sacrifices, as 2Ch 1:7) God spoke unto him, Ge 46:2. Note, Those who desire to keep up communion with God shall find that it never fails on his side. If we speak to him as we ought, he will not fail to speak to us. God called him by name, by his old name, Jacob, Jacob, to remind him of his low estate; his present fears did scarcely become an Israel. Jacob, like one well acquainted with the visions of the Almighty, and ready to obey them, answers, "Here I am, ready to receive orders:" and what has God to say to him?

1. He renews the covenant with him: I am God, the God of thy father (Ge 46:3); that is, "I am what thou ownest me to be: thou shalt find me a God, a divine wisdom and power engaged for thee; and thou shalt find me the God of thy father, true to the covenant made with him."

2. He encourages him to make this removal of his family: Fear not to go down into Egypt. It seems, though Jacob, upon the first intelligence of Joseph's life and glory in Egypt, resolved, without any hesitation, I will go and see him; yet, upon second thoughts, he saw some difficulties in it, which he knew not well how to get over. Note, Even those changes that seem to have in them the greatest joys and hopes, yet have an alloy of cares and fears, Nulla est sincera voluptas--There is no unmingled pleasure. We must always rejoice with trembling. Jacob had many careful thoughts about this journey, which God took notice of.

(1.) He was old, 130 years old; and it is mentioned as one of the infirmities of old people that they are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way, Ec 12:5. It was a long journey, and Jacob was unfit for travel, and perhaps remembered that his beloved Rachel died in a journey.

(2.) He feared lest his sons should be tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and forget the God of their fathers, or enamoured with the pleasures of Egypt, and forget the land of promise.

(3.) Probably he thought of what God had said to Abraham concerning the bondage and affliction of his seed (Ge 15:13), and was apprehensive that his removal to Egypt would issue in that. Present satisfactions should not take us off from the consideration and prospect of future inconveniences, which possibly may arise from what now appears most promising.

(4.) He could not think of laying his bones in Egypt. But, whatever his discouragements were, this was enough to answer them all, Fear not to go down into Egypt.

3 And he said, I *am* God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation.

He promises him comfort in the removal.

(1.) That he should multiply in Egypt: "I will there, where thou fearest that thy family will sink and be lost, make it a great nation. That is the place Infinite Wisdom has chosen for the accomplishment of that promise."

(2.) That he should have God's presence with him: I will go down with thee into Egypt. Note, Those that go whither God sends them shall certainly have God with them, and that is enough to secure them wherever they are and to silence their fears; we may safely venture even into Egypt if God go down with us.

(3.) That neither he nor his should be lost in Egypt: I will surely bring thee up again. Though Jacob died in Egypt, yet this promise was fulfilled, [1.] In the bringing up of his body, to be buried in Canaan, about which, it appears, he was very solicitous, Ge 49:29, 32. [2.] In the bringing up of his seed to be settled in Canaan. Whatever low or darksome valley we are called into at any time, we may be confident, if God go down with us into it, that he will surely bring us up again. If he go with us down to death, he will surely bring us up again to glory.

(4.) That living and dying, his beloved Joseph should be a comfort to him: Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. This is a promise that Joseph should live as long as he lived, that he should be with him at his death, and close his eyes with all possible tenderness and respect, as the dearest relations used to do. Probably Jacob, in the multitude of his thoughts within him, had been wishing that Joseph might do this last office of love for him: Ille meos oculos comprimat--Let him close my eyes; and God thus answered him in the letter of his desire. Thus God

sometimes gratifies the innocent wishes of his people, and makes not only their death happy, but the very circumstances of it agreeable.

4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up *again:* and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

Old Jacob is here flitting. Little did he think of ever leaving Canaan; he expected, no doubt, to die in his nest, and to leave his seed in actual possession of the promised land: but Providence orders it otherwise. Note, Those that think themselves well settled may yet be unsettled in a little time. Even old people, who think of no other removal than that to the grave (which Jacob had much upon his heart, Ge 37:35, 42:38), sometimes live to see great changes in their family. It is good to be ready, not only for the grave, but for whatever may happen betwixt us and the grave. Observe, 1. How Jacob was conveyed; not in a chariot, though chariots were then used, but in a waggon, Ge 46:5. Jacob had the character of a plain man, who did not affect anything stately or magnificent; his son rode in a chariot (Ge 41:43), but a waggon would serve him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

The removal of what he had with him.
(1.) His effects (Ge 46:6), cattle and goods; these he took with him that he might not wholly be beholden to Pharaoh for a livelihood, and that it might not afterwards be said of them, "that they came beggars to Egypt."

(2.) His family, all his seed, Ge 46:7. It is probable that they had continued to live together in common with their father; and therefore when he went they all went, which perhaps they were the more willing to do, because, though they had heard that the land of Canaan was promised them, yet, to this day, they had none of it in possession. We have here a particular account of the names of Jacob's family, his sons' sons, most of whom are

afterwards mentioned as heads of houses in the several tribes. See Nu 26:5-65, &c. Bishop Patrick observes that Issachar called his eldest son Tola, which signifies a worm, probably because when he was born he was a very little weak child, a worm, and no man, not likely to live; and yet there sprang from him a very numerous offspring, 1Ch 7:2. Note, Living and dying do not go by probability. The whole number that went down into Egypt was sixty-six (Ge 46:26), to which add Joseph and his two sons, who were there before, and Jacob himself, the head of the family, and you have the number of seventy, Ge 46:27. The LXX. makes them seventy-five, and Stephen follows them (Ac 7:14), the reason of which we leave to the conjecture of the critics; but let us observe,

[1.] Masters of families ought to take care of all under their charge, and to provide for those of their own house food convenient both for body and soul. When Jacob himself removed to a land of plenty, he would not leave any of his children behind him to starve in a barren land.

[2.] Though the accomplishment of promises is always sure, yet it is often slow. It was now 215 years since God had promised Abraham to make of him a great nation (Ge 12:2); and yet that branch of his seed on which the promise was entailed had increased only to seventy, of which this particular account is kept, that the power of God in multiplying these seventy to so vast a multitude, even in Egypt, may appear the more illustrious. When God pleases, a little one shall become a thousand, Isa 60:22.

7 his sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons'
daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.
8 And these *are* the names of the children of Israel, which came
into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.
9 And the sons of Reuben; Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and
Carmi.
10 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin,
and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman.
11 And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

12 And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul.
13 And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron.
14 And the sons of Zebulun; Sered, and Elon, and Jahleel.
15 These be the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-Aram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters *were* thirty and three.
16 And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggi, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli.
17 And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isui, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel.
18 These *are* the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bare unto Jacob, *even* sixteen souls.
19 The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin.
20 And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.
21 And the sons of Benjamin *were* Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.
22 These *are* the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls *were* fourteen.
23 And the sons of Dan; Hushim.
24 And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem.
25 These *are* the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls *were* seven.
26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls *were* threescore and six;
27 and the sons of Joseph, which were borne him in Egypt, *were* two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, *were* threescore and ten.
28 And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.

Jacob's prudence in sending Judah before him to Joseph, to give him notice of his arrival in Goshen. This was a piece of

respect owing to the government, under the protection of which these strangers had come to put themselves, Ge 46:28. We should be very careful not to give offence to any, especially not to the higher powers.

29 And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

Joseph's filial respect to him. He went in his chariot to meet him, and, in the interview, showed,

(1.) How much he honoured him: He presented himself unto him. Note, It is the duty of children to reverence their parents, yea, though Providence, as to outward condition, has advanced them above their parents.

(2.) How much he loved him. Time did not wear out the sense of his obligations, but his tears which he shed abundantly upon his father's neck, for joy to see him, were real indications of the sincere and strong affection he had for him. See how near sorrow and joy are to each other in this world, when tears serve for the expression of both. In the other world weeping will be restrained to sorrow only; in heaven there is perfect joy, but no tears of joy: all tears, even those, shall there be wiped away, because the joys there are, as no joys are here, without any alloy. When Joseph embraced Benjamin he wept upon his neck, but when he embraced his father he wept upon his neck a good while; his brother Benjamin was dear, but his father Jacob must be dearer.

30 And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou *art* yet alive.

Jacob's great satisfaction in this meeting: Now let me die, Ge 46:30. Not but that it was further desirable to live with Joseph, and to see his honour and usefulness; but he had so much pleasure and satisfaction in this first meeting that he thought it too much to desire or expect any more in this world, where our comforts must always be imperfect. Jacob wished to die immediately, and lived seventeen years longer, which, as our lives go now, is a considerable part of a man's age. Note, Death

will not always come just when we call for it, whether in a passion of sorrow or in a passion of joy. Our times are in God's hand, and not in our own; we must die just when God pleases, and not either just when we are surfeited with the pleasures of life or just when we are overwhelmed with its griefs.

31 And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which *were* in the land of Canaan, are come unto me;

Joseph's prudent care concerning his brethren's settlement. It was justice to Pharaoh to let him know that such a colony had come to settle in his dominions. Note, If others repose a confidence in us, we must not be so base and disingenuous as to abuse it by imposing upon them. If Jacob and his family should come to be a charge to the Egyptians, yet it should never be said that they came among them clandestinely and by stealth. Thus Joseph took care to pay his respects to Pharaoh, Ge 46:31. But how shall he dispose of his brethren? Time was when they were contriving to get rid of him; now he is contriving to settle them to their satisfaction and advantage: this is rendering good for evil. Now,

1. He would have them to live by themselves, separate as much as might be from the Egyptians, in the land of Goshen, which lay nearest to Canaan, and which perhaps was more thinly peopled by the Egyptians, and well furnished with pastures for cattle. He desired they might live separately, that they might be in the less danger both of being infected by the vices of the Egyptians and of being insulted by the malice of the Egyptians. Shepherds, it seems, were an abomination to the Egyptians, that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and scorned to converse with them; and he would not send for his brethren to Egypt to be trampled upon. And yet,

2. He would have them to continue shepherds, and not to be ashamed to own that as their occupation before Pharaoh. He could have employed them under himself in the corn-trade, or perhaps, by his interest in the king, might have procured places for them at court or in the army, and some of them, at least,

were deserving enough; but such preferments would have exposed them to the envy of the Egyptians, and would have tempted them to forget Canaan and the promise made unto their fathers; therefore he contrives to continue them in their old employment. Note,

(1.) An honest calling is no disparagement, nor ought we to account it so either in ourselves or in our relations, but rather reckon it a shame to be idle, or to have nothing to do.

(2.) It is generally best for people to abide in the callings that they have been bred to, and used to, 1Co 7:24. Whatever employment or condition God, in his providence, has allotted for us, let us accommodate ourselves to it, and satisfy ourselves with it, and not mind high things. It is better to be the credit of a mean post than the shame of a high one.

32 and the men *are* shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

33 And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, what *is* your occupation?

34 That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, *and* also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Genesis -47

1 Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, my father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they *are* in the land of Goshen.

The respect which Joseph, as a subject, showed to his prince. Though he was his favourite, and prime-minister of state, and had

had particular orders from him to send for his father down to Egypt, yet he would not suffer him to settle till he had given notice of it to Pharaoh, Ge 47:1. Christ, our Joseph, disposes of his followers in his kingdom as it is prepared of his Father, saying, It is not mine to give, Mt 20:23.

2 And he took some of his brethren, *even* five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

3 And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, what *is* your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants *are* shepherds, both we, *and* also our fathers.

The respect which Joseph, as a brother, showed to his brethren, notwithstanding all the unkindness he had formerly received from them.

1. Though he was a great man, and they were comparatively mean and despicable, especially in Egypt, yet he owned them. Let those that are rich and great in the world learn hence not to overlook nor despise their poor relations. Every branch of the tree is not a top branch; but, because it is a lower branch, is it therefore not of the tree? Our Lord Jesus, like Joseph here, is not ashamed to call us brethren.

2. They being strangers and no courtiers, he introduced some of them to Pharaoh, to kiss

his hand, as we say, intending thereby to put an honour upon them among the Egyptians. Thus Christ presents his brethren in the court of heaven, and improves his interest for them, though in themselves unworthy and an abomination to the Egyptians. Being presented to Pharaoh, according to the instructions which Joseph had given them, they tell him,

(1.) What was their business--that they were shepherds, Ge 47:3? Pharaoh asked them (and Joseph knew it would be one of his first questions, Ge 46:33), What is your occupation? He takes it for granted they had something to do, else Egypt should be no place for them, no harbor for idle vagrants. If they would not work, they should not eat of his bread in this time of scarcity. Note, All that have a place in the world should have an employment in it according to their capacity, some occupation or other, mental or manual. Those that need not work for their bread must yet have something to do, to keep them from idleness. Again, Magistrates should enquire into the occupation of their subjects, as those that have the care of the public welfare; for idle people are as drones in the hive, unprofitable burdens of the commonwealth.

(2.) What was their business in Egypt--to sojourn in the land (Ge 47:4), not to settle there forever, only to sojourn there for a time, while the famine so prevailed in Canaan, which lay high, that it was not habitable for shepherds, the grass being burnt up much more than in Egypt, which lay low, and where the corn chiefly failed, while there was tolerably good pasture.

3. He obtained for them a grant of a settlement in the land of Goshen, Ge 47:5, 6. This was an instance of Pharaoh's gratitude to Joseph; because he had been such a blessing to him and his kingdom, he would be kind to his relations, purely for his sake. He offered them preferment as shepherds over his cattle, provided they were men of activity; for it is the man who is diligent in his business that shall stand before kings. And, whatever our profession or employment is, we should aim to be excellent in it, and to prove ourselves ingenious and industrious.

4 They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are
we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the
famine *is* sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee,
let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

5 And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy
brethren are come unto thee:

6 the land of Egypt *is* before thee; in the best of the land make thy father
and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if
thou knowest *any* men of activity among them, then make them
rulers over my cattle.
7 And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before
Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

The respect Joseph, as a son, showed to his father.

He presented him to Pharaoh, Ge 47:7. And here,

(1.) Pharaoh asks Jacob a common question: How old art thou? Ge 47:8. A question usually put to old men, for it is natural to us to admire old age and to reverence it (Le 19:32), as it is very unnatural and unbecoming to despise it, Isa 3:5. Jacob's countenance, no doubt, showed him to be very old, for he had been a man of labour and sorrow; in Egypt people were not so long-lived as in Canaan, and therefore Pharaoh looks upon Jacob with wonder; he was as a show in his court. When we are reflecting upon ourselves, this should come into the account, "How old are we?"

(2.) Jacob gives Pharaoh an uncommon answer, Ge 47:9. He speaks as becomes a patriarch, with an air of seriousness, for the instruction of Pharaoh. Though our speech be

not always of grace, yet it must thus be always with grace. Observe here,

[1.] He calls his life a pilgrimage, looking upon himself as a stranger in this world, and a traveller towards another world: this earth his inn, not his home. To this the apostle refers (Heb 11:13), They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. He not only reckoned himself a pilgrim now that he was in Egypt, a strange country in which he never was before; but his life, even in the land of his nativity, was a pilgrimage, and those who so reckon it can the better bear the inconvenience of banishment from their native soil; they are but pilgrims still, and so they were always.

[2.] He reckons his life by days; for, even so, it is soon reckoned, and we are not sure of the continuance of it for a day to an end, but may be turned out of this tabernacle at less than an hour's warning. Let us therefore number our days (Ps 90:12), and measure them, Ps 39:4.

[3.] The character he gives of them is, First, That they were few. Though he had now lived 130 years, they seemed to him but a few days, in comparison with the days of eternity, the

eternal God, and the eternal state, in which a thousand years (longer than ever any man lived) are but as one day. Secondly, That they were evil. This is true concerning man in general, he is of few days, and full of trouble (Job 14:1); and, since his days are evil, it is well they are few. Jacob's life, particularly, had been made up of evil days; and the pleasantest days of his life were yet before him. Thirdly, That they were short of the days of his fathers, not so many, not so pleasant, as their days. Old age came sooner upon him than it had done upon some of his ancestors. As the young man should not be proud of his strength or beauty, so the old man should not be proud of his age, and the crown of his hoary hairs, though others justly reverence it; for those who are accounted very old attain not to the years of the patriarchs. The hoary head is a crown of glory only when it is found in the way of righteousness.

(3.) Jacob both addresses himself to Pharaoh and takes leave of him with a blessing (Ge 47:7): Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and again, Ge 47:10, which was not only an act of civility (he paid him respect and returned him thanks for his kindness), but an act of piety--he prayed

for him, as one having the authority of a prophet and a patriarch. Though in worldly wealth Pharaoh was the greater, yet, in interest with God, Jacob was the greater; he was God's anointed, Ps 105:15. And a patriarch's blessing was not a thing to be despised, no, not by a potent prince. Darius valued the prayers of the church for himself and for his sons, Ezr 6:10. Pharaoh kindly received Jacob, and, whether in the name of a prophet or no, thus he had a prophet's reward, which sufficiently recompensed him, not only for his courteous converse with him, but for all the other kindnesses he showed to him and his.

8 And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old *art* thou?

9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

10 And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

11 And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

He provided well for him and his, placed him in Goshen (Ge 47:11), nourished him and all his with food convenient for them, Ge 47:12. This bespeaks, not only Joseph a good man, who took this tender care of his poor relations, but God a good God, who raised him up for this purpose, and put him into a capacity of

doing it, as Esther came to the kingdom for such a time as this. What God here did for Jacob he has, in effect, promised to do for all his, that serve him and trust in him. Ps 37:19, In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to *their* families.

13 And *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *all* the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

Care being taken of Jacob and his family, the preservation of which was especially designed by Providence in Joseph's advancement, an account is now given of the saving of the kingdom of Egypt too from ruin; for God is King of nations as well as King of saints, and provideth food for all flesh. Joseph now returns to the management of that great trust which Pharaoh had lodged in his hand. It would have been pleasing enough to him to have gone and lived with his father and brethren in Goshen; but his employment would not permit it. When he had seen his father, and seen him well settled, he applied himself as closely as ever to the execution of his office. Note, Even natural affection must give way to necessary business. Parents and

children must be content to be absent one from another, when it is necessary, on either side, for the service of God or their generation. In Joseph's transactions with the Egyptians observe,

The great extremity that Egypt, and the parts adjacent, were reduced to by the famine. There was no bread, and they fainted (Ge 47:13), they were ready to die, Ge 47:15, 19.

1. See here what a dependence we have upon God's providence. If its usual favours are suspended but for a while, we die, we perish, we all perish. All our wealth would not keep us from starving if the rain of heaven were but withheld for two or three years. See how much we lie at God's mercy, and let us keep ourselves always in his love.

2. See how much we smart by our own improvidence. If all the Egyptians had done for themselves in the seven years of plenty as Joseph did for Pharaoh, they had not been now in these straits; but they regarded not the warning they had of the years of famine, concluding that to-morrow shall be as this day, next year as this, and much more abundant.

Note, Because man knows not his time (his time of gathering when he has it) therefore his misery is great upon him when the spending time comes, Ec 8:6, 7.

3. See how early God put a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites, as afterwards in the plagues, Ex 8:22, 9:4, 10:23. Jacob and his family, though strangers, were plentifully fed on free cost, while the Egyptians were dying for want. See Isa 65:13, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry. Happy art thou, O Israel. Whoever wants, God's children shall not, Ps 34:10.

15 And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? For the money faileth.

16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

17 And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in *exchange* for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses; and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

The price they had come up to, for their supply, in this exigency.

1. They parted with all their money which they had hoarded up, Ge 47:14. Silver and gold would not feed them, they must have corn. All

the money of the kingdom was by this means brought into the exchequer.

2. When the money failed, they parted with all their cattle, those for labour, as the horses and asses, and those for food, as the flocks and the herds, Ge 47:17. By this it should seem that we may better live upon bread without flesh than upon flesh without bread. We may suppose they parted the more easily with their cattle because they had little or no grass for them; and now Pharaoh saw in reality what he had before seen in vision, nothing but lean kine.

3. When they had sold their stocks off their land, it was easy to persuade themselves (rather than starve) to sell their land too; for what good would that do them, when they had neither corn to sow it nor cattle to eat of it? They therefore sold that next, for a further supply of corn.

4. When their land was sold, so that they had nothing to live on, they must of course sell themselves, that they might live purely upon their labour, and hold their lands by the base tenure of villanage, at the courtesy of the crown.

Note, Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, even liberty and property (those darling twins), will he give for his life; for life is sweet. There are few (though perhaps there are some) who would even dare to die rather than live in slavery, and dependence on an arbitrary power. And perhaps there are those who, in that case, could die by the sword, in a heat, who yet could not deliberately die by famine, which is much worse, La 4:9. Now it was a great mercy to the Egyptians that, in this distress, they could have corn at any rate; if they had all died for hunger, their lands perhaps would have escheated to the crown of course, for want of heirs; they therefore resolved to make the best of bad.

18 When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year,
and said unto him, We will not hide *it* from my lord, how that our
money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not
aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:
19 wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land?
buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants
unto Pharaoh: and give *us* seed, that we may live, and not die, that
the land be not desolate.
20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the
Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed
over them: so the land became Pharaoh's.
21 And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of
the borders of Egypt even to the *other* end thereof.

22 Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion *assigned them* of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands.

The method which Joseph took to accommodate the matter between prince and people, so that the prince might have his just advantage, and yet the people not be quite ruined.

1. For their lands, he needed not come to any bargain with them while the years of famine lasted; but when these were over (for God will not contend for ever, nor will he be always wroth) he came to an agreement, which it seems both sides were pleased with, that the people should occupy and enjoy the lands, as he thought fit to assign them, and should have seed to sow them with out of the king's stores, for their own proper use and behoof, yielding and paying only a fifth part of the yearly profits as a chief rent to the crown. This became a standing law, Ge 47:26. And it was a very good bargain to have food for their lands, when otherwise they and theirs must have starved, and then to have their lands again upon such easy terms.

Note, Those ministers of state are worthy of double honour, both for wisdom and integrity,

that keep the balance even between prince and people, so that liberty and property may not intrench upon prerogative, nor the prerogative bear hard upon liberty and property: in the multitude of such counsellors there is safety. If afterwards the Egyptians thought it hard to pay so great a duty to the king out of their lands, they must remember, not only how just, but how kind, the first imposing of it was. They might thankfully pay a fifth where all was due. It is observable how faithful Joseph was to him that appointed him. He did not put the money into his own pocket, nor entail the lands upon his own family; but converted both entirely to Pharaoh's use; and therefore we do not find that his posterity went out of Egypt any richer than the rest of their poor brethren. Those in public trusts, if they raise great estates, must take heed that it be not at the expense of a good conscience, which is much more valuable.

2. For their persons, he removed them to cities, Ge 47:21. He transplanted them, to show Pharaoh's sovereign power over them, and that they might, in time, forget their titles to their lands, and be the more easily reconciled to their new condition of servitude. The Jewish

writers say, "He removed them thus from their former habitations because they reproached his brethren as strangers, to silence which reproach they were all made, in effect, strangers." See what changes a little time may make with a people, and how soon God can empty those from vessel to vessel who had settled upon their lees. How hard soever this seems to have been upon them, they themselves were at this time sensible of it as a very great kindness, and were thankful they were not worse used: Thou hast saved our lives, Ge 47:25. Note, There is good reason that the Savior of our lives should be the Master of our lives. "Thou hast saved us; do what thou wilt with us."

23 Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, *here is* seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

24 And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth *part* unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

25 And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, *that* Pharaoh should have the fifth *part;* except the land of the priests only, *which* became not Pharaoh's.

27 And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was a hundred forty and seven years.

1 The comfort Jacob lived in (Ge 47:27, 28); while the Egyptians were impoverished in their own land, Jacob was replenished in a strange land. He lived seventeen years after he came into Egypt, far beyond his own expectation. Seventeen years he had nourished Joseph (for so old he was when he was sold from him, Ge 37:2), and now, by way of requital, seventeen years Joseph nourished him.

Observe how kindly Providence ordered Jacob's affairs, that when he was old, and least able to bear care or fatigue, he had least occasion for it, being well provided for by his son without his own forecast. Thus God considers the frame of his people.

2 The care Jacob died in. At last the time drew nigh that Israel must die, Ge 47:29. Israel, a prince with God, that had power over the angel and prevailed, yet must yield to death. There is no remedy, he must die: it is appointed for all men, therefore for him; and there is no discharge in that war. Joseph supplied him with bread, that he might not die by famine; but this did not secure him from dying by age

or sickness. He died by degrees; his candle was not blown out, but gradually burnt down to the socket, so that he saw, at some distance, the time drawing nigh.

Note, It is an improvable advantage to see the approach of death before we feel its arrests, that we may be quickened to do what our hand finds to do with all our might: however, it is not far from any of us. Now Jacob's care, as he saw the day approaching, was about his burial, not the pomp of it (he was no way solicitous about that), but the place of it.

(1.) He would be buried in Canaan. This he resolved on, not from mere humour, because Canaan was the land of his nativity, but in faith, because it was the land of promise (which he desired thus, as it were, to keep possession of, till the time should come when his posterity should be masters of it), and because it was a type of heaven, that better country which he that said these things declared plainly that he was in expectation of, Heb 11:14. He aimed at a good land, which would be his rest and bliss on the other side death.

(2.) He would have Joseph sworn to bring him thither to be buried (Ge 47:29, 31), that Joseph, being under such a solemn obligation to do it, might have that to answer to the objections which otherwise might have been made against it, and for the greater satisfaction of Jacob now in his dying minutes. Nothing will better help to make a death-bed easy than the certain prospect of a rest in Canaan after death.

(3.) When this was done Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head, yielding himself, as it were, to the stroke of death ("Now let it come, and it shall be welcome"), or worshipping God, as it is explained, Heb 11:21, giving God thanks for all his favours, and particularly for this, that Joseph was ready, not only to put his hand upon his eyes to close them, but under his thigh to give him the satisfaction he desired concerning his burial. Thus those that go down to the dust should, with humble thankfulness, bow before God, the God of their mercies, Ps 22:29.

29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt:

30 but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt,
and bury me in their burying place. And he said, I will do as thou
hast said.
31 And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him. And Israel
bowed himself upon the bed's head.

Genesis -48

Jacob Blesses Ephraim and Manasseh

1 And it came to pass after these things, that *one* told Joseph, Behold, thy
father *is* sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and
Ephraim.

Here, Joseph, upon notice of his father's illness, goes to see him; though a man of honour and business, yet he will not fail to show this due respect to his aged father, Ge 48:1. Visiting the sick, to whom we lie under obligations, or may have opportunity of doing good, either for body or soul, is our duty. The sick bed is a proper place both for giving comfort and counsel to others and receiving instruction ourselves. Joseph took his two sons with him, that they might receive their dying grandfather's blessing, and that what they might see in him, and hear from him, might make an abiding impression upon them. Note,

1. It is good to acquaint young people that are coming into the world with the aged servants of God that are going out of it, whose dying testimony to the goodness of God, and the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, may be a great encouragement to the rising generation. Manasseh and Ephraim (I dare say) would never forget what passed at this time.

2. Pious parents are desirous of a blessing, not only for themselves, but for their children. "O that they may live before God!" Joseph had been, above all his brethren, kind to his father, and therefore had reason to expect particular favour from him.

2 And *one* told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

Jacob, upon notice of his son's visit, prepared himself as well as he could to entertain him, Ge 48:2. He did what he could to rouse his spirits, and to stir up the gift that was in him; what little was left of bodily strength he put forth to the utmost, and sat upon the bed. Note, It is very good for sick and aged people to be as lively and cheerful as they can, that they may not faint in the day of adversity. Strengthen thyself, as Jacob here, and God will strengthen thee; hearten thyself and help thyself, and God will help and hearten thee. Let the spirit sustain the infirmity.

3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

4 and said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee *for* an everlasting possession.

5 And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

6 And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, *and* shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

In recompence to Joseph for all his attentions to him, he adopted his two sons. In this charter of adoption there is,

1. A particular recital of God's promise to him, to which this had reference: "God blessed me (Ge 48:3), and let that blessing be entailed upon them." God had promised him two things, a numerous issue, and Canaan for an inheritance (Ge 48:4); and Joseph's sons, pursuant hereunto, should each of them multiply into a tribe, and each of them have a distinct lot in Canaan, equal with Jacob's own sons. See how he blessed them by faith in that which God had said to him, Heb 11:21. Note, In all our prayers, both for ourselves and for our children, we ought to have a particular eye to, and remembrance of, God's promises to us.

2. An express reception of Joseph's sons into his family: "Thy sons are mine (Ge 48:5), not only my grand-children, but as my own children." Though they were born in Egypt, and their father was then separated from his brethren, which might seem to have cut them off from the heritage of the Lord, yet Jacob takes them in, and owns them for visible church members. He explains this at Ge 48:16, Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers; as if he had said, "Let them not succeed their father in his power and grandeur here in Egypt, but let them succeed me in the inheritance of the promise made to Abraham," which Jacob looked upon as much more valuable and honourable, and would have them to prize and covet accordingly. Thus the aged dying patriarch teaches these young persons, now that they were of age (being about twenty-one years old), not to look upon Egypt as their home, nor to incorporate themselves with the Egyptians, but to take their lot with the people of God, as Moses afterwards in the like temptation, Heb 11:24-26. And because it would be a piece of self-denial in them, who stood so fair for preferment in Egypt, to adhere to the despised Hebrews, to encourage them he constitutes each of them the head of a tribe.

Note, Those are worthy of double honour who, through God's grace, break through the temptations of worldly wealth and preferment, to embrace religion in disgrace and poverty. Jacob will have Ephraim and Manasseh to believe that it is better to be low and in the church than high and out of it, to be called by the name of poor Jacob than to be called by the name of rich Joseph.

3. A proviso inserted concerning the children he might afterwards have; they should not be accounted heads of tribes, as Ephraim and Manasseh were, but should fall in with either the one or the other of their brethren, Ge 48:6. It does not appear that Joseph had any more children; however, it was Jacob's prudence to give this direction, for the preventing of contest and mismanagement. Note, In making settlements, it is good to take advice, and to provide for what may happen,

while we cannot foresee what will happen. Our prudence must attend God's providence.

4. Mention is made of the death and burial of Rachel, Joseph's mother, and Jacob's best beloved wife (Ge 48:7), referring to that story, Ge 35:19.

Note, (1.) When we come to die ourselves, it is good to call to mind the death of our dear relations and friends, that have gone before us, to make death and the grave the more familiar to us. See Nu 27:13. Those that were to us as our own souls are dead and buried; and shall we think it much to follow them in the same path?

(2.) The removal of dear relations from us is an affliction the remembrance of which cannot but abide with us a great while. Strong affections in the enjoyment cause long afflictions in the loss.

7 And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the
land of Canaan in the way, when yet *there was* but a little way to
come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath;
the same *is* Bethlehem.
8 And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, who are these?
9 And Joseph said unto his father, they *are* my sons, whom God hath
given me in this *place.* And he said, bring them, I pray thee, unto me,
and I will bless them.
10 Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, *so that* he could not see.
And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and
embraced them.

Jacob was blind for age, Ge 48:10. It is one of the common infirmities of old age. Those that look out at the windows are darkened, Ec 12:3. It is folly to walk in the sight of our eyes, and to suffer our hearts to go after them, while we know death will shortly close them, and we do not know but some accident between us and death may darken them. Jacob, like his father before him, when he was old, was dim-sighted. Note,

(1.) Those that have the honour of age must therewith be content to take the burden of it.

(2.) The eye of faith may be very clear even when the eye of the body is very much clouded.

Jacob was very fond of Joseph's sons: He kissed them and embraced them, Ge 48:10. It is common for old people to have a very particular affection for their grand-children, perhaps more than they had for their own children when they were little, which Solomon gives a reason for (Pr 17:6), Children's children are the crown of old men. With what satisfaction does Jacob say here (Ge 48:11), I had not thought to see thy face (having many years given him up for lost), and, lo, God has shown me also thy seed! See here,

(1.) How these two good men own God in their comforts. Joseph says (Ge 48:9), They are my sons whom God has given me, and, to magnify the favour, he adds, "In this place of my banishment, slavery, and imprisonment." Jacob says here, God has shown me thy seed. Our comforts are then doubly sweet to us when we see them coming from God's hand.

(2.) How often God, in his merciful providences, outdoes our expectations, and thus greatly magnifies his favours. He not only prevents our fears, but exceeds our hopes. We may apply this to the promise which is made to us and to our children. We could not have thought that we should have been taken into covenant with God ourselves, considering how guilty and corrupt we are; and yet, lo, he has shown us our seed also in covenant with him.

11 And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed.

12 And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

13 And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward
Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's
right hand, and brought *them* near unto him.
14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid *it* upon Ephraim's
head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head,
guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

When he confers the blessing and name of Abraham and Isaac upon them he recommends the pattern and example of Abraham and Isaac to them, Ge 48:15. He calls God the God before whom his fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, that is, in whom they believed, whom they observed and obeyed, and with whom they kept up communion in instituted ordinances, according to the condition of the covenant. Walk before me, Ge 17:1. Note,

(1.) Those that would inherit the blessing of their godly ancestors, and have the benefit of God's covenant with them, must tread in the steps of their piety.

(2.) It should recommend religion and the service of God to us that God was the God of our fathers, and that they had satisfaction in walking before him.

15 And he blessed Joseph, and said,
God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk,
the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,

Before he entails his blessing, he recounts his experiences of God's goodness to him. He had spoken (Ge 48:3) of God's appearing to him. The particular visits of his grace, and the special communion we have sometimes had with him, ought never to be forgotten. But (Ge 48:15, 16) he mentions the constant care which the divine Providence had taken of him all his days.

(1.) He had fed him all his life long unto this day, Ge 48:15. Note, As long as we have lived in this world we have had continual experience of God's goodness to us, in providing for the support of our natural life. Our bodies have called for daily food, and no little has gone to feed us, yet we have never

wanted food convenient. He that has fed us all our life long surely will not fail us at last.

(2.) He had by his angel redeemed him from all evil, Ge 48:16. A great deal of hardship he had known in his time, but God had graciously kept him from the evil of his troubles. Now that he was dying he looked upon himself as redeemed from all evil, and bidding an everlasting farewell to sin and sorrow. Christ is He that redeems us from all evil, 2Ti 4:18. Note,

[1.] It becomes the servants of God, when they are old and dying, to witness for our God that they have found him gracious.

[2.] Our experiences of God's goodness to us are improvable, both for the encouragement of others to serve God, and for encouragement to us in blessing them and praying for them.

16 the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads;
and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers
Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst
of the earth.

17 And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the
head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand,
to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

In blessing them, he crossed hands. Joseph placed them so as that Jacob's right hand should be put on the head of Manasseh the elder, Ge 48:12, 13. But Jacob would put it on the head of Ephraim the younger, Ge 48:14. This displeased Joseph, who was willing to support the reputation of his first-born, and would therefore have removed his father's hands, Ge 48:17, 18. But Jacob gave him to understand that he know what he did, and that he did it not by mistake, nor in a humour, nor from a partial affection to one more than the other, but from a spirit of prophecy, and in compliance with the divine counsels. Manasseh should be great, but truly Ephraim should be greater. When the tribes were mustered in the wilderness, Ephraim was more numerous than Manasseh, and had the standard of that squadron (Nu 1:32, 33, 35, 2:18, 20), and is

named first, Ps 80:2. Joshua was of that tribe, so was Jeroboam. The tribe of Manasseh was divided, one half on one side Jordan, the other half on the other side, which made it the less powerful and considerable. In the foresight of this, Jacob crossed hands. Note.

(1.) God, in bestowing his blessings upon his people, gives more to some than to others, more gifts, graces, and comforts, and more of the good things of this life.

(2.) He often gives most to those that are least likely. He chooses the weak things of the world; raises the poor out of the dust. Grace observes not the order of nature, nor does God prefer those whom we think fittest to be preferred, but as it pleases him. It is observable how often God, by the distinguishing favours of his covenant, advanced the younger above the elder, Abel above Cain, Shem above Japheth, Abraham above Nahor and Haran, Isaac above Ishmael, Jacob above Esau; Judah and Joseph were preferred before Reuben, Moses before Aaron, David and Solomon before their elder brethren. See 1Sa 16:7. He tied the Jews to observe the birthright (De 21:17), but he never tied himself to observe it. Some make this typical of the preference given to the Gentiles above the Jews; the Gentile converts were much more numerous than those of the Jews. See Gal 4:27. Thus free grace becomes more illustrious.

18 And Joseph said unto his father, not so, my father: for this *is* the
firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.
19 And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it:* he also
shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his
younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become
a multitude of nations.
20 And he blessed them that day, saying,
in thee shall Israel bless, saying,
God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh:
and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.
21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die; but God shall be with
you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

The particular tokens of his favour to Joseph.

1. He left with him the promise of their return out of Egypt, as a sacred trust: I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again, Ge 48:21. Accordingly, Joseph, when he died, left it with his brethren, Ge 50:24. This assurance was given them, and carefully preserved among them, that they might neither love Egypt too much when it favoured them, nor fear it too much when it frowned upon them. These words of Jacob furnish us with comfort in reference to the death of our friends: They die; but God shall be with us, and his gracious presence is sufficient to make up the loss: they leave us, but he will never fail us. Further, He will bring us to the land of our fathers, the heavenly Canaan, whither our godly fathers have gone before us. If God be with us while we stay behind in this world, and will receive us shortly to be with those that have gone before to a better world, we ought not to sorrow as those that have no hope.

2. He bestowed one portion upon him above his brethren, Ge 48:22. The lands bequeathed are described to be those which he took out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword, and with his bow. He purchased them first (Jos 24:32), and, it seems, was afterwards disseized of them by the Amorites, but retook them by the sword, repelling force by force, and recovering his right by violence when he could not otherwise recover it. These lands he settled upon Joseph; mention is made of this grant, Joh 4:5. Pursuant to it, this parcel of ground was given to the tribe of Ephraim as their right, and the lot was never cast upon it; and in it Joseph's bones were buried, which perhaps Jacob had an eye to as much as to anything in this settlement.

Note, It may sometimes be both just and prudent to give some children portions above the rest; but a grave is that which we can most count upon as our own in this earth.

22 Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

Genesis -49

Jacob's Prophecy concerning His Sons

1 And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the last days.

2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob;
and hearken unto Israel your father.

Here is, the preface to the prophecy, in which,

1 The congregation is called together (Ge 49:2): Gather yourselves together; let them all be sent for from their several employments, to see their father die, and to hear his dying words. It was a comfort to Jacob, now that he was dying, to see all his children about him, and none missing, though he had sometimes thought himself bereaved. It was of use to them to attend him in his last moments, that they might learn of him how to die, as well as how to live: what he said to each he said in the hearing of all the rest; for we may profit by the reproofs, counsels, and comforts, that are principally intended for others. His calling upon them once and again to gather together intimated both a precept to them to unite in love, (to keep together, not to mingle with the Egyptians, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together,) and a prediction that they should not be separated from each other, as Abraham's sons and Isaac's were, but should be incorporated, and all make one people.

2. A general idea is given of the intended discourse (Ge 49:1): That I may tell you that which shall befall you (not your persons, but your posterity) in the latter days; this prediction would be of use to those that came after them, for the confirming of their faith and the guiding of their way, on their return to Canaan, and their settlement there. We cannot tell

our children what shall befall them or their families in this world; but we can tell them, from the word of God, what will befall them in the last day of all, according as they conduct themselves in this world.

3. Attention is demanded (Ge 49:2): "Hearken to Israel your father; let Israel, that has prevailed with God, prevail with you." Note, Children must diligently hearken to what their godly parents say, particularly when they are dying. Hear, you children, the instruction of a father, which carries with it both authority and affection, Pr 4:1.

3 Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn,
my might, and the beginning of my strength,
the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

The prophecy concerning Reuben. He begins with him (Ge 49:3, 4), for he was the firstborn; but by committing uncleanness with his father's wife, to the great reproach of the family to which he ought to have been an ornament, he forfeited the prerogatives of the birthright; and his dying father here solemnly degrades him, though he does not disown nor disinherit him: he shall have all the privileges of a son, but not of a firstborn. We have reason to think Reuben had repented of his sin, and it was pardoned; yet it was a necessary piece of justice, in detestation of the villany, and for warning to others, to put this mark of disgrace upon him. Now according to the method of degrading,

1. Jacob here puts upon him the ornaments of the birthright (Ge 49:3), that he and all his brethren might see what he had forfeited, and, in that, might see the evil of the sin: as the firstborn, he was his father's joy, almost his pride, being the beginning of his strength. How welcome he was to his parents his name bespeaks, Reuben, See a son. To him belonged the excellency of dignity above his brethren, and some power over them. Christ Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren, and to him, of right, belong the most excellent power and dignity: his church also, through him, is a church of firstborn.

2. He then strips him of these ornaments (Ge 49:4), lifts him up, that he may cast him down, by that one word, "Thou shalt

not excel; a being thou shalt have as a tribe, but not an excellency." No judge, prophet, nor prince, is found of that tribe, nor any person of renown except Dathan and Abiram, who were noted for their impious rebellion against Moses. That tribe, as not aiming to excel, meanly chose a settlement on the other side Jordan. Reuben himself seems to have lost all that influence upon his brethren to which his birthright entitled him; for when he spoke unto them they would not hear, Ge 42:22. Those that have not understanding and spirit to support the honours and privileges of their birth will soon lose them, and retain only the name of them. The character fastened upon Reuben, for which he is laid under this mark of infamy, is that he was unstable as water.

(1.) His virtue was unstable; he had not the government of himself and his own appetites: sometimes he would be very regular and orderly, but at other times he deviated into the wildest courses. Note, Instability is the ruin of men's excellency. Men do not thrive because they do not fix.

(2.) His honour consequently was unstable; it departed from him, vanished into smoke, and became as water spilt upon the ground. Note, Those that throw away their virtue must not expect to save their reputation. Jacob charges him particularly with the sin for which he was thus disgraced: Thou wentest up to thy father's bed. It was forty years ago that he had been guilty of this sin, yet now it is remembered against him.

Note, As time will not of itself wear off the guilt of any sin from the conscience, so there are some sins whose stains it will not wipe off from the good name, especially seventh-commandment sins. Reuben's sin left an indelible mark of infamy upon his family, a dishonour that was a wound not to be healed without a scar, Pr 6:32, 33. Let us never do evil, and then we need not fear being told of it.

4 unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because
thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then
defiledst thou *it:* he went up to my couch.

5 Simeon and Levi *are* brethren;
instruments of cruelty *are in* their habitations.

These were next in age to Reuben, and they also had been a grief and shame to Jacob, when they treacherously and barbarously destroyed the Shechemites, which he here remembers against them. Children should be afraid of incurring their parents' just displeasure, lest they fare the worse for it long afterwards, and, when they would inherit the blessing, be rejected. Observe,

1 The character of Simeon and Levi: they were brethren in disposition; but, unlike their father, they were passionate and revengeful, fierce and uncontrollable; their swords, which should have been only weapons of defence, were (as the margin reads it, Ge 49:5) weapons of violence, to do wrong to others, not to save themselves from wrong. Note, It is no new thing for the temper of children to differ very much from that of their parents. We need not think this strange: it was so in Jacob's family. It is not in the power of parents, no, not by education, to form the dispositions of their children; Jacob bred his sons to everything that was mild and quiet, and yet they proved to be thus furious.

2. A proof of this is the murder of the Shechemites, which Jacob deeply resented at the time (Ge 34:30) and still continued to resent. They slew a man, Shechem himself, and many others; and, to effect that, they digged down a wall, broke the houses, to plunder them, and murder the inhabitants. Note, The best governors cannot always restrain those under their charge from committing the worst villanies. And when two in a family are mischievous they commonly make one another so much the worse, and it were wisdom to part them. Simeon and Levi, it is probable, were most active in the wrong done to Joseph, to which some think Jacob has here some reference; for in their anger they would have slain that man. Observe what a mischievous thing self-will is in young people: Simeon and Levi would not be advised by their aged and experienced father; no, they would be governed by their own passion rather than by his prudence. Young people would better consult their own interests if they would less indulge their own will.

3. Jacob's protestation against this barbarous act of theirs: O my soul, come not thou into their secret. Hereby he professes not only his abhorrence of such practices in general, but his innocence particularly in that matter. Perhaps he had been suspected as, under-hand, aiding and abetting; he therefore thus solemnly expresses his detestation of the fact, that he might not die under that suspicion. Note, Our soul is our honour; by its powers and faculties we are distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts that perish. Note, further, We ought, from our hearts, to detest and abhor all society and confederacy with bloody and mischievous men. We must not be ambitious of coming into their secret, or knowing the depths of Satan.

4. His abhorrence of those brutish lusts that led them to this wickedness: Cursed be their anger. He does not curse their persons, but their lusts. Note,

(1.) Anger is the cause and original of a great deal of sin, and exposes us to the curse of God, and his judgment, Mt 5:22.

(2.) We ought always, in the expressions of our zeal, carefully to distinguish between the sinner and the sin, so as not to love nor bless the sin for the sake of the person, nor to hate nor curse the person for the sake of the sin.

5. A token of displeasure which he foretells their posterity should lie under for this: I will divide them. The Levites were scattered throughout all the tribes, and Simeon's lot lay not together, and was so strait that many of the tribe were forced to disperse themselves in quest of settlements and subsistence. This curse was afterwards turned into a blessing to the Levites; but the Simeonites, for Zimri's sin (Nu 25:14), had it bound on.

Note, Shameful dispersions are the just punishment of sinful unions and confederacies.

6 O my soul, come not thou into their secret;
unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united:

for in their anger they slew a man,
and in their self-will they digged down a wall.
7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce;
and their wrath, for it was cruel: I
will divide them in Jacob,
and scatter them in Israel.
8 Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise:
thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies;
thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Glorious things are here said of Judah. The mention of the crimes of the three elder of his sons had not so put the dying patriarch out of humour but that he had a blessing ready for Judah, to whom blessings belonged. Judah's name signifies praise, in allusion to which he says, Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, Ge 49:8. God was praised for him (Ge 29:35), praised by him, and praised in him; and therefore his brethren shall praise him.

Note, Those that are to God for a praise shall be the praise of their brethren. It is prophesied that, the tribe of Judah should be victorious and successful in war: Thy hand shall be in the neck of thy enemies. This was fulfilled in David, Ps 18:40.

It should be superior to the rest of the tribes; not only in itself more numerous and illustrious, but having a dominion over them: Thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah was the lawgiver, Ps 60:7. That tribe led the van through the wilderness, and in the conquest of Canaan, Jdg 1:2 The prerogatives of the birthright which Reuben had forfeited, the excellency of dignity and power, were thus conferred upon Judah.

Observe, "Thy brethren shall bow down before thee, and yet shall praise thee, reckoning themselves happy in having so wise and bold a commander."

Note, Honour and power are then a blessing to those that have them when they are not grudged and envied, but praised and applauded, and cheerfully submitted to.

9 Judah is a lion's whelp:
from the prey, my son, thou art gone up:
he stooped down, he couched as a lion,
and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

It should be a strong and courageous tribe, and so qualified for command and conquest: Judah is a lion's whelp, Ge 49:9. The lion is the king of beasts, the terror of the forest when he roars; when he seizes his prey, none can resist him; when he goes up from the prey, none dare pursue him to revenge it. By this it is foretold that the tribe of Judah should become very formidable, and should not only obtain great victories, but should peaceably and quietly enjoy what was obtained by those victories--that they should make war, not for the sake of war, but for the sake of peace. Judah is compared, not to a lion rampant, always tearing, always raging, always ranging; but to a lion couchant, enjoying the satisfaction of his power and success, without creating vexation to others: this is to be truly great.

10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor
a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh
come;
and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be.*

It should be the royal tribe, and the tribe from which Messiah the Prince should come: The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come, Ge 49:10. Jacob here foresees and foretells,

(1.) That the sceptre should come into the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, on whose family the crown was entailed.

(2.) That Shiloh should be of this tribe--his seed, that promised seed, in whom the earth should be blessed: that peaceable and prosperous one, or the Savior, so others translate it, he shall come of Judah. Thus dying Jacob, at a great distance, saw Christ's day, and it was his comfort and support on his death-bed.

(3.) That after the coming of the sceptre into the tribe of Judah it should continue in that tribe, at least a government of their own, till the coming of the Messiah, in whom, as the king of the church, and the great high priest, it was fit that both the priesthood and the royalty should determine. Till the captivity, all along from David's time, the sceptre was in Judah, and subsequently the governors of Judea were of that tribe, or of the Levites that adhered to it (which was equivalent), till Judea became a province of the Roman empire, just at the time of our Saviour's birth, and was at that time taxed as one of the provinces, Lu 2:1. And at the time of his death the Jews expressly owned, We have no king but Cæsar. Hence it is undeniably inferred against the Jews that our Lord Jesus is he that should come, and that we are to look for no other; for he came exactly at the time appointed. Many excellent pens have been admirable well employed in explaining and illustrating this famous prophecy of Christ.

11 Binding his foal unto the vine,
and his ass's colt unto the choice vine;
he washed his garments in wine,
and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

It should be a very fruitful tribe, especially that it should abound with milk for babes, and wine to make glad the heart of strong men (Ge 49:11,12)--vines so common in the hedge-rows and so strong that they should tie their asses to them, and so fruitful that they should load their asses from them--wine as plentiful as water, so that the men of that tribe should be very healthful and lively, their eyes brisk and sparkling, their teeth white. Much of what is here said concerning Judah is to be applied to our Lord Jesus.

(1.) He is the ruler of all his father's children, and the conqueror of all his father's enemies; and he it is that is the praise of all the saints.

(2.) He is the lion of the tribe of Judah, as he is called with reference to this prophecy (Re 5:5), who, having spoiled principalities and powers, went up a conqueror, and couched so as none can stir him up, when he sat down on the right hand of the Father.

(3.) To him belongs the sceptre; he is the lawgiver, and to him shall the gathering of the people be, as the desire of all nations (Ga 2:7), who, being lifted up from the earth, should draw all men unto him (Joh 12:32), and in whom the children of God that are scattered abroad should meet as the centre of their unity, Joh 11:52.

(4.) In him there is plenty of all that which is nourishing and refreshing to the soul, and which maintains and cheers the divine life in it; in him we may have wine and milk, the riches of Judah's tribe, without money and without price, Isa 55:1.

12 his eyes *shall be* red with wine, and
his teeth white with milk.

13 Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea;
and he *shall be* for a haven of ships;
and his border *shall be* unto Zidon.

Concerning Zebulun (Ge 49:13), that his posterity should have their lot upon the seacoast, and should be merchants, and mariners, and traders at sea. This was fulfilled when, two or three hundred years after, the land of Canaan was divided by lot, and the border of Zebulun went up towards the sea, Jos 19:11. Had they chosen their lot themselves, or Joshua appointed it, we might have supposed it done with design to make Jacob's words good; but, being done by lot, it appears that it was divinely disposed, and Jacob divinely inspired. Note, The lot of God's providence exactly agrees with the plan of God's counsel, like a true copy with the original. If prophecy says, Zebulun shall be a haven of ships, Providence will so plant him. Note,

1. God appoints the bounds of our habitation.

2. It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our lot and to improve it. If Zebulun dwell at the haven of the sea, let him be for a haven of ships.

14 Issachar *is* a strong ass
couching down between two burdens:

Concerning Issachar, Ge 49:14, 15.

1. That the men of that tribe should be strong and industrious, fit for labour and inclined to labour, particularly the toil of husbandry, like the ass, that patiently carries his burden, and, by using himself to it, makes it the easier. Issachar submitted to two burdens, tillage and tribute. It was a tribe that took pains, and, thriving thereby, was called upon for rents and taxes.

2. That they should be encouraged in their labour by the goodness of the land that should fall to their lot.

(1.) He saw that rest at home was good. Note, The labour of the husbandman is really rest, in comparison with that of soldiers and seamen, whose hurries and perils are such that those who tarry at home in the most constant service have no reason to envy them.

(2.) He saw that the land was pleasant, yielding not only pleasant prospects to charm the eye of the curious, but pleasant fruits to recompense his toils. Many are the pleasures of a country life, abundantly sufficient to balance the inconveniences of it, if we can but persuade ourselves to think so, Issachar, in prospect of advantage, bowed his shoulders to bear: let us, with an eye of faith, see the heavenly rest to be good, and that land of promise to be pleasant; and this will make our present services easy, and encourage us to bow our shoulder to them.

15 and he saw that rest *was* good, and the
land that *it was* pleasant; and bowed his
shoulder to bear, and became a servant
unto tribute.

16 Dan shall judge his people, as one
of the tribes of Israel.

Matthew Henry Commentary:

Concerning Dan, Ge 49:16, 17. What is said concerning Dan has reference either,

1. To that tribe in general, that though Dan was one of the sons of the concubines yet he should be a tribe governed by judges of his own as well as other tribes, and should, by art, and policy, and surprise, gain advantages against his enemies, like a serpent suddenly biting the heel of the traveller.

Note, In God's spiritual Israel there is no distinction made of bond or free, Col 3:11. Dan shall be incorporated by as good a charter as any of the other tribes. Note, also, Some, like Dan, may excel in the subtlety of the serpent, as others, like Judah, in the courage of the lion; and both may do good service to the cause of God against the Canaanites. Or it may refer,

2. To Samson, who was of that tribe, and judged Israel, that is, delivered them out of the hands of the Philistines, not as the other judges, by fighting them in the field, but by the vexations and annoyances he gave them underhand: when he pulled the house down under the Philistines that were upon the roof of it, he made the horse throw his rider.

Other commentaries:

Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. With a play upon his name, the firstborn son of Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah, is described as one who should occupy an important place and exercise highly beneficial functions in the future commonwealth, enjoying independence and self-government as one of the tribes of Israel (Herder, and others), and performing the office of an administrator among the People not of his own tribe merely, but also of all Israel, a prediction pointing perhaps to the transient supremacy enjoyed by Dan over the other tribes in the days of Samson (Onkelos, et alii). Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. The שְׁפִיפוֹן, from the Syriac פּשֶׁפַ, to glide (Gesenins), from שׁוּף, to sting (Kalisch), שָׁפַף, to bite (Furst), was the horned serpent, cerastes, of the color of sand, and marked with white and black spots, which was exceedingly dangerous to passers-by, its bite being poisonous and fatal. The allusion has been almost unanimously explained as pointing to Samson (Judges

16:28), but the tribe in general appears not to have been entirely destitute of the treacherous and formidable characteristics here depicted (Judges 18:27). "It is certainly observable that the first introduction of idolatry in Israel is ascribed to the tribe of Dan (Judges 18.), and that in the numbering of the tribes in Revelation 7 the name of Dan is omitted. From these or other causes many of the Fathers (Irenaeus, Ambrose, Augustine, Theodoret) were led to believe that Antichrist should spring from the tribe of Dan" ('Speaker's Commentary').

17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way,
an adder in the path,
that biteth the horse heels,
so that his rider shall fall backward.
18 I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.
19 Gad, a troop shall overcome him:
but he shall overcome at the last.

Concerning Gad, Ge 49:19. He alludes to his name, which signifies a troop, foresees the character of that tribe, that it should be a warlike tribe, and so we find (1Ch 12:8); the Gadites were men of war fit for the battle. He foresees that the situation of that tribe on the other side Jordan would expose it to the incursions of its neighbours, the Moabites and Ammonites; and, that they might not be proud of their strength and valour, he foretells that the troops of their enemies should, in many skirmishes, overcome them; yet, that they might not be discouraged by their defeats, he assures them that they should overcome at the last, which was fulfilled when, in Saul's time and David's, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly subdued: see 1Ch 5:18-22, &c.

Note, The cause of God and his people, though it may seem for a time to be baffled and run down, will yet be victorious at last. Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello--We are foiled in a battle, but not in a campaign. Grace in the soul is often foiled in its conflicts, troops of corruption overcome it, but the cause is God's, and grace will in the issue come off conqueror, yea, more than conqueror, Ro 8:37.

20 Out of Asher his bread *shall be* fat, and
he shall yield royal dainties.

Concerning Asher (Ge 49:20), that it should be a very rich tribe, replenished not only with bread for necessity, but with fatness, with dainties, royal dainties (for the king himself is served of the field, Ec 5:9), and these exported out of Asher to other tribes, perhaps to other lands. Note, The God of nature has provided for us not only necessaries but dainties, that we might call him a bountiful benefactor; yet, whereas all places are competently furnished with necessaries, only some places afford dainties. Corn is more common than spices. Were the supports of luxury as universal as the supports of life, the world would be worse than it is, and that it needs not be.

21 Naphtali *is* a hind let loose:
he giveth goodly words.

Concerning Naphtali (Ge 49:21), a tribe that carries struggles in its name; it signifies wrestling, and the blessing entailed upon it signifies prevailing; it is a hind let loose. Though we find not this prediction so fully answered in the event as some of the rest, yet, no doubt, it proved true that those of this tribe were,

1. As the loving hind (for that is her epithet, Pr 5:19), friendly and obliging to one another and to other tribes; their converse remarkably kind and endearing.

2. As the loosened hind, zealous for their liberty.

3. As the swift hind (Ps 18:33), quick in despatch of business; and perhaps,

4. As the trembling, timorous in times of public danger. It is rare that those that are most amiable to their friends are most formidable to their enemies.

5. That they should be affable and courteous, their language refined, and they complaisant, giving goodly words. Note, Among God's Israel there is to be found a great variety of dispositions, contrary to each other, yet all contributing to the

beauty and strength of the body, Judah like a lion, Issachar like an ass, Dan like a serpent, Naphtali like a hind. Let not those of different tempers and gifts censure one another, nor envy one another, any more than those of different statures and complexions.

22 Joseph *is* a fruitful bough,
even a fruitful bough by a well;
whose branches run over the wall:

He closes with the blessings of his best beloved sons, Joseph and Benjamin; with these he will breathe his last.

The blessing of Joseph, which is very large and full. He is compared (Ge 49:22) to a fruitful bough, or young tree; for God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction; he owned it, Ge 41:52. His two sons were as branches of a vine, or other spreading plant, running over the wall. Note, God can make those fruitful, great comforts to themselves and others, who have been looked upon as dry and withered. More is recorded in the history concerning Joseph than concerning any other of Jacob's sons; and therefore what Jacob says of him is historical as well as prophetical. Observe,

1 The providences of God concerning Joseph, Ge 49:23, 24. These are mentioned to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Jacob's faith and hope, that God had blessings in store for his seed. Here observe

(1.) Joseph's straits and troubles, Ge 49:23. Though he now lived at ease and in honour, Jacob reminds him of the difficulties he had formerly waded through. He had had many enemies, here called archers, being skillful to do mischief, masters of their art of persecution. They hated him: there persecution begins. They shot their poisonous darts at him, and thus they sorely grieved him. His brethren, in his father's house, were very spiteful towards him, mocked him, stripped him, threatened him, sold him, thought they had been the death of him. His mistress, in the house of Potiphar, sorely grieved him, and shot at him, when she impudently assaulted his chastity (temptations are fiery darts, thorns in the flesh, sorely grievous to gracious souls); when she prevailed not in

this, she hated him, and shot at him by her false accusations, arrows against which there is little fence but the hold God has in the consciences of the worst of men. Doubtless he had enemies in the court of Pharaoh, that envied his preferment, and sought to undermine him.

(2.) Joseph's strength and support under all these troubles (Ge 49:24): His bow abode in strength, that is, his faith did not fail, but he kept his ground, and came off a conqueror. The arms of his hands were made strong, that is, his other graces did their part, his wisdom, courage, and patience, which are better than weapons of war. In short, he maintained both his integrity and his comfort through all his trials; he bore all his burdens with an invincible resolution, and did not sink under them, nor do any thing unbecoming him.

(3.) The spring and fountain of this strength; it was by the hands of the mighty God, who was therefore able to strengthen him, and the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with him, and therefore engaged to help him. All our strength for the resisting of temptations, and the bearing of afflictions, comes from God: his grace is sufficient, and his strength is perfected in our weakness.

(4.) The state of honour and usefulness to which he was subsequently advanced: Thence (from this strange method of providence) he became the shepherd and stone, the feeder and supporter, of God's Israel, Jacob and his family. Herein Joseph was a type,

[1.] Of Christ; he was shot at and hated, but borne up under his sufferings (Isa 50:7-9), and was afterwards advanced to be the shepherd and stone.

[2.] Of the church in general, and particular believers; hell shoots its arrows against the saints, but Heaven protects and strengthens them, and will crown them.

23 the archers have sorely grieved him, and
shot *at him,* and hated him:
24 but his bow abode in strength,

and the arms of his hands were made strong by
the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob;
(from thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel;)
25 *even* by the God of thy father, who shall help thee;
and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with
blessings of heaven above,
blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings
of the breasts, and of the womb:

The promises of God to Joseph. See how these are connected with the former: Even by the God of thy father Jacob, who shall help thee, Ge 49:25. Note, Our experiences of God's power and goodness in strengthening us hitherto are our encouragements still to hope for help from him; he that has helped us will help: we may build much upon our Eben-ezers. See what Joseph may expect from the Almighty, even the God of his father.

(1.) He shall help thee in difficulties and dangers which may yet be before thee, help thy seed in their wars. Joshua came from him, who commanded in chief in the wars of Canaan.

(2.) He shall bless thee; and he only blesses indeed. Jacob prays for a blessing upon Joseph, but the God of Jacob commands the blessing. Observe the blessings conferred on Joseph.

[1.] Various and abundant blessings: Blessings of heaven above (rain in its season, and fair weather in its season, and the benign influences of the heavenly bodies); blessings of the deep that lieth under this earth, which, compared with the upper world, is but a great deep, with subterraneous mines and springs. Spiritual blessings are blessings of heaven above, which we ought to desire and seek for in the first place, and to which we must give the preference; while temporal blessings, those of this earth, must lie under in our account and esteem. Blessings of the womb and the breasts are given when children are safely born and comfortably nursed. In the word of God, by which we are born again, and nourished up (1Pe

1:23, 2:2), there are to the new man blessings both of the womb and the breasts.

[2.] Eminent and transcendent blessings, which prevail above the blessings of my progenitors, Ge 49:26. His father Isaac had but one blessing, and, when he had given that to Jacob, he was at a loss for a blessing to bestow upon Esau; but Jacob had a blessing for each of his twelve sons, and now, at the latter end, a copious one for Joseph. The great blessing entailed upon that family was increase, which did not so immediately and so signally follow the blessings which Abraham and Isaac gave to their sons as it followed the blessing which Jacob gave to his; for, soon after his death, they multiplied exceedingly.

[3.] Durable and extensive blessings: Unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, including all the productions of the most fruitful hills, and lasting as long as they last, Isa 54:10. Note, the blessings of the everlasting God include the riches of the everlasting hills, and much more. Well, of these blessings it is here said, They shall be, so it is a promise, or, Let them be, so it is a prayer, on the head of Joseph, to which let them be as a crown to adorn it and a helmet to protect it. Joseph was separated from his brethren (so we read it) for a time; yet, as others read it, he was a Nazarite among his brethren, better and more excellent than they.

Note, It is no new thing for the best men to meet with the worst usage, for Nazarites among their brethren to be cast out and separated from their brethren; but the blessing of God will make it up to them.

26 the blessings of thy father have prevailed
above the blessings of my progenitors
unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills:
they shall be on the head of Joseph,
and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

27 Benjamin shall raven *as* a wolf:
in the morning he shall devour the prey, and
at night he shall divide the spoil.

The blessing of Benjamin (Ge 49:27): He shall raven as a wolf; it is plain by this that Jacob was guided in what he said by a spirit of prophecy, and not by natural affection; else he would have spoken with more tenderness of his beloved son Benjamin, concerning whom he only foresees and foretells this, that his posterity should be a warlike tribe, strong and daring, and that they should enrich themselves with the spoils of their enemies--that they should be active and busy in the world, and a tribe as much feared by their neighbours as any other: In the morning, he shall devour the prey, which he seized and divided over night. Or, in the first times of Israel, they shall be noted for activity, though many of them left-handed, Jdg 3:15, 20:16. Ehud the second judge, and Saul the first king, were of this tribe; and so also in the last times Esther and Mordecai, by whom the enemies of the Jews were destroyed, were of this tribe. The Benjamites ravened like wolves when they desperately espoused the cause of the men of Gibeah, those men of Belial, Jdg 20:14. Blessed Paul was of this tribe (Ro 11:1, Php 3:5); and he did, in the morning of his day, devour the prey as a persecutor, but, in the evening, divided the spoil as a preacher. Note, God can serve his own purposes by the different tempers of men; the deceived and the deceiver are his.

The Death and Burial of Jacob

28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel: and this *is it* that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

Here is, the summing up of the blessings of Jacob's sons, Ge 49:28. Though Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were put under the marks of their father's displeasure, yet he is said to bless them every one according to his blessing; for none of them were rejected as Esau was. Note, Whatever rebukes of God's word or providence we are under at any time, yet, as long as we have an interest in God's covenant, a place and a name among his people, and good hopes of a share in the heavenly Canaan, we must account ourselves blessed.

29 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30 in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before
Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the
field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place.

The solemn charge Jacob gave them concerning his burial, which is a repetition of what he had before given to Joseph. See how he speaks of death, now that he is dying: I am to be gathered unto my people, Ge 49:29. Note, It is good to represent death to ourselves under the most desirable images, that the terror of it may be taken off. Though it separates us from our children and our people in this world, it gathers us to our fathers and to our people in the other world. Perhaps Jacob uses this expression concerning death as a reason why his sons should bury him in Canaan; for, says he, "I am to be gathered unto my people, my soul must go to the spirits of just men made perfect: and therefore bury me with my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and their wives," Ge 49:31. Observe,

1. His heart was very much upon it, not so much from a natural affection to his native soil as from a principle of faith in the promise of God, that Canaan should be the inheritance of his seed in due time. Thus he would keep up in his sons a remembrance of the promised land, and not only would have their acquaintance with it renewed by a journey thither on that occasion, but their desire towards it and their expectation of it preserved.

2. He is very particular in describing the place both by the situation of it and by the purchase Abraham had made of it for a burying-place, Ge 49:30,32. He was afraid lest his sons, after seventeen years' sojourning in Egypt, had forgotten Canaan, and even the burying-place of their ancestors there, or lest the Canaanites should dispute his title to it; and therefore he specifies it thus largely, and the purchase of it, even when he lies a-dying, not only to prevent mistakes, but to show how mindful he was of that country. Note, It is, and should be, a great pleasure to dying saints to fix their thoughts upon the heavenly Canaan, and the rest they hope for there after death.

31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried
Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

32 The purchase of the field and of the cave that *is* therein *was* from the children of Heth.

33 And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

The death of Jacob, Ge 49:33. When he had finished both his blessing and his charge (both which are included in the commanding of his sons), and so had finished his testimony, he addressed himself to his dying work.

1. He put himself into a posture for dying; having before seated himself upon the bed-side, to bless his sons (the spirit of prophecy bringing fresh oil to his expiring lamp, Da 10:19), when that work was done, he gathered up his feet into the bed, that he might lie along, not only as one patiently submitting to the stroke, but as one cheerfully composing himself to rest, now that he was weary. I will lay me down, and sleep.

2. He freely resigned his spirit into the hand of God, the Father of spirits: He yielded up the ghost.

3. His separated soul went to the assembly of the souls of the faithful, which, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity: he was gathered to his people. Note, If God's people be our people, death will gather us to them.

Genesis -50

1 And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

Joseph is here paying his last respects to his deceased father. With tears and kisses, and all the tender expressions of a filial affection, he takes leave of the deserted body, Ge 50:1. Though Jacob was old and decrepit, and must needs die in the course of nature--though he was poor comparatively, and a constant charge to his son Joseph, yet such an affection he had for a loving father, and so sensible was he of the loss of a prudent, pious, praying father, that he could not part with him without floods of tears. Note, As it is an honour to die lamented, so it is the duty of survivors to lament the death of those who have been useful in their day, though for some time they may have survived their usefulness. The departed soul is out of the reach of our tears and kisses, but with them it is proper to show our respect to the poor body, of which we look for a glorious and joyful resurrection. Thus Joseph showed his faith in God, and love to his father, by kissing his pale and cold lips, and so giving an affectionate farewell. Probably the rest of Jacob's sons did the same, much moved, no doubt, with his dying words.

2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel.

He ordered the body to be embalmed (Ge 50:2), not only because he died in Egypt, and that was the manner of the Egyptians, but because he was to be carried to Canaan, which would be a work of time, and therefore it was necessary the body should be preserved as well as it might be from putrefaction. See how vile our bodies are, when the soul has forsaken them; without a great deal of art, and pains, and care, they will, in a very little time, become noisome. If the body have been dead four days, by that time it is offensive.

3 And forty days were fulfilled for him; for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed: and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days.

He observed the ceremony of solemn mourning for him, Ge 50:3. Forty days were taken up in embalming the body, which the Egyptians (they say) had an art of doing so curiously as to preserve the very features of the face unchanged; all this time, and thirty days more, seventy in all, they either confined themselves and sat solitary, or, when they went out, appeared in the habit of close mourners, according to the decent custom of the country. Even the Egyptians, many of them, out of the great respect they had for Joseph (whose good offices done for the king and country were now fresh in remembrance), put themselves into mourning for his father: as with us, when the court goes into mourning, those of the best quality do so too. About ten weeks was the court of Egypt in mourning for Jacob. Note, What they did in state, we should do in sincerity, weep with those that weep, and mourn with those that mourn, as being ourselves also in the body.

4 And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, if now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

He asked and obtained leave of Pharaoh to go to Canaan, thither to attend the funeral of his father, Ge 50:4-6.

(1.) It was a piece of necessary respect to Pharaoh that he would not go without leave; for we may suppose that, though his charge about the corn was long since over, yet he continued a prime-minister of state, and therefore would not be so long absent from his business without licence.

(2.) He observed a decorum, in employing some of the royal family, or some of the officers of the household, to intercede for this licence, either because it was not proper for him in the days of his mourning to come into the presence-chamber, or because he would not presume too much upon his own interest. Note, Modesty is a great ornament to dignity.

(3.) He pleaded the obligation his father had laid upon him, by an oath, to bury him in Canaan, Ge 50:5. It was not from pride or humour, but from his regard to an indispensable duty, that he desired it. All nations reckon that oaths must be performed, and the will of the dead must be observed.

(4.) He promised to return: I will come again. When we return to our own houses from burying the bodies of our relations, we say, "We have left them behind;" but, if their souls have gone to our heavenly Father's house, we may say with more reason, "They have left us behind."

(5.) He obtained leave (Ge 50:6): Go and bury thy father. Pharaoh was willing his business should stand still so long; but the service of Christ is more needful, and therefore he would not allow one that had work to do for him to go first and bury his father; no, Let the dead bury their dead, Mt 8:22.

5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

6 And Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

7 And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

We have here an account of Jacob's funeral. Of the funerals of the kings of Judah, usually, no more is said than this, They were buried with their fathers in the city of David: but the funeral of the patriarch Jacob is more largely and fully described, to show how much better God was to him than he expected (he had spoken more than once of dying for grief, and going to the grave bereaved of his children, but, behold, he dies in honour, and is followed to the grave by all his children), and also because his orders concerning his burial were given and observed in faith, and in expectation both of the earthly and of the heavenly Canaan.

Now, it was a stately funeral. He was attended to the grave, not only by his own family, but by the courtiers, and all the great men of the kingdom, who, in token of their gratitude to Joseph, showed this respect to his father for his sake, and did him honour at his death. Though the Egyptians had had an antipathy to the Hebrews, and had looked upon them with disdain (Ge 43:32), yet now, that they were better acquainted with them, they began to have a respect for them. Good old Jacob had conducted himself so well among them as to gain universal esteem. Note, Professors of religion should endeavour, by wisdom and love, to remove the prejudices which many may have conceived against them because they do not know them. There went abundance of chariots and horsemen, not only to attend them a little way, but to go through with them. Note, The decent solemnities of funerals, according to a man's situation, are very commendable; and we must not say of them, To what purpose is this waste? See Ac 8:2, Lu 7:12.

8 and all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house:
only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in
the land of Goshen.

9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it
was a very great company.

10 And they came to the threshingfloor of Atad, which *is* beyond
Jordan; and there they mourned with a great and very sore
lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

It was a sorrowful funeral (Ge 50:10, 11); standers-by took notice of it as a grievous mourning. Note, The death of good men is a great loss to any place, and ought to be greatly lamented. Stephen dies a martyr, and yet devout men make great lamentations for him. The solemn mourning for Jacob gave a name to the place, Abel-Mizraim, the mourning of the Egyptians, which served for a testimony against the next generation of the Egyptians, who oppressed the posterity of this Jacob to whom their ancestors showed such respect.

11 And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the
mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, this *is* a grievous
mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called

Abel-mizraim [the mourning of the Egyptians], which *is* beyond
Jordan.
12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them:
13 for his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in
the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with
the field for a possession of a burying place of Ephron the Hittite,
before Mamre.
14 And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that
went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

The Death of Joseph

15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said,
Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all
the evil which we did unto him.

We have here the settling of a good correspondence between Joseph and his brethren, now that their father was dead. Joseph was at court, in the royal city; his brethren were in Goshen, remote in the country; yet the keeping up of a good understanding, and a good affection, between them, would be both his honour and their interest. Note, When Providence has removed the parents by death, the best methods ought to be taken, not only for the preventing of quarrels among the children (which often happen about the dividing of the estate), but for the preserving of acquaintance and love, that unity may continue even when that centre of unity is taken away.

Joseph's brethren humbly make their court to him for his favour.

1. They began to be jealous of Joseph, not that he had given them any cause to be so, but the consciousness of guilt, and of their own inability in such a case to forgive and forget, made them suspicious of the sincerity and constancy of Joseph's favour (Ge 50:15): Joseph will peradventure hate us. While their father lived, they thought themselves safe under his shadow; but now that he was dead they feared the worst from Joseph. Note, A guilty conscience exposes men to

continual frights, even where no fear is, and makes them suspicious of everybody, as Cain, Ge 4:14. Those that would be fearless must keep themselves guiltless. If our heart reproach us not, then have we confidence both towards God and man.

2. They humbled themselves before him, confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. They did it by proxy (Ge 50:17); they did it in person, Ge 50:18. Now that the sun and moon had set, the eleven stars did homage to Joseph, for the further accomplishment of his dream. They speak of their former offence with fresh regret: Forgive the trespass. They throw themselves at Joseph's feet, and refer themselves to his mercy: We are thy servants. Thus we must bewail the sins we committed long ago, even those which we hope through grace are forgiven; and, when we pray to God for pardon, we must promise to be his servants.

3. They pleaded their relation to Jacob and to Jacob's God.

(1.) To Jacob, urging that he directed them to make this submission, rather because he questioned whether they would do their duty in humbling themselves than because he questioned whether Joseph would do his duty in forgiving them; nor could he reasonably expect Joseph's kindness to them unless they thus qualified themselves for it (Ge 50:16): Thy father did command. Thus, in humbling ourselves to Christ by faith and repentance, we may plead that it is the command of his Father, and our Father, that we do so.

(2.) To Jacob's God. They plead (Ge 50:17), We are the servants of the God of thy father; not only children of the same Jacob, but worshippers of the same Jehovah. Note, Though we must be ready to forgive all that are any way injurious to us, yet we must especially take heed of bearing malice towards any that are the servants of the God of our father: such we should always treat with a peculiar tenderness; for we and they have the same Master.

16 And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

Joseph, with a great deal of compassion, confirms his reconciliation and affection to them; his compassion appears, Ge 50:17. He wept when they spoke to him. These were tears of sorrow for their suspicion of him, and tears of tenderness upon their submission. In his reply, he directs them to look up to God in their repentance (Ge 50:19): Am I in the place of God? He, in his great humility, thought they showed him too much respect, as if all their happiness were bound up in his favour, and said to them, in effect, as Peter to Cornelius, "Stand up, I myself also am a man. Make your peace with God, and then you will find it an easy matter to make your peace with me." Note, When we ask forgiveness of those whom we have offended we must take heed of putting them in the place of God, by dreading their wrath and soliciting their favour more than God's. "Am I in the place of God, to whom alone vengeance belongs? No, I will leave you to his mercy." Those that avenge themselves step into the place of God, Ro 12:19.

18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants.

19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

He extenuates their fault, from the consideration of the great good which God wonderfully brought out of it, which, though it should not make them the less sorry for their sin, yet might make him the more willing to forgive it (Ge 50:20): You thought evil (to disappoint the dreams), but God meant it unto good, in order to the fulfilling of the dreams, and the making of Joseph a greater blessing to his family than otherwise he could have been.

Note, When God makes use of men's agency for the performance of his counsels, it is common for him to mean one thing and them another, even the quite contrary, but God's counsel shall stand. See Isa 10:7. Again, God often brings good out of evil, and promotes the designs of his providence even by the sins of men; not that he is the author of sin, far be it from us to think so; but his infinite wisdom so overrules events, and directs the chain of them, that, in the issue, that ends in his praise which in its own nature had a direct tendency to his dishonour; as the putting of Christ to death, Ac 2:23. This does not make sin the less sinful, nor sinners the less punishable, but it redounds greatly to the glory of God's wisdom.

21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones.
And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

He assures them of the continuance of his kindness to them: Fear not; I will nourish you, Ge 50:21. See what an excellent spirit Joseph was of, and learn of him to render good for evil. He did not tell them they were upon their good behaviour, and he would be kind to them if he saw they conducted themselves well; no, he would not thus hold them in suspense, nor seem jealous of them, though they had been suspicious of him: He comforted them, and, to banish all their fears, he spoke kindly to them. Note, Broken spirits must be bound up and encouraged. Those we love and forgive we must not only do well for but speak kindly to.

22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived a hundred and ten years.

23 And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third *generation:* the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

The building up of Joseph's family: he lived to see his great-grand-children by both his sons (Ge 50:23), and probably he saw his two sons solemnly owned as heads of distinct tribes, equal to any of his brethren. It contributes much to the comfort of aged parents if they see their posterity in a flourishing condition, especially if with it they see peace upon Israel, Ps 128:6.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The last will and testament of Joseph published in the presence of his brethren, when he saw his death approaching. Those that were properly his brethren perhaps were some of them dead before him, as several of them were older than he; but to those of them who yet survived, and to the sons of those who were gone, who stood up in their fathers' stead, he said this.

1. He comforted them with the assurance of their return to Canaan in due time: I die, but God will surely visit you, Ge 50:24. To this purport Jacob had spoken to him, Ge 48:21. Thus must we comfort others with the same comforts with which we ourselves have been comforted of God, and encourage them to rest on those promises which have been our support. Joseph was, under God, both the protector and the benefactor of his brethren; and what would become of them now that he was dying? Why, let this be their comfort, God will surely visit you. Note, God's gracious visits will serve to make up the loss of our best friends. They die; but we may live, and live comfortably, if we have the favour and presence of God with us. He bids them be confident: God will bring you out of this land, and therefore,

(1.) They must not hope to settle there, nor look upon it as their rest for ever; they must set their hearts upon the land of promise, and call that their home.

(2.) They must not fear sinking, and being ruined there; probably he foresaw the ill usage they would meet with there after his death, and therefore gives them this word of encouragement: "God will bring you in triumph out of this land at last." Herein he has an eye to the promise, Ge 15:13, 14, and, in God's name, assures them of the performance of it.

2. For a confession of his own faith, and a confirmation of theirs, he charges them to keep him unburied till that day, that glorious day, should come, when they should be settled in the land of promise, Ge 50:25. He makes them promise him with an oath that they would bury him in Canaan. In Egypt they buried their great men very honourably and with abundance of pomp; but Joseph prefers a significant burial in Canaan, and that deferred too almost 200 years, before a magnificent one in Egypt. Thus Joseph, by faith in the doctrine of the resurrection and the promise of Canaan, gave commandment concerning his bones, Heb 11:22. He dies in Egypt; but lays his bones at stake that God will surely visit Israel, and bring them to Canaan.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

The death of Joseph, and the reservation of his body for a burial in Canaan, Ge 50:26. He was put in a coffin in Egypt, but not buried till his children had received their inheritance in Canaan, Jos 24:32. Note,

1. If the separate soul, at death, do but return to its rest with God, the matter is not great though the deserted body find not at all, or not quickly, its rest in the grave.

2. Yet care ought to be taken of the dead bodies of the saints, in the belief of their resurrection; for there is a covenant with the dust, which shall be remembered, and a commandment is given concerning the bones.

26 So Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

The Second Book of Moses, Called

Exodus

[Exodus]

Exodus-1

The Affliction of the Israelites in Egypt

1 Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel, which came into
Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.
2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,
3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,
4 Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.
5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy
souls: for Joseph was in Egypt *already*.
6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation.

The death of Joseph, Ex 1:6. All that generation by degrees wore off. Perhaps all Jacob's sons died much about the same time; for there was not more than seven years' difference in age between the eldest and the youngest of them, except Benjamin; and, when death comes into a family, sometimes it makes a full end in a little time. When Joseph, the stay of the family, died, the rest went off apace. Note, We must look upon ourselves and our brethren, and all we converse with, as dying and hastening out of the world. This generation passeth away, as that did which went before.

7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly,
and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled
with them.

The strange increase of Israel in Egypt, Ex 1:7. Here are four words used to express it: They were fruitful, and increased abundantly, like fishes or insects, so that they multiplied; and, being generally healthful and strong, they waxed exceedingly mighty, so that they began almost to outnumber the natives, for the land was in all places filled with them, at least Goshen, their own allotment. Observe,

(1.) Though, no doubt, they increased considerably before, yet, it should seem, it was not till after the death of Joseph that it began to be taken notice of as extraordinary. Thus, when they lost the benefit of his protection, God made their numbers their defence, and they became better able than they had been to shift for themselves. If God continue our friends and relations to us while we most need them, and remove them when they can be better spared, let us own that he is wise, and not complain that he is hard upon us. After the death of Christ, our Joseph, his gospel Israel began most remarkably to increase: and his death had an influence upon it; it was like the sowing of a corn of wheat, which, if it die, bringeth forth much fruit, Joh 12:24.

(2.) This wonderful increase was the fulfillment of the promise long before made unto the fathers. From the call of Abraham, when God first told him he would make of him a great nation, to the deliverance of his seed out of Egypt, it was 430 years, during the first 215 of which they were increased but to seventy, but, in the latter half, those seventy multiplied to 600,000 fighting men. Note,

[1.] Sometimes God's providences may seem for a great while to thwart his promises, and to go counter to them, that his people's faith may be tried, and his own power the more magnified.

[2.] Though the performance of God's promises is sometimes slow, yet it is always sure; at the end it shall speak, and not lie, Hab 2:3.

8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

The land of Egypt here, at length, becomes to Israel a house of bondage, though hitherto it had been a happy shelter and settlement for them. Note, The place of our satisfaction may soon become the place of our affliction, and that may prove the greatest cross to us of which we said, This same shall comfort us. Those may prove our sworn enemies whose parents were our faithful friends; nay, the same persons that loved us may possibly turn to hate us: therefore cease from man, and say not concerning any place on this side heaven, This is my rest for ever. Observe here,

The obligations they lay under to Israel upon Joseph's account were forgotten: There arose a new king, after several successions in Joseph's time, who knew not Joseph, Ex 1:8. All that knew him loved him, and were kind to his relations for his sake; but when he was dead he was soon forgotten, and the remembrance of the good offices he had done was either not retained or not regarded, nor had it any influence upon their councils. Note, the best and the most useful and acceptable services done to men are seldom remembered, so as to be recompensed to those that did them, in the notice taken either of their memory, or of their posterity, after their death, Ec 9:5,15. Therefore our great care should be to serve God, and please him, who is not unrighteous, whatever men are, to forget our work and labour of love, Heb 6:10. If we work for men only, our works, at furthest, will die with us; if for God, they will follow us, Re 14:13. This king of Egypt knew not Joseph; and after him arose one that had the impudence to say, I know not the Lord, Ex 5:2. Note, Those that are unmindful of their other benefactors, it is to be feared, will forget the supreme benefactor, 1Jo 4:20.

9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we:

10 come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and *so* get them up out of the land.

Reasons of state were suggested for their dealing hardly with Israel, Ex 1:9, 10.

1. They are represented as more and mightier than the Egyptians; certainly they were not so, but the king of Egypt, when he resolved to oppress them, would have them thought so, and looked on as a formidable body.

2. Hence it is inferred that if care were not taken to keep them under they would become dangerous to the government, and in time of war would side with their enemies and revolt from their allegiance to the crown of Egypt. Note, It has been the policy of persecutors to represent God's Israel as a dangerous people, hurtful to kings and provinces, not fit to be trusted, nay, not fit to

be tolerated, that they may have some pretence for the barbarous treatment they design them, Ezr 4:12,Es 3:8. Observe, The thing they feared was lest they should get them up out of the land, probably having heard them speak of the promise made to their fathers that they should settle in Canaan.

Note, The policies of the church's enemies aim to defeat the promises of the church's God, but in vain; God's counsels shall stand.

3. It is therefore proposed that a course be taken to prevent their increase: Come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply. Note,

(1.) The growth of Israel is the grief of Egypt, and that against which the powers and policies of hell are levelled.

(2.) When men deal wickedly, it is common for them to imagine that they deal wisely; but the folly of sin will, at last, be manifested before all men.

11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

The wonderful increase of the Israelites, notwithstanding the oppressions they groaned under (Ex 1:12): The more they afflicted them the more they multiplied, sorely to the grief and vexation of the Egyptians. Note,

1. Times of affliction have often been the church's growing times, Sub pondere crescit--Being pressed, it grows. Christianity spread most when it was persecuted: the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.

2. Those that take counsel against the Lord and his Israel do but imagine a vain thing (Ps 2:1), and create so much the greater vexation to themselves: hell and earth cannot diminish those whom Heaven will increase.

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor:

14 and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, *was* with rigor.

The method they took to suppress them, and check their growth, Ex 1:11, 13, and 14. The Israelites behaved themselves so peaceably and inoffensively that they could not find any occasion of making war upon them, and weakening them by that means: and therefore,

1. They took care to keep them poor, by charging them with heavy taxes, which, some think, is included in the burdens with which they afflicted them.

2. By this means they took an effectual course to make them slaves. The Israelites, it should seem, were much more industrious laborious people than the Egyptians, and therefore Pharaoh took care to find them work, both in building (they built him treasure-cities), and in husbandry, even all manner of service in the field: and this was exacted from them with the utmost rigour and severity. Here are many expressions used, to affect us with the condition of God's people. They had taskmasters set over them, who were directed, not only to burden them, but, as much as might be, to afflict them with their burdens, and contrive how to make them grievous. They not only made them serve, which was sufficient for Pharaoh's profit, but they made them serve with rigour, so that their lives became bitter to them, intending hereby,

(1.) To break their spirits, and rob them of everything in them that was ingenuous and generous.

(2.) To ruin their health and shorten their days, and so diminish their numbers.

(3.) To discourage them from marrying, since their children would be born to slavery.

(4.) To oblige them to desert the Hebrews, and incorporate themselves with the Egyptians. Thus he hoped to cut off the name of Israel, that it might be no more in remembrance. And it is to be feared that the oppression they were under had this bad effect

upon them, that it brought over many of them to join with the Egyptians in their idolatrous worship; for we read (Jos 24:14) that they served other gods in Egypt; and, though it is not mentioned here in this history, yet we find (Eze 20:8) that God had threatened to destroy them for it, even while they were in the land of Egypt: however, they were kept a distinct body, unmingled with the Egyptians, and by their other customs separated from them, which was the Lord's doing, and marvellous.

15 And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one *was* Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah;

The Egyptians' indignation at Israel's increase, notwithstanding the many hardships they put upon them, drove them at length to the most barbarous and inhuman methods of suppressing them, by the murder of their children. It was strange that they did not rather pick quarrels with the grown men, against whom they might perhaps find some occasion: to be thus bloody towards the infants, whom all must own to be innocents, was a sin which they had to cloak for. Note,

1. There is more cruelty in the corrupt heart of man than one would imagine, Ro 3:15, 16. The enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman divests men of humanity itself, and makes them forget all pity. One would not think it possible that ever men should be so barbarous and blood-thirsty as the persecutors of God's people have been, Re 17:6.

2. Even confessed innocence is no defence against the old enmity. What blood so guiltless as that of a child new-born? Yet that is prodigally shed like water, and sucked with delight like milk or honey. Pharaoh and Herod sufficiently proved themselves agents for that great red dragon, who stood to devour the man-child as soon as it was born, Re 12:3, 4. Pilate delivered Christ to be crucified, after he had confessed that he found no fault in him. It is well for us that, though man can kill the body, this is all he can do. Two bloody edicts are here signed for the destruction of all the male children that were born to the Hebrews.

16 and he said, when ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see *them* upon the stools, if it *be* a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live.

The midwives were commanded to murder them. Observe, the orders given them, Ex 1:15, 16. It added much to the barbarity of the intended executions that the midwives were appointed to be the executioners; for it was to make them, not only bloody, but perfidious, and to oblige them to betray a trust, and to destroy those whom they undertook to save and help. Could he think that their sex would admit such cruelty, and their employment such base treachery? Note, Those who are themselves barbarous think to find, or make, others as barbarous. Pharaoh's project was secretly to engage the midwives to stifle the men-children as soon as they were born, and then to lay it upon the difficulty of the birth, or some mischance common in that case, Job 3:11. The two midwives he tampered with in order hereunto are here named; and perhaps, at this time, which was above eighty years before their going out of Egypt, those two might suffice for all the Hebrew women, at least so many of them as lay near the court, as it is plain by Ex 2:5, 6, many of them did, and of them he was most jealous. They are called Hebrew midwives, probably not because they were themselves Hebrews (for surely Pharaoh could never expect they should be so barbarous to those of their own nation), but because they were generally made use of by the Hebrews; and, being Egyptians, he hoped to prevail with them.

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

Their pious disobedience to this impious command, Ex 1:17. They feared God, regarded his law, and dreaded his wrath more than Pharaoh's, and therefore saved the men-children alive. Note, If men's commands be any way contrary to the commands of God, we must obey God and not man, Ac 4:19, 5:29. No power on earth can warrant us, much less oblige us, to sin against God, our chief Lord. Again, Where the fear of God rules in the heart, it will preserve it from the snare which the inordinate fear of man brings.

18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men children alive?

19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women *are* not as the Egyptian women; for they *are* lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them.

Their justifying themselves in this disobedience, when they were charged with it as a crime, Ex 1:18. They gave a reason for it,

which, it seems, God's gracious promise furnished them with--that they came too late to do it, for generally the children were born before they came, Ex 1:19. I see no reason we have to doubt the truth of this; it is plain that the Hebrews were now under an extraordinary blessing of increase, which may well be supposed to have this effect, that the women had very quick and easy labour, and, the mothers and children being both lively, they seldom needed the help of midwives: this these midwives took notice of, and, concluding it to be the finger of God, were thereby emboldened to disobey the king, in favour of those whom Heaven thus favoured, and with this justified themselves before Pharaoh, when he called them to an account for it. Some of the ancient Jews expound it thus, Ere the midwife comes to them they pray to their Father in heaven, and he answereth them, and they do bring forth. Note, God is a readier help to his people in distress than any other helpers are, and often anticipates them with the blessings of his goodness; such deliverances lay them under peculiarly strong obligations. 4. The recompence God gave them for their tenderness towards his people: He dealt well with them, Ex 1:20. Note, God will be behind-hand with none for any kindness done to his people, taking it as done to himself. In particular, he made them houses (Ex 1:21), built them up into families, blessed their children, and prospered them in all they did. Note, The services done for God's Israel are often repaid in kind. The midwives kept up the Israelites' houses, and, in recompence for it, God made them houses. Observe, The recompence has relation to the principle upon which they went: Because they feared God, he made them houses.

Note, Religion and piety are good friends to outward prosperity: the fear of God in a house will help to build it up and establish it. Dr. Lightfoot's notion of it is, That, for their piety, they were married to Israelites, and Hebrew families were built up by them.

20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.

22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

When this project did not take effect, Pharaoh gave public orders to all his people to drown all the male children of the Hebrews, Ex 1:22. We may suppose it was made highly penal for any to know of the birth of a son to an Israelite, and not to give information to those who were appointed to throw him into the river. Note, The enemies of the church have been restless in their endeavours to wear out the saints of the Most High, Da 7:25. But he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them. See Ps 2:4.

Exodus-2

The Birth of Moses

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to *wife* a daughter of Levi.
2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he *was* a goodly child, she hid him three months.

Moses was a Levite, both by father and mother. Jacob left Levi under marks of disgrace (Ge 49:5); and yet, soon after, Moses appears a descendant from him, that he might typify Christ, who came in the likeness of sinful flesh and was made a curse for us. This tribe began to be distinguished from the rest by the birth of Moses, as afterwards it became remarkable in many other instances. Observe, concerning this newborn infant,

How he was hidden. It seems to have been just at the time of his birth that the cruel law was made for the murder of all the male children of the Hebrews; and many, no doubt, perished by the execution of it. The parents of Moses had Miriam and Aaron, both older than he, born to them before this edict came out, and had nursed them without that peril: but those that begin the world in peace know not what troubles they may meet with before they have got through it. Probably the mother of Moses was full of anxiety in the expectation of his birth, now that this edict was in force, and was ready to say, Blessed are the barren that never bore, Lu 23:29. Better so

than bring forth children to the murderer, Ho 9:13. Yet this child proves the glory of his father's house. Thus that which is most our fear often proves, in the issue, most our joy. Observe the beauty of providence: just at the time when Pharaoh's cruelty rose to this height the deliverer was born, though he did not appear for many years after. Note, When men are projecting the church's ruin God is preparing for its salvation. Moses, who was afterwards to bring Israel out of this house of bondage, was himself in danger of falling a sacrifice to the fury of the oppressor, God so ordering it that, being afterwards told of this, he might be the more animated with a holy zeal for the deliverance of his brethren out of the hands of such bloody men.

His parents observed him to be a goodly child, more than ordinarily beautiful; he was fair to God, Ac 7:20. They fancied he had a lustre in his countenance that was something more than human, and was a specimen of the shining of his face afterwards, Ex 34:29. Note, God sometimes gives early earnests of his gifts, and manifests himself betimes in those for whom and by whom he designs to do great things. Thus he put an early strength into Samson (Jdg 13:24, 25), an early forwardness into Samuel (1Sa 2:18), wrought an early deliverance for David (1Sa 17:37), and began betimes with Timothy, 1Ti 3:15.

3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid *it* in the flags by the river's brink.

Therefore they were the more solicitous for his preservation, because they looked upon this as an indication of some kind purpose of God concerning him, and a happy omen of something great. Note, A lively active faith can take encouragement from the least intimation of the divine favour; a merciful hint of Providence will encourage those whose spirits make diligent search, Three months they hid him in some private apartment of their own house, though probably with the hazard of their own lives, had he been discovered. Herein Moses was a type of Christ, who, in his infancy, was

forced to abscond, and in Egypt too (Mt 2:13), and was wonderfully preserved, when many innocents were butchered. It is said (Heb 11:23) that the parents of Moses hid him by faith; some think they had a special revelation to them that the deliverer should spring from their loins; however they had the general promise of Israel's preservation, which they acted faith upon, and in that faith hid their child, not being afraid of the penalty annexed to the king's commandment. Note, Faith in God's promise is so far from superseding that it rather excites and quickens to the use of lawful means for the obtaining of mercy. Duty is ours, events are God's. Again, Faith in God will set us above the ensnaring fear of man.

4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

How he was exposed. At three months' end, probably when the searchers came about to look for concealed children, so that they could not hide him any longer (their faith perhaps beginning now to fail), they put him in an ark of bulrushes by the river's brink (Ex 2:3), and set his little sister at some distance to watch what would become of him, and into whose hands he would fall, Ex 2:4. God put it into their hearts to do this, to bring about his own purposes, that Moses might by this means be brought into the hands of Pharaoh's daughter, and that by his deliverance from this imminent danger a specimen might be given of the deliverance of God's church, which now lay thus exposed. Note, 1. God takes special care of the outcasts of Israel (Ps 147:2); they are his outcasts, Isa 16:4. Moses seemed quite abandoned by his friends; his own mother durst not own him: but now the Lord took him up and protected him, Ps 27:10. 2. In times of extreme difficulty it is good to venture upon the providence of God. Thus to have exposed their child while they might have preserved it, would have been to tempt Providence; but, when they could not, it was to trust to Providence. "Nothing venture, nothing win." If I perish, I perish.

5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

Here is, Moses saved from perishing. Come see the place where that great man lay when he was a little child; he lay in a bulrush-basket by the river's side. Had he been left to lie there, he must have perished in a little time with hunger, if he had not been sooner washed into the river or devoured by a crocodile. Had he fallen into any other hands than those he did fall into, either they would not, or durst not, have done otherwise than have thrown him straightway into the river; but Providence brings no less a person thither than Pharaoh's daughter, just at that juncture, guides her to the place where this poor forlorn infant lay, and inclines her heart to pity it, which she dares do when none else durst. Never did poor child cry so seasonably, so happily, as this did: The babe wept, which moved the compassion of the princess, as no doubt his beauty did, Ex 2:5,6. Note,

1. Those are hard-hearted indeed that have not a tender compassion for helpless infancy. How pathetically does God represent his compassion for the Israelites in general considered in this pitiable state! Eze 16:5, 6.

2. It is very commendable in persons of quality to take cognizance of the distresses of the meanest, and to be helpful and charitable to them.

3. God's care of us in our infancy ought to be often made mention of by us to his praise. Though we were not thus exposed (that we were not was God's mercy) yet many were the perils we were surrounded with in our infancy, out of which the Lord delivered us, Ps 22:9,10.

4. God often raises up friends for his people even among their enemies. Pharaoh cruelly seeks Israel's destruction, but his own daughter charitably compassionates a Hebrew child, and not only so, but, beyond her intention, preserves Israel's deliverer. O Lord, how wonderful are thy counsels!

6 And when she had opened *it*, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, this *is one* of the Hebrews' children.

7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

9 And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give *thee* thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses [drawn out]: and she said, because I drew him out of the water.

Moses preferred to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Ex 2:10), his parents herein perhaps not only yielding to necessity, having nursed him for her, but too much pleased with the honour thereby done to their son; for the smiles of the world are stronger temptations than its frowns, and more difficult to resist. The tradition of the Jews is that Pharaoh's daughter had no child of her own, and that she was the only child of her father, so that when he was adopted for her son he stood fair for the crown: however it is certain he stood fair for the best preferments of the court in due time, and in the meantime had the advantage of the best education and improvements of the court, with the help of which, having a great genius, he became master of all the lawful learning of the Egyptians, Ac 7:22. Note,

1. Providence pleases itself sometimes in raising the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, Ps 113:7, 8. Many who, by their birth, seem marked for obscurity and poverty, by surprising events of Providence are brought to sit at the upper end of the world, to make men know that the heavens do rule.

2. Those whom God designs for great services he find out ways to qualify and prepare beforehand. Moses, by having his education in a court, is the fitter to be a prince and king in Jeshurun; by having his education in a learned court (for such the Egyptian then was) is the fitter to be an historian; and by having his education in the court of Egypt is the fitter to be employed, in the name of God, as an ambassador to that court.

Moses Flees from Egypt

11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

He boldly owns and espouses the cause of God's people: When Moses was grown he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens, Ex 2:11. The best exposition of these words we have from an inspired pen, Heb 11:24-26, where we are told that by this he expressed,

1. His holy contempt of the honours and pleasures of the Egyptian court; he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, for he went out. The temptation was indeed very strong. He had a fair opportunity (as we say) to make his fortune, and to have been serviceable to Israel too, with his interest at court. He was obliged, in gratitude as well as interest, to Pharaoh's daughter, and yet he obtained a glorious victory by faith over his temptation. He reckoned it much more his honour and advantage to be a son of Abraham than to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

2. His tender concern for his poor brethren in bondage, with whom (though he might easily have avoided it) he chose to suffer affliction; he looked on their burdens as one that not only pitied them, but was resolved to venture with them, and, if occasion were, to venture for them.

12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that *there was* no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

He gives a specimen of the great things he was afterwards to do for God and his Israel in two little instances, related particularly by Stephen (Ac 7:23-53, &c.) with design to show how their fathers had always resisted the Holy Ghost (Ac 7:51), even in Moses himself, when he first appeared as their deliverer, wilfully shutting their eyes against this day-break of their enlargement. He found himself, no doubt, under a divine direction and impulse in what he did, and that he was in an extraordinary manner called of God to do it. Now observe,

Moses was afterwards to be employed in plaguing the Egyptians for the wrongs they had done to God's Israel; and, as a specimen of that, he killed the Egyptian who smote the Hebrew (Ex 2:11, 12); probably it was one of the Egyptian taskmasters, whom he found abusing his Hebrew slave, a relation (as some think) of Moses, a man of the same tribe. It was by special warrant from Heaven (which makes not a precedent in ordinary cases) that Moses slew the Egyptian, and rescued his oppressed brother. The Jew's tradition is that he did not slay him with any weapon, but, as Peter slew Ananias and Sapphira, with the word of his mouth. His hiding him in the sand signified that hereafter Pharaoh and all his Egyptians should, under the control of the rod of Moses, be buried in the sand of the Red Sea. His taking care to execute this justice privately, when no man saw, was a piece of needful prudence and caution, it being but an assay; and perhaps his faith was as yet weak, and what he did was with some hesitation. Those who come to be of great faith, yet began with a little, and at first spoke tremblingly.

13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

Moses was afterwards to be employed in governing Israel, and as a specimen of this, we have him here trying to end a controversy between two Hebrews, in which he is forced (as he did afterwards for forty years) to suffer their manners. Observe here,

(1.) The unhappy quarrel which Moses observed between two Hebrews, Ex 2:13. It does not appear what was the occasion; but, whatever it was, it was certainly very unseasonable for Hebrews to strive with one another when they were all oppressed and ruled with rigour by the Egyptians. Had they not beating enough from the Egyptians, but they must beat one another? Note,

[1.] Even sufferings in common do not always unite God's professing people to one another, so much as one might reasonably expect.

[2.] When God raises up instruments of salvation for the church they will find enough to do, not only with oppressing Egyptians, to restrain them, but with quarrelsome Israelites, to reconcile them.

(2.) The way he took of dealing with them; he marked him that caused the division, that did the wrong, and mildly reasoned with him: Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? The injurious Egyptian was killed, the injurious Hebrew was only reprimanded; for what the former did was from a rooted malice, what the latter did we may suppose was only upon a sudden provocation. The wise God makes, and, according to his example, all wise governors make, a difference between one offender and another, according to the several qualities of the same offence. Moses endeavoured to make them friends, a good office; thus we find Christ often reproving his disciples' strifes (Lu 9:46-50,22:24-27), for he was a prophet like unto Moses, a healing prophet, a peacemaker, who visited his brethren with a design to slay all enmities. The reproof Moses gave on this occasion may still be of use, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? Note, Smiting our fellows is bad in any, especially in Hebrews, smiting with tongue or hand, either in a way of persecution or in a way of strife and contention. Consider the person thou smitest; it is thy fellow, thy fellow-creature, thy fellow-Christian, it is thy fellow-

servant, thy fellow-sufferer. Consider the cause, Wherefore smitest? Perhaps it is for no cause at all, or no just cause, or none worth speaking of.

14 And he said, who made thee a prince and a judge over us?
intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, surely this thing is known.

The ill success of his attempt (Ex 2:14): He said, Who made thee a prince? He that did the wrong thus quarrelled with Moses; the injured party, it should seem, was inclinable enough to peace, but the wrong-doer was thus touchy. Note, It is a sign of guilt to be impatient of reproof; and it is often easier to persuade the injured to bear the trouble of taking wrong than the injurious to bear the conviction of having done wrong. 1Co 6:7, 8. It was a very wise and mild reproof which Moses gave to this quarrelsome Hebrew, but he could not bear it, he kicked against the pricks (Ac 9:5), and crossed questions with his reprover.

[1.] He challenges his authority: Who made thee a prince? A man needs no great authority for the giving of a friendly reproof, it is an act of kindness; yet this man needs will interpret it an act of dominion, and represents his reprover as imperious and assuming. Thus when people dislike good discourse, or a seasonable admonition, they will call it preaching, as if a man could not speak a work for God and against sin but he took too much upon him. Yet Moses was indeed a prince and a judge, and knew it, and thought the Hebrews would have understood it, and struck in with him; but they stood in their own light, and thrust him away, Ac 7:25, 27.

[2.] He upbraids him with what he had done in killing the Egyptian: Intendest thou to kill me? See what base constructions malice puts upon the best words and actions. Moses, for reproving him is immediately charged with a design to kill him. An attempt upon his sin was interpreted an attempt upon his life; and his having killed the Egyptian was thought sufficient to justify the suspicion; as if Moses made

no difference between an Egyptian and a Hebrew. If Moses, to right an injured Hebrew, had put his life in his hand, and slain an Egyptian, he ought therefore to have submitted to him, not only as a friend to the Hebrews, but as a friend that had more than ordinary power and zeal. But he throws that in his teeth as a crime which was bravely done, and was intended as a specimen of the promised deliverance; if the Hebrews had taken the hint, and come in to Moses as their head and captain, it is probable that they would have been delivered now; but, despising their deliverer, their deliverance was justly deferred, and their bondage prolonged forty years, as afterwards their despising Canaan kept them out of it forty years more. I would, and you would not. Note, Men know not what they do, nor what enemies they are to their own interest, when they resist and despise faithful reproofs and reprovers. When the Hebrews strove with Moses, God sent him away into Midian, and they never heard of him for forty years; thus the things that belonged to their peace were hidden from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. As to Moses, we may look on it as a great damp and discouragement to him. He was now choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, and embracing the reproach of Christ; and now, at his first setting out, to meet with this affliction and reproach from them was a very sore trial of his resolution. He might have said, "If this be the spirit of the Hebrews, I will go to court again, and be the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

Note, First, We must take heed of being prejudiced against the ways and people of God by the follies and peevishness of some particular persons that profess religion. Secondly, It is no new thing for the church's best friends to meet with a great deal of opposition and discouragement in their healing, saving attempts, even from their own mother's children; Christ himself was set at nought by the builders, and is still rejected by those he would save.

15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses.
But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of

Midian: and he sat down by a well.

The flight of Moses to Midian, in consequence. The affront given him thus far proved a kindness to him; it gave him to understand that his killing the Egyptian was discovered, and so he had time to make his escape, otherwise the wrath of Pharaoh might have surprised him and taken him off. Note, God can overrule even the strife of tongues, so as, one way or other, to bring good to his people out of it. Information was brought to Pharaoh (and it is well if it was not brought by the Hebrew himself whom Moses reproved) of his killing the Egyptian; warrants are presently out for the apprehending of Moses, which obliged him to shift for his own safety, by flying into the land of Midian, Ex 2:15.

[1.] Moses did this out of a prudent care of his own life. If this be his forsaking of Egypt which the apostle refers to as done by faith (Heb 11:27), it teaches us that when we are at any time in trouble and danger for doing our duty the grace of faith will be of good use to us in taking proper methods for our own preservation. Yet there it is said, He feared not the wrath of the king; here it is said he feared, Ex 2:14. He did not fear with a fear of diffidence and amazement, which weakens and has torment, but with a fear of diligence, which quickened him to take that way which Providence opened to him for his own preservation.

[2.] God ordered it for wise and holy ends. Things were not yet ripe for Israel's deliverance: the measure of Egypt's iniquity was not yet full; the Hebrews were not sufficiently humbled, nor were they yet increased to such a multitude as God designed; Moses is to be further fitted for the service, and therefore is directed to withdraw for the present, till the time to favour Israel, even the set time, should come. God guided Moses to Midian because the Midianites were of the seed of Abraham, and retained the worship of the true God among them, so that he might have not only a safe but a comfortable settlement among them. And through this country he was afterwards to lead Israel, with which (that he

might do it the better) he now had opportunity of making himself acquainted. Hither he came, and sat down by a well, tired and thoughtful, at a loss, and waiting to see which way Providence would direct him. It was a great change with him, since he was but the other day at ease in Pharaoh's court: thus God tried his faith, and it was found to praise and honour.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew *water,* and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

Moses here gains a settlement in Midian, just as his father Jacob had gained one in Syria, Ge 29:2, &c. And both these instances should encourage us to trust Providence, and to follow it. Events that seem inconsiderable, and purely accidental, after wards appear to have been designed by the wisdom of God for very good purposes, and of great consequence to his people. A casual transient occurrence has sometimes occasioned the greatest and happiest turns of a man's life. Observe,

Concerning the seven daughters of Reuel the priest or prince of Midian.

1. They were humble, and very industrious, according as the employment of the country was: they drew water for their father's flock, Ex 2:16. If their father was a prince, it teaches us that even those who are honourably born, and are of quality and distinction in their country, should yet apply themselves to some useful business, and what their hand finds to do do it with all their might. Idleness can be no one's honour. If their father was a priest, it teaches us that ministers' children should, in a special manner, be examples of humility and industry.

2. They were modest, and would not ask this strange Egyptian to come home with them (though handsome and a great courtier), till their father sent for him. Modesty is the ornament of woman.

17 And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

18 And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, how *is it that* ye are come so soon today?
19 And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew *water* enough for us, and watered the flock.

Concerning Moses. He was taken for an Egyptian (Ex 2:19); and strangers must be content to be the subjects of mistake; but it is observable,

How ready he was to help Reuel's daughters to water their flocks. Though bred in learning and at court, yet he knew how to turn his hand to such an office as this when there was occasion; nor had he learned of the Egyptians to despise shepherds. Note, Those that have had a liberal education yet should not be strangers to servile work, because they know not what necessity Providence may put them in of working for themselves, or what opportunity Providence may give them of being serviceable to others. These young women, it seems, met with some opposition in their employment, more than they and their servants could conquer; the shepherds of some neighbouring prince, as some think, or some idle fellows that called themselves shepherds, drove away their flocks; but Moses, though melancholy and in distress, stood up and helped them, not only to get clear of the shepherds, but, when that was done, to water the flocks. This he did, not only in complaisance to the daughters of Reuel (though that also did very well become him), but because, wherever he was, as occasion offered itself,

(1.) He loved to be doing justice, and appearing in the defence of such as he saw injured, which every man ought to do as far as it is in the power of his hand to do it.

(2.) He loved to be doing good. Wherever the Providence of God casts us we should desire and endeavour to be useful; and, when we cannot do the good we would, we must be ready to do the good we can. And he that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more.

20 And he said unto his daughters, and where *is* he? Why is it *that* ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.
21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

How well he was paid for his serviceableness. When the young women acquainted their father with the kindnesses they had received from this stranger, he sent to invite him to his house, and made much of him, Ex 2:20. Thus God will recompense the kindnesses which are at any time shown to his children; they shall in no wise lose their reward. Moses soon recommended himself to the esteem and good affection of this prince of Midian, who took him into his house, and, in process of time, married one of his daughters to him (Ex 2:21), by whom he had a son, whom he called Gershom, a stranger there (Ex 2:22), that if ever God should give him a home of his own he might keep in remembrance the land in which he had been a stranger. Now this settlement of Moses in Midian was designed by Providence,

(1.) To shelter him for the present. God will find hiding-places for his people in the day of their distress; nay, he will himself be to them a little sanctuary, and will secure them, either under heaven or in heaven. But,

(2.) It was also designed to prepare him for the great services he was further designed for. His manner of life in Midian, where he kept the flock of his father-in-law (having none of his own to keep), would be of use to him,

[1.] To inure him to hardship and poverty, that he might learn how to want as well as how to abound. Those whom God intends to exalt he first humbles.

[2.] To inure him to contemplation and devotion. Egypt accomplished him as a scholar, a gentleman, a statesman, a soldier, all which accomplishments would be afterwards of use to him; but yet he lacked one thing, in which the court of Egypt could not befriend him. He that was to do all by divine

revelation must know, by a long experience, what it was to live a life of communion with God; and in this he would be greatly furthered by the solitude and retirement of a shepherd's life in Midian. By the former he was prepared to rule in Jeshurun, but by the latter he was prepared to converse with God in Mount Horeb, near which mount he had spent much of his time. Those that know what it is to be alone with God in holy exercises are acquainted with better delights than ever Moses tasted in the court of Pharaoh.

22 And she bare *him* a son, and he called his name Gershom [a stranger there]: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

23 And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Here is, 1 The continuance of the Israelites' bondage in Egypt, Ex 2:23. Probably the murdering of their infants did not continue; this part of their affliction attended only the period immediately connected with the birth of Moses, and served to signalize it. The Egyptians now were content with their increase, finding that Egypt was enriched by their labour; so that they might have them for slaves, they cared not how many they were. On this therefore they were intent, to keep them all at work, and make the best hand they could of their labour. When one Pharaoh died, another rose up in his place that was governed by the same maxims, and was as cruel to Israel as his predecessors. If there was sometimes a little relaxation, yet it presently revived again with as much rigour as ever; and probably, as the more Israel were oppressed the more they multiplied, so the more they multiplied the more they were oppressed.

Note, Sometimes God suffers the rod of the wicked to lie very long and very heavily on the lot of the righteous. If Moses, in Midian, at any time began to think how much better his condition might have been had he staid among the courtiers, he must of himself think this also, how much worse it would have been if he had had his lot with brethren: it was a great

degradation to him to be keeping sheep in Midian, but better so than making brick in Egypt. The consideration of our brethren's afflictions would help to reconcile us to our own.

2 The preface to their deliverance at last.

(1.) They cried, Ex 2:23. Now, at last, they began to think of God under their troubles, and to return to him from the idols they had served, Eze 20:8. Hitherto they had fretted at the instruments of their trouble, but God was not in all their thoughts. Thus hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he binds them, Job 36:13. But before God unbound them he put it into their hearts to cry unto him, as it is explained, Nu 20:16. Note, It is a good sign that God is coming towards us with deliverance when he inclines and enables us to cry to him for it.

(2.) God heard, Ex 2:24, 25. The name of God is here emphatically prefixed to four different expressions of a kind intention towards them.

[1.] God heard their groaning; that is, he made it to appear that he took notice of their complaints. The groans of the oppressed cry aloud in the ears of the righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, especially the groans of God's spiritual Israel; he knows the burdens they groan under and the blessings they groan after, and that the blessed Spirit, by these groanings, makes intercession in them.

[2.] God remembered his covenant, which he seemed to have forgotten, but of which he is ever mindful. This God had an eye to, and not to any merit of theirs, in what he did for them. See Le 26:42.

(3.) God looked upon the children of Israel. Moses looked upon them and pitied them (Ex 2:11); but now God looked upon them and helped them.

(4.) God had a respect unto them, a favourable respect to them as his own. The frequent repetition of the name of God here intimates that now we are to expect something great, Opus Deo dignum--A work worthy of God. His eyes, which run to and fro through the earth, are now fixed upon Israel, to show himself strong, to show himself a God in their behalf.

24 And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto *them*.

Exodus-3

The Call of Moses

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, *even* to Horeb.

The years of the life of Moses are remarkably divided into three forties: the first forty he spent as a prince in Pharaoh's court, the second a shepherd in Midian, the third a king in Jeshurun; so changeable is the life of men, especially the life of good men. He had now finished his second forty, when he received his commission to bring Israel out of Egypt.

Note, Sometimes it is long before God calls his servants out of that work which of old he designed them for, and has been graciously preparing them for. Moses was born to be Israel's deliverer, and yet not a word is said of it to him till he is eighty years of age. Now observe,

How this appearance of God to him found him employed. He was keeping the flock (tending sheep) near mount Horeb, Ex 3:1. This was a poor employment for a man of his parts and education, yet he rests satisfied with it, and thus learns meekness and contentment to a high degree, for which he is more celebrated in sacred writ than for all his other learning. Note,

1. In the calling to which we are called we should abide, and not be given to change.

2. Even those that are qualified for great employments and services must not think it strange if they be confined to obscurity; it was the lot of Moses before them, who foresaw nothing to the contrary but that he should die, as he had lived a great while, a poor despicable shepherd. Let those that think themselves buried alive be content to shine like lamps in their sepulchres, and wait till God's time come for setting them on a candlestick. Thus employed Moses was, when he was honoured with this vision. Note,

(1.) God will encourage industry. The shepherds were keeping their flocks when they received the tidings of our Saviour's birth, Lu 2:8. Satan loves to find us idle; God is well pleased when he find us employed.

(2.) Retirement is a good friend to our communion with God. When we are alone, the Father is with us. Moses saw more of God in a desert than ever he had seen in Pharaoh's court.

2 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed.

3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

What the appearance was. To his great surprise he saw a bush burning, when he perceived no fire either from earth or heaven to kindle it, and, which was more strange, it did not consume, Ex 3:2. It was an angel of the Lord that appeared to him; some think, a created angel, who speaks in the language of him that sent him; others, the second person, the angel of the covenant, who is himself Jehovah. It was an extraordinary manifestation of the divine presence and glory; what was visible was produced by the ministry of an angel, but he heard God in it speaking to him.

1. He saw a flame of fire; for our God is a consuming fire. When Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was promised to Abraham, he saw a burning lamp, which signified the light of joy which that deliverance should cause (Ge 15:17); but now it shines brighter, as a flame of fire, for God in that deliverance brought terror and destruction to his enemies, light and heat to his people, and displayed his glory before all. See Isa 10:17.

2. This fire was not in a tall and stately cedar, but in a bush, a thorny bush, so the word signifies; for God chooses the weak and despised things of the world (such as Moses, now a poor shepherd), with them to confound the wise; he delights to beautify and crown the humble.

3. The bush burned, and yet was not consumed, an emblem of the church now in bondage in Egypt, burning in the brick-kilns, yet not consumed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed.

The curiosity Moses had to enquire into this extraordinary sight: I will turn aside and see, Ex 3:3. He speaks as one inquisitive and bold in his enquiry; whatever it was, he would, if possible, know the meaning of it. Note, Things revealed belong to us, and we ought diligently to enquire into them.

4 And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, here *am* I.

God gave him a gracious call, to which he returned a ready answer, Ex 3:4. When God saw that he took notice of the burning bush, and turned aside to see it, and left his business to attend it, then God called to him. If he had carelessly neglected it as an ignis fatuus--a deceiving meteor, a thing not worth taking notice of, it is probable that God would have departed, and said nothing to him; but, when he turned aside, God called to him. Note, Those that would have communion with God must attend upon him, and approach to him, in those ordinances wherein he is pleased to manifest himself, and his power and glory, though it be in a bush; they must come to the

treasure, though in an earthen vessel. Those that seek God diligently shall find him, and find him their bountiful rewarder. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. God called him by name, Moses, Moses. This which he heard could not but surprise him much more than what he saw. The word of the Lord always went along with the glory of the Lord, for every divine vision was designed for divine revelation, Job 4:16-21, 32:14-15. Divine calls are then effectual,

(1.) When the Spirit of God makes them particular, and calls us by name. The word calls, Ho, every one! The Spirit, by the application of that, calls, Ho, such a one! I know thee by name, Ex 33:12.

(2.) When we return an obedient answer to them, as Moses here, "Here am I, what saith my Lord unto his servant? Here am I, not only to hear what is said, but to do what I am bidden."

5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.

God gave him a needful caution against rashness and irreverence in his approach,

(1.) He must keep his distance; draw near, but not too near; so near as to hear, but not so near as to pry. His conscience must be satisfied, but not his curiosity; and care must be taken that familiarity do not breed contempt. Note, In all our approaches to God, we ought to be deeply affected with the infinite distance there is between us and God, Ec 5:2. Or this may be taken as proper to the Old-Testament dispensation, which was a dispensation of darkness, bondage, and terror, from which the gospel happily frees us, giving us boldness to enter into the holiest, and inviting us to draw near.

(2.) He must express his reverence, and his readiness to obey: Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, as a servant. Putting off the shoe was then what putting off the hat is now, a token of respect and submission. "The ground, for the present, is holy ground, made so by this special manifestation of the divine

presence, during the continuance of which it must retain this character; therefore tread not on that ground with soiled shoes." Keep thy foot, Ec 5:1.

Note, We ought to approach to God with a solemn pause and preparation; and, though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet we ought to glorify God with our bodies, and to express our inward reverence by a grave and reverent behaviour in the worship of God, carefully avoiding everything that looks light, and rude, and unbecoming the awfulness of the service.

6 Moreover he said, I *am* the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

The solemn declaration God made of his name, by which he would be known to Moses: I am the God of thy father, Ex 3:6.

1. He lets him know that it is God who speaks to him, to engage his reverence and attention, his faith and obedience; for this is enough to command all these: I am the Lord. Let us always hear the word as the word of God, 1Th 2:13.

2. He will be known as the God of his father, his pious father Amram, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his ancestors, and the ancestors of all Israel, for whom God was now about to appear. By this God designed,

(1.) To instruct Moses in the knowledge of another world, and to strengthen his belief of a future state. Thus it is interpreted by our Lord Jesus, the best expositor of scripture, who from this proves that the dead are raised, against the Sadducees. Moses, says he, showed it at the bush (Lu 20:37), that is, God there showed it to him, and in him to us, Mt 22:31, &c. Abraham was dead, and yet God is the God of Abraham; therefore Abraham's soul lives, to which God stands in relation; and, to make his soul completely happy, his body must live again in due time. This promise made unto the fathers, that God would be their God, must include a future happiness; for he never did anything for them in this world

sufficient to answer to the vast extent and compass of that great word, but, having prepared for them a city, he is not ashamed to be called their God, Heb 11:16; and see Ac 26:6, 7, 24:15. (2.) To assure Moses of the fulfillment of all those particular promises made to the fathers. He may confidently expect this, for by these words it appears that God remembered his covenant, Ex 2:24. Note,

[1.] God's covenant-relation to us as our God is the best support in the worst of times, and a great encouragement to our faith in particular promises.

[2.] When we are conscious to ourselves of our own great unworthiness we may take comfort from God's relation to our fathers, 2Ch 20:6.

The solemn impression this made upon Moses: He hid his face, as one both ashamed and afraid to look upon God. Now that he knew it was a divine light his eyes were dazzled with it; he was not afraid of a burning bush till he perceived that God was in it. Yea, though God called himself the God of his father, and a God in covenant with him, yet he was afraid. Note, 1 The more we see of God the more cause we shall see to worship him with reverence and godly fear. 2. Even the manifestations of God's grace and covenant-love should increase our humble reverence of him.

7 And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

Now that Moses had put off his shoes (for, no doubt, he observed the orders given him, Ex 3:5), and covered his face, God enters upon the particular business that was now to be concerted, which was the bringing of Israel out of Egypt. Now, after forty years of Israel's bondage and Moses's banishment, when we may suppose both he and they began to despair, they of being delivered and he of delivering them, at length, the time has come, even the year of the redeemed.

Note, God often comes for the salvation of his people when they have done looking for him. Shall he find faith? Lu 18:8.

Here is, the notice God takes of the afflictions of Israel (Ex 3:7, 9): Seeing I have seen, not only, I have surely seen, but I have strictly observed and considered the matter. Three things God took cognizance of:--

1. Their sorrows, Ex 3:7. It is likely they were not permitted to make a remonstrance of their grievances to Pharaoh, nor to seek relief against their task-masters in any of his courts, nor scarcely durst complain to one another; but God observed their tears. Note, Even the secret sorrows of God's people are known to him.

2. Their cry: I have heard their cry (Ex 3:7), it has come unto me, Ex 3:9. Note, God is not deaf to the cries of his afflicted people. 3. The tyranny of their persecutors: I have seen the oppression, Ex 3:9. Note, As the poorest of the oppressed are not below God's cognizance, so the highest and greatest of their oppressors are not above his check, but he will surely visit for these things.

8 and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

The promise God makes of their speedy deliverance and enlargement: I have come down to deliver them, Ex 3:8.

1. It denotes his resolution to deliver them, and that his heart was upon it, so that it should be done speedily and effectually, and by methods out of the common road of providence: when God does something very extraordinary he is said to come down to do it, as Isa 64:1.

2. This deliverance was typical of our redemption by Christ, in which the eternal Word did indeed come down from heaven to deliver us: it was his errand into the world. He promises also their happy settlement in the land of Canaan, that they should exchange bondage for liberty, poverty for plenty, labour for rest, and the precarious condition of tenants at will for the ease and honour of lords proprietors. Note, Whom God by his grace delivers out of a spiritual Egypt he will bring to a heavenly Canaan.

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

The commission he gives to Moses in order hereunto, Ex 3:10. He is not only sent as a prophet to Israel, to assure them that they should speedily be delivered (even that would have been a great favour), but he is sent as an ambassador to Pharaoh, to treat with him, or rather as a herald at arms, to demand their discharge, and to denounce war in case of refusal; and he is sent as a prince to Israel, to conduct and command them. Thus is he taken from following the ewes great with young, to a pastoral office much more noble, as David, Ps 78:71? Note, God is the fountain of power, and the powers that be are ordained of him as he pleases. The same hand that now fetched a shepherd out of a desert, to be the planter of a Jewish church, afterwards fetched fishermen from their ships, to be the planters of the Christian church, That the excellency of the power might be of God.

11 And Moses said unto God, Who *am* I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

He objects his own insufficiency for the service he was called to (Ex 3:11): Who am I? He thinks himself unworthy of the honour, and not par negotio--equal to the task. He thinks he wants courage, and therefore cannot go to Pharaoh, to make a demand which might cost the demandant his head: he thinks he wants skill, and therefore cannot bring forth the children of

Israel out of Egypt; they are unarmed, undisciplined, quite dispirited, utterly unable to help themselves; it is morally impossible to bring them out.

1. Moses was incomparably the fittest of any man living for this work, eminent for learning, wisdom, experience, valour, faith, holiness; and yet he says, Who am I? Note, The more fit any person is for service commonly the less opinion he has of himself: see Jdg 9:8, &c.

2 The difficulties of the work were indeed very great, enough to startle the courage and stagger the faith of Moses himself. Note, Even wise and faithful instruments may be much discouraged at the difficulties that lie in the way of the church's salvation.

3. Moses had formerly been very courageous when he slew the Egyptian, but now his heart failed him; for good men are not always alike bold and zealous. 4. Yet Moses is the man that does it at last; for God gives grace to the lowly. Modest beginnings are very good presages.

12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

God answers this objection, Ex 3:12.

1. He promises him his presence: Certainly I will be with thee, and that is enough. Note, Those that are weak in themselves may yet do wonders, being strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and those that are most diffident of themselves may be most confident in God. God's presence puts an honour upon the worthless, wisdom and strength into the weak and foolish, makes the greatest difficulties dwindle to nothing, and is enough to answer all objections.

2. He assures him of success, and that the Israelites should serve God upon this mountain. Note,

(1.) Those deliverances are most valuable which open to us a door of liberty to serve God.

(2.) If God gives us opportunity and a heart to serve him, it is a happy and encouraging earnest of further favours designed us.

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, what *is* his name? What shall I say unto them?

He begs instructions for the executing of his commission, and has them, thoroughly to furnish him. He desires to know by what name God would at this time make himself known, Ex 3:13.

1. He supposes the children of Israel would ask him, What is his name? This they would ask either,

(1.) To perplex Moses: he foresaw difficulty, not only in dealing with Pharaoh, to make him willing to part with them, but in dealing with them, to make them willing to remove. They would be scrupulous and apt to cavil, would bid him produce his commission, and probably this would be the trial: "Does he know the name of God? Has he the watch-word?" Once he was asked, Who made thee a judge? Then he had not his answer ready, and he would not be nonplussed so again, but would be able to tell in whose name he came. Or,

(2.) For their own information. It is to be feared that they had grown very ignorant in Egypt, by reason of their hard bondage, want of teachers, and loss of the Sabbath, so that they needed to be told the first principles of the oracles of God. Or this question, What is his name? Amounted to an enquiry into the

nature of the dispensation they were now to expect: "How will God in it be known to us, and what may we depend upon from him?"

2. He desires instructions what answer to give them: "What shall I say to them? What name shall I vouch to them for the proof of my authority? I must have something great and extraordinary to say to them; what must it be? If I must go, let me have full instructions, that I may not run in vain." Note,

(1.) It highly concerns those who speak to people in the name of God to be well prepared beforehand.

(2.) Those who would know what to say must go to God, to the word of his grace and to the throne of his grace, for instructions, Eze 2:7, 3:4, 10, and 17.

(3.) Whenever we have anything to do with God, it is desirable to know, and our duty to consider, what is his name.

14 And God said unto Moses, I am that I am:and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.

A name that denotes what he is in himself (Ex 3:14): I am that I am. This explains his name Jehovah, and signifies,

(1.) That he is self-existent; he has his being of himself, and has no dependence upon any other: the greatest and best man in the world must say, By the grace of God I am what I am; but God says absolutely--and it is more than any creature, man or angel, can say--I am that I am. Being self-existent, he cannot but be self-sufficient, and therefore all-sufficient, and the inexhaustible fountain of being and bliss.

(2.) That he is eternal and unchangeable, and always the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever; he will be what he will be and what he is; see Re 1:8.

(3.) That we cannot by searching find him out. This is such a name as checks all bold and curious enquiries concerning God,

and in effect says, Ask not after my name, seeing it is secret, Jdg 13:18,Pr 30:4. Do we ask what is God? Let it suffice us to know that he is what he is, what he ever was, and ever will be. How little a portion is heard of him! Job 26:14.

(4.) That he is faithful and true to all his promises, unchangeable in his word as well as in his nature, and not a man that he should lie. Let Israel know this, I AM hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations.

A name that denotes what he is to his people. Lest that name I AM should amuse and puzzle them, he is further directed to make use of another name of God more familiar and intelligible: The Lord God of your fathers hath sent me unto you (Ex 3:15): Thus God had made himself know to him (Ex 3:6), and thus he must make him known to them,

(1.) That he might revive among them the religion of their fathers, which, it is to be feared, was much decayed and almost lost. This was necessary to prepare them for deliverance, Ps 80:19.

(2.) That he might raise their expectations of the speedy performance of the promises made unto their fathers. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are particularly named, because with Abraham the covenant was first made, and with Isaac and Jacob often expressly renewed; and these three were distinguished from their brethren, and chosen to be the trustees of the covenant, when their brethren were rejected. God will have this to be his name for ever, and it has been, is, and will be, his name, by which his worshippers know him, and distinguish him from all false gods; see 1Ki 18:36.

Note, God's covenant-relation to his people is what he will be ever mindful of, what he glories in, and what he will have us never forget, but give him the glory of: if he will have this to be his memorial unto all generations, we have all the reason in the world to make it so with us, for it is a precious memorial.

16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and *seen* that which is done to you in Egypt:

Moses is here more particularly instructed in his work, and informed beforehand of his success. He must deal with the elders of Israel, and raise their expectation of a speedy removal to Canaan, Ex 3:16, 17. He must repeat to them what God had said to him, as a faithful ambassador. Note, That which ministers have received of the Lord they must deliver to his people, and keep back nothing that is profitable. Lay an emphasis on that, Ex 3:17: "I have said, I will bring you up; that is enough to satisfy them, I have said it:" hath he spoken, and will he not make it good? With us saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God, for he is in one mind and who can turn him? "I have said it, and all the world cannot gainsay it. My counsel shall stand." His success with the elders of Israel would be good; so he is told (Ex 3:18): They shall hearken to thy voice, and not thrust thee away as they did forty years ago. He who, by his grace, inclines the heart, and opens the ear, could say beforehand, They shall hearken to thy voice, having determined to make them willing in this day of power.

17 and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

18 And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.

He must deal with the king of Egypt (Ex 3:18), he and the elders of Israel, and in this they must not begin with a demand,

but with a humble petition; that gentle and submissive method must be first tried, even with one who, it was certain, would not be wrought upon by it: We beseech thee, let us go. Moreover, they must only beg leave of Pharaoh to go as far as Mount Sinai to worship God, and say nothing to him of going quite away to Canaan; the latter would have been immediately rejected, but the former was a very modest and reasonable request, and his denying it was utterly inexcusable and justified them in the total deserting of his kingdom. If he would not give them leave to go and sacrifice at Sinai, justly did they go without leave to settle in Canaan.

Note, The calls and commands which God sends to sinners are so highly reasonable in themselves, and delivered to them in such a gentle winning way, that the mouth of the disobedient must needs be forever stopped. As to his success with Pharaoh, Moses is here told,

(1.) That petitions, and persuasions, and humble remonstrances, would not prevail with him, no, nor a mighty hand stretched out in signs and wonders: I am sure he will not let you go, Ex 3:19. Note, God sends his messengers to those whose hardness and obstinacy he certainly knows and foresees, that it may appear he would have them turn and live.

(2.) That plagues should compel him to it: I will smite Egypt, and then he will let you go, Ex 3:20. Note, Those will certainly be broken by the power of God's hand that will not bow to the power of his word; we may be sure that when God judges he will overcome.

(3.) That his people should be more kind to them, and furnish them at their departure with abundance of plate and jewels, to their great enriching: I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, Ex 3:21, 22. Note,

[1.] God sometimes makes the enemies of his people, not only to be at peace with them, but to be kind to them.

[2.] God has many ways of balancing accounts between the injured and the injurious, of righting the oppressed, and compelling those that have done wrong to make restitution; for he sits in the throne judging right.

19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

20 And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:

22 but every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Exodus-4

1 And Moses answered and said, but, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.

It was a very great honour that Moses was called to when God commissioned him to bring Israel out of Egypt; yet he is with difficulty persuaded to accept the commission, and does it at last with great reluctance, which we should rather impute to a humble diffidence of himself and his own sufficiency than to any unbelieving distrust of God and his word and power. Note, Those whom God designs for preferment he clothes with humility; the most fit for service are the least forward.

Moses objects that in all probability the people would not hearken to his voice (Ex 4:1), that is, they would not take his bare word, unless he showed them some sign, which he had not been yet instructed to do. This objection cannot be justified, because it contradicts what God had said (Ex 3:18), They shall hearken to thy voice. If God says, They will, does

it become Moses to say, They will not? Surely he means, "Perhaps they will not at first, or some of them will not." If there should be some gainsayers among them who would question his commission, how should he deal with them? And what course should he take to convince them? He remembered how they had once rejected him, and feared it would be so again. Note,

1. Present discouragements often arise from former disappointments.

2. Wise and good men have sometimes a worse opinion of people than they deserve. Moses sad (Ex 4:1), They will not believe me; and yet he was happily mistaken, for it is said (Ex 4:31), The people believed; but then the signs which God appointed in answer to this objection were first wrought in their sight.

2 And the Lord said unto him, what *is* that in thine hand?And he said, a rod.

3 And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.

God empowers him to work miracles, directs him to three particularly, two of which were now immediately wrought for his own satisfaction.

Note, True miracles are the most convincing external proofs of a divine mission attested by them. Therefore our Savior often appealed to his works (as Joh 5:36), and Nicodemus owns himself convinced by them, Joh 3:2. And here Moses, having a special commission given him as a judge and lawgiver to Israel, has this seal affixed to his commission, and comes supported by these credentials.

The rod in his hand is made the subject of a miracle, a double miracle: it is but thrown out of his hand and it becomes a serpent; he resumes it and it becomes a rod again, Ex 4:2-4. Now,

(1.) Here was a divine power manifested in the change itself, that a dry stick should be turned into a living serpent, a lively one, so formidable a one that Moses himself, on whom, it should seem, it turned in some threatening manner, fled from before it, though we may suppose, in that desert, serpents were no strange things to him; but what was produced miraculously was always the best and strongest of the kind, as the water turned to wine: and, then, that this living serpent should be turned into a dry stick again, this was the Lord's doing.

(2.) Here was an honour put upon Moses, that this change was wrought upon his throwing it down and taking it up, without any spell, or charm, or incantation: his being empowered thus to act under God, out of the common course of nature and providence, was a demonstration of his authority, under God, to settle a new dispensation of the kingdom of grace. We cannot imagine that the God of truth would delegate such a power as this to an impostor.

(3.) There was a significancy in the miracle itself. Pharaoh had turned the rod of Israel into a serpent, representing them as dangerous (Ex 1:10), causing their belly to cleave to the dust, and seeking their ruin; but now they should be turned into a rod again: or, thus Pharaoh had turned the rod of government into the serpent of oppression, from which Moses had himself fled into Midian; but by the agency of Moses the scene was altered again.

(4.) There was a direct tendency in it to convince the children of Israel that Moses was indeed sent of God to do what he did, Ex 4:5. Miracles were for signs to those that believed not, 1Co 14:22.

4 And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand:

5 that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.

6 And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

His hand itself is next made the subject of a miracle. He puts it once into his bosom, and takes it out leprous; he puts it again into the same place, and takes it out well, Ex 4:6, 7. This signified,

(1.) That Moses, by the power of God, should bring sore diseases upon Egypt, and that, at his prayer, they should be removed.

(2.) That whereas the Israelites in Egypt had become leprous, polluted by sin, and almost consumed by oppression (a leper is as one dead, Nu 12:12), by being taken into the bosom of Moses they should be cleansed and cured, and have all their grievances redressed.

(3.) That Moses was not to work miracles by his own power, nor for his own praise, but by the power of God and for his glory; the leprous hand of Moses does forever exclude boasting. Now it was supposed that, if the former sign did not convince, this latter would. Note, God is willing more abundantly to show the truth of his word, and is not sparing in his proofs; the multitude and variety of the miracles corroborate the evidence.

7 And he said, put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his *other* flesh.

8 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

9 And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of

the river, and pour *it* upon the dry *land:* and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry *land*.

He is directed, when he shall come to Egypt, to turn some of the water of the river into blood, Ex 4:9. This was done, at first, as a sign, but, not gaining due credit with Pharaoh, the whole river was afterwards turned into blood, and then it became a plague. He is ordered to work this miracle in case they would not be convinced by the other two. Note, Unbelief shall be left inexcusable, and convicted of a willful obstinacy. As to the people of Israel, God had said (Ex 3:18), They shall hearken; yet he appoints these miracles to be wrought for their conviction, for he that has ordained the end has ordained the means.

10 And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

Moses still continues backward to the service for which God had designed him, even to a fault; for now we can no longer impute it to his humility and modesty, but must own that here was too much of cowardice, slothfulness, and unbelief in it. Observe here,

How Moses endeavours to excuse himself from the work.

1. He pleads that he was no good spokesman: O my Lord! I am not eloquent, Ex 4:10. He was a great philosopher, statesman, and divine, and yet no orator; a man of a clear head, great thought, and solid judgment, but had not a voluble tongue, or ready utterance, and therefore he thought himself unfit to speak before great men about great affairs, and in danger of being run down by the Egyptians. Observe,

(1.) We must not judge of men by the readiness and fluency of their discourse. Moses was mighty in word (Ac 7:22), and yet not eloquent: what he said was strong and nervous, and to the purpose, and distilled as the dew (De 32:2), though he did not deliver himself with that readiness, ease, and elegance,

that some do, who have not the tenth part of his sense. St. Paul's speech was contemptible, 2Co 10:10. A great deal of wisdom and true worth is concealed by a slow tongue.

(2.) God is pleased sometimes to make choice of those as his messengers who have fewest of the advantages of art or nature, that his grace in them may appear the more glorious. Christ's disciples were no orators, till the Spirit made them such.

11 And the Lord said unto him, who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?

How God condescends to answer all his excuses. Though the anger of the Lord was kindled against him (Ex 4:14), yet he continued to reason with him, till he had overcome him.

Note, Even self-diffidence, when it grows into an extreme--when it either hinders us from duty or clogs us in duty, or when it discourages our dependence upon the grace of God--is very displeasing to him. God justly resents our backwardness to serve him, and has reason to take it ill; for he is such a benefactor as is before-hand with us, and such a rewarder as will not be behind-hand with us. Note further, God is justly displeased with those whom yet he does not reject: he vouchsafes to reason the case even with his froward children, and overcomes them, as he did Moses here, with grace and kindness.

To balance the weakness of Moses, he here reminds him of his own power, Ex 4:11.

(1.) His power in that concerning which Moses made the objection: Who has made man's mouth? Have not I the Lord? Moses knew that God made man, but he must be reminded now that God made man's mouth. An eye to God as Creator would help us over a great many of the difficulties which lie in the way of our duty, Ps 124:8. God, as the author of nature,

has given us the power and faculty of speaking; and from him, as the fountain of gifts and graces, comes the faculty of speaking well, the mouth and wisdom (Lu 21:15), the tongue of the learned (Isa 50:4); he pours grace into the lips, Ps 45:2.

(2.) His power in general over the other faculties. Who but God makes the dumb and the deaf, the seeing and the blind? [1.] The perfections of our faculties are his work, he makes the seeing; he formed the eye (Ps 94:9); he opens the understanding, the eye of the mind, Lu 24:45.

[2.] Their imperfections are from him too; he make the dumb, and deaf, and blind. Is there any evil of this kind, and the Lord has not done it? No doubt he has, and always in wisdom and righteousness, and for his own glory, 9:3. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were made deaf and blind spiritually, as Isa 6:9, 10. But God knew how to manage them, and get himself honour upon them.

12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

To encourage him in this great undertaking, he repeats the promise of his presence, not only in general, I will be with thee (Ex 3:12), but in particular, "I will be with thy mouth, so that the imperfection in thy speech shall be no prejudice to thy message." It does not appear that God did immediately remove the infirmity, whatever it was; but he did that which was equivalent, he taught him what to say, and then let the matter recommend itself: if others spoke more gracefully, none spoke more powerfully. Note, Those whom God employs to speak for him ought to depend upon him for instructions, and it shall be given them what they shall speak, Mt 10:19.

13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand *of him whom* thou wilt send.

14 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, *is* not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well.

And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, *even* he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

He joins Aaron in commission with him. He promises that Aaron shall meet him opportunely, and that he will be glad to see him, they having not seen one another (it is likely) for many years, Ex 4:14. He directs him to make use of Aaron as his spokesman, Ex 4:16. God might have laid Moses wholly aside, for his backwardness to be employed; but he considered his frame, and ordered him an assistant. Observe,

(1.) Two are better than one, Ec 4:9. God will have his two witnesses (11:3), that out of their mouths every word may be established.

(2.) Aaron was the brother of Moses, divine wisdom so ordering it, that their natural affection one to another might strengthen their union in the joint execution of their commission. Christ sent his disciples two and two, and some of the couples were brothers.

(3.) Aaron was the elder brother, and yet he was willing to be employed under Moses in this affair, because God would have it so.

(4.) Aaron could speak well, and yet was far inferior to Moses in wisdom. God dispenses his gifts variously to the children of men, that we may see our need one of another, and each may contribute something to the good of the body, 1Co 12:21. The tongue of Aaron, with the head and heart of Moses, would make one completely fit for this embassy.

(5.) God promises, I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth. Even Aaron, that could speak well, yet could not speak to purpose unless God was with his mouth; without the constant aids of divine grace the best gifts will fail.

17 And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

He bids him take the rod with him in his hand (Ex 4:17), to intimate that he must bring about his undertaking rather by acting than by speaking; the signs he should work with this rod might abundantly supply the want of eloquence; one miracle would do him better service than all the rhetoric in the world. Take this rod, the rod he carried as a shepherd, that he might not be ashamed of that mean condition out of which God called him. This rod must be his staff of authority, and must be to him instead both of sword and sceptre.

Moses Returns to Egypt

18 And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

Moses obtains leave of his father-in-law to return into Egypt, Ex 4:18. His father-in-law had been kind to him when he was a stranger, and therefore he would not be so uncivil as to leave his family, nor so unjust as to leave his service, without giving him notice. Note, The honour of being admitted into communion with God, and of being employed for him, does not exempt us from the duties of our relations and callings in this world. Moses said nothing to his father-in-law (for aught that appears) of the glorious manifestation of God to him; such favours we are to be thankful for to God, but not to boast of before men.

19 And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

He receives from God further encouragements and directions in his work. After God had appeared to him in the bush to

settle a correspondence, it should seem, he often spoke to him, as there was occasion, with less overwhelming solemnity. And, 1. He assures Moses that the coasts were clear. Whatever new enemies he might make by his undertaking, his old enemies were all dead, all that sought his life, Ex 4:19. Perhaps some secret fear of falling into their hands was at the bottom of Moses's backwardness to go to Egypt, though he was not willing to own it, but pleaded unworthiness, insufficiency, want of elocution, &c. Note, God knows all the temptations his people lie under, and how to arm them against their secret fears, Ps 142:3.

20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

Moses addresses himself to this expedition. When God had assured him (Ex 4:19) that the men were dead who sought his life, immediately it follows (Ex 4:20), he took his wife, and his sons, and set out for Egypt. Note, Though corruption may object much against the services God calls us to, yet grace will get the upper hand, and will be obedient to the heavenly vision.

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

He orders him to do the miracles, not only before the elders of Israel, but before Pharaoh, Ex 4:21. There were some alive perhaps in the court of Pharaoh who remembered Moses when he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and had many a time called him a fool for deserting the honours of that relation; but he is now sent back to court, clad with greater powers than Pharaoh's daughter could have advanced him to, so that it might appear he was no loser by his choice: this wonder-working rod did more adorn the hand of Moses than the sceptre of Egypt could have done. Note, Those that look with contempt upon worldly honours shall be recompensed

with the honour that cometh from God, which is the true honour.

That Pharaoh's obstinacy might be no surprise nor discouragement to him, God tells him before that he would harden his heart. Pharaoh had hardened his own heart against the groans and cries of the oppressed Israelites, and shut up the bowels of his compassion from them; and now God, in a way of righteous judgment, hardens his heart against the conviction of the miracles, and the terror of the plagues. Note, Ministers must expect with many to labour in vain: we must not think it strange if we meet with those who will not be wrought upon by the strongest arguments and fairest reasonings; yet our judgment is with the Lord.

22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my
son, *even* my firstborn:

23 and I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me: and if
thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy
firstborn.

Words are put into his mouth with which to address Pharaoh, Ex 4:22, 23. God had promised him (Ex 4:12), I will teach thee what thou shalt say; and here he does teach him.

(1.) He must deliver his message in the name of the great Jehovah: Thus saith the Lord; this is the first time that preface is used by any man which afterwards is used so frequently by all the prophets: whether Pharaoh will hear, or whether he will forbear, Moses must tell him, Thus saith the Lord.

(2.) He must let Pharaoh know Israel's relation to God, and God's concern for Israel. Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave? Jer 2:14. "No, Israel is my son, my firstborn, precious in my sight, honourable, and dear to me, not to be thus insulted and abused."

(3.) He must demand a discharge for them: "Let my son go; not only my servant whom thou hast no right to detain, but

my son whose liberty and honour I am very jealous for. It is my son, my son that serves me, and therefore must be spared, must be pleaded for," Mal 3:17.

(4.) He must threaten Pharaoh with the death of the first-born of Egypt, in case of a refusal: I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn. As men deal with God's people, let them expect to be themselves dealt with; with the froward he will wrestle.

24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him.

Moses is here going to Egypt, and we are told,

How God met him in anger, Ex 4:24-26. This is a very difficult passage of story; much has been written, and excellently written, to make it intelligible; we will try to make it improving. Here is,

1 The sin of Moses, which was neglecting to circumcise his son. This was probably the effect of his being unequally yoked with a Midianite, who was too indulgent of her child, while Moses was too indulgent of her. Note,

(1.) We have need to watch carefully over our own hearts, lest fondness for any relation prevail above our love to God, and take us off from our duty to him. It is charged upon Eli that he honoured his sons more than God (1Sa 2:29); and see Mt 10:37.

(2.) Even good men are apt to cool in their zeal for God and duty when they have long been deprived of the society of the faithful: solitude has its advantages, but they seldom counterbalance the loss of Christian communion.

2. God's displeasure against him. He met him, and, probably by a sword in an angel's hand, sought to kill him. This was a great change; very lately God was conversing with him, and

lodging a trust in him, as a friend; and now he is coming forth against him as an enemy. Note,

(1.) Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment, and particularly the contempt and neglect of the seals of the covenant; for it is a sign that we undervalue the promises of the covenant, and are displeased with the conditions of it. He that has made a bargain, and is not willing to seal and ratify it, one may justly suspect, neither likes it nor designs to stand to it.

(2.) God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of his own people. If they neglect their duty, let them expect to hear of it by their consciences, and perhaps to feel from it by cross providences: for this cause many are sick and weak, as some think Moses was here.

3. The speedy performance of the duty for the neglect of which God had now a controversy with him. His son must be circumcised; Moses is unable to circumcise him; therefore, in this case of necessity, Zipporah does it, whether with passionate words (expressing her dislike of the ordinance itself, or at least the administration of it to so young a child, and in a journey), as to me it seems, or with proper words--solemnly expressing the espousal of the child to God by the covenant of circumcision (as some read it) or her thankfulness to God for sparing her husband, giving him a new life, and thereby giving her, as it were, a new marriage to him, upon her circumcising her son (as others read it)--I cannot determine: but we learn,

(1.) That when God discovers to us what is amiss in our lives we must give all diligence to amend it speedily, and particularly return to the duties we have neglected.

(2.) The putting away of our sins is indispensably necessary to the removal of God's judgements. This is the voice of every rod, it calls to us to return to him that smites us.

4. The release of Moses thereupon: So he let him go; the distemper went off, the destroying angel withdrew, and all was well: only Zipporah cannot forget the fright she was in, but will unreasonably call Moses a bloody husband, because he obliged her to circumcise the child; and, upon this occasion (it is probable), he sent them back to his father-in-law, that they might not create him any further uneasiness. Note,

(1.) When we return to God in a way of duty he will return to us in a way of mercy; take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

(2.) We must resolve to bear it patiently, if our zeal for God and his institutions be misinterpreted and discouraged by some that should understand themselves, and us, and their duty, better, as David's zeal was misinterpreted by Michal; but if this be to be vile, if this be to be bloody, we must be yet more so.

(3.) When we have any special service to do for God we should remove as far from us as we can that which is likely to be our hindrance. Let the dead bury their dead, but follow thou me.

25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her
son, and cast *it* at his feet, and said, surely a bloody husband *art*
thou to me.
26 So he let him go: then she said, a bloody husband thou *art*, because of
the circumcision.
27 And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.
And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.
28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent
him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

How Aaron met him in love, Ex 4:27, 28.

1. God sent Aaron to meet him, and directed him where to find him, in the wilderness that lay towards Midian. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged in the comfortable meeting of relations and friends.

2. Aaron made so much haste, in obedience to his God, and in love to his brother, that he met him in the mount of God, the place where God had met with him.

3. They embraced one another with mutual endearments. The more they saw of God's immediate direction in bringing them together the more pleasant their interview was: they kissed, not only in token of brotherly affection, and in remembrance of ancient acquaintance, but as a pledge of their hearty concurrence in the work to which they were jointly called.

4. Moses informed his brother of the commission he had received, with all the instructions and credentials affixed to it, Ex 4:28. Note, What we know of God we should communicate for the benefit of others; and those that are fellow-servants to God in the same work should use a mutual freedom, and endeavour rightly and fully to understand one another.

29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

How the elders of Israel met him in faith and obedience. When Moses and Aaron first opened their commission in Egypt, said what they were ordered to say, and, to confirm it, did what they were ordered to do, they met with a better reception than they promised themselves, Ex 4:29-31.

The Israelites gave credit to them: The people believed, as God had foretold (Ex 3:18), knowing that no man could do those works that they did, unless God were with him. They gave glory to God: They bowed their heads and worshipped,

therein expressing not only their humble thankfulness to God, who had raised them up and sent them a deliverer, but also their cheerful readiness to observe orders, and pursue the methods of their deliverance.

30 and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

31 And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Exodus-5

Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh

1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

Moses and Aaron, having delivered their message to the elders of Israel, with whom they found good acceptance, are now to deal with Pharaoh, to whom they come in peril of their lives--Moses particularly, who perhaps was out-lawed for killing the Egyptian forty years before, so that if any of the old courtiers should happen to remember that against him now it might cost him his head. Their message itself was displeasing, and touch Pharaoh both in his honour and in his profit, two tender points; yet these faithful ambassadors boldly deliver it, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

Their demand is piously bold: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, Ex 5:1. Moses, in treating with the elders of Israel, is directed to call God the God of their fathers; but, in treating with Pharaoh, they call him the God of Israel, and it is the first time we find him called so in scripture: he is called the God of Israel, the person (Ge 33:20); but here it is Israel, the people. They are just beginning to be formed into a people when God is called their God. Moses, it is likely, was directed to call him so, at least it might be inferred from Ex

9:22, Israel is my son. In this great name they deliver their message: Let my people go.

They were God's people, and therefore Pharaoh ought not to detain them in bondage. Note, God will own his own people, though ever so poor and despicable, and will find a time to plead their cause. "The Israelites are slaves in Egypt, but they are my people," says God, "and I will not suffer them to be always trampled upon." See Isa 52:4, 5.

He expected services and sacrifices from them, and therefore they must have leave to go where they could freely exercise their religion, without giving offence to, or receiving offence from, the Egyptians. Note, God delivers his people out of the hand of their enemies, that they may serve him, and serve him cheerfully, that they may hold a feast to him, which they may do, while they have his favour and presence, even in a wilderness, a dry and barren land.

2 And Pharaoh said, who *is* the Lord that I should obey his voice to let
Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

Pharaoh's answer is impiously bold: Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Ex 5:2. Being summoned to surrender, he thus hangs out the flag of defiance, hectors Moses and the God that sends him, and peremptorily refuses to let Israel go; he will not treat about it, nor so much as bear the mention of it. Observe,

1. How scornfully he speaks of the God of Israel: "Who is Jehovah? I neither know him nor care for him, neither value him nor fear him:" it is a hard name that he never heard of before, but he resolves it shall be no bug-bear to him. Israel was now a despised oppressed people, looked on as the tail of the nation, and, by the character they bore, Pharaoh makes his estimate of their God, and concludes that he made no better a figure among the gods than his people did among the nations.

Note, Hardened persecutors are more malicious against God himself than they are against his people. See Isa 37:23. Again,

Ignorance and contempt of God are at the bottom of all the wickedness that is in the world. Men know not the Lord, or have very low and mean thoughts of him, and therefore they obey not his voice, nor will let anything go for him.

2. How proudly he speaks of himself: "That I should obey his voice; I, the king of Egypt, a great people, obey the God of Israel, a poor enslaved people? Shall I, that rule the Israel of God, obey the God of Israel? No, it is below me; I scorn to answer his summons."

Note, Those are the children of pride that are the children of disobedience, Job 41:34, Eph 5:6. Proud men think themselves too good to stoop even to God himself, and would not be under control, Jer 43:2. Here is the core of the controversy: God must rule, but man will not be ruled. "I will have my will done," says God: "But I will do my own will," says the sinner.

3. How resolutely he denies the demand: Neither will I let Israel go. Note, Of all sinners none are so obstinate, nor so hardly persuaded to leave their sin, as persecutors are.

3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto The Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

Finding that Pharaoh had no veneration at all for God, Moses and Aaron next try whether he had any compassion for Israel, and become humble suitors to him for leave to go and sacrifice, but in vain.

Their request is very humble and modest, Ex 5:3. They make no complaint of the rigour they were ruled with. They plead that the journey they designed was not a project formed among themselves, but that their God had met with them, and called them to it. They beg with all submission: We pray thee. The poor useth entreaties; though God may summon princes that oppress, it becomes us to beseech and make supplication to

them. What they ask is very reasonable, only for a short vacation, while they went three days' journey into the desert, and that on a good errand, and unexceptionable: "We will sacrifice unto the Lord our God, as other people do to theirs;" and, lastly, they give a very good reason, "Lest, if we quite cast off his worship, he fall upon us with one judgment or other, and then Pharaoh will lose his vassals."

4 And the king of Egypt said unto them, wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens.

5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now *are* many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

Pharaoh's denial of their request is very barbarous and unreasonable, Ex 5:4-9.

1. His suggestions were very unreasonable.

(1.) That the people were idle, and that therefore they talked of going to sacrifice. The cities they built for Pharaoh, and the other fruit of their labours, were witnesses for them that they were not idle; yet he thus basely misrepresents them, that he might have a pretence to increase their burdens.

(2.) That Moses and Aaron made them idle with vain words, Ex 5:9. God's words are here called vain words; and those that called them to the best and most needful business are accused of making them idle. Note, The malice of Satan has often represented the service and worship of God as fit employment for those only that have nothing else to do, and the business only of the idle; whereas indeed it is the indispensable duty of those that are most busy in the world.

2. His resolutions hereupon were most barbarous.

(1.) Moses and Aaron themselves must get to their burdens (Ex 5:4); they are Israelites, and, however God had distinguished them from the rest, Pharaoh makes no

difference: they must share in the common slavery of their nation. Persecutors have always taken a particular pleasure in putting contempt and hardship upon the ministers of the churches.

(2.) The usual tale of bricks must be exacted, without the usual allowance of straw to mix with the clay, or to burn the bricks with, that thus more work might be laid upon the men, which if they performed, they would be broken with labour; and, if not, they would be exposed to punishment.

6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.

8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish *aught* thereof: for they *be* idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go *and* sacrifice to our God.

9 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein; and let them not regard vain words.

10 And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.

Pharaoh's orders are here put in execution; straw is denied, and yet the work not diminished. 1 The Egyptian task-masters were very severe. Pharaoh having decreed unrighteous decrees, the task-masters were ready to write the grievousness that he had prescribed, Isa 10:1. Cruel princes will never want cruel instruments to be employed under them, who will justify them in that which is most unreasonable. These task-masters insisted upon the daily tasks, as when there was straw, Ex 5:13. See what need we have to pray that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, 2Th 3:2 The enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman is such as breaks through all the laws of reason, honour, humanity, and common justice.

11 Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not aught of your work shall be diminished.

12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of

Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.

The people hereby were dispersed throughout all the land of Egypt, to gather stubble, Ex 5:12. By this means Pharaoh's unjust and barbarous usage of them came to be known to all the kingdom, and perhaps caused them to be pitied by their neighbours, and made Pharaoh's government less acceptable even to his own subjects: good-will is never got by persecution.

13 And the taskmasters hasted *them*, saying, Fulfil your works, *your* daily tasks, as when there was straw.

14 And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, *and* demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as heretofore?

The Israelite-officers were used with particular harshness, Ex 5:14. Those that were the fathers of the houses of Israel paid dearly for their honour; for from them immediately the service was exacted, and they were beaten when it was not performed. See here,

(1.) What a miserable thing slavery is, and what reason we have to be thankful to God that we are a free people, and not oppressed. Liberty and property are valuable jewels in the eyes of those whose services and possessions lie at the mercy of an arbitrary power.

(2.) What disappointments we often meet with after the raising of our expectations. The Israelites were now lately encouraged to hope for enlargement, but behold greater distresses. This teaches us always to rejoice with trembling.

(3.) What strange steps God sometimes takes in delivering his people; he often brings them to the utmost straits when he is just ready to appear for them. The lowest ebbs go before the highest tides; and very cloudy mornings commonly introduce the fairest days, De 32:36. God's time to help is when things are at the worst; and Providence verifies the paradox, The worse the better.

15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?

How justly they complained to Pharaoh: They came and cried unto Pharaoh, Ex 5:15. Whither should they go with a remonstrance of their grievances but to the supreme power, which is ordained for the protection of the injured? As bad as Pharaoh was his oppressed subjects had liberty to complain to him; there was no law against petitioning: it was a very modest, but moving, representation that they made of their condition (Ex 5:16): Thy servants are beaten (severely enough, no doubt, when things were in such a ferment), and yet the fault is in thy own people, the task-masters, who deny us what is necessary for carrying on our work. Note, It is common for those to be most rigorous in blaming others who are most blameworthy themselves. But what did they get by this complaint? It did but make bad worse.

16 There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.

17 But he said, ye *are* idle, *ye are* idle: therefore ye say, Let us go *and* do sacrifice to the Lord.

Pharaoh taunted them (Ex 5:17); when they were almost killed with working, he told them they were idle: they underwent the fatigue of industry, and yet lay under the imputation of slothfulness, while nothing appeared to ground the charge upon but this, that they said, Let us go and do sacrifice. Note, It is common for the best actions to be mentioned under the worst names; holy diligence in the best business is censured by many as a culpable carelessness in the business of the world. It is well for us that men are not to be our judges, but a God who knows what the principles are on which we act. Those that are diligent in doing sacrifice to the Lord will, with God, escape the doom of the slothful servant, though, with men, they do not. 2. He bound on their burdens: Go now and work. Ex 5:18. Note, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked; what can be expected from unrighteous men but more unrighteousness?

18 Go therefore now, *and* work; for there shall no straw be given you,
yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.
19 And the officers of the children of Israel did see *that* they *were* in
evil *case,* after it was said, ye shall not monish aught from your
bricks of your daily task.
20 And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they
came forth from Pharaoh:
21 and they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge;
because ye have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of
Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their
hand to slay us.

How unjustly they complained of Moses and Aaron: The Lord look upon you, and judge, Ex 5:21. This was not fair. Moses and Aaron had given sufficient evidence of their hearty good-will to the liberties of Israel; and yet, because things succeed not immediately as they hoped, they are reproached as accessaries to their slavery. They should have humbled themselves before God, and taken to themselves the shame of their sin, which turned away good things from them; but, instead of this, they fly in the face of their best friends, and quarrel with the instruments of their deliverance, because of some little difficulties and obstructions they met with in effecting it.

Note, Those that are called out to public service for God and their generation must expect to be tried, not only by the malicious threats of proud enemies, but by the unjust and unkind censures of unthinking friends, who judge only by outward appearance and look but a little way before them. Now what did Moses do in this strait? It grieved him to the heart that the event did not answer, but rather contradict, his expectation; and their upbraidings were very cutting, and like a sword in his bones;

The Lord's Charge to Moses and Aaron

22 And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast
thou *so* evil entreated this people? Why *is* it *that* thou hast sent me?

He returned to the Lord (Ex 5:22), to acquaint him with it, and to represent the case to him: he knew that what he had said and done was by divine direction; and therefore what blame is laid upon him for it he considers as reflecting upon God, and, like Hezekiah, spreads it before him as interested in the cause, and appeals to him. Compare this with Jer 20:7-9. Note, When we find ourselves, at any time, perplexed and embarrassed in the way of our duty, we ought to have recourse to God, and lay open our case before him by faithful and fervent prayer. If we retreat, let us retreat to him, and no further.

23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

He expostulated with him, Ex 5:22, 23. He knew not how to reconcile the providence with the promise and the commission which he had received. "Is this God's coming down to deliver Israel? Must I, who hoped to be a blessing to them, become a scourge to them? By this attempt to get them out of the pit, they are but sunk the deeper into it." Now he asks,

(1.) Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Note, Even when God is coming towards his people in ways of mercy, he sometimes takes such methods as that they may think themselves but ill-treated. The instruments of deliverance, when they aim to help, are found to hinder, and that becomes a trap which, it was hoped, would have been for their welfare, God suffering it to be so that we may learn to cease from man, and may come off from a dependence upon second causes.

Note, further, When the people of God think themselves ill-treated, they should go to God by prayer, and plead with him, and that is the way to have better treatment in God's good time.

(2.) Why is it thou hast sent me? Thus,

[1.] He complains of his ill success: "Pharaoh has done evil to this people, and not one step seems to be taken towards their deliverance." Note, It cannot but sit very heavily upon the

spirits of those whom God employs for him to see that their labour does no good, and much more to see that it does hurt eventually, though not designedly. It is uncomfortable to a good minister to perceive that his endeavours for men's conviction and conversion do but exasperate their corruptions, confirm their prejudices, harden their hearts, and seal them up under unbelief. This makes them go in the bitterness of their souls, as the prophet, Eze 3:14. Or,

[2.] He enquires what was further to be done: Why hast thou sent me? That is, "What other method shall I take in pursuance of my commission?" Note, Disappointments in our work must not drive us from our God, but still we must consider why we are sent.

Exodus-6

1 Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

God silences Moses's complaints with the assurance of success in this negotiation, repeating the promise made him in Ex 3:20, After that, he will let you go. When Moses was at his wit's end, wishing he had staid in Midian, rather than have come to Egypt to make bad worse--when he was quite at a loss what to do--Then the Lord said unto Moses, for the quieting of his mind, "Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh (Ex 6:1); now that the affair has come to a crisis, things are as bad as they can be, Pharaoh is in the height of pride and Israel in the depth of misery, now is my time to appear." See Ps 12:5, Now will I arise. Note, Man's extremity is God's opportunity of helping and saving. Moses had been expecting what God would do; but now he shall see what he will do, shall see his day at length, Job 24:1. Moses had been trying what he could do, and could effect nothing. "Well," says God, "now thou shalt see what I will do; let me alone to deal with this proud man," Job 40:12,13. Note, Then the

deliverance of God's church will be accomplished, when God takes the work into his own hands. With a strong hand, that is, being forced to it by a strong hand, he shall let them go. Note, As some are brought to their duty by the strong hand of God's grace, who are made willing in the day of his power, so others by the strong hand of his justice, breaking those that would not bend.

2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the Lord:

3 and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them.

4 And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

From his covenant: I have established my covenant, Ex 6:4. Note, The covenants God makes he establishes; they are made as firm as the power and truth of God can make them. We may venture our all upon this bottom.

5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant.

From his compassions (Ex 6:5): I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel; he means their groaning on occasion of the late hardships put upon them. Note, God take notice of the increase of his people's calamities, and observes how their enemies grow upon them.

6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I *am* the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

From his present resolutions, Ex 6:6-8. Here is line upon line, to assure them that they should be brought triumphantly out of Egypt (Ex 6:6), and should be put in possession of the land of Canaan (Ex 6:8): I will bring you out. I will rid you. I will redeem you. I will bring you into the land of Canaan, and I will give it to you. Let man take the shame of his unbelief, which needs such repetitions; and let God have the glory of

his condescending grace, which gives us such repeated assurances for our satisfaction.

7 and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God:
and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord your God, which bringeth
you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did
swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it
you for a heritage: I *am* the Lord.

From his gracious intentions in all these, which were great, and worthy of him, Ex 6:7.

(1.) He intended their happiness: I will take you to me for a people, a peculiar people, and I will be to you a God; more than this we need not ask, we cannot have, to make us happy.

(2.) He intended his own glory: You shall know that I am the Lord. God will attain his own ends, nor shall we come short of them if we make them our chief end too. Now, one would think, these good words, and comfortable words, should have revived the drooping Israelites, and cause them to forget their misery; but, on the contrary, their miseries made them regardless of God's promises (Ex 6:9): They harkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit. That is,

[1.] They were so taken up with their troubles that they did not heed him.

[2.] They were so cast down with their late disappointment that they did not believe him.

[3.] They had such a dread of Pharaoh's power and wrath that they durst not themselves move in the least towards their deliverance. Note, First, Disconsolate spirits often put from

them the comforts they are entitled to, and stand in their own light. See Isa 28:12. Secondly, Strong passions oppose strong consolations. By indulging ourselves in discontent and fretfulness, we deprive ourselves of the comfort we might have both from God's word and from his providence, and must thank ourselves if we go comfortless.

9 And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened
not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.
10 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
11 Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of
Israel go out of his land.

God sends Moses the second time to Pharaoh (Ex 6:11) upon the same errand as before, to command him, at his peril, that he let the children of Israel go. Note, God repeats his precepts before he begins his punishments. Those that have often been called in vain to leave their sins must yet be called again and again, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, Eze 3:1. God is said to hew sinners by his prophets (Ho 6:5), which denotes the repetition of the strokes. How often would I have gathered you?

12 And Moses spake before the Lord, saying, Behold, the children of
Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear
me, who *am* of uncircumcised lips?

Moses makes objections, as one discouraged, and willing to give up the cause, Ex 6:12. He pleads,

1 The unlikelihood of Pharaoh's hearing: "Behold the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; they give no heed, no credit, to what I have said; how then can I expect that Pharaoh should hear me? If the anguish of their spirit makes them deaf to that which would compose and comfort them, much more will the anger of his spirit, his pride and insolence, make him deaf to that which will but exasperate and provoke him." If God's professing people hear not his messengers, how can it be thought that his professed enemy should? Note, The frowardness and untractableness of those that are called Christians greatly discourage ministers, and make them ready to despair of success in dealing with those that are atheistical

and profane. We would be instrumental to unite Israelites, to refine and purify them, to comfort and pacify them; but, if they hearken not to us, how shall we prevail with those in whom we cannot pretend to such an interest? But with God all things are possible.

2. He pleads the unreadiness and infirmity of his own speaking: I am of uncircumcised lips; it is repeated, Ex 6:30. He was conscious to himself that he had not the gift of utterance, had no command of language; his talent did not lie that way. To this objection God had given a sufficient answer before, and therefore he ought not to have insisted upon it, for the sufficiency of grace can supply the defects of nature at any time.

Note, Though our infirmities ought to humble us, yet they ought not to discourage us from doing our best in any service we have to do for God. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

13 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

God again joins Aaron in commission with Moses, and puts an end to the dispute by interposing his own authority, and giving them both a solemn charge, upon their allegiance to their great Lord, to execute it with all possible expedition and fidelity. When Moses repeats his baffled arguments, he shall be argued with no longer, but God gives him a charge, and Aaron with him, both to the children of Israel and to Pharaoh, Ex 6:13. Note, God's authority is sufficient to answer all objections, and binds us to obedience, without murmuring or disputing, Php 2:14. Moses himself has need to be charged, and so has Timothy, 1Ti 6:13,2Ti 4:1.

14 These be the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi: these be the families of Reuben.

We have here a genealogy, not an endless one, such as the apostle condemns (1Ti 1:4), for it ends in those two great

patriots Moses and Aaron, and comes in here to show that they were Israelites, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh whom they were sent to deliver, raised up unto them of their brethren, as Christ also should be, who was to be the prophet and priest, the Redeemer and lawgiver, of the people of Israel, and whose genealogy also, like this, was to be carefully preserved. The heads of the houses of three of the tribes are here named, agreeing with the accounts we had, Ge 46:1-34. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, are thus dignified here by themselves for this reason, because they were left under marks of infamy by their dying father, Reuben for his incest and Simeon and Levi for their murder of the Shechemites; and therefore Moses would put this particular honour upon them, to magnify God's mercy in their repentance and remission, as a pattern to those that should afterwards believe: the two former seem rather to be mentioned only for the sake of a third, which was Levi, from whom Moses and Aaron descended, and all the priests of the Jewish church. Thus was the tribe of Levi distinguished betimes. Observe here, that Kohath, from whom Moses and Aaron, and all the priests, derived their pedigree, was a younger son of Levi, Ex 6:16.

Note, The grants of God's favours do not go by seniority of age and priority of birth, but the divine sovereignty often prefers the younger before the elder, so crossing hands.

15 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman: these *are* the families of Simeon.

16 And these *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari: and the years of the life of Levi *were* a hundred thirty and seven years.

17 The sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimi, according to their families.

18 And the sons of Kohath; Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: and the years of the life of Kohath *were* a hundred thirty and three years.

19 And the sons of Merari; Mahali and Mushi: these *are* the families of
Levi according to their generations.
20 And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she
bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram *were*
a hundred and thirty and seven years.

It must not be omitted that Moses has recorded the marriage of his father Amram with Jochebed his own aunt (Ex 6:20); and it appears by Nu 26:59 that it must be taken strictly for his father's own sister, at least by the half blood. This marriage was afterwards forbidden as incestuous (Le 18:12), which might be looked upon as a blot upon his family, though before that law; yet Moses does not conceal it, for he sought not his own praise, but wrote with a sincere regard to truth, whether it smiled or frowned upon him.

He again nominates him an assistant, his brother Aaron, who was not a man of uncircumcised lips, but a notable spokesman: "He shall be thy prophet," that is, "he shall speak from thee to Pharaoh, as prophets do from God to the children of men. Thou shalt, as a god, inflict and remove the plagues, and Aaron, as a prophet, shall denounce them, and threaten Pharaoh with them."

21 And the sons of Izhar; Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri.
22 And the sons of Uzziel; Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Zithri.
23 And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of
Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and
Ithamar.
24 And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these *are*
the families of the Korhites.
25 And Eleazar Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to
wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these *are* the heads of the fathers
of the Levites according to their families.
26 These *are* that Aaron and Moses, to whom the Lord said, Bring
out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their
armies.

27 These *are* they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out
the children of Israel from Egypt: these *are* that Moses and Aaron.
28 And it came to pass on the day *when* the Lord spake unto Moses
in the land of Egypt,
29 that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I *am* the Lord: speak
thou unto Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say unto thee.
30 And Moses said before the Lord, Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised
lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?

His objection against it, Ex 6:30. Note, Those that have at any time spoken unadvisedly with their lips ought often to reflect upon it with regret, as Moses seems to do here.

Exodus-7

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to
Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

God encourages Moses to go to Pharaoh, and at last silences all his discouragements.

He clothes him with great power and authority (Ex 7:1): I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; that is, my representative in this affair, as magistrates are called gods, because they are God's vicegerents. He was authorized to speak and act in God's name and stead, and, under the divine direction, was endued with a divine power to do that which is above the ordinary power of nature, and invested with a divine authority to demand obedience from a sovereign prince and punish disobedience. Moses was a god, but he was only a made god, not essentially one by nature; he was no god but by commission. He was a god, but he was a god only to Pharaoh; the living and true God is a God to all the world. It is an instance of God's condescension, and an evidence that his thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace, that when he treats with men he treats by men, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

He again nominates him an assistant, his brother Aaron, who was not a man of uncircumcised lips, but a notable spokesman: "He shall be thy prophet," that is, "he shall speak from thee to Pharaoh, as prophets do from God to the children of men. Thou shalt, as a god, inflict and remove the plagues, and Aaron, as a prophet, shall denounce them, and threaten Pharaoh with them."

2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee; and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, *and* my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

He tells him the worst of it, that Pharaoh would not hearken to him, and yet the work should be done at last, Israel should be delivered and God therein would be glorified, Ex 7:4,5. The Egyptians, who would not know the Lord, should be made to know him.

Note, It is, and ought to be, satisfaction enough to God's messengers that, whatever contradiction and opposition may be given them, thus far they shall gain their point, that God will be glorified in the success of their embassy, and all his chosen Israel will be saved, and then they have no reason to say that they have laboured in vain. See here,

(1.) How God glorifies himself; he makes people know that he is Jehovah. Israel is made to know it by the performance of his promises to them (Ex 6:3), and the Egyptians are made to know it by the pouring out of his wrath upon them. Thus God's name is exalted both in those that are saved and in those that perish.

(2.) What method he takes to do this: he humbles the proud, and exalts the poor, Lu 1:51, 52. If God stretch out his hand to sinners in vain, he will at last stretch out his hand upon them; and who can bear the weight of it?

5 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

6 And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they.

Moses and Aaron apply themselves to their work without further objection: They did as the Lord commanded them, Ex 7:6. Their obedience, all things considered, was well worthy to be celebrated, as it is by the Psalmist (Ps 105:28), They rebelled not against his word, namely, Moses and Aaron, whom he mentions, Ex 7:26. Thus Jonah, though at first he was very averse, at length went to Nineveh. Notice is taken of the age of Moses and Aaron when they undertook this glorious service. Aaron the elder (and yet the inferior in office) was eighty-three, Moses was eighty; both of them men of great gravity and experience, whose age was venerable, and whose years might teach wisdom, Ex 7:7. Joseph, who was to be only a servant to Pharaoh, was preferred at thirty years old; but Moses, who was to be a god to Pharaoh, was not so dignified until he was eighty years old. It was fit that he should long wait for such an honour, and belong in preparing for such a service.

7 And Moses *was* fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.

Aaron's Rod

8 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast *it* before Pharaoh, *and* it shall become a serpent.

The first time that Moses made his application to Pharaoh, he produced his instructions only; now he is directed to produce his credentials, and does accordingly.

1. It is taken for granted that Pharaoh would challenge these demandants to work a miracle, that, by a performance evidently above the power of nature, they might prove their commission from the God of nature. Pharaoh will say, Show a miracle; not with any desire to be convinced, but with the hope that none will be wrought, and then he would have some colour for his infidelity.

2. Orders are therefore given to turn the rod into a serpent, according to the instructions, Ex 4:3. The same rod that was to give the signal of the other miracles is now itself the subject of a miracle, to put a reputation upon it. Aaron cast his rod to the ground, and instantly it became a serpent, Ex 7:10. This was proper, not only to affect Pharaoh with wonder, but to strike a terror upon him. Serpents are hurtful dreadful animals; the very sight of one, thus miraculously produced, might have softened his heart into a fear of that God by whose power it was produced. This first miracle, though it was not a plague, yet amounted to the threatening of a plague. If it made not Pharaoh feel, it made him fear; and this is God's method of dealing with sinners--he comes upon them gradually.

10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

11 Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

This miracle, though too plain to be denied, is enervated, and the conviction of it taken off, by the magicians' imitation of it, Ex 7:11, 12. Moses had been originally instructed in the learning of the Egyptians, and was suspected to have improved himself in magical arts in his long retirement; the

magicians are therefore sent for, to vie with him. And some think those of that profession had a particular spite against the Hebrews ever since Joseph put them all to shame, by interpreting a dream which they could make nothing of, in remembrance of which slur put on their predecessors these magicians withstood Moses, as it is explained, 2Ti 3:8. Their rods became serpents, real serpents; some think, by the power of God, beyond their intention or expectation, for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart; others think, by the power of evil angels, artfully substituting serpents in the room of the rods, God permitting the delusion to be wrought for wise and holy ends, that those might believe a lie who received not the truth: and herein the Lord was righteous. Yet this might have helped to frighten Pharaoh into a compliance with the demands of Moses, that he might be freed from these dreadful unaccountable phenomena, with which he saw himself on all sides surrounded. But to the seed of the serpent these serpents were no amazement.

Note, God suffers the lying spirit to do strange things, that the faith of some may be tried and manifested (De 13:3,1Co 11:19), that the infidelity of others may be confirmed, and that he who is filthy may be filthy still, 2Co 4:4.

Yet, in this contest, Moses plainly gains the victory. The serpent which Aaron's rod was turned into swallowed up the others, which was sufficient to have convinced Pharaoh on which side the right lay.

Note, Great is the truth, and will prevail. The cause of God will undoubtedly triumph at last over all competition and contradiction, and will reign alone, Da 2:44. But Pharaoh was not wrought upon by this. The magicians having produced serpents, he had this to say, that the case between them and Moses was disputable; and the very appearance of an opposition to truth, and the least head made against it,

serve those for a justification of their infidelity who are prejudiced against the light and love of it.

12 For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents:
but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.
13 And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto
them; as the Lord had said.

The Plague of Blood

Here is the first of the ten plagues, the turning of the water into blood, which was,

1. A dreadful plague, and very grievous. The very sight of such vast rolling streams of blood, pure blood no doubt, florid and high-colored, could not but strike a horror upon people: much more afflictive were the consequences of it. Nothing more common than water: so wisely has Providence ordered it, and so kindly, that that which is so needful and serviceable to the comfort of human life should be cheap, and almost everywhere to be had; but now the Egyptians must either drink blood, or die for thirst.

Fish was much of their food (Nu 11:5), but the changing of the waters was the death of the fish; it was a pestilence in that element (Ex 7:21): The fish died. In the general deluge they escaped, because perhaps they had not then contributed so much to the luxury of man as they have since; but in this particular judgment they perished (Ps 105:29): He slew their fish; and when another destruction of Egypt, long afterwards, is threatened, the disappointment of those that make sluices and ponds for fish is particularly noticed, Isa 19:10. Egypt was a pleasant land, but the noisome stench of dead fish and blood, which by degrees would grow putrid, now rendered it very unpleasant.

2. It was a righteous plague, and justly inflicted upon the Egyptians. For,

(1.) Nilus, the river of Egypt, was their idol; they and their land derived so much benefit from it that they served and worshipped it more than the Creator. The true fountain of the Nile being unknown to them, they paid all their devotions to its streams: here therefore God punished them, and turned that into blood which they had turned into a god.

Note, That creature which we idolize God justly removes from us, or embitters to us. He makes that a scourge to us which we make a competitor with him.

(2.) They had stained the river with the blood of the Hebrews' children, and now God made that river all bloody. Thus he gave them blood to drink, for they were worthy, Re 16:6. Note, Never any thirsted after blood, but, sooner or later, they had enough of it.

3. It was a significant plague. Egypt had a great dependence upon their river (Zec 14:18), so that in smiting the river they were warned of the destruction of all the productions of their country, till it came at last to their firstborn; and this red river proved a direful omen of the ruin of Pharaoh and all his forces in the Red Sea. This plague of Egypt is alluded to in the prediction of the ruin of the enemies of the New-Testament church, Re 16:3, 4. But there the sea, as well as the rivers and fountains of water, is turned into blood; for spiritual judgments reach further, and strike deeper, than temporal judgments do.

And, lastly, let me observe in general concerning this plague that one of the first miracles Moses wrought was turning water into blood, but one of the first miracles our Lord Jesus wrought was turning water into wine; for the law was given by Moses, and it was a dispensation of death and terror; but grace and truth, which, like wine, make glad the heart, came by Jesus Christ.

14 And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart *is* hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.

15 Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.

Moses is directed to give Pharaoh warning of this plague. "Pharaoh's heart is hardened (Ex 7:14), therefore go and try what this will do to soften it," Ex 7:15. Moses perhaps may not be admitted into Pharaoh's presence-chamber, or the room of state where he used to give audience to ambassadors; and therefore he is directed to meet him by the river's brink, whither God foresaw he would come in the morning, either for the pleasure of a morning's walk or to pay his morning devotions to the river: for thus all people will walk, everyone in the name of his god; they will not fail to worship their god every morning. There Moses must be ready to give him a new summons to surrender, and, in case of a refusal, to tell him of the judgment that was coming upon that very river on the banks of which they were now standing.

Notice is thus given him of it beforehand, that they might have no colour to say it was a chance, or to attribute it to any other cause, but that it might appear to be done by the power of the God of the Hebrews, and as a punishment upon him for his obstinacy. Moses is expressly ordered to take the rod with him, that Pharaoh might be alarmed at the sight of that rod which had so lately triumphed over the rods of the magicians. Now learn hence,

1. That the judgments of God are all known to himself beforehand. He knows what he will do in wrath as well as in mercy. Every consumption is a consumption determined, Isa 10:23.

2. That men cannot escape the alarms of God's wrath, because they cannot go out of the hearing of their own consciences: he that made their hearts can make his sword to approach them.

3. That God warns before he wounds; for he is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

16 And thou shalt say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

17 Thus saith the Lord, In this thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord : behold, I will smite with the rod that *is* in mine hand upon the waters which *are* in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

18 And the fish that *is* in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river.

19 And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and *that* there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *vessels of* wood, and in *vessels of* stone.

Aaron (who carried the mace) is directed to summon the plague by smiting the river with his rod, Ex 7:19, 20. It was done in the sight of Pharaoh and his attendants; for God's true miracles were not performed, as Satan's lying wonders were, by those that peeped and muttered: truth seeks no corners. An amazing change was immediately wrought; all the waters, not only in the rivers but in all their ponds, were turned into blood.

1. See here the almighty power of God. Every creature is that to us which he makes it to be, water or blood.

2. See the mutability of all things under the sun, and what changes we may meet with in them. That which is water to-

day may be blood to-morrow; what is always vain may soon become vexatious. A river, at the best, is transient; but divine justice can quickly make it malignant.

3. See what mischievous work sin makes. if the things that have been our comforts prove our crosses, we must thank ourselves: it is sin that turns our waters into blood.

20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood.

21 And the fish that *was* in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

22 And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the Lord had said.

Pharaoh endeavours to confront the miracle, because he resolves not to humble himself under the plague. He sends for the magicians, and, by God's permission, they ape the miracle with their enchantments (Ex 7:22), and this serves Pharaoh for an excuse not to set his heart to this also (Ex 7:23), and a pitiful excuse it was. Could they have turned the river of blood into water again, this would have been something to the purpose; then they would have proved their power, and Pharaoh would have been obliged to them as his benefactors. But for them, when there was such scarcity of water, to turn more of it into blood, only to show their art, plainly intimates that the design of the devil is only to delude his devotees and amuse them, not to do them any real kindness, but to keep them from doing a real kindness to themselves by repenting and returning to their God.

23 And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.

24 And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.

The Egyptians, in the meantime, are seeking for relief against the plague, digging round about the river for water to drink, Ex 7:24. Probably they found some, with much ado, God remembering mercy in the midst of wrath; for he is full of compassion, and would not let the subjects smart too much for the obstinacy of their prince.

The Plague of Frogs

25 And seven days were fulfilled, after that the Lord had smitten the river.

The plague continued seven days (Ex 7:25), and, in all that time, Pharaoh's proud heart would not let him so much as desire Moses to intercede for the removal of it. Thus the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath; they cry not when he binds them (Job 36:13); and then no wonder that his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Exodus-8

Pharaoh is here first threatened and then plagued with frogs, as afterwards, in this chapter, with lice and flies, little despicable inconsiderable animals, and yet by their vast numbers rendered sore plagues to the Egyptians. God could have plagued them with lions, or bears, or wolves, or with vultures or other birds of prey; but he chose to do it by these contemptible instruments.

1. That he might magnify his own power. He is Lord of the hosts of the whole creation, has them all at his beck, and makes what use he pleases of them. Some have thought that the power of God is shown as much in the making of an ant as in the making of an elephant; so is his providence in serving his own purposes by the least creatures as effectually as by the strongest, that the excellency of the power, in

judgment as well as mercy, may be of God, and not of the creature. See what reason we have to stand in awe of this God, who, when he pleases, can arm the smallest parts of the creation against us. If God be our enemy, all the creatures are at war with us.

2. That he might humble Pharaoh's pride, and chastise his insolence. What a mortification must it needs be to this haughty monarch to see himself brought to his knees, and forced to submit, by such despicable means! Every child is, ordinarily, able to deal with those invaders, and can triumph over them; yet now so numerous were their troops, and so vigorous their assaults, that Pharaoh, with all his chariots and horsemen, could make no head against them. Thus he poureth contempt upon princes that offer contempt to him and his sovereignty, and makes those who will not own him above them to know that, when he pleases, he can make the meanest creature to insult them and trample upon them. As to the plague of frogs we may observe,

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

How it was threatened. Moses, no doubt, attended the divine Majesty daily for fresh instructions, and (perhaps while the river was yet blood) he is here directed to give notice to Pharaoh of another judgment coming upon him, in case he continue obstinate: If thou refuse to let them go, it is at thy peril, Ex 8:1,2. Note, God does not punish men for sin unless they persist in it. If he turn not, he will whet his sword (Ps 7:12), which implies favour if he turn. So here, If thou refuse, I will smite thy borders, intimating that if Pharaoh complied the controversy should immediately be dropped. The plague threatened, in case of refusal, was formidably extensive. Frogs were to make such an inroad upon them as should make them uneasy in their houses, in their beds, and at their tables; they should not be able to eat, nor drink, nor sleep in

quietness, but, wherever they were, should be infested by them, Ex 8:3,4. Note,

1. God's curse upon a man will pursue him wherever he goes, and lie heavily upon him whatever he does. See De 28:16, &c.

2. There is no avoiding divine judgments when they invade with commission.

2 And if thou refuse to let *them* go, behold, I will smite all thy borders
with frogs:
3 and the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up
and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy
bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and
into thine ovens, and into thy kneading troughs:
4 and the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and
upon all thy servants.
5 And the Lord spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth
thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over
the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

How it was inflicted. Pharaoh not regarding the alarm, nor being at all inclined to yield to the summons, Aaron is ordered to draw out the forces, and with his outstretched arm and rod to give the signal of battle. Dictum factum--No sooner said than done; the host is mustered, and, under the direction and command of an invisible power, shoals of frogs invade the land, and the Egyptians, with all their art and all their might, cannot check their progress, nor so much as give them a diversion. Compare this with that prophecy of an army of locusts and caterpillars, Joe 2:2, &c.; and see Isa 34:16, 17. Frogs came up, at the divine call, and covered the land.

Note, God has many ways of disquieting those that live at ease.

6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the
frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

7 And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

How the magicians were permitted to imitate it, Ex 8:7. They also brought up frogs, but could not remove those that God sent. The unclean spirits which came out of the mouth of the dragon are said to be like frogs, which go forth to the kings of the earth, to deceive them (Re 16:13), which probably alludes to these frogs, for it follows the account of the turning of the waters into blood. The dragon, like the magicians, intended by them to deceive, but God intended by them to destroy those that would be deceived.

8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.

How Pharaoh relented under this plague: it was the first time he did so, Ex 8:8. He begs of Moses to intercede for the removal of the frogs, and promises fair that he will let the people go. He that a little while ago had spoken with the utmost disdain both of God and Moses is now glad to be beholden to the mercy of God and the prayers of Moses. Note, Those that bid defiance to God and prayer in a day of extremity will, first or last, be made to see their need of both, and will cry, Lord, Lord, Mt 7:22. Those that have bantered prayer have been brought to beg it, as the rich man that had scorned Lazarus courted him for a drop of water.

9 And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, *that* they may remain in the river only?

10 And he said, tomorrow. And he said, *be it* according to thy word; that thou mayest know that *there is* none like unto the Lord our God.

11 And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.

How Moses fixes the time with Pharaoh, and then prevails with God by prayer for the removal of the frogs. Moses, to show that his performances had no dependence upon the conjunctions or oppositions of the planets, or the luckiness of any one hour more than another, bids Pharaoh name his time. Nellum occurrit tempus regi--No time fixed on by the king shall be objected to, Ex 8:9. Have thou this honour over me, tell me against when I shall entreat for thee. This was designed for Pharaoh's conviction, that, if his eyes were not opened by the plague, they might by the removal of it. So various are the methods God takes to bring men to repentance. Pharaoh sets the time for to-morrow, Ex 8:10. And why not immediately? Was he so fond of his guests that he would have them stay another night with him? No, but probably he hoped that they would go away of themselves, and then he should get clear of the plague without being obliged either to God or Moses.

However, Moses joins issue with him upon it: "Be it according to thy word, it shall be done just when thou wouldst have it done, that thou mayest know that, whatever the magicians pretend to, there is none like unto the Lord our God. None has such a command as he has over all the creatures, nor is any one so ready to forgive those that humble themselves before him."

Note, The great design both of judgments and mercies is to convince us that there is none like the Lord our God, none so wise, so mighty, so good, no enemy so formidable, no friend so desirable, so valuable. Moses, hereupon, applies to God, prays earnestly to him, to remand the frogs, Ex 8:12.

Note, We must pray for our enemies and persecutors, even the worst as Christ did. In answer to the prayer of Moses, the frogs that came up one day perished the next, or the next but one. They all died (Ex 8:13), and, that it might appear that they were real frogs, their dead bodies were left to be raked

together in heaps, so that the smell of them became offensive, Ex 8:14.

Note, The great Sovereign of the world makes what use he pleases of the lives and deaths of his creatures; and he that gives a being, to serve one purpose, may, without wrong to his justice, call for it again immediately, to serve another purpose.

12 And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried
unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against
Pharaoh.
13 And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs
died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.
14 And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank.
15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his
heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

What was the issue of this plague (Ex 8:15): When Pharaoh saw there was a respite, without considering either what he had lately felt or what he had reason to fear, he hardened his heart. Note,

1. Till the heart is renewed by the grace of God, the impressions made by the force of affliction do not abide; the convictions wear off, and the promises that were extorted are forgotten. Till the disposition of the air is changed, what thaws in the sun will freeze again in the shade.

2. God's patience is shamefully abused by impenitent sinners. The respite he gives them, to lead them to repentance, they are hardened by; and while he graciously allows them a truce, in order to the making of their peace, they take that opportunity to rally again the baffled forces of an obstinate infidelity. See Ec 8:11,Ps 78:34, &c.

The Plague of Lice

Here is a short account of the plague of lice. It does not appear that any warning was given of it before. Pharaoh's abuse of the respite granted to him might have been a sufficient warning to him to expect another plague: for if the removal of an affliction harden us, and so we lose the benefit of it, we may conclude it goes away with a purpose to return or to make room for a worse. Observe,

16 And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

How this plague of lice was inflicted on the Egyptians, Ex 8:16, 17. The frogs were produced out of the waters, but these lice out of the dust of the earth; for out of any part of the creation God can fetch a scourge, with which to correct those that rebel against him. He has many arrows in his quiver. Even the dust of the earth obeys him. "Fear not then, thou worm Jacob, for God can use thee as a threshing instrument, if he please," Isa 41:14, 15. These lice, no doubt, were extremely vexatious, as well as scandalous, to the Egyptians. Though they had respite, they had respite but awhile, Re 11:14. The second woe was past, but behold the third woe came very quickly.

17 And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

18 And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

How the magicians were baffled by it, Ex 8:18. They attempted to imitate it, but they could not. When they failed in this, it should seem they attempted to remove it; for it follows, So there were lice upon man and beast, in spite of them. This forced them to confess themselves overpowered:

This is the finger of God (Ex 8:19); that is, "This check and restraint put upon us must needs be from a divine power." Note,

1. God has the devil in a chain, and limits him both as a deceiver and as a destroyer; hitherto he shall come, but no further. The devil's agents when God permitted them, could do great things; but when he laid an embargo upon them, though but with his finger, they could do nothing. The magicians' inability, in this less instance, showed whence they had their ability in the former instances which seemed greater, and that they had no power against Moses but what was given them from above.

2. Sooner or later God will extort, even from his enemies, an acknowledgment of his own sovereignty and over-ruling power. It is certain they must all (as we say) knock under at last, as Julian the apostate did, when his dying lips confessed, Thou hast overcome me, O thou Galilean! God will not only be too hard for all opposers, but will force them to own it.

19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This *is* the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

How Pharaoh, notwithstanding this, was made more and more obstinate (Ex 8:19); even those that had deceived him now said enough to undeceive him, and yet he grew more and more obstinate. Even the miracles and the judgments were to him a savour of death unto death. Note, Those that are not made better by God's word and providences are commonly made worse by them.

The Plague of Flies

20 And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

How it was threatened, like that of frogs, before it was inflicted. Moses is directed (Ex 8:20) to rise early in the morning, to meet Pharaoh when he came forth to the water, and there to repeat his demands. Note,

1. Those that would bring great things to pass for God and their generation must rise early, and redeem time in the morning. Pharaoh was early up at his superstitious devotions to the river; and shall we be for more sleep and more slumber when any service is to be done which would pass well in our account in the great day?

2. Those that would approve themselves God's faithful servants must not be afraid of the face of man. Moses must stand before Pharaoh, proud as he was, and tell him that which was in the highest degree humbling, must challenge him (if he refused to release his captives) to engage with any army of flies, which would obey God's orders of Pharaoh would not. See a similar threatening, Isa 7:18, The Lord will hiss (or whistle) for the fly and the bee, to come and serve his purposes.

21 Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they *are.*

22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I *am* the Lord in the midst of the earth.

How the Egyptians and the Hebrews were to be remarkably distinguished in this plague, Ex 8:22, 23. It is probable that this distinction had not been so manifest and observable in

any of the foregoing plagues as it was to be in this. Thus, as the plague of lice was made more convincing than any before it, by its running the magicians aground, so was this, by the distinction made between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. Pharaoh must be made to know that God is the Lord in the midst of the earth; and by this it will be known beyond dispute.

1. Swarms of flies, which seem to us to fly at random, shall be manifestly under the conduct of an intelligent mind, while they are above the direction of any man. "Hither they shall go," says Moses, "and thither they shall not come;" and the performance is punctually according to this appointment, and both, compared, amount to a demonstration that he that said it and he that did it was the same, even a Being of infinite power and wisdom.

2 The servants and worshippers of the great Jehovah shall be preserved from sharing in the common calamities of the place they live in, so that the plague which annoys all their neighbours shall not approach them; and this shall be an incontestable proof that God is the Lord in the midst of the earth. Put both these together, and it appears that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, and through the air too, to direct that which to us seems most casual, to serve some great designed end, that he may show himself strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with him, 2Ch 16:9. Observe how it is repeated: I will put a division between my people and thy people Ex 8:23.

Note, The Lord knows those that are his, and will make it appear, perhaps in this world, certainly in the other, that he has set them apart for himself. A day will come when you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked (Mal 3:18), the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:32,Eze 34:17), though now intermixed.

23 And I will put a division between my people and thy people:

tomorrow shall this sign be.

24 And the Lord did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and *into* his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

How it was inflicted, the day after it was threatened: There came a grievous swarm of flies (Ex 8:24), flies of divers sorts, and such as devoured them, Ps 78:45. The prince of the power of the air has gloried in being Beelzebub--the god of flies; but here it is proved that even in that he is a pretender and a usurper, for even with swarms of flies God fights against his kingdom and prevails.

25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.

How Pharaoh, upon this attack, sounded a parley, and entered into a treaty with Moses and Aaron about a surrender of his captives: but observe with what reluctance he yields.

He is content they should sacrifice to their God, provided they would do it in the land of Egypt, Ex 8:25. Note, God can extort a toleration of his worship, even from those that are really enemies to it. Pharaoh, under the smart of the rod, is content they should do sacrifice, and will allow liberty of conscience to God's Israel, even in his own land. But Moses will not accept his concession; he cannot do it, Ex 8:26. It would be an abomination to God should they offer the Egyptian sacrifices, and an abomination to the Egyptians should they offer to God their own sacrifices, as they ought; so that they could not sacrifice in the land without incurring the displeasure either of their God or of their task-masters; therefore he insists: We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, Ex 8:27.

Note, Those that would offer an acceptable sacrifice to God must,

(1.) Separate themselves from the wicked and profane; for we cannot have fellowship both with the Father of lights and with the works of darkness, both with Christ and with Belial, 2Co 6:14, Ps 26:4, 6.

(2.) They must retire from the distractions of the world, and get as far as may be from the noise of it. Israel cannot keep the feast of the Lord either among the brick-kilns or among the flesh-pots of Egypt; no, We will go into the wilderness, Ho 2:14, So 7:11.

(3.) They must observe the divine appointment: "We will sacrifice as God shall command us, and not otherwise." Though they were in the utmost degree of slavery to Pharaoh, yet in the worship of God, they must observe his commands and not Pharaoh's.

26 And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the
abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we
sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and
will they not stone us?

27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice
to the Lord our God, as he shall command us.

28 And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the
Lord your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far
away: entreat for me.

When this proposal is rejected, he consents for them to go into the wilderness, provided they do not go very far away, not so far but that he might fetch them back again, Ex 8:28. It is probable he had heard of their design upon Canaan, and suspected that if once they left Egypt they would never come back again; and therefore, when he is forced to consent that they shall go (the swarms of flies buzzing the necessity in his ears), yet he is not willing that they should go out of his reach. Thus some sinners who, in a pang of conviction, part with their sins, yet are loth they should go very far away; for, when the fright is over, they will return to them again. We observe here a struggle between Pharaoh's convictions and

his corruptions; his convictions said, "Let them go;" his corruptions said, "Yet not very far away:" but he sided with his corruptions against his convictions, and this was his ruin. This proposal Moses so far accepted as that he promised the removal of this plague upon it, Ex 8:29. See here,

(1.) How ready God is to accept sinners' submissions. Pharaoh does but say, Entreat for me (though it is with regret that he humbles so far), and Moses promises immediately, I will entreat the Lord for thee, that Pharaoh might see what the design of the plague was, not to bring him to ruin, but to bring him to repentance. With what pleasure did God say (1Ki 21:29), Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself?

(2.) What need we have to be admonished that we be sincere in our submission: But let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more. Those that deal deceitfully are justly suspected, and must be cautioned not to return again to folly, after God has once more spoken peace. Be not deceived, God is not mocked; if we think to put a cheat upon God by a counterfeit repentance, and a fraudulent surrender of ourselves to him, we shall prove, in the end, to have put a fatal cheat upon our own souls.

29 And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will entreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.

30 And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the Lord.

Lastly, The issue of all was that God graciously removed the plague (Ex 8:30, 31), but Pharaoh perfidiously returned to his hardness, and would not let the people go, Ex 8:32. His pride would not let him part with such a flower of his crown as his dominion over Israel was, nor his covetousness with such a branch of his revenue as their labours were. Note, Reigning lusts break through the strongest bounds, and make men impudently presumptuous and scandalously perfidious.

Let not sin therefore reign; for, if it do, it will betray and hurry us to the grossest absurdities.

31 And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.

32 And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

Exodus-9

The Plague on the Cattle

1 Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Warning given of another plague, namely, the murrain of beasts. When Pharaoh's heart was hardened, after he had seemed to relent under the former plague, then Moses is sent to tell him there is another coming, to try what that would do towards reviving the impressions of the former plagues. Thus is the wrath of God revealed from heaven, both in his word and in his works, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Moses puts Pharaoh in a very fair way to prevent it: Let my people go, Ex 9:1. This was still the demand. God will have Israel released; Pharaoh opposes it, and the trial is, whose word shall stand. See how jealous God is for his people. When the year of his redeemed has come, he will give Egypt for their ransom; that kingdom shall be ruined, rather than Israel shall not be delivered. See how reasonable God's demands are. Whatever he calls for, it is but his own: They are my people, therefore let them go.

2 For if thou refuse to let *them* go, and wilt hold them still,

He describes the plague that should come, if he refused, Ex 9:2, 3. The hand of the Lord immediately, without the stretching out of Aaron's hand, is upon the cattle, many of which, some of all kinds, should die by a sort of pestilence. This was greatly to the loss of the owners: they had made Israel poor, and now God would make them poor. Note, The hand of God is to be acknowledged even in the sickness and death of cattle, or other damage sustained in them; for a sparrow falls not to the ground without our Father.

3 behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle which *is* in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: *there shall be* a very grievous murrain.

4 And the Lord shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all *that is* the children's of Israel.

As an evidence of the special hand of God in it, and of his particular favour to his own people, he foretells that none of their cattle should die, though they breathed in the same air and drank of the same water with the Egyptians' cattle: The Lord shall sever, Ex 9:4.

Note, When God's judgments are abroad, though they may fall both on the righteous and the wicked, yet God makes such a distinction that they are not the same to the one that they are to the other. See Isa 27:7. The providence of God is to be acknowledged with thankfulness in the life of the cattle, for he preserveth man and beast, Ps 36:6.

5 And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land.

To make the warning the more remarkable, the time is fixed (Ex 9:5): To-morrow it shall be done. We know not what any day will bring forth, and therefore we cannot say what we will do to-morrow, but it is not so with God.

6 And the Lord did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

The plague itself inflicted. The cattle died, Ex 9:6. Note, The creature is made subject to vanity by the sin of man, being liable, according to its capacity, both to serve his wickedness and to share in his punishment, as in the universal deluge. Ro 8:20, 22. Pharaoh and the Egyptians sinned; but the sheep, what had they done? Yet they are plagued. See Jer 12:4, For the wickedness of the land, the beasts are consumed. The Egyptians afterwards, and (some think) now, worshipped their cattle; it was among them that the Israelites learned to make a god of a calf: in this therefore the plague here spoken of meets with them. Note, What we make an idol of it is just with God to remove from us, or embitter to us. See Isa 19:1.

7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

The distinction put between the cattle of the Egyptians and the Israelites' cattle, according to the word of God: Not one of the cattle of the Israelites died, Ex 9:6, 7. Does God take care of oxen? Yes, he does; his providence extends itself to the meanest of his creatures. But it is written also for our sakes, that, trusting in God, and making him our refuge, we may not be afraid of the pestilence that walketh in darkness, no, not though thousands fall at our side, Ps 91:6, 7. Pharaoh sent to see if the cattle of the Israelites were infected, not to satisfy his conscience, but only to gratify his curiosity, or with design, by way of reprisal, to repair his own losses out of their stocks; and, having no good design in the enquiry, the report brought to him made no impression upon him, but, on the contrary, his heart was hardened. Note, To those that are wilfully blind, even those methods of conviction which are ordained to life prove a savour of death unto death.

The Plague of Boils

8 And the Lord said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

When they were not wrought upon by the death of their cattle, God sent a plague that seized their own bodies, and touched them to the quick. If less judgments do not do their work, God will send greater. Let us therefore humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and go forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, that his anger may be turned away from us.

The signal by which this plague was summoned was the sprinkling of warm ashes from the furnace, towards heaven (Ex 9:8,10), which was to signify the heating of the air with such an infection as should produce in the bodies of the Egyptians sore boils, which would be both noisome and painful. Immediately upon the scattering of the ashes, a scalding dew came down out of the air, which blistered wherever it fell. Note, Sometimes God shows men their sin in their punishment; they had oppressed Israel in the furnaces, and now the ashes of the furnace are made as much a terror to them as ever their task-masters had been to the Israelites.

The plague itself was very grievous--a common eruption would be so, especially to the nice and delicate, but these eruptions were inflammations, like Job's. This is afterwards called the botch of Egypt (De 28:27), as if it were some new disease, never heard of before, and known ever after by that name, Note, Sores in the body are to be looked upon as the punishments of sin, and to be hearkened to as calls to repentance.

9 And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.

10 And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast.

11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

The magicians themselves were struck with these boils, Ex 9:11.

1. Thus they were punished,

(1.) For helping to harden Pharaoh's heart, as Elymas for seeking to pervert the right ways of the Lord; God will severely reckon with those that strengthen the hands of the wicked in their wickedness.

(2.) For pretending to imitate the former plagues, and making themselves and Pharaoh sport with them. Those that would produce lice shall, against their wills, produce boils. Note, It is ill jesting with God's judgments, and more dangerous than playing with fire. Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.

2. Thus they were shamed in the presence of their admirers. How weak were their enchantments, which could not so much as secure themselves! The devil can give no protection to those that are in confederacy with him.

3. Thus they were driven from the field. Their power was restrained before (Ex 8:18), but they continued to confront Moses, and confirm Pharaoh in his unbelief, till now, at length, they were forced to retreat, and could not stand before Moses, to which the apostle refers (2Ti 3:9) when he says that their folly was made manifest unto all men.

12 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken unto Moses.

Pharaoh continued obstinate, for now the Lord hardened his heart, Ex 9:12. Before, he had hardened his own heart, and resisted the grace of God; and now God justly gave him up to his own heart's lusts, to a reprobate mind, and strong delusions, permitting Satan to blind and harden him, and ordering everything, henceforward, so as to make him more and more obstinate.

Note, Willful hardness is commonly punished with judicial hardness. If men shut their eyes against the light, it is just with God to close their eyes. Let us dread this as the sorest judgment a man can be under on this side hell.

The Plague of Hail

13 And the Lord said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

A general declaration of the wrath of God against Pharaoh for his obstinacy. Though God has hardened his heart (Ex 9:12), yet Moses must repeat his applications to him; God suspends his grace and yet demands obedience, to punish him for requiring bricks of the children of Israel when he denied them straw. God would likewise show forth a pattern of long-suffering, and how he waits to be gracious to a rebellious and gainsaying people Six times the demand had been made in vain, yet Moses must make it the seventh time: Let my people go, Ex 9:13. A most dreadful message Moses is here ordered to deliver to him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

He must tell him that he is marked for ruin, that he now stands as the butt at which God would shoot all the arrows of his wrath, Ex 9:14, 15. "Now I will send all my plagues." Now that no place is found for repentance in Pharaoh,

nothing can prevent his utter destruction, for that only would have prevented it. Now that God begins to harden his heart, his case is desperate. "I will send my plagues upon thy heart, not only temporal plagues upon thy body, but spiritual plagues upon thy soul."

Note, God can send plagues upon thy soul." Note, God can send plagues upon the heart, either by making it senseless or by making it hopeless--and these are the worst plagues. Pharaoh must now expect no respite, no cessation of arms, but to be followed with plague upon plague, till he is utterly consumed. Note, When God judges he will overcome; none ever hardened his heart against him and prospered.

14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and
upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know
that *there is* none like me in all the earth.
15 For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy
people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.
16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to show *in*
thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all
the earth.

He must tell him that he is to remain in history a standing monument of the justice and power of God's wrath (Ex 9:16): "For this cause have I raised thee up to the throne at this time, and made thee to stand the shock of the plagues hitherto, to show in thee my power." Providence ordered it so that Moses should have a man of such a fierce and stubborn spirit as he was to deal with; and everything was so managed in this transaction as to make it a most signal and memorable instance of the power God has to humble and bring down the proudest of his enemies. Everything concurred to signalize this, that God's name (that is, his incontestable sovereignty, his irresistible power, and his inflexible justice) might be declared throughout all the earth, not only to all places, but through all ages while the earth remains.

Note, God sometimes raises up very bad men to honour and power, spares them long, and suffers them to grow insufferably insolent, that he may be so much the more glorified in their destruction at last. See how the neighbouring nations, at that time, improved the ruin of Pharaoh to the glory of God. Jethro said upon it, Now know I that the Lord is greater than all gods, Ex 18:11. The apostle illustrates the doctrine of God's sovereignty with this instance, Ro 9:17. To justify God in these resolutions, Moses is directed to ask him (Ex 9:17), As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people? Pharaoh was a great king; God's people were poor shepherds at the best, and now poor slaves; and yet Pharaoh shall be ruined if he exalt himself against them, for it is considered as exalting himself against God. This was not the first time that God reproved kings for their sakes, and let them know that he would not suffer his people to be trampled upon and insulted, no, not by the most powerful of them.

17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will because it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.

A particular prediction of the plague of hail (Ex 9:18), and a gracious advice to Pharaoh and his people to send for their servants and cattle out of the field, that they might be sheltered from the hail, Ex 9:19. Note, When God's justice threatens ruin his mercy, at the same time, shows us a way of escape from it, so unwilling is he that any should perish. See here what care God took, not only to distinguish between Egyptians and Israelites, but between some Egyptians and others. If Pharaoh will not yield, and so prevent the judgment itself, yet an opportunity is given to those that have any dread of God and his word to save themselves from sharing in the judgment. Note, Those that will take warning may take shelter; and those that will not may thank themselves if they

fall by the overflowing scourge, and the hail which will sweep away the refuge of lies, Isa 28:17. See the different effect of this warning.

1. Some believed the things that were spoken, and they feared, and housed their servants and cattle (Ex 9:20, like Noah (Heb 11:7), and it was their wisdom. Even among the servants of Pharaoh there were some that trembled at God's word; and shall not the sons of Israel dread it?

But, 2. Others believed not: though, whatever plague Moses had hitherto foretold, the event exactly answered to the prediction; and though, if they had had any reason to question this, it would have been no great damage to them to have kept their cattle in the house for one day, and so, supposing it a doubtful case, to have chosen the surer side; yet they were so foolhardy as in defiance to the truth of Moses, and the power of God (of both which they had already had experience enough, to their cost), to leave their cattle in the field, Pharaoh himself, it is probable, giving them an example of the presumption, Ex 9:21. Note, Obstinate infidelity, which is deaf to the fairest warnings and the wisest counsels, leaves the blood of those that perish upon their own heads.

19 Send therefore now, *and* gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; *for upon* every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

20 He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:

21 and he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field.

22 And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

What desolations it made upon the earth. The thunder, and fire from heaven (or lightning), made it both the more dreadful and the more destroying, Ex 9:23, 24.

Note, God makes the clouds, not only his store-houses whence he drops fatness on his people, but his magazines whence, when he pleases, he can draw out a most formidable train of artillery, with which to destroy his enemies. He himself speaks of the treasures of hail which he hath reserved against the day of battle and war, Job 38:22, 23. Woeful havoc this hail made in the land of Egypt. It killed both men and cattle, and battered down, not only the herbs, but the trees, Ex 9:25. The corn that was above ground was destroyed, and that only preserved which as yet had not come up, Ex 9:31, 32.

Note, God has many ways of taking away the corn in the season thereof (Ho 2:9), either by a secret blasting, or a noisy hail. In this plague the hot thunderbolts, as well as the hail, are said to destroy their flocks, Ps 78:47, 48; and see Ps 105:32, 33. Perhaps David alludes to this when, describing God's glorious appearances for the discomfiture of his enemies, he speaks of the hailstones and coals of fire he threw among them, Ps 18:12, 13. And there is a plan reference to it on the pouring out of the seventh vial, Re 16:21.

Notice is here taken (Ex 9:26) of the land of Goshen's being preserved from receiving any damage by this plague. God has the directing of the pregnant clouds, and causes it to rain or hail on one city and not on another, either in mercy or in judgment.

24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were*, was there no hail.

27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord *is* righteous, and I and my people *are* wicked.

What a consternation it put Pharaoh in. See what effect it had upon him, 1. He humbled himself to Moses in the language of a penitent, Ex 9:27, 28. No man could have spoken better. He owns himself on the wrong side in his contest with the God of the Hebrews: "I have sinned in standing it out so long." He owns the equity of God's proceedings against him: The Lord is righteous, and must be justified when he speaks, though he speak in thunder and lightning. He condemns himself and his land: "I and my people are wicked, and deserve what is brought upon us." He begs the prayers of Moses: "Entreat the Lord for me, that this direful plague may be removed." And, lastly, he promises to yield up his prisoners: I will let you go. What could one desire more? And yet his heart was hardened all this while. Note, The terror of the rod often extorts penitent acknowledgments from those who have no penitent affections; under the surprise and smart of affliction, they start up, and say that which is pertinent enough, not because they are deeply affected, but because they know that they should be and that it is meet to be said.

28 Entreat the Lord (for *it is* enough) that there be no *more* mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

Moses, hereupon, becomes an intercessor for him with God. Though he had all the reason in the world to think that he would immediately repent of his repentance, and told him so

(Ex 9:30), yet he promises to be this friend in the court of heaven. Note, Even those whom we have little hopes of, yet we should continue to pray for, and to admonish, 1Sa 12:23. Observe,

(1.) The place Moses chose for his intercession. He went out of the city (Ex 9:33), not only for privacy in his communion with God, but to show that he durst venture abroad into the field, notwithstanding the hail and lightning which kept Pharaoh and his servants withindoors, knowing that every hail-stone had its direction from his God, who meant him no hurt. Note, Peace with God makes men thunderproof, for thunder is the voice of their Father.

(2.) The gesture: He spread abroad his hands unto the Lord--an outward expression of earnest desire and humble expectation. Those that come to God for mercy must stand ready to receive it.

(3.) The end Moses aimed at in interceding for him: That thou mayest know, and be convinced, that the earth is the Lord's (Ex 9:29), that is, that God has a sovereign dominion over all the creatures, that they all are ruled by him, and therefore that thou oughtest to be so. See what various methods God uses to bring men to their proper senses. Judgments are sent, judgments removed, and all for the same end, to make men know that he Lord reigns.

29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; *and* the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth *is* the Lord's.

30 But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God.

31 And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax *was* bolled.

32 But the wheat and the rye were not smitten: for they *were* not grown up.

The success of it.

[1.] He prevailed with God, Ex 9:33. But,

[2.] He could not prevail with Pharaoh: He sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, Ex 9:34, 35. The prayer of Moses opened and shut heaven, like Elias's (Jam 5:17, 18), and such is the power of God's two witnesses (Re 11:6); yet neither Moses nor Elias, nor those two witnesses, could subdue the hard hearts of men. Pharaoh was frightened into a compliance by the judgment, but, when it was over, his convictions vanished, and his fair promises were forgotten. Note, Little credit is to be given to confessions upon the rack. Note also, Those that are not bettered by judgments and mercies are commonly made worse.

33 And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad
his hands unto the Lord: and the thunders and hail ceased, and
the rain was not poured upon the earth.
34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders
were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and
his servants.
35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the
children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses.

Exodus-10

The Plague of Locusts

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have
hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show
these my signs before him:

Moses is instructed. We may well suppose that he, for his part, was much astonished both at Pharaoh's obstinacy and at God's severity, and could not but be compassionately concerned for the desolations of Egypt, and at a loss to conceive what this contest would come to at last. Now here God tells him what he designed, not only Israel's release, but the magnifying of his own name: That thou mayest tell in thy writings, which shall continue to the world's end, what I have wrought in Egypt, Ex 10:1,2 The ten plagues of Egypt must be inflicted, that they may be recorded for the generations to come as undeniable proofs,

1. Of God's overruling power in the kingdom of nature, his dominion over all the creatures, and his authority to use them either as servants to his justice or sufferers by it, according to the counsel of his will.

2. Of God's victorious power over the kingdom of Satan, to restrain the malice and chastise the insolence of his and his church's enemies. These plagues are standing monuments of the greatness of God, the happiness of the church, and the sinfulness of sin, and standing monitors to the children of men in all ages not to provoke the Lord to jealousy nor to strive with their Maker. The benefit of these instructions to the world sufficiently balances the expense.

2 and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's
son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which
I have done among them; that ye may know how that I *am* the
Lord.

3 And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him,
Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou
refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go, that they
may serve me.

Pharaoh is reproved (Ex 10:3): Thus saith the Lord God of the poor, despised, persecuted, Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Note, It is justly expected from the greatest of men that they humble

themselves before the great God, and it is at their peril if they refuse to do it. This has more than once been God's quarrel with princes. Belshazzar did not humble his heart, Da 5:22. Zedekiah humbled not himself before Jeremiah, 2Ch 36:12. Those that will not humble themselves God will humble. Pharaoh had sometimes pretended to humble himself, but no account was made of it, because he was neither sincere nor constant in it.

4 Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast:

5 and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field:

The plague of locusts is threatened, Ex 10:4-6. The hail had broken down the fruits of the earth, but these locusts should come and devour them: and not only so, but they should fill their houses, whereas the former inroads of these insects had been confined to their lands. This should be much worse than all the calamities of that king which had ever been known. Moses, when he had delivered his message, not expecting any better answer than he had formerly, turned himself and went out from Pharaoh, Ex 10:6. Thus Christ appointed his disciples to depart from those who would not receive them, and to shake off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them; and ruin is not far off from those who are thus justly abandoned by the Lord's messengers, 1Sa 15:27, &c.

6 and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.

7 And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

Pharaoh's attendants, his ministers of state, or privy-counsellors, interpose, to persuade him to come to some

terms with Moses, Ex 10:7. They, as in duty bound, represent to him the deplorable condition of the kingdom (Egypt is destroyed), and advise him by all means to release his prisoners (Let the men go); for Moses, they found, would be a snare to them till it was done, and it were better to consent at first than to be compelled at last. The Israelites had become a burdensome stone to the Egyptians, and now, at length, the princes of Egypt were willing to be rid of them, Zec 12:3. Note, It is a thing to be regretted (and prevented, if possible) that a whole nation should be ruined for the pride and obstinacy of its princes, Salus populi suprema lex--To consult the welfare of the people is the first of laws.

8 And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the Lord your God: *but* who *are* they that shall go?

9 And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we *must hold* a feast unto the Lord.

A new treaty is, hereupon, set on foot between Pharaoh and Moses, in which Pharaoh consents for the Israelites to go into the wilderness to do sacrifice; but the matter in dispute was who should go, Ex 10:8.

1. Moses insists that they should take their whole families, and all their effects, along with them, Ex 10:9. Note, Those that serve God must serve him with all they have. Moses pleads, "We must hold a feast, therefore we must have our families to feast with, and our flocks and herds to feast upon, to the honour of God."

2. Pharaoh will by no means grant this: he will allow the men to go, pretending that this was all they desired, though this matter was never yet mentioned in any of the former treaties; but, for the little ones, he resolves to keep them as hostages, to oblige them to return, Ex 10:10,11. In a great passion he curses them, and threatens that, if they offer to remove their little ones, they will do it at their peril.

Note, Satan does all he can to hinder those that serve God themselves from bringing their children in to serve him. He is a sworn enemy to early piety, knowing how destructive it is to the interests of his kingdom; whatever would hinder us from engaging our children to the utmost in God's service, we have reason to suspect the hand of Satan in it.

3. The treaty, hereupon, breaks off abruptly; those that before went out from Pharaoh's presence (Ex 10:6) were now driven out. Those will quickly hear their doom that cannot bear to hear their duty. See 2Ch 25:16. Quos Deus destruet eos dementat--Whom God intends to destroy he delivers up to infatuation. Never was man so infatuated to his own ruin as Pharaoh was.

10 And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look *to it;* for evil *is* before you.

11 Not so: go now ye *that are* men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

12 And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left.

The invasion of the land by the locusts--God's great army, Joe 2:11. God bids Moses stretch out his hand (Ex 10:12), to beckon them, as it wee (for they came at a call), and he stretched forth his rod, Ex 10:13. Compare Ex 9:22, 23. Moses ascribes it to the stretching out, not of his own hand, but the rod of God, the instituted sign of God's presence with him. The locusts obey the summons, and fly upon the wings of the wind, the east wind, and caterpillars without number, as we are told, Ps 105:34, 35. A formidable army of horse and foot might more easily have been resisted than this host of insects. Who then is able to stand before the great God?

13 And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all *that* night; *and* when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous *were they;* before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.

15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

The desolations they made in it (Ex 10:15): They covered the face of the earth, and ate up the fruit of it. The earth God has given to the children of men; yet, when God pleases, he can disturb their possession and send locusts and caterpillars to force them out. Herbs grow for the service of man; yet, when God pleases, those contemptible insects shall not only be fellow-commoners with him, but shall plunder him, and eat the bread out of his mouth. Let our labour be, not for the habitation and meat which thus lie exposed, but for those which endure to eternal life, which cannot be thus invaded, nor thus corrupted.

16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you.

Pharaoh's admission, hereupon, Ex 10:16, 17. He had driven Moses and Aaron from him (Ex 10:11), telling them (it is likely) he would have no more to do with them. But now he calls for them again in all haste, and makes court to them with as much respect as before he had dismissed them with disdain.

Note, The day will come when those who set at nought their counsellors, and despise all their reproofs, will be glad to make an interest in them and engage them to intercede on their behalf. The foolish virgins court the wise to give them of their oil; and see Ps 141:6.

1. Pharaoh confesses his fault: I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. He now sees his own folly in the slights and affronts he had put on God and his ambassadors,

and seems at least, to repent of it. When God convinces men of sin, and humbles them for it, their contempt of God's ministers, and the word of the Lord in their mouths, will certainly come into the account, and lie heavily upon their consciences. Some think that when Pharaoh said, "The LORD your God," he did in effect say, "The LORD shall not be my God." Many treat with God as a potent enemy, whom they are willing not to be at war with, but care not for treating with him as their rightful prince, to whom they are willing to submit with loyal affection. True penitents lament sin as committed against God, even their own God, to whom they stand obliged.

2. He begs pardon, not of God, as penitents ought, but of Moses, which was more excusable in him, because, by a special commission, Moses was made a god to Pharaoh, and whosesoever sins he remitted they were forgiven; when he prays, Forgive this once, he, in effect, promises not to offend in like manner any more, yet seems loth to express that promise, nor does he say anything particularly of letting the people go.

Note, Counterfeit repentance commonly cheats men with general promises and is loth to covenant against particular sins.

3. He entreats Moses and Aaron to pray for him. There are those who, in distress, implore the help of other persons' prayers, but have no mind to pray for themselves, showing thereby that they have no true love to God, nor any delight in communion with him. Pharaoh desires their prayers that this death only might be taken away, not this sin: he deprecates the plague of locusts, not the plague of a hard heart, which yet was much the more dangerous.

17 Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only.

18 And he went out from Pharaoh, and entreated the Lord.

The removal of the judgment, upon the prayer of Moses, Ex 10:18, 19. This was,

1. As great an instance of the power of God as the judgment itself. An east wind brought the locusts, and now a west wind carried them off. Note, Whatever point of the compass the wind is in, it is fulfilling God's word, and turns about by his counsel. The wind bloweth where it listeth, as it respects any control of ours; not so as it respects the control of God: he directeth it under the whole heaven.

2. It was as great a proof of the authority of Moses, and as firm a ratification of his commission and his interest in that God who both makes peace and creates evil, Isa 45:7. Nay, hereby he not only commanded the respect, but recommended himself to the good affections of the Egyptians, inasmuch as, while the judgment came in obedience to his summons, the removal of it was in answer to his prayers. He never desired the woeful day, though he threatened it. His commission indeed ran against Egypt, but his intercession was for it, which was a good reason why they should love him, though they feared him.

3. It was also as strong an argument for their repentance as the judgment itself; for by this it appeared that God is ready to forgive, and swift to show mercy. If he turn away a particular judgment, as he did often from Pharaoh, or defer it, as in Ahab's case, upon the profession of repentance and the outward tokens of humiliation, what will he do if we be sincere, and how welcome will true penitents be to him! O that this goodness of God might lead us to repentance!

19 And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea; there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

20 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

Pharaoh's return to his impious resolution again not to let the people go (Ex 10:20), through the righteous hand of God upon him, hardening his heart, and confirming him in his obstinacy. Note, Those that have often baffled their convictions, and stood it out against them, forfeit the benefit of them, and are justly given up to those lusts of their own hearts which (how strong soever their convictions) prove too strong for them.

The Plague of Darkness

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward
heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even
darkness *which* may be felt.
22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was
a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:

The plague of darkness brought upon Egypt, and a most dreadful plague it was, and therefore is put first of the ten in Ps 105:28, though it was one of the last; and in the destruction of the spiritual Egypt it is produced by the fifth vial, which is poured out upon the seat of the beast, Re 16:10. His kingdom was full of darkness. Observe particularly concerning this plague, 1. That it was a total darkness. We have reason to think, not only that the lights of heaven were clouded, but that all their fires and candles were put out by the damps or clammy vapours which were the cause of this darkness; for it is said (Ex 10:23), They saw not one another. It is threatened to the wicked (Job 18:5, 6) that the spark of his fire shall not shine (even the sparks of his own kindling, as they are called, Isa 50:11), and that the light shall be dark in his tabernacle. Hell is utter darkness. The light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee, Re 18:23.

That it was darkness which might be felt (Ex 10:21), felt in its causes by their fingers' ends (so thick were the fogs), felt in its effects, some think, by their eyes, which were pricked with pain, and made the more sore by their rubbing them.

Great pain is spoken of as the effect of that darkness, Re 16:10, which alludes to this.

No doubt it astonished and terrified them. The cloud of locusts, which had darkened the land (Ex 10:15), was nothing to this. The tradition of the Jews is that in this darkness they were terrified by the apparitions of evil spirits, or rather by dreadful sounds and murmurs which they made, or (which is no less frightful) by the horrors of their own consciences; and this is the plague which some think is intended (for, otherwise, it is not mentioned at all there) Ps 78:49, He poured upon them the fierceness of his anger, by sending evil angels among them; for to those to whom the devil has been a deceiver he will, at length, be a terror.

23 they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

It continued three days, six nights (says bishop Hall) in one; so long they were imprisoned by those chains of darkness, and the most lightsome palaces were perfect dungeons. No man rose from his place, Ex 10:23. They were all confined to their houses; and such a terror seized them that few of them had the courage to go from the chair to the bed, or from the bed to the chair. Thus were they silent in darkness, 1Sa 2:9. Now Pharaoh had time to consider, if he would have improved it. Spiritual darkness is spiritual bondage; while Satan blinds men's eyes that they see not, he binds them hands and feet that they work not for God, nor move towards heaven. They sit in darkness.

It was a righteous thing with God thus to punish them. Pharaoh and his people had rebelled against the light of God's word, which Moses spoke to them; justly therefore are they punished with darkness, for they loved it and chose it rather. The blindness of their minds brings upon them this darkness of the air. Never was mind so blinded as Pharaoh's, never was air so darkened as Egypt's. The Egyptians by their cruelty would have extinguished the lamp of Israel, and

quenched their coal; justly therefore does God put out their lights. Compare it with the punishment of the Sodomites, Ge 19:11. Let us dread the consequences of sin; if three days' darkness was so dreadful, what will everlasting darkness be?

The children of Israel, at the same time, had light in their dwellings (Ex 10:23), not only in the land of Goshen, where most of them dwelt, but in the habitations of those who were dispersed among the Egyptians: for that some of them were thus dispersed appears from the distinction afterwards appointed to be put on their door-posts, Ex 12:7. This is an instance,

(1.) Of the power of God above the ordinary power of nature. We must not think that we share in common mercies as a matter of course, and therefore that we owe no thanks to God for them; he could distinguish, and withhold that from us which he grants to other. He does indeed ordinarily make his sun to shine on the just and unjust; but he could make a difference, and we must own ourselves indebted to his mercy that he does not.

(2.) Of the particular favour he bears to his people: they walk in the light when others wander endlessly in thick darkness; wherever there is an Israelite indeed, though in this dark world, there is light, there is a child of light, one for whom light is sown, and whom the day-spring from on high visits. When God made this difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians, who would not have preferred the poorest cottage of an Israelite to the finest palace of an Egyptian? There is still a real difference, though not so discernible a one, between the house of the wicked, which is under a curse, and the habitation of the just, which is blessed, Pr 3:33. We should believe in that difference, and govern ourselves accordingly. Upon Ps 105:28, He sent darkness and made it dark, and they rebelled not against his word, some ground a conjecture that, during these three days of darkness, the

Israelites were circumcised, in order to their celebrating the Passover which was now approaching, and that the command which authorized this was the word against which they rebelled not; for their circumcision, when they entered Canaan, is spoken of as a second general circumcision, Josh 5:2. During these three days of darkness to the Egyptians, if God had so pleased, the Israelites, by the light which they had, might have made their escape, and without asking leave of Pharaoh; but God would bring them out with a high hand, and not by stealth, nor in haste, Isa 52:12.

24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.

Here is the impression made upon Pharaoh by this plague, much like that of the foregoing plagues. 1. It awakened him so far that he renewed the treaty with Moses and Aaron, and now, at length, consented that they should take their little ones with them, only he would have their cattle left in pawn, Ex 10:24. It is common for sinners thus to bargain with God Almighty. Some sins they will leave, but not all; they will leave their sins for a time, but they will not bid them a final farewell; they will allow him some share in their hearts, but the world and the flesh must share with him: thus they mock God, but they deceive themselves. Moses resolves not to abate in his terms: Our cattle shall go with us, Ex 10:26. Note, The terms of reconciliation are so fixed that though men dispute them ever so long they cannot possibly alter them, nor bring them lower. We must come up to the demands of God's will, for we cannot expect he should condescend to the provisos of our lusts. God's messengers must always be bound up by that rule (Jer 15:19), Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Moses gives a very good reason why they must take their cattle with them; they must go to do sacrifice, and therefore they must take wherewithal. What numbers and kinds of sacrifices would be required they did not yet know, and therefore they must take all they had. Note, With ourselves, and our children, we must

devote all our worldly possessions to the service of God, because we know not what use God will make of what we have, nor in what way may we be called upon to honour God with it.

25 And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God.

26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not a hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and we know not with what we must serve the Lord, until we come thither.

27 But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in *that* day thou seest my face thou shalt die.

Yet it exasperated him so far that, when he might not make his own terms, he broke off the conference abruptly, and took up a resolution to treat no more. Wrath now came upon him to the utmost, and he became outrageous beyond all bounds, Ex 10:28. Moses is dismissed in anger, forbidden the court upon pain of death, forbidden so much as to meet Pharaoh any more, as he had been used to do, by the river's side: In that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die. Prodigious madness! Had he not found that Moses could plague him without seeing his face? Or had he forgotten how often he had sent for Moses as his physician to heal him and ease him of his plagues? And must he now be bidden to come near him no more? Impotent malice! To threaten him with death who was armed with such a power, and at whose mercy he had so often laid himself. What will not hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandments bring men to? Moses takes him at his word (Ex 10:29): I will see thy face no more, that is, "after this time;" for this conference did not break off till Ex 11:8, when Moses went out in a great anger, and told Pharaoh how soon he would change his mind, and his proud spirit would come down, which was fulfilled (Ex 12:31), when Pharaoh became a humble supplicant to

Moses to depart. So that, after this interview, Moses came no more, till he was sent for. Note, When men drive God's word from them he justly permits their delusions, and answers them according to the multitude of their idols. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, he presently left them.

29 And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.

Exodus-11

The Death of the Firstborn Foretold

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague *more* upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterward he will let you go hence: when he shall let *you* go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

The high favour Moses and Israel were in with God. Moses was a favourite of Heaven, for God will not hide from him the thing he will do. God not only makes him his messenger to deliver his errands, but communicates to him his purpose (as the man of his counsel) that he would bring one plague more, and but one, upon Pharaoh, by which he would complete the deliverance of Israel, Ex 11:1. Moses longed to see an end of this dreadful work, to see Egypt no more plagued and Israel no more oppressed: "Well," says God, "now it is near an end; the warfare shall shortly be accomplished, the point gained; Pharaoh shall be forced to own himself conquered, and to give up the cause." After all the rest of the plagues, God says, I will bring one more. Thus, after all the judgments executed upon sinners in this world, still there is one more reserved to be brought on them in the other world, which will completely humble those whom nothing else would humble.

2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

The Israelites were favourites of Heaven; for God himself espouses their injured cause, and takes care to see them paid for all their pains in serving the Egyptians. This was the last day of their servitude; they were about to go away, and their masters, who had abused them in their work, would not have defrauded them of their wages, and have sent them away empty; while the poor Israelites were so fond of liberty that they would be satisfied with that, without pay, and would rejoice to get that upon any terms: but he that executeth righteousness and judgment for the oppressed provided that the labourers should not lose their hire, and ordered them to demand it now at their departure (Ex 11:2), in jewels of silver and jewels of gold, to prepare for which God, by the plagues, had now made the Egyptians as willing to part with them upon any terms as, before, the Egyptians, by their severities, had made them willing to go upon any terms. Though the patient Israelites were content to lose their wages, yet God would not let them go without them. Note, One way or other, God will give redress to the injured, who in a humble silence commit their cause to him; and he will see to it that none be losers at last by their patient suffering any more than by their services.

3 And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses *was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

The high favour Moses and Israel were in with the Egyptians, Ex 11:3.

1. Even the people that has been hated and despised now came to be respected; the wonders wrought on their behalf put an honour upon them and made them considerable. How great do they become for whom God thus fights! Thus the Lord gave them favour in the sight of the Egyptians, by making it appear how much he favoured them: he also

changed the spirit of the Egyptians towards them, and made them to be pitied of their oppressors, Ps 106:46.

2. The man Moses was very great. How could it be otherwise when they saw what power he was clothed with, and what wonders were wrought by his hand? Thus the apostles, though otherwise despicable men, came to be magnified, Ac 5:13. Those that honour God he will honour; and with respect to those that approve themselves faithful to him, how meanly soever they may pass through this world, there is a day coming when they will look great, very great, in the eyes of all the world, even theirs who now look upon them with the utmost contempt. Observe, Though Pharaoh hated Moses, there were those of Pharaoh's servants that respected him. Thus in Caesar's household, even Nero's, there were some that had an esteem for blessed Paul, Php 1:13.

4 And Moses said, thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:

5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that *is* behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.

Warning is here given to Pharaoh of the last and conquering plague which was now to be inflicted. This was the death of all the first-born in Egypt at once, which had been first threatened (Ex 4:23, I will slay thy son, thy first-born), but is last executed; less judgments were tried, which, if they had done the work would have prevented this. See how slow God is to wrath, and how willing to be met with in the way of his judgments, and to have his anger turned away, and particularly how precious the lives of men are in his eyes: if the death of their cattle had humbled and reformed them, their children would have been spared; but, if men will not improve the gradual advances of divine judgments, they must thank themselves if they find, in the issue, that the worst was reserved for the last.

The plague itself is here particularly foretold, Ex 11:4-6. The time is fixed--about midnight, the very next midnight, the dead time of the night; when they were all asleep, all their first-born should sleep the sleep of death, not silently and insensibly, so as not to be discovered till morning, but so as to rouse the families at midnight to stand by and see them die. The extent of this plague is described, Ex 11:5. The prince that was to succeed in the throne was not too high to be reached by it, nor were the slaves at the mill too low to be taken notice of. Moses and Aaron were not ordered to summon this plague; no I will go out, saith the Lord, Ex 11:4. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; what is hell but this?

6 And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

The special protection which the children of Israel should be under, and the manifest difference that should be put between them and the Egyptians. While angels drew their swords against the Egyptians, there should not so much as a dog bark at any of the children of Israel, Ex 11:7. An earnest was hereby given of the difference which shall be put in the great day between God's people and his enemies: did men know what a difference God puts, and will put to eternity, between those that serve him and those that serve him not, religion would not seem to them such an indifferent thing as they make it, nor would they act in it with so much indifference as they do.

8 And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.

The humble submission which Pharaoh's servants should make to Moses, and how submissively they should request

him to go (Ex 11:8): They shall come down, and bow themselves.

Note, The proud enemies of God and his Israel shall be made to fall under at last (Re 3:9), and shall be found liars to them, De 33:29. When Moses had thus delivered his message, it is said, He went out from Pharaoh in a great anger, though he was the meekest of all the men of the earth. Probably he expected that the very threatening of the death of the firstborn would have induced Pharaoh to comply, especially as Pharaoh had complied so far already, and had seen how exactly all Moses's predictions hitherto were fulfilled. But it had not that effect; his proud heart would not yield, no, not to save all the firstborn of his kingdom: no marvel that men are not deterred from vicious courses by the prospects given them of eternal misery in the other world, when the imminent peril they run of the loss of all that is dear to them in this world will not frighten them. Moses, hereupon, was provoked to a holy indignation, being grieved (as our Savior afterwards) for the hardness of his heart, Mk 3:5. Note, It is a great vexation to the spirits of good ministers to see people deaf to all the fair warnings given them, and running headlong upon ruin, notwithstanding all the kind methods taken to prevent it. Thus Ezekiel went in the bitterness of his spirit (Eze 3:14), because God had told him that the house of Israel would not hearken to him, Ex 11:7. To be angry at nothing but sin is the way not to sin in anger. Moses, having thus adverted to the disturbance which Pharaoh's obstinacy gave him,

(1.) Reflects upon the previous notice God had given him of this (Ex 11:9): The Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken to you. The scripture has foretold the incredulity of those who should hear the gospel, that it might not be a surprise nor stumbling-block to us, Joh 12:37, 38, Ro 10:16. Let us think never the worse of the gospel of Christ for the

slights men generally put upon it, for we were told before what cold entertainment it would meet with.

(2.) He recapitulates all he had said before to this purport (Ex 11:10), that Moses did all these wonders, as they are here related, before Pharaoh (he himself was an eye-witness of them), and yet he could not prevail, which was a certain sign that God himself had, in a way of righteous judgment, hardened his heart. Thus the Jews' rejection of the gospel of Christ was so gross an absurdity that it might easily be inferred from it that God had given them the spirit of slumber, Ro 11:8.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto
you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.
10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and
the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the
children of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus-12

The Passover

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,
saying,
2 This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be*
the first month of the year to you.

Moses and Aaron here receive of the Lord what they were afterwards to deliver to the people concerning the ordinance of the Passover, to which is prefixed an order for a new style to be observed in their months (Ex 12:1, 2): This shall be to you the beginning of months. They had hitherto begun their year from the middle of September, but henceforward they were to begin it from the middle of March, at least in all their ecclesiastical computations.

Note, It is good to begin the day, and begin the year, and especially to begin our lives, with God. This new calculation began the year with the spring, which reneweth the face of the earth, and was used as a figure of the coming of Christ, So 2:11, 12. We may suppose that, while Moses was bringing the ten plagues upon the Egyptians, he was directing the Israelites to prepare for their departure at an hour's warning. Probably he had be degrees brought them near together from their dispersions, for their are here called the congregation of Israel (Ex 12:3), and to them as a congregation orders are here sent. Their amazement and hurry, it is easy to suppose, were great; yet now they must apply themselves to the observance of a sacred rite, to the honour of God. Note, When our heads are fullest of care, and our hands of business, yet we must not forget our religion, nor suffer ourselves to be indisposed for acts of devotion.

3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, in the tenth
day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb,
according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for a house:
4 and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his
neighbor next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the
souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for
the lamb.
5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye
shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats:
6 and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month:
and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in
the evening.

God appointed that on the night wherein they were to go out of Egypt they should, in each of their families, kill a lamb, or that two or three families, if they were small, should join for a lamb. The lamb was to be got ready four days before and that afternoon they were to kill it (Ex 12:6) as a sacrifice; not strictly, for it was not offered upon the altar, but as a religious ceremony, acknowledging God's goodness to them, not only in preserving them from, but in delivering them by, the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians. See the antiquity of

family-religion; and see the convenience of the joining of small families together for religious worship, that it may be made the more solemn.

7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with* fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

The solemnly eating of the lamb was typical of our gospel-duty to Christ.

(1.) The paschal lamb was killed, not to be looked upon only, but to be fed upon; so we must by faith make Christ ours, as we do that which we eat, and we must receive spiritual strength and nourishment from him, as from our food, and have delight and satisfaction in him, as we have in eating and drinking when we are hungry or thirsty: see Joh 6:53-55.

(2.) It was to be all eaten; those that by faith feed upon Christ must feed upon a whole Christ; they must take Christ and his yoke, Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown. Is Christ divided? Those hat gather much of Christ will have nothing over.

(3.) It was to be eaten immediately, not deferred till morning, Ex 12:10. To-day Christ is offered, and is to be accepted while it is called to-day, before we sleep the sleep of death.

(4.) It was to be eaten with bitter herbs (Ex 12:8), in remembrance of the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt. We must feed upon Christ with sorrow and brokenness of heart, in remembrance of sin; this will give an admirable relish to the paschal lamb. Christ will be sweet to us if sin be bitter.

(5.) It was to be eaten in a departing posture (Ex 12:11); when we feed upon Christ by faith we must absolutely

forsake the rule and dominion of sin, shake off Pharaoh's yoke; and we must sit loose to the world, and everything in it, forsake all for Christ, and reckon it no bad bargain, Heb 13:13,14.

10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

11 And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it *is* the Lord's Passover.

The lamb so slain they were to eat, roasted (we may suppose, in its several quarters), with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, because they were to eat it in haste (Ex 12:11), and to leave none of it until the morning; for God would have them to depend upon him for their daily bread, and not to take thought for the morrow. He that led them would feed them.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord.

Before they ate the flesh of the lamb, they were to sprinkle the blood upon the doorposts, Ex 12:7. By this their houses were to be distinguished from the houses of the Egyptians, and so their first-born secured from the sword of the destroying angel, Ex 12:12, 13. Dreadful work was to be made this night in Egypt; all the first-born both of man and beast were to be slain, and judgment executed upon the gods of Egypt. Moses does not mention the fulfillment, in this chapter, yet he speaks of it Nu 33:4. It is very probable that the idols which the Egyptians worshipped were destroyed, those of metal melted, those of wood consumed, and those of stone broken to pieces, whence Jethro infers (Ex 18:11), The Lord is greater than all gods. The same angel that destroyed their first-born demolished their idols, which were no less dear to them. For the protection of Israel from this plague they were ordered to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the door-posts, their doing which would be accepted as

an instance of their faith in the divine warnings and their obedience to the divine precepts. Note,

1. If in times of common calamity God will secure his own people, and set a mark upon them; they shall be hidden either in heaven or under heaven, preserved either from the stroke of judgments or at least from the sting of them.

2 The blood of sprinkling is the saint's security in times of common calamity; it is this that marks them for God, pacifies conscience, and gives them boldness of access to the throne of grace, and so becomes a wall of protection round them and a wall of partition between them and the children of this world.

13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are:* and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you,* when I smite the land of Egypt.

14 And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.

15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

This was to be annually observed as a feast of the Lord in their generations, to which the feast of unleavened bread was annexed, during which, for seven days, they were to eat no bread but what was unleavened, in remembrance of their being confined to such bread, of necessity, for many days after they came out of Egypt, Ex 12:14-20. The appointment is inculcated for their better direction, and that they might not mistake concerning it, and to awaken those who perhaps in Egypt had grown generally very stupid and careless in the matters of religion to a diligent observance of the institution. Now, without doubt, there was much of the gospel in this ordinance; it is often referred to in the New Testament, and,

in it, to us is the gospel preached, and not to them only, who could not stedfastly look to the end of these things, Heb 4:2,2Co 3:13.

The paschal lamb was typical. Christ is our Passover, 1Co 5:7.

(1.) It was to be a lamb; and Christ is the Lamb of God (Joh 1:29), often in the Revelation called the Lamb, meek and innocent as a lamb, dumb before the shearers, before the butchers.

(2.) It was to be a male of the first year (Ex 12:5), in its prime; Christ offered up himself in the midst of his days, not in infancy with the babes of Bethlehem. It denotes the strength and sufficiency of the Lord Jesus, on whom our help was laid.

(3.) It was to be without blemish (Ex 12:5), denoting the purity of the Lord Jesus, a Lamb without spot, 1Pe 1:19. The judge that condemned him (as if his trial were only like the scrutiny that was made concerning the sacrifices, whether they were without blemish or no) pronounced him innocent.

(4.) It was to be set apart four days before (Ex 12:3, 6), denoting the designation of the Lord Jesus to be a Savior, both in the purpose and in the promise. It is very observable that as Christ was crucified at the Passover, so he solemnly entered into Jerusalem four days before, the very day that the paschal lamb was set apart.

(5.) It was to be slain, and roasted with fire (Ex 12:6-9), denoting the exquisite sufferings of the Lord Jesus, even unto death, the death of the cross. The wrath of God is as fire, and Christ was made a curse for us.

(6.) It was to be killed by the whole congregation between the two evenings, that is, between three o'clock and six. Christ suffered in the end of the world (Heb 9:26), by the hand of the Jews, the whole multitude of them (Lu 23:18), and for the good of all his spiritual Israel.

(7.) Not a bone of it must be broken (Ex 12:46), which is expressly said to be fulfilled in Christ (Joh 19:33, 36), denoting the unbroken strength of the Lord Jesus.

16 And in the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save *that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

The feast of unleavened bread was typical of the Christian life, 1Co 5:7, 8. Having received Christ Jesus the Lord,

(1.) We must keep a feast in holy joy, continually delighting ourselves in Christ Jesus; no manner of work must be done (Ex 12:16), no care admitted or indulged, inconsistent with, or prejudicial to, this holy joy: if true believers have not a continual feast, it is their own fault.

(2.) It must be a feast of unleavened bread, kept in charity, without the leaven of malice, and insincerity, without the leaven of hypocrisy. The law was very strict as to the Passover, and the Jews were so in their usages, that no leaven should be found in their houses, Ex 12:19. All the old leaven of sin must be put far from us, with the utmost caution and abhorrence, if we would keep the feast of a holy life to the honour of Christ.

(3.) It was by an ordinance forever (Ex 12:17); as long as we live, we must continue feeding upon Christ and rejoicing in him, always making thankful mention of the great things he has done for us.

17 And ye shall observe the *feast of* unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt:

therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever.

18 In the first *month,* on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

19 Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

20 Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the Passover.

22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that *is* in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

The sprinkling of the blood was typical.

(1.) It was not enough that the blood of the lamb was shed, but it must be sprinkled, denoting the application of the merits of Christ's death to our souls; we must receive the atonement, Ro 5:11.

(2.) It was to be sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop (Ex 12:22) dipped in the basin. The everlasting covenant, like the basin, in the conservatory of this blood, the benefits and privileges purchased by it are laid up for us there; faith is the bunch of hyssop by which we apply the promises to ourselves and the benefits of the blood of Christ laid up in them.

(3.) It was to be sprinkled upon the door-posts, denoting the open profession we are to make of faith in Christ, and obedience to him, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence upon him. The mark of the beast may be received on the forehead or in the right hand, but the seal of

the Lamb is always in the forehead, Re 7:3. There is a back-way to hell, but no back-way to heaven; no, the only way to this is a high-way, Isa 35:8.

(4.) It was to be sprinkled upon the lintel and the sideposts, but not upon the threshold (Ex 12:7), which cautions us to take heed of trampling underfoot the blood of the covenant, Heb 10:29. It is precious blood, and must be precious to us.

(5.) The blood, thus sprinkled, was a means of the preservation of the Israelites from the destroying angel, who had nothing to do where the blood was. If the blood of Christ be sprinkled upon our consciences, it will be our protection from the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell, Ro 8:1.

That this night, when the first-born were to be destroyed, no Israelite must stir out of doors till morning, that is, till towards morning, when they would be called to march out of Egypt, Ex 12:22. Not but that the destroying angel could have known an Israelite from an Egyptian in the street; but God would intimate to them that their safety was owing to the blood of sprinkling; if they put themselves from under the protection of that, it was at their peril. Those whom God has marked for himself must not mingle with evil doers: see Isa 26:20, 21. They must not go out of the doors, lest they should straggle and be out of the way when they should be summoned to depart: they must stay within, to wait for the salvation of the Lord, and it is good to do so.

23 For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when
he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the
Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer
to come in unto your houses to smite *you*.

24 And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy
sons forever.

25 And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

The question which the children would ask concerning this solemnity (which they would soon take notice of in the family): "What mean you by this service? What is he meaning of all this care and exactness about eating this lamb, and this unleavened bread, more than about common food? Why such a difference between this meal and other meals?" Note,

[1.] It is a good thing to see children inquisitive about the things of God; it is to be hoped that those who are careful to ask for the way will find it. Christ himself, when a child, heard and asked questions, Lu 2:46.

[2.] It concerns us all rightly to understand the meaning of those holy ordinances wherein we worship God, what is the nature and what the end of them, what is signified and what intended, what is the duty expected from us in them and what are the advantages to be expected by us. Every ordinance has a meaning; some ordinances, as sacraments, have not their meaning so plain and obvious as others have; therefore we are concerned to search, that we may not offer the blind for sacrifice, but may do a reasonable service. If either we are ignorant of, or mistake about, the meaning of holy ordinances, we can neither please God nor profit ourselves.

27 That ye shall say, It *is* the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

The answer which the parents were to return to this question (Ex 12:27): You shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, that is, "By the killing and sacrificing of this lamb,

we keep in remembrance the work of wonder and grace which God did for our fathers, when,"

[1.] "To make way for our deliverance out of bondage, he slew the firstborn of the Egyptians, so compelling them to sign our discharge;" and,

[2.] "Though there were with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God, for which the destroying angel, when he was abroad doing execution, might justly have destroyed our first-born too, yet God graciously appointed and accepted the family-sacrifice of a lamb, instead of the first-born, as, of old, the ram instead of Isaac, and in every house where the lamb was slain the first-born were saved." The repetition of this solemnity in the return of every year was designed,

First, To look backward as a memorial, that in it they might remember what great things God had done for them and their fathers. The word pesach signifies a leap, or transition; it is a passing over; for the destroying angel passed over the houses of the Israelites, and did not destroy their first-born. When God brings utter ruin upon his people he says, I will not pass by them any more (Am 7:8,8:2), intimating how often he had passed by them, as now when the destroying angel passed over their houses.

Note,

1. Distinguishing mercies lay under peculiar obligations. When a thousand fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, and yet we are preserved, and have our lives given us for a prey, this should greatly affect us, Ps 91:7. In war or pestilence, if the arrow of death have passed by us, passed over us, hit the next to us and just missed us, we must not say it was by chance that we were preserved but by the special providence of our God.

2. Old mercies to ourselves, or to our fathers, must not be forgotten, but be had in everlasting remembrance, that God may be praised, our faith in him encouraged, and our hearts enlarged in his service.

Secondly, It was designed to look forward as an earnest of the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the fullness of time, instead of us and our first-born. We were obnoxious to the sword of the destroying angel, but Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, his death was our life, and thus he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, from the foundation of the Jewish church: Moses kept the Passover by faith in Christ, for Christ was the end of the law for righteousness.

28 And the children of Israel went away, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

The people received these instructions with reverence and ready obedience.

1. They bowed the head and worshipped (Ex 12:27): they hereby signified their submission to this institution as a law, and their thankfulness for it as a favour and privilege.

Note, When God gives law to us, we must give honour to him; when he speaks, we must bow our heads and worship.

2. They went away and did as they were commanded, Ex 12:23. Here was none of that discontent and murmuring among them which we read of, Ex 5:20, 21. The plagues of Egypt had done them good, and raised their expectations of a glorious deliverance, which before they despaired of; and now they went forth to meet it in the way appointed.

Note, The perfecting of God's mercies to us must be waited for in a humble observance of his institutions.

The Death of the Firstborn

29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that *was* in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.

The Egyptians' sons, even their first-born, slain, Ex 12:29, 30. If Pharaoh would have taken the warning which was given him of this plague, and would thereupon have released Israel, what a great many dear and valuable lives might have been preserved! But see what obstinate infidelity brings upon men. Observe,

1 The time when this blow was given: It was at midnight, which added to the terror of it. The three preceding nights were made dreadful by the additional plague of darkness, which might be felt, and doubtless disturbed their repose; and now, when they hoped for one quiet night's rest, at midnight was the alarm given. When the destroying angel drew his sword against Jerusalem, it was in the day-time (2Sa 24:15), which made it the less frightful; but the destruction of Egypt was by a pestilence walking in darkness, Ps 91:6. Shortly there will be an alarming cry at midnight, Behold, the bridegroom cometh.

2. On whom the plague fastened--on their first-born, the joy and hope of their respective families. They had slain the Hebrews' children, and now God slew theirs. Thus he visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children; and he is not unrighteous who taketh vengeance.

3. How far it reached--from the throne to the dungeon. Prince and peasant stand upon the same level before God's judgments, for there is no respect of persons with him; see Job 34:19, 20. Now the slain of the Lord were many; multitudes, multitudes, fall in this valley of decision, when

the controversy between God and Pharaoh was to be determined.

4. What an outcry was made upon it: There was a great cry in Egypt, universal lamentation for their only son (with many), and with all for their first-born. If any be suddenly taken ill in the night, we are wont to call up neighbours; but the Egyptians could have no help, no comfort, from their neighbours, all being involved in the same calamity. Let us learn hence,

(1.) To tremble before God, and to be afraid of his judgments, Ps 119:120. Who is able to stand before him, or dares resist him?

(2.) To be thankful to God for the daily preservation of ourselves and our families: lying so much exposed, we have reason to say, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt: for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead.

31 And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, *and* get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.

God's sons, even his first-born, released; this judgment conquered Pharaoh, and obliged him to surrender at discretion, without capitulating. Men had better come up to God's terms at first, for he will never come down to theirs, let them object as long as they will. Now Pharaoh's pride is abased, and he yields to all that Moses had insisted on: Serve the Lord as you have said (Ex 12:31), and take your flocks as you have said, Ex 12:32. Note, God's word will stand, and we shall get nothing by disputing it, or delaying to submit to it. Hitherto the Israelites were not permitted to depart, but now things had come to the last extremity, in consequence of which,

They are commanded to depart: Rise up, and get you forth, Ex 12:31. Pharaoh had told Moses he should see his face no more; but now he sent for him. Those will seek God early in their distress who before had set him at defiance. Such a fright he was now in that he gave orders by night for their discharge, fearing lest, if he delayed any longer, he himself should fall next; and that he sent them out, not as men hated (as the pagan historians have represented this matter), but as men feared, is plainly discovered by his humble request to them (Ex 12:32): "Bless me also; let me have your prayers, that I may not be plagued for what is past, when you are gone." Note, Those that are enemies to God's church are enemies to themselves, and, sooner or later, they will be made to see it.

32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.

33 And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, we *be* all dead *men*.

They are hired to depart by the Egyptians; they cried out (Ex 12:33), We be all dead men. Note, When death comes into our houses, it is seasonable for us to think of our own mortality. Are our relations dead? It is easy to infer thence that we are dying, and, in effect, already dead men. Upon this consideration they were urgent with the Israelites to be gone, which gave great advantage to the Israelites in borrowing their jewels, Ex 12:35, 36. When the Egyptians urged them to be gone, it was easy for them to say that the Egyptians had kept them poor, that they could not undertake such a journey with empty purses, but, that, if they would give them wherewithal to bear their charges, they would be gone. And this the divine Providence designed in suffering things to come to this extremity, that they, becoming formidable to the Egyptians, might have what they would, for asking; the Lord also, by the influence he has on the minds of people, inclined

the hearts of the Egyptians to furnish them with what they desired, they probably intending thereby to make atonement, that the plagues might be stayed, as the Philistines, when they returned the ark, sent a present with it for a trespass-offering, having an eye to this precedent, 1Sa 6:3,6. The Israelites might receive and keep what they thus borrowed, or rather required, of the Egyptians,

(1.) As justly as servants receive wages from their masters for work done, and sue for it if it be detained.

(2.) As justly as conquerors take the spoils of their enemies whom they have subdued; Pharaoh was in rebellion against the God of the Hebrews, by which all that he had was forfeited.

(3.) As justly as subjects receive the estates granted to them by their prince. God is the sovereign proprietor of the earth, and the fullness thereof; and, if he take from one and give to another, who may say unto him, What doest thou? It was by God's special order and appointment that the Israelites did what they did, which was sufficient to justify them, and bear them out; but what they did will by no means authorize others (who cannot pretend to any such warrant) to do the same. Let us remember,

[1.] That the King of kings can do no wrong.

[2.] That he will do right to those whom men injure, Ps 146:7. Hence it is that the wealth of the sinner often proves to be laid up for the just, Pr 13:22, Job 27:16, 17.

34 And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.

35 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:

36 and the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so
that they lent unto them *such things as they required:* and they
spoiled the Egyptians.

The Israelites Leave Egypt

37 And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth,
about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children.

Here is the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt; having obtained their dismission, they set forward without delay, and did not defer to a more convenient season. Pharaoh was now in a good mind; but they had reason to think he would not long continue so, and therefore it was no time to linger. We have here an account, Of their number, about 600,000 men (Ex 12:37), besides women and children, which I think, we cannot supposed to make less than 1,200,000 more. What a vast increase was this, to arise from seventy souls in little more than 200 years' time! See the power and efficacy of that blessing, when God commands it, Be fruitful and multiply. This was typical of the multitudes that were brought into the gospel church when it was first founded; so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.

38 And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and
herds, even very much cattle.

Of their retinue (Ex 12:38): A mixed multitude went up with them, hangers on to that great family, some perhaps willing to leave their country, because it was laid waste by the plagues, and to seek their fortune, as we say, with the Israelites; others went out of curiosity, to see the solemnities of Israel's sacrifice to their God, which had been so much talked of, and expecting to see some glorious appearances of their God to them in the wilderness, having seen such glorious appearances of their God for them in the field of Zoan, Ps 78:12. Probably the greatest part of this mixed multitude were but a rude unthinking mob, that followed the crowd they knew not why; we afterwards find that they proved a snare to them (Nu 11:4), and it is probable that

when, soon afterwards, they understood that the children of Israel were to continue forty years in the wilderness, they quitted them, and returned to Egypt.

Note, There were always those among the Israelites that were not Israelites, and there are still hypocrites in the church, who make a deal of mischief, but will be shaken off at last.

39 And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals.

Of the provision made for the camp, which was very poor and slender. They brought some dough with them out of Egypt in their knapsacks, Ex 12:34. They had prepared to bake, the next day, in order to their removal, understanding it was very near; but, being hastened away sooner than they thought of, by some hours, they took the dough as it was, unleavened; when they came to Succoth, their first stage, they baked unleavened cakes, and, though these were of course insipid, yet the liberty they were brought into made this the most joyful meal they had ever eaten in their lives.

Note, The servants of God must not be slaves to their appetites, nor solicitous to wind up all the delights of sense to their highest pitch. We should be willing to take up with dry bread, nay, with unleavened bread, rather than neglect or delay any service we have to do for God, as those whose meat and drink it is to do his will.

40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, *was* four hundred and thirty years.

Of the date of this great event: it was just 430 years from the promise made to Abraham (as the apostle explains it, Ga 3:17) at his first coming into Canaan, during all which time the children of Israel, that is, the Hebrews, the distinguished chosen seed, were sojourners in a land that was not theirs, either Canaan or Egypt. So long the promise God made to

Abraham of a settlement lay dormant and unfulfilled, but now, at length, it revived, and things began to work towards the accomplishment of it. The first day of the march of Abraham's seed towards Canaan was just 430 years (it should seem to a day) from the promise made to Abraham, Ge 12:2, I will make of thee a great nation. See how punctual God is to his time; though his promises be not performed quickly, they will be accomplished in their season.

41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

42 It *is* a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this *is* that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

Of the memorableness of it: It is a night to be much observed, Ex 12:42.

(1.) The providences of that first night were very observable; memorable was the destruction of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of the Israelites by it; God herein made himself taken notice of.

(2.) The ordinances of that night, in the annual return of it, were to be carefully observed: This is that night of the Lord, that remarkable night, to be celebrated in all generations.

Note, The great things God does for his people are not to be a nine days' wonder, as we say, but the remembrance of them is to be perpetuated throughout all ages, especially the work of our redemption by Christ. This first Passover-night was a night of the Lord much to be observed; but the last Passover-night, in which Christ was betrayed (and in which the Passover, with the rest of the ceremonial institutions, was superseded and abolished), was a night of the Lord much more to be observed, when a yoke heavier than that of Egypt was broken from off our necks, and a land better than that of Canaan set before us. That was a temporal deliverance to be

celebrated in their generation; this is an eternal redemption to be celebrated in the praises of glorious saints, world without end.

43 And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This *is* the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

44 but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

45 A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof.

46 In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

In one house shall it be eaten (Ex 12:46), for good-fellowship sake, that they might rejoice together, and edify one another in the eating of it. None of it must be carried to another place, nor left to another time; for God would not have them so taken up with care about their departure as to be indisposed to take the comfort of it, but to leave Egypt, and enter upon a wilderness, with cheerfulness, and, in token of that, to eat a good hearty meal. The papists' carrying their consecrated host from house to house is not only superstitious in itself, but contrary to this typical law of the Passover, which directed that no part of the lamb should be carried abroad.

47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

All the congregation of Israel must keep it, Ex 12:47. All that share in God's mercies should join in thankful praises for them. Though it was observed in families apart, yet it is looked upon as the act of the whole congregation; for the smaller communities constituted the greater. The New-Testament Passover, the Lord's supper, ought not to be neglected by any who are capable of celebrating it. He is unworthy the name of an Israelite that can contentedly neglect the commemoration of so great a deliverance.

1. No stranger that was uncircumcised might be admitted to eat of it, Ex 12:43, 45, and 48. None might sit at the table but those that came in by the door; nor may any now approach to the improving ordinance of the Lord's supper who have not first submitted to the initiating ordinance of baptism. We must be born again by the word ere we can be nourished by it. Nor shall any partake of the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, or feast upon it, who are not first circumcised in heart, Col 2:11.

2. Any stranger that was circumcised might be welcome to eat of the Passover, even servants, Ex 12:44. If, by circumcision, they would make themselves debtors to the law in its burdens, they were welcome to share in the joy of its solemn feasts, and not otherwise. Only it is intimated (Ex 12:48) that those who were masters of families must not only be circumcised themselves, but have all their males circumcised too. If in sincerity, and with that zeal which the thing required and deserves, we give up ourselves to God, we shall, with ourselves, give up all we have to him, and do our utmost that all ours may be his too. Here is an early indication of favour to the poor Gentiles, that the stranger, if circumcised, stands upon the same level with the home-born Israelite. One law for both, Ex 12:49. This was a mortification to the Jews, and taught them that it was their dedication to God, not their descent from Abraham, that entitled them to their privileges. A sincere proselyte was as welcome to the Passover as a native Israelite, Isa 56:6, 7.

49 One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.

50 Thus did all the children of Israel; as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

The chapter concludes with a repetition of the whole matter, that the children of Israel did as they were bidden, and God did for them as he promised (Ex 12:50, 51); for he will certainly be the author of salvation to those that obey him.

51 And it came to pass the selfsame day, *that* the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

Exodus-13

The Consecration of the Firstborn

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine.

Of the preservation of Israel's firstborn, when the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain. In memory of that distinguishing favour, and in gratitude for it, the firstborn, in all ages, were to be consecrated to God, as his peculiars (Ex 13:2), and to be redeemed, Ex 13:13. God, who by the right of creation is proprietor and sovereign of all the creatures, here lays claim in particular to the firstborn of the Israelites, by right of protection: Sanctify to me all the firstborn. The parents were not to look upon themselves as interested in their firstborn, till they had first solemnly presented them to God, recognized his title to them, and received them back, at a certain rate, from him again. Note,

1. That which is by special distinguishing mercy spared to us should be in a peculiar manner dedicated to God's honour; at least some grateful acknowledgment, in works of piety and charity, should be made, when our lives, or the lives of our children, have been given us for a prey.

2. God, who is the first and best, should have the first and best, and to him we should resign that which is most dear to us, and most valuable. The firstborn were the joy and hope of their families. Therefore they shall be mine, says God. By this is will appear that we love God best (as we ought) if we are

willing to part with that to him which we love best in this world.

3. It is the church of the firstborn that is sanctified to God, Heb 12:23. Christ it the firstborn among many brethren (Ro 8:29), and, by virtue of their union with him, all that are born again, and born from above, are accounted as firstborn. There is an excellency of dignity and power belonging to them; and, if children, then heirs.

3 And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye
came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength
of hand the Lord brought you out from this *place:* there shall no
leavened bread be eaten.

The remembrance of their coming out of Egypt must also be perpetuated: "Remember this day, Ex 13:3. Remember it by a good token, as the most remarkable day of your lives, the birthday of your nation, or the day of its coming of age, to be no longer under the rod." Thus the day of Christ's resurrection is to be remembered, for in it we were raised up with Christ out of death's house of bondage. The scripture tells us not expressly what day of the year Christ rose (as Moses told the Israelites what day of the year they were brought out of Egypt, that they might remember it yearly), but very particularly what day of the week it was, plainly intimating that, as the more valuable deliverance, and of greater importance, it should be remembered weekly. Remember it, for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out. Note, The more of God and his power appears in any deliverance, the more memorable it is.

4 This day came ye out in the month Abib.
5 And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the
Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites,
and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a
land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service
in this month.
6 Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day
shall be a feast to the Lord.

They must be sure to keep the feast of unleavened bread, Ex 13:5-7. It was not enough that they remembered it, but they must celebrate the memorial of it in that way which God had appointed, and use the instituted means of preserving the remembrance of it. So, under the gospel, we must not only remember Christ, but do this in remembrance of him. Observe, How strict the prohibition of leaven is (Ex 13:7); not only no leaven must be eaten, but none must be seen, no, not in all their quarters. Accordingly, the Jews' usage was, before the feast of the Passover, to cast all the leavened bread out of their houses: they burnt it, or buried it, or broke it small and scattered it in the wind; they searched diligently with lighted candles in all the corners of their houses, lest any leaven should remain. The care and strictness enjoined in this matter were designed,

(1.) To make the feast the more solemn, and consequently the more taken notice of by their children, who would ask, "Why is so much ado made?"

(2.) To teach us how solicitous we should be to put away from us all sin, 1Co 5:7.

7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

8 And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, this *is done* because of that *which* the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.

They must instruct their children in the meaning of it, and relate to them the story of their deliverance out of Egypt, Ex 13:8. Note,

(1.) Care must be taken betimes to instruct children in the knowledge of God. Here is an ancient law for catechising.

(2.) It is particularly of great use to acquaint children betimes with the stories of the scripture, and to make them familiar to them.

(3.) It is a debt we owe to the honour of God, and to the benefit of our children's souls, to tell them of the great works God has done for his church, both those which we have seen with our eyes done in our day and which we have heard with our ears and our fathers have told us: Thou shalt show thy son in that day (the day of the feast) these things. When they were celebrating the ordinance, they must explain it. Everything is beautiful in its season. The Passover is appointed for a sign, and for a memorial, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth.

Note, We must retain the remembrance of God's works, that we may remain under the influence of God's law. And those that have God's law in their heart should have it in their mouth, and be often speaking of it, the more to affect themselves and to instruct others.

9 And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought thee out of Egypt.

10 Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

11 And it shall be when the Lord shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee,

12 that thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the male *shall be* the Lord's.

Further directions concerning the dedicating of their firstborn to God.

1 The firstlings of their cattle were to be dedicated to God, as part of their possessions. Those of clean beasts--calves, lambs, and kids--if males, were to be sacrificed, Ex 22:30, Nu 18:17, 18. Those of unclean beasts, as colts, were to be redeemed with a lamb, or knocked on the head. For whatsoever is unclean (as we all are by nature), if it be not redeemed, will be destroyed, Ex 13:11, 13.

2 The firstborn of their children were to be redeemed, and by no means sacrificed, as the Gentiles sacrificed their children to Moloch. The price of the redemption of the firstborn was fixed by the law (Nu 18:16) at five shekels. We were all obnoxious to the wrath and curse of God; by the blood of Christ we are redeemed, that we may be joined to the church of the firstborn. They were to redeem their children, as well as the firstlings of the unclean beasts, for our children are by nature polluted. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if
thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the
firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.
14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying,
what *is* this?That thou shalt say unto him, by strength of hand the
Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage:

Further directions concerning the catechising of their children, and all those of the rising generation, from time to time, in this matter. It is supposed that, when they saw all the firstlings thus devoted, they would ask the meaning of it, and their parents and teachers must tell them (Ex 13:14-16) that God's special propriety in their firstborn, and all their firstlings, was founded in his special preservation of them from the sword of the destroying angel. Being thus delivered, they must serve him. Note,

1. Children should be directed and encouraged to ask their parents questions concerning the things of God, a practice which would be perhaps of all others the most profitable way of catechising; and parents must furnish themselves with useful knowledge, that they may be ready always to give an answer to their enquiries. If ever the knowledge of God cover the earth, as the waters do the sea, the fountains of family-instruction must first be broken up.

2. We should all be able to show cause for what we do in religion. As sacraments are sanctified by the word, so they must be explained and understood by it. God's service is reasonable, and it is then acceptable when we perform it intelligently, knowing what we do and why we do it.

3. It must be observed how often it is said in this chapter that by strength of hand (Ex 13:3, 14, 16), with a strong hand (Ex 13:9), the Lord brought them out of Egypt. The more opposition is given to the accomplishment of God's purposes the more is his power magnified therein. It is a strong hand that conquers hard hearts. Sometimes God is said to work deliverance not by might nor power (Zec 4:6), not by such visible displays of his power as that recorded here.

4. Their posterity that should be born in Canaan are directed to say, The Lord brought us out of Egypt, Ex 13:14, 16. Mercies to our fathers are mercies to us; we reap the benefit of them, and therefore must keep up a grateful remembrance of them. We stand upon the bottom of former deliverances, and were in the loins of our ancestors when they were delivered. Much more reason have we to say that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we were redeemed.

15 and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the
Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn
of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord

all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt.

The Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire

17 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not *through* the way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

18 but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

The choice God made of their way, Ex 13:17, 18. He was their guide. Moses gave them direction but as he received it from the Lord. Note, The way of man is not in himself, Jer 10:23. He may devise his way, and design it; but, after all, it is God that directs his steps, Pr 16:9. Man proposes, but God disposes, and in his disposal we must acquiesce, and set ourselves to follow providence. There were two ways from Egypt to Canaan. One was a short cut from the north of Egypt to the south of Canaan, perhaps about four or five days' journey; the other was much further about, through the wilderness, and that was the way in which God chose to lead his people Israel, Ex 13:18.

1. There were many reasons why God led them through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. The Egyptians were to be drowned in the Red Sea. The Israelites were to be humbled and proved in the wilderness, De 8:2. God had given it to Moses for a sign (Ex 3:12), You shall serve God in this mountain. They had again and again told Pharaoh that they must go three days' journey into the wilderness to do sacrifice, and therefore it was requisite that they should bend their march that way, else they would justly have been exclaimed

against as notorious dissemblers. Before they entered the lists with their enemies, matters must be settled between them and their God, laws must be given, ordinances instituted, covenants sealed, and the original contract ratified, for the doing of which it was necessary that they should retire into the solitudes of a wilderness, the only closet for such a crowd; the high road would be no proper place for these transactions. It is said (De 32:10), He led them about, some hundreds of miles about, and yet (Ps 107:7), He led them forth by the right way. God's way is the right way, though it seem about. If we think he leads not his people the nearest way, yet we may be sure he leads them the best way, and so it will appear when we come to our journey's end. Judge nothing before the time.

2. There was one reason why God did not lead them the nearest way, which would have brought them after a few days' march to the land of the Philistines (for it was that part of Canaan that lay next to Egypt), namely, because they were not as yet fit for war, much less for war with the Philistines, Ex 13:17. Their spirits were broken with slavery; it was not easy for them to turn their hands of a sudden from the trowel to the sword. The Philistines were formidable enemies, too fierce to be encountered by raw recruits; it was more suitable that they should begin with the Amalekites, and be prepared for the wars of Canaan by experiencing the difficulties of the wilderness. Note, God proportions his people's trials to their strength, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able, 1Co 10:13. That promise, if compared with the foregoing verses, will seem to refer to this event, as an instance of it. God knows our frame, and considers our weakness and faintheartedness, and by less trials will prepare us for greater. God is said to bring Israel out of Egypt as the eagle brings up her young ones (De 32:11), teaching them by degrees to fly. Orders being thus given which way they should go, we are told,

(1.) That they went up themselves, not as a confused rout, but in good order, rank and file: they went up harnessed, Ex 13:18. They went up by five in a rank (so some), in five squadrons, so others. They marched like an army with banners, which added much to their strength and honour.

(2.) That they took the bones of Joseph along with them (Ex 13:19), and probably the bones of the rest of Jacob's sons, unless (as some think) they had been privately carried to Canaan (Ac 7:16), severally as they died. Joseph had particularly appointed that his bones should be carried up when God should visit the (Ge 50:25,26), so that their carrying up his bones was not only a performance of the oath their fathers had sworn to Joseph, but an acknowledgment of the performance of God's promise to them by Joseph that he would visit them and bring them out of the land of Egypt, and an encouragement to their faith and hope that he would fulfil the other part of the promise, which was to bring them to Canaan, in expectation of which they carried these bones with them while they wandered in the desert. They might think, "Joseph's bones must rest at last, and then we shall." Moses is said to take these bones with him. Moses was now a very great man; so had Joseph been in his day, yet he was now but a box full of dry bones; this was all that remained of him in this world, which might serve for a monitor to Moses to remember his mortality. I have said, You are gods; it was said so to Moses expressly (Ex 7:1); but you shall die like men.

19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

20 And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.

Here is the guidance they were blessed with in the way: The Lord went before them in a pillar, Ex 13:21, 22. In the first two stages it was enough that God directed Moses whither to march: he knew the country and the road well enough; but now that they had come to the edge of the wilderness (Ex

13:20) they would have occasion for a guide; and a very good guide they had, one that was infinitely wise, kind, and faithful: The Lord went before them, the shechinah (or appearance of the divine Majesty, which was typical of Christ) or a previous manifestation of the eternal Word, which, in the fullness of time, was to be made flesh, and dwell among us. Christ was with the church in the wilderness, 1Co 10:9. Now their King passed before them, even the Lord on the head of them, Mic 2:13. Note, Those whom God brings into a wilderness he will not leave nor lose there, but will take care to lead them through it; we may well think it was a very great satisfaction to Moses and the pious Israelites to be sure that they were under divine guidance. Those needed not to fear missing their way who were thus led, nor being lost who were thus directed; those needed not to fear being benighted who were thus illuminated, nor being robbed who were thus protected. Those who make the glory of God their end, and the word of God their rule, the Spirit of God the guide of their affections, and the providence of God the guide of their affairs, may be confident that the Lord goes before them, as truly as he went before Israel in the wilderness, though not so sensibly; we must live by faith.

1. They had sensible evidences of God's going before them. They all saw an appearance from heaven of a pillar, which in the bright day appeared cloudy, and in the dark night appeared fiery. We commonly see that that which is a flame in the night is a smoke in the day; so was this. God gave them this ocular demonstration of his presence, in compassion to the infirmity of their faith, and in compliance with that infant state of the church, which needed to be thus lisped to in their own language; but blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed God's gracious presence with them, according to his promise.

2. They had sensible effects of God's going before them in this pillar. For,

(1.) It led the way in that vast howling wilderness, in which there was no road, no track, no way-mark, of which they had no maps, through which they had no guides. When they marched, this pillar went before them, at the rate that they could follow, and appointed the place of their encampment, as Infinite Wisdom saw fit, which both eased them from care, and secured them from danger, both in moving and in resting.

(2.) It sheltered them by day from the heat, which, at some times of the year, was extreme.

(3.) It gave them light by night when they had occasion for it, and at all times made their camp pleasant and the wilderness they were in less frightful.

21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.

22 He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

These were constant standing miracles (Ex 13:22): He took not away the pillar of cloud; no, not when they seemed to have less occasion for it, travelling through inhabited countries, no, not when they murmured and were provoking; it never left them, till it brought them to the borders of Canaan. It was a cloud which the wind could not scatter. This favour is acknowledged with thankfulness long afterwards, Ne 9:19, Ps 78:14. There was something spiritual in this pillar of cloud and fire.

1 The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in this cloud, which, some think, distilled dew upon them, 1Co 10:2. By coming under this cloud, they signified their putting themselves under the divine guidance and command by the ministry of Moses. Protection draws allegiance; this cloud was the badge of God's protection, and so became the bond of

their allegiance. Thus they were initiated, and admitted under that government, now when they were entering upon the wilderness.

2. Some make this cloud a type of Christ. The cloud of his human nature was a veil to the light and fire of his divine nature; we find him (Re 10:1) clothed with a cloud, and his feet as pillars of fire. Christ is our way, the light of our way and the guide of it.

3. It signified the special guidance and protection which the church of Christ is under in this world. God himself is the keeper of Israel, and he neither slumbers nor sleeps, Ps 121:4, Isa 27:3. There is a defence created, not only on Sion's assemblies, but on every dwelling-place in Sion. See Isa 4:5, 6. Nay, every Israelite indeed is hidden under the shadow of God's wings (Ps 17:8); angels, whose ministry was made use of in this cloud, are employed for their good, and pitch their tents about them. Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people?

Exodus-14

Crossing the Red Sea

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

Instructions given to Moses concerning Israel's motions and encampments, which were so very surprising that if Moses had not express orders about them before they would scarcely have been persuaded to follow the pillar of cloud and fire.

That therefore there might be no scruple nor dissatisfaction about it, Moses is told before,

1. Whither they must go, Ex 14:1, 2. They had got to the edge of the wilderness (Ex 13:20), and a stage or two more would have brought them to Horeb, the place appointed for their serving God; but, instead of going forward, they are ordered to turn short off, on the right hand from Canaan, and to march towards the Red Sea. Where they were, at Etham, there was no sea in their way to obstruct their passage: but God himself orders them into straits, which might give them an assurance that when his purposes were served he would without fail bring them out of those straits. Note, God sometimes raises difficulties in the way of the salvation of his people, that he may have the glory of subduing them, and helping his people over them.

2. What God designed in these strange orders. Moses would have yielded an implicit obedience, though God had given him no reason; but shall he hide from Moses the thing that he does? No, Moses shall know,

(1.) That Pharaoh has a design to ruin Israel, Ex 14:3.

(2.) That therefore God has a design to ruin Pharaoh, and he takes this way to effect it, Ex 14:4. Pharaoh's sagacity would conclude that Israel was entangled in the wilderness and so would become an easy prey to him; and, that he might be the more apt to think so, God orders them into yet greater entanglements; also, by turning them so much out of their road, he amazes him yet more, and gives him further occasion to suppose that they were in a state of embarrassment and danger. And thus (says God) I will be honoured upon Pharaoh. Note,

[1.] All men being made for the honour of their Maker, those whom he is not honoured by him will be honoured upon.

[2.] What seems to tend to the church's ruin is often overruled to the ruin of the church's enemies, whose pride and malice are fed by Providence, that they may be ripened for destruction.

3 For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They *are* entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the Lord. And they did so.

5 And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?

Pharaoh's pursuit of Israel, in which, while he gratifies his own malice and revenge, he is furthering the accomplishment of God's counsels concerning him. It was told him that the people fled, Ex 14:5. Such a fright was he in, when he gave them leave to go, that when the fright was a little over he either forgot, or would not own, that they departed with his consent, and therefore was willing that it should be represented to him as a revolt from their allegiance. Thus what may easily be justified is easily condemned, by putting false colours upon it. Now, hereupon,

He reflects upon it with regret that he had connived at their departure. He and his servants, though it was with the greatest reason in the world that they had let Israel go, yet were now angry with themselves for it: Why have we done thus? (1.) It vexed them that Israel had their liberty, that they had lost the profit of their labours, and the pleasure of chastising them. It is meat and drink to proud persecutors to trample upon the saints of the Most High, and say to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over; and therefore it vexes them to have their

hands tied. Note, The liberty of God's people is a heavy grievance to their enemies, Es 5:12,13,Ac 5:17,33.

It aggravated the vexation that they themselves had consented to it, thinking now that they might have hindered it, and that they needed not to have yielded, though they had stood it out to the last extremity. Thus God makes men's envy and rage against his people a torment to themselves, Ps 112:10. It was well done to let Israel go, and what they would have reflected on with comfort if they had done it from an honest principle; but doing it by constraint, they called themselves a thousand fools for doing it, and passionately wished it undone again. Note, It is very common, but very absurd and criminal, for people to repent of their good deeds; their justice and charity, and even their repentance, are repented of. See an instance somewhat like this, Jer 34:10,11.

6 And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him:
7 and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

He resolves, if possible, either to reduce them or to be revenged on them; in order to this, he levies an army, musters all his force of chariots and horsemen, Ex 14:17,18 (for, it should seem, he took no foot with him, because the king's business required haste), and thus he doubts not but he shall re-enslave them, Ex 14:6,7. It is easy to imagine what a rage Pharaoh was now in, roaring like a lion disappointed of his prey, how his proud heart aggravated the affront, swelled with indignation, scorned to be baffled, longed to be revenged: and now all the plagues are as if they had never been. He has quite forgotten the sorrowful funerals of his firstborn, and can think of nothing but making Israel feel his resentments; now he thinks he can be too hard for God himself; for, otherwise, could he have hoped to conquer a people so dear to him? God gave him up to these passions of his own heart, and so hardened it. It is said (Ex 14:8), The children of Israel went out with a high hand, that is, with a great deal of courage and bravery, triumphing in their release, and resolved to break

through the difficulties that lay in their way. But the Egyptians (Ex 14:9) pursued after them. Note, Those that in good earnest set their faces heaven-ward, and will live godly in Christ Jesus, must expect to be set upon by Satan's temptations and terrors. He will not tamely part with any out of his service, nor go out without raging, Mk 9:26.

8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with a high hand.

9 But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

10 And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.

11 And they said unto Moses, because *there were* no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?

The fright that the children of Israel were in when they perceived that Pharaoh pursued them, Ex 14:10. They knew very well the strength and rage of the enemy, and their own weakness; numerous indeed they were, but all on foot, unarmed, undisciplined, disquieted by long servitude, and (which was worst of all) now penned up by the situation of their camp, so that they could not make their escape. On the one hand was Pi-hahiroth, a range of craggy rocks impassable; on the other hand were Migdol and Baalzephon, which, some think were forts and garrisons upon the frontiers of Egypt; before them was the sea; behind them were the Egyptians: so that there was no way open for them but upwards, and thence their deliverance came.

Note, We may be in the way of our duty, following God and hastening towards heaven, and yet may be in great straits,

troubled on every side, 2Co 4:8. In this distress, no marvel that the children of Israel were sorely afraid; their father Jacob was so in a like case (Ge 32:7); when without are fightings, it cannot be otherwise but that within are fears: what therefore was the fruit of this fear? According as that was, the fear was good or evil.

1. Some of them cried out unto the Lord; their fear set them a praying, and that was a good effect of it. God brings us into straits that he may bring us to our knees.

2. Others of them cried out against Moses; their fear set them a murmuring, Ex 14:11,12. They give up themselves for lost; and as if God's arm were shortened all of a sudden, and he were not as able to work miracles to-day as he was yesterday, they despair of deliverance, and can count upon nothing but dying in the wilderness. How inexcusable was their distrust! Did they not see themselves under the guidance and protection of a pillar from heaven? And can almighty power fail them, or infinite goodness be false to them? Yet this was not the worst; they quarrel with Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and, in quarrelling with him, fly in the face of God himself, and provoke him to wrath whose favour was now the only succour they had to flee to. As the Egyptians were angry with themselves for the best deed they ever did, so the Israelites were angry with God for the greatest kindness that was ever done them; so gross are the absurdities of unbelief. They here express,

(1.) A sordid contempt of liberty, preferring servitude before it, only because it was attended with some difficulties. A generous spirit would have said, "If the worst come to the worst," as we say, "It is better to die in the field of honour than to live in the chains of slavery;" nay, under God's conduct, they could not miscarry, and therefore they might say, "Better

live God's freemen in the open air of a wilderness than the Egyptians' bondmen in the smoke of the brick-kilns." But because, for the present, they are a little embarrassed, they are angry that they were not left buried alive in their house of bondage.

(2.) Base ingratitude to Moses, who had been the faithful instrument of their deliverance. They condemn him, as if he had dealt hardly and unkindly with them, whereas it was evident, beyond dispute, that whatever he did, and however it issued, it was by direction from their God, and with design for their good. What they had said in a former ferment (when they hearkened not to Moses for anguish of spirit), they repeat and justify in this: We said in Egypt, Let us alone; and it was ill-said, yet more excusable, because then they had not had so much experience as they had now of God's wonderful appearances in their favour. But they had as soon forgotten the miracles of mercy as the Egyptians had forgotten the miracles of wrath; and they, as well as the Egyptians, hardened their hearts, at last, to their own ruin; as Egypt after ten plagues, so Israel after ten provocations, of which this was the first (Nu 14:22), were sentenced to die in the wilderness.

12 *Is* not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, let us
alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For *it had been* better for us
to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.
13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the
salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today: for the
Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no
more forever.

The seasonable encouragement that Moses gave them in this distress, Ex 14:13,14. He answered not these fools according to their folly. God bore with the provocation they gave to him, and did not (as he might justly have done) chose their delusions, and bring their fears upon them; and therefore Moses might well afford to pass by the affront they put upon him. Instead of chiding them, he comforts them, and with an

admirable presence and composure of mind, not disheartened either by the threatenings of Egypt or the tremblings of Israel, stills their murmuring, with the assurance of a speedy and complete deliverance: Fear you not.

Note, It is our duty and interest, when we cannot get out of our troubles, yet to get above our fears, so that they may only serve to quicken our prayers and endeavours, but may not prevail to silence our faith and hope.

1. He assures them that God would deliver them, that he would undertake their deliverance, and that he would effect it in the utter ruin of their pursuers: The Lord shall fight for you. This Moses was confident of himself, and would have them to be so, though as yet he knew not how or which way it would be brought to pass. God had assured him that Pharaoh and his host should be ruined, and he comforts them with the same comforts wherewith he had been comforted.

2. He directs them to leave it to God, in a silent expectation of the event: "Stand still, and think not to save yourselves either by fighting or flying; wait God's orders, and observe them; be not contriving what course to take, but follow your leader; wait God's appearances, and take notice of them, that you may see how foolish you are to distrust them. Compose yourselves, by an entire confidence in God, into a peaceful prospect of the great salvation God is now about to work for you. Hold your peace; you need not so much as give a shout against the enemy, as Jos 6:16. The work shall be done without any concurrence of yours." Note,

(1.) If God himself bring his people into straits, he will himself discover a way to bring them out again.

(2.) In times of great difficulty and great expectation, it is our wisdom to keep our spirits calm, quiet, and sedate; for then

we are in the best frame both to do our own work and to consider the work of God. Your strength is to sit still (Isa 30:7), for the Egyptians shall help in vain, and threaten to hurt in vain.

14 The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

15 And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:

What he must do himself. He must, for the present, leave off praying, and apply himself to his business (Ex 14:15): Wherefore cryest thou unto me? Moses, though he was assured of a good issue to the present distress, yet did not neglect prayer. We read not of one word he said in prayer, but he lifted up to God his heart, the language of which God well understood and took notice of. Moses's silent prayers of faith prevailed more with God than Israel's loud outcries of fear, Ex 14:10. Note,

(1.) Praying, if of the right kind, is crying to God, which denotes it to be the language both of a natural and of an importunate desire.

(2.) To quicken his diligence. Moses had something else to do besides praying; he was to command the hosts of Israel, and it was now requisite that he should be at his post. Everything is beautiful in its season.

What he must order Israel to do. Speak to them, that they go forward. Some think that Moses had prayed, not so much for their deliverance (he was assured of that) as for the pardon of heir murmurings, and that God's ordering them to go forward was an intimation of the pardon. There is no going forward with any comfort but in the sense of our reconciliation to God. Moses had bidden them stand still, and expect orders from God; and now orders are given. They thought they must have been directed either to the right hand or to the left. "No," says God, "speak to them to go forward, directly to the sea-side;"

as if there had lain a fleet of transport-ships ready for them to embark in. Note, When we are in the way of our duty, though we met with difficulties, we must go forward, and not stand in mute astonishment; we must mind present work and then leave the even to God, use means and trust him with the issue.

16 but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea.

17 And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honor upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

What he might expect God to do. Let the children of Israel go as far as they can upon dry ground, and then God will divide the sea, and open a passage for them through it, Ex 14:16-18. God designs, not only to deliver the Israelites, but to destroy the Egyptians; and the plan of his counsels is accordingly.

(1.) He will show favour to Israel; the waters shall be divided for them to pass through, Ex 14:16. The same power could have congealed the waters for them to pass over; but Infinite Wisdom chose rather to divide the waters for them to pass through; for that way of salvation is always pitched upon which is most humbling. Thus it is said, with reference to this (Isa 63:13,14), He led them through the deep, as a beast goes down into the valley, and thus made himself a glorious name.

(2.) He will get him honour upon Pharaoh. If the due rent of honour be not paid to the great landlord, by and from whom we have and hold our beings and comforts, he will distrain for it, and recover it. God will be a loser by no man. In order to this, it is threatened: I, behold I, will harden Pharaoh's heart, Ex 14:17. The manner of expression is observable: I, behold I, will do it. "I, that may do it;" so it is the language of his sovereignty. We may not contribute to the hardening of any man's heart, nor withhold anything that we can do towards the

softening of it; but God's grace is his own, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth. "I, that can do it;" so it is the language of his power; none but the Almighty can make the heart soft (Job 23:16), nor can any other being make it hard. "I, that will do it;" for it is the language of his justice; it is a righteous thing with God to put those under the impressions of his wrath who have long resisted the influences of his grace. It is spoken in a way of triumph over this obstinate and presumptuous rebel: "I even I, will take an effectual course to humble him; he shall break that would not bend." It is an expression like that (Isa 1:24), Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries

18 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

19 And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:

A guard set upon Israel's camp where it now lay most exposed, which was in the rear, Ex 14:19,20. The angel of God, whose ministry was made use of in the pillar of cloud and fire, went from before the camp of Israel, where they did not now need a guide (there was no danger of missing their way through the sea, nor needed they any other word of command than to go forward), and it came behind them, where now they needed a guard (the Egyptians being just ready to seize the hindmost of them), and so was a wall of partition between them. There it was of use to the Israelites, not only to protect them, but to light them through the sea, and, at the same time, it confounded the Egyptians, so that they lost sight of their prey just when they were ready to lay hands on it. The word and providence of God have a black and dark side towards sin and sinners, but a bright and pleasant side towards those that are Israelites indeed. That which is a savour of life unto life to some is a savour of death unto death to others. This was not the first time that he who in the beginning divided between light and darkness (Ge 1:4),

and still forms both (Isa 45:7), had, at the same time, allotted darkness to the Egyptians and light to the Israelites, a specimen of the endless distinction which will be made between the inheritance of the saints in light and that utter darkness which forever will be the portion of hypocrites. God will separate between the precious and the vile.

20 and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them,* but it gave light by night *to these:* so that the one came not near the other all the night.

21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry *land,* and the waters were divided.

We have here the history of that work of wonder which is so often mentioned both in the Old and New Testament, the dividing of the Red Sea before the children of Israel. It was the terror of the Canaanites (Jos 2:9,10), the praise and triumph of the Israelites, Ps 114:3,Ps 106:9,136:13,14. It was a type of baptism, 1Co 10:1,2. Israel's passage through it was typical of the conversion of souls (Isa 11:15), and the Egyptians' perdition in it was typical of the final ruin of all impenitent sinners, Re 20:14. Here we have,

An instance of God's almighty power in the kingdom of nature, in dividing the sea, and opening a passage through the waters. It was a bay, or gulf, or arm of the sea, two or three leagues over, which was divided, Ex 14:21. The instituted sign made use of was Moses's stretching out his hand over it, to signify that it was done in answer to his prayer, for the confirmation of his mission, and in favour to the people whom he led. The natural sign was a strong east wind, signifying that it was done by the power of God, whom the winds and the seas obey. If there be any passage in the book of Job which has reference to the miracles wrought for Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, it is that in Job 26:12, He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smileth through Rahab (so the word is), that is, Egypt.

Note, God can bring his people through the greatest difficulties, and force a way where he does not find it. The God of nature has not tied himself to its laws, but, when he pleases, dispenses with them, and then the fire does not burn, nor the water flow.

22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry *ground:* and the waters *were* a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

An instance of his wonderful favour to his Israel. They went through the sea to the opposite shore, for I cannot suppose, with some, that they fetched a compass, and came out again on the same side, Ex 14:22. They walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea, Ex 14:29. And the pillar of cloud, that glory of the Lord, being their rearward (Isa 58:8), that the Egyptians might not charge them in the flank, the waters were a wall to them (it is twice mentioned) on their right hand and on their left. Moses and Aaron, it is probable, ventured first into this untrodden path, and then all Israel after them; and this march through the paths of the great waters would make their march afterwards, through the wilderness, less formidable. Those who had followed God through the sea needed not to fear following him whithersoever he led them. This march through the sea was in the night, and not a moon-shiny night, for it was seven days after the full moon, so that they had no light but what they had from the pillar of cloud and fire. This made it the more awful; but where God leads us he will light us; while we follow his conduct, we shall not want his comforts.

This was done, and recorded, in order to encourage God's people in all ages to trust in him in the greatest straits. What cannot he do who did this? What will not he do for those hat fear and love him who did this for these murmuring unbelieving Israel is, who yet were beloved for their fathers' sake, and for the sake of a remnant among them? We find the saints, long afterwards, making themselves sharers in the triumphs of this march (Ps 66:6): They went through the flood

on foot; there did we rejoice in him: and see how this work of wonder is improved, Ps 77:11,16,19.

23 And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, *even* all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

An instance of his just and righteous wrath upon his and his people's enemies, the Egyptians. Observe here,

How they were infatuated. In the heat of their pursuit, they went after the Israelites into the midst of the sea, Ex 14:23. "Why," thought they, "may not we venture where Israel did?" Once or twice the magicians of Egypt had done what Moses did, with their enchantments; Pharaoh remembered this, but forgot how they were nonplussed at last. They were more advantageously provided with chariots and horses, while the Israelites were on foot. Pharaoh had said, I know not the Lord; and by this it appeared he did not, else he would not have ventured thus.

None so bold as those that are blind. Rage against Israel made them thus daring and inconsiderate: they had long hardened their own hearts; and now God hardened them to their ruin, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged to their peace and safety. Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird (Pr 1:17); yet so blind where the Egyptians that they hastened to the snare, Pr 7:23. Note, The ruin of sinners is brought on by their own presumption, which hurries them headlong into the pit. They are self-destroyers.

24 And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians,

25 and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

How they were troubled and perplexed, Ex 14:24,25. For some hours they marched through the divided waters as safely and triumphantly as Israel did, not doubting but, that, in a little

time, they should gain their point. But, in the morning watch, the Lord looked upon the host of the Egyptians, and troubled them. Something or other they saw or heard from the pillar of cloud and fire which put them into great consternation, and gave them an apprehension of their ruin before it was brought upon them. Now it appeared that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and that God has ways to frighten sinners into despair, before he plunges them into destruction. He cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth.

(1.) They had hectored and boasted as if the day were their own; but now they were troubled and dismayed, struck with a panic-fear.

(2.) They had driven furiously; but now they drove heavily, and found themselves plugged and embarrassed at every step; the way grew deep, their hearts grew sad, their wheels dropped off, and the axle-trees failed. Thus can God check the violence of those that are in pursuit of his people.

(3.) They had been flying upon the back of Israel, as the hawk upon the trembling dove; but now they cried, Let us flee from the face of Israel, which had become to them like a torch of fire in a sheaf, Zec 12:6. Israel has now, all of a sudden, become as much a terror to them as they had been to Israel. They might have let Israel alone and would not; now they would flee from the face of Israel and cannot. Men will not be convinced, till it is too late, that those who meddle with God's people meddle to their own hurt; when the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment, the mighty men will in vain seek to shelter themselves under rocks and mountains from the face of Israel and Israel's King, Re 6:15. Compare with this story, Job 27:20, &c.

26 And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

27 And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

28 And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, *and* all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

How they were all drowned. As soon as ever the children of Israel had got safely to the shore, Moses was ordered to stretch out his hand over the sea, and thereby give a signal to the waters to close again, as before, upon his word of command, they had opened to the right and the left, Ex 14:29. He did so, and immediately the waters returned to their place, and overwhelmed all the host of the Egyptians, Ex 14:27,28. Pharaoh and his servants, who had hardened one another in sin, now fell together, and not one escaped. An ancient tradition says that Pharaoh's magicians, Jannes and Jambres, perished with the rest, as Balaam with the Midianites whom he had seduced, Nu 31:8. And now,

(1.) God avenged upon the Egyptians the blood of the firstborn whom they had drowned: and the principal is repaid with interest, it is recompensed double, full-grown Egyptians for newborn Israelites; thus the Lord is righteous, and precious is his people's blood in his sight, Ps 72:14.

(2.) God reckoned with Pharaoh for all his proud and insolent conduct towards Moses his ambassador. Mocking the messengers of the Lord, and playing the fool with them, bring ruin without remedy. Now God got him honour upon Pharaoh, looking upon that proud man, and abasing him, Job 40:12. Come and see the desolations he made, and write it, not in water, but with an iron pen in the rock forever. Here lies that bloody tyrant who bade defiance to his Maker, to his demands, threatenings, and judgments; a rebel to God, and a slave to his own barbarous passions; perfectly lost to humanity, virtue, and all true honour; here he lies, buried in

the deep, a perpetual monument of divine justice. Here he went down to the pit, though he was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, Eze 31:18.

29 But the children of Israel walked upon dry *land* in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore.

They saw the Egyptians dead upon the sands, Ex 14:30. Providence so ordered it that the next tide threw up the dead bodies,

(1.) For the greater disgrace of the Egyptians. Now the beasts and birds of prey were called to eat the flesh of the captains and mighty men, Re 19:17,18. The Egyptians were very nice and curious in embalming and preserving the bodies of their great men, but here the utmost contempt is poured upon all the grandees of Egypt; see how they lie, heaps upon heaps, as dung upon the face of the earth.

(2.) For the greater triumph of the Israelites, and to affect them the more with their deliverance; for the eye affects the heart. See Isa 66:24, They shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me. Probably they stripped the slain and, having borrowed jewels of their neighbours before, which (the Egyptians having by this hostile pursuit of them broken their faith with them) henceforward they were not under any obligation to restore, they now got arms from them, which, some think, they were not before provided with. Thus, when God broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, he gave him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness, Ps 74:14.

31 And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.

The sight of this great work greatly affected them, and now they feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses, Ex 14:31. Now they were ashamed of their distrusts and murmurings, and, in the good mind they were in, they would never again despair of help from Heaven, no, not in the greatest straits; they would never again quarrel with Moses, nor talk of returning to Egypt. They were now baptized unto Moses in the sea, 1Co 10:2. This great work which God wrought for them by the ministry of Moses bound them effectually to follow his directions, under God. This confirmed their faith in the promises that were yet to be fulfilled; and, being brought thus triumphantly out of Egypt, they did not doubt that they should be in Canaan shortly, having such a God to trust to, and such a mediator between them and him. O that there had been such a heart in them as now there seemed to be! Sensible mercies, when they are fresh, make sensible impressions; but with many these impressions soon wear off: while they see God's works, and feel the benefit of them, they fear him and trust in him; but they soon forget his works, and then they slight him. How well were it for us if we were always in as good a frame as we are in sometimes!

Exodus-15

The Song of Moses

Having read how that complete victory of Israel over the Egyptians was obtained, here we are told how it was celebrated; those that were to hold their peace while the deliverance was in working (Ex 14:14) must not hold their peace now that it was wrought; the less they had to do then the more they had to do now. If God accomplishes deliverance by his own immediate power, it redounds so much the more to his glory. Moses, no doubt by divine inspiration, indited this song, and delivered it to the children of Israel, to be sung

before they stirred from the place where they saw the Egyptians dead upon the shore. Observe,

1. They expressed their joy in God, and thankfulness to him, by singing; it is almost natural to us thus to give vent to our joy and the exultations of our spirit. By this instance it appears that the singing of psalms, as an act of religious worship, was used in the church of Christ before the giving of the ceremonial law, and therefore was no part of it, nor abolished with it. Singing is as much the language of holy joy as praying is of holy desire.

2. Moses, who had gone before them through the sea, goes before them in the song, and composes it for them. Note, Those that are active in public services should not be neuters in public praises.

3. When the mercy was fresh, and they were much affected with it, then they sang this song. Note, When we have received special mercy from God, we ought to be quick and speedy in our returns of praise to him, before time and the deceitfulness of our own hearts efface the good impressions that have been made. David sang his triumphant song in the day that the Lord delivered him, 2Sa 22:1. Bis dat qui cito dat--He gives twice who gives quickly.

4. When they believed the Lord (Ex 14:31) then they sang this song: it was a song of faith; this connection is observed (Ps 106:12): Then believed they his words, they sang his praise. If with the heart man believes, thus confession must be made.

1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying,

1. We may observe respecting this song, that it is,

(1.) An ancient song, the most ancient that we know of.

(2.) A most admirable composition, the style lofty and magnificent, the images lively and proper, and the whole very moving.

(3.) It is a holy song, consecrated to the honour of God, and intended to exalt his name and celebrate his praise, and his only, not in the least to magnify any man: holiness to the Lord is engraven in it, and to him they made melody in the singing of it.

(4.) It is a typical song. The triumphs of the gospel church, in the downfall of its enemies, are expressed in the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb put together, which are said to be sung upon a sea of glass, as this was upon the Red Sea, Re 15:2,3.

2. Let us observe what Moses chiefly aims at in this song.

He gives glory to God, and triumphs in him; this is first in his intention (Ex 15:1): I will sing unto the Lord. Note, All our joy must terminate in God, and all our praises be offered up to him, the Father of lights and Father of mercies, for he hath triumphed. Note, All that love God triumph in his triumphs; what is his honour should be our joy. Israel rejoiced in God,

[1.] As their own God, and therefore their strength, song, and salvation, Ex 15:2. Happy therefore the people whose God is the Lord; they need no more to make them happy. They have work to do, temptations to grapple with, and afflictions to bear, and are weak in themselves; but he strengthens them: his grace is their strength. They are often in sorrow, upon many accounts, but in him they have comfort, he is their song; sin, and death, and hell, threaten them, but he is, and will be, their salvation: See Isa 12:2.

[2.] As their fathers' God. This they take notice of, because, being conscious to themselves of their own unworthiness and provocations, they had reason to think that what God had now done for them was for their fathers' sake, De 4:37. Note, The children of the covenant ought to improve their fathers' relation to God as their God for comfort, for caution, and for quickening.

[3.] As a God of infinite power (Ex 15:3): The Lord is a man of war, that is, well able to deal with all those that strive with their Maker, and will certainly be too hard for them.

[4.] As a God of matchless and incomparable perfection, Ex 15:11. This is expressed, First, More generally: Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! This is pure praise, and a high expression of humble adoration.--It is a challenge to all other gods to compare with him: "Let them stand forth, and pretend their utmost; none of them dare make the comparison." Egypt was notorious for the multitude of its gods, but the God of the Hebrews was too hard for them and baffled them all, Nu 38:4,De 32:23-39. The princes and potentates of the world are called gods, but they are feeble and mortal, none of them all comparable to Jehovah, the almighty and eternal God.--It is confession of his infinite perfection, as transcendent and unparalleled.

Note, God is to be worshipped and adored as a being of such infinite perfection that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, as one that in all things has and must have the pre-eminence, Ps 89:6. Secondly, More particularly,

1. He is glorious in holiness; his holiness is his glory. It is that attribute which angels adore, Isa 6:3. His holiness appeared in the destruction of Pharaoh, his hatred of sin, and his wrath against obstinate sinners. It appeared in the deliverance of

Israel, his delight in the holy seed, and his faithfulness to his own promise. God is rich in mercy--this is his treasure, glorious in holiness--this is his honour. Let us always give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

2. He is fearful in praises. That which is the matter of our praise, though it is joyful to the servants of God, is dreadful and very terrible to his enemies, Ps 66:1-3. Or it directs us in the manner of our praising God; we should praise him with a humble holy awe, and serve the Lord with fear. Even our spiritual joy and triumph must be balanced with a religious fear.

3. He is doing wonders, wondrous to all, being above the power and out of the common course of nature; especially wondrous to us, in whose favour they are wrought, who are so unworthy that we had little reason to expect them. They were wonders of power and wonders of grace; in both God was to be humbly adored.

I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
2 The Lord *is* my strength and song, and
he is become my salvation:
he *is* my God, and I will prepare him a habitation;
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
3 The Lord *is* a man of war:
the Lord *is* his name.
4 Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea:
his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.
5 The depths have covered them:
they sank into the bottom as a stone.
6 Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power:
thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
7 And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown
them that rose up against thee:
thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

8 And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together,
the floods stood upright as a heap,
and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

He describes the deliverance they were now triumphing in, because the song was intended, not only to express and excite their thankfulness for the present, but to preserve and perpetuate the remembrance of this work of wonder to after-ages. Two things were to be taken notice of:--

The destruction of the enemy; the waters were divided, Ex 15:8. The floods stood upright as a heap. Pharaoh and all his hosts were buried in the waters. The horse and his rider could not escape (Ex 15:1), the chariots, and the chosen captains (Ex 15:4); they themselves went into the sea, and they were overwhelmed, Ex 15:19. The depths, the sea, covered them, and the proud waters went over the proud sinners; they sank like a stone, like lead (Ex 15:5,10), under the weight of their own guilt and God's wrath. Their sin had made them hard like a stone, and now they justly sink like a stone. Nay, the earth itself swallowed them (Ex 15:12); their dead bodies sank into the sands upon which they were thrown up, which sucked them in. Those whom the Creator fights against the whole creation is at war with. All this was the Lord's doing, and his only. It was an act of his power: Thy right hand, O Lord, not ours, has dashed in pieces the enemy, Ex 15:6. It was with the blast of thy nostrils (Ex 15:8), and thy wind (Ex 15:10), and the stretching out of thy right hand, Ex 15:12. It was an instance of his transcendent power--in the greatness of thy excellency; and it was the execution of his justice: Thou sentest forth thy wrath, Ex 15:7. This destruction of the Egyptians was made the more remarkable by their pride and insolence, and their strange assurance of success: The enemy said, I will pursue, Ex 15:9. Here is,

First, Great confidence. When they pursue, they do not question but they shall overtake; and, when they overtake,

they do not question but they shall overcome, and obtain so decisive a victory as to divide the spoil. Note, It is common for men to be most elevated with the hope of success when they are upon the brink of ruin, which makes their ruin so much the sorer. See Isa 37:24,25.

Secondly, Great cruelty--nothing but killing, and slaying, and destroying, and this will satisfy his lust; and a barbarous lust that is which so much blood must be the satisfaction of. Note, It is a cruel hatred with which the church is hated; its enemies are bloody men. This is taken notice of here to show,

1. That God resists the proud, and delights to humble those who lift up themselves; he that says, "I will, and I will, whether God will or no," shall be made to know that wherein he deals proudly God is above him.

2. That those who thirst for blood shall have enough of it. Those who love to be destroying shall be destroyed; for we know who has said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay.

9 The enemy said,
I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;
my lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
10 Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them:
they sank as lead in the mighty waters.
11 Who *is* like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who *is* like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful *in* praises, doing wonders?
12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand,
the earth swallowed them.
13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people *which* thou hast redeemed:
thou hast guided *them* in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.
14 The people shall hear, *and* be afraid:

sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.

The protection and guidance of Israel (Ex 15:13): Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people, led them forth out of the bondage Egypt, led them forth out of the perils of the Red Sea, Ex 15:19. But the children of Israel went on dry land. Note, The destruction of the wicked serves for a foil to set off the salvation of Israel, and to make it the more illustrious, Isa 45:13-15.

He sets himself to improve this wonderful appearance of God for them.

[1.] In order to quicken them to serve God: in consideration of this, I will prepare him habitation, Ex 15:2. God having preserved them, and prepared a covert for them under which they had been safe and easy, they resolve to spare no cost nor pains for the erecting of a tabernacle to his honour, and there they will exalt him, and mention, to his praise, the honour he had got upon Pharaoh. God had now exalted them, making them great and high, and therefore they will exalt him, by speaking of his infinite height and grandeur. Note, Our constant endeavour should be, by praising his name and serving his interests, to exalt God; and it is an advancement to us to be so employed.

[2.] In order to encourage them to trust in God. So confident is this Psalmist of the happy issue of the salvation which was so gloriously begun that he looks upon it as in effect finished already: "Thou hast guided them to thy holy habitation, Ex 15:13. Thou hast thus put them into the way to it, and wilt in due time bring them to the end of that way," for God's work is perfect; or, "Thou hast guided them to attend thy holy habitation in heaven with their praises." Note, Those whom God takes under his direction he will guide to his holy habitation in faith now, and in fruition shortly. Two ways this great deliverance was encouraging:--

First, It was such an instance of God's power as would terrify their enemies, and quite dishearten them, Ex 15:14-16. The very report of the overthrow of the Egyptians would be more than half the over throw of all their other enemies; it would sink their spirits, which would go far towards the sinking of their powers and interests; he Philistines, Moabites, Edomites, and Canaanites (with each of which nations Israel was to grapple), would be alarmed by it, would be quite dispirited, and would conclude it was in vain to fight against Israel, when a God of such power fought for them. It had this effect; the Edomites were afraid of them (De 2:4), so were the Moabites (Nu 22:3), and the Canaanites, Jos 2:9,10,5:1. Thus God sent his fear before them (Ex 23:27), and cut off the spirit of princes.

Secondly, It was such a beginning of God's favour to them as gave them an earnest of the perfection of his kindness. This was but in order to something further: Thou shalt bring them in, Ex 15:17. If he thus bring them out of Egypt, notwithstanding their unworthiness, and the difficulties that lay in the way of their escape, doubtless he will bring them into Canaan; for has he begun (so begun), and will he not make an end? Note, Our experiences of God's power and favour should be improved for the support of our expectations. "Thou hast, therefore, not only thou canst, but we trust thou wilt," is good arguing. Thou wilt plant them in the place which thou has made for thee to dwell in.

Note, It is good dwelling where God dwells, in his church on earth (Ps 27:4), in his church in heaven, Joh 17:24. Where he says, "This is my rest forever," we should say, "Let it be ours."

Lastly, The great ground of the encouragement which they draw from this work of wonder is, The Lord shall reign for ever and ever, Ex 15:18. They had now seen an end of

Pharaoh's reign; but time itself shall not put a period to Jehovah's reign, which, like himself, is eternal, and not subject to change.

Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all God's faithful subjects, not only that he does reign universally and with an incontestable sovereignty, but that he will reign eternally, and there shall be no end of his dominion.

15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed;
the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them;
all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.
16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them;
by the greatness of thine arm they shall be *as* still as a stone;
till thy people pass over, O Lord,
till the people pass over, *which* thou hast purchased.
17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance,
in the place, O Lord, *which* thou hast made for thee to dwell in;
in the sanctuary, O Lord, *which* thy hands have established.
18 The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.
19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea.
20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

Miriam (or Mary, it is the same name) presided in an assembly of the women, who (according to the softness of their sex, and the common usage of those times for expressing joy, with timbrels and dances) sang this song. Moses led the psalm, and gave it out for the men, and then Miriam for the women. Famous victories were wont to be applauded by the daughters of Israel (1Sa 18:6,7); so was this. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, it is said (Mic 6:4), He sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, though we read not of

anything memorable that Miriam did but this. But those are to be reckoned great blessings to a people who assist them, and go before them, in praising God.

21 And Miriam answered them,
Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The Bitter Water at Marah

22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

It should seem, it was with some difficulty that Moses prevailed with Israel to leave that triumphant shore on which they sang the foregoing song. They were so taken up with the sight, or with the song, or with the spoiling of the dead bodies, that they cared not to go forward, but Moses with much ado brought them from the Red Sea into a wilderness. The pleasures of our way to Canaan must not retard our progress, but quicken it, though we have a wilderness before us. Now here we are told,

That in the wilderness of Shur they had no water, Ex 15:22. This was a sore trial to the young travellers, and a diminution to their joy; thus God would train them up to difficulties. David, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, reaches forth towards God, Ps 63:1.

23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah [bitterness].

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

25 And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

That at Marah they had water, but it was bitter, so that though they had been three days without water they could not drink it, because it was extremely unpleasant to the taste or was likely to be prejudicial to their health, or was so brackish that it rather increased their thirst than quenched it, Ex 15:23.

Note, God can embitter that to us from which we promise ourselves most satisfaction, and often does so in the wilderness of this world, that our wants and disappointments in the creature may drive us to the Creator, in whose favour alone true comfort is to be had. Now in this distress, 1 The people fretted and quarrelled with Moses, as if he had done ill by them. What shall we drink? Is all their clamour, Ex 15:24. Note, The greatest joys and hopes are soon turned into the greatest griefs and fears with those that live by sense only, and not by faith.

2. Moses prayed: He cried unto the Lord, Ex 15:25. The complaints which they brought to him he brought to God, on whom, notwithstanding his elevation, Moses owned a constant dependence. Note, It is the greatest relief of the cares of magistrates and ministers, when those under their charge make them uneasy, that they may have recourse to God by prayer: he is the guide of the church's guides and to him, as the Chief Shepherd, the under-shepherds must upon all occasions apply.

3. God provided graciously for them. He directed Moses to a tree, which he cast into the waters, in consequence of which, all of a sudden, they were made sweet. Some think this wood had a peculiar virtue in it for this purpose, because it is said,

God showed him the tree. God is to be acknowledged, not only in the creating of things useful for man, but in discovering their usefulness. Or perhaps this was only a sign, and not at all a means, of the cure, any more than the brazen serpent, or Elisha's casting one cruse full of salt into the waters of Jericho. Some make this tree typical of the cross of Christ, which sweetens the bitter waters of affliction to all the faithful, and enables them to rejoice in tribulation. The Jews' tradition is that the wood of this tree was itself bitter, yet it sweetened the waters of Marah; the bitterness of Christ's sufferings and death alters the property of ours.

4. Upon this occasion, God came upon terms with them, and plainly told them, now that they had got clear of the Egyptians, and had entered into the wilderness, that they were upon their good behaviour, and that according as they carried themselves so it would be well or ill with them: There he made a statute and an ordinance, and settled matters with them. There he proved them, that is, there he put them upon the trial, admitted them as probationers for his favour. In short, he tells them, Ex 15:26,

(1.) What he expected from them, and that was, in one word, obedience. They must diligently hearken to his voice, and give ear to his commandments, that they might know their duty, and not transgress through ignorance; and they must take care in everything to do that which was right in God's sight, and to keep all his statutes. They must not think, now that they were delivered from their bondage in Egypt, that they had no lord over them, but were their own masters; no, therefore they must look upon themselves as God's servants, because he had loosed their bonds, Ps 116:16,Lu 1:74,75.

(2.) What they might then expect from him: I will put none of these diseases upon thee, that is, "I will not bring upon thee any of the plagues of Egypt." This intimates that, if they were rebellious and disobedient, the very plagues which they had seen inflicted upon their enemies should be brought upon them; so it is threatened, De 28:60. God's judgments upon Egypt, as they were mercies to Israel, opening the way to their deliverance, so they were warnings to Israel, and designed to awe them into obedience. Let not the Israelites think, because God had thus highly honoured them in the great things he had done for them, and had proclaimed them to all the world his favourites, that therefore he would connive at their sins and let them do as they would. No, God is no respecter of persons; a rebellious Israelite shall fare no better than a rebellious Egyptian; and so they found, to their cost, before the got to Canaan. "But, if thou wilt be obedient, thou shalt be safe and happy;" the threatening is implied only, but the promise is expressed: "I am the Lord that healeth thee, and will take care of thy comfort wherever thou goest."

Note, God is the great physician. If we be kept well, it is he that keeps us; if we be made well, it is he that restores us; he is our life, and the length of our days.

26 and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I *am* the Lord that healeth thee.

27 And they came to Elim, where *were* twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

That at Elim they had good water, and enough of it, Ex 15:27. Though God may, for a time, order his people to encamp by the waters of Marah, yet that shall not always be their lot. See how changeable our condition is in this world, from better to worse, from worse to better. Let us therefore learn both how to be abased and how to abound, to rejoice as though we

rejoiced not when we are full, and to weep as though we wept not when we are emptied. Here were twelve wells for their supply, one for every tribe, that they might not strive for water, as their fathers had sometimes done; and, for their pleasure, there were seventy palm-trees, under the shadow of which their great men might repose themselves.

Note, God can find places of refreshment for his people even in the wilderness of this world, wells in the valley of Baca, lest they should faint in their mind with perpetual fatigue: yet, whatever our delights may be in the land of our pilgrimage, we must remember that we do but encamp by them for a time, that here we have no continuing city.

Exodus-16

God Gives Manna

1 And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which *is* between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

Their discontent and murmuring upon that occasion, Ex 16:2,3. The whole congregation, the greatest part of them, joined in this mutiny; it was not immediately against God that they murmured, but (which was equivalent) against Moses and Aaron, God's vicegerents among them.

1. They count upon being killed in the wilderness--nothing less, at the first appearance of disaster. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he could easily have done that in the Red Sea; but then he preserved them, and now could as easily provide for them. It argues great distrust of God, and of his power and goodness, in every distress and appearance of

danger to despair of life, and to talk of nothing but being speedily killed.

2. They invidiously charge Moses with a design to starve them when he brought them out of Egypt; whereas what he had done was both by order from God and with a design to promote their welfare. Note, It is no new thing for the greatest kindnesses to be misinterpreted and basely represented as the greatest injuries. The worst colours are sometimes put upon the best actions. Nay,

3. They so far undervalue their deliverance that they wish they had died in Egypt, nay, and died by the hand of the Lord too, that is, by some of the plagues which cut off the Egyptians, as if it were not the hand of the Lord, but of Moses only, that brought them into this hungry wilderness. It is common for people to say of that pain, or sickness, or sore, of which they see not the second causes, "It is what pleases God," as if that were not so likewise which comes by the hand of man, or some visible accident. Prodigious madness! They would rather die by the fleshpots of Egypt, where they found themselves with provision, than live under the guidance of the heavenly pillar in a wilderness and be provided for by the hand of God! They pronounce it better to have fallen in the destruction of God's enemies than to bear the fatherly discipline of his children! We cannot suppose that they had any great plenty in Egypt, how largely soever they now talk of the flesh-pots; nor could they fear dying for want in the wilderness, while they had their flocks and herds with them.

But discontent magnifies what is past, and vilifies what is present, without regard to truth or reason. None talk more absurdly than murmurers. Their impatience, ingratitude, and distrust of God, were so much the worse in that they had lately received such miraculous favours, and convincing proofs both that God could help them in the greatest exigencies and that really he had mercy in store for them. See how soon they

forgot his works, and provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea, Ps 106:7-13. Note, Experiences of God's mercies greatly aggravate our distrusts and murmurings.

2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:

3 and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, *and* when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

4 Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

5 And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare *that* which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:

7 and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what *are* we, that ye murmur against us?

8 And Moses said, *This shall be,* when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what *are* we? Your murmurings *are* not against us, but against the Lord.

How Moses made known these intentions to Israel, as God ordered him. Here Aaron was his prophet, as he had been to Pharaoh. Moses directed Aaron what to speak to the congregation of Israel (Ex 16:9); and some think that, while Aaron was giving a public summons to the congregation to come near before the Lord, Moses retired to pray, and that the appearance of the glory of the Lord (Ex 16:10) was in answer to his prayer. They are called to come near, as Isa 1:18, Come, and let us reason together.

Note, God condescends to give even murmurers a fair hearing; and shall we then despise the cause of our inferiors when they contend with us? Job 31:13.

(1.) He convinces them of the evil of their murmurings. They thought they reflected only upon Moses and Aaron, but here they are told that God was struck at through their sides. This is much insisted on (Ex 16:7,8): "Your murmurings are not against us, then we would have been silent, but against the Lord; it was he that led you into these straits, and not we."

Note, When we murmur against those who are instruments of any uneasiness to us, whether justly or unjustly, we should do well to consider how much we reflect upon God by it; men are but God's hand. Those that quarrel with the reproofs and convictions of the word, and are angry with their ministers when they are touched in a tender part, know not what they do, for therein they strive with their Maker. Let this for ever stop the mouth of murmuring, that it is daring impiety to murmur at God, because he is God; and gross absurdity to murmur at men, because they are but men.

(2.) He assures them of the supply of their wants, that since they had harped upon the flesh-pots so much they should for once have flesh in abundance that evening, and bread the next morning, and so on every day thenceforward, Ex 16:8,12. Many there are of whom we say that they are better fed than taught; but the Israelites were thus fed, that they might be taught. He led him about, he instructed him (De 32:10); and, as to this instance, see De 8:3, He fed thee with manna, that

thou mightest know that man doth not live by bread only. And, besides this, here are two things mentioned, which he intended to teach them by sending them manna:--

[1.] By this you shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt, Ex 16:6. That they were brought out of Egypt was plain enough; but so strangely sottish and short-sighted were they that they said it was Moses that brought them out, Ex 16:3. Now God sent them manna, to prove that it was no less than infinite power and goodness that brought them out, and this could perfect what was begun. If Moses only had brought them out of Egypt, he could not thus have fed them; they must therefore own that that was the Lord's doing, because this was so, and both were marvellous in their eyes; yet, long afterwards, they needed to be told that Moses gave them not this bread from heaven, Joh 6:32.

[2.] By this you shall know that I am the Lord your God, Ex 16:12. This gave proof of his power as the Lord, and his particular favour to them as their God. When God plagued the Egyptians, it was to make them know that he was the Lord; when he provided for the Israelites, it was to make them know that he was their God.

9 And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the Lord: for he hath heard your murmurings.

10 And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

How God himself manifested his glory, to still the murmurings of the people, and to put a reputation upon Moses and Aaron, Ex 16:10. While Aaron was speaking, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. The cloud itself, one would think, was enough both to strike an awe upon them and to give

encouragement to them; yet, in a few days, it had grown so familiar to them that it made no impression upon them, unless it shone with an unusual brightness. Note, What God's ministers say to us is then likely to do us good when the glory of God shines in with it upon our souls.

11 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, at even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord your God.

The care God graciously took for their supply. Justly he might have said, "I will rain fire and brimstone upon these murmurers, and consume them;" but, quite contrary, he promises to rain bread upon them. Observe,

1. How God makes known to Moses his kind intentions, that he might not be uneasy at their murmurings, nor be tempted to wish he had let them alone in Egypt.

(1.) He takes notice of the people's complaints: I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, Ex 16:12. As a God of pity, he took cognizance of their necessity, which was the occasion of their murmuring; as a just and holy God, he took cognizance of their base and unworthy reflections upon his servant Moses, and was much displeased with them.

Note, When we begin to fret and be uneasy, we ought to consider that God hears all our murmurings, though silent, and only the murmurings of the heart. Princes, parents, masters, do not hear all the murmurs of their inferiors against them, and it is well they do not, for perhaps they could not bear it; but God hears, and yet bears. We must not think, because God does not immediately take vengeance on men for their sins, that therefore he does not take notice of them; no, he hears the murmurings of Israel, and is grieved with this generation, and yet continues his care of them, as the tender parent of the froward child.

(2.) He promises them a speedy, sufficient, and constant supply, Ex 16:4. Man being made out of the earth, his Maker has wisely ordered him food out of the earth, Ps 104:14. But the people of Israel, typifying the church of the first-born that are written in heaven, and born from above, and being themselves immediately under the direction and government of heaven, receiving their charters, laws, and commissions, from heaven, from heaven also received their food: their law being given by the disposition of angels, they did also eat angels' food. See what God designed in making this provision for them: That I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no.

[1.] Thus he tried whether they would trust him, and walk in the law of faith or no, whether they could live from hand to mouth, and (though now uneasy because their provisions were spent) could rest satisfied with the bread of the day in its day, and depend upon God for fresh supplies to-morrow.

[2.] Thus he tried whether they would serve him, and be always faithful to so good a Master, that provided so well for his servants; and hereby he made it appear to all the world, in the issue, what an ungrateful people they were, whom nothing could affect with a sense of obligation. Let favour be shown to them, yet will they not learn righteousness, Isa 26:10.

13 And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

He makes them a feast, at night, of delicate fowl, feathered fowl (Ps 78:27), therefore not locusts, as some think; quails, or pheasants, or some wild fowl, came up, and covered the camp, so tame that they might take up as many of them as they pleased.

Note, God gives us of the good things of this life, not only for necessity, but for delight, that we may not only serve him, but serve him cheerfully.

14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness *there lay* a small round thing, *as* small as the hoar frost on the ground.

Next morning he rained manna upon them, which was to be continued to them for their daily bread. That which was provided for them was manna, which descended from the clouds, so that, in some sense, they might be said to live upon the air. It came down in dew that melted, and yet was itself of such a consistency as to serve for nourishing strengthening food, without anything else. They called it manna, manhu, "What is this?" Either, "What a poor thing this is!" despising it: or, "What a strange thing this is!" admiring it: or, "It is a portion, no matter what it is; it is that which our God has allotted us, and we will take it and be thankful," Ex 16:14,15. It was pleasant food; the Jews say that it was palatable to all, however varied their tastes. It was wholesome food, light of digestion, and very necessary (Dr. Grew says) to cleanse them from disorders with which he thinks it probable that they were, in the time of their bondage, more or less infected, which disorders a luxurious diet would have made contagious. By this spare and plain diet we are all taught a lesson of temperance, and forbidden to desire dainties and varieties.

15 And when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said one to another, It *is* manna: for they wist not what it *was*. And Moses said unto them, this *is* the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

16 This *is* the thing which the Lord hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, *according to* the number of your persons; take ye every man for *them* which *are* in his tents.

17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less.

18 And when they did mete *it* with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

19 And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

Dependence upon Providence: Let no man leave till morning (Ex 16:19), but let them learn to go to bed and sleep quietly, though they have not a bit of bread in their tent, nor in all their camp, trusting that God, with the following day, will bring them their daily bread." It was surer and safer in God's store-house than in their own, and would thence come to them sweeter and fresher. Read with this, Mt 6:25, Take no thought for your life, &c. See here the folly of hoarding. The manna that was laid up by some (who thought themselves wiser and better managers than their neighbours, and who would provide in case it should fail next day), putrefied, and bred worms, and became good for nothing.

Note That proves to be most wasted which is covetously and distrustfully spared. Those riches are corrupted, Jam 5:2,3. Let us set ourselves to think,

[1.] Of that great power of God which fed Israel in the wilderness, and made miracles their daily bread. What cannot this God do, who prepared a table in the wilderness, and furnished it richly even for those who questioned whether he could or no? Ps 78:19,20. Never was there such a market of provisions as this, where so many hundred thousand men were daily furnished, without money and without price. Never was there such an open house kept as God kept in the wilderness for forty years together, nor such free and plentiful entertainment given. The feast which Ahasuerus made, to show the riches of his kingdom, and the honour of his majesty, was nothing to this, Es 1:4. It is said (Ex 16:21), When the sun waxed hot, it melted; as if what was left were drawn up

by the heat of the sun into the air to be the seed of the next day's harvest, and so from day to day.

[2.] Of that constant providence of God which gives food to all flesh, for his mercy endures forever, Ps 136:25. He is a great house-keeper that provides for all the creatures. The same wisdom, power, and goodness that now brought food daily out of the clouds, are employed in the constant course of nature, bringing food yearly out of the earth, and giving us all things richly to enjoy.

20 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

21 And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

They were to gather it every morning (Ex 16:21), the portion of a day in his day, Ex 16:4. Thus they must live upon daily providence, as the fowls of the air, of which it is said, That which thou givest them they gather (Ps 104:28); not to-day for to-morrow: let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. To this daily raining and gathering of manna our Savior seems to allude when he teaches us to pray, Give us this day our daily bread. We are hereby taught,

(1.) Prudence and diligence in providing food convenient for ourselves and our household. What God graciously gives we must industriously gather; with quietness working, and eating our own bread, not the bread either of idleness or deceit. God's bounty leaves room for man's duty; it did so even when manna was rained: they must not eat till they have gathered.

(2.) Contentment and satisfaction with a sufficiency. They must gather, every man according to his eating; enough is as good as a feast, and more than enough is as bad as a surfeit. Those that have most have, for themselves, but food, and

raiment, and mirth; and those that have least generally have these: so that he who gathers much has nothing over, and he who gathers little has no lack. There is not so great a disproportion between one and another in the comforts and enjoyments of the things of this life as there is in the property and possession of the things themselves.

22 And it came to pass, *that* on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one *man:* and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

We have here, a plain intimation of the observing of a seventh day sabbath, not only before the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai, but before the bringing of Israel out of Egypt, and therefore, from the beginning, Ge 2:3. If the sabbath had now been first instituted, how could Moses have understood what God said to him (Ex 16:5), concerning a double portion to be gathered on the sixth day, without making any express mention of the sabbath? And how could the people so readily take the hint (Ex 16:22), even to the surprise of the rulers, before Moses had declared that it was done with a regard to the sabbath, if they had not had some knowledge of the sabbath before? The setting apart of one day in seven for holy work, and, in order to that, for holy rest, was a divine appointment ever since God created man upon the earth, and the most ancient of positive laws. The way of sabbath-sanctification is the good old way.

23 And he said unto them, this *is that* which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow *is* the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake *that* which ye will bake *today,* and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

The double provision which God made for the Israelites, and which they were to make for themselves, on the sixth day: God gave them on the sixth day the bread of two days, Ex 16:29. Appointing them to rest on the seventh day, he took care that they should be no losers by it; and none ever will be losers by serving God. On that day they were to fetch in enough for two days, and to prepare it, Ex 16:23. The law was very strict, that they must bake and seeth, the day before, and

not on the sabbath day. This does not now make it unlawful for us to dress meat on the Lord's day, but directs us to contrive our family affairs so that they may hinder us as little as possible in the work of the sabbath. Works of necessity, no doubt, are to be done on that day; but it is desirable to have as little as may be to do of things necessary to the life that now is, that we may apply ourselves the more closely to the one thing needful. That which they kept of for their food on the sabbath day did not putrefy, Ex 16:24. When they kept it in opposition to a command (Ex 16:20) it stank; when they kept it in obedience to a command it was sweet and good; for everything is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

24 And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not
stink, neither was there any worm therein.

25 And Moses said, Eat that today; for today *is* a Sabbath unto the
Lord: today ye shall not find it in the field.

26 Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, *which is* the
Sabbath, in it there shall be none.

The intermission of the manna on the seventh day. God did not send it then, and therefore they must not expect it, nor go out to gather, Ex 16:25,26. This showed that it was not produced by natural causes, and that it was designed for a confirmation of the divine authority of the law which was to be given by Moses. Thus God took an effectual course to make them remember the sabbath day; they could not forget it, nor the day of preparation for it. Some, it seems, went out on the seventh day, expecting to find manna (Ex 16:27); but they found none, for those that will find must seek in the appointed time: seek the Lord while he may be found. God, upon this occasion, said to Moses, How long refuse you to keep my commandments? Ex 16:28. Why did he say this to Moses? He was not disobedient. No, but he was the ruler of a disobedient people, and God charges it upon him that he might the more warmly charge it upon them, and might take care that their disobedience should not be through any neglect or default of his. It was for going out to seek for manna on the seventh day that they were thus reproved. Note,

(1.) Disobedience, even in a small matter, is very provoking.

(2.) God is jealous for the honour of his Sabbaths. If walking out on the sabbath to seek for food was thus reproved, walking out on that day purely to find our own pleasure cannot be justified.

27 And it came to pass, *that* there went out *some* of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

28 And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

29 See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it *was* like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey.

32 And Moses said, this *is* the thing which the Lord commandeth, fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.

33 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.

God having provided manna to be his people's food in the wilderness, and to be to them a continual feast, we are here told,

How the memory of it was preserved. An omer of this manna was laid up in a golden pot, as we are told (Heb 9:4), and kept before the testimony, or the ark, when it was afterwards made, Ex 16:32-34. The preservation of this manna from waste and corruption was a standing miracle, and therefore the more proper memorial of this miraculous food. "Posterity shall see the bread," says God, "wherewith I have fed you in the

wilderness," see what sort of food it was, and how much each man's daily proportion of it was, that it may appear they were neither kept to hard fare nor to short allowance, and then judge between God and Israel, whether they had any cause given them to murmur and find fault with their provisions, and whether they and their seed after them had not a great deal of reason gratefully to won God's goodness to them. Note, Eaten bread must not be forgotten. God's miracles and mercies are to be had in everlasting remembrance, for our encouragement to trust in him at all times.

34 As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

35 And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

How the mercy of it was continued as long as they had occasion for it. The manna never ceased till they came to the borders of Canaan, where there was bread enough and to spare, Ex 16:35. See how constant the care of Providence is; seedtime and harvest fail not, while the earth remains. Israel was very provoking in the wilderness, yet the manna never failed them: thus still God causes his rain to fall on the just and unjust. The manna is called spiritual meat (1Co 10:3), because it was typical of spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Christ himself is the true manna, the bread of life, of which this was a figure, Joh 6:49-51. The word of God is the manna by which our souls are nourished, Mt 4:4. The comforts of the Spirit are hidden manna, Re 2:17. These come from heaven, as the manna did, and are the support and comfort of the divine life in the soul, while we are in the wilderness of this world. It is food for Israelites, for those only that follow the pillar of cloud and fire. It is to be gathered; Christ in the word is to be applied to the soul, and the means of grace are to be used. We must every one of us gather for ourselves, and gather in the morning of our opportunities, which if we let slip, it may be too late to gather. The manna they gathered must not be hoarded up, but eaten; those that

have received Christ must by faith live upon him, and not receive his grace in vain. There was manna enough for all, enough for each, and none had too much; so in Christ there is a complete sufficiency, and no superfluity. But those that did eat manna hungered again, died at last, and with many of them God was not well-pleased; whereas those that feed on Christ by faith shall never hunger, and shall die no more, and with them God will be forever well pleased. The Lord evermore give us this bread!

36 Now an omer is the tenth *part* of an ephah.

Exodus-17

Water from the Rock

1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and *there was* no water for the people to drink.

The strait that the children of Israel were in for want of water; once before they were in the like distress, and now, a second time, Ex 17:1. They journeyed according to the commandment of the Lord, led by the pillar of cloud and fire, and yet they came to a place where there was no water for them to drink. Note, We may be in the way of our duty, and yet may meet with troubles, which Providence brings us into for the trial of our faith, and that God may be glorified in our relief.

2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?

Their discontent and distrust in this strait. It is said (Ex 17:3), They thirsted there for water. If they had no water to drink, they must needs thirst; but this intimates, not only that they wanted water and felt the inconvenience of that want, but that their passion sharpened their appetites and they were violent and impatient in their desire; their thirst made them

outrageous. Natural desires, and those that are most craving, have need to be kept under the check and control of religion and reason. See what was the language of this inordinate desire.

1. They challenged Moses to supply them (Ex 17:2): Give us water that we may drink, demanding it as a debt, and strongly suspecting that he was not able to discharge it. Because they were supplied with bread, they insist upon it that they must be supplied with water too; and indeed to those that by faith and prayer live a life of dependence upon God one favour is an earnest of another, and may be humbly pleaded; but the unthankful and unbelieving have reason to think that the abuse of former favours is the forfeiture of further favours: Let not them think that they shall receive any thing (Jam 1:7), yet they are ready to demand everything.

2. They quarrelled with him for bringing them out of Egypt, as if, instead of delivering them, he designed to murder them, than which nothing could be more base and invidious, Ex 17:3. Many that have not only designed well, but done well, for their generation, have had their best services thus misconstrued, and their patience thereby tried, by unthinking unthankful people. To such a degree their malice against Moses rose that they were almost ready to stone him, Ex 17:4. Many good works he had shown them; and for which of these would they stone him? Joh 10:32. Ungoverned passions, provoked by the crossing of unbridled appetites, sometimes make men guilty of the greatest absurdities, and act like madmen, that cast firebrands, arrows, and death, among their best friends.

3. They began to question whether God were with them or not: They tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not? Ex 17:7. Is Jehovah among us by that name by which he made himself known to us in Egypt?" They question his essential presence--whether there was a God or not; his common providence--whether that God governed the world; and his special promise--whether he would be as good as his word to them. This is called their tempting God, which signifies, not only a distrust of God in general, but a distrust of him after they had received such proofs of his power and goodness, for the confirmation of his promise. They do, in effect, suppose that Moses was an impostor, Aaron a deceiver, the pillar of cloud and fire a mere sham and illusion, which imposed upon their senses, that long series of miracles which had rescued them, served them, and fed them, a chain of cheats, and the promise of Canaan a banter upon them; it was all so, if the Lord was not among them.

Note, It is a great provocation to God for us to question his presence, providence, or promise, especially for his Israel to do it, who are so peculiarly bound to trust him.

3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

4 And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me.

The course that Moses took, when he was thus set upon, and insulted.

1. He reproved the murmurers (Ex 17:2): Why chide you with me? Observe how mildly he answered them; it was well that he was a man of extraordinary meekness, else their tumultuous conduct would have made him lose the possession of himself: it is folly to answer passion with

passion, for that makes bad worse; but soft answers turn away wrath. He showed them whom their murmurings reflected upon, and that the reproaches they cast on him fell on God himself: You tempt the Lord; that is, "By distrusting his power, you try his patience, and so provoke his wrath."

2. He made his complaint to God (Ex 17:4): Moses cried unto the Lord. This servant came, and showed his Lord all these things, Lu 14:21. When men unjustly censure us and quarrel with us, it will be a great relief to us to go to God, and by prayer lay the case before him and leave it with him: if men will not hear us, God will; if their bad conduct towards us ruffle our spirits, God's consolations will compose them. Moses begs of God to direct him what he should do, for he was utterly at a loss; he could not of himself either supply their want or pacify their tumult; God only could do it. He pleads his own peril: "They are almost ready to stone me; Lord, if thou hast any regard to the life of thy poor servant, interpose now."

5 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.

God's gracious appearance for their relief, Ex 17:5,6. He orders Moses to go on before the people, and venture himself in his post, though they spoke of stoning him. He must take his rod with him, not (as God might justly have ordered) to summon some plague or other to chastise them for their distrust and murmuring, but to fetch water for their supply. O the wonderful patience and forbearance of God towards provoking sinners! He loads those with benefits that make him to serve with their sins, maintains those that are at war with him, and reaches out the hand of his bounty to those that lift up the heel against him. Thus he teaches us, if our enemy hunger, to feed him, and if he thirst, as Israel did now, to give him drink, Ro 12:20,Mt 5:44,45. Will he fail those that trust him, when he was so liberal even to those that

tempted him? If God had only shown Moses a fountain of water in the wilderness, as he did Hagar not far hence (Ge 21:19), that would have been a great favour; but that he might show his power as well as his pity, and make it a miracle of mercy, he gave them water out of a rock. He directed Moses whither to go, and appointed him to take some of the elders of Israel with him, to be witnesses of what was done, that they might themselves be satisfied, and might satisfy others, of the certainty of God's presence with them. He promised to meet him there in the cloud of glory (to encourage him), and ordered him to smite the rock; Moses obeyed, and immediately water came out of the rock in great abundance, which ran throughout the camp in streams and rivers (Ps 78:15,16), and followed them wherever they went in that wilderness: it is called a fountain of waters, Ps 114:8. God showed the care he took of his people in giving them water when they wanted it; he showed his power in fetching the water out of a rock; and he put an honour upon Moses in appointing the water to flow out upon his smiting the rock. This fair water, that came out of the rock, is called honey and oil (De 32:13), because the people's thirst made it doubly pleasant; coming when they were in extreme want, it was like honey and oil to them. It is probable that the people digged canals for the conveyance of it, and pools for the reception of it, in like manner as, long afterwards, passing through the valley of Baca, they made it a well, Ps 84:6,Nu 21:18. Let this direct us to live in a dependence,

1. Upon God's providence, even in the greatest straits and difficulties. God can open fountains for our supply where we least expect them, waters in the wilderness (Isa 43:20), because he makes a way in the wilderness, Ex 17:19. Those who, in this wilderness, keep to God's way, may trust him to provide for them. While we follow the pillar of cloud and fire, surely goodness and mercy shall follow us, like the water out of the rock.

2. Upon Christ's grace: That rock was Christ, 1Co 10:4. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are compared to rivers of living water, Joh 7:38,39,Joh 4:14. These flow from Christ, who is the rock smitten by the law of Moses, for he was made under the law. Nothing will supply the needs, and satisfy the desires, of a soul, but water out of this rock, this fountain opened. The pleasures of sense are puddle-water; spiritual delights are rock-water, so pure, so clear, so refreshing--rivers of pleasure.

6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

7 And he called the name of the place Massah [temptation], and Meribah [chiding *or* strife], because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?

A new name was, upon this occasion, given to the place, preserving the remembrance, not of the mercy of their supply (the water that followed them was sufficient to do that), but of the sin of their murmuring--Massah, temptation, because they tempted God; Meribah, strife, because they chid with Moses, Ex 17:7. There was thus a remembrance kept of sin, both for the disgrace of the sinners themselves (sin leaves a blot upon the name) and for warning to their seed to take heed of sinning after the similitude of their transgression.

War with Amalek

We have here the story of the war with Amalek, which, we may suppose, was the first that was recorded in the book of the wars of the Lord, Nu 21:14. Amalek was the first of the nations that Israel fought with, Nu 24:20. Observe,

Amalek's attempt: They came out, and fought with Israel, Ex 17:8.

I. Some believe that the Amalekites were the posterity of Esau, who hated Jacob because of the birthright and blessing, and this was an effort of the hereditary enmity, a malice that ran in the blood, and perhaps was now exasperated by the working of the promise towards an accomplishment. Consider this,

1. As Israel's affliction. They had been quarrelling with Moses (Ex 17:2), and now God sends Amalekites to quarrel with them; wars abroad are the just punishment of strifes and discontents at home.

2. As Amalek's sin; so it is reckoned, De 25:17,18. They did not boldly front them as a generous enemy, but without any provocation given by Israel, or challenge given to them, basely fell upon their rear, and smote those that were faint and feeble and could neither make resistance nor escape. Herein they bade defiance to that power which had so lately ruined the Egyptians; but in vain did they attack a camp guarded and victualled by miracles: verily they knew not what they did.

II. Others believe that it is a tribe dwelling originally in the region south of Judah, the wilderness of et-Tih where the Israelites came into conflict with them. They were nomads as a people dwelling in that tract would naturally be. When they joined the Midianites to invade Israel they came "with their cattle and their tents" (Jud 6:3-5). They are not to be identified with the descendants of Esau (Ge 36:12,16) because they are mentioned earlier, in the account of the

invasion of Chedorlaomer (Ge 14:7) and in Balaam's prophecy (Nu 24:20) Amalek is called "the first of the nations," which seems to refer to an early existence. We are uncertain of their origin, for they do not appear in the list of nations found in Ge 10. They do not seem to have had any relationship with the tribes of Israel, save as, we may surmise, some of the descendants of Esau were incorporated into the tribe. It is probable that they were of Semitic stock though we have no proof of it. The first contact with Israel was at Rephidim, in the wilderness of Sinai, where they made an unprovoked attack and were defeated after a desperate conflict (Ex 17:8-13; De 25:17,18). On account of this they were placed under the ban and Israel was commanded to exterminate them (De 25:19; 1Sa 15:2,3). The next encounter of the two peoples was when the Israelites attempted to enter Canaan from the west of the Dead Sea. The spies had reported that the Amalekites were to be found in the south, in connection with the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites (Nu 13:29). The Israelites at first refused to advance, but later determined to do so contrary to the will of God and the command of Moses. They were met by Amalek and the Canaanites and completely defeated (Nu 14:39-45). Amalek is next found among the allies of Moab in their attack upon Israel in the days of Eglon (Jud 3:13). They were also associated with the Midianites in their raids upon Israel (Jud 6:3), and they seemed to have gained a foothold in Ephraim, or at least a branch of them, in the hill country (Jud 5:14; 12:15), but it is evident that the great body of them still remained in their old habitat, for when Saul made war upon them he drove them toward Shur in the wilderness toward Egypt (1Sa 15:1-9). David also found them in the same region (1Sa 27:8; 30:1). After this they seem to have declined, and we find, in the days of Hezekiah, only a remnant of them who were smitten by the Simeonites at Mount Seir (1Ch 4:41-43). They are once mentioned in Psalms in connection with other inveterate enemies of Israel (Ps 83:7). The hatred Inspired by the Amalekites is reflected

in the passages already mentioned which required their utter destruction. Their attack upon them when they were just escaped from Egypt and while they were struggling through the wilderness made a deep impression upon the Israelites which they never forgot, and the wrath of David upon the messenger who brought him news of the death of Saul and Jonathan, declaring himself to be the slayer of Saul, was no doubt accentuated by his being an Amalekite (2Sa 1:1-16).

8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.
9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

Israel's engagement with Amalek, in their own necessary defence against the aggressors. Observe,

1 The post assigned to Joshua, of whom this is the first mention: he is nominated commander-in-chief in this expedition, that he might be trained up to the services he was designed for after the death of Moses, and be a man of war from his youth. He is ordered to draw out a detachment of choice men from the thousands of Israel and to drive back the Amalekites, Ex 17:9. When the Egyptians pursued them Israel must stand still and see what God would do; but now it was required that they should bestir themselves. Note, God is to be trusted in the use of means.

2 The post assumed by Moses: I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand, Ex 17:9. See how God qualifies his people for, and calls them to, various services for the good of his church: Joshua fights, Moses prays, and both minister to Israel. Moses went up to the top of the hill, and placed himself, probably, so as to be seen by Israel; there he held up the rod of God in his hand, that wonder-working rod which had summoned the plagues of Egypt, and under which Israel had passed out of the house of bondage. This rod Moses held up to Israel, to animate them; the rod was

held up as the banner to encourage the soldiers, who might look up, and say, "Yonder is the rod, and yonder the hand that used it, when such glorious things were wrought for us."

Note, It tends much to the encouragement of faith to reflect upon the great things God has done for us, and review the monuments of his favours. Moses also held up this rod to God, by way of appeal to him: "Is not the battle the Lord's? Is not he able to help, and engaged to help? Witness this rod, the voice of which, thus held up, is (Isa 51:9,10), Put on strength, O arm of the Lord; art not thou it that hath cut Rahab?" Moses was not only a standard-bearer, but an intercessor, pleading with God for success and victory. Note, When the host goes forth against the enemy earnest prayers should be made to the God of hosts for his presence with them. It is here the praying legion that proves the thundering legion. There, in Salem, in Sion where prayers were made, there the victory was won, there broke the arrows of the bow, Ps 76:2,3. Observe,

(1.) How Moses was tired (Ex 17:12): His hands were heavy. The strongest arm will fail with being long extended; it is God only whose hand is stretched out still. We do not find that Joshua's hands were heavy in fighting, but Moses's hands were heavy in praying. The more spiritual any service is the more apt we are to fail and flag in it. Praying work, if done with due intenseness of mind and vigour of affection, will be found hard work, and, though the spirit be willing, the flesh will be weak. Our great Intercessor in heaven faints not, nor is he weary, though he attends continually to this very thing.

(2.) What influence the rod of Moses had upon the battle (Ex 17:11): When Moses held up his hand in prayer (so the Chaldee explains it) Israel prevailed, but, when he let down his hand from prayer, Amalek prevailed. To convince Israel

that the hand of Moses (with whom they had just now been chiding) contributed more to their safety than their own hands, his rod than their sword, the success rises and falls as Moses lifts up or lets down his hands. It seems, the scale wavered for some time, before it turned on Israel's side. Even the best cause must expect disappointments as an alloy to its successes; though the battle be the Lord's, Amalek may prevail for a time. The reason was, Moses let down his hands. Note, The church's cause is, commonly, more or less successful according as the church's friends are more or less strong in faith and fervent in prayer.

(3.) The care that was taken for the support of Moses. When he could not stand any longer he sat down, not in a chair of state, but upon a stone (Ex 17:12); when he could not hold up his hands, he would have them held up. Moses, the man of God, is glad of the assistance of Aaron his brother, and Hur, who, some think, was his brother-in-law, the husband of Miriam. We should not be shy either of asking help from others or giving help to others, for we are members one of another. Moses's hands, thus stayed, were steady till the going down of the sun; and, though it was with much ado that he held out, yet his willing mind was accepted. No doubt it was a great encouragement to the people to see Joshua before them in the field of battle and Moses above them upon the top of the hill: Christ is both to us--our Joshua, the captain of our salvation who fights our battles, and our Moses, who, in the upper world, ever lives making intercession, that our faith fail not.

10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek:
and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.
11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel
prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.
12 But Moses' hands *were* heavy; and they took a stone, and put *it*
under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his

hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

The defeat of Amalek. Victory had hovered awhile between the camps; sometimes Israel prevailed and sometimes Amalek, but Israel carried the day, Ex 17:13. Though Joshua fought with great disadvantages--his soldiers undisciplined, ill-armed, long inured to servitude, and apt to murmur; yet by them God wrought a great salvation, and made Amalek pay dearly for his insolence. Note, Weapons formed against God's Israel cannot prosper long, and shall be broken at last. The cause of God and his Israel will be victorious. Though God gave the victory, yet it is said, Joshua discomfited Amalek, because Joshua was a type of Christ, and of the same name, and in him it is that we are more than conquerors. It was his arm alone that spoiled principalities and powers, and routed all their force.

14 And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

The trophies of this victory set up.

1. Moses took care that God should have the glory of it (Ex 17:15); instead of setting up a triumphal arch, to the honour of Joshua (though it had been a laudable policy to put marks of honour upon him), he builds an altar to the honour of God, and we may suppose it was not an altar without sacrifice; but that which is most carefully recorded is the inscription upon the altar, Jehovah-nissi--The Lord is my banner, which probably refers to the lifting up of the rod of God as a banner in this action. The presence and power of Jehovah were the banner under which they enlisted, by which they were animated and kept together, and therefore which they erected in the day of their triumph. In the name of our God we must

always lift up our banners, Ps 20:5. It is fit that he who does all the work should have all the praise.

2. God took care that posterity should have the comfort and benefit of it: "Write this for a memorial, not in loose papers, but in a book, write it, and then rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, let him be entrusted with this memorial, to transmit it to the generations to come." Moses must now begin to keep a diary or journal of occurrences; it is the first mention of writing that we find in scripture, and perhaps the command was not given till after the writing of the law upon the tables of stone: "Write it in perpetuam rei memoriam--that the event may be had in perpetual remembrance; that which is written remains."

(1.) "Write what has been done, what Amalek has done against Israel; write in gall their bitter hatred, write in blood their cruel attempts, let them never be forgotten, nor yet what God has done for Israel in saving them from Amalek. Let ages to come know that God fights for his people, and he that touches them touches the apple of his eye."

(2.) Write what shall be done.

[1.] That in process of time Amalek shall be totally ruined and rooted out (Ex 17:14), that he shall be remembered only in history." Amalek would have cut off the name of Israel, that it might be no more in remembrance (Ps 83:4,7); and therefore God not only disappoints him in this, but cuts off his name. "Write it for the encouragement of Israel, whenever the Amalekites are an annoyance to them, that Israel will at last undoubtedly triumph in the fall of Amalek." This sentence was executed in part by Saul (1Sa 15:1-35),

and completely by David (1Sa 30:1-31,2Sa 1:1,8:12); after his time we never read so much as of the name of Amalek.

[2.] This is the mean time God would have a continual controversy with him (Ex 17:16): Because his hand is upon the throne of the Lord, that is, against the camp of Israel in which the Lord ruled, which was the place of his sanctuary, and is therefore called a glorious high throne from the beginning (Jer 17:12); therefore the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. This was written for direction to Israel never to make any league with the Amalekites, but to look upon them as irreconcilable enemies, doomed to ruin. Amalek's destruction was typical of the destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his kingdom. Whoever make war with the Lamb, the Lamb will overcome them.

15 And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi
[the Lord my banner]:
16 for he said, because the Lord hath sworn *that* the Lord *will have*
war with Amalek from generation to generation.

Exodus-18

Jethro Visits Moses

1 When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of
all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, *and* that
the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt;

Jethro comes, to congratulate the happiness of Israel, and particularly the honour of Moses his son-in-law; and now Jethro thinks himself well paid for all the kindness he had shown to Moses in his distress, and his daughter better matched than he could have expected. Jethro could not but hear what all the country rang of, the glorious appearances of God for his people Israel (Ex 18:1); and he comes to enquire,

and inform himself more fully thereof (see Ps 111:2), and to rejoice with them as one that had a true respect both for them and for their God. Though he, as a Midianite, was not to share with them in the promised land, yet he shared with them in the joy of their deliverance. We may thus make the comforts of others our own, by taking pleasure, as God does, in the prosperity of the righteous.

2 then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back,

It seems, he had sent them back, probably from the inn where his wife's aversion to the circumcision of her son had like to have cost him his life (Ex 4:25); fearing lest they should prove a further hindrance, he sent them home to his father-in-law. He foresaw what discouragements he was likely to meet with in the court of Pharaoh, and therefore would not take any with him in his own family. He was of that tribe that said to his father, I have not known him, when service was to be done for God, De 33:9. Thus Christ's disciples, when they were to go upon an expedition not much unlike that of Moses, were to forsake wife and children, Mt 19:29. But though there might be reason for the separation that was between Moses and his wife for a time, yet they must come together again, as soon as ever they could with any convenience. It is the law of the relation. You husbands, dwell with your wives, 1Pe 3:7.

Jethro, we may suppose, was glad of his daughter's company, and fond of her children, yet he would not keep her from her husband, nor them from their father, Ex 18:5,6. Moses must have his family with him, that while he ruled the church of God he might set a good example of prudence in family-government, 1Ti 3:5. Moses had now a great deal both of honour and care put upon him, and it was fit that his wife should be with him to share with him in both. Notice is taken of the significant names of his two sons.

1 The eldest was called Gershom (Ex 18:3), a stranger, Moses designing thereby, not only a memorial of his own condition,

but a memorandum to his son of his condition also: for we are all strangers upon earth, as all our fathers were. Moses had a great uncle almost of the same name, Gershon, a stranger; for though he was born in Canaan (Ge 46:11), yet even there the patriarchs confessed themselves strangers.

2 The other he called Eliezer (Ex 18:4), My God a help, as we translate it; it looks back to his deliverance from Pharaoh, when he made his escape, after the slaying of the Egyptian; but, if this was (as some think) the son that was circumcised at the inn as he was going, I would rather translate it so as to look forward, which the original will bear, The Lord is my help, and will deliver me from the sword of Pharaoh, which he had reason to expect would be drawn against him when he was going to fetch Israel out of bondage.

Note, When we are undertaking any difficult service for God and our generation, it is good for us to encourage ourselves in God as our help: he that has delivered does and will deliver.

3 and her two sons; of which the name of the one was Gershom [a stranger there]; for he said, I have been an alien in a strange land:
4 and the name of the other *was* Eliezer [my God *is* an help]; for the God of my father, *said he, was* mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh:
5 and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God:
6 and he said unto Moses, I thy father-in-law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.
7 And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of *their* welfare; and they came into the tent.

The kind greeting that took place between Moses and his father-in-law, Ex 18:7. Though Moses was a prophet of the Lord, a great prophet, and king in Jeshurun, yet he showed a very humble respect to his father-in-law. However God in his providence is pleased to advance us, we must make

conscience of giving honour to whom honour is due, and never look with disdain upon our poor relations. Those that stand high in the favour of God are not thereby discharged from the duty they owe to men, nor will that justify them in a stately haughty carriage. Moses went out to meet Jethro, did homage to him, and kissed him. Religion does not destroy good manners. They asked each other of their welfare. Even the kind How-do-you-do's that pass between them are taken notice of, as the expressions and improvements of mutual love and friendship.

8 And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, *and* all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and *how* the Lord delivered them.

The narrative that Moses gave his father-in-law of the great things God had done for Israel, Ex 18:8. This was one thing Jethro came for, to know more fully and particularly what he had heard the general report of. Note, Conversation concerning God's wondrous works is profitable conversation; it is good, and to the use of edifying, Ps 105:2. Compare Ps 145:11,12. Asking and telling news, and discoursing of it, are not only an allowable entertainment of conversation, but are capable of being tuned to a very good account, by taking notice of God's providence, and the operations and tendencies of that providence, in all occurrences.

9 And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

The impressions this narrative made upon Jethro.

1. He congratulated God's Israel: Jethro rejoiced, Ex 18:9. He not only rejoiced in the honour done to his son-in-law, but in all the goodness done to Israel, Ex 18:9. Note, Public blessings are the joy of public spirits. While the Israelites were themselves murmuring, notwithstanding all God's goodness to them, here was a Midianite rejoicing. This was not the only time that the faith of the Gentiles shamed the unbelief of the Jews; see Mt 8:10. Standers-by were more

affected with the favours God had shown to Israel than those were that received them.

2. He gave the glory to Israel's God (Ex 18:10): "Blessed be Jehovah" (for by that name he is now known), "who hath delivered you, Moses and Aaron, out of the hand of Pharaoh, so that though he designed your death he could not effect it, and by your ministry has delivered the people." Note, Whatever we have the joy of God must have the praise of. 3. His faith was hereby confirmed, and he took this occasion to make a solemn profession of it: Now know I that Jehovah is greater than all gods, Ex 18:11. Observe,

(1.) The matter of his faith: that the God of Israel is greater than all pretenders, all false and counterfeit-deities that usurp divine honours; he silences them, subdues them, and is too hard for them all, and therefore is himself the only living and true God. He is also higher than all princes and potentates (who are called gods), and has both an incontestable authority over them and an irresistible power to control and over-rule them; he manages them all as he pleases, and gets honour upon them, how great soever they are.

(2.) The confirmation and improvement of his faith: Now know I; he knew it before, but now he knew it better; his faith great up to a full assurance, upon this fresh evidence. Those obstinately shut their eyes against the clearest light who do not know that the Lord is greater than all gods.

(3.) The ground and reason upon which he built it: For wherein they dealt proudly, the magicians, and the idols which the Egyptians worshipped, or Pharaoh and his grandees (they both opposed God and set up in competition with him), he was above them. The magicians were baffled, the idols shaken, Pharaoh humbled, his powers broken, and, in spite of all their confederacies, God's Israel was rescued out of their hands. Note, Sooner or later, God will show

himself above those that by their proud dealings contest with him. He that exalts himself against God shall be abased.

10 And Jethro said, blessed *be* the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.
11 Now I know that the Lord *is* greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly *he was* above them.
12 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.

The expressions of their joy and thankfulness. They had communion with each other both in a feast and in a sacrifice, Ex 18:12. Jethro, being hearty in Israel's interests, was cheerfully admitted though a Midianite, into fellowship with Moses and the elders of Israel, forasmuch as he also was a son of Abraham, though of a younger house.

1. They joined in a sacrifice of thanksgiving: Jethro took burnt offerings for God, and probably offered them himself, for he was a priest in Midian, and a worshipper of the true God, and the priesthood was not yet settled in Israel. Note, Mutual friendship is sanctified by joint-worship. It is a very good thing for relations and friends, when they come together, to join in the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise, as those that meet in Christ the centre of unity.

2. They joined in a feast of rejoicing, a feast upon the sacrifice. Moses, upon this occasion, invited his relations and friends to an entertainment in his own tent, a laudable usage among friends, and which Christ himself, not only warranted, but recommended, by his acceptance of such invitations. This was a temperate feast: They did eat bread; this bread, we may suppose, was manna. Jethro must see and taste that bread from heaven, and, though a Gentile, is as welcome to it as any

Israelite; the Gentiles still are so to Christ the bread of life. It was a feast kept after a godly sort: They did eat bread before God, soberly, thankfully, in the fear of God; and their table-talk was such as became saints.

Thus we must eat and drink to the glory of God, behaving ourselves at our tables as those who believe that God's eye is upon us.

The Appointment of Judges

13 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

Having been employed to redeem Israel out of the house of bondage, herein he is a further type of Christ, that he is employed as a lawgiver and a judge among them.

(1.) He was to answer enquiries, to acquaint them with the will of God in doubtful cases, and to explain the laws of God that were already given them, concerning the sabbath, the man, &c., beside the laws of nature, relating both to piety and equity, Ex 18:15. They came to enquire of God; and happy it was for them that they had such an oracle to consult: we are ready to wish, many a time, that we had some such certain way of knowing God's mind when we are at a loss what to do. Moses was faithful both to him that appointed him and to those that consulted him, and made them know the statutes of God and his laws, Ex 18:16. His business was, not to make laws, but to make known God's laws; his place was but that of a servant.

(2.) He was to decide controversies, and determine matters in variance, judging between a man and his fellow, Ex 18:16.

And, if the people were as quarrelsome one with another as they were with God, no doubt he had a great many causes brought before him, and the more because their trials put them to no expense, nor was the law costly to them. When a quarrel happened in Egypt, and Moses would have reconciled the contenders, they asked, Who made thee a prince and a judge? But now it was past dispute that God had made him one; and they humbly attend him whom they had then proudly rejected.

14 And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, what *is* this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

Such was the business Moses was called to, and it appears that he did it,

(1.) With great consideration, which, some think, is intimated in his posture: he sat to judge (Ex 18:13), composed and sedate.

(2.) With great condescension to the people, who stood by him, Ex 18:14. He was very easy of access; the meanest Israelite was welcome himself to bring his cause before him.

(3.) With great constancy and closeness of application.

[1.] Though Jethro, his father-in-law, was with him, which might have given him a good pretence for a vacation (he might have adjourned the court for that day, or at least have shortened it), yet he sat, even the next day after his coming, from morning till evening. Note, Necessary business must always take place of ceremonious attentions. It is too great a compliment to our friends to prefer the enjoyment of their company before our duty to God, which ought to be done, while yet the other is not left undone.

[2.] Though Moses was advanced to great honour, yet he did not therefore take his case and throw upon others the burden of care and business; no, he thought his preferment, instead of discharging him from service, made it more obligatory upon him. Those think of themselves above what is meet who think it below them to do good. It is the honour even of angels themselves to be serviceable.

[3.] Though the people had been provoking to him, and were ready to stone him (Ex 17:4), yet still he made himself the servant of all. Note, Though others fail in their duty to us, yet we must not therefore neglect ours to them.

[4.] Though he was an old man, yet he kept to his business from morning to night, and made it his meat and drink to do it. God had given him great strength both of body and mind, which enabled him to go through a great deal of work with ease and pleasure; and, for the encouragement of others to spend and be spent in the service of God, it proved that after all his labours his natural force was not diminished. Those that wait on the Lord and his service shall renew their strength.

15 And Moses said unto his father-in-law, because the people come unto me to inquire of God:

16 when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make *them* know the statutes of God, and his laws.

17 And Moses' father-in-law said unto him, The thing that thou doest *is* not good.

18 Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that *is* with thee: for this thing *is* too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.

The great prudence and consideration of Jethro as a friend.

1. He disliked the method that Moses took, and was so free with him as to tell him so, Ex 18:14,17,18. He thought it was too much business for Moses to undertake alone, that it would

be a prejudice to his health and too great a fatigue to him, and also that it would make the administration of justice tiresome to the people; and therefore he tells him plainly, It is not good.

Note, There may be over-doing even in well-doing, and therefore our zeal must always be governed by discretion, that our good may not be evil spoken of. Wisdom is profitable to direct, that we may neither content ourselves with less than our duty nor over-task ourselves with that which is beyond our strength.

2. He advised him to such a model of government as would better answer the intention, which was,

(1.) That he should reserve to himself all applications to God (Ex 18:19): Be thou for them to God-ward; that was an honour in which it was not fit any other should share with him, Nu 12:6-8. Also whatever concerned the whole congregation in general must pass through his hand, Ex 18:20. But,

(2.) That he should appoint judges in the several tribes and families, who should try causes between man and man, and determine them, which would be done with less noise, and more despatch, than in the general assembly wherein Moses himself presided. Thus they must be governed as a nation by a king as supreme, and inferior magistrates sent and commissioned by him, 1Pe 2:13. Thus many hands would make light work, causes would be sooner heard, and the people eased by having justice thus brought to their tent-doors. Yet,

(3.) An appeal might lie, if there were just cause for it, from these inferior courts to Moses himself; at least if the judges were themselves at a loss: Every great matter they shall bring unto thee, Ex 18:22. Thus that great man would be the more serviceable by being employed only in great matters.

Note, Those whose gifts and stations are most eminent may yet be greatly furthered in their work by the assistance of those that are every way their inferiors, whom therefore they should not despise. The head has need of the hands and feet, 1Co 12:21. Great men should not only study to be useful themselves, but contrive how to make others useful, according as their capacity is. Such is Jethro's advice, by which it appears that though Moses excelled him in prophecy he excelled Moses in politics;

19 Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

20 and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

21 Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

He adds two qualifications to his counsel:--

(1.) That great care should be taken in the choice of the persons who should be admitted into this trust (Ex 18:21); they must be able men, &c. It was requisite that they should be men of the very best character,

[1.] For judgment and resolution--able men, men of good sense, that understood business, and bold men, that would not be daunted by frowns or clamours. Clear heads and stout hearts make good judges.

[2.] For piety and religion--such as fear God, as believe there is a God above them, whose eye is upon them, to whom they are accountable, and of whose judgment they stand in awe. Conscientious men, that dare not do a base thing, though they could do it ever so secretly and securely. The fear of God is

that principle which will best fortify a man against all temptations to injustice, Ne 5:15,Ge 42:18.

[3.] For integrity and honesty--men of truth, whose word one may take, and whose fidelity one may rely upon, who would not for a world tell a lie, betray a trust, or act an insidious part.

[4.] For noble and generous contempt of worldly wealth--hating covetousness, not only not seeking bribes nor aiming to enrich themselves, but abhorring the thought of it; he is fit to be a magistrate, and he alone, who despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shaketh his hands from the holding of bribes, Isa 33:15.

(2.) That he should attend God's direction in the case (Ex 18:23): If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so. Jethro knew that Moses had a better counsellor than he was, and to his counsel he refers him. Note, Advice must be given with a humble submission to the word and providence of God, which must always overrule.

Now Moses did not despise this advice because it came from one not acquainted, as he was, with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty; but he hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, Ex 18:24. When he came to consider the thing, he saw the reasonableness of what his father-in-law proposed and resolved to put it in practice, which he did soon afterwards, when he had received directions from God in the matter.

Note, Those are not so wise as they would be thought to be who think themselves too wise to be counselled; for a wise man (one who is truly so) will hear, and will increase learning, and not slight good counsel, though given by an inferior. Moses did not leave the election of the magistrates to the people, who had already done enough to prove

themselves unfit for such a trust; but he chose them, and appointed them, some for greater, others for less division, the less probably subordinate to the greater. We have reason to value government as a very great mercy, and to thank God for laws and magistrates, so that we are not like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less.

22 and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, *that* every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear *the burden* with thee.

23 If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee *so,* then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

24 So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said.

25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

26 And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

27 And Moses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land.

Jethro's return to his own land, Ex 18:27. No doubt he took home with him the improvements he had made in the knowledge of God, and communicated them to his neighbours for their instruction. It is supposed that the Kenites (mentioned in 1Sa 15:6) were the posterity of Jethro (compare Jdg 1:16), and they are there taken under special protection, for the kindness their ancestor here showed to Israel. The good-will shown to God's people, even in the smallest instances, shall in no wise lose its reward, but shall be recompensed, at furthest, in the resurrection.

Exodus-19

Israel at Mount Sinai

1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they *into* the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come *to* the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

The charter itself. Moses was called up the mountain (on the top of which God had pitched his tent, and at the foot of which Israel had pitched theirs), and was employed as the mediator, or rather no more than the messenger of the covenant: Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, Ex 19:3.

Here bishop Patrick observes that the people are called by the names both of Jacob and Israel, to remind them that those who had lately been as low as Jacob when he went to Padan-aram had now grown as great as God made him when he came thence (justly enriched with the spoils of him that had oppressed him) and was called Israel.

Now observe, that the maker, and first mover, of the covenant, is God himself. Nothing was said nor done by this stiff-naked unthinking people themselves towards this settlement; no motion made, no petition put up for God's favour, but this blessed charter was granted ex mero motu--purely out of God's own good-will.

Note, In all our dealings with God, free grace anticipates us with the blessings of goodness, and all our comfort is owing, not to our knowing God, but rather to our being known of him, Ga 4:9. We love him, visit him, and covenant with him, because he first loved us, visited us, and covenanted with us. God is the Alpha, and therefore must be the Omega.

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

That the matter of the covenant is not only just and unexceptionable, and such as puts no hardship upon them, but kind and gracious, and such as gives them the greatest privileges and advantages imaginable. He reminds them of what he had done for them, Ex 19:4. He had righted them, and avenged them upon their persecutors and oppressors: "You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, how many lives were sacrificed to Israel's honour and interests:" He had given them unparalleled instances of his favour to them, and his care of them: I bore you on eagles' wings, a high expression of the wonderful tenderness God had shown for them. It is explained, De 32:11,12. It denotes great speed. God not only came upon the wing for their deliverance (when the set time was come, he rode on a cherub, and did fly), but he hastened them out, as it were, upon the wing. He did it also with great ease, with the strength as well as with the swiftness of an eagle: those that faint not, nor are weary, are said to mount up with wings as eagles, Isa 40:31. Especially, it denotes God's particular care of them and affection to them. Even Egypt, that iron furnace, was the nest in which these young ones were hatched, where they were first formed as the embryo of a nation; when, by the increase of their numbers, they grew to some maturity, they were carried out of that nest. They were brought not only into a state of liberty and honour, but into covenant and communion with God. This, this was the glory of their deliverance, as it is of ours by Christ, that he died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. This God aims at in all the gracious methods of his providence and grace, to bring us back to himself, from

whom we have revolted, and to bring us home to himself, in whom alone we can be happy. He appeals to themselves, and their own observation and experience, for the truth of what is here insisted on: You have seen what I did; so that they could not disbelieve God, unless they would first disbelieve their own eyes. They saw how all that was done was purely the Lord's doing. It was not they that reached towards God, but it was he that brought them to himself. Some have well observed that the Old-Testament church is said to be borne upon eagles' wings, denoting the power of that dispensation, which was carried on with a high hand an out-stretched arm; but the New-Testament church is said to be gathered by the Lord Jesus, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings (Mt 23:37), denoting the grace and compassion of that dispensation, and the admirable condescension and humiliation of the Redeemer.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:

He tells them plainly what he expected and required from them in one word, obedience (Ex 19:5), that they should obey his voice indeed and keep his covenant. Being thus saved by him, that which he insisted upon was that they should be ruled by him. The reasonableness of this demand is, long after, pleaded with them, that in the day he brought them out of the land of Egypt this was the condition of the covenant, Obey my voice (Jer 7:23); and this he is said to protest earnestly to them, Jer 11:4,7. Only obey indeed, not in profession and promise only, not in pretence, but in sincerity. God had shown them real favours, and therefore required real obedience.

6 and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

He assures them of the honour he would put upon them, and the kindness he would show them, in case they did thus keep his covenant (Ex 19:5,6): Then you shall be a peculiar

treasure to me. He does not specify any one particular favour, as giving them the land of Canaan, or the like, but expresses it in that which was inclusive of all happiness, that he would be to them a God in covenant, and they should be to him a people.

[1.] God here asserts his sovereignty over, and propriety in, the whole visible creation: All the earth is mine. Therefore he needed them not; he that had so vast a dominion was great enough, and happy enough, without concerning himself for so small a demesne as Israel was. All nations on the earth being his, he might choose which he pleased for his peculiar, and act in a way of sovereignty.

[2.] He appropriates Israel to himself,

First, As a people dear unto him. You shall be a peculiar treasure; not that God was enriched by them, as a man is by his treasure, but he was pleased to value and esteem them as a man does his treasure; they were precious in his sight and honourable (Isa 43:4); he set his love upon them (De 7:7), took them under his special care and protection, as a treasure that is kept under lock and key. He looked upon the rest of the world but as trash and lumber in comparison with them. By giving them divine revelation, instituted ordinances, and promises inclusive of eternal life, by sending his prophets among them, and pouring out his Spirit upon them, he distinguished them from, and dignified them above, all people. And this honour have all the saints; they are unto God a peculiar people (Tit 2:4), his when he makes up his jewels.

Secondly, As a people devoted to him, to his honour and service (Ex 19:6), a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. All the Israelites, if compared with other people, were priests unto

God, so near were they to him (Ps 148:14), so much employed in his immediate service, and such intimate communion they had with him. When they were first made a free people it was that they might sacrifice to the Lord their God, as priests; they were under God's immediate government, and the tendency of the laws given them was to distinguish them from others, and engage them for God as a holy nation. Thus all believers are, through Christ, made to our God kings and priests (Re 1:6), a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, 1Pe 2:9.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.

Israel's acceptance of this charter, and consent to the conditions of it.

1. Moses faithfully delivered God's message to them (Ex 19:7): He laid before their faces all those words; he not only explained to them what God had given him in charge, but he put it to their choice whether they would accept these promises upon these terms or no. His laying it to their faces denotes his laying it to their consciences.

2. They readily agreed to the covenant proposed. They would oblige themselves to obey the voice of God, and take it as a great favour to be made a kingdom of priests to him. They answered together as one man, nemine contradicente--without a dissentient voice (Ex 19:8): All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. Thus they strike the bargain, accepting the Lord to be to them a God, and giving up themselves to be to him a people. O that there had been such a heart in them!

3. Moses, as a mediator, returned the words of the people to God, Ex 19:8. Thus Christ, the Mediator between us and God, as a prophet reveals God's will to us, his precepts and

promises, and then as a priest offers up to God our spiritual sacrifices, not only of prayer and praise, but of devout affections and pious resolutions, the work of his own Spirit in us. Thus he is that blessed days-man who lays his hand upon us both.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever.

And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord.

God intimates to Moses his purpose of coming down upon mount Sinai, in some visible appearance of his glory, in a thick cloud (Ex 19:9); for he said that he would dwell in the thick darkness (2Ch 6:1), and make this his pavilion (Ps 18:11), holding back the face of his throne when he set it upon mount Sinai, and spreading a cloud upon it, Job 26:9. This thick cloud was to prohibit curious enquiries into things secret, and to command an awful adoration of that which was revealed. God would come down in the sight of all the people (Ex 19:11); though they should see no manner of similitude, yet they should see so much as would convince them that God was among them of a truth. And so high was the top of mount Sinai that it is supposed that not only the camp of Israel, but even the countries about, might discern some extraordinary appearance of glory upon it, which would strike a terror upon them. It seems also to have been particularly intended to put an honour upon Moses: That they may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever, Ex 19:9. Thus the correspondence was to be first settled by a sensible appearance of the divine glory, which was afterwards to be carried on more silently by the ministry of Moses. In like manner, the Holy Ghost descended visibly upon Christ at his baptism, and all that were present heard God speak to him (Mt 3:17), that afterwards, without the repetition of such visible tokens, they might believe him. So likewise the Spirit

descended in cloven tongues upon the apostles (Ac 2:3), that they might be believed. Observe, When the people had declared themselves willing to obey the voice of God, then God promised they should hear his voice; for, if any man be resolved to do his will, he shall know it, Joh 7:17.

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes,

He orders Moses to make preparation for this great solemnity, giving him two days' time for it.

He must sanctify the people (Ex 19:10), as Job, before this, sent and sanctified his sons, Job 1:5. He must raise their expectation by giving them notice what God would do, and assist their preparation by directing them what they must do. "Sanctify them," that is, "Call them off from their worldly business, and call them to religious exercises, meditation and prayer, that they may receive the law from God's mouth with reverence and devotion. Let them be ready," Ex 19:11.

Note, When we are to attend upon God in solemn ordinances it concerns us to sanctify ourselves, and to get ready beforehand. Wandering thoughts must be gathered in, impure affections abandoned, disquieting passions suppressed, nay, and all cares about secular business, for the present, dismissed and laid by, that our hearts may be engaged to approach unto God. Two things particularly prescribed as signs and instances of their preparation:--

(1.) In token of their cleansing themselves from all sinful pollutions, that they might be holy to God, they must wash their clothes (Ex 19:10), and they did so (Ex 19:14); not that God regards our clothes; but while they were washing their clothes he would have them think of washing their souls by repentance from the sins they had contracted in Egypt and since their deliverance. It becomes us to appear in clean

clothes when we wait upon great men; so clean hearts are required in our attendance on the great God, who sees them as plainly as men see our clothes. This is absolutely necessary to our acceptably worshipping God. See Ps 26:6,Isa 1:16-18,Heb 10:22.

(2.) In token of their devoting themselves entirely to religious exercises, upon this occasion, they must abstain even from lawful enjoyments during these three days, and not come at their wives, Ex 19:15. See 1Co 7:5.

11 and be ready against the third day: for the third day the Lord will
come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying,
Take heed to yourselves, *that ye* go *not* up into the mount, or touch
the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put
to death:

He must set bounds about the mountain, Ex 19:12,13. Probably he drew a line, or ditch, round at the foot of the hill, which none were to pass upon pain of death. This was to intimate,

(1.) That humble awful reverence which ought to possess the minds of all those that worship God. We are mean creatures before a great Creator, vile sinners before a holy righteous Judge; and therefore a godly fear and shame well become us, Heb 12:28,Ps 2:11.

(2.) The distance at which worshippers were kept, under that dispensation, which we ought to take notice of, that we may the more value our privilege under the gospel, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb 10:19.

13 there shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or
shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the
trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

He must order the people to attend upon the summons that should be given (Ex 19:13): "When the trumpet soundeth

long then let them take their places at the foot of the mount, and so sit down at God's feet," as it is explained, De 33:3. Never was so great a congregation called together, and preached to, at once, as this was here. No one man's voice could have reached so many, but the voice of God did.

14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at *your* wives.

16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.

The pulpit (or throne rather) was mount Sinai, hung with a thick cloud (Ex 19:16), covered with smoke (Ex 19:18), and made to quake greatly. Now it was that the earth trembled at the presence of the Lord, and the mountains skipped like rams (Ps 114:4), that Sinai itself, though rough and rocky, melted from before the Lord God of Israel, Jdg 5:5. Now it was that the mountains saw him, and trembled (Hab 3:10), and were witnesses against a hard-hearted unmoved people, whom nothing would influence.

The introductions to the service were thunders and lightnings, Ex 19:16. These were designed to strike an awe upon the people, and to raise and engage their attention. Were they asleep? The thunders would awaken them. Were they looking another way? The lightnings would engage them to turn their faces towards him that spoke to them. Thunder and lightning have natural causes, but the scripture directs us in a particular manner to take notice of the power of God, and his terror, in them. Thunder is the voice of God, and lightning the fire of God, proper to engage the senses of sight and hearing, those senses by which we receive so much of our information.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

Moses brought the hearers to the place of meeting, Ex 19:17. He that had led them out of the bondage of Egypt now led them to receive the law from God's mouth. Public persons are indeed public blessings when they lay out themselves in their places to promote the public worship of God. Moses, at the head of an assembly worshipping God, was as truly great as Moses at the head of an army in the field.

18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

The preacher was God himself (Ex 19:18): The Lord descended in fire, and (Ex 19:20), The Lord came down upon mount Sinai. The shechinah, or glory of the Lord, appeared in the sight of all the people; he shone forth from mount Paran with ten thousands of his saints (De 33:2), that is, attended, as the divine Majesty always is, by a multitude of the holy angels, who were both to grace the solemnity and to assist at it. Hence the law is said to be given by the disposition of angels, Ac 7:53.

19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

The congregation was called together by the sound of a trumpet, exceedingly loud (Ex 19:16), and waxing louder and louder, Ex 19:19. This was done by the ministry of the angels, and we read of trumpets sounded by angels, Re 8:6. It was the sound of the trumpet that made all the people tremble, as those who knew their own guilt, and who had reason to expect that the sound of this trumpet was to them the alarm of war.

20 And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the Lord called Moses *up* to the top of the mount; and Moses went up.

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.

22 And let the priests also, which come near to the Lord, sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them.

Moses is God's minister, who is spoken to, to command silence, and keep the congregation in order: Moses spoke, Ex 19:19. Some think it was now that he said, I exceedingly fear and quake (Heb 12:21); but God stilled his fear by his distinguishing favour to him, in calling him up to the top of the mount (Ex 19:20), by which also he tried his faith and courage. No sooner had Moses got up a little way towards the top of the mount than he was sent down again to keep the people from breaking through to gaze, Ex 19:21. Even the priests or princes, the heads of the houses of their fathers, who officiated for their respective families, and therefore are said to come near to the Lord at other times, must now keep their distance, and conduct themselves with a great deal of caution. Moses pleads that they needed not to have any further orders given them, effectual care being taken already to prevent any intrusions, Ex 19:23. But God, who knew their willfulness and presumption, and what was now in the hearts of some of them, hastens him down with this in charge, that neither the priests nor the people should offer to force the lines that were set, to come up unto the Lord, but Moses and Aaron on, the men whom God delighted to honour. Observe,

1. What it was that God forbade them--breaking through to gaze; enough was provided to awaken their consciences, but they were not allowed to gratify their vain curiosity. They might see, but not gaze. Some of them, probably, were desirous to see some similitude, that they might know how to make an image of God, which he took care to prevent, for they saw no manner of similitude, De 4:5.

Note, In divine things we must not covet to know more than God would have us know; and he has allowed us as much as is good for us. A desire of forbidden knowledge was the ruin of our first parents. Those that would be wise above what is written, and intrude into those things which they have not seen, need this admonition, that they break not through to gaze.

2. Under what penalty it was forbidden: Lest the Lord break forth upon them (Ex 19:22-24), and many of them perish. Note,

(1.) The restraints and warnings of the divine law are all intended for our good, and to keep us out of that danger into which we should otherwise, by our own folly, run ourselves.

(2.) It is at our peril if we break the bounds that God has set us, and intrude upon that which he has not allowed us; the Bethshemites and Uzzah paid dearly for their presumption. And, even when we are called to approach God, we must remember that he is in heaven and we upon earth, and therefore it behoves us to exercise reverence and godly fear.

23 And Moses said unto the Lord, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

24 And the Lord said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them.

25 So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

Exodus-20

The Ten Commandments

1 And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I *am* the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

The preface of the law-writer, Moses: God spoke all these words, Ex 20:1 The law of the ten commandments is, 1. A law of God's making. They are enjoined by the infinite eternal Majesty of heaven and earth. And where the word of the King of kings is surely there is power. 2. It is a law of his own

speaking. God has many ways of speaking to the children of men (Job 33:14); once, yea twice--by his Spirit, by conscience, by providences, by his voice, all which we ought carefully to attend to; but he never spoke, at any time, upon any occasion, as he spoke the ten commandments, which therefore we ought to hear with the more earnest heed. They were not only spoken audibly (so he owned the Redeemer by a voice from heaven, Mt 3:17), but with a great deal of dreadful pomp. This law God had given to man before (it was written in his heart by nature); but sin had so defaced that writing that it was necessary, in this manner, to revive the knowledge of it.

The preface of the Law-maker: I am the Lord thy God, Ex 20:2. Herein,

1. God asserts his own authority to enact this law in general: "I am the Lord who command thee all that follows."

2. He proposes himself as the sole object of that religious worship which is enjoined in the first four of the commandments. They are here bound to obedience by a threefold cord, which, one would think, could not easily be broken.

(1.) Because God is the Lord--Jehovah, self-existent, independent, eternal, and the fountain of all being and power; therefore he has an incontestable right to command us. He that gives being may give law; and therefore he is able to bear us out in our obedience, to reward it, and to punish our disobedience.

(2.) He was their God, a God in covenant with them, their God by their own consent; and, if they would not keep his commandments, who would? He had laid himself under obligations to them by promise, and therefore might justly lay his obligations on them by precept. Though that covenant of peculiarity is now no more, yet there is another, by virtue of which all that are baptized are taken into relation to him as their God, and are therefore unjust, unfaithful, and very ungrateful, if they obey him not.

(3.) He had brought them out of the land of Egypt; therefore they were bound in gratitude to obey him, because he had done them so great a kindness, had brought them out of a grievous slavery into a glorious liberty. They themselves had been eye-witnesses of the great things God had done in order to their deliverance, and could not but have observed that every circumstance of it heightened their obligation. They were now enjoying the blessed fruits of their deliverance, and in expectation of a speedy settlement in Canaan; and could they think anything too much to do for him that had done so much for them? Nay, by redeeming them, he acquired a further right to rule them; they owed their service to him to whom they owed their freedom, and whose they were by purchase. And thus Christ, having rescued us out of the bondage of sin, is entitled to the best service we can do him, Lu 1:74. Having loosed our bonds, he has bound us to obey him, Ps 116:16.

The law itself. The first four of the ten commandments, which concern our duty to God (commonly called the first table), we have in these verses. It was fit that those should be put first, because man had a Maker to love before he had a neighbour to love; and justice and charity are acceptable acts of obedience to God only when they flow from the principles of piety. It cannot be expected that he should be true to his brother who is false to his God. Now our duty to God is, in

one word, to worship him, that is, to give to him the glory due to his name, the inward worship of our affections, the outward worship of solemn address and attendance.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

The first commandment concerns the object of our worship, Jehovah, and him only (Ex 20:3): Thou shalt have no other gods before me. The Egyptians, and other neighbouring nations, had many gods, the creatures of their own fancy, strange gods, new gods; this law was prefixed because of that transgression, and, Jehovah being the God of Israel, they must entirely cleave to him, and not be for any other, either of their own invention or borrowed from their neighbours. This was the sin they were most in danger of now that the world was so overspread with polytheism, which yet could not be rooted out effectually but by the gospel of Christ. The sin against this commandment which we are most in danger of is giving the glory and honour to any creature which are due to God only. Pride makes a god of self, covetousness makes a god of money, sensuality makes a god of the belly; whatever is esteemed or loved, feared or served, delighted in or depended on, more than God, that (whatever it is) we do in effect make a god of.

This prohibition includes a precept which is the foundation of the whole law, that we take the Lord for our God, acknowledge that he is God, accept him for ours, adore him with admiration and humble reverence, and set our affections entirely upon him. In the last words, before me, it is intimated,

(1.) That we cannot have any other God but he will certainly know it. There is none besides him but what is before him. Idolaters covet secresy; but shall not God search this out?

(2.) That it is very provoking to him; it is a sin that dares him to his face, which he cannot, which he will not, overlook, nor connive at. See Ps 44:20,21.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

The second commandment concerns the ordinances of worship, or the way in which God will be worshipped, which it is fit that he himself should have the appointing of. Here is,

(1.) The prohibition: we are here forbidden to worship even the true God by images, Ex 20:4,5.

[1.] The Jews (at least after the captivity) thought themselves forbidden by this commandment to make any image or picture whatsoever. Hence the very images which the Roman armies had in their ensigns are called an abomination to them (Mt 24:15), especially when they were set up in the holy place. It is certain that it forbids making any image of God (for to whom can we liken him? Isa 40:15,18), or the image of any creature for a religious use. It is called the changing of the truth of God into a lie (Ro 1:25), for an image is a teacher of lies; it insinuates to us that God has a body, whereas he is an infinite spirit, Hab 2:18. It also forbids us to make images of God in our fancies, as if he were a man as we are. Our religious worship must be governed by the power of faith, not by the power of imagination. They must not make such images or pictures as the heathen worshipped, lest they also should be tempted to worship them. Those who would be kept from sin must keep themselves from the occasions of it.

[2.] They must not bow down to them occasionally, that is, show any sign of respect or honour to them, much less serve them constantly, by sacrifice or incense, or any other act of religious worship. When they paid their devotion to the true God, they must not have any image before them, for the directing, exciting, or assisting of their devotion. Though the

worship was designed to terminate in God, it would not please him if it came to him through an image. The best and most ancient lawgivers among the heathen forbade the setting up of images in their temples.

5 thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;

The reasons to enforce this prohibition (Ex 20:5,6), which are,

[1.] God's jealousy in the matters of his worship: "I am the Lord Jehovah, and thy God, am a jealous God, especially in things of this nature." This intimates the care he has of his own institutions, his hatred of idolatry and all false worship, his displeasure against idolaters, and that he resents everything in his worship that looks like, or leads to, idolatry. Jealousy is quicksighted. Idolatry being spiritual adultery, as it is very often represented in scripture, the displeasure of God against it is fitly called jealousy. If God is jealous herein, we should be so, afraid of offering any worship to God otherwise than as he has appointed in his word.

[2.] The punishment of idolaters. God looks upon them as haters of him, though they perhaps pretend love to him; he will visit their iniquity, that is, he will very severely punish it, not only as a breach of his law, but as an affront to his majesty, a violation of the covenant, and a blow at the root of all religion. He will visit it upon the children, that is, this being a sin for which churches shall be unchurched and a bill of divorce given them, the children shall be cast out of covenant and communion together with the parents, as with the parents the children were at first taken in. Or he will bring such judgments upon a people as shall be the total ruin of families. If idolaters live to be old, so as to see their children

of the third or fourth generation, it shall be the vexation of their eyes, and the breaking of their hearts, to see them fall by the sword, carried captive, and enslaved. Nor is it an unrighteous thing with God (if the parents died in their iniquity, and the children tread in their steps, and keep up false worships, because they received them by tradition from their fathers), when the measure is full, and God comes by his judgments to reckon with them, to bring into the account the idolatries their fathers were guilty of. Though he bear long with an idolatrous people, he will not bear always, but by the fourth generation, at furthest, he will begin to visit. Children are dear to their parents; therefore, to deter men from idolatry, and to show how much God is displeased with it, not only a brand of infamy is by it entailed upon families, but the judgments of God may for it be executed upon the poor children when the parents are dead and gone.

[3.] The favour God would show to his faithful worshippers: Keeping mercy for thousands of persons, thousands of generations of those that love me, and keep my commandments. This intimates that the second commandment, though, in the letter of it, it is only a prohibition of false worships, yet includes a precept of worshipping God in all those ordinances which he has instituted. As the first commandment requires the inward worship of love, desire, joy, hope, and admiration, so the second requires the outward worship of prayer and praise, and solemn attendance on God's word. Note,

First, Those that truly love God will make it their constant care and endeavour to keep his commandments, particularly those that relate to his worship. Those that love God, and keep those commandments, shall receive grace to keep his other commandments. Gospel worship will have a good influence upon all manner of gospel obedience.

Secondly, God has mercy in store for such. Even they need mercy, and cannot plead merit; and mercy they shall find with God, merciful protection in their obedience and a merciful recompence of it.

Thirdly, This mercy shall extend to thousands, much further than the wrath threatened to those that hate him, for that reaches but to the third or fourth generation. The streams of mercy run now as full, as free, and as fresh, as ever.

6 and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

The third commandment concerns the manner of our worship, that it be done with all possible reverence and seriousness, Ex 20:7. We have here,

(1.) A strict prohibition: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. It is supposed that, having taken Jehovah for their God, they would make mention of his name (for thus all people will walk everyone in the name of his god); this command gives a needful caution not to mention it in vain, and it is still as needful as ever. We take God's name in vain,

[1.] By hypocrisy, making a profession of God's name, but not living up to that profession. Those that name the name of Christ, but do not depart from iniquity, as that name binds them to do, name it in vain; their worship is vain (Mt 15:7-9), their oblations are vain (Isa 1:11,13), their religion is vain, Jam 1:26.

[2.] By covenant-breaking; if we make promises to God, binding our souls with those bonds to that which is good, and yet perform not to the Lord our vows, we take his name in

vain (Mt 5:33), it is folly, and God has no pleasure in fools (Ec 5:4), nor will he be mocked, Ga 6:7.

[3.] By rash swearing, mentioning the name of God, or any of his attributes, in the form of an oath, without any just occasion for it, or due application of mind to it, but as a by-word, to no purpose at all, or to no good purpose.

[4.] By false swearing, which, some think, is chiefly intended in the letter of the commandment; so it was expounded by those of old time. Thou shalt not forswear thyself, Mt 5:33. One part of the religious regard the Jews were taught to pay to their God was to swear by his name, De 10:20. But they affronted him, instead of doing him honour, if they called him to be witness to a lie.

[5.] By using the name of God lightly and carelessly, and without any regard to its awful significancy. The profanation of the forms of devotion is forbidden, as well as the profanation of the forms of swearing; as also the profanation of any of those things whereby God makes himself known, his word, or any of his institutions; when they are either turned into charms and spells, or into jest and sport, the name of God is taken in vain.

(2.) A severe penalty: The Lord will not hold him guiltless; magistrates, who punish other offences, may not think themselves concerned to take notice of this, because it does not immediately offer injury either to private property or the public peace; but God, who is jealous for his honour, will not thus connive at it. The sinner may perhaps hold himself guiltless, and think there is no harm in it, and that God will never call him to an account for it. To obviate this suggestion, the threatening is thus expressed, God will not hold him

guiltless, as he hopes he will; but more is implied, namely, that God will himself be the avenger of those that take his name in vain, and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:
10 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates:

The fourth commandment concerns the time of worship. God is to be served and honoured daily, but one day in seven is to be particularly dedicated to his honour and spent in his service. Here is,

(1.) The command itself (Ex 20:8): Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy; and (Ex 20:10), In it thou shalt do no manner of work. It is taken for granted that the sabbath was instituted before; we read of God's blessing and sanctifying a seventh day from the beginning (Ge 2:3), so that this was not the enacting of a new law, but the reviving of an old law.

[1.] They are told what is the day they must religiously observe--a seventh, after six days' labour; whether this was the seventh by computation from the first seventh, or from the day of their coming out of Egypt, or both, is not certain: now the precise day was notified to them (Ex 16:23), and from this they were to observe the seventh.

[2.] How it must be observed. First, As a day of rest; they were to do no manner of work on this day in their callings or worldly business. Secondly, As a holy day, set apart to the honour of the holy God, and to be spent in holy exercises. God, by blessing it, had made it holy; they, by solemnly blessing him, must keep it holy, and not alienate it to any other purpose than that for which the difference between it and other days was instituted.

[3.] Who must observe it: Thou, and thy son, and thy daughter; the wife is not mentioned, because she is supposed to be one with the husband and present with him, and, if he sanctify the sabbath, it is taken for granted that she will join with him; but the rest of the family are specified. Children and servants must keep the sabbath, according to their age and capacity: in this, as in other instances of religion, it is expected that masters of families should take care, not only to serve the Lord themselves, but that their houses also should serve him, at least that it may not be through their neglect if they do not, Jos 24:15. Even the proselyted strangers must observe a difference between this day and other days, which, if it laid some restraint upon them then, yet proved a happy indication of God's gracious purpose, in process of time, to bring the Gentiles into the church, that they might share in the benefit of Sabbaths. Compare Isa 56:6,7. God takes notice of what we do, particularly what we do on sabbath days, though we should be where we are strangers.

[4.] A particular memorandum put upon this duty: Remember it. It is intimated that the sabbath was instituted and observed before; but in their bondage in Egypt they had lost their computation, or were restrained by their task-masters, or, through a great degeneracy and indifference in religion, they had let fall the observance of it, and therefore it was requisite they should be reminded of it.

Note, Neglected duties remain duties still, notwithstanding our neglect. It also intimates that we are both apt to forget it and concerned to remember it. Some think it denotes the preparation we are to make for the sabbath; we must think of it before it comes, that, when it does come, we may keep it holy, and do the duty of it.

(2.) The reasons of this command.

[1.] We have time enough for ourselves in those six days, on the seventh day let us serve God; and time enough to tire ourselves, on the seventh it will be a kindness to us to be obliged to rest.

[2.] This is God's day: it is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, not only instituted by him, but consecrated to him. It is sacrilege to alienate it; the sanctification of it is a debt.

[3.] It is designed for a memorial of the creation of the world, and therefore to be observed to the glory of the Creator, as an engagement upon ourselves to serve him and an encouragement to us to trust in him who made heaven and earth. By the sanctification of the sabbath, the Jews declared that they worshipped the God that made the world, and so distinguished themselves from all other nations, who worshipped gods which they themselves made.

[4.] God has given us an example of rest, after six days' work: he rested the seventh day, took a complacency in himself, and rejoiced in the work of his hand, to teach us, on that day, to take a complacency in him, and to give him the glory of his works, Ps 92:4. The sabbath began in the finishing of the work of creation, so will the everlasting sabbath in the finishing of the work of providence and redemption; and we observe the weekly sabbath in expectation of that, as well as in remembrance of the former, in both conforming ourselves to him we worship.

[5.] He has himself blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it. He has put an honour upon it by setting it apart for himself; it is the holy of the Lord and honourable: and he has put blessings into it, which he has encouraged us to expect from him in the religious observance of that day. It is the day which the Lord hath made, let not us do what we can to unmake it. He has blessed, honoured, and sanctified it, let not us profane

it, dishonour it, and level that with common time which God's blessing has thus dignified and distinguished.

11 for *in* six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12 Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

We have here the laws of the second table, as they are commonly called, the last six of the ten commandments, comprehending our duty to ourselves and to one another, and constituting a comment upon the second great commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. As religion towards God is an essential branch of universal righteousness, so righteousness towards men is an essential branch of true religion. Godliness and honesty must go together.

The fifth commandment concerns the duties we owe to our relations; those of children to their parents are alone specified: Honour thy father and thy mother, which includes,

1. A decent respect to their persons, an inward esteem of them outwardly expressed upon all occasions in our conduct towards them. Fear them (Le 19:3), give them reverence, Heb 12:9. The contrary to this is mocking at them and despising them, Pr 30:17.

2. Obedience to their lawful commands; so it is expounded (Eph 6:1-3): "Children, obey your parents, come when they call you, go where they send you, do what they bid you, refrain from what they forbid you; and this, as children, cheerfully, and from a principle of love." Though you have said, "We will not," yet afterwards repent and obey, Mt 21:29.

3. Submission to their rebukes, instructions, and corrections; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward, out of conscience towards God.

4. Disposing of themselves with the advice, direction, and consent, of parents, not alienating their property, but with their approbation.

5. Endeavouring, in everything, to be the comfort of their parents, and to make their old age easy to them, maintaining them if they stand in need of support, which our Saviour makes to be particularly intended in this commandment, Mt 15:4-6. The reason annexed to this commandment is a promise: That thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Having mentioned, in the preface to the commandments, has bringing them out of Egypt as a reason for their obedience, he here, in the beginning of the second table, mentions his bringing them into Canaan, as another reason; that good land they must have upon their thoughts and in their eye, now that they were in the wilderness. They must also remember, when they came to that land, that they were upon their good behaviour, and that, if they did not conduct themselves well, their days should be shortened in that land, both the days of particular persons who should be cut off from it, and the days of their nation which should be removed out of it.

But here a long life in that good land is promised particularly to obedient children. Those that do their duty to their parents are most likely to have the comfort of that which their parents gather for them and leave to them; those that support their parents shall find that God, the common Father, will support them. This promise is expounded (Eph 6:3), That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. Those who, in conscience towards God, keep this and the rest of God's commandments, may be sure that it shall be well with them, and that they shall live as long on earth as Infinite

Wisdom sees good for them, and that what they may seem to be cut short of on earth shall be abundantly made up in eternal life, the heavenly Canaan which God will give them.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

The sixth commandment concerns our own and our neighbour's life (Ex 20:13): "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not do anything hurtful or injurious to the health, ease, and life, of thy own body, or any other person's unjustly." This is one of the laws of nature, and was strongly enforced by the precepts given to Noah and his sons, Ge 9:5,6. It does not forbid killing in lawful war, or in our own necessary defence, nor the magistrate's putting offenders to death, for those things tend to the preserving of life; but it forbids all malice and hatred to the person of any (for he that hateth his brother is a murderer), and all personal revenge arising therefrom; also all rash anger upon sudden provocations, and hurt said or done, or aimed to be done, in passion: of this our Saviour expounds this commandment, Mt 5:22. And, as that which is worst of all, it forbids persecution, laying wait for the blood of the innocent and excellent ones of the earth.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

The seventh commandment concerns our own and our neighbour's chastity: Thou shalt not commit adultery, Ex 20:14. This is put before the sixth by our Saviour (Mk 10:19): Do not commit adultery, do not kill; for our chastity should be as dear to us as our lives, and we should be as much afraid of that which defiles the body as of that which destroys it. This commandment forbids all acts of uncleanness, with all those fleshly lusts which produce those acts and war against the soul, and all those practices which cherish and excite those fleshly lusts, as looking, in order to lust, which, Christ tells us, is forbidden in this commandment, Mt 5:28.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

The eighth commandment concerns our own and our neighbour's wealth, estate, and goods: Thou shalt not steal, Ex 20:15. Though God had lately allowed and appointed them to spoil the Egyptians in a way of just reprisal, yet he

did not intend that it should be drawn into a precedent and that they should be allowed thus to spoil one another. This command forbids us to rob ourselves of what we have by sinful spending, or of the use and comfort of it by sinful sparing, and to rob others by removing the ancient landmarks, invading our neighbour's rights, taking his goods from his person, or house, or field, forcibly or clandestinely, over-reaching in bargains, nor restoring what is borrowed or found, withholding just debts, rents, or wages, and (which is worst of all) to rob the public in the coin or revenue, or that which is dedicated to the service of religion.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The ninth commandment concerns our own and our neighbour's good name: Thou shalt not bear false witness, Ex 20:16. This forbids,

1. Speaking falsely in any matter, lying, equivocating, and any way devising and designing to deceive our neighbour.

2. Speaking unjustly against our neighbour, to the prejudice of his reputation; and (which involves the guilty of both),

3. Bearing false witness against him, laying to his charge things that he knows not, either judicially, upon oath (by which the third commandment, and the sixth of eighth, as well as this, are broken), or extrajudicially, in common converse, slandering, backbiting, tale-bearing, aggravating what is done amiss and making it worse than it is, and any way endeavouring to raise our own reputation upon the ruin of our neighbour's.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbor's.

The tenth commandment strikes at the root: Thou shalt not covet, Ex 20:17. The foregoing commands implicitly forbid

all desire of doing that which will be an injury to our neighbour; this forbids all inordinate desire of having that which will be a gratification to ourselves. "O that such a man's house were mine! Such a man's wife mine! Such a man's estate mine!" This is certainly the language of discontent at our own lot, and envy at our neighbour's; and these are the sins principally forbidden here. St. Paul, when the grace of God caused the scales to fall from his eyes, perceived that this law, Thou shalt not covet, forbade all those irregular appetites and desires which are the first-born of the corrupt nature, the first risings of the sin that dwelleth in us, and the beginnings of all the sin that is committed by us: this is that lust which, he says, he had not known the evil of, if this commandment, when it came to his conscience in the power of it, had not shown it to him, Ro 7:7. God give us all to see our face in the glass of this law, and to lay our hearts under the government of it!

The People's Fear

18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw *it*, they removed, and stood afar off.

The extraordinary terror with which the law was given. Never was any thing delivered with such awful pomp; every word was accented, and every sentence paused, with thunder and lightning, much louder and brighter, no doubt, than ordinary. And why was the law given in this dreadful manner, and with all this tremendous ceremony?

1. It was designed (once for all) to give a sensible discovery of the glorious majesty of God, for the assistance of our faith concerning it, that, knowing the terror of the Lord, we may be persuaded to live in his fear.

2. It was a specimen of the terrors of the general judgment, in which sinners will be called to an account for the breach of this law: the archangel's trumpet will then sound an alarm, to give notice of the Judge's coming, and a fire shall devour before him.

3. It was an indication of the terror of those convictions which the law brings into conscience, to prepare the soul for the comforts of the gospel. Thus was the law given by Moses in such a way as might startle, affright, and humble men, that the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ might be the more welcome. The apostle largely describes this instance of the terror of that dispensation, as a foil to set off our privileges, as Christians, in the light, liberty, and joy, of the New-Testament dispensation, Heb 12:18, &c.

19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

The impression which this made, for the present, upon the people; they must have had stupid hearts indeed, if this had not affected them.

1. They removed, and stood afar off, Ex 20:18. Before God began to speak, they were thrusting forward to gaze (Ex 19:21); but now they were effectually cured of their presumption, and taught to keep their distance.

2. They entreated that the word should not be so spoken to them any more (Heb 12:19), but begged that God would speak to them by Moses, Ex 20:19. Hereby they obliged themselves to acquiesce in the mediation of Moses, they themselves nominating him as a fit person to deal between them and God, and promising to hearken to him as to God's messenger; hereby also they teach us to acquiesce in that method which Infinite Wisdom takes, of speaking to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor

their hand be heavy upon us. Once God tried the expedient of speaking to the children of men immediately, but it was found that they could not bear it; it rather drove men from God than brought them to him, and, as it proved in the issue, though it terrified them, it did not deter them from idolatry, for soon after this they worshipped the golden calf. Let us therefore rest satisfied with the instructions given us by the scriptures and the ministry; for, if we believe not them, neither should we be persuaded though God should speak to us in thunder and lightning, as he did from Mount Sinai: here that matter was determined.

20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

The encouragement Moses gave them, by explaining the design of God in his terror (Ex 20:20): Fear not, that is, "Think not that the thunder and fire are designed to consume you," which was the thing they feared (Ex 20:19, lest we die); thunder and lightning constituted one of the plagues of Egypt, but Moses would not have them think they were sent to them on the same errand on which they were sent to the Egyptians: no, they were intended,

1. To prove them, to try how they would like dealing with God immediately, without a mediator, and so to convince them how admirably well God had chosen for them, in putting Moses into that office. Ever since Adam fled, upon hearing God's voice in the garden, sinful man could not bear either to speak to God or hear from him immediately.

2. To keep them to their duty, and prevent their sinning against God. He encourages them, saying, Fear not, and yet tells them that God thus spoke to them, that his fear might be before their face. We must not fear with amazement--with

that fear which has torment, which only works upon the fancy for the present, sets us a trembling, genders to bondage, betrays us to Satan, and alienates us from God; but we must always have in our minds a reverence of God's majesty, a dread of his displeasure, and an obedient regard to his sovereign authority over us: this fear will quicken us to our duty and make us circumspect in our walking. Thus stand in awe, and sin not, Ps 4:4.

21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God *was.*

The progress of their communion with God by the mediation of Moses, Ex 20:21. While the people continued to stand afar off, conscious of guilt and afraid of God's wrath, Moses drew near unto the thick darkness; he was made to draw near, so the word is: Moses, of himself, durst not have ventured into the thick darkness, if God had not called him, and encouraged him, and, as some of the rabbies suppose, sent an angel to take him by the hand, and lead him up.

22 And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

They are here forbidden to make images for worship (Ex 20:22,23): You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven (such was his wonderful condescension, much more than for some mighty prince to talk familiarly with a company of poor beggars); now you shall not make gods of silver.

1. This repetition of the second commandment comes in here, either

(1.) As pointing to that which God had chiefly in view in giving them this law in this manner, that is, their peculiar addictedness to idolatry, and the peculiar sinfulness of that crime. Ten commandments God had given them, but Moses is ordered to inculcate upon them especially the first two.

They must not forget any of them, but they must be sure to remember those. Or,

(2.) As pointing to that which might properly be inferred from God's speaking to them as he had done. He had given them sufficient demonstration of his presence among them; they needed not to make images of him, as if he were absent. Besides, they had only seen that he talked with them; they had seen no manner of similitude, so that they could not make any image of God; and his manifesting himself to them only by a voice plainly showed them that they must not make any such image, but keep up their communion with God by his word, and not otherwise.

2. Two arguments are here hinted against image-worship:--

(1.) That thereby they would affront God, intimated in that, You shall not make with me gods. Though they pretended to worship them but as representations of God, yet really they made them rivals with God, which he would not endure.

(2.) That thereby they would abuse themselves, intimated in that, "You shall not make unto you gods; while you think by them to assist your devotion, you will really corrupt it, and put a cheat upon yourselves." At first, it should seem, they made their images for worship of gold and silver, pretending, by the richness of those metals, to honour God, and, by the brightness of them, to affect themselves with his glory; but, even in these, they changed the truth of God into a lie, and so, by degrees, were justly given up to such strong delusions as to worship images of wood or stone.

23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

24 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

They are here assured of God's gracious acceptance of their devotions, wherever they were paid according to his will (Ex 20:24): In all places where I record my name, or where my name is recorded (that is, where I am worshipped in sincerity), I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. Afterwards, God chose one particular place wherein to record his name: but that being taken away now under the gospel, when men are encouraged to pray everywhere, this promise revives in its full extent, that, wherever God's people meet in his name to worship him, he will be in the midst of them, he will honour them with his presence, and reward them with the gifts of his grace; there he will come unto them, and will bless them, and more than this we need not desire for the beautifying of our solemn assemblies.

25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

They are here directed in making altars for worship: it is meant of occasional altars, such as they reared now in the wilderness, before the tabernacle was erected, and afterwards upon special emergencies, for present use, such as Gideon built (Jdg 6:24), Manoah (Jdg 13:19), Samuel (1Sa 7:17), and many others. We may suppose, now that the people of Israel were, with this glorious discovery which God had made of himself to them, that many of them would incline, in this pang of devotion, to offer sacrifice to God; and, it being necessary to a sacrifice that there be an alter, they are here appointed,

To make their altars very plain, either of earth or of unhewn stone, Ex 20:24,25. That they might not be tempted to think of a graven image, they must not so much as hew into shape the stones that they made their altars of, but pile them up as they were, in the rough. This rule being prescribed before the establishment of the ceremonial law, which appointed altars much more costly, intimates that, after the period of that law,

plainness should be accepted as the best ornament of the external services of religion, and that gospel-worship should not be performed with external pomp and gaiety.

26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

To make their altars very low (Ex 20:26), so that they might not go up by steps to them. That the higher the altar was, and the nearer heaven, the more acceptable the sacrifice was, was a foolish fancy of the heathen, who therefore chose high places; in opposition to this, and to show that it is the elevation of the heart, not of the sacrifice, that God looks at, they were here ordered to make their altars low. We may suppose that the altars they reared in the wilderness, and other occasional altars, were designed only for the sacrifice of one beast at a time; but the altar in Solomon's temple, which was to be made much longer and broader, that it might contain many sacrifices at once, was made ten cubits high, that the height might bear a decent proportion to the length and breadth; and to that it was requisite they should go up by steps, which yet, no doubt, were so contrived as to prevent the inconvenience here spoken of, the discovering of their nakedness thereon.

Exodus-21

The Treatment of Servants

The Ex 21:1 is the general title of the laws contained in this and the two following chapters, some of them relating to the religious worship of God, but most of them relating to matters between man and man. Their government being purely a Theocracy, that which in other states is to be settled by human prudence was directed among them by a divine appointment, so that the constitution of their government was peculiarly adapted to make them happy. These laws are called judgments, because they are framed in infinite wisdom and equity, and because their magistrates were to give judgment

according to the people. In the doubtful cases that had hitherto occurred, Moses had particularly enquired of God for them, as appeared, Ex 18:15; but now God gave him statutes in general by which to determine particular cases, which likewise he must apply to other like cases that might happen, which, falling under the same reason, fell under the same rule. He begins with the laws concerning servants, commanding mercy and moderation towards them. The Israelites had lately been servants themselves; and now that they had become, not only their own masters, but masters of servants too, lest they should abuse their servants, as they themselves had been abused and ruled with rigour by the Egyptian task-masters, provision was made by these laws for the mild and gentle usage of servants.

Note, If those who have had power over us have been injurious to us this will not in the least excuse us if we be in like manner injurious to those who are under our power, but will rather aggravate our crime, because, in that case, we may the more easily put our souls into their soul's stead. Here is,

1 Now these *are* the judgments which thou shalt set before them.
2 If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

A law concerning men-servants, sold, either by themselves or their parents, through poverty, or by the judges, for their crimes; even those of the latter sort (if Hebrews) were to continue in slavery but seven years at the most, in which time it was taken for granted that they would sufficiently have smarted for their folly or offence. At the seven years' end the servant should either go out free (Ex 21:2,3), or his servitude should thenceforward be his choice, Ex 21:5,6. If he had a wife given him by his master, and children, he might either leave them and go out free himself, or, if he had such a kindness for them that he would rather tarry with them in bondage than go out at liberty without them, he was to have his ear bored through to the doorpost and serve till the death of his master, or the year of jubilee.

3 If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.

4 If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

By this law God taught, (1.) The Hebrew servants generosity, and a noble love of liberty, for they were the Lord's freemen; a mark of disgrace must be put upon him who refused liberty when he might have it, though he refused it upon considerations otherwise laudable enough. Thus Christians, being bought with a price, and called unto liberty, must not be the servants of men, nor of the lusts of men, 1Co 7:23. There is a free and princely spirit that much helps to uphold a Christian, Ps 51:12. He likewise taught, (2.) The Hebrew masters not to trample upon their poor servants, knowing, not only that they had been by birth upon a level with them, but that, in a few years, they would be so again. Thus Christian masters must look with respect on believing servants, Philemon 1:16.

This law will be further useful to us, To explain the obligation which the great Redeemer laid upon himself to prosecute the work of our salvation, for he says (Ps 40:6), My ears hast thou opened, which seems to allude to this law. He loved his Father, and his captive spouse, and the children that were given him, and would not go out free from his undertaking, but engaged to serve in it for ever, Isa 42:1,4. Much more reason have we thus to engage ourselves to serve God for ever; we have all the reason in the world to love our Master and his work, and to have our ears bored to his door-posts, as those who desire not to go out free from his service.

5 And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:

6 then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever.

7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do.

8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself,
then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation
he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.
9 And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her
after the manner of daughters.
10 If he take him another *wife*, her food, her raiment, and her duty of
marriage, shall he not diminish.
11 And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free
without money.

Laws concerning Acts of Violence

12 He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.

A law concerning murder. He had lately said, Thou shalt not kill; here he provides, 1. For the punishing of wilful murder (Ex 21:12): He that smiteth a man, whether upon a sudden passion or in malice prepense, so that he die, the government must take care that the murderer be put to death, according to that ancient law (Ge 9:6), Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. God, who by his providence gives and maintains life, thus by his law protects it; so that mercy shown to a wilful murderer is real cruelty to all mankind besides: such a one, God here says, shall be taken even from his altar (Ex 21:14), to which he might flee for protection; and, if God will not shelter him, let him flee to the pit, and let no man stay him. 2. For the relief of such as killed by accident, per infortunium--by misfortune, or chance-medley, as our law expresses it, when a man, in doing a lawful act, without intent of hurt to any, happens to kill another, or, as it is here described, God delivers him into his hand; for nothing comes to pass by chance; what seems to us purely casual is ordered by the divine Providence, for wise and holy ends secret to us. In this case God provided cities of refuge for the protection of those whose infelicity it was, but not their fault, to occasion the death of another, Ex 21:13. With us, who know no avengers of blood but the magistrates, the law itself is a sufficient sanctuary for those whose minds are innocent, though their hands are guilty, and there needs no other.

13 And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver *him* into his hand;
then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.
14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him
with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.
15 And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put
to death.

Concerning rebellious children. It is here made a capital crime, to be punished with death, for children either,

1. To strike their parents (Ex 21:15) so as either to draw blood or to make the place struck black and blue. Or,

2. To curse their parents (Ex 21:17), if they profaned any name of God in doing it, as the rabbies say. Note, The undutiful behaviour of children towards their parents is a very great provocation to God our common Father; and, if men do not punish it, he will. Those are perfectly lost to all virtue, and abandoned to all wickedness, that have broken through the bonds of filial reverence and duty to such a degree as in word or action to abuse their own parents. What yoke will those bear that have shaken off this? Let children take heed of entertaining in their minds any such thought or passions towards their parents as savour of undutifulness and contempt; for the righteous God searches the heart.

16 And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in
his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

Here is a law against man-stealing (Ex 21:16): He that steals a man (that is, a person, man, woman, or child), with design to sell him to the Gentiles (for no Israelite would buy him), was adjudged to death by this statute, which is ratified by the apostle (1Ti 1:10), where men-stealers are reckoned among those wicked ones against whom laws must be made by Christian princes.

17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put
to death.
18 And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone,
or with *his* fist, and he die not, but keepeth *his* bed:

Care is here taken that satisfaction be made for hurt done to a person, though death do not ensue, Ex 21:18,19. He that did the hurt must be accountable for damages, and pay, not only for the cure, but for the loss of time, to which the Jews add that he must likewise give some recompence both for the pain and for the blemish, if there were any.

19 if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that
smote *him* be quit: only he shall pay *for* the loss of his time, and
shall cause *him* to be thoroughly healed.

20 And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die
under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

21 Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be
punished: for he *is* his money.

22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit
depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely
punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him;
and he shall pay as the judges *determine*.

1. The execution of this law is not hereby put into the hands of private persons, as if every man might avenge himself, which would introduce universal confusion, and make men like the fishes of the sea. The tradition of the elders seems to have put this corrupt gloss upon it, in opposition to which our Saviour commands us to forgive injuries, and not to meditate revenge, Mt 5:39.

2. God often executes it in the course of his providence, making the punishment, in many cases, to answer to the sin, as Jdg 1:7,Isa 33:1,Hab 2:13,Mt 26:52.

3. Magistrates ought to have an eye to this rule in punishing offenders, and doing right to those that are injured. Consideration must be had of the nature, quality, and degree of the wrong done, that reparation may be made to the party injured, and others deterred from doing the like; either an eye shall go for an eye, or the forfeited eye shall be redeemed by a sum of money.

Note, He that does wrong must expect one way or other to receive according to the wrong he has done, Col 3:25. God sometimes brings men's violent dealings upon their own heads (Ps 7:16); and magistrates are in this the ministers of the justice, that they are avengers (Ro 13:4), and they shall not bear the sword in vain.

23 And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,
24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,
25 burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Laws concerning Responsibility of Owners

26 And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.
27 And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake.
28 If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox *shall be* quit.
29 But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.

In case of hurt done by oxen, or any other brute-creature; for the law, doubtless, was designed to extend to all parallel cases.

(1.) As an instance of God's care of the life of man (though forfeited a thousand times into the hands of divine justice), and in token of his detestation of the sin of murder. If an ox killed any man, woman, or child, the ox was to be stoned (Ex 21:28); and, because the greatest honour of the inferior creatures is to be serviceable to man, the criminal is denied that honour: his flesh shall not be eaten. Thus God would keep up in the minds of his people a rooted abhorrence of the sin of murder and every thing that was barbarous.

(2.) To make men careful that none of their cattle might do hurt, but that, by all means possible, mischief might be prevented. If the owner of the beast knew that he was mischievous, he must answer for the hurt done, and, according as the circumstances of the case proved him to be more or less accessory, he must either be put to death or ransom his life with a sum of money, Ex 21:29-32. Some of our ancient books make this felony, by the common law of England, and give this reason, "The owner, by suffering his beast to go at liberty when he knew it to be mischievous, shows that he was very willing that hurt should be done."

Note, It is not enough for us not to do mischief ourselves, but we must take care that no mischief be done by those whom it is in our power to restrain, whether man or beast.

30 If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him.

31 Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him.

32 If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

33 And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;

In case of hurt done to oxen, or other cattle.

(1.) If they fall into a pit, and perish there, he that opened the pit must make good the loss, Ex 21:33,34. Note, We must take heed not only of doing that which will be hurtful, but of doing that which may be so. It is not enough not to design and devise mischief, but we must contrive to prevent mischief, else we become accessory to our neighbours' damage. Mischief done in malice is the great transgression; but mischief done through negligence, and for want of due care and consideration, is not without fault, but ought to be reflected upon with great regret, according as the degree of the mischief is: especially we must be careful that we do

nothing to make ourselves accessory to the sins of others, by laying an occasion of offence in our brother's way, Ro 14:13.

(2.) If cattle fight, and one kill another, the owners shall equally share in the loss, Ex 21:35. Only if the beast that had done the harm was known to the owner to have been mischievous he shall answer for the damage, because he ought either to have killed him or kept him up, Ex 21:36. The determinations of these cases carry with them the evidence of their own equity, and give such rules of justice as were then, and are still, in use, for the decision of similar controversies that arise between man and man. But I conjecture that these cases might be specified, rather than others (though some of them seem minute), because they were then cases in fact actually depending before Moses; for in the wilderness where they lay closely encamped, and had their flocks and herds among them, such mischiefs as these last mentioned were likely enough to occur. That which we are taught by these laws is that we should be very careful to do no wrong, either directly or indirectly; and that, if we have done wrong, we must be very willing to make satisfaction, and desirous that nobody may lose by us.

34 the owner of the pit shall make *it* good, *and* give money unto the
owner of them; and the dead *beast* shall be his.
35 And if one man's ox hurt another's that he die; then they shall
sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead *ox* also
they shall divide.
36 Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his
owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the
dead shall be his own.

Exodus-22

Laws concerning Restitution

1 If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

Concerning theft, which are these:--

1. If a man steal any cattle (in which the wealth of those times chiefly consisted), and they be found in his custody, he must restore double, Ex 22:4. Thus he must both satisfy for the wrong and suffer for the crime. But it was afterwards provided that if the thief were touched in conscience, and voluntarily confessed it, before it was discovered or enquired into by any other, then he should only make restitution of what he had stolen, and add to it a fifth part, Le 6:4,5.

2. If he had killed or sold the sheep or ox he had stolen, and thereby persisted in his crime, he must restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep (Ex 22:1), more for an ox than for a sheep because the owner, besides all the other profit, lost the daily labour of his ox. This law teaches us that fraud and injustice, so far from enriching men, will impoverish them: if we unjustly get and keep that which is another's, it will not only waste itself, but it will consume that which is our own.

3. If he was not able to make restitution, he must be sold for a slave, Ex 22:3. The court of judgment was to do it, and it is probable that the person robbed had the money. Thus with us, in some cases, felons are transported into plantations where alone Englishmen know what slavery is.

2 If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, *there shall* no blood *be shed* for him.

3 If the sun be risen upon him, *there shall be* blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

If a thief broke a house in the night, and was killed in the doing of it, his blood was upon his own head, and should not be required at the hand of him that shed it, Ex 22:2. As he that does an unlawful act bears the blame of the mischief that follows to others, so likewise of that which follows to himself. A man's house is his castle, and God's law, as well as man's, sets a guard upon it; he that assaults it does so at his peril. Yet, if it was in the day-time that the thief was killed, he that killed him must be accountable for it (Ex 22:3), unless it was in the necessary defence of his own life. Note, We ought to be tender of the lives even of bad men; the magistrate must afford us redress, and we must not avenge ourselves.

4 If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.

5 If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

Concerning trespass, Ex 22:5. He that wilfully put his cattle into his neighbour's field must make restitution of the best of his own. Our law makes a much greater difference between this and other thefts than the law of Moses did. The Jews hence observed it as a general rule that restitution must always be made of the best, and that no man should keep any cattle that were likely to trespass upon his neighbours or do them any damage. We should be more careful not to do wrong than not to suffer wrong, because to suffer wrong is only an affliction, but to do wrong is a sin, and sin is always worse than affliction.

6 If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed *therewith;* he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

Concerning damage done by fire, Ex 22:6. He that designed only the burning of thorns might become accessory to the burning of corn, and should not be held guiltless. Men of hot and eager spirits should take heed, lest, while they pretend only to pluck up the tares, they root out the wheat also. If the fire did mischief, he that kindled it must answer for it, though it could not be proved that he designed the mischief. Men

must suffer for their carelessness, as well as for their malice. We must take heed of beginning strife; for, though it seem but little, we know not how great a matter it may kindle, the blame of which we must bear, if, with the madman, we cast fire-brands, arrows, and death, and pretend we mean no harm. It will make us very careful of ourselves, if we consider that we are accountable, not only for the hurt we do, but for the hurt we occasion through inadvertency.

7 If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double.

8 If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, *to see* whether he have put his hand unto his neighbor's goods.

Concerning trusts, Ex 22:7-13. If a man deliver goods, suppose to a carrier to be conveyed, or to a warehouse-keeper to be preserved, or cattle to a farmer to be fed, upon a valuable consideration, and if a special confidence be reposed in the person they are lodged with, in case these goods be stolen or lost, perish or be damaged, if it appear that it was not by any fault of the trustee, the owner must stand to the loss, otherwise he that has been false to this trust must be compelled to make satisfaction. The trustee must aver his innocence upon oath before the judges, if the case was such as afforded no other proof, and they were to determine the matter according as it appeared. This teaches us,

1. That we ought to be very careful of every thing we are entrusted with, as careful of it, though it be another's, as if it were our own. It is unjust and base, and that which all the world cries shame on, to betray a trust.

2. That there is such a general failing of truth and justice upon earth as gives too much occasion to suspect men's honesty whenever it is their interest to be dishonest.

3. That an oath for confirmation is an end of strife, Heb 6:16. It is called an oath for the Lord (Ex 22:11), because to him the appeal is made, not only as to a witness of truth, but as to

an avenger of wrong and falsehood. Those that had offered injury to their neighbour by doing any unjust thing, yet, it might be hoped, had not so far debauched their consciences as to profane an oath of the Lord, and call the God of truth to be witness to a lie: perjury is a sin which natural conscience startles at as much as any other. The religion of an oath is very ancient, and a plain indication of the universal belief of a God, and a providence, and a judgment to come.

4. That magistracy is an ordinance of God, designed, among other intentions, to assist men both in discovering rights disputed and recovering rights denied; and great respect ought to be paid to the determination of the judges.

5. That there is no reason why a man should suffer for that which he could not help: masters should consider this, in dealing with their servants, and not rebuke that as a fault which was a mischance, and which they themselves, had they been in their servants' places, could not have prevented.

9 For all manner of trespass, *whether it be* for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, *or* for any manner of lost thing, which *another* challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; *and* whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor.

10 If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing *it:*

11 *then* shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept *thereof,* and he shall not make *it* good.

12 And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof.

13 If it be torn in pieces, *then* let him bring it *for* witness, and he shall not make good that which was torn.

14 And if a man borrow aught of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof *being* not with it, he shall surely make *it* good.

Concerning loans, Ex 22:14,15. If a man (suppose) lent his team to his neighbour, if the owner was with it, or was to

receive profit for the loan of it, whatever harm befel the cattle the owner must stand to the loss of: but if the owner was so kind to the borrower as to lend it to him gratis, and put such a confidence in him as to trust it from under his own eye, then, if any harm happened, the borrower must make it good. Let us learn hence to be very careful not to abuse any thing that is lent us; it is not only unjust, but base and disingenuous, inasmuch as it is rendering evil for good; we should much rather choose to lose ourselves than that any should sustain loss by their kindness to us. Alas, master! for it was borrowed, 2Ki 6:5.

15 *But* if the owner thereof *be* with it, he shall not make *it* good: if it *be* a hired *thing*, it came for his hire.

Laws of Human Relations

16 And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife.

A law that he who debauched a young woman should be obliged to marry her, Ex 22:16,17. If she was betrothed to another, it was death to debauch her (De 22:23,24); but the law here mentioned respects her as single. But, if the father refused her to him, he was to give satisfaction in money for the injury and disgrace he had done her. This law puts an honour upon marriage and shows likewise how improper a thing it is that children should marry without their parents' consent: even here, where the divine law appointed the marriage, both as a punishment to him that had done wrong and a recompence to her that had suffered wrong, yet there was an express reservation for the father's power; if he denied his consent, it must be no marriage.

17 If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

A law which makes witchcraft a capital crime, Ex 22:18. Witchcraft not only gives that honour to the devil which is due to God alone, but bids defiance to the divine Providence, wages war with God's government, and puts his work into the devil's hand, expecting him to do good and evil, and so making him indeed the god of this world; justly therefore was

it punished with death, especially among a people that were blessed with a divine revelation, and cared for by divine Providence above any people under the sun.

18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

Unnatural abominations are here made capital; such beasts in the shape of men as are guilty of them are unfit to live (Ex 22:19): Whosoever lies with a beast shall die.

19 Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.

20 He that sacrificeth unto *any* god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

Idolatry is also made capital, Ex 22:20. God having declared himself jealous in this matter, the civil powers must be jealous in it too, and utterly destroy those persons, families, and places of Israel, that worshipped any god, save the Lord: this law might have prevented the woeful apostasies of the Jewish nation in after times, if those that should have executed it had not been ringleaders in the breach of it.

21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Strangers must not be abused (Ex 22:21), not wronged in judgment by the magistrates, not imposed upon in contracts, nor must any advantage be taken of their ignorance or necessity; no, nor must they be taunted, trampled upon, treated with contempt, or upbraided with being strangers; for all these were vexations, and would discourage strangers from coming to live among them, or would strengthen their prejudices against their religion, to which, by all kind and gentle methods, they should endeavour to proselyte them. The reason given why they should be kind to strangers is, "You were strangers in Egypt, and knew what it was to be vexed and oppressed there," Note,

(1.) Humanity is one of the laws of religion, and obliges us particularly to be tender of those that lie most under disadvantages and discouragements, and to extend our compassionate concern to strangers, and those to whom we

are not under the obligations of alliance or acquaintance. Those that are strangers to us are known to God, and he preserves them, Ps 146:9.

(2.) Those that profess religion should study to oblige strangers, that they may thereby recommend religion to their good opinion, and take heed of doing any thing that may tempt them to think ill of it or its professors, 1Pe 2:12.

(3.) Those that have themselves been in poverty and distress, if Providence enrich and enlarge them, ought to show a particular tenderness towards those that are now in such circumstances as they were in formerly, doing now by them as they then wished to be done by.

22 Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

Widows and fatherless must not be abused (Ex 22:22): You shall not afflict them, that is, "You shall comfort and assist them, and be ready upon all occasions to show them kindness." In making just demands from them, their condition must be considered, who have lost those that should deal for them, and protect them; they are supposed to be unversed in business, destitute of advice, timorous, and of a tender spirit, and therefore must be treated with kindness and compassion; no advantage must be taken against them, nor any hardship put upon them, from which a husband or a father would have sheltered them. For,

(1.) God takes particular cognizance of their case, Ex 22:23. Having no one else to complain and appeal to, they will cry unto God, and he will be sure to hear them; for his law and his providence are guardians to the widows and fatherless, and if men do not pity them, and will not hear them, he will. Note, It is a great comfort to those who are injured and oppressed by men that they have a God to go to who will do more than give them the hearing; and it ought to be a terror

to those who are oppressive that they have the cry of the poor against them, which God will hear. Nay,

(2.) He will severely reckon with those that do oppress them. Though they escape punishments from men, God's righteous judgments will pursue and overtake them, Ex 22:24. Men that have a sense of justice and honour will espouse the injured cause of the weak and helpless; and shall not the righteous God do it? Observe the equity of the sentence here passed upon those that oppress the widows and fatherless: their wives shall become widows, and their children fatherless; and the Lord is known by these judgments, which he sometimes executes still.

23 If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;

24 and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

25 If thou lend money to *any of* my people *that is* poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

A law against extortion in lending. 1. They must not receive use for money from any that borrowed for necessity (Ex 22:25), as in that case, Ne 5:5,7. And such provision the law made for the preservation of estates to their families by the year of jubilee that a people who had little concern in trade could not be supposed to borrow money but for necessity, and therefore it is generally forbidden among themselves; but to a stranger, whom yet they might not oppress, they were allowed to lend upon usury: this law, therefore, in the strictness of it, seems to have been peculiar to the Jewish state; but, in the equity of it, it obliges us to show mercy to those of whom we might take advantage, and to be content to share, in loss as well as profit, with those we lend to,

26 If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down:

They must not take a poor man's bed-clothes in pawn; but, if they did, must restore them by bed-time, Ex 22:26,27. Those

who lie soft and warm themselves should consider the hard and cold lodgings of many poor people, and not do any thing to make bad worse, or to add affliction to the afflicted.

27 for that *is* his covering only, it *is* his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I *am* gracious.

28 Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

A law against the contempt of authority (Ex 22:28): Thou shalt not revile the gods, that is, the judges and magistrates, for their executing these laws; they must do their duty, whoever suffer by it. Magistrates ought not to fear the reproach of men, nor their revilings, but to despise them as long as they keep a good conscience; but those that do revile them for their being a terror to evil works and workers reflect upon God himself, and will have a great deal to answer for another day. We find those under a black character, and a heavy doom, that despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities, Jude 1:8. Princes and magistrates are our fathers, whom the fifth commandment obliges us to honour and forbids us to revile. St. Paul applies this law to himself, and owns that he ought not to speak evil of the ruler of his people; no, not though the ruler was then his most unrighteous persecutor, Ac 23:5; see Ec 10:20.

29 Thou shalt not delay *to offer* the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors.
The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

30 Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, *and* with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me.

A law concerning the offering of their first-fruits to God, Ex 22:29,30. It was appointed before (Ex 13:1-22), and it is here repeated: The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me; and much more reason have we to give ourselves, and all we have, to God, who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. The first ripe of their corn they must not delay to offer. There is danger, if we delay our duty, lest we wholly omit it; and by slipping the first opportunity, in expectation of another, we suffer Satan to cheat us of all our time. Let not young people delay to offer to God the first-fruits of their

time and strength, lest their delays come, at last, to be denials, through the deceitfulness of sin, and the more convenient season they promise themselves never arrive. Yet it is provided that the firstlings of their cattle should not be dedicated to God till they were past seven days old, for then they began to be good for something. Note, God is the first and best, and therefore must have the first and best.

31 And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat *any* flesh *that is* torn of beasts in the fields; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

A distinction put between the Jews and all other people: You shall be holy men unto me; and one mark of that honourable distinction is appointed in their diet, which was, that they should not eat any flesh that was torn of beasts (Ex 22:31), not only because it was unwholesome, but because it was paltry, and base, and covetous, and a thing below those who were holy men unto God, to eat the leavings of the beasts of prey. We that are sanctified to God must not be curious in our diet; but we must be conscientious, not feeding ourselves without fear, but eating and drinking by rule, the rule of sobriety, to the glory of God.

Exodus-23

1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

The witnesses are here cautioned that they neither occasion an innocent man to be indicted, by raising a false report of him and setting common fame against him, nor assist in the prosecution of an innocent man, or one whom they do not know to be guilty, by putting their hand in swearing as witnesses against him, Ex 23:1. Bearing false witness against a man, in a matter that touches his life, has in it all the guilty of lying, perjury, malice, theft, murder, with the additional stains of colouring all with a pretence of justice and involving many others in the same guilt. There is scarcely any one act of wickedness that a man can possibly be guilty of which has in it a greater complication of villanies than this has. Yet the former part of this caution is to be extended, not only to judicial proceedings, but to common conversation; so that

slandering and backbiting are a species of falsewitness-bearing. A man's reputation lies as much at the mercy of every company as his estate or life does at the mercy of a judge or jury; so that he who raises, or knowingly spreads, a false report against his neighbour, especially if the report be made to wise and good men whose esteem one would desire to enjoy, sins as much against the laws of truth, justice, and charity, as a false witness does--with this further mischief, that he leaves it not in the power of the person injured to obtain redress. That which we translate, Thou shalt not raise, the margin reads, Thou shalt not receive a false report; for sometimes the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief; and a backbiting tongue would not do so much mischief as it does if it were not countenanced. Sometimes we cannot avoid hearing a false report, but we must not receive it, that is, we must not hear it with pleasure and delight as those that rejoice in iniquity, nor give credit to it as long as there remains any cause to question the truth of it. This is charity to our neighbour's good name, and doing as we would be done by.

2 Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest *judgment:*

The judges are here cautioned not to pervert judgment. They must not be overruled, either by might or multitude, to go against their consciences in giving judgment, Ex 23:2. With the Jews causes were tried by a bench of justices, and judgment given according to the majority of votes, in which cause every particular justice must go according to truth, as it appeared to him upon the strictest and most impartial enquiry, though the multitude of the people, and their outcries, or, the sentence of the rabbim (we translate it many), the more ancient and honourable of the justices, went the other way. Therefore (as with us), among the Jews, the junior upon the bench voted first, that he might not be swayed nor overruled by the authority of the senior. Judges must not respect the persons either of the parties or of their fellow-judges. The former part of this verse also gives a general rule for all, as well as judges, not to follow a multitude to do evil. General usage will never excuse us in a bad practice; nor is the broad way ever the better or safer for its being tracked and crowded.

We must enquire what we ought to do, not what the majority do; because we must be judged by our Master, not by our fellow-servants, and it is too great a compliment to be willing to go to hell for company.

3 neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

They must not pervert judgment, no, not in favour of a poor man, Ex 23:3. Right must in all cases take place and wrong must be punished, and justice never biassed nor injury connived at under pretence of charity and compassion. If a poor man be a bad man, and do a bad thing, it is foolish pity to let him fare the better for his poverty, De 1:16,17.

4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

Commands concerning neighbourly kindnesses. We must be ready to do all good offices, as there is occasion, for any body, yea even for those that have done us ill offices, Ex 23:4,5. The command of loving our enemies, and doing good to those that hate us, is not only a new, but an old commandment, Pr 25:21,22. Infer hence,

1. If we must do this kindness for an enemy, much more for a friend, though an enemy only is mentioned, because it is supposed that a man would not be unneighbourly to any unless such as he had a particular spleen against.

2. If it be wrong not to prevent our enemy's loss and damage, how much worse is it to occasion harm and loss to him, or any thing he has.

3. If we must bring back our neighbours' cattle when they go astray, much more must we endeavour, by prudent admonitions and instructions, to bring back our neighbours themselves, when they go astray in any sinful path, see Jam 5:19,20. And, if we must endeavour to help up a fallen ass,

much more should we endeavour, by comforts and encouragements, to help up a sinking spirit, saying to those that are of a fearful heart, Be strong. We must seek the relief and welfare of others as our own, Php 2:4. If thou sayest, Behold, we know it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? See Pr 24:11,12.

6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

Neither must they pervert judgment in prejudice to a poor man, nor suffer him to be wronged because he had not wherewithal to right himself; in such cases the judges themselves must become advocates for the poor, as far as their cause was good and honest (Ex 23:6): "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the poor; remember they are thy poor, bone of thy bone, thy poor neighbours, thy poor brethren; let them not therefore fare the worse for being poor."

7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

They must dread the thoughts of assisting or abetting a bad cause (Ex 23:7): "Keep thyself far from a false matter; do not only keep thyself free from it, nor think it enough to say thou art unconcerned in it, but keep far from it, dread it as a dangerous snare. The innocent and righteous thou wouldest not, for all the world, slay with thy own hands; keep far therefore from a false matter, for thou knowest not but it may end in that, and the righteous God will not leave such wickedness unpunished: I will not justify the wicked," that is, "I will condemn him that unjustly condemns others." Judges themselves are accountable to the great judge.

8 And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

They must not take bribes, Ex 23:8. They must not only not be swayed by a gift to give an unjust judgment, to condemn the innocent, or acquit the guilty, or adjudge a man's right from him, but they must not so much as take a gift, lest it should have a bad influence upon them, and overrule them, contrary to their intentions; for it has a strange tendency to blind those that otherwise would do well.

9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

They must not oppress a stranger, Ex 23:9. Though aliens might not inherit lands among them, yet they must have justice done them, must peaceably enjoy their own, and be redressed if they were wronged, though they were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. It is an instance of the equity and goodness of our law, that, if an alien be tried for any crime except treason, the one half of his jury, if he desire it, shall be foreigners; they call it a trial per mediatatem linguae, a kind provision that strangers may not be oppressed. The reason here given is the same with that in Ex 22:21, You were strangers, which is here elegantly enforced, You know the heart of a stranger; you know something of the griefs and fears of a stranger by sad experience, and therefore, being delivered, can the more easily put your souls into their souls' stead.

10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof:

The institution of the sabbatical year, Ex 23:10,11. Every seventh year the land was to rest; they must not plough nor sow it at the beginning of the year, and then they could not expect any great harvest at the end of the year: but what the earth did produce of itself should be eaten from hand to mouth, and not laid up. Now this was designed,

1. To show what a plentiful land that was into which God was bringing them--that so numerous a people could have rich maintenance out of the produce of so small a country, without foreign trade, and yet could spare the increase of every seventh year.

2. To remind them of their dependence upon God their great landlord, and their obligation to use the fruit of their land as he should direct. Thus he would try their obedience in a matter that nearly touched their interest. Afterwards we find that their disobedience to this command was a forfeiture of the promises, 2Ch 36:21.

3. To teach them a confidence in the divine Providence, while they did their duty--that, as the sixth day's manna served for

two day's meat, so the sixth year's increase should serve for two years' subsistence. Thus they must learn not to take thought for their life, Mt 6:25. If we are prudent and diligent in our affairs, we may trust Providence to furnish us with the bread of the day in its day.

11 but the seventh *year* thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy oliveyard.

The repetition of the law of the fourth commandment concerning the weekly sabbath, Ex 23:12. Even in the year of rest they must not think that the sabbath day was laid in common with the other days, but, even that year, it must be religiously observed; yet thus some have endeavoured to take away the observance of the sabbath, by pretending that every day must be a sabbath day.

12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

13 And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

All manner of respect to the gods of the heathen is here strictly forbidden, Ex 23:13. A general caution is prefixed to this, which has reference to all these precepts: In all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect. We are in danger of missing our way on the right hand and on the left, and it is at our peril if we do; therefore we have need to look about us. A man may ruin himself through mere carelessness, but he cannot save himself without great care and circumspection: particularly, since idolatry was a sin which they were much addicted to, and would be greatly tempted to, they must endeavour to blot out the remembrance of the gods of the heathen, and must disuse and forget all their superstitious forms of speech, and never mention them but with detestation. In Christian schools and academies (for it is in vain to think of reforming the play-houses), it were to be wished that the names and stories of the heathen deities, or demons rather, were not so commonly and familiarly used as

they are, even with intimations of respect, and sometimes with forms of invocation. Surely we have not so learned Christ.

The Three Appointed Feasts

14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty :)

16 and the feast of harvest, the first fruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, *which is* in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labors out of the field.

Their solemn religious attendance on God in the place which he should choose is here strictly required, Ex 23:14-17.

1. Thrice a year all their males must come together in a holy convocation, that they might the better know and love one another, and keep up their communion as a dignified and peculiar people.

2. They must come together before the Lord (Ex 23:17) to present themselves before him, looking towards the place where his honour dwelt, and to pay their homage to him as their great Lord, from and under whom they held all their enjoyments.

3. They must feast together before the Lord, eating and drinking together, in token of their joy in God and their grateful sense of his goodness to them; for a feast is made for laughter, Ec 10:19. O what a good Master do we serve, who has made it our duty to rejoice before him, who feasts his servants when they are in waiting! Never let religion be called

a melancholy thing, when its solemn services are solemn feasts.

4. They must not appear before God empty, Ex 23:15. Some free-will offering or other they must bring, in token of their respect and gratitude to their great benefactor; and, as they were not allowed to come empty-handed, so we must not come to worship God empty-hearted; our souls must be filled with grace, with pious and devout affections, holy desires towards him, and dedications of ourselves to him, for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.

5. The Passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, in spring, summer, and autumn, were the three times appointed for their attendance: not in winter, because travelling was then uncomfortable; not in the midst of their harvest, because then they were otherwise employed; so that they had no reason to say that he made them to serve with an offering, or wearied them with incense.

17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God.

Some particular directions are here given about the three feasts, though not so fully as afterwards.

1. As to the Passover, it was not to be offered with leavened bread, for at that feast all leaven was to be cast out, nor was the fat of it to remain until the morning, lest it should become offensive, Ex 23:18.

2. At the feast of pentecost, when they were to begin their harvest, they must bring the first of their first-fruits to God, by the pious presenting of which the whole harvest was sanctified, Ex 23:19.

3. At the feast of ingathering, as it is called (Ex 23:16), they must give God thanks for the harvest-mercies they had received, and must depend upon him for the next harvest, and must not think to receive benefit by that superstitious usage of some of the Gentiles, who, it is said, at the end of their harvest, seethed a kid in its dam's milk, and sprinkled that milk-pottage, in a magical way, upon their gardens and fields, to make them more fruitful next year. But Israel must abhor such foolish customs.

18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.

19 The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

Lord's Angel Sent to Lead Israel

20 Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name *is* in him.

It is promised that this blessed angel should keep them in the way, though it lay through a wilderness first, and afterwards through their enemies' country; thus God's spiritual Israel shall be kept through the wilderness of this earth, and from the insults of the gates of hell. It is also promised that he should bring them into the place which God had not only designed but prepared for them: and thus Christ has prepared a place for his followers, and will preserve them to it, for he is faithful to him that appointed him. The precept joined with this promise is that they be observant of, and obedient to, this angel whom God would send before them (Ex 23:21): "Beware of him, and obey his voice in every thing; provoke him not in any thing, for it is at your peril if you do, he will visit your iniquity." Note,

1. Christ is the author of salvation to those only that obey him. The word of command is Hear you him, Mt 17:5. Observe what he hath commanded, Mt 28:20.

2. Our necessary dependence upon the divine power and goodness should awe us into obedience. We do well to take heed of provoking our protector and benefactor, because if our defence depart from us, and the streams of his goodness be cut off, we are undone. Therefore, "Beware of him, and carry it towards him with all possible reverence and caution. Fear the Lord, and his goodness."

3. Christ will be faithful to those who are faithful to him, and will espouse their cause who adhere to his: I will be an adversary to thine adversaries, Ex 23:22. The league shall be offensive and defensive, like that with Abraham, I will bless him that blesseth thee, and curse him that curseth thee. Thus is God pleased to twist his interests and friendships with his people's.

22 But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then
I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto
thine adversaries.
23 For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the
Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites,
the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.
24 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do
after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite
break down their images.
25 And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and he shall bless thy bread,
and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

It is promised that they should have a comfortable settlement in the land of Canaan, which they hoped now (though it proved otherwise) within a few months to be in the possession of, Ex 23:24-26. Observe,

1. How reasonable the conditions of this promise are--only that they should serve their own God, who was indeed the only true God, and not the gods of the nations, which were no

gods at all, and which they had no reason at all to have any respect for. They must not only not worship their gods, but they must utterly overthrow them, in token of their great abhorrence of idolatry, their resolution never to worship idols themselves, and their care to prevent any other from worshipping them; as the converted conjurors burnt their books, Ac 19:19.

2. How rich the particulars of this promise are.

(1.) The comfort of their food. He shall bless thy bread and thy water; and God's blessing will make bread and water more refreshing and nourishing than a feast of fat things and wines on the lees without that blessing.

(2.) The continuance of their health: "I will take sickness away, either prevent it or remove it. Thy land shall not be visited with epidemical diseases, which are very dreadful, and sometimes have laid countries waste."

(3.) The increase of their wealth. Their cattle should not be barren, nor cast their young, which is mentioned as an instance of prosperity, Job 21:10.

(4.) The prolonging of their lives to old age: "The number of thy days I will fulfil, and they shall not be cut off in the midst by untimely deaths." Thus hath godliness the promise of the life that now is.

26 There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

27 I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come; and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

It is promised that they should conquer and subdue their enemies, the present occupants of the land of Canaan, who must be driven out to make room for them. This God would do,

Effectually by his power (Ex 23:27,28); not so much by the sword and bow of Israel as by the terrors which he would strike into the Canaanites. Though they were so obstinate as not to be willing to submit to Israel, resign their country, and retire elsewhere, which they might have done, yet they were so dispirited that they were not able to stand before them. This completed their ruin; such power had the devil in them that they would resist, but such power had God over them that they could not. I will send my fear before thee; and those that fear will soon flee. Hosts of hornets made way for the hosts of Israel; such mean creatures can God make use of for the chastising of his people's enemies, as in the plagues of Egypt. When God pleases, hornets can drive out Canaanites, as well as lions could, Jos 24:12.

28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

29 I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

30 By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

He would do it gradually, in wisdom (Ex 23:29,30), not all at once, but by little and little. As the Canaanites had kept possession till Israel had grown into a people, so there should still be some remains of them till Israel should grow so numerous as to replenish the whole.

Note, The wisdom of God is to be observed in the gradual advances of the church's interests. It is in real kindness to the church that its enemies are subdued by little and little; for thus we are kept upon our guard, and in a continual dependence upon God. Corruptions are thus driven out of the hearts of God's people; not all at once, but by little and little; the old man is crucified, and therefore dies slowly. God, in his providence, often delays mercies, because we are not ready for them. Canaan has room enough to receive Israel, but Israel is not numerous enough to occupy Canaan. We are not straitened in God; if we are straitened, it is in ourselves. The land of Canaan is promised them (Ex 23:31) in its utmost

extent, which yet they were not possessed of till the days of David; and by their sins they soon lost possession.

The precept annexed to this promise is that they should not make any friendship, nor have any familiarity, with idolaters, Ex 23:32,33. Idolaters must not so much as sojourn in their land, unless they renounced their idolatry. Thus they must avoid the reproach of intimacy with the worshippers of false gods and the danger of being drawn to worship with them. By familiar converse with idolaters, their dread and detestation of the sin would wear off; they would think it no harm, in compliment to their friends, to pay some respect to their gods, and so by degrees would be drawn into the fatal snare.

Note, Those that would be kept from bad courses must keep from bad company; it is dangerous living in a bad neighbourhood; others' sins will be our snares, if we look not well to ourselves. We must always look upon our greatest danger to be from those that would cause us to sin against God. Whatever friendship is pretended, that is really our worst enemy that draws us from our duty.

31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the
Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the
inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them
out before thee.
32 Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.
33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against
me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Exodus-24

Moses and the Elders on Mount Sinai

1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, thou, and
Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and
worship ye afar off.

The first two verses record the appointment of a second session upon mount Sinai, for the making of laws, when an end was put to the first. When a communion is begun between God and us, it shall never fail on his side, if it do not first fail on ours. Moses is directed to bring Aaron and his sons, and the seventy elders of Israel, that they might be witnesses of the glory of God, and that communion with him to which Moses was admitted; and that their testimony might confirm the people's faith. In this approach,

1. They must all be very reverent: Worship you afar off, Ex 24:1. Before they came near, they must worship. Thus we must enter into God's gates with humble and solemn adorations, draw near as those that know our distance, and admire the condescensions of God's grace in admitting us to draw near. Are great princes approached with the profound reverences of the body? And shall not the soul that draws near to God be bowed before him?

2. They must none of them come so near as Moses, Ex 24:2. They must come up to the Lord (and those that would approach to God must ascend), but Moses alone must come near, being therein a type of Christ, who, as the high priest, entered alone into the most holy place.

2 And Moses alone shall come near the Lord: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.

3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, all the words which the Lord hath said will we do.

Moses told the people the words of the Lord, Ex 24:3. He did not lead them blindfold into the covenant, nor teach them a devotion that was the daughter of ignorance; but laid before them all the precepts, general and particular, in the foregoing chapters; and fairly put it to them whether they were willing to submit to these laws or no.

The people unanimously consented to the terms proposed, without reservation or exception: All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. They had before consented in general to be under God's government (Ex 19:8); here they consent in particular to these laws now given. O that there had been such a heart in them! How well were it if people would but be always in the same good mind that sometimes they seem to be in! Many consent to the law, and yet do not live up to it; they have nothing to except against it, and yet will not persuade themselves to be ruled by it.

4 And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

How it was engrossed in the book of the covenant: Moses wrote the words of the Lord (Ex 24:4), that there might be no mistake; probably he had written them as God dictated them on the mount. As soon as ever God had separated to himself a peculiar people in the world, he governed them by a written word, as he has done ever since, and will do while the world stands and the church in it. Moses, having engrossed the articles of agreement concluded upon between God and Israel, read them in the audience of the people (Ex 24:7), that they might be perfectly apprised of the thing, and might try whether their second thoughts were the same with their first, upon the whole matter. And we may suppose they were so; for their words (Ex 24:7) are the same with what they were (Ex 24:3), but something stronger: All that the Lord hath said (be it good, or be it evil, to flesh and blood, Jer 42:6) we will do; so they had said before, but now they add, "And will be obedient; not only we will do what has been commanded, but in every thing which shall further be ordained we will be obedient." Bravely resolved! If they had but stuck to their resolution. See here that God's covenants and commands are so incontestably equitable in themselves, and so highly advantageous to us, that the more we think of them, and the more plainly and fully they are set before us, the more reason we shall see to comply with them.

5 And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord.

How it was sealed by the blood of the covenant, that Israel might receive strong consolations from the ratifying of God's promises to them, and might lie under strong obligations from the ratifying of their promises to God. Thus has Infinite Wisdom devised means that we may be confirmed both in our faith and in our obedience, may be both encouraged in our duty and engaged to it. The covenant must be made by sacrifice (Ps 50:5), because, since man has sinned, and forfeited his Creator's favour, there can be no fellowship by covenant till there be first friendship and atonement by sacrifice.

In preparation therefore for the parties interchangeably putting their seals to this covenant,

[1.] Moses builds an altar, to the honour of God, which was principally intended in all the altars that were built, and which was the first thing to be looked at in the covenant they were now to seal. No addition to the perfections of the divine nature can be made by any of God's dealings with the children of men, but in them his perfections are manifested and magnified, and his honour is shown forth; therefore he will not be represented by an altar, to signify that all he expected from them was that they should do him honour, and that, being his people, they should be to him for a name and a praise.

[2.] He erects twelve pillars, according to the number of the tribes. These were to represent the people, the other party to the covenant; and we may suppose that they were set up against the altar, and that Moses, as mediator, passed to and fro between them. Probably each tribe set up and knew its own pillar, and their elders stood by it.

[3.] He appointed sacrifices to be offered upon the altar (Ex 24:5), burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, which yet were designed to be expiatory. We are not concerned to enquire who these young men were that were employed in offering these sacrifices; for Moses was himself the priest, and what they did was purely as his servants, by his order and appointment. No doubt they were men who by their bodily strength were qualified for the service, and by their station among the people were fittest for the honour.

6 And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basins; and half
of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.
7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience
of the people: and they said, all that the Lord hath said will we
do, and be obedient.

Preparation being thus made, the ratifications were very solemnly exchanged.

[1.] The blood of the sacrifice which the people offered was (part of it) sprinkled upon the altar (Ex 24:6), which signifies the people's dedicating themselves, their lives, and beings, to God, and to his honour. In the blood (which is the life) of the dead sacrifices all the Israelites were presented unto God as living sacrifices, Ro 12:1.

[2.] The blood of the sacrifice which God had owned and accepted was (the remainder of it) sprinkled either upon the people themselves (Ex 24:8) or upon the pillars that represented them, which signified God's graciously conferring his favour upon them and all the fruits of that favour, and his giving them all the gifts they could expect or desire from a God reconciled to them and in covenant with them by sacrifice. This part of the ceremony was thus explained: "Behold the blood of the covenant; see here how God has sealed to you to be a people; his promises to you, and yours to him, are both yea and amen." Thus our Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant (of whom Moses was a type), having offered up himself a sacrifice upon the cross, that his blood might be indeed the blood of the covenant, sprinkled it upon the altar in his intercession (Heb 9:12), and

sprinkles it upon his church by his word and ordinances and the influences and operations of the Spirit of promise, by whom we are sealed. He himself seemed to allude to this solemnity when, in the institution of the Lord's supper, he said, This cup is the New Testament (or covenant) in my blood. Compare with this, Heb 9:19,20.

8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.

9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel;

10 and they saw the God of Israel: and *there was* under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in *his* clearness.

11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

1. They saw the God of Israel (Ex 24:10), that is, they had some glimpse of his glory, in light and fire, though they saw no manner of similitude, and his being no man hath seen nor can see, 1Ti 6:16. They saw the place where the God of Israel stood (so the LXX.), something that came near a similitude, but was not; whatever they saw, it was certainly something of which no image nor picture could be made, and yet enough to satisfy them that God was with them of a truth. Nothing is described but that which was under his feet; for our conceptions of God are all below him, and fall infinitely short of being adequate. They saw not so much as God's feet; but at the bottom of the brightness, and as the footstool or pedestal of it, they saw a most rich and splendid pavement, such as they never saw before nor after, as it had been of sapphires, azure or sky-coloured. The heavens themselves are the pavement of God's palace, and his throne is above the firmament. See how much better wisdom is than the precious onyx or the sapphires, for wisdom was from eternity God's delight (Pr 8:30), and lay in his bosom, but the sapphires are the pavement under his feet; there let us put all the wealth of this world, and not in our hearts.

2. Upon the nobles (or elders) of Israel, he laid not his hand, Ex 24:11. Though they were men, the dazzling splendour of his glory did not overwhelm them; but it was so moderated (Job 26:9), and they were so strengthened (Da 10:19), that they were able to bear it. Nay, though they were sinful men, and obnoxious to God's justice, yet he did not lay his punishing avenging hand upon them, as they feared he would. When we consider what a consuming fire God is, and what stubble we are before him, we shall have reason to say, in all our approaches to him, It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

3. They saw God, and did eat and drink. They had not only their lives preserved, but their vigour, courage, and comfort; it cast no damp upon their joy, but rather increased and elevated it. They feasted upon the sacrifice, before God, in token of their cheerful consent to the covenant now made, their grateful acceptance of the benefits of it, and their communion with God, in pursuance of that covenant. Thus believers eat and drink with Christ at his table, Lu 22:30. Blessed are those that shall eat bread in the kingdom of our Father, and drink of the wine new there.

12 And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.

13 And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua; and Moses went up into the mount of God.

14 And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur *are* with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

The public ceremony of sealing the covenant being over, Moses is called up to receive further instructions, which we have in the following chapters.

He is called up into the mount, and there he remains six days at some distance. Orders are given him (Ex 24:12): Come up to the mount, and be there, that is, "Expect to continue there

for some considerable time." Those that would have communion with God must not only come to ordinances, but they must abide by them. Blessed are those that dwell in his house, not that merely call there. "Come up, and I will give thee a law, that thou mayest teach them." Moses taught them nothing but what he had received from the Lord, and he received nothing from the Lord but what he taught them; for he was faithful both to God and Israel, and did neither add nor diminish, but kept close to his instructions. Having received these orders, he appointed Aaron and Hur to be as lords-justices in his absence, to keep the peace and good order in the congregation, Ex 24:14. The care of his government he would leave behind him when he went up into the mount, that he might not have that to distract his mind; and yet he would not leave the people as sheep having no shepherd, no, not for a few days. Good princes find their government a constant care, and their people find it a constant blessing.

15 And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

16 And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

A cloud covered the mount six days, a visible token of God's special presence there, for he so shows himself to us as at the same time to conceal himself from us. He lets us know so much as to assure us of his presence, power, and grace, but intimates to us that we cannot find him out to perfection. During these six days Moses staid waiting upon the mountain for a call into the presence-chamber, Ex 24:15,16. God thus tried the patience of Moses, and his obedience to that command (Ex 24:12), Be there. If Moses had been tired before the seventh day (as Saul, 1Sa 13:8,9), and had said, What should I wait for the Lord any longer? He would have lost the honour of entering into the cloud; but communion with God is worth waiting for. And it is fit we should address ourselves to solemn ordinances with a solemn pause, taking time to compose ourselves, Ps 108:1.

He is called up into a cloud on the seventh day, probably on the sabbath day, Ex 24:16. Now, the thick cloud opened in the sight of all Israel, and the glory of the Lord broke forth like devouring fire, Ex 24:17. God, even our God, is a consuming fire, and so he was pleased to manifest himself in the giving of the law, that, knowing the terrors of the Lord, we may be persuaded to obey, and may by them be prepared for the comforts of the gospel, and that the grace and truth which come by Jesus Christ may be the more acceptable.

17 And the sight of the glory of the Lord *was* like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

The entrance of Moses into the cloud was very wonderful: Moses went into the midst of the cloud, Ex 24:18. It was an extraordinary presence of mind which the grace of God furnished him with by his six days' preparation, else he durst not have ventured into the cloud, especially when it broke out in devouring fire. Moses was sure that he who called him would protect him; and even those glorious attributes of God which are most terrible to the wicked the saints with a humble reverence rejoice in. He that walks righteously, and speaks uprightly, is able to dwell even with this devouring fire, as we are told, Isa 33:14,15. There are persons and works that will abide the fire, 1Co 3:12, &c., and some that will have confidence before God.

His continuance in the cloud was no less wonderful; he was there forty days and forty nights. It should seem, the six days (Ex 24:16) were not part of the forty; for, during those six days, Moses was with Joshua, who did eat of the manna, and drink of the brook, mentioned, De 9:21, and while they were together it is probable that Moses did eat and drink with him; but when Moses was called into the midst of the cloud he left Joshua without, who continued to eat and drink daily while he waited for Moses's return, but thenceforward Moses fasted. Doubtless God could have said what he had now to

say to Moses in one day, but, for the greater solemnity of the thing, he kept him with him in the mount forty days and forty nights. We are hereby taught to spend much time in communion with God, and to think that time best spent which is so spent. Those that would get the knowledge of God's will must meditate thereon day and night.

Exodus-25

Israel to Bring an Offering

We may suppose that when Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and abode there so long, where the holy angels attended the shechinah, or divine Majesty, he saw and heard very glorious things relating to the upper world, but they were things which it was not lawful nor possible to utter; and therefore, in the records he kept of the transactions there, he says nothing to satisfy the curiosity of those who would intrude into the things which they have not seen, but writes that only which he was to speak to the children of Israel. For the scripture is designed to direct us in our duty, not to fill our heads with speculations, nor to please our fancies.

In these verses God tells Moses his intention in general, that the children of Israel should build him a sanctuary, for he designed to dwell among them (Ex 25:8); and some think that, though there were altars and groves used for religious worship before this, yet there never was any house, or temple, built for sacred uses in any nation before this tabernacle was erected by Moses, and that all the temples which were afterwards so much celebrated among the heathen took rise from this and pattern by it. God had chosen the people of Israel to be a peculiar people to himself (above all people), among whom divine revelation, and a religion according to it, should be lodged and established: he himself would be their King. As their King, he had already given them laws for the government of themselves, and their dealings one with another, with some general rules for religious worship, according to the light of reason and the law of nature, in the

ten commandments and the following comments upon them. But this was not thought sufficient to distinguish them from other nations, or to answer to the extent of that covenant which God would make with them to be their God; and therefore,

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

When Moses was to erect this palace, it was requisite that he should first be instructed where he must have the materials, and where he must have the model; for he could neither contrive it by his own ingenuity nor build it at his own charge; he is therefore directed here concerning both.

The people must furnish him with the materials, not by a tax imposed upon them, but by a voluntary contribution. This is the first thing concerning which orders are here given.

Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering; and there was all the reason in the world that they should, for (Ex 25:1),

[1.] It was God himself that had not only enlarged them, but enriched them with the spoils of the Egyptians. He had instructed them to borrow, and he had inclined the Egyptians to lend, so that from him they had their wealth, and therefore it was fit they should devote it to him and use it for him, and thus make a grateful acknowledgement of the favours they had received. Note,

First, The best use we can make of our worldly wealth is to honour God with it in works of piety and charity.

Secondly, When we have been blessed with some remarkable success in our affairs, and have had, as we say, a good turn, it may be justly expected that we should do something more

than ordinary for the glory of God, consecrating our gain, in some reasonable proportion of it, to the Lord of the whole earth, Mic 4:3.

[2.] The sanctuary that was to be built was intended for their benefit and comfort, and therefore they must be at the expense of it. They had been unworthy of the privilege if they had grudged at the charge. They might well afford to offer liberally for the honour of God, while they lived at free quarters, having food for themselves and their families rained upon them daily from heaven. We also must own that we have our all from God's bounty, and therefore ought to use all for his glory. Since we live upon him, we must live to him.

3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,

4 and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair*,

This offering must be given willingly, and with the heart, that is,

[1.] It was not prescribed to them what or how much they must give, but it was left to their generosity, that they might show their good-will to the house of God and the offices thereof, and might do it with a holy emulation, the zeal of a few provoking many, 2Co 9:2. We should ask, not only, "What must we do?" but, "What may we do for God?"

[2.] Whatever they gave, they must give it cheerfully, not grudgingly and with reluctance, for God loves a cheerful giver, 2Co 9:7. What is laid out in the service of God we must reckon well bestowed.

The particulars are here mentioned which they must offer (Ex 25:3-7), all of them things that there would be occasion for in the tabernacle, or the service of it. Some observe that here was gold, silver, and brass, provided, but no iron; that is the military metal, and this was to be a house of peace. Every thing that was provided was very rich and fine, and the best of the sort; for God, who is the best, should have the best.

5 and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

6 oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,
7 onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the
breastplate.
8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.
9 According to all that I show thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle,
and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye
make *it*.

God himself would furnish him with the model: According to all that I show thee, Ex 25:9. God showed him an exact plan of it, in miniature, which he must conform to in all points. Thus Ezekiel saw in vision the form of the house and the fashion thereof, Eze 43:11.

Note, Whatsoever is done in God's service must be done by his direction, and not otherwise. Yet God did not only show him the model, but gave him also particular directions how to frame the tabernacle according to that model, in all the parts of it, which he goes over distinctly in this and the following chapters. When Moses, in the beginning of Genesis, was to describe the creation of the world, though it is such a stately and curious fabric and made up of such a variety and vast number of particulars, yet he gave a very short and general account of it, and nothing compared with what the wisdom of this world would have desired and expected from one that wrote by divine revelation; but, when he comes to describe the tabernacle, he does it with the greatest niceness and accuracy imaginable. He that gave us no account of the lines and circles of the globe, the diameter of the earth, or the height and magnitude of the stars, has told us particularly the measure of every board and curtain of the tabernacle; for God's church and instituted religion are more precious to him and more considerable than all the rest of the world. And the scriptures were written, not to describe to us the works of nature, a general view of which is sufficient to lead us to the knowledge and service of the Creator, but to acquaint us with the methods of grace, and those things which are purely matters of divine revelation. The blessedness of the future state is more fully represented under the notion of a new

Jerusalem than under the notion of new heavens and a new earth.

The Ark of the Testimony

10 And they shall make an ark *of* shittim wood: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

11 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about.

The tables of the law are called the testimony because God did in them testify his will: his giving them that law was in token of his favour to them; and their acceptance of it was in token of their subjection and obedience to him. This law was a testimony to them, to direct them in their duty, and would be a testimony against them if they transgressed. The ark is called the ark of the testimony (Ex 30:6), and the tabernacle the tabernacle of the testimony (Nu 10:11) or witness, Ac 7:44. The gospel of Christ is also called a testimony or witness, Mt 24:14. It is observable,

1. That the tables of the law were carefully preserved in the ark for the purpose, to teach us to make much of the word of God, and to hide it in our hearts, in our innermost thoughts, as the ark was placed in the holy of holies. It intimates likewise the care which divine Providence ever did, and ever will, take to preserve the records of divine revelation in the church, so that even in the latter days there shall be seen in his temple the ark of his testament. See Re 11:19.

2. That this ark was the chief token of God's presence, which teaches us that the first and great evidence and assurance of God's favour is the putting of his law in the heart. God dwells where that rules, Heb 8:10.

3. That provision was made for the carrying of this ark about with them in all their removals, which intimates to us that, wherever we go, we should take our religion along with us, always bearing about with us the love of the Lord Jesus, and his law.

12 And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put *them* in the four corners thereof; and two rings *shall be* in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it.

13 And thou shalt make staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

14 And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

15 The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it.

16 And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat *of* pure gold: two cubits and a half *shall be* the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof.

The mercy-seat was the covering of the ark or chest, made of solid gold, exactly to fit the dimensions of the ark, Ex 25:17,21. This propitiatory covering, as it might well be translated, was a type of Christ, the great propitiation, whose satisfaction fully answers the demands of the law, covers our transgressions, and comes between us and the curse we deserve. Thus he is the end of the law for righteousness.

18 And thou shalt make two cherubim *of* gold, *of* beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: *even* of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubim on the two ends thereof.

20 And the cherubim shall stretch forth *their* wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces *shall look* one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be.

21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.

22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee
from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which
are upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee
in commandment unto the children of Israel.

The Table for the Showbread

23 Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits *shall be* the
length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a
half the height thereof.
24 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown
of gold round about.
25 And thou shalt make unto it a border of a handbreadth round
about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border
thereof round about.
26 And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings
in the four corners that *are* on the four feet thereof.
27 Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves
to bear the table.
28 And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them
with gold, that the table may be borne with them.
29 And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and
covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: *of* pure gold shalt
thou make them.
30 And thou shalt set upon the table showbread before me always.

The Golden Candlestick

31 And thou shalt make a candlestick *of* pure gold: *of* beaten work
shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his
bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.
32 And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of
the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the
candlestick out of the other side:
33 three bowls made like unto almonds, *with* a knop and a flower in
one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other
branch, *with* a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come
out of the candlestick.

34 And in the candlestick *shall be* four bowls made like unto almonds, *with* their knops and their flowers.
35 And *there shall be* a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.
36 Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all of it *shall be* one beaten work *of* pure gold.
37 And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.
38 And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, *shall be of* pure gold.
39 *Of* a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.
40 And look that thou make *them* after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.

Exodus-26

The Tabernacle

1 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle *with* ten curtains *of* fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: *with* cherubim of cunning work shalt thou make them.

The house must be a tabernacle or tent, such as soldiers now use in the camp, which was both a mean dwelling and a movable one; and yet the ark of God had not better, till Solomon built the temple 480 years after this, 1Ki 6:1. God manifested his presence among them thus in a tabernacle, in compliance with their present condition in the wilderness, that they might have him with them wherever they went. Note, God suits the tokens of his favour, and the gifts of his grace, to his people's wants and necessities, according as they are, accommodating his mercy to their state, prosperous or adverse, settled or unsettled. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, Isa 43:2.

That it might represent the state of God's church in this world, it is a tabernacle-state, Ps 15:1. We have here no continuing city; being strangers in this world, and travellers towards a better, we shall never be fixed till we come to heaven. Church-privileges are movable goods, from one place to another; the gospel is not tied to any place; the candlestick is in a tent, and may easily be taken away, Re 2:5. If we make much of the tabernacle, and improve the privilege of it, wherever we go it will accompany us; but, if we neglect and disgrace it, wherever we stay it will forsake us.

2 The length of one curtain *shall be* eight and twenty cubits, and the
breadth of one curtain four cubits: and every one of the curtains
shall have one measure.
3 The five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and
other five curtains *shall be* coupled one to another.
4 And thou shalt make loops of blue upon the edge of the one curtain
from the selvedge in the coupling; and likewise shalt thou make in
the uttermost edge of *another* curtain, in the coupling of the
second.
5 Fifty loops shalt thou make in the one curtain, and fifty loops shalt
thou make in the edge of the curtain that *is* in the coupling of the
second; that the loops may take hold one of another.
6 And thou shalt make fifty taches of gold, and couple the curtains
together with the taches: and it shall be one tabernacle.
7 And thou shalt make curtains *of* goats' *hair* to be a covering upon
the tabernacle: eleven curtains shalt thou make.
8 The length of one curtain *shall be* thirty cubits, and the breadth of
one curtain four cubits: and the eleven curtains *shall be all* of one
measure.
9 And thou shalt couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains
by themselves, and shalt double the sixth curtain in the forefront
of the tabernacle.
10 And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain *that*
is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops in the edge of the curtain
which coupleth the second.

11 And thou shalt make fifty taches of brass, and put the taches into
the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one.
12 And the remnant that remaineth of the curtains of the tent, the
half curtain that remaineth, shall hang over the back side of the
tabernacle.
13 And a cubit on the one side, and a cubit on the other side of that
which remaineth in the length of the curtains of the tent, it shall
hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and on that side,
to cover it.
14 And thou shalt make a covering for the tent *of* rams' skins dyed red,
and a covering above *of* badgers' skins.
15 And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle *of* shittim wood
standing up.
16 Ten cubits *shall be* the length of a board, and a cubit and a half *shall
be* the breadth of one board.
17 Two tenons *shall there be* in one board, set in order one against
another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle.
18 And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards
on the south side southward.
19 And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty
boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two
sockets under another board for his two tenons.
20 And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side *there
shall be* twenty boards,
21 and their forty sockets *of* silver; two sockets under one board, and
two sockets under another board.
22 And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six
boards.
23 And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in
the two sides.
24 And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be
coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it
be for them both; they shall be for the two corners.
25 And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets *of* silver, sixteen
sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under
another board.

26 And thou shalt make bars *of* shittim wood; five for the boards of
the one side of the tabernacle,
27 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and
five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two
sides westward.
28 And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end
to end.
29 And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings
of gold *for* places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with
gold.
30 And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion
thereof which was showed thee in the mount.
31 And thou shalt make a veil *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine
twined linen of cunning work: with cherubim shall it be made.
32 And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim *wood* overlaid
with gold: their hooks *shall be of* gold, upon the four sockets of
silver.
33 And thou shalt hang up the veil under the taches, that thou mayest
bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the
veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy.
34 And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in
the most holy *place.*
35 And thou shalt set the table without the veil, and the candlestick
over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the
south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side.
36 And thou shalt make a hanging for the door of the tent, *of* blue,
and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with
needlework.
37 And thou shalt make for the hanging five pillars *of* shittim *wood,*
and overlay them with gold, *and* their hooks *shall be of* gold: and
thou shalt cast five sockets of brass for them.

Exodus-27

The Altar of Burnt Offering

1 And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and
five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height
thereof *shall be* three cubits.
2 And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof:
his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass.
3 And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels,
and his basins, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels
thereof thou shalt make *of* brass.
4 And thou shalt make for it a grate of network *of* brass; and upon the
net shalt thou make four brazen rings in the four corners thereof.
5 And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that
the net may be even to the midst of the altar.
6 And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves *of* shittim wood, and
overlay them with brass.
7 And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall
be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it.
8 Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was showed thee in
the mount, so shall they make *it*.

The Court of the Tabernacle

9 And thou shalt make the court of the tabernacle: for the south
side southward *there shall be* hangings for the court *of* fine twined
linen of a hundred cubits long for one side:
10 and the twenty pillars thereof and their twenty sockets *shall be of*
brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *shall be of* silver.
11 And likewise for the north side in length *there shall be* hangings of
a hundred *cubits* long, and his twenty pillars and their twenty
sockets *of* brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *of* silver.
12 And *for* the breadth of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings
of fifty cubits: their pillars ten, and their sockets ten.
13 And the breadth of the court on the east side eastward *shall be* fifty
cubits.

14 The hangings of one side *of the gate shall be* fifteen cubits: their pillars three, and their sockets three.
15 And on the other side *shall be* hangings fifteen *cubits:* their pillars three, and their sockets three.
16 And for the gate of the court *shall be* a hanging of twenty cubits, *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, wrought with needlework: *and* their pillars *shall be* four, and their sockets four.
17 All the pillars round about the court *shall be* filleted with silver; their hooks *shall be of* silver, and their sockets of brass.
18 The length of the court *shall be* a hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty every where, and the height five cubits *of* fine twined linen, and their sockets *of* brass.
19 All the vessels of the tabernacle in all the service thereof, and all the pins thereof, and all the pins of the court, *shall be of* brass.

The Tending of the Lamp

20 And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.

We read of the candlestick in the twenty-fifth chapter; here is an order given for the keeping of the lamps constantly burning in it, else it was useless; in every candlestick there should be a burning and shining light; candlesticks without candles are as wells without water or as clouds without rain. Now,

1 The people were to provide the oil; from them the Lord's ministers must have their maintenance. Or, rather, the pure oil signified the gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are communicated to all believers from Christ the good olive, of whose fulness we receive (Zec 4:11,12), and without which our light cannot shine before men.

2 The priests were to light the lamps, and to tend them; it was part of their daily service to cause the lamp to burn always, night and day; thus it is the work of ministers, by the preaching and expounding of the scriptures (which are as a lamp), to enlighten the church, God's tabernacle upon the earth, and to direct the spiritual priests in his service. This is to be a statute for ever, that the lamps of the word be lighted as duly as the incense of prayer and praise is offered.

21 In the tabernacle of the congregation without the veil, which *is* before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord: *it shall be* a statute for ever unto their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel.

Exodus-28

The Garments for the Priests

1 And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, *even* Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

The priests nominated: Aaron and his sons, Ex 28:1. Hitherto every master of a family was priest to his own family, and offered, as he saw cause, upon altars of earth; but now that the families of Israel began to be incorporated into a nation, and a tabernacle of the congregation was to be erected, as a visible centre of their unity, it was requisite there should be a public priesthood instituted.

Moses, who had hitherto officiated, and is therefore reckoned among the priests of the Lord (Ps 99:6), had enough to do as their prophet to consult the oracle for them, and as their prince to judge among them; nor was he desirous to engross all the honours to himself, or to entail that of the priesthood, which alone was hereditary, upon his own family, but was very well pleased to see his brother Aaron

invested in this office, and his sons after him, while (how great soever he was) his sons after him would be but common Levites. It is an instance of the humility of that great man, and an evidence of his sincere regard for the glory of God, that he had so little regard to the preferment of his own family. Aaron, who had humbly served as a prophet to his younger brother Moses, and did not decline the office (Ex 7:1), is now advanced to be a priest, a high priest to God; for he will exalt those that abase themselves. Nor could any man have taken this honour to himself, but he that was called of God to it, Heb 5:4. God had said of Israel in general that they should be to him a kingdom of priests, Ex 19:6.

But because it was requisite that those who ministered at the altar should give themselves wholly to the service, and because that which is every body's work will soon come to be nobody's work, God here chose from among them one to be a family of priests, the father and his four sons; and from Aaron's loins descended all the priests of the Jewish church, of whom we read so often, both in the Old Testament and in the New. A blessed thing it is when real holiness goes, as the ceremonial holiness did, by succession in a family.

2 And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty.

These glorious garments were appointed,

(1.) That the priests themselves might be reminded of the dignity of their office, and might behave themselves with due decorum.

(2.) That the people might thereby be possessed with a holy reverence of that God whose ministers appeared in such grandeur.

(3.) That the priests might be types of Christ, who should offer himself without spot to God, and of all Christians, who have the beauty of holiness put upon them, in which they are consecrated to God. Our adorning, now under the gospel, both that of ministers and Christians, is not to be of gold, and pearl, and costly array, but the garments of salvation, and the robe of righteousness, Isa 61:10,Ps 132:9,16. As the filthy garments wherewith Joshua the high priest was clothed signified the iniquity which cleaved to his priesthood, from which care was taken that it should be purged (Zec 3:3,4), so those holy garments signified the perfect purity that there is in the priesthood of Christ; he is holy, harmless, and undefiled.

3 And thou shalt speak unto all *that are* wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

4 And these *are* the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

5 And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.

6 And they shall make the ephod *of* gold, of blue, and of purple, *of* scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work.

7 It shall have the two shoulderpieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and *so* it shall be joined together.

8 And the curious girdle of the ephod, which *is* upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; *even of* gold, *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.

9 And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel:

10 six of their names on one stone, and *the other* six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth.

11 With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold.

12 And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod
for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall
bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a
memorial.
13 And thou shalt make ouches *of* gold;
14 and two chains *of* pure gold at the ends; of wreathed work shalt
thou make them, and fasten the wreathed chains to the ouches.
15 And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning
work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; *of* gold, *of*
blue, and *of* purple, and *of* scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt
thou make it.
16 Foursquare it shall be *being* doubled; a span *shall be* the length
thereof, and a span *shall be* the breadth thereof.
17 And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones:
the first row *shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: *this shall be*
the first row.
18 And the second row *shall be* an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.
19 And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.
20 And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall
be set in gold in their inclosings.
21 And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel,
twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet;
every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve
tribes.
22 And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends *of*
wreathed work *of* pure gold.
23 And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold, and
shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate.
24 And thou shalt put the two wreathed *chains* of gold in the two rings
which are on the ends of the breastplate.
25 And *the other* two ends of the two wreathed *chains* thou shalt fasten
in the two ouches, and put *them* on the shoulderpieces of the ephod
before it.
26 And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them
upon the two ends of the breastplate in the border thereof, which
is in the side of the ephod inward.

27 And two *other* rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on
the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart
thereof, over against the *other* coupling thereof, above the curious
girdle of the ephod.
28 And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the
rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that *it* may be above the
curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not
loosed from the ephod.
29 And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the
breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the
holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.
30 And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the
Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in
before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the
children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually.
31 And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all *of* blue.
32 And there shall be a hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it
shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as
it were the hole of a habergeon, that it be not rent.
33 And *beneath* upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates *of*
blue, and *of* purple, and *of* scarlet, round about the hem thereof;
and bells of gold between them round about:
34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate,
upon the hem of the robe round about.
35 And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be
heard when he goeth in unto the holy *place* before the Lord, and
when he cometh out, that he die not.
36 And thou shalt make a plate *of* pure gold, and grave upon it, *like*
the engravings of a signet, **Holiness to the Lord.**

Concerning the golden plate fixed upon Aaron's forehead, on which must be engraven, Holiness to the Lord (Ex 28:36,37), or The holiness of Jehovah. Aaron must hereby be reminded that God is holy, and that his priests must be holy. Holiness becomes his house and household. The high priest must be sequestered from all pollution, and consecrated to God and to his service and honour, and so must all his ministrations be. All that attend in God's house must have Holiness to the

Lord engraven upon their foreheads, that is, they must be holy, devoted to the Lord, and designing his glory in all they do. This must appear in their forehead, in an open profession of their relation to God, as those that are not ashamed to own it, and in a conversation in the world answerable to it. It must likewise be engraven like the engravings of a signet, so deep, so durable, not painted to be washed off, but sincere and lasting; such must our holiness to the Lord be. Aaron must have this upon his forehead, that he may bear the iniquity of the holy things (Ex 28:38), and that they may be accepted before the Lord. Herein he was a type of Christ, the great Mediator between God and man, through whom it is that we have to do with God.

(1.) Through him what is amiss in our services is pardoned. The divine law is strict; in many things we come short of our duty, so that we cannot but be conscious to ourselves of much iniquity cleaving even to our holy things; when we would do good evil is present; even this would be our ruin if God should enter into judgment with us. But Christ, our high priest, bears this iniquity, bears it for us so as to bear it from us, and through him it is forgiven to us and not laid to our charge.

(2.) Through him what is good is accepted; our persons, our performances, are pleasing to God upon the account of Christ's intercession, and not otherwise, 1Pe 2:5. His being holiness to the Lord recommends all those to the divine favour that are interested in his righteousness, and clothed with his Spirit; and therefore he has said it was for our sakes that he sanctified himself, Joh 17:19. Having such a high priest, we come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb 4:14-16.

The rest of the garments are but named (Ex 28:39), because there was nothing extraordinary in them. The embroidered coat of fine linen was the innermost of the priestly garments; it reached to the feet, and the sleeves to the wrists, and was bound to the body with a girdle or sash of needle-work. The mitre, or diadem, was of linen, such as kings anciently wore in the east, typifying the kingly office of Christ. He is a priest upon a throne (Zec 6:13), a priest with a crown. These two God has joined, and we must not think to separate them.

37 And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be.

38 And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.

39 And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine linen, and thou shalt make the mitre *of* fine linen, and thou shalt make the girdle *of* needlework.

40 And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty.

41 And thou shalt put them upon Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.

We have here,

1. Particular orders about the vestments of the inferior priests. They were to have coats, and girdles, and bonnets, of the same materials with those of the high priest; but there was a difference in shape between their bonnets and his mitre. Theirs, as his, were to be for glory and beauty (Ex 28:40), that they might look great in their ministration: yet all this glory was nothing compared with the glory of grace, this beauty nothing to the beauty of holiness, of which these holy garments were typical. They are particularly ordered, in their ministration, to wear linen breeches, Ex 28:42. This teaches us modesty and decency of garb and gesture at all

times, especially in public worship, in which a veil is becoming, 1Co 11:5,6,10. It also intimates what our souls need have of a covering, when we come before God, that the shame of their nakedness may not appear.

2. A general rule concerning the garments both of the high priest and of the inferior priests, that they were to be put upon them, at first, when they were consecrated, in token of their being invested in the office (Ex 28:41), and then they were to wear them in all their ministrations, but not at other times (Ex 28:43), and this at their peril, lest they bear iniquity and die. Those who are guilty of omissions in duty, as well as omissions of duty, shall bear their iniquity. If the priests perform the instituted service, and do not do it in the appointed garments, it is (say the Jewish doctors) as if a stranger did it, and the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death. Nor will God connive at the presumptions and irreverences even of those whom he causes to draw most near to him; if Aaron himself put a slight upon the divine institution, he shall bear iniquity, and die. To us these garments typify,

(1.) The righteousness of Christ; if we appear not before God in this, we shall bear iniquity and die. What have we to do at the wedding-feast without a wedding-garment, or at God's altar without the array of his priests? Mt 22:12,13.

(2.) The armour of God prescribed Eph 6:13. If we venture without that armour, our spiritual enemies will be the death of our souls, and we shall bear the iniquity, our blood will be upon our own heads. Blessed is he therefore that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, Re 16:15.

3. This is said to be a statute for ever, that is, it is to continue as long as the priesthood continues. But it is to have its perpetuity in the substance of which these things were the shadows.

42 And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness;
from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach:
43 and they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come
in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near
unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not
iniquity, and die: *it shall be* a statute for ever unto him and his seed
after him.

Exodus-29

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

1 And this is the thing that thou shalt do unto them to hallow them,
to minister unto me in the priest's office: Take one young bullock,
and two rams without blemish,
2 and unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened tempered with oil,
and wafers unleavened anointed with oil: *of* wheaten flour shalt
thou make them.
3 And thou shalt put them into one basket, and bring them in the
basket, with the bullock and the two rams.
4 And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the
tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.
5 And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat,
and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and
gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod:
6 and thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown
upon the mitre.

Here is, I The law concerning the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priest's office, which was to be done with a great deal of ceremony and solemnity, that they themselves might be duly affected with the greatness of the work to which they were called, and that the people also might learn to magnify the office and none might dare to invade it.

1 The ceremonies wherewith it was to be done were very fully and particularly appointed, because nothing of this kind

had been done before, and because it was to be a statute for ever that the high priest should be thus inaugurated. Now,

(1.) The work to be done was the consecrating of the persons whom God had chosen to be priests, by which they devoted and gave up themselves to the service of God and God declared his acceptance of them; and the people were made to know that they glorified not themselves to be made priests, but were called of God, Heb 5:4,5. They were thus distinguished from common men, sequestered from common services, and set apart for God and an immediate attendance on him. Note, All that are to be employed for God are to be sanctified to him. The person must first be accepted, and then the performance. The Hebrew phrase for consecrating is filling the hand (Ex 29:9): Thou shalt fill the hand of Aaron and his sons, and the ram of consecration is the ram of fillings, Ex 29:22,26. The consecrating of them was the perfecting of them; Christ is said to be perfect or consecrated for evermore, Heb 7:28. Probably the phrase here is borrowed from the putting of the sacrifice into their hand, to be waved before the Lord, Ex 29:24. But it intimates,

[1.] That ministers have their hands full; they have no time to trifle, so great, so copious, so constant is their work.

[2.] That they must have their hands filled. Of necessity they must have something to offer, and they cannot find it in themselves, it must be given them from above. They cannot fill the people's hearts unless God fill their hands; to him therefore they must go, and receive from his fulness.

(2.) The person to do it was Moses, by God's appointment. Though he was ordained for men, yet the people were not to consecrate him; Moses the servant of the Lord, and his agent herein, must do it. By God's special appointment he now did

the priest's work, and therefore that which was the priest's part of the sacrifice was here ordered to be his, Ex 29:26.

(3.) The place was at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, Ex 29:4. God was pleased to dwell in the tabernacle, the people attending in the courts, so that the door between the court and the tabernacle was the fittest place for those to be consecrated in who were to mediate between God and man, and to stand between both, and lay their hands (as it were) upon both. They were consecrated at the door, for they were to be door-keepers.

(4.) It was done with many ceremonies.

[1.] They were to be washed (Ex 29:4), signifying that those must be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord, Isa 52:11. Those that would perfect holiness must cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2Co 7:1,Isa 1:16-18. They were now washed all over; but afterwards, when they went in to minister, they washed only their hands and feet (Ex 30:19); for he that is washed needs no more, Joh 13:10.

[2.] They were to be clothed with the holy garments (Ex 29:5,6,8,9), to signify that it was not sufficient for them to put away the pollutions of sin, but they must put on the graces of the Spirit, be clothed with righteousness, Ps 132:9. They must be girded, as men prepared and strengthened for their work; and they must be robed and crowned, as men that counted their work and office their true honour.

[3.] The high priest was to be anointed with the holy anointing oil (Ex 29:7), that the church might be filled and delighted with the sweet savour of his administrations (for ointment and perfume rejoice the heart), and in token of the pouring out of the Spirit upon him, to qualify him for his work. Brotherly love is compared to this oil with which Aaron was anointed, Ps 133:2 The inferior priests are said to

be anointed (Ex 30:30), not on their heads, as the high priest (Le 21:10), the oil was only mingled with the blood that was sprinkled upon their garments.

[4.] Sacrifices were to be offered for them. The covenant of priesthood, as all other covenants, must be made by sacrifice.

First, There must be a sin-offering, to make atonement for them, Ex 29:10-14. The law made those priests that had infirmity, and therefore they must first offer for their own sin, before they could make atonement for the people, Heb 7:27,28. They were to put their hand on the head of their sacrifice (Ex 29:10), confessing that they deserved to die for their own sin, and desiring that the killing of the beast might expiate their guilt, and be accepted as a vicarious satisfaction. It was used as other sin-offerings were; only, whereas the flesh of other sin-offerings was eaten by the priests (Le 10:18), in token of the priest's taking away the sin of the people, this was appointed to be all burnt without the camp (Ex 29:14), to signify the imperfection of the legal dispensation (as the learned bishop Patrick notes); for the sins of the priests themselves could not be taken away by those sacrifices, but they must expect a better high priest and a better sacrifice.

Secondly, There must be a burnt-offering, a ram wholly burnt, to the honour of God, in token of the dedication of themselves wholly to God and to his service, as living sacrifices, kindled with the fire and ascending in the flame of holy love, Ex 29:15-18. The sin-offering must first be offered and then the burnt-offering; for, till guilt be removed, no acceptable service can be performed, Isa 6:7.

Thirdly, There must be a peace-offering; it is called the ram of consecration, because there was more in this peculiar to the occasion than in the other two. In the burnt-offering God

had the glory of their priesthood, in this they had the comfort of it; and, in token of a mutual covenant between God and them,

1 The blood of the sacrifice was divided between God and them (Ex 29:20,21); part of the blood was sprinkled upon the altar round about, and part put upon them, upon their bodies (Ex 29:20), and upon their garments, Ex 29:21. Thus the benefit of the expiation made by the sacrifice was applied and assured to them, and their whole selves from head to foot sanctified to the service of God. The blood was put upon the extreme parts of the body, to signify that it was all, as it were, enclosed and taken in for God, the tip of the ear and the great toe not excepted. We reckon that the blood and oil sprinkled upon garments spot and stain them; yet the holy oil, and the blood of the sacrifice, sprinkled upon their garments, must be looked upon as the greatest adorning imaginable to them, for they signified the blood of Christ, and the graces of the Spirit, which constitute and complete the beauty of holiness, and recommend us to God; we read of robes made white with the blood of the Lamb.

2 The flesh of the sacrifice, with the meat-offering annexed to it, was likewise divided between God and them, that (to speak with reverence) God and they might feast together, in token of friendship and fellowship.

(1.) Part of it was to be first waved before the Lord, and then burnt upon the altar; part of the flesh (Ex 29:22), part of the bread, for bread and flesh must go together (Ex 29:23); these were first put into the hands of Aaron to be waved to and fro, in token of their being offered to God (who, though unseen, yet compasses us round on every side), and then they were to be burnt upon the altar (Ex 29:24,25), for the altar was to devour God's part of the sacrifice. Thus God admitted Aaron and his sons to be his servants, and wait at his table, taking the mat of his altar from their hands. Here, in a parenthesis,

as it were, comes in the law concerning the priests' part of the peace-offerings afterwards, the breast and shoulder, which were now divided; Moses had the breast, and the shoulder was burnt on the altar with God's part, Ex 29:26-28.

(2.) The other part, both of the flesh of the ram and of the bread, Aaron and his sons were to eat at the door of the tabernacle (Ex 29:31-33), to signify that he called them not only servants but friends, Joh 15:15. He supped with them, and they with him. Their eating of the things wherewith the atonement was made signified their receiving the atonement, as the expression is (Ro 5:11), their thankful acceptance of the benefit of it, and their joyful communion with God thereupon, which was the true intent and meaning of a feast upon a sacrifice. If any of it was left, it must be burnt, that it might not be in any danger of putrefying, and to show that it was an extraordinary peace-offering.

2 The time that was to be spent in this consecration: Seven days shalt thou consecrate them, Ex 29:35. Though all the ceremonies were performed on the first day, yet,

(1.) They were not to look upon their consecration as completed till the seven days' end, which put a solemnity upon their admission, and a distance between this and their former state, and obliged them to enter upon their work with a pause, giving them time to consider the weight and seriousness of it. This was to be observed in after-ages, Ex 29:30. He that was to succeed Aaron in the high-priesthood must put on the holy garments seven days together, in token of a deliberate and gradual advance into his office, and that one sabbath might pass over him in his consecration.

(2.) Every day of the seven, in this first consecration, a bullock was to be offered for a sin-offering (Ex 29:36), which was to intimate to them,

[1.] That it was of very great concern to them to get their sins pardoned, and that though atonement was made, and they had the comfort of it, yet they must still keep up a penitent sense of sin and often repeat the confession of it.

[2.] That those sacrifices which were thus offered day by day to make atonement could not make the comers thereunto perfect, for then they would have ceased to be offered, as the apostle argues, Heb 10:1,2. They must therefore expect the bringing in of a better hope.

3. This consecration of the priests was a shadow of good things to come.

(1.) Our Lord Jesus is the great high-priest of our profession, called of God to be so, consecrated for evermore, anointed with the Spirit above his fellows (whence he is called Messiah, the Christ), clothed with the holy garments, even with glory and beauty, sanctified by his own blood, not that of bullocks and rams (Heb 9:12), made perfect, or consecrated, through sufferings, Heb 2:10. Thus in him this was a perpetual statute, Ex 29:9.

(2.) All believers are spiritual priests, to offer spiritual sacrifices (1Pe 2:5), washed in the blood of Christ, and so made to our God priests, Re 1:5,6. They also are clothed with the beauty of holiness, and have received the anointing, 1Jo 2:27. Their hands are filled with work, to which they must continually attend; and it is through Christ, the great sacrifice, that they are dedicated to this service. His blood sprinkled upon the conscience purges it from dead works, that they may, as priests, serve the living God. The Spirit of God (as Ainsworth notes) is called the finger of God (Lu 21:20, compared with Mt 12:28), and by him the merit of Christ is effectually applied to our souls, as here Moses with his finger was to put the blood upon Aaron. It is likewise

intimated that gospel ministers are to be solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry with great deliberation and seriousness both in the ordainers and in the ordained, as those that are to be employed in a great work and entrusted with a great charge.

II The consecration of the altar, which seems to have been coincident with that of the priests, and the sin-offerings which were offered every day for seven days together had reference to the altar as well as the priests, Ex 29:36,37. An atonement was made for the altar. Though that was not a subject capable of sin, nor, having never yet been used, could it be said to be polluted with the sins of the people, yet, since the fall, there can be no sanctification to God but there must first be an atonement for sin, which renders us both unworthy and unfit to be employed for God. The altar was also sanctified, not only set apart itself to a sacred use, but made so holy as to sanctify the gifts that were offered upon it, Mt 23:19. Christ is our altar; for our sakes he sanctified himself, that we and our performances might be sanctified and recommended to God, Joh 17:19.

7 Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour *it* upon his head, and anoint him.

8 And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them.

9 And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

10 And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.

11 And thou shalt kill the bullock before the Lord, *by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

12 And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar.

13 And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the
caul *that is* above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that
is upon them, and burn *them* upon the altar.
14 But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou
burn with fire without the camp: it *is* a sin offering.
15 Thou shalt also take one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put
their hands upon the head of the ram.
16 And thou shalt slay the ram, and thou shalt take his blood, and
sprinkle *it* round about upon the altar.
17 And thou shalt cut the ram in pieces, and wash the inwards of him,
and his legs, and put *them* unto his pieces, and unto his head.
18 And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it *is* a burnt
offering unto the Lord: it *is* a sweet savor, an offering made by fire
unto the Lord.
19 And thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall
put their hands upon the head of the ram.
20 Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put *it* upon
the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and upon the tip of the right ear
of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the
great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar
round about.
21 And thou shalt take of the blood that *is* upon the altar, and of the
anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* upon Aaron, and upon his garments,
and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him:
and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his
sons' garments with him.
22 Also thou shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat
that covereth the inwards, and the caul *above* the liver, and the two
kidneys, and the fat that *is* upon them, and the right shoulder; for
it *is* a ram of consecration:
23 and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer
out of the basket of the unleavened bread that *is* before the Lord:
24 and thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his
sons; and shalt wave them *for* a wave offering before the Lord.
25 And thou shalt receive them of their hands, and burn *them* upon
the altar for a burnt offering, for a sweet savor before the Lord:
it *is* an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

26 And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration,
and wave it *for* a wave offering before the Lord: and it shall be thy
part.
27 And thou shalt sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the
shoulder of the heave offering, which is waved, and which is
heaved up, of the ram of the consecration, *even* of *that* which is for
Aaron, and of *that* which is for his sons:
28 and it shall be Aaron's and his sons' by a statute for ever from the
children of Israel; for it *is* a heave offering: and it shall be a heave
offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifice of their peace
offerings, *even* their heave offering unto the Lord.
29 And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be
anointed therein, and to be consecrated in them.
30 *And* that son that is priest in his stead shall put them on seven days,
when he cometh into the tabernacle of the congregation to
minister in the holy *place.*
31 And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his
flesh in the holy place.
32 And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread
that *is* in the basket, *by* the door of the tabernacle of the
congregation.
33 And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was
made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not
eat *thereof,* because they are holy.
34 And if aught of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread,
remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the
remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it *is* holy.
35 And thus shalt thou do unto Aaron, and to his sons, according to
all *things* which I have commanded thee: seven days shalt thou
consecrate them.
36 And thou shalt offer every day a bullock *for* a sin offering for
atonement: and thou shalt cleanse the altar, when thou hast made
an atonement for it, and thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it.
37 Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify
it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar
shall be holy.

The Daily Offerings

38 Now this *is that* which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually.

39 The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even:

The daily service appointed. A lamb was to be offered upon the altar every morning, and a lamb every evening, each with a meat-offering, both made by fire, as a continual burnt-offering throughout their generations, Ex 29:38-41. Whether there were any other sacrifices to be offered or not, these were sure to be offered, at the public charge, for the benefit and comfort of all Israel, to make atonement for their daily sins, and to be an acknowledgement to God of their daily mercies. This was that which the duty of every day required. The taking away of this daily sacrifice by Antiochus, for so many evenings and mornings, was that great calamity of the church which was foretold, Da 8:11. Note,

1. This typified the continual intercession which Christ ever lives to make, in virtue of his satisfaction, for the continual sanctification of his church: though he offered himself once for all, yet that one offering thus becomes a continual offering.

2. This teaches us to offer up to God the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise every day, morning and evening, in humble acknowledgement of our dependence upon him and our obligations to him. Our daily devotions must be looked upon as the most needful of our daily works and the most pleasant of our daily comforts. Whatever business we have, this must never be omitted, either morning or evening; prayer-time must be kept up as duly as meat-time. The daily sacrifices were as the daily meals in God's house, and therefore they were always attended with bread and wine. Those starve their own souls that keep not up a constant attendance on the throne of grace.

40 and with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the
fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin
of wine *for* a drink offering.
41 And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto
according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the
drink offering thereof, for a sweet savor, an offering made by fire
unto the Lord.
42 *This shall be* a continual burnt offering throughout your generations
at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord,
where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee.
43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle*
shall be sanctified by my glory.

Great and precious promises made of God's favour to Israel, and the tokens of his special presence with them, while they thus kept up his institutions among them. He speaks as one well pleased with the appointment of the daily sacrifice; for, before he proceeds to the other appointments that follow, he interposes these promises. It is constancy in religion that brings in the comfort of it. He promises, that he would keep up communion with them; that he would not only meet Moses, and speak to him, but that he would meet the children of Israel, (Ex 29:43), to accept the daily sacrifices offered up on their behalf. Note, God will not fail to give those the meeting who diligently and conscientiously attend upon him in the ordinances of his own appointment.

That he would own his own institutions, the tabernacle, the altar, the priesthood (Ex 29:43,44); he would take possession of that which was consecrated to him. Note, What is sanctified to the glory of God shall be sanctified by his glory. If we do our part, God will do his, and will mark and fit that for himself which is in sincerity given up to him.

44 And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the
altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me
in the priest's office.
45 And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their

God.

46 And they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I *am* the Lord their God.

That he would reside among them as God in covenant with them, and would give them sure and comfortable tokens of his peculiar favour to them, and his special presence with them (Ex 29:45,46): I will dwell among the children of Israel. Note, Where God sets up the tabernacle of his ordinances he will himself dwell. Lo, I am with you always, Mt 28:20. Those that abide in God's house shall have God to abide with them. I will be their God, and they shall know that I am so. Note, Those are truly happy that have a covenant-interest in God as theirs and the comfortable evidence of that interest. If we have this, we have enough, and need no more to make us happy.

Exodus-30

The Altar of Incense

1 And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: *of* shittim wood shalt thou make it.

Generally, this incense-altar typifies, The devotions of the saints, whose prayers are said to be set forth before God as incense, Ps 141:2. As the smoke of the incense ascended, so much our desires towards God rise in prayer, being kindled with the fire of holy love and other pious affections. When the priest was burning incense the people were praying (Lu 1:10), to signify that prayer is the true incense. This incense was offered daily, it was a perpetual incense (Ex 30:8); for we must pray always, that is, we must keep up stated times for prayer every day, morning and evening, at least, and never omit it, but thus pray without ceasing. The lamps were dressed or lighted at the same time that the incense was

burnt, to teach us that the reading of the scriptures (which are our light and lamp) is a part of our daily work, and should ordinarily accompany our prayers and praises. When we speak to God we must hear what God says to us, and thus the communion is complete. The devotions of sanctified souls are well-pleasing to God, of a sweet-smelling savour; the prayers of saints are compared to sweet odours (Re 5:8), but it is the incense which Christ adds to them that makes them acceptable (Re 8:3), and his blood that atones for the guilt which cleaves to our best services. And, if the heart and life be not holy, even incense is an abomination (Isa 1:13), and he that offers it is as if he blessed an idol, Isa 56:3.

2 A cubit shall *be* the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits *shall be* the height thereof: the horns thereof *shall be* of the same.

3 And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about.

The orders given concerning the altar of incense are, that it was to be made of wood, and covered with gold, pure gold, about a yard high and half a yard square, with horns at the corners, a golden cornice round it, with rings and staves of gold, for the convenience of carrying it, Ex 30:1-5. It does not appear that there was any grate to this altar for the ashes to fall into, that they might be taken away; but, when they burnt incense, a golden censer was brought with coals in it, and placed upon the altar, and in that censer the incense was burnt, and with it all the coals were taken away, so that no coals nor ashes fell upon the altar. The measure of the altar of incense in Ezekiel's temple is double to what it is here (Eze 41:22), and it is there called an altar of wood, and there is no mention of gold, to signify that the incense, in gospel times, should be spiritual, the worship plain, and the service of God enlarged, for in every place incense should be offered, Mal 1:11.

4 And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make

it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal.

5 And thou shalt make the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.

6 And thou shalt put it before the veil that *is* by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that *is* over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

7 And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

That Aaron was to burn sweet incense upon this altar, every morning and every evening, about half a pound at a time, which was intended, not only to take away the ill smell of the flesh that was burnt daily on the brazen altar, but for the honour of God, and to show the acceptableness of his people's services to him, and the pleasure which they should take in ministering to him, Ex 30:7,8. As by the offerings on the brazen altar satisfaction was made for what had been done displeasing to God, so, by the offering on this, what they did well was, as it were, recommended to the divine acceptance; for our two great concerns with God are to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in his sight.

8 And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.

9 Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

That nothing was to be offered upon it but incense, nor any incense but that which was appointed, Ex 30:9. God will have his own service done according to his own appointment, and not otherwise.

10 And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements; once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it *is* most holy unto the Lord.

That this altar should be purified with the blood of the sin-offering put upon the horns of it, every year, upon the day of atonement, Ex 30:10. See Le 16:18,19. The high priest was to take this in his way, as he came out from the holy of holies.

This was to intimate to them that the sins of the priests who ministered at this altar, and of the people for whom they ministered, put a ceremonial impurity upon it, from which it must be cleansed by the blood of atonement.

The Atonement Money

11 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

12 When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when *thou* numberest them.

Some observe that the repetition of those words, The Lord spoke unto Moses, here and afterwards (Ex 30:17,22,34), intimates that God did not deliver these precepts to Moses in the mount, in a continued discourse, but with many intermissions, giving him time either to write what was said to him or at least to charge his memory with it. Christ gave instructions to his disciples as they were able to hear them. Moses is here ordered to levy money upon the people by way of poll, so much a head, for the service of the tabernacle. This he must do when he numbered the people. Some think that it refers only to the first numbering of them, now when the tabernacle was set up; and that this tax was to make up what was deficient in the voluntary contributions for the finishing of the work, or rather for the beginning of the service in the tabernacle. Others think that it was afterwards repeated upon any emergency and always when the people were numbered, and that David offended in not demanding it when he numbered the people. But many of the Jewish writers, and others from them, are of opinion that it was to be an annual tribute, only it was begun when Moses first numbered the people. This was that tribute-money which Christ paid, for fear of offending his adversaries (Mt 17:27), when yet he showed good reason why he should have been excused. Men were appointed in every city to receive this payment yearly.

this tribute was to be paid as a ransom of the soul, that there might be no plague among them. Hereby they acknowledged that they received their lives from God, that they had forfeited their lives to him, and that they depended upon his power and patience for the continuance of them; and thus they did homage to the God of their lives, and deprecated those plagues which their sins had deserved.

13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs :) a half shekel *shall be* the offering of the Lord.

14 Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord.

15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when *they* give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.

The tribute to be paid was half a shekel, about fifteen pence of our money. The rich were not to give more, nor the poor less (Ex 30:15), to intimate that the souls of the rich and poor are alike precious, and that God is no respecter of persons, Ac 10:34,Job 34:19. In other offerings men were to give according to their ability; but this, which was the ransom of the soul, must be alike for all; for the rich have as much need of Christ as the poor, and the poor are as welcome to him as the rich. They both alike contributed to the maintenance of the temple-service, because both were to have a like interest in it and benefit by it. In Christ and his ordinances rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker, the Lord Christ is the Redeemer of them both, Pr 22:2 The Jews say, "If a man refused to pay this tribute, he was not comprehended in the expiation."

16 And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls.

This money that was raised was to be employed in the service of the tabernacle (Ex 30:16); with it they bought

sacrifices, flour, incense, wine, oil, fuel, salt, priests' garments, and all other things which the whole congregation was interested in. Note, Those that have the benefit of God's tabernacle among them must be willing to defray the expenses of it, and not grudge the necessary charges of God's public worship. Thus we must honour the Lord with our substance, and reckon that best laid out which is laid out in the service of God.

It is taken from only men. Men who are twenty years old and above. Money indeed cannot make an atonement for the soul, but it may be used for the honour of him who has made the atonement, and for the maintenance of the gospel by which the atonement is applied.

The Laver

17 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
18 Thou shalt also make a laver *of* brass, and his foot *also of* brass, to wash *withal:* and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.
19 For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:

Orders are here given,

1. For the making of a laver, or font, of brass, a large vessel, that would contain a good quantity of water, which was to be set near the door of the tabernacle, Ex 30:18. The foot of brass, it is supposed, was so contrived as to receive the water, which was let into it out of the laver by spouts or cocks. They then had a laver for the priests only to wash in, but to us now there is a fountain open for Judah and Jerusalem to wash in (Zec 13:1), an inexhaustible fountain of living water, so that it is our own fault if we remain in our pollution.

2. For the using of this laver. Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and feet at this laver every time they went in to minister, every morning, at least, Ex 30:19-21. For this purpose clean water was put into the laver fresh every day. Though they washed themselves ever so clean at their own houses, that would not serve; they must wash at the laver, because that was appointed for washing, 2Ki 5:12-14. This was designed,

(1.) To teach them purity in all their ministrations, and to possess them with a reverence of God's holiness and a dread of the pollutions of sin. They must not only wash and be made clean when they were first consecrated, but they must wash and be kept clean whenever they went in to minister. He only shall stand in God's holy place that has clean hands and a pure heart, Ps 24:3,4. And,

(2.) It was to teach us, who are daily to attend upon God, daily to renew our repentance for sin and our believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls for remission; for in many things we daily offend and contract pollution, Joh 13:8,10,Jam 3:2. This is the preparation we are to make for solemn ordinances. Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts, and then draw nigh to God, Jam 4:8. To this law David alludes in Ps 26:6, I will wash my hands in innocency, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.

20 when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall
wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the
altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord:
21 so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and
it shall be a statute for ever to them, *even* to him and to his seed
throughout their generations.

The Anointing Oil and the Incense

22 Moreover the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

23 Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five
hundred *shekels,* and of sweet cinnamon half so much, *even* two
hundred and fifty *shekels,* and of sweet calamus two hundred and
fifty *shekels,*
24 and of cassia five hundred *shekels,* after the shekel of the sanctuary,
and of oil olive a hin:
25 and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment
compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be a holy
anointing oil.
26 And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation
therewith, and the ark of the testimony,
27 and the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels,
and the altar of incense,
28 and the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and
his foot.
29 And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy:
whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.
30 And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them,
that *they* may minister unto me in the priest's office.
31 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, this shall
be a holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations.
32 Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make *any*
other like it, after the composition of it: it *is* holy, and it shall be
holy unto you.
33 Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth *any* of
it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.
34 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices,
stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; *these* sweet spices with pure
frankincense: of each shall there be a like *weight:*
35 and thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the
apothecary, tempered together, pure *and* holy:
36 and thou shalt beat *some* of it very small, and put of it before the
testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet
with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.
37 And *as for* the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make
to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto
thee holy for the Lord.

38 Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even
be cut off from his people.

Exodus-31

The Call of Bezaleel and Aholiab

A great deal of fine work God had ordered to be done about the tabernacle; the materials the people were to provide, but who must put them into form? Moses himself was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, nay, he was well acquainted with the words of God, and the visions of the Almighty; but he knew not how to engrave or embroider. We may suppose that there were some very ingenious men among the Israelites; but, having lived all their days in bondage in Egypt, we cannot think they were any of them instructed in these curious arts. They knew how to make brick and work in clay, but to work in gold and in cutting diamonds was what they had never been brought up to. How should the work be done with the neatness and exactness that were required when they had no goldsmiths or jewellers but what must be made out of masons and bricklayers? We may suppose that there were a sufficient number who would gladly be employed, and would do their best; but it would be hard to find out a proper person to preside in this work. Who was sufficient for these things? But God takes care of this matter also.

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur,
of the tribe of Judah:

He nominates the persons that were to be employed, that there might be no contest about the preferment, nor envy at those that were preferred, God himself having made the choice.

Bezaleel was to be the architect, or master workman, Ex 31:2. He was of the tribe of Judah, a tribe that God delighted to honour; the grandson of Hur, probably that Hur who had helped to hold up Moses's hands (Ex 17:1-16), and was at this time in commission with Aaron for the government of the people in the absence of Moses (Ex 24:14); out of that family which was of note in Israel was the workman chosen, and it added no little honour to the family that a branch of it was employed, though but as a mechanic, or handicraft tradesman, for the service of the tabernacle. The Jews' tradition is that Hur was the husband of Miriam; and, if so, it was requisite that God should appoint him to this service, lest, if Moses himself had done it, he should be thought partial to his own kindred, his brother Aaron also being advanced to the priesthood. God will put honour upon Moses's relations, and yet will make it to appear that he takes not the honour to himself or his own family, but that it is purely the Lord's doing.

3 and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

He qualifies these persons for the service (Ex 31:3): I have filled him with the Spirit of God; and (Ex 31:6) in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom. Note, skill in common arts and employments is the gift of God; from him are derived both the faculty and the improvement of the faculty. It is he that puts even this wisdom into the inward parts, Job 38:36. He teaches the husbandman discretion (Isa 28:26), and the tradesman too; and he must have the praise of it.

God dispenses his gifts variously, one gift to one, another to another, and all for the good of the whole body, both of mankind and of the church. Moses was fittest of all to govern Israel, but Bezaleel was fitter than he to build the tabernacle. The common benefit is very much supported by the variety of men's faculties and inclinations; the genius of some leads

them to be serviceable one way, of others another way, and all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, 1Co 12:11. This forbids pride, envy, contempt, and carnal emulation, and strengthens the bond of mutual love.

4 to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

5 and in cutting of stones, to set *them*, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, is appointed next to Bezaleel, and partner with him, Ex 31:6. Two are better than one. Christ sent forth his disciples who were to rear the gospel tabernacle, two and two, and we read of his two witnesses. Aholiab was of the tribe of Dan, which was one of the less honourable tribes, that the tribes of Judah and Levi might not be lifted up, as if they were to engross all the preferments; to prevent a schism in the body, God gives honour to that part which lacked, 1Co 12:24. The head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee. Hiram, who was the head workman in the building of Solomon's temple, was also of the tribe of Dan, 2Ch 2:14.

There were others that were employed by and under these in the several operations about the tabernacle, Ex 31:6. Note, When God has work to do he will never want instruments to do it with, for all hearts and heads too are under his eye, and in his hand; and those may cheerfully go about any service for God, and go on in it, who have reason to think that, one way or other, he has called them to it; for whom he calls he will own and bear out.

7 the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that *is* thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle,

Those whom God calls to any service he will either find, or make, fit for it. If God give the commission, he will in some measure give the qualifications, according as the service is. The work, that was to be done here was to make the tabernacle and the utensils of it, which are here particularly reckoned up, Ex 31:7, &c. And for this the persons employed were enabled to work in gold, and silver, and brass. When Christ sent his apostles to rear the gospel tabernacle, he poured out his Spirit upon them, to enable them to speak with tongues the wonderful works of God; not to work upon metal, but to work upon men; so much more excellent were the gifts, as the tabernacle to be pitched was a greater and more perfect tabernacle, as the apostle calls it, Heb 9:11.

8 and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense,

9 and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,

10 and the clothes of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,

11 and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy *place:* according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

The Sabbath as a Sign

A strict command for the sanctification of the sabbath day, Ex 31:13-17. The law of the sabbath had been given them before any other law, by way of preparation (Ex 16:23); it had been inserted in the body of the moral law, in the fourth commandment; it had been annexed to the judicial law (Ex 23:12); and here it is added to the first part of the ceremonial law, because the observance of the sabbath is indeed the hem and hedge of the whole law; where no conscience is made of that, farewell both godliness and honesty; for, in the moral law, it stands in the midst between the two tables. Some suggest that it comes in here upon another account. Orders were now given that a tabernacle should be set up and

furnished for the service of God with all possible expedition; but lest they should think that the nature of the work, and the haste that was required, would justify them in working at it on sabbath days, that they might get it done the sooner, this caution is seasonably inserted, Verily, or nevertheless, my Sabbaths you shall keep. Though they must hasten the work, yet they must not make more haste than good speed; they must not break the law of the sabbath in their haste: even tabernacle-work must give way to the sabbath-rest; so jealous is God for the honour of his Sabbaths.

12 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that *ye* may know that I *am* the Lord that doth sanctify you.

The nature, meaning, and intention, of the sabbath, by the declaration of which God puts an honour upon it, and teaches us to value it. Divers things are here said of the sabbath. It is a sign between me and you (Ex 31:13), and again, Ex 31:17. The institution of the sabbath was a great instance of God's favour to them, and a sign that he had distinguished them from all other people; and their religious observance of the sabbath was a great instance of their duty and obedience to him. God, by sanctifying this day among them, let them know that he sanctified them, and set them apart for himself and his service; otherwise he would not have revealed to them his holy Sabbaths, to be the support of religion among them. Or it may refer to the law concerning the sabbath, Keep my Sabbaths, that you may know that I the Lord do sanctify you. Note, If God by his grace incline our hearts to keep the law of the fourth commandment, it will be an evidence of a good work wrought in us by his Spirit. If we sanctify God's day, it is a sign between him and us that he has sanctified our hearts: hence it is the character of the blessed man that he keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, Isa 56:2 The Jews, by observing one day in seven, after six days' labour, testified and declared that they worshipped the

God who made the world in six days, and rested the seventh; and so distinguished themselves from other nations, who, having first lost the sabbath, which was instituted to be a memorial of the creation, by degrees lost the knowledge of the Creator, and gave that honour to the creature which was due to him alone.

14 Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

The law of the sabbath. They must keep it (Ex 31:13,14,16), keep it as a treasure, as a trust, observe it and preserve it, keep it from polluting it, keep it up as a sign between God and them, keep it and never part with it. The Gentiles had anniversary-feasts, to the honour of their gods; but it was peculiar to the Jews to have a weekly festival; this therefore they must carefully observe.

15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth *any* work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

The penalty to be inflicted for the breach of this law: "Every one that defileth the sabbath, by doing any work therein but works of piety and mercy, shall be cut off from among his people (Ex 31:14); he shall surely be put to death. Ex 31:15. The magistrate must cut him off the sword of justice if the crime can be proved; if it cannot, or if the magistrate be remiss, and do not do his duty, God will take the work into his own hands, and cut him off by a stroke from heaven, and his family shall be rooted out of Israel." Note, The contempt and profanation of the sabbath day is an iniquity to be punished by the judges; and, if men do not punish it, God will, here or hereafter, unless it be repented of.

16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, *for* a perpetual covenant.

It is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord, Ex 31:15. It is separated from common use, and designed for the honour and service of God, and by the observance of it we are taught to rest from worldly pursuits and the service of the flesh, and to devote ourselves, and all we are, have, and can do, to God's glory.

17 It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for *in* six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

It was to be observed throughout their generations, in every age, for a perpetual covenant. Ex 31:16. This was to be one of the most lasting tokens of that covenant which was between God and Israel.

The reason of the sabbath; for God's laws are not only backed with the highest authority, but supported with the best reason. God's own example is the great reason, Ex 31:17. As the work of creation is worthy to be thus commemorated, so the great Creator is worthy to be thus imitated, by a holy rest, the seventh day, after six days' labour, especially since we hope, in further conformity to the same example, shortly to rest with him from all our labours.

The Golden Calf

18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

The delivering of the two tables of testimony to Moses. God had promised him these tables when he called him up into the mount (Ex 24:12), and now, when he was sending him down, he delivered them to him, to be carefully and honourably deposited in the ark, Ex 31:18.

1 The ten commandments which God had spoken upon mount Sinai in the hearing of all the people were now

written, in perpetuam rei memoriam--for a perpetual memorial, because that which is written remains.

2. They were written in tables of stone, prepared, not by Moses, as it should seem (for it is intimated, Ex 24:12, that he found them ready written when he went up to the mount), but, as some think, by the ministry of angels. The law was written in tables of stone, to denote the perpetual duration of it (what can be supposed to last longer than that which is written in stone, and laid up?), to denote likewise the hardness of our hearts; one might more easily write in stone than write any thing that is good in our corrupt and sinful hearts.

3. They were written with the finger of God, that is, by his will and power immediately, without the use of any instrument. It is God only that can write his law in the heart; he gives a heart of flesh, and then, by his Spirit, which is the finger of God, he writes his will in the fleshly tables of the heart, 2Co 3:3.

4. They were written in two tables, being designed to direct us in our duty both towards God and towards man.

5. They are called tables of testimony, because this written law testified both the will of God concerning them and his good-will towards them, and would be a testimony against them if they were disobedient.

6. They were delivered to Moses, probably with a charge, before he laid them up in the ark, to show them publicly, that they might be seen and read of all men, and so what they had heard with the hearing of the ear might now be brought to their remembrance. Thus the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Exodus-32

1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for

as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

While Moses was in the mount, receiving the law from God, the people had time to meditate upon what had been delivered, and prepare themselves for what was further to be revealed, and forty days was little enough for that work; but, instead of that, there were those among them that were contriving how to break the laws they had already received, and to anticipate those which they were in expectation of. On the thirty-ninth day of the forty, the plot broke out of rebellion against the Lord. Here is,

A tumultuous address which the people made to Aaron, who was entrusted with the government in the absence of Moses: Up, make us gods, which shall go before us, Ex 32:1.

1. See the ill effect of Moses's absence from them; if he had not had God's call both to go and stay, he would not have been altogether free from blame. Those that have the charge of others, as magistrates, ministers, and masters of families, ought not, without just cause, to absent themselves from their charge, lest Satan get advantage thereby.

2. See the fury and violence of a multitude when they are influenced and corrupted by such as lie in wait to deceive. Some few, it is likely, were at first possessed with this humour, while many, who would never have thought of it if they had not put it into their hearts, were brought to follow their pernicious ways; and presently such a multitude were carried down the stream that the few who abhorred the proposal durst not so much as enter their protestation against

it. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles! Now what was the matter with this giddy multitude?

(1.) They were weary of waiting for the promised land. They thought themselves detained too long at mount Sinai; though there they lay very safe and very easy, well fed and well taught, yet they were impatient to be going forward. They had a God that staid with them, and manifested his presence with them by the cloud; but this would not serve. They must have a god to go before them; they are for hastening to the land flowing with milk and honey, and cannot stay to take their religion along with them.

Note, Those that would anticipate God's counsels are commonly precipitate in their own. We must first wait for God's law before we catch at his promises. He that believeth doth not make haste, not more haste than good speed.

(2.) They were weary of waiting for the return of Moses. When he went up into the mount, he had not told them (for God had not told him) how long he must stay; and therefore, when he had outstayed their time, though they were every way well provided for in his absence, some bad people advanced I know not what surmises concerning his delay: As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him. Observe,

[1.] How slightly they speak of his person--this Moses. Thus ungrateful are they to Moses, who had shown such a tender concern for them, and thus do they walk contrary to God. While God delights to put honour upon him, they delight to put contempt upon him, and this to the face of Aaron his brother, and now his viceroy. Note, The greatest merits cannot secure men from the greatest indignities and affronts in this ungrateful world.

[2.] How suspiciously they speak of his delay: We wot not what has become of him. They thought he was either consumed by the devouring fire or starved for want to food, as if that God who kept and fed them, who were so unworthy, would not take care for the protection and supply of Moses his favourite. Some of them, who were willing to think well of Moses, perhaps suggested that he was translated to heaven like Enoch; while others that cared not how ill they thought of him insinuated that he had deserted his undertaking, as unable to go on with it, and had returned to his father-in-law to keep his flock. All these suggestions were perfectly groundless and absurd, nothing could be more so; it was easy to tell what had become of him: he was seen to go into the cloud, and the cloud he went into was still seen by all Israel upon the top of the mount; they had all the reason in the world to conclude that he was safe there; if the Lord had been pleased to kill him, he would not have shown him such favours as these. If he tarried long, it was because God had a great deal to say to him, for their good; he resided upon the mount as the ambassador, and he would certainly return as soon as he had finished the business he went upon; and yet they make this the colour for their wicked proposal: We wot not what has become of him. Note,

First, Those that are resolved to think ill, when they have ever so much reason to think well, commonly pretend that they know not what to think.

Secondly, Misinterpretations of our Redeemer's delays are the occasion of a great deal of wickedness. Our Lord Jesus has gone up into the mount of glory, where he is appearing in the presence of God for us, but out of our sight; the heavens must contain him, must conceal him, that we may live by faith. There he has been long; there he is yet. Hence unbelievers suggest that they know not what has become of him; and ask, Where is the promise of his coming? (2Pe 3:4), as if, because he has not come yet, he would never come.

The wicked servant emboldens himself in his impieties with this consideration, My Lord delays his coming.

Thirdly, Weariness in waiting betrays us to a great many temptations. This began Saul's ruin; he staid for Samuel to the last hour of the time appointed, but had not patience to stay that hour (1Sa 13:8, &c.); so Israel here, if they could but have staid one day longer, would have seen what had become of Moses. The Lord is a God of judgment, and must be waited for till he comes waited for though he tarry; and then we shall not lose our labour, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

(3.) They were weary of waiting for a divine institution of religious worship among them for that was the thing they were now in expectation of. They were told that they must serve God in this mountain, and fond enough they would be of the pomp and ceremony of it; but, because that was not appointed them so soon as they wished, they would set their own wits on work to devise signs of God's presence with them, and would glory in them, and have a worship of their own invention, probably such as they had seen among the Egyptians; for Stephen says that when they said unto Aaron, Make us gods, they did, in heart, turn back into Egypt, Ac 7:39,40. This was a very strange motion, Up, make us gods. If they knew not what had become of Moses, and thought him lost, it would have been decent for them to have appointed a solemn mourning for him for certain days; but see how soon so great a benefactor is forgotten. If they had said, "Moses is lost, make us a governor," there would have been some sense in it, though a great deal of ingratitude to the memory of Moses, and contempt of Aaron and Hur who were left lords-justices in his absence; but to say, Moses is lost, make us a god, was the greatest absurdity imaginable. Was Moses their god? Had he ever pretended to be so? Whatever had become of Moses, was it not evident, beyond contradiction that God was still with them? And had they

any room to question his leading their camp who victualled it so well every day? Could they have any other god that would provide so well for them as he had done, nay as he now did? And yet, Make us gods, which shall go before us! gods! How many would they have? Is not one sufficient? Make us gods! and what good would gods of their own making do them? They must have such gods to go before them as could not go themselves further than they were carried. So wretchedly besotted and intoxicated are idolaters: they are mad upon their idols, Jer 50:38.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me.

Here is the demand which Aaron makes of their jewels thereupon: Bring me your golden ear-rings, Ex 32:2. We do not find that he said one word to discountenance their proposal; he did not reprove their insolence, did not reason with them to convince them of the sin and folly of it, but seemed to approve the motion, and showed himself not unwilling to humour them in it. One would hope he designed, at first, only to make a jest of it, and, by setting up a ridiculous image among them, to expose the motion, and show them the folly of it. But, if so, it proved ill jesting with sin: it is of dangerous consequence for the unwary fly to play about the candle. Some charitably suppose that when Aaron told them to break off their ear-rings, and bring them to him, he did it with design to crush the proposal, believing that though their covetousness would have let them lavish gold out of the bag to make an idol of (Isa 46:6), yet their pride would not have suffered them to part with the golden ear-rings. But it is not safe to try how far men's sinful lusts will carry them in a sinful way, and what expense they will be at; it proved here a dangerous experiment.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron.

Here is the making of the golden calf, Ex 32:3,4.

1 The people brought in their ear-rings to Aaron, whose demand of them, instead of discouraging the motion, perhaps did rather gratify their superstition, and beget in them a fancy that the gold taken from their ears would be the most acceptable, and would make the most valuable god. Let their readiness to part with their rings to make an idol of shame us out of our niggardliness in the service of the true God. Did they not draw back from the charge of their idolatry? And shall we grudge the expenses of our religion, or starve so good a cause?

2. Aaron melted down their rings, and, having a mould prepared for the purpose, poured the melted gold into it, and then produced it in the shape of an ox or calf, giving it some finishing strokes with a graving tool. Some think that Aaron chose this figure, for a sign or token of the divine presence, because he thought the head and horns of an ox a proper emblem of the divine power, and yet, being so plain and common a thing, he hoped the people would not be so sottish as to worship it. But it is probable that they had learnt of the Egyptians thus to represent the Deity, for it is said (Eze 20:8), They did not forsake the idols of Egypt, and (Ex 23:8), Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox (Ps 106:20), and proclaimed their own folly, beyond that of other idolaters, who worshipped the host of heaven.

4 And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, these *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5 And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow *is* a feast to the Lord.

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

Having made the calf in Horeb, they worshipped the graven image, Ps 106:19. Aaron, seeing the people fond of their

calf, was willing yet further to humour them, and he built an altar before it, and proclaimed a feast to the honour of it (Ex 32:5), a feast of dedication. Yet he calls it a feast to Jehovah; for, brutish as they were, they did not imagine that this image was itself a god, nor did they design to terminate their adoration in the image, but they made it for a representation of the true God, whom they intended to worship in and through this image; and yet this did not excuse them from gross idolatry, any more than it will excuse the papists, whose plea it is that they do not worship the image, but God by the image, so making themselves just such idolaters as the worshippers of the golden calf, whose feast was a feast to Jehovah, and proclaimed to be so, that the most ignorant and unthinking might not mistake it.

The people are forward enough to celebrate this feast (Ex 32:6): They rose up early on the morrow, to show how well pleased they were with the solemnity, and, according to the ancient rites of worship, they offered sacrifice to this new-made deity, and then feasted upon the sacrifice; thus having, at the expense of their ear-rings, made their god, they endeavour, at the expense of their beasts, to make this god propitious. Had they offered these sacrifices immediately to Jehovah, without the intervention of an image, they might (for aught I know) have been accepted (Ex 20:24); but having set up an image before them as a symbol of God's presence, and so changed the truth of God into a lie, these sacrifices were an abomination, nothing could be more so. When the idolatry of theirs is spoken of in the New Testament the account of their feast upon the sacrifice is quoted and referred to (1Co 10:7): They sat down to eat and drink of the remainder of what was sacrificed, and then rose up to play, to play the fool, to play the wanton. Like god, like worship. They would not have made a calf their god if they had not first made their belly their god; but, when the god was a jest, no marvel that the service was sport. Being vain

in their imaginations, they became vain in their worship, so great was this vanity. Now,

1. It was strange that any of the people, especially so great a number of them, should do such a thing. Had they not, but the other day, in this very place, heard the voice of the Lord God speaking to them out of the midst of the fire, Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image? Had they not heard the thunder, seen the lightnings, and felt the earthquake, with the dreadful pomp of which this law was given? Had they not been particularly cautioned not to make gods of gold? Ex 20:23. Nay, had they not themselves solemnly entered into covenant with God, and promised that all that which he had said unto them they would do, and would be obedient? Ex 24:7.

And yet, before they stirred from the place where this covenant had been solemnly ratified, and before the cloud was removed from the top of mount Sinai, thus to break an express command, in defiance of an express threatening that this iniquity should be visited upon them and their children--what shall be think of it? It is a plain indication that the law was no more able to sanctify than it was to justify; by it is the knowledge of sin, but not the cure of it. This is intimated in the emphasis laid upon the place where this sin was committed (Ps 106:19). They made a calf in Horeb, the very place where the law was given. It was otherwise with those that received the gospel; they immediately turned from idols; 1Th 1:9.

2. It was especially strange that Aaron should be so deeply implicated in this sin, that he should make the calf, and proclaim the feast! Is this Aaron, the saint of the Lord, the brother of Moses his prophet, that could speak so well. (Ex 4:14), and yet speaks not one word against this idolatry? Is this he that had not only seen, but had been employed in

summoning, the plagues of Egypt, and the judgments, executed upon the gods of the Egyptians? What! And yet himself copying out the abandoned idolatries of Egypt? With what face could they say, These are thy gods that brought thee out of Egypt, when they thus bring the idolatry of Egypt (the worst thing there) along with them? Is this Aaron, who had been with Moses in the mount (Ex 19:24,24:9), and knew that there was no manner of similitude seen there, by which they might make an image? Is this Aaron who was entrusted with the care of the people in the absence of Moses? Is he aiding and abetting in this rebellion against the Lord? How was it possible that he should ever do so sinful a thing? Either he was strangely surprised into it, and did it when he was half asleep, or he was frightened into it by the outrages of the rabble. The Jews have a tradition that his colleague Hur opposing it the people fell upon him and stoned him (and therefore we never read of him after) and that this frightened Aaron into a compliance. And God left him to himself,

[1.] To teach us what the best of men are when they are so left, that we may cease from man, and that he who thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall.

[2.] Aaron was, at this time, destined by the divine appointment to the great office of the priesthood; though he knew it not, Moses in the mount did. Now, lest he should be lifted up, above measure, with the honours that were to be put upon him, a messenger of Satan was suffered to prevail over him, that the remembrance thereof might keep him humble all his days. He who had once shamed himself so far as to build an altar to a golden calf must own himself altogether unworthy of the honour of attending at the altar of God, and purely indebted to free grace for it. Thus pride and boasting were for ever silenced, and a good effect brought

out of a bad cause. By this likewise it was shown that the law made those priests who had infirmity, and needed first to offer for their own sins.

7 And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves:*

8 they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, these *be* thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Here, God acquaints Moses with what was doing in the camp while he was absent, Ex 32:7,8. He could have told him sooner, as soon as the first step was taken towards it, and have hastened him down to prevent it; but he suffered it to come to this height, for wise and holy ends, and then sent him down to punish it.

Note, It is no reproach to the holiness of God that he suffers sin to be committed, since he knows, not only how to restrain it when he pleases, but how to make it serviceable to the designs of his own glory. Observe what God here says to Moses concerning this sin.

1. That they had corrupted themselves. Sin is the corruption or depravation of the sinner, and it is a self-corruption; every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust.

2. That they had turned aside out of the way. Sin is a deviation from the way of our duty into a by-path. When they promised to do all that God should command them, they set out as fair as could be; but now they missed their way, and turned aside.

3. That they had turned aside quickly, quickly after the law was given them and they had promised to obey it, quickly after God had done such great things for them and declared his kind intentions to do greater. They soon forgot his works.

To fall into sin quickly after we have renewed our covenants with God, or received special mercy from him, is very provoking.

4. He tells him particularly what they had done: They have made a calf, and worshipped it. Note, Those sins which are concealed from our governors are naked and open before God. He sees that which they cannot discover, nor is any of the wickedness in the world hidden from him. We could not bear to see the thousandth part of that provocation which God sees every day and yet keeps silence.

5. He seems to disown them, in saying to Moses, They are thy people whom thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt; as if he had said, "I will not own any relation to them, or concern for them; let it never be said that they are my people, or that I brought them out of Egypt." Note, Those that corrupt themselves not only shame themselves, but even make God himself ashamed of them and of his kindness to them.

6. He sends him down to them with all speed: Go, get thee down. He must break off even his communion with God to go and do his duty as a magistrate among the people; so must Joshua, Ex 7:10. Every thing is beautiful in its season.

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:

10 now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

He expresses his displeasure against Israel for this sin, and the determination of his justice to cut them off, Ex 32:9,10.

1. He gives this people their true character: "It is a stiff-necked people, unapt to come under the yoke of the divine law, and governed as it were by a spirit of contradiction, averse to all good and prone to evil, obstinate against the

methods employed for their cure." Note, The righteous God sees, not only what we do, but what we are, not only the actions of our lives, but the dispositions of our spirits, and has an eye to them in all his proceedings.

2. He declares what was their just desert--that his wrath should wax hot against them, so as to consume them at once, and blot out their name from under heaven (De 9:14); not only cast them out of covenant, but chase them out of the world.

Note, Sin exposes us to the wrath of God; and that wrath, if it be not allayed by divine mercy, will burn us up as stubble. It were just with God to let the law have its course against sinners, and to cut them off immediately in the very act of sin; and, if he should do so, it would be neither loss nor dishonour to him.

3. He holds out inducements to Moses not to intercede for them: Therefore, let me alone. What did Moses, or what could he do, to hinder God from consuming them? When God resolves to abandon a people, and the decree of ruin has gone forth, no intercession can prevent it, Eze 14:14,15:1.

But God would thus express the greatness of his just displeasure against them, after the manner of men, who would have none to intercede for those they resolve to be severe with. Thus also he would put an honour upon prayer, intimating that nothing but the intercession of Moses could save them from ruin, that he might be a type of Christ, by whose mediation alone God would reconcile the world unto himself. That the intercession of Moses might appear the more illustrious, God fairly offers him that, if he would not interpose in this matter, he would make of him a great nation, that either, in process of time, he would raise up a people out of his loins, or that he would immediately, by some means or other, bring another great nation under his government

and conduct, so that he should be no loser by their ruin. Had Moses been of a narrow selfish spirit, he would have closed with this offer; but he prefers the salvation of Israel before the advancement of his own family. Here was a man fit to be a governor.

11 And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?

12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, for mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Moses earnestly intercedes with God on their behalf (Ex 32:11-13): he besought the Lord his God. If God would not be called the God of Israel, yet he hoped he might address him as his own God. What interest we have at the throne of grace we should improve for the church of God, and for our friends. Now Moses is standing in the gap to turn away the wrath of God, Ps 106:23. He wisely took the hint which God gave him when he said, Let me alone, which, though it seemed to forbid his interceding, did really encourage it, by showing what power the prayer of faith has with God. In such a case, God wonders if there be no intercessor, Isa 59:16. Observe,

1. His prayer (Ex 32:12): Turn from thy fierce wrath; not as if he thought God was not justly angry, but he begs that he would not be so greatly angry as to consume them. "Let mercy rejoice against judgment; repent of this evil; change the sentence of destruction into that of correction."

2. His pleas. He fills his mouth with arguments, not to move God, but to express his own faith and to excite his own fervency in prayer. He urges,

(1.) God's interest in them, the great things he had already done for them, and the vast expense of favours and miracles he had been at upon them, Ex 32:11. God had said to Moses (Ex 32:7), They are thy people, whom thou broughtest up out of Egypt; but Moses humbly turns them back upon God again: "They are thy people, thou art their Lord and owner; I am but their servant. Thou broughtest them forth out of Egypt; I was but the instrument in thy hand; that was done in order to their deliverance which thou only couldest do." Though their being his people was a reason why he should be angry with them for setting up another god, yet it was a reason why he should not be so angry with them as to consume them. Nothing is more natural than for a father to correct his son, but nothing more unnatural than for a father to slay his son. And as the relation is a good plea ("they are thy people"), so is the experience they had had of his kindness to them: "Thou broughtest them out of Egypt, though they were unworthy, and had there served the gods of the Egyptians, Jos 24:15. If thou didst that for them, notwithstanding their sins in Egypt, wilt thou undo it for their sins of the same nature in the wilderness?"

(2.) He pleads the concern of God's glory (Ex 32:12): Wherefore should the Egyptians say, For mischief did he bring them out? Israel is dear to Moses as his kindred, as his charge; but it is the glory of God that he is most concerned for; this lies nearer his heart than any thing else. If Israel could perish without any reproach to God's name, Moses could persuade himself to sit down contented; but he cannot bear to hear God reflected on, and therefore this he insists upon, Lord, what will the Egyptians say? Their eyes, and the eyes of all the neighbouring nations, were now upon Israel; from the wondrous beginnings of that people, they raised their expectations of something great in their latter end; but, if a people so strangely saved should be suddenly ruined, what would the world say of it, especially the Egyptians, who have such an implacable hatred both to Israel and to the

God of Israel? They would say, "God was either weak, and could not, or fickle, and would not, complete the salvation he began; he brought them forth to that mountain, not to sacrifice (as was pretended), but to be sacrificed."

They will not consider the provocation given by Israel, to justify the proceeding, but will think it cause enough for triumph that God and his people could not agree, but that their God had done that which they (the Egyptians) wished to see done. Note, The glorifying of God's name, as it ought to be our first petition (it is so in the Lord's prayer), so it ought to be our great plea, Ps 79:9, Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, Jer 14:21; and see Jer 33:8,9. And, if we would with comfort plead this with God as a reason why he should not destroy us, we ought to plead it with ourselves as a reason why we should not offend him: What will the Egyptians say? We ought always to be careful that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed through us.

(3.) He pleads God's promise to the patriarchs that he would multiply their seed, and give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance, and this promise confirmed by an oath, an oath by himself, since he could swear by no greater, Ex 32:13. God's promises are to be our pleas in prayer; for what he has promised he is able to perform, and the honour of this truth is engaged for the performance of it. "Lord, if Israel be cut off, what will become of the promise? Shall their unbelief make that of no effect? God forbid." Thus we must take our encouragement in prayer from God only.

13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.

14 And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

God graciously abated the rigour of the sentence, and repented of the evil he thought to do (Ex 32:14); though he designed to punish them, yet he would not ruin them. See here,

1 The power of prayer; God suffers himself to be prevailed with by the humble believing importunity of intercessors.

2 The compassion of God towards poor sinners, and how ready he is to forgive. Thus he has given other proofs besides his own oath that he has no pleasure in the death of those that die; for he not only pardons upon the repentance of sinners, but spares and reprieves upon the intercession of others for them.

15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other *were* they written.

16 And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

The favour of God to Moses, in trusting him with the two tables of the testimony, which, though of common stone, were far more valuable than all the precious stones that adorned the breast-plate of Aaron. The topaz of Ethiopia could not equal them, Ex 32:15,16. God himself, without the ministry either of man or angel (for aught that appears), wrote the ten commandments on these tables, on both their sides, some on one table and some on the other, so that they were folded together like a book, to be deposited in the ark.

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, *There is* a noise of war in the camp.

18 And he said, *It is* not the voice of *them that* shout for mastery, neither *is it* the voice of *them that* cry for being overcome; *but* the noise of *them that* sing do I hear.

The familiarity between Moses and Joshua. While Moses was in the cloud, as in the presence-chamber, Joshua continued as near as he might, in the anti-chamber (as it were), waiting till Moses came out, that he might be ready to attend him; and though he was all alone for forty days (fed, it is likely, with manna), yet he was not weary of waiting, as the people were, but when Moses came down he came with him, and not till then. And here we are told what constructions they put upon the noise that they heard in the camp, Ex 32:17,18. Though Moses had been so long in immediate converse with God, yet he did not disdain to talk freely with his servant Joshua. Those whom God advances he preserves from being puffed up. Nor did he disdain to talk of the affairs of the camp. Blessed Paul was not the less mindful of the church on earth for having been in the third heavens, where he heard unspeakable words. Joshua, who was a military man, and had the command of the train-bands, feared there was a noise of war in the camp, and then he would be missed; but Moses, having received notice of it from God, better distinguished the sound, and was aware that it was the voice of those that sing. It does not however appear that he told Joshua what he knew of the occasion of their singing; for we should not be forward to proclaim men's faults: they will be known too soon.

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder, and strewed *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*.

The great and just displeasure of Moses against Israel, for their idolatry. Knowing what to expect, he was presently aware of the golden calf, and the sport the people made with it. He saw how merry they could be in his absence, how soon he was forgotten among them, and what little thought they had of him and his return. He might justly take this ill, as an affront to himself, but this was the least part of the grievance;

he resented it as an offence to God, and the scandal of his people.

See what a change it is to come down from the mount of communion with God to converse with a world that lies in wickedness. In God we see nothing but what is pure and pleasant, in the world nothing but pollution and provocation. Moses was the meekest man on the earth, and yet when he saw the calf, and the dancing, his anger waxed hot. Note, It is no breach of the law of meekness to show our displeasure at the wickedness of the wicked. Those are angry and sin not that are angry at sin only, not as against themselves, but as against God. Ephesus is famous for patience, and yet cannot bear those that are evil, Re 2:2. It becomes us to be cool in our own cause, but warm in God's. Moses showed himself very angry, both by breaking the tables and burning the calf, that he might, by these expressions of strong indignation, awaken the people to a sense of the greatness of the sin they had been guilty of, which they would have been ready to make light of if he had not thus shown his resentment, as one in earnest for their conviction.

To convince them that they had forfeited and lost the favour of God, he broke the tables, Ex 32:19. Though God knew of their sin, before Moses came down, yet he did not order him to leave the tables behind him, but gave them to him to take down in his hand, that the people might see how forward God was to take them into covenant with himself, and that nothing but their own sin prevented it; yet he put in into his heart, when the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered (as the expression is, Ho 7:1), to break the tables before their eyes (as it is De 9:17), that the sight of it might the more affect them, and fill them with confusion, when they saw what blessings they had lost. Thus, they being guilty of so notorious an infraction of the treaty now on foot, the writings were torn, even when they lay ready to be sealed.

Note, The greatest sign of God's displeasure against any person or people is his taking his law from them. The breaking of the tables is the breaking of the staff of beauty and band (Zec 11:10,14); it leaves a people unchurched and undone. Some think that Moses sinned in breaking the tables, and observe that, when men are angry, they are in danger of breaking all God's commandments; but it rather seems to be an act of justice than of passion, and we do not find that he himself speaks of it afterwards (De 9:17) with any regret.

21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

To convince them that they had betaken themselves to a God that could not help them, he burnt the calf (Ex 32:20), melted it down, and then filed it to dust; and, that the powder to which it was reduced might be taken notice of throughout the camp, he strewed it upon that water of which they all drank. That it might appear that an idol is nothing in the world (1Co 8:4); he reduced this to atoms, that it might be as near nothing as could be. To show that false gods cannot help their worshippers, he here showed that this could not save itself, Isa 46:1,2. And to teach us that all the relics of idolatry ought to be abolished, and that the names of Baalim should be taken away, the very dust to which it was ground was scattered. Filings of gold are precious (we say), and therefore are carefully gathered up; but the filings of the golden calf were odious, and must be scattered with detestation. Thus the idols of silver and gold must be cast to the moles and the bats (Isa 2:20,30:22), and Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? His mixing this powder with their drink signified to them that the curse they had thereby brought upon themselves would mingle itself with all their enjoyments, and embitter them; it would enter into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; he shall drink as he brews. These were indeed waters of Marah.

22 And Aaron said, let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are *set* on mischief.

He begins with Aaron, as God began with Adam, because he was the principal person, though not first in the transgression, but drawn into it. Observe here,

The just reproof Moses gives him, Ex 32:21. He does not order him to be cut-off, as those (Ex 32:27) that had been the ring-leaders in the sin. Note, A great deal of difference will be made between those that presumptuously rush into sin and those that through infirmity are surprised into it, between those that overtake the fault that flees from them and those that are overtaken in the fault they flee from. See Ga 6:1. Not but that Aaron deserved to be cut off for this sin, and would have been so if Moses had not interceded particularly for him, as appears De 9:20. And having prevailed with God for him, to save him from ruin, he here expostulates with him, to bring him to repentance. He puts Aaron upon considering,

(1.) What he had done to this people: Thou hast brought so great a sin upon them. The sin of idolatry is a great sin, so great a sin that the evil of it cannot be expressed; the people, as the first movers, might be said to bring the sin upon Aaron; but he being a magistrate, who should have suppressed it, and yet aiding and abetting it, might truly be said to bring it upon them, because he hardened their hearts and strengthened their hands in it. It is a shocking thing for governors to humour people in their sins, and give countenance to that to which they should be a terror. Observe, in general, Those who bring sin upon others, either by drawing them into it or encouraging them in it, do more mischief than they are aware of; we really hate those whom we either bring or suffer sin upon, Le 19:17. Those that share in sin help to break their partners, and really ruin one another.

(2.) What moved him to it: What did this people unto thee? He takes it for granted that it must needs be something more than ordinary that prevailed with Aaron to do such a thing, thus insinuating an excuse for him, because he knew that his heart was upright: "What did they? Did they accost thee fairly, and wheedle thee into it; and durst thou displease thy God, to please the people? Did they overcome thee by importunity; and hadst thou so little resolution left as to yield to the stream of a popular clamour? Did they threaten to stone thee; and couldest not thou have opposed God's threatenings to theirs, and frightened them worse than they could frighten thee?"

Note, We must never be drawn into sin by any thing that man can say or do to us, for it will not justify us to say that we were so drawn in. Men can but tempt us to sin; they cannot force us. Men can but frighten us; if we do not comply, they cannot hurt us.

23 For they said unto me, make us gods, which shall go before us: for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

The frivolous excuse Aaron makes for himself. We will hope that he testified his repentance for the sin afterwards better than he did now; for what he says here has little in it of the language of a penitent. If a just man fall, he shall rise again, but perhaps not quickly.

(1.) He deprecates the anger of Moses only, whereas he should have deprecated God's anger in the first place: Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot, Ex 32:22.

(2.) He lays all the fault upon the people: They are set on mischief, and they said, Make us gods. It is natural to us to endeavour thus to transfer our guilt; we have it in our kind, Adam and Eve did so; sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own. Aaron was now the chief magistrate and had power over the people, and yet pleads that the people overpowered

him; he that had authority to restrain them, yet had so little resolution as to yield to them.

(3.) It is well if he did not intend a reflection upon Moses, as accessory to the sin, by staying so long on the mount, in repeating, without need, that invidious surmise of the people, As for this Moses, we know not what has become of him, Ex 32:23.

(4.) He extenuates and conceals his own share in the sin, as if he had only bidden them break off their gold that they had about them, intending to make a hasty assay for the present, and to try what he could make of the gold that was next hand: and childishly insinuates that when he cast the gold into the fire it came out, either by accident or by the magic art of some of the mixed multitude (as the Jewish writers dream), in this shape; but not a word of his graving and fashioning it, Ex 32:24. But Moses relates to all ages what he did (Ex 32:4), though he himself here would not own it.

Note, He that covers his sin shall not prosper, for sooner or later it will be discovered. Well, this was all Aaron had to say for himself; and he had better have said nothing, for his defence did but aggravate his offence; and yet he is not only spared, but preferred; as sin did abound, grace did much more abound.

24 And I said unto them, whosoever hath any gold, let them break *it* off. So they gave *it* me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked unto *their* shame among their enemies,)

The people are next to be judged for this sin. The approach of Moses soon spoiled their sport and turned their dancing into trembling. Those that hectored Aaron into a compliance with them in their sin durst not look Moses in the face, nor make the least opposition to the severity which he thought fit to use both against the idol and against the idolaters.

Note, It is not impossible to make those sins which were committed with daring presumption appear contemptible, when the insolent perpetrators of them slink away overwhelmed in their own confusion. The king that sits upon the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes. Observe two things:--

How they were exposed to shame by their sin: The people were naked (Ex 32:25), not so much because they had some of them lost their ear-rings (that was inconsiderable), but because they had lost their integrity, and lay under the reproach of ingratitude to their best benefactor, and a treacherous revolt from their rightful Lord. It was a shame to them, and a perpetual blot, that they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox. Other nations boasted that they were true to their false gods; well may Israel blush for being false to the true God. Thus were they made naked, stripped of their ornaments, and exposed to contempt; stripped of their armour, and liable to insults. Thus our first parents, when they had sinned, became naked, to their shame.

Note, Those that do dishonour to God really bring the greatest dishonour upon themselves: so Israel here did, and Moses was concerned to see it, though they themselves were not; he saw that they were naked.

26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, who is on the
Lord's side? *Let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi
gathered themselves together unto him.

27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put
every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate
throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every
man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

The course that Moses took to roll away this reproach, not by concealing the sin, or putting any false colour upon it, but by punishing it, and so bearing a public testimony against it. Whenever it should be case in their teeth that they had made a calf in Horeb, they might have this to say, in answer to those that reproached them, that though it was true there were those that did so, yet justice was executed upon them. The government disallowed the sin, and suffered not the sinners to go unpunished. They did so, but they paid dearly for it. Thus (said God) thou shalt put the evil away, De 13:5. Observe here,

(1.) By whom vengeance was taken--by the children of Levi (Ex 32:26,28); not by the immediate hand of God himself, as on Nadab and Abihu, but by the sword of man, to teach them that idolatry was an iniquity to be punished by the judge, being a denial of the God that is above, Job 31:28,De 13:9. It was to be done by the sword of their own brethren, that the execution of justice might redound more to the honour of the nation. And, if they must fall now into the hands of man, better so than flee before their enemies. The innocent must be culled out to be the executioners of the guilty, that it might be the more effectual warning to themselves, that they did not the like another time; and the putting of them upon such an unpleasant service, and so much against the grain as this must needs be, to kill their next neighbours, was a punishment to them too for not appearing sooner to prevent the sin, and make head against it. The Levites particularly were employed in doing this execution; for, it should seem, there were more of them than of any other tribe that had kept themselves free from the contagion, which was the more laudable because Aaron, the head of their tribe, was so deeply concerned in it. Now here we are told,

[1.] How the Levites were called out to this service: Moses stood in the gate of the camp, the place of judgment; there he displayed a banner, as it were, because of the truth, to enlist soldiers for God. He proclaimed, Who is on the Lord's side? The idolaters had set up the golden calf for their standard, and now Moses set up his, in opposition to them. Now Moses clad himself with zeal as with a robe, and summoned all those to appear forthwith that were on God's side, against the golden calf. He does not proclaim, as Jehu, "Who is on my side (2Ki 9:32), to avenge the indignity done to me?" but, Who is on the Lord's side? It was God's cause that he espoused against the evil-doers, Ps 94:16. Note, First, There are two great interests on foot in the world, with the one or the other of which all the children of men are siding. The interest of sin and wickedness is the devil's interest, and all wicked people side with that interest; the interest of truth and holiness is God's interest, with which all godly people side; and it is a case that will not admit a neutrality. Secondly, It concerns us all to enquire whether we are on the Lord's side or not. Thirdly, Those who are on his side are comparatively but few, and sometimes seem fewer than really they are. Fourthly, God does sometimes call out those that are on his side to appear for him, as witnesses, as soldiers, as intercessors.

[2.] How they were commissioned for this service (Ex 32:27): Slay every man his brother, that is, "Slay all those that you know to have been active for the making and worshipping of the golden calf, though they were your own nearest relations, or dearest friends." The crime was committed publicly, the Levites saw who of their acquaintance were concerned in it, and therefore needed no other direction than their own knowledge whom to slay. And probably the greatest part of those that were guilty were known, and known to be so, by some or other of the Levites who were employed in the execution. Yet, it should seem, they were to slay those only whom they found abroad in the

streets of the camp; for it might be hoped that those who had retired into their tents were ashamed of what they had done, and were upon their knees, repenting. Those are marked for ruin who persist in sin, and are not ashamed of the abominations they have committed, Jer 8:12.

But how durst the Levites encounter so great a body, who probably were much enraged by the burning of their calf? It is easy to account for this; a sense of guilt disheartened the delinquents, and a divine commission animated the executioners. And one thing that put life into them was that Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord, that he may bestow a blessing upon you, thereby intimating to them that they now stood fair for preferment and that, if they would but signalize themselves upon this occasion, it would be construed into such a consecration of themselves to God, and to his service, as would put upon their tribe a perpetual honour. Those that consecrate themselves to the Lord he will set apart for himself. Those that do the duty shall have the dignity; and, if we do signal services for God, he will bestow especial blessings upon us. There was a blessing designed for the tribe of Levi; now says Moses, "Consecrate yourselves to the Lord, that you may qualify yourselves to receive the blessing." The Levites were to assist in the offering of sacrifice to God; and now they must begin with the offering of these sacrifices to the honour of divine justice. Those that are to minister about holy things must be not only sincere and serious, but warm and zealous, bold and courageous, for God and godliness. Thus all Christians, but especially ministers, must forsake father and mother, and prefer the service of Christ and his interest far before their nearest and dearest relations; for if we love our relations better than Christ we are not worthy of him. See how this zeal of the Levites is applauded, De 33:9.

(2.) On whom vengeance is taken: There fell of the people that day about 3000 men, Ex 32:28. Probably these were but few, in comparison with the many that were guilty; but these were the men that headed the rebellion, and were therefore picked out, to be made examples of, for terror to all others. Those that in the morning were shouting and dancing before night were dying in their own blood; such a sudden change do the judgments of God sometimes make with sinners that are secure and jovial in their sin, as with Belshazzar by the hand-writing upon the wall. This is written for warning to us. 1Co 10:7, Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them.

28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29 For Moses had said, consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

Moses, having executed justice upon the principal offenders, is here dealing both with the people and with God.

With the people, to bring them to repentance, Ex 32:30.

When some were slain, lest the rest should imagine that, because they were exempt from the capital punishment, they were therefore looked upon as free from guilt, Moses here tells the survivors, You have sinned a great sin, and therefore, though you have escaped this time, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish. That they might not think lightly of the sin itself, he calls it a great sin; and that they might not think themselves innocent, because perhaps they were not all so deeply guilty as some of those that were put to death, he tells them all, You have sinned a great sin. The work of ministers is to show people their sins, and the

greatness of their sins. "You have sinned, and therefore you are undone if your sins be not pardoned, for ever undone without a Saviour. It is a great sin, and therefore calls for great sorrow, for it puts you in great danger." To affect them with the greatness of their sin he intimates to them what a difficult thing it would be to make up the quarrel which God had with them for it.

(1.) It would not be done, unless he himself went up unto the Lord on purpose, and gave as long and as solemn attendance as he had done for the receiving of the law. And yet,

(2.) Even so it was but a peradventure that he should make atonement for them; the case was extremely hazardous. This should convince us of the great evil there is in sin, that he who undertook to make atonement found it no easy thing to do it; he must go up to the Lord with his own blood to make atonement. The malignity of sin appears in the price of pardons.

Yet it was some encouragement to the people (when they were told that they had sinned a great sin) to hear that Moses, who had so great an interest in heaven and so true an affection for them, would go up unto the Lord to make atonement for them. Consolation should go along with conviction: first wound, and then heal; first show people the greatness of their sin, and then make known to them the atonement, and give them hopes of mercy. Moses will go up unto the Lord, though it be but a peradventure that he should make atonement. Christ, the great Mediator, went upon greater certainty than this, for he had lain in the bosom of the Father, and perfectly knew all his counsels. But to us poor supplicants it is encouragement enough in prayer for particular mercies that peradventure we may obtain them, though we have not an absolute promise. Zep 2:3, It may be, you shall be hid. In our prayers for others, we should be

humbly earnest with God, though it is but a peradventure that God will give them repentance, 2Ti 2:25.

31 And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

How pathetic his address was. Moses returned unto the Lord, not to receive further instructions about the tabernacle: there were no more conferences now about that matter. Thus men's sins and follies make work for their friends and ministers, unpleasant work, many times, and give great interruptions to that work which they delight in. Moses in this address expresses,

His great detestation of the people's sin, Ex 32:31. He speaks as one overwhelmed with the horror of it: Oh! This people have sinned a great sin. God had first told him of it (Ex 32:7), and now he tells God of it, by way of lamentation. He does not call them God's people, he knew they were unworthy to be called so; but this people, this treacherous ungrateful people, they have made for themselves gods of gold. It is a great sin indeed to make gold our god, as those do that make it their hope, and set their heart on it. He does not go about to excuse or extenuate the sin; but what he had said to them by way of conviction he says to God by way of confession: They have sinned a great sin; he came not to make apologies, but to make atonement. "Lord, pardon the sin, for it is great," Ps 25:11.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

His great desire of the people's welfare (Ex 32:32): Yet now it is not too great a sin for infinite mercy to pardon, and therefore if thou wilt forgive their sin. What then Moses? It is an abrupt expression, "If thou wilt, I desire no more; if thou wilt, thou wilt be praised, I shall be pleased, and abundantly recompensed for my intercession." It is an expression like that of the dresser of the vineyard (Lu 13:9), If it bear fruit; or, If thou wilt forgive, is as much as, "O that thou wouldest forgive!" as Lu 19:42, If thou hadst known is,

O that thou hadst known. "But if not, if the decree has gone forth, and there is no remedy, but they must be ruined; if this punishment which has already been inflicted on many is not sufficient (2Co 2:6), but they must all be cut off, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written;" that is, "If they must be cut off, let me be cut off with them, and cut short of Canaan; if all Israel must perish, I am content to perish with them; let not the land of promise be mine by survivorship." This expression may be illustrated from Eze 13:9, where this is threatened against the false prophets, They shall not be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel. God had told Moses that, if he would not interpose he would make of him a great nation, Ex 32:10. "No," says Moses, "I am so far from desiring to see my name and family built up on the ruins of Israel, that I will choose rather to sink with them. If I cannot prevent their destruction, let me not see it (Nu 11:15); let me not be written among the living (Isa 4:3), nor among those that are marked for preservation; even let me die in the last ditch." Thus he expresses his tender affection for the people, and is a type of the good Shepherd, that lays down his life for the sheep (Joh 10:11), who was to be cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people, Isa 53:8,Da 9:26. He is also an example of public-spiritedness to all, especially to those in public stations. All private interests must be made subordinate to the good and welfare of communities. It is no great matter what becomes of us and our families in this world, so that it go well with the church of God, and there be peace upon Israel. Moses thus importunes for a pardon, and wrestles with God, not prescribing to him ("If thou wilt not forgive, thou art either unjust or unkind"); no, he is far from that; but, "If not, let me die with the Israelites, and the will of the Lord be done."

33 And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

Observe how prevalent his address was. God would not take him at his word; no, he will not blot any out of his book but

those that by their wilful disobedience have forfeited the honour of being enrolled in it (Ex 32:33); the soul that sins shall die, and not the innocent for the guilty. This was also an intimation of mercy to the people, that they should not all be destroyed in a body, but those only that had a hand in the sin.

Thus Moses gets ground by degrees. God would not at first give him full assurances of his being reconciled to them, lest, if the comfort of a pardon were too easily obtained, they should be emboldened to do the like again, and should not be made sensible enough of the evil of the sin. Comforts are suspended that convictions may be the deeper impressed: also God would hereby exercise the faith and zeal of Moses, their great intercessor. Further, in answer to the address of Moses,

(1.) God promises, notwithstanding this, to go on with his kind intention of giving them the land of Canaan, the land he had spoken to them of, Ex 32:34. Therefore he sends Moses back to them to lead them, though they were unworthy of him, and promises that his angel should go before them, some created angel that was employed in the common services of the kingdom of providence, which intimated that they were not to expect any thing for the future to be done for them out of the common road of providence, not any thing extraordinary. Moses afterwards obtained a promise of God's special presence with them (Ex 33:14,17); but at present this was all he could prevail for.

(2.) Yet he threatens to remember this sin against them when hereafter he should see cause to punish them for other sins: "When I visit, I will visit for this among the rest. Next time I take the rod in hand, they shall have one stripe the more for this." The Jews have a saying, grounded on this, that henceforward no judgment fell upon Israel but there was in

it an ounce of the powder of the golden calf. I see no ground in scripture for the opinion some are of, that God would not have burdened them with such a multitude of sacrifices and other ceremonial institutions if they had not provoked him by worshipping the golden calf. On the contrary, Stephen says that when they made a calf, and offered sacrifice to the idol, God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven (Ac 7:41,42); so that the strange addictedness of that people to the sin of idolatry was a just judgment upon them for making and worshipping the golden calf, and a judgment they were never quite freed from till the captivity of Babylon. See Ro 1:23-25.

Note, Many that are not immediately cut off in their sins are reserved for a further day of reckoning: vengeance is slow, but sure. For the present, the Lord plagued the people (Ex 32:35), probably by the pestilence, or some other infectious disease, which was a messenger of God's wrath, and an earnest of worse. Aaron made the calf, and yet it is said the people made it, because they worshipped it. Deos qui rogat, ille facit--He who asks for gods makes them.

Aaron was not plagued, but the people; for his was a sin of infirmity, theirs a presumptuous sin, between which there is a great difference, not always discernable to us, but evident to God, whose judgment therefore, we are sure, is according to truth. Thus Moses prevailed for a reprieve and a mitigation of the punishment, but could not wholly turn away the wrath of God. This (some think) bespeaks the inability of the law of Moses to reconcile men to God and to perfect our peace with him, which was reserved for Christ to do, in whom alone it is that God so pardons sin as to remember it no more.

34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine angel shall go before thee: nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.

35 And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf,
which Aaron made.

Exodus-33

The Lord's Presence Promised

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, *and* go up hence, thou and
the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt,

> He bids them depart and go up hence to the land of Canaan, Ex 33:1. This mount Sinai, where they now were, was the place appointed for the setting up of God's tabernacle and solemn worship among them; this was not yet done, so that in bidding them depart hence God intimates that it should not be done--"Let them go forward as they are;" and so it was very expressive of God's displeasure.
>
> He turns them over to Moses, as the people whom he had brought up out of the land of Egypt, and leaves it to him to lead them to Canaan.

unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob,
saying, unto thy seed will I give it:

2 and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the
Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite,
the Hivite, and the Jebusite:

> Though he promises to make good his covenant with Abraham, in giving them Canaan, yet he denies them the extraordinary tokens of his presence, such as they had hitherto been blessed with, and leaves them under the common conduct of Moses their prince, and the common convoy of a guardian angel: "I will send an angel before thee, for thy protector, otherwise the evil angels would soon destroy thee; but I will not go up in the midst of thee, lest I consume thee" (Ex 33:2,3); not as if an angel would be more patient and compassionate than God, but their affronts given

to an angel would not be so provoking as those given to the shechinah, or divine Majesty itself.

Note, The greater the privileges we enjoy the greater is our danger if we do not improve them and live up to them.

3 unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou *art* a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way.

Here is, the message which God sent by Moses to the children of Israel, signifying the continuance of the displeasure against them, and the bad terms they yet stood upon with God. This he must let them know for their further mortification.

He applies to them a mortifying name, by giving them their just character--a stiff-necked people, Ex 33:3,5. "Go," says God to Moses, "go and tell them that they are so." He that knows them better than they know themselves says so of them. God would have brought them under the yoke of his law, and into the bond of his covenant, but their necks were too stiff to bow to them. God would have cured them of their corrupt and crooked dispositions, and have set them straight; but they were wilful and obstinate, and hated to be reformed, and would not have God to reign over them. Note, God judges of men by the temper of their minds. We know what man does; God knows what he is: we know what proceeds from man; God knows what is in man, and nothing is more displeasing to him than stiff-neckedness, as nothing in children is more offensive to their parents and teachers than stubbornness.

4 And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

The people's melancholy reception of this message; it was evil tidings to them to hear that they should not have God's special presence with them, and therefore,

They mourned (Ex 33:4), mourned for their sin which had provoked God to withdraw from them, and mourned for this as the sorest punishment of their sin. When 3000 of them were at one time laid dead upon the spot by the Levites' sword, we do not find that they mourned for this (hoping that it would help to expiate the guilt); but when God denied them his favourable presence then they mourned and were in bitterness.

Note, Of all the bitter fruits and consequences of sin, that which true penitents most lament, and dread most, is God's departure from them. God had promised that, notwithstanding their sin, he would give them the land flowing with milk and honey. but they could have small joy of that if they had not God's presence with them. Canaan itself would be no pleasant land without that; therefore, if they want that, they mourn.

In token of great shame and humiliation, those that were undressed did not put on their ornaments (Ex 33:4), and those that were dressed stripped themselves of their ornaments, by the mount; or, as some read it, at a distance from the mount (Ex 33:6), standing afar off like the publican, Lu 18:13. God bade them lay aside their ornaments (Ex 33:5), and they did so, both to show, in general, their deep mourning, and, in particular, to take a holy revenge upon themselves for giving their ear-rings to make the golden calf of. Those that would part with their ornaments for the maintenance of their sin could do no less than lay aside their ornaments in token of their sorrow and shame for it. When the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning we must comply with the call, and not only fast from pleasant bread (Da 10:3), but lay aside our ornaments; even those that are decent enough at other times are unseasonably worn on days of humiliation or in times of public calamity, Isa 3:18.

5 For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye *are* a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in
a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

He tells them what they deserved, that he should come into the midst of them in a moment, and consume them, Ex 33:5. Had he dealt with them according to their sins, he had taken them away with a swift destruction.

Note, Those whom God pardons must be made to know what their sin deserved, and how miserable they would have been if they had been unpardoned, that God's mercy may be the more magnified.

He speaks as one that was at a loss what course to take with them. Justice said, "Cut them off, and consume them." Mercy said, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" Ho 11:8. Well, says God, put off thy ornaments, that I may know what to do with thee; that is, "Put thyself into the posture of a penitent, that the dispute may be determined in thy favour, and mercy may rejoice against judgment," Ex 33:5. Note, Calls to repentance are plain indications of mercy designed. If the Lord were pleased to kill us, justice knows what to do with a stiff-necked people: but God has no pleasure in the death of those that die; let them return and repent, and then mercy, which otherwise is at a loss, knows what to do.

6 And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

7 And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, *that* every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which *was* without the camp.

One mark of displeasure put upon them for their further humiliation: Moses took the tabernacle, not his own tent for his family, but the tent wherein he gave audience, heard

causes, and enquired of God, the guild-hall (as it were) of their camp, and pitched it without, afar off from the camp (Ex 33:7), to signify to them that they had rendered themselves unworthy of it, and that, unless peace was made, it would return to them no more. God would thus let them know that he was at variance with them: The Lord is far from the wicked. Thus the glory of the Lord departed from the temple when it was polluted with sin, Eze 10:4,11:23.

Note, It is a sign that God is angry when he removes his tabernacle, for his ordinances are fruits of his favour and tokens of his presence; while we have them with us we have him with us. Perhaps this tabernacle was a plan, or model rather, of the tabernacle that was afterwards to be erected, a hasty draught from the pattern shown him in the mount, designed for direction to the workmen, and used, in the mean time, as a tabernacle of meeting between God and Moses about public affairs. This was set up at a distance, to affect the people with the loss of that glorious structure which, if they had not forsaken their own mercies for lying vanities, was to have been set up in the midst of them. Let them see what they had forfeited.

Though the tabernacle was removed, yet every one that was disposed to seek the Lord was welcome to follow it, Ex 33:7. Private persons, as well as Moses, were invited and encouraged to apply to God, as intercessors upon this occasion. A place was appointed for them to go to without the camp, to solicit God's return to them. Thus when Ezra (a second Moses) interceded for Israel there were assembled to him many that trembled at God's word, Ezr 9:4. When God designs mercy, he stirs up prayer. He will be sought unto (Eze 36:37); and, thanks be to his name, he may be sought unto, and will not reject the intercession of the poorest.

Every Israelite that sought the Lord was welcome to this tabernacle, as well as Moses the man of God.

8 And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose up, and stood every man *at* his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

The people seemed to be in a very good mind and well disposed towards a reconciliation.

When Moses went out to go to the tabernacle, the people looked after him (Ex 33:8), in token of their respect to him whom before they had slighted, and their entire dependence upon his mediation. By this it appeared that they were very solicitous about this matter, desirous to be at peace with God and concerned to know what would be the issue. Thus the disciples looked after our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high to enter into the holy place not made with hands, till a cloud received him out of their sight, as Moses here. And we must with an eye of faith follow him likewise thither, where he is appearing in the presence of God for us; then shall we have the benefit of his mediation.

9 And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the* Lord talked with Moses.

10 And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand *at* the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man *in* his tent door.

When they saw the cloudy pillar, that symbol of God's presence, give Moses the meeting, they all worshipped, every man at his tent door, Ex 33:10. Thereby they signified,

[1.] Their humble adoration of the divine Majesty, which they will ever worship, and not gods of gold any more.

[2.] Their joyful thankfulness to God that he was pleased to show them this token for good, and give them hopes of a reconciliation; for, if he had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shown them such things as these, would not

have raised them up such a mediator, nor given him such countenance.

[3.] Their hearty concurrence with Moses as their advocate in every thing he should promise for them, and their expectation of a comfortable and happy issue of this treaty. Thus must we worship God in our tents with an eye to Christ as the Mediator. Their worshipping in their tent doors declared plainly that they were not ashamed publicly to own their respect to God and Moses, as they had publicly worshipped the calf.

11 And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp; but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

God was, in Moses, reconciling Israel to himself, and manifested himself very willing to be at peace.

(1.) God met Moses at the place of treaty, Ex 33:9. The cloudy pillar, which had withdrawn itself from the camp when it was polluted with idolatry, now returned to this tabernacle at some distance, coming back gradually. If our hearts go forth towards God to meet him he will graciously come down to meet us.

(2.) God talked with Moses (Ex 33:9), spoke to him face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex 33:11), which intimates that God revealed himself to Moses, not only with greater clearness and evidence of divine light than to any other of the prophets, but also with greater expressions of particular kindness and grace. He spoke, not as a prince to a subject, but as a man to his friend, whom he loves, and with whom he takes sweet counsel. This was great encouragement to Israel, to see their advocate so great a favourite; and, that they might be encouraged by it, Moses turned again into the camp, to tell the people what hopes he had of bringing this business to a good issue, and that they

might not despair if he should be long absent. But, because he intended speedily to return to the tabernacle of the congregation, he left Joshua there, for it was not fit that the place should be empty, so long as the cloud of glory stood at the door (Ex 33:9); but, if God had any thing to say out of that cloud while Moses was absent, Joshua was there, ready to hear it.

12 And Moses said unto the Lord, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

How he pleads.

(1.) He insists upon the commission God had given him to bring up this people, Ex 33:12. This he begins with: "Lord, it is thou thyself that employest me; and wilt thou not own me? I am in the way of my duty; and shall I not have thy presence with me in that way?" Whom God calls out to any service he will be sure to furnish with necessary assistances. "Now, Lord, thou hast ordered me a great work, and yet left me at a loss how to go about it, and to through with it."

Note, Those that sincerely design and endeavour to do their duty may in faith beg of God direction and strength for the doing of it.

(2.) He improves the interest he himself had with God, and pleads God's gracious expressions of kindness to him: Thou hast said, I know thee by name, as a particular friend and confidant, and thou hast also found grace in my sight, above any other. Now, therefore, says Moses, if it be indeed so, that I have found grace in thy sight, show me the way, Ex 33:13. What favour God had expressed to the people they had forfeited the benefit of, there was no insisting upon that; and therefore Moses lays the stress of his plea upon what God

had said to him, which, though he owns himself unworthy of, yet he hopes he has not thrown himself out of the benefit of. By this therefore he takes hold on God: "Lord, if ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this for the people." Thus our Lord Jesus, in his intercession, presents himself to the Father, as one in whom he is always well pleased, and so obtains mercy for us with whom he is justly displeased; and we are accepted in the beloved. Thus also men of public spirit love to improve their interest both with God and man for the public good. Observe what it is he is thus earnest for: Show me thy way, that I may know that I find grace in thy sight.

Note, Divine direction is one of the best evidences of divine favour. By this we may know that we find grace in God's sight, if we find grace in our hearts to guide and quicken us in the way of our duty. God's good work in us is the surest discovery of his good-will towards us.

(3.) He insinuates that the people also, though most unworthy, yet were in some relation to God: "Consider that this nation is thy people, a people that thou hast done great things for, redeemed to thyself, and taken into covenant with thyself; Lord, they are thy own, do not leave them." The offended father considers this, "My child is foolish and froward, but he is my child, and I cannot abandon him."

(4.) He expresses the great value he had for the presence of God. When God said, My presence shall go with thee, he caught at that word, as that which he could not live and move without: "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," Ex 33:15. He speaks as one that dreaded the thought of going forward without God's presence, knowing that their marches could not be safe, nor their encampments easy, if they had not God with them. "Better lie down and die here

in the wilderness than go forward to Canaan without God's presence."

Note, Those who know how to value God's favours are best prepared to receive them. Observe how earnest Moses is in this matter; he begs as one that would take no denial. "Here we will stay till we obtain thy favour; like Jacob, I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And observe how he advances upon God's concessions; the kind intimations given him make him yet more importunate. Thus God's gracious promises, and the advances of mercy towards us, should not only encourage our faith, but excite our fervency in prayer.

(5.) He concludes with an argument taken from God's glory (Ex 33:16): "Wherein shall it be known to the nations that have their eyes upon us that I and thy people (with whom my interests are all blended) have found grace in thy sight, distinguishing favour, so as to be separated from all people on earth? How will it appear that we are indeed thus honoured? Is it not in that thou goest with us? Nothing short of this can answer these characters. Let it never be said that we are a peculiar people, and highly favoured, for we stand but upon a level with the rest of our neighbours unless thou go with us; sending an angel with us will not serve." He lays a stress upon the place--"here in this wilderness, whither thou hast led us, and where we shall be certainly lost if thou leave us." Note, God's special presence with us in this wilderness, by his Spirit and grace, to direct, defend, and comfort us, is the surest pledge of his special love to us and will redound to his glory as well as our benefit.

13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation *is* thy people.

14 And he said, My presence shall go *with thee,* and I will give thee rest.

He is very earnest with God for a grant of his presence with Israel in the rest of their march to Canaan, notwithstanding their provocations. The people had by their sin deserved the wrath of God, and for the turning away of that Moses had already prevailed, Ex 32:14. But they had likewise forfeited God's favourable presence, and all the benefit and comfort of that, and this Moses is here begging for the return of. Thus, by the intercession of Christ, we obtain not only the removal of the curse, but an assurance of the blessing; we are not only saved from ruin, but become entitled to everlasting happiness. Observe how admirably Moses orders this cause before God, and fills his mouth with arguments. What a value he expresses for God's favour, what a concern for God's glory and the welfare of Israel. How he pleads, and how he speeds.

Observe how he speeds. He obtained an assurance of God's favour,

(1.) To himself (Ex 33:14): "I will give thee rest, I will take care to make thee easy in this matter; however it be, thou shalt have satisfaction." Moses never entered Canaan, and yet God made good his word that he would give him rest, Da 12:13.

(2.) To the people for his sake. Moses was not content with that answer which bespoke favour to himself only, he must gain a promise, an express promise, for the people too, or he is not at rest; gracious generous souls think it not enough to get to heaven themselves, but would have all their friends go thither too. And in this also Moses prevailed: I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken, Ex 33:17. Moses is not checked as an unreasonable beggar, whom no saying would serve, but he is encouraged. God grants as long as he asks, gives liberally, and does not upbraid him. See the power of prayer, and be quickened hereby to ask, and seek, and knock, and to continue instant in prayer, to pray always and not to

faint. See the riches of God's goodness. When he has done much, yet he is willing to do more: I will do this also--above what we are able to ask or think. See, in type, the prevalency of Christ's intercession, which he ever lives to make for all those that come to God by him, and the ground of that prevalency. It is purely his own merit, not any thing in those for whom he intercedes; it is because thou hast found grace in my sight. And now the matter is settled, God is perfectly reconciled to them, his presence in the pillar of cloud returns to them and shall continue with them; all is well again, and henceforth we hear no more of the golden calf. Lord, who is a God like unto thee, pardoning iniquity?

15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me,* carry us not up hence.

16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? *Is it* not in that thou goest with us?So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

17 And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

18 And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory.

The humble request Moses makes: I beseech thee, show me thy glory, Ex 33:18. Moses had lately been in the mount with God, had continued there a great while, and had enjoyed as intimate a communion with God as ever any man had on this side heaven; and yet he is still desiring a further acquaintance. All that are effectually called to the knowledge of God and fellowship with him, though they desire nothing more than God, are nevertheless still coveting more and more of him, till they come to see as they are seen. Moses had wonderfully prevailed with God for one favour after another, and the success of his prayers emboldened him to go on still to seek God; the more he had the more he asked: when we are in a good frame at the throne of grace, we should endeavour to preserve and improve it, and strike while the iron is hot: "Show me thy glory; make me to see

it" (so the word is); "make it some way or other visible, and enable me to bear the sight of it." Not that he was so ignorant as to think God's essence could be seen with bodily eyes; but, having hitherto only heard a voice out of a pillar of cloud or fire, he desired to see some representation of the divine glory, such as God saw fit to gratify him with. It was not fit that the people should see any similitude when the Lord spoke unto them, lest they should corrupt themselves; but he hoped that there was not that danger in his seeing some similitude. Something it was more than he had yet seen that Moses desired. If it was purely for the assisting of his faith and devotion, the desire was commendable; but perhaps there was in it a mixture of human infirmity. God will have us walk by faith, not by sight, in this world; and faith comes by hearing. Some think that Moses desired a sight of God's glory as a token of his reconciliation, and an earnest of that presence which he had promised them; but he knew not what he asked.

19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

The gracious reply God made to this request. The gracious reply God made to this request. He denied that which was not fit to be granted, and which Moses could not bear: Thou canst not see my face, Ex 33:20. A full discovery of the glory of God would quite overpower the faculties of any mortal man in this present state, and overwhelm him, even Moses himself. Man is mean and unworthy of it, weak and could not bear it, guilty and could not but dread it. It is in compassion to our infirmity that God holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it, Job 26:9. God has said that here (that is, in this world) his face shall not be seen (Ex 33:23); that is an honour reserved for the future state, to be the eternal bliss of holy souls: should men in this state know what it is, they would not be content to live short of it. There is a knowledge and enjoyment of God which

must be waited for in another world, when we shall see him as he is, 1Jo 3:2. In the mean time let us adore the height of what we do know of God, and the depth of what we do not. Long before this, Jacob had spoken of it with wonder that he had seen God face to face, and yet his life was preserved, Ge 32:30. Sinful man dreads the sight of God his Judge; but holy souls, being by the Spirit of the Lord changed into the same image, behold with open face the glory of the Lord. 2Co 3:18.

20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

He granted that which would be abundantly satisfying. He should hear what would please him (Ex 33:19): I will make all my goodness pass before thee. He had given him wonderful instances of his goodness in being reconciled to Israel: but that was only goodness in the stream; he would show him goodness in the spring--all his goodness. This was a sufficient answer to his request. "Show me thy glory," says Moses. "I will show thee my goodness," says God. Note, God's goodness is his glory; and he will have us to know him by the glory of his mercy more than by the glory of his majesty; for we must fear even the Lord and his goodness, Ho 3:5. That especially which is the glory of God's goodness is the sovereignty of it, that he will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, that, as an absolute proprietor, he makes what difference he pleases in bestowing his gifts, and is not debtor to any, nor accountable to any (may he not do what he will with his own?); also that all his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, not from any merit in his creatures: as he has mercy on whom he will, so, because he will. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy sight. It is never said, "I will be angry at whom I will be angry," for his wrath is always just and holy; but I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, for his grace is always free. He never damns by prerogative, but by prerogative he saves. The apostle quotes this (Ro 9:15) in answer to those who

charged God with unrighteousness in giving that grace freely to some which he withholds justly from others.

21 And the Lord said, Behold, there *is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

He denied that which was not fit to be granted, and which Moses could not bear: Thou canst not see my face, Ex 33:20. A full discovery of the glory of God would quite overpower the faculties of any mortal man in this present state, and overwhelm him, even Moses himself. Man is mean and unworthy of it, weak and could not bear it, guilty and could not but dread it. It is in compassion to our infirmity that God holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it, Job 26:9. God has said that here (that is, in this world) his face shall not be seen (Ex 33:23); that is an honour reserved for the future state, to be the eternal bliss of holy souls: should men in this state know what it is, they would not be content to live short of it. There is a knowledge and enjoyment of God which must be waited for in another world, when we shall see him as he is, 1Jo 3:2. In the mean time let us adore the height of what we do know of God, and the depth of what we do not. Long before this, Jacob had spoken of it with wonder that he had seen God face to face, and yet his life was preserved, Ge 32:30. Sinful man dreads the sight of God his Judge; but holy souls, being by the Spirit of the Lord changed into the same image, behold with open face the glory of the Lord. 2Co 3:18.

22 and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:

He should see what he could bear, and what would suffice him. The matter is concerted so as that Moses might be safe and yet satisfied. First, Save in a cleft of the rock, Ex 33:21,22. In this he was to be sheltered from the dazzling light and devouring fire of God's glory. This was the rock in Horeb out of which water was brought, of which it is said, That rock was Christ, 1Co 10:4. It is in the clefts of this rock that we are secured from the wrath of God, which otherwise

would consume us; God himself will protect those that are thus hid. And it is only through Christ that we have the knowledge of the glory of God. None can see his glory to their comfort but those who stand upon this rock, and take shelter in it. Secondly, He was satisfied with a sight of his back-parts, Ex 33:23. He should see more of God than any ever saw on earth, but not so much as those see who are in heaven. The face, in man, is the seat of majesty, and men are known by their faces; in them we take a full view of men. That sight of God Moses might not have, but such a sight as we have of a man who has gone past us, so that we only see his back, and have (as we say) a blush of him. We cannot be said to look at God, but rather to look after him (Ge 16:13); for we see through a glass darkly. When we see what God has done in his works, observe the goings of our God, our King, we see (as it were) his back-parts. The best thus know but in part, and we cannot order our speech concerning God, by reason of darkness, any more than we can describe a man whose face we never saw. Now Moses was allowed to see only the back-parts; but long afterwards, when he was a witness to Christ's transfiguration, he saw his face shine as the sun. If we faithfully improve the discoveries God gives us of himself while we are here, a brighter and more glorious scene will shortly be opened to us; for to him that hath shall be given.

23 and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts;
but my face shall not be seen.

Exodus-34

The Second Tables of Stone

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like
unto the first: and I will write upon *these* tables the words that were
in the first tables, which thou brakest.

The treaty that was on foot between God and Israel being broken off abruptly, by their worshipping the golden calf, when peace was made all must be begun anew, not where they left off, but from the beginning. Thus backsliders must repent, and do their first works, Re 2:5.

Moses must prepare for the renewing of the tables, Ex 34:1. Before, God himself provided the tables, and wrote on them; now, Moses must hew out the tables, and God would only write upon them. Thus, in the first writing of the law upon the heart of man in innocency, both the tables and the writing were the work of God; but when those were broken and defaced by sin, and the divine law was to be preserved in the scriptures, God therein made use of the ministry of man, and Moses first. But the prophets and apostles did only hew the tables, as it were; the writing was God's still, for all scripture is given by inspiration of God. Observe, When God was reconciled to them, he ordered the tables to be renewed, and wrote his law in them, which plainly intimates to us, that even under the gospel of peace and reconciliation by Christ (of which the intercession of Moses was typical) the moral law should continue to bind believers. Though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet not from the command of it, but still we are under the law to Christ; when our Saviour, in his sermon on the mount, expounded the moral law, and vindicated it from the corrupt glosses with which the scribes and Pharisees had broken it (Mt 5:19), he did in effect renew the tables, and make them like the first, that is, reduce the law to its primitive sense and intention.

That the best evidence of the pardon of sin and peace with God is the writing of the law in the heart. The first token God gave of his reconciliation to Israel was the renewing of the tables of the law; thus the first article of the new covenant is, I will write my law in their heart (Heb 8:10), and it follows (Ex 34:12), for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness.

That, if we would have God to write the law in our hearts, we must prepare our hearts for the reception of it. The heart of stone must be hewn by conviction and humiliation for sin (Ho 6:5), the superfluity of naughtiness must be taken off (Jam 1:21), the heart made smooth, and laboured with, that the word may have a place in it. Moses did accordingly hew out the tables of stone, or slate, for they were so slight and thin that Moses carried them both in his hand; and, for their dimensions, they must have been somewhat less, and perhaps not much, than the ark in which they were deposited, which was a yard and quarter long, and three quarters broad. It should seem there was nothing particularly curious in the framing of them, for there was no great time taken; Moses had them ready presently, to take up with him, next morning. They were to receive their beauty, not from the art of man, but from the finger of God.

2 And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

Moses must attend again on the top of mount Sinai, and present himself to God there, Ex 34:2. Though the absence of Moses, and his continuance so long on the mount, had lately occasioned their making the golden calf, yet God did not therefore alter his measures, but he shall come up and tarry as long as he had done, to try whether they had learned to wait. To strike an awe upon the people, they are directed to keep their distance, none must come up with him, Ex 34:3. They had said (Ex 32:1), We know not what has become of him, and God will not let them know. Moses, accordingly, rose up early (Ex 34:4) to go to the place appointed, to show how forward he was to present himself before God and loth to lose time. It is good to be early at our devotions. The morning is perhaps as good a friend to the graces as it is to the muses.

3 And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor did herds feed before that mount.

4 And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

5 And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

No sooner had Moses got to the top of the mount than God gave him the meeting (Ex 34:5): The Lord descended, by some sensible token of his presence, and manifestation of his glory. His descending bespeaks his condescension; he humbles himself to take cognizance of those that humble themselves to walk with him. Ps 113:6, Lord, what is man, that he should be thus visited? He descended in the cloud, probably that pillar of cloud which had hitherto gone before Israel, and had the day before met Moses at the door of the tabernacle. This cloud was to strike an awe upon Moses, that the familiarity he was admitted to might not breed contempt. The disciples feared, when they entered the cloud. His making a cloud his pavilion intimated that, though he made known much of himself, yet there was much more concealed. Now observe,

How God proclaimed his name (Ex 34:6,7): he did it in transitu--as he passed by him. Fixed views of God are reserved for the future state; the best we have in this world are transient. God now was performing what he had promised Moses, the day before, that his glory should pass by, Ex 33:22. He proclaimed the name of the Lord, by which he would make himself known. He had made himself known to Moses in the glory of his self-existence and self-sufficiency when he proclaimed that name, I am that I am; now he makes himself known in the glory of his grace, and goodness, and all-sufficiency to us. Now that God is about

to publish a second edition of the law he prefaces it with this proclamation; for it is God's grace or goodness that gives the law, especially the remedial law. The pardon of Israel's sin in worshipping the calf was now to pass the seals; and God, by this declaration, would let them know that he pardoned ex mero motu--merely out of his own good pleasure, not for their merits' sake, but from his own inclination to forgive. The proclaiming of it denotes the universal extent of God's mercy. He is not only good to Israel, but good to all; let all take notice of it. He that hath an ear, let him hear, and know, and believe,

1. That the God with whom we have to do is a great God. He is Jehovah, the Lord, who has his being of himself, and is the fountain of all being, Jehovah-El, the Lord, the strong God, a God of almighty power himself, and the original of all power. This is prefixed before the display of his mercy, to teach us to think and to speak even of God's grace and goodness with great seriousness and a holy awe, and to encourage us to depend upon these mercies; they are not the mercies of a man, that is frail and feeble, false and fickle, but the mercies of the Lord, the Lord God; therefore sure mercies, and sovereign mercies, mercies that may be trusted, but not tempted.

2. That he is a good God. His greatness and goodness illustrate and set off each other. That the terror of his greatness may not make us afraid, we are told how good he is; and, that we may not presume upon his goodness, we are told how great he is. Many words are here heaped up, to acquaint us with, and convince us of, God's goodness, and to show how much his goodness is both his glory and his delight, yet without any tautology.

(1.) He is merciful. This bespeaks his tender compassion, like that of a father to his children. This is put first, because it is the first wheel in all the instances of God's good-will to

fallen man, whose misery makes him an object of pity, Jdg 10:16,Isa 63:9. Let us not then have either hard thoughts of God or hard hearts towards our brethren.

(2.) He is gracious. This bespeaks both freeness and kindness; it intimates not only that he has a compassion to his creatures, but a complacency in them and in doing good to them, and this of his own good-will, and not for the sake of any thing in them. His mercy is grace, free grace; this teaches us to be not only pitiful, but courteous, 1Pe 3:8.

(3.) He is long-suffering. This is a branch of God's goodness which the wickedness of sinners gives occasion for; that of Israel had done so: they had tried his patience, and experienced it. He is long-suffering, that is, he is slow to anger, and delays the execution of his justice; he waits to be gracious, and lengthens out the offers of his mercy.

(4.) He is abundant in goodness and truth. This bespeaks plentiful goodness, goodness abounding above our deserts, above our conception and expression. The springs of mercy are always full, the streams of mercy always flowing; there is mercy enough in God, enough for all, enough for each, enough for ever. It bespeaks promised goodness, goodness and truth put together, goodness engaged by promise, and his faithfulness pledged for the security of it. He not only does good, but by his promise he raises our expectation of it, and even binds himself to show mercy.

(5.) He keepeth mercy for thousands. This denotes,

[1.] Mercy extended to thousands of persons. When he gives to some, still he keeps for others, and is never exhausted; he has mercy enough for all the thousands of Israel, when they shall multiply as the sand.

[2.] Mercy entailed upon thousands of generations, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come; nay, the line of it is drawn parallel with that of eternity itself.

(6.) He for giveth iniquity, transgression, and sin. Pardoning mercy is specified, because in this divine grace is most magnified, and because in this divine grace is most magnified, and because it is this which opens the door to all other gifts of his divine grace, and because of this he had lately given a very pregnant proof. He forgives offences of all sorts--iniquity, transgression, and sin, multiplies his pardons; and with him is plenteous redemption.

3. That he is a just and holy God. For,

(1.) He will by no means clear the guilty. Some read it so as to express a mitigation of wrath, even when he does punish: When he empties, he will not make quite desolate; that is, "He does not proceed to the greatest extremity, till there be no remedy." As we read it, we must expound it that he will by no means connive at the guilty, as if he took no notice of their sin. Or, he will not clear the impenitently guilty, that go on still in their trespasses: he will not clear the guilty without some satisfaction to his justice, and necessary vindications of the honour of his government.

(2.) He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. He may justly do it, for all souls are his, and there is a malignity in sin that taints the blood. He sometimes will do it, especially for the punishment of idolaters. Thus he shows his hatred to sin, and displeasure against it; yet he keepeth not his anger for ever, but visits to the third and fourth generation only, while he keepeth his mercy for thousands. Well, this is God's name for ever, and this is his memorial unto all generations.

6 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty;* visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation.*

8 And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

How Moses received this declaration which God made of himself, and of his grace and mercy. It should seem as if Moses accepted this as a sufficient answer to his request that God would show him his glory; for we read not that he went into the cleft of the rock, whence to gain a sight of God's back parts. Perhaps this satisfied him, and he desired no more; as we read not that Thomas did thrust his hand into Christ's side, though Christ invited him to do it. God having thus proclaimed his name, Moses says, "It is enough, I expect no more till I come to heaven;" at least he did not think fit to relate what he saw. Now we are here told,

1. What impression it made upon him: Moses made haste, and bowed his head, Ex 34:8. Thus he expressed,

(1.) His humble reverence and adoration of God's glory, giving him the honour due to that name he had thus proclaimed. Even the goodness of God must be looked upon by us with a profound veneration and holy awe.

(2.) His joy in this discovery which God had made of himself, and his thankfulness for it. We have reason gratefully to acknowledge God's goodness to us, not only in the real instances of it, but in the declarations he has made of it by his word; not only that he is, and will be, gracious to us, but that he is pleased to let us know it.

(3.) His holy submission to the will of God, made known in this declaration, subscribing to his justice as well as mercy, and putting himself and his people Israel under the government and direction of such a God as Jehovah had now proclaimed himself to be. Let this God be our God for ever and ever.

2. What improvement he made of it. He immediately grounded a prayer upon it (Ex 34:9); and a more earnest affectionate prayer it is,

(1.) For the presence of God with his people Israel in the wilderness: "I pray thee, go among us, for thy presence is all in all to our safety and success."

(2.) For pardon of sin: "O pardon our iniquity and our sin, else we cannot expect thee to go among us." And,

(3.) For the privileges of a peculiar people: "Take us for thy inheritance, which thou wilt have a particular eye to, and concern for, and delight in." These things God had already promised, and given Moses assurances of, and yet he prays for them, not as doubting the sincerity of God's grants, but as one solicitous for the ratification of them. God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to direct and encourage, prayer. Those who have some good hopes, through grace, that their sins are pardoned, must yet continue to pray for pardon, for the renewing of their pardon, and the clearing of it more and more to their souls. The more we see of God's goodness the more ashamed we should be of our own sins, and the more earnest for an interest in it. God had said, in the close of the proclamation, that he would visit the iniquity upon the children; and Moses here deprecates that. "Lord, do not only pardon it to them, but to their children, and let our covenant-relation to thee be entailed upon our posterity, as an inheritance." Thus Moses, like a man of a truly public

spirit, intercedes even for the children that should be born. But it is a strange plea he urges: For it is a stiff-necked people. God had given this as a reason why he would not go along with them, Ex 33:3. "Yea," says Moses, "the rather go along with us; for the worse they are the more need they have of thy presence and grace to make them better." Moses sees them so stiff-necked that, for his part, he has neither patience nor power enough to deal with them. "Therefore, Lord, do thou go among us, else they will never be kept in awe. Thou wilt spare, and bear with them, for thou art God, and not man," Ho 11:9.

9 And he said, if now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it *is* a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

10 And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou *art* shall see the work of the Lord: for it *is* a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

Reconciliation being made, a covenant of friendship is here settled between God and Israel. The traitors are not only pardoned, but preferred and made favourites again. Well may the assurances of this be ushered in with a behold, a word commanding attention and admiration: Behold, I make a covenant. When the covenant was broken, it was Israel that broke it; now that it comes to be renewed, it is God that makes it. If there be quarrels, we must bear all the blame; if there be peace, God must have all the glory. Here is,

God's part of this covenant, what he would do for them, Ex 34:10,11.

1. In general: Before all thy people, I will do marvels. Note, Covenant-blessings are marvellous things (Ps 98:1), marvels in the kingdom of grace; those mentioned here were marvels

in the kingdom of nature, the drying up of Jordan, the standing still of the sun, &c. Marvels indeed, for they were without precedent, such as have not been done in all the earth. They were the joy of Israel, and the confirmation of their faith: Thy people shall see, and own the work of the Lord. And they were the terror of their enemies: It is a terrible thing that I will do. Nay, even God's own people should see them with astonishment.

2. In particular: I drive out before thee the Amorite. God, as King of nations, plucks up some, to plant others, as it pleases him; as King of saints, he made room for the vine he brought out of Egypt, Ps 80:8,9. Kingdoms are given to Israel's interests, Isa 43:3,4.

Israel Warned of the Idolatry of Canaan

11 Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

13 but ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

Their part of the covenant: Observe that which I command thee. We cannot expect the benefit of the promises unless we make conscience of the precepts.

1 The two great precepts are,

(1.) Thou shalt worship no other gods (Ex 34:14), not give divine honour to any creature, or any name whatsoever, the creature of fancy. A good reason is annexed. It is at thy peril if thou do: For the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, as tender in the matters of his worship as the husband is of the honour of the marriage-bed. Jealousy is called the

rage of a man (Pr 6:34), but it is God's holy and just displeasure. Those cannot worship God aright who do not worship him alone.

(2.) "Thou shalt make thee no molten god (Ex 34:17); thou shalt not worship the true God by images." This was the sin they had lately fallen into, which therefore they are particularly cautioned against.

2. Fences are here erected about these two precepts by two others:

(1.) That they might not be tempted to worship other gods, they must not join in affinity or friendship with those that did (Ex 34:12): "Take heed to thyself, for thou art upon thy good behaviour. It is a sin that thou art prone to and that will easily beset thee, and therefore be very cautious, and carefully abstain from all appearances of it and advances towards it. Make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land." If God, in kindness to them, drove out the Canaanites, they ought, in duty to God, not to harbour them. What could be insisted on more reasonable than this? If God make war with the Canaanites, let not Israel make peace with them. If God take care that the Canaanites be not their lords, let them take care that they be not their snares. It was for their civil interest to complete the conquest of the land; so much does God consult our benefit in the laws he gives us. They must particularly take heed of intermarrying with them, Ex 34:15,16. If they espoused their children, they would be in danger of espousing their gods; such is the corruption of nature that the bad are much more likely to debauch the good than the good to reform the bad. The way of sin is downhill: those that are in league with idolaters will come by degrees to be in love with idolatry; and those that are prevailed upon to eat of the idolatrous sacrifice will come at length to offer it. Obsta principiis--Nip the mischief in the bud.

(2.) That they might not be tempted to make molten gods, they must utterly destroy those they found and all that belong to them, the altars and groves (Ex 34:13), lest, if these were left standing, they should be brought, in process of time, either to use them or to take pattern by them, or to abate in their detestation and dread of idolatry. The relics of idolatry ought to be abolished as affronts to the holy God and a great reproach to human nature. Let it never be said that men who pretend to reason were ever guilty of such absurdities as to make gods of their own and worship them.

14 for thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God.

15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and *one* call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

16 and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

The Three Appointed Feasts

18 The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt.

19 All that openeth the matrix *is* mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, *whether* ox or sheep, *that is male.*

The three feasts are here mentioned, with their appendages.

1 The Passover, and the feast of unleavened bread, in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt; and to this is annexed the law of the redemption of the first-born, Ex 34:18-20. This feast was instituted, Ex 12:13, and urged again, Ex 23:15.

2 The feast of weeks, that is, that of pentecost, seven weeks after the Passover; and to this is annexed the law of the first-fruits.

3. The feast of in-gathering at the year's end, which was the feast of tabernacles (Ex 34:22): of these also he had spoken before, Ex 23:16. As to those laws repeated here (Ex 34:25,26), that against leaven relates to the Passover, that of the first-fruits to the feast of pentecost, and therefore that against seething the kid in his mother's milk in all probability relates to the feast of in-gathering, at which God would not have them use that superstitious ceremony, which probably they had seen the Egyptians, or some other of the neighbouring nations, bless their harvests with.

20 But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem *him* not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

21 Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.

Here is a repetition of several appointments made before, especially relating to their solemn feasts. When they had made the calf, they proclaimed a feast in honour of it; now, that they might never do so again, they are here charged with the observance of the feasts which God had instituted. Note, Men need not be drawn from their religion by the temptation of mirth, for we serve a Master that has abundantly provided for the joy of his servants: serious godliness is a continual feast, and joy in God always.

Once a week they must rest (Ex 34:21), even in earing time, and in harvest, the most busy times of the year. All worldly business must give way to that holy rest; harvest-work will prosper the better for the religious observance of the sabbath-day in harvest-time. Hereby we must show that we prefer our communion with God, and our duty to him, before either the business or the joy of harvest.

22 And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of wheat
harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.
23 Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the
Lord God, the God of Israel.

Thrice a year they must feast (Ex 34:23); they must then appear before the Lord, God, the God of Israel. In all our religious approaches to God, we must eye him as the Lord God, infinitely blessed, great, and glorious, that we may worship him with reverence and godly fear, as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with us, that we may be encouraged to trust in him, and to serve him cheerfully. We always are before God; but, in holy duties, we present ourselves before him, as servants to receive commands, as petitioners to sue for favours, and we have reason to do both with joy. But it might be suggested that, when all the males from every part of the country had gone up to worship in the place that God should choose, the country would be left exposed to the insults of their neighbours; and what would become of the poor women and children, and sick and aged, that were left at home? Trust God with them (Ex 34:24): Neither shall any man desire thy land; not only they shall not invade it, but they shall not so much as think of invading it. Note,

1. All hearts are in God's hands, and under his check; he can lay a restraint, not only upon men's actions, but upon their desires. Canaan was a desirable land, and the neighbouring nations were greedy enough; and yet God says, "They shall not desire it." Let us check all sinful desires in our own hearts against God and his glory, and then trust him to check all sinful desires in the hearts of others against us and our interest.

2 The way of duty is the way of safety. If we serve God, he will preserve us; and those that venture for him shall never lose by him. While we are employed in God's work, and are attending upon him, we are taken under special protection,

as noblemen and members of parliament are privileged from arrests.

24 For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders:
neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to
appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.
25 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven;
neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left unto
the morning.
26 The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto
the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid
in his mother's milk.

Moses and the Tables of the Law

27 And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after
the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with
Israel.

With these laws, here repeated, it is probable all that was said to him when he was before upon the mount was repeated likewise, and the model of the tabernacle shown him again, lest the ruffle and discomposure, which the golden calf had put him in to should have bereaved him of the ideas he had in mind of what he had seen and heard; also in token of a complete reconciliation, and to show that not one jot or tittle of the law should pass away, but that all should be carefully preserved by the great Mediator, who came not to destroy, but to fulfil, Mt 5:17,18. And in the close,

1. Moses is ordered to write these words (Ex 34:27), that the people might be the better acquainted with them by a frequent perusal, and that they might be transmitted to the generations to come. We can never be enough thankful to God for the written word.

2. He is told that according to the tenour of these words God would make a covenant with Moses and Israel; not with Israel immediately, but with them in Moses a mediator. Thus the covenant of grace is made with believers through Christ, who is given for a covenant to the people, Isa 49:8. And, as here the covenant was made according to the tenour of the command, so it is still; for we are by baptism brought into covenant, that we may be taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded us, Mt 28:19,20.

28 And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments [*Heb.* words].

The continuance of Moses in the mount, where he was miraculously sustained, Ex 34:28. He was there in very intimate communion with God, without interruption, forty days and forty nights, and did not think it long. When we are weary of an hour or two spent in attendance upon God and adoration of him, we should think how many days and nights Moses spent with him, and of the eternal day we hope to spend in praising him. During all this time Moses did neither eat nor drink. Though he had before been kept so long fasting, yet he did not, this second time, take up so many days' provision along with him, but believed that man lives not by bread alone, and encouraged himself with the experience he had of the truth of it. So long he continued without meat and drink (and probably without sleep too), for,

1 The power of God supported him, that he did not need it. He who made the body can nourish it without ordinary means, which he uses, but is not tied to. The life is more than meat.

2. His communion with God entertained him, so that he did not desire it. He had meat to eat which the world knew not of, for it was his meat and drink to hear the word of God and pray. The abundant satisfaction his soul had in the word of

God and the visions of the Almighty made him forget the body and the pleasures of it. When God would treat his favourite Moses, it was not with meat and drink, but with his light, law, and love, with the knowledge of himself and his will; then man did indeed eat angels' food. See what we should value as the truest pleasure. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, neither the abundance nor delicacy of food, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. As Moses, so Elijah and Christ, fasted forty days and forty nights. The more dead we are to the delights of sense the better prepared we are for the pleasures of heaven.

29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

He came down enriched with the best treasure; for he brought in his hands the two tables of the law, written with the finger of God, Ex 34:28,29. It is a great favour to have the law given us; this favour was shown to Israel, Ps 147:19,20. It is a great honour to be employed in delivering God's law to others; this honour was done to Moses.

30 And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

He came down adorned with the best beauty; for the skin of his face shone, Ex 34:29. This time of his being in the mount he heard only what he had heard before, but he saw more of the glory of God, which having with open face beheld, he was in some measure changed into the same image from glory to glory, 2Co 3:18. The last time he came down from the mount with the glory of a magistrate, to frown upon and chastise Israel's idolatry; now with the glory of an angel, with tidings of peace and reconciliation. Then he came with a rod, now with the spirit of meekness. Now,

This may be looked upon,

[1.] As a great honour done to Moses, that the people might never again question his mission nor think nor speak lightly of him. He carried his credentials in his very countenance, which, some think, retained, as long as he lived, some remainders of this glory, which perhaps contributed to the vigour of his old age; that eye could not wax dim which had seen God, nor that face become wrinkled which had shone with his glory. The Israelites could not look him in the face but they must there read his commission. Thus it was done to the man whom the King of kings did delight to honour. Yet, after this, they murmured against him; for the most sensible proofs will not of themselves conquer an obstinate infidelity. The shining of Moses's face was a great honour to him; yet that was no glory, in comparison with the glory which excelled. We read of our Lord Jesus, not only that his face shone as the sun, but his whole body also, for his raiment was white and glistering, Lu 9:29. But, when he came down from the mount, he quite laid aside that glory, it being his will that we should walk by faith, not by sight.

[2.] It was also a great favour to the people, and an encouragement to them, that God put this glory upon him, who was their intercessor, thereby giving them assurance that he was accepted, and they through him. Thus the advancement of Christ, our advocate with the Father, is the great support of our faith.

[3.] It was the effect of his sight of God. Communion with God, First, Makes the face to shine in true honour. Serious godliness puts a lustre upon a man's countenance, such as commands esteem and affection. Secondly, It should make the face to shine in universal holiness. When we have been in the mount with God, we should let our light shine before men, in humility, meekness, and all the instances of a heavenly conversation; thus must the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, even the beauty of holiness, that all we

converse with may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, Ac 4:13.

31 And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

Concerning the shining of Moses's face observe here,

[1.] Moses was not aware of it himself: He wist not that the skin of his face shone, Ex 34:29. Thus, First, It is the infelicity of some that, though their faces shine in true grace, yet they do not know it, to take the comfort of it. Their friends see much of God in them, but they themselves are ready to think they have no grace. Secondly, It is the humility of others that, though their faces shine in eminent gifts and usefulness, yet they do not know it, to be puffed up with it. Whatever beauty God puts upon us, we should still be filled with a humble sense of our own unworthiness, and manifold infirmities, as will make us even overlook and forget that which makes our faces shine.

[2.] Aaron and the children of Israel saw it, and were afraid, Ex 34:30. The truth of it was attested by a multitude of witnesses, who were also conscious of the terror of it. It not only dazzled their eyes, but struck such an awe upon them as obliged them to retire. Probably they doubted whether it were a token of God's favour or of his displeasure; and, though it seemed most likely to be a good omen, yet, being conscious of guilt, they feared the worst, especially remembering the posture Moses found them in when he came last down from the mount. Holiness will command reverence; but the sense of sin makes men afraid of their friends, and even of that which really is a favour to them.

32 And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.

33 And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

Moses put a veil upon his face, when he perceived that it shone, Ex 34:33,35.

First, This teaches us all a lesson of modesty and humility. We must be content to have our excellences obscured, and a veil drawn over them, not coveting to make a fair show in the flesh. Those that are truly desirous to be owned and accepted of God will likewise desire not to be taken notice of nor applauded by men. Qui bene latuit, bene vixit--There is a laudable concealment.

Secondly, It teaches ministers to accommodate themselves to the capacities of people, and to preach to them as they are able to bear it. Let all that art and all that learning be veiled which tend to amusement rather than edification, and let the strong condescend to the infirmities of the weak.

Thirdly, This veil signified the darkness of that dispensation. The ceremonial institutions had in them much of Christ, much of the grace of the gospel, but a veil was drawn over it, so that the children of Israel could not distinctly and stedfastly see those good things to come which the law had the shadow of. It was beauty veiled, gold in the mine, a pearl in the shell; but, thanks be to God, by the gospel life and immortality are brought to light, the veil is taken away from off the Old Testament; yet still it remains upon the hearts of those who shut their eyes against the light. Thus the apostle expounds this passage, 2Co 3:13-15.

34 But when Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.

When Moses went in before the Lord, to speak with him in the tabernacle of meeting, he put off the veil, Ex 34:34. Then there was no occasion for it, and, before God, every man

does and must appear unveiled; for all things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do, and it is folly for us to think of concealing or disguising any thing. Every veil must be thrown aside when we come to present ourselves unto the Lord. This signified also, as it is explained (2Co 3:16), that when a soul turns to the Lord the veil shall be taken away, and with open face it may behold his glory. And when we shall come before the Lord in heaven, to be there for ever speaking with him, the veil shall not only be taken off from the divine glory, but from our hearts and eyes, that we may see as we are seen, and know as we are known.

35 And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

Exodus-35

Regulations for the Sabbath

1 And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These *are* the words which the Lord hath commanded, that *ye* should do them.

All the congregation is summoned to attend (Ex 35:1); that is, the heads and rulers of the congregation, the representatives of the several tribes, who must receive instructions from Moses as he had received them from the Lord, and must communicate them to the people. Thus John, being commanded to write to the seven churches what had been revealed to him, writes it to the angels, or ministers, of the churches.

Moses gave them in charge all that (and that only) which God had commanded him; thus he approved himself faithful both to God and Israel, between whom he was a messenger or mediator. If he had added, altered, or diminished, he

would have been false to both. But, both sides having reposed a trust in him, he was true to the trust; yet he was faithful as a servant only, but Christ as a Son, Heb 3:5,6.

2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.

He begins with the law of the sabbath, because that was much insisted on in the instructions he had received (Ex 35:2,3): Six days shall work be done, work for the tabernacle, the work of the day that was now to be done in its day; and they had little else to do here in the wilderness, where they had neither husbandry nor merchandise, neither food to get nor clothes to make: but on the seventh day you must not strike a stroke, no, not at the tabernacle-work; the honour of the sabbath was above that of the sanctuary, more ancient and more lasting; that must be to you a holy day, devoted to God, and not be spent in common business. It is a sabbath of rest. It is a sabbath of Sabbaths (so some read it), more honourable and excellent than any of the other feasts, and should survive them all. A sabbath of sabbatism, so others read it, being typical of that sabbatism or rest, both spiritual and eternal, which remains for the people of God, Heb 4:9. It is a sabbath of rest, that is, in which a rest from all worldly labour must be very carefully and strictly observed. It is a sabbath and a little sabbath, so some of the Jews would have it read; not only observing the whole day as a sabbath, but an hour before the beginning of it, and an hour after the ending of it, which they throw in over and above out of their own time, and call a little sabbath, to show how glad they are of the approach of the sabbath and how loth to part with it. It is a sabbath of rest, but it is rest to the Lord, to whose honour it must be devoted. A penalty is here annexed to the breach of it: Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Also a particular prohibition of kindling fires on the sabbath day for any servile work, as smith's work, or plumbers, &c.

3 Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the
sabbath day.

Israel to Bring an Offering

4 And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of
Israel, saying, This *is* the thing which the Lord commanded,
saying,
5 Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever
is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold,
and silver, and brass,

All that were able must contribute: Take you from among you an offering, Ex 35:5. The tabernacle was to be dedicated to the honour of God, and used in his service; and therefore what was brought for the setting up and furnishing of that was an offering to the Lord. Our goodness extends not to God, but what is laid out for the support of his kingdom and interest among men he is pleased to accept as an offering to himself; and he requires such acknowledgements of our receiving our all from him and such instances of our dedicating our all to him. The rule is, Whosoever is of a willing heart let him bring. It was not to be a tax imposed upon them, but a benevolence or voluntary contribution, to intimate to us,

(1.) That God has not made our yoke heavy. He is a prince that does not burden his subjects with taxes, nor make them to serve with an offering, but draws with the cords of a man, and leaves it to ourselves to judge what is right; his is a government that there is no cause to complain of, for he does not rule with rigour.

(2.) That God loves a cheerful giver, and is best pleased with the free-will offering. Those services are acceptable to him that come from the willing heart of a willing people, Ps 110:3.

6 and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair,*

7 and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood,
8 and oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense,
9 and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate.

The Tabernacle Articles

10 And every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded;

All that were skilful must work: Every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make, Ex 35:10. See how God dispenses his gifts variously; and, as every man hath received the gift, so he must minister, 1Pe 4:10. Those that were rich must bring in materials to work on; those that were ingenious must serve the tabernacle with their ingenuity; as they needed one another, so the tabernacle needed them both, 1Co 12:7-21. The work was likely to go on when some helped with their purses, others with their hands, and both with a willing heart. Moses, as he had told them what must be given (Ex 35:5-9), so he gives them the general heads of what must be made (Ex 35:11-19), that, seeing how much work was before them, they might apply themselves to it the more vigorously, and every hand might be busy; and it gave them such an idea of the fabric designed that they could not but long to see it finished.

11 the tabernacle, his tent, and his covering, his taches, and his boards, his bars, his pillars, and his sockets;
12 the ark, and the staves thereof, *with* the mercy seat, and the veil of the covering;
13 the table, and his staves, and all his vessels, and the showbread;
14 the candlestick also for the light, and his furniture, and his lamps, with the oil for the light;
15 and the incense altar, and his staves, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense, and the hanging for the door at the entering in of the tabernacle;
16 the altar of burnt offering, with his brazen grate, his staves, and all his vessels, the laver and his foot;

17 the hangings of the court, his pillars, and their sockets, and the
hanging for the door of the court;
18 the pins of the tabernacle, and the pins of the court, and their
cords;
19 the clothes of service, to do service in the holy *place,* the holy
garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to
minister in the priest's office.

The People Bring the Offering

20 And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from
the presence of Moses.
21 And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every
one whom his spirit made willing, *and* they brought the Lord's
offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for
all his service, and for the holy garments.

The offerings that were brought for the service of the tabernacle (Ex 35:21, &c.), concerning which many things may be noted.

1. It is intimated that they brought their offerings immediately; they departed to their tents immediately to fetch their offering, and did not desire time to consider of it, lest their zeal should be cooled by delays. What duty God convinces us of, and calls us to, we should set about speedily. No season will be more convenient than the present season.

2. It is said that their spirits made them willing (Ex 35:21), and their hearts, Ex 35:29. What they did they did cheerfully, and from a good principle. They were willing, and it was not any external inducement that made them so, but their spirits. It was from a principle of love to God and his service, a desire of his presence with them in his ordinances, gratitude for the great things he had done for them, faith in his promise

of what he would further do (or, at least, from the present consideration of these things), that they were willing to offer. What we give and do for God is then acceptable when it comes from a good principle in the heart and spirit.

22 And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted, *and* brought bracelets, and earrings, and rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold: and every man that offered, *offered* an offering of gold unto the Lord.

When it is said that as many as were willing-hearted brought their offerings (Ex 35:22), it should seem as if there were some who were not, who loved their gold better than their God, and would not part with it, no, not for the service of the tabernacle. Such there are, who will be called Israelites, and yet will not be moved by the equity of the thing, God's expectations from them, and the good examples of those about them, to part with any thing for the interests of God's kingdom: they are for the true religion, provided it be cheap and will cost them nothing.

The offerings were of divers kinds, according as they had; those that had gold and precious stones brought them, not thinking any thing too good and too rich to part with for the honour of God. Those that had not precious stones to bring brought goats' hair, and rams' skins. If we cannot do as much as others for God, we must not therefore sit still and do nothing: if the meaner offerings which are according to our ability gain us not such a reputation among men, yet they shall not fail of acceptance with God, who requires according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, 2Co 8:12,2Ki 5:23. Two mites from a pauper were more pleasing than so many talents from a Dives. God has an eye to the heart of the giver more than to the value of the gift.

Many of the things they offered were their ornaments, bracelets and rings, and tablets or lockets (Ex 35:22); and even the women parted with these. Can a maid forget her ornaments? Thus far they forgot them that they preferred the beautifying of the sanctuary before their own adorning. Let this teach us, in general, to part with that for God, when he calls for it, which is very dear to us, which we value, and value ourselves by; and particularly to lay aside our ornaments, and deny ourselves in them, when either they occasion offence to others or feed our own pride. If we think those gospel rules concerning our clothing too strict (1Ti 2:9,10,1Pe 3:3,4), I fear we should scarcely have done as these Israelites did. If they thought their ornaments well bestowed upon the tabernacle, shall not we think the want of ornaments well made up by the graces of the Spirit? Pr 1:9.

23 And every man, with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' *hair,* and red skins of rams, and badgers' skins, brought *them.*

24 Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass brought the Lord's offering: and every man, with whom was found shittim wood for any work of the service, brought *it.*

25 And all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, *and* of scarlet, and of fine linen.

26 And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' *hair.*

The work that was done for the service of the tabernacle (Ex 35:25): The women did spin with their hands. Some spun fine work, of blue and purple; others coarse work, of goats' hair, and yet theirs also is said to be done in wisdom, Ex 35:26. As it is not only rich gifts, so it is not only fine work that God accepts. Notice is here taken of the good women's work for God, as well as of Bezaleel's and Aholiab's. The meanest hand for the honour of God, shall have an honourable recompence. Mary's anointing of Christ's head shall be told for a memorial (Mt 26:13); and a record is kept of the women that laboured in the gospel tabernacle (Php

4:3), and were helpers to Paul in Christ Jesus, Ro 16:3. It is part of the character of the virtuous woman that she layeth her hands to the spindle, Pr 31:19. This employment was here turned to a pious use, as it may be still (though we have no hangings to make for the tabernacle) by the imitation of the charity of Dorcas, who made coats and garments for poor widows, Ac 9:39. Even those that are not in a capacity to give in charity may yet work in charity; and thus the poor may relieve the poor, and those that have nothing but their limbs and senses may be very charitable in the labour of love.

27 And the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, for the ephod, and for the breastplate;

These rich things that they offered, we may suppose, were mostly the spoils of the Egyptians; for the Israelites in Egypt were kept poor, till they borrowed at parting. And we may suppose the rulers had better things (Ex 35:27), because, having more influence among the Egyptians, they borrowed larger sums. Who would have thought that ever the wealth of Egypt should have been so well employed? But thus God has often made the earth to help the woman, Re 12:16. It was by a special providence and promise of God that the Israelites got all that spoil, and therefore it was highly fit that they should devote a part of it to the service of that God to whom they owed it all. Let every man give according as God hath prospered him, 1Co 16:2.

Extraordinary successes should be acknowledged by extraordinary offerings. Apply it to human learning, arts and sciences, which are borrowed, as it were, from the Egyptians. Those that are enriched with these must devote them to the service of God and his tabernacle: they may be used as helps to understand the scriptures, as ornaments or handmaids to divinity. But then great care must be taken that Egypt's gods mingle not with Egypt's gold. Moses, though learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, did not therefore

pretend, in the least instance, to correct the pattern shown him in the mount. The furnishing of the tabernacle with the riches of Egypt was perhaps a good omen to the Gentiles, who, in the fulness of time, should be brought into the gospel tabernacle, and their silver and their gold with them (Isa 60:9), and it should be said, Blessed be Egypt my people, Isa 19:25.

We may suppose that the remembrance of the offerings made for the golden calf made them the more forward in these offerings. Those that had then parted with their ear-rings would not testify their repentance by giving the rest of their jewels to the service of God: godly sorrow worketh such a revenge, 2Co 7:11. And those that had kept themselves pure from that idolatry yet argued with themselves, "Were they so forward in contributing to an idol, and shall we be backward or sneaking in our offerings to the Lord?" Thus some good was brought even out of that evil.

28 and spice, and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for
the sweet incense.
29 The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord,
every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring
for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be
made by the hand of Moses.

The Call of Bezaleel and Aholiab

30 And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord hath
called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe
of Judah;

Here is the divine appointment of the master-workmen, that there might be no strife for the office, and that all who were employed in the work might take direction from, and give account to, these general inspectors; for God is the God of order and not of confusion. Observe,

Those whom God called by name to this service he filled with the Spirit of God, to qualify them for it, Ex 35:30,31. Skill in secular employments is God's gift, and comes from above, Jam 1:17. From him the faculty is, and the improvement of it. To his honour therefore all knowledge must be devoted, and we must study how to serve him with it. The work was extraordinary which Bezaleel was designed for, and therefore he was qualified in an extraordinary manner for it; thus when the apostles were appointed to be master-builders in setting up the gospel tabernacle they were filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding.

31 and he hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship;

32 and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

They were appointed, not only to devise, but to work (Ex 35:32), to work all manner of work, Ex 35:35. Those of eminent gifts, that are capable of directing others, must not thing that these will excuse them in idleness. Many are ingenious enough in cutting out work for other people, and can tell what this man and that man should do, but the burdens they bind on others they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. These will fall under the character of slothful servants.

33 and in the cutting of stones, to set *them*, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work.

34 And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

35 Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, *even* of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.

They were not only to devise and work themselves, but they were to teach others, Ex 35:34. Not only had Bezaleel power to command, but he was to take pains to instruct. Those that rule should teach; and those to whom God had given knowledge should be willing to communicate it for the benefit of others, not coveting to monopolize it.

Exodus-36

1 Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded.

The workmen set in without delay. Then they wrought, Ex 36:1. When God had qualified them for the work, then they applied themselves to it. Note, The talents we are entrusted with must not be laid up, but laid out; not hid in a napkin, but traded with. What have we all our gifts for, but to do good with them? They began when Moses called them, Ex 36:2. Even those whom God has qualified for, and inclined to, the service of the tabernacle, yet must wait for a regular call to it, either extraordinary, as that of prophets and apostles, or ordinary, as that of pastors and teachers. And observe who they were that Moses called: Those in whose heart God had put wisdom for this purpose, beyond their natural capacity, and whose heart stirred them up to come to the work in good earnest. Note, Those are to be called to the building of the gospel tabernacle whom God has by his grace made in some measure fit for the work and free to engage in it. Ability and willingness (with resolution) are the two things to be regarded in the call of ministers. Has God given them not only knowledge, but wisdom? (for those that would win souls must be wise, and have their hearts stirred up to come to the work, and not to the honour only; to do it, and not to talk of it only), let them come to it with full purpose

of heart to go through with it. The materials which the people had contributed were delivered by Moses to the workmen, Ex 36:3. They could not create a tabernacle, that is, make it out of nothing, nor work, unless they had something to work upon; the people therefore brought the materials and Moses put them into their hands. Precious souls are the materials of the gospel tabernacle; they are built up a spiritual house, 1Pe 2:5. To this end they are to offer themselves a free-will offering to the Lord, for his service (Ro 15:16), and they are then committed to the care of his ministers, as builders, to be framed and wrought upon by their edification and increase in holiness, till they all come, like the curtains of the tabernacle, in the unity of the faith, to be a holy temple, Eph 2:21,22,4:12,13.

Moses Restrains the People from Bringing Gifts

2 And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted
man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, *even* every one
whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:
3 and they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of
Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to
make it *withal*. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every
morning.
4 And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary,
came every man from his work which they made;
5 and they spake unto Moses, saying, the people bring much more
than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord
commanded to make.

The contributions restrained. The people continued to bring free offerings every morning, Ex 36:3. Note, We should always make it our morning's work to bring our offerings unto the Lord; even the spiritual offerings of prayer and praise, and a broken heart surrendered entirely to God. This is that which the duty of every day requires. God's compassions are new every morning, and so must our duty to him be. Probably there were some that were backward at

first to bring their offering, but their neighbours' forwardness stirred them up and shamed them. The zeal of some provoked many. There are those who will be content to follow who yet do not care for leading in a good work. It is best to be forward, but better late than never. Or perhaps some who had offered at first, having pleasure in reflecting upon it, offered more; so far were they from grudging what they had contributed, that they doubled their contribution. Thus, in charity, give a portion to seven, and also to eight; having given much, give more. Now observe,

1 The honesty of the workmen. When they had cut out their work, and found how their stuff held out, and that the people were still forward to bring in more, they went in a body to Moses to tell him that there needed no more contributions, Ex 36:4,5. Had they sought their own things, they had now a fair opportunity of enriching themselves by the people's gifts; for they might have made up their work, and converted the overplus to their own use, as perquisites of their place. But they were men of integrity, that scorned to do so mean a thing as to sponge upon the people, and enrich themselves with that which was offered to the Lord. Those are the greatest cheats that cheat the public. If to murder many is worse than to murder one, by the same rule to defraud communities, and to rob the church or state, is a much greater crime than to pick the pocket of a single person. But these workmen were not only ready to account for all they received, but were not willing to receive more than they had occasion for, lest they should come either into the temptation or under the suspicion of taking it to themselves. These were men that knew when they had enough.

2 The liberality of the people. Though they saw what an abundance was contributed, yet they continued to offer, till they were forbidden by proclamation, Ex 36:6,7. A rare

instance! Most need a spur to quicken their charity; few need a bridle to check it, yet these did. Had Moses aimed to enrich himself, he might have suffered them still to bring in their offerings; and when the work was finished might have taken the remainder to himself: but he also preferred the public before his own private interest, and was therein a good example to all in public trusts. It is said (Ex 36:5), The people were restrained from bringing; they looked upon it as a restraint upon them not to be allowed to do more for the tabernacle; such was the zeal of those people, who gave to their power, yea, and beyond their power, praying the collectors with much entreaty to receive the gift, 2Co 8:3,4. These were the fruits of a first love; in these last-days charity has grown too cold for us to expect such things from it.

6 And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing.

7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.

The Making of the Tabernacle

8 And every wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work of the tabernacle made ten curtains *of* fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: *with* cherubim of cunning work made he them.

9 The length of one curtain was twenty and eight cubits, and the breadth of one curtain four cubits: the curtains *were* all of one size.

The first work they set about was the framing of the house, which must be done before the furniture of it was prepared. This house was not made of timber or stone, but of curtains curiously embroidered and coupled together. This served to typify the state of the church in this world, the palace of God's kingdom among men.

1. Though it is upon the earth, yet its foundation is not in the earth, as that of a house is; no, Christ's kingdom is not of this world, nor founded in it.

2. It is mean and mutable, and in a militant state; shepherds dwelt in tents, and God is the Shepherd of Israel; soldiers dwelt in tents, and the Lord is a man of war, and his church marches through an enemy's country, and must fight its way. The kings of the earth enclose themselves in cedar (Jer 22:15), but the ark of God was lodged in curtains only.

3. Yet there is a beauty in holiness; the curtains were embroidered, so is the church adorned with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that raiment of needle-work, Ps 45:14.

4. The several societies of believers are united in one, and, as here, all become one tabernacle; for there is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

10 And he coupled the five curtains one unto another: and *the other* five curtains he coupled one unto another.

11 And he made loops of blue on the edge of one curtain from the selvedge in the coupling: likewise he made in the uttermost side of *another* curtain, in the coupling of the second.

12 Fifty loops made him in one curtain, and fifty loops made him in the edge of the curtain which *was* in the coupling of the second: the loops held one *curtain* to another.

13 And he made fifty taches of gold, and coupled the curtains one unto another with the taches: so it became one tabernacle.

14 And he made curtains *of* goats' *hair* for the tent over the tabernacle: eleven curtains he made them.

15 The length of one curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits *was* the breadth of one curtain: the eleven curtains *were* of one size.

16 And he coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves.
17 And he made fifty loops upon the uttermost edge of the curtain in the coupling, and fifty loops made he upon the edge of the curtain which coupleth the second.
18 And he made fifty taches *of* brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one.
19 And he made a covering for the tent *of* rams' skins dyed red, and a covering *of* badgers' skins above that.
20 And he made boards for the tabernacle *of* shittim wood, standing up.
21 The length of a board *was* ten cubits, and the breadth of a board one cubit and a half.
22 One board had two tenons, equally distant one from another: thus did he make for all the boards of the tabernacle.
23 And he made boards for the tabernacle; twenty boards for the south side southward:
24 and forty sockets of silver he made under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons.
25 And for the other side of the tabernacle, *which is* toward the north corner, he made twenty boards,
26 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board.
27 And for the sides of the tabernacle westward he made six boards.
28 And two boards made him for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides.
29 And they were coupled beneath, and coupled together at the head thereof, to one ring: thus he did to both of them in both the corners.
30 And there were eight boards; and their sockets *were* sixteen sockets of silver, under every board two sockets.
31 And he made bars of shittim wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle,
32 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the sides westward.

33 And he made the middle bar to shoot through the boards from the
one end to the other.
34 And he overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings *of* gold
to be places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.
35 And he made a veil *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine
twined linen: *with* cherubim made he bit of cunning work.
36 And he made thereunto four pillars *of* shittim *wood,* and overlaid
them with gold: their hooks *were of* gold; and he cast for them four
sockets of silver.
37 And he made a hanging for the tabernacle door *of* blue, and purple,
and scarlet, and fine twined linen, of needlework;
38 and the five pillars of it with their hooks: and he overlaid their
chapiters and their fillets with gold: but their five sockets *were of*
brass.

Exodus-37

The Furnishings of the Tabernacle

1 And Bezaleel made the ark *of* shittim wood: two cubits and a half
was the length of it, and a cubit and a half the breadth of it, and
a cubit and a half the height of it:
2 and he overlaid it with pure gold within and without, and made
a crown of gold to it round about.
3 And he cast for it four rings of gold, *to be set* by the four corners of
it; even two rings upon the one side of it, and two rings upon the
other side of it.
4 And he made staves *of* shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold.
5 And he put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, to bear
the ark.
6 And he made the mercy seat *of* pure gold: two cubits and a half *was*
the length thereof, and one cubit and a half the breadth thereof.
7 And he made two cherubim *of* gold, beaten out of one piece made
he them, on the two ends of the mercy seat;
8 one cherub on the end on this side, and another cherub on the *other*
end on that side: out of the mercy seat made he the cherubim on
the two ends thereof.

9 And the cherubim spread out *their* wings on high, *and* covered with
their wings over the mercy seat, with their faces one to another;
even to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubim.
10 And he made the table of shittim wood: two cubits *was* the length
thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the
height thereof:
11 and he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereunto a crown of
gold round about.
12 Also he made thereunto a border of a handbreadth round about;
and made a crown of gold for the border thereof round about.
13 And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings upon the four
corners that *were* in the four feet thereof.
14 Over against the border were the rings, the places for the staves to
bear the table.
15 And he made the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlaid them with
gold, to bear the table.
16 And he made the vessels which *were* upon the table, his dishes, and
his spoons, and his bowls, and his covers to cover withal, *of* pure
gold.
17 And he made the candlestick *of* pure gold: *of* beaten work made he
the candlestick; his shaft, and his branch, his bowls, his knops, and
his flowers, were of the same:
18 and six branches going out of the sides thereof; three branches of
the candlestick out of the one side thereof, and three branches of
the candlestick out of the other side thereof:
19 three bowls made after the fashion of almonds in one branch, a
knop and a flower; and three bowls made like almonds in another
branch, a knop and a flower: so throughout the six branches going
out of the candlestick.
20 And in the candlestick *were* four bowls made like almonds, his
knops, and his flowers:
21 and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two
branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same,
according to the six branches going out of it.
22 Their knops and their branches were of the same: all of it *was* one
beaten work *of* pure gold.
23 And he made his seven lamps, and his snuffers, and his snuffdishes,

Of pure gold.
24 *Of* a talent of pure gold made him it, and all the vessels thereof.
25 And he made the incense altar *of* shittim wood: the length of it *was* a cubit, and the breadth of it a cubit; it *was* foursquare; and two cubits *was* the height of it; the horns thereof were of the same.
26 And he overlaid it with pure gold, *both* the top of it, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns of it: also he made unto it a crown of gold round about.
27 And he made two rings of gold for it under the crown thereof, by the two corners of it, upon the two sides thereof, to be places for the staves to bear it withal.
28 And he made the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlaid them with gold.
29 And he made the holy anointing oil, and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the apothecary.

Exodus-38

1 And he made the altar of burnt offering *of* shittim wood: five cubits *was* the length thereof, and five cubits the breadth thereof; *it was* foursquare; and three cubits the height thereof.
2 And he made the horns thereof on the four corners of it; the horns thereof were of the same: and he overlaid it with brass.
3 And he made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, and the shovels, and the basins, *and* the fleshhooks, and the firepans: all the vessels thereof made him *of* brass.
4 And he made for the altar a brazen grate of network, under the compass thereof, beneath unto the midst of it.
5 And he cast four rings for the four ends of the grate of brass, *to be* places for the staves.
6 And he made the staves *of* shittim wood, and overlaid them with brass.
7 And he put the staves into the rings on the sides of the altar, to bear it withal; he made the altar hollow with boards.
8 And he made the laver *of* brass, and the foot of it *of* brass, of the looking glasses of *the women* assembling, which assembled *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The Court of the Tabernacle

9 And he made the court: on the south side southward the hangings
of the court *were of* fine twined linen, a hundred cubits:
10 their pillars *were* twenty, and their brazen sockets twenty; the
hooks of the pillars and their fillets *were of* silver.
11 And for the north side *the hangings were* a hundred cubits, their
pillars were twenty, and their sockets of brass twenty; the hooks of
the pillars and their fillets *of* silver.
12 And for the west side *were* hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten,
and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets *of*
silver.
13 And for the east side eastward fifty cubits.
14 The hangings of the one side *of the gate were* fifteen cubits; their
pillars three, and their sockets three.
15 And for the other side of the court gate, on this hand and that
hand, *were* hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their
sockets three.
16 All the hangings of the court round about *were* of fine twined linen.
17 And the sockets for the pillars were *of* brass; the hooks of the pillars
and their fillets *of* silver; and the overlaying of their chapiters *of*
silver; and all the pillars of the court *were* filleted with silver.
18 And the hanging for the gate of the court *was* needlework, *of* blue,
and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen: and twenty cubits
was the length, and the height in the breadth *was* five cubits,
answerable to the hangings of the court.
19 And their pillars were four, and their sockets *of* brass four; their hooks
of silver, and the overlaying of their chapiters and their fillets *of*
silver.
20 And all the pins of the tabernacle, and of the court round about,
were of brass.

The Supervision of the Work

21 This is the sum of the tabernacle, *even* of the tabernacle of
testimony, as it was counted, according to the commandment of
Moses, *for* the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son
to Aaron the priest.

22 And Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah,
made all that the Lord commanded Moses.
23 And with him *was* Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan,
an engraver, and a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in
blue, and in purple, and in scarlet, and fine linen.

The Metal of the Sanctuary

24 All the gold that was occupied for the work in all the work of the
holy place, even the gold of the offering, was twenty and nine
talents, and seven hundred and thirty shekels, after the shekel of
the sanctuary.
25 And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation *was*
a hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore
and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary:
26 a bekah for every man, *that is,* half a shekel, after the shekel of the
sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty
years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three
thousand and five hundred and fifty *men.*
27 And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the
sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; a hundred sockets of the
hundred talents, a talent for a socket.
28 And of the thousand seven hundred seventy and five *shekels* he
made hooks for the pillars, and overlaid their chapiters, and
filleted them.
29 And the brass of the offering *was* seventy talents, and two thousand
and four hundred shekels.
30 And therewith he made the sockets to the door of the tabernacle
of the congregation, and the brazen altar, and the brazen grate for
it, and all the vessels of the altar,
31 and the sockets of the court round about, and the sockets of the
court gate, and all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins of the
court round about.

Exodus-39

The Making of the Priests' Garments

1 And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made clothes of
service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments
for Aaron; as the Lord commanded Moses.
2 And he made the ephod *of* gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and
fine twined linen.
3 And they did beat the gold into thin plates, and cut *it into* wires, to
work *it* in the blue, and in the purple, and in the scarlet, and in the
fine linen, *with* cunning work.
4 They made shoulderpieces for it, to couple *it* together: by the two
edges was it coupled together.
5 And the curious girdle of his ephod, that *was* upon it, *was* of the
same, according to the work thereof; *of* gold, blue, and purple, and
scarlet, and fine twined linen; as the Lord commanded Moses.
6 And they wrought onyx stones inclosed in ouches of gold, graven,
as signets are graven, with the names of the children of Israel.
7 And he put them on the shoulders of the ephod, *that they should*
be stones for a memorial to the children of Israel; as the Lord
commanded Moses.
8 And he made the breastplate *of* cunning work, like the work of
the ephod; *of* gold, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined
linen.
9 It was foursquare; they made the breastplate double: a span *was* the
length thereof, and a span the breadth thereof, *being* doubled.
10 And they set in it four rows of stones: *the first* row *was* a sardius, a
topaz, and a carbuncle: this *was* the first row.
11 And the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.
12 And the third row, a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.
13 And the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper: *they were*
inclosed in ouches of gold in their inclosings.
14 And the stones were according to the names of the children of
Israel, twelve according to their names, *like* the engravings of a
signet, every one with his name, according to the twelve tribes.

15 And they made upon the breastplate chains at the ends, of wreathed work of pure gold.
16 And they made two ouches of gold, and two gold rings, and put the two rings in the two ends of the breastplate.
17 And they put the two wreathed chains of gold in the two rings on the ends of the breastplate.
18 And the two ends of the two wreathed chains they fastened in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulderpieces of the ephod, before it.
19 And they made two rings of gold, and put *them* on the two ends of the breastplate, upon the border of it, which was on the side of the ephod inward.
20 And they made two *other* golden rings, and put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart of it, over against the *other* coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod.
21 And they did bind the breastplate by his rings unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not be loosed from the ephod; as the Lord commanded Moses.
22 And he made the robe of the ephod *of* woven work, all *of* blue.
23 And *there was* a hole in the midst of the robe, as the hole of a habergeon, *with* a band round about the hole, that it should not rend.
24 And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates *of* blue, and purple, and scarlet, *and* twined *linen.*

25 And they made bells *of* pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates upon the hem of the robe, round about between the pomegranates;
26 a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, round about the hem of the robe to minister *in;* as the Lord commanded Moses.
27 And they made coats *of* fine linen *of* woven work for Aaron, and for his sons,

28 and a mitre *of* fine linen, and goodly bonnets *of* fine linen, and
linen breeches *of* fine twined linen,
29 and a girdle of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet,
of needlework; as the Lord commanded Moses.
30 And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and
wrote upon it a writing, *like to* the engravings of a signet,
Holiness to the Lord.
31 And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten *it* on high upon the
mitre; as the Lord commanded Moses.

The Tabernacle Articles Completed

32 Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the
congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to
all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they.

The builders of the tabernacle made very good despatch. It was not much more than five months from the beginning to the finishing of it. Though there was a great deal of fine work about it, such as is usually the work of time, embroidering and engraving, not only in gold, but in precious stones, yet they went through with it in a little time. Church-work is usually slow work, but they made quick work of this, and yet did it with the greatest exactness imaginable. For,

1. Many hands were employed, all unanimous, and not striving with each other. This expedited the business, and made it easy.

2 The workmen were taught of God, and so were kept from making blunders, which would have retarded them. 3. The people were hearty and zealous in the work, and impatient till it was finished. God had prepared their hearts, and then the thing was done suddenly, 2Ch 29:36. Resolution and industry, and a cheerful application of mind, will, by the

grace of God, bring a great deal of good work to pass in a little time, in less than one would expect.

They punctually observed their orders, and did not in the least vary from them. They did it according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, Ex 39:32,42. Note, God's work must be done, in every thing, according to his own will. His institutions neither need nor admit men's inventions to make them either more beautiful or more likely to answer the intention of them. Add thou not unto his words. God is pleased with willing worship, but not with will-worship.

33 And they brought the tabernacle unto Moses, the tent, and all his furniture, his taches, his boards, his bars, and his pillars, and his sockets;

They brought all their work to Moses, and submitted it to his inspection and censure, Ex 39:33. He knew what he had ordered them to make; and now the particulars were called over, and all produced, that Moses might see both that they had made all, omitting nothing, and that they had made all according to the instructions given them, and that, if they had made a mistake in any thing, it might be forthwith rectified. Thus they showed respect to Moses, who was set over them in the Lord; not objecting that Moses did not understand such work, and therefore that there was no reason for submitting it to his judgment. No, that God who gave them so much knowledge as to do the work gave them also so much humility as to be willing to have it examined and compared with the model. Moses was in authority, and they would pay a deference to his place. The spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets. And besides, though they knew how to do the work better than Moses, Moses had a better and more exact idea of the model than they had, and therefore they could not be well pleased with their own work, unless they had his approbation. Thus in all the services of religion we should labour to be accepted of the Lord.

34 and the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of
badgers' skins, and the veil of the covering;
35 the ark of the testimony, and the staves thereof, and the mercy seat;
36 the table, *and* all the vessels thereof, and the showbread;
37 the pure candlestick, *with* the lamps thereof, *even with* the lamps to
be set in order, and all the vessels thereof, and the oil for light;
38 and the golden altar, and the anointing oil, and the sweet incense,
and the hanging for the tabernacle door;
39 the brazen altar, and his grate of brass, his staves, and all his vessels,
the laver and his foot;
40 the hangings of the court, his pillars, and his sockets, and the
hanging for the court gate, his cords, and his pins, and all the
vessels of the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of the
congregation;
41 the clothes of service to do service in the holy place, and the holy
garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons' garments, to minister
in the priest's office.
42 According to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children
of Israel made all the work.
43 And Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done
it as the Lord had commanded, even so had they done it: and
Moses blessed them.

Moses, upon search, found all done according to the rule, Ex 39:43. Moses, both for their satisfaction and for his own, did look upon all the work, piece by piece, and behold they had done it according to the pattern shown him, for the same Being that showed him the pattern guided their hand in the work. All the copies of God's grace exactly agree with the original of his counsels: what God works in us, and by us, is the fulfilling of the good pleasure of his own goodness; and when the mystery of God shall be finished, and all his performances come to be compared with his purposes, it will appear that behold all is done according to the counsel of his own will, not one iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground, or be varied from.

Moses blessed them.

1. He commended them, and signified his approbation of all they had done. He did not find fault where there was none, as some do, who think they disparage their own judgment if they do not find something amiss in the best and most accomplished performance. In all this work it is probable there might have been found here and there a stitch amiss, and a stroke awry, which would have served for an over-curious and censorious critic to animadvert upon; but Moses was too candid to notice small faults where there were no great ones.

Note, All governors must be a praise to those that do well, as well as a terror to evil-doers. Why should any take a pride in being hard to be pleased?

2. He not only praised them, but prayed for them. He blessed them as one having authority, for the less is blessed of the better. We read not of any wages that Moses paid them for their work, but this blessing he gave them. For, though ordinarily the labourer be worthy of his hire, yet in this case,

A. They wrought for themselves. The honour and comfort of God's tabernacle among them would be recompence enough. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself.

B. They had their meat from heaven on free-cost, for themselves and their families, and their raiment waxed not old upon them; so that they neither needed wages nor had reason to expect any. Freely you have received, freely give. The obligations we lie under, both in duty and interest, to serve God, should be sufficient to quicken us to our work, though we had not a reward in prospect.

But, 3. This blessing, in the name of the Lord, was wages enough for all their work. Those whom God employs he will

bless, and those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. The blessing he commands is life for evermore.

Exodus-40

The Setting Up of the Tabernacle

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

The materials and furniture of the tabernacle had been viewed severally and approved, and now they must be put together.

1. God here directs Moses to set up the tabernacle and the utensils of it in their places. Though the work of the tabernacle was finished, and every thing ready for rearing, and the people, no doubt, were very desirous to see it up, yet Moses will not erect it till he has express orders for doing so. It is good to see God going before us in every step, Ps 37:23. The time for doing this is fixed to the first day of the first month (Ex 40:2), which wanted but fourteen days of a year since they came out of Egypt; and a good year's work there was done in it. Probably the work was made ready but just at the end of the year, so that the appointing of this day gave no delay, or next to none, to this good work. We must not put off any necessary duty under pretence of waiting for some remarkable day; the present season is the most convenient. But the tabernacle happening to be set up on the first day of the first month intimates that it is good to begin the year with some good work. Let him that is the first have the first; and let the things of his kingdom be first sought. In Hezekiah's time we find they began to sanctify the temple on the first day of the first month, 2Ch 29:17. The new moon (which by their computation was the first day of every month) was observed by them with some solemnity; and therefore this first new moon of the year was thus made remarkable. Note, When a new year begins, we should think of serving God more and better than we did the year before.

Moses is particularly ordered to set up the tabernacle itself first, in which God would dwell and would be served (Ex 40:2), then to put the ark in its place, and draw the veil before it (Ex 40:3), then to fix the table, and the candlestick, and the altar of incense, without the veil (Ex 40:4, 5), and to fix the hanging of the door before the door. Then in the court he must place the altar of burnt offering, and the laver (Ex 40:6,7); and, lastly, he must set up the curtains of the court, and a hanging for a court-gate. And all this would be easily done in one day, many hands no doubt being employed in it under the direction of Moses.

2. He directs Moses, when he had set up the tabernacle and all the furniture of it, to consecrate it and them, by anointing them with the oil which was prepared for the purpose, Ex 30:25-29, &c. It was there ordered that this should be done; here it was ordered that it should be done now, Ex 40:9-11. Observe, Every thing was sanctified when it was put in its proper place, and not till then, for till then it was not fit for the use to which it was to be sanctified. As every thing is beautiful in its season, so is every thing in its place.

3. He directs him to consecrate Aaron and his sons. When the goods were brought into God's house, they were marked first, and then servants were hired to bear the vessels of the Lord; and those must be clean who were put into that office, Ex 40:12-15. The law which was now ordered to be put in execution we had before, Ex 29:1-46 Thus in the visible church, which is God's tabernacle among men, it is requisite that there be ministers to keep the charge of the sanctuary, and that they receive the anointing.

2 On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle
of the tent of the congregation.
3 And thou shalt put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the
ark with the veil.

4 And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof.
5 And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the hanging of the door to the tabernacle.
6 And thou shalt set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation.
7 And thou shalt set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and shalt put water therein.
8 And thou shalt set up the court round about, and hang up the hanging at the court gate.
9 And thou shalt take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that *is* therein, and shalt hallow it, and all the vessels thereof: and it shall be holy.
10 And thou shalt anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy.
11 And thou shalt anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify it.
12 And thou shalt bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water.
13 And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.
14 And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats:
15 and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.
16 Thus did Moses: according to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he.

When the tabernacle and the furniture of it were prepared, they did not put off the rearing of it till they came to Canaan, though they now hoped to be there very shortly; but, in obedience to the will of God, they set it up in the midst of their camp, while they were in the wilderness. Those that are unsettled in the world must not think that this will excuse

them in their continued irreligion; as if it were enough to begin to serve God when they begin to be settled in the world. No; a tabernacle for God is a very needful and profitable companion even in a wilderness, especially considering that our carcases may fall in that wilderness, and we may be fixed in another world before we come to fix in this.

17 And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was reared up.

18 And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars.

19 And he spread abroad the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent above upon it; as the Lord commanded Moses.

20 And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:

The rearing of the tabernacle was a good day's work; the consecrating of it, and of the priests, was attended to some days after. Here we have an account only of that new-year's-day's work.

1. Moses not only did all that God directed him to do, but in the order that God appointed; for God will be sought in the due order.

2. To each particular there is added an express reference to the divine appointment, which Moses governed himself by as carefully and conscientiously as the workmen did; and therefore, as before, so here it is repeated, as the Lord commanded Moses, seven times in less than fourteen verses. Moses himself, as great a man as he was, would not pretend to vary from the institution, neither to add to it nor diminish from it, in the least punctilio. Those that command others must remember that their Master also is in heaven, and they must do as they are commanded.

3. That which was to be veiled be veiled (Ex 40:21), and that which was to be used he used immediately, for the instruction of the priests, that by seeing him do the several offices they might learn to do them the more dexterously. Though Moses was not properly a priest, yet he is numbered among the priests (Ps 99:6), and the Jewish writers call him the priest of the priests; what he did he did by special warrant and direction from God, rather as a prophet, or law-giver, than as a priest. He set the wheels a going, and then left the work in the hands of the appointed ministry.

(1.) When he had placed the table, he set the show-bread in order upon it (Ex 40:23); for God will never have his table unfurnished.

(2.) As soon as he had fixed the candlestick, he lighted the lamps before the Lord, Ex 40:25. Even that dark dispensation would not admit of unlighted candles.

(3.) The golden altar being put in its place, immediately he burnt sweet incense thereon (Ex 40:27); for God's altar must be a smoking altar.

(4.) At the laver likewise, when he had fixed that, Moses himself washed his hands and feet. Thus, in all these instances, he not only showed the priests how to do their duty, but has taught us that God's gifts are intended for use, and not barely for show. Though the altars, and table, and candlestick, were fresh and new, he did not say it was a pity to sully them; no, he handselled them immediately. Talents were given to be occupied, not to be buried.

21 and he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil
of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the
Lord commanded Moses.
22 And he put the table in the tent of the congregation, upon the
side of the tabernacle northward, without the veil.
23 And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord; as the Lord

had commanded Moses.
24 And he put the candlestick in the tent of the congregation, over
against the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward.
25 And he lighted the lamps before the Lord; as the Lord
commanded Moses.
26 And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation before
the veil:
27 and he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the Lord commanded
Moses.
28 And he set up the hanging *at* the door of the tabernacle.
29 And he put the altar of burnt offering *by* the door of the tabernacle
of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt
offering and the meat offering; as the Lord commanded Moses.
30 And he set the laver between the tent of the congregation and the
altar, and put water there, to wash *withal*.
31 And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their
feet thereat:
32 when they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they
came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded
Moses.
33 And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the
altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished
the work.

The Cloud over the Tabernacle

34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory
of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

As when, in the creation, God had finished this earth, which he designed for man's habitation, he made man, and put him in possession of it, so when Moses had finished the tabernacle, which was designed for God's dwelling-place among men, God came and took possession of it. The shechinah, the divine eternal Word, though not yet made flesh, yet, as a prelude to that event, came and dwelt among them, Joh 1:14. This was henceforward the place of his throne, and the place of the soles of his feet (Eze 43:7); here

he resided, here he ruled. By the visible tokens of God's coming among them to take possession of the tabernacle he testified both the return of his favour to them, which they had forfeited by the golden calf (Ex 33:7), and his gracious acceptance of all the expense they had been at, and all the care and pains they had taken about the tabernacle. Thus God owned them, showed himself well pleased with what they had done, and abundantly rewarded them. Note, God will dwell with those that prepare him a habitation. The broken and contrite heart, the clean and holy heart, that is furnished for his service, and devoted to his honour, shall be his rest for ever; here will Christ dwell by faith, Eph 3:17. Where God has a throne and an altar in the soul, there is a living temple. And God will be sure to own and crown the operations of his own grace and the observance of his own appointments.

As God had manifested himself upon mount Sinai, so he did now in this newly-erected tabernacle. We read (Ex 24:16) that the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, which is said to be like devouring fire (Ex 40:17), and that the cloud covered it on the outside, and the glory of the Lord filled it within, to which, probably there is an allusion in Zec 2:5, where God promises to be a wall of fire round about Jerusalem (and the pillar of cloud was by night a pillar of fire) and the glory in the midst of her.

35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, Ex 40:34,35. The shechinah now made an awful and pompous entry into the tabernacle, through the outer part of which it passed into the most holy place, as the presence-chamber, and there seated itself between the cherubim. It was in light and fire, and (for aught we know) no otherwise, that the shechinah made itself visible; for God is light; our God is a consuming fire. With these the tabernacle was now filled, yet, as before the bush

was not consumed, so now the curtains were not so much as singed by this fire; for to those that have received the anointing the terrible majesty of God is not destroying. Yet so dazzling was the light, and so dreadful was the fire, that Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, at the door of which he attended, till the splendour had a little abated, and the glory of the Lord retired within the veil, Ex 40:35. This shows how terrible the glory and majesty of God are, and how unable the greatest and best of men are to stand before him. The divine light and fire, let forth in their full strength, will overpower the strongest heads and the purest hearts. But what Moses could not do, in that he was weak through the flesh, has been done by our Lord Jesus, whom God caused to draw near and approach, and who, as the forerunner, has for us entered, and has invited us to come boldly even to the mercy-seat. He was able to enter into the holy place not made with hands (Heb 9:24); nay, he is himself the true tabernacle, filled with the glory of God (Joh 1:14), even with the divine grace and truth prefigured by this fire and light. In him the shechinah took up its rest for ever, for in him dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

36 And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys:

37 but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up.

The cloud covered the tent. That same cloud which, as the chariot or pavilion of the shechinah, had come up before them out of Egypt and led them hither, now settled upon the tabernacle and hovered over it, even in the hottest and clearest day; for it was none of those clouds which the sun scatters. This cloud was intended to be,

1. A token of God's presence constantly visible day and night (Ex 40:38) to all Israel, even to those that lay in the remotest corners of the camp, that they might never again make a question of it, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? That very

cloud which had already been so pregnant with wonders in the Red Sea, and on mount Sinai, sufficient to prove God in it of a truth, was continually in sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys; so that they were inexcusable if they believed not their own eyes.

2. A concealment of the tabernacle, and the glory of God in it. God did indeed dwell among them, but he dwelt in a cloud: Verily thou art a God that hidest, thyself. Blessed be God for the gospel of Christ, in which we all with open face behold as in a glass, not in a cloud, the glory of the Lord.

3. A protection of the tabernacle. They had sheltered it with one covering upon another, but, after all, the cloud that covered it was its best guard. Those that dwell in the house of the Lord are hidden there, and are safe under the divine protection, Ps 27:4,5. Yet this, which was then a peculiar favour to the tabernacle, is promised to every dwelling-place of mount Zion (Isa 4:5); for upon all the glory shall be a defence.

4. A guide to the camp of Israel in their march through the wilderness, Ex 40:36,37. While the cloud continued on the tabernacle, they rested; when it removed, they removed and followed it, as being purely under divine direction. This is spoken of more fully, Nu 9:19,Ps 78:14,105:39. As before the tabernacle was set up the Israelites had the cloud for their guide, which appeared sometimes in one place and sometimes in another, but henceforward rested on the tabernacle and was to be found there only, so the church had divine revelation for its guide from the first, before the scriptures were written, but since the making up of that canon it rests in that as its tabernacle, and there only it is to be found, as in the creation the light which was made the first day, centered in the sun the fourth day. Blessed be God for the law and the testimony!

38 For the cloud of the Lord *was* upon the tabernacle by day, and fire
was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout
all their journeys.

The Third Book of Moses, Called
Leviticus
[Leviticus]

Leviticus-1

Burnt Offerings

1 And the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,

Observe here,

1. It is taken for granted that people would be inclined to bring offerings to the Lord. The very light of nature directs man, some way or other, to do honour to his Maker, and pay him homage as his Lord. Revealed religion supposes natural religion to be an ancient and early institution, since the fall had directed men to glorify God by sacrifice, which was an implicit acknowledgment of their having received all from God as creatures, and their having forfeited all to him as sinners. A conscience thoroughly convinced of dependence and guilt would be willing to come before God with thousands of rams, Mic 6:6,7.

2. Provision is made that men should not indulge their own fancies, nor become vain in their imaginations and inventions about their sacrifices, lest, while they pretended to honour God, they should really dishonour him, and do that which was unworthy of him. Every thing therefore is directed to be done with due decorum, by a certain rule, and so as that the sacrifices might be most significant both of the great sacrifice of atonement which Christ was to offer in the fulness of time and of the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment which believers should offer daily.

3. God gave those laws to Israel by Moses; nothing is more frequently repeated than this, The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel. God could have spoken it to the children of Israel himself, as he did the ten commandments; but he chose to deliver it to them by Moses, because they had desired he would no more speak to them himself, and he had designed that Moses should, above all the prophets, be a type of Christ, by whom God would in these last days speak to us, Heb 1:2. By other prophets God sent messages to his people, but by Moses he gave them laws; and therefore he was fit to typify him to whom the Father has given all judgment. And, besides, the treasure of divine revelation was always to be put into earthen vessels, that our faith might be tried, and that the excellency of the power might be of God.

4. God spoke to him out of the tabernacle. As soon as ever the shechinah had taken possession of its new habitation, in token of the acceptance of what was done, God talked with Moses from the mercy-seat, while he attended without the veil, or rather at the door, hearing a voice only; and it is probable that he wrote what he heard at that time, to prevent any mistake, or a slip of memory, in the rehearsal of it. The tabernacle was set up to be a place of communion between God and Israel; there, where they performed their services to God, God revealed his will to them. Thus, by the word and by prayer, we now have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, Ac 6:4. When we speak to God we must desire to hear from him, and reckon it a great favour that he is pleased to speak to us. The Lord called to Moses, not to come near (under that dispensation, even Moses must keep his distance), but to attend and hearken to what should be said. A letter less than ordinary in the Hebrew word for called, the Jewish critics tell us, intimates that God spoke in a still small voice. The moral law was given with terror from

a burning mountain in thunder and lightning; but the remedial law of sacrifice was given more gently from a mercy-seat, because that was typical of the grace of the gospel, which is the ministration of life and peace.

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the Lord, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock.

3 If his offering *be* a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord.

4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

5 And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that *is by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces.

If a man were rich and could afford it, it is supposed that he would bring his burnt-sacrifice, with which he designed to honour God, out of his herd of larger cattle. He that considers that God is the best that is will resolve to give him the best he has, else he gives him not the glory due unto his name. Now if a man determined to kill a bullock, not for an entertainment for his family and friends, but for a sacrifice to his God, these rules must be religiously observed:--

1 The beast to be offered must be a male, and without blemish, and the best he had in his pasture. Being designed purely for the honour of him that is infinitely perfect, it ought to be the most perfect in its kind. This signified the complete strength and purity that were in Christ the dying sacrifice, and the sincerity of heart and unblamableness of life that should be in Christians, who are presented to God as living sacrifices. But, literally, in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female; nor is any natural blemish in the body a bar to our acceptance with God, but only the moral defects and deformities introduced by sin into the soul.

2 The owner must offer it voluntarily. What is done in religion, so as to please God, must be done by no other constraint than that of love. God accepts the willing people and the cheerful giver. Ainsworth and others read it, not as the principle, but as the end of offering: "Let him offer it for his favourable acceptation before the Lord. Let him propose this to himself as his end in bringing his sacrifice, and let his eye be fixed steadily upon that end--that he may be accepted of the Lord." Those only shall find acceptance who sincerely desire and design it in all their religious services, 2Co 5:9.

3. It must be offered at the door of the tabernacle, where the brazen altar of burnt-offerings stood, which sanctified the gift, and not elsewhere. He must offer it at the door, as one unworthy to enter, and acknowledging that there is no admission for a sinner into covenant and communion with God, but by sacrifice; but he must offer it at the tabernacle of the congregation, in token of his communion with the whole church of Israel even in this personal service.

4. The offerer must put his hand upon the head of his offering, Le 1:4. "He must put both his hands," say the Jewish doctors, "with all his might, between the horns of the beast," signifying thereby,

(1.) The transfer of all his right to, and interest in, the beast, to God, actually, and by a manual delivery, resigning it to his service.

(2.) An acknowledgment that he deserved to die, and would have been willing to die if God had required it, for the serving of his honour, and the obtaining of his favour.

(3.) A dependence upon the sacrifice, as an instituted type of the great sacrifice on which the iniquity of us all was to be laid. The mystical signification of the sacrifices, and

especially this rite, some think the apostle means by the doctrine of laying on of hands (Heb 6:2), which typified evangelical faith. The offerer's putting his hand on the head of the offering was to signify his desire and hope that it might be accepted from him to make atonement for him. Though the burnt-offerings had not respect to any particular sin, as the sin-offering had, yet they were to make atonement for sin in general; and he that laid his hand on the head of a burnt-offering was to confess that he had left undone what he ought to have done and had done that which he ought not to have done, and to pray that, though he deserved to die himself, the death of his sacrifice might be accepted for the expiating of his guilt.

5. The sacrifice was to be killed by the priests of Levites, before the Lord, that is, in a devout religious manner, and with an eye to God and his honour. This signified that our Lord Jesus was to make his soul, or life, an offering for sin. Messiah the prince must be cut off as a sacrifice, but not for himself, Da 9:26. It signified also that in Christians, who are living sacrifices, the brutal part must be mortified or killed, the flesh crucified with its corrupt affections and lusts and all the appetites of the mere animal life.

6. The priests were to sprinkle the blood upon the altar (Le 1:5); for, the blood being the life, it was this that made atonement for the soul. This signified the direct and actual regard which our Lord Jesus had to the satisfaction of his Father's justice, and the securing of his injured honour, in the shedding of his blood; he offered himself without spot to God. It also signified the pacifying and purifying of our consciences by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ upon them by faith, 1Pe 1:2,Heb 10:22.

7. The beast was to be flayed and decently cut up, and divided into its several joints or pieces, according to the art of the butcher; and then all the pieces, with the head and the

fat (the legs and inwards being first washed), were to be burnt together upon the altar, Le 1:6-9. "But to what purpose," would some say, "was this waste? Why should all this good meat, which might have been given to the poor, and have served their hungry families for food a great while, be burnt together to ashes?" So was the will of God; and it is not for us to object or to find fault with it. When it was burnt for the honour of God, in obedience to his command, and to signify spiritual blessings, it was really better bestowed, and better answered the end of its creation, than when it was used as food for man. We must never reckon that lost which is laid out for God. The burning of the sacrifice signified the sharp sufferings of Christ, and the devout affections with which, as a holy fire, Christians must offer up themselves their whole spirit, soul, and body, unto God.

8. This is said to be an offering of a sweet savour, or savour of rest, unto the Lord. The burning of flesh is unsavoury in itself; but this, as an act of obedience to a divine command, and a type of Christ, was well pleasing to God: he was reconciled to the offerer, and did himself take a complacency in that reconciliation. He rested, and was refreshed with these institutions of his grace, as, at first, with his works of creation (Ex 31:17), rejoicing therein, Ps 104:31. Christ's offering of himself to God is said to be of a sweet-smelling savour (Eph 5:2), and the spiritual sacrifices of Christians are said to be acceptable to God, through Christ, 1Pe 2:5.

7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and
lay the wood in order upon the fire:
8 and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the
fat, in order upon the wood that *is* on the fire which *is* upon the
altar:
9 but his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest
shall burn all on the altar, to *be* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made
by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.
10 And if his offering *be* of the flocks, *namely*, of the sheep, or of the
goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish.

11 And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the
Lord: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round
about upon the altar.
12 And he shall cut it into his pieces, with his head and his fat: and the
priest shall lay them in order on the wood that *is* on the fire which
is upon the altar:
13 but he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water: and the
priest shall bring *it* all, and burn *it* upon the altar: it *is* a burnt
sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

Here we have the laws concerning the burnt-offerings, which were of the flock or of the fowls. Those of the middle rank, that could not well afford to offer a bullock, would bring a sheep or a goat; and those that were not able to do that should be accepted of God if they brought a turtle-dove or a pigeon. For God, in his law and in his gospel, as well as in his providence, considers the poor. It is observable that those creatures were chosen for sacrifice which were most mild and gentle, harmless and inoffensive, to typify the innocence and meekness that were in Christ, and to teach the innocence and meekness that should be in Christians. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning the burnt-offerings of the flock, Le 1:10. The method of managing these is much the same with that of the bullocks; only it is ordered here that the sacrifice should be killed on the side of the altar northward, which, though mentioned here only, was probably to be observed concerning the former, and other sacrifices. Perhaps on that side of the altar there was the largest vacant space, and room for the priests to turn them in. It was of old observed that fair weather comes out of the north, and that the north wind drives away rain; and by these sacrifices the storms of God's wrath are scattered, and the light of God's countenance is obtained, which is more pleasant than the brightest fairest weather.

2. Concerning those of the fowls. They must be either turtle-doves (and, if so, "they must be old turtles," say the Jews), or pigeons, and, if so, they must be young pigeons. What was most acceptable at men's tables must be brought to God's altar. In the offering of these fowls,

(1.) The head must be wrung off, "quite off," say some; others think only pinched, so as to kill the bird, and yet leave the head hanging to the body. But it seems more likely that it was to be quite separated, for it was to be burnt first.

(2.) The blood was to be wrung out at the side of the altar.

(3.) The garbages with the feathers were to be thrown by upon the dunghill.

(4.) The body was to be opened, sprinkled with salt, and then burnt upon the altar. "This sacrifice of birds," the Jews say, "was one of the most difficult services the priests had to do," to teach those that minister in holy things to be as solicitous for the salvation of the poor as for that of the rich, and that the services of the poor are as acceptable to God, if they come from an upright heart, as the services of the rich, for he accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, 2Co 8:12. The poor man's turtle-doves, or young pigeons, are here said to be an offering of a sweet-smelling savour, as much as that of an ox or bullock that hath horns or hoofs. Yet, after all, to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, Mk 12:33.

14 And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the Lord *be* of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons.

15 And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head, and burn *it* on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar:

16 and he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside
the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes.
17 And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, *but* shall not divide
it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the
wood that *is* upon the fire: it *is* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made
by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

Leviticus-2

Meal Offerings

1 And when any will offer a meat offering unto the Lord, his
offering shall be *of* fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put
frankincense thereon.

There were some meat-offerings that were only appendices to the burnt-offerings, as that which was offered with the daily sacrifice (Ex 29:38,39) and with the peace-offerings; these had drink-offerings joined with them (see Nu 15:4,7,9,10), and in these the quantity was appointed. But the law of this chapter concerns those meat-offerings that were offered by themselves, whenever a man saw cause thus to express his devotion. The first offering we read of in scripture was of this kind (Ge 4:3): Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering.

This sort of offerings was appointed,

1. In condescension to the poor, and their ability, that those who themselves lived only upon bread and cakes might offer an acceptable offering to God out of that which was their own coarse and homely fare, and by making for God's altar, as the widow of Sarepta for his prophet, a little cake first, might procure such a blessing upon the handful of meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse, as that it should not fail.

2. As a proper acknowledgment of the mercy of God to them in their food. This was like a quitrent, by which they testified their dependence upon God, their thankfulness to him, and their expectations from him as their owner and bountiful benefactor, who giveth to all life, and breath, and food convenient. Thus must they honour the Lord with their substance, and, in token of their eating and drinking to his glory, must consecrate some of their meat and drink to his immediate service. Those that now, with a grateful charitable heart, deal out their bread to the hungry, and provide for the necessities of those that are destitute of daily food, and when they eat the fat and drink the sweet themselves send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, offer unto God an acceptable meat-offering. The prophet laments it as one of the direful effects of famine that thereby the meat-offering and drink-offering were cut off from the house of the Lord (Joe 1:9), and reckoned it the greatest blessing of plenty that it would be the revival of them, Joe 2:14.

2 And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons the priests: and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to *be* an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord:

The laws of the meat-offerings were these:--

1 The ingredients must always be fine flour and oil, two staple commodities of the land of Canaan, De 8:8. Oil was to them then in their food what butter is now to us. If it was undressed, the oil must be poured upon the flour (Le 2:1); if cooked, it must be mingled with the flour, Le 2:4, &c.

2. If it was flour unbaked, besides the oil it must have frankincense put upon it, which was to be burnt with it (Le 2:1,2), for the perfuming of the altar; in allusion to this,

gospel ministers are said to be a sweet savour unto God, 2Co 2:15.

3. If it was prepared, this might be done in various ways; the offerer might bake it, or fry it, or mix the flour and oil upon a plate, for the doing of which conveniences were provided about the tabernacle. The law was very exact even about those offerings that were least costly, to intimate the cognizance God takes of the religious services performed with a devout mind, even by the poor of his people.

4. It was to be presented by the offerer to the priest, which is called bringing it to the Lord (Le 2:8), for the priests were God's receivers, and were ordained to offer gifts.

5. Part of it was to be burnt upon the altar, for a memorial, that is, in token of their mindfulness of God's bounty to them, in giving them all things richly to enjoy. It was an offering made by fire, Le 2:2,9. The consuming of it by fire might remind them that they deserved to have all the fruits of the earth thus burnt up, and that it was of the Lord's mercies that they were not. They might also learn that as meats are for the belly, and the belly for meats, so God shall destroy both it and them (1Co 6:13), and that man lives not by bread alone. This offering made by fire is here said to be of a sweet savour unto the Lord; and so are our spiritual offerings, which are made by the fire of holy love, particularly that of almsgiving, which is said to be an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God (Php 4:18), and with such sacrifices God is well pleased, Heb 13:16.

6. The remainder of the meat-offering was to be given to the priests, Le 2:3,10. It is a thing most holy, not to be eaten by the offerers, as the peace-offerings (which, though holy,

were not most holy), but by the priests only, and their families. Thus God provided that those who served at the altar should live upon the altar, and live comfortably.

3 and the remnant of the meat offering *shall be* Aaron's and his sons': *it is* a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire.

4 And if thou bring an oblation of a meat offering baked in the oven, it *shall be* unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil.

5 And if thy oblation *be* a meat offering *baked* in a pan, it shall be *of* fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil.

6 Thou shalt part it in pieces, and pour oil thereon: it *is* a meat offering.

7 And if thy oblation *be* a meat offering *baked* in the frying pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

8 And thou shalt bring the meat offering that is made of these things unto the Lord: and when it is presented unto the priest, he shall bring it unto the altar.

9 And the priest shall take from the meat offering a memorial thereof, and shall burn *it* upon the altar: *it is* an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

10 And that which is left of the meat offering *shall be* Aaron's and his sons': *it is* a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord made by fire.

11 No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire.

Here, I. Leaven and honey are forbidden to be put in any of their meat-offerings: No leaven, nor any honey, in any offering made by fire, Le 2:11.

1 The leaven was forbidden in remembrance of the unleavened bread they ate when they came out of Egypt. So much despatch was required in the offerings they made that it was not convenient they should stay for the leavening of them. The New Testament comparing pride and hypocrisy to leaven because they swell like leaven, comparing also

malice and wickedness to leaven because they sour like leaven, we are to understand and improve this as a caution to take heed of those sins which will certainly spoil the acceptableness of our spiritual sacrifices. Pure hands must be lifted up without wrath, and all our gospel feasts kept with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

2. Honey was forbidden, though Canaan flowed with it, because to eat much honey is not good (Pr 25:16,27); it turns to choler and bitterness in the stomach, though luscious to the taste. Some think the chief reason why those two things, leaven and honey, were forbidden, was because the Gentiles used them very much in their sacrifices, and God's people must not learn or use the way of the heathen, but his services must be the reverse of their idolatrous services; see De 12:30,31. Some make this application of this double prohibition: leaven signifies grief and sadness of spirit (Ps 73:21), My heart was leavened; honey signifies sensual pleasure and mirth. In our service of God both these must be avoided, and a mean observed between those extremes; for the sorrow of the world worketh death, and a love to the delights of sense is a great enemy to holy love.

12 As for the oblation of the first fruits, ye shall offer them unto the
Lord: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savor.
13 And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt;
neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be
lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt
offer salt.

Salt is required in all their offerings, Le 2:13. The altar was the table of the Lord; and therefore, salt being always set on our tables, God would have it always used at his. It is called the salt of the covenant, because, as men confirmed their covenants with each other by eating and drinking together, at all which collations salt was used, so God, by accepting his people's gifts and feasting them upon his sacrifices, supping with them and they with him (Re 3:20), did confirm

his covenant with them. Among the ancients salt was a symbol of friendship. The salt for the sacrifice was not brought by the offerers, but was provided at the public charge, as the wood was, Ezr 7:20-22. And there was a chamber in the court of the temple called the chamber of salt, in which they laid it up. Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? God would hereby intimate to them that their sacrifices in themselves were unsavoury. The saints, who are living sacrifices to God, must have salt in themselves, for every sacrifice must be salted with salt (Mk 9:49,50), and our speech must be always with grace (Col 4:6), so must all our religious performances be seasoned with that salt. Christianity is the salt of the earth.

14 And if thou offer a meat offering of thy first fruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy first fruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, *even* corn beaten out of full ears.

Directions are given about the first-fruits.

1 The oblation of their first-fruits at harvest, of which we read, De 26:2. These were offered to the Lord, not to be burnt upon the altar, but to be given to the priests as perquisites of their office, Le 2:12. And you shall offer them (that is, leaven and honey) in the oblation of the first-fruits, though they were forbidden in other meat-offerings; for they were proper enough to be eaten by the priests, though not to be burnt upon the altar. The loaves of the first-fruits are particularly ordered to be baked with leaven, Le 23:17. And we read of the first-fruits of honey brought to the house of God, 2Ch 31:5.

2. A meat-offering of their first-fruits. The former was required by the law; this was a free-will offering, Le 2:14-16. If a man, with a thankful sense of God's goodness to him in giving him hopes of a plentiful crop, was disposed to bring an offering in kind immediately out of his field, and present

it to God, owning thereby his dependence upon God and obligations to him,

(1.) Let him be sure to bring the first ripe and full ears, not such as were small and half-withered. Whatever was brought for an offering to God must be the best in its kind, though it were but green ears of corn. We mock God, and deceive ourselves, if we think to put him off with a corrupt thing while we have in our flock a male, Mal 1:14.

(2.) These green ears must be dried by the fire, that the corn, such as it was, might be beaten out of them. That is not expected from green ears which one may justly look for from those that have been left to grow fully ripe. If those that are young do God's work as well as they can, they shall be accepted, though they cannot do it so well as those that are aged and experienced. God makes the best of green ears of corn, and so must we.

(3.) Oil and frankincense must be put upon it. Thus (as some allude to this) wisdom and humility must soften and sweeten the spirits and services of young people, and then their green ears of corn shall be acceptable. God takes a particular delight in the first ripe fruits of the Spirit and the expressions of early piety and devotion. Those that can but think and speak as children, yet, if they think and speak well, God will be well pleased with their buds and blossoms, and will never forget the kindness of their youth.

(4.) It must be used as other meat-offerings, Le 2:16, compare Le 2:9. He shall offer all the frankincense; it is an offering made by fire. The fire and the frankincense seem to have had a special significancy.

[1.] The fire denotes the fervency of spirit which ought to be in all our religious services. In every good thing we must be zealously affected. Holy love to God is the fire by which all our offerings must be made; else they are not of a sweet savour to God.

[2.] The frankincense denotes the mediation and intercession of Christ, by which all our services are perfumed and recommended to God's gracious acceptance. Blessed be God that we have the substance of which all these observances were but shadows, the fruit that was hid under these leaves.

15 And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon: it *is* a meat offering.

16 And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, *part* of the beaten corn thereof, and *part* of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: *it is* an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

Leviticus-3

Peace Offerings

The burnt-offerings had regard to God as in himself the best of beings, most perfect and excellent; they were purely expressive of adoration, and therefore were wholly burnt. But the peace-offerings had regard to God as a benefactor to his creatures, and the giver of all good things to us; and therefore these were divided between the altar, the priest, and the owner. Peace signifies,

1. Reconciliation, concord, and communion. And so these were called peace-offerings, because in them God and his people did, as it were, feast together, in token of friendship. The priest, who was ordained for men in things pertaining to God, gave part of this peace-offering to God (that part which

he required, and it was fit he should be first served), burning it upon God's altar; part he gave to the offerer, to be eaten by him with his family and friends; and part he took to himself, as the days-man that laid his hand upon them both. They could not thus eat together unless they were agreed; so that it was a symbol of friendship and fellowship between God and man, and a confirmation of the covenant of peace.

2. It signifies prosperity and all happiness: Peace be to you was as much as, All good be to you; and so the peace-offerings were offered either,

(1.) By way of supplication or request for some good that was wanted and desired. If a man was in the pursuit or expectation of any mercy, he would back his prayer for it with a peace-offering, and probably put up the prayer when he laid his hand upon the head of his offering. Christ is our peace, our peace-offering; for through him alone it is that we can expect to obtain mercy, and an answer of peace to our prayers; and in him an upright prayer shall be acceptable and successful, though we bring not a peace-offering. The less costly our devotions are the more lively and serious they should be. Or,

(2.) By way of thanksgiving for some particular mercy received. It is called a peace-offering of thanksgiving, for so it was sometimes; as in other cases a vow, Le 7:15,16. And some make the original word to signify retribution. When they had received any special mercy, and were enquiring what they should render, this they were directed to render to the God of their mercies as a grateful acknowledgment for the benefit done to them, Ps 116:12. And we must offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually, by Christ our peace; and then this shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. Observe,

1 And if his oblation *be* a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offer *it* of the herd, whether *it be* a male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord.

As to the matter of the peace-offering, suppose it was of the herd, it must be without blemish; and, if it was so, it was indifferent whether it was male or female, Le 3:1. In our spiritual offerings, it is not the sex, but the heart, that God looks at, Ga 3:28.

2 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about.

As to the management of it.

1 The offerer was, by a solemn manumission, to transfer his interest in it to God (Le 3:2), and, with his hand on the head of the sacrifice, to acknowledge the particular mercies for which he designed this a thank-offering, or, if it was a vow, to make his prayer.

2. It must be killed; and, although this might be done in any part of the court, yet it is said to be at the door of the tabernacle, because the mercies received or expected were acknowledged to come from God, and the prayers or praises were directed to him, and both, as it were, through that door. Our Lord Jesus has said, I am the door, for he is indeed the door of the tabernacle.

3. The priest must sprinkle the blood upon the altar, for it was the blood that made atonement for the soul; and, though this was not a sin-offering, yet we must be taught that in all our offerings we must have an eye to Christ as the propitiation for sin, as those who know that the best of their services cannot be accepted unless through him their sins be pardoned. Penitent confessions must always go along with

our thankful acknowledgments; and, whatever mercy we pray for, in order to it we must pray for the removal of guilt, as that which keeps good things from us. First take away all iniquity, and then receive us graciously, or give good, Ho 14:2.

3 And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the Lord; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that *is* upon the inwards,

All the fat of the inwards, that which we call the tallow and suet, with the caul that encloses it and the kidneys in the midst of it, were to be taken away, and burnt upon the altar, as an offering made by fire, Le 3:3-5. And this was all that was sacrificed to the Lord out of the peace-offering; how the rest was to be disposed of we shall find, Le 7:11-34, &c. It is ordered to be burnt upon the burnt-sacrifice, that is, the daily burnt-offering, the lamb which was offered every morning before any other sacrifice was offered; so that the fat of the peace-offerings was an addition to that, and a continuation of it. The great sacrifice of peace, that of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, prepares the altar for our sacrifices of praise, which are not accepted till we are reconciled. Now the burning of this fat is supposed to signify,

(1.) The offering up of our good affections to God in all our prayers and praises. God must have the inwards; for we must pour out our souls, and lift up our hearts, in prayer, and must bless his name with all that is within us. It is required that we be inward with God in every thing wherein we have to do with him. The fat denotes the best and choicest, which must always be devoted to God, who has made for us a feast of fat things.

(2.) The mortifying of our corrupt affections and lusts, and the burning up of them by the fire of divine grace, Col 3:5.

Then we are truly thankful for former mercies, and prepared to receive further mercy, when we part with our sins, and have our minds cleared from all sensuality by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, Isa 4:4.

4 and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* on them, which *is* by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.

5 And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which *is* upon the wood that *is* on the fire: *it is* an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

6 And if his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering unto the Lord *be* of the flock, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish.

Directions are here given concerning the peace-offering, if it was a sheep or a goat. Turtle-doves or young pigeons, which might be brought for whole burnt offerings, were not allowed for peace-offerings, because they have no fat considerable enough to be burnt upon the altar; and they would be next to nothing if they were to be divided according to the law of the peace-offerings. The laws concerning a lamb or goat offered for a peace offering are much the same with those concerning a bullock, and little now occurs here; but, 1 The rump of the mutton was to be burnt with the fat of the inwards upon the altar, the whole rump (Le 3:9), because in those countries it was very fat and large. Some observe from this that, be a thing ever so contemptible, God can make it honourable, by applying it to his service. Thus God is said to give more abundant honour to that part which lacked, 1Co 12:23,24.

7 If he offer a lamb for his offering, then shall he offer it before the Lord.

8 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle the blood thereof round about upon the altar.

9 And he shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire unto the Lord; the fat thereof, *and* the whole rump, it shall he take off hard by the backbone; and the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that *is* upon the inwards,

10 and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* upon them, which *is* by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.

11 And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: *it is* the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord.

That which was burnt upon the altar is called the food of the offering, Le 3:11,16. It fed the holy fire; it was acceptable to God as our food is to us; and since in the tabernacle God did, as it were, keep house among them, by the offerings on the altar he kept a good table, as Solomon in his court, 1Ki 4:22-28, &c.

12 And if his offering *be* a goat, then he shall offer it before the Lord.

13 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of it, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle the blood thereof upon the altar round about.

14 And he shall offer thereof his offering, *even* an offering made by fire unto the Lord; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that *is* upon the inwards,

15 and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* upon them, which *is* by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.

16 And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: *it is* the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savor: all the fat *is* the Lord's.

Here is a general rule laid down, that all the fat is the Lord's (Le 3:16), and a law made thereupon, that they should eat neither fat nor blood, no, not in their private houses, Le 3:17.

(1.) As for the fat, it is not meant of that which is interlarded with the meat (that they might eat, Neh 8:10), but the fat of the inwards, the suet, which was always God's part out of the sacrificed beasts; and therefore they must not eat of it, no, not out of the beasts that they killed for their common use. Thus would God preserve the honour of that which was sacred to himself. They must not only not feed upon that fat which was to be the food of the altar, but not upon any like it, lest the table of the Lord (as the altar is called), if

something were not reserved peculiar to it, should become contemptible, and the fruit thereof, even its meat, contemptible, Mal 1:7,12.

(2.) The blood was universally forbidden likewise, for the same reason that the fat was, because it was God's part of every sacrifice. The heathen drank the blood of their sacrifices; hence we read of their drink-offerings of blood, Ps 16:4.

But God would not permit the blood, that made atonement, to be used as a common thing (Heb 10:29), nor will he allow us, though we have the comfort of the atonement made, to assume to ourselves any share in the honour of making it. He that glories, let him glory in the Lord, and to his praise let all the blood be poured out.

17 *It shall be* a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.

Leviticus-4

Sin Offerings

The laws contained in the first three chapters seem to have been delivered to Moses at one time. Here begin the statutes of another session, another day. From the throne of glory between the cherubim God delivered these orders. And he enters now upon a subject more strictly new than those before. Burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, and peace-offerings, it should seem, had been offered before the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; those sacrifices the patriarchs had not been altogether unacquainted with (Ge 8:20,Ex 20:24), and in them they had respect to sin, to make atonement for it, Job 1:5. But the law being now added

because of transgressions (Ga 3:19), and having entered, that eventually the offence might abound (Ro 5:20), they were put into a way of making atonement for sin more particularly by sacrifice, which was (more than any of the ceremonial institutions) a shadow of good things to come, but the substance is Christ, and that one offering of himself by which he put away sin and perfected for ever those who are sanctified.

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord *concerning things* which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them:

The general case supposed we have, Le 4:2. Here observe, 1. Concerning sin in general, that it is described to be against any of the commandments of the Lord; for sin is the transgression of the law, the divine law. The wits or wills of men, their inventions or their injunctions, cannot make that to be sin which the law of God has not made to be so. It is said likewise, if a soul sin, for it is not sin if it be not some way or other the soul's act; hence it is called the sin of the soul (Mic 6:7), and it is the soul that is injured by it, Pr 8:36. 2. Concerning the sins for which those offerings were appointed.

(1.) They are supposed to be overt acts; for, had they been required to bring a sacrifice for every sinful thought or word, the task had been endless. Atonement was made for those in the gross, on the day of expiation, once a year; but these are said to be done against the commandments.

(2.) They are supposed to be sins of commission, things which ought not to be done. Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment; but what had been omitted at one time

might be done at another, and so to obey was better than sacrifice: but a commission was past recall.

(3.) They are supposed to be sins committed through ignorance. If they were done presumptuously, and with an avowed contempt of the law and the Law-maker, the offender was to be cut off, and there remained no sacrifice for the sin, Heb 10:26,27,Nu 15:30. But if the offender were either ignorant of the law, as in divers instances we may suppose many were (so numerous and various were the prohibitions), or were surprised into the sin unawares, the circumstances being such as made it evident that his resolution against the sin was sincere, but that he was overtaken in it, as the expression is (Ga 6:1), in this case relief was provided by the remedial law of the sin-offering. And the Jews say, "Those crimes only were to be expiated by sacrifice, if committed ignorantly, for which the criminal was to have been cut off if they had been committed presumptuously."

3 if the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the Lord for a sin offering.

The law begins with the case of the anointed priest, that is, the high priest, provided he should sin through ignorance; for the law made men priests who had infirmity. Though his ignorance was of all others least excusable, yet he was allowed to bring his offering. His office did not so far excuse his offence as that it should be forgiven him without a sacrifice; yet it did not so far aggravate it but that it should be forgiven him when he did bring his sacrifice. If he sin according to the sin of the people (so the case is put, Le 4:3), which supposes him in this matter to stand upon the level with other Israelites, and to have no benefit of his clergy at all. Now the law concerning the sin-offering for the high priest is,

That he must bring a bullock without blemish for a sin-offering (Le 4:3), as valuable an offering as that for the whole congregation (Le 4:14); whereas for any other ruler, or a common person, a kid of the goats should serve, Le 4:23,28. This intimated the greatness of the guilt connected with the sin of a high priest. The eminency of his station, and his relation both to God and to the people, greatly aggravated his offences; see Ro 2:21.

4 And he shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the Lord.

The hand of the offerer must be laid upon the head of the offering (Le 4:4), with a solemn penitent confession of the sin he had committed, putting it upon the head of the sin-offering, Le 16:21. No remission without confession, Ps 32:5,Pr 28:13. It signified also a confidence in this instituted way of expiating guilt, as a figure of something better yet to come, which they could not stedfastly discern. He that laid his hand on the head of the beast thereby owned that he deserved to die himself, and that it was God's great mercy that he would please to accept the offering of this beast to die for him. The Jewish writers themselves say that neither the sin-offering nor the trespass-offering made atonement, except for those that repented and believed in their atonement.

5 And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation:

6 and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary.

The bullock must be killed, and a great deal of solemnity there must be in disposing of the blood; for it was the blood that made atonement, and without shedding of blood there was no remission, Le 4:5-7. Some of the blood of the high-priest's sin-offering was to be sprinkled seven times before the veil, with an eye towards the mercy-seat, though it was veiled: some of it was to be put upon the horns of the golden

altar, because at that altar the priest himself ministered; and thus was signified the putting away of that pollution which from his sins did cleave to his services. It likewise serves to illustrate the influence which Christ's satisfaction has upon the prevalency of his intercession. The blood of his sacrifice is put upon the altar of his incense and sprinkled before the Lord. When this was done the remainder of the blood was poured at the foot of the brazen altar. By this rite, the sinner acknowledged that he deserved to have his blood thus poured out like water. It likewise signified the pouring out of the soul before God in true repentance, and typified our Saviour's pouring out his soul unto death.

7 And the priest shall put *some* of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which *is at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

8 And he shall take off from it all the fat of the bullock for the sin offering; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that *is* upon the inwards,

9 and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* upon them, which *is* by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away,

The fat of the inwards was to be burnt upon the altar of burnt-offering, Le 4:8-10. By this the intention of the offering and of the atonement made by it was directed to the glory of God, who, having been dishonoured by the sin, was thus honoured by the sacrifice. It signified the sharp sufferings of our Lord Jesus, when he was made sin (that is, a sin-offering) for us, especially the sorrows of his soul and his inward agonies. It likewise teaches us, in conformity to the death of Christ, to crucify the flesh.

10 as it was taken off from the bullock of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall burn them upon the altar of the burnt offering.

11 And the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, with his head, and with his legs, and his inwards, and his dung,

12 even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto
a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the
wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt.

The head and body of the beast, skin and all, were to be carried without the camp, to a certain place appointed for that purpose, and there burnt to ashes, Le 4:11,12. This was very significant,

(1.) Of the duty of repentance, which is the putting away of sin as a detestable thing, which our soul hates. True penitents say to their idols, "Get you hence; what have we to do any more with idols?" The sin-offering is called sin. What they did to that we must do to our sins; the body of sin must be destroyed, Ro 6:6.

(2.) Of the privilege of remission. When God pardons sin he quite abolishes it, casts it behind his back. The iniquity of Judah shall be sought for and not found. The apostle takes particular notice of this ceremony, and applies it to Christ (Heb 13:11-13), who suffered without the gate, in the place of a skull, where the ashes of dead men, as those of the altar, were poured out.

13 And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance,
and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have
done *somewhat against* any of the commandments of the Lord
concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty;
14 when the sin, which they have sinned against it, is known, then the
congregation shall offer a young bullock for the sin, and bring him
before the tabernacle of the congregation.
15 And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the
head of the bullock before the Lord; and the bullock shall be killed
before the Lord.

This is the law for expiating the guilt of a national sin, by a sin offering. If the leaders of the people, through mistake concerning the law, caused them to err, when the mistake was discovered an offering must be brought, that wrath might not come upon the whole congregation. Observe,

1. It is possible that the church may err, and that her guides may mislead her. It is here supposed that the whole congregation may sin, and sin through ignorance. God will always have a church on earth; but he never said it should be infallible, or perfectly pure from corruption on this side heaven.

2. When a sacrifice was to be offered for the whole congregation, the elders were to lay their hands upon the head of it (three of them at least), as representatives of the people and agents for them. The sin we suppose to have been some common custom, taken up and used by the generality of the people, upon presumption of its being lawful, which afterwards, upon search, appeared to be otherwise. In this case the commonness of the usage received perhaps by tradition from their fathers, and the vulgar opinion of its being lawful, would not so far excuse them from sin but that they must bring a sacrifice to make atonement for it. There are many bad customs and forms of speech which are thought to have no harm in them, and yet may bring guilt and wrath upon a land, which therefore it concerns the elders both to reform and to intercede with God for the pardon of, Joe 2:16.

16 And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to
the tabernacle of the congregation:
17 and the priest shall dip his finger in *some* of the blood, and sprinkle
it seven times before the Lord, *even* before the veil.

The blood of this sin-offering, as of the former, was to be sprinkled seven times before the Lord, Le 4:17. It was not to be poured out there, but sprinkled only; for the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ was then and still is sufficiently signified and represented by sprinkling, Isa 52:15. It was to be sprinkled seven times. Seven is a number of perfection, because when God had made the world in six days he rested the seventh; so this signified the perfect satisfaction Christ made, and the complete cleansing of the souls of the faithful

by it; see Heb 10:14. The blood was likewise to be put upon the horns of the incense-altar, to which there seems to be an allusion in Jer 17:1, where the sin of Judah is said to be graven upon the horns of their altars. If they did not forsake their sins, the putting of the blood of their sin-offerings upon the horns of their altars, instead of taking away their guilt, did but bind it on the faster, perpetuated the remembrance of it, and remained a witness against them. It is likewise alluded to in Re 9:13, where a voice is heard from the four horns of the golden altar; that is, an answer of peace is given to the prayers of the saints, which are acceptable and prevalent only by virtue of the blood of the sin-offering put upon the horns of that altar; compare Re 8:3.

18 And he shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar which *is* before the Lord, that *is* in the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall pour out all the blood at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which *is at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

19 And he shall take all his fat from him, and burn *it* upon the altar.

20 And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

When the offering is completed, it is said, atonement is made, and the sin shall be forgiven, Le 4:20. The promise of remission is founded upon the atonement. It is spoken here of the forgiveness of the sin of the whole congregation, that is, the turning away of those national judgments which the sin deserved. Note, The saving of churches and kingdoms from ruin is owing to the satisfaction and mediation of Christ.

21 And he shall carry forth the bullock without the camp, and burn him as he burned the first bullock: it *is* a sin offering for the congregation.

22 When a ruler hath sinned, and done *somewhat* through ignorance *against* any of the commandments of the Lord his God *concerning things* which should not be done, and is guilty;

23 or if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; he
shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish:
24 and he shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat, and kill it in
the place where they kill the burnt offering before the Lord: it *is* a
sin offering.

Observe here,

1. That God takes notice of and is displeased with the sins of rulers. Those who have power to call others to account are themselves accountable to the ruler of rulers; for, as high as they are, there is a higher than they. This is intimated in that the commandment transgressed is here said to be the commandment of the Lord his God, Le 4:22. He is a prince to others, but let him know the Lord is a God to him.

2 The sin of the ruler which he committed through ignorance is supposed afterwards to come to his knowledge (Le 4:23), which must be either by the check of his own conscience or by the reproof of his friends, both which we should all, even the best and greatest, not only submit to, but be thankful for. What we have done amiss we should be very desirous to come to the knowledge of. That which I see not, teach thou me, and show me wherein I have erred, are prayers we should put up to God every day, that though through ignorance we fall into sin we may not through ignorance lie still in it.

3. The sin-offering for a ruler was to be a kid of the goats, not a bullock, as for the priest and the whole congregation; nor was the blood of his sin-offering to be brought into the tabernacle, as of the other two, but it was all bestowed upon the brazen altar (Le 4:25); nor was the flesh of it to be burnt, as that of the other two, without the camp, which intimated that the sin of a ruler, though worse than that of a common person, yet was not so heinous, nor of such pernicious consequence, as the sin of the high priest, or of the whole congregation. A kid of the goats was sufficient to be offered

for a ruler, but a bullock for a tribe, to intimate that the ruler, though major singulis--greater than each, was minor universis--less than the whole. It is bad when great men give bad examples, but worse when all men follow them.

4. It is promised that the atonement shall be accepted and the sin forgiven (Le 4:26), that is, if he repent and reform; for otherwise God swore concerning Eli, a judge in Israel, that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, 1Sa 3:14.

25 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out his blood at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering.

26 And he shall burn all his fat upon the altar, as the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings: and the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.

27 And if any one of the common people sin through ignorance, while he doeth *somewhat against* any of the commandments of the Lord *concerning things* which ought not to be done, and be guilty;

Here is the law of the sin-offering for a common person, which differs from that for a ruler only in this, that a private person might bring either a kid or a lamb, a ruler only a kid; and that for a ruler must be a male, for the other a female: in all the circumstances of the management of the offering they agreed. Observe,

1 The case supposed: If any one of the common people sin through ignorance, Le 4:27. The prophet supposes that they were not so likely as the great men to know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God (Jer 5:4), and yet, if they sin through ignorance, they must bring a sin-offering.

Note, Even sins of ignorance need to be atoned for by sacrifice. To be able to plead, when we are charged with sin, that we did it ignorantly, and through the surprise of

temptation, will not bring us off if we be not interested in that great plea, Christ hath died, and entitled to the benefit of that. We have all need to pray with David (and he was a ruler) to be cleansed from secret faults, the errors which we ourselves do not understand or are not aware of, Ps 19:12.

2. That the sins of ignorance committed by a single person, a common obscure person, did require a sacrifice; for, as the greatest are not above the censure, so the meanest are not below the cognizance of the divine justice. None of the common people, if offenders, were overlooked in a crowd.

3. That a sin-offering was not only admitted, but accepted, even from one of the common people, and an atonement made by it, Le 4:31,35. Here rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together; they are both alike welcome to Christ, and to an interest in his sacrifice, upon the same terms. See Job 34:19.

28 or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge; then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned.

29 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slay the sin offering in the place of the burnt offering.

30 And the priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar.

31 And he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat is taken away from off the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn *it* upon the altar for a sweet savor unto the Lord; and the priest shall make an atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

32 And if he bring a lamb for a sin offering, he shall bring it a female without blemish.

33 And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering, and slay it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering.

34 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar:

From all these laws concerning the sin-offerings we may learn,

1. To hate sin, and to watch against it. That is certainly a very bad thing to make atonement for which so many innocent and useful creatures must be slain and mangled thus.

2. To value Christ, the great and true sin-offering, whose blood cleanses from all sin, which it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away. Now, if any man sin, Christ is the propitiation (1Jo 2:1,2), not for Jews only, but for Gentiles. And perhaps there was some allusion to this law concerning sacrifices for sins of ignorance in that prayer of Christ's, just when he was offering up himself a sacrifice, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

35 and he shall take away all the fat thereof, as the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of the peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them upon the altar, according to the offerings made by fire unto the Lord: and the priest shall make an atonement for his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

Leviticus-5

1 And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and *is* a witness, whether he hath seen or known *of it;* if he do not utter *it,* then he shall bear his iniquity.

The offences here supposed are, a man's concealing the truth when he was sworn as a witness to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Judges among the Jews had power to adjure not only the witnesses, as with us, but the person suspected (contrary to a rule of our law, that no man is bound to accuse himself), as appears by the high priest adjuring our Saviour, who thereupon answered, though

before he stood silent, Mt 26:63,64. Now (Le 5:1), If a soul sin (that is, a person, for the soul is the man), if he hear the voice of swearing (that is, if he be adjured to testify what he knows, by an oath of the Lord upon him, 1Ki 8:31), if in such a case, for fear of offending one that either has been his friend or may be his enemy, he refuses to give evidence, or gives it but in part, he shall bear his iniquity. And that is a heavy burden, which, if some course be not taken to get it removed, will sink a man to the lowest hell. He that heareth cursing (that is, that is thus adjured) and betrayeth it not (that is, stifles his evidence, and does not utter it), he is a partner with the sinner, and hateth his own soul; see Pr 29:24. Let all that are called out at any time to bear testimony think of this law, and be free and open in their evidence, and take heed of prevaricating. An oath of the Lord is a sacred thing, and not to be dallied with.

2 Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether *it be* a carcass of an unclean beast, or a carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and *if* it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty.

A man's touching any thing that was ceremonially unclean, Le 5:2,3. If a man, polluted by such touch, came into the sanctuary inconsiderately, or if he neglected to wash himself according to the law, then he was to look upon himself as under guilt, and must bring his offering. Though his touching the unclean thing contracted only a ceremonial defilement, yet his neglect to wash himself according to the law was such an instance either of carelessness or contempt as contracted a moral guilt. If at first it be hidden from him, yet when he knows it he shall be guilty. Note, As soon as ever God by his Spirit convinces our consciences of any sin or duty we must immediately set in with the conviction, and prosecute it, as those that are not ashamed to own our former mistake.

3 Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness *it be* that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth *of it,* then he shall be guilty.

4 Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with *his* lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever *it be* that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth *of it,* then he shall be guilty in one of these.

Rash swearing. If a man binds himself by an oath that he will do or not do such a thing, and the performance of his oath afterwards proves either unlawful or impracticable, by which he is discharged from the obligation, yet he must bring an offering to atone for his fully in swearing so rashly, as David that he would kill Nabal. And then it was that he must say before the angel that it was an error, Ec 5:6. He shall be guilty in one of these (Le 5:4), guilty if he do not perform his oath, and yet, if the matter of it were evil, guilty if he do. Such wretched dilemmas as these do some men bring themselves into by their own rashness and folly; go which way they will their consciences are wounded, sin stares them in the face, so sadly are they snared in the words of their mouth. A more sad dilemma this is than that of the lepers, "If we sit still, we die; if we stir, we die." Wisdom and watchfulness beforehand would prevent these straits.

5 And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these *things,* that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that *thing:*

Now in these cases,

1 The offender must confess his sin and bring his offering (Le 5:5,6); and the offering was not accepted unless it was accompanied with a penitential confession and a humble prayer for pardon. Observe, The confession must be particular, that he hath sinned in that thing; such was David's confession (Ps 51:4), I have done this evil; and Achan's (Jos 7:20), Thus and thus have I done. Deceit lies in generals; many will own in general they have sinned, for that all must own, so that it is not any particular reproach to them; but that they have sinned in this thing they stand too much upon their honour to acknowledge: but the way to be well assured of pardon, and to be well armed against sin for the future, is to be particular in our penitent confessions.

2 The priest must make atonement for him. As the atonement was not accepted without his repentance, so his repentance would not justify him without the atonement. Thus, in our reconciliation to God, Christ's part and ours are both needful.

6 and he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord for his sin which he hath sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb, or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin.

7 And if he be not able to bring a lamb, then he shall bring for his trespass, which he hath committed, two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, unto the Lord ; one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering.

8 And he shall bring them unto the priest, who shall offer *that* which *is* for the sin offering first, and wring off his head from his neck, but shall not divide *it* asunder:

Provision is here made for the poor of God's people, and the pacifying of their consciences under the sense of guilt. Those that were not able to bring a lamb might bring for a sin-offering a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons; nay, if any were so extremely poor that they were not able to procure these so often as they would have occasion, they might bring a pottle of fine flour, and this should be accepted. Thus the expense of the sin-offering was brought lower than that of any other offering, to teach us that no man's poverty shall ever be a bar in the way of his pardon. The poorest of all may have atonement made for them, if it be not their own fault. Thus the poor are evangelized; and no man shall say that he had not wherewithal to bear the charges of a journey to heaven. Now,

I. If the sinner brought two doves, one was to be offered for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering, Le 5:7. Observe, 1. Before he offered the burnt-offering, which was for the honour and praise of God, he must offer the sin-

offering, to make atonement. We must first see to it that our peace be made with God, and then we may expect that our services for his glory will be accepted. The sin-offering must make way for the burnt-offering. 2. After the sin-offering, which made atonement, came the burnt-offering, as an acknowledgment of the great mercy of God in appointing and accepting the atonement.

II. If he brought fine flour, a handful of it was to be offered, but without either oil or frankincense (Le 5:11), not only because this would make it too costly for the poor, for whose comfort this sacrifice was appointed, but because it was a sin-offering, and therefore, to show the loathsomeness of the sin for which it was offered, it must not be made grateful either to the taste by oil or to the smell by frankincense. The unsavouriness of the offering was to intimate that the sinner must never relish his sin again as he had done. God by these sacrifices did speak, 1. Comfort to those that had offended, that they might not despair, nor pine away in their iniquity; but, peace being thus made for them with God, they might have peace in him. 2. Caution likewise not to offend any more, remembering what an expensive troublesome thing it was to make atonement.

9 and he shall sprinkle of the blood of the sin offering upon the side
of the altar; and the rest of the blood shall be wrung out at the
bottom of the altar: it *is* a sin offering.
10 And he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the
manner: and the priest shall make an atonement for him for his
sin which he hath sinned, and it shall be forgiven him.
11 But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young
pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth
part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil
upon it, neither shall he put *any* frankincense thereon: for it *is* a sin
offering.
12 Then shall he bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his
handful of it, *even* a memorial thereof, and burn *it* on the altar,

according to the offerings made by fire unto the Lord: it *is* a sin offering.

13 And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him: and *the remnant* shall be the priest's, as a meat offering.

Trespass Offerings

14 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

15 If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering:

16 and he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

Hitherto in this chapter orders were given concerning those sacrifices that were both sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, for they go by both names, Le 5:6. Here we have the law concerning those that were properly and peculiarly trespass-offerings, which were offered to atone for trespasses done against a neighbour, those sins we commonly call trespasses. Now injuries done to another may be either in holy things or in common things; of the former we have the law in these verses; of the latter in the beginning of the next chapter. If a man did harm (as it is Le 5:16) in the holy things of the Lord, he thereby committed a trespass against the priests, the Lord's ministers, who were entrusted with the care of these holy things, and had the benefit of them. Now if a man did alienate or convert to his own use any thing that was dedicated to God, unwittingly, he was to bring this sacrifice; as suppose he had ignorantly made use of the tithes, or first-fruits, or first-born of his cattle, or (which, it should seem by Le 22:14-16, is principally meant here) had eaten any of those parts of the sacrifices which

were appropriated to the priests; this was a trespass. It is supposed to be done through mistake, or forgetfulness, for want either of care or zeal; for if it was done presumptuously, and in contempt of the law, the offender died without mercy, Heb 10:28. But in case of negligence and ignorance this sacrifice was appointed; and Moses is told,

1. What must be done in case the trespass appeared to be certain. The trespasser must bring an offering to the Lord, which, in all those that were purely trespass-offerings, must be a ram without blemish, "of the second year," say the Jewish doctors. He must likewise make restitution to the priest, according to a just estimation of the thing which he had so alienated, adding a fifth part to it, that he might learn to take more heed next time of embezzling what was sacred to God, finding to his cost that there was nothing got by it, and that he paid dearly for his oversights.

2. What must be done in case it were doubtful whether he had trespassed or no; he had cause to suspect it, but he wist it not (Le 5:17), that is, he was not very certain; in this case, because it is good to be sure, he must bring his trespass-offering, and the value of that which he feared he had embezzled, only he was not to add the fifth part to it. Now this was designed to show the very great evil there is in sacrilege. Achan, that was guilty of it presumptuously, died for it; so did Ananias and Sapphira. But this goes further to show the evil of it, that if a man had, through mere ignorance, and unwittingly, alienated the holy things, nay, if he did but suspect that he had done so, he must be at the expense, not only of a full restitution with interest, but of an offering, with the trouble of bringing it, and must take shame to himself, by making confession of it; so bad a thing is it to invade God's property, and so cautious should we be to abstain from all appearances of this evil. We are also taught

here to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to ask pardon for the sin, and make satisfaction for the wrong, which we do but suspect ourselves guilty of. In doubtful cases we should take and keep the safer side.

17 And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist *it* not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.

18 And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist *it* not, and it shall be forgiven him.

19 It *is* a trespass offering: he hath certainly trespassed against the Lord.

Leviticus-6

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

2 If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor;

The trespass supposed, Le 6:2,3. Though all the instances relate to our neighbour, yet it is called a trespass against the Lord, because, though the injury be done immediately to our neighbour, yet an affront is thereby given to his Maker and our Master. He that speaks evil of his brother is said to speak evil of the law, and consequently of the Law-maker, Jam 4:11. Though the person injured be ever so mean and despicable, and every way our inferior, yet the injury reflects upon that God who has made the command of loving our neighbour second to that of loving himself. The trespasses specified are,

1. Denying a trust: If a man lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or, which is worse, which was lent him for his use. If we claim that as our own which

is only borrowed, left in our custody, or committed to our care, this is a trespass against the Lord, who, for the benefit of human society, will have property and truth maintained.

2. Defrauding a partner: If a man lie in fellowship, claiming a sole interest in that wherein he has but a joint-interest.

3. Disowning a manifest wrong: If a man has the front to lie in a thing taken away by violence, which ordinarily cannot be hid. 4. Deceiving in commerce, or, as some think, by false accusation; if a man have deceitfully oppressed his neighbour, as some read it, either withholding what is due or extorting what is not. 5. Detaining what is found, and denying it (Le 6:3); if a man have found that which was lost, he must not call it his own presently, but endeavour to find out the owner, to whom it must be returned; this is doing as we would be done by: but he that lies concerning it, that falsely says he knows nothing of it, especially if he back this lie with a false oath, trespasseth against the Lord, who to every thing that is said is a witness, but in an oath he is the party appealed to, and highly affronted when he is called to witness to a lie.

3 or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and
swearetH falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning
therein:

4 then it shall be, because he hath sinned, and is guilty, that he shall
restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he
hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or
the lost thing which he found,

The trespass-offering appointed.

1. In the day of his trespass-offering he must make satisfaction to his brother. This must be first done if thy brother hath aught against thee: Because he hath sinned and is guilty, (Le 6:4,5), that is, is convicted of his guilt by his own conscience, and is touched with remorse for it; seeing himself guilty before God, let him faithfully restore all that

he has got by fraud or oppression, with a fifth part added, to make amends to the owner for the loss and trouble he had sustained in the mean time; let him account both for debt and damages.

Note, Where wrong has been done restitution must be made; and till it is made to the utmost of our power, or an equivalent accepted by the person wronged, we cannot have the comfort of the forgiveness of the sin; for the keeping of what is unjustly got avows the taking, and both together make but one continued act of unrighteousness. To repent is to undo what we have done amiss, which (whatever we pretend) we cannot be said to do till we restore what has been got by it, as Zaccheus (Lu 19:8), and make satisfaction for the wrong done.

2. He must then come and offer his gift, must bring his trespass-offering to the Lord whom he had offended; and the priest must make an atonement for him, Le 6:6,7. This trespass-offering could not, of itself, make satisfaction for sin, nor reconciliation between God and the sinner, but as it signified the atonement that was to be made by our Lord Jesus, when he should make his soul an offering or sin, a trespass-offering; it is the same word that is here used, Isa 53:10. The trespasses here mentioned are trespasses still against the law of Christ, which insists as much upon justice and truth as ever the law of nature or the law of Moses did; and though now we may have them pardoned without a trespass-offering, yet not without true repentance, restitution, reformation, and a humble faith in the righteousness of Christ: and, if any make the more bold with these sins because they are not now put to the expense of a trespass-offering for them, they turn the grace of God into wantonness, and so bring upon themselves a swift destruction. The Lord is the avenger of all such, 1Th 4:6.

5 or all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, *and*

give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.

6 And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering, unto the priest:

7 and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein.

The Law of the Offerings

8 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

9 Command Aaron and his sons, saying, this *is* the law of the burnt offering: It *is* the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it.

10 And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.

The priest must take care of the ashes of the burnt-offering, that they be decently disposed of, Le 6:10,11. He must clear the altar of them every morning, and put them on the east side of the altar, which was furthest from the sanctuary; this he must do in his linen garment, which he always wore when he did any service at the altar; and then he must shift himself, and put on other garments, either such as were his common wear, or (as some think) other priestly garments less honourable, and must carry the ashes into a clean place without the camp.

Now, 1. God would have this done, for the honour of his altar and the sacrifices that were burnt upon it. Even the ashes of the sacrifices must be preserved, to testify the regard God had to it; by the burnt-offering he was honoured, and

therefore thus it was honoured, and therefore thus it was honoured. And some think that this care which was taken of the ashes of the sacrifice typified the burial of our Saviour; his dead body (the ashes of his sacrifice) was carefully laid up in a garden, in a new sepulchre, which was a clean place. It was also requisite that the altar should be kept as clean as might be; the fire upon it would burn the better, and it is decent in a house to have a clean fire-side.

2. God would have the priests themselves to keep it so, to teach them and us to stoop to the meanest services for the honour of God and of his altar. The priest himself must not only kindle the fire, but clean the hearth, and carry out the ashes. God's servants must think nothing below them but sin.

11 And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place.

12 And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings.

The priest must take care of the fire upon the altar, that it be kept always burning. This is much insisted on here (Le 6:9,12), and this express law is given: The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar, it shall never go out, Le 6:13. We may suppose that no day passed without some extraordinary sacrifices, which were always offered between the morning and evening lamb; so that from morning to night the fire on the altar was kept up of course. But to preserve it all night unto the morning (Le 6:9) required some care. Those that keep good houses never let their kitchen fire go out; therefore God would thus give an instance of his good house-keeping. The first fire upon the altar came from heaven (Le 9:24), so that by keeping that up continually with a constant supply of fuel all their sacrifices throughout all their generations might be said to be consumed with that fire

from heaven, in token of God's acceptance. If, through carelessness, they should ever let it go out, they could not expect to have it so kindled again. Accordingly the Jews tell us that the fire never did go out upon the altar, till the captivity in Babylon. This is referred to Isa 31:9, where God is said to have his fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem. By this law we are taught to keep up in our minds a constant disposition to all acts of piety and devotion, an habitual affection to divine things, so as to be always ready to every good word and work. We must not only not quench the Spirit, but we must stir up the gift that is in us. Though we be not always sacrificing, yet we must keep the fire of holy love always burning; and thus we must pray always.

13 The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.

14 And this *is* the law of the meat offering: The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the Lord, before the altar.

15 And he shall take of it his handful, of the flour of the meat offering, and of the oil thereof, and all the frankincense which *is* upon the meat offering, and shall burn *it* upon the altar *for* a sweet savor, *even* the memorial of it, unto the Lord.

Only a handful of it was to be burnt upon the altar; all the rest was allowed to the priests for their food. The law of the burnt-offerings was such as imposed upon the priests a great deal of care and work, but allowed them little profit; for the flesh was wholly burnt, and the priests had nothing but the skin. But to make them amends the greatest part of the meat-offering was their own. The burning of a handful of it upon the altar (Le 6:15) was ordered before, Le 2:2,9. Here the remainder of it is consigned to the priests, the servants of God's house: I have given it unto them for their portion of my offerings, Le 6:17. Note,

(1.) It is the will of God that his ministers should be well provided for with food convenient; and what is given to them

he accepts as offered to himself, if it be done with a single eye.

(2.) All Christians, being spiritual priests, do themselves share in the spiritual sacrifices they offer. It is not God that is the gainer by them; the handful burnt upon the altar was not worth speaking of, in comparison with the priests' share; we ourselves are the gainers by our religious services. Let God have all the frankincense, and the priests shall have the flour and the oil; what we give to God the praise and glory of we may take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of.

16 And the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: with unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it.

17 It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it *unto them for* their portion of my offerings made by fire; it *is* most holy, as *is* the sin offering, and as the trespass offering.

The laws concerning the eating of it were,

(1.) That it must be eaten unleavened, Le 6:16. What was offered to God must have no leaven in it, and the priests must have it as the altar had it, and no otherwise. Thus must we keep the feasts of the Lord with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

(2.) It must be eaten in the court of the tabernacle (here called the holy place), in some room prepared by the side of the court for this purpose. It was a great crime to carry any of it out of the court. The very eating of it was a sacred rite, by which they were to honour God, and therefore it must be done in a religious manner, and with a holy reverence, which was preserved by confining it to the holy place.

(3.) The males only must eat of it, Le 6:18. Of the less holy things, as the first-fruits and tithes, and the shoulder and breasts of the peace-offerings, the daughters of the priests might eat, for they might be carried out of the court; but this was of the most holy things, which being to be eaten only in the tabernacle, the sons of Aaron only might eat of it.

(4.) The priests only that were clean might eat of it: Every one that toucheth them shall be holy, Le 6:18. Holy things for holy persons. Some read it, Every thing that toucheth it shall be holy: Al the furniture of the table on which these holy things were eaten must be appropriated to that use only, and never after used as common things.

18 All the males among the children of Aaron shall eat of it. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations concerning the offerings of the
Lord made by fire: every one that toucheth them shall be holy.
19 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
20 This *is* the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer unto the Lord in the day when he is anointed; the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a meat offering perpetual, half of it in the morning, and half thereof at night.
21 In a pan it shall be made with oil; *and when it is* baked, thou shalt bring it in: *and* the baked pieces of the meat offering shalt thou offer *for* a sweet savor unto the Lord.
22 And the priest of his sons that is anointed in his stead shall offer it: *it is* a statute for ever unto the Lord; it shall be wholly burnt.

As to the consecration meat-offering, which was offered for the priests themselves, it was to be wholly burnt, and none of it eaten, Le 6:23. It comes in here as an exception to the foregoing law. It should seem that this law concerning the meat-offering of initiation did not only oblige the high priest to offer it, and on that day only that he was anointed, and so for his successors in the day they were anointed; but the Jewish writers say that by this law every priest, on the day he first entered upon his ministry, was bound to offer this

meat-offering,--that the high priest was bound to offer it every day of his life, from the day in which he was anointed,--and that it was to be offered besides the meat-offering that attended the morning and evening sacrifice, because it is said here to be a meat-offering perpetual, Le 6:20. Josephus says, "The high priest sacrificed twice every day at his own charges, and this was his sacrifice." Note, Those whom God has advanced above others in dignity and power ought to consider that he expects more from them than from others, and should attend to every intimation of service to be done for him. The meat-offering of the priest was to be baked as if it were to be eaten, and yet it must be wholly burnt. Though the priest that ministered was to be paid for serving the people, yet there was no reason that he should be paid for serving the high priest, who was the father of the family of the priests, and whom therefore any priest should take a pleasure in serving gratis. Nor was it fit that the priests should eat of the offerings of a priest; for as the sins of the people were typically transferred to the priests, which was signified by their eating of their offerings (Ho 4:8), so the sins of the priests must be typically transferred to the altar, which therefore must eat up all their offerings. We are all undone, both ministers and people, if we must bear our own iniquity; nor could we have had any comfort or hope if God had not laid on his dear Son the iniquity of us all, and he is both the priest and the altar.

23 For every meat offering for the priest shall be wholly burnt: it shall
not be eaten.

24 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

25 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, this *is* the law of the sin
offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin
offering be killed before the Lord: it *is* most holy.

26 The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: in the holy place shall
it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation.

We have here so much of the law of the sin-offering as did peculiarly concern the priests that offered it. As,

1. That it must be killed in the place where the burnt-offering was killed (Le 6:25), that is, on the north side of the altar (Le 1:11), which, some think typified the crucifying of Christ on mount Calvary, which was on the north side of Jerusalem. 2. That the priest who offered it for the sinner was (with his sons, or other priests, Le 6:29) to eat the flesh of it, after the blood and fat had been offered to God, in the court of the tabernacle, Le 6:26. Hereby they were to bear the iniquity of the congregation, as it is explained, Le 10:17.

3. The blood of the sin-offering was with great reverence to be washed out of the clothes on which it happened to light (Le 6:27), which signified the awful regard we ought to have to the blood of Christ, not counting it a common thing; that blood must be sprinkled on the conscience, not on the raiment.

4. The vessel in which the flesh of the sin-offering was boiled must be broken if it were an earthen one, and, if a brazen one, well washed, Le 6:28. This intimated that the defilement was not wholly taken away by the offering, but did rather cleave to it, such was the weakness and deficiency of those sacrifices; but the blood of Christ thoroughly cleanses from all sin, and after it there needs no cleansing.

5. That all this must be understood of the common sin-offerings, not of those for the priest, or the body of the congregation, either occasional, or stated upon the day of atonement; for it had been before ordained, and was now ratified, that if the blood of the offering was brought into the holy place, as it was in those extraordinary cases, the flesh was not to be eaten, but burnt without the camp, Le 6:30. Hence the apostle infers the advantage we have under the gospel above what they had under the law; for though the

blood of Christ was brought into the tabernacle, to reconcile within the holy place, yet we have a right by faith to eat of the altar (Heb 13:10-12), and so to take the comfort of the great propitiation.

27 Whatsoever shall touch the flesh thereof shall be holy: and when
there is sprinkled of the blood thereof upon any garment, thou
shalt wash that whereon it was sprinkled in the holy place.
28 But the earthen vessel wherein it is sodden shall be broken: and if
it be sodden in a brazen pot, it shall be both scoured, and rinsed in
water.
29 All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it *is* most holy.
30 And no sin offering, whereof *any* of the blood is brought into the
tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile *withal* in the holy *place*,
shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire.

Leviticus-7

1 Likewise this *is* the law of the trespass offering: it *is* most holy.
2 In the place where they kill the burnt offering shall they kill the
trespass offering: and the blood thereof shall he sprinkle round
about upon the altar.
3 And he shall offer of it all the fat thereof; the rump, and the fat that
covereth the inwards,
4 and the two kidneys, and the fat that *is* on them, which *is* by the
flanks, and the caul *that is* above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall
he take away:
5 and the priest shall burn them upon the altar *for* an offering made
by fire unto the Lord: it *is* a trespass offering.

Observe here, concerning the trespass-offering, that, being much of the same nature with the sin-offering, it was to be governed by the same rules, Le 7:6. When the blood and fat were offered to God to make atonement, the priests were to eat the flesh, as that of the sin-offering, in the holy place. The Jews have a tradition (as we have it from the learned bishop Patrick) concerning the sprinkling of the blood of the trespass-offering round about upon the altar, "That there was

a scarlet line which went round about the altar exactly in the middle, and the blood of the burnt-offerings was sprinkled round about above the line, but that of the trespass-offerings and peace-offerings round about below the line." As to the flesh of the trespass-offering, the right to it belonged to the priest that offered it, Le 7:7. He that did the work must have the wages. This was an encouragement to the priests to give diligent attendance on the altar; the more ready and busy they were the more they got. Note, The more diligent we are in the services of religion the more we shall reap of the advantages of it. But any of the priests, and the males of their families, might be invited by him to whom it belonged to partake with him: Every male among the priests shall eat thereof, that is, may eat thereof, in the holy place, Le 7:6. And, no doubt, it was the usage to treat one another with those perquisites of their office, by which friendship and fellowship were kept up among the priests. Freely they had received, and must freely give. It seems the offerer was not himself to have any share of his trespass-offering, as he was to have of his peace-offering; but it was all divided between the altar and the priest. They offered peace-offerings in thankfulness for mercy, and then it was proper to feast; but they offered trespass-offerings in sorrow for sin, and then fasting was more proper, in token of holy mourning, and a resolution to abstain from sin.

6 Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: it shall be eaten in the holy place: it *is* most holy.

7 As the sin offering is, so *is* the trespass offering: *there is* one law for them: the priest that maketh atonement therewith shall have *it*.

8 And the priest that offereth any man's burnt offering, *even* the priest shall have to himself the skin of the burnt offering which he hath offered.

9 And all the meat offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the frying pan, and in the pan, shall be the priest's that offereth it.

Concerning the burnt-offering it is here appointed that the priest that offered it should have the skin (Le 7:8), which no

doubt he might make money of. "This" (the Jews say) "is meant only for the burnt-offerings which were offered by particular persons; for the profit of the skins of the daily burnt-offerings for the congregation went to the repair of the sanctuary." Some suggest that this appointment will help us to understand God's clothing our first parents with coats of skins, Ge 3:21. It is probable that the beasts whose skins they were offered in sacrifice as whole burnt-offerings, and that Adam was the priest that offered them; and then God gave him the skins, as his fee, to make clothes of for himself and his wife, in remembrance of which the skins ever after pertained to the priest; and see Ge 27:16. 3. Concerning the meat-offering, if it was dressed, it was fit to be eaten immediately; and therefore the priest that offered it was to have it, Le 7:9. If it was dry, there was not so much occasion for being in haste to use it; and therefore an equal dividend of it must be made among all the priests that were then in waiting, Le 7:10.

10 And every meat offering, mingled with oil, and dry, shall all the
sons of Aaron have, one *as much* as another.

11 And this *is* the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he
shall offer unto the Lord.

12 If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the
sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and
unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil,
of fine flour, fried.

13 Besides the cakes, he shall offer *for* his offering leavened bread with
the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings.

14 And of it he shall offer one out of the whole oblation *for* a heave
offering unto the Lord, *and* it shall be the priest's that sprinkleth
the blood of the peace offerings.

15 And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving
shall be eaten the same day that it is offered; he shall not leave any
of it until the morning.

16 But if the sacrifice of his offering *be* a vow, or a voluntary offering,
it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice; and on
the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten:

The nature and intention of the peace-offerings are here more distinctly opened. They were offered either,

1. In thankfulness for some special mercy received, such as recovery from sickness, preservation in a journey, deliverance at sea, redemption out of captivity, all which are specified in Ps 107:1-43, and for them men are called upon to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, Le 7:22. Or,

2. In performance of some vow which a man made when he was in distress (Le 7:16), and this was less honourable than the former, though the omission of it would have been more culpable. Or,

3. In supplication for some special mercy which a man was in the pursuit and expectation of, here called a voluntary offering. This accompanied a man's prayers, as the former did his praises. We do not find that men were bound by the law, unless they had bound themselves by vow, to offer these peace-offerings upon such occasions, as they were to bring their sacrifices of atonement in case of sin committed. Not but that prayer and praise are as much our duty as repentance is; but here, in the expressions of their sense of mercy, God left them more to their liberty than in the expressions of their sense of sin--to try the generosity of their devotion, and that their sacrifices, being free-will offerings, might be the more laudable and acceptable; and, by obliging them to bring the sacrifices of atonement, God would show the necessity of the great propitiation.

17 but the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall
be burnt with fire.
18 And if *any* of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten
at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be

imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.

19 And the flesh that toucheth any unclean *thing* shall not be eaten; it shall be burnt with fire: and as for the flesh, all that be clean shall eat thereof.

But the flesh, and those that eat it, must be pure.

(1.) The flesh must touch no unclean thing; if it did, it must not be eaten, but burnt, Le 7:19. If, in carrying it from the altar to the place where it was eaten, a dog touched it, or it touched a dead body or any other unclean thing, it was then unfit to be used in a religious feast. Every thing we honour the holy God with must be pure and carefully kept from all pollution. It is a case adjudged (Hag 2:12) that the holy flesh could not by its touch communicate holiness to what was common; but by this law it is determined that by the touch of that which was unclean it received pollution from it, which intimates that the infection of sin is more easily and more frequently communicated than the savour of grace.

(2.) It must not be eaten by any unclean person. When a person was upon any account ceremonially unclean it was at his peril if he presumed to eat of the flesh of the peace-offerings, Le 7:20,21. Holy things are only for holy persons; the holiness of the food being ceremonial, those were incapacitated to partake of it who lay under any ceremonial uncleanness; but we are hereby taught to preserve ourselves pure from all the pollutions of sin, that we may have the benefit and comfort of Christ's sacrifice, 1Pe 2:1,2. Our consciences must be purged from dead works, that we may be fit to serve the living God, Heb 9:14. But if any dare to partake of the table of the Lord under the pollution of sin unrepented of, and so profane sacred things, they eat and drink judgment to themselves, as those did that ate of the peace-offerings (Le 7:20) and again (Le 7:21), that they

pertain unto the Lord: whatever pertains to the Lord is sacred, and must be used with great reverence and not with unhallowed hands. "Be you holy, for God is holy, and you pertain to him."

20 But the soul that eateth *of* the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that *pertain* unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.

21 Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean *thing, as* the uncleanness of man, or *any* unclean beast, or any abominable unclean *thing*, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which pertain unto the Lord, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.

22 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

23 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, ye shall eat no manner of fat, of ox, or of sheep, or of goat.

The eating of blood and the fat of the inwards is here again prohibited; and the prohibition is annexed as before to the law of the peace-offerings, Le 3:17.

(1.) The prohibition of the fat seems to be confined to those beasts which were used for sacrifice, the bullocks, sheep, and goats: but of the roe-buck, the hart, and other clean beasts, they might eat the fat; for those only of which offerings were brought are mentioned here, Le 7:23-25. This was to preserve in their minds a reverence for God's altar, on which the fat of the inwards was burnt. The Jews say, "If a man eat so much as an olive of forbidden fat--if he do it presumptuously, he is in danger of being cut off by the hand of God--if ignorantly, he is to bring a sin-offering, and so to pay dearly for his carelessness." To eat of the flesh of that which died of itself, or was torn of beasts, was unlawful; but to eat of the fat of such was doubly unlawful, Le 7:24.

(2.) The prohibition of blood is more general (Le 7:26,27), because the fat was offered to God only by way of

acknowledgment, but the blood made atonement for the soul, and so typified Christ's sacrifice much more than the burning of the fat did; to this therefore a greater reverence must be paid, till these types had their accomplishment in the offering up of the body of Christ once for all. The Jews rightly expound this law as forbidding only the blood of the life, as they express it, not that which we call the gravy, for of that they supposed it was lawful to eat.

24 And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it.

25 For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, even the soul that eateth *it* shall be cut off from his people.

26 Moreover ye shall eat no manner of blood, *whether it be* of fowl or of beast, in any of your dwellings.

27 Whatsoever soul *it be* that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.

28 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

29 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace offerings unto the Lord, shall bring his oblation unto the Lord of the sacrifice of his peace offerings.

30 His own hands shall bring the offerings of the Lord made by fire, the fat with the breast; it shall he bring, that the breast may be waved *for* a wave offering before the Lord.

31 And the priest shall burn the fat upon the altar: but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'.

32 And the right shoulder shall ye give unto the priest for a heave offering of the sacrifices of your peace offerings.

The priest's share of the peace-offerings is here prescribed. Out of every beast that was offered for a peace-offering the priest that offered it was to have to himself the breast and the right shoulder, Le 7:30-34. Observe here,

(1.) That when the sacrifice was killed the offerer himself must, with his own hands, present God's part of it, that he

might signify thereby his cheerfully giving it up to God, and his desire that it might be accepted. He was with his own hands to lift it up, in token of his regard to God as the God of heaven, and then to wave it to and fro, in token of his regard to God as the Lord of the whole earth, to whom thus, as far as he could reach, he offered it, showing his readiness and wish to do him honour. Now that which was thus heaved and waved was the fat, and the breast, and the right shoulder, it was all offered to God; and then he ordered the fat to his altar, and the breast and shoulder to his priest, both being his receivers.

(2.) That when the fat was burnt the priest took his part, on which he and his family were to feast, as well as the offerer and his family. In holy joy and thanksgiving, it is good to have our ministers to go before us, and to be our mouth to God. The melody is sweet when he that sows and those that reap rejoice together. Some observe a significancy in the parts assigned to the priests: the breast and the shoulder intimate the affections and the actions, which must be devoted to the honour of God by all his people and to the service also of the church by all his priests. Christ, our great peace-offering, feasts all his spiritual priests with the breast and shoulder, with the dearest love and the sweetest and strongest supports; for his is the wisdom of God and the power of God. When Saul was designed for a king Samuel ordered the shoulder of the peace-offering to be set before him (1Sa 9:24), which gave him a hint of something great and sacred intended for him. Jesus Christ is our great peace-offering; for he made himself a sacrifice, not only to atone for sin, and so to save us from the curse, but to purchase a blessing for us, and all good. By our joyfully partaking of the benefits of redemption we feast upon the sacrifice, to signify which the Lord's supper was instituted.

33 He among the sons of Aaron, that offereth the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right shoulder for *his* part.

34 For the wave breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them unto Aaron the priest and unto his sons, by a statute for ever, from among the children of Israel.

35 This *is the portion* of the anointing of Aaron, and of the anointing of his sons, out of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, in the day *when* he presented them to minister unto the Lord in the priest's office;

Here is the conclusion of these laws concerning the sacrifices, though some of them are afterwards repeated and explained. They are to be considered,

1. As a grant to the priests, Le 7:35,36. In the day they were ordained to that work and office this provision was made for their comfortable maintenance. Note, God will take care that those who are employed for him be well paid and well provided for. Those that receive the anointing of the Spirit to minister unto the Lord shall have their portion, and it shall be a worthy portion, out of the offerings of the Lord; for God's work is its own wages, and there is a present reward of obedience in obedience.

2. As a statute for ever to the people, that they should bring these offerings according to the rules prescribed, and cheerfully give the priests their share out of them. God commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations, Le 7:38. Note, The solemn acts religious worship are commanded. They are not things that we are left to our liberty in, and which we may do or not do at our pleasure; but we are under indispensable obligations to perform them in their season, and it is at our peril if we omit them. The observance of the laws of Christ cannot be less necessary than the observance of the laws of Moses was.

36 which the Lord commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that he anointed them, *by* a statute for ever throughout their generations.

37 This *is* the law of the burnt offering, of the meat offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecrations, and of the sacrifice of the peace offerings;

38 which the Lord commanded Moses in Mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations unto the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai.

Leviticus-8

The Consecration of Aaron and His Sons

1 And the Lord Spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread;

The orders repeated. What was there commanded to be done is here commanded to be done now, Le 8:2,3. The tabernacle was newly set up, which, without the priests, would be as a candlestick without a candle; the law concerning sacrifices was newly given, but could not be observed without priests; for, though Aaron and his sons had been nominated to the office, they could not officiate, till they were consecrated, which yet must not be done till the place of their ministration was prepared, and the ordinances were instituted, that they might apply themselves to work as soon as ever they were consecrated, and might know that they were ordained, not only to the honour and profit, but to the business of the priesthood. Aaron and his sons were near relations to Moses, and therefore he would not consecrate them till he had further orders, lest he should seem too forward to bring honour into his family.

3 and gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

4 And Moses did as the Lord commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The congregation called together, at the door, that is, in the court of the tabernacle, Le 8:4. The elders and principal men of the congregation, who represented the body of the people, were summoned to attend; for the court would hold but a few of the many thousands of Israel. It was done thus publicly,

1. Because it was a solemn transaction between God and Israel; the priests were to be ordained for men in things pertaining to God, for the maintaining of a settled correspondence, and the negotiating of all affairs between the people and God; and therefore it was fit that both sides should appear, to own the appointment, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

2 The spectators of the solemnity could not but be possessed, by the sight of it, with a great veneration for the priests and their office, which was necessary among a people so wretchedly prone as these were to envy and discontent. It was strange that any of those who were witnesses of what was here done should afterwards say, as some of them did, You take too much upon you, you sons of Levi; but what would they have said if it had been done clandestinely?

Note, It is very fit, and of good use, that ministers should be ordained publicly, plebe praesente--in the presence of the common people, according to the usage of the primitive church.

5 And Moses said unto the congregation, This *is* the thing which the Lord commanded to be done.

The commission read, Le 8:5. Moses, who was God's representative in this solemnity, produced his orders before

the congregation: This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done. Though God had crowned him king in Jeshurun, when he made his face to shine in the sight of all Israel, yet he did not institute or appoint any thing in God's worship but what God himself had commanded. The priesthood he delivered to them was that which he had received from the Lord. Note, All that minister about holy things must have an eye to God's command as their rule and warrant; for it is only in the observance of this that they can expect to be owned and accepted of God. Thus we must be able to say, in all acts of religious worship, This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done.

6 And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water.

7 And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound *it* unto him therewith.

8 And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim.

The ceremony performed according to the divine ritual.

1. Aaron and his sons were washed with water (Le 8:6), to signify that they ought now to purify themselves from all sinful dispositions and inclinations, and ever after to keep themselves pure. Christ washes those from their sins in his own blood whom he makes to our God kings and priests (Re 1:5,6); and those that draw near to God must be washed in pure water, Heb 10:22. Though they were ever so clean before and no filth was to be seen upon them, yet they must be washed, to signify their purification from sin, with which their souls were polluted, how clean soever their bodies were.

2. They were clothed with the holy garments, Aaron with his (Le 8:7-9), which typified the dignity of Christ our great high priest, and his sons with theirs (Le 8:13), which typified the

decency of Christians, who are spiritual priests. Christ wears the breast-plate of judgment and the holy crown; for the church's high priest is her prophet and king. All believers are clothed with the robe of righteousness, and girt with the girdle of truth, resolution, and close application; and their heads are bound, as the word here is, with the bonnet or diadem of beauty, the beauty of holiness. 3. The high priest was anointed, and, it should seem, the holy things were anointed at the same time; some think that they were anointed before, but that the anointing of them is mentioned here because Aaron was anointed with the same oil with which they were anointed; but the manner of relating it here makes it more than probable that it was done at the same time, and that the seven days employed in consecrating the altar were coincident with the seven days of the priests' consecration. The tabernacle, and all its utensils, had some of the anointing oil put upon them with Moses's finger (Le 8:10), so had the altar (Le 8:11); these were to sanctify the gold and the gift (Mt 23:17-19), and therefore must themselves be thus sanctified; but he poured it out more plentifully upon the head of Aaron (Le 8:12), so that it ran down to the skirts of his garments, because his unction was to typify the anointing of Christ with the Spirit, which was not given by measure to him. Yet all believers also have received the anointing, which puts an indelible character upon them, 1Jo 2:27.

9 And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, *even* upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the Lord commanded Moses.

10 And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that *was* therein, and sanctified them.

11 And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them.

12 And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

13 And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them, and girded them with girdles, and put bonnets upon them; as the Lord commanded Moses.

14 And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering.

The covenant of priesthood must be made by sacrifice, as well as other covenants, Ps 50:5. And thus Christ was consecrated by the sacrifice of himself, once for all. Sacrifices of each kind must be offered for the priests, that they might with the more tenderness and concern offer the gifts and sacrifices of the people, with compassion on the ignorant, and on those that were out of the way, not insulting over those for whom sacrifices were offered, remembering that they themselves had had sacrifices offered for them, being compassed with infirmity. A bullock, the largest sacrifice, was offered for a sin-offering (Le 8:14), that hereby atonement might be made, and they might not bring any of the guilt of the sins of their former state into the new character they were now to put on. When Isaiah was sent to be a prophet, he was told to his comfort, Thy iniquity is taken away, Isa 6:7. Ministers, that are to declare the remission of sins to others, should give diligence to get it made sure to themselves in the first place that their own sins are pardoned. Those to whom is committed the ministry of reconciliation must first be reconciled to God themselves, that they may deal for the souls of others as for their own.

15 And he slew *it;* and Moses took the blood, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it.

16 And he took all the fat that *was* upon the inwards, and the caul *above* the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and Moses burned *it* upon the altar.

17 But the bullock, and his hide, his flesh, and his dung, he burnt with fire without the camp; as the Lord commanded Moses.

18 And he brought the ram for the burnt offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram.

19 And he killed *it;* and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about.

A ram was offered for a burnt-offering, Le 8:18-21. By this they gave to God the glory of this great honour which was now put upon them, and returned him praise for it, as Paul thanked Christ Jesus for putting him into the ministry, 1Ti 1:12. They also signified the devoting of themselves and all their services to the honour of God.

20 And he cut the ram into pieces; and Moses burnt the head, and the pieces, and the fat.

21 And he washed the inwards and the legs in water; and Moses burnt the whole ram upon the altar: it *was* a burnt sacrifice for a sweet savor, *and* an offering made by fire unto the Lord; as the Lord commanded Moses.

22 And he brought the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the ram.

Another ram, called the ram of consecration, was offered for a peace-offering, Le 8:22, &c. The blood of it was part put on the priests, on their ears, thumbs, and toes, and part sprinkled upon the altar; and thus he did (as it were) marry them to the altar, upon which they must all their days give attendance. All the ceremonies about this offering, as those before, were appointed by the express command of God; and, if we compare this chapter with Ex 29:1-46, we shall find that the performance of the solemnity exactly agrees with the precept there, and in nothing varies. Here, therefore, as in the account we had of the tabernacle and its vessels, it is again and again repeated, As the Lord commanded Moses. And thus Christ, when he sanctified himself with his own blood, had an eye to his Father's will in it. As the Father gave me commandment so I do, Joh 14:31,Joh 10:18,Joh 6:38.

23 And he slew *it;* and Moses took of the blood of it, and put *it* upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.

24 And he brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the
tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and
upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the
blood upon the altar round about.
25 And he took the fat, and the rump, and all the fat that *was* upon the
inwards, and the caul *above* the liver, and the two kidneys, and their
fat, and the right shoulder:
26 and out of the basket of unleavened bread, that *was* before the
Lord, he took one unleavened cake, and a cake of oiled bread, and
one wafer, and put *them* on the fat, and upon the right shoulder:
27 and he put all upon Aaron's hands, and upon his sons' hands, and
waved them *for* a wave offering before the Lord.
28 And Moses took them from off their hands, and burnt *them* on
the altar upon the burnt offering: they *were* consecrations for a
sweet savor: it *is* an offering made by fire unto the Lord.
29 And Moses took the breast, and waved it *for* a wave offering before
the Lord: *for* of the ram of consecration it was Moses' part; as the
Lord commanded Moses.
30 And Moses took of the anointing oil, and of the blood which *was*
upon the altar, and sprinkled *it* upon Aaron, *and* upon his
garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with
him; and sanctified Aaron, *and* his garments, and his sons, and his
sons' garments with him.
31 And Moses said unto Aaron and to his sons, Boil the flesh *at* the
door of the tabernacle of the congregation; and there eat it with
the bread that *is* in the basket of consecrations, as I commanded,
saying, Aaron and his sons shall eat it.

They must boil the flesh of their peace-offering, and eat it in the court of the tabernacle, and what remained they must burn with fire, Le 8:31,32. This signified their thankful consent to the consecration: when God gave Ezekiel his commission, he told him to eat the roll, Eze 3:1,2.

32 And that which remaineth of the flesh and of the bread shall
ye burn with fire.
33 And ye shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the
congregation *in* seven days, until the days of your consecration be
at an end: for seven days shall he consecrate you.

34 As he hath done this day, *so* the Lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you.

They must not stir out of the court of the tabernacle for seven days, Le 8:33. The priesthood being a good warfare, they must thus learn to endure hardness, and to disentangle themselves from the affairs of this life, 2Ti 2:3,4. Being consecrated to their service, they must give themselves wholly to it, and attend continually to this very thing. Thus Christ's apostles were appointed to wait for the promise of the Father, Ac 1:4. During this time appointed for their consecration, they were daily to repeat the same sacrifices which were offered the first day, Le 8:34. This shows the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, which, because they could not take away sin, were often repeated (Heb 10:1,2), but were here repeated seven times (a number of perfection), because they typified that one offering, which perfected for ever those that were sanctified. The work lasted seven days; for it was a kind of creation: and this time was appointed in honour of the sabbath, which, probably, was the last day of the seven, for which they were to prepare during the six days. Thus the time of our life, like the six days, must be our preparation for the perfection of our consecration to God in the everlasting sabbath: they attended day and night (Le 8:35), and so constant should we be in our meditation on God's law, Ps 1:2. They attended to keep the charge of the Lord: we have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to serve; and it must be our daily care to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord our Master, who will shortly call us to an account about it, and it is at our utmost peril if we neglect it. Keep it that you die not; it is death, eternal death, to betray the trust we are charged with; by the consideration of this we must be kept in awe. Lastly, We are told (Le 8:36) that Aaron and his sons did all that was commanded. Thus their consecration was completed; and thus they set an example before the people of an exact obedience to the laws of sacrifices now newly

given, and then they could with the better grace teach them. Thus the covenant of peace (Nu 25:12), of life and peace (Mal 2:5), was made with Aaron and his sons; but after all the ceremonies that were used in their consecration there was one point of ratification which was reserved to be the honour and establishment of Christ's priesthood, which was this, that they were made priests without an oath, but Christ with an oath (Heb 7:21), for neither such priests nor their priesthood could continue, but Christ's is a perpetual and unchangeable priesthood.

35 Therefore shall ye abide *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation day and night seven days, and keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not: for so I am commanded.

36 So Aaron and his sons did all things which the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

Gospel ministers are compared to those who served at the altar, for they minister about holy things (1Co 9:13), they are God's mouth to the people and the people's to God, the pastors and teachers Christ has appointed to continue in the church to the end of the world: they seem to be meant in that promise which points at gospel times (Isa 66:21), I will take of them for priests and for Levites. No man may take this honour to himself, but he who upon trial is found to be clothed and anointed by the Spirit of God with gifts and graces to qualify him for it, and who with purpose of heart devotes himself entirely to the service, and is then by the word and prayer (for so every thing is sanctified), and the imposition of the hands of those that give themselves to the word and prayer, set apart to the office, and recommended to Christ as a servant and to the church as a steward and guide. And those that are thus solemnly dedicated to God ought not to depart from his service, but faithfully to abide in it all their days; and those that do so, and continue labouring in the word and doctrine, are to be accounted worthy of double honour, double to that of the Old-Testament priests.

Leviticus-9

Aaron Offers Sacrifices

1 And it came to pass on the eighth day, *that* Moses called Aaron and
his sons, and the elders of Israel;
2 and he said unto Aaron, Take thee a young calf for a sin offering,
and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer *them*
before the Lord.
3 And unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, saying, Take ye
a kid of the goats for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both of
the first year, without blemish, for a burnt offering;

He puts both priests and people upon preparing to receive this favour which God designed them. Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel, are all summoned to attend, Le 9:1. Note, God will manifest himself in the solemn assemblies of his people and ministers; and those that would have the benefit and comfort of God's appearances must in them give their attendance.

(1.) Aaron is ordered to prepare his offerings: A young calf for a sin-offering, Le 9:2 The Jewish writers suggest that a calf was appointed for a sin-offering to remind him of his sin in making the golden calf, by which he had rendered himself for ever unworthy of the honour of the priesthood, and which he had reason to reflect upon with sorrow and shame in all the atonements he made.

(2.) Aaron must direct the people to get theirs ready. Hitherto Moses had told the people what they must do; but now Aaron, as high priest over the house of God, must be their teacher, in things pertaining to God: Unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak, Le 9:3. Now that he was to speak from them to God in the sacrifices (the language of which he

that appointed them very well understood) he must speak from God to them in the laws about the sacrifices. Thus Moses would engage the people's respect and obedience to him, as one that was set over them in the Lord, to admonish them.

(3.) Aaron must offer his own first, and then the people's, Le 9:7. Aaron must now go to the altar, Moses having shown him the way to it; and there,

[1.] He must make an atonement for himself; for the high priest, being compassed with infirmity, ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins (Heb 5:2,3), and for himself first; for how can we expect to be accepted in our prayers for others, if we ourselves be not reconciled to God? Nor is any service pleasing to God till the guilt of sin be removed by our interest in the great propitiation. Those that have the care of the souls of others are also hereby taught to look to their own in the first place; this charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. It is the charge to Timothy, to take care to save himself first, and then those that heard him, 1Ti 4:16. The high priest made atonement for himself, as one that was joined with sinners; but we have a high priest that was separated from sinners, and needed no atonement. When Messiah the prince was cut off as a sacrifice, it was not for himself; for he knew no sin.

[2.] He must make an atonement for the people, by offering their sacrifices. Now that he was made a high priest he must lay to heart the concerns of the people, and this as their great concern, their reconciliation to God, and the putting away of sin which had separated between them and God. He must make atonement as the Lord commanded. See here the wonderful condescension of the mercy of God, that he not

only allows an atonement to be made, but commands it; not only admits, but requires us to be reconciled to him. No room therefore is left to doubt but that the atonement which is commanded will be accepted.

4 also a bullock and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord; and a meat offering mingled with oil: for today the Lord will appear unto you.

Orders are here given for another solemnity upon the eighth day; for the newly-ordained priests were set to work immediately after the days of their consecration were finished, to let them know that they were not ordained to be idle: He that desires the office of a bishop desires a good work, which must be looked at with desire, more than the honour and benefit. The priests had not so much as one day's respite from service allowed them, that they might divert themselves, and receive the compliments of their friends upon their elevation, but were busily employed the very next day; for their consecration was the filling of their hands. God's spiritual priests have constant work cut out for them, which the duty of every day requires; and those that would give up their account with joy must redeem time; see Eze 43:26,27. Now, Moses raises their expectation of a glorious appearance of God to them this day (Le 9:4): "To day the Lord will appear to you that are the priests." And when all the congregation are gathered together, and stand before the Lord, he tells them (Le 9:6), The glory of the Lord shall appear to you. Though they had reason enough to believe God's acceptance of all that they had done according to his appointment, upon the general assurance we have that he is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him (even if he had not given them any sensible token of it), yet that if possible they and theirs might be effectually obliged to the service and worship of God, and might never turn aside to idols, the glory of God appeared to them, and visibly owned what they had done. We are not now to expect such appearances; we Christians walk more by faith, and less by sight, than they did. But we may be sure that God draws nigh to those who

draw nigh to him, and that the offerings of faith are really acceptable to him, though, the sacrifices being spiritual, the tokens of the acceptance are, as it is fit they should be, spiritual likewise. To those who are duly consecrated to God he will undoubtedly manifest himself.

5 And they brought *that* which Moses commanded before the tabernacle of the congregation: and all the congregation drew near and stood before the Lord.

6 And Moses said, this *is* the thing which the Lord commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the Lord shall appear unto you.

7 And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and for the people: and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; as the Lord commanded.

8 Aaron therefore went unto the altar, and slew the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself.

These being the first offerings that ever were offered by the Levitical priesthood, according to the newly-enacted law of sacrifices, the manner of offering them is particularly related, that it might appear how exactly they agreed with the institution. Aaron with his own hands slew the offering (Le 9:8), and did the work of the inferior priests; for, great as he was, he must not think any service below him which he could do for the honour of God: and, as Moses had shown him how to do this work decently and dexterously, so he showed his sons, that they might do likewise; for this is the best way of teaching, and thus parents should instruct their children by example. Therefore as Moses before, so Aaron now offered some of each of the several sorts of sacrifices that were appointed, whose rites differed, that they might be thoroughly furnished for every good work.

9 And the sons of Aaron brought the blood unto him: and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar:

10 but the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver of the sin offering, he burnt upon the altar; as the Lord commanded Moses.

11 And the flesh and the hide he burnt with fire without the camp.

12 And he slew the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons presented unto him the blood, which he sprinkled round about upon the altar.
13 And they presented the burnt offering unto him, with the pieces thereof, and the head: and he burnt *them* upon the altar.
14 And he did wash the inwards and the legs, and burnt *them* upon the burnt offering on the altar.
15 And he brought the people's offering, and took the goat, which *was* the sin offering for the people, and slew it, and offered it for sin, as the first.

It is not clear whether, when it is said that he burnt such and such parts of the sacrifices upon the altar (Le 9:10-20), the meaning is that he burnt them immediately with ordinary fire, as formerly, or that he laid them upon the altar ready to be burnt with the fire from heaven which they expected (Le 9:24), or whether, as bishop Patrick thinks, he burnt the offerings for himself with ordinary fire, but when they were burnt out he laid the people's sacrifices upon the altar, which were kindled and consumed by the fire of the Lord. I would rather conjecture, because it is said of all these sacrifices that he burnt them (except the burnt-offering for the people, of which it is said that he offered it according to the manner, Le 9:16, which seems to be equivalent), that he did not kindle the fire to burn them, but that then the fire from the Lord fastened upon them, put out the fire that he had kindled (as we know a greater fire puts out a less), and suddenly consumed the remainder, which the fire he had kindled would have consumed slowly.

16 And he brought the burnt offering, and offered it according to the manner.
17 And he brought the meat offering, and took a handful thereof, and burnt *it* upon the altar, besides the burnt sacrifice of the morning.

He offered these besides the burnt-sacrifice of the morning, which was every day offered first, Le 9:17. Note, Our accustomed devotions morning and evening, alone and in our families, must not be omitted upon any pretence whatsoever, no, not when extraordinary services are to be performed; whatever is added, these must not be diminished.

18 He slew also the bullock and the ram *for* a sacrifice of peace
offerings, which *was* for the people: and Aaron's sons presented
unto him the blood, which he sprinkled upon the altar round
about,
19 and the fat of the bullock and of the ram, the rump, and that which
covereth the *inwards*, and the kidneys, and the caul *above* the liver:
20 and they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burnt the fat upon the
altar:
21 and the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved *for* a wave
offering before the Lord; as Moses commanded.
22 And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed
them; and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the
burnt offering, and peace offerings.

When Aaron had done all that on his part was to be done about the sacrifices he lifted up his hand towards the people, and blessed them, Le 9:22. This was one part of the priest's work, in which he was a type of Christ, who came into the world to bless us, and when he was parted from his disciples, at his ascension, lifted up his hands and blessed them, and in them his whole church, of which they were the elders and representatives, as the great high priest of our profession. Aaron lifted up his hands in blessing them, to intimate whence he desired and expected the blessing to come, even from heaven, which is God's throne. Aaron could but crave a blessing, it is God's prerogative to command it. Aaron, when he had blessed, came down; Christ, when he blessed, went up.

23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the
congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory
of the Lord appeared unto all the people.

We are not told what Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle to do, Le 9:23. Some of the Jewish writers say, "They went in to pray for the appearance of the divine glory;" most probably they went in that Moses might instruct Aaron how to do the service that was to be done there--burn incense, light the lamps, set the show-bread, &c., that he might instruct his sons in it. But, when they came out, they

both joined in blessing the people, who stood expecting the promised appearance of the divine glory; and it was now (when Moses and Aaron concurred in praying) that they had what they waited for. Note, God's manifestations of himself, of his glory and grace, are commonly given in answer to prayer. When Christ was praying the heavens were opened, Lu 3:21. The glory of God appeared, not while the sacrifices were in offering, but when the priests prayed (as 2Ch 5:13), when they praised God, which intimates that the prayers and praises of God's spiritual priests are more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

When the solemnity was finished, the blessing pronounced, and the congregation ready to be dismissed, in the close of the day, then God testified his acceptance, which gave them such satisfaction as was well worth waiting for.

I. The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people, Le 9:23. What the appearance of it was we are not told; no doubt it was such as carried its own evidence along with it. The glory which filled the tabernacle (Ex 40:34) now showed itself at the door of the tabernacle to those who attended there, as a prince shows himself to the expecting crowd, to gratify them. God hereby testified of their gifts, and showed them that he was worthy for whom they should do all this.

Note, Those that diligently attend upon God in the way he has appointed shall have such a sight of his glory as shall be abundantly to their satisfaction. Those that dwell in God's house with an eye of faith may behold the beauty of the Lord.

II. There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed the sacrifice, Le 9:24. Here the learned bishop Patrick has a very probable conjecture, that Moses and Aaron staid in the tabernacle till it was time to offer the evening sacrifice, which Aaron did, but it is not mentioned, because it was done of course, and it was this which the fire that came out

from the Lord consumed. Whether this fire came from heaven, or out of the most holy place, or from that visible appearance of the glory of God which all the people saw, it was a manifest token of God's acceptance of their service, as, afterwards, of Solomon's sacrifice, 2Ch 7:1, and Elijah's, 1Ki 18:38.

1. This fire did consume (or, as the word is, eat up) the present sacrifice. And two ways this was a testimony of acceptance:--

(1.) It signified the turning away of God's wrath from them. God's wrath is a consuming fire; this fire might justly have fastened upon the people, and consumed them for their sins; but its fastening upon the sacrifice, and consuming that, signified God's acceptance of that as an atonement for the sinner.

(2.) It signified God's entering into covenant and communion with them: they ate their part of the sacrifice, and the fire of the Lord ate up his part; and thus he did, as it were, sup with them, and they with him, Re 3:20.

2. This fire did, as it were, take possession of the altar. The fire was thus kindled in God's house, which was to continue as long as the house stood, as we read before, Le 6:13. This also was a figure of good things to come. The Spirit descended upon the apostles in fire (Ac 2:3), so ratifying their commission, as this spoken of here did the priests'. And the descent of this holy fire into our souls to kindle in them pious and devout affections towards God, and such a holy zeal as burns up the flesh and the lusts of it, is a certain token of God's gracious acceptance of our persons and performances. That redounds to God's glory which is the work of his own grace in us. Hereby we know that we dwell

in God, and God in us, because he hath thus given us of his Spirit, 1Jo 4:13. Now henceforward,

(1.) All their sacrifices and incense must be offered with this fire. Note, Nothing goes to God but what comes from him. We must have grace, that holy fire, from the God of grace, else we cannot serve him acceptably, Heb 12:28.

(2.) The priests must keep it burning with a constant supply of fuel, and the fuel must be wood, the cleanest of fuel. Thus those to whom God has given grace must take heed of quenching the Spirit.

III. We are here told how the people were affected with this discovery of God's glory and grace; they received it,

1. With the highest joy: They shouted; so stirring up themselves and one another to a holy triumph, in the assurance now given them that they had God nigh unto them, which is spoken of the grandeur of their nation, De 4:7.

2. With the lowest reverence: They fell on their faces, humbly adoring the majesty of that God who vouchsafed thus to manifest himself to them. That is a sinful fear of God which drives us from him; a gracious fear makes us bow before him. Very good impressions were made upon their minds for the present, but they soon wore off, as those commonly do which are made by that which is only sensible; while the influences of faith are durable.

24 And there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: *which* when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

Leviticus-10

The Sin of Nadab and Abihu

1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not.

The great sin that Nadab and Abihu were guilty of: and a great sin we must call it, how little soever it appears in our eye, because it is evident by the punishment of it that it was highly provoking to the God of heaven, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. But what was their sin? All the account here given of it is that they offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not (Le 10:1), and the same Nu 3:4.

1. It does not appear that they had any orders to burn incense at all at this time. It is true their consecration was completed the day before, and it was part of their work, as priests, to serve at the altar of incense; but, it should seem, the whole service of this solemn day of inauguration was to be performed by Aaron himself, for he slew the sacrifices (Le 9:8,15,18), and his sons were only to attend him (Le 10:9,12,18); therefore Moses and Aaron only went into the tabernacle, Le 10:23. But Nadab and Abihu were so proud of the honour they were newly advanced to, and so ambitious of doing the highest and most honourable part of their work immediately, that though the service of this day was extraordinary, and done by particular direction from Moses, yet without receiving orders, or so much as asking leave from him, they took their censers, and they would enter into the tabernacle, at the door of which they thought they had attended long enough, and would burn incense. And then their offering strange fire is the same with offering strange

incense, which is expressly forbidden, Ex 30:9. Moses, we may suppose, had the custody of the incense which was prepared for this purpose (Ex 39:38), and they, doing this without his leave, had none of the incense which should have been offered, but common incense, so that the smoke of their incense came from a strange fire. God had indeed required the priests to burn incense, but, at this time, it was what he commanded them not; and so their crime was like that of Uzziah the king, 2Ch 26:16. The priests were to burn incense only when it was their lot (Lu 1:9), and, at this time, it was not theirs.

2. Presuming thus to burn incense of their own without order, no marvel that they made a further blunder, and instead of taking of the fire from the altar, which was newly kindled from before the Lord and which henceforward must be used in offering both sacrifice and incense (Re 8:5), they took common fire, probably from that with which the flesh of the peace-offerings was boiled, and this they made use of in burning incense; not being holy fire, it is called strange fire; and, though not expressly forbidden, it was crime enough that God commanded it not. For (as bishop Hall well observes here) "It is a dangerous thing, in the service of God, to decline from his own institutions; we have to do with a God who is wise to prescribe his own worship, just to require what he has prescribed, and powerful to revenge what he has not prescribed."

3. Incense was always to be burned by only one priest at a time, but here they would both go in together to do it.

4. They did it rashly, and with precipitation. They snatched their censers, so some read it, in a light careless way, without due reverence and seriousness: when all the people fell upon

their faces, before the glory of the Lord, they thought the dignity of their office was such as to exempt them from such abasements. The familiarity they were admitted to bred a contempt of the divine Majesty; and now that they were priests they thought they might do what they pleased.

5. There is reason to suspect that they were drunk when they did it, because of the law which was given upon this occasion, Le 10:8. They had been feasting upon the peace-offerings, and the drink-offerings that attended them, and so their heads were light, or, at least, their hearts were merry with wine; they drank and forgot the law (Pr 31:5) and were guilty of this fatal miscarriage.

6. No doubt it was done presumptuously; for, if it had been done through ignorance, they would have been allowed the benefit of the law lately made, even for the priests, that they should bring a sin-offering, Le 4:2,3. But the soul that doth aught presumptuously, and in contempt of God's majesty, authority, and justice, that soul shall be cut of, Nu 15:30.

2 And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.

The dreadful punishment of this sin: There went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, Le 10:2. This fire which consumed the sacrifices came the same way with that which had consumed the sacrifices (Le 9:24), which showed what justice would have done to all the guilty people if infinite mercy had not found and accepted a ransom; and, if that fire struck such an awe upon the people, much more would this.

1. Observe the severity of their punishment.

(1.) They died. Might it not have sufficed if they had been only struck with a leprosy, as Uzziah, or struck dumb, as Zechariah, and both by the altar of incense? No; they were both struck dead. The wages of this sin was death.

(2.) They died suddenly, in the very act of their sin, and had not time so much as to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" Though God is long-suffering to us-ward, yet sometimes he makes quick work with sinners; sentence is executed speedily: presumptuous sinners bring upon themselves a swift destruction, and are justly denied even space to repent.

(3.) They died before the Lord; that is, before the veil that covered the mercy-seat; for even mercy itself will not suffer its own glory to be affronted. Those that sinned before the Lord died before him. Damned sinners are said to be tormented in the presence of the Lamb, intimating that he does not interpose on their behalf, Re 14:10.

(4.) They died by fire, as by fire they sinned. They slighted the fire that came from before the Lord to consume the sacrifices, and thought other fire would do every jot as well; and now God justly made them feel the power of that fire which they did not reverence. Thus those that hate to be refined by the fire of divine grace will undoubtedly be ruined by the fire of divine wrath. The fire did not burn them to ashes, as it had done the sacrifices, nor so much as singe their coats (Le 10:5), but, like lightning, struck them dead in an instant; by these different effects of the same fire God would show that it was no common fire, but kindled by the breath of the Almighty, Isa 30:23.

(5.) It is twice taken notice of in scripture that they died childless, Nu 3:4,1Ch 24:2. By their presumption they had reproached God's name, and God justly blotted out their names, and laid that honour in the dust which they were proud of.

2. But why did the Lord deal thus severely with them? Were they not the sons of Aaron, the saint of the Lord, nephews to Moses, the great favourite of heaven? Was not the holy anointing oil sprinkled upon them, as men whom God had set apart for himself? Had they not diligently attended during the seven days of their consecration, and kept the charge of the Lord, and might not that atone for this rashness? Would it not excuse them that they were young men, as yet unexperienced in these services, that it was the first offence, and done in a transport of joy for their elevation? And besides, never could men be worse spared: a great deal of work was now lately cut out for the priests to do, and the priesthood was confined to Aaron and his seed; he has but four sons; if two of them die, there will not be hands enough to do the service of the tabernacle; if they die childless, the house of Aaron will become weak and little, and the priesthood will be in danger of being lost for want of heirs. But none of all these considerations shall serve either to excuse the offence or bring off the offenders. For,

(1.) The sin was greatly aggravated. It was a manifest contempt of Moses, and the divine law that was given by Moses. Hitherto it had been expressly observed concerning every thing that was done that they did it as the Lord commanded Moses, in opposition to which it is here said they did that which the Lord commanded them not, but they did it of their own heads. God was now teaching his people obedience, and to do every thing by rule, as becomes servants; for priests therefore to break rules and disobey was such a provocation as must by no means go unpunished. Their character made their sin more exceedingly sinful. For the sons of Aaron, his eldest sons, whom God had chosen to be immediate attendants upon him, for them to be guilty of such a piece of presumption, it cannot be suffered. There was in their sin a contempt of God's glory, which had now newly

appeared in fire, as if that fire were needless, they had as good of their own before.

(2.) Their punishment was a piece of necessary justice, now at the first settling of the ceremonial institutions. It is often threatened in the law that such and such offenders should be cut off from the people; and here God explained the threatening with a witness. Now that the laws concerning sacrifices were newly made, lest any should be tempted to think lightly of them because they descended to many circumstances which seemed very minute, these that were the first transgressors were thus punished, for warning to others, and to show how jealous God is in the matters of his worship. Thus he magnified the law and made it honourable; and let his priests know that the caution which so often occurs in the laws concerning them, that they must do so that they die not, was not a mere bugbear, but fair warning of their danger, if they did the work of the Lord negligently. And no doubt this exemplary piece of justice at first prevented many irregularities afterwards. Thus Ananias and Sapphira were punished, when they presumed to lie to the Holy Ghost, that newly-descended fire.

3 Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

We may well think that when Nadab and Abihu were struck with death all about them were struck with horror, and every face, as well as theirs, gathered blackness. Great consternation, no doubt, seized them, and they were all full of confusion; but, whatever the rest were, Moses was composed, and knew what he said and did, not being displeased, as David was in a like case, 2Sa 6:8. But though it touched him in a very tender part, and was a dreadful damp to one of the greatest joys he ever knew, yet he kept possession of his own soul, and took care to keep good order and a due decorum in the sanctuary.

I. He endeavours to pacify Aaron, and to keep him in a good frame under this sad dispensation, Le 10:3. Moses was a brother that was born for adversity, and has taught us, by his example, with seasonable counsels and comforts to support the weak, and strengthen the feeble-minded. Observe here,

1. What it was that Moses suggested to his poor brother upon this occasion: This is it that the Lord spoke. Note, The most quieting considerations under affliction are those that are fetched from the word of God. So and so the Lord hath said, and it is not for us to gainsay it. Note, also, In all God's providences it is good to observe the fulfilling of scripture, and to compare God's word and his works together, which if we do we shall find an admirable harmony and agreement between them, and that they mutually explain and illustrate each other. But,

(1.) Where did God speak this? We do not find the very words; but to this purport he had said (Ex 19:22), Let the priests who come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them. Indeed the whole scope and tenour of his law spoke this, that being a holy God, and a sovereign Lord, he must always be worshipped with holiness and reverence, and exactly according to his own appointment; and, if any jest with him, it is at their peril. Much had been said to this purport, as Ex 29:43,44,34:14,Le 8:35.

(2.) What was it that God spoke? It was this (the Lord by his grace speak it to all our hearts!) I will be sanctified in those that come nigh me, whoever they are, and before all the people I will be glorified. Note, First, Whenever we worship God, we come nigh unto him, as spiritual priests. This consideration ought to make us very reverent and serious in all acts of devotion, that in them we approach to God, and present ourselves before him. Secondly, It concerns us all, when we come nigh to God, to sanctify him, that is, to give

him the praise of his holiness, to perform every religious exercise as those who believe that the God with whom we have to do is a holy God, a God of spotless purity and transcendent perfection, Isa 8:13. Thirdly, When we sanctify God we glorify him, for his holiness is his glory; and, when we sanctify him in our solemn assemblies, we glorify him before all the people, confessing our own belief of his glory and desiring that others also may be affected with it. Fourthly, If God be not sanctified and glorified by us, he will be sanctified and glorified upon us. He will take vengeance on those that profane his sacred name by trifling with him. If his rent be not paid, it shall be distrained for.

(3.) But what was this to the present case? What was there in this to quiet Aaron? Two things:--

[1.] This must silence him, that his sons deserved their death; for they were thus cut off from their people because they did not sanctify and glorify God. The acts of necessary justice, how hard soever they may seem to bear upon the persons concerned, are not to be complained of, but submitted to.

[2.] This must satisfy him, that the death of his sons redounded to the honour of God, and his impartial justice would for it be adored throughout all ages.

2. What good effects this had upon him: Aaron held his peace, that is, he patiently submitted to the holy will of God in this sad providence, was dumb, and opened not his mouth, because God did it. Something he was ready to say by way of complaint (as losers think they may have leave to speak), but he wisely suppressed it, laid his hand upon his mouth, and said nothing, for fear lest he should offend with his tongue, now that his heart was hot within him. Note,

(1.) When God corrects us or ours for sin, it is our duty to be silent under the correction, not to quarrel with God, arraign his justice, or charge him with folly, but to acquiesce in all that God does; not only bearing, but accepting, the punishment of iniquity, and saying, as Eli, in a case not much unlike this, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good, 1Sa 3:18. If our children have sinned against God (as Bildad puts the case, Job 8:4), and he have cast them away for their transgression, though it must needs be grievous to think that the children of our love should be the children of God's wrath, yet we must awfully adore the divine justice, and make no exceptions against its processes.

(2.) The most effectual arguments to quiet a gracious spirit under afflictions are those that are fetched from God's glory; this silenced Aaron. It is true he is a loser in his comforts by this severe execution, but Moses has shown him that God is a gainer in his glory, and therefore he has not a word to say against it: if God be sanctified, Aaron is satisfied. Far be it form him that he should honour his sons more than God, or wish that God's name, or house, or law, should be exposed to reproach or contempt for the preserving of the reputation of his family. No; now, as well as in the matter of the golden calf, Levi does not acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children; and therefore they shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law, De 33:9,10. Ministers and their families are sometimes exercised with sore trials that they may be examples to the believers of patience and resignation to God, and they may comfort others with that with which they themselves have been comforted.

4 And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.

Moses gives orders about the dead bodies. It was not fit that they should be left to lie where they fell; yet their own father and brethren, the amazed spectators of this dismal tragedy, durst not offer to lift them up, no, not to see whether there

was any life left in them; they must neither be diverted from nor unfitted for the great work that was now upon their hands. Let the dead bury their dead, but they must go on with their service; that is, "Rather let the dead be unburied, if there be nobody else to do it, than that work for God should be left undone by those whom he has called to it." But Moses takes care of this matter, that though they died by the hand of justice in the act of sin, yet they should be decently buried, and they were so, Le 10:4,5.

1. Some of their nearest relations were employed in it, who were cousins-german to their father, and are here named, who would perform this office with tenderness and respect. They were Levites only, and might not have come into the sanctuary, no, not upon such an occasion as this, if they had not had a special command for it.

2. They carried them out of the camp to be burned, so far were they from burying them in the place of worship, or the court of it, according to our modern usage, though they died there, that they did not bury them, nor any of their dead, within the lines of their camp; as afterwards their burying places were out of their cities. The tabernacle was pitched in the midst of the camp, so that they could not carry these dead priests to their graves without carrying them through one of the squadrons of the camp; and doubtless it was a very awful affecting sight to the people. The names of Nadab and Abihu had become very great and honourable among them; none more talked of, nor more expected to appear abroad after the days of their consecration, to receive the honours and caresses of the crowd, whose manner it is to adore the rising sun; and next to Moses and Aaron, who were old and going off, Nadab and Abihu (who had been in the mount with God, Ex 24:1) were looked upon as the great favourites of heaven, and the hopes of their people; and now on a sudden, when the tidings of the event had scarcely reached their ears, to see them both carried out dead, with the visible marks of divine

vengeance upon them, as sacrifices to the justice of God, they could not choose but cry out, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? 1Sa 6:20.

5 So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.

6 And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled.

He gives directions about the mourning.

1. That the priests must not mourn. Aaron and his two surviving sons, though sad in spirit, must not use any outward expressions of sorrow upon this sad occasion, nor so much as follow the corpse one step from the door of the tabernacle, Le 10:7. It was afterwards forbidden to the high priest to use the ceremonies of mourning for the death of any friend whatsoever, though it were a father or mother (Le 21:11); yet it was allowed at the same time to the inferior priests to mourn for their near relations, Le 10:2,3. But here it was forbidden both to Aaron and his sons, because,

(1.) They were now actually waiting, doing a great work, which must by no means cease (Ne 6:3); and it was very much for the honour of God that their attendance on him should take place of their respects to their nearest relations, and that all services should give way to those of their ministry. By this they must make it to appear that they had a greater value and affection for their God and their work than for the best friend they had in the world; as Christ did, Mt 12:47,48. And we are hereby taught, when we are serving God in holy duties, to keep out minds, as much as may be, intent and engaged, and not to suffer them to be diverted by any worldly thoughts, or cares, or passions. Let us always attend upon the Lord without distraction.

(2.) Their brethren were cut off for their transgression by the immediate hand of God, and therefore they must not mourn for them lest they should seem to countenance the sin, or impeach the justice of God in the punishment. Instead of lamenting their own loss, they must be wholly taken up in applauding the sentence, and subscribing to the equity of it.

Note, The public concerns of God's glory ought to lie nearer our hearts than any private affections of our own. Observe, How Moses frightens them into this submission, and holds the rod over them to still their crying (Le 10:6): "Lest you die likewise, and lest wrath come upon all the people, who may be in danger of suffering for your irreverence, and disobedience, and ungoverned passions;" and again (Le 10:7), lest you die. See here what use we are to make of the judgments of God upon others; we must double our guard over ourselves, lest we likewise perish. The death, especially the sudden death, of others, instead of moving our passion, should compose us into a holy reverence of God, a cautious separation from all sin, and a serious expectation of our own death. The reason given them is because the anointing oil of your God is upon you, the honour of which must be carefully preserved by your doing the duty of your office with cheerfulness.

Note, Those that through grace have received the anointing ought not to disturb themselves with the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. It was very hard, no doubt, for Aaron and his sons to restrain themselves upon such an extraordinary occasion from inordinate grief, but reason and grace mastered the passion, and they bore the affliction with an obedient patience: They did according to the word of Moses, because they knew it to be the word of God. Happy those who thus are themselves under God's government, and have their passions under their own government.

2 The people must mourn: Let the whole house of Israel bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. The congregation must lament, not only the loss of their priests, but especially the displeasure of God which appeared in it. They must bewail the burning that was kindled, that it might not burn further. Aaron and his sons were in danger of being too much affected with the providence, and therefore they are forbidden to mourn: the house of Israel were in danger of being too little affected with it, and therefore they are commanded to lament. Thus nature must always be governed by grace, according as it needs to be either constrained or restrained.

7 And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the Lord *is* upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

8 And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying,

9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations:

Aaron having been very observant of what God said to him by Moses, now God does him the honour to speak to him immediately (Le 10:8): The Lord spoke unto Aaron, and the rather because what was now to be said Aaron might perhaps have taken amiss from Moses, as if he had suspected him to have been a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, so apt are we to resent cautions as accusations; therefore God saith it himself to him, Do not drink wine, nor strong drink, when you go into the tabernacle, and this at their peril, lest you die, Le 10:9. Probably they had seen the ill effect of it in Nadab and Abihu, and therefore must take warning by them. Observe here,

1 The prohibition itself: Do not drink wine nor strong drink. At other times they were allowed it (it was not expected that every priest should be a Nazarite), but during the time of

their ministration they were forbidden it. This was one of the laws in Ezekiel's temple (Eze 44:21), and so it is required of gospel ministers that they be not given to wine, 1Ti 3:3. Note, Drunkenness is bad in any, but it is especially scandalous and pernicious in ministers, who of all men ought to have the clearest heads and the cleanest hearts.

2 The penalty annexed to the prohibition: Lest you die; lest you die when you are in drink, and so that day come upon you unawares, Lu 21:34. Or, "Lest you do that which will make you liable to be cut off by the hand of God." The danger of death we are continually in should engage us to be sober, 1Pe 4:7. It is a pity that it should ever be used for the support of licentiousness, as it is by those who argue, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

3. The reasons assigned for this prohibition. They must needs to be sober, else they could not duly discharge their office; they will be in danger of erring through wine, Isa 28:7. They must be sure to keep sober,

(1.) That they might themselves be able to distinguish, in their ministrations, between that which was sacred and that which was common, and might never confound them, Le 10:10. It concerns the Lord's ministers to put a difference between holy and unholy, both things and persons, that they may separate between the precious and the vile, Jer 15:19.

(2.) That they might be able to teach the people (Le 10:11), for that was a part of the priests' work (De 33:10); and those that are addicted to drunkenness are very unfit to teach people God's statutes, both because those that live after the flesh can have no experimental acquaintance with the things of the Spirit, and because such teachers pull down with one hand what they build up with the other.

10 and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

11 and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which
the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.
12 And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto
Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat offering that
remaineth of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and eat
it without leaven beside the altar: for it *is* most holy.

Moses is here directing Aaron to go on with his service after this interruption. Afflictions should rather quicken us to our duty than take us off from it. Observe (Le 10:12), He spoke unto Aaron and to his sons that were left. The notice taken of their survivorship intimates,

1. That Aaron should take comfort under the loss of two of his sons, from this consideration, that God had graciously spared him the other two, and that he had reason to be thankful for the remnant that was left, and all his sons were not dead, and, in token of his thankfulness to God, to go on cheerfully in his work.

2. That God's sparing them should be an engagement upon them to proceed in his service, and not to fly off from it. Here were four priests consecrated together, two were taken away, and two left; therefore the two that were left should endeavour to fill up the places of those that were gone, by double care and diligence in the services of the priesthood. Now,

Moses repeats the directions he had formerly given them about eating their share of the sacrifices, Le 10:12-15. The priests must learn not only to put a difference between the holy and the unholy, as they had been taught (Le 10:10), but also to distinguish between that which was most holy and that which was only holy of the things that were to eat. That part of the meat-offering which remained to the priest was most holy, and therefore must be eaten in the courts of the tabernacle, and by Aaron sons only (Le 10:12,13); but the breast and shoulder of the peace-offerings might be eaten in

any decent place out of the courts of the tabernacle, and by the daughters of their families. The meat-offerings, being annexed to the burnt-offerings, were intended only and wholly for the glory of God; but the peace-offerings were ordained for the furtherance of men's joy and comfort; the former therefore were the more sacred, and to be had more in veneration. This distinction the priests must carefully observe, and take heed of making any blunders. Moses does not pretend to give any reasons for this difference, but refers to his instructions: For so am I commanded, Le 10:13. This was reason enough; he had received of the Lord all that he delivered unto them, 1Co 11:23.

13 And ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it *is* thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire: for so I am commanded.

14 And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for *they be* thy due, and thy sons' due, *which* are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel.

15 The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave *it for* a wave offering before the Lord; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as the Lord hath commanded.

16 And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron *which were* left *alive,* saying,

He enquires concerning one deviation from the appointment, which it seems had happened upon this occasion, which was this:--There was a goat to be sacrificed as a sin-offering or the people, Le 9:15. Now the law of the sin-offerings was that if the blood of them was brought into the holy place, as that of the sin-offerings for the priest was, then the flesh was to be burnt without the camp; otherwise it was to be eaten by the priest in the holy place, Le 6:30. The meaning of this is here explained (Le 10:17), that the priests did hereby bear the iniquity of the congregation, that is, they were types of

him who was to be made sin for us, and on whom God would lay the iniquity of us all.

Now the blood of this goat was not brought into the holy place, and yet, it seems, it was burnt without the camp. Now observe here, the gentle reproof Moses gives to Aaron and his sons for this irregularity. Here again Aaron sons are said to be those that were left alive (Le 10:16), who therefore ought to have taken warning; and Moses was angry with them. Though he was the meekest man in the world, it seems he could be angry; and when he thought God was disobeyed and dishonoured, and the priesthood endangered, he would be angry. Yet observe how very mildly he deals with Aaron and his sons, considering their present affliction. He only tells them they should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, but is willing to hear what they have to say for themselves, being loth to speak to the grief of those whom God had wounded.

17 Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it *is* most holy, and *God* hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord?

18 Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy place: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded.

19 And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord; and such things have befallen me: and *if* I had eaten the sin offering today, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?

The plausible excuse which Aaron makes for this mistake. Moses charged the fault upon Eleazar and Ithamar (Le 10:16), but it is probable that what they did was by Aaron direction, and therefore he apologized for it. He might have pleaded that this was a sin-offering for the congregation, and if it had been a bullock it must have been wholly burnt (Le 4:21), and therefore why not now that it was a goat? But it seems it was otherwise ordered at this time, and therefore he makes his affliction his excuse, Le 10:19. Observe,

(1.) How he speaks of affliction: Such things have befallen me, such sad things, which could not but go near his heart, and make it very happy. He was a high priest taken from among men, and could not put off natural affection when he put on the holy garments. He held his peace (Le 10:3), yet his sorrow was stirred, as David's, Ps 39:2. Note, There may be a deep sense of affliction even where there is a sincere resignation to the will of God in the affliction. "Such things as never befel me before, and as I little expected now. My spirits cannot but sink, when I see my family sinking; I must needs be heavy, when God is angry:" thus it is easy to say a great deal to aggravate an affliction, but it is better to say little.

(2.) How he makes this an excuse for his varying from the appointment about the sin-offering. He could not have eaten it but in his mourning, and with a sorrowful spirit; and would this have been accepted? He does not plead that his heart was so full of grief that he had no appetite for it, but that he feared it would not be accepted. Note,

[1.] Acceptance with God is the great thing we should desire and aim at in all our religious services, particularly in the Lord's supper, which is our eating of the sin-offering.

[2.] The sorrow of the world is a very great hindrance to our acceptable performance of holy duties, both as it is discomposing to ourselves, takes off our chariot-wheels and makes us drive heavily (1Sa 1:7,8), and as it is displeasing to God, whose will it is that we should serve him cheerfully, De 12:7. Mourner's bread was polluted, Ho 9:4. See Mal 3:14.

20 And when Moses heard *that,* he was content.

The acquiescence of Moses in this excuse: He was content, Le 10:20. Perhaps he thought it justified what they had done. God had provided that what could not be eaten might be

burnt. Our unfitness for duty, when it is natural and not sinful, will have great allowances made for it; and God will have mercy and not sacrifice. At least he thought it did very much extenuate the fault; the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak. God by Moses showed that he considered his frame. It appeared that Aaron sincerely aimed at God's acceptance; and those that do so with an upright heart shall find he is not extreme to mark what they do amiss. Nor must we be severe in our animadversions upon every mistake, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted.

Leviticus-11

Clean and Unclean Animals

Now that Aaron was consecrated a high priest over the house of God, God spoke to him with Moses, and appointed them both as joint-commissioners to deliver his will to the people. He spoke both to Moses and to Aaron about this matter; for it was particularly required of the priests that they should put a difference between clean and unclean, and teach the people to do so. After the flood, when God entered into covenant with Noah and his sons, he allowed them to eat flesh (Ge 9:13), whereas before they were confined to the productions of the earth. But the liberty allowed to the sons of Noah is here limited to the sons of Israel. They might eat flesh, but not all kinds of flesh; some they must look upon as unclean and forbidden to them, others as clean and allowed them. The law in this matter is both very particular and very strict. But what reason can be given for this law? Why may not God's people have as free a use of all the creatures as other people?

1. It is reason enough that God would have it so: his will, as it is law sufficient, so it is reason sufficient; for his will is his wisdom. He saw good thus to try and exercise the obedience of his people, not only in the solemnities of his altar, but in

matters of daily occurrence at their own table, that they might remember they were under authority. Thus God had tried the obedience of man in innocency, by forbidding him to eat of one particular tree.

2. Most of the meats forbidden as unclean are such as were really unwholesome, and not fit to be eaten; and those of them that we think wholesome enough, and use accordingly, as the rabbit, the hare, and the swine, perhaps in those countries, and to their bodies, might be hurtful. And then God in this law did by them but as a wise and loving father does by his children, whom he restrains from eating that which he knows will make them sick. Note, The Lord is for the body, and it is not only folly, but sin against God, to prejudice our health for the pleasing of our appetite.

3. God would thus teach his people to distinguish themselves from other people, not only in their religious worship, but in the common actions of life. Thus he would show them that they must not be numbered among the nations. It should seem there had been, before this, some difference between the Hebrews and other nations in their food, kept up by tradition; for the Egyptians and they would not eat together, Ge 43:32. And even before the flood there was a distinction of beasts into clean and not clean (Ge 7:2), which distinction was quite lost, with many other instances of religion, among the Gentiles. But by this law it is reduced to a certainty, and ordered to be kept up among the Jews, that thus, by having a diet peculiar to themselves, they might be kept from familiar conversation with their idolatrous neighbours, and might typify God's spiritual Israel, who not in these little things, but in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their lives, should be governed by a sober singularity, and not be conformed to this world. The learned observe further, That most of the creatures which by this law were to be

abominated as unclean were such as were had in high veneration among the heathen, not so much for food as for divination and sacrifice to their gods; and therefore those are here mentioned as unclean, and an abomination, which yet they would not be in any temptation to eat, that they might keep up a religious loathing of that for which the Gentiles had a superstitious value. The swine, with the later Gentiles, was sacred to Venus, the owl to Minerva, the eagle to Jupiter, the dog to Hecate, &c., and all these are here made unclean. As to the beasts, there is a general rule laid down, that those which both part the hoof and chew the cud were clean, and those only: these are particularly mentioned in the repetition of this law (De 14:4,5), where it appears that the Israelites had variety enough allowed them, and needed not to complain of the confinement they were under. Those beasts that did not both chew the cud and divide the hoof were unclean, by which rule the flesh of swine, and of hares, and of rabbits, was prohibited to them, though commonly used among us.

Therefore, particularly at the eating of any of these, we should give thanks for the liberty granted us in this matter by the gospel, which teaches us that every creature of God is good, and we are to call nothing common or unclean. Some observe a significancy in the rule here laid down for them to distinguish by, or at least think it may be alluded to. Meditation, and other acts of devotion done by the hidden man of the heart, may be signified by the chewing of the cud, digesting our spiritual food; justice and charity towards men, and the acts of a good conversation, may be signified by the dividing of the hoof. Now either of these without the other will not serve to recommend us to God, but both must go together, good affections in the heart and good works in the life: if either be wanting, we are not clean, surely we are not clean. Of all the creatures here forbidden as unclean, none

has been more dreaded and detested by the pious Jews than swine's flesh. Many were put to death by Antiochus because they would not eat it. This, probably, they were most in danger of being tempted to, and therefore possessed themselves and their children with a particular antipathy to it, calling it not by its proper name, but a strange thing. It should seem the Gentiles used it superstitiously (Isa 65:4), they eat swine's flesh; and therefore God forbids all use of it to his people, lest they should learn of their neighbours to make that ill use of it. Some suggest that the prohibition of these beasts as unclean was intended to be a caution to the people against the bad qualities of these creatures. We must not be filthy nor wallow in the mire as swine, nor be timorous and faint-hearted as hares, nor dwell in the earth as rabbits; let not man that is in honour make himself like these beasts that perish. The law forbade, not only the eating of them, but the very touching of them; for those that would be kept from any sin must be careful to avoid all temptations to it, and every thing that looks towards it or leads to it.

1 And the Lord Spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These *are* the beasts
which ye shall eat among all the beasts that *are* on the earth.
3 Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, *and* cheweth
the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.
4 Nevertheless, these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or
of them that divide the hoof: *as* the camel, because he cheweth the
cud, but divideth not the hoof; he *is* unclean unto you.
5 And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the
hoof; he *is* unclean unto you.
6 And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the
hoof; he *is* unclean unto you.
7 And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed,
yet he cheweth not the cud; he *is* unclean to you.
8 Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch;
they *are* unclean to you.

9 These shall ye eat of all that *are* in the waters: whatsoever hath
fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them
shall ye eat.
10 And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers,
of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which *is* in
the waters, they *shall be* an abomination unto you:
11 they shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat
of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination.
12 Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that *shall be*
an abomination unto you.
13 And these *are they which* ye shall have in abomination among the
fowls; they shall not be eaten, they *are* an abomination: the eagle,
and the ossifrage, and the ospray,
14 and the vulture, and the kite after his kind;
15 every raven after his kind;
16 and the owl, and the nighthawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk
after his kind,
17 and the little owl, and the cormorant, and the great owl,
18 and the swan, and the pelican, and the gier-eagle,
19 and the stork, the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and the
bat.
20 All fowls that creep, going upon *all* four, shall *be* an abomination
unto you.
21 Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon
all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the
earth;
22 *even* these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald
locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the
grasshopper after his kind.
23 But all *other* flying creeping things, which have four feet, *shall be*
an abomination unto you.
24 And for these ye shall be unclean: whosoever toucheth the carcass
of them shall be unclean until the even.
25 And whosoever beareth aught of the carcass of them shall wash his
clothes, and be unclean until the even.

26 *The carcasses* of every beast which divideth the hoof, and *is* not cloven-footed, nor cheweth the cud, *are* unclean unto you: every one that toucheth them shall be unclean.
27 And whatsoever goeth upon his paws, among all manner of beasts that go on *all* four, those *are* unclean unto you: whoso toucheth their carcass shall be unclean until the even.
28 And he that beareth the carcass of them shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: they *are* unclean unto you.
29 These also *shall be* unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth; the weasel, and the mouse, and the tortoise after his kind,
30 and the ferret, and the chameleon, and the lizard, and the snail, and the mole.
31 These *are* unclean to you among all that creep: whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even.
32 And upon whatsoever *any* of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean; whether *it be* any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, whatsoever vessel *it be*, wherein *any* work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed.
33 And every earthen vessel, whereunto any of them falleth, whatsoever *is* in it shall be unclean; and ye shall break it.
34 Of all meat which may be eaten, *that* on which *such* water cometh shall be unclean: and all drink that may be drunk in every *such* vessel shall be unclean.
35 And every *thing* whereupon *any part* of their carcass falleth shall be unclean; *whether it be* oven, or ranges for pots, they shall be broken down: *for* they *are* unclean, and shall be unclean unto you.
36 Nevertheless a fountain or pit, wherein *there is* plenty of water, shall be clean: but that which toucheth their carcass shall be unclean.
37 And if *any part* of their carcass fall upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, it *shall be* clean.
38 But if *any* water be put upon the seed, and *any part* of their carcass fall thereon, it *shall be* unclean unto you.
39 And if any beast, of which ye may eat, die; he that toucheth the carcass thereof shall be unclean until the even.

40 And he that eateth of the carcass of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: he also that beareth the carcass of it shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even.

41 And every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth *shall be* an abomination; it shall not be eaten.

42 Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon *all* four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they *are* an abomination.

43 Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby.

44 For I *am* the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I *am* holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

45 For I *am* the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.

46 This *is* the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

The conclusion of this statute: This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, &c., Le 11:46,47. This law was to them a statute for ever, that is, as long as that economy lasted; but under the gospel we find it expressly repealed by a voice from heaven to Peter (Ac 10:15), as it had before been virtually set aside by the death of Christ, with the other ordinances that perished in the using: Touch not, taste not, handle not, Col 2:21,22. And now we are sure that meat commends us not to God (1Co 8:8), and that nothing is unclean of itself (Ro 14:14), nor does that defile a man which goes into his mouth, but that which comes out from the heart, Mt 15:11. Let us therefore,

1. Give thanks to God that we are not under this yoke, but that to us every creature of God is allowed as good, and nothing to be refused.

2. Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and take heed of those doctrines which command to abstain from meats, and so would revive Moses again, 1Ti 4:3,4.

3. Be strictly and conscientiously temperate in the use of the good creatures God has allowed us. If God's law has given us liberty, let us lay restraints upon ourselves, and never feed ourselves without fear, lest our table be a snare. Set a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite; and be not desirous of dainties or varieties, Pr 23:2,3. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing.

47 to make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

Leviticus-12

The Purification of Women after Childbirth

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and borne a man child, then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean.
3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.
4 And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.
5 But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days.
6 And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering,

unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest:

A woman that had lain in, when the time set for her return to the sanctuary had come, was not to attend there empty, but must bring her offerings, Le 12:6.

1. A burnt-offering; a lamb if she was able, if poor, a pigeon. This she was to offer in thankfulness to God for his mercy to her, in bringing her safely through the pains of child-bearing and all the perils of child-bed, and in desire and hopes of God's further favour both to her and to the child. When a child is born there is joy and there is hope, and therefore it was proper to bring this offering, which was of a general nature; for what we rejoice in we must give thanks for, and what we are in hopes of we must pray for. But, besides this,

2. She must offer a sin-offering, which must be the same for poor and rich, a turtle-dove or a young pigeon; for, whatever difference there may be between rich and poor in the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of atonement is the same for both. This sin-offering was intended either,

(1.) To complete her purification from that ceremonial uncleanness which, though it was not in itself sinful, yet was typical of moral pollution; or,

(2.) To make atonement for that which was really sin, either an inordinate desire of the blessing of children or discontent or impatience under the pains of child-bearing. It is only by Christ, the great sin-offering, that the corruption of our nature is done away, and to that it is owing that we are not for ever excluded by it from the sanctuary, and from eating of the holy things. According to this law, we find that the

mother of our blessed Lord, though he was not conceived in sin as others, yet accomplished the days of purification, and then presented her son to the Lord, being a first-born, and brought her own offering, a pair of turtle-doves, Lu 2:22-24. So poor were Christ's parents that they were not able to bring a lamb for a burnt-offering; and so early was Christ made under the law, to redeem those that were under it. The morality of this law obliges those women that have received mercy from God in child-bearing with all thankfulness to own God's goodness to them, acknowledging themselves unworthy of it, and (which is the best purification of women that have been saved in child-bearing, 1Ti 2:15) to continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety; for this shall please the Lord better than the turtle-doves or the young pigeons.

7 who shall offer it before the Lord, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This *is* the law for her that hath borne a male or a female.

8 And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.

Leviticus-13

Laws concerning Leprosy

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying,

Concerning the plague of leprosy we may observe in general,

1. That it was rather an uncleanness than a disease; or, at least, so the law considered it, and therefore employed not the physicians but the priests about it. Christ is said to

cleanse lepers, not to cure them. We do not read of any that died of the leprosy, but it rather buried them alive, by rendering them unfit for conversation with any but such as were infected like themselves. Yet there is a tradition that Pharaoh, who sought to kill Moses, was the first that ever was struck with this disease, and that he died of it. It is said to have begun first in Egypt, whence it spread into Syria. It was very well known to Moses, when he put his own hand into his bosom and took it out leprous.

2. That it was a plague inflicted immediately by the hand of God, and came not from natural causes, as other diseases; and therefore must be managed according to a divine law. Miriam's leprosy, and Gehazi's, and king Uzziah's, were all the punishments of particular sins: and, if generally it was so, no marvel there was so much care taken to distinguish it from a common distemper, that none might be looked upon as lying under this extraordinary token of divine displeasure but those that really were so.

3. That it is a plague not now known in the world; what is commonly called the leprosy is of a quite different nature. This seems to have been reserved as a particular scourge for the sinners of those times and places. The Jews retained the idolatrous customs they had learnt in Egypt, and therefore God justly caused this with some others of the diseases of Egypt to follow them. Yet we read of Naaman the Syrian, who was a leper, 2Ki 5:1.

4. That there were other breakings-out in the body which did very much resemble the leprosy, but were not it, which might make a man sore and loathsome and yet not ceremonially unclean. Justly are our bodies called vile bodies, which have in them the seeds of so many diseases, by which the lives of so many are made bitter to them.

5. That the judgment of it was referred to the priests. Lepers were looked upon as stigmatized by the justice of God, and therefore it was left to his servants the priests, who might be presumed to know his mark best, to pronounce who were lepers and who were not. All the Jews say, "Any priest, though disabled by a blemish to attend the sanctuary, might be a judge of the leprosy, provided the blemish were not in his eye. And he might" (they say) "take a common person to assist him in the search, but the priest only must pronounce the judgment."

6. That it was a figure of the moral pollution of men's minds by sin, which is the leprosy of the soul, defiling to the conscience, and from which Christ alone can cleanse us; for herein the power of his grace infinitely transcends that of the legal priesthood, that the priest could only convict the leper (for by the law is the knowledge of sin), but Christ can cure the leper, he can take away sin. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean, which was more than the priests could do, Mt 8:2. Some think that the leprosy signified, not so much sin in general as a state of sin, by which men are separated from God (their spot not being the spot of God's children), and scandalous sin, for which men are to be shut out from the communion of the faithful. It is a work of great importance, but of great difficulty, to judge of our spiritual state: we have all cause to suspect ourselves, being conscious to ourselves of sores and spots, but whether clean or unclean is the question. A man might have a scab (Le 13:6) and yet be clean: the best have their infirmities; but, as there were certain marks by which to know that it was a leprosy, so there are characters of such as are in the gall of bitterness, and the work of ministers is to declare the judgment of leprosy and to assist those that suspect themselves in the trial of their spiritual state, remitting or retaining sin. And hence the keys of the kingdom of heaven are said to be given to them, because they are to separate

between the precious and the vile, and to judge who are fit as clean to partake of the holy things and who as unclean must be debarred from them.

2 When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab,
or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh *like* the plague of
leprosy; then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto
one of his sons the priests:

3 and the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh: and
when the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight
be deeper than the skin of his flesh, it *is* a plague of leprosy: and the
priest shall look on him, and pronounce him unclean.

4 If the bright spot *be* white in the skin of his flesh, and in sight *be*
not deeper than the skin, and the hair thereof be not turned white;
then the priest shall shut up *him that hath* the plague seven days:

Several rules are here laid down by which the judgment of the priest must be governed.

1. If the sore was but skin-deep, it was to be hoped it was not the leprosy, Le 13:4. But, if it was deeper than the skin, the man must be pronounced unclean, Le 13:3. The infirmities that consist with grace do not sink deep into the soul, but the mind still serves the law of God, and the inward man delights in it, Ro 7:22,25. But if the matter be really worse than it shows, and the inwards be infected, the case is dangerous.

2. If the sore be at a stay, and do not spread, it is no leprosy, Le 13:4,5. But if it spread much abroad, and continue to do so after several inspections, the case is bad, Le 13:7,8. If men do not grow worse, but a stop be put to the course of their sins and their corruptions be checked, it is to be hoped they will grow better; but if sin get ground, and they become worse every day, they are going downhill.

3. If there was proud raw flesh in the rising, the priest needed not to wait any longer, it was certainly a leprosy, Le 13:10,11. Nor is there any surer indication of the badness of

a man's spiritual state than the heart's rising in self-conceit, confidence in the flesh, and resistance of the reproofs of the word and strivings of the Spirit.

4. If the eruption, whatever it was, covered all the skin from head to foot, it was no leprosy (Le 13:12,13); for it was an evidence that the vitals were sound and strong, and nature hereby helped itself, throwing out what was burdensome and pernicious. There is hope in the small-pox when they come out well: so if men freely confess their sins, and hide them not, there is no danger comparable to theirs that cover their sins. Some gather this from it, that there is more hope of the profane than of hypocrites. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of heaven before scribes and Pharisees. In one respect, the sudden breakings-out of passion, though bad enough, are not so dangerous as malice concealed. Others gather this, that, if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged; if we see and own that there is no health in us, no soundness in our flesh, by reason of sin, we shall find grace in the eyes of the Lord.

5. The priest must take time in making his judgment, and not give it rashly. If the matter looked suspicious, he must shut up the patient seven days, and then seven days more, that his judgment might be according to truth. This teaches all, both ministers and people, not to be hasty in their censures, nor to judge any thing before the time. If some men's sins go before unto judgment, the sins of others follow after, and so men's good works; therefore let nothing be done suddenly, 1Ti 5:22,24,25.

6. If the person suspected was found to be clean, yet he must wash his clothes (Le 13:6), because he had been under the suspicion, and there had been in him that which gave ground

for the suspicion. Even the prisoner that is acquitted must go down on his knees. We have need to be washed in the blood of Christ from our spots, though they be not leprosy-spots; for who can say, I am pure from sin? Though there are those who through grace are innocent from the great transgression.

5 and the priest shall look on him the seventh day: and, behold, *if* the plague in his sight be at a stay, *and* the plague spread not in the skin; then the priest shall shut him up seven days more:

6 and the priest shall look on him again the seventh day: and, behold, *if* the plague be somewhat dark, *and* the plague spread not in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean: it *is but* a scab: and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.

7 But if the scab spread much abroad in the skin, after that he hath been seen of the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen of the priest again:

8 and *if* the priest see that, behold, the scab spreadeth in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it *is* a leprosy.

9 When the plague of leprosy is in a man, then he shall be brought unto the priest;

10 and the priest shall see *him:* and, behold, *if* the rising *be* white in the skin, and it have turned the hair white, and *there be* quick raw flesh in the rising;

11 it *is* an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean, and shall not shut him up: for he *is* unclean.

12 And if a leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of *him that hath* the plague from his head even to his foot, wheresoever the priest looketh;

13 then the priest shall consider: and, behold, *if* the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce *him* clean *that hath* the plague: it is all turned white: he *is* clean.

14 But when raw flesh appeareth in him, he shall be unclean.

15 And the priest shall see the raw flesh, and pronounce him to be unclean: *for* the raw flesh *is* unclean: it *is* a leprosy.

16 Or if the raw flesh turn again, and be changed unto white, he shall come unto the priest;

17 and the priest shall see him: and, behold, *if* the plague be turned into white; then the priest shall pronounce *him* clean *that hath* the plague: he *is* clean.

18 The flesh also, in which, *even* in the skin thereof, was a boil, and is healed,

19 and in the place of the boil there be a white rising, or a bright spot, white, and somewhat reddish, and it be showed to the priest;

20 and if, when the priest seeth it, behold, it *be* in sight lower than the skin, and the hair thereof be turned white; the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it *is* a plague of leprosy broken out of the boil.

The priest is here instructed what judgment to make if there was any appearance of a leprosy, either,

1. In an old ulcer, or bile, that has been healed, Le 13:18, &c. When old sores, that seemed to be cured, break out again, it is to be feared there is a leprosy in them; such is the danger of those who, having escaped the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein and overcome. Or,

2. In a burn by accident, for this seems to be meant, Le 13:24, &c. The burning of strife and contention often proves the occasion of the rising up and breaking out of that corruption which witnesses to men's faces that they are unclean.

3. In a scall-head. And in this commonly the judgment turned upon a very small matter. If the hair in the scall was black, it was a sign of soundness; if yellow, it was an indication of a leprosy, Le 13:30-37. The other rules in these cases are the same with those mentioned before. In reading of these several sorts of ailments, it will be good for us,

a. To lament the calamitous state of human life, which lies exposed to so many grievances. What troops of diseases are we beset with on every side! and they all entered by sin.

b. To give thanks to God if he has never afflicted us with any of these sores: if the constitution is healthful, and the body lively and easy, we are bound to glorify God with our bodies.

21 But if the priest look on it, and, behold, *there be* no white hairs therein, and *if* it *be* not lower than the skin, but *be* somewhat dark; then the priest shall shut him up seven days:

22 and if it spread much abroad in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it *is* a plague.

23 But if the bright spot stay in his place, *and* spread not, it *is* a burning boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

24 Or if there be *any* flesh, in the skin whereof *there is* a hot burning, and the quick *flesh* that burneth have a white bright spot, somewhat reddish, or white;

25 then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, *if* the hair in the bright spot be turned white, and it *be in* sight deeper than the skin; it *is* a leprosy broken out of the burning: wherefore the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it *is* the plague of leprosy.

26 But if the priest look on it, and, behold, *there be* no white hair in the bright spot, and it *be* no lower than the *other* skin, but *be* somewhat dark; then the priest shall shut him up seven days:

27 and the priest shall look upon him the seventh day: *and* if it be spread much abroad in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it *is* the plague of leprosy.

28 And if the bright spot stay in his place, *and* spread not in the skin, but it *be* somewhat dark; it *is* a rising of the burning, and the priest shall pronounce him clean: for it *is* an inflammation of the burning.

29 If a man or woman have a plague upon the head or the beard;

30 then the priest shall see the plague: and, behold, if it *be* in sight deeper than the skin, and there *be* in it a yellow thin hair; then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it *is* a dry scall, *even* a leprosy upon the head or beard.

31 And if the priest look on the plague of the scall, and, behold, it *be* not in sight deeper than the skin, and *that there is* no black hair in it; then the priest shall shut up *him that hath* the plague of the scall seven days:

32 and in the seventh day the priest shall look on the plague: and, behold, *if* the scall spread not, and there be in it no yellow hair, and the scall *be* not in sight deeper than the skin;
33 he shall be shaven, but the scall shall he not shave; and the priest shall shut up *him that hath* the scall seven days more:
34 and in the seventh day the priest shall look on the scall: and, behold, *if* the scall be not spread in the skin, nor *be* in sight deeper than the skin; then the priest shall pronounce him clean: and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.
35 But if the scall spread much in the skin after his cleansing;
36 then the priest shall look on him: and, behold, if the scall be spread in the skin, the priest shall not seek for yellow hair; he *is* unclean.
37 But if the scall be in his sight at a stay, and *that* there is black hair grown up therein; the scall is healed, he *is* clean: and the priest shall pronounce him clean.
38 If a man also or a woman have in the skin of their flesh bright spots, *even* white bright spots;
39 then the priest shall look: and, behold, *if* the bright spots in the skin of their flesh *be* darkish white, it *is* a freckled spot *that* groweth in the skin: he *is* clean.

Provisos that neither a freckled skin nor a bald head should be mistaken for a leprosy, Le 13:38-41. Every deformity must not forthwith be made a ceremonial defilement. Elisha was jeered for his bald head (2Ki 2:23); but it was the children of Bethel, that knew not the judgments of their God, who turned it to his reproach.

40 And the man whose hair is fallen off his head, he *is* bald; yet *is* he clean.
41 And he that hath his hair fallen off from the part of his head toward his face, he *is* forehead bald; *yet is* he clean.
42 And if there be in the bald head, or bald forehead, a white reddish sore; it *is* a leprosy sprung up in his bald head, or his bald forehead.
43 Then the priest shall look upon it: and, behold, *if* the rising of the sore *be* white reddish in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh;
44 he is a leprous man, he *is* unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean; his plague *is* in his head.

A particular brand set upon the leprosy if at any time it did appear in a bald head: The plague is in his head, he is utterly unclean, Le 13:44. If the leprosy of sin have seized the head, if the judgment be corrupted, and wicked principles which countenance and support wicked practices, be embraced, it is an utter uncleanness, from which few are ever cleansed. Soundness in the faith keeps the leprosy from the head, and saves conscience from being shipwrecked.

45 And the leper in whom the plague *is,* his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

46 All the days wherein the plague shall *be* in him he shall be defiled; he *is* unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp *shall* his habitation *be.*

Directions what must be done with the convicted leper. When the priest, upon mature deliberation, had solemnly pronounced him unclean,

1. He must pronounce himself so, Le 13:45. He must put himself into the posture of a mourner and cry, Unclean, unclean. The leprosy was not itself a sin, but it was a sad token of God's displeasure and a sore affliction to him that was under it. It was a reproach to his name, put a full stop to his business in the world, cut him off from conversation with his friends and relations, condemned him to banishment till he was cleansed, shut him out from the sanctuary, and was, in effect, the ruin of all the comfort he could have in this world. Heman, it would seem, either was a leper or alludes to the melancholy condition of a leper, Ps 88:8-18, &c. He must therefore,

(1.) Humble himself under the mighty hand of God, not insisting upon his cleanness when the priest had pronounced him unclean, but justifying God and accepting the punishment of his iniquity. He must signify this by rending his clothes, uncovering his head, and covering his upper lip, all tokens of shame and confusion of face, and very

significant of that self-loathing and self-abasement which should fill the hearts of penitents, the language of which is self-judging. Thus must we take to ourselves the shame that belongs to us, and with broken hearts call ourselves by our own name, Unclean, unclean--heart unclean, life unclean, unclean by original corruption, unclean by actual transgression--unclean, and therefore worthy to be for ever excluded from communion with God, and all hope of happiness in him. We are all as an unclean thing (Isa 64:6)--unclean, and therefore undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose.

(2.) He must give warning to others to take heed of coming near him. Wherever he went, he must cry to those he saw at a distance, "I am unclean, unclean, take heed of touching me." Not that the leprosy was catching, but by the touch of a leper ceremonial uncleanness was contracted. Every one therefore was concerned to avoid it; and the leper himself must give notice of the danger. And this was all that the law could do, in that it was weak through the flesh; it taught the leper to cry, Unclean, unclean, but the gospel has put another cry into the lepers' mouths, Lu 17:12,13, where we find ten lepers crying with a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. The law only shows us our disease; the gospel shows us our help in Christ.

2. He must then be shut out of the camp, and afterwards, when they came to Canaan, out of the city, town, or village, where he lived, and dwell alone (Le 13:46), associating with none but those that were lepers like himself. When king Uzziah became a leper, he was banished from his palace, and dwelt in a separate house, 2Ch 26:21. And see 2Ki 7:3. This typified the purity which ought to be preserved in the gospel church, by the solemn and authoritative exclusion of scandalous sinners that hate to be reformed, from the communion of the faithful. Put away from among yourselves that wicked person, 1Co 5:13.

47 The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, *whether it be* a woolen garment, or a linen garment;
48 whether *it be* in the warp, or woof, of linen, or of woolen; whether in a skin, or in any thing made of skin;
49 and if the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it *is* a plague of leprosy, and shall be showed unto the priest:
50 and the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up *it that hath* the plague seven days:
51 and he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it *is* unclean.
52 He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woolen or in linen, or any thing of skin, wherein the plague is: for it *is* a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire.
53 And if the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague be not spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin;
54 then the priest shall command that they wash *the thing* wherein the plague *is*, and he shall shut it up seven days more:

This is the law concerning the plague of leprosy in a garment, whether linen or woollen. A leprosy in a garment, with discernible indications of it, the colour changed by it, the garment fretted, the nap worn off, and this in some one particular part of the garment, and increasing when it was shut up, and not to be got out by washing is a thing which to us now is altogether unaccountable. The learned confess that it was a sign and a miracle in Israel, an extraordinary punishment inflicted by the divine power, as a token of great displeasure against a person or family.

1 The process was much the same with that concerning a leprous person. The garment suspected to be tainted was not to be burnt immediately, though, it may be, there would have been no great loss of it; for in no case must sentence be given

merely upon a surmise, but it must be shown to the priest. If, upon search, it was found that there was a leprous spot (the Jews say no bigger than a bean), it must be burnt, or at least that part of the garment in which the spot was, Le 13:52,57. If the cause of the suspicion was gone, it must be washed, and then might be used, Le 13:58.

2 The signification also was much the same, to intimate the great malignity there is in sin: it not only defiles the sinner's conscience, but it brings a stain upon all his employments and enjoyments, all he has and all he does. To those that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, Tit 1:15. And we are taught hereby to hate even the garments spotted with the flesh, Jude 1:23. Those that make their clothes servants to their pride and lust may see them thereby tainted with a leprosy, and doomed to the fire, Isa 3:18-24. But the ornament of the hidden man of the heart is incorruptible, 1Pe 3:4. The robes of righteousness never fret nor are moth-eaten.

55 and the priest shall look on the plague, after that it is washed: and, behold, *if* the plague have not changed his color, and the plague be not spread, it *is* unclean; thou shalt burn it in the fire; it *is* fret inward, *whether* it *be* bare within or without.

56 And if the priest look, and, behold, the plague be somewhat dark after the washing of it; then he shall rend it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof:

57 and if it appear still in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it *is* a spreading *plague:* thou shalt burn that wherein the plague *is* with fire.

58 And the garment, either warp, or woof, or whatsoever thing of skin *it be,* which thou shalt wash, if the plague be departed from them, then it shall be washed the second time, and shall be clean.

59 This *is* the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of woolen or linen, either in the warp, or woof, or any thing of skins, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean.

Leviticus-14

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:
3 and the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, *if* the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;

The judgment of the cure, as well as that of the disease, was referred to the priest. He must go out of the camp to the leper, to see whether his leprosy was healed, Le 14:3. And we may suppose the priest did not contract any ceremonial uncleanness by coming near the leper, as another person would. It was in mercy to the poor lepers that the priests particularly had orders to attend them, for the priests' lips should keep knowledge; and those in affliction have need to be instructed both how to bear their afflictions and how to reap benefit by them, have need of the word, in concurrence with the rod, to bring them to repentance; therefore it is well for those that are sick if they have these messengers of the Lord of hosts with them, these interpreters, to show unto them God's uprightness, Job 33:23. When the leper was shut out, and could not go to the priests, it was well that the priests might come to him. Is any sick? Let him send for the elders, the ministers, Jam 5:14. If we apply it to the spiritual leprosy of sin, it intimates that when we withdraw from those who walk disorderly, that they may be ashamed, we must not count them as enemies, but admonish them as brethren, 2Th 3:15. And also that when God by his grace has brought those to repentance who were shut out of communion for scandal, they ought with tenderness, and joy, and sincere affection, to be received in again. Thus Paul orders concerning the excommunicated Corinthian that when he had given evidences of his repentance they should forgive him, and comfort him, and confirm their love towards him, 2Co 2:7,8. And ministers are entrusted by our Master with the declarative power of loosing as well as binding: both must be done with great caution and deliberation, impartially and

without respect of persons, with earnest prayer to God for directions, and a sincere regard to the edification of the body of Christ, due care being always taken that sinners may not be encouraged by an excess of lenity, nor penitents discouraged by an excess of severity. Wisdom and sincerity are profitable to direct in this case.

4 then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed
two birds alive *and* clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:
5 and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an
earthen vessel over running water.
6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the
scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in
the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water:
7 and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the
leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let
the living bird loose into the open field.
8 And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off
all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and
after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out
of his tent seven days.
9 But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off
his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall
shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh
in water, and he shall be clean.
10 And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish,
and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three
tenth deals of fine flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, and
one log of oil:
11 and the priest that maketh *him* clean shall present the man that is
to be made clean, and those things, before the Lord, *at* the door of
the tabernacle of the congregation.

To complete the purification of the leper, on the eighth day, after the former solemnity performed without the camp, and, as it should seem, before he returned to his own habitation, he was to attend at the door of the tabernacle, and was there to be presented to the Lord, with his offering, Le 14:11. Observe here,

That the mercies of God oblige us to present ourselves to him, Ro 12:1.

When we present ourselves before the Lord we must present our offerings, devoting to God with ourselves all we have and can do.

Both we and our offerings must be presented before the Lord by the priest that made us clean, even our Lord Jesus, else neither we nor they can be accepted.

12 And the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord:

13 and he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the holy place: for as the sin offering is the priest's, *so is* the trespass offering: it *is* most holy:

14 and the priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put *it* upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.

Three lambs the cleansed leper was to bring, with a meat-offering, and a log of oil, which was about half a pint. Now,

1. Most of the ceremony peculiar to this case was about the trespass-offering, the lamb for which was offered first, Le 14:12. And, besides the usual rites with which the trespass-offering was offered, some of the blood was to be put upon the ear, and thumb, and great toe, of the leper that was to be cleansed (Le 14:14), the very same ceremony that was used in the consecration of the priests, Le 8:23,24. It was a mortification to them to see the same purification necessary for them that was for a leper. The Jews say that the leper stood without the gate of the tabernacle and the priest within, and thus the ceremony was performed through the gate, signifying that now he was admitted with other Israelites to attend in the courts of the Lord's house again, and was as

welcome as ever; though he had been a leper, and though perhaps the name might stick by him as long as he lived (as we read of one who probably was cleansed by our Lord Jesus, who yet afterwards is called Simon the leper, Mt 26:6), yet he was as freely admitted as ever to communion with God and man. After the blood of the offering had been put with the priest's finger upon the extremities of the body, to include the whole, some of the oil that he brought, which was first waved and then sprinkled before the Lord, was in like manner put in the same places upon the blood. "The blood" (says the learned bishop Patrick) "seems to have been a token of forgiveness, the oil of healing," for God first forgiveth our iniquities and then healeth our diseases, Ps 103:3. See Isa 38:17. Wherever the blood of Christ is applied for justification the oil of the Spirit is applied for sanctification; for these two are inseparable and both necessary to our acceptance with God. Nor shall our former leprosy, if it be healed by repentance, be any bar to these glorious privileges. Cleansed lepers are as welcome to the blood and the oil as consecrated priests. Such were some of you, but you are washed. When the leper was sprinkled the water must have blood in it (Le 14:5), when he was anointed the oil must have blood under it, to signify that all the graces and comforts of the Spirit, all his purifying dignifying influences, are owing to the death of Christ: it is by his blood alone that we are sanctified.

2. Besides this there must be a sin-offering and a burnt-offering, a lamb for each, Le 14:19,20. By each of these offerings, it is said, the priests shall make atonement for him.

(1.) His moral guilt shall be removed; the sin for which the leprosy was sent shall be pardoned, and all the sins he had been guilty of in his afflicted state. Note, The removal of any outward trouble is then doubly comfortable to us when at the

same time God gives us some assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. If we receive the atonement, we have reason to rejoice, Ro 5:11.

(2.) His ceremonial pollution shall be removed, which had kept him from the participation of the holy things. And this is called making an atonement for him, because our restoration to the privileges of God's children, typified hereby, is owing purely to the great propitiation. When the atonement is made for him he shall be clean, both to his own satisfaction and to his reputation among his neighbours; he shall retrieve both his credit and his comfort, and both these true penitents become entitled to, both ease and honour, by their interest in the atonement. The burnt-offering, besides the atonement that was made by it, was a thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy to him: and the more immediate the hand of God was both in the sickness and in the cure the more reason he had thus to give glory to him, and thus, as our Saviour speaks (Mk 1:44), to offer for his cleansing all those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

15 And the priest shall take *some* of the log of oil, and pour *it* into the
palm of his own left hand:
16 and the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that *is* in his left
hand, and shall sprinkle of the oil with his finger seven times
before the Lord:
17 and of the rest of the oil that *is* in his hand shall the priest put upon
the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the
thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot,
upon the blood of the trespass offering:
18 and the remnant of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall pour
upon the head of him that is to be cleansed: and the priest shall
make an atonement for him before the Lord.
19 And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make an atonement
for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness; and afterward
he shall kill the burnt offering:

20 and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meat offering
upon the altar: and the priest shall make an atonement for him,
and he shall be clean.
21 And if he *be* poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one
lamb *for* a trespass offering to be waved, to make an atonement for
him, and one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat
offering, and a log of oil;
22 and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get;
and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering.
23 And he shall bring them on the eighth day for his cleansing unto
the priest, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,
before the Lord.

We have here the gracious provision which the law made for the cleansing of poor lepers. If they were not able to bring three lambs, and three tenth-deals of flour, they must bring one lamb, and one tenth-deal of flour, and, instead of the other two lambs, two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, Le 14:21,22. Here see,

1. That the poverty of the person concerned would not excuse him if he brought no offering at all. Let none think that because they are poor God requires no service from them, since he has considered them, and demands that which it is in the power of the poorest to give. "My son, give me thy heart, and with that the calves of thy lips shall be accepted instead of the calves of the stall."

2. That God expected from those who were poor only according to their ability; his commandments are not grievous, nor does he make us to serve with an offering. The poor are as welcome to God's altar as the rich; and, if there be first a willing mind and an honest heart, two pigeons, when they are the utmost a man is able to get, are as acceptable to God as two lambs; for he requires according to what a man has and not according to what he has not. But it

is observable that though a meaner sacrifice was accepted from the poor, yet the very same ceremony was used for them as was for the rich; for their souls are as precious and Christ and his gospel are the same to both. Let not us therefore have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons, Jam 2:1.

24 And the priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering, and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them *for* a wave offering before the Lord:

25 and he shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering, and put *it* upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot.

26 And the priest shall pour of the oil into the palm of his own left hand:

27 and the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger *some* of the oil that *is* in his left hand seven times before the Lord:

28 and the priest shall put of the oil that *is* in his hand upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the place of the blood of the trespass offering:

29 and the rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall put upon the head of him that is to be cleansed, to make an atonement for him before the Lord.

30 And he shall offer the one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can get;

31 *even* such as he is able to get, the one *for* a sin offering, and the other *for* a burnt offering, with the meat offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before the Lord.

32 This *is* the law *of him* in whom *is* the plague of leprosy, whose hand is not able to get *that which pertaineth* to his cleansing.

33 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

34 When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give to you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession;

This is the law concerning the leprosy in a house. Now that they were in the wilderness they dwelt in tents, and had no

houses, and therefore the law is made only an appendix to the former laws concerning the leprosy, because it related, not to their present state, but to their future settlement. The leprosy in a house is as unaccountable as the leprosy in a garment; but, if we see not what natural causes of it can be assigned, we may resolve it into the power of the God of nature, who here says, I put the leprosy in a house (Le 14:34), as his curse is said to enter into a house, and consume it with the timber and stones thereof, Zec 5:4.

Now, it is supposed that even in Canaan itself, the land of promise, their houses might be infected with a leprosy. Though it was a holy land, this would not secure them from this plague, while the inhabitants were many of them so unholy. Thus a place and a name in the visible church will not secure wicked people from God's judgments.

35 and he that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, it seemeth to me *there is* as it were a plague in the house:

It is likewise taken for granted that the owner of the house will make the priest acquainted with it, as soon as he sees the least cause to suspect the leprosy in his house: It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house, Le 14:35. Sin, where that reigns in a house, is a plague there, as it is in a heart. And masters of families should be aware and afraid of the first appearance of gross sin in their families, and put away the iniquity, whatever it is, far from their tabernacles, Job 22:23. They should be jealous with a godly jealousy concerning those under their charge, lest they be drawn into sin, and take early advice, if it but seem that there is a plague in the house, lest the contagion spread, and many be by it defiled and destroyed.

36 then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest go *into it* to see the plague, that all that *is* in the house be not made unclean: and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house:

37 and he shall look on the plague, and, behold, *if* the plague *be* in the walls of the house with hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, which in sight *are* lower than the wall;

38 then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days:

39 and the priest shall come again the seventh day, and shall look: and, behold, *if* the plague be spread in the walls of the house;

40 then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague *is*, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city:

If the priest, upon search, found that the leprosy had got into the house, he must try to cure it, by taking gout that part of the building that was infected, Le 14:40,41. This was like cutting off a gangrened limb, for the preservation of the rest of the body. Corruption should be purged out in time, before it spread; for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.

41 and he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place:

42 and they shall take other stones, and put *them* in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house.

43 And if the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered;

44 then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, *if* the plague be spread in the house, it *is* a fretting leprosy in the house: it *is* unclean.

If yet it remained in the house, the whole house must be pulled down, and all the materials carried to the dunghill, Le 14:44,45. The owner had better be without a dwelling than live in one that was infected. Note, The leprosy of sin, if it be obstinate under the methods of cure, will at last be the ruin of families and churches. If Babylon will not be healed, she shall be forsaken and abandoned, and (according to the law respecting the leprous house), they shall not take of her a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations, Jer 51:9,26.

The remainders of sin and corruption in our mortal bodies are like this leprosy in the house; after all our pains in scraping and plastering, we shall never be quite clear of it, till the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved and taken down; when we are dead we shall be free from sin, and not till then, Ro 6:7.

45 And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry *them* forth out of the city into an unclean place.

46 Moreover, he that goeth into the house all the while that it is shut up shall be unclean until the even.

47 And he that lieth in the house shall wash his clothes; and he that eateth in the house shall wash his clothes.

48 And if the priest shall come in, and look *upon it*, and, behold, the plague hath not spread in the house, after the house was plastered; then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed.

49 And he shall take to cleanse the house two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

If the taking out the infected stones cured the house, and the leprosy did not spread any further, then the house must be cleansed; not only aired, that it might be healthful, but purified from the ceremonial pollution, that it might be fit to be the habitation of an Israelite. The ceremony of its cleansing was much the same with that of cleansing a leprous person, Le 14:49, &c. This intimated that the house was smitten for the man's sake (as bishop Patrick expresses it), and he was to look upon himself as preserved by divine mercy. The houses of Israelites are said to be dedicated (De 20:5), for they were a holy nation, and therefore they ought to keep their houses pure from all ceremonial pollutions, that they might be fit for the service of that God to whom they were devoted. And the same care should we take to reform whatever is amiss in our families, that we and our houses may serve the Lord; see Ge 35:2. Some have thought the leprosy in the house was typical of the idolatry of the Jewish church, which did strangely cleave to it; for, though some of

the reforming kings took away the infected stones, yet still it broke out again, till by the captivity of Babylon God took down the house, and carried it to an unclean land; and this proved an effectual cure of their inclination to idols and idolatrous worships.

50 and he shall kill the one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water:

51 and he shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times:

52 and he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood, and with the hyssop, and with the scarlet:

53 but he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house: and it shall be clean.

54 This *is* the law for all manner of plague of leprosy, and scall,

This is the conclusion of this law concerning the leprosy. There is no repetition of it in Deuteronomy, only a general memorandum given (De 24:8), Take heed in the plague of leprosy. We may see in this law,

1 The gracious care God took of his people Israel, for to them only this law pertained, and not to the Gentiles. When Naaman the Syrian was cured of his leprosy he was not bidden to show himself to the priest, though he was cured in Jordan, as the Jews that were cured by our Saviour were. Thus those who are entrusted with the key of discipline in the church judge those only that are within; but those that are without God judgeth, 1Co 5:12,13.

2 The religious care we ought to take of ourselves, to keep our minds from the dominion of all sinful affections and dispositions, which are both their disease and their defilement, that we may be fit for the service of God. We ought also to avoid all bad company, and, as much as may

be, to avoid coming within the danger of being infected by it. Touch not the unclean thing, saith the Lord, and I will receive you, 2Co 6:17.

55 and for the leprosy of a garment, and of a house,
56 and for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot:
57 to teach when *it is* unclean, and when *it is* clean: this *is* the law of leprosy.

Leviticus-15

Unclean Discharges from the Body

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, *because of* his issue he *is* unclean.

We have here the law concerning the ceremonial uncleanness that was contracted by running issues in men. It is called in the margin (Le 15:2) the running of the reins: a very grievous and loathsome disease, which was, usually the effect and consequent of wantonness and uncleanness, and a dissolute course of life, filling men's bones with the sins of their youth, and leaving them to mourn at the last, when all the pleasures of their wickedness have vanished, and nothing remains but the pain and anguish of a rotten carcase and a wounded conscience. And what fruit has the sinner then of those things whereof he has so much reason to be ashamed? Ro 6:21.

As modesty is an ornament of grace to the head and chains about the neck, so chastity is health to the navel and marrow to the bones; but uncleanness is a wound and dishonour, the consumption of the flesh and the body, and a sin which is often its own punishment more than any other. It was also sometimes inflicted by the righteous hand of God for other sins, as appears by David's imprecation of a curse upon the

family of Joab, for the murder of Abner. 2Sa 3:29, Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or is a leper. A vile disease for vile deserts. Now whoever had this disease upon him,

He was himself unclean, Le 15:2. He must not dare to come near the sanctuary, it was at his peril if he did, nor might he eat of the holy things. This signified the filthiness of sin, and of all the productions of our corrupt nature, which render us odious to God's holiness, and utterly unfit for communion with him. Out of a pure heart well-kept are the issues of life (Pr 4:23), but out of an unclean heart comes that which is defiling, Mt 12:34,35.

3 And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue: whether his flesh run with his issue, or his flesh be stopped from his issue, it *is* his uncleanness.

4 Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean.

5 And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

6 And he that sitteth on *any* thing whereon he sat that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

He made every person and thing unclean that he touched, or that touched him, Le 15:4-12. His bed, and his chair, and his saddle, and every thing that belonged to him, could not be touched without a ceremonial uncleanness contracted, which a man must remain conscious to himself of till sunset, and from which he could not be cleansed without washing his clothes, and bathing his flesh in water. This signified the contagion of sin, the danger we are in of being polluted by conversing with those that are polluted, and the need we have with the utmost circumspection to save ourselves from this untoward generation.

7 And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

8 And if he that hath the issue spit upon him that is clean; then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

9 And what saddle soever he rideth upon that hath the issue shall be unclean.

10 And whosoever toucheth any thing that was under him shall be unclean until the even: and he that beareth *any of* those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

11 And whomsoever he toucheth that hath the issue, and hath not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.

12 And the vessel of earth, that he toucheth which hath the issue, shall be broken: and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

13 And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue, then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean.

14 And on the eighth day he shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before the Lord unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and give them unto the priest:

When he was cured of the disease, yet he could not be cleansed from the pollution without a sacrifice, for which he was to prepare himself by seven days' expectation after he was perfectly clear from his distemper, and by bathing in spring water, Le 15:13-15. This signified the great gospel duties of faith and repentance, and the great gospel privileges of the application of Christ's blood to our souls for our justification and his grace for our sanctification. God has promised to sprinkle clean water upon us, and to cleanse us from all our filthiness, and has appointed us by repentance to wash and make ourselves clean: he has also provided a sacrifice of atonement, and requires us by faith to interest ourselves in that sacrifice; for it is the blood of Christ his Son that cleanses us from all sin, and by which atonement is made for us, that we may have admission into God's presence and may partake of his favour.

15 and the priest shall offer them, the one *for* a sin offering, and the

other *for* a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement
for him before the Lord for his issue.
16 And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he
shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.
17 And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the seed of
copulation, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the
even.
18 The woman also with whom man shall lie *with* seed of copulation,
they shall *both* bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the
even.
19 And if a woman have an issue, *and* her issue in her flesh be blood,
she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall
be unclean until the even.

This is concerning the ceremonial uncleanness which women lay under from their issues, both those that were regular and healthful, and according to the course of nature (Le 15:19-24), and those that were unseasonable, excessive, and the disease of the body; such was the bloody issue of that poor woman who was suddenly cured by touching the hem of Christ's garment, after she had lain twelve years under her distemper, and had spent her estate upon physicians and physic in vain. This made the woman that was afflicted with it unclean (Le 15:25) and every thing she touched unclean, Le 15:26, 27. And if she was cured, and found by seven days' trial that she was perfectly free from her issue of blood, she was to be cleansed by the offering of two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, to make an atonement for her, Le 15:28,29. All wicked courses, particularly idolatries, are compared to the uncleanness of a removed woman (Eze 36:17), and, in allusion to this, it is said of Jerusalem (La 1:9), Her filthiness is in her skirts, so that (as it follows, Le 15:17) she was shunned as a menstruous woman.

20 And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be
unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be
unclean.

21 And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.
22 And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.
23 And if it *be* on *her* bed, or on any thing whereon she sitteth, when he toucheth it, he shall be unclean until the even.
24 And if any man lie with her at all, and her flowers be upon him, he shall be unclean seven days; and all the bed whereon he lieth shall be unclean.
25 And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she *shall be* unclean.
26 Every bed whereon she lieth all the days of her issue shall be unto her as the bed of her separation: and whatsoever she sitteth upon shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her separation.
27 And whosoever toucheth those things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even.
28 But if she be cleansed of her issue, then she shall number to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.
29 And on the eighth day she shall take unto her two turtles, or two young pigeons, and bring them unto the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
30 And the priest shall offer the one *for* a sin offering, and the other *for* a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her before the Lord for the issue of her uncleanness.
31 Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness; that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that *is* among them.

The reasons given for all these laws (which we are ready to think might very well have been spared) we have, Le 15:31.

1. Thus shall you separate the children of Israel (for to them only and their servants and proselytes these laws pertained) from their uncleanness; that is,

(1.) By these laws they were taught their privilege and honour, that they were purified unto God a peculiar people, and were intended by the holy God for a kingdom of priests, a holy nation; for that was a defilement to them which was not so to others.

(2.) They were also taught their duty, which was to preserve the honour of their purity, and to keep themselves from all sinful pollutions. It was easy for them to argue that if those pollutions which were natural, unavoidable, involuntary, their affliction and not their sin, rendered them for the time so odious that they were not fit for communion either with God or man, much more abominable and filthy were they if they sinned against the light and law of nature, by drunkenness, adultery, fraud, and the like sins, which defile the very mind and conscience. And, if these ceremonial pollutions could not be done away but by sacrifice and offering, something greater and much more valuable must be expected and depended upon for the purifying of the soul from the uncleanness of sin.

2. Thus their dying in their uncleanness by the hand of God's justice, if while they were under any of these defilements they should come near the sanctuary, would be prevented. Note, It is a dangerous thing to die in our uncleanness; and it is our own fault if we do, since we have not only fair warning given us, by God's law, against those things that will defile us, but also such gracious provision made by his gospel for our cleansing if at any time we be defiled.

3. In all these laws there seems to be a special regard had to the honour of the tabernacle, to which none must approach in their uncleanness, that they defile not my tabernacle. Infinite Wisdom took this course to preserve in the minds of that careless people a continual dread of, and veneration for,

the manifestations of God's glory and presence among them in his sanctuary. Now that the tabernacle of God was with men familiarity would be apt to breed contempt, and therefore the law made so many things of frequent incidence to be ceremonial pollutions, and to involve an incapacity of drawing near to the sanctuary (making death the penalty), that so they might not approach without great caution, and reverence, and serious preparation, and fear of being found unfit. Thus they were taught never to draw near to God but with an awful humble sense of their distance and danger, and an exact observance of every thing that was required in order to their safety and acceptance.

And what duty must we learn from all this?

1. Let us bless God that we are not under the yoke of these carnal ordinances, that, as nothing can destroy us, so nothing can defile us, but sin. Those may now partake of the Lord's supper who durst not then eat of the peace-offerings. And the defilement we contract by our sins of daily infirmity we may be cleansed from in secret by the renewed acts of repentance and faith, without bathing in water or bringing an offering to the door of the tabernacle.

2. Let us carefully abstain from all sin, as defiling to the conscience, and particularly from all fleshly lusts, possessing our vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness, which not only pollute the soul, but war against it, and threaten its ruin.

3. Let us all see how indispensably necessary real holiness is to our future happiness, and get our hearts purified by faith, that we may see God. Perhaps it is in allusion to these laws which forbade the unclean to approach the sanctuary that when it is asked, Who shall stand in God's holy place? it is answered, He that hath clean hands and a pure heart (Ps 24:3,4); for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

32 This *is* the law of him that hath an issue, and of *him* whose seed
goeth from him, and is defiled therewith;
33 and of her that is sick of her flowers, and of him that hath an issue,
of the man, and of the woman, and of him that lieth with her that
is unclean.

Leviticus-16

The Day of Atonement

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of
Aaron, when they offered before the Lord, and died;

The date of this law concerning the day of atonement: it was after the death of the two sons of Aaron (Le 16:1), which we read, Le 10:1.

1. Lest Aaron should fear that any remaining guilt of that sin should cleave to his family, or (seeing the priests were so apt to offend) that some after-sin of his other sons should be the ruin of his family, he is directed how to make atonement for his house, that it might keep in with God; for the atonement for it would be the establishment of it, and preserve the entail of the blessing upon it.

2 The priests being warned by the death of Nadab and Abihu to approach to God with reverence and godly fear (without which they came at their peril), directions are here given how the nearest approach might be made, not only without peril, but to unspeakable advantage and comfort, if the directions were observed. When they were cut off for an undue approach, the rest must not say, "Then we will not draw near at all," but, "Then we will do it by rule." They died for their sin, therefore God graciously provides for the rest, that they die not. Thus God's judgments on some should be instructions to others.

2 and the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy *place* within the veil before the mercy seat, which *is* upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

The design of this law. One intention of it was to preserve a veneration for the most holy place, within the veil, where the Shechinah, or divine glory, was pleased to dwell between the cherubim: Speak unto Aaron, that he come not at all times into the holy place, Le 16:2. Before the veil some of the priests came every day to burn incense upon the golden altar, but within the veil none must ever come but the high priest only, and he but on one day in the year, and with great ceremony and caution. That place where God manifested his special presence must not be made common. If none must come into the presence-chamber of an earthly king uncalled, no, not the queen herself, upon pain of death (Es 4:11), was it not requisite that the same sacred respect should be paid to the Kings of kings? But see what a blessed change is made by the gospel of Christ; all good Christians have now boldness to enter into the holiest, through the veil, every day (Heb 10:19,20); and we come boldly (not as Aaron must, with fear and trembling) to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, Heb 4:16. While the manifestations of God's presence and grace were sensible, it was requisite that they should thus be confined and upon reserve, because the objects of sense the more familiar they are made the less awful or delightful they become; but now that they are purely spiritual it is otherwise, for the objects of faith the more they are conversed with the more do they manifest of their greatness and goodness: now therefore we are welcome to come at all times into the holy place not made with hands, for we are made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places by faith, Eph 2:6. Then Aaron must not come near at all times, lest he die; we now must come near at all times that we may live: it is distance only that is our death. Then God appeared in the cloud upon the mercy-seat, but now with open face we

behold, not in a dark cloud, but in a clear glass, the glory of the Lord, 2Co 3:18.

3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place; with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

The person to whom the work of this day was committed, and that was the high priest only: Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place, Le 16:3. He was to do all himself upon the day of atonement: only there was a second provided to be his substitute or supporter, in case any thing should befall him, either of sickness or ceremonial uncleanness, that he could not perform the service of the day. All Christians are spiritual priests, but Christ only is the high priest, and he alone it is that makes atonement, nor needed he either assistant or substitute.

4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these *are* holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and *so* put them on.

The attire of the high priest in this service. He was not to be dressed up in his rich garments that were peculiar to himself: he was not to put on the ephod, with the precious stones in it, but only the linen clothes which he wore in common with the inferior priests, Le 16:4. That meaner dress did best become him on this day of humiliation; and, being thinner and lighter, he would in it be more expedite for the work or service of the day, which was all to go through his hands. Christ, our high priest, made atonement for sin in our nature; not in the robes of his own peculiar glory, but the linen garments of our mortality, clean indeed, but mean.

5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

The Jewish writers say that for seven days before the day of expiation the high priest was to retire from his own house, and to dwell in a chamber of the temple, that he might prepare himself for the service of this great day. During

those seven days he himself did the work of the inferior priests about the sacrifices, incense, &c., that he might have his hand in for this day: he must have the institution read to him again and again, that he might be fully apprised of the whole method.

He was to begin the service of the day very early with the usual morning sacrifice, after he had first washed his whole body before he dressed himself, and his hands and feet again afterwards. He then burned the daily incense, dressed the lamps, and offered the extraordinary sacrifice appointed for this day (not here, but Nu 29:8), a bullock, a ram, and seven lambs, all for burnt-offerings. This he is supposed to have done in his high priest's garments.

6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which *is* for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

He must now put off his rich robes, bathe himself, put on the linen garments, and present unto the Lord his own bullock, which was to be a sin-offering for himself and his own house, Le 16:6. The bullock was set between the temple and the altar, and the offering of him mentioned in this verse was the making of a solemn confession of his sins and the sins of his house, earnestly praying for the forgiveness of them, and this with his hands on the head of the bullock.

7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

He must then cast lots upon the two goats, which were to make (both together) one sin-offering for the congregation. One of these goats must be slain, in token of a satisfaction to be made to God's justice for sin, the other must be sent away, in token of the remission or dismission of sin by the mercy of God. Both must be presented together to God (Le 16:7) before the lot was cast upon them, and afterwards the scape-goat by itself, Le 16:10. Some think that goats were chosen for the sin-offering because, by the disagreeableness of their smell, the offensiveness of sin is represented: others think, because it was said that the demons which the heathens then

worshipped often appeared to their worshippers in the form of goats, God therefore obliged his people to sacrifice goats, that they might never be tempted to sacrifice to goats.

8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him *for* a sin offering.

10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, *and* to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

Benson Commentary
Leviticus 16:10. For a scape-goat — This seems to be the most literal and obvious meaning of the original word לזאזא, Azazel, evidently derived from זע, ez, or gnez, a goat, and אזל, leza, ,ti dnatsrednu ytneveS eht esnes siht nI .yawa og ot, rendering the word αποπομπαιος, sent away; Aquila also, who translates it απολελυμενον, dismissed; and Symmachus, who renders it απερχομενον, going away. Nor does there appear to be any solid reason for thinking it was the name of a mountain, to which the goat was sent, much less that the angel of death, or the devil, was intended by the word, as some have said; for surely in that case it could be no type of Christ's resurrection, as it is generally supposed to have been.

11 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which *is* for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which *is* for himself:

The next thing to be done was to kill the bullock for the sin-offering for himself and his house, Le 16:11. "Now," say the Jews, "he must again put his hands on the head of the bullock, and repeat the confession and supplication he had before made, and kill the bullock with his own hands, to make atonement for himself first (for how could he make reconciliation for the sins of the people till he was himself first reconciled?) and for his house, not only his own family,

but all the priests, who are called the house of Aaron," Ps 135:19. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. The bullock being killed, he left one of the priests to stir the blood, that it might not thicken, and then, He took a censer of burning coals (that would not smoke) in one hand, and a dish full of the sweet incense in the other, and then went into the holy of holies through the veil, and went up towards the ark, set the coals down upon the floor, and scattered the incense upon them, so that the room was immediately filled with smoke. The Jews say that he was to go in side-ways, that he might not look directly upon the ark where the divine glory was, till it was covered with smoke; then he must come out backwards, out of reverence to the divine majesty; and, after a short prayer, he was to hasten out of the sanctuary, to show himself to the people, that they might not suspect that he had misbehaved himself and died before the Lord.

12 and he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring *it* within the veil:

13 and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* upon the testimony, that he die not:

14 and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle *it* with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

When the priest had come out from the sprinkling the blood of the bullock before the mercy-seat,

He must next kill the goat which was the sin-offering for the people (Le 16:15) and go the third time into the holy of holies, to sprinkle the blood of the goat, as he had done that of the bullock; and thus he was to make atonement for the

holy place (Le 16:16); that is, whereas the people by their sins had provoked God to take away those tokens of his favourable presence with them, and rendered even that holy place unfit to be the habitation of the holy God, atonement was hereby made for sin, that God, being reconciled to them, might continue with them.

16 and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

He must then do the same for the outward part of the tabernacle that he had done for the inner room, by sprinkling the blood of the bullock first, and then that of the goat, without the veil, where the table and incense-altar stood, eight times each as before. The reason intimated is because the tabernacle remained among them in the midst of their uncleanness, Le 16:16. God would hereby show them how much their hearts needed to be purified, when even the tabernacle, only by standing in the midst of such an impure and sinful people, needed this expiation; and also that even their devotions and religious performances had much amiss in them, for which it was necessary that atonement should be made. During this solemnity, none of the inferior priests must come into the tabernacle (Le 16:17), but, by standing without, must own themselves unworthy and unfit to minister there, because their follies, and defects, and manifold impurities in their ministry, had made this expiation of the tabernacle necessary.

17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy *place,* until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that *is* before the Lord, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put *it* upon the horns of the altar round about.

He must then put some of the blood, both of the bullock and of the goat mixed together, upon the horns of the altar that is before the Lord, Le 16:18,19. It is certain that the altar of incense had this blood put upon it, for so it is expressly ordered (Ex 30:10); but some think that this directs the high priest to the altar of burnt-offerings, for that also is here called the altar before the Lord (Le 16:12), because he is said to go out to it, and because it may be presumed that that also had need of an expiation; for to that the gifts and offerings of the children of Israel were all brought, from whose uncleanness the altar is here said to be hallowed.

19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

20 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

The high priest having presented unto the Lord the expiatory sacrifices, by the sprinkling of their blood, the remainder of which, it is probable, he poured out at the foot of the brazen altar, he is next to confess the sins of Israel, with both his hands upon the head of the scape-goat (Le 16:20,21); and whenever hands were imposed upon the head of any sacrifice it was always done with confession, according as the nature of the sacrifice was; and, this being a sin-offering, it must be a confession of sin. In the latter and more degenerate ages of the Jewish church they had a set form of confession prepared for the high priest, but God here prescribed none; for it might be supposed that the high priest was so well acquainted with the state of the people, and had such a tender concern for them, that he needed not any form. The confession must be as particular as he could make it, not only of all the iniquities of the children of Israel, but all their transgressions in all their sins. In one sin there may be many transgressions, from the several aggravating circumstances of it; and in our confessions we should take notice of them, and not only say, I have sinned, but, with Achan, "Thus and

thus have I done." By this confession he must put the sins of Israel upon the head of the goat; that is, exercising faith upon the divine appointment which constituted such a translation, he must transfer the punishment incurred from the sinners to the sacrifice, which would have been but a jest, nay, an affront to God, if he himself had not ordained it.

21 and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22 and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

The goat was then to be sent away immediately by the hand of a fit person pitched upon for the purpose, into a wilderness, a land not inhabited; and God allowed them to make this construction of it, that the sending away of the goat was the sending away of their sins, by a free and full remission: He shall bear upon him all their iniquities, Le 16:22. The losing of the goat was a sign to them that the sins of Israel should be sought for, and not found, Jer 50:20.

23 And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there:

The high priest must then put off his linen garments in the tabernacle, and leave them there, the Jews say never to be worn again by himself or any other, for they made new ones every year; and he must bathe himself in water, put on his rich clothes, and then offer both his own and the people's burnt-offerings, Le 16:23,24. When we have the comfort of our pardon God must have the glory of it. If we have the benefit of the sacrifice of atonement, we must not grudge the sacrifices of acknowledgment. And, it should seem, the burning of the fat of the sin-offering was deferred till now (Le 16:25), that it might be consumed with the burnt-offerings.

24 and he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on
his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the
burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself,
and for the people.
25 And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.
26 And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes,
and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.
27 And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat *for* the sin offering,
whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy
place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn
in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

The flesh of both those sin-offerings whose blood was taken within the veil was to be all burnt, not upon the altar, but at a distance without the camp, to signify both our putting away sin by true repentance, and the spirit of burning, and God's putting it away by a full remission, so that it shall never rise up in judgment against us.

28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his
flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

He that took the scape-goat into the wilderness, and those that burned the sin-offering, were to be looked upon as ceremonially unclean, and must not come into the camp till they had washed their clothes and bathed their flesh in water, which signified the defiling nature of sin; even the sacrifice which was but made sin was defiling: also the imperfection of the legal sacrifices; they were so far from taking away sin that even they left some stain upon those that touched them.

When all this was done, the high priest went again into the most holy place to fetch his censer, and so returned to his own house with joy, because he had done his duty, and died not.

29 And *this* shall be a statute for ever unto you: *that* in the seventh
month, on the tenth *day* of the month, ye shall afflict your souls,
and do no work at all, *whether it be* one of your own country, or a
stranger that sojourneth among you:

The day appointed for this solemnity. It must be observed yearly on the tenth day of the seventh month, Le 16:29. The seventh had been reckoned the first month, till God appointed that the month in which the children of Israel came out of Egypt should thenceforward be accounted and called the first month. Some have fancied that this tenth day of the seventh month was the day of the year on which our first parents fell, and that it was kept as a fast in remembrance of their fall. Dr. Lightfoot computes that this was the day on which Moses came the last time down from the mount, when he brought with him the renewed tables, and the assurances of God's being reconciled to Israel, and his face shone: that day must be a day of atonement throughout their generations; for the remembrance of God's forgiving them their sin about the golden calf might encourage them to hope that, upon their repentance, he would forgive them all trespasses.

30 for on that day shall the *priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that* ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.

31 It *shall be* a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

The duty of the people on this day.

(1.) They must rest from all their labours: It shall be a sabbath of rest, Le 16:31. The work of the day was itself enough, and a good day's work if it was done well; therefore they must do no other work at all. The work of humiliation for sin requires such a close application of mind, and such a fixed engagement of the whole man, as will not allow us to turn aside to any other work. The day of atonement seems to be that sabbath spoken of by the prophet (Isa 58:13), for it is the same with the fast spoken of in the verses before.

(2.) They must afflict their souls. They must refrain from all bodily refreshments and delights, in token of inward humiliation and contrition of soul for their sins. They all fasted on this day from food (except the sick and children), and laid aside their ornaments, and did not anoint themselves, as Daniel, Le 10:3,12. David chastened his soul with fasting, Ps 35:13. And it signified the mortifying of sin and turning from it, loosing the bands of wickedness, Isa 58:6,7. The Jewish doctors advised that they should not on that day read those portions of scripture which were proper to affect them with delight and joy, because it was a day to afflict their souls.

32 And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, *even* the holy garments:

33 and he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar: and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

The perpetuity of this institution: It shall be a statute for ever, Le 16:29,34. It must not be intermitted any year, nor ever let fall till that constitution should be dissolved, and the type should be superseded by the antitype. As long as we are continually sinning, we must be continually repenting, and receiving the atonement. The law of afflicting our souls for sin is a statute for ever, which will continue in force till we arrive where all tears, even those of repentance, will be wiped from our eyes. The apostle observes it as an evidence of the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to take away sin, and purge the conscience from it, that in them there was a remembrance made of sin every year, upon the day of atonement, Heb 10:1-3. The annual repetition of the sacrifices showed that there was in them only a faint and feeble effort towards making atonement; it could be done effectually only by the offering up of the body of Christ once

for all, and that once was sufficient; that sacrifice needed not to be repeated.

34 And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Let us see what there was of gospel in all this.

1. Here are typified the two great gospel privileges of the remission of sin and access to God, both which we owe to the mediation of our Lord Jesus. Here then let us see,

(1.) The expiation of guilt which Christ made for us. He is himself both the maker and the matter of the atonement; for he is,

[1.] The priest, the high priest, that makes reconciliation for the sins of the people, Heb 2:17. He, and he only, is par negotio--fit for the work and worthy of the honour: he is appointed by the Father to do it, who sanctified him, and sent him into the world for this purpose, that God might in him reconcile the world to himself. He undertook it, and for our sakes sanctified himself, and set himself apart for it, Joh 17:19. The high priest's frequently bathing himself on this day, and performing the service of it in fine linen clean and white, signified the holiness of the Lord Jesus, his perfect freedom from all sin, and his being beautified and adorned with all grace. No man was to be with the high priest when he made atonement (Le 16:17); for our Lord Jesus was to tread the wine-press alone, and of the people there must be none with him (Isa 63:3); therefore, when he entered upon his sufferings, all his disciples forsook him and fled, for it any of them had been taken and put to death with him it would have looked as if they had assisted in making the atonement; none but thieves, concerning whom there could be no such suspicion, must suffer with him. And observe what the extent of the atonement was which the high priest made: it was for the holy sanctuary, for the tabernacle, for

the altar, for the priests, and for all the people, Le 16:33. Christ's satisfaction is that which atones for the sins both of ministers and people, the iniquities of our holy (and our unholy) things; the title we have to the privileges of ordinances, our comfort in them, and benefit by them, are all owing to the atonement Christ made. But, whereas the atonement which the high priest made pertained only to the congregation of Israel, Christ is the propitiation, not for their sins only, that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole Gentile world. And in this also Christ infinitely excelled Aaron, that Aaron needed to offer sacrifice for his own sin first, of which he was to make confession upon the head of his sin-offering; but our Lord Jesus had no sin of his own to answer for. Such a high priest became us, Heb 7:26. And therefore, when he was baptized in Jordan, whereas others stood in the water confessing their sins (Mt 3:6), he went up straightway out of the water (Le 16:16), having no sins to confess.

[2.] As he is the high priest, so he is the sacrifice with which atonement is made; for he is all in all in our reconciliation to God.

First, The atonement is said to be completed by putting the sins of Israel upon the head of the goat. They deserved to have been abandoned and sent into a land of forgetfulness, but that punishment was here transferred to the goat that bore their sins, with reference to which God is said to have laid upon our Lord Jesus (the substance of all these shadows) the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:6), and he is said to have borne our sins, even the punishment of them, in his own body upon the tree, 1Pe 2:24. Thus was he made sin for us, that is, a sacrifice for sin, 2Co 5:21. He suffered and died, not only for our good, but in our stead, and was forsaken, and seemed to be forgotten for a time, that we might not be forsaken and forgotten for ever. Some learned men have computed that our Lord Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan upon the tenth day of the seventh month, which was the very day of

atonement. Then he entered upon his office as Mediator, and was immediately driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, a land not inhabited.

Secondly, The consequence of this was that all the iniquities of Israel were carried into a land of forgetfulness. Thus Christ, the Lamb of God, takes away the sin the of world, by taking it upon himself, Joh 1:29. And, when God forgives sin, he is said to remember it no more (Heb 8:12), to cast it behind his back (Isa 38:17), into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19), and to separate it as far as the east is from the west, Ps 103:12.

(2.) The entrance into heaven which Christ made for us is here typified by the high priest's entrance into the most holy place. This the apostle has expounded (Heb 9:7, &c.), and he shows,

[1.] That heaven is the holiest of all, but not of that building, and that the way into it by faith, hope, and prayer, through a Mediator, was not then so clearly manifested as it is to us now by the gospel.

[2.] That Christ our high priest entered into heaven at his ascension once for all, and as a public person, in the name of all his spiritual Israel, and through the veil of his flesh, which was rent for that purpose, Heb 10:20.

[3.] That he entered by his own blood (Heb 9:12), taking with him to heaven the virtues of the sacrifice he offered on earth, and so sprinkling his blood, as it were, before the mercy-seat, where it speaks better things than the blood of bulls and goats could do. Hence he is said to appear in the midst of the throne as a lamb that had been slain, Re 5:6. And, though he had no sin of his own to expiate, yet it was by his own merit that he obtained for himself a restoration to

his own ancient glory (Joh 17:4,5), as well as an eternal redemption for us, Heb 9:12.

[4.] The high priest in the holy place burned incense, which typified the intercession that Christ ever lives to make for us within the veil, in virtue of his satisfaction. And we could not expect to live, no, not before the mercy-seat, if it were not covered with the cloud of this incense. Mere mercy itself will not save us, without the interposition of a Mediator. The intercession of Christ is there set forth before God as incense, as this incense. And as the high priest interceded for himself first, then for his household, and then for all Israel, so our Lord Jesus, in the Joh 17:1-26 (which was a specimen of the intercession he makes in heaven), recommended himself first to his Father, then his disciples who were his household, and then all that should believe on him through their word, as all Israel; and, having thus adverted to the uses and intentions of his offering, he was immediately seized and crucified, pursuant to these intentions.

[5.] Herein the entry Christ made far exceeded Aaron's, that Aaron could not gain admission, no, not for his own sons, into the most holy place; but our Lord Jesus has consecrated for us also a new and living way into the holiest, so that we also have boldness to enter, Heb 10:19,20.

[6.] The high priest was to come out again, but our Lord Jesus ever lives, making intercession, and always appears in the presence of God for us, whither as the forerunner he has for us entered, and where as agent he continues for us to reside.

2. Here are likewise typified the two great gospel duties of faith and repentance, by which we are qualified for the atonement, and come to be entitled to the benefit of it.

(1.) By faith we must put our hands upon the head of the offering, relying on Christ as the Lord our Righteousness, pleading his satisfaction as that which was alone able to atone for our sins and procure us a pardon. "Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. This is all I have to say for myself, Christ has died, yea, rather has risen again; to his grace and government I entirely submit myself, and in him I receive the atonement," Ro 5:11.

(2.) By repentance we must afflict our souls; not only fasting for a time from the delights of the body, but inwardly sorrowing for our sins, and living a life of self-denial and mortification. We must also make a penitent confession of sin, and this with an eye to Christ, whom we have pierced, and mourning because of him; and with a hand of faith upon the atonement, assuring ourselves that, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Lastly, In the year of jubilee, the trumpet which proclaimed the liberty was ordered to be sounded in the close of the day of atonement, Le 25:9. For the remission of our debt, release from our bondage, and our return to our inheritance, are all owing to the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ. By the atonement we obtain rest for our souls, and all the glorious liberties of the children of God.

Leviticus-17

One Place of Sacrifice

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, This *is* the thing which the Lord hath commanded, saying,
3 What man soever there *be* of the house of Israel, that killeth an ox, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or that killeth *it* out of the camp,

How this law settled it.

1. Some think that the children of Israel were by this law forbidden, while they were in the wilderness, to kill any beef, or mutton, or veal, or lamb, or goat, even for their common eating, but at the door of the tabernacle, where the blood and the fat were to be offered to God upon the altar, and the flesh to be returned back to the offerer to be eaten as a peace-offering, according to the law. And the statute is so worded (Le 17:3,4) as to favour this opinion, for it speaks generally of killing any ox, or lamb, or goat. The learned Dr. Cudworth puts this sense upon it, and thinks that while they had their tabernacle so near them in the midst of their camp they ate no flesh but what had first been offered to God, but that when they were entering Canaan this constitution was altered (De 12:21), and they were allowed to kill their beasts of the flock and herd at home, as well as the roebuck and the hart; only thrice a year they were to see God at his tabernacle, and to eat and drink before him there. And it is probable that in the wilderness they did not eat much flesh but that of their peace-offerings, preserving what cattle they had, for breed, against they came to Canaan; therefore they murmured for flesh, being weary of manna; and Moses on that occasion speaks as if they were very sparing of the flocks and the herds, Nu 11:4,22. Yet it is hard to construe this as a temporary law, when it is expressly said to be a statute for ever (Le 17:7); and therefore,

2. It should seem rather to forbid only the killing of beasts for sacrifice any where but at God's altar. They must not offer sacrifice, as they had done, in the open field (Le 17:5), no, not to the true God, but it must be brought to the priest, to be offered on the altar of the Lord: and the solemnity they had lately witnessed, of consecrating both the priests and the altar, would serve for a good reason why they should confine themselves to both these that God had so signally appointed

and owned. This law obliged not only the Israelites themselves, but the proselytes or strangers that were circumcised and sojourned among them, who were in danger of retaining an affection to their old ways of worship. If any should transgress this law, and offer sacrifice any where but at the tabernacle,

(1.) The guilt was great: Blood shall be imputed to that man; he hath shed blood, Le 17:4. Though it was but a beast he had killed, yet, killing it otherwise than God had appointed, he was looked upon as a murderer. It is by the divine grant that we have the liberty to kill the inferior creatures, to the benefit of which we are not entitled, unless we submit to the limitations of it, which are that it be not done either with cruelty or with superstition, Ge 9:3, 4. Nor was there ever any greater abuse done to the inferior creatures than when they were made either false gods or sacrifices to false gods, to which the apostle perhaps has special reference when he speaks of the vanity and bondage of corruption to which the creature was made subject, Ro 8:20,21, and compare Le 1:23,25. Idolatrous sacrifices were looked upon, not only as adultery, but as murder: he that offereth them is as if he slew a man, Isa 66:3.

(2.) The punishment should be severe: That man shall be cut off from among his people. Either the magistrate must do it if it were manifest and notorious, or, if not, God would take the work into his own hands, and the offender should be cut off by some immediate stroke of divine justice. The reasons why God thus strictly ordered all their sacrifices to be offered at one place were,

[1.] For the preventing of idolatry and superstition. That sacrifices might be offered to God, and according to the rule,

and without innovations, they must always be offered by the hands of the priests, who were servants in God's house, and under the eye of the high priest, who was ruler of the house, and took care to see every thing done according to God's ordinance.

[2.] For the securing of the honour of God's temple and altar, the peculiar dignity of which would be endangered if they might offer their sacrifices any where else as well as there.

[3.] For the preserving of unity and brotherly love among the Israelites, that meeting all at one altar, as all the children of the family meet daily at one table, they might live and love as brethren, and be as one man, of one mind in the Lord.

4 and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people:

5 to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, and offer them for peace offerings unto the Lord.

6 And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the Lord *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savor unto the Lord.

7 And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute for ever unto them throughout their generations.

How it stood before.

1. It was allowed to all people to build altars, and offer sacrifices to God, where they pleased. Wherever Abraham

had a tent he built an altar, and every master of a family was a priest to his own family, as Job 1:5.

2. This liberty had been an occasion of idolatry. When every man was his own priest, and had an altar of his own, by degrees, as they became vain in their imaginations, they invented gods of their own, and offered their sacrifices unto demons, Le 17:7. The word signifies rough or hairy goats, because it is probable that in the shape the evil spirits often appeared to them, to invite their sacrifices and to signify their acceptance of them. For the devil, ever since he became a revolter from God and a rebel against him, has set up for a rival with him, and coveted to have divine honours paid him: he had the impudence to solicit our blessed Saviour to fall down and worship him. The Israelites themselves had learned in Egypt to sacrifice to demons. And some of them, it should seem, practised it even since the God of Israel had so gloriously appeared for them, and with them. They are said to go a whoring after these demons; for it was such a breach of their covenant with God as adultery is of the marriage covenant: and they were as strongly addicted to their idolatrous worships, and as hard to be reclaimed from them, as those that have given themselves over to fornication, to work all uncleanness with greediness; and therefore it is with reference to this that God calls himself a jealous God.

8 And thou shalt say unto them, Whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice,

How this law was observed.

1. While the Israelites kept their integrity they had a tender and very jealous regard to this law, as appears by their zeal against the altar which was erected by the two tribes and a half, which they would by no means have left standing if they had not been satisfied that it was never designed, nor should ever be used, for sacrifice or offering, Jos 22:12, &c.

2 The breach of this law was for many ages the scandalous and incurable corruption of the Jewish church, witness that complaint which so often occurs in the history even of the good kings, Howbeit the high places were not taken away; and it was an inlet to the grossest idolatries. 3. Yet this law was, in extraordinary cases, dispensed with. Gideon's sacrifice (Jdg 6:26), Manoah's (Jdg 13:19), Samuel's (1Sa 7:9,9:13,11:15), David's (2Sa 24:18), and Elijah's (1Ki 18:23), were accepted, though not offered at the usual place: but these were all either ordered by angels or offered by prophets; and some think that after the desolation of Shiloh, and before the building of the temple, while the ark and altar were unsettled, it was more allowable to offer sacrifice elsewhere.

How the matter stands now, and what use we are to make of this law.

1. It is certain that the spiritual sacrifices we are now to offer are not confined to any one place. Our Saviour has made this clear (Joh 4:21), and the apostle (1Ti 2:8), according to the prophecy, that in every place incense should be offered, Mal 1:11. We have now no temple nor altar that sanctifies the gift, nor does the gospel unity lie in one place, but in one heart, and the unity of the spirit.

2. Christ is our altar, and the true tabernacle (Heb 8:2,13:10); in him God dwells among us, and it is in him that our sacrifices are acceptable to God, and in him only, 1Pe 2:5. To set up other mediators, or other altars, or other expiatory sacrifices, is, in effect, to set up other gods. He is the centre of unity, in whom all God's Israel meet.

3. Yet we are to have respect to the public worship of God, not forsaking the assemblies of his people, Heb 10:25. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so should we; see Eze 20:40. Though God will graciously accept our family offerings, we must not therefore neglect the door of the tabernacle.

9 and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.

The Eating of Blood Forbidden

10 And whatsoever man *there be* of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

It is made binding, not only on the house of Israel, but on the strangers that sojourned among them (Le 17:10), which perhaps was one reason why it was thought advisable, for a time, to forbid blood to the Gentile converts, Ac 15:29.

The penalty annexed to this law is very severe (Le 17:10): I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, if he do it presumptuously, and will cut him off; and again (Le 17:14), He shall be cut off. Note, God's wrath will be the sinner's ruin. Write that man undone, for ever undone, against whom God sets his face; for what creature is able to confront the Creator?

11 For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul.

A reason is given for this law (Le 17:11): because it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul; and therefore it was appointed to make atonement with, because the life of the

flesh is the blood. The sinner deserved to die; therefore the sacrifice must die.

Now, the blood being so the life that ordinarily beasts were killed for man's use by the drawing out of all their blood, God appointed the sprinkling or pouring out of the blood of the sacrifice upon the altar to signify that the life of the sacrifice was given to God instead of the sinner's life, and as a ransom or counter-price for it; therefore without shedding of blood there was no remission, Heb 9:22. For this reason they must eat no blood, and,

(1.) It was then a very good reason; for God would by this means preserve the honour of that way of atonement which he had instituted, and keep up in the minds of the people a reverent regard to it. The blood of the covenant being then a sensible object, no blood must be either eaten or trodden under foot as a common thing, as they must have no ointment nor perfume like that which God ordered them to make for himself. But,

(2.) This reason is now superseded, which intimates that the law itself was ceremonial, and is now no longer in force: the blood of Christ who has come (and we are to look for no other) is that alone which makes atonement for the soul, and of which the blood of the sacrifices was an imperfect type: the coming of the substance supersedes the shadow. The blood of beasts is no longer the ransom, but Christ's blood only;

12 Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

A repetition and confirmation of the law against eating blood. We have met with this prohibition twice before in the Levitical law (Le 3:17,7:26), besides the place it had in the

precepts of Noah, Ge 9:4. But here, the prohibition is repeated again and again, and reference had to the former laws to this purport (Le 17:12): I said to the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood; and again (Le 17:14), You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh. A great stress is laid upon it, as a law which has more in it than at first view one would think.

13 And whatsoever man *there be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

14 For *it is* the life of all flesh; the blood of it *is* for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the life of all flesh *is* the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

15 And every soul that eateth that which died *of itself,* or that which was torn *with beasts, whether it be* one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and bathe *himself* in water, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean.

Some other precepts are here given as appendages to this law, and hedges about it,

1. They must cover the blood of that which they took in hunting, Le 17:13. They must not only not eat it, but must give it a decent burial, in token of some mystery which they must believe lay hidden in this constitution. The Jews look upon this as a very weighty precept and appoint that the blood should be covered with these words, Blessed be he that hath sanctified us by his precepts, and commanded us to cover blood.

2. They must not eat that which died of itself or was torn of beasts (Le 17:15), for the blood was either not at all, or not regularly, drawn out of them. God would have them to be curious in their diet, not with the curiosity that gratifies the sensual appetite, but with that which checks and restrains it. God would not have his children to eat every thing that came

in their way with greediness, but to consider diligently what was before them, that they might learn in other things to ask questions for conscience' sake. Those that flew upon the spoiled sinned, 1Sa 14:32,33. If a man did, through ignorance or inconsideration, eat the flesh of any beast not duly slain, he must wash himself and his clothes, else he bore his iniquity, Le 17:15,16. The pollution was ceremonial, so was the purification from it; but if a man slighted the prescribed method of cleansing, or would not submit, he thereby contracted moral guilt. See the nature of a remedial law: he that obeys it has the benefit of it; he that does not, not only remains under his former guilt, but adds to that guilt of contemning the provisions made by divine grace for his relief, and sins against the remedy.

16 But if he wash *them* not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity.

Leviticus-18

Acts of Immorality Forbidden

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I *am* the Lord your God.

After divers ceremonial institutions, God here returns to the enforcement of moral precepts. The former are still of use to us as types, the latter still binding as laws. We have here,

1 The sacred authority by which these laws are enacted: I am the Lord your God (Le 18:1,4,30), and I am the Lord, Le 18:5,6,21. "The Lord, who has a right to rule all; your God, who has a peculiar right to rule you." Jehovah is the fountain of being, and therefore the fountain of power, whose we are, whom we are bound to serve, and who is able to punish all disobedience. "Your God to whom you have consented, in

whom you are happy, to whom you lie under the highest obligations imaginable, and to whom you are accountable."

2. A strict caution to take heed of retaining the relics of the idolatries of Egypt, where they had dwelt, and of receiving the infection of the idolatries of Canaan, whither they were now going, Le 18:3. Now that God was by Moses teaching them his ordinances there was aliquid dediscendum--something to be unlearned, which they had sucked in with their milk in Egypt, a country noted for idolatry: You shall not do after the doings of the land of Egypt. It would be the greatest absurdity in itself to retain such an affection for their house of bondage as to be governed in their devotions by the usages of it, and the greatest ingratitude to God, who had so wonderfully and graciously delivered them. Nay, as if governed by a spirit of contradiction, they would be in danger, even after they had received these ordinances of God, of admitting the wicked usages of the Canaanites and of inheriting their vices with their land. Of this danger they are here warned, You shall not walk in their ordinances. Such a tyrant is custom that their practices are called ordinances, and they became rivals even with God's ordinances, and God's professing people were in danger of receiving law from them.

3 After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.

4 Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the Lord your God.

A solemn charge to them to keep God's judgments, statutes, and ordinances, Le 18:4,5. To this charge, and many similar ones, David seems to refer in the many prayers and professions he makes relating to God's laws in the Ps 119. Observe here,

(1.) The great rule of our obedience--God's statutes and judgments. These we must keep to walk therein. We must keep them in our books, and keep them in our hands, that we may practise them in our hearts and lives. Remember God's commandments to do them, Ps 103:18. We must keep in them as our way to travel in, keep to them as our rule to work by, keep them as our treasure, as the apple of our eye, with the utmost care and value.

(2.) The great advantage of our obedience: Which if a man do, he shall live in them, that is, "he shall be happy here and hereafter." We have reason to thank God,

[1.] That this is still in force as a promise, with a very favourable construction of the condition. If we keep God's commandments in sincerity, though we come short of sinless perfection, we shall find that the way of duty is the way of comfort, and will be the way to happiness. Godliness has the promise of life, 1Ti 4:8. Wisdom has said, Keep my commandments and live: and if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body (which are to us as the usages of Egypt were to Israel) we shall live.

[2.] That it is not so in force in the nature of a covenant as that the least transgression shall for ever exclude us from this life. The apostle quotes this twice as opposite to the faith which the gospel reveals. It is the description of the righteousness which is by the law, the man that doeth them shall live en autois--in them (Ro 10:5), and is urged to prove that the law is not of faith, Ga 3:12. The alteration which the gospel has made is in the last word: still the man that does them shall live, but not live in them; for the law could not give life, because we could not perfectly keep it; it was weak through the flesh, not in itself; but now the man that does them shall live by the faith of the Son of God. He shall owe

his life to the grace of Christ, and not to the merit of his own works; see Ga 3:21,22. The just shall live, but they shall live by faith, by virtue of their union with Christ, who is their life.

5 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the Lord.

6 None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I *am* the Lord.

That which is forbidden as to the relations here specified is approaching to them to uncover their nakedness, Le 18:6.

1. It is chiefly intended to forbid the marrying of any of these relations. Marriage is a divine institution; this and the sabbath, the eldest of all, of equal standing with man upon the earth: it is intended for the comfort of human life, and the decent and honourable propagation of the human race, such as became the dignity of man's nature above that of the beasts. It is honourable in all, and these laws are for the support of the honour of it. It was requisite that a divine ordinance should be subject to divine rules and restraints, especially because it concerns a thing wherein the corrupt nature of man is as apt as in any thing to be wilful and impetuous in its desires, and impatient of check. Yet these prohibitions, besides their being enacted by an incontestable authority, are in themselves highly reasonable and equitable.

(1.) By marriage two were to become one flesh, therefore those that before were in a sense one flesh by nature could not, without the greatest absurdity, become one flesh by institution; for the institution was designed to unite those who before were not united.

(2.) Marriage puts an equality between husband and wife. "Is she not thy companion taken out of thy side?" Therefore, if those who before were superior and inferior should intermarry (which is the case in most of the instances here

laid down), the order of nature would be taken away by a positive institution, which must by no means be allowed. The inequality between master and servant, noble and ignoble, is founded in consent and custom, and there is no harm done if that be taken away by the equality of marriage; but the inequality between parents and children, uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, either by blood or marriage, is founded in nature, and is therefore perpetual, and cannot without confusion be taken away by the equality of marriage, the institution of which, though ancient, is subsequent to the order of nature.

(3.) No relations that are equals are forbidden, except brothers and sisters, by the whole blood or half blood, or by marriage; and in this there is not the same natural absurdity as in the former, for Adam's sons must of necessity have married their own sisters; but it was requisite that it should be made by a positive law unlawful and detestable, for the preventing of sinful familiarities between those that in the days of their youth are supposed to live in a house together, and yet cannot intermarry without defeating one of the intentions of marriage, which is the enlargement of friendship and interest. If every man married his own sister (as they would be apt to do from generation to generation if it were lawful), each family would be a world to itself, and it would be forgotten that we are members one of another. It is certain that this has always been looked upon by the more sober heathen as a most infamous and abominable thing; and those who had not this law yet were herein a law to themselves. The making use of the ordinance of marriage for the patronizing of incestuous mixtures is so far from justifying them, or extenuating their guilt, that it adds the guilt of profaning an ordinance of God, and prostituting that to the vilest of purposes which was instituted for the noblest ends. But,

2. Uncleanness, committed with any of these relations out of marriage, is likewise, without doubt, forbidden here, and no less intended than the former: as also all lascivious carriage, wanton dalliance, and every thing that has the appearance of this evil. Relations must love one another, and are to have free and familiar converse with each other, but it must be with all purity; and the less it is suspected of evil by others the more care ought the persons themselves to take that Satan do not get advantage against them, for he is a very subtle enemy, and seeks all occasions against us.

7 The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she *is* thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

8 The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it *is* thy father's nakedness.

9 The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, *whether she be* born at home, or born abroad, *even* their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.

10 The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, *even* their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs *is* thine own nakedness.

11 The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she *is* thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

12 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she *is* thy father's near kinswoman.

13 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she *is* thy mother's near kinswoman.

14 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she *is* thine aunt.

15 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter-in-law: she *is* thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

16 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it *is* thy brother's nakedness.

17 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her

daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; *for* they *are* her
near kinswomen: it *is* wickedness.
18 Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex *her,* to uncover
her nakedness, besides the other in her life *time.*
19 Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her
nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness.
20 Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife,
to defile thyself with her.
21 And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to
Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the
Lord.

A law against that which was the most unnatural idolatry, causing their children to pass through the fire to Moloch, Le 18:21. Moloch (as some think) was the idol in and by which they worshipped the sun, that great fire of the world; and therefore in the worship of it they made their own children either sacrifices to this idol, burning them to death before it, or devotees to it, causing them to pass between two fires, as some think, or to be thrown through one, to the honour of this pretended deity, imagining that the consecrating of but one of their children in this manner to Moloch would procure good fortune for all the rest of their children. Did idolaters thus give their own children to false gods, and shall we think any thing too dear to be dedicated to, or to be parted with for, the true God? See how this sin of Israel (which they were afterwards guilty of, notwithstanding this law) is aggravated by the relation which they and their children stood in to God. Eze 16:20, Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these thou hast sacrificed. Therefore it is here called profaning the name of their God; for it looked as if they thought they were under greater obligations to Moloch than to Jehovah; for to him they offered their cattle only, but to Moloch their children.

22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is*
abomination.

A law against unnatural lusts, sodomy and bestiality, sins not to be named nor thought of without the utmost abhorrence

imaginable, Le 18:22,23. Other sins level men with the beasts, but these sink them much lower. That ever there should have been occasion for the making of these laws, and that since they are published they should ever have been broken, is the perpetual reproach and scandal of human nature; and the giving of men up to these vile affections was frequently the punishment of their idolatries; so the apostle shows, Ro 1:24.

23 Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it *is* confusion.

24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:

Arguments against these and the like abominable wickednesses. He that has an indisputable right to command us, yet because he will deal with us as men, and draw with the cords of a man, condescends to reason with us.

Sinners defile themselves with these abominations: Defile not yourselves in any of these things, Le 18:24. All sin is defiling to the conscience, but these are sins that have a peculiar turpitude in them. Our heavenly Father, in kindness to us, requires of us that we keep ourselves clean, and do not wallow in the dirt.

25 and the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

The land is defiled, Le 18:25. If such wickednesses as these be practised and connived at, the land is thereby made unfit to have God's tabernacle in it, and the pure and holy God will withdraw the tokens of his gracious presence from it. It is also rendered unwholesome to the inhabitants, who are hereby infected with sin and exposed to plagues and it is really nauseous and loathsome to all good men in it, as the wickedness of Sodom was to the soul of righteous Lot.

26 Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations; *neither* any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you:

27 (for all these abominations have the men of the land done, which *were* before you, and the land is defiled ;)

These have been the abominations of the former inhabitants, Le 18:24,27. Therefore it was necessary that these laws should be made, as antidotes and preservatives from the plague are necessary when we go into an infected place. And therefore they should not practise any such things, because the nations that had practised them now lay under the curse of God, and were shortly to fall by the sword of Israel. They could not but be sensible how odious those people had made themselves who wallowed in this mire, and how they stank in the nostrils of all good men; and shall a people sanctified and dignified as Israel was make themselves thus vile? When we observe how ill sin looks in others we should use this as an argument with ourselves with the utmost care and caution to preserve our purity.

28 that the land spew not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that *were* before you.

For these and the like sins the Canaanites were to be destroyed; these filled the measure of the Amorites' iniquity (Ge 15:16), and brought down that destruction of so many populous kingdoms which the Israelites were now shortly to be not only the spectators, but the instruments of: Therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, Le 18:25. Note, The tremendous judgments of God, executed on those that are daringly profane and atheistical, are intended as warnings to those who profess religion to take heed of every thing that has the least appearance of, or tendency towards, profaneness or atheism. Even the ruin of the Canaanites is an admonition to the Israelites not to do like them. Nay, to show that not only the Creator is provoked, but the creation burdened, by such abominations as these, it is added (Le 18:25), The land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. The very ground they went upon did, as it were, groan under them, and was sick of them, and not easy till it had discharged itself of these enemies of the Lord, Isa 1:24. This bespeaks the extreme loathsomeness of sin; sinful man indeed drinks in

iniquity like water, but the harmless part of the creation even heaves at it, and rises against it. Many a house and many a town have spued out the wicked inhabitants, as it were, with abhorrence, Re 3:16. Therefore take heed, saith God, that the land spue not you out also, Le 18:28. It was secured to them, and entailed upon them, and yet they must expect that, if they made the vices of the Canaanites their own, with their land their fate would be the same.

Note, Wicked Israelites are as abominable to God as wicked Canaanites, and more so, and will be as soon spued out, or sooner. Such a warning as was here given to the Israelites is given by the apostle to the Gentile converts, with reference to the rejected Jews, in whose room they were substituted (Ro 11:19, &c.); they must take heed of falling after the same example of unbelief, Heb 4:11. Apply it more generally; and let it deter us effectually from all sinful courses to consider how many they have been the ruin of. Lay the ear of faith to the gates of the bottomless pit, and hear the doleful shrieks and outcries of damned sinners, whom earth has spued out and hell has swallowed, that find themselves undone, for ever undone, by sin; and tremble lest this be your portion at last. God's threatenings and judgments should frighten us from sin.

29 For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit *them* shall be cut off from among their people.

The souls that commit them shall be cut off, Le 18:29. And justly; for, if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, 1Co 3:17. Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and will certainly be the ruin of it if God's mercy and grace prevent not.

30 Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that *ye* commit not *any one* of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I *am* the Lord your God.

The chapter concludes with a sovereign antidote against this infection: Therefore you shall keep my ordinance that you commit not any one of these abominable customs, Le 18:30. This is the remedy prescribed. Note,

1. Sinful customs are abominable customs, and their being common and fashionable does not make them at all the less abominable nor should we the less abominate them, but the more; because the more customary they are the more dangerous they are.

2. It is of pernicious consequence to admit and allow of any one sinful custom, because one will make way for many, Uno absurdo dato, mille sequuntur--Admit but a single absurdity, you invite a thousand. The way of sin is downhill.

3. A close and constant adherence to God's ordinances is the most effectual preservative from the infection of gross sin. The more we taste of the sweetness and feel of the power of holy ordinances the less inclination we shall have to the forbidden pleasures of sinners' abominable customs. It is the grace of God only that will secure us, and that grace is to be expected only in the use of the means of grace. Nor does God ever leave any to their own hearts' lusts till they have first left him and his institutions.

Leviticus-19

Laws of Holiness and Justice

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say
unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God *am* holy.

Moses is ordered to deliver the summary of the laws to all the congregation of the children of Israel (Le 19:2); not to Aaron and his sons only, but to all the people, for they were all concerned to know their duty. Even in the darker ages of the law, that religion could not be of God which boasted of ignorance as its mother. Moses must make known God's statutes to all the congregation, and proclaim them through the camp. These laws, it is probable, he delivered himself to as many of the people as could be within hearing at once, and so by degrees at several times to them all. Many of the precepts here given they had received before, but it was requisite that they should be repeated, that they might be remembered. Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough. In these verses,

It is required that Israel be a holy people, because the God of Israel is a holy God, Le 19:2. Their being distinguished from all other people by peculiar laws and customs was intended to teach them a real separation from the world and the flesh, and an entire devotedness to God. And this is now the law of Christ (the Lord bring every thought within us into obedience to it!) You shall be holy, for I am holy, 1Pe 1:15,16. We are the followers of the holy Jesus, and therefore must be, according to our capacity, consecrated to God's honour, and conformed to his nature and will. Israel was sanctified by the types and shadows (Le 20:8), but we are sanctified by the truth, or substance of all those shadows, Joh 17:17,Tit 2:14.

3 Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I *am* the Lord your God.

That children be obedient to their parents: "You shall fear every man his mother and his father, Le 19:3.

1 The fear here required is the same with the honour commanded by the fifth commandment; see Mal 1:6. It includes inward reverence and esteem, outward expressions

of respect, obedience to the lawful commands of parents, care and endeavour to please them and make them easy, and to avoid every thing that may offend and grieve them, and incur their displeasure. The Jewish doctors ask, "What is this fear that is owing to a father?" And they answer, "It is not to stand in his way nor to sit in his place, not to contradict what he says nor to carp at it, not to call him by his name, either living or dead, but 'My Father,' or 'Sir;' it is to provide for him if he be poor, and the like."

2. Children, when they grow up to be men, must not think themselves discharged from this duty: every man, though he be a wise man, and a great man, yet must reverence his parents, because they are his parents.

3. The mother is put first, which is not usual, to show that the duty is equally owing to both; if the mother survive the father, still she must be reverenced and obeyed.

4. It is added, and keep my Sabbaths. If God provides by his law for the preserving of the honour of parents, parents must use their authority over their children for the preserving of the honour of God, particularly the honour of his Sabbaths, the custody of which is very much committed to parents by the fourth commandment, Thou, and thy son, and thy daughter. The ruin of young people has often been observed to begin in the contempt of their parents and the profanation of the sabbath day. Fitly therefore are these two precepts here put together in the beginning of this abridgment of the statutes: "You shall fear, every man, his mother and his father, and keep my Sabbaths. Those are hopeful children, and likely to do well, that make conscience of honouring their parents and keeping holy the sabbath day.

5. The reason added to both these precepts is, "I am the Lord your God; the Lord of the sabbath and the God of your parents."

4 Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I *am* the Lord your God.

That God only be worshipped, and not by images (Le 19:4): "Turn you not to idols, to Elilim, to vanities, things of no power, no value, gods that are no gods. Turn not from the true God to false ones, from the mighty God to impotent ones, from the God that will make you holy and happy to those that will deceive you, debauch you, ruin you, and make you for ever miserable. Turn not your eye to them, much less your heart. Make not to yourselves gods, the creatures of your own fancy, nor think to worship the Creator by molten gods. You are the work of God's hands, be not so absurd as to worship gods the work of your own hands." Molten gods are specified for the sake of the molten calf.

5 And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, ye shall offer it at your own will.

6 It shall be eaten the same day ye offer it, and on the morrow: and if aught remain until the third day, it shall be burnt in the fire.

That the sacrifices of their peace-offerings should always be offered, and eaten, according to the law, Le 19:5-8. There was some particular reason, it is likely, for the repetition of this law rather than any other relating to the sacrifices. The eating of the peace-offerings was the people's part, and was done from under the eye of the priests, and perhaps some of them had kept the cold meat of their peace-offerings, as they had done the manna (Ex 16:20), longer than was appointed, which occasioned this caution; see the law itself before, Le 7:16-18. God will have his own work done in his own time. Though the sacrifice was offered according to the law, if it was not eaten according to the law, it was not accepted. Though ministers do their part, what the better if people do not theirs? There is work to be done after our spiritual sacrifices, in a due improvement of them; and, if this be neglected, all is in vain.

7 And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it *is* abominable; it shall not be accepted.

8 Therefore *every one* that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, because he hath profaned the hallowed thing of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

That they should leave the gleanings of their harvest and vintage for the poor, Le 19:9,10. Note, Works of piety must be always attended with works of charity, according as our ability is. When they gathered in their corn, they must leave some standing in the corner of the field; the Jewish doctors say, "It should be a sixtieth part of the field;" and they must also leave the gleanings and the small clusters of their grapes, which at first were overlooked. This law, though not binding now in the letter of it, yet teaches us,

1. That we must not be covetous and griping, and greedy of every thing we can lay any claim to; nor insist upon our right in things small and trivial.

2. That we must be well pleased to see the poor supplied and refreshed with the fruit of our labours. We must not think every thing lost that goes beside ourselves, nor any thing wasted that goes to the poor.

3. That times of joy, such as harvest-time is, are proper times for charity; that, when we rejoice, the poor may rejoice with us, and when our hearts are blessing God their loins may bless us.

10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather *every* grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I *am* the Lord your God.

11 Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

To be honest and true in all our dealings, Le 19:11. God, who has appointed every man's property by his providence, forbids by his law the invading of that appointment, either by downright theft, You shall not steal, or by fraudulent dealing, "You shall not cheat, or deal falsely." Whatever we have in the world, we must see to it that it be honestly come by, for we cannot be truly rich, nor long rich, with that which is not. The God of truth, who requires truth in the heart (Ps 51:6), requires it also in the tongue: Neither lie one to another, either in bargaining or common converse. This is one of the laws of Christianity (Col 3:9): Lie not one to another. Those that do not speak truth do not deserve to be told truth; those that sin by lying justly suffer by it; therefore we are forbidden to lie one to another; for, if we lie to others, we teach them to lie to us.

12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the Lord.

To maintain a very reverent regard to the sacred name of God (Le 19:12), and not to call him to be witness either,

1. To a lie: You shall not swear falsely. It is bad to tell a lie, but it is much worse to swear it. Or,

2. To a trifle, and every impertinence: Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God, by alienating it to any other purpose than that for which it is to be religiously used.

13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob *him:* the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Neither to take nor keep any one's right from him, Le 19:13. We must not take that which is none of our own, either by fraud or robbery; nor detain that which belongs to another, particularly the wages of the hireling, let it not abide with thee all night. Let the day-labourer have his wages as soon as he has done his day's work, if he desire it. It is a great sin

to deny the payment of it, nay, to defer it, to his damage, a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance, Jam 5:4.

14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I *am* the Lord.

To be particularly tender of the credit and safety of those that cannot help themselves, Le 19:14.

1 The credit of the deaf: Thou shalt not curse the deaf; that is, not only those that are naturally deaf, that cannot hear at all, but also those that are absent, and at present out of hearing of the curse, and so cannot show their resentment, return the affront, nor right themselves, and those that are patient, that seem as if they heard not, and are not willing to take notice of it, as David, Ps 38:13. Do not injure any because they are unwilling, or unable, to avenge themselves, for God sees and hears, though they do not.

2 The safety of the blind we must likewise be tender of, and not put a stumbling-block before them; for this is to add affliction to the afflicted, and to make God's providence a servant to our malice. This prohibition implies a precept to help the blind, and remove stumbling-blocks out of their way. The Jewish writers, thinking it impossible that any should be so barbarous as to put a stumbling-block in the way of the blind, understood it figuratively, that it forbids giving bad counsel to those that are simple and easily imposed upon, by which they may be led to do something to their own prejudice. We ought to take heed of doing any thing which may occasion our weak brother to fall, Ro 14:13,1Co 8:9. It is added, as a preservative from these sins, but fear thou God. "Thou dost not fear the deaf and blind, they cannot right themselves; but remember it is the glory of God to help the helpless, and he will plead their cause." Note, The fear of God will restrain us from doing that which will not expose us to men's resentments.

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.

Judges and all in authority are here commanded to give verdict and judgment without partiality (Le 19:15); whether they were constituted judges by commission or made so in a particular case by the consent of both parties, as referees or arbitrators, they must do no wrong to either side, but, to the utmost of their skill, must go according to the rules of equity, having respect purely to the merits of the cause, and not to the characters of the person. Justice must never be perverted, either,

1. In pity to the poor: Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, Ex 23:3. Whatever may be given to a poor man as an alms, yet let nothing be awarded him as his right but what he is legally entitled to, nor let his poverty excuse him from any just punishment for a fault. Or,

2. In veneration or fear of the mighty, in whose favour judges would be most frequently biased. The Jews say, "Judges were obliged by this law to be so impartial as not to let one of the contending parties sit while the other stood, nor permit one to say what he pleased and bid the other be short; see Jam 2:1-4.

16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor: I *am* the Lord.

We are all forbidden to do any thing injurious to our neighbour's good name (Le 19:16), either,

1. In common conversation: Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer. It is as bad an office as a man can put himself into to be the publisher of every man's faults, divulging what was secret, aggravating crimes, and making the worst of every thing that was amiss, with design to blast and ruin

men's reputation, and to sow discord among neighbours. The word used for a tale-bearer signifies a pedlar, or petty chapman, the interlopers of trade; for tale-bearers pick up ill-natured stories at one house and utter them at another, and commonly barter slanders by way of exchange. See this sin condemned, Pr 11:13,20:19,Jer 9:4,Eze 22:9. Or,

2, In witness-bearing: Neither shalt thou stand as a witness against the blood of thy neighbour, if his blood be innocent, nor join in confederacy with such bloody men as those described," Pr 1:11,12. The Jewish doctors put this further sense upon it: "Thou shalt not stand by and see thy brother in danger, but thou shalt come in to his relief and succour, though it be with the peril of thy own life or limb;" they add, "He that can by his testimony clear one that is accused is obliged by this law to do it;" see Pr 24:11,12.

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

We are commanded to rebuke our neighbour in love (Le 19:17): Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour.

1. Rather rebuke him than hate him for an injury done to thyself. If we apprehend that our neighbour has any way wronged us, we must not conceive a secret grudge against him, and estrange ourselves from him, speaking to him neither bad nor good, as the manner of some is, who have the art of concealing their displeasure till they have an opportunity of a full revenge (2Sa 13:22); but we must rather give vent to our resentments with the meekness of wisdom, endeavour to convince our brother of the injury, reason the case fairly with him, and so put an end to the disgust conceived: this is the rule our Saviour gives in this case, Lu 17:3.

2. Therefore rebuke him for his sin against God, because thou lovest him; endeavour to bring him to repentance, that his sin may be pardoned, and he may turn from it, and it may not be suffered to lie upon him. Note, Friendly reproof is a duty we owe to one another, and we ought both to give it and take it in love. Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness, Ps 141:5. Faithful and useful are those wounds of a friend, Pr 27:5,6. It is here strictly commanded, "Thou shalt in any wise do it, and not omit it under any pretence." Consider,

(1.) The guilt we incur by not reproving: it is construed here into a hating of our brother. We are ready to argue thus, "Such a one is a friend I love, therefore I will not make him uneasy by telling him of his faults;" but we should rather say, "therefore I will do him the kindness to tell him of them." Love covers sin from others, but not from the sinner himself.

(2.) The mischief we do by not reproving: we suffer sin upon him. Must we help the ass of an enemy that has fallen under his burden, and shall we not help the soul of a friend? Ex 23:5. And by suffering sin upon him we are in danger of bearing sin for him, as the margin reads it. If we reprove not the unfruitful works of darkness, we have fellowship with them, and become accessaries ex post facto--after the fact, Eph 5:11. It is thy brother, thy neighbour, that is concerned; and he was a Cain that said, Am I my brother's keeper?

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I *am* the Lord.

We are here required to put off all malice, and to put on brotherly love, Le 19:18.

1. We must be ill-affected to none: Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge; to the same purport with that Le 19:17, Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; for malice is

murder begun. If our brother has done us an injury, we must not return it upon him, that is avenging; we must not upon every occasion upbraid him with it, that is bearing a grudge; but we must both forgive it and forget it, for thus we are forgiven of God. It is a most ill-natured thing, and the bane of friendship, to retain the resentment of affronts and injuries, and to let that word devour for ever.

2. We must be well-affected to all: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. We often wrong ourselves, but we soon forgive ourselves those wrongs, and they do not at all lessen our love to ourselves; and in like manner we should love our neighbour. Our Saviour has made this the second great commandment of the law (Mt 22:39), and the apostle shows how it is the summary of all the laws of the second table, Ro 13:9,10,Ga 5:14. We must love our neighbour as truly as we love ourselves, and without dissimulation; we must evidence our love to our neighbour in the same way as that by which we evidence our love to ourselves, preventing his hurt, and procuring his good, to the utmost of our power. We must do to our neighbour as we would be done to ourselves (Mt 7:12), putting our souls into his soul's stead, Job 16:4,5.

Nay, we must in many cases deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, as Paul, 1Co 9:19, &c. Herein the gospel goes beyond even that excellent precept of the law; for Christ, by laying down his life for us, has taught us even to lay down our lives for the brethren, in some cases (1Jo 3:16), and so to love our neighbour better than ourselves.

19 Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woolen come upon thee.

A law against mixtures, Le 19:19. God in the beginning made the cattle after their kind (Ge 1:25), and we must

acquiesce in the order of nature God hath established, believing that is best and sufficient, and not covet monsters. Add thou not unto his works, lest he reprove thee; for it is the excellency of the work of God that nothing can, without making it worse, be either put to it or taken from it, Ec 3:14. As what God has joined we must not separate, so what he has separated we must not join. The sowing of mingled corn and the wearing of linsey-woolsey garments are forbidden, either as superstitious customs of the heathen or to intimate how careful they should be not to mingle themselves with the heathen nor to weave any of the usages of the Gentiles into God's ordinances. Ainsworth suggests that it was to lead Israel to the simplicity and sincerity of religion, and to all the parts and doctrines of the law and gospel in their distinct kinds. As faith is necessary, good works are necessary, but to mingle these together in the cause of our justification before God is forbidden, Ga 2:16.

20 And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that *is* a bondmaid, betrothed to a husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged: they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.

A law for punishing adultery committed with one that was a bondmaid that was espoused, Le 19:20-22. If she had not been espoused, the law appointed no punishment at all; being espoused, if she had not been a bondmaid, the punishment had been no less than death: but, being as yet a bondmaid (though before the completing of her espousals she must have been made free), the capital punishment is remitted, and they shall both be scourged; or, as some think, the woman only, and the man was to bring a sacrifice. It was for the honour of marriage, though but begun by betrothing, that the crime should be punished; but it was for the honour of freedom that it should not be punished as the debauching of a free woman was, so great was the difference then made between bond and free (Ga 4:30); but the gospel of Christ knows no such distinction, Col 3:11.

21 And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, *even* a ram for a trespass offering.

22 And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the Lord for his sin which he hath done; and the sin which he hath done shall be forgiven him.

23 And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of.

A law concerning fruit-trees, that for the first three years after they were planted, if they should happen to be so forward as to bear in that time, yet no use should be made of the fruit, Le 19:23-25. It was therefore the practice of the Jews to pluck off the fruit, as soon as they perceived it knit, from their young trees, as gardeners do sometimes, because their early bearing hinders their growing. If any did come to perfection, it was not to be used in the service either of God or man; but what they bore the fourth year was to be holy to the Lord, either given to the priests, or eaten before the Lord with joy, as their second tithe was, and thenceforward it was all their own. Now,

1. Some think this taught them not to follow the custom of the heathen, who, they say, consecrated the very first products of their fruit-trees to their idols, saying that otherwise all the fruits would be blasted.

2. This law in the case of fruit-trees seems to be parallel with that in the case of animals, that no creature should be accepted as an offering till it was past eight days old, nor till that day were children to be circumcised; see Le 22:27. God would have the first-fruits of their trees, but, because for the first three years they were as inconsiderable as a lamb or a calf under eight days old, therefore God would not have them, for it is fit he should have every thing at its best; and

yet he would not allow them to be used, because his first-fruits were not as yet offered: they must therefore be accounted as uncircumcised, that is, as an animal under eight days' old, not fit for any use.

3. We are hereby taught not to be over-hasty in catching at any comfort, but to be willing with patience to wait the time for the enjoyment of it, and particularly to acknowledge ourselves unworthy of the increase of the earth, our right to the fruits of which was forfeited by our first parents eating forbidden fruit, and we are restored to it only by the word of God and prayer, 1Ti 4:5.

24 But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the
Lord *withal*.
25 And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may
yield unto you the increase thereof: I *am* the Lord your God.
26 Ye shall not eat *any thing* with the blood: neither shall ye use
enchantment, nor observe times.
27 Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou
mar the corners of thy beard.

A law against the superstitious usages of the heathen, Le 19:26-28.

1. Eating upon the blood, as the Gentiles did, who gathered the blood of their sacrifices into a vessel for their demons (as they fancied) to drink, and then sat about it, eating the flesh themselves, signifying their communion with devils by their feasting with them. Let not this custom be used, for the blood of God's sacrifices was to be sprinkled on the altar, and then poured at the foot of it, and conveyed away.

2. Enchantment and divination, and a superstitious observation of the times, some days and hours lucky and others unlucky. Curious arts of this kind, it is likely, had been of late invented by the Egyptian priests, to amuse the

people, and support their own credit. The Israelites had seen them practised, but must by no means imitate them. It would be unpardonable in those to whom were committed the oracles of God to ask counsel of the devil, and yet worse in Christians, to whom the Son of God is manifested, who has destroyed the works of the devil. For Christians to have their nativities cast, and their fortunes told them, to use spells and charms for the cure of diseases and the driving away of evil spirits, to be affected with the falling of the salt, a hare crossing the way, cross days, or the like, is an intolerable affront to the Lord Jesus, a support of paganism and idolatry, and a reproach both to themselves and to that worthy name by which they are called: and those must be grossly ignorant, both of the law and the gospel, that ask, "What harm is there in these things?" Is it no harm for those that have fellowship with Christ to have fellowship with devils, or to learn the ways of those that have? Surely we have not so learned Christ.

3. There was a superstition even in trimming themselves used by the heathen, which must not be imitated by the people of God: You shall not round the corners of your heads. Those that worshipped the hosts of heaven, in honour of them, cut their hair so as that their heads might resemble the celestial globe; but, as the custom was foolish itself, so, being done with respect to their false gods, it was idolatrous.

4. The rites and ceremonies by which they expressed their sorrow at their funerals must not be imitated, Le 19:28. They must not make cuts or prints in their flesh for the dead; for the heathen did so to pacify the infernal deities they dreamt of, and to render them propitious to their deceased friends. Christ by his sufferings has altered the property of death, and made it a true friend to every true Israelite; and now, as there needs nothing to make death propitious to us (for, if God be so, death is so of course), so we sorrow not as those that have no hope. Those whom the God of Israel had set apart for

himself must not receive the image and superscription of these dunghill deities. Lastly, The prostituting of their daughters to uncleanness, which is here forbidden (Le 19:29), seems to have been practised by the heathen in their idolatrous worships, for with such abominations those unclean spirits which they worshipped were well pleased. And when lewdness obtained as a religious rite, and was committed in their temples, no marvel that the land became full of that wickedness, which, when it entered at the temple-doors, overspread the land like a mighty torrent, and bore down all the fences of virtue and modesty. The devil himself could not have brought such abominations into their lives if he had not first brought them into their worships. And justly were those given up to vile affections who forsook the holy God, and gave divine honours to impure spirits. Those that dishonour God are thus suffered to dishonour themselves and their families.

28 Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print
any marks upon you: I *am* the Lord.
29 Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest
the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.
30 Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the
Lord.

A law for the preserving of the honour of the time and place appropriated to the service of God, Le 19:30. This would be a means to secure them both from the idolatries and superstitions of the heathen and from all immoralities in conversation.

1. Sabbaths must be religiously observed, and not those times mentioned (Le 19:26) to which the heathen had a superstitious regard.

2 The sanctuary must be reverenced: great care must be taken to approach the tabernacle with that purity and preparation which the law required, and to attend there with that humility, decency, and closeness of application which

became them in the immediate presence of such an awful majesty. Though now there is no place holy by divine institution, as the tabernacle and temple then were, yet this law obliges us to respect the solemn assemblies of Christians for religious worship, as being held under a promise of Christ's special presence in them, and to carry ourselves with a due decorum while in those assemblies we attend the administration of holy ordinances, Ec 5:1.

31 Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I *am* the Lord your God.

A caution against all communion with witches, and those that were in league with familiar spirits: "Regard them not, seek not after them, be not in fear of any evil from them nor in hopes of any good from them. Regard not their threatenings, or promises, or predictions; seek not to them for discovery or advice, for, if you do, you are defiled by it, and rendered abominable both to God and your own consciences." This was the sin that completed Saul's wickedness, for which he was rejected of God, 1Ch 10:13.

32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the Lord.

A charge to young people to show respect to the aged: Thou shall rise up before the hoary head, Le 19:32. Age is honourable, and he that is the Ancient of days requires that honour be paid to it. The hoary head is a crown of glory. Those whom God has honoured with the common blessing of long life we ought to honour with the distinguishing expressions of civility; and those who in age are wise and good are worthy of double honour: more respect is owing to such old men than merely to rise up before them; their credit and comfort must be carefully consulted, their experience and observations improved, and their counsels asked and hearkened to, Job 32:6,7. Some, by the old man whose face or presence is to be honoured, understand the elder in office, as by the hoary head the elder in age; both ought to be respected as fathers, and in the fear of God, who has put

some of his honour upon both. Note, Religion teaches good manners, and obliges us to give honour to those to whom honour is due. It is an instance of great degeneracy and disorder in a land when the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable, Isa 3:5,Job 30:1,12. It becomes the aged to receive this honour, and the younger to give it; for it is the ornament as well as duty of their youth to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters.

33 And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.

A charge to the Israelites to be very tender of strangers, Le 19:33,34. Both the law of God and his providence had vastly dignified Israel above any other people, yet they must not therefore think themselves authorized to trample upon all mankind but those of their own nation, and to insult them at their pleasure; no, "Thou shall not vex a stranger, but love him as thyself, and as one of thy own people." It is supposed that this stranger was not an idolater, but a worshipper of the God of Israel, though not circumcised, a proselyte of the gate at least, though not a proselyte of righteousness: if such a one sojourned among them, they must not vex him, nor oppress, nor over-reach him in a bargain, taking advantage of his ignorance of their laws and customs; they must reckon it as great a sin to cheat a stranger as to cheat an Israelite; "nay" (say the Jewish doctors) "they must not so much as upbraid him with his being a stranger, and his having been formerly an idolater." Strangers are God's particular care, as the widow and the fatherless are, because it is his honour to help the helpless, Ps 146:9. It is therefore at our peril if we do them any wrong, or put any hardships upon them. Strangers shall be welcome to God's grace, and therefore we should do what we can to invite them to it, and to recommend religion to their good opinion. It argues a generous disposition, and a pious regard to God, as a common Father, to be kind to strangers; for those of different countries, customs, and languages, are all made of one

blood. But here is a reason added peculiar to the Jews: "For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. God then favoured you, therefore do you now favour the strangers, and do to them as you then wished to be done to. You were strangers, and yet are now thus highly advanced; therefore you know not what these strangers may come to, whom you are apt to despise."

34 *But* the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one
born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were
strangers in the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.

35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in
weight, or in measure.

Justice in weights and measures is here commanded. That there should be no cheat in them, Le 19:35. That they should be very exact, Le 19:36. In weighing and measuring, we pretend a design to give all those their own whom we deal with; but, if the weights and measures be false, it is like a corruption in judgment, it cheats under colour of justice; and thus to deceive a man to his damage is worse than picking his pocket or robbing him on the highway. He that sells is bound to give the full of the commodity, and he that buys the full of the price agreed upon, which cannot be done without just balances, weights, and measures. Let no man go beyond or defraud his brother, for, though it be hidden from man, it will be found that God is the avenger of all such.

36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye
have: I *am* the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land
of Egypt.

37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments,
and do them: I *am* the Lord.

The chapter concludes with a general command (Le 19:37): You shall observe all my statutes, and do them. Note, 1. We are not likely to do God's statutes, unless we observe them with great care and consideration. 2. Yet it is not enough barely to observe God's precepts, but we must make conscience of obeying them. What will it avail us to be critical in our notions, if we be not conscientious in our

conversations? 3. An upright heart has respect to all God's commandments, Ps 119:6. Though in many instances the hand fails in doing what should be done, yet the eye observes all God's statutes. We are not allowed to pick and choose our duty, but must aim at standing complete in all the will of God.

Leviticus-20

The Penalties for Acts of Immorality

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever *he be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth *any* of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.

Parents abusing their children, by sacrificing them to Moloch, Le 20:2,3. There is the grossest absurdity that can be in all the rites of idolatry, and they are all a great reproach to men's reason; but none trampled upon all the honours of human nature as this did, the burning of children in the fire to the honour of a dunghill-god. It was a plain evidence that their gods were devils, who desired and delighted in the misery and ruin of mankind, and that the worshippers were worse than the beasts that perish, perfectly stripped, not only of reason, but of natural affection. Abraham's offering Isaac could not give countenance, much less could it give rise to this barbarous practice, since, though that was commanded, it was immediately countermanded.

Yet such was the power of the god of this world over the children of disobedience that this monstrous piece of inhumanity was generally practised; and even the Israelites were in danger of being drawn into it, which made it necessary that this severe law should be made against it. It was not enough to tell them they might spare their children

(the fruit of their body should never be accepted for the sin of their soul), but they must be told,

(1.) That the criminal himself should be put to death as a murderer: The people of the land shall stone him with stones (Le 20:2), which was looked upon as the worst of capital punishments among the Jews. If the children were sacrificed to the malice of the devil, the parents must be sacrificed to the justice of God. And, if either the fact could not be proved or the magistrates did not do their duty, God would take the work into his own hands: I will cut him off, Le 20:3. Note, Those that escape punishment from men, yet shall not escape the righteous judgments of God; so wretchedly do those deceive themselves that promise themselves impunity in sin. How can those escape against whom God sets his face, that is, whom he frowns upon, meets as an enemy, and fights against? The heinousness of the crime is here set forth to justify the doom: it defiles the sanctuary, and profanes the holy name of God, for the honour of both which he is jealous.

Observe, The malignity of the sin is laid upon that in it which was peculiar to Israel. When the Gentiles sacrificed their children they were guilty of murder and idolatry; but, if the Israelites did it, they incurred the additional guilt of defiling the sanctuary (which they attended upon even when they lay under this guilt, as if there might be an agreement between the temple of God and idols), and of profaning the holy name of God, by which they were called, as if he allowed his worshippers to do such things, Ro 2:23.

(2.) That all his aiders and abetters should be cut off likewise by the righteous hand of God. If his neighbours concealed him, and would not come in as witnesses against him,--if the magistrates connived at him, and would not pass sentence upon him, rather pitying his folly than hating his impiety,--God himself would reckon with them, Le 20:4,5. Misprision of idolatry is a crime cognizable in the court of heaven, and

which shall not go unpunished: I will set my face against that man (that magistrate, Jer 5:1) and against his family. Note,

[1.] The wickedness of the master of a family often brings ruin upon a family; and he that should be the house-keeper proves the house-breaker.

[2.] If magistrates will not do justice upon offenders, God will do justice upon them, because there is danger that many will go a whoring after those who do but countenance sin by winking at it. And, if the sins of leaders be leading sins, it is fit that their punishments should be exemplary punishments.

3 And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.

4 And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not;

5 then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.

6 And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

Persons abusing themselves by consulting such as have familiar spirits, Le 20:6. By this, as much as any thing, a man diminishes, disparages, and deceives himself, and so abuses himself. What greater madness can there be than for a man to go to a liar for information, and to an enemy for advice? Those do so who turn after those that deal in the black art, and know the depths of Satan. This is spiritual adultery as much as idolatry is, giving that honour to the devil which is due to God only; and the jealous God will give a bill of divorce to those that thus go a whoring from him, and will cut them off, they having first cut themselves off from him.

7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I *am* the Lord your God.

In the midst of these particular laws comes in that general charge, Le 20:7,8, where we have,

1 The duties required; and they are two:--

(1.) That in our principles, affections, and aims, we be holy: Sanctify yourselves and be you holy. We must cleanse ourselves from all the pollutions of sin, consecrate ourselves to the service and honour of God, and conform ourselves in every thing to his holy will and image: this is to sanctify ourselves.

(2.) That in all our actions, and in the whole course of our conversation, we be obedient to the laws of God: You shall keep my statutes. By this only can we make it to appear that we have sanctified ourselves and are holy, even by our keeping God's commandments; the tree is known by its fruit. Nor can we keep God's statutes, as we ought, unless we first sanctify ourselves, and be holy. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good.

2 The reasons to enforce these duties.

(1.) "I am the Lord your God; therefore be holy, that you may resemble him whose people you are, and may be pleasing to him. Holiness becomes his house and household."

(2.) I am the Lord who sanctifieth you. God sanctified them by peculiar privileges, laws, and favours, which distinguished them from all other nations, and dignified them as a people set apart for God. He gave them his word and ordinances to be means of their sanctification, and his good Spirit to instruct them; therefore they must be holy, else they received the grace of God herein in vain. Note,

[1.] God's people are, and must be, persons of distinction. God has distinguished them by his holy covenant, and

therefore they ought to distinguish themselves by their holy conversation.

[2.] God's sanctifying us is a good reason why we should sanctify ourselves, that we may comply with the designs of his grace, and not walk contrary to them. If it be the Lord that sanctifies us, we may hope the work shall be done, though it be difficult: the manner of expression is like that, 2Co 5:5, He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God. And his grace is so far from superseding our care and endeavour that it most strongly engages and encourages them. Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh in you.

8 And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I *am* the Lord which sanctify you.

9 For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood *shall be* upon him.

Children's abusing their parents, by cursing them, Le 20:9. If children should speak ill of their parents, or wish ill to them, or carry it scornfully or spitefully towards them, it was an iniquity to be punished by the judges, who were employed as conservators both of God's honour and of the public peace, which were both attacked by this unnatural insolence. See Pr 30:17, The eye that mocks at his father the ravens of the valley shall pick out, which intimates that such wicked children were in a fair way to be not only hanged, but hanged in chains. This law of Moses Christ quotes and confirms (Mt 15:4), for it is as direct a breach of the fifth commandment as wilful murder is of the sixth. The same law which requires parents to be tender of their children requires children to be respectful to their parents. He that despitefully uses his parents, the instruments of his being, flies in the face of God himself, the author of his being, who will not see the paternal dignity and authority insulted and trampled upon.

10 And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife,
even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the
adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Lying with another man's wife was made a capital crime. The adulterer and the adulteress that had joined in the sin must fall alike under the sentence: they shall both be put to death, Le 20:10. Long before this, even in Job's time, this was reputed a heinous crime and an iniquity to be punished by the judges, Job 31:11. It is a presumptuous contempt of an ordinance of God, and a violation of his covenant, Pr 2:17. It is an irreparable wrong to the injured husband, and debauches the mind and conscience of both the offenders as much as any thing. It is a sin which headstrong and unbridled lusts hurry men violently to, and therefore it needs such a powerful restraint as this. It is a sin which defiles a land and brings down God's judgments upon it, which disquiets families, and tends to the ruin of all virtue and religion, and therefore is fit to be animadverted upon by the conservators of the public peace: but see Joh 8:3-11.

11 And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his
father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their
blood shall *be* upon them.

12 And if a man lie with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely
be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood *shall be*
upon them.

Incestuous connections, whether by marriage or not. 1. Some of them were to be punished with death, as a man's lying with his father's wife, Le 20:11. Reuben would have been put to death for his crime (Ge 35:22) if this law had been then made. It was the sin of the incestuous Corinthian, for which he was to be delivered unto Satan, 1Co 5:1,5. A man's debauching his daughter-in-law, or his mother-in-law, or his sister, was likewise to be punished with death, Le 20:12,14,17. 2. Others of them God would punish with the curse of barrenness, as a man's defiling his aunt, or his brother's wife (Le 20:19-21): They shall die childless. Those that keep not within the divine rules of marriage forfeit the

blessings of marriage: They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase, Ho 4:10. Nay it is said, They shall bear their iniquity, that is, though they be not immediately cut off by the hand either of God or man for this sin, yet the guilt of it shall lie upon them, to be reckoned for another day, and not be purged with sacrifice or offering.

13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.

14 And if a man take a wife and her mother, it *is* wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you.

15 And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death; and ye shall slay the beast.

16 And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.

The unnatural lusts of sodomy and bestiality (sins not to be mentioned without horror) were to be punished with death, as they are at this day by our law, Le 20:13,15,16. Even the beast that was thus abused was to be killed with the sinner, who was thereby openly put to the greater shame: and the villany was thus represented as in the highest degree execrable and abominable, all occasions of the remembrance or mention of it being to be taken away. Even the unseasonable use of the marriage, if presumptuous, and in contempt of the law, would expose the offenders to the just judgment of God: they shall be cut off, Le 20:18. For this is the will of God, that every man should possess his vessel (and the wife is called the weaker vessel) in sanctification and honour, as becomes saints.

17 And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it *is* a wicked thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity.

18 And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.

19 And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister; for he uncovereth his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity.

20 And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless.

21 And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it *is* an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

22 Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spew you not out.

23 And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you: for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them.

Their danger.

1. They were going into an infected place (Le 20:24): You shall inherit their land, a land flowing with milk and honey, which they would have the comfort of if they kept their integrity; but, withal, it was a land full of idols, idolatries, and superstitious usages, which they would be apt to fall in love with, having brought from Egypt with them a strange disposition to take that infection.

2. If they took the infection, it would be of pernicious consequence to them. The Canaanites were to be expelled for these very sins: They committed all these things, therefore I abhorred them, Le 20:23. See what an evil thing sin is; it provokes God to abhor his own creatures, whereas otherwise he delights in the work of his hands. And, if the Israelites trod in the steps of their impiety, they must expect that the land would spue them out (Le 20:22), as he had told them before, Le 18:28. If God spared not the natural branches, but broke them off, neither would he spare those

who were grafted in, if they degenerated. Thus the rejection of the Jews stands for a warning to all Christian churches to take heed lest the kingdom of God be taken from them. Those that sin like others must expect to smart like them; and their profession of relation to God will be no security to them.

24 But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I *am* the Lord your God, which have separated you from *other* people.

The rest of these verses repeat and inculcate what had been said before; for to that unthinking forgetful people it was requisite that there should be line upon line, and that general rules, with their reasons, should be frequently insisted on, for the enforcement of particular laws, and making them more effectual. Three things we are here reminded of:--

Their dignity.

1. They had the Lord for their God, Le 20:24. They were his, his care, his choice, his treasure, his jewels, his kingdom of priests (Le 20:26): That you should be mine. Happy the people, and truly great, that are in such a case.

2. Their God was a holy God (Le 20:26), infinitely advanced above all others. His holiness is his glory, and it was their honour to be related to him, while their neighbours were the infamous worshippers of impure and filthy spirits.

3. The great God had separated them from other people (Le 20:24), and again, Le 20:26. Other nations were the common; they were the enclosure, beautified and enriched with peculiar privileges, and designed for peculiar honours; let them therefore value themselves accordingly, preserve their honour, and not lay it in the dust, by walking in the way of the heathen.

Their duty; this is inferred from their dignity. God had done more for them than for others, and therefore expected more from them than from others. And what is it that the Lord their God requires, in consideration of the great things done and designed? 1. You shall keep all my statutes (Le 20:22); and there was all the reason in the world that they should, for the statutes were their honour, and obedience to them would be their lasting comfort.

2. You shall not walk in the manners of nations, Le 20:23. Being separated from them, they must not associate with them, nor learn their ways. The manners of the nations were bad enough in them, but would be much worse in God's people.

3. You shall put a difference between clean and unclean, Le 20:25. This is holiness, to discern between things that differ, not to live at large, as if we might say and do any thing, but to speak and act with caution.

4. You shall not make your souls abominable, Le 20:25. Our constant care must be to preserve the honour, by preserving the purity, of our own souls, and never to do any thing to make them abominable to God and to our own consciences.

25 Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean,
and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your
souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living
thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from
you as unclean.

26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord *am* holy, and have
severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.

27 A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a
wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with
stones; their blood *shall be* upon them.

Leviticus-21

The Holiness of the Priests

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron, and say unto them, There shall none be defiled for the dead among his people:

It was before appointed that the priests should teach the people the statutes God had given concerning the difference between clean and unclean, Le 10:10,11. Now here it is provided that they should themselves observe what they were to teach the people. Note, Those whose office it is to instruct must do it by example as well as precept, 1Ti 4:12. The priests were to draw nearer to God than any of the people, and to be more intimately conversant with sacred things, and therefore it was required of them that they should keep at a greater distance than others from every thing that was defiling and might diminish the honour of their priesthood.

They must take care not to disparage themselves in their mourning for the dead. All that mourned for the dead were supposed to come near the body, if not to touch it: and the Jews say, "It made a man ceremonially unclean to come within six feet of a dead corpse;" nay, it is declared (Nu 19:14) that all who come into the tent where the dead body lies shall be unclean seven days. Therefore all the mourners that attended the funeral could not but defile themselves, so as not to be fit to come into the sanctuary for seven days: for this reason it is ordered,

1. That the priests should never put themselves under this incapacity of coming into the sanctuary, unless it were for one of their nearest relations, Le 21:1-3. A priest was permitted to do it for a parent or a child, for a brother or an unmarried sister, and therefore, no doubt (though this is not

mentioned) for the wife of his bosom; for Ezekiel, a priest, would have mourned for his wife if he had not been particularly prohibited, Eze 24:17. By this allowance God put an honour upon natural affection, and favoured it so far as to dispense with the attendance of his servants for seven days, while they indulged themselves in their sorrow for the death of their dear relations; but, beyond this period, weeping must not hinder sowing, nor their affection to their relations take them off from the service of the sanctuary. Nor was it at all allowed for the death of any other, no, not of a chief man among the people, as some read it, Le 21:4. They must not defile themselves, no, nor for the high priest himself, unless thus akin to them. Though there is a friend that is nearer than a brother, yet the priests must not pay this respect to the best friend they had, except he were a relation, lest, if it were allowed for one, others should expect it, and so they should be frequently taken off from their work: and it is hereby intimated that there is a particular affection to be reserved for those that are thus near akin to us; and, when any such are removed by death, we ought to be affected with it, and lay it to heart, as the near approach of death to ourselves, and an alarm to us to prepare to follow.

2. That they must not be extravagant in the expressions of their mourning, no, not for their dearest relations, Le 21:5. Their mourning must not be either,

(1.) Superstitious, according to the manner of the heathen, who cut off their hair, and let out their blood, in honour of the imaginary deities which presided (as they thought) in the congregation of the dead, that they might engage them to be propitious to their departed friends. Even the superstitious rites used of old at funerals are an indication of the ancient belief of the immortality of the soul, and its existence in a separate state: and though the rites themselves were forbidden by the divine law, because they were performed to false gods, yet the decent respect which nature teaches and

which the law allows to be paid to the remains of our deceased friends, shows that we are not to look upon them as lost. Nor,

(2.) Must it be passionate or immoderate. Note, God's ministers must be examples to others of patience under affliction, particularly that which touches in a very tender part, the death of their near relations. They are supposed to know more than others of the reasons why we must not sorrow as those that have no hope (1Th 4:13), and therefore they ought to be eminently calm and composed, that they may be able to comfort others with the same comforts wherewith they are themselves comforted of God. The people were forbidden to mourn for the dead with superstitious rites (Le 19:27,28), and what was unlawful to them was much more unlawful to the priest. The reason given for their peculiar care not to defile themselves we have (Le 21:6): Because they offered the bread of their God, even the offerings of the Lord made by fire, which were the provisions of God's house and table. They are highly honoured, and therefore must not stain their honour by making themselves slaves to their passions; they are continually employed in sacred service, and therefore must not be either diverted from or disfitted for the services they were called to. If they pollute themselves, they profane the name of their God on whom they attend: if the servants are rude and of ill behaviour, it is a reflection upon the master, as if he kept a loose and disorderly house. Note, All that either offer or eat the bread of our God must be holy in all manner of conversation, or else they profane that name which they pretend to sanctify.

2 but for his kin, that is near unto him, *that is,* for his mother, and for
his father, and for his son, and for his daughter, and for his brother,
3 and for his sister a virgin, that is nigh unto him, which hath had no
husband; for her may he be defiled.
4 *But* he shall not defile himself, *being* a chief man among his people,
to profane himself.

5 They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.

6 They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, *and* the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy.

7 They shall not take a wife *that is* a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he *is* holy unto his God.

They must take care not to degrade themselves in their marriage, Le 21:7. A priest must not marry a woman of ill fame that either had been guilty or was suspected to have been guilty of uncleanness. He must not only not marry a harlot, though ever so great a penitent for her former whoredoms, but he must not marry one that was profane, that is, of a light carriage or indecent behaviour.

Nay, he must not marry one that was divorced, because there was reason to think it was for some fault she was divorced. The priests were forbidden to undervalue themselves by such marriages as these, which were allowed to others,

1. Lest it should bring a present reproach upon their ministry, harden the profane in their profaneness, and grieve the hearts of serious people: the New Testament gives laws to ministers' wives (1Ti 3:11), that they be grave and sober, that the ministry be not blamed.

2. Lest it should entail a reproach upon their families; for the work and honour of the priesthood were to descend as an inheritance to their children after them. Those do not consult the good of their posterity as they ought who do not take care to marry such as are of good report and character. He that would seek a godly seed (as the expression is, Mal 2:15) must first seek a godly wife, and take heed of a corruption of blood. It is added here (Le 21:8), Thou shalt sanctify him,

and he shall be holy unto thee. "Not only thou, O Moses, by taking care that these laws be observed, but thou, O Israel, by all endeavours possible to keep up the reputation of the priesthood, which the priests themselves must do nothing to expose or forfeit. He is holy to his God (Le 21:7), therefore he shall be holy unto thee." Note, We must honour those whom our God puts honour upon. Gospel ministers by this rule are to be esteemed very highly in love for their works' sake (1Th 5:13), and every Christian must look upon himself as concerned to be the guardian of their honour.

8 Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy
God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify
you, *am* holy.

9 And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the
whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.

Their children must be afraid of doing any thing to disparage them (Le 21:9): If the daughter of any priest play the whore, her crime is great; she not only polluteth but profaneth herself: other women have not that honour to lose that she has, who, as one of a priest's family, has eaten of the holy things, and is supposed to have been better educated than others. Nay, she profaneth her father; he is reflected upon, and every body will be ready to ask, "Why did not he teach her better?" And the sinners in Zion will insult and say, "Here is your priest's daughter." Her punishment there must be peculiar: She shall be burnt with fire, for a terror to all priests' daughters. Note, The children of ministers ought, of all others, to take heed of doing any thing that is scandalous, because in them it is doubly scandalous, and will be punished accordingly by him whose name is Jealous.

10 And *he that is* the high priest among his brethren, upon whose
head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put
on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

11 neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his
father, or for his mother;

More was expected from a priest than from other people, but more from the high priest than from other priests, because

upon his head the anointing oil was poured, and he was consecrated to put on the garments (Le 21:10), both which were typical of the anointing and adorning of the Lord Jesus, with all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which he received without measure. It is called the crown of the anointing oil of his God (Le 21:12); for the anointing of the Spirit is, to all that have it, a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty. The high priest being thus dignified,

He must not defile himself at all for the dead, no, nor for his nearest relations, his father or his mother, much less his child or brother, Le 21:11.

1. He must not use the common expressions of sorrow on those occasions, such as uncovering his head, and rending his clothes (Le 21:10), so perfectly unconcerned must he show himself in all the crosses and comforts of this life: even his natural affection must be swallowed up in compassion to the ignorant, and a feeling of their infirmities, and a tender concern for the household of God, which he was made the ruler of. Thus being the holy one that was entrusted with the thummim and the urim he must not know father or mother, De 33:8,9.

2. He must not go in to any dead body, Le 21:11. If any of the inferior priests were under a ceremonial pollution, there were other priests that might supply their places; but, if the high priest were defiled, there would be a greater want of him. And the forbidding of him to go to any house of mourning, or attend any funeral, would be an indication to the people of the greatness of that dignity to which he was advanced. Our Lord Jesus, the great high priest of our profession, touched the dead body of Jairus's daughter, the bier of the widow's son, and the grave of Lazarus, to show that he came to altar the property of death, and to take off the terror of it, by breaking the power of it. Now that it cannot destroy it does not defile.

3. He must not go out of the sanctuary (Le 21:12); that is, whenever he was attending or officiating in the sanctuary, where usually he tarried in his own apartment all day, he must not go out upon any occasion whatsoever, nor cut short his attendance on the living God, no, not to pay his last respects to a dying relation. It was a profanation of the sanctuary to leave it, while his presence was requisite there, upon any such occasion; for thereby he preferred some other business before the service of God and the business of his profession, to which he ought to make every thing else give place. Thus our Lord Jesus would not leave off preaching to speak with his mother and brethren, Mt 12:48.

12 neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary
of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God *is* upon
him: I *am* the Lord.

13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity.

He might not marry a widow (as other priests might), much less one divorced, or a harlot, Le 21:13,14. The reason of this was to put a difference between him and other priests in this matter; and (as some suggest) that he might be a type of Christ, to whom the church was to be presented a chaste virgin, 2Co 11:2. See Eze 44:22. Christ must have our first love, our pure love, our entire love; thus the virgins love thee (So 1:3), and such only are fit to follow the Lamb, Re 14:4.

14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, *or* a harlot, these shall
he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

15 Neither shall he profane his seed among his people: for I the Lord
do sanctify him.

He might not profane his seed among his people, Le 21:15. Some understand it as forbidding him to marry any of an inferior rank, which would be a disparagement to his family. It may be a caution to him in disposing of his children; he must not profane his seed by marrying them unsuitably. Ministers' children are profaned if they be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

16 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

17 Speak unto Aaron, saying, whosoever *he be* of thy seed in their generations that hath *any* blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.

18 For whatsoever man *he be* that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous,

19 or a man that is broken-footed, or broken-handed,

The priesthood being confined to one particular family, and entailed upon all the male issue of that family throughout their generations, it was very likely that some or other in after-ages that were born to the priesthood would have natural blemishes and deformities: the honour of the priesthood would not secure them from any of those calamities which are common to men. Divers blemishes are here specified; some that were ordinarily for life, as blindness; others that might be for a time, as a scurf or scab, and, when they were gone, the disability ceased. Now,

I The law concerning priests that had blemishes was,

1. That they might live upon the altar (Le 21:22): He shall eat of the sacrifices with the other priests, even the most holy things, such as the show-bread and the sin-offerings, as well as the holy things, such as the tithes and first-fruits, and the priests' share of the peace-offerings. The blemishes were such as they could not help, and therefore, though they might not work, they must not starve. Note, None must be abused for their natural infirmities. Even the deformed child in the family must have its child's part.

2. Yet they must not serve at the altar, at either of the altars, nor be admitted to attend or assist the other priests in offering sacrifice or burning incense, Le 21:17, 21, 23. Great men choose to have such servants about them as are sightly, and it was fit that the great God should have such in his house then, when he was pleased to manifest his glory in external indications of it. But it was especially requisite that comely

men should be chosen to minister about holy things, for the sake of the people, who were apt to judge according to outward appearance, and to think meanly of the service, how honourable soever it was made by the divine institution, of those that performed it looked despicably or went about it awkwardly. This provision God made for the preserving of the reputation of his altar that it might not at any time fall under contempt. It was for the credit of the sanctuary that none should appear there who were any way disfigured, either by nature or accident.

II. Under the gospel,

1. Those that labour under any such blemishes as these have reason to thank God that they are not thereby excluded from offering spiritual sacrifices to God; nor, if otherwise qualified for it, from the office of the ministry. There is many a healthful beautiful soul lodged in a crazy deformed body. Yet,

2. We ought to infer hence how incapable those are to serve God acceptably whose minds are blemished and deformed by any reigning vice. Those are unworthy to be called Christians, and unfit to be employed as ministers, that are spiritually blind, and lame, and crooked, whose sins render them scandalous and deformed, so as that the offerings of the Lord are abhorred for their sakes. The deformities of Hophni and Phinehas were worse than any of the blemishes here mentioned. Let such therefore as are openly vicious be put out of the priesthood as polluted persons; and let all that are made to our God spiritual priests be before him holy and without blemish, and comfort themselves with this, that, though in this imperfect state they have spots that are the spots of God's children, yet they shall shortly appear before the throne of God without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

20 or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken;

21 no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall
come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath
a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God.
22 He shall eat the bread of his God, *both* of the most holy, and of the
holy.
23 Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar,
because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for
I the Lord do sanctify them.
24 And Moses told *it* unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the
children of Israel.

Leviticus-22

The Holiness of the Offerings

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves
from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they profane
not my holy name *in those things* which they hallow unto me: I *am*
the Lord.
3 Say unto them, whosoever *he be* of all your seed among your
generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children
of Israel hallow unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him,
that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I *am* the Lord.

Those that had a natural blemish, though they were forbidden to do the priests' work, were yet allowed to eat of the holy things: and the Jewish writers say that "to keep them from idleness they were employed in the wood-room, to pick out that which was worm-eaten, that it might not be used in the fire upon the altar; they might also be employed in the judgment of leprosy:" but,

Those that were under any ceremonial uncleanness, which possibly they contracted by their own fault, might no so much as eat of the holy things while they continued in their pollution.

1. Some pollutions were permanent, as a leprosy or a running issue, Le 22:4. These separated the people from the sanctuary, and God would show that they were so far from being more excusable that really they were more abominable in a priest.

2. Others were more transient, as the touching of a dead body, or any thing else that was unclean, from which, after a certain time, a man was cleansed by bathing his flesh in water, Le 22:6. But whoever was thus defiled might not eat of the holy things, under pain of God's highest displeasure, who said, and ratified the saying, That soul shall be cut off from my presence, Le 22:3. Our being in the presence of God, and attending upon him, will be so far from securing us that it will but the more expose us to God's wrath, if we dare to draw nigh to him in our uncleanness. The destruction shall come from the presence of the Lord (2Th 1:9), as the fire by which Nadab and Abihu died came from before the Lord. Thus those who profane the holy word of God will be cut off by that word which they make so light of; it shall condemn them. They are again warned of their danger if they eat the holy thing in their uncleanness (Le 22:9), lest they bear sin, and die therefore. Note,

(1.) Those contract great guilt who profane sacred things, by touching them with unhallowed hands. Eating the holy things signified an interest in the atonement; but, if they ate of them in their uncleanness, they were so far from lessening their guilt that they increased it: They shall bear sin.

(2.) Sin is a burden which, if infinite mercy prevent not, will certainly sink those that bear it: They shall die therefore. Even priests may be ruined by their pollutions and presumptions.

4 What man soever of the seed of Aaron is a leper, or hath a running issue; he shall not eat of the holy things, until he be clean. And

whoso toucheth any thing *that is* unclean *by* the dead, or a man whose seed goeth from him;

As to the design of this law we may observe,

1. This obliged the priests carefully to preserve their purity, and to dread every thing that would defile them. The holy things were their livelihood; if they might not eat of them, how must they subsist? The more we have to lose of comfort and honour by our defilement, the more careful we should be to preserve our purity.

2. This impressed the people with a reverence for the holy things, when they saw the priests themselves separated from them (as the expression is, Le 22:2) so long as they were in their uncleanness. He is doubtless a God of infinite purity who kept his immediate attendants under so strict a discipline.

3. This teaches us carefully to watch against all moral pollutions, because by them we are unfitted to receive the comfort of God's sanctuary. Though we labour not under habitual deformities, yet actual defilements deprive us of the pleasure of communion with God; and therefore he that is washed needeth to wash his feet (Joh 13:10), to wash his hands, and so to compass the altar, Ps 26:6. Herein we have need to be jealous over ourselves, lest (as it is observably expressed here) we profane God's holy name in those things which we hallow unto him, Le 22:2. If we affront God in those very performances wherein we pretend to honour him, and provoke him instead of pleasing him, we shall make up but a bad account shortly; yet thus we do if we profane God's name, by doing that in our uncleanness which pretends to be hallowed to him.

5 or whosoever toucheth any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean, or a man of whom he may take uncleanness, whatsoever uncleanness he hath;

6 the soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even,
and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with
water.
7 And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward
eat of the holy things; because it *is* his food.
8 That which dieth of itself, or is torn *with beasts,* he shall not eat to
defile himself therewith: I *am* the Lord.
9 They shall therefore keep mine ordinance, lest they bear sin for it,
and die therefore, if they profane it: I the Lord do sanctify them.
10 There shall no stranger eat *of* the holy thing: a sojourner of the
priest, or a hired servant, shall not eat *of* the holy thing.
11 But if the priest buy *any* soul with his money, he shall eat of it, and
he that is born in his house: they shall eat of his meat.

The holy things were to be eaten by the priests and their families. Now,

Here is a law that no stranger should eat of them, that is, no person whatsoever but the priests only, and those that pertained to them, Le 22:10. The priests are charged with this care, not to profane the holy things by permitting the strangers to eat of them (Le 22:15) or suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass (Le 22:16); that is, suffer them to bring guilt upon themselves, by meddling with that which they have no right to. Thus it is commonly understood. Note, We must not only be careful that we do not bear iniquity ourselves, but we must do what we can to prevent others bearing it. We must not only not suffer sin to lie upon our brother, but, if we can help it, we must not suffer it to come upon him. But perhaps there is another meaning of those words: the priests' eating the sin-offerings is said to signify their bearing the iniquity of the congregation, to make an atonement for them, Le 10:17. Let not a stranger therefore eat of that holy thing particularly, and so pretend to bear the iniquity of trespass; for it is daring presumption for any to do that, but such as are appointed to do it. Those that set up other mediators besides Christ our priest, to bear the iniquity of trespass, sacrilegiously rob Christ of his honour, and

invade his rights. When we warn people not to trust to their own righteousness, nor dare to appear before God in it, but to rely on Christ's righteousness only for peace and pardon, it is because we dare not suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass, for we know it is too heavy for them.

12 If the priest's daughter also be *married* unto a stranger, she may not eat of an offering of the holy things.

Here is an explanation of the law, showing who were to be looked upon as belonging to the priest's family, and who not.

1. Sojourners and hired servants abode not in the house for ever; they were in the family, but not of it; and therefore they might not eat of the holy things (Le 22:10): but the servant that was born in the house or bought with money, being a heirloom to the family, though a servant, yet might eat of the holy things, Le 22:11. Note, Those only are entitled to the comforts of God's house who make it their rest for ever, and resolve to dwell in it all the days of their life. As for those who for a time only believe, to serve a present turn. They are looked upon but as sojourners and mercenaries, and have no part nor lot in the matter.

2. As to the children of the family, concerning the sons there could be no dispute, they were themselves priests, but concerning the daughters there was a distinction. While they continued in their father's house they might eat of the holy things; but, if they married such as were not priests, they lost their right (Le 22:12), for now they were cut off from the family of the priests. Yet if a priest's daughter became a widow, and had no children in whom she might preserve a distinct family, and returned to her father's house again, being neither wife nor mother, she should again be looked upon as a daughter, and might eat of the holy things. If those whom Providence has made sorrowful widows, and who are dislodged from the rest they had in the house of a husband, yet find it again in a father's house, they have reason to be

thankful to the widows' God, who does not leave them comfortless.

3. Here is a demand of restitution to be made by him that had no right to the holy things, and yet should eat of them unwittingly, Le 22:14. If he did it presumptuously, and in contempt of the divine institution, he was liable to be cut off by the hand of God, and to be beaten by the magistrate; but, if he did it through weakness in inconsideration, he was to restore the value, adding a fifth part to it, besides which he was to bring an offering to atone for the trespass; see Le 5:15,16.

This law might be dispensed with in a case of necessity, as it was when David and his men ate of the show-bread, 1Sa 21:6. And our Saviour justifies them, and gives a reason for it, which furnishes us with a lasting rule in all such cases, that God will have mercy and not sacrifice, Mt 12:3,4,7. Rituals must give way to morals.

It is an instruction to gospel ministers, who are stewards of the mysteries of God, not to admit all, without distinction, to eat of the holy things, but to take out the precious from the vile. Those that are scandalously ignorant or profane are strangers and aliens to the family of the Lord's priests; and it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to such. Holy things are for holy persons, for those who are holy, at least, in profession, Mt 7:6.

13 But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no
child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she
shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat
thereof.

14 And if a man eat *of* the holy thing unwittingly, then he shall put the
fifth *part* thereof unto it, and shall give *it* unto the priest with the
holy thing.

15 And they shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel,
which they offer unto the Lord;

16 or suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass, when they eat their
holy things: for I the Lord do sanctify them.
17 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
18 Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of
Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever *he be* of the house of Israel,
or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his
vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto
the Lord for a burnt offering;
19 *ye shall offer* at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves,
of the sheep, or of the goats.
20 *But* whatsoever hath a blemish, *that* shall ye not offer: for it shall
not be acceptable for you.
21 And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the
Lord to accomplish *his* vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or
sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish
therein.
22 Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or
scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an
offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord.

Whatever was offered in sacrifice to God should be without blemish, otherwise it should not be accepted. This had often been mentioned in the particular institutions of the several sorts of offerings. Now here they are told what was to be accounted a blemish which rendered a beast unfit for sacrifice: if it was blind, or lame, had a wen, or the mange (Le 22:22),--if it was bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut (Le 22:24), that is, as the Jewish writers understand it, if it was, in any of these ways, castrated, if bulls and rams were made into oxen and weathers, they might not be offered. Moreover a difference is made between what was brought as a free-will offering and what was brought as a vow, Le 22:23. And, though none that had any of the forementioned blemishes might be brought for either, yet if a beast had any thing superfluous or lacking (that is, as the Jews understand it, if there was a disproportion or inequality between those parts that are pairs, when one eye, or ear, or leg, was bigger than it should be, or less than it should be)--if there was no

other blemish than this, it might be accepted for a free-will offering, to which a man had not before laid himself, nor had the divine law laid him, under any particular obligation; but for a vow it might not be accepted. Thus God would teach us to make conscience of performing our promises to him very exactly, and not afterwards to abate in quantity or value of what we had solemnly engaged to devote to him. What was, before the vow, in our own power, as in the case of a free-will offering, afterwards is not, Ac 5:4. It is again and again declared that no sacrifice should be accepted if it was thus blemished, Le 22:20,21. According to this law great care was taken to search all the beasts that were brought to be sacrificed, that there might, to a certainty, be no blemish in them. A blemished sacrifice might not be accepted even from the hand of a stranger, though to such all possible encouragement should be given to do honour to the God of Israel, Le 22:25. By this it appears that strangers were expected to come to the house of God from a far country (1Ki 8:41,42), and that they should be welcome, and their offerings accepted, as those of Darius, Ezr 6:9,10,Isa 56:6,7. The heathen priests were many of them not so strict in this matter, but would receive sacrifices for their gods that were ever so scandalous; but let strangers know that the God of Israel would not be so served. Now,

1. This law was then necessary for the preserving of the honour of the sanctuary, and of the God that was there worshipped. It was fit that every thing that was employed for his honour should be the best of the kind; for, as he is the greatest and brightest, so he is the best of beings; and he that is the best must have the best. See how greatly and justly displeasing the breach of this law was to the holy God, Mal 1:8,13,14.

2. This law made all the legal sacrifices the fitter to be types of Christ, the great sacrifice from which all these derived their virtue. In allusion to this law, he is said to be a Lamb

without blemish and without spot, 1Pe 1:19. As such a priest, so such a sacrifice, became us, who was harmless and undefiled. When Pilate declared, I find no fault in this man, he did thereby in effect pronounce the sacrifice without blemish. The Jews say it was the work of the sagan, or suffragan, high priest, to view the sacrifices, and see whether they were without blemish or no; when Christ suffered, Annas was in that office; but little did those who brought Christ to Annas first, by whom he was sent bound to Caiaphas, as a sacrifice fit to be offered (Joh 18:13,24), think that they were answering the type of this law.

3. It is an instruction to us to offer to God the best we have in our spiritual sacrifices. If our devotions are ignorant, and cold, and trifling, and full of distractions, we offer the blind, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice; but cursed be the deceiver that does so, for, while he thinks to put a cheat upon God, he puts a damning cheat upon his own soul.

23 Either a bullock or a lamb that hath any thing superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer *for* a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

24 Ye shall not offer unto the Lord that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make *any offering thereof* in your land.

25 Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption *is* in them, *and* blemishes *be* in them: they shall not be accepted for you.

26 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

That no beast should be offered in sacrifice before it was eight days old, Le 22:26,27. It was provided before that the firstlings of their cattle, which were to be dedicated to God, should not be brought to him till after the eighth day, Ex 22:30. Here it is provided that no creature should be offered in sacrifice till it was eight days old complete. Sooner than that it was not fit to be used at men's tables, and therefore not a God's altar. The Jews say, "It was because the sabbath sanctifies all things, and nothing should be offered to God

till at least one sabbath had passed over it." It was in conformity to the law of circumcision, which children were to receive on the eighth day. Christ was sacrificed for us, not in his infancy, though then Herod sought to slay him, but in the prime of his time.

27 When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

28 And *whether it be* cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day.

That the dam and her young should not both be killed in one day, whether in sacrifice or for common use, Le 22:28. There is such a law as this concerning birds, De 22:6. This was forbidden, not as evil in itself, but because it looked barbarous and cruel to the brute creatures; like the tyranny of the king of Babylon, that slew Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, and then put out his eyes. It looked ill-natured towards the species to kill two generations at once, as if one designed the ruin of the kind.

29 And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord, offer *it* at your own will.

30 On the same day it shall be eaten up; ye shall leave none of it until the morrow: I *am* the Lord.

31 Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I *am* the Lord.

That the flesh of their thank-offerings should be eaten on the same day that they were sacrificed, Le 22:29,30. This is a repetition of what we had before, Le 7:15,19:6,7. The chapter concludes with such a general charge as we have often met with, to keep God's commandments, and not to profane his holy name, Le 22:31,32. Those that profess God's name, if they do not make conscience of keeping his commandments, do but profane his name. The general reasons are added: God's authority over them--I am the Lord; his interest in them--I am your God; the title he had to them by redemption--"I brought you out of the land of Egypt, on

purpose that I might be your God;" the designs of his grace concerning them--I am the Lord that hallow you; and the resolutions of his justice, if he had not honour from them, to get himself honour upon them--I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. God will be a loser in his glory by no man at last; but sooner or later will recover his right, either in the repentance of sinners or in their ruin.

32 Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I *am* the Lord which hallow you,
33 that brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the Lord.

Leviticus-23

The Appointed Feasts

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *concerning* the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even* these are my feasts.

A general account of the holy times which God appointed (Le 23:2), and it is only his appointment that can make time holy; for he is the Lord of time, and as soon as ever he had set its wheels a-going it was he that sanctified and blessed one day above the rest, Ge 2:3. Man may by his appointment make a good day (Es 9:19), but it is God's prerogative to make a holy day; nor is any thing sanctified but by the stamp of his institution. As all inherent holiness comes from his special grace, so all adherent holiness from his special appointment. Now, concerning the holy times here ordained, observe,

1. They are called feasts. The day of atonement, which was one of them, was a fast; yet, because most of them were appointed for joy and rejoicing, they are in the general called

feasts. Some read it, These are my assemblies, but that is coincident with convocations. I would rather read it, These are my solemnities; so the word here used is translated (Isa 33:20), where Zion is called the city of our solemnities: and, reading it so here, the day of atonement was as great a solemnity as any of them.

2. They are the feasts of the Lord (my feasts), observed to the honour of his name, and in obedience to his command.

3. They were proclaimed; for they were not to be observed by the priests only that attended the sanctuary, but by all the people. And this proclamation was the joyful sound concerning which we read, Blessed are the people that know it, Ps 89:15.

4. They were to be sanctified and solemnized with holy convocations, that the services of these feasts might appear the more honourable and august, and the people the more unanimous in the performance of them; it was for the honour of God and his institutions, which sought not corners and the purity of which would be best preserved by the public administration of them; it was also for the edification of the people in love that the feasts were to be observed as holy convocations.

A repetition of the law of the sabbath in the first place. Though the annual feasts were made more remarkable by the general attendance at the sanctuary, yet these must not eclipse the brightness of the sabbath, Le 23:3. They are here told,

1. That on that day they must withdraw themselves from all the affairs and business of the world. It is a sabbath of rest, typifying our spiritual rest from sin, and in God: You shall do no work therein. On other holy days they were forbidden to do any servile work (Le 23:7), but on the sabbath, and the

day of atonement (which is also called a sabbath), they were to do no work at all, no, not the dressing of meat.

2. On that day they must employ themselves in the service of God.

It is a holy convocation; that is, "If it lie within your reach, you shall sanctify it in a religious assembly: let as many as can come to the door of the tabernacle, and let others meet elsewhere for prayer, and praise, and the reading of the law," as in the schools of the prophets, while prophecy continued, and afterwards in the synagogues.

3 Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath
of rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein:* it *is* the
Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.
4 These *are* the feasts of the Lord, *even* holy convocations, which
ye shall proclaim in their seasons.
5 In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the Lord's
Passover.
6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast
of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must
eat unleavened bread.
7 In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do
no servile work therein.

Here again the feasts are called the feasts of the Lord, because he appointed them. Jeroboam's feast, which he devised of his own heart (1Ki 12:33), was an affront to God, and a reproach upon the people. These feasts were to be proclaimed in their seasons (Le 23:4), and the seasons God chose for them were in March, May and September (according to our present computation), not in winter, because travelling would then be uncomfortable, when the days were short, and the ways foul; not in the middle of summer, because then in those countries they were gathering in their harvest and vintage, and could be ill spared from their country business. Thus graciously does God consult our comfort in his appointments, obliging us thereby religiously

to regard his glory in our observance of them, and not to complain of them as a burden. The solemnities appointed them were,

1. Many and returned frequently, which was intended to preserve in them a deep sense of God and religion, and to prevent their inclining to the superstitions of the heathen. God kept them fully employed in his service, that they might not have time to hearken to the temptations of the idolatrous neighbourhood they lived in.

2. They were most of them times of joy and rejoicing. The weekly sabbath is so, and all their yearly solemnities, except the day of atonement. God would thus teach them that wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and engage them to his service by encouraging them to be cheerful in it and to sing at their work. Seven days were days of strict rest and holy convocations; the first day and the seventh of the feast of unleavened bread, the day of pentecost, the day of the feast of trumpets, the first day and the eighth of the feast of tabernacles, and the day of atonement: here were six for holy joy and one only for holy mourning. We are commanded to rejoice evermore, but not to be evermore weeping. Here is,

I. A repetition of the law of the Passover, which was to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month, in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt and the distinguishing preservation of their first-born, mercies never to be forgotten. This feast was to begin with the killing of the paschal lamb, Le 23:5. It was to continue seven days, during all which time they were to eat sad bread, that was unleavened (Le 23:6), and the first and last day of the seven were to be days of holy rest and holy convocations, Le 23:7,8. They were not idle days spent in sport and recreation (as many that are called Christians spend their holy days), but offerings were made by fire unto the Lord at his altar; and we have reason to think that the people were taught to

employ their time in prayer, and praise, and godly meditation.

II. An order for the offering of a sheaf of the first-fruits, upon the second day of the feast of unleavened bread; the first is called the sabbath, because it was observed as a sabbath (Le 23:11), and, on the morrow after, they had this solemnity. A sheaf or handful of new corn was brought to the priest, who was to heave it up, in token of his presenting it to the God of Heaven, and to wave it to and fro before the Lord, as the Lord of the whole earth, and this should be accepted for them as a thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy to them in clothing their fields with corn, and of their dependence upon God, and desire towards him, for the preserving of it to their use. For it was the expression both of prayer and praise, Le 23:11. A lamb for a burnt-offering was to be offered with it, Le 23:12. As the sacrifice of animals was generally attended with meat-offerings, so this sacrifice of corn was attended with a burnt-offering, that bread and flesh might be set together on God's table. They are forbidden to eat of their new corn till this handful was offered to God; for it was fit, if God and Israel feast together, that he should be served first. And the offering of this sheaf of first-fruits in the name of the whole congregation did, as it were, sanctify to them their whole harvest, and give them a comfortable use of all the rest; for then we may eat our bread with joy when we have, in some measure, performed our duty to God, and God has accepted our works, for thus all our enjoyments become clean to us. Now, 1. This law was given now, though there was no occasion for putting it in execution till they came to Canaan: in the wilderness they sowed no corn; but God's feeding them there with bread from heaven obliged them hereafter not to grudge him his share of their bread out of the earth. We find that when they came into Canaan the manna ceased upon the very day that the sheaf of first-fruits was offered; they had eaten of the old corn the day before (Jos 5:11), and then on this day they offered the first-fruits, by

which they became entitled to the new corn too (Le 23:12), so that there was no more occasion for manna.

1. This sheaf of first-fruits was typical of our Lord Jesus, who has risen from the dead as the first-fruits of those that slept, 1Co 15:20. That branch of the Lord (Isa 4:2) was then presented to him, in virtue of the sacrifice of himself, the Lamb of God, and it was accepted for us. It is very observable that our Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the very day that the first-fruits were offered, to show that he was the substance of this shadow.

2. We are taught by this law to honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase, Pr 3:9. They were not to eat of their new corn till God's part was offered to him out of it (Le 23:14), for we must always begin with God, begin our lives with him, begin every day with him, begin every meal with him, begin every affair and business with him; seek first the kingdom of God.

8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day *is* a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein.*

9 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest:

11 and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

12 And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf a he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord.

13 And the meat offering thereof *shall be* two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord *for* a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof *shall be* of wine, the fourth *part* of a hin.

14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete:

16 even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.

Here is the institution of the feast of pentecost, or weeks, as it is called (De 16:9), because it was observed fifty days, or seven weeks, after the Passover. It is also called the feast of harvest, Ex 23:16. For as the presenting of the sheaf of first-fruits was an introduction to the harvest, and gave them liberty to put in the sickle, so they solemnized the finishing of their corn-harvest at this feast.

1. Then they offered a handful of ears of barley, now they offered two loaves of wheaten bread, Le 23:17. This was leavened. At the Passover they ate unleavened bread, because it was in remembrance of the bread they ate when they came out of Egypt, which was unleavened; but now at pentecost it was leavened, because it was an acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in their ordinary food, which was leavened.

2. With that sheaf of first-fruits they offered only one lamb for a burnt-offering, but with these loaves of first-fruits they offered seven lambs, two rams, and one bullock, all for a burnt-offering, so giving glory to God, as the Lord of their land and the Lord of their harvest, by whose favour they lived and to whose praise they ought to live. They offered likewise a kid for a sin-offering, so taking shame to themselves as unworthy of the bread they ate, and imploring pardon for their sins, by which they had forfeited their harvest-mercies, and which they had been guilty of in the receiving of them. And lastly, two lambs for a sacrifice of

peace-offerings, to beg a blessing upon the corn they had gathered in, which would be neither sure nor sweet to them without that blessing, Hag 1:9. These were the only peace-offerings that were offered on the behalf of the whole congregation, and they were reckoned most holy offerings, whereas other peace-offerings were but holy. All these offerings are here appointed, Le 23:18-20.

3. That one day was to be kept with a holy convocation, Le 23:21. It was one of the days on which all Israel was to meet God and one another, at the place which the Lord should choose. Some suggest that whereas seven days were to make up the feast of unleavened bread there was only one day appointed for the feast of pentecost, because this was a busy time of the year with them, and God allowed them speedily to return to their work in the country. This annual feast was instituted in remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, the fiftieth day after they came out of Egypt. That was the feast which they were told in Egypt must be observed to God in the wilderness, as a memorial of which ever after they kept this feast. But the period and perfection of this feast was the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles on the day of this feast (Ac 2:1), in which the law of faith was given, fifty days after Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. And on that day (as bishop Patrick well expresses it) the apostles, having themselves received the first-fruits of the Spirit, begat three thousand souls, through the word of truth, and presented them, as the first-fruits of the Christian church, to God and the Lamb.

To the institution of the feast of pentecost is annexed a repetition of that law which we had before (Le 19:9), by which they were required to leave the gleanings of their fields, and the corn that grew on the ends of the butts, for the poor, Le 23:22. Probably it comes in here as a thing which the priests must take occasion to remind the people of, when

they brought their first-fruits, intimating to them that to obey even in this small matter was better than sacrifice, and that, unless they were obedient, their offerings should not be accepted. It also taught them that the joy of harvest should express itself in charity to the poor, who must have their due out of what we have, as well as God his. Those that are truly sensible of the mercy they receive from God will without grudging show mercy to the poor.

17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth
deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven;
they are the first fruits unto the Lord.
18 And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of
the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be
for a burnt offering unto the Lord, with their meat offering, and
their drink offerings, *even* an offering made by fire, of sweet savor
unto the Lord.
19 Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and
two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.
20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits *for*
a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs: they shall be
holy to the Lord for the priest.
21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, *that* it may be a holy
convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein*: it shall be*
a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your
generations.
22 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make
clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest,
neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt
leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I *am* the Lord your
God.
23 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the seventh month,
in the first *day* of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial
of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.

The institution of the feast of trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month, Le 23:24,25. That which was now the seventh month had been reckoned the first month, and the

year of jubilee was still to begin with this month (Le 25:8), so that this was their new year's day. It was to be as their other yearly Sabbaths, a day of holy rest--You shall do no servile work therein; and a day of holy work--You shall offer an offering to the Lord; concerning these particular directions were afterwards given, Nu 29:1. That which is here made peculiar to this festival is that it was a memorial of blowing of trumpets. They blew the trumpet every new moon (Ps 81:3), but in the new moon of the seventh month it was to be done with more than ordinary solemnity; for they began to blow at sun-rise and continued till sun-set. Now,

1. This is here said to be a memorial, perhaps of the sound of the trumpet upon mount Sinai when the law was given, which must never be forgotten. Some think that it was a memorial of the creation of the world, which is supposed to have been in autumn; for which reason this was, till now, the first month. The mighty word by which God made the world is called the voice of his thunder (Ps 104:7); fitly therefore was it commemorated by blowing of trumpets, or a memorial of shouting, as the Chaldee renders it; for, when the foundations of the earth were fastened, all the sons of God shouted for joy, Job 38:6,7.

2 The Jewish writers suppose it to have a spiritual signification. Now at the beginning of the year they were called by this sound of trumpet to shake off their spiritual drowsiness, to search and try their ways, and to amend them: the day of atonement was the ninth day after this; and thus they were awakened to prepare for that day, by sincere and serious repentance, that it might be indeed to them a day of atonement. And they say, "The devout Jews exercised themselves more in good works between the feast of trumpets and the day of expiation than at any other time of the year."

3. It was typical of the preaching of the gospel, by which joyful sound souls were to be called in to serve God and keep a spiritual feast to him. The conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ is said to be by the blowing of a great trumpet, Isa 27:13.

25 Ye shall do no servile work *therein:* but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

26 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

27 Also on the tenth *day* of this seventh month *there shall be* a day of atonement: it shall be a holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

28 And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it *is* a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.

A repetition of the law of the day of atonement, that is, so much of it as concerned the people.

1. They must on this day rest from all manner of work, and not only from servile works as on other annual festivals; must it be as strict a rest as that of the weekly sabbath, Le 23:28,30,31. The reason is: For it is a day of atonement. Note, The humbling of our souls for sin, and the making of our peace with God, is work that requires the whole man, and the closest application of mind imaginable, and all little enough. He that would do the work of a day of atonement in its day, as it should be done, had need lay aside the thoughts of every thing else. On that day God spoke peace unto his people, and unto his saints; and therefore they must lay aside all their worldly business, that they might the more clearly and the more reverently hear that voice of joy and gladness. Fasting days should be days of rest.

2. They must afflict their souls, and this upon pain of being cut off by the hand of God, Le 23:27,29,32. They must mortify the body, and deny the appetites of it, in token of their sorrow for the sins they had committed, and the mortifying of their indwelling corruptions. Every soul must

be afflicted, because every soul was polluted, and guilty before God; while none have fulfilled the law of innocency none are exempt from the law of repentance, besides that every man must sigh and cry for the abominations of the land.

3. The entire day must be observed: From even to even you shall afflict your souls (Le 23:32), that is, "You shall begin your fast, and the expressions of your humiliation, in the ninth day of the month at even." They were to leave off all their worldly labour, and compose themselves to the work of the day approaching, some time before sun-set on the ninth day, and not to take any food (except children and sick people) till after sun-set on the tenth day. Note, The eves of solemn days ought to be employed in solemn preparation. When work for God and our souls is to be done, we should not straiten ourselves in time for the doing of it; for how can we spend our time better? Of this sabbath the rule here given is to be understood: From even unto even shall you celebrate your sabbath.

29 For whatsoever soul *it be* that shall not be afflicted in that same day,
he shall be cut off from among his people.
30 And whatsoever soul *it be* that doeth any work in that same day, the
same soul will I destroy from among his people.
31 Ye shall do no manner of work: *it shall be* a statute for ever
throughout your generations in all your dwellings.
32 It *shall be* unto you a Sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls:
in the ninth *day* of the month at even, from even unto even, shall
ye celebrate your Sabbath.
33 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

We have here, the institution of the feast of tabernacles, which was one of the three great feasts at which all the males were bound to attend, and celebrated with more expressions of joy than any of them.

1. As to the directions for regulating this feast, observe,

(1.) It was to be observed on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Le 23:34), but five days after the day of atonement. We may suppose, though they were not all bound to attend on the day of atonement, as on the three great festivals, yet that many of the devout Jews came up so many days before the feast of tabernacles as to enjoy the opportunity of attending on the day of atonement. Now,

[1.] The afflicting of their souls on the day of atonement prepared them for the joy of the feast of tabernacles. The more we are grieved and humbled for sin, the better qualified we are for the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

[2.] The joy of this feast recompensed them for the sorrow of that fast; for those that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

(2.) It was to continue eight days, the first and last of which were to be observed as Sabbaths, days of holy rest and holy convocations, Le 23:35,36,39. The sacrifices to be offered on these eight days we have a very large appointment of, Nu 29:12-39, &c.

(3.) During the first seven days of this feast all the people were to leave their houses, and the women and children in them, and to dwell in booths made of the boughs of thick trees, particularly palm trees, Le 23:40,42. The Jews make the taking of the branches to be a distinct ceremony from the making of the booths. It is said, indeed (Ne 8:15), that they made their booths of the branches of trees, which they might do, and yet use that further expression of joy, the carrying of palm-branches in their hands, which appears to have been a token of triumph upon other occasions (Joh 12:13), and is alluded to, Re 7:9. The eighth day some make a distinct feast of itself, but it is called (Joh 7:37) that great day of the feast; it was the day on which they returned from their booths, to settle again in their own houses.

(4.) They were to rejoice before the Lord God during all the time of this feast, Le 23:40. The tradition of the Jews is that they were to express their joy by dancing, and singing hymns of praise to God, with musical instruments: and not the common people only, but the wise men of Israel, and their elders, were to do it in the court of the sanctuary: for (say they) the joy with which a man rejoices in doing a commandment is really a great service.

2. As to the design of this feast,

(1.) It was to be kept in remembrance of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness. Thus it is expounded here (Le 23:43): That your generations may know, not only by the written history, but by this ocular tradition, that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths. Thus it kept in perpetual remembrance,

[1.] The meanness of their beginning, and the low and desolate state out of which God advanced that people. Note, Those that are comfortably fixed ought often to call to mind their former unsettled state, when they were but little in their own eyes.

[2.] The mercy of God to them, that, when they dwelt in tabernacles, God not only set up a tabernacle for himself among them, but, with the utmost care and tenderness imaginable, hung a canopy over them, even the cloud that sheltered them from the heat of the sun. God's former mercies to us and our fathers ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance. The eighth day was the great day of this feast, because then they returned to their own houses again, and remembered how, after they had long dwelt in tents in the wilderness, at length they came to a happy settlement in the land of promise, where they dwelt in goodly houses. And they would the more sensibly value and be thankful for the comforts and conveniences of their houses when they had

been seven days dwelling in booths. It is good for those that have ease and plenty sometimes to learn what it is to endure hardness.

(2.) It was a feast of in-gathering, so it is called, Ex 23:16. When they had gathered in the fruit of their land (Le 23:39), the vintage as well as the harvest, then they were to keep this feast in thankfulness to God for all the increase of the year; and some think that the eighth day of the feast had special reference to this ground of the institution. Note, The joy of harvest ought to be improved for the furtherance of our joy in God. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and therefore whatever we have the comfort of he must have the glory of, especially when any mercy is perfected.

(3.) It was a typical feast. It is supposed by many that our blessed Saviour was born much about the time of this feast; then he left his mansions of light above to tabernacle among us (Joh 1:14), and he dwelt in booths. And the worship of God under the New Testament is prophesied of under the notion of keeping the feast of tabernacles, Zec 14:16. For,

[1.] The gospel of Christ teaches us to dwell in tabernacles, to sit loose to this world, as those that have here no continuing city, but by faith, and hope and holy contempt of present things, to go out to Christ without the camp, Heb 13:13,14.

[2.] It teaches us to rejoice before the Lord our God. Those are the circumcision, Israelites indeed, that always rejoice in Christ Jesus, Php 3:3. And the more we are taken off from this world the less liable we are to the interruption of our joys.

34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, the fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the feast of tabernacles *for* seven days unto the Lord.

35 On the first day *shall be* a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein.*

36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord; on the eighth day shall be a holy convocation unto you, and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: it *is* a solemn assembly; *and* ye shall do no servile work *therein.*

37 These *are* the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day:

38 beside the Sabbaths of the Lord, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the Lord.

39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day *shall be* a Sabbath, and on the eighth day *shall be* a Sabbath.

The summary and conclusion of these institutions.

1. God appointed these feasts (Le 23:37,38), besides the Sabbaths and your free-will offerings. This teaches us,

(1.) That calls to extraordinary services will not excuse us from our constant stated performances. Within the days of the feast of tabernacles there must fall at least one sabbath, which must be as strictly observed as any other.

(2.) That God's institutions leave room for free-will offerings. Not that we may invent what he never instituted, but we may repeat what he has instituted, ordinarily, the oftener the better. God is well pleased with a willing people.

2. Moses declared them to the children of Israel, Le 23:44. He let them know what God appointed, and neither more nor less. Thus Paul delivered to the churches what he had received from the Lord. We have reason to be thankful that

the feasts of the Lord, declared unto us, are not so numerous, nor the observance of them so burdensome and costly, as theirs then were, but more spiritual and significant, and surer sweeter earnests of the everlasting feast, at the last in-gathering, which we hope to be celebrating to eternity.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year: *it shall be* a statute for ever in your generations; ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43 that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.

44 And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord.

Leviticus-24

The Tending of the Lamp

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually.

3 Without the veil of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: *it shall be* a statute for ever in your generations.

Care is here taken, and orders are given, for the decent furnishing of the candlestick and table in God's house.

The lamps must always be kept burning. The law for this we had before, Ex 27:20,21. It is here repeated, probably

because it now began to be put in execution, when other things were settled.

1 The people were to provide oil (Le 24:2), and this, as every thing else that was to be used in God's service, must be of the best, pure olive-oil, beaten, probably it was double-strained. This was to cause the lamps to burn; all our English copies read it lamps, but in the original it is singular in Le 24:2--to cause the lamp to burn; but plural in Le 24:4--he shall order the lamps. The seven lamps made all one lamp, in allusion to which the blessed Spirit of grace is represented by seven lamps of fire before the throne (Re 4:5), for there are diversities of gifts, but one Spirit, 1Co 12:4. Ministers are as burning and shining lights in Christ's church, but it is the duty of people to provide comfortably for them, as Israel for the lamps. Scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry.

2 The priests were to tend the lamps; they must snuff them, clean the candlestick, and supply them with oil, morning and evening, Le 24:3,4. Thus it is the work of the ministers of the gospel to hold forth that word of life, not to set up new lights, but, by expounding and preaching the word, to make the light of it more clear and extensive. This was the ordinary way of keeping the lamps burning; but, when the church was poor and in distress, we find its lamps fed constantly with oil from the good olives immediately, without the ministry of priest or people (Zec 4:2,3); for, though God has tied us to means, he has not tied himself to them, but will take effectual care that his lamp never go out in the world for want of oil.

4 He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually.

The Showbread

5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.

The table must always be kept spread. This was appointed before, Ex 25:30. And here also,

1 The table was furnished with bread; not dainties nor varieties to gratify a luxurious palate, but twelve loaves or cakes of bread, Le 24:5,6. Where there is plenty of bread there is no famine; and where bread is not there is no feast. There was a loaf for every tribe, for in our Father's house there is bread enough. They were all provided for by the divine bounty, and were all welcome to the divine grace. Even after the revolt of the ten tribes this number of loaves was continued (2Ch 13:11), for the sake of those few of each tribe that retained their affection to the temple and continued their attendance on it.

2. A handful of frankincense was put in a golden saucer, upon or by each row, Le 24:7. When the bread was removed, and given to the priests, this frankincense was burnt upon the golden altar (I suppose) over and above the daily incense: and this was for a memorial instead of the bread, an offering made by fire, as the handful of the meat-offering which was burnt upon the altar is called the memorial thereof, Le 2:2. Thus a little was accepted as a humble acknowledgment, and all the loaves were consigned to the priests. All God's spiritual Israel, typified by the twelve loaves, are made through Christ a sweet savour to him, and their prayers are said to come up before God for a memorial, Ac 10:4. The word is borrowed from the ceremonial law.

3. Every sabbath it was renewed. When the loaves had stood there a week, the priests had them to eat with other holy things that were to be eaten in the holy place (Le 24:9), and new ones were provided at the public charge, and put in the room of them, Le 24:8.

The Jews say, "The hands of those priests that put on were mixed with theirs that took off, that the table might be never empty, but the bread might be before the Lord continually." God is never unprovided for the entertainment of those that visit him, as men often are, Lu 11:5. Every one of those cakes contained two tenth-deals, that is, two omers of fine flour; just so much manna every Israelite gathered on the sixth day for the sabbath, Ex 16:22. Hence some infer that this show-bread, which was set on the table on the sabbath, was intended as a memorial of the manna wherewith they were fed in the wilderness. Christ's ministers should provide new bread for his house every sabbath day, the production of their fresh studies in the scripture, that their proficiency may appear to all, 1Ti 4:1,5.

6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord.

7 And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, *even* an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

8 Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

9 And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it *is* most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute.

The Punishment for Blasphemy

10 And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father *was* an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish *woman* and a man of Israel strove together in the camp;

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws. We have here an account of the evil manners of a certain nameless mongrel Israelite, and the good laws occasioned thereby.

The offender was the son of an Egyptian father and an Israelitish mother (Le 24:10); his mother was of the tribe of Dan, Le 24:11. Neither he nor his father is named, but his mother only, who was an Israelite. This notice is taken of his parentage either,

1. To intimate what occasioned the quarrel he was engaged in. The Jews say, "He offered to set up his tent among the Danites in the right of his mother, but was justly opposed by some or other of that tribe, and informed that his father being an Egyptian he had no part nor lot in the matter, but must look upon himself as a stranger." Or,

2. To show the common ill effect of such mixed marriages. When a daughter of Israel would marry an idolatrous malignant Egyptian, what could be the fruit of such a marriage but a blasphemer? For the children will be apt to take after the worse side, whichsoever it is, and will sooner learn of an Egyptian father to blaspheme than of an Israelitish mother to pray and praise.

11 and the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name *of the* Lord, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan :)

The occasion of the offence was contention: He strove with a man of Israel. The mixed multitude of Egyptians that came

up with Israel (Ex 12:38) were in many ways hurtful to them, and this was one, they were often the authors of strife. The way to preserve the peace of the church is to preserve the purity of it. In this strife he broke out into ill language.

Note, When quarrels begin we know not what mischief they will make before they end, nor how treat a matter a little fire may kindle. When men's passion is up they are apt to forget both their reason and their religion, which is a good reason why we should not be apt either to give or to resent provocation, but leave off strife before it be meddled with, because the beginning of it is as the letting forth of water.

The offence itself was blasphemy and cursing, Le 24:11. It is supposed that his cause came to be heard before the judges, who determined that he had no right to the privileges of an Israelite, his father being an Egyptian, and that, being enraged at the sentence,

1. He blasphemed the name of the Lord. He blasphemed the name, that is, he blasphemed God, who is known by his name only, not by his nature, or any similitude. Not as if God were a mere name, but his is a name above every name. The translators add of the Lord, which is implied, but not expressed, in the original, for the greater reverence of the divine Majesty: it is a shame that it should be found on record that the very name of Jehovah should be blasphemed; tell it not in Gath. It is a fond conceit of the superstitious Jews that his blasphemy was in pronouncing the name of Jehovah, which they call ineffable: he that made himself known by that name never forbade the calling of him by that name. It is probable that finding himself aggrieved by the divine appointment, which separated between the Israelites and strangers, he impudently reproached both the law and the Law-maker, and set him at defiance.

2. He cursed either God himself (and then his cursing was the same with blaspheming) or the person with whom he strove. Imprecations of mischief are the hellish language of hasty passion, as well as of rooted malice. Or perhaps he cursed the judges that gave sentence against him; he flew in the face of the court, and ridiculed the processes of it; thus he added sin to sin.

12 and they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be showed them.

The caution with which he was proceeded against for this sin. The witnesses or inferior judges brought him and his case (which was somewhat extraordinary) unto Moses (Le 24:11), according to the order settled (Ex 18:22), and Moses himself would not give judgment hastily, but committed the offender into custody, till he had consulted the oracle in this case. Note, Judges must deliberate; both those that give the verdict and those that give the sentence must consider diligently what they do, and do nothing rashly, for the judgment is God's (De 1:17), and before him there will be a rehearing of the cause. They waited to know what was the mind of the Lord, whether he was to be put to death by the hand of the magistrate or to be left to the judgment of God: or, rather, they wanted to know whether he should be stoned, as those were to be that only cursed their parents (Le 20:9), or whether, the crime being so much greater, some sorer punishment should be inflicted on him. Note, Those that sit in judgment should sincerely desire, and by prayer and the use of all good means should endeavour to know the mind of the Lord, because they judge for him (2Ch 19:6) and to him they are accountable.

13 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

14 Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard *him* lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

Sentence passed upon this offender by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth himself: Let all the congregation stone him, Le 24:14. God could have cut him off by an immediate

stroke from heaven, but he would put this honour upon the institution of magistracy to make use of it for the supporting and vindicating of his own glory in the world. Observe,

1 The place of execution appointed: Bring him forth without the camp. To signify their detestation of the crime, they must thus cast out the criminal as an abominable branch, and separate him from them as an unclean thing and unworthy a place in the camp of Israel.

2 The executioners: Let all the congregation do it, to show their zeal for the honour of God's name. Every man should have a stone to throw at him that blasphemes God, reckoning himself nearly concerned in the reproaches cast on God, Ps 69:9. Thus also the greater terror would be cast upon the congregation; those that once helped to stone a blasphemer would ever after dread every thing that bordered upon blasphemy, that looked like it or looked towards it.

3. The solemnity of the execution; before the congregation stoned him, the witnesses were to lay their hands upon his head. The Jews say that this was used in the execution of no criminals but blasphemers; and that it was done with words to this purport, "Thy blood be upon thy own head, for thou thyself hast occasioned it. Let no blame be laid on the law, judges, juries, or witnesses; if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."

15 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

A standing law made upon this occasion for the stoning of blasphemers, Le 24:15,16. Magistrates are the guardians of both tables, and ought to be as jealous for the honour of God against those that speak contemptuously of his being and

government as for the public peace and safety against the disturbers of them.

1. A great stress is laid upon this law, as in no case to be dispensed with: He shall surely be put to death; they shall certainly stone him. Those that lightly esteemed God's honour might think it hard to make a man an offender for a word (words are but wind); but God would let them know that they must not make light of such words as these, which come from malice against God in the heart of him that speaks, and must occasion either great guilt or great grief to those that hear.

2. It is made to extend to the strangers that sojourned among them, as well as those that were born in the land. God never made any law to compel strangers to be circumcised and embrace the Jewish religion (proselytes made by force would be no honour to the God of Israel), but he made a law to restrain strangers from speaking evil of the God of Israel.

3. He that was put to death for blasphemy is said to bear his sin, in the punishment of it; no sacrifice being appointed, on the head of which the sin might be transferred, he himself was to bear it upon his own head, as a sacrifice to divine justice. So his own tongue fell upon him (Ps 64:8), and the tongue of a blasphemer will fall heavily.

16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely
be put to death, *and* all the congregation shall certainly stone him:
as
well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he
blasphemeth the name *of the* Lord, shall be put to death.
17 And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.

A repetition of some other laws annexed to this new law.

1. That murder should be punished with death (Le 24:17, and again Le 24:21), according to an ancient law in Noah's time (Ge 9:6), and the very law of nature, Ge 4:10.

2. That maimers should in like manner be punished by the law of retaliation, Le 24:19,20. Not that men might in these cases be their own avengers, but they might appeal to the civil magistrate, who should award suffering to the injurious and satisfaction to the injured as should be thought fit in proportion to the hurt done. This law we had before, Ex 22:4,5. And it was more agreeable to that dispensation, in which were revealed the rigour of the law and what sin deserved, than to the dispensation we are under, in which are revealed the grace of the gospel and the remission of sins: and therefore our Saviour has set aside this law (Mt 5:38,39), not to restrain magistrates from executing public justice, but to restrain us all from returning personal injuries and to oblige us to forgive as we are and hope to be forgiven.

3. That hurt done wilfully to a neighbour's cattle should be punished by making good the damage, Le 24:18,21. Thus the divine law took not only their lives, but their goods also under its protection. Those beasts which belonged to no particular person, but were, as our law speaks, ferae naturae--of a wild nature, it was lawful for them to kill; but not those which any man had a property in. Does God take care for oxen? Yes; for our sakes he does.

4. That strangers, as well as native Israelites, should be both entitled to the benefit of this law, so as not to suffer wrong, and liable to the penalty of this law in case they did wrong. And, it should seem, this is it that brings in these laws here, to show how equitable it was that strangers as well as Israelites should be punished for blasphemy, because

strangers as well as Israelites were punishable for other crimes. And there may be this further reason for the recognition of these laws here, God would hereby show what provision he had made for man's safety, in punishing those that were injurious to him, which should be an argument with magistrates to be jealous for his honour, and to punish those that blasphemed his name. If God took care for their comfort, they ought to take care for his glory.

18 And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.
19 And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;
20 breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him *again*.
21 And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.
22 Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I *am* the Lord your God.
23 And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones: and the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses.

The execution of the blasphemer. Moses did, as it were, sign the warrant or it: He spoke unto the children of Israel to do it, and they did as the Lord commanded Moses, Le 24:23. This teaches that death is the wages of sin, and that blasphemy in particular is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. But, if those who thus profane the name of God escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgments. This blasphemer was the first that died by the law of Moses. Stephen, the first that died for the gospel, died by the abuse of this law; the martyr and the malefactor suffered the same death: but how vast the difference between them!

Leviticus-25

Sabbath Years and the Year of Jubilee

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye
come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep
a Sabbath unto the Lord.
3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy
vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

The law of Moses laid a great deal of stress upon the sabbath, the sanctification of which was the earliest and most ancient of all divine institutions, designed for the keeping up of the knowledge and worship of the Creator among men; that law not only revived the observance of the weekly sabbath, but, for the further advancement of the honour of them, added the institution of a sabbatical year: In the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, Le 25:4. And hence the Jews collect that vulgar tradition that after the world has stood six thousand years (a thousand years being to God as one day) it shall cease, and the eternal sabbath shall succeed--a weak foundation on which to build the fixing of that day and hour which it is God's prerogative to know. This sabbatical year began in September, at the end of harvest, the seventh month of their ecclesiastical year: and the law was,

1. That at the seed-time, which immediately followed the end of their in-gathering, they should sow no corn in their land, and that they should not in the spring dress their vineyards, and consequently that they should not expect either harvest or vintage the next year.

2. That what their ground did produce of itself they should not claim any property or use in, otherwise than from hand to mouth, but leave it for the poor, servants, strangers, and cattle, Le 25:5-7. It must be a sabbath of rest to the land; they must neither do any work about it, nor expect any fruit from

it; all annual labours must be intermitted in the seventh year, as much as daily labours on the seventh day. The Jews say they "began not to reckon for the sabbatical year till they had completed the conquest of Canaan, which was in the eighth year of Joshua; the seventh year after that was the first sabbatical year, and so the fiftieth year was the jubilee." This year there was to be a general release of debts (De 15:1,2), and a public reading of the law in the feast (De 31:10,11), to make it the more solemn. Now,

(1.) God would hereby show them that he was their landlord, and that they were tenants at will under him. Landlords are wont to stipulate with their tenants when they shall break up their ground, how long they shall till it, and when they shall let it rest: God would thus give, grant, and convey, that good land to them, under such provisos and limitations as should let them know that they were not proprietors, but dependents on their Lord.

(2.) It was a kindness to their land to let it rest sometimes, and would keep it in heart (as our husbandmen express it) for posterity, whose satisfaction God would have them to consult, and not to use the ground as if it were designed only for one age.

(3.) When they were thus for a whole year taken off from all country business, they would have the more leisure to attend the exercises of religion, and to get the knowledge of God and his law.

(4.) They were hereby taught to be charitable and generous, and not to engross all to themselves, but to be willing that others should share with them in the gifts of God's bounty, which the earth brought forth of itself.

(5.) They were brought to live in a constant dependence upon the divine providence, finding that, as man lives not by bread

alone, so he has bread, not by his own industry alone, but, if God pleases, by the word of blessing from the mouth of God, without any care or pains of man, Mt 4:4.

(6.) They were reminded of the easy life man lived in paradise, when he ate of every good thing, not, as since, in the sweat of his face. Labour and toil came in with sin.

(7.) They were taught to consider how the poor lived, that did neither sow nor reap, even by the blessing of God upon a little.

(8.) This year of rest typified the spiritual rest which all believers enter into through Christ, our true Noah, who giveth us comfort and rest concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed, Ge 5:29. Through him we are eased of the burden of worldly care and labour, both being sanctified and sweetened to us, and we are enabled and encouraged to live by faith. And, as the fruits of this sabbath of the land were enjoyed in common, so the salvation wrought out by Christ is a common salvation; and this sabbatical year seems to have been revived in the Christian church, when the believers had all things common, Ac 2:44.

4 but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a
Sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune
thy vineyard.
5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not
reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: *for* it is a year
of rest unto the land.
6 And the Sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for
thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy
stranger that sojourneth with thee,
7 and for thy cattle, and for the beast that *are* in thy land, shall all the
increase thereof be meat.

8 And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month, in the Day of Atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

Here is, the general institution of the jubilee, Le 25:8-22, &c.

1. When it was to be observed: after seven Sabbaths of years (Le 25:8), whether the forty-ninth or fiftieth is a great question among learned men: that it should be the seventh sabbatical year, that is, the forty-ninth (which by a very common form of speech is called the fiftieth), seems to me most probable, and is, I think, made pretty clear and the objections removed by that learned chronologer Calvisius; but this is not a place for arguing the question. Seven Sabbaths of weeks were reckoned from the Passover to the feast of pentecost (or fiftieth day, for so pentecost signifies), and so seven Sabbaths of years from one jubilee to another, and the seventh is called the fiftieth; and all this honour is put upon the sevenths for the sake of God's resting the seventh day from the work of creation.

2. How it was to be proclaimed, with sound of trumpet in all parts of the country (Le 25:5), both to give notice to all persons of it, and to express their joy and triumph in it; and the word jobel, or jubilee, is supposed to signify some particular sound of the trumpet distinguishable from any other; for the trumpet that gives an uncertain sound is of little service, 1Co 14:8. The trumpet was sounded in the close of the day of atonement; thence the jubilee commenced, and very fitly; when they had been humbling and afflicting their souls for sin, then they were made to hear this voice of joy and gladness, Ps 11:8. When their peace was made with God, then liberty was proclaimed; for the removal of guilt is necessary to make way for the entrance of all true comfort,

Ro 5:1,2. In allusion to this solemn proclamation of the jubilee, it was foretold concerning our Lord Jesus that he should preach the acceptable year of the Lord, Isa 61:2. He sent his apostles to proclaim it with the trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which they were to preach to every creature. And it stands still foretold that at the last day the trumpet shall sound, which shall release the dead out of the bondage of the grave, and restore us to our possessions.

3. What was to be done in that year extraordinary; besides the common rest of the land, which was observed every sabbatical year (Le 25:11,12), and the release of personal debts (De 15:2,3), there was to be the legal restoration of every Israelite to all the property, and all the liberty, which had been alienated from him since the last jubilee; so that never was any people so secured in their liberty and property (those glories of a people) as Israel was. Effectual care was taken that while they kept close to God these should not only not be taken from them by the violence of others, but not thrown away by their own folly.

(1.) The property which every man had in his dividend of the land of Canaan could not be alienated any longer than till the year of jubilee, and then he or his should return to it, and have a title to it as undisputed, and the possession of it as undisturbed, as ever (Le 25:10,13): "You shall return every man to his possession; so that if a man had sold or mortgaged his estate, or any part of it, it should then return to him or his heirs, free of all charge and encumbrance. Now this was no wrong to the purchaser, because the year of jubilee was fixed, and every man knew when it would come, and made his bargain accordingly. By our law indeed, if lands be granted to a man and his heirs, upon condition that he should never sell or alienate them, the grant is good, but the condition is void and repugnant: Iniquum est ingenuis hominibus (say the lawyers) non esse liberam rerum suarum

alienationem--It is unjust to prevent free men from alienating their own possessions.

Yet it is agreed in the books that if the king grant lands to a man in fee upon condition he shall not alienate, the condition is good. Now God would show his people Israel that their land was his, and they were his tenants; and therefore he ties them up that they shall not have power to sell, but only to make leases for any term of years, not going beyond the next jubilee. By this means it was provided,

[1.] That their genealogies should be carefully preserved, which would be of use for clearing our Saviour's pedigree.

[2.] That the distinction of tribes should be kept up; for, though a man might purchase lands in another tribe, yet he could not retain them longer than till the year of jubilee, and then they would revert of course.

[3.] That none should grow exorbitantly rich, by laying house to house, and field to field (Isa 5:8), but should rather apply themselves to the cultivating of what they had than the enlarging of their possessions. The wisdom of the Roman commonwealth sometimes provided that no man should be master of above 500 acres.

[4.] That no family should be sunk and ruined, and condemned to perpetual poverty. This particular care God took for the support of the honour of that people, and the preserving, not only of that good land to the nation in general, but of every man's share to his family in particular, for a perpetual inheritance, that it might the better typify that good part which shall never be taken away from those that have it.

(2.) The liberty which every man was born to, if it were sold or forfeited, should likewise return at the year of jubilee:

You shall return every man to his family, Le 25:10. Those that were sold into other families thereby became strangers to their own; but in this year of redemption they were to return. This was typical of our redemption by Christ from the slavery of sin and Satan, and our restoration to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Some compute that the very year in which Christ died was a year of jubilee, and the last that ever was kept. But, however that be, we are sure it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed.

10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

11 A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather *the grapes* in it of thy vine undressed.

12 For it *is* the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.

13 In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession.

14 And if thou sell aught unto thy neighbor, or buyest *aught* of thy neighbor's hand, ye shall not oppress one another:

A law upon this occasion against oppression in buying and selling of land; neither the buyer nor the seller must overreach, Le 25:14-17. In short, the buyer must not give less, nor the seller take more, than the just value of the thing, considered as necessarily returning at the year of jubilee. It must be settled what the clear yearly value of the land was, and then how many years' purchase it was worth till the year of jubilee. But they must reckon only the years of the fruits (Le 25:15), and therefore must discount for the sabbatical years. It is easy to observe that the nearer the jubilee was the less must the value of the land be. According to the fewness of the years thou shalt diminish the price. But we do not find it so easy practically to infer thence that the nearer the world comes to its period the less value we should put upon the things of it: because the time is short, and the fashion of the

world passeth away, let those that buy be as though they possessed not. One would put little value on an old house, that is ready to drop down. All bargains ought to be made by this rule, You shall not oppress one another, nor take advantage of one another's ignorance or necessity, but thou shalt fear thy God. Note, The fear of God reigning in the heart would effectually restrain us from doing any wrong to our neighbour in word or deed; for, though man be not, God is the avenger of those that go beyond or defraud their brethren, 1Th 4:6. Perhaps Nehemiah refers to this very law (Ne 5:15), where he tells us that he did not oppress those he had under his power, because of the fear of God.

15 according to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbor, *and* according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee:

16 according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for *according* to the number *of the years* of the fruits doth he sell unto thee.

17 Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I *am* the Lord your God.

Assurance given them that they should be no losers, but great gainers, by observing these years of rest. It is promised,

1. That they should be safe: You shall dwell in the land in safety, Le 25:18, and again, Le 25:19. The word signifies both outward safety and inward security and confidence of spirit, that they should be quiet both from evil and from the fear of evil.

2. That they should be rich: You shall eat your fill. Note, If we be careful to do our duty, we may cheerfully trust God with our comfort. 3. That they should not want food convenient that year in which they did neither sow nor reap: I will command my blessing in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years, Le 25:21. This was,

(1.) A standing miracle, that, whereas at other times one year did but serve to bring in another, the productions of the sixth year should serve to bring in the ninth. Note, The blessing of God upon our provision will make a little go a great way, and satisfy even the poor with bread, Ps 131:15.

(2.) A lasting memorial of the manna which was given double on the sixth day for two days.

(3.) It was intended for an encouragement to all God's people, in all ages, to trust him in the way of duty, and to cast their care upon him. There is nothing lost by faith and self-denial in our obedience.

18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and
do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety.
19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill,
and dwell therein in safety.
20 And if ye shall say, what shall we eat the seventh year? Behold,
we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase:
21 then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and
it shall bring forth fruit for three years.
22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat *yet* of old fruit until the
ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat *of* the old *store.*
23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye *are*
strangers and sojourners with me.
24 And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption
for the land.
25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his
possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall
he redeem that which his brother sold.

Here is,

A law concerning the real estates of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and the transferring of them.

1. No land should be sold for ever from the family to whose lot it fell in the division of the land. And the reason given is, The land is mine, and you are strangers and sojourners with me, Le 25:23.

(1.) God having a particular propriety in this land, he would by this restraint keep them sensible of it. The possessions of good people, who, having given up themselves to God, have therewith given up all they have to him, are in a particular manner at his disposal, and his disposal of them must be submitted to.

(2.) They being strangers and sojourners with him in that land, and having his tabernacle among them, to alienate their part of that land would be in effect to cut themselves off from their fellowship and communion with God, of which that was a token and symbol, for which reason Naboth would rather incur the wrath of a king than part with the inheritance of his fathers, 1Ki 21:3.

2. If a man was constrained through poverty to sell his land for the subsistence of his family, yet, if afterwards he was able, he might redeem it before the year of jubilee (Le 25:24,26,27), and the price must be settled according to the number of years since the sale and before the jubilee.

3. If the person himself was not able to redeem it, his next kinsman might (Le 25:25): The redeemer thereof, he that is near unto him, shall come and shall redeem, so it might be read. The kinsman is called Goel, the redeemer (Nu 5:8,Ru 3:9), to whom belonged the right of redeeming the land. And this typified Christ, who assumed our nature, that he might be our kinsman, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and, being the only kinsman we have that is able to do it, to him belonged the right of redemption. As for all our other kinsmen, their shoe must be plucked off (Ru 4:6,7); they cannot redeem. But Christ can and hath redeemed the

inheritance which we by sin had forfeited and alienated, and made a new settlement of it upon all that by faith become allied to him. We know that this Redeemer liveth, Job 19:25. And some make this duty of the kinsman to signify the brotherly love that should be among Christians, inclining them to recover those that are fallen, and to restore them with the spirit of meekness.

4. If the land was not redeemed before the year of jubilee, then it should return of course to him that had sold or mortgaged it: In the jubilee it shall go out, Le 25:28. This was a figure of the free grace of God towards us in Christ, by which, and not by any price or merit of our own, we are restored to the favour of God, and become entitled to paradise, from which our first parents, and we in them, were expelled for disobedience.

5. A difference was made between houses in walled cities, and lands in the country, or houses in country villages. Houses in walled cities were more the fruits of their own industry than land in the country, which was the immediate gift of God's bounty; and therefore, if a man sold a house in a city, he might redeem it any time within a year after the sale, but otherwise it was confirmed to the purchaser for ever, and should not return, no, not at the year of the jubilee, Le 25:29,30. This provision was made to encourage strangers and proselytes to come and settle among them. Though they could not purchase land in Canaan to them and their heirs, yet they might purchase houses in walled cities, which would be most convenient for those who were supposed to live by trade. But country houses could be disposed of no otherwise than as lands might.

6. A clause is added in favour of the Levites, by way of exception from these rules.

(1.) Dwelling houses in the cities of the Levites might be redeemed at any time, and, if not redeemed, should revert in the year of jubilee (Le 25:32,33), because the Levites had no other possessions than cities and their suburbs, and God would show that the Levites were his peculiar care; and it was for the interest of the public that they should not be impoverished, or wormed out of their inheritances.

(2.) The fields adjoining to their cities (Nu 35:4,5) might not be sold at any time, for they belonged, not to particular Levites, but to the city of the Levites, as a corporation, who could not alienate without a wrong to their tribe; therefore, if any of those fields were sold, the bargain was void, Le 25:34. Even the Egyptians took care to preserve the land of the priests, Ge 47:22. And there is no less reason for the taking of the maintenance of the gospel ministry under the special protection of Christian governments.

26 And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it;

27 then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession.

28 But if he be not able to restore *it* to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.

29 And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; *within* a full year may he redeem it.

30 And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that *is* in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubilee.

31 But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubilee.

32 Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, *and* the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time.
33 And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in *the year of* jubilee: for the houses of the cities of the Levites *are* their possession among the children of Israel.
34 But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it *is* their perpetual possession.
35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: *yea, though he be* a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

A law for the relief of the poor, and the tender usage of poor debtors, and these are of more general and perpetual obligation than the former.

1 The poor must be relieved, Le 25:35. Here is,

(1.) Our brother's poverty and distress supposed: If thy brother be waxen poor; not only thy brother by nation as a Jew, but thy brother by nature as a man, for it follows, though he be a stranger or a sojourner. All men are to be looked upon and treated as brethren, for we have all one Father, Mal 2:10. Though he is poor, yet still he is thy brother, and is to be loved and owned as a brother. Poverty does not destroy the relation. Though a son of Abraham, yet he may wax poor and fall into decay.

Note, Poverty and decay are great grievances, and very common: The poor you have always with you.

(2.) Our duty enjoined: Thou shalt relieve him. By sympathy, pitying the poor; by service, doing for them; and by supply, giving to them according to their necessity and thy ability.

2. Poor debtors must not be oppressed: If thy brother be waxen poor, and have occasion to borrow money of thee for the necessary support of his family, take thou no usury of him, either for money or victuals, Le 25:36,37. And thus far this law binds still, but could never be thought binding where money is borrowed for purchase of lands, trade, or other improvements; for there it is reasonable that the lender share with the borrower in the profit. The law here is plainly intended for the relief of the poor, to whom it is sometimes as great a charity to lend freely as to give. Observe the arguments here used against extortion.

(1.) God patronizes the poor: "Fear thy God, who will reckon with thee for all injuries done to the poor: thou fearest not them, but fear him."

(2.) Relieve the poor, that they may live with thee, and some way or other they may be serviceable to thee. The rich can as ill spare the hands of the poor as the poor can the purses of the rich.

(3.) The same argument is used to enforce this precept that prefaces all the ten commandments: I am the Lord your God which brought you out of Egypt, Le 25:38. Note, It becomes those that have received mercy to show mercy. If God has been gracious to us, we ought not to be rigorous with our brethren.

36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

38 I *am* the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, *and* to be your God.

39 And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:

40 *but* as a hired servant, *and* as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, *and*

shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee:

We have here the laws concerning servitude, designed to preserve the honour of the Jewish nation as a free people, and rescued by a divine power out of the house of bondage, into the glorious liberty of God's sons, his first-born. Now the law is,

That a native Israelite should never be made a bondman for perpetuity. If he was sold for debt, or for a crime, by the house of judgment, he was to serve but six years, and to go out the seventh; this was appointed, Ex 21:2. But if he sold himself through extreme poverty, having nothing at all left him to preserve his life, and if it was to one of his own nation that he sold himself, in such a case it is here provided,

1. That he should not serve as a bond-servant (Le 25:39), nor be sold with the sale of a bondman (Le 25:42); that is, "it must not be looked upon that his master that bought him had as absolute a property in him as in a captive taken in war, that might be used, sold, and bequeathed, at pleasure, as much as a man's cattle; no, he shall serve thee as a hired servant, whom the master has the use of only, but not a despotic power over." And the reason is, They are my servants, Le 25:42. God does not make his servants slaves, and therefore their brethren must not. God had redeemed them out of Egypt, and therefore they must never be exposed to sale as bondmen. The apostle applies this spiritually (1Co 7:23), You are bought with a price, be not the servants of men, that is, "of the lusts of men, no, nor of your own lusts;" for, having become the servants of God, we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies, Ro 6:12,22.

2. That while he did serve he should not be ruled with rigour, as the Israelites were in Egypt, Le 25:43. Both his work and his usage must be such as were fitting for a son of Abraham. Masters are still required to give to their servants that which is just and equal, Col 4:1. They may be used, but must not

be abused. Those masters that are always hectoring and domineering over their servants, taunting them and trampling upon them, that are unreasonable in exacting work and giving rebukes, and that rule them with a high hand, forget that their Master is in heaven; and what will they do when he rises up? As holy Job reasons with himself, Job 31:13,14.

3. That at the year of jubilee he should go out free, him and his children, and should return to his own family, Le 25:41. This typified our redemption from the service of sin and Satan by the grace of God in Christ, whose truth makes us free, Joh 7:32. The Jewish writers say that, for ten days before the jubilee-trumpet sounded, the servants that were to be discharged by it did express their great joy by feasting, and wearing garlands on their heads: it is therefore called the joyful sound, Ps 89:15. And we are thus to rejoice in the liberty we have by Christ.

41 and *then* shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.

42 For they *are* my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen.

43 Thou shalt not rule over him with rigor; but shalt fear thy God.

44 Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, *shall be* of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids.

That they might purchase bondmen of the heathen nations that were round about them, or of those strangers that sojourned among them (except of those seven nations that were to be destroyed); and might claim a dominion over them, and entail them upon their families as an inheritance, for the year of jubilee should give no discharge to them, Le 25:44,46. Thus in our English plantations the negroes only are used as slaves; how much to the credit of Christianity I shall not say. Now,

1. This authority which they had over the bondmen whom they purchased from the neighbouring nations was in pursuance of the blessing of Jacob, Ge 27:29, Let people serve thee.

2. It prefigured the bringing in of the Gentiles to the service of Christ and his church. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, Ps 2:8. And it is promised (Isa 61:5), Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your vine-dressers; see Re 2:26,27. The upright shall have the dominion in the morning, Ps 49:14.

3. It intimates that none shall have the benefit of the gospel jubilee but those only that are Israelites indeed, and the children of Abraham by faith: as for those that continue heathenish, they continue bondmen. See this turned upon the unbelieving Jews themselves, Ga 4:25, where Jerusalem, when she had rejected Christ, is said to be in bondage with her children. Let me only add here that, though they are not forbidden to rule their bondmen with rigour, yet the Jewish doctors say, "It is the property of mercy, and way of wisdom, that a man should be compassionate, and not make his yoke heavy upon any servant that he has."

45 Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that *are* with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.

46 And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them for* a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor.

47 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother *that dwelleth* by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger *or* sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family:

48 after that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:

49 either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or *any* that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

50 And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of a hired servant shall it be with him.

51 If *there be* yet many years *behind,* according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for.

52 And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubilee, then he shall count with him, *and* according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption.

That if an Israelite sold himself for a servant to a wealthy proselyte that sojourned among them care should be taken that he should have the same advantages as if he had sold himself to an Israelite, and in some respects greater.

1. That he should not serve as a bondman, but as a hired servant, and not to be ruled with rigour (Le 25:53), in thy sight, which intimated that the Jewish magistrates should particularly have an eye to him, and, if he were abused, should take cognizance of it, and redress his grievances, though the injured servant did not himself complain. Also he was to go free at the year of jubilee, Le 25:54. Though the sons of strangers might serve them for ever, yet the sons of Israel might not serve strangers for ever; yet the servant here, having made himself a slave by his own act and deed, should not go out in the seventh year of release, but in the jubilee only.

2. That he should have this further advantage that he might be redeemed again before the year of jubilee, Le 25:48,49. He that had sold himself to an Israelite might, if ever he was able, redeem himself, but his relations had no right to redeem him. "But if a man sold himself to a stranger," the Jews say, "his relations were urged to redeem him; if they did not, it

was fit that he should be redeemed at the public charge," which we find done, Ne 5:8. The price of his ransom was to be computed according to the prospect of the year of jubilee (Le 25:50-52), as in the redemption of land, Le 25:15,16. The learned bishop Patrick quotes one of the Jewish rabbin for an evangelical exposition of that appointment (Le 25:48), One of his brethren shall redeem him. "This Redeemer," says the rabbi, "is the Messiah, the Son of David." They expected this Messiah to be their Redeemer out of their captivity, and to restore them to their own land again; but we welcome him as the Redeemer who shall come to Zion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for he shall save his people from their sins; and under this notion there were those that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

53 *And* as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: *and the other* shall not rule with rigor over him in thy sight.

54 And if he be not redeemed in these *years,* then he shall go out in the year of jubilee, both he, and his children with him.

55 For unto me the children of Israel *are* servants; they *are* my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.

Leviticus-26

The Blessings of Obedience

1 Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up *any* image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I *am* the Lord your God.

2 Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the Lord.

The inculcating of those precepts of the law which were of the greatest consequence, and by which were of the greatest consequence, and by which especially their obedience would be tried, Le 26:1,2. They are the abstract of the second and fourth commandments, which, as they are by much the

largest in the decalogue, so they are most frequently insisted on in other parts of the law. As, when a master has given many things in charge to his servant, he concludes with the repetition of those things which were of the greatest importance, and which the servant was most in danger of neglecting, bidding him, whatever he did, be sure to remember those, so here God by Moses, after many precepts, closes all with a special charge to observe these two great commandments.

1. "Be sure you never worship images, nor ever make any sort of images or pictures for a religious use," Le 26:1. No sin was more provoking to God than this, and yet there was none that they were more addicted to, and which afterwards proved of more pernicious consequence to them. Next to God's being, unity, and universal influence, it is necessary that we know and believe that he is an infinite Spirit; and therefore to represent him by an image in the making of it, to confine him to an image in the consecrating of it, and to worship him by an image in bowing down to it, changes his truth into a lie and his glory into shame, as much as any thing.

2. "Be sure you keep up a great veneration for Sabbaths and religious assemblies," Le 26:2. As nothing tends more to corrupt religion than the use of images in devotion, so nothing contributes more to the support of it than keeping the Sabbaths and reverencing the sanctuary. These make up very much of the instrumental part of religion, by which the essentials of it are kept up. Therefore we find in the prophets that, next to the sin of idolatry, there is no sin for which the Jews are more frequently reproved and threatened than the profanation of the sabbath day.

3 If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them;

4 then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

5 And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

6 And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make *you* afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.

7 And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.

Great encouragements given them to live in constant obedience to all God's commandments, largely and strongly assuring them that if they did so they should be a happy people, and should be blessed with all the good things they could desire. Human governments enforce their laws with penalties to be inflicted for the breach of them; but God will be known as the rewarder of those that seek and serve him. Let us take a view of these great and precious promises, which, though they relate chiefly to the life which now is, and to the public national concerns of that people, were typical of the spiritual blessings entailed by the covenant of grace upon all believers through Christ.

1. Plenty and abundance of the fruits of the earth. They should have seasonable rain, neither too little nor too much, but what was requisite for their land, which was watered with the dew of heaven (De 11:10,11), that it might yield its increase, Le 26:4. The dependence which the fruitfulness of the earth beneath has upon the influences of heaven above is a sensible intimation to us that every good and perfect gift must be expected from above, from the Father of lights. It is promised that the earth should produce its fruits in such great abundance that they would be kept in full employment, during both the harvest and the vintage, to gather it in, Le 26:5. Before they had reaped their corn and threshed it, the vintage would be ready; and, before they had finished their vintage, it would be high time to begin their sowing. Long harvests are often with us the consequences of bad weather, but with them they should be the effects of a great increase.

This signified the abundance of grace which should be poured out in gospel times, when the ploughman should overtake the reaper (Am 9:13), and a great harvest of souls should be gathered in to Christ. The plenty should be so great that they should bring forth the old to be given away to the poor because of the new, to make room for it in their barns, which yet they would not pull down to build greater, as that rich fool (Lu 12:18), for God gave them this abundance to be laid out, not be hoarded up from one year to another. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him, Pr 11:26. That promise (Mal 3:10), I will pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it, explains this, Le 26:10. And that which crowns this blessing of plenty is (Le 26:5), You shall eat your bread to the full, which intimates that they should have, not only abundance, but content and satisfaction in it. They should have enough, and should know when they had enough. Thus the meek shall eat and be satisfied, Ps 22:26.

2. Peace under the divine protection; "You shall dwell in your land safely (Le 26:5); both really save, and safe in your own apprehensions; you shall lie down to rest in the power and promise of God, and not only none shall hurt you, but none shall so much as make you afraid," Le 26:6. See Ps 4:8. They should not be infested with wild beasts, these should be rid out of the land, or, as it is promised (Job 5:23), should be at peace with them. Nor should they be terrified with the alarms of war: Neither shall the sword go through your land. This holy security is promised to all the faithful, Ps 91:1-16, &c. Those must needs dwell in safety that dwell in God, Job 9:18,19.

3. Victory and success in their wars abroad, while they had peace and tranquility at home, Le 26:7,8. They are assured that the hand of God should so signally appear with them in their conquests that no disproportion of numbers should

make against them: Five of you shall have courage to attack, and strength to chase and defeat, a hundred, as Jonathan did (1Sa 14:12), experiencing the truth of his own maxim (Le 26:6), that it is all one with the Lord to save by many or by few.

4. The increase of their people: I will make you fruitful and multiply you, Le 26:9. Thus the promise made to Abraham must be fulfilled, that his seed should be as the dust of the earth; and much more numerous they would have been if they had by their sin cut themselves short. It is promised to the gospel church that it shall be fruitful, Joh 15:16.

5. The favour of God, which is the fountain of all good: I will have respect unto you, Le 26:9. If the eye of our faith be unto God, the eye of his favour will be unto us. More is implied than is expressed in that promise, My soul shall not abhor you (Le 26:11), as there is in that threatening, My soul shall have no pleasure in him, Heb 10:38. Though there was that among them which might justly have alienated him from them, yet, if they would closely adhere to his institutions, he would not abhor them.

6. Tokens of his presence in and by his ordinances: I will set my tabernacle among you, Le 26:11. It was their honour and advantage that God's tabernacle was lately erected among them; but here he lets them know that the continuance and establishment of it depended upon their good behaviour. The tabernacle that was now set should be settled if they would be obedient, else not. Note, The way to have God's ordinances fixed among us, as a nail in a sure place, is to cleave closely to the institution of them. It is added (Le 26:12), "I will walk among you, with delight and satisfaction, as a man in his garden; I will keep up communion with you as a man walking with his friend." This seems to be alluded to, Re 2:1, where Christ is said to walk in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

7. The grace of the covenant, as the fountain and foundation, the sweetness and security, of all these blessings: I will establish my covenant with you, Le 26:9. Let them perform their part of the covenant, and God would not fail to perform his. All covenant-blessings are summed up in the covenant-relation (Le 26:12): I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and they are all grounded upon their redemption: I am your God, because I brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, Le 26:13. Having purchased them, he would own them, and never cast them off till they cast him off. He broke their yoke, and made them go upright, that is, their deliverance out of Egypt put them in a state both of ease and honour, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might serve God without fear, each walking in his uprightness. When Israel rejected Christ, and was therefore rejected by him, their back is said to be bowed down always under the burden of their guilt, which was heavier than that of their bondage in Egypt, Ro 11:10.

8 And five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall
put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you
by the sword.
9 For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and
multiply you, and establish my covenant with you.
10 And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the
new.
11 And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not
abhor you.
12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be
my people.
13 I *am* the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land
of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken
the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.

The Consequences of Disobedience

14 But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these
commandments;

15 and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, *but* that ye break my covenant:

16 I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.

After God had set the blessing before them (the life and good which would make them a happy people if they would be obedient), he here sets the curse before them, the death and evil which would make them as miserable if they were disobedient. Let them not think themselves so deeply rooted as that God's power could not ruin them, nor so highly favoured as that his justice would not ruin them if they revolted from him and rebelled against him; no You only have I known, therefore I will punish you soonest and sorest. Am 3:2. Observe,

How their sin is described, which would bring all this misery upon them. Not sins of ignorance and infirmity; God had provided sacrifices for those. Not the sins they repented of and forsook; but the sins that were presumptuously committed, and obstinately persisted in. Two things would certainly bring this ruin upon them:--

1. A contempt of God's commandments (Le 26:14): "If you will not hearken to me speaking to you by the law, nor do all these commandments, that is, desire and endeavour to do them, and, wherein you miss it, make use of the prescribed remedies." Thus their sin is supposed to begin in mere carelessness, and neglect, and omission. These are bad enough, but they make way for worse; for the people are brought in (Le 26:15) as,

(1.) Despising God's statutes, both the duties enjoined and the authority enjoining them, thinking meanly of the law and

the Law-maker. Note, Those are hastening apace to their own ruin who begin to think it below them to be religious.

(2.) Abhorring his judgments, their very souls abhorring them. Note, Those that begin to despise religion will come by degrees to loathe it; and mean thoughts of it will ripen into ill thoughts of it; those that turn from it will turn against it, and their hearts will rise at it.

(3.) Breaking his covenant. Though every breach of the commandment does not amount to a breach of the covenant (we were undone if it did), yet, when men have come to such a pitch of impiety as to despise and abhor the commandment, the next step will be to disown God, and all relation to him. Those that reject the precept will come at last to renounce the covenant. Observe, It is God's covenant which they break: he made it, but they break it. Note, If a covenant be made and kept between God and man, God must have all the honour; but, if ever it be broken, man must bear all the blame: on him shall this breach be.

2. A contempt of his corrections. Even their disobedience would not have been their destruction if they had not been obstinate and impenitent in it, notwithstanding the methods God took to reclaim them. Their contempt of God's word would not have brought them to ruin, if they had not added to that a contempt of his rod, which should have brought them to repentance. Three ways this is expressed:--

(1.) "If you will not for all this hearken to me, Le 26:18,21,27. If you will not learn obedience by the things which you suffer, but be as deaf to the loud alarms of God's judgments as you have been to the close reasonings of his word and the secret whispers of your own consciences, you are obstinate indeed."

(2.) "If you walk contrary to me, Le 26:21,23,27. All sinners walk contrary to God, to his truths, laws, and counsels; but those especially that are incorrigible under his judgments. The design of the rod is to humble them, and soften them, and bring them to repentance; but, instead of this, their hearts are more hardened and exasperated against God, and in their distress they trespass yet more against him, 2Ch 28:22. This is walking contrary to God. Some read it, "If you walk at all adventures with me, carelessly and presumptuously, as if you heeded not either what you do, whether it be right or wrong, or what God does with you, whether it be for you or against you, blundering on in wilful ignorance."

(3.) If you will not be reformed by these things. God's design in punishing is to reform, by giving men sensible convictions of the evil of sin, and obliging them to seek unto him for relief: this is the primary intention; but those that will not be reformed by the judgments of God must expect to be ruined by them. Those have a great deal to answer for that have been long and often under God's correcting hand, and yet go on frowardly in a sinful way; sick and in pain, and yet not reformed; crossed and impoverished, and yet not reformed; broken with breach upon breach, yet not returning to the Lord, Am 4:6, &c.

17 And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.

The whole creation would be at war with them. All God's sore judgments would be sent against them; for he hath many arrows in his quiver. The threatenings here are very particular, because really they were prophecies, and he that foresaw all their rebellions knew they would prove so; see De 31:16,29. This long roll of threatening shows that evil pursues sinners. We have here,

(1.) Temporal judgments threatened.

[1.] Diseases of body, which should be epidemical: I will appoint over you, as task-masters, to rule you with rigour, terror, consumption, and the burning ague, Le 26:16. What we translate terror, some think, signifies a particular disease, probably (says the learned bishop Patrick) the falling sickness, which is terror indeed: all chronical diseases are included in the consumption, and all acute diseases in the burning ague or fever. These consume the eyes, and cause sorrow both to those that are visited with them and to their friends and relations. Note, All diseases are God's servants; they do what he appoints them, and are often used as scourges wherewith he chastises a provoking people. The pestilence is threatened (Le 26:25) to meet them, when they are gathered together in their cities for fear of the sword. The greater the concourse of people is, the greater desolation does the pestilence make; and, when it gets among the soldiers that should defend a place, it is of most fatal consequence.

[2.] Famine and scarcity of bread, which should be brought upon them several ways; as, First, By plunder (Le 26:16): Your enemies shall eat it up, and carry it off as the Midianites did, Jdg 6:5,6. Secondly, By unseasonable weather, especially the want of rain (Le 26:19): I will make your heaven as iron, letting fall no rain, but reflecting heat, and then the earth would of course be as dry and hard as brass, and their labour in ploughing and sowing would be in vain (Le 26:20); for the increase of the earth depends upon God's good providence more than upon man's good husbandry. This should be the breaking of the staff of bread (Le 26:26), which life leans upon, and is supported by, on which perhaps they had leaned more than upon God's blessing. There should be so great a dearth of corn that, whereas every family used to fill an oven of their own with household bread, now ten families should have to fill but one over, which would bring themselves and their children and servants to short allowance, so that they should eat and not

be satisfied. The less they had the more craving should their appetites be. Thirdly, By the besieging of their cities, which would reduce them to such an extremity that they should eat the flesh of their sons and daughters, Le 26:29.

[3.] War, and the prevailing of their enemies over them: "You shall be slain before your enemies, Le 26:17. Your choice men shall die in battle, and those that hate you shall reign over you, and justly, since you are not willing that the God that loved you should reign over you;" 2Ch 12:8. Miserable is that people whose enemies are their rulers and have got dominion over them, or whose rulers have become their enemies and under-hand seek the ruin of their interests. Thus God would break the pride of their power, Le 26:19. God had given them power over the nations; but when they, instead of being thankful for that power, and improving it for the service of God's kingdom, grew proud of it, and perverted the intentions of it, it was just with God to break it. Thus God would bring a sword upon them to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, Le 26:25. Note, God has a just quarrel with those that break covenant with him, for he will not be mocked by the treachery of perfidious men; and one way or other he will avenge this quarrel upon those that play at fast and loose with him.

[4.] Wild beasts, lions, bears, and wolves, which should increase upon them, and tear in pieces all that come in their way (Le 26:22), as we read of two bears that in an instant killed forty-two children, 2Ki 2:24. This is one of the four sore judgments threatened Eze 14:21, which plainly refers to this chapter. Man was made to have dominion over the creatures, and, though many of them are stronger than he, yet none of them could have hurt him, nay, all of them would have served him, if he had not first shaken off God's dominion, and so lost his own; and now the creatures are in rebellion against him that is in rebellion against his Maker,

and, when the Lord of those hosts pleases, they are the executioners of his wrath and the ministers of his justice.

[5.] Captivity, or dispersion: I will scatter you among the heathen (Le 26:33), in your enemies' land, Le 26:34. Never were any people so incorporated and united among themselves as they were; but for their sin God would scatter them, so that they should be lost among the heathen, from whom God had graciously distinguished them, but with whom they had wickedly mingled themselves. Yet, when they were scattered, divine justice had not done with them, but would draw out a sword after them, which would find them out, and follow them wherever they were. God's judgments, as they cannot be outfaced, so they cannot be outrun.

[6.] The utter ruin and desolation of their land, which should be so remarkable that their very enemies themselves, who has helped it forward, should in the review be astonished at it, Le 26:32. First, Their cities should be waste, forsaken, uninhabited, and all the buildings destroyed; those that escaped the desolations of war should fall to decay of themselves. Secondly, Their sanctuaries should be a desolation, that is, their synagogues where they met for religious worship every sabbath, as well as their tabernacle where they met thrice a year. Thirdly, The country itself should be desolate, not tilled or husbanded (Le 26:34,35); then the land should enjoy its Sabbaths, because they had not religiously observed the sabbatical years which God appointed them. They tilled their ground when God would have them let it rest; justly therefore were they driven out of it; and the expression intimates that the ground itself was pleased and easy when it was rid of the burden of such sinners, under which it had groaned, Ro 8:20, &c. The captivity in Babylon lasted seventy years, and so long the land enjoyed her Sabbaths, as is said (2Ch 36:21) with reference to this.

[7.] The destruction of their idols, though rather a mercy than a judgment, yet, being a necessary piece of justice, is here mentioned, to show what would be the sin that would bring all these miseries upon them: I will destroy your high places, Le 26:30. Those that will not be parted from their sins by the commands of God shall be parted from them by his judgments; since they would not destroy their high places, God would. And, to upbraid them with the unreasonable fondness they had shown for their idols, it is foretold that their carcases should be cast upon the carcases of their idols. Those that are wedded to their lusts will sooner or later have enough of them. Their idols would not be able to help either themselves or their worshippers; but, those that made them being like them, they should both perish alike, and fall together as blind into the ditch.

(2.) Spiritual judgments are here threatened. These should seize the mind; for he that made the mind can, when he pleases, make his sword approach to it. It is here threatened,

[1.] That they should find no acceptance with God: I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours, Le 26:31. Though the judgments of God upon them did not separate them and their sins, yet they extorted incense from them; but in vain--even their incense was an abomination, Isa 1:13.

[2.] That they should have no courage in their wars, but should be quite dispirited and disheartened. They should not only fear and flee (Le 26:17), but fear and fall, when none pursued, Le 26:36. A guilty conscience would be their continual terror, so that not only the sound of a trumpet, but the very sound of a leaf, should chase them. Note, Those that cast off the fear of God expose themselves to the fear of every thing else, Pr 28:1. Their very fears should dash them one against another, Le 26:37,38. And those that had

increased one another's guilt would now increase one another's fears.

[3.] That they should have no hope of the forgiveness of their sins (Le 26:39): They shall pine away in their iniquity, and how should they then live? Eze 33:10. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to leave those to despair of pardon that have presumed to sin; and it is owing to free grace if we are not abandoned to pine away in the iniquity we were born in and have lived in.

18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

19 And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:

How the misery is described which their sin would bring upon them, under two heads:--

1. God himself would be against them; and this is the root and cause of all their misery.

(1.) I will set my face against you (Le 26:17), that is, "I will set myself against you, set myself to ruin you." These proud sinners God will resist, and face those down that confront his authority. Or the face is put for the anger: "I will show myself highly displeased at you."

(2.) I will walk contrary to you (Le 26:24,28); with the forward he will wrestle, Ps 28:26 [margin]. When God in his providence thwarts the designs of a people, which they thought well laid, crosses their purposes, breaks their measures, blasts their endeavours, and disappoints their expectations, then he walks contrary to them. Note, There is nothing got by striving with God Almighty, for he will break either the heart or the neck of those that contend with him, will bring them either to repentance or ruin. "I will walk at all adventures with you," so some read; "all covenant loving-kindness shall be forgotten, and I will leave you to common

providence." Note, Those that cast off God deserve that he should cast them off.

(3.) As they continued obstinate, the judgments should increase yet more upon them. If the first sensible tokens of God's displeasures do not attain their end, to humble and reform them, then (Le 26:18), I will punish you seven times more, and again (Le 26:21), I will bring seven times more plagues, and (Le 26:24), I will punish you yet seven times, and (Le 26:28), I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. Note, If less judgments do not do their work, God will send greater; for, when he judges, he will overcome. If true repentance do not stay process, it will go on till execution be taken out. Those that are obstinate and incorrigible, when they have weathered one storm must expect another more violent; and, how severely soever they are punished, till they are in hell they must still say, "There is worse behind," unless they repent. If the founder have hitherto melted in vain (Jer 6:29), the furnace will be heated seven times hotter (a proverbial expression, used Da 3:19), and again and again seven times hotter; and who among us can dwell with such devouring fire? God does not begin with the sorest judgments, to show that he is patient, and delights not in the death of sinners; but, if they repent not, he will proceed to the sorest, to show that he is righteous, and that he will not be mocked or set at defiance.

(4.) Their misery is completed in that threatening: My soul shall abhor you, Le 26:30. That man is as miserable as he can be whom God abhors; for his resentments are just and effective. Thus if any man draw back, as these are supposed to do, God's soul shall have no pleasure in him (Heb 10:38), and he will spue them out of his mouth, Re 3:16. It is spoken of as strange, and yet too true, Hath thy soul loathed Zion? Jer 14:19.

20 and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not
yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their
fruits.
21 And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I
will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your
sins.
22 I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your
children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number;
and your *high* ways shall be desolate.
23 And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will
walk contrary unto me;
24 then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet
seven times for your sins.
25 And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of
my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your
cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be
delivered into the hand of the enemy.
26 *And* when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall
bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver *you* your bread
again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied.
27 And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary
unto me;
28 then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will
chastise you seven times for your sins.
29 And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your
daughters shall ye eat.
30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and
cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul
shall abhor you.
31 And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto
desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors.
32 And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which
dwell therein shall be astonished at it.
33 And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a
sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your
cities waste.

34 Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye *be* in your enemies' land; *even* then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths.

35 As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it.

36 And upon them that are left *alive* of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth.

37 And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies.

38 And ye shall perish among the heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.

39 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.

40 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me;

Here the chapter concludes with gracious promises of the return of God's favour to them upon their repentance, that they might not (unless it were their own fault) pine away in their iniquity. Behold, with wonder, the riches of God's mercy to a people that had obstinately stood it out against the judgments of God, and would never think of surrendering till they were reduced to the last extremity. Yet turn to strong-hold, you prisoners of hope, Zec 9:12. As bad as things are, they may be mended. Yet there is hope in Israel. Observe,

How the repentance which would qualify them for this mercy is described, Le 26:40,41. The instances of it are three:--

1. Confession, by which they must give glory to God, and take shame to themselves. There must be a confession of sin,

their own and their fathers', which they must lament the guilt of because they feel the smart of it; that thus they may cut off the entail of wrath. They must in their confession put sin under its worst character, as walking contrary to God; this is the sinfulness of sin, the worst thing in it, and which in our repentance we should especially bewail. There must also be a confession of wrath; they must overlook the instruments of their trouble and the second causes, and confess that God has walked contrary to them, and so dealt with them according to their sins. Such a confession as this we find made by Daniel just before the dawning of the day of their deliverance (Da 9:1-27), and the like, Ezr 9:1-15,Ne 9:2. Remorse and godly sorrow for sin: If their uncircumcised heart be humbled. An impenitent, unbelieving, unhumbled heart, is called an uncircumcised heart, the heart of a Gentile that is a stranger to God, rather than the heart of an Israelite in covenant with him. True circumcision is of the heart (Ro 2:29), without which the circumcision of the flesh avails nothing, Jer 9:26. Now in repentance this uncircumcised heart was humbled, that is, it was truly broken and contrite for sin.

Note, A humble heart under humbling providences prepares for deliverance and true comfort.

2. Submission to the justice of God in all his dealings; if they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity (Le 26:41 and again Le 26:43), that is, if they justify God and condemn themselves, patiently bear the punishment as that which they have well deserved, and carefully answer the ends o it as that which God has well designed, accept it as a kindness, take it as physic, and improve it, then they are penitents indeed.

41 and *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity:

42 then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

43 The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her Sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes.

44 And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I *am* the Lord their God.

How the mercy which they should obtain upon their repentance is described.

1. They should not be abandoned: Though they have despised my judgments, yet, for all that, I will not cast them away, Le 26:43,44. He speaks as a tender Father that cannot find in his heart to disinherit a son that has been very provoking. How shall I do it? Ho 11:8,9. Till he had laid the foundations of a church for himself in the Gentile world, the Jewish church was not quite forsaken, nor cast away.

2. They should be remembered: I will remember the land with favour, which is grounded upon the promise before, I will remember my covenant (Le 26:42), which is repeated, Le 26:45. God is said to remember the covenant when he performs the promises of it, purely for his faithfulness' sake; not because there is any thing in us to recommend us to his favour, but because he will be as good as his word. This is the church's plea. Ps 74:20, Have respect unto the covenant. He will remember the constitution of the covenant, which is such as leaves room for repentance, and promises pardon upon repentance; and the Mediator of the covenant, who was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was sent, when the fulness of time came, in remembrance of that holy covenant. The word covenant is thrice repeated, to intimate

that God is ever mindful of it and would have us to be so. The persons also with whom the covenant was made are mentioned in an unusual manner, per modum ascensus--in the ascending line, beginning with Jacob, to lead them gradually to the most ancient promise, which was made to the father of the faithful: thus (Mic 7:20) he is said to perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham. He will for their sakes (Le 26:45), not their merit's sake, but their benefit's sake, remember the covenant of their ancestors, and upon that score show kindness to them, though most unworthy; they are therefore said to be, as touching the election, beloved for the fathers' sake, Ro 11:28.

Note, When those that have walked contrary to God in a way of sin return to him by sincere repentance, though he has walked contrary to them in a way of judgment he will return to them in a way of special mercy, pursuant to the covenant of redemption and grace. None are so ready to repent as God is to forgive upon repentance, through Christ, who is given for a covenant.

Lastly, These are said to be the laws which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel, Le 26:46. His communion with his church is kept up by his law. He manifests not only his dominion over them, but his favour to them, by giving them his law; and they manifest not only their holy fear, but their holy love, by the observance of it; and thus it is made between them, rather as a covenant than a law; for he draws with the cords of a man.

45 But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I *am* the Lord.

46 These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

Leviticus-27

Laws concerning Dedications

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when a man shall make a singular vow, the persons *shall be* for the Lord by thy estimation.

This is part of the law concerning singular vows, extraordinary ones, which though God did not expressly insist on, yet, if they were consistent with and conformable to the general precepts, he would be well pleased with. Note, We should not only ask, What must we do, but, What may we do, for the glory and honour of God? As the liberal devises liberal things (Isa 32:8), so the pious devises pious things, and the enlarged heart would willingly do something extraordinary in the service of so good a Master as God is. When we receive or expect some singular mercy it is good to honour God with some singular vow.

The case is here put of persons vowed to God by a singular vow, Le 27:2. If a man consecrated himself, or a child, to the service of the tabernacle, to be employed there in some inferior office, as sweeping the floor, carrying out ashes, running of errands, or the like, the person so consecrated shall be for the Lord, that is, "God will graciously accept the good-will." Thou didst well that it was in thy heart, 2Ch 6:8. But forasmuch as he had no occasion to use their service about the tabernacle, a whole tribe being appropriated to the use of it, those that were thus vowed were to be redeemed, and the money paid for their redemption was employed for the repair of the sanctuary, or other uses of it, as appears by 2Ki 12:14, where it is called, in the margin, the money of the souls of his estimation. A book of rates is accordingly provided, by which the priests were to go in their estimation. Here is,

1 The rate of the middle-aged, between twenty and threescore, these were valued highest, because most serviceable; a male fifty shekels, and a female thirty, Le 27:3,4. The females were then less esteemed, but not so in Christ; for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, Ga 3:28. Note, Those that are in the prime of their time must look upon themselves as obliged to do more in the service of God and their generation than can be expected either from minors, that have not yet arrived to their usefulness, or from the aged, that have survived it.

2 The rate of the youth between five years old and twenty was less, because they were then less capable of doing service, Le 27:5.

3. Infants under five years old were capable of being vowed to God by their parents, even before they were born, as Samuel was, but not to be presented and redeemed till a month old, that, as one sabbath passed over them before they were circumcised, so one new moon might pass over them before they were estimated; and their valuation was but small, Le 27:6. Samuel, who was thus vowed to God, was not redeemed, because he was a Levite, and a particular favourite, and therefore was employed in his childhood in the service of the tabernacle.

4. The aged are valued less than youth, but more than children, Le 27:7. And the Hebrews observe that the rate of an aged woman is two parts of three to that of an aged man, so that in that age the female came nearest to the value of the male, which occasioned (as bishop Patrick quotes it here) this saying among them, That an old woman in a house is a treasure in a house. Paul sets a great value upon the aged women, when he makes them teachers of good things, Tit 2:3. 5. The poor shall be valued according to their ability, Le 27:8. Something they must pay, that they might learn not to be rash in vowing to God, for he hath no pleasure in fools,

Ec 5:4. Yet not more than their ability, but secundum tenementum--according to their possessions, that they might not ruin themselves and their families by their zeal.

Note, God expects and requires from men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not, Lu 21:4.

3 And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even
unto sixty years old, even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of
silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary.
4 And if it *be* a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels.
5 And if *it be* from five years old even unto twenty years old, then thy
estimation shall be of the male twenty shekels, and for the female
ten shekels.
6 And if *it be* from a month old even unto five years old, then thy
estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the
female thy estimation *shall be* three shekels of silver.
7 And if *it be* from sixty years old and above; if *it be* a male, then thy
estimation shall be fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels.
8 But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present
himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according
to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him.
9 And if *it be* a beast, whereof men bring an offering unto the
Lord, all that *any man* giveth of such unto the Lord shall be holy.

The case is put of beasts vowed to God, 1. If it was a clean beast, such as was offered in sacrifice, it must not be redeemed, nor any equivalent given for it: It shall be holy, Le 27:9, 10. After it was vowed, it was not to be put to any common use, nor changed upon second thoughts; but it must be either offered upon the altar, or, if through any blemish it was not meet to be offered, he that vowed it should not take advantage of that, but the priests should have it for their own use (for they were God's receivers), or it should be sold for the service of the sanctuary. This teaches caution in making vows and constancy in keeping them when they are made; for it is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry, Pr 20:25. And to this that rule

of charity seems to allude (2Co 9:7), Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give. 2. If it was an unclean beast, it should go to the use of the priest at such a value; but he that vowed it, upon paying that value in money, and adding a fifth part more to it, might redeem it if he pleased, Le 27:11-13. It was fit that men should smart for their inconstancy. God has let us know his mind concerning his service, and he is not pleased if we do not know our own. God expects that those that deal with him should be at a point, and way what they will stand to.

10 He shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for
a good: and if he shall at all change beast for beast, then it and the
exchange thereof shall be holy.
11 And if *it be* any unclean beast, of which they do not offer a sacrifice
unto the Lord, then he shall present the beast before the priest:
12 and the priest shall value it, whether it be good or bad: as thou
valuest it, *who art* the priest, so shall it be.
13 But if he will at all redeem it, then he shall add a fifth *part* thereof
unto thy estimation.
14 And when a man shall sanctify his house *to be* holy unto the
Lord, then the priest shall estimate it, whether it be good or bad:
as the priest shall estimate it, so shall it stand.
15 And if he that sanctified it will redeem his house, then he shall add
the fifth *part* of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be
his.
16 And if a man shall sanctify unto the Lord *some part* of a field of
his possession, then thy estimation shall be according to the
seed thereof: a homer of barley seed *shall be valued* at fifty shekels
of silver.

Here is the law concerning real estates dedicated to the service of God by a singular vow.

I. Suppose a man, in his zeal for the honour of God, should sanctify his house to God (Le 27:14), the house must be valued by the priest, and the money got by the sale of it was to be converted to the use of the sanctuary, which by degrees

came to be greatly enriched with dedicated things, 1Ki 15:15. But, if the owner be inclined to redeem it himself, he must not have it so cheap as another, but must add a fifth part to the price, for he should have considered before he had vowed it, Le 27:15. To him that was necessitous God would abate the estimation (Le 27:8); but to him that was fickle and humoursome, and whose second thoughts inclined more to the world and his secular interest than his first, God would rise in the price. Blessed be God, there is a way of sanctifying our houses to be holy unto the Lord, without either selling them or buying them. If we and our houses serve the Lord, if religion rule in them, and we put away iniquity far from them, and have a church in our house, holiness to the Lord is written upon it, it is his, and he will dwell with us in it.

II. Suppose a man should sanctify some part of his land to the Lord, giving it to pious uses, then a difference must be made between land that came to the donor by descent and that which came by purchase, and accordingly the case altered.

1. If it was the inheritance of his fathers, here called the field of his possession, which pertained to his family from the first division of Canaan, he might not give it all, no, not to the sanctuary; God would not admit such a degree of zeal as ruined a man's family. But he might sanctify or dedicate only some part of it, Le 27:16. And in that case,

(1.) The land was to be valued (as our countrymen commonly compute land) by so many measures' sowing of barley. So much land as would take a homer, or chomer, of barley, which contained ten ephahs, Eze 45:11 (not, as some have here mistaken it, an omer, which was but a tenth part of an ephah, Ex 16:36), was valued at fifty shekels, a moderate price (Le 27:16), and that if it were sanctified immediately from the year of jubilee, Le 27:17. But, if some

years after, there was to be a discount accordingly, even of that price, Le 27:18. And,

(2.) When the value was fixed, the donor might, if he pleased, redeem it for sixty shekels the homer's sowing, which was with the addition of a fifth part: the money then went to the sanctuary, and the land reverted to him that had sanctified it, Le 27:19. But if he would not redeem it, and the priest sold it to another, then at the year of jubilee, beyond which the sale could not go, the land came to the priests, and was theirs for ever, Le 27:20,21.

Note, What is given to the Lord ought not to be given with a power of revocation; what is devoted to the Lord must be his for ever, by a perpetual covenant.

2. If the land was his own purchase, and came not to him from his ancestors, then not the land itself, but the value of it was to be given to the priests for pious uses, Le 27:22,24. It was supposed that those who, by the blessing of God, had grown so rich as to become purchasers would think themselves obliged in gratitude to sanctify some part of their purchase, at least (and here they are not limited, but they might, if they pleased, sanctify the whole), to the service of God. For we ought to give as God prospers us, 1Co 16:2. Purchasers are in a special manner bound to be charitable. Now, forasmuch as purchased lands were by a former law to return at the year of jubilee to the family from which they were purchased, God would not have that law and the intentions of it defeated by making the lands corban, a gift, Mk 7:11. But it was to be computed how much the land was worth for so many years as were from the vow to the jubilee; for only so long it was his own, and God hates robbery for burnt-offerings. We can never acceptably serve God with that of which we have wronged our neighbour. And so much money he was to give for the present, and keep the land in his own hands till the year of jubilee, when it was to return

free of all encumbrances, even that of its being dedicated to him of whom it was bought. The value of the shekel by which all these estimations were to be made is here ascertained (Le 27:25); it shall be twenty gerahs, and every gerah was sixteen barley-corns. This was fixed before (Ex 30:13); and, whereas there had been some alterations, it is again fixed in the laws of Ezekiel's visionary temple (Eze 45:12), to denote that the gospel should reduce things to their ancient standard.

17 If he sanctify his field from the year of jubilee, according to thy estimation it shall stand.

18 But if he sanctify his field after the jubilee, then the priest shall reckon unto him the money according to the years that remain, even unto the year of the jubilee, and it shall be abated from thy estimation.

19 And if he that sanctified the field will in any wise redeem it, then he shall add the fifth *part* of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be assured to him.

20 And if he will not redeem the field, or if he have sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed any more.

21 But the field, when it goeth out in the jubilee, shall be holy unto the Lord, as a field devoted; the possession thereof shall be the priest's.

22 And if *a man* sanctify unto the Lord a field which he hath bought, which *is* not of the fields of his possession;

23 then the priest shall reckon unto him the worth of thy estimation, *even* unto the year of the jubilee: and he shall give thine estimation in that day, *as* a holy thing unto the Lord.

24 In the year of the jubilee the field shall return unto him of whom it was bought, *even* to him to whom the possession of the land *did belong*.

25 And all thy estimations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs shall be the shekel.

26 Only the firstling of the beasts, which should be the Lord's firstling, no man shall sanctify it; whether *it be* ox, or sheep: it *is* the Lord's.

Here is, a caution given that no man should make such a jest of sanctifying things to the Lord as to sanctify any firstling

to him, for that was his already by the law, Le 27:26. Though the matter of a general vow be that which we were before obliged to, as of our sacramental covenant, yet a singular vow should be of that which we were not, in such circumstances and proportions, antecedently bound to. The law concerning the firstlings of unclean beasts (Le 27:27) is the same with that before, Le 27:11,12.

27 And if *it be* of an unclean beast, then he shall redeem *it* according to thine estimation, and shall add a fifth *part* of it thereto: or if it be not redeemed, then it shall be sold according to thy estimation.

28 Notwithstanding, no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, *both* of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing *is* most holy unto the Lord.

Things or persons devoted are here distinguished from things or persons that were only sanctified.

1. Devoted things were most holy to the Lord, and could neither revert nor be alienated, Le 27:28. They were of the same nature with those sacrifices which were called most holy, which none might touch but only the priests themselves. The difference between these and other sanctified things arose from the different expression of the vow. If a man dedicated any thing to God, binding himself with a solemn curse never to alienate it to any other purpose, then it was a thing devoted.

2. Devoted persons were to be put to death, Le 27:29. Not that it was in the power of any parent or master thus to devote a child or a servant to death; but it must be meant of the public enemies of Israel, who, either by the appointment of God or by the sentence of the congregation, were devoted, as the seven nations with which they must make no league. The city of Jericho in particular was thus devoted, Jos 6:17. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead were put to death for violating the curse pronounced upon those who came not up to Mizpeh, Jdg 21:9,10. Some think it was for want of being

rightly informed of the true intent and meaning of this law that Jephtha sacrificed his daughter as one devoted, who might not be redeemed.

29 None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; *but* shall surely be put to death.

30 And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: *it is* holy unto the Lord.

31 And if a man will at all redeem aught of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth *part* thereof.

32 And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, *even* of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.

33 He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.

34 These *are* the commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai.

The Fourth Book of Moses, Called

Numbers

[Numbers]

Numbers-1

The Numbering of Israel at Sinai

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the
tabernacle of the congregation, on the first *day* of the second
month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of
Egypt, saying,
2 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel,
after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number
of *their* names, every male by their polls;
3 from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to
war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.
4 And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of
the house of his fathers.
5 And these *are* the names of the men that shall stand with you: of *the*
tribe of Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur.
6 Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.
7 Of Judah; Nahshon the son of Amminadab.
8 Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar.
9 Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon.
10 Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of
Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.
11 Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni.
12 Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.
13 Of Asher; Pagiel the son of Ocran.
14 Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel.
15 Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan.
16 These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes
of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.

17 And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by
their names:
18 and they assembled all the congregation together on the first *day* of
the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their
families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of
the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls.
19 As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the
wilderness of Sinai.
20 And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations,
after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the
number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years
old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war;
21 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Reuben, *were*
forty and six thousand and five hundred.
22 Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families,
by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them,
according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male
from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to
war;
23 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Simeon,
were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred.
24 Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by
the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names,
from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to
war;
25 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Gad, *were*
forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty.
26 Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families,
by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names,
from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to
war;
27 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Judah, *were*
threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred.

28 Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families,
by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names,
from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to
war;
29 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Issachar,
were fifty and four thousand and four hundred.
30 Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families,
by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names,
from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to
war;
31 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Zebulun,
were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred.
32 Of the children of Joseph, *namely*, of the children of Ephraim, by
their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers,
according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and
upward, all that were able to go forth to war;
33 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Ephraim,
were forty thousand and five hundred.
34 Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their
families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of
the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to
go forth to war;
35 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Manasseh,
were thirty and two thousand and two hundred.
36 Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their
families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of
the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to
go forth to war;
37 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Benjamin,
were thirty and five thousand and four hundred.
38 Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by
the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names,
from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to
war;

39 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Dan, *were*
threescore and two thousand and seven hundred.
40 Of the children of Asher, by their generations, after their families, by
the house of their fathers, according to the number of the
names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go
forth to war;
41 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Asher, *were*
forty and one thousand and five hundred.
42 Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their generations, after
their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the
number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that
were able to go forth to war;
43 those that were numbered of them, *even* of the tribe of Naphtali,
were fifty and three thousand and four hundred.
44 These *are* those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron
numbered, and the princes of Israel, *being* twelve men: each one
was for the house of his fathers.
45 So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by
the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all
that were able to go forth to war in Israel;
46 even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and
three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

The Appointment of the Levites

47 But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered
among them.
48 For the Lord had spoken unto Moses, saying,
49 Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum
of them among the children of Israel:
50 but thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony,
and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that *belong* to it:
they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they
shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

51 And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.
52 And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts.
53 But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.
54 And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they.

Numbers-2

The Camps and Leaders of the Tribes

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
2 Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.
3 And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab *shall be* captain of the children of Judah.
4 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred.
5 And those that do pitch next unto him *shall be* the tribe of Issachar: and Nethaneel the son of Zuar shall *be* captain of the children of Issachar.
6 And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, *were* fifty and four thousand and four hundred.
7 *Then* the tribe of Zebulun: and Eliab the son of Helon *shall be* captain of the children of Zebulun.

8 And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, *were* fifty and seven thousand and four hundred.
9 All that were numbered in the camp of Judah were a hundred thousand and fourscore thousand and six thousand and four hundred, throughout their armies: these shall first set forth.
10 On the south side *shall be* the standard of the camp of Reuben according to their armies: and the captain of the children of Reuben *shall be* Elizur the son of Shedeur.
11 And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, *were* forty and six thousand and five hundred.
12 And those which pitch by him *shall be* the tribe of Simeon: and the captain of the children of Simeon *shall be* Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.
13 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* fifty and nine thousand and three hundred.
14 Then the tribe of Gad: and the captain of the sons of Gad *shall be* Eliasaph the son of Reuel.
15 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty and five thousand and six hundred and fifty.
16 All that were numbered in the camp of Reuben were a hundred thousand and fifty and one thousand and four hundred and fifty, throughout their armies: and they shall set forth in the second rank.
17 Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp: as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place by their standards.
18 On the west side *shall be* the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their armies: and the captain of the sons of Ephraim *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud.
19 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty thousand and five hundred.
20 And by him shall *be* the tribe of Manasseh: and the captain of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.
21 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* thirty and two thousand and two hundred.

22 Then the tribe of Benjamin: and the captain of the sons of
Benjamin *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideoni.
23 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* thirty
and five thousand and four hundred.
24 All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim *were* a hundred
thousand and eight thousand and a hundred, throughout their
armies: and they shall go forward in the third rank.
25 The standard of the camp of Dan shall *be* on the north side by
their armies: and the captain of the children of Dan *shall be* Ahiezer
the son of Ammishaddai.
26 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were*
threescore and two thousand and seven hundred.
27 And those that encamp by him *shall be* the tribe of Asher: and the
captain of the children of Asher *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran.
28 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* forty
and one thousand and five hundred.
29 Then the tribe of Naphtali: and the captain of the children of
Naphtali *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan.
30 And his host, and those that were numbered of them, *were* fifty and
three thousand and four hundred.
31 All they that were numbered in the camp of Dan *were* a hundred
thousand and fifty and seven thousand and six hundred: they shall
go hindmost with their standards.
32 These *are* those which were numbered of the children of Israel by
the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps
throughout their hosts *were* six hundred thousand and three
thousand and five hundred and fifty.
33 But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as
the Lord commanded Moses.
34 And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord
commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they
set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of
their fathers.

Numbers-3

The Number and Duties of the Levites

1 These also *are* the generations of Aaron and Moses, in the day *that*
the Lord spake with Moses in Mount Sinai.
2 And these *are* the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the firstborn,
and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.
3 These *are* the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were
anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.
4 And Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, when they offered
strange fire before the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they
had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's
office in the sight of Aaron their father.
5 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the
priest, that they may minister unto him.
7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole
congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the
service of the tabernacle.
8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the
congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the
service of the tabernacle.
9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they *are*
wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.
10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on
their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put
to death.
11 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of
Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among
the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine;
13 because all the firstborn *are* mine; for on the day that I smote all the
firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn
in Israel, both man and beast: mine they shall be: I *am* the Lord.

14 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai,
saying,
15 Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their
families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou
number them.
16 And Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as
he was commanded.
17 And these were the sons of Levi by their names; Gershon, and
Kohath, and Merari.
18 And these *are* the names of the sons of Gershon by their families;
Libni, and Shimei.
19 And the sons of Kohath by their families; Amram, and Izehar,
Hebron, and Uzziel.
20 And the sons of Merari by their families; Mahli, and Mushi. These
are the families of the Levites according to the house of their
fathers.
21 Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the
Shimites: these *are* the families of the Gershonites.
22 Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all
the males, from a month old and upward, *even* those that were
numbered of them *were* seven thousand and five hundred.
23 The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle
westward.
24 And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites *shall be*
Eliasaph the son of Lael.
25 And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the
congregation *shall be* the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering
thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the
congregation,
26 and the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the
court, which *is* by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and
the cords of it, for all the service thereof.
27 And of Kohath *was* the family of the Amramites, and the family of
the Izeharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of
the Uzzielites: these *are* the families of the Kohathites.

28 In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, *were*
eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary.
29 The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the side of the
tabernacle southward.
30 And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the
Kohathites *shall be* Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.
31 And their charge shall *be* the ark, and the table, and the candlestick,
and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they
minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof.
32 And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall *be* chief over the chief
of the Levites, *and have* the oversight of them that keep the charge
of the sanctuary.
33 Of Merari *was* the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the
Mushites: these *are* the families of Merari.
34 And those that were numbered of them, according to the number
of all the males, from a month old and upward, *were* six thousand
and two hundred.
35 And the chief of the house of the father of the families of Merari
was Zuriel the son of Abihail: *these* shall pitch on the side of the
tabernacle northward.
36 And *under* the custody and charge of the sons of Merari *shall be* the
boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars
thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all
that serveth thereto,
37 and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and
their pins, and their cords.
38 But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, *even*
before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, *shall be* Moses,
and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the
charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh
shall be put to death.
39 All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron
numbered at the commandment of the Lord, throughout their

families, all the males from a month old and upward, *were* twenty and two thousand.

The Redemption of the Firstborn

40 And the Lord said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names.
41 And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I *am* the Lord) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel.
42 And Moses numbered, as the Lord commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel.
43 And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen.
44 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I *am* the Lord.
46 And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites;
47 thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take *them:* (the shekel *is* twenty gerahs :)
48 and thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.
49 And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites:
50 of the firstborn of the children of Israel took him the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five *shekels,* after the shekel of the sanctuary:

51 and Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Numbers-4

The Tasks Assigned to the Levites

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
2 Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers,
3 from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

We have here a second muster of the tribe of Levi. As that tribe was taken out of all Israel to be God's peculiar, so the middle-aged men of that tribe were taken from among the rest to be actually employed in the service of the tabernacle. Now observe,

Who were to be taken into this number? All the males from thirty years old to fifty. Of the other tribes, those that were numbered to go forth to war were from twenty years old and upward, but of the Levites only from thirty to fifty; for the service of God requires the best of our strength, and the prime of our time, which cannot be better spent than to the honour of him who is the first and best. And a man may make a good soldier much sooner than a good minister. Now,

1. They were not to be employed till they were thirty years old, because till then they were in danger of retaining something childish and youthful and had not gravity enough to do the service, and wear the honour, of a Levite. They were entered as probationers at twenty-five years old, (Nu 8:24), and in David's time, when there was more work to be done, at

twenty (1Ch 23:24, and so Ezr 3:8); but they must be five years learning and waiting, and so fitting themselves for service; nay, in David's time they were ten years in preparation, from twenty to thirty. John Baptist began his public ministry, and Christ his, at thirty years old. This is not in the letter of it obligatory on gospel ministers now, as if they must either not begin their work till thirty years old or must leave off at fifty; but it gives us two good rules:--

(1.) That ministers must not be novices, 1Ti 3:6. It is a work that requires ripeness of judgment and great steadiness, and therefore those are very unfit for it who are but babes in knowledge and have not put away childish things.

(2.) That they must learn before they teach, serve before they rule, and must first be proved, 1Ti 3:10.

2. They were discharged at fifty years old from the toilsome part of the service, particularly that of carrying the tabernacle; for that is the special service to which they are here ordained, and which there was most occasion for while they were in the wilderness. When they began to enter upon old age, they were dismissed,

(1.) In favour to them, that they might no be over-toiled when their strength began to decay. Twenty years' good service was thought pretty well for one man.

(2.) In honour to the work, that it might not be done by those who, through the infirmities of age, were slow and heavy. The service of God should be done when we are in the most lively active frame. Those do not consider this who put off their repentance to old age, and so leave the best work to be done in the worst time.

4 This *shall be* the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, *about* the most holy things.

5 And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the ark of testimony with it:

6 and shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over *it* a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof.

How their work is described. They are said to enter into the host, or warfare, to do the work in the tabernacle. The ministry is a good work (1Ti 3:1): ministers are not ordained to the honour only, but to the labour, not only to have the wages, but to do the work. It is also a good warfare, 1Ti 1:18. Those that enter into the ministry must look upon themselves as entered into the host, and approve themselves good soldiers, 2Ti 2:3. Now, as to the sons of Kohath in particular, here is,

1. Their service appointed them, in the removes of the tabernacle. Afterwards, when the tabernacle was fixed, they had other work assigned them; but this was the work of the day, which was to be done in its day. Observe, Wherever the camp of Israel went, the tabernacle of the Lord went with them, and care must be taken for the carriage of it. Note, Wherever we go, we must see to it that we take our religion along with us, and not forget that or any part of it. Now the Kohathites were to carry all the holy things of the tabernacle. They were charged with those things before (Nu 3:31), but here they have more particular instructions given them.

(1.) Aaron, and his sons the priests, must pack up the things which the Kohathites were to carry, as here directed, Nu 4:5, &c. God had before appointed that none should come into the most holy place, but only Aaron once a year with a cloud of incense (Le 16:2); and yet, the necessity of their unsettled state requiring it, that law is here dispensed with; for every time they removed Aaron and his sons went in to take down the ark, and make it up for carriage; for (as the learned bishop Patrick suggests) the shechinah, or display of the divine majesty, which was over the mercy-seat, removed for the present in the

pillar of cloud, which was taken up, and then the ark was not dangerous to be approached.

(2.) All the holy things must be covered, the ark and table with three coverings, all the rest with two. Even the ashes of the altar, in which the holy fire was carefully preserved and raked up, must have a purple cloth spread over them, Nu 4:13. Even the brazen altar, though in the court of the sanctuary it stood open to the view of all, yet was covered in the carriage of it. All these coverings were designed,

[1.] For safety, that these holy things might not be ruffled with the wind, sullied with the rain, nor tarnished with the sun, but that they might be preserved in their beauty; for on all the glory shall be a defence. The coverings of badgers' skins, being thick and strong, would keep out wet; and, while we are in our passage through the wilderness of this world, it concerns us to be fenced for all weathers, Isa 4:5,6.

[2.] For decency and ornament. Most of these things had a cloth of blue, or purple, or scarlet, spread outmost; and the ark was covered with a cloth wholly of blue (Nu 4:6), an emblem (say some) of the azure skies, which are spread like a curtain between us and the Majesty on high, Job 26:9. Those that are faithful to God should endeavour likewise to appear beautiful before men, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

[3.] For concealment. It signified the darkness of that dispensation. That which is now brought to light by the gospel, and revealed to babes, was then hidden from the wise and prudent. They saw only the coverings, not the holy things themselves (Heb 10:1); but now Christ has destroyed the face of the covering, Isa 25:7. (3.) When all the holy things were covered, then the Kohathites were to carry them on their shoulders. These things that had staves were carried by their staves (Nu 4:6,8,11,14); those that had not were carried upon a bar, or bier, or bearing barrow, Nu 4:10,12. See how the

tokens of God's presence in this world are movable things; but we look for a kingdom that cannot be moved.

2. Eleazar, now the eldest son of Aaron, is appointed overseer of the Kohathites in this service (Nu 4:16); he must take care that nothing was forgotten, left behind, or displaced. As a priest he had more honour than the Levites, but then he had more care; and that care was a heavier burden, no doubt, upon his heart, than all the burdens that were laid upon their shoulders. It is much easier to do the work of the tabernacle than to discharge the trusts of it, to obey than to rule.

3. Great care must be taken to preserve the lives of these Levites, by preventing their unseasonable irreverent approach to the most holy things: Cut you not off the Kohathites, Nu 4:18. Note, Those who do not what they can to keep others from sin do what they can to cut them off.

[1.] The Kohathites must not see the holy things till the priests had covered them, Nu 4:20. Even those that bore the vessels of the Lord saw not what they bore, so much were even those in the dark concerning the gospel whose office it was to expound the law. And,

[2.] When the holy things were covered, they might not touch them, at least not the ark, called here the holy thing, upon pain of death, Nu 4:15. Uzza was struck dead for the breach of this law. Thus were the Lord's ministers themselves then kept in fear, and that was a dispensation of terror, as well as darkness; but now, through Christ, the case is altered; we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handles, the word of life (1Jo 1:1), and we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace.

7 And upon the table of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon:

8 and they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the
same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves
thereof.
9 And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the
light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuffdishes, and all the oil
vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it:
10 and they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of
badgers' skins, and shall put *it* upon a bar.
11 And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover
it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof:
12 and they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they
minister in the sanctuary, and put *them* in a cloth of blue, and cover
them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put *them* on a bar.
13 And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a
purple cloth thereon:
14 and they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they
minister about it, *even* the censers, the fleshhooks, and the shovels,
and the basins, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon
it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it.
15 And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the
sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set
forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear *it:* but
they shall not touch *any* holy thing, lest they die. These *things are*
the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the
congregation.
16 And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *pertaineth* the
oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering,
and the anointing oil, *and* the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of
all that therein *is,* in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof.
17 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
18 Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from
among the Levites:
19 but thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they
approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in,
and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden:
20 but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest
they die.
21 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

22 Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families:
23 from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.
24 This *is* the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens:
25 and they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that *is* above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,

We have here the charge of the other two families of the Levites, which, though not so honourable as the first, yet was necessary, and was to be done regularly.

1 The Gershonites were charged with all the drapery of the tabernacle, the curtains, and hangings, and the coverings of badgers' skins, Nu 4:22-26. These they were to take down when the cloud removed, and the ark and the rest of the holy things were carried away, to pack up and bring with them, and then to set up again, where the cloud rested. Aaron and his sons allotted to them their respective charge: "You shall take care of such a curtain, and you of such a hanging, that every one may know his work, and there may be no confusion," Nu 4:27. Ithamar particularly was to take the oversight of them, Nu 4:28.

2 The Merarites were charged with the heavy carriage, the boards and bars, the pillars and sockets, the pins and cords, and these were delivered to them by name, Nu 4:31,32. An inventory was given them of every particular, that it might be forthcoming, and nothing to seek, when the tabernacle was to be set up again. Though these seemed of less importance than the other things pertaining to the sanctuary, yet there was this care taken of them, to teach us with the greatest exactness to preserve pure and entire all divine institutions, and to take care that nothing be lost. It also intimates the care God takes of his church, and every member of it; the good Shepherd calls his

own sheep by name, Joh 10:3. Here were thousands of men employed about these services, though a much less number would have served for the bearing of those burdens; but it was requisite that the tabernacle should be taken down, and set up, with great expedition, and many hands would make quick work, especially when every one knew his work. They had tents of their own to take care of, and to take along with them, but the young men under thirty, and the old men above fifty, might serve for them; nor is there any mention of them, for God's house must always be preferred before our own. Their care was preposterous who built and ceiled their own houses while God's house lay waste, Hag 1:4,9.

The death of the saints is represented as the taking down of the tabernacle (2Co 5:1), and the putting of it off, 2Pe 1:14. The immortal soul, like the most holy things, is first covered and taken away, carried by angels, unseen, under the inspection of the Lord Jesus, our Eleazar. Care is also taken of the body--the skin and flesh, which are as the curtains, the bones and sinews which are as the bars and pillars; none of these shall be lost; commandment is given concerning the bones, a covenant made with the dust; these are in safe custody, and shall all be produced in the great day, when this tabernacle shall be set up again, and these vile bodies made like the glorious body of Jesus Christ.

26 and the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which *is* by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve.

27 At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens.

28 This *is* the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge *shall be* under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

29 As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers;

30 from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou
number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the
work of the tabernacle of the congregation.
31 And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service
in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle,
and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof,
32 and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their
pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their
service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge
of their burden.
33 This *is* the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to
all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand
of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.
34 And Moses and Aaron and the chief of the congregation numbered
the sons of the Kohathites after their families, and after the house
of their fathers,
35 from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every
one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of
the congregation:
36 and those that were numbered of them by their families were two
thousand seven hundred and fifty.
37 These *were* they that were numbered of the families of the Kohathites,
all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, which
Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the
Lord by the hand of Moses.
38 And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon,
throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers,
39 from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every
one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of
the congregation,
40 even those that were numbered of them, throughout their families,
by the house of their fathers, were two thousand and six hundred
and thirty.
41 These *are* they that were numbered of the families of the sons of
Gershon, of all that might do service in the tabernacle of the
congregation, whom Moses and Aaron did number according to
the commandment of the Lord.
42 And those that were numbered of the families of the sons of

Merari, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers,
43 from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation,
44 even those that were numbered of them after their families, were three thousand and two hundred.
45 These be those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses.
46 All those that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chief of Israel numbered, after their families, and after the house of their fathers,
47 from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation,
48 even those that were numbered of them, were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore.
49 According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Numbers-5

The Unclean Driven from the Camp

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead:

Here is, a command for the purifying of the camp, by turning out from within its lines all those that were ceremonially unclean, by issues, leprosies, or the touch of dead bodies, until they were cleansed according to the law, Lu 5:2,3.

1. These orders are executed immediately, Lu 5:4.

(1.) The camp was now newly-modelled and put in order, and therefore, to complete the reformation of it, it is next to be cleansed.

Note, The purity of the church must be as carefully consulted and preserved as the peace and order of it. It is requisite, not only that every Israelite be confined to his own standard, but that every polluted Israelite be separated from it. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.

(2.) God's tabernacle was now fixed in the midst of their camp, and therefore they must be careful to keep it clean. Note, The greater profession of religion any house or family make the more they are obliged to put away iniquity far from their tabernacle, Job 22:23. The person, the place, in the midst of which God dwells, must not be defiled; for, if it be, he will be affronted, offended, and provoked to withdraw, 1Co 3:16,17.

2. This expulsion of the unclean out of the camp was to signify,

(1.) What the governors of the church ought to do: they must separate between the precious and the vile, and purge out scandalous persons, as old leaven (1Co 5:8,13), lest others should be infected and defiled, Heb 12:15. It is for the glory of Christ and the edification of his church that those who are openly and incorrigibly profane and vicious should be put out and kept from Christian communion till they repent.

(2.) What God himself will do in the great day: he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather out of his kingdom all things that offend. As here the unclean were shut out of the camp, so into the new Jerusalem no unclean thing shall enter, Re 21:27.

3 both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.

4 And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the Lord spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel.

The Law of Recompense

5 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
6 Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty;

A law concerning restitution, in case of wrong done to a neighbour. It is called a sin that men commit (Lu 5:6), because it is common among men; a sin of man, that is, a sin against man, so it is thought it should be translated and understood. If a man overreach or defraud his brother in any matter, it is to be looked upon as a trespass against the Lord, who is the protector of right, the punisher of wrong, and who strictly charges and commands us to do justly. Now what is to be done when a man's awakened conscience charges him with guilt of this kind, and brings it to his remembrance though done long ago?

1. He must confess his sin, confess it to God, confess it to his neighbour, and so take shame to himself. If he have denied it before, though it go against the grain to own himself in a lie, yet he must do it; because his heart was hardened he denied it, therefore he has no other way of making it appear that his heart is now softened but by confessing it.

2. He must bring a sacrifice, a ram of atonement, Lu 5:8. Satisfaction must be made for the offence done to God, whose law is broken, as well as for the loss sustained by our neighbour; restitution in this case is not sufficient without faith and repentance.

3. Yet the sacrifices would not be accepted till full amends were made to the party wronged, not only the principal, but a fifth part added to it, Lu 5:7. It is certain that while that which is got by injustice is knowingly retained in the hands the guilt

of the injustice remains upon the conscience, and is not purged by sacrifice nor offering, prayers not tears, for it is one and the same continued act of sin persisted in. This law we had before (Le 6:4), and it is here added that if the party wronged was dead, and he had no near kinsman who was entitled to the debt, or if it was any way uncertain to whom the restitution should be made, this should not serve for an excuse to detain what was unjustly gotten; to whomsoever it pertained, it was certainly none of his that got it by sin, and therefore it must be given to the priest, Lu 5:8. If there were any that could make out a title to it, it must not be given to the priest (God hates robbery for burnt-offerings); but, if there were not, then it lapsed to the great Lord (ob defectum sanguinis--for want of issue), and the priests were his receivers. Note, Some work of piety or charity is a piece of necessary justice to be done by those who are conscience to themselves that they have done wrong, but know not how otherwise to make restitution; what is not our property will never be our profit.

A general rule concerning hallowed things given upon this occasion, that, whatever was given to the priest, his it shall be, Lu 5:9,10. 1. He that gave it was not to receive his gift again upon any pretence whatsoever. This law ratifies and confirms all grants for pious uses, that people might not give things to the priests in a fit of zeal, and then recall them in a fit of vexation. 2 The other priests should not come in sharers with that priest who then officiated, and to whom the hallowed thing, whatever it was, was given. Let him that was most ready and diligent in attending fare the better for it: if he do the work, let him have the pay, and much good may it do him.

7 then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall
recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it
the fifth *part* thereof, and give *it* unto *him* against whom he hath
trespassed.

8 But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto,
let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, *even* to the priest;

beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him.

9 And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his.

10 And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his.

The Law concerning Jealousy

11 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

12 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, if any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him,

We have here the law concerning the solemn trial of a wife whose husband was jealous of her. Observe,

I. What was the case supposed: That a man had some reason to suspect his wife to have committed adultery, Lu 5:12-14. Here,

1 The sin of adultery is justly represented as an exceedingly sinful sin; it is going aside from God and virtue, and the good way, Pr 2:17. It is committing a trespass against the husband, robbing him of his honour, alienating his right, introducing a spurious breed into his family to share with his children in his estate, and violating her covenant with him. It is being defiled; for nothing pollutes the mind and conscience more than this sin does.

2. It is supposed to be a sin which great care is taken by the sinners to conceal, which there is no witness of. The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Job 24:15. And the adulteress takes her opportunity when the good man is not at home, Pr 7:19. It would not covet to be secret if it were not shameful; and the devil who draws sinners to this sin teaches them how to cover it.

3. The spirit of jealousy is supposed to come upon the husband, of which Solomon says, It is the rage of a man (Pr 6:34), and that it is cruel as the grave, So 8:6.

4. "Yet" (say the Jewish writers) "he must make it appear that he has some just cause for the suspicion." The rule they give is, "If the husband have said unto his wife before witnesses, 'Be not thou in secret with such a man;' and, notwithstanding that admonition, it is afterwards proved that she was in secret with that man, though her father or her brother, then he may compel her to drink the bitter water." But the law here does not tie him to that particular method of proving the just cause of his suspicion; it might be otherwise proved. In case it could be proved that she had committed adultery, she was to be put to death (Le 20:10); but, if it was uncertain, then this law took place. Hence,

(1.) Let all wives be admonished not to give any the least occasion for the suspicion of their chastity; it is not enough that they abstain from the evil of uncleanness, but they must abstain from all appearance of it, from every thing that looks like it, or leads to it, or may give the least umbrage to jealousy; for how great a matter may a little fire kindle!

(2.) Let all husbands be admonished not to entertain any causeless or unjust suspicions of their wives. If charity in general, much more conjugal affection, teaches to think no evil, 1Co 13:5. It is the happiness of the virtuous woman that the heart of her husband does safely trust in her, Pr 31:11.

II. What was the course prescribed in this case, that, if the suspected wife was innocent, she might not continue under the reproach and uneasiness of her husband's jealousy, and, if guilty, her sin might find her out, and others might hear, and fear, and take warning.

1 The process of the trial must be thus:--

(1.) Her husband must bring her to the priest, with the witnesses that could prove the ground of his suspicion, and desire that she might be put upon her trial. The Jews say that the priest was first to endeavour to persuade her to confess the truth, saying to this purport, "Dear daughter, perhaps thou wast overtaken by drinking wine, or wast carried away by the heat of youth or the examples of bad neighbours; come, confess the truth, for the sake of his great name which is described in the most sacred ceremony, and do not let it be blotted out with the bitter water." If she confessed, saying, "I am defiled," she was not put to death, but was divorced and lost her dowry; if she said, "I am pure," then they proceeded.

(2.) He must bring a coarse offering of barley-meal, without oil or frankincense, agreeably to the present afflicted state of his family; for a great affliction it was either to have cause to be jealous or to be jealous without cause. It is an offering of memorial, to signify that what was to be done was intended as a religious appeal to the omniscience and justice of God.

(3.) The priest was to prepare the water of jealousy, the holy water out of the laver at which the priests were to wash when they ministered; this must be brought in an earthen vessel, containing (they say) about a pint; and it must be an earthen vessel, because the coarser and plainer every thing was the more agreeable it was to the occasion. Dust must be put into the water, to signify the reproach she lay under, and the shame she ought to take to herself, putting her mouth in the dust; but dust from the floor of the tabernacle, to put an honour upon every thing that pertained to the place God had chosen to put his name there, and to keep up in the people a reverence for it; see Joh 8:6.

(4.) The woman was to be set before the Lord, at the east gate of the temple-court (say the Jews), and her head was to be uncovered, in token of her sorrowful condition; and there she stood for a spectacle to the world, that other women might

learn not to do after her lewdness, Eze 23:48. Only the Jews say, "Her own servants were not to be present, that she might not seem vile in their sight, who were to give honour to her; her husband also must be dismissed."

(5.) The priest was to adjure her to tell the truth, and to denounce the curse of God against her if she were guilty, and to declare what would be the effect of her drinking the water of jealousy, Lu 5:19-22. He must assure her that, if she were innocent, the water would do her no harm, Lu 5:19. None need fear the curse of the law if they have not broken the commands of the law. But, if she were guilty, this water would be poison to her, it would make her belly to swell and her thigh to rot, and she should be a curse or abomination among her people, Lu 5:21,22. To this she must say, Amen, as Israel must do to the curses pronounced on mount Ebal, De 27:15-26. Some think the Amen, being doubled, respects both parts of the adjuration, both that which freed her if innocent and that which condemned her if guilty. No woman, if she were guilty, could say Amen to this adjuration, and drink the water upon it, unless she disbelieved the truth of God or defied his justice, and had come to such a pitch of impudence and hard-heartedness in sin as to challenge God Almighty to do his worst, and choose rather to venture upon his curse than to give him glory by making confession; thus has whoredom taken away the heart.

(6.) The priest was to write this curse in a scrip or scroll o parchment, verbatim--word for word, as he had expressed it, and then to wipe or scrape out what he had written into the water (Lu 5:23), to signify that it was that curse which impregnated the water, and gave it its strength to effect what was intended. It signified that, if she were innocent, the curse should be blotted out and never appear against her, as it is written, Isa 43:25, I am he that blotteth out thy transgression, and Ps 51:9, Blot out my iniquities; but that, if she were guilty, the curse, as it was written, being infused into the water, would enter into her bowels with the water, even like oil into her

bones (Ps 109:18), as we read of a curse entering into a house, Zec 5:4.

(7.) The woman must then drink the water (Lu 5:24); it is called the bitter water, some think because they put wormwood in it to make it bitter, or rather because it caused the curse. Thus sin is called an evil thing and a bitter for the same reason, because it causeth the curse, Jer 2:19. If she had been guilty (and otherwise it did not cause the curse), she was made to know that though her stolen waters had been sweet, and her bread eaten in secret pleasant, yet the end was bitter as wormwood, Pr 9:17, and Nu 5:4. Let all that meddle with forbidden pleasures know that they will be bitterness in the latter end. The Jews say that if, upon denouncing the curse, the woman was so terrified that she durst not drink the water, but confessed she was defiled, the priest flung down the water, and cast her offering among the ashes, and she was divorced without dowry: if she confessed not, and yet would not drink, they forced her to it; and, if she was ready to throw it up again, they hastened her away, that she might not pollute the holy place.

(8.) Before she drank the water, the jealousy-offering was waved and offered upon the altar (Lu 5:25,26); a handful of it was burnt for a memorial, and the remainder of it eaten by the priest, unless the husband was a priest, and then it was scattered among the ashes. This offering in the midst of the transaction signified that the whole was an appeal to God, as a God that knows all things, and from whom no secret is hid.

(9.) All things being thus performed according to the law, they were to wait the issue. The water, with a little dust put into it, and the scrapings of a written parchment, had no natural tendency at all to do either good or hurt; but if God was thus appealed to in the way of an instituted ordinance, though otherwise the innocent might have continued under suspicion and the guilty undiscovered, yet God would so far own his own institution as that in a little time, by the miraculous

operation of Providence, the innocency of the innocent should be cleared, and the sin of the guilty should find them out.

[1.] If the suspected woman was really guilty, the water she drank would be poison to her (Lu 5:27), her belly would swell and her thigh rot by a vile disease for vile deserts, and she would mourn at the last when her flesh and body were consumed, Pr 5:11. Bishop Patrick says, from some of the Jewish writers, that the effect of these waters appeared immediately, she grew pale, and her eyes ready to start out of her head. Dr. Lightfoot says that sometimes it appeared not for two or three years, but she bore no children, was sickly, languished, and rotted at last; it is probable that some indications appeared immediately. The rabbin say that the adulterer also died in the same day and hour that the adulteress did, and in the same manner too, that he belly swelled, and his secret parts rotted: a disease perhaps not much unlike that which in these latter ages the avenging hand of a righteous God has made the scourge of uncleanness, and with which whores and whoremongers infect, and plague, and ruin one another, since they escape punishment from men. The Jewish doctors add that the waters had this effect upon the adulteress only in case the husband had never offended in the same kind; but that, if he had at any time defiled the marriage-bed, God did not thus right him against his injurious wife; and that therefore in the latter and degenerate ages of the Jewish church, when uncleanness did abound, this way of trial was generally disused and laid aside; men, knowing their own crimes, were content not to know their wives' crimes. And to this perhaps may refer the threatening (Ho 4:14), I will not punish your spouses when they commit adultery, for you yourselves are separated with whores.

[2.] If she were innocent, the water she drank would be physic to her: She shall be free, and shall conceive seed, Lu 5:28. The Jewish writers magnify the good effects of this water to the innocent woman, that, to recompense her for the wrong done to her by the suspicion, she should, after the drinking of these

waters, be stronger and look better than ever; if she was sickly, she should become healthful, should bear a man-child, and have easy labour.

2. From the whole we may learn,

(1.) That secret sins are known to God, and sometimes are strangely brought to light in this life; however, there is a day coming when God will, by Jesus Christ, as here by the priest, judge the secrets of men according to the gospel, Ro 2:16.

(2.) That, in particular, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. The violation of conjugal faith and chastity is highly provoking to the God of heaven, and sooner or later it will be reckoned for. Though we have not now the waters of jealousy to be a sensible terror to the unclean, yet we have a word from God which ought to be as great a terror, that if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, 1Co 3:17.

(3.) That God will find out some way or other to clear the innocency of the innocent, and to bring forth their righteousness as the light.

(4.) That to the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled nothing is so, Tit 1:15. The same word is to some a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death, like those waters of jealousy, according as they receive it; the same providence is for good to some and for hurt to others, Jer 24:5,8,9. And, whatsoever it is intended for, it shall not return void.

13 and a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her
husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and *there be* no
witness against her, neither she be taken *with the manner;*
14 and the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his
wife, and she be defiled; or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him,
and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

15 then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring
her offering for her, the tenth *part* of an ephah of barley meal; he shall
pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it *is* an offering
of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to
remembrance.
16 And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord:
17 and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the
dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put
it into the water:
18 and the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover
the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands,
which *is* the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand
the bitter water that causeth the curse:
19 and the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman,
If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to
uncleanness *with another* instead of thy husband, be thou free from
this bitter water that causeth the curse:
20 but if thou hast gone aside *to another* instead of thy husband, and if
thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee besides thine
husband:
21 then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and
the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and
an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to
rot, and thy belly to swell;
22 and this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to
make *thy* belly to swell, and *thy* thigh to rot. And the woman shall
say, Amen, amen.
23 And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot
them out with the bitter water:
24 and he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth
the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her,
and become bitter.
25 Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's
hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and offer it
upon the altar:
26 and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, *even* the
memorial thereof, and burn *it* upon the altar, and afterward shall
cause the woman to drink the water.

27 And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come
to pass, *that* if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her
husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her,
and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot:
and the woman shall be a curse among her people.
28 And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be
free, and shall conceive seed.
29 This *is* the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside *to another*
instead of her husband, and is defiled;
30 or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous
over his wife, and shall set the woman before the Lord, and the
priest shall execute upon her all this law.
31 Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall
bear her iniquity.

Numbers-6

The Law for the Nazarite

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when either
man or woman shall separate *themselves* to vow a vow of a Nazarite,
to separate *themselves* unto the Lord;

After the law for the discovery and shame of those that by sin had made themselves vile, fitly follows this for the direction and encouragement of those who by their eminent piety and devotion had made themselves honourable, and distinguished themselves from their neighbours. It is very probable that there were those before the making of this law who went under the character of Nazarites, and were celebrated by that title as persons professing greater strictness and zeal in religion than other people; for the vow of a Nazarite is spoken of here as a thing already well known, but the obligation of it is reduced to a greater certainty than hitherto it had been. Joseph is called a Nazarite among his brethren (Ge 49:26), not only because separate from them, but because eminent among them. Observe,

The general character of a Nazarite: it is a person separated unto the Lord, Lu 6:2. Some were Nazarites for life, either by divine designation, as Samson (Jdg 13:5), and John Baptist (Lu 1:15), or by their parents' vow concerning them, as Samuel, 1Sa 1:11. Of these this law speaks not. Others were so for a certain time, and by their own voluntary engagement, and concerning them rules are given by this law. A woman might bind herself with the vow of a Nazarite, under the limitations we find, Nu 30:3, where the vow which the woman is supposed to vow unto the Lord seems to be meant especially of this vow. The Nazarites were,

1. Devoted to the Lord during the time of their Nazariteship, and, it is probable, spent much of their time in the study of the law, in acts of devotion, and instructing others. An air of piety was thereby put upon them, and upon their whole conversation.

2. They were separated from common persons and common things. Those that are consecrated to God must not be conformed to this world. They distinguished themselves, not only from others, but from what they themselves were before and after. 3. They separated themselves by vowing a vow. Every Israelite was bound by the divine law to love God with all his heart, but the Nazarites by their own act and deed bound themselves to some religious observances, as fruits and expressions of that love, which other Israelites were not bound to. Some such there were, whose spirits God stirred up to be in their day the ornaments of the church, the standard-bearers of religion, and patterns of piety. It is spoken of as a great favour to their nation that God raised up of their young men for Nazarites, Am 2:11.

The Nazarites were known in the streets and respected as purer than snow, whiter than milk, La 4:7. Christ was called in reproach a Nazarene, so were his followers: but he was no Nazarite according to this law; he drank wine, and touched

dead bodies, yet in his this type had its accomplishment, for in him all purity and perfection met; and every true Christian is a spiritual Nazarite, separated by vow unto the Lord. We find St. Paul, by the persuasion of his friends, in complaisance to the Jews, submitting to this law of the Nazarites; but at the same time it is declared that the Gentiles should observe no such thing, Ac 21:24,25. It was looked upon as a great honour to a man to be a Nazarite, and therefore if a man speak of it as a punishment, saying for instance, "I will be a Nazarite rather than do so or so," he is (say the Jews) a wicked man; but he that vows unto the Lord in the way of holiness to be a Nazarite, lo, the crown of his God is upon his head.

3 he shall separate *himself* from wine and strong drink, and shall drink
no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he
drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.

4 All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of
the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

The particular obligations that the Nazarites lay under. That the fancies of superstitious men might not multiply their restraints endlessly, God himself lays down the law for them, and gives them the rule of their profession.

1. They must have nothing to do with the fruit of the vine, Lu 6:3,4. They must drink no wine nor string drink, nor eat grapes, no, not the kernel nor the husk; they might not so much as eat a raisin. The learned Dr. Lightfoot has a conjecture (Hor. Heb. in Luc. 1. 15), that, as the ceremonial pollutions by leprosy and otherwise represented the sinful state of fallen man, so the institution of the order of Nazarites was designed to represent the pure and perfect state of man in innocency, and that the tree of knowledge, forbidden to Adam, was the vine, and for that reason it was forbidden to the Nazarites, and all the produce of it. Those who gave the Nazarites wine to drink did the tempter's work (Am 2:12), persuading them to that forbidden fruit. That it was reckoned a perfection and praise not to drink wine appears from the instance of the Rechabites, Jer 35:6. They were to drink no wine,

(1.) That they might be examples of temperance and mortification. Those that separate themselves to God and to his honour must not gratify the desires of the body, but keep it under and bring it into subjection. Drinking a little wine for the stomach's sake is allowed, to help that, 1Ti 5:23. But drinking much wine for the palate's sake, to please that, does by no means become those who profess to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

(2.) That they might be qualified to employ themselves in the service of God. They must not drink, lest they should forget the law (Pr 31:5), lest they should err through wine, Isa 28:7. Let all Christians oblige themselves to be very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for, if the love of these once gets the mastery of a man, he becomes a very easy prey to Satan. It is observable that because they were to drink no wine (which was the thing mainly intended) they were to eat nothing that came of the vine, to teach us with the utmost care and caution to avoid sin and every thing that borders upon it and leads to it, or may be a temptation to us. Abstain from all appearance of evil, 1Th 5:22.

2. They must not cut their hair, Lu 6:5. They must neither poll their heads nor shave their beards; this was that mark of Samson's Nazariteship which we often read of in his story. Now,

(1.) This signified a noble neglect of the body and the ease and ornament of it, which became those who, being separated to God, ought to be wholly taken up with their souls, to secure their peace and beauty. It signified that they had, for the present, renounced all sorts of sensual pleasures and delights, and resolved to live a life of self-denial and mortification. Mephibosheth in sorrow trimmed not his beard, 2Sa 19:24.

(2.) Some observe that long hair is spoken of as a badge of subjection (1Co 11:5, &c.); so that the long hair of the

Nazarites denoted their subjection to God, and their putting themselves under his dominion.

(3.) By this they were known to all that met them to be Nazarites, and so it commanded respect. It made them look great without art; it was nature's crown to the head, and a testimony for them that they had preserved their purity. For, if they had been defiled, their hair must have been cut, Lu 6:9. See Jer 7:29.

3. They must not come near any dead body, Lu 6:6,7. Others might touch dead bodies, and contracted only a ceremonial pollution by it for some time; some must do it, else the dead must be unburied; but the Nazarites must not do it, upon pain of forfeiting all the honour of their Nazariteship. They must not attend the funeral of any relation, no, not father nor mother, any more than the high priest himself, because the consecration of his God is upon his head. Those that separate themselves to God must learn,

(1.) To distinguish themselves, and do more than others.

(2.) To keep their consciences pure from dead works, and not to touch the unclean thing. The greater profession of religion we make, and the more eminent we appear, the greater care we must take to avoid all sin, for we have so much the more honour to lose by it.

(3.) To moderate their affections even to their near relations, so as not to let their sorrow for the loss of them break in upon their joy in God and submission to his will. See Mt 8:21,22.

4. All the days of their separation they must be holy to the Lord, Lu 6:8. This was the meaning of those external observances, and without this they were of no account. The Nazarites must be devoted to God, employed for him, and

their minds intent upon him; they must keep themselves pure in heart and life, and be in every thing conformable to the divine image and will; this is to be holy, this is to be a Nazarite indeed.

5 All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth *himself* unto the Lord, he shall be holy, *and* shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.

6 All the days that he separateth *himself* unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body.

7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God *is* upon his head.

The provision that was made for the cleansing of a Nazarite, if he happened unavoidably to contract a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a dead body. No penalty is ordered by this law for the wilful breach of the foregoing laws; for it was not supposed that a man who had so much religion as to make that vow could have so little as to break it presumptuously: nor could it be supposed that he should drink wine, or have his hair cut, but by his own fault; but purely by the providence of God, without any fault of his own, he might be near a dead body, and that is the case put (Lu 6:9): If a man die very suddenly by him, he has defiled the head of his consecration.

Note, Death sometimes takes men away very suddenly, and without any previous warning. A man might be well and dead in so little a time that the most careful Nazarite could not avoid being polluted by the dead body; so short a step is it sometimes, and so soon taken, from time to eternity. God prepare us for sudden death! In this case,

1. He must be purified from the ceremonial pollution he had contracted, as others must, upon the seventh day, Lu 6:9. Nay, more was required for the purifying of the Nazarite than of any other person that had touched a dead body; he must bring a sin-offering and a burnt-offering, and an atonement must be made for him, Lu 6:10,11. This teaches us that sins of

infirmity, and the faults we are overtaken in by surprise, must be seriously repented of, and that an application must be made of the virtue of Christ's sacrifice to our souls for the forgiveness of them every day, 1Jo 2:1,2. It teaches us also that, if those who make an eminent profession of religion do any thing to sully the reputation of their profession, more is expected from them than others, for the retrieving both of their peace and of their credit.

2. He must begin the days of his separation again; for all that were past before his pollution, though coming ever so near the period of his time set, were lost, and not reckoned to him, Lu 6:12. This obliged them to be very careful not to defile themselves by the dead, for that was the only thing that made them lose their time, and it teaches us that if a righteous man turn away from his righteousness, and defile himself with dead works, all his righteousness that he has done shall be lost to him, Eze 33:13. It is all lost, all in vain, if he do not persevere, Ga 3:4. He must begin again, and do his first works.

8 All the days of his separation he *is* holy unto the Lord.

9 And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it.

10 And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:

11 and the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day.

12 And he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

13 And this *is* the law of the Nazarite: when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:

14 and he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the

first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings,

15 and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings.

16 And the priest shall bring *them* before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering:

17 and he shall offer the ram *for* a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering, and his drink offering.

18 And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put *it* in the fire which *is* under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

19 And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put *them* upon the hands of the Nazarite, after *the hair of* his separation is shaven:

20 and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the Lord: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine.

The law for the solemn discharge of a Nazarite from his vow, when he had completed the time he fixed to himself. Before the expiration of that term he could not be discharged; before he vowed, it was in his own power, but it was too late after the vow to make enquiry. The Jews say that the time of a Nazarite's vow could not be less than thirty days; and if a man said, "I will be a Nazarite but for two days," yet he was bound for thirty; but it should seem Paul's vow was for only seven days (Ac 21:27), or, rather, then he observed the ceremony of finishing that vow of Nazariteship from which, being at a distance from the temple, he had discharged himself some years before at Cenchrea only by the ceremony of cutting his hair, Ac 18:18. When the time of the vowed separation was out, he was to be made free,

1. Publicly, at the door of the tabernacle (Lu 6:13), that all might take notice of the finishing of his vow, and none might

be offended if they saw him now drink wine, who had so lately refused.

2. It was to be done with sacrifices, Lu 6:14. Lest he should think that by this eminent piece of devotion he had made God a debtor to him, he is appointed, even when he had finished his vow, to bring an offering to God; for, when we have done our utmost in duty to God, still we must own ourselves behind-hand with him. He must bring one of each sort of the instituted offerings.

(1.) A burnt-offering, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereign dominion over him and all he had still, notwithstanding his discharge from this particular vow.

(2.) A sin-offering. This, though mentioned second (Lu 6:14), yet seems to have been offered first (Lu 6:16), for atonement must be made for our sins before any of our sacrifices can be accepted. And it is very observable that even the Nazarite, who in the eye of men was purer than snow and whiter than milk, yet durst not appear before the holy God without a sin-offering. Though he had fulfilled the vow of his separation without any pollution, yet he must bring a sacrifice for sin; for there is guilt insensibly contracted by the best of men, even in their best works--some good omitted, some ill admitted, which, if we were dealt with in strict justice, would be our ruin, and in consequence of which it is necessary for us to receive the atonement, and plead it as our righteousness before God.

(3.) A peace-offering, in thankfulness to God who had enabled him to fulfil his vow, and in supplication to God for grace to preserve him from ever doing any thing unbecoming one that had been once a Nazarite, remembering that, though he was now freed from the bonds of his own vow, he still remained under the bonds of the divine law.

(4.) To these were added the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, according to the manner (Lu 6:15,17), for these always accompanied the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings: and, besides these, a basket of unleavened cakes, and wafers.

(5.) Part of the peace-offering, with a cake and wafer, was to be waved for a wave-offering (Lu 6:19,20); and this was a gratuity to the priest, who had it for his pains, after it had been first presented to God.

(6.) Besides all this, he might bring his free-will offerings, such as his hand shall get, Lu 6:21. More than this he might bring, but not less. And, to grace the solemnity, it was common upon this occasion to have their friends to be at charges with them, Ac 21:24. Lastly, One ceremony more was appointed, which was like the cancelling of the bond when the condition is performed, and that was the cutting off of his hair, which had been suffered to grow all the time of his being a Nazarite, and burning it in the fire over which the peace-offerings were boiling, Lu 6:18. This intimated that his full performance of his vow was acceptable to God in Christ the great sacrifice, and not otherwise. Learn hence to vow and pay to the Lord our God, for he has no pleasure in fools.

21 This *is* the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, *and of* his offering unto the Lord for his separation, besides *that* that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation.

The Priestly Benediction

22 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

23 Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, on this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them,

Here, I The priests, among other good offices which they were to do, are appointed solemnly to bless the people in the name of the Lord, Lu 6:23. It was part of their work, De 21:5. Hereby God put an honour upon the priests, for the less is

blessed of the better; and hereby he gave great comfort and satisfaction to the people, who looked upon the priest as God's mouth to them. Though the priests of himself could do no more than beg a blessing, yet being an intercessor by office, and doing that in his name who commands the blessing, the prayer carried with it a promise, and he pronounced it as one having authority with his hands lifted up and his face towards the people. Now,

1. This was a type of Christ's errand into the world, which was to bless us (Ac 3:26), as the high priest of our profession. The last thing he did on earth was with uplifted hands to bless his disciples, Lu 24:50,51. The learned bishop Pearson observes it as a tradition of the Jews that the priests blessed the people only at the close of the morning sacrifice, not of the evening sacrifice, to show (says he) that in the last days, the days of the Messiah, which are (as it were) the evening of the world, the benediction of the law should cease, and the blessing of Christ should take place.

2. It was a pattern to gospel ministers, the masters of assemblies, who are in like manner to dismiss their solemn assemblies with a blessing. The same that are God's mouth to his people, to teach and command them, are his mouth likewise to bless them; and those that receive the law shall receive the blessing. The Hebrew doctors warn the people that they say not, "What availeth the blessing of this poor simple priest? “For," say they, "the receiving of the blessing depends, not on the priest, but on the holy blessed God."

24 The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
25 the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

A form of blessing is here prescribed them. In their other devotions no form was prescribed, but this being God's command concerning benediction, that it might not look like any thing of their own, he puts the very words in their mouths, Lu 6:24-26. Here observe,

1. That the blessing is commanded upon each particular person: The Lord bless thee. They must each of them prepare themselves to receive the blessing, and then they should find enough in it to make them every man happy. Blessed shalt thou be, De 28:3. If we take the law to ourselves, we may take the blessing to ourselves, as if our names were inserted.

2. That the name Jehovah is three times repeated in it, and (as the critics observe) each with a different accent in the original; the Jews themselves think there is some mystery in this, and we know what it is, the New Testament having explained it, which directs us to expect the blessing from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, each of which persons is Jehovah, and yet they are "not three Lords, but one Lord," 2Co 13:14. 3. That the favour of God is all in all in this blessing, for that is the fountain of all good.

(1.) The Lord bless thee! Our blessing God is only our speaking well of him; his blessing us is doing well for us; those whom he blesses are blessed indeed.

(2.) The Lord make his face shine upon thee, alluding to the shining of the sun upon the earth, to enlighten and comfort it, and to renew the face of it. "The Lord love thee and cause thee to know that he loves thee." We cannot but be happy if we have God's love; and we cannot but be easy if we know that we have it.

(3.) The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee. This is to the same purport with the former, and it seems to allude to the smiles of a father upon his child, or of a man upon his friend whom he takes pleasure in. If God give us the assurances of his special favour and his acceptance of us, this will put gladness into the heart, Ps 4:7,8. 4. That the fruits of this favour conveyed by this blessing are protection, pardon, and peace.

(1.) Protection from evil, Lu 6:24. The Lord keep thee, for it is he that keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps 121:4), and all believers are kept by the power of God.

(2.) Pardon of sin, Lu 6:25. The Lord be gracious, or merciful, unto thee.

(3.) Peace (Lu 6:26), including all that good which goes to make up a complete happiness.

26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
27 And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.

God here promises to ratify and confirm the blessing: They shall put my name upon the children of Israel, Lu 6:27. God gives them leave to make use of his name in blessing the people, and to bless them as his people, called by his name. This included all the blessings they could pronounce upon them, to mark them for God's peculiar, the people of his choice and love. God's name upon them was their honour, their comfort, their safety, their plea. We are called by thy name, leave us not. It is added, and I will bless them.

Note, A divine blessing goes along with divine institutions, and puts virtue and efficacy into them. What Christ says of the peace is true of the blessing, "Peace to this congregation," if the sons of peace and heirs of blessing be there, the peace, the blessing, shall rest upon them, Lu 10:5,6. For in every place where God records his name he will meet his people and bless them.

Numbers-7

Offerings for the Dedication of the Altar

1 And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them;

2 that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who *were* the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered:

Here is the offering of the princes to the service of the tabernacle. Observe,

I. When it was; not till it was fully set up, Nu 7:1. When all things were done both about the tabernacle itself, and the camp of Israel which surrounded it, according to the directions given, then they began their presents, probably about the eighth day of the second month. Note, Necessary observances must always take place of free-will offerings: first those, and then these.

II. Who it was that offered: The princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, Nu 7:2. Note, Those that are above others in power and dignity ought to go before others, and endeavour to go beyond them, in every thing that is good. The more any are advanced the more is expected from them, on account of the greater opportunity they have of serving God and their generation. What are wealth and authority good for, but as they enable a man to do so much the more good in the world?

III. What was offered: six wagons, with each of them a yoke of oxen to draw them, Nu 7:3. Doubtless these wagons were agreeable to the rest of the furniture of the tabernacle and its appurtenances, the best of the kind, like the carriages which

great princes use when they go in procession. Some think that God, by Moses, intimated to them what they should bring, or their own consideration perhaps suggested to them to make this present. Though God's wisdom had ordained all the essentials of the tabernacle, yet it seems these accidental conveniences were left to be provided by their own discretion, which was to set in order that which was wanting (Tit 1:5), and these wagons were not refused, though no pattern of them was shown to Moses in the mount. Note, It must not be expected that the divine institution of ordinances should descend to all those circumstances which are determinable, and are fit to be left alterable, by human prudence, that wisdom which is profitable to direct. Observe, No sooner is the tabernacle fully set up than this provision is made for the removal of it.

Note, Even when we are but just settled in the world, and think we are beginning to take root, we must be preparing for changes and removes, especially for the great change. While we are here in this world, every thing must be accommodated to a militant and movable state. When the tabernacle was framing, the princes were very generous in their offerings, for then they brought precious stones, and stones to be set (Ex 35:27), yet now they bring more presents. Note, Those that have done good should study to abound therein yet more and more, and not be weary of well-doing.

IV. How the offering was disposed of, and what use was made of it: the wagons and oxen were given to the Levites, to be used in carrying the tabernacle, both for their ease (for God would not have any of his servants overburdened with work), and for the more safe and right conveyance of the several parts of the tabernacle, which would be best kept together, and sheltered from the weather, in wagons.

1 The Gershonites, that had the light carriage, the curtains and hangings, had but two wagons, and two yoke of oxen (Nu 7:7);

when they had loaded these, they must carry the rest, if any remained, upon their shoulders.

2 The Merarites, that had the heavy carriage, and that which was most unwieldy, the boards, pillars, sockets, &c., had four wagons, and four yoke of oxen allotted them (Nu 7:8); and yet, if they had not more wagons of their own, they would be obliged to carry a great deal upon their backs too, for the silver sockets alone weighed 100 talents, which was above four tons, and that was enough to load four wagons that were drawn but by one yoke of oxen a-piece. But each socket being a talent weight, which is about a man's burden (as appears, 2Ki 5:23) probably they carried those on their backs, and put the boards and pillars into the wagons. Observe here, How God wisely and graciously ordered the most strength to those that had the most work. Each had wagons according to their service. Whatever burden God in his providence lays upon us, he will by his sufficient grace proportion the strength to it, 1Co 10:13.

3. The Kohathites, that had the most sacred carriage, had no wagons at all, because they were to carry their charge upon their shoulders (Nu 7:9), with a particular care and veneration. When in David's time they carried the ark in a cart, God made them to know to their terror, by the death of Uzza, that they did not seek him in the due order. See 1Ch 15:13.

3 and they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle.
4 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
5 Take *it* of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service.
6 And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites.
7 Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service:

8 and four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari,
according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of
Aaron the priest.
9 But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the
sanctuary belonging unto them was *that* they should bear upon their
shoulders.
10 And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it
was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the
altar.
11 And the Lord said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering,
each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar.
12 And he that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son
of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah:

We have here an account of the great solemnity of dedicating the altars, both that of burnt-offerings and that of incense; they had been sanctified before, when they were anointed (Le 8:10,11), but now they were handselled, as it were, by the princes, with their free-will offerings. They began the use of them with rich presents, great expressions of joy and gladness, and extraordinary respect to those tokens of God's presence with them. Now observe here,

I. That the princes and great men were first and forwardest in the service of God. Those that are entitled to precedency should go before in good works, and that is true honour. Here is an example to the nobility and gentry, those that are in authority and of the first rank in their country; they ought to improve their honour and power, their estate and interest, for the promoting of religion, and the service of God, in the places where they live. It is justly expected that those who have more than others should do more good than others with what they have, else they are unfaithful stewards, and will not make up their account with joy. Nay, great men must not only with their wealth and power assist and protect those that serve God, but they must make conscience of being devout and religious themselves, and employing themselves in the exercises of piety, which will greatly redound to the honour of God (Ps 138:4,5), and have a good influence upon others, who will be

the more easily persuaded to acts of devotion when they see them thus brought into reputation. It is certain that the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God; nor are the meanest services of religion any disparagement to those that make the greatest figure in the world.

II The offerings they brought were very rich and valuable, so rich that some think there was not so great a difference in estate between them and others as that they were able to bear the expense of them themselves, but that the heads of each tribe contributed to the offering which their prince brought.

1. They brought some things to remain for standing service, twelve large silver dishes, each about sixty ounces weight, as many large silver cups, or bowls, of about thirty-five ounces--the former to be used for the meat-offerings, the latter for the drink-offerings--the former for the flesh of the sacrifices, the latter for the blood. The latter was God's table (as it were), and it was fit that so great a King should be served in plate. The golden spoons being filled with incense were intended, it is probable, for the service of the golden altar, for both the altars were anointed at the same time.

Note, In works of piety and charity we ought to be generous according as our ability is. He that is the best should be served with the best we have. The Israelites indeed might well afford to part with their gold and silver in abundance to the service of the sanctuary, for they needed it not to buy meat and victual their camp, being daily fed with bread from heaven; nor did they need it to buy land, or pay their army, for they were shortly to be put in possession of Canaan.

2. They brought some things to be used immediately, offerings of each sort, burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and a great many peace-offerings (on part of which they were to feast with their friends), and the meat-offerings that were to be annexed to them. Hereby they signified their thankful acceptance of, and cheerful submission to, all those laws concerning the

sacrifices which God had lately by Moses delivered to them. And, though it was a time of joy and rejoicing, yet it is observable that still in the midst of their sacrifices we find a sin-offering. Since in our best services we are conscious to ourselves that there is a mixture of sin, it is fit that there should be even in our most joyful services a mixture of repentance. In all our approaches to God, we must by faith have an eye to Christ as the great sin-offering, and make mention of him.

3. They brought their offerings each on a separate day, in the order that they had been lately put into, so that the solemnity lasted twelve days. So God appointed (Nu 7:11): They shall bring their offering, each prince on his day, and so they did. One sabbath must needs fall within the twelve days, if not two, but it should seem they did not intermit on the sabbath, for it was holy work, proper enough for a holy day. God appointed that it should thus be done on several days,

(1.) That solemnity might be prolonged, and so might be universally taken notice of by all Israel, and the remembrance of it more effectually preserved.

(2.) That an equal honour might thereby be put upon each tribe respectively; in Aaron's breast-plate each had his precious stone, so in this offering each had his day.

(3.) Thus it would be done more decently and in order; God's work should not be done confusedly, and in a hurry; take time, and we shall have done the sooner, or at least we shall have done the better.

(4.) God hereby signified how much pleased he is, and how much pleased we should be, with the exercises of piety and devotion. The repetition of them should be a continual pleasure to us, and we must not be weary of well doing. If extraordinary service be required to be done for twelve days

together, we must not shrink from it, nor call it a task and a burden.

(5.) The priests and Levites, having this occasion to offer the same sacrifices, and those some of every sort, every day, for so many days together, would have their hands well set in, and would be well versed in the laws concerning them.

(6.) The peace-offerings were all to be eaten the same day they were offered, and two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five lambs, were enough for one day's festival; had there been more, especially if all had been brought on one day, there might have been danger of excess. The virtue of temperance must not be left, under pretence of the religion of feasting.

4. All their offerings were exactly the same, without any variation, though it is probable that neither the princes nor the tribes were all alike rich; but thus it was intimated that all the tribes of Israel had an equal share in the altar, and an equal interest in the sacrifices that were offered upon it. Though one tribe was posted more honourably in the camp than another, yet they and their services were all alike acceptable to God. Nor must we have faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect to persons, Jam 2:1.

5. Nahshon, the prince of the tribe of Judah, offered first, because God had given that tribe the first post of honour in the camp; and the rest of the tribes acquiesced, and offered in the same order in which God had appointed them to encamp. Judah, of which tribe Christ came, first, and then the rest; thus, in the dedication of souls to God, every man is presented in his own order, Christ the first-fruits, 1Co 15:23. Some observe that Nahshon is the only one that is not expressly called a prince (Nu 7:12), which the Jews give this account of: he is not called a prince, that he might not be puffed up because he offered first; and all the others are called princes because they (though some of them of the elder house) submitted, and offered after him. Or, because the title of prince of Judah did

more properly belong to Christ, for unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

6. Though the offerings were all the same, yet the account of them is repeated at large for each tribe, in the same words. We are sure there are no vain repetitions in scripture; what then shall we make of these repetitions? Might it not have served to say of this noble jury that the same offering which their foreman brought each on his day brought likewise? No, God would have it specified for each tribe: and why so?

(1.) It was for the encouragement of these princes, and of their respective tribes, that each of their offerings being recorded at large no slight might seem to be put upon them; for rich and poor meet together before God.

(2.) It was for the encouragement of all generous acts of piety and charity, by letting us know that what is so given is lent to the Lord, and he carefully records it, with every one's name prefixed to his gift, because what is so given he will pay again, and even a cup of cold water shall have its reward. He is not unrighteous, to forget either the cost or the labour of love, Heb 6:10. We find Christ taking particular notice of what was cast into the treasury, Mk 12:41. Though what is offered be but little, though it be a contribution to the charity of others, yet if it be according to our ability it shall be recorded, that it may be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

7. The sum total is added at the foot of the account (Nu 7:84-88), to show how much God was pleased with the mention of his freewill-offerings, and what a great deal they amounted to in the whole, when every prince brought in his quota! How greatly would the sanctuary of God be enriched and beautified if all would in their places do their part towards it, by exemplary purity and devotion, extensive charity, and universal usefulness!

8. God signified his gracious acceptance of these presents that were brought him, by speaking familiarly to Moses, as a man speaks to his friend, from off the mercy-seat (Nu 7:89,12:8); and in speaking to him he did in effect speak to all Israel, showing them this token for good, Ps 103:7.

Note, By this we may know that God hears and accepts our prayers if he gives us grace to hear and receive his word, for thus our communion with him is maintained and kept up. I know not why we may not suppose that upon each of the days on which these offerings were brought (probably while the priests and offerers were feasting upon the peace-offerings) Moses was in the tabernacle, receiving some of those laws and orders which we have already met with in this and the foregoing book. And here the excellent bishop Patrick observes that God's speaking to Moses thus by an audible articulate voice, as if he had been clothed with a holy body, might be looked upon as an earnest of the incarnation of the Son of God in the fulness of time, when the Word should be made flesh, and speak in the language of the sons of men. For, however God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke unto the fathers, he has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. And that he who now spoke to Moses, as the shechinah or divine Majesty, from between the cherubim, was the eternal Word, the second person in the Trinity, was the pious conjecture of many of the ancients; for all God's communion with man is by his Son, by whom he made the world, and rules the church, and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

13 and his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them *were* full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering:

14 one spoon of ten *shekels* of gold, full of incense:

15 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:

16 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:

17 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Nahshon
the son of Amminadab.
18 On the second day Nethaneel the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, did
offer:
19 he offered *for* his offering one silver charger, the weight whereof *was*
a hundred and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after
the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled
with oil for a meat offering:
20 one spoon of gold of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
21 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
22 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
23 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats,
five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Nethaneel the son
of Zuar.
24 On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, prince of the children of
Zebulun, *did offer:*
25 his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred
and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel
of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for
a meat offering:
26 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
27 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
28 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
29 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Eliab the
son of Helon.
30 On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur, prince of the
children of Reuben, *did offer:*
31 his offering *was* one silver charger of the weight of a hundred and
thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of
the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a
meat offering:
32 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
33 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:

34 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
35 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Elizur the
son of Shedeur.
36 On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the
children of Simeon, *did offer:*
37 his offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred
and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after
the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled
with oil for a meat offering:
38 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
39 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
40 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
41 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Shelumiel
the son of Zurishaddai.
42 On the sixth day Eliasaph the son of Deuel, prince of the children of
Gad, *offered:*
43 his offering *was* one silver charger of the weight of a hundred and
thirty *shekels,* a silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the
sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a
meat offering:
44 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
45 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
46 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
47 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Eliasaph
the son of Deuel.
48 On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, prince of the
children of Ephraim, *offered:*
49 his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred
and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel
of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for
a meat offering:
50 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:

51 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
52 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
53 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Elishama
the son of Ammihud.
54 On the eighth day *offered* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, prince of the
children of Manasseh:
55 his offering *was* one silver charger of the weight of a hundred and
thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of
the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a
meat offering:
56 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
57 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
58 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
59 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Gamaliel
the son of Pedahzur.
60 On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, prince of the
children of Benjamin, *offered:*
61 his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred
and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel
of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for
a meat offering:
62 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
63 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt
offering:
64 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
65 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he
goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Abidan
the son of Gideoni.
66 On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the
children of Dan, *offered:*
67 his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred
and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel
of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for
a meat offering:

68 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
69 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:
70 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
71 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.
72 On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ocran, prince of the children of Asher, *offered:*
73 his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering:
74 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
75 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:
76 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
77 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Pagiel the son of Ocran.
78 On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, prince of the children of Naphtali, *offered:*
79 his offering *was* one silver charger, the weight whereof *was* a hundred and thirty *shekels,* one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering:
80 one golden spoon of ten *shekels,* full of incense:
81 one young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering:
82 one kid of the goats for a sin offering:
83 and for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this *was* the offering of Ahira the son of Enan.
84 This *was* the dedication of the altar, in the day when it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold:

85 each charger of silver *weighing* a hundred and thirty *shekels,* each bowl seventy: all the silver vessels *weighed* two thousand and four hundred *shekels,* after the shekel of the sanctuary:
86 the golden spoons *were* twelve, full of incense, *weighing* ten *shekels* apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary: all the gold of the spoons *was* a hundred and twenty *shekels.*
87 All the oxen for the burnt offering *were* twelve bullocks, the rams twelve, the lambs of the first year twelve, with their meat offering: and the kids of the goats for sin offering twelve.
88 And all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace offerings were twenty and four bullocks, the rams sixty, the he goats sixty, the lambs of the first year sixty. This *was* the dedication of the altar, after that it was anointed.
89 And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that *was* upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim: and he spake unto him.

Numbers-8

Aaron Lights the Lamps

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.
3 And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Directions were given long before this for the making of the golden candlestick (Ex 25:31), and it was made according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, Ex 38:17. But now it was that the lamps were first ordered to be lighted, when other things began to be used. Observe,

1. Who must light the lamps; Aaron himself, he lighted the lamps, Nu 8:3. As the people's representative to God, he thus did the office of a servant in God's house, lighting his Master's

candle; as the representative of God to the people, he thus gave them the intimations of God's will and favour, thus expressed (Ps 18:28), Thou wilt light my candle; and thus Aaron himself was now lately directed to bless the people, The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, Nu 6:25. The commandment is a lamp, Pr 6:23. The scripture is a light shining in a dark place, 2Pe 1:19. And a dark place indeed even the church would be without it, as the tabernacle (which had no window in it) without the lamps. Now the work of ministers is to light these lamps, by expounding and applying the word of God. The priest lighted the middle lamp from the fire of the altar, and the rest of the lamps he lighted one from another, which (says Mr. Ainsworth) signifies that the fountain of all light and knowledge is in Christ, who has the seven spirits of God figured by the seven lamps of fire (Re 4:5), but that in the expounding of scripture one passage must borrow light from another. He also supposes that, seven being a number of perfection, by the seven branches of the candlestick is shown the full perfection of the scriptures, which are able to make us wise to salvation.

2. To what end the lamps were lighted, that they might give light over against the candlestick, that is, to that part of the tabernacle where the table stood, with the show-bread upon it, over against the candlestick. They were not lighted like tapers in an urn, to burn to themselves, but to give light to the other side of the tabernacle, for therefore candles are lighted, Mt 5:15. Note, The lights of the world, the lights of the church, must shine as lights. Therefore we have light, that we may give light.

4 And this work of the candlestick *was of* beaten gold; unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, *was* beaten work: according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick.

The Cleansing of the Levites

5 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

6 Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.
7 And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and *so* make themselves clean.
8 Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, *even* fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.
9 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together.
10 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:
11 and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord *for* an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord.
12 And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one *for* a sin offering, and the other *for* a burnt offering, unto the Lord, to make an atonement for the Levites.
13 And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord.

We read before of the separating of the Levites from among the children of Israel when they were numbered, and the numbering of them by themselves (Nu 3:6,15), that they might be employed in the service of the tabernacle. Now here we have directions given for their solemn ordination (Nu 8:6), and the performance of it, Nu 8:20. All Israel must know that they took not this honour to themselves, but were called of God to it; nor was it enough that they were distinguished from their neighbours, but they must be solemnly devoted to God. Note, All that are employed for God must be dedicated to him, according as the degree of employment is. Christian musts be baptized, ministers must be ordained; we must first give ourselves unto the Lord, and then our services. Observe in what method this was done:

I The Levites must be cleansed, and were so. The rites and ceremonies of their cleansing were to be performed,

1. By themselves. They must wash their clothes, and not only bathe, but shave all their flesh, as the leper was to do when he was cleansed, Le 14:8. They must cause a razor to pass over all their flesh, to clear themselves from that defilement which would not wash off. Jacob, whom God loved, was a smooth man; it was Esau that was hairy. The great pains they were to take with themselves to make themselves clean teaches all Christians, and ministers particularly, by repentance and mortification, to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that they may perfect holiness. Those must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

2. By Moses. He must sprinkle the water of purifying upon them, which was prepared by divine direction. This signified the application of the blood of Christ to our souls by faith, to purify us from an evil conscience, that we may be fit to serve the living God. It is our duty to cleanse ourselves, and God's promise that he will cleanse us.

II The Levites, being thus prepared, must be brought before the Lord in a solemn assembly of all Israel, and the children of Israel must put their hands upon them (Nu 8:10), so transferring their interest in them and in their service (to which, as a part, the whole body of the people was entitled) to God and to his sanctuary. They presented them to God as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, to perform a reasonable service; and therefore, as the offerers in all other cases did, they laid their hands upon them, desiring that their service might be accepted in lieu of the attendance of the whole congregation, particularly the first-born, which they acknowledge God might have insisted on. This will not serve to prove a power in the people to ordain ministers; for this imposition of hands by the children of Israel upon the Levites did not make them ministers of the sanctuary, but only signified the people's parting with that tribe out of their militia,

and civil incorporations, in order to their being made ministers by Aaron, who was to offer them before the Lord. All the congregation of the children of Israel could not lay hands on them, but it is probable that the rulers and elders did it as the representative body of the people. Some think that the first-born did it because in their stead the Levites were consecrated to God. Whatever God calls for from us to serve his own glory by, we must cheerfully resign it, lay our hands upon it, not to detain it but to surrender it, and let it go to him that is entitled to it.

III. Sacrifices were to be offered for them, a sin-offering first (Nu 8:12), and then a burnt-offering, to make an atonement for the Levites, who, as the parties concerned, were to lay their hands upon the head of the sacrifices. See here,

1. That we are all utterly unworthy and unfit to be admitted into and employed in the service of God, till atonement be made for sin, and thereby our peace made with God. That interposing cloud must be scattered before there can be any comfortable communion settled between God and our souls.

2. That it is by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice, that we are reconciled to God, and made fit to be offered to him. It is by him that Christians are sanctified to the work of their Christianity, and ministers to the work of their ministry. The learned bishop Patrick's notion of the sacrifice offered by the Levites is that the Levites were themselves considered as an expiatory sacrifice, for they were given to make atonement for the children of Israel, (Nu 8:19), and yet not being devoted to death, any more than the first-born were, these two sacrifices were substituted in their stead, upon which therefore they were to lay their hands, that the sin which the children of Israel laid upon them (Nu 8:10) might be transferred to these beasts.

IV. The Levites themselves were offered before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, Nu 8:11. Aaron gave them up to God, as being first given up by themselves, and by the

children of Israel. The original word signifies a wave-offering, not that they were actually waved, but they were presented to God as the God of heaven, and the Lord of the whole earth, as the wave-offerings were. And in calling them wave-offerings it was intimated to them that they must continually lift up themselves towards God in his service, lift up their eyes, lift up their hearts, and must move to and fro with readiness in the business of their profession. They were not ordained to be idle, but to be active and stirring.

V. God here declares his acceptance of them: The Levites shall be mine, Nu 8:14. God took them instead of the first-born (Nu 8:16-18), of which before, Nu 3:4. Note, What is in sincerity offered to God shall be graciously owned and accepted by him. And his ministers who have obtained mercy of him to be faithful have particular marks of favour and honour put upon them: they shall be mine, and then (Nu 8:15) they shall go in to do the service of the tabernacle. God takes them for his own, that they may serve him. All that expect to share in the privileges of the tabernacle must resolve to do the service of the tabernacle. As, on the one hand, none of God's creatures are his necessary servants (he needs not the service of any of them), so, on the other hand, none are taken merely as honorary servants, to do nothing. All whom God owns he employs; angels themselves have their services.

VI. They are then given as a gift to Aaron and his sons (Nu 8:19), yet so as that the benefit accrued to the children of Israel.

1 The Levites must act under the priests as attendants on them, and assistants to them, in the service of the sanctuary. Aaron offers them to God (Nu 8:11), and then God gives them back to Aaron, Nu 8:19. Note, Whatever we give up to God, he will give back to us unspeakably to our advantage. Our hearts, our children, our estates, are never more ours, more truly, more comfortably ours, than when we have offered them up to God.

2. They must act for the people. They were taken to do the service of the children of Israel, that is, not only to do the service which they should do, but to serve their interests, and do that which would really redound to the honour, safety, and prosperity of the whole nation. Note, Those that faithfully perform the service of God do one of the best services that can be done to the public; God's ministers, while they keep within the sphere of their office and conscientiously discharge the duty of it, must be looked upon as some of the most useful servants of their country. The children of Israel can as ill spare the tribe of Levi as any of their tribes. But what is the service they do the children of Israel? It follows, it is to make an atonement for them, that there be no plague among them. It was the priests' work to make atonement by sacrifice, but the Levites made atonement by attendance, and preserved the peace with heaven which was made by sacrifice. If the service of the priests in the tabernacle had been left to all the first-born of Israel promiscuously, it would have been either neglected or done unskillfully and irreverently, being done by those that were not so closely tied to it, nor so diligently trained to it, nor so constantly used to it, as the Levites were; and this would bring a plague among the children of Israel--meaning, perhaps, the death of the first-born themselves, which was the last and greatest of the plagues of Egypt. To prevent this, and to preserve the atonement, the Levites were appointed to do this service, who should be bred up to it under their parents from their infancy, and therefore would be well versed in it; and so the children of Israel, that is, the first-born, should not need to come nigh to the sanctuary; or, when any Israelites had occasion, the Levites would be ready to instruct them, and introduce them, and so prevent any fatal miscarriage or mistake. Note, It is a very great kindness to the church that ministers are appointed to go before the people in the things of God, as guides, overseers, and rulers, in religious worship, and to make that their business. When Christ ascended on high, he gave these gifts, Eph 4:8,11,12.

VII. The time of their ministration is fixed.

1. They were to enter upon the service at twenty-five years old, Nu 8:24. They were not charged with the carrying of the tabernacle and the utensils of it till they were thirty years old, Nu 4:3. But they were entered to be otherwise serviceable at twenty-five years old, a very good age for ministers to begin their public work at. The work then required that strength of body and the work now requires that maturity of judgment and steadiness of behaviour which men rarely arrive at till about that age; and novices are in danger of being lifted up with pride.

2. They were to have a writ of ease at fifty years old; then they were to return from the warfare, as the phrase is (Nu 8:25), not cashiered with disgrace, but preferred rather to the rest which their age required, to be loaded with the honours of their office, as hitherto they had been with the burdens of it. They shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle, to direct the junior Levites, and set them in; and they shall keep the charge, as guards upon the avenues of the tabernacle, to see that no stranger intruded, nor any person in his uncleanness, but they shall not be put upon any service which may be a fatigue to them. If God's grace provide that men shall have ability according to their work, man's prudence should take care that men have work only according to their ability. The aged are most fit for trusts, and to keep the charge; the younger are most fit for work, and to do the service. Those that have used the office of a servant well purchase to themselves a good degree, 1Ti 3:13. Yet indeed gifts are not tied to ages (Job 32:9), but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit. Thus was the affair of the Levites settled.

14 Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.

15 And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them *for* an offering.

16 For they *are* wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, *even instead of* the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me.

17 For all the firstborn of the children of Israel *are* mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself.

18 And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.

19 And I have given the Levites *as* a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.

20 And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them.

21 And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them *as* an offering before the Lord; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them.

22 And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

23 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

24 This *is it* that *belongeth* unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation:

25 and from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service *thereof*, and shall serve no more:

26 but shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

Numbers-9

The Observance of the Passover

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the
first month of the second year after they were come out of the land
of Egypt, saying,
2 Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed
season.
3 In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his
appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to
all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.
4 And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep
the Passover.
5 And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month
at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the Lord
commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.
6 And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of
a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they
came before Moses and before Aaron on that day.
7 And those men said unto him, We *are* defiled by the dead body of a
man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering
of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel?

Here we have,

I. An order given for the solemnization of the Passover, the day twelvemonth after they came out of Egypt, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the second year, some days before they were numbered, for that was done in the beginning of the second month. Observe,

1. God gave particular orders for the keeping of this Passover, otherwise (it should seem) they would not have kept it, for, in the first institution of this ordinance, it was appointed to be kept when they should come into the land of promise, Ex 12:25. And, no Passover till they came to Canaan, Jos 5:10.

This was an early indication of the abolishing of the ceremonial institutions at last, that, so soon after they were first appointed, some of them were suffered to lie asleep for so many years. The ordinance of the Lord's supper (which came in the room of the Passover) was not thus intermitted or set aside in the first days of the Christian church, though those were days of greater difficulty and distress than Israel knew in the wilderness; nay, in the times of persecution, the Lord's supper was celebrated more frequently than afterwards. The Israelites in the wilderness could not forget their deliverance out of Egypt, their present state was a constant memorandum of it to them. All the danger was when they came to Canaan; there therefore they had need to be reminded of the rock out of which they were hewn. However, because the first Passover was celebrated in a hurry, and was rather the substance itself than the sign, it was the will of God that at the return of the year, when they were more composed, and better acquainted with the divine law, they should observe it again, that their children might more distinctly understand the solemnity and the better remember it hereafter. Calvin supposes that they were obliged to keep it now, and notes it as an instance of their carelessness that they had need to be reminded of an institution which they so lately received.

2. Moses faithfully transmitted to the people the orders given him, Nu 9:4. Thus Paul delivered to the churches what he received of the Lord concerning the gospel Passover, 1Co 11:23. Note, Magistrates must be monitors, and ministers must stir up men's minds by way of remembrance to that which is good.

3. The people observed the orders given them, Nu 9:5. Though they had lately kept the feast of dedication (Nu 7:1-89), yet they did not desire to excuse themselves with that from keeping this feast. Note, Extraordinary performances must not supersede or jostle out or stated services. They kept the Passover even in the wilderness: though our condition be solitary and unsettled, yet we must keep up our attendance on

God by holy ordinances as we have opportunity, for in them we may find the best conversation and the best repose. Thus is God' Israel provided for in a desert.

II. Instructions given concerning those that were ceremonially unclean when they were to eat the Passover. The law of the Passover required every Israelite to eat of it. Some subsequent laws had forbidden those that had contracted any ceremonial pollution to eat of the holy things; those whose minds and consciences are defiled by sin are utterly unfit for communion with God, and cannot partake, with any true comfort, of the gospel Passover, till they are cleansed by true repentance and faith: and a sad dilemma they are in; if they come not to holy ordinances, they are guilty of a contempt of them; if they do come in their pollution, they are guilty of a profanation of them. They must therefore wash, and then compass God's altar. Now,

1. Here is the case that happened in Israel when this Passover was to be kept: Certain men were defiled by the dead body of a man (Nu 9:6), and they lay under that defilement seven days (Nu 19:11), and in that time might not eat of the holy things, Le 7:20. This was not their iniquity, but their infelicity: some persons must touch dead bodies, to bury them out of sight, and therefore they could, with the better grace, bring their complaint to Moses.

2 The application made to Moses by the person concerned, Nu 9:7. Note, It is people's wisdom, in difficult cases concerning sin and duty, to consult with their ministers whom God has set over them, and to ask the law at their mouth, Mal 2:7. These means we must use in pursuance of our prayers to God to lead us in a plain path. Observe with what trouble and concern these men complained that they were kept back from offering to the Lord. They did not complain of the law as unjust, but lamented their unhappiness that they fell under the restraint of it at this time, and desired some expedient might be found out for their relief. Note, It is a blessed thing to see people

hungering and thirsting after God's ordinances, and to hear them complaining of that which prevents their enjoyment of them. It should be a trouble to us when by any occasion we are kept back from bringing our offering in the solemnities of a sabbath or a sacrament, as it was to David when he was banished from the altar, Ps 42:1,2.

3. The deliberation of Moses in resolving this case. Here seemed to be law against law; and, though it is a rule that the latter law must explain the former, yet he pitied these Israelites that were thus deprived of the privilege of the Passover, and therefore took time to consult the oracles, and to know what was the mind of God in this case: I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you, Nu 9:8. Ministers must take example hence in resolving cases of conscience.

(1.) They must not determine rashly, but take time to consider, that every circumstance may be duly weighted, the case viewed in a true light, and spiritual things compared with spiritual.

(2.) They must ask counsel at God's mouth, and not determine according to the bias of their own fancy or affection, but impartially, according to the mind of God, to the best of their knowledge. We have no such oracle to consult as Moses had, but we must have recourse to the law and the testimony, and speak according to that rule; and if, in difficult cases, we take time to spread the matter in particular before God by humble believing prayer, we have reason to hope that the Spirit who is promised to lead us into all truth will enable us to direct others in the good and right way.

4. The directions which God gave in this case, and in other similar cases, explanatory of the law of the Passover. The disagreeable accident produced good laws.

(1.) Those that happened to be ceremonially unclean at the time when the Passover should be eaten were allowed to eat it that day month, when they were clean; so were those that happened to be in a journey afar off, Nu 9:10,11. See here,

[1.] That when we are to attend upon God in solemn ordinances it is very necessary both that we be clean and that we be composed.

[2.] That that may excuse the deferring of a duty for a time which yet will not justify us in the total neglect and omission of it. He that is at variance with his brother may leave his gift before the altar, while he goes to be reconciled to his brother; but when he has done his part towards it, whether it be effected or no, he must come again and offer his gift, Mt 5:23,24. This secondary Passover was to be kept on the same day of the month with the first, because the ordinance was a memorial of their deliverance on that day of the month. Once we find the whole congregation keeping the Passover on this fourteenth day of the second month, in Hezekiah's time (2Ch 30:15), which perhaps may help to account for the admission of some that were not clean to the eating of it. Had the general Passover been kept in the first month, the unclean might have been put off till the second; but, that being kept in the second month, they had no warrant to eat it in the third month, and therefore, rather than not eat of it at all, they were admitted, though not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, Nu 9:19,20.

(2.) Whenever the Passover was kept in the second month, all the rites and ceremonies of it must be strictly observed, Nu 9:12. They must not think that, because the time was dispensed with, any part of the solemnity of it might be abated; when we cannot do as we would we must do the utmost we can in the service of God.

(3.) This allowance in a case of necessity would be no means countenance or indulge any in their neglect to keep the

Passover at the time appointed, when they were not under the necessity, Nu 9:13. When a person is under no incapacity to eat the Passover in the appointed time, if he neglects it then, upon the presumption of the liberty granted by this law, he puts an affront upon God, impiously abuses his kindness, and he shall certainly bear his sin, and be cut off from his people. Note, As those who against their minds are forced to absent themselves from God's ordinances may comfortably expect the favours of God's grace under their affliction, so those who of choice absent themselves may justly expect the tokens of God's wrath for their sin. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

(4.) Here is a clause added in favour of strangers, Nu 9:14. Though it was requisite that the stranger who would join with them in eating the Passover should be circumcised as a proselyte to their religion (Ex 12:48,49), yet this kind admission of those that were not native Israelites to eat the Passover was an intimation of the favour designed for the poor Gentiles by Christ. As then there was one law, so in the days of the Messiah there should be one gospel, for the stranger and for him that was born in the land; for in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him, and this was a truth before Peter perceived it, Ac 10:34,35.

8 And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the
Lord will command concerning you.
9 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
10 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of
your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or *be* in a
journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the Lord.
11 The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it,
and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs.*
12 They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of
it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.

13 But the man that *is* clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.

14 And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the Passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.

The Cloud over the Tabernacle

15 And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, *namely,* the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.

16 So it was alway: the cloud covered it *by day,* and the appearance of fire by night.

17 And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents.

18 At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.

19 And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not.

We have here the history of the cloud; not a natural history: who knows the balancings of the clouds? But a divine history of a cloud that was appointed to be the visible sign and symbol of God's presence with Israel.

I. When the tabernacle was finished this cloud, which before had hung on high over their camp, settled upon the tabernacle, and covered it, to show that God manifests his presence with his people in and by his ordinances; there he makes himself

known, and to them we must look if we would see the beauty of the Lord, Ps 27:4, Eze 37:26,27. Thus God glorified his own appointments, and signified his acceptance of his people's love and obedience.

II. That which appeared as a cloud by day appeared as a fire all night. Had it been a cloud only, it would not have been visible by night; and, had it been a fire only, it would have been scarcely discernible by day; but God would give them sensible demonstrations of the constancy of his presence with them, and his care of them, and that he kept them night and day, Isa 27:3, Ps 121:6. And thus we are taught to set God always before us, and to see him near us both night and day. Something of the nature of that divine revelation which the Old-Testament church was governed by might also be signified by these visible signs of God's presence, the cloud denoting the darkness and the fire the terror of that dispensation, in comparison with the more clear and comfortable discoveries God has made of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

III. This pillar of cloud and fire directed and determined all the motions, marches, and encampments, of Israel in the wilderness.

1. As long as the cloud rested upon the tabernacle, so long they continued in the same place, and never stirred; though no doubt they were very desirous to be pressing forward in their journey towards Canaan, where they longed to be and hoped to be quickly, yet as long as the cloud rested, if it was a month or a year, so long they rested, Nu 9:22. Note, He that believeth doth not make haste. There is no time lost while we are waiting God's time. It is as acceptable a piece of submission to the will of God to sit still contentedly when our lot requires it as to work for him when we are called to it.

2. When the cloud was taken up, they removed, how comfortably soever they were encamped, Nu 9:17. Whether

it moved by day or night, they delayed not to attend its motions (Nu 9:21), and probably there were some appointed to stand sentinel day and night within sight of it, to give timely notice to the camp of its beginning to stir, and this called keeping the charge of the Lord. The people, being thus kept at a constant uncertainty, and having no time fixed for stopping or removing, were obliged to hold themselves in constant readiness to march upon very short warning. And for the same reason we are kept at uncertainty concerning the time of our putting off the earthly house of this tabernacle, that we may be always ready to remove at the commandment of the Lord. 3. As long and as far as the cloud moved, so long and so far they marched, and just where it abode they pitched their tents about it, and God's tent under it, Nu 9:17.

Note, It is uncomfortable staying when God has departed, but very safe and pleasant going when we see God go before us and resting where he appoints us to rest. This is repeated again and again in these verses, because it was a constant miracle, and often repeated, and what never failed in all their travels, and because it is a matter which we should take particular notice of as very significant and instructive. It is mentioned long after by David (Ps 105:39), and by the people of God after their captivity, Neh 9:19. And the guidance of this cloud is spoken of as signifying the guidance of the blessed Spirit. Isa 63:14, The Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest, and so didst thou lead thy people. This teaches us,

(1.) The particular care God takes of his people. Nothing could be more expressive and significant of God's tenderness of Israel than the guidance of this cloud was; it led them by the right way (Ps 107:7), went on their pace: God did by it, as it were, cover them with his feathers. We are not now to expect such sensible tokens of the divine presence and guidance as this was, but the promise is sure to all God's spiritual Israel that he will guide them by his counsel (Ps 73:24), even unto death (Ps 48:14), that all the children of God shall be led by the Spirit of God (Ro 8:14), that he will

direct the paths of those who in all their ways acknowledge him, Pr 3:6. There is a particular providence conversant about all their affairs, to direct and overrule them for the best. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, Ps 37:23.

(2.) The particular regard we ought to have to God in all our ways. In our affections and actions we must follow the direction of his word and Spirit; all the motions of our souls must be guided by the divine will; at the commandment of the Lord our hearts should always move and rest; in all our affairs we must follow Providence, reconciling ourselves to all its disposals, and bringing our mind to our condition, whatever it is. The people of Israel, having the cloud for their guide, were eased of the trouble of holding councils of war, to consider when and whither they should march, which might have occasioned strifes and debates among them: nor needed they to send spies before to inform them of the posture of the country, or pioneers to clear the way, or officers to mark out their camp; the pillar of cloud did all this for them: and those that by faith commit their works to the Lord, though they are bound to the prudent use of means, yet may in like manner be easy in the expectation of the event. "Father, thy will be done; dispose of me and mine as thou pleasest; here I am, desirous to be found waiting on my God continually, to journey and rest at the commandment of the Lord. What thou wilt, and where thou wilt, only let me be thine, and always in the way of my duty."

20 And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed.

21 And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and *that* the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they

journeyed: whether *it was* by day or by night that the cloud was
taken up, they journeyed.
22 Or *whether it were* two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud
tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of
Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was
taken up, they journeyed.
23 At the commandment of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at
the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge
of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of
Moses.

Numbers-10

The Silver Trumpets

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make
them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and
for the journeying of the camps.
3 And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall
assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the
congregation.
4 And if they blow *but* with one *trumpet*, then the princes, *which are*
heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee.

We have here directions concerning the public notices that were to be given to the people upon several occasions by sound of trumpet. In a thing of this nature, one would think, Moses needed not to have been taught of God: his own reason might teach him the conveniency of trumpets; but the constitution of Israel was to be in every thing divine, and therefore even in this matter, small as it seems. Moses is here directed,

1. About the making of them. They must be made of silver; not cast but of beaten work (as some read it), the matter and shape, no doubt, very fit for the purpose. He was now ordered

to make but two, because there were but two priests to use them. But in Solomon's time we read of 120 priests sounding with trumpets, 2Ch 5:12. The form of these trumpets is supposed to have been much like ours at this day.

2. Who were to make use of them; not any inferior person, but the priests themselves, the sons of Aaron, Nu 10:8. As great as they were, they must not think it a disparagement to them to be trumpeters in the house of God; the meanest office there was honourable. This signified that the Lord's ministers should lift up their voice like a trumpet, to show people their sins (Isa 58:1), to call them to Christ, Isa 27:13. 3. Upon what occasions the trumpets were to be sounded.

(1.) For the calling of assemblies, Nu 10:2. Thus they are told to blow the trumpet in Zion for the calling of a solemn assembly together, to sanctify a fast, Joe 2:15. Public notice ought to be given of the time and place of religious assemblies; for the invitation to the benefit or ordinances is general: whoever will, let him come. wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse. But, that the trumpet might not give an uncertain sound, they are directed, if only the princes and elders were to meet, to blow but one of the trumpets; less should serve to call them together, who ought to be examples of forwardness in any thing that is good: but, if the body of the people were to be called together, both the trumpets must be sounded, that they might be heard at the greater distance. In allusion to this, they are said to be blessed that hear the joyful sound (Ps 89:15), that is, that are invited and called upon to wait upon God in public ordinances, Ps 122:1. And the general assembly at the great day will be summoned by the sound of the archangel's trumpet, Mt 24:31.

(2.) For the journeying of the camps, to give notice when each squadron must move; for no man's voice could reach to give the word of command: soldiers with us that are well disciplined may be exercised by beat of drums. When the trumpets were blown for this purpose, they mustsound an

alarm (Nu 10:5), a broken, quavering, interrupted sound, which was proper to excite and encourage the minds of people in their marches against their enemies; whereas a continued equal sound was more proper for the calling of the assembly together (Nu 10:7): yet when the people were called together to deprecate God's judgments we find an alarm sounded, Joe 2:1. At the first sounding, Judah's squadron marched, at the second Reuben's, at the third Ephraim's, at the fourth Dan's, Nu 10:5,6. And some think that this was intended to sanctify their marches, for thus were proclaimed by the priests, who were God's mouth to the people, not only the divine orders given them to move, but the divine blessing upon them in all their motions. He that hath ears, let him hear that God is with them of a truth. King Abijah valued himself and his army very much upon this (2Ch 13:12), God himself is with us for our captain and his priests with sounding trumpets.

(3.) For the animating and encouraging of their armies, when they went out in battle (Nu 10:9): "If you go to war, blow with the trumpets, signifying thereby your appeal to heaven for the decision of the controversy, and your prayer to God to give you victory; and God will own this his own institution, and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God." God will take notice of this sound of the trumpet, and be engaged to fight their battles, and let all the people take notice of it, and be encouraged to fight his, as David, when he heard a sound of a going upon the tops of the mulberry trees. Not that God needed to be awaked by sound of trumpet any more than Christ needed to be awaked by his disciples in the storm, Mt 8:25. But where he intends mercy it is his will that we should solicit it; ministers must stir up the good soldiers of Jesus Christ to fight manfully against sin, the world, and the devil, by assuring them that Christ is the captain of their salvation, and will tread Satan under their feet.

(4.) For the solemnizing of their sacred feasts, Nu 10:10. One of their feasts was called a memorial of the blowing of trumpets, Le 23:23-25, &c. And it should seem they were thus

to grace the solemnity of all their feasts (Ps 81:3), and their sacrifices (2Ch 29:27), to intimate with what joy and delight they performed their duty to God, and to raise the minds of those that attended the services to a holy triumph in the God they worshipped. And then their performances were for a memorial before God; for he takes pleasure in our religious exercises when we take pleasure in them. Holy work should be done with holy joy.

5 When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward.

6 When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys.

7 But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm.

8 And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations.

9 And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.

10 Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I *am* the Lord your God.

The Israelites Depart from Sinai

11 And it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony.

12 And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.

13 And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

14 In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host *was* Nahshon the son of Amminadab.
15 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar *was* Nethaneel the son of Zuar.
16 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun *was* Eliab the son of Helon.
17 And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle.

Here is,

I. A general account of the removal of the camp of Israel from mount Sinai, before which mountain it had lain now about a year, in which time and place a great deal of memorable business was done. Of this removal, it should seem, God gave them notice some time before (De 1:6,7): You have dwelt long enough in this mountain, turn you and take your journey towards the land of promise. The apostle tells us that mount Sinai genders to bondage (Ga 4:24), and signifies the law there given, which is of use indeed as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, yet we must not rest in it, but advance towards the joys and liberties of the children of God, for our happiness is conferred not by the law, but by promise. Observe,

1 The signal given (Nu 10:11): The cloud was taken up, and we may suppose it stood for some time, till they were ready to march; and a great deal of work it was to take down all those tents, and pack up all those goods that they had there; but every family being employed about its own, and all at the same time, many hands made quick work of it.

2 The march began: They took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord, and just as the cloud led them, Nu 10:13. Some think that mention is thus frequently made in this and the foregoing chapter of the commandment of the Lord, guiding and governing them in all their travels, to obviate the calumny and reproach which were afterwards thrown upon Israel, that they tarried so long in the wilderness, because they

had lost themselves there, and could not find the way out. No, the matter was not so; in every stage, in every step, they were under divine direction; and, if they knew not where they were, yet he that led them knew. Note, Those that have given up themselves to the direction of God's word and Spirit steer a steady course, even when they seem to be bewildered. While they are sure they cannot lose their God and guide, they need not fear losing their way.

3. The place they rested in, after three days' march: They went out of the wilderness of Sinai, and rested in the wilderness of Paran. Note, All our removals in this world are but from one wilderness to another. The changes which we think will be for the better do not always prove so; while we carry about with us, wherever we go, the common infirmities of human nature, we must expect, wherever we go, to meet with its common calamities; we shall never be at rest, never at home, till we come to heaven, and all will be well there.

II. A particular draught of the order of their march, according to the late model.

1. Judah's squadron marched first, Nu 10:14-16. The leading standard, now lodged with that tribe, was an earnest of the sceptre which in David's time should be committed to it, and looked further to the captain of our salvation, of whom it was likewise foretold that unto him should the gathering of the people be.

2. Then came those two families of the Levites which were entrusted to carry the tabernacle. As soon as ever the cloud was taken up, the tabernacle was taken down, and packed up for removing, Nu 10:17. And here the six wagons came laden with the more bulky part of the tabernacle. This frequent removing of the tabernacle in all their journeys signified the movableness of that ceremonial dispensation. That which was so often shifted would at length vanish away, Heb 8:13.

3. Reuben's squadron marched forward next, taking place after Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord, Nu 10:18-20.

4. Then the Kohathites followed with their charge, the sacred furniture of the tabernacle, in the midst of the camp, the safest and most honourable place, Nu 10:21. And they (that is, says the margin, the Gershonites and Merarites) did set up the tabernacle against they came; and perhaps it is expressed thus generally because, if there was occasion, not those Levites only, but the other Israelites that were in the first squadron, lent a hand to the tabernacle to hasten the rearing of it up, even before they set up their own tents.

5. Ephraim's squadron followed next after the ark (Nu 10:22-24), to which some think the psalmist alludes when he prays (Ps 80:2), Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, the three tribes that composed this squadron, stir up thy strength (and the ark is called his strength, Ps 78:61), and come and save us.

6. Dan's squadron followed last, Nu 10:25-27. It is called the rearward, or gathering host, of all the camps, because it gathered up all that were left behind; not the women and children (these we may suppose were taken care of by the heads of their families in their respective tribes), but all the unclean, the mixed multitude, and all that were weak and feeble, and cast behind in their march. Note, He that leadeth Joseph like a flock has a tender regard to the hindmost (Eze 34:16), that cannot keep pace with the rest, and of all that are given him he will lose none, Joh 17:11.

18 And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to
their armies: and over his host *was* Elizur the son of Shedeur.
19 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simeon *was*
Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.
20 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Gad *was* Eliasaph
the son of Deuel.

21 And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and *the other* did set up the tabernacle against they came.
22 And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host *was* Elishama the son of Ammihud.
23 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh *was* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.
24 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin *was* Abidan the son of Gideoni.
25 And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, *which was* the rearward of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host *was* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.
26 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher *was* Pagiel the son of Ocran.
27 And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali *was* Ahira the son of Enan.
28 Thus *were* the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward.
29 And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, we are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

Here is, an account of what passed between Moses and Hobab, now upon this advance which the camp of Israel made towards Canaan. Some think that Hobab was the same with Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, and that the story, Ex 18:1-27, should come in here; it seems more probable that Hobab was the son of Jethro, alias Reuel, or Raguel (Ex 2:18), and that when the father, being aged, went to his own land (Ex 18:27), he left his son Hobab with Moses, as Barzillai left Chimham with David; and the same word signifies both a father-in-law and a brother-in-law. Now this Hobab staid contentedly with Israel while they encamped at mount Sinai, near his own country; but, now that they were removing, he was for going back to his own country and kindred, and his father's house. Here is,

1 The kind invitation Moses gives him to go forward with them to Canaan, Nu 10:29. He tempts him with a promise that they would certainly be kind to him, and puts God's word in for security: The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. As if he had said, "Come, cast in thy lot among us, and thou shalt fare as we fare; and we have the promise of God that we shall fare well."

Note, Those that are bound for the heavenly Canaan should invite and encourage all their friends to go along with them, for we shall have never the less of the treasures of the covenant, and the joys of heaven, for others coming in to share with us. And what argument can be more powerful with us to take God's people for our people than this, that God hath spoken good concerning them? It is good having fellowship with those that have fellowship with God (1Jo 1:3), and going with those with whom God is, Zec 8:23.

2. Hobab's inclination, and present resolution, to go back to his own country, Nu 10:30. One would have thought that he who had seen so much of the special presence of God with Israel, and such surprising tokens of his favour to them, would not have needed much invitation to embark with them. But his refusal must be imputed to the affection he had for his native air and soil, which was not overpowered, as it ought to have been, by a believing regard to the promise of God and a value for covenant blessings. He was indeed a son of Abraham's loins (for the Midianites descended from Abraham by Keturah), but not an heir of Abraham's faith (Heb 11:8), else he would not have given Moses this answer. Note, The things of this world, which are seen, draw strongly from the pursuit of the things of the other world, which are not seen. The magnetic virtue of this earth prevails with most people above the attractives of heaven itself.

3. The great importunity Moses used with him to alter his resolution, Nu 10:31,32. He urges,

(1.) That he might be serviceable to them: "We are to encamp in the wilderness" (a country well known to Hobab), "and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes, not to show us where we must encamp, nor what way we must march" (which the cloud was to direct), "but to show us the conveniences and inconveniences of the place we march through and encamp in, that we may make the best use we can of the conveniences, and the best fence we can against the inconveniences." Note, It will very well consist with our trust in God's providence to make use of the help of our friends in those things wherein they are capable of being serviceable to us. Even those that were led by miracle must not slight the ordinary means of direction. Some think that Moses suggests this to Hobab, not because he expected much benefit from his information, but to please him with the thought of being some way useful to so great a body, and so to draw him on with them, by inspiring him with an ambition to obtain that honour. Calvin gives quite another sense of this place, very agreeably with the original, which yet I do not find taken notice of by any since. "Leave us not, I pray thee, but come along, to share with us in the promised land, for therefore hast thou known our encampment in the wilderness, and hast been to us instead of eyes; and we cannot make thee amends for sharing with us in our hardships, and doing us so many good offices, unless thou go with us to Canaan. Surely for this reason thou didst set out with us that thou mightest go on with us." Note, Those that have begun well should use that as a reason for their persevering, because otherwise they lose the benefit and recompence of all they have done and suffered.

(2.) That they would be kind to him: What goodness the Lord shall do to us, the same we will do to thee, Nu 10:32. Note,

[1.] We can give only what we receive. We can do no more service and kindness to our friends than God is pleased to put it into the power of our hand to do. This is all we dare promise, to do good as God shall enable us.

[2.] Those that share with God's Israel in their labours and hardships shall share with them in their comforts and honours. Those that are willing to take their lot with them in the wilderness shall have their lot with them in Canaan; if we suffer with them we shall reign with them, 2Ti 2:12,Lu 22:28,29.

We do not find any reply that Hobab here made to Moses, and therefore we hope that his silence gave consent, and he did not leave them, but that, when he perceived he might be useful, he preferred that before the gratifying of his own inclination; in this case he left us a good example. And we find (Jdg 1:16,1Sa 15:6) that his family was no loser by it.

30 And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred.

31 And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes.

32 And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

33 And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them.

An account of the communion between God and Israel in this removal. They left the mount of the Lord (Nu 10:33), that Mount Sinai where they had seen his glory and heard his voice, and had been taken into covenant with him (they must not expect that such appearances of God to them as they had there been blessed with should be constant); they departed from that celebrated mountain, which we never read of in scripture any more, unless with reference to these past stories; now farewell, Sinai; Zion is the mountain of which God has said. This is my rest for ever (Ps 132:14), and of which we must say so. But when they left the mount of the Lord they

took with them the ark of the covenant of the Lord, by which their stated communion with God was to be kept up. For,

1. By it God did direct their paths. The ark of the covenant went before them, some think in place, at least in this removal; others think only in influence; though it was carried in the midst of the camp, yet the cloud that hovered over it directed all their motions. The ark (that is, the God of the ark) is said to search out a resting place for them; not that God's infinite wisdom and knowledge need to make searches, but every place they were directed to was as convenient for them as if the wisest man they had among them had been employed to go before them, and mark out their camp to the best advantage. Thus Canaan is said to be a land which God spied out, Eze 20:6.

2. By it they did in all their ways acknowledge God, looking upon it as a token of God's presence; when that moved, or rested, they had their eye up unto God. Moses, as the mouth of the congregation, lifted up a prayer, both at the removing and at the resting of the ark; thus their going out and coming in were sanctified by prayer, and it is an example to us to begin and end every day's journey, and every day's work, with prayer.

(1.) Here is his prayer when the ark set forward: Rise up, Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, Nu 10:35. They were now in a desolate country, but they were marching towards an enemy's country, and their dependence was upon God for success and victory in their wars, as well as for direction and supply in the wilderness. David used this prayer long after (Ps 68:1), for he also fought the Lords' battles. Note,

[1.] There are those in the world that are enemies to God, and haters of him: secret and open enemies; enemies to his truths, his laws, his ordinances, his people.

[2.] The scattering and defeating of God's enemies is a thing to be earnestly desired, and believingly expected, by all the Lord's people. This prayer is a prophecy. Those that persist in rebellion against God are hasting towards their own ruin.

[3.] For the scattering and defeating of God's enemies, there needs no more but God's arising. When God arose to judgment, the work was soon done, Ps 76:8,9. "Rise, Lord, as the sun riseth to scatter the shadows of the night." Christ's rising from the dead scattered his enemies, Ps 68:18.

(2.) His prayer when the ark rested, Nu 10:36.

[1.] That God would cause his people to rest. So some read it, "Return, O Lord, the many thousands of Israel, return them to their rest again after this fatigue." Thus it is said (Isa 63:14), The Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest. Thus he prays that God would give Israel success and victory abroad, and peace and tranquillity at home.

[2.] That God himself would take up his rest among them. So we read it: Return to the thousands of Israel, the ten thousand thousand, so the word is. Note, First, The church of God is a great body; there are many thousands belonging to God's Israel. Secondly, We ought in our prayers to concern ourselves for this body. Thirdly, The welfare and happiness of the Israel of God consist in the continual presence of God among them. Their safety consists not in their numbers, though they are thousands, many thousands, but in the favour of God, and his gracious return to them and residence with them. These thousands are cyphers; he is the figure: and upon this account, Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people!

34 And the cloud of the Lord *was* upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

35 And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.

36 And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.

Numbers-11

The Lord Sends Quails

1 And when *the* people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard *it;* and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.

2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched.

Here is,

I The people's sin. They complained, Nu 11:1. They were, as it were, complainers. So it is in the margin. There were some secret grudgings and discontents among them, which as yet did not break out in an open mutiny. But how great a matter did this little fire kindle! They had received from God excellent laws and ordinances, and yet no sooner had they departed from the mount of the Lord than they began to quarrel with God himself. See in this,

1 The sinfulness of sin, which takes occasion from the commandment to be the more provoking.

2 The weakness of the law through the flesh, Ro 8:3. The law discovered sin, but could not destroy it; checked it, but could not conquer it. They complained. Interpreters enquire what they complained of; and truly, when they were furnished with so much matter for thanksgiving, one may justly wonder where they found any matter for complaint; it is probable that those who complained did not all agree in the cause. Some perhaps complained that they were removed from Mount Sinai, where they had been at rest so long, others that they did

not remove sooner: some complained of the weather, others of the ways: some perhaps thought three days' journey was too long a march, others thought it not long enough, because it did not bring them into Canaan. When we consider how their camp was guided, guarded, graced, what good victuals they had and good company, and what care was taken of them in their marches that their feet should not swell nor their clothes wear (De 8:4), we may ask, "What could have been done more for a people to make them easy?" And yet they complained.

Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit will always find something or other to quarrel with, though the circumstances of their outward condition be ever so favourable.

II. God's just resentment of the affront given to him by this sin: The Lord heard it, though it does not appear that Moses did. Note, God is acquainted with the secret frettings and murmurings of the heart, though they are industriously concealed from men. What he took notice of his was much displeased with, and his anger was kindled. Note, Though God graciously gives us leave to complain to him when there is cause (Ps 142:2), yet he is justly provoked, and takes it very ill, if we complain of him when there is no cause: such conduct in our inferiors provokes us.

III. The judgment wherewith God chastised them for this sin: The fire of the Lord burnt among them, such flashes of fire from the cloud as had consumed Nadab and Abihu. The fire of their wrath against God burned in their minds (Ps 39:3), and justly does the fire of God's wrath fasten upon their bodies. We read of their murmurings several times, when they came first out of Egypt, Ex 15:1-17:16. But we do not read of any plagues inflicted on them for their murmurings, as there were now; for now they had had great experience of God's care of them, and therefore now to distrust him was so much

the more inexcusable. Now a fire was kindled against Jacob (Ps 78:21), but, to show how unwilling God was to contend with them, it fastened on those only that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. Thus God's judgments came upon them gradually, that they might take warning.

IV. Their cry to Moses, who was their tried intercessor, Nu 11:2. When he slew them, then they sought him, and made their application to Moses to stand their friend. Note, 1. When we complain without cause, it is just with God to give us cause to complain. 2. Those that slight God's friends when they are in prosperity would be glad to make them their friends when they are in distress. Father Abraham, send Lazarus.

V. The prevalency of Moses's intercession for them: When Moses prayed unto the Lord (he was always ready to stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God) God had respect to him and his offering, and the fire was quenched. By this it appears that God delights not in punishing, for, when he has begun his controversy, he is soon prevailed with to let it fall. Moses was one of those worthies who by faith quenched the violence of fire.

VI. A new name given hereupon to the place, to perpetuate the shame of a murmuring people and the honour of a righteous God; the place was called Taberah, a burning (Nu 11:3), that others might hear, and fear, and take warning not to sin as they did, lest they should smart as they did, 1Co 10:10.

3 And he called the name of the place Taberah [a burning]: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

4 And the mixed multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat?

These verses represent things sadly unhinged and out of order in Israel, both the people and the prince uneasy.

Here is the people fretting, and speaking against God himself (as it is interpreted, Ps 78:19), notwithstanding his glorious appearances both to them and for them. Observe,

1. Who were the criminals?

(1.) The mixed multitude began, they fell a lusting, Nu 11:4. The rabble that came with them out of Egypt, expecting only the land of promise, but not a state of probation in the way to it. They were hangers on, who took hold of the skirts of the Jews, and would go with them only because they knew not how to live at home, and were disposed to seek their fortunes (as we say) abroad. These were the scabbed sheep that infected the flock, the leaven that leavened the whole lump. Note, A few factious, discontented, ill-natured people, may do a great deal of mischief in the best societies, if great care be not taken to discountenance them. Such as these are an untoward generation, from which it is our wisdom to save ourselves, Ac 2:40.

(2.) Even the children of Israel took the infection, as we are informed, Nu 11:4. The holy seed joined themselves to the people of these abominations. The mixed multitude here spoken of were not numbered with the children of Israel, but were set aside as a people God made no account of; and yet the children of Israel, forgetting their own character and distinction, herded themselves with them and learned their way, as if the scum and outcasts of the camp were to be the privy-counsellors of it. The children of Israel, a people near to God and highly privileged, yet drawn into rebellion against him! O how little honour has God in the world, when even the people which he formed for himself, to show forth his praise, were so much a dishonour to him! Therefore let none think that their external professions and privileges will be their security either against Satan's temptations to sin or God's judgments for sin. See 1Co 10:1,2,12.

2. What was the crime: they lusted and murmured. Though they had been lately corrected for this sin, and many of them overthrown for it, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the smell of the fire was still in their nostrils, yet they returned to it. See Pr 27:22. (1.) They magnified the plenty and dainties they had had in Egypt (Nu 11:5), as if God had done them a great deal of wrong in taking them thence. While they were in Egypt they sighed by reason of their burdens, for their lives were made bitter to them with hard bondage; and yet now they talk of Egypt as if they had all lived like princes there, when this serves as a colour for their present discontent. But with what face can they talk of eating fish in Egypt freely, or for nought, as if it cost them nothing, when they paid so dearly for it with their hard service? They remember the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick (precious stuff indeed to be fond of!), but they do not remember the brick-kilns and the task-masters, the voice of the oppressor and the smart of the whip. No, these are forgotten by these ungrateful people.

(2.) They were sick of the good provision God had made for them, Nu 11:6. It was bread from heaven, angels' food. To show how unreasonable their complaint was, it is here described, Nu 11:7-9. It was good for food, and pleasant to the eye, every grain like an orient pearl; it was wholesome food and nourishing; it was not to be called dry bread, for it tasted like fresh oil; it was agreeable (the Jews say, Wisd. xvi. 20) to every man's palate, and tasted as he would have it; and, though it was still the same, yet, by the different ways of dressing it, it yielded them a grateful variety; it cost them no money, nor care, for it fell in the night, while they slept; and the labour of gathering it was not worth speaking of; they lived upon free quarter, and yet could talk of Egypt's cheapness and the fish they ate there freely. Nay, which was much more valuable than all this, the manna came from the immediate power and bounty of God, not from common providence, but from special favour. It was, as God's compassion, new every morning, always fresh, not as their

food who live on shipboard. While they lived on manna, they seemed to be exempted from the curse which sin has brought on man, that in the sweat of his face should he eat bread. And yet they speak of manna with such scorn, as if it were not good enough to be meat for swine: Our soul is dried away. They speak as if God dealt hardly with them in allowing them no better food. At first they admired it (Ex 16:15): What is this? "What a curious precious thing is this!" But now they despised it. Note, Peevish discontented minds will find fault with that which has no fault in it but that it is too good for them. It is very provoking to God to undervalue his favours, and to put a but upon our common mercies. Nothing but manna! Those that might be very happy often make themselves very miserable by their discontents.

(3.) They could not be satisfied unless they had flesh to eat. They brought flocks and herds with them in great abundance out of Egypt; but either they were covetous, and could not find in their hearts to kill them, lest they should lessen their flocks (they must have flesh as cheap as they had bread, or they would not be pleased), or else they were curious, beef and mutton would not please them; they must have something more nice and delicate, like the fish they did eat in Egypt. Food would not serve; they must be feasted. They had feasted with God upon the peace-offerings which they had their share of; but it seems God did not keep a table good enough for them, they must have daintier bits than any that came to his altar. Note, It is an evidence of the dominion of the carnal mind when we are solicitous to have all the delights and satisfactions of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness. Be not desirous of dainties, Pr 23:1-3. If God gives us food convenient, we ought to be thankful, though we do not eat the fat and drink the sweet.

(4.) They distrusted the power and goodness of God as insufficient for their supply: Who will give us flesh to eat? taking it for granted that God could not. Thus this question is commented up on, Ps 78:19,20, Can he provide flesh also?

Though he had given them flesh with their bread once, when he saw fit (Ex 16:13), and they might have expected that he would do it again, and in mercy, if, instead of murmuring, they had prayed. Note, It is an offence to God to let our desires go beyond our faith.

(5.) They were eager and importunate in their desires; they lusted a lust, so the word is, lusted greatly and greedily, till they wept again for vexation. So childish were the children of Israel, and so humoursome, that they cried because they had not what they would have and when they would have it. They did not offer up this desire to God, but would rather be beholden to any one else than to him. We should not indulge ourselves in any desire which we cannot in faith turn into prayer, as we cannot when we ask meat for our lust, Ps 78:18. For this sin the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly against them, which is written for our admonition, that we should not lust after evil things as they lusted, 1Co 10:6.

(6.) Flesh is good food, and may lawfully be eaten; yet they are said to lust after evil things. What is lawful of itself becomes evil to us when it is what God does not allot to us and yet we eagerly desire it.

5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic:

6 but now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, besides this manna, *before* our eyes.

7 And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium.

8 *And* the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

9 And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

10 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

11 And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

Moses himself, though so meek and good a man, is uneasy upon this occasion: Moses also was displeased. Now,

1. It must be confessed that the provocation was very great. These murmurings of theirs reflected great dishonour upon God, and Moses laid to heart the reproaches cast on himself; they knew that he did his utmost for their good, and that he neither did nor could do any thing without a divine appointment; and yet to be thus continually teased and clamoured against by an unreasonable ungrateful people would break in upon the temper even of Moses himself. God considered this, and therefore we do not find that he chided him for his uneasiness.

2. Yet Moses expressed himself otherwise than became him upon this provocation, and came short of his duty both to God and Israel in these expostulations.

(1.) He undervalues the honour God had put upon him, in making him the illustrious minister of his power and grace, in the deliverance and guidance of that peculiar people, which might have been sufficient to balance the burden.

(2.) He complains too much of a sensible grievance, and lays too near his heart a little noise and fatigue. If he could not bear the toil of government, which was but running with the footman, how would he bear the terrors of war, which was contending with horses? He might easily have furnished himself with considerations enough to enable him to slight their clamours, and make nothing of them.

(3.) He magnifies his own performances, that all the burden of the people lay upon him; whereas God himself did in effect ease him of all the burden. Moses needed not to be in care to provide quarters for them, or victuals; God did all. And, if any

difficult case happened, he needed not to be in any perplexity, while he had the oracle to consult, and in it the divine wisdom to direct him, the divine authority to back him and bear him out, and almighty power itself to dispense rewards and punishments.

(4.) He is not so sensible as he ought to be of the obligation he lay under, by virtue of the divine commission and command, to do the utmost he could for his people, when he suggests that because they were not the children of his body therefore he was not concerned to take a fatherly care of them, though God himself, who might employ him as he pleased, had appointed him to be a father to them.

(5.) He takes too much to himself when he asks, Whence should I have flesh to give them (Nu 11:13), as if he were the housekeeper, and not God. Moses gave them not the bread, Joh 6:32. Nor was it expected that he should give them the flesh, but as an instrument in God's hand; and if he meant, "Whence should God have it for them?" he too much limited the power of the Holy One of Israel.

(6.) He speaks distrustfully of the divine grace when he despairs of being able to bear all this people, Nu 11:14. Had the work been much less, he could not have gone through it in his own strength; but had it been much greater, through God strengthening him, he might have done it.

(7.) It was worst of all passionately to wish for death, and desire to be killed out of hand, because just at this time his life was made a little uneasy to him, Nu 11:15. Is this Moses? Is this the meekest of all the men on the earth? The best have their infirmities, and fail sometimes in the exercise of that grace for which they are most eminent. But God graciously overlooked Moses's passion at this time, and therefore we must not be severe in our animadversions upon it, but pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

12 Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?
13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? For they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.
14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me.
15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.
16 And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.
17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.
18 And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? For *it was* well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.
19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

We have here God's gracious answer to both the foregoing complaints, wherein his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious.

I. Provision is made for the redress of the grievances Moses complains of. If he find the weight of government lie too heavy upon him, though he was a little too passionate in his remonstrance, yet he shall be eased, not by being discarded from the government himself, as he justly might have been if God had been extreme to mark what he said amiss, but by having assistants appointed him, who should be, as the apostle speaks (1Co 12:28), helps, governments (that is, helps in government), not at all to lesson or eclipse his honour, but to make the work more easy to him, and to bear the burden of

the people with him. And that this provision might be both agreeable and really serviceable,

1. Moses is directed to nominate the persons, Nu 11:16. The people were too hot and heady and tumultuous to be entrusted with the election; Moses must please himself in the choice, that he may not afterwards complain. The number he is to choose is seventy men, according to the number of the souls that went down into Egypt. He must choose such as he knew to be elders, that is, wise and experienced men. Those that had acquitted themselves best, as rulers of thousands and hundreds (Ex 18:25), purchase to themselves now this good degree. "Choose such as thou knowest to be elders indeed, and not in name only, officers that execute their office." We read of the same number of elders (Ex 24:1) that went up with Moses to Mount Sinai, but they were distinguished only for that occasion, these for a perpetuity; and, according to this constitution, the Sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews, which in after ages sat at Jerusalem, and was the highest court of judgment among them, consisted of seventy men. Our Saviour seems to have had an eye to it in the choice of seventy disciples, who were to be assistants to the apostles, Lu 10:1-24

2. God promises to qualify them. If they were not found fit for the employ, they should be made fit, else they might prove more a hindrance than a help to Moses, Nu 11:17. Though Moses had talked too boldly with God, yet God does not therefore break off communion with him; he bears a great deal with us, and we must with one another: I will come down (said God) and talk with thee, when thou art more calm and composed; and I will take of the same spirit of wisdom, and piety, and courage, that is upon thee, and put it upon them. Not that Moses had the less of the Spirit for their sharing, nor that they were hereby made equal with him; Moses was still unequalled (De 34:10), but they were clothed with a spirit of government proportionable to their place, and with a spirit of

prophecy to prove their divine call to it, the government being a Theocracy. Note,

(1.) Those whom God employs in any service he qualifies for it, and those that are not in some measure qualified cannot think themselves duly called.

(2.) All good qualifications are from God; every perfect gift is from the Father of lights.

II. Even the humour of the discontented people shall be gratified too, that every mouth may be stopped. They are ordered to sanctify themselves (Nu 11:18), that is, to put themselves into a posture to receive such a proof of God's power as should be a token both of mercy and judgment. Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, Am 4:12.

1. God promises (shall I say?)--he threatens rather, that they shall have their fill of flesh, that for a month together they shall not only be fed, but feasted, with flesh, besides their daily manna; and, if they have not a better government of their appetites than now it appears they have they shall be surfeited with it (Nu 11:19,20): You shall eat till it come out at your nostrils, and become loathsome to you. See here,

(1.) The vanity of all the delights of sense; they will cloy, but not satisfy: spiritual pleasures are the contrary. As the world passes away, so do the lusts of it, 1Jo 2:17. What was greedily coveted in a little time comes to be nauseated.

(2.) What brutish sins (and worse than brutish) gluttony and drunkenness are; they put a force upon nature, and make that the sickness of the body which should be its health; they are sins that are their own punishments, and yet not the worst that attend them.

(3.) What a righteous thing it is with God to make that loathsome to men which they have inordinately lusted after.

God could make them despise flesh as much as they had despised manna.

2. Moses objects the improbability of making good this word, Nu 11:21,22. It is an objection like that which the disciples made, Mk 8:4, Whence can a man satisfy these men? Some excuse Moses here, and construe what he says as only a modest enquiry which way the supply must be expected; but it savours too much of diffidence and distrust of God to be justified. He objects the number of the people, as if he that provided bread for them all could not, by the same unlimited power, provide flesh too. He reckons it must be the flesh either of beasts or fishes, because they are the most bulky animals, little thinking that the flesh of birds, little birds, should serve the purpose. God sees not as man sees, but his thoughts are above ours. He objects the greediness of the people's desires in that word, to suffice them. Note, Even true and great believers sometimes find it hard to trust God under the discouragements of second causes, and against hope to believe in hope. Moses himself could scarcely forbear saying, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? when this had become the common cry. No doubt this was his infirmity.

3. God gives a short but sufficient answer to the objection in that question, Has the Lord's hand waxed short? Nu 11:23. If Moses had remembered the years of the right hand of the Most High, he would not have started all these difficulties; therefore God reminds him of them, intimating that this objection reflected upon the divine power, of which he himself had been so often, not only the witness, but the instrument. Had he forgotten what wonders the divine power had wrought for that people, when it inflicted the plagues of Egypt, divided the sea, broached the rock, and rained bread from heaven? Had that power abated? Was God weaker than he used to be? Or was he tired with what he had done? Whatever our unbelieving hearts may suggest to the contrary, it is certain,

(1.) That God's hand is not short; his power cannot be restrained in the exerting of itself by any thing but his own will; with him nothing is impossible. That hand is not short which measures the waters, metes out the heavens (Isa 40:12), and grasps the winds, Pr 30:4.

(2.) That it has not waxed short. He is as strong as ever he was, fainteth not, neither is weary. And this is sufficient to silence all our distrusts when means fail us, Is any thing too hard for the Lord? God here brings Moses to this first principle, sets him back in his lesson, to learn the ancient name of God, The Lord God Almighty, and puts the proof upon the issue: Thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass or not. This magnifies God's word above all his name, that his works never come short of it. If he speaks, it is done.

20 *but* even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be
loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord
which *is* among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came
we forth out of Egypt?
21 And Moses said, the people, among whom I *am, are* six hundred
thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that
they may eat a whole month.
22 Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? Or
shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice
them?
23 And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short?
thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee
or not.
24 And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord,
and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set
them round about the tabernacle.
25 And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took
of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders:
and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they
prophesied, and did not cease.
26 But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one
was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested

upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

We have here the performance of God's word to Moses, that he should have help in the government of Israel.

I. Here is the case of the seventy privy-counsellors in general. Moses, though a little disturbed by the tumult of the people, yet was thoroughly composed by the communion he had with God, and soon came to himself again. And according as the matter was concerted,

1. He did his part; he presented the seventy elders before the Lord, round the tabernacle (Nu 11:24), that they might there stand ready to receive the grace of God, in the place where he manifested himself, and that the people also might be witnesses of their solemn call. Note, Those that expect favour from God must humbly offer themselves and their service to him.

2. God was not wanting to do his part. He gave of his Spirit to the seventy elders (Nu 11:25), which enabled those whose capacities and education set them but on a level with their neighbours of a sudden to say and do that which was extraordinary, and which proved them to be actuated by divine inspiration: they prophesied, and did not cease all that day, and (some think) only that day. They discoursed to the people of the things of God, and perhaps commented upon the law they had lately received with admirable clearness, and fulness, and readiness, and aptness of expression, so that all who heard them might see and say that God was with them of a truth; see 1Co 14:24,25. Thus, long afterwards, Saul was marked for the government by the gift of prophecy, which came upon him for a day and a night, 1Sa 10:6,11. When Moses was to fetch Israel out of Egypt, Aaron was appointed to be his prophet, Ex 7:1. But, now that God had called Aaron to other work, in his room Moses has seventy prophets to attend him. Note, Those are fittest to rule in God's Israel that

are well acquainted with divine things and are apt to teach to edification.

II. Here is the particular case of two of them, Eldad and Medad, probably two brothers.

1. They were nominated by Moses to be assistants in the government, but they went not out unto the tabernacle as the rest did, Nu 11:26. Calvin conjectures that the summons was sent them, but that it did not find them, they being somewhere out of the way; so that, though they were written, yet they were not called. Most think that they declined coming to the tabernacle out of an excess of modesty and humility; being sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness, they desired to be excused from coming into the government. Their principle was their praise, but their practice in not obeying orders was their fault.

2 The Spirit of God found them out in the camp, where they were hidden among the stuff, and there they prophesied, that is, they exercised their gift of praying, preaching, and praising God, in some private tent. Note, The Spirit of God is not tied to the tabernacle, but, like the wind, blows where he listeth, Joh 3:8. Whither can we go from that Spirit? There was a special providence in it that these two should be absent, for thus it appeared that it was indeed a divine Spirit which the elders were actuated by, and that Moses gave them not that Spirit, but God himself. They modestly declined preferment, but God forced it upon them; nay, they have the honour of being named, which the rest have not: for those that humble themselves shall be exalted, and those are most fit for government who are least ambitious of it.

3. Information of this was given to Moses (Nu 11:27): "Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp; there is a conventicle in such a tent, and Eldad and Medad are holding forth there, from under the inspection and presidency of Moses, and out of the communion of the rest of the elders." Whoever the

person was that brought the tidings, he seems to have looked upon it as an irregularity.

4. Joshua moved to have them silenced: My lord Moses, forbid them, Nu 11:28. It is probable that Joshua himself was one of the seventy, which made him the more jealous for the honour of their order. He takes it for granted that they were not under any necessitating impulse, for the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets, and therefore he would have them either not to prophesy at all or to come to the tabernacle and prophesy in concert with the rest. He does not desire that they should be punished for what they had done, but only restrained for the future. This motion he made from a good principle, not out of any personal dislike to Eldad and Medad, but out of an honest zeal for that which he apprehended to be the unity of the church, and concern for the honour of God and Moses.

5. Moses rejected the motion, and reproved him that made it (Nu 11:29): "Enviest thou for my sake? Thou knowest not what manner of spirit thou art of." Though Joshua was Moses's particular friend and confidant, though he said this out of a respect to Moses, whose honour he was very loth to see lessened by the call of those elders, yet Moses reproves him, and in him all that show such a spirit.

(1.) We must not secretly grieve at the gifts, graces, and usefulness of others. It was the fault of John's disciples that they envied Christ's honour because it shaded their master's, Joh 3:26-36, &c.

(2.) We must not be transported into heats against the weaknesses and infirmities of others. Granting that Eldad and Medad were guilty of an irregularity, yet Joshua was too quick and too warm upon them. Our zeal must always be tempered with the meekness of wisdom: the righteousness of God needs not the wrath of man, Jam 1:20.

(3.) We must not make even the best and most useful men heads of a party. Paul would not have his name made use of to patronise a faction, 1Co 1:12,13.

(4.) We must not be forward to condemn and silence those that differ from us, as if they did not follow Christ because they do not follow him with us, Mk 9:38. Shall we reject those whom Christ has owned, or restrain any from doing good because they are not in every thing of our mind? Moses was of another spirit; so far from silencing these two, and quenching the Spirit in them, he wished all the Lord's people were prophets, that is, that he would put his Spirit upon them. Not that he would have any set up for prophets that were not duly qualified, or that he expected that the Spirit of prophecy should be made thus common; but thus he expresses the love and esteem he had for all the Lord's people, the complacency he took in the gifts of others, and how far he was from being displeased at Eldad and Medad's prophesying from under his eye. Such an excellent spirit as this blessed Paul was of, rejoicing that Christ was preached, though it was by those who therein intended to add affliction to his bonds, Php 1:16. We ought to be pleased that God is served and glorified, and good done, though to the lessening of our credit and the credit of our way.

6. The elders, now newly ordained, immediately entered upon their administration (Nu 11:30); when their call was sufficiently attested by their prophesying, they went with Moses to the camp, and applied themselves to business. Having received the gift, they ministered the same as good stewards. And now Moses was pleased that he had so many to share with him in his work and honour. And,

(1.) Let the testimony of Moses be credited by those who desire to be in power, that government is a burden. It is a burden of care and trouble to those who make conscience of the duty of it; and to those who do not it will prove a heavier

burden in the day of account, when they fall under the doom of the unprofitable servant that buried his talent.

(2.) Let the example of Moses be imitated by those that are in power; let them not despise the advice and assistance of others, but desire it, and be thankful for it, not coveting to monopolize wisdom and power. In the multitude of counsellors there is safety

27 And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and
Medad do prophesy in the camp.
28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young
men, answered and said, my lord Moses, forbid them.
29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God
that all the Lord's people were prophets, *and* that the Lord would
put his Spirit upon them.
30 And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.
31 And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails
from the sea, and let *them* fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey
on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round
about the camp, and as it were two cubits *high* upon the face of the
earth.

God, having performed his promise to Moses by giving him assessors in the government, thereby proving the power he has over the spirits of men by his Spirit, he here performs his promise to the people by giving them flesh, proving thereby his power over the inferior creatures and his dominion in the kingdom of nature. Observe,

1. How the people were gratified with flesh in abundance: A wind (a south-east wind, as appears, Ps 78:26) brought quails, Nu 11:31. It is uncertain what sort of animals they were; the psalmist calls them feathered fowl, or fowl of wing. The learned bishop Patrick inclines to agree with some modern writers, who think they were locusts, a delicious sort of food well known in those parts, the rather because they were brought with a wind, lay in heaps, and were dried in the sun for use. Whatever they were, they answered the intention, they served for a month's feast for Israel, such an indulgent

Father was God to his froward family. Locusts, that had been a plague to fruitful Egypt, feeding upon the fruits, were a blessing to a barren wilderness, being themselves fed upon.

2. How greedy they were of this flesh that God sent them. They flew upon the spoil with an unsatiable appetite, not regarding what Moses had told them from God, that they would surfeit upon it, Nu 11:32. Two days and a night they were at it, gathering flesh, till every master of a family had brought home ten homers (that is, ten ass-loads) at least. David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem, but would not drink it when he had it, because it was obtained by venturing; much more reason these Israelites had to refuse this flesh, which was obtained by murmuring, and which, they might easily perceive, by what Moses said, was given them in anger; but those that are under the power of a carnal mind will have their lusts fulfilled, though it be to the certain damage and ruin of their precious souls.

3. How dearly they paid for their feasts, when it came into the reckoning: The Lord smote them with a very great plague (Nu 11:33), some bodily disease, which probably was the effect of their surfeit, and was the death of many of them, and those, it is likely, the ringleaders in the mutiny. Note, God often grants the desires of his own people in love. He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul, Ps 16:15. By all that was said to them they were not estranged from their lusts, and therefore, while the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, Ps 78:30,31. What we inordinately desire, if we obtain it (we have reason to fear), will be some way or other a grief and cross to us. God satiated them first, and then plagued them,

(1.) To save the reputation of his own power, that it might not be said, "He would not have cut them off had he been able to supply them." And,

(2.) To show us the meaning of the prosperity of sinners; it is their preparation for ruin, they are fed as an ox for the slaughter. Lastly, The remembrance of this is preserved in the name given to the place, Nu 11:34. Moses called it Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of lusters or of lust. And well it had been if these graves of Israel's lusters had proved the graves of Israel's lust: the warning was designed to be so, but it had not its due effect, for it follows (Ps 78:32), For all this, they sinned still.

32 And the people stood up all that day, and all *that* night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread *them* all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

33 And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague.

34 And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah [the graves of lust]: because there they buried the people that lusted.

35 *And* the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

Numbers-12

Miriam and Aaron Speak against Moses

1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

Here is,

I The unbecoming passion of Aaron and Miriam: they spoke against Moses, Nu 12:1. If Moses, that received so much honour from God, yet received so many slights and affronts from men, shall any of us think such trials either strange or hard, and be either provoked or discouraged by them? But who would have thought that disturbance should be created to Moses,

1. From those that were themselves serious and good; nay, that were eminent in religion, Miriam a prophetess, Aaron the high priest, both of them joint-commissioners with Moses for the deliverance of Israel? Mic 6:4, I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

2. From those that were his nearest relations, his own brother and sister, who shone so much by rays borrowed from him? Thus the spouse complains (So 1:6), My mother's children were angry with me; and quarrels among relations are in a special manner grievous. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city. Yet this helps to confirm the call of Moses, and shows that his advancement was purely by the divine favour, and not by any compact or collusion with his kindred, who themselves grudged his advancement. Neither did many of our Saviour's kindred believe on him, Joh 7:5. It should seem that Miriam began the quarrel, and Aaron, not having been employed or consulted in the choice of the seventy elders, was for the present somewhat disgusted, and so was the sooner drawn in to take his sister's part. It would grieve one to see the hand of Aaron in so many trespasses, but it shows that the law made men priests who had infirmity. Satan prevailed first with Eve, and by her with Adam; see what need we have to take heed of being drawn into quarrels by our relations, for we know not how great a matter a little fire may kindle. Aaron ought to have remembered how Moses stood his friend when God was angry with him for making the golden calf (De 9:20), and not to have rendered him evil for good. Two things they quarrelled with Moses about:--

(1.) About his marriage: some think a late marriage with a Cushite or Arabian; others because of Zipporah, whom on this occasion they called, in scorn, an Ethiopian woman, and who, they insinuated, had too great an influence upon Moses in the choice of these seventy elders. Perhaps there was some private falling out between Zipporah and Miriam, which occasioned some hot words, and one peevish reflection

introduced another, till Moses and Aaron came to be interested.

(2.) About his government; not the mismanagement of it, but the monopolizing of it (Nu 12:2): "Hath the Lord spoken only by Moses? Must he alone have the choice of the persons on whom the spirit of prophecy shall come? Hath he not spoken also by us? Might not we have had a hand in that affair, and preferred our friends, as well as Moses his?" They could not deny that God had spoken by Moses, but it was plain he had sometimes spoken also by them; and that which they intended was to make themselves equal with him, though God had so many ways distinguished him. Note, Striving to be greatest is a sin which easily besets disciples themselves, and it is exceedingly sinful. Even those that are well preferred are seldom pleased if others be better preferred. Those that excel are commonly envied.

II The wonderful patience of Moses under this provocation. The Lord heard it (Nu 12:2), but Moses himself took no notice of it, for (Nu 12:3) he was very meek. He had a great deal of reason to resent the affront; it was ill-natured and ill-timed, when the people were disposed to mutiny, and had lately given him a great deal of vexation with their murmurings, which would be in danger of breaking out again when thus headed and countenanced by Aaron and Miriam; but he, as a deaf man, heard not. When God's honour was concerned, as in the case of the golden calf, no man more zealous than Moses; but, when his own honour was touched, no man more meek: as bold as a lion in the cause of God, but as mild as a lamb in his own cause. God's people are the meek of the earth (Zep 2:3), but some are more remarkable than others for this grace, as Moses, who was thus fitted for the work he was called to, which required all the meekness he had and sometimes more. And sometimes the unkindness of our friends is a greater trial of our meekness than the malice of our enemies. Christ himself records his own meekness (Mt

11:29, I am meek and lowly in heart), and the copy of meekness which Christ has set was without a blot, but that of Moses was not.

2 And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard *it*.

3 (Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)

4 And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

5 And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.

6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, *I* the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream.

Moses did not resent the injury done him, nor complain of it to God, nor make any appeal to him; but God resented it. He hears all we say in our passion, and is a swift witness of our hasty speeches, which is a reason why we should resolutely bridle our tongues, that we speak not ill of others, and why we should patiently stop our ears, and not take notice of it, if others speak ill of us. I heard not, for thou wilt hear, Ps 38:13-15. The more silent we are in our own cause the more is God engaged to plead it. The accused innocent needs to say little if he knows the judge himself will be his advocate.

I The cause is called, and the parties are summoned forthwith to attend at the door of the tabernacle, Nu 12:4,5. Moses had often shown himself jealous for God's honour, and now God showed himself jealous for his reputation; for those that honour God he will honour, nor will he ever be behind-hand with any that appear for him. Judges of old sat in the gate of the city to try causes, and so on this occasion the shechinah in the cloud of glory stood at the door of the tabernacle, and Aaron and Miriam, as delinquents, were called to the bar.

II. Aaron and Miriam were made to know that great as they were they must not pretend to be equal to Moses, nor set up as rivals with him, Nu 12:6-8. Were they prophets of the Lord? Of Moses it might be truly said, He more.

1. It was true that God put a great deal of honour upon the prophets. However men mocked them and misused them, they were the favourites and intimates of heaven. God made himself known to them, either by dreams when they were asleep or by visions when they were awake, and by them made himself known to others. And those are happy, those are great, truly great, truly happy, to whom God makes himself known, Now he does it not by dreams and visions, as of old, but by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, who makes known those things to babes which prophets and kings desired to see and might not. Hence in the last days, the days of the Messiah, the sons and daughters are said to prophesy (Joe 2:28), because they shall be better acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of grace than even the prophets themselves were; see Heb 1:1,2.

2. Yet the honour put upon Moses was far greater (Nu 12:7): My servant Moses is not so, he excels them all. To recompense Moses for his meekly and patiently bearing the affronts which Miriam and Aaron gave him, God not only cleared him, but praised him; and took that occasion to give him an encomium which remains upon record to his immortal honour; and thus shall those that are reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake have a great reward in heaven, Christ will confess them before his Father and the holy angels.

(1.) Moses was a man of great integrity and tried fidelity. He is faithful in all my house. This is put first in his character, because grace excels gifts, love excels knowledge, and sincerity in the service of God puts a greater honour upon a man and recommends him to the divine favour more than learning, abstruse speculations, and an ability to speak with tongues. This is that part of Moses's character which the

apostle quotes when he would show that Christ was greater than Moses, making it out that he was so in this chief instance of his greatness; for Moses was faithful only as a servant, but Christ as a son, Heb 3:2,5,6. God entrusted Moses to deliver his mind in all things to Israel; Israel entrusted him to treat for them with God; and he was faithful to both. He said and did every thing in the management of that great affair as became an honest good man, that aimed at nothing else but the honour of God and the welfare of Israel.

(2.) Moses was therefore honoured with clearer discoveries of God's mind, and a more intimate communion with God, than any other prophet whatsoever. He shall,

[1.] Hear more from God than any other prophet, more clearly and distinctly: With him will I speak mouth to mouth, or face to face (Ex 30:11), as a man speaks to his friend, whom he discourses with freely and familiarly, and without any confusion or consternation, such as sometimes other prophets were under; as Ezekiel, and John himself, when God spoke to them. By other prophets God sent to his people reproofs, and predictions of good or evil, which were properly enough delivered in dark speeches, figures, types, and parables; but by Moses he gave laws to his people, and the institution of holy ordinances, which could by no means be delivered by dark speeches, but must be expressed in the plainest and most intelligible manner.

[2.] He shall see more of God than any other prophet: The similitude of the Lord shall behold, as he hath seen it in Horeb, when God proclaimed his name before him. Yet he saw only the similitude of the Lord, angels and glorified saints always behold the face of our Father. Moses had the spirit of prophecy in a way peculiar to himself, and which set him far above all other prophets; yet he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, much more does our Lord Jesus infinitely excel him, Heb 3:1-6, &c.

Now let Miriam and Aaron consider who it was that they insulted: Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Against my servant, against Moses? so it runs in the original. "How dare you abuse any servant of mine, especially such a servant as Moses, who is a friend, a confidant, and steward of the house?" How durst they speak to the grief and reproach of one whom God had so much to say in commendation of? Might they not expect that God would resent it, and take it as an affront to himself?

Note, We have reason to be afraid of saying or doing any thing against the servants of God; it is at our peril if we do, for God will plead their cause, and reckon that what touches them touches the apple of his eye. It is a dangerous thing to offend Christ's little ones, Mt 18:6. Those are presumptuous indeed that are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, 2Pe 2:10.

III. God, having thus shown them their fault and folly, next shows them his displeasure (Nu 12:9): The anger of the Lord was kindled against them, of which perhaps some sensible indications were given in the change of the colour of the cloud, or some flashes of lightning from it. But indeed it was indication enough of his displeasure that he departed, and would not so much as hear their excuse, for he needed not, understanding their thoughts afar off; and thus he would show that he was displeased.

Note, The removal of God's presence from us is the surest and saddest token of God's displeasure against us. Woe unto us if he depart; and he never departs till we by our sin and folly drive him from us.

7 My servant Moses *is* not so, who *is* faithful in all mine house.
8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?
9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.

10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam *became* leprous, *white* as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was* leprous.
11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.
12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.
13 And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.
14 And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in *again.*

Here is,

I. God's judgment upon Miriam (Nu 12:10): The cloud departed from off that part of the tabernacle, in token of God's displeasure, and presently Miriam became leprous; when God goes, evil comes; expect no good when God departs. The leprosy was a disease often inflicted by the immediate hand of God as the punishment of some particular sin, as on Gehazi for lying, on Uzziah for invading the priest's office, and here on Miriam for scolding and making mischief among relations. The plague of the leprosy, it is likely, appeared in her face, so that it appeared to all that saw her that she was struck with it, with the worst of it, she was leprous as snow; not only so white, but so soft, the solid flesh losing its consistency, as that which putrefies does. Her foul tongue (says bishop Hall) is justly punished with a foul face, and her folly in pretending to be a rival with Moses is made manifest to all men, for every one sees his face to be glorious, and hers to be leprous. While Moses needs a veil to hide his glory, Miriam needs one to hide her shame. Note, Those distempers which any way deform us ought to be construed as a rebuke to our pride, and improved for the cure of it, and under such humbling providences we ought to be very humble. It is a sign that the heart is hard indeed if the flesh be mortified, and yet

the lusts of the flesh remain unmortified. It should seem that this plague upon Miriam was designed for an exposition of the law concerning the leprosy (Le 13:1-59), for it is referred to upon the rehearsal of that law, De 24:8,9. Miriam was struck with a leprosy, but not Aaron, because she was first in the transgression, and God would put a difference between those that mislead and those that are misled. Aaron's office, though it saved him not from God's displeasure, yet helped to secure him from this token of his displeasure, which would not only have suspended him for the present from officiating, when (there being no priests but himself and his two sons) he could ill be spared, but it would have rendered him and his office mean, and would have been a lasting blot upon his family. Aaron as priest was to be the judge of the leprosy, and his performing that part of his office upon this occasion, when he looked upon Miriam, and behold she was leprous, was a sufficient mortification to him. He was struck through her side, and could not pronounce her leprous without blushing and trembling, knowing himself to be equally obnoxious. This judgment upon Miriam is improvable by us as a warning to take heed of putting any affront upon our Lord Jesus. If she was thus chastised for speaking against Moses, what will become of those that sin against Christ?

II. Aaron's submission hereupon (Nu 12:11,12); he humbles himself to Moses, confesses his fault, and begs pardon. He that but just now joined with his sister in speaking against Moses is here forced for himself and his sister to make a penitent address to him, and in the highest degree to magnify him (as if he had the power of God to forgive and heal) whom he had so lately vilified.

Note, Those that trample upon the saints and servants of God will one day be glad to make court to them; at furthest, in the other world, as the foolish virgins to the wise for a little oil, and the rich man to Lazarus for a little water; and perhaps in this world, as Job's friend to him for his prayers, and here Aaron to Moses. Re 3:9. In his submission,

1. He confesses his own and his sister's sin, Nu 12:11. He speaks respectfully to Moses, of whom he had spoken slightly, calls him his lord, and now turns the reproach upon himself, speaks as one ashamed of what he had said: We have sinned, we have done foolishly. Those sin, and do foolishly, who revile and speak evil of any, especially of good people or of those in authority. Repentance is the unsaying of that which we have said amiss, and it had better be unsaid than that we be undone by it.

2. He begs Moses's pardon: Lay not this sin upon us. Aaron was to bring his gift to the altar, but, knowing that his brother had something against him, he of all men was concerned to reconcile himself to his brother, that he might be qualified to offer his gift. Some think that this speedy submission which God saw him ready to make was that which prevented his being struck with a leprosy as his sister was. 3. He recommends the deplorable condition of his sister to Moses's compassionate consideration (Nu 12:12): Let her not be as one dead, that is, "Let her not continue so separated from conversation, defiling all she touches, and even to putrefy above ground as one dead." He eloquently describes the misery of her case, to move his pity.

III. The intercession made for Miriam (Nu 12:13): He cried unto the Lord with a loud voice, because the cloud, the symbol of his presence, was removed and stood at some distance, and to express his fervency in this request, Heal her now, O Lord, I beseech thee. By this he made it to appear that he did heartily forgive her the injury she had one him, that he had not accused her to God, nor called for justice against her; so far from this that, when God in tenderness to his honour had chastised her insolence, he was the first that moved for reversing the judgment. By this example we are taught to pray for those that despitefully use us; and not to take pleasure in the most righteous punishment inflicted either by God or man on those that have been injurious to us. Jeroboam's withered

hand was restored at the special instance and request of the prophet against whom it had been stretched out, 1Ki 13:6. So Miriam here was healed by the prayer of Moses, whom she had abused, and Abimelech by the prayer of Abraham, Ge 20:17. Moses might have stood off, and have said, "She is served well enough, let her govern her tongue better next time;" but, not content with being able to say that he had not prayed for the inflicting of the judgment, he prays earnestly for the removal of it. This pattern of Moses, and that of our Saviour, Father, forgive them, we must study to conform to.

IV. The accommodating of this matter so as that mercy and justice might meet together.

1. Mercy takes place so far as that Miriam shall be healed; Moses forgives her, and God will. See 2Co 2:10. But,

2. Justice takes place so far as that Miriam shall be humbled (Nu 12:14): Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, that she herself might be made more sensible of her fault and penitent for it, and that her punishment might be the more public, and all Israel might take notice of it and take warning by it not to mutiny. If Miriam the prophetess be put under such marks of humiliation for one hasty word spoken against Moses, what may we expect for our murmurings? If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? See how people debase and diminish themselves by sin, stain their glory, and lay their honour in the dust. When Miriam praised God, we find her at the head of the congregation and one of the brightest ornaments of it, Ex 15:20. Now that she quarrelled with God we find her expelled as the filth and off-scouring of it.

A reason is given for her being put out of the camp for seven days, because thus she ought to accept of the punishment of her iniquity. If her father, her earthly father, had but spit in her face, and so signified his displeasure against her, would she not be so troubled and concerned at it, and so sorry that

she had deserved it, as to shut herself up for some time in her room, and not come into his presence, or show her face in the family, being ashamed of her own folly and unhappiness? If such reverence as this be owing to the fathers of our flesh, when they correct us, much more ought we to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of the Father of spirits, Heb 12:9.

Note, When we are under the tokens of God's displeasure for sin, it becomes us to take shame to ourselves, and to lie down in that shame, owning that to us belongs confusion of face. If by our own fault and folly we expose ourselves to the reproach and contempt of men, the just censures of the church, or the rebukes of the divine Providence, we must confess that our Father justly spits in our face, and be ashamed.

V. The hindrance that this gave to the people's progress: The people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again, Nu 12:15. God did not remove the cloud, and therefore they did not remove their camp. This was intended,

1. As a rebuke to the people, who were conscious to themselves of having sinned after the similitude of Miriam's transgression, in speaking against Moses: thus far therefore they shall share in her punishment, that it shall retard their march forward towards Canaan. Many things oppose us, but nothing hinders us in the way to heaven as sin does.

2. As a mark of respect to Miriam. If the camp had removed during the days of her suspension, her trouble and shame had been the greater; therefore, in compassion to her, they shall stay till her excommunication be taken off, and she taken in again, it is probable with the usual ceremonies of the cleansing of lepers. Note, Those that are under censure and rebuke for sin ought to be treated with a great deal of tenderness, and not be over-loaded, no, not with the shame they have deserved, not counted as enemies (2Th 3:15), but

forgiven and comforted, 2Co 2:7. Sinners must be cast out with grief, and penitents taken in with joy. When Miriam was absolved and re-admitted, the people went forward into the wilderness of Paran, which joined up to the south border of Canaan, and thither their next remove would have been if they had not put a bar in their own way.

15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in *again*.

16 And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Numbers-13

The Twelve Spies Sent to Canaan

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

Orders given to send spies to search out the land of Canaan. It is here said, God directed Moses to send them (Nu 13:1,2), but it appears by the repetition of the story afterwards (De 1:22) that the motion came originally from the people; they came to Moses, and said, We will send men before us; and it was the fruit of their unbelief. They would not take God's word that it was a good land, and that he would, without fail, put them in possession of it. They could not trust the pillar of cloud and fire to show them the way to it, but had a better opinion of their own politics than of God's wisdom. How absurd was it for them to send to spy out a land which God himself had spied out for them, to enquire the way into it when God himself had undertaken to show them the way! But thus we ruin ourselves by giving more credit to the reports and representations of sense than to divine revelation; we walk by sight, not by faith; whereas, if we will receive the witness of men, without doubt the witness of God is greater. The people making this motion to Moses, he (perhaps not aware of the unbelief at the bottom of it) consulted God in the case, who bade him gratify the people in this matter, and send spies before them: "Let them walk in their own counsels." Yet God was no way accessory to the sin that followed, for the

sending of these spies was so far from being the cause of the sin that if the spies had done their duty, and the people theirs, it might have been the confirmation of their faith, and of good service to them.

2 Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

3 And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

4 And these *were* their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

5 Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

7 Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun.

The persons nominated that were to be employed in this service (Nu 13:4-15, &c.), one of each tribe, that it might appear to be the act of the people in general; and rulers, person of figure in their respective tribes, some of the rulers of thousands or hundreds, to put the greater credit upon their embassy. This was designed for the best, but it proved to have this ill effect that the quality of the persons occasioned the evil report they brought up to be the more credited and the people to be the more influenced by it. Some think that they are all named for the sake of two good ones that were among them, Caleb and Joshua. Notice is taken of the change of Joshua's name upon this occasion, Nu 13:16. He was Moses's minister, but had been employed, though of the tribe of Ephraim, as general of the forces that were sent out against Amalek. The name by which he was generally called and known in his own tribe was Oshea, but Moses called him Joshua, in token of his affection to him and power over him; and now, it should seem, he ordered others to call him so, and fixed that to be his name henceforward. Oshea signifies a prayer for salvation, Save thou; Joshua signifies a promise of salvation, He will save, in answer to that prayer: so near is the relation between prayers and promises. Prayers prevail for

promises, and promises direct and encourage prayers. Some think that Moses designed, by taking the first syllable of the name Jehovah and prefixing it to his name, which turned Hoshea into Jehoshua, to put an honour upon him, and to encourage him in this and all his future services with the assurances of God's presence. Yet after this he is called Hoshea, De 32:44. Jesus is the same name with Joshua, and it is the name of our Lord Christ, of whom Joshua was a type as successor to Moses, Israel's captain, and conqueror of Canaan. There was another of the same name, who was also a type of Christ, Zec 6:11. Joshua was the saviour of God's people from the powers of Canaan, but Christ is their Saviour from the powers of hell.

9 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.
10 Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.
11 Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely,* of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.
12 Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.
13 Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.
14 Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.
15 Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.
16 These *are* the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun, Jehoshua.
17 And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this *way* southward, and go up into the mountain:

The instructions given to those spies. They were sent into the land of Canaan the nearest way, to traverse the country, and to take account of its present state, Nu 13:17. Two heads of enquiry were given them in charge, 1. Concerning the land itself: See what that is (Nu 13:18, and again, Nu 13:19), see whether it be good or bad, and (Nu 13:20) whether it be fat or lean. All parts of the earth do not share alike in the blessing of fruitfulness; some countries are blessed with a richer soil than others. Moses himself was well satisfied that Canaan was a very good land, but he sent these spies to bring an account of it for the satisfaction of the people; as John Baptist sent to Jesus, to ask whether he was the Christ, not to inform

himself, but to inform those he sent. They must take notice whether the air was healthful or no, what the soil was, and what the productions; and, for the better satisfaction of the people, they must bring with them some of the fruits. 2. Concerning the inhabitants--their number, few or many--their size and stature, whether strong able-bodied men or weak,--their habitations, whether they lived in tents or houses, whether in open villages or in walled towns,--whether the woods were standing as in those countries that are uncultivated, through the unskillfulness and slothfulness of the inhabitants, or whether the woods were cut down, and the country made champaign, for the convenience of tillage. These were the things they were to enquire about. Perhaps there had not been of late years such commerce between Egypt and Canaan as there was in Jacob's time, else they might have informed themselves of these things without sending men on purpose to search. See the advantage we may derive from books and learning, which acquaint those that are curious and inquisitive with the state of foreign countries, at a much greater distance than Canaan was now from Israel, without this trouble and expense.

18 and see the land, what it *is;* and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they *be* strong or weak, few or many;

19 and what the land *is* that they dwell in, whether it *be* good or bad; and what cities *they be* that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds;

20 and what the land *is,* whether it *be* fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time *was* the time of the first ripe grapes.

Moses dismisses the spies with this charge, Be of good courage, intimating, not only that they should be themselves encouraged against the difficulties of this expedition, but that they should bring an encouraging account to the people and make the best of every thing. It was not only a great undertaking they were put upon, which required good management and resolution, but it was a great trust that was reposed in them, which required that they should be faithful.

21 So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of

Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.
22 And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where
Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, *were.* (Now
Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

We have here a short account of the survey which the spies made of the promised land.

1. They went quite through it, from Zin in the south, to Rehob, near Hamath, in the north, Nu 13:21. See Nu 34:3,8. It is probable that they did not go altogether in a body, lest they should be suspected and taken up, which there would be the more danger of if the Canaanites knew (and one would think they could not but know) how near the Israelites were to them; but they divided themselves into several companies, and so passed unsuspected, as way-faring men.

2. They took particular notice of Hebron (Nu 13:22), probably because near there was the field of Machpelah, where the patriarchs were buried (Ge 23:2), whose dead bodies did, as it were, keep possession of that land for their posterity. To this sepulchre they made a particular visit, and found the adjoining city in the possession of the sons of Anak, who are here named. In that place where they expected the greatest encouragements they met with the greatest discouragements. Where the bodies of their ancestors kept possession for them the giants kept possession against them. They ascended by the south, and came to Hebron, that is, "Caleb," say the Jews, "in particular," for to his being there we find express reference, Jos 14:9,12,13. But that others of the spies were there too appears by their description of the Anakim, Nu 13:33.

3. They brought a bunch of grapes with them, and some other of the fruits of the land, as a proof of the extraordinary goodness of the country. Probably they furnished themselves with these fruits when they were leaving the country and returning. The cluster of grapes was so large and so heavy that they hung it upon a bar, and carried it between two of

them, Nu 13:23,24. The place whence they took it was, from this circumstance, called the valley of the cluster, that famous cluster which was to Israel both the earnest and the specimen of all the fruits of Canaan. Such are the present comforts which we have in communion with God, foretastes of the fulness of joy we expect in the heavenly Canaan. We may see by them what heaven is.

23 And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and *they brought* of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

24 The place was called the brook Eshcol [a cluster of grapes], because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

25 And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

26 And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

27 And they told him, and said, we came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

28 Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

It is a wonder how the people of Israel had patience to stay forty days for the return of their spies, when they were just ready to enter Canaan, under all the assurances of success they could have from the divine power, and a constant series of miracles that had hitherto attended them; but they distrusted God's power and promise, and were willing to be held in suspense by their own counsels, rather than be brought to a certainty by God's covenant. How much do we stand in our own light by our unbelief! Well, at length the messengers return, but they agree not in their report.

The major part discourage the people from going forward to Canaan; and justly are the Israelites left to this temptation, for putting so much confidence in the judgment of men, when they had the word of God to trust to. It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to strong delusions who will not receive his truth in the love of it.

1. Observe their report.

(1.) They could not deny but that the land of Canaan was a very fruitful land; the bunch of grapes they brought with them was an ocular demonstration of it, Nu 13:27. God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, and the evil spies themselves own that it is such a land. Thus even out of the mouth of adversaries will God be glorified and the truth of his promise attested. And yet afterwards they contradict themselves, when they say (Nu 13:32), It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; as if, though it had milk, and honey, and grapes, yet it wanted other necessary provision; some think that there was a great plague in the country at the time they surveyed it, which they ought to have imputed to the wisdom of the divine Providence, which thus lessened the numbers of their enemies, to facilitate their conquests; but they invidiously imputed it to the unwholesomeness of the air, and thence took occasion to disparage the country. For this unreasonable fear of a plague in Canaan, they were justly cut off immediately by a plague in the wilderness, Nu 14:37. But,

(2.) They represented the conquest of it as altogether impracticable, and that it was to no purpose to attempt it. The people are strong (Nu 13:28), men of a great stature (Nu 13:32), stronger than we, Nu 13:31. The cities are represented as impregnable fortresses: they are walled and very great, Nu 13:28. But nothing served their ill purpose more than a description of the giants, on whom they lay a great stress: We saw the children of Anak there (Nu 13:28), and again, we saw the giants, those men of a prodigious size, the sons of Anak,

who come of the giants, Nu 13:33. They spoke as if they were ready to tremble at the mention of them, as they had done at the sight of them. "O these tremendous giants! When we were near them, we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, not only little and weak, but trembling and daunted." Compare Job 39:20, Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? "Nay, and so we were in their sight; they looked upon us with as much scorn and disdain as we did upon them with fear and trembling." So that upon the whole matter they gave it in as their judgment, We are not able to go up against them (Nu 13:31), and therefore must think of taking some other course.

2. Now, even if they had been to judge only by human probabilities, they could not have been excused from the imputation of cowardice. Were not the hosts of Israel very numerous? 600,000 effective men, well marshalled and modelled, closely embodied, and entirely united in interest and affection, constituted as formidable an army as perhaps was ever brought into the field; many a less has done more than perhaps the conquering of Canaan was, witness Alexander's army. Moses, their commander-in-chief, was wise and brave; and if the people had put on resolution, and behaved themselves valiantly, what could have stood before them? It is true the Canaanites were strong, but they were dispersed (Nu 13:29): Some dwell in the south and others in the mountains; so that by reason of their distance they could not soon get together, and by reason of their divided interests they could not long keep together, to oppose Israel. The country being plentiful would subsist an army, and, though the cities were walled, if they could beat them in the field the strong-holds would fall of course into their hands. And, lastly, as for the giants, their overgrown stature would but make them the better mark, and the bulkiest men have not always the best mettle.

3. But, though they deserved to be posted for cowards, this was not the worst, the scripture brands them for unbelievers.

It was not any human probabilities they were required to depend upon, but,

(1.) They had the manifest and sensible tokens of God's presence with them, and the engagement of his power for them. The Canaanites were stronger than Israel; suppose they were, but were they stronger than the God of Israel? We are not able to deal with them, but is not God Almighty able? Have we not him in the midst of us? Does not he go before us? And is any thing too hard for him? Were we as grasshoppers before the giants, and are not they less than grasshoppers before God? Their cities are walled against us, but can they be walled against heaven? Besides this,

(2.) They had had very great experience of the length and strength of God's arm, lifted up and made bare on their behalf. Were not the Egyptians as much stronger than they as the Canaanites were? And yet, without a sword drawn by Israel or a stroke struck, the chariots and horsemen of Egypt were quite routed and ruined; the Amalekites took them at great disadvantages, and yet they were discomfited. Miracles were at this time their daily bread; were there nothing else, an army so well victualled as theirs was, so constantly, so plentifully, and all on free cost, would have a might advantage against any other force. Nay,

(3.) They had particular promises made them of victory and success in their wars against the Canaanites. God had given Abraham all possible assurances that he would put his seed into possession of that land, Ge 15:18,17:8. He had expressly promised them by Moses that he would drive out the Canaanites from before them (Ex 33:2), and that he would do it by little and little, Ex 23:30. And, after all this, for them to say, We are not able to go up against them, was in effect to say, "God himself is not able to make his words good." It was in effect to give him the lie, and to tell him he had undertaken more than he could perform. We have a short account of their sin, with which they infected the whole congregation, Ps

106:24. They despised the land, they believed not his word. Though, upon search, they had found it as good as he had said, a land flowing with milk and honey, yet they would not believe it as sure as he had said, but despaired of having it, though eternal truth itself had engaged it to them. And now this is the representation of the evil spies.

29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Caleb encouraged them to go forward, though he was seconded by Joshua only (Nu 13:30): Caleb stilled the people, whom he saw already put into a ferment even before Moses himself, whose shining face could not daunt them, when they began to grow unruly. Caleb signifies all heart, and he answered his name, was hearty himself, and would have made the people so if they would have hearkened to him. If Joshua had begun to stem the tide, he would have been suspected of partiality to Moses, whose minister he was; and therefore he prudently left it to Caleb's management at first, who was of the tribe of Judah, the leading tribe, and therefore the fittest to be heard. Caleb had seen and observed the strength of the inhabitants as much as his fellows, and upon the whole matter, 1. He speaks very confidently of success: We are well able to overcome them, as strong as they are. 2. He animates the people to go on, and, his lot lying in the van, he speaks as one resolved to lead them on with bravery: "Let us go up at once, one bold step, one bold stroke more, will do our business; it is all our own if we have but courage to make it so: Let us go up and possess it." He does not say, "Let us go up and conquer it;" he looks upon that to be as good as done already; but, "Let us go up and possess it; there is nothing to be done but to enter, and take the possession which God our great Lord is ready to give us." Note, The righteous are bold as a lion. Difficulties that lie in the way of salvation dwindle and vanish before a lively active faith in the power and

promise of God. All things are possible, if they be but promised, to him that believes.

31 But the men that went up with him said, we be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, the land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

Numbers-14

The People Rebel against the Lord

1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt!Or would God we had died in this wilderness!

Here we see what mischief the evil spies made by their unfair representation. We may suppose that these twelve that were impanelled to enquire concerning Canaan had talked it over among themselves before they brought in their report in public; and Caleb and Joshua, it is likely, had done their utmost to bring the rest over to be of their mind, and if they would but have agreed that Caleb, according to his pose, should have spoken for them all, as their foreman, all had been well; but the evil spies, it should seem, wilfully designed to raise this mutiny, purely in opposition to Moses and Aaron, though they could not propose any advantage to themselves by it, unless they hoped to be captains and commanders of the retreat into Egypt they were now meditating. But what came

of it? Here in these verses we find those whom they studied to humour put into a vexation, and, before the end of the chapter, brought to ruin. Observe,

I. How the people fretted themselves: They lifted up their voices and cried (Nu 14:1); giving credit to the report of the spies rather than to the word of God, and imagining their condition desperate, they laid the reins on the neck of their passions, and could keep no manner of temper. Like foolish froward children, they fall a crying, yet know not what they cry for. It would have been time enough to cry out when the enemy had beaten up their quarters, and they had seen the sons of Anak at the gate of their camp; but those that cried when nothing hurt them deserved to have something given them to cry for. And, as if all had been already gone, they sat down and wept that night. Note, Unbelief, or distrust of God, is a sin that is its own punishment. Those that do not trust God are continually vexing themselves. The world's mourners are more than God's, and the sorrow of the world worketh death.

II. How they flew in the face of their governors--murmured against Moses and Aaron, and in them reproached the Lord, Nu 14:2,3. The congregation of elders began the discontent (Nu 14:1), but the contagion soon spread through the whole camp, for the children of Israel murmured. Jealousies and discontents spread like wildfire among the unthinking multitude, who are easily taught to despise dominions, and to speak evil of dignities.

1. They look back with a causeless discontent. They wish that they had died in Egypt with the first-born that were slain there, or in the wilderness with those that lately died of the plague for lusting. See the prodigious madness of unbridled passions, which make men prodigal even of that which nature accounts most dear, life itself. Never were so many months spent so pleasantly as these which they had spent since they came out of Egypt, loaded with honours, compassed with favours, and continually entertained with something or other

that was surprising; and yet, as if all these things had not made it worth their while to live, they wished they had died in Egypt. And such a light opinion they had of God's tremendous judgments executed on their neighbours for their sin that they wished they had shared with them in their plagues, rather than run the hazard of making a descent upon Canaan. They wish rather to die criminals under God's justice than live conquerors in his favour. Some read it, O that we had died in Egypt, or in the wilderness! O that we might die! They wish to die, for fear of dying; and have not sense enough to reason as the poor lepers, when rather than die upon the spot they ventured into an enemy's camp, If they kill us, we shall but die, 2Ki 7:4. How base were the spirits of these degenerate Israelites, who, rather than die (if it come to the worst) like soldiers on the bed of honour, with their swords in their hands, desire to die like rotten sheep in the wilderness.

2. They look forward with a groundless despair, taking it for granted (Nu 14:3) that if they went on they must fall by the sword, and pretend to lay the cause of their fear upon the great care they had for their wives and children, who, they conclude, will be a prey to the Canaanites. And here is a most wicked blasphemous reflection upon God himself, as if he had brought them hither on purpose that they might fall by the sword, and that their wives and children, those poor innocents, should be a prey. Thus do they, in effect, charge that God who is love itself with the worst of malice, and eternal Truth with the basest hypocrisy, suggesting that all the kind things he had said to them, and done for them, hitherto, were intended only to decoy them into a snare, and to cover a secret design carried on all along to ruin them. Daring impudence! But what will not that tongue speak against heaven that is set on fire of hell? The devil keeps up his interest in the hearts of men by insinuating to them ill thoughts of God, as if he desired the death of sinners, and delighted in the hardships and sufferings of his own servants, whereas he knows his thoughts to us-ward (whether we know

them so or no) to be thoughts of good, and not of evil, Jer 29:11.

3 And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

How they came at last to this desperate resolve, that, instead of going forward to Canaan, they would go back again to Egypt. The motion is first made by way of query only (Nu 14:3): Were it not better for us to return into Egypt? But the ferment being high, and the spirits of the people being disposed to entertain any thing that was perverse, it soon ripened to a resolution, without a debate (Nu 14:4): Let us make a captain and return to Egypt; and it is lamented long after (Ne 9:17) that in their rebellion they appointed a captain to return to their bondage; for they knew Moses would not be their captain in this retreat. Now,

1. It was the greatest folly in the world to wish themselves in Egypt, or to think that if they were there it would be better with them than it was. If they durst not go forward to Canaan, yet better be as they were than go back to Egypt. What did they want? What had they to complain of? They had plenty, and peace, and rest, were under a good government, had good company, had the tokens of God's presence with them, and enough to make them easy even in the wilderness, if they had but hearts to be content. But whither were they thus eager to go to better themselves? To Egypt! Had they so soon forgotten the sore bondage they were in there? Would they be again under the tyranny of their taskmasters, and at the drudgery of making brick? And, after all the plagues which Egypt had suffered for their sakes, could they expect any better treatment there than they had formerly, and not rather much worse? In how little time (not a year and a half) have they forgotten all the sighs of their bondage, and all the songs of their deliverance! Like brute-beasts, they mind only what is present, and their memories, with the other powers of reason, are sacrificed to their passions. See Ps 106:7. We find it threatened (De 28:68), as the completing of their misery,

that they should be brought into Egypt again, and yet this is what they here wish for. Sinners are enemies to themselves; and those that walk not in God's counsels consult their own mischief and ruin.

2. It was a most senseless ridiculous thing to talk of returning thither through the wilderness. Could they expect that God's cloud would lead them or his manna attend them? And, if they did not, the thousands of Israel must unavoidably be lost and perish in the wilderness. Suppose the difficulties of conquering Canaan were as great as they imagined, those of returning to Egypt were much greater. In this let us see,

(1.) The folly of discontent and impatience under the crosses of our outward condition. We are uneasy at that which is, complain of our place and lot, and we would shift; but is there any place or condition in this world that has not something in it to make us uneasy if we are disposed to be so? The way to better our condition is to get our spirits into a better frame; and instead of asking, "Were it not better to go to Egypt?" ask, "Were it not better to be content, and make the best of that which is?"

(2.) The folly of apostasy from the ways of God. Heaven is the Canaan set before us, a land flowing with milk and honey; those that bring up ever so ill a report of it cannot but say that it is indeed a good land, only it is hard to get to it. Strict and serious godliness is looked upon as an impracticable thing, and this deters many who began well from going on; rather than undergo the imaginary hardships of a religious life, they run themselves upon the certain fatal consequences of a sinful course; and so they transcribe the folly of Israel, who, when they were within a step of Canaan, would make a captain, and return to Egypt.

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us
return into Egypt.
5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of
the congregation of the children of Israel.

6 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:
7 and they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, the land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

The friends of Israel here interpose to save them if possible from ruining themselves, but in vain. The physicians of their state would have healed them, but they would not be healed; their watchmen gave them warning, but they would not take warning, and so their blood is upon their own heads.

I The best endeavours were used to still the tumult, and, if now at last they would have understood the things that belonged to their peace, all the following mischief would have been prevented.

1. Moses and Aaron did their part, Nu 14:5. Though it was against them that they murmured (Nu 14:2), yet they bravely overlooked the affront and injury done them, and approved themselves faithful friends to those who were outrageous enemies to them. The clamour and noise of the people were so great that Moses and Aaron could not be heard; should they order any of their servants to proclaim silence, the angry multitude would perhaps be the more clamorous; and therefore, to gain audience in the sight of all the assembly, they fell on their faces, thus expressing,

(1.) Their humble prayers to God to still the noise of this sea, the noise of its waves, even the tumult of the people.

(2.) The great trouble and concern of their own spirits. They fell down as men astonished and even thunder-struck, amazed to see a people throw away their own mercies: to see those so ill-humoured who were so well taught. And,

(3.) Their great earnestness with the people to cease their murmurings; they hoped to work upon them by this humble posture, and to prevail with them not to persist in their

rebellion; Moses and Aaron beseech them, as though by them God himself did beseech them, to be reconciled unto God. What they said to the people Moses relates in the repetition of this story. De 1:29,30, Be not afraid; the Lord your God shall fight for you. Note, Those that are zealous friends to precious souls will stoop to any thing for their salvation. Moses and Aaron, notwithstanding the posts of honour they are in, prostrate themselves to the people to beg of them not to ruin themselves.

2. Caleb and Joshua did their part: they rent their clothes in a holy indignation at the sin of the people, and a holy dread of the wrath of God, which they saw ready to break out against them. It was the greater trouble to these good men because the tumult was occasioned by those spies with whom they had been joined in commission; and therefore they thought themselves obliged to do what they could to still the storm which their fellows had raised. No reasoning could be more pertinent and pathetic than theirs was (Nu 14:7-9), and they spoke as with authority.

(1.) They assured them of the goodness of the land they had surveyed, and that it was really worth venturing for, and not a land that ate up the inhabitants, as the evil spies had represented it. It is an exceedingly good land (Nu 14:7); it is very, very good, so the word is; so that they had no reason to despise this pleasant land. Note, If men were but thoroughly convinced of the desirableness of the gains of religion, they would not stick at the services of it.

(2.) They made nothing of the difficulties that seemed to lie in the way of their gaining the possession of it: "Fear not the people of the land, Nu 14:9. Whatever formidable ideas have been given you of them, the lion is not so fierce as he is painted. They are bread for us," that is, "they are set before us rather to be fed upon than to be fought with, so easily, so pleasantly, and with so much advantage to ourselves shall we master them." Pharaoh is said to have been given them for

meat (Ps 74:14), and the Canaanites will be so too. They show that, whatever was suggested to the contrary, the advantage was clear on Israel's side. For,

[1.] Though the Canaanites dwell in walled cities, they are naked: Their defence has departed from them; that common providence which preserves the rights of nations has abandoned them, and will be no shelter nor protection to them. The other spies took notice of their strength, but these of their wickedness, and thence inferred that God had forsaken them, and therefore their defence had departed. No people can be safe when they have provoked God to leave them.

[2.] Though Israel dwell in tents they are fortified: The Lord is with us, and his name is a strong tower; fear them not. Note, While we have the presence of God with us, we need not fear the most powerful force against us.

(3.) They showed them plainly that all the danger they were in was from their own discontents, and that they would succeed against all their enemies if they did not make God their enemy. On this point alone the cause would turn (Nu 14:8): "If the Lord delight in us, as certainly he does, and will if we do not provoke him, he will bring us into this good land; we shall without fail get it in possession by his favour, and the light of his countenance (Ps 44:3), if we do not forfeit his favour and by our own follies turn away our own mercies." It has come to this issue (Nu 14:9): Only rebel not you against the Lord. Note, Nothing can ruin sinners but their own rebellion. If God leave them, it is because they drive him from them; and they die because they will die. None are excluded the heavenly Canaan but those that exclude themselves. And, now, could the case have been made more plain? Could it have been urged more closely? But what was the effect?

II. It was all to no purpose; they were deaf to this fair reasoning; nay, they were exasperated by it, and grew more

outrageous: All the congregation bade stone them with stones, Nu 14:10. The rulers of the congregation, and the great men (so bishop Patrick), ordered the common people to fall upon them, and knock their brains out. Their case was sad indeed when their leaders thus caused them to err. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil to rage at those who give them good counsel. Those who hate to be reformed hate those that would reform them, and count them their enemies because they tell them the truth. Thus early did Israel begin to misuse the prophets, and stone those that were sent to them, and it was this that filled the measure of their sin, Mt 23:37. Stone them with stones! Why, what evil have they done? No crime can be laid to their charge; but the truth is these two witnesses tormented those that were obstinate in their infidelity, Re 11:10. Caleb and Joshua had but just said, The Lord is with us; fear them not (Nu 14:9): and, if Israel will not apply those encouraging words to their own fears, those that uttered them know how to encourage themselves with them against this enraged multitude that spoke of stoning them, as David in a like cause, 1Sa 30:6. Those that cannot prevail to edify others with their counsels and comforts should endeavour at least to edify themselves. Caleb and Joshua knew they appeared for God and his glory, and therefore doubted not but God would appear for them and their safety. And they were not disappointed, for immediately the glory of the Lord appeared, to the terror and confusion of those that were for stoning the servants of God. When they reflected upon God (Nu 14:3), his glory appeared not to silence their blasphemies; but, when they threatened Caleb and Joshua, they touched the apple of his eye, and his glory appeared immediately. Note, Those who faithfully expose themselves for God are sure to be taken under his special protection, and shall be hidden from the rage of men, either under heaven or in heaven.

8 If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

9 Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord *is* with us: fear them not.
10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones.
And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.
11 And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them?

Here is, the righteous sentence which God gave against Israel for their murmuring and unbelief, which, though afterwards mitigated, showed what was the desert of their sin and the demand of injured justice, and what would have been done if Moses had not interposed. When the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle we may suppose that Moses took it for a call to him immediately to come and attend there, as before the tabernacle was erected he went up to the mount in a similar case, Ex 32:30. Thus, while the people were studying to disgrace him, God publicly put honour upon him, as the man of his counsel. Now here we are told what God said to him there.

1. He showed him the great evil of the people's sin, Nu 14:11. What passed between God and Israel went through the hands of Moses: when they were displeased with God they told Moses of it (Nu 14:2); when God was displeased with them he told Moses too, revealing his secret to his servant the prophet, Am 3:7. Two things God justly complains of to Moses:--

(1.) Their sin. They provoke me, or (as the word signifies) they reject, reproach, despise me, for they will not believe me. This was the bitter root which bore the gall and wormwood. It was their unbelief that made this a day of provocation in the wilderness, Heb 3:8. Note, Distrust of God, of his power and promise, is itself a very great provocation, and at the bottom of many other provocations. Unbelief is a great sin (1Jo 5:10), and a root sin, Heb 3:12.

(2.) Their continuance in it: How long will they do so? Note, The God of heaven keeps an account how long sinners persist in their provocations; and the longer they persist the more he is displeased. The aggravations of their sin were,

[1.] Their relation to God: This people, a peculiar people, a professing people. The nearer any are to God in name and profession, the more he is provoked by their sins, especially their unbelief.

[2.] The experience they had had of God's power and goodness, in all the signs which he had shown among them, by which, one would think, he had effectually obliged them to trust him and follow him. The more God has done for us the greater is the provocation if we distrust him.

2. He showed him the sentence which justice passed upon them for it, Nu 14:12. "What remains now but that I should make a full end of them? It will soon be done. I will smite them with the pestilence, not leave a man of them alive, but wholly blot out their name and race, and so disinherit them, and be no more troubled with them. Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries. They wish to die; and let them die, and neither root nor branch be left of them. Such rebellious children deserve to be disinherited." And if it be asked, "What will become of God's covenant with Abraham then?" here is an answer, "I shall be preserved in the family of Moses: I will make of thee a greater nation." Thus,

(1.) God would try Moses, whether he still continued that affection for Israel which he formerly expressed upon a like occasion, in preferring their interests before the advancement of his own family; and it is proved that Moses was still of the same public spirit, and could not bear the thought of raising his own name upon the ruin of the name of Israel.

(2.) God would teach us that he will not be a loser by the ruin of sinners. If Adam and Eve had been cut off and disinherited, he could have made another Adam and another Eve, and have glorified his mercy in them, as here he could have glorified his mercy in Moses, though Israel had been ruined.

12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13 And Moses said unto the Lord, then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them ;)

The humble intercession Moses made for them. Their sin had made a fatal breach in the wall of their defence, at which destruction would certainly have entered if Moses had not seasonably stepped in and made it good. Here he was a type of Christ, who interceded for his persecutors, and prayed for those that despitefully used him, leaving us an example to his own rule, Mt 5:44.

1 The prayer of his petition is, in one word, Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people (Nu 14:19), that is, "Do not bring upon them the ruin they deserve." This was Christ's prayer for those that crucified him, Father forgive them. The pardon of a national sin, as such, consists in the turning away of the national punishment; and that is it for which Moses is here so earnest.

2 The pleas are many, and strongly urged.

(1.) He insists most upon the plea that is taken from the glory of God, Nu 14:13-16. With this he begins, and somewhat abruptly, taking occasion from that dreadful word, I will disinherit them. Lord (says he), then the Egyptians shall hear it. God's honour lay nearer to his heart than any interests of his own. Observe how he orders this cause before God. He pleads,

[1.] That the eyes both of Egypt and Canaan were upon them, and great expectations were raised concerning them. They could not but have heard that thou, Lord, art among this people, Nu 14:14. The neighbouring countries rang of it, how much this people were the particular care of heaven, so as never any people under the sun were.

[2.] That if they should be cut off great notice would be taken of it. "The Egyptians will hear it (Nu 14:13), for they have their spies among us, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of the land" (Nu 14:14); for there was great correspondence between Egypt and Canaan, although not by the way of this wilderness. "If this people that have made so great a noise be all consumed, if their mighty pretensions come to nothing, and their light go out in a snuff, it will be told with pleasure in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon; and what construction will the heathen put upon it? It will be impossible to make them understand it as an act of God's justice, and as such redounding to God's honour; brutish men know not this (Ps 92:6): but they will impute it to the failing of God's power, and so turn it to his reproach, Nu 14:16. They will say, He slew them in the wilderness because he was not able to bring them to Canaan, his arm being shortened, and his stock of miracles being spent. Now, Lord, let not one attribute be glorified at the expense of another; rather let mercy rejoice against judgment than that almighty power should be impeached." Note, The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour; for they agree with the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, Hallowed be thy name. Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory. God pleads it with himself (De 32:27), I feareth the wrath of the enemy; and we should use it as an argument with ourselves to walk so in every thing as to give no occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, 1Ti 6:1.

(2.) He pleads God's proclamation of his name at Horeb (Nu 14:17,18): Let the power of the Lord be great. Power is here put for pardoning mercy; it is his power over his own anger.

If he should destroy them, God's power would be questioned; if he should continue and complete their salvation, notwithstanding the difficulties that arose, not only from the strength of their enemies, but from their own provocations, this would greatly magnify the divine power: what cannot he do who could make so weak a people conquerors and such an unworthy people favourites? The more danger there is of others reproaching God's power the more desirous we should be to see it glorified. To enforce this petition, he refers to the word which God had spoken: The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy. God's goodness had there been spoken of as his glory; God gloried in it, Ex 34:6,7. Now here he prays that upon this occasion he would glorify it.

Note, We must take our encouragement in prayer from the word of God, upon which he has caused us to hope, Ps 119:49. "Lord, be and do according as thou hast spoken; for hast thou spoken, and wilt thou not make it good?" Three things God had solemnly made a declaration of, which Moses here fastens upon, and improves for the enforcing of his petition:--

[1.] The goodness of God's nature in general, that he is long-suffering, or slow to anger, and of great mercy; not soon provoked, but tender and compassionate towards offenders.

[2.] His readiness in particular to pardon sin: Forgiving iniquity and transgression, sins of all sorts.

[3.] His unwillingness to proceed to extremity, even when he does punish. For in this sense the following words may be read: That will by no means make quite desolate, in visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. God had indeed said in the second commandment that he would thus visit, but here he promises not to make a full end of families, churches, and nations, at once; and so it is very applicable to this occasion, for Moses cannot beg that God would not at all punish this sin (it would be too great an encouragement to

rebellion if he should set no mark of his displeasure upon it), but that he would not kill all this people as one man, Nu 14:15. He does not ask that they may not be corrected, but that they may not be disinherited. And this proclamation of God's name was the more apposite to his purpose because it was made upon occasion of the pardoning of their sin in making the golden calf. This sin which they had now fallen into was bad enough, but it was not idolatry.

(3.) He pleads past experience: As thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt, Nu 14:19. This seemed to make against him. Why should those be forgiven any more who, after they had been so often forgiven, revolted yet more and more, and seemed hardened and encouraged in their rebellion by the lenity and patience of their God, and the frequent pardons they had obtained? Among men it would have been thought impolitic to take notice of such a circumstance in a request of this nature, as it might operate to the prejudice of the petitioner: but, as in other things so in pardoning sin, God's thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, Isa 55:9. Moses looks upon it as a good plea, Lord, forgive, as thou hast forgiven. It will be no more a reproach to thy justice, nor any less the praise of thy mercy, to forgive now, than it has been formerly. Therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed, because they have to do with a God that changes not, Mal 3:6.

14 and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou Lord *art* among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15 Now if thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

16 Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

18 The Lord *is* long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity
and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the
iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth
generation.
19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto
the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people,
from Egypt even until now.

God's Punishment on Israel

20 And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

We have here God's answer to the prayer of Moses, which sings both of mercy and judgment. It is given privately to Moses (Nu 14:20-25), and then directed to be made public to the people, Nu 14:26-35. The frequent repetitions of the same things in it speak these resolves to be unalterable. Let us see the particulars.

I The extremity of the sentence is receded from (Nu 14:20): "I have pardoned, so as not to cut them all off at once, and disinherit them." See the power of prayer, and the delight God takes in putting an honour upon it. He designed a pardon, but Moses shall have the praise of obtaining it by prayer: it shall be done according to thy word; thus, as a prince, he has power with God, and prevails. See what countenance and encouragement God gives to our intercessions for others, that we may be public-spirited in prayer. Here is a whole nation rescued from ruin by the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man. See how ready God is to forgive sin, and how easy to be entreated: Pardon, says Moses (Nu 14:19); I have pardoned, says God, Nu 14:20. David found him thus swift to show mercy, Ps 32:5. He deals not with us after our sins, Ps 103:10.

II The glorifying of God's name is, in the general, resolved upon, Nu 14:21. It is said, it is sworn, All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Moses in his prayer had shown a great concern for the glory of God. "Let me alone,"

says God, "to secure that effectually, and to advance it, by this dispensation." All the world shall see how God hates sin even in his own people, and will reckon for it, and yet how gracious and merciful he is, and how slow to anger. Thus when our Saviour prayed, Father, glorify thy name, he was immediately answered, I have glorified it, and will glorify it yet again, Joh 12:28.

Note, Those that sincerely seek God's glory may be sure of what they seek. God having turned this prayer for the glorifying of himself into a promise, we may turn it into praise, in concert with the angels, Isa 6:3, The earth is full of his glory.

21 but *as* truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the
Lord.
22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles,
which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me
now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;
23 surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers,
neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:
24 but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and
hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he
went; and his seed shall possess it.

The mercy that was mixed with this severe sentence.

1. Mercy to Caleb and Joshua, that though they should wander with the rest in the wilderness, yet they, and only they of all that were now above twenty years old, should survive the years of banishment, and live to enter Canaan. Caleb only is spoken of (Nu 14:24), and a particular mark of honour put upon him, both,

(1.) In the character given of him: he had another spirit, different from the rest of the spies, an after-spirit, which furnished him with second thoughts, and he followed the Lord fully, kept close to his duty, and went through with it, though deserted and threatened; and,

(2.) In the recompence promised to him: Him will I bring in due time into the land whereinto he went. Note,

[1.] It ought to be the great care and endeavour of every one of us to follow the Lord fully. We must, in a course of obedience to God's will and of service to his honour, follow him universally, without dividing,--uprightly, without dissembling,--cheerfully, without disputing,--and constantly, without declining; and this is following him fully.

[2.] Those that would follow God fully must have another spirit, another from the spirit of the world, and another from what their own spirit has been. They must have the spirit of Caleb.

[3.] Those that follow God fully in times of general apostasy God will own and honour by singular preservations in times of general calamity. The heavenly Canaan shall be the everlasting inheritance of those that follow the Lord fully. When Caleb is again mentioned (Nu 14:30) Joshua stands with him, compassed with the same favours and crowned with the same honours, having stood with him in the same services.

2. Mercy to the children even of these rebels. They should have a seed preserved, and Canaan secured to that seed: Your little ones, now under twenty years old, which you, in your unbelief, said should be a prey, them will I bring in, Nu 14:31. They had invidiously charged God with a design to ruin their children, Nu 14:3. But God will let them know that he can put a difference between the guilty and the innocent, and cut them off without touching their children. Thus the promise made to Abraham, though it seemed to fail for a time, was kept from failing for evermore; and, though God chastened their transgressions with a rod, yet his loving kindness he would not utterly take away.

25 (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

The sin of this people which provoked God to proceed against them is here aggravated, Nu 14:22,27. It is not made worse than really it was, but is shown to be exceedingly sinful. It was an evil congregation, each bad, but altogether in congregation, very bad.

1. They tempted God--tempted his power, whether he could help them in their straits--his goodness, whether he would--and his faithfulness, whether his promise would be performed. They tempted his justice, whether he would resent their provocations and punish them or no. They dared him, and in effect challenged him, as God does the idols (Isa 41:23), to do good, or do evil.

2. They murmured against him. This is much insisted on, Nu 14:27. As they questioned what he would do, so they quarrelled with him for every thing he did or had done, continually fretting and finding fault. It does not appear that they murmured at any of the laws or ordinances that God gave them (though they proved a heavy yoke), but they murmured at the conduct they were under, and the provision made for them. Note, It is much easier to bring ourselves to the external services of religion, and observe all the formalities of devotion, than to live a life of dependence upon, and submission to, the divine Providence in the course of our conversation.

3. They did this after they had seen God's miracles in Egypt and in the wilderness, Nu 14:2. They would not believe their own eyes, which were witnesses for God that he was in the midst of them of a truth.

4. They had repeated the provocations ten times, that is, very often: the Jewish writers reckon this exactly the tenth time that the body of the congregation had provoked God. First, at

the Red Sea, Ex 14:11. In Marah, Ex 15:23,24. In the wilderness of Sin, Ex 16:2. At Rephidim, Ex 17:1,2 The golden calf, Ex 32:1-35. Then at Taberah. Then at Kibroth-Hattaavah, Nu 11:1-35. And so this was the tenth. Note, God keeps an account how often we repeat our provocations, and will sooner or later set them in order before us.

5. They had not hearkened to his voice, though he had again and again admonished them of their sin.

26 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

The sentence passed upon them for this sin.

1. That they should not see the promised land (Nu 14:23), nor come into it, Nu 14:30. He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, Ps 95:11. Note, Disbelief of the promise is a forfeiture of the benefit of it. Those that despise the pleasant land shall be shut out of it. The promise of God should be fulfilled to their posterity, but not to them.

2. That they should immediately turn back into the wilderness, Nu 14:25. Their next remove should be a retreat. They must face about, and instead of going forward to Canaan, on the very borders of which they now were, they must withdraw towards the Red Sea again. To-morrow turn you; that is, "Very shortly you shall be brought back to that vast howling wilderness which you are so weary of. And it is time to shift for your own safety, for the Amalekites lie in wait in the valley, ready to attack you if you march forward." Of them they had been distrustfully afraid (Nu 13:29), and now with them God justly frightened them. The fear of the wicked shall come upon him.

3. That all those who had now grown up to men's estate should die in the wilderness, not all at once, but by degrees. They wished that they might die in the wilderness, and God said Amen to their passionate wish, and made their sin their ruin, snared them in the words of their mouth, and caused their own tongue to fall upon them, took them at their word,

and determined that their carcases should fall in the wilderness, Nu 14:28,29, and again, Nu 14:32,35. See with what contempt they are spoken of, now that they had by their sin made themselves vile; the mighty men of valour were but carcases, when the Spirit of the Lord had departed from them. They were all as dead men. Their fathers had such a value for Canaan that they desired to have their dead bodies carried thither to be buried, in token of their dependence upon God's promise that they should have that land for a possession: but these, having despised that good land and disbelieved the promise of it, shall not have the honour to be buried in it, but shall have their graves in the wilderness.

4. That in pursuance of this sentence they should wander to and fro in the wilderness, like travellers that have lost themselves, for forty years; that is, so long as to make it full forty years from their coming out of Egypt to their entrance into Canaan, Nu 14:33,34. Thus long they were kept wandering,

(1.) To answer the number of the days in which the spies were searching the land. They were content to wait forty days for the testimony of men, because they could not take God's word; and therefore justly are they kept forty years waiting for the performance of God's promise.

(2.) That hereby they might be brought to repentance, and find mercy with God in the other world, whatever became of them in this. Now they had time to bethink themselves, and to consider their ways; and the inconveniences of the wilderness would help to humble them and prove them, and show them what was in their heart, De 8:2. Thus long they bore their iniquities, feeling the weight of God's wrath in the punishment. They were made to groan under the burden of their own sin that brought it upon them, which was too heavy for them to bear.

(3.) That they might sensibly feel what a dangerous thing it is for God's covenant-people to break with him: "You shall know my breach of promise, both the causes of it, that it is procured by your sin" (for God never leaves any till they first leave him), "and the consequences of it, that it will produce your ruin; you are quite undone when you are thrown out of covenant."

(4.) That a new generation might in this time be raised up, which could not be done all of a sudden. And the children, being brought up under the tokens of God's displeasure against their fathers, and so bearing their whoredoms (that is, the punishment of their sins, especially their idolatry about the golden calf, which God now remembered against them), might take warning not to tread in the steps of their fathers' disobedience. And their wandering so long in the wilderness would make Canaan at last the more welcome to them. It should seem that upon occasion of this sentence Moses penned the Ps 90:1-17, which is very apposite to the present state of Israel, and wherein they are taught to pray that since this sentence could not be reversed it might be sanctified, and they might learn to apply their hearts unto wisdom.

27 How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

28 Say unto them, *as truly as* I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

29 your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

30 doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But *as for* you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

35 I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

The Death of the Ten Evil Spies

36 And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,

Here is,

I The sudden death of the ten evil spies. While the sentence was passing upon the people, before it was published, they died of the plague before the Lord, Nu 14:36,37. Now,

1. God hereby showed his particular displeasure against those who sinned and made Israel to sin.

(1.) They sinned themselves, in bringing up a slander upon the land of promise. Note, Those greatly provoke God who misrepresent religion, cast reproach upon it, and raise prejudices in men's minds against it, or give occasion to those to do so who seek occasion. Those that represent the service of God as mean and despicable, melancholy and uncomfortable, hard and impracticable, needless and unprofitable, bring up an evil report upon the good land, pervert the right ways of the Lord, and in effect give him the lie.

(2.) They made Israel to sin. They designedly made all the congregation murmur against God. Note, Ring-leaders in sin may expect to fall under particular marks of the wrath of God,

who will severely reckon for the blood of souls, which is thus spilt.

2. God hereby showed what he could have done with the whole congregation, and gave an earnest of the execution of the sentence now passed upon them. He that thus cut off one of a tribe could have cut off their whole tribes suddenly, and would do it gradually. Note, The remarkable deaths of notorious sinners are earnests of the final perdition of ungodly men, 2Pe 2:5,6. Thus the wrath of God is revealed, that sinners may hear and fear.

II The special preservation of Caleb and Joshua: They lived still, Nu 14:38. It is probable that all the twelve spies stood together, for the eyes of all Israel were now upon them; and therefore it is taken notice of as very remarkable, and which could not but be affecting to the whole congregation, that when the ten evil spies fell down dead of the plague, a malignant infectious distemper, yet these two that stood among them lived, and were well. God hereby confirmed their testimony, and put those to confusion that spoke of stoning them. He likewise gave them an assurance of their continued preservation in the wilderness, when thousands should fall on their right hand and on their left, Ps 91:7. Death never misses his mark, nor takes any by oversight that were designed for life, though in the midst of those that were to die.

III. The publication of the sentence to all the people, Nu 14:36. He told them all what the decree was which had gone forth concerning them, and which could not be reversed, that they must all die in the wilderness, and Canaan must be reserved for the next generation. It was a very great disappointment, we may well think, to Moses himself, who longed to be in Canaan, as well as to all the people; yet he acquiesced, but they wept and mourned greatly. The assurance which Moses had of God's being glorified by this sentence gave him satisfaction, while the consciousness of their own guilt, and their having procured it to themselves,

gave them the greatest vexation. They wept for nothing (Nu 14:1), and now they have cause given them to weep; so justly are murmurers made mourners. If they had mourned for the sin when they were faithfully reproved for it (Nu 14:9), the sentence would have been prevented; but now that they mourned for the judgment only their grief came too late, and did them no service; they found no place for repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears, Heb 12:17. Such mourning as this there is in hell, but the tears will not quench the flames, no, nor cool the tongue.

37 even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land,
died by the plague before the Lord.
38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which*
were of the men that went to search the land, lived *still.*

The Defeat of Israel at Hormah

39 And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and
the people mourned greatly.
40 And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top
of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here,* and will go up unto the place
which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned.

The foolish fruitless attempts of some of the Israelites to enter Canaan, notwithstanding the sentence.

1. They were now eager to go forward towards Canaan, Nu 14:40. They were up early, mustered all their force, got together in a body, and begged of Moses to lead them on against the enemy, and now there is no more talk among them of making a captain to return into Egypt. They confess their fault: We have sinned; they profess reformation: Lo, we be here, and will go up. They now desire the land which they had despised, and put a confidence in the promise which they had distrusted. Thus when God judges he will overcome, and, first or last, will convince sinners of the evil of all their ungodly deeds, and hard speeches, and force them to recall their own words. But, though God was glorified by this recantation of theirs, they were not benefited by it, because it came too late.

The decree had gone forth, the consumption was determined; they did not seek the Lord while he might be found, and now he would not be found. O, if men would but be as earnest for heaven while their day of grace lasts as they will be when it is over, would be as solicitous to provide themselves with oil while the bridegroom tarries as they will be when the bridegroom comes, how well were it for them!

2. Moses utterly disallows their motion, and forbids the expedition they were meditating: Go not up, Nu 14:41-43.

(1.) He gives them warning of the sin; it is transgressing the commandment of the Lord, who had expressly ordered them, when they did move, to move back towards the Red Sea. Note, That which has been duty, in its season, when it comes to be mistimed may be turned into sin. It is true the command he refers to was in the nature of a punishment, but he that has not obeyed the law is obliged to submit to the penalty, for the Lord is our Judge as well as Lawgiver.

(2.) He gives them this warning of the danger: "It shall not prosper, never expect it." Note, It is folly to promise ourselves success in that which we undertake contrary to the mind of God. "The Canaanites are before you to attack you, and the Lord is not among you to protect you and fight for you, and therefore look to yourselves that you be not smitten before your enemies." Those that are out of the way of their duty are from under God's protection, and go at their peril. It is dangerous going where we cannot expect God should go along with us. Nay, he plainly foresees and foretels their defeat: You shall fall by the sword of the Amalekites and Canaanites (who were to have fallen by their sword); Because you are turned away from the Lord, from following the guidance of his precept and promise, therefore the Lord will not be with you. Note, God will certainly leave those that leave him; and those that are left of him lie exposed to all misery.

3. They venture notwithstanding. Never was people so perverse and so desperately resolved in every thing to walk contrary to God. God bade them go, and they would not; he forbade them, and they would. Thus is the carnal mind enmity to God: They presumed to go up unto the hill-top, Nu 14:44. Here,

(1.) They struggled against the sentence of divine justice, and would press on in defiance of it.

(2.) They slighted the tokens of God's presence, for they would go though they left Moses and the ark of the covenant behind them. They had distrusted God's strength, and now they presume upon their own without his.

4. The expedition speeds accordingly, Nu 14:45. The enemy had posted themselves upon the top of the hill, to make good that pass against the invaders, and, being informed by their scouts of their approach, sallied out upon them, and defeated them, and it is probable that many of the Israelites were killed. Now the sentence began to be executed that their carcases should fall in the wilderness. Note, That affair can never end well that begins with sin. The way to obtain peace with our friends, and success against our enemies, is to make God our friend, and keep ourselves in his love. The Jews, like these their ancestors, when they had rejected Christ's righteousness, attempted to establish their own, and it sped as this.

41 And Moses said, wherefore now do ye transgress the
commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper.
42 Go not up, for the Lord *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten
before your enemies.
43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye
shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord,
therefore the Lord will not be with you.
44 But they presumed to go up unto the hilltop: nevertheless the ark
of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the
camp.

45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

Numbers-15

Laws concerning Offerings

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

Full instructions given concerning the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, which were appendages to all the sacrifices of animals. The beginning of this law is very encouraging: When you come into the land of your habitation which I give unto you, they you shall do so and so, Nu 15:2. This was a plain intimation, not only that God was reconciled to them notwithstanding the sentence he had passed upon them, but that he would secure the promised land to their seed notwithstanding their proneness to rebel against him. They might think some time or other they should be guilty of a misdemeanour that would be fatal to them, and would exclude them for ever, as the last had done for one generation; but this intimates an assurance that they should be kept from provoking God to such a degree as would amount to a forfeiture; for this statute takes it for granted that there were some of them that should in due time come into Canaan. The meat-offerings were of two sorts; some were offered alone, and we have the law concerning those, Le 2:1-16, &c. Others were added to the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and constantly attended them, and about these direction is here given. It was requisite, since the sacrifices of acknowledgment (specified in Nu 15:3) were intended as the food of God's table, that there should be a constant provision of bread, oil, and wine, whatever the flesh-meat was. The caterers or purveyors for Solomon's temple provided fine flour, 1Ki 4:22. And it was fit that God should keep a good house, that his table should be furnished with bread as well as

flesh, and that his cup should run over. In my Father's house there is bread enough. Now the intent of this law is to direct what proportion the meat-offering and drink-offering should bear to several sacrifices to which they were annexed. If the sacrifice was a lamb or a kid, then the meat-offering must be a tenth-deal of flour, that is, an omer, which contained about five pints; this must be mingled with oil, the fourth part of a hin (a hin contained about five quarts), and the drink-offering must be the same quantity of wine, about a quart and half a pint, Nu 15:3-5. If it was a ram, the meat-offering was doubled, two tenth-deals of flour, about five quarts, and a third part of a hin of oil (which was to them as butter is to us) mingled with it; and the same quantity of wine for a drink-offering, Nu 15:6,7. If the sacrifice was a bullock, the meat-offering was to be trebled, three omers, with five pints of oil, and the same quantity of wine for a drink-offering, Nu 15:8-10. And thus for each sacrifice, whether offered by a particular person or at the common charge. Note, Our religious services should be governed, as by other rules, so by the rule of proportion.

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye be
come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you,
3 and will make an offering by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering,
or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in
your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savor unto the Lord, of the
herd, or of the flock:
4 then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat
offering of a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth *part* of a hin
of oil.
5 And the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou
prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb.
6 Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare *for* a meat offering two tenth deals
of flour, mingled with the third *part* of a hin of oil.
7 And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of a hin of
wine, for a sweet savor unto the Lord.
8 And when thou preparest a bullock *for* a burnt offering, or *for* a
sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the Lord;

9 then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth
deals of flour, mingled with half a hin of oil.
10 And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half a hin of wine, for an
offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.
11 Thus shall it be done for one bullock, or for one ram, or for a
lamb, or a kid.
12 According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to
every one according to their number.
13 All that are born of the country shall do these things after this
manner, in offering an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto
the Lord.
14 And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever *be* among you in
your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet
savor unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do.

Natives and strangers are here set upon a level, in this as in other matters (Nu 15:13-16): "One law shall be for you and for the stranger that is proselyted to the Jewish religion." Now,

1. This was an invitation to the Gentiles to become proselytes, and to embrace the faith and worship of the true God. In civil things there was a difference between strangers and true-born Israelites, but not in the things of God; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord, for with him there is no respect of persons. See Isa 56:3.

2. This was an obligation upon the Jews to be kind to strangers, and not to oppress them, because they saw them owned and accepted of God. Communion in religion is a great engagement to mutual affection, and should slay all enmities.

3. It was a mortification to the pride of the Jews, who are apt to be puffed up with their birthright privileges. "We are Abraham's seed." God let them know that the sons of the stranger were as welcome to him as the sons of Jacob; no man's birth or parentage shall turn either to his advantage or his prejudice in his acceptance with God. This likewise intimated that, as believing strangers should be accounted

Israelites, so unbelieving Israelites should be accounted strangers. 4. It was a happy presage of the calling of the Gentiles, and of their admission into the church. If the law made so little difference between Jew and Gentile, much less would the gospel make, which broke down the partition-wall, and reconciled both to God in one sacrifice, without the observance of the legal ceremonies.

15 One ordinance *shall be both* for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with *you*, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye *are*, so shall the stranger be before the Lord.

16 One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.

17 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

18 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye come into the land whither I bring you,

A law for the offering of the first of their dough unto the Lord. This, as the former, goes upon the comfortable supposition of their having come into the promised land, Nu 15:18. Now that they lived upon manna they needed not such an express acknowledgment of God's title to their daily bread, and their dependence upon him for it, the thing spoke for itself; but in Canaan, where they should eat the fruit of their own industry, God required that he should be owned as their landlord and their great benefactor. They must not only offer him the first-fruits and tenths of the corn in their fields (these had already been reserved); but when they had it in their houses, in their kneading trough, when it was almost ready to be set upon their tables, God must have a further tribute of acknowledgment, part of their dough (the Jews say a fortieth part, at least, of the whole lump) must be heaved or offered up to God (Nu 15:20,21), and the priest must have it for the use of his family. Thus they must own their dependence upon God for their daily bread, even when they had it in the house with them; they must then wait on God for the comfortable use of it; for we read of that which was brought home, and yet God did blow upon it, and it came to little, Hag 1:9. Christ has taught us to pray not, Give us this year our yearly harvest, but Give us this day our daily bread. God by this law said to

the people, as the prophet long afterwards said to the widow of Sarepta (1Ki 17:13), Only make me thereof a little cake first. This offering was expressly kept up by the laws of Ezekiel's visionary temple, and it is a commandment with promise of family-mercies (Eze 44:30): You shall give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thy house; for, when God has had his dues out of our estates, we may expect the comfort of what falls to our share.

19 then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up a heave offering unto the Lord.

20 Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough *for* a heave offering: as *ye do* the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it.

21 Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord a heave offering in your generations.

22 And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses,

We have here the laws concerning sacrifices for sins of ignorance; the Jews understand it of idolatry, or false worship, through the error of their teachers. The case here supposed is that they had not observed all these commandments, Nu 15:22,23. If they had failed in the offerings of their acknowledgment, and had not brought them according to the law, then they must bring an offering of atonement, yea, though the omission had been through forgetfulness or mistake. If they failed in one part of the ceremony, they must make it up by the observance of another part, which was in the nature of a remedial law.

1 The case is put of a national sin, committed through ignorance, and become customary through a vulgar error (Nu 15:24)--the congregation, that is, the body of the people, for so it is explained (Nu 15:25): All the congregation of the children of Israel. The ceremonial observances were so numerous, and so various, that, it might easily be supposed, some of them by degrees would be forgotten and disused, as particularly that immediately before concerning the heave-

offering of their dough: now if, in process of time, upon consulting the law, there should appear to have been a general neglect of that or any other appointment, then a sacrifice must be offered for the whole congregation, and the oversight shall be forgiven (Nu 15:25,26) and not punished, as it deserved, with some national judgment. The offering of the sacrifice according to the manner, or ordinance, plainly refers to a former statute, of which this is the repetition; and the same bullock which is there called a sin-offering (Le 4:13,21) is here called a burnt-offering (Nu 15:24), because it was wholly burnt, though not upon the altar, yet without the camp. And here is the addition of a kid of the goats for a sin-offering. According to this law, we find that Hezekiah made atonement for the errors of his father's reign, by seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven he-goats, which he offered as a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah (2Ch 29:21), and for all Israel, Nu 15:24. And we find the like done after the return out of captivity, Ezr 8:35.

2. It is likewise supposed to be the case of a particular person: If any soul sin through ignorance (Nu 15:27), neglecting any part of his duty, he must bring his offering, as was appointed, Le 4:27-35, &c. Thus atonement shall be made for the soul that sins, when he sins through ignorance, Nu 15:28. Observe,

(1.) Sins committed ignorantly need to have atonement made for them; for, though ignorance will in a degree excuse, it will not justify those that might have known their Lord's will and did it not. David prayed to be cleansed from his secret faults, that is, those sins which he himself was not aware of, the errors he did not understand, Ps 19:12.

(2.) Sins committed ignorantly shall be forgiven, through Christ the great sacrifice, who, when he offered up himself once for all upon the cross, seemed to explain the intention of his offering in that prayer, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And Paul seems to allude to this law concerning sins of ignorance (1Ti 1:13), I obtained mercy,

because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief. And it looked favourable upon the Gentiles that this law of atoning for sins of ignorance is expressly made to extend to those who were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel (Nu 15:29), but supposed to be proselytes of righteousness. Thus the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles.

23 *even* all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the Lord commanded *Moses,* and henceforward among your generations;

24 then it shall be, if *aught* be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savor unto the Lord, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.

25 And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it *is* ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their ignorance:

26 and it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people were in ignorance.

27 And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering.

28 And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

29 Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, *both for* him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

30 But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, *whether he be* born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

I The general doom passed upon presumptuous sinners.

1. Those are to be reckoned presumptuous sinners that sin with a high hand, as the original phrase is (Nu 15:30), that is,

that avowedly confront God's authority, and set up their own lust in competition with it, that sin for sinning-sake, in contradiction to the precept of the law, and in defiance of the penalty, that fight against God, and dare him to do his worst; see Job 15:25. It is not only to sin against knowledge, but to sin designedly against God's will and glory.

2. Sins thus committed are exceedingly sinful. He that thus breaks the commandment,

(1.) Reproaches the Lord (Nu 15:30); he says the worst he can of him, and most unjustly. The language of presumptuous sin is, "Eternal truth is not fit to be believed, the Lord of all not fit to be obeyed, and almighty power not fit to be either feared or trusted." It imputes folly to Infinite Wisdom, and iniquity to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth; such is the malignity of wilful sin.

(2.) He despises the word of the Lord, Nu 15:31. There are those who, in many instances, come short of fulfilling the word, and yet have a great value for it, and count the law honourable; but presumptuous sinners despise it, thinking themselves too great, too good, and too wise, to be ruled by it. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? Whatever the sin itself is, it is contumacy that incurs the anathema. It is rebellion added to the sin that is as witch-craft, and stubbornness as idolatry.

3. The sentence passed on such is dreadful. There remains no sacrifice for those sins; the law provided none: That soul shall be cut off from among his people (Nu 15:30), utterly cut off (Nu 15:31); and that God may be for ever justified, and the sinner for ever confounded, his iniquity shall be upon him, and there needs no more to sink him to the lowest hell. Thus the Jewish doctors understand it, that the iniquity shall cleave to the soul, after it is cut off, and that man shall give an account of his sin at the great day of judgment. Perhaps the kind of offence might be such as did not expose the offender

to the censure of the civil magistrate, but, if it was done presumptuously, God himself would take the punishment of it into his own hands, and into them it is a fearful thing to fall. In the New Testament we find the like sentence of exclusion from all benefit by the great sacrifice passed upon the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and a total apostasy from Christianity.

II. A particular instance of presumption in the sin of sabbath-breaking.

1 The offence was the gathering of sticks on the sabbath day (Nu 15:32), which, it is probable, were designed to make a fire of, whereas they were commanded to bake and seeth what they had occasion for the day before, Ex 16:23. This seemed but a small offence, but it was a violation of the law of the sabbath, and so was a tacit contempt of the Creator, to whose honour the sabbath was dedicated, and an incursion upon the whole law, which the sabbath was intended as a hedge about. And it appears by the context to have been done presumptuously, and in affront both of the law and to the Law-maker.

2 The offender was secured, Nu 15:33,34. Those that found him gathering sticks, in their zeal for the honour of the sabbath, brought him to Moses and Aaron, and all the congregation, which intimates that being the sabbath day the congregation was at that time gathered to Moses and Aaron, to receive instruction from them, and to join with them in religious worship. It seems, even common Israelites, though there was much amiss among them, yet would not contentedly see the sabbath profaned, which was a good sign that they had not quite forsaken God, nor were utterly forsaken of him.

3. God was consulted, because it was not declared what should be done to him. The law had already made the

profanation of the sabbath a capital crime (Ex 31:14,Nu 35:2); but they were in doubt, either concerning the offence (whether this that he had done should be deemed a profanation or no) or concerning the punishment, which death he should die. God was the Judge, and before him they brought this cause.

4. Sentence was passed; the prisoner was adjudged a sabbath-breaker, according to the intent of that law, and as such he must be put to death; and to show how great the crime was, and how displeasing to God, and that others might hear and fear and not do in like manner presumptuously, that death is appointed him which was looked upon as most terrible: He must be stoned with stones, Nu 15:35. Note, God is jealous for the honour of his Sabbaths, and will not hold those guiltless, whatever men do, that profane them. 5. Execution was done pursuant to the sentence, Nu 15:36. He was stoned to death by the congregation. As many as could were employed in the execution, that those, at least, might be afraid of breaking the sabbath, who had thrown a stone at this sabbath-breaker. This intimates that the open profanation of the sabbath is a sin which ought to be punished and restrained by the civil magistrate, who, as far as overt acts go, is keeper of both tables. See Ne 13:17. One would think there could be no great harm in gathering a few sticks, on what day soever it was, but God intended the exemplary punishment of him that did so for a standing warning to us all, to make conscience of keeping holy the sabbath.

31 Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity *shall be* upon him.

The Stoning of a Sabbath Breaker

32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day.

33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should
be done to him.
35 And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death:
all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.
36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and
stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded
Moses.

Fringes on Garments

37 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
38 Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make
them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their
generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a
ribband of blue:
39 and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and
remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and
that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after
which ye use to go a whoring:

Provision had been just now made by the law for the pardon of sins of ignorance and infirmity; now here is an expedient provided for the preventing of such sins. They are ordered to make fringes upon the borders of their garments, which were to be memorandums to them of their duty, that they might not sin through forgetfulness.

1 The sign appointed is a fringe of silk, or thread, or worsted, or the garment itself ravelled at the bottom, and a blue riband bound on the top of it to keep it tight, Nu 15:38. The Jews being a peculiar people, they were thus distinguished from their neighbours in their dress, as well as in their diet, and taught by such little instances of singularity not to be conformed to the way of the heathen in greater things. Thus likewise they proclaimed themselves Jews wherever they were, as those that were not ashamed of God and his law. Our Saviour, being made under the law, wore these fringes; hence we read of the hem or border, of his garment, Mt 9:20. These borders the Pharisees enlarged, that they might be thought more holy and devout than other people. The phylacteries

were different things; these were their own invention, the fringes were a divine institution. The Jews at this day wear them, saying, when they put them on, Blessed be he who has sanctified us unto himself, and commanded us to wear fringes.

2 The intention of it was to remind them that they were a peculiar people. They were not appointed for the trimming and adorning of their clothes, but to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance (2Pe 3:1), that they might look upon the fringe and remember the commandments. Many look upon their ornaments to feed their pride, but they must look upon these ornaments to awaken their consciences to a sense of their duty, that their religion might constantly beset them, and that they might carry it about with them, as they did their clothes, wherever they went. If they were tempted to sin, the fringe would be a monitor to them not to break God's commandments: If a duty was forgotten to be done in its season, the fringe would remind them of it. This institution, though it is not an imposition upon us, is an instruction to us, always to remember the commandments of the Lord our God, that we may do them, to treasure them up in our memories, and to apply them to particular cases as there is occasion to use them. It was intended particularly to be a preservative from idolatry: that you seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes, in your religious worship. Yet it may extend also to the whole conversation, for nothing is more contrary to God's honour, and our own true interest, than to walk in the way of our heart and in the sight of our eyes; for the imagination of the heart is evil, and so is the lust of the eyes.

After the repetition of some ceremonial appointments, the chapter closes with that great and fundamental law of religion, Be holy unto your God, purged from sin, and sincerely devoted to his service; and that great reason for all the commandments is again and again inculcated, I am the Lord your God. Did we more firmly believe, and more frequently and seriously consider, that God is the Lord, and

our God and Redeemer, we should see ourselves bound in duty, interest, and gratitude, to keep all his commandments.

40 that ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy
unto your God.
41 I *am* the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of
Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the Lord your God.

Numbers-16

Korah's Rebellion

1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi,
and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of
Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men:*
2 and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of
Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the
congregation, men of renown:
3 and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against
Aaron, and said unto them, *Ye take* too much upon you, seeing all
the congregation *are* holy, every one of them, and the Lord *is*
among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the
congregation of the Lord?

I. An account of the rebels, who and what they were, not, as formerly, the mixed multitude and the dregs of the people, who are therefore never named, but men of distinction and quality, that made a figure. Korah was the ring-leader: he formed and headed the faction; therefore it is called the gainsaying of Korah, Jude 1:11. He was cousin-german to Moses, they were brothers' children, yet the nearness of the relation could not restrain him from being insolent and rude to Moses. Think it not strange if a man's foes be those of his own house. With him joined Dathan and Abiram, chief men of the tribe of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob. Probably Korah was disgusted both at the preferment of Aaron to the priesthood and the constituting of Elizaphan to the head of the Kohathites (Nu 3:30); and perhaps the Reubenites were angry that the tribe of Judah had the first post of honour in the

camp. On is mentioned (Nu 16:1) as one of the heads of the faction, but never after in the whole story, either because, as some think, he repented and left them, or because he did not make himself so remarkable as Dathan and Abiram did. The Kohathites encamped on the same side of the tabernacle that the Reubenites did, which perhaps gave Korah an opportunity of drawing them in, whence the Jews say, Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour, who is in danger of being infected by him. And, these being themselves men of renown, they seduced into the conspiracy two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly (Nu 16:2); probably they were first-born, or at least heads of families, who, before the elevation of Aaron, had themselves ministered in holy things.

Note, The pride, ambition, and emulation, of great men, have always been the occasion of a great deal of mischief both in churches and states. God by his grace make great men humble, and so give peace in our time, O Lord! Famous men, and men of renown, as these are described to be, were the great sinners of the old world, Ge 6:4. The fame and renown which they had did not content them; they were high, but would be higher, and thus the famous men became infamous.

II The rebels' remonstrance, Nu 16:3. That which they quarrel with is the settlement of the priesthood upon Aaron and his family, which they think an honour too great for Moses to give and Aaron to accept, and so they are both charged with usurpation: You take too much upon you; or, "Let it suffice you to have domineered thus long, and now think of resigning your places to those who have as good a title to them and are as well able to manage them."

1. They proudly boast of the holiness of the congregation, and the presence of God in it. "They are holy, every one of them, and as fit to be employed in offering sacrifice as Aaron is, and as masters of families formerly were, and the Lord is among them, to direct and own them." Small reason they had to boast of the people's purity, or of God's favour, as the people had

been so frequently and so lately polluted with sin, and were now under the marks of God's displeasure, which should have made them thankful for priests to mediate between them and God; but, instead of that, they envy them.

2. They unjustly charge Moses and Aaron with taking the honour they had to themselves, whereas it was evident, beyond contradiction, that they were called of God to it, Heb 5:4. So that they would either have no priests at all, nor any government, none to preside either in civil or sacred things, none over the congregation, none above it, or they would not acquiesce in that constitution of the government which God had appointed. See here,

(1.) What spirit levellers are of, and those that despise dominions, and resist the powers that God has set over them; they are proud, envious, ambitious, turbulent, wicked, and unreasonable men.

(2.) What usage even the best and most useful men may expect, even from those they have been serviceable to. If those be represented as usurpers that have the best titles, and those as tyrants that govern best, let them recollect that Moses and Aaron were thus abused.

4 And when Moses heard *it,* he fell upon his face:

Moses's conduct when their remonstrance was published against him. How did he take it?

1. He fell on his face (Nu 16:4), as before, Nu 14:5. Thus he showed how willing he would have been to yield to them, and how gladly he would have resigned his government, if it would have consisted with his duty to God and his fidelity to the trust reposed in him. Thus also he applied to God, by prayer, for direction what to say and to do upon this sad occasion. He would not speak to them till he had thus humbled and composed his own spirit (which could not but begin to be heated), and had received instruction from God.

The heart of the wise in such a case studies to answer, and asks counsel at God's mouth.

2. He agrees to refer the case to God, and leave it to him to decide it, as one well assured of the goodness of his title, and yet well content to resign, if God thought fit, to gratify this discontented people with another nomination. An honest cause fears not a speedy trial; even to-morrow let it be brought on, Nu 16:5-7. Let Korah and his partisans bring their censers, and offer incense before the Lord, and, if he testify his acceptance of them, well and good; Moses is now as willing that all the Lord's people should be priests, if God so pleased, as before that they should all be prophets, Nu 11:29. But if God, upon an appeal to him, determine (as no doubt he would) for Aaron, they would find it highly dangerous to make the experiment: and therefore he puts it off till to-morrow, to try whether, when they had slept upon it, they would desist, and let fall their pretensions.

3. He argues the case fairly with them, to still the mutiny with fair reasoning, if possible, before the appeal came to God's tribunal, for then he knew it would end in the confusion of the complainants.

(1.) He calls them the sons of Levi, Nu 16:7, and again Nu 16:8. They were of his own tribe, nay, they were of God's tribe; it was therefore the worse in them thus to mutiny both against God and against him. It was not long since the sons of Levi had bravely appeared on God's side, in the matter of the golden calf, and got immortal honour by it; and shall those that were then the only innocents now be the leading criminals, and lose all the honour they had won? Could there be such chaff on God's floor? Levites, and yet rebels?

(2.) He retorts their charge upon themselves. They had unjustly charged Moses and Aaron with taking too much upon them, though they had done no more than what God put upon them; nay, says Moses, You take too much upon you,

you sons of Levi. Note, Those that take upon them to control and contradict God's appointment take too much upon them. It is enough for us to submit; it is too much to prescribe.

(3.) He shows them the privilege they had as Levites, which was sufficient for them, they needed not to aspire to the honour of the priesthood, Nu 16:9,10. He reminds them how great the honour was to which they were preferred, as Levites.

[1.] They were separated from the congregation of Israel, distinguished from them, dignified above them; instead of complaining that Aaron's family was advanced above theirs, they ought to have been thankful that their tribe was advanced above the rest of the tribes, though they had been in all respects upon the level with them. Note, It will help to keep us from envying those that are above us duly to consider how many there are below us. Instead of fretting that any are preferred before us in honour, power, estate, or interest, in gifts, graces, or usefulness, we have reason to bless God if we, who are less than the least, are not put among the very last. Many perhaps who deserve better are not preferred so well.

[2.] They were separated to very great and valuable honours, First, To draw near to God, nearer than the common Israelites, though they also were a people near unto him; the nearer any are to God the greater is their honour. Secondly, To do the service of the tabernacle. It is honour enough to bear the vessels of the sanctuary, and to be employed in any part of the service of the tabernacle. God's service is not only perfect freedom, but high preferment. Thirdly, To stand before the congregation to minister unto them. Note, Those are truly great that serve the public, and it is the honour of God's ministers to be the church's ministers; nay, which adds to the dignity put upon them,

[3.] It was the God of Israel himself that separated them. It was his act and deed to put them into their place, and therefore

they ought not to have been discontented: and he it was likewise that put Aaron into his place, and therefore they ought not to have envied him.

(4.) He convicts them of the sin of undervaluing those privileges: Seemeth it a small thing unto you? As if he had said, "It ill becomes you of all men to grudge Aaron the priesthood, when at the same time that he was advanced to that honour you were designed for another honour dependent upon it, and shine with rays borrowed from him." Note,

[1.] The privilege of drawing near to the God of Israel is not a small thing in itself, and therefore must not appear small to us. To those who neglect opportunities of drawing near to God, who are careless and formal in it, to whom it is a task and not a pleasure, we may properly put this question: "Seemeth it a small thing to you that God has made you a people near unto him?"

[2.] Those who aspire after and usurp the honours forbidden them put a great contempt upon the honours allowed them. We have each of us as good a share of reputation as God sees fit for us, and sees us fit for, and much better than we deserve; and we ought to rest satisfied with it, and not, as these, exercise ourselves in things too high for us: Seek you the priesthood also? They would not own that they sought it, but Moses saw that they had this in their eye; the law had provided very well for those that served at the altar, and therefore they would put in for the office.

(5.) He interprets their mutiny to be a rebellion against God (Nu 16:11); while they pretended to assert the holiness and liberty of the Israel of God, they really took up arms against the God of Israel: You are gathered together against the Lord. Note, Those that strive against God's ordinances and providences, whatever they pretend, and whether they are aware of it or no, do indeed strive with their Maker. Those resist the prince who resist those that are commissioned by

him: for, alas! says Moses, What is Aaron, that you murmur against him? If murmurers and complainers would consider that the instruments they quarrel with are but instruments whom God employs, and that they are but what he makes them, and neither more nor less, better nor worse, they would not be so bold and free in their censures and reproaches as they are. Those that found the priesthood, as it was settled, a blessing, must give all the praise to God; but if any found it a burden they must not therefore quarrel with Aaron, who is but what he is made, and does but as he is bidden. Thus he interested God in the cause, and so might be sure of speeding well in his appeal.

5 and he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even
tomorrow the Lord will show who are his, and *who is* holy; and
will cause *him* to come near unto him: even *him* whom he hath
chosen will he cause to come near unto him.
6 This do; Take you censers, Korah, and all his company;
7 and put fire therein, and put incense in them before the Lord
tomorrow: and it shall be *that* the man whom the Lord doth choose,
he *shall be* holy: *ye take* too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.
8 And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:
9 *seemeth it but* a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath
separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to
himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand
before the congregation to minister unto them?
10 And he hath brought thee near *to him*, and all thy brethren the sons
of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?
11 For which cause *both* thou and all thy company *are* gathered
together against the Lord: and what *is* Aaron, that ye murmur
against him?
12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab;
which said, We will not come up:

The insolence of Dathan and Abiram, and their treasonable remonstrance. Moses had heard what Korah had to say, and had answered it; now he summons Dathan and Abiram to bring in their complaints (Nu 16:12); but they would not obey his summons, either because they could not for shame say that

to his face which they were resolved to say, and then it is an instance of some remains of modesty in them; or, rather, because they would not so far own his authority, and then it is an instance of the highest degree of impudence. They spoke the language of Pharaoh himself, who set Moses at defiance, but they forgot how dearly he paid for it. Had not their heads been wretchedly heated, and their hearts hardened, they might have considered that, if they regarded not these messengers, Moses could soon in God's name send messengers of death for them. But thus the God of this world blinds the minds of those that believe not. But by the same messengers they send their articles of impeachment against Moses; and the charge runs very high.

1. They charge him with having done them a great deal of wrong in bringing them out of Egypt, invidiously calling that a land flowing with milk and honey, Nu 16:13. Onions, and garlick, and fish, they had indeed plenty of in Egypt, but it never pretended to milk and honey; only they would thus banter the promise of Canaan. Ungrateful wretches, to represent that as an injury to them which was really the greatest favour that ever was bestowed upon any people!

2. They charge him with a design upon their lives, that he intended to kill them in the wilderness, though they were so well provided for. And, if they were sentenced to die in the wilderness, they must thank themselves. Moses would have healed them, and they would not be healed.

3. They charge him with a design upon their liberties, that he meant to enslave them, by making himself a prince over them. A prince over them! Was he not a tender father to them? Nay, their devoted servant for the Lord's sake? Had they not their properties secured, their order preserved, and justice impartially administered? Did they not live in ease and honour? And yet they complain as if Moses's yoke were heavier than Pharaoh's. And did Moses make himself a prince? Far from it. How gladly would he have declined the

office at first! How gladly would he have resigned it many a time since! And yet he is thus put under the blackest characters of a tyrant and a usurper.

4. They charge him with cheating them, raising their expectations of a good land, and then defeating them (Nu 16:14): Thou hast not brought us, as thou promisedst us, into a land that floweth with milk and honey; and pray whose fault was that? He had brought them to the borders of it, and was just ready, under God, to put them in possession of it; but they thrust it away from them, and shut the door against themselves; so that it was purely their own fault that they were not now in Canaan, and yet Moses must bear the blame. Thus when the foolishness of man perverteth his way his heart fretteth against the Lord, Pr 19:3.

5. They charge him in the general with unfair dealing, that he put out the eyes of these men, and then meant to lead them blindfold as he pleased. The design of all he did for them was to open their eyes, and yet they insinuate that he intended to put out their eyes, that they might not see themselves imposed upon.

Note, The wisest and best cannot please every body, nor gain the good word of all. Those often fall under the heaviest censures who have merited the highest applause. Many a good work Moses had shown them from the Father, and for which of these do they reproach him?

13 *is it* a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

14 Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up.

15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

Moses's just resentment of their insolence, Nu 16:15. Moses, though the meekest man, yet, finding God reproached in him, was very wroth; he could not bear to see a people ruining themselves for whose salvation he had done so much. In this discomposure,

1. He appeals to God concerning his own integrity; whereas they basely reflected upon him as ambitious, covetous, and oppressive, in making himself a prince over them, God was his witness,

(1.) That he never got any thing by them: I have not taken one ass from them, not only not by way of bribery and extortion, but not by way of recompence or gratuity for all the good offices he had done them; he never took the pay of a general, or the salary of a judge, much less the tribute of a prince. He got more in his estate when he kept Jethro's flock than when he came to be king in Jeshurun.

(2.) That they never lost any thing by him: Neither have I hurt any one of them, no, not the least, no, not the worst, no, not those that had been most peevish and provoking to him: he never abused his power to the support of wrong. Note, Those that have never blemished themselves need not fear being slurred by others: when men condemn us we may be easy, if our own hearts condemn us not.

2. He begs of God to plead his cause, and clear him, by showing his displeasure at the incense which Korah and his company were to offer, with whom Dathan and Abiram were in confederacy. Lord, says he, Respect not thou their offering. Herein he seems to refer to the history of Cain, lately written by his own hand, of whom it is said that to him and his offering God had not respect, Ge 4:5. These that followed the gainsaying of Korah walked in the way of Cain (these are put together, Jude 1:11), and therefore he prays that they might be frowned upon as Cain was, and put to the same confusion.

16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before
the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow:
17 and take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring
ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty
censers; thou also, and Aaron, each *of you* his censer.

Issue joined between Moses and his accusers.

1. Moses challenges them to appear with Aaron next morning, at the time of offering up the morning incense, and refer the matter to God's judgment, Nu 16:16,17. Since he could not convince them by his calm and affectionate reasoning, he is ready to enter into bonds to stand God's award, not doubting but that God would appear, to decide the controversy. This reference he had agreed to before (Nu 16:6,7), and here adds only one clause, which bespeaks his great condescension to the plaintiffs, that Aaron, against whose advancement they excepted, though now advanced by the divine institution to the honour of burning incense within the tabernacle, yet, upon this trial, should put himself into the place of a probationer, and stand upon the level with Korah, at the door of the tabernacle; nay, and Moses himself would stand with them, so that the complainant shall have all the fair dealing he can desire; and thus every mouth shall be stopped.

2. Korah accepts the challenge, and makes his appearance with Moses and Aaron at the door of the tabernacle, to make good his pretensions, Nu 16:18,19. If he had not had a very great stock of impudence, he could not have carried on the matter thus far. Had not he lately seen Nadab and Abihu, the consecrated priests, struck dead for daring to offer incense with unhallowed fire? And could he and his accomplices expect to fare any better in offering incense with unhallowed hands? Yet, to confront Moses and Aaron, in the height of his pride he thus bids defiance to Heaven, and pretends to demand the divine acceptance without a divine warrant; thus wretchedly is the heart hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. They took every man his censer. Perhaps these were some of the censers which these heads of families had made use of

at their family-altars, before this part of religious service was confined to the priesthood and the altar in the tabernacle (and they would bring them into use and reputation again); or they might be common chafing-dishes, which were for their ordinary use. Now to attend the solemn trial, and to be witness of the issue, one would have thought Moses should have gathered the congregation against the rebels, but it seems Korah gathered them against Moses (Nu 16:19), which intimates that a great part of the congregation sided with Korah, were at his beck, and wished him success, and that Korah's hopes were very high of carrying the point against Aaron; for, had he suspected the event, he would not have coveted to make the trial thus public: but little did he think that he was now calling the congregation together to be the witnesses of his own confusion! Note, Proud and ambitious men, while they are projecting their own advancement, often prove to have been hurrying on their own shameful fall.

18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation.

The judgment set, and the Judge taking the tribunal, and threatening to give sentence against the whole congregation.

1 The glory of the Lord appeared, Nu 16:19. The same glory that appeared to instal Aaron in his office at first (Le 9:23) now appeared to confirm him in it, and to confound those that oppose him, and set up themselves in competition with him. The Shechinah, or divine Majesty, the glory of the eternal Word, which ordinarily dwelt between the cherubim within the veil, now was publicly seen over the door of the tabernacle, to the terror of the whole congregation; for, though they saw no manner of similitude, yet probably the appearances of the light and fire were such as plainly showed God to be angry with them; as when he appeared, Nu 14:10.

Nothing is more terrible to those who are conscious of guilt than the appearances of divine glory; for such a glorious Being must needs be a formidable enemy.

2. God threatened to consume them all in a moment, and, in order to that, bade Moses and Aaron stand from among them, Nu 16:21. God thus showed what their sin deserved, and how very provoking it was to him. See what a dangerous thing it is to have fellowship with sinners, and in the least to partake with them. Many of the congregation, it is likely, came only for company, following the crowd, or for curiosity, to see the issue, yet not coming, as they ought to have done, to bear their testimony against the rebels, and openly to declare for God and Moses, they had like to have been all consumed in a moment. If we follow the herd into which the devil has entered, it is at our peril.

20 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.
22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

The humble intercession of Moses and Aaron for the congregation, Nu 16:22.

1. Their posture was importuning: they fell on their faces, prostrating themselves before God, as supplicants in good earnest, that they might prevail for sparing mercy. Though the people had treacherously deserted them, and struck in with those that were in arms against them, yet they approved themselves faithful to the trusts reposed in them, as shepherds of Israel, who were to stand in the breach when they saw the flock in danger. Note, If others fail in their duty to us, this does not discharge us from our duty to them, nor take off the obligations we lie under to seek their welfare.

2. Their prayer was a pleading prayer, and it proved a prevailing one. Now God would have destroyed them if

Moses had not turned away his wrath (Ps 106:23); yet far be it from us to imagine that Moses was more considerate or more compassionate than God in such a case as this: but God saw fit to show his just displeasure against the sin of sinners by the sentence, and at the same time to show his gracious condescension to the prayers of the saints, by the revocation of the sentence at the intercession of Moses. Observe in the prayer,

(1.) The title they give to God: The God of the spirits of all flesh. See what man is; he is a spirit in flesh, a soul embodied, a creature wonderfully compounded of heaven and earth. See what God is; he is the God of the spirits of all mankind. He forms the spirit, Zec 12:1. He fathers it, Heb 12:9. He has an ability to fashion it (Ps 33:15), and authority to dispose of it, for he has said, All souls are mine, Eze 18:4. They insinuate hereby that though, as the God of the spirits of all flesh, he might in sovereignty consume this congregation in a moment, yet it was to be hoped that he would in mercy spare them, not only because they were the work of his own hands, and he had a propriety in them, but because, being the God of spirits, he knew their frame, and could distinguish between the leaders and the led, between those who sinned maliciously and those who were drawn in by their wiles, and would make a difference accordingly in his judgments.

(2.) The argument they insist on; it is much the same with that which Abraham urged in his intercession for Sodom (Ge 18:23): Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Such is the plea here: Shall one man sin and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation? Not but that it was the sin of them all to join in this matter, but the great transgression was his that first hatched the treason. Note, Whatever God may do in sovereignty and strict justice, we have reason to hope that he will not destroy a congregation for the sin of one, but that, righteousness and peace having kissed each other in the undertaking of the Redeemer, mercy shall rejoice against judgment. Moses knew that all the congregation must perish

in the wilderness by degrees, yet he is thus earnest in prayer that they might not be consumed at once, and would reckon it a favour to obtain a reprieve. Lord, let it alone this year.

23 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

24 Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

We have here the determining of the controversy with Dathan and Abiram, who rebelled against Moses, as in the next paragraph the determining of the controversy with Korah and his company, who would be rivals with Aaron. It should seem that Dathan and Abiram had set up a spacious tabernacle in the midst of the tents of their families, where they kept court, met in council, and hung out their flag of defiance against Moses; it is here called the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Nu 16:24,27. There, as in the place of rendezvous, Dathan and Abiram staid, when Korah and his friends went up to the tabernacle of the Lord, waiting the issue of their trial; but here we are told how they had their business done, before that trial was over. For God will take what method he pleases in his judgments.

Public warning is given to the congregation to withdraw immediately from the tents of the rebels.

1. God bids Moses speak to this purport, Nu 16:24. This was in answer to Moses's prayer. He had begged that God would not destroy the whole congregation. "Well," says God, "I will not, provided they be so wise as to shift for their own safety, and get out of the way of danger. If they will quit the rebels, well and good, they shall not perish with them; otherwise, let them take what follows." Note, We cannot expect to reap benefit by the prayers of our friends for our salvation, unless we ourselves be diligent and faithful in making use of the means of salvation; for God never promised to save by miracles those that would not save themselves by means. Moses that had prayed for them must preach this to them, and warn them to flee from this wrath to come.

2. Moses accordingly repairs to the head-quarters of the rebels, leaving Aaron at the door of the tabernacle, Nu 16:25. Dathan and Abiram had contumaciously refused to come up to him (Nu 16:12), yet he humbly condescends to go down to them, to try if he could yet convince and reclaim them. Ministers must thus with meekness instruct those that oppose themselves, and not think it below them to stoop to those that are most stubborn, for their good. Christ himself stretches out his hand to a rebellious and gainsaying people. The seventy elders of Israel attend Moses and his guard, to secure him from the insolence of the rabble, and by their presence to put an honour upon him, and if possible to strike an awe upon the rebels. It is our duty to contribute all we can to the countenance and support of injured innocency and honour.

3. Proclamation is made that all manner of persons, as they tendered their own safety, should forthwith depart from the tents of these wicked men (Nu 16:26), and thus should signify that they deserted their cause and interest, detested their crimes and counsels, and dreaded the punishment coming upon them. Note, Those that would not perish with sinners must come out from among them, and be separate. In vain do we pray, Gather not our souls with sinners, if we save not ourselves from the untoward generation. God's people are called out of Babylon, lest they share both in her sins and in her plagues, Re 18:4.

25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.

27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

The congregation takes the warning, but the rebels themselves continue obstinate, Nu 16:27.

1. God, in mercy, inclined the people to forsake the rebels: They got up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, both those whose lot it was to pitch near them (who doubtless with themselves removed their families, and all their effects) and those also who had come from all parts of their camp to see the issue. It was in answer to the prayer of Moses that God thus stirred up the hearts of the congregation to shift for their own preservation. Note, To those whom God will save he gives repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. Grace to separate from evil doers is one of the things that accompany salvation.

2. God, in justice, left the rebels to the obstinacy and hardness of their own hearts. Though they saw themselves abandoned by all their neighbours, and set up as a mark to the arrows of God's justice, yet instead of falling down and humbling themselves before God and Moses, owning their crime and begging pardon, instead of fleeing and dispersing themselves to seek for shelter in the crowd, they impudently stood in the doors of their tents, as if they would out-face God himself, and dare him to his worst. Thus were their hearts hardened to their own destruction, and they were fearless when their case was most fearful.

But what a pity was it that their little children, who were not capable of guilt or fear, should by the presumption of their parents be put in this audacious posture! Happy they who are taught betimes to bow before God, and not as those unhappy little ones to stand it out against him!

28 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for *I have* not *done them* of mine own mind.

Sentence is solemnly pronounced upon them by Moses in the name of the Lord, and the decision of the controversy is put upon the execution of that sentence by the almighty power of God. Moses, by divine instinct and direction, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, waiting the event, moved with a just and holy indignation at the impudence of

the rebels, boldly puts the whole matter to a surprising issue, Nu 16:28-30.

1. If the rebels die a common death, he will be content to be called and counted an impostor; not only if they die a natural death, but if they die by any sort of judgment that has formerly been executed on other malefactors. "If they die by the plague, or by fire from heaven, or by the sword, then say, God has disowned Moses;" but,

2. "If the earth open and swallow them up" (a punishment without precedent), "then let all the house of Israel know assuredly that I am God's servant, sent by him, and employed for him, and that those that fight against me fight against him." The judgment itself would have been proof enough of God's displeasure against the rebels, and would have given all men to understand that they had provoked the Lord; but when it was thus solemnly foretold and appealed to by Moses beforehand, when there was not the least previous indication of it from without, the convincing evidence of it was much the stronger, and it was put beyond dispute that he was not only a servant but a favourite of Heaven, who was so intimately acquainted with the divine counsels, and could obtain such extraordinary appearances of the divine power in his vindication.

29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; *then* the Lord hath not sent me.
30 But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that *appertain* unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.
31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that *was* under them:
32 and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods.

33 They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

Execution is immediately done. It appeared that God and his servant Moses understood one another very well; for, as soon as ever Moses had spoken the word, God did the work, the earth clave asunder (Nu 16:31), opened her mouth, and swallowed them all up, them and theirs (Nu 16:32), and then closed upon them, Nu 16:33. This judgment was,

1. Unparalleled. God, in it, created a new thing, did what he never did before; for he has many arrows in his quiver; and there are diversities of operations in wrath as well as mercy. Dathan and Abiram thought themselves safe because they were at a distance from the shechinah, whence the fire of the Lord had sometimes issued, qui procul à Jove (they say) procul à fulmine--he who is far from Jove is far from the thunderbolt. But God made them to know that he was not tied up to one way of punishing; the earth, when he pleases, shall serve his justice as effectually as the fire.

2. It was very terrible to the sinners themselves to go down alive into their own graves, to be dead and buried in an instant, to go down thus to the bars of the pit when they were in their full strength wholly at ease and quiet.

3. It was severe upon their poor children, who, for the greater terror of the judgment, and fuller indication of the divine wrath, perished as parts of their parents, in which, though we cannot particularly tell how bad they might be to deserve it or how good God might be otherwise to them to compensate it, yet of this we are sure in the general, that Infinite Justice did them no wrong. Far be it from God that he should do iniquity.

4. It was altogether miraculous. The cleaving of the earth was as wonderful, and as much above the power of nature, as the cleaving of the sea, and the closing of the earth again more so than the closing of the waters. God has all the creatures at his

command, and can make any of them, when he pleases, instruments of his justice; nor will any of them be our friends if he be our enemy. God now confirmed to Israel what Moses had lately taught them in that prayer of his, Ps 90:11, Who knows the power of thy anger? He has, when he pleases, strange punishments for the workers of iniquity, Job 31:3. Let us therefore conclude, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?

5. It was very significant. They set their mouths against the heavens, and their throat was an open sepulchre; justly therefore does the earth open her mouth upon them and swallow them up. They made a rent in the congregation; justly therefore is the earth rent under them. Presumptuous sinners, that hate to be reformed, are a burden to the earth, the whole creation groans under them, which here was signified by this, that the earth sunk under these rebels, as weary of bearing them and being under them. And, considering how the earth is still in like manner loaded with the weight of iniquity, we have reason to wonder that this was the only time it ever sunk under its load.

6. It was typical of the eternal ruin of sinners who die impenitent, who, perhaps in allusion to this, are said to sink down into the pit (Ps 9:15) and to go down quickly into hell, Ps 55:15. But David, even when he sinks in deep mire, yet prays in faith, Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me, as it does on the damned, between whom and life there is a gulf fixed, Ps 69:2-15. His case was bad, but not, like this, desperate.

34 And all Israel that *were* round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, lest the earth swallow us up *also.*

All Israel is alarmed at the judgment: They fled at the cry of them, Nu 16:34. They cried for help when it was too late. Their doleful shrieks, instead of fetching their neighbours in to their relief, drove them so much the further off; for knowing their own guilt, and one another's, they hastened one another, saying, Lest the earth swallow us up also. Note,

Others' ruins should be our warnings. Could we by faith hear the outcries of those that have gone down to the bottomless pit, we should give more diligence than we do to escape for our lives, lest we also come into that condemnation.

35 And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

We must now look back to the door of the tabernacle, where we left the pretenders to the priesthood with their censers in their hands ready to offer incense; and here we find,
Vengeance taken on them, Nu 16:35. It is probable that when the earth opened in the camp to swallow up Dathan and Abiram a fire went out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men that offered incense, while Aaron that stood with them was preserved alive. This punishment was not indeed so new a thing as the former, for Nadab and Abihu thus died; but it was not less strange or dreadful, and in it it appeared,

1. That our God is a consuming fire. Is thunder a sensible indication of the terror of his voice? Lightning is also the power of his hand. We must see in this his fiery indignation which devours the adversaries, and infer from it what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, Heb 10:27-31.

2. That it is at our peril if we meddle with that which does not belong to us. God is jealous of the honour of his own institutions, and will not have them invaded. It is most probable that Korah himself was consumed with those 250 that presumed to offer incense; for the priesthood was the thing he aimed at, and therefore we have reason to think that he would not quit his post at the door of the tabernacle. But, behold, those are made sacrifices to the justice of God who flattered themselves with the hopes of being priests. Had they been content with their office as Levites, which was sacred and honourable, and better than they deserved, they might have lived and died with joy and reputation; but, like the angels that sinned, leaving their first estate, and aiming at the honours that were not appointed them, they were thrust down

to Hades, their censers struck out of their hands, and their breath out of their bodies, by a burning which typified the vengeance of eternal fire.

36 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

37 Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

Care is taken to perpetuate the remembrance of this vengeance. No mention is made of the taking up of their carcases: the scripture leaves them as dung upon the face of the earth; but orders are given about their censers,

1. That they be secured, because they are hallowed. Eleazar is charged with this, Nu 16:37. Those invaders of the priesthood had proceeded so far, by the divine patience and submission, as to kindle their incense with fire from off the altar, which they were suffered to use by way of experiment: but, as soon as they had kindled their fire, God kindled another, which put a fatal final period to their pretensions; now Eleazar is ordered to scatter the fire, with the incense that was kindled with it, in some unclean place without the camp, to signify God's abhorrence of their offering as a polluted thing: The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. But he is to gather up the censers out of the mingled burning, God's fire and theirs, because they are hallowed. Having been once put to a holy use, and that by God's own order (though only for trial), they must not return to common service; so some understand it: rather, they are devoted, they are an anathema; and therefore, as all devoted things, they must be made some way or other serviceable to the glory of God.

2. That they be used in the service of the sanctuary, not as censers, which would rather have put honour upon the usurpers whose disgrace was intended; nor was there occasion for brazen censers, the golden altar was served with golden ones; but they must be beaten into broad plates for a covering of the brazen altar, Nu 16:38-40. These pretenders

thought to have ruined the altar, by laying the priesthood in common again; but to show that Aaron's office was so far from being shaken by their impotent malice that it was rather confirmed by it, their censers, which offered to rival his, were used both for the adorning and for the preserving of the altar at which he ministered. Yet this was not all; this covering of the altar must be a memorial to the children of Israel, throughout their generations, of this great event. Though there was so much in it astonishing, and though Moses was to record it in his history, yet there was danger of its being forgotten in process of time; impressions that seem deep are not always durable; therefore it was necessary to appoint this record of the judgment, that the Levites who attended this altar, and had their inferior services appointed them, might learn to keep within their bounds, and be afraid of transgressing them, lest they should be made like Korah and his company, who were Levites, and would have been priests. These censers were preserved in terrorem, that others might hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Thus God has provided that his wonderful works, both in mercy and judgment, should be had in everlasting remembrance, that the end of them may be answered, and they may serve for instruction and admonition to those on whom the ends of the world are come.

38 The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates *for* a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the Lord, therefore they are hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel.

39 And Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad *plates for* a covering of the altar:

40 *to be* a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which *is* not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the Lord said to him by the hand of Moses.

41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, ye have killed the people of the Lord.

A new rebellion raised the very next day against Moses and Aaron. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth! Was there ever such an instance of the incurable corruption of sinners? On the morrow (Nu 16:41) the body of the people mutinied.

1. Though they were so lately terrified by the sight of the punishment of the rebels. The shrieks of those sinking sinners, those sinners against their own souls, were yet sounding in their ears, the smell of the fire yet remained, and the gaping earth was scarcely thoroughly closed, and yet the same sins were re-acted and all these warnings slighted.

2. Though they were so lately saved from sharing in the same punishment, and the survivors were as brands plucked out of the burning, yet they fly in the face of Moses and Aaron, to whose intercession they owed their preservation. Their charge runs very high: You have killed the people of the Lord. Could any thing have been said more unjustly and maliciously? They canonize the rebels, calling those the people of the Lord who died in arms against him. They stigmatize divine justice itself. It was plain enough that Moses and Aaron had no hand in their death (they did what they could to save them), so that in charging them with murder they did in effect charge God himself with it. The continued obstinacy of this people, notwithstanding the terrors of God's law as it was given on Mount Sinai, and the terrors of his judgments as they were here executed on the disobedient, shows how necessary the grace of God is to the effectual change of men's hearts and lives, without which the most likely means will never attain the end. Love will do what fear could not.

42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

God's speedy appearance against the rebels. When they had gathered against Moses and Aaron, perhaps with a design to depose or murder them, they looked towards the tabernacle, as if their misgiving consciences expected some frowns thence, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared (Nu 16:42), for the protection of his servants, and the confusion of his and their accusers and adversaries. Moses and Aaron thereupon came before the tabernacle, partly for their own safety (there they took sanctuary from the strife of tongues, Ps 27:5,31:20), and partly for advice, to know what was the mind of God upon this occasion, Nu 16:43. Justice hereupon declares that they deserve to be consumed in a moment, Nu 16:45. Why should those live an other day who hate to be reformed, and whose rebellions are their daily practices? Let just vengeance take place and do its work, and the trouble will soon be over; only Moses and Aaron must first be secured.

43 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

44 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

45 Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

46 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun.

47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

The intercession which Moses and Aaron made for them. Though they had as much reason, one would think, as Elias had to make intercession against Israel (Ro 11:2), yet they forgive and forget the indignities offered them, and are the best friends their enemies have.

1. They both fell on their faces, humbly to intercede with God for mercy, knowing how great the provocation was. This they

had done several times before, upon similar occasions; and, though the people had basely requited them for it, yet, God having graciously accepted them, they still have recourse to the same method. This is praying always.

2. Moses, perceiving that the plague had begun in the congregation of the rebels (that is, that body of them which was gathered against Moses), sent Aaron by an act of his priestly office to make atonement for them, Nu 16:46. And Aaron readily went and burned incense between the living and the dead, not to purify the infected air, but to pacify an offended God, and so stayed the progress of the judgment. By this it appeared,

(1.) That Aaron was a very good man, and a man that had a true love for the children of his people, though they hated and envied him. Though God was now avenging his quarrel and pleading the cause of his priesthood, yet he interposes to turn away God's wrath. Nay, forgetting his age and gravity, he ran into the midst of the congregation to help them. He did not say, "Let them smart awhile, and then, when I come, I shall be the more welcome;" but, as one tender of the life of every Israelite, he makes all possible speed into the gap at which death was entering. Moses and Aaron, who had been charged with killing the people of the Lord, might justly have upbraided them now; could they expect those to be their saviours whom they had so invidiously called their murderers? But those good men have taught us here by their example not to be sullen towards those that are peevish with us, nor to take the advantage which men give us by their provoking language to deny them any real kindness which it is in the power of our hands to do them. We must render good for evil.

(2.) That Aaron was a very bold man--bold to venture into the midst of an enraged rabble that were gathered together against him, and who, for aught he knew, might be the more exasperated by the plague that had begun--bold to venture

into the midst of the infection, where the arrows of death flew thickest, and hundreds, nay thousands, were falling on the right hand and on the left. To save their lives he put his own into his hand, not counting it dear to him, so that he might but fulfil his ministry.

(3.) That Aaron was a man of God, and ordained for men, in things pertaining to God. His call to the priesthood was hereby abundantly confirmed and set above all contradiction; God had not only saved his life when the intruders were cut off, but now made him an instrument for saving Israel. Compare the censer of Aaron here with the censers of those sinners against their own souls. Those provoked God's anger, this pacified it; those destroyed men's lives, this saved them; no room therefore is left to doubt of Aaron's call to the priesthood.

Note, Those make out the best title to public honours that lay out themselves the most for public good and obtain mercy of the Lord to be faithful and useful. If any man will be great, let him make himself the servant of all.

(4.) That Aaron was a type of Christ, who came into the world to make an atonement for sin and to turn away the wrath of God from us, and who, by his mediation and intercession, stands between the living and the dead, to secure his chosen Israel to himself, and save them out of the midst of a world infected with sin and the curse.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides them that died about the matter of Korah.

The result and issue of the whole matter.

1. God's justice was glorified in the death of some. Great execution the sword of the Lord did in a very little time. Though Aaron made all the haste he could, yet, before he could reach his post of service, there were 14,700 men laid

dead upon the spot, Nu 16:49. There were but few comparatively that died about the matter of Korah, the ring-leaders only were made examples; but, the people not being led to repentance by the patience and forbearance of God with them, justice is not now so sparing of the blood of Israelites. They complained of the death of a few hundreds as an unmerciful slaughter made among the people of the Lord, but here God silences that complaint by the slaughter of many thousands. Note, Those that quarrel with less judgments prepare greater for themselves; for when God judges he will overcome.

2. His mercy was glorified in the preservation of the rest. God showed them what he could do by his power, and what he might do in justice, but then showed them what he would do in his love and pity: he would, notwithstanding all this, preserve them a people to himself in and by a mediator. The cloud of Aaron's incense coming from his hand stayed the plague. Note, It is much for the glory of God's goodness that many a time even in wrath he remembers mercy. And, even when judgments have been begun, prayer puts a stop to them; so ready is he to forgive, and so little pleasure does he take in the death of sinners.

50 And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

Numbers-17

Aaron's Rod

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of *their* fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers, twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.
3 And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod *shall be* for the head of the house of their fathers.

Orders given for the bringing in of a rod for every tribe (which was peculiarly significant, for the word here used for a rod sometimes signifies a tribe, as particularly Nu 34:13), that God by a miracle, wrought on purpose, might make it known on whom he had conferred the honour of the priesthood.

1. It seems then the priesthood was a preferment worth seeking and striving for, even by the princes of the tribes. It is an honour to the greatest of men to be employed in the service of God. Yet perhaps these contended for it rather for the sake of the profit and power that attended the office than for the sake of that in it which was divine and sacred.

2. It seems likewise, after all that had been done to settle this matter, there were those who would be ready upon any occasion to contest it. They would not acquiesce in the divine appointment, but would make an interest in opposition to it. They strive with God for the dominion; and the question is whose will shall stand. God will rule, but Israel will not be ruled; and this is the quarrel.

3. It is an instance of the grace of God that, having wrought divers miracles to punish sin, he would work one more on purpose to prevent it. God has effectually provided that the obstinate shall be left inexcusable, and every mouth shall be stopped. Israel were very prone to murmur both against God and against their governors. "Now," said God, "I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, Nu 17:5. If any thing will convince them, they shall be convinced; and, if this will not convince them, nothing will." This was to be to them, as Christ said the sign of the prophet Jonas (that is, his own resurrection) should be to the men of that generation, the highest proof of his mission that should be given them. The directions are,

(1.) That twelve rods or staves should be brought in. It is probable that they were not now fresh cut out of a tree, for

then the miracle would not have been so great; but that they were the staves which the princes ordinarily used as ensigns of their authority (of which we read Nu 21:18), old dry staves, that had no sap in them, and it is probable that they were all made of the almond-tree. It should seem they were but twelve in all, with Aaron's, for, when Levi comes into the account, Ephraim and Manasseh make but one, under the name of Joseph.

(2.) That the name of each prince should be written upon his rod, that every man might know his own, and to prevent contests. Writing is often a good preservative against strife, for what is written may be appealed to.

(3.) That they should be laid up in the tabernacle, for one night, before the testimony, that is, before the ark, which, with its mercy seat, was a symbol, token, or testimony, of God's presence with them. (4.) They were to expect, being told it before, that the rod of the tribe, or prince, whom God chose to the priesthood, should bud and blossom, Nu 17:5. It was requisite that they should be told of it, that it might appear not to be casual, but according to the counsel and will of God.

4 And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

5 And it shall come to pass, *that* the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

6 And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, *even* twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron *was* among their rods.

7 And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness.

The preparing of the rods accordingly. The princes brought them in, some of them perhaps fondly expecting that the choice would fall upon them, and all of them thinking it honour enough to be competitors with Aaron, and to stand

candidates, even for the priesthood (Nu 17:7); and Moses laid them up before the Lord. He did not object that the matter was sufficiently settled already, and enough done to convince those that were not invincibly hardened in their prejudices. He did not undertake to determine the controversy himself, though it might easily have been done; nor did he suggest that it would be to no purpose to offer satisfaction to a people that were willingly blind. But, since God will have it so, he did his part, and lodged the case before the Lord, to whom the appeal was made by consent, and left it with him.

8 And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

The final determination of the controversy concerning the priesthood by a miracle, Nu 17:8,9. The rods or staves were brought out from the most holy place where they were laid up, and publicly produced before the people; and, while all the rest of the rods remained as they were, Aaron's rod only, of a dry stick, became a living branch, budded, and blossomed, and yielded almonds. In some places there were buds, in others blossoms, in others fruit, at the same time. This was miraculous, and took away all suspicion of a fraud, as if in the night Moses had taken away Aaron's rod, and put a living branch of an almond tree in the room of it; for no ordinary branch would have buds, blossoms, and fruits upon it, all at once. Now,

1. This was a plain indication to the people that Aaron was chosen to the priesthood, and not any other of the princes of the tribes. Thus he was distinguished from them and manifested to be under the special blessing of heaven, which sometimes yields increase where there is neither planting nor watering by the hand of man. Bishop Hall here observes that fruitfulness is the best evidence of a divine call, and that the plants of God's setting, and the boughs cut off from them, will

flourish. See Ps 92:12-14. The trees of the Lord, though they seem dry trees, are full of sap.

2. It was a very proper sign to represent the priesthood itself, which was hereby confirmed to Aaron.

(1.) That it should be fruitful and serviceable to the church of God. It produced not only blossoms, but almonds; for the priesthood was designed, not only for an honour to Aaron, but for a blessing to Israel. Thus Christ ordained his apostles and ministers that they should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain, Joh 15:16.

(2.) That there should be a succession of priests. Here were not only almonds for the present, but buds and blossoms promising more hereafter. Thus has Christ provided in his church that a seed should serve him from generation to generation.

(3.) That yet this priesthood should not be perpetual, but in process of time, like the branches and blossoms of a tree, should fail and wither. The flourishing of the almond-tree is mentioned as one of the signs of old age, Ec 12:5. This character was betimes put upon the Mosaic priesthood, which soon became old and ready to vanish away, Heb 8:13.

3. It was a type and figure of Christ and his priesthood: for he is the man, the branch, that is to be a priest upon his throne, as it follows (Zec 6:12); and he was to grow up before God, as this before the ark, like a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground, Isa 53:2.

10 And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

The record of this determination, by the preserving of the rod before the testimony, in perpetuam rei memoriam--that it might be had in perpetual remembrance, Nu 17:10,11. It is

probable that the buds, and blossoms, and fruit, continued fresh; the same divine power that produced them in a night preserved them for ages, at least so long as it was necessary for a token against the rebels. So it was a standing miracle, and the continuance of it was an undeniable proof of the truth of it. Even the leaf of God's trees shall not wither, Ps 1:3. This rod was preserved, as the censers were, to take away their murmurings, that they die not. Note,

1 The design of God in all his providences, both mercies and judgments, and in the memorials of them, is to take away sin, and to prevent it. These things are done, these things written, that we sin not, 1Jo 2:1. Christ was manifested to take away sin.

2. What God does for the taking away of sin is done in real kindness to us, that we die not. All the bitter potions he gives, and all the sharp methods he uses with us, are for the cure of a disease which otherwise would certainly be fatal. Bishop Hall observes here that the tables of the law, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, were preserved together in or about the ark (the apostle takes notice of them all three together, Heb 9:4), to show to after-ages how the ancient church was taught, and fed, and ruled; and he infers how precious the doctrine, sacraments, and government, of the church are to God and should be to us. The rod of Moses was used in working many miracles, yet we do not find that this was preserved, for the keeping of it would serve only to gratify men's curiosity; but the rod of Aaron, which carried its miracle along with it, was carefully preserved, because that would be of standing use to convince men's consciences, to silence all disputes about the priesthood, and to confirm the faith of God's Israel in his institutions. Such is the difference between the sacraments which Christ has appointed for edification and the relics which men have devised for superstition.

11 And Moses did *so:* as the Lord commanded him, so did he.

12 And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish.

He outcry of the people hereupon (Nu 17:12,13): Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Shall we be consumed with dying? This may be considered as the language either,

1. Of a repining people quarrelling with the judgments of God, which, by their own pride and obstinacy, they had brought upon themselves. They seem to speak despairingly, as if God was a hard Master, that sought advantage against them, and took all occasions to pick quarrels with them, so that if they trod every so little awry, if they stepped ever so little beyond their bounds, they must die, they must perish, they must all perish, basely insinuating that God would never be satisfied with their blood and ruin, till he had made an end of them all and they were consumed with dying. Thus they seem to be like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord (Isa 51:20), fretting that God was too hard for them and that they were forced to submit, which they did only because they could not help it.

Note, It is a very wicked thing to fret against God when we are in affliction, and in our distress thus to trespass yet more. If we die, if we perish, it is owing to ourselves, and the blame will lie upon our own heads. Or,

2. Of a repenting people. Many interpreters take it as expressing their submission: "Now we see that it is the will of God we should keep our distance, and that it is at our peril if we draw nearer than is appointed. We submit to the divine will in this appointment; we will not contend any more, lest we all perish:" and they engage Moses to intercede for them, that they may not be all consumed with dying. Thus the point was gained, and in this matter God quite took away their murmurings, and henceforward they acquiesced.

Note, When God judges he will over come, and, one way or other, will oblige the most obstinate gainsayers to confess their folly sooner or later, and that wherein they dealt proudly

he was above them. Vicisti Galilæe--O Galilæan, thou hast conquered!

13 Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

Numbers-18

Provision for the Priests and Levites

1 And the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

2 And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee *shall minister* before the tabernacle of witness.

3 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.

The coherence of this chapter with that foregoing is very observable.

I The people, in the close of that chapter, had complained of the difficulty and peril that there were in drawing near to God, which put them under some dreadful apprehensions that the tabernacle in the midst of them, which they hoped would have been their joy and glory, would rather be their terror and ruin. Now, in answer to this complaint, God here gives them to understand by Aaron that the priests should come near for them as their representatives; so that, though the people were obliged to keep their distance, yet that should not at all redound to their disgrace or prejudice, but their comfortable communion with God should be kept up by the interposition of the priests.

II. A great deal of honour God had now lately put upon Aaron; his rod had budded and blossomed, when the rods of

the rest of the princes remained dry, and destitute both of fruit and ornament. Now lest Aaron should be puffed up with the abundance of the favours that were done him, and the miracles that were wrought for the support of him in his high station, God comes to him to remind him of the burden that was laid upon him, and the duty required from him as a priest. He would see reason not to be proud of his preferment, but to receive the honours of his office with reverence and holy trembling, when he considered how great was the charge committed to him, and how hard it would be for him to give a good account of it. Be not high-minded, but fear.

1. God tells him of the danger that attended his dignity, Nu 18:1.

(1.) That both the priests and Levites (thou, and thy sons, and thy father's house) should bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; that is, if the sanctuary were profaned by the intrusion of strangers, or persons in their uncleanness, the blame should lie upon the Levites and priests, who ought to have kept them off. Though the sinner that thrust in presumptuously should die in his iniquity, yet his blood should be required at the hands of the watchmen. Or it may be taken more generally: "If any of the duties or offices of the sanctuary be neglected, if any service be not done in its season or not according to the law, if any thing be lost or misplaced in the removal of the sanctuary, you shall be accountable for it, and answer it at your peril."

(2.) That the priests should themselves bear the iniquity of the priesthood; that is, if they either neglected any part of their work or permitted any other persons to invade their office, and take their work out of their hands, they should bear the blame of it. Note, The greater the trust is of work and power that is committed to us the greater is our danger of contracting guilt, by falsifying and betraying that trust. This is a good reason why we should neither be envious at others' honours nor ambitious ourselves of high places, because great dignity

exposes us to great iniquity. Those that are entrusted with the charge of the sanctuary will have a great deal to answer for. Who would covet the care of souls who considers the account that must be given of that care?

2. He tells him of the duty that attended his dignity.

(1.) That he and his sons must minister before the tabernacle of witness (Nu 18:2); that is (as bishop Patrick explains it), before the most holy place, in which the ark was, on the outside of the veil of that tabernacle, but within the door of the tabernacle, of the congregation. They were to attend the golden altar, the table, and candlestick, which no Levite might approach to. You shall serve, Nu 18:7. Not, "You shall rule" (it was never intended that they should lord it over God's heritage), but "You shall serve God and the congregation." Note, The priesthood is a service. If any desire the office of a bishop he desires a good work. Ministers must remember that they are ministers, that is, servants, of whom it is required that they be humble, diligent, and faithful.

(2.) That the Levites must assist him and his sons, and minister to them in all the service of the tabernacle (Nu 18:2-4), though they must by no means come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary, nor at the altar meddle with the great services of burning the fat and sprinkling the blood. Aaron's family was very small, and, as it increased, the rest of the families of Israel would increase likewise, so that the hands of the priests neither were now nor were likely to be sufficient for all the service of the tabernacle; therefore (says God) the Levites shall be joined to thee, Nu 18:2, and again Nu 18:4, where there seems to be an allusion to the name of Levi, which signifies joined. Many of the Levites had of late set themselves against Aaron, but henceforward God promises that they should be heartily joined to him in interest and affection, and should no more contest with him. It was a good sign to Aaron that God owned him when he inclined the hearts of those concerned to own him too. The Levites are

said to be given as a gift to the priests, Nu 18:6. Note, We are to value it as a great gift of the divine bounty to have those joined to us that will be helpful and serviceable to us in the service of God.

(3.) That both priests and Levites must carefully watch against the profanation of sacred things. The Levites must keep the charge of the tabernacle, that no stranger (that is, none who upon any account was forbidden to come) might come nigh (Nu 18:4), and that upon pain of death, Nu 18:7. And the priests must keep the charge of the sanctuary (Nu 18:5), must instruct the people, and admonish them concerning the due distance they were to keep, and not suffer them to break the bounds set them, as Korah's company had done, that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.

Note, The preventing of sin is the preventing of wrath; and the mischief sin has done should be a warning to us for the future to watch against it both in ourselves and others.

4 And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you.

5 And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.

6 And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you *they are* given *as* a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

7 Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office *unto you as* a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

8 And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.

9 This shall be thine of the most holy things, *reserved* from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin

offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall *be* most holy for thee and for thy sons.

10 In the most holy *place* shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee.

11 And this is thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it.

12 All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee.

The priest's service is called a warfare; and who goes a warfare at his own charges? As they were well employed, so they were well provided for, and well paid. None shall serve God for nought. All believers are spiritual priests, and God has promised to take care of them; they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed, and shall not want any good thing. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is. And from this plentiful provision here made for the priests the apostle infers that it is the duty of Christian churches to maintain their ministers; those that served at the altar lived upon the altar. So those that preach the gospel should live upon the gospel, and live comfortably, 1Co 9:13,14. Scandalous maintenance makes scandalous ministers. Now observe,

1. That much of the provision that was made for them arose out of the sacrifices which they themselves were employed to offer. They had the skins of almost all the sacrifices, which they might sell, and they had a considerable share out of the meat-offerings, sin-offerings, &c. Those that had the charge of the offerings had the benefit, Nu 18:8. Note, God's work is its own wages, and his service carries its recompence along with it. Even in keeping God's commandments there is great reward. The present pleasures of religion are part of its pay.

2. That they had not only a good table kept for them, but money likewise in their pockets for the redemption of the

first-born, and those firstlings of cattle which might not be offered in sacrifice. Thus their maintenance was such as left them altogether disentangled from the affairs of this life; they had no grounds to occupy, no land to till, no vineyards to dress, no cattle to tend, no visible estate to take care of, and yet had a more plentiful income than any other families whatsoever. Thus God ordered it that they might be the more entirely addicted to their ministry, and not diverted from it, nor disturbed in it, by any worldly care or business (the ministry requires a whole man); and that they might be examples of living by faith, not only in God's providence, but in his ordinance. They lived from hand to mouth, that they might learn to take no thought for the morrow; sufficient for the day would be the provision thereof: and they had no estates to leave their children, that they might by faith leave their children, that they might by faith leave them to the care of that God who had fed them all their lives long.

3. Of the provision that was made for their tables some is said to be most holy (Nu 18:9,10), which was to be eaten by the priests themselves, and in the court of the tabernacle only; but other perquisites were less holy, of which their families might eat, at their own houses, provided they were clean, Nu 18:11-13. See Le 21:10-12, &c.

4. It is commanded that the best of the oil, and the best of the wine and wheat, should be offered for the first-fruits unto the Lord, which the priest were to have, Nu 18:12. Note, We must always serve and honour God with the best we have, for he is the best, and best deserves it; he is the first, and therefore must have the first ripe. Those that think to save charges by putting God off with the refuse do but deceive themselves, for God is not mocked. 5. All this is given to the priests by reason of the anointing, Nu 18:8. It was not for the sake of their personal merits above other Israelites that they had these tributes paid to them, be it known unto them; but purely for the sake of the office to which they were anointed. Thus all the comforts that are given to the Lord's people are given

them by reason of the anointing which they have received. It is said to be given them by an ordinance for ever (Nu 18:8), and it is a covenant of salt for ever, Nu 18:19. As long as the priesthood should continue this should continue to be the maintenance of it, that this lamp might not go out for want of oil to keep it burning. Thus provision is made that a gospel ministry should continue till Christ comes, by an ordinance for ever. Lo, I am with you (that is their maintenance and support) always, even to the end of the world. Thanks be to the Redeemer, it is the word which he has commanded to a thousand generations.

13 *And* whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto
the Lord, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house
shall eat *of* it.
14 Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine.
15 Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring
unto the Lord, *whether it be* of men or beasts, shall be thine:
nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the
firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.
16 And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou
redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five
shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which *is* twenty gerahs.
17 But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling
of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they *are* holy: thou shalt sprinkle
their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat *for* an offering
made by fire, for a sweet savor unto the Lord.
18 And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the
right shoulder are thine.
19 All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of
Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy
daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it *is* a covenant of salt for
ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee.
20 And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance
in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I *am*
thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.
21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel
for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, *even* the service
of the tabernacle of the congregation.

22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

They must have no inheritance in the land; only cities to dwell in were afterwards allowed them, but no ground to occupy: Thou shalt not have any part among them, Nu 18:20. It is repeated again Nu 18:23, and again Nu 18:24, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance, either by purchase or descent. God would have them comfortably provided for, but would not have their families over-rich, lest they should think themselves above that work which their wages supposed and obliged them constantly to attend upon. As Israel was a peculiar people, and not to be numbered among the nations, so Levi was a peculiar tribe, and not to be settled as the rest of the tribes, but in all respects distinguished from them. A good reason is given why they must have no inheritance in the land, for, says God, I am thy part, and thy inheritance. Note, Those that have God for their inheritance and their portion for ever ought to look with a holy contempt and indifference upon the inheritances of this world, and not covet their portion in it. "The Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him, and not depend upon any thing I have on this earth," La 3:24. The Levites shall have no inheritance, and yet they shall live very comfortably and plentifully--to teach us that Providence has various ways of supporting those that live in a dependence upon it; the fowls reap not, and yet are fed, the lilies spin not, and yet are clothed, the Levites have no inheritance in Israel, and yet live better than any other tribe. The repetition of that caution, that no Israelite should approach the tabernacle, comes in suitable, though somewhat abruptly, Nu 18:22. It seems set in opposition to that order concerning the priests and Levites that they should have no inheritance in Israel, to show how God dispenses his favours variously. The Levites have the honour of attending the tabernacle, which is denied the Israelites; but then the Israelites have the honour of inheritances in Canaan, which is denied the Levites; thus each is kept from either envying or despising the other, and both have reason to rejoice in their lot. The Israelites must not come nigh the tabernacle, but then

the Levites must have no inheritance in the land; if ministers expect that people should keep in their sphere, and not intermeddle with sacred offices, let them keep in theirs, and not entangle themselves in secular affairs.

23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer *as* a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

25 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave offering of it for the Lord, *even* a tenth *part* of the tithe.

27 And *this* your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though *it were* the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

28 Thus ye also shall offer a heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest.

But they must both have tithes of the land. Besides the first-fruits which were appropriated to the priests, which, the Jews say, were to be a fiftieth part, or at least a sixtieth, the tithe also was appropriated.

1 The Levites had the tithes of the people's increase (Nu 18:21): I have given (whose the whole is) all the tenths in Israel, of all the productions of the land, to the children of Levi, to be divided among them in just proportions, for their service which they serve. The Levites were the smallest tribe of the twelve, and yet, besides all other advantages, they had a tenth part of the yearly profits, without the trouble and expense of ploughing and sowing; such care did God take of those that were devoted to his service; not only that they

might be well maintained, but that they might be honoured with a national acknowledgment of the good services they did to the public, and owned as God's agents and receivers; for that which was a heave-offering, or an offering lifted heavenward unto the Lord, was by him consigned to the Levites.

2. The priests had the tenths of the Levites' tithes settled upon them. The order for this Moses is directed to give to the Levites, whom God would have to pay it with cheerfulness, rather than the priests to demand it with authority: Speak to the Levites that it be offered by them, rather than levied upon them. Now observe,

(1.) The Levites were to give God his dues out of their tithes, as well as the Israelites out of their increase. They were God's tenants, and rent was expected from them, nor were they exempted by their office. Thus now, ministers must be charitable out of what they receive; and the more freely they have received the more freely they must give, and be examples of liberality. You shall offer a heave-offering to the Lord, Nu 18:26. Those that are employed to assist the devotions of others must be sure to pay their own, as a heave-offering to the Lord. Prayers and praises lifted up to God, or rather the heart lifted up in them, are now our heave-offerings. This (says God) shall be reckoned to you as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor; that is, though it was not the fruit of their ground, nor of their own labour, as the tithes of other Israelites were, yet being of such as they had it should be accepted, to the sanctifying of all the rest.

(2.) This was to be given to Aaron the priest (Nu 18:28), and to his successors the high priests, to be divided and disposed of in such proportions as they should think fit among the inferior priests. Most of the profits of the priests' office, which were appointed in the former part of the chapter, arising from the sacrifices, those priests had the benefit of who constantly attended at the altar; but, forasmuch as there were many priests employed in the country to teach and rule, those tithes

taken by the Levites, it is probable, were directed by the high priest for their maintenance. It is the probable conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick that the tenth of this last tenth was reserved for the high priest himself, to support his state and dignity; for otherwise we read not of any peculiar provision made for him.

(3.) When the Levites had thus paid the tenth of their income, as a heave-offering to the Lord, they had themselves the comfortable enjoyment of the other nine parts (Nu 18:30): "When you have thus heaved the best from it (for still God's part must be the best) then you shall eat the rest, not as a holy thing, but with the same freedom that the other Israelites eat their part with, in every place, you and your households," Nu 18:31. See here what is the way to have the comfort of all our worldly possessions so as to bear no sin by reason of them, as it follows, Nu 18:32.

[1.] We must be sure that what we have be got honestly and in the service of God. It is your reward for your service; that meat is the best eating that is first earned; but, if any will not work, neither shall he eat, 2Th 3:10. And that seems to be spoken of as having a particular comfort and satisfaction in it which is the reward of faithful service done in the tabernacle of the congregation.

[2.] We must be sure that God has his dues out of it. Then we have the comfort of our substance when we have honoured the Lord with it. The you shall bear no sin by reason of it, when you have heaved the best from it. This intimates that we must never feed ourselves without fear, lest our table become a snare, and we bear sin by reason of it; and that therefore we are concerned to give alms of such things as we have, that all may be clean and comfortable to us.

29 Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the Lord, of all the best thereof, *even* the hallowed part thereof out of it.

30 Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress.
31 And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it *is* your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.
32 And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.

Numbers-19

The Purification of the Unclean

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
2 This *is* the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein *is* no blemish, *and* upon which never came yoke.
3 And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and *one* shall slay her before his face:
4 and Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times.

We have here the divine appointment concerning the solemn burning of a red heifer to ashes, and the preserving of the ashes, that of them might be made, not a beautifying, but a purifying, water, for that was the utmost the law reached to; it offered not to adorn as the gospel does, but to cleanse only. This burning of the heifer, though it was not properly a sacrifice of expiation, being not performed at the altar, yet was typical of the death and sufferings of Christ, by which he intended, not only to satisfy God's justice, but to purify and pacify our consciences, that we may have peace with God and also peace in our own bosoms, to prepare for which Christ died, not only like the bulls and goats at the altar, but like the heifer without the camp.

I. There was a great deal of care employed in the choice of the heifer that was to be burnt, much more than in the choice of any other offering, Nu 19:2. It must not only be without blemish, typifying the spotless purity and sinless perfection of the Lord Jesus, but it must a red heifer, because of the rarity of the colour, that it might be the more remarkable: the Jews say, "If but two hairs were black or white, it was unlawful." Christ, as man, was the Son of Adam, red earth, and we find him red in his apparel, red with his own blood, and red with the blood of his enemies. And it must be one on which never came yoke, which was not insisted on in other sacrifices, but thus was typified the voluntary offer of the Lord Jesus, when he said, Lo, I come, He was bound and held with no other cords than those of his own love. This heifer was to be provided at the expense of the congregation, because they were all to have a joint interest in it; and so all believers have in Christ.

II. There was to be a great deal of ceremony in the burning of it. The care of doing it was committed to Eleazar, not to Aaron himself, because it was not fit that he should do any thing to render himself ceremonially unclean, no, not so much as till the evening (Nu 19:8); yet it being an affair of great concern especially in the significancy of it, it was to be performed by him that was next to Aaron in dignity. The chief priests of that time had the principal hand in the death of Christ. Now,

1 The heifer was to be slain without the camp, as an impure thing, which bespeaks the insufficiency of the methods prescribed by the ceremonial law to take away sin. So far were they from cleansing effectually that they were themselves unclean; as if the pollution that was laid upon them continued to cleave to them. Yet, to answer this type, our Lord Jesus, being made sin and a curse for us, suffered without the gate, Heb 13:12.

2. Eleazar was to sprinkle the blood directly before the door of the tabernacle, and looking steadfastly towards it, Nu 19:4. This made it in some sort an expiation; for the sprinkling of the blood before the Lord was the chief solemnity in all the sacrifices of atonement; therefore, though this was not done at the altar, yet, being done towards the sanctuary, it was intimated that the virtue and validity of it depended upon the sanctuary, and were derived from it. This signified the satisfaction that was made to God by the death of Christ, our great high priest, who by the eternal Spirit (and the Spirit is called the finger of God, as Ainsworth observes, Lu 11:20) offered himself without spot unto God; directly before the sanctuary, when he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. It also signifies how necessary it was to the purifying of our hearts that satisfaction should be made to divine justice. This sprinkling of the blood put virtue into the ashes.

3. The heifer was to be wholly burnt, Nu 19:5. This typified the extreme sufferings of our Lord Jesus, both in soul and body, as a sacrifice made by fire. The priest was to cast into the fire, while it was burning, cedarwood, hyssop, and scarlet, which were used in the cleansing of lepers (Le 14:6,7), that the ashes of these might be mingled with the ashes of the heifer, because they were designed for purification.

4. The ashes of the heifer (separated as well as they could from the ashes of the wood wherewith it was burnt) were to be carefully gathered up by the hand of a clean person, and (as the Jews say) pounded and sifted, and so laid up for the use of the congregation, as there was occasion (Nu 19:9), not only for that generation, but for posterity; for the ashes of this one heifer were sufficient to season as many vessels of water as the people of Israel would need for many ages. The Jews say that this one served till the captivity, nearly 1000 years, and that there was never another heifer burnt till Ezra's time, after their return, to which tradition of theirs, grounded (I suppose) only upon the silence of their old records, I see no reason we have to give credit, since in the later times of their

church, of which they had more full records, they find eight burnt between Ezra's time and the destruction of the second temple, which was about 500 years, These ashes are said to be laid up here as a purification for sin, because, though they were intended to purify only from ceremonial uncleanness, yet they were a type of that purification for sin which our Lord Jesus made by his death. Ashes mixed with water are used in scouring, but these had their virtue purely from the divine institution, and their accomplishment and perfection in Christ, who is the end of this law for righteousness. Now observe,

(1.) That the water of purification was made so by the ashes of a heifer, whose blood was sprinkled before the sanctuary; so that which cleanses our consciences is the abiding virtue of the death of Christ; it is his blood that cleanses from all sin, 1Jo 1:7.

(2.) That the ashes were sufficient for all the people. There needed not to be a fresh heifer slain for every person or family that had occasion to be purified, but this one was enough for all, even for the strangers that sojourned among them (Nu 19:10); so there is virtue enough in the blood of Christ for all that repent and believe the gospel, for every Israelite, and not for their sins only, but for the sins of the whole world, 1Jo 2:2.

(3.) That these ashes were capable of being preserved without waste to many ages. No bodily substance is so incorruptible as ashes are, which (says bishop Patrick) made these a very fit emblem of the everlasting efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. He is able to save, and, in order to that, able to cleanse, to the uttermost, both of person and times.

(4.) These ashes were laid up as a stock or treasure, for the constant purification of Israel from their pollutions; so the blood of Christ is laid up for us in the word and sacraments, as an inexhaustible fountain of merit, to which by faith we

may have recourse daily for the purging of our consciences; see Zec 13:1.

5. All those that were employed in this service were made ceremonially unclean by it; even Eleazar himself, though he did but sprinkle the blood, Nu 19:7. He that burned the heifer was unclean (Nu 19:8), and he that gathered up the ashes (Nu 19:10); so all that had a hand in putting Christ to death contracted guilt by it: his betrayer, his prosecutors, his judge, his executioner, all did what they did with wicked hands, though it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Ac 2:23); yet some of them were, and all might have been cleansed by the virtue of that same blood which they had brought themselves under the guilt of. Some make this to signify the imperfection of the legal services, and their insufficiency to take away sin, inasmuch as those who prepared for the purifying of others were themselves polluted by the preparation. The Jews say, This is a mystery which Solomon himself did not understand, that the same thing should pollute those that were clean and purify those that were unclean. But (says bishop Patrick) it is not strange to those who consider that all the sacrifices which were offered for sin were therefore looked upon as impure, because the sins of men were laid upon them, as all our sins were upon Christ, who therefore is said to be made sin for us, 2Co 5:21.

5 And *one* shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh,
and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:
6 and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and
cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer.
7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in
water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest
shall be unclean until the even.
8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe
his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even.
9 And a man that *is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and
lay *them* up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept
for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of
separation: it *is* a purification for sin.

10 And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

11 He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.

12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.

13 Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness *is* yet upon him.

Directions are here given concerning the use and application of the ashes which were prepared for purification. they were laid up to be laid out; and therefore, though now one place would serve to keep them in, while all Israel lay so closely encamped, yet it is probable that afterwards, when they came to Canaan, some of these ashes were kept in every town, for there would be daily use for them. Observe,

I. In what cases there needed a purification with these ashes. No other is mentioned here than the ceremonial uncleanness that was contracted by the touch of a dead body, or of the bone or grave of a dead man, or being in the tent or house where a dead body lay, Nu 19:11,14-16. This I look upon to have been one of the greatest burdens of the ceremonial law, and one of the most unaccountable. He that touched the carcase of an unclean beast, or any living man under the greatest ceremonial uncleanness, was made unclean by it only till the evening, and needed only common water to purify himself with; but he that came near the dead body of man, woman, or child, much bear the reproach of his uncleanness seven days, must twice be purified with the water of separation, which he could not obtain without trouble and charge, and till he was purified must not come near the sanctuary upon pain of death.

1. This was strange, considering,

(1.) that whenever any died (and we are in deaths oft) several persons must unavoidable contract this pollution, the body must be stripped, washed, wound up, carried out, and buried, and this could not be done without many hands, and yet all defiled, which signifies that in our corrupt and fallen state there is none that lives and sins not; we cannot avoid being polluted by the defiling world we pass through, and we offend daily, yet the impossibility of our being sinless does not make sin the less polluting.

(2.) that taking care of the dead, to see them decently buried, is not only necessary, but a very good office, and an act of kindness, both to the honour of the dead and the comfort of the living, and yet uncleanness was contracted by it, which intimates that the pollutions of sin mix with and cleave to our best services. There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not; we are apt some way or other to do amiss even in our doing good.

(3.) That this pollution was contracted by what was done privately in their own houses, which intimates (as bishop Patrick observes) that God sees what is done in secret, and nothing can be concealed from the divine Majesty.

(4.) This pollution might be contracted, and yet a man might never know it, as by the touch of a grave which appeared not, of which our Saviour says, Those that walk over it are not aware of it (Lu 11:44), which intimates the defilement of the conscience by sins of ignorance, and the cause we have to cry out, "Who can understand his errors?" and to pray, "Cleanse us from secret faults, faults which we ourselves do not see ourselves guilty of."

2. But why did the law make a dead corpse such a defiling thing?

(1.) Because death is the wages of sin, entered into the world by it, and reigns by the power of it. Death to mankind is another thing from what it is to other creatures: it is a curse, it is the execution of the law, and therefore the defilement of death signifies the defilement of sin.

(2.) Because the law could not conquer death, nor abolish it and alter the property of it, as the gospel does by bringing life and immortality to light, and so introducing a better hope. Since our Redeemer was dead and buried, death is no more destroying to the Israel of God, and therefore dead bodies are no more defiling; but while the church was under the law, to show that it made not the comers thereunto perfect, the pollution contracted by dead bodies could not but form in their minds melancholy and uncomfortable notions concerning death, while believers now through Christ can triumph over it. O grave! Where is thy victory? Where is thy pollution?

II. How the ashes were to be used and applied in these cases.

1. A small quantity of the ashes must be put into a cup of spring water, and mixed with the water, which thereby was made, as it is here called, a water of separation, because it was to be sprinkled on those who were separated or removed from the sanctuary by their uncleanness. As the ashes of the heifer signified the merit of Christ, so the running water signified the power and grace of the blessed Spirit, who is compared to rivers of living water; and it is by his operation that the righteousness of Christ is applied to us for our cleansing. Hence we are said to be washed, that is, sanctified and justified, not only in the name of the Lord Jesus, but by the Spirit of our God, 1Co 6:11,1Pe 1:2. Those that promise themselves benefit by the righteousness of Christ, while they submit not to the grace and influence of the Spirit, do but deceive themselves, for we cannot put asunder what God has

joined, nor be purified by the ashes otherwise than in the running water.

2. This water must be applied by a bunch of hyssop dipped in it, with which the person or thing to be cleansed must be sprinkled (Nu 19:18), in allusion to which David prays, Purge me with hyssop. Faith is the bunch of hyssop wherewith the conscience is sprinkled and the heart purified. Many might be sprinkled at once, and the water with which the ashes were mingled might serve for many sprinklings, till it was all spent; and a very little lighting upon a man served to purify him, if done with that intention. In allusion to this application of the water of separation by sprinkling, the blood of Christ is said to be the blood of sprinkling (12:24), and with it were are said to be sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb 10:22), that is, we are freed from the uneasiness that arises from a sense of our guilt. And it is foretold that Christ, by his baptism, shall sprinkle many nations, Isa 52:15.

3. The unclean person must be sprinkled with this water on the third day after his pollution, and on the seventh day, Nu 19:12-19. The days were reckoned (we may suppose) from the last time of his touching or coming near the dead body; for he would not begin the days of his cleansing while he was still under a necessity of repeating the pollution; but when the dead body was buried, so that there was no further occasion of meddling with it, then he began to reckon his days. Then, and then only, we may with comfort apply Christ's merit to our souls, when we have forsaken sin, and cease all fellowship with the unfruitful works of death and darkness. The repetition of the sprinkling teaches us often to renew the actings of repentance and faith, wash as Naaman, seven times; we need to do that often which is so necessary to be well done.

4. Though the pollution contracted was only ceremonial, yet the neglect of the purification prescribed would turn into moral guilt: He that shall be unclean and shall not purify

himself, that soul shall be cut off, Nu 19:20. Note, It is a dangerous thing to contemn divine institutions, though they may seem minute. A slight wound, if neglected, may prove fatal; a sin we call little, if not repented of, will be our ruin, when great sinners that repent shall find mercy. Our uncleanness separates us from God, but it is our being unclean and not purifying ourselves that will separate us for ever from him: it is not the wound that is fatal, so much as the contempt of the remedy.

5. Even he that sprinkled the water of separation, or touched it, or touched the unclean person, must be unclean till the evening, that is, must not come near the sanctuary on that day, Nu 19:21,22. Thus God would show them the imperfection of those services, and their insufficiency to purify the conscience, that they might look for the Messiah, who in the fulness of time should by the eternal Spirit offer himself without spot unto God, and so purge our consciences from dead works (that is, from sin, which defiles like a dead body, and is therefore called a body of death), that we may have liberty of access to the sanctuary, to serve the living God with living sacrifices.

14 This *is* the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that *is* in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.

15 And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, *is* unclean.

16 And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

17 And for an unclean *person* they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel:

18 and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip *it* in the water, and sprinkle *it* upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:

19 and the clean *person* shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify

himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

20 But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he *is* unclean.

21 And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even.

22 And whatsoever the unclean *person* toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth *it* shall be unclean until even.

Numbers-20

Water from the Rock

1 Then came the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

3 And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place?It *is* no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither *is* there any water to drink.

After thirty-eight years' tedious marches, or rather tedious rests, in the wilderness, backward towards the Red Sea, the armies of Israel now at length set their faces towards Canaan again, and had come not far off from the place where they were when, by the righteous sentence of divine Justice, they were made to begin their wanderings. Hitherto they had been led about as in a maze or labyrinth, while execution was doing upon the rebels that were sentenced; but they were now

brought into the right way again: they abode in Kadesh (Nu 20:1), not Kadesh-barnea, which was near the borders of Canaan, but another Kadesh on the confines of Edom, further off from the land of promise, yet in the way to it from the Red Sea, to which they had been hurried back. Now,

I. Here dies Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, and as it should seem older than either of them. She must have been so if she was that sister that was set to watch Moses when he was put into the ark of bulrushes, Ex 2:4. Miriam died there, Nu 20:1. She was a prophetess, and had been an instrument of much good to Israel, Mic 6:4. When Moses and Aaron with their rod went before them, to work wonders for them, Miriam with her timbrel went before them in praising God for these wondrous works (Ex 15:20), and therein did them real service; yet she had once been a murmurer (Nu 12:1), and must not enter Canaan.

II. Here there is another Meribah. One place we met with before of that name, in the beginning of their march through the wilderness, which was so called because of the chiding of the children of Israel, Ex 17:7. And now we have another place, at the latter end of their march, which bears the same name for the same reason: This is the water of Meribah, Nu 20:13. What was there done was here re-acted.

1. There was no water for the congregation, Nu 20:2 The water out of the rock of Rephidim had followed them while there was need of it; but it is probable that for some time they had been in a country where they were supplied in an ordinary way, and when common providence supplied them it was fit that the miracle should cease. But in this place it fell out that there was no water, or not sufficient for the congregation.

Note, We live in a wanting world, and, wherever we are, must expect to meet with some inconvenience or other. It is a great mercy to have plenty of water, a mercy which if we found the want of we should own the worth of.

2. Hereupon they murmured, mutinied (Nu 20:2), gathered themselves together, and took up arms against Moses and Aaron. They chid with them (Nu 20:3), spoke the same absurd and brutish language that their fathers had done before them.

(1.) They wished they had died as malefactors by the hands of divine justice, rather than thus seem for a while neglected by the divine mercy: Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! Instead of giving God thanks, as they ought to have done, for sparing them, they not only despise the mercy of their reprieve, but quarrel with it, as if God had done them a great deal of wrong in giving them their lives for a prey, and snatching them as brands out of the burning. But they need not wish that they had died with their brethren, they are here taking the ready way to die like their brethren in a little while. Woe unto those that desire the day of the Lord, Am 5:18.

(2.) They were angry that they were brought out of Egypt, and led through this wilderness, Nu 20:4,5. They quarrelled with Moses for that which they knew was the Lord's doing; they represented that as an injury which was the greatest favour that ever was done to any people. They prefer slavery before liberty, the house of bondage before the land of promise; and though, the present want was of water only, yet, now that they are disposed to find fault, it shall be looked upon as an insufferable hardship put upon them that they have not vines and figs. It was an aggravation of their crime,

[1.] That they had smarted so long for the discontents and distrusts of their fathers. They had borne their whoredoms now almost forty years in the wilderness (Nu 14:33); and yet they ventured in the same steps, and, as is charged upon Belshazzar, humbled not their hearts, though they knew all this, Da 5:22.

[2.] That they had had such long and constant experience of God's goodness to them, and of the tenderness and faithfulness of Moses and Aaron. [3.] That Miriam was now lately dead; and, having lost one of their leaders, they ought to have been more respectful to those that were left; but, as if they were resolved to provoke God to leave them as sheep without any shepherd, they grow outrageous against them: instead of condoling with Moses and Aaron for the death of their sister, they add affliction to their grief.

3. Moses and Aaron made them no reply, but retired to the door of the tabernacle to know God's mind in this case, Nu 20:6. There they fell on their faces, as formerly on the like occasion, to deprecate the wrath of God and to entreat direction from him. Here is no mention of any thing they said; they knew that God heard the murmurings of the people, and before him they humbly prostrate themselves, making intercessions with groanings that cannot be uttered. There they lay waiting for orders Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear.

4. God appeared, to determine the matter; not on his tribunal of justice, to sentence the rebels according to their deserts; no, he will not return to destroy Ephraim (Ho 11:9), will not always chide; see Ge 8:21. But he appeared,

(1.) On his throne of glory, to silence their unjust murmuring (Nu 20:6): The glory of the Lord appeared, to still the tumult of the people, by striking an awe upon them. Note, A believing sight of the glory of the Lord would be an effectual check to our lusts and passions, and would keep our mouths as with a bridle.

(2.) On his throne of grace, to satisfy their just desires. It was requisite that they should have water, and therefore, thought the manner of their petitioning for it was irregular and disorderly, yet God did not take that advantage against them to deny it to them, but gave immediate orders for their supply, Nu 20:8. Moses must a second time in God's name command

water out of a rock for them, to show that God is as able as ever to supply his people with good things, even in their greatest straits an in the utmost failure of second causes. Almighty power can bring water out of a rock, has done it, and can again, for his arm is not shortened. Lest it should be thought that there was some thing peculiar in the former rock itself, some secret spring which nature hid before in it, God here bids him broach another, and does not, as then, direct him which he must apply to, but lets him make use of which he pleased, or the first he came to; all alike to Omnipotence.

[1.] God bids him take the rod, that famous rod with which he summoned the plagues of Egypt, and divided the sea, that, having that in his hand, both he and the people might be reminded of the great things God had formerly done for them, and might be encouraged to trust in him now. This rod, it seems, was kept in the tabernacle (Nu 20:9), for it was the rod of God, the rod of his strength, as the gospel is called (Ps 110:2), perhaps in allusion to it.

[2.] God bids him gather the assembly, not the elders only, but the people, to be witnesses of what was done, that by their own eyes they might be convinced and made ashamed of their unbelief. There is no fallacy in God's works of wonder, and therefore they shun not the light, nor the inspection and enquiry of many witnesses.

[3.] He bids him speak to the rock, which would do as it was bidden, to shame the people who had been so often spoken to, and would not hear nor obey. Their hearts were harder than this rock, not so tender, not so yielding, not so obedient.

[4.] He promises that the rock should give forth water (Nu 20:8), and it did so (Nu 20:11): The water came out abundantly. This is an instance, not only of the power of God, that he could thus fetch honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, but of his mercy and grace, that he would do it for such a provoking people. This was a new generation

(most of the old stock were by this time worn off), yet they were as bad as those that went before them; murmuring ran in the blood, yet the entail of the divine favour was not cut off, but in this instance of it the divine patience shines as brightly as the divine power. He is God and not man, in sparing and pardoning; nay, he not only here gave them the drink which they drank of in common with their beasts (Nu 20:8), but in it he made them to drink spiritual drink, which typified spiritual blessings, for that rock was Christ.

5. Moses and Aaron acted improperly in the management of this matter, so much so that God in displeasure told them immediately that they should not have the honour of bringing Israel into Canaan, Nu 20:10-12.

(1.) This is a strange passage of story, yet very instructive.

[1.] It is certain that God was greatly offended, and justly, for he is never angry without cause. Though they were his servants, and had obtained mercy to be faithful, though they were his favourites, and such as he had highly honoured, yet for something they thought, or said, or did, upon this occasion, he put them under the disgrace and mortification of dying, as other unbelieving Israelites did, short of Canaan. And no doubt the crime deserved the punishment.

[2.] Yet it is uncertain what it was in this management that was so provoking to God. The fault was complicated.

First, They did not punctually observe their orders, but in some things varied from their commission; God bade them speak to the rock, and they spoke to the people, and smote the rock, which at this time they were not ordered to do, but they thought speaking would not do. When, in distrust of the power of the word, we have recourse to the secular power in matters of pure conscience, we do, as Moses here, smite the rock to which we should only speak,

Secondly, They assumed too much of the glory of this work of wonder to themselves: Must we fetch water? As if it were done by some power or worthiness of theirs. Therefore it is charged upon them (Nu 20:12) that they did not sanctify God, that is, they did not give him that glory of this miracle which was due unto his name.

Thirdly, Unbelief was the great transgression (Nu 20:12): You believed me not; nay, it is called rebelling against God's commandment, Nu 27:14. The command was to bring water out of the rock, but they rebelled against this command, by distrusting it, and doubting whether it would take effect or no. They speak doubtfully: Must we fetch water? And probably they did in some other ways discover an uncertainty in their own minds whether water would come or no for such a rebellious generation as this was. And perhaps they the rather questioned it, though God had promised it, because the glory of the Lord did not appear before them upon this rock, as it had done upon the rock in Rephidim, Ex 17:6. They would not take God's word without a sign. Dr. Lightfoot's notion of their unbelief is that they doubted whether now at last, when the forty years had expired, they should enter Canaan, and whether they must not for the murmurings of the people be condemned to another period of toil, because a new rock was now opened for their supply, which they took for an indication of their longer stay. And, if so, justly were they kept out of Canaan themselves, while the people entered at the time appointed.

Fourthly, They said and did all in heat and passion; this is the account given of the sin (Ps 106:33): They provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. It was in his passion that he called them rebels. It is true they were so; God had called them so; and Moses afterwards, in the way of a just reproof (De 9:24), calls them so without offence; but now it came from a provoked spirit, and was spoken unadvisedly: it was too much like Raca, and Thou fool. His smiting the rock

twice (it should seem, not waiting at all for the eruption of the water upon the first stroke) shows that he was in a heat. The same thing said and done with meekness may be justifiable which when said and done in anger may be highly culpable; see Jam 1:20.

Fifthly, That which aggravated all the rest, and made it the more provoking, was that it was public, before the eyes of the children of Israel, to whom they should have been examples of faith, and hope, and meekness. We find Moses guilty of sinful distrust, Nu 11:22,23. That was private between God and him, and therefore was only checked. But his was public; it dishonoured God before Israel, as if he grudged them his favours, and discouraged the people's hope in God, and therefore this was severely punished, and the more because of the dignity and eminency of those that offended.

(2.) From the whole we may learn,

[1.] That the best of men have their failings, even in those graces that they are most eminent for. The man Moses was very meek, and yet here he sinned in passion; wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

[2.] That God judges not as man judges concerning sins; we might think that there was not much amiss in what Moses said and did, yet God saw cause to animadvert severely upon it. He knows the frame of men's spirits, what temper they are of, and what temper they are in upon particular occasions, and from what thoughts and intents words and actions do proceed; and we are sure that therefore his judgment is according to truth, when it agrees not with ours.

[3.] that God not only takes notice of, and is displeased with, the sins of his people, but that the nearer any are to him the more offensive are their sins, Am 3:2. It should seem, the Psalmist refers to this sin of Moses and Aaron (Ps 99:8): Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest

vengeance on their inventions. As many are spared in this life and punished in the other, so many are punished in this life and saved in the other.

[4.] That, when our heart is hot within us, we are concerned to take heed that we offend not with our tongue.

Yet, [5.] It is an evidence of the sincerity of Moses, and his impartiality in writing, that he himself left this upon record concerning himself, and drew not a veil over his own infirmity, by which it appeared that in what he wrote, as well as what he did, he sought God's glory more than his own.

Lastly, The place is hereupon called Meribah, Nu 20:13. It is called Meribah-Kadesh (De 32:51), to distinguish it from the other Meribah. It is the water of strife; to perpetuate the remembrance of the people's sin, and Moses's, and yet of God's mercy, who supplied them with water, and owned and honoured Moses notwithstanding. Thus he was sanctified in the, as the Holy One of Israel, so he is called when his mercy rejoices against judgment, Ho 11:9. Moses and Aaron did not sanctify God as they ought in the eyes of Israel (Nu 20:12), but God was sanctified in them; for he will not be a loser in his honour by any man. If he be not glorified by us, he will be glorified upon us.

6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto
the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon
their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.
7 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and
Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes;
and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them
water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their
beasts drink.
9 And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded
him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before
the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch
you water out of this rock?
11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock
twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation
drank, and their beasts *also.*
12 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed
me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore
ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given
them.
13 This is the water of Meribah [strife]; because the children of Israel
strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.

Edom Refuses Passage to Israel

14 And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom,
Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath
befallen us:
15 how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt
a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:

We have here the application made by Israel to the Edomites. The nearest way to Canaan from the place where Israel now lay encamped was through the country of Edom. Now,

I. Moses sends ambassadors to treat with the king of Edom for leave to pass through his country, and gives them instructions what to say, Nu 20:14-17.

1. They are to claim kindred with the Edomites: Thus saith thy brother Israel. Both nations descended from Abraham and Isaac, their common ancestors; Esau and Jacob, the two fathers of their respective nations, were twin-brothers; and therefore, for relation-sake, they might reasonably expect this kindness from them; nor needed the Edomites to fear that their brother Israel had any ill design upon them, or would take any advantages against them.

2. They are to give a short account of the history and present state of Israel, which, they take it for granted, the Edomites were no strangers to. And in this there was a double plea:--

(1.) Israel had been abused by the Egyptians, and therefore ought to be pitied and succoured by their relations: "The Egyptians vexed us and our fathers, but we may hope our brethren the Edomites will not be so vexatious."

(2.) Israel had been wonderfully saved by the Lord, and therefore ought to be countenanced and favoured (Nu 20:16): "We cried unto the Lord, and he sent an angel, the angel of his presence, the angel of the covenant, the eternal Word, who had brought us forth out of Egypt, and led us hither." It was therefore the interest of the Edomites to ingratiate themselves with a people that had so great an interest in heaven and were so much its favourites, and it was at their peril if they offered them any injury. It is our wisdom and duty to be kind to those whom God is pleased to own, and to take his people for our people. Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.

3. They are humbly to beg a passport through their country. Though God himself, in the pillar of cloud and fire, was Israel's guide, in following which they might have justified their passing through any man's ground against all the world, yet God would have this respect paid to the Edomites, to show that no man's property ought to be invaded under colour of religion. Dominion is founded in providence, not in grace. Thus when Christ was to pass through a village of the Samaritans, to whom his coming was likely to be offensive, he sent messengers before his face to ask leave, Lu 9:52. Those that would receive kindness must not disdain to request it.

4. They are to give security for the good behaviour of the Israelites in this march, that they would keep in the king's high road, that they would commit no trespass upon any man's property, either in ground or water, that they would not

so much as make use of a well without paying for it, and that they would make all convenient speed, as fast as they could well go on their feet, Nu 20:17,19. Nothing could be offered more fair and neighbourly.

II The ambassadors returned with a denial, Nu 20:18. Edom, that is, the king of Edom, as protector of his country, said, Thou shalt not pass by me; and, when the ambassadors urged it further, he repeated the denial (Nu 20:20) and threatened, if they offered to enter his country, it should be at their peril; he raised his trained bands to oppose them. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage. This was owing,

1. To their jealousy of the Israelites; they feared they should receive promises. And truly, had this numerous army been under any other discipline and command than that of the righteous God himself, who would no more suffer them to do wrong than to take wrong, there might have been cause for this jealousy; but what could they fear from a nation that had statutes and judgments so righteous?

2. It was owing to the old enmity which Esau bore to Israel. If they had no reason to fear damage by them, yet they were not willing to show so much kindness to them. Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing, and now the hatred revived, when the blessing was ready to be inherited. God would hereby discover the ill-nature of the Edomites to their shame, and try the good-nature of the Israelites to their honour: they turned away from him, and did not take this occasion to quarrel with him. Note, We must not think it strange if the most reasonable requests be denied by unreasonable men, and if those be affronted by men whom God favours. I as a deaf man heard not. After this indignity which the Edomites offered to Israel God gave them a particular caution not to abhor an Edomite (De 23:7), though the Edomites had shown such an abhorrence of them, to teach us in such cases not to meditate revenge.

16 and when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an
angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we *are*
in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border.
17 Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass
through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink
of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will
not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy
borders.
18 And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come
out against thee with the sword.
19 And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high
way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it:
I will only, without *doing* any thing *else,* go through on my feet.
20 And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out
against him with much people, and with a strong hand.
21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border:
wherefore Israel turned away from him.

Aaron Dies on Mount Hor

22 And the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation,
journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor.
23 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the
coast of the land of Edom, saying,
24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into
the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye
rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.
25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount
Hor:

The chapter began with the funeral of Miriam, and it ends with the funeral of her brother Aaron. When death comes into a family, it often strikes double. Israel had not improved the former affliction they were under, by the death of the prophetess, and therefore, soon after, God took away their priest, to try if they would lay that to heart. This happened at the very next stage, when they removed to Mount Hor, fetching a compass round the Edomites' country, leaving it on

their left hand. Wherever we go, death attends us, and the graves are ready for us.

I. God bids Aaron die, Nu 20:24. God takes Moses and Aaron aside, and tells them, Aaron shall be gathered to his people. These two dear brothers are told that they must part. Aaron the elder must die first, but Moses is not likely to be long after him; so that it is but for a while, a little while, that they are parted.

1. There is something of displeasure in these orders. Aaron must not enter Canaan, because he had failed in his duty at the waters of strife. The mention of this, no doubt, went to the heart of Moses, who knew himself, perhaps, at that time, to be the guiltier of the two.

2. There is much of mercy in them. Aaron, though he dies for his transgression, is not put to death as a malefactor, by a plague, or fire from heaven, but dies with ease and in honour. He is not cut off from his people, as the expression usually is concerning those that die by the hand of divine justice, but he is gathered to his people, as one that died in the arms of divine grace.

3. There is much of type and significancy in them. Aaron must not enter Canaan, to show that the Levitical priesthood could make nothing perfect: that must be done by the bringing in of a better hope. Those priests could not continue by reason of sin and death, but the priesthood of Christ, being undefiled, is unchangeable, and to this, which abides for ever, Aaron must resign all his honour, Heb 7:23-25.

II. Aaron submits, and dies in the method and manner appointed, and, for aught that appears, with as much cheerfulness as if he had been going to bed.

1. He puts on his holy garments to take his leave of them, and goes up with his brother and son to the top of Mount Hor, and

probably some of the elders of Israel with him, Nu 20:27. They went up in the sight of all the congregation, who, it is likely, were told on what errand they went up; by this solemn procession Aaron lets Israel know that he is neither afraid nor ashamed to die, but, when the bridegroom comes, can trim his lamp and go forth to meet him. His going up the hill to die signified that the death of saints (and Aaron is called the saint of the Lord) is their ascension; they rather go up than go down to death.

2. Moses, whose hands had first clothed Aaron with his priestly garments, now strips him of them; for, in reverence to the priesthood, it was not fit that he should die in them. Note, Death will strip us; naked we came into the world, and naked we must go out. We shall see little reason to be proud of our clothes, our ornaments, or marks of honour, if we consider how soon death will strip us of our glory, divest us of all our offices and honours, and take the crown off from our head.

3. Moses immediately puts the priestly garments upon Eleazar his son, clothes him with his father's robe, and strengthens him with his girdle, Isa 22:21. Now,

(1.) This was a great comfort to Moses, by whose hand the law of the priesthood was given to see that it should be kept up in a succession, and that a lamp was ordained for the anointed, which should not be extinguished by death itself. This was a happy earnest and indication to the church of the care God would take that as one generation of ministers and Christians (spiritual priests) passes away another generation should come up instead of it.

(2.) It was a great satisfaction to Aaron to see his son, who was dear to him, thus preferred, and his office, which was dearer, thus preserved and secured, and especially to see in this a figure of Christ's everlasting priesthood, in which alone his would be perpetuated. Now, Lord, might Aaron say, let

thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation.

(3.) It was a great kindness to the people. The installing of Eleazar before Aaron was dead would prevent those who bore ill-will to Aaron's family from attempting to set up another upon his death, in competition with his son. What could they do when the matter was already settled? It would likewise encourage those among them that feared God, and be a token for good to them, that he would not leave them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail.

4. Aaron died there. Quickly after he was stripped of his priestly garments, he laid himself down and died contentedly; for a good man would desire, if it were the will of God, not to outlive his usefulness. Why should we covet to continue any longer in this world than while we may do God and our generation some service in it?

5. Moses and Eleazar, with those that attended them, buried Aaron where he died, as appears by De 10:6, and then came down from the mount. And now, when they came down, and had left Aaron behind, it might be proper for them to think that he had rather gone up to the better world and had left them behind.

6. All the congregation mourned for Aaron thirty days, Nu 20:29. Though the loss was well made up in Eleazar, who, being in the prime of life, was fitter from public service that Aaron would have been if he had lived, yet it was a debt owing to their deceased high priest to mourn for him. While he lived, they were murmuring at him upon all occasions, but now that he was dead they mourned for him. Thus many are taught to lament the loss of those mercies which they would not learn to be thankful for the enjoyment of. Many good men have had more honour done to their memories than ever they had to their persons, witness those that were persecuted while

they lived, but when they were dead had their sepulchres garnished.

26 and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son:
and Aaron shall be gathered *unto his people,* and shall die there.
27 And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into
mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.
28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon
Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and
Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.
29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they
mourned for Aaron thirty days, *even* all the house of Israel.

Numbers-21

The Canaanites Attack Israel

1 And when *king* Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard
tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against
Israel, and took *some* of them prisoners.

Here is,

1 The descent which Arad the Canaanite made upon the camp of Israel, hearing that they came by the way of the spies; for, though the spies which Moses had sent thirty-eight years before then passed and repassed unobserved, yet their coming, and their errand, it is likely, were afterwards known to the Canaanites, gave them an alarm, and induced them to keep an eye upon Israel and get intelligence of all their motions. Now, when they understood that they were facing about towards Canaan, this Arad, thinking it policy to keep the war at a distance, made an onset upon them and fought with them. But it proved that he meddled to his own hurt; had he sat still, his people might have been last destroyed of all the Canaanites, but now they were the first. Thus those that are overmuch wicked die before their time, Ec 7:17.

2. His success at first in this attempt. His advance-guards picked up some straggling Israelites, and took them prisoners, Nu 21:1. This, no doubt, puffed him up, and he began to thin that he should have the honour of crushing this formidable body, and saving his country from the ruin which it threatened. It was likewise a trial to the faith of the Israelites and a check to them for their distrusts and discontents.

3. Israel's humble address to God upon this occasion, Nu 21:2. It was a temptation to them to murmur as their fathers did, and to despair of getting possession of Canaan; but God, who thus tried them by his providence, enabled them by his grace to quit themselves well in the trial, and to trust in him for relief against this fierce and powerful assailant. They, by their elders, in prayer for success, vowed a vow. Noe, When we are desiring and expecting mercy from God we should bind our souls with a bond that we will faithfully do our duty to him, particularly that we will honour him with the mercy we are in the pursuit of. Thus Israel here promised to destroy the cities of these Canaanites, as devoted to God, and not to take the spoil of them to their own use. If God would give them victory, he should have all the praise, and they would not make a gain of it to themselves. When we are in this frame we are prepared to receive mercy.

4. The victory which the Israelites obtained over the Canaanites, Nu 21:3. A strong party was sent out, probably under the command of Joshua, which not only drove back these Canaanites, but followed them to their cities, which probably lay on the edge of the wilderness, and utterly destroyed them, and so returned to the camp. Vincimur in prælie, sed non in bello--We lose a battle, but we finally triumph. What is said of the tribe of God is true of all God's Israel, a troop may overcome them, but they shall overcome at the last. The place was called Hormah, as a memorial of the destruction, for the terror of the Canaanites, and probably for warning to posterity not to attempt the rebuilding of these cities, which were destroyed as devoted to God and sacrifices

to divine justice. And it appears from the instance of Jericho that the law concerning such cities was that they should never be rebuilt. There seems to be an allusion to this name in the prophecy of the fall of the New Testament Babylon (Re 16:16), where its forces are said to be gathered together to a place called Armageddon--the destruction of a troop.

2 And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

3 And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah [utter destruction].

The Fiery Serpents

4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?For *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6 And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

Here is,

I The fatigue of Israel by a long march round the land of Edom, because they could not obtain passage through it the nearest way: The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way, Nu 21:4. Perhaps the way was rough and uneven, or foul and dirty; or it fretted them to go far about, and that they were not permitted to force their passage through the Edomites' country. Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit will always find something or other to make them uneasy.

II. Their unbelief and murmuring upon this occasion, Nu 21:5. Though they had just now obtained a glorious victory

over the Canaanites, and were going on conquering and to conquer, yet they speak very discontentedly of what God had done for them and distrustfully of what he would do, vexed that they were brought out of Egypt, that they had not bread and water as other people had by their own care and industry, but by miracle, they knew not how. They have bread enough and to spare; and yet they complain there is no bread, because, though they eat angels' food, yet they are weary of it; manna itself is loathed, and called light bread, fit for children, not for men and soldiers. What will those be pleased with whom manna will not please? Those that are disposed to quarrel will find fault where there is no fault to be found. Thus those who have long enjoyed the means of grace are apt to surfeit even on the heavenly manna, and to call it light bread. But let not the contempt which some cast upon the word of God cause us to value it the less: it is the bread of life, substantial bread, and will nourish those who by faith feed upon it to eternal life, whoever calls it light bread.

III. The righteous judgment which God brought upon them for their murmuring, Nu 21:6. He sent fiery serpents among them, which bit or stung many of them to death. The wilderness through which they had passed was all along infested with those fiery serpents, as appears, De 8:15. But hitherto God had wonderfully preserved his people from receiving hurt by them, till now that they murmured, to chastise them for which these animals, which hitherto had shunned their camp, now invade it. Justly are those made to feel God's judgments that are not thankful for his mercies. These serpents are called fiery, from their colour, or from their rage, or from the effects of their bitings, inflaming the body, putting it immediately into a high fever, scorching it with an insatiable thirst. They had unjustly complained for want of water (Nu 21:5), to chastise them for which God sends upon them this thirst, which no water would quench. Those that cry without cause have justly cause given them to cry out. They distrustfully concluded that they must die in the wilderness, and God took them at their word, chose their

delusions, and brought their unbelieving fears upon them; many of them did die. They had impudently flown in the face of God himself, and the poison of asps was under their lips, and now these fiery serpents (which, it should seem, were flying serpents, Isa 14:29) flew in their faces and poisoned them. They in their pride had lifted themselves up against God and Moses, and now God humbled and mortified them, by making these despicable animals a plague to them. That artillery is now turned against them which had formerly been made use of in their defence against the Egyptians. He that brought quails to feast them let them know that he could bring serpents to bite them; the whole creation is at war with those that are in arms against God.

IV. Their repentance and supplication to God under this judgment, Nu 21:7. They confess their fault: We have sinned. They are particular in their confession: We have spoken against the Lord, and against thee. It is to be feared that they would not have owned the sin if they had not felt the smart; but they relent under the rod; when he slew them, then they sought him. They beg the prayers of Moses for them, as conscious to themselves of their own unworthiness to be heard, and convinced of the great interest which Moses had in heaven. How soon is their tone altered! Those who had just before quarrelled with him as their worst enemy now make their court to him as their best friend, and choose him for their advocate with God. Afflictions often change men's sentiments concerning God's people, and teach them to value those prayers which, at a former period, they had scorned. Moses, to show that he had heartily forgiven them, blesses those who had cursed him, and prays for those who had despitefully used him Herein he was a type of Christ, who interceded for his persecutors, and a pattern to us to go and do likewise, and thus to show that we love our enemies.

V. The wonderful provision which God made for their relief. He did not employ Moses in summoning the judgment, but, that he might recommend him to the good affection of the

people, he made him instrumental in their relief, Nu 21:8,9. God ordered Moses to make the representation of a fiery serpent, which he did, in brass, and set it up on a very long pole, so that it might be seen from all parts of the camp, and every one that was stung with a fiery serpent was healed by looking up to this serpent of brass. The people prayed that God would take away the serpents from them (Nu 21:7), but God saw fit not to do this: for he gives effectual relief in the best way, though not in our way. Thus those who did not die for their murmuring were yet made to smart for it, that they might the more feelingly repent and humble themselves for it; they were likewise made to receive their cure from God, by the hand of Moses, that they might be taught, if possible, never again to speak against God and Moses. This method of cure was altogether miraculous, and the more wonderful if what some naturalists say be true, that looking upon bright and burnished brass is hurtful to those that are stung with fiery serpents. God can bring about his purposes by contrary means. The Jews themselves say that it was not the sight of the brazen serpent that cured them, but, in looking up to it, they looked up to God as the Lord that healed them. But there was much of gospel in this appointment. Our Saviour has told us so (Joh 3:14, 15), that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so the Son of man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. Observe then a resemblance,

1. Between their disease and ours. The devil is the old serpent, a fiery serpent, hence he appears (Re 12:3) as a great red dragon. Sin is the biting of this fiery serpent; it is painful to the startled conscience, and poisonous to the seared conscience. Satan's temptations are called his fiery darts, Eph 6:16. Lust and passion inflame the soul, so do the terrors of the Almighty, when they set themselves in array. At the last, sin bites like a serpent and stings like an adder; and even its sweets are turned into the gall of asps.

2. Between their remedy and ours.

(1.) It was God himself that devised and prescribed this antidote against the fiery serpents; so our salvation by Christ was the contrivance of Infinite Wisdom; God himself has found the ransom.

(2.) It was a very unlikely method of cure; so our salvation by the death of Christ is to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. It was Moses that lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and Moses wrote of him, Joh 5:4-6. Christ was lifted up by the rulers of the Jews, who were the successors of Moses.

(3.) That which cured was shaped in the likeness of that which wounded. So Christ, though perfectly free from sin himself, yet was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro 8:3), so like that it was taken for granted that this man was a sinner, Joh 9:24.

(4.) The brazen serpent was lifted up; so was Christ. He was lifted up upon the cross (Joh 12:33, 34), for his was made a spectacle to the world. He was lifted up by the preaching of the gospel. The word here used for a pole signifies a banner, or ensign, for Christ crucified stands for an ensign of the people, Isa 11:10. Some make the lifting up of the serpent to be a figure of Christ's triumphing over Satan, the old serpent, whose head he bruised, when in his cross he made an open show of the principalities and powers which he had spoiled and destroyed, Col 2:15.

3. Between the application of their remedy and ours. They looked and lived, and we, if we believe, shall not perish; it is by faith that we look unto Jesus, Heb 12:2. Look unto me, and be you saved, Isa 45:22. We must be sensible of our wound and of our danger by it, receive the record which God has given concerning his Son, and rely upon the assurance he has given us that we shall be healed and saved by him if we resign

ourselves to his direction. The brazen serpent's being lifted up would not cure if it was not looked upon. If any pored on their wound, and would not look up to the brazen serpent, they inevitably died. If they slighted this method of cure, and had recourse to natural medicines, and trusted to them, they justly perished; so if sinners either despise Christ's righteousness or despair of benefit by it their wound will, without doubt, be fatal. But whoever looked up to this healing sign, though from the outmost part of the camp, though with a weak and weeping eye, was certainly healed; so whosoever believes in Christ, though as yet but weak in faith, shall not perish. There are weak brethren for whom Christ died. Perhaps for some time after the serpent was set up the camp of Israel was molested by the fiery serpents; and it is the probable conjecture of some that they carried this brazen serpent along with them through the rest of their journey, and set it up wherever they encamped, and, when they settled in Canaan, fixed it somewhere within the borders of the land; for it is not likely that the children of Israel went so far off as this was into the wilderness to burn incense to it, as we find they did, 2Ki 18:4. Even those that are delivered from the eternal death which is the wages of sin must expect to feel the pain and smart of it as long as they are here in this world; but, if it be not our own fault, we may have the brazen serpent to accompany us, to be still looked up to upon all occasions, by bearing about with us continually the dying of the Lord Jesus.

7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, we have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8 And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

The Israelites Journey around Moab

10 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth.
11 And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which *is* before Moab, toward the sunrising.
12 From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared.
13 From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which *is* in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon *is* the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.
14 Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord,
What he did in the Red sea,
and in the brooks of Arnon,
15 and at the stream of the brooks
that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar,
and lieth upon the border of Moab.

We have here an account of the several stages and removals of the children of Israel, till they came into the plains of Moab, out of which they at length passed over Jordan into Canaan, as we read in the beginning of Joshua. Natural motions are quicker the nearer they are to their centre. The Israelites were now drawing near to the promised rest, and now they set forward, as the expression is, Nu 21:10. It were well if we would do thus in our way to heaven, rid ground in the latter end of our journey, and the nearer we come to heaven be so much the more active and abundant in the work of the Lord. Two things especially are observable in the brief account here given of these removals:--

1 The wonderful success which God blessed his people with, near the brooks of Arnon, Nu 21:13-15. They had now compassed the land of Edom (which they were not to invade, nor so much as to disturb, De 2:4,5), and had come to the border of Moab. It is well that there are more ways than one

to Canaan. The enemies of God's people may retard their passage, but cannot prevent their entrance into the promised rest. Care is taken to let us know that the Israelites in their march religiously observed the orders which God gave them to use no hostility against the Moabites (De 2:9), because they were the posterity of righteous Lot; therefore they pitched on the other side of Arnon (Nu 21:13), that side which was now in the possession of the Amorites, one of the devoted nations, though formerly it had belonged to Moab, as appears here, Nu 21:26,27. This care of theirs not to offer violence to the Moabites is pleaded by Jephtha long afterwards, in his remonstrance against the Ammonites (Jdg 11:15-23, &c.), and turned to them for a testimony. What their achievements were, now that they pitched on the banks of the river Arnon, we are not particularly told, but are referred to the book of the wars of the Lord, perhaps that book which was begun with the history of the war with the Amalekites, Ex 17:14. Write it (said God) for a memorial in a book, to which were added all the other battles which Israel fought, in order, and, among the rest, their actions on the river Arnon, at Vaheb in Suphah (as our margin reads it) and other places on that river. Or, it shall be said (as some read it) in the rehearsal, or commemoration, of the wars of the Lord, what he did in the Red Sea, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, and what he did in the brooks of Arnon, just before he brought them into Canaan. Note, In celebrating the memorials of God's favours to us, it is good to observe the series of them, and how divine goodness and mercy have constantly followed us, even from the Red Sea to the brooks of Arnon. In every stage of our lives, nay, in every step, we should take notice of what God has wrought for us; what he did at such a time, and what in such a place, ought to be distinctly remembered.

2 The wonderful supply which God blessed his people with at Beer (Nu 21:16), which signifies the well or fountain. It is said (Nu 21:10) they pitched in Oboth, which signifies bottles, so called perhaps because there they filled their bottles with water, which should last them for some time; but

by this time, we may suppose, it was with them as it was with Hagar (Ge 21:15), The water was spent in the bottle; yet we do not find that they murmured, and therefore God, in compassion to them, brought them to a well of water, to encourage them to wait on him in humble silence and expectation and to believe that he would graciously take cognizance of their wants, though they did not complain of them. In this world, we do at the best but pitch in Oboth, where our comforts lie in close and scanty vessels; when we come to heaven we shall remove to Beer, the well of life, the fountain of living waters. Hitherto we have found, when they were supplied with water, they asked it in unjust discontent, and God gave it in just displeasure; but here we find,

(1.) That God gave it in love (Nu 21:16): Gather the people together, to be witnesses of the wonder, and joint-sharers in the favour, and I will give them water. Before they prayed, God granted, and anticipated them with the blessings of his goodness.

(2.) That they received it with joy and thankfulness, which made the mercy doubly sweet to them, Nu 21:17. Then they sang this song, to the glory of God and the encouragement of one another, Spring up, O well! Thus they pray that it may spring up, for promised mercies must be fetched in by prayer; they triumph that it does spring up, and meet it with their joyful acclamations. With joy must we draw water out of the wells of salvation, Isa 11:3. As the brazen serpent was a figure of Christ, who is lifted up for our cure, so is this well a figure of the Spirit, who is poured forth for our comfort, and from whom flow to us rivers of living waters, Joh 7:38. Does this well spring up in our souls? We should sing to it; take the comfort to ourselves, and give the glory to God; stir up this gift, sing to it, Spring up, O well! Thou fountain of gardens, to water my soul (So 4:15), plead the promise, which perhaps alludes to this story (Isa 41:17,18), I will make the wilderness wells of water.

(3.) That whereas before the remembrance of the miracle was perpetuated in the names given to the places, which signified the people's strife and murmuring, now it was perpetuated in a song of praise, which preserved on record the manner in which it was done (Nu 21:18): The princes digged the well, the seventy elders, it is probable, by direction of the lawgiver (that is, Moses, under God) with their staves; that is, with their staves they made holes in the soft and sandy ground, and God caused the water miraculously to spring up in the holes which they made. Thus the pious Israelites long afterwards, passing through the valley of Baca, a dry and thirsty place, made wells, and God by rain from heaven filled the pools, Ps 84:6. Observe,

[1.] God promised to give them water, but the must open the ground to receive it, and give it vent. God's favours must be expected in the use of such means as lie within our power, but still the excellency of the power is of God.

[2.] The nobles of Israel were forward to set their hands to this work, and used their staves, probable those that were the ensigns of their honour and power, for the public service, and it is upon record to their honour. And we may suppose that it was a great confirmation to them in their offices, and a great comfort to the people, that they were made use of by the divine power as instruments to this miraculous supply. By this it appeared that the spirit of Moses, who must shortly die, rested in some measure upon the nobles of Israel. Moses did not strike the ground himself, as formerly the rock, but gave them direction to do it, that their staves might share in the honour of his rod, and they might comfortably hope that when he should leave them yet God would not, but that they also in their generation should be public blessings, and might expect the divine presence with them as long as they acted by the direction of the lawgiver. For comfort must be looked for only in the way of duty; and, if we would share in divine joys, we must carefully follow the divine direction.

16 And from thence *they went* to Beer: that *is* the well whereof the
Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will
give them water.
17 Then Israel sang this song, spring up, O well;
sing ye unto it:
18 the princes digged the well,
the nobles of the people digged it,
by *the direction of* the lawgiver, with their staves.
And from the wilderness *they went* to Mattanah:
19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel: and from Nahaliel to Bamoth:
20 and from Bamoth *in* the valley, that *is* in the country of Moab, to
the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon.

Israel Conquers Sihon

21 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites,
saying,
22 Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or
into the vineyards; we will not drink *of* the waters of the well: *but*
we will go along by the king's *high* way, until we be past thy borders.
23 And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but
Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel
into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against
Israel.
24 And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his
land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon:
for the border of the children of Ammon *was* strong.
25 And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of
the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof.
26 For Heshbon *was* the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who
had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land
out of his hand, even unto Arnon.
27 Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, come into Heshbon,
let the city of Sihon be built and prepared:
28 for there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of
Sihon:
it hath consumed Ar of Moab,
and the lords of the high places of Arnon.

We have here an account of the victories obtained by Israel over Sihon and Og, which must be distinctly considered, not only because they are here distinctly related, but because long afterwards the memorial of them is distinctly celebrated, and they are severally assigned as instances of everlasting mercy. He slew Sihon king of the Amorites, for his mercy endureth for ever, and Og the king of Bashan, for his mercy endureth for ever, Ps 136:19,20.

I. Israel sent a peaceable message to Sihon king of the Amorites (Nu 21:21), but received an unpeaceable return, worse than that of the Edomites to the like message, Nu 20:18,20. For the Edomites only refused them a passage, and stood upon their own defence to keep them out; but Sihon went out with his forces against Israel in the wilderness, out of his own borders, without any provocation given him (Nu 21:23), and so ran himself upon his own ruin. Jephtha intimates that he was prompted by his politics to do this (Jdg 11:20), Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast; but his politics deceived him, for Moses says, God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into the hand of Israel, De 2:30. The enemies of God's church are often infatuated in those very counsels which they think most wisely taken. Sihon's army was routed, and not only so, but all his country came into the possession of Israel, Nu 21:24,25. This seizure is justified,

1. Against the Amorites themselves, for they were the aggressors, and provoked the Israelites to battle; and yet, perhaps, that would not have been sufficient to entitle Israel to their land, but that God himself, the King of nations, the Lord of the whole earth, had given them a grant of it. The Amorites formed one of the devoted nations whose land God had promised to Abraham and his seed, which promise should be performed when the iniquity of the Amorites should be full, Ge 15:16. Jephtha insists upon this grant as their title, Jdg 11:23,24. The victory which God gave them over the Amorites put them in possession, and then, the promise made

to their fathers having given them a right, by virtue of that they kept possession.

2. Against the Moabites, who had formerly been the lords-proprietors of this country. If they should ever lay claim to it, and should plead that God himself had provided that none of their land should be given to Israel for a possession (De 2:9), Moses here furnishes posterity with a replication to their plea, and Jephtha makes use of it against the Amorites 260 years afterwards, when Israel's title to this country was questioned.

(1.) The justification itself is that though it was true this country had belonged to the Moabites, yet the Amorites had taken it from them some time before, and were now in full and quiet possession of it, Nu 21:26. The Israelites did not take it out of the hands of the Moabites, they had before lost it to the Amorites, and were constrained to give up their pretensions to it; and, when Israel had taken it from the Amorites, they were under no obligation to restore it to the Moabites, whose title to it was long since extinguished. See here the uncertainty of worldly possessions, how often they change their owners, and how soon we may be deprived of them, even when we think ourselves most sure of them; they make themselves wings. It is our wisdom therefore to secure the good part which cannot be taken away from us. See also the wisdom of the divine Providence and its perfect foresight, by which preparation is made long before for the accomplishment of all God's purposes in their season. This country being designed in due time for Israel, it is beforehand put into the hand of the Amorites, who little think that they have it but as trustees till Israel come of age, and then must surrender it. We understand not the vast reaches of Providence, but known unto God are all his works, as appears in this instance, that he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel, De 32:8. All that land which he intended for his chosen people he put into the possession of the devoted nations, that were to be driven out.

(2.) For proof of the allegation, he refers to the authentic records of the country, for so their proverbs or songs were, one of which he quotes some passages out of (Nu 21:27-30), which sufficiently proves what is vouched for, namely,

[1.] That such and such places that are here named, though they had been in the possession of the Moabites, had by right of war become the dominion of Sihon king of the Amorites. Heshbon had become his city, and he obtained such a quiet possession of it that it was built and prepared for him (Nu 21:27), and the country to Dibon and Nophah was likewise subdued, and annexed to the kingdom of the Amorites, Nu 21:30.

[2.] That the Moabites were utterly disabled ever to regain the possession. Even Ar of Moab, though not taken or attempted by Sihon, but still remaining the metropolis of Moab, yet was so wasted by this loss that is would never be able to make head, Nu 21:28. The Moabites were undone, and even Chemosh their god had given them up, as unable to rescue them out of the hands of Sihon, Nu 21:29. By all this it appears that the Moabites' claim to this country was barred for ever. There may be a further reason for inserting this Amorite poem, namely, to show that the triumphing of the wicked is short. Those that had conquered the Moabites, and insulted over them, were now themselves conquered and insulted over by the Israel of God. It is very probable that the same Sihon, king of the Amorites, that had got this country from the Moabites, now lost it to the Israelites; for, though it is said to be taken from a former king of Moab (Nu 21:26), yet not by a former king of the Amorites; and then it shows how sometimes justice makes men to see the loss of that which they got by violence, and were puffed up with the gain of. They are exalted but for a little while, Job 24:24.

II. Og king of Bashan, instead of being warned by the fate of his neighbours to make peace with Israel, is instigated by it to make war with them, which proves in like manner to be his

destruction. Og was also an Amorite, and therefore perhaps thought himself better able to deal with Israel than his neighbours were, and more likely to prevail, because of his own gigantic strength and stature, which Moses takes notice of, De 3:11, where he gives a more full account of this story. Here observe,

1. That the Amorite begins the war (Nu 21:33): He went out to battle against Israel. His country was very rich and pleasant. Bashan was famous for the best timber (witness the oaks of Bashan), and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and kine of Bashan, and the lambs and rams of that country, which are celebrated, De 32:14. Wicked men do their utmost to secure themselves and their possessions against the judgments of God, but all in vain, when their day comes, on which they must fall.

2. That God interests himself in the cause, bids Israel not to fear this threatening force, and promises a complete victory: "I have delivered him into thy hand (Nu 21:34); the thing is as good as done already, it is all thy own, enter and take possession." Giants are but worms before God's power.

3. That Israel is more than a conqueror, not only routs the enemies' army, but gains the enemies' country, which afterwards was part of the inheritance of the two tribes and a half that were first seated on the other side Jordan. God gave Israel these successes, while Moses was yet with them, both for his comfort (that he might see the beginning of that glorious work, which he must not live to see the finishing of) and for the encouragement of the people in the war of Canaan under Joshua. Though this was to them in comparison but as the day of small things, yet it was an earnest of great things.

29 Woe to thee, Moab!
Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh:
he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

30 We have shot at them;
Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon,
and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which *reacheth* unto Medeba.

Israel Conquers Og of Bashan

31 Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.
32 And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that *were* there.
33 And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei.
34 And the Lord said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.
35 So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.

Numbers-22

Balak Sends for Balaam

1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan *by* Jericho.
2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they *were* many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.
4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all *that are* round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.
5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which *is* by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call

him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: Behold,
they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:
6 come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they *are*
too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, *that* we may smite
them, and *that* I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he
whom thou blessest *is* blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.
7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with
the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto
Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

The children of Israel have at length finished their wanderings in the wilderness, out of which they went up (Nu 21:18), and are now encamped in the plains of Moab near Jordan, where they continued till they passed through Jordan under Joshua, after the death of Moses. Now we have here,

I The fright which the Moabites were in upon the approach of Israel, Nu 22:2-4. They needed not to fear any harm from them if they knew (and it is probable that Moses let them know) the orders God had given to Israel not to contend with the Moabites, nor to use any hostility against them, De 2:9. But, if they had any notice of this, they were jealous that it was but a sham, to make them secure, that they might be the more easily conquered. Notwithstanding the old friendship between Abraham and Lot, the Moabites resolved to ruin Israel if they could, and therefore they will take it for granted, without any ground for the suspicion, that Israel resolves to ruin them.

Thus it is common for those that design mischief to pretend that mischief is designed against them; and their groundless jealousies must be the colour of their causeless malice. They hear of their triumphs over the Amorites (Nu 22:2), and think that their own house is in danger when their neighbour's is on fire. They observe their multitudes (Nu 22:3): They were many; and hence infer how easily they would conquer their country, and all about them if some speedy and effectual course were not taken to stop the progress of their victorious arms: "They shall lick up or devour us, and all that are round

about us, as speedily and irresistibly as the ox eats up the grass" (Nu 22:4), owning themselves to be an unequal match for so formidable an enemy.

Therefore they were sorely afraid and distressed themselves; thus were the wicked in great fear where no fear was, Ps 53:5. These fears they communicated to their neighbours, the elders of Midian, that some measures might be concerted between them for their common safety; for, if the kingdom of Moab fall, the republic of Midian cannot stand long. The Moabites, if they had pleased, might have made a good use of the advances of Israel, and their successes against the Amorites. They had reason to rejoice, and give God and Israel thanks for freeing them from the threatening power of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had taken from them part of their country, and was likely to overrun the rest. They had reason likewise to court Israel's friendship, and to come in to their assistance; but having forsaken the religion of their father Lot, and being sunk into idolatry, they hated the people of the God of Abraham, and were justly infatuated in their counsels and given up to distress.

II The project which the king of Moab formed to get the people of Israel cursed, that is, to set God against them, who, he perceived, hitherto fought for them. He trusted more to his arts than to his arms, and had a notion that if he could but get some prophet or other, with his powerful charms, to imprecate evil upon them, and to pronounce a blessing upon himself and his forces, then, though otherwise too weak, he should be able to deal with them. This notion arose,

1. Out of the remains of some religion; for it owns a dependence upon some visible sovereign powers that rule in the affairs of the children of men and determine them, and an obligation upon us to make application to these powers.

2. Out of the ruins of the true religion; for if the Midianites and Moabites had not wretchedly degenerated from the faith

and worship of their pious ancestors, Abraham and Lot, they could not have imagined it possible to do any mischief with their curses to a people who alone adhered to the service of the true God, from whose service they had themselves revolted.

III. The court which he made to Balaam the son of Beor, a famous conjurer, to engage him to curse Israel. The Balaam lived a great way off, in that country whence Abraham came, and where Laban lived; but, though it was probable that there were many nearer home that were pretenders to divination, yet none had so great a reputation for success as Balaam, and Balak will employ the best he can hear of, though he send a great way for him, so much is his heart upon this project. And to gain him,

1. He makes him his friend, complaining to him, as his confidant, of the danger he was in from the numbers and neighbourhood of the camp of Israel: They cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me, Nu 22:5.

2. In effect he makes him his god, by the great power he attributes to his word: He whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed, Nu 22:6. The learned bishop Patrick inclines to think, with many of the Jewish writers, that Balaam had been a great prophet, who, for the accomplishment of his predictions and the answers of his prayers, both for good and evil, had been looked upon justly as a man of great interest with God; but that, growing proud and covetous, God departed from him, and then, to support his sinking credit, he betook himself to diabolical arts. He is called a prophet (2Pe 2:16,) because he had been one, or perhaps he had raised his reputation from the first by his magical charms, as Simon Magus, who bewitched the people so far that he was called the great power of God, Ac 8:10.

Curses pronounced by God's prophets in the name of the Lord have wonderful effects, as Noah's (Ge 9:25), and Elisha's, 2Ki 2:24. But the curse causeless shall not come (Pr 26:2), no more than Goliath's, when he cursed David by his gods, 1Sa 17:43. Let us desire to have the prayers of God's ministers and people for us, and dread having them against us; for they are greatly regarded by him who blesseth indeed and curseth indeed. But Balak cannot rely upon these compliments as sufficient to prevail with Balaam, the main inducement is yet behind (Nu 22:7): they took the rewards of divination in their hand, the wages of unrighteousness, which he loved, 2Pe 2:15.

IV. The restraint God lays upon Balaam, forbidding him to curse Israel. It is very probable that Balaam, being a curious inquisitive man, was no stranger to Israel's case and character, but had heard that God was with them of a truth, so that he ought to have given the messengers their answer immediately, that he would never curse a people whom God had blessed; but he lodges the messengers, and takes a night's time to consider what he shall do, and to receive instructions from God, Nu 22:8. When we enter into a parley with temptations we are in great danger of being overcome by them. In the night God comes to him, probably in a dream, and enquires what business those strangers had with him. He knows it, but he will know it from him. Balaam gives him an account of their errand (Nu 22:9-11), and God thereupon charges him not to go with them, or attempt to curse that blessed people, Nu 22:12. Thus God sometimes, for the preservation of his people, was pleased to speak to bad men, as to Abimelech (Ge 20:3), and to Laban, Ge 31:24. And we read of some that were workers of iniquity, and yet in Christ's name prophesied, and did many wondrous works. Balaam is charged not only not to go to Balak, but not to offer to curse this people, which he might have attempted at a distance; and the reason is given: They are blessed. This was part of the blessing of Abraham (Ge 12:3), I will curse him that curseth thee; so that an attempt to curse them would be not only

fruitless, but perilous. Israel had often provoked God in the wilderness, yet he will not suffer their enemies to curse them, for he rewards them not according to their iniquities. The blessedness of those whose sin is covered comes upon them, Ro 4:6,7.

V. The return of the messengers without Balaam.

1. Balaam is not faithful in returning God's answer to the messengers, Nu 22:13. He only tells them, the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you. He did not tell them, as he ought to have done, that Israel was a blessed people, and must by no means be cursed; for then the design would have been crushed, and the temptation would not have been renewed: but he, in effect, desired them to give his humble service to Balak, and let him know that he applauded his project, and would have been very glad to gratify him, but that truly he had the character of a prophet, and must not go without leave from God, which he had not yet obtained, and therefore for the present he must be excused.

Note, Those are a fair mark for Satan's temptation that speak diminishingly of divine prohibitions, as if they amounted to no more than the denial of a permission, and as if to go against God's law were only to go without his leave.

2 The messengers are not faithful in returning Balaam's answer to Balak. All the account they give of it is, Balaam refuseth to come with us (Nu 22:14), intimating that he only wanted more courtship and higher proffers; but they are not willing Balak should know that God had signified his disallowance of the attempt. Thus are great men wretchedly abused by the flatteries of those about them, who do all they can to prevent their seeing their own faults and follies.

8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, what men *are* these with thee?
10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, *saying*,
11 Behold, *there is* a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.
12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.
13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you.
14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.
15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honorable than they.
16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:
17 for I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

We have here a second embassy sent to Balaam, to fetch him over to curse Israel. It were well for us if we were as earnest and constant in prosecuting a good work, notwithstanding disappointments, as Balak was in pursuing this ill design. The enemies of the church are restless and unwearied in their attempts against it; but he that sits in heaven laughs at them. Observe,

I The temptation Balak laid before Balaam. He contrived to make this assault more vigorous than the former. It is very probable that he sent double money in the hands of his messengers; but, besides that, now he tempted him with honours, laid a bait not only for his covetousness, but for his pride and ambition. How earnestly should we beg of God daily to mortify in us these two limbs of the old man! Those that know how to look with a holy contempt upon worldly

wealth and preferment will find it not so hard a matter as most men do to keep a good conscience. See how artfully Balak managed the temptation.

1 The messengers he sent were more, and more honourable, Nu 22:15. He sent to this conjurer with as great respect and deference to his quality as if he had been a sovereign prince, apprehending perhaps that Balaam had thought himself slighted in the fewness and meanness of the former messengers.

2 The request was very urgent. This powerful prince becomes a suitor to him: "Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee (Nu 22:16), no, not God, nor conscience, nor any fear either of sin or shame." 3. The proffers were high: "I will promote thee to very great honour among the princes of Moab;" nay, he gives him a blank, and he shall write his own terms: I will do whatsoever thou sayest, that is, "I will give thee whatever thou desirest, and observe whatever thou orderest; thy word shall be a law to me," Nu 22:17. Thus sinners stick at no pains, spare no cost, and care not how low they stoop, for the gratifying either of their luxury or of their malice; shall we then be stiff and strait-handed in our compliance with the laws of virtue? God forbid.

II. Balaam's seeming resistance of, but real yielding to, this temptation. We may here discern in Balaam a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions.

1. His convictions charged him to adhere to the command of God, and he spoke their language, Nu 22:18. Nor could any man have said better: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, and that is more than he can give or I can ask, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God." See how honourably he speaks of God; he is Jehovah, my God.

Note, Many call God theirs that are not his, not truly because not only his; they swear by the Lord, and by Malcham. See

how respectfully he speaks of the word of God, as one resolved to stick to it, and in nothing to vary from it, and how slightly of the wealth of this world, as if gold and silver were nothing to him in comparison with the favour of God; and yet, at the same time, the searcher of hearts knew that he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Note, It is an easy thing for bad men to speak very good words, and with their mouth to make a show of piety. There is no judging of men by their words. God knows the heart.

2. His corruptions at the same time strongly inclined him to go contrary to the command. He seemed to refuse the temptation, Nu 22:18. But even then he expressed no abhorrence of it, as Christ did when he had the kingdoms of the world offered him (Get thee hence Satan), and as Peter did when Simon Magus offered him money: Thy money perish with thee. But it appears (Nu 22:19) that he had a strong inclination to accept the proffer; for he would further attend, to know what God would say to him, hoping that he might alter his mind and give him leave to go. This was a vile reflection upon God Almighty, as if he could change his mind, and now at last suffer those to be cursed whom he had pronounced blessed, and as if he would be brought to allow what he had already declared to be evil. Surely he thought God altogether such a one as himself. He had already been told what the will of God was, in which he ought to have acquiesced, and not to have desired a re-hearing of that cause which was already so plainly determined.

Note, It is a very great affront to God, and a certain evidence of the dominion of corruption in the heart, to beg leave to sin.

III. The permission God gave him to go, Nu 22:20. God came to him, probably by an anger, and told him he might, if he pleased, go with Balak's messengers. So he gave him up to his own heart's lust. "Since thou hast such a mind to go, even go, yet know that the journey thou undertakest shall not be for thy honour; for, though thou hast leave to go, thou shalt

not, as thou hopest, have leave to curse, for the word which I shall say unto thee, that thou shalt do." Note, God has wicked men in a chain; hitherto they shall come by his permission, but no further that he does permit them. Thus he makes the wrath of man to praise him, yet, at the same time, restrains the remainder of it. It was in anger that God said to Balaam, "Go with them," and we have reason to think that Balaam himself so understood it, for we do not find him pleading this allowance when God reproved him for going. Note, As God sometimes denies the prayers of his people in love, so sometimes he grants the desires of the wicked in wrath.

IV. His setting out in the journey, Nu 22:21. God gave him leave to go if the men called him, but he was so fond of the journey that we do not find he staid for their calling him, but he himself rose up in the morning, got every thing ready with all speed, and went with the princes of Moab, who were proud enough that they had carried their point. The apostle describes Balaam's sin here to be that he ran greedily into an error for reward, Jude 1:11. The love of money is the root of all evil.

18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak
would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond
the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.
19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may
know what the Lord will say unto me more.
20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men
come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them; but yet the word
which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

The Angel and Balaam's Ass

21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and
went with the princes of Moab.
22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the
Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was
riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him.

23 And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

24 But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall *being* on this side, and a wall on that side.

25 And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

26 And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

We have here an account of the opposition God gave to Balaam in his journey towards Moab; probably the princes had gone before, or gone some other way, and Balaam had pointed out where he would meet them, or where they should stay for him, for we read nothing of them in this part of our narrative, only that Balaam, like a person of some quality, was attended with his two men-honour enough, one would think, for such a man, he needed not be beholden to Balak for promotion.

I. Here is God's displeasure against Balaam for undertaking this journey: God's anger was kindled because he went, Nu 22:22. Note, 1 The sin of sinners is not to be thought the less provoking to God because he permits it. We must not think that, because God does not by his providence restrain men from sin, therefore he approves of it, or that it is therefore not hateful to him; he suffers sin, and yet is angry at it. 2. Nothing is more displeasing to God than malicious designs against his people; he that touches them touches the apple of his eye.

II The way God took to let Balaam know his displeasure against him: An angel stood in the way for an adversary. Now God fulfilled his promise to Israel (Ex 23:22), I will be an enemy to thy enemies. The holy angels are adversaries to sin, and perhaps are employed more than we are aware of in preventing it, particularly in opposing those that have any ill

designs against God's church and people, for whom Michael our prince stands up, Da 12:1,Da 10:21. What a comfort is this to all that wish well to the Israel of God, that he never suffers wicked men to form an attempt against them, without sending his holy angels forth to break the attempt and secure his little ones! When the prophet saw the four horns that scattered Judah, at the same time he saw four carpenters that were to fray those horns, Zec 1:18-21, &c. When the enemy comes in like a flood the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. This angel was an adversary to Balaam, because Balaam counted him his adversary; otherwise those are really our best friends, and we are so to reckon them, that stop our progress in a sinful way. The angel stood with his sword drawn (Nu 22:23), a flaming sword, like that in the hands of the cherubim (Ge 3:24), turning every way. Note, The holy angels are at war with those with whom God is angry, for they are the ministers of his justice. Observe,

1. Balaam had notice given him of God's displeasure, by the ass, and this did not startle him. The ass saw the angel, Nu 22:23. How vainly did Balaam boast that he was a man whose eyes were open, and that he saw the visions of the Almighty (Nu 24:3,4), when the ass he rode on saw more than he did, his eyes being blinded with covetousness and ambition and dazzled with the rewards of divination!

Note, Many have God against them, and his holy angels, but are not aware of it. The ass knows his owner, sees his danger, but Balaam does not know, does not consider, Isa 1:3. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, Isa 26:11. Let none be puffed up with a conceit of visions and revelations, when even an ass saw an angel; yet let those be ashamed of their own sottishness, worse than that of the beasts that perish, who, when they are told of the sword of God's wrath drawn against them, while they persist in wicked ways, yet will go on: the ass understood the law of self-preservation better than so; for, to save both herself and her senseless rider,

(1.) She turned aside out of the way, Nu 22:23. Balaam should have taken the hint of this, and considered whether he was not out of the way of his duty; but, instead of this, he beat her into the way again. Thus those who by wilful sin are running headlong into perdition are angry at those that would prevent their ruin.

(2.) She had not gone much further before she saw the angel again, and the, to avoid him, ran up to a wall, and crushed her rider's foot, Nu 22:24,25. How many ill accidents are we liable to in travelling upon the road, from which if we are preserved we must own our obligations to the divine Providence, which by the ministry of angels keeps us in all our ways, lest we dash our foot against a stone; but, if we at any time meet with a disaster, it should put us upon enquiring whether our way be right in the sight of God or no. The crushing of Balaam's foot, though it was the saving of his life, provoked him so much that he smote his ass the second time, so angry are we apt to be at that which, though a present uneasiness, yet is a real kindness.

(3.) Upon the next encounter with the angel, the ass fell down under Balaam, Nu 22:26,27. He ought to have considered that there was certainly something extraordinary in this; for his ass was not restive, nor did she use to serve him thus: but it is common for those whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil to push on violently, and break through all the difficulties which Providence lays in their way to give check to them and to stop them in their career. Balaam the third time smote his ass, though she had now done him the best piece of service that ever she did him, saving him from the sword of the angel, and by her falling down teaching him to do likewise.

(4.) When all this would not work upon him, God opened the mouth of the ass, and she spoke to him once and again; and yet neither did this move him: The Lord opened the mouth of the ass, Nu 22:28. This was a great miracle, quite above the power of nature, and wrought by the power of the God of

nature, who made man's mouth, and taught him to speak, for otherwise (since we learn to speak purely by imitation, and therefore those that are born deaf are consequently dumb) the first man would never have spoken, nor any of his seed. He that made man speak could, when he pleased, make the ass to speak with man's voice, 2Pe 2:16. Here Mr. Ainsworth observes that the devil, when he tempted our first parents to sin, employed a subtle serpent, but that God, when he would convince Balaam, employed a silly ass, a creature dull and sottish to a proverb; for Satan corrupts men's minds by the craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive, but Christ has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. By a dumb ass God rebukes the madness of the prophet, for he will never want reprovers, but when he pleases can make the stones cry out as witnesses to him, Lu 19:40,Hab 2:11.

[1.] The ass complained of Balaam's cruelty (Nu 22:28): What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me? Note, The righteous God will not see the meanest and weakest abused; but either they shall be enabled to speak in their own defence or he will some way or other speak for them. If God would not suffer a beast to be wronged, much less a man, a Christian, a child of his own. We cannot open the mouth of the dumb, as God did here, but we may and must open our mouth for the dumb, Pr 31:8,Job 31:13. The ass's complaint was just: What have I done?

Note, When we are prompted to smite any with hand or tongue, we should consider what they have done unto us, and what provocation they have given us. We hear it not, but thus the whole creation groans, being burdened, Ro 8:22. It was much that Balaam was not astonished to hear his ass speak, and put to confusion: but some think that it was no new thing to him (being a conjurer) to be thus spoken to by his familiars; others rather think that his brutish head-strong passion so blinded him that he could not observe or consider the strangeness of the thing. Nothing besots men worse than unbridled anger. Balaam in his fury wished he had a sword to

kill his ass with, Nu 22:29. See his impotency; can he think by his curses to do mischief to Israel that has it not in his power to kill his own ass? This he cannot do, yet he fain would; and what would he get by that, but make himself so much the poorer (as many do), to gratify his passion and revenge? Such was the madness of this false prophet. Here bishop Hall observes, It is ill falling into the hands of those whom the brute-creatures find unmerciful; for a good man regardeth the life of his beast.

[2.] The ass reasoned with him, Nu 22:30. God enabled not only a dumb creature to speak, but a dull creature to speak to the purpose. Three things she argues with him from:--First, His propriety in her: Am not I thy ass? Note,

1. God has given to man a dominion over the creatures: they are delivered into his hand to be used, and put under his feet to be ruled.

2. Even wicked people have a title to the possessions God gives to them, which they are not to be wronged of.

3. The dominion God has given us over the creatures is a good reason why we should not abuse them. We are their lords, and therefore must not be tyrants. Secondly, Her serviceableness to him: On which thou hast ridden.

Note, It is good for us often to consider how useful the inferior creatures are, and have been, to us, that we may be thankful to God, and tender of them. Thirdly, That she was not wont to do so by him, and had never before crushed his foot, nor fallen down under him; he might therefore conclude there was something more than ordinary that made her do so now. Note, 1 The rare occurrence of an offence should moderate our displeasure against an offender. 2. When the creatures depart from their wonted obedience to us, we should enquire the cause within ourselves, and be humbled for our sin.

2. Balaam at length had notice of God's displeasure by the angel, and this did startle him. When God opened his eyes he saw the angel (Nu 22:31), and then he himself fell flat upon his face, in reverence of that glorious messenger, and in fear of the sword he saw in his hand. God has many ways of breading and bringing down the hard and unhumbled heart.

(1.) The angel reproved him for his outrageousness (Nu 22:32,33): Wherefore hast thou smitten thy ass? Whether we consider it or no, it is certain that God will call us to account for the abuses done to his creatures. Nay, he shows him how much more reason he had to smite upon his breast, and to condemn himself, than to fly out thus against his ass ("Thy way is perverse before me, and then how canst thou expect to prosper?"), and how much wiser his ass was than himself, and how much beholden he was to her that she turned aside; it was for his safety, and not for her own, for had she gone on he had been slain, and she had been saved alive.

Note, When our eyes are opened we shall see what danger we are in in a sinful way, and how much it was for our advantage to be crossed in it, and what fools we were to quarrel with our crosses which helped to save our lives.

(2.) Balaam then seemed to relent (Nu 22:34): "I have sinned, sinned in undertaking this journey, sinned in pushing on so violently;" but he excused it with this, that he saw not the angel; yet, now that he did see him, he was willing to go back again. That which was displeasing to God was not so much his going as his going with a malicious design against Israel, and a secret hope that notwithstanding the proviso with which his permission was clogged he might prevail to curse them, and so gratify Balak, and get preferment under him. It does not appear that he was sensible of this wickedness of his heart, or willing to own it, but, when he finds he cannot go forward, he will be content (since there is no remedy) to go back. Here is no sign that his heart is turned, but, if his hands

are tied, he cannot help it. Thus many leave their sins only because their sins have left them. There seems to be a reformation of the life, but what will this avail if there be no renovation of the heart?

(3.) The angel however continued his permission: "Go with the men, Nu 22:35. Go, if thou hast a mind to be made a fool of, and to be shamed before Balak, and all the princes of Moab. Go, only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak, whether thou wilt or no," for this seems not to be a precept, but a prediction of the event, that he should not only not be able to curse Israel, but should be forced to bless them, which would be more for the glory of God and his own confusion than if he had turned back. Thus God gave him fair warning, but he would not take it; he went with the princes of Balak. For the iniquity of Balaam's covetousness God was wroth, and smote him, but he went on frowardly, Isa 57:17.

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

30 And the ass said unto Balaam, *Am* not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since *I was* thine unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

31 Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

32 And the angel of the Lord said unto him, wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because *thy* way is perverse before me:

33 and the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I
knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore,
if it displease thee, I will get me back again.
35 And the angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but
only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So
Balaam went with the princes of Balak.
36 And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to
meet him unto a city of Moab, which *is* in the border of Arnon,
which *is* in the utmost coast.
37 And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to
call thee? Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able
indeed to promote thee to honor?

We have here the meeting between Balak and Balaam, confederate enemies to God's Israel; but here they seem to differ in their expectations of the success.

1. Balak speaks of it with confidence, not doubting but to gain his point now that Balaam had come. In expectation of this, he went out to meet him, even to the utmost border of his country (Nu 22:36), partly to gratify his own impatient desire to see one he had such great expectations from, and partly to do honour to Balaam, and so to engage him with his utmost power to serve him. See what respect heathen princes paid to those that had but the name and face of prophets, and pretended to have any interest in heaven; and how welcome one was that came with his mouth full of curses. What a shame is it then that the ambassadors of Christ are so little respected by most, so much despised by some, and that those are so coldly entertained who bring tidings of peace and a blessing! Balak has now nothing to complain of but that Balaam did not come sooner, Nu 22:37.

And he thinks that he should have considered the importunity Balak had used, Did I not earnestly send to thee? (And the importunity of people inferior to kings has prevailed with many against their inclinations), and that he should also have considered Balak's intentions concerning him: Am not I able to promote thee to honour? Balak, as king, was in his own

kingdom the fountain of honour, and Balaam should have his choice of all the preferments that were in his gift; he therefore thinks himself affronted by Balaam's delays, which looked as if he thought the honours he prepared not worthy his acceptance. Note, Promotion to honour is a very tempting bait to many people; and it were well if we would be drawn into the service of God by the honour he sets before us. Why do we delay to come unto him? Is not he able to promote us to honour?

2. Balaam speaks doubtfully of the issue, and bids Balak not depend to much upon him (Nu 22:38): "Have I now any power at all to say any thing? I have come, but what the nearer am I? Gladly would I curse Israel; but I must not, I cannot, God will not suffer me." He seems to speak with vexation at the hook in his nose and the bridle in his jaws, such as Sennacherib was tied up with, Isa 37:29.

3. They address themselves with all speed to the business. Balaam is nobly entertained over night, a sacrifice of thanksgiving is offered to the gods of Moab, for the safe arrival of this welcome guest, and his is treated with a feast upon the sacrifice, Nu 22:40. And the next morning, that no time might be lost, Balak takes Balaam in his chariot to the high places of his kingdom, not only because their holiness (such as it was), he thought, might give some advantage to his divinations, but their height might give him a convenient prospect of the camp of Israel, which was to be the butt or mark at which he must shoot his envenomed arrows. And now Balaam is really as solicitous to please Balak as ever he had pretended to be to please God. See what we need have to pray every day, Our Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation.

38 And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now
any power at all to say any thing? The word that God putteth in my
mouth, that shall I speak.
39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth.
40 And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the
princes that *were* with him.

Balaam Blesses Israel

41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

Numbers-23

1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.
2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on *every* altar a bullock and a ram.
3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the Lord will come to meet me; and whatsoever he showeth me I will tell thee. And he went to a high place.
4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.
5 And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

Here is,

I. Great preparation made for the cursing of Israel. That which was aimed at was to engage the God of Israel to forsake them, and either to be on Moab's side or to stand neuter. O the sottishness of superstition, to imagine that God will be at men's beck! Balaam and Balak think to bribe him with altars and sacrifices, offered without any warrant or institution of his: as if he would eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats. Ridiculous nonsense, to think that these would please God, and gain his favour, when there could be in them no exercise either of faith or obedience!

Yet, it should seem, they offered these sacrifices to the God of heaven the supreme Numen--Divinity, and not to any of their local deities. But the multiplying of altars was an instance of their degeneracy from the religion of their

ancestors, and their apostasy to idolatry; for those that multiplied altars multiplied gods. Ephraim made many altars to sin, Ho 8:11. Thus they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but became vain in their imaginations; and yet presumptuously expected hereby to gain God over to them from Israel, who had his sanctuary among them, and his anointed altar. Observe here,

1. How very imperious Balaam was, proud to have the command of a king and to give law to princes. Such is the spirit of that wicked one who exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. With what authority does Balaam give orders! Build me here (in the place I have pitched upon) seven altars, of stone or turf. Thus he covers his malice against Israel with a show of devotion, but his sacrifice was an abomination, being brought with such a wicked mind, Pr 21:27. That which he aimed at was not to honour God with the sacrifices of righteousness, but to enrich himself with the wages of unrighteousness.

2. How very obsequious Balak was. The altars were presently built, and the sacrifices prepared, the best of the sort, seven bullocks and seven rams. Balak makes no objection to the charge, nor does he snuff at it, or think it either a weariness or a disparagement to stand by his burnt-offering as Balaam ordered him.

II The turning of the curse into a blessing, by the overruling power of God, in love to Israel, which is the account Moses gives of it, De 23:5.

1. God puts the blessing into the mouth of Balaam. While the sacrifices were burning, Balaam retired; he went solitary, into some dark grove on the top of the high place, Nu 23:3, marg. Thus much he knew, that solitude gives a good opportunity for communion with God; those that would meet with him must retire from the world, and the business and conversation

of it, and love to be private, reckoning themselves never less alone than when alone, because the Father is with them. Enter therefore into thy closet, and shut the door, and be assured that God will meet thee if thou seek him in the due order.

But Balaam retired with a peradventure only, having some thoughts that God might meet him; but being conscious to himself of guilt, and knowing that God had lately met him in anger, he had reason to speak doubtfully: Peradventure the Lord will come to meet me, Nu 23:3. But let not such a man think that he shall receive any favour from God. Nay, it should seem, though he pretended to go and meet with God, he really designed to use enchantments; see Nu 24:1.

But, whatever he intended. God designed to serve his own glory by him, and therefore met Balaam, Nu 23:4. What communion has light with darkness? No friendly communion, we may be sure. Balaam's way was still perverse, and God was still an adversary to him; but, Balak having chosen him for his oracle, God would constrain him to utter such a confession, to the honour of god and Israel, as should render those for ever inexcusable who should appear in arms against them. When Balaam was aware that God met him, probably by an angel, he boasted of his performances: I have prepared seven altars, and offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. How had he done it? It cost him nothing; it was done at Balak's expense; yet,

(1.) He boasts of it, as if he had done some mighty thing. The acts of devotion which are done in hypocrisy are commonly reflected upon with pride and vain glory. Thus the Pharisee went up to the temple to boast of his religion, Lu 18:11,12.

(2.) He insists upon it as a reason why God should gratify him in his desire to curse Israel, as if now he had made God his debtor, and might draw upon him for what he pleased. He thinks God is so much beholden to him for these sacrifices that the least he can do in recompense for them is to sacrifice

his Israel to the malice of the king of Moab. Note, It is a common cheat that wicked people put upon themselves, to think that by the shows of piety they may prevail with God to countenance them, and connive at them, in their greatest immoralities, especially in persecution, Isa 66:5.

However, thought the sacrifice was an abomination, God took the occasion of Balaam's expectation to put a word into his mouth (Nu 23:5); for the answer of the tongue if from the Lord, and thus he would show how much those are mistaken who say, With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own, Ps 12:4. He that made man's mouth knows how to manage it, and to serve his own purposes by it. This speaks terror to daring sinners, that set their mouth against the heavens. God can make their own tongues to fall upon them, Ps 64:8. And it speaks comfort to God's witnesses, whom at any time he calls out to appear for him; if God put a word into the mouth of Balaam, who would have defied God and Israel, surely he will not be wanting to those who desire to glorify God and edify his people by their testimony, but it shall be given them in that same hour what they should speak.

2. Balaam pronounces the blessing in the ears of Balak. He found him standing by his burnt-sacrifice (Nu 23:6), closely attending it, and earnestly expecting the success. Those that would have an answer of peace from God must abide by the sacrifice, and attend on the Lord without distraction, not weary in well doing. Balaam, having fixed himself in the place appointed for his denouncing curses against Israel, which perhaps he had drawn up in form ready to deliver, takes up his parable, and it proves a blessing, Nu 23:7. He pronounces Israel safe and happy, and so blesses them.

(1.) He pronounces them safe, and out of the reach of his envenomed darts.

[1.] He owns that the design was to curse them, that Balak sent for him out of his own country, and that he came, with

that intent, Nu 23:7. The message sent to him was, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. Balak intended to make war upon them, and he would have Balaam to bless his arms, and to prophesy and pray for the ruin of Israel.

[2.] He owns the design defeated, and his own inability to accomplish it. He could not so much as give them an ill word or an ill wish: How shall I curse those whom God has not cursed? Nu 23:8. Not that therefore he would not do it, but therefore he could not do it. This is a fair confession,

First, Of the weakness and impotency of his own magic skill, for which others valued him so much, and doubtless he valued himself no less. He was the most celebrated man of that profession, and yet owns himself baffled. God had warned the Israelites not to use divination (Le 19:31), and this providence gave them a reason for that law, by showing them the weakness and folly of it. As they had seen the magicians of Egypt befooled, so, here, the great conjurer of the east. See Isa 47:12-14.

Secondly, It is a confession of the sovereignty and dominion of the divine power. He owns that he could do no more than God would suffer him to do, for God could overrule all his purposes, and turn his counsels headlong.

Thirdly, It is a confession of the inviolable security of the people of God. Note,

1. God's Israel are owned and blessed of him. He has not cursed them, for they are delivered from the curse of the law; he has not defied them, nor rejected or abandoned them, though mean and vile.

2. Those that have the good-will of Heaven have the ill-will of hell; the serpent and this seed have an enmity to them. 3. Though the enemies of God's people may prevail far against them, yet they cannot curse them; that is, they cannot do them

any real mischief, much less a ruining mischief, for they cannot separate them from the love of God, Ro 8:39.

(2.) He pronounces them happy in three things:--

[1.] Happy in their peculiarity, and distinction from the rest of the nations: From the top of the rock I see him, Nu 23:9. And it seems to have been a great surprise to him that whereas, it is probable, they were represented to him as a rude and disorderly rabble, that infested the countries round about in rambling parties, he was them a regular incorporated camp, in which appeared all the marks of discipline and good order; he saw them a people dwelling alone, and foresaw they would continue so, and their singularity would be their unspeakable honour. Persons of quality we call person of distinction; this was Israel's praise, though their enemies turned it to their reproach, that they differed from all the neighbouring nations, not only in their religion and sacred rites, but in their diet, and dress, and common usages, as a people called out of the world, and not to be conformed to it. They never lost their reputation till they mingled among the heathen, Ps 106:35.

Note, It is the duty and honour of those that are dedicated to God to be separated from the world, and not to walk according to the course and custom of it. Those who make conscience of peculiar duties may take the comfort of peculiar privileges, which it is probable Balaam has an eye to here. God's Israel shall not stand upon a level with other nations, but be dignified above them all, as a people near to God, and set apart for him.

[2.] Happy in their numbers, not so few and despicable as they were represented to him, but an innumerable company, which made them both honourable and formidable (Nu 23:10): Who can count the dust of Jacob? The number of the people was the thing that Balak was vexed at (Nu 22:3): Moab was afraid of them, because they were many; and God does here by

Balaam promote that fear and vexation, foretelling their further increase.

Balak would have him see the utmost part of the people (Nu 22:41), hoping the more he saw of them the more he would be exasperated against them, and throw about his curses with the more keenness and rage; but it proved quite contrary: instead of being angry at their numbers, he admired them. The better acquainted we are with God's people the better opinion we have of them. He takes notice of the number, First, Of the dust of Jacob; that is, the people of Jacob, concerning whom it was foretold that they should be as the dust for number, Ge 28:14.

Thus he owns the fulfilling of the promise made to the fathers, and expects that it should be yet further accomplished. Perhaps it was part of David's fault in numbering the people that he offered to count the dust of Jacob, which God had said should be innumerable. Secondly, Of the fourth part of Israel, alluding to the form of their camp, which was cast into four squadrons, under four standards.

Note, God's Israel are a very great body, his spiritual Israel are so, and they will appear to be so when they shall all be gathered together unto him in the great day, Re 7:9.

[3.] Happy in their end: Let me die the death of the righteous Israelites, that are in covenant with God, and let my last end, or future state, be like theirs, or my recompence, namely, in the other world. Here,

First, It is taken for granted that death is the end of all men; the righteous themselves must die: and it is good for us to think of this with application, as Balaam himself does here, speaking of his own death.

Secondly, he goes upon the supposition of the soul's immortality, and a different state on the other side death, to

which this is a noble testimony, and an evidence of its being anciently known and believed. For how could the death of the righteous be more desirable than the death of the wicked upon any other account than as it involved happiness in another world, since in the manner and circumstances of dying we see all things come alike to all?

Thirdly, He pronounces the righteous truly blessed, not only while they live, but when they die, which makes their death not only more desirable than the death of others, but even more desirable than life itself; for in that sense his wish may be taken. Not only, "When I do die, let me die the death of the righteous;" but, "I could even now be willing to die, on condition that I might die the death of the righteous, and reach my end this moment, provided it might be like his." Very near the place where Balaam now was, on one of the mountains of Moab, not long after this, Moses died, and to that perhaps God, who put this word into his mouth, designed it should have a reference, that by it Moses might be encouraged to go up and die such a death as Balaam himself wished to die.

Fourthly, He shows his opinion of religion to be better than his resolution; there are many who desire to die the death of the righteous, but do not endeavour to live the life of the righteous. Gladly would they have their end like theirs, but not their way. They would be saints in heaven, but not saints on earth. This is the desire of the slothful, which kills him, because his hands refuse to labour. This of Balaam's is only a wish, not a prayer, and it is a vain wish, being only a wish for the end, without any care for the means. Thus far this blessing goes, even to death, and beyond it, as far as the last end.

6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice,
he, and all the princes of Moab.
7 And he took up his parable, and said,
Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram,
out of the mountains of the east, *saying*,

Come, curse me
Jacob, and come, defy
Israel.
8 How shall I curse, *whom* God hath not cursed?
Or how shall I defy, *whom* the Lord hath not defied?
9 For from the top of the rocks I see him,
and from the hills I behold him:
lo, the people shall dwell alone,
and shall not be reckoned among the nations.
10 Who can count the dust of Jacob?
and the number of the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
and let my last end be like his!
11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed *them* altogether.

We are told,

1. How Balak fretted at it, Nu 23:11. He pretended to honour the Lord with his sacrifices, and to wait for the answer God would send him; and yet, when it did not prove according to his mind, he forgot God, and flew into a great passion against Balaam, as if it had been purely his doing: "What hast thou done unto me! How hast thou disappointed me!" Sometimes God makes the enemies of his church a vexation one to another, while he that sits in heaven laughs at them, and the efforts of their impotent malice.

2. How Balaam was forced to acquiesce in it. He submits because he cannot help it, and yet humours the thing with no small address, as if he had been peculiarly conscientious, answering Balak with the gravity of a prophet: Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord has put in my mouth? Nu 23:12. Thus a confession of God's overruling power is extorted from a wicked prophet, to the further confusion of a wicked prince.

12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth?

13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another
place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the
utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them
from thence.
14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah,
and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on *every* altar.
15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I
meet *the* Lord yonder.
16 And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said,
Go again unto Balak, and say thus.
17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering,
and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What
hath the Lord spoken?
18 And he took up his parable, and said,
Rise up, Balak, and hear;
hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:
19 God *is* not a man, that he should lie;
neither the son of man, that he should repent:
hath he said, and shall he not do *it?*
Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?
20 Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless:
and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.
21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,
neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel:
the Lord his God *is* with him,
and the shout of a king *is* among them.
22 God brought them out of Egypt;
he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn.
23 Surely there *is* no enchantment against Jacob,
neither *is there* any divination against Israel:
according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel,
What hath God wrought!

I. Preparation made the second time, as before, for the cursing of Israel.

1 The place is changed, Nu 23:13. Balak fancied that Balaam, having so full a prospect of the whole camp of Israel, from the top of the rocks (Nu 23:9), was either so enamoured with

the beauty of it that he would not curse them or so affrighted with the terror of it that he durst not; and therefore he would bring him to another place, form which he might see only some part of them, which would appear more despicable, and that part at least which would lie in view he hoped he might obtain leave to curse, and so by degrees he should get ground against them, intending, no doubt, if he had gained this point, to make his attack on that part of the camp of Israel which Balaam now had in his eye, and into which he was to throw the fireballs of his curses.

See how restless and unwearied the church's enemies are in their malicious attempts to ruin it; they leave no stone unturned, no project untried, to compass it. O that we were as full of contrivance and resolution in prosecuting good designs for the glory of God!

2 The sacrifices are repeated, new altars are built, a bullock and a ram offered on every altar, and Balak attends his sacrifice as closely as ever, Nu 23:14,15. Were we thus earnest to obtain the blessing as Balak was to procure a curse (designedly upon Israel, but really upon himself and his people), we should not grudge the return both of the charge and of the labour of religious exercises.

3. Balaam renews his attendance on God, and God meets him the second time, and puts another word into his mouth, not to reverse the former, but to ratify it, Nu 23:16,17. If God said not to Balaam, Seek in vain, much less will he say so to any of the seed of Jacob, who shall surely find him, not only as Balaam, their instructor and oracle, but their bountiful rewarder. When Balaam returned Balak was impatient to know what message he had: "What hath the Lord spoken? Are there any better tidings yet, any hopes of speeding?" This should be our enquiry when we come to hear the word of God. See Jer 23:35.

II. A second conversion of the curse into a blessing by the overruling power of God; and this blessing is both larger and stronger than the former, and quite cuts off all hopes of altering it. Balak having been so forward to ask what the Lord had spoken (Nu 23:17), Balaam now addresses himself particularly to him (Nu 23:18): Rise up, Balak, and hear. It was a message from God that he had to deliver, and it is required of Balak, though a king, that he attend (hear and hearken, with a close application of mind, let not a word slip), and also that he attend with reverence: Rise up, and hear. His successor Eglon, when he was to receive a message from God, rose out of his seat, Jdg 3:20.

1. Two things Balaam in this discourse informs Balak of, sorely to his grief and disappointment:--

(1.) That he had no reason to hope that he should ruin Israel.

[1.] It would be to no purpose to attempt to ruin them, and he would deceive himself if he expected it, for three reasons:--

First, Because God is unchangeable: God is not a man that he should lie, Nu 23:19. Men change their minds, and therefore break their words; they lie, because they repent. But God does neither. He never changes his mind, and therefore never recalls his promise. Balaam had owned (Nu 23:8) that he could not alter God's counsel, and thence he infers here that God himself would not alter it; such is the imperfection of man, and such the perfection of God. It is impossible for God to lie, Heb 6:18. And, when in scripture he is said to repent, it is not meant of any change of his mind (for he is in one mind, and who can turn him?) but only of the change of his way. This is a great truth, that with God there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Now here,

1. He appeals to Balak himself concerning it: "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Said it in his own purpose, and shall he not perform it in his providence, according to the counsel of

his will? Hath he spoken in his word, in his promise, and shall he not make it good? Can we think otherwise of God than that he is unchangeably one with himself and true to his word? All his decrees are unalterable, and all his promises inviolable."

2. He applies this general truth to the case in hand (Nu 23:20): He hath blessed and I cannot reverse it, that is, "I cannot prevail with him to reverse it." Israel were of old a blessed people, a seed that the Lord had blessed; the blessing of Abraham came upon them; they were born under the blessing of the covenant, and born to the blessing of Canaan, and therefore they could not be cursed, unless you could suppose that the God of eternal truth should break his word, and become false to himself and his people.

Secondly, Because Israel are at present unblamable: he has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, Nu 23:21. Not but that there was iniquity in Jacob, and God saw it; but,

1. There was not such a degree of iniquity as might provoke God to abandon them and give them up to ruin. As bad as they were, they were not so bad as this.

2. There was no idolatry among them, which is in a particular manner called iniquity and perverseness; we have found nothing of that kind in Israel since the golden calf, and therefore, though they were in other instances very provoking, yet God would not cast them off. Balaam knew that nothing would separate between them and God but sin. While God saw no reigning sin among them, he would send no destroying curse among them; and therefore, as long as they kept in with God, he despaired of ever doing them any mischief.

Note, While we keep from sin we keep from harm. Some give another sense of those words; they read it thus: He has not beheld wrong offered to Jacob, nor will he see any grievance done to Israel, that is, "He has not nor will he permit it, or

allow it; he will not see Israel injured, but he will right them, and avenge their quarrel." Note, God will not bear to see any injury done to his church and people; for what is done against them he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly.

Thirdly, Because the power of both was irresistible. He shows Balak that there was no contending with them, it was to no purpose to attempt it; for,

1. They had the presence of God with them: "The Lord his God is with him in a particular manner, and not provoked to withdraw from him."

2. They had the joy of that presence, and were always made to triumph in it: The shout or alarm of a king is among them. They shout against their enemies, as sure of victory and success, glorying continually in God as their King and conqueror for them.

3. They had had the experience of the benefit of God's presence with them, and his power engaged for them; for God brought them out of Egypt, Nu 23:22. The power which had done that could never be restrained, never resisted; and, having begun so gloriously, he would no doubt finish gloriously.

4. While they had God's presence with them they had the strength of a unicorn, able to make head against all that opposed them. See Nu 24:8. Such is the strength which the God of Israel gives unto his people.

[2.] From all this he infers that it was to no purpose for him to think of doing them a mischief by all the arts he could use, Nu 23:23. First, He owns himself baffled. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob so as to prevail. The curses of hell can never take place against the blessings of heaven. Not but that attempts of this kind would be made, but they would

certainly be fruitless and ineffectual. Some observe that Jacob denotes the church low and afflicted, Israel denotes it prosperous and advanced; but be the church high or low, be her friends few or many, let second causes smile or frown, it comes all to one: no weapon formed against it shall prosper.

Note, God easily can, and certainly will, baffle and disappoint all the devices and designs of the powers of darkness against his church, so that they shall not prevail to destroy it. Secondly, He foresees that this would be remembered in time to come. According to this time, that is, with reference to this we are now about, it shall be said concerning Jacob and Israel, and said by them, What God hath wrought! What great things hath God done for his people! It shall be said with wonder, joy, and thankfulness, and a challenge to the neighbouring nations to produce any similar instances of the care of their gods for them.

Note, The defeating of the designs of the church's enemies ought to be had in everlasting remembrance to the glory of God. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun. What Balaam says here concerning the pre-eminence of the God of Israel above all the gods of the Gentiles perhaps Moses refers to when he says (De 32:31), Their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges, Balaam particularly. Balak therefore has no hopes of ruining Israel. But,

(2.) Balaam shows him that he had more reason to fear being ruined by them, for they were likely to make bloody work among his neighbours; and, if he and his country escaped, it was not because he was too great for them to meddle with, but because he fell not within their commission Nu 23:24. Behold, and tremble; the people that now have lain for some time closely encamped do but repose themselves for a while like a lion couchant, but shortly they shall rise up as a great lion, a lion rampant, that shall not lie down till he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain. This seems to point at

the victories he foresaw they would obtain over the Canaanites, that they would never lay down their arms till they had made a complete conquest of the land they had now in view; and, when his neighbour's house was on fire, he had reason to think his own in danger.

2. Now what was the issue of this disappointment?

(1.) Balak and Balaam were both of them sick of the cause.

[1.] Balak is now willing to have his conjurer silenced. Since he cannot say what he would have him, he wishes him to say nothing: "Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all, Nu 23:25. If thou canst not curse them, I beseech thee not to bless them. If thou canst no assist and encourage my forces, yet do not oppose and dispirit them" Note, God can make those that depart from him weary of the multitude of their counsels, Isa 47:13,57:10.

[2.] Balaam is still willing to own himself overruled, and appeals to what he had said in the beginning of this enterprise (Nu 22:38): All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do, Nu 23:26. This sows, First, In general, that the way of man is not in himself; there are many devices in man's heart, but God's counsels shall stand. Secondly, In particular, that, as no weapon formed against the church shall prosper, so every tongue that rises against her in judgment god will control and condemn, Isa 54:17.

(2.) Yet they resolve to make another attempt. They think it scorn to be baffled, and therefore pursue the design, though it be only to their further confusion. And now the third time,

[1.] They change the place. Balak is at last convinced that it is not Balaam's fault, on whom, before, he had laid the blame, but that really he was under a divine check, and therefore now he hopes to bring him to a place whence God might at least permit him to curse them, Nu 23:27. Probably he and Balaam

were the more encouraged thus to repeat their attempt because God had the second time allowed Balaam to go, though he had forbidden him the first time. Since by repeated trials they had carried that point, they hope in like manner to carry this. Thus because sinners are borne with, and sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, their hearts are the more fully set in them to do evil.

The place to which Balak now took Balaam was the top of Peor, the most eminent high place in all his country, where, it is probable, Baal was worshipped, and it was thence called Baal-peor. He chose this place with a hope, either, First, That it being the residence (as he fancied) of Baal, the god of Moab, Jehovah the God of Israel would not, or could not, come hither to hinder the operation; or, Secondly, That, it being a place acceptable to his god, it would be so to the Lord, and there he would be brought into a good humour. Such idle conceits have foolish men of God, and so vain are their imaginations concerning him. Thus the Syrians fancied the Lord to be God of the hills, but not of the valleys (1Ki 20:28), as if he were more powerful in one place than he is in every place.

[2.] They repeat their sacrifice, seven bullocks and seven rams, upon seven altars, Nu 23:29,30. Thus do they persevere in their expensive oblations, though they had no promise on which to build their hopes of speeding. Let not us therefore, who have a promise that the vision at the end shall speak and not lie, be discouraged by delays, but continue instant in prayer, and not faint, Lu 18:1.

24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion,
and lift up himself as a young lion:
he shall not lie down until he eat *of* the prey,
and drink the blood of the slain.

25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?

27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee
unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou
mayest curse me them from thence.
28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh
toward Jeshimon.
29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and
prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.
30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram
on *every* altar.

Numbers-24

1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he
went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his
face toward the wilderness.
2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding *in his tents*
according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.
3 And he took up his parable, and said,
Balaam the son of Beor hath said,
and the man whose eyes are open hath said:
4 he hath said, *which* heard the words of God,
which saw the vision of the Almighty,
falling *into a trance,* but having his eyes open:
5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
and thy tabernacles, O Israel!

The blessing itself which Balaam here pronounces upon Israel is much the same with the two we had in the foregoing chapter; but the introduction to it is different.

I The method of proceeding here varies much in several instances.

1. Balaam laid aside the enchantments which he had hitherto depended on, used no spells, or charms, or magic arts, finding they did him no service; it was to no purpose to deal with the devil for a curse, when it was plain that God was determined immovably to bless, Nu 24:1. Sooner or later God will convince men of their folly in seeking after lying vanities,

which cannot profit. To what purpose should he seek for enchantment? He knew that God was out of the reach of them.

2. He did not now retire into a solitary place as before, but set his face directly towards the wilderness where Israel lay encamped; and, since there is no remedy, but they must be blessed, he will design nothing else, but will submit by compulsion.

3. Now the Spirit of God came upon him, that is, the Spirit of prophecy, as upon Saul to prevent him from taking David, 1Sa 19:23. He spoke not his own sense, but the language of the Spirit that came upon him.

4. He used a different preface now from what he had used before (Nu 24:3,4), much like that of David (2Sa 23:1-3), yet savouring very much (as some think) of pride and vain-glory, taking all the praise of this prophecy to himself, and magnifying himself as one of the cabinet-council of heaven. Two things he boasts of:--

(1.) The favour God did him in making known himself to him. He heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty. God himself had met him and spoken to him (Nu 23:16), and with this he was greatly puffed up. Paul speaks with humility of his visions and revelations (2Co 12:1), but Balaam speaks of his with pride.

(2.) His own power to receive and bear those revelations. He fell into a trance indeed, as other prophets did, but he had his eyes open. This he mentions twice; but the words in the original are not the same. The man whose eyes were shut, some think it may be read so (Nu 24:3-9), but now having his eyes open, Nu 24:4. When he attempted to curse Israel, he owns, he was in a mistake, but now he began to see his error, and yet still he remained blinded by covetousness and ambition, those foolish and hurtful lusts. Note,

[1.] Those that oppose God and his people will sooner or later be made to see themselves wretchedly deceived.

[2.] Many have their eyes open that have not their hearts open, are enlightened, but not sanctified; and that knowledge which puffs men up with pride will but serve to light them to hell, whither many go with their eyes open.

II. Yet the blessing is for substance the same with those before. Several things he admires in Israel:--

1. Their beauty (Nu 24:5): How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! Though they dwelt not in stately palaces, but in coarse and homely tents, and these, no doubt, sadly weather-beaten, yet Balaam sees a beauty in those tents, because of their admirable order, according to their tribes, Nu 24:2. Nothing recommends religion more to the good opinion of those that look upon it at a distance than the unity and harmony of its professors, Ps 133:1 The amiableness of this people, and the great reputation they should gain among their neighbours, are compared (Nu 24:6) to the beauty and sweetness of fruitful valleys and fine gardens, flourishing trees and fragrant spices.

Note, Those whose eyes are open see the saints on the earth to be excellent ones, and their delight is accordingly in them. The righteous, doubtless, is more excellent than his neighbour. They are trees which the Lord has planted; that is their excellency. The branches of righteousness are the planting of the Lord. See Ho 14:5-7.

2. Their fruitfulness and increase. This may be intended by those similitudes (Nu 24:6) of the valleys, gardens, and trees, as well as by those expressions (Nu 24:7), He shall pour the water out of his buckets; that is, God shall water them with his blessing like rain from heaven, and then his seed shall be in many waters. Compare Ho 2:23, I will sow her unto me in the earth. And waters are in scripture put for peoples, and multitudes, and nations. This has been fulfilled in the

wonderful increase of that nation and their vast multitude even in their dispersion.

3. Their honour and advancement. As the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, so the magnificence of the prince is the honour of the people; Balaam therefore foretells that their king shall be higher than Agag. Agag, it is probable, was the most potent monarch in those parts; Balaam knew of none more considerable than he was; he rose above the rest of his neighbours. But Balaam foretells that Israel's chief commander, who, after Moses, was Joshua, should be more great and honourable than ever Agag was, and make a far better figure in history. Saul, their first king, triumphed over Agag, though, it is said, he came delicately.

4. Their power and victory, Nu 24:8.

(1.) He looks back upon what they had done, or rather what had been done for them: God brought them forth out of Egypt; this he had spoken of before, Nu 23:22. The wonders that attended their deliverance out of Egypt contributed more to their honour, and the terror of their adversaries, than any thing else, Jos 2:10. He that brought them out of Egypt will not fail to bring them into Canaan, for, as for God, his work is perfect.

(2.) He looks down upon their present strength. Israel hath, as it were, the strength of a unicorn, of which creature it is said (Job 39:9,10), Will he be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind him with his band in the furrow? "No, Israel is too powerful to be checked or held in by my curses or thy armies."

(3.) He looks forward to their future conquests: He shall eat up the nations his enemies; that is, "he shall not only destroy and devour them as easily and irresistibly as a lion does his prey, but he shall himself be strengthened, and fattened, and enriched, by their spoils."

5. Their courage and security: He lay down as a lion, as a great lion, Nu 24:9. Now he does so in the plains of Moab, and asks no leave of the king of Moab, nor is he in fear of him; shortly will he do so in Canaan. When he has torn his prey, he will take his repose, quiet from the fear of evil, and bid defiance to all his neighbours; for who shall stir up a sleeping lion? It is observed of lions (as the learned bishop Patrick takes notice here) that they do not retire into places of shelter to sleep, but lie down any where, knowing that none dares meddle with them: thus secure were Israel in Canaan, chiefly in the days of David and Solomon; and thus is the righteous bold as a lion (Pr 28:1), not to assault others, but to repose themselves, because God maketh them to dwell in safety, Ps 4:8.

6. Their interest, and influence upon their neighbours. Their friends, and those in alliance with them, were happy: Blessed is he that blesseth thee; those that do them any kindness will certainly fare the better for it. But their enemies, and those in arms against them, were certainly miserable: Cursed is he that curseth thee; those that do them any injury do it at their peril; for God takes what is done to them, whether good or evil, as done to himself. Thus he confirms the blessing of Abraham (Ge 12:3), and speaks as if therefore he did at this time bless Israel, and not curse them, because he desired to share in the blessing of Israel's friends and dreaded the curse on Israel's enemies.

6 As the valleys are they spread forth,
as gardens by the river's side,
as the trees of lignaloes which the Lord hath planted,
and as cedar trees beside the waters.
7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets,
and his seed *shall be* in many waters,
and his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted.
8 God brought him forth out of Egypt;
he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn:

he shall eat up the nations his enemies,
and shall break their bones,
and pierce *them* through with his arrows.
9 He couched, he lay down as a lion,
and as a great lion: who shall stir him up?
Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee,
and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.

Balaam's Prophecy

10 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed *them* these three times.
11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honor; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor.

We have here the conclusion of this vain attempt to curse Israel, and the total abandonment of it.

1. Balak made the worst of it. He broke out into a rage against Balaam (Nu 24:10), expressed both in words and gesture the highest degree of vexation at the disappointment; he smote his hands together, for indignation, to see all his measures thus broken, and his project baffled. He charged Balaam with putting upon him the basest affront and cheat imaginable: "I called thee to curse my enemies, and thou hast shown thyself in league with them, and in their interests, for thou hast blessed them these three times, though, by appointing the altars to be built and sacrifices to be offered, thou madest be believe thou wouldest certainly curse them." Hereupon he forbade him his presence, expelled him his country, upbraided him with the preferments he had designed to bestow upon him, but now would not (Nu 24:11): "The Lord hath kept thee back from honour. See what thou gettest by pleasing the Lord, instead of pleasing me; thou has hindered thy preferment by it." Thus those who are any way losers by

their duty are commonly upbraided with it, as fools, for preferring it before their interest in the world.

Whereas, if Balaam had been voluntary and sincere in his adherence to the word of the Lord, though he lost the honour Balak designed him by it, God would have made that loss up to him abundantly to his advantage.

2. Balaam made the best if it.

(1.) He endeavours to excuse the disappointment. And a very good excuse he has for it, that God restrained him from saying what he would have said, and constrained him to say what he would not; and that this was what Balak ought not to be displeased at, not only because he could not help it, but because he had told Balak before what he must depend upon, Nu 24:12,13. Balak could not say that he had cheated him, since he had given him fair notice of the check he found himself under.

(2.) He endeavours to atone for it, Nu 24:14. Though he cannot do what Balak would have him do, yet,

[1.] He will gratify his curiosity with some predictions concerning the nations about him. It is natural to us to be pleased with prophecy, and with this he hopes to pacify the angry prince.

[2.] He will satisfy him with an assurance that, whatever this formidable people should do to his people, it should not be till the latter days; so that he, for his part, needed not to fear any mischief or molestation from them; the vision was for a great while to come, but in his days there should be peace.

[3.] He will put him into a method of doing Israel a mischief without the ceremonies of enchantment and execration. This seems to be implied in that word: I will advertise thee; for it properly signifies, I will counsel thee. What the counsel was

is not set down here, because it was given privately, but we are told afterwards what it was, Nu 31:16. He counselled him to entice the Israelites to idolatry, Re 2:14. Since he could not have leave from God to curse them, he puts him in a way of getting help from the devil to tempt them. Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo--If I cannot move heaven, I will solicit hell.

12 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers
which thou sentest unto me, saying,
13 If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go
beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do *either* good or bad of
mine own mind; *but* what the Lord saith, that will I speak?
14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come *therefore, and* I will
advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter
days.
15 And he took up his parable, and said,
Balaam the son of Beor hath said,
and the man whose eyes are open hath said:
16 he hath said, which heard the words of God,
and knew the knowledge of the Most High,
which saw the vision of the Almighty,
falling *into a trance,* but having his eyes open:
17 I shall see him, but not now:
I shall behold him, but not nigh:
there shall come a Star out of Jacob,
and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
and shall smite the corners of Moab,
and destroy all the children of Sheth.
18 And Edom shall be a possession,
Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies;
and Israel shall do valiantly.
19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion,
and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

The office of prophets was both to bless and to prophesy in the name of the Lord. Balaam, as a prophet, per force had blessed Israel; here he foretels future events.

I. His preface is much the same as that, Nu 24:3,4. He personates a true prophet admirably well, God permitting and directing him to do so, because, whatever he was, the prophecy itself was a true prophecy. He boasts,

1. That his eyes are open (Nu 24:15), for prophets were in old time called seers (1Sa 9:9), because they must speak what they had seen, and therefore, before they opened their lips, it was necessary that they should have their eyes open.

2. That he has heard the words of God, which many do that do not heed them, nor hear God in them.

3. That he knew the knowledge of the Most High; this is added here. A man may be full of the knowledge of God and yet utterly destitute of the grace of God, may receive the truth in the light of it and yet be a stranger to the love of it.

4. That he saw the vision of the Almighty, but not so as to be changed into the same image. He calls God the Most High, and the Almighty; no man could speak more honourably of him, nor seem to put a greater value upon his acquaintance with him, and yet he had no true fear of him, love to him, or faith in him, so far may a man go towards heaven, and yet come short.

II. Here is his prophecy concerning him that should be the crown and glory of his people Israel, who is,

1. David in the type, who not now, not quickly, but in process of time, should smite the corners of Moab. (Nu 24:17), and take possession of Mount Seir, and under whom the forces of Israel should do valiantly, Nu 24:18. This was fulfilled when David smote Moab, and measured them with a line, so that the Moabites became David' servants, 2Sa 8:2. And at the same time the Edomites likewise were brought into obedience to Israel, Nu 24:14. But,

2. Our Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah, is chiefly pointed at in the antitype, and of him it is an illustrious prophecy; it was the will of God that notice should thus be given of his coming, a great while before, not only to the people of the Jews, but to other nations, because his gospel and kingdom were to extend themselves so far beyond the borders of the land of Israel. It is here foretold,

(1.) That while: "I shall see him, but not now; I do see him in vision, but at a very great distance, through the interposing space of 1500 years at least." Or understand it thus:--Balaam, a wicked man, shall see Christ, but shall not see him nigh, nor see him as Job, who saw him as his Redeemer, and saw him for himself, Job 19:25. When he comes in the clouds every eye shall see him, but many will see him (as the rich man in hell saw Abraham) afar off.

(2.) That he shall come out of Jacob, and Israel, as a star and a sceptre, the former denoting his glory and lustre, and the bright and morning star, the latter his power and authority; it is he that shall have dominion. Perhaps this prophecy of Balaam (one of the children of the east) concerning a star that should arise out of Jacob, as the indication of a sceptre arising in Israel, being preserved by a tradition of that country, gave occasion to the wise men, who were of the east too, upon the sight of an unusual star over the land of Judea, to enquire for him that was born king of the Jews, Mt 2:2.

(3.) That his kingdom shall be universal, and victorious over all opposition, which was typified by David's victories over Moab and Edom. But the Messiah shall destroy, or, as some read it, shall rule over, all the children of Seth. (Nu 24:17), that is, all the children of men, who descend from Seth, the son of Adam, the descendants of the rest of Adam's sons being cut off by the deluge. Christ shall be king, not only of Jacob and Israel, but of all the world; so that all the children of Seth shall be either governed by his golden sceptre or dashed in pieces by his iron rod. He shall set up a universal

rule, authority, and power, of his own, and shall put down all opposing rule, 1Co 15:24. He shall unwall all the children of Seth; so some read it. He shall take down all their defences and carnal confidences, so that they shall either admit his government or lie open to his judgments.

(4.) That his Israel shall do valiantly; the subjects of Christ, animated by his might, shall maintain a spiritual was with the powers of darkness, and be more than conquerors. The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits, Da 11:32.

III. Here is his prophecy concerning the Amalekites and Kenites, part of whose country, it is probable, he had now in view.

1 The Amalekites were now the chief of the nations (Nu 24:20), therefore Agag was spoken of (Nu 24:7) as an eminent prince, and they were the first that engaged Israel when they came out of Egypt; but the time will come when that nation, as great as it looks now, will be totally ruined and rooted out: His latter end shall be that he perish for ever. Here Balaam confirms that doom of Amalek which Moses had read (Ex 15:14,16), where God had sworn that he would have perpetual war with Amalek. Note, Those whom God is at war with will certainly perish for ever; for when God judges he will overcome.

2 The Kenites were now the securest of the nations; their situation was such as that nature was their engineer, and had strongly fortified them: "Thou puttest thy nest (like the eagle) in a rock, Nu 24:21. Thou thinkest thyself safe, and yet the Kenites shall be wasted (Nu 24:22) and gradually brought to decay, till they be carried away captive by the Assyrians," which was done at the captivity of the ten tribes. Note, Bodies politic, like natural bodies, though of the strongest constitutions, will gradually decay, and come to ruin at last; even a nest in a rock will be no perpetual security.

IV. Here is a prophecy that looks as far forward as the Greeks and Romans, for theirs is supposed to be meant by the coast of Chittim, Nu 24:24.

1 The introduction to this parable; this article of his prophecy is very observable (Nu 24:23): Alas! Who shall live when God doeth this? Here he acknowledges all the revolutions of states and kingdoms to be the Lord's doing: God doeth this; whoever are the instruments, he is the supreme director. But he speaks mournfully concerning them, and has a very melancholy prospect of these events: Who shall live? Either,

(1.) These events are so distant, and so far off to come, that it is hard to say who shall live till they come; but, whoever shall live to see them, there will be amazing turns. Or,

(2.) They will be so dismal, and make such desolations, that scarcely any will escape or be left alive; who shall live when death rides in triumph? Re 6:8. Those that live then will be as brands plucked out of the fire, and will have their lives given them as a prey. God fit us for the worst of times!

2 The prophecy itself is observable. Both Greece and Italy lie much upon the sea, and therefore their armies were sent forth mostly in ships. Now he seems here to foretell,

(1.) That the forces of the Grecians should humble and bring down the Assyrians, who were united with the Persians, which was fulfilled when the eastern country was overcome, or overrun rather, by Alexander.

(2.) That theirs and the Roman forces should afflict the Hebrews, or Jews, who were called the children of Eber; this was fulfilled in part when the Grecian empire was oppressive to the Jewish nation, but chiefly when the Roman empire ruined it and put a period to it. But,

(3.) That Chittim, that is, the Roman empire, in which the Grecian was at length swallowed up, should itself perish for ever, when the stone cut out of the mountain without hands shall consume all these kingdoms, and particularly the feet of iron and clay, Da 2:34. Thus (says Dr. Lightfoot) Balaam, instead of cursing the church, curses Amalek the first, and Rome the last, enemy of the church. And so let all thy enemies perish, O Lord!

20 And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said,
Amalek was the first of the nations;
but his latter end *shall be* that he perish for ever.
21 And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said,
Strong is thy dwelling place,
and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.
22 Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted,
until Ashur shall carry thee away captive.
23 And he took up his parable, and said, Alas,
who shall live when God doeth this!
24 And ships shall *come* from the coast of Chittim,
and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber,
and he also shall perish for ever.
25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and
Balak also went his way.

Numbers-25

Israel Worships Baal-peor

1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit
whoredom with the daughters of Moab.
2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the
people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.
3 And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the
Lord was kindled against Israel.

I The sin of Israel, to which they were enticed by the daughters of Moab and Midian; they were guilty both of corporal and spiritual whoredoms, for Israel joined himself

unto Baal-peor, Nu 25:3. Not all, nor the most, but very many, were taken in this snare. Now concerning this observe,

1. That Balak, by the advice of Balaam, cast this stumbling-block before the children of Israel, Re 2:14. Note, Those are our worst enemies that draw us to sin, for that is the greatest mischief any man can do us. If Balak had drawn out his armed men against them to fight them, Israel had bravely resisted, and no doubt had been more than conquerors; but now that he sends his beautiful women among them, and invites them to his idolatrous feasts, the Israelites basely yield, and are shamefully overcome: those are smitten with this harlots that could not be smitten with his sword. Note, We are more endangered by the charms of a smiling world than by the terrors of a frowning world.

2. That the daughters of Moab were their tempters and conquerors. Ever since Eve was first in the transgression the fairer sex, though the weaker, has been a snare to many; yea strong men have been wounded and slain by the lips of the strange woman (Pr 7:26), witness Solomon, whose wives were shares and nets to him Ec 7:26.

3. That whoredom and idolatry went together. They first defiled and debauched their consciences, by committing lewdness with the women, and then were easily drawn, in complaisance to them, and in contempt of the God of Israel, to bow down to their idols. And they were more likely to do so if, as it is commonly supposed, and seems probable by the joining of them together, the uncleanness committed was a part of the worship and service performed to Baal-peor. Those that have broken the fences of modesty will never be held by the bonds of piety, and those that have dishonoured themselves by fleshly lusts will not scruple to dishonour God by idolatrous worships, and for this they are justly given up yet further to vile affections.

4. That by eating of the idolatrous sacrifices they joined themselves to Baal-peor to whom they were offered, which the apostle urges as a reason why Christians should not eat things offered to idols, because thereby they had fellowship with the devils to whom they were offered, 1Co 10:20. It is called eating the sacrifices of the dead (Ps 106:28), not only because the idol itself was a dead thing, but because the person represented by it was some great hero, who since his death was deified, as saints in the Roman church are canonized.

5. It was great aggravation of the sin that Israel abode in Shittim, where they had the land of Canaan in view, and were just ready to enter and take possession of it. It was the highest degree of treachery and ingratitude to be false to their God, whom they had found so faithful to them, and to eat of idol-sacrifices when they were ready to be feasted so richly on God's favours.

II. God's just displeasure against them for this sin. Israel's whoredoms did that which all Balaam's enchantments could not do, they set God against them; now he was turned to be their enemy, and fought against them. So many of the people, nay, so many of the princes, were guilty, that the sin became national, and for it God was wroth with the whole congregation.

1. A plague immediately broke out, for we read of the staying of it (Nu 25:8), and of the number that died of it (Nu 25:9), but no mention of the beginning of it, which therefore must be implied in those words (Nu 25:3), The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. It is said expressly (Ps 106:29), The plague broke in.

Note, Epidemical diseases are the fruits of God's anger, and the just punishments of epidemical sins; one infection follows the other. The plague, no doubt, fastened on those that were most guilty, who were soon made to pay dearly for their

forbidden pleasures; and though now God does not always plague such sinners, as he did here, yet that word of God will be fulfilled, If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, 1Co 3:17.

2 The ringleaders are ordered to be put to death by the hand of public justice, which will be the only way to stay the plague (Nu 25:4): Take the heads of the people (that is, of that part of the people that went out of the camp of Israel into the country of Moab, to join in their idolatries)--take them and hang them up before the sun, as sacrifices to God's justice, and for a terror to the rest of the people. The judges must first order them to be slain with the sword (Nu 25:5), and their dead bodies must be hanged up, that the stupid Israelites, seeing their leaders and princes so severely punished for their whoredom and idolatry, without any regard to their quality, might be possessed with a sense of the evil of the sin and the terror of God's wrath against them. Ringleaders in sin ought to be made examples of justice.

4 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people,
and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce
anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel.
5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men
that were joined unto Baal-peor.
6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto
his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the
sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were*
weeping *before* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest,
saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin
in his hand;
8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of
them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly.
So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.
9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.
10 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned
my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous

for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

Here is a remarkable contest between wickedness and righteousness, which shall be most bold and resolute; and righteousness carries the day, as no doubt it will at last.

I. Never was vice more daring than it was in Zimri, a prince of a chief house in the tribe of Simeon. Such a degree of impudence in wickedness had he arrived at that he publicly appeared leading a Midianitish harlot (and a harlot of quality too like himself, a daughter of a chief house in Midian) in the sight of Moses, and all the good people of Israel. He did not think it enough to go out with his harlot to worship the gods of Moab, but, when he had done that, he brought her with him to dishonour the God of Israel. He not only owned her publicly as his friend, and higher in his favour then any of the daughters of Israel, but openly went with her into the tent, Nu 25:8. The word signifies such a booth or place of retirement as was designed and fitted up for lewdness. Thus he declared his sin as Sodom, as was so far from blushing for it that he rather prided himself in it, and gloried in his shame. All the circumstances concurred to make it exceedingly sinful, exceedingly shameful.

1. It was an affront to the justice of the nation, and bade defiance to that. The judges were ordered to put the criminals to death, but he thought himself too great for them to meddle with, and, in effect, bade them touch him if they durst. He had certainly cast off all fear of God who stood in no awe of the powers which he had ordained to be a terror to evil-doers.

2. It was an affront to the religion of the nation, and put a contempt upon that. Moses, and the main body of the congregation, who kept their integrity, were weeping at the door of the tabernacle, lamenting the sin committed and deprecating the plague begun; they were sanctifying a fast in a solemn assembly, weeping between the porch and the altar, to turn away the wrath of God from the congregation. Then

comes Zimri among them, with his harlot in his hand, to banter them, and, in effect, to tell them that he was resolved to fill the measure of sin as fast as they emptied it.

II. Never was virtue more daring than it was in Phinehas. Being aware of the insolence of Zimri, which it is probable, all the congregation took notice of, in a holy indignation at the offenders he rises up from his prayers, takes his sword or half-pike, follows those impudent sinners into their tent, and stabs them both, Nu 25:7,8. It is not at all difficult to justify Phinehas in what he did; for, being now heir-apparent to the high-priesthood, no doubt he was one of those judges of Israel whom Moses had ordered, by the divine appointment, to slay all those whom they knew to have joined themselves to Baal-peor, so that this gives no countenance at all to private persons, under pretence of zeal against sin, to put offenders to death, who ought to be prosecuted by due course of law. The civil magistrate is the avenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil, and no private person may take his work out of his hand. Two ways God testified his acceptance of the pious zeal of Phinehas:--

1. He immediately put a stop to the plague, Nu 25:8. Their weeping and praying prevailed not till this piece of necessary justice was done. If magistrates do not take care to punish sin, God will; but their justice will be the best prevention of his judgment, as in the case of Achan, Jos 7:13.

2. He put an honour upon Phinehas. Though he did no more than it was his duty to do as a judge, yet because he did it with extraordinary zeal against sin, and for the honour of God and Israel, and did it when the other judges, out of respect to Zimri's character as a prince, were afraid, and declined doing it, therefore God showed himself particularly well pleased with him, and it was counted to him for righteousness, Ps 106:31. There is nothing lost by venturing for God. If Zimri's relations bore him a grudge for it, and his friends might censure him as indiscreet in this violent and hasty execution,

what needed he care, while God accepted him? In a good thing we should be zealously affected.

(1.) Phinehas, upon this occasion, though a young man, is pronounced his country's patriot and best friend, Nu 25:11. He has turned away my wrath from the children of Israel. So much does God delight in showing mercy that he is well pleased with those that are instrumental in turning away his wrath. This is the best service we can do to our people; and we may contribute something towards it by our prayers, and by our endeavours in our places to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end.

(2.) The priesthood is entailed by covenant upon his family. It was designed him before, but now it was confirmed to him, and, which added much to the comfort and honour of it, it was made the recompence of his pious zeal, Nu 25:12,13. It is here called an everlasting priesthood, because it should continue to the period of the Old-Testament dispensation, and should then have its perfection and perpetuity in the unchangeable priesthood of Christ, who is consecrated for evermore. By the covenant of peace given him, some understand in general a promise of long life and prosperity, and all good; it seems rather to be meant particularly of the covenant of priesthood, for that is called the covenant of life and peace (Mal 2:5), and was made for the preservation of peace between God and his people.

Observe how the reward answered the service. By executing justice he had made an atonement for the children of Israel (Nu 25:13), and therefore he and his shall henceforward be employed in making atonement by sacrifice. He was zealous for his God, and therefore he shall have the covenant of an everlasting priesthood.

Note, It is requisite that ministers should be not only for God, but zealous for God. It is required of them that they do more

than others for the support and advancement of the interests of God's kingdom among men.

12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:
13 and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.
14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, *was* Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.
15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain *was* Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he *was* head over a people, *and* of a chief house in Midian.
16 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

God had punished the Israelites for their sin with a plague; as a Father he corrected his own children with a rod. But we read not that any of the Midianites died of the plague; God took another course with them, and punished them with the sword of an enemy, not with the rod of a father.

1. Moses, though the meekest man, and far from a spirit of revenge, is ordered to vex the Midianites and smite them, Nu 25:17. Note, We must set ourselves against that, whatever it is, which is an occasion of sin to us, though it be a right eye or a right hand that thus offends us, Mt 5:29,30. This is that holy indignation and revenge which godly sorrow worketh, 2Co 7:11.

2 The reason given for the meditating of this revenge is because they vex you with their wiles, Nu 25:18. Note, Whatever draws us to sin should be a vexation to us, as a thorn in the flesh. The mischief which the Midianites did to Israel by enticing them to whoredom must be remembered and punished with as much severity as that which the Amalekites did in fighting with them when they came out of Egypt, Ex 17:14. God will certainly reckon with those that do the devil's work in tempting men to sin. See further orders given in this matter, Nu 31:2.

17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

18 for they vex you with their wiles, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.

Numbers-26

The Numbering of Israel in Moab

1 And it came to pass after the plague, that the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying,

Observe here,

1. That Moses did not number the people but when God commanded him. David in his time did it without a command, and paid dearly for it. God was Israel's king, and he would not have this act of authority done but by his express orders. Moses, perhaps, by this time, had heard of the blessing with which Balaam was constrained, sorely against his will, to bless Israel, and particularly the notice he took of their numbers; and he was sufficiently pleased with that general testimony borne to this instance of their strength and honour by an adversary, though he knew not their numbers exactly, till God now appointed him to take the sum of them.

2. Eleazar was joined in commission with him, as Aaron had been before, by which God honoured Eleazar before the elders of his people, and confirmed his succession.

3. It was presently after the plague that this account was ordered to be taken, to show that though God had in justice contended with them by that sweeping pestilence, yet he had not made a full end, nor would he utterly cast them off. God's Israel shall not be ruined, though it be severely rebuked.

4. They were now to go by the same rule that they had gone by in the former numbering, counting those only that were

able to go forth to war, for this was the service now before them.

2 Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel.

3 And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho, saying,

4 *Take the sum of the people,* from twenty years old and upward; as the Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt.

This is the register of the tribes as they were now enrolled, in the same order that they were numbered in Nu 1:1-54. Observe,

I The account that is here kept of the families of each tribe, which must not be understood of such as we call families, those that live in a house together, but such as were the descendants of the several sons of the patriarchs, by whose names, in honour of them, their posterity distinguished themselves and one another. The families of the twelve tribes are thus numbered:--Of Dan but one, for Dan had but one son, and yet that tribe was the most numerous of all except Judah, Nu 26:42,43. Its beginning was small, but its latter end greatly increased. Zebulun was divided into three families, Ephraim into four, Issachar into four, Naphtali into four, and Reuben into four; Judah, Simeon, and Asher, had five families apiece, Gad and Benjamin seven apiece, and Manasseh eight. Benjamin brought ten sons into Egypt (Ge 46:21), but three of them, it seems either died childless or their families were extinct, for here we find seven only of those names preserved, and that whole tribe none of the most numerous; for Providence, in the building up of families and nations, does not tie itself to probabilities. The barren hath borne seven, and she that hath many children has waxed feeble, 1Sa 2:5.

II The numbers of each tribe. And here our best entertainment will be to compare these numbers with those when they were numbered at Mount Sinai. The sum total was nearly the same;

they were now 1820 fewer than they were then; yet seven of the tribes had increased in number. Judah had increased 1900, Issachar 9900, Zebulun 3100, Manasseh 20, 500, Benjamin 10,200, Dan 1700, and Asher 11,900. But the other five had decreased more than to balance that increase. Reuben had decreased 2770, Simeon 37,100, Gad 5150, Ephraim 8000, and Naphtali 8000. In this account we may observe,

1. That all the three tribes that were encamped under the standard of Judah, who was the ancestor of Christ, had increased, for his church shall be edified and multiplied.

2. That none of the tribes had increased so much as that of Manasseh, which in the former account was the smallest of all the tribes, only 32,200, while here it is one of the most considerable; and that of his brother Ephraim, which there was numerous, is here one of the least. Jacob had crossed hands upon their heads, and had preferred Ephraim before Manasseh, which perhaps the Ephraimites had prided themselves too much in, and had trampled upon their brethren the Manassites; but, when the Lord saw that Manasseh was despised, he thus multiplied him exceedingly, for it is his glory to help the weakest, and raise up those that are cast down.

3. That none of the tribes decreased so much as Simeon did; from 59,300, it such to 22,200, little more than a third part of what it was. One whole family of that tribe (namely Ohad, mentioned Ex 6:15) was extinct in the wilderness. Hence Simeon is not mentioned in Moses's blessing (De 33:1-29), and the lot of that tribe in Canaan was inconsiderable, only a canton out of Judah's lot, Jos 19:9. Some conjecture that most of those 24,000 who were cut off by the plague for the iniquity of Peor were of that tribe; for Zimri, who was a ringleader in that iniquity, was a prince of that tribe, many of whom therefore were influenced by his example to follow his pernicious ways.

III. In the account of the tribe of Reuben mention is made of the rebellion of Dathan and Abiram, who were of that tribe, in confederacy with Korah a Levite, Nu 26:9-11. Though the story had been largely related but a few chapters before, yet here it comes in again, as fit to be had in remembrance and thought of by posterity, whenever they looked into their pedigree and pleased themselves with the antiquity of their families and the glory of their ancestors, that they might call themselves a seed of evil doers. Two things are here said of them:--

1. That they had been famous in the congregation, Nu 26:9. Probably they were remarkable for their ingenuity, activity, and fitness for business:--That Dathan and Abiram that might have been advanced in due time under God and Moses; but their ambitious spirits put them upon striving against God and Moses, and when they quarrelled with the one they quarrelled with the other. And what was the issue?

2. Those that might have been famous were made infamous: they became a sign, Nu 26:10. They were made monuments of divine justice; God, in their ruin, showed himself glorious in holiness, and so they were set up for a warning to all others, in all ages, to take heed of treading in the steps of their pride and rebellion. Notice is here taken of the preservation of the children of Korah (Nu 26:11); they died not, as the children of Dathan and Abiram did, doubtless because they kept themselves pure from the infection, and would not join, no, not with their own father, in rebellion. If we partake not of the sins of sinners, we shall not partake of their plagues. These sons of Korah were afterwards, in their posterity, eminently serviceable to the church, being employed by David as singers in the house of the Lord; hence many psalms are said to be for the sons of Korah: and perhaps they were made to bear his name so long after, rather than the name of any other of their ancestors, for warning to themselves, and as an instance of the power of God, which brought those choice fruits even out of that bitter root. The children of

families that have been stigmatized should endeavour, by their eminent virtues, to roll away the reproach of their fathers.

5 Reuben, the eldest son of Israel: the children of Reuben; Hanoch, *of whom cometh* the family of the Hanochites: of Pallu, the family of the Palluites:
6 of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites: of Carmi, the family of the Carmites.
7 These are the families of the Reubenites: and they that were numbered of them were forty and three thousand and seven hundred and thirty.
8 And the sons of Pallu; Eliab.
9 And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This *is that* Dathan and Abiram, *which were* famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the Lord:
10 and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign.
11 Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.
12 The sons of Simeon after their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites: of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites: of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites:
13 of Zerah, the family of the Zarhites: of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites.
14 These *are* the families of the Simeonites, twenty and two thousand and two hundred.
15 The children of Gad after their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites: of Haggi, the family of the Haggites: of Shuni, the family of the Shunites:
16 of Ozni, the family of the Oznites: of Eri, the family of the Erites:
17 of Arod, the family of the Arodites: of Areli, the family of the Arelites.
18 These *are* the families of the children of Gad according to those that were numbered of them, forty thousand and five hundred.
19 The sons of Judah were Er and Onan: and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.

20 And the sons of Judah after their families were; of Shelah, the
family of the Shelanites: of Pharez, the family of the Pharzites: of
Zerah, the family of the Zarhites.
21 And the sons of Pharez were; of Hezron, the family of the
Hezronites: of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites.
22 These *are* the families of Judah according to those that were
numbered of them, threescore and sixteen thousand and five
hundred.
23 *Of* the sons of Issachar after their families: *of* Tola, the family of the
Tolaites: of Pua, the family of the Punites:
24 of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites: of Shimron, the family of
the Shimronites.
25 These *are* the families of Issachar according to those that were
numbered of them, threescore and four thousand and three
hundred.
26 *Of* the sons of Zebulun after their families: of Sered, the family of the
Sardites: of Elon, the family of the Elonites: of Jahleel, the family of
the Jahleelites.
27 These *are* the families of the Zebulunites according to those that
were numbered of them, threescore thousand and five hundred.
28 The sons of Joseph after their families *were* Manasseh and
Ephraim.
29 Of the sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites:
and Machir begat Gilead: of Gilead *come* the family of the
Gileadites.
30 These *are* the sons of Gilead: *of* Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites:
of Helek, the family of the Helekites:
31 and *of* Asriel, the family of the Asrielites: and *of* Shechem, the
family of the Shechemites:
32 and *of* Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites: and *of* Hepher, the
family of the Hepherites.
33 And Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters:
and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad *were* Mahlah, and
Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.
34 These *are* the families of Manasseh, and those that were numbered
of them, fifty and two thousand and seven hundred.

35 These *are* the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites: of Becher, the family of the Bachrites: of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites.
36 And these *are* the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites.
37 These *are* the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred. These *are* the sons of Joseph after their families.
38 The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites:
39 of Shupham, the family of the Shuphamites: of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites.
40 And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: *of Ard,* the family of the Ardites: *and* of Naaman, the family of the Naamites.
41 These *are* the sons of Benjamin after their families: and they that were numbered of them *were* forty and five thousand and six hundred.
42 These *are* the sons of Dan after their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These *are* the families of Dan after their families.
43 All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those that were numbered of them, *were* threescore and four thousand and four hundred.
44 *Of* the children of Asher after their families: of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites: of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites: of Beriah, the family of the Beriites.
45 Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites: of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites.
46 And the name of the daughter of Asher *was* Sarah.
47 These *are* the families of the sons of Asher according to those that were numbered of them; *who were* fifty and three thousand and four hundred.
48 *Of* the sons of Naphtali after their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites: of Guni, the family of the Gunites:
49 of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites: of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites.

50 These *are* the families of Naphtali according to their families: and they that were numbered of them *were* forty and five thousand and four hundred.

51 These *were* the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty.

The Land to Be Divided by Lot

52 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

53 Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names.

54 To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him.

If any ask why such a particular account is kept of the tribes, and families, and numbers, of the people of Israel, here is an answer for them; as they were multiplied, so they were portioned, not by common providence, but by promise; and, for the support of the honour of divine revelation, God will have the fulfilling of the promise taken notice of both in their increase and in their inheritance. When Moses had numbered the people God did not say, By these shall the land be conquered; but, taking that for granted, he tells him, Unto these shall the land be divided. "These that are now registered as the sons of Israel shall be admitted (as it were by copy of court-roll) heirs of the land of Canaan." Now, in the distributing, or quartering, of these tribes,

1 The general rule of equity is here prescribed to Moses, that to many he should give more, and to few he should give less (Nu 26:54); yet, alas! He was so far from giving any to others that he must not have any himself, but this direction given to him was intended for Joshua his successor.

2 The application of this general rule was to be determined by lot (Nu 26:55); notwithstanding it seems thus to be left to the prudence of their prince, yet the matter must be finally reserved to the providence of their God, in which they must

all acquiesce, how much soever it contradicted their policies or inclination: According to the lot shall the possession be divided. As the God of nations, so the God of Israel in particular, reserves it to himself to appoint the bounds of our habitation. And thus Christ, our Joshua, when he was urged to appoint one of his disciples to his right hand, another to his left in his kingdom, acknowledged the sovereignty of his Father in the disposal: It is not mine to give. Joshua must not dispose of inheritances in Canaan according to his own mind. But it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father.

55 Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit.

56 According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.

The Tribe of Levi

57 And these *are* they that were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites: of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites: of Merari, the family of the Merarites.

58 These *are* the families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begat Amram.

Levi was God's tribe, a tribe that was to have no inheritance with the rest in the land of Canaan, and therefore was not numbered with the rest, but by itself; so it had been numbered in the beginning of this book at Mount Sinai, and therefore came not under the sentence passed upon all that were then numbered, that none of them should enter Canaan but Caleb and Joshua; for of the Levites that were not numbered with them, nor were to go forth to war, Eleazar and Ithamar, and perhaps others who were above twenty years old then (as appears, Nu 4:16,28), entered Canaan; and yet this tribe, now at its second numbering, had increased but 1000, and was still one of the smallest tribes. Mention is made here of the death of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire, as before of the

sin and punishment of Korah, because these things happened to them for ensamples.

59 And the name of Amram's wife *was* Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her *mother* bare to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram, Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister.

60 And unto Aaron was born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

61 And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the Lord.

62 And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel.

Only Caleb and Joshua Survive

63 These *are* they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho.

64 But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai.

That which is observable in this conclusion of the account is the execution of the sentence passed upon the murmurers (Nu 14:29), that not one of those who were numbered from twenty years old and upwards (and that the Levites were not, but either from a month old or from thirty years old to fifty) should enter Canaan, except Caleb and Joshua. In the muster now made particular directions, no doubt, were given to those of each tribe that were employed in taking the account, to compare these rolls with the former, and to observe whether there were any now left of those that were numbered at Mount Sinai, and it appeared that there was not one man numbered now that was numbered then except Caleb and Joshua, Nu 26:64,65. Herein appeared,

1 The righteousness of God, and his faithfulness to his threatenings, when once the decree has gone forth. He swore

in his wrath, and what he had sworn he performed. Better all those carcasses, had they been ten times as many, should fall to the ground, than the word of God. Though the rising generation was mixed with the, and many of the guilty and condemned criminals long survived the sentence, even to the last year of the forty, yet they were cut off by some means or other before this muster was made. Those whom God has condemned cannot escape either by losing themselves in a crowd or by the delay of execution.

2 The goodness of God to this people, notwithstanding their provocations. Though that murmuring race was cut off, yet God raised up another generation, which was as numerous as they, that, though they perished, yet the name of Israel might not be cut off, lest the inheritance of the promise should be lost for want of heirs. And, though the number fell a little short what it was at Mount Sinai, yet those now numbered had this advantage, that they were all middle-aged men, between twenty and sixty, in the prime of their time for service; and during the thirty-eight years of their wandering and wasting in the wilderness they had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the laws and ordinances of God, having no business, civil or military, to divert them from those sacred studies, and having Moses and Aaron to instruct them, and God's good Spirit, Ne 9:20.

3. The truth of God, in performing his promise made to Caleb and Joshua. They were to be preserved from falling in this common ruin, and they were so. The arrows of death, though they fly in the dark, do not fly at random, even when they fly thickest, but are directed to the mark intended, and no other. All that are written among the living shall have their lives given them for a prey, in the most dangerous times. Thousands may fall on their right hand, and ten thousands on their left, but they shall escape.

65 For the Lord had said of them, they shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

Numbers-27

The Request of Zelophehad's Daughters

1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son
of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of
Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these *are* the names of his
daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah.
2 And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and
before the princes and all the congregation, *by* the door of the
tabernacle of the congregation, saying,
3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company
of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the
company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons.
4 Why should the name of our father be done away from among his
family, because he hath no son? Give unto us *therefore* a possession
among the brethren of our father.
5 And Moses brought their cause before the Lord.
6 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

Mention is made of the case of these daughters of Zelophehad in the chapter before, Nu 27:33. It should seem, by the particular notice taken of it, that it was a singular case, and that the like did not at this time occur in all Israel, that the head of a family had no sons, but daughters only. Their case is again debated (Nu 36:1-13) upon another article of it; and, according to the judgments given in their case, we find them put in possession, Jos 17:3,4. One would suppose that their personal character was such as added weight to their case, and caused it to be so often taken notice of.

Here is,

I. Their case stated by themselves, and their petition upon it presented to the highest court of judicature, which consisted of Moses as king, the princes as lords, and the congregation,

or elders of the people who were chose their representatives, as the commons, Nu 27:2. This august assembly sat near the door of the tabernacle, that in difficult cases they might consult the oracle. To them these young ladies made their application; for it is the duty of magistrates to defend the fatherless, Ps 82:3. We find not that they had any advocate to speak for them, but they managed their own cause ingeniously enough, which they could do the better because it was plain and honest, and spoke for itself. Now observe,

1. What it is they petition for: That they might have a possession in the land of Canaan, among the brethren of their father, Nu 27:4. What God had said to Moses (Nu 26:53) he had faithfully made known to the people, that the land of Canaan was to be divided among those that were now numbered; these daughters knew that they were not numbered, and therefore by this rule must expect no inheritance, and the family of their father must be looked upon as extinct, and written childless, though he had all these daughters: this they thought hard, and therefore prayed to be admitted heirs to their father, and to have an inheritance in his right. If they had had a brother, they would not have applied to Moses (as one did to Christ, Lu 12:13) for an order to inherit with him. But, having no brother, they beg for a possession. Herein they discovered,

(1.) A strong faith in the power and promise of God concerning the giving of the land of Canaan to Israel. Though it was yet unconquered, untouched, and in the full possession of the natives, yet they petition for their share in it as if it were all their own already. See Ps 60:6,7, God has spoken in his holiness, and the Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mane.

(2.) An earnest desire of a place and name in the land of promise, which was a type of heaven; and if they had, as some think, an eye to that, and by this claim laid hold on eternal life, they were five wise virgins indeed; and their example should quicken us with all possible diligence to make sure our

title to the heavenly inheritance, in the disposal of which, by the covenant of grace, no difference is made between male and female, Ga 3:28.

(3.) A true respect and honour for their father, whose name was dear and precious to them now that he was gone, and they were therefore solicitous that it should not be done away from among his family. There is a debt which children owe to the memory of their parents, required by the fifth commandment: Honour thy father and mother.

2. What their plea is: That their father did not die under any attainder which might be thought to have corrupted his blood and forfeited his estate, but he died in his own sin (Nu 27:3), not engaged in any mutiny or rebellion against Moses, particularly not in that of Korah and his company, nor in any way concerned in the sins of others, but chargeable only with the common iniquities of mankind, for which to his own Master he was to stand or fall, but laid not himself open to any judicial process before Moses and the princes. He was never convicted of any thing that might be a bar to his children's claim. It is a comfort to parents, when they come to die, if, though they smart themselves for their own sin, yet they are not conscious to themselves of any of those iniquities which God visits upon the children.

II. Their case determined by the divine oracle. Moses did not presume to give judgment himself, because, though their pretensions seemed just and reasonable, yet his express orders were to divide the land among those that were numbered, who were the males only; he therefore brings their cause before the Lord, and waits for his decision (Nu 27:5), and God himself gives the judgment upon it. He takes cognizance of the affairs, not only of nations, but of private families, and orders them in judgment, according to the counsel of his own will.

1 The petition is granted (Nu 27:7): They speak right, give them a possession. Those that seek an inheritance in the land of promise shall have what they seek, and other things shall be added to them. These are claims which God will countenance and crown.

2 The point is settled for all future occasions. These daughters of Zelophehad consulted, not only their own comfort and the credit of their family, but the honour and happiness of their sex likewise; for on this particular occasion a general law was made that, in case a man had no son, his estate should go to his daughters (Nu 27:8); not to the eldest, as the eldest son, but to them all in copartnership, share and share alike. Those that in such a case deprive their daughters of their right, purely to keep up the name of their family, unless a valuable consideration be allowed them, may make the entail of their lands surer than the entail of a blessing with them.

Further directions are given for the disposal of inheritances, Nu 27:9-11. "If a man have no issue at all, his estate shall go to his brethren; if no brethren, then to his father's brethren; and, if there be no such, then to his next kinsman." With this the rules of our law exactly agree: and though the Jewish doctors here will have it understood that if a man have no children his estate shall go to his father, if living, before his brethren, yet there is nothing of that in the law, and our common law has an express rule against it, That an estate cannot ascend lineally; so that if a person purchase lands in fee-simple, and die without issue in the life-time of his father, his father cannot be his heir. See how God makes heirs, and in his disposal we must acquiesce.

7 The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them
a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and
thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.
8 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, if a man
die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass
unto his daughter.

9 And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren.
10 And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren.
11 And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Moses Appoints Joshua as His Successor

12 And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel.
13 And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.

1. God tells Moses of his fault, his speaking unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of strife, where he did not express, so carefully as he ought to have done, a regard to the honour both of God and Israel, Nu 27:14. Though Moses was a servant of the Lord, a faithful servant, yet once he rebelled against God's commandment, and failed in his duty; and though a very honourable servant, and highly favoured, yet he shall hear of his miscarriage, and all the world shall hear of it too, again and again; for God will show his displeasure against sin, even in those that are nearest and dearest to him. Those that are in reputation for wisdom and honour have need to be constantly careful of their words and ways, lest at any time they say or do that which may be a diminution to their comfort, or to their credit, or both, a great while after.

2. He tells Moses of his death. His death was the punishment of his sin, and yet notice is given him of it in such a manner as might best serve to sweeten and mollify the sentence, and reconcile him to it.

(1.) Moses must die, but he shall first have the satisfaction of seeing the land of promise, Nu 27:12. God did not intend with

this sight of Canaan to tantalize him, or upbraid him with his folly in doing that which cut him short of it, nor had it any impression of that kind upon him, but God appointed it and Moses accepted it as a favour, his sight (we have reason to think) being wonderfully strengthened and enlarged to take such a full and distinct view of it as did abundantly gratify his innocent curiosity. This sight of Canaan signified his believing prospect of the better country, that is, the heavenly, which is very comfortable to dying saints.

(2.) Moses must die, but death does not cut him off; it only gathers him to his people, brings him to rest with the holy patriarchs that had gone before him. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, were his people, the people of his choice and love, and to them death gathered him.

(3.) Moses must die, but only as Aaron died before him, Nu 27:13. And Moses had seen how easily and cheerfully Aaron had put off the priesthood first and then the body; let not Moses therefore be afraid of dying; it was but to be gathered to his people, as Aaron was gathered. Thus the death of our near and dear relations should be improved by us,

[1.] As an engagement to us to think often of dying. We are not better than our fathers or brethren; if they are gone, we are going; if they are gathered already, we must be gathered very shortly.

[2.] As an encouragement to us to think of death without terror, and even to please ourselves with the thoughts of it. It is but to die as such and such died, if we live as they lived; and their end was peace, they finished their course with joy; why then should we fear any evil in that melancholy valley?

14 For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the
strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their
eyes: that *is* the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.
15 And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying,

16 Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,
17 which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.
18 And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom *is* the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

I. Moses prays for a successor. When God had told him that he must die, though it appears elsewhere that he solicited for a reprieve for himself (De 3:24,25), yet, when this could not be obtained, he begged earnestly that the work of God might be carried on, though he might not have the honour of finishing it. Envious spirits do not love their successors, but Moses was not one of these. We should concern ourselves, both in our prayers and in our endeavours, for the rising generation, that religion may flourish, and the interests of God's kingdom among men may be maintained and advanced, when we are in our graves. In this prayer Moses expresses,

1. A tender concern for the people of Israel: That the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. Our Saviour uses this comparison in his compassions for the people when they wanted good ministers, Mt 9:36. Magistrates and ministers are the shepherds of a people; if these be wanting, or be not as they should be, people are apt to wander and be scattered abroad, are exposed to enemies, and in danger of wanting food and of hurting one another, as sheep having no shepherd.

2. A believing dependence upon God, as the God of the spirits of all flesh. He is both the former and the searcher of spirits, and therefore can either find men fit or make them fit to serve his purposes, for the good of his church. Moses prays to God, not to send an angel, but to set a man over the congregation, that is, to nominate and appoint one whom he would qualify and own as ruler of his people Israel. Before God gave this

blessing to Israel, he stirred up Moses to pray for it: thus Christ, before he sent forth his apostles, called to those about him to pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest, Mt 9:38.

II. God, in answer to his prayer, appoints him a successor, even Joshua, who had long since signalized himself by his courage in fighting Amalek, his humility in ministering to Moses, and his faith and sincerity in witnessing against the report of the evil spies; this is the man whom God pitches upon to succeed Moses: A man in whom is the Spirit, the Spirit of grace (he is a good man, fearing God and hating covetousness, and acting from principle), the spirit of government (he is fit to do the work and discharge the trusts of his place), a spirit of conduct and courage; and he had also the spirit of prophecy, for the Lord often spoke unto him, Jos 4:1,6:2,7:10. Now here,

1. God directs Moses how to secure the succession to Joshua.

(1.) He must ordain him: Lay thy hand upon him, Nu 27:18. This was done in token of Moses' transferring the government to him, as the laying of hands on the sacrifice put the offering in the place and stead of the offerer; also in token of God's conferring the blessing of the Spirit upon him, which Moses obtained by prayer. It is said (De 34:9), Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. This rite of imposing hands we find used in the New Testament in the setting apart of gospel ministers, denoting a solemn designation of them to the office and an earnest desire that God would qualify them for it and own them in it. It is the offering of them to Christ and his church for living sacrifices.

(2.) He must present him to Eleazar and the people, set him before them, that they might know him to be designed of God for this great trust and consent to that designation.

(3.) He must give him a charge, Nu 27:19. He must be charged with the people of Israel, who were delivered into his hand as sheep into the hand of a shepherd, and for whom he must be accountable. He must be strictly charged to do his duty to them; though they were under his command, he was under God's command, and from him must receive charge. The highest must know that there is a higher than they. This charge must be given him in their sight, that it might be the more affecting to Joshua, and that the people, seeing the work and care of their prince, might be the more engaged to assist and encourage him.

(4.) He must put some of his honour upon him, Nu 27:20. Joshua at the most had but some of the honour of Moses, and in many instances came short of him; but this seems to be meant of his taking him now, while he lived, into partnership with him in the government and admitting him to act with authority as his assistant. It is an honour to be employed for God and his church; some of this honour must be put upon Joshua, that the people, being used to obey him while Moses lived, might the more cheerfully do it afterwards.

(5.) He must appoint Eleazar the high priest, with this breast-plate of judgment, to be his privy-council (Nu 27:21): He shall stand before Eleazar, by him to consult the oracle, ready to receive and observe all the instructions that should be given him by it. This was a direction to Joshua. Though he was full of the Spirit, and had all this honour put upon him, yet he must do nothing without asking counsel of God, not leaning to his own understanding. It was also a great encouragement to him. To govern Israel, and to conquer Canaan, were two hard tasks, but God assures him that in both he should be under a divine conduct; and in every difficult case God would advise him to that which should be for the best. Moses had recourse to the oracle of God himself, but Joshua and the succeeding judges must use the ministry of the high priest, and consult the judgment of urim, which, the Jews say, might not be enquired of but by the king or the head of the

sanhedrim, or by the agent or representative of the people, for them, and in their name.

Thus the government of Israel was now purely divine, for both the designation and direction of their princes were entirely so. At the word of the priest, according to the judgment of urim, Joshua and all Israel must go out and come in; and no doubt God, who thus guided, would preserve both their going out and their coming in. Those are safe, and may be easy, that follow God, and in all their ways acknowledge him.

2. Moses does according to these directions, Nu 27:22,23. He cheerfully ordained Joshua,

(1.) Though it was a present lessening to himself, and amounted almost to a resignation of the government. He was very willing that the people should look off from him, and gaze on the rising sun.

(2.) Though it might appear a perpetual slur upon his family. It would not have been so much his praise if he had thus resigned his honour to a son of his own; but with his own hands first to ordain Eleazar high priest, and then Joshua, one of another tribe, chief ruler, while his own children had no preferment at all, but were left in the rank of common Levites, this was such an instance of self-denial and submission to the will of God as was more his glory than the highest advancement of his family could have been; for it confirms his character as the meekest man upon earth, and faithful to him that appointed him in all his house. This (says the excellent bishop Patrick) shows him to have had a principle which raised him above all other lawgivers, who always took care to establish their families in some share of that greatness which they themselves possessed; but hereby it appeared that Moses acted not from himself, because he acted not for himself.

19 and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the
congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.
20 And thou shalt put *some* of thine honor upon him, that all the
congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.
21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask *counsel*
for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word
shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, *both* he, and
all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.
22 And Moses did as the Lord commanded him: and he took Joshua,
and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the
congregation:
23 and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the
Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

Numbers-28

The Daily Offerings

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, my offering,
and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, *for* a sweet savor unto
me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.
3 And thou shalt say unto them, this *is* the offering made by fire
which ye shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year
without spot day by day, *for* a continual burnt offering.
4 The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb
shalt thou offer at even;

I. A general order given concerning the offerings of the Lord, which were to be brought in their season, Nu 28:2. These laws are here given afresh, not because the observance of them was wholly disused during their thirty-eight years' wandering in the wilderness (we cannot think that they were so long without any public worship, but that at least the daily lamb was offered morning and evening, and doubled on the sabbath day; so bishop Patrick conjectures); but that many of the sacrifices were then omitted is plainly intimated, Am 5:25, quoted by Stephen, Ac 7:42. Did you offer unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

It is implied, "No, you did not." But, whether the course of sacrifices had been interrupted or no, God saw fit now to repeat the law of sacrifices,

1. Because this was a new generation of men, that were most of them unborn when the former laws were given; therefore, that they might be left without excuse, they have not only these laws written, to be read to them, but again repeated from God himself, and put into a less compass and a plainer method.

2. Because they were now entering upon war, and might be tempted to think that while they were engaged in that they should be excused from offering sacrifices. Inter arma silent leges--law is little regarded amidst the clash of arms. No, says God, my bread for my sacrifices even now shall you observe to offer, and that in the due season. They were peculiarly concerned to keep their peace with God when they were at war with their enemies. In the wilderness they were solitary, and quite separate from all other people, and therefore there they needed not so much their distinguishing badges, nor would their omission of sacrifices be so scandalous as when they came into Canaan, when they mingled with other people.

3. Because possession was now to be given them of the land of promise, that land flowing with milk and honey, where they would have plenty of all good things. "Now" (says God), "When you are feasting yourselves, forget not to offer the bread of your God." Canaan was given to them upon this condition, that they should observe God's statutes, Ps 105:44,45.

II The particular law of the daily sacrifice, a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the evening, which, for the constancy of it as duly as the day came, is called a continual burnt-offering (Nu 28:3), which intimates that when we are bidden to pray always, and to pray without ceasing, it is intended that at least every morning and every evening we offer up our

solemn prayers and praises to God. This is said to be ordained in Mount Sinai (Nu 28:6), when the other laws were given. The institution of it we have, Ex 29:38. Nothing is here added in the repetition of the law, but that the wine to be poured out in the drink-offering is ordered to be strong wine (Nu 28:7), the riches and most generous and best-bodied wine they could get. Though it was to be poured out upon the altar, and not drunk (they therefore might be ready to think the worst would serve to be so thrown away), yet God requires the strongest, to teach us to serve God with the best we have. The wine must be strong (says Ainsworth) because it was a figure of the blood of Christ, the memorial of which is still left to the church in wine, and of the blood of the martyrs, which was poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and service of our faith, Php 2:17.

5 and a tenth *part* of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled
with the fourth *part* of a hin of beaten oil.
6 *It is* a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in Mount Sinai
for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord.
7 And the drink offering thereof *shall be* the fourth *part* of a hin for
the one lamb: in the holy *place* shalt thou cause the strong wine to
be poured unto the Lord *for* a drink offering.
8 And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of
the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer *it*, a
sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

The Sabbath and Monthly Offerings

9 And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot,
and two tenth deals of flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil,
and the drink offering thereof:
10 *this is* the burnt offering of every Sabbath, beside the continual
burnt offering, and his drink offering.
11 And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt
offering unto the Lord; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven
lambs of the first year without spot;

12 and three tenth deals of flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one ram;

The new moons and the Sabbaths are often spoken of together, as great solemnities in the Jewish church, very comfortable to the saints then, and typical of gospel grace. Now we have here the sacrifices appointed,

1. For the Sabbaths. Every sabbath day the offering must be doubled; besides the two lambs offered for the daily burnt-offering, there must be two more offered, one (it is probable) added to the morning sacrifice, and the other to the evening, Nu 28:9,10. This teaches us to double our devotions on sabbath days, for so the duty of the day requires. The sabbath rest is to be observed, in order to a more close application to the sabbath work, which ought to fill up sabbath time. In Ezekiel's temple-service, which points at gospel times, the sabbath offerings were to be six lambs and a ram, with their meat-offerings, and drink-offerings (Eze 46:4,5), to intimate not only the continuance, but the advancement, of sabbath sanctification in the days of the Messiah. This is the burnt-offering of the sabbath in his sabbath, so it is in the original, Nu 28:10. We must do every sabbath day's work in its day, studying to redeem every minute of sabbath time as those that believe it precious; and not thinking to put off one Sabbath's work to another, for sufficient to every sabbath is the service thereof.

2. For the new moons. Some suggest that, as the sabbath was kept with an eye to the creation of the world, so the new moons were sanctified with an eye to the divine providence, which appoints the moon for seasons, guiding the revolutions of time by its changes, and governing sublunary bodies (as many think) by its influences. Though we observe not any feast of new moons, yet we must not forget to give God the glory of all the precious things put forth by the moon which he has established for ever, a faithful witness in heaven, Ps 89:37. The offerings in the new moons were very

considerable, two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs, with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings that were to attend them (Nu 28:11-15, &c.), besides a sin-offering, Nu 28:15. For, when we give glory to God by confessing his mercies, we must give glory to him likewise by confessing our own sins; and, when we rejoice in the gifts of common providence, we must make the sacrifice of Christ, that great gift of special grace, the fountain and spring-head of our joy. Some have questioned whether the new moons were to be reckoned among their feasts; but why should they not, when, besides the special sacrifices which were then to be offered, they rested from servile works (Am 8:5), blew the trumpets (Nu 10:10), and went to the prophets to hear the word? 2Ki 4:23. And the worship performed in the new moons is made typical of gospel solemnities, Isa 66:23.

13 and a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil *for* a meat offering
unto one lamb; *for* a burnt offering of a sweet savor, a sacrifice
made by fire unto the Lord.
14 And their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine unto a bullock,
and the third part of a hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of a hin unto
a lamb: this *is* the burnt offering of every month throughout the
months of the year.
15 And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the Lord shall be
offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

The Offerings at the Appointed Feasts

16 And in the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the Passover of the
Lord.
17 And in the fifteenth day of this month *is* the feast: seven days shall
unleavened bread be eaten.
18 In the first day *shall be* a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of
servile work *therein:*
19 but ye shall offer a sacrifice made by fire *for* a burnt offering unto
the Lord; two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven lambs of
the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish.

20 And their meat offering *shall be of* flour mingled with oil: three
tenth deals shall ye offer for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a
ram;
21 a several tenth deal shalt thou offer for every lamb, throughout the
seven lambs:
22 and one goat *for* a sin offering, to make an atonement for you.

The appointment of the pass-over sacrifices; not that which was the chief, the paschal lamb (sufficient instructions had formerly been given concerning that), but those which were to be offered upon the seven days of unleavened bread, which followed it, Nu 28:17-25. The first and last of those seven days were to be sanctified as Sabbaths, by a holy rest and a holy convocation, and on each of the seven days they were to be liberal in their sacrifices, in token of their great and constant thankfulness for their deliverance out of Egypt: Two bullocks, a ram, and seven lambs. A gospel conversation, in gratitude for Christ our Passover who was sacrificed, is called the keeping of this feast (1Co 5:8); for it is not enough that we purge out the leavened bread of malice and wickedness, but we must offer the bread of our God, even the sacrifice of praise, continually, and continue herein unto the end. 2 The sacrifices are likewise appointed which were to be offered at the feast of pentecost, here called the day of the first-fruits, Nu 28:26. In the feast of unleavened bread they offered a sheaf of their first-fruits of barley (which with them was first ripe) to the priest (Le 23:10), as an introduction to the harvest; but now, about seven weeks after, they were to bring a new meat-offering to the Lord, at the end of harvest, in thankfulness to God, who had not only given, but preserved to their use, the kindly fruits of the earth, so as that in due time they did enjoy them. It was at this feast that the Spirit was poured out (Ac 2:1-13, &c.), and thousands were converted by the preaching of the apostles, and were presented to Christ, to be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. The sacrifice that was to be offered with the loaves of the first-fruits was appointed, Le 23:18. But over and above, besides that and besides the daily offerings, they were to offer two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs, with a kid for a sin-

offering, Nu 28:27-30. When God sows plentifully upon us he expects to reap accordingly from us. Bishop Patrick observes that no peace-offerings are appointed in this chapter, which were chiefly for the benefit of the offerers, and therefore in them they were left more to themselves; but burnt-offerings were purely for the honour of God, were confessions of his dominion, and typified evangelical piety and devotion, by which the soul is wholly offered up to God in the flames of holy love; and sin-offerings were typical of Christ's sacrifice of himself, by which we and our services are perfected and sanctified.

23 Ye shall offer these beside the burnt offering in the morning, which
is for a continual burnt offering.
24 After this manner ye shall offer daily, throughout the seven days,
the meat of the sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the
Lord: it shall be offered beside the continual burnt offering, and
his drink offering.
25 And on the seventh day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall
do no servile work.
26 Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat
offering unto the Lord, after your weeks be *out,* ye shall have a
holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work:
27 but ye shall offer the burnt offering for a sweet savor unto the
Lord; two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs of the first year;
28 and their meat offering of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals
unto one bullock, two tenth deals unto one ram,
29 a several tenth deal unto one lamb, throughout the seven lambs;
30 *and* one kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you.
31 Ye shall offer *them* beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat
offering, (they shall be unto you without blemish,) and their drink
offerings.

Numbers-29

1 And in the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, ye shall
have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of
blowing the trumpets unto you.
2 And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savor unto the Lord;
one young bullock, one ram, *and* seven lambs of the first year
without blemish:
3 and their meat offering *shall be of* flour mingled with oil, three
tenth deals for a bullock, *and* two tenth deals for a ram,
4 and one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs:
5 and one kid of the goats *for* a sin offering, to make an atonement
for you:
6 beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and
the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink
offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savor, a sacrifice
made by fire unto the Lord.

There were more sacred solemnities in the seventh month than in any other month of the year, not only because it had been the first month till the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (which, falling in the month Abib, occasioned that to be thenceforth made the beginning of the months in all ecclesiastical computations), but because still it continued the first month in the civil reckonings of the jubilees and years of release, and also because it was the time of vacation between harvest and seedtime, when they had most leisure to attend the sanctuary, which intimates that, though God will dispense with sacrifices in consideration of works of necessity and mercy, yet the more leisure we have from the pressing occasions of this life the more time we should spend in the immediate service of God. 1. We have here the appointment of the sacrifices that were to be offered on the first day of the month, the day of blowing the trumpets, which was a preparative for the two great solemnities of holy mourning on the day of atonement and of holy joy in the feast of tabernacles. The intention of divine institutions is well answered when one religious service helps to fit us for

another and all for heaven. The blowing of the trumpets was appointed, 23:24. Here the people are directed what sacrifices to offer on that day, of which there was not then any mention made. Note, Those who would know the mind of God in the scripture must compare one part of the scripture with another, and put those parts together that have reference to the same thing, for the latter discoveries of divine light explain what was dark and supply what was defective in the former, that the man of God may be perfect. The sacrifices then to be offered are particularly ordered here (Nu 29:2-6), and care taken that these should not supersede the daily oblation and that of the new moon. It is hereby intimated that we must not seek occasions to abate our zeal in God's service, nor be glad of an excuse to omit a good duty, but rather rejoice in an opportunity of accumulating and doing more than ordinary in religion. If we perform family-worship, we must not think that this will excuse us from our secret devotions; nor that on the days we go to church we need not worship God alone and with our families; but we should always abound in the work of the Lord. 2. On the day of atonement. Besides all the services of that day, which we had the institution of, Le 16:1-34, and which, one would think, required trouble and charge enough, here are burnt-offerings ordered to be offered, Nu 29:8-10. For in our faith and repentance, those two great gospel graces which were signified by that day's performances, we must have an eye to the glory and honour of God, which was purely intended in the burnt-offerings; there was likewise to be a kid of the goats for a sin-offering, besides the great sin-offering of atonement (Nu 29:11), which intimates that there are so many defects and faults, even in the exercises and expressions of our repentance, that we have need of an interest in a sacrifice to expiate the guilt even of that part of our holy things. Though we must not repent that we have repented, yet we must repent that we have not repented better. It likewise intimated the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, and their insufficiency to take away sin, that on the very day the sin-offering of atonement was offered, yet

there must be another sin-offering. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak, that Christ has done.

7 And ye shall have on the tenth *day* of this seventh month a holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work *therein:*

8 but ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord *for* a sweet savor; one young bullock, one ram, *and* seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish.

9 And their meat offering *shall be of* flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, *and* two tenth deals to one ram,

10 a several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs:

11 one kid of the goats *for* a sin offering; beside the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings.

12 And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days:

13 and ye shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord; thirteen young bullocks, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs of the first year; they shall be without blemish:

14 and their meat offering *shall be of* flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto every bullock of the thirteen bullocks, two tenth deals to each ram of the two rams,

15 and a several tenth deal to each lamb of the fourteen lambs:

16 and one kid of the goats *for* a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering.

17 And on the second day *ye shall offer* twelve young bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without spot:

Soon after the day of atonement, that day in which men were to afflict their souls, followed the feast of tabernacles, in which they were to rejoice before the Lord; for those that sow in tears shall soon reap in joy. To the former laws about this feast, which we had, Le 23:34-44, &c., here are added directions about the offerings by fire, which they were to offer unto the Lord during the seven days of that feast, Le 33:36. Observe here,

1. Their days of rejoicing were to be days of sacrifices. A disposition to be cheerful does us no harm, nor is any bad symptom, when it is so far from unfitting us for the duties of God's immediate service that it encourages and enlarges our hearts in them.

2. All the days of their dwelling in booths they must offer sacrifices. While we are here in a tabernacle-state, it is our interest as well as duty constantly to keep up communion with God; nor will the unsettledness of our outward condition excuse us in our neglect of the duties of God's worship.

3. The sacrifices for each of the seven days, though differing in nothing but the number of the bullocks, are severally and particularly appointed, which yet is no vain repetition; for God would thus teach them to be very exact in those observances, and to keep an eye of faith fixed upon the institution in every day's work. It likewise intimates that the repetition of the same services, if performed with an upright heart, and with a continued fire of pious and devout affection, is no weariness to God, and therefore we ought not to snuff at it, or to say, Behold, what a weariness it is to us!

4. The number of bullocks (which were the most costly part of the sacrifice) decreased every day. On the first day of the feast they were to offer thirteen, on the second day but twelve, on the third day eleven, &c. So that on the seventh they offered seven; and the last day, though it was the great day of the feast, and celebrated with a holy convocation, yet they were to offer but one bullock; and, whereas on all the other days they offered two rams and fourteen lambs, on this they offered but one ram and seven lambs. Such was the will of the Law-maker, and that is reason enough for the law. Some suggest that God herein considered the infirmity of the flesh, which is apt to grudge the charge and expense of religion; it is therefore ordered to grow less and less, that they might not complain as if God had made them to serve with an offering, Isa 43:23. Or it is hereby intimated to them that the legal

dispensation should wax old, and vanish away at last; and the multitude of their sacrifices should end in one great sacrifice, infinitely more worthy than all of them. It was on the last day of the feast, after all these sacrifices had been ordered, that our Lord Jesus stood and cried to those who still thirsted after righteousness (being sensible of the insufficiency of these sacrifices to justify them) to come unto him and drink, Joh 7:37.

5. The meat-offerings and drink-offerings attended all the sacrifices, according to their number, after the manner. Be there ever so much flesh, it is no feast without bread and drink, therefore these must never be omitted at God's altar, which was his table. We must not think that doing much in religion will be accepted if we do not do it well, and after the manner that God has appointed.

6. Every day there must be a sin-offering presented, as we observed in the other feasts. Our burnt-offerings of praise cannot be accepted of God unless we have an interest in the great sacrifice of propitiation which Christ offered when for us he made himself a sin-offering.

7. Even when all these sacrifices were offered, yet the continual burnt-offering must not be omitted either morning or evening, but each day this must be offered first in the morning and last in the evening. No extraordinary services should jostle out our stated devotions.

8. Though all these sacrifices were required to be presented by the body of the congregation, at the common charge, yet, besides these, particular persons were to glorify God with their vows and their free-will offerings, Nu 29:39. When God commanded that this they must do, he left room for the generosity of their devotion, a great deal more they might do, not inventing other worships, but abounding in these, as 2Ch 30:23,24. Large directions had been given in Leviticus concerning the offerings of all sorts that should be brought by

particular persons according to the providences of God concerning them and the graces of God in them. Though every Israelite had an interest in these common sacrifices, yet he must not think that these will serve instead of his vows and his free-will offerings. Thus our ministers' praying with us and for us will not excuse us from praying for ourselves.

18 and their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks,
for the rams, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number,
after the manner:
19 and one kid of the goats *for* a sin offering; beside the continual
burnt offering, and the meat offering thereof, and their drink
offerings.
20 And on the third day eleven bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs
of the first year without blemish:
21 and their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks,
for the rams, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number,
after the manner:
22 and one goat *for* a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering,
and his meat offering, and his drink offering.
23 And on the fourth day ten bullocks, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs of
the first year without blemish:
24 their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for
the rams, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number,
after the manner:
25 and one kid of the goats *for* a sin offering; beside the continual
burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering.
26 And on the fifth day nine bullocks, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs of
the first year without spot:
27 and their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks,
for the rams, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number,
after the manner:
28 and one goat *for* a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering,
and his meat offering, and his drink offering.
29 And on the sixth day eight bullocks, two rams, *and* fourteen
lambs of the first year without blemish:
30 and their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks,
for the rams, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number,
after the manner:

31 and one goat *for* a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering,
his meat offering, and his drink offering.
32 And on the seventh day seven bullocks, two rams, *and* fourteen
lambs of the first year without blemish:
33 and their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks,
for the rams, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number,
after the manner:
34 and one goat *for* a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering,
his meat offering, and his drink offering.
35 On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly: ye shall do no
servile work *therein:*
36 but ye shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a
sweet savor unto the Lord: one bullock, one ram, seven lambs of
the first year without blemish:
37 their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullock, for the
ram, and for the lambs, shall *be* according to their number, after the
manner:
38 and one goat *for* a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering,
and his meat offering, and his drink offering.
39 These *things* ye shall do unto the Lord in your set feasts, beside
your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings,
and for your meat offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for
your peace offerings.
40 And Moses told the children of Israel according to all that the
Lord commanded Moses.

Numbers-30

The Law concerning Vows

1 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the
children of Israel, saying, this *is* the thing which the Lord hath
commanded.

This law was delivered to the heads of the tribes that they might instruct those who were under their charge, explain the law to them, give then necessary cautions, and call them to

account, if there were occasion, for the breach of their vows. Perhaps the heads of the tribes had, upon some emergency of this kind, consulted Moses, and desired by him to know the mind of God, and here they are told it: This is the thing which the Lord has commanded concerning vows, and it is a command still in force.

1 The case supposed is that a person vows a vow unto the Lord, making God a party to the promise, and designing his honour and glory in it. The matter of the vow is supposed to be something lawful: no man can be by his own promise bound to do that which he is already by the divine precept prohibited from doing. Yet it is supposed to be something which, in such and such measures and degrees, was not a necessary duty antecedent to the vow. A person might vow to bring such and such sacrifices at certain times, to give such and such a sum or such a proportion in alms, to forbear such meats and drinks which the law allowed, to fast and afflict the soul (which is specified Nu 30:13) at other times besides the day of atonement. And many similar vows might be made in an extraordinary heat of holy zeal, in humiliation for some sin committed or for the prevention of sin, in the pursuit of some mercy desired or in gratitude for some mercy received. It is of great use to make such vows as these, provided they be made in sincerity with due caution. Vows (say the Jewish doctors) are the hedge of separation, that is, a fence to religion. He that vows is here said to bind his soul with a bond. It is a vow to God, who is a spirit, and to him the soul, with all its powers, must be bound. A promise to man is a bond upon the estate, but a promise to God is a bond upon the soul. Our sacramental vows, by which we are bound to no more than what was before our duty, and which neither father nor husband can disannul, are bonds upon the soul, and by them we must feel ourselves bound out from all sin and bound up to the whole will of God. Our occasional vows concerning that which before was in our own power (Ac 5:4), when they are made, are bonds upon the soul likewise.

2 The command given is that these vows be conscientiously performed: He shall not break his word, though afterwards he may change his mind, but he shall do according to what he has said. Margin, He shall not profane his word. Vowing is an ordinance of God; if we vow in hypocrisy we profane that ordinance: it is plainly determined, Better not vow than vow and not pay, Ec 5:5. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. His promises to us are yea and amen, let not ours to him be yea and nay.

2 If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

3 If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind *herself* by a bond, *being* in her father's house in her youth;

4 and her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand.

5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth, not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand; and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.

6 And if she had at all a husband, when she vowed, or uttered aught out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul;

7 and her husband heard *it*, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard *it:* then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

8 But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard *it*, then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect; and the Lord shall forgive her.

It is here taken for granted that all such persons as are sui juris--at their own disposal, and are likewise of sound understanding and memory, are bound to perform whatever they vow that is lawful and possible; but, if the person vowing be under the dominion and at the disposal of another, the case is different. Two cases much alike are here put and determined:--

I The case of a daughter in her father's house: and some think, probably enough, that it extends to a son likewise, while he is at home with his father, and under tutors and governors. Whether the exception may thus be stretched I cannot say. Non est distinguendum, ubi lex non distinguit--We are not allowed to make distinctions which the law does not. The rule is general, If a man vow, he must pay. But for a daughter it is express: her vow is nugatory or in suspense till her father knows it, and (it is supposed) knows it from her; for, when it comes to his knowledge, it is in his power either to ratify or nullify it. But in favour of the vow,

1. Even his silence shall suffice to ratify it: If he hold his peace, her vows shall stand, Nu 30:4. Qui tacet, consentire videtur--Silence gives consent. Hereby he allows his daughter the liberty she has assumed, and, as long as he says nothing against her vow, she shall be bound by it. But,

2. His protestation against it shall perfectly disannul it, because it is possible that such vow may by prejudicial to the affairs of the family, break the father's measures, perplex the provision made for his table if the vow related to meats, or lessen the provision made for his children if the vow would be more expensive than his estate would bear; however, it was certain that it was an infringement of his authority over his child, and therefore, if he disallow it, she is discharged, and the Lord shall forgive her, that is, she shall not be charged with the guilt of violating her vow; she showed her good-will in making the vow, and, if her intentions therein were sincere, she shall be accounted better than sacrifice.

This shows how great a deference children owe to their parents, and how much they ought to honour them and be obedient to them. It is for the interest of the public that the paternal authority be supported; for, when children are countenanced in their disobedience to their parents (as they were by the tradition of the elders, Mt 15:5,6), they soon

become in other things children of Belial. If this law be not to be extended to children's marrying without their parents' consent so far as to put it in parents' power to annul the marriage and dissolve the obligation (as some have thought it does), yet certainly it proves the sinfulness of it, and obliges the children that have thus done foolishly to repent and humble themselves before God and their parents.

II The case of a wife is much the same. As for a woman that is a widow or divorced, she has neither father nor husband to control her, so that, whatever vows she binds her soul with, they shall stand against her (Nu 30:9), it is at her peril if she run back; but a wife, who has nothing that she can strictly call her own, but with her husband's allowance, cannot, without that, make any such vow.

1 The law is plain in case of a wife that continues so long after the vow. If her husband allow her vow, though only by silence, it must stand, Nu 30:6,7. If he disallow it, since her obligation to that which she had vowed arose purely from her own act, and not from any prior command of God, her obligation to her husband shall take place of it, for to him she ought to be in subjection as unto the Lord; and now it is so far from being her duty to fulfil her vow that it would be her sin to disobey her husband, whose consent perhaps she ought to have asked before she made the vow; therefore she needs forgiveness, Nu 30:8.

2 The law is the same in case of a wife that soon after becomes a widow, or is put away. Though, if she return to her father's house, she does not therefore so come again under his authority as that he has power to disannul hew vows (Nu 30:9), yet if the vow was made while she was in the house of her husband, and her husband disallowed it, it was made void and of no effect for ever, and she does not return under the law of her vow when she is loosed from the law of her husband. This seems to be the distinct meaning of Nu 30:10-

14, which otherwise would be but a repetition of Nu 30:6-8. But it is added (Nu 30:15) that, if the husband make void the vows of his wife, he shall bear her iniquity; that is, if the thing she had vowed was really good, for the honour of God and the prosperity of her own soul, and the husband disallowed it out of covetousness, or humour, or to show his authority, though she be discharged from the obligation of her vow, yet he will have a great deal to answer for.

Now here it is very observable how carefully the divine law consults the good order of families, and preserves the power of superior relations, and the duty and reverence of inferiors. It is fit that every man should bear rule in his own house, and have his wife and children in subjection with all gravity; and rather than this great rule should be broken, or any encouragement given to inferior relations to break those bonds asunder, God himself would quit his right, and release the obligations even of a solemn vow; so much does religion strengthen the ties of all relations, and secure the welfare of all societiesd, that in it the families of the earth are blessed.

9 But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

10 And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath;

11 and her husband heard *it*, and held his peace at her, *and* disallowed her not: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

12 But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard *them; then* whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the Lord shall forgive her.

13 Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void.

14 But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which *are* upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard *them*.

15 But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard

them; then he shall bear her iniquity.

16 These *are* the statutes, which the Lord commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter, *being yet* in her youth in her father's house.

Numbers-31

Israel Takes Vengeance on Midian

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

3 And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian.

I The Lord of hosts gives orders to Moses to make war upon the Midianites, and his commission no doubt justified this war, though it will not serve to justify the like without such commission. The Midianites were the posterity of Abraham by Keturah, Ge 25:2. Some of them settled south of Canaan, among whom Jethro lived, and they retained the worship of the true God; but these were settled east of Canaan, and had fallen into idolatry, neighbours to, and in confederacy with, the Moabites. Their land was not designed to be given to Israel, nor would Israel have meddled with them if they had not made themselves obnoxious to their resentment by sending their bad women among them to draw them to whoredom and idolatry. This was the provocation, this was the quarrel. For this (says God) avenge Israel of the Midianites, Nu 31:2.

1. God would have the Midianites chastised, an inroad made upon that part of their country which lay next to the camp of Israel, and which was probably more concerned in that mischief than the Moabites, who therefore were let alone. God will have us to reckon those our worst enemies that draw

us to sin, and to avoid them; and since every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, and these are the Midianites which ensnare us with their wiles, on them we should avenge ourselves, not only make no league with them, but make war upon them by living a life of mortification. God had taken vengeance on his own people for yielding to the Midianites' temptations; now the Midianites, that gave the temptation, must be reckoned with, for the deceived and the deceiver are his (Job 12:16), both accountable to his tribunal; and, though judgment begin at the house of God, it shall not end there, 1Pe 4:17. There is a day coming when vengeance will be taken on those that have introduced errors and corruptions into the church, and the devil that deceived men will be cast into the lake of fire. Israel's quarrel with Amalek, that fought against them, was not avenged till long after: but their quarrel with Midian, that debauched them, was speedily avenged, for they were looked upon as much more the dangerous and malicious enemies.

2. God would have it done by Moses, in his life-time, that he who had so deeply resented that injury might have the satisfaction of seeing it avenged. "See this execution done upon the enemies of God and Israel, and afterwards thou shalt be gathered to thy people." This was the only piece of service of this kind that Moses must further do, and then he has accomplished, as a hireling, his day, and shall have his quietus--enter into rest: hitherto his usefulness must come, and no further; the wars of Canaan must be carried on by another hand. Note, God sometimes removes useful men when we think they can be ill spared; but this ought to satisfy us, that they are never removed till they have done the work which was appointed them.

II. Moses gives orders to the people to prepare for this expedition, Nu 31:3. He would not have the whole body of the camp to stir, but they must arm some of themselves to the war, such as were either most fit or most forward, and avenge the Lord of Midian. God said, Avenge Israel; Moses says,

Avenge the Lord; for the interests of God and Israel are united, and the cause of both is one and the same. And if God, in what he does, shows himself jealous for the honour of Israel, surely Israel, in what they do, ought to show themselves jealous for the glory of God. Then only we can justify the avenging of ourselves when it is the vengeance of the Lord that we engage in. Nay, for this reason we are forbidden to avenge ourselves, because God has said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay.

III. A detachment is drawn out accordingly for this service, 1000 out of every tribe, 12,000 in all, a small number in comparison with what they could have sent, and it is probable small in comparison with the number of the enemies they were sent against. But God would teach them that it is all one to him to save by many or by few, 1Sa 14:6.

IV. Phinehas the son of Eleazar is sent along with them. It is strange that no mention is made of Joshua in this great action. If he was general of these forces, who do we not find him leading them out? If he tarried at home, why do we not find him meeting them with Moses at their return? It is probable, each tribe having a captain of its own thousand, there was no general, but they proceeded in the order of their march through the wilderness, Judah first, and the rest in their posts, under the command of their respective captains, spoken of Nu 31:48. But, the war being a holy war, Phinehas was their common head, not to supply the place of a general, but, by the oracle of God, to determine the resolves of their counsels of war, in which the captains of thousands would all acquiesce, and according to which they would act in conjunction. He therefore took with him the holy instruments or vessels, probably the breast-plate of judgment, by which God might he consulted in any emergency.

Though he was not yet the high priest, yet he might be delegated pro hac vice--for this particular occasion, to bear the urim and thummim, as 1Sa 23:6. And there was a particular reason for sending Phinehas to preside in this expedition; he has already signalized himself for his zeal against the Midianites and their cursed arts to ensnare Israel when he slew Cozbi, a daughter of a chief house in Midian, for her impudence in the matter of Peor, Nu 25:15. He that had so well used the sword of justice against a particular criminal was best qualified to guide the sword of war against the whole nation. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.

4 Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war.

5 So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of *every* tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of *every* tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; *namely*, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

1 The descent which this little army of Israelites made, under the divine commission, conduct, and command, upon the country of Midian. They warred against the Midianites. It is very probable that they first published their manifesto, showing the reasons of the war, and requiring them to give up the ringleaders of the mischief to justice; for such afterwards was the law (De 20:10), and such the practice, Jdg 20:12,13. But the Midianites justifying what they had done, and standing by those that had done it, the Israelites attacked them with fire and sword, and all the pious fury with which their zeal for God and their people inspired them.

2 The execution (the military execution) they did in this descent.

(1.) They slew all the males (Nu 31:7), that is, all they met with as far as they went; they put them all to the sword, and gave no quarter. But that they did not slay all the males of the nation is certain, for we find the Midianites a powerful and formidable enemy to Israel in the days of Gideon; and they were the Midianites of this country, for they are reckoned with the children of the east, Jdg 6:3.

(2.) They slew the kings of Midian the same that are called elders of Midian (Nu 22:4), and the dukes of Sihon, Jos 13:21. Five of these princes are here named, one of whom is Zur, probably the same Zur whose daughter Cosbi was, Nu 25:15.

(3.) They slew Balaam. Many conjectures there are as to what brought Balaam among the Midianites at this time; it is probable that the Midianites, having intelligence of the march of this army of Israelites against them, hired Balaam to come and assist them with his enchantments, that if he could not prevail to act offensively in their favour, by cursing the armies of Israel, yet he might act defensively, by blessing the country of Midian. Whatever was the occasion of his being there, God's overruling providence brought him thither, and there his just vengeance found him.

Had he himself believed what he said of the happy state of Israel, he would not have herded thus with the enemies of Israel; but justly does he die the death of the wicked (though he pretended to desire that of the righteous), and go down slain to the pit with the uncircumcised, who rebelled thus against the convictions of his own conscience. The Midianites' wiles were Balaam's projects, it was therefore just that he should perish with them, Ho 4:5. Now was his folly made manifest to all men, who foretold the fate of others, but foresaw not his own.

(4.) They took all the women and children captives, Nu 31:9.

(5.) They burnt their cities and goodly castles (Nu 31:10), not designing to inhabit them themselves (that country was out of their line), but they thus prevented those who had made their escape from sheltering themselves in their own country and settling there again. Some understand it of their idol-temples; it was fit that they should share in this vengeance.

(6.) They plundered the country, and carried off all the cattle and valuable goods, and so returned to the camp of Israel laden with a very rich booty, Nu 31:9,11,12. Thus (as when they came out of Egypt) they were enriched with the spoils of their enemies, and furnished with stock for the good land into which God was bringing them.

9 And the children of Israel took *all* the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.
10 And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.
11 And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, *both* of men and of beasts.
12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which *are* by Jordan *near* Jericho.
13 And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp.
14 And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, *with* the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.
15 And Moses said unto them, have ye saved all the women alive?
16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

We have here the triumphant return of the army of Israel from the war with Midian, and here,

I. They were met with great respect, Nu 31:13. Moses himself, notwithstanding his age and gravity, walked out of the camp to congratulate them on their victory, and to grace the solemnity of their triumphs. Public successes should be publicly acknowledged, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of those that have jeoparded their lives in their country's cause.

II. They were severely reproved for saving the women alive. It is very probable that Moses had commanded them to kill the women, at least this was implied in the general order to avenge Israel of the Midianites; the execution having reference to that crime, their drawing them in to the worship of Peor, it was easy to conclude that the women, who were the principal criminals, must not be spared. What! Says Moses, have you saved the women alive? Nu 31:15. He was moved with a holy indignation at the sight of them. These were those that caused the children of Israel to commit this trespass; and therefore,

1. It is just that they should die. The law in case of whoredom was, The adulterer and adulteress should surely be put to death. God had put to death the adulterers of Israel by the plague, and now it was fit that the adulteresses of Midian, especially since they had been the tempters, should be put to death by the sword.

2. "It is dangerous to let them live; they will be still tempting the Israelites to uncleanness, and so your captives will be your conquerors and a second time your destroyers." Severe orders are therefore given that all the grown women should be slain in cold blood, and only the female children spared.

III. They were obliged to purify themselves, according to the ceremony of the law, and to abide without the camp seven days, till their purification was accomplished. For,

1. They had imbrued their hands in blood, by which though they had not contracted any moral guilt, the war being just and lawful, yet they were brought under a ceremonial uncleanness, which rendered them unfit to come near the tabernacle till they were purified. Thus God would preserve in their minds a dread and detestation of murder. David must not build the temple because he had been a man of war, and had shed blood, 1Ch 28:3.

2. They could not but have touched dead bodies, by which they were polluted, and that required they should be purified with the water of separation, Nu 31:19,20,24.

IV. They must likewise purify the spoil they had taken, the captives (Nu 31:19) and all the goods, Nu 31:21-23. What would bear the fire must pass through the fire, and what would not must be washed with water. These things had been use by Midianites, and, having now come into the possession of Israelites, it was fit that they should be sanctified to the service of that holy nation and the honour of their holy God. To us now every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer, if we are sanctified by the Spirit, who is compared both to fire and water. To the pure all things are pure.

17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.

18 But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

19 And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify *both* yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day.

20 And purify all *your* raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats' *hair*, and all things made of wood.

The Division of the Booty

21 And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, this *is* the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses;
22 only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead,
23 every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make *it* go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water.
24 And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.
25 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
26 Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation:
27 and divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation.
28 And levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, *both* of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep:
29 take *it* of their half, and give *it* unto Eleazar the priest, *for* a heave offering of the Lord.
30 And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord.
31 And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.
32 And the booty, *being* the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand and seventy thousand and five thousand sheep,
33 and threescore and twelve thousand beeves,
34 and threescore and one thousand asses,
35 and thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him.

We have here the distribution of the spoil which was taken in this expedition against Midian. God himself directed how

it should be distributed, and Moses and Eleazar did according to the directions, and thus unhappy contests among themselves were prevented and the victory was made to turn to the common benefit. It was fit that he who gave them the prey should order the disposal of it. All we have is from God, and therefore must be subject to his will.

I The prey is ordered to be divided into two parts, one for the 12,000 men that undertook the war, and the other for the congregation. The prey that was divided seems to have been only the captives and the cattle; as for the plate, and jewels, and other goods, every man kept what he took, as is intimated, Nu 31:50-53. That only was distributed which would be of use for the stocking of that good land into which they were going. Now observe,

1. That the one half of the prey was given to the whole congregation, Moses allotting to each tribe its share, and then leaving it to the heads of the tribes to divide their respective shares among themselves, according to their families. The war was undertaken on the behalf of the whole congregation; they would all have been ready to go to the help of the Lord against the mighty, if they had been so ordered, and they did help, it is likely, by their prayers; and therefore God appoints that those that tarried at home should divide the spoil, Ps 68:12. David, in his time, made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel, that, as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff, 1Sa 30:24,25. Those that are employed in public trusts must not think to benefit themselves only by their toils and hazards, but must aim at the advantage of the community.

2. That yet the 12,000 that went to the battle had as much for their share as the whole congregation (which were fifty times as many) had for theirs; so that the particular persons of the soldiery had a much better share than any of their brethren that tarried at home: and good reason they should. The greater pains we take, and the greater hazards we run, in the service

of God and our generation, the greater will our recompence be at last; for God is not unrighteous to forget the work and labour of love.

II. God was to have a tribute out of it, as an acknowledgment of his sovereignty over them in general, and that he was their king to whom tribute was due, and particularly of his interest in this war and the gains of it, he having given them their success; and that the priests, the Lord's receivers, might have something added to the provision made for their maintenance.

Note, Whatever we have, God must have his dues out of it. And here (as before) the soldiers are favoured above the rest of the congregation, for out of the people's share God required one in fifty, but out of the soldier's share only one in 500, because the people got theirs easily, without any peril or fatigue. The less opportunity we have of honouring God with our personal services the more it is expected we should honour him with our substance. The tribute out of the soldiers' half was given to the priests (Nu 31:29), that out of the people's half was given to the Levites, Nu 31:30. For the priests were taken from among the Levites, as these soldiers from among the people, for special and hazardous service, and their pay was proportioned accordingly.

36 And the half, *which was* the portion of them that went out to war,
was in number three hundred thousand and seven and thirty
thousand and five hundred sheep:
37 and the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore
and fifteen.
38 And the beeves *were* thirty and six thousand; of which the Lord's
tribute *was* threescore and twelve.
39 And the asses *were* thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the
Lord's tribute *was* threescore and one.
40 And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the Lord's
tribute *was* thirty and two persons.
41 And Moses gave the tribute, *which was* the Lord's heave offering,
unto Eleazar the priest, as the Lord commanded Moses.

42 And of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided from the
men that warred,
43 (now the half *that pertained unto* the congregation was three
hundred thousand and thirty thousand *and* seven thousand and
five hundred sheep,
44 and thirty and six thousand beeves,
45 and thirty thousand asses and five hundred,
46 and sixteen thousand persons,)
47 even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty,
both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept
the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord; as the Lord commanded
Moses.
48 And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the
captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto
Moses:
49 and they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the
men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one
man of us.
50 We have therefore brought an oblation for the Lord, what every
man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings,
earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the
Lord.

Here is a great example of piety and devotion in the officers of the army, the colonels, that are called captains of thousands, and the inferior officers that were captains of hundreds; they came to Moses as their general and commander-in-chief, and, though he was now going off the stage they very humbly and respectfully addressed themselves to him, calling themselves his servants; the honours they had won did not puff them up, so as to make them forget their duty to him. Observe in their address to them,

1 The pious notice they take of God's wonderful goodness to them in this late expedition, in preserving not only their own lives, but the lives of all the men of war that they had under their charge; so that, upon the review of their muster-roll, it appeared there was not one missing, Nu 31:49. This was very

extraordinary, and perhaps cannot be paralleled in any history. So many thousands of lives jeoparded in the high places of the field, and not one lost, either by the sword of the enemy or by any disease or disaster. This was the Lord's doing, and cannot but be marvellous in the eyes of those that consider how the lives of all men, especially soldiers, are continually in their hands. It is an evidence of the tender feeling which these commanders had for their soldiers, and that their lives were very precious to them, that they looked upon it as a mercy to themselves that none of those under their charge miscarried. Of all that were given them they had lost none; so precious also is the blood of Christ's subjects and soldiers to him, Ps 72:14.

2 The pious acknowledgment they make for this favour: Therefore we have brought an oblation to the Lord, Nu 31:50. The oblation they brought was out of that which every man had gotten, and it was gotten honestly by a divine warrant. Thus every man should lay by according as God has prospered him, 1Co 16:2. For where God sows plentifully in the gifts of his bounty he expects to reap accordingly in the fruits of our piety and charity. The tabernacle first, and the temple afterwards, were beautified and enriched with the spoils taken from the enemies of Israel; as by David (2Sa 8:11,12), and his captains, 1Ch 26:26,27. We should never take any thing to ourselves, in war or trade, which we cannot in faith consecrate a part of to God, who hates robbery for burnt-offerings; but, when God has remarkably preserved and prospered us, he expects that we should make some particular return of gratitude to him. As to this oblation,

(1.) The captains offered it to make an atonement for their souls, Nu 31:50. Instead of coming to Moses to demand a recompence for the good service they had done in avenging the Lord of Midian, or to set up trophies of their victory for the immortalizing of their own names, they bring an oblation to make atonement for their souls, being conscious to themselves, as the best men must be even in their best

services, that they had been defective in their duty, not only in that instance for which they were reproved (Nu 31:14), but in many others; for there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not.

(2.) Moses accepted it, and laid it up in the tabernacle as a memorial for the children of Israel (Nu 31:54), that is, a monument of God's goodness to them, that they might be encouraged to trust in him in their further wars, and a monument of their gratitude to God (sacrifices are said to be memorials), that he, being well pleased with this thankful acknowledgment of favours bestowed, might continue and repeat his mercies to them.

51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, *even* all wrought jewels.
52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the Lord, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.
53 (*For* the men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.)
54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, *for* a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord.

Numbers-32

Reuben, Gad, and Half of Manasseh Settle East of the Jordan

1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place *was* a place for cattle;
2 the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying,
3 Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,
4 *even* the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of

Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:
5 wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this
land be given unto thy servants for a possession, *and* bring us not
over Jordan.
6 And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of
Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?
7 And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel
from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?

Israel's tents were now pitched in the plains of Moab, where they continued many months, looking back upon the conquests they had already made of the land of Sihon and Og, and looking forward to Canaan, which they hoped in a little while to make themselves masters of. While they made this stand, and were at a pause, this great affair of the disposal of the conquests they had already made was here concerted and settled, not by any particular order or appointment of God, but at the special instance and request of two of the tribes, to which Moses, after a long debate that arose upon it, consented. For even then, when so much was done by the extraordinary appearances of divine Providence, many things were left to the direction of human prudence; for God, in governing both the world and the church, makes use of the reason of men, and serves his own purposes by it.

I. Here is a motion made by the Reubenites and the Gadites, that the land which they had lately possessed themselves of, and which in the right of conquest belonged to Israel in common, might be assigned to them in particular for their inheritance: upon the general idea they had of the land of promise, they supposed this would be about their proportion. Reuben and Gad were encamped under the same standard, and so had the better opportunity of comparing notes, and settling this matter between themselves. In the Nu 32:1 the children of Reuben are named first, but afterwards the children of Gad (Nu 32:2,25,31), either because the Gadites made the first motion and were most forward for it, or because they were the better spokesmen and had more of the art of management, Reuben's tribe still lying under Jacob's

sentence, he shall not excel. Two things common in the world induced these tribes to make this choice and this motion upon it, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, 1Jo 2:16.

1 The lust of the eye. This land which they coveted was not only beautiful for situation, and pleasant to the eye, but it was good for food, food for cattle; and they had a great multitude of cattle, above the rest of the tribes, it is supposed because they brought more out of Egypt, than the rest did; but that was forty years before, and stocks of cattle increase and decrease in less time than that; therefore I rather think they had been better husbands of their cattle in the wilderness, had tended them better, had taken more care of the breed, and not been so profuse as their neighbours in eating the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall.

Now they, having these large stocks, coveted land proportionable. Many scriptures speak of Bashan and Gilead as places famous for cattle; they had been so already, and therefore these tribes hoped they would be so to them, and whatever comes of it here they desire to take their lot. The judicious Calvin thinks there was much amiss in the principle they went upon, and that they consulted their own private convenience more than the public good, that they had not such regard to the honour and interest of Israel, and the promise made to Abraham of the land of Canaan (strictly so called), as they ought to have had. And still it is too true that many seek their own things more than the things of Jesus Christ (Php 2:21), and that many are influenced by their secular interest and advantage to take up short of the heavenly Canaan. Their spirits agree too well with this world, and with the things that are seen, that are temporal; and they say, "It is good to be here," and so lose what is hereafter for want of seeking it. Lot thus chose by the sight of the eye, and smarted for his choice. Would we choose our portion aright we must look above the things that are seen.

2. Perhaps there was something of the pride of life in it. Reuben was the first-born of Israel, but he had lost his birthright. Several of the tribes, and Judah especially, had risen above him, so that he could not expect the best lot in Canaan; and therefore, to save the shadow of a birthright, when he had forfeited the substance, he here catches at the first lot, though it was out of Canaan, and far off from the tabernacle. Thus Esau sold his birthright, and yet got to be served first with an inheritance in Mount Seir. The tribe of Gad descended from the first-born of Zilpah, and were like pretenders with the Reubenites; and Manasseh too was a first-born, but knew he must be eclipsed by Ephraim his younger brother, and therefore he also coveted to get precedency.

II. Moses's dislike of this motion, and the severe rebuke he gives to it, as a faithful prince and prophet.

1. It must be confessed that prima facie--at first sight, the thing looked ill, especially the closing words of their petition: Bring us not over Jordan, Nu 32:5.

(1.) It seems to proceed from a bad principle, a contempt of the land of promise, which Moses himself was so desirous of a sight of, a distrust too of the power of God to dispossess the Canaanites, as if a lot in a land which they knew, and which was already conquered, was more desirable than a lot in a land they knew not, and which was yet to be conquered: one bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. There seemed also to be covetousness in it; for that which they insisted on was that it was convenient for their cattle. It argued likewise a neglect of their brethren, as if they cared not what became of Israel, while they themselves were well provided for.

(2.) It might have been of bad consequence. The people might have taken improper hints from it, and have suggested that they were few enough, when they had their whole number, to deal with the Canaanites, but how unequal would the match be if they should drop two tribes and a half (above a fifth part

of their strength) on this side Jordan. It would likewise be a bad precedent; if they must have the land thus granted them as soon as it was conquered, other tribes might make the same pretensions and claims, and so the regular disposition of the land by lot would be anticipated.

2. Moses is therefore very warm upon them, which is to be imputed to his pious zeal against sin, and not to any peevishness, the effect of old age, for his meekness abated not, any more than his natural force.

(1.) He shows them what he apprehended to be evil in this motion, that it would discharge the heart of their brethren, Nu 32:6,7. "What!" (says he, with a holy indignation at their selfishness) "Shall your brethren go to war, and expose themselves to all the hardships and hazards of the field, and shall you sit here at your ease? No, do not deceive yourselves, you shall never be indulged by me in this sloth and cowardice." It ill becomes any of God's Israel to sit down unconcerned in the difficult and perilous concernments of their brethren, whether public or personal.

(2.) He reminds them of the fatal consequences of the unbelief and faint-heartedness of their fathers, when they were just ready to enter Canaan, as they themselves now were. He recites the story very particularly (Nu 32:8-13): "Thus did your fathers, whose punishment should be a warning to you to take heed of sinning after the similitude of their transgression."

(3.) He gives them fair warning of the mischief that would be likely to follow upon this separation which they were about to make from the camp of Israel; they would be in danger of bringing wrath upon the whole congregation, and hurrying them all back again into the wilderness (Nu 32:14,15): "You have risen up in your fathers' stead to despise the pleasant

land and reject it as they did, when we hoped you had risen up in their stead to possess it.

"It was an encouragement to Moses to see what an increase of men there was in these tribes, but a discouragement to see that it was withal an increase of sinful men, treading in the steps of their fathers' impiety. It is sad to see the rising generation in families and countries not only no better, but worse than that which went before it; and what comes of it? Why, it augments the fierce anger of the Lord; not only continues that fire, but increases it, and fills the measure, often till it overflows in a deluge of desolation. Note, If men did but consider as they ought, what would be the end of sin, they would be afraid of the beginnings of it.

8 Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land.

9 For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the Lord had given them.

10 And the Lord's anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying,

11 Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me:

12 save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun; for they have wholly followed the Lord.

13 And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the Lord, was consumed.

14 And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord toward Israel.

15 For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

16 And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones:

17 but we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel,
until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones
shall dwell in the fenced cities, because of the inhabitants of the
land.
18 We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel
have inherited every man his inheritance:
19 for we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or
forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan
eastward.
20 And Moses said unto them, if ye will do this thing, if ye will go
armed before the Lord to war,
21 and will go all of you armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he
hath driven out his enemies from before him,

We have here the accommodating of the matter between Moses and the two tribes, about their settlement on this side Jordan. Probably the petitioners withdrew, and considered with themselves what answer they should return to the severe reproof Moses had given them; and, after some consultation, they return with this proposal, that their men of war should go and assist their brethren in the conquest of Canaan, and they would leave their families and flocks behind them in this land: and thus they might have their request, and no harm would be done.

Now it is uncertain whether they designed this at first when they brought their petition or no. If they did, it is an instance how often that which is honestly meant is unhappily misinterpreted; yet Moses herein was excusable, for he had reason to suspect the worst of them, and the rebuke he gave them was from the abundance of his care to prevent sin.

But, if they did not, it is an instance of the good effect of plain dealing; Moses, by showing them their sin, and the danger of it, brought them to their duty without murmuring or disputing. They object not that their brethren were able to contend with the Canaanites without their help, especially since they were sure of God's fighting for them; but engage themselves to stand by them.

I. Their proposal is very fair and generous, and such as, instead of disheartening, would rather encourage their brethren.

1. That their men of war, who were fit for service, would go ready armed before the children of Israel into the land of Canaan. So far would they be from deserting them that, if it were thought fit, they would lead them on, and be foremost is all dangerous enterprises. So far were they from either distrusting or despising the conquest of Canaan that they would assist in it with the utmost readiness and resolution.

2. That they would leave behind them their families and cattle (which would otherwise be but the incumbrance of their camp), and so they would be the more serviceable to their brethren, Nu 32:16.

3. That they would not return to their possessions till the conquest of Canaan was completed, Nu 32:18. Their brethren should have their best help as long as they needed it.

4. That yet they would not expect any share of the land that was yet to be conquered (Nu 32:19): "We will not desire to inherit with them, nor, under colour of assisting them in the war, put in for a share with them in the land; no, we will be content with our inheritance on this side Jordan, and there will be so much the more on yonder side for them."

II. Moses thereupon grants their request, upon consideration that they would adhere to their proposals.

1. He insists much upon it that they should never lay down their arms till their brethren laid down theirs. They promised to go armed before the children of Israel, Nu 32:17. "Nay," says Moses, "you shall go armed before the Lord, Nu 32:20,21. It is God's cause more than your brethren's, and to

him you must have an eye, and not to them only." Before the Lord, that is, before the ark of the Lord, the token of his presence, which, it should seem, they carried about with them in the wars of Canaan, and immediately before which these two tribes were posted, as we find in the order of their march, Nu 2:10,17.

2. Upon this condition he grants them this land for their possession, and tells them they shall be guiltless before the Lord and before Israel, Nu 32:22. They should have the land, and neither sin nor blame should cleave to it, neither sin before God nor blame before Israel; and, whatever possessions we have, it is desirable thus to come guiltless to them. But,

3. He warns them of the danger of breaking their word: "If you fail, you sin against the Lord (Nu 32:23), and not against your brethren only, and be sure your sin will find you out;" that is, "God will certainly reckon with you for it, though you may make a light matter of it." Note, Sin will, without doubt, find out the sinner sooner or later. It concerns us therefore to find our sins out, that we may repent of them and forsake them, lest our sins find us out to our ruin and confusion.

III. They unanimously agree to the provisos and conditions of the grant, and do, as it were, give bond for performance, by a solemn promise: Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth, Nu 32:25. Their brethren had all contributed their assistance to the conquest of this country, which they desired for a possession, and therefore they owned themselves obliged in justice to help them in the conquest of that which was to be their possession. Having received kindness, we ought to return it, though it was not so conditioned when we received it. We may suppose that this promise was understood, on both sides, so as not to oblige all that were numbered of these tribes to go over armed, but those only that were fittest for the expedition, who would be most

serviceable, while it was necessary that some should be left to till the ground and guard the country; and accordingly we find that about 40,000 of the two tribes and a half went over armed (Jos 4:13), whereas their whole number was about 100,000.

22 and the land be subdued before the Lord: then afterward ye shall
return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this
land shall be your possession before the Lord.
23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord:
and be sure your sin will find you out.
24 Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and
do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.
25 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto
Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth.
26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be
there in the cities of Gilead:
27 but thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the
Lord to battle, as my lord saith.
28 So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and
Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the
children of Israel:
29 and Moses said unto them, if the children of Gad and the children
of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to
battle, before the Lord, and the land shall be subdued before you;
then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession:
30 but if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have
possessions among you in the land of Canaan.
31 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered,
saying, As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do.
32 We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan,
that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan *may be*
ours.
33 And Moses gave unto them, *even* to the children of Gad, and to the
children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of
Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the
kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in
the coasts, *even* the cities of the country round about.

1. Moses settles this matter with Eleazar, and with Joshua who was to be his successor, knowing that he himself must not live to see it perfected, Nu 32:28-30. He gives them an estate upon condition, leaving it to Joshua, if they fulfilled the condition, to declare the estate absolute: "If they will not go over with you," he does not say "you shall give them no inheritance at all," but "you shall not give them this inheritance which they covet. If their militia will not come over with you, compel the whole tribes to come over, and let them take their lot with their brethren, and fare as they fare; they shall have possessions in Canaan, and let them not expect that the lot will favour them." Hereupon they repeat their promise to adhere to their brethren, Nu 32:31,32.

2. Moses settles them in the land they desired. He gave it to them for a possession, Nu 32:33. Here is the first mention of the half tribe of Manasseh coming in with them for a share; probably they had not joined with them in the petition, but, the land when it came to be apportioned proving to be too much for them, this half tribe had a lot among them, perhaps at their request, or by divine direction, or because they had signalized themselves in the conquest of this country: for the children of Machir, a stout and warlike family, had taken Gilead and dispossessed the Amorites, Nu 32:39. "Let them win it and wear it, get it and take it." And, they being celebrated for their courage and bravery, it was for the common safety to put them in this frontier-country. Concerning the settlement of these tribes observe,

(1.) They built the cities, that is, repaired them, because either they had been damaged by the war or the Amorites had suffered them to go to decay.

(2.) They changed the names of them (Nu 32:38), either to show their authority, that the change of the names might signify the change of their owners, or because their names were idolatrous, and carried in them a respect to the dunghill-deities that were there worshipped. Nebo and Baal were

names of their gods, which they were forbidden to make mention of (Ex 23:13), and which, by changing the names of these cities, they endeavoured to bury in oblivion; and God promises to take away the names of Baalim out of the mouths of his people, Ho 2:17.

Lastly, It is observable that, as these tribes were now first placed before the other tribes, so, long afterwards, they were displaced before the other tribes. We find that they were carried captive into Assyria some years before the other tribes, 2Ki 15:29. Such a proportion does Providence sometimes observe in balancing prosperity and adversity; he sets the one over-against the other.

34 And the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer,
35 and Atroth, Shophan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah,
36 and Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fenced cities; and folds for sheep.
37 And the children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim,
38 and Nebo, and Baal-meon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded.
39 And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which *was* in it.
40 And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein.
41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havoth-jair.
42 And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

Numbers-33

The Stages of Israel's Journey

1 These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth
out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses
and Aaron.
2 And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by
the commandment of the Lord: and these *are* their journeys
according to their goings out.
3 And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the
fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover
the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all
the Egyptians.

This is a review and brief rehearsal of the travels of the children of Israel through the wilderness. It was a memorable history and well worthy to be thus abridged, and the abridgment thus preserved, to the honour of God that led them and for the encouragement of the generations that followed. Observe here,

I. How the account was kept: Moses wrote their goings out, Nu 33:2. When they began this tedious march, God ordered him to keep a journal or diary, and to insert in it all the remarkable occurrences of their way, that it might be a satisfaction to himself in the review and an instruction to others when it should be published. It may be of good use to private Christians, but especially to those in public stations, to preserve in writing an account of the providences of God concerning them, the constant series of mercies they have experienced, especially those turns and changes which have made some days of their lives more remarkable. Our memories are deceitful and need this help, that we may remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us in this wilderness, De 8:2.

II. What the account itself was. It began with their departure out of Egypt, continued with their march through the wilderness, and ended in the plains of Moab, where they now lay encamped.

1. Some things are observed here concerning their departure out of Egypt, which they are reminded of upon all occasions, as a work of wonder never to be forgotten.

(1.) That they went forth with their armies (Nu 33:1), rank and file, as an army with banners.

(2.) Under the hand of Moses and Aaron, their guides, overseers, and rulers, under God.

(3.) With a high hand, because God's hand was high that wrought for them, and in the sight of all the Egyptians, Nu 33:3. They did not steal away clandestinely (Isa 52:12), but in defiance of their enemies, to whom God had made them such a burdensome stone that they neither could, nor would, nor durst, oppose them.

(4.) They went forth while the Egyptians were burying, or at least preparing to bury, their first-born, Nu 33:4. They had a mind good enough, or rather bad enough, still to have detained the Israelites their prisoners, but God found them other work to do. They would have God's first-born buried alive, but God set them a burying their own first-born.

(5.) To all the plagues of Egypt it is added here that on their gods also the Lord executed judgments. Their idols which they worshipped, it is probable, were broken down, as Dagon afterwards before the ark, so that they could not consult them about this great affair. To this perhaps there is reference, Isa 19:1, The idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence.

2. Concerning their travels towards Canaan. Observe,

(1.) They were continually upon the remove. When they had pitched a little while in one place they departed from that to another. Such is our state in this world; we have here no continuing city.

(2.) Most of their way lay through a wilderness, uninhabited, untracked, unfurnished even with the necessaries of human life, which magnifies the wisdom and power of God, by whose wonderful conduct and bounty the thousands of Israel not only subsisted for forty years in that desolate place, but came out at least as numerous and vigorous as they went in. At first they pitched in the edge of the wilderness (Nu 33:6), but afterwards in the heart of it; by less difficulties God prepares his people for greater. We find them in the wilderness of Etham (Nu 33:8), of Sin (Nu 33:11), of Sinai, Nu 33:15. Our removals in this world are but from one wilderness to another.

(3.) They were led to and fro, forward and backward, as in a maze or labyrinth, and yet were all the while under the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire. He led them about (De 32:10), and yet led them the right way, Ps 107:7. The way which God takes in bringing his people to himself is always the best way, though it does not always seem to us the nearest way.

(4.) Some events are mentioned in this journal, as their want of water at Rephidim (Nu 33:14), the death of Aaron (Nu 33:38,39), the insult of Arad (Nu 33:40); and the very name of Kibroth-hattaavah--the graves of lusts (Nu 33:16), has a story depending upon it. Thus we ought to keep in mind the providences of God concerning us and our families, us and our land, and the many instances of that divine care which has led us, and fed us, and kept us, all our days hitherto. Shittim, the place where the people sinned in the matter of Peor (Nu 25:1), is here called Abel-shittim. Abel signifies mourning (as Ge 50:11), and probably this place was so called from the mourning of the good people of Israel on account of that sin

and of God's wrath against them for it. It was so great a mourning that it gave a name to the place.

4 For the Egyptians buried all *their* firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments.

5 And the children of Israel removed from Rameses, and pitched in Succoth.

6 And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which *is* in the edge of the wilderness.

7 And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pi-hahiroth, which *is* before Baal-zephon: and they pitched before Migdol.

8 And they departed from before Pi-hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah.

9 And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim *were* twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there.

10 And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea.

11 And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin.

12 And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Nophah.

13 And they departed from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush.

14 And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink.

15 And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai.

16 And they removed from the desert of Sinai, and pitched at Kibroth-hattaavah.

17 And they departed from Kibroth-hattaavah, and encamped at Hazeroth.

18 And they departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah.

19 And they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmon-parez.

20 And they departed from Rimmon-parez, and pitched in Libnah.

21 And they removed from Libnah, and pitched at Rissah.

22 And they journeyed from Rissah, and pitched in Kehelathah.

23 And they went from Kehelathah, and pitched in mount Shapher.

24 And they removed from mount Shapher, and encamped in
Haradah.
25 And they removed from Haradah, and pitched in Makheloth.
26 And they removed from Makheloth, and encamped at Tahath.
27 And they departed from Tahath, and pitched at Tarah.
28 And they removed from Tarah, and pitched in Mithcah.
29 And they went from Mithcah, and pitched in Hashmonah.
30 And they departed from Hashmonah, and encamped at Moseroth.
31 And they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Bene-jaakan.
32 And they removed from Bene-jaakan, and encamped at Hor-
hagidgad.
33 And they went from Hor-hagidgad, and pitched in Jotbathah.
34 And they removed from Jotbathah, and encamped at Ebronah.
35 And they departed from Ebronah, and encamped at Ezion-gaber.
36 And they removed from Ezion-gaber, and pitched in the wilderness
of Zin, which *is* Kadesh.
37 And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in mount Hor, in the
edge of the land of Edom.
38 And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the
commandment of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year
after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in
the first *day* of the fifth month.
39 And Aaron *was* a hundred and twenty and three years old when he
died in mount Hor.
40 And king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south in the
land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.
41 And they departed from mount Hor, and pitched in Zalmonah.
42 And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon.
43 And they departed from Punon, and pitched in Oboth.
44 And they departed from Oboth, and pitched in Ije-abarim, in the
border of Moab.
45 And they departed from Iim, and pitched in Dibon-gad.
46 And they removed from Dibon-gad, and encamped in Almon-
diblathaim.
47 And they removed from Almon-diblathaim, and pitched in the
mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.
48 And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in
the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho.

49 And they pitched by Jordan, from Beth-jesimoth *even* unto Abel-
shittim in the plains of Moab.

The Borders and Division of Canaan

50 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan
near Jericho, saying,
51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye are
passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan;
52 then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before
you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten
images, and quite pluck down all their high places:

While the children of Israel were in the wilderness their total separation from all other people kept them out of the way of temptation to idolatry, and perhaps this was one thing intended by their long confinement in the wilderness, that thereby the idols of Egypt might be forgotten, and the people aired (as it were) and purified from that infection, and the generation that entered Canaan might be such as never knew those depths of Satan. But now that they were to pass over Jordan they were entering again into that temptation, and therefore,

1. They are here strictly charged utterly to destroy all remnants of idolatry. They must not only drive out the inhabitants of the land, that they may possess their country, but they must deface all their idolatrous pictures and images, and pull down all their high places, Nu 33:52. They must not preserve any of them, no, not as monuments of antiquity to gratify the curious, nor as ornaments of their houses, nor toys for their children to play with, but they must destroy all, both in token of their abhorrence and detestation of idolatry and to prevent their being tempted to worship those images, and the false gods represented by them, or to worship the God of Israel by such images or representations.

2. They were assured that, if they did so, God would by degrees put them in full possession of the land of promise, Nu

33:53,54. If they would keep themselves pure from the idols of Canaan, God would enrich them with the wealth of Canaan. Learn not their way, and then fear not their power. 3. They were threatened that, if they spared either the idols or the idolaters, they should be beaten with their own rod and their sin would certainly be their punishment.

(1.) They would foster snakes in their own bosoms, Nu 33:55. The remnant of the Canaanites, if they made any league with them, though it were but a cessation of arms, would be pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides, that is, they would be upon all occasions vexatious to them, insulting them, robbing them, and, to the utmost of their power, making mischief among them. We must expect trouble and affliction from that, whatever it is, which we sinfully indulge; that which we are willing should tempt us we shall find will vex us.

(2.) The righteous God would turn that wheel upon the Israelites which was to have crushed the Canaanites: I shall do to you as I thought to do unto them, Nu 33:56. It was intended that the Canaanites should be dispossessed; but if the Israelites fell in with them, and learned their way, they should be dispossessed, for God's displeasure would justly be greater against them than against the Canaanites themselves. Let us hear this, and fear. If we do not drive sin out, sin will drive us out; if we be not the death of our lusts, our lusts will be the death of our souls.

53 and ye shall dispossess *the inhabitants of* the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it.

54 And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families; *and* to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's *inheritance* shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit.

55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

56 Moreover it shall come to pass, *that* I shall do unto you, as I thought
to do unto them.

Numbers-34

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye come
into the land of Canaan; (this *is* the land that shall fall unto you
for an inheritance, *even* the land of Canaan with the coasts
thereof :)
3 then your south quarter shall be from the wilderness of Zin along
by the coast of Edom, and your south border shall be the outmost
coast of the salt sea eastward:
4 and your border shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim,
and pass on to Zin: and the going forth thereof shall be from the
south to Kadesh-barnea, and shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass
on to Azmon:
5 and the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of
Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea.
6 And *as for* the western border, ye shall even have the great sea for a
border: this shall be your west border.

We have here a particular draught of the line by which the land of Canaan was meted, and bounded, on all sides. God directs Moses to settle it here, not as a geographer in his map, merely to please the curious, but as a prince in his grant, that it may be certainly known what passes, and is conveyed, by the grant. There was a much larger possession promised them, which in due time they would have possessed if they had been obedient, reaching even to the river Euphrates, Da 11:24.

And even so far the dominion of Israel did extend in David's time and Solomon's, 2Ch 9:26. But this which is here described is Canaan only, which was the lot of the nine tribes and a half, for the other two and a half were already settled, Nu 34:14,15. Now concerning the limits of Canaan observe,

I. That it was limited within certain bounds: for God appoints the bounds of our habitation, Ac 17:26. The borders are set them,

1. That they might know whom they were to dispossess, and how far the commission which was given them extended (Nu 33:53), that they should drive out the inhabitants. Those that lay within these borders, and those only, they must destroy; hitherto their bloody sword must go, and no further.

2. That they might know what to expect the possession of themselves. God would not have his people to enlarge their desire of worldly possessions, but to know when they have enough, and to rest satisfied with it. The Israelites themselves must not be placed alone in the midst of the earth, but must leave room for their neighbours to live by them. God sets bounds to our lot; let us then set bounds to our desires, and bring our mind to our condition.

II. That it lay comparatively in a very little compass: as it is here bounded, it is reckoned to be but about 160 miles in length and about fifty in breadth; perhaps it did not contain more than half as much ground as England, and yet this is the country which was promised to the father of the faithful and was the possession of the seed of Israel. This was that little spot of ground in which only, for many ages, God was known, and his name was great, Ps 76:1. This was the vineyard of the Lord, the garden enclosed; but, as it is with gardens and vineyards, the narrowness of the extent was abundantly compensated by the extraordinary fruitfulness of the soil, otherwise it could not have subsisted so numerous a nation as did inhabit it. See here then,

1. How small a part of the world God has for himself. Though the earth is his, and the fullness thereof, yet few have the knowledge of him and serve him; but those few are happy, very happy, because fruitful to God.

2. How small a share of the world God often gives to his own people. Those that have their portion in heaven have reason to be content with a small pittance of this earth; but, as here, what is wanting in quantity is made up in quality; a little that a righteous man has, having it from the love of God and with his blessing, is far better and more comfortable than the riches of many wicked, Ps 37:16.

III. It is observable what the bounds and limits of it were.

1. Canaan was itself a pleasant land (so it is called Da 8:9), and yet it bordered upon wilderness and seas, and was surrounded with divers melancholy prospects. Thus the vineyard of the church is compassed on all hands with the desert of this world, which serves as a foil to it, to make it appear the more beautiful for situation.

2. Many of its borders were its defences and natural fortifications, to render the access of enemies the more difficult, and to intimate to Israel that the God of nature was their protector, and with his favour would compass them as with a shield.

3. The border reached to the river of Egypt (Nu 34:5), that the sight of that country which they could look into out of their own might remind them of their bondage there, and their wonderful deliverance thence.

4. Their border is here made to begin at the Salt Sea (Nu 34:3), and there it ends, Nu 34:12. This was the remaining lasting monument of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. That pleasant fruitful vale in which these cities stood became a lake, which was never stirred by any wind, bore no vessels, was replenished with no fish, no living creature of any sort being found in it, therefore called the Dead Sea. This was part of their border, that it might be a constant warning to them to take heed of those sins which had been the ruin of Sodom; yet the iniquity of Sodom was

afterwards found in Israel (Eze 16:49), for which Canaan was made, though not a salt sea as Sodom, yet a barren soil, and continues so to this day.

5. Their western border was the Great Sea (Nu 34:6), which is now called the Mediterranean. Some consider this sea itself to have been a part of their possession, and that by virtue of this grant, they had the dominion of it, and, if they had not forfeited it by sin, might have rode masters of it

7 And this shall be your north border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you mount Hor:
8 from mount Hor ye shall point out *your border* unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad:
9 and the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan: this shall be your north border.
10 And ye shall point out your east border from Hazar-enan to Shepham:
11 and the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward:
12 and the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about.
13 And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, this *is* the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the Lord commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe:
14 for the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received *their inheritance;* and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance:
15 the two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan *near* Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising.
16 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
17 These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun.
18 And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance.

19 And the names of the men *are* these: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb
the son of Jephunneh.
20 And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of
Ammihud.
21 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon.
22 And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of
Jogli.
23 The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of
Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod.

God here appoints commissioners for the dividing of the land to them. The conquest of it is taken for granted, though as yet there was never a stroke struck towards it. Here is no nomination of the generals and commanders-in-chief that should carry on the war; for they were to get the land in possession, not by their own sword or bow, but by the power and favour of God; and so confident must they be of victory and success while God fought for them that the persons must now be named who should be entrusted with the dividing of the land, that is, who should preside in casting the lots, and determine controversies that might arise, and see that all was done fairly.

1 The principal commissioners, who were of the quorum, were Eleazar and Joshua (Nu 34:17), typifying Christ, who, as priest and king, divides the heavenly Canaan to the spiritual Israel; yet, as they were to go by the lot, so Christ acknowledges the disposal must be by the will of the Father, Mt 20:23. Compare, Eph 1:11.

2. Besides these, that there might be no suspicion of partiality, a prince of each tribe was appointed to inspect this matter, and to see that the tribe he served for was in no respect injured. Public affairs should be so managed as not only to give their right to all, but, if possible, to give satisfaction to all that they have justice done them., It is a happiness to a land to have the princes of their people meet together, some out of every tribe, to concert the affairs that are of common concern,

a constitution which is the abundant honour, ease, and safety, of the nation that is blessed with it.

3. Some observe that the order of the tribes here very much differs from that in which they hitherto, upon all occasions, been named, and agrees with the neighbourhood of their lots in the division of the land. Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, the first three here named, lay close together; the inheritance of Dan lay next them on one side, that of Ephraim and Manasseh on another side; Zebulun and Issachar lay abreast more northerly, and, lastly, Asher and Naphtali most northward of all, as is easy to observe in looking over a map of Canaan; this (says bishop Patrick) is an evidence that Moses was guided by a divine Spirit in his writings. Known unto God are all his works beforehand, and what is new and surprising to us he perfectly foresaw, without any confusion or uncertainty.

24 And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan.
25 And the prince of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach.
26 And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan.
27 And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi.
28 And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.
29 These *are they* whom the Lord commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

Numbers-35

The Inheritance of the Levites

1 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan
near Jericho, saying,
2 Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites, of
the inheritance of their possession, cities to dwell in; and ye shall
give *also* unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.
3 And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them
shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts.
4 And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites,
shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits
round about.

The laws about the tithes and offerings had provided very plentifully for the maintenance of the Levites, but it was not to be thought, nor indeed was it for the public good, that when they came to Canaan they should all live about the tabernacle, as they had done in the wilderness, and therefore care must be taken to provide habitations for them, in which they might live comfortably and usefully. It is this which is here taken care of.

I. Cities were allotted them, with their suburbs, Nu 35:2. They were not to have any ground for tillage; they needed not to sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, for their heavenly Father fed them with the tithe of the increase of other people's labours, that they might the more closely attend to the study of the law, and might have more leisure to teach the people; for they were not fed thus easily that they might live in idleness, but that they might give themselves wholly to the business of their profession, and not be entangled in the affairs of this life.

1. Cities were allotted them, that they might live near together, and converse with one another about the law, to their mutual edification; and that in doubtful cases they might

consult one another, and in all cases strengthen one another's hands.

2. These cities had suburbs annexed to them for their cattle (Nu 35:3), a thousand cubits from the wall was allowed them for out-houses to keep their cattle in, and then two thousand more for fields to graze their cattle in, Nu 35:4,5. Thus was care taken that they should not only live, but live plentifully, and have all desirable conveniences about them, that they might not be looked upon with contempt by their neighbours.

II. These cities were to be assigned them out of the possessions of each tribe, Nu 35:8.

1. That each tribe might thus make a grateful acknowledgment to God out of their real as well as out of their personal estates (for what was given to the Levites was accepted as given to the Lord) and thus their possessions were sanctified to them.

2. That each tribe might have the benefit of the Levites' dwelling among them, to teach them the good knowledge of the Lord; thus that light was diffused through all parts of the country, and none were left to sit in darkness, De 33:10, They shall teach Jacob thy judgments. Jacob's curse on Levi's anger was, I will scatter them in Israel, Ge 49:7. But that curse was turned into a blessing, and the Levites, by being thus scattered, were put into a capacity of doing so much the more good. It is a great mercy to a country to be replenished in all parts with faithful ministers.

III. The number allotted them was forty-eight in all, four out of each of the twelve tribes, one with another. Out of the united tribes of Simeon and Judah nine, out of Naphtali three, and four apiece out of the rest, as appears, Jos 21:1-45. Thus were they blessed with a good ministry, and that ministry with a comfortable maintenance, not only in tithes, but in glebe-lands. And, though the gospel is not so particular as the law

was in this matter, yet it expressly provides that he that is taught in the word should communicate unto him that teaches in all good things, Ga 6:6.

5 And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city *shall be* in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities.

6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites *there shall be* six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.

7 *So* all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall *be* forty and eight cities: them *shall ye give* with their suburbs.

8 And the cities which ye shall give *shall be* of the possession of the children of Israel: from *them that have* many ye shall give many; but from *them that have* few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

The Cities of Refuge

9 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan,

11 then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares.

12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

13 And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge.

14 Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge.

15 These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them; that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.

16 And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he *is* a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

17 And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he *is* a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.
18 Or *if* he smite him with a hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he *is* a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.
19 The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him.
20 But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die;
21 or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote *him* shall surely be put to death; *for* he *is* a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him.
22 But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait,
23 or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing *him* not, and cast *it* upon him, that he die, and *was* not his enemy, neither sought his harm:
24 then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments:

We have here the orders given concerning the cities of refuge, fitly annexed to what goes before, because they were all Levites' cities. In this part of the constitution there is a great deal both of good law and pure gospel.

I. Here is a great deal of good law, in the case of murder and manslaughter, a case of which the laws of all nations have taken particular cognizance. It is here enacted and provided, consonant to natural equity,

1. That wilful murder should be punished with death, and in that case no sanctuary should be allowed, no ransom taken, nor any commutation of the punishment accepted: The murderer shall surely be put to death, Nu 35:16. It is supposed to be done of hatred (Nu 35:20), or in enmity (Nu 35:21), upon a sudden provocation (for our Saviour makes rash anger, as well as malice prepense, to be murder, Mt 5:21,22), whether the person be murdered with an instrument of iron

(Nu 35:16) or wood (Nu 35:18), or with a stone thrown at him (Nu 35:17,20); nay, if he smite him with his hand in enmity, and death ensue, it is murder (Nu 35:21); and it was an ancient law, consonant to the law of nature, that whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, Ge 9:6. Where wrong has been done restitution must be made; and, since the murderer cannot restore the life he has wrongfully taken away, his own must be exacted from him in lieu of it, not (as some have fancied) to satisfy the manes or ghost of the person slain, but to satisfy the law and the justice of a nation; and to be a warning to all others not to do likewise.

It is here said, and it is well worthy the consideration of all princes and states, that blood defiles not only the conscience of the murderer, who is thereby proved not to have eternal life abiding in him (1Jo 3:15), but also the land in which it is shed; so very offensive is it to God and all good men, and the worst of nuisances. And it is added that the land cannot be cleansed from the blood of the murdered, but by the blood of the murderer, Nu 35:33. If murderers escape punishment from men, those that suffer them to escape will have a great deal to answer for, and God will nevertheless not suffer them to escape his righteous judgments. Upon the same principle it is provided that no satisfaction should be taken for the life of a murderer (Nu 35:31): If a man would give all the substance of his house to the judges, to the country, or to the avenger of blood, to atone for his crime, it must utterly be contemned.

The redemption of the life is so precious that it cannot be obtained by the multitude of riches (Ps 49:6-8), which perhaps may allude to this law. A rule of law comes in here (which is a rule of our law in cases of treason only) that no man shall be put to death upon the testimony of one witness, but it was necessary there should be two (Nu 35:30); this law is settled in all capital cases, De 17:6,19:15. And, lastly, not only the prosecution, but the execution, of the murderer, is committed to the next of kin, who, as he was to be the redeemer of his kinsman's estate if it were mortgaged, so he

was to be the avenger of his blood if he were murdered (Nu 35:19): The avenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer, if he be convicted by the notorious evidence of the fact, and he needed not to have recourse by a judicial process to the court of judgment. But if it were uncertain who the murderer was, and the proof doubtful, we cannot think that his bare suspicion, or surmise, would empower him to do that which the judges themselves could not do but upon the testimony of two witnesses.

Only if the fact were plain then the next heir of the person slain might himself, in a just indignation, slay the murderer wherever he met him. Some think this must be understood to be after the lawful judgment of the magistrate, and so the Chaldee says, "He shall slay him, when he shall be condemned unto him by judgment;" but it should seem, by Nu 35:24, that the judges interposed only in a doubtful case, and that if the person on whom he took vengeance was indeed the murderer, and a wilful murderer, the avenger was innocent (Nu 35:27), only, if it proved otherwise, it was at his peril. Our law allows an appeal to be brought against a murderer by the widow, or next heir, of the person murdered, yea, though the murderer have been acquitted upon an indictment; and, if the murderer be found guilty upon that appeal, execution shall be awarded at the suit of the appellant, who may properly be called the avenger of blood.

2. But if the homicide was not voluntary, nor done designedly, if it was without enmity, or lying in wait (Nu 35:22), not seeing the person or not seeking his harm (Nu 35:23), which our law calls chance-medley, or homicide per infortunium--through misfortune, in this case there were cities of refuge appointed for the manslayer to flee to. By our law this incurs a forfeiture of goods, but a pardon is granted of course upon the special matter found. Concerning the cities of refuge the law was,

(1.) That, if a man killed another, in these cities he was safe, and under the protection of the law, till he had his trial before the congregation, that is, before the judges in open court. If he neglected thus to surrender himself, it was at his peril; if the avenger of blood met him elsewhere, or overtook him loitering in his way to the city of refuge, and slew him, his blood was upon his own head, because he did not make use of the security which God had provided for him.

(2.) If, upon trial, it were found to be willful murder, the city of refuge should no longer be a protection to him; it was already determined: Thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die, Ex 21:14.

(3.) But if it were found to be by error or accident, and that the stroke was given without any design upon the life of the person slain or any other, then the man-slayer should continue safe in the city of refuge, and the avenger of blood might not meddle with him, Nu 35:25. There he was to remain in banishment from his own house and patrimony till the death of the high priest; and, if at any time he went out of that city or the suburbs of it, he put himself out of the protection of the law, and the avenger of blood, if he met him, might slay him, Nu 35:26-28. Now,

[1.] By the preservation of the life of the man-slayer God would teach us that men ought not to suffer for that which is rather their unhappiness than their crime, rather the act of Providence than their own act, for God delivered him into his hand, Ex 21:13.

[2.] By the banishment of the man-slayer from his own city, and his confinement to the city of refuge, where he was in a manner a prisoner, God would teach us to conceive a dread and horror of the guilt of blood, and to be very careful of life, and always afraid lest by oversight or negligence we occasion the death of any.

[3.] By the limiting of the time of the offender's banishment to the death of the high priest, an honour was put upon that sacred office. The high priest was to be looked upon as so great a blessing to his country that when he died their sorrow upon that occasion should swallow up all other resentments. The cities of refuge being all of them Levites' cities, and the high priest being the head of that tribe, and consequently having a peculiar dominion over these cites, those that were confined to them might properly be looked upon as his prisoners, and so his death must be their discharge; it was, as it were, at his suit that the delinquent was imprisoned, and therefore at his death it fell. Actio moritur cum persona--The suit expires with the party. Anisworth has another notion of it, That as the high priests, while they lived, by their service and sacrificing made atonement for sin, wherein they prefigured Christ's satisfaction, so, at their death, those were released that had been exiled for casual murder, which typified redemption in Israel.

[4.] By the abandoning of the prisoner to the avenger of blood, in case he at any time went out of the limits of the city of refuge, they were taught to adhere to the methods which Infinite Wisdom prescribed for their security. It was for the honour of a remedial law that it should be so strictly observed. How can we expect to be saved if we neglect the salvation, which is indeed a great salvation!

II. Here is a great deal of good gospel couched under the type and figure of the cities of refuge; and to them the apostle seems to allude when he speaks of our fleeing for refuge to the hope set before is (Heb 6:18), and being found in Christ, Php 3:9. We never read in the history of the Old Testament of any use made of these cities of refuge, any more than of other such institutions, which yet, no doubt, were made use of upon the occasions intended; only we read of those that, in dangerous cases, took hold of the horns of the altar (1Ki 1:50,2:28); for the altar, wherever that stood, was, as it were the capital city of refuge. But the law concerning these cities

was designed both to raise and to encourage the expectations of those who looked for redemption in Israel, which should be to those who were convinced of sin, and in terror by reason of it, as the cities of refuge were to the man-slayer. Observe,

1. There were several cities of refuge, and they were so appointed in several parts of the country that the man-slayer, wherever he dwelt in the land of Israel, might in half a day reach one or other of them; so, though there is but one Christ appointed for our refuge, yet, wherever we are, he is a refuge at hand, a very present help, for the word is nigh us and Christ in the word.

2 The man-slayer was safe in any of these cities; so in Christ believers that flee to him, and rest in him, are protected from the wrath of God and the curse of the law. There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, Ro 8:1. Who shall condemn those that are thus sheltered?

3. They were all Levites' cities; it was a kindness to the poor prisoner that though he might not go up to the place where the ark was, yet he was in the midst of Levites, who would teach him the good knowledge of the Lord, and instruct him how to improve the providence he was now under. It might also be expected that the Levites would comfort and encourage him, and bid him welcome; so it is the work of gospel ministers to bid poor sinners welcome to Christ, and to assist and counsel those that through grace are in him.

4. Even strangers and sojourners, though they were not native Israelites, might take the benefit of these cities of refuge, Nu 35:15. So in Christ Jesus no difference in made between Greek and Jew; even the sons of the stranger that by faith flee to Christ shall be safe in him.

5. Even the suburbs or borders of the city were a sufficient security to the offender, Nu 35:26,27. So there is virtue even in the hem of Christ's garment for the healing and saving of

poor sinners. If we cannot reach to a full assurance, we may comfort ourselves in a good hope through grace.

6. The protection which the man-slayer found in the city of refuge was not owing to the strength of its walls, or gates, or bars, but purely to the divine appointment; so it is the word of the gospel that gives souls safety in Christ, for him hath God the Father sealed.

7. If the offender was ever caught struggling out of the borders of his city of refuge, or stealing home to his house again, he lost the benefit of his protection, and lay exposed to the avenger of blood; so those that are in Christ must abide in Christ, for it is at their peril if they forsake him and wander from him. Drawing back is to perdition.

25 and the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the
revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the
city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto
the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.
26 But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the
city of his refuge, whither he was fled;
27 and the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city
of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not
be guilty of blood:
28 because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the
death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the
slayer shall return into the land of his possession.

The Law concerning Bloodshed

29 So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you
throughout your generations in all your dwellings.
30 Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by
the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against
any person *to cause him* to die.
31 Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer,
which *is* guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.
32 And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of

his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the
death of the priest.
33 So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye *are:* for blood it defileth
the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed
therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.
34 Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I
dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.

Numbers-36

The Law concerning the Marriage of Heiresses

1 And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the
son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of
Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes,
the chief fathers of the children of Israel:
2 and they said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for
an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was
commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad
our brother unto his daughters.

We have here the humble address which the heads of the tribe of Manasseh made to Moses and the princes, on occasion of the order lately made concerning the daughters of Zelophehad. The family they belonged to was part of that half of the tribe of Manasseh which we yet to have their lot within Jordan, not that half that was already settled; and yet they speak of the land of their possession, and the inheritance of their fathers, with as great assurance as if they had it already in their hands, knowing whom they had trusted. In their appeal observe,

1. They fairly recite the former order made in this case, and do not move to have that set aside, but are very willing to acquiesce in it (Nu 36:2): The Lord commanded to give the inheritance of Zelophehad to his daughters; and they are very well pleased that it should be so, none of them knowing but

that hereafter it might be the case of their own families, and then their daughters would have the benefit of this law.

2. They represent the inconvenience which might, possibly, follow hereupon, if the daughters of Zelophehad should see cause to marry into any other tribes, Nu 36:3. And it is probable that this was not a bare surmise, or supposition, but that they knew, at this time, great court was made to them by some young gentlemen of other tribes, because they were heiresses, that they might get footing in this tribe, and so enlarge their own inheritance. This truly is often aimed at more than it should be in making marriages, not the meetness of the person, but the convenience of the estate, to lay house to house, and field to field. Wisdom indeed is good with an inheritance; but what is an inheritance good for in that relation without wisdom? But here, we may presume, the personal merit of these daughters recommended them as well as their fortunes; however, the heads of their tribe foresaw the mischief that would follow, and brought the case to Moses, that he might consult the oracle of God concerning it.

The difficulty they start God could have obviated and provided against in the former order given in this case; but to teach us that we must, in our affairs, not only attend God's providence, but make use of our own prudence, God did not direct in it till the themselves that were concerned wisely foresaw the inconvenience, and piously applied to Moses for a rule in it. For though they were chief fathers in their families, and might have assumed a power to overrule these daughters of Zelophehad in disposing of themselves, especially their father being dead and the common interest of their tribe being concerned in it, yet they chose rather to refer the matter to Moses, and it issued well. We should not covet to be judges in our own case, for it is difficult to be so without being partial. It is easier in many cases to take good advice than to give it, and it is a satisfaction to be under direction. Two things they aimed at in their representation:--

(1.) To preserve the divine appointment of inheritances. They urged the command (Nu 36:2), that the land should be given by lot to the respective tribes, and urged that it would break in upon the divine appointment if such a considerable part of the lot of Manasseh should, by their marriage, be transferred to any other tribe; for the issue would be denominated from the father's tribe, not the mother's. This indeed would not lessen the lot of the particular persons of that tribe (they would have their own still), but it would lessen the lot of the tribe in general, and render it less strong and considerable; they therefore thought themselves concerned for the reputation of their tribe, and perhaps were the more jealous for it because it was already very much weakened by the sitting down of the one half of it on this side Jordan.

(2.) To prevent contests and quarrels among posterity. If those of other tribes should come among them perhaps it might occasion some contests. They would be apt to give and receive disturbance, and their title might, in process of time, come to be questioned; and how great a matter would this fire kindle! It is the wisdom and duty of those that have estates in the world to settle them, and dispose of them, so as that no strife and contention may arise about them among posterity.

3 And if they be married to any of the sons of the *other* tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance.

4 And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.

5 And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, the tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well.

6 This *is* the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry.

7 So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

8 And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers.

9 Neither shall the inheritance remove from *one* tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance.

Here is, I The matter settled by express order from God between the daughters of Zelophehad and the rest of the tribe of Manasseh. The petition is assented to, and care taken to prevent the inconvenience feared: The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well, Nu 36:5. Thus those that consult the oracles of God concerning the making of their heavenly inheritance sure shall not only be directed what to do, but their enquiries shall be graciously accepted, and they shall have not only their well done, but their well said, good and faithful servant. Now the matter is thus accommodated: these heiresses must be obliged to marry, not only within their own tribe of Manasseh, but within the particular family of the Hepherites, to which they did belong.

1. They are not determined to any particular persons; there was choice enough in the family of their father: Let them marry to whom they think best. As children must preserve the authority of their parents, and not marry against their minds, so parents must consult the affections of their children in disposing of them, and not compel them to marry such as they cannot love. Forced marriages are not likely to prove blessings.

2. Yet they are confined to their own relations, that their inheritance may not go to another family. God would have them know that the land being to be divided by lot, the disposal whereof was of the Lord, they could not mend, and therefore should not alter, his appointment. The inheritances

must not remove from tribe to tribe (Nu 36:7), lest there should be confusion among them, their estates entangled, and their genealogies perplexed. God would not have one tribe to be enriched by the straitening and impoverishing of another, since they were all alike the seed of Abraham his friend.

II The law, in this particular case, was made perpetual, and to be observed whenever hereafter the like case should happen, Nu 36:8. Those that were not heiresses might marry into what tribe they pleased (though we may suppose that, ordinarily, they kept within their own tribe), but those that were must either quit their claim to the inheritance or marry one of their own family, that each of the tribes might keep to its own inheritance, and one tribe might not encroach upon another, but throughout their generations there might remain immovable the ancient landmarks, set, not by their fathers, but by the God of their fathers.

III. The submission of the daughters of Zelophehad to this appointment. How could they but marry well, and to their satisfaction, when God himself directed them? They married their father's brothers' sons, Nu 36:10-12. By this it appears,

1. That the marriage of cousin-germans is not in itself unlawful, nor within the degrees prohibited, for then God would not have countenanced these marriages. But,

2. That ordinarily it is not advisable; for, if there had not been a particular reason for it (which cannot hold in any case now, inheritances being not disposed of as then by the special designation of Heaven), they would not have married such near relations. The world is wide, and he that walks uprightly will endeavour to walk surely.

IV. The conclusion of this whole book, referring to the latter part of it: These are the judgments which the Lord commanded in the plains of Moab (Nu 36:13), these foregoing, ever since Nu 26:1-3, most of which related to

their settlement in Canaan, into which they were now entering. Whatever new condition God is by his providence bringing us into, we must beg of him to teach us the duty of it, and to enable us to do it, that we may do the work of the day in its day, of the place in its place.

10 Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad:

11 for Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brothers' sons:

12 *and* they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father.

13 These *are* the commandments and the judgments, which the Lord commanded, by the hand of Moses, unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho. The Fifth Book of Moses, Called

Deuteronomy
[Deuteronomy]

Deuteronomy-1

Moses Recounts the Lord's Promise to Israel at Horeb

1 These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side
Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red *sea*,
between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and
Dizahab.
2 (*There are* eleven days' *journey* from Horeb by the way of mount
Seir unto Kadesh-barnea.)
3 And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the
first *day* of the month, *that* Moses spake unto the children of Israel,
according unto all that the Lord had given him in commandment
unto them;
4 after he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in
Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in
Edrei:

We have here, I The date of this sermon which Moses preached to the people of Israel. A great auditory, no question, he had, as many as could crowd within hearing, and particularly all the elders and officers, the representatives of the people; and, probably, it was on the sabbath day that he delivered this to them.

1 The place were they were now encamped was in the plain, in the land of Moab (De 1:1,5), where they were just ready to enter Canaan, and engage in a war with the Canaanites. Yet he discourses not to them concerning military affairs, the arts and stratagems of war, but concerning their duty to God; for, if they kept themselves in his fear and favour, he would

secure to them the conquest of the land: their religion would be their best policy.

2 The time was near the end of the fortieth year since they came out of Egypt. So long God had borne their manners, and they had borne their own iniquity (Nu 14:34), and now that a new and more pleasant scene was to be introduced, as a token for good, Moses repeats the law to them. Thus, after God's controversy with them on account of the golden calf, the first and surest sign of God's being reconciled to them was the renewing of the tables. There is no better evidence and earnest of God's favour than his putting his law in our hearts, ps 147:19,20.

II The discourse itself. In general, Moses spoke unto them all that the Lord had given him in commandment (De 1:3), which intimates, not only that what he now delivered was for substance the same with what had formerly been commanded, but that it was what God now commanded him to repeat. He gave them this rehearsal and exhortation purely by divine direction; God appointed him to leave this legacy to the church. He begins his narrative with their removal from Mount Sinai (De 1:6), and relates here,

1 The orders which God gave them to decamp, and proceed in their march (De 1:6,7): You have dwelt long enough in this mount. This was the mount that burned with fire (Heb 12:18), and gendered to bondage, Ga 4:24. Thither God brought them to humble them, and by the terrors of the law to prepare them for the land of promise. There he kept them about a year, and then told them they had dwelt long enough there, they must go forward. Though God brings his people into trouble and affliction, into spiritual trouble and affliction of mind, he knows when they have dwelt long enough in it, and will certainly find a time, the fittest time, to advance them from the terrors of the spirit of adoption. See Ro 8:15.

2 The prospect which he gave them of a happy and early settlement in Canaan: Go to the land of the Canaanites (De 1:7); enter and take possession, it is all your own. Behold I have set the land before you, De 1:8. When God commands us to go forward in our Christian course he sets the heavenly Canaan before us for our encouragement.

5 on this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying,

6 The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:

7 turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all *the places* nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

The Appointment of Judges

9 And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:

10 the Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye *are* this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

11 (The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye *are*, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)

12 How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?

Moses here reminds them of the happy constitution of their government, which was such as might make them all safe and easy if it was not their own fault. When good laws were given them good men were entrusted with the execution of them, which, as it was an instance of God's goodness to them, so it was of the care of Moses concerning them; and, it should seem, he mentions it here to recommend himself to them as a man that sincerely sought their welfare, and so to make way for what he was about to say to them, wherein he aimed at

nothing but their good. In this part of his narrative he insinuates to them,

I. That he greatly rejoiced in the increase of their numbers. He owns the accomplishment of God's promise to Abraham (De 1:10): You are as the stars of heaven for multitude; and prays for the further accomplishment of it (De 1:11): God make you a thousand times more. This prayer comes in in a parenthesis, and a good prayer prudently put in cannot be impertinent in any discourse of divine things, nor will a pious ejaculation break the coherence, but rather strengthen and adorn it. But how greatly are his desires enlarged when he prays that they might be made a thousand times more than they were! We are not straitened in the power and goodness of God, why should we be straitened in our own faith and hope, which ought to be as large as the promise? Larger they need not be. It is from the promise that Moses here takes the measures of his prayer: The Lord bless you as he hath promised you. And why might he not hope that they might become a thousand times more than they were now when they were now ten thousand times more than they were when they went down into Egypt, about 250 years ago? Observe, When they were under the government of Pharaoh the increase of their numbers was envied, and complained of as a grievance (Ex 1:9); but now, under the government of Moses, it was rejoiced in, and prayed for as a blessing. The consideration of this might give them occasion to reflect with shame upon their own folly when they had talked of making a captain and returning to Egypt.

II. That he was not ambitious of monopolizing the honour of the government, and ruling them himself alone, as an absolute monarch, De 1:9. Though he was a man as well worthy of that honour, and as well qualified for the business, as ever any man was, yet he was desirous that others might be taken in as assistants to him in the business and consequently sharers with him in the honour: I cannot myself alone bear the

burden, De 1:12. Magistracy is a burden. Moses himself, though eminently gifted for it, found it lay heavily on his shoulders; nay, the best magistrates complain most of the burden, and are most desirous of help, and most afraid of undertaking more than they can perform.

III. That he was not desirous to prefer his own creatures, or such as should underhand have a dependence upon him; for he leaves it to the people to choose their own judges, to whom he would grant commissions, not durant bene placito--to be turned out when he pleased; but quam diu se bene gesserint--to continue so long as they approved themselves faithful. Take you wise men, that are known to be so among your tribes, and I will make them rulers, De 1:13. Thus the apostles directed the multitude to choose overseers of the poor, and then they ordained them, Ac 6:3,6.

He directs them to take wise men and understanding, whose personal merit would recommend them. The rise and origin of this nation were so late that none of them could pretend to antiquity of race, and nobility of birth, above their brethren; and, having all lately come out of slavery in Egypt, it is probable that one family was not much richer than another; so that their choice must be directed purely by the qualifications of wisdom, experience, and integrity. "Choose those," says Moses, "whose praise is in your tribes, and with all my heart I will make them rulers." We must not grudge that God's work be done by other hands than ours, provided it be done by good hands.

IV. That he was in this matter very willing to please the people; and, though he did not in any thing aim at their applause, yet in a thing of this nature he would not act without their approbation. And they agreed to the proposal: The thing which thou hast spoken is good, De 1:14. This he mentions to aggravate the sin of their mutinies and discontents after this, that the government they quarrelled with was what they

themselves had consented to; Moses would have pleased them if they would have been pleased.

V. That he aimed to edify them as well as to gratify them; for,

1. He appointed men of good characters (De 1:15), wise men and men known, men that would be faithful to their trust and to the public interest.

2. He gave them a good charge, De 1:16,17. Those that are advanced to honour must know that they are charged with business, and must give account another day of their charge.

(1.) He charges them to be diligent and patient: Hear the causes. Hear both sides, hear them fully, hear them carefully; for nature has provided us with two ears, and he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. The ear of the learner is necessary to the tongue of the learned, Isa 50:4.

(2.) To be just and impartial: Judge righteously. Judgment must be given according to the merits of the cause, without regard to the quality of the parties. The natives must not be suffered to abuse the strangers any more that the strangers to insult the natives or to encroach upon them; the great must not be suffered to oppress the small, nor to crush them, any more than the small, to rob the great, or to affront them. No faces must be known in judgment, but unbribed unbiased equity must always pass sentence.

(3.) To be resolute and courageous: "You shall not be afraid of the face of man; be not overawed to do an ill thing, either by the clamours of the crowd or by the menaces of those that have power in their hands." And he gave them a good reason to enforce this charge: "For the judgment is God's. You are God's vicegerents, you act for him, and therefore must act like him; you are his representatives, but if you judge unrighteously, you misrepresent him. The judgment is his,

and therefore he will protect you in doing right, and will certainly call you to account if you do wrong."

3. He allowed them to bring all difficult cases to him, and he would always be ready to hear and determine, and to make both the judges and the people easy. Happy art thou. O Israel! in such praise as Moses was.

13 Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.
14 And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken *is* good *for us* to do.
15 So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.
16 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, hear *the causes* between your brethren, and judge righteously between *every* man and his brother, and the stranger *that is* with him.
17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; *but* ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment *is* God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring *it* unto me, and I will hear it.
18 And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

The Spies Sent Out at Kadesh-barnea

19 And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.
20 And I said unto you, ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us.
21 Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up *and* possess *it*, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.
22 And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, we will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us

word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall
come.
23 And the saying pleased me well; and I took twelve men of you, one
of a tribe:
24 and they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto
the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.
25 And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought *it*
down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, *it is* a good land
which the Lord our God doth give us.
26 Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the
commandment of the Lord your God:
27 and ye murmured in your tents, and said, because the Lord hated
us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us
into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.

Moses here makes a large rehearsal of the fatal turn which was given to their affairs by their own sins, and God's wrath, when, from the very borders of Canaan, the honour of conquering it, and the pleasure of possessing it, the whole generation was hurried back into the wilderness, and their carcases fell there. It was a memorable story; we read it Nu 13:1-14:45, but divers circumstances are found here which are not related there.

I. He reminds them of their march from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (De 1:19), through that great and terrible wilderness. This he takes notice of,

1. To make them sensible of the great goodness of God to them, in guiding them through so great a wilderness, and protecting them from the mischiefs they were surrounded with in such a terrible wilderness. The remembrance of our dangers should make us thankful for our deliverances.

2. To aggravate the folly of those who, in their discontent, would have gone back to Egypt through the wilderness, though they had forfeited, and had no reason to expect, the divine guidance, in such a retrograde motion.

II. He shows them how fair they stood for Canaan at that time, De 1:20,21. He told them with triumph, the land is set before you, go up and possess it. He lets them see how near they were to a happy settlement when they put a bar in their own door, that their sin might appear the more exceedingly sinful. It will aggravate the eternal ruin of hypocrites that they were not far from the kingdom of God and yet came short, Mk 12:34.

III. He lays the blame of sending the spies upon them, which did not appear in Numbers, there it is said (De 13:1,2) that the Lord directed the sending of them, but here we find that the people first desired it, and God, in permitting it, gave them up to their counsels: You said, We will send men before us, De 1:22. Moses had given them God's word (De 1:20,21), but they could not find in their hearts to rely upon that: human policy goes further with them than divine wisdom, and they will needs light a candle to the sun. As if it were not enough that they were sure of a God before them, they must send men before them.

IV. He repeats the report which the spies brought of the goodness of the land which they were sent to survey, De 1:24,25. The blessings which God has promised are truly valuable and desirable, even the unbelievers themselves being judges: never any looked into the holy land, but they must own it a good land. Yet they represented the difficulties of conquering it as insuperable (De 1:28); as if it were in vain to think of attacking them either by battle, "for the people are taller than we," or by siege, "for the cities are walled up to heaven," an hyperbole which they made use of to serve their ill purpose, which was to dishearten the people, and perhaps they intended to reflect on the God of heaven himself, as if they were able to defy him, like the Babel-builders, the top of whose tower must reach to heaven, Ge 11:4. Those places only are walled up to heaven that are compassed with God's favour as with a shield.

V. He tells them what pains he took with them to encourage them, when their brethren had said so much to discourage them (De 1:29): Then I said unto you, Dread not. Moses suggested enough to have stilled the tumult, and to have kept them with their faces towards Canaan. He assured them that God was present with them, and president among them, and would certainly fight for them, De 1:30. And for proof of his power over their enemies he refers them to what they had seen done in Egypt, where their enemies had all possible advantages against them and yet were humbled and forced to yield, De 1:30. And for proof of God's goodwill to them, and the real kindness which he intended them, he refers them to what they had seen in the wilderness (De 1:31,33), through which they had been guided by the eye of divine wisdom in a pillar of cloud and fire (which guided both their motions and their rests), and had been carried in the arms of divine grace with as much care and tenderness as were ever shown to any child borne in the arms of a nursing father. And was there any room left to distrust this God? Or were they not the most ungrateful people in the world, who, after such sensible proofs of the divine goodness, hardened their hearts in the day of temptation? Moses had complained once that God had charged him to carry this people as a nursing father doth the sucking child (Nu 11:12); but here he owns that it was God that so carried them, and perhaps this is alluded to (Ac 13:18), where he is said to bear them, or to suffer their manners.

VI. He charges them with the sin which they were guilty of upon this occasion. Though those to whom he was now speaking were a new generation, yet he lays it upon them: You rebelled, and you murmured; for many of these were then in being, though under twenty years old, and perhaps were engaged in the riot; and the rest inherited their fathers' vices, and smarted for them. Observe what he lays to their charge.

1. Disobedience and rebellion against God's law: You would not go up, but rebelled, De 1:26. The rejecting of God's favours is really a rebelling against his authority.

2. Invidious reflections upon God's goodness. They basely suggested: Because the Lord hated us, he brought us out of Egypt, De 1:27. What could have been more absurd, more disingenuous, and more reproachful to God?

3. An unbelieving heart at the bottom of all this: You did not believe the Lord your God, De 1:32. All your disobedience to God's laws, and distrust of his power and goodness, flow from a disbelief of his word. A sad pass it has come to with us when the God of eternal truth cannot be believed.

VII. He repeats the sentence passed upon them for this sin, which now they had seen the execution of.

1. They were all condemned to die in the wilderness, and none of them must be suffered to enter Canaan except Caleb and Joshua, De 1:34-38. So long they must continue in their wanderings in the wilderness that most of them would drop off of course, and the youngest of them should be cut off. Thus they could not enter in because of unbelief. It was not the breach of any of the commands of the law that shut them out of Canaan, no, not the golden calf, but their disbelief of that promise which was typical of gospel grace, to signify that no sin will ruin us but unbelief, which is a sin against the remedy.

2. Moses himself afterwards fell under God's displeasure for a hasty word which they provoked him to speak: The Lord was angry with me for your sakes, De 1:37. Because all the old stock must go off, Moses himself must not stay behind. Their unbelief let death into the camp, and, having entered, even Moses falls within his commission. 3. Yet here is mercy mixed with wrath.

(1.) That, though Moses might not bring them into Canaan, Joshua should (De 1:38): Encourage him; for he would be discouraged from taking up a government which he saw Moses himself fall under the weight of; but let him be assured that he shall accomplish that for which he is raised up: He shall cause Israel to inherit it. Thus what the law could not do, in that it was weak, Jesus, our Joshua, does by bringing in the better hope.

(2.) That, though this generation should not enter into Canaan, the next should, De 1:39. As they had been chosen for their fathers' sakes, so their children might justly have been rejected for their sakes. But mercy rejoiceth against judgement.

VIII. He reminds them of their foolish and fruitless attempt to get this sentence reversed when it was too late.

1. They tried it by their reformation in this particular; whereas they had refused to go up against the Canaanites, now they would go up, aye, that they would, in all haste, and they girded on their weapons of war for that purpose, De 1:41. Thus, when the door is shut, and the day of grace is over, there will be found those that stand without and knock. But this, which looked like a reformation, proved but a further rebellion. God, by Moses, prohibited the attempt (De 1:42): yet they went presumptuously up to the hill (De 1:43), acting now in contempt of the threatening, as before in contempt of the promise, as if they were governed by a spirit of contradiction; and it sped accordingly (De 1:44): they were chased and destroyed; and, by this defeat which they suffered when they provoked God to leave them, they were taught what success they might have had if they had kept themselves in his love.

2. They tried by their prayers and tears to get the sentence reversed: They returned and wept before the Lord, De 1:45. While they were fretting and quarrelling, it is said (Nu 14:1):

They wept that night; those were tears of rebellion against God, these were tears of repentance and humiliation before God. Note, Tears of discontent must be wept over again; the sorrow of the world worketh death, and is to be repented of; it is not so with godly sorrow, that will end in joy. But their weeping was all to no purpose. The Lord would not harken to your voice, because you would not harken to his; the decree had gone forth, and, like Esau, they found no place of repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears.

28 Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart,
saying, the people is greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great
and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of
the Anakim there.
29 Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them.
30 The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you,
according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes;
31 and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy
God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye
went, until ye came into this place.
32 Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God,
33 who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch
your tents *in*, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should
go, and in a cloud by day.

God's Punishment on Israel

34 And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and
sware, saying,
35 Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see
that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers,
36 save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I
give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children,
because he hath wholly followed the Lord.
37 Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also
shalt not go in thither.
38 *But* Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go
in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

39 Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.
40 But *as for* you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

The Defeat of Israel at Hormah

41 Then ye answered and said unto me, we have sinned against the Lord, we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill.
42 And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I *am* not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies.
43 So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill.
44 And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, *even* unto Hormah.
45 And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.
46 So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode *there.*

Deuteronomy-2

The Years in the Wilderness

1 Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the Lord spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days.
2 And the Lord spake unto me, saying,
3 Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

Here is,

I. A short account of the long stay of Israel in the wilderness: We compassed Mount Seir many days, De 2:1. Nearly thirty-eight years they wandered in the deserts of Seir; probably in some of their rests they staid several years, and never stirred; God by this not only chastised them for their murmuring and unbelief, but,

1. Prepared them for Canaan, by humbling them for sin, teaching them to mortify their lusts, to follow God, and to comfort themselves in him. It is a work of time to make souls meet for heaven, and it must be done by a long train of exercises.

2. He prepared the Canaanites for destruction. All this time the measure of their iniquity was filling up; and, though it might have been improved by them as a space to repent in, it was abused by them to the hardening of their hearts. Now that the host of Israel was once repulsed, and after that was so long entangled and seemingly lost in the wilderness, they were secure, and thought the danger was over from that quarter, which would make the next attempt of Israel upon them the more dreadful.

II. Orders given them to turn towards Canaan. Though God contend long, he will not contend for ever. Though Israel may be long kept waiting for deliverance or enlargement, it will come at last: The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie.

III. A charge given them not to annoy the Edomites.

1. They must not offer any hostility to them as enemies: Meddle not with them, De 2:4,5.

(1.) They must not improve the advantage they had against them, by the fright they would be put into upon Israel's approach: "They shall be afraid of you, knowing your

strength and numbers, and the power of God engaged for you; but think not that, because their fears make them an easy prey, you may therefore prey upon them; no, take heed to yourselves." There is need of great caution and a strict government of our own spirits, to keep ourselves from injuring those against whom we have an advantage. Or this caution is given to the princes; they must not only not meddle with the Edomites themselves, but not permit any of the soldiers to meddle with them.

(2.) They must not avenge upon the Edomites the affront they gave them in refusing them passage through their country, Nu 20:21. Thus, before God brought Israel to destroy their enemies in Canaan, he taught them to forgive their enemies in Edom.

(3.) They must not expect to have any part of their land given them for a possession: Mount Seir was already settled upon the Edomites, and they must not, under pretence of God's covenant and conduct, think to seize for themselves all they could lay hands on. Dominion is not founded in grace. God's Israel shall be well placed, but must not expect to be placed alone in the midst of the earth, Isa 5:8.

2. They must trade with them as neighbours, buy meat and water of them, and pay for what they bought, De 2:6. Religion must never be made a cloak for injustice. The reason given (De 2:7), is, "God hath blessed thee, and hitherto thou hast lacked nothing; and therefore,"

(1.) "Thou needest not beg; scorn to be beholden to Edomites, when thou hast a God all-sufficient to depend upon. Thou hast wherewithal to pay for what thou callest for (thanks to the divine blessing!); use therefore what thou hast, use it cheerfully, and do not sponge upon the Edomites."

(2.) "Therefore thou must not steal. Thou hast experienced the care of the divine providence concerning thee, in confidence

of which for the future, and in a firm belief of its sufficiency, never use any indirect methods for thy supply. Live by the faith and not by thy sword."

4 And command thou the people, saying, ye *are* to pass through the
coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir;
and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves
therefore:
5 meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not
so much as a footbreadth; because I have given mount Seir unto
Esau *for* a possession.
6 Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall
also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.
7 For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy
hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these
forty years the Lord thy God *hath been* with thee; thou hast lacked
nothing.
8 And when we passed by from our brethren the children of Esau,
which dwelt in Seir, through the way of the plain from Elath, and
from Ezion-gaber, we turned and passed by the way of the
wilderness of Moab.
9 And the Lord said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither
contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land *for*
a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot *for* a
possession.
10 The Emim dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many,
and tall, as the Anakim;
11 which also were accounted giants, as the Anakim; but the Moabites
call them Emim.
12 The Horim also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau
succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them,
and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his
possession, which the Lord gave unto them.
13 Now rise up, *said I*, and get you over the brook Zered. And we went
over the brook Zered.
14 And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we
were come over the brook Zered, *was* thirty and eight years; until
all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among
the host, as the Lord sware unto them.

15 For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.

It is observable here that Moses, speaking of the Edomites (De 2:8), calls them, "our brethren, the children of Esau." Though they had been unkind to Israel, in refusing them a peaceable passage through their country, yet he calls them brethren. For, though our relations fail in their duty to us, we must retain a sense of the relation, and not be wanting in our duty to them, as there is occasion. Now in these verses we have,

I The account which Moses gives of the origin of the nations of which he had here occasion to speak, the Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites. We know very well, from other parts of his history, whose posterity they were; but here he tells us how they came to those countries in which Israel found them; they were not the aborigines, or first planters. But,

1 The Moabites dwelt in a country which had belonged to a numerous race of giants, called Emim (that is, terrible ones), as tall as the Anakim, and perhaps more fierce, De 2:10,11.

2 The Edomites in like manner dispossessed the Horim from Mount Seir, and took their country (De 2:12. and again De 2:22), of which we read, Ge 36:20.

3. The Ammonites likewise got possession of a country that had formerly been inhabited by giants, called Zamzummim, crafty men, or wicked men (De 2:20,21), probably the same that are called Zuzim, Ge 14:5. He illustrates these remarks by an instance older than any of these; the Caphtorim (who were akin to the Philistines, Ge 10:14) drove the Avim out of their country, and took possession of it, De 2:23. The learned bishop Patrick supposes these Avites, being expelled hence, to have settled in Assyria, and to be the same people we read of under that name, 2Ki 17:31. Now these revolutions are recorded,

(1.) To show how soon the world was peopled after the flood, so well peopled that, when a family grew numerous, they could not find a place to settle in, at least in that part of the world, but they must drive out those that were already settled.

(2.) To show that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Giants were expelled by those of ordinary stature; for probably these giants, like those before the flood (Ge 6:4), were notorious for impiety and oppression, which brought the judgments of God upon them, against which their great strength would be on defence.

(3.) To show what uncertain things worldly possessions are, and how often they change their owners; it was so of old, and ever will be so. Families decline, and from them estates are transferred to families that increase; so little constancy or continuance is there in these things.

(4.) To encourage the children of Israel, who were now going to take possession of Canaan, against the difficulties they would meet with, and to show the unbelief of those that were afraid of the sons of Anak, to whom the giants, here said to be conquered, are compared, De 2:11,21. If the providence of God had done this for the Moabites and Ammonites, much more would his promise do it for Israel his peculiar people.

II The advances which Israel made towards Canaan. They passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab (De 2:8), and then went over the brook or vale of Zered (De 2:13), and there Moses takes notice of the fulfilling of the word which God had spoken concerning them, that none of those that were numbered at Mount Sinai should see the land that God had promised, Nu 14:23. According to that sentence, now that they began to set their faces towards Canaan, and to have it in their eye, notice is taken of their being all destroyed and consumed, and not a man of them left, De 2:14.

Common providence, we may observe, in about thirty-eight years, ordinarily raises a new generation, so that in that time few remain of the old one; but here it was entirely new, and none at all remained but Caleb and Joshua: for indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, De 2:15. Those cannot but waste, until they were consumed, who have the hand of God against them. Observe, Israel is not called to engage with the Canaanites till all the men of war, the veteran regiments, that had been used to hardship, and had learned the art of war from the Egyptians, were consumed and dead from among the people (De 2:16), that the conquest of Canaan, being effected by a host of new-raised men, trained up in a wilderness, the excellency of the power might the more plainly appear to be of God and not of men.

III. The caution given them not to meddle with the Moabites or Ammonites, whom they must not disseize, nor so much as disturb in their possessions: Distress them not, nor contend with them, De 2:9. Though the Moabites aimed to ruin Israel (Nu 22:6), yet Israel must not aim to ruin them. If others design us a mischief, this will not justify us in designing them a mischief. But why must not the Moabites and Ammonites be meddled with?

1. Because they were the children of Lot (De 2:9,19), righteous Lot, who kept his integrity in Sodom. Note, Children often fare the better in this world for the piety of their ancestors: the seed of the upright, though they degenerate, yet are blessed with temporal good things.

2. Because the land they were possessed of was what God had given them, and he did not design it for Israel. Even wicked men have a right to their worldly possessions, and must not be wronged. The tares are allowed their place in the field, and must not be rooted out until the harvest. God gives and preserves outward blessings to wicked men, to show that

these are not the best things, but he has better in store for his own children.

16 So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people,
17 that the Lord spake unto me, saying,
18 Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day:
19 and *when* thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon *any* possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot *for* a possession.
20 (That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummim;
21 a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakim; but the Lord destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead:
22 as he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horim from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day:
23 and the Avim which dwelt in Hazerim, *even* unto Azzah, the Caphtorim, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.)
24 Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess *it*, and contend with him in battle.
25 This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations *that are* under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.

Israel Conquers Sihon

26 And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying,
27 Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left.
28 Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet:

29 (as the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me:) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the Lord our God giveth us.

30 But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as *appeareth* this day.

God having tried the self-denial of his people in forbidding them to meddle with the Moabites and Ammonites, and they having quietly passed by those rich countries, and, though superior in number, not made any attack upon them, here he recompenses them for their obedience by giving them possession of the country of Sihon king of the Amorites. If we forbear what God forbids, we shall receive what he promises, and shall be no losers at last by our obedience, though it may seem for the present to be to our loss. Wrong not others, and God shall right thee.

I. God gives them commission to seize upon the country of Sihon king of Heshbon, De 2:24,25. This was then God's way of disposing of kingdoms, but such particular grants are not now either to be expected or pretended. In this commission observe, 1. Though God assured them that the land should be their own, yet they must bestir themselves, and contend in battle with the enemy. What God gives we must endeavour to get. 2. God promises that when they fight he will fight for them. Do you begin to possess it, and I will begin to put the dread of you upon them. God would dispirit the enemy and so destroy them, would magnify Israel and so terrify all those against whom they were commissioned. See Ex 15:14.

II. Moses sends to Sihon a message of peace, and only begs a passage through his land, with a promise to give his country no disturbance, but the advantage of trading for ready money with so great a body, De 2:26-29. Moses herein did neither disobey God, who bade him contend with Sihon, nor dissemble with Sihon; but doubtless it was by divine direction that he did it, that Sihon might be left inexcusable, though God hardened his heart. This may illustrate the method of

God's dealing with those to whom he gives his gospel, but does not give grace to believe it.

III. Sihon began the war (De 2:32), God having made his heart obstinate, and hidden from his eyes the thing that belonged to his peace (De 2:30), that he might deliver him into the hand of Israel. Those that meddle with the people of God meddle to their own hurt; and God sometimes ruins his enemies by their own resolves. See Mic 4:11-13,Re 16:14.

IV. Israel was victorious.

1. They put all the Amorites to the sword, men, women, and children (De 2:33,34); this they did as the executioners of God's wrath; now the measure of the Amorites' iniquity was full (Ge 15:16), and the longer it was in the filling the sorer was the reckoning at last. This was one of the devoted nations. They died, not as Israel's enemies, but as sacrifices to divine justice, in the offering of which sacrifices Israel was employed, as a kingdom of priests. The case being therefore extraordinary, it ought not to be drawn into a precedent for military executions, which make no distinction and give no quarter: those will have judgment without mercy that show no mercy.

2. They took possession of all they had; their cities (De 2:34), their goods (De 2:35), and their land, De 2:36. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. What a new world did Israel now come into! Most of them were born, and had lived all their days, in a vast howling wilderness, where they knew not what either fields or cities were, had no houses to dwell in, and neither sowed nor reaped; and now of a sudden to become masters of a country so well built, so well husbanded, this made them amends for their long waiting, and yet it was but the earnest of a great deal more. Much more joyful will the change be which holy souls will experience when they remove out of the wilderness of this world to the better country, that is, the heavenly, to the city that has foundations.

31 And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.
32 Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz.
33 And the Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.
34 And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain:
35 only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took.
36 From Aroer, which *is* by the brink of the river of Arnon, and *from* the city that *is* by the river, even unto Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us: the Lord our God delivered all unto us:
37 only unto the land of the children of Ammon thou camest not, *nor* unto any place of the river Jabbok, nor unto the cities in the mountains, nor unto whatsoever the Lord our God forbade us.

Deuteronomy-3

Israel Conquers Og of Bashan

1 Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.
2 And the Lord said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.
3 So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining.
4 And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

5 All these cities *were* fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many.

We have here another brave country delivered into the hand of Israel, that of Bashan; the conquest of Sihon is often mentioned together with that of Og, to the praise of God, the rather because in these Israel's triumphs began, Ps 135:11,136:19,20. See,

I. How they got the mastery of Og, a very formidable prince,

1. Very strong, for he was of the remnant of the giants (De 3:11); his personal strength was extraordinary, a monument of which was preserved by the Ammonites in his bedstead, which was shown as a rarity in their chief city. You might guess at his weight by the materials of his bedstead; it was iron, as if a bedstead of wood were too weak for him to trust to: and you might guess at his stature by the dimensions of it; it was nine cubits long and four cubits broad, which, supposing a cubit to be but half a yard (and some learned men have made it appear to be somewhat more), was four yards and a half long, and two yards broad; and if we allow his bedstead to be two cubits longer than himself, and that is as much as we need allow, he was three yards and a half high, double the stature of an ordinary man, and every way proportionable, yet they smote him, De 3:3.

Note, when God pleads his people's cause he can deal with giants as with grasshoppers. No man's might can secure him against the Almighty. The army of Og was very powerful, for he had the command of sixty fortified cities, besides the unwalled towns, De 3:5. Yet all this was nothing before God's Israel, when they came with commission to destroy him.

2. He was very bold and daring: He came out against Israel to battle, De 3:1. It was wonderful that he did not take warning by the ruin of Sihon, and send to desire conditions of peace; but he trusted to his own strength, and so was hardened to his destruction.

Note, Those that are not awakened by the judgments of God upon others, but persist in their defiance of heaven, are ripening apace for the like judgments upon themselves, Jer 3:8. God bade Moses not fear him, De 3:2. If Moses himself was so strong in faith as not to need the caution, yet it is probable that the people needed it, and for them these fresh assurances are designed; "I will deliver him into thy hand; not only deliver thee out of his hand, that he shall not be thy ruin, but deliver him into thy hand, that thou shalt be his ruin, and make him pay dearly for his attempt." He adds, Thou shalt do to him as thou didst to Sihon, intimating that they ought to be encouraged by their former victory to trust in God for another victory, for he is God, and changeth not.

II. How they got possession of Bashan, a very desirable country. They took all the cities (De 3:4), and all the spoil of them, De 3:7. They made them all their own, De 3:10. So that now they had in their hands all that fruitful country which lay east of Jordan, from the river Arnon unto Hermon, De 3:8. Their conquering and possessing these countries was intended, not only for the encouragement of Israel in the wars of Canaan, but for the satisfaction of Moses before his death. Since he must not live to see the completing of their victory and settlement, God thus gives him a specimen of it. Thus the Spirit is given to those that believe as the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

6 And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of
Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of
every city.
7 But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to
ourselves.
8 And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the
Amorites the land that *was* on this side Jordan, from the river of
Arnon unto Mount Hermon;
9 (*which* Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it
Shenir;)
10 all the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto

Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.
11 For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants;
behold, his bedstead *was* a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of
the children of Ammon?Nine cubits *was* the length thereof, and
four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.

Reuben, Gad, and Half of Manasseh Settle East of the Jordan

12 And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which *is*
by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof,
gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites.
13 And the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, *being* the kingdom of Og,
gave I unto the half tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, with
all Bashan, which was called the land of giants.
14 Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the
coasts of Geshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own
name, Bashan-havoth-jair, unto this day.
15 And I gave Gilead unto Machir.
16 And unto the Reubenites and unto the Gadites I gave from Gilead
even unto the river Arnon half the valley, and the border even unto
the river Jabbok, *which is* the border of the children of Ammon;

Having shown how this country which they were now in was conquered, in these verses he shows how it was settled upon the Reubenites, Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, which we had the story of before, Nu 32:1-42 Here is the rehearsal.

1. Moses specifies the particular parts of the country that were allotted to each tribe, especially the distribution of the lot to the half tribe of Manasseh, the subdividing of which tribe is observable. Joseph was divided into Ephraim and Manasseh; Manasseh was divided into one half on the one side Jordan and the other half on the other side: that on the east side Jordan was again divided into two great families, which had their several allotments: Jair, De 3:14, Machir, De 3:15. And perhaps Jacob's prediction of the smallness of that tribe was now accomplished in these divisions and subdivisions. Observe that Bashan is here called the land of the giants,

because it had been in their possession, but Og was the last of them. These giants, it seems, had lost their country, and were rooted out of it sooner than any of their neighbours; for those who, presuming upon their strength and stature, had their hand against every man, had every man's hand against them, and went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

2. He repeats the condition of the grant which they had already agreed to, De 3:18-20. That they should send a strong detachment over Jordan to lead the van in the conquest of Canaan, who should not return to their families, at least not to settle (though for a time they might retire thither into winter quarters, at the end of a campaign), till they had seen their brethren in as full possession of their respective allotments as they themselves were now in of theirs. They must hereby be taught not to look at their own things only, but at the things of others, Php 2:4. It ill becomes an Israelite to be selfish, and to prefer any private interest before the public welfare. When we are rest we should desire to see our brethren at rest too, and should be ready to do what we can towards it; for we are not born for ourselves, but are members one of another. A good man cannot rejoice much in the comforts of his family unless withal he sees peace upon Israel, Ps 128:6.

17 the plain also, and Jordan, and the coast *thereof,* from Chinnereth
even unto the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, under Ashdoth-
pisgah eastward.

18 And I commanded you at that time, saying, The Lord your God
hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed
before your brethren the children of Israel, all *that are* meet for the
war.

19 But your wives, and your little ones, and your cattle, (*for* I know
that ye have much cattle,) shall abide in your cities which I have
given you;

20 until the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, as well as unto
you, and *until* they also possess the land which the Lord your God
hath given them beyond Jordan: and *then* shall ye return every man
unto his possession, which I have given you.

21 And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have
seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto these two kings:
so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest.
22 Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for
you.

Moses Not Permitted to Enter Canaan

23 And I besought the Lord at that time, saying,
24 O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness,
and thy mighty hand: for what God *is there* in heaven or in earth,
that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?
25 I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that *is* beyond
Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.

Here is

I The encouragement which Moses gave to Joshua, who was to succeed him in the government, De 3:21,22. He commanded him not to fear. This those that are aged and experienced in the service of God should do all they can to strengthen the hands of those that are young, and setting out in religion. Two things he would have him consider for his encouragement:--

1. What God has done? Joshua had seen what a total defeat God had given by the forces of Israel to these two kings, and thence he might easily infer, so shall the Lord do to all the rest of the kingdoms upon which we are to make war. He must not only infer thence that thus the Lord can do with them all, for his arm is not shortened, but thus he will do, for his purpose is not changed; he that has begun will finish; as for God, his work is perfect. Joshua had seen it with his own eyes. And the more we have seen of the instances of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, the more inexcusable we are if we fear what flesh can do unto us.

2. What God had promised. The Lord your God he shall fight for you; and that cause cannot but be victorious which the

Lord of hosts fights for. If God be for us, who can be against us so as to prevail? We reproach our leader if we follow him trembling.

II The prayer which Moses made for himself, and the answer which God gave to that prayer.

1. His prayer was that, if it were God's will, he might go before Israel over Jordan into Canaan. At that time, when he had been encouraging Joshua to fight Israel's battles, taking it for granted that he must be their leader, he was touched with an earnest desire to go over himself, which expresses itself not in any passionate and impatient complaints, or reflections upon the sentence he was under, but in humble prayers to God for a gracious reversing of it. I besought the Lord. Note, We should never allow any desires in our hearts which we cannot in faith offer up to God by prayer; and what desires are innocent, let them be presented to God. We have not because we ask not. Observe,

(1.) What he pleads here. Two things:--

[1.] The great experience which he had had of God's goodness to him in what he had done for Israel: "Thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness. Lord, perfect what thou hast begun. Thou hast given me to see thy glory in the conquest of these two kings, and the sight has affected me with wonder and thankfulness. O let me see more of the outgoings of my God, my King! This great work, no doubt, will be carried on and completed; let me have the satisfaction of seeing it."

Note, the more we see of God's glory in his works the more we shall desire to see. The works of the Lord are great, and therefore are sought out more and more of all those that have pleasure therein.

[2.] The good impressions that had been made upon his heart by what he had seen: For what God is there in heaven or earth

that can do according to thy works? The more we are affected with what we have seen of God, of his wisdom, power, and goodness, the better we are prepared for further discoveries. Those shall see the works of God that admire him in them. Moses had thus expressed himself concerning God and his works long before (Ex 15:11), and he still continues of the same mind, that there are no works worthy to be compared with God's works, Ps 86:8.

(2.) What he begs: I pray thee let me go over, De 3:25. God had said he should not go over; yet he prays that he might, not knowing but that the threatening was conditional, for it was not ratified with an oath, as that concerning the people was, that they should not enter. Thus Hezekiah prayed for his own life, and David for the life of his child, after both had ben expressly threatened; and the former prevailed, though the latter did not. Moses remembered the time when he had by prayer prevailed with God to recede from the declarations which he had made of his wrath against Israel, Ex 32:14. And why might he not hope in like manner to prevail for himself? Let me go over and see the good land.

Not, "Let me go over and be a prince and a ruler there;" he seeks not his own honour, is content to resign the government to Joshua; but, "Let me go to be a spectator of thy kindness to Israel, to see what I believe concerning the goodness of the land of promise." How pathetically does he speak of Canaan, that good land, that goodly mountain!

Note, Those may hope to obtain and enjoy God's favours that know how to value them. What he means by that goodly mountain we may learn from Ps 78:54, where it is said of God's Israel that he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain which his right hand had purchased, where it is plainly to be understood of the whole land of Canaan, yet with an eye to the sanctuary, the glory of it.

2. God's answer to this prayer had in it a mixture of mercy and judgment, that he might sing unto God of both.

(1.) There was judgment in the denial of his request, and that in something of anger too: The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, De 3:26. God not only sees sin in his people, but is much displeased with it; and even those that are delivered from the wrath to come may yet lie under the tokens of God's wrath in this world, and may be denied some particular favour which their hearts are much set upon. God is a gracious, tender, loving Father; but he is angry with his children when they do amiss, and denies them many a thing that they desire and are ready to cry for. But how was he wroth with Moses for the sake of Israel? Either,

[1.] For that sin which they provoked him to; see Ps 106:32,33. Or,

[2.] The removal of Moses at that time, when he could so ill be spared, was a rebuke to all Israel, and a punishment of their sin. Or,

[3.] It was for their sakes, that it might be a warning to them to take heed of offending God by passionate and unbelieving speeches at any time, after the similitude of his transgression; for, if this were done to such a green tree, what should be done to the dry? He acknowledges that God would not hear him. God had often heard him for Israel, yet he would not hear him for himself. It was the prerogative of Christ, the great Intercessor, to be heard always; yet of him his enemies said, He saved others, himself he could not save, which the Jews would not have upbraided him with had they considered that Moses, their great prophet, prevailed for others, but for himself he could not prevail. Though Moses, being one of the wrestling seed of Jacob, did not seek in vain, yet he had not the thing itself which he sought for. God may accept our prayers, and yet not grant us the very thing we pray for.

(2.) Here is mercy mixed with this wrath in several things:--

[1.] God quieted the spirit of Moses under the decree that had gone forth by that word (De 3:26), Let it suffice thee. With this word, no doubt, a divine power went to reconcile Moses to the will of God, and to bring him to acquiesce in it. If God does not by his providence give us what we desire, yet, if by his grace he makes us content without it, it comes much to one. "Let it suffice thee to have God for they father, and heaven for thy portion, though thou hast not every thing thou wouldest have in this world. Be satisfied with this, God is all-sufficient."

[2.] He put an honour upon his prayer in directing him not to insist upon this request: Speak no more to me of this matter. It intimates that what God does not think fit to grant we should not think fit to ask, and that God takes such a pleasure in the prayer of the upright that it is no pleasure to him, no, not in any particular instance, to give a denial to it.

[3.] He promised him a sight of Canaan from the top of Pisgah, De 3:27. Though he should not have the possession of it, he should have the prospect of it; not to tantalize him, but such a sight of it as would yield him true satisfaction, and would enable him to form a very clear and pleasing idea of that promised land. Probably Moses had not only his sight preserved for other purposes, but greatly enlarged for this purpose; for, if he had not had such a sight of it as others could not have from the same place, it would have been no particular favour to Moses, nor the matter of a promise. Even great believers, in this present state, see heaven but at a distance.

[4.] He provided him a successor, one who should support the honour of Moses and carry on and complete that glorious work which the heart of Moses was so much upon, the bringing of Israel to Canaan, and settling them there (De 3:28): Charge Joshua and encourage him in this work. Those

to whom God gives a charge, he will be sure to give encouragement to. And it is a comfort to the church's friends (when they are dying and going off) to see God's work likely to be carried on by other hands, when they are silent in the dust.

26 But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not
hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no
more unto me of this matter.
27 Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward,
and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold *it* with
thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.
28 But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he
shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit
the land which thou shalt see.
29 So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.

Deuteronomy-4

Moses Exhorts Israel to Obedience

1 Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the
judgments, which I teach you, for to do *them*, that ye may live, and
go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers
giveth you.

This most lively and excellent discourse is so entire, and the particulars of it are so often repeated, that we must take it altogether in the exposition of it, and endeavour to digest it into proper heads, for we cannot divide it into paragraphs.

In general, it is the use and application of the foregoing history; it comes in by way of inference from it: Now therefore harken, O Israel, De 4:1. This use we should make of the review of God's providences concerning us, we should by them be quickened and engaged to duty and obedience. The histories of the years of ancient times should in like manner be improved by us.

2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *aught* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

3 Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

The scope and drift of his discourse is to persuade them to keep close to God and to his service, and not to forsake him for any other god, nor in any instance to decline from their duty to him. Now observe what he says to them, with a great deal of divine rhetoric, both by way of exhortation and direction, and also by way of motive and argument to enforce his exhortations.

1. See here how he charges and commands them, and shows them what is good, and what the Lord requires of them.

(1.) He demands their diligent attention to the word of God, and to the statutes and judgments that were taught them: Hearken, O Israel. He means, not only that they must now give him the hearing, but that whenever the book of the law was read to them, or read by them, they should be attentive to it. "Hearken to the statutes, as containing the great commands of God and the great concerns of your own souls, and therefore challenging your utmost attention." At Horeb God had made them hear his words (De 4:10), hear them with a witness; the attention which was then constrained by the circumstances of the delivery ought ever after to be engaged by the excellency of the things themselves. What God so spoke once, we should hear twice, hear often.

(2.) He charges them to preserve the divine law pure and entire among them, De 4:2. Keep it pure, and do not add to it; keep it entire, and do not diminish from it. Not in practice, so some: "You shall not add by committing the evil which the law forbids, nor diminish by omitting the good which the law requires." Not in opinion, so others: "You shall not add your own inventions, as if the divine institutions were defective,

nor introduce, much less impose, any rites of religious worship other than what God has appointed; nor shall you diminish, or set aside, any thing that is appointed, as needless or superfluous." God's work is perfect, nothing can be put to it, nor taken from it, without making it the worse. See Ec 3:14. The Jews understand it as prohibiting the alteration of the text or letter of the law, even in the least jot or tittle; and to their great care and exactness herein we are very much indebted, under God, for the purity and integrity of the Hebrew code. We find a fence like this made about the New Testament in the close of it, Re 22:18,19.

(3.) He charges them to keep God's commandments (De 4:2), to do them (De 4:5,14), to keep and do them (De 4:6), to perform the covenant, De 4:13. Hearing must be in order to doing, knowledge in order to practice. God's commandments were the way they must keep in, the rule they must keep to; they must govern themselves by the moral precepts, perform their devotion according to the divine ritual, and administer justice according to the judicial law. He concludes his discourse (De 4:40) with this repeated charge: Thou shalt keep his statutes and his commandments which I command thee. What are laws made for but to be observed and obeyed?

(4.) He charges them to be very strict and careful in their observance of the law (De 4:9): Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently; and (De 4:15), Take you therefore good heed unto yourselves; and again (De 4:23), Take heed to yourselves. Those that would be religious must be very cautious, and walk circumspectly. Considering how many temptations we are compassed about with, and what corrupt inclinations we have in our own bosoms, we have great need to look about us and to keep our hearts with all diligence. Those cannot walk aright that walk carelessly and at all adventures.

(5.) He charges them particularly to take heed of the sin of idolatry, that sin which of all others they would be most

tempted to by the customs of the nations, which they were most addicted to by the corruption of their hearts, and which would be most provoking to God and of the most pernicious consequences to themselves: Take good heed, lest in this matter you corrupt yourselves, De 4:15,16. Two sorts of idolatry he cautions them against:--

[1.] The worship of images, however by them they might intend to worship the true God, as they had done in the golden calf, so changing the truth of God into a lie and his glory into shame. The second commandment is expressly directed against this, and is here enlarged upon, De 4:15-18. "Take heed lest you corrupt yourselves," that is, "lest you debauch yourselves;" for those that think to make images of God form in their minds such notions of him as must needs be an inlet to all impieties; and it is intimated that it is a spiritual adultery. "And take heed lest you destroy yourselves. If any thing ruin you, this will be it. Whatever you do, make no similitude of God, either in a human shape, male of female, or in the shape of any beast or fowl, serpent or fish;" for the heathen worshipped their gods by images of all these kinds, being either not able to form, or not willing to admit, that plain demonstration which we find, Ho 8:6: The workman made it, therefore it is not God.

To represent an infinite Spirit by an image, and the great Creator by the image of a creature, is the greatest affront we can put upon God and the greatest cheat we can put upon ourselves. As an argument against their making images of God, he urges it very much upon them that when God made himself known to them at Horeb he did it by a voice of words which sounded in their ears, to teach them that faith comes by hearing, and God in the word is nigh us; but no image was presented to their eye, for to see God as he is is reserved for our happiness in the other world, and to see him as he is not will do us hurt and no good in this world. You saw no similitude (De 4:12), no manner of similitude, De 4:15.

Probably they expected to have seen some similitude, for they were ready to break through unto the Lord to gaze, Ex 19:21.

But all they saw was light and fire, and nothing that they could make an image of, God an infinite wisdom so ordering his manifestation of himself because of the peril of idolatry. It is said indeed of Moses that he beheld the similitude of the Lord (Nu 12:8), God allowing him that favour because he was above the temptation of idolatry; but for the people who had lately come from admiring the idols of Egypt, they must see no resemblance of God, lest they should have pretended to copy it, and so should have received the second commandment in vain; "for" (says bishop Patrick) "they would have thought that this forbade them only to make any representation of God besides that wherein he showed himself to them, in which they would have concluded it lawful to represent him." Let this be a caution to us to take heed of making images of God in our fancy and imagination when we are worshipping him, lest thereby we corrupt ourselves. There may be idols in the heart, where there are none in the sanctuary.

[2.] The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, is another sort of idolatry which they were cautioned against, De 4:19. This was the most ancient species of idolatry and the most plausible, drawing the adoration to those creatures that not only are in a situation above us, but are most sensibly glorious in themselves and most generally serviceable to the world. And the plausibleness of it made it the more dangerous. It is intimated here,

First, How strong the temptation is to sense; for the caution is, Lest thou shouldest be driven to worship them by the strong impulse of a vain imagination and the impetuous torrent of the customs of the nations. The heart is supposed to walk after the eye, which, in our corrupt and degenerate state, it is very apt to do. "When thou seest the sun, moon, and stars, thou wilt so admire their height and brightness, their regular

motion and powerful influence, that thou wilt be strongly tempted to give that glory to them which is due to him that made them, and made them what they are to us--gave them their beings, and made them blessings to the world." It seems there was need of a great deal of resolution to arm them against this temptation, so weak was their faith in an invisible God and an invisible world.

Secondly, Yet he shows how weak the temptation would be to those that would use their reason; for these pretended deities, the sun, moon, and stars, were only blessings which the Lord their God, whom they were obliged to worship, had imparted to all nations. It is absurd to worship them, for they are man's servants, were made and ordained to give light on earth; and shall we serve those that were made to serve us? The sun, in Hebrew is called shemesh, which signifies a servant, for it is the minister-general of this visible world, and holds the candle to all mankind; let it not then be worshipped as a lord. Moreover, they are God's gifts; he has imparted them; whatever benefit we have by them, we owe it to him; it is therefore highly injurious to him to give that honour and praise to them which is due to him only.

(6.) He charges them to teach their children to observe the laws of God: Teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons (De 4:9), that they may teach their children, De 4:10.

[1.] Care must be taken in general to preserve the entail of religion among them, and to transmit the knowledge and worship of God to posterity; for the kingdom of God in Israel was designed to be perpetual, if they did not forfeit the privilege of it.

[2.] Parents must, in order hereunto, particularly take care to teach their own children the fear of God, and to train them up in an observance of all his commandments.

(7.) He charges them never to forget their duty: Take heed lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, De 4:23. Though God is ever mindful of the covenant, we are apt to forget it; and this is at the bottom of all our departures from God. We have need therefore to watch against all those things which would put the covenant out of our minds, and to watch over our own hearts, lest at any time we let it slip; and so we must take heed lest at any time we forget our religion, lest we lose it or leave it off. Care and caution, and holy watchfulness, are the best helps against a bad memory. These are the directions and commands he gives them.

2. Let us see now what are the motives or arguments with which he backs these exhortations. How does he order the cause before them, and fill his mouth with arguments! He has a great deal to say on God's behalf. Some of his topics are indeed peculiar to that people, yet applicable to us. But, upon the whole, it is evident that religion has reason on its side, the powerful charms of which all that are irreligious wilfully stop their ears against.

(1.) He urges the greatness, glory, and goodness, of God. Did we consider what a God he is with whom we have to do, we should surely make conscience of our duty to him and not dare to sin against him. He reminds them here,

[1.] That the Lord Jehovah is the one and only living and true God. This they must know and consider, De 4:39. There are many things which we know, but are not the better for, because we do not consider them, we do not apply them to ourselves, nor draw proper inferences from them. This is a truth so evident that it cannot but be known, and so influential that, if it were duly considered, it would effectually reform the world, That the Lord Jehovah he is God, an infinite and eternal Being, self-existent and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being, power, and motion--that he is God in heaven above, clothed with all the glory and Lord of all the hosts of the upper world, and that he is God upon earth

beneath, which, though distant from the throne of his glory, is not out of the reach of his sight or power, and though despicable and mean is not below his care and cognizance. And there is none else, no true and living God but himself. All the deities of the heathen were counterfeits and usurpers; nor did any of them so much as pretend to be universal monarchs in heaven and earth, but only local deities. The Israelites, who worshipped no other than the supreme Numen--Divinity, were for ever inexcusable if they either changed their God or neglected him.

[2.] That he is a consuming fire, a jealous God, De 4:24. Take heed of offending him, for,

First, He has a jealous eye to discern an affront; he must have your entire affection and adoration, and will by no means endure a rival. God's jealousy over us is a good reason for our godly jealousy over ourselves.

Secondly, He has a heavy hand to punish an affront, especially in his worship, for therein he is in a special manner jealous. He is a consuming fire; his wrath against sinners is so; it is dreadful and destroying, it is a fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries, Heb 10:27. Fire consumes that only which is fuel for it, so the wrath of God fastens upon those only who, by their own sin, have fitted themselves for destruction, 1Co 3:13,Isa 27:4. Even in the New Testament we find the same argument urged upon us as a reason why we should serve God with reverence (Heb 12:28,29), because though he is our God, and a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully, yet he is a consuming fire to those that trifle with him.

Thirdly, That yet he is a merciful God, De 4:31. It comes in here as an encouragement to repentance, but might serve as an inducement to obedience, and a consideration proper to prevent their apostasy. Shall we forsake a merciful God, who will never forsake us, as it follows here, if we be faithful unto

him? Whither can we go to better ourselves? Shall we forget the covenant of our God, who will not forget the covenant of our fathers? Let us be held to our duty by the bonds of love, and prevailed with by the mercies of God to cleave to him.

(2.) He urges their relation to this God, his authority over them and their obligations to him. "The commandments you are to keep and do are not mine," says Moses, "not my inventions, not my injunctions, but they are the commandments of the Lord, framed by infinite wisdom, enacted by sovereign power. He is the Lord God of your fathers (De 4:1), so that you are his by inheritance: your fathers were his, and you were born in his house. He is the Lord your God (De 4:2), so that you are his by your own consent. He is the Lord my God (De 4:5), so that I treat with you as his agent and ambassador;" and in his name Moses delivered unto them all that, and that only, which he had received from the Lord.

(3.) He urges the wisdom of being religious: For this is your wisdom in the sight of the nations, De 4:6. In keeping God's commandments,

[1.] They would act wisely for themselves; This is your wisdom. It is not only agreeable to right reason, but highly conducive to our true interest; this is one of the first and most ancient maxims of divine revelation. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, Job 28:28.

[2.] They would answer the expectations of their neighbours, who, upon reading or hearing the precepts of the law that was given them, would conclude that certainly the people that were governed by this law were a wise and understanding people. Great things may justly be looked for from those who are guided by divine revelation, and unto whom are committed the oracles of God.

They must needs be wiser and better than other people; and so they are if they are ruled by the rules that are given them; and if they are not, though reproach may for their sakes be cast upon the religion they profess, yet it will in the end certainly return upon themselves to their eternal confusion. Those that enjoy the benefit of divine light and laws ought to conduct themselves so as to support their own reputation for wisdom and honour (see Ec 10:1), that God may be glorified thereby.

(4.) He urges the singular advantages which they enjoyed by virtue of the happy establishment they were under, De 4:7,8. Our communion with God (which is the highest honour and happiness we are capable of in this world) is kept up by the word and prayer; in both these Israel were happy above any people under heaven.

[1.] Never were any people so privileged in speaking to God, De 4:7. He was nigh unto them in all that they called upon him for, ready to answer their enquiries and resolve them by his oracle, ready to answer their requests and to grant them by a particular providence. When they had cried unto God for bread, for water, for healing, they had found him near them, to succour and relieve them, a very present help, and in the midst of them (Ps 46:1,5), his ear open to their prayers. Observe,

First, It is the character of God's Israel that on all occasions they call upon him, in every thing they make their requests known to God. They do nothing but what they consult him in, they desire nothing but what they come to him for.

Secondly, Those that call upon God shall certainly find him within call, and ready to give an answer of peace to every prayer of faith; see Isa 58:9, "Thou shalt cry, as the child for a nurse, and he shall say, Here I am, what does my dear child cry for?"

Thirdly, This is a privilege which makes the Israel of God truly great and honourable. What can go further than this to magnify a people or a person? Is any name more illustrious than that of Israel, a prince with God? What nation is there so great? Other nations might boast of greater numbers, larger territories, and more ancient incorporations; but none could boast of such an interest in heaven as Israel had. They had their gods, but not so nigh to them as Israel's God was; they could not help them in a time of need, as 1Ki 18:27.

[2.] Never were any people so privileged in hearing from God, by the statutes and judgments which were set before them, De 4:8. This also was the grandeur of Israel above any people. What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous? Observe,

First, That all these statutes and judgments of the divine law are infinitely just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. The law of God is far more excellent that the law of nations. No law so consonant to natural equity and the unprejudiced dictates of right reason, so consistent with itself in all the parts of it, and so conducive to the welfare and interest of mankind, as the scripture-law is, Ps 119:128.

Secondly, The having of these statutes and judgments set before them is the true and transcendent greatness of any nation or people. See Ps 147:19,20. It is an honour to us that we have the Bible in reputation and power among us. It is an evidence of a people's being high in the favour of God, and a means of making them high among the nations. Those that magnify the law shall be magnified by it.

(5.) He urges God's glorious appearances to them at Mount Sinai, when he gave them this law. This he insists much upon. Take heed lest thou forget the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, De 4:10. Some of them were now alive that could remember it, though they were then under

twenty years of age, and the rest of them might be said to stand there in the loins of their fathers, who received the law and entered into covenant there, not for themselves only, but for their children, to whom God had an eye particularly in giving the law, that they might teach it to their children. Two things they must remember, and, one would think, they could never forget them:--

[1.] What they saw at Mount Sinai, De 4:11. They saw a strange composition of fire and darkness, both dreadful and very awful; and they must needs be a striking foil to each other; the darkness made the fire in the midst of it look the more dreadful. Fires in the night are the most frightful, and the fire made the darkness that surrounded it look the more awful; for it must needs be a strong darkness which such a fire did not disperse. In allusion to this appearance upon Mount Sinai, God is said to show himself for his people, and against his and their enemies, in fire and darkness together, Ps 18:8,9. He tells them again (De 4:36) what they saw, for he would have them never forget it: He showed thee his great fire. One flash of lightning, that fire from heaven, strikes an awe upon us; and some have observed that most creatures naturally turn their faces towards the lightning, as ready to receive the impressions of it; but how dreadful then must a constant fire from heaven be! It gave an earnest of the day of judgment, in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire. As he reminds them of what they saw, so he tells them what they saw not; no manner of similitude, from which they might form either an idea of God in their fancies or an image of God in their high places. By what we see of God sufficient ground is given us to believe him to be a Being of infinite power and perfection, but no occasion given us to suspect him to have a body such as we have.

[2.] What they heard at Mount Sinai (De 4:12): "The Lord spoke unto you with an intelligible voice, in your own language, and you heard it." This he enlarges upon towards the close of his discourse, De 4:32,33,36.

First, They heard the voice of God, speaking out of heaven. God manifests himself to all the world in the works of creation, without speech or language, and yet their voice is heard (Ps 19:1-3); but to Israel he made himself known by speech and language, condescending to the weakness of the church's infant state. Here was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, to prepare the way of the Lord.

Secondly, They heard it out of the midst of the fire, which showed that it was God himself that spoke to them, for who else could dwell with devouring fire? God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, which was terrible; but to Israel out of the fire, which was more terrible. We have reason to be thankful that he does not thus speak to us, but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, Job 33:6,7.

Thirdly, They heard it and yet lived, De 4:33. It was a wonder of mercy that the fire did not devour them, or that they did not die for fear, when Moses himself trembled. Fourthly, Never any people heard the like. He bids them enquire of former days and distant places, and they would find this favour of God to Israel without precedent or parallel, De 4:32. This singular honour done them called for singular obedience from them. It might justly be expected that they should do more for God than other people, since God had done so much more for them.

(6.) He urges God's gracious appearances for them, in bringing them out of Egypt, from the iron furnace, where they laboured in the fire, forming them into a people, and then taking them to be his own people, a people of inheritance (De 4:20); this he mentions again, De 4:34,37,28. Never did God do such a thing for any people; the rise of this nation was quite different from that of all other nations.

[1.] They were thus dignified and distinguished, not for any thing in them that was deserving or inviting, but because God

had a kindness for their fathers: he chose them. See the reasons of free grace; we are not beloved for our own sakes, but for his sake who is the great trustee of the covenant.

[2.] They were delivered out of Egypt by miracles and signs, in mercy to them and in judgment upon the Egyptians, against whom God stretched out his arm, which was signified by Moses's stretching out his hand in summoning the plagues.

[3.] They were designed for a happy settlement in Canaan, De 4:38. Nations must be driven out from before them, to make room for them, to show how much dearer they were to God than any other people were. Egyptians and Canaanites must both be sacrificed to Israel's honour and interest. Those that stand in Israel's light, in Israel's way, shall find it is at their peril.

(7.) He urges God's righteous appearance against them sometimes for their sins. He specifies particularly the matter of Peor, De 4:3,4. This had happened very lately: their eyes had seen but the other day the sudden destruction of those that joined themselves to Baal-peor and the preservation of those that clave to the Lord, from which they might easily infer the danger of apostasy from God and the benefit of adherence to him. He also takes notice again of God's displeasure against himself: The Lord was angry with me for your sakes, De 4:21,22. He mentions this to try their ingenuousness, whether they would really be troubled for the great prejudice which they had occasioned to their faithful friend and leader. Others' sufferings for our sakes should grieve us more than our own.

(8.) He urges the certain advantage of obedience. This argument he begins with (De 4:1): That you may live, and go in and possess the land; and this he concludes with (De 4:40): That it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee. He reminds them that they were upon their good behaviour that their prosperity would depend upon their piety. If they

kept God's precepts, he would undoubtedly fulfil his promises.

(9.) He urges the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God, that it would undoubtedly be the ruin of their nation. This he enlarges upon, De 4:25-31. Here,

[1.] He foresees their revolt from God to idols, that in process of time, when they had remained long in the land and were settled upon their lees, they would corrupt themselves, and make a graven image; this was the sin that would most easily beset them, De 4:25.

[2.] He foretels the judgments of God upon them for this: You shall utterly be destroyed (De 4:26), scattered among the nations, De 4:27. And their sin should be made their punishment (De 4:28): "There shall you serve gods, the work of men's hands, be compelled to serve them, whether you will or no, or, through your own sottishness and stupidity, you will find no better succours to apply yourselves in your captivity." Those that cast off the duties of religion in their prosperity cannot expect the comforts of it when they come to be in distress. Justly are they then sent to the gods whom they have served, Jdg 10:14.

[3.] Yet he encourages them to hope that God would reserve mercy for them in the latter days, that he would by his judgments upon them bring them to repentance, and take them again into covenant with himself, De 4:29-31. Here observe,

First, That whatever place we are in we may thence seek the Lord our God, though ever so remote from our own land or from his holy temple. There is no part of this earth that has a gulf fixed between it and heaven.

Secondly, Those, and those only, shall find God to their comfort, who seek him with all their heart, that is, who are

entirely devoted to him, earnestly desirous of his favour and solicitous to obtain it.

Thirdly, Afflictions are sent to engage and quicken us to see God, and, by the grace of God working with them, many are thus reduced to their right mind, "When these things shall come upon thee, it is to be hoped that thou wilt turn to the Lord they God, for thou seest what comes of turning from him;" see Da 9:11,12.

Fourthly, God's faithfulness to his covenant encourages us to hope that he will not reject us, though we be driven to him by affliction. If we at length remember the covenant, we shall find that he has not forgotten it.

Now let all these arguments be laid together, and then say whether religion has not reason on its side. None cast off the government of their God but those that have first abandoned the understanding of a man.

4 But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God *are* alive every one of you this day.

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6 Keep therefore and do *them;* for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.

7 For what nation is *there so* great, who *hath* God *so* nigh unto them, as the Lord our God *is* in all *things that* we call upon him *for?*

8 And what nation *is there so* great, that hath statutes and judgments *so* righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

Israel's Experience at Horeb

9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart

from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

10 *specially* the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that* they may teach their children.

11 And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

12 And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only *ye heard* a voice.

13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

14 And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

Warning against Idolatry

15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day *that* the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire;

16 lest ye corrupt *yourselves,* and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17 the likeness of any beast that *is* on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

18 the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that *is* in the waters beneath the earth:

19 and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, *even* all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

20 But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, *even* out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as *ye are* this day.

21 Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and
sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in
unto that good land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee *for* an
inheritance:
22 but I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall
go over, and possess that good land.
23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord
your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image,
or the likeness of any *thing*, which the Lord thy God hath
forbidden thee.
24 For the Lord thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.
25 When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye
shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt *yourselves*,
and make a graven image, *or* the likeness of any *thing*, and shall do
evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger;
26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall
soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan
to possess it; ye shall not prolong *your* days upon it, but shall utterly
be destroyed.
27 And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be
left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall
lead you.
28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and
stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.
29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt
find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.
30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon
thee, *even* in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and
shalt be obedient unto his voice;
31 (for the Lord thy God *is* a merciful God ;) he will not forsake thee,
neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which
he sware unto them.
32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee,
since the day that God created man upon the earth, and *ask* from
the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been *any
such thing* as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?
33 Did *ever* people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of
the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

34 Or hath God assayed to go *and* take him a nation from the midst of
another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by
war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great
terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in
Egypt before your eyes?
35 Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord
He *is* God; there *is* none else beside him.
36 Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might
instruct thee: and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and
thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.
37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed
after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power
out of Egypt;
38 to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou
art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land *for* an inheritance, as *it*
is this day.
39 Know therefore this day, and consider *it* in thine heart, that the
Lord he *is* God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: *there*
is none else.
40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments,
which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and
with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong *thy* days
upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.

The Cities of Refuge East of the Jordan

41 Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the
sunrising;
42 that the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbor
unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto
one of these cities he might live:

Here is,

1 The nomination of the cities of refuge on that side Jordan where Israel now lay encamped. Three cities were appointed for that purpose, one in the lot of Reuben, another in that of Gad, and another in that of the half tribe of Manasseh, De 4:41-43. What Moses could do for that people while he was

yet with them he did, to give example to the rulers who were settled that they might observe them the better when he was gone.

2 The introduction to another sermon that Moses preached to Israel, which we have in the following chapters. Probably it was preached the next sabbath day after, when the congregation attended to receive instruction. He had in general exhorted them to obedience in the former chapter; here he comes to repeat the law which they were to observe, for he demands a universal but not an implicit obedience. How can we do our duty if we do not know it? Here therefore he sets the law before them as the rule they were to work by, the way they were to walk in, sets it before them as the glass in which they were to see their natural face, that, looking into this perfect law of liberty, they might continue therein. These are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments, the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws, which had been enacted before, when Israel had newly come out of Egypt, and were now repeated, on this side Jordan, De 4:44-46. The place where Moses gave them these laws in charge is here particularly described.

(1.) It was over-against Beth-peor, an idol-temple of the Moabites, which perhaps Moses sometimes looked towards, with a particular caution to them against the infection of that and other such like dangerous places.

(2.) It was upon their new conquests, in the very land which they had got out of the hands of Sihon and Og, and were now actually in possession of, De 4:47. Their present triumphs herein were a powerful argument for obedience.

43 *namely,* Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

Moses Recounts Israel's Law

44 And this *is* the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:
45 these *are* the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt,
46 on this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt:
47 and they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which *were* on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;
48 from Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which *is* Hermon,
49 and all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.

Deuteronomy-5

The Ten Commandments

1 And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them.
2 The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.
3 The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even* us, who are all of us here alive this day.
4 The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,

1. Moses summons the assembly. He called all Israel; not only the elders, but, it is likely, as many of the people as could come within hearing, De 5:1 The greatest of them were not above God's command, nor the meanest of them below his cognizance; but they were all bound to do.

2. He demands attention: "Hear, O Israel; hear and heed, hear and remember, hear, that you may learn, and keep, and do; else your hearing is to no purpose." When we hear the word of God we must set ourselves to learn it, that we may have it ready to us upon all occasions, and what we have learned we must put in practice, for that is the end of hearing and learning; not to fill our heads with notions, or our mouths with talk, but to rectify and direct our affections and conversations.

3. He refers them to the covenant made with them in Horeb, as that which they must govern themselves by. See the wonderful condescension of divine grace in turning the command into a covenant, that we might be the more strongly bound to obedience by our own consent and the more encouraged in it by the divine promise, both which are supposed in the covenant. The promises and threatenings annexed to some of the precepts, as to the second, third, and fifth, make them amount to a covenant. Observe,

(1.) The parties to this covenant. God made it, not with our fathers, not with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to them God gave the covenant of circumcision (Ac 7:8), but not that of the ten commandments. The light of divine revelation shone gradually, and the children were made to know more of God's mind than their fathers had done. "The covenant was made with us, or our immediate parents that represented us, before Mount Sinai, and transacted for us."

(2.) The publication of this covenant. God himself did, as it were, read the articles to them (De 5:4): He talked with you face to face; word to word, so the Chaldee. Not in dark visions, as of old he spoke to the fathers (Job 4:12,13), but openly and clearly, and so that all the thousands of Israel might hear and understand. He spoke to them, and then received the answer they returned to him: thus was it transacted face to face.

(3.) The mediator of the covenant: Moses stood between God and them, at the foot of the mount (De 5:5), and carried messages between them both for the settling of the preliminaries (Ex 19:1-25) and for the changing of the ratifications, Ex 24:1-8 Herein Moses was a type of Christ, who stands between God and man, to show us the word of the Lord, a blessed days-man, that has laid his hand upon us both, so that we may both hear from God and speak to him without trembling.

5 (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount,) saying,

6 I *am* the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

7 Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

8 Thou shalt not make thee *any* graven image, *or* any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the waters beneath the earth:

9 thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me,

10 and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

11 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold *him* guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

12 Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

13 Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work:

14 but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the Lord thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

Here is the repetition of the ten commandments, in which observe,

1. Though they had been spoken before, and written, yet they are again rehearsed; for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough to keep the word of God in our minds and to preserve and renew the impressions of it. We have need to have the same things often inculcated upon us. See Php 3:1.

2. There is some variation here from that record (Ex 20:1-26), as there is between the Lord's prayer as it is in Mt 6:9-13 and as it is Lu 11:2-4 In both it is more necessary that we tie ourselves to the things than to the words unalterably.

3. The most considerable variation is in the fourth commandment. In Ex 20:8-11 the reason annexed is taken from the creation of the world; here it is taken from their deliverance out of Egypt, because that was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, in remembrance of which the Christian sabbath was to be observed: Remember that thou wast a servant, and God brought thee out, De 5:15. And Therefore,

(1.) "It is fit that thy servants should be favoured by the sabbath-rest; for thou knowest the heart of a servant, and how welcome one day's ease will be after six days' labour."

(2.) "It is fit that thy God should be honoured by the sabbath-work, and the religious services of the day, in consideration of the great things he has done for thee." In the resurrection of Christ we were brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore, by the gospel-edition of the law, we are directed to observe the first day of the week, in remembrance of that glorious work of power and grace.

4. It is added in the fifth commandment, That it may go well with thee, which addition the apostle quotes, and puts first (Eph 6:3), that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long. If there be instances of some that have been very

dutiful to their parents, and yet have not lived long upon earth, we may reconcile it to the promise by this explication of it, Whether they live long or no, it shall go well with them, either in this world or in a better. See Ec 8:12.

5. The last five commandments are connected or coupled together, which they are not in Exodus: Neither shalt thou commit adultery, neither shalt thou steal, &c., which intimate that God's commands are all of a piece: the same authority that obliges us to one obliges us to another; and we must not be partial in the law, but have respect to all God's commandments, for he that offends in one point is guilty of all, Jam 2:10,11. 6. That these commandments were given with a great deal of awful solemnity, De 5:22.

(1.) They were spoken with a great voice out of the fire, and thick darkness. That was a dispensation of terror, designed to make the gospel of grace the more welcome, and to be a specimen of the terrors of the judgment-day, Ps 50:3,4.

(2.) He added no more. What other laws he gave them were sent by Moses, but no more were spoken in the same manner that the ten commandments were. He added no more, therefore we must not add: the law of the Lord is perfect.

(3.) He wrote them in two tables of stone, that they might be preserved from corruption, and might be transmitted pure and entire to posterity, for whose use they were intended, as well as for the present generation. These being the heads of the covenant, the chest in which the written tables were deposited was called the ark of the covenant. See Re 11:19.

15 And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and *that* the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

16 Honor thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

17 Thou shalt not kill.
18 Neither shalt thou commit adultery.
19 Neither shalt thou steal.
20 Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor.
21 Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any *thing* that *is* thy neighbor's.

The People's Fear

22 These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.
23 And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, *even* all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;
24 and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.
25 Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die.
26 For who *is there of* all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we *have,* and lived?
27 Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear *it,* and do *it*.

Here,

I. Moses reminds them of the agreement of both the parties that were now treating, in the mediation of Moses.

1. Here is the consternation that the people were put into by that extreme terror with which the law was given. They owned that they could not bear it any more: "This great fire will consume us; this dreadful voice will be fatal to us; we

shall certainly die if we hear it any more," De 5:25. They wondered that they were not already struck dead with it, and took it for an extraordinary instance of the divine power and goodness, not only that they were thus spoken to, but that they were enabled to bear it. For who ever heard the voice of the living God, as we have, and lived? God's appearances have always been terrible to man, ever since the fall: but Christ, having taken away sin, invites us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

2. Their earnest request that God would henceforth speak to them by Moses, with a promise that they would hear what he said as from God himself, and do it, De 5:27. It seems by this,

(1.) That they expected to receive further commands from God and were willing to hear more from him.

(2.) That they thought Moses able to bear those discoveries of the divine glory which they by reason of guilt were sensible of their inability to stand up under. They believed him to be a favourite of Heaven, and also one that would be faithful to them; yet at other times they murmured at him, and but a little before this were ready to stone him, Ex 17:4. See how men's convictions correct their passions.

(3.) That now they were in a good mind, under the strong convictions of the word they heard. Many have their consciences startled by the law that have they not purified; fair promises are extorted from them, but no good principles fixed and rooted in them.

3. God's approbation of their request.

(1.) He commends what they said, De 5:28. They spoke it to Moses, but God took notice of it; for there is not a word in our tongue but he knows it. He acknowledges, They have well said. Their owning the necessity of a mediator to deal between them and God was well said. Their desire to receive

further directions from God by Moses, and their promise to observe what directions should be given them, were well said. And what is well said shall have its praise with God, and should have with us. What is good, as far as it goes, let it be commended.

(2.) He wishes they were but sincere in it: O that there were such a heart in them! De 5:29.

[1.] Such a heart as they should have, a heart to fear God, and keep his commandments for ever. Note, The God of heaven is truly and earnestly desirous of the welfare and salvation of poor sinners. He has given abundant proof that he is so: he gives us time and space to repent, by his mercies invites us to repentance, and waits to be gracious; he has sent his Son to redeem us, published a general offer of pardon and life, promised his Spirit to those that pray for him, and has said and sworn that he has no pleasure in the ruin of sinners.

[2.] Such a heart as they now had, or one would think they had. Note, It would be well with many if there were always such a heart in them as there seems to be sometimes, when they are under conviction of sin, or the rebukes of Providence, or when they come to look death in the face: How gracious will they be when these pangs come upon them! O that there were always such a heart in them!

(3.) He appoints Moses to be his messenger to them, to receive the law from his mouth and to communicate it to them, De 5:31. Here the matter was settled by consent of both parties that God should hence-forward speak to us by men like ourselves, by Moses and the prophets, by the apostles and the evangelists, and, if we believe not these, neither should we be persuaded though God should speak to us as he did to Israel at Mount Sinai, or send expresses from heaven or hell.

II. Hence he infers a charge to them to observe and do all that God had commanded them, De 5:32,33. Seeing God had

shown himself so tender of them, and so willing to consider their frame and gratify them in what they desired, and withal so ready to make the best of them,--seeing they themselves had desired to have Moses for their teacher, who was now teaching them,--and seeing they had promised so solemnly, and under the influence of so many good causes and considerations, that they would hear and do, he charges them to walk in all the ways that God had commanded them, assuring them that it would be highly for their advantage to do so. The only way to be happy is to be holy. Say to the righteous, It shall be well with them.

28 And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

29 Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

30 Go say to them, Get you into your tents again.

31 But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it.

32 Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* ye may prolong *your* days in the land which ye shall possess.

Deuteronomy-6

The Great Commandment

1 Now these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the
judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you,
that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it:
2 that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes
and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy
son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may
be prolonged.

Observe here,

1. That Moses taught the people all that, and that only, which God commanded him to teach them, De 6:1. Thus Christ's ministers are to teach his churches all that he has commanded, and neither more nor less, Mt 28:20.

2. That the end of their being taught was that they might do as they were taught (De 6:1), might keep God's statutes (De 6:2), and observe to do them, De 6:3. Good instructions from parents and ministers will but aggravate our condemnation if we do not live up to them.

3. That Moses carefully endeavoured to fix them for God and godliness, now that they were entering upon the land of Canaan, that they might be prepared for the comforts of that land, and fortified against the snares of it, and now that they were setting out in the world might set out well.

4. That the fear of God in the heart will be the most powerful principle of obedience: That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes, De 6:2.

5. The entail of religion in a family, or country, is the best entail: it is highly desirable that not we only, but our children, and our children's children, may fear the Lord.

6. Religion and righteousness advance and secure the prosperity of any people. Fear God, and it shall be well with thee. Those that are well taught, if they do what they are taught, shall be well fed too, as Israel in the land flowing with milk and honey, De 6:3.

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it;* that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God *is* one Lord:

A brief summary of religion, containing the first principles of faith and obedience, De 6:4,5. These two verses the Jews reckon one of the choicest portions of scripture: they write it in their phylacteries, and think themselves not only obliged to say it at least twice every day, but very happy in being so obliged, having this saying among them, Blessed are we, who every morning and evening say, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. But more blessed are we if we duly consider and improve,

1. What we are here taught to believe concerning God: that Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.

(1.) That the God whom we serve is Jehovah, a Being infinitely and eternally perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient.

(2.) That he is the one only living and true God; he only is God, and he is but one. The firm belief of this self-evident truth would effectually arm them against all idolatry, which was introduced by that fundamental error, that there are gods many. It is past dispute that there is one God, and there is no other but he, Mk 12:32. Let us therefore have no other, nor desire to have any other. Some have thought there is here a

plain intimation of the trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead; for here is the name of God three times, and yet all declared to be one. Happy they that have this one Lord for their God; for they have but one master to please, but one benefactor to seek to. It is better to have one fountain that a thousand cisterns, one all-sufficient God than a thousand insufficient ones.

2. What we are here taught concerning the duty which God requires of man. It is all summed up in this as its principle, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. He had undertaken (De 6:2) to teach them to fear God; and, in pursuance of his undertaking, he here teaches them to love him, for the warmer our affection to him the greater will be our veneration for him; the child that honours his parents no doubt loves them. Did ever any prince make a law that his subjects should love him? Yet such is the condescension of the divine grace that this is made the first and great commandment of God's law, that we love him, and that we perform all other parts of our duty to him from a principle of love. My son, give me thy heart. We must highly esteem him, be well pleased that there is such a Being, well pleased in all his attributes, and relations to us: our desire must be towards him, our delight in him, our dependence upon him, and to him we must be entirely devoted. It must be a constant pleasure to us to think of him, hear from him, speak to him, and serve him. We must love him,

(1.) As the Lord, the best of beings, most excellent and amiable in himself.

(2.) As our God, a God in covenant with us, our Father, and the most kind and bountiful of friends and benefactors. We are also commanded to love God with all our heart, and soul, and might; that is, we must love him,

[1.] With a sincere love; not in word and tongue only, saying we love him when our hearts are not with him, but inwardly, and in truth, solacing ourselves in him.

[2.] With a strong love; the heart must be carried out towards him with great ardour and fervency of affection. Some have hence though that we should avoid saying (as we commonly express ourselves) that we will do this or that with all our heart, for we must not do any thing with all our heart but love God; and that this phrase, being here used concerning that sacred fire, should not be unhallowed. He that is our all must have our all, and none but he.

[3.] With a superlative love; we must love God above any creature whatsoever, and love nothing besides him but what we love for him and in subordination to him.

[4.] With an intelligent love; for so it is explained, Mk 12:33. To love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, we must know him, and therefore love him as those that see good cause to love him. [5.] With an entire love; he is one, and therefore our hearts must be united in this love, and the whole stream of our affections must run towards him. O that this love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts!

5 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and
with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine
heart:

Means are here prescribed for the maintaining and keeping up of religion in our hearts and houses, that it might not wither and go to decay. And they are these:--

1. Meditation: These words which I command thee shall be in thy heart, De 6:6. Though the words alone without the things will do us no good, yet we are in danger of losing the things if we neglect the words, by which ordinarily divine light and power are conveyed to the heart. God's words must be laid up on our heart, that our thoughts may be daily

conversant with them and employed about them, and thereby the whole soul may be brought to abide and act under the influence and impression of them. This immediately follows upon the law of loving God with all your heart; for those that do so will lay up his word in their hearts both as an evidence and effect of that love and as a means to preserve and increase it. He that loves God loves his Bible.

2 The religious education of children (De 6:7): "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children; and by communicating thy knowledge thou wilt increase it." Those that love the Lord God themselves should do what they can to engage the affections of their children to him, and so to preserve the entail of religion in their families from being cut off. Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children, so some read it; frequently repeat these things to them, try all ways of instilling them into their minds, and making them pierce into their hearts; as, in whetting a knife, it is turned first on this side, then on that. "Be careful and exact in teaching thy children; and aim, as by whetting, to sharpen them, and put an edge upon them. Teach them to thy children, not only those of thy own body" (say the Jews) "but all those that are anyway under thy care and tuition." Bishop Patrick well observes here that Moses thought his law so very plain and easy that every father might be able to instruct his sons in it and every mother her daughters. Thus that good thing which is committed to us we must carefully transmit to those that come after us, that it may be perpetuated.

3. Pious discourse. "Thou shalt talk of these things, with due reverence and seriousness, for the benefit not only of thy children, but of thy other domestics, thy friends and companions, as thou sittest in thy house at work, or at meat, or at rest, or to receive visits, and when thou walkest by the way for diversion, or for conversation, of in journeys, when at night thou art retiring from thy family to lie down for sleep, and when in the morning thou hast risen up and returnest to thy family again. Take all occasions to discourse with those

about thee of divine things; not of unrevealed mysteries, or matters of doubtful disputation, but of the plain truths and laws of God, and the things that belong to our peace." So far is it from being reckoned a diminution to the honour of sacred things to make them subject of our familiar discourse that they are recommended to us to be talked of; for the more conversant we are with them the more we shall admire them and be affected with them, and may thereby be instrumental to communicate divine light and heat.

4. Frequent reading of the word: They shall be as frontlets between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, De 6:8,9. It is probable that at that time there were few written copies of the whole law, only at the feasts of tabernacles the people had it read to them; and therefore God appointed them, at least for the present, to write some select sentences of the law, that were most weighty and comprehensive, upon their walls, or in scrolls of parchment to be worn about their wrists; and some think that hence the phylacteries so much used among the Jews took rise. Christ blames the Pharisees, not for wearing them, but for affecting to have them broader than other people's, Mt 23:5.

But when Bibles came to be common among them there was less occasion for this expedient. It was prudently and piously provided by the first reformers of the English church that then, when Bibles were scarce, some select portions of scripture should be written on the walls and pillars of the churches, which the people might make familiar to them, in conformity to this direction, which seems to have been binding in the letter of it to the Jews as it is to us in the intent of it, which is that we should endeavour by all means possible to make the word of God familiar to us, that we may have it ready to us upon all occasions, for our restraint from sin and our direction and excitement to our duty. It must be as that which is graven on the palms of our hands, always before our eyes. See Pr 7:1-3. It is also intimated that we must never be ashamed to own our religion, nor to own ourselves under the

check and government of it. Let it be written on our gates, and let every one that goes by our door read it, that we believe Jehovah to be God alone, and believe ourselves bound to love him with all our hearts.

7 and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt
talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou
walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou
risest up.
8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they
shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.
9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy
gates.

Warnings against Disobedience

10 And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee
into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac,
and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou
buildedst not,

A caution is here given not to forget God in a day of prosperity and plenty, De 6:10-12. Here,

1. He raises their expectations of the goodness of their God, taking it for granted that he would bring them into the good land that he had promised (De 6:10), that they should no longer dwell in tents as shepherds and poor travellers, but should settle in great and goodly cities, should no longer wander in a barren wilderness, but should enjoy houses will furnished and gardens well planted (De 6:11), and all this without any care and expense of their own, which he here lays a great stress upon--Cities which thou buildest not, houses which thou filledst not, &c., both because it made the mercy really much more valuable that what they had come to them so cheaply, and yet, if they did not actually consider it, the mercy would be the less esteemed, for we are most sensible of the value of that which has cost us dear. When they came

so easily by the gift they would be apt to grow secure, and unmindful of the giver.

2. He engages their watchfulness against the badness of their own hearts: Then beware, when thou liest safe and soft, lest thou forget the Lord, De 6:12. Note,

(1.) In a day of prosperity we are in great danger of forgetting God, our dependence upon him, our need of him, and our obligations to him. When the world smiles we are apt to make our court to it, and expect our happiness in it, and so we forget him that his our only portion and rest. Agur prays against this temptation (Pr 30:9): Lest I be full and deny thee.

(2.) There is therefore need of great care and caution at such a time, and a strict watch over our own hearts. "Then beware; being warned of your danger, stand upon your guard against it. Bind the words of God for a sign upon thy hand, for this end to prevent thy forgetting God. When thou art settled in Canaan forget not thy deliverance out of Egypt; but look to the rock out of which thou wast hewn. When thy latter end has greatly increased, remember the smallness of thy beginnings."

11 and houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;
12 *then* beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.
13 Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

Some special precepts and prohibitions are here given, which are of great consequence.

1. They must upon all occasions give honour to God De 6:13): Fear him and serve him (for, if he be a Master, we must both reverence him and do his work); and swear by his name, that is, they must not upon any occasion appeal to any other, as the discerner of truth and avenger of wrong. Swear by him

only, and not by an idol, or any other creature. Swear by his name in all treaties and covenants with the neighbouring nations, and do not compliment them so far as to swear by their gods. Swearing by his mane is sometimes put for an open profession of his name. Isa 45:23, Every tongue shall swear, is expounded (Ro 14:11), Every tongue shall confess to God.

2. They must not upon any occasion give that honour to other gods (De 6:14): You shall not go after other gods, that is, "You shall not serve nor worship them;" for therein they went astray, they went a whoring from the true God, who in this, more than in any thing, is jealous god (De 6:15): and the learned bishop Patrick observes here, out of Maimonides, that we never find, either in the law or the prophets, anger, or fury, or jealousy, or indignation, attributed to God but upon occasion of idolatry.

3. They must take heed of dishonouring God by tempting him (De 6:16): You shall not tempt the Lord your God, that is, "You shall not in any exigence distrust the power, presence, and providence of God, nor quarrel with him," which, if they indulged an evil heart of unbelief, they would take occasion to do in Canaan as well as in the wilderness. No change of condition will cure a disposition of murmur and fret. Our Saviour uses this caution as an answer to one of Satan's temptations, with application to himself, Mt 4:7, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, either by despairing of his power and goodness while we keep in the way of our duty, or by presuming upon it when we turn aside out of that way.

14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you;

15 (for the Lord thy God *is* a jealous God among you ;) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

16 Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted *him* in Massah.

17 Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God,
and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded
thee.
18 And thou shalt do *that which is* right and good in the sight of the
Lord ; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in
and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers,
19 to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Lord hath
spoken.
20 *And* when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, what *mean*
the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the
Lord our God hath commanded you?

He charges them to instruct their children in the commands of God, not only that they might in their tender years intelligently and affectionately join in religious services, but that afterwards they might in their day keep up religion, and convey it to those that should come after them. Now,

1. Here is a proper question which it is supposed the children would ask (De 6:20): "What mean the testimonies and the statutes? What is the meaning of the feasts we observe, the sacrifices we offer, and the many peculiar customs we keep up?" Observe,

(1.) All divine institutions have a certain meaning, and there is something great designed in them.

(2.) It concerns us to know and understand the meaning of them, that we may perform a reasonable service and may not offer the blind for sacrifice.

(3.) It is good for children betimes to enquire into the true intent and meaning of the religious observances they are trained up in. If any are thus inquisitive in divine things it is a good sign that they are concerned about them, and a good means of their attaining to a great acquaintance with them. Then shall we know if thus we follow on to know.

2. Here is a full answer put into the parents' mouths to be given to this good question. Parents and teachers must give instruction to those under their charge, though they do not ask it, nay, though they have an aversion to it; much more must they be ready to answer questions, and to give instruction when it is desired; for it may be hoped that those who ask it will be willing to receive it. Did the children ask the meaning of God's laws? Let them be told that they were to be observed,

(1.) In a grateful remembrance of God's former favours to them, especially their deliverance out of Egypt, De 6:21-23. The children must be often told of the deplorable state their ancestors were in when they were bondmen in Egypt, the great salvation God wrought for them in fetching them out thence, and that God, in giving them these peculiar statutes, meant to perpetuate the memorial of that work of wonder, by which they were formed into a peculiar people.

(2.) As the prescribed condition of his further favours (De 6:24): The Lord commanded us all these statutes for our good. Note, God commands us nothing but what is really for our good. It is our interest as well as our duty to be religious.

[1.] It will be our life: That he might preserve us alive, which is a great favour, and more than we could expect, considering how often we have forfeited life itself. Godliness has the promise of the continuance and comfort of the life that now is as far as it is for God's glory.

[2.] It will be our righteousness. Could we perfectly fulfil but that one command of loving God with all our heart, soul, and might, and could we say, "We have never done otherwise," this would be so our righteousness as to entitle us to the benefits of the covenant of innocency; had we continued in every thing that is written in the book of the law to do it, the law would have justified us. But this we cannot pretend to, therefore our sincere obedience shall be accepted through a Mediator to denominate us, as Noah was, righteous before

God, Ge 7:1,Lu 1:6,1Jo 3:7. The Chaldee reads it, There shall be a reward to us if we observe to do these commandments; for, without doubt, in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

21 then thou shalt say unto thy son, we were Pharaoh's bondmen in
Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:
22 and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon
Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:
23 and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to
give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.
24 And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the
Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us
alive, as *it is* at this day.
25 And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these
commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded
us.

Deuteronomy-7

Israel Warned of the Idolatry of Canaan

1 When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou
goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the
Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites,
and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations
greater and mightier than thou;
2 and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou
shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no
covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them:
3 neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou
shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto
thy son.
4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may
serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against
you, and destroy thee suddenly.

5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

A Holy People to the Lord

6 For thou *art* a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth.

Here is,

I. A very strict caution against all friendship and fellowship with idols and idolaters. Those that are taken into communion with God must have no communication with the unfruitful works of darkness. These things they are charged about for the preventing of this snare now before them.

1. They must show them no mercy, De 7:1,2. Bloody work is here appointed them, and yet it is God's work, and good work, and in its time and place needful, acceptable, and honourable.

(1.) God here engages to do his part. It is spoken of as a thing taken for granted that God would bring them into the land of promise, that he would cast out the nations before them, who were the present occupants of that land; no room was left to doubt of that. His power is irresistible, and therefore he can do it; his promise is inviolable, and therefore he will do it. Now,

[1.] These devoted nations are here named and numbered (De 7:1), seven in all, and seven to one are great odds. They are specified, that Israel might know the bounds and limits of their commission: hitherto their severity must come, but no further; nor must they, under colour of this commission, kill all that came in their way; no, here must its waves be stayed. The confining of this commission to the nations here mentioned plainly intimates that after-ages were not to draw this into a precedent; this will not serve to justify those

barbarous laws which give no quarter. How agreeable soever this method might be, when God himself prescribed it, to that dispensation under which such multitudes of beasts were killed and burned in sacrifice, now that all sacrifices of atonement are perfected in, and superseded by, the great propitiation made by the blood of Christ, human blood has become perhaps more precious than it was, and those that have most power yet must not be prodigal of it.

[2.] They are here owned to be greater and mightier than Israel. They had been long rooted in this land, to which Israel came strangers; they were more numerous, had men much more bulky and more expert in war than Israel had; yet all this shall not prevent their being cast out before Israel. The strength of Israel's enemies magnifies the power of Israel's God, who will certainly be too hard for them.

(2.) He engages them to do their part. Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, De 7:2. If God cast them out, Israel must not take them in, no, not as tenants, nor tributaries, nor servants. Not covenant of any kind must be made with them, no mercy must be shown them. This severity was appointed,

[1.] By way of punishment for the wickedness they and their fathers had been guilty of. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and the longer it had been in the filling the sorer was the vengeance when it came at last.

[2.] In order to prevent the mischiefs they would do to God's Israel if they were left alive. The people of these abominations must not be mingled with the holy seed, lest they corrupt them. Better that all these lives should be lost from the earth than that religion and the true worship of God should be lost in Israel. Thus we must deal with our lusts that was against our souls; God has delivered them into our hands by that promise, Sin shall not have dominion over you, unless it be your own faults; let not us them make covenants with

them, nor show them any mercy, but mortify and crucify them, and utterly destroy them.

2. They must make no marriages with those of them that escaped the sword, De 7:3,4. The families of the Canaanites were ancient, and it is probable that some of them were called honourable, which might be a temptation to the Israelites, especially those of them that were of least note in their tribes, to court an alliance with them, to ennoble their blood; and the rather because their acquaintance with the country might be serviceable to them in the improvement of it: but religion, and the fear of God, must overrule all these considerations. To intermarry with them was therefore unlawful, because it was dangerous; this very thing had proved of fatal consequence to the old world (Ge 6:2), and thousands in the world that now is have been undone by irreligious ungodly marriages; for there is more ground of fear in mixed marriages that the good will be perverted than of hope that the bad will be converted. The event proved the reasonableness of this warning: They will turn away thy son from following me. Solomon paid dearly for his folly herein. We find a national repentance for this sin of marrying strange wives, and care taken to reform (Ezr 9:1-10:44,Ne 13:1-31), and a New-Testament caution not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, 2Co 6:14. Those that in choosing yokefellows keep not at least within the bounds of a justifiable profession of religion cannot promise themselves helps meet for them. One of the Chaldee paraphrases adds here, as a reason of this command (De 7:3), For he that marries with idolaters does in effect marry with their idols.

3. They must destroy all the relics of their idolatry, De 7:5. Their altars and pillars, their groves and graven images, all must be destroyed, both in a holy indignation against idolatry and to prevent infection. This command was given before, Ex 23:24,34:13. A great deal of good work of this kind was done by the people, in their pious zeal (2Ch 31:1), and by good

Josiah (2Ch 34:3,7), and with this may be compared the burning of the conjuring books, Ac 19:19.

II. Here are very good reasons to enforce this caution.

1 The choice which God had made of this people for his own, De 7:6. There was such a covenant and communion established between God and Israel as was not between him and any other people in the world. Shall they by their idolatries dishonour him who had thus honoured them? Shall they slight him who had thus testified his kindness for them? Shall they put themselves upon the level with other people, when God had thus dignified and advanced them above all people? Had God taken them to be a special people to him, and no other but them, and will not they take God to be a special God to them, and no other but him?

2 The freeness of that grace which made this choice.

(1.) There was nothing in them to recommend or entitle them to this favour. In multitude of the people is the king's honour, Pr 14:28. But their number was inconsiderable; they were only seventy souls when they went down into Egypt, and, though greatly increased there, yet there were many other nations more numerous: You were the fewest of all people, De 7:7. The author of the Jerusalem Targum passes too great a compliment upon his nation in his reading this, You were humble in spirit, and meek above all people; quite contrary: they were rather stiff-necked and ill-natured above all people.

(2.) God fetched the reason of it purely from himself, De 7:8.

[1.] He loved you because he would love you. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes. All that God loves he loves freely, Hos 14:4. Those that perish perish by their own merits, but all that are saved are saved by prerogative.

[2.] He has done his work because he would keep his word. "He has brought you out of Egypt in pursuance of the oath sworn to your fathers." Nothing in them, or done by them, did or could make God a debtor to them; but he had made himself a debtor to his own promise, which he would perform notwithstanding their unworthiness.

3. The tenour of the covenant into which they were taken; it was in short this, That as they were to God so God would be to them. They should certainly find him,

(1.) Kind to his friends, De 7:9. "The Lord thy God is not like the gods of the nations, the creatures of fancy, subjects fit enough for loose poetry, but no proper objects of serious devotion; no, he is God, God indeed, God alone, the faithful God, able and ready not only to fulfil his own promises, but to answer all the just expectations of his worshippers, and he will certainly keep covenant and mercy," that is, "show mercy according to covenant, to those that love him and keep his commandments" (and in vain do we pretend to love him if we do not make conscience of his commandments); "and this" (as is here added for the explication of the promise in the second commandment) "not only to thousands of persons, but to thousands of generations--so inexhaustible is the fountain, so constant are the streams!"

(2.) Just to his enemies: He repays those that hate him, De 7:10. Note,

[1.] Wilful sinners are haters of God; for the carnal mind is enmity against him. Idolaters are so in a special manner, for they are in league with his rivals.

[2.] Those that hate God cannot hurt him, but certainly ruin themselves. He will repay them to their face, in defiance of them and all their impotent malice. His arrows are said to be made ready against the face of them, Ps 21:12. Or, He will bring those judgments upon them which shall appear to

themselves to be the just punishment of their idolatry. Compare Job 21:9, He rewardeth him, and he shall know it. Though vengeance seem to be slow, yet it is not slack. The wicked and sinner shall be recompensed in the earth, Pr 11:31. I cannot pass the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon this place, because it speaks the faith of the Jewish church concerning a future state: He recompenses to those that hate him the reward of their good works in this world, that he may destroy them in the world to come.

7 The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because
ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of
all people:
8 but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the
oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord
brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the
house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
9 Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he *is* God, the faithful
God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him
and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;
10 and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he
will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his
face.
11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes,
and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

The Blessings of Obedience

12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments,
and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee
the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers:
13 and he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also
bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and
thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of
thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
14 Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or
female barren among you, or among your cattle.

15 And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put
none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee;
but will lay them upon all *them* that hate thee.
16 And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God
shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither
shalt thou serve their gods; for that *will be* a snare unto thee.
17 If thou shalt say in thine heart, these nations *are* more than I;
how can I dispossess them?
18 Thou shalt not be afraid of them: *but* shalt well remember what the
Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;
19 the great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the
wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby
the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do
unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.

Here,

I The caution against idolatry is repeated, and against communion with idolaters: "Thou shalt consume the people, and not serve their gods." De 7:16. We are in danger of having fellowship with the works of darkness if we take pleasure in fellowship with those that do those works. Here is also a repetition of the charge to destroy the images, De 7:25,26. The idols which the heathen had worshipped were an abomination to God, and therefore must be so to them: all that truly love God hat what he hates. Observe how this is urged upon them: Thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; such a holy indignation as this must we conceive against sin, that abominable thing which the Lord hates. They must not retain the images to gratify their covetousness: Thou shalt not desire the silver nor gold that is on them, nor think it a pity to have that destroyed. Achan paid dearly for converting that to his own use which was an anathema. Nor must they retain them to gratify their curiosity: "Neither shalt thou bring it into thy house, to be hung up as an ornament, or preserved as a monument of antiquity. No, to the fire with it, that is the fittest place for it." Two reasons are given for this caution:--

1. Lest thou be snared therein (De 7:25), that is, "Lest thou be drawn, ere thou art aware, to like it and love it, to fancy it and pay respect to it"

2. Lest thou be a cursed thing like it, De 7:26. Those that make images are said to be like the, stupid and senseless; here they are said to be in a worse sense like them, accursed of God and devoted to destruction. Compare these two reasons together, and observe that whatever brings us into a snare brings us under a curse.

II The promise of God's favour to them, if they would be obedient, is enlarged upon with a most affecting copiousness and fluency of expression, which intimates how much it is both God's desire and our own interest that we be religious. All possible assurance is here given them,

1. That, if they would sincerely endeavour to do their part of the covenant, God would certainly perform his part. He shall keep the mercy which he swore to thy fathers, De 7:12. Let us be constant in our duty, and we cannot question the constancy of God's mercy.

2. That if they would love God and serve him, and devote themselves and theirs to him, he would love them, and bless them, and multiply them greatly, De 7:13,14. What could they desire more to make them happy?

(1.) "He will love thee." He began in love to us (1Jo 4:10), and, if we return his love in filial duty, then, and then only, we may expect the continuance of it, Joh 14:21.

(2.) "He will bless thee with the tokens of his love above all people." If they would distinguish themselves from their neighbours by singular services, God would dignify them above their neighbours by singular blessings.

(3.) "He will multiply thee." Increase was the ancient blessing for the peopling of the world, once and again (Ge 1:28,9:1), and here for the peopling of Canaan, that little world by itself. The increase both of their families and of their stock is promised: they should neither have estates without heirs nor heirs without estates, but should have the complete satisfaction of having many children and plentiful provisions and portions for them.

3. That, if they would keep themselves pure from the idolatries of Egypt, God would keep them clear form the diseases of Egypt, De 7:15. It seems to refer not only to those plagues of Egypt by the force of which they were delivered, but to some other epidemical country disease (as we call it), which they remembered the prevalency of among the Egyptians, and by which God had chastised them for their national sins. Diseases are God's servants; they go where he sends them, and do what he bids them. It is therefore good for the health of our bodies to mortify the sin of our souls.

4. That, if they would cut off the devoted nations, they should cut them off, and none should be able to stand before them. Their duty in this matter would itself be their advantage: Thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee--this is the precept (De 7:16); and the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them--this is the promise, De 7:23. Thus we are commanded not to let sin reign, not to indulge ourselves in it nor give countenance to it, but to hate it and strive against it; and then God has promised that sin shall not have dominion over us (Ro 6:12,14), but that we shall be more than conquerors over it. The difficulty and doubtfulness of the conquest of Canaan having been a stone of stumbling to their fathers, Moses here animates them against those things which were most likely to discourage them, bidding them not to be afraid of them, De 7:18, and again, De 7:21.

(1.) Let them not be disheartened by the number and strength of their enemies: Say not, They are more than I, how can I dispossess them? De 7:17. We are apt to think that the most numerous must needs be victorious: but, to fortify Israel against this temptation, Moses reminds them of the destruction of Pharaoh and all the power of Egypt, De 7:18,19. They had seen the great temptations, or miracles (so the Chaldee reads it), the signs and wonders, wherewith God had brought them out of Egypt, in order to his bringing them into Canaan, and thence might easily infer that God could dispossess the Canaanites (who, though formidable enough, had not such advantages against Israel as the Egyptians had; he that had done the greater could do the less), and that he would dispossess them, otherwise his bringing Israel out of Egypt had been no kindness to them. He that begun would finish. Thou shalt therefore well remember this, De 7:18. The word and works of God are well remembered when they are improved as helps to our faith and obedience. That is well laid up which is ready to us when we have occasion to use it.

(2.) Let them not be disheartened by the weakness and deficiency of their own forces; for God will send them in auxiliary troops of hornets, or wasps, as some read it (De 7:20), probably larger than ordinary, which would so terrify and molest their enemies (and perhaps be the death of many to them) that their most numerous armies would become an easy prey to Israel. God plagued the Egyptians with flies, but the Canaanites with hornets. Those who take not warning by less judgments on others may expect greater on themselves. But the great encouragement of Israel was that they had God among them, a mighty God and terrible, De 7:21. And if God be for us, if God be with us, we need not fear the power of any creature against us.

(3.) Let them not be disheartened by the slow progress of their arms, nor think that the Canaanites would never be subdued if they were not expelled the first year; no, they must be put out by little and little, and not all at once, De 7:22. Note, We

must not think that, because the deliverance of the church and the destruction of its enemies are not effected immediately, therefore they will never be effected. God will do his own work in his own method and time, and we may be sure that they are always the best.

Thus corruption is driven out of the hearts of believers by little and little. The work of sanctification is carried on gradually; but that judgment will at length be brought forth into a complete victory. The reason here given (as before, Ex 23:29,30) is, Lest the beast of the field increase upon thee. The earth God has given to the children of men; and therefore there shall rather be a remainder of Canaanites to keep possession till Israel become numerous enough to replenish it than that it should be a habitation of dragons, and a court for the wild beasts of the desert, Isa 34:13,14. Yet God could have prevented this mischief from the beasts, Le 26:6. But pride and security, and other sins that are the common effects of a settled prosperity, were enemies more dangerous than the beasts of the field, and these would be apt to increase upon them. See Jdg 3:1,4.

20 Moreover the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.

21 Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the Lord thy God *is* among you, a mighty God and terrible.

22 And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.

23 But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

24 And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.

25 The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it *is* an abomination to the Lord thy God.

26 Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: *but* thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing.

Deuteronomy-8

A Good Land to Be Possessed

1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers.

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every *word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

The charge here given them is the same as before, to keep and do all God's commandments. Their obedience must be,

1. Careful: Observe to do.

2. Universal: To do all the commandments, De 8:1. And,

3. From a good principle, with a regard to God as the Lord, and their God, and particularly with a holy fear of him (De 8:6), from a reverence of his majesty, a submission to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. To engage them to this obedience, besides the great advantages of it, which he sets before them (that they should live and multiply, and all should be well with them, De 8:1), he directs them,

To look back upon the wilderness through which God had now brought them: Thou shalt remember all the way which

the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, De 8:2. Now that they had come of age, and were entering upon their inheritance, they must be reminded of the discipline they had been under during their minority and the method God had taken to train them up for himself. The wilderness was the school in which they had been for forty years boarded and taught, under tutors and governors; and this was a time to bring it all to remembrance.

The occurrences of these last forty years were very memorable and well worthy to be remembered, very useful and profitable to be remembered, as yielding a complication of arguments for obedience; and they were recorded on purpose that they might be remembered. As the feast of the Passover was a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, so was the feast of tabernacles of their passage through the wilderness.

Note, It is very good for us to remember all the ways both of God's providence and grace, by which he has led us hitherto through this wilderness, that we may be prevailed with cheerfully to serve him and trust in him. Here let us set up our Ebenezer.

1. They must remember the straits they were sometimes brought into, (1.) For the mortifying of their pride; it was to humble them, that they might not be exalted above measure with the abundance of miracles that were wrought in their favor, and that they might not be secure, and confident of being in Canaan immediately.

(2.) For the manifesting of their perverseness: to prove them, that they and others might know (for God himself perfectly knew it before) all that was in their heart, and might see that God chose them not for any thing in them that might recommend them to his favour, for their whole carriage was untoward and provoking. Many commandments God gave them which there would have been no occasion for if they had

not been led through the wilderness, as those relating to the manna (Ex 16:28); and God thereby tried them, as our first parents were tried by the trees of the garden, whether they would keep God's commandments or not. Or God thereby proved them whether they would trust his promises, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations, and, in dependence on his promises, obey his precepts.

2. They must remember the supplies which were always granted them.

(1.) God himself took particular care of their food, raiment, and health; and what would they have more?

[1.] They had manna for food (De 8:3): God suffered them to hunger, and the fed them with manna, that the extremity of their want might make the supply the more acceptable, and God's goodness to them therein the more remarkable. God often brings his people low, that he may have the honour of helping them. And thus the manna of heavenly comforts is given to those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, Mt 5:6. To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. It is said of the manna that it was a sort of food which neither they nor their fathers knew. And again, De 8:16. If they knew there was such a thing that fell sometimes with the dew in those countries, as some think they did, yet it was never known to fall in such vast quantities, so constantly, and at all seasons of the year, so long, and only about a certain place. These things were altogether miraculous, and without precedent; the Lord created a new thing for their supply. And hereby he taught them the man liveth not by bread alone. Though God has appointed bread for the strengthening of man's heart, and that is ordinarily made the staff of life, yet God can, when he pleases, command support and nourishment without it, and make something else, very unlikely, to answer the intention as well. We might live upon air if it were sanctified for that use by the word of God; for the means God ordinarily uses he is not tied to, but can perform his kind purposes to his people

without them. Our Saviour quotes this scripture in answer to that temptation of Satan, Command that these stones be made bread. "What need of that?" says Christ; "my heavenly Father can keep me alive without bread," Mt 4:3,4. Let none of God's children distrust their Father, nor take any sinful indirect course for the supply of their own necessities; some way or other, God will provide for them in the way of duty and honest diligence, and verily they shall be fed. It may be applied spiritually; the word of God, as it is the revelation of God's will and grace duly received and entertained by faith, is the food of the soul, the life which is supported by that is the life of the man, and not only that life which is supported by bread. The manna typified Christ, the bread of life. He is the Word of God; by him we live. The Lord evermore give us that bread which endures to eternal life, and let us not be put off with the meat that perisheth!

[2.] The same clothes served them from Egypt to Canaan, at least the generality of them. Though they had no change of raiment, yet it was always new, and waxed not old upon them, De 8:4. This was a standing miracle, and the greater if, as the Jews say, they grew with them, so as to be always fit for them. But it is plain that they brought out of Egypt bundles of clothes on their shoulders (Ex 12:34), which they might barter with each other as there was occasion; and these, with what they wore, sufficed till they came into a country where they could furnish themselves with new clothes.

(2.) By the method God took of providing food and raiment for them

[1.] He humbled them. It was a mortification to them to be tied for forty years together to the same meat, without any varieties, and to the same clothes, in the same fashion. Thus he taught them that the good things he designed for them were figures of better things, and that the happiness of man consists not in being clothed in purple or fine linen, and in faring sumptuously every day, but in being taken into covenant and

communion with God, and in learning his righteous judgements. God's law, which was given to Israel in the wilderness, must be to them instead of food and raiment.

[2.] He proved them, whether they could trust him to provide for them when means and second causes failed. Thus he taught them to live in a dependence upon Providence, and not to perplex themselves with care what they should eat and drink, and wherewithal they should be clothed. Christ would have his disciples learn the same lesson (Mt 6:25), and took a like method to teach it to them, when he sent them out without purse or scrip, and yet took care that they lacked nothing, Lu 22:35.

[3.] God took care of their health and ease. Though they travelled on foot in a dry country, the way rough and untrodden, yet their feet swelled not. God preserved them from taking hurt by the inconveniences of their journey; and mercies of this kind we ought to acknowledge. Note, Those that follow God's conduct are not only safe but easy. Our feet swell not while we keep in the way of duty; it is the way of transgression that is hard, Pr 13:15. God had promised to keep the feet of his saints, 1Sa 2:9.

3. They must also remember the rebukes they had been under, De 8:6. During these years of their education they had been kept under a strict discipline, and not without need. As a man chasteneth his son, for his good, and because he loves him, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. God is a loving tender Father to all his children, yet when there is occasion they shall feel the smart of the rod. Israel did so: they were chastened that they might not be condemned, chastened with the rod of men. Not as a man wounds and slays his enemies whose destruction he aims at, but as a man chastens his son whose happiness and welfare he designs: so did their God chasten them; he chastened and taught them, Ps 94:12. This they must consider in their heart, that is, they must own it from their

own experience that God had corrected them with a fatherly love, for which they must return to him a filial reverence and compliance. Because God has chastened thee as a father, therefore (De 8:6) thou shalt keep his commandments. This use we should make of all our afflictions; by them let us be engaged and quickened to our duty. Thus they are directed to look back upon the wilderness.

4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.

5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.

6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

7 For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

8 a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

He directs them to look forward to Canaan, into which God was now bringing them. Look which way we will, both our reviews and our prospects will furnish us with arguments for obedience. Observe,

1 The land which they were now going to take possession of is here described to be a very good land, having every thing in it that was desirable, De 8:7-9.

(1.) It was well-watered, like Eden, the garden of the Lord. It was a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, which contributed to the fruitfulness of the soil. Perhaps there was a greater plenty of water there now than in Abraham's time, the Canaanites having found and digged wells; so that Israel reaped the fruit of their industry as well as of God's bounty.

(2.) The ground produced great plenty of all good things, not only for the necessary support, but for the convenience and comfort of human life. In their fathers' land they had bread enough; it was corn land, a land of wheat and barley, where,

with the common care and labour of the husbandman, they might eat bread without scarceness. It was a fruitful land, that was never turned into barrenness but for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein. They had not only water enough to quench their thirst, but vines, the fruit whereof was ordained to make glad the heart. And, if they were desirous of dainties, they needed not to send to far countries for them, when their own was so well stocked with fig-trees, and pomegranates, olives of the best kind, and honey, or date-trees, as some think it should be read.

(3.) Even the bowels of its earth were very rich, though it should seem that silver and gold they had none; of these the princes of Sheba should bring presents (Ps 72:10,15); yet they had plenty of those more serviceable metals, iron and brass. Iron-stone and mines of brass were found in their hills. See Job 28:2.

2. These things are mentioned,

(1.) To show the great difference between that wilderness through which God had led them and the good land into which he was bringing them. Note, Those that bear the inconveniences of an afflicted state with patience and submission, are humbled by them and prove well under them, are best prepared for better circumstances.

(2.) To show what obligations they lay under to keep God's commandments, both in gratitude for his favours to them and from a regard to their own interest, that the favours might be continued. The only way to keep possession of this good land would be to keep in the way of their duty.

(3.) To show what a figure it was of good things to come. Whatever others saw, it is probable that Moses in it saw a type of the better country: The gospel church is the New-Testament Canaan, watered with the Spirit in his gifts and graces, planted with the trees of righteousness, bearing the

fruits of righteousness. Heaven is the good land, in which there is nothing wanting, and where there is a fulness of joy.

9 a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt
not lack any *thing* in it; a land whose stones *are* iron, and out of
whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord
thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

Warning against Forgetting the Lord

11 Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping
his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I
command thee this day:

Moses, having mentioned the great plenty they would find in the land of Canaan, finds it necessary to caution them against the abuse of that plenty, which was a sin they would be the more prone to new that they came into the vineyard of the Lord, immediately out of a barren desert.

He directs them to the duty of a prosperous condition, De 8:10. They are allowed to eat even to fulness, not to surfeiting no excess; but let them always remember their benefactor, the founder of their feast, and never fail to give thanks after meat: Then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God.

1. They must take heed of eating or drinking so much as to indispose themselves for this duty of blessing God, rather aiming to serve God therein with so much the more cheerfulness and enlargement.

2. They must not have any fellowship with those that, when they had eaten and were full, blessed false gods, as the Israelites themselves had done in their worship of the golden calf, Ex 32:6.

3. Whatever they had the comfort of God must have the glory of. As our Saviour has taught us to bless before we eat (Mt

14:19,20), so we are here taught to bless after meat. That is our Hosannah--God bless; this is our Hallelujah--Blessed be God. In every thing we must give thanks. From this law the religious Jews took up a laudable usage of blessing God, not only at their solemn meals, but upon other occasions; if they drank a cup of wine they lifted up their hands and said, Blessed be he that created the fruit of the vine to make glad the heart. If they did but smell at a flower, they said, Blessed be he that made this flower sweet.

4. When they gave thanks for the fruits of the land they must give thanks for the fruits of the land itself, which was given them by promise From all our comfortable enjoyments we must take occasion to thank God for our comfortable settlements; and I know not but we of this nation have as much reason as they had to give thanks for a good land.

12 lest *when* thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt *therein;*

He arms them against the temptations of a prosperous condition, and charges them to stand upon their guard against them: "When thou art settled in goodly houses of thy own building," De 8:12 (for though God gave them houses which they builded not, De 6:10, these would not serve them, they must have larger and finer),--"and when thou hast grown rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold (De 8:13), as Abraham (Ge 13:2),--when all thou hast is multiplied,"

1. "Then take heed of pride. Beware lest then thy heart be lifted up," De 8:14. When the estate rises, the mind is apt to rise with it, in self-conceit, self-complacency, and self-confidence. Let us therefore strive to keep the spirit low in a high condition; humility is both the ease and the ornament of prosperity. Take heed of saying, so much as in thy heart, that proud word, My power, even the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth, De 8:17.

Note, We must never take the praise of our prosperity to ourselves, nor attribute it to our ingenuity or industry; for

bread is not always to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, Ec 9:11. It is spiritual idolatry thus to sacrifice to our own net, Hab 1:16.

2. "Then take heed of forgetting God." This follows upon the lifting up on the heart; for it is through the pride of the countenance that the wicked seek not after God, Ps 10:4. Those that admire themselves despise God.

(1.) "Forget not thy duty to God." De 8:11. We forget God if we keep not his commandments; we forget his authority over us, and our obligations to him and expectations from him, if we are not obedient to his laws. When men grow rich they are tempted to think religion a needless thing. They are happy without it, think it a thing below them and too hard upon them. Their dignity forbids them to stoop, and their liberty forbids them to serve. But we are basely ungrateful if the better God is to us the worse we are to him.

(2.) "Forget not God's former dealings with thee. Thy deliverance out of Egypt, De 8:14. The provision he made for thee in the wilderness, that great and terrible wilderness." They must never forget the impressions which the horror of that wilderness made upon them; see Jer 2:6, where it is called the very shadow of death. There God preserved them from being destroyed by the fiery serpents and scorpions, though sometimes he made use of them for their correction: there he kept them from perishing for want of water, following them with water out of a rock of flint (De 8:15), out of which (says bishop Patrick) one would rather have expected fire than water. There he fed them with manna, of which before (De 8:3), taking care to keep them alive, that he might do them good at their latter end, De 8:16. Note, God reserves the best till the last for his Israel. However he may seem to deal hardly with them by the way, he will not fail to do them good at their latter end.

(3.) "Forget not God's hand in thy present prosperity, De 8:18. Remember it is he that giveth thee wealth; for he giveth thee power to get wealth." See here how God's giving and our getting are reconciled, and apply it to spiritual wealth. It is our duty to get wisdom, and above all our gettings to get understanding; and yet it is God's grace that gives wisdom, and when we have got it we must not say, It was the might of our hand that got it, but must own it was God that gave us power to get it, and therefore to him we must give the praise and consecrate the use of it. The blessing of the Lord on the hand of the diligent makes rich both for this world and for the other. He giveth thee power to get wealth, not so much to gratify thee, and make thee easy, as that he may establish his covenant. All God's gifts are in pursuance of his promises.

13 and *when* thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14 then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

15 who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, *wherein were* fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where *there was* no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

16 who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

17 and thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of *mine* hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18 But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

He repeats the fair warning he had often given them of the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God, De 8:19,20. Observe,

1. How he describes the sin; it is forgetting God, and then worshipping other gods. What wickedness will not those fall into that keep thoughts of God out of their minds? And, when once the affections are displaced from God, they will soon be misplaced upon lying vanities.

2. How he denounces wrath and ruin against them for it: "If you do so, you shall surely perish, and the power and might of your hands, which you are so proud of, cannot help you. Nay, you shall perish as the nations that are driven out before you. God will make no more account of you, notwithstanding his covenant with you and your relation to him, than he does of them, if you will not be obedient and faithful to him." Those that follow others in sin will certainly follow them to destruction. If we do as sinners do, we must expect to fare as sinners fare.

20 As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy-9

The Lord Will Destroy the Nations of Canaan

1 Hear, O Israel: Thou *art* to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,

2 a people great and tall, the children of the Anakim, whom thou knowest, and *of whom* thou hast heard *say*, Who can stand before the children of Anak!

3 Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God *is* he which goeth over before thee; *as* a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee.

The call to attention (De 9:1), Hear, O Israel, intimates that this was a new discourse, delivered at some distance of time after the former, probably the next sabbath day.

I. Moses represents to the people the formidable strength of the enemies which they were now to encounter, De 9:1 The nations they were to dispossess were mightier than themselves, not a rude and undisciplined rout, like the natives of America, that were easily made a prey of. But, should they besiege them, they would find their cities well-fortified, according as the art of fortification then was; should they engage them in the field, they would find the people great and tall, of whom common fame had reported that there was no standing before them, De 9:2. This representation is much the same with that which the evil spies had made (Nu 13:28,33), but made with a very different intention: that was designed to drive them from God and to discourage their hope in him; this to drive them to God and to engage their hope in him, since no power less than that which is almighty could secure and prosper them.

II. He assures them of victory, by the presence of God with them, notwithstanding the strength of the enemy, De 9:3. "Understand therefore what thou must trust to for success, and which way thou must look; it is the Lord thy God that goes before thee, not only as thy captain, or commander-in-chief, to give direction, but as a consuming fire, to do execution among them. Observe, He shall destroy them, and then thou shalt drive them out. Thou canst not drive them out, unless he destroy them and bring them down. But he will not destroy them and bring them down, unless thou set thyself in good earnest to drive them out." We must do our endeavour in dependence upon God's grace, and we shall have that grace if we do our endeavour.

III. He cautions them not to entertain the least thought of their own righteousness, as if that had procured them this favour at God's hand: "Say not. For my righteousness (either with regard to my good character or in recompence for any good service) the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land (De 9:4); never think it is for thy righteousness or the uprightness

of thy heart, that it is in consideration either of thy good conversation or of they good disposition," De 9:5. And again (De 9:6) it is insisted on, because it is hard to bring people from a conceit of their own merit, and yet very necessary that it be done: "Understand (know it, and believe it, and consider it) that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this land for thy righteousness. Hadst thou been to come to it upon that condition, thou wouldst have been for ever shut out of it, for thou art a stiff-necked people." Note, Our gaining possession of the heavenly Canaan, as it must be attributed to God's power and not to our own might, so it must be ascribed to God's grace and not to our own merit: in Christ we have both righteousness and strength; in him therefore we must glory, and not in ourselves, or any sufficiency of our own.

IV. He intimates to them the true reasons why God would take this good land out of the hands of the Canaanites, and settle it upon Israel, and they are borrowed from his own honour, not from Israel's deserts.

1. He will be honoured in the destruction of idolaters; they are justly looked upon as haters of him, and therefore he will visit their iniquity upon them. It is for the wickedness of these nations that God drives them out, De 9:4, and again, De 9:5. All those whom God rejects are rejected for their own wickedness: but none of those whom he accepts are accepted for their own righteousness.

2. He will be honoured in the performance of his promise to those that are in covenant with him: God swore to the patriarchs, who loved him and left all to follow him, that he would give this land to their seed; and therefore he would keep that promised mercy for thousands of those that loved him and kept his commandments; he would not suffer his promise to fail. It was for their fathers' sakes that they were beloved, Ro 11:28. Thus boasting is for ever excluded. See Eph 1:9,11.

4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath
cast them out from before thee, saying, for my righteousness the
Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the
wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from
before thee.
5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost
thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations
the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that
he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers,
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Israel's Rebellion at Horeb

6 Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not
this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou *art* a
stiffnecked people.
7 Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy
God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart
out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been
rebellious against the Lord.
8 Also in Horeb ye provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord
was angry with you to have destroyed you.
9 When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone,
even the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you,
then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights; I neither did
eat bread nor drink water:
10 and the Lord delivered unto me two tables of stone written with
the finger of God; and on them *was written* according to all the
words which the Lord spake with you in the mount, out of the
midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly.
11 And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, *that*
the Lord gave me the two tables of stone, *even* the tables of the
covenant.
12 And the Lord said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from
hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt
have corrupted *themselves;* they are quickly turned aside out of the
way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten
image.

13 Furthermore the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:
14 let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.

That they might have no pretence to think that God brought them to Canaan for their righteousness, Moses here shows them what a miracle of mercy it was that they had not long ere this been destroyed in the wilderness: "Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God (De 9:7); so far from purchasing his favour, thou hast many a time laid thyself open to his displeasure." Their fathers' provocations are here charged upon them; for, if God had dealt with their fathers according to their deserts, this generation would never have been, much less would they have entered Canaan. We are apt to forget our provocations, especially when the smart of the rod is over, and have need to be often put in mind of them, that we may never entertain any conceit of our own righteousness. Paul argues from the guilt which all mankind is under to prove that we cannot be justified before God by our own works, Ro 3:19,20. If our works condemn us, they will not justify us. Observe,

1. They had been a provoking people ever since they came out of Egypt, De 9:7. Forty years long, from first to last, were God and Moses grieved with them. It is a very sad character Moses now at parting leaves of them: You have been rebellious since the day I knew you, De 9:24. No sooner were they formed into a people than there was a faction formed among them, which upon all occasions made head against God and his government. Though the Mosaic history records little more than the occurrences of the first and last year of the forty, yet it seems by this general account that the rest of the years were not much better, but one continued provocation.

2. Even in Horeb they made a calf and worshipped it, De 9:8, &c. That was a sin so heinous, and by several aggravations

made so exceedingly sinful, that they deserved upon all occasions to be upbraided with it. It was done in the very place where the law was given by which they were expressly forbidden to worship God by images, and while the mountain was yet burning before their eyes, and Moses had gone up to fetch them the law in writing. They turned aside quickly, De 9:16.

3. God was very angry with them for their sin. Let them not think that God overlooked what they did amiss, and gave them Canaan for what was good among them. No, God had determined to destroy them (De 9:8), could easily have done it, and would have been no loser by it; he even desired Moses to let him alone that he might do it, De 9:13,14. By this it appeared how heinous their sin was, for God is never angry with any above what there is cause for, as men often are. Moses himself, though a friend and favourite, trembled at the revelation of God's wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness (De 9:19): I was afraid of the anger of the Lord, afraid perhaps not for them only, but for himself, Ps 119:120.

4. They had by their sin broken covenant with God, and forfeited all the privileges of the covenant, which Moses signified to them by breaking the tables, De 9:17. A bill of divorce was given them, and thenceforward they might justly have been abandoned for ever, so that their mouth was certainly stopped from pleading any righteousness of their own. God had, in effect, disowned them, when he said to Moses (De 9:12), "They are thy people, they are none of mine, nor shall they be dealt with as mine."

5. Aaron himself fell under God's displeasure for it, though he was the saint of the Lord, and was only brought by surprise or terror to be confederate with them in the sin: The Lord was very angry with Aaron, De 9:20. No man's place or character can shelter him from the wrath of God if he have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Aaron, that should have

made atonement for them if the iniquity could have been purged away by sacrifice and offering, did himself fall under the wrath of God: so little did they consider what they did when they drew him in.

6. It was with great difficulty and very long attendance that Moses himself prevailed to turn away the wrath of God, and prevent their utter ruin. He fasted and prayed full forty days and forty nights before he could obtain their pardon, De 9:18. And some think twice forty days (De 9:25), because it is said, as I fell down before, whereas his errand in the first forty was not of that nature. Others think it was but one forty, though twice mentioned (as also in De 10:10); but this was enough to make them sensible how great God's displeasure was against them, and what a narrow escape they had for their lives. And in this appears the greatness of God's anger against all mankind that no less a person than his Son, and no less a price than his own blood, would serve to turn it away. Moses here tells them the substance of his intercession for them. He was obliged to own their stubbornness, and their wickedness, and their sin, De 9:27. Their character was bad indeed when he that appeared an advocate for them could not give them a good word, and had nothing else to say in their behalf but that God had done great things for them, which really did but aggravate their crime (De 9:26),--that they were the posterity of good ancestors (De 9:27), which might also have been turned upon him, as making the matter worse and not better,--and that the Egyptians would reproach God, if he should destroy them, as unable to perfect what he had wrought for them (De 9:28), a plea which might easily enough have been answered: no matter what the Egyptians say, while the heavens declare God's righteousness; so that the saving of them from ruin at that time was owing purely to the mercy of God, and the importunity of Moses, and not to any merit of theirs, that could be offered so much as in mitigation of their offence.

7. To affect them the more with the destruction they were then at the brink of, he describes very particularly the destruction of the calf they had made, De 9:21. He calls it their sin: perhaps not only because it had been the matter of their sin, but because the destroying of it was intended for a testimony against their sin, and an indication to them what the sinners themselves did deserve. Those that made it were like unto it, and would have had no wrong done them if they had been thus stamped to dust, and consumed, and scattered, and no remains of them left. It was infinite mercy that accepted the destruction of the idol instead of the destruction of the idolaters.

8. Even after this fair escape that they had, in many other instances they provoked the Lord again and again. He needed only to name the places, for they carried the memorials either of the sin or of the punishment in their names (De 9:22): at Taberah, burning, where God set fire to them for their murmuring,--at Massah, the temptation, where they challenged almighty power to help them,--and at Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of lusters, where the dainties they coveted were their poison; and, after these, their unbelief and distrust at Kadesh-barnea, of which he had already told them (De 1:1-46), and which he here mentions again (De 9:23), would certainly have completed their ruin if they had been dealt with according to their own merits.

Now let them lay all this together, and it will appear that whatever favour God should hereafter show them, in subduing their enemies and putting them in possession of the land of Canaan, it was not for their righteousness. It is good for us often to remember against ourselves, with sorrow and shame, our former sins, and to review the records conscience keeps of them, that we may see how much we are indebted to free grace, and may humbly own that we never merited at God's hand any thing but wrath and the curse.

15 So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount

burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant *were* in my two hands.

16 And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the Lord your God, *and* had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the Lord had commanded you.

17 And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

18 And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.

19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also.

20 And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.

21 And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, *and* ground *it* very small, *even* until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

22 And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, ye provoked the Lord to wrath.

23 Likewise when the Lord sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

24 Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.

25 Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at *the first;* because the Lord had said he would destroy you.

26 I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

27 Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:

28 lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

29 Yet they *are* thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

Deuteronomy-10

The Second Tables of Stone

1 At that time the Lord said unto me, hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood.

2 And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark.

3 And I made an ark *of* shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand.

4 And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the Lord spake unto you in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them unto me.

5 And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me.

There were four things in and by which God showed himself reconciled to Israel and made them truly great and happy, and in which God's goodness took occasion from their badness to make him the more illustrious:--

I. He gave them his law, gave it to them in writing, as a standing pledge of his favour. Though the tables that were first written were broken, because Israel had broken the commandments, and God might justly break the covenant, yet when his anger was turned away the tables were renewed, De 10:1,2. Note, God's putting his law in our reconciliation to God and the best earnest of our happiness in him. Moses is

told to hew the tables; for the law prepares the heart by conviction and humiliation for the grace of God, but it is only that grace that then writes the law in it. Moses made an ark of shittim-wood (De 10:3), a plain chest, the same, I suppose, in which the tables were afterwards preserved: but Bezaleel is said to make it (Ex 37:1), because he afterwards finished it up and overlaid it with gold. Or Moses is said to make it because, when he went up the second time into the mount, he ordered it to be made by Bezaleel against he came down. And it is observable that for this reason the ark was the first thing that God gave orders about, Ex 25:10. And this left an earnest to the congregation that the tables should not miscarry this second time, as they had done the first. God will send his law and gospel to those whose hearts are prepared as arks to receive them. Christ is the ark in which now our salvation is kept safely, that it may not be lost as it was in the first Adam, when he had it in his own hand. Observe,

1. What it was that God wrote on the two tables, the ten commandments (De 10:4), or ten words, intimating in how little a compass they were contained: they were not ten volumes, but ten words: it was the same with the first writing, and both the same that he spoke in the mount. The second edition needed no correction nor amendment, nor did what he wrote differ form what he spoke. The written word is as truly the word of God as that which he spoke to his servants the prophets.

2. What care was taken of it? These two tables, thus engraven, were faithfully laid up in the ark. And there they be, said Moses, pointing it is probable towards the sanctuary, De 10:5. That good thing which was committed to him he transmitted to them, and left it pure and entire in their hands; now let them look to it at their peril. Thus we may say to the rising generation, "God has entrusted us with Bibles, Sabbaths, sacraments, &c., as tokens of his presence and favour, and there they be; we lodge them with you," 2Ti 1:13,14.

II. He led them forward towards Canaan, though they in their hearts turned back towards Egypt, and he might justly have chosen their delusions, De 10:6,7. He brought them to a land of rivers of waters, out of a dry and barren wilderness. Sometimes God supplied their wants by the ordinary course of nature: when that failed, then by miracles; and yet after this, when they were brought into a little distress, we find them distrusting God and murmuring, Nu 20:3,4.

III. He appointed a standing ministry among them, to deal for them in holy things. At that time when Moses went up a second time to the mount, or soon after, he had orders to separate the tribe of Levi to God, and to his immediate service, they having distinguished themselves by their zeal against the worshippers of the golden calf, De 10:8,9. The Kohathites carried the ark; they and the other Levites stood before the Lord, to minister to him in all the offices of the tabernacle; and the priests, who were of that tribe, were to bless the people. This was a standing ordinance, which had now continued almost forty years, even unto this day; and provision was made for the perpetuating of it by the settled maintenance of that tribe, which was such as gave them great encouragement in their work, and no diversion from it. The Lord is his inheritance.

Note, A settled ministry is a great blessing to a people, and a special token of God's favour. And, since the particular priests could not continue by reason of death, God showed his care of the people in securing a succession, which Moses takes notice of here, De 10:6. When Aaron died, the priesthood did not die with him, but Eleazar his son ministered in his stead, and took care of the ark, in which the tables of stone, those precious stones, were deposited, that they should suffer no damage; there they be, and he has the custody of them. Under the law, a succession in the ministry was kept up, by an entail of the office on a certain tribe and family. But now, under the gospel, when the effusion of the Spirit is more plentiful and powerful, the succession is kept

up by the Spirit's operation on men's hearts, qualifying men for, and inclining men to, that work, some in every age, that the name of Israel may not be blotted out.

IV. He accepted Moses as an advocate or intercessor for them, and therefore constituted him their prince and leader (De 10:10,11): The Lord hearkened to me and said, Arise, go before the people. It was a mercy to them that they had such a friend, so faithful both to him that appointed him and to those for whom he was appointed. It was fit that he who had saved them from ruin, by his intercession with heaven, should have the conduct and command of them. And herein he was a type of Christ, who, as he ever lives making intercession for us, so he has all power both in heaven and in earth.

6 And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera: there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his stead.

7 From thence they journeyed unto Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters.

8 At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.

9 Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord *is* his inheritance, according as the Lord thy God promised him.

10 And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also, *and* the Lord would not destroy thee.

11 And the Lord said unto me, Arise, take *thy* journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give unto them.

What God Requires

12 And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him,

and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

13 to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens *is* the Lord's thy God, the earth *also,* with all that therein *is.*

Here is a most pathetic exhortation to obedience, inferred from the premises, and urged with very powerful arguments and a great deal of persuasive rhetoric. Moses brings it in like an orator, with an appeal to his auditors And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee? De 10:12. Ask what he requires; as David (Ps 116:12), What shall I render? When we have received mercy from God it becomes us to enquire what returns we shall make to him. Consider what he requires, and you will find it is nothing but what is highly just and reasonable in itself and of unspeakable benefit and advantage to you. Let us see here what he does require, and what abundant reason there is why we should do what he requires.

I. We are here most plainly directed in our duty to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves.

1. We are here taught our duty to God, both in the dispositions and affections of our souls and in the actions of our lives, our principles and our practices.

(1.) We must fear the Lord our God, De 10:12, and again De 10:20. We must adore his majesty, acknowledge his authority, stand in awe of his power, and dread his wrath. This is gospel duty, Re 14:6,7.

(2.) We must love him, be well pleased that he is, desire that he may be ours, and delight in the contemplation of him and in communion with him. Fear him as a great God, and our Lord, love him as a good God, and our Father and benefactor.

(3.) We must walk in his ways, that is, the ways which he has appointed us to walk in. The whole course of our conversation must be conformable to his holy will.

(4.) We must serve him (De 10:20), serve him with all our heart and soul (De 10:12), devote ourselves to his honour, put ourselves under his government, and lay out ourselves to advance all the interests of his kingdom among men. And we must be hearty and zealous in his service, engage and employ our inward man in his work, and what we do for him we must do cheerfully and with a good will.

(5.) We must keep his commandments and his statutes, De 10:13. Having given up ourselves to his service, we must make his revealed will our rule in every thing, perform all he prescribes, forbear all the forbids, firmly believing that all the statutes he commands us are for our good. Besides the reward of obedience, which will be our unspeakable gain, there are true honour and pleasure in obedience. It is really for our present good to be meek and humble, chaste and sober, just and charitable, patient and contented; these make us easy, and safe, and pleasant, and truly great.

(6.) We must give honour to God, in swearing by his name (De 10:20); so give him the honour of his omniscience, his sovereignty, his justice, as well as of his necessary existence. Swear by his name, and not by the name of any creature, or false god, whenever an oath for confirmation is called for. (7.) To him we must cleave, De 10:20. Having chosen him for our God, we must faithfully and constantly abide with him and never forsake him. Cleave to him as one we love and delight in, trust and confide in, and from whom we have great expectations.

2. We are here taught our duty to our neighbour (De 10:19): Love the stranger; and, if the stranger, much more our brethren, as ourselves. If the Israelites that were such a peculiar people, so particularly distinguished from all people,

must be kind to strangers, much more must we, that are not enclosed in such a pale; we must have a tender concern for all that share with us in the human nature, and as we have opportunity; (that is, according to their necessities and our abilities) we must do good to all men. Two arguments are here urged to enforce this duty:--

(1.) God's common providence, which extends itself to all nations of men, they being all made of one blood. God loveth the stranger (De 10:18), that is, he gives to all life, and breath, and all things, even to those that are Gentiles, and strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and to Israel's God. He knows those perfectly whom we know nothing of. He gives food and raiment even to those to whom he has not shown his word and statutes. God's common gifts to mankind oblige us to honour all men. Or the expression denotes the particular care which Providence takes of strangers in distress, which we ought to praise him for (Ps 146:9, The Lord preserveth the strangers), and to imitate him, to serve him, and concur with him therein, being forward to make ourselves instruments in his hand of kindness to strangers.

2.) The afflicted condition which the Israelites themselves had been in, when they were strangers in Egypt. Those that have themselves been in distress, and have found mercy with God, should sympathize most feelingly with those that are in the like distress and be ready to show kindness to them. The people of the Jews, notwithstanding these repeated commands given them to be kind to strangers, conceived a rooted antipathy to the Gentiles, whom they looked upon with the utmost disdain, which made them envy the grace of God and the gospel of Christ, and this brought a final ruin upon themselves.

3. We are here taught our duty to ourselves (De 10:16): Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts. that is, "Cast away from you all corrupt affections and inclinations, which hinder you from fearing and loving God. Mortify the flesh with the

lusts of it. Away with all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, which obstruct the free course of the word of God to your hearts. Rest not in the circumcision of the body, which was only the sign, but be circumcised in heart, which is the thing signified." See Ro 2:29. The command of Christ goes further than this, and obliges us not only to cut off the foreskin of the heart, which may easily be spared, but to cut off the right hand and to pluck out the right eye that is an offence to us; the more spiritual the dispensation is the more spiritual we are obliged to be, and to go the closer in mortifying sin. And be no more stiff-necked, as they had been hitherto, De 9:24. "Be not any longer obstinate against divine commands and corrections, but ready to comply with the will of God in both." The circumcision of the heart makes it ready to yield to God, and draw in his yoke.

II. We are here most pathetically persuaded to our duty. Let but reason rule us, and religion will.

1. Consider the greatness and glory of God, and therefore fear him, and from that principle serve and obey him. What is it that is thought to make a man great, but great honour, power, and possessions? Think then how great the Lord our God is, and greatly to be feared.

(1.) He has great honour, a name above every name. He is God of gods, and Lord of lords, De 10:17. Angels are called gods, so are magistrates, and the Gentiles had gods many, and lords many, the creatures of their own fancy; but God is infinitely above all these nominal deities. What an absurdity would it be for them to worship other gods when the God to whom they had sworn allegiance was the God of gods!

(2.) He has great power. He is a mighty God and terrible (De 10:17), who regardeth not persons. He has the power of a conqueror, and so he is terrible to those that resist him and rebel against him. He has the power of a judge, and so he is just to all those that appeal to him or appear before him. And

it is as much the greatness and honour of a judge to be impartial in his justice, without respect to persons or bribes, as it is to a general to be terrible to the enemy. Our God is both.

(3.) He has great possessions. Heaven and earth are his (De 10:14), and all the hosts and stars of both. Therefore he is able to bear us out in his service, and to make up the losses we sustain in discharging our duty to him. And yet therefore he has no need of us, nor any thing we have or can do; we are undone without him, but he is happy without us, which makes the condescensions of his grace, in accepting us and our services, truly admirable. Heaven and earth are his possession, and yet the Lord's portion is his people.

2. Consider the goodness and grace of God, and therefore love him, and from that principle serve and obey him. His goodness is his glory as much as his greatness.

(1.) He is good to all. Whomsoever he finds miserable, to them he will be found merciful: He executes the judgment of the fatherless and widow, De 10:18. It is his honour to help the helpless, and to succour those that most need relief and that men are apt to do injury to, or at least to put a light upon. See Ps 68:4,5,146:7,9.

(2.) But truly God is good to Israel in a special obligations to him: "He is they praise, and he is thy God, De 10:21. Therefore love him and serve him, because of the relation wherein he stands to thee. He is thy God, a God in covenant with thee, and as such he is thy praise," that is

[1.] "He puts honour upon thee; he is the God in whom, all the day long, thou mayest boast that thou knowest him, and art known of him. If he is thy God, he is thy glory."

[2.] "He expects honour from thee. He is thy praise," that is "he is the God whom thou art bound to praise; if he has not

praise from thee, whence may he expect it?" He inhabits the praises of Israel. Consider,

First, The gracious choice he made of Israel, De 10:15. "He had a delight in thy fathers, and therefore chose their seed." Not that there was any thing in them to merit his favour, or to recommend them to it, but so it seemed good in his eyes. He would be kind to them, though he had no need of them.

Secondly, The great things he had done for Israel, De 10:21,22. He reminds them not only of what they had heard with their ears, and which their fathers had told them of, but of what they had seen with their eyes, and which they must tell their children of, particularly that within a few generations seventy souls (for they were no more when Jacob went down into Egypt) increased to a great nation, as the stars of heaven for multitude. And the more they were in number the more praise and service God expected from them; yet it proved, as in the old world, that when they began to multiply they corrupted themselves.

15 Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he
chose their seed after them, *even* you above all people, as *it is* this
day.
16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more
stiffnecked.
17 For the Lord your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great
God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor
taketh reward:
18 he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and
loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.
19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of
Egypt.
20 Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to
him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.
21 He *is* thy praise, and he *is* thy God, that hath done for thee these
great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons;
and now the Lord thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven
for multitude.

Deuteronomy-11

The Greatness of the Lord

1 Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge,
and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.
2 And know ye this day: for *I speak* not with your children which
have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the
Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched
out arm,
3 and his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt
unto Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and unto all his land;

Because God has made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude (so the preceding chapter concludes), therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God (so this begins). Those whom God has built up into families, whose beginning was small, but whose latter end greatly increases, should use that as an argument with themselves why they should serve God. Thou shalt keep his charge, that is, the oracles of his word and ordinances of his worship, with which they were entrusted and for which they were accountable. It is a phrase often used concerning the office of the priests and Levites, for all Israel was a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. Observe the connection of these two: Thou shalt love the Lord and keep his charge, since love will work in obedience, and that only is acceptable obedience which flows from a principle of love. 1Jo 5:3.

Mention is made of the great and terrible works of God which their eyes had seen, De 11:7. This part of his discourse Moses addresses to the seniors among the people, the elders in age; and probably the elders in office were so, and were now his immediate auditors: there were some among them that could remember their deliverance out of Egypt, all above fifty, and

to them he speaks this, not to the children, who knew it by hearsay only, De 11:2.

Note, God's mercies to us when we were young we should remember and retain the impressions of when we are old; what our eyes have seen, especially in our early days, has affected us, and should be improved by us long after. They had seen what terrible judgments God had executed upon the enemies of Israel's peace,

1. Upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians that enslaved them. What a fine country was ruined and laid waste by one plague after another, to force Israel's enlargement! De 11:3. What a fine army was entirely drowned in the Red Sea, to prevent Israel's being re-enslaved! De 11:4. Thus did he give Egypt for their ransom, Isa 43:3. Rather shall that famous kingdom be destroyed than that Israel shall not be delivered.

2. Upon Dathan and Abiram that embroiled them. Remember what he did in the wilderness (De 11:5), by how many necessary chastisements (as they are called, De 11:2) they were kept from ruining themselves, particularly when those daring Reubenites defied the authority of Moses and headed a dangerous rebellion against God himself, which threatened the ruin of a whole nation, and might have ended in that if the divine power had not immediately crushed the rebellion by burying the rebels alive, them and all that was in their possession, De 11:6. What was done against them, though misinterpreted by the disaffected party (Nu 16:41), was really done in mercy to Israel. To be saved from the mischiefs of insurrections at home is as great a kindness to a people, and therefore lays them under as strong obligations, as protection from the invasion of enemies abroad.

4 and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and *how* the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day;

5 and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place;
6 and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their possession, in the midst of all Israel:
7 but your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did.

The Blessings of the Promised Land

8 Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it;
9 and that ye may prolong *your* days in the land, which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed, a land that floweth with milk and honey.
10 For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, *is* not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst *it* with thy foot, as a garden of herbs:
11 but the land, whither ye go to possess it, *is* a land of hills and valleys, *and* drinketh water of the rain of heaven:

Still Moses urges the same subject, as loth to conclude till he had gained his point. "If thou wilt enter into life, if thou wilt enter into Canaan, a type of that life, and find it a good land indeed to thee, keep the commandments: Keep all the commandments which I command you this day; love God, and serve him with all your heart."

I. Because this was the way to get and keep possession of the promised land.

1. It was the way to get possession (De 11:8): That you may be strong for war, and so go in and possess it. So little did they know either of hardship or hazard in the wars of Canaan that he does not say they should go in and fight for it; no, they had nothing in effect to do but go in and possess it. He does not go about to teach them the art of war, how to draw the bow, and use the sword, and keep ranks, that they might be

strong, and go in and possess the land; no, but let them keep God's commandments, and their religion, while they are true to it, will be their strength, and secure their success.

It was the way to keep possession (De 11:9): That you may prolong your days in this land that your eye is upon. Sin tends to the shortening of the days of particular persons and to the shortening of the days of a people's prosperity; but obedience will be a lengthening out of their tranquillity.

II. Because the land of Canaan, into which they were going, had a more sensible dependence upon the blessing of heaven than the land of Egypt had, De 11:10-12. Egypt was a country fruitful enough, but it was all flat, and was watered, not as other countries with rain (it is said of Egypt, Zec 14:18, that it has no rain), but by the overflowing of the river Nile at a certain season of the year, to the improving of which there was necessary a great deal of the art and labour of the husbandman, so that in Egypt a man must bestow as much cost and pains upon a field as upon a garden of herbs. And this made them the more apt to imagine that the power of their own hands got them this wealth. But the land of Canaan was an uneven country, a land of hills and valleys, which not only gave a more pleasing prospect to the eye, but yielded a greater variety of soils for the several purposes of the husbandman. It was a land that had no great rivers in it, except Jordan, but drank water of the rain of heaven, and so,

1. Saved them a great deal of labour. While the Egyptians were ditching and guttering in the fields, up to the knees in mud, to bring water to their land, which otherwise would soon become like the heath in the wilderness, the Israelites could sit in their houses, warm and easy, and leave it to God to water their land with the former and the latter rain, which is called the river of God (Ps 65:9), perhaps in allusion to, and contempt of, the river of Egypt, which that nation was so proud of. Note, The better God has provided, by our outward condition, for our ease and convenience, the more we should

abound in his service: the less we have to do for our bodies the more we should do for God and our souls.

2. So he directed them to look upwards to God, who giveth us rain form heaven and fruitful seasons (Ac 14:17), and promised to be himself as the dew unto Israel, Ho 14:5. Note,

(1.) Mercies bring with them the greatest comfort and sweetness when we see them coming from heaven, the immediate gifts of divine Providence.

(2.) The closer dependence we have upon God the more cheerful we should be in our obedience to him. See how Moses here magnifies the land of Canaan above all other lands, that the eyes of God were always upon it, that is, they should be so, to see that nothing was wanting, while they kept close to God and duty; its fruitfulness should be not so much the happy effect of its soil as the immediate fruit of the divine blessing; this may be inferred from its present state, for it is said to be at this day, now that God has departed from it, as barren a spot of ground as perhaps any under heaven. Call it not Naomi: call it Marah.

III. Because God would certainly bless them with an abundance of all good things if they would love him and serve him (De 11:13-15): I will give you the rain of your land in due season, so that they should neither want it when the ground called for it nor have it in excess; but they should have the former rain, which fell at seed-time, and the latter rain, which fell before the harvest, Am 4:7. This represented all the seasonable blessings which God would bestow upon them, especially spiritual comforts, which should come as the latter and former, rain, Ho 6:3. And the earth thus watered produced, 1. Fruits for the service of man, corn and wine, and oil, Ps 104:13-15. 2. Grass for the cattle, that they also might be serviceable to man, that he might eat of them and be full, De 11:15. Godliness hath here the promise of the life that now

is; but the favour of God shall put gladness into the heart, more than the increase of corn, and wine, and oil will.

IV. Because their revolt from God to idols. Would certainly be their ruin: Take heed that your hearts be not deceived, De 11:16,17. All that forsake God to set their affection upon, or pay their devotion to, any creature, will find themselves wretchedly deceived to their own destruction; and this will aggravate it that it was purely for want of taking heed. A little care would have prevented their being imposed upon by the great deceiver. To awaken them to take heed, Moses here tells them plainly that if they should turn aside to other gods,

1. They would provoke the wrath of God against them; and who knows the power of that anger?

2. Good things would be turned away from them; the heaven would withhold its rain, and then of course the earth would not yield its fruit.

3. Evil things would come upon them; they would perish quickly form off this good land. And the better the land was the more grievous it would be to perish from it. The goodness of the land would not be their security, when the badness of the inhabitants had made them ripe for ruin.

12 a land which the Lord thy God caret for: the eyes of the Lord thy
God *are* always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto
the end of the year.
13 And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my
commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord
your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your
soul,
14 that I will give *you* the rain of your land in his due season, the first
rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and
thy wine, and thine oil.
15 And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest
eat and be full.

16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye
turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;
17 and *then* the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up
the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her
fruit; and *lest* ye perish quickly from off the good land which the
Lord giveth you.
18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your
soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as
frontlets between your eyes.
19 And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when
thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,
when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
20 And thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thine house, and
upon thy gates:

Here,

I. Moses repeats the directions he had given for the guidance and assistance of the people in their obedience, and for the keeping up of religion among them (De 11:18-20), which is much to the same purport with what we had before, De 6:6, &c. Let us all be directed by the three rules here given:--

1. Let our hearts be filled with the word of God: Lay up these words in your heart and in your soul. The heart must be the treasury or store-house in which the word of God must be laid up, to be used upon all occasions. We cannot expect good practices in the conversation, unless there be good thoughts, good affections, and good principles, in the heart.

2. Let our eyes be fixed upon the word of God. "Bind these words for a sign upon your hand, which is always in view (Isa 49:16), and as frontlets between your eyes, which you cannot avoid the sight of; let them be as ready and familiar to you, and have your eye as constantly upon them, as if they were written upon your door-posts, and could not be overlooked either when you go out or when you come in." Thus we must lay God's judgments before us, having a constant regard to

them, as the guide of our way, as the rule of our work, Ps 119:30.

3. Let our tongues be employed about the word of God. Let it be the subject of our familiar discourse, wherever we are; especially with our children, who must be taught the service of God, as the one thing needful, much more needful than either the rules of decency or the calling they must live by in this world. Great care and pains must be taken to acquaint children betimes, and to affect them, with the word of God and the wondrous things of his law. Nor will any thing contribute more to the prosperity and perpetuity of religion in a nation than the good education of children: if the seed be holy, it is the substance of a land.

II. He repeats the assurances he had before given them, in God's name, of prosperity and success if they were obedient.

1. They should have a happy settlement, De 11:21. Their days should be multiplied; and, when they were fulfilled, the days of their children likewise should be many, as the days of heaven, that is, Canaan should be sure to them and their heirs for ever, as long as the world stands, if they did not by their own sin throw themselves out of it.

2. It should not be in the power of their enemies to give them any disturbance, nor make them upon any account uneasy. "If you will keep God's commandments, and be careful to do your duty (De 11:22), God will not only crown the labours of the husbandman with plenty of the fruits of the earth, but he will own and succeed the more glorious undertakings of the men of war. Victory shall attend your arms; which way soever they turn, God will drive out these nations, and put you in possession of their land," De 11:23,24. Their territories should be enlarged to the utmost extent of the promise, Ge 15:18. And all their neighbours should stand in awe of them, De 11:25. Nothing contributes more to the making of a nation

considerable abroad, valuable to its friends and formidable to its enemies, than religion reigning in it; for who can be against those that have God for them? And he is certainly for those that are sincerely for him, Pr 14:34.

21 that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

22 For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him;

23 then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.

24 Every place where on the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.

25 There shall no man be able to stand before you: *for* the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you.

26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

27 a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day:

28 and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known.

Here Moses concludes his general exhortations to obedience; and his management is very affecting, and such as, one would think, should have engaged them for ever to God, and should have left impressions upon them never to be worn out.

I. He sums up all his arguments for obedience in two words, the blessing and the curse (De 11:26), that is, the rewards and the punishments, as they stand in the promises and the threatenings, which are the great sanctions of the law, taking hold of hope and fear, those two handles of the soul, by which it is caught, held, and managed. These two, the blessing and the curse, he set before them, that is,

1. He explained them, that they might know them; he enumerated the particulars contained both in the blessing and in the curse, that they might see the more fully how desirable the blessing was, and how dreadful the curse.

2. He confirmed them, that they might believe them, made it evident to them, by the proofs he produced of his own commission, that the blessing was not a fool's paradise, nor the curse a bugbear, but that both were real declarations of the purpose of God concerning them. 3. He charged them to choose which of these they would have, so fairly does he deal with them, and so far is he from putting out the eyes of these men, as he was charged, Nu 16:14. They and we are plainly told on what terms we stand with Almighty God.

(1.) If we be obedient to his laws, we may be sure of a blessing, De 11:27. But,

(2.) If we be disobedient, we may be as sure of a curse, De 11:28. Say you to the righteous (for God has said it, and all the world cannot unsay it) that it shall be well with them: but woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them.

II. He appoints a public and solemn proclamation to be made of the blessing and curse which he had set before them, upon the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, De 11:29,30. We have more particular directions for this solemnity in De 27:11, &c., and an account of the performance of it, Joh 8:33, &c. It was to be done, and was done, immediately upon their coming into Canaan, that when they first took possession of that land they might know upon what terms they stood. The place where this was to be done is particularly described by Moses, though he never saw it, which is one circumstance among many that evidences his divine instructions. It is said be near the plain, or oaks, or meadows, of Moreh, which was one of the first places that Abraham came to in Canaan; so that in sending them thither, to hear the blessing and the curse, God reminded them of the promise he made to Abraham in

that very place, Ge 12:6,7. The mention of this appointment here serves,

1. For the encouragement of their faith in the promise of God, that they should be masters of Canaan quickly. Do it (says Moses) on the other side Jordan (De 11:30), for you may be confident you shall pass over Jordan, De 11:31. The institution of this service to be done in Canaan was an assurance to them that they should be brought into possession of it, and a token like that which God gave to Moses (Ex 3:12): You shall serve God upon this mountain. And,

2. It serves for an engagement upon them to be obedient, that they might escape that curse, and obtain that blessing, which, besides what they had already heard, they must shortly be witnesses to the solemn publication of (De 11:32): "You shall observe to do the statutes and judgements, that you may not in that solemnity be witnesses against yourselves."

29 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God hath brought
thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou
shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon
mount Ebal.
30 *Are* they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun
goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the
champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh?
31 For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the
Lord your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell
therein.
32 And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I
set before you this day.

Deuteronomy-12

Only One Place of Worship

1 These *are* the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do
in the land, which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to
possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.
2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye
shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon
the hills, and under every green tree:
3 and ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and
burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven
images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that
place.

From those great original truths, That there is a God, and that there is but one God, arise those great fundamental laws, That that God is to be worshipped, and he only, and that therefore we are to have no other God before him: this is the first commandment, and the second is a guard upon it, or a hedge about it. To prevent a revolt to false gods, we are forbidden to worship the true God in such a way and manner as the false gods were worshipped in, and are commanded to observe the instituted ordinances of worship that we may adhere to the proper object of worship. For this reason Moses is very large in his exposition of the second commandment. What is contained in this and the four following chapters mostly refers to that. These are statutes and judgments which they must observe to do (De 12:1),

1. In the days of their rest and prosperity, when they should be masters of Canaan. We must not think that our religion is instituted only to be our work in the years of our servitude, our entertainment in the places of our solitude, and our consolation in affliction; no, when we come to possess a good land, still we must keep up the worship of God in Canaan as

well as in a wilderness, when we have grown up as well as when we are children, when we are full of business as well as when we have nothing else to do.

2. All the days, as long as you live upon the earth. While we are here in our state of trial, we must continue in our obedience, even to the end, and never leave our duty, nor grow weary of well-doing. Now,

I. They are here charged to abolish and extirpate all those things that the Canaanites had served their idol-gods with, De 12:2,3. Here is no mention of idol-temples, which countenances the opinion some have, that the tabernacle Moses reared in the wilderness was the first habitation that ever was made for religious uses, and that from it temples took their rise. But the places that had been used, and were now to be levelled, were enclosures for their worship on mountains and hills (as if the height of the ground would give advantage to the ascent of their devotions), and under green trees, either because pleasant or because awful: whatever makes the mind easy and reverent, contracts and composes it, was thought to befriend devotion. The solemn shade and silence of a grove are still admired by those that are disposed to contemplation. But the advantage which these retirements gave to the Gentiles in the worship of their idols was that they concealed those works of darkness which could not bear the light; and therefore they must all be destroyed, with the altars, pillars, and images, that had been used by the natives in the worship of their gods, so as that the very names of them might be buried in oblivion, and not only not be remembered with respect, but not remembered at all. They must thus consult,

1 The reputation of their land; let it never be said of this holy land that it had been thus polluted, but let all these dunghills be carried away, as things they were ashamed of.

2 The safety of their religion; let none be left remaining, lest profane unthinking people, especially in degenerate ages, should make use of them in the service of the God of Israel. Let these pest-houses be demolished, as things they were afraid of. He begins the statutes that relate to divine worship with this, because there must first be an abhorrence of that which is evil before there can be a steady adherence to that which is good, Ro 12:9. The kingdom of God must be set up, both in persons and places, upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom; for they cannot stand together, nor can there be any communion between Christ and Belial.

I. They are charged not to transfer the rites and usages of idolaters into the worship of God; no, not under colour of beautifying and improving it (De 12:4): You shall not do so to the Lord your god, that is, "you must not think to do honour to him by offering sacrifices on mountains and hills, erecting pillars, planting groves, and setting up images; no, you must not indulge a luxurious fancy in your worship, nor think that whatever pleases that will please God: he is above all gods, and will not be worshipped as other gods are."

4 Ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God.

5 But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

There is not any one particular precept (as I remember) in all the law of Moses so largely pressed and inculcated as this, by which they are all tied to bring their sacrifices to that one altar which was set up in the court of the tabernacle, and there to perform all the rituals of their religion; for, as to moral services, then, no doubt, as now, men might pray every where, as they did in their synagogues. The command to do this, and the prohibition of the contrary, are here repeated again and again, as we teach children: and yet we are sure that there is in scripture no vain repetition; but all this stress is laid upon it,

1. Because of the strange proneness there was in the hearts of the people to idolatry and superstition, and the danger of their being seduced by the many temptations which they would be surrounded with.

2. Because of the great use which the observance of this appointment would be of to them, both to prevent the introducing of corrupt customs into their worship and to preserve among them unity and brotherly love, that, meeting all in one place, they might continue both of one way and of one heart. 3. Because of the significancy of this appointment. They must keep to one place, in token of their belief of those two great truths, which we find together (1Ti 2:5), That there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man. It not only served to keep up the notion of the unity of the Godhead, but was an intimation to them (though they could not stedfastly discern it) of the one only way of approach to God and communion with him, in and by the Messiah.

Let us now reduce this long charge to its proper heads.

I. It is here promised that when they were settled in Canaan, when they had rest from their enemies, and dwelt in safety, God would choose a certain place, which he would appoint to be the centre of their unity, to which they should bring all their offerings, De 12:10,11. Observe,

1. If they just be tied to one place, they should not be left in doubt concerning it, but should certainly know what place it was. Had Christ intended, under the gospel, to make any one place such a seat of power as Rome pretends to be, we should not have been left so destitute of instruction as we are concerning the appointed place.

2. God does not leave it to them to choose the place, lest the tribes should have quarrelled about it, each striving, for their secular advantage, to have it among them; but he reserves the

choice to himself, as he does the designation of the Redeemer and the institution of holy ordinances.

3. He does not appoint the place now, as he had appointed mounts Gerizim and Ebal, for the pronouncing of the blessings and curses (De 11:29), but reserves the doing of it till hereafter, that hereby they might be made to expect further directions from heaven, and a divine conduct, after Moses should be removed. The place which God would choose is said to be the place where he would put his name, that is, which he would have to be called his, where his honour should dwell, where he would manifest himself to his people, and make himself known, as men do by their names, and where he would receive addresses, by which his name is both praised and called upon.

It was to be his habitation, where, as King of Israel, he would keep court, and be found by all those that reverently sought him. The ark was the token of God's presence, and where that was put there God put his name, and that was his habitation. It contained the tables of the law; for none must expect to receive favours from God's hand but those that are willing to receive the law from his mouth. The place which God first chose for the ark to reside in was Shiloh; and, after that place had sinned away its honours, we find the ark at Kirjath-jearim and other places; but at length, in David's time, it was fixed at Jerusalem, and God said concerning Solomon's temple, more expressly than ever he had said concerning any other place, This I have chosen for a house of sacrifice, 2Ch 7:12. Compare 2Ch 6:5.

Now, under the gospel, we have no temple that sanctifies the gold, no altar that sanctifies the gift, but Christ only; and, as to the places of worship, the prophets foretold that in every place the spiritual incense should be offered, Mal 1:11. And our Saviour has declared that those are accepted as true worshippers who worship God in sincerity and truth, without regard either to this mountain or Jerusalem, Joh 4:23.

II. They are commanded to bring all their burnt-offerings and sacrifices to this place that God would choose (De 12:6 and again De 12:11): Thither shall you bring all that I command you; and (De 12:14), There thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings; and (De 12:27), The flesh and the blood must be offered upon the altar of the Lord thy God. And of their peace-offerings, here called their sacrifices, though they were to eat the flesh, yet the blood was to be poured out upon the altar. By this they were taught that sacrifices and offerings God did not desire, nor accept, for their own sake, nor for any intrinsic worth in them, as natural expressions of homage and adoration; but that they received their virtue purely from that altar on which they were offered, as it typified Christ; whereas prayers and praises, as much more necessary and valuable, were to be offered every day by the people of God wherever they were. A devout Israelite might honour God, and keep up communion with him, and obtain mercy from him, though he had not an opportunity, perhaps, for many months together, of bringing a sacrifice to his altar. But this signified the obligation we Christians are under to offer up all our spiritual sacrifices to God in the name of Jesus Christ, hoping for acceptance only upon the score of his mediation, 1Pe 2:5.

III. They are commanded to feast upon their hallowed things before the Lord, with holy joy. They must not only bring to the altar the sacrifices which were to be offered to God, but hey must bring to the place of the altar all those things which they were appointed by the law to eat and drink, to the honour of God, in token of their communion with him, De 12:6. Their, tithes, and heave-offerings of their hand, that is, their first-fruits, their vows, and free-will-offerings, and firstlings, all those things which were to be religiously made use of either by themselves or by the priests and Levites, must be brought to the place which God would choose; as all the revenues of the crown, from all parts of the kingdom, are brought into the exchequer. And (De 12:7): There you shall

eat before the Lord, and rejoice in all that you put your hands unto; and again (De 12:12), You shall rejoice before the Lord, you, and your sons, and your daughters. Observe here,

1. That what we do in the service of God and to his glory redounds to our benefit, if it be not our own fault. Those that sacrifice to God are welcome to eat before him, and to feast upon their sacrifices: he sups with us, and we with him, Re 3:20. If we glorify God, we edify ourselves, and cultivate our own minds, through the grace of God, by the increase of our knowledge and faith, the enlivening of devout affections, and the confirming of gracious habits and resolutions: thus is the soul nourished.

2. That work for God should be done with holy joy and cheerfulness. You shall eat and rejoice, De 12:7, and again, De 12:12 and De 12:18.

(1.) Now while they were before the Lord they must rejoice, De 12:12. It is the will of God that we should serve him with gladness; none displeased him more than those that covered his altar with tears. Mal 2:13. See what a good Master we serve, who has made it our duty to sing at our work. Even the children and servants must rejoice with them before God, that the services of religion might be a pleasure to them, and not a task or drudgery.

(2.) They must carry away with them the grateful relish of that delight which they found in communion with God; they must rejoice in all that they put their hands unto, De 12:7. Some of the comfort which they must take with them into their common employments; and, being thus strengthened in soul, whatever they did they must do it heartily and cheerfully. And this holy pious joy in God and his goodness, with which we are to rejoice evermore, would be the best preservative against the sin and snare of vain and carnal mirth and a relief against the sorrows of the world.

6 and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices,
and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows,
and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of
your flocks:
7 and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall
rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households,
wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.
8 Ye shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every
man whatsoever *is* right in his own eyes.
9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which
the Lord your God giveth you.
10 But *when* ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord
your God giveth you to inherit, and *when* he giveth you rest from all
your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;
11 then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose
to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I
command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your
tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice
vows which ye vow unto the Lord:

I. They are commanded to be kind to the Levites. Did they feast with joy? The Levites must feast with them, and rejoice with them, De 12:12, and again, De 12:18; and a general caution (De 12:19), Take heed that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest. There were Levites that attended the altar as assistants to the priests, and these must not be forsaken, that is, the service they performed must be constantly adhered to; no other altar must be set up than that which God appointed; for that would be to forsake the Levites. But this seems to be spoken of the Levites that were dispersed in the country to instruct the people in the law of God, and to assist them in their devotions; for it is the Levite within their gates that they are here commanded to make much of. It is a great mercy to have Levites near us, within our gates, that we may ask the law at their mouth, and at our feasts to be a check upon us, to restrain excesses.

And it is the duty of people to be kind to their ministers that give them good instructions and set them good examples. As

long as we live we shall need their assistance, till we come to that world where ordinances will be superseded; and therefore as long as we live we must not forsake the Levites. The reason given (De 12:12) is because the Levite has no part nor inheritance with you, so that he cannot grow rich by husbandry or trade; let him therefore share with you in the comfort of your riches. They must give the Levites their tithes and offerings, settled on them by the law, because they had no other maintenance.

II. They are allowed to eat common flesh, but not the flesh of their offerings, in their own houses, wherever they dwelt. What was any way devoted to God they must not eat at home, De 12:13,17. But what was not so devoted they might kill and eat of at their pleasure, De 12:15. And this permission is again repeated, De 12:20-22. It should seem that while they were in the wilderness they did not eat the flesh of any of those kinds of beasts that were used in sacrifice, but what was killed at the door of the tabernacle, and part of it presented to God as a peace-offering, Le 17:3,4.

But when they came to Canaan, where they must live at a great distance from the tabernacle, they might kill what they pleased for their own use of their flocks and herds, without bringing part to the altar. This allowance is very express, and repeated, lest Satan should take occasion from that law which forbade the eating of their sacrifices at their own houses to suggest to them, as he did to our first parents, hard thoughts of God, as if he grudged them: Thou mayest eat whatsoever thy soul lusteth after. There is a natural regular appetite, which it is lawful to gratify with temperance and sobriety, not taking too great a pleasure in the gratification, nor being uneasy if it be crossed. The unclean, who might not eat of the holy things, yet might eat of the same sort of flesh when it was only used as common food. The distinction between clean persons and unclean was sacred, and designed for the preserving of the honour of their holy feasts, and therefore

must not be brought into their ordinary meals. This permission has a double restriction:--

1. They must eat according to the blessing which God had given them, De 12:15. Note, It is not only our wisdom, but our duty, to live according to our estates, and not to spend above what we have. As it is unjust on the one hand to hoard what should be laid out, so it is much more unjust to lay out more than we have; for what is not our own must needs be another's, who is thereby robbed and defrauded. And this, I say, is much more unjust, because it is easier afterwards to distribute what has been unduly spared, and so to make a sort of restitution for the wrong, than it is to repay to wife, and children, and creditors, what has been unduly spent. Between these two extremes let wisdom find the mean, and then let watchfulness and resolution keep it.

2. They must not eat blood (De 12:16, and again, De 12:23): Only be sure that thou eat not the blood (De 12:24), Thou shalt not eat it; and (De 12:25), Thou shalt not eat it, that it may go well with thee. When they could not bring the blood to the altar, to pour it out there before the Lord, as belonging to him, they must pour it out upon the earth, as not belonging to them, because it was the life, and therefore, as an acknowledgment, belonged to him who gives life, and, as an atonement, belonged to him to whom life is forfeited. Bishop Patrick thinks one reason why they were forbidden thus strictly the eating of blood was to prevent the superstitions of the old idolaters about the blood of their sacrifices, which they thought their demons delighted in, and by eating of which they imagined that they had communion with them.

III. They are forbidden to keep up either their own corrupt usages in the wilderness or the corrupt usages of their predecessors in the land of Canaan.

1. They must not keep up those improper customs which they had got into in the wilderness, and which were connived at in

consideration of the present unsettledness of their condition (De 12:8,9): You shall not do after all the things that we do here this day. Never was there a better governor than Moses, and one would think never a better opportunity of keeping up good order and discipline than now among the people of Israel, when they lay so closely encamped under the eye of their governor; and yet it seems there was much amiss and many irregularities had crept in among them. We must never expect to see any society perfectly pure and right, and as it should be till we come to the heavenly Canaan. They had sacrifices and religious worship, courts of justice and civil government, and, by the stoning of the man that gathered sticks on the sabbath day, it appears there was great strictness used in guarding the most weighty matters of the law; but being frequently upon the remove, and always at uncertainty,

(1.) They could none of them observe the solemn feasts, and the rites of cleansing, with the exactness that the law required. And,

(2.) Those among them that were disposed to do amiss had opportunity given them to do it unobserved by the frequent interruptions which their removals gave to the administration of justice. But (says Moses) when you come to Canaan, you shall not do as we do here. Note, When the people of God are in an unsettled condition, that may be tolerated and dispensed with which would by no means be allowed at another time. Cases of necessity are to be considered while the necessity continues; but that must not be done in Canaan which was done in the wilderness. While a house is in the building a great deal of dirt and rubbish are suffered to lie by it, which must all be taken away when the house is built. Moses was now about to lay down his life and government, and it was a comfort to him to foresee that Israel would be better in the next reign than they had been in his.

2. They must not worship the Lord by any of those rites or ceremonies which the notions of Canaan had made use of in

the service of their gods, De 12:29-32. They must not so much as enquire into the modes and forms of idolatrous worship. What good would it do to them to know those depths of Satan? Re 2:24. It is best to be ignorant of that which there is danger of being infected by. They must not introduce the customs of idolaters,

(1.) Because it would be absurd to make those their patterns whom God had made their slaves and captives, cut off, and destroyed from before them. The Canaanites had not flourished and prospered so much in the service of their gods as that the Israelites should be invited to take up their customs. Those are wretchedly besotted indeed who will walk in the way of sinners, after they have seen their end.

(2.) Because some of their customs were most barbarous and inhuman, and such as trampled, not only upon the light and law of nature, but upon natural affection itself, as burning their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods (De 12:31), the very mention of which is sufficient to make it odious, and possess us with a horror of it.

(3.) Because their idolatrous customs were an abomination to the Lord, and the translating of them into his worship would make even that an abomination and an affront to him by which they should give him honour, and by which they hoped to obtain his favour. The case is bad indeed when the sacrifice itself has become an abomination, Pr 15:8. He therefore concludes (De 12:32) with the same caution concerning the worship of God which he had before given concerning the word of God (De 4:2): "You shall not add thereto any inventions of your own, under pretence of making the ordinance either more significant or more magnificent, nor diminish from it, under pretence of making it more easy and practicable, or of setting aside that which may be spared; but observe to do all that, and that only, which God has commanded." We may then hope in our religious worship to obtain the divine acceptance when we observe the divine

appointment. God will have his own work done in his own way.

12 and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that *is* within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:

14 but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

15 Notwithstanding, thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

16 Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

18 but thou must eat them before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

19 Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

20 When the Lord thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

21 If the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the Lord hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

22 Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them:

the unclean and the clean shall eat *of* them alike.
23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life;
and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.
24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.
25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy
children after thee, when thou shalt do *that which is* right in the
sight of the Lord.
26 Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt
take, and go unto the place which the Lord shall choose:
27 and thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood,
upon the altar of the Lord thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices
shall be poured out upon the altar of the Lord thy God, and thou
shalt eat the flesh.
28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it
may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever,
when thou doest *that which is* good and right in the sight of the
Lord thy God.

Warning against Idolatry

29 When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before
thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest
them, and dwellest in their land;
30 take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them,
after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou inquire
not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their
gods? Even so will I do likewise.
31 Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God: for every
abomination to the Lord which he hateth have they done unto
their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt
in the fire to their gods.
32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt
not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Deuteronomy-13

1 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,
2 and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;
3 thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Here is,

I. A very strange supposition, De 13:1,2.

1. It is strange that there should arise any among themselves, especially any pretending to vision and prophecy, who should instigate them to go and serve other gods. Was it possible that any who had so much knowledge of the methods of divine revelation as to be able to personate a prophet should yet have so little knowledge of the divine nature and will as to go himself and entice his neighbours after other gods? Could an Israelite ever be guilty of such impiety? Could a man of sense ever be guilty of such absurdity? We see it in our own day, and therefore may think it the less strange; multitudes that profess both learning and religion yet exciting both themselves and others, not only to worship God by images, but to give divine honour to saints and angels, which is no better than going after other gods to serve them; such is the power of strong delusions.

2. It is yet more strange that the sign or wonder given for the confirmation of this false doctrine should come to pass. Can it be thought that God himself should give any countenance to such a vile proceeding? Did ever a false prophet work a true miracle? It is only supposed here for two reasons:--

(1.) To strengthen the caution here given against hearkening to such a one. "Though it were possible that he should work a true miracle, yet you must not believe him if he tell you that you must serve other gods, for the divine law against that is certainly perpetual and unalterable." The supposition is like that in Ga 1:8, If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you--which does not prove it possible that an angel should preach another gospel, but strongly expresses the certainty and perpetuity of that which we have received. So here,

(2.) It is to fortify them against the danger of impostures and lying wonders (2Th 2:9): "Suppose the credentials he produces be so artfully counterfeited that you cannot discern the cheat, nor disprove them, yet, if they are intended to draw you to the service of other gods, that alone is sufficient to disprove them; no evidence can be admitted against so clear a truth as that of the unity of the Godhead, and so plain a law as that of worshipping the one only living and true God." We cannot suppose that the God of truth should set his seal of miracles to a lie, to so gross a lie as is supposed in that temptation, Let us go after other gods. But if it be asked, Why is this false prophet permitted to counterfeit this broad seal? It is answered here (De 13:3): "The Lord you God proveth you. He suffers you to be set upon by such a temptation to try your constancy, that both those that are perfect and those that are false and corrupt may be made manifest. It is to prove you; therefore see that you acquit yourselves well in the trial, and stand your ground."

II. Here is a very necessary charge given in this case,

1. Not to yield to the temptation: "Thou shalt not hearken to the worlds of that prophet, De 13:3. Not only thou shalt not do the thing he tempts thee to, but thou shalt not so much as patiently hear the temptation, but reject it with the utmost disdain and detestation. Such a suggestion as this is not to be

so much as parleyed with, but the ear must be stopped against it. Get thee behind me, Satan." Some temptations are so grossly vile that they will not bear a debate, nor may we so much as give them the hearing. What follows (De 13:4), You shall walk after the Lord, may be looked upon,

(1.) As prescribing a preservative from the temptation: "Keep close to your duty, and you keep out of harm's way. God never leaves us till we leave him." Or,

(2.) As furnishing us with an answer to the temptation; say, "It is written, Thou shalt walk after the Lord, and cleave unto him; and therefore what have I to do with idols?"

2. Not to spare the tempter, De 13:5. That prophet shall be put to death, both to punish him for the attempt he has made (the seducer must die, though none were seduced by him--a design upon the crown is treason) and to prevent his doing further mischief. This is called putting away the evil. There is no way of removing the guilt but by removing the guilty; if such a criminal be not punished, those that should punish him make themselves responsible. And thus the mischief must be put away; the infection must be kept from spreading by cutting off the gangrened limb, and putting away the mischief-makers. such Dangerous diseases as these must be taken in time.

4 Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

5 And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn *you* away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

6 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which *is* as thine own soul,

entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which
thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;
7 *namely,* of the gods of the people which *are* round about you, nigh
unto thee, or far off from thee, from the *one* end of the earth even
unto the *other* end of the earth;
8 thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither
shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt
thou conceal him:

Further provision is made by this branch of the statute against receiving the infection of idolatry from those that are near and dear to us.

I. It is the policy of the tempter to send his solicitations by the hand of those whom we love, whom we least suspect of any ill design upon us, and whom we are desirous to please and apt to conform ourselves to. The enticement here is supposed to come from a brother or child that are near by nature, from a wife or friend that are near by choice, and are to us as our own souls, De 13:6. Satan tempted Adam by Eve and Christ by Peter.

We are therefore concerned to stand upon our guard against a bad proposal when the person that makes it can pretend to an interest in us, that we many never sin against God in compliment to the best friend we have in the world. The temptation is supposed to be private: he will entice thee secretly, implying that idolatry is a work of darkness, which dreads the light and covets to be concealed, and in which the sinner promises himself, and the tempter promises him, secrecy and security. Concerning the false gods proposed to be served,

1 The tempter suggests that the worshipping of these gods was the common practice of the world; and, if they limited their adorations to an invisible Deity, they were singular, and like nobody, for these gods were the gods of the people round about them, and indeed of all the nations of the earth, De 13:7. This suggestion draws many away from religion and

godliness, that it is an unfashionable thing; and they make their court to the world and the flesh because these are the gods of the people that are round about them.

2. Moses suggests, in opposition to this, that it had not been the practice of their ancestors; they are gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers. Those that are born of godly parents, and have been educated in pious exercises, when they are enticed to a vain, loose, careless way of living should remember that those are ways which they have not known, they nor their fathers. And will they thus degenerate?

II. It is our duty to prefer God and religion before the best friends we have in the world.

1. We must not, in complaisance to our friends, break God's law (De 13:8): "Thou shalt not consent to him. nor go with him to his idolatrous worship, no, not for company, or curiosity, or to gain a better interest in is affections." It is a general rule, If sinners entice thee, consent thou not, Pr 1:10.

2. We must not, in compassion to our friends, obstruct the course of God's justice. He that attempts such a thing must not only be looked upon as an enemy, or dangerous person, whom one should be afraid of, and swear the peace against, but as a criminal or traitor, whom, in zeal for our sovereign Lord, his crown and dignity, we are bound to inform against, and cannot conceal without incurring the guilt of a great misprision (De 13:9):

Thou shalt surely kill him. By this law the persons enticed were bound to the seducer, and to give evidence against him before the proper judges, that he might suffer the penalty of the law, and that without delay, which the Jews say is here intended in that phrase, as it is in the Hebrew, killing thou shalt kill him. Neither the prosecution nor the execution must be deferred; and he that was first in the former must be first in the latter, to show that he stood to his testimony: "Thy hand

shall be first upon him, to mark him out as an anathema, and then the hands of all the people, to put him away as an accursed thing."

The death he must die was that which was looked upon among the Jews as the severest of all deaths. He must be stoned: and his accusation written is that he has sought to thrust thee away, by a kind of violence, from the Lord they God, De 13:10. Those are certainly our worst enemies that would thrust us from God, our best friend; and whatever draws us to sin, separates between us and God, is a design upon our life, and to be resented accordingly, And, lastly, here is the good effect of this necessary execution (De 13:11): All Israel shall hear and fear. They ought to hear and fear; for the punishment of crimes committed is designed in terrorem--to terrify, and so to prevent their repetition. And it is to be hoped they will hear and fear, and by the severity of the punishment, especially when it is at the prosecution of a father, a brother, or a friend, will be made to conceive a horror of the sin, as exceedingly sinful, and to be afraid of incurring the like punishment themselves. Smite the scorner that sins presumptuously, and the simple, that is in danger of sinning carelessly, will beware.

9 but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to
put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.
10 And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath
sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought
thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.
11 And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such
wickedness as this is among you.
12 If thou shalt hear *say* in one of thy cities, which the Lord thy
God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,
13 *Certain* men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you,
and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go
and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

14 then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, *if it be* truth, *and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought among you;

15 thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that *is* therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

Here the case is put of a city revolting from its allegiance to the God of Israel, and serving other gods.

I The crime is supposed to be committed,

1. By one of the cities of Israel, that lay within the jurisdiction of their courts. The church then judged those only that were within, 1Co 5:12,13. And, even when they were ordered to preserve their religion in the first principles of it by fire and sword to propagate it. Those that are born within the allegiance of a prince, if they take up arms against him, are dealt with as traitors, but foreign invaders are not so. The city that is here supposed to have become idolatrous is one that formerly worshipped the true God, but had now withdrawn to other gods, which intimates how great the crime is, and how sore the punishment will be, of those that, after they have known the way of righteousness, turn aside from it, 2Pe 2:21.

2. It is supposed to be committed by the generality of the inhabitants of the city, for we may conclude that, if a considerable number did retain their integrity, those only that were guilty were to be destroyed, and the city was to be spared for the sake of the righteous in it; for will not the Judge of all the earth do right? No doubt he will.

3. They are supposed to be drawn to idolatry by certain men, the children of Belial, men that would endure no yoke (so it signifies), that neither fear God nor regard man, but shake off all restraints of law and conscience, and are perfectly lost to all manner of virtue; these are those that say, "Let us serve other gods," that will not only allow, but will countenance and encourage, our immoralities. Belial is put for the devil

(2Co 6:15), and the children of Belial are his children. These withdraw the inhabitants of the city; for a little of this old leaven, when it is entertained, soon leavens the whole lump.

II The cause is ordered to be tried with a great deal of care (De 13:14): Thou shalt enquire and make search. They must not proceed upon common fame, or take the information by hearsay, but must examine the proofs, and not give judgment against them unless the evidence was clear and the charge fully made out. God himself, before he destroyed Sodom, is said to have come down to see whether its crimes were according to the clamour, Ge 18:21. In judicial processes it is requisite that time, and care, and pains, be taken to find out the truth, and that search be made without any passion, prejudice, or partiality.

The Jewish writers say that, though particular persons who were idolaters might be judged by the inferior courts, the defection of a city was to be tried by the great Sanhedrim; and, if it appeared that they were thrust away to idolatry, two learned men were sent to them to admonish and reclaim them. If they repented, all would be well; if not, then all Israel must go up to war against them, to testify their indignation against idolatry and to stop the spreading of the contagion.

III. If the crime were proved, and the criminals were incorrigible, the city was to be wholly destroyed. If there were a few righteous men in it, no doubt they would remove themselves and their families out of such a dangerous place, and then all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, must be put to the sword (De 13:15), all the spoil of the city, both shop-goods and the furniture of houses, must be brought into the marketplace and burned, and the city itself must be laid in ashes and never built again, De 13:16. The soldiers are forbidden, upon pain of death, to convert any of the plunder to their own use, De 13:17. It was a devoted thing, and dangerous to meddle with, as we find in the case of Achan. Now,

1. God enjoins this severity of show what a jealous God he is in the matters of his worship, and how great a crime it is to serve other gods. Let men know that God will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images.

2. He expects that magistrates, having their honour and power from him, should be concerned for his honour, and use their power for terror to evil doers, else they bear the sword in vain.

3. The faithful worshippers of the true God must take all occasions to show their just indignation against idolatry, much more against atheism, infidelity, and irreligion.

4. It is here intimated that the best expedient for the turning away of God's anger from a land is to execute justice upon the wicked of the land (De 13:17), that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, which was ready to break out against the whole nation, for the wickedness of that one apostate city. It is promised that, if they would thus root wickedness out of their land, God would multiply them. They might think it impolitic, and against the interest of their nation, to ruin a whole city for a crime relating purely to religion, and that they should be more sparing of the blood of Israelites: "Fear not the" (says Moses), "God will multiply you the more; the body of your nation will lose nothing by the letting out of this corrupt blood."

Lastly, Though we do not find this law put in execution in all the history of the Jewish church (Gibeah was destroyed, not for idolatry, but immorality), yet for the neglect of the execution of it upon the inferior cities that served idols God himself, by the army of the Chaldeans, put it in execution upon Jerusalem, the head city, which, for is apostasy from God, was utterly destroyed and laid waste, and lay in ruins seventy years. Though idolaters may escape punishment from men (nor is this law in the letter of it binding now, under the

gospel), yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgements. The New Testament speaks of communion with idolaters as a sin which, above any other, provokes the Lord to jealousy, and dares him as if we were stronger than he, 1Co 10:21,22.

16 And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the Lord thy God: and it shall be a heap for ever; it shall not be built again.
17 And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;
18 when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do *that which is* right in the eyes of the Lord thy God.

Deuteronomy-14

1 Ye *are* the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.
2 For thou *art* a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that *are* upon the earth.

Clean and Unclean Food

3 Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.
4 These *are* the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat,
5 the hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois.
6 And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, *and* cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat.
7 Nevertheless these ye shall not eat, of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; *as* the camel, and the hare, and the

coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; *therefore* they *are* unclean unto you.

Moses here tells the people of Israel,

I. How God had dignified them, as a peculiar people, with three distinguishing privileges, which were their honour, and figures of those spiritual blessings in heavenly things with which God has in Christ blessed us.

1. Here is election: The Lord hath chosen thee, De 14:2. Not for their own merit, nor for any good works foreseen, but because he would magnify the riches of his power and grace among them. He did not choose them because they were by their own dedication and subjection a peculiar people to him above other nations, but he chose them that they might be so by his grace; and thus were believers chosen, Eph 1:4.

2. Here is adoption (De 14:1): "You are the children of the Lord your God, formed by him into a people, owned by him as his people, nay, his family, a people near unto him, nearer than any other."

Israel is my son, my first-born; not because he needed children, but because they were orphans, and needed a father. Every Israelite is indeed a child of God, a partaker of his nature and favour, his love and blessing Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! 3. Here is sanctification (De 14:2): "Thou art a holy people, separated and set apart for God, devoted to his service, designed for his praise, governed by a holy law, graced by a holy tabernacle, and the holy ordinances relating to it." God's people are under the strongest obligations to be holy, and, if they are holy, are indebted to the grace of God that makes them so. The Lord has set them apart for himself, and qualified them for his service and the enjoyment of him, and so has made them holy to himself.

II. How they ought to distinguish themselves by a sober singularity from all the nations that were about them. And, God having thus advanced them, let not them debase themselves by admitting the superstitious customs of idolaters, and, by making themselves like them, put themselves upon the level with them. Be you the children of the Lord your God; so the Seventy read it, as a command, that is, "Carry yourselves as becomes the children of God, and do nothing to disgrace the honour and forfeit the privileges of the relation." In two things particularly they must distinguish themselves:--

1. In their mourning: You shall not cut yourselves, De 14:1. This forbids (as some think), not only their cutting themselves at their funerals, either to express their grief or with their own blood to appease the infernal deities, but their wounding and mangling themselves in the worship of their gods, as Baal's prophets did (1Ki 18:28), or their marking themselves by incisions in their flesh for such and such deities, which in them, above any, would be an inexcusable crime, who in the sign of circumcision bore about with them in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jehovah. So that,

(1.) They are forbidden to deform or hurt their own bodies upon any account. Methinks this is like a parent's change to his little children, that are foolish, careless, and wilful, and are apt to play with knives: Children, you shall not cut yourselves. This is the intention of those commands which oblige us to deny ourselves; the true meaning of them, if we understood them aright, would appear to be, Do yourselves no harm. And this also is the design of those providences which most cross us, to remove from us those things by which we are in danger of doing ourselves harm. Knives are taken from us, lest we should cut ourselves. Those that are dedicated to God as a holy people must do nothing to disfigure themselves; the body is for the Lord, and is to be used accordingly.

(2.) They are forbidden to disturb and afflict their own minds with inordinate grief for the loss of near and dear relations: "You shall not express or exasperate you sorrow, even upon the most mournful occasions, by cutting yourselves, and making baldness between your eyes, like men enraged, or resolvedly hardened in sorrow for the dead, as those that have no hope," 1Th 4:13. It is an excellent passage which Mr. Ainsworth here quotes from one of the Jewish writers, who understands this as a law against immoderate grief for the death of our relations. If your father (for instance) die, you shall not cut yourselves, that is, you shall not sorrow more than is meet, for you are not fatherless, you have a Father, who is great, living, and permanent, even the holy blessed God, whose children you are, De 14:1. But an infidel (says he), when his father dies, hath no father that can help him in time of need; for he hath said to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth (Jer 2:27); therefore he weeps, cuts himself, and makes himself bald. We that have a God to hope in, and a heaven to hope for, must bear up ourselves with that hope under every burden of this kind.

2. They must be singular in their meat. Observe,

(1.) Many sorts of flesh which were wholesome enough, and which other people did commonly eat, they must religiously abstain from as unclean. This law we had before Le 11:2, where it was largely opened. It seems plainly, by the connection here, to be intended as a mark of peculiarity; for their observance of it would cause them to be taken notice of in all mixed companies as a separate people, and would preserve them from mingling themselves with, and conforming themselves to, their idolatrous neighbours.

[1.] Concerning beasts, here is a more particular enumeration of those which they were allowed to eat then was in Leviticus, to show that they had no reason to complain of their being restrained from eating swines' flesh, and hares, and rabbits

(which were all that were then forbidden, but are now commonly used), when they were allowed so great a variety, not only of that which we call butcher's meat (De 14:4), which alone was offered in sacrifice, but of venison, which they had great plenty of in Canaan, the hart, and the roe-buck, and the fallow deer (De 14:5), which, though never brought to God's altar, was allowed them at their own table. See De 12:22. When of all these (as Adam of every tree of the garden) they might freely eat, those were inexcusable who, to gratify a perverse appetite, or (as should seem) in honour of their idols, and in participation of their idolatrous sacrifices, ate swines' flesh, and had broth of abominable things (made so by this law) in their vessels, Isa 65:4.

[2.] Concerning fish there is only one general rule given, that whatsoever had not fins and scales (as shell-fish and eels, besides leeches and other animals in the water that are not proper food) was unclean and forbidden, De 14:9,10.

[3.] No general rule is given concerning fowl, but those are particularly mentioned that were to be unclean to them, and there are few or none of them which are here forbidden that are now commonly eaten; and whatsoever is not expressly forbidden is allowed, De 14:11-20. Of all clean fowls you may eat.

[4.] They are further forbidden, First, To eat the flesh of any creature that died of itself, because the blood was not separated from it, and, besides the ceremonial uncleanness which it lay under (from Le 11:39), it is not wholesome food, nor ordinarily used among us, except by the poor. Secondly, To seethe a kid in its mother's milk, either to gratify their own luxury, supposing it a dainty bit, or in conformity to some superstitious custom of the heathen. The Chaldee paraphrasts read it, Thou shalt not eat flesh--meats and milk--meats together; and so it would forbid the use of butter as sauce to any flesh.

(2.) Now as to all these precepts concerning their food,

[1.] It is plain in the law itself that they belonged only to the Jews, and were not moral, nor of perpetual use, because not of universal obligation; for what they might not eat themselves they might give to a stranger, a proselyte of the gate, that had renounced idolatry, and therefore was permitted to live among them, though not circumcised; or they might sell it to an alien, a mere Gentile, that came into their country for trade, but might not settle it, De 14:21. They might feed upon that which an Israelite might not touch, which is a plain instance of their peculiarity, and their being a holy people.

[2.] It is plain in the gospel that they are now antiquated and repealed. For every creature of God is good, and nothing now to be refused, or called common and unclean, 1Ti 4:4.

8 And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the
cud, it *is* unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch
their dead carcass.
9 These ye shall eat, of all that *are* in the waters: all that have fins
and scales shall ye eat:
10 and whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it *is*
unclean unto you.
11 *Of* all clean birds ye shall eat.
12 But these *are they* of which ye shall not eat: the eagle, and the
ossifrage, and the ospray,
13 and the glede, and the kite, and the vulture after his kind,
14 and every raven after his kind,
15 and the owl, and the nighthawk, and the cuckoo, and the hawk
after his kind,
16 the little owl, and the great owl, and the swan,
17 and the pelican, and the gier-eagle, and the cormorant,
18 and the stork, and the heron after her kind, and the lapwing, and
the bat.
19 And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you: they shall
not be eaten.
20 *But of* all clean fowls ye may eat.

21 Ye shall not eat *of* any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that *is* in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou *art* a holy people unto the Lord thy God.
Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

The Law of the Tithe

22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.
23 And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.
24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; *or* if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee:

We have here a part of the statute concerning tithes. The productions of the ground were twice tithed, so that, putting both together, a fifth part was devoted to God out of their increase, and only four parts of five were for their own common use; and they could not but own they paid an easy rent, especially since God's part was disposed of to their own benefit and advantage. The first tithe was for the maintenance of their Levites, who taught them the good knowledge of God, and ministered to them in holy things; this is supposed as anciently due, and is entailed upon the Levites as an inheritance, by that law, Nu 18:24, &c. But it is the second tithe that is here spoken of, which was to be taken out of the remainder when the Levites had had theirs.

I. They are here charged to separate it, and set it apart for God: Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of the seed, De 14:22. The Levites took care of their own, but the separating of this

was left to the owners themselves, the law encouraging them to be honest by reposing a confidence in them, and so trying their fear of God. They are commanded to tithe truly, that is, to be sure to do it, and to do it faithfully and carefully, that God's part might not be diminished either with design or by oversight. Note, We must be sure to give God his full dues out of our estates; for, being but stewards of them, it is required that we be faithful, as those that must give account.

II. They are here directed how to dispose of it when they had separated it. Let every man lay by as God prospers him and gives him success, and then let him lay out in pious uses as God gives him opportunity; and it will be the easier to lay out, and the proportion will be more satisfying, when first we have laid by. This second tithe may be disposed of,

1. In works of piety, for the first two years after the year of release. They must bring it up, either in kind or in the full value of it, to the place of the sanctuary, and there must spend it in holy feasting before the Lord. If they could do it with any convenience, they must bring it in kind (De 14:23); but, if not, they might turn it into money (De 14:24,25), and that money must be laid out in something to feast upon before the Lord. The comfortable cheerful using of what God has given us, with temperance and sobriety, is really the honouring of God with it. Contentment, holy joy, and thankfulness, make every meal a religious feast. The end of this law we have (De 14:23): That thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always; it was to keep them right and firm to their religion,

(1.) By acquainting them with the sanctuary, the holy things, and the solemn services that were there performed. What they read the appointment of their Bibles, it would do them good to see the observance of in the tabernacle; it would make a deeper impression upon them, which would keep them out of the snares of the idolatrous customs. Note, It will have a good influence upon our constancy in religion never to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, Heb 10:25. By the comfort

of the communion of saints, we may be kept to our communion with God.

(2.) By using them to the most pleasant and delightful services of religion. Let them rejoice before the Lord, that they may learn to fear him always. The more pleasure we find in the ways of religion the more likely we shall be to persevere in those ways. One thing they must remember in their pious entertainments--to bid their Levites welcome to them. Thou shalt not forsake the Levites (De 14:27): "Let him never be a stranger to thy table, especially when thou eatest before the Lord."

2. Every third year this tithe must be disposed of at home in works of charity (De 14:28,29): Lay it up within they own gates, and let it be given to the poor, who, knowing the provision this law had made for them, no doubt would come to seek it; and, that they might make the poor familiar to them and not disdain their company, they are here directed to welcome them to their houses. "Thither let them come, and eat and be satisfied." In this charitable distribution of the second tithe they must have an eye to the poor ministers and add to their encouragement by entertaining them, then to poor strangers (not only for the supply of their necessities, but to put a respect upon them, and so to invite them to turn proselytes), and then to the fatherless and widow, who, though perhaps they might have a competent maintenance left them, yet could not be supposed to live so plentifully and comfortably as they had done in months past, and therefore they were to countenance them, and help to make them easy by inviting them to this entertainment.

God has a particular care for widows and fatherless, and he requires that we should have the same. It is his honour, and will be ours, to help the helpless. And if we thus serve God, and do good with what we have, it is promised here that the Lord our God will bless us in all the work of our hand. Note,

(1.) The blessing of God is all in all to our outward prosperity, and, without that blessing, the work of our hands which we do will bring nothing to pass.

(2.) The way to obtain that blessing is to be diligent and charitable. The blessing descends upon the working hand: "Except not that God should bless thee in thy idleness and love of ease, but in all the work of the hand." It is the hand of the diligent, with the blessing of God upon it, that makes rich, Pr 10:4,22. And it descends upon the giving hand; he that thus scatters certainly increases, and the liberal soul will be made fat. It is an undoubted truth, though little believed, that to be charitable to the poor, and to be free and generous in the support of religion and any good work, is the surest and safest way of thriving. What is lent to the Lord will be repaid with abundant interest. See Eze 44:30.

25 then shalt thou turn *it* into money, and bind up the money in thine
hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall
choose:
26 and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth
after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for
whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the
Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,
27 and the Levite that *is* within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him:
for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.
28 At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of
thine increase the same year, and shalt lay *it* up within thy gates:
29 and the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,)
and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which *are*
within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the
Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which
thou doest.

Deuteronomy-15

The Year of Release

1 At the end of *every* seven years thou shalt make a release.
2 And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth
aught unto his neighbor shall release *it;* he shall not exact *it* of his
neighbor, or of his brother; because it is called the Lord's release.
3 Of a foreigner thou mayest exact *it again:* but *that* which is thine
with thy brother thine hand shall release;
4 save when there shall be no poor among you; for the Lord shall
greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee
for an inheritance to possess it:
5 only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God,
to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee
this day.
6 For the Lord thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou
shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou
shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.

Lending to the Poor

7 If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within
any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee,
thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy
poor brother:

Here is,

I. A law for the relief of poor debtors, such (we may suppose) as were insolvent. Every seventh year was a year of release, in which the ground rested from being tilled and servants were discharged from their services; and, among other acts of grace, this was one, that those who had borrowed money, and had not been able to pay it before, should this year be released from it; and though, if they were able, they were afterwards

bound in conscience to repay it, yet thenceforth the creditor should never recover it by law. Many good expositors think it only forbids the exacting of the debt in the year of release, because, no harvest being gathered in that year, it could not be expected that men should pay their debts then, but that afterwards it might be sued for and recovered: so that the release did not extinguish the debt, but only stayed the process for a time.

But others think it was a release of the debt for ever, and this seems more probable, yet under certain limitations expressed or implied. It is supposed (De 15:3) that the debtor was an Israelite (an alien could not take the benefit of this law) and that he was poor (De 15:4), that he did not borrow for trade or purchase, but for the subsistence of his family, and that now he could not pay it without reducing himself to poverty and coming under a necessity of seeking relief in other countries, which might be his temptation to revolt from God. The law is not that the creditor shall not receive the debt if the debtor, or his friends for him, can pay it; but he shall not exact it by a legal process. The reasons of this law are,

1. To put an honour upon the sabbatical year: Because it is called the Lord's release, De 15:2. That was Gods year for their land, as the weekly sabbath was God's day for themselves, their servants, and cattle; and, as by the resting of their ground, so by the release of their debts, God would teach them to depend upon his providence. This year of release typified the grace of the gospel, in which is proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, and by which we obtain the release of our debts, that is, the pardon of our sins, and we are taught to forgive injuries, as we are and hope to be forgiven of God.

2. It was to prevent the falling of any Israelite into extreme poverty: so the margin reads (De 15:4), To the end there shall be no poor among you, none miserably and scandalously

poor, to the reproach of their nation and religion, the reputation of which they ought to preserve.

3. God's security is here given by a divine promise that, whatever they lost by their poor debtors, it should be made up to them in the blessing of God upon all they had and did, De 15:4-6. Let them take care to do their duty, and then God would bless them with such great increase that what they might lose by bad debts, if they generously remitted them, should not be missed out of their stock at the year's end. Not only, the Lord shall bless thee (De 15:4), but he doth bless thee, De 15:6. It is altogether inexcusable if, though God had given us abundance, so that we have not only enough but to spare, yet we are rigorous and server in our demands from our poor brethren; for our abundance should be the supply of their wants, that at least there may not be such an inequality as is between two extremes, 2Co 8:14. They must also consider that their land was God's gift to them, that all their increase was the fruit of God's blessing upon them, and therefore they were bound in duty to him to use and dispose of their estates as he should order and direct them.

And, lastly, If they would remit what little sums they had lent to their poor brethren, it is promised that they should be able to lend great sums to their rich neighbours, even to many nations (De 15:6), and should be enriched by those loans. Thus the nations should become subject to them, and dependent on them, as the borrower is servant to the lender, Pr 22:7. To be able to lend, and not to have need to borrow, we must look upon as a great mercy, and a good reason why we should do good with what we have, lest we provoke God to turn the scales.

II. Here is a law in favour of poor borrowers, that they might not suffer damage by the former law. Men would be apt to argue, If the case of a man be so with his debtor that if the debt be not paid before the year of release it shall be lost, it

were better not to lend. "No," says this branch of the statute, "thou shalt not think such a thought."

1. It is taken for granted that there would be poor among them, who would have occasion to borrow (De 15:7), and that there would never cease to be some such objects of charity (De 15:7), and that there would never cease to be some such objects of charity (De 15:11): The poor shall never cease out of thy land, though not such as were reduced to extreme poverty, yet such as would be behind-hand, and would have occasion to borrow; of such poor he here speaks, and such we have always with us, so that a charitable disposition may soon find a charitable occasion.

2. In such a case we are here commanded to lend or give, according to our ability and the necessity of the case: Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand, De 15:7. If the hand be shut, it is a sign the heart is hardened; for, if the clouds were full of rain, they would empty themselves, Ec 11:3. Bowels of compassion would produce liberal distributions, Jam 2:15,16. Thou shalt not only stretch out thy hand to him to reach him something, but thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, to lend him sufficient, De 15:8. Sometimes there is as much charity in prudent lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower to industry and honesty and may put him into a way of helping himself. We are sometimes tempted to think, when an object of charity presents itself, we may choose whether we will give any thing or nothing, little or much; whereas it is here an express precept (De 15:11), I command thee, not only to give, but to open thy hand wide, to give liberally.

3. Here is a caveat against that objection which might arise against charitable lending from the foregoing law for the release of debts (De 15:9): Beware that there be not a thought, a covetous ill-natured thought, in thy Belial heart, "The year of release is at hand, and therefore I will not lend what I must then be sure to lose;" lest thy poor brother, whom thou

refusest to lend to, complain to God, and it will be a sin, a great sin, to thee. Note,

(1.) The law is spiritual and lays a restraint upon the thoughts of the heart. We mistake if we think thoughts are free from the divine cognizance and check.

(2.) That is a wicked heart indeed that raises evil thoughts from the good law of God, as theirs did who, because God had obliged them to the charity of forgiving, denied the charity of giving.

(3.) We must carefully watch against all those secret suggestions which would divert us from our duty or discourage us in it. Those that would keep from the act of sin must keep out of their minds the very thought of sin.

(4.) When we have an occasion of charitable lending, if we cannot trust the borrower, we must trust God, and lend, hoping for nothing again in this world, but expecting it will be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, Lu 6:35,14:14.

(5.) It is a dreadful thing to have the cry of the poor against us, for God has his ear open to that cry, and, in compassion to them, will be sue to reckon with those that deal hardly with them.

(6.) That which we think is our prudence often proves sin to us; he that refused to lend because the year of release was at hand thought he did wisely, and that men would praise him as doing well for himself, Ps 49:18. But he is here told that he did wickedly, and that God would condemn him as doing ill to his brother; and we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that what he says is sin to us will certainly be ruin to us if it be not repented of.

8 but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely
lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth.

9 Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

10 Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

Here is a command to give cheerfully whatever we give in charity: "Thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest, De 15:10. Be not loth to part with thy money on so good an account, nor think it lost; grudge not a kindness to they brother; and distrust not the providence of God, as if thou shouldest want that thyself which thou givest in charity; but, on the contrary, let it be a pleasure and a satisfaction of soul to thee to think that thou art honouring God with thy substance, doing good, making thy brother easy, and laying up for thyself a good security for the time to come. What thou doest do freely, for God loves a cheerful giver," 2Co 9:7.

Here is a promise of a recompence in this life: "For this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee." Covetous people say "Giving undoes us;" no, giving cheerfully in charity will enrich us, it will fill the barns with plenty (Pr 3:10) and the soul with true comfort, Isa 58:10,11.

11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

The Treatment of Servants

12 *And* if thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

13 And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

14 thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: *of that* wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

15 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today.

Here is,

I. A repetition of the law that had been given concerning Hebrew servants who had sold themselves for servants, or were sold by their parents through extreme poverty, or were sold by the court of judgment for some crime committed. The law was,

1. That they should serve but six years, and in the seventh should go out free, De 15:12. Compare Ex 21:2. And, if the year of jubilee happened before they served out their time, that would be their discharge. God's Israel were a free people, and must not be compelled to perpetual slavery; thus are God's spiritual Israel called unto liberty.

2. That if, when their six years' service had expired, they had no mind to go out free, but would rather continue in service, as having less care, though taking more pains, than their masters, in this case they must lay themselves under an obligation to serve for ever, that is, for life, by having their ears bored to the door-posts, De 15:16,17. Compare Ex 21:6. If hereby a man disgraced himself with some, as of a mean and servile spirit, that had not a due sense of the honour and pleasure of liberty, yet, we may suppose, with others he got reputation, as of a quiet contented spirit, humble, and diligent, and loving, and not given to change.

II. Here is an addition to this law, requiring them to put some small stock into their servants' hands to set up with for themselves, when they sent them out of their service, De 15:13,14. It was to be supposed that they had nothing of their own, and that their friends had little or nothing for them, else they else they would have been redeemed before they were discharged by law; they had no wages for their service, and

all they got by their labour was their masters', so that their liberty would do them little good, having nothing to begin the world with; therefore their masters are here commanded to furnish them liberally with corn and cattle. No certain measure is prescribed: that is left to the generosity of the master, who probably would have respect to the servant's merit and necessity; but the Jewish writers say, "He could not give less than the value of thirty shekels of silver, but as much more as he pleased" The maid-servants, though they were not to have their ears bored if they were disposed to stay, yet, if they went out free, they were to have a gratuity given them; for to this those words refer, Unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise, De 15:17. The reasons for this are taken from the law of gratitude. They must do it,

1. In gratitude to God, who had not only brought them out of Egypt (De 15:15), but brought them out greatly enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. Let them not send their servants out empty, for they were not sent empty out of the house of bondage. God's tender care of us and kindness to us oblige us to be careful of, and kind to, those that have a dependence upon us. Thus we must render according to the benefit done unto us.

2. In gratitude to their servants, De 15:18. "Grudge not to give him a little out of thy abundance, for he has been worth a double hired servant unto thee. The days of the hireling at most were but three years (Isa 16:14), but he has served thee six years, and, unlike the hired servant, without any wages." Masters and landlords ought to consider what need they have of, and what ease and advantage they have by, their servants and tenants, and should not only be just but kind to them. To these reasons it is added, as before in this chapter (De 15:4,6,10), The Lord they God shall bless thee. Then we may expect family blessings, the springs of family-prosperity, when we make conscience of our duty to our family-relations.

16 And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee;
because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with
thee;
17 then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust *it* through his ear unto the
door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy
maidservant thou shalt do likewise.
18 It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free
from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant *to thee,* in
serving thee six years: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all
that thou doest.

The Consecration of Firstlings

19 All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou
shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work with
the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.
20 Thou shalt eat *it* before the Lord thy God year by year in the place
which the Lord shall choose, thou and thy household.

Here is,

1. A repetition of the law concerning the firstlings of their cattle, that, if they were males, they were to be sanctified to the Lord (De 15:19), in remembrance of, and in thankfulness for, the sparing of the first-born of Israel, when the first-born of the Egyptians, both of man and beast, were slain by the destroying angel (Ex 13:2,15); on the eighth day it was to be given to God (Ex 22:30), and to be divided between the priest and the altar, Nu 18:17,18.

2. An addition to that law, for the further explication of it, directing them what to do with the firstlings,

(1.) That were females: "Thou shalt do no work with the female firstlings of the cow, nor shear those of the sheep" (De 15:19); of them the learned bishop Patrick understands it. Though the female firstlings were not so entirely sanctified to God as the males, nor so early as at eight days old, yet they were not to be converted by the owners to their own use as

the other cattle, but must be offered to God as peace-offerings, or used in a religious feast, at the year's end, De 15:20. Thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God, as directed De 12:18.

(2.) But what must they do with that which was blemished, ill-blemished? De 15:21. Were it male or female, it must not be brought near the sanctuary, nor used either for sacrifice or for holy feasting, for it would not be fit to honour God with, nor to typify Christ, who is a Lamb without blemish; yet it must not be reared, but killed and eaten at their own houses as common food (De 15:22), only they must be sure not to eat it with the blood, De 15:23. The frequent repetition of this caution intimates what need the people had of it, and what stress God laid upon it.

What a mercy it is that we are not under this yoke! We are not dieted as they were; we make no difference between a first calf, or lamb, and the rest that follow. Let us therefore realize the gospel meaning of this law, devoting ourselves and the first of our time and strength to God, as a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, and using all our comforts and enjoyments to his praise and under the direction of his law, as we have them all by his gift.

21 And if there be *any* blemish therein, *as if it be* lame, or blind, or *have* any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the Lord thy God.
22 Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean *person shall eat it* alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart.
23 Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

Deuteronomy-16

The Three Appointed Feasts

1 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover unto the Lord
thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee
forth out of Egypt by night.
2 Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God,
of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose
to place his name there.
3 Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat
unleavened bread therewith, *even* the bread of affliction; for thou
camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest
remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt
all the days of thy life.
4 And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast
seven days; neither shall there *any thing* of the flesh, which thou
sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the
morning.
5 Thou mayest not sacrifice the Passover within any of thy gates,
which the Lord thy God giveth thee:

Much of the communion between God and his people Israel was kept up, and a face of religion preserved in the nation, by the three yearly feasts, the institution of which, and the laws concerning them, we have several times met with already; and here they are repeated.

I The law of the Passover, so great a solemnity that it made the whole month, in the midst of which it was placed, considerable: Observe the month Abib, De 16:1. Though one week only of this month was to be kept as a festival, yet their preparations before must be so solemn, and their reflections upon it and improvements of it afterwards so serious, as to amount to an observance of the whole month.

The month of Abib, or of new fruits, as the Chaldee translates it, answers to our March (or part of March and part of April), and was by a special order from God, in remembrance of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, made the beginning of their year (Ex 12:2), which before was reckoned to begin in September. This month they were to keep the Passover, in remembrance of their being brought out of Egypt by night, De 16:1 The Chaldee paraphrasts expound it, "Because they came out of Egypt by daylight," there being an express order that they should not stir out of their doors till morning, Ex 12:22. One of them expounds it thus: "He brought thee out of Egypt, and did wonders by night." The other, "and thou shalt eat the Passover by night." The laws concerning it are,

1. That they must be sure to sacrifice the Passover in the place that God should choose (De 16:2), and in no other place, De 16:5-7. The Passover was itself a sacrifice; hence Christ, as our Passover, is said to be sacrificed for us (1Co 5:7), and many other sacrifices were offered during the seven days of the feast (Nu 28:19, &c.), which are included here, for they are said to be sacrificed of the flock and the herd, whereas the Passover itself was only of the flock, either a lamb or a kid: now no sacrifice was accepted but from the altar that sanctified it; it was therefore necessary that they should to up to the place of the altar, for, though the paschal lamb was entirely eaten by the owners, yet it must be killed in the court, the blood sprinkled, and the inwards burned upon the altar. By confining them to the appointed rule, from which they would have been apt to vary, and to introduce foolish inventions of their own, had they been permitted to offer these sacrifices within their own gates, from under the inspection of the priests.

They were also hereby directed to have their eye up unto God in the solemnity, and the desire of their hearts towards the remembrance of his name, being appointed to attend where he had chosen to place his name, De 16:2,6. But, when the solemnity was over, they might turn and go unto their tents,

De 16:7. Some think that they might, if they pleased, return the very morning after the paschal lamb was killed and eaten, the priests and Levites being sufficient to carry on the rest of the week's work; but the first day of the seven is so far from being the day of their dispersion that it is expressly appointed for a holy convocation (Le 23:7,Nu 28:18); therefore we must take it as Jonathan's paraphrase expounds it, in the morning after the end of the feast thou shalt go to thy cities. And it was the practice to keep together the whole week, 2Ch 35:17.

2. That they must eat unleavened bread for seven days, and no leavened bread must be seen in all their coasts, De 16:3,4,8. The bread they were confined to is here called bread of affliction, because neither grateful to the taste nor easy of digestion, and therefore proper to signify the heaviness of their spirits in their bondage and to keep in remembrance the haste in which they came out, the case being so urgent that they could not stay for the leavening of the bread they took with them for their march. The Jewish writers tell us that the custom at the Passover supper was that the master of the family broke this unleavened bread, and gave to every one a piece of it, saying, This is (that is, this signifies, represents, or commemorates, which explains that saying of our Saviour, This is my body) the bread of affliction which your fathers did eat in the land of Egypt. The gospel meaning of this feast of unleavened bread the apostle gives us, 1Co 5:7. Christ our Passover being sacrificed for us, and we having participated in the blessed fruits of that sacrifice to our comfort, let us keep the feast in a holy conversation, free from the leaven of malice towards our brethren and hypocrisy towards God, and with the unleavened bread of sincerity and love. Lastly, Observe, concerning the Passover, for what end it was instituted: "That thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of Egypt, not only on the day of the Passover, or during the seven days of the feast, but all the days of thy life (De 16:3), as a constant inducement to obedience." Thus we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death at certain times,

that we may remember it at all times, as a reason why we should live to him that died for us and rose again.

II. Seven weeks after the Passover the feast of pentecost was to be observed, concerning which they are here directed,

1. Whence to number their seven weeks, from the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn (De 16:9), that is, from the morrow after the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, for on that day (though it is probable the people did not begin their harvest till the feast was ended) messengers were sent to reap a sheaf of barley, which was to be offered to God as the first-fruits, Le 23:10. Some think it implies a particular care which Providence would take of their land with respect to the weather, that their harvest should be always ripe and ready for the sickle just at the same time.

2. How they were to keep this feast.

(1.) They must bring an offering unto God, De 16:10. It is here called a tribute of a free-will-offering. It was required of them as a tribute to their Sovereign Lord and owner, under whom they held all they had; and yet because the law did not determine the quantum, but it was left to every man's generosity to bring what he chose, and whatever he brought he must give cheerfully, it is therefore called a free-will offering. It was a grateful acknowledgment of the goodness of God to them in the mercies of these corn-harvests now finished, and therefore must be according as God had blessed them. Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly.

(2.) They must rejoice before God, De 16:11. Holy joy is the heart and soul of thankful praises, which are as the language and expression of holy joy. They must rejoice in their receivings from God, and in their returns of service and sacrifice to him; our duty must be our delight as well as our enjoyments. They must have their very servants to rejoice

with them, "for remember (De 16:12) that thou wast a bondman, and wouldest have been very thankful if thy taskmasters would have given thee some time and cause for rejoicing; and thy God did bring thee out to keep a feast with gladness; therefore be pleasant with thy servants, and make them easy." And, it should seem, those general words, thou shalt observe and do these statutes, are added here for a particular reason, because this feast was kept in remembrance of the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai, fifty days after they came out of Egypt; now the best way of expressing our thankfulness to God for his favour to us in giving us his law is to observe and do according to the precepts of it.

III. They must keep the feast of tabernacles, De 16:13-15. Here is no repetition of the law concerning the sacrifices that were to be offered in great abundance at this feast (which we had at large, 29:12, &c.), because the care of these belonged to the priests and Levites, who had not so much need of a repetition as the people had, and because the spiritual part of the service, which consisted in holy joy, was most pleasing to God, and was to be the perpetual duty of a gospel conversation, of which this feast was typical. Observe what stress is laid upon it here: Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast (De 16:14), and, because the Lord shall bless thee, thou shalt surely rejoice, De 16:15. Note,

1. It is the will of God that his people should be a cheerful people. If those that were under the law must rejoice before God, much more must we that are under the grace of the gospel, which makes it our duty, not only as here to rejoice in our feasts, but to rejoice evermore, to rejoice in the Lord always.

2. When we rejoice in God ourselves we should do what we can to assist others also to rejoice in him, by comforting the mourners and supplying the necessitous, that even the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow may rejoice with us. See Job 29:13. 3. We must rejoice in God, not only because

of what we have received and are receiving from him daily, but because of what he has promised, and we expect to receive yet further from him: because he shall bless thee, therefore thou shalt rejoice. Those that make God their joy may rejoice in hope, for he is faithful that has promised.

IV. The laws concerning the three solemn feasts are summed up (De 16:16,17), as often before, Ex 23:16,34:23. The general commands concerning them are,

1. That all the males must then make their personal appearance before God, that by their frequent meeting to worship God, at the same place, and by the same rule, they might be kept faithful and constant to that holy religion which was established among them.

2. That none must appear before God empty, but every man must bring some offering or other, in token of a dependence upon God and gratitude to him. And God was not unreasonable in his demands; let every man but give as he was able, and no more was expected. The same is still the rule of charity, 1Co 16:2. Those that give to their power shall be accepted, but those that give beyond their power are accounted worthy of double honour (2Co 8:3), as the poor widow that gave all she had, Lu 21:4.

6 but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his
name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going
down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.
7 And thou shalt roast and eat *it* in the place which the Lord thy God
shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy
tents.
8 Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day
shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no
work *therein*.
9 Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the
seven weeks from *such time as* thou beginnest *to put* the sickle to the
corn.
10 And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God

with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt
give *unto the* Lord *thy God*, according as the Lord thy God hath
blessed thee:
11 and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son,
and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and
the Levite that *is* within thy gates, and the stranger, and the
fatherless, and the widow, that *are* among you, in the place which
the Lord thy God hath chosen to place his name there.
12 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and
thou shalt observe and do these statutes.
13 Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that
thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:
14 and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy
daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the
Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are*
within thy gates.
15 Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God
in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy
God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of
thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.
16 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord
thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of
unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of
tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty:
17 every man shall *give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the
Lord thy God which he hath given thee.

The Administration of Justice

18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which
the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they
shall judge the people with just judgment.

Here is, care taken for the due administration of justice among them, that controversies might be determined, matters in variance adjusted, the injured redressed, and the injurious punished. While they were encamped in the wilderness, they had judges and officers according to their numbers, rulers of

thousands and hundreds, Ex 17:25. When they came to Canaan, they must have them according to their towns and cities, in all their gates; for the courts of judgment sat in the gates. Now,

1. Here is a commission given to these inferior magistrates: "Judges to try and pass sentence, and officers to execute their sentences, shalt thou make thee." However the persons were pitched upon, whether by the nomination of their sovereign or by the election of the people, the power were ordained of God, Ro 13:1. And it was a great mercy to the people thus to have justice brought to their doors, that it might be more expeditious and less expensive, a blessing which we of this nation ought to be very thankful for. Pursuant to this law, besides the great sanhedrim that sat at the sanctuary, consisting of seventy elders and a president, there was in the larger cities, such as had in them above 120 families, a court of twenty-three judges, in the smaller cities a court of three judges. See this law revived by Jehoshaphat, 2Ch 19:5,8.

2. Here is a command given to these magistrates to do justice in the execution of the trust reposed in them. Better not judge at all than not judge with just judgment, according to the direction of the law and the evidence of the fact.

(1.) The judges are here cautioned not to do wrong to any (De 16:19), nor to take any gifts, which would tempt them to do wrong. This law had been given before, Ex 23:8.

(2.) They are charged to do justice to all: "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, De 16:20. Adhere to the principles of justice, act by the rules of justice, countenance the demands of justice, imitate the patterns of justice, and pursue with resolution that which appears to be just. Justice, justice, shalt thou follow." This is that which the magistrate is to have in his eye, on this he must be intent, and to this all personal regards must be sacrificed, to do right to all and wrong to none.

19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.
20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
21 Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee.

Care taken for the preventing of all conformity to the idolatrous customs of the heathen, De 16:21,22. They must not only not join with the idolaters in their worships, not visit their groves, nor bow before the images which they had set up, but,

1. They must not plant a grove, nor so much as a tree, near God's altar lest they should make it look like the altars of the false gods. They made groves the places of their worship either to make it secret (but that which is true and good desires the light rather), or to make it solemn, but the worship of the true God has enough in itself to make it so and needs not the advantage of such a circumstance.

2. They must not set up any image, statue, or pillar, to the honour of God, for it is a thing which the Lord hates; nothing belies or reproaches him more, or tends more to corrupt and debauch the minds of men, than representing and worshipping by an image that God who is an infinite and eternal Spirit.

22 Neither shalt thou set thee up *any* image; which the Lord thy God hateth.

Deuteronomy-17

1 Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God *any* bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, *or* any evil-favoredness: for that *is* an abomination unto the Lord thy God.
2 If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought

wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant,

3 and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;

Here is,

I. A law for preserving the honour of God's worship, by providing that no creature that had any blemish should be offered in sacrifice to him, De 17:1. This caveat we have often met with: Thou shalt not sacrifice that which has any blemish, which renders it unsightly, or any evil matter or thing (as the following word night better be rendered), any sickness or weakness, though not discernible at first view; it is an abomination to God. God is the best of beings, and therefore whatsoever he is served with ought to be the best in its kind. And the Old-Testament sacrifices in a special manner must be so, because they were types of Christ, who is a Lamb without blemish or spot (1Pe 1:19), perfectly pure from all sin and all appearance of it. In the latter times of the Jewish church, when by the captivity in Babylon they were cured of idolatry, yet they were charged with profaneness in the breach of this law, with offering the blind, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice, Mal 1:8.

II. A law for the punishing of those that worshipped false gods. It was made a capital crime to seduce others to idolatry (De 13:1-18), here it is made no less to be seduced. If the blind thus mislead the blind, both must fall into the ditch. Thus God would possess them with a dread of that sin, which they must conclude exceedingly sinful when so many sanguinary laws were made against it, and would deter those from it that would not otherwise be persuaded against it; and yet the law, which works death, proved ineffectual. See here,

1. What the crime was against which this law was levelled, serving or worshipping other gods, De 17:3. That which was the most ancient and plausible idolatry is specified,

worshipping the sun, moon, and stars; and, if that was so detestable a thing, much more was it so to worship stocks and stones, or the representations of mean and contemptible animals. Of this it is said,

(1.) That it is what God had not commanded. He had again and again forbidden it; but it is thus expressed to intimate that, if there had been no more against it, this had been enough (for in the worship of God his institution and appointment must be our rule and warrant), and that God never commanded his worshippers to debase themselves so far as to do homage to their fellow-creatures: had God commanded them to do it, they might justly have complained of it as a reproach and disparagement to them; yet, when he has forbidden it, they will, from a spirit of contradiction, put this indignity upon themselves.

(2.) That it is wickedness in the sight of God, De 17:2. Be it ever so industriously concealed, he sees it, and, be it ever so ingeniously palliated, he hates it: it is a sin in itself exceedingly heinous, and the highest affront that can be offered to Almighty God.

(3.) That it is a transgression of the covenant. It was on this condition that God took them to be his peculiar people, that they should serve and worship him only as their God, so that if they gave to any other the honour which was due to him alone that covenant was void, and all the benefit of it forfeited. Other sins were transgressions of the command, but this was a transgression of the covenant. It was spiritual adultery, which breaks them marriage bond.

(4.) That it is abomination in Israel, De 17:4. Idolatry was bad enough in any, but it was particularly abominable in Israel, a people so blessed with peculiar discoveries of the will and favour of the only true and living God.

2. How it must be tried. Upon information given of it, or any ground of suspicion that any person whatsoever, man or woman, had served other gods, (1.) Enquiry must be made, De 17:4. Though it appears not certain at first, it may afterwards upon search appear so; and, if it can possibly be discovered, it must not be unpunished; if not, yet the very enquiry concerning it would possess the country with a dread of it. (2.) Evidence must be given in, De 17:6. How heinous and dangerous soever the crime is, yet they must not punish any for it, unless there were good proof against them, by two witnesses at least. They must not, under pretence of honouring God, wrong an innocent man. This law, which requires two witnesses in case of life, we had before, Nu 35:30; it is quoted, Mt 18:16.

3. What sentence must be passed and executed. So great a punishment as death, so great a death as stoning, must be inflicted on the idolater, whether man or woman, for the infirmity of the weaker sex would be no excuse, De 17:5. The place of execution must be the gate of the city, that the shame might be the greater to the criminal and the warning the more public to all others. The hands of the witnesses, in this as in other cases, must be first upon him, that is, they must cast the first stone at him, thereby avowing their testimony, and solemnly imprecating the guilt of his blood upon themselves if their evidence were false. This custom might be of use to deter men from false-witness bearing. The witnesses are really, and therefore it was required that they should be actually, the death of the malefactor. But they must be followed, and the execution completed, by the hands of all the people, who were thus to testify their detestation of the crime and to put the evil away from among them, as before, De 13:9.

4 and it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it,* and inquired diligently, and, behold, *it be* true, and the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought in Israel:

5 then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have
committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even* that man or that
woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.
6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is
worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he
shall not be put to death.
7 The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to
death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put
the evil away from among you.
8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood
and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke,
being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise,
and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall
choose;
9 and thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the
judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show
thee the sentence of judgment:
10 and thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that
place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt
observe to do according to all that they inform thee:

Courts of judgment were ordered to be erected in every city (De 16:18), and they were empowered to hear and determine causes according to law, both those which we call pleas of the crown and those between party and party; and we may suppose that ordinarily they ended the matters that were brought before them, and their sentence was definitive; but,

1. It is here taken for granted that sometimes a case might come into their court too difficult for those inferior judges to determine, who could not be thought to be so learned in the laws as those that presided in the higher courts; so that (to speak in the language of our law) they must find a special verdict, and take time to advise before the giving of judgment (De 17:8): If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, which it would be no dishonour to the judges to own the difficulty of,--suppose it between blood and blood, the blood of a person which cried and the blood of him that was charged with the murder which was demanded, when it

was doubtful upon the evidence whether it was wilful or casual,--or between plea and plea, the plea (that is, the bill or declaration) of the plaintiff and the plea of the defendant,--or between stroke and stroke, in actions of assault and battery; in these and similar cases, thought the evidence were plain, yet doubts might arise about the sense and meaning of the law and the application of it to the particular case.

2. These difficult cases, which hitherto had been brought to Moses, according to Jethro's advice, were, after his death, to be brought to the supreme power, wherever it was lodged, whether in a judge (when there was such an extraordinary person raised up and qualified for that great service, as Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, &c.) or in the high-priest (when he was by the eminency of his gifts called of God to preside in public affairs, as Eli), or, if no single person were marked by heaven for this honour, then in the priests and Levites (or in the priests, who were Levites of course), who not only attended the sanctuary, but met in council to receive appeals from the inferior courts, who might reasonably be supposed, not only to be best qualified by their learning and experience, but to have the best assistance of the divine Spirit for the deciding of doubts, De 17:9,11,12.

They are not appointed to consult the urim and thummim, for it is supposed that these were to be consulted only in cases relating to the public, either the body of the people or the prince; but in ordinary cases the wisdom and integrity of those that sat at the stern must be relied on, their judgment had not the divine authority of an oracle, yet besides the moral certainty it had, as the judgment of knowing, prudent, and experienced men, it had the advantage of a divine promise, implied in those words (De 17:9), They shall show thee the sentence of judgment; it had also the support of a divine institution, by which they were made the supreme judicature of the nation.

3. The definitive sentence given by the judge, priest, or great council, must be obeyed by the parties concerned, upon pain of death: Thou shalt do according to their sentence (De 17:10); thou shalt observe to do it, thou shalt not decline from it (De 17:11), to the right hand nor to the left.

Note, It is for the honour of God and the welfare of a people that the authority of the higher power be supported and the due order of government observed, that those be obeyed who are appointed to rule, and that every soul be subject to them in all those things that fall within their commission. Though the party thought himself injured by the sentence (as every man is apt to be partial in his own cause), yet he must needs be subject, must stand to the award, how unpleasing soever, and bear, or lose, or pay, according to it, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. But if an inferior judge contradict the sentence of the higher court and will not execute the orders of it, or a private person refuse to conform to their sentence, the contumacy must be punished with death, though the matter were ever so small in which the opposition was made: That man shall die, and all the people shall hear and fear, De 17:12,13. See here,

(1.) The evil of disobedience. Rebellion and stubbornness, from a spirit of contradiction and opposition of God, or those in authority under him, from a principle of contempt and self-willedness, are as witchcraft and idolatry. To differ in opinion from weakness and infirmity may be excused and must be borne with; but to do so presumptuously, in pride and wickedness (as the ancient translations explain it), this is to take up arms against the government, and is an affront to him by whom the powers that be are ordained.

(2.) The design of punishment: that others may hear and fear, and not do the like. Some would be so considerate as to infer the heinousness of the offence from the grievousness of the penalty, and therefore would detest it; and others would so far consult their own safety as to cross their humours by

conforming to the sentence rather than to sin against their own heads, and forfeit their lives by going contrary to it. From this law the apostle infers the greatness of the punishment of which those will be thought worthy that trample on the authority of the Son of God, Heb 10:28,29.

11 according to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee,
and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt
do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show
thee, to the right hand, nor *to* the left.

12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken
unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy
God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put
away the evil from Israel.

13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more
presumptuously.

Instructions concerning a King

14 When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God
giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt
say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about
me;

15 thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the Lord thy
God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king
over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy
brother.

16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to
return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses:
forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, ye shall henceforth
return no more that way.

After the laws which concerned subjects fitly followed the laws which concern kings; for those that rule others must themselves remember that they are under command. Here are laws given,

I. To the electors of the empire, what rules they must go by in making their choice, De 17:14,15. 1. It is here supposed that

the people would, in process of time, be desirous of a king, whose royal pomp and power would be thought to make their nation look great among their neighbours. Their having a king is neither promised as a mercy nor commanded as a duty (nothing could be better for them than the divine regimen they were under), but it is permitted them if they desired it. If they would but take care to have the ends of government answered, and God's laws duly observed and put in execution, they should not be tied to any one form of government, but should be welcome to have a king. Though something irregular is supposed to be the principle of the desire, that they might be like the nations (whereas God in many ways distinguished them from the nations), yet God would indulge them in it, because he intended to serve his own purposes by it, in making the regal government typical of the kingdom of the Messiah.

2. They are directed in their choice. If they will have a king over them, as God foresaw they would (though it does not appear that ever the motion was made till almost 400 years after), then they must,

(1.) Ask counsel at God's mouth, and make him king whom God shall choose; and happy it was for them that they had an oracle to consult in so weighty an affair, and a God to choose for them who knows infallibly what every man is and will be. Kings are God's vicegerents, and therefore it is fit that he should have the choosing of them: God had himself been in a particular manner Israel's King, and if they set another over them, under him, it was necessary that he should nominate the person. Accordingly, when the people desired a king, they applied to Samuel a prophet of the Lord; and afterwards David, Solomon, Jeroboam, Jehu, and others, were chosen by the prophets; and the people are reproved for not observing this law, Ho 8:4: They have set up kings but not by me. In all cases God's choice, if we can but know it, should direct, determine, and overrule ours.

(2.) They must not choose a foreigner under pretence of strengthening their alliances, or of the extraordinary fitness of the person, lest a strange king should introduce strange customs of usages, contrary to those that were established by the divine law; but he must be one from among thy brethren, that he may be a type of Christ, who is bone of our bone, Heb 2:14.

II. Laws are here given to the prince that should be elected for the due administration of the government.

1. He must carefully avoid every thing that would divert him from God and religion. Riches, honours, and pleasures are the three great hindrances of godliness (the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life), especially to those in high stations: against these therefore the king is here warned.

(1.) He must not gratify the love of honour by multiplying horses, De 17:16. He that rode upon a horse (a stately creature) in a country where asses and mules were generally used looked very great; and therefore though he might have horses for his own saddle, and chariots, yet he must not set servants on horseback (Ec 10:7) nor have many horses for his officers and guards (when God was their King, his judges rode on asses, Jdg 5:10,12:14), nor must he multiply horses for war, lest he should trust too much to them, Ps 20:7,33:17,Ho 14:3.

The reason here given against his multiplying horses is because it would produce a greater correspondence with Egypt (which furnished Canaan with horses, 1Ki 10:28,29) than it was fit the Israel of God should have, who were brought thence with such a high hand: You shall return no more that way, for fear of being infected with the idolatries of Egypt (Le 18:3), to which they were very prone. Note, We should take heed of that commerce or conversation by which we are in danger of being drawn into sin. If Israel must not

return to Egypt, they must not trade with Egypt; Solomon got no good by it.

(2.) He must not gratify the love of pleasure by multiplying wives (De 17:17), as Solomon did to his undoing (1Ki 11:1), that his heart, being set upon them, turn not away from business, and every thing that is serious, and especially from the exercise of piety and devotion, to which nothing is a greater enemy than the indulgence of the flesh.

(3.) He must not gratify the love of riches by greatly multiplying silver and gold. A competent treasure is allowed him, and he is not forbidden to be good husband of it, but,

[1.] He must not greatly multiply money, so as to oppress his people by raising it (as Solomon seems to have done, 1Ki 12:4), nor so as to deceive himself, by trusting to it, and setting his heart upon it, Ps 62:10.

[2.] He must not multiply it to himself. David multiplied silver and gold, but it was for the service of God (1Ch 29:4), not for himself; for his people, not for his own family.

2. He must carefully apply himself to the law of God, and make that his rule. This must be to him better than all riches, honours, and pleasures, than many horses or many wives, better than thousands of gold and silver.

(1.) He must write himself a copy of the law out of the original, which was in the custody of the priests that attended the sanctuary, De 17:18. Some think that he was to write only this book of Deuteronomy, which is an abstract of the law, and the precepts of which, being mostly moral and judicial, concerned the king more than the laws in Leviticus and Numbers, which, being ceremonial, concerned chiefly the priests. Others think that he was to transcribe all the five books of Moses, which are called the law, and which were preserved together as the foundation of their religion. Now,

[1.] Though the king might be presumed to have very fair copies by him from his ancestors, yet, besides those, he must have one of his own: it might be presumed that theirs were worn with constant use; he must have a fresh one to begin the world with.

[2.] Though he had secretaries about him whom he might employ to write this copy, and who perhaps could write a better hand than he, yet he must do it himself, with his own hand, for the honour of the law, and that he might think no act of religion below him, to inure himself to labour and study, and especially that he might thereby be obliged to take particular notice of every part of the law and by writing it might imprint it in his mind. Note, It is of great use for each of us to write down what we observe as most affecting and edifying to us, out of the scriptures and good books, and out of the sermons we hear. A prudent pen may go far towards making up the deficiencies of the memory, and the furnishing of the treasures of the good householder with things new and old.

[3.] He must do this even when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, provided that he had not done it before. When he begins to apply himself to business, he must apply himself to this in the first place. He that sits upon the throne of a kingdom cannot but have his hands full. The affairs of his kingdom both at home and abroad call for a large share of his time and thoughts, and yet he must write himself a copy of the law. Let not those who call themselves men of business think that this will excuse them from making religion their business; nor let great men think it any disparagement to them to write for themselves those great things of God's law which he hath written to them, Heb 8:12.

(2.) Having a Bible by him of his own writing, he must not think it enough to keep it in his cabinet, but he must read therein all the days of his life, De 17:19. It is not enough to

have Bibles, but we must use them, use them daily, as the duty and necessity of everyday require: our souls must have their constant meals of that manna; and, if well digested, it will be true nourishment and strength to them. As the body is receiving benefit by its food continually, and not only when it is eating, so is the soul, by the word of God, if it meditate therein day and night, Ps 1:2. And we must persevere in the use of the written word of God as long as we live. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bibles, but will have a constant occasion for them till they come to that world where knowledge and love will both be made perfect.

(3.) His writing and reading were all nothing if he did not reduce to practice what he wrote and read, De 17:19,20. The word of God is not designed merely to be and entertaining subject of speculation, but to be a commanding rule of conversation. Let him know,

[1.] What dominion his religion must have over him, and what influence it must have upon him.

First, It must possess him with a very reverent and awful regard to the divine majesty and authority. He must learn (and thus the most learned must by ever learning) to fear the Lord his God; and, as high as he is, he must remember that God is above him, and, whatever fear his subjects owe to him, that, and much more, he owes to God as his King.

Secondly, It must engage him to a constant observance of the law of God, and a conscientious obedience to it, as the effect of that fear. He must keep all the words of this law (he is custos utriusque tabulae--the keeper of both tables), not only take care that others do them, but do them himself as a humble servant to the God of heaven and a good example to his inferiors.

Thirdly, It must keep him humble. How much soever he is advanced, let him keep his spirit low, and let the fear of his

God prevent the contempt of his brethren; and let not his heart be lifted up above them, so as to carry himself haughtily or disdainfully towards them, and to trample upon them. Let him not conceit himself better than they because he is greater and makes a fairer show; but let him remember that he is the minister of God to them for good (major singulis, but minor universis--greater than any one, but less than the whole). It must prevent his errors, either on the right hand or on the left (for there are errors on both hands), and keep him right, in all instances, to his God and to his duty.

[2.] What advantage his religion would be of to him. Those that fear God and keep his commandments will certainly fare the better for it in this world. The greatest monarch in the world may receive more benefit by religion than by all the wealth and power of his monarchy. It will be of advantage,

First, To his person: He shall prolong his days in his kingdom. We find in the history of the kings of Judah that, generally, the best reigns were the longest, except when God shortened them for the punishment of the people, as Josiah's.

Secondly, To his family: his children shall also prosper. Entail religion upon posterity, and God will entail a blessing upon it.

17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not
away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.
18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom,
that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which*
is before the priests the Levites:
19 and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his
life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the
words of this law and these statutes, to do them:
20 that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn
not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left:
to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his
children, in the midst of Israel.

Deuteronomy-18

The Portions of the Levites

1 The priests the Levites, *and* all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part
nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the Lord
made by fire, and his inheritance.
2 Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the
Lord *is* their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.
3 And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that
offer a sacrifice, whether *it be* ox or sheep; and they shall give unto
the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.
4 The firstfruit *also* of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the
first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.
5 For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to
stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for
ever.

Magistracy and ministry are two divine institutions of admirable use for the support and advancement of the kingdom of God among men. Laws concerning the former we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, directions are in this given concerning the latter. Land-marks are here set between the estates of the priests and those of the people.

I. Care is taken that the priests entangle not themselves with the affairs of this life, nor enrich themselves with the wealth of this world; they have better things to mind. They shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel, that is, no share either in the spoils taken in war or in the land that was to be divided by lot, De 18:1. Their warfare and husbandry are both spiritual, and enough to fill their hands both with work and profit and to content them.

The Lord is their inheritance, De 18:2. Note, Those that have God for their inheritance, according to the new covenant, should not be greedy of great things in the world, neither

gripe what they have nor grasp at more, but look upon all present things with the indifference which becomes those that believe God to be all-sufficient.

II. Care is likewise taken that they want not any of the comforts and conveniences of this life. Though God, who is a Spirit, is their inheritance, it does not therefore follow that they must live upon the air; no,

1 The people must provide for them. They must have their due from the people, De 18:3. Their maintenance must not depend upon the generosity of the people, but they must be by law entitled to it. He that is taught in the word ought in justice to communicate to him that teaches him; and he that has the benefit of solemn religious assemblies ought to contribute to the comfortable support of those that preside in such assemblies.

(1.) The priests who in their courses served at the altar had their share of the sacrifices, namely, the peace-offerings, that were brought while they were in waiting: besides the breast and shoulder, which were appointed them before (Le 7:32-34), the cheeks and maw are here ordered to be given them; so far was the law from diminishing what was already granted that it gave them an augmentation

(2.) The first-fruits which arose within such a precinct were brought in, as it should seem, to the priests that resided among them, for their maintenance in the country; the first of their corn and wine for food, and the first of their fleece for clothing (De 18:4); for the priests who were employed to teach others ought themselves to learn, having food and raiment, to be therewith content. The first-fruits were devoted to God, and he constituted the priests his receivers; and if God reckons what is, in general, given to the poor, lent to him, to be repaid with interest, much more what is, in particular, given to the poor, lent to him, to be repaid with interest, much more what is, in particular, given to poor ministers.

There is a good reason given for this constant charge upon their estates (De 18:5), because the Levites were chosen of God, and his choice must be owned and countenanced, and those honoured by us whom he honours; and because they stood to minister, and ought to be recompensed for their attendance and labour, especially since it was in the name of the Lord, by his warrant, in his service, and for his praise, and this charge entailed upon their seed for ever; those who were thus engaged and thus employed ought to have all due encouragement given them, as some of the most needful useful members of their commonwealth.

2 The priests must not themselves stand in one another's light. If a priest that by the law was obliged to serve at the altar only in his turn, and was paid for that, should, out of his great affection to the sanctuary, devote himself to a constant attendance there, and quit the ease and pleasure of the city in which he had his lot for the satisfaction of serving the altar, the priests whose turn it was to attend must admit him both to join in the work and to share in the wages, and not grudge him either the honour of the one or the profit of the other, though it might seem to break in upon them, De 18:6-8. Note, A hearty pious zeal to serve God and his church, though it may a little encroach upon a settled order, and there may be somewhat in it that looks irregular, yet ought to be gratified and not discouraged.

He that appears to have a hearty affection to the sanctuary, and loves dearly to be employed in the service of it, in God's name let him minister; he shall be as welcome to God as the Levites whose course it was to minister, and should be so to them. The settling of the courses was intended rather to secure those to the work that were not willing to do so much than to exclude any that were willing to do more. And he that thus serves as a volunteer shall have as good pay as the pressed men, besides that which comes of the sale of his patrimony. The church of Rome obliges those who leave their estates to

go into a monastery to bring the produce of their estates with them into the common stock of the monastery, for gain is their godliness; but here it is ordered that the pious devotee should reserve to himself the produce of his patrimony, for religion and the ministry were never appointed of God, however they have been abused by men, to serve a secular interest.

6 And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose;
7 then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites *do*, which stand there before the Lord.
8 They shall have like portions to eat, besides that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

Warning against Heathen Practices

9 When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.
10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, *or* that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,
11 or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

One would not think there had been so much need as it seems there was to arm the people of Israel against the infection of the idolatrous customs of the Canaanites. Was it possible that a people so blessed with divine institutions should ever admit the brutish and barbarous inventions of men and devils? Were they in any danger of making those their tutors and directors in religion whom God had made their captives and tributaries? It seems they were in danger, and therefore, after many similar cautions, they are here charged not to do after the abominations of those nations, De 18:9.

I. Some particulars are specified; as,

1 The consecrating of their children to Moloch, an idol that represented the sun, by making them to pass through the fire, and sometimes consuming them as sacrifices in the fire, De 18:10. See the law against this before, Le 18:21.

2. Using arts of divination, to get the unnecessary knowledge of things to come, enchantments, witchcrafts, charms, &c., by which the power and knowledge peculiar to God were attributed to the devil, to the great reproach both of God's counsels and of his providence, De 18:10,11. One would wonder that such arts and works of darkness, so senseless and absurd, so impious and profane, could be found in a country where divine revelation shone so clearly; yet we find remains of them even where Christ's holy religion is known and professed; such are the powers and policies of the rulers of the darkness of this world.

But let those give heed to fortune-tellers, or go to wizards for the discovery of things secret, that use spells for the cure of diseases, are in any league or acquaintance with familiar spirits, or form a confederacy with those that are--let them know that they can have no fellowship with God while thus they have fellowship with devils. It is amazing to think that there should by any pretenders of this kind in such a land and day of light as we live in.

II. Some reasons are given against their conformity to the customs of the Gentiles.

1. Because it would make them abominable to God. The things themselves being hateful to him, those that do them are an abomination; and miserable is that creature that has become odious to its Creator, De 18:12. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin; that must needs be an evil thing indeed which provokes the God of mercy to detest the work of his own hands.

2. Because these abominable practices had been the ruin of the Canaanites, of which ruin they were not only the witnesses but the instruments. It would be the most inexcusable folly, as well as the most unpardonable impiety, for them to practise themselves those very things for which they had been employed so severely to chastise others. Did the land spue out the abominations of the Canaanites, and shall Israel lick up the vomit?

3. Because they were better taught, De 18:13,14. It is an argument like that of the apostle against Christians walking as the Gentiles walked (Eph 4:17,18,20): You have not so learned Christ. "It is true these nations, whom God gave up to their own hearts' lusts, and suffered to walk in their own ways (Ac 14:16), did thus corrupt themselves; but thou art not thus abandoned by the grace of God: the Lord thy God had not suffered thee to do so; thou art instructed in divine things, and hast fair warning given thee of the evil of those practices; and therefore, whatever others do, it is expected that thou shouldest be perfect with the Lord thy God," that is, "that thou shouldest give divine honours to him, to him only, and to no other, and not mix any of the superstitious customs of the heathen with his institutions."

One of the Chaldee paraphrasts here takes notice of God's furnishing them with the oracle of urim and thummim, as a preservative from all unlawful arts of divination. Those were fools indeed who would go to consult the father of lies when they had such a ready way of consulting the God of truth.

12 For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the Lord:and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

13 Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.

14 For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so *to do.*

God Promises a Prophet like Moses

15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the
midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall
hearken;
16 according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb
in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice
of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more,
that I die not.

Here is, the promise of the great prophet, with a command to receive him, and hearken to him. Now,

1. Some think it is the promise of a succession of prophets, that should for many ages be kept up in Israel. Besides the priests and Levites, their ordinary ministers, whose office it was to teach Jacob God's law, they should have prophets, extraordinary ministers, to reprove them for their faults, remind them of their duty, and foretel things to come, judgments for warning and deliverances for their comfort. Having these prophets,

(1.) They need not use divinations, nor consult with familiar spirits, for they might enquire of God's prophets even concerning their private affairs, as Saul did when he was in quest of his father's asses, 1Sa 9:6.

(2.) They could not miss the way of their duty through ignorance or mistake, nor differ in their opinions about it, having prophets among them, whom, in every difficult doubtful case, they might advise with and appeal to. These prophets were like unto Moses in some respects, though far inferior to him, De 34:10.

2. Whether a succession of prophets be included in this promise or not, we are sure that it is primarily intended as a promise of Christ, and it is the clearest promise of him that is in all the law of Moses. It is expressly applied to our Lord Jesus as the Messiah promised (Ac 3:22,7:37), and the people

had an eye to this promise when they said concerning him, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world (Joh 6:14); and it was his Spirit that spoke in all the other prophets, 1Pe 1:11. Observe,

(1.) What it is that is here promised concerning Christ? What God promised Moses at Mount Sinai (which he relates, De 18:18), he promised the people (De 18:15) in God's name.

[1.] That there should come a prophet, great above all the prophets, by whom God would make known himself and his will to the children of men more fully and clearly than ever he had done before. He is the light of the world, as prophecy was of the Jewish church, Joh 8:12. He is the Word, by whom God speaks to us, Joh 1:1,Heb 1:2.

[2.] That God would raise him up from the midst of them. In his birth he should be one of that nation, should live among them and be sent to them. In his resurrection he should be raised up at Jerusalem, and thence his doctrine should go forth to all the world: thus God, having raised up his Son Christ Jesus, sent him to bless us.

[3.] That he should be like unto Moses, only as much above him as the other prophets came short of him. Moses was such a prophet as was a law-giver to Israel and their deliverer out of Egypt, and so was Christ: he not only teaches, but rules and saves. Moses was the founder of a new dispensation by signs and wonders and mighty deeds, and so was Christ, by which he proved himself a teacher come from God. Was Moses faithful? So was Christ; Moses as a servant, but Christ as a Son.

[4.] That God would put his words in his mouth, De 18:18. What messages God had to send to the children of men he would send them by him, and give him full instructions what to say and do as a prophet. Hence our Saviour says, My doctrine is not mine originally, but his that sent me, Joh 7:16.

So that this great promise is performed; this Prophet has come, even Jesus; it is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

(2.) The agreeableness of this designed dispensation to the people's avowed choice and desire at Mount Sinai, De 18:16,17. There God had spoken to them in thunder and lightning, out of the midst of the fire and thick darkness. Every word made their ears tingle and their hearts tremble, so that the whole congregation was ready to die with fear. In this fright, they begged hard that God would not speak to them in this manner any more (they could not bear it, it would overwhelm and distract them), but that he would speak to them by men like themselves, by Moses now, and afterwards by other prophets like unto him.

"Well," says God, "it shall be so; they shall be spoken to by men, whose terrors shall not make them afraid;" and, to crown the favour beyond what they were able to ask or think, in the fulness of time the Word itself was made flesh, and they saw his glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, not, as at Mount Sinai, full of majesty and terror, but full of grace and truth, Joh 1:14. Thus, in answer to the request of those who were struck with amazement by the law, God promised the incarnation of his Son, though we may suppose it far from the thoughts of those that made that request.

(3.) A charge and command given to all people to hear and believe, hear and obey, this great prophet here promised: Unto him you shall hearken (De 18:15); and whoever will not hearken to him shall be surely and severely reckoned with for his contempt (De 18:19): I will require it of him. God himself applied this to our Lord Jesus in the voice that came out of the excellent glory, Mt 17:5, Hear you him, that is, this is he concerning whom it was said by Moses of old, Unto him you shall hearken; and Moses and Elias then stood by and assented to it. The sentence here passed on those that hearken not to this prophet is repeated and ratified in the New

Testament. He that believeth not the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him, Joh 3:36. And how shall we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? Heb 12:25. The Chaldee paraphrase here reads it, My Word shall require it of him, which can be no other than a divine person, Christ the eternal Word, to whom the Father has committed all judgement, and by whom he will at the last day judge the world. Whoever turns a deaf ear to Jesus Christ shall find that it is at his peril; the same that is the prophet is to be his judge, Joh 12:48.

17 And the Lord said unto me, they have well-*spoken that* which they have spoken.

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.

20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

Here is a caution against false prophets,

1. By way of threatening against the pretenders themselves, De 18:20. Whoever sets up for a prophet, and produces either a commission from the true God, shall be deemed and adjudged guilty of high treason against the crown and dignity of the King of kings, and that traitor shall be put to death (De 18:20), namely, by the judgment of the great sanhedrim, which, in process of time, sat at Jerusalem; and therefore our Saviour says that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, and lays the blood of the prophets at Jerusalem's door (Lu 13:33,34), whom therefore God himself would punish; yet there false prophets were supported.

2. By way of direction to the people, that they might not be imposed upon by pretenders, of which there were many, as appears, Jer 23:25,Eze 13:6,1Ki 22:6. It is a very proper question which they are supposed to ask, De 18:21. Since it

is so great a duty to hearken to the true prophets, and yet there is so much danger of being misled by false prophets, how shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? By what marks may we discover a cheat?

Note, It highly concerns us to have a right touchstone wherewith to try the word we hear, that we may know what that word is which the Lord has not spoken. Whatever is directly repugnant to sense, to the light and law of nature, and to the plain meaning of the written word, we may be sure is not that which the Lord has spoken; nor that which gives countenance and encouragement to sin, or has a manifest tendency to the destruction of piety or charity: far be it from God that he should contradict himself.

The rule here given in answer to this enquiry was adapted chiefly to that state, De 18:22. If there was any cause to suspect the sincerity of a prophet, let them observe that if he gave them any sign, or foretold something to come, and the event was not according to his prediction, they might be sure he was not sent of God. This does not refer so much to the foretelling of mercies and judgments (though as to these, and the difference between the predictions of mercies and judgments, there is a rule of discerning between truth and falsehood laid down by the prophet, Jer 28:8,9), but rather to the giving of signs on purpose to confirm their mission. Though the sign did come to pass, yet this would not serve to prove their mission if they called them to serve other gods; this point had been already settled, De 13:1-3.

But, if the sign did not come to pass, this would serve to disprove their mission. "When Moses cast his rod upon the ground (it is bishop Patrick's explanation of this), and said it would become a serpent, if it had not accordingly been turned into a serpent, Moses had been a false prophet: if, when Elijah called for fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, none had come, he had been no better than the prophets of Baal." Samuel's mission was proved by this, that God let none of his

words fall to the ground, 1Sa 3:19,20. And by the miracles Christ wrought, especially by that great sign he gave of his resurrection the third day, which came to pass as he foretold, it appeared that he was a teacher come from God.

Lastly, They are directed not to be afraid of a false prophet; that is, not to be afraid of the judgments such a one might denounce to amuse people and strike terror upon them; nor to be afraid of executing the law upon him when, upon a strict and impartial scrutiny, it appeared that he was a false prophet. This command not to fear a false prophet implies that a true prophet, who proved his commission by clear and undeniable proofs, was to be feared, and it was at their peril if they offered him any violence or put any slight upon him.

21 And if thou say in thine heart, how shall we know the word which
the Lord hath not spoken?
22 when a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow
not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the Lord hath not
spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt
not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy-19

The Cities of Refuge

1 When the Lord thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the
Lord thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest
in their cities, and in their houses;
2 thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land,
which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it.
3 Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land,
which the Lord thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts,
that every slayer may flee thither.
4 And this *is* the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he
may live: Whoso killeth his neighbor ignorantly, whom he hated
not in time past;

5 as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbor to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbor, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:

It was one of the precepts given to the sons of Noah that whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed, that is, by the avenger of blood, Ge 9:6. Now here we have the law settled between blood and blood, between the blood of the murdered and the blood of the murderer, and effectual provision made,

I. That the cities of refuge should be a protection to him that slew another casually, so that he should not die for that as a crime which was not his voluntary act, but only his unhappiness. The appointment of these cities of refuge we had before (Ex 21:13), and the law laid down concerning them at large, Nu 35:10-15, &c. It is here repeated, and direction is given concerning three things:--

1 The appointing of three cities in Canaan for this purpose. Moses had already appointed three on that side Jordan which he saw the conquest of; and now he bids them, when they should be settled in the other part of the country, to appoint three more, De 19:1-3,7. The country was to be divided into three districts, as near by as might be equal, and a city of refuge in the centre of each so that every corner of the land might have one within reach. Thus Christ is not a refuge at a distance, which we must ascend to heaven or go down to the deep for, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, Ro 10:8. The gospel brings salvation to our door, and there it knocks for admission. To make the flight of the delinquent the easier, the way must be prepared that led to the city of refuge. Probably they had causeways or street-ways leading to those cities, and the Jews say that the magistrates of Israel, upon one certain day in the year, sent out messengers to see that those roads were in good repair, and they were to remove stumbling-blocks, mend bridges that were broken, and, where two ways met, they were to set up a Mercurial post, with a

finger to point the right way, on which was engraven in great letters, Miklat, Miklat--Refuge, Refuge. In allusion to this, gospel ministers are to show people the way to Christ, and to assist and direct them in flying by faith to him for refuge. They must be ready to remove their prejudices, and help them over their difficulties. And, blessed be God, the way of holiness, to all that seek it faithfully, is a highway so plain that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

2 The use to be made of these cities, De 19:4-6. (1.) It is supposed that it might so happen that a man might be the death of his neighbour without any design upon him either from a sudden passion or malice prepense, but purely by accident, as by the flying off of an axe-head, which is the instance here given, with which every case of this kind was to be compared, and by it adjudged. See how human life lies exposed daily, and what deaths we are often in, and what need therefore we have to be always ready, our souls being continually in our hands. How are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them! Ec 9:12. An evil time indeed it is when this happens not only to the slain but to the slayer. (2.) It is supposed that the relations of the person slain would be forward to avenge the blood, in affection to their friend and in zeal for public justice. Though the law did not allow the avenging of any other affront or injury with death, yet the avenger of blood, the blood of a relation, shall have great allowances made for the heat of his heart upon such a provocation as that, and his killing only, should not be accounted murder if he did it before he got to the city of refuge, though it is owned he was not worthy of death. Thus would God possess people with a great horror and dread of the sin of murder: if mere chance-medley did thus expose a man, surely he that wilfully does violence to the blood of any person, whether from an old grudge or upon a sudden provocation, must flee to the pit, and let no man stay him (Pr 28:17); yet the New Testament represents the sin of murder as more heinous and more dangerous than even this law does. 1Jo 3:15, You know that no murderer has eternal

life abiding in him. (3.) It is provided that, if an avenger of blood should be so unreasonable as to demand satisfaction for blood shed by accident only, then the city of refuge should protect the slayer. Sins of ignorance indeed do expose us to the wrath of God, but there is relief provided, if by faith and repentance we make use of it. Paul that had been a persecutor obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly; and Christ prayed for his crucifiers, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

3. The appointing of three cities more for this use in case God should hereafter enlarge their territories and the dominion of their religion, that all those places which came under the government of the law of Moses in other instances might enjoy the benefit of that law in this instance, De 19:8-10. Here is,

(1.) An intimation of God's gracious intention to enlarge their coast, as he had promised to their fathers, if they did not by their disobedience forfeit the promise, the condition of which is here carefully repeated, that, if it were not performed, the reproach might lie upon them, and not on God. He promised to give it, if thou shalt keep all these commandments; not otherwise.

(2.) A direction to them to appoint three cities more in their new conquests, which, the number intimates, should be as large as their first conquests were; wherever the border of Israel went this privilege must attend it, that innocent blood be not shed, De 19:10. Though God is the saviour and preserver of all men, and has a tender regard to all lives, yet the blood of Israelites is in a particular manner precious to him, Ps 72:14.

The learned Ainsworth observes that the Jewish writers themselves own that, the condition not being performed, the promise of the enlarging of their coast was never fulfilled; so that there was no occasion for ever adding these three cities

of refuge; yet the holy blessed God (say they) did not command it in vain, for in the days of Messiah the prince three other cities shall be added to these six: they expect it to be fulfilled in the letter, but we know that in Christ it has its spiritual accomplishment, for the borders of the gospel Israel are enlarged according to the promise, and in Christ, the Lord our righteousness, refuge is provided for those that by faith flee to him.

6 lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he *was* not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

7 Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee.

8 And if the Lord thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers;

9 if thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

10 that innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance, and *so* blood be upon thee.

11 But if any man hate his neighbor, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities;

It is provided that the cities of refuge should be no sanctuary or shelter to a wilful murderer, but even thence he should be fetched, and delivered to the avenger of blood, De 19:11-13.

1. This shows that wilful murder must never be protected by the civil magistrate; he bears the sword of justice in vain if he suffers those to escape the edge of it that lie under the guilt of blood, which he by office is the avenger of. During the dominion of the papacy in our own land, before the Reformation, there were some churches and religious houses (as they called them) that were made sanctuaries for the protection of all sorts of criminals that fled to them, wilful

murderers not excepted, so that (as Stamford says, in his Pleas of the Crown, lib. II. c. xxxviii.) the government follows not Moses but Romulus, and it was not till about the latter end of Henry VIII's time that this privilege of sanctuary for wilful murder was taken away, when in that, as in other cases, the word of God came to be regarded more than the dictates of the see of Rome.

And some have thought it would be a completing of that instance of reformation if the benefit of clergy were taken away for man-slaughter, that is, the killing of a man upon a small provocation, since this law allowed refuge only in case of that which our law calls chance-medley.

2. It may be alluded to to show that in Jesus Christ there is no refuge for presumptuous sinners, that go on still in their trespasses. If we thus sin wilfully, sin and go on in it, there remains no sacrifice, Heb 10:26. Those that flee to Christ from their sins shall be safe in him, but not those that expect to be sheltered by him in their sins. Salvation itself cannot save such: divine justice will fetch them even from the city of refuge, the protection of which they are not entitled to.

12 then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

13 Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away *the guilt of* innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.

14 Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it.

The Law concerning Witnesses

15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

16 If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him *that which is* wrong;

Here is a statute for the preventing of frauds and perjuries; for the divine law takes care of men's rights and properties, and has made a hedge about them. Such a friend is it to human society and men's civil interest.

I. A law against frauds, De 19:14.

1. Here is an implicit direction given to the first planters of Canaan to fix land-marks, according to the distribution of the land to the several tribes and families by lot. Note, It is the will of God that every one should know his own, and that all good means should be used to prevent encroachments and the doing and suffering of wrong. When right is settled, care must be taken that it be not afterwards unsettled, and that, if possible, no occasion of dispute may arise.

2. An express law to posterity not to remove those land-marks which were thus fixed at first, by which a man secretly got that to himself which was his neighbour's. This, without doubt, is a moral precept, and still binding, and to us it forbids,

(1.) The invading of any man's right, and taking to ourselves that which is not our own, by any fraudulent arts or practices, as by forging, concealing, destroying, or altering deeds and writings (which are our land-marks, to which appeals are made), or by shifting hedges, meer-stones, and boundaries. Though the land-marks were set by the hand of man, yet he was a thief and a robber by the law of God that removed them. Let every man be content with his own lot, and just to his neighbours, and then we shall have no land-marks removed.

(2.) It forbids the sowing of discord among neighbours, and doing any thing to occasion strife and law-suits, which is done (and it is very ill done) by confounding those things which should determine disputes and decide controversies. And,

(3.) It forbids breaking in upon the settled order and constitution of civil government, and the altering of ancient usages without just cause. This law supports the honour of prescriptions. Consuetudo facit jus--Custom is to be held as law.

II. A law against perjuries, which enacts two things:--

1. That a single witness should never be admitted to give evidence in a criminal cause, so as that sentence should be passed upon his testimony, De 19:15. This law we had before, Nu 35:30, and in this book, De 17:6. This was enacted in favour to the prisoner, whose life and honour should not lie at the mercy of a particular person that had a pique against him, and for caution to the accuser not to say that which he could not corroborate by the testimony of another. It is a just shame which this law puts upon mankind as false and not to be trusted; every man is by it suspected: and it is the honour of God's grace that the record he has given concerning his Son is confirmed both in heaven and in earth by three witnesses, 1Jo 5:7. Let God be true and every man a liar, Ro 3:4.

2. That a false witness should incur the same punishment which was to have been inflicted upon the person he accused. If two, or three, or many witnesses, concurred in a false testimony, they were all liable to be prosecuted upon this law.

(2.) The person wronged or brought into peril by the false testimony is supposed to be the appellant, De 19:17. And yet if the person were put to death upon the evidence, and afterwards it appeared to be false, any other person, or the judges themselves, ex officio--by virtue of their office, might call the false witness to account. (3.) Causes of this kind, having more than ordinary difficulty in them, were to be brought before the supreme court, The priests and judges, who are said to be before the Lord, because, as other judges sat in the gates of their cities, so these at the gate of the sanctuary, De 17:12.

(4.) There must be great care in the trial, De 19:18. A diligent inquisition must be made into the characters of the persons, and all the circumstances of the case, which must be compared, that the truth might be found out, which, where it is thus faithfully and impartially enquired into, Providence, it may be hoped, will particularly advance the discovery of.

(5.) If it appeared that a man had knowingly and maliciously borne false witness against his neighbour, though the mischief he designed him thereby was not effected, he must undergo the same penalty which his evidence would have brought his neighbour under, De 19:19. Nec lex est justior ulla--Nor could any law be more just. If the crime he accused his neighbour of was to be punished with death, the false witness must be put to death; if with stripes, he must be beaten; if with a pecuniary mulct, he was to be fined the sum. And because to those who considered not the heinousness of the crime, and the necessity of making this provision against it, it might seem hard to punish a man so severely for a few words' speaking, especially when no mischief did actually follow, it is added: Thy eye shall not pity, De 19:21. No man needs to be more merciful than God. The benefit that will accrue to the public from this severity will abundantly recompense it: Those that remain shall hear and fear, De 19:20. Such exemplary punishments will be warnings to others not to attempt any such mischief, when they see how he that made the pit and digged it has fallen into the ditch which he made.

17 then both the men, between whom the controversy *is*, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;

18 and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, *if* the witness *be* a false witness, *and* hath testified falsely against his brother;

19 then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

20 And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.
21 And thine eye shall not pity; *but* life *shall go* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Deuteronomy-20

The Laws concerning War

1 When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, *and* a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God *is* with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.
2 And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,
3 and shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;
4 for the Lord your God *is* he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.
5 And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man *is there* that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

Israel was at this time to be considered rather as a camp than as a kingdom, entering upon an enemy's country, and not yet settled in a country of their own; and, besides the war they were now entering upon in order to their settlement, even after their settlement they could neither protect nor enlarge their coast without hearing the alarms of war. It was therefore needful that they should have directions given them in their military affairs; and in these verses they are directed in managing, marshalling, and drawing up their own forces. And it is observable that the discipline of war here prescribed is so far from having any thing in it harsh or severe, as is usual in martial law, that the intent of the whole is, on the contrary, to encourage the soldiers, and to make their service easy to them.

I. Those that were disposed to fight must be encouraged and animated against their fears.

1. Moses here gives a general encouragement, which the leaders and commanders in the war must take to themselves: "Be not afraid of them, De 20:1. Though the enemy have ever so much the advantage by their numbers (being more than thou), and by their cavalry (their armies being much made up of horses and chariots, which thou art not allowed to multiply), yet decline not coming to a battle with them, dread not the issue, nor doubt of success." Two things they must encourage themselves with in their wars, provided they kept close to their God and their religion, otherwise they forfeited these encouragements:--

(1.) The presence of God with them: "The Lord thy God is with thee, and therefore thou art not in danger, nor needest thou be afraid." See Isa 41:10.

(2.) The experience they and their fathers had had of God's power and goodness in bringing them out of the land of Egypt, in defiance of Pharaoh and all his hosts, which was not only in general a proof of the divine omnipotence, but to them in particular a pledge of what God would do further for them. He that saved them from those greater enemies would not suffer them to be run down by those that were every way less considerable, and thus to have all he had done for them undone again.

2. This encouragement must be particularly addressed to the common soldiers by a priest appointed, and, the Jews say, anointed, for that purpose, whom they call the anointed of the war, a very proper title for our anointed Redeemer, the captain of our salvation: This priest, in God's name, was to animate the people; and who so fit to do that as he whose office it was as priest to pray for them? For the best

encouragements arise from the precious promises made to the prayer of faith. This priest must,

(1.) Charge them not to be afraid (De 20:3), for nothing weakens the hands so much as that which makes the heart tremble, De 20:3. There is need of precept upon precept to this purport, as there is here: Let not your hearts be tender (so the word is), to receive all the impressions of fear, but let a believing confidence in the power and promise of God harden them. Fear not, and do not make haste (so the word is), for he that believeth doth not make more haste than good speed. "Do not make haste either rashly to anticipate your advantages or basely to fly off upon every disadvantage."

(2.) He must assure them of the presence of God with them, to own and plead their righteous cause, and not only to save them from their enemies, but to give them victory over them, De 20:4. Note, Those have no reason to fear that have God with them. The giving of this encouragement by a priest, one of the Lord's ministers, intimates,

[1.] That it is very fit that armies should have chaplains, not only to pray for them, but to preach to them, both to reprove that which would hinder their success and to raise their hopes of it.

[2.] That it is the work of Christ's ministers to encourage his good soldiers in their spiritual conflict with the world and the flesh, and to assure them of a conquest, yea, more than a conquest, through Christ that loved us.

II. Those that were indisposed to fight must be discharged, whether the indisposition did arise,

1. From the circumstances of a man's outward condition; as,

(1.) If he had lately built or purchased a new house, and had not taken possession of it, had not dedicated it (De 20:5), that is, made a solemn festival for the entertainment of his friends, that came to him to welcome him to his house; let him go home and take the comfort of that which God had blessed him with, till, by enjoying it for some time, he become less fond of it, and consequently less disturbed in the war by the thoughts of it, and more willing to lie and leave it. For this is the nature of all our worldly enjoyments, that they please us best at first; after a while we see the vanity of them.

Some think that this dedication of their houses was a religious act, and that they took possession of them with prayers and praises, with a solemn devoting of themselves and all their enjoyments to the service and honour of God. David penned the Ps 30:1-12 on such an occasion, as appears by the title. Note, He that has a house of his own should dedicate it to God by setting up and keeping up the fear and worship of God in it, that he may have a church in his house; and nothing should be suffered to divert a man from this. Or,

(2.) If a man had been at a great expense to plant a vineyard, and longed to eat of the fruit of it, which for the first three years he was forbidden to do by the law (Le 19:23-25, &c.), let him go home, if he has a mind, and gratify his own humour with the fruits of it, De 20:6. See how indulgent God is to his people in innocent things, and how far from being a hard Master. Since we naturally covet to eat the labour of our hands, rather than an Israelite should be crossed therein, his service in war shall be dispensed with., Or,

(3.) If a man had made up his mind to be married, and the marriage were not solemnized, he was at liberty to return (De 20:7), as also to tarry at home for one year after marriage (De 24:5), for the terrors of war would be disagreeable to a man who had just welcomed the soft scene of domestic attachment. And God would not be served in his wars by pressed men, that were forced into the army against their will,

but they must all be perfectly volunteers. Ps 110:3, Thy people shall be willing.

In running the Christian race, and fighting the good fight of faith, we must lay aside every weight, and all that which would clog and divert our minds and make us unwilling. The Jewish writers agree that this liberty to return was allowed only in those wars which they made voluntarily (as bishop Patrick expresses it), not those which were made by the divine command against Amalek and the Canaanites, in which every man was bound to fight.

2. If a man's indisposition to fight arose from the weakness and timidity of his own spirit, he had leave to return from the war, De 20:8. This proclamation Gideon made to his army, and it detached above two-thirds of them, Jdg 7:3. Some make the fearfulness and faintheartedness here supposed to arise from the terrors of an evil conscience, which would make a man afraid to look death and danger in the face. It was then thought that men of loose and profligate lives would not be good soldiers, but must needs be both cowards in an army and curses to it, the shame and trouble of the camp; and therefore those who were conscious to themselves of notorious guilt were shaken off.

But it seems rather to be meant of a natural fearfulness. It was partly in kindness to them that they had their discharge (for, though shamed, they were eased); but much more in kindness to the rest of the army, who were hereby freed from the incumbrance of such as were useless and unserviceable, while the danger of infection from their cowardice and flight was prevented. This is the reason here given: Lest his brethren's heart fail as well as his heart. Fear is catching, and in an army is of most pernicious consequence. We must take heed that we fear not the fear of those that are afraid, Isa 8:12.

III. It is here ordered that, when all the cowards were dismissed, then captains should be nominated (De 20:9), for

it was in a special manner necessary that the leaders and commanders should be men of courage. That reform therefore must be made when the army was first mustered and marshalled. The soldiers of Christ have need of courage, that they may quit themselves like men, and endure hardness like good soldiers, especially the officers of his army.

6 And what man *is he* that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not *yet* eaten of it? Let him *also* go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

7 And what man *is there* that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

8 And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man *is there that is* fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

9 And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

10 When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

They are here directed what method to take in dealing with the cities (these only are mentioned, De 20:10, but doubtless the armies in the field, and the nations they had occasion to deal with, are likewise intended) upon which they made war. They must not make a descent upon any of their neighbours till they had first given them fair notice, by a public manifesto, or remonstrance, stating the ground of their quarrel with them. In dealing with the worst of enemies, the laws of justice and honour must be observed; and, as the sword must never be taken in hand without cause, so not without cause shown. War is an appeal, in which the merits of the cause must be set forth.

I. Even to the proclamation of war must be subjoined a tender of peace, if they would accept of it upon reasonable terms. That is (say the Jewish writers), "upon condition that they renounce idolatry, worship the God of Israel, as proselytes of

the gate that were not circumcised, pay to their new masters a yearly tribute, and submit to their government:" on these terms the process of war should be stayed, and their conquerors, upon this submission, were to be their protectors, De 20:10,11.

Some think that even the seven nations of Canaan were to have this offer of peace made to them; and the offer was no jest or mockery, though it was of the Lord to harden their hearts that they should not accept it, Jos 11:20. Others think that they are excluded (De 20:16) not only from the benefit of that law (De 20:13) which confines military execution to the males only, but from the benefit of this also, which allows not to make war till peace was refused.

And I see not how they could proclaim peace to those who by the law were to be utterly rooted out, and to whom they were to show no mercy, De 7:2. But for any other nation which they made war upon, for the enlarging of their coast, the avenging of any wrong done, or the recovery of any right denied, they must first proclaim peace to the. Let this show,

1. God's grace in dealing with sinners: though he might most justly and easily destroy them, yet, having no pleasure in their ruin, he proclaims peace, and beseeches them to be reconciled; so that those who lie most obnoxious to his justice, and ready to fall as sacrifices to it, if they make him an answer of peace, and open to him, upon condition that they will be tributaries and servants to him, shall not only be saved from ruin, but incorporated with his Israel, as fellow-citizens with the saints.

2. Let it show us our duty in dealing with our brethren: if any quarrel happen, let us not only be ready to hearken to the proposals of peace, but forward to make such proposals. We should never make use of the law till we have first tried to accommodate matters in variance amicably, and without

expense and vexation. We must be for peace, whoever are for war.

II. If the offers of peace were not accepted, then they must proceed to push on the war. And let those to whom God offers peace know that if they reject the offer, and take not the benefit of it within the time limited, judgment will rejoice against mercy in the execution as much as now mercy rejoices against judgment in the reprieve. In this case,

1. There is a promise implied that they should be victorious. It is taken for granted that the Lord their God would deliver it into their hands, De 20:13. Note, Those enterprises which we undertake by a divine warrant, and prosecute by divine direction, we may expect to succeed in. If we take God's method, we shall have his blessing.

2. They are ordered, in honour to the public justice, to put all the soldiers to the sword, for them I understand by every male (De 20:13), all that bore arms (as all then did that were able); but the spoil they are allowed to take to themselves (De 20:14), in which were reckoned the women and children.

Note, A justifiable property is acquired in that which is won in lawful war. God himself owns the title: The Lord thy God gives it thee; and therefore he must be owned in it, Ps 44:3.

11 And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee,
then it shall be, *that* all the people *that is* found therein shall be
tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.
12 And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against
thee, then thou shalt besiege it:
13 and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands,
thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:
14 but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in
the city, *even* all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and
thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God
hath given thee.

15 Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *which are* very far off from
thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.
16 But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give
thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that
Breatheth:

I. The nations of Canaan are excepted from the merciful provisions made by this law. Remnants might be left of the cities that were very far off (De 20:15), because by them they were not in so much danger of being infected with idolatry, nor was their country so directly and immediately intended in the promise; but of the cities which were given to Israel for an inheritance no remnants must be left of their inhabitants (De 20:16), for it put a slight upon the promise to admit Canaanites to share with them in the peculiar land of promise; and for another reason they must be utterly destroyed (De 20:17), because, since it could not be expected that they should be cured of their idolatry, if they were left with that plague-sore upon them they would be in danger of infecting God's Israel, who were too apt to take the infection: They will teach you to do after their abominations (De 20:18), to introduce their customs into the worship of the God of Israel, and by degrees to forsake him and to worship false gods; for those that dare violate the second commandment will not long keep to the first. Strange worships open the door to strange deities.

II. Care is here taken that in the besieging of cities there should not be any destruction made of fruit-trees, De 20:19-20. In those times, when besiegers forced their way, not as now with bombs and cannon-ball, but with battering rams, they had occasion for much timber in carrying on their sieges: now because, in the heat of war, men are not apt to consider, as they ought, the public good, it is expressly provided that fruit-trees should not be used as timber-trees.

That reason, for the tree of the field is man's (the word life we supply), all the ancient versions, the Septuagint, Targums, &c., read, For is the tree of the field a man? Or the tree of the

field is not a man, that it should come against thee in the siege, or retire from thee into the bulwark. "Do not brutishly vent thy rage against the trees that can do thee no harm." But our translation seems most agreeable to the intent of the law, and it teaches us,

1. That God is a better friend to man than man is to himself; and God's law, which we are apt to complain of as a heavy yoke, consults our interest and comfort, while our own appetites and passions, of which we are so indulgent, are really enemies to our welfare. The intent of many of the divine precepts is to restrain us from destroying that which is our life and food.

2. That armies and their commanders are not allowed to make what desolation they please in the countries that are the seat of war. Military rage must always be checked and ruled with reason. War, though carried on with ever so much caution, is destructive enough, and should not be made more so than is absolutely necessary. Generous spirits will show themselves tender, not only of men's lives, but of their livelihoods; for, though the life is more than meat, yet it will soon be nothing without meat. 3. The Jews understand this as a prohibition of all wilful waste upon any account whatsoever. No fruit-tree is to be destroyed unless it be barren, and cumber the ground.

"Nay," they maintain, "whoso wilfully breaks vessels, tears clothes, stops wells, pulls down buildings, or destroys meat, transgresses this law: Thou shalt not destroy." Christ took care that the broken meat should be gathered up, that nothing might be lost. Every creature of God is good, and, as nothing is to be refused, so nothing is to be abused. We may live to want what we carelessly waste.

17 but thou shalt utterly destroy them; *namely,* the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee:

18 that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God.

19 When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field *is* man's *life*) to employ *them* in the siege:

20 only the trees which thou knowest that they *be* not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.

Deuteronomy-21

Settlement for an Unknown Murderer's Crime

1 If *one* be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, *and* it be not known who hath slain him:

2 then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which *are* round about him that is slain:

3 and it shall be, *that* the city *which is* next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take a heifer, which hath not been wrought with, *and* which hath not drawn in the yoke;

4 and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley.

5 And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be *tried:*

Care had been taken by some preceding laws for the vigorous and effectual persecution of a wilful murderer (De 19:11-13, &c.), the putting of whom to death was the putting away of the guilt of blood from the land; but if this could not be done, the murderer not being discovered, they must not think that

the land was in no danger of contracting any pollution because it was not through any neglect of theirs that the murderer was unpunished; no, a great solemnity is here provided for the putting away of the guilt, as an expression of their dread and detestation of that sin.

I The case supposed is that one is found slain, and it is not known who slew him, De 21:1 The providence of God has sometimes wonderfully brought to light these hidden works of darkness, and by strange occurrences the sin of the guilty has found them out, insomuch that it has become a proverb, Murder will out. But it is not always so; now and then the devil's promises of secresy and impunity in this world are made good; yet it is but for a while: there is a time coming when secret murders will be discovered; the earth shall disclose her blood (Isa 26:21), upon the inquisition which justice makes for it; and there is an eternity coming when those that escaped punishment from men will lie under the righteous judgment of God. And the impunity with which so many murders and other wickednesses are committed in this world makes it necessary that there should be a day of judgment, to require that which is past, Ec 3:15.

II. Directions are given concerning what is to be done in this case. Observe,

1. It is taken for granted that a diligent search had been made for the murderer, witnesses examined, and circumstances strictly enquired into, that if possible they might find out the guilty person; but if, after all, they could not trace it out, not fasten the charge upon any, then,

(1.) The elders of the next city (that had a court of three and twenty in it) were to concern themselves about this matter. If it were doubtful which city was next, the great sanhedrim were to send commissioners to determine that matter by an exact measure, De 21:2,3. Note, Public persons must be solicitous about the public good; and those that are in power

and reputation in cities must lay out themselves to redress grievances, and reform what is amiss in the country and neighbourhood that lie about them. Those that are next to them should have the largest share of their good influence, as ministers of God for good.

(2.) The priests and Levites must assist and preside in this solemnity (De 21:5), that they might direct the management of it in all points according to the law, and particularly might be the people's mouth to God in the prayer that was to be put up on this sad occasion, De 21:8. God being Israel's King, his ministers must be their magistrates, and by their word, as the mouth of the court and learned in the laws, every controversy must be tried. It was Israel's privilege that they had such guides, overseers, and rulers, and their duty to make use of them upon all occasions, especially in sacred things, as this was.

(3.) They were to bring a heifer down into a rough and unoccupied valley, and to kill it there, De 21:3,4. This was not a sacrifice (for it was not brought to the altar), but a solemn protestation that thus they would put the murderer to death if they had him in their hands. The heifer must be one that had not drawn in the yoke, to signify (say some) that the murderer was a son of Belial; it must be brought into a rough valley, to signify the horror of the fact, and that the defilement which blood brings upon a land turns it into barrenness. And the Jews say that unless, after this, the murderer was found out, this valley where the heifer was killed was never to be tilled nor sown.

(4.) The elders were to wash their hands in water over the heifer that was killed, and to profess, not only that they had not shed this innocent blood themselves, but that they knew not who had (De 21:6,7), nor had knowingly concealed the murderer, helped him to make his escape, or been any way aiding or abetting. To this custom David alludes, Ps 26:6, I will wash my hands in innocency; but if Pilate had any eye to

it (Mt 27:24) he wretchedly misapplied it when he condemned Christ, knowing him to be innocent, and yet acquitted himself from the guilt of innocent blood. Protestatio non valet contra factum--Protestations are of no avail when contradicted by fact.

(5.) The priests were to pray to God for the country and nation, that God would be merciful to them, and not bring upon them the judgments which the connivance at the sin of murder would deserve. It might be presumed that the murderer was either one of their city or was now harboured in their city; and therefore they must pray that they might not fare the worse for his being among them, Nu 16:22. Be merciful, O Lord, to thy people Israel, De 21:8. Note, When we hear of the wickedness of the wicked we have need to cry earnestly to God for mercy for our land, which groans and trembles under it. We must empty the measure by our prayers which others are filling by their sins. Now,

2. This solemnity was appointed,

(1.) That it might give occasion to common and public discourse concerning the murder, which perhaps might some way or other occasion the discovery of it.

(2.) That it might possess people with a dread of the guilt of blood, which defiles not only the conscience of him that sheds it (this should engage us all to pray with David, Deliver me from blood--guiltiness), but the land in which it is shed; it cries to the magistrate for justice on the criminal, and, if that cry be not heard, it cries to heaven for judgment on the land. If there must be so much care employed to save the land from guilt when the murderer was not known, it was certainly impossible to secure it from guilt if the murderer was known and yet protected. All would be taught, by this solemnity, to use their utmost care and diligence to prevent, discover, and punish murder. Even the heathen mariners dreaded the guilt of blood, Jon 1:14.

(3.) That we might all learn to take heed of partaking in other men's sins, and making ourselves accessory to them ex post facto--after the fact, by countenancing the sin or sinner, and not witnessing against it in our places. We have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness if we do not reprove them rather, and bear our testimony against them. The repentance of the church of Corinth for the sin of one of their members produced such a carefulness, such a clearing of themselves, such a holy indignation, fear, and revenge (2Co 7:11), as were signified by the solemnity here appointed.

6 and all the elders of that city, *that are* next unto the slain *man*, shall
wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley:
7 and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood,
neither have our eyes seen *it*.
8 Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast
redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's
charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.
9 So shalt thou put away the *guilt of* innocent blood from among you,
when thou shalt do *that which is* right in the sight of the Lord.

Various Laws

10 When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the
Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast
taken them captive,

By this law a soldier is allowed to marry his captive if he pleased. For the hardness of their hearts Moses gave them this permission, lest, if they had not had liberty given them to marry such, they should have taken liberty to defile themselves with them, and by such wickedness the camp would have been troubled. The man is supposed to have a wife already, and to take this wife for a secondary wife, as the Jews called them.

This indulgence of men's inordinate desires, in which their hearts walked after their eyes, is by no means agreeable to the law of Christ, which therefore in this respect, among others,

far exceeds in glory the law of Moses. The gospel permits not him that has one wife to take another, for from the beginning it was not so. The gospel forbids looking upon a woman, though a beautiful one, to lust after her, and commands the mortifying and denying of all irregular desires, though it be as uneasy as the cutting off of a right hand; so much does our holy religion, more than that of the Jews, advance the honour and support the dominion of the soul over the body, the spirit over the flesh, consonant to the glorious discovery it makes of life and immortality, and the better hope.

But, though military men were allowed this liberty, yet care is here taken that they should not abuse it, that is,

I. That they should not abuse themselves by doing it too hastily, though the captive was ever so desirable: "If thou wouldest have her to thy wife (De 21:10,11), it is true thou needest not ask her parents' consent, for she is thy captive, and is at thy disposal. But,

1. Thou shalt have no familiar intercourse till thou hast married her." This allowance was designed to gratify, not a filthy brutish lust, in the heat and fury of its rebellion against reason and virtue, but an honourable and generous affection to a comely and amiable person, though in distress; therefore he may make her his wife if he will, but he must not deal with her as with a harlot.

2. "Thou shalt not marry her of a sudden, but keep her a full month in thy house," De 21:12,13. This he must do either,

(1.) That he may try to take his affection off from her; for he must know that, though in marrying her he does not do ill (so the law then stood), yet in letting her alone he does much better. Let her therefore shave her head, that he might not be enamoured with her locks, and let her nails grow (so the margin reads it), to spoil the beauty of her hand. Quisquid amas cupias non placuisse nimis--We should moderate our

affection for those things which we are tempted to love inordinately. Or rather,

(2.) This was done in token of her renouncing idolatry, and becoming a proselyte to the Jewish religion. The shaving of her head, the paring of her nails, and the changing of her apparel, signified her putting off her former conversation, which was corrupt in her ignorance, that she might become a new creature. She must remain in his house to be taught the good knowledge of the Lord and the worship of him: and the Jews say that if she refused, and continued obstinate in idolatry, he must not marry her. Note, The professors of religion must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, 2Co 6:14.

II. That they should not abuse the poor captive. 1. She must have time to bewail her father and mother, from whom she was separated, and without whose consent and blessing she is now likely to be married, and perhaps to a common soldier of Israel, though in her country ever so nobly born and bred. To force a marriage till these sorrows were digested, and in some measure got over, and she was better reconciled to the land of her captivity by being better acquainted with it, would be very unkind.

She must not bewail her idols, but be glad to part with them; to her near and dear relations only her affection must be thus indulged. 2. If, upon second thoughts, he that had brought her to his house with a purpose to marry her changed his mind and would not marry her, he might not make merchandise of her, as of his other prisoners, but must give her liberty to return, if she pleased, to her own country, because he had humbled her and afflicted her, by raising expectations and then disappointing them (De 21:14); having made a fool of her, he might not make a prey of her. This intimates how binding the laws of justice and honour are, particularly in the pretensions of love, the courting of affections, and the

promises of marriage, which are to be looked upon as solemn things, that have something sacred in them, and therefore are not to be jested with.

11 and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;

12 then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails;

13 and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.

14 And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

15 If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have borne him children, *both* the beloved and the hated; and *if* the firstborn son be hers that was hated:

This law restrains men from disinheriting their eldest sons out of mere caprice, and without just provocation.

I The case here put (De 21:15) is very instructive.

1. It shows the great mischief of having more wives than one, which the law of Moses did not restrain, probably in hopes that men's own experience of the great inconvenience of it in families would at last put an end to it and make them a law to themselves. Observe the supposition here: If a man have two wives, it is a thousand to one but one of them is beloved and the other hated (that is, manifestly loved less) as Leah was by Jacob, and the effect of this cannot but be strifes and jealousies, envy, confusion, and every evil work, which could not but create a constant uneasiness and vexation to the husband, and involve him both in sin and trouble. Those do much better consult their own ease and satisfaction who adhere to God's law than those who indulge their own lusts.

2. It shows how Providence commonly sides with the weakest, and gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked; for the first-born son is here supposed to be hers that was hated; it was so in Jacob's family: because the Lord saw that Leah was hated, Ge 29:31. The great householder wisely gives to each his dividend of comfort; if one had the honour to be the beloved wife, it often proved that the other had the honour to be the mother of the first-born.

II The law in this case is still binding on parents; they must give their children their right without partiality. In the case supposed, the eldest son, though the son of the less-beloved wife, must have his birthright privilege, which was a double portion of the father's estate, because he was the beginning of his strength that is, in him his family began to be strengthened and his quiver began to be filled with the arrows of a mighty man (Ps 127:4), and therefore the right of the first-born is his, De 21:16,17.

Jacob had indeed deprived Reuben of his birthright, and given it to Joseph, but it was because Reuben had forfeited the birthright by his incest, not because he was the son of the hated; now, lest that which Jacob did justly should be drawn into a precedent for others to do the same thing unjustly, it is here provided that when the father makes his will, or otherwise settled his estate, the child shall not fare the worse for the mother's unhappiness in having less of her husband's love, for that was not the child's fault. Note,

(1.) Parents ought to make no other difference in dispensing their affections among their children than what they see plainly God makes in dispensing his grace among them.

(2.) Since it is the providence of God that makes heirs, the disposal of providence in that matter must be acquiesced in and not opposed. No son should be abandoned by his father till he manifestly appear to be abandoned of God, which is hard to say of any while there is life.

16 then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit *that* which he
hath, *that* he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before
the son of the hated, *which is indeed* the firstborn:
17 but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by
giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the
beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.
18 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey
the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when
they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

Here is,

I. A law for the punishing of a rebellious son. Having in the former law provided that parents should not deprive their children of their right, it was fit that it should next be provided that children withdraw not the honour and duty which are owing to their parents, for there is no partiality in the divine law. Observe,

1. How the criminal is here described. He is a stubborn and rebellious son, De 21:18. No child was to fare the worse for the weakness of his capacity, the slowness or dulness of his understanding, but for his wilfulness and obstinacy. If he carry himself proudly and insolently towards his parents, contemn their authority, slight their reproofs and admonitions, disobey the express commands they give him for his own good, hate to be reformed by the correction they give him, shame their family, grieve their hearts, waste their substance, and threaten to ruin their estate by riotous living--this is a stubborn and rebellious son. He is particularly supposed (De 21:20) to be a glutton or a drunkard. This intimates either,

(1.) That these were sins which his parents did in a particular manner warn him against, and therefore that in these instances there was a plain evidence that he did not obey their voice. Lemuel had this charge from his mother, Pr 31:4. Note, In the education of children, great care should be taken to suppress all inclinations to drunkenness, and to keep them out

of the way of temptations to it; in order hereunto they should be possessed betimes with a dread and detestation of that beastly sin, and taught betimes to deny themselves. Or,

(2.) That his being a glutton and a drunkard was the cause of his insolence and obstinacy towards his parents. Note, There is nothing that draws men into all manner of wickedness, and hardens them in it, more certainly and fatally than drunkenness does. When men take to drink they forget the law, they forget all law (Pr 31:5), even that fundamental law of honouring parents.

2. How this criminal is to be proceeded against. His own father and mother are to be his prosecutors, De 21:19,20. They might not put him to death themselves, but they must complain of him to the elders of the city, and the complaint must needs be made with a sad heart: This our son is stubborn and rebellious. Note, Those that give up themselves to vice and wickedness, and will not be reclaimed, forfeit their interest in the natural affections of the nearest relations; the instruments of their being justly become the instruments of their destruction.

The children that forget their duty must thank themselves and not blame their parents if they are regarded with less and less affection. And, how difficult soever tender parents now find it to reconcile themselves to the just punishment of their rebellious children, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God all natural affection will be so entirely swallowed up in divine love that they will acquiesce even in the condemnation of those children, because God will be therein for ever glorified.

3. What judgment is to be executed upon him: he must publicly stoned to death by the men of his city, De 21:21. And thus,

(1.) The paternal authority was supported, and God, our common Father, showed himself jealous for it, it being one of the first and most ancient streams derived from him that is the fountain of all power.

(2.) This law, if duly executed, would early destroy the wicked of the land. (Ps 101:8), and prevent the spreading of the gangrene, by cutting off the corrupt part betimes; for those that were bad members of families would never make good members of the commonwealth.

(3.) It would strike an awe upon children, and frighten them into obedience to their parents, if they would not otherwise be brought to their duty and kept in it: All Israel shall hear. The Jews say, "The elders that condemned him were to send notice of it in writing all the nation over, In such a court, such a day, we stoned such a one, because he was a stubborn and rebellious son." And I have sometimes wished that as in all our courts there is an exact record kept of the condemnation of criminals, in perpetuam rei memoriam--that the memorial may never be lost, so there might be public and authentic notice given in print to the kingdom of such condemnations, and the executions upon them, by the elders themselves, in terrorem--that all may hear and fear.

II. A law for the burying of the bodies of malefactors that were hanged, De 21:22. The hanging of them by the neck till the body was dead was not used at all among the Jews, as with us; but of such as were stoned to death, if it were for blasphemy, or some other very execrable crime, it was usual, by order of the judges, to hang up the dead bodies upon a post for some time, as a spectacle to the world, to express the ignominy of the crime, and to strike the greater terror upon others, that they might not only hear and fear, but see and fear. Now it is here provided that, whatever time of the day they were thus hanged up, at sun-set they should be taken down and buried, and not left to hang out all night; sufficient (says the law) to such a man is this punishment; hitherto let it go,

but no further. Let the malefactor and his crime be hidden in the grave. Now,

1. God would thus preserve the honour of human bodies and tenderness towards the worst of criminals. The time of exposing dead bodies thus is limited for the same reason that the number of stripes was limited by another law: Lest thy brother seem vile unto thee. Punishing beyond death God reserves to himself; as for man, there is no more that he can do. Whether therefore the hanging of malefactors in chains, and setting up their heads and quarters, be decent among Christians that look for the resurrection of the body, may perhaps be worth considering.

2. Yet it is plain there was something ceremonial in it; by the law of Moses the touch of a dead body was defiling, and therefore dead bodies must not be left hanging up in the country, because, by the same rule, this would defile the land. But,

3. There is one reason here given which has reference to Christ. He that is hanged is accursed of God, that is, it is the highest degree of disgrace and reproach that can be done to a man, and proclaims him under the curse of God as much as any external punishment can. Those that see him thus hang between heaven and earth will conclude him abandoned of both and unworthy of either; and therefore let him not hang all night, for that would carry it too far. Now the apostle, showing how Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being himself made a curse for us, illustrates it by comparing the brand here put on him that was hanged on a tree with the death of Christ, Ga 3:13.

Moses, by the Spirit, uses this phrase of being accursed of God, when he means no more than being treated most ignominiously, that it might afterwards be applied to the death of Christ, and might show that in it he underwent the curse of the law for us, which is a great enhancement of his

love and a great encouragement to our faith in him. And (as the excellent bishop Patrick well observes) this passage is applied to the death of Christ, not only because he bore our sins and was exposed to shame, as these malefactors were that were accursed of God, but because he was in the evening taken down from the cursed tree and buried (and that by the particular care of the Jews, with an eye to this law, Joh 19:31), in token that now, the guilt being removed, the law was satisfied, as it was when the malefactor had hanged till sun-set; it demanded no more. Then he ceased to be a curse, and those that were his. And, as the land of Israel was pure and clean when the dead body was buried, so the church is washed and cleansed by the complete satisfaction which thus Christ made.

19 then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring
him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;
20 and they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son *is* stubborn
and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton, and a
drunkard.
21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die:
so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall
hear, and fear.
22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to
be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:
23 his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in
any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of
God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth
thee for an inheritance.

Deuteronomy-22

1 Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide
thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy
brother.

The kindness that was commanded to be shown in reference to an enemy (Ex 23:4,5, &c.) is here required to be much

more done for a neighbour, though he were not an Israelite, for the law is consonant to natural equity.

1. That strayed cattle should be brought back, either to the owner or to the pasture out of which they had gone astray, De 22:1,2. This must be done in pity to the very cattle, which, while they wandered, were exposed; and in civility and respect to the owner, nay, and in justice to him, for it was doing as we would be done by, which is one of the fundamental laws of equity.

Note, Religion teaches us to be neighbourly, and to be ready to do all good offices, as we have opportunity, to all men. In doing this,

(1.) They must not mind trouble, but, if they knew who the owner was, must take it back themselves; for, if they should only send notice to the owner to come and look after it himself, some mischief might befall it ere he could reach it.

(2.) They must not mind expense, but, if they knew not who the owner was, must take it home and feed it till the owner was found. If such care must be taken of a neighbour's ox or ass going astray, much more of himself going astray from God and his duty; we should do our utmost to convert him (Jam 5:19), and restore him, considering ourselves, Ga 6:1.

2. That lost goods should be brought to the owner, De 22:3. The Jews say, "He that found the lost goods was to give public notice of them by the common crier three or four times," according to the usage with us; if the owner could not be found, he that found the goods might convert them to his own use; but (say some learned writers in this case) he would do very well to give the value of the goods to the poor.

3. That cattle in distress should be helped, De 22:4. This must be done both in compassion to the brute-creatures (for a merciful man regardeth the life of a beast, though it be not his

own) and in love and friendship to our neighbour, not knowing how soon we may have occasion for his help. If one member may say to another, "I have at present no need of thee," it cannot say, "I never shall."

2 And if thy brother *be* not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again.

3 In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.

4 Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift *them* up again.

5 The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the Lord thy God.

6 If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, *whether they be* young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:

7 *but* thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and *that* thou mayest prolong *thy* days.

Here are several laws in these verses which seem to stoop very low, and to take cognizance of things mean and minute. Men's laws commonly do not so: De minimis non curat lex-- The law takes no cognizance of little things; but because God's providence extends itself to the smallest affairs, his precepts do so, that even in them we may be in the fear of the Lord, as we are under his eye and care. And yet the significancy and tendency of these statutes, which seem little, are such that, notwithstanding their minuteness, being fond among the things of God's law, which he has written to us, they are to be accounted great things.

I The distinction of sexes by the apparel is to be kept up, for the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, De 22:5. Nature itself teaches that a difference be made between them in their hair (1Co 11:14), and by the same rule in their clothes, which therefore ought not to be confounded, either in ordinary wear or occasionally. To befriend a lawful escape or concealment it may be done, but whether for sport or in the acting of plays is justly questionable.

1. Some think it refers to the idolatrous custom of the Gentiles: in the worship of Venus, women appeared in armour, and men in women's clothes; this, as other such superstitious usages, is here said to be an abomination to the Lord.

2. It forbids the confounding of the dispositions and affairs of the sexes: men must not be effeminate, nor do the women's work in the house, nor must women be viragos, pretend to teach, or usurp authority, 1Ti 2:11,12. Probably this confounding of garments had been used to gain opportunity of committing uncleanness, and is therefore forbidden; for those that would be kept from sin must keep themselves from all occasions of it and approaches to it.

II. In taking a bird's-nest, the dam must be let go, De 22:6,7. The Jews say, "This is the least of all the commandments of the law of Moses," and yet the same promise is here made to the observance of it that is made to the keeping of the fifth commandment, which is one of the greatest, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days; for, as disobedience in a small matter shows a very great contempt of the law, so obedience in a small matter shows a very great regard to it. He that let go a bird out of his hand (which was worth two in the bush) purely because God bade him, in that made it to appear that he esteemed all God's precepts concerning all things to be right, and that he could deny himself rather than sin against God. But doth God take care for birds? 1Co 9:9. Yes, certainly; and perhaps to this law our

Saviour alludes. Lu 12:6, Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? This law,

1. Forbids us to be cruel to the brute-creatures, or to take a pleasure in destroying them. Though God has made us wiser than the fowls of heaven, and given us dominion over them, yet we must not abuse them nor rule them with rigour. Let go the dam to breed again; destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, Isa 65:8.

2. It teaches us compassion to those of our own kind, and to abhor the thought of every thing that looks barbarous, and cruel, and ill-natured, especially towards those of the weaker and tender sex, which always ought to be treated with the utmost respect, in consideration of the sorrows wherein they bring forth children. It is spoken of as an instance of the most inhuman cruelty that the mother was dashed to pieces upon her children (Ho 10:14), and that the women with child were ripped open, Am 1:13.

3. It further intimates that we must not take advantage against any, from their natural affection and the tenderness of their disposition, to do them an injury. The dam could not have been taken if her concern for her eggs or young (unlike to the ostrich) had not detained her upon the next when otherwise she could easily have secured herself by flight. Now, since it is a thousand pities that she should fare the worse for that which is her praise, the law takes care that she shall be let go. The remembrance of this may perhaps, some time or other, keep us from doing a hard or unkind thing to those whom we have at our mercy.

III. In building a house, care must be taken to make it safe, that none might receive mischief by falling from it, De 22:8. The roofs of their houses were flat for people to walk on, as appears by many scriptures; now lest any, through carelessness, should fall off them, they must compass them

with battlements, which (the Jews say) must be three feet and a half high; if this were not done, and mischief followed, the owner, by his neglect, brought the guilt of blood upon his house. See here,

1. How precious men's lives are to God, who protects them, not only by his providence, but by his law.

2. How precious, therefore, they ought to be to us, and what care we should take to prevent hurt from coming to any person. The Jews say that by the equity of this law they were obliged (and so are we too) to fence, or remove, every thing by which life may be endangered, as to cover draw-wells, keep bridges in repair, and the like, lest, if any perish through our omission, their blood be required at our hand.

IV. Odd mixtures are here forbidden, De 22:9,10. Much of this we met with before, Le 19:19. There appears not any thing at all of moral evil in these things, and therefore we now make no conscience of sowing wheat and rye together, ploughing with horses and oxen together, and of wearing linsey-woolsey garments; but hereby is forbidden either,

1. A conformity to some idolatrous customs of the heathen. Or,

2. That which is contrary to the plainness and purity of an Israelite. They must not gratify their own vanity and curiosity by putting those things together which the Creator in infinite wisdom had made asunder: they must not be unequally yoked with unbelievers, nor mingle themselves with the unclean, as an ox with an ass. Nor must their profession and appearance in the world be motley, or party-coloured, but all of a piece, all of a kind.

V. The law concerning fringes upon their garments, and memorandums of the commandments, which we had before

(Nu 15:38,39), is here repeated, De 22:12. By these they were distinguished from other people, so that it might be said, upon the first sight, There goes an Israelite, which taught them not to be ashamed of their country, nor the peculiarities of their religion, how much soever their neighbours looked upon them and it with contempt: and they were also put in mind of the precepts upon the particular occasions to which they had reference; and perhaps this law is repeated here because the precepts immediately foregoing seemed so minute that they were in danger of being overlooked and forgotten. The fringes will remind you not to make your garments of linen and woollen, De 22:11.

8 When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

9 Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.

10 Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.

11 Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, *as* of woolen and linen together.

12 Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest *thyself.*

Laws concerning Chastity

13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

14 and give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:

15 then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth *the tokens of* the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

These laws relate to the seventh commandment, laying a restraint by laying a penalty upon those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

I. If a man, lusting after another woman, to get rid of his wife slander her and falsely accuse her, as not having the virginity she pretended to when he married her, upon the disproof of his slander he must be punished, De 22:13-19. What the meaning of that evidence is by which the husband's accusation was to be proved false the learned are not agreed, nor is it at all necessary to enquire--those for whom this law was intended, no doubt, understood it: it is sufficient for us to know that this wicked husband, who had thus endeavoured to ruin the reputation of his own wife, was to be scourged, and fined, and bound out from ever divorcing the wife he had thus abused, De 22:18,19. Upon his dislike of her he might have divorced her if he had pleased, by the permission of the law (De 24:1), but then he must have given her her dowry: if therefore to save that, and to do her the greater mischief, he would thus destroy her good name, it was fit that he should be severely punished for it, and for ever after forfeit the permission to divorce her. Observe,

1 The nearer any are in relation to us the greater sin it is to belie them and blemish their reputation. It is spoken of as a crime of the highest nature to slander thy own mother's son (Ps 50:20), who is next to thyself, much more to slander thy own wife, or thy own husband, that is thyself: it is an ill bird indeed that defiles its own nest.

2. Chastity is honour as well as virtue, and that which gives occasion for the suspicion of it is as great a reproach and disgrace as any whatsoever: in this matter therefore, above any thing, we should be highly tender both of our own good name and that of others. 3. Parents must look upon themselves as concerned to vindicate the reputation of their children, for it is a branch of their own.

II. If the woman that was married as a virgin was not found to be one she was to be stoned to death at her father's door, De 22:20,21. If the uncleanness had been committed before

she was betrothed it would not have been punished as a capital crime; but she must die for the abuse she put upon him whom she married, being conscious to herself of being defiled, while she made him believe her to be a chaste and modest woman. But some think that her uncleanness was punished with death only in case it was committed after she was betrothed, supposing there were few come to maturity but what were betrothed, though not yet married. Now,

1. This gave a powerful caution to young women to flee fornication, since, however concealed before, so as not to mar their marriage, it would very likely be discovered afterwards, to their perpetual infamy and utter ruin.

2. It is intimated to parents that they must by all means possible preserve their children's chastity, by giving them good advice and admonition, setting them good examples, keeping them from bad company, praying for them, and laying them under needful restraints, because, if the children committed lewdness, the parents must have the grief and shame of the execution at their own door. That phrase of folly wrought in Israel was used concerning this very crime in the case of Dinah, Ge 34:7. All sin is folly, uncleanness especially; but, above all, uncleanness in Israel, by profession a holy people.

III. If any man, single or married, lay with a married woman, they were both to be put to death, De 22:22. This law we had before, Le 20:10. For a married man to lie with a single woman was not a crime of so high a nature, nor was it punished with death, because not introducing a spurious brood into families under the character of legitimate children.

IV. If a damsel were betrothed and not married, she was from under the eye of her intended husband, and therefore she and her chastity were taken under the special protection of the law.

1. If her chastity were violated by her own consent, she was to be put to death, and her adulterer with her, De 22:23,24. And it shall be presumed that she consented if it were done in the city, or in any place where, had she cried out, help might speedily have come in to prevent the injury offered her. Qui tacet, consentire videtur--Silence implies consent.

Note, It may be presumed that those willingly yield to a temptation (whatever they pretend) who will not use the means and helps they might be furnished with to avoid and overcome it. Nay, her being found in the city, a place of company and diversion, when she should have kept under the protection of her father's house, was an evidence against her that she had not that dread of the sin and the danger of it which became a modest woman. Note, Those that needlessly expose themselves to temptation justly suffer for the same, if, ere they are aware, they be surprised and caught by it. Dinah lost her honour to gratify her curiosity with a sight of the daughters of the land. By this law the Virgin Mary was in danger of being made a public example, that is, of being stoned to death, but that God, by an angel, cleared the matter to Joseph.

2. If she were forced, and never consented, he that committed the rape was to be put to death, but the damsel was to be acquitted, De 22:24-27. Now if it were done in the field, out of the hearing of neighbours, it shall be presumed that she cried out, but there was none to save her; and, besides, her going into the field, a place of solitude, did not so much expose her. Now by this law it is intimated to us,

(1.) That we shall suffer only for the wickedness we do, not for that which is done to us. That is no sin which has not more or less of the will in it.

(2.) That we must presume the best concerning all persons, unless the contrary do appear; not only charity, but equity teaches us to do so. Though none heard her cry, yet, because

none could hear it if she did, it shall be taken for granted that she did. This rule we should go by in judging of persons and actions: believe all things, and hope all things.

(3.) That our chastity should be as dear to us as our life when that is assaulted, it is not at all improper to cry murder, murder, for, as when a man riseth against his neighbour and slayeth him, even so is this matter.

(4.) By way of allusion to this, see what we are to do when Satan sets upon us with his temptations: wherever we are, let us cry aloud to heaven for help (Succurre, Domine, vim patior--Help me, O Lord, for I suffer violence), and there we may be sure to be heard, and answered, as Paul was, My grace is sufficient for thee.

V. If a damsel not betrothed were thus abused by violence, he that abused her should be fined, the father should have the fine, and, if he and the damsel did consent, he should be bound to marry her, and never to divorce her, how much soever she was below him, and how unpleasing soever she might afterwards be to him, as Tamar was to Amnon after he had forced her, De 22:28,29. This was to deter men from such vicious practices, which it is a shame that we are necessitated to read and write of.

VI. The law against a man's marrying his father's widow, or having any undue familiarity with his father's wife, is here repeated (De 22:30) from Le 18:8. And, probably, it is intended (as bishop Patrick notes) for a short memorandum to them carefully to observe all the laws there made against incestuous marriages, that being specified which is the most detestable of all; it is that of which the apostle says, It is not so much as named among the Gentiles, 1Co 5:1.

16 and the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

17 and, lo, he hath given occasions of speech *against her*, saying, I
found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these *are the tokens of* my
daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the
elders of the city.
18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;
19 and they shall amerce him in a hundred *shekels* of silver, and give
them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an
evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may
not put her away all his days.
20 But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of* virginity be not found for
the damsel:
21 then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's
house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she
die; because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in
her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.
22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband,
then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the
woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.
23 If a damsel that *is* a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a
man find her in the city, and lie with her;
24 then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye
shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she
cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled
his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.
25 But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man
force her, and lie with her; then the man only that lay with her
shall die:
26 but unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; *there is* in the damsel no
sin *worthy* of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbor,
and slayeth him, even so *is* this matter:
27 for he found her in the field, *and* the betrothed damsel cried, and
there was none to save her.
28 If a man find a damsel *that is* a virgin, which is not betrothed, and
lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;
29 then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father
fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath
humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

30 A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

Deuteronomy-23

Those Excluded from the Congregation

1 He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.
2 A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.
3 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever:
4 because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.
5 Nevertheless, the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.

Interpreters are not agreed what is here meant by entering into the congregation of the Lord, which is here forbidden to eunuchs and to bastards, Ammonites and Moabites, for ever, but to Edomites and Egyptians only till the third generation.

1. Some think they are hereby excluded from communicating with the people of God in their religious services. Though eunuchs and bastards were owned as members of the church, and the Ammonites and Moabites might be circumcised and proselyted to the Jewish religion, yet they and their families must lie for some time under marks of disgrace, remembering the rock whence they were hewn, and must not come so near the sanctuary as others might, nor have so free a communion with Israelites.

2. Others think they are hereby excluded from bearing office in the congregation: none of these must be elders or judges, lest the honour of the magistracy should thereby be stained.

3. Others think they are excluded only from marrying with Israelites. Thus the learned bishop Patrick inclines to understand it; yet we find that when this law was put in execution after the captivity they separated from Israel, not only the strange wives, but all the mixed multitude, see Ne 13:1-2. With the daughters of these nations (though out of the nations of Canaan), it should seem, the men of Israel might marry, if they were completely proselyted to the Jewish religion; but with the men of these nations the daughters of Israel might not marry, nor could the men be naturalized otherwise than as here provided.

It is plain, in general, that disgrace is here put,

I. Upon bastards and eunuchs, De 23:1,2. By bastards here the Jewish writers understand, not all that were born of fornication, or out of marriage, but all the issue of those incestuous mixtures which are forbidden, Le 18:1-30. And, though it was not the fault of the issue, yet, to deter people from those unlawful marriages and unlawful lusts, it was very convenient that their posterity should thus be made infamous.

By this rule Jephthah, though the son of a harlot, a strange woman (Jdg 11:1,2), yet was not a bastard in the sense of this law. And as for the eunuchs, though by this law they seemed to be cast out of the vineyard as dry trees, which they complain of (Isa 56:3), yet it is here promised (De 23:5) that if they took care of their duty to God, as far as they were admitted, by keeping his Sabbaths and choosing the things that pleased him, the want of this privilege should be made up to them with such spiritual blessings as would entitle them to an everlasting name.

II. Upon Ammonites and Moabites, the posterity of Lot, who, for his outward convenience, had separated himself from Abraham, Ge 13:11. And we do not find that he or his ever joined themselves again to the children of the covenant. They are here cut off to the tenth generation, that is, (as some think it is explained), for ever. Compare Ne 13:1 The reason of this quarrel which Israel must have with them, so as not to seek their peace (De 23:6), is because of the unkindness they had now lately done to the camp of Israel, notwithstanding the orders God had given not to distress or vex them, De 2:9,19.

1. It was bad enough that they did not meet them with bread and water in the way (De 23:4), that they did not as allies, or at least as neutral states, bring victuals into their camp, which they should have been duly paid for. It was well that God's Israel did not need their kindness, God himself following them with bread and water. However this omission of the Ammonites should be remembered against their nation in future ages.

Note, God will certainly reckon, not only with those that oppose his people, but with those that do not help and further them, when it is in the power of their hand to do it. The charge at the great day is for an omission: I was hungry, and you gave me no meat.

2 The Moabites had done worse, they hired Balaam to curse Israel, De 23:4. It is true God turned the curse into a blessing (De 23:5), not only changing the word in Balaam's mouth, but making that really turn to the honour and advantage of Israel which was designed for their ruin. But though the design was defeated, and overruled for good, the Moabites' wickedness was not the less provoking. God will deal with sinners, but according to their endeavours, Ps 28:4.

III. The Edomites and Egyptians had not so deep a mark of displeasure put upon them as the Moabites and Ammonites

had. If an Edomite or Egyptian turned proselyte, his grand-children should be looked upon as members of the congregation of the Lord to all intents and purposes, De 23:7,8. We should think that the Edomites had been more injurious to the Israelites than the Ammonites, and deserved as little favour from them (Nu 20:20), and yet "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, as thou must an Ammonite, for he is thy brother."

Note, The unkindness of near relations, though by many worst taken, yet should with us, for that reason, because of the relation, be first forgiven. And then, as to the Egyptians, here is a strange reason given why they must not be abhorred: "Thou wast a stranger in their land, and therefore, though hardly used there, be civil to them, for old acquaintance' sake." They must not remember their bondage in Egypt for the keeping up of any ill will to the Egyptians, but only for the magnifying of Gods power and goodness in their deliverance.

6 Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for
ever.
7 Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he *is* thy brother: thou shalt
not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.
8 The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the
congregation of the Lord in their third generation.

Laws of Sanitation

9 When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee
from every wicked thing.

Israel was now encamped, and this vast army was just entering upon action, which was likely to keep them together for a long time, and therefore it was fit to give them particular directions for the good ordering of their camp. And the charge is in one word to be clean. They must take care to keep their camp pure from moral, ceremonial, and natural pollution.

I. From moral pollution (De 23:9): When the host goes forth against thy enemy then look upon thyself as in a special manner engaged to keep thyself from every evil thing.

1 The soldiers themselves must take heed of sin, for sin takes off the edge of valour; guilt makes men cowards. Those that put their lives in their hands are concerned to make and keep their peace with God, and preserve a conscience void of offence; then may they look death in the face without terror. Soldiers, in executing their commission, must keep themselves from gratifying the lusts of malice, covetousness, or uncleanness, for these are wicked things--must keep themselves from the idols, or accursed things, they found in the camps they plundered.

2. Even those that tarried at home, the body of the people, and every particular person, must at that time especially keep from every wicked thing, lest by sin they provoke God to withdraw his presence from the host, and give victory to the enemy for the correcting of his own people. Times of war should be times of reformation, else how can we expect God should hear and answer our prayers for success? Ps 66:18. See 1Sa 7:3.

II. From ceremonial pollution, which might befall a person when unconscious of it, for which he was bound to wash his flesh in water, and look upon himself as unclean until the evening, Le 15:16. A soldier, notwithstanding the constant service and duty he had to do in the camp, must be so far from looking upon himself as discharged from the observance of this ceremony that more was required from him than at another time; had he been at his own house, he needed only to wash his flesh, but, being in the army, he must go abroad out of the camp, as one concerned to keep it pure and ashamed of his own impurity, and not return till after sunset, De 23:10,11. By this trouble and reproach, which even involuntary pollutions exposed men to, they were taught to

keep up a very great dread of all fleshly lusts. It were well if military men would consider this.

III. From natural pollution; the camp of the Lord must have nothing offensive in it, De 23:12-14. It is strange that the divine law, or at least the solemn order and direction of Moses, should extend to a thing of this nature; but the design of it was to teach them,

1. Modesty and decorum; nature itself teaches them thus to distinguish themselves from beasts that know no shame.

2. Cleanliness, and, though not niceness, yet neatness, even in their camp. Filthiness is offensive to the senses God has endued us with, prejudicial to the health, a wrong to the comfort of human life, and an evidence of a careless slothful temper of mind.

3. Purity from the pollutions of sin; if there must be this care taken to preserve the body clean and sweet, much more should we be solicitous to keep the mind so.

4. A reverence of the divine majesty. This is the reason here given: For the Lord thy God walketh by his ark, the special token of his presence, in the midst of thy camp; with respect to that external symbol this external purity is required, which (though not insisted on in the letter when that reason ceases) teaches us to preserve inward purity of soul, in consideration of the eye of God, which is always upon us. By this expression of respect to the presence of God among them, they were taught both to fortify themselves against sin and to encourage themselves against their enemies with the consideration of that presence.

5. A regard one to another. The filthiness of one is noisome to many; this law of cleanliness therefore teaches us not to do that which will be justly offensive to our brethren and grieve them. It is a law against nuisances.

10 If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of
uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad
out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp:
11 but it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash *himself* with
water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp
again.
12 Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt
go forth abroad:
13 and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be,
when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and
shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:
14 for the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver
thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy
camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away
from thee.

Laws of Human Relations

15 Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is
escaped from his master unto thee:

Orders are here given about five several things which have no relation one to another:--

I The land of Israel is here made a sanctuary, or city of refuge, for servants that were wronged and abused by their masters, and fled thither for shelter from the neighbouring countries, De 23:15,16. We cannot suppose that they were hereby obliged to give entertainment to all the unprincipled men that ran from service; Israel needed not (as Rome at first did) to be thus peopled. But,

1. They must not deliver up the trembling servant to his enraged master, till upon trial it appeared that the servant has wronged his master and was justly liable to punishment. Note, It is an honourable thing to shelter and protect the weak, provided they be not wicked. God allows his people to patronise the oppressed. The angel bid Hagar return to her

mistress, and Paul sent Onesimus back to his master Philemon, because they had neither of them any cause to go away, nor was either of them exposed to any danger in returning. But the servant here is supposed to escape, that is, to run for his life, to the people of Israel, of whom he had heard (as Benhadad of the kings of Israel, 1Ki 20:31) that they were a merciful people, to save himself from the fury of a tyrant; and in that case to deliver him up is to throw a lamb into the mouth of a lion.

2. If it appeared that the servant was abused, they must not only protect him, but, supposing him willing to embrace their religion, they must give him all the encouragement that might be to settle among them. Care is taken both that he should not be imposed up on in the place of his settlement--let it be that which he shall choose and where it liketh him best, and that he should not exchange one hard master for many--thou shalt not oppress him. Thus would he soon find a comfortable difference between the land of Israel and other lands, and would choose it to be his rest for ever. Note, Proselytes and converts to the truth should be treated with particular tenderness, that they may have no temptation to return.

II The land of Israel must be no shelter for the unclean; no whore, no Sodomite, must be suffered to live among them (De 23:17,18), neither a whore nor a whoremonger. No houses of uncleanness must be kept either by men or women. Here is,

1. A good reason intimated why there should be no such wickedness tolerated among them: they were Israelites. This seems to have an emphasis laid upon it. For a daughter of Israel to be a whore, or a son of Israel a whoremaster, is to reproach the stock they are come of, the people they belong to, and the God they worship. It is bad in any, but worst in Israelites, a holy nation, 2Sa 13:12.

2. A just mark of displeasure put upon this wickedness, that the hire of a whore, that is, the money she gets by her whoring, and the price of a dog, that is, of the Sodomite, pimp, or whoremaster (so I incline to understand it, for such are called dogs, Re 22:15), the money he gets by his lewd and villainous practices, no part of it shall be brought into the house of the Lord (as the hire of prostitutes among the Gentiles was into their temples) for any vow. This intimates,

(1.) That God would not accept of any offering at all from such wicked people; they had nothing to bring an offering of but what they got by their wickedness, and therefore their sacrifice could not but be an abomination to the Lord, Pr 15:8.

(2.) That they should not think, by making and paying vows, and bringing offerings to the Lord, to obtain leave to go on in this sin, as (it should seem) some that followed that trade suggested to themselves, when their offerings were admitted. Pr 7:14,15, This day have I paid my vows, therefore came I forth to meet thee. Nothing should be accepted in commutation of penance.

(3.) That we cannot honour God with our substance unless it be honestly and honourably come by. It must not only be considered what we give, but how we got it; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and uncleanness too.

16 he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall
choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not
oppress him.
17 There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of
the sons of Israel.
18 Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into
the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these *are*
abomination unto the Lord thy God.
19 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money,
usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:
20 unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother
thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the Lord thy God may bless

thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

I. The matter of usury is here settled, De 23:19,20.

(1.) They must not lend upon usury to an Israelite. They had and held their estates immediately from and under God, who, while he distinguished them from all other people, might have ordered, had he so pleased, that they should have all things in common among themselves; but instead of that, and in token of their joint interest in the good land he had given them, he only appointed them, as there was occasion, to lend to one another without interest, which among them would be little or no loss to the lender, because their land was so divided, their estates were so settled, and there was so little of merchandise among them, that it was seldom or never that they had occasion to borrow any great sums, only what was necessary for the subsistence of their families when the fruits of their ground had met with any disaster, or the like; and, in such a case, for a small matter to insist upon usury would have been very barbarous. Where the borrower gets, or hopes to get, it is just that the lender should share in the gain; but to him that borrows for his necessary food pity must be shown, and we must lend, hoping for nothing again, if we have wherewithal to do it, Lu 6:35.

(2.) They might lend upon usury to a stranger, who was supposed to live by trade, and (as we say) by turning the penny, and therefore got by what he borrowed, and came among them in hopes to do so. By this it appears that usury is not in itself oppressive; for they must not oppress a stranger, and yet might exact usury from him.

II. The performance of the vows wherewith we have bound our souls is here required; and it is a branch of the law of nature, De 23:21-23.

(1.) We are here left at our liberty whether we will make vows or no: If thou shalt forbear to vow (some particular sacrifice

and offering, more than was commanded by the law), it shall be no sin to thee. God had already signified his readiness to accept a free-will offering thus vowed, though it were but a little fine flour (Le 2:4-7, &c.), which was encouragement enough to those who were so inclined. But lest the priests, who had the largest share of those vows and voluntary offerings, should sponge upon the people, by pressing it upon them as their duty to make such vows, beyond their ability and inclination, they are here expressly told that it should not be reckoned a sin in them if they did not make any such vows, as it would be if they omitted any of the sacrifices that God had particularly required. For (as bishop Patrick well expresses it) God would have men to be easy in his service, and all their offerings to be free and cheerful.

(2.) We are here laid under the highest obligations, when we have made a vow, to perform it, and to perform it speedily: "Thou shalt not be slack to pay it, lest if it be delayed beyond the first opportunity the zeal abate, the vow be forgotten, or something happen to disable thee for the performance of it. That which has gone out of thy lips as a solemn and deliberate vow must not be recalled, but thou shalt keep and perform it, punctually and fully." The rule of the gospel goes somewhat further than this. 2Co 9:7, Every one, according as he purposeth in his heart, though it have not gone out of his lips, so let him give. Here is a good reason why we should pay our vows, that if we do not God will require it of us, will surely and severely reckon with us, not only for lying, but for going about to mock him, who cannot be mocked. See Ec 5:4.

V. Allowance is here given, when they passed through a cornfield or vineyard, to pluck and eat of the corn or grapes that grew by the road-side, whether it was done for necessity or delight, only they must carry none away with them, De 23:24,25. Therefore the disciples were not censured for plucking the ears of corn (it was well enough known that the

law allowed it), but for doing it on the sabbath day, which the tradition of the elders had forbidden. Now,

1. This law intimated to them what great plenty of corn and wine they should have in Canaan, so much that a little would not be missed out of their fruits: they should have enough for themselves and all their friends.

2. It provided for the support of poor travellers, to relieve the fatigue of their journey, and teaches us to be kind to such. The Jews say, "This law was chiefly intended in favour of labourers, who were employed in gathering in their harvest and vintage; their mouths must not be muzzled any more than that of the ox when he treads out the corn."

3. It teaches us not to insist upon property in a small matter, of which it is easy to say, What is that between me and thee? It was true the grapes which the passenger ate were none of his own, nor did the proprietor give them to him; but the thing was of so small value that he had reason to think were he present, he would not deny them to him, anymore than he himself would grudge the like courtesy, and therefore it was no theft to take them.

4. It used them to hospitality, and teaches us to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, and not to think every thing lost that is given away. Yet,

5. It forbids us to abuse the kindness of our friends, and to take the advantage of fair concessions to make unreasonable encroachments: we must not draw an ell from those that give but an inch. They may eat of their neighbour's grapes; but it does not therefore follow that they may carry away.

21 When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt
not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of
thee; and it would be sin in thee.
22 But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.
23 That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; *even*

a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord
thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.
24 When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, then thou mayest
eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put *any*
in thy vessel.
25 When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then
thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not
move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn.

Deuteronomy-24

1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to
pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some
uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement,
and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.

This is that permission which the Pharisees erroneously referred to as a precept, Mt 19:7, Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement. It was not so; our Saviour told them that he only suffered it because of the hardness of their hearts, lest, if they had not had liberty to divorce their wives, they should have ruled them with rigour, and it may be, have been the death of them. It is probable that divorces were in use before (they are taken for granted, Le 21:14), and Moses thought it needful here to give some rules concerning them.

1. That a man might not divorce his wife unless he found some uncleanness in her, De 24:1. It was not sufficient to say that he did not like her, or that he liked another better, but he must show cause for his dislike; something that made her disagreeable and unpleasant to him, though it might not make her so to another. This uncleanness must mean something less than adultery; for, for that, she was to die; and less than the suspicion of it, for in that case he might give her the waters of jealousy; but it means either a light carriage, or a cross froward disposition, or some loathsome sore or disease; nay, some of the Jewish writers suppose that an offensive breath might be a just ground for divorce. Whatever is meant by it, doubtless it was something considerable; so that their modern

doctors erred who allowed divorce for every cause, though ever so trivial, Mt 19:3.

2. That it must be done, not by word of mouth, for that might be spoken hastily, but by writing, and that put in due form, and solemnly declared, before witnesses, to be his own act and deed, which was a work of time, and left room for consideration, that it might not be done rashly.

3. That the husband must give it into the hand of his wife, and send her away, which some think obliged him to endow her and make provision for her, according to her quality and such as might help to marry her again; and good reason he should do this, since the cause of quarrel was not her fault, but her infelicity.

4. That being divorced it was lawful for her to marry another husband, De 24:2 The divorce had dissolved the bond of marriage as effectually as death could dissolve it; so that she was as free to marry again as if her first husband had been naturally dead.

5. That if her second husband died, or divorced her, then still she might marry a third, but her first husband should never take her again (De 24:3,4), which he might have done if she had not married another; for by that act of her own she had perfectly renounced him for ever, and, as to him was looked upon as defiled, though not as to another person.

The Jewish writers say that this was to prevent a most vile and wicked practice which the Egyptians had of changing wives; or perhaps it was intended to prevent men's rashness in putting away their wives; for the wife that was divorced would be apt, in revenge, to marry another immediately, and perhaps the husband that divorced her, how much soever he though to better himself by another choice, would find the next worse, and something in her more disagreeable, so that he would wish for his first wife again. "No" (says this law)

"you shall not have her, you should have kept her when you had her."

Note, It is best to be content with such things as we have, since changes made by discontent often prove for the worse. The uneasiness we know is commonly better, though we are apt to think it worse, than that which we do not know. By the strictness of this law God illustrates the riches of his grace in his willingness to be reconciled to his people that had gone a whoring from him. Jer 3:1, Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again to me. For his thoughts and ways are above ours.

2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's *wife*.

3 And *if* the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth *it* in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her *to be* his wife;

4 her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that *is* abomination before the Lord : and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance.

5 When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: *but* he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

6 No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh *a man's* life to pledge.

7 If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

8 Take heed in the plague of leprosy that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, *so* ye shall observe to do.

Here is,

I. Provision made for the preservation and confirmation of love between new-married people, De 24:5. This fitly follows upon the laws concerning divorce, which would be prevented

if their affection to each other were well settled at first. If the husband were much abroad from his wife the first year, his love to her would be in danger of cooling, and of being drawn aside to others whom he would meet with abroad; therefore his service to his country in war, embassies, or other public business that would call him from home, shall be dispensed with, that he may cheer up the wife that he has taken. Note,

1. It is of great consequence that love be kept up between husband and wife, and that every thing be very carefully avoided which might make them strange one to another, especially at first; for in that relation, where there is not the love that should be, there is an inlet ready to abundance of guilt and grief.

2. One of the duties of that relation is to cheer up one another under the cares and crosses that happen, as helpers of each other's joy; for a cheerful heart does good like a medicine.

II. A law against man-stealing, De 24:7. It was not death by the law of Moses to steal cattle or goods; but to steal a child, or a weak and simple man, or one that a man had in his power, and to make merchandize of him, this was a capital crime, and could not be expiated, as other thefts, by restitution--so much is a man better than a sheep, Mt 12:12. It was a very heinous offence, for, 1. It was robbing the public of one of its members. 2. It was taking away a man's liberty, the liberty of a free-born Israelite, which was next in value to his life. 3. It was driving a man out from the inheritance of the land, to the privileges of which he was entitled, and bidding him go serve other gods, as David complains against Saul, 1Sa 26:19.

III. A memorandum concerning the leprosy, De 24:8,9.

1 The laws concerning it must be carefully observed. The laws concerning it we had, Le 13:14. They are here said to be commanded to the priests and Levites, and therefore are not repeated in a discourse to the people; but the people are here

charged, in case of leprosy, to apply to the priest according to the law, and to abide by his judgment, so far as it agreed with the law and the plain matter of fact. The plague of leprosy being usually a particular mark of God's displeasure for sin, he in whom the signs of it did appear ought not to conceal it, nor cut out the signs of it, nor apply to the physician for relief; but he must go to the priest, and follow his directions. Thus those that feel their consciences under guilt and wrath must not cover it, nor endeavour to shake off their convictions, but by repentance, and prayer, and humble confession, take the appointed way to peace and pardon.

2 The particular case of Miriam, who was smitten with leprosy for quarrelling with Moses, must not be forgotten. It was an explication of the law concerning the leprosy. Remember that, and,

(1.) "Take heed of sinning after the similitude of her transgression, by despising dominions and speaking evil of dignities, lest you thereby bring upon yourselves the same judgment."

(2.) "If any of you be smitten with a leprosy, expect not that the law should be dispensed with, nor think it hard to be shut out of the camp and so made a spectacle; there is no remedy: Miriam herself, though a prophetess and the sister of Moses, was not exempted, but was forced to submit to this severe discipline when she was under this divine rebuke." Thus David, Hezekiah, Peter, and other great men, when they had sinned, humbled themselves, and took to themselves shame and grief; let us not expect to be reconciled upon easier terms.

IV. Some necessary orders given about pledges for the security of money lent. They are not forbidden to take such securities as would save the lender from loss, and oblige the borrower to be honest; but,

1. They must not take the millstone for a pledge (De 24:6), for with that they ground the corn that was to be bread for their families, or, if it were a public mill, with it the miller got his livelihood; and so it forbids the taking of any thing for a pledge by the want of which a man was in danger of being undone. Consonant to this is the ancient common law of England, which provides that no man be distrained of the utensils or instruments of his trade or profession, as the axe of a carpenter, or the books of a scholar, or beasts belonging to the plough, as long as there are other beasts of which distress may be made (Coke, 1 Inst. fol. 47). This teaches us to consult the comfort and subsistence of others as much as our own advantage. That creditor who cares not though his debtor and his family starve, nor is at all concerned what become of them, so he may but get his money or secure it, goes contrary, not only to the law of Christ, but even to the law of Moses too.

2. They must not go into the borrower's house to fetch the pledge, but must stand without, and he must bring it, De 24:10,11. The borrower (says Solomon) is servant to the lender; therefore lest the lender should abuse the advantage he has against him, and improve it for his own interest, it is provided that he shall take not what he pleases, but what the borrower can best spare. A man's house is his castle, even the poor man's house is so, and is here taken under the protection of the law. 3. That a poor man's bed-clothes should never be taken for a pledge, De 24:12,13. This we had before, Ex 22:26,27. If they were taken in the morning, they must be brought back again at night, which is in effect to say that they must not be taken at all. "Let the poor debtor sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee," that is, "pray for thee, and praise God for thy kindness to him."

Note, Poor debtors ought to be sensible (more sensible than commonly they are) of the goodness of those creditors that do not take all the advantage of the law against them, and to repay their kindnesses by their prayers for them, when they

are not in a capacity to repay it in any other way. "Nay, thou shalt not only have the prayers and good wishes of thy poor brother, but it shall be righteousness to thee before the Lord thy God," that is, "It shall be accepted and rewarded as an act of mercy to thy brother and obedience to thy God, and an evidence of thy sincere conformity to the law. Though it may be looked upon by men as an act of weakness to deliver up the securities thou hast for thy debt, yet it shall be looked upon by thy God as an act of goodness, which shall in no wise lose its reward."

9 Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Miriam by the way,
after that ye were come forth out of Egypt.
10 When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go
into his house to fetch his pledge.
11 Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend
shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.
12 And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:
13 in any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun
goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee:
and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God.
14 Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant *that is* poor and needy, *whether*
he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that *are* in thy land within
thy gates:
15 at his day thou shalt give *him* his hire, neither shall the sun go
down upon it; for he *is* poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he
cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee.

Here, I. Masters are commanded to be just to their poor servants, De 24:14,15.

1. They must not oppress them, by overloading them with work, by giving them undue and unreasonable rebukes, or by withholding from them proper maintenance. A servant, though a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, must not be abused: "For thou wast a bondman in the land where thou wast a stranger (De 24:18), and thou knowest what a grievous thing it is to be oppressed by a task-master, and therefore, in

tenderness to those that are servants and strangers, and in gratitude to that God who set thee at liberty and settled thee in a country of thy own, thou shalt not oppress a servant." Let not masters be tyrants to their servants, for their Master is in heaven. See Job 31:13.

2. They must be faithful and punctual in paying them their wages: "At his day thou shalt give him his hire, not only pay it in time, without further delay. As soon as he had done his day's work, if he desire it, let him have his day's wages," as those labourers (Mt 20:8) when evening had come. he that works by day-wages is supposed to live from hand to mouth, and cannot have to-morrow's bread for his family till be is paid for this day's labour. If the wages be withheld,

(1.) It will be grief to the servant, for, poor man, he sets his heart upon it,. or, as the word is, he lifts up his soul to it, he is earnestly desirous of it, as the reward of his work (Job 7:2), and depends upon it as the gift of God's providence for the maintenance of his family. A compassionate master, though it should be somewhat inconvenient to himself, would not disappoint the expectation of a poor servant that was so fond to think of receiving his wages. But that is not the worst.

(2.) It will be guilt to the master. "The injured servant will cry against thee to the Lord; since he has no one else to appeal to, he will lodge his appeal in the court of heaven, and it will be sin to thee." Or, if he do not complain, the cause will speak for itself, the "hire of the labourers which is kept back by fraud will itself cry," Jam 5:4. It is a greater sin than most people think it is, and will be found so in the great day, to put hardships upon poor servants, labourers, and workmen, that we employ. God will do them right if men do not.

II. Magistrates and judges are commanded to be just in their administrations.

1. In those which we call pleas of the crown a standing rule is here given, that the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers, De 24:16. If the children make themselves obnoxious to the law, let them suffer for it, but let not the parents suffer either for them or with them; it is grief enough to them to see their children suffer: if the parents be guilty, let them die for their own sin; but though God, the sovereign Lord of life, sometimes visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, and when he deals with nations in their national capacity, yet he does not allow men to do so. Accordingly, we find Amaziah sparing the children, even when the fathers were put to death for killing the king, 2Ki 14:6. It was in an extraordinary case, and no doubt by special direction from heaven, that Saul's sons were put to death for his offence, and they died rather as sacrifices than as malefactors, 2Sa 21:9,14.

2. In common pleas between party and party, great care must be taken that none whose cause was just should fare the worse for their weakness, nor for their being destitute of friends, as strangers, fatherless, and widows (De 24:17): "Thou shalt not pervert their judgment, nor force them to give their very raiment for a pledge, by defrauding them of their right." Judges must be advocates for those that cannot speak for themselves and have no friends to speak for them.

III. The rich are commanded to be kind and charitable to the poor. Many ways they are ordered to be so by the law of Moses. The particular instance of charity here prescribed is that they should not be greedy in gathering in their corn, and grapes, and olives, so as to be afraid of leaving any behind them, but be willing to overlook some, and let the poor have the gleanings, De 24:19-22.

1. "Say not, 'It is all my own, and why should not I have it?' But learn a generous contempt of property in small matters. One sheaf or two forgotten will make thee never the poorer at

the year's end, and it will do somebody good, if thou have it not."

2. "Say not, 'What I give I will give, and know whom I give it to, why should I leave it to be gathered by I know not whom, that will never thank me.' But trust God's providence with the disposal of thy charity, perhaps that will direct it to the most necessitous." Or, "Thou mayest reasonably think it will come to the hands of the most industrious, that are forward to seek and gather that which this law provides for them."

3. "Say not, 'What should the poor do with grapes and olives? It is enough for them to have bread and water;' for, since they have the same senses that the rich have, why should not they have so me little share of the delights of sense?" Boaz ordered handfuls of corn to be left on purpose for Ruth, and God blessed him. All that is left is not lost.

16 The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

17 Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

18 but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean *it* afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

22 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Deuteronomy-25

1 If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that *the judges* may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

Here is,

I. A direction to the judges in scourging malefactors, De 25:1-3.

1. It is here supposed that, if a man be charged with a crime, the accuser and the accused (Actor and Reus) should be brought face to face before the judges, that the controversy may be determined.

2. If a man were accused of a crime, and the proof fell short, so that the charge could not be made out against him by the evidence, then he was to be acquitted: "Thou shalt justify the righteous," that is, "him that appears to the court to be so." If the accusation be proved, then the conviction of the accused is a justification of the accuser, as righteous in the prosecution.

3. If the accused were found guilty, judgment must be given against him: "Thou shalt condemn the wicked;" for to justify the wicked is as much an abomination to the Lord as it is to condemn the righteous, Pr 17:15.

4. If the crime were not made capital by the law, then the criminal must be beaten. A great many precepts we have met with which have not any particular penalty annexed to them, the violation of most of which, according to the constant practice of the Jews, was punished by scourging, from which no person's rank or quality did exempt him if he were a delinquent, but with this proviso, that he should never be upbraided with it, nor should it be looked upon as leaving any mark of infamy or disgrace upon him. The directions here given for the scourging of criminals are,

(1.) That it be done solemnly; not tumultuously through the streets, but in open court before the judge's face, and with so much deliberation as that the stripes might be numbered. The Jews say that while execution was in doing the chief justice of the court read with a loud voice De 28:58,59,29:9, and concluded with those words (Ps 78:38), But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity. Thus it was made a sort of religious act, and so much the more likely to reform the offender himself and to be a warning to others.

(2.) That it be done in proportion to the crime, according to his fault, that some crimes might appear, as they are, more heinous than others, the criminal being beaten with many stripes, to which perhaps there is an allusion, Lu 12:47,48.

(3.) That how great soever the crime were the number of stripes should never exceed forty, De 25:3. Forty save one was the common usage, as appears, 2Co 11:24. It seems, they always gave Paul as many stripes as ever they gave to any malefactor whatsoever. They abated one for fear of having miscounted (though one of the judges was appointed to number the stripes), or because they would never go to the utmost rigour, or because the execution was usually done with a whip of three lashes, so that thirteen stripes (each one being counted for three) made up thirty-nine, but one more by that reckoning would have been forty-two. The reason given for this is, lest thy brother should seem vile unto thee. He must still be looked upon as a brother (2Th 3:15), and his reputation as such was preserved by this merciful limitation of his punishment. It saves him from seeming vile to his brethren, when God himself by his law takes this care of him. Men must not be treated as dogs; nor must those seem vile in our sight to whom, for aught we know, God may yet give grace to make them precious in his sight.

II. A charge to husbandmen not to hinder their cattle from eating when they were working, if meat were within their

reach, De 25:4. This instance of the beast that trod out the corn (to which there is an allusion in that of the prophet, Ho 10:11) is put for all similar instances. That which makes this law very remarkable above its fellows (and which countenances the like application of other such laws) is that it is twice quoted in the New Testament to show that it is the duty of the people to give their ministers a comfortable maintenance, 1Co 9:9,10, and 1Ti 5:17,18. It teaches us in the letter of it to make much of the brute-creatures that serve us, and to allow them not only the necessary supports for their life, but the advantages of their labour; and thus we must learn not only to be just, but kind, to all that are employed for our good, not only to maintain but to encourage them, especially those that labour among us in the word and doctrine, and so are employed for the good of our better part.

2 And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

3 Forty stripes he may give him, *and* not exceed: lest, *if* he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.

4 Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the corn*.

5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her.

6 And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

7 And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.

8 Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and *if* he stand to *it*, and say, I like not to take her;

Here is,

I The law settled concerning the marrying of the brother's widow. It appears from the story of Judah's family that this had been an ancient usage (Ge 38:8), for the keeping up of distinct families. The case put is a case that often happens, of a man's dying without issue, it may be in the prime of his time, soon after his marriage, and while his brethren were yet so young as to be unmarried. Now in this case,

1 The widow was not to marry again into any other family, unless all the relations of her husband did refuse her, that the estate she was endowed with might not be alienated.

2 The husband's brother, or next of kin, must marry her, partly out of respect to her, who, having forgotten her own people and her father's house, should have all possible kindness shown her by the family into which she was married; and partly out of respect to the deceased husband, that though he was dead and gone he might not be forgotten, nor lost out of the genealogies of his tribe; for the first-born child, which the brother or next kinsman should have by the widow, should be denominated from him that was dead, and entered in the genealogy as his child, De 25:5,6.

Under that dispensation we have reason to think men had not so clear and certain a prospect of living themselves on the other side death as we have now, to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel; and therefore they could not but be the more desirous to live in their posterity, which innocent desire was in some measure gratified by this law, an expedient being found out that, though a man had no child by his wife, yet his name should not be put out of Israel, that is, out of the pedigree, or, which is equivalent, remain there under the brand of childlessness. The Sadducees put a case to our Saviour upon this law, with a design to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection by it (Mt 22:24-33, &c.), perhaps insinuating that there was no need of maintaining the immortality of the soul and a future state,

since the law had so well provided for the perpetuating of men's names and families in the world. But,

3. If the brother, or next of kin, declined to do this good office to the memory of him that was gone, what must be done in that case? Why,

(1.) He shall not be compelled to do it, De 25:7. If he like her not, he is at liberty to refuse her, which, some think, was not permitted in this case before this law of Moses. Affection is all in all to the comfort of the conjugal relation; this is a thing which cannot be forced, and therefore the relation should not be forced without it.

(2.) Yet he shall be publicly disgraced for not doing it. The widow, as the person most concerned for the name and honour of the deceased, was to complain to the elders of his refusal; if he persist in it, she must pluck off his shoe, and spit in his face, in open court (or, as the Jewish doctors moderate it, spit before his face), thus to fasten a mark of infamy upon him, which was to remain with his family after him, De 25:8-10.

Note, Those justly suffer in their own reputation who do not do what they ought to preserve the name and honour of others. He that would not build up his brother's house deserved to have this blemish put upon his own, that it should be called the house of him that had his shoe loosed, in token that he deserved to go barefoot. In the case of Ruth we find this law executed (Ru 4:7), but because, upon the refusal of the next kinsman, there was another ready to perform the duty of a husband's brother, it was that other that plucked off the shoe, and not the widow--Boaz, and not Ruth.

II. A law for the punishing of an immodest woman, De 25:11,12. The woman that by the foregoing law was to complain against her husband's brother for not marrying her,

and to spit in his face before the elders, needed a good measure of assurance; but, lest the confidence which that law supported should grow to an excess unbecoming the sex, here is a very severe but just law to punish impudence and immodesty.

1 The instance of it is confessedly scandalous to the highest degree. A woman could not do it unless she were perfectly lost to all virtue and honour.

2 The occasion is such as might in part excuse it; it was to help her husband out of the hands of one that was too hard for him. Now if the doing of it in a passion, and with such a good intention, was to be so severely punished, much more when it was done wantonly and in lust.

3. The punishment was that her hand should be cut off; and the magistrates must not pretend to be more merciful than God: Thy eye shall not pity her. Perhaps our Saviour alludes to this law when he commands us to cut off the right hand that offends us, or is an occasion of sin to us. Better put the greatest hardships that can be upon the body than ruin the soul for ever. Modesty is the hedge of chastity, and therefore ought to be very carefully preserved and kept up by both sexes.

9 then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.

10 And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

11 When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:

12 then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity *her.*

13 Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small:

Here is, a law against deceitful weights and measures: they must not only not use them, but they must not have them, not

have them in the bag, not have them in the house (De 25:13,14); for, if they had them, they would be strongly tempted to use them. They must not have a great weight and measure to buy by and a small one to sell by, for that was to cheat both ways, when either was bad enough; as we read of those that made the ephah small, in which they measured the corn they sold, and the shekel great, by which they weighed the money they received for it, Am 8:5. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, De 25:15. That which is the rule of justice must itself be just; if that be otherwise, it is a constant cheat. This had been taken care of before, Le 19:35,36. This law is enforced with two very good reasons:--

1. That justice and equity will bring down upon us the blessing of God. The way to have our days lengthened, and to prosper, is to be just and fair in all our dealings Honesty is the best policy.

2. That fraud and injustice will expose us to the curse of God, De 25:16. Not only unrighteousness itself, but all that do unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord. And miserable is that man who is abhorred by his Maker. How hateful, particularly, all the arts of deceit are to God, Solomon several times observes, Pr 11:1,20:10,23; and the apostle tells us that the Lord is the avenger of all such as overreach and defraud in any matter, 1Th 4:6.

14 thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small:

15 *but* thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

16 For all that do such things, *and* all that do unrighteously, *are* an abomination unto the Lord thy God.

The Command to Blot Out Amalek

17 Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;

A law for the rooting out of Amalek. Here is a just weight and a just measure, that, as Amalek had measured to Israel, so it should be measure to Amalek again.

1 The mischief Amalek did to Israel must be here remembered, De 25:17,18. When it was first done it was ordered to be recorded (Ex 17:14-16), and here the remembrance of it is ordered to be preserved, not in personal revenge (for that generation which suffered by the Amalekites was gone, so that those who now lived, and their posterity, could not have any personal resentment of the injury), but in a zeal for the glory of God (which was insulted by the Amalekites), that throne of the Lord against which the hand of Amalek was stretched out. The carriage of the Amalekites towards Israel is here represented,

(1.) As very base and disingenuous. They had no occasion at all to quarrel with Israel, nor did they give them any notice, by a manifesto or declaration of war; but took them at an advantage, when they had just come out of the house of bondage, and, for aught that appeared to them, were only going to sacrifice to God in the wilderness.

(2.) As very barbarous and cruel; for they smote those that were more feeble, whom they should have succoured. The greatest cowards are commonly the most cruel; while those that have the courage of a man will have the compassion of a man.

(3.) As very impious and profane: they feared not God. If they had had any reverence for the majesty of the God of Israel, which they saw a token of in the cloud, or any dread of his wrath, which they lately heard of the power of over Pharaoh, they durst not have made this assault upon Israel. Well, here was the ground of the quarrel: and it shows how God takes what is done against his people as done against himself, and that he will particularly reckon with those that discourage and hinder young beginners in religion, that (as Satan's agents) set

upon the weak and feeble, either to divert them or to disquiet them, and offend his little ones.

2. This mischief must in due time be revenged, De 25:19. When their wars were finished, by which they were to settle their kingdom and enlarge their coast, then they must make war upon Amalek (De 25:19), not merely to chase them, but to consume them, to blot out the remembrance of Amalek. It was an instance of God's patience that he deferred the vengeance so long, which should have led the Amalekites to repentance; yet an instance of fearful retribution that the posterity of Amalek, so long after, were destroyed for the mischief done by their ancestors to the Israel of God, that all the world might see, and say, that he who toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.

It was nearly 400 years after this that Saul was ordered to put this sentence in execution (1Sa 15:1-35), and was rejected of God because he did not do it effectually, but spared some of that devoted nation, in contempt, not only of the particular orders he received from Samuel, but of this general command here given by Moses, which he could not be ignorant of. David afterwards made some destruction of them; and the Simeonites, in Hezekiah's time, smote the rest that remained (1Ch 4:43); for when God judges he will overcome.

18 how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, *even* all *that were* feeble behind thee, when thou *wast* faint and weary; and he feared not God.

19 Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance to possess it, *that* thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget *it*.

Deuteronomy-26

The Firstfruits and the Tithe

1 And it shall be, when thou *art* come in unto the land which the
Lord thy God giveth thee *for* an inheritance, and possessest it, and
dwellest therein;

A good work ordered to be done, and that is the presenting of a basket of their first-fruits to God every year, De 26:1,2. Besides the sheaf of first-fruits, which was offered for the whole land, on the morrow after the Passover (Le 23:10), every man was to bring for himself a basket of first-fruits at the feast of pentecost, when the harvest was ended, which is therefore called the feast of first-fruits (Ex 34:22), and is said to be kept with a tribute of free-will-offering, De 16:10. But the Jews say, "The first-fruits, if not brought then, might be brought any time after, between that and winter." When a man went into the field or vineyard at the time when the fruits were ripening, he was to mark that which he observed most forward, and to lay it by for first-fruits, wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates, some of each sort must be put in the same basket, with leaves between them, and presented to God in the place which he should choose. Now from this law we may learn,

1. To acknowledge God as the giver of all those good things which are the support and comfort of our natural life, and therefore to serve and honour him with them.

2. To deny ourselves. What is first ripe we are most fond of; those that are nice and curious expect to be served with each fruit at its first coming in. My soul desired the first ripe fruits, Mic 7:1. When therefore God appointed them to lay those by for him he taught them to prefer the glorifying of his name before the gratifying of their own appetites and desires.

3. To give to God the first and best we have, as those that believe him to be the first and best of beings. Those that consecrate the days of their youth, and the prime of their time, to the service and honour of God, bring him their first-fruits, and with such offerings he is well pleased. I remember the kindness of thy youth.

2 that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which
thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and
shalt put *it* in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord
thy God shall choose to place his name there.
3 And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and
say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am
come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for
to give us.
4 And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it
down before the altar of the Lord thy God.

I. Good words put into their mouths to be said in the doing of this good work, as an explication of the meaning of this ceremony, that it might be a reasonable service. The offerer must begin his acknowledgment before he delivered his basket to the priest, and then must go on with it, when the priest had set down the basket before the altar, as a present to God their great landlord, De 26:3,4.

1. He must begin with a receipt in full for the good land which God had given them (De 26:3): I profess that I have come now at last, after forty years' wandering, unto the country which the Lord swore to give us. This was most proper to be said when they came first into Canaan; probably when they had been long settled there they varied from this form.

Note, When God has made good his promises to us he expects that we should own it, to the honour of his faithfulness; this is like giving up the bond, as Solomon does, 1Ki 8:56, There has not failed one word of all his good promise. And our creature-comforts are doubly sweet to us when we see them flowing from the fountain of the promise.

2. He must remember and own the mean origin of that nation of which he was a member. How great soever they were now, and he himself with them, their beginning was very small, which ought thus to be kept in mind throughout all the ages of their church by this public confession, that they might not be proud of their privileges and advantages, but might for ever be thankful to that God whose grace chose them when they were so low and raised them so high. Two things they must own for this purpose:--

(1.) The meanness of their common ancestor: A Syrian ready to perish was my father, De 26:5. Jacob is here called an Aramite, or Syrian, because he lived twenty years in Padan-Aram; his wives were of that country, and his children were all born there, except Benjamin; and perhaps the confessor means not Jacob himself, but that son of Jacob who was the father of his tribe. However it be, both father and sons were more than once ready to perish, by Laban's severity, Esau's cruelty, and the famine in the land, which last was the occasion of their going down into Egypt. Laban the Syrian sought to destroy my father (so the Chaldee), had almost destroyed him, so the Arabic.

(2.) The miserable condition of their nation in its infancy. They sojourned in Egypt as strangers, they served there as slaves (De 26:6), and that a great while: as their father was called a Syrian, they might be called Egyptians; so that their possession of Canaan being so long discontinued they could not pretend any tenant-right to it. A poor, despised, oppressed people they were in Egypt, and therefore, though now rich and great, had no reason to be proud, or secure, or forgetful of God.

3. He must thankfully acknowledge God's great goodness, not only to himself in particular, but to Israel in general.

(1.) In bringing them out of Egypt, De 26:7,8. It is spoken of here as an act of pity--he looked on our affliction; and an act

of power--he brought us forth with a mighty hand. This was a great salvation, fit to be remembered upon all occasions, and particularly upon this; they need not grudge to bring a basket of first-fruits to God, for to him they owed it that they were not now bringing in the tale of bricks to their cruel task-masters.

(2.) In settling them in Canaan: He hath given us this land, De 26:9. Observe, He must not only give thanks for his own lot, but for the land in general which was given to Israel; not only for this year's profits, but for the ground itself which produced them, which God had graciously granted to his ancestors and entailed upon his posterity. Note, The comfort we have in particular enjoyments should lead us to be thankful for our share in public peace and plenty; and with present mercies we should bless God for the former mercies we remember and the further mercies we expect and hope for.

4. He must offer to God his basket of first-fruits (De 26:10): "I have brought the first-fruits of the land (like a pepper-corn) as a quit-rent for the land which thou hast given me." Note, Whatever we give to God, it is but of his own that we give him, 1Ch 29:14. And it becomes us, who receive so much from him, to study what we shall render to him. The basket he set before God; and the priests, as God's receivers, had the first-fruits, as perquisites of their place and fees for attending, Nu 18:12.

III. The offerer is here appointed, when he has finished the service,

1. To give glory to God: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. His first-fruits were not accepted without further acts of adoration. A humble, reverent, thankful heart is that which God looks at and requires, and, without this, all we can put in a basket will not avail. If a man would give all the substance of his house to be excused from this, or in lieu of it, it would utterly be contemned.

2. To take the comfort of it to himself and family: Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing, De 26:11. It is the will of God that we should be cheerful, not only in our attendance upon his holy ordinances, but in our enjoyments of the gifts of his providence. Whatever good thing God gives us, it is his will that we should make the most comfortable use we can of it, yet still tracing the streams to the fountain of all comfort and consolation.

5 And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian
ready to perish *was* my father; and he went down into Egypt, and
sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great,
mighty, and populous:
6 and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon
us hard bondage:
7 and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord
heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and
our oppression:
8 and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand,
and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and
with signs, and with wonders:
9 and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land,
even a land that floweth with milk and honey.
10 And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which
thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the
Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God:
11 and thou shalt rejoice in every good *thing* which the Lord thy God
hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite,
and the stranger that *is* among you.
12 When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine
increase the third year, *which is* the year of tithing, and hast given *it*
unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that
they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;
13 then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away
the hallowed things out of *mine* house, and also have given them
unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the
widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast

commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten *them:*

Concerning the disposal of their tithe the third year we had the law before, De 14:28,29. The second tithe, which in the other two years was to be spent in extraordinaries at the feasts, was to be spent the third year at home, in entertaining the poor. Now because this was done from under the eye of the priests, and a great confidence was put in the people's honesty, that they would dispose of it according to the law, to the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless (De 26:12), it is therefore required that when at the next feast after they appeared before the Lord they should there testify (as it were) upon oath, in a religious manner, that they had fully administered, and been true to their trust.

I. They must make a solemn protestation to this purport, De 26:13,14.

1. That no hallowed things were hoarded up: "I have brought them away out of my house, nothing now remains there but my own part."

2. That the poor, and particularly poor ministers, poor strangers, and poor widows, had had their part according to the commandment. It is fit that God, who by his providence gives us all we have, should by his law direct the using of it, and, though we are not now under such particular appropriations of our revenue as they then were, yet, in general, we are commanded to give alms of such things as we have; and then, and not otherwise, all things are clean to us. Then we may take the comfort of our enjoyments, when God has thus had his dues out of them. This is a commandment which must not be transgressed, no, not with an excuse of its being forgotten, De 26:13.

3. That none of this tithe had been misapplied to any common use, much less to any ill use. This seems to refer to the tithe

of the other two years, which was to be eaten by the owners themselves; they must profess,

(1.) That they had not eaten of it in their mourning, when, by their mourning for the dead, they were commonly unclean; or they had not eaten of it grudgingly, as those that all their days eat in darkness.

(2.) That they had not sacrilegiously alienated it to any common use, for it was not their own. And,

(3.) That they had not given it for the dead, for the honour of their dead gods, or in hope of making it beneficial to their dead friends. Now the obliging of them to make this solemn protestation at the three years' end would be an obligation upon them to deal faithfully, knowing that they must be called upon thus to purge themselves. It is our wisdom to keep conscience clear at all times, that when we come to give up our account we may lift up our face without spot. The Jews say that this protestation of their integrity was to be made with a low voice, because it looked like a self-commendation, but that the foregoing confession of God's goodness was to be made with a loud voice to his glory. He that durst not make this protestation must bring his trespass-offering, Le 5:15.

II. To this solemn protestation they must add a solemn prayer (De 26:15), not particularly for themselves, but for God's people Israel; for in the common peace and prosperity every particular person prospers and has peace. We must learn hence to be public-spirited in prayer, and to wrestle with God for blessings for the land and nation, our English Israel, and for the universal church, which we are directed to have an eye to in our prayers, as the Israel of God, Ga 6:16. In this prayer we are taught,

1. To look up to God as in a holy habitation, and thence to infer that holiness becomes his house, and that he will be sanctified in those that are about him.

2. To depend upon the favour of God, and his gracious cognizance, as sufficient to make us and our people happy.

3. To reckon it wonderful condescension in God to case an eye even upon so great and honourable a body as Israel was. It is looking down.

4. To be earnest with God for a blessing upon his people Israel, and upon the land which he has given us. For how should the earth yield its increase, or, if it does, what comfort can we take in it, unless therewith God, even our own God, gives us his blessing? Ps 67:6.

14 I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away *aught* thereof for *any* unclean use, nor given *aught* thereof for the dead: *but* I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, *and* have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

15 Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

16 This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Two things Moses here urges to enforce all these precepts:--

1. That they were the commands of God, De 26:16. They were not the dictates of his own wisdom, nor were they enacted by any authority of his own, but infinite wisdom framed them, and the power of the King of kings made them binding to them: "The Lord thy God commands thee, therefore thou art bound in duty and gratitude to obey him, and it is at thy peril if thou disobey. They are his laws, therefore thou shalt do them, for to that end were they given thee: do them and not dispute them, do them and not draw back from them; do them not carelessly and hypocritically, but with thy heart and soul, thy whole heart and thy whole soul."

2. That their covenant with God obliged them to keep these commands. He insists not only upon God's sovereignty over them, but his propriety in them, and the relation wherein they stood to him. The covenant is mutual, and it binds to obedience both ways.

(1.) That we may perform our part of the covenant, and answer the intentions of that (De 26:17): "Thou hast avouched and solemnly owned and confessed the Lord Jehovah to be thy God, thy Prince and Ruler. As he is so by an incontestable right, so he is by thy own consent." They did this implicitly by their attendance on his word, had done it expressly (Ex 24:1-8), and were now to do it again before they parted, De 29:1. Now this obliges us, in fidelity to our word, as well as in duty to our Sovereign, to keep his statutes and his commandments. We really forswear ourselves, and perfidiously violate the most sacred engagements, if, when we have taken the Lord to be our God, we do not make conscience of obeying his commands.

(2.) That God's part of the covenant also may be made good, and the intentions of that answered (De 26:18,19): The Lord has avouched, not only taken, but publicly owned thee to be his segullah, his peculiar people, as he has promised thee, that is, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise. Now their obedience was not only the condition of this favour, and of the continuance of it (if they were not obedient, God would disown them, and cast them off), but it was also the principal design of this favour. "He has avouched thee on purpose that thou shouldest keep his commandments, that thou mightest have both the best directions and the best encouragements in religion." Thus we are elected to obedience (1Pe 1:2), chosen that we should be holy (Eph 1:4), purified, a peculiar people, that we might not only do good works, but be zealous in them, Tit 2:14. Two things God is here said to design in avouching them to be his peculiar people (De 26:19), to make them high, and, in order to that,

to make them holy; for holiness is true honour, and the only way to everlasting honour.

[1.] To make them high above all nations. The greatest honour we are capable of in this world is to be taken into covenant with God, and to live in his service. They should be, First, High in praise; for God would accept them, which is true praise, Ro 2:29. Their friends would admire them, Zep 3:19,20. Secondly, High in name, which, some think, denotes the continuance and perpetuity of that praise, a name that shall not be cut off. Thirdly, High in honour, that is, in all the advantages of wealth and power, which would make them great above their neighbours. See Jer 13:11.

[2.] That they might be a holy people, separated for God, devoted to him, and employed continually in his service. This God aimed at in taking them to be his people; so that, if they did not keep his commandments, they received all this grace in vain.

17 Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk
in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and
his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:
18 and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar
people, as he hath promised thee, and that *thou* shouldest keep all
his commandments;
19 and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in
praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be a holy
people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.

Deuteronomy-27

The Law to Be Recorded on Mount Ebal

1 And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying,
Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.
2 And it shall be, on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the
land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee
up great stones, and plaster them with plaster:
3 and thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when
thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which
the Lord thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and
honey; as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee.
4 Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, *that* ye shall set up
these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and
thou shalt plaster them with plaster.
5 And there shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God, an altar
of stones: thou shalt not lift up *any* iron tool upon them.

Here is,

I. A general charge to the people to keep God's commandments; for in vain did they know them, unless they would do them. This is pressed upon them,

1. With all authority. Moses with the elders of Israel, the rulers of each tribe (De 27:1), and again, Moses and the priests the Levites (De 27:9); so that the charge is given by Moses who was king in Jeshurun, and by their lords, both spiritual and temporal, in concurrence with him. Lest they should think that it was Moses only, an old and dying man, that made such ado about religion, or the priests and Levites only, whose trade it was to attend religion and who had their maintenance out of it, the elders of Israel, whom God had placed in honour and power over them, and who were men of business in the world and likely to be so long so when Moses was gone, they commanded their people to keep God's law. Moses, having put

some of his honour upon them, joins them in commission with himself, in giving this charge, as Paul sometimes in his epistles joins with himself Silvanus and Timotheus.

Note, All that have any interest in others, or power over them, should use it for the support and furtherance of religion among them. Though the supreme power of a nation provide ever so good laws for this purpose, if inferior magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, and masters of families in theirs, do not execute their offices, it will all be to little effect.

2. With all importunity. They press it upon them with the utmost earnestness (De 27:9): Take heed and hearken, O Israel. It is a thing that requires and deserves the highest degree of caution and attention. They tell them of their privilege and honour: "This day thou hast become the people of the Lord thy God, the Lord having avouched thee to be his own, and being now about to put thee in possession of Canaan which he had long promised as thy God (Ge 17:7,8), and which if he had failed to do in due time, he would have been ashamed to be called thy God, Heb 11:16. Now thou art more than ever his people, therefore obey his voice." Privileges should be improved as engagements to duty. Should not a people be ruled by their God?

II. A particular direction to them with great solemnity to register the words of this law, as soon as they came into Canaan. It was to be done but once, and at their entrance into the land of promise, in token of their taking possession of it under the several provisos and conditions contained in this law. There was a solemn ratification of the covenant between God and Israel at Mount Sinai, when an altar was erected, with twelve pillars, and the book of the covenant was produced, Ex 24:4. That which is here appointed is a somewhat similar solemnity.

1. They must set up a monument on which they must write the words of this law.

(1.) The monument itself was to be very mean, only rough unhewn stone plastered over; not polished marble or alabaster, nor brass tables, but common plaster upon stone, De 27:2 The command is repeated (De 27:4), and orders are given that it be written, not very finely, to be admired by the curious, but very plainly, that he who runs may read it, Hab 2:2 The word of God needs not to be set off by the art of man, nor embellished with the enticing words of man's wisdom. But,

(2.) The inscription was to be very great: All the words of this law, De 27:3, and again, De 27:8. Some understand it only of the covenant between God and Israel, mentioned De 26:17,18. Let this help be set up for a witness, like that memorial of the covenant between Laban and Jacob, which was nothing but a heap of stones thrown hastily together, upon which they did eat together in token of friendship (Ge 31:46,47), and that stone which Joshua set up, Jos 24:26. Others think that the curses of the covenant in this chapter were written upon this monument, the rather because it was set up in Mount Ebal, De 27:4.

Others think that the whole book of Deuteronomy was written upon this monument, or at least the statutes and judgments from De 12:1-26:19 And it is not improbable that the heap might be so large as, taking in all the sides of it, to contain so copious an inscription, unless we will suppose (as some do) that the ten commandments only were here written, as an authentic copy of the close rolls which were laid up in the ark. They must write this when they had gone into Canaan, and yet Moses says (De 27:3), "Write it that thou mayest go in," that is, "that thou mayest go in with comfort, and assurance of success and settlement, otherwise it were well for thee not to go in at all. Write it as the conditions of thy entry, and own that thou comest in upon these terms and no other: since Canaan is given by promise, it must beheld by obedience."

2. They must also set up an altar. By the words of the law which were written upon the plaster, God spoke to them; by the altar, and the sacrifices offered upon it, they spoke to God; and thus was communion kept up between them and God. The word and prayer must go together. Though they might not, of their own heads, set up any altar besides that at the tabernacle, yet, but the appointment of God, they might upon a special occasion. Elijah built a temporary altar of twelve unhewn stones, similar to this, when he brought Israel back to the covenant which was now made, 1Ki 18:31,32. Now,

(1.) This altar must be made of such stones as they found ready upon the field, not newly cut out of the rock, much less squared artificially: Thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them, De 27:5. Christ, our altar, is a stone cut out of the mountain without hands (Da 2:34,35), and therefore refused by the builders, as having no form or comeliness, but accepted of God the Father, and made the head of the corner.

(2.) Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings must be offered upon this altar (De 27:6,7), that by them they might give glory to God and obtain favour. Where the law was written, an altar was set up close by it, to signify that we could not look with any comfort upon the law, being conscious to ourselves of the violation of it, if it were not for the great sacrifice by which atonement is made for sin; and the altar was set up on Mount Ebal, the mount on which those tribes stood that said Amen to the curses, to intimate that through Christ we are redeemed from the curse of the law. In the Old Testament the words of the law are written, with the curse annexed, which would fill us with horror and amazement if we had not in the New Testament (which is bound up with it) an altar erected close by it, which gives us everlasting consolation.

(3.) They must eat there, and rejoice before the Lord their God, De 27:7. This signified,

[1.] The consent they gave to the covenant; for the parties to a covenant ratified the covenant by feasting together. They were partakers of the altar, which was God's table, as his servants and tenants, and such they acknowledged themselves, and, being put in possession of this good land, bound themselves to pay the rent and to do the services reserved by the royal grant.

[2.] The comfort they took in the covenant; they had reason to rejoice in the law, when they had an altar, a remedial law, so near it. It was a great favour to them, and a token for good, that God gave them his statutes; and that they were owned as the people of God, and the children of the promise, was what they had reason to rejoice in, though, when this solemnity was to be performed, they were not put in full possession of Canaan; but God has spoken in his holiness, and then I will rejoice, Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; all my own.

6 Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones:
and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord thy
God:
7 and thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice
before the Lord thy God.
8 And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very
plainly.
9 And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying,
Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the
people of the Lord thy God.
10 Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do
his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this
day.

The Curses at Mount Ebal

11 And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,
12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye
are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar,
and Joseph, and Benjamin:

When the law was written, to be seen and read by all men, the sanctions of it were to be published, which, to complete the solemnity of their covenanting with God, they were deliberately to declare their approbation of. This they were before directed to do (De 11:29,30), and therefore the appointment here begins somewhat abruptly, De 27:12. There were, it seems, in Canaan, that part of it which afterwards fell to the lot of Ephraim (Joshua's tribe), two mountains that lay near together, with a valley between, one called Gerizim and the other Ebal. On the sides of these two mountains, which faced one another, all the tribes were to be drawn up, six on one side and six on the other, so that in the valley, at the foot of each mountain, they came pretty near together, so near as that the priests standing betwixt them might be heard by those that were next them on both sides; then when silence was proclaimed, and attention commanded, one of the priests, or perhaps more at some distance from each other, pronounced with a loud voice one of the curses here following, and all the people that stood on the side and foot of Mount Ebal (those that stood further off taking the signal from those that stood nearer and within hearing) said Amen; then the contrary blessing was pronounced, "Blessed is he that doth not so or so," and then those that stood on the side, and at the foot, of Mount Gerizim, said Amen. This could not but affect them very much with the blessings and curses, the promises and threatenings, of the law, and not only acquaint all the people with them, but teach them to apply them to themselves.

I. Something is to be observed, in general, concerning this solemnity, which was to be done, but once and not repeated, but would be talked of to posterity,. 1. God appointed which tribes should stand upon Mount Gerizim and which on Mount Ebal (De 27:12,13), to prevent the disputes that might have arisen if they had been left to dispose of themselves. The six tribes that were appointed for blessing were all the children of the free women, for to such the promise belongs, Ga 4:31. Levi is here put among the rest, to teach ministers to apply to

themselves the blessing and curse which they preach to others, and by faith to set their own Amen to it.

2. Of those tribes that were to say Amen to the blessings it is said, They stood to bless the people, but of the other, They stood to curse, not mentioning the people, as loth to suppose that any of this people whom God had taken for his own should lay themselves under the curse. Or, perhaps, the different mode of expression intimates that there was to be but one blessing pronounced in general upon the people of Israel, as a happy people, and that should ever be so, if they were obedient; and to this blessing the tribes on Mount Gerizim were to say Amen--"Happy art thou, O Israel, and mayest thou ever be so;" but then the curses come in as exceptions from the general rule, and we know exceptio firmat regulam--the exception confirms the rule. Israel is a blessed people, but, if there be any particular persons even among them that do such and such things as are mentioned, let them know that they have no part nor lot in the matter, but are under a curse. This shows how ready God is to bestow the blessing; if any fall under the curse, they may thank themselves, they bring it upon their own heads.

3. The Levites or priests, such of them as were appointed for that purpose, were to pronounce the curses as well as the blessings. They were ordained to bless (De 10:8), the priests did it daily, Nu 6:23. But they must separate between the precious and the vile; they must not give that blessing promiscuously, but must declare it to whom it did not belong, lest those who had no right to it themselves should think to share in it by being in the crowd. Note, Ministers must preach the terrors of the law as well as the comforts of the gospel; must not only allure people to their duty with the promises of a blessing, but awe them to it with the threatenings of a curse.

4. The curses are here expressed, but not the blessings; for as many as were under the law were under the curse, but it was a honour reserved for Christ to bless us, and so to do that for us

which the law could not do, in that it was weak. In Christ's sermon upon the mount, which was the true Mount Gerizim, we have blessings only, Mt 5:3-11, &c.

5. To each of the curses the people were to say Amen. It is easy to understand the meaning of Amen to the blessings. The Jews have a saying to encourage people to say Amen to the public prayers, Whosoever answereth Amen, after him that blesseth, he is as he that blesseth. But how could they say Amen to the curses?

(1.) It was a profession of their faith in the truth of them, that these and the like curses were not bug-bears to frighten children and fools, but the real declarations of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, not one iota of which shall fall to the ground.

(2.) It was an acknowledgment of the equity of these curses; when they said Amen, they did in effect say, not only, It is certain it shall be so, but, It is just it should be so. Those who do such things deserve to fall and lie under the curse.

(3.) It was such an imprecation upon themselves as strongly obliged them to have nothing to do with those evil practices upon which the curse is here entailed. "Let God's wrath fall upon us if ever we do such things." We read of those that entered into a curse (and with us that is the usual form of a solemn oath) to walk in God's law Ne 10:29. Nay, the Jews say (as the learned bishop Patrick quotes them), "All the people, by saying this Amen, became bound for one another, that they would observe God's laws, by which every man was obliged, as far as he could, to prevent his neighbour from breaking these laws, and to reprove those that had offended, lest they should bear sin and the curse for them."

II. Let us now observe what are the particular sins against which the curses are here denounced.

1. Sins against the second commandment. This flaming sword is set to keep that commandment first, De 27:15. Those are here cursed, not only that worship images, but that make them or keep them, if they be such (or like such) as idolaters used in the service of their gods. Whether it be a graven image or a molten image, it comes all to one, it is an abomination to the Lord, even though it be not set up in public, but in a secret place,--though it be not actually worshipped, nor is it said to be designed for worship, but reserved there with respect and a constant temptation. He that does this may perhaps escape punishment from men, but he cannot escape the curse of God.

2. Against the fifth commandment, De 27:16. The contempt of parents is a sin so heinous that it is put next to the contempt of God himself. If a man abused his parents, either in word or deed, he fell under the sentence of the magistrate, and must be put to death, Ex 21:15,17. But to set light by them in his heart was a thing which the magistrate could not take cognizance of, and therefore it is here laid under the curse of God, who knows the heart. Those are cursed children that carry themselves scornfully and insolently towards their parents.

3. Against the eighth commandment. The curse of God is here fastened,

(1.) Upon an unjust neighbour that removes the land-marks, De 27:17. See De 19:14. Upon an unjust counsellor, who, when his advice is asked, maliciously directs his friend to that which he knows will be to his prejudice, which is making the blind to wander out of the way, under pretence of directing him in the way, than which nothing can be either more barbarous or more treacherous, De 27:18. Those that seduce others from the way of God's commandments, and entice them to sin, bring this curse upon themselves, which our Saviour has explained, Mt 15:14, The blind lead the blind, and both shall fall into the ditch.

(2.) Upon an unjust judge, that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow, whom he should protect and vindicate, De 27:19. These are supposed to be poor and friendless (nothing to be got by doing them a kindness, nor any thing lost by disobliging them), and therefore judges may be tempted to side with their adversaries against right and equity; but cursed are such judges.

4. Against the seventh commandment. Incest is a cursed sin, with a sister, a father's wife, or a mother-in-law, De 27:20,22,23. These crimes not only exposed men to the sword of the magistrate (Le 20:11), but, which is more dreadful, to the wrath of God; bestiality likewise, De 27:21.

5. Against the sixth commandment. Two of the worst kinds of murder are here specified:--

(1.) Murder unseen, when a man does not set upon his neighbour as a fair adversary, giving him an opportunity to defend himself, but smites him secretly (De 27:24), as by poison or otherwise, when he sees not who hurts him. See Ps 10:8,9. Though such secret murders may go undiscovered and unpunished, yet the curse of God will follow them.

(2.) Murder under colour of law, which is the greatest affront to God, for it makes an ordinance of his to patronise the worst of villains, and the greatest wrong to our neighbour, for it ruins his honour as well as his life: cursed therefore is he that will be hired, or bribed, to accuse, or to convict, or to condemn, and so to slay, an innocent person, De 27:25. See Ps 15:5.

6. The solemnity concludes with a general curse upon him that confirmeth not, or, as it might be read, that performeth not, all the words of this law to do them, De 27:26. By our obedience to the law we set our seal to it, and so confirm it, as by our disobedience we do what lies in us to disannul it, Ps 119:126. The apostle, following all the ancient versions, reads it, Cursed is every one that continues not, Ga 3:10. Lest those

who were guilty of other sins, not mentioned in this commination, should think themselves safe from the curse, this last reaches all; not only those who do the evil which the law forbids, but those also who omit the good which the law requires: to this we must all say Amen, owning ourselves under the curse, justly to have deserved it, and that we must certainly have perished for ever under it, if Christ had not redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us.

13 and these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14 And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,

15 Cursed be the man that maketh *any* graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth *it* in a secret place:
and all the people shall answer and say,
Amen.

16 Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

17 Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

18 Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

19 Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

20 Cursed *be* he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

21 Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

22 Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or
the daughter of his mother:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.
23 Cursed *be* he that lieth with his mother-in-law:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.
24 Cursed *be* he that smiteth his neighbor secretly:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.
25 Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.
26 Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do
them:
and all the people shall say,
Amen.

Deuteronomy-28

The Blessings of Obedience

1 And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the
voice of the Lord thy God, to observe *and* to do all his
commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy
God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:
2 and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if
thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.
3 Blessed *shalt* thou be in the city,
and blessed *shalt* thou *be* in the field.
4 Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body,
and the fruit of thy ground,
and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine,
and the flocks of thy sheep.
5 Blessed shall *be* thy basket and thy store.
6 Blessed *shalt* thou be when thou comest in, and
blessed *shalt* thou *be* when thou goest out.

7 The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

The blessings are here put before the curses, to intimate,

1. That God is slow to anger, but swift to show mercy: he has said it, and sworn, that he would much rather we would obey and live than sin and die. It is his delight to bless.

2. That though both the promises and the threatenings are designed to bring and hold us to our duty, yet it is better that we be allured to that which is good by a filial hope of God's favour than that we be frightened to it by a servile fear of his wrath. That obedience pleases best which comes from a principle of delight in God's goodness. Now,

I. We have here the conditions upon which the blessing is promised.

1. It is upon condition that they diligently hearken to the voice of God (De 28:1,2), that they hear God speaking to them by his word, and use their utmost endeavours to acquaint themselves with his will, De 28:13.

2. Upon condition that they observe and do all his commandments (and in order to obedience there is need of observation) and that they keep the commandments of God (De 28:9) and walk in his ways. Not only do them for once, but keep them for ever; not only set out in his ways, but walk in them to the end.

3. Upon condition that they should not go aside either to the right hand or to the left, either to superstition on the one hand, or profaneness on the other; and particularly that they should not go after other gods (De 28:14), which was the sin that of all others they were most prone to, and God would be most displeased with. Let them take care to keep up religion, both

the form and power of it, in their families and nation, and God would not fail to bless them.

II The particulars of this blessing.

1. It is promised that the providence of God should prosper them in all their outward concerns. These blessings are said to overtake them, De 28:2. Good people sometimes, under the sense of their unworthiness, are ready to fly from the blessing and to conclude that it belongs not to them, but the blessing shall find them out and follow them notwithstanding. Thus in the great day the blessing will overtake the righteous that say, Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee? Mt 25:37. Observe,

(1.) Several things are enumerated in which God by his providence would bless them:--

[1.] They should be safe and easy; a blessing should rest upon their persons wherever they were, in the city, or in the field, De 28:3. Whether their habitation was in town or country, whether they were husbandmen or tradesmen, whether their business called them into the city or into the field, they should be preserved from the dangers and have the comforts of their condition. This blessing should attend them in their journeys, going out and coming in, De 28:6. Their persons should be protected, and the affair they went about should succeed well. Observe here, What a necessary and constant dependence we have upon God both for the continuance and comfort of this life. We need him at every turn, in all the various movements of life; we cannot be safe if he withdraw his protection, nor easy if he suspend his favour; but, if he bless us, go where we will it is well with us.

[2.] Their families should be built up in a numerous issue: blessed shall be the fruit of thy body (De 28:4), and in that the Lord shall make thee plenteous (De 28:11), in pursuance of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the

stars of heaven for multitude, and that God would be a God to them, than which a greater blessing, and more comprehensive, could not be entailed upon the fruit of their body. See Isa 61:9.

[3.] They should be rich, and have an abundance of all the good things of this life, which are promised them, not merely that they might have the pleasure of enjoying them, but (as bishop Patrick observes out of one of the Jewish writers) that they might have wherewithal to honour God, and might be helped and encouraged to serve him cheerfully and to proceed and persevere in their obedience to him. A blessing is promised,

First, On all they had without doors, corn and cattle in the field (De 28:4,11), their cows and sheep particularly, which would be blessed for the owners' sakes, and made blessings to them. In order to this, it is promised that God would give them rain in due season, which is called his good treasure (De 28:12), because with this river of God the earth is enriched, Ps 65:9. Our constant supplies we must see coming from God's good treasure, and own our obligations to him for them; if he withhold his rain, the fruits both of the ground and of the cattle soon perish.

Secondly, On all they had within doors, the basket and the store (De 28:5), the store-houses or barns, De 28:8. When it is brought home, God will bless it, and not blow upon it as sometimes he does, Hag 1:6,9. We depend upon God and his blessing, not only for our yearly corn out of the field, but for our daily bread out of our basket and store, and therefore are taught to pray for it every day.

[4.] They should have success in all their employments, which would be a constant satisfaction to them: "The Lord shall command the blessing (and it is he only that can command it) upon thee, not only in all thou hast, but in all thou doest, all that thou settest thy hand to," De 28:8. This intimated that even when they were rich they must not be idle, but must find some

good employment or other to set their hand to, and God would own their industry, and bless the work of their hand (De 28:12); for that which makes rich, and keeps so, is the blessing of the Lord upon the hand of the diligent, Pr 10:4,22.

[5.] They should have honour among their neighbours (De 28:1): The Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations. He made them so, by taking them into covenant with himself, De 26:19. And he would make them more and more so by their outward prosperity, if they would not by sin disparage themselves. Two things should help to make them great among the nations:--First, Their wealth (De 28:12): "Thou shalt lend to many nations upon interest" (which they were allowed to take form the neighbouring nations), "but thou shalt not have occasion to borrow." This would give them great influence with all about them; for the borrower is servant to the lender.

It may be meant of trade and commerce, that they should export abundantly more than they should import, which would keep the balance on their side. Secondly, Their power (De 28:13): "The Lord shall make thee the head, to give law to all about thee, to exact tribute, and to arbitrate all controversies." Every sheaf should bow to theirs, which would make them so considerable that all the people of the earth would be afraid of them (De 28:10), that is, would reverence their true grandeur, and dread making them their enemies. The flourishing of religion among them, and the blessing of God upon them, would make them formidable to all their neighbours, terrible as an army with banners.

[6.] They should be victorious over their enemies, and prosper in all their wars. If any were so daring as to rise up against them to oppress them, or encroach upon them, it should be at their peril, they should certainly fall before them, De 28:7. The forces of the enemy, though entirely drawn up to come against them one way, should be entirely routed, and flee before them seven ways, each making the best of his way.

(2.) From the whole we learn (though it were well if men would believe it) that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. Though temporal blessings do not take up so much room in the promises of the New Testament as they do in those of the Old, yet it is enough that our Lord Jesus has given us his word (and surely we may take his word) that if we seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, all other things shall be added to us, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good; and who can desire them further? Mt 6:33.

2. It is likewise promised that the grace of God should establish them a holy people, De 28:9. Having taken them into covenant with himself, he would keep them in covenant; and, provided they used the means of stedfastness, he would give them the grace of stedfastness, that they should not depart from him. Note, Those that are sincere in holiness God will establish in holiness; and he is of power to do it, Ro 16:25. He that is holy shall be holy still; and those whom God establishes in holiness he thereby establishes a people to himself, for a long as we keep close to God he will never forsake us.

This establishment of their religion would be the establishment of their reputation (De 28:10): All the people of the earth shall see, and own, that thou art called by the name of the Lord, that is, "that thou art a most excellent and glorious people, under the particular care and countenance of the great God. They shall be made to know that a people called by the name Jehovah are without doubt the happiest people under the sun, even their enemies themselves being judges." The favourites of Heaven are truly great, and, first or last, it will be made to appear that they are so, if not in this world, yet at that day when those who confess Christ now shall be confessed by him before men and angels, as those whom he delights to honour.

8 The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
9 The Lord shall establish thee a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways.
10 And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.
11 And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers to give thee.
12 The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.
13 And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do *them:*
14 and thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

The Consequences of Disobedience

15 But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:
16 Cursed shalt thou be in the city,
and cursed *shalt* thou *be* in the field.
17 Cursed shall *be* thy basket and thy store.
18 Cursed shall *be* the fruit of thy body,
and the fruit of thy land,
the increase of thy kine,
and the flocks of thy sheep.
19 Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and
cursed *shalt* thou be when thou goest out.

20 The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all
that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed,
and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy
doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.
21 The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have
consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.
22 The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever,
and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with
the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue
thee until thou perish.
23 And thy heaven that *is* over thy head shall be brass, and the earth
that *is* under thee *shall be* iron.

Having viewed the bright side of the cloud, which is towards the obedient, we have now presented to us the dark side, which is towards the disobedient. If we do not keep God's commandments, we not only come short of the blessing promised, but we lay ourselves under the curse, which is as comprehensive of all misery as the blessing is of all happiness. Observe,

I The equity of this curse. It is not a curse causeless, nor for some light cause; God seeks not occasion against us, nor is he apt to quarrel with us. That which is here mentioned as bringing the curse is,

1. Despising God, refusing to hearken to his voice (De 28:15), which bespeaks the highest contempt imaginable, as if what he said were not worth the heeding, or we were not under any obligation to him.

2. Disobeying him, not doing his commandments, or not observing to do them. None fall under his curse but those that rebel against his command. 3. Deserting him. "It is because of the wickedness of thy doings, not only whereby thou hast slighted me, but whereby thou hast forsaken me," De 28:20. God never casts us off till we first cast him off. It intimates that their idolatry, by which they forsook the true God for false gods, would be their destroying sin more than any other.

II The extent and efficacy of this curse.

1. In general, it is declared, "All these curses shall come upon thee from above, and shall overtake thee; though thou endeavour to escape them, it is to no purpose to attempt it, they shall follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and seize thee, overtake thee, and overcome thee," De 28:15. It is said of the sinner, when God's wrath is in pursuit of him, that he would fain flee out of his hand (Job 27:22), but he cannot; if he flee from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall reach him and strike him through. There is no running from God but by running to him, no fleeing from his justice but by fleeing to his mercy. See Ps 21:7,8.

(1.) Wherever the sinner goes, the curse of God follows him; wherever he is, it rests upon him. He is cursed in the city and in the field, De 28:16. The strength of the city cannot shelter him from it, the pleasant air of the country is no fence against these pestilential steams. He is cursed (De 28:19) when he comes in, for the curse is upon the house of the wicked (Pr 3:33), and he is cursed when he goes out, for he cannot leave that curse behind him, nor get rid of it, which has entered into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones.

(2.) Whatever he has is under a curse: Cursed is the ground for his sake, and all that is on it, or comes out of it, and so he is cursed from the ground, as Cain, Ge 4:11. The basket and store are cursed, De 28:17,18. All his enjoyments being forfeited by him are in a manner forbidden to him, as cursed things, which he has no title to. To those whose mind and conscience are defiled every thing else is so, Tit 1:15. They are all embittered to him; he cannot take any true comfort in them, for the wrath of God mixes itself with them, and he is so far from having any security of the continuance of them that, if his eyes be open, he may see them all condemned and ready to be confiscated, and with them all his joys and all his hopes gone for ever.

(3.) Whatever he does is under a curse too. It is a curse in all that he sets his hand to (De 28:20), a constant disappointment, which those are subject to that set their hearts upon the world, and expect their happiness in it, and which cannot but be a constant vexation. This curse is just the reverse of the blessing in the former part of the chapter. Thus whatever bliss there is in heaven there is not only the want of it, but the contrary to it, in hell. Isa 65:13, My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry.

2. Many particular judgments are here enumerated, which would be the fruits of the curse, and with which God would punish the people of the Jews for their apostasy and disobedience. These judgments threatened are of divers kinds, for God has many arrows in his quiver, four sore judgments (Eze 14:21), and many more. They are represented as very terrible, and the descriptions of them are exceedingly lively and affecting, that men, knowing these terrors of the Lord, might, if possible, be persuaded. The threatenings of the same judgment are several times repeated, that they might make the more deep and lasting impressions, and to intimate that, if men persisted in their disobedience, the judgment which they thought was over, and of which they said, "Surely the bitterness of it is past," would return with double force; for when God judges he will overcome.

(1.) Bodily diseases are here threatened, that they should be epidemical in their land. These God sometimes makes use of for the chastisement and improvement of his own people. Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. But here they are threatened to be brought upon his enemies as tokens of his wrath, and designed for their ruin. So that according to the temper of our spirits, under sickness, accordingly it is to us a blessing or a curse. But, whatever sickness may be to particular persons, it is certain that epidemical diseases raging

among a people are national judgments, and are so to be accounted. He here threatens,

[1.] Painful diseases (De 28:35), a sore botch, beginning in the legs and knees, but spreading, like Job's boils, from heat to foot.

[2.] Shameful diseases (De 28:27), the botch of Egypt (such boils and blains as the Egyptians had been plagued with, when God brought Israel from among them), and the emerods and scab, vile diseases, the just punishment of those who by sin had made themselves vile.

[3.] Mortal diseases, the pestilence (De 28:21), the consumption (put for all chronical diseases), and the fever (for all acute diseases), De 28:22. See Le 26:16. And all incurable, De 28:27.

(2.) Famine, and scarcity of provisions; and this,

[1.] For want of rain (De 28:23,24): Thy heaven over thy head, that part that is over thy land, shall be as dry as brass, while the heavens over other countries shall distil their dews; and, when the heaven is as brass, the earth of course will be as iron, so hard and unfruitful. Instead of rain, the dust shall be blown out of the highways into the field, and spoil the little that there is of the fruits of the earth.

[2.] By destroying insects. The locust should destroy the corn, so that they should not have so much as their seed again, De 28:38,42. And the fruit of the vine, which should make glad their hearts, should all be worm-eaten, De 28:39. And the olive, some way or other, should be made to cast its fruit, De 28:40. The heathen use many superstitious customs in honour of their idol-gods for preserving the fruits of the earth; but Moses tells Israel that the only way they had to preserve them was to keep God's commandments; for he is a God that will not be sported with, like their idols, but will be served in spirit

and truth. This threatening we find fulfilled in Israel, 1Ki 17:1,Jer 14:1,Joe 1:4.

(3.) That they should be smitten before their enemies in war, who, it is likely, would be the more cruel to them, when they had them at their mercy, for the severity they had used against the nations of Canaan, which their neighbours in after-ages would be apt to remember against them, De 28:25. It would make their flight the more shameful, and the more grievous, that they might have triumphed over their enemies if they had but been faithful to their God. The carcases of those that were slain in war, or died in captivity among strangers, should be meat for the fowls (De 28:26); and an Israelite, having forfeited the favour of his God, should have so little humanity shown him as that no man should drive them away, so odious would God's curse make him to all mankind.

(4.) That they should be infatuated in all their counsels, so as not to discern their own interest, nor bring any thing to pass for the public good: The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness, De 28:28,29. Note, God's judgments can reach the minds of men to fill them with darkness and horror, as well as their bodies and estates; and those are the sorest of all judgments which make men a terror to themselves, and their own destroyers. That which they contrived to secure themselves by should still turn to their prejudice. Thus we often find that the allies they confided in distressed them and strengthened them not, 2Ch 28:20. Those that will not walk in God's counsels are justly left to be ruined by their own; and those that are wilfully blind to their duty deserve to be made blind to their interest, and, seeing they loved darkness rather than light, let them grope at noon-day as in the dark.

(5.) That they should be plundered of all their enjoyments, stripped of all by the proud and imperious conqueror, such as Benhadad was to Ahab, 1Ki 20:5,6. Not only their houses and vineyards should be taken from them, but their wives and children, De 28:30,32. Their dearest comforts, which they

took most pleasure in, and promised themselves most from, should be the entertainment and triumph of their enemies. As they had dwelt in houses which they built not, and eaten of vineyards which they planted not (De 6:10,11), so others should do by them. Their oxen, asses, and sheep, like Job's, should be taken away before their eyes, and they should not be able to recover them, De 28:31. And all the fruit of their land and labours should be devoured and eaten up by the enemy; so that they and theirs would want necessaries, while their enemies were revelling with that which they had laboured for.

(6.) That they should be carried captives into a far country; nay, into all the kingdoms of the earth, De 28:25. Their sons and daughters, whom they promised themselves comfort in, should go into captivity (De 28:41), and they themselves at length, and their king in whom they promised themselves safety and settlement, De 28:36. This was fully accomplished when the ten tribes first were carried captive into Assyria (2Ki 17:6), and not long after the two tribes into Babylon, and two of their kings, 2Ki 24:15,15,25:7,21.

That which is mentioned as an aggravation of their captivity is that they should go into an unknown country, the language and customs of which would be very uncouth, and their treatment among them barbarous, and there they should serve other gods, that is, be compelled to do so by their enemies, as they were in Babylon, Da 3:6. Note, God often makes men's sin their punishment, and chooses their delusions. You shall serve other gods, that is, "You shall serve those that do serve them;" a nation is often in scripture called by the name of its gods, as Jer 48:7. They had made idolaters their associates, and now god made idolaters their oppressors.

(7.) That those who remained should be insulted and tyrannized over by strangers, De 28:43,44. So the ten tribes were by the colonies which the king of Assyria sent to take possession of their land, 2Ki 17:24. Or this may be meant of

the gradual encroachments which the strangers within their gates should make upon them, so as insensibly to worm them out of their estates. We read of the fulfilling of this, Ho 7:9, Strangers have devoured his strength. Foreigners ate the bread out of the mouths of trueborn Israelites, by which they were justly chastised for introducing strange gods.

(8.) That their reputation among their neighbours should be quite sunk, and those that had been a name, and a praise, should be an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, De 28:37. Some have observed the fulfilling of this threatening in their present state; for, when we would express the most perfidious and barbarous treatment, we say, None but a Jew would have done so. Thus is sin a reproach to any people.

(9.) To complete their misery, it is threatened that they should be put quite out of the possession of their minds by all these troubles (De 28:34): Thou shalt be mad for the sight of thy eyes, that is, quite bereaved of all comfort and hope, and abandoned to utter despair. Those that walk by sight, and not by faith, are in danger of losing reason itself, when every thing about them looks frightful; and their condition is woeful indeed that are mad for the sight of their eyes.

24 The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.
25 The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.
26 And thy carcass shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray *them* away.
27 The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.
28 The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart:
29 and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save *thee.*

30 Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou
shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant
a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.
31 Thine ox *shall be* slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof:
thine ass *shall be* violently taken away from before thy face, and shall
not be restored to thee: thy sheep *shall be* given unto thine enemies,
and thou shalt have none to rescue *them*.
32 Thy sons and thy daughters *shall be* given unto another people, and
thine eyes shall look, and fail *with longing* for them all the day long:
and *there shall be* no might in thine hand.
33 The fruit of thy land, and all thy labors, shall a nation which thou
knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed
alway:
34 so that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou
shalt see.
35 The Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore
botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top
of thy head.
36 The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over
thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have
known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone.
37 And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword,
among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee.
38 Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather *but*
little in; for the locust shall consume it.
39 Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress *them*, but shalt neither drink
of the wine, nor gather *the grapes;* for the worms shall eat them.
40 Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt
not anoint *thyself* with the oil; for thine olive shall cast *his fruit*.
41 Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy
them; for they shall go into captivity.
42 All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume.
43 The stranger that *is* within thee shall get up above thee very high;
and thou shalt come down very low.
44 He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be
the head, and thou shalt be the tail.
45 Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue
thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou

hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee.

46 And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.

47 Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all *things;*

48 therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all *things:* and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

49 The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

50 a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young:

51 and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which *also* shall not leave thee *either* corn, wine, or oil, *or* the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee.

52 And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.

53 And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:

54 *so that the* man that *is* tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave:

55 so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat: because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates.

One would have thought that enough had been said to possess them with a dread of that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. But to show how deep the treasures of that wrath are, and that

still there is more and worse behind, Moses, when one would have thought that he had concluded this dismal subject, begins again, and adds to this roll of curses many similar words: as Jeremiah did to his, Jer 36:32. It should seem that in the former part of this commination Moses foretells their captivity in Babylon, and the calamities which introduced and attended that, by which, even after their return, they were brought to that low and poor condition which is described, De 28:44. That their enemies should be the head, and they the tail: but here, in this latter part, he foretels their last destruction by the Romans and their dispersion thereupon.

And the present deplorable state of the Jewish nation, and of all that have incorporated themselves with them, by embracing their religion, does so fully and exactly answer to the prediction in these verses that it serves for an incontestable proof of the truth of prophecy, and consequently of the divine authority of the scripture. And, this last destruction being here represented as more dreadful than the former, it shows that their sin, in rejecting Christ and his gospel, was more heinous and more provoking to God than idolatry itself, and left them more under the power of Satan; for their captivity in Babylon cured them effectually of their idolatry in seventy years' time; but under this last destruction now for above 1600 years they continue incurably averse to the Lord Jesus. Observe,

I. What is here said in general of the wrath of God, which should light and lie upon them for their sins.

1. That, if they would not be ruled by the commands of God, they should certainly be ruined by his curse, De 28:45,46. Because thou didst not keep his commandments (especially that of hearing and obeying the great prophet), these curses shall come upon thee, as upon a people appointed to destruction, the generation of God's wrath: and they shall be for a sign and for a wonder. It is amazing to think that a people so long the favourites of Heaven should be so perfectly abandoned and cast off, that a people so closely incorporated

should be so universally dispersed, and yet that a people so scattered in all nations should preserve themselves distinct and not mix with any, but like Cain be fugitives and vagabonds, and yet marked to be known.

2. That, if they would not serve God with cheerfulness, they should be compelled to serve their enemies (De 28:47,48), that they might know the difference (2Ch 12:8), which, some think, is the meaning of Ex 20:24,25, Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good. Observe here,

(1.) It is justly expected from those to whom God gives an abundance of the good things of this life that they should serve him. What does he maintain us for out that we may do his work, and be some way serviceable to his honour?

(2.) The more God gives us the more cheerfully we should serve him; our abundance should be oil to the wheels of our obedience. God is a Master that will be served with gladness, and delights to hear us sing at our work.

(3.) If, when we receive the gifts of God's bounty, we either do not serve him at all or serve him with reluctance, it is a righteous thing with him to make us know the hardships of want and servitude. Those deserve to have cause given them to complain who complain without a cause. Tristis es et felix--Happy, and yet not easy! Blush at thy own folly and ingratitude.

3. That, if they would not give glory to God by a reverential obedience, he would get him honour upon them by wonderful plagues, De 28:58,59. Note,

(1.) God justly expects from us that we should fear his fearful name; and, which is strange, that name which is here proposed as the object of our fear is, THE LORD THY GOD, which is

very fitly here put in our Bibles in capital letters; for nothing can sound more truly august. As nothing is more comfortable, so nothing more awful, than this, that he with whom we have to do is Jehovah, a being infinitely perfect and blessed, and the author of all being; and that he is our God, our rightful Lord and owner, from whom we are to receive laws and to whom we are to give account: this is great, and greatly to be feared.

(2.) We may justly expect from God that, if we do not fear his fearful name, we shall feel his fearful plagues; for one way or other God will be feared. All God's plagues are dreadful, but some are wonderful, carrying in them extraordinary signatures of divine power and justice, so that a man, upon the first view of them, may say, Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

II. How the destruction threatened is described. Moses is here upon the same melancholy subject that our Saviour is discoursing of to his disciples in his farewell sermon (Mt 24:4-28), namely, The destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. Observe,

1. Five things are here foretold as steps to their ruin:--

(1.) That they should be invaded by a foreign enemy (De 28:49,50): A nation from far, namely, the Romans, as swift as the eagle hastening to the prey. Our Saviour makes use of this similitude, in foretelling this destruction, that where the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together, Mt 24:28. And bishop Patrick observes (to make the accomplishment the more remarkable) that the ensign of the Roman armies was an eagle. This nation is said to be of a fierce countenance, an indication of a fierce nature, stern and severe, that would not pity the weakness and infirmity either of little children or of old people.

(2.) That the country should be laid waste, and all the fruits of it eaten up by this army of foreigners, which is the natural

consequence of an invasion, especially when it is made, as that by the Romans was, for the chastisement of rebels: He shall eat the fruits of thy cattle and land (De 28:51), so that the inhabitants should be starved, while the invaders were fed to the full.

(3.) That their cities should be besieged, and that such would be the obstinacy of the besieged, and such the vigour of the besiegers, that they would be reduced to the last extremity, and at length fall into the hands of the enemy, De 28:52. No place, though ever so well fortified, no, not Jerusalem itself, though it held out long, would escape. Two of the common consequences of a long siege are here foretold:--

[1.] A miserable famine, which would prevail to such a degree that, for want of food, they should kill and eat their own children, De 28:53. Men should do so, notwithstanding their hardiness, and ability to bear hunger; and, though obliged by the law of nature to provide for their own families, yet should refuse to give to the wife and children that were starving any of the child that was barbarously butchered, De 28:54,55. Nay, women, ladies of quality, notwithstanding their natural niceness about their food, and their natural affection to their children, yet, for want of food, should so far forget all humanity as to kill and eat them, De 28:56,57.

Let us observe, by the way, how hard this fate must needs be to the tender and delicate women, and learn not to indulge ourselves in tenderness and delicacy, because we know not what we may be reduced to before we die; the more nice we are, the harder it will be to us to bear want, and the more danger we shall be in or sacrificing reason, and religion, and natural affection itself, to the clamours and cravings of an unmortified and ungoverned appetite. This threatening was fulfilled in the letter of it, more than once, to the perpetual reproach of the Jewish nation: never was the like done either by Greek or barbarian, but in the siege of Samaria, a woman boiled her own son, 2Ki 6:28,29. And it is spoken of as

commonly done among them in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, La 4:10. And, in the last siege by the Romans, Josephus tells us of a noble woman that killed and ate her own child, through the extremity of the famine, and when she had eaten one half secretly (De 28:57), that she might have it to herself, the mob, smelling meat, got into the house, to whom she showed the other half, which she had kept till another time, inviting them to share with her. What is too barbarous for those to do that are abandoned of God!

[2.] Sickness is another common effect of a strait and long siege, and that is here threatened: Sore sickness, and of long continuance, De 28:59. These should attend the Jews wherever they went afterwards, the diseases of Egypt, leprosies, botches, and foul ulcers, De 28:60. Nay, as if the particular miseries here threatened were not enough, he concludes with an et cetera, De 28:61. The Lord will bring upon thee every sickness, and every plague, though it be not written in the book of this law. Those that fall under the curse of God will find that the one half was not told them of the weight and terror of that curse.

(4.) That multitudes of them should perish, so that they should become few in number, De 28:62. It was a nation that God had wonderfully increased, so that they were as the stars of heaven for multitude; but, for their sin, they were diminished and brought low, Ps 107:38,39. It is computed that in the destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, as appears by the account Josephus gives of it, above two millions fell by the sword at several places, besides what perished by famine and pestilence; so that the whole country was laid waste and turned into a wilderness. That is a terrible word (De 28:63), As the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, so he will rejoice over you to destroy you. Behold here the goodness and severity of God: mercy here shines brightly in the pleasure God takes in doing good--he rejoices in it; yet justice here appears no less illustrious in the pleasure he takes in

destroying the impenitent; not as it is the making of his creatures miserable, but as it is the asserting of his own honour and the securing of the ends of his government. See what a malignant mischievous thing sin is, which (as I may say) makes it necessary for the God of infinite goodness to rejoice in the destruction of his own creatures, even those that had been favourites.

(5.) That the remnant should be scattered throughout the nations This completes their woe: The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, De 28:64. This is remarkably fulfilled in their present dispersion, for there are Jews to be fond almost in all countries that are possessed either by Christians or Mahometans, and in such numbers that it has been said, If they could unite in one common interest, they would be a very formidable body, and able to deal with the most powerful states and princes; but they abide under the power of this curse, and are so scattered that they are not able to incorporate. It is here foretold that in this dispersion,

[1.] They should have no religion, or none to any purpose, should have no temple, nor altar, nor priesthood, for they should serve other gods. Some think this has been fulfilled in the force put upon the Jews in popish countries to worship the images that are used in the Romish church, to their great vexation.

[2.] They should have no rest, no rest of body: The sole of thy foot shall not have rest (De 28:65), but be continually upon the remove, either in hope of gain or fear of persecution; all wandering Jews: no rest of the mind (which is much worse), but a trembling heart (De 28:65); no assurance of life (De 28:66); weary both of light and darkness, which are, in their turns, both welcome to a quiet mind, but to them both day and night would be a terror, De 28:67.

Such was once the condition of Job (Job 7:4), but to them this should be constant and perpetual; that blindness and darkness

which the apostle speaks of as having happened to Israel, and that guilt which bowed down their back always (Ro 11:8-10), must needs occasion a constant restlessness and amazement. Those are a torment to themselves, and to all about them, that fear day and night and are always uneasy. Let good people strive against it, and not give way to that fear which has torment; and let wicked people not be secure in their wickedness, for their hearts cannot endure, nor can their hands be strong, when the terrors of God set themselves in array against them. Those that say in the morning, O that it were evening, and in the evening, O that it were morning, show,

First, A constant fret and vexation, chiding the hours for lingering and complaining of the length of every minute. Let time be precious to us when we are in prosperity, and then it will not be so tedious to us when we are in afflictions as otherwise it would. Secondly, A constant fright and terror, afraid in the morning of the arrow that flieth by day, and therefore wishing the day over; but what will this do for them? When evening comes, the trembling heart is no less apprehensive of the terror by night, Ps 91:5,6. Happy they whose minds, being stayed on God, are quiet from the fear of evil! Observe here, The terror arises not only from the sight of the eyes, but from the fear of the heart, not only from real dangers, but from imaginary ones; the causes of fear, when they come to be enquired into, often prove to be only the creatures of the fancy.

2. In the close, God threatens to leave them as he found them, in a house of bondage (De 28:68): The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again, that is into such a miserable state as they were in when they were slaves to the Egyptians, and ruled by them with rigour. God had brought them out of Egypt, and had said, They shall see it no more again (De 17:16); but now they should be reduced to the same state of slavery that they had been in there. To be sold to strangers would be bad enough, but much worse to be sold to their enemies. Even slaves may

be valued as such, but a Jew should have so ill a name for all that is base that when he was exposed to sale no man would buy him, which would make his master that had him to sell the more severe with him. Thirty Jews (they say) have been sold for one small piece of money, as they sold our Saviour for thirty pieces.

3. Upon the whole matter,

(1.) The accomplishment of these predictions upon the Jewish nation shows that Moses spoke by the Spirit of God, who certainly foresees the ruin of sinners, and gives them warning of it, that they may prevent it by a true and timely repentance, or else be left inexcusable.

(2.) Let us all hence learn to stand in awe and not to sin. I have heard of a wicked man, who, upon reading the threatenings of this chapter, was so enraged that he tore the leaf out of the Bible, as Jehoiakim cut Jeremiah's roll; but to what purpose is it to deface a copy, while the original remains upon record in the divine counsels, by which it is unalterably determined that the wages of sin is death, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear?

56 The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter,

57 and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all *things* secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates.

58 If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God;

59 then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, *even* great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.

60 Moreover, he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which
thou wast afraid of; and they shall cleave unto thee.
61 Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the
book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou
be destroyed.
62 And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of
heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of
the Lord thy God.
63 And it shall come to pass, *that* as the Lord rejoiced over you to do
you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to
destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked
from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.
64 And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one
end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve
other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even*
wood and stone.
65 And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the
sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a
trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:
66 and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day
and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life:
67 in the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even!And at even
thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! For the fear of thine
heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which
thou shalt see.
68 And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the
way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again:
and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and
bondwomen, and no man shall buy *you*.

Deuteronomy-29

The Lord's Covenant with Israel in Moab

1 These *are* the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded
Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab,
besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

2 And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have
seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt
unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land;
3 the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and
those great miracles:

Now that Moses had largely repeated the commands which the people were to observe as their part of the covenant, and the promises and threatenings which God would make good (according as they behaved themselves) as part of the covenant, the whole is here summed up in a federal transaction. The covenant formerly made is here renewed, and Moses, who was before, is still, the mediator of it (De 29:1): The Lord commanded Moses to make it.

Moses himself, though king in Jeshurun, could not make the covenant any otherwise than as God gave him instructions. It does not lie in the power of ministers to fix the terms of the covenant; they are only to dispense the seals of it. This is said to be besides the covenant made in Horeb; for, though the covenant was the same, yet it was a new promulgation and ratification of it. It is probable that some now living, though not of age to be mustered, were of age to consent for themselves to the covenant made at Horeb, and yet it is here renewed.

Note, Those that have solemnly covenanted with God should take all opportunities to do it again, as those that like their choice too well to change. But the far greater part were a new generation, and therefore the covenant must be made afresh with them, for it is fit that the covenant should be renewed to the children of the covenant.

I. It is usual for indentures to begin with a recital; this does so, with a rehearsal of the great things God had done for them,

1. As an encouragement to them to believe that God would indeed be to them a God, for he would not have done so much for them if he had not designed more, to which all he had

hitherto done was but a preface (as it were) or introduction; nay, he had shown himself a God in what he had hitherto done for them, which might raise their expectations of something great and answering the vast extent and compass of that pregnant promise, that God would be to them a God.

2. As an engagement upon them to be to him an obedient people, in consideration of what he had done for them.

II. For the proof of what he here advances he appeals to their own eyes (De 29:2): You have seen all that the Lord did. Their own senses were incontestable evidence of the matter of fact, that God had done great things for them; and then their own reason was a no less competent judge of the equity of his inference from it: Keep therefore the words of this covenant, De 29:9.

III. These things he specifies, to show the power and goodness of God in his appearances for them.

1. Their deliverance out of Egypt, De 29:2,3. The amazing signs and miracles by which Pharaoh was plagued and compelled to dismiss them, and Israel was tried (for they are called temptations) whether they would trust God to secure them from, and save them by, those plagues.

2. Their conduct through the wilderness for forty years, De 29:5,6. There they were led, and clad, and fed, by miracles; though the paths of the wilderness were not only unknown but untrodden, yet God kept them from being lost there; and (as bishop Patrick observes) those very shoes which by the appointment of God they put on in Egypt, at the Passover, when the were ready to march (Ex 12:11), never wore out, but served them to Canaan: and though they lived not upon bread which strengthens the heart, and wine which rejoices it, but upon manna and rock-water, yet they were men of strength and courage, mighty men, and able to go forth to war. By these

miracles they were made to know that the Lord was God, and by these mercies that he was their God.

3. The victory they had lately obtained of Sihon and Og, and that good land which they had taken possession of, De 29:7,8. Both former mercies and fresh mercies should be improved by us as inducements to obedience.

IV. By way of inference from these memoirs,

1. Moses laments their stupidity: Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive, De 29:4. This does not lay the blame of their senselessness, and sottishness, and unbelief, upon God, as if they had stood ready to receive his grace and had begged for it, but he had denied them; no, but it fastens the guilt upon themselves. "The Lord, who is the Father of spirits, a God in covenant with you, and who had always been so rich in mercy to you, no doubt would have crowned all his other gifts with this, he would have given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see if you had not by your own frowardness and perverseness frustrated his kind intentions, and received his grace in vain." Note,

(1.) The hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart, are the gift of God. All that have them have them from him.

(2.) God gives not only food and raiment, but wealth and large possessions, to many to whom he does not give grace. Many enjoy the gifts who have not hearts to perceive the giver, nor the true intention and use of the gifts.

(3.) God's readiness to do us good in other things is a plain evidence that if we have not grace, that best of gifts, it is our own fault and not his; he would have gathered us and we would not.

2. Moses charges them to be obedient: Keep therefore, and do, De 29:9. Note, We are bound in gratitude and interest, as well as duty and faithfulness, to keep the words of the covenant.

4 yet the Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.

5 And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

6 Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I *am* the Lord your God.

7 And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them:

8 and we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh.

9 Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

10 Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, *with* all the men of Israel,

The parties to this covenant.

1. It is the Lord their God they are to covenant with, De 29:12. To him they must give up themselves, to him they must join themselves. "It is his oath; he has drawn up the covenant and settled it; he requires your consent to it; he has sworn to you and to him you must be sworn." This requires us to be sincere and serious, humble and reverent, in our covenant-transactions with God, remembering how great a God he is with whom we are covenanting, who has a perfect knowledge of us and an absolute dominion over us.

2. They are all to be taken into covenant with him. They were all summoned to attend (De 29:2), and did accordingly, and are told (De 29:10) what was the design of their appearing before God now in a body--they were to enter into covenant with him.

(1.) Even their great men, the captains of their tribes, their elders and officers, must not think it any disparagement to their honour, or any diminution of their power, to put their necks under the yoke of this covenant, and to draw in it. They must rather enter into the covenant first, to set a good example to their inferiors.

(2.) Not the men only, but their wives and children, must come into this covenant; though they were not numbered and mustered, yet they must be joined to the Lord, De 29:11. Observe, Even little ones are capable of being taken into covenant with God, and are to be admitted with their parents. Little children, so little as to be carried in arms, must be brought to Christ, and shall be blessed by him, for of such was and is the kingdom of God.

(3.) Not the men of Israel only, but the stranger that was in their camp, provided he was so far proselyted to their religion as to renounce all false gods, was taken into this covenant with the God of Israel, forasmuch as he also, though a stranger, was to be looked upon in this matter as a son of Abraham, Lu 19:9. This was an early indication of favour to the Gentiles, and of the kindness God had in store for them.

(4.) Not the freemen only, but the hewers of wood and drawers of water, the meanest drudge they had among them. Note, As none are too great to come under the bonds of the covenant, so none are too mean to inherit the blessings of the covenant. In Christ no difference is made between bond and free, Col 3:11. Art thou called being a servant? Care not for it, 1Co 7:21.

(5.) Not only those that were now present before God in this solemn assembly, but those also that were not here with them were taken into covenant (De 29:15): As with him that standeth here with us (so bishop Patrick thinks it should be rendered) so also with him, that is not here with us this day; that is,

[1.] Those that tarried at home were included; though detained either by sickness or necessary business, they must not therefore think themselves disengaged; no, every Israelite shares in the common blessings. Those that tarry at home divide the spoil, and therefore every Israelite must own himself bound by the consent of the representative body. Those who cannot go up to the house of the Lord must keep up a spiritual communion with those that do, and be present in spirit when they are absent in body.

[2.] The generations to come are included. Nay, one of the Chaldee paraphrasts reads it, All the generations that have been from the first days of the world, and all that shall arise to the end of the whole world, stand with us here this day. And so, taking this covenant as a typical dispensation of the covenant of grace, it is a noble testimony to the Mediator of that covenant, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

11 your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that *is* in thy camp,
from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water:
12 that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God,
and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this
day:
13 that he may establish thee today for a people unto himself, and *that*
he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath
sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The summary of this covenant. All the precepts and all the promises of the covenant are included in the covenant-relation between God and them, De 29:13. That they should be appointed, raised up, established, for a people to him, to observe and obey him, to be devoted to him and dependent on him, and that he should be to them a God, according to the tenour of the covenant made with their fathers, to make them holy, high, and happy Their fathers are here named, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as examples of piety, which those were to set themselves to imitate who expected any benefit from the covenant made with them. Note, A due consideration of the relation we stand in to God as our God, and of the obligation

we lie under as a people to him, is enough to bring us to all the duties and all the comforts of the covenant.

14 Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath;
15 but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with *him* that *is* not here with us this day:
16 (for ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by;
17 and ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them :)

The principal design of the renewing of this covenant at this time was to fortify them against temptations to idolatry. Though other sins will be the sinner's ruin, yet this was the sin that was likely to be their ruin. Now concerning this he shows,

1 The danger they were in of being tempted to it (De 29:16,17): "You know we have dwelt in the land of Egypt, a country addicted to idolatry; and it were well if there were not among you some remains of the infection of that idolatry; we have passed by other nations, the Edomites, Moabites, &c. and have seen their abominations and their idols, and some among you, it may be, have liked them too well, and still hanker after them, and would rather worship a wooden god that they can see than an infinite Spirit whom they never saw." It is to be hoped that there were those among them who, the more they saw of these abominations and idols, the more they hated them; but there were those that were smitten with the sight of them, saw the accursed things and coveted them.

2 The danger they were in if they yielded to the temptation. He gives them fair warning: it was at their peril if they forsook God to serve idols. If they would not be bound and held by the precepts of the covenant, they would find that the curses of the covenant would be strong enough to bind and hold them.

(1.) Idolatry would be the ruin of particular persons and their families, De 29:18-21, where observe,

[1.] The sinner described, De 29:18.

First, He is one whose heart turns away from his God; there the mischief begins, in the evil heart of unbelief, which inclines men to depart from the living God to dead idols. Even to this sin men are tempted when they are drawn aside by their own lusts and fancies. Those that begin to turn from God, by neglecting their duty to him, are easily drawn to other gods: and those that serve other gods do certainly turn away from the true God; for he will admit of no rivals: he will be all or nothing.

Secondly, He is a root that bears gall and wormwood; that is, he is a dangerous man, who, being himself poisoned with bad principles and inclinations, with a secret contempt of the God of Israel and his institutions and a veneration for the gods of the nations, endeavours, by all arts possible, to corrupt and poison others and draw them to idolatry: this is a man whose fruit is hemlock (so the word is translated, Ho 10:4) and wormwood; it is very displeasing to God, and will be, to all that are seduced by him, bitterness in the latter end. This is referred to by the apostle, Heb 12:15, where he is in like manner cautioning us to take heed of those that would seduce us from the Christian faith; they are the weeds or tares in a field, which, if let alone, will overspread the whole field. A little of this leaven will be in danger of infecting the whole lump.

[2.] His security in the sun. He promises himself impunity, though he persists in his impiety, De 29:19. Though he hears the words of the curse, so that he cannot plead ignorance of the danger, as other idolaters, yet even then he blesses himself in his own heart, thinks himself safe from the wrath of the God of Israel, under the protection of his idol-gods, and therefore says, "I shall have peace, though I be governed in my religion, not by God's institution, but by my own imagination, to add drunkenness to thirst, one act of wickedness to another." Idolaters were like drunkards, violently set upon their idols themselves and industrious to draw others in with them.

Revellings commonly accompanied their idolatries (1Pe 4:3), so that this speaks a woe to drunkards (especially the drunkards of Ephraim), who, when they are awake, being thirsty, seek it yet again, Pr 23:35. And those that made themselves drunk in honour of their idols were the worst of drunkards.

Note, First, There are many who are under the curse of God and yet bless themselves; but it will soon be found that in blessing themselves they do but deceive themselves.

Secondly, Those are ripe for ruin, and there is little hope of their repentance, who have made themselves believe that they shall have peace though they go on in a sinful way.

Thirdly, Drunkenness is a sin that hardens the heart, and debauches the conscience, as much as any other, a sin to which men are strangely tempted themselves even when they have lately felt the mischiefs of it, and to which they are strangely fond of drawing others, Hab 2:15. And such an ensnaring sin is idolatry.

[3.] God's just severity against him for the sin, and for the impious affront he put upon God in saying he should have peace though he went on, so giving the lie to eternal truth, Ge 3:4. There is scarcely a threatening in all the book of God that sounds more dreadful than this. O that presumptuous sinners would read it and tremble! For it is not a bug-bear to frighten children and fools, but a real declaration of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men, De 29:20,21.

First, The Lord shall not spare him. The days of his reprieve, which he abuses, will be shortened, and no mercy remembered in the midst of judgment.

Secondly, The anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, which is the fiercest anger, shall smoke against him, like the smoke of a furnace.

Thirdly, The curses written shall lie upon him, not only light upon him to terrify him, but abide upon him, to sink him to the lowest hell, Joh 3:36.

Fourthly, His name shall be blotted out, that is, he himself shall be cut off, and his memory shall rot and perish with him.

Fifthly, He shall be separated unto evil, which is the most proper notion of a curse; he shall be cut off from all happiness and all hope of it, and marked out for misery without remedy. And

(lastly) All this according to the curses of the covenant, which are the most fearful curses, being the just revenges of abused grace.

(2.) Idolatry would be the ruin of their nation; it would bring plagues upon the land that connived at this root of bitterness and received the infection; as far as the sin spread, the judgment should spread likewise.

[1.] The ruin is described. It begins with plagues and sicknesses (De 29:22), to try if they will be reclaimed by less judgments; but, if not, it ends in a total overthrow, like that of Sodom, De 29:23. As that valley, which had been like the garden of the Lord for fruitfulness, was turned into a lake of salt and sulphur, so should the land of Canaan be made desolate and barren, as it has been ever since the last destruction of it by the Romans. The lake of Sodom bordered closely upon the land of Israel, that by it they might be warned against the iniquity of Sodom; but, not taking the warning, they were made as like to Sodom in ruin as they had been in sin.

[2.] The reason of it is enquired into, and assigned.

First, It would be enquired into by the generations to come (De 29:22), who would find the state of their nation in all respects the reverse of what it had been, and, when they read both the history and the promise, would be astonished at the change. The stranger likewise, and the nations about them, as well as particular persons, would ask, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? De 29:24. Great desolations are thus represented elsewhere as striking the spectators with amazement, 1Ki 9:8,9,Jer 22:8,9. It was time for the neighbours to tremble when judgment thus began at the house of God, 1Pe 4:17. The emphasis of the question is to be laid upon this land, the land of Canaan, this good land, the glory of all lands, this land flowing with milk and honey. A thousand pities that such a good land as this should be made desolate, but this is not all; it is this holy land, the land of Israel, a people in covenant with God; it is Immanuel's land, a land where God was known and worshipped, and yet thus wasted.

Note, 1. It is no new thing for God to bring desolating judgments upon a people that in profession are near to him, Am 3:2.

2. He never does this without a good reason.

3. It concerns us to enquire into the reason, that we may give glory to God and take warning to ourselves. Secondly, The reason is here assigned, in answer to that enquiry. The matter would be so plain that all men would say, It was because they forsook the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, De 29:25.

Note, God never forsakes any till they first forsake him. But those that desert the God of their fathers are justly cast out of the inheritance of their fathers. They went and served other gods (De 29:26), gods that they had no acquaintance with, nor lay under any obligation to either in duty of gratitude; for God

has not given the creatures to be served by us, but to serve us; nor have they done any good to us (as some read it), more than what God has enabled them to do; to the Creator therefore we are debtors, and not to the creatures. It was for this that God was angry with them (De 29:27), and rooted them out in anger, De 29:28. So that, how dreadful soever the desolation was, the Lord was righteous in it, which is acknowledged, Da 9:11-14.

"Thus" (says Mr. Ainsworth) "the law of Moses leaves sinners under the curse, and rooted out of the Lord's land; but the grace of Christ towards penitent believing sinners plants them again upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up, being kept by the power of God," Am 9:15.

[3.] He concludes his prophecy of the Jews' rejection just as St. Paul concludes his discourse on the same subject, when it began to be fulfilled (Ro 11:33), How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out! So here (De 29:29), Secret things belong to the Lord our God. Some make it to be one sentence, The secret things of the Lord our God are revealed to us and to our children, as far as we are concerned to know them, and he hath not dealt so with other nations: but we make it two sentences, by which,

First, We are forbidden curiously to enquire into the secret counsels of God and to determine concerning them. A full answer is given to that question, Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land? sufficient to justify God and admonish us. But if any ask further why God would be at such a vast expense of miracles to form such a people, whose apostasy and ruin he plainly foresaw, why he did not by his almighty grace prevent it, or what he intends yet to do with them, let such know that these are questions which cannot be answered, and therefore are not fit to be asked. It is presumption in us to pry into the Arcana imperii--the mysteries of government, and to enquire into the reasons of state which it is not for us to know. See Ac 1:7,Joh 21:22.Col 2:18.

Secondly, We are directed and encouraged diligently to enquire into that which God has made known: things revealed belong to us and to our children.

Note, 1. Though God has kept much of his counsel secret, yet there is enough revealed to satisfy and save us. He has kept back nothing that is profitable for us, but that only which it is good for us to be ignorant of.

2. We ought to acquaint ourselves, and our children too, with the things of God that are revealed. We are not only allowed to search into them, but are concerned to do so. They are things which we and ours are nearly interested in. They are the rules we are to live by, the grants we are to live upon; and therefore we are to learn them diligently ourselves, and to teach them diligently to our children.

3. All our knowledge must be in order to practice, for this is the end of all divine revelation, not to furnish us with curious subjects of speculation and discourse, with which to entertain ourselves and our friends, but that we may do all the words of this law, and be blessed in our deed.

18 lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe,
whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go
and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you
a root that beareth gall and wormwood;
19 and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that
he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I
walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to
thirst:
20 the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and
his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that
are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot
out his name from under heaven.
21 And the Lord shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of
Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in
this book of the law:

22 so that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it;
23 *and that* the whole land thereof *is* brimstone, and salt, *and* burning, *that* it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:
24 even all nations shall say, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What *meaneth* the heat of this great anger?
25 Then men shall say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:
26 for they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and *whom* he had not given unto them:
27 and the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:
28 and the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day.
29 The secret *things belong* unto the Lord our God: but those *things which are* revealed *belong* unto us and to our children for ever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy-30

The Conditions for Restoration and Blessing

1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee,
2 and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

3 that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.
4 If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:
5 and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

These verses may be considered either as a conditional promise or as an absolute prediction.

I. They are chiefly to be considered as a conditional promise, and so they belong to all persons and all people, and not to Israel only; and the design of them is to assure us that the greatest sinners, if they repent and be converted, shall have their sins pardoned, and be restored to God's favour. This is the purport of the covenant of grace, it leaves room for repentance in case of misdemeanour, and promises pardon upon repentance, which the covenant of innocency did not. Now observe here,

1. How the repentance is described which is the condition of these promises.

(1.) It begins in serious consideration, De 30:1. "Thou shalt call to mind that which thou hadst forgotten or not regarded."

Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion. Isa 46:8, Bring to mind, O you transgressors. The prodigal son came to himself first, and then to his father. That which they should call to mind is the blessing and the curse. If sinners would but seriously consider the happiness they have lost by sin and the misery they have brought themselves into, and that by repentance they may escape that misery and recover that happiness, they would not delay to return to the Lord their God. The prodigal called to mind the blessing and the curse

when he considered his present poverty and the plenty of bread in his father's house, Lu 15:17.

(2.) It consists in sincere conversion. The effect of the consideration cannot but be godly sorrow and shame, Eze 6:9,7:16. But that which is the life and soul of repentance, and without which the most passionate expressions are but a jest, is returning to the Lord our God, De 30:2. If thou turn (De 30:10) with all thy heart and with all thy soul. We must return to our allegiance to God as our Lord and ruler, our dependence upon him as our Father and benefactor, our devotedness to him as our highest end, and our communion with him as our God in covenant. We must return to God from all that which stands in opposition to him or competition with him. In this return to God we must be upright--with the heart and soul, and universal--with all the heart and all the soul.

(3.) It is evidenced by a constant obedience to the holy will of God: If thou shalt obey his voice (De 30:2), thou and thy children; for it is not enough that we do our duty ourselves, but we must train up and engage our children to do it. Or this comes in as the condition of the entail of the blessing upon their children, provided their children kept close to their duty.

[1.] This obedience must be with an eye to God: Thou shalt obey his voice (De 30:8), and hearken to it, De 30:10.

[2.] It must be sincere, and cheerful, and entire: With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, De 30:2.

[3.] It must be from a principle of love, and that love must be with all thy heart and with all thy soul, De 30:6. It is the heart and soul that God looks at and requires; he will have these or nothing, and these entire or not at all.

[4.] It must be universal: According to all that I command thee, De 30:2, and again De 30:8, to do all his commandments; for he that allows himself in the breach of one commandment

involves himself in the guilt of contemning them all, Jam 2:10. An upright heart has respect to all God's commandments, Ps 119:6.

2. What the favour is which is promised upon this repentance. Though they are brought to God by their trouble and distress, in the nations whither they were driven (De 30:1), yet God will graciously accept of them notwithstanding; for on this errand afflictions are sent, to bring us to repentance. Though they are driven out to the utmost parts of heaven, yet thence their penitent prayers shall reach God's gracious ear, and there his favour shall find them out, De 30:4. Undique ad cælos tantundem est viæ--From every place there is the same way to heaven. This promise Nehemiah pleads in his prayer for dispersed Israel, Ne 1:9. It is here promised,

(1.) That God would have compassion upon them, as proper objects of his pity, De 30:3. Against sinners that go on in sin God has indignation (De 29:20), but on those that repent and bemoan themselves he has compassion, Jer 31:18,20. True penitents may take great encouragement from the compassions and tender mercies of our God, which never fail, but overflow.

(2.) That he would turn their captivity, and gather them from the nations whither they were scattered (De 30:3), though ever so remote, De 30:4. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts applies this to the Messiah, explaining it thus: The word of the Lord shall gather you by the hand of Elias the great priest, and shall bring you by the hand of the king Messiah; for this was God's covenant with him, that he should restore the preserved of Israel, Isa 49:6. And this was the design of his death, to gather into one the children of God that were scattered abroad, Joh 11:51,52. To him shall the gathering of the people be.

(3.) That he would bring them into their land again, De 30:5. Note, Penitent sinners are not only delivered out of their misery, but restored to true happiness in the favour of God.

The land they are brought into to possess it is , though not the same, yet in some respects better than that which our first father Adam possessed, and out of which he was expelled.

(4.) That he would do them good (De 30:5) and rejoice over them for good, De 30:9. For there is joy in heaven upon the repentance and conversion of sinners: the father of the prodigal rejoiced over him for good.

(5.) That he would multiply them (De 30:5), and that, when they grew numerous, every mouth might have meat: he would make them plenteous in every work of their hand, De 30:9. National repentance and reformation bring national plenty, peace, and prosperity. It is promised, The Lord will make thee plenteous in the fruit of thy cattle and land, for good. Many have plenty for hurt; the prosperity of fools destroys them. Then it is for good when with it God gives us grace to use it for his glory.

(6.) That he would transfer the curses they had been under to their enemies, De 30:7. When God was gathering them in to re-establish them they would meet with much opposition; but the same curses that had been a burden upon them should become a defence to them, by being turned upon their adversaries. The cup of trembling should be taken out of their hand, and put into the hand of those that afflicted them, Isa 51:22,23.

(7.) That he would give them his grace to change their hearts, and rule there (De 30:6): The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord. Note,

[1.] The heart must be circumcised to love God. The filth of the flesh must be put away; and the foolishness of the heart, as the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it. See Col 2:11,12,Ro 2:29. Circumcision was a seal of the covenant; the heart is then circumcised to love God when it is strongly engaged and held by that bond to this duty.

[2.] It is the work of God's grace to circumcise the heart, and to shed abroad the love of God there; and this grace is given to all that repent and seek it carefully. Nay, that seems to be rather a promise than a precept (De 30:8): Thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord. He that requires us to return promises grace to enable us to return: and it is our fault if that grace be not effectual. herein the covenant of grace is well ordered, that whatsoever is required in the covenant is promised. Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit, Pr 1:23.

3. It is observable how Moses here calls God the Lord thy God twelve times in De 30:1-10, intimating,

(1.) That penitents may take direction and encouragement in their return to God from their relation to him. Jer 3:22, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God; therefore to thee we are bound to come, whither else should we go? And therefore we hope to find favour with thee."

(2.) That those who have revolted from God, if they return to him and do their first works, shall be restored to their former state of honour and happiness. Bring hither the first robe. In the threatenings of the former chapter he is all along called the Lord, a God of power and the Judge of all: but, in the promises of this chapter, the Lord thy God, a God of grace, and in covenant with thee.

II. This may also be considered as a prediction of the repentance and restoration of the Jews: When all these things shall have come upon thee (De 30:1), the blessing first, and after that the curse, then the mercy in reserve shall take place. Though their hearts were wretchedly hardened, yet the grace of God could soften and change them; and then, though their case was deplorably miserable, the providence of God would redress all their grievances. Now,

1. It is certain that this was fulfilled in their return from their captivity in Babylon. It was a wonderful instance of their repentance and reformation that Ephraim, who had been joined to idols, renounced them, and said, What have I to do any more with idols? That captivity effectually cured them of idolatry; and then God planted them again in their own land and did them good. But,

2. Some think that it is yet further to be accomplished in the conversion of the Jews who are now dispersed, their repentance for the sin of their fathers in crucifying Christ, their return to God through him, and their accession to the Christian church. But, alas! Who shall live when God doth this?

6 And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

7 And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee.

8 And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.

9 And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:

10 if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes *which are* written in this book of the law, *and* if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

Moses here urges them to obedience from the consideration of the plainness and easiness of the command.

I. This is true of the law of Moses. They could never plead in excuse of their disobedience that God had enjoined them that which was either unintelligible or impracticable, impossible to be known or to be done (De 30:11): It is not hidden from thee. That is, not send messengers to heaven (De 30:12), to enquire what thou must do to please God; nor needest thou go beyond sea (De 30:13), as the philosophers did, that travelled through

many and distant regions in pursuit of learning; no, thou art not put to that labour and expense; nor is the commandment within the reach of those only that have a great estate or a refined genius, but it is very nigh unto thee, De 30:14. It is written in thy books, made plain upon tables, so that he that runs may read it; thy priests' lips keep this knowledge, and, when any difficulty arises, thou mayest ask the law at their mouth, Mal 2:7. It is not communicated in a strange language; but it is in thy mouth, that is, in the vulgar tongue that is commonly used by thee, in which thou mayest hear it read, and talk of it familiarly among thy children. It is not wrapped up in obscure phrases or figures to puzzle and amuse thee, or in hieroglyphics, but it is in thy heart; it is delivered in such a manner as that it is level to thy capacity, even to the capacity of the meanest."

"It is not too hard nor heavy for thee:" so the Septuagint reads it, De 30:11. Thou needest not say, "As good attempt to climb to heaven, or flee upon the wings of the morning to the uttermost part of the sea, as go about to do all the words of this law:" no, the matter is not so; it is no such intolerable yoke as some ill-minded people represent it. It was indeed a heavy yoke in comparison with that of Christ (Ac 15:10), but not in comparison with the idolatrous services of the neighbouring nations. God appeals to themselves that he had not made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense, Isa 43:23,Mic 6:3. But he speaks especially of the moral law, and its precepts: "That is very nigh thee, consonant to the law of nature, which would have been found in every man's heart, and every man's mouth, if he would but have attended to it. There is that in thee which consents to the law that it is good, Ro 7:16. Thou hast therefore no reason to complain of any insuperable difficulty in the observance of it."

II. This is true of the gospel of Christ, to which the apostle applies it, and makes it the language of the righteousness which is of faith, 10:6-8. And many think this is principally intended by Moses here; for he wrote of Christ, Joh 5:46. This

is God's commandment now under the gospel that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, 1Jo 3:23. If we ask, as the blind man did, Lord, who is he? Or where is he, that we may believe on him? (Joh 9:36), this scripture gives an answer, We need not go up to heaven, to fetch him thence, for he has come down thence in his incarnation; nor down to the deep, to fetch him thence, for thence he has come up in his resurrection.

But the word is nigh us, and Christ in that word; so that if we believe with the heart that the promises of the incarnation and resurrection of the Messiah are fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, and receive him accordingly, and confess him with our mouth, we have then Christ with us, and we shall be saved. He is near, very near, that justifies us. The law was plain and easy, but the gospel much more so.

11 For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off.

12 It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

13 Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

14 But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

Moses here concludes with a very bright light, and a very strong fire, that, if possible, what he had been preaching of might find entrance into the understanding and affections of this unthinking people. What could be said more moving, and more likely to make deep and lasting impressions? The manner of his treating with them is so rational, so prudent, so affectionate, and every way so apt to gain the point, that it abundantly shows him to be in earnest, and leaves them inexcusable in their disobedience.

I. He states the case very fairly. He appeals to themselves concerning it whether he had not laid the matter as plainly as they could wish before them.

1. Every man covets to obtain life and good, and to escape death and evil, desires happiness and dreads misery. "Well," says he, "I have shown you the way to obtain all the happiness you can desire and to avoid all misery. Be obedient, and all shall be well, and nothing amiss." Our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, in hopes of getting thereby the knowledge of good and evil; but it was a miserable knowledge they got, of good by the loss of it, and of evil by the sense of it; yet such is the compassion of God towards man that, instead of giving him to his own delusion, he has favoured him by his word with such a knowledge of good and evil as will make him for ever happy if it be not his own fault.

2. Every man is moved and governed in his actions by hope and fear, hope of good and fear of evil, real of apparent. "Now," says Moses, "I have tried both ways; if you will be either drawn to obedience by the certain prospect of advantage by it, or driven to obedience by the no less certain prospect of ruin in case you be disobedient--if you will be wrought upon either way, you will be kept close to God and your duty; but, if you will not, you are utterly inexcusable." Let us, then, hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

(1.) If they and theirs would love God and serve him, they should live and be happy, De 30:16. If they would love God, and evidence the sincerity of their love by keeping his commandments--if they would make conscience of keeping his commandments, and do it from a principle of love--then God would do them good, and they should be as happy as his love and blessing could make them.

(2.) If they or theirs should at any time turn from God, desert his service, and worship other gods this would certainly be their ruin, De 30:17,18. Observe, It is not for every failure in

the particulars of their duty that ruin is threatened, but for apostasy and idolatry: though every violation of the command deserved the curse, yet the nation would be destroyed by that only which is the violation of the marriage covenant.

The purport of the New Testament is much the same; this, in like manner, sets before us life and death, good and evil; He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned, Mk 16:16. And this faith includes love and obedience. To those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life. But to those that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (and so, in effect, worship other gods and serve them), will be rendered the indignation and wrath of an immortal God, the consequence of which must needs be the tribulation and anguish of an immortal soul, Ro 2:7-9.

II. Having thus stated the case, he fairly puts them to their choice, with a direction to them to choose well. He appeals to heaven and earth concerning his fair and faithful dealing with them, De 30:19. They could not but own that whatever was the issue he had delivered his soul; therefore, that they might deliver theirs, he bids them choose life, that is, choose to do their duty, which would be their life. Note,

1. Those shall have life that choose it: those that choose the favour of God and communion with him for their felicity, and prosecute their choice as they ought, shall have what they choose.

2. Those that come short of life and happiness must thank themselves; they would have had it if they had chosen it when it was put to their choice: but they die because they will die; that is, because they do not like the life promised upon the terms proposed.

III. In the De 30:20,

1. He shows them, in short, what their duty is, to love God, and to love him as the Lord, a Being most amiable, and as their God, a God in covenant with them; and, as an evidence of this love, to obey his voice in every thing, and by a constancy in this love and obedience to cleave to him, and never to forsake him in affection or practice.

2. He shows them what reason there was for this duty, inconsideration,

(1.) Of their dependence upon God: He is thy life, and the length of thy days. He gives life, preserves life, restores life, and prolongs it by his power though it is a frail life, and by his patience though it is a forfeited life: he sweetens life with his comforts, and is the sovereign Lord of life; in his hand our breath is. Therefore we are concerned to keep ourselves in his love; for it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy.

(2.) Of their obligation to him for the promise of Canaan made to their fathers and ratified with an oath. And,

(3.) Of their expectations from him in performance of that promise: "Love God, and serve him, that thou mayest dwell in that land of promise which thou mayest be sure he can give, and uphold to thee who is thy life and the length of thy days." All these are arguments to us to continue in love and obedience to the God of our mercies.

16 in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk
in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his
judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy
God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.
17 But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be
drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

18 I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that* ye shall not prolong *your* days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.
19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:
20 that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, *and* that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Deuteronomy-31

Joshua Commissioned as Moses' Successor

1 And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.
2 And he said unto them, I *am* a hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.
3 The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, *and* he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: *and* Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said.

Loth to part (we say) bids oft farewell. Moses does so to the children of Israel: not because he was loth to go to God, but because he was loth to leave them, fearing that when he had left them they would leave God. He had finished what he had to say to them by way of counsel and exhortation: here he calls them together to give them a word of encouragement, especially with reference to the wars of Canaan, in which they were now to engage. It was a discouragement to them that Moses was to be removed at a time when he could so ill be spared: though Joshua was continued to fight for them in the valley, they would want Moses to intercede for them on the hill, as he did, Ex 17:10. But there is no remedy: Moses can no more go out and come in, De 31:2. Not that he was disabled

by any decay either of body or mind; for his natural force was not abated, De 24:7. But he cannot any longer discharge his office; for,

1. He is 120 years old, and it is time for him to think of resigning his honour and returning to his rest. He that had arrived at so great an age then, when seventy or eighty was the ordinary stint, as appears by the prayer of Moses (Ps 90:10), might well think that he had accomplished as a hireling his day.

2. He is under a divine sentence: Thou shalt not go over Jordan. Thus a full stop was put to his usefulness; hitherto he must go, hitherto he must serve, but no further. So God had appointed it and Moses acquiesces: for I know not why we should any of us desire to live a day longer than while God has work for us to do; nor shall we be accountable for more time than is allotted us. But, though Moses must not go over himself, he is anxious to encourage those that must.

I. He encourages the people; and never could any general animate his soldiers upon such good grounds as those on which Moses here encourages Israel.

1. He assures them of the constant presence of God with them (De 31:3): The Lord thy God. that has led thee and kept thee hitherto will go over before thee; and those might follow boldly who were sure that they had God for their leader. He repeats it again (De 31:6) with an emphasis: "The Lord thy God, the great Jehovah, who is thine in covenant, he it is, he and no less, he and no other, that goes before thee; not only who by his promise has assured thee that he will go before thee; but by his ark, the visible token of his presence, shows thee that he does actually go before thee." And he repeats it with enlargement: "Not only he goes over before thee at first, to bring thee in, but he will continue with thee all along, with thee and thine; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee; he will not disappoint thy expectations in any strait, nor will he ever

desert thy interest; be constant to him, and he will be so to thee." This is applied by the apostle to all God's spiritual Israel, for the encouragement of their faith and hope; unto us is this gospel preached, as well as unto them He will never fail thee, nor forsake thee, Heb 13:5.

2. He commends Joshua to them for a leader: Joshua, he shall go over before thee, De 31:3. One whose conduct, and courage, and sincere affection to their interest, they had had long experience of; and one whom God had ordained and appointed to be their leader, and therefore, no doubt, would own and bless, and make a blessing to them. See Nu 27:18. Note, It is a great encouragement to a people when, instead of some useful instruments that are removed, God raises up others to carry on his work.

3. He ensures their success. The greatest generals, supported with the greatest advantages, must yet own the issues of war to be doubtful and uncertain; the battle is not always to the strong nor to the bold; an ill accident unthought of may turn the scale against the highest hopes. But Moses had warrant from God to assure Israel that, notwithstanding the disadvantages they laboured under, they should certainly be victorious. A coward will fight when he is sure to be a conqueror. God undertakes to do the work--he will destroy these nations; and Israel shall do little else than divide the spoil--thou shalt possess them, De 31:3. Two things might encourage their hopes of this:--

(1.) The victories they had already obtained over Sihon and Og (De 31:4), from which they might infer both the power of God, that he could do what he had done, and the purpose of God, that he would finish what he had begun to do. Thus must we improve our experience.

(2.) The command God had given them to destroy the Canaanites (De 7:2,12:2), to which he refers here (De 31:5, that you may do unto them according to all which I have

commanded you), and from which they might infer that, if God had commanded them to destroy the Canaanites, no doubt he would put it into the power of their hands to do it. Note, What God has made our duty we have reason to expect opportunity and assistance from him for the doing of. So that from all this he had reason enough to bid them be strong and of a good courage, De 31:6. While they had the power of God engaged for them they had no reason to fear all the powers of Canaan engaged against them.

II. He encourages Joshua, De 31:7,8. Observe,

1. Though Joshua was an experienced general, and a man of approved gallantry and resolution, who had already signalized himself in many brave actions, yet Moses saw cause to bid him be of good courage, now that he was entering upon a new scene of action; and Joshua was far from taking it as an affront, or as a tacit questioning of his courage, to be thus charged, as sometimes we find proud and peevish spirits invidiously taking exhortations and admonitions for reproaches and reflections. Joshua himself is very well pleased to be admonished by Moses to be strong and of good courage.

2. He gives him this charge in the sight of all Israel, that they might be the more observant of him whom they saw thus solemnly inaugurated, and that he might set himself the more to be an example of courage to the people who were witnesses to this charge here given to him as well as to themselves. 3. He gives him the same assurances of the divine presence, and consequently of a glorious success, that he had given the people. God would be with him, would not forsake him, and therefore he should certainly accomplish the glorious enterprise to which he was called and commissioned: Thou shalt cause them to inherit the land of promise.

Note, Those shall speed well that have God with them; and therefore they ought to be of good courage. Through God let us do valiantly, for through him we shall do victoriously; if we

resist the devil, he shall flee, and God shall shortly tread him under our feet.

4 And the Lord shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed.

5 And the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.

6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he *it is* that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

7 And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

8 And the Lord, he *it is* that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

9 And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel.

The law was given by Moses; so it is said, Joh 1:17. He was not only entrusted to deliver it to that generation, but to transmit it to the generations to come; and here it appears that he was faithful to that trust.

I. Moses wrote this law, De 31:9. The learned bishop Patrick understands this of all the five books of Moses, which are often called the law; he supposes that though Moses had written most of the Pentateuch before, yet he did not finish it till now; now he put his last hand to that sacred volume. Many think that the law here (especially since it is called this law, this grand abridgment of the law) is to be understood of this book of Deuteronomy; all those discourses to the people which have taken up this whole book, he, being in them divinely inspired, wrote them as the word of God. He wrote this law,

1. That those who had heard it might often review it themselves, and call it to mind.

2. That it might be the more safely handed down to posterity. Note, The church has received abundance of advantage from the writing, as well as from the preaching, of divine things; faith comes not only by hearing, but by reading. The same care that was taken of the law, thanks be to God, is taken of the gospel too; soon after it was preached it was written, that it might reach to those on whom the ends of the world shall come.

II. Having written it, he committed it to the care and custody of the priests and elders. He delivered one authentic copy to the priests, to be laid up by the ark (De 31:26), there to remain as a standard by which all other copies must be tried. And it is supposed that he gave another copy to the elders of each tribe, to be transcribed by all of that tribe that were so disposed. Some observe that the elders, as well as the priests, were entrusted with the law, to intimate that magistrates by the power, as well as ministers by their doctrine, are to maintain religion, and to take care that the law be not broken nor lost.

III. He appointed the public reading of this law in a general assembly of all Israel every seventh year. The pious Jews (it is very probable) read the laws daily in their families, and Moses of old time was read in the synagogue every sabbath day, Ac 15:21. But once in seven years, that the law might be the more magnified and made honourable, it must be read in a general assembly. Though we read the word in private, we must not think it needless to hear it read in public. Now here he give direction,

1. When this solemn reading of the law must be, that the time might add to the solemnity; it must be done,

(1.) In the year of release. In that year the land rested, so that they could the better spare time to attend this service. Servants

who were then discharged, and poor debtors who were then acquitted from their debts, must know that, having the benefit of the law, it was justly expected they should yield obedience to it, and therefore give up themselves to be God's servants, because he had loosed their bonds. The year of release was typical of gospel grace, which therefore is called the acceptable year of the Lord; for our remission and liberty by Christ engage us to keep his commandments, Lu 1:74,75.

(2.) At the feast of tabernacles in that year. In that feast they were particularly required to rejoice before God, Le 23:40. Therefore then they must read the law, both to qualify their mirth and keep it in due bounds, and to sanctify their mirth, that they might make the law of God the matter of their rejoicing, and might read it with pleasure and not as a task.

2. To whom it must be read: To all Israel (De 31:11), men, women, and children, and the strangers, De 31:12. The women and children were not obliged to go up to the other feasts, but to this only in which the law was read. Note, It is the will of God that all people should acquaint themselves with his word. It is a rule to all, and therefore should be read to all. It is supposed that, since all Israel could not possibly meet in one place, nor could one man's voice reach them all, as many as the courts of the Lord's house would hold met there, and the rest at the same time in their synagogues.

The Jewish doctors say that the hearers were bound to prepare their hearts, and to hear with fear and reverence, and with joy and trembling, as in the day when the law was given on Mount Sinai; and, though there were great and wise men who knew the whole law very well, yet they were bound to hear with great attention; for he that reads is the messenger of the congregation to cause the words of God to be heard. I wish those that hear the gospel read and preached would consider this.

3. By whom it must be read: Thou shalt read it (De 31:11), "Thou, O Israel," by a proper person appointed for that purpose; or, "Thou, O Joshua," their chief ruler; accordingly we find that he did read the law himself, Jos 8:34,35. So did Josiah, 2Ch 34:30, and Ezra, Ne 8:3. And the Jews say that the king himself (when they had one) was the person that read in the courts of the temple, that a pulpit was set up for that purpose in the midst of the court, in which the king stood, that the book of the law was delivered to him by the high priest, that he stood up to receive it, uttered a prayer (as every one did that was to read the law in public) before he read; and then, if he pleased, he might sit down and read.

But if he read standing it was thought the more commendable, as (they say) king Agrippa did. Here let me offer it as a conjecture that Solomon is called the preacher, in his Ecclesiastes, because he delivered the substance of that book in a discourse to the people, after his public reading of the law in the feast of tabernacles, according to this appointment here.

4. For what end it must be thus solemnly read.

(1.) That the present generation might hereby keep up their acquaintance with the law of God, De 31:12. They must hear, that they may learn, and fear God, and observe to do their duty. See here what we are to aim at in hearing the word; we must hear, that we may learn and grow in knowledge; and every time we read the scriptures we shall find that there is still more and more to be learned out of them. We must learn, that we may fear God, that is, that we may be duly affected with divine things; and must fear God, that we may observe and do the words of his law; for in vain do we pretend to fear him if we do not obey him.

(2.) That the rising generation might betimes be leavened with religion (De 31:13); not only that those who know something may thus know more, but that the children who have not

known any thing may betimes know this, how much it is their interest as well as duty to fear God.

10 And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of *every* seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,
11 when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.
12 Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that *is* within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:
13 and *that* their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.
14 And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.
15 And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

Here,

I. Moses and Joshua are summoned to attend the divine majesty at the door of the tabernacle, De 31:14. Moses is told again that he must shortly die; even those that are most ready and willing to die have need to be often reminded of the approach of death. In consideration of this, he must come himself to meet God; for whatever improves our communion with God furthers our preparation for death. He must also bring Joshua with him to be presented to God for a successor, and to receive his commission and charge. Moses readily obeys the summons, for he was not one of those that look with an evil eye upon their successors, but, on the contrary, rejoiced in him.

II. God graciously gives them the meeting: He appeared in the tabernacle (as the shechinah used to appear) in a pillar of a cloud, De 31:15. This is the only time in all this book that we read of the glory of God appearing, whereas we often read of it in the three foregoing books, which perhaps signifies that in the latter days, under the evangelical law, such visible appearances as these of the divine glory are not to be expected, but we must take heed to the more sure word of prophecy.

III. He tells Moses that, after his death, the covenant which he had taken so much pains to make between Israel and their God would certainly be broken.

1. That Israel would forsake God, De 31:16. And we may be sure that if the covenant between God and man be broken the blame must lie on man, it is he that breaks it; we have often observed it, That God never leaves any till they first leave him. Worshipping the gods of the Canaanites (who had been the natives, but henceforward were to be looked upon as the strangers of that land) would undoubtedly be counted a deserting of God, and, like adultery, a violation of the covenant. Thus still those are revolters from Christ, and will be so adjudged, who either make a god of their money by reigning covetousness or a god of their belly by reigning sensuality.

Those that turn to other gods (De 31:18) forsake their own mercies. This apostasy of theirs is foretold to be the effect of their prosperity (De 31:20): They shall have eaten and filled themselves; this is all they will aim at in eating, to gratify their own appetites, and then they will wax fat, grow secure and sensual; their security will take off their dread of God and his judgments; and their sensuality will incline them to the idolatries of the heathen, which made provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it. Note, God has a clear and infallible foresight of all the wickedness of the wicked, and has often covenanted with those who he knew would deal very

treacherously (Isa 48:8), and conferred many favours on those who he knew would deal very ungratefully.

2. That then God would forsake Israel; and justly does he cast those off who had so unjustly cast him off (De 31:17): My anger shall be kindled against them, and I will forsake them. His providence would forsake them, no longer to protect and prosper them, and then they would become a prey to all their neighbours. His spirit and grace would forsake them, no longer to teach and guide them, and then they would be more and more bigoted, besotted, and hardened in their idolatries. Thus many evils and troubles would befall them. (De 31:17,21), which would be such manifest indications of God's displeasure against them that they themselves would be constrained to own it: Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?

Those that have sinned away their God will find that thereby they pull all mischiefs upon their own heads. But that which completed their misery was that God would hide his face from them in that day, that day of their trouble and distress, De 31:18. Whatever outward troubles we are in, if we have but the light of God's countenance, we may be easy. But, if God hide his face from us and our prayers, we are undone.

IV. He directs Moses to deliver them a song, in the composing of which he should be divinely inspired, and which should remain a standing testimony for God as faithful to them in giving them warning, and against them as persons false to themselves in not taking the warning, De 31:19. The written word in general, as well as this song in particular, is a witness for God against all those that break covenant with him. It shall be for a testimony, Mt 24:14. The wisdom of man has devised many ways of conveying the knowledge of good and evil, by laws, histories, prophecies, proverbs, and, among the rest, by songs; each has its advantages. And the wisdom of God has in the scripture made use of them all, that ignorant and careless men might be left inexcusable.

1. This song, if rightly improved, might be a means to prevent their apostasy; for in the inditing of it God had an eye to their present imagination, now, before they were brought into the land of promise, De 31:21. God knew very well that there were in their hearts such gross conceits of the deity, and such inclinations of idolatry, that they would be tinder to the sparks of that temptation; and therefore in this song he gives them warning of their danger that way. Note, The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of men's hearts, and meets with them strangely by its reproofs and corrections, Heb 4:12. Compare 1Co 14:25. Ministers who preach the word know not the imaginations men go about, but God, whose word it is, knows perfectly.

2. If this song did not prevent their apostasy, yet it might help to bring them to repentance, and to recover them from their apostasy. When their troubles come upon them, this song shall not be forgotten, but may serve as a glass to show them their own faces, that they may humble themselves, and return to him from whom they have revolted. Note, Those for whom God has mercy in store he may leave to fall, yet he will provide means for their recovery. Medicines are prepared before-hand for their cure.

16 And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go *to be* among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God *is* not among us?

18 And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

19 Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

20 For when I shall have brought them into the land which I sware unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

21 And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I sware.

22 Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

23 And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee.

Here,

I The charge is given to Joshua, which God has said (De 31:14) he would give him. The same in effect that Moses had given him. The same in effect that Moses had given him (De 31:7): Be strong and of a good courage, De 31:23. Joshua had now heard from God so much of the wickedness of the people whom he was to have the conduct of as could not but be a discouragement to him: "Nay," says God, "how bad soever they are, thou shalt go through thy understanding, for I will be with thee. Thou shalt put them into possession of Canaan. If they afterwards by their sin throw themselves out of it again, that will be no fault of thine, nor any dishonour to thee, therefore be of good courage."

II The solemn delivery of the book of the law to the Levites, to be deposited in the side of the ark, is here again related (De 31:24-26), of which before, De 31:9. Only they are here directed where to treasure up this precious original, not in the ark (there only the two tables were preserved), but in another

box by the side of the ark. It is probable that this was the very book that was found in the house of the Lord (having been somehow or other misplaced) in the days of Josiah (2Ch 34:14), and so perhaps the following words here, that it may be a witness against thee, may particularly point at that event, which happened so long after; for the finding of this very book occasioned the public reading of it by Josiah himself, for a witness against a people who were then almost ripe for their ruin by the Babylonians.

III. The song which follows in the next chapter is here delivered to Moses, and by him to the people. He wrote it first (De 31:22), as the Spirit of God indited it, and then spoke it in the ears of all the congregation (De 31:30), and taught it to them (De 31:22), that is, gave out copies of it, and ordered the people to learn it by heart. It was delivered by word of mouth first, and afterwards in writing, to the elders and officers, as the representatives of their respective tribes (De 31:28), by them to be transmitted to their several families and households. It was delivered to them with a solemn appeal to heaven and earth concerning the fair warning which was given them by it of the fatal consequences of their apostasy from God, and with a declaration of the little joy and little hope Moses had in and concerning them.

1. He declares what little joy he had had of them while he was with them, De 31:27. It is not in a passion that he says, I know thy rebellion (as once he said unadvisedly, Hear now, you rebels), but it is the result of a long acquaintance with them: you have been rebellious against the Lord. Their rebellions against himself he makes no mention of: these he had long since forgiven and forgotten; but they must be made to hear of their rebellions against God, that they may be ever repented of and never repeated.

2. What little hopes he had of them now that he was leaving them. From what God had now said to him (De 31:16) more than from his own experience of them, though that was

discouraging enough, he tells them (De 31:29), I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves. Many a sad thought, no doubt, it occasioned to this good man, to foresee the apostasy and ruin of a people he had taken so much pains with, in order to them good and make them happy; but this was his comfort, that he had done his duty, and that God would be glorified, if not in their settlement, yet in their dispersion. Thus our Lord Jesus, a little before his death, foretold the rise of false Christs and false prophets (Mt 24:24), notwithstanding which, and all the apostasies of the latter times, we may be confident that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, for the foundation of God stands sure.

The Law to Be Placed in the Ark

24 And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished,
25 that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying,
26 Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.
27 For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death?
28 Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.
29 For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt *yourselves*, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

The Song of Moses

30 And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

Deuteronomy-32

1 Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;
and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
my speech shall distil as the dew,
as the small rain upon the tender herb, and
as the showers upon the grass:
3 because I will publish the name of the Lord:
ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

Here is,

I. A commanding preface or introduction to this song of Moses, De 32:1,2. He begins,

1. With a solemn appeal to heaven and earth concerning the truth and importance of what he was about to say, and the justice of the divine proceedings against a rebellious and backsliding people, for he had said (De 31:28) that he would in this song call heaven and earth to record against them. Heaven and earth would sooner hear than this perverse and unthinking people; for they revolt not from the obedience to their Creator, but continue to this day, according to his ordinances, as his servants (Ps 119:89-91), and therefore will rise up in judgment against rebellious Israel.

Heaven and earth will be witnesses against sinners, witnesses of the warning given them and of their refusal to take the warning (see Job 20:27); the heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. Or heaven and earth are here put for the inhabitants of both, angels and men; both shall agree to justify God in his proceedings against Israel, and to declare his righteousness, Ps 50:6; see Re 19:1,2.

2. He begins with a solemn application of what he was about to say to the people (De 32:2): My doctrine shall drop as the rain. "It shall be a beating sweeping rain to the rebellious;" so one of the Chaldee paraphrasts expounds the first clause. Rain is sometimes sent for judgment, witness that with which the world was deluged; and so the word of God, while to some it is reviving and refreshing--a savour of life unto life, is to others terrifying and killing--a savour of death unto death. It shall be as a sweet and comfortable dew to those who are rightly prepared to receive it. Observe,

(1.) The subject of this song is doctrine; he had given them a song of praise and thanksgiving (Ex 15:1-21), but this is a song of instruction, for in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, we are not only to give glory to god, but to teach and admonish one another, Col 3:16. Hence many of David's psalms are entitled Maschil--to give instruction.

(2.) This doctrine is fitly compared to rain and showers which come from above, to make the earth fruitful, and accomplish that for which they are sent. (Isa 55:10,11), and depend not upon the wisdom or will of man, Mic 5:7. It is a mercy to have this rain come often upon us, and our duty to drink it in, Heb 6:7.

(3.) He promises that his doctrine shall drop and distil as the dew, and the small rain, which descend silently and without noise. The word preached is likely to profit when it comes gently, and sweetly insinuates itself into the hearts and affections of the hearers.

(4.) He bespeaks their acceptance and entertainment of it, and that it might be as sweet, and pleasant, and welcome to them as rain to the thirsty earth, Ps 72:6. And the word of God is likely to do us good when it is thus acceptable. (5.) The learned bishop Patrick understands it as a prayer that his words which were sent from heaven to them might sink into their hearts and

soften them, as the rain softens the earth, and so make them fruitful in obedience.

II. An awful declaration of the greatness and righteousness of God, De 32:3,4.

1. He begins with this, and lays it down as his first principle,

(1.) To preserve the honour of God, that no reproach might be cast upon him for the sake of the wickedness of his people Israel; how wicked and corrupt soever those are who are called by his name, he is just, and right, and all that is good, and is not to be thought the worse of for their badness.

(2.) To aggravate the wickedness of Israel, who knew and worshipped such a holy god, and yet were themselves so unholy. And,

(3.) To justify God in his dealings with them; we must abide by it, that God is righteous, even when his judgments are a great deep, Jer 12:1,Ps 36:6.

2. Moses here sets himself to publish the name of the Lord (De 32:3), that Israel, knowing what a God he is whom they had avouched for theirs, might never be such fools as to exchange him for a false god, a dunghill god. He calls upon them therefore to ascribe greatness to him. It will be of great use to us for the preventing of sin, and the preserving of us in the way of our duty, always to keep up high and honourable thoughts of God, and to take all occasions to express them: Ascribe greatness to our God. We cannot add to his greatness, for it is infinite; but we must acknowledge it, and give him the glory of it.

Now, when Moses would set forth the greatness of God, he does it, not by explaining his eternity and immensity, or describing the brightness of his glory in the upper world, but

by showing the faithfulness of his word, the perfection of his works, and the wisdom and equity of all the administrations of his government; for in these his glory shines most clearly to us, and these are the things revealed concerning him, which belong to us and our children, De 32:4.

(1.) He is the rock. So he is called six times in this chapter, and the LXX. all along translates it Theos, God. The learned Mr. Hugh Broughton reckons that God is called the rock eighteen times (besides in this chapter) in the Old Testament (though in some places we translate it strength), and charges it therefore upon the papists that they make St. Peter a god when they make him the rock on which the church is built. God is the rock, for he is in himself immutable immovable, and he is to all that seek him and fly to him an impenetrable shelter, and to all that trust in him an everlasting foundation.

(2.) His work is perfect. His work of creation was so, all very good; his works of providence are so, or will be so in due time, and when the mystery of God shall be finished the perfection of his works will appear to all the world. Nothing that God does can be mended, Ec 3:14. God was now perfecting what he had promised and begun for his people Israel, and from the perfection of this work they must take occasion to give him the glory of the perfection of all his works. The best of men's works are imperfect, they have their flaws and defects, and are left unfinished; but, as for God, his work is perfect; if he begin, he will make an end.

(3.) All his ways are judgment. The ends of his ways are all righteous, and he is wise in the choice of the means in order to those ends. Judgment signifies both prudence and justice. The ways of the Lord are right, Ho 14:9.

(4.) He is a God of truth, whose word we may take and rely upon, for he cannot lie who is faithful to all his promises, nor shall his threatenings fall to the ground.

(5.) He is without iniquity, one who never cheated any that trusted in him, never wronged any that appealed to his justice, nor ever was hard upon any that cast themselves upon his mercy.

(6.) Just and right is he. As he will not wrong any by punishing them more than they deserve, so he will not fail to recompense all those that serve him or suffer for him. He is indeed just and right; for he will effectually take care that none shall lose by him. Now what a bright and amiable idea does this De 34:4 give us of the God whom we worship; and what reason have we then to love him and fear him, to live a life of delight in him, dependence on him, and devotedness to him! This is our rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him; nor can there be, Ps 92:15.

III. A high charge exhibited against the Israel of God, whose character was in all respects the reverse of that of the God of Israel, De 32:5.

1. They have corrupted themselves. Or, It has corrupted itself; the body of the people has: the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint. God did not corrupt them, for just and right is he; but they are themselves the sole authors of their own sin and ruin; and both are included in this word. They have debauched themselves; for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. And they have destroyed themselves, Ho 13:9. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear the guilt and grief, Pr 9:12.

2. Their spot is not the spot of his children. Even God's children have their spots, while they are in this imperfect state; for if we say we have no sin, no spot, we deceive ourselves. But the sin of Israel was none of those; it was not an infirmity which they strove against, watched and prayed against, but an evil which their hearts were fully set in them to do. For,

3. They were a perverse and crooked generation, that were actuated by a spirit of contradiction, and therefore would do what was forbidden because it was forbidden, would set up their own humour and fancy in opposition to the will of God, were impatient of reproof, hated to be reformed, and went on frowardly in the way of their heart.

The Chaldee paraphrase reads De 32:5 thus: They have scattered or changed themselves, and not him, even the children that served idols, a generation that has depraved its own works, and alienated itself. Idolaters cannot hurt God, nor do any damage to his works, nor make him a stranger to this world. See Job 35:6. No, all the hurt they do is to themselves and their own works. The learned bishop Patrick gives another reading of it: Did he do him any hurt? That is, "Is God the rock to be blamed for the evils that should befall Israel? No, His children are their blot," that is, "All the evil that comes upon them is the fruit of their children's wickedness; for the whole generation of them is crooked and perverse." All that are ruined ruin themselves; they die because they will die.

IV. A pathetic expostulation with this provoking people for their ingratitude (De 32:6): "Do you thus requite the Lord? Surely you will not hereafter be so base and disingenuous in your carriage towards him as you have been."

1. He reminds them of the obligations God had laid upon them to serve him, and to cleave to him. He had been a Father to them, had begotten them, fed them, carried them, nursed them, and borne their manners; and would they spurn at the bowels of a Father? He had bought them, had been at a vast expense of miracles to bring them out of Egypt, had given men for them, and people for their life, Isa 43:4. "Is not he thy Father, thy owner (so some), that has an incontestable propriety in thee?" and the ox knoweth his owner.

"He has made thee, and brought thee into being, established thee and kept thee in being; has he not done so? Can you deny

the engagements you lie under to him, in consideration of the great things he has done and designed for you?" And are not our obligations, as baptized Christians, equally great and strong to our Creator that made us, our Redeemer that bought us, and our Sanctifier that has established us.

2. Hence he infers the evil of deserting him and rebelling against him. For,

(1.) It was base ingratitude: "Do you thus require the Lord? Are these the returns you make him for all his favours to you? The powers you have from him will you employ them against him?" See Mic 6:3,Joh 10:32. This is such monstrous villany as all the world will cry shame of: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse.

(2.) It was prodigious madness: O foolish people and unwise! Fools, and double fools! Who has bewitched you? Ga 3:1. "Fools indeed, to disoblige one on whom you have such a necessary dependence! To forsake your own mercies for lying vanities!" Note, All wilful sinners, especially sinners in Israel, are the most unwise and the most ungrateful people in the world.

4 *He is* the Rock, his work is perfect:
for all his ways *are* judgment:
a God of truth and without iniquity, just
and right *is* he.
5 They have corrupted themselves,
their spot *is* not *the spot* of his children:
they are a perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do ye thus requite the Lord, O
foolish people and unwise?
Is not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? Hath he
not made thee, and established thee?
7 Remember the days of old,
consider the years of many generations: ask
thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders,
and they will tell thee.

Moses, having in general represented God to them as their great benefactor, whom they were bound in gratitude to observe and obey, in these verses gives particular instances of God's kindness to them and concern for them.

1. Some instances were ancient, and for proof of them he appeals to the records (De 32:7): Remember the days of old; that is, "Keep in remembrance the history of those days, and of the wonderful providences of God concerning the old world, and concerning your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; you will find a constant series of mercies attending them, and how long since things were working towards that which has now come to pass." Note, The authentic histories of ancient times are of singular use, and especially the history of the church in its infancy, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament church.

2. Others were more modern, and for proof of them he appeals to their fathers and elders that were now alive and with them. Parents must diligently teach their children, not only the word of God, his laws (De 6:7), and the meaning of his ordinances (Ex 12:26,27), but his works also, and the methods of his providence. See Ps 78:3,4,6,7. And children should desire the knowledge of those things which will be of use to engage them to their duty and to direct them in it.

Three things are here enlarged upon as instances of God's kindness to his people Israel, and strong obligations upon them never to forsake him:--

I The early designation of the land of Canaan for their inheritance; for herein it was a type and figure of our heavenly inheritance, that it was of old ordained and prepared in the divine counsels, De 32:8. Observe,

1. When the earth was divided among the sons of men, in the days of Peleg, after the flood, and each family had its lot, in which it must settle, and by degrees grow up into a nation, then

God had Israel in his thoughts and in his eye; for, designing this good land into which they were now going to be in due time an inheritance for them, he ordered that the posterity of Canaan, rather than any other of the families then in being, should be planted there in the mean time, to keep possession, as it were, till Israel was ready for it, because those families were under the curse of Noah, by which they were condemned to servitude and ruin (Ge 9:25), and therefore would be the more justly, honourably, easily, and effectually, rooted out, when the fulness of time should come that Israel should take possession. Thus he set the bounds of that people with an eye to the designed number of the children of Israel, that they might have just as much as would serve their turn. And some observe that Canaan himself, and his eleven sons (Ge 10:15-18, &c.), make up just the number of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Note, (1.) The wisdom of God has appointed the bounds of men's habitation, and determined both the place and time of our living in the world, Ac 17:26. When he gave the earth to the children of men (Ps 115:16), it was not that every man might catch as he could; no, he divides to nations their inheritance, and will have every one to know his own, and not to invade another's property.

(2.) Infinite wisdom has a vast reach, and designs beforehand what is brought to pass long after. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning to the end (Ac 15:18), but they are not so to us, Ec 3:11.

(3.) The great God, in governing the world, and ordering the affairs of states and kingdoms, has a special regard to his church and people, and consults their good in all. See 2Ch 16:9,Isa 45:4. The Canaanites thought they had as good and sure a title to their land as any of their neighbours had to theirs; but God intended that they should only be tenants, till the Israelites, their landlords, came. Thus God serves his own purposes of kindness to his people, by those that neither know

him nor love him, who mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa 10:7,Mic 4:12.

2 The reason given for the particular care God took for this people, so long before they were either born or thought of (as I may say), in our world, does yet more magnify the kindness, and make it obliging beyond expression (De 32:9): For the Lord's portion is his people. All the world is his. He is owner and possessor of heaven and earth, but his church is his in a peculiar manner. It is his demesne, his vineyard, his garden enclosed. He has a particular delight in it: it is the beloved of his soul, in it he walks, he dwells, it is his rest for ever. He has a particular concern for it, keeps it as the apple of his eye.

He has particular expectations from it, as a man has from his portion, has a much greater rent of honour, glory, and worship, from that distinguished remnant, than from all the world besides. That God should be his people's portion is easy to be accounted for, for he is their joy and felicity; but how they should be his portion, who neither needs them nor can be benefited by them, must be resolved into the wondrous condescensions of free grace. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes so to call and to account them.

II The forming of them into a people, that they might be fit to enter upon this inheritance, like an heir of age, at the time appointed of the Father. And herein also Canaan was a figure of the heavenly inheritance; for, as it was from eternity proposed and designed for all God's spiritual Israel, so they are, in time (and it is a work of time), fitted and made meet for it, Col 1:12.

The deliverance of Israel out of slavery, by the destruction of their oppressors, was attended with so many wonders obvious to sense, and had been so often spoken of, that it needed not to be mentioned in this song; but the gracious works God wrought upon them would be less taken notice of than the glorious works he had wrought for them, and therefore he

chooses rather to advert to them. A great deal was done to model this people, to cast them into some shape, and to fit them for the great things designed for them in the land of promise; and it is here most elegantly described.

1. He found him in a desert land, De 32:10. This refers, no doubt, to the wilderness through which God brought them to Canaan, and in which he took so much pains with them; it is called the church in the wilderness, Ac 7:38. There it was born, and nursed, and educated, that all might appear to be divine and from heaven, since they had there no communication with any part of this earth either for food or learning. But, because he is said to find them there, it seems designed also to represent both the bad state and the bad character of that people when God began first to appear for them.

(1.) Their condition was forlorn. Egypt was to them a desert land, and a waste howling wilderness, for they were bond-slaves in it, and cried by reason of their oppression, and were perfectly bewildered and at a loss for relief; there God found them, and thence he fetched them. And,

(2.) Their disposition was very unpromising. So ignorant were the generality of them in divine things, so stupid and unapt to receive the impressions of them, so peevish and humoursome, so froward and quarrelsome, and withal so strangely addicted to the idolatries of Egypt, that they might well be said to be found in a desert land; for one might as reasonably expect a crop of corn from a barren wilderness as any good fruit of service to God from a people of such a character. Those that are renewed and sanctified by grace should often remember what they were by nature.

2. He led him about and instructed him. When God had them in the wilderness he did not bring them directly to Canaan, but made them go a great way about, and so he instructed them; that is,

(1.) By this means he took time to instruct them, and gave them commandments as they were able to receive them. Those whose business it is to instruct others must not expect it will be done of a sudden; learners must have time to learn.

(2.) By this means he tried their faith, and patience, and dependence upon God, and inured them to the hardships of the wilderness, and so instructed them. Every stage had something in it that was instructive; even when he chastened them, he thereby taught them out of his law. It is said (Ps 107:7) that he led them forth by the right way;. and yet here that he led them about; for God always leads his people the right way, however to us it may seem circuitous: so that the furthest way about proves, if not the nearest way, yet the best way home to Canaan.

How God instructed them is explained long after (Ne 9:13), Thou gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes, and commandments; and especially (De 32:20), Thou gavest them also thy good Spirit to instruct them; and he instructs effectually. We may well imagine how unfit that people would have been for Canaan had they not first gone through the discipline of the wilderness.

3. He kept him as the apple of his eye, with all the care and tenderness that could be, from the malignant influences of an open sky and air, and all the perils of an inhospitable desert. The pillar of cloud and fire was both a guide and a guard to them.

4. He did that for them which the eagle does for her nest of young ones, De 32:11,12. The similitude was touched, Ex 19:4, I bore you on eagles' wings; here it is enlarged upon. The eagle is observed to have a strong affection for her young, and to show it, not only as other creatures by protecting them and making provision for them, but by educating them and teaching them to fly. For this purpose she stirs them out of the nest where they lie dozing, flutters over them, to show them

how they must use their wings, and then accustoms them to fly upon her wings till they have learnt to fly upon their own.

This, by the way, is an example to parents to train up their children to business, and not to indulge them in idleness and the love of ease. God did thus by Israel; when they were in love with their slavery, and loth to leave it, God, by Moses, stirred them up to aspire after liberty, and many a time kept them from returning to the house of bondage.

He carried them out of Egypt, led them into the wilderness, and now at length had led them through it. The Lord alone did lead him, he needed not any assistance, nor did he take any to be partner with him in the achievement, which was a good reason why they should serve the Lord only and no other, so much as in partnership, much less in rivalship with him. There was no strange god with him to contribute to Israel's salvation, and therefore there should be none to share in Israel's homage and adoration, Ps 81:9.

III. The settling of them in a good land. This was done in part already, in the happy planting of the two tribes and a half, an earnest of what would speedily and certainly be done for the rest of the tribes.

1. They were blessed with glorious victories over their enemies (De 32:13): He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that is, he brought him on with conquest, and brought him home with triumph. He rode over the high places or strong holds that were kept against him, sat in ease and honour upon the fruitful hills of Canaan. In Egypt they looked mean, and were so, in poverty and disgrace; but in Canaan they looked great, and were so, advanced and enriched; they rode in state, as a people whom the King of kings delighted to honour.

2. With great plenty of all good things. Not only the ordinary increase of the field, but, which was uncommon, Honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock, which may refer either,

(1.) To their miraculous supply of fresh water out of the rock that followed them in the wilderness, which is called honey and oil, because the necessity they were reduced to made it as sweet and acceptable as honey and oil at another time. Or,

(2.) To the great abundance of honey and oil they should find in Canaan, even in those parts that were least fertile. The rocks in Canaan should yield a better increase than the fields and meadows of other countries. Other productions of Canaan are mentioned, De 32:14.

Such abundance and such variety of wholesome food (and every thing the best in its kind) that every meal might be a feast if they pleased: excellent bread made of the best corn, here called the kidneys of the wheat (for a grain of wheat is not unlike a kidney), butter and milk in abundance, the flesh of cattle well fed, and for their drink, no worse than the pure blood of the grape; so indulgent a Father was God to them, and so kind a benefactor. Ainsworth makes the plenty of good things in Canaan to be a figure of the fruitfulness of Christ's kingdom, and the heavenly comforts of his word and Spirit: for the children of his kingdom he has butter and milk, the sincere milk of the word; and strong meat for strong men, with the wine that makes glad the heart.

8 When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when
he separated the sons of Adam,
he set the bounds of the people
according to the number of the children of Israel.
9 For the Lord's portion *is* his people; Jacob
is the lot of his inheritance.
10 He found him in a desert land,
and in the waste howling wilderness; he
led him about, he instructed him, he kept
him as the apple of his eye.

11 As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
fluttereth over her young,
spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,
beareth them on her wings:
12 *so* the Lord alone did lead him,
and *there was* no strange god with him.
13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
that he might eat the increase of the fields;
and he made him to suck honey out of the rock,
and oil out of the flinty rock;
14 butter of kine, and milk of sheep,
with fat of lambs,
and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
with the fat of kidneys of wheat;
and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.
15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked:
thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick,
thou art covered *with fatness;*
then he forsook God *which* made him,
and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

We have here a description of the apostasy of Israel from God, which would shortly come to pass, and to which already they had a disposition. One would have thought that a people under so many obligations to their God, in duty, gratitude, and interest, would never have turned from him; but, alas! They turned aside quickly. Here are two great instances of their wickedness, and each of them amounted to an apostasy from God:--

I. Security and sensuality, pride and insolence, and the other common abuses of plenty and prosperity, De 32:15. These people were called Jeshurun--an upright people (so some), a seeing people, so others: but they soon lost the reputation both of their knowledge and of their righteousness; for, being well-fed,

1. They waxed fat, and grew thick, that is, they indulged themselves in all manner of luxury and gratifications of their

appetites, as if they had nothing to do but to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. They grew fat, that is, they grew big and unwieldy, unmindful of business, and unfit for it; dull and stupid, careless and senseless; and this was the effect of their plenty. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them, Pr 1:32. Yet this was not the worst of it.

2. They kicked; they grew proud and insolent, and lifted up the heel even against God himself. If God rebuked them, either by his prophets or by his providence, they kicked against the goad, as an untamed heifer, or a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, and in their rage persecuted the prophets, and flew in the face of providence itself. And thus he forsook God that made him (not paying due respect to his creator, nor answering the ends of his creation), and put an intolerable contempt upon the rock of his salvation, as if he were not indebted to him for any past favours, nor had any dependence upon him for the future.

Those that make a god of themselves and a god of their bellies, in pride and wantonness, and cannot bear to be told of it, certainly thereby forsake God and show how lightly they esteem him.

II. Idolatry was the great instance of their apostasy, and which the former led them to, as it made them sick of their religion, self-willed, and fond of changes. Observe,

1. What sort of gods they chose and offered sacrifice to, when they forsook the God that made them, De 32:16,17. This aggravated their sin that those very services which they should have done to the true God they did,

(1.) To strange gods, that could not pretend to have done them any kindness, or laid them under any obligation to them, gods that they had no knowledge of, nor could expect any benefit by, for they were strangers. Or they are called strange gods, because they were other than the one only true God, to whom they were betrothed and ought to have been faithful.

(2.) To new gods, that came newly up; for even in religion, the antiquity of which is one of its honours, vain minds have strangely affected novelty, and, in contempt of the Ancient of days, have been fond of new gods. A new god! Can there be a more monstrous absurdity? Would we find the right way to rest, we must ask for the good old way, Jer 6:16. It was true their fathers had worshipped other gods (Jos 24:2), and perhaps it had been some little excuse if the children had returned to them; but to serve new gods whom their fathers feared not, and to like them the better for being new, was to open a door to endless idolatries.

(3.) They were such as were no gods at all, but mere counterfeits and pretenders; their names the invention of men's fancies, and their images the work of men's hands. Nay,

(4.) They were devils. So far from being gods, fathers and benefactors to mankind, they really were destroyers (so the word signifies), such as aimed to do mischief. If there were any spirits or invisible powers that possessed their idol-temples and images, they were evil spirits and malignant powers, whom yet they did not need to worship for fear they should hurt them, as they say the Indians do; for those that faithfully worship God are out of the devil's reach: nay, the devil can destroy those only that sacrifice to him. How mad are idolaters, who forsake the rock of salvation to run themselves upon the rock of perdition!

2. What a great affront this was to Jehovah their God.

(1.) It was justly interpreted a forgetting of him (De 32:18): Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful. Mindfulness of God would prevent sin, but, when the world is served and the flesh indulged, God is forgotten; and can any thing be more base and unworthy than to forget the God that is the author of our being, by whom we subsist, and in whom we live

and move? And see what comes of it, Isa 17:10,11, Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, though the strange slips be pleasant plants at first, yet the harvest at last will be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. There is nothing got by forgetting God.

(2.) It was justly resented as an inexcusable offence: They provoked him to jealousy and to anger (De 32:16), for their idols were abominations to him. See here God's displeasure against idols, whether they be set up in the heart or in the sanctuary.

[1.] He is jealous of them, as rivals with him for the throne in the heart.

[2.] He hates them, as enemies to his crown and government.

[3.] He is, and will be, very angry with those that have any respect or affection for them. Those consider not what they do that provoke God; for who knows the power of his anger?

16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange *gods,*
with abominations provoked they him to anger.
17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God;
to gods whom they knew not,
to new *gods that* came newly up,
whom your fathers feared not.
18 Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful,
and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

The method of this song follows the method of the predictions in the foregoing chapter, and therefore, after the revolt of Israel from God, described in the De 32:15,16, here follow immediately the resolves of divine Justice concerning them; we deceive ourselves if we think that God will be thus mocked by a foolish faithless people, that play fast and loose with him.

I. He had delighted in them, but now he would reject them with detestation and disdain, De 32:19. When the Lord saw

their treachery, and folly, and base ingratitude, he abhorred them, he despised them, so some read it. Sin makes us odious in the sight of the holy God; and no sinners are so loathsome to him as those that he has called, and that have called themselves, his sons and his daughters, and yet have been provoking to him. Note, The nearer any are to God in profession the more noisome are they to him if they are defiled in a sinful way, Ps 106:39,40.

II. He had given them the tokens of his presence with them and his favour to them; but now he would withdraw and hide his face from them, De 32:20. His hiding his face signifies his great displeasure; they had turned their back upon God, and now God would turn his back upon them (compare Jer 18:17,Jer 2:27); but here it denotes also the slowness of God's proceedings against them in a way of judgment.

They began in their apostasy with omissions of good, and so proceeded to commissions of evil. In like manner God will first suspend his favours, and let them see what the issue of that will be, what a friend they lose when they provoke God to depart, and will try whether this will bring them to repentance. Thus we find God hiding himself, as it were, in expectation of the event, Isa 57:17. To justify himself in leaving them he shows that they were such as there was no dealing with; for,

1. They were froward and a people that could not be pleased, or obstinate in sin, and that could not be convinced and reclaimed.

2. They were faithless, and a people that could not be trusted. When he saved them, and took them into covenant, he said, Surely they are children that will not lie (Isa 63:8); but when they proved otherwise, children in whom is no faith, they deserved to be abandoned, and that the God of truth should have no more to do with them.

III. He had done every thing to make them easy and to please them, but now he would do that against them which should be most vexatious to them. The punishment here answers the sin, De 32:21.

1. They had provoked God with despicable deities which were not gods at all, but vanities, creatures of their own imagination, that could not pretend either to merit or to repay the respects of their worshippers; the more vain and vile the gods were after which they went a whoring the greater was the offence to that great and good God whom they set them up in competition with and contradiction to. This put two great evils into their idolatry, Jer 2:13.

2. God would therefore plague them with despicable enemies, that were worthless, weak, and inconsiderable, and not deserving the name of a people, which was a great mortification to them, and aggravated the oppressions they groaned under The more base the people were that tyrannised over them the more barbarous they would be (none so insolent as a beggar on horseback), besides that it would be infamous to Israel, who had so often triumphed over great and mighty nations, to be themselves trampled upon by the weak and foolish, and to come under the curse of Canaan, who was to be a servant of servants.

But God can make the weakest instrument a scourge to the strongest sinner; and those that by sin insult their might Creator are justly insulted by the meanest of their fellow-creatures. This was remarkably fulfilled in the days of the judges, when they were sometimes oppressed by the very Canaanites themselves, whom they had subdued, Jdg 4:2.

But the apostle applies it to the conversion of the Gentiles, who had been a people not in covenant with God, and foolish in divine things, yet were brought into the church, sorely to the grief of the Jews, who upon all occasions showed a great

indignation at it, which was both their sin and their punishment, as envy always is, Ro 10:19.

IV. He had planted them in a good land, and replenished them with all good things; but now he would strip them of all their comforts, and bring them to ruin. The judgments threatened are very terrible, De 32:22-25.

1 The fire of God's anger shall consume them, De 32:22. Are they proud of their plenty? It shall burn up the increase of the earth. Are they confident of their strength? It shall destroy the very foundations of their mountains: there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission to lay all waste. It shall burn to the lowest hell, that is, it shall bring them to the very depth of misery in this world, which yet would be but a faint resemblance of the complete and endless misery of sinners in the other world. The damnation of hell (as our Saviour calls it) is the fire of God's anger, fastening upon the guilty conscience of a sinner, to its inexpressible and everlasting torment, Isa 30:33.

2 The arrows of God's judgments shall be spent upon them, till his quiver is quite exhausted, De 32:23. The judgments of God, like arrows, fly swiftly (Ps 64:7), reaching those at a distance who flatter themselves with hopes of escaping them, Ps 21:8,12. They come from an unseen hand, but wound mortally, for God never misses his mark, 1Ki 22:34. The particular judgments here threatened are,

(1.) Famine: they shall be burnt, or parched, with hunger.

(2.) Pestilence and other diseases, here called burning heat and bitter destruction.

(3.) The insults of the inferior creatures: the teeth of beasts and the poison of serpents, De 32:24.

(4.) War and the fatal consequences of it, De 32:25.

[1.] Perpetual frights. When the sword is without, there cannot but be terror within. 2Co 7:5, Without were fightings, within were fears. Those who cast off the fear of God are justly exposed to the fear of enemies.

[2.] Universal deaths. The sword of the Lord, when it is sent to lay all waste, will destroy without distinction; neither the strength of the young man nor the beauty of the virgin, neither the innocency of the suckling nor the gravity or infirmity of the man of gray hairs, will be their security from the sword when it devours one as well as another. Such devastation does war make, especially when it is pushed on by men as ravenous as wild beasts and as venomous as serpents, De 32:24. See here what mischief sin does, and reckon those fools that make a mock at it.

19 And when the Lord saw *it,* he abhorred *them,*
because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.
20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I
will see what their end *shall be:*
for they *are* a very froward generation,
children in whom *is* no faith.
21 They have moved me to jealousy with *that which is* not God;
they have provoked me to anger with their vanities:
and I will move them to jealousy with *those which are* not a people; I
will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger,
and shall burn unto the lowest hell,
and shall consume the earth with her increase,
and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.
23 I will heap mischiefs upon them;
I will spend mine arrows upon them.
24 *They shall be* burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat,
and with bitter destruction:
I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them,
with the poison of serpents of the dust.
25 The sword without, and terror within,
shall destroy both the young man and the virgin,
the suckling *also* with the man of gray hairs.

After many terrible threatenings of deserved wrath and vengeance, we have here surprising intimations of mercy, undeserved mercy, which rejoices against judgment, and by which it appears that God has no pleasure in the death of sinners, but would rather they should turn and live.

I. In jealousy for his own honour, he will not make a full end of them, De 32:26-28.

1. It cannot be denied but that they deserved to be utterly ruined, and that their remembrance should be made to cease from among men, so that the name of an Israelite should never be known but in history; for they were a nation void of counsel (De 32:28), the most sottish inconsiderate people that ever were, that would not believe the glory of God, though they saw it, nor understand his loving kindness, though they tasted it and lived upon it. Of those who could cast off such a God, such a law, such a covenant, for vain and dunghill-deities, it might truly be said, There is no understanding in them.

2. It would have been an easy thing with God to ruin them and blot out the remembrance of them; when the greatest part of them were cut off by the sword, it was but scattering the remnant into some remote obscure corners of the earth, where they should never have been heard of any more, and the thing had been done. See Eze 5:12. God can destroy those that are most strongly fortified, disperse those that are most closely united, and bury those names in perpetual oblivion that have been most celebrated.

3. Justice demanded it: I said I would scatter them. It is fit those should be cut off from the earth that have cut themselves off from their God; why should they not be dealt with according to their deserts?

4. Wisdom considered the pride and insolence of the enemy, which would take occasion from the ruin of a people that had been so dear to God, and for whom he had done such great

things, to reflect upon God and to imagine that because they had got the better of Israel they had carried the day against the God of Israel: The adversaries will say, Our hand is high, high indeed, when it has been too high for those whom God himself fought for; nor will they consider that the Lord has done all this, but will dream that they have done it in despite of him, as if the God of Israel were as weak and impotent, and as easily run down, as the pretended deities of other nations.

5. In consideration of this, Mercy prevails for the sparing of a remnant and the saving of that unworthy people from utter ruin: I feared the wrath of the enemy. It is an expression after the manner of men; it is certain that God fears no man's wrath, but he acted in this matter as if he had feared it. Those few good people in Israel that had a concern for the honour of God's name feared the wrath of the enemy in this instance more than in any other, as Joshua (Jos 7:9), and David often; and, because they feared it, God himself is said to fear it. He needed not Moses to plead it with him, but reminded himself of it: What will the Egyptians say? Let all those whose hearts tremble for the ark of God and his Israel comfort themselves with this, that God will work for his own name, and will not suffer it to be profaned and polluted: how much soever we deserve to be disgraced, God will never disgrace the throne of his glory.

II. In concern for their welfare, he earnestly desires their conversion; and, in order to that, their serious consideration of their latter end, De 32:29. Observe,

1. Though God had pronounced them a foolish people and of no understanding, yet he wishes they were wise, as De 5:29, O that there were such a heart in them! And Ps 94:8, You fools, when will you be wise? God delights not to see sinners ruin themselves, but desires they will help themselves; and, if they will, he is ready to help them.

2. It is a great piece of wisdom, and will contribute much to the return of sinners to God, seriously to consider the latter end, or the future state. It is here meant particularly of that which God by Moses had foretold concerning this people in the latter days: but it may be applied more generally. We ought to understand and consider,

(1.) The latter end of life, and the future state of the soul. To think of death as our removal from a world of sense to a world of spirits, the final period of our state of trial and probation, and our entrance upon an unchangeable state of recompence and retribution.

(2.) The latter end of sin, and the future state of those that live and die in it. O that men would consider the happiness they will lose, and the misery they will certainly plunge themselves into, if they go on still in their trespasses, what will be in the end thereof, Jer 5:31. Jerusalem forgot this, and therefore came down wonderfully, La 1:9.

III. He calls to mind the great things he had done for them formerly, as a reason why he should not quite cast them off. This seems to be the meaning of that (De 32:30,31), "How should one Israelite have been too hard for a thousand Canaanites, as they have been many a time, but that God, who is greater than all gods, fought for them!" And so it corresponds with that, Isa 63:10,11. When he was turned to be their enemy, as here, and fought against them for their sins, then he remembered the days of old, saying, Where is he that brought them out of the sea? So here, his arm begins to awake as in the days of old against the wrath of the enemy, Ps 138:7. There was a time when the enemies of Israel were sold by their own rock, that is, their own idol-gods, who could not help them, but betrayed them, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, had shut them up as sheep for the slaughter. For the enemies themselves must own that their gods were a very unequal match for the God of Israel. For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, De 32:32,33.

This must be meant of the enemies of Israel, who fell so easily before the sword of Israel because they were ripe for ruin, and the measure of their iniquity was full. Yet these verses may be understood of the strange prevalency of the enemies of Israel against them, when God made use of them as the rod of his anger, Isa 10:5,6. "How should one Canaanite chase a thousand Israelites" (as it is threatened against those that trust to Egypt for help, Isa 30:17, One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one) "unless Israel's rock had deserted them and given them up." For otherwise, however they may impute their power to their gods (Hab 1:11), as the Philistines imputed their victory to Dagon, it is certain the enemies' rock could not have prevailed against the rock of Israel; God would soon have subdued their enemies (Ps 81:14), but that the wickedness of Israel delivered them into their hands. For their vine, that is, Israel's, is of the vine of Sodom, De 32:32,33. They were planted a choice vine, wholly a right seed, but by sin had become the degenerate plant of a strange vine (Jer 2:21), and not only transcribed the iniquity of Sodom, but outdid it, Eze 16:48. God called them his vineyard, his pleasant plant, Isa 5:7. But their fruits were,

1. Very offensive, and displeasing to God, bitter as gall.

2 Very malignant, and pernicious one to another, like the cruel venom of asps. Some understand this of their punishment; their sin would be bitterness in the latter end (2Sa 2:26), it would bite like a serpent and sting like an adder, Job 20:14,Pr 23:32.

IV. He resolves upon the destruction of those at last that had been their persecutors and oppressors. When the cup of trembling goes round, the king of Babel shall pledge it at last, Jer 25:26, and see Isa 51:22,23. The day is coming when the judgment that began at the house of God shall end with the sinner and ungodly, 1Pe 4:17,18. God will in due time bring down the church's enemies.

1. In displeasure against their wickedness, which he takes notice of, and keeps an account of, De 32:34,35. "Is not this implacable fury of theirs against Israel laid up in store with me, to be reckoned for hereafter, when it shall be made to appear that to me belongs vengeance?" Some understand it of the sin of Israel, especially their persecuting the prophets, which was laid up in store against them from the blood of righteous Abel, Mt 23:35. However it teaches us that the wickedness of the wicked is all laid up in store with God.

(1.) He observes it, Ps 90:8. He knows both what the vine is and what the grapes are, what is the temper of the mind and what are the actions of life.

(2.) He keeps a record of it both in his own omniscience and in the sinner's conscience; and this is sealed up among his treasures, which denotes both safety and secresy: these books cannot be lost, nor will they be opened till the great day. See Ho 13:12.

(3.) He often delays the punishment of sin for a great while; it is laid up in store, till the measure be full, and the day of divine patience has expired. See Job 21:28-30.

(4.) There is a day of reckoning coming, when all the treasures of guilt and wrath will be broken up, and the sin of sinners shall surely find them out.

[1.] The thing itself will certainly be done, for the Lord is a God to whom vengeance belongs, and therefore he will repay, Isa 59:18. This is quoted by the apostle to show the severity of God's wrath against those that revolt from the faith of Christ, Heb 10:30.

[2.] It will be done in due time, in the best time; nay, it will be done in a short time. The day of their calamity is at hand; and,

though it may seem to tarry, it lingers not, it slumbers not, but makes haste. In one hour, shall the judgment of Babylon come.

2. He will do it in compassion to his own people, who, though they had greatly provoked him, yet stood in relation to him, and their misery appealed to his mercy (De 32:36): The Lord shall judge his people,. that is, judge for them against their enemies, plead their cause, and break the yoke of oppression under which they had long groaned, repenting himself for his servants; not changing his mind, but changing his way, and fighting for them, as he had fought against them, when he sees that their power is gone. This plainly points at the deliverances God wrought for Israel by the judges out of the hands of those to whom he had sold them for their sins (see Jdg 2:11-18), and how his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Jdg 10:16), and this when they were reduced to the last extremity. God helped them when they could not help themselves; for there was none shut up or left; that is, none that dwelt either in cities or walled towns, in which they were shut up, nor any that dwelt in scattered houses in the country, in which they were left at a distance from neighbours.

Note, God's time to appear for the deliverance of his people is when things are at the worst with them. God tries his people's faith, and stirs up prayer, by letting things go to the worst, and then magnifies his own power, and fills the faces of his enemies with shame and the hearts of his people with so much the greater joy, by rescuing them out of extremity as brands out of the burning.

3. He will do it in contempt and to the reproach of idol-gods, De 32:37,38. Where are their gods? Two ways it may be understood:

(1.) That God would do that for his people which the idols they had served could not do for them. They had forsaken God, and

been very liberal in their sacrifices to idols, had brought to their altars the fat of their sacrifices and the wine of their drink-offerings, which they supposed their deities to feed upon and on which they feasted with them. "Now," says God, "will these gods you have made your court to, at so great an expense, help you in your distress, and so repay you for all your charges in their service? Go get you to the gods you have served, and let them deliver you, Jdg 10:14. This is intended to convince them of their folly in forsaking a God that could help them for gods that could not, and so to bring them to repentance and qualify them for deliverance. When the adulteress shall follow after her lovers and not overtake them, pray to her idols and receive no kindness from them, then she shall say, I will go and return to my first husband, Ho 2:7. See Isa 16:12,Jer 2:27,28. Or,

(2.) That God would do that against his enemies which the idols they had served could not save them from, Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar boldly challenged the God of Israel to deliver his worshippers (Isa 37:10,Da 3:15), and he did deliver them, to the confusion of their enemies. But the God of Israel challenged Bel and Nebo to deliver their worshippers, to rise up and help them, and to be their protection (Isa 47:12,13); but they were so far from helping them that they themselves, that is, their images, which was all that was of them, went into captivity, Isa 46:1,2. Note, Those who trust to any rock but God will find it sand in the day of their distress; it will fail them when they most need it.

26 I said, I would scatter them into corners,
I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:
27 were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy,
lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely,
and lest they should say, our hand *is* high,
and the Lord hath not done all this.
28 For they *are* a nation void of counsel,
neither *is there any* understanding in them.
29 O that they were wise, *that* they understood this,
that they would consider their latter end!

30 How should one chase a thousand,
and two put ten thousand to flight,
except their Rock had sold them,
and the Lord had shut them up?
31 For their rock *is* not as our Rock,
even our enemies themselves *being* judges.
32 For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom,
and of the fields of Gomorrah:
their grapes *are* grapes of gall,
their clusters *are* bitter:
33 their wine is the poison of dragons,
and the cruel venom of asps.
34 *Is* not this laid up in store with me,
and sealed up among my treasures?
35 To me *belongeth* vengeance, and recompense;
their foot shall slide in *due* time:
for the day of their calamity *is* at hand,
and the things that shall come upon them make haste.
36 For the Lord shall judge his people, and
repent himself for his servants, when he
seeth that *their* power is gone, and *there is*
none shut up, or left.
37 And he shall say, where are their gods,
their rock in whom they trusted,
38 which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,
and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let
them rise up and help you,
and be your protection.
39 See now that I, *even* I, *am* he, and
there is no god with me:
I kill, and I make alive; I
wound, and I heal:
neither *is there any* that can deliver out of my hand.

This conclusion of the song speaks three things:

I. Glory to God, De 32:39. "See now upon the whole matter, that I, even I, am he. Learn this from the destruction of

idolaters, and the inability of their idols to help them." The great God here demands the glory,

1. Of a self-existence: I, even I, am he. Thus Moses concludes with that name of God by which he was first made to know him (Ex 3:14), "I am that I am. I am he that I have been, that I will be, that I have promised to be, that I have threatened to be; all shall find me true to my word." The Targum of Uzzielides paraphrases it thus: When the Word of the Lord shall reveal himself to redeem his people, he shall say to all people, See that I now am what I am, and have been, and I am what I will be, which we know very well how to apply to him who said to John, I am he who is, and was, and is to come, Re 1:8. These words, I even I, am he, we meet with often in those chapters of Isaiah where God is encouraging his people to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, Isa 41:4,43:11,13,15,25,46:4.

2. Of a sole supremacy. "There is no god with me. None to help with me, none to cope with me." See Isa 43:10,11.

3. Of an absolute sovereignty, a universal agency: I kill, and I make alive; that is, all evil and all good come from his hand to providence; he forms both the light of life and the darkness of death, Isa 45:7,La 3:37,38. Or, He kills and wounds his enemies, but heals and makes alive his own people, kills and wounds with his judgments those that revolt from him and rebel against him; but, when they return and repent, he heals them, and makes them alive with his mercy and grace. Or it denotes his incontestable authority to dispose of all his creatures, and the beings he has given them, so as to serve his own purposes by them: Whom he will he slays, and whom he will he keeps alive, when his judgments are abroad. Or thus, Though he kill, yet he makes alive again: though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, La 3:32. Though he have torn, he will heal us, Ho 6:1,2 The Jerusalem Targum reads it, I kill those that are alive in this world, and make those alive in the other world that are dead. And some of the Jewish doctors

themselves have observed that death, and a life after it, that is, eternal life, is intimated in these words.

4. Of an irresistible power, which cannot be controlled: Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand those that I have marked for destruction. As no exception can be made against the sentence of God's justice, so no escape can be made from the executions of his power.

II. Terror to his enemies, De 32:40-42. Terror indeed to those that hate him, as all those do that serve other gods, that persist in wilful disobedience to the divine law, and that malign and persecute his faithful servants. These are those to whom God will render vengeance, those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them. In order to alarm such in time to repent and return to their allegiance, the wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against them.

1 The divine sentence is ratified with an oath (De 32:40): He lifts up his hand to heaven, the habitation of his holiness; this was an ancient and very significant sign used in swearing, Ge 14:22. And, since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself and his own life. Those are miserable without remedy that have the word and oath of God against them. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, that the sin of sinners shall be their ruin if they go on in it.

2. Preparation is made for the execution: The glittering sword is whet. See Ps 7:12. It is a sword bathed in heaven, Isa 34:5. While the sword is in whetting, space is given to the sinner to repent and make his peace, which, if he neglects, will render the wound the deeper. And, as the sword is whet, so the hand that is to wield it takes hold on judgment with a resolution to go through with it.

3. The execution itself will be very terrible: The sword shall devour flesh in abundance, and the arrows be made drunk with

blood, such vast quantities of it shall be shed, the blood of the slain in battle, and of the captives, to whom no quarter shall be given, but who shall be put under military execution. When he begins revenge he will make an end; for in this also his work is perfect. The critics are much perplexed with the last clause, From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. The learned bishop Patrick (that great master) thinks it may admit this reading, From the king to the slave of the enemies, Jer 50:35-37. When the sword of God's wrath is drawn it will make bloody work, blood to the horse-bridles, Re 14:20.

III. Comfort to his own people (De 32:43): Rejoice, O you nations, with his people. He concludes the song with words of joy; for in God's Israel there is a remnant whose end will be peace. God's people will rejoice at last, will rejoice everlastingly. Three things are here mentioned as the matter of joy:--

1 The enlarging of the church's bounds. The apostle applies the first words of this verse to the conversion of the Gentiles. Ro 15:10, Rejoice you Gentiles with his people. See what the grace of God does in the conversion of souls, it brings them to rejoice with the people of God; for true religion brings us acquainted with true joy, so great a mistake are those under that think it tends to make men melancholy.

2 The avenging of the church's controversies upon her adversaries. He will make inquisition for the blood of his servants, and it shall appear how precious it is to him; for those that spilt it shall have blood given them to drink.

3. The mercy God has in store for his church, and for all that belong to it: He will be merciful to his land, and to his people, that is, to all every where that fear and serve him. Whatever judgments are brought upon sinners, it shall go well with the people of God; in this let Jews and Gentiles rejoice together.

40 For I lift up my hand to heaven,
and say, I live for ever.

41 If I whet my glittering sword,
and mine hand take hold on judgment;
I will render vengeance to mine enemies,
and will reward them that hate me.
42 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword shall devour flesh;
and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives,
from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.
43 Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people:
for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and
will render vengeance to his adversaries,
and will be merciful unto his land, *and* to his people.
44 And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun.
45 And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:
46 and he said unto them, set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.
47 For it *is* not a vain thing for you; because it *is* your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong *your* days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

Here is,

I The solemn delivery of this song to the children of Israel, De 32:44,45. Moses spoke it to as many as could hear him, while Joshua, in another assembly, at the same time, delivered it to as many as his voice would reach. Thus coming to them from the mouth of both their governors, Moses who was laying down the government, and Joshua who was taking it up, they would see they were both in the same mind, and that, though they changed their commander, there was no change in the divine command; Joshua, as well as Moses, would be a witness against them if ever they forsook God.

II. An earnest charge to them to mind these and all the rest of the good words that Moses had said to them. How earnestly does he long after them all, how very desirous that the word of God might make deep and lasting impressions upon them,

how jealous over them with a godly jealousy, lest they should at any time let slip these great things!

1 The duties he charges upon them are,

(1.) Carefully to attend to these themselves: "Set your hearts both to the laws, and to the promises and threatenings, the blessings and curses, and now at last to this song. Let the mind be closely applied to the consideration of these things; be affected with them; be intent upon your duty, and cleave to it with full purpose of heart."

(2.) Faithfully to transmit these things to those that should come after them: "What interest you have in your children, or influence upon them, use it for this purpose; and command them (as your father Abraham did, Ge 18:19) to observe to do all the words of this law." Those that are good themselves cannot but desire that their children may be so likewise, and that posterity may keep up religion in their day and the entail of it may not be cut off.

2 The arguments he uses to persuade them to make religion their business and to persevere in it are,

(1.) The vast importance of the things themselves which he had charged upon them (De 32:47): "It is not a vain thing, because it is your life. It is not an indifferent thing, but of absolute necessity; it is not a trifle, but a matter of consequence, a matter of life and death; mind it, and you are made for ever; neglect it, and you are for ever undone." O that men were but fully persuaded of this, that religion is their life, even the life of their souls!

(2.) The vast advantage it would be of to them: Through this thing you shall prolong your days in Canaan, which is a typical promise of that eternal life which Christ has assured us those shall enter into that keep the commandments of God, Mt 19:17.

III. Orders given to Moses concerning his death. Now that this renowned witness for God had finished his testimony, he must go up to Mount Nebo and die; in the prophecy of Christ's two witnesses there is a plain allusion to Moses and Elias (Re 11:6), and perhaps their removal, being by martyrdom, is no less glorious than the removal either of Moses or Elias.

Orders were given to Moses that self-same day, De 32:48. Now that he had done his work, why should he desire to live a day longer? He had indeed formerly prayed that he might go over Jordan, but now he is entirely satisfied, and, as God had bidden him, saith no more of that matter. 1. God here reminds him of the sin he had been guilty of, for which he was excluded Canaan (De 32:51), that he might the more patiently bear the rebuke because he had sinned, and that now he might renew his sorrow for that unadvised word, for it is good for the best of men to die repenting of the infirmities they are conscious to themselves of. It was an omission that was thus displeasing to God; he did not sanctify God, as he ought to have done, before the children of Israel, he did not carry himself with a due decorum in executing the orders he had then received. 2. He reminds him of the death of his brother Aaron (De 32:50), to make his own the more familiar and the less formidable.

Note, It is a great encouragement to us, when we die, to think of our friends that have gone before us through that darksome valley, especially of Christ, our elder brother and great high priest. 3. He sends him up to a high hill, thence to take a view of the land of Canaan and then die, De 32:49,50.

The remembrance of his sin might make death terrible, but the sight God gave him of Canaan took off the terror of it, as it was a token of God's being reconciled to him, and a plain indication to him that though his sin shut him out of the earthly Canaan, yet it should not deprive him of that better country which in this world can only be seen, and that with an eye of faith. Note, Those may die with comfort and ease whenever

God calls for them (notwithstanding the sins they remember against themselves) who have a believing prospect and a well-grounded hope of eternal life beyond death.

Moses Permitted to See the Land of Canaan

48 And the Lord spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying,
49 Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, *unto* mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, that *is* over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession:
50 and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:
51 because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.
52 Yet thou shalt see the land before *thee;* but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy-33

Moses Blesses the Tribes of Israel

1 And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

The De 33:1 is the title of the chapter: it is a blessing. In the foregoing chapter he had thundered out the terrors of the Lord against Israel for their sin; it was a chapter like Ezekiel's roll, full of lamentation, and mourning, and woe. Now to soften that, and that he might not seem to part in anger, he here subjoins a blessing, and leaves his peace, which should descend and rest upon all those among them that were the sons of peace. Thus Christ's last work on earth was to bless his disciples (Lu 24:50), like Moses here, in token of parting as friends. Moses blessed them,

1. As a prophet--a man of God. Note, It is a very desirable thing to have an interest in the prayers of those that have an interest in heaven; it is a prophet's reward. In this blessing Moses not only expresses his good wishes to this people, but by the spirit of prophecy foretels things to come concerning them.

2. As a parent to Israel; for so good princes are to their subjects. Jacob upon his death-bed blessed his sons (Ge 49:1), in conformity to whose example Moses here blesses the tribes that were descended from them, to show that though they had been very provoking yet the entail of the blessing was not cut off. The doing of this immediately before his death would not only be the more likely to leave an impression upon them, but would be an indication of the great good-will of Moses to them, that he desired their happiness, though he must die and not share in it.

He begins his blessing with a lofty description of the glorious appearances of God to them in giving them the law, and the great advantage they had by it.

I. There was a visible and illustrious discovery of the divine majesty, enough to convince and for ever silence atheists and infidels, to awaken and affect those that were most stupid and careless, and to put to shame all secret inclinations to other gods, De 33:2.

1. His appearance was glorious: he shone forth like the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Even Seir and Paran, two mountains at some distance, were illuminated by the divine glory which appeared on Mount Sinai, and reflected some of the rays of it, so bright was the appearance, and so much taken notice of by the adjacent countries. To this the prophet alludes, to set forth the wonders of the divine providence, Hab 3:3, 4, Ps 18:7-9. The Jerusalem Targum has a strange gloss upon this, that, "when God came down to give the law, he offered it on Mount Seir to the Edomites, but they refused it, because

they found in it, Thou shalt not kill. Then he offered it on Mount Paran to the Ishmaelites, but they also refused it, because they found in it, Thou shalt not steal; and then he came to Mount Sinai and offered it to Israel, and they said, All that the Lord shall say we will do." I would not have transcribed so groundless a conceit but for the antiquity of it.

2. His retinue was glorious; he came with his holy myriads, as Enoch had long since foretold he should come in the last day to judge the world, Jude 1:14. These were the angels, those chariots of God in the midst of which the Lord was, on that holy place, Ps 68:17. They attended the divine majesty, and were employed as his ministers in the solemnities of the day. Hence the law is said to be given by the disposition of angels, Ac 7:53,Heb 2:2.

II. He gave them his law, which is,

1. Called a fiery law, because it was given them out of the midst of the fire (De 4:33), and because it works like fire; if it be received, it is melting, warming, purifying, and burns up the dross of corruption; if it be rejected, it hardens, sears, torments, and destroys. The Spirit descended in cloven tongues as of fire; for the gospel also is a fiery law.

2. It is said to go from his right hand, either because he wrote it on tables of stone, or to denote the power and energy of the law and the divine strength that goes along with it, that it may not return void. Or it came as a gift to them, and a precious gift it was, a right-hand blessing.

3. It was an instance of the special kindness he had for them: Yea, he loved the people (De 33:32), and therefore, though it was a fiery law, yet it is said to go for them (De 33:2), that is, in favour to them.

Note, The law of God written in the heart is a certain evidence of the love of God shed abroad there: we must reckon God's

law one of the gifts of his grace. Yea, he embraced the people, or laid them in his bosom; so the word signifies, which denotes not only the dearest love, but the most tender and careful protection. All his saints are in his hand. Some understand it particularly of his supporting them and preserving them alive at Mount Sinai, when the terror was so great that Moses himself quaked; they heard the voice of God and lived, De 4:33. Or it denotes his forming them into a people by his law; he moulded and fashioned them as a potter does the clay. Or they were in his hand to be covered and protected, used and disposed of, as the seven stars were in the hand of Christ, Re 1:16.

Note, God has all his saints in his hand; and, though there are ten thousands of his saints (De 33:2), yet his hand, with which he measures the waters, is large enough, and strong enough, to hold them all, and we may be sure that none can pluck them out of his hand, Joh 10:28.

III. He disposed them to receive the law which he gave them: They sat down at thy feet, as scholars at the feet of their master, in token of reverence, in attendance and humble submission to what is taught; so Israel sat at the foot of Mount Sinai, and promised to hear and do whatever God should say. They were struck to thy feet, so some read it; namely, by the terrors of Mount Sinai, which greatly humbled them for the present, Ex 20:19. Every one then stood ready to receive God's words, and did so again when the law was publicly read to them, as Joh 8:34. It is a great privilege when we have heard the words of God to have opportunity of hearing them again. Joh 17:26, I have declared thy name, and will declare it.

So Israel not only had received the law, but should still receive it by their prayers, and other lively oracles. The people are taught (De 33:4,5), in gratitude for the law of God, always to keep up an honourable remembrance both of the law itself and of Moses by whom it was given. Two of the Chaldee paraphrasts read it, The children of Israel said, Moses

commanded us a law. And the Jews say that as soon as a child was able to speak his father was obliged to teach him these words: Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.

1. They are taught to speak with great respect of the law, and to call it the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. They looked upon it,

(1.) As peculiar to them, and that by which they were distinguished from other nations, who neither had the knowledge of it (Ps 147:20), nor, if they had, were under those obligations to observe it that Israel were under: and therefore (says bishop Patrick), "when the Jews conquered any country, they did not force any to embrace the law of Moses, but only to submit to the seven precepts of Noah."

(2.) As entailed upon them; for so inheritances are to be transmitted to their posterity. And,

(3.) As their wealth and true treasure. Those that enjoy the word of God and the means of grace have reason to say, We have a goodly heritage. He is indeed a rich man in whom the word of Christ dwells richly. Perhaps the law is called their inheritance because it was given them with their inheritance, and we so annexed to it that the forsaking of the law would be a forfeiture of the inheritance. See Ps 119:111.

2. They are taught to speak with great respect of Moses; and they were the more obliged to keep up his name because he had not provided for the keeping of it up in his family; his posterity were never called the sons of Moses, as the priests were the sons of Aaron.

(1.) They must own Moses a great benefactor to their nation, in that he commanded them the law; for, though it came from the hand of God, it went through the hand of Moses.

(2.) He was king in Jeshurun. Having commanded them the law, as long as he lived he took care to see it observed and put in execution; and they were very happy in having such a king, who ruled them, and went in and out before them at all times, but did in a special manner look great when the heads of the people were gathered together in parliament, as it were, and Moses was president among them. Some understand this of God himself; he did then declare himself their King when he gave them the law, and he continued so long as they were Jeshurun, an upright people, and till they rejected him, 1Sa 12:12.

But it seems rather to be understood of Moses. A good government is a great blessing to any people, and what they have reason to be very thankful for; and that constitution is very happy which as Israel's, which as ours, divides the power between the king in Jeshurun and the heads of the tribes, when they are gathered together.

2 And he said,
The Lord came from Sinai,
and rose up from Seir unto them;
he shined forth from mount Paran,
and he came with ten thousands of saints:
from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them.
3 Yea, he loved the people;
all his saints *are* in thy hand:
and they sat down at thy feet;
every one shall receive of thy words.
4 Moses commanded us a law,
even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.
5 And he was king in Jeshurun,
when the heads of the people *and* the tribes of Israel were gathered together.
6 Let Reuben live, and not die;
and let *not* his men be few.

Here is,

I The blessing of Reuben. Though Reuben had lost the honour of his birthright, yet Moses begins with him; for we should not insult over those that are disgraced, nor desire to perpetuate marks of infamy upon any, though ever so justly fastened at first, De 33:6. Moses desires and foretels,

1 The preserving of this tribe. Though a frontier tribe on the other side Jordan, yet, "Let it live, and not be either ruined by its neighbours or lost among them." And perhaps he refers to those chosen men of that tribe who, having had their lot assigned them already, left their families in it, and were now ready to go over armed before their brethren, Nu 32:27. "Let them be protected in this noble expedition, and have their heads covered in the day of battle."

2. Let it be a numerous tribe; though their other honours be lost, so that they shall not excel, yet let them multiply." Let Reuben live and not die, though his men be few; so bishop Patrick, thinks it may be rendered. "Though he must not expect to flourish (Ge 49:4), yet let him not perish." All the Chaldee paraphrasts refer this to the other world: Let Reuben live in life eternal, and not die the second death, so Onkelos. Let Reuben live in this world, and not die that death which the wicked die in the world to come, so Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum.

II The blessing of Judah, which is put before Levi because our Loud sprang out of Judah, and (as Dr. Lightfoot says) because of the dignity of the kingdom above the priesthood. The blessing (De 33:7) may refer either,

1. To the whole tribe in general. Moses prays for, and prophesies, the great prosperity of that tribe. That God would hear his prayers (see an instance, 2Ch 13:14,15), settle him in his lot, prosper him in all his affairs, and give him victory over his enemies. It is taken for granted that the tribe of Judah would be both a praying tribe and an active tribe. "Lord," says Moses, "hear his prayers, and give success to all his

undertakings: let his hands be sufficient for him both in husbandry and in war." The voice of prayer should always be attended with the hand of endeavour, and then we may expect prosperity. Or,

2. It may refer in particular to David, as a type of Christ, that God would hear his prayers, Ps 20:1 (and Christ was heard always, Joh 11:42), that he would give him victory over his enemies, and success in his great undertakings. See Ps 89:20-28, &c. And that prayer that God would bring him to his people seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy concerning Shiloh, That to him should the gathering of the people be, Ge 49:10.

The tribe of Simeon is omitted in the blessing, because Jacob had left it under a brand, and it had never done any thing, as Levi had done, to retrieve its honour. It was lessened in the wilderness more than any other of the tribes; and Zimri, who was so notoriously guilty in the matter of Peor but the other day, was of that tribe. Or, because the lot of Simeon was an appendage to that of Judah, that tribe is included in the blessing of Judah. Some copies of the LXX. join Simeon with Reuben: Let Reuben live and not die; and let Simeon be many in number.

7 And this is *the blessing* of Judah: and he said,
Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah,
and bring him unto his people:
let his hands be sufficient for him;
and be thou a help *to him* from his enemies.
8 And of Levi he said,
Let thy Thummim and thy Urim *be* with thy holy one,
whom thou didst prove at Massah,
and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

In blessing the tribe of Levi, Moses expresses himself more at large, not so much because it was his own tribe (for he takes no notice of his relation to it) as because it was God's tribe. The blessing of Levi has reference.

I. To the high priest, here called God's holy one (De 33:8), because his office was holy, in token of which, Holiness to the Lord was written upon his forehead. 1. He seems to acknowledge that God might justly have displaced Aaron and his seed, for his sin at Meribah, (Ex 17:7), which might be very remarkable, and which God might have an eye to in conferring the priesthood upon him, though no mention is made of it there.

All the Chaldee paraphrasts agree that it was a trial in which he was found perfect and faithful, and stood in the trial; therefore not that, Nu 20:2. He prays that the office of the high priest might ever remain: Let thy thummim and thy urim be with him. It was given him for some eminent piece of service, as appears, Mal 2:5. "Lord, let it never be taken from him." Notwithstanding this blessing, the urim and thummim were lost in the captivity, and never restored under the second temple. But this prayer has its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, God's Holy One, and our great high priest, of whom Aaron was a type: with him who had lain in the Father's bosom from eternity the urim and thummim shall remain; for he is the wonderful and everlasting counsellor.

Some translate the thummim and urim appellatively, the rather because the usual order is here inverted, and here only. Thummim signifies integrity, and Urim illumination: Let these be with thy holy one, that is, "Lord, let the high priest ever be both an upright man and an understanding man." A good prayer to be put up for the ministers of the gospel, that they may have clear heads and honest hearts; light and sincerity make a complete minister.

II. To the inferior priests and Levites, De 33:9-11.

1. He commends the zeal of this tribe for God when they sided with Moses (and so with God) against the worshippers of the golden calf (Ex 32:26-28, &c.), and, being employed in cutting off the ring-leaders in that wickedness, they did it

impartially: the best friends they had in the world, though as dear to them as their next relations, they did not spare if they were idolaters.

Note, Our regard to God and to his glory ought always to prevail above our regard to any creature whatsoever. And those who not only keep themselves pure from the common iniquities of the times and places in which they live, but, as they are capable, bear testimony against them, and stand up for God against the evil-doers, shall have special marks of honour put upon them. Perhaps Moses may have an eye to the sons of Korah, who refused to join with their father in his gain-saying, Nu 26:11. Also to Phinehas, who executed judgment, and stayed the plague. And indeed the office of the priests and Levites, which engaged their constant attendance, at least in their turns, at God's altar, laid them under a necessity of being frequently absent from their families, which they could not take such care of, nor make such provision for, as other Israelites might. This was the constant self-denial they submitted to, that they might observe God's word, and keep the covenant of priesthood.

Note, Those that are called to minister in holy things must sit loose to the relations and interests that are dearest to them in this world, and prefer the gratifying of the best friend they have, Ac 21:13,Ac 20:24. Our Lord Jesus knew not his mother and his brethren when they would have taken him off from his work, Mt 12:48.

2. He confirms the commission granted to this tribe to minister in holy things, which was the recompence of their zeal and fidelity, De 33:10.

(1.) They were to deal for God with the people: "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments and Israel thy laws, both as preachers in thy religious assemblies, reading and expounding the law (Ne 8:7,8), and as judges, determining doubtful and difficult cases that were brought before them," 2Ch 17:8,9.

The priests' lips kept this knowledge for the use of the people, who were to ask the law at their mouth, Mal 2:7. Even Haggai, a prophet, consulted the priests in a case of conscience, Hag 2:11-13, &c. Note, Preaching is necessary, not only for the first planting of churches, but for the preserving and edifying of churches when they are planted. See Eze 44:23,24.

(2.) They were to deal for the people with God, in burning incense to the praise and glory of God, and offering sacrifices to make atonement for sin and to obtain the divine favour. This was the work of the priests, but the Levites attended and assisted in it. Those that would have benefit by their incense and offerings must diligently and faithfully observe their instructions.

3. He prays for them, De 33:11.

(1.) That God would prosper them in their estates, and make that which was allotted them for their maintenance comfortable to them. Bless, Lord, his substance. The provision made for them was very plentiful, and came to them easily, and yet they could have no joy of it unless God blessed it to them; and, since God himself was their portion, a particular blessing might be expected to attend this portion. Bless, Lord, his virtue; so some read it. "Lord, increase thy graces in them, and make them more and more fit for their work."

(2.) That he would accept them in their services: "Accept the work of his hands, both for himself and for the people for whom he ministers." Acceptance with God is that which we should all aim at, and be ambitious of, in all our devotions, whether men accept us or no (2Co 5:9), and it is the most valuable blessing we can desire either for ourselves or others.

(3.) That he would take his part against all his enemies: Smite through the loins of those that rise against him. He supposes that God's ministers would have many enemies: some would hate their persons for their faithfulness, and would endeavour

to do them a mischief; others would envy them their maintenance, and endeavour sacrilegiously to deprive them of it; others would oppose them in the execution of their office and not submit to the sentence of the priests; and some would aim to overthrow the office itself.

Now he prays that God would blast all such attempts, and return the mischief upon the heads of the authors. This prayer is a prophecy that God will certainly reckon with those that are enemies to his ministers, and will keep up a ministry in his church to the end of time, in spite of all the designs of the gates of hell against it. Saul rose up against the Lord's priests (1Sa 22:18), and this filled the measure of his sin.

9 who said unto his father and to his mother, I
have not seen him;
neither did he acknowledge his brethren,
nor knew his own children:
for they have observed thy word,
and kept thy covenant.
10 They shall teach Jacob thy judgments,
and Israel thy law:
they shall put incense before thee,
and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.
11 Bless, Lord, his substance,
and accept the work of his hands:
smite through the loins of them that rise against him,
and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.
12 *And* of Benjamin he said,
The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him;
and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and
he shall dwell between his shoulders.

Here is,

I The blessing of Benjamin, De 33:12. Benjamin is put next to Levi, because the temple, where the priests' work lay, was just upon the edge of the lot of this tribe; and it is put before Joseph because of the dignity of Jerusalem (part of which was in this

tribe) above Samaria, which was in the tribe of Ephraim, and because Benjamin adhered to the house of David, and to the temple of the Lord, when the rest of the tribes deserted both with Jeroboam.

1. Benjamin is here called the beloved of the Lord, and the father of this tribe was Jacob's beloved son, the son of his right hand. Note, Those are blessed indeed that are beloved of the Lord. Saul the first king, and Paul the great apostle, were both of this tribe.

2. He is here assured of the divine protection: he shall dwell safely. Note, Those are safe whom God loves, Ps 91:1.

3. It is here intimated that the temple in which God would dwell should be built in the borders of this tribe. Jerusalem the holy city was in the lot of this tribe (Jos 18:28); and though Zion, the city of David, is supposed to belong to Judah, yet Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, was in Benjamin's lot. God is therefore said to dwell between his shoulders, because the temple stood on that mount, as the head of a man upon his shoulders. And by this means Benjamin was covered all the day long under the protection of the sanctuary (Ps 125:2), which is often spoken of as a place of refuge, Ps 27:4, 5, Ne 6:10. Benjamin, dwelling by the temple of God, dwelt in safety by him. Note, It is a happy thing to be in the neighbourhood of the temple. This situation of Benjamin, it is likely, was the only thing that kept that tribe in adherence with Judah to the divine institutions, when the other ten tribes apostatized. Those have corrupt and wicked hearts indeed who, the nearer they are to the church, are so much the further from God.

II The blessing of Joseph, including both Manasseh and Ephraim. In Jacob's blessing (Ge 49:1-27) that of Joseph is the largest, and so it is here; and thence Moses here borrows the title he gives to Joseph (De 33:16), that he was separated from

his brethren, or, as it might be read, a Nazarite among them, both in regard of his piety, wherein it appears, by many instances, he excelled them all, and of his dignity in Egypt, where he was both their ruler and benefactor. His brethren separated him from them by making him a slave, but God distinguished him from them by making him a prince. Now the blessings here prayed for, and prophesied of, for this tribe, are great plenty and great power.

1. Great plenty, De 33:13-16. In general: Blessed of the Lord be his land. Those were very fruitful countries that fell into the lot of Ephraim and Manasseh, yet Moses prays they might be watered with the blessing of God, which makes rich, and on which all fruitfulness depends. Now,

(1.) He enumerates many particulars which he prays may contribute to the wealth and abundance of those two tribes, looking up to the Creator for the benefit and serviceableness of all the inferior creatures, for they are all that to us which he makes them to be. He prays,

[1.] For seasonable rains and dews, the precious things of heaven; and so precious they are, though but pure water, that without them the fruits of the earth would all fail and be cut off.

[2.] For plentiful springs, which help to make the earth fruitful, called here the deep that coucheth beneath; both are the rivers of God (Ps 65:9), and he made particularly the fountains of waters, Re 14:7.

[3.] For the benign influences of the heavenly bodies (De 33:14), for the precious fruits (the word signifies that which is most excellent, and the best in its kind) put forth by the quickening heat of the sun, and the cooling moisture of the moon. "Let them have the yearly fruits in their several months, according to the course of nature, in one month olives, in another dates," &c. So some understand it.

[4.] For the fruitfulness even of their hills and mountains, which in other countries used to be barren (De 33:15): Let them have the chief things of the ancient mountains; and, if the mountains be fruitful, the fruits on them will be first and best ripened. They are called ancient mountains, not because prior in time to other mountains, but because, like the first-born, they were superior in worth and excellency; and lasting hills, not only because as other mountains they were immovable (Hab 3:6), but because the fruitfulness of them should continue.

[5.] For the productions of the lower grounds (De 33:16): For the precious things of the earth. Though the earth itself seems a useless worthless lump of matter, yet there are precious things produced out of it, for the support and comfort of human life. Job 28:5. Out of it cometh bread, because out of it came our bodies, and to it they must return. But what are the precious things of the earth to a soul that came from God and must return to him? Or what is its fulness to the fulness that is in Christ, whence we receive grace for grace? Some make these precious things here prayed for to be figures of spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ, the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit.

(2.) He crowns all with the good-will, or favourable acceptance, of him that dwelt in the bush (De 33:16), that is, of God, that God who appeared to Moses in the bush that burned and was not consumed (Ex 3:2), to give him his commission for the bringing of Israel out of Egypt. Though God's glory appeared there but for a while, yet it is said to dwell there, because it continued as long as there was occasion for it: the good-will of the shechinah in the bush; so it might be read, for shechinah signifies that which dwelleth; and, though it was but a little while a dweller in the bush, yet it continued to dwell with the people of Israel. My dweller in the bush; so it should be rendered; that was an appearance of the

divine Majesty to Moses only, in token of the particular interest he had in God, which he desires to improve for the good of this tribe.

Many a time God has appeared to Moses, but now that he is just dying he seems to have the most pleasing remembrance of that which was the first time, when his acquaintance with the visions of the Almighty first began, and his correspondence with heaven was first settled: that was a time of love never to be forgotten. It was at the bush that God declared himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and so confirmed the promise made to the fathers, that promise which reached as far as the resurrection of the body and eternal life, as appears by our Saviour's argument from it, Lu 20:37. So that, when he prays for the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, he has an eye to the covenant then and there renewed, on which all our hopes of God's favour must be bottomed. Now he concludes this large blessing with a prayer for the favour or good-will of God,

[1.] Because that is the fountain and spring-head of all these blessings; they are gifts of God's good-will; they are so to his own people, whatever they are to others. Indeed when Ephraim (a descendant from Joseph) slid back from God, as a backsliding heifer, those fruits of his country were so far from being the gifts of God's good-will that they were intended but to fatten him for the slaughter, as a lamb in a large place, Ho 4:16,17.

[2.] Because that is the comfort and sweetness of all these blessings; then we have joy of them when we taste God's good-will in them.

[3.] Because that is better than all these, infinitely better; for if we have but the favour and good-will of God we are happy, and may be easy in the want of all these things, and may rejoice in the God of our salvation though the fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine, Hab 3:17,18.

2. Great power Joseph is here blessed with, De 33:17. Here are three instances of his power foretold:

(1.) His authority among his brethren: His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, or young bull, which is a stately creature, and therefore was formerly used as an emblem of royal majesty. Joshua, who was to succeed Moses, was of the tribe of Ephraim the son of Joseph, and his glory was indeed illustrious, and he was an honour to his tribe. In Ephraim was the royal city of the ten tribes afterwards. And of Manasseh were Gideon, Jephthah, and Jair, who were all ornaments and blessings to their country. Some think he is compared to the firstling of the bullock because the birthright which Reuben lost devolved upon Joseph (1Ch 5:1,2), and to the firstling of his bullock, because Bashan, which was in the lot of Manasseh, was famous for bulls and cows, Ps 22:12.Am 4:1.

(2.) His force against his enemies and victory over them: His horns are like the horn of a unicorn, that is, "The forces he shall bring into the field shall be very strong and formidable, and with them he shall push the people," that is, "He shall overcome all that stand in his way." It appears from the Ephraimites' contests, both with Gideon (Jdg 8:1) and with Jephthah (Jdg 12:1), that they were a warlike tribe and fierce. Yet we find the children of Ephraim, when they had forsaken the covenant of God, though they were armed, turning back in the day of battle (Ps 78:9,10); for, though here pronounced strong and bold as unicorns, when God had departed from them they became as weak as other men.

(3.) The numbers of his people, in which Ephraim, though the younger house, exceeded, Jacob having, in the foresight of the same thing, crossed hands, Ge 48:19. They are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh. Jonathan's Targum applies it to the ten thousands of Canaanites conquered by Joshua, who was of the tribe of Manasseh. And the gloss of the Jerusalem Targum upon the

former part of De 33:17 is observable, that "as the firstlings of the bullock were never to be worked, nor could the unicorn ever be tamed, so Joseph should continue free; and they would have continued free if they had not by sin sold themselves."

13 And of Joseph he said,
Blessed of the Lord *be* his land,
for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and
for the deep that coucheth beneath,
14 and for the precious fruits *brought forth* by the sun, and
for the precious things put forth by the moon,
15 and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and
for the precious things of the lasting hills,
16 and for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and
for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush:
let *the blessing* come upon the head of Joseph,
and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.
17 His glory is *like* the firstling of his bullock, and his
horns are *like* the horns of unicorns:
with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth:
and they *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim, and
they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.
18 And of Zebulun he said,
Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out;
and, Issachar, in thy tents.

Here we have,

I The blessings of Zebulun and Issachar put together, for they were both the sons of Jacob by Leah, and by their lot in Canaan they were neighbours; it is foretold,

1. That they should both have a comfortable settlement and employment, De 33:18. Zebulun must rejoice, for he shall have cause to rejoice; and Moses prays that he may have cause in his going out, either to war (for Zebulun jeoparded their lives in the high places of the field, Jdg 5:18), or rather to sea,

for Zebulun was a haven of ships, Ge 49:13. And Issachar must rejoice in his tents, that is, in his business at home, his husbandry, to which the men of that tribe generally confined themselves, because they saw that rest was good, and when the sea was rough the land was pleasant, Ge 49:14,15. Observe here,

(1.) That the providence of God, as it variously appoints the bounds of men's habitation, some in the city and some in the country, some in the seaports and some in the inland towns, so it wisely disposes men's inclinations to different employments for the good of the public, as each member of the body is situated and qualified for the service of the whole. The genius of some men leads them to a book, of others to the sea, of others to the sword; some are inclined to rural affairs, others to trade, and some have a turn for mechanics; and it is well it is so. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? 1Co 12:17. It was for the common good of Israel that the men of Zebulun were merchants and that the men of Issachar were husbandmen.

(2.) That whatever our place and business are it is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to them, and it is a great happiness to be well pleased with them. Let Zebulun rejoice in his going out; let him thank God for the gains and make the best of the losses and inconveniences of his merchandise, and not despise the meanness, nor envy the quietness, of Issachar's tents. Let Issachar rejoice in his tents, let him be well pleased with the retirements and content with the small profits of his country seats, and not grudge that he has not Zebulun's pleasure of travelling and profit of trading. Every business has both its conveniences and inconveniences, and therefore whatever Providence has made our business we ought to bring our minds to it; and it is really a great happiness, whatever our lot is, to be easy with it. This is the gift of God, Ec 5:19.

2. That they should both be serviceable in their places to the honour of God and the interests of religion in the nation (De 33:19): They shall call the people to the mountain, that is, to the temple, which Moses foresaw should be built upon a mountain. I see not why this should be confined (as it is by most interpreters) to Zebulun; if both Zebulun and Issachar received the comforts of their respective employments, why may we not suppose that they both took care to give God the glory of them? Two things they shall do for God:--

(1.) They shall invite others to his service. Call the people to the mountain.

[1.] Zebulun shall improve his acquaintance and commerce with the neighbouring nations, to whom he goes out, for this noble purpose, to propagate religion among them, and to invite them into the service of the God of Israel. Note, Men of great business, or large conversation, should wisely and zealously endeavour to recommend the practice of serious godliness to those with whom they converse and among whom their business lies. Such are blessed, for they are blessings. It were well if the enlargement of trade with foreign countries might be made to contribute to the spreading of the gospel. This prophecy concerning Zebulun perhaps looks as far as the preaching of Christ and his apostles, which began in the land of Zebulun (Mt 4:14,15); then they called the people to the mountain, that is, to the kingdom of the Messiah, which is called the mountain of the Lord's house, Isa 2:2.

[2.] Issachar that tarries at home, and dwells in tents, shall call upon his neighbours to go up to the sanctuary at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, either because they should be more zealous and forward than their neighbours (and it has been often observed that though those that with Zebulun dwell in the haven of ships, which are places of concourse, have commonly more of the light of religion, those that with Issachar dwell in tents in the country have more of the life and

heat of it), and may therefore with their zeal provoke those to a holy emulation that have more knowledge (Ps 122:1); or because they were more observant of the times appointed for their feasts than others were. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts reads the foregoing verse, Rejoice, Issachar, in the tents of thy schools, supposing they would many of them be scholars, and would use their learning for that purpose, according to the revolutions of the year, to give notice of the times of the feasts; for almanacs were not then so common as they are now.

And Onkelos more particularly, Rejoice, Issachar, when thou goest to compute the times of the solemnities at Jerusalem; for then the tribes of Israel shall be gathered to the mountain of the house of the sanctuary. So he reads the beginning of this verse; and many think this is the meaning of that character of the men of Issachar in David's time, That they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, 1Ch 12:32. And the character which follows (De 33:33) of the men of Zebulun, that they were such as went forth to battle, expert in war, perhaps may explain the blessing of that tribe here. Note, Those that have not opportunity as Zebulun had of bringing into the church those that are without may yet be very serviceable to its interest by helping to quicken, encourage, and build up, those that are within. And it is good work to call people to God's ordinances, to put those in remembrance that are forgetful, and to stir up those that are slothful, who will follow, but care not to lead.

(2.) They shall not only invite others to the service of God, but they shall abound in it themselves: There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness. They shall not send others to the temple and stay at home themselves, under pretence that they cannot leave their business; but, when they stir up others to go speedily to pray before the Lord, they shall say, We will go also, as it is Zec 8:12. Note, The good we exhort others to we should ourselves be examples of. And, when they come to the temple, they shall not appear before the Lord empty, but shall

bring for the honour and service of God according as he has prospered them, 1Co 16:2.

[1.] It is here foretold that both these tribes should grow rich. Zebulun that goes abroad shall suck of the abundance of the seas, which are full breasts to the merchants, while Issachar, that tarries at home, shall enrich himself with treasures hid in the sands, either the fruits of the earth or the underground treasures of metals and minerals, or (because the word for sand here signifies properly the sand of the sea) the rich things thrown up by the sea, for the lot of Issachar reached to the sea-side. Perhaps their success in calling the people to the mount is intimated by their sucking of the abundance of the seas, for we have a like phrase used for the bringing in of the nations to the church (Isa 60:5), The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and (De 33:16), Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles. It is foretold,

[2.] That these tribes, being thus enriched, should consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth, Mic 4:13. The merchandise of Zebulun, and the hire of Issachar, shall be holiness to the Lord (Isa 23:18), for thereof they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness, that is, sacrifices according to the law. Note, We must serve and honour God with what we have; and where he sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly. Those that suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand, ought to offer sacrifices of righteousness proportionable.

II The blessing of the tribe of Gad comes next, De 33:20,21. This was one of the tribes that was already seated on that side Jordan where Moses now was. Now,

1. He foretels what this tribe would be, De 33:20.

(1.) That it would be enlarged, as at present it had a spacious allotment; and he gives God the glory both of its present and of its future extent: Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad. We find how this tribe was enlarged by their success in a war which it seems they carried on very religiously against the Hagarites, 1Ch 5:19,20,22. Note, God is to have the glory of all our enlargements.

(2.) That it would be a valiant and victorious tribe, would, if let alone, dwell secure and fearless as a lion; but, if provoked, would, like a lion, tear the arm with the crown of the head; that is, would pull in pieces all that stood in his way, both the arm (that is, the strength) and the crown of the head (that is, the policy and authority) of his enemies. In David's time there were Gadites whose faces were as the faces of lions, 1Ch 12:8. Some reckon Jehu to be of this tribe, because the first mention we have of him is at Ramoth Gilead, which belonged to Gad, and they think this may refer to his valiant acts.

2. He commends this tribe for what they had done and were now doing, De 33:21.

(1.) They had done very wisely for themselves, when they chose their lot with the first, in a country already conquered: He provided the first part for himself; though he had a concern for his brethren, yet his charity began at home, and he was willing to see himself first served, first settled. The Gadites were the first and most active movers for an allotment on that side Jordan, and therefore are still mentioned before the Reubenites in the history of that affair, Nu 32:2. And thus, while the other tribes had their portion assigned them by Joshua the conqueror, Gad and his companions had theirs from Moses the law-giver, and in it they were seated by law; or (as the word is) covered or protected by a special providence which watched over those that were left behind, while the men of war went forward with their brethren. Note, Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself (when

thou providest first for thyself, as Gad did), Ps 49:18. And God will praise thee when thou doest well for thy soul, which is indeed thyself, and providest the first part for that in a portion from the law-giver.

(2.) They were now doing honestly and bravely for their brethren; for they came with the heads of the people, before whom they went armed over Jordan, to execute the justice of the Lord upon the Canaanites, under the conduct of Joshua, to whom we afterwards find they solemnly vowed obedience, Jos 1:12,16. This was what they undertook to do when they had their lot assigned them, Nu 32:27. This they did, Jos 4:12. And, when the wars of Canaan were ended, Joshua dismissed them with a blessing, Jos 22:7. Note, It is a blessed and honourable thing to be helpful to our brethren in their affairs, and particularly to assist in executing the justice of the Lord by suppressing that which is provoking to him: it was this that was counted to Phinehas for righteousness.

19 They shall call the people unto the mountain; there
they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they
shall suck *of* the abundance of the seas, and *of*
treasures hid in the sand.
20 And of Gad he said,
Blessed *be* he that enlargeth Gad:
he dwelleth as a lion,
and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.
21 And he provided the first part for himself,
because there, *in* a portion of the lawgiver, *was he* seated;
and he came with the heads of the people, he
executed the justice of the Lord,
and his judgments with Israel.
22 And of Dan he said, Dan is
a lion's whelp:
he shall leap from Bashan.

Here is,

I The blessing of Dan, De 33:22. Jacob in his blessing had compared him to a serpent for subtlety; Moses compares him

to a lion for courage and resolution: and what could stand before those that had the head of a serpent and the heart of a lion? He is compared to the lions that leaped from Bashan, a mountain noted for fierce lions, whence they came down to leap upon their prey in the plains. This may refer either,

1. To the particular victories obtained by Samson (who was of this tribe) over the Philistines. The Spirit of the Lord began to move him in the camp of Dan when he was very young, as a lion's whelp, so that in his attacks upon the Philistines he surprised them, and overpowered them by main strength, as a lion does his prey; and one of his first exploits was the rending of a lion. Or,

2. To a more general achievement of that tribe, when a party of them, upon information brought them of the security of Laish, which lay in the furthest part of the land of Canaan from them, surprised it, and soon made themselves masters of it. See Jdg 18:27. And, the mountains of Bashan lying not far from that city, probably thence they made their descent upon it; and therefore are here said to leap from Bashan.

II The blessing of Naphtali, De 33:23. He looks upon this tribe with wonder, and applauds it: "O Naphtali, thou art happy, thou shalt be so, mayest thou be ever so!" Three things make up the happiness of this tribe:--

1. Be thou satisfied with favour. Some understand it of the favour of men, their good-will and good word. Jacob had described this tribe to be, generally, courteous obliging people, giving goodly words, as the loving hind, Ge 49:21. Now what should they get by being so? Moses here tells them they should have an interest in the affections of their neighbours, and be satisfied with favour. Those that are loving shall be beloved.

But others understand it of the favour of God, and with good reason; for that only is the favour that is satisfying to the soul

and puts true gladness into the heart. Those are happy indeed that have the favour of God; and those shall have it that place their satisfaction in it, and reckon that, in having that, they have enough and desire no more.

2. Be thou full with the blessing of the Lord, that is, not only with those good things that are the fruits of the blessing (corn, and wine, and oil), but with the blessing itself; that is, the grace of God, according to his promise and covenant. Those who have that blessing may well reckon themselves full: they need nothing else to make them happy. "The portion of the tribe of Naphtali" (the Jews say) "was so fruitful, and the productions so forward, though it lay north, that those of that tribe were generally the first that brought their first-fruits to the temple; and so they had first the blessing from the priest, which was the blessing of the Lord." Capernaum, in which Christ chiefly resided, lay in this tribe.

3. Be thou in possession of the sea and the south; so it may be read, that is, of that sea which shall lie south of thy lot, that was the sea of Galilee, which we so often read of in the gospels, directly north of which the lot of this tribe lay, and which was of great advantage to this tribe, witness the wealth of Capernaum and Bethsaida, which lay within this tribe, and upon the shore of that sea. See how Moses was guided by a spirit of prophesy in these blessings; for before the lot was cast into the lap he foresaw and foretold how the disposal of it would be.

III. The blessing of Asher, De 33:24,25. Four things he prays for and prophecies concerning this tribe, which carries blessedness in its name; for Leah called the father of it Asher, saying Happy am I, Ge 30:13.

1 The increase of their numbers. They were now a numerous tribe, Nu 26:47. "Let it be more so: Let Asher be blessed with children." Note, Children, especially children of the covenant, are blessings, not burdens.

2. Their interest in their neighbours: Let him be acceptable to his brethren. Note, It is a very desirable thing to have the love and good-will of those we live among: it is what we should pray to God for, who has all hearts in his hand; and what we should endeavour to gain by meekness and humility, and a readiness, as we have ability and opportunity, to do good to all men.

3. The richness of their land.

(1.) Above ground: Let him dip his foot in oil, that is, "Let him have such plenty of it in his lot that he may not only anoint his head with it, but, if he please, wash his feet in it," which was not commonly done; yet we find our blessed Saviour so acceptable to his brethren that his feet were anointed with the most precious ointment, Lu 7:46.

(2.) Under ground: Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, that is, "Thou shalt have great plenty of these metals (mines of them) in thy own ground, which by an uncommon blessing shall have both its surface and its bowels rich:" or, if they had them not as the productions of their own country, they should have them imported from abroad; for the lot of this tribe lay on the sea-coast. The Chaldee paraphrasts understand this figuratively: "Thou shalt be strong and bright, as iron and brass."

4. The continuance of their strength and vigour: As thy days, so shall thy strength be. Many paraphrase it thus, "The strength of thy old age shall be like that of thy youth; thou shalt not feel a decay, nor be the worse for the wearing, but shalt renew thy youth; as if not thy shoes only, but thy bones, were iron and brass." The day is often in scripture put for the events of the day; and, taking it so here, it is a promise that God would graciously support them under their trials and troubles, whatever they were.

And so it is a promise sure to all the spiritual seed of Abraham, that God will wisely proportion their graces and comforts to the services and sufferings he calls them out to. Have they work appointed them? They shall have strength to do it. Have they burdens appointed them? They shall have strength to bear them; and never be tempted above that they are able. Faithful is he that has thus promised, and hath caused us to hope in this promise.

23 And of Naphtali he said,
O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,
and full with the blessing of the Lord,
possess thou the west and the south.
24 And of Asher he said,
Let Asher *be* blessed with children;
let him be acceptable to his brethren, and
let him dip his foot in oil.
25 Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass;
and as thy days, *so shall* thy strength *be.*
26 *There is* none like unto the God of Jeshurun,
who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and
in his excellency on the sky.

These are the last words of all that ever Moses, that great writer, that great dictator, either wrote himself or had written from his dictation; they are therefore very remarkable, and no doubt we shall find them very improving. Moses, the man of God (who had as much reason as ever any mere man had to know both), with his last breath magnifies both the God of Israel and the Israel of God. They are both incomparable in his eye; and we are sure that in this his judgment of both his eye did not wax dim.

I. No God like the God of Israel. None of the gods of the nations were capable of doing that for their worshippers which Jehovah did for his: There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, De 33:26. Note, When we are expecting that God should bless us in doing well for us we must bless him by speaking well of him: and one of the most solemn ways of

praising God is by acknowledging that there is none like him. Now,

1. This was the honour of Israel. Every nation boasted of its god; but none had such a God to boast of as Israel had.

2. It was their happiness that they were taken into covenant with such a God. Two things he takes notice of as proofs of the incontestable pre-eminence of the God of Jeshurun above all other gods:

(1.) His sovereign power and authority: He rides upon the heavens, and with the greatest state and magnificence on the skies. Riding on the heavens denotes his greatness and glory, in which he manifests himself to the upper world, and the use he makes of the influences of heaven, and the productions of the clouds, in bringing to pass his own counsels in this lower world: he manages and directs them as a man does the horse he rides on. When he has any thing to do for his people he rides upon the heavens to do it; for he does it swiftly and strongly: no enemy can either anticipate or obstruct the progress of him that rides on the heavens.

(2.) His boundless eternity; he is the eternal God, and his arms are everlasting, De 33:27. The gods of the heathen were but lately invented, and would shortly perish; but the God of Jeshurun is eternal: he was before all worlds, and will be when time and days shall be no more. See Hab 1:12.

II. No people like the Israel of God. Having pronounced each tribe happy, in the close he pronounces all together very happy, so happy in all respects that there was no nation under the sun comparable to them (De 33:29): Happy art thou, O Israel, a people whose God is the Lord, on that account truly happy, and none like unto thee. If Israel honour God as a non-such God, he will favour them so as to make them a non-such people, the envy of all their neighbours and the joy of all their well-wishers. Who is like unto thee, O people? Behold, thou

art fair, my love, says Christ of his spouse. To which she presently returns, Behold thou art fair, my beloved. What one nation (no, not all the nations together) is like thy people Israel? 2Sa 7:23. What is here said of the church of Israel and the honours and privileges of it is certainly to be applied to the church of the first-born, that are written in heaven. The Christian church is the Israel of God, as the apostle calls it (Ga 6:16), on which there shall be peace, and which is dignified above all societies in the world, as Israel was.

1. Never were people so well seated and sheltered (De 33:27): The eternal God is thy refuge. Or, as the word signifies, "thy habitation, or mansion-house, in which thou art safe, and easy, and at rest, as a man in his own house." Every Israelite indeed is at home in God; the soul returns to him, and reposes in him as its resting-place (Ps 116:7), its hiding-place, Ps 32:7. And those that make him their habitation shall have all the comforts and benefits of a habitation in him, Ps 91:1. Moses had an eye to God as the habitation of Israel when they were wandering in the wilderness (Ps 90:1): Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. And now that they were going to settle in Canaan they must not change their habitation; still they will need, and still they shall have, the eternal God for their dwelling-place; without him Canaan itself would be a wilderness, and a land of darkness.

2. Never were people so well supported and borne up: Underneath are the everlasting arms; that is, the almighty power of God is engaged for the protection and consolation of all that trust in him, in their greatest straits and distresses, and under the heaviest burdens. The everlasting arms shall support,

(1.) The interests of the church in general, that they shall not sink, or be run down; underneath the church is that rock of ages on which it is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, Mt 16:18.

(2.) The spirits or particular believers, so that, though they may be oppressed, they shall not be overwhelmed by any trouble. How low soever the people of God are at any time brought, everlasting arms are underneath them to keep the spirit from sinking, from fainting, and the faith from failing, even when they are pressed above measure. The everlasting covenant, and the everlasting consolations that flow from it, are indeed everlasting arms, with which believers have been wonderfully sustained, and kept cheerful in the worst of times; divine grace is sufficient for them, 2Co 12:9.

3. Never were people so well commanded and led on to battle: "He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee by his almighty power, which will make room for thee; and by a commission which will bear thee out he shall say, Destroy them." They were now entering upon a land that was in the full possession of a strong and formidable people, and who, being its first planters, looked upon themselves as its rightful owners; how shall Israel justify, and how shall they accomplish, the expulsion of them?

(1.) God will give them a commission to destroy the Canaanites, and that will justify them, and bear them out in it, against all the world. He that is sovereign Lord of all lives and all lands not only allowed and permitted, but expressly commanded and appointed the children of Israel both to take possession of the land of Canaan and to put the sword to the people of Canaan, which, being thus authorized, they might not only lawfully but honourably do, without incurring the least stain or imputation of theft by the one or murder by the other.

(2.) God will give them power and ability to destroy them; nay, he will in effect do it to their hands: he will thrust out the enemy from before them; for the very fear of Israel shall put them to flight. God drive out the heathen to plant his people, Ps 44:2. Thus believers are more than conquerors over their spiritual enemies, through Christ that loved them. The captain

of our salvation thrust out the enemy from before us when he overcame the world and spoiled principalities and powers on the cross; and the word of command to us is, "Destroy them; pursue the victory, and you shall divide the spoil."

4. Never were people so well secured and protected (De 33:28): Israel shall then dwell in safety alone. Those that dwell in God, and make his name their strong tower, dwell in safety; the place of their defence is the munitions of rocks, Isa 33:16. They shall dwell in safety alone.

(1.) Though alone. Though they contract no alliances with their neighbours, nor have any reason to expect help or succour from any of them, yet they shall dwell in safety; they shall really be safe, and they shall think themselves so.

(2.) Because alone. They shall dwell in safety as long as they continue pure, and unmixed with the heathen, a singular and peculiar people. Their distinction from other nations, though it made them like a speckled bird (Jer 12:9), and exposed them to the ill-will of those about them, yet was really their preservation from the mischief their neighbours wished them, as it kept them under the divine protection. All that keep close to God shall be kept safely by him. It is promised that in the kingdom of Christ Israel shall dwell safely, Jer 23:6.

5. Never were people so well provided for: The fountain of Jacob (that is, the present generation of that people, which is as the fountain to all the streams that shall hereafter descend and be derived from it) shall now presently be fixed upon a good land. The eye of Jacob (so it might be read, for the same word signifies a fountain and an eye) is upon the land of corn and wine, that is, where they now lay encamped they had Canaan in their eye, it was just before their faces, on the other side the river, and they would have it in their hands and under their feet quickly. This land upon which they had set their eye was blessed both with the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven; it was a land of corn and wine, substantial and useful

productions: also his heavens (as if the heavens were particularly designed to be blessings to that land) shall drop down dew, without which, though the soil were ever so good, the corn and wine would soon fail. Every Israelite indeed has his eye, the eye of faith, upon the better country, the heavenly Canaan, which is richly replenished with better things than corn and wine.

6. Never were people so well helped. If they were in any strait, God himself rode upon the heavens for their help, De 33:26. And they were a people saved by the Lord, De 33:29. If they were in danger of any harm, or in want of any good, they had an eternal God to go to, an almighty power to trust to; nothing could hurt those whom God helped, nor was it possible that the people should perish which was saved by the Lord. Those that are added to the gospel Israel are such as shall be saved, Ac 2:47.

7. Never were people so well armed. God himself was the shield of their help by whom they were armed defensively, and sufficiently guarded against all assailants: and he was the sword of their excellency, by whom they were armed offensively, and made both formidable and successful in all their wars. God is called the sword of their excellency because, in fighting for them, he made them to excel other people, or because in all he did for them he had an eye to his sanctuary among them, which is called the excellency of Jacob, ps 47:4,eze 24:21,am 6:8. Those in whose hearts is the excellency of holiness have God himself for their shield and sword--are defended by the whole armour of God; his word is their sword, and faith in it is their shield, Eph 6:16,17.

8. Never were people so well assured of victory over their enemies: They shall be found liars unto thee; That is, "shall be forced to submit to thee sorely against their will, so that it will be but a counterfeit submission; yet the point shall be gained, for thou shalt tread upon their necks" (so the LXX.), which we find done, Jos 10:24. "Thou shalt tread down their strong-

holds, be they ever so high, and trample upon their palaces and temples, though esteemed ever so sacred. If thy enemies be found liars to thee" (so some read it), "thou shalt tread upon their high places; if they will not be held by the bonds of leagues and treaties, they shall be broken by the force of war." Thus shall the God of peace tread Satan under the feet of all believers, and shall do it shortly, Ro 16:20.

Now lay all this together, and then you will say, Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people! Thrice happy the people whose God is the Lord.

27 The eternal God *is thy* refuge,
and underneath *are* the everlasting arms:
and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee;
and shall say, Destroy *them*.
28 Israel then shall dwell in safety alone:
the fountain of Jacob *shall be* upon a land of corn and wine;
also his heavens shall drop down dew.
29 Happy *art* thou, O Israel:
who *is* like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the
shield of thy help,
and who *is* the sword of thy excellency!
And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee;
and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Deuteronomy-34

The Death of Moses

1 And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that *is* over against Jericho: and the
Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,

Falling in this wilderness. See 2Ki 7:2.

5. He saw all this just before his death. Sometimes God reserves the brightest discoveries of his grace to his people to be the support of their dying moments. Canaan was Immanuel's land (Isa 8:8), so that in viewing it he had a view

of the blessings we enjoy by Christ. It was a type of heaven (Heb 11:16), which faith is the substance and evidence of. Note, Those may leave this world with a great deal of cheerfulness that die in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of heaven, and with Canaan in their eye. Having thus seen the salvation of God, we may well say, Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace.

2 and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all
the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,
3 and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of
palm trees, unto Zoar.
4 And the Lord said unto him, this *is* the land which I sware unto
Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy
seed: I have caused thee to see *it* with thine eyes, but thou shalt not
go over thither.
5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab,
according to the word of the Lord.

Here is,

I The death of Moses (De 34:5): Moses the servant of the Lord died. God told him he must not go over Jordan, and, though at first he prayed earnestly for the reversing of the sentence yet God's answer to his prayer sufficed him, and now he spoke no more of that matter, De 3:26. Thus our blessed Saviour prayed that the cup might pass from him, yet, since it might not, he acquiesced with, Father, thy will be done. Moses had reason to desire to live a while longer in the world. He was old, it is true, but he had not yet attained to the years of the life of his fathers; his father Amram lived to be 137; his grandfather Kohath 133; his great grandfather Levi 137; Ex 6:16-20. And why must Moses, whose life was more serviceable than any of theirs, die at 120, especially since he felt not the decays of age, but was as fit for service as ever? Israel could ill spare him at this time; his conduct and his converse with God would be as great a happiness to them in the conquest of Canaan as the courage of Joshua. It bore hard upon Moses himself, when he had gone through all the fatigues of the wilderness, to be prevented from enjoying the pleasures of Canaan; when he

had borne the burden and heat of the day, to resign the honour of finishing the work to another, and that not his son, but his servant, who must enter into his labours. We may suppose that this was not pleasant to flesh and blood. But the man Moses was very meek; God will have it so, and he cheerfully submits.

1. He is here called the servant of the Lord, not only as a good man (all the saints are God's servants), but as a useful man, eminently useful, who had served God's counsels in bringing Israel out of Egypt, and leading them through the wilderness. It was more his honour to be the servant of the Lord. than to be king in Jeshurun.

2. Yet he dies. Neither his piety nor his usefulness would exempt him from the stroke of death. God's servants must die that they may rest from their labours, receive their recompense, and make room for others. When God's servants are removed, and must serve him no longer on earth, they go to serve him better, to serve him day and night in his temple.

3. He dies in the land of Moab, short of Canaan, while as yet he and his people were in an unsettled condition and had not entered into their rest. In the heavenly Canaan there will be no more death. 4. He dies according to the word of the Lord. At the mouth of the Lord; so the word is. The Jews say, "with a kiss from the mouth of God." No doubt, he died very easily (it was an euthanasia--a delightful death), there were no bands in his death; and he had in his death a most pleasing taste of the love of God to him: but that he died at the mouth of the Lord means no more but that he died in compliance with the will of God. Note, The servants of the Lord, when they have done all their other work, must die at last, in obedience to their Master, and be freely willing to go home whenever he sends for them, Ac 21:13.

II. His burial, De 34:6. It is a groundless conceit of some of the Jews that Moses was translated to heaven as Elijah was, for it is expressly said that he died and was buried; yet

probably he was raised to meet Elias, to grace the solemnity of Christ's transfiguration.

1. God himself buried him, namely, by the ministry of angels, which made this funeral, though very private, yet very magnificent. Note, God takes care of the dead bodies of his servants; as their death is precious, so is their dust, not a grain of it shall be lost, but the covenant with it shall be remembered. When Moses was dead, God buried him; when Christ was dead, God raised him, for the law of Moses was to have an end, but not the gospel of Christ. Believers are dead to the law that they might be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, Ro 7:4. It should seem Michael, that is, Christ (as some think), had the burying of Moses, for by him the Mosaical ordinances were abolished and taken out of the way, nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave, Col 2:14.

2. He was buried in a valley over against Beth-peor. How easily could the angels that buried him have conveyed him over Jordan and buried him with the patriarchs in the cave of Machpelah! But we must learn not be over-solicitous about the place of our burial. If the soul be at rest with God, the matter is not great where the body rests. One of the Chaldee paraphrasts says, "He was buried over against Beth-peor, that, whenever Baal-peor boasted of the Israelites being joined to him, the grave of Moses over against his temple might be a check to him." 3. The particular place was not known, lest the children of Israel, who were so very prone to idolatry, should have enshrined and worshipped the dead body of Moses, that great founder and benefactor of their nation. It is true that we read not, among all the instances of their idolatry, that they worshipped relics, the reason of which perhaps was because they were thus prevented from worshipping Moses, and so could not for shame worship any other.

Some of the Jewish writers say that the body of Moses was concealed, that necromancers, who enquired of the dead,

might not disquiet him, as the witch of Endor did Samuel, to bring him up. God would not have the name and memory of his servant Moses thus abused. Many think this was the contest between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses, mentioned Jude 1:9. The devil would make the place known that it might be a snare to the people, and Michael would not let him. Those therefore who are for giving divine honours to the relics of departed saints side with the devil against Michael our prince.

III. His age, De 34:7. His life was prolonged,

1. To old age. He was 120 years old, which, though far short of the years of the patriarchs, yet much exceeded the years of most of his contemporaries, for the ordinary age of man had been lately reduced to seventy, Ps 90:10. The years of the life of Moses were three forties. The first forty he lived a courtier, at ease and in honour in Pharaoh's court; the second forty he lived a poor desolate shepherd in Midian; the third forty he lived a king in Jeshurun, in honour and power, but encumbered with a great deal of care and toil: so changeable is the world we live in, and alloyed with such mixtures; but the world before us is unmixed and unchangeable.

2. To a good old age: His eye was not dim (as Isaac's, Ge 27:1, and Jacob's, Ge 48:10), nor was his natural force abated; there was no decay either of the strength of his body or of the vigour and activity of his mind, but he could still speak, and write, and walk as well as ever. His understanding was as clear, and his memory as strong, as ever. "His visage was not wrinkled," say some of the Jewish writers; "he had lost never a tooth," say others; and many of them expound it of the shining of his face (Ex 34:30), that that continued to the last.

This was the general reward of his services; and it was in particular the effect of his extraordinary meekness, for that is a grace which is, as much as any other, health to the navel and marrow to the bones. Of the moral law which was given by

Moses, though the condemning power be vacated to true believers, yet the commands are still binding, and will be to the end of the world; the eye of them is not waxen dim, for they shall discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, nor is their natural force or obligation abated but still we are under the law to Christ.

IV. The solemn mourning that there was for him, De 34:8. It is a debt owing to the surviving honour of deceased worthies to follow them with our tears, as those who loved and valued them, are sensible of our loss of them, and are truly humbled for those sins which have provoked God to deprive us of them; for penitential tears very fitly mix with these. Observe,

1. Who the mourners were: The children of Israel. They all conformed to the ceremony, whatever it was, though some of them perhaps, who were ill-affected to his government, were but mock-mourners; yet we may suppose there were those among them who had formerly quarrelled with him and his government, and perhaps had been of those who spoke of stoning him, who now were sensible of their loss, and heartily lamented him when he was removed from them, though they knew not how to value him when he was with them. Thus those who had murmured were made to learn doctrine, Isa 29:24. Note, The loss of good men, especially good governors, is to be much lamented and laid to heart: those are stupid who do not consider it.

2. How long they mourned: Thirty days. So long the formality lasted, and we may suppose there were some in whom the mourning continued much longer. Yet the ending of the days of weeping and mourning for Moses is an intimation that, how great soever our losses have been, we must not abandon ourselves to perpetual grief; we must suffer the wound at least to heal up in time. If we hope to go to heaven rejoicing, why should we resolve to go to the grave mourning? The ceremonial law of Moses is dead and buried in the grave of

Christ; but the Jews have not yet ended the days of their mourning for it.

6 And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

7 And Moses *was* a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses were ended.

9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

We have here a very honourable encomium passed both on Moses and Joshua; each has his praise, and should have. It is ungrateful so to magnify our living friends as to forget the merits of those that are gone, to whose memories there is a debt of honour due: all the respect must not be paid to the rising sun; and, on the other hand, it is unjust so to cry up the merits of those that are gone as to despise the benefit we have in those that survive and succeed them. Let God be glorified in both, as here.

I. Joshua is praised as a man admirably qualified for the work to which he was called, De 34:9. Moses brought Israel to the borders of Canaan and then died and left them, to signify that the law made nothing perfect, Heb 7:19. It brings men into a wilderness of conviction, but not into the Canaan of rest and settled peace. It is an honour reserved for Joshua (our Lord Jesus, of whom Joshua was a type) to do that for us which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Ro 8:3. Through him we enter into rest, the spiritual rest of conscience and eternal rest in heaven. Three things concurred to clear Joshua's call to this great undertaking:--

1. God fitted him for it: He was full of the spirit of wisdom; and so he had need who had such a peevish people to rule, and such a politic people to conquer. Conduct is as requisite in a

general as courage. Herein Joshua was a type of Christ, in whom are hidden the treasures of wisdom.

2. Moses, by the divine appointment, had ordained him to it: He had laid his hands upon him, so substituting him to be his successor, and praying to God to qualify him for the service to which he had called him; and this comes in as a reason why God gave him a more than ordinary spirit of wisdom, because his designation to the government was God's own act (those whom God employs he will in some measure make fit for the employment) and because this was the thing that Moses had asked of God for him when he laid his hands on him. When the bodily presence of Christ withdrew from his church, he prayed the Father to send another Comforter, and obtained what he prayed for.

3. The people cheerfully owned him and submitted to him. Note, An interest in the affections of people is a great advantage, and a great encouragement to those that are called to public trusts of what kind soever. It was also a great mercy to the people that when Moses was dead they were not as sheep having no shepherd, but had one ready among them in whom they did unanimously, and might with the highest satisfaction, acquiesce.

II. Moses is praised (De 34:10-12), and with good reason.

1. He was indeed a very great man, especially upon two accounts:--

(1.) His intimacy with the God of nature: God knew him face to face, and so he knew God. See Nu 12:8. He saw more of the glory of God than any (at least of the Old-Testament saints) ever did. He had more free and frequent access to God, and was spoken to not in dreams, and visions, and slumberings on the bed, but when he was awake and standing before the cherubim. Other prophets, when God appeared and spoke to

them, were struck with terror (Da 10:7), but Moses, whenever he received a divine revelation, preserved his tranquillity.

(2.) His interest and power in the kingdom of nature. The miracles of judgment he wrought in Egypt before Pharaoh, and the miracles of mercy he wrought in the wilderness before Israel, served to demonstrate that he was a particular favourite of Heaven, and had an extra-ordinary commission to act as he did on this earth. Never was there any man whom Israel had more reason to love, or whom the enemies of Israel had more reason to fear. Observe, The historian calls the miracles Moses wrought signs and wonders, done with a mighty hand and great terror, which may refer to the terrors of Mount Sinai, by which God fully ratified Moses's commission and demonstrated it beyond exception to be divine, and this in the sight of all Israel.

2. He was greater than any other of the prophets of the Old Testament. Though they were men of great interest in heaven and great influence upon earth, yet they were none of them to be compared with this great man; none of them either so evidenced or executed a commission from heaven as Moses did. This encomium of Moses seems to have been written long after his death, yet then there had not arisen any prophet like unto Moses, nor did there arise any such between that period and the sealing up of the vision and prophecy. by Moses God gave the law, and moulded and formed the Jewish church; by the other prophets he only sent particular reproofs, directions, and predictions. The last of the prophets concludes with a charge to remember the law of Moses, Mal 4:4. Christ himself often appealed to the writings of Moses, and vouched him for a witness, as one that saw his day at a distance and spoke of him.

But, as far as the other prophets came short of him, our Lord Jesus went beyond him. His doctrine was more excellent, his miracles were more illustrious, and his communion with his Father was more intimate, for he had lain in his bosom from

eternity, and by him God does now in these last days speak to us. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a Son. The history of Moses leaves him buried in the plains of Moab, and concludes with the period of his government; but the history of our Saviour leaves him sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and we are assured that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, largely proves the pre-eminence of Christ above Moses, as a good reason why we that are Christians should be obedient, faithful, and constant, to that holy religion which we make profession of. God, by his grace, make us all so!

10 And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses,
whom the Lord knew face to face,
11 in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in
the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his
land,
12 and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses
showed in the sight of all Israel.

The Book of Joshua
[Joshua]

Joshua-1

Preparations for the Conquest of Canaan

1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,
2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.
3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.
4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.
5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Honour is here put upon Joshua, and great power lodged in his hand, by him that is the fountain of honour and power, and by whom kings reign. Instructions are given him by Infinite Wisdom, and encouragements by the God of all consolation. God had before spoken to Moses concerning him (Nu 27:18), but now he speaks to him (Jos 1:1), probably as he spoke to Moses (Le 1:1) out of the tabernacle of the congregation, where Joshua had with Moses presented himself (De 31:14), to learn the way of attending there. Though Eleazar had the breast-plate of judgment, which Joshua was directed to consult as there was occasion (Nu 27:21), yet, for his greater encouragement, God here speaks to him immediately, some think in a dream or vision (as Job 33:15); for though God has tied us to instituted ordinances, in them to attend him, yet he has not tied himself to them, but that he may without them

make himself known to his people, and speak to their hearts otherwise than by their ears. Concerning Joshua's call to the government observe here,

I The time when it was given him: After the death of Moses. As soon as ever Moses was dead, Joshua took upon him the administration, by virtue of his solemn ordination in Moses's life-time. An interregnum, though but for a few days, might have been of bad consequence; but it is probable that God did not speak to him to go forward towards Canaan till after the thirty days of mourning for Moses were ended; not, as the Jews say, because the sadness of his spirit during those days unfitted him for communion with God (he sorrowed not as one that had no hope), but by this solemn pause, and a month's adjournment of the public councils, even now when time was so very precious to them, God would put an honour upon the memory of Moses, and give time to the people not only to lament their loss of him, but to repent of their miscarriages towards him during the forty years of his government.

II The place Joshua had been in before he was thus preferred. He was Moses's minister, that is, an immediate attendant upon his person and assistant in business. The LXX. translates it hypourgos, a workman under Moses, under his direction and command. Observe,

1. He that was here called to honour had been long bred to business. Our Lord Jesus himself took upon him the form of a servant, and then God highly exalted him.

2. He was trained up in subjection and under command. Those are fittest to rule that have learnt to obey.

3. He that was to succeed Moses was intimately acquainted with him, that he might fully know his doctrine and manner of life, his purpose and long-suffering (2Ti 3:10), might take the same measures, walk in the same spirit, in the same steps, having to carry on the same work.

4. He was herein a type of Christ, who might therefore be called Moses's minister, because he was made under the law and fulfilled all the righteousness of it.

III. The call itself that God gave him, which is very full.

1 The consideration upon which he was called to the government: Moses my servant is dead, Jos 1:2. All good men are God's servants; and it is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men to be so: angels themselves are his ministers. Moses was called to extraordinary work, was a steward in God's house, and in the discharge of the trusts reposed in him he served not himself but God who employed him; he was faithful as a servant, and with an eye to the Son, as is intimated, Heb 3:5, where what he did is said to be for a testimony of the things that should be spoken after.

God will own his servants, will confess them in the great day. But Moses, though God's servant, and one that could ill be spared, is dead; for God will change hands, to show that whatever instruments he uses he is not tied to any. Moses, when he has done his work as a servant, dies and goes to rest from his labours, and enters into the joy of his Lord. Observe, God takes notice of the death of his servants. It is precious in his sight, Ps 116:15.

2 The call itself. Now therefore arise.

(1.) "Though Moses is dead, the work must go on; therefore arise, and go about it." Let not weeping hinder sowing, nor the withering of the most useful hands be the weakening of ours; for, when God has work to do, he will either find or make instruments fit to carry it on. Moses the servant is dead, but God the Master is not: he lives for ever.

(2.) "Because Moses is dead, therefore the work devolves upon thee as his successor, for hereunto thou wast appointed.

Therefore there is need of thee to fill up his place; up, and be doing." Note,

[1.] The removal of useful men should quicken survivors to be so much the more diligent in doing good. Such and such are dead, and we must die shortly, therefore let us work while it is day.

[2.] It is a great mercy to a people, if, when useful men are taken away in the midst of their usefulness, others are raised up in their stead to go on where they broke off. Joshua must arise to finish what Moses began. Thus the latter generations enter into the labours of the former. And thus Christ, our Joshua, does that for us which could never be done by the law of Moses,--justifies (Ac 13:39), and sanctifies, Ro 8:3. The life of Moses made way for Joshua, and prepared the people for what was to be done by him. Thus the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ: and then the death of Moses made room for Joshua; thus we are dead to the law, our first husband, that we may be married to Christ, Ro 7:4.

3. The particular service he was now called out to: "Arise, go over this Jordan, this river which you have in view, and on the banks of which you lie encamped." This was a trial to the faith of Joshua, whether he would give orders to make preparation for passing the river when there was no visible way of getting over it, at least not at this place and at this time, when all the banks were overflown, Jos 3:15. He had no pontoons or bridge of boats by which to convey them over, and yet he must believe that God, who had ordered them over, would open a way for them. Going over Jordan was going into Canaan; thither Moses might not, could not, bring them, De 31:2. Thus the honour of bringing the many sons to glory is reserved for Christ the captain of our salvation, Heb 2:10.

4. The grant of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel is here repeated (Jos 1:2-4): I do give it them. To the patriarchs it was promised, I will give it; but, now that the fourth

generation had expired, the iniquity of the Amorites was full, and the time had come for the performance of the promise, it is actually conveyed, and they are put in possession of that which they had long been in expectation of: "I do give it, enter upon it, it is all your own; nay (Jos 1:3), I have given it; though it be yet unconquered, it is as sure to you as if it were in your hands." Observe,

(1.) The persons to whom the conveyance is made: To them, even to the children of Israel (Jos 1:2), because they are the seed of Jacob, who was called Israel at the time when this promise was made to him, Ge 35:10,12. The children of Israel, though they had been very provoking in the wilderness, yet, for their fathers' sakes, should have the entail preserved. And it was the children of the murmurers that God said should enter Canaan, Nu 14:31.

(2.) The land itself that is conveyed: From the river Euphrates eastward, to the Mediterranean Sea westward, Jos 1:4. Though their sin cut them short of this large possession, and they never replenished all the country within the bounds here mentioned, yet, had they been obedient, God would have given them this and much more. Out of all these countries, and many others, there were in process of time proselytes to the Jewish religion, as appears, Ac 2:5, &c. If their church was enlarged, though their nation was not multiplied, it cannot be said that the promise was of no effect. And, if this promise had not its full accomplishment in the letter, believers might thence infer that it had a further meaning, and was to be fulfilled in the kingdom of the Messiah, both that of grace and that of glory.

(3.) The condition is here implied upon which this grant is made, in those words, as I said unto Moses, that is, "upon the terms that Moses told you of many a time, if you will keep my statutes, you shall go in and possess that good land. Take it under those provisos and limitations, and not otherwise." The precept and promise must not be separated.

(4.) It is intimated with what ease they should gain the possession of this land, if it were not their own fault, in these words, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon (within the following bounds) shall be your own. Do but set your foot upon it and you have it."

5. The promises God here makes to Joshua for his encouragement.

(1.) That he should be sure of the presence of God with him in this great work to which he was called (Jos 1:5): "As I was with Moses, to direct and strengthen him, to own and prosper him, and give him success in bringing Israel out of Egypt and leading them through the wilderness, so I will be with thee to enable thee to settle them in Canaan." Joshua was sensible how far he came short of Moses in wisdom and grace; But what Moses did was done by virtue of the presence of God with him, and, though Joshua had not always the same presence of mind that Moses had, yet, if he had always the same presence of God, he would do well enough.

Note, it is a great comfort to the rising generation of ministers and Christians that the same grace which was sufficient for those that went before them shall not be wanting to them if they be not wanting to themselves in the improvement of it. It is repeated here again (Jos 1:9). "The Lord thy God is with thee as a God of power, and that power engaged for thee whithersoever thou goest." Note, Those that go where God sends them shall have him with them wherever they go and they need desire no more to make them easy and prosperous.

(2.) That the presence of God should never be withdrawn from him: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, Jos 1:5. Moses had assured him of this (De 31:8), that, though he must now leave him, God never would: and here God himself confirms that word of his servant Moses (Isa 44:26), and engages never to leave Joshua. We need the presence of God, not only when we are beginning our work to set us in, but in the progress of it to

further us with a continual help. If that at any time fail us, we are gone; this we may be sure, that the Lord is with us while we are with him. This promise here made to Joshua is applied to all believers, and improved as an argument against covetousness, Heb 13:5, Be content with such things as you have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee.

(3.) That he should have victory over all the enemies of Israel (Jos 1:5): There shall not any man that comes against thee be able to stand before thee. Note, There is no standing before those that have God on their side. If he be for us, who can be against us? God promises him clear success--the enemy should not make any head against him; and constant success--all the days of his life. However it might be with Israel when he was gone, all his reign should be graced with triumphs. What Joshua had himself encouraged the people with long ago (Nu 14:9) God here encourages him with.

(4.) That he should himself have the dividing of this land among the people of Israel, Jos 1:6. It was a great encouragement to him in beginning this work that he was sure to see it finished and his labour should not be in vain. Some make it a reason why he should arm himself with resolution, and be of good courage, because of the bad character of the people whom he must cause to inherit that land. He knew well what a froward discontented people they were, and how unmanageable they had been in his predecessor's time; let him therefore expect vexation from them and be of good courage.

6. The charge or command he gives to Joshua, which is,

(1.) That he conform himself in every thing to the law of God, and make this his rule Jos 1:7,8. God does, as it were, put the book of the law into Joshua's hand; as, when Joash was crowned, they gave him the testimony, 2Ki 11:12. And concerning this book he is charged,

[1.] To meditate therein day and night, that he might understand it and have it ready in him upon all occasions. If ever any man's business might have excused him from meditation, and other acts of devotion, one would think Joshua's might at this time. It was a great trust that was lodged in his hands; the care of it was enough to fill him, if he had had ten souls, and yet he must find time and thoughts for meditation. Whatever affairs of this world we have to mind, we must not neglect the one thing needful.

[2.] Not to let it depart out of his mouth; that is, all his orders to the people, and his judgments upon appeals made to him, must be consonant to the law of God; upon all occasions he must speak according to this rule, Isa 8:20. Joshua was to maintain and carry on the work that Moses had begun, and therefore he must not only complete the salvation Moses had wrought for them, but must uphold the holy religion he had established among them. There was no occasion to make new laws; but that good thing which was committed to him he must carefully and faithfully keep, 2Ti 1:14.

[3.] He must observe to do according to all this law. To this end he must meditate therein, not for contemplation sake only, or to fill his head with notions, or that he might find something to puzzle the priests with, but that he might, both as a man and as a magistrate, observe to do according to what was written therein; and several things were written there which had particular reference to the business he had now before him, as the laws concerning their wars, the destroying of the Canaanites and the dividing of Canaan; &c.; these he must religiously observe. Joshua was a man of great power and authority, yet he must himself be under command and do as he is bidden. No man's dignity or dominion, how great soever, sets him above the law of God. Joshua must not only govern by law, and take care that the people observed the law, but he must observe it himself, and so by his own example maintain the honour and power of it.

First, He must do what was written. It is not enough to hear and read the word, to commend and admire it, to know and remember it, to talk and discourse of it, but we must do it.

Secondly, He must do according to what was written, exactly observing the law as his copy, and doing, not only that which was there required, but in all circumstances according to the appointment.

Thirdly, He must do according to all that was written, without exception or reserve, having a respect to all God's commandments, even those which are most displeasing to flesh and blood.

Fourthly, He must observe to do so, observe the checks of conscience, the hints of providence; and all the advantages of opportunity. Careful observance is necessary to universal obedience.

Fifthly, He must not turn from it, either in his own practice or in any act of government, to the right hand or to the left, for there are errors on both hands, and virtue is in the mean.

Sixthly, He must be strong and courageous, that he might do according to the law. So many discouragements there are in the way of duty that those who will proceed and persevere in it must put on resolution.

And, lastly, to encourage him in his obedience, he assures him that then he shall do wisely (as it is in the margin) and make his way prosperous, Jos 1:7,8. Those that make the word of God their rule, and conscientiously walk by that rule, shall both do well and speed well; it will furnish them with the best maxims by which to order their conversation (Ps 111:10); and it will entitle them to the best blessings: God shall give them the desire of their heart.

(2.) That he encourage himself herein with the promise and presence of God, and make these his stay (Jos 1:6): Be strong and of a good courage. And again (Jos 1:7), as if this was the one thing needful: Only be strong and very courageous. And he concludes with this (Jos 1:9): Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. Joshua had long since signalized his valour, in the war with Amalek, and in his dissent from the report of the evil spies; and yet God sees fit thus to inculcate this precept upon him. Those that have grace have need to be called upon again and again to exercise grace and to improve in it. Joshua was humble and low in his own eyes, not distrustful of God, and his power, and promise, but diffident of himself, and of his own wisdom, and strength, and sufficiency for the work, especially coming after so great a man as Moses; and therefore God repeats this so often, "Be strong and of a good courage; let not the sense of thy own infirmities dishearten thee; God is all-sufficient. Have not I commanded thee?"

[1.] "I have commanded the work to be done, and therefore it shall be done, how invincible soever the difficulties may seem that lie in the way." Nay,

[2.] "I have commanded, called, and commissioned, thee to do it, and therefore will be sure to own thee, and strengthen thee, and bear thee out in it." Note, When we are in the way of our duty we have reason to be strong and very courageous; and it will help very much to animate and embolden us if we keep our eye upon the divine warrant, hear God saying, "Have not I commanded thee? I will therefore help thee, succeed thee, accept thee, reward thee." Our Lord Jesus, as Joshua here, was borne up under his sufferings by a regard to the will of God and the commandment he had received from his Father, Joh 10:18.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it *to* the right hand or *to* the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

Joshua, being settled in the government, immediately applies himself to business; not to take state or to take his pleasure, but to further the work of God among, the people over whom God had set him. As he that desires the office of a minister (1Ti 3:1), so he that desires the office of a magistrate, desires a work, a good work; neither is preferred to be idle.

I. He issues out orders to the people to provide for a march; and they had been so long encamped in their present post that it would be a work of some difficulty to decamp. The officers of the people that commanded under Joshua in their respective tribes and families attended him for orders, which they were to transmit to the people. Inferior magistrates are as necessary and as serviceable to the public good in their places as the supreme magistrate in his. What could Joshua have done without officers? We are therefore required to be subject, not only to the king as supreme, but to governors as to those that are sent by him, 1Pe 2:13,14. By these officers,

1. Joshua gives public notice that they were to pass over Jordan within three days. These orders, I suppose, were not given till after the return of the spies that were sent to bring an account of Jericho, though the story of that affair follows, Jos 2:1-24 And perhaps that was such an instance of his jealousy, and excessive caution, as made it necessary that he should be so often bidden as he was to be strong and of a good courage.

Observe with what assurance Joshua says to the people, because God had said it to him, You shall pass over Jordan, and shall possess the land. We greatly honour the truth of God.

2. He gives them directions to prepare victuals, not to prepare transport vessels. He that bore Egypt upon eagle's wings would in like manner bear them into Canaan, to bring them to himself, Ex 19:4. But those that were desirous to have other victuals besides the manna, which had not yet ceased, must prepare it and have it ready against the time appointed. Perhaps, though the manna did not quite cease till they came into Canaan (Jos 5:12), yet since they had come into a land inhabited (Ex 16:35), where they might be furnished in part with other provisions, it did not fall so plentifully, nor did they gather so much as when they had it first given to them in the wilderness, but decreased gradually, and therefore they are ordered to provide other victuals, in which perhaps was included all other things necessary to their march. And some of the Jewish writer, considering that having manna they needed not to provide other victuals, understand it figuratively, that they must repent of their sins, and make their peace with God, and resolve to live a new life, that they might be ready to receive this great favour. See Ex 19:10,11.

II. He reminds the two tribes and a half of the obligations they were under to go over Jordan with their brethren, though they left their possessions and families on this side. Interest would make the other tribes glad to go over Jordan, but in these it was an act of self-denial, and against the grain; therefore it was needful to produce the agreement which Moses had made with them, when he gave them their possession before their brethren (Jos 1:13): Remember the word which Moses commanded you. Some of them perhaps were ready to think now that Moses was dead, who they thought was too hard upon them in this matter, they might find some excuse or other to release themselves from this engagement, or might prevail with Joshua to dispense with them; but he holds them to it, and

lets them know that, though Moses was dead, his commands and their promises were still in full force. He reminds them,

1. Of the advantages they had received in being first settled: "The Lord your God hath given you rest. He has given your minds rest; you know what you have to trust to, and are not as the rest of the tribes waiting the issue of the war first and then of the lot. He has also given your families rest, your wives and children, whose settlement is your satisfaction. He has given you rest by giving you this land, this good land, of which you are in full and quiet possession."

Note, When God by his providence has given us rest we ought to consider how we may honour him with the advantages of it, and what service we may do to our brethren who are unsettled, or not so well settled as we are When God had given David rest (2Sa 7:1), see how restless he was till he had found out a habitation for the ark, Ps 132:4,5. When God has given us rest, we must take heed of slothfulness and of settling upon our lees.

2. He reminds them of their agreement to help their brethren in the wars of Canaan till God had in like manner given them rest, Jos 1:14,15. This was,
(1.) Reasonable in itself. So closely were all the tribes incorporated that they must needs look upon themselves as members one of another.

(2.) It was enjoined them by Moses, the servant of the Lord; he commanded them to do this, and Joshua his successor would see his commands observed.

(3.) It was the only expedient they had to save themselves from the guilt of a great sin in settling on that side Jordan, a sin which would one time or other find them out, Nu 32:23.

(4.) It was the condition of the grant Moses had made them of the land they were possessed of, so that they could not be sure

of a good title to, or a comfortable enjoyment of, the land of their possession, as it is here called (Jos 1:15), if they did not fulfil the condition.

(5.) They themselves had covenanted and agreed thereunto (Nu 32:25): Thy servants will do as my Lord commandeth. Thus we all lie under manifold obligations to strengthen the hands one of another, and not to seek our own welfare only, but one another's.

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.

12 And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying,

13 Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.

14 Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle, shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side Jordan; but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them;

15 until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as *he hath given* you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God giveth them: then ye shall return unto the land of your possession, and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord's servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.

16 And they answered Joshua, saying, all that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

This answer was given not by the two tribes and a half only (though they are spoken of immediately before), but by the officers of all the people (Jos 1:10), as their representatives, concurring with the divine appointment, by which Joshua was set over them, and they did it heartily, and with a great deal of cheerfulness and resolution.

I. They promise him obedience (Jos 1:16), not only as subjects to their prince, but as soldiers to their general, of whose particular orders they are to be observant. He that hath soldiers

under him saith to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh, Mt 8:9. Thus the people of Joshua; "All that thou commandest us we will readily do, without murmuring or disputing; and whithersoever thou sends us, though upon the most difficult and perilous expedition, we will go."

We must thus swear allegiance to our Lord Jesus, as the captain of our salvation, and bind ourselves to do what he commands us by his word, and to go where he sends us by his providence. And since Joshua, being humbly conscious to himself how far short he came of Moses, feared he should not have such an influence upon the people and such an interest in them as Moses had, they here promise that they will be as obedient to him as ever they had been to Moses, Jos 1:17. To speak truth, they had no reason to boast of their obedience to Moses; he had found them a stiff-necked people, De 9:24. But they meant that they would be as observant of Joshua as they should have been, and as some of them were (and the generality of them at least sometimes) of Moses.

Note, We must not so magnify those that are gone, how eminent soever they were, either in the magistracy or in the ministry, as to be wanting in the honour and duty we owe to those that survive and succeed them, though in gifts they may come short of them. Obedience for conscience' sake will continue, though Providence change the hands by which it rules and acts.

II. They pray for the presence of God with him (Jos 1:17): "Only the Lord thy God be with thee, to bless and prosper thee, and give thee success, as he was with Moses." Prayers and supplications are to be made for all in authority, 1Ti 2:1,2. And the best thing we can ask of God for our magistrates is that they may have the presence of God with them; this will make them blessings to us, so that in seeking this for them we consult our own interest. A reason is here intimated why they would obey him as they had obeyed Moses, because they

believed (and in faith prayed) that God's presence would be with him as it was with Moses. Those that we have reason to think have favour from God should have honour and respect from us. Some understand it as a limitation of their obedience: "We will obey only as far as we perceive the Lord is with thee, but no further. While thou keepest close to God we will keep close to thee; hitherto shall our obedience come, but no further." But they were so far from having any suspicion of Joshua's deviating from the divine rule that there needed not such a proviso.

III. They pass an act to make it death for any Israelite to disobey Joshua's orders, or rebel against his commandment, Jos 1:18. Perhaps if such a law had been made in Moses's time it might have prevented many of the rebellions that were formed against him; for most men fear the sword of the magistrate more than the justice of God. Yet there was a special reason for the making of this law now that they were entering upon the wars of Canaan; for in times of war the severity of military discipline is more necessary than at other times. Some think that in this statute they had an eye to that law concerning the prophet God would raise up like unto Moses, which they think, though it refer chiefly to Christ, yet takes in Joshua by the way as a type of him, that whosoever would not hearken to him should be cut off from his people. De 18:19, I will require it of him.

IV. They animate him to go on with cheerfulness in the work to which God had called him; and, in desiring that he would be strong and of a good courage, they did in effect promise him that they would do all they could, by an exact, bold, and cheerful observance of all his orders, to encourage him. It very much heartens those that lead in a good work to see those that follow with a good will. Joshua, though of approved valour, did not take it as an affront, but as a great kindness, for the people to bid him be strong and of a good courage.

17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

18 Whosoever he *be* that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

Joshua-2

The Spies Sent to Jericho

1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

2 And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither tonight of the children of Israel to search out the country.

In these verses we have,

I The prudence of Joshua, in sending spies to observe this important pass, which was likely to be disputed at the entrance of Israel into Canaan (Jos 2:1). Go view the land, even Jericho. Moses had sent spies (Nu 13:1-33) Joshua himself was one of them and it proved of ill consequence.

Yet Joshua now sent spies, not, as the former were sent, to survey the whole land, but Jericho only; not to bring the account to the whole congregation, but to Joshua only, who, like a watchful general, was continually projecting for the public good, and, was particularly careful to take the first step well and not to stumble at the threshold. It was not fit that Joshua should venture over Jordan, to make his remarks incognito--in disguise; but he sends two men (two young men, says the LXX.), to view the land, that from their report he might take his measures in attacking Jericho. Observe,

1. There is no remedy, but great men must see with other people's eyes, which makes it very necessary that they be

cautious in the choice of those they employ, since so much often depends upon their fidelity.

2. Faith in God's promise ought not to supersede but encourage our diligence in the use of proper means. Joshua is sure he has God with him, and yet sends men before him. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if our expectations slacken our endeavours.

3. See how ready these men were to go upon this hazardous enterprise. Though they put their lives in their hands yet they ventured in obedience to Joshua their general, in zeal for the service of the camp, and in dependence upon the power of that God who, being the keeper of Israel in general, is the protector of every particular Israelite in the way of his duty.

II The providence of God directing the spies to the house of Rahab. How they got over Jordan we are not told; but into Jericho they came, which was about seven or eight miles from the river, and there seeking for a convenient inn were directed to the house of Rahab, here called a harlot, a woman that had formerly been of ill fame, the reproach of which stuck to her name, though of late she had repented and reformed. Simon the leper (Mt 26:6), though cleansed from his leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name at long as he lived; so Rahab the harlot; and she is so called in the New Testament, where both her faith and her good works are praised, to teach us,

1. That the greatness of sin is no bar to pardoning mercy if it be truly repented of in time. We read of publicans and harlots entering into the kingdom of the Messiah, and being welcomed to all the privileged of that kingdom, Mt 21:31.

2. That there are many who before their conversion were very wicked and vile, and yet afterwards come to great eminence in faith and holiness.

3. Even those that through grace have repented of the sins of their youth must expect to bear the reproach of them, and when they hear of their old faults must renew their repentance, and, as an evidence of that, hear of them patiently. God's Israel, for aught that appears, had but one friend, but one well-wisher in all Jericho, and that was Rahab a harlot. God has often served his own purposes and his church's interests by men of different morals.

Had these scouts gone to any other house than this they would certainly have been betrayed and put to death without mercy. But God knew where they had a friend that would be true to them, though they did not, and directed them thither. Thus that which seems to us most contingent and accidental is often over-ruled by the divine providence to serve its great ends. And those that faithfully acknowledge God in their ways he will guide with his eye. See Jer 36:19,26.

III. The piety of Rahab in receiving and protecting these Israelites. Those that keep public-houses entertain all comers, and think themselves obliged to be civil to their guests. But Rahab showed her guests more than common civility, and went upon an uncommon principle in what she did; it was by faith that she received those with peace against whom her king and country had denounced war, Heb 11:31.

1. She bade them welcome to her house; they lodged there, though it appears by what she said to them (Jos 2:9) she knew both whence they came and what their business was.

2. Perceiving that they were observed coming into the city, and that umbrage was taken at it, she hid them upon the roof of the house, which was flat, and covered them with stalks of flax (Jos 2:6), so that, if the officers should come thither to search for them, there they might lie undiscovered. By these stalks of flax, which she herself had lain in order upon the roof to dry in the sun, in order to the beating of it and making it ready for the wheel, it appears she had one of the good

characters of the virtuous woman, however in others of them she might be deficient, that she sought wool and flax, and wrought willingly with her hands, Pr 31:13. From this instance of her honest industry one would hope that, whatever she had been formerly, she was not now a harlot.

3. When she was examined concerning them, she denied they were in her house, turned off the officers that had a warrant to search for them with a sham, and so secured them. No marvel that the king of Jericho sent to enquire after them (Jos 2:2,3); he had cause to fear when the enemy was at his door, and his fear made him suspicious and jealous of all strangers. He had reason to demand from Rahab that she should bring forth the men to be dealt with as spies; but Rahab not only disowned that she knew them, or knew where they were, but, that no further search might be made for them in the city, told the pursuers they had gone away again and in all probability might be overtaken, Jos 2:4,5. Now,

(1.) We are sure this was a good work: it is canonized by the apostle (Jam 2:25), where she is said to be justified by works, and this is specified, that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way, and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man, even of the wrath of the king. She believed, upon the report she had heard of the wonders wrought for Israel, that their God was the only true God, and that therefore their declared design upon Canaan would undoubtedly take effect and in this faith she sided with them, protected them, and courted their favour. Had she said, "I believe God is yours and Canaan yours, but I dare not show you any kindness," her faith had been dead and inactive, and would not have justified her. But by this it appeared to be both alive and lively, that she exposed herself to the utmost peril, even of life, in obedience to her faith.

Note, Those only are true believers that can find in their hearts to venture for God; and those that by faith take the Lord for their God take his people for their people, and cast in their lot

among them. Those that have God for their refuge and hiding-place must testify their gratitude by their readiness to shelter his people when there is occasion. Let my outcasts dwell with thee, Isa 16:3,4. And we must be glad of an opportunity of testifying the sincerity and zeal of our love to God by hazardous services to his church and kingdom among men. But,

(2.) There is that in it which it is not easy to justify, and yet it must be justified, or else it could not be so good a work as to justify her.

[1.] It is plain that she betrayed her country by harbouring the enemies of it, and aiding those that were designing its destruction, which could not consist with her allegiance to her prince and her affection and duty to the community she was a member of. But that which justifies her in this is that she knew the Lord had given Israel this land (Jos 2:9), knew it by the incontestable miracles God had wrought for them, which confirmed that grant; and her obligations to God were higher than her obligations to any other. If she knew God had given them this land, it would have been a sin to join with those that hindered them from possessing it. But, since no such grant of any land to any people can now be proved, this will by no means justify any such treacherous practices against the public welfare.

[2.] It is plain that she deceived the officers that examined her with an untruth--That she knew not whence the men were, that they had gone out, that she knew not whither they had gone. What shall we say to this? If she had either told the truth or been silent, she would have betrayed the spies, and this would certainly have been a great sin; and it does not appear that she had any other way of concealing them that by this ironical direction to the officers to pursue them another way, which if they would suffer themselves to be deceived by, let them be deceived.

None are bound to accuse themselves, or their friends, of that which, though enquired after as a crime, they know to be a virtue. This case was altogether extraordinary, and therefore cannot be drawn into a precedent; and that my be justified here which would be by no means lawful in a common case. Rahab knew, by what was already done on the other side Jordan, that no mercy was to be shown to the Canaanites, and thence inferred that, if mercy was not owing them, truth was not; those that might be destroyed might be deceived. Yet divines generally conceive that it was a sin, which however admitted of this extenuation, that being a Canaanite she was not better taught the evil of lying; but God accepted her faith and pardoned her infirmity.

However it was in this case, we are sure it is our duty to speak every man the truth to his neighbour, to dread and detest lying, and never to do evil, that evil, that good may come of it, Ro 3:8. But God accepts what is sincerely and honestly intended, though there be a mixture of frailty and folly in it, and is not extreme to mark what we do amiss. Some suggest that what she said might possibly be true of some other men.

3 And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

4 And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, there came men unto me, but I wist not whence they *were:*

5 and it came to pass *about the time* of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out; whither the men went, I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them.

6 But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.

7 And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

9 and she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

The matter is here settled between Rahab and the spies respecting the service she was now to do for them, and the favour they were afterwards to show to her. She secures them on condition that they should secure her.

I. She gives them, and by them sends to Joshua and Israel, all the encouragement that could be desired to make their intended descent upon Canaan. This was what they came for, and it was worth coming for. Having got clear of the officers, she comes up to them to the roof of the house where they lay hid, finds them perhaps somewhat dismayed at the peril they apprehended themselves in from the officers, and scarcely recovered from the fright, but has that to say to them which will give them abundant satisfaction.

1. She lets them know that the report of the great things God had done for them had come to Jericho (Jos 2:10), not only that they had an account of their late victories obtained over the Amorites in the neighbouring country, on the other side of the river, but that their miraculous deliverance out of Egypt, and passage through the Red Sea, a great way off, and forty years ago, were remembered and talked of afresh in Jericho, to the amazement of every body. Thus this Joshua and his fellows were men wondered at, Zec 3:8. See how God makes his wonderful works to be remembered (Ps 111:4), so that men shall speak of the might of his terrible acts, Ps 145:6.

2. She tells them what impressions the tidings of these things had made upon the Canaanites: Your terror has fallen upon us (Jos 2:9); our hearts did melt, Jos 2:11. If she kept a public house, this would give her an opportunity of understanding the

sense of various companies and of travellers from other parts of the country, so that they could not know this any way better than by her information; and it would be of great use to Joshua and Israel to know it; it would put courage into the most cowardly Israelite to hear how their enemies were dispirited, and it was easy to conclude that those who now fainted before them would infallibly fall before them, especially because it was the accomplishment of a promise God had made them, that he would lay the fear and dread of them upon all this land (De 11:25), and so it would be an earnest of the accomplishment of all the other promises God had made to them. Let not the stout man glory in his courage, any more than the strong man in his strength; for God can weaken both mind and body.

Let not God's Israel be afraid of their most powerful enemies; for their God can, when he pleases, make their most powerful enemies afraid of them. Let none think to harden their hearts against God and prosper; for he that made man's soul can at any time make the sword of his terrors approach to it.

3. She hereupon makes profession of her faith in God and his promise; and perhaps there was not found so great faith (all things considered), no, not in Israel, as in this woman of Canaan.

(1.) who believes God's power and dominion over all the world (Jos 2:11): "Jehovah your God, whom you worship and call upon, is so far above all gods that he is the only true God; for he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath, and is served by all the hosts of both." A vast distance there is between heaven and earth, yet both are equally under the inspection and government of the great Jehovah. Heaven is not above his power, nor is earth below his cognizance.

(2.) She believes his promise to his people Israel (Jos 2:9): I know that the Lord hath given you the land. The king of Jericho had heard as much as she had of the great things God

had done for Israel, yet he cannot infer thence that the Lord had given them this land, but resolves to hold it out against them to the last extremity; for the most powerful means of conviction will not of themselves attain the end without divine grace, and by that grace Rahab the harlot, who had only heard of the wonders God had wrought, speaks with more assurance of the truth of the promise made to the fathers than all the elders of Israel had done who were eye-witnesses of those wonders, many of whom perished through unbelief of this promise. Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed; so Rahab did. O woman, great is thy faith!

II. She engaged them to take her and her relations under their protection, that they might not perish in the destruction of Jericho, Jos 2:12,13. Now,

1. It was an evidence of the sincerity and strength of her faith concerning the approaching revolution in her country that she was so solicitous to make an interest for herself with the Israelites, and courted their kindness. She foresaw the conquest of her country, and in the belief of that bespoke in time the favour of the conquerors. Thus Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and the condemning of the world, Heb 11:7. Those who truly believe the divine revelation concerning the ruin of sinners, and the grant of the heavenly land to God's Israel, will give diligence to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold of eternal life, by joining themselves to God and to his people.

2 The provision she made for the safety of her relations, as well as for her own, is a laudable instance of natural affection, and an intimation to us in like manner to do all we can for the salvation of the souls of those that are dear to us, and, with ourselves, to bring them, if possible, into the bond of the covenant. No mention is made of her husband and children, but only her parents, and brothers, and sisters, for whom,

though she was herself a housekeeper, she retained a due concern.

3. Her request that they would swear unto her by Jehovah is an instance of her acquaintance with the only true God, and her faith in him and devotion towards him, one act of which is religiously to swear by his name.

4. Her petition is very just and reasonable, that, since she had protected them, they should protect her, and since her kindness to them extended to their people, for whom they were now negotiating, their kindness to her should take in all hers. It was the least they could do for one that had saved their lives with the hazard of her own. Note, Those that show mercy may expect to find mercy. Observe, She does not demand any preferment by way of reward for her kindness to them, though they lay so much at her mercy that she might have made her own terms, but only indents for her Life, which in a general destruction would be a singular favour. Thus God promised Ebed-Melech, in recompence for his kindness to Jeremiah, that in the worst of times he should have his life for a prey, Jer 39:18. Yet this Rahab was afterwards advanced to be a princess in Israel, the wife of Salmon, and one of the ancestors of Christ, Mt 1:5. Those that faithfully serve Christ and suffer for him he will not only protect, but prefer, and will do for them more than they are able to ask or think.

III. They solemnly engaged for her preservation in the common destruction (Jos 2:14): "Our life for yours. We will take as much care of your lives as of our own, and would as soon hurt ourselves as any of you." Nay, they imprecate God's judgments on themselves if they should violate their promise to her. She had pawned her life for theirs, and now they in requital pawn their lives for hers, and (as public persons) with them they pawn the public faith and the credit of their nation, for they plainly interest all Israel in the engagement in those words, When the Lord has given us the land, meaning not themselves only, but the people whose agents they were.

No doubt they knew themselves sufficiently authorized to treat with Rahab concerning this matter, and were confident that Joshua would ratify what they did, else they had not dealt honestly; the general law that they should make no covenant with the Canaanites (De 7:2) did not forbid them to take under their protection a particular person, that had heartily come into their interests and had done them real kindnesses. The law of gratitude is one of the laws of nature. Now observe here,

1 The promises they made her. In general, "We will deal kindly and truly with thee, Jos 2:14. We will not only be kind in promising now, but true in performing what we promise; and not only true in performing just what we promise, but kind in out-doing thy demands and expectations." The goodness of God is often expressed by his kindness and truth (Ps 117:2), and in both these we must be followers of him. In particular, "If a hand be upon any in the house with thee, his blood shall be on our head," Jos 2:19. If hurt come through our carelessness to those whom we are obliged to protect, we thereby contract guilt, and blood will be found a heavy load.

2 The provisos and limitations of their promises. Though they were in haste, and it may be in some confusion, yet we find them very cautious in settling this agreement and the terms of it, not to bind themselves to more than was fit for them to perform.

Note, Covenants must be made with care, and we must swear in judgment, lest we find ourselves perplexed and entangled when it is too late after vows to make enquiry. Those that will be conscientious in keeping their promises will be cautious in making them, and perhaps may insert conditions which others may think frivolous. Their promise is here accompanied with three provisos, and they were necessary ones. They will protect Rahab, and all her relations always, provided,

(1.) That she tie the scarlet cord with which she was now about to let them down in the window of her house, Jos 2:18. This was to be a mark upon the house, which the spies would take care to give notice of to the camp of Israel, that no soldier, how hot and eager soever he was in military executions, might offer any violence to the house that was thus distinguished. This was like the blood sprinkled upon the door-post, which secured the first-born from the destroying angel, and, being of the same colour, some allude to this also to represent the safety of believers under the protection of the blood of Christ sprinkled on the conscience. The same cord that she made use of for the preservation of these Israelites was to be made use of for her preservation. What we serve and honour God with we may expect he will bless and make comfortable to us.

(2.) That she should have all those whose safety she had desired in the house with her and keep them there, and that, at the time of taking the town, none of them should dare to stir out of doors, Jos 2:18,19. This was a necessary proviso, for Rahab's kindred could not be distinguished any other way than by being in her distinguished house; should they mingle with their neighbours, there was no remedy, but the sword would devour one as well as another. It was a reasonable proviso that, since they were saved purely for Rahab's sake, her house should have the honour of being their castle, and that, if they would not perish with those that believed not, they should thus far believe the certainty and severity of the ruin coming upon their city as to retire into a place made safe by promise, as Noah into the ark and Lot into Zoar, and should save themselves from this untoward generation, by separating from them. It was likewise a significant proviso, intimating to us that those who are added to the church that they may be saved must keep close to the society of the faithful, and, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, must take heed of being again entangled therein.

(3.) That she should keep counsel (Jos 2:14,20): If thou utter this our business, that is, "If thou betray us when we are gone,

or if thou make this agreement public, so as that others tie scarlet lines in their windows and so confound us, then we will be clear of thy oath." Those are unworthy of the secret of the Lord that know now how to keep it to themselves when there is occasion.

IV. She then took effectual care to secure her new friends, and sent them out another way, Jam 2:25. Having fully understood the bargain they made with her, and consented to it (Jos 2:21), she then let them down by a cord over the city wall (Jos 2:15), the situation of her house befriending them herein: thus Paul made his escape out of Damascus, 2Co 11:33. She also directed them which way to go for their own safety, being better acquainted with the country than they were, Jos 2:16. She directs them to leave the high road, and abscond in the mountains till the pursuers returned, for till then they could not safely venture over Jordan. Those that are in the way of God and their duty may expect that Providence will protect them, but this will not excuse them from taking all prudent methods for their own safety. God will keep us, but then we must not wilfully expose ourselves. Providence must be trusted, but not tempted.

Calvin thinks that their charge to Rahab to keep this matter secret, and not to utter it, was intended for her safety, lest she, boasting of her security from the sword of Israel, should, before they came to protect her, fall into the hands of the king of Jericho and be put to death for treason: thus do they prudently advise her for her safety, as she advised them for theirs. And it is good advice, which we should at any time be thankful for, to take heed to ourselves.

11 And as soon as we had heard *these things,* our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

13 and *that* ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

14 And the men answered her, our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house *was* upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

16 And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way.

17 And the men said unto her, we *will be* blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.

18 Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

19 And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him.

20 And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.

21 And she said, according unto your words, so *be* it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.

We have here the safe return of the spies Joshua had sent, and the great encouragement they brought with them to Israel to proceed in their descent upon Canaan. Had they been disposed to discourage the people, as the evil spies did that Moses sent, they might have told them what they had observed of the height and strength of the walls of Jericho, and the extraordinary vigilance of the king of Jericho, and how narrowly they escaped out of his hands; but they were of another spirit, and, depending themselves upon the divine promise, they animated Joshua likewise.

1. Their return in safety was itself an encouragement to Joshua, and a token for good. That God provided for them so good a friend as Rahab was in an enemy's country, and that notwithstanding the rage of the king of Jericho and the eagerness of the pursuers they had come back in peace, was such an instance of God's great care concerning them for Israel's sake as might assure the people of the divine guidance and care they were under, which should undoubtedly make the progress of their arms glorious. He that so wonderfully protected their scouts would preserve their men of war, and cover their heads in the day of battle.

2 The report they brought was much more encouraging (Jos 2:24): "All the inhabitants of the country, though resolved to stand it out, yet do faint because of us, they have neither wisdom to yield nor courage to fight," whence they conclude, "Truly the Lord has delivered into our hands all the land, it is all our own; we have nothing to do, in effect, but to take possession." Sinners' frights are sometimes sure presages of their fall. If we resist our spiritual enemies they will flee before us, which will encourage us to hope that in due time we shall be more than conquerors.

22 And they went, and came unto the mountain, and abode there three days, until the pursuers were returned: and the pursuers sought *them* throughout all the way, but found *them* not.

23 So the two men returned, and descended from the mountain, and passed over, and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all *things* that befell them:

24 and they said unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

Joshua-3

Israel Passes over the Jordan

1 And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

Rahab, in mentioning to the spies the drying up of the Red Sea (Jos 2:10), the report of which terrified the Canaanites more than anything else, intimates that those on that side the water expected that Jordan, that great defence of their country, would in like manner give way to them. Whether the Israelites had any expectation of it does not appear. God often did things for them which they looked not for, Isa 64:3. Now here we are told,

I. That they came to Jordan and lodged there, Jos 3:1. Though they were not yet told how they should pass the river, and were unprovided for the passing of it in any ordinary way, yet they went forward in faith, having been told (Jos 1:11) that they should pass it. We must go on in the way of our duty though we foresee difficulties, trusting God to help us through them when we come to them. Let us proceed as far as we can, and depend on divine sufficiency for that which we find ourselves not sufficient for. In this march Joshua led them, and particular notice is taken of his early rising as there is afterwards upon other occasions (Jos 6:12,7:16,8:10), which intimates how little he loved his ease, how much he loved his business, and what care and pains he was willing to take in it. Those that would bring great things to pass must rise early. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty. Joshua herein set a good example to the officers under him, and taught them to rise early, and to all that are in public stations especially to attend continually to the duty of their place.

II. That the people were directed to follow the ark. Officers were appointed to go through the host to give these directions

(Jos 3:2), that every Israelite might know both what to do and what to depend upon.

1. They might depend upon the ark to lead them; that is, upon God himself, of whose presence the ark was an instituted sign and token. It seems, the pillar of cloud and fire was removed, else that would have led them, unless we suppose that it now hovered over the ark and so they had a double guide: honour was put upon the ark, and a defence upon that glory. It is called here the ark of the covenant of the Lord their God. What greater encouragement could they have than this, that the Lord was their God, a God in covenant with them? Here was the ark of the covenant; if God be ours, we need not fear any evil. He was nigh to them, present with them, went before them: what could come amiss to those that were thus guided, thus guarded? Formerly the ark was carried in the midst of the camp, but now it went before them to search out a resting-place for them (Nu 10:33), and, as it were, to give them livery and seisin of the promised land, and put them in possession of it In the ark the tables of the law were, and over it the mercy-seat; for the divine law and grace reigning in the heart are the surest pledges of God's presence and favour, and those that would be led to the heavenly Canaan must take the law of God for their guide (if thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments) and have the great propitiation in their eye, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

2. They might depend upon the priests and Levites, who were appointed for that purpose to carry the ark before them. The work of ministers is to hold forth the word of life, and to take care of the administration of those ordinances which are the tokens of God's presence and the instruments of his power and grace; and herein they must go before the people of God in their way to heaven.

3. The people must follow the ark: Remove from your place and go after it,

(1.) As those that are resolved never to forsake it. Wherever God's ordinances are, there we must be; if they flit, we must remove and go after them.

(2.) As those that are entirely satisfied in its guidance, that it will lead in the best way to the best end; and therefore, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. This must be all their car, to attend the motions of the ark, and follow it with an implicit faith. Thus must we walk after the rule of the word and the direction of the Spirit in every thing, so shall peace be upon us, as it now was upon the Israel of God. They must follow the priests as far as they carried the ark, but no further; so we must follow our ministers only as they follow Christ.

4. In following the ark, they must keep their distance, Jos 3:4. They must none of them come within a thousand yards of the ark.

(1.) They must thus express their awful and reverent regard to that token of God's presence, lest its familiarity with them should breed contempt. This charge to them not to come near was agreeable to that dispensation of darkness, bondage, and terror: but we now through Christ have access with boldness.

(2.) Thus it was made to appear that the ark was able to protect itself, and needed not to be guarded by the men of war, but was itself a guard to them. With what a noble defiance of the enemy did it leave all it its friends half a mile behind except the unarmed priests that carried it as perfectly sufficient for its own safety and theirs that followed it!

(3.) Thus it was the better seen by those that were to be led by it: That you may know the way by which you must go, seeing it, as it were, chalked out or tracked by the ark. Had they been allowed to come near it, they would have surrounded it, and none would have had the sight of it but those that were close to it; but, as it was put at such a distance before them, they

would all have the satisfaction of seeing it, and would be animated by the sight. And it was with good reason that this provision was made for their encouragement:

For you have not passed this way heretofore. This had been the character of all their way through the wilderness, it was an untrodden path, but this especially through Jordan. While we are here we must expect and prepare for unusual events, to pass ways that we have not passed before, and much more when we go hence; our way through the valley of the shadow of death is a way we have not gone before, which makes it the more formidable. But, if we have the assurance of God's presence, we need not fear; that will furnish us with such strength as we never had when we come to do a work we never did.

2 And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;
3 and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.
4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this* way heretofore.
5 And Joshua said unto the people, sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.
6 And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the Ark of the Covenant, and went before the people.
7 And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee.

We may observe here how God honours Joshua, and by this wondrous work he is about to do designs to make Israel know that he is their governor, and then how Joshua honours God and endeavours by it to make Israel know that he is their God. Thus those that honour God he will honour, and those whom

he has advanced should do what they can in their places to exalt him.

I. God speaks to Joshua to put honour upon him, Jos 3:7,8.

1. It was a great honour God is him that he spoke to him as he had done to Moses from off the mercy-seat, before the priests removed it with the ark. This would make Joshua easy in himself and great among the people, that God was pleased to speak so familiarly to him.

2. That he designed to magnify him in the sight of all Israel. He had told him before that he would be with him (Jos 1:5), and that comforted him, but now all Israel shall see it, and this would magnify him. Those are truly great with whom God is and whom he employs and owns in his service. God magnified him because he would have the people magnify him. Pious magistrates are to be highly honoured and esteemed as public blessings, and the more we see of God with them the more we should honour them.

By the dividing of the red Sea Israel was convinced that God was with Moses in bringing them out of Egypt; therefore they are said to be baptized unto Moses in the sea, 1Co 10:2. And upon that occasion they believed him, Ex 14:31. And now, by the dividing of Jordan, they shall be convinced that God is in like manner with Joshua in bringing them into Canaan. God had magnified Joshua before on several occasions, but now he began to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. Some have observed that it was at the banks of Jordan that God began to magnify Joshua, and at the same place he began to magnify our Lord Jesus as Mediator; for John was baptizing at Bethabara, the house of passage, and there it was that when our Saviour was baptized it was proclaimed concerning him, This is my beloved Son.

3. That by him he gave orders to the priests themselves, though they were his immediate attendants (Jos 3:8): Thou shalt

command the priests, that is, "Thou shalt make known to them the divine command in this matter, and take care that they observe it, to stand still at the brink of Jordan while the waters part, that it may appear to be at the presence of the Lord, of the mighty God of Jacob, that Jordan is driven back," Ps 114:5,7. God could have divided the river without the priests, but they could not without him. The priests must herein set a good example to the people, and teach them to do their utmost in the service of God, and trust him for help in time of need.

II. Joshua speaks to the people, and therein honours God.

1. He demands attention (Jos 3:9): "Come hither to me, as many as can come within hearing, and, before you see the works, hear the words of the Lord your God, that you may compare them together and they may illustrate each other." He had commanded them to sanctify themselves, and therefore calls them to hear the word of God, for that is the ordinary means of sanctification, Joh 17:17.

2. He now tells them, at length, by what way they should pass over Jordan, by the stopping of its streams (Jos 3:13): The waters of Jordan shall be cut off. God could by a sudden and miraculous frost have congealed the surface, so that they might all have gone over upon the ice; but that being a thing sometimes done even in that country by the ordinary power of nature (Job 38:30), it would not have been such an honour to Israel's God, nor such a terror to Israel's enemies; it must therefore be done in such a way as had no precedent but the dividing of the Red Sea: and that miracle is here repeated, to show that God has the same power to finish the salvation of his people that he had to begin it, for he is the Alpha and the Omega; and that the word of the Lord (as the Chaldee reads it, Jos 3:7), the essential, eternal Word, was as truly with Joshua as he was with Moses.

And by the dividing of the waters from the waters, and the making of the dry land to appear which had been covered, God would remind them of that in which Moses by revelation had instructed them concerning the work of creation (Ge 1:6,9), that by what they now saw their belief of that which they there read might be assisted, and they might know that the God whom they worshipped was the same God that made the world and that it was the same power that was engaged and employed for them.

3. The people having been directed before to follow the ark are here told that it should pass before them into Jordan, Jos 3:11. Observe,

(1.) The ark of the covenant must be their guide. During the reign of Moses, the cloud was their guide, but now, in Joshua's reign, the ark; both were visible signs of God's presence and presidency, but divine grace under the Mosaic dispensation was wrapt up as in a cloud and covered with a veil, while by Christ, our Joshua, it is revealed in the ark of the covenant unveiled.

(2.) It is called the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth. "He that is your God (Jos 3:9), in covenant with you, is the Lord of all the earth, has both right and power to command, control, use, and dispose of all nations and of all creatures. He is the Lord of all the earth, therefore he needs not you, nor can he be benefited by you; therefore it is your honour and happiness to have him in covenant with you: if he be yours, all the creatures are at your service, and when he pleases shall be employed for you." When we are praising and worshipping God as Israel's God, and ours through Christ, we must remember that he is the Lord of the whole earth, and reverence him and trust in him accordingly. Some observe an accent in the original, which they think directs us to translate it somewhat more emphatically, Behold the ark of the covenant, even the ark of the Lord, or even of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth. (3.) They are told that the ark should pass

before them into Jordan. God would not appoint them to go any where but where he himself would go before them and go with them; and they might safely venture, even into Jordan itself, if the ark of the covenant led them. While we make God's precepts our rule, his promises our stay, and his providence our guide, we need not dread the greatest difficulties we may meet with in the way of duty. That promise is sure to all the seed (Isa 43:2), When thou passes through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.

4. From what God was now about to do for them he infers an assurance of what he would yet further do. This he mentions first, so much was his heart upon it, and so great a satisfaction did it give him (Jos 3:10): "Hereby you shall know that the living God (the true God, and God of power, not one of the dead gods of the heathen) is among you, though you see him not, nor are to have any image of him, is among you to give you law, secure your welfare, and receive your homage,--is among you in this great undertaking now before you; and therefore you shall, nay, he himself will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites." So that the dividing of Jordan was intended to be to them,

(1.) A sure token of God's presence with them. By this they could not but know that God was among them, unless their unbelief was as obstinate against the most convincing evidence as that of their fathers was, who presently after God had divided the Red Sea before them, impudently asked, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? Ex 17:7.

(2.) A sure pledge of the conquest of Canaan. "If the living God is among you, expelling he will expel (so the Hebrew phrase is) from before you the Canaanites." He will do it certainly, and do it effectually. What should hinder him? What can stand in his way before whom rivers are divided and dried up? The forcing of the lines was certain presage of the ruin of all their hosts: how could they stand their ground when Jordan

itself was driven back? When they had not courage to dispute this pass, but trembled at the approach of the mighty God of Jacob (Ps 114:7), what opposition could they ever make after this?

This assurance which Joshua here gives them was so well grounded that it would enable one Israelite to chase a thousand Canaanites, and two to put then thousand to flight; and it would be abundantly strengthened by remembering the song of Moses, dictated forty years before, which plainly foretold the dividing of Jordan and the influence it would have upon the driving out of the Canaanites. Ex 15:15-17, "The inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away, and so be effectually driven out; they shall be as still as a stone till thy people pass over, and then thou shalt bring them in and plant them." Note, God's glorious appearances for his church and people ought to be improved by us for the encouragement of our faith and hope for the future. As for God, his work is perfect. If Jordan's flood cannot keep them our, Canaan's force cannot turn them out again.

5. He directs them to get twelve men ready, one of each tribe, who must be within call to receive such orders as Joshua should afterwards give them, Jos 3:12. It does not appear that they were to attend the priests, and walk with them when they carried the ark, that they might more immediately be witnesses of the wonders done by it, as some think; but they were to be at hand for the service they were called to, Jos 4:4, &c.

8 And thou shalt command the priests that bear the Ark of the Covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

9 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God.

10 And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God *is* among you, and *that* he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.

12 Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, *that* the waters of Jordan shall be cut off *from* the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon a heap.

14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant before the people;

Here we have a short and plain account of the dividing of the river Jordan, and the passage of the children of Israel through it. The story is not garnished with the flowers of rhetoric (gold needs not to be painted), but it tell us, in short, matter of fact.

I. That this river was now broader and deeper than usually it was at other times of the year, Jos 3:15. The melting of the snow on the mountains of Lebanon, near which this river had its rise, was the occasion that at the time of harvest, barley-harvest, which was the spring of the year, Jordan overflowed all his banks. This great flood, just at that time (which Providence might have restrained for once, of which he might have ordered them to cross at another time of the year) very much magnified the power of God and his kindness to Israel. Note, Though the opposition given to the salvation of God's people have all imaginable advantages, yet god can and will conquer it. Let the banks of Jordan be filled to the brink, filled till they run over, it is as easy to Omnipotence to divide them, and dry them up, as if they were ever so narrow, ever so shallow; it is all one with the Lord.

II. That as soon as ever the feet of the priests dipped in the brim of the water the stream stopped immediately, as if a sluice had been led down to dam it up, Jos 3:15,16. So that the waters above swelled, stood on a heap, and ran back, and yet, as it should seem did not spread, but congealed, which

unaccountable rising of the river was observed with amazement by those that live upward upon it many miles off, and the remembrance of it remained among them long after: the waters on the other side this invisible dam ran down of course, and left the bottom of the river dry as far downward, it is likely, as they swelled upward. When they passed through the red Sea, the waters were a wall on either hand, here only on the right-hand.

Note, The God of nature can, when he pleases, change the course of nature, and alter its properties, can turn fluids into solids, waters into standing rocks, as, on the contrary, rocks into standing waters, to serve his own purposes. See Ps 114:5,8. What cannot God do? What will he not do for the perfecting of his peoples, salvation? Sometimes he cleaves the earth with rivers (Hab 3:9), and sometimes, as here, cleaves the rivers without earth. It is easy to imagine how, when the course of this strong rapid stream was arrested on a sudden, the waters roared and were troubled, so that the mountains seemed to shake with the swelling thereof (Ps 46:3), how the floods lifted up their voice, the floods lifted up their waves, while the Lord on high showed himself mightier than the noise of these many waters, Ps 93:3,4.

With reference to this the prophet asks, Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? Was thine anger against the rivers? Hab 3:8. No, Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, Jos 3:13. In allusion to this, it is foretold, among the great things God will do for the gospel church in the latter days, that the great river Euphrates shall be dried up, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, Re 16:12.

When the time has come for Israel's entrance into the land of promise all difficulties shall be conquered, mountains shall become plains (Zec 4:7) and rivers become dry, for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over. When we have finished our pilgrimage through this wilderness, death will be like this Jordan between us and the heavenly Canaan, but the ark of the

covenant has prepare us a way through it; it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed.

III. That the people passed over right against Jericho, which was,

1. An instance of their boldness, and a noble defiance of their enemies. Jericho was one of the strongest cities, and yet they dared to face it at their first entrance.

2. It was an encouragement to them to venture through Jordan, for Jericho was a goodly city and the country about it extremely pleasant; and, having that in view as their own, what difficulties could discourage them from taking possession?

3. It would increase the confusion and terror of their enemies, who no doubt strictly observed their motions, and were the amazed spectators of this work of wonders.

IV. That the priests stood still in the midst of Jordan while all the people passed over, Jos 3:17. There the ark was appointed to be, to show that the same power that parted the waters kept them parted as long as there was occasion; and had not the divine presence, of which the ark was a token, been their security, the waters would have returned upon them and buried them. there the priests were appointed to stand still,

1. To try their faith, whether they could venture to take their post, when god assigned it to them, with mountains of water over their heads. As they made a bold step when they set the first foot into Jordan, so now they made a bold stand when they tarried longest in Jordan; but they knew they carried their own protection with them. Note, Ministers in times of peril should be examples of courage and confidence in the divine goodness.

2. It was to encourage the faith of the people, that they might go triumphantly into Canaan, and fear no evil, no, not in this valley of the shadow of death (for so the divided river was), being assured of God's presence, which interposed between them and the greatest danger, between them and the proud waters, which otherwise had gone over their souls. Thus in the greatest dangers the saints are comforted with his rod and his staff, Ps 23:4.

15 and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of
the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water,
(for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)
16 that the waters which came down from above stood *and* rose up
upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that *is* beside Zairean; and
those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea,
failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against
Jericho.
17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood
firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites
passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean
over Jordan.

Joshua-4

The Twelve Stones Taken from the Jordan

1 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over
Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying,
2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,
3 and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of
Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve
stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the
lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.
4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the
children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

We may well imagine how busy Joshua and all the men of war were while they were passing over Jordan, when besides their own marching into an enemy's country, and in the face of the

enemy, which could not but occasion them many thoughts of hear, they had their wives, and children, and families, their cattle, and tents, and all their effects, bag and baggage, to convey by this strange and untrodden path, which we must suppose either very muddy or very stony, troublesome to the weak and frightful to the timorous, the descent to the bottom of the river and the ascent out of it steep, so that every man must needs have his head full of care and his hands full of business, and Joshua more than any of them. And yet, in the midst of all his hurry, care must be taken to perpetuate the memorial of this wondrous work of God, and this care might not be adjourned to a time of greater leisure.

Note, How much soever we have to do of business for ourselves and our families, we must not neglect nor omit what we have to do for the glory of God and the serving of his honour, for that is our best business. Now,

I. God gave orders for the preparing of this memorial. Had Joshua done it without divine direction, it might have looked like a design to perpetuate his own name and honour, nor would it have commanded so sacred and venerable a regard from posterity as now, when god himself appointed it. Note, God's works of wonder ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance, and means devise for the preserving of the memorial of them. Some of the Israelites that passed over Jordan perhaps were so stupid, and so little affected with this great favour of God to them, that they felt no concern to have it remembered; while others, it may be, were so much affected with it, and had such deep impressions made upon them by it, that they thought there needed no memorial of it to be erected, the heart and tongue of every Israelite in every age would be a living lasting monument of it.

But God, knowing their frame, and how apt they had been soon to forget his works, ordered an expedient for the keeping of this in remembrance to all generations, that those who could not, or would not, read the record of it in the sacred history,

might come to the knowledge of it by the monument set up in remembrance of it, of which the common tradition of the country would be an explication; it would likewise serve to corroborate the proof of the matter of fact, and would remain a standing evidence of it to those who in after-ages might question the truth of it. A monument is to be erected, and,

1. Joshua, as chief captain, must five direction about it (Jos 4:1): When all the people had clean passed over Jordan, not even the feeble, that were the hindmost of them, left behind, so that God had done his work completely, and every Israelite got safe into Canaan, then God spoke unto Joshua to provide materials for this monument. It is the pious conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick that Joshua had gone into some place of retirement to return thanks immediately for this wonderful mercy, and then god met him, and spoke thus to him. Or, perhaps, it was by Eleazar the priest that God gave these and other instructions to Joshua; for, though he is not mentioned here, yet, when Joshua was ordained by the imposition of hands to this great trust, god appointed that Eleazar should ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim, and at his word Joshua and all the children of Israel must go out and come in, Nu 27:21.

2. One man out of each tribe, and he a chosen man, must be employed to prepare materials for this monument, that each tribe might have the story told them by one of themselves, and each tribe might contribute something to the glory of God thereby (Jos 4:2,4): Out of ever tribe a man. Not the Levites only, but every Israelite must, in his place, help to make known to the sons of men God's mighty acts, Ps 145:12. The two tribes, though seated already in their possession, yet, sharing in the mercy, must lend a hand to the memorial of it.

3. The stones that must be set up for this memorial are ordered to be taken out of the midst of the channel (where, probably, there lay abundance of great stones), and as near as might be from the very place where the priests stood with the ark, Jos

4:3,5. This intended monument deserved to be made of stones curiously cut with the finest and most exquisite art, but these stones out of the bottom of the river were more natural and more apt indications of the miracle. let posterity know by this that Jordan was driven back, for these very stones were then fetched out of it. In the institution of signs, God always chose that which was most proper and significant, rather than that which is pompous or curious; for God hath chosen the foolish things of the world. These twelve men, after they got over Jordan, must be sent back to the place where the ark stood, being permitted to come near it (which others might not) for this service: "Pass over before the ark (Jos 4:5), that is, into the presence of the ark, which now stands in the midst of Jordan, and thence fetch these stones."

4. The use of these stones is here appointed for a sign (Jos 4:6), a memorial, Jos 4:7. They would give occasion to the children to ask their parents in time to come, How came these stones hither? (probably the land about not being stony), and then the parents would inform them, as they themselves had been informed, that in this place Jordan was divided by the almighty power of God, to give Israel passage into Canaan, as Joshua enlarges on this head, Jos 4:22-24, &c.

II. According to these orders the thing was done.

1. Twelve stones were taken up out of the midst of Jordan, and carried in the sight of the people to the place where they had their head-quarters that night, Jos 4:8. It is probable that the stones they took were as big as they could well carry, and as near as might be of a size and shape. But whether they went away with them immediately to the place, of whether they staid to attend the ark, and kept pace with the solemn procession of that, to grace its triumphant entry in to Canaan, is not certain. By these stones which they were ordered to take up God did, as it were, give them livery and seisin of this good land; it is all their own, let them enter and take possession; therefore what these twelve did the children of Israel are said

to do (Jos 4:8), because they were the representatives of their respective tribes. In allusion to this, we may observe that when the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, having overcome the sharpness of death and dried up that Jordan, had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, he appointed his twelve apostles according to the number of the tribes of Israel, by the memorial of the gospel to transmit the knowledge of this to remote places and future ages.

2. Other twelve stones (probably much larger than the other, for we read not that they were each of them one man's load) were set up in the midst of Jordan (Jos 4:9), piled up so high in a heap or pillar as that the top of it might be seen above the water when the river was low, or seen in the water when it was clear, or at least the noise of commotion of the water passing over it would be observable, and the bargemen would avoid it, as they do a rock. Some way or other, it is likely, it was discernible, so as to notify the very place where the ark stood, and to serve for a duplicate to the other monument, which was to set up on dry land in Gilgal, for the confirming of its testimony and the preserving of its tradition. The sign being doubled, no doubt the thing was certain.

5 and Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord
your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of
you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the
tribes of the children of Israel:
6 that this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask
their fathers in time to come, saying, what *mean* ye by these stones?
7 then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off
before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over
Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be
for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.
8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up
twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto
Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of
Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they
lodged, and laid them down there.

9 And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the Ark of the Covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

10 For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua.And the people hasted and passed over.

The inspired historian seems to be so well pleased with his subject here that he is loth to quit it, and is therefore very particular in his narrative, especially in observing how closely Joshua pursued the orders God gave him, and that he did nothing without divine direction, finishing all that the Lord had commanded him (Jos 4:10), which is also said to be what Moses commanded. We read not of any particular commands that Moses gave to Joshua about this matter: the thing was altogether new to him. It must therefore be understood of the general instructions Moses had given him to follow the divine direction, to deliver that to the people which he received of the Lord, and to take all occasions to remind them of their duty to God, as the best return for his favours to them. This which Moses, who was now dead and gone, had said to him, he had in mind at this time, and did accordingly. It is well for us to have the good instructions that have been given us ready to us when we have occasion for them.

I. The people hasted and passed over, Jos 4:10. Some understand this of the twelve men that carried the stones, but it seems rather to be meant of the body of the people; for, though an account was given of their passing over (Jos 4:1), yet here it is repeated for the sake of this circumstance, which was to be added, that they passed over in haste, either because Joshua by their officers ordered them to make haste, for it was to be but one day's work and they must not leave a hoof behind, or perhaps it was their own inclination that hastened them.

1. Some hasted because they were not able to trust God. They were afraid the waters should return upon them, being

conscious of guilt, and diffident of the divine power and goodness.

2. Others because they were not willing to tempt God to continue the miracle longer than needs must, nor would they put the patience of the priests that bore the ark too much to the stretch by unnecessary delay. 3. Others because they were eager to be in Canaan, and would thus show how much they longed after that pleasant land. 4. Those that considered least, yet hasted because others did. He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate God's counsels, but he makes haste to attend them, Isa 28:16.

II The two tribes and a half led the van, Jos 4:12,13. So they had promised when they had their lot given them on that side Jordan, Nu 32:27. And Joshua had lately reminded them of their promise, Jos 1:12-15. It was fit that those who had the first settlement should be the first in the encounter of difficulties, the rather because they had not the incumbrance of families with them as the other tribes had, and they were all chose men, and fit for service, ready armed. It was a good providence that they had so strong a body to lead them on, and would be an encouragement to the rest. And the two tribes had no reason to complain: the post of danger is the post of honour.

III. When all the people had got clear to the other side, the priests with the ark came up out of Jordan. This, one would think, should have been done of course; their own reason would tell them that now there was no more occasion for them, and yet they did not stir a step till Joshua ordered them to move, and Joshua did not order them out of Jordan till God directed him to do so, Jos 4:15-17. So observant were they of Joshua, and he of God, which was their praise, as it was their happiness to be under such good direction. How low a condition soever God may at any time bring his priests or people to, let them patiently wait, till by his providence he shall call them up out of it, as the priests here were called to come up out of Jordan, and let them not be weary of waiting,

while they have the tokens of God's presence with them, even the ark of the covenant, in the depth of their adversity.

IV. As soon as ever the priests and the ark had come up out of Jordan, the waters of the river, which had stood on a heap, gradually flowed down according to their nature and usual course, and soon filled the channel again, Jos 4:18. This makes it yet more evident that the stop which had now been given to the river was not from any secret natural cause, but purely from the power of God's presence, and for the sake of his Israel; for when Israel's turn was served, and the token of God's presence was removed, immediately the water went forward again; so that if it be asked, What ailed thee, O Jordan! That thou wast driven back? It must be answered, It was purely in obedience to the God of Israel, and in kindness to the Israel of God. There is therefore none like unto the God of Jeshurun; happy also art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people? Some observe here, by way of allusion, that when the ark, and the priests that bore it, are removed from any place, the flood-gates are drawn up, the defence has departed, and an inundation of judgments is to be expected shortly. Those that are unchurched will soon be undone. The glory has departed if the ark is taken.

V. Notice is taken of the honour put upon Joshua by all this (Jos 4:14): On that day the Lord magnified Joshua, both by the fellowship he admitted him to with himself, speaking to him upon all occasions and being ready to be consulted by him, and by the authority he confirmed him in over both priests and people. Those that honour God he will honour, and when he will magnify a man, as he had said he would magnify Joshua (Jos 3:7), he will do it effectually. Yet it was not for Joshua's sake only that he was thus magnified, but to put him in a capacity of doing so much the more service to Israel, for hereupon they feared him as they feared Moses. See here what is the best and surest way to command the respect of inferiors, and to gain their reverence and observance, not by blustering and threatening, and carrying it with a high hand, but by

holiness and love, and all possible indications of a constant regard to their welfare, and to God's will and honour. Those are feared in the best manner, and to the best purpose, who make it to appear that God is with them, and that they set him before them. Those that are sanctified are truly magnified, and are worthy of double honour. Favourites of heaven should be looked on with awe.

VI. An account is kept of the time of this great event (Jos 4:19): it was on the tenth day of the first month, just forty years since they came out of Egypt, wanting five days. God had said in his wrath that they should wander forty years in the wilderness, but, to make up that forty, we must take in the first year, which was then past, and had been a year of triumph in their deliverance out of Egypt, and this last, which had been a year of triumph likewise on the other side Jordan, so that all the forty were not years of sorrow; and at last he brought them into Canaan five days before the forty years were ended, to show how little pleasure God takes in punishing, how swift he is to show mercy, and that for the elects' sake the days of trouble are shortened, Mt 24:22. God ordered it so that they should enter Canaan four days before the annual solemnity of the Passover, and on the very day when the preparation for it was to begin (Ex 12:3), because he would have their entrance into Canaan Graced and sanctified with that religious feast, and would have them then to be reminded of their deliverance out of Egypt, that, comparing them together, God might be glorified as the Alpha and Omega of their bliss.

11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over,
that the ark of the Lord passed over, and the priests, in the
presence of the people.
12 And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the
tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel,
as Moses spake unto them:
13 about forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the Lord
unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.
14 On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel;
and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

15 And the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying,
16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.
17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.
18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as *they did* before.
19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.
20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.
21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, when your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, what *mean* these stones?

The twelve stones which were laid down in Gilgal (Jos 4:8) are here set up either one upon another, yet so as that they might be distinctly counted, or one by another in rows; for after they were fixed they ar not call a heap of stones, but these stones.

I. It is here taken for granted that posterity would enquire into the meaning of them, supposing them intended for a memorial: Your children shall ask their fathers (for who else should they ask?) What mean these stones? Notes, Those that will be wise when they are old must be inquisitive when they are young. Our Lord Jesus, though he had in himself the fulness of knowledge, has by his example taught children and young people to hear and ask questions, Lu 2:46. Perhaps when John was baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara (the house of passage, where the people passed over) he pointed at these very stones, while saying (Mt 3:9) God is able of these stones (which were at first set up by the twelve tribes) to raise up children unto Abraham.

The stones being the memorial of the miracle, the children's question gave occasion for the improvement of it; but our Saviour says (Lu 10:40), If the children should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out; for one way or other the Lord will be glorified in his works of wonder.

II The parents are here directed what answer to give to this enquiry (Jos 4:22): "You shall let your children know that which you have yourselves learned from the written word and from your fathers." Note, It is the duty of parents to acquaint their children betimes with the word and works of God, that they may be trained up in the way they should go.

1. They must let their children know that Jordan was driven back before Israel, who went through it upon dry land, and that this was the very place where they passed over. They saw how deep and strong a stream Jordan now was, but the divine power put a stop to it, even when it overflowed all its banks--"and this for you, that live so long after." Note, God's mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us; and we should take all occasions to revive the remembrance of the great things God did for our fathers in the days of old.

The place thus marked would be a memorandum to them: Israel came over this Jordan. A local memory would be of use to them, and the sight of the place remind them of that which was done there; and not only the inhabitants of that country, but strangers and travellers, would look upon these stones and receive instruction. Many, upon the sight of the stones, would go to their Bibles, and there read the history of this wondrous work; and some perhaps, upon reading the history, though living at a distance, would have the curiosity to go and see the stones.

2. They must take that occasion to tell their children of the drying up of the Red Sea forty years before: As the Lord your God did to the Red Sea. Note.

(1.) It greatly magnifies later mercies to compare them with former mercies, for, by making the comparison, it appears that god is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

(2.) Later mercies should bring to remembrance former mercies, and revive our thankfulness for them.

3. They must put them in the way of making a good use of these works of wonder, the knowledge whereof was thus carefully transmitted to them, Jos 4:24.

(1.) The power of God was hereby magnified. All the world was or might be convinced that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that nothing is too hard for God to do; nor can any power, no, not that of nature itself, obstruct what God will effect. The deliverances of God's people are instructions to all people, and fair warnings not to contend with Omnipotence.

(2.) The people of God were engaged and encouraged to persevere in his service "That you might fear the Lord your God, and consequently do your duty to him, and this for ever," or all days (margin), "every day, all the days of your lives, and your seed throughout your generations." The remembrance of this wonderful work should effectually restrain them from the worship of other gods, and constrain them to abide and abound in the service of their own God. Note, In all the instructions and informations parents give their children, they should have this chiefly in their eye, to teach and engage them to fear God for ever. Serious godliness is the best learning.

22 then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this
Jordan on dry land.
23 For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before
you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red
sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:
24 that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord,
that it *is* mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.

Joshua-5

The Circumcision and Passover at Gilgal

1 And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which *were* on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

2 At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

3 And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.

4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, *that were* males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

A vast show, no doubt, the numerous camp of Israel made in the plains of Jericho, where now they had pitched their tents. Who can count the dust of Jacob? That which had long been the church in the wilderness has now come up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved, and looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. How terrible she was in the eyes of her enemies we are here told, Jos 5:1. How fair and clear she was made in the eyes of her friends, by the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt, we are told in the following verses.

I. Here is the fright which the Canaanites were put into by their miraculously passing over Jordan, Jos 5:1 The news of it was soon dispersed all the country over, not only as a prodigy in itself, but as an alarm to all the kings and kingdoms of Canaan. Now, as when Babylon was taken, One post runs to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to carry the amazing tidings to every corner of their land, Jer 51:31. And here we are told what impressions the tidings made upon the kings of this land: Their heart melted like wax before the fire, neither was there spirit in them any more. This intimates that,

though the heart of the people generally had fainted before (as Rahab owned, Jos 2:9), yet the kings had till now kept up their spirits pretty well, had promised themselves that, being in possession, their country populous, and their cities fortified, they should be able to make their part good against the invaders; but when they heard not only that they had come over Jordan, and that this defence of their country was broken through, but that they had come over by a miracle, the God of nature manifestly fighting for them, their hearts failed them too, they gave up the cause for gone, and were now at their wits' end. And,

1. They had reason enough to be afraid; Israel itself was a formidable body, and much more so when God was its head, a God of almighty power. What can make head against them if Jordan be driven back before them?

2. God impressed these fears upon them, and dispirited them, as he had promised (Ex 23:27), I will send my fear before thee. God can make the wicked to fear where no fear is (Ps 53:5), much more where there is such cause for fear as was here. He that made the soul can, when he pleases, make his sword thus to approach to it and kill it with his terrors.

II The opportunity which this gave to the Israelites to circumcise those among them that were uncircumcised: At that time (Jos 5:2), when the country about them was in that great consternation, God ordered Joshua to circumcise the children of Israel, for at that time it might be done with safety even in an enemy's country; their hearts being melted, their hands were tied, that they could not take this advantage against them as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites, to come upon them when they were sore. Joshua could not be sure of this, and therefore, if he had ordered this general circumcision just at this time of his own head, he might justly have been censured as imprudent; for, how good soever the thing was in itself, in the eye of reason it was not seasonable at this time, and might have been of dangerous consequence; but, when

God commanded him to do it, he must not consult with flesh and blood; he that bade them to do it would, no doubt, protect them and bear them out in it. Now observe,

1 The occasion there was for this general circumcision.

(1.) All that came out of Egypt were circumcised, Jos 5:5. While they had peace in Egypt doubtless they circumcised their children the eighth day according to the law. But after they began to be oppressed, especially when the edict was made for the destruction of their male infants, the administration of this ordinance was interrupted; many of them were uncircumcised, of whom there was a general circumcision, either during the time of the three days' darkness, as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, or a year after, just before their eating the second Passover at Mount Sinai, and in order to that solemnity (Nu 9:2) as many think. And it is with reference to that general circumcision that this is called a second, Jos 5:2. But the learned Masius thinks it refers to the general circumcision of Abraham's family when that ordinance was first instituted, Ge 17:23. That first confirmed the promise of the land of Canaan, this second was a thankful celebration of the performance of that promise. But,

(2.) All that were born in the wilderness, namely, after their walking in the wilderness, became by the divine sentence a judgment upon them for their disobedience, as is intimated by that repetition of the sentence, Jos 5:6. All that were born since that fatal day on which God swore in his wrath that none of that generation should enter into his rest were uncircumcised. But what shall we say to this? Had not God enjoined it to Abraham, under a very severe penalty, that every man-child of his seed should be circumcised on the eighth day? Ge 17:9-14. Was it not the seal of the everlasting covenant? Was not so great a stress laid upon it when they were coming out of Egypt that when, immediately after the first Passover, the law concerning that feast was made perpetual, this was one clause of it, that no uncircumcised person should eat of it, but should

be deemed as a stranger? And yet, under the government of Moses himself, to have all their children that were born for thirty-eight years together left uncircumcised is unaccountable. So great an omission could not be general but by divine direction. Now,

[1.] Some think circumcision was omitted because it was needless: it was appointed to be a mark of distinction between the Israelites and other nations, and therefore in the wilderness, where they were so perfectly separated from all and mingled with none, there was no occasion for it.

[2.] Others think that they did not look upon the precept of circumcision as obligatory till they came to settle in Canaan; for in the covenant made with them at Mount Sinai nothing was said about circumcision, neither was it of Moses but of the fathers (Joh 7:22), and with particular reference to the grant of the land of Canaan, Ge 17:8.

[3.] Others think that God favourably dispensed with the observance of this ordinance in consideration of the unsettledness of their state, and their frequent removals while they were in the wilderness. It was requisite that children after they were circumcised should rest for some time while they were sore, and stirring them might be dangerous to them; God therefore would have mercy and not sacrifice. This reason is generally acquiesced in, but to me it is not satisfactory, for sometimes they staid a year in a place (Nu 9:22), if not much longer, and in their removals the little children, though sore, might be wrapped so warm, and carried so easy, as to receive no damage, and might certainly be much better accommodated than the mothers in travail or while lying in. Therefore,

[4.] To me it seems to have been a continued token of God's displeasure against them for their unbelief and murmuring. Circumcision was originally a seal of the promise of the land of Canaan, as we observed before. It was in the believing hope of that good land that the patriarchs circumcised their children;

but when God had sworn in his wrath concerning the men of was who came out of Egypt that they should be consumed in the wilderness, and never enter Canaan, nor come within sight of it (as that sentence is here repeated, Jos 5:6, reference being made to it), as a further ratification of that sentence, and to be a constant memorandum of it to them, all that fell under that sentence, and were to fall by it, were forbidden to circumcise their children, by which they were plainly told that, whatever others might, they should never have the benefit of that promise of which circumcision was the seal. And this was such a significant indication of God's wrath as the breaking of the tables of the covenant was when Israel had broken the covenant by making the golden calf.

It is true that there is no express mention of this judicial prohibition in the account of that sentence; but an intimation of it in Nu 14:33, Your children shall bear your whoredoms. It is probable the children of Caleb and Joshua were circumcised, for they were excepted out of that sentence, and of Caleb it is particularly said, To him will I give the land, and to his children (De 1:36), which was the very promise that circumcision was the seal of: and Joshua is here told to circumcise the people, not his own family. Whatever the reason was, it seems that this great ordinance was omitted in Israel for almost forty years together, which is a plain indication that it was not of absolute necessity, nor was to be of perpetual obligation, but should in the fulness of time be abolished, as now it was for so long a time suspended.

2 The orders given to Joshua for this general circumcision (Jos 5:2): Circumcise again the children of Israel, not the same person, but the body of the people. Why was this ordered to be done now? Answ.

(1.) Because now the promise of which circumcision was instituted to be the seal was performed. The seed of Israel was brought safely into the land of Canaan. "Let them therefore

hereby own the truth of that promise which their fathers had disbelieved, and could not find in their hearts to trust to."

(2.) Because now the threatening of which the suspending of circumcision for thirty-eight years was the ratification was fully executed by the expiring of the forty years. That warfare is accomplished, that iniquity is pardoned (Isa 40:2), and therefore now the seal of the covenant is revived again. But why was it not done sooner? Why not while they were resting some months in the plains of Moab? Why not during the thirty days of their mourning for Moses? Why was it not deferred longer, till they had made some progress in the conquest of Canaan, and had gained a settlement there, at least till they had entrenched themselves, and fortified their camp? Why must it be done the very next day after they had come over Jordan? Answ. Because divine Wisdom saw that to be the fittest time, just when the forty years were ended, and they had entered Canaan; and the reasons which human wisdom would have offered against it were easily overruled.

[1.] God would hereby show that the camp of Israel was not governed by the ordinary rules and measures of war, but by immediate direction from God, who by thus exposing them, in the most dangerous moments, magnified his own power in protecting them even then. And this great instance of security, in disabling themselves for action just when they were entering upon action, proclaimed such confidence in the divine care for their safety as would increase their enemies' fears, much more when their scouts informed them not only of the thing itself that was done, but of the meaning of it, that it was a seal of the grant of this land to Israel.

[2.] God would hereby animate his people Israel against the difficulties they were now to encounter, by confirming his covenant with them, which gave them unquestionable assurance of victory and success, and the full possession of the land of promise.

[3.] God would hereby teach them, and us with them, in all great undertakings to begin with God, to make sure of his favour, by offering ourselves to him a living sacrifice (for that was signified by the blood of circumcision), and then we may expect to prosper in all we do.

[4.] The reviving of circumcision, after it had been so long disused, was designed to revive the observance of other institutions, the omission of which had been connived at in the wilderness. This command to circumcise them was to remind them of that which Moses had told them (De 21:8), that when they should have come over Jordan they must not do as they had done in the wilderness, but must come under a stricter discipline. It was said concerning many of the laws God had given them that they must observe them in the land to which they were going, De 6:1,12:1.

[5.] This second circumcision, as it is here called, was typical of the spiritual circumcision with which the Israel of God, when they enter into the gospel rest, are circumcised; it is the learned bishop Pierson's observation that this circumcision being performed under the direction of Joshua, Moses' successor, it points to Jesus as the true circumciser, the author of another circumcision than that of the flesh, commanded by the law, even the circumcision of the heart (Ro 2:29), called the circumcision of Christ, Col 2:11.

3. The people's obedience to these orders. Joshua circumcised the children of Israel (Jos 5:3), not himself with his own hands, but he commanded that it should be done, and took care that it was done: it might soon be despatched, for it was not necessary that it should be done by a priest or Levite, but any one might be employed to do it. All those that were under twenty years old when the people were numbered at Mount Sinai, and not being numbered with them fell not by the fatal sentence, were circumcised, and by them all the rest might be circumcised in a little time. The people had promised to hearken to Joshua as they had hearkened to Moses (Jos 1:17),

and here they gave an instance of their dutifulness by submitting to this painful institution, and not calling him for the sake of it a bloody governor, as Zipporah because of the circumcision called Moses a bloody husband.

4. The names given to the place where this was done, to perpetuate the memory of it.

(1.) It was called the hill of the foreskins, Jos 5:3. Probably the foreskins that were cut off were laid on a heap, and covered with earth, so that they made a little hillock.

(2.) It was called Gilgal, from a word which signifies to take away, from that which God said to Joshua (Jos 5:9), This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt. God is jealous for the honour of his people, his own honour being so much interested in it; and, whatever reproach they may lie under for a time, first or last it will certainly be rolled away, and every tongue that riseth up against them he will condemn.

[1.] Their circumcision rolled away the reproach of Egypt. They were hereby owned to be the free-born children of God, having the seal of the covenant in their flesh, and so the reproach of their bondage in Egypt was removed. They were tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and that was their reproach; but now that they were circumcised it was to be hoped they would be so entirely devoted to God that the reproach of their affection to Egypt would be rolled away.

[2.] Their coming safely to Canaan rolled away the reproach of Egypt, for it silenced that spiteful suggestion of the Egyptians, that for mischief they were brought out, the wilderness had shut them in, Ex 14:3. Their wandering so long in the wilderness confirmed the reproach, but now that they had entered Canaan in triumph that reproach was done away. When God glorifies himself in perfecting the salvation of his people he not only silences the reproach of their enemies, but rolls it upon themselves.

5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people *that were* born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, *them* they had not circumcised.

6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that *were* men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord: unto whom the Lord sware that he would not show them the land, which the Lord sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

8 And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole.

9 And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal [rolling] unto this day.

10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the Passover, unleavened cakes, and parched *corn* in the selfsame day.

12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

We may well imagine that the people of Canaan were astonished, and that when they observed the motions of the enemy they could not but think them very strange. When soldiers take the field they are apt to think themselves excused from religious exercises (they have not time nor thought to attend to them), yet Joshua opens the campaign with one act of devotion after another. What was afterwards said to another Joshua might truly be said to this, Hear now, O Joshua! Thou and thy fellows that sit before thee are men wondered at (Zec 3:8), and yet indeed he took the right method. That is likely to end well which begins with God. Here is,

I. A solemn Passover kept, at the time appointed by the law, the fourteenth day of the first month, and in the same place where they were circumcised, Jos 5:10. While they were wandering in the wilderness they were denied the benefit and comfort of this ordinance, as a further token of God's displeasure; but now, in answer to the prayer of Moses upon the passing of that sentence Ps 90:15, God comforted them again, after the time that he had afflicted them, and therefore now that joyful ordinance is revived again.

Now that they had entered into Canaan it was very seasonable to remember those wondrous works of divine power and goodness by which they were brought out of Egypt. The finishing of mercies should bring to mind the beginning of them; and when it is perfect day we must not forget how welcome the morning-light was when we had long waited for it. The solemn Passover followed immediately after the solemn circumcision; thus, when those that received the word were baptized, immediately we find them breaking bread, Ac 2:41,42.

They kept this Passover in the plains of Jericho, as it were in defiance of the Canaanites that were round about them and enraged against them, and yet could not give them any disturbance. Thus God gave them an early instance of the performance of that promise that when they went up to keep the feasts their land should be taken under the special protection of the divine Providence. Ex 34:24, Neither shall any man desire thy land. He now prepared a table before them in the presence of their enemies, Ps 23:5.

II. Provision made for their camp of the corn of the land, and the ceasing of the manna thereupon, Jos 5:11,12. Manna was a wonderful mercy to them when they needed it. But it was the mark of a wilderness state; it was the food of children; and therefore, though it was angel's food, and not to be complained

of a light bread, yet it would be more acceptable to them to eat of the corn of the land, and this they are now furnished with.

1 The country people, having retired for safety into Jericho, had left their barns and fields, and all that was in them, which served for the subsistence of this great army. And the supply came very seasonably, for,

(1.) After the Passover they were to keep the feast of unleavened bread, which they could not do according to the appointment when they had nothing but manna to live upon; and perhaps this was one reason why it was intermitted in the wilderness. But now they found old corn enough in the barns of the Canaanites to supply them plentifully for that occasion; thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and little did those who laid it up think whose all these things should be which they had provided.

(2.) On the morrow after the Passover-sabbath they were to wave the sheaf of first-fruits before the Lord, Le 23:10,11. And this they were particularly ordered to do when they came into the land which God would vice them: and they were furnished for this with the fruit of the land that year Jos 5:12), which was then growing and beginning to be ripe. Thus they were well provided for, both with old and new corn, as good householders. See Mt 13:52. And as soon as ever the fruits of this good land came to their hands they had an opportunity of honouring God with them, and employing them in his service according to his appointment. And thus, behold, all things were clean and comfortable to them.

Calvin is of opinion that they had kept the Passover every year in its season during their wandering in the wilderness, though it is not mentioned, and that God dispensed with their being uncircumcised, as he did, notwithstanding that, admit them to offer other sacrifices. But some gather from Am 5:25 that after the sentence passed upon them there were no sacrifices offered till they came to Canaan, and consequently no Passover was

kept. And it is observable that after that sentence (Nu 14:1-45) the law which follows (Nu 15:1-41) concerning sacrifices begins thus: "When you shall have come into the land of your habitations" you shall do so and so.

2. Notice is taken of the ceasing of the manna as soon as ever they had eaten the old corn of the land,

(1.) To show that it did not come by chance or common providence, as snow or hail does, but by the special designation of divine wisdom and goodness; for, as it came just when they needed it, so it continued as long as they had occasion for it and no longer.

(2.) To teach us not to expect extraordinary supplies when supplies may be had in an ordinary way. If God had dealt with Israel according to their deserts, the manna would have ceased when they called it light bread; but as long as they needed it God continued it, though they despised it; and now that they needed it not God withdrew it, though perhaps some of them desired it. He is a wise Father, who knows the necessities of his children, and accommodates his gifts to them, not to their humours. The word and ordinances of God are spiritual manna, with which God nourishes his people in this wilderness, and, though often forfeited, yet they are continued while we are here; but when we come to the heavenly Canaan this manna will cease, for we shall no longer have need of it.

Joshua and the Man with a Drawn Sword

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his
eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him
with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and
said unto him, *Art* thou for us, or for our adversaries?
14 And he said, nay; but *as* captain of the host of the Lord am I now
come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and
said unto him, what saith my lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe
from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy. And
Joshua did so.

Joshua-6

The Fall of Jericho

1 Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel:
none went out, and none came in.

We have here a contest between God and the men of Jericho, and their different resolutions, upon which it is easy to say whose word shall prevail.

I. Jericho resolves Israel shall not be its master, Jos 6:1. It was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel. It did shut up, and it was shut up (so it is in the margin); it did shut up itself, being strongly fortified both by art and nature, and it was shut up by the obstinacy and resolution of the inhabitants, who agreed never to surrender nor so much as sound a parley; none went out as deserters or to treat of peace, nor were any admitted in to offer peace. Thus were they infatuated, and their hearts hardened to their own destruction--the miserable case and character of all those that strengthen themselves against the Almighty, Job 15:25.

II. God resolves Israel shall be its master, and that quickly, The captain of the Lord's host, here called Jehovah, taking notice how strongly Jericho was fortified and how strictly guarded, and knowing Joshua's thoughts and cares about reducing it, and perhaps his fears of a disgrace there and of stumbling at the threshold, gave him here all the assurance he could desire of success (Jos 6:2): See, I have given into thy hand Jericho. Not, "I will do it, but, I have done it; it is all thy own, as sure as if it were already in thy possession." It was designed that this city, being the first-fruits of Canaan, should be entirely devoted to God, and that neither Joshua nor Israel should ever be one mite the richer for it, and yet it is here said

to be given into their hand; for we must reckon that most our own which we have an opportunity of honouring God with and employing in his service. Now.

1 The captain of the Lord's host gives directions how the city should be besieged. No trenches are to be opened, no batteries erected, nor battering rams drawn up, nor any military preparations made; but the ark of God must be carried by the priests round the city once a day for six days together, and seven times the seventh day, attended by the men of war in silence, the priests all the while blowing with trumpets of rams' horns, Jos 6:3,4. This was all they were to do.

2. He assures them that on the seventh day before night they should, without fail, be masters of the town. Up on a signal given, they must all shout, and immediately the wall should fall down, which would not only expose the inhabitants, but so dispirit them that they would not be able to make any resistance, Jos 6:5. God appointed this way,

(1.) To magnify his own power, that he might be exalted in his own strength (Ps 21:13), not in the strength of instruments. God would hereby yet further make bare his own almighty arm for the encouragement of Israel and the terror and confusion of the Canaanites.

(2.) To put an honour upon his ark, the instituted token of his presence, and to give a reason for the laws by which the people were obliged to look upon it with the most profound veneration and respect. When, long after this, the ark was brought into the camp without orders from God, it was looked upon as a profanation of it, and the people paid dearly for their presumption, 1Sa 4:3, &c. But now that it was done by the divine appointment it was an honour to the ark of God, and a great encouragement to the faith of Israel.

(3.) It was likewise to put honour upon the priests, who were appointed upon this occasion to carry the ark and sound the

trumpets. Ordinarily the priests were excused from war, but that this privilege, with other honours and powers that the law had given them, might not be grudged them, in this service they are principally employed, and so the people are made sensible what blessings they were to the public and how well worthy of all the advantages conferred upon them.

(4.) It was to try the faith, obedience, and patience, of the people, to try whether they would observe a precept which to human policy seemed foolish to obey and believe a promise which in human probability seemed impossible to be performed. They were also proved whether they could patiently bear the reproaches of their enemies and patiently wait for the salvation of the Lord. Thus by faith, not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down.

(5.) It was to encourage the hope of Israel with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. That suggestion of the evil spies that Canaan could never be conquered because the cities were walled up to heaven (De 1:28) would by this be for ever silenced. The strongest and highest walls cannot hold out against Omnipotence; they needed not to fight, and therefore needed not to fear, because God fought for them.

2 And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand
Jericho, and the king thereof, *and* the mighty men of valor.
3 And ye shall compass the city, all *ye* men of war, *and* go round about
the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.
4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams'
horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times,
and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.
5 And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long *blast* with the
ram's horn, *and* when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people
shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down
flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.
6 And Joshua the son of Nun called the priests, and said unto them,
Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and let seven priests bear seven
trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord.

We have here an account of the cavalcade which Israel made about Jericho, the orders Joshua gave concerning it, as he had received them from the Lord and their punctual observance of these orders. We do not find that he gave the people the express assurances God had given him that he would deliver the city into their hands; but he tried whether they would obey orders with a general confidence that it would end well, and we find them very observant both of God and Joshua.

I. Wherever the ark went the people attended it, Jos 6:9. The armed men went before it to clear the way, not thinking it any disparagement to them, though they were men of war, to be pioneers to the ark of God. If any obstacle should be found in crossing the roads that led to the city (which they must do in walking round it) they would remove it; if any opposition should be made by the enemy, they would encounter it, that the priests' march with the ark might be easy and safe. It is an honour to the greatest men to do any good office to the ark and to serve the interests of religion in their country. The rereward, either another body of armed men, or Dan's squadron, which marched last through the wilderness, or, as some think, the multitude of the people who were not armed or disciplined for war (as many of them as would) followed the ark, to testify their respect to it, to grace the solemnity, and to be witnesses of what was done. Every faithful zealous Israelite would be willing to undergo the same fatigues and run the same hazard with the priests that bore the ark.

II. Seven priests went immediately before the ark, having trumpets in their hands, with which they were continually sounding, Jos 6:4,5,9,13. The priests were God's ministers, and thus in his name, 1. They proclaimed war with the Canaanites, and so stuck a terror upon them; for by terrors upon their spirits they were to be conquered and subdued. Thus God's ministers, by the solemn declarations of his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, must blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in the holy mountain, that the sinners in Zion may be afraid. They are

God's heralds to denounce war against all those that go on still in their trespasses, but say, "We shall have peace, though we go on." 2. They proclaimed God's gracious presence with Israel, and so put life and courage into them. It was appointed that when they went to war the priests should encourage them with the assurance of God's presence with them, De 20:2-4. And particularly their blowing with trumpets was to be a sign to the people that they should be remembered before the Lord Their God in the day of battle, Nu 10:9. It encouraged Abijah, 2Ch 13:12. Thus God's ministers, by sounding the Jubilee trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which proclaims liberty and victory, must encourage the good soldiers of Jesus Christ in their spiritual warfare.

III. The trumpets they used were not those silver trumpets which were appointed to be made for their ordinary service, but trumpets of rams' horns, bored hollow for the purpose, as some think. These trumpets were of the basest matter, dullest sound, and least show, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Thus by the foolishness of preaching, fitly compared to the sounding of these rams' horns, the devil's kingdom is thrown down; and the weapons of our warfare, though they are not carnal nor seem to a carnal eye likely to bring any thing to pass, are yet mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds, 2Co 10:4,5. The word here is trumpets of Jobel, that is, such trumpets as they used to blow withal in the year of jubilee; so many interpreters understand it, as signifying the complete liberty to which Israel was now brought, and the bringing of the land of Canaan into the hands of its just and rightful owners.

IV. All the people were commanded to be silent, not to speak a word, nor make any noise (Jos 6:10), that they might the more carefully attend to the sound of the sacred trumpets, which they were now to look upon as the voice of God among them; and it does not become us to speak when God is speaking. It likewise intimates their reverent expectation of

the event. Zec 2:13, Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord. Ex 14:14, God shall fight, and you shall hold your peace.

V. They were to do this once a day for six days together and seven times the seventh day, and they did so, Jos 6:14,15. God could have caused the walls of Jericho to fall upon the first surrounding of them, but they must go round them thirteen times before they fall, that they might be kept waiting patiently for the Lord. Though they had lately come into Canaan, and their time was very precious (for they had a great deal of work before them), yet they must linger so many days about Jericho, seeming to do nothing, nor to make any progress in their business. As promised deliverances must be expected in God's way, so they must be expected in his time. He that believes does not make haste, not more haste than God would have him make. Go yet seven times, before any thing hopeful appears, 1Ki 18:43.

VI. One of these days must needs be a sabbath day, and the Jews say that it was the last, but this is not certain; however, if he that appointed them to rest on the other sabbath days appointed them to walk on this, that was sufficient to justify them in it; he never intended to bind himself by his own laws, but that when he pleased he might dispense with them. The impotent man went upon this principle when he argued (Joh 5:11), He that made me whole (and therefore has a divine power) said unto me, Take up thy bed. And, in this case here, it was an honour to the sabbath day, by which our time is divided into weeks, that just seven days were to be spent in this work, and seven priests were employed to sound seven trumpets, this number being, on this occasion, as well as many others, made remarkable, in remembrance of the six day's work of creation and the seventh day's rest from it. And, besides, the law of the sabbath forbids our own work, which is servile and secular, but this which they did was a religious act. It is certainly no breach of the sabbath rest to do the sabbath work, for the sake of which the rest was instituted; and

what is the sabbath work but to attend the ark in all its motions?

VII. They continued to do this during the time appointed, and seven times the seventh day, though they saw not any effect of it, believing that at the end the vision would speak and not lie, Hab 2:3. If we persevere in the way of duty, we shall lose nothing by it in the long run. It is probable they walked at such a distance from the walls as to be out of the reach of the enemies' arrows and out of the hearing of their scoffs. We may suppose the oddness of the thing did at first amuse the besieged, but by the seventh day they had grown secure, feeling no harm from that which perhaps they looked upon as an enchantment. Probably they bantered the besiegers, as those mentioned in Ne 4:2, "What do these feeble Jews? Is this the people we thought so formidable? Are these their methods of attack?" Thus they cried peace and safety, that the destruction might be the more terrible when it came. Wicked men (says bishop Hall) think God in jest when he is preparing for their judgment; but they will be convinced of their mistake when it is too late.

VIII. At last they were to give a shout, and did so, and immediately the walls fell, Jos 6:16. This was a shout for mastery, a triumphant shout; the shout of a king is among them, Nu 23:21. This was a shout of faith; they believed that the walls of Jericho would fall, and by this faith the walls were thrown down. It was a shot of prayer, an echo to the sound of the trumpets which proclaimed the promise that God would remember them; with one accord, as one man, they cry to heaven for help, and help comes in. Some allude to this to show that we must never expect a complete victory over our own corruptions till the very evening of our last day, and then we shall shout in triumph over them, when we come to the number and measure of our perfection, as bishop Hall expresses it. A good heart (says he) groans under the sense of his infirmities, fain would be rid of them, and strives and prays, but, when all is done, until the end of the seventh day it

cannot be; then judgment shall be brought forth unto victory. And at the end of time, when our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet, Satan's kingdom shall be completely ruined, and not till then, when all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be effectually and eternally put down.

7 And he said unto the people, Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the Lord.

8 And it came to pass, when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them.

9 And the armed men went before the priests that blew with the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark, the *priests* going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

10 And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall *any* word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.

11 So the ark of the Lord compassed the city, going about *it* once: and they came into the camp, and lodged in the camp.

12 And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord.

13 And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rearward came after the ark of the Lord, *the priests* going on, and blowing with the trumpets.

14 And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp. So they did six days.

15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.

17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that *are* therein, to the

Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

The people had religiously observed the orders given them concerning the besieging of Jericho, and now at length Joshua had told them (Jos 6:16), "The Lord hath given you the city, enter and take possession." Accordingly in these verses we have,

I The rules they were to observe in taking possession. God gives it to them, and therefore may direct it to what uses and intents, and clog it with what provisos and limitations he thinks fit. It is given to them to be devoted to God, as the first and perhaps the worst of all the cities of Canaan.

1 The city must be burnt, and all the lives in it sacrificed without mercy to the justice of God. All this they knew was included in those words, Jos 6:17. The city shall be a cherem, a devoted thing, at and all therein, to the Lord. No life in it might be ransomed upon any terms; they must all be surely put to death, Le 27:29. So he appoints from whom as creatures they had received their lives, and to whom as sinners they had forfeited them; and who may dispute his sentence? Is God unrighteous, who thus taketh vengeance? God forbid we should entertain such a thought! There was more of God seen in the taking of Jericho than of any other of the cities of Canaan, and therefore that must be more than any other devoted to him. And the severe usage of this city would strike a terror upon all the rest and melt their hearts yet more before Israel. Only, when this severity is ordered, Rahab and her family are excepted: She shall live and all that are with her. She had distinguished herself from her neighbours by the kindness she showed to Israel, and therefore shall be distinguished from them by the speedy return of that kindness.

2. All the treasure of it, the money and plate and valuable goods, must be consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and brought into the stock of dedicated things, the Jews say because the city was taken on the sabbath day. Thus God

would be honoured by the beautifying and enriching of his tabernacle; thus preparation was made for the extraordinary expenses of his service; and thus the Israelites were taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth nor to aim at heaping up abundance of it for themselves. God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, not a land abounding with silver and gold; for he would have them live comfortably in it, that they might serve him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distant countries or to hoard for after times. He would likewise have them to reckon themselves enriched in the enriching of the tabernacle, and to think that which was laid up in God's house as truly their honour and wealth as if it had been laid up in their own.

3. A particular caution is given them to take heed of meddling with the forbidden spoil; for what was devoted to God, if they offered to appropriate it to their own use, would prove accursed to them; therefore (Jos 6:18) "In any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing; you will find yourselves inclined to reach towards it, but check yourselves, and frighten yourselves from having any thing to do with it." He speaks as if he foresaw the sin of Achan, which we have an account of in the next chapter, when he gives this reason for the caution, lest you make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it, as it proved that Achan did.

II The entrance that was opened to them into the city by the sudden fall of the walls, or at least that part of the wall over against which they then were when they gave the shout (Jos 6:20): The wall fell down flat, and probably killed abundance of people, the guards that stood sentinel upon it, or others that crowded about it, to look at the Israelites that were walking round. We read of thousands killed by the fall of a wall, 1Ki 20:30. That which they trusted to for defence proved their destruction. The sudden fall of the wall, no doubt, put the inhabitants into such a consternation that they had no strength nor spirit to make any resistance, but they became an easy prey

to the sword of Israel, and saw to how little purpose it was to shut their gates against a people that had the Lord on the head of them, Mic 2:13. Note, The God of heaven easily can, and certainly will, break down all the opposing power of his and his church's enemies. Gates of brass and bars of iron are, before him, but as straw and rotten wood, Isa 45:1,2. Who will bring me into the strong city? Wilt not thou, O God? Ps 60:9,10. Thus shall Satan's kingdom fall, nor shall any prosper that harden themselves against God.

III. The execution of the orders given concerning this devoted city. All that breathed were put to the sword; not only the men that were found in arms, but the women, and children, and old people. Though they cried for quarter, and begged ever so earnestly for their lives, there was no room for compassion, pity must be forgotten: they utterly destroyed all, Jos 6:21. If they had not had a divine warrant under the seal of miracles for this execution, it could not have been justified, nor can it justify the like now, when we are sure no such warrant can be produced.

But, being appointed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth to do it, who is not unrighteous in taking vengeance, they are to be applauded in doing it as the faithful ministers of his justice. Work for God was then bloody work; and cursed was he that did it deceitfully, keeping back his sword from blood, Jer 48:10.

But the spirit of the gospel is very different, for Christ came not to destroy men's lives but to save them, Lu 9:56. Christ's victories were of another nature. The cattle were put to death with the owners, as additional sacrifices to the divine justice. The cattle of the Israelites, when slain at the altar, were accepted as sacrifices for them, but the cattle of these Canaanites were required to be slain as sacrifices with them, for their iniquity was not to be purged with sacrifice and offering: both were for the glory of God.

2 The city was burnt with fire, and all that was in it, Jos 6:24. The Israelites, perhaps, when they had taken Jericho, a large and well-built city, hoped they should have that for their head-quarters; but God will have them yet to dwell in tents, and therefore fires this nest, lest they should nestle in it. 3. All the silver and gold, and all those vessels which were capable of being purified by fire, were brought into the treasury of the house of the Lord; not that he needed it but that he would be honoured by it, as the Lord of hosts, of their hosts in particular, the God that gave the victory and therefore might demand the spoil, either the whole, as here, or, as sometimes, a tenth, Heb 7:4.

IV. The preservation of Rahab the harlot, or inn-keeper, who perished not with those that believed not, Heb 11:31. The public faith was engaged for her safety by the two spies, who acted therein as public persons; and therefore, though the hurry they were in at the taking of the town was no doubt very great, yet Joshua took effectual care for her preservation. The same persons that she had secured were employed to secure her, Jos 6:22,23. They were best able to do it who knew her and her house, and they were fittest to do it, that it might appear it was for the sake of her kindness to them that she was thus distinguished and had her life given her for a prey. All her kindred were saved with her; like Noah she believed to the saving of her house; and thus faith in Christ brings salvation to the house, Ac 16:31. Some ask how her house, which is said to have been upon the wall (Jos 2:15), escaped falling with the wall; we are sure it did escape, for she and her relations were safe in it, either though it joined so near to the wall as to be said to be upon it, yet it was so far off as not to fall either with the wall or under it; or, rather, that part of the wall on which her house stood fell not. Now being preserved alive,

1. She was left for some time without the camp to be purified from the Gentile superstition, which she was to renounce, and to be prepared for her admission as a proselyte.

2. She was in due time incorporated with the church of Israel, and she and her posterity dwelt in Israel, and her family was remarkable long after. We find her the wife of Salmon, prince of Judah, mother of Boaz, and named among the ancestors of our Saviour, Mt 1:5. Having received Israelites in the name of Israelites, she had an Israelite's reward. Bishop Pierson observes that Joshua's saving Rahab the harlot, and admitting her into Israel, were a figure of Christ's receiving into his kingdom, and entertaining there, the publicans and the harlots, Mt 21:31. Or it may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles.

V. Jericho is condemned to a perpetual desolation, and a curse pronounced upon the man that at any time hereafter should offer to rebuild it (Jos 6:26): Joshua adjured them, that is, the elders and people of Israel, not only by their own consent, obliging themselves and their posterity never to rebuild this city, but by the divine appointment, God himself having forbidden it under the sever penalty here annexed.

1. God would hereby show the weight of a divine curse; where it rests there is no contending with it nor getting from under it; it brings ruin without remedy or repair.

2. He would have it to remain in its ruins a standing monument of his wrath against the Canaanites when the measure of their iniquity was full, and of his mercy to his people when the time had come for their settlement in Canaan. The desolations of their enemies were witnesses of his favour to them, and would upbraid them with their ingratitude to that God who had done so much for them. The situation of the city was very pleasant, and probably its nearness to Jordan was an advantage to it,

which would tempt men to build upon the same spot; but they are here told it is at their peril if they do it.

Men build for their posterity, but he that builds Jericho shall have no posterity to enjoy what he builds; his eldest son shall die when he begins the work, and if he take not warning by that stroke to desist, but will go on presumptuously, the finishing of his work shall be attended with the funeral of his youngest, and we must suppose all the rest cut off between. This curse, not being a curse causeless, did come upon that man who long after rebuilded Jericho (1Ki 16:34), but we are not to think it made the place ever the worse when it was built, or brought any hurt to those that inhabited it. We find Jericho afterwards graced with the presence, not only of those two great prophets Elijah and Elisha, but of our blessed Saviour himself, Lu 18:35,19:1,Mt 20:29. Note, It is a dangerous thing to attempt the building up of that which God will have to be destroyed. See Mal 1:4.

Lastly, All this magnified Joshua and raised his reputation (Jos 6:27); it made him not only acceptable to Israel, but formidable to the Canaanites, because it appeared that God was with him of a truth: the Word of the Lord was with him, so the Chaldee, even Christ himself, the same that was with Moses. Nothing can more raise a man's reputation, nor make him appear more truly great, than to have the evidences of God's presence with him.

18 And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.

19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, *are* consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.

20 So the people shouted when *the priests* blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.

21 And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.
22 But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.
23 And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel.
24 And they burnt the city with fire, and all that *was* therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the Lord.
25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel *even* unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.
26 And Joshua adjured *them* at that time, saying, cursed *be* the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest *son* shall he set up the gates of it.
27 So the Lord was with Joshua; and his fame was *noised* throughout all the country.

Joshua-7

The Sin of Achan

1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel.
2 And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth- even, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.

3 And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; *and* make not all the people to labor thither; for they *are but* few.

The story of this chapter begins with a but. The Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised through all that country, so the foregoing chapter ends, and it left no room to doubt but that he would go on as he had begun conquering and to conquer. He did right, and observed his orders in every thing. But the children of Israel committed a trespass, and so set God against them; and then even Joshua's name and fame, his wisdom and courage, could do them no service. If we lose our God, we lose our friends, who cannot help us unless God be for us. Now here is,

I. Achan sinning, Jos 7:1. Here is only a general mention made of the sin; we shall afterwards have a more particular account of it from his own mouth. The sin is here said to be taking of the accursed thing, in disobedience to the command and in defiance of the threatening, Jos 6:18. In the sacking of Jericho orders were given that they should neither spare any lives nor take any treasure to themselves; we read not of the breach of the former prohibition (there were none to whom they showed any mercy), but of the latter: compassion was put off and yielded to the law, but covetousness was indulged.

The love of the world is that root of bitterness which of all others is most hardly rooted up. Yet the history of Achan is a plain intimation that he of all the thousands of Israel was the only delinquent in this matter. Had there been more in like manner guilty, no doubt we should have heard of it: and it is strange there were no more. The temptation was strong. It was easy to suggest what a pity it was that so many things of value should be burnt; to what purpose is this waste? In plundering cities, every man reckons himself entitled to what he can lay his hands on. It was easy to promise themselves secrecy and impunity.

Yet by the grace of God such impressions were made upon the minds of the Israelites by the ordinances of God, circumcision and the Passover, which they had lately been partakers of, and by the providences of God which had been concerning them, that they stood in awe of the divine precept and judgment, and generously denied themselves in obedience to their God. And yet, though it was a single person that sinned, the children of Israel are said to commit the trespass, because one of their body did it, and he was not as yet separated from them, nor disowned by them.

They did it, that is, by what Achan did guilt was brought upon the whole society of which he was a member. This should be a warning to us to take heed of sin ourselves, lest by it many be defiled or disquieted (Heb 12:15), and to take heed of having fellowship with sinners, and of being in league with them, lest we share in their guilt. Many a careful tradesman has been broken by a careless partner. And it concerns us to watch over one another for the preventing of sin, because others' sins may redound to our damage.

II The camp of Israel suffering for the same: The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; he saw the offence, though they did not, and takes a course to make them see it; for one way or other, sooner or later, secret sins will be brought to light; and, if men enquire not after them, God will, and with his enquiries will awaken theirs. Many a community is under guilt and wrath and is not aware of it till the fire breaks out: here it broke out quickly.

1. Joshua sends a detachment to seize upon the next city that was in their way, and that was Ai. Only 3000 men were sent, advice being brought him by his spies that the place was inconsiderable, and needed no greater force for the reduction of it, Jos 7:2,3. Now perhaps it was a culpable assurance, or security rather that led them to send so small a party on this expedition; it might also be an indulgence of the people in the love of ease, for they will not have all the people to labour

thither. Perhaps the people were the less forward to go upon this expedition because they were denied the plunder of Jericho; and these spies were willing they should be gratified. Whereas when the town was to be taken, though God by his own power would throw down the walls, yet they must all labour thither and labour there too, in walking round it. It did not bode well at all that God's Israel began to think much of their labour, and contrived how to spare their pains. It is required that we work out our salvation, though it is God that works in us. It has likewise often proved of bad consequence to make too light of an enemy. They are but few (say the spies), but, as few as they were, they were too many for them. It will awaken our care and diligence in our Christian warfare to consider that we wrestle with principalities and powers.

2 The party he sent, in their first attack upon the town, were repulsed with some loss (Jos 7:4,5): They fled before the men of Ai, finding themselves unaccountably dispirited, and their enemies to sally out upon them with more vigour and resolution than they expected. In their retreat they had about thirty-six men cut off: no great loss indeed out of such a number, but a dreadful surprise to those who had no reason to expect any other in any attack than clear, cheap, and certain victory. And now, as it proves, it is well there were but 3000 that fell under this disgrace. Had the body of the army been there, they would have been no more able to keep their ground, now they were under guilt and wrath, than this small party, and to them the defeat would have been much more grievous and dishonourable. However, it was bad enough as it was, and served,

(1.) To humble God's Israel, and to teach them always to rejoice with trembling. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth if off.

(2.) To harden the Canaanites, and to make them the more secure notwithstanding the terrors they had been struck with, that their ruin, when it came, might be the more dreadful.

(3.) To be an evidence of God's displeasure against Israel, and a call to them to purge out the old leaven. And this was principally intended in their defeat. 3. The retreat of this party in disorder put the whole camp of Israel into a fright: The hearts of the people melted, not so much for the loss as for the disappointment. Joshua had assured them that the living God would without fail drive out the Canaanites from before them, Jos 3:10. How can this event be reconciled to that promise? To every thinking man among them it appeared an indication of God's displeasure, and an omen of something worse, and therefore no marvel it put them into such a consternation; if God turn to be their enemy and fight against them, what will become of them? True Israelites tremble when God is angry.

4 So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men; and they fled before the men of Ai.

5 And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate *even* unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

6 And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

7 And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

We have here an account of the deep concern Joshua was in upon this sad occasion. He, as a public person, interested himself more than any other in this public loss, and is therein an example to princes and great men, and teaches them to lay much to heart the calamities that befall their people: he is also a type of Christ, to whom the blood of his subjects is precious, Ps 72:14. Observe,

I. How he grieved: He rent his clothes (Jos 7:6), in token of great sorrow for this public disaster, and especially a dread of God's displeasure, which was certainly the cause of it. Had it

been but the common chance of war (as we are too apt to express it), it would not have become a general to droop thus under it; but, when God was angry, it was his duty and honour to feel thus. One of the bravest soldiers that ever was owned that his flesh trembled for fear of God, Ps 119:120. As one humbling himself under the mighty had of God, he fell to the earth upon his face, not thinking it any disparagement to him to lie thus low before the great God, to whom he directed this token of reverence, by keeping his eye towards the ark of the Lord.

The elders of Israel, being interested in the cause and influenced by his example, prostrated themselves with him, and, in token of deep humiliation, put dust upon their heads, not only as mourners, but as penitents; not doubting but it was for some sin or other that God did thus contend with them (though they knew not what it was), they humbled themselves before God, and thus deprecated the progress of his wrath. This they continued until even-tide, to show that it was not the result of a sudden feeling, but proceeded from a deep conviction of their misery and danger if God were any way provoked to depart from them. Joshua did not fall foul upon his spies for their misinformation concerning the strength of the enemy, nor upon the soldiers for their cowardice, though perhaps both were blameworthy, but his eye is up to God; for is there any evil in the camp and he has not done it? His eye is upon God as displeased, and that troubles him.

II. How he prayed, or pleaded rather, humbly expostulating the case with God, not sullen, as David when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, but much affected; his spirit seemed to be somewhat ruffled and discomposed, yet not so as to be put out of frame for prayer; but, by giving vent to his trouble in a humble address to God, he keeps his temper and it ends well.

1. Now he wishes they had all taken up with the lot of the two tribes on the other side Jordan, Jos 7:7. He thinks it would have

been better to have staid there and been cut short than come hither to be cut off. This savours too much of discontent and distrust of God, and cannot be justified, though the surprise and disappointment to one deeply concerned for the public interest may in part excuse it. Those words, wherefore hast thou brought us over Jordan to destroy us? are too like what the murmurers often said (Ex 14:11,12,16:3,17:3,Nu 14:2,3); but he that searches the heart knew they came from another spirit, and therefore was not extreme to mark what he said amiss. Had Joshua considered that this disorder which their affairs were put into no doubt proceeded from something amiss, which yet might easily be redressed, and all set to rights again (as often in his predecessor's time), he would not have spoken of it as a thing taken for granted that they were delivered into the hands of the Amorites to be destroyed. God knows what he does, though we do not; but this we may be sure of, he never did nor ever will do us any wrong.

2. He speaks as one quite at a loss concerning the meaning of this event (Jos 7:8): "What shall I say, what construction can I put upon it, when Israel, thy own people, for whom thou hast lately done such great things and to whom thou hast promised the full possession of this land, when they turn their backs before their enemies" (their necks, so the word is), "when they not only flee before them, but fall before them, and become a prey to them? What shall we think of the divine power? Is the Lord's arm shortened? Of the divine promise? Is his word yea and nay? Of what God has done for us? Shall this be all undone again and prove in vain?" Note, The methods of Providence are often intricate and perplexing, and such as the wisest and best of men know not what to say to; but they shall know hereafter, Joh 13:7.

3. He pleads the danger Israel was now in of being ruined. He gives up all for lost: "The Canaanites will environ us round, concluding that now our defence having departed, and the scales being turned in their favour, we shall soon be as contemptible as ever we were formidable, and they will cut off

our name from the earth," Jos 7:9. Thus even good men, when things go against them a little, are too apt to fear the worst, and make harder conclusions than there is reason for. But his comes in here as a plea: "Lord, let not Israel's name, which has been so dear to thee and so great in the world, be cut off."

4. He pleads the reproach that would be cast on God, and that if Israel were ruined his glory would suffer by it. They will cut off our name, says he, yet, as if he had corrected himself for insisting upon that, it is no great matter (thinks he) what becomes of our little name (the cutting off of that will be a small loss), but what wilt thou do for thy great name? This he looks upon and laments as the great aggravation of the calamity. He feared it would reflect on God, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness; what would the Egyptians say?

Note, Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than dishonour done to God's name. This also he insists upon as a plea for the preventing of his fears and for a return of God's favour; it is the only word in all his address that has any encouragement in it, and he concludes with it, leaving it to this issue, Father, glorify thy name. The name of God is a great name, above every name; and, whatever happens, we ought to believe that he will, and pray that he would, work for his own name, that this may not be polluted. This should be our concern more than any thing else. On this we must fix our eye as the end of all our desires, and from this we must fetch our encouragement as the foundation of all our hopes. We cannot urge a better plea than this, Lord, What wilt thou do for thy great name? Let God in all be glorified, and then welcome his whole will.

8 O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!

9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear *of it*, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?

11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put *it* even among their own stuff.

12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.

We have here God's answer to Joshua's address, which, we may suppose, came from the oracle over the ark, before which Joshua had prostrated himself, Jos 7:6. Those that desire to know the will of God must attend with their desires upon the lively oracles, and wait at wisdom's gates for wisdom's dictates, Pr 8:34. And let those that find themselves under the tokens of God's displeasure never complain of him, but complain to him, and they shall receive an answer of peace. The answer came immediately, while he was yet speaking (Isa 65:24), as that to Daniel, Da 9:20, &c.

I. God encourages Joshua against his present despondencies, and the black and melancholy apprehensions he had of the present posture of Israel's affairs (Jos 7:10): "Get thee up, suffer not thy spirits to droop and sink thus; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" No doubt Joshua did well to humble himself before God, and mourn as he did, under the tokens of his displeasure; but now God told him it was enough, he would not have him continue any longer in that melancholy posture, for God delights not in the grief of penitents when they afflict their souls further than as it qualifies them for pardon and peace; the days even of that mourning must be ended. Arise, shake thyself from the dust, Isa 53:2. Joshua continued his mourning till eventide (Jos 7:6), so late that they could do nothing that night towards the discovery of the criminal, but were forced to put it off till next morning. Daniel (Da 9:21), and Ezra (Ezr 9:5,6), continued their mourning only till the time of the evening sacrifice; that revived them both: but

Joshua went past that time, and therefore is thus roused: "Get thee up, do not lie all night there." Yet we find that Moses fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, to make intercession for Israel, De 9:18.

Joshua must get up because he has other work to do than to lie there; the accursed thing must be discovered and cast out, and the sooner the better; Joshua is the man that must do it, and therefore it is time for him to lay aside his mourning weeds, and put on his judge's robes, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak. Weeping must not hinder sowing, nor one duty of religion jostle out another. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Shechaniah perhaps had an eye to this in what he said to Ezra upon a like occasion. See Ezr 10:2-4.

II. He informs him of the true and only cause of this disaster, and shows him wherefore he contended with them (Jos 7:11): Israel hath sinned. "Think not that God's mind is changed, his arm shortened, or his promise about to fail; no, it is sin, it is sin, that great mischief-maker, that has stopped the current of divine favours and has made this breach upon you." The sinner is not named, though the sin is described, but it is spoken of as the act of Israel in general, till they have fastened it upon the particular person, and their godly sorrow have so wrought a clearing of themselves, as theirs did, 2Co 7:11. Observe how the sin is here made to appear exceedingly sinful.

1. They have transgressed my covenant, an express precept with a penalty annexed to it. It was agreed that God should have all the spoil of Jericho, and they should have the spoil of the rest of the cities of Canaan; but, in robbing God of his part, they transgressed this covenant.

2. They have even taken of the devoted thing, in contempt of the curse which was so solemnly denounced against him that should dare to break in upon God's property, as if that curse had nothing in it formidable.

3. They have also stolen; they did it clandestinely, as if they could conceal it from the divine omniscience, and they were ready to say, The Lord shall not see, or will not miss so small a matter out of so great a spoil. Thus thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself.

4. They have dissembled also. Probably, when the action was over, Joshua called all the tribes, and asked them whether they had faithfully disposed of the spoil according to the divine command, and charged them, if they knew of any transgression, that they should discover it, but Achan joined with the rest in a general protestation of innocency, and kept his countenance, like the adulterous woman that eats and wipes her mouth, and says, I have done no wickedness. Nay,

5. They have put the accursed thing among their own goods, as if they had as good a title to that as to any thing they have, never expecting to be called to an account, nor designing to make restitution. All this Joshua, though a wise and vigilant ruler, knew nothing of, till God told him, who knows all the secret wickedness that is in the world, which men know nothing of God could at this time have told him who the person was that had done this thing, but he does not,

(1.) To exercise the zeal of Joshua and Israel, in searching out the criminal.

(2.) To give the sinner himself space to repent and make confession. Joshua no doubt proclaimed it immediately throughout the camp that there was such a transgression committed, upon which, if Achan had surrendered himself, and penitently owned his guilt, and prevented the scrutiny, who knows but he might have had the benefit of that law which accepted of a trespass-offering, with restitution, from those that had sinned through ignorance in the holy things of the law? Le 5:15,16. But Achan never discovering himself till the lot discovered him evidenced the hardness of his heart, and therefore he found no mercy.

III. He awakens him to enquire further into it, by telling him,

1. That this was the only ground for the controversy God had with them, this, and nothing else; so that when this accursed thing was put away he needed not fear, all would be well, the stream of their successes, when this one obstruction was removed, would run as strong as ever.

2. That if this accursed thing were not destroyed they could not expect the return of God's gracious presence; in plain terms, neither will I be with you any more as I have been, except you destroy the accursed, that is, the accursed person, who is made so by the accursed thing. That which is accursed will be destroyed; and those whom God has entrusted to bear the sword bear it in vain if they make it not a terror to that wickedness which brings these judgments of God on a land. By personal repentance and reformation, we destroy the accursed thing in our own hearts, and, unless we do this, we must never expect the favour of the blessed God. Let all men know that it is nothing but sin that separates between them and God, and, if it be not sincerely repented of and forsaken, it will separate eternally.

IV. He directs him in what method to make this enquiry and prosecution.

1. He must sanctify the people, now over-night, that is, as it is explained, he must command them to sanctify themselves, Jos 7:13. And what can either magistrates or ministers do more towards sanctification? They must put themselves into a suitable frame to appear before God and submit to the divine scrutiny, must examine themselves, now that God was coming to examine them, must prepare to meet their God. They were called to sanctify themselves when they were to receive the divine law (Ex 19:1-25), and now also when they were to come under the divine judgment; for in both God is to be

attended with the utmost reverence. "There is an accursed thing in the midst of you, and therefore sanctify yourselves," that is, Let all that are innocent be able to clear themselves, and be the more careful to cleanse themselves. The sin of others may be improved by us as furtherances of our sanctification, as the scandal of the incestuous Corinthian occasioned a blessed reformation in that church, 2Co 7:11.

2. He must bring them all under the scrutiny of the lot (Jos 7:14); the tribe which the guilty person was of should first be discovered by lot, then the family, then the household, and last of all the person. The conviction came upon him thus gradually that he might have some space given him to come in and surrender himself; for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Observe, The Lord is said to take the tribe, and family, and household, on which the lot fell, because the disposal of the lot is of the Lord, and, however casual it seems, is under the direction of infinite wisdom and justice; and to show that when the sin of sinners finds them out God is to be acknowledged in it; it is he that seizes them, and the arrests are in his name. God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants, Ge 44:16. It is also intimated with what a certain and unerring judgment the righteous God does and will distinguish between the innocent and the guilty, so that though for a time they seem involved in the same condemnation, as the whole tribe did when it was first taken by the lot, yet he who has his fan in his hand will effectually provide for the taking out of the precious from the vile; so that though the righteous be of the same tribe, and family, and household, with the wicked, yet they shall never be treated as the wicked, Ge 18:25.

3. When the criminal was found out he must be put to death without mercy (Heb 10:28), and with all the expressions of a holy detestation, Jos 7:15. He and all that he has must be burnt with fire, that there might be no remainders of the accursed thing among them; and the reason given for this severe sentence is because the criminal has,

(1.) Given a great affront to God: He has transgressed the covenant of the Lord, who is jealous particularly for the honour of the holy covenant.

(2.) He has done a great injury to the church of God: He has wrought folly in Israel, has shamed that nation which is looked upon by all its neighbours to be a wise and understanding people, has infected that nation which is sanctified to God, and troubled that nation of which he is the protector. These being crimes so heinous in their nature, and of such pernicious consequence and example, the execution, which otherwise would have come under the imputation of cruelty, is to be applauded as a piece of necessary justice. It was sacrilege; it was invading God's rights, alienating his property, and converting to a private use that which was devoted to his glory and appropriated to the service of his sanctuary--this was the crime to be thus severely punished, for warning to all people in all ages to take heed how they rob God.

13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There *is* an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, *that* the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come according to the families *thereof;* and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households; and the household which the Lord shall take shall come man by man.

15 And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

16 So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:

We have in these verses,

The discovery of Achan by the lot, which proved a perfect lot, though it proceeded gradually. Though we may suppose that Joshua slept the better, and with more ease and satisfaction, when he knew the worst of the disease of that body of which, under God, he was the head, and was put into a certain method of cure, yet he rose up early in the morning (Jos 7:16), so much was his heart upon it, to put away the accursed thing. We have found Joshua upon other occasions an early riser; here it shows his zeal and vehement desire to see Israel restored to the divine favour. In the scrutiny observe,

1. That the guilty tribe was that of Judah, which was, and was to be, of all the tribes, the most honourable and illustrious; this was an alloy to their dignity, and might serve as a check to their pride: many there were who were its glories, but here was one that was its reproach. Let not the best families think it strange if there be those found in them, and descending from them, that prove their grief and shame. Judah was to have the first and largest lot in Canaan; the more inexcusable is one of that tribe it, not content to wait for his own share, he break in upon God's property. The Jews' tradition is that when the tribe of Judah was taken the valiant men of that tribe drew their swords, and professed they would not sheathe them again till they saw the criminal punished and themselves cleared who knew their own innocency.

2. That the guilty person was at length fastened upon, and the language of the lot was, Thou art the man, Jos 7:18. It was strange that Achan, being conscious to himself of guilt, when he saw the lot come nearer and nearer to him, had not either the wit to make an escape or the grace to make a confession; but his heart was hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and it proved to be to his own destruction. We may well imagine how his countenance changed, and what horror and confusion seized him when he was singled out as the delinquent, when the eyes of all Israel were fastened upon him, and every one was ready to say, Have we found thee, O our enemy? See here,

(1.) The folly of those that promise themselves secrecy in sin: the righteous God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness, and so bringing to shame and ruin those that continue their fellowship with those unfruitful works. A bird of the air, when God pleases, shall carry the voice, Ec 10:20. See Ps 94:7, &c.

(2.) How much it is our concern, when God is contending with us, to find out what the cause of action is, what the particular sin is, that, like Achan, troubles our camp. We must thus examine ourselves and carefully review the records of conscience, that we may find out the accursed thing, and pray earnestly with holy Job, Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. Discover the traitor and he shall be no longer harboured.

17 and he brought the family of Judah; and he took the family of the Zarhites: and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man; and Zabdi was taken:

18 and he brought his household man by man; and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me.

His arraignment and examination, Jos 7:19. Joshua sits judge, and, though abundantly satisfied of his guilt by the determination of the lot, yet urges him to make a penitent confession, that his soul might be saved by it in the other world, though he could not give him any encouragement to hope that he should save his life by it. Observe,

1. How He accosts him with the greatest mildness and tenderness that could be, like a true disciple of Moses. He might justly have called him "thief," and "rebel," "Raca," and "thou fool," but he call him "son;" he might have adjured him to confess, as the high priest did our blessed Saviour, or threatened him with the torture to extort a confession, but for

love's sake he rather beseeches him: I pray thee make confession. This is an example to all not to insult over those that are in misery, though they have brought themselves into it by their own wickedness, but to treat even offenders with the spirit of meekness, not knowing, what we ourselves should have been and done if God had put us into the hands of our own counsels. It is likewise an example to magistrates, in executing justice, to govern their own passions with a strict and prudent hand, and never suffer themselves to be transported by them into any indecencies of behaviour or language, no, not towards those that have given the greatest provocations. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Let them remember the judgment is God's, who is Lord of his anger. This is the likeliest method of bringing offenders to repentance.

2. What he wishes him to do, to confess the fact, to confess it to God, the party offended by the crime; Joshua was to him in god's stead, so that in confessing to him he confessed to God. Hereby he would satisfy Joshua and the congregation concerning that which was laid to his charge; his confession would also be an evidence of his repentance, and a warning to others to take heed of sinning after the similitude of his transgression: but that which Joshua aims at herein is that God might be honoured by it, as the Lord, the God of infinite knowledge and power, from whom no secrets are hid; and as the God of Israel, who, as he does particularly resent affronts given to his Israel, so he does the affronts given him by Israel. Note, In confessing sin, as we take shame to ourselves, so we give glory to God as righteous God, owning him justly displeased with us, and as a good God, who will not improve our confessions as evidences against us, but is faithful and just to forgive when we are brought to own that he would be faithful and just if he should punish. By sin we have injured God in his honour. Christ by his death has made satisfaction for the injury; but it is required that we by repentance show our good will to his honour, and, as far as in us lies, give glory to him. Bishop Patrick quotes the Samaritan chronicle, making

Joshua to say here to Achan, Lift up thy eyes to the king of heaven and earth, and acknowledge that nothing can be hidden from him who knoweth the greatest secrets.

20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

His confession, which now at last, when he saw it was to no purpose to conceal his crime, was free and ingenuous enough, Jos 7:20,21. Here is,

1. A penitent acknowledgment of fault. "Indeed I have sinned; what I am charged with is too true to be denied and too bad to be excused. I own it, I lament it; the Lord is righteous in bringing it to light, for indeed I have sinned." This is the language of a penitent that is sick of his, and whose conscience is loaded with it. "I have nothing to accuse any one else of, but a great deal to say against myself; it is with me that the accursed thing is found; I am the man who has perverted that which was right and it profited me not." And that wherewith he aggravates the sin is that it was committed against the Lord God of Israel. He was himself an Israelite, a sharer with the rest of that exalted nation in their privileges, so that, in offending the God of Israel, he offended his own God, which laid him under the guilt of the basest treachery and ingratitude imaginable.

2. A particular narrative of the fact: Thus and thus have I done. God had told Joshua in general that a part of the devoted things was alienated, but is to him to draw from Achan an account of the particulars; for, one way or other, God will make sinners' own tongues to fall upon them (Ps 64:8); if ever he bring them to repentance, they will be their own accusers, and their awakened consciences will be instead of a thousand witnesses. Note, It becomes penitents, in the confession of their sins to God, to be very particular; not only, "I have sinned," but, "In this and that instance I have sinned," reflecting with regret upon all the steps that led to the sin and all the circumstances that aggravated it and made it exceedingly sinful: thus and thus have I done. He confesses,

(1.) To the things taken. In plundering a house in Jericho he found a goodly Babylonish garment; the word signifies a robe, such as princes wore when they appeared in state, probably it belonged to the King of Jericho; it was far fetched, as we translate it, from Babylon. A garment of divers colours, so some render it. Whatever it was, in his eyes it made a very glorious show. "A thousand pities" (thinks Achan) "that it should be burnt; then it will do nobody any good; if I take it for myself, it will serve me many a year for my best garment."

Under these pretences, he makes bold with this first, and things it no harm to save it from the fire; but, his hand being thus in, he proceeds to take a bag of money, two hundred shekels, that is one hundred ounces of silver, and a wwedge of gold which weighed fifty shekels, that is twenty-five ounces. He could not plead that, in taking these, he saved them from the fire (for the silver and gold were to be laid up in the treasury); but those that make a slight excuse to serve in daring to commit one sin will have their hearts so hardened by it that they will venture upon the next without such an excuse; for the way of sin is downhill. See what a peer prize it was for which Achan ran this desperate hazard, and what an unspeakable loser he was by the bargain. See Mt 16:26.

(2.) He confesses the manner of taking them.

[1.] The sin began in the eye. He saw these fine things, as Eve saw the forbidden fruit, and was strangely charmed with the sight. See what comes of suffering the heart to walk after the eyes, and what need we have to make this covenant with our eyes, that if they wander they shall be sure to weep for it. Look not thou upon the wine that is red, upon the woman that is fair; close the right eye that thus offense thee, to prevent the necessity of plucking it out, and casting it from thee, Mt 5:28,29.

[2.] It proceeded out of the heart. He owns, I coveted them. thus lust conceived and brought forth this sin. Those that would be kept from sinful actions must mortify and check in themselves sinful desires, particularly the desire of worldly wealth, which we more particularly call covetousness. O what a world of evil is the love money the root of! Had Achan looked upon these things with an eye of faith, he would have seen them accursed things, and would have dreaded them, but, looking upon them with an eye of sense only, he saw them goodly things, and coveted them. It was not the looking, but the lusting that ruined him.

[3.] When he had committed it he was very industrious to conceal it. Having taken of the forbidden treasures, fearing lest any search should be made for prohibited goods, he hid them in the earth, as one that resolved to keep what he had gotten, and never to make restitution. Thus does Achan confess the whole matter, that God might be justified in the sentence passed upon him. See the deceitfulness of sin; that which is pleasing in the commission is bitter in the reflection; at the last it bites like a serpent. Particularly, see what comes of ill-gotten goods, and how those will be cheated that rob God. Job 20:15, He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again.

21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they *are* hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, *it was* hid in his tent, and the silver under it.

His conviction. God had convicted him by the lot; he had convicted himself by his own confession; but, that no room might be left for the most discontented Israelite to object against the process, Joshua has him further convicted by the searching of his tent, in which the goods were found which he confessed to. Particular notice is taken of the haste which the messengers made that were sent to search: They ran to the tent (Jos 7:22), not only to show their readiness to obey Joshua's

orders, but to show how uneasy they were till the camp was cleared of the accursed thing, that they might regain the divine favour. Those that feel themselves under wrath find themselves concerned not to defer the putting away of sin. Delays are dangerous, and it is not time to trifle. When the stolen goods were brought they were laid out before the Lord (Jos 7:23), that all Israel might see how plain the evidence was against Achan, and might adore the strictness of God's judgments in punishing so severely the stealing of such small things, and yet the justice of his judgments in maintaining his right to devoted things, and might be afraid of ever offending in the like kind. In laying them out before the Lord they acknowledged his title to them, and waited to receive his directions concerning them. Note, Those that think to put a cheat upon God do but deceive themselves; what is taken from him he will recover (Ho 2:9) and he will be a loser by no man at last.

23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord.

24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

25 And Joshua said, why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

His condemnation. Joshua passes sentence upon him (Jos 7:25): Why hast thou troubled us? There is the ground of the sentence. O, how much hast thou troubled us! so some read it. He refers to what was said when the warning was given not to meddle with the accursed thing (Jos 6:18), lest you make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it. Note, Sin is a very troublesome thing, not only to the sinner himself, but to all about him. He that is greedy of gain, as Achan was, troubles his own house (Pr 15:27) and all the communities he belongs to. Now (says Joshua) God shall trouble thee. See why Achan

was so severely dealt with, not only because he had robbed God, but because he had troubled Israel; over his head he had (as it were) this accusation written, "Achan, the troubler of Israel," as Ahab, 1Ki 18:18. This therefore is his doom: God shall trouble thee. Note, the righteous God will certainly recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people, 2Th 1:6. Those that are troublesome shall be troubled. Some of the Jewish doctors, from that word which determines the troubling of him to this day, infer that therefore he should not be troubled in the world to come; the flesh was destroyed that spirit might be saved, and, if so, the dispensation was really less severe than it seemed. In the description both of his sin and of his punishment, by the trouble that was in both, there is a plain allusion to his name Achan, or, as he is called, 1Ch 2:7, Achar, which signifies trouble. He did too much answer his name.

26 And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, the valley of Achor [trouble], unto this day.

His execution. No reprieve could be obtained; a gangrened member must be cut off immediately. When he is proved to be an anathema, and the troubler of the camp, we may suppose all the people cry out against him, Away with him, away with him! Stone him, stone him! Here is,

1 The place of execution. They brought him out of the camp, in token of their putting far from them that wicked person, 1Co 5:13. When our Lord Jesus was made a curse for us, that by his trouble we might have peace, he suffered as an accursed thing without the gate, bearing our reproach, Heb 13:12,13. The execution was at a distance, that the camp which was disturbed by Achan's sin might not be defiled by his death.

2 The persons employed in his execution. It was the act of all Israel, Jos 7:24,25. They were all spectators of it, that they might see and fear. Public executions are public examples. Nay, they were all consenting to his death, and as many as

could were active in it, in token of the universal detestation in which they held his sacrilegious attempt, and their dread of God's displeasure against them.

3. The partakers with him in the punishment; for he perished not alone in his iniquity, Jos 22:20.

(1.) The stolen goods were destroyed with him, the garment burnt, as it should have been with the rest of the combustible things in Jericho, and the silver and gold defaced, melted, lost, and buried, in the ashes of the rest of his goods under the heap of stones, so as never to be put to any other use.

(2.) All his other goods were destroyed likewise, not only his tent, and the furniture of that, but his oxen, asses, and sheep, to show that goods gotten unjustly, especially if they be gotten by sacrilege, will not only turn to no account, but will blast and waste the rest of the possessions to which they are added. The eagle in the fable, that stole flesh from the altar, brought a coal of fire with it, which burnt her nest, Hab 2:9,10,Zec 5:3. Those lose their own that grasp at more than their own.

(3.) His sons and daughters were put to death with him. Some indeed think that they were brought out (Jos 7:24) only to be the spectators of their father's punishment, but most conclude that they died with him, and that they must be meant Jos 7:25, where it is said they burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. God had expressly provided that magistrates should not put the children to death for the fathers'; but he did not intend to bind himself by that law, and in this case he had expressly ordered (Jos 7:15) that the criminal, and all that he had, should be burnt. Perhaps his sons and daughters were aiders and abettors in the villany, had helped to carry off the accursed thing.

It is very probable that they assisted in the concealment, and that he could not hide them in the midst of his tent but they must know and keep his counsel, and so they became

accessaries ex post facto--after the fact; and, if they were ever so little partakers in the crime, it was son heinous that they were justly sharers in the punishment. However God was hereby glorified, and the judgment executed was thus made the more tremendous.

4. The punishment itself that was inflicted on him. He was stoned (some think as a sabbath breaker, supposing that the sacrilege was committed on the sabbath day), and then his dead body was burnt, as an accursed thing, of which there should be no remainder left. The concurrence of all the people in this execution teaches us how much it is the interest of a nation that all in it should contribute what they can, in their places, to the suppression of vice and profaneness, and the reformation of manners; sin is a reproach to any people, and therefore every Israelite indeed will have a stone to throw at it.

5. The pacifying of God's wrath hereby (Jos 7:26): The Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. The putting away of sin by true repentance and reformation, as it is the only way, so it is a sure and most effectual way, to recover the divine favour. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

VII. The record of his conviction and execution. Care was taken to preserve the remembrance of it, for warning and instruction to posterity.

1. A heap of stones was raised on the place where Achan was executed, every one perhaps of the congregation throwing a stone to the heap, in token of his detestation of the crime.

2. A new name was given to the place; it was called the Valley of Achor, or trouble. This was a perpetual brand of infamy upon Achan's name, and a perpetual warning to all people not to invade God's property. By this severity against Achan, the honour of Joshua's government, now in the infancy of it, was maintained, and Israel, at their entrance upon the promised

Canaan, were reminded to observe, at their peril, the provisos and limitations of the grant by which they held it. The Valley of Achor is said to be given for a door of hope, because when we put away the accursed thing then there begins to be hope in Israel, Ho 2:15,Ezr 10:2.

Joshua-8

The Capture and Destruction of Ai

1 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:

2 and thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it.

Israel were very happy in having such a commander as Joshua, but Joshua was more happy in having such a director as God himself; when any difficulty occurred, he needed not to call a council of war who had God so nigh unto him, not only to answer, but even to anticipate, his enquiries.

It should seem, Joshua was now at a stand, had scarcely recovered the discomposure he was put into by the trouble Achan gave them, and could not think, without fear and trembling, of pushing forward, lest there should be in the camp another Achan; then God spoke to him, either by vision, as before (Jos 5:1-15), or by the breastplate of judgment. Note, When we have faithfully put away sin, that accursed thing, which separates between us and God, then, and not till then, we may expect to hear from God to our comfort; and God's directing us how to go on in our Christian work and warfare is a good evidence of his being reconciled to us. Observe here,

I The encouragement God gives to Joshua to proceed: Fear not, neither be thou dismayed, Jos 8:1. This intimates that the

sin of Achan, and the consequences of it, had been a very great discouragement to Joshua, and made his heart almost ready to fail. Corruptions within the church weaken the hands, and damp the spirits, of her guides and helpers, more than oppositions from without; treacherous Israelites are to be dreaded more than malicious Canaanites. But God bids Joshua not be dismayed; the same power that keeps Israel from being ruined by their enemies shall keep them from ruining themselves. To animate him,

1. He assures him of success against Ai, tells him it is all his own; but he must take it as god's gift: I have given it into thy hands, which secured him both title and possession, and obliged him to give God the glory of both, Ps 44:3. 2. He allows the people to take the spoil to themselves. Here the spoil was not consecrated to God as that of Jericho, and therefore there was no danger of the people's committing such a trespass as they had committed there. Observe, How Achan who caught at forbidden spoil lost that, and life, and all, but the rest of the people who had conscientiously refrained from the accursed thing were quickly recompensed for their obedience with the spoil of Ai.

The way to have the comfort of what God allows us is to forbear what he forbids us. No man shall lose by his self-denial; let God have his dues first, and then all will be clean to us and sure, 1Ki 17:13. God did not bring them to these goodly cities, and houses filled with all good things, to tantalize them with the sight of that which they might not touch; but, having received the first-fruits from Jericho, the spoil of Ai, and of all the cities which thenceforward came into their hands, they might take for a prey to themselves.

II The direction he gives him in attacking Ai. It must not be such a work of time as the taking of Jericho was; this would have prolonged the war too much. Those that had patiently waited seven days for Jericho shall have Ai given them in one day. Nor was it, as that, to be taken by miracle, and purely by

the act of God, but now their own conduct and courage must be exercised; having seen God work for them, they must now bestir themselves. God directs him,

1. To take all the people, that they might all be spectators of the action and sharers in the spoil. Hereby God gave him a tacit rebuke for sending so small a detachment against Ai in the former attempt upon it, Jos 7:4.

2. To lay an ambush behind the city; this was a method which perhaps Joshua would not have thought of at this time, if God had not directed him to it; and though now we are not to expect direction, as here, by visions, voices, or oracles, yet, whenever those who are entrusted with public councils take prudent measures for the public good, it must be acknowledged that god puts it into their hears; he that teaches the husbandman discretion no doubt teaches statesman and general.

3 So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valor, and sent them away by night.

4 And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, *even* behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready:

5 and I, and all the people that *are* with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them,

6 (for they will come out after us,) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, they flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them.

7 Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the Lord your God will deliver it into your hand.

8 And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, *that* ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you.

We have here an account of the taking of Ai by stratagem. The stratagem here used, we are sure, was lawful and good; God himself appointed it, and we have no reason to think but that the like is lawful and good in other wars. Here was no league

broken, no treaty of peace, that the advantage was gained; no, these are sacred things, and not to be jested with, nor used to serve a turn; truth, when once it is plighted, becomes a debt even to the enemy. But in this stratagem here was no untruth told; nothing was concealed but their own counsels, which no enemy ever pretended a right to be entrusted with; nothing was dissembled, nothing counterfeited but a retreat, which was no natural or necessary indication at all of their inability to maintain their onset, or of any design not to renew it.

The enemy ought to have been upon their guard, and to have kept within the defence of their own walls. Common prudence, had they been governed by it, would have directed them not to venture on the pursuit of an army which they saw was so far superior to them in numbers, and leave their city unguarded; but (si populus vult decipi, decipiatur--if the people will be deceived, let them) if the Canaanites will be so easily imposed upon, and in pursuit of God's Israel will break through all the laws of policy and good management, the Israelites are not at all to be blamed for taking advantage of their fury and thoughtlessness; nor is it any way inconsistent with the character God is pleased to give of them, that they are children that will not lie. Now in the account here given of this matter,

I. There is some difficulty in adjusting the numbers that were employed to effect it. Mention is made (Jos 8:3) of 30,000 that were chosen and sent away by night, to whom the charge was given to surprise the city as soon as ever they perceived it was evacuated, Jos 8:4,7,8. And yet afterwards (Jos 8:12) it is said, Joshua took 5000 men and set them to lie in ambush behind the city, and that ambush entered the city, and set it on fire, Jos 8:19. Now,

1. Some think there were two parties sent out to lie in ambush, 30,000 first, and afterwards 5000 to guard the roads, and to intercept those that were first sent out; and that Joshua made his open attack upon the city with all the thousands of Israel.

So the learned bishop Patrick, insisting upon God's command (Jos 8:1) to take all the people of war with him. But,

2. Others think that all the people were taken only to encamp before the city, and that out of them Joshua chose out 30,000 men to be employed in the action, out of which he sent out 5000 to lie in ambush, which were as many as could be supposed to march incognito--without being discovered (more would have been seen, and thus the design would have been broken) and that then with the other 25,000 he made the open attack, as Masius thinks, or with the 30,000, which, as Calvin thinks, he kept entire for that purpose, having, besides them, sent out 5000 for an ambuscade.

And those 5000 (they think) must be meant by those (Jos 8:3) whom he sent away by night, with orders to lie in wait behind the city, though the particular number is not specified till Jos 8:12. If we admit such a seeming disturbance in the order of the narrative (of which, perhaps, similar instances might be cited from the other scripture histories), it seems most probable that there was but one ambushment, which consisted only of 5000, enough for such a purpose.

II. Yet the principal parts of the story are plain enough, that a detachment being secretly marched behind the city, on the other side to that on which the main body of the army lay (the situation of the country, it is probable, favouring their concealment), Joshua, and the forces with him, faced the city; the garrison made a vigorous sally out upon them, whereupon they withdrew, gave ground, and retreated in some seeming disorder towards the wilderness, which being perceived by the men of Ai, they drew out all the force they had to pursue them.

This gave a fair opportunity for those that lay in ambush to make themselves masters of the city, whereof when they had given notice by a smoke to Joshua, he, with all his force, returned upon the pursuers, who now, when it was too late, were aware of the snare they were drawn into, and, their retreat

being intercepted, they were every man of them cut off. The like artifice we find used, Jdg 20:30, &c. Now in this story we may observe,

1. What a brave commander Joshua was. See,

(1.) His conduct and prudence. God gave him the hint (Jos 8:2) that he should lay an ambush behind the city, but left him to himself to order the particulars, which he did admirably well. Doubtless wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men, Ec 7:19.

(2.) His care and industry (Jos 8:10): He rose up early in the morning, that he might lose no time, and to show how intent his mind was upon his business. Those that would maintain their spiritual conflicts must not love their ease.

(3.) His courage and resolution; though an army of Israelites had been repulsed before Ai, yet he resolves to lead them on in person the second time, Jos 8:5. Being himself also an elder, he took the elders of Israel with him to make this attack upon the city (Jos 8:10), as if he were going rather to sit in judgment upon them as criminals than to fight them as enemies.

(4.) His caution and consideration (Jos 8:13): He went that night into the midst of the valley, to make the necessary dispositions for an attack, and to see that every thing was in good order. It is the pious conjecture of the learned bishop Patrick that he went into the valley alone, to pray to God for a blessing upon his enterprise, and he did not seek in vain.

(5.) His constancy and perseverance; when he had stretched out his spear towards the city (Jos 8:18, a spear almost as fatal and formidable to the enemies of Israel as the rod of Moses was) he never drew back his hand till the work was done. His hands in fighting, like Moses's in interceding, were steady till the going down of the sun. Those that have stretched out their hands against their spiritual enemies must never draw them

back. Lastly, What Joshua did in the stratagem is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type.

Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered; so our Lord Jesus, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death and triumphed over him, and as if he and all his interests had been routed and ruined; but in his resurrection he rallied again and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat; he broke the serpent's head, by suffering him to bruise his heel. A glorious stratagem!

2. What an obedient people Israel was. What Joshua commanded them to do, according to the commandment of the Lord (Jos 8:8), they did it without murmuring or disputing. Those that were sent to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai (two cities confederate against them) were in a post of danger, and had they been discovered might all have been cut off, and yet they ventured; and, when the body of the army retreated and fled, it was both disgraceful and perilous, and yet, in obedience to Joshua, they did it.

3. What an infatuated enemy the king of Ai was,

(1.) That he did not by his scouts discover those that lay in ambush behind the city, Jos 8:14. Some observe it as a remarkable instance of the power of God in making men blind to their own interest, and the things that belong to their peace, that he wist not that there were liers in wait against him. Those are most in danger who are least aware that they are so.

(2.) That when Israel seemed to fly he drew out all his forces to pursue them, and left none to guard his city and to secure his retreat, Jos 8:17. Thus the church's enemies often run themselves into destruction by their own fury and the violence of their rage against the Israel of God. Pharaoh plunged himself into the Red Sea by the eagerness with which he pursued Israel.

(3.) That from the killing of thirty-six men out of 3000, when Israel made the former attack upon his city, he should infer the total routing of so great an army as now he had to deal with (Jos 8:6): They flee before us as at the first. See how the prosperity of fools destroys them and hardens them to their ruin. God had made use of the men of Ai as a scourge to chastise his people for meddling with the accursed thing, and this had puffed them up with a conceit that they must have the honour of delivering their country from these formidable invaders; but they were soon made to see their mistake, and that when the Israelites had reconciled themselves to their God they could have no power against them. God had made use of them only for the rebuking of Israel, with a purpose, when the correction was over, to throw the rod itself into the fire; howbeit, they meant not so, but it was in their heart to destroy and cut off, Isa 10:5-7.

4. What a complete victory Israel obtained over them by the favour and blessing of God. Each did his part: the divided forces of Israel, by signals agreed on, understood one another, and every thing succeeded according to the project; so that the men of Ai, even when they were most confident of victory, found themselves surrounded, so that they had neither spirit to resist nor room to fly, but were under a fatal necessity of yielding their lives to the destroyers. And now it is hard to say whether the shouts of the men of Israel, or the shrieks of the men of Ai, were the louder, but easy to imagine what terror and confusion they were filled with, when their highest assurances sunk so suddenly into the heaviest despair. Note, The triumphing of the wicked is short, Job 20:5. They are exalted for a little while, that their fall and ruin may be the sorer, Job 24:24. See how easily, how quickly, the scale turns against those that have not God on their side.

9 Joshua therefore sent them forth; and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.

10 And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.

11 And all the people, *even the people* of war that *were* with him, went up,
and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north
side of Ai: now *there was* a valley between them and Ai.
12 And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in
ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city.
13 And when they had set the people, *even* all the host that *was* on the
north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city,
Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.
14 And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that they hasted and
rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle,
he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he
wist not that *there were* liers in ambush against him behind the city.
15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them,
and fled by the way of the wilderness.
16 And all the people that *were* in Ai were called together to pursue
after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away
from the city.
17 And there was not a man left in Ai or Beth-el that went not out
after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel.
18 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that *is* in thy
hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua
stretched out the spear that *he had* in his hand toward the city.
19 And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as
soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the
city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire.
20 And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold,
the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power
to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness
turned back upon the pursuers.
21 And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the
city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again,
and slew the men of Ai.
22 And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in
the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and
they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape.
23 And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.
24 And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the
inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased

them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword.

25 And so it was, *that* all that fell that day, both of men and women, *were* twelve thousand, *even* all the men of Ai?

We have here an account of the improvement which the Israelites made of their victory over Ai.

1. They put all to the sword, not only in the field, but in the city, man, woman, and child, none of them remained, Jos 8:24. God, the righteous Judge, had passed this sentence upon them for their wickedness, so that the Israelites were only the ministers of his justice and the executioners of his doom.

Once in this story, and but once, mention is made of the men of Beth-el, as confederates with the men of Ai, Jos 8:17. Though they had a king of their own, and were not subjects to the king of Ai (for the king of Beth-el is reckoned among the thirty-one kings that Joshua destroyed, Jos 12:16), yet Ai being a stronger place they threw themselves into that, for their own safety, and the strengthening of their neighbours' hands, and so (we may presume) were all cut off with them; thus that by which they hoped to prevent their own ruin hastened it. The whole number of the slain, it seems, was but 12,000, and inconsiderable body to make head against all the thousands of Israel; but those whom God will destroy he infatuates.

Here it is said (Jos 8:26) that Joshua drew not his hand back wherewith he stretched out the spear (Jos 8:18) till the slaughter was completed. Some think the spear he stretched out was not to slay the enemies, but to animate and encourage his own soldiers, some flag or ensign being hung out at the end of this spear; and they observe it as an instance of his self-denial that though the fire of courage wherewith his breast was filled would have pushed him forward, sword in hand, into the hottest of the action, yet, in obedience to God, he kept the inferior post of a standard-bearer, and did not quit it till the

work was done. By the spear stretched out, he directed the people to expect their help from God, and to him to give the praise.

2. They plundered the city and took all the spoil to themselves, Jos 8:27. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just; the spoil they brought out of Egypt, by borrowing of their neighbours, was much of it expended upon the tabernacle they had reared in the wilderness, for which they are now reimbursed with interest. The spoil here taken, it is probable, was all brought together, and distributed by Joshua in due proportions, as that of the Midianites was, Nu 31:26, &c. It was not seized with irregularity or violence, for God is the God or order and equity, and not of confusion.

3. They laid the city in ashes, and left it to remain so, Jos 8:28. Israel must yet dwell in tents, and therefore this city, as well as Jericho, must be burnt. And, though there was no curse entailed upon him that should rebuild it, yet, it seems, it was not rebuilt unless it be the same with Aijah, which we read of, long after, Ne 11:31. Some think it was not rebuilt because Israel had received a defeat before it, the remembrance of which should be buried in the ruins of the city.

4. The king of Ai was taken prisoner and cut off, not by the sword of war as a soldier, but by the sword of justice as a malefactor. Joshua ordered him to be hanged, and his dead body thrown at the gate of his own city, under a heap of stone, Jos 8:23,29. Some particular reason, no doubt, there was for this severity against the king of Ai; it is likely he had been notoriously wicked and vile, and a blasphemer of the God of Israel, perhaps upon occasion of the repulse he had given to the forces of Israel in their first onset. Some observe that his dead body was thrown at the gate where he had been wont to sit in judgment that so much the greater contempt might thereby be poured upon the dignity he had been proud of, and he might be punished for the unrighteous decrees he had made

in the very place where he had made them. Thus the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes.

26 For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

27 Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the Lord which he commanded Joshua.

28 And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a heap forever, *even* a desolation unto this day.

29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, *that remaineth* unto this day.

The Law Recorded at Mount Ebal

30 Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal,

This religious solemnity of which we have here an account comes in somewhat surprisingly in the midst of the history of the wars of Canaan. After the taking of Jericho and Ai, we should have expected that the next news would be of their taking possession of the country, the pushing on of their victories in other cities, and the carrying of the war into the bowels of the nation, now that they had made themselves masters of these frontier towns. But here a scene opens of quite another nature; the camp of Israel is drawn out into the field, not to engage the enemy, but to offer sacrifice, to hear the law read, and to say Amen to the blessings and the curses.

Some think this was not done till after some of the following victories were obtained which were read of, Jos 10:1-11:23. But it should seem by the maps that Shechem (near to which these two mountains Gerizim and Ebal were) was not so far off from Ai but that when they had taken that they might penetrate into the country as far as those two mountains, and therefore I would not willingly admit a transposition of the

story; and the rather because, as it comes in here, it is a remarkable instance,

1. Of the zeal of Israel for the service of God and for his honour. Though never was war more honourable, more pleasant, or more gainful, nor ever was war more sure of victory, or more necessary to a settlement (for they had neither houses nor lands of their own till they had won them by the sword, no, not Joshua himself), yet all the business of the war shall stand still, while they make a long march to the place appointed, and there attend this solemnity. God appointed them to do this when they should have got over Jordan, and they did it as soon as possibly they could, though they might have had a colourable pretence to put it off. Note, We must not think to defer our covenanting with God till we are settled in the world, or must any business put us by from minding and pursuing the one thing needful. The way to prosper is to begin with God, Mt 6:33.

2. It is an instance of the care of God concerning his faithful servants and worshippers. Though they were in an enemy's country, as yet unconquered, yet in the service of God they were safe, as Jacob when in this very country he was going to Beth-el to pay his vows: the terror of God was upon the cities round about, Ge 35:5. Note, When we are in the way of duty God takes us under his special protection.

Twice Moses had given express orders for this solemnity; once De 11:29,30, where he seems to have pointed to the very place where it was to be performed; and again De 27:2, &c. It was a federal transaction: the covenant was now renewed between God and Israel upon their taking possession of the land of promise, that they might be encouraged in the conquest of it, and might know upon what terms they held it, and come under fresh obligations to obedience. In token of the covenant,

I. They built an altar, and offered sacrifice to God (Jos 8:30,31), in token of their dedication of themselves to God, as living sacrifices to his honour, in and by a Mediator, who is the altar that sanctifies this gift. This altar was erected on Mount Ebal, the mount on which the curse was put (De 11:29), to signify that there, where by the law we had reason to expect a curse, by Christ's sacrifice of himself for us and his mediation we have peace with God; he has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us, Ga 3:13. Even where it was said, by the curse, You are not my people, there it is said, through Christ the altar, You are the children of the living God, Ho 1:10. The curses pronounced on Mount Ebal would immediately have been executed if atonement had not been made by sacrifice. By the sacrifices offered on this altar they did likewise give God the glory of the victories they had already obtained, as Ex 17:15. Now that they had had the comfort of them, in the spoils of Ai, it was fit that God should have the praise of them. And they also implored his favour for their future success; for supplications as well as thanksgivings were intended in their peace-offerings. The way to prosper in all that we put our hand to is to take God along with us, and in all our ways to acknowledge him by prayer, praise, and dependence. The altar they built was of rough unhewn stone, according to the law (Ex 20:25), for that which is most plain and natural, and least artful and affected, in the worship of God, he is best pleased with. Man's device can add no beauty to God's institutions.

II. They received the law from God; and this those must do that would find favour with him, and expect to have their offerings accepted; for, if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayers will be an abomination. When God took Israel into covenant he gave them his law, and they, in token of their consent to the covenant, subjected themselves to the law. Now here,

1 The law of the ten commandments was written upon stones in the presence of all Israel, as an abridgment of the whole, Jos

8:32. This copy was not graven in the stone, as that which was reserved in the ark: That was to be done only by the finger of God; it is his prerogative to write the law in the heart. But the stones were plastered, and it was written upon the plaster, De 27:4,8. It was written, that all might see what it was that they consented to, and that it might be a standing remaining testimony to posterity of God's goodness in giving them such good laws, and a testimony against them if they were disobedient to them. It is a great mercy to any people to have the law of God in writing, and it is fit that the written law should be exposed to common view in a known tongue, that it may be seen and read of all men.

2 The blessings and the curses, the sanctions of the law, were publicly read, and the people (we may suppose), according to Moses's appointment, said Amen to them, Jos 8:33,34.

(1.) The auditory was very large.

[1.] The greatest prince was not excused. The elders, officers, and judges, are not above the cognizance of the law, but will come under the blessing or the curse, according as they are or are not obedient to it, and therefore they must be present to consent to the covenant and to go before the people therein.

[2.] The poorest stranger was not excluded. Here was a general naturalization of them: as well the stranger as he that was born among them was taken into covenant. This was an encouragement to proselytes, and a happy presage of the kindnesses intended for the poor Gentiles in the latter days.

(2.) The tribes were posted, as Moses directed, six towards Gerizim and six towards Ebal. And the ark in the midst of the valley was between them, for it was the ark of the covenant; and in it were shut up the close rolls of that law which was copied out and shown openly upon the stones. The covenant was commanded, and the command covenanted. The priests that attended the ark, or some of the Levites that attended

them, after the people had all taken their places, and silence was proclaimed, pronounced distinctly the blessings and the curses, as Moses had drawn them up, to which the tribes said Amen; and yet it is here only said that they should bless the people, for the blessing was that which was first and chiefly intended, and which God designed in giving the law. If they fell under the curse, that was their own fault. And it was really a blessing to the people that they had this matter laid so plainly before them, life and death, good and evil; he had not dealt so with other nations.

3. The law itself also containing the precepts and prohibitions was read (Jos 8:35), it should seem by Joshua himself, who did not think it below him to be a reader in the congregation of the Lord. In conformity to this example, the solemn reading of the law, which was appointed once in seven years (De 31:10,11), was performed by their king or chief magistrate. It is here intimated what a general publication of the law this was.

(1.) Every word was read; even the minutest precepts were not omitted, nor the most copious abridged; not one iota or tittle of the law shall pass away, and therefore none was, in reading, skipped over, under pretence of want of time, or that any part was needless or not proper to be read. It was not many weeks since Moses had preached the whole book of Deuteronomy to them, yet Joshua must now read it all over again; it is good to hear twice what God has spoken once (Ps 62:11) and to review what had been delivered to us, or to have it repeated, that we may not let it slip.

(2.) Every Israelite was present, even the women and the little ones that all might know and do their duty. Note, Masters of families should bring their wives and children with them to the solemn assemblies for religious worship. All that are capable of learning must come to be taught out of the law. The strangers also attended with them; for wherever we are,

though but as strangers, we should improve every opportunity of acquainting ourselves with God and his holy will.

31 as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the Law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up *any* iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings.

32 And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel.

33 And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

34 And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law.

35 There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.

Joshua-9

The Deceit of the Gibeonites

1 And it came to pass, when all the kings which *were* on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard *thereof;*

Hitherto the Canaanites had acted defensively; the Israelites were the aggressors upon Jericho and Ai. But here the kings of Canaan are in consultation to attack Israel, and concert matters for a vigorous effort of their united forces to check the progress of their victorious arms. Now,

1. It was strange they did not do this sooner. They had notice long since of their approach; Israel's design upon Canaan was no secret; one would have expected that a prudent concern for their common safety would put them upon taking some measures to oppose their coming over Jordan, and maintain that pass against them, or to give them a warm reception as soon as they were over. It was strange they did not attempt to raise the siege of Jericho, or at least fall in with the men of Ai, when they had given them a defeat. But they were, either through presumption or despair, wonderfully infatuated and at their wits' end. Many know not the things that belong to their peace till they are hidden from their eyes.

2. It was more strange that they did it now. Now that the conquest of Jericho had given such a pregnant proof of God's power, and that of Ai of Israel's policy, one would have thought the end of their consultation should be, not to fight with Israel, but to make peace with them, and to gain the best terms they could for themselves. This would have been their wisdom (Lu 14:32), but their minds were blinded, and their hearts hardened to their destruction. Observe,

(1.) What induced them now at last to enter upon this consultation. When they heard thereof (Jos 9:1), not only of the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but of the convention of the states of Mount Ebal, of which we have an account immediately before,--when they heard that Joshua, as if he thought himself already completely master of the country, had had all his people together, and had read the laws to them by which they must be governed, and taken their promises to submit to those laws,--then they perceived the Israelites were in good earnest, and thought it was high time for them to bestir themselves. The pious devotion of God's people sometimes provokes and exasperates their enemies more than any thing else.

(2.) How unanimous they were in their resolves. Though they were many kings of different nations, Hittites, Amorites,

Perizzites, &c., doubtless of different interests, and that had often been at variance one with another, yet they determined, nemine contradicente--unanimously, to unite against Israel. O that Israel would learn this of Canaanites, to sacrifice private interests to the public welfare, and to lay aside all animosities among themselves, that they may cordially unite against the common enemies of God's kingdom among men!

2 that they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

3 And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

4 they did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

5 and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* mouldy.

6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

8 And they said unto Joshua, We *are* thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, who are ye? And from whence come ye?

Here, I The Gibeonites desire to make peace with Israel, being alarmed by the tidings they heard of the destruction of Jericho, Jos 9:3. Other people heard those tidings, and were irritated thereby to make war upon Israel; but the Gibeonites heard them and were induced to make peace with them. Thus the discovery of the glory and grace of God in the gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, but to others a savour of death unto death, 2Co 2:16. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. I do not remember that we read any where of a king of Gibeon. Had their government been at this time in a single person, perhaps his heart would have been too high to yield to Israel, and he would have joined with the rest of the kings against Israel. But these four united cities (mentioned Jos 9:17) seem to have been governed by elders, or senators (Jos 9:11), who consulted the common safety more than their own

personal dignity. The inhabitants of Gibeon did well for themselves. We have,

II The method they took to compass it. They knew that all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan were to be cut off; perhaps they had some spies in the congregation at Ebal, when the law was read, who observed and brought them notice of the command given to Israel (De 7:1-3), that they should show no mercy to the Canaanites, give them no quarter in battle, which made them afraid of fighting them, and that they should make no covenant with them, which made them despair of gaining any advantage by treating with them; and therefore there was no way of saving their lives from the sword of Israel unless they could, by disguising themselves, make Joshua believe that they came from some very country, which the Israelites were not commanded to make war upon nor forbidden to make peace with, but were particularly appointed to offer peace to, De 20:10,15.

Unless they could be admitted under this notion, they saw there was but one way with them: they must submit to the fate of Jericho and Ai. Though the neighbouring princes knew that all the men thereof were mighty (Jos 10:2), and they knew it themselves, yet they durst not contend with Israel, who had an Almighty God on their side. This therefore is the only game they have to play, and observe,

1. They play it very artfully and successfully. Never was any such thing more craftily managed.

(1.) They come under the character of ambassadors from a foreign state, which they thought would please the princes of Israel, and make them proud of the honour of being courted by distant countries: we find Hezekiah fond of those that came to him from a far country (Isa 39:3); they were not used to be thus courted.

(2.) They pretended to have undergone the fatigues of a very long journey, and produced what passed for an ocular demonstration of it. It should seem it was then usual for those that undertook long journeys to take with them, as we do now for long voyages, all manner of provision in kind, the country not being furnished as ours is now with houses of entertainment, for the convenience of which, when we have occasion to make use of them, we have reason to be very thankful. Now they here pretended that their provision, when they brought it from home, was fresh and new, but now it appeared to be old and dry, whereas it might well be presumed they had not loitered, but made the best of their way; so that hence it must be inferred that they came, as they said they did, from a very far country: their sacks or portmanteaus were old; the wine was all drunk, and the bottles in which it had been were broken; their shoes and clothes were worse than those of the Israelites in forty years, and their bread was mouldy, Jos 9:4,5, and again, Jos 9:12,13.

Thus God's Israel have often been deceived and imposed upon with a show of antiquity. But (as bishop Hall expresses it) errors are never the older for being patched, and so seeming old; but those that will be caught with this Gibeonitish stratagem prove they have not consulted with God. And thus there are those who make themselves poor with the badges of want and distress and yet have great riches (Pr 13:7), or at least have no need of relief, by which fraud charity is misplaced and diverted from those that are real objects of it.

(3.) When they were suspected, and more strictly examined as to whence they came, they industriously declined telling the name of their country, till the agreement was settled.

[1.] The men of Israel suspected a fraud (Jos 9:7): "Peradventure you dwell among us, and then we may not, we must not, make any league with you." This might have discouraged the Gibeonites from urging the matter any further, concluding that if the peace were made the Israelites would

not think themselves obliged to keep it, having thus solemnly protested against it in case they dwelt among them; but, knowing that there was no hope at all if they stood it out, they bravely ventured a submission. "Who knows but the people of Israel may save us alive, though thus inveigled into a promise; and if we tell them at last we shall but die."

[2.] Joshua put the questions to them, Who are you? And whence come you? He finds himself concerned to stand upon his guard against secret fraud as well as against open force. We in our spiritual warfare must stand against the wiles of the devil, remembering he is a subtle serpent as well as a roaring lion. In all leagues of relation and friendship we must first try and then trust, lest we repent at leisure agreements made in haste.

[3.] They would not tell whence they came; but still repeat the same thing: We have come from a very far country, Jos 9:9. They will have it thought that it is a country Joshua knows nothing of nor ever heard of, and therefore would be never the wiser if they should tell him the name of it.

(4.) They profess a respect for the God of Israel, the more to ingratiate themselves with Joshua, and we charitably believe they were sincere in this profession: "We have come because of the name of the Lord thy God (Jos 9:9), because of what we have heard of that name, which has convinced us that it is above every name, and because we have a desire towards that name and the remembrance of it, and would gladly come under its protection."

(5.) They fetch their inducements from what had been done some time before in Moses's reign, the tidings whereof might easily be supposed ere this to have reached distant regions, the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Sihon and Og (Jos 9:9,10), but prudently say nothing of the destruction of Jericho and Ai (though this was the true inducement, Jos 9:3), because

they will have it supposed that they came from home long before those conquests were made. We need not be long to seek for reasons why we should submit to the God of Israel; we may be furnished either with new or old, which we will.

(6.) They make a general submission--We are our servants; and humbly sue for a general agreement--Make a league with us, Jos 9:11. They insist not upon terms, but will be glad of peace upon any terms; nor will the case admit of delays, lest the fraud be discovered; they would fain have the bargain struck up immediately; if Joshua will but make a league with them, they have all they come for, and they hope their ragged clothes and clouted shoes will be no exception against them. God and Israel reject none for their poverty. But,

2. There is a mixture of good and evil in their conduct.

(1.) Their falsehood cannot be justified, nor ought it to be drawn into a precedent. We must not do evil that good may come. Had they owned their country but renounced the idolatries of it, resigning the possession of it to Israel and themselves to the God of Israel, we have reason to think Joshua would have been directed by the oracle of God to spare their lives, and they needed not to have made these pretensions. It is observable that when they had once said, We have come from a far country (Jos 9:6), they found themselves necessitated to say it again (Jos 9:9), and to say what was utterly false concerning their bread, their bottles, and their clothes (Jos 9:12,13), for one lie is an inlet to another, and that to a third, and so on. The way of that sin is down-hill. But,

(2.) Their faith and prudence are to be greatly commended. Our Lord commended even the unjust steward, because he had done wisely and well for himself, Lu 16:8. In submitting to Israel, they submitted to the God of Israel, which implied a renunciation of the god they had served, a resignation to the laws of true religion. They had heard enough to convince them of the infinite power of the God of Israel, and thence might

infer his other perfections of wisdom and goodness; and how can we do better for ourselves than surrender at discretion to infinite wisdom, and cast ourselves upon the mercy of a God of infinite goodness. The submission of these Gibeonites was the more laudable because it was,

[1.] Singular. Their neighbours took another course, and expected they should join with them.

[2.] Speedy. They did not stay till Israel had besieged their cities; then it would have been too late to capitulate; but when they were at some distance they desired conditions of peace. Thy way to avoid a judgment is to meet it by repentance. Let us imitate these Gibeonites, and make our peace with God in the rags of humiliation, godly sorrow, and mortification, so our iniquity shall not be our ruin. Let us be servants to Jesus, our blessed Joshua, and make a league with him and the Israel of God, and we shall live.

9 And they said unto him, from a very far country thy servants are
come, because of the name of the Lord thy God: for we have heard
the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,
10 and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that *were*
beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of
Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth.
11 Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to
us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet
them, and say unto them, We *are* your servants: therefore now make
ye a league with us.
12 This our bread we took hot *for* our provision out of our houses on
the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry,
and it is mouldy:
13 and these bottles of wine, which we filled, *were* new; and, behold, they
be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by
reason of the very long journey.
14 And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the
mouth of the Lord.

15 And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

Here is, I The treaty soon concluded with the Gibeonites, Jos 9:15. The thing was not done with much formality, but in short,

1. They agreed to let them live, and more the Gibeonites did not ask. In a common war this would have been but a small matter to be granted; but in the wars of Canaan, which were to make a general destruction, it was a great favour to a Canaanite to have his life given him for a prey, Jer 45:5.

2. This agreement was made not by Joshua only, but by the princes of the congregation in conjunction with him. Though Joshua had an extraordinary call to the government, and extraordinary qualifications for it, yet he would not act in an affair of this nature without the counsel and concurrence of the princes, who were neither kept in the dark nor kept under foot, but were treated by him as sharers in the government.

3. It was ratified by an oath; they swore unto them, not by any of the gods of Canaan, but by the God of Israel only, Jos 9:19. Those that mean honestly do not startle at assurances, but satisfy those with whom they treat, and glorify God by calling him to witness to the sincerity of their intentions. 4. Nothing appears to have been culpable in all this but that it was done rashly; they took of their victuals, by which they satisfied themselves that it was indeed old and dry, but did not consider that his was no proof of their bringing it fresh from home; so that, making use of their senses only, but not their reason, they received the men (as the margin reads it) because of their victuals, perceiving perhaps, upon the view and taste of their bread, not only that now it was old, but that it had been fine and very good at first, whence they inferred that they were persons of some quality, and therefore the friendship of their country was not to be despised.

But they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord. They had the Urim and Thummim with them, which they might have advised with in this difficult case, and which would have told them no lie, would have led them into no error; but they relied so much on their own politics that they thought it needless to bring the matter to the oracle. Joshua himself was not altogether without blame herein.

Note, We make more haste than good speed in any business when we stay not to take God along with us, and by the word and prayer to consult him. Many a time we see cause to reflect upon it with regret that such and such an affair miscarried, because we asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord; would we acknowledge him in all our ways, we should find them more safe, easy, and successful.

II The fraud soon discovered, by which this league was procured. A lying tongue is but for a moment, and truth will be the daughter of time. Within three days they found, to their great surprise, that the cities which these ambassadors had treated for were very near them, but one night's foot-march from the camp at Gilgal, Jos 10:9. Either their own scouts or the parties that sallied out to acquaint themselves with the country, or perhaps some deserters that came over to them from the enemy, informed them of the truth in this matter. Those that suffer themselves to be deceived by the wiles of Satan will soon be undeceived to their confusion, and will find that near, even at the door, which they imagined was very far off.

III. The disgust of the congregation at this. They did indeed submit to the restraints which this league laid upon them, and smote not the cities of the Gibeonites, neither slew the persons nor seized the prey; but it vexed them to have their hands thus tied, and they murmured against the princes (Jos 9:18) it is to be feared, more from a jealousy for their own profit than from a zeal for the fulfilling of God's command, though some of

them perhaps had a regard to that. Many are forward to arraign and censure the actions of princes while they are ignorant of the springs of those actions and are incompetent judges of the reasons of state that govern them. While therefore we are satisfied in general that those who are over us aim at nothing but the public good, and sincerely seek the welfare of their people, we ought to make the best of what they do and not exercise ourselves in things above us.

IV. The prudent endeavour of the princes to pacify the discontented congregation, and to accommodate the matter; herein all the princes concurred and were unanimous, which doubtless disposed the people to acquiesce.

1. They resolved to spare the lives of the Gibeonites, for so they had expressly sworn to do (Jos 9:15), to let them live.

(1.) The oath was lawful, else it had not bound them any more than Herod's oath bound him to cut off John Baptist's head; it is true God had appointed them to destroy all the Canaanites, but the law must be construed, in favorem vitæ--with some tender allowance, to mean those only that stood it out and would not surrender their country to them, and not to bind them so far to put off the sense of honour and humanity as to slay those who had never lifted up a hand against them nor ever would, but before they were reduced to any extremity, or ever attempted any act of hostility, with one consent humbled themselves; the kings of Israel were certainly more merciful kings than to do so (1Ki 20:31), and the God of Israel a more merciful God than to order it so. Satis est prostrasse leoni--It is enough to have laid the lion prostrate.

And besides, the reason of the law is the law; the mischief designed to be prevented by that law was the infecting of the Israelites with their idolatry, De 7:4. But if the Gibeonites renounce their idolatry, and become friends and servants to the house of God, the danger is effectually prevented, the reason

of the law ceases, and consequently the obligation of it, especially to a thing of this nature. The conversion of sinners shall prevent their ruin.

(2.) The oath being lawful, both the princes and the people for whom they transacted were bound by it, bound in conscience, bound in honour to the God of Israel, by whom they had sworn, and whose name would have been blasphemed by the Canaanites if they had violated this oath. They speak as those that feared an oath (Ec 9:2), when they argued thus: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore, Jos 9:20. He that ratifies a promise with an oath imprecates the divine vengeance if he wilfully break his promise, and has reason to expect that divine justice will take him at his word. God is not mocked, and therefore oaths are not to be jested with. The princes would keep their word,

[1.] Though they lost by it. A citizen of Zion swears to his own hurt and changes not, Ps 15:4. Joshua and the princes, when they found it was to their prejudice that they had thus bound themselves, did not apply to Eleazar for a dispensation, much less did they pretend that no faith is to be kept with heretics, with Canaanites; no, they were strangers to the modern artifices of the Romish church to elude the most sacred bonds, and even to sanctify perjuries

[2.] Though the people were uneasy at it, and their discontent might have ended in a mutiny, yet the princes would not violate their engagement to the Gibeonites; we must never be over-awed, either by majesty or multitude, to do a sinful thing, and go against our consciences.

[3.] Though they were drawn into this league by a wile, and might have had a very plausible pretence to declare it null and void, yet they adhered to it. They might have pleaded that though those were the men with whom they exchanged the ratifications, yet these were not the cities intended in the league; they had promised to spare certain cities, without

names, that were very far off, and upon the express consideration of their being so; but these were very near, and therefore not the cities that they covenanted with.

And many learned men have thought that they were so grossly imposed upon by the Gibeonites that it would have been lawful for them to have recalled their promise, but to preserve their reputation, and to keep up in Israel a veneration of an oath, they would stand to it; but it is plain that they thought themselves indispensably obliged by it, and were apprehensive that the wrath of God would fall upon them if they broke it. And, however their adherence to it might be displeasing to the congregation, it is plain that it was acceptable to God; for when, in pursuance of this league, they undertook the protection of the Gibeonites, God gave them the most glorious victory that ever they had in all their wars (Jos 10:1-43), and long afterwards severely avenged the wrong Saul did to the Gibeonites in violation of this league, 2Sa 21:1.

Let this convince us all how religiously we ought to perform our promises, and make good our bargains; and what conscience we ought to make of our words when they are once given. If a covenant obtained by so many lies and deceits might not be broken, shall we think to evade the obligation of those that have been made with all possible honesty and fairness? If the fraud of others will not justify or excuse our falsehood, certainly the honesty of others in dealing with us will aggravate and condemn our dishonesty in dealing with them.

2. Though they spared their lives, yet they seized their liberties, and sentenced them to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation, Jos 9:21. By this proposal the discontented congregation was pacified; for,

(1.) Those who were angry that the Gibeonites lived might be content when they saw them condemned to that which, in the

general apprehension, is worse than death, perpetual servitude.

(2.) Those who were angry that they were not spoiled might be content when their serving the congregation would be more to the public advantage than their best effects could be; and, in short, the Israelites would be not losers either in honour or profit by this peace with the Gibeonites; convince them of this, and they will be satisfied.

16 And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbors, and *that* they dwelt among them.

17 And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim.

18 And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

19 But all the princes said unto all the congregation, we have sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

20 This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.

21 And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

22 And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, we *are* very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

23 Now therefore ye *are* cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

The matter is here settled between Joshua and the Gibeonites, and an explanation of the league agreed upon. We may suppose that now, not the messengers who were first sent, but the elders of Gibeon, and of the cities that were dependent

upon it, were themselves present and treated with, that the matter might be fully compromised.

I. Joshua reproves them for their fraud, Jos 9:22. And they excuse it as well as they can, Jos 9:24.

1. Joshua gives the reproof very mildly: Wherefore have you beguiled us? He does not load them with any ill names, does not give them any harsh provoking language, does not call them, as they deserved to be called, base liars, but only asks them, Why have you beguiled us? Under the greatest provocations, it is our wisdom and duty to keep our temper, and to bridle our passion; a just cause needs not anger to defend it, and a bad one is made never the better by it.

2. They make the best excuse for themselves, that the thing would bear, Jos 9:24. They found by the word of God that sentence of death was passed upon them (the command was to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, without exception), and they found by the works of God already wrought that there was no opposing the execution of this sentence; they considered that God's sovereignty is incontestable, his justice inflexible, his power irresistible, and therefore resolved to try what his mercy was, and found it was not in vain to cast themselves upon it.

They do not go about to justify their lie, but in effect beg pardon for it, pleading it was purely to save their lives that they did it, which every man that finds in himself the force of the law of self-preservation will therefore make great allowances for, especially in such a case as this, where the fear was not merely of the power of man (if that were all, one might flee from that to the divine protection), but of the power of God himself, which they saw engaged against them.

II. Joshua condemns them to servitude, as a punishment of their fraud (Jos 9:23), and they submit to the sentence (Jos 9:25), and for aught that appears both sides are pleased.

1. Joshua pronounces them perpetual bondmen. They had purchased their lives with a lie, but, that being no good consideration, he obliges them to hold their lives under the rent and reservation of their continual labours, in hewing wood and drawing water, the meanest and most toilsome employments. Thus their lie was punished; had they dealt fairly and plainly with Israel, perhaps they would have had more honourable conditions granted them, but now, since they gain their lives with ragged clothes and clouted shoes, the badges of servitude, they are condemned for ever to wear such, so must their doom be. And thus the ransom of their lives is paid; dominion is acquired by the preservation of a life that lies at mercy (servus dicitur a servando--a servant is so called from the act of saving); they owe their service to those to whom they owe their lives. Observe how the judgment is given against them.

(1.) Their servitude is made a curse to them. "Now you are cursed with the ancient curse of Canaan," from whom these Hivites descended, a servant of servants shalt thou be, Ge 9:25. What shall be done to the false tongue but this? Cursed shall it be.

(2.) Yet this curse is turned into a blessing; they must be servants, but it shall be for the house of my God. The princes would have them slaves unto all the congregation (Jos 9:21), at least they chose to express themselves so, for the pacifying of the people that were discontented; but Joshua mitigates the sentence, both in honour to God and in favour to the Gibeonites: it would be too hard upon them to make them every man's drudge; if they must be hewers of wood and drawers of water, than which there cannot be a greater disparagement, especially to those who are citizens of a royal city, and all mighty men (Jos 10:2), yet they shall be so to the house of my God, than which there cannot be a greater preferment: David himself could have wished to be a door-

keeper there. Even servile work becomes honourable when it is done for the house of our God and the offices thereof.

[1.] They were hereby excluded from the liberties and privileges of true-born Israelites, and a remaining mark of distinction was put upon their posterity throughout all their generations.

[2.] They were hereby employed in such services as required their personal attendance upon the altar of God in the place which he should choose (Jos 9:27), which would bring them to the knowledge of the law of God, keep them strictly to that holy religion to which they were proselyted, and prevent their revolt to the idolatries of their fathers.

[3.] This would be a great advantage to the priests and Levites to have so many, and those mighty men, constant attendants upon them, and engaged by office to do all the drudgery of the tabernacle. A great deal of wood must be hewed for fuel for God's house, not only to keep the fire burning continually upon the altar, but to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings, &c. And a great deal of water must be drawn for the divers washings which the law prescribed. These and other such servile works, such as washing the vessels, carrying out ashes, sweeping the courts, &c., which otherwise the Levites must have done themselves, these Gibeonites were appointed to do.

[4.] They were herein servants to the congregation too; for whatever promotes and helps forward the worship of God is real service to the commonwealth. It is the interest of every Israelite that the altar of God be well attended. Hereby also the congregation was excused from much of that servile work which perhaps would otherwise have been expected from some of them. God had made a law that the Israelites should never make any of their brethren bondmen; if they had slaves, they must be of the heathen that were round about them, Le 25:44. Now in honour of this law, and of Israel that was honoured by it, God would not have the drudgery, no, not of

the tabernacle itself, to be done by Israelites, but by Gibeonites, who were afterwards called Nethinim, men given to the Levites, as the Levites were to the priests (Nu 3:9), to minister to them in the service of God.

[5.] This may be looked upon as typifying the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel church. Now they were taken in upon their submission to be under-officers, but afterwards God promises that he will take of them for priests and Levites, Isa 66:21.

2. They submit to this condition, Jos 9:25. Conscious of a fault in framing a lie whereby to deceive the Israelites, and sensible also how narrowly they escaped with their lives and what a kindness it was to have them spared, they acquiesce in the proposal: Do as it seemeth right unto thee. Better live in servitude, especially such servitude, than not live at all. Those of the very meanest and most despicable condition are described to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, De 29:11. But skin for skin, liberty, and labour, and all that a man has, will he give for his life, and no ill bargain. Accordingly the matter was determined.

(1.) Joshua delivered them out of the hands of the Israelites that they should not be slain, Jos 9:26. It seems there were those who would have fallen upon them with the sword if Joshua had not interposed with his authority; but wise generals know when to sheathe the sword, as well as when to draw it.

(2.) He then delivered them again into the hands of the Israelites to be enslaved, Jos 9:27. They were not to keep possession of their cities, for we find afterwards that three of them fell to the lot of Benjamin and one to that of Judah; nor were they themselves to be at their own disposal, but, as bishop Patrick thinks, were dispersed into the cities of the priests and Levites, and came up with them in their courses to serve at the altar, out of the profits of which, it is probable, they were maintained. And thus Israel's bondmen became the

Lord's freemen, for his service in the meanest office is liberty, and his work is its own wages. And this they got by their early submission.

Let us, in like manner, submit to our Lord Jesus, and refer our lives to him, saying, "We are in thy hand, do unto us as seemeth good and right unto thee; only save our souls, and we shall not repent it:" if he appoint us to bear his cross, and draw in his yoke, and serve at his altar, this shall be afterwards neither shame nor grief to us, while the meanest office in God's service will entitle us to a dwelling in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.

24 And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the Lord thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

25 And now, behold, we *are* in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

26 And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

27 And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

Joshua-10

The Defeat of the Amorites

1 Now it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;

2 that they feared greatly, because Gibeon *was* a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it *was* greater than Ai, and all the men thereof *were* mighty.

3 Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,

Joshua and the hosts of Israel had now been a good while in the land of Canaan, and no great matters were effected; they were made masters of Jericho by a miracle, of Ai by stratagem, and of Gibeon by surrender, and that was all; hitherto the progress of their victories had not seemed proportionable to the magnificence of their entry and the glory of their beginnings.

Those among them that were impatient of delays, it is probable, complained of Joshua's slowness, and asked why they did not immediately penetrate into the heart of the country, before the enemy could rally their forces to make head against them, why they stood trifling, while they were so confident both of their title and of their success. Thus Joshua's prudence, perhaps, was censured as slothfulness, cowardice, and want of spirit. But,

1. Canaan was not to be conquered in a day. God had said that by little and little he would drive out the Canaanites, Ex 23:30. He that believeth will not make haste, or conclude that the promise will never be performed because it is not performed so soon as he expected.

2. Joshua waited for the Canaanites to be the aggressors; let them first make an onset upon Israel, or the allies of Israel, and then their destruction will be, or at least will appear to be, the more just and more justifiable. Joshua had warrant sufficient to set upon them, yet he stays till they strike the first stroke, that he might provide for honest things in the sight, not only of God, but of men; and they would be the more inexcusable in their resistance, now that they had seen what favour the Gibeonites found with Israel.

3. It was for the advantage of Israel to sit still awhile, that the forces of these little kings might unite in one body, and so

might the more easily be cut off at one blow. This God had in his eye when he put it into their hearts to combine against Israel; though they designed thereby to strengthen one another, that which he intended was to gather them as sheaves into the floor, to fall together under the flail, Mic 4:12. Thus oftentimes that seeming paradox proves wholesome counsel, Stay awhile, and we shall have done the sooner.

After Israel had waited awhile for an occasion to make war upon the Canaanites, a fair one offers itself. 1. Five kings combine against the Gibeonites. Adoni-zedec king of Jerusalem was the first mover and ring-leader of this confederacy. He had a good name (it signifies lord of righteousness), being a descendant perhaps from Melchizedek, king of righteousness; but, notwithstanding the goodness of his name and family, it seems he was a bad man, and an implacable enemy to the posterity of that Abraham to whom his predecessor, Melchizedek, was such a faithful friend.

He called upon his neighbours to join against Israel either because he was the most honourable prince, and had the precedency among these kings (perhaps they had some dependence upon him, at least they paid a deference to him, as the most public, powerful, and active man they had among them), or because he was first or most apprehensive of the danger his country was in, not only by the conquest of Jericho and Ai, but the surrender of Gibeon, which, it seems, was the chief thing that alarmed him, it being one of the most considerable frontier towns they had. Against Gibeon therefore all the force he would raise must be leveled. Come, says he, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon. This he resolves to do, either,

(1.) In policy, that he might retake the city, because it was a strong city, and of great consequence to this country in whose hands it was; or,

(2.) In passion, that he might chastise the citizens for making peace with Joshua, pretending that they had perfidiously betrayed their country and strengthened the common enemy, whereas they had really done the greatest kindness imaginable to their country, by setting them a good example, if they would have followed it. Thus Satan and his instruments make war upon those that make peace with God. Marvel not if the world hate you, and treat those as deserters who are converts to Christ. 2 The Gibeonites send notice to Joshua of the distress and danger they are in, Jos 10:6. Now they expect benefit from the league they had made with Israel, because, though it was obtained by deceit, it was afterwards confirmed when the truth came out. They think Joshua obliged to help them,

(1.) In conscience, because they were his servants; not in compliment, as they had said in their first address (Jos 9:8), We are thy servants, but in reality made servants to the congregation; and it is the duty of masters to take care of the poorest and meanest of their servants, and not to see them wronged when it is in the power of their hand to right them. Those that pay allegiance may reasonably expect protection. Thus David pleads with God (Ps 119:94), I am thine, save me; and so may we, if indeed we be his.

(2.) In honour, because the ground of their enemies' quarrel with them was the respect they had shown to Israel, and the confidence they had in a covenant with them. Joshua cannot refuse to help them when it is for their affection to him, and to the name of his God, that they are attacked. David thinks it a good plea with God (Ps 69:7), For thy sake I have borne reproach. When our spiritual enemies set themselves in array against us, and threaten to swallow us up, let us, by faith and prayer, apply to Christ, our Joshua, for strength and succour, as Paul did, and we shall receive the same answer of peace, My grace is sufficient for thee, 2Co 12:8,9.

4 Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.

5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

6 And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.

7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.

8 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.

9 Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, *and* went up from Gilgal all night.

Here, I. Joshua resolves to assist the Gibeonites, and God encourages him in this resolve. 1. He ascended from Gilgal (Jos 10:7), that is, he designed, determined, and prepared for, this expedition to relieve Gibeon, for it is probable it was before he stirred a step that God spoke to him to encourage him. It was generous and just in Joshua to help his new allies, though perhaps the king of Jerusalem, when he attacked them, little thought that Joshua would be so ready to help them, but expected he would abandon them as Canaanites, the rather because they had obtained their league with him by fraud; therefore he speaks with assurance (Jos 10:4) of smiting Gibeon. But Joshua knew that his promise to let them live obliged him, not only not to slay them himself, but not to stand by and see them slain when it was in the power of his hand to prevent it, Pr 24:11,12. He knew that when they embraced the faith and worship of the God of Israel they came to trust under the shadow of his wings (Ru 2:12), and therefore, as his servants, he was bound to protect them. 2. God animated him for his undertaking, (Jos 10:8): Fear not, that is,

(1.) "Doubt not of the goodness of thy cause and the clearness of thy call; though it be to assist Gibeonites, thou art in the way of duty, and God is with thee of a truth."

(2.) "Dread not the power of the enemy; though so many kings are confederate against thee, and are resolved to make their utmost efforts for the reduction of Gibeon, and it may be will fight desperately in a desperate cause, yet let not this discourage thee, I have delivered them into thy hand;" and those can make neither resistance nor escape whom God has marked for destruction.

II. Joshua applies himself to execute this resolve, and God assists him in the execution. Here we have,

1 The great industry of Joshua, and the power of God working with it for the defeat of the enemy. In this action,

(1.) Joshua showed his good-will in the haste he made for the relief of Gibeon (Jos 10:9): He came unto them suddenly, for the extremity was such as would not admit delay. If one of the tribes of Israel had been in danger, he could not have shown more care or zeal for its relief than here for Gibeon, remembering in this, as in other cases, there must be one law for the stranger that was proselyted and for him that was born in the land. Scarcely had the confederate princes got their forces together, and sat down before Gibeon, when Joshua was upon them, the surprise of which would put them into the greatest confusion. Now that the enemy were actually drawn up into a body, which had all as it were but one neck, despatch was as serviceable to his cause as before delay was, while he waited for this general rendezvous; and now that things were ripe for execution no man more expeditious than Joshua, who before had seemed slow.

Now it shall never be said, He left that to be done to-morrow which he could do to-day. When Joshua found he could not reach Gibeon in a day, lest he should lose any real advantages against the enemy, or so much as seem to come short or to neglect his new allies, he marched all night, resolving not to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he had

accomplished this enterprise. It was well the forces he took with him were mighty men of valour, not only able-bodied men, but men of spirit and resolution, and hearty in the cause, else they neither could nor would have borne this fatigue, but would have murmured at their leader and would have asked, "Is this the rest we were promised in Canaan?"

But they well considered that the present toil was in order to a happy settlement, and therefore were reconciled to it. Let the good soldiers of Jesus Christ learn hence to endure hardness, in following the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and not think themselves undone if their religion lose them now and then a night's sleep; it will be enough to rest when we come to heaven. But why needed Joshua to put himself and his men so much to the stretch? Had not God promised him that without fail he would deliver the enemies into his hand? It is true he had; but God's promises are intended, not to slacken and supersede, but to quicken and encourage our endeavours. He that believeth doth not make haste to anticipate providence, but doth make haste to attend it, with a diligent, not a distrustful, speed.

(2.) God showed his great power in defeating the enemies whom Joshua so vigorously attacked, Jos 10:10,11. Joshua had a very numerous and powerful army with him, hands enough to despatch a dispirited enemy, so that the enemy might have been scattered by the ordinary fate of war; but God himself would appear in this great and decisive battle, and draw up the artillery of heaven against the Canaanites, to demonstrate to this people that they got not this land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but God's right hand and his arm, Ps 44:3. The Lord discomfited them before Israel. Israel did what they could, and yet God did all.

[1.] It must needs be a very great terror and confusion to the enemy to perceive that heaven itself fought against them; for who can contest with, flee from, or fence against, the powers

of heaven? They had affronted the true God and robbed him of his honour by worshipping the host of heaven, giving that worship to the creature which is due to the Creator only; and now the host of heaven fights against them, and even that part of the creation which they had idolized is at war with them, and even triumphs in their ruin, Jer 8:2. There is no way of making any creature propitious to us, no, not by sacrifice nor offering, but only by making our peace with God and keeping ourselves in his love. This had been enough to make them an easy prey to the victorious Israelites, yet this was not all.

[2.] Besides the terror struck upon them, there was a great slaughter made of them by hail-stones, which were so large, and came down with such a force, that more were killed by the hail-stones than by the sword of the Israelites, though no doubt they were busy. God himself speaks to Job of treasures, or magazines, of snow and hail, which he has reserved for the day of battle and war (Job 38:22,23), and here they are made use of to destroy the Canaanites. Here was hail, shot from God's great ordnance, that, against whomsoever it was directed, was sure to hit (and never glanced upon the Israelites mixed with them), and wherever it hit was sure to kill. See here how miserable those are that have God for their enemy, and how sure to perish; it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands, for there is no fleeing out of them. Some observe that Beth-horon lay north of Gibeon, Azekah and Makkedah lay south, so that they fled each way but, which way soever they fled, the hail-stones pursued them, and met them at every turn.

2 The great faith of Joshua, and the power of God crowning it with the miraculous arrest of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be prolonged, and so the enemy totally defeated. The hail-stones had their rise no higher than the clouds, but, to show that Israel's help came from above the clouds, the sun itself, who by his constant motion serves the whole earth, by halting when there was occasion served the Israelites, and did them a kindness. The sun and moon stood

still in their habitation, at the light of thy arrows which gave the signal, Hab 3:11.

(1.) Here is the prayer of Joshua that the sun might stand still. I call it his prayer, because it is said (Jos 10:12) he spoke to the Lord; as Elijah, though we read (1Ki 17:1) only of his prophesying of the drought, yet is said (Jam 5:17) to pray for it. Observe,

[1.] An instance of Joshua's unwearied activity in the service of God and Israel, that though he had marched all night and fought all day, and, one might expect, would be inclined to repose himself and get a little sleep, and give his army some time to rest--that, like the hireling, he would earnestly desire the shadow, and bid the night welcome, when he had done such a good day's work--yet, instead of this, he wishes for nothing so much as the prolonging of the day. Note, Those that wait on the Lord and work for him shall renew their strength, shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint, Isa 40:31.

[2.] An instance of his great faith in the almighty power of God, as above the power of nature, and able to control and alter the usual course of it. No doubt Joshua had an extraordinary impulse or impression upon his spirit, which he knew to be of divine origin, prompting him to desire that this miracle might be wrought upon this occasion, else it would have been presumption in him to desire or expect; the prayer would not have been granted by the divine power, if it had not been dictated by the divine grace. God wrought this faith in him, and then said, "According to thy faith, and thy prayer of faith, be it unto thee." It cannot be imagined, however, that such a thing as this should have entered into his mind if God had not put it there; a man would have had a thousand projects in his head for the completing of the victory before he would have thought of desiring the sun to stand still; but even in the Old-Testament saints the Spirit made intercession according to the will of God. What God will give the inclines the hearts

of his praying people to ask, and for what he will do he will be enquired of, Eze 36:37.

Now, First, It looked great for Joshua to say, Sun, stand thou still. His ancestor Joseph had indeed dreamed that the sun and moon did homage to him; but who would have thought that, after it had been fulfilled in the figure, it should be again fulfilled in the letter to one of his posterity? The prayer is thus expressed with authority, because it was not an ordinary prayer, such as is directed and supported only by God's common providence or promise, but the prayer of a prophet at this time divinely inspired for this purpose; and yet it intimates to us the prevalency of prayer in general, so far as it is regulated by the word of God, and may remind us of that honour put upon prayer (45:11), Concerning the work of my hands command you me. He bids the sun stand still upon Gibeon, the place of action and the seat of war, intimating that what he designed in this request was the advantage of Israel against their enemies; it is probable that the sun was now declining, and that he did not call for the lengthening out of the day until he observed it hastening towards it period. He does likewise, in the name of the King of kings, arrest the moon, perhaps because it was requisite for the preserving of the harmony and good order of the spheres that the course of the rest of the heavenly bodies should be stayed likewise, otherwise, while the sun shone, he needed not the moon; and here he mentions the valley of Ajalon, which was near to Gibeon, because there he was at that time.

Secondly, It was bold indeed to say so before Israel, and argues a very strong assurance of faith. If the event had not answered the demand, nothing could have been a greater slur upon him; the Israelites would have concluded he was certainly going mad, or he would never have talked so extravagantly. But he knew very well God would own and answer a petition which he himself directed to be drawn up and presented, and therefore was not afraid to say before all

Israel, calling them to observe this work of wonder, Sun, stand thou still, for he was confident in him whom he had trusted.

He believed the almighty power of God, else he could not have expected that the sun, going on in its strength, driving in a full career, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, should be stopped in an instant. He believed the sovereignty of God in the kingdom of nature, else he could not have expected that the established law and course of nature should be changed and interrupted, the ordinances of heaven, and the constant usage according to these ordinances, broken in upon. And he believed God's particular favour to Israel above all people under the sun, else he could not have expected that, to favour them upon an emergency with a double day, he should (which must follow of course) amaze and terrify so great a part of the terrestrial globe with a double night at the same time. It is true, he causeth the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust; but for this once the unjust shall wait for it beyond the usual time, while, in favour to righteous Israel, it stands still.

(2.) The wonderful answer to this prayer. No sooner said than done (Jos 10:13): The sun stood still, and the moon staid. Notwithstanding the vast distance between the earth and the sun, at the word of Joshua the sun stopped immediately; for the same God that rules in heaven above rules at the same time on this earth, and, when he pleases, even the heavens shall hear the earth, as here. Concerning this great miracle it is here said,

[1.] That it continued a whole day, that is, the sun continued as long again above the horizon as otherwise it would have done. It is commonly supposed to have been about the middle of summer that this happened, when, in that country, it was about fourteen hours between sun and sun, so that this day was about twenty-eight hours long; yet, if we suppose it to have been at that time of the year when the days are at the shortest, it will be the more probable that Joshua should desire and pray for the prolonging of the day.

[2.] That hereby the people had full time to avenge themselves of their enemies, and to give them a total defeat. We often read in history of battles which the night put an end to, the shadows of which favoured the retreat of the conquered; to prevent this advantage to the enemy in their flight, the day was doubled, that the hand of Israel might find out all their enemies; but the eye and hand of God can find them out without the help of the sun's light, for to him the night shineth as the day, Ps 139:12. Note, Sometimes God completes a great salvation in a little time, and makes but one day's work of it. Perhaps this miracle is alluded to Zec 14:6,7, where the day of God's fighting against the nations is said to be one day, and that at evening time it shall be light, as here. And,

[3.] That there was never any day like it, before or since, in which God put such an honour upon faith and prayer, and upon Israel's cause; never did he so wonderfully comply with the request of a man, nor so wonderfully fight for his people.

[4.] This is said to be written in the book of Jasher, a collection of state-poems, in which the poem made upon this occasion was preserved among the rest; probably the same with that book of the wars of the Lord (Nu 21:14), which afterwards was continued and carried on by one Jasher. Those words, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon, sounding metrical, are supposed to be taken from the narrative of this event as it was found in the book of Jasher. Not that the divine testimony of the book of Joshua needed confirmation from the book of Jasher, a human composition; but to those who had that book in their hands it would be of use to compare this history with it, which warrants the appeals the learned make to profane history for corroborating the proofs of the truth of sacred history.

[5.] But surely this stupendous miracle of the standing still of the sun was intended for something more than merely to give Israel so much the more time to find out and kill their enemies, which, without this, might have been done the next day. First,

God would hereby magnify Joshua (Jos 3:7), as a particular favourite, and one whom he did delight to honour, being a type of him who has all power both in heaven and in earth and whom the winds and the seas obey. Secondly, He would hereby notify to all the world what he was doing for his people Israel here in Canaan; the sun, the eye of the world, must be fixed for some hours upon Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, as if to contemplate the great works of God there for Israel, and so to engage the children of men to look that way, and to enquire of this wonder done in the land, 2Ch 32:31.

Proclamation was hereby made to all the neighbouring nations. Come, behold the works of the Lord (Ps 46:8), and say, What nation is there so great as Israel is, who has God so nigh unto them? One would have supposed that this would bring such real ambassadors as the Gibeonites pretended to be from a very far country, to court the friendship of Israel because of the name of the Lord their God. Thirdly, He would hereby convince and confound those idolaters that worshipped the sun and moon and gave divine honours to them, by demonstrating that they were subject to the command of the God of Israel, and that, as high as they were, he was above them; and thus he would fortify his people against temptations to this idolatry, which he foresaw they would be addicted to (De 4:19), and which, notwithstanding this, they afterwards corrupted themselves with. Fourthly, This miracle signified (it is the learned bishop Pierson's notion) that in the latter days, when the light of the world was tending towards a light of darkness, the Sun of righteousness, even our Joshua, should arise (Mal 4:2), give check to the approaching night, and be the true light. To which let me add that when Christ conquered our spiritual enemies upon the cross the miracle wrought on the sun was the reverse of this; it was then darkened as if it had gone down at noon, for Christ needed not the light of the sun to carry on his victories: he then made darkness his pavilion. And, Lastly, The arresting of the sun and moon in this day of battle prefigured the turning of the sun into

darkness, and the moon into blood, in the last great and terrible day of the Lord.

10 And the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah, and unto Makkedah.

11 And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, *and* were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: *they were* more which died with hailstones than *they* whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

12 Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,
until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.
Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

14 And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel.

15 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

16 But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.

17 And it was told Joshua, saying, the five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.

It was a brave appearance, no doubt, which the five kings made when they took the field for the reducing of Gibeon, and a brave army they had following them; but they were all routed, put into disorder first, and then brought to destruction by the hail-stones. And now Joshua thought, his work being done, he might go with his army into quarters of refreshment. Accordingly it was resolved, perhaps in a council of war, that they should presently return to the camp at Gilgal (Jos 10:15), till they should receive orders from God to take possession of the country they had now conquered; but he soon finds he has more work cut out for him. The victory must be pursued, that

the spoils might be divided. Accordingly he applies himself to it with renewed vigour.

I The forces that had dispersed themselves must be followed and smitten. When tidings were brought to Joshua where the kings were he ordered a guard to be set upon them for the present (Jos 10:18), reserving them for another day of destruction, and to be brought forth to a day of wrath, Job 21:30. He directs his men to pursue the common soldiers, as much as might be, to prevent their escaping to the garrisons, which would strengthen them, and make the reduction of them the more difficult, Jos 10:19. Like a prudent general, he does that first which is most needful, and defers his triumphs till he has completed his conquests; nor was he in such haste to insult over the captive kings but that he would first prevent the rallying again of their scattered forces. The result of this vigorous pursuit was,

1. That a very great slaughter was made of the enemies of God and Israel. And,

2 The field was cleared of them, so that none remained but such as got into fenced cities, where they would not long be safe themselves, nor were they capable of doing any service to the cities that sheltered them, unless they could have left their fears behind them. 3. None moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel, Jos 10:21. This expression intimates,

(1.) Their perfect safety and tranquillity; some think it should be read (from Ex 11:7), Against any of the children of Israel did not a dog move his tongue; no, not against any one man of them. They were not threatened by any danger at all after their victory, no, not so much as the barking of a dog. Not one single Israelite (for the original makes it so particular) was brought into any distress, either in the battle or in the pursuit. (2.) Their honour and reputation; no man had any reproach to cast upon them, nor an ill word to give them. God not only tied the

hands, but stopped the mouths, of their enraged enemies, and put lying lips to silence.

(3.) The Chaldee paraphrase makes it an expression of their unalloyed joy for this victory, reading it, There was no hurt nor loss to the children of Israel, for which any man should afflict his soul. When the army came to be reviewed after the battle, there was none slain, none wounded, none missing. Not one Israelite had occasion to lament either the loss of a friend or the loss of a limb, so cheap, so easy, so glorious, was this victory.

II The kings that had hidden themselves must now be called to an account, as rebels against the Israel of God, to whom, by the divine promise and grant, this land did of right belong and should have been surrendered upon demand. See here,

1. How they were secured. The cave which they fled to, and trusted in for a refuge, became their prison, in which they were clapped up, till Joshua sat in judgment on them, Jos 10:18. It seems they all escaped both the hail-stones and the sword, God so ordering it, not in kindness to them, but that they might be reserved for a more solemn and terrible execution; as, for this cause, Pharaoh survived the plagues of Egypt, and was made to stand, that God might in him show his power, Ex 9:16.

They all fled, and met at the same place, Providence directing them; and now those who were lately consulting against Israel were put upon new counsels to preserve themselves and agreed to take shelter in the same cave. The information brought to Joshua of this is an evidence that there were those of the country, who knew the holes and fastnesses of it, that were in his interests. And the care Joshua took to keep them there when they were there, as it is an instance of his policy and presence of mind, even in the heat of action, so, in the result of their project, it shows how those not only deceive themselves, but destroy themselves, who think to hide

themselves from God. Their refuge of lies will but bind them over to God's judgment.

2. How they were triumphed over. Joshua ordered them to be brought forth out of the cave, set before him as at the bar, and their names called over, Jos 10:22,23. And when they either were bound and cast upon the ground unable to help themselves, or threw themselves upon the ground, humbly to beg for their lives, he called for the general officers and great men, and commanded them to trample upon these kings, and set their feet upon their necks, not in sport and to make themselves and the company merry, but with the gravity and decorum that became the ministers of the divine justice who were not herein to gratify any pride or passion of their own, but to give glory to the God of Israel as higher than the highest, who treads upon princes as mortar (Isa 41:25), and is terrible to the kings of the earth, Ps 76:12.

The thing does indeed look barbarous, thus to insult over men in misery, who had suddenly fallen from the highest pitch of honour into this disgrace. It was hard for crowned heads to be thus trodden upon, not by Joshua himself (that might better have been borne), at least not by him only, but by all the captains of the army. Certainly it ought not to be drawn into a precedent, for the case was extraordinary, and we have reason to think it was by divine direction and impulse that Joshua did this.

(1.) God would hereby punish the abominable wickedness of these kings, the measure of whose iniquity was now full. And, by this public act of justice done upon these ringleaders of the Canaanites in sin, he would possess his people with the greater dread and detestation of those sins of the nations that God cast out from before them, which they would be tempted to imitate.

(2.) He would hereby have the promise by Moses made good (De 33:29), Thou shalt tread upon their high places, that is, their great men, which should the rather be speedily fulfilled

in the letter because they are the very last words of Moses that we find upon record.

(3.) He would hereby encourage the faith and hope of his people Israel in reference to the wars that were yet before them. Therefore Joshua said (Jos 10:25): Fear not, nor be dismayed.

[1.] "Fear not these kings, nor any of theirs, as if there were any danger of having this affront now put upon them in after-time revenged upon yourselves, a consideration which keeps many from being insolent towards those they have at their mercy, because they know not how soon the uncertain fate of war may turn the same wheel upon themselves; but you need not fear that any should rise up ever to revenge this quarrel."

[2.] "Fear not any other kings, who may at any time be in confederacy against you, for you see these brought down, whom you thought formidable. Thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies; now that they begin to fall, to fall so low that you may set your feet on their necks, you may be confident that they shall not prevail, but shall surely fall before you," Es 6:13.

(4.) He would hereby give a type and figure of Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and believers' victories through him. All the enemies of the Redeemer shall be made his footstool, Ps 110:1. And see Ps 18:40. The kings of the earth set themselves against him (Ps 2:2), but sooner or later we shall see all things put under Him (Heb 2:8), and principalities and powers made a show of, Col 2:15. And in these triumphs we are more than conquerors, may tread upon the lion and adder (Ps 91:13), may ride on the high places of the earth (Isa 58:14), and may be confident that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet, shall do it shortly and do it effectually, Ro 16:20. See Ps 149:8,9.

3. How they were put to death. Perhaps, when they had undergone that terrible mortification of being trodden upon by the captains of Israel, they were ready to say, as Agag, Surely the bitterness of death is past, and that sufficient unto them was this punishment which was inflicted by many; but their honours cannot excuse their lives, their forfeited devoted lives. Joshua smote them with the sword, and then hanged up their bodies till evening, when they were taken down, and thrown into the cave in which they had hidden themselves, Jos 10:26,27. That which they thought would have been their shelter was made their prison first and then their grave; so shall we be disappointed in that which we flee to from God: yet to good people the grave is still a hiding-place, Job 14:13. If these five kings had humbled themselves in time, and had begged peace instead of waging war, they might have saved their lives; but now the decree had gone forth, and they found no place for repentance, or the reversal of the judgment; it was too late to expect it, though perhaps they sought it carefully with tears.

18 And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them:

19 and stay ye not, *but* pursue after your enemies, and smite the hindmost of them; suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the Lord your God hath delivered them into your hand.

20 And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest *which* remained of them entered into fenced cities.

21 And all the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

22 Then said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings unto me out of the cave.

23 And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon.

24 And it came to pass, when they brought out those kings unto Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, come near, put

your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

25 And Joshua said unto them, Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

26 And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.

27 And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, *that* Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, *which remain* until this very day.

28 And that day Joshua took Makkedah, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof he utterly destroyed, them, and all the souls that *were* therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah as he did unto the king of Jericho.

29 Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:

30 and the Lord delivered it also, and the king thereof, into the hand of Israel; and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that *were* therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof as he did unto the king of Jericho.

31 And Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, unto Lachish, and encamped against it, and fought against it:

32 and the Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that *were* therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah.

33 Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua smote him and his people, until he had left him none remaining.

We are here informed how Joshua improved the late glorious victory he had obtained and the advantages he had gained by it, and to do this well is a general's praise.

I. Here is a particular account of the several cities which he immediately made himself master of.

1 The cities of three of the kings whom he had conquered in the field he went and took possession of, Lachish (Jos 10:31,32), Eglon (Jos 10:34,35), and Hebron, Jos 10:36,37. The other two, Jerusalem and Jarmuth, were not taken at this time; perhaps his forces were either so much fatigued with what they had done or so well content with what they had got that they had no mind to attack those places, and so they let slip the fairest opportunity they could ever expect of reducing them with ease, which afterwards was not done without difficulty, Jdg 1:8,2Sa 5:6.

2. Three other cities, and royal cities too, he took: Makkedah, into the neighbourhood of which the five kings had fled, which brought Joshua and his forces thither in pursuit of them, and so hastened its ruin (Jos 10:28), Libnah (Jos 10:29,30), and Debir, Jos 10:38,39. 3. One king that brought in his forces for the relief of Lachish, that had lost its king, proved to meddle to his own hurt; it was Horam king of Gezer, who, either in friendship to his neighbours or for his own security, offered to stop the progress of Joshua's arms, and was cut off with all his forces, Jos 10:33. Thus wicked men are often snared in their counsels, and, by opposing God in the way of his judgments, bring them the sooner on their own heads.

II. A general account of the country which was hereby reduced and brought into Israel's hands (Jos 10:40-42), that part of the land of Canaan of which they first got possession, which lay south of Jerusalem, and afterwards fell, for the most part, to the lot of the tribe of Judah. Observe in this narrative,

1 The great speed Joshua made in taking these cities, which, some think, is intimated in the manner of relating it, which is quick and concise. He flew like lightning from place to place; and though they all stood it out to the last extremity, and none of these cities opened their gates to him, yet in a little time he got them all into his hands, summoned them, and seized them, the same day (Jos 10:28), or in two days, Jos 10:32. Now that they were struck with fear, by the defeat of their armies and

the death of their kings, Joshua prudently followed his blow. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time, if we will but be busy and improve our opportunities.

2 The great severity Joshua used towards those he conquered. He gave no quarter to man, woman, nor child, put to the sword all the souls (Jos 10:28,30,32,35, &c.), utterly destroyed all that breathed (Jos 10:40), and left none remaining. Nothing could justify this military execution but that herein they did as the Lord God of Israel commanded (Jos 10:40), which was sufficient not only to bear them out, and save them for the imputation of cruelty, but to sanctify what they did, and make it an acceptable piece of service to his justice. God would hereby,

(1.) Manifest his hatred of the idolatries and other abominations which the Canaanites had been guilty of, and leave us to judge how great the provocation was which they had given him by the greatness of the destruction which was brought upon them when the measure of their iniquity was full.

(2.) He would hereby magnify his love to his people Israel, in giving so many men for them, and people for their life, Isa 43:4. When the heathen are to be cast out to make room for this vine (Ps 80:8) divine justice appears more prodigal than ever of human blood, that the Israelites might find themselves for ever obliged to spend their lives to the glory of that God who had sacrificed so many of the lives of his creatures to their interest.

(3.) Hereby was typified the final and eternal destruction of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the Lord Jesus, who, having slighted the riches of his grace, must for ever feel the weight of his wrath, and shall have judgment without mercy. Nations that forget God shall be turned into hell, and no reproach at all to God's infinite goodness.

3. The great success of this expedition. The spoil of these cities was now divided among the men of war that plundered them; and the cities themselves, with the land about them, were shortly to be divided among the tribes, for the Lord fought for Israel, Jos 10:42. They could not have gotten the victory if God had not undertaken the battle; then we conquer when God fights for us; and, if he be for us, who can be against us?

34 And from Lachish Joshua passed unto Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it, and fought against it:
35 and they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that *were* therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.
36 And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, unto Hebron; and they fought against it:
37 and they took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that *were* therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that *were* therein.
38 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:
39 and he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that *were* therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.
40 So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded.
41 And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.
42 And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.
43 And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

Joshua-11

The Defeat of Jabin's Alliance

1 And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor had heard *those things,* that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achshaph,

We are here entering upon the story of another campaign that Joshua made, and it was a glorious one, no less illustrious than the former in the success of it, though in respect of miracles it was inferior to it in glory. The wonders God then wrought for them were to animate and encourage them to act vigorously themselves. Thus the war carried on by the preaching of the gospel against Satan's kingdom was at first forwarded by miracles; but, the war being by them sufficiently proved to be of God, the managers of it are now left to the ordinary assistance of divine grace in the use of the sword of the Spirit, and must not expect hail-stones nor the standing still of the sun. In this story we have,

I The Canaanites taking the field against Israel. They were the aggressors, God hardening their hearts to begin the war, that Israel might be justified beyond exception in destroying them. Joshua and all Israel had returned to the camp at Gilgal, and perhaps these kings knew no other than that they intended to sit down content with the conquest they had already made, and yet they prepare war against them.

Note, Sinners bring ruin upon their own heads, so that God will be justified when he speaks, and they alone shall bear the blame for ever. Judah had now couched as a lion gone up from the prey; if the northern kings rouse him up, it is at their peril, Ge 49:9. Now, 1. Several nations joined in this confederacy, some in the mountains and some in the plains, Jos 11:2. Canaanites from east and west, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, &c. (Jos 11:3), of different constitutions and divided interests

among themselves, and yet they here unite against Israel as against a common enemy. Thus are the children of this world more unanimous, and therein wiser, than the children of light.

The oneness of the church's enemies should shame the church's friends out of their discords and divisions, and engage them to be one. 2 The head of this confederacy was Jabin king of Hazor (Jos 11:1), as Adoni-zedec was of the former; it is said (Jos 11:10) Hazor had been the head of all those kingdoms, which could not have revolted without occasioning ill-will; but this was forgotten and laid aside upon this occasion, by consent of parties, Lu 23:12. When they had all drawn up their forces together, every kingdom bringing in its quota, they were a very great army, much greater than the former, as the sand on the sea shore in multitude, and upon this account much stronger and more formidable, that they had horses and chariots very many, which we do not find the southern kings had; hereby they had a great advantage against Israel, for their army consisted only of foot, and they never brought horses nor chariots into the field. Josephus tells us that the army of the Canaanites consisted of 300,000 foot, 10,000 horses, and 20,000 chariots. Many there be that rise up against God's Israel; doubtless their numbers made them very confident of success, but it proved that so much the greater slaughter was made of them.

II The encouragement God gave to Joshua to give them the meeting, even upon the ground of their own choosing (Jos 11:6): Be not afraid because of them. Joshua was remarkable for his courage--it was his master grace, and yet it seems he had need to be again and again cautioned not to be afraid. Fresh dangers and difficulties make it necessary to fetch in fresh supports and comforts from the word of God, which we have always nigh unto us, to be made use of in every time of need. Those that have God on their side need not be disturbed at the number and power of their enemies; more are those that are with us than those that are against us; those have the hosts

of the Lord that have the Lord of hosts engaged for them. For his encouragement,

1. God assures him of success, and fixes the hour: To-morrow about this time, when an engagement (it is probable) was expected and designed on both sides, I will deliver them up slain. Though they were to be slain by the sword of Israel, yet it is spoken of as God's work, that he would deliver them up.

2. He appoints him to hough their horses, hamstring them, lame them, and burn their chariots, not only that Israel might not use them hereafter, but that they might not fear them now, their God designing this contempt to be put upon them. Let Israel look upon their chariots but as rotten wood designed for the fire, and their horses of war as disabled things, scarcely good enough for the cart. This encouragement which God here gave to Joshua no doubt he communicated to the people, who perhaps were under some apprehensions of danger from this vast army, notwithstanding the experience they had had of God's power engaged for them. And the wisdom and goodness of God are to be observed,

(1.) In infatuating the counsels of the enemy, that all the kings of Canaan, who were not dispersed at such a distance from each other but that they might have got all together in a body, did not at first confederate against Israel, but were divided in to the southern and northern combination, and so became the less formidable. And,

(2.) In preparing his people to encounter the greater force, by breaking the less. They first engage with five kings together, and now with many more. God proportions our trials to our strength and our strength to our trials.

III. Joshua's march against these confederate forces, Jos 11:7. He came upon them suddenly, and surprised them in their quarters. He made this haste, 1. That he might put them into the greater confusion, by giving them an alarm, when they

little thought he was near them. 2. That he might be sure not to come short of the honour God had fixed, to give him the meeting at the enemies' camp, to-morrow about this time. It is fit we should keep time with God.

IV. His success, Jos 11:8. He obtained the honour and advantage of a complete victory; he smote them and chased them, in the several ways they took in their flight; some fled towards Zidon, which lay to the northwest, others towards Mizpeh, eastward, but the parties Joshua sent out pursued them each way. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel; they would not deliver themselves into the hands of Israel to be made proselytes and tributaries, and so offered up to God's grace (Ro 15:16), and therefore God delivered them into their hands to be made sacrifices to his justice; for God will be honoured by us or upon us.

V. His obedience to the orders given him, in destroying the horses and chariots (Jos 11:9), which was an instance, 1. Of his subjection to the divine will, as one under authority, that must do as he is bidden. 2. Of his self-denial, and crossing his own genius and inclination in compliance with God's command. 3. Of his confidence in the power of God engaged for Israel, which enabled them to despise the chariots and horses which others trusted in, Ps 20:7,33:17. 4. Of his care to keep up in the people the like confidence in God, by taking that from them which they would be tempted to trust too much to. This was cutting of a right hand.

2 and to the kings that *were* on the north of the mountains, and of
the plains south of Chinneroth, and in the valley, and in the
borders of Dor on the west,
3 *and to* the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and *to* the Amorite,
and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite in the mountains,
and *to* the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpeh.
4 And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much
people, even as the sand that *is* upon the seashore in multitude,
with horses and chariots very many.

5 And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.
6 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.
7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them.
8 And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.
9 And Joshua did unto them as the Lord bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.
10 And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms.
11 And they smote all the souls that *were* therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire.

We have here the same improvement made of this victory as was made of that in the foregoing chapter.

1 The destruction of Hazor is particularly recorded, because in it, and by the king thereof, this daring design against Israel was laid, Jos 11:10,11. The king of Hazor, it seems, escaped with his life out of the battle, and thought himself safe when he had got back into his own city, and Joshua had gone in pursuit of the scattered troops another way. But it proved that that which he thought would be for his welfare was his trap; in it he was taken as in an evil net; there he was slain, and his city, for his sake, burned. Yet we find that the remains of it being not well looked after by Israel the Canaanites rebuilt it, and settled there under another king of the same name, Jdg 4:2.

2 The rest of the cities of that part of the country are spoken of only in general, that Joshua got them all into his hands, but

did not burn them as he did Hazor, for Israel was to dwell in great and goodly cities which they builded not (De 6:10) and in these among the rest. And here we find Israel rolling in blood and treasure.

(1.) In the blood of their enemies; they smote all the souls (Jos 11:1), neither left they any to breathe (Jos 11:14), that there might be none to infect them with the abominations of Canaan, and none to disturb them in the possession of it. The children were cut off, lest they should afterwards lay claim to any part of this land in the right of their parents.

(2.) In the wealth of their enemies. The spoil, and the cattle, they took for a prey to themselves, Jos 11:14. As they were enriched with the spoil of their oppressors when they came out of Egypt, wherewith to defray the charges of their apprenticeship in the wilderness, so they were now enriched with the spoil of their enemies for a stock wherewith to set up in the land of Canaan. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just.

12 And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, *and* he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded.

13 But *as for* the cities that stood still in their strength, Israel burned none of them, save Hazor only; *that* did Joshua burn.

14 And all the spoil of these cities, and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man they smote with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them, neither left they any to breathe.

15 As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses.

16 So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country,
and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the
mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;
17 *even* from the mount Halak that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-
gad in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon: and all their
kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.
18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter.

I. A short account is here given of what was done in four things:--

1 The obstinacy of the Canaanites in their opposition to the Israelites. It was strange that though it appeared so manifestly that God fought for Israel, and in every engagement the Canaanites had the worst of it, yet they stood it out to the last; not one city made peace with Israel, but the Gibeonites only, who understood the things that belonged to their peace better than their neighbours, Jos 11:19. It is intimated that other cities might have made as good terms for themselves, without ragged clothes and clouted shoes, if they would have humbled themselves, but they never so much as desired conditions of peace. We here are told whence this unaccountable infatuation came: It was of the Lord to harden their hearts, Jos 11:20. As Pharaoh's heart was hardened by his own pride and wilfulness first, and afterwards by the righteous judgment of God, to his destruction, so were the hearts of these Canaanites.

To punish them for all their other follies, God left them to this, to make those their enemies whom they might have made their friends. This was it that ruined them: they came against Israel in battle, and gave the first blow, and therefore might have no favour shown them. Those know not what they do who give the provocation to divine justice, or the authorized instruments of it. Are we stronger than God? Observe here, That hardness of heart is the ruin of sinners. Those that are stupid and secure,

and heedless of divine warnings, are already marked for destruction. What hope is there of those concerning whom God has said, Go, make their hearts fat?

2 The constancy of the Israelites in prosecuting this war (Jos 11:18): Joshua made war a long time; some reckon it five years, others seven, that were spent in subduing this land: so long God would train up Israel to war, and give them repeated instances of his power and goodness in every new victory that he gave them.

3. The conquest of the Anakim at last, Jos 11:21,22. Either this was done as they met with them where they were dispersed, as some think, or rather it should seem the Anakim had retired to their fastnesses, and so were hunted out and cut off at last, after all the rest of Israel's enemies. The mountains of Judah and Israel were the habitations of those mountains of men; but not their height, nor the strength of their caves, nor the difficulty of the passes to them, could secure, no, not these mighty men, from the sword of Joshua. The cutting off of the sons of Anak is particularly mentioned because these had been such a terror to the spies forty years before, and their bulk and strength had been thought an insuperable difficulty in the way of the reducing of Canaan, Nu 13:28,33. Even that opposition which seemed invincible was got over.

Never let the sons of Anak be a terror to the Israel of God, for even their day will come to fall. Giants are dwarfs to Omnipotence; yet this struggle with the Anakim was reserved for the latter end of the war, when the Israelites had become more expert in the arts of war, and had had more experience of the power and goodness of God. Note, God sometimes reserves the sharpest trials of his people by affliction and temptation for the latter end of their days. Therefore let not him that girds on the harness boast as he that puts it off. Death, that tremendous son of Anak, is the last enemy that is to be

encountered; but it is to be destroyed, 1Co 15:26. Thanks be to God, who will give us the victory.

4. The end and issue of this long war. The Canaanites were rooted out, not perfectly (as we shall find after in the book of Judges), but in a good measure; they were not able to make any head either,

(1.) So as to keep the Israelites out of possession of the land: Joshua took all that land, Jos 11:16,17. And we may suppose the people dispersed themselves and their families into the countries they had conquered, at least those that lay nearest to the head-quarters at Gilgal, until an orderly distribution should be made by lot, that every man might know his own. Or,

(2.) So as to keep them in action, or give them any molestation (Jos 11:23): The land rested from war. It ended not in a peace with the Canaanites (that was forbidden), but in a peace from them. There is a rest, a rest from war, remaining for the people of God, into which they shall enter when their warfare is accomplished.

II. That which was now done is here compared with that which had been said to Moses. God's word and his works, if viewed and considered together, will mutually illustrate each other. It is here observed in the close,

1. That all the precepts God had given to Moses relating to the conquest of Canaan were obeyed on the people's part, at least while Joshua lived. See how solemnly this is remarked (Jos 11:15): As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, by whose hand the law was given, so did Moses command Joshua, for Moses was faithful, as a law-giver, to him that appointed him; he did his part, and then he died: but were the commands of Moses observed when he was in his grave? Yes, they were: So did Joshua, who was, in his place, as faithful as Moses in his. He left nothing undone (Heb. he removed nothing) of all that the Lord commanded Moses.

Those that leave their duty undone do what they can to remove or make void the command of God, by which they are bound to do it; but Joshua, by performing the precept, confirmed it, as the expression is, De 27:26. Joshua was himself a great commander, and yet nothing was more his praise than his obedience. Those that rule others at their will must themselves be ruled by the divine will; then their power is indeed their honour, and not otherwise. The pious obedience for which Joshua is here commended respects especially the command to destroy the Canaanites, and to break down their altars and burn their images, de 7:2-5,ex 23:24,34:13.

Joshua, in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, spared neither the idols nor the idolaters. Saul's disobedience, or rather his partial obedience, to the command of God, for the utter destruction of the Amalekites, cost him his kingdom. It should seem Joshua himself gives this account of his most careful and punctual observance of his orders in the execution of his commission, that in all respects he had done as Moses commanded him; and then it intimates that he had more pleasure and satisfaction in reflecting upon his obedience to the commands of God in all this war, and valued himself more upon that, than upon all the gains and triumphs with which he was enriched and advanced.

2. That all the promises God had given to Moses relating to this conquest were accomplished on his part, Jos 11:23. Joshua took the whole land, conquered it, and took possession of it, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses. God had promised to drive out the nations before them (Ex 33:2,34:11), and to bring them down, De 9:3. And now it was done. There failed not one word of the promise. Our successes and enjoyments are then doubly sweet and comfortable to us when we see them flowing to us from the promise (this is according to what the Lord said), as our obedience is then acceptable to God when it has an eye to the precept. And, if we make

conscience of our duty, we need not question the performance of the promise.

19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all *other* they took in battle.

20 For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, *and* that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.

21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakim from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

22 There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

Joshua-12

The Kings Defeated by Moses

1 Now these *are* the kings of the land, which the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land on the other side Jordan toward the rising of the sun, from the river Arnon unto mount Hermon, and all the plain on the east:

2 Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, *and* ruled from Aroer, which *is* upon the bank of the river Arnon, and from the middle of the river, and from half Gilead, even unto the river Jabbok, *which is* the border of the children of Ammon;

3 and from the plain to the sea of Chinneroth on the east, and unto the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea on the east, the way to Beth-jeshimoth; and from the south, under Ashdoth-pisgah:

Joshua, or whoever else is the historian before he comes to sum up the new conquests Israel had made, in these verses receives their former conquests in Moses's time, under whom they became masters of the great and potent kingdoms of Sihon and Og. Note, Fresh mercies must not drown the remembrance of former mercies, nor must the glory of the present instruments of good to the church be suffered to eclipse and diminish the just honour of those who have gone before them, and who were the blessings and ornaments of their day. Joshua's services and achievements are confessedly great, but let not those under Moses be overlooked and forgotten, since God was the same who wrought both, and both put together proclaim him the Alpha and Omega of Israel's great salvation. Here is,

1. A description of this conquered country, the measure and bounds of it in general (Jos 12:1): From the river Arnon in the south, to Mount Hermon in the north. In particular, here is a description of the kingdom of Sihon (Jos 12:2,3), and that of Og, Jos 12:4,5. Moses had described this country very particularly (De 2:36,3:4, &c.), and this description here agrees with his. King Og is said to dwell at Ashtaroth and Edrei (Jos 12:4), probably because they were both his royal cities; he had palaces in both, and resided sometimes in one and sometimes in the other; one perhaps was his summer seat and the other his winter seat. But Israel took both from him, and made one grave to serve him that could not be content with one palace.

2 The distribution of this country. Moses assigned it to the two tribes and a half, at their request, and divided it among them (Jos 12:6), of which we had the story at large, Nu 32:1-42. The dividing of it when it was conquered by Moses is here mentioned as an example to Joshua what he must do now that he had conquered the country on this side Jordan. Moses, in his time, gave to one part of Israel a very rich and fruitful country, but it was on the outside of Jordan; but Joshua gave to all Israel the holy land, the mountain of God's sanctuary,

within Jordan: so the law conferred upon some few of God's spiritual Israel external temporal blessings, which were earnests of good things to come; but our Lord Jesus, the true Joshua, has provided for all the children of promise spiritual blessings--the privileges of the sanctuary, and the heavenly Canaan. The triumphs and grants of the law were glorious, but those of the gospel far exceed in glory.

4 and the coast of Og king of Bashan, *which was* of the remnant of the
giants, that dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei,
5 and reigned in Mount Hermon, and in Salcah, and in all Bashan,
unto the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and half
Gilead, the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.
6 Them did Moses the servant of the Lord and the children of Israel
smite: and Moses the servant of the Lord gave it *for* a possession unto
the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

The Kings Defeated by Joshua

7 And these *are* the kings of the country which Joshua and the children
of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from Baal- gad in the
valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir;
which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel *for* a possession according
to their divisions;
8 in the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the
springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; the
Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the
Hivites, and the Jebusites:

We have here a breviate of Joshua's conquests.

I The limits of the country he conquered. It lay between Jordan on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the west, and extended from Baal-gad near Lebanon in the north to Halak, which lay upon the country of Edom in the south, Jos 12:7. The boundaries are more largely described, Nu 34:2-12, &c. But what is here said is enough to show that God had been as good as his word, and had given them possession of all he had promised them by Moses, if they would but have kept it.

II The various kinds of land that were found in this country, which contributed both to its pleasantness and to its fruitfulness, Jos 12:8. There were mountains, not craggy, and rocky, and barren, which are frightful to the traveller and useless to the inhabitants, but fruitful hills, such as put forth precious things (De 33:15), which charmed the spectator's eye and filled the owner's hand. And valleys, not mossy and boggy, but covered with corn, Ps 65:13. There were plains, and springs to water them; and even in that rich land there were wildernesses too, or forests, which were not so thickly inhabited as other parts, yet had towns and houses in them, but served as foils to set off the more pleasant and fruitful countries.

III. The several nations that had been in possession of this country--Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, &c., all of them descended from Canaan, the accursed son of Ham, Ge 10:15-18. Seven nations they are called (De 7:1), and so many are there reckoned up, but here six only are mentioned, the Girgashites being either lost or left out, though we find them, Ge 10:16,15:21. Either they were incorporated with some other of these nations, or, as the tradition of the Jews is, upon the approach of Israel under Joshua they all withdrew and went into Africa, leaving their country to be possessed by Israel, with whom they saw it was to no purpose to contend, and therefore they are not named among the nations that Joshua subdued.

IV. A list of the kings that were conquered and subdued by the sword of Israel, some in the field, others in their own cities, thirty-one in all, and very particularly named and counted, it should seem, in the order in which they were conquered; for the catalogue begins with the kings of Jericho and Ai, then takes in the king of Jerusalem and the princes of the south that were in confederacy with him, and then proceeds to those of the northern association. Now,

1. This shows what a very fruitful country Canaan then was, which could support so many kingdoms, and in which so many kings chose to throng together rather than disperse themselves into other countries, which we may suppose not yet inhabited, but where, though they might find more room, they could not expect such plenty and pleasure: this was the land God spied out for Israel; and yet at this day it is one of the most barren, despicable, and unprofitable countries in the world: such is the effect of the curse it lies under, since its possessors rejected Christ and his gospel, as was foretold by Moses, De 29:23.

2. It shows what narrow limits men's ambition was then confined to. These kings contented themselves with the government, each of them, of one city and the towns and villages that pertained to it; and no one of them, for aught that appears, aimed to make himself master of the rest, but, when there was occasion, all united for the common safety. Yet it should seem that what was wanting in the extent of their territories was made up in the absoluteness of their power, their subjects being all their tenants and vassals, and entirely at their command.

3. It shows how good God was to Israel, in giving them victory over all these kings, and possession of all these kingdoms, and what obligations he hereby laid upon them to observe his statutes and to keep his laws, Ps 105:44,45. Here were thirty-one kingdoms, or seigniories, to be divided among nine tribes and a half of Israel. Of these there fell to the lot of Judah the kingdoms of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, Arad, Libnah, and Adullam, eight in all, besides part of the kingdom of Jerusalem and part of Geder. Benjamin had the kingdoms of Jericho, Ai, Jerusalem, Makkedah, Beth-el, and the nations of Gilgal, six in all. Simeon had the kingdom of Hormah and part of Geder. Ephraim had the kingdoms of Gezer and Tirzah. Manasseh (that half-tribe) had the kingdoms of Tappuah and Hepher, Taanach and Megiddo. Asher had the kingdoms of Aphek and Achshaph. Zebulun had the kingdoms of Lasharon, Shimron-meron, and Jokneam. Naphtali had the kingdoms of

Madon, Hazor, and Kedesh. And Issachar had that of Dor. These were some of the great and famous kings that God smote, for his mercy endureth for ever; and gave their land for a heritage, even a heritage unto Israel his servant, for his mercy endureth for ever, Ps 136:17-24, &c.

9 the king of Jericho, one; the king of Ai, which *is* beside Beth-el, one;
10 the king of Jerusalem, one; the king of Hebron, one;
11 the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one;
12 the king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one;
13 the king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one;
14 the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one;
15 the king of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one;
16 the king of Makkedah, one; the king of Beth-el, one;
17 the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one;
18 the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one;
19 the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one;
20 the king of Shimron-meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one;
21 the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one;
22 the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam of Carmel, one;
23 the king of Dor in the coast of Dor, one; the king of the nations of Gilgal, one;
24 the king of Tirzah, one: all the kings thirty and one.

Joshua-13

The Land Yet to Be Possessed

1 Now Joshua was old *and* stricken in years; and the Lord said unto him, Thou art old *and* stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.
2 This *is* the land that yet remaineth: all the borders of the Philistines, and all Geshuri,
3 from Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, *which* is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdothites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites:

Here, I. God puts Joshua in mind of his old age, Jos 13:1.

1. It is said that Joshua was old and stricken in years, and he and Caleb were at this time the only old men among the thousands of Israel, none except them of all those who were numbered at Mount Sinai being now alive. He had been a man of war from his youth (Ex 17:10); but now he yielded to the infirmities of age, with which it is in vain for the stoutest to think of contesting. It should seem Joshua had not the same strength and vigour in his old age that Moses had; all that come to old age do not find it alike good; generally, the days of old age are evil days, and such as there is no pleasure in, nor expectation of service from.

2. God takes notice of it to him: God said to him, Thou art old. Note, It is good for those who are old and stricken in years to be put in remembrance of their being so. Some have gray hairs here and there upon them, and perceive it not (Ho 7:9); they do not care to think of it, and therefore need to be told of it, that they may be quickened to do the work of life, and make preparation for death, which is coming towards them apace. But God mentions Joshua's age and growing infirmities,

(1.) As a reason why he should now lay by the thoughts of pursuing the war; he cannot expect to see an end of it quickly, for there remained much land, more perhaps than he thought, to be possessed, in several parts remote from each other: and it was not fit that at his age he should be put upon the fatigue of renewing the war, and carrying it to such distant places; no, it was enough for him that he had reduced the body of the country.

"Let him be gathered to rest with honour and the thanks of his people for the good services he had done them, and let the conquering of the skirts of the country be left for those that shall come after." As he had entered into the labours of Moses, so let others enter into his, and bring forth the top-stone, the doing of which was reserved for David long after. Observe, God considers the frame of his people, and would not have

them burdened with work above their strength. It cannot be expected that old people should do as they have done for God and their country.

(2.) As a reason why he should speedily apply himself to the dividing of that which he had conquered. That work must be done, and done quickly; it was necessary that he should preside in the doing of it, and therefore, he being old and stricken in years, and not likely to continue long, let him make this his concluding piece of service to God and Israel. All people, but especially old people, should set themselves to do that quickly which must be done before they die, lest death prevent them, Ec 9:10.

II. He gives him a particular account of the land that yet remained unconquered, which was intended for Israel, and which, in due time, they should be masters of if they did not put a bar in their own door. Divers places are here mentioned, some in the south, as the country of the Philistines, governed by five lords, and the land that lay towards Egypt (Jos 13:2,3), some westward, as that which lay towards the Sidonians (Jos 13:4), some eastward, as all Lebanon (Jos 13:5), some towards the north, as that in the entering in of Hamath, Jos 13:5. Joshua is told this, and he made the people acquainted with it,

1. That they might be the more affected with God's goodness to them in giving them this good land, and might thereby be engaged to love and serve him; for, if this which they had was too little, God would moreover give them such and such things, 2Sa 12:8.

2. That they might not be tempted to make any league, or contract any dangerous familiarity with these their neighbours so as to learn their way, but might rather be jealous of them, as a people that kept them from their right and that they had just cause of quarrel with.

3. That they might keep themselves in a posture for war, and not think of putting off the harness so long as there remained any land to be possessed. Nor must we lay aside our spiritual armour, nor be off our watch, till our victory be completed in the kingdom of glory.

III. He promises that he would make the Israelites masters of all those countries that were yet unsubdued, though Joshua was old and not able to do it, old and not likely to live to see it done. Whatever becomes of us, and however we may be laid aside as despised broken vessels, God will do his own work in his own time (Jos 13:6): I will drive them out. The original is emphatic: "It is I that will do it, I that can do it when thou are dead and gone, and will do it if Israel be not wanting to themselves." "I will do it by my Word," so the Chaldee here, as in many other places, "by the eternal Word, the captain of the hosts of the Lord."

This promise that he would drive them out from before the children of Israel plainly supposes it as the condition of the promise that the children of Israel must themselves attempt their extirpation, must go up against them, else they could not be said to be driven out before them; if afterwards Israel, through sloth, or cowardice, or affection to these idolaters, sit still and let them alone, they must blame themselves, and not God, if they be not driven out. We must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us and work with us; we must resist our spiritual enemies, and then God will tread them under our feet; we must go forth to our Christian work and warfare, and then God will go forth before us.

4 from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that *is*
beside the Sidonians, unto Aphek, to the borders of the Amorites:
5 and the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon toward the sunrising,
from Baal-gad under Mount Hermon unto the entering into
Hamath.
6 All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto
Misrephoth-maim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out

from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto
the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.
7 Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine
tribes, and the half tribe of Manasseh,
8 with whom the Reubenites and the Gadites have received their
inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond Jordan eastward, *even*
as Moses the servant of the Lord gave them;
9 from Aroer, that *is* upon the bank of the river Arnon, and the city
that *is* in the midst of the river, and all the plain of Medeba unto
Dibon;
10 and all the cities of Sihon king of the Amorites, which reigned in
Heshbon, unto the border of the children of Ammon;
11 and Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, and
all mount Hermon, and all Bashan unto Salcah;
12 all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, which reigned in Ashtaroth and
in Edrei, who remained of the remnant of the giants: for these did
Moses smite, and cast them out.
13 Nevertheless the children of Israel expelled not the Geshurites, nor
the Maachathites: but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell
among the Israelites until this day.

The Inheritances Given by Moses

14 Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the
sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire *are* their
inheritance, as he said unto them.

Here we have, I. Orders given to Joshua to assign to each tribe its portion of this land, including that which was yet unsubdued, which must be brought into the lot, in a believing confidence that it should be conquered when Israel was multiplied so as to have occasion for it (Jos 13:7): Now divide this land. Joshua thought all must be conquered before any must be divided. "No," said, God, "there is as much conquered as will serve your turn for the present; divide this, and make your best of it, and wait for the remainder hereafter." Note, We must take the comfort of what we have, though we cannot compass all we would have. Observe,

1 The land must be divided among the several tribes, and they must not always live in common, as now they did. Which way soever a just property is acquired, it is the will of that God who has given the earth to the children of men that there should be such a thing, and that every man should know his own, and not invade that which is another's. The world must be governed, not by force, but right, by the law of equity, not of arms.

2. That it must be divided for an inheritance, though they got it by conquest.

(1.) The promise of it came to them as an inheritance from their fathers; the land of promise pertained to the children of promise, who were thus beloved for their fathers' sakes, and in performance of the covenant with them.

(2.) The possession of it was to be transmitted by them, as an inheritance to their children. Frequently, what is got by force is soon lost again; but Israel, having an incontestable title to this land by the divine grant, might see it hereby secured as an inheritance to their seed after them, and that God kept this mercy for thousands.

3. That Joshua must not divide it by his own will. Though he was a very wise, just, and good man, it must not be left to him to give what he pleased to each tribe; but he must do it by lot, which referred the matter wholly to God, and to his determination, for he it is that appoints the bounds of our habitation, and every man's judgment must proceed from him.

But Joshua must preside in this affair, must manage this solemn appeal to Providence, and see that the lot was drawn fairly and without fraud, and that every tribe did acquiesce in it. The lot indeed causeth contention to cease, Pr 18:18. But, if upon this lot any controversy should arise, Joshua by his wisdom and authority must determine it, and prevent any ill

consequences of it. Joshua must have the honour of dividing the land,

(1.) Because he had undergone the fatigue of conquering it: and when, through his hand, each tribe received its allotment, they would thereby be made the more sensible of their obligations to him. And what a pleasure must it needs be to a man of such a public spirit as Joshua was to see the people that were so dear to him eating of the labour of his hands!

(2.) That he might be herein a type of Christ, who has not only conquered for us the gates of hell, but has opened to us the gates of heaven, and, having purchased the eternal inheritance for all believers, will in due time put them all in possession of it.

II. An account is here given of the distribution of the land on the other side Jordan among the Reubenites, and Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Observe,

1. How this account is introduced. It comes in,

(1.) As the reason why this land within Jordan must be divided only to the nine tribes and a half, because the other two and a half were already provided for.

(2.) As a pattern to Joshua in the work he had now to do. He had seen Moses distribute that land, which would give him some aid in distributing this, and thence he might take his measure; only this was to be done by lot, but it should seem Moses did that himself, according to the wisdom given unto him.

(3.) As an inducement to Joshua to hasten the dividing of this land, that the nine tribes and a half might not be kept any longer than was necessary out of their possession, since their brethren of the two tribes and a half were so well settled in

theirs; and God their common Father would not have such a difference made between his children.

2 The particulars of this account.

(1.) Here is a general description of the country that was given to the two tribes and a half, which Moses gave them, even as Moses gave them, Jos 13:8. The repetition implies a ratification of the grant by Joshua. Moses settled this matter, and, as Moses settled it, so shall it rest; Joshua will not, under any pretence whatsoever, go about to alter it. And a reason is intimated why he would not, because Moses was the servant of the Lord, and acted in this matter by secret direction from him and was faithful as a servant. Here we have,

[1.] The fixing of the boundaries of this country, by which they were divided from the neighbouring nations, Jos 13:9-12, &c. Israel must know their own and keep to it, and may not, under pretence of their being God's peculiar people, encroach upon their neighbours, and invade their rights and properties, to which they had a good and firm title by providence, though not, as Israel, a title by promise.

[2.] An exception of one part of this country from Israel's possession, though it was in their grant, namely, the Geshurites and the Maachathites, Jos 13:13. They had not leisure to reduce all the remote and obscure corners of the country in Moses's time, and afterwards they had no mind to it, being easy with what they had. Thus those who are not straitened in God's promises are yet straitened in their own faith, and prayers, and endeavours.

(2.) A very particular account of the inheritances of these two tribes and a half, how they were separated from each other, and what cites, with the towns, villages, and fields, commonly known and reputed to be appurtenances to them, belonged to each tribe. This is very fully and exactly set down in order that posterity might, in reading this history, be the more affected

with the goodness of God to their ancestors, when they found what a large and fruitful country, and what abundance of great and famous cities, he put them in possession of (God's grants look best when we descend to the particulars); and also that the limits of every tribe being punctually set down in this authentic record disputes might be prevented, and such contests between the tribes as commonly happen where boundaries have not been adjusted nor this matter brought to a certainty. And we have reason to think that the register here prescribed and published of the lot of each tribe was of great use to Israel in after-ages, was often appealed to, and always acquiesced in, for the determining of meum and tuum--mine and thine.

[1.] We have here the lot of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's first-born, who, though he had lost the dignity and power which pertained to the birthright, yet, it seems, had the advantage of being first served. Perhaps those of that tribe had an eye to this in desiring to be seated on that side Jordan, that, since they could not expect the benefit of the best lot, they might have the credit of the first. Observe, First, In the account of the lot of this tribe mention is made of the slaughter,

1. Of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in this country, and might have kept it and his life if he would have been neighbourly, and have suffered Israel to pass through his territories, but, by attempting to oppose them, justly brought ruin upon himself, Nu 21:21-25, &c.

2. Of the princes of Midian, who were slain afterwards in another war (Nu 31:8), and yet are here called dukes of Sihon, and are said to be smitten with him, because they were either tributaries to him, or, in his opposition to Israel, confederates with him, and hearty in his interests, and his fall made way for theirs not long after.

3. Of Balaam particularly, that would, if he could, have cursed Israel, and was soon after recompensed according to the

wickedness of his endeavour (Ps 28:4), for he fell with those that set him on. This was recorded before (Nu 31:8), and is here repeated, because the defeating of Balaam's purpose to curse Israel was the turning of that curse into a blessing, and was such an instance of the power and goodness of God as was fit to be had in everlasting remembrance. See Mic 6:5.

Secondly, Within the lot of this tribe was that Mount Pisgah from the top of which Moses took his view of the earthly Canaan and his flight to the heavenly. And not far off thence Elijah was when he was fetched up to heaven in a chariot of fire.
The separation of this tribe from the rest, by the river Jordan, was that which Deborah lamented; and the preference they gave to their private interests above the public was what she censured, Jdg 5:15,16. In this tribe lay Heshbon and Sibmah, famed for their fruitful fields and vineyards. See Isa 16:8,9,Jer 47:32. This tribe, with that of Gad, was sorely shaken by Hazael king of Syria (2Ki 10:33), and afterwards dislodged and carried into captivity, twenty years before the general captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, 1Ch 5:26.

[2.] The lot of the tribe of Gad, Jos 13:24-28. This lay north of Reuben's lot; the country of Gilead lay in this tribe, so famous for its balm that it is thought strange indeed if there be no balm in Gilead, and the cities of Jabesh-Gilead and Ramoth-Gilead which we often read of in scripture. Succoth and Penuel, which we read of in the story of Gideon, were in this tribe; and that forest which is called the wood of Ephraim (from the slaughter Jephthah made there of the Ephraimites), in which Absalom's rebellious army was beaten, while his father David lay at Mahanaim, one of the frontier-cities of this tribe, Jos 13:26. Sharon, famous for roses, was in this tribe. And within the limits of this tribe lived those Gadarenes that loved their swine better than their Saviour, fitter to be called Girgashites than Israelites.

[3.] The lot of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Jos 13:29-31. Bashan, the kingdom of Og, was in this allotment, famous for the best timber, witness the oaks of Bashan--and the best breed of cattle, witness the bulls and rams of Bashan. This tribe lay north of Gad, reached to Mount Hermon, and had in it part of Gilead. Mispeh was in this half-tribe, and Jephthah was one of its ornaments; so was Elijah, for in this tribe was Thisbe, whence he is called the Tishbite; and Jair was another. In the edge of the tribe stood Chorazin, honoured with Christ's wondrous works, but ruined by his righteous woe for not improving them.

[4.] Twice in this chapter it is taken notice of that to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance (Jos 13:14,33), for so God had appointed, Nu 18:20. If they had been appointed to a lot entire by themselves, Moses would have served them first, not because it was his own tribe, but because it was God's; but they must be provided for in another manner; their habitations must be scattered in all the tribes, and their maintenance brought out of all the tribes, and God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup, De 10:9,18:2.

15 And Moses gave unto the tribe of the children of Reuben
inheritance according to their families.
16 And their coast was from Aroer, that *is* on the bank of the river
Arnon, and the city that *is* in the midst of the river, and all the
plain by Medeba;
17 Heshbon, and all her cities that *are* in the plain; Dibon, and
Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon,
18 and Jahaza, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath,
19 and Kirjathaim, and Sibmah, and Zareth-shahar in the mount of
the valley,
20 and Beth-peor, and Ashdoth-pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth,
21 and all the cities of the plain, and all the kingdom of Sihon king of
the Amorites, which reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses smote with
the princes of Midian, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and
Reba, *which were* dukes of Sihon, dwelling in the country.
22 Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of
Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them.

23 And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the
border *thereof.* This *was* the inheritance of the children of Reuben
after their families, the cities and the villages thereof.
24 And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the tribe of Gad, *even* unto the
children of Gad according to their families.
25 And their coast was Jazer, and all the cities of Gilead, and half the
land of the children of Ammon, unto Aroer that *is* before Rabbah;
26 and from Heshbon unto Ramath-mizpeh, and Betonim; and from
Mahanaim unto the border of Debir;
27 and in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and
Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, Jordan
and *his* border, *even* unto the edge of the sea of Chinnereth on the
other side Jordan eastward.
28 This *is* the inheritance of the children of Gad after their families,
the cities, and their villages.
29 And Moses gave *inheritance* unto the half tribe of Manasseh: and *this*
was the *possession* of the half tribe of the children of Manasseh by their
families.
30 And their coast was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of
Og king of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair, which *are* in Bashan,
threescore cities:
31 and half Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of
Og in Bashan, *were pertaining* unto the children of Machir the son of
Manasseh, *even* to the one half of the children of Machir by their
families.
32 These are *the countries* which Moses did distribute for inheritance in
the plains of Moab, on the other side Jordan, by Jericho, eastward.
33 But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not *any* inheritance: the
Lord God of Israel *was* their inheritance, as he said unto them.

Joshua-14

Canaan Divided by Lot

1 And these are *the countries* which the children of Israel inherited in
the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of

Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.

2 By lot *was* their inheritance, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and *for* the half tribe.

The historian, having in the foregoing chapter given an account of the disposal of the countries on the other side Jordan, now comes to tell us what they did with the countries in the land of Canaan. They were not conquered to be left desert, a habitation for dragons, and a court for owls, Isa 34:13. No, the Israelites that had hitherto been closely encamped in a body, and the greatest part of them such as never knew any other way of living, must now disperse themselves to replenish these new conquests. It is said of the earth, God created it not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited, Isa 45:18. Canaan would have been subdued in vain if it had not been inhabited.

Yet every man might not go and settle where he pleased, but as there seems to have been in the days of Peleg an orderly and regular division of the habitable earth among the sons of Noah (Ge 10:25,32), so there was now such a division of the land of Canaan among the sons of Jacob. God had given Moses directions how this distribution should be made, and those directions are here punctually observed. See Nu 26:53-56, &c.

I The managers of this great affair were Joshua the chief magistrate, Eleazar the chief priest, and ten princes, one of each of the tribes that were now to have their inheritance, whom God himself had nominated (Nu 34:17-29, &c.) some years before; and, it should seem, they were all now in being, and attended this service, that every tribe, having a representative of its own, might be satisfied that there was fair dealing, and might the more contentedly sit down by its lot.

II The tribes among whom this dividend was to be made were nine and a half.

1. Not the two and a half that were already seated (Jos 13:3), though perhaps now that they saw what a good land Canaan was, and how effectually it was subdued, they might some of them repent their choice, and wish they had now been to have their lot with their brethren, upon which condition they would gladly have given up what they had on the other side Jordan; but it could not be admitted: they had made their election without power of revocation, and so must their doom be; they themselves have decided it, and they must adhere to their choice.

2. Not the tribe of Levi; this was to be otherwise provided for. God had distinguished them from, and dignified them above, the other tribes, and they must not now mingle themselves with them, nor cast in their lot among them, for this would entangle them in the affairs of this life, which would not consist with a due attendance on their sacred function. But,

3. Joseph made two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, pursuant to Jacob's adoption of Joseph's two sons, and so the number of the tribes was kept up to twelve, though Levi was taken out, which is intimated here (Jos 13:4): The children of Joseph were two tribes, therefore they gave no part to Levi, they being twelve without them.

III. The rule by which they went was the lot, Jos 13:2. The disposal of that is of the Lord, Pr 16:33. It was here used in an affair of weight, and which could not otherwise be accommodated to universal satisfaction, and it was used in a solemn religious manner as an appeal to God, by consent of parties. In dividing by lot,

1. They referred themselves to God, and to his wisdom and sovereignty, believing him fitter to determine for them than they for themselves. Ps 47:4, He shall choose our inheritance for us.

2. They professed a willingness to abide by the determination of it; for every man must take what is his lot, and make the best of it. In allusion to this we are said to obtain an inheritance in Christ (Eph 1:11), eklerothemen--we have obtained it by lot, so the word signified; for it is obtained by a divine designation. Christ, our Joshua, gives eternal life to as many as were given him, Joh 17:2.

3 For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and a half tribe
on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none
inheritance among them.
4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim:
therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities
to dwell *in*, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.
5 As the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and
they divided the land.

Hebron Given to Caleb

6 Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb
the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest
the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God
concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.
7 Forty years old *was* I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me
from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word
again as *it was* in mine heart.
8 Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of
the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God.
9 And Moses sware on that day, saying, surely the land whereon thy
feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for
ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God.
10 And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these
forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto
Moses, while *the children of* Israel wandered in the wilderness: and
now, lo, I *am* this day fourscore and five years old.

Before the lot was cast into the lap for the determining of the portions of the respective tribes, the particular portion of Caleb was assigned to him. He was now, except Joshua, not only the oldest man in all Israel, but was twenty years older

than any of them, for all that were above twenty years old when he was forty were dead in the wilderness; it was fit therefore that this phoenix of his age should have some particular marks of honour put upon him in the dividing of the land. Now,

I. Caleb here presents his petition, or rather makes his demand, to have Hebron given him for a possession (this mountain he calls it, Jos 13:12), and not to have that put into the lot with the other parts of the country. To justify his demand, he shows that God had long since, by Moses, promised him that very mountain; so that God's mind being already made known in this matter it would be a vain and needless thing to consult it any further by casting lots, by which we are to appeal to God in those cases only which cannot otherwise be decided, not in those which, like this, are already determined. Caleb is here called the Kenezite, some think from some remarkable victory obtained by him over the Kenezites, as the Romans gave their great generals titles from the countries they conquered, as Africanus, Germanicus, &c. Observe,

1. To enforce his petition,

(1.) He brings the children of Judah, that is, the heads and great men of that tribe, along with him, to present it, who were willing thus to pay their respects to that ornament of their tribe, and to testify their consent that he should be provided for by himself, and that they would not take it as any reflection upon the rest of this tribe. Caleb was the person whom God had chosen out of that tribe to be employed in dividing the land (Nu 34:19), and therefore, lest he should seem to improve his authority as a commissioner for his own private advantage and satisfaction, he brings his brethren along with him, and waiving his own power, seems rather to rely upon their interest.

(2.) He appeals to Joshua himself concerning the truth of the allegations upon which he grounded his petition: Thou knowest the thing, Jos 13:6.

(3.) He makes a very honourable mention of Moses, which he knew would not be at all unpleasing to Joshua: Moses the man of God (Jos 13:6), and the servant of the Lord, Jos 13:7. What Moses said he took as from God himself, because Moses was his mouth and his agent, and therefore he had reason both to desire and expect that it should be made good. What can be more earnestly desired than the tokens of God's favour? And what more confidently expected than the grants of his promise?

2. In his petition he sets forth,

(1.) The testimony of his conscience concerning his integrity in the management of that great affair on which it proved the fare of Israel turned, the spying out of the land. Caleb was one of the twelve that were sent out on that errand (Jos 13:7), and he now reflected upon it with comfort, and mentioned it, not in pride, but as that which, being the consideration of the grant, was necessary to be inserted in the plea,

[1.] That he made his report as it was in his heart, that is, he spoke as he thought when he spoke so honourably of the land of Canaan, so confidently of the power of God to put them in possession of it, and so contemptibly of the opposition that the Canaanites, even the Anakim themselves, could make against them, as we find he did, Nu 13:30,14:7-9. He did not do it merely to please Moses, or to keep the people quiet, much less from a spirit of contradiction to his fellows, but from a full conviction of the truth of what he said and a firm belief of the divine promise.

[2.] That herein he wholly followed the Lord his God, that is, he kept close to his duty, and sincerely aimed at the glory of God in it. He conformed himself to the divine will with an eye

to the divine favour. He had obtained this testimony from God himself (Nu 14:24), and therefore it was not vain-glory in him to speak of it, any more than it is for those who have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God humbly and thankfully to tell others for their encouragement what God has done for their souls. Note, Those that follow God fully when they are young shall have both the credit and comfort of it when they are old, and the reward of it for ever in the heavenly Canaan.

[3.] That he did this when all his brethren and companions in that service, except Joshua, did otherwise. They made the heart of the people melt (Jos 13:8), and how pernicious the consequences of it were was very well known. It adds much to the praise of following God if we adhere to him when others desert and decline from him. Caleb needed not to mention particularly Joshua's conduct in this matter; it was sufficiently known, and he would not seem to flatter him; it was enough to say (Jos 13:6), Thou knowest what the Lord spoke concerning me and thee.

(2.) The experience he had had of God's goodness to him ever since to this day. Though he had wandered with the rest in the wilderness, and had been kept thirty-eight years out of Canaan as they were, for that sin which he was so far from having a hand in that he had done his utmost to prevent it, yet, instead of complaining of this, he mentioned, to the glory of God, his mercy to him in two things:--

[1.] That he was kept alive in the wilderness, not only notwithstanding the common perils and fatigues of that tedious march, but though all that generation of Israelites, except himself and Joshua, were one way or other cut off by death. With what a grateful sense of God's goodness to him does he speak it! (Jos 13:10). Now behold (behold and wonder) the Lord hath kept me alive these forty and five years, thirty-eight years in the wilderness, through the plagues of the desert, and seven years in Canaan through the perils of war!

Note, First, While we live, it is God that keeps us alive; by his power he protects us from death, and by his bounty supplies us continually with the supports and comforts of life. He holdeth our soul in life. Secondly, The longer we live the more sensible we should be of God's goodness to us in keeping us alive, his care in prolonging our frail lives, his patience in prolonging our forfeited lives.

Has he kept me alive these forty-five years? Is it about that time of life with us? Or is it more? Or is it less? We have reason to say, It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. How much are we indebted to the favour of God, and what shall we render? Let the life thus kept by the providence of God be devoted to his praise. Thirdly, The death of many others round about us should make us the more thankful to God for sparing us and keeping us alive. Thousands falling on our right hand and our left and yet ourselves spared. These distinguishing favours impose on us strong obligations to singular obedience.

[2.] That he was fit for business, now that he was in Canaan. Though eighty-five years old, yet as hearty and lively as when he was forty (Jos 13:11): As my strength was then, so is it now. This was the fruit of the promise, and out-did what was said; for God not only gives what he promises, but he gives more: life by promise shall be life, and health, and strength, and all that which will make the promised life a blessing and comfort. Moses had said in his prayer (Ps 90:10) that at eighty years old even their strength is labour and sorrow, and so it is most commonly. But Caleb was an exception to the rule; his strength at eighty-five was ease and joy: this he got by following the Lord fully. Caleb here takes notice of this to the glory of God, and as an excuse for his asking a portion which he must fetch out of the giants' hands. Let not Joshua tell him he knew not what he asked; could he get the possession of that which he begged for a title to? "Yes," says he, "why not? I am as fit for war now as ever I was."

(3.) The promise Moses had made him in God's name that he should have this mountain, Jos 13:9. This promise is his chief plea, and that on which he relies. As we find it (Nu 14:24) it is general, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it; but it seems it was more particular, and Joshua knew it; both sides understood this mountain for which Caleb was now a suitor to be intended. This was the place from which, more than any other, the spies took their report, for here they met with the sons of Anak (Nu 13:22), the sight of whom made such an impression upon them, Jos 13:3. We may suppose that Caleb, observing what stress they laid upon the difficulty of conquering Hebron, a city garrisoned by the giants, and how thence they inferred that the conquest of the whole land was utterly impracticable, in opposition to their suggestions, and to convince the people that he spoke as he thought, bravely desired to have that city which they called invincible assigned to himself for his own portion: "I will undertake to deal with that, and, if I cannot get it for my inheritance, I will be without." "Well," said Moses, "it shall be thy own then, win it and wear it." Such a noble heroic spirit Caleb had, and so desirous was he to inspire his brethren with it, that he chose this place only because it was the most difficult to be conquered. And, to show that his soul did not decay any more than his body, now forty-five years after he adheres to his choice and is still of the same mind.

(4.) The hopes he had of being master of it, though the sons of Anak were in possession of it (Jos 13:12): If the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out. The city of Hebron Joshua had already reduced (Jos 10:37), but the mountain which belonged to it, and which was inhabited by the sons of Anak, was yet unconquered; for though the cutting off of the Anakim from Hebron was mentioned Jos 11:21, because the historian would relate all the military actions together, yet it seems it was not conquered till after they had begun to divide the land. Observe, He builds his hopes of driving out the sons of Anak upon the presence of God with him. He does not say, "Because I am now as strong for war as

I was at forty, therefore I shall drive them out," depending upon his personal valour; nor does he depend upon his interest in the warlike tribe of Judah, who attended him now in making this address, and no doubt would assist him; nor does he court Joshua's aid, or put it upon that, "If thou wilt be with me I shall gain my point." But, If the Lord will be with me. Here,

[1.] He seems to speak doubtfully of God's being with him, not from any distrust of his goodness or faithfulness. He had spoken without the least hesitation of God's presence with Israel in general (Nu 14:9); the Lord is with us. But for himself, from a humble sense of his own unworthiness of such a favour, he chooses to express himself thus, If the Lord will be with me. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, If the Word of the Lord be my helper, that Word which is God, and in the fulness of time was made flesh, and is the captain of our salvation.

[2.] But he expresses without the least doubt his assurance that if God were with him he should be able to dispossess the sons of Anak. "If God be with us, If God be for us, who can be against us, so as to prevail?" It is also intimated that if God were not with him, though all the forces of Israel should come in to his assistance, he should not be able to gain his point. Whatever we undertake, God's favourable presence with us is all in all to our success; this therefore we must earnestly pray for, and carefully make sure of, by keeping ourselves in the love of God; and on this we must depend, and from this take our encouragement against the greatest difficulties.

3. Upon the whole matter, Caleb's request is (Jos 13:12), Give me this mountain,

(1.) Because it was formerly in God's promise, and he would let Israel know how much he valued the promise, insisting upon this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day, as most desirable, though perhaps as good a portion might have fallen to him by lot in common with the rest. Those that live

by faith value that which is given by promise far above that which is given by providence only.

(2.) Because it was now in the Anakim's possession, and he would let Israel know how little he feared the enemy, and would by his example animate them to push on their conquests. Herein Caleb answered his name, which signifies all heart.

II. Joshua grants his petition (Jos 13:13): Joshua blessed him, commended his bravery, applauded his request, and gave him what he asked. He also prayed for him, and for his good success in his intended undertaking against the sons of Anak. Joshua was both a prince and a prophet, and upon both accounts it was proper for him to give Caleb his blessing, for the less is blessed of the better. Hebron was settled on Caleb and his heirs (Jos 13:14), because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel. And happy are we if we follow him. Note, Singular piety shall be crowned with singular favours. Now,

1. We are here told what Hebron had been, the city of Arba, a great man among the Anakim (Jos 13:15); we find it called Kirjath-arba (Ge 23:2), as the place where Sarah died. Hereabouts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived most of their time in Canaan, and near to it was the cave of Machpelah, where they were buried, which perhaps had led Caleb hither when he went to spy out the land, and had made him covet this rather than any other part for his inheritance.

2. We are afterwards told what Hebron was.
(1.) It was one of the cities belonging to priests (Jos 21:13), and a city of refuge, Jos 20:7. When Caleb had it, he contented himself with the country about it, and cheerfully gave the city to the priests, the Lord's ministers, thinking it could not be better bestowed, no, not upon his own children, nor that it was the less his own for being thus devoted to God.

(2.) It was a royal city, and, in the beginning of David's reign, the metropolis of the kingdom of Judah; thither the people resorted to him, and there he reigned seven years. Thus highly was Caleb's city honoured; it is a pity there should have been such a blemish upon his family long after as Nabal was, who was of the house of Caleb, 1Sa 25:3. But the best men cannot entail their virtues.

11 As yet I *am as* strong this day as *I was* in the day that Moses sent me:
as my strength *was* then, even so *is* my strength now, for war, both to
go out, and to come in.
12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in
that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim *were* there,
and *that* the cities *were* great *and* fenced: if so be the Lord *will be* with
me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.
13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of
Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance.
14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of
Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day; because that he wholly
followed the Lord God of Israel.
15 And the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjath-arba; *which Arba was* a
great man among the Anakim. And the land had rest from war.

Joshua-15

The Territory Allotted to Judah

1 *This then* was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their
families; even to the border of Edom the wilderness of Zin
southward *was* the uttermost part of the south coast.
2 And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea, from the
bay that looketh southward:
3 and it went out to the south side to Maaleh-acrabbim, and passed
along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadesh-
barnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and
fetched a compass to Karkaa:

4 *from thence* it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: this shall be your south coast.

5 And the east border was the salt sea, *even* unto the end of Jordan. And *their* border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan:

Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob on whom Reuben's forfeited birth-right devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first seated, Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan and Joseph in the northern part, and on them the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two; the lots of Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan, were appendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulun, Naphtali and Asher, to Joseph.

These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterwards, Jos 18:9. It is probable that the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and, by the decision of that lot, the southern country, of which we have an account in this chapter, fell to Judah, and the northern, of which we have an account in the two following chapters, to Joseph.

And when this was done there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that general rule which was given concerning this partition (Nu 33:54), to the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less, and every man's inheritance shall be where his lot falleth; that is, "You shall appoint two greater portions which shall be determined by lot to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall

be less portions to be allotted to the less numerous tribes." The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh.

In these verses, we have the borders of the lot of Judah, which, as the rest, is said to be by their families, that is, with an eye to the number of their families. And it intimates that Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of the commissioners, when they had by lot given each tribe its portion, did afterwards (it is probable by lot likewise) subdivide those larger portions, and assign to each family its inheritance, and then to each household, which would be better done by this supreme authority, and be apt to give less disgust than if it had been left to the inferior magistrates of each tribe to make that distribution. The borders of this tribe are here largely fixed, yet not unalterably, for a good deal of that which lies within these bounds was afterwards assigned to the lots of Simeon and Dan.

1 The eastern border was all, and only, the Salt Sea, Jos 15:5. Every sea is salt, but this was of an extraordinary and more than natural saltness, the effects of that fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in Abraham's time, whose ruins lie buried in the bottom of this dead water, which never either was moved itself or had any living thing in it.

2 The southern border was that of the land of Canaan in general, as will appear by comparing Jos 15:1-4,Nu 34;3-5. So that this powerful and warlike tribe of Judah guarded the frontiers of the whole land, on that side which lay towards their old sworn enemies (though their two fathers were twin-brethren), the Edomites. Our Lord therefore, who sprang out of Judah, and whose the kingdom is, shall judge the mount of Esau, Ob 1:21.

3. The northern border divided it from the lot of Benjamin. In this, mention is made of the stone of Bohan a Reubenite (Jos 15:6), who probably was a great commander of those forces

of Reuben that came over Jordan, and died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off under this stone. The valley of Achor likewise lies upon this border (Jos 15:7), to remind the men of Judah of the trouble which Achan, one of their tribe, gave to the congregation of Israel, that they might not be too much lifted up with their services. This northern line touched closely upon Jerusalem (Jos 15:8), so closely as to include in the lot of this tribe Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, though the greater part of the city lay in the lot of Benjamin.

4. The west border went near to the great sea at first (Jos 15:12), but afterwards the lot of the tribe of Dan took off a good part of Judah's lot on that side; for the lot was only to determine between Judah and Joseph, which should have the north and which the south, and not immovably to fix the border of either. Judah's inheritance had its boundaries determined. Though it was a powerful warlike tribe, and had a great interest in the other tribes, yet they must not therefore be left to their own choice, to enlarge their possessions at pleasure, but must live so as that their neighbours might live by them. Those that are placed high yet must not think to be placed alone in the midst of the earth.

6 and the border went up to Beth-hogla, and passed along by the
north of Beth-arabah; and the border went up to the stone of
Bohan the son of Reuben:
7 and the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and
so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that *is* before the going up to
Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the river: and the border
passed toward the waters of En-shemesh, and the goings out
thereof were at En-rogel:
8 and the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto
the south side of the Jebusite; the same *is* Jerusalem: and the border
went up to the top of the mountain that *lieth* before the valley of
Hinnom westward, which *is* at the end of the valley of the giants
northward:
9 and the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto the
fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of

mount Ephron; and the border was drawn to Baalah, which *is*
Kirjath-jearim:
10 and the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir,
and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which *is* Chesalon,
on the north side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on
to Timnah:
11 and the border went out unto the side of Ekron northward: and the
border was drawn to Shicron, and passed along to mount Baalah, and
went out unto Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the
sea.
12 And the west border *was* to the great sea, and the coast *thereof.* This
is the coast of the children of Judah round about according to their
families.

Caleb Conquers Hebron and Debir

13 And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the
children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to
Joshua, *even* the city of Arba the father of Anak, which *city is*
Hebron.
14 And Caleb drove thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and
Ahiman, and Talmai, the children of Anak.
15 And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name
of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher.

The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb and to do him honour, because he had honoured God in following him fully. Observe,

I The grant Joshua made him of the mountain of Hebron for his inheritance is here repeated (Jos 15:13), and it is said to be given him.

1. According to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua. Though Caleb, in his petition, had made out a very good title to it by promise, yet, because God had ordered Joshua to divide the land by lot, he would not in this one single instance, no, not to gratify his old friend Caleb, do otherwise, without orders from God, whose oracle, it is probable, he consulted

upon this occasion. In every doubtful case it is very desirable to know the mind of God, and to see the way of our duty plain.

2. It is said to be a part among the children of Judah; though it was assigned him before the lot of that tribe came up, yet it proved, God so directing the lot, to be in the heart of that tribe, which was graciously ordered in kindness to him, that he might not be as one separated from his brethren and surrounded by those of other tribes.

II. Caleb having obtained this grant, we are told,

1. How he signalized his own valour in the conquest of Hebron (Jos 15:14): He drove thence the three sons of Anak, he and those that he engaged to assist him in this service. This is mentioned here to show that the confidence he had expressed of success in this affair, through the presence of God with him (Jos 14:12), did not deceive him, but the event answered his expectation. It is not said that he slew these giants, but he drove them thence, which intimates that they retired upon his approach and fled before him; the strength and stature of their bodies could not keep up the courage of their minds, but with the countenances of lions they had the hearts of trembling hares. Thus does God often cut off the spirit of princes (Ps 76:12), take away the heart of the chief of the people (Job 12:24), and so shame the confidence of the proud; and thus if we resist the devil, that roaring lion, though he fall not, yet he will flee.

2. How he encouraged the valour of those about him in the conquest of Debir, Jos 15:15-19, &c. It seems, though Joshua had once made himself master of Debir (Jos 10:39), yet the Canaanites had regained the possession in the absence of the army, so that the work had to be done a second time; and when Caleb had completed the reduction of Hebron, which was for himself and his own family, to show his zeal for the public good, as much as for his own private interest, he pushes on his conquest to Debir, and will not lay down his arms till he sees

that city also effectually reduced, which lay but ten miles southward from Hebron, though he had not any particular concern in it, but the reducing of it would be to the general advantage of his tribe. Let us learn hence not to seek and mind our own things only, but to concern and engage ourselves for the welfare of the community we are members of; we are not born for ourselves, nor must we live to ourselves.

(1.) Notice is taken of the name of this city. It had been called Kirjath-sepher, the city of a book, and Kirjath-sannah (Jos 15:49), which some translate the city of learning (so the LXX. Polis grammaton), whence some conjecture that it had been a university among the Canaanites, like Athens in Greece, in which their youth were educated; or perhaps the books of their chronicles or records, or the antiquities of the nation, were laid up there; and, it may be, this was it that made Caleb so desirous to see Israel master of this city, that they might get acquainted with the ancient learning of the Canaanites.

(2.) The proffer that Caleb made of his daughter, and a good portion with her, to any one that would undertake to reduce that city, and to command the forces that should be employed in that service, Jos 15:16. Thus Saul promised a daughter to him that would kill Goliath (1Sa 17:25), neither of them intending to force his daughter to marry such as she could not love, but both of them presuming upon their daughters' obedience, and submission to their fathers' will, though it might be contrary to their own humour or inclination. Caleb's family was not long honourable and wealthy, but religious; he that himself followed the Lord fully no doubt taught his children to do so, and therefore it could not but be a desirable match to any young gentleman. Caleb, in making the proposal, aims,

[1.] To do service to his country by the reducing of that important place; and,

[2.] To marry a daughter well, to a man of learning, that would have a particular affection for the city of books, and a man of war, that would be likely to serve his country, and do worthily in his generation. Could he but marry his child to a man of such a character, he would think her well bestowed, whether the share in the lot of his tribe were more or less.

(3.) The place was bravely taken by Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, whom probably Caleb had thoughts of when he made the proffer, Jos 15:17. This Othniel, who thus signalized himself when he was young, had long after, in his advanced years, the honour to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided in their affairs after Joshua's death. It is good for those who are setting out in the world to begin betimes with that which is great and good, that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old.

(4.) Hereupon (all parties being agreed) Othniel married his cousin-german Achsah, Caleb's daughter. It is probable that he had a kindness for her before, which put him upon this bold undertaking to obtain her. Love to his country, an ambition of honour, and a desire to find favour with the princes of his people, might not have engaged him in this great action, but his affection for Achsah did. This made it intolerable to him to think that any one should do more to win her favour than he would, and so inspired him with this generous fire. Thus is love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

(5.) Because the historian is now upon the dividing of the land, he gives us an account of Achsah's portion, which was in land, as more valuable because enjoyed by virtue of the divine promise, though we may suppose the conquerors of Canaan, who had had the spoil of so many rich cities, were full of money too.

[1.] Some land she obtained by Caleb's free grant, which was allowed while she married within her own tribe and family, as

Zelophehad's daughters did. He gave her a south land, Jos 15:19. Land indeed, but a south land, dry, and apt to be parched.

[2.] She obtained more upon her request; she would have had her husband to ask for a field, probably some particular field, or champaign ground, which belonged to Caleb's lot, and joined to that south land which he had settled upon his daughter at marriage. She thought her husband had the best interest in her father, who, no doubt, was extremely pleased with his late glorious achievement, but he thought it was more proper for her to ask, and she would be more likely to prevail; accordingly she did, submitting to her husband's judgment, though contrary to her own; and she managed the undertaking with great address.

First, She took the opportunity when her father brought her home to the house of her husband, when the satisfaction of having disposed of his daughter so well would make him think nothing too much to do for her.

Secondly, She lighted off her ass, in token of respect and reverence to her father, whom she would honour still, as much as before her marriage. She cried or sighed from off her ass, so the LXX. and the vulgar Latin read it; she expressed some grief and concern, that she might give her father occasion to ask her what she wanted.

Thirdly, She calls it a blessing, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement; and she was sure that, since she married not only with her father's consent, but in obedience to his command, he would not deny her his blessing.

Fourthly, She asks only for the water, without which the ground she had would be of little use either for tillage or pasture, but she means the field in which the springs of water were. The modesty and reasonableness of her quest gave it a great advantage. Earth without water would be like a tree

without sap, or the body of an animal without blood; therefore, when God gathered the waters into one place, he wisely and graciously left some in every place, that the earth might be enriched for the service of man. See Ps 104:10-23, &c. Well, Achsah gained her point; her father gave her what she asked, and perhaps more, for he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs, two fields so called from the springs that were in them, as we commonly distinguish between the higher field and the lower field.

Those who understand it but of one field, watered both with the rain of heaven and the springs that issued out of the bowels of the earth, give countenance to the allusion we commonly make to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings which relate to our souls as blessings of the upper springs, and those which relate to the body and the life that now is as blessings of the nether springs.

From this story we learn,

1. That it is no breach of the tenth commandment moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life which we see attainable in a fair and regular way.

2. That husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree, about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings, those of the upper springs.

3. That parents must never think that lost which is bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance, especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons (1Ch 4:15), and yet gave thus liberally to his daughter. Those parents forget themselves and their relation who grudge their children what is convenient for them when they can conveniently part with it.

16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

17 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.
18 And it came to pass, as she came *unto him,* that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?
19 Who answered, Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And he gave her the upper springs, and the nether springs.

The Cities of Judah

20 This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families.
21 And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom southward were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur,
22 and Kinah, and Dimonah, and Adadah,
23 and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Ithnan,
24 Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,
25 and Hazor, Hadattah, and Kerioth, *and* Hezron, which *is* Hazor,
26 Amam, and Shema, and Moladah,
27 and Hazar-gaddah, and Heshmon, and Beth-palet,
28 and Hazar-shual, and Beer-sheba, and Bizjothjah,
29 Baalah, and Iim, and Azem,
30 and Eltolad, and Chesil, and Hormah,
31 and Ziklag, and Madmannah, and Sansannah,
32 and Lebaoth, and Shilhim, and Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities *are* twenty and nine, with their villages.
33 *And* in the valley, Eshtaol, and Zoreah, and Ashnah,
34 and Zanoah, and En-gannim, Tappuah, and Enam,
35 Jarmuth, and Adullam, Socoh, and Azekah,

We have here a list of the several cities that fell within the lot of the tribe of Judah, which are mentioned by name, that they might know their own, and both keep it and keep to it, and might neither through cowardice nor sloth lose the possession of what was their own.

I The cities are here named, and numbered in several classes, which they then could account for the reason of better than we can now. Here are,

1. Some that are said to be the uttermost cities towards the coast of Edom, Jos 15:21-32. Here are thirty-eight named, and yet said to be twenty-nine (Jos 15:32), because nine of these were afterwards transferred to the lot of Simeon, and are reckoned as belonging to that, as appears by comparing Jos 19:2-9, &c.; therefore those only are counted (though the rest are named) which remained to Judah.

2. Others that are said to be in the valley (Jos 15:33) are counted to be fourteen, yet fifteen are named; but it is probable that Gederah and Gederathaim were either two names or two parts of one and the same city.

3. Then sixteen are named without any head of distinction, Jos 15:37-41, and nine more, Jos 15:42-44.

4. Then the three Philistine-cities, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza, Jos 15:45-47.

5. Cities in the mountains, eleven in all (Jos 15:48-51), nine more (Jos 15:52-54), ten more (Jos 15:55-57), six more (Jos 15:58,59), then two (Jos 15:60), and six in the wilderness, a part of the country not so thick of inhabitants as some others were.

II. Now here,

1. We do not find Bethlehem, which was afterwards the city of David, and was ennobled by the birth of our Lord Jesus in it. But that city, which at the best was but little among the thousands of Judah (Mic 5:2), except that it was thus dignified, was now so little as not to be accounted one of the cities, but perhaps was one of the villages not named. Christ came to give

honour to the places he was related to, not to receive honour from them.

2. Jerusalem is said to continue in the hands of the Jebusites (Jos 15:63), for the children of Judah could not drive them out, through their sluggishness, stupidity, and unbelief. Had they attempted it with vigour and resolution, we have reason to think God would not have been wanting to them to give them success; but they could not do it, because they would not. Jerusalem was afterwards to be the holy city, the royal city, the city of the great King, the brightest ornament of all the land of Israel. God has designed it should be so. It may therefore be justly looked upon as a punishment of their neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them that they were so long kept out of this.

3. Among the cities of Judah (in all 114) we meet with Libnah, which in Joram's days revolted, and probably set up for a free independent state (2Ki 8:22), and Lachish, where king Amaziah was slain (1Ki 14:19); it led the dance in idolatry (Mic 1:13); it was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion. Giloh, Ahithophel's town, is here mentioned, and Tekoa, of which the prophet Amos was, and near which Jehoshaphat obtained that glorious victory, 2Ch 20:20-30, &c., and Maresha, where Asa was a conqueror.

Many of the cities of this tribe occur in the history of David's troubles. Adullam, Ziph, Keilah, Maon, Engedi, Ziklag, here reckoned in this tribe, were places near which David had most of his haunts; for, though sometimes Saul drove him out from the inheritance of the Lord, yet he kept as close to it as he could. The wilderness of Judah he frequented much, and in it John Baptist preached, and there the kingdom of heaven commenced, Mt 3:1 The riches of this country no doubt answered Jacob's blessing of this tribe, that he should wash his garments in wine, Ge 49:11. And, in general, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, not envy.

36 and Sharaim, and Adithaim, and Gederah, and Gederothaim;

fourteen cities with their villages.
37 Zenan, and Hadashah, and Migdal-gad,
38 and Dilean, and Mizpeh, and Joktheel,
39 Lachish, and Bozkath, and Eglon,
40 and Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish,
41 and Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages.
42 Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,
43 and Jiphtah, and Ashnah, and Nezib,
44 and Keilah, and Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages.
45 Ekron, with her towns and her villages:
46 from Ekron even unto the sea, all that *lay* near Ashdod, with their villages.
47 Ashdod, with her towns and her villages; Gaza, with her towns and her villages, unto the river of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border *thereof*.
48 And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,
49 and Dannah, and Kirjath-sannah, which *is* Debir,
50 and Anab, and Eshtemoh, and Anim,
51 and Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages.
52 Arab, and Dumah, and Eshean,
53 and Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah,
54 and Humtah, and Kirjath-arba, which *is* Hebron, and Zior; nine cities with their villages.
55 Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,
56 and Jezreel, and Jokdeam, and Zanoah,
57 Cain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages.
58 Halhul, Beth-zur, and Gedor,
59 and Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages.
60 Kirjath-baal, which *is* Kirjath-jearim, and Rabbah; two cities with their villages.
61 In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, and Secacah,
62 and Nibshan, and the city of Salt, and Engedi; six cities with their villages.

63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

Joshua-16

The Territory Allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh

1 And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Beth-el,

Though Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, yet he was his eldest by his most just and best beloved wife Rachel, was himself his best beloved son, and had been the greatest ornament and support of his family, kept it from perishing in a time of famine, and had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, and therefore his posterity were very much favoured by the lot. Their portion lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan. It extended from Jordan in the east (Jos 16:1) to the sea, the Mediterranean Sea, in the west, so that it took up the whole breadth of Canaan from side to side; and no question the fruitfulness of the soil answered the blessings both of Jacob and Moses, Ge 49:25,26,De 33:13-17, &c. The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes; we have only the limits and boundaries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had the cities of Judah and afterwards those of the other tribes. For this no reason can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua being himself of the children of Joseph they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of their cities to the great council of their princes who sat upon this affair, by which means it came to pass that they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

2 and goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,

3 and goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of

Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof
are at the sea.
4 So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their
inheritance.
5 And the border of the children of Ephraim according to their
families was *thus:* even the border of their inheritance on the east
side was Ataroth-addar, unto Beth-horon the upper;
6 and the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the
north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanath-
shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;
7 and it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, and to Naarath, and
came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan.

Here, 1 The border of the lot of Ephraim is set down, by which it was divided on the south from Benjamin and Dan, who lay between it and Judah, and on the north from Manasseh; for east and west it reached from Jordan to the great sea. The learned, who aim to be exact in drawing the line according to the directions here, find themselves very much at a loss, the description being short and intricate. The report of those who in these latter ages have travelled those countries will not serve to clear the difficulties, so vastly unlike is it now to what it was then; not only cities have been so destroyed as that no mark nor footstep of them remains, but brooks are dried up, rivers alter their courses, and even the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place, Job 14:18. Unless I could hope to solve the doubts that arise upon this draught of the border of Ephraim, it is to no purpose to mention them: no doubt it was then perfectly understood, so as that the first intention of recording it was effectually answered, which was to notify the ancient landmarks, which posterity must by no means remove.

2. Some separate cities are spoken of, that lay not within these borders, at least not if the line was drawn direct, but lay within the lot of Manasseh (Jos 16:9), which might better be read, and there were separate cities for the children of Ephraim among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, because it proved that Manasseh could spare them, and Ephraim had

need of them, and it might be hoped that no inconvenience would arise from this mixture of these two tribes together, who were both the sons of Joseph, and should love as brethren.

And by this it appears that though, when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then 52,000, and Ephraim but 32,000 (Nu 26:34,37), yet by the time they were well settled in Canaan the hands were crossed again, and the blessing of Moses was verified, De 33:17, They are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh. Families and kingdoms are diminished and increased, increased and diminished again, as God pleases. 3. A brand is put upon the Ephraimites, that they did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer (Jos 16:10), either through carelessness or cowardice, either for want of faith in the promise of God, that he would give them success if they would make a vigorous effort, or for want of zeal for the command of God, which obliged them utterly to drive out the Canaanites, and to make no peace with them.

And, though they hoped to satisfy the law by putting them under tribute, yet (as Calvin thinks) this made the matter worse, for it shows that they spared them out of covetousness, that they might be profited by their labours, and by dealing with them for their tribute they were in danger of being infected with their idolatry; yet some think that, when they brought them under tribute, they obliged them to renounce their idols, and to observe the seven precepts of the sons of Noah; and I should think so, but that we find in the sequel of the story that the Israelites were so far from restraining idolatry in others that they soon fell into it themselves. Many famous places were within this lot of the tribe of Ephraim, though not mentioned here.

In it were Ramah, Samuel's city (called in the New Testament Arimathea, of which Joseph was, that took care of our Saviour's burial), and Shiloh, where the tabernacle was first

set up. Tirzah also, the royal city of Jeroboam and his successors, and Deborah's palm-tree, under which she judged Israel, were in this tribe. Samaria, built by Omri after the burning of the royal palace of Tirzah, was in this tribe, and was long the royal city of the kingdom of the ten tribes; not far from it were Shechem, and the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, and Sychar, near which was Jacob's well, where Christ talked with the woman of Samaria. We read much of Mount Ephraim in the story of the Judges, and of a city called Ephraim, it is probable in this tribe, to which Christ retired, Joh 11:54. The whole kingdom of the ten tribes is often, in the prophets, especially in Hosea, called Ephraim.

8 The border went out from Tappuah westward unto the river Kanah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families.

9 And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim *were* among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.

10 And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

Joshua-17

1 There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he *was* the firstborn of Joseph; *to wit*, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan.

2 There was also *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families; for the children of Abiezer, and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hepher, and for the children of Shemida: these *were* the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families.

Manasseh was itself but one half of the tribe of Joseph, and yet was divided and subdivided.

1. It was divided into two parts, one already settled on the other side Jordan, consisting of those who were the posterity of Machir, Jos 17:1. This Machir was born to Manasseh in Egypt; there he had signalized himself as a man of war, probably in the contests between the Ephraimites and the men of Gath, 1Ch 7:21. His warlike disposition descended to his posterity, and therefore Moses gave them Gilead and Bashan, on the other side Jordan, of which before, Jos 13:31. It is here said that the lot came to Manasseh, for he was the first-born of Joseph. Bishop Patrick thinks it should be translated, though he was the first-born of Joseph, and then the meaning is plain, that the second lot was for Manasseh, because, though he was the first-born, yet Jacob had preferred Ephraim before him. See the names of those heads of the families that settled on the other side Jordan, 1Ch 5:24.

2. That part on this side Jordan as subdivided into ten families, Jos 17:5. There were six sons of Gilead here named (Jos 17:2), the same that are recorded Nu 26:30-32, only that he who is there called Jezeer is here called Abiezer. Five of these sons had each of them their portion; the sixth, which was Hepher, had his male line cut off in his son Zelophehad, who left daughters only, five in number, of whom we have often read, and these five had each of them a portion; though perhaps, they claiming under Hepher, all their five portions were but equal to one of the portions of the five sons. Or if Hepher had other sons besides Zelophehad, in whom the name of his family was kept up, their posterity married to the daughters of Zelophehad the elder brother, and in their right had these portions assigned them. See Nu 36:12. Here is,

(1.) The claim which the daughters of Zelophehad made, grounded upon the command God gave to Moses concerning them, Jos 17:4. They had themselves, when they were young, pleaded their own cause before Moses, and obtained the grant of an inheritance with their brethren, and now they would not lose the benefit of that grant for want of speaking to Joshua,

but seasonably put in their demand themselves, as it should seem, and not their husbands for them.

(2.) The assignment of their portions according to their claim. Joshua knew very well what God had ordered in their case, and did not object that they having not served in the wars of Canaan there was no reason why they should share in the possessions of Canaan, but readily gave them as inheritance among the brethren of their father. And now they reaped the benefit of their own pious zeal and prudent forecast in this matter. Thus those who take care in the wilderness of this world to make sure to themselves a place in the inheritance of the saints in light will certainly have the comfort of it in the other world, while those that neglect it now will lose it for ever.

3 But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these *are* the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

4 And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren. Therefore, according to the commandment of the Lord, he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father.

5 And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan;

6 because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons: and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land of Gilead.

7 And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah, that *lieth* before Shechem; and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah.

8 *Now* Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim;

9 and the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river: these cities of Ephraim *are* among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also *was* on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea:

10 southward *it was* Ephraim's, and northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea is his border; and they met together in Asher on the north, and in Issachar on the east.

We have here a short account of the lot of this half tribe. It reached from Jordan on the east to the great sea on the west; on the south it lay all along contiguous to Ephraim, but on the north it abutted upon Asher and Issachar. Asher lay north-west, and Issachar north-east, which seems to be the meaning of that (Jos 17:10), that they (that is, Manasseh and Ephraim, as related to it, both together making the tribe of Joseph) met in Asher on the north and Issachar on the east, for Ephraim itself reached not those tribes. Some things are particularly observed concerning this lot:--

1. That there was great communication between this tribe and that of Ephraim. The city of Tappuah belonged to Ephraim, but the country adjoining to Manasseh (Jos 17:8); there were likewise many cities of Ephraim that lay within the border of Manasseh (Jos 17:9), of which before, Jos 16:9.

2. That Manasseh likewise had cities with their appurtenances in the tribes of Issachar and Asher (Jos 17:11), God so ordering it, that though every tribe had its peculiar inheritance, which might not be alienated from it, yet they should thus intermix one with another, to keep up mutual acquaintance and correspondence among the tribes, and to give occasion for the doing of good offices one to another, as became those who, though of different tribes, were all one Israel, and were bound to love as brethren.

3. That they suffered the Canaanites to live among them, contrary to the command of God, serving their own ends by conniving at them, for they made them tributaries, Jos 17:12,13. The Ephraimites had done the same (Jos 16:10), and from them perhaps the Manassites learned it, and with their example excused themselves in it. The most remarkable person of this half tribe in after-time was Gideon, whose great actions were done within this lot. He was of the family of

Abiezer; Cesarea was in this lot, and Antipatris, famed in the latter ages of the Jewish state.

11 And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, *even* three countries.

12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

13 Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out.

14 And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me *but* one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I *am* a great people, forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto?

15 And Joshua answered them, if thou *be* a great people, *then* get thee up to the wood *country*, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee.

16 And the children of Joseph said, the hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both *they* who *are* of Beth-shean and her towns, and *they* who *are* of the valley of Jezreel.

17 And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou *art* a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot *only:*

Here, I The children of Joseph quarrel with their lot; if they had had any just cause to quarrel with it, we have reason to think Joshua would have relieved them, by adding to it, or altering it, which it does not appear he did. It is probable, because Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, they promised themselves that they should have some particular favour shown them, and should not be confined to the decision of the lot so closely as the other tribes; but Joshua makes them know that in the discharge of his office, as a public person, he had no more regard to his own tribe than to any other, but would administer impartially, without favour or affection, wherein he has left an excellent example to all in public trusts.

It was a very competent provision that was made for them, as much, for aught that appears, as they were able to manage, and yet they call it in disdain but one lot, as if that which was assigned to them both was scarcely sufficient for one. The word for complainers (Jude 1:16) is mempsimoiroi, blamers of their lot:--

1. That they were very numerous, through the blessing of God upon them (Jos 17:14): I am a great people, for the Lord has blessed me; and we have reason to hope that he that hath sent mouths will send meat. "I am a great people, and in so small a lot shall not have room to thrive." Yet observe, when they speak thankfully of their present increase, they do not speak confidently of the continuance of it. "The Lord has blessed me hitherto, however he may see fit to deal with me for the future." The uncertainty of what may be must not make us unthankful for what has been and is done in kindness to us.

2. That a good part of that country which had now fallen to their lot was in the hands of the Canaanites, and that they were formidable enemies, who brought into the field of battle chariots of iron (Jos 17:16), that is, chariots with long scythes fastened to the sides of them, or the axle-tree, which made great destruction of all that came in their way, mowing them down like corn. They urge that though they had a good portion assigned them, yet it was in bad hands, and they could not come to the possession of it, wishing to have their lot in those countries that were more thoroughly reduced than this was.

II. Joshua endeavours to reconcile them to their lot. He owns they were a great people, and being two tribes ought to have more than one lot only (Jos 17:17), but tells them that what had fallen to their share would be a sufficient lot for them both, if they would but work and fight. They desired a lot in which they might indulge themselves in ease and luxury. "No," says Joshua, "you must not count upon that; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread is a sentence in force even in Canaan itself." He retorts their own argument, that they were a great

people. "If so, you are the better able to help yourselves, and have the less reason to expect help from others. If thou hast many mouths to be filled, thou hast twice as many hands to be employed; earn, and then eat."

1. He bids them work for more (Jos 17:15): "Get thee up to the wood-country, which is within thy own border, and let all hands be set to work to cut down the trees, rid the rough lands, and make them, with art and industry, good arable ground." Note, Many wish for larger possessions who do not cultivate and make the best of what they have, think they should have more talents given them who do not trade with those with which they are entrusted. Most people's poverty is the effect of their idleness; would they dig, they need not beg.

2. He bids them fight for more (Jos 17:17,18), when they pleaded that they could not come at the wood-lands he spoke of because in the valley between them and it were Canaanites whom they durst not enter the lists with. "Never fear them," said Joshua, "thou hast God on thy side, and thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, if thou wilt set about it in good earnest, though they have iron chariots." We straiten ourselves by apprehending the difficulties in the way of our enlargement to be greater than really they are. What can be insuperable to faith and holy resolution?

18 but the mountain shall be thine; for it *is* a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, *and* though they be strong.

Joshua-18

The Territory Allotted to the Other Tribes

1 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there: and the land was subdued before them.

2 And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance.
3 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, How long *are* ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?

In the midst of the story of the dividing of the land comes in this account of the setting up of the tabernacle, which had hitherto continued in its old place in the centre of their camp; but now that three of the four squadrons that used to surround it in the wilderness were broken and diminished, those of Judah, Ephraim, and Reuben, by the removal of those tribes to their respective possessions, and that of Dan only remained entire, it was time to think of removing the tabernacle itself into a city.

Many a time the priests and Levites had taken it down, carried it, and set it up again in the wilderness, according to the directions given them (Nu 4:5-33, &c.); but now they must do it for good and all, not one of the stakes thereof must any more be removed, nor any of the cords thereof broken, Isa 33:20. Observe,

I The place to which the tabernacle was removed, and in which it was set up. It was Shiloh, a city in the lot of Ephraim, but lying close upon the lot of Benjamin. Doubtless God himself did some way or other direct them to this place, for he had promised to choose the place where he would make his name to dwell, De 12:11. It is most probable God made known his mind in this matter by the judgment of Urim. This place was pitched upon,

1. Because it was in the heart of the country, nearer the centre than Jerusalem was, and therefore the more convenient for the meeting of all Israel there from the several parts of the country; it had been in the midst of their camp in the wilderness, and therefore must now be in the midst of their nation, as that which sanctified the whole, and was the glory in the midst of them. See Ps 46:5.

2. Because it was in the lot of that tribe of which Joshua was, who was now their chief magistrate, and it would be both for his honour and convenience and for the advantage of the country to have it near him. The testimony of Israel and the thrones of judgment do well together, Ps 122:4,5.

3. Some think there was an eye to the name of the place, Shiloh being the name by which the Messiah was known in dying Jacob's prophecy (Ge 49:10), which prophecy, no doubt, was well known among the Jews; the setting up of the tabernacle in Shiloh gave them a hint that in that Shiloh whom Jacob spoke of all the ordinances of this worldly sanctuary should have their accomplishment in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, Heb 9:1,11. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks that the place where the tabernacle was set up was therefore called Shiloh, because of the peaceableness of the land at this time; as afterwards in Salem was his temple, which also signifies peaceable.

II The solemn manner of doing it: The whole congregation assembled together to attend the solemnity, to do honour to the ark of God, as the token of his presence, and to bid it welcome to its settlement. Every Israelite was interested in it, and therefore all testified their joy and satisfaction upon this occasion. See 2Sa 6:15. It is probable those tribes that were yet encamped when the tabernacle was removed to Shiloh decamped from Gilgal and pitched about Shiloh, for every true Israelite will desire to fix where God's tabernacle fixed.

Mention is made, on this occasion, of the land being subdued before them, to intimate that the country, hereabouts at least, being thoroughly reduced, they met with no opposition, nor were they apprehensive of any danger, but thought it time to make this grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in the constant series of successes with which he had blessed them. It was a good presage of a comfortable settlement to themselves in Canaan, when their first care was

to see the ark well settled as soon as they had a safe place ready to settle it in. Here the ark continued about 300 years, till the sins of Eli's house forfeited the ark, lost it and ruined Shiloh, and its ruins were long after made use of as warnings to Jerusalem. Go, see what I did to Shiloh, Jer 7:12,Ps 78:60.

4 Give out from among you three men for *each* tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and describe it according to the inheritance of them; and they shall come *again* to me.

5 And they shall divide it into seven parts: Judah shall abide in their coast on the south, and the house of Joseph shall abide in their coasts on the north.

6 Ye shall therefore describe the land *into* seven parts, and bring *the description* hither to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the Lord our God.

Here, I. Joshua reproves those tribes which were yet unsettled that they did not bestir themselves to gain a settlement in the land which God had given them. Seven tribes were yet unprovided for, though sure of an inheritance, yet uncertain where it should be, and it seems in no great care about it, Jos 18:2. And with them Joshua reasons (Jos 18:3): How long are you slack?

1. They were too well pleased with their present condition, liked well enough to live in a body together, the more the merrier, and, like the Babel-builders, had no mind to be scattered abroad and break good company. The spoil of the cities they had taken served them to live plentifully upon for the present, and they banished the thoughts of time to come. Perhaps the tribes of Judah and Joseph, who had already received their inheritance in the countries next adjoining, were generous in entertaining their brethren who were yet unprovided for, so that they went from one good house to another among their friends, with which, instead of grudging that they were postponed, they were so well pleased that they cared not for going to houses of their own.

2. They were slothful and dilatory. It may be they wished the thing done, but had not spirit to stir in it, or move towards the doing of it, though it was so much for their own advantage; like the sluggard, that hides his hand in his bosom, and it grieves him to bring it to his mouth again. The countries that remained to be divided lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them, the cities must be rebuilt or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places, and this will not be done without care and pains, and breaking through some hardships; thus he that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that regards the clouds shall not reap, Ec 11:4.

Note, Many are diverted from real duties, and debarred from real comforts, by seeming difficulties. God by his grace has given us a title to a good land, the heavenly Canaan, but we are slack to take possession; we enter not into that rest, as we might by faith, and hope, and holy joy; we live not in heaven, as we might by setting our affections on things above and having our conversation there. How long shall it be thus with us? How long shall we thus stand in our own light, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities?

Joshua was sensible of the inconveniences of this delay, that, while they neglected to take possession of the land that was conquered, the Canaanites were recovering strength and spirit, and fortifying themselves in the places that were yet in their hands, which would make the total expulsion of them the more difficult. They would lose their advantages by not following their blow; and therefore, as an eagle stirreth up her nest, so Joshua stirs them up to take possession of their lot. He is ready to do his part, if they will but do theirs.

II. He puts them in a way to settle themselves.

1 The land that remained must be surveyed, an account taken of the cities, and the territories belonging to them, Jos 18:4.

These must be divided into seven equal parts, as near as they could guess at their true value, which they must have an eye to, and not merely to the number of the cities and extent of the country. Judah is fixed on the south and Joseph on the north of Shiloh, to protect the tabernacle (Jos 18:5), and therefore they need not describe their country, but those countries only that were yet undisposed of. He gives a reason (Jos 18:7) why they must divide it into seven parts only, because the Levites were to have no temporal estate (as we say), but their benefices only, which were entailed upon their families: The priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance, and a very honourable, comfortable, plentiful inheritance it was. Gad and Reuben, with half of the tribe of Manasseh, were already fixed, and needed not to have any further care taken of them. Now,

(1.) The surveyors were three men out of each of the seven tribes that were to be provided for (Jos 18:4), one-and-twenty in all, who perhaps for greater expedition, because they had already lost time, divided themselves into three companies, one of each tribe in each company, and took each their district to survey. The matter was thus referred equally, that there might be neither any partiality used in making up the seven lots, nor any shadow of suspicion given, but all might be satisfied that they had right done them.

(2.) The survey was accordingly made, and brought in to Joshua, Jos 18:8,9. Josephus says it was seven months in the doing. And we must in it observe,

[1.] The faith and courage of the persons employed: abundance of Canaanites remained in the land, and all raging against Israel, as a bear robbed of her whelps; the business of these surveyors would soon be known, and what could they expect but to be way-laid, and have their brains knocked out by the fierce observers? But in obedience to Joshua's command, and in dependence upon God's power, they thus put their lives in their hands to serve their country.

[2.] The good providence of God in protecting them from the many deaths they were exposed to, and bringing them all safely again to the host at Shiloh. When we are in the way of our duty we are under the special protection of the Almighty.

2. When it was surveyed, and reduced to seven lots, then Joshua would, by appeal to God, and direction from him, determine which of these lots should belong to each tribe (Jos 18:6): That I may cast lots for you here at the tabernacle (because it was a sacred transaction) before the Lord our God, to whom each tribe must have an eye, with thankfulness for the conveniences and submission to the inconveniences of their allotment. What we have in the world we must acknowledge God's property in, and dispose of it as before him, with justice, and charity, and dependence upon Providence. The heavenly Canaan is described to us in a book, the book of the scriptures, and there are in it mansions and portions sufficient for all God's spiritual Israel. Christ is our Joshua that divides it to us. On him we must attend, and to him we must apply for an inheritance with the saints in light. See Joh 17:2,3.

7 But the Levites have no part among you; for the priesthood of the
Lord *is* their inheritance: and Gad, and Reuben, and half the tribe
of Manasseh, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan on the
east, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave them.
8 And the men arose, and went away: and Joshua charged them that
went to describe the land, saying, Go and walk through the land,
and describe it, and come again to me, that I may here cast lots
for you before the Lord in Shiloh.
9 And the men went and passed through the land, and described it by
cities into seven parts in a book, and came *again* to Joshua to the host
at Shiloh.
10 And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the Lord: and there
Joshua divided the land unto the children of Israel according to their
divisions.
11 And the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up
according to their families: and the coast of their lot came forth
between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.

12 And their border on the north side was from Jordan; and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north side, and went up through the mountains westward; and the goings out thereof were at the wilderness of Beth-even.

We have here the lot of the tribe of Benjamin, which Providence cast next to Joseph on the one hand, because Benjamin was own and only brother to Joseph, and was little Benjamin (Ps 68:27), that needed the protection of great Joseph, and yet had a better protector, for the Lord shall cover him all the day long, De 33:12. And it was next to Judah on the other hand, that this tribe might hereafter unite with Judah in an adherence to the throne of David and the temple at Jerusalem. Here we have,

1 The exact borders and limits of this tribe, which we need not be exact in the explication of. As it had Judah on the south and Joseph on the north, so it had Jordan on the east and Dan on the west. The western border is said to compass the corner of the sea southward (Jos 18:14), whereas no part of the lot of this tribe came near to the great sea. Bishop Patrick thinks the meaning is that it ran along in a parallel line to the great sea, though at a distance. Dr. Fuller suggests that since it is not called the great sea, but only the sea, which often signifies any lake or mere, it may be meant of the pool of Gibeon, which may be called a corner or canton of the sea; it is called the great waters of Gibeon (Jer 41:12), and it is compassed by the western border of this tribe.

2 The particular cities in this tribe, not all, but the most considerable. Twenty-six are here named. Jericho is put first, though dismantled, and forbidden to be rebuilt as a city with gates and walls, because it might be built and inhabited as a country village, and so was not useless to this tribe. Gilgal, where Israel first encamped when Saul was made king (1Sa 11:15), was in this tribe. It was afterwards a very profane place. Ho 9:15, All their wickedness is in Gilgal. Beth-el was in this tribe, a famous place. Though Benjamin adhered to the house of David, yet Beth-el, it seems, was in the possession of

the house of Joseph (Jdg 1:23-25), and there Jeroboam set up one of his calves. In this tribe was Gibeon, where the altar was in the beginning of Solomon's time, 2Ch 1:3. Gibeah likewise, that infamous place where the Levite's concubine was abused. Mizpeh, and near it Samuel's Ebenezer, and also Anathoth, Jeremiah's city, were in this tribe, as was the northern part of Jerusalem. Paul was the honour of this tribe (Ro 11:1,Php 3:5); but where his land lay we know not: he sought the better country.

13 And the border went over from thence toward Luz, to the side of Luz, which *is* Beth-el, southward; and the border descended to Ataroth-adar, near the hill that *lieth* on the south side of the nether Beth-horon.

14 And the border was drawn *thence,* and compassed the corner of the sea southward, from the hill that *lieth* before Beth-horon southward; and the goings out thereof were at Kirjath-baal, which *is* Kirjath-jearim, a city of the children of Judah: this *was* the west quarter.

15 And the south quarter *was* from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah:

16 and the border came down to the end of the mountain that *lieth* before the valley of the son of Hinnom, *and* which *is* in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to En-rogel,

17 and was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-shemesh, and went forth toward Geliloth, which *is* over against the going up of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben,

18 and passed along toward the side over against Arabah northward, and went down unto Arabah:

19 and the border passed along to the side of Beth-hoglah northward: and the outgoings of the border were at the north bay of the salt sea at the south end of Jordan: this *was* the south coast.

20 And Jordan was the border of it on the east side. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the coasts thereof round about, according to their families.

21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and the valley of Keziz,
22 and Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Beth-el,
23 and Avim, and Parah, and Ophrah,
24 and Chephar-haammonai, and Ophni, and Gaba; twelve cities with their villages:
25 Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth,
26 and Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah,
27 and Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah,
28 and Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, which *is* Jerusalem, Gibeath, *and* Kirjath; fourteen cities with their villages. This *is* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

Joshua-19

1 And the second lot came forth to Simeon, *even* for the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families: and their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah.
2 And they had in their inheritance Beer-sheba, or Sheba, and Moladah,
3 and Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem,
4 and Eltolad, and Bethul, and Hormah,
5 and Ziklag, and Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susah,

Simeon's lot was drawn after Judah's, Joseph's, and Benjamin's, because Jacob had put that tribe under disgrace; yet it is put before the two younger sons of Leah and the three sons of the handmaids. Not one person of note, neither judge nor prophet, was of this tribe, that we know of.

I The situation of their lot was within that of Judah (Jos 19:1) and was taken from it, Jos 19:9. It seems, those that first surveyed the land thought it larger than it was, and that it would have held out to give every tribe in proportion as large a share as they had carved out for Judah; but, upon a more strict enquiry, it was found that it would not reach (Jos 19:9): The part of the children of Judah was too much for them, more than they needed, and more, as it proved, than fell to their

share. Yet God did not by the lot lessen it, but left it to their prudence and care afterwards to discover and rectify the mistake, which when they did,

1 The men of Judah did not oppose the taking away of the cities again, which by the first distribution fell within their border, when they were convinced that they had more than their proportion. In all such cases errors must be accepted and a review admitted if there be occasion. Though, in strictness, what fell to their lot was their right against all the world, yet they would not insist upon it when it appeared that another tribe would want what they had to spare. Note, We must look on the things of others, and not on our own only. The abundance of some must supply the wants of others, that there may be somewhat of an equality, for which there may be equity where there is not law.

2. That which was thus taken off from Judah to be put into a new lot Providence directed to the tribe of Simeon, that Jacob's prophecy concerning this tribe might be fulfilled, I will divide them in Jacob. The cities of Simeon were scattered in Judah, with which tribe they were surrounded, except on that side towards the sea. This brought them into a confederacy with the tribe of Judah (Jdg 1:3), and afterwards was a happy occasion of the adherence of many of this tribe to the house of David, at the time of the revolt of the ten tribes to Jeroboam. 2Ch 15:9, out of Simeon they fell to Asa in abundance. It is good being in a good neighbourhood.

II The cities within their lot are here named. Beersheba, or Sheba, for these names seem to refer to the same place, is put first. Ziklag, which we read of in David's story, is one of them. What course they took to enlarge their borders and make room for themselves we find 1Ch 4:39-43, &c.

6 and Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhen; thirteen cities and their villages:
7 Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:

8 and all the villages that *were* round about these cities to Baalath- beer,
Ramath of the south. This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the
children of Simeon according to their families.
9 Out of the portion of the children of Judah *was* the inheritance of
the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was
too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their
inheritance within the inheritance of them.
10 And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to
their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid:
11 and their border went up toward the sea, and Maralah, and reached
to Dabbasheth, and reached to the river that *is* before Jokneam;
12 and turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrising unto the
border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and
goeth up to Japhia,

This is the lot of Zebulun, who, though born of Leah after Issachar, yet was blessed by Jacob and Moses before him; and therefore it was so ordered that his lot was drawn before that of Issachar, north of which it lay and south of Asher.

1 The lot of this tribe was washed by the great sea on the west, and by the sea of Tiberias on the east, answering Jacob's prophecy (Ge 49:13), Zebulun shall be a haven of ships, trading ships on the great sea and fishing ships on the sea of Galilee.

2. Though there were some places in this tribe which were made famous in the Old Testament, especially Mount Carmel, on which the famous trial was between God and Baal in Elijah's time, yet it was made much more illustrious in the New Testament; for within the lot of this tribe was Nazareth, where our blessed Saviour spent so much of his time on earth, and from which he was called Jesus of Nazareth, and Mount Tabor on which he was transfigured, and that coast of the sea of Galilee on which Christ preached so many sermons and wrought so many miracles.

13 and from thence passeth on along on the east to Gittah-hepher, to
Ittah-kazin, and goeth out to Remmon-methoar to Neah;

14 and the border compasseth it on the north side to Hannathon: and
the outgoings thereof are in the valley of Jiphthah-el:
15 and Kattath, and Nahallal, and Shimron, and Idalah, and
Bethlehem: twelve cities with their villages.
16 This *is* the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to their
families, these cities with their villages.
17 *And* the fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of
Issachar according to their families.

The lot of Issachar ran from Jordan in the east to the great sea in the west, Manasseh on the south, and Zebulun on the north. A numerous tribe, Nu 26:25. Tola, one of the judges, was of this tribe, Jdg 10:1. So was Baasha, one of the kings of Israel, 1Ki 15:27. The most considerable places in this tribe were, 1. Jezreel, in which was Ahab's palace, and near it Naboth's vineyard. 2. Shunem, where lived that good Shunamite that entertained Elisha. 3. The river Kishon, on the banks of which, in this tribe, Sisera was beaten by Deborah and Barak. 4. The mountains of Gilboa, on which Saul and Jonathan were slain, which were not far from Endor, where Saul consulted the witch. 5. The valley of Megiddo, where Josiah was slain near Hadad-rimmon, 2Ki 23:29,Zec 12:11.

18 And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem,
19 and Haphraim, and Shihon, and Anaharath,
20 and Rabbith, and Kishion, and Abez,
21 Remeth, and En-gannim, and En-haddah, and Beth-pazzez;
22 and the coast reacheth to Tabor, and Shahazimah, and Beth-
shemesh; and the outgoings of their border were at Jordan: sixteen
cities with their villages.
23 This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar
according to their families, the cities and their villages.
24 And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher
according to their families.

The lot of Asher lay upon the coast of the great sea. We read not of any famous person of this tribe but Anna the prophetess, who was a constant resident in the temple at the time of our Saviour's birth, Lu 2:36. Nor were there many famous places in this tribe. Aphek (mentioned Jos 19:30) was the place near which Benhadad was beaten by Ahad, 1Ki 20:30. But close

adjoining to this tribe were the celebrated sea-port towns of Tyre and Sidon, which we read so much of. Tyre is called here that strong city (Jos 19:29), but Bishop Patrick thinks it was not the same Tyre that we read of afterwards, for that was built on an island; this old strong city was on the continent. And it is conjectured by some that into these two strong-holds, Sidon and Tzor, or Tyre, many of the people of Canaan fled and took shelter when Joshua invaded them.

25 And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and Achshaph,
26 and Alammelech, and Amad, and Misheal; and reacheth to Carmel westward, and to Shihor-libnath;
27 and turneth toward the sunrising to Beth-dagon, and reacheth to Zebulun, and to the valley of Jiphthah-el toward the north side of Beth-meek, and Neiel, and goeth out to Cabul on the left hand,
28 and Hebron, and Rehob, and Hammon, and Kanah, *even* unto great Zidon;
29 and *then* the coast turneth to Ramah, and to the strong city Tyre; and the coast turneth to Hosah; and the outgoings thereof are at the sea from the coast to Achzib:
30 Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two cities with their villages.
31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.
32 The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, *even* for the children of Naphtali according to their families.

Naphtali lay furthest north of all the tribes, bordering on Mount Libanus. The city of Leshem, or Liash, lay on the utmost edge of it to the north, and therefore when the Danites had made themselves masters of it, and called it Dan, the length of Canaan from north to south was reckoned from Dan to Beersheba. It had Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west, and Judah upon Jordan, probably a city of that name, and so distinguished from the tribe of Judah on the east. It was in the lot of this tribe, near the waters of Merom, that Joshua fought and routed Jabin, Jos 11:1-14. &c. In this tribe stood Capernaum and Bethsaida, on the north end of the sea of Tiberias, in which Christ did so many mighty works; and the mountain (as is supposed) on which Christ preached, Mt 5:1.

33 And their coast was from Heleph, from Allon to Zaanannim, and
Adami, Nekeb, and Jabneel, unto Lakum; and the outgoings
thereof were at Jordan:
34 and *then* the coast turneth westward to Aznoth-tabor, and goeth out
from thence to Hukkok, and reacheth to Zebulun on the south
side, and reacheth to Asher on the west side, and to Judah upon
Jordan toward the sunrising.
35 And the fenced cities *are* Ziddim, Zer, and Hammath, Rakkath, and
Chinnereth,
36 and Adamah, and Ramah, and Hazor,
37 and Kedesh, and Edrei, and En-hazor,
38 and Iron, and Migdal-el, Horem, and Beth-anath, and Beth-
shemesh; nineteen cities with their villages.
39 This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali
according to their families, the cities and their villages.
40 *And* the seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan
according to their families.

Dan, though commander of one of the four squadrons of the camp of Israel, in the wilderness, that which brought up the rear, yet was last provided for in Canaan, and his lot fell in the southern part of Canaan, between Judah on the east and the land of the Philistines on the west, Ephraim on the north and Simeon on the south. Providence ordered this numerous and powerful tribe into a post of danger, as best able to deal with those vexatious neighbours the Philistines, and so it was found in Samson. Here is an account, 1. Of what fell to this tribe by lot, Zorah, and Eshtaol, and the camp of Dan thereabouts, of which we read in the story of Samson. And near there was the valley of Eshcol, whence the spies brought the famous bunch of grapes. Japho, or Joppa was in this lot. 2. Of what they got by their own industry and valour, which is mentioned here (Jos 19:47), but related at large, Jdg 18:7-31, &c.

41 And the coast of their inheritance was Zorah, and Eshtaol, and Ir-
shemesh,
42 and Shaalabbin, and Ajalon, and Jethlah,
43 and Elon, and Thimnathah, and Ekron,
44 and Eltekeh, and Gibbethon, and Baalath,
45 and Jehud, and Bene-berak, and Gath-rimmon,

46 and Me-jarkon, and Rakkon, with the border before Japho.
47 And the coast of the children of Dan went out *too little* for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.
48 This *is* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.
49 When they had made an end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them:
50 according to the word of the Lord they gave him the city which he asked, even Timnath-Serah in mount Ephraim: and he built the city, and dwelt therein.

Before this account of the dividing of the land is solemnly closed up, in the Jos 19:51, which intimates that the thing was done to the satisfaction of all, here is an account of the particular inheritance assigned to Joshua.

1. He was last served, though the eldest and greatest man of all Israel, and who, having commanded in the conquest of Canaan, might have demanded the first settlement in it for himself and his family. But he would make it to appear that in all he did he sought the good of his country, and not any private interest of his own. He was content to be unfixed till he saw them all settled; and herein is a great example to all in public places to prefer the common welfare before their particular satisfaction. Let the public be first served.

2. He had his lot according to the word of the Lord. It is probable that, when God by Moses told Caleb what inheritance he should have (Jos 14:9), he gave the like promise to Joshua, which he had an eye to in making his election: this made his portion doubly pleasant, that he had it, not as the rest by common providence, but by special promise.

3. He chose it in Mount Ephraim, which belonged to his own tribe, with which he thereby put himself in common, when he

might by prerogative have chosen his inheritance in some other tribe, as suppose that of Judah, and thereby have distinguished himself from them.

Let no man's preferment or honour make him ashamed of his family or country, or estrange him from it. The tabernacle was set up in the lot of Ephraim, and Joshua would forecast not to be far from that.

4. The children of Israel are said to give it to him (Jos 19:49), which bespeaks his humility, that he would not take it to himself without the people's consent and approbation, as if he would thereby own himself, though major singulis--greater than any one, yet minor universis--less than the whole assemblage, and would hold even the estate of his family, under God, by the grant of the people.

5. It was a city that must be built before it was fit to be dwelt in. While others dwelt in houses which they built not, Joshua must erect for himself (that he might be a pattern of industry and contentment with mean things) such buildings as he could hastily run up, without curiosity or magnificence. Our Lord Jesus thus came and dwelt among us, not in pomp but poverty, providing rest for us, yet himself not having where to lay his head. Even Christ pleased not himself.

51 These *are* the inheritances, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the
son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children
of Israel, divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord,
at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. So
they made an end of dividing the country.

Joshua-20

The Cities of Refuge Appointed

1 The Lord also spake unto Joshua, saying,
2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses:
3 that the slayer that killeth *any* person unawares *and* unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.

Many things were by the law of Moses ordered to be done when they came to Canaan and this among the rest, the appointing of sanctuaries for the protecting of those that were guilty of casual murder, which was a privilege to all Israel, since no man could be sure but some time or other it might be his own case; and it was for the interest of the land that the blood of an innocent person, whose hand only was guilty but not his heart, should not be shed, no, not by the avenger of blood: of this law, which was so much for their advantage, God here reminds them, that they might remind themselves of the other laws he had given them, which concerned his honour.

1. Orders are given for the appointing of these cities (Jos 20:2), and very seasonably at this time when the land was newly surveyed, and so they were the better able to divide the coasts of it into three parts, as God had directed them, in order to the more convenient situation of these cities of refuge, De 19:3. Yet it is probable that it was not done till after the Levites had their portion assigned them in the next chapter, because the cities of refuge were all to be Levites' cities. As soon as ever God had given them cities of rest, he bade them appoint cities of refuge, to which none of them knew but they might be glad to escape.

Thus God provided, not only for their ease at all times, but for their safety in times of danger, and such times we must expect and prepare for in this world. And it intimates what God's

spiritual Israel have and shall have, in Christ and heaven, not only rest to repose themselves in, but refuge to secure themselves in. And we cannot think these cities of refuge would have been so often and so much spoken of in the law of Moses, and have had so much care taken about them (when the intention of them might have been effectually answered, as it is in our law, by authorizing the courts of judgment to protect and acquit the manslayer in all those cases wherein he was to have privilege of sanctuary), if they were not designed to typify the relief which the gospel provides for poor penitent sinners, and their protection from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, in our Lord Jesus, to whom believers flee for refuge (Heb 6:18), and in whom they are found (Php 3:9) as in a sanctuary, where they are privileged from arrests, and there is now no condemnation to them, Ro 8:1.

2. Instructions are given for the using of these cities. The laws in this matter we had before, Nu 35:10-34, &c., where they were opened at large.

(1.) It is supposed that a man might possibly kill a person, it might be his own child or dearest friend, unawares and unwittingly (Jos 20:3), not only whom he hated not, but whom he truly loved beforetime (Jos 20:5); for the way of man is not in himself. What reason have we to thank God who has kept us both from slaying and from being slain by accident! In this case, it is supposed that the relations of the person slain would demand the life of the slayer, as a satisfaction to that ancient law that whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

(2.) It is provided that if upon trial it appeared that the murder was done purely by accident, and not by design, either upon an old grudge or a sudden passion, then the slayer should be sheltered from the avenger of blood in any one of these cities, Jos 20:4-6. By this law he was entitled to a dwelling in that city, was taken into the care of the government of it, but was confined to it, as prisoner at large; only, if he survived the high

priest, then, and not till then, he might return to his own city. And the Jews say, "If he died before the high priest in the city of his refuge and exile, and was buried there, yet, at the death of the high priest, his bones should be removed with respect to the place of his fathers' sepulchres."

4 And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them.

5 And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbor unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime.

6 And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

7 And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which *is* Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

We have here the nomination of the cities of refuge in the land of Canaan, which was made by the advice and authority of Joshua and the princes (Jos 20:7); and upon occasion of the mention of this is repeated the nomination of the other three in the lot of the other two tribes and a half, which was made by Moses (De 4:43), but (as bishop Patrick thinks) they had not the privilege till now.

1. They are said to sanctify these cities, that is the original word for appointed, Jos 20:7. Not that any ceremony was used to signify the consecration of them, only they did by a public act of court solemnly declare them cities of refuge, and as such sacred to the honour of God, as the protector of exposed innocency. If they were sanctuaries, it was proper to say they were sanctified. Christ, our refuge, was sanctified by his Father; nay, for our sakes he sanctified himself, Joh 17:19.

2. These cities (as those also on the other side Jordan) stood in the three several parts of the country, so conveniently that a man might (they say) in half a day reach some one of them from any corner of the country. Kedesh was in Naphtali, the most northern tribe, Hebron in Judah, the most southern, and Shechem in Ephraim, which lay in the middle, about equally distant from the other two. God is a refuge at hand.

3. They were all Levites' cities, which put an honour upon God's tribe, making them judges in those cases wherein divine Providence was so nearly concerned, and protectors to oppressed innocency. It was also a kindness to the poor refugee, that when he might not go up to the house of the Lord, nor tread his courts, yet he had the servants of God's house with him, to instruct him, and pray for him, and help to make up the want of public ordinances. If he must be confined, it shall be to a Levite-city, where he may, if he will, improve his time.

4. These cities were upon hills to be seen afar off, for a city on a hill cannot be hid; and this would both direct and encourage the poor distressed man that was making that way; and, though therefore his way at last was up-hill, yet this would comfort him, that he would be in his place of safety quickly, and if he could but get into the suburbs of the city he was well enough off.

5. Some observe a significancy in the names of these cities with application to Christ our refuge. I delight not in quibbling upon names, yet am willing to take notice of these. Kedesh signifies holy, and our refuge is the holy Jesus. Shechem, a shoulder, and the government is upon his shoulder. Hebron, fellowship, and believers are called into the fellowship of Christ Jesus our Lord. Bezer, a fortification, for he is a stronghold to all those that trust in him. Ramoth, high or exalted, for him hath God exalted with his own right hand. Golan, joy or exultation, for in him all the saints are justified, and shall glory.

Lastly, Besides all these, the horns of the altar, wherever it was, were a refuge to those who took hold of them, if the crime were such as that sanctuary allowed. This is implied in that law (Ex 21:14), that a wilful murderer shall be taken from God's altar to be put to death. And we find the altar used for this purpose. 1Ki 1:50,2:28. Christ is our altar, who not only sanctifies the gift, but protects the giver.

8 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

9 These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth *any* person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation.

Joshua-21

The Cities of the Levites

1 Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun, and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel;

2 and they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.

3 And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the Lord, these cities and their suburbs.

Here is, I The Levites' petition presented to this general convention of the states, now sitting at Shiloh, Jos 21:1,2. Observe,

1. They had not their lot assigned them till they made their claim. There is an inheritance provided for all the saints, that

royal priesthood, but then they must petition for it. Ask, and it shall be given you. Joshua had quickened the rest of the tribes who were slack to put in their claims, but the Levites, it may be supposed, knew their duty and interest better than the rest, and were therefore forward in this matter, when it came to their turn, without being called upon. They build their claim upon a very good foundation, not their own merits nor services, but the divine precept: "The Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities, commanded you to grant them, which implied a command to us to ask them."

Note, The maintenance of ministers is not an arbitrary thing, left purely to the good-will of the people, who may let them starve if they please; no, as the God of Israel commanded that the Levites should be well provided for, so has the Lord Jesus, the King of the Christian church, ordained, and a perpetual ordinance it is that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1Co 9:14), and should live comfortably.

2. They did not make their claim till all the rest of the tribes were provided for, and then they did it immediately. There was some reason for it; every tribe must first know their own, else they would not know what they gave the Levites, and so it could not be such a reasonable service as it ought to be. But it is also an instance of their humility, modesty, and patience (and Levites should be examples of these and other virtues), that they were willing to be served last, and they fared never the worse for it. Let not God's ministers complain if at any time they find themselves postponed in men's thoughts and cares, but let them make sure of the favour of God and the honour that comes from him, and then they may well enough afford to bear the slights and neglects of men.

II The Levites' petition granted immediately, without any dispute, the princes of Israel being perhaps ashamed that they needed to be called upon in this matter, and that the motion

had not been made among themselves for the settling of the Levites.

1 The children of Israel are said to give the cities for the Levites. God had appointed how many they should be in all, forty-eight. It is probable that Joshua and the princes, upon consideration of the extent and value of the lot of each tribe as it was laid before them, had appointed how many cities should be taken out of each; and then the fathers of the several tribes themselves agreed which they should be, and therefore are said to give them, as an offering, to the Lord; so God had appointed. Nu 35:8, Every one shall give of his cities to the Levites. Here God tried their generosity, and it was found to praise and honour, for it appears by the following catalogue that the cities they gave to the Levites were generally some of the best and most considerable in each tribe. And it is probable that they had an eye to the situation of them, taking care they should be so dispersed as that no part of the country should be too far distant from a Levites' city.

2. They gave them at the commandment of the Lord, that is, with an eye to the command and in obedience to it, which was it that sanctified the grant. They gave the number that God commanded, and it was well this matter was settled that the Levites might not ask more nor the Israelites offer less. They gave them also with their suburbs, or glebe-lands, belonging to them, so many cubits by measure from the walls of the city, as God had commanded (Nu 35:4,5), and did not go about to cut them short.

3. When the forty-eight cities were pitched upon, they were divided into four lots, as they lay next together, and then by lot were determined to the four several families of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelites had surrendered the cities into the hand of God, he would himself have the distributing of them among his servants.
(1.) The family of Aaron, who were the only priests, had for their share the thirteen cities that were given by the tribes of

Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin, Jos 21:4. God in wisdom ordered it thus, that though Jerusalem itself was not one of their cities, it being as yet in the possession of the Jebusites (and those generous tribes would not mock the Levites, who had another warfare to mind, with a city that must be recovered by the sword before it could be enjoyed), yet the cities that fell to their lot were those which lay next to Jerusalem, because that was to be, in process of time, the holy city, where their business would chiefly lie.

(2.) The Kohathite-Levites (among whom were the posterity of Moses, though never distinguished from them) had the cities that lay in the lot of Dan, which lay next to Judah, and in that of Ephraim, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, which lay next to Benjamin. So those who descended from Aaron's father joined nearest to Aaron's sons.

(3.) Gershon was the eldest son of Levi, and therefore, though the younger house of the Kohathites was preferred before his, yet his children had the precedency of the other family of Merari, Jos 21:6.

(4.) The Merarites, the youngest house, had their lot last, and it lay furthest off, Jos 21:7. The rest of the sons of Jacob had a lot for every tribe only, but Levi, God's tribe, had a lot for each of its families; for there is a particular providence directing and attending the removals and settlements of ministers, and appointing where those shall fix who are to be the lights of the world.

4 And the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites: and the children of Aaron the priest, *which were* of the Levites, had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities.

5 And the rest of the children of Kohath *had* by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.

6 And the children of Gershon *had* by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe

of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.

7 The children of Merari by their families *had* out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.

8 And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

9 And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, these cities which are *here* mentioned by name,

10 which the children of Aaron, *being* of the families of the Kohathites, *who were* of the children of Levi, had: for theirs was the first lot.

11 And they gave them the city of Arba the father of Anak, which *city is* Hebron, in the hill *country* of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it.

12 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession.

We have here a particular account of the cities which were given to the children of Levi out of the several tribes, not only to be occupied and inhabited by them, as tenants to the several tribes in which they lay--no, their interest in them was not dependent and precarious, but to be owned and possessed by them as lords and proprietors, and as having the same title to them that the rest of the tribes had to their cities or lands, as appears by the law which preserved the house in the Levites' cities from being alienated any longer than till the year of jubilee, Le 25:32,33. Yet it is probable that the Levites having only the cities and suburbs, while the land about pertained to the tribes in which they lay, those of that tribe, for the convenience of occupying that land, might commonly rent houses of the Levites, as they could spare them in their cities, and so live among them as their tenants. Several things may be observed in this account, besides what was observed in the law concerning it, Nu 35:1-34.

I. That the Levites were dispersed into all the tribes, and not suffered to live all together in any one part of the country. This

would find them all with work, and employ them all for the good of others; for ministers, of all people, must neither be idle nor live to themselves or to one another only. Christ left his twelve disciples together in a body, but left orders that they should in due time disperse themselves, that they might preach the gospel to every creature.

The mixing of the Levites thus with the other tribes would be an obligation upon them to walk circumspectly, and as became their sacred function, and to avoid every thing that might disgrace it. Had they lived all together, they would have been tempted to wink at one another's faults, and to excuse one another when they did amiss; but by this means they were made to see the eyes of all Israel upon them, and therefore saw it their concern to walk so as that their ministry might in nothing be blamed nor their high character suffer by their ill carriage.

II. That every tribe of Israel was adorned and enriched with its share of Levites' cities in proportion to its compass, even those that lay most remote. They were all God's people, and therefore they all had Levites among them.

1. To show kindness to, as God appointed them, De 12:19,14:29. They were God's receivers, to whom the people might give their grateful acknowledgments of God's goodness, as the occasion and disposition were.

2. To receive advice and instruction from; when they could not go up to the tabernacle, to consult those who attended there, they might go to a Levites' city, and be taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Thus God set up a candle in every room of his house, to give light to all his family; as those that attended the altar kept the charge of the Lord, to see that no divine appointment was neglected there, so those that were scattered in the country had their charge too, which was to see that no idolatrous superstitious usages were introduced at a distance and to watch for the souls of God's Israel.

Thus did God graciously provide for the keeping up of religion among them, and that they might have the word nigh them; yet, blessed be God, we, under the gospel, have it yet nigher, not only Levites in every county, but Levites in every parish, whose office it is still to teach the people knowledge, and to go before them in the things of God.

III. That there were thirteen cities, and those some of the best, appointed for the priests, the sons of Aaron, Jos 21:19. Aaron left but two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, yet his family was now so much increased, and it was foreseen that it would in process of time grow so numerous, as to replenish all these cities, though a considerable number must of necessity be resident wherever the ark and the altar were. We read in both Testaments of such numbers of priests that we may suppose none of all the families of Israel that came out of Egypt increased afterwards so much as that of Aaron did; and the promise afterwards to the house of Aaron is, God shall increase you more and more, you and your children, Ps 115:12,14. He will raise up a seed to serve him.

IV. That some of the Levites' cities were afterwards famous upon other accounts. Hebron was the city in which David began his reign, and in Manhanaim, another Levites' city (Jos 21:38), he lay, and had his headquarters when he fled from Absalom. The first Israelite that ever wore the title of king (namely, Abimelech, the son of Gideon) reigned in Shechem, another Levites' city, Jos 21:21.

V. That the number of them in all was more than of most of the tribes, except Judah, though the tribe of Levi was one of the least of the tribes, to show how liberal God is, and his people should be, to his ministers; yet the disproportion will not appear so great as at first it seems, if we consider that the Levites had cities only with their suburbs to dwell in, but the rest of the tribes, besides their cities (and those perhaps were many more than are named in the account of their lot), had

many unwalled towns and villages which they inhabited, besides country houses.

Upon the whole, it appears that effectual care was taken that the Levites should live both comfortably and usefully: and those, whether ministers or others, for whom Providence has done well, must look upon themselves as obliged thereby to do good, and, according as their capacity and opportunity are, to serve their generation

13 Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs,
14 and Jattir with her suburbs, and Eshtemoa with her suburbs,
15 and Holon with her suburbs, and Debir with her suburbs,
16 and Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, *and* Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.
17 And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, Geba with her suburbs,
18 Anathoth with her suburbs, and Almon with her suburbs; four cities.
19 All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their suburbs.
20 And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites which remained of the children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim.
21 For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs,
22 and Kibzaim with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs; four cities.
23 And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs, Gibbethon with her suburbs,
24 Aijalon with her suburbs, Gath-rimmon with her suburbs; four cities.
25 And out of the half tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs; two cities.
26 All the cities *were* ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

27 And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, out
of the *other* half tribe of Manasseh *they gave* Golan in Bashan
with her suburbs, *to be* a city of refuge for the slayer; and Beeshterah
with her suburbs; two cities.
28 And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs, Dabareh
with her suburbs,
29 Jarmuth with her suburbs, En-gannim with her suburbs; four cities.
30 And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with
her suburbs,
31 Helkath with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs; four cities.
32 And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs,
to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Hammoth-dor with her
suburbs, and Kartan with her suburbs; three cities.
33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families *were*
thirteen cities with their suburbs.
34 And unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the
Levites, out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs, and
Kartah with her suburbs,
35 Dimnah with her suburbs, Nahalal with her suburbs; four cities.
36 And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs, and
Jahazah with her suburbs,
37 Kedemoth with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs; four
cities.
38 And out of the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, *to*
be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Mahanaim with her suburbs,
39 Heshbon with her suburbs, Jazer with her suburbs; four cities in all.
40 So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families, which
were remaining of the families of the Levites, were *by* their lot
twelve cities.
41 All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of
Israel *were* forty and eight cities with their suburbs.
42 These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them:
thus were all these cities.

Israel Possesses the Land

43 And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

We have here the conclusion of this whole matter, the foregoing history summed up, and, to make it appear the more bright, compared with the promise of which it was the full accomplishment. God's word and his works mutually illustrate each other. The performance makes the promise appear very true and the promise makes the performance appear very kind.

I. God had promised to give the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession, and now at last he performed this promise (Jos 21:43): They possessed it, and dwelt therein. Though they had often forfeited the benefit of that promise, and God had long delayed the performance of it, yet at last all difficulties were conquered, and Canaan was their own. And the promise of the heavenly Canaan is as sure to all God's spiritual Israel, for it is the promise of him that cannot lie.

II. God had promised to give them rest in that land, and now they had rest round about, rest from the fatigues of their travel through the wilderness (which tedious march, perhaps, was long in their bones), rest from their wars in Canaan, and the insults which their enemies there had at first offered them. They now dwelt, not only in habitations of their own, but those quiet and peaceable ones; though there were Canaanites that remained, yet none that had either strength or spirit to attack them, nor so much as give them an alarm. This rest continued till they by their own sin and folly put thorns into their own beds and their own eyes.

III. God had promised to give them victory and success in their wars, and this promise likewise was fulfilled: There stood not a man before them, Jos 21:44. They had the better in every battle, and which way soever they turned their forces they prospered. It is true there were Canaanites now remaining in

many parts of the land, and such as afterwards made head against them, and became very formidable. But,

1. As to the present remains of the Canaanites, they were no contradiction to the promise, for God had said he would not drive them out all at once, but by little and little, Ex 23:30. They had now as much in their full possession as they had occasion for and as they had hands to manage, so that the Canaanites only kept possession of some of the less cultivated parts of the country against the beasts of the field, till Israel, in process of time, should become numerous enough to replenish them.

2. As to the after prevalency of the Canaanites, that was purely the effect of Israel's cowardice and slothfulness, and the punishment of their sinful inclination to the idolatries and other abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord would have cast out before them but that they harboured and indulged them. So that the foundation of God stands sure.

Israel's experience of God's fidelity is here upon record, and is an acquittance under their hands to the honour of God, the vindication of his promise which had been so often distrusted, and the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world: There failed not any good thing, no, nor aught of any good thing (so full is it expressed), which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel, but in due time all came to pass, Jos 21:45. Such an acknowledgment as this, here subscribed by Joshua in the name of all Israel, we afterwards find made by Solomon, and all Israel did in effect say Amen to it, 1Ki 8:56. The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, are what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and, if in any thing the performance has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.

44 And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their

enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

45 There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

Joshua-22

The Altar by the Jordan

1 Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh,

2 and said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you:

3 ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the Lord your God.

4 And now the Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, *and* unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side Jordan.

5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

The war being ended, and ended gloriously, Joshua, as a prudent general, disbands his army, who never designed to make war their trade, and sends them home, to enjoy what they had conquered, and to beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks; and particularly the forces of these separate tribes, who had received their inheritance on the other side Jordan from Moses upon this condition, that their men of war should assist the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, which they promised to do (Nu 32:32), and renewed the promise to Joshua at the opening of the campaign, Jos 1:16.

And, now that they had performed their bargain, Joshua publicly and solemnly in Shiloh gives them their discharge. Whether this was done, as it was placed, not till after the land was divided, as some think, or whether after the war was ended, and before the division was made, as others think (because there was no need of their assistance in dividing the land, but only in conquering it, nor were there any of their tribes employed as commissioners in that affair, but only of the other ten, Nu 34:18-28, &c.), this is certain, it was not done till after Shiloh was made the head-quarters (Jos 21:2), and the land was begun to be divided before they removed from Gilgal, Jos 14:6.

It is probable that this army of Reubenites and Gadites, which had led the van in all the wars of Canaan, had sometimes, in the intervals of action, and when the rest of the army retired into winter-quarters, some of them at least, made a step over Jordan, for it was not far, to visit their families, and to look after their private affairs, and perhaps tarried at home, and sent others in their room more serviceable; but still these two tribes and a half had their quota of troops ready, 40,000 in all, which, whenever there was occasion, presented themselves at their respective posts, and now attended in a body to receive their discharge. Though their affection to their families, and concern for their affairs, could not but make them, after so long an absence, very desirous to return, yet, like good soldiers, they would not move till they had orders from their general. So, though our heavenly Father's house above be ever so desirable (it is bishop Hall's allusion), yet must we stay on earth till our warfare be accomplished, wait for a due discharge, and not anticipate the time of our removal.

I. Joshua dismisses them to the land of their possession, Jos 21:4. Those that were first in the assignment of their lot were last in the enjoyment of it; they got the start of their brethren in title, but their brethren were before them in full possession; so the last shall be first, and the first last, that there may be something of equality.

II. He dismisses them with their pay; for who goes a warfare at his own charge? Return with much riches unto your tents, Jos 21:8. Though all the land they had helped to conquer was to go to the other tribes, yet they should have their share of the plunder, and had so, and this was all the pay that any of the soldiers expected; for the wars of Canaan bore their own charges. "Go," says Joshua, "go home to your tents," that is, "your houses," which he calls tents, because they had been so much used to tents in the wilderness; and indeed the strongest and stateliest houses in this world are to be looked upon but as tents, mean and movable in comparison with our house above. "Go home with much riches, not only cattle, the spoil of the country, but silver and gold, the plunder of the cities, and,"

1. "Let your brethren whom you leave behind have your good word, who have allowed you your share in full, though the land is entirely theirs, and have not offered to make any drawback. Do not say that you are losers by us."

2. "Let your brethren whom you go to, who abode by the stuff, have some share of the spoil: Divide the spoil with your brethren, as that was divided which was taken in the war with Midian, Nu 31:27. Let your brethren that have wanted you all this while be the better for you when you come home."

III. He dismisses them with a very honourable character. Though their service was a due debt, and the performance of a promise, and they had done no more than was their duty to do, yet he highly commends them; not only gives them up their bonds, as it were, now that they had fulfilled the condition, but applauds their good services. Though it was by the favour of God and his power that Israel got possession of this land, and he must have all the glory, yet Joshua thought there was a thankful acknowledgment due to their brethren who assisted them, and whose sword and bow were employed for them. God must be chiefly eyed in our praises, yet

instruments must not be altogether overlooked. He here commends them,

1. For the readiness of their obedience to their commanders, Jos 21:2. When Moses was gone, they remembered and observed the charge he had given them; and all the orders which Joshua, as general of the forces, had issued out, they had carefully obeyed, went, and came, and did, as he appointed, Mt 8:9. It is as much as any thing the soldier's praise to observe the word of command.

2. For the constancy of their affection and adherence to their brethren: You have not left them these many days. How many days he does not say, nor can we gather it with certainty from any other place. Calvisius and others of the best chronologers compute that the conquering and dividing of the land was the work of about six or seven years, and so long these separate tribes attended their camp, and did them the best service they could.

Note, It will be the honour of those that have espoused the cause of God's Israel, and twisted interests with them, to adhere to them, and never to leave them till God has given them rest, and then they shall rest with them. 3. For the faithfulness of their obedience to the divine law. They had not only done their duty to Joshua and Israel, but, which was best of all, they had made conscience of their duty to God: You have kept the charge, or, as the word is, You have kept the keeping, that is, "You have carefully and circumspectly kept the commandment of the Lord your God, not only in this particular instance of continuing in the service of Israel to the end of the war, but, in general, you have kept up religion in your part of the camp, a rare and excellent thing among soldiers, and where it is worthy to be praised."

IV. He dismisses them with good counsel, not to cultivate their ground, fortify their cities, and, now that their hands were inured to war and victory, to invade their neighbours, and so

enlarge their own territories, but to keep up serious godliness among them in the power of it. They were not political but pious instructions that he gave them, Jos 21:5.

1. In general, to take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law. Those that have the commandment have it in vain unless they do the commandment; and it will not be done aright (so apt are we to turn aside, and so industrious are our spiritual enemies to turn us aside) unless we take heed, diligent heed.

2. In particular, to love the Lord our God, as the best of beings, and the best of friends; and as far as this principle rules in the heart, and is the spring of its pulses, there will be a constant care and sincere endeavour to walk in his ways, in all his ways, even those that are narrow and up-hill, in every particular instance, in all manner of conversation to keep his commandments, at all times and in all conditions with purpose of heart to cleave unto him, and to serve him and his honour, and the interest of his kingdom among men, with all our heart and with all our soul. What good counsel was here given to them is given to us all. God give us grace to take it!

V. He dismisses them with a blessing (Jos 21:6), particularly the half tribe of Manasseh, to which Joshua, as an Ephraimite, was somewhat nearer akin than to the other two, and who perhaps were the more loth to depart because they left one half of their own tribe behind them, and therefore, bidding often farewell, and lingering behind, had a second dismission and blessing, Jos 21:7. Joshua not only prayed for them as a friend, but blessed them as a father in the name of the Lord, recommending them, their families, and affairs, to the grace of God. Some by the blessing Joshua gave them understand the presents he made them, in recompence of their services; but Joshua being a prophet, and having given them one part of a prophet's reward in the instructions he gave them (Jos 21:5), no doubt we must understand this of the other, even the

prayers he made for them, as one having authority, and as God's vicegerent.

VI. Being thus dismissed, they returned to the land of their possession in a body (Jos 21:9), ferry-boats being, it is likely, provided for their repassing Jordan. Though masters of families may sometimes have occasion to be absent, long absent, from their families, yet, when their business abroad is finished, they must remember home is their place, from which they ought not to wander as a bird from her nest.

6 So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away: and they went unto their tents.

7 Now to the *one* half of the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given *possession* in Bashan: but unto the *other* half thereof gave Joshua among their brethren on this side Jordan westward. And when Joshua sent them away also unto their tents, then he blessed them,

8 and he spake unto them, saying, Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.

9 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan, to go unto the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

10 And when they came unto the borders of Jordan, that *are* in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to.

11 And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan, in the borders of Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel.

12 And when the children of Israel heard *of it,* the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up to war against them.

13 And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest,

Here is, I The pious care of the separated tribes to keep their hold of Canaan's religion, even when they were leaving Canaan's land, that they might not be as the sons of the stranger, utterly separated from God's people, Isa 56:3. In order to this, they built a great altar on the borders of Jordan, to be a witness for them that they were Israelites, and as such partakers of the altar of the Lord, 1Co 10:18. When they came to Jordan (Jos 21:10) they did not consult how to preserve the remembrance of their own exploits in the wars of Canaan, and the services they had done their brethren, by erecting a monument to the immortal honour of the two tribes and a half; but their relation to the church of God, together with their interest in the communion of saints, is that which they are solicitous to preserve and perpetuate the proofs and evidences of; and therefore without delay, when the thing was first proposed by some among them, who, though glad to think that they were going towards home, were sorry to think that they were going from the altar of God, immediately they erected this altar, which served as a bridge to keep up their fellowship with the other tribes in the things of God. Some think they built this altar on the Canaan-side of Jordan, in the lot of Benjamin, that, looking over the river, they might see the figure of the altar at Shiloh, when they could not conveniently go to it; but it is more likely that they built it on their own side of the water, for what had they to do to build on another man's land without his consent? And it is said to be over-against the land of Canaan; nor there any cause of suspecting it designed for sacrifice if they had not built it among themselves.

This altar was very innocently and honestly designed, but it would have been well if, since it had in it an appearance of evil, and might be an occasion of offence to their brethren, they had consulted the oracle of God about it before they did it, or at least acquainted their brethren with their purpose, and given them the same explication of their altar before, to

prevent their jealousy, which they did afterwards, to remove it. Their zeal was commendable, but it ought to have been guided with discretion. There was no need to hasten the building of an altar for the purpose for which they intended this, but they might have taken time to consider and take advice; yet, when their sincerity was made to appear, we do not find that they were blamed for their rashness. God does, and men should, overlook the weakness of an honest zeal.

II The holy jealousy of the other tribes for the honour of God and his altar at Shiloh. Notice was immediately brought to the princes of Israel of the setting up of this altar, Jos 21:11. And they, knowing how strict and severe that law was which required them to offer all their sacrifices in the place which God should choose, and not elsewhere (De 12:5-7), were soon apprehensive that the setting up of another altar was an affront to the choice which God had lately made of a place to put his name in, and had a direct tendency to the worship of some other God. Now,

1. Their suspicion was very excusable, for it must be confessed the thing, prima facie--at first sight, looked ill, and seemed to imply a design to set up and maintain a competitor with the altar at Shiloh. It was no strained innuendo from the building of an altar to infer an intention to offer sacrifice upon it, and that might introduce idolatry and end in a total apostasy from the faith and worship of the God of Israel. So great a matter might this fire kindle. God is jealous for his own institutions, and therefore we should be so too, and afraid of every thing that looks like, or leads to, idolatry.

2. Their zeal, upon this suspicion, was very commendable, Jos 21:12. When they apprehended that these tribes, which by the river Jordan were separated from them, were separating themselves from God, they took it as the greatest injury that could be done to themselves, and showed a readiness, if it were necessary, to put their lives in their hands in defence of the altar of God, and to take up arms for the chastising and reducing of these rebels, and to prevent the spreading of the

infection, if no gentler methods would serve, by cutting off from their body the gangrened member. They all gathered together, and Shiloh was the place of their rendezvous, because it was in defence of the divine charter lately granted to that place that they now appeared; their resolution was as became a kingdom of priests, who, being devoted to God and his service, did not acknowledge their brethren nor know their own children, De 33:9.

They would immediately go up to war against them if it appeared they had revolted from God, and were in rebellion against him. Though they were bone of their bone, had been companions with them in tribulation in the wilderness, and serviceable to them in the wars of Canaan, yet, if they turn to serve other gods, they will treat them as enemies, not as sons of Israel, but as children of whoredoms, for so God had appointed, De 13:12-18, &c. They had but lately sheathed their swords, and retired from the perils and fatigues of war to the rest God had given them, and yet they are willing to begin a new war rather than be any way wanting in their duty to restrain, repress, and revenge, idolatry, and every step towards it--a brave resolution, and which shows them hearty for their religion, and, we hope, careful and diligent in the practice of it themselves. Corruptions in religion are best dealt with at first, before they get head and plead prescription.

3. Their prudence in the prosecution of this zealous resolution is no less commendable. God had appointed them, in cases of this nature, to enquire and make search (De 13:14), that they might not wrong their brethren under pretence of righting their religion; accordingly they resolve here not to send forth their armies, to wage war, till they had first sent their ambassadors to enquire into the merits of the cause, and these men of the first rank, one out of each tribe, and Phinehas at the head of them to be their spokesman, Jos 21:13,14. Thus was their zeal for God tempered, guided, and governed by the meekness of wisdom. He that knows all things, and hates all evil things, would not punish the worst of criminals but he would first go

down and see, Ge 18:21. Many an unhappy strife would be prevented, or soon healed by an impartial and favourable enquiry into that which is the matter of the offence. The rectifying of mistakes and misunderstandings, and the setting of misconstrued words and actions in a true light, would be the most effectual way to accommodate both private and public quarrels, and bring them to a happy period.

4. The ambassadors' management of this matter came fully up to the sense and spirit of the congregation concerning it, and bespeaks much both of zeal and prudence.

(1.) The charge they draw up against their brethren is indeed very high, and admits no other excuse than that it was in their zeal for the honour of God, and was now intended to justify the resentments of the congregation at Shiloh and to awaken the supposed delinquents to clear themselves, otherwise they might have suspended their judgment, or mollified it at least, and not have taken it for granted, as they do here (Jos 21:16), that the building of this altar was a trespass against the God of Israel, and a trespass no less heinous than the revolt of soldiers from their captain (you turn from following the Lord), and the rebellion of subjects against their sovereign: that you might rebel this day against the Lord. Hard words. It is well they were not able to make good their charge. Let not innocency think it strange to be thus misrepresented and accused. They laid to my charge things that I knew not.

(2.) The aggravation of the crime charged upon their brethren is somewhat far-fetched: Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us? Jos 21:17. Probably that is mentioned because Phinehas, the first commissioner in this treaty, had signalized himself in that matter (Nu 25:7), and because we may suppose they were not about the very place in which that iniquity was committed on the other side Jordan. It is good to recollect and improve those instances of the wrath of God, revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, which have fallen out in our own time, and which we ourselves have

been eye-witnesses of. He reminds them of the iniquity of Peor,

[1.] As a very great sin, and very provoking to God. The building of this altar seemed but a small matter, but it might lead to an iniquity as bad as that of Peor, and therefore must be crushed in its first rise. Note, The remembrance of great sins committed formerly should engage us to stand upon our guard against the least occasions and beginnings of sin; for the way of sin is down-hill.

[2.] As a sin that the whole congregation had smarted for: "There was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, of which, in one day, there died no fewer than 24,000; was not that enough for ever to warn you against idolatry? What! will you bring upon yourselves another plague? Are you so mad upon an idolatrous altar that you will run yourselves thus upon the sword's point of God's judgments? Does not our camp still feel from that sin and the punishment of it? We are not cleansed from it unto this day; there are remaining sparks," First, "Of the infection of that sin; some among us so inclined to idolatry that if you set up another altar they will soon take occasion from that, whether you intend it or no, to worship another God." Secondly, "Of the wrath of God against us for that sin. We have reason to fear that, if we provoke God by another sin to visit, he will remember against us the iniquity of Peor, as he threatened to do that of the golden calf, Ex 32:34. And dare you wake the sleeping lion of divine vengeance?" Note, It is a foolish and dangerous thing for people to think their former sins little, too little for them, as those do who add sin to sin, and so treasure up wrath against the day of wrath. Let therefore the time past suffice, 1Pe 4:3.

(3.) The reason they give for their concerning themselves so warmly in this matter is very sufficient. They were obliged to it, in their own necessary defence, by the law of self-preservation: "For, if you revolt from God to-day, who knows but to-morrow his judgments may break in upon the whole

congregation (Jos 21:18), as in the case of Achan? Jos 21:20. He sinned, and we all smarted for it, by which we should receive instruction, and from what God did then infer what he may do, and fear what he will do, if we do not witness against your sin, who are so many, and punish it."

Note, The conservators of the public peace are obliged, in justice to the common safety, to use their power for the restraining and suppressing of vice and profaneness, lest, if it be connived at, the sin thereby become national, and bring God's judgments upon the community. Nay, we are all concerned to reprove our neighbour when he does amiss, lest we bear sin for him, Le 19:17.

(4.) The offer they make is very fair and kind (Jos 21:19), that if they thought the land of their possession unclean, for want of an altar, and therefore could not be easy without one, rather than they should set up another in competition with that at Shiloh they should be welcome to come back to the land where the Lord's tabernacle was, and settle there, and they would very willingly straiten themselves to make room for them. By this they showed a sincere and truly pious zeal against schism, that rather than their brethren should have any occasion to set up a separate altar, though their pretence for it, as here supposed, was very weak and grounded upon a great mistake, yet they were willing to part with a considerable share of the land which God himself had by the lot assigned them, to comprehend them and take them in among them. This was the spirit of Israelites indeed.

14 and with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout
all the tribes of Israel; and each one *was* a head of the house of their
fathers among the thousands of Israel.
15 And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of
Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and
they spake with them, saying,
16 Thus saith the whole congregation of the Lord, What trespass *is*
this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away

this day from following the Lord, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the Lord?
17 *Is* the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord?
18 but that ye must turn away this day from following the Lord? And it will be, *seeing* ye rebel today against the Lord, that tomorrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel.
19 Notwithstanding, if the land of your possession *be* unclean, *then* pass ye over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against the Lord, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar besides the altar of the Lord our God.
20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel?And that man perished not alone in his iniquity.
21 Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,
22 The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if *it be* in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, (save us not this day,)
23 that we have built us an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the Lord himself require *it;*
24 and if we have not *rather* done it for fear of *this* thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel?
25 For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord.
26 Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice:
27 but *that* it *may be* a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt offerings, and with our sacrifices, and

with our peace offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the Lord.

We may suppose there was a general convention called of the princes and great men of the separate tribes, to give audience to these ambassadors; or perhaps the army, as it came home, was still encamped in a body, and not yet dispersed; however it was, there were enough to represent the two tribes and a half, and to give their sense. Their reply to the warm remonstrance of the ten tribes is very fair and ingenuous.

They do not retort their charge, upbraid them with the injustice and unkindness of their threatenings, nor reproach them for their rash and hasty censures, but give them a soft answer which turns away wrath, avoiding all those grievous words which stir up anger; they demur not to their jurisdiction, nor plead that they were not account able to them for what they had done, nor bid them mind their own business, but, by a free and open declaration of their sincere intention in what they did, free themselves from the imputation they were under, and set themselves right in the opinion of their brethren, to do which they only needed to state the case and put the matter in a true light.

I. They solemnly protest against any design to use this altar for sacrifice or offering, and therefore were far from setting it up in competition with the altar at Shiloh, or from entertaining the least thought of deserting that. They had indeed set up that which had the shape and fashion of an altar, but they had not dedicated it to a religious use, had had no solemnity of its consecration, and therefore ought not to be charged with a design to put it to any such use. To gain credit to this protestation here is,

1. A solemn appeal to God concerning it, with which they begin their defence, intending thereby to give glory to God first, and then to give satisfaction to their brethren, Jos 21:22.

(1.) A profound awe and reverence of God are expressed in the form of their appeal: The Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knows. Or, as it might be read somewhat closer to the original, The God of gods, Jehovah, the God of gods, Jehovah, he knows, which bespeaks his self-existence and self-sufficiency; he is Jehovah, and has sovereignty and supremacy over all beings and powers whatsoever, even those that are called gods, or that are worshipped. This brief confession of their faith would help to obviate and remove their brethren's suspicion of them, as if they intended to desert the God of Israel, and worship other gods: how could those entertain such a thought who believed him to be God over all? Let us learn hence always to speak of God with reverence and seriousness, and to mention his name with a solemn pause. Those who make their appeals to heaven with a slight, careless, "God knows," have reason to fear lest they take his name in vain, for it is very unlike this appeal.

(2.) It is a great confidence of their own integrity which they express in the matter of their appeal. They refer the controversy to the God of gods, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, such as the guilty have reason to dread and the upright to rejoice in. "If it be in rebellion or transgression that we have built this altar, to confront the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, to make a party, or to set up any new gods or worships,"

[1.] "He knows it (Jos 21:22), for he is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of the heart, and particularly with all inclinations to idolatry (Ps 44:20,21); this is in a particular manner before him. We believe he knows it, and we cannot by any arts conceal it from him."

[2.] "Let him require it, as we know he will, for he is a jealous God." Nothing but a clear conscience would have thus imprecated divine justice to avenge the rebellion if there had been any. Note, First, In every thing we do in religion, it highly concerns us to approve ourselves to God in our integrity

therein, remembering that he knows the heart. Secondly, When we fall under the censures of men, it is very comfortable to be able with a humble confidence to appeal to God concerning our sincerity. See 1Co 4:3,4.

2. A sober apology presented to their brethren: Israel, he shall know. Though the record on high, and the witness in our bosoms, are principally to be made sure for us, yet there is a satisfaction besides which we owe to our brethren who doubt concerning our integrity, and which we should be ready to give with meekness and fear. If our sincerity be known to God, we should study likewise to let others know it by its fruits, especially those who, though they mistake us, yet show a zeal for the glory of God, as the ten tribes here did.

3. A serious abjuration or renunciation of the design which they were suspected to be guilty of. With this they conclude their defence (Jos 21:29): "God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, as we own we should if we had set up this altar for burnt-offerings; no, we abhor the thought of it. We have as great a value and veneration for the altar of the Lord at Shiloh as any of the tribes of Israel have, and are as firmly resolved to adhere to it and constantly to attend it; we have the same concern that you have for the purity of God's worship and the unity of his church; far be it, far be it from us, to think of turning away from following God."

II. They fully explain their true intent and meaning in building this altar; and we have all the reason in the world to believe that it is a true representation of their design, and not advanced now to palliate it afterwards, as we have reason to think that these same persons meant very honestly when they petitioned to have their lot on that side Jordan, though then also is was their unhappiness to be misunderstood even by Moses himself. In their vindication, they make it out that the building of this altar was so far from being a step towards a separation from their brethren, and from the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, that, on the contrary, it was really designed for a pledge and

preservative of their communion with their brethren and with the altar of God, and a token of their resolution to do the service of the Lord before him (Jos 21:27), and to continue to do so.

1. They gave an account of the fears they had lest, in process of time, their posterity, being seated at such a distance from the tabernacle, should be looked upon and treated as strangers to the commonwealth of Israel (Jos 21:24); it was for fear of this thing, and the word signifies a great perplexity and solicitude of mind which they were in, until they eased themselves by this expedient. As they were returning home (and we may suppose it was not thought of before, else they would have made Joshua acquainted with their purpose), some of them in discourse started this matter, and the rest took the hint, and represented to themselves and one another a very melancholy prospect of what might probably happen in after-ages, that their children would be looked upon by the other tribes as having no interest in the altar of God and the sacrifices there offered. Now indeed they were owned as brethren, and were as welcome at the tabernacle as any other of the tribes; but what if their children after them should be disowned? They, by reason of their distance, and the interposition of Jordan, which it was not easy at all times to pass and repass, could not be so numerous and constant in their attendance on the three yearly feasts as the other tribes, to make a continual claim to the privileges of Israelites, and would therefore be looked upon as inconsiderable members of their church, and by degrees would be rejected as not members of it at all: So shall your children (who in their pride will be apt to monopolize the privileges of the altar) make our children (who perhaps will not be so careful as they ought to be to keep hold of those privileges) cease from fearing the Lord. Note,

(1.) Those that are cut off from public ordinances are likely to lose all religion, and will by degrees cease from fearing the Lord. Though the form and profession of godliness are kept

up by many without the life and power of it, yet the life and power of it will not long be kept up without the form and profession. You take away grace if you take away the means of grace.

(2.) Those who have themselves found the comfort and benefit of God's ordinances cannot but desire to preserve and perpetuate the entail of them upon their seed, and use all possible precautions that their children after them may not be made to cease from following the Lord, or be looked upon as having no part in him.

2 The project they had to prevent this, Jos 21:26-28. "Therefore, to secure an interest in the altar of God to those who shall come after us, and to prove their title to it, we said, Let us build an altar, to be a witness between us and you," that, having this copy of the altar in their custody, it might be produced as an evidence of their right to the privilege of the original. Every one that saw this altar, and observed that it was never used for sacrifice and offering, would enquire what was the meaning of it, and this answer would be given to that enquiry, that it was built by those separate tribes, in token of their communion with their brethren and their joint-interest with them in the altar of the Lord. Christ is the great altar that sanctifies every gift; the best evidence of our interest in him will be the pattern of his Spirit in our hearts, and our conformity to him. If we can produce this it will be a testimony for us that we have a part in the Lord, and an earnest of our perseverance in following him.

28 Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should *so* say to us or
to our generations in time to come, that we may say *again,* Behold
the pattern of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made, not
for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it *is* a witness between us
and you.

29 God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day
from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for

meat offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the Lord our God that *is* before his tabernacle.

30 And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which *were* with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them.

31 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the Lord *is* among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord.

We have here the good issue of this controversy, which, if there had not been on both sides a disposition to peace, as there was on both sides a zeal for God, might have been of ill consequence; for quarrels about religion, for want of wisdom and love, often prove the most fierce and most difficult to be accommodated. But these contending parties, when the matter was fairly stated and argued, were so happy as to understand one another very well, and so the difference was presently compromised.

I The ambassadors were exceedingly pleased when the separate tribes had given in a protestation of the innocency of their intentions in building this altar.

1 The ambassadors did not call in question their sincerity in that protestation, did not say, "You tell us you design it not for sacrifice and offering, but who can believe you? What security will you give us that it shall never be so used?" No. Charity believes all things, hopes all things, believes and hopes the best, and is very loth to give the lie to any.

2. They did not upbraid them with the rashness and unadvisedness of this action, did not tell them, "If you would do such a thing, and with this good intention, yet you might have had so much respect for Joshua and Eleazar as to have advised with them, or at least have made them acquainted with it, and so have saved the trouble and expense of this embassy."

But a little want of consideration and good manners should be excused and overlooked in those who, we have reason to think, mean honestly.

3. Much less did they go about to fish for evidence to make out their charge, because they had once exhibited it, but were glad to have their mistake rectified, and were not at all ashamed to own it. Proud and peevish spirits, when they have passed an unjust censure upon their brethren, though ever so much convincing evidence be brought of the injustice of it, will stand to it, and can by no means be persuaded to retract it. These ambassadors were not so prejudiced; their brethren's vindication pleased them, Jos 21:30.

They looked upon their innocency as a token of God's presence (Jos 21:31), especially when they found that what was done was so far from being an indication of their growing cool to the altar of God that, one the contrary, it was a fruit of their zealous affection to it: You have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord, that is, "You have not, as we feared, delivered them into the hand of the Lord, or exposed them to his judgments by the trespass we were jealous of."

II The congregation was abundantly satisfied when their ambassadors reported to them their brethren's apology for what they had done. It should seem they staid together, at least by their representatives, until they heard the issue (Jos 21:32); and when they understood the truth of the matter it pleased them (Jos 21:33), and they blessed God.

Note, Our brethren's constancy in religion, their zeal for the power of godliness, and their keeping the unity of the Spirit in faith and love, notwithstanding the jealousies conceived of them as breaking the unity of the church, are things which we should be very glad to be satisfied of, and should make the matter both of our rejoicing and of our thanksgiving; let God have the glory of it, and let us take the comfort of it. Being thus satisfied, they laid down their arms immediately, and

were so far from any thoughts of prosecuting the war they had been meditating against their brethren that we may suppose them wishing for the next feast, when they should meet them at Shiloh.

III. The separate tribes were gratified, and, since they had a mind to preserve among them this pattern of the altar of God, though there was not likely to be that occasion for it which they fancied, yet Joshua and the princes let them have their humour, and did not give orders for the demolishing of it, though there was as much reason to fear that it might in process of time be an occasion of idolatry as there was to hope that ever it might be a preservation from idolatry.

Thus did the strong bear the infirmities of the weak. Only care was taken that they having explained the meaning of their altar, that it was intended for no more than a testimony of their communion with the altar at Shiloh, this explanation should be recorded, which was done according to the usage of those times by giving a name to it signifying so much (Jos 21:34); they called it Ed, a witness to that, and no more, a witness of the relation they stood in to God and Israel, and of their concurrence with the rest of the tribes in the same common faith, that Jehovah he is God, he and no other. It was a witness to posterity of their care to transmit their religion pure and entire to them, and would be a witness against them if ever they should forsake God and turn from following after him.

32 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again.

33 And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

34 And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar *Ed* [a witness]: for it *shall be* a witness between us that the Lord *is* God.

Joshua-23

Joshua's Charge to the People

1 And it came to pass, a long time after that the Lord had given rest
unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed
old *and* stricken in age.
2 And Joshua called for all Israel, *and* for their elders, and for their
heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto
them, I am old *and* stricken in age:
3 and ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these
nations because of you; for the Lord your God *is* he that hath fought
for you.
4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain,
to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the
nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.
5 And the Lord your God, he shall expel them from before you, and
drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land,
as the Lord your God hath promised unto you.

As to the date of this edict of Joshua,

I. No mention at all is made of the place where this general assembly was held; some think it was at Timnath-serah, Joshua's own city, where he lived, and whence, being old, he could not well remove. But it does not appear that he took so much state upon him; therefore it is more probable this meeting was at Shiloh, where the tabernacle of meeting was, and to which place, perhaps, all the males that could had now come up to worship before the Lord, at one of the three great feasts, which Joshua took the opportunity of, for the delivering of this charge to them.

II. There is only a general mention of the time when this was done. It was long after the Lord had given them rest, but it is not said how long, Jos 23:1. It was, 1. So long as that Israel had time to feel the comforts of their rest and possessions in Canaan, and to enjoy the advantages of that good land. 2. So long as that Joshua had time to observe which ways their

danger lay of being corrupted, namely, by their intimacy with the Canaanites that remained, against which he is therefore careful to arm them.

III. The persons to whom Joshua made this speech: To all Israel, even their elders, &c. So it might be read, Jos 23:2. They could not all come within hearing, but he called for all the elders, that is, the privy-counsellors, which in later times constituted the great Sanhedrim, the heads of the tribes, that is, the noblemen and gentlemen of their respective countries, the judges learned in the laws, that tried criminals and causes, and gave judgment upon them, and, lastly, the officers or sheriffs, who were entrusted with the execution of those judgments. These Joshua called together, and to them he addressed himself,

1. That they might communicate what he said, or at least the sense and substance of it, to those under them in their respective countries, and so this charge might be dispersed through the whole nation. 2. Because, if they would be prevailed upon to serve God and cleave to him, they, by their influence on the common people, would keep them faithful. If great men be good men, they will help to make many good.

IV. Joshua's circumstances when he gave them this charge: He was old and stricken in age (Jos 23:1), probably it was in the last year of his life, and he lived to be 110 years old, Jos 24:29. And he himself takes notice of it, in the first words of his discourse, Jos 23:2. When he began to be old, some years ago, God reminded him of it (Jos 13:1): Thou art old. But now he did himself feel so much of the decays of age that he needed not to be told of it, he readily speaks of it himself: I am old and stricken in age. He uses it,

1. As an argument with himself to give them this charge, because being old he could expect to be but a little while with them, to advise and instruct them, and therefore (as Peter speaks, 2Pe 1:13) as long as he is in this tabernacle he will

take all opportunities to put them in remembrance of their duty, knowing by the increasing infirmities of age that he must shortly put off this tabernacle, and desiring that after his decease they might continue as good as they were now. When we see death hastening towards us, this should quicken us to do the work of life with all our might.

2. As an argument with them to give heed to what he said. He was old and experienced, and therefore to be the more regarded, for days should speak; he had grown old in their service, and had spent himself for their good, and therefore was to be the more regarded by them. He was old and dying; they would not have him long to preach to them; therefore let them observe what he said now, and lay it up in store for the time to come.

V. The discourse itself, the scope of which is to engage them if possible, them and their seed after them, to persevere in the true faith and worship of the God of Israel.

1. He puts them in mind of the great things God had done for them, now in his days, and under his administration, for here he goes no further back. And for the proof of this he appeals to their own eyes (Jos 23:3): "You have seen all that the Lord your God has done; not what I have done, or what you have done (we were only instruments in God's hand), but what God himself has done by me and for you."

(1.) Many great and mighty nations (as the rate of nations then went) were driven out from as fine a country as any was at that time upon the face of the earth, to make room for Israel. "You see what he has done to these nations, who were his creatures, the work of his hands, and whom he could have made new creatures and fit for his service; yet see what destruction he has made of them because of you (Jos 23:2), how he has driven them out from before you (Jos 23:9), as if they were of no account with him, though great and strong in comparison with you."

(2.) They were not only driven out (this they might have been, and yet sent to some other country less rich to begin a new plantation there, suppose to that wilderness in which Israel had wandered so long, and so they would only have exchanged seats with them), but they were trodden down before them; though they held out against them with the greatest obstinacy that could be, yet they were subdued before them, which made the possessing of their land so much the more glorious to Israel and so much the more illustrious an instance of the power and goodness of the God of Israel (Jos 23:3): "The Lord your God has not only led you, and fed you, and kept you, but he has fought for you as a man of war," by which title he was known among them when he first brought them out of Egypt, Ex 15:3. So clear and cheap were all their victories, during the course of this long war, that no man had been able to stand before them (Jos 23:9), that is, to make head against them, so as to put them in fear, create them any difficulty, or give any check to the progress of their victorious arms. In every battle they carried the day, and in every siege they carried the city; their loss before Ai was upon a particular occasion, was inconsiderable, and only served to show them on what terms they stood with God; but, otherwise, never was army crowned with such a constant uninterrupted series of successes as the armies of Israel were in the wars of Canaan.

(3.) They had not only conquered the Canaanites, but were put in full possession of their land (Jos 23:4): "I have divided to you by lot these nations, both those which are cut off and those which remain, not only that you may spoil and plunder them, and live at discretion in their country for a time, but to be a sure and lasting inheritance for your tribes. You have it not only under your feet, but in your hands."

2. He assures them of God's readiness to carry on and complete this glorious work in due time. It is true some of the Canaanites did yet remain, and in some places were strong and daring, but this should be no disappointment to their

expectations; when Israel was so multiplied as to be able to replenish this land God would expel the Canaanites to the last man, provided Israel would pursue their advantages and carry on the war against them with vigour (Jos 23:5): "The Lord your God will drive them from out of your sight, so that there shall not be a Canaanite to be seen in the land; and even that part of the country which is yet in their hands you shall possess." If it were objected that the men of war of the several tribes being dispersed to their respective countries, and the army disbanded, it would be difficult to get them together when there was occasion to renew the war upon the remainder of the Canaanites, in answer to this he tells them what little need they had to be in care about the numbers of their forces (Jos 23:10): One man of you shall chase a thousand, as Jonathan did, 1Sa 14:13. "Each tribe may venture for itself, and for the recovery of its own lot, without fearing disadvantage by the disproportion of numbers; for the Lord your God, whose all power is, both to inspirit and to dispirit, and who has all the creatures at his beck, he it is that fighteth for you; and how many do you reckon him for?"

3. He hereupon most earnestly charges them to adhere to their duty, to go on and persevere in the good ways of the Lord wherein they had so well set out. He exhorts them,

(1.) To be very courageous (Jos 23:6): "God fighteth for you against your enemies, do you therefore behave yourselves valiantly for him. Keep and do with a firm resolution all that is written in the book of the law." He presses upon them no more than what they were already bound to. "Keep with care, do with diligence, and eye what is written with sincerity."

(2.) To be very cautious: "Take heed of missing it, either on the right hand or on the left, for there are errors and extremes on both hands. Take heed of running either into a profane neglect of any of God's institutions or into a superstitious addition of any of your own inventions." They must especially

take heed of all approaches towards idolatry, the sin to which they were first inclined and would be most tempted, Jos 23:7.

[1.] They must not acquaint themselves with idolaters, nor come among them to visit them or be present at any of their feasts or entertainments, for they could not contract any intimacy nor keep up any conversation with them, without danger of infection.

[2.] They must not show the least respect to any idol, nor make mention of the name of their gods, but endeavour to bury the remembrance of them in perpetual oblivion, that the worship of them may never be revived. "Let the very name of them be forgotten. Look upon idols as filthy detestable things, not to be named without the utmost loathing and detestation." The Jews would not suffer their children to name swine's flesh, because it was forbidden, lest the name of it should occasion their desiring it; but, if they had occasion to speak of it, they must call it that strange thing. It is a pity that among Christians the names of the heathen gods are so commonly used, and made so familiar as they are, especially in plays and poems: let those names which have been set up in rivalship with God be for ever loathed and lost.

[3.] They must not countenance others in showing respect to them. They must not only not swear by them themselves, but they must not cause others to swear by them, which supposes that they must not make any covenants with idolaters, because they, in the confirming of their covenants, would swear by their idols; never let Israelites admit such an oath.

[4.] They must take heed of these occasions of idolatry, lest by degrees they should arrive at the highest step of it, which was serving false gods, and bowing down to them, against the letter of the second commandment.

(3.) To be very constant (Jos 23:8): Cleave unto the Lord your God, that is, "delight in him, depend upon him, devote

yourselves to his glory, and continue to do so to the end, as you have done unto this day, ever since you came to Canaan;" for, being willing to make the best of them, he looks not so far back as the iniquity of Peor. There might be many things amiss among them, but they had not forsaken the Lord their God, and it is in order to insinuate his exhortation to perseverance with the more pleasing power that he praises them. "Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you while you are with him." Those that command should commend; the way to make people better is to make the best of them. "You have cleaved to the Lord unto this day, therefore go on to do so, else you lose the praise and recompence of what you have wrought. Your righteousness will not be mentioned unto you if you turn from it."

6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written
in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to*
the right hand or *to* the left;
7 that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among
you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to
swear *by them*, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:
8 but cleave unto the Lord your God, as ye have done unto this day.
9 For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and
strong: but *as for* you, no man hath been able to stand before you
unto this day.
10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he
it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.
11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord
your God.
12 Else, if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of
these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall make
marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:
13 know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive
out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares
and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your
eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your
God hath given you.

Here, I. Joshua directs them what to do, that they might persevere in religion, Jos 23:11. Would we cleave to the Lord, and not forsake him,

1. We must always stand upon our guard, for many a precious soul is lost and ruined through carelessness: "Take heed therefore, take good heed to yourselves, to your souls (so the word is), that the inward man be kept clean from the pollutions of sin, and closely employed in the service of God." God has given us precious souls with this charge, "Take good heed to them, keep them with all diligence, above all keepings."

2. What we do in religion we must do from a principle of love, not by constraint or from a slavish fear of God, but of choice and with delight. "Lord the Lord your God, and you will not leave him."

II. He urges God's fidelity to them as an argument why they should be faithful to him (Jos 23:14): "I am going the way of all the earth, I am old and dying." To die is to go a journey, a journey to our long home; it is the way of all the earth, the way that all mankind must go, sooner or later. Joshua himself, though so great and good a man, and one that could so ill be spared, cannot be exempted from this common lot. He takes notice of it here that they might look upon these as his dying words, and regard them accordingly.

Or thus: "I am dying, and leaving you. Me you have not always; but if you cleave to the Lord he will never leave you." Or thus, "Now that I am near my end it is proper to look back upon the years that are past; and, in the review, I find, and you yourselves know it in all your hearts and in all your souls, by a full conviction on the clearest evidence, and the thing has made an impression upon you"--(that knowledge does us good which is seated, not in the head only, but in the heart and soul, and with which we are duly affected)--"you know that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spoke concerning you" (and he spoke a great many); see Jos 21:45.

God had promised them victory, rest, plenty, his tabernacle among them, &c., and not one thing had failed of all he had promised. "Now," said he, "has God been thus true to you? Be not you false to him." It is the apostle's argument for perseverance (Heb 10:23), He is faithful that has promised.

III. He gives them fair warning what would be the fatal consequences of apostasy (Jos 23:12,13,15,16): "If you go back, know for a certainty it will be your ruin." Observe,

1. How he describes the apostasy which he warns them against. The steps of it would be (Jos 23:12) growing intimate with idolaters, who would craftily wheedle them, and insinuate themselves into their acquaintance, now that they had become lords of the country, to serve their own ends. The next step would be intermarrying with them, drawn to it by their artifices, who would be glad to bestow their children upon these wealthy Israelites. And the consequence of that would be (Jos 23:16) serving other gods (which were pretended to be the ancient deities of the country) and bowing down to them. Thus the way of sin is down-hill, and those who have fellowship with sinners cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. This he represents,

(1.) As a base and shameful desertion; "it is going back from what you have so well begun," Jos 23:12. (2.) As a most perfidious breach of promise (Jos 23:16): "It is a transgression of the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and which you yourselves set your hand to." Other sins were transgressions of the law God commanded them, but this was a transgression of the covenant he commanded them, and amounted to a breach of the relation between God and them and a forfeiture of all the benefits of the covenant.

2. How he describes the destruction which he warns them of. He tells them,

(1.) That these remainders of the Canaanites, if they should harbour them, and indulge them, and join in affinity with them, would be snares and traps to them, both to draw them to sin (not only to idolatry, but to all immoralities, which would be the ruin, not only of their virtue, but of their wisdom and sense, their spirit and honour), and also to draw them into foolish bargains, unprofitable projects, and all manner of inconveniences; and having thus by underhand practices decoyed them into one mischief or other, so as to gain advantages against them, they would then act more openly, and be scourges in their sides and thorns in their eyes, would perhaps kill or drive away their cattle, burn or steal their corn, alarm or plunder their houses, and would be all ways possible be vexatious to them; for, whatever pretences of friendship they might make, a Canaanite, unless proselyted to the faith and worship of the true God, would in every age hate the very name and sight of an Israelite. See how the punishment would be made to answer the sin, nay, how the sin itself would be the punishment.

(2.) That the anger of the Lord would be kindled against them. Their making leagues with the Canaanites would not only give those idolaters the opportunity of doing them a mischief, and be the fostering of snakes in their bosoms, but it would likewise provoke God to become their enemy, and would kindle the fire of his displeasure against them.

(3.) That all the threatenings of the word would be fulfilled, as the promise had been, for the God of eternal truth is faithful to both (Jos 23:15): "As all good things have come upon you according to the promise, so long as you have kept close to God, so all evil things will come upon you according to the threatening, if you forsake him." Moses had set before them good and evil; they had experienced the good, and were now in the enjoyment of it, and the evil would as certainly come if they were disobedient. As God's promises are not a fool's paradise, so his threatenings are not bugbears.

(4.) That it would end in the utter ruin of their church and nation, as Moses had foretold. This is three times mentioned here. Your enemies will vex you until you perish from off this good land, Jos 23:13. Again, "God will plague you until he have destroyed you from off this good land, Jos 23:15. Heaven and earth will concur to root you out, so that (Jos 23:16) you shall perish from off the good land." It will aggravate their perdition that the land from which they shall perish is a good land, and a land which God himself had given them, and which therefore he would have secured to them if they by their wickedness had not thrown themselves out of it.

Thus the goodness of the heavenly Canaan, and the free and sure grant God has made of it, will aggravate the misery of those that shall for ever be shut out and perish from it. Nothing will make them see how wretched they are so much as to see how happy they might have been. Joshua thus sets before them the fatal consequences of their apostasy, that, knowing the terror of the Lord, they might be persuaded with purpose of heart to cleave to him.

14 And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof.

15 Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.

16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

Joshua-24

Joshua's Farewell Address

1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

2 And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.

3 And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac.

4 And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt.

5 I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out.

6 And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea.

7 And when they cried unto the Lord, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season.

Joshua thought he had taken his last farewell of Israel in the solemn charge he gave them in the foregoing chapter, when he said, I go the way of all the earth; but God graciously continuing his life longer than expected, and renewing his strength, he was desirous to improve it for the good of Israel. He did not say, "I have taken my leave of them once, and let that serve;" but, having yet a longer space given him, he summons them together again, that he might try what more he could do to engage them for God.

Note, We must never think our work for God done till our life is done; and, if he lengthen out our days beyond what we

thought, we must conclude it is because he has some further service for us to do.

The assembly is the same with that in the foregoing chapter, the elders, heads, judges, and officers of Israel, Jos 24:1. But it is here made somewhat more solemn than it was there.

I The place appointed for their meeting is Shechem, not only because that lay nearer to Joshua than Shiloh, and therefore more convenient now that he was infirm and unfit for travelling, but because it was the place where Abraham, the first trustee of God's covenant with this people, settled at his coming to Canaan, and where God appeared to him (Ge 12:6,7), and near which stood mounts Gerizim and Ebal, where the people had renewed their covenant with God at their first coming into Canaan, Jos 8:30. Of the promises God had made to their fathers, and of the promises they themselves had made to God, this place might serve to put them in mind.

II. They presented themselves not only before Joshua, but before God, in this assembly, that is, they came together in a solemn religious manner, as into the special presence of God, and with an eye to his speaking to them by Joshua; and it is probable the service began with prayer. It is the conjecture of interpreters that upon this great occasion Joshua ordered the ark of God to be brought by the priests to Shechem, which, they say, was about ten miles from Shiloh, and to be set down in the place of their meeting, which is therefore called (Jos 24:26) the sanctuary of the Lord, the presence of the ark making it so at that time; and this was done to grace the solemnity, and to strike an awe upon the people that attended. We have not now any such sensible tokens of the divine presence, but are to believe that where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name he is as really in the midst of them as God was where the ark was, and they are indeed presenting themselves before him.

III. Joshua spoke to them in God's name, and as from him, in the language of a prophet (Jos 24:2): "Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah, the great God, and the God of Israel, your God in covenant, whom therefore you are bound to hear and give heed to." Note, The word of God is to be received by us as his, whoever is the messenger that brings it, whose greatness cannot add to it, nor his meanness diminish from it. His sermon consists of doctrine and application.

1 The doctrinal part is a history of the great things God had done for his people, and for their fathers before them. God by Joshua recounts the marvels of old: "I did so and so." They must know and consider, not only that such and such things were done, but that God did them. It is a series of wonders that is here recorded, and perhaps many more were mentioned by Joshua, which for brevity's sake are here omitted. See what God had wrought.

(1.) He brought Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, Jos 24:2,3. He and his ancestors had served other gods there, for it was the country in which, though celebrated for learning, idolatry, as some think, had its rise; there the world by wisdom knew not God. Abraham, who afterwards was the friend of God and the great favourite of heaven, was bred up in idolatry, and lived long in it, till God by his grace snatched him as a brand out of that burning. Let them remember that rock out of which they were hewn, and not relapse into that sin from which their fathers by a miracle of free grace were delivered. "I took him," says God, "else he had never come out of that sinful state." Hence Abraham's justification is made by the apostle an instance of God's justifying the ungodly, Ro 4:5.

(2.) He brought him to Canaan, and built up his family, led him through the land to Shechem, where they now were, multiplied his seed by Ishmael, who begat twelve princes, but at last gave him Isaac the promised son, and in him multiplied his seed. When Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, God provided an inheritance for Esau elsewhere in Mount Seir, that

the land of Canaan might be reserved entire for the seed of Jacob, and the posterity of Esau might not pretend to a share in it.

(3.) He delivered the seed of Jacob out of Egypt with a high hand (Jos 24:5,6), and rescued them out of the hands of Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea, Jos 24:6,7. The same waters were the Israelites' guard and the Egyptians' grave, and this in answer to prayer; for, though we find in the story that they in that distress murmured against God (Ex 14:11,12), notice is here taken of their crying to God; he graciously accepted those that prayed to him, and overlooked the folly of those that quarrelled with him.

(4.) He protected them in the wilderness, where they are here said, not to wander, but to dwell for a long season, Jos 24:7. So wisely were all their motions directed, and so safely were they kept, that even there they had as certain a dwelling-place as if they had been in a walled city.

(5.) He gave them the land of the Amorites, on the other side Jordan (Jos 24:8), and there defeated the plot of Balak and Balaam against them, so that Balaam could not curse them as he desired, and therefore Balak durst not fight them as he designed, and as, because he designed it, he is here said to have done it. The turning of Balaam's tongue to bless Israel, when he intended to curse them, is often mentioned as an instance of the divine power put forth in Israel's favour as remarkable as any, because in it God proved (and does still, more than we are aware of) his dominion over the powers of darkness, and over the spirits of men.

(6.) He brought them safely and triumphantly into Canaan, delivered the Canaanites into their hand (Jos 24:11), sent hornets before them, when they were actually engaged in battle with the enemy, which with their stings tormented them and with their noise terrified them, so that they became a very easy prey to Israel. These dreadful swarms first appeared in

their war with Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites, and afterwards in their other battles, Jos 24:12. God had promised to do this for them, Ex 23:27,28. And here Joshua takes notice of the fulfilling of that promise. See Ex 23:27,28,De 7:20. These hornets, it should seem, annoyed the enemy more than the artillery of Israel, and therefore he adds, not with thy sword nor bow. It was purely the Lord's doing. Lastly, They were now in the peaceable possession of a good land, and lived comfortably upon the fruit of other people's labours, Jos 24:13.

2 The application of this history of God's mercies to them is by way of exhortation to fear and serve God, in gratitude for his favour, and that it might be continued to them, Jos 24:14. Now therefore, in consideration of all this,

(1.) "Fear the Lord, the Lord and his goodness, Ho 3:5. Reverence a God of such infinite power, fear to offend him and to forfeit his goodness, keep up an awe of his majesty, a deference to his authority, a dread of his displeasure, and a continual regard to his all-seeing eye upon you."

(2.) "Let your practice be consonant to this principle, and serve him both by the outward acts of religious worship and every instance of obedience in your whole conversation, and this in sincerity and truth, with a single eye and an upright heart, and inward impressions answerable to outward expressions." This is the truth in the inward part, which God requires, Ps 51:6. For what good will it do us to dissemble with a God that searches the heart? (3.) Put away the strange gods, both Chaldean and Egyptian idols, for those they were most in danger of revolting to.

It should seem by this charge, which is repeated (Jos 24:23), that there were some among them that privately kept in their closets the images or pictures of these dunghill-deities, which came to their hands from their ancestors, as heir-looms of their families, though, it may be, they did not worship them; these

Joshua earnestly urges them to throw away: "Deface them, destroy them, lest you be tempted to serve them." Jacob pressed his household to do this, and at this very place; for, when they gave him up the little images they had, he buried them under the oak which was by Shechem, Ge 35:2,4. Perhaps the oak mentioned here (Jos 24:26) was the same oak, or another in the same place, which might be well called the oak of reformation, as there were idolatrous oaks.

8 And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on
the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them
into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed
them from before you.
9 Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred
against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse
you:
10 but I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you
still: so I delivered you out of his hand.
11 And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of
Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and
the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites,
and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand.
12 And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from
before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites; *but* not with thy
sword, nor with thy bow.
13 And I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities
which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and
oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat.
14 Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in
truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the
other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.
15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day
whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that
were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in
whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the
Lord.
16 And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should
forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;
17 for the Lord our God, he *it is* that brought us up and our fathers

out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

18 and the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: *therefore* will we also serve the Lord; for he *is* our God.

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he *is* a holy God; he *is* a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20 If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

Never was any treaty carried on with better management, nor brought to a better issue, than this of Joshua with the people, to engage them to serve God. The manner of his dealing with them shows him to have been in earnest, and that his heart was much upon it, to leave them under all possible obligations to cleave to him, particularly the obligation of a choice and of a covenant.

I. Would it be any obligation upon them if they made the service of God their choice?--he here puts them to their choice, not as if it were antecedently indifferent whether they served God or nor, or as if they were at liberty to refuse his service, but because it would have a great influence upon their perseverance in religion if they embraced it with the reason of men and with the resolution of men. These two things he here brings them to.

1. He brings them to embrace their religion rationally and intelligently, for it is a reasonable service. The will of man is apt to glory in its native liberty, and, in a jealousy for the honour of this, adheres with most pleasure to that which is its own choice and is not imposed upon it; therefore it is God's will that this service should be, not our chance, or a force upon us, but our choice. Accordingly,

(1.) Joshua fairly puts the matter to their choice, Jos 24:15. Here,

[1.] He proposes the candidates that stand for the election. The Lord, Jehovah, on one side, and on the other side either the gods of their ancestors, which would pretend to recommend themselves to those that were fond of antiquity, and that which was received by tradition from their fathers, or the gods of their neighbours, the Amorites, in whose land they dwelt, which would insinuate themselves into the affections of those that were complaisant and fond of good fellowship.

[2.] He supposes there were those to whom, upon some account or other, it would seem evil to serve the Lord. There are prejudices and objections which some people raise against religion, which, with those that are inclined to the world and the flesh, have great force. It seems evil to them, hard and unreasonable, to be obliged to deny themselves, mortify the flesh, take up their cross, &c. But, being in a state of probation, it is fit there should be some difficulties in the way, else there were no trial.

[3.] He refers it to themselves: "Choose you whom you will serve, choose this day, now that the matter is laid thus plainly before you, speedily bring it to a head, and do not stand hesitating." Elijah, long after this, referred the decision of the controversy between Jehovah and Baal to the consciences of those with whom he was treating, 1Ki 18:21. Joshua's putting the matter here to this issue plainly intimates two things:--

First, That it is the will of God we should every one of us make religion our serious and deliberate choice. Let us state the matter impartially to ourselves, weigh things in an even balance, and then determine for that which we find to be really true and good. Let us resolve upon a life of serious godliness, not merely because we know no other way, but because really, upon search, we find no better.

Secondly, That religion has so much self-evident reason and righteousness on its side that it may safely be referred to every man that allows himself a free thought either to choose or refuse it; for the merits of the cause are so plain that no considerate man can do otherwise but choose it. The case is so clear that it determines itself. Perhaps Joshua designed, by putting them to their choice, thus to try if there were any among them who, upon so fair an occasion given, would show a coolness and indifference towards the service of God, whether they would desire time to consider and consult their friends before they gave in an answer, and if any such should appear he might set a mark upon them, and warn the rest to avoid them.

[4.] He directs their choice in this matter by an open declaration of his own resolutions: "But as for me and my house, whatever you do, we will serve the Lord, and I hope you will all be of the same mind." Here he resolves, First, For himself: As for me, I will serve the Lord. Note, The service of God is nothing below the greatest of men; it is so far from being a diminution and disparagement to princes and those of the first rank to be religious that it is their greatest honour, and adds the brightest crown of glory to them. Observe how positive he is: "I will serve God." It is no abridgment of our liberty to bind ourselves with a bond to God. Secondly, For his house, that is, his family, his children and servants, such as were immediately under his eye and care, his inspection and influence. Joshua was a ruler, a judge in Israel, yet he did not make his necessary application to public affairs an excuse for the neglect of family religion. Those that have the charge of many families, as magistrates and ministers, must take special care of their own (1Ti 3:4,5): I and my house will serve God.

1. "Not my house, without me." He would not engage them to that work which he would not set his own hand to. As some who would have their children and servants good, but will not be so themselves; that is, they would have them go to heaven, but intend to go to hell themselves.

2. "Not I, without my house." He supposes he might be forsaken by his people, but in his house, where his authority was greater and more immediate, there he would over-rule. Note, When we cannot bring as many as we would to the service of God we must bring as many as we can, and extend our endeavours to the utmost sphere of our activity; if we cannot reform the land, let us put away iniquity far from our own tabernacle. 3. "First I, and then my house." Note, Those that lead and rule in other things should be first in the service of God, and go before in the best things. Thirdly, He resolves to do this whatever others did. Though all the families of Israel should revolt from God, and serve idols, yet Joshua and his family will stedfastly adhere to the God of Israel.

Note, Those that resolve to serve God must not mind being singular in it, nor be drawn by the crowd to forsake his service. Those that are bound for heaven must be willing to swim against the stream, and must not do as the most do, but as the best do.

(2.) The matter being thus put to their choice, they immediately determine it by a free, rational, and intelligent declaration, for the God of Israel, against all competitors whatsoever, Jos 24:16-18. Here,

[1.] They concur with Joshua in his resolution, being influenced by the example of so great a man, who had been so great a blessing to them (Jos 24:18): We also will serve the Lord. See how much good great men might do, if they were but zealous in religion, by their influence on their inferiors.

[2.] They startle at the thought of apostatizing from God (Jos 24:16): God forbid; the word intimates the greatest dread and detestation imaginable. "Far be it, far be it from us, that we or ours should ever forsake the Lord to serve other gods. We must be perfectly lost to all sense of justice, gratitude, and honour, ere we can harbour the least thought of such a thing."

Thus must our hearts rise against all temptations to desert the service of God. Get thee behind me, Satan.

[3.] They give very substantial reasons for their choice, to show that they did not make it purely in compliance to Joshua, but from a full conviction of the reasonableness and equity of it. They make this choice for, and in consideration, First, Of the many great and very kind things God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, Jos 24:17,18. Thus they repeat to themselves Joshua's sermon, and then express their sincere compliance with the intentions of it. Secondly, Of the relation they stood in to God, and his covenant with them: "We will serve the Lord (Jos 24:18), for he is our God, who has graciously engaged himself by promise to us, and to whom we have by solemn vow engaged ourselves."

2. He brings them to embrace their religion resolutely, and to express a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord. Now that he has them in a good mind he follows his blow, and drives the nail to the head, that it might, if possible, be a nail in a sure place. Fast bind, fast find.

(1.) In order to this he sets before them the difficulties of religion, and that in it which might be thought discouraging (Jos 24:19,20): You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God, or, as it is in the Hebrew, he is the holy Gods, intimating the mystery of the Trinity, three in one; holy, holy, holy, holy Father, holy Son, holy Spirit. He will not forgive. And, if you forsake him, he will do you hurt. Certainly Joshua does not intend hereby to deter them from the service of God as impracticable and dangerous. But,

[1.] He perhaps intends to represent here the suggestions of seducers, who tempted Israel from their God, and from the service of him; with such insinuations as these, that he was a hard master, his work impossible to be done, and he not to be pleased, and, if displeased, implacable and revengeful,--that

he would confine their respects to himself only, and would not suffer them to show the least kindness for any other,--and that herein he was very unlike the gods of the nations, which were easy, and neither holy nor jealous. It is probable that this was then commonly objected against the Jewish religion, as it has all along been the artifice of Satan every since he tempted our first parents thus to misrepresent God and his laws, as harsh and severe; and Joshua by his tone and manner of speaking might make them perceive he intended it as an objection, and would put it to them how they would keep their ground against the force of it. Or,

[2.] He thus expresses his godly jealousy over them, and his fear concerning them, that, notwithstanding the profession they now made of zeal for God and his service, they would afterwards draw back, and if they did they would find him just and jealous to avenge it. Or,

[3.] He resolves to let them know the worst of it, and what strict terms they must expect to stand upon with God, that they might sit down and count the cost. "You cannot serve the Lord, except you put away all other gods for he is holy and jealous, and will by no means admit a rival, and therefore you must be very watchful and careful, for it is at your peril if you desert his service; better you had never known it." Thus, though our Master has assured us that his yoke is easy, yet lest, upon the presumption of this, we should grow remiss and careless, he has also told us that the gate is strait, and the way narrow, that leads to life, that we may therefore strive to enter, and not seek only. "You cannot serve God and Mammon; therefore, if you resolve to serve God, you must renounce all competitors with him. You cannot serve God in your own strength, nor will he forgive your transgressions for any righteousness of your own; but all the seed of Israel must be justified and must glory in the Lord alone as their righteousness and strength," Isa 45:24,25. They must therefore come off from all confidence in their own sufficiency, else their purposes would be to no purpose. Or,

[4.] Joshua thus urges on them the seeming discouragements which lay in their way, that he might sharpen their resolutions, and draw from them a promise yet more express and solemn that they would continue faithful to God and their religion. He draws it form them that they might catch at it the more earnestly and hold it the faster.

(2.) Notwithstanding this statement of the difficulties of religion, they declare a firm and fixed resolution to continue and persevere therein (Jos 24:21): "Nay, but we will serve the Lord. We will think never the worse of him for his being a holy and jealous God, nor for his confining his servants to worship himself only. Justly will he consume those that forsake him, but we never will forsake him; not only we have a good mind to serve him, and we hope we shall, but we are at a point, we cannot bear to hear any entreaties to leave him or to turn from following after him (Ru 1:16); in the strength of divine grace we are resolved that we will serve the Lord." This resolution they repeat with an explication (Jos 24:24): "The Lord our God will we serve, not only be called his servants and wear his livery, but our religion shall rule us in every thing, and his voice will we obey." And in vain do we call him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he saith, Lu 6:46. This last promise they make in answer to the charge Joshua gave them (Jos 24:23), that, in order to their perseverance, they should,

[1.] Put away the images and relics of the strange gods, and not keep any of the tokens of those other lovers in their custody, if they resolved their Maker should be their husband; they promise, in this, to obey his voice.

[2.] That they should incline their hearts to the God of Israel, use their authority over their own hearts to engage them for God, not only to set their affections upon him, but to settle them so. These terms they agree to, and thus, as Joshua

explains the bargain, they strike it: The Lord our God will we serve.

II The service of God being thus made their deliberate choice, Joshua binds them to it by a solemn covenant, Jos 24:25. Moses had twice publicly ratified this covenant between God and Israel, at Mount Sinai (Ex 24:1-33) and in the plains of Moab, De 29:1. Joshua had likewise done it once (Jos 8:31-35, &c.) and now the second time. It is here called a statute and an ordinance, because of the strength and perpetuity of its obligation, and because even this covenant bound them to no more than what they were antecedently bound to by the divine command. Now, to give it the formalities of a covenant,

1. He calls witnesses, no other than themselves (Jos 24:22): You are witnesses that you have chosen the Lord. He promises himself that they would never forget the solemnities of this day; but, if hereafter they should break this covenant, he assures them that the professions and promises they had now made would certainly rise up in judgment against them and condemn them; and they agreed to it: "We are witnesses; let us be judged out of our own mouths if ever we be false to our God."

2. He put it in writing, and inserted it, as we find it here, in the sacred canon: He wrote it in the book of the law (Jos 24:26), in that original which was laid up in the side of the ark, and thence, probably, it was transcribed into the several copies which the princes had for the use of each tribe. There it was written, that their obligation to religion by the divine precept, and that by their own promise, might remain on record together.

3. He erected a memorandum of it, for the benefit of those who perhaps were not conversant with writings, Jos 24:26,27. He set up a great stone under an oak, as a monument of this covenant, and perhaps wrote an inscription upon it (by which stones are made to speak) signifying the intention of it. When

he says, It hath heard what was past, he tacitly upbraids the people with the hardness of their hearts, as if this stone had heard to as good purpose as some of them; and, if they should forget what was no done, this stone would so far preserve the remembrance of it as to reproach them for their stupidity and carelessness, and be a witness against them.

The matter being thus settled, Joshua dismissed this assembly of the grandees of Israel (Jos 24:28), and took his last leave of them, well satisfied in having done his part, by which he had delivered his soul; if they perished, their blood would be upon their own heads.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.
22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye *are* witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, *We are* witnesses.
23 Now therefore put away, *said he,* the strange gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.
24 And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.
25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.
26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that *was* by the sanctuary of the Lord.
27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.
28 So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance.

The Death of Joshua

29 And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a hundred and ten years old.

This book, which began with triumphs, here ends with funerals, by which all the glory of man is stained. We have here

1 The burial of Joseph, Jos 24:32. He died about 200 years before in Egypt, but gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should not rest in their grave until Israel had rest in the land of promise; now therefore the children of Israel, who had brought this coffin full of bones with them out of Egypt, carried it along with them in all their marches through the wilderness (the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, it is probable, taking particular care of it), and kept it in their camp till Canaan was perfectly reduced, now at last they deposited it in that piece of ground which his father gave him near Shechem, Ge 48:22.

Probably it was upon this occasion that Joshua called for all Israel to meet him at Shechem (Jos 24:1), to attend Joseph's coffin to the grave there, so that the sermon in this chapter served both for Joseph's funeral sermon and his own farewell sermon; and if it was, as is supposed, in the last year of his life, the occasion might very well remind him of his own death being at hand, for he was not just at the same age that his illustrious ancestor Joseph had arrived at when he died, 110 years old; compare Jos 24:29 with Ge 50:26.

2 The death and burial of Joshua, Jos 24:29,30. We are not told how long he lived after the coming of Israel into Canaan. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was about seventeen years; but the Jewish chronologers generally say it was about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years. He is here called the servant of the Lord, the same title that was given to Moses (Jos 1:1) when mention was made of his death; for, though Joshua was in many respects inferior to Moses, yet in this he was equal to him, that, according as his work was, he approved himself a diligent and faithful servant of God. And he that traded with his two talents had the same approbation that he had who traded with his five.

Well done, good and faithful servant. Joshua's burying-place is here said to be on the north side of the hill Gaash, or the quaking hill; the Jews say it was so called because it trembled

at the burial of Joshua, to upbraid the people of Israel with their stupidity in that they did not lament the death of that great and good man as they ought to have done.

Thus at the death of Christ, our Joshua, the earth quaked. The learned bishop Patrick observes that there is no mention of any days of mourning being observed for Joshua, as there were for Moses and Aaron, in which, he says, St. Hierom and others of the fathers think there is a mystery, namely, that under the law, when life and immortality were not brought to so clear a light as they are now, they had reason to mourn and weep for the death of their friends; but now that Jesus, our Joshua, has opened the kingdom of heaven, we may rather rejoice.

3. The death and burial of Eleazar the chief priest, who, it is probable, died about the same time that Joshua did, as Aaron in the same year with Moses, Jos 24:33. The Jews say that Eleazar, a little before he died, called the elders together, and gave them a charge as Joshua had done. He was buried in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which came to him, not by descent, for then it would have pertained to his father first, nor had the priests any cities in Mount Ephraim, but either it fell to him by marriage, as the Jews conjecture, or it was freely bestowed upon him, to build a country seat on, by some pious Israelite that was well-affected to the priesthood, for it is here said to have been given him; and there he buried his dear father.

4. A general idea given us of the state of Israel at this time, Jos 24:31. While Joshua lived, religion was kept up among them under his care and influence; but soon after he and his contemporaries died it went to decay, so much oftentimes does one head hold up: how well is it for the gospel church that Christ, our Joshua, is still with it, by his Spirit, and will be always, even unto the end of the world!

30 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-serah, which *is* in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash.

31 And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.

Joseph's Bones Buried at Shechem

32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

The Death of Eleazar

33 And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill *that pertained to* Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.

The Book of Judges

[Judges]

Judges-1

Judah and Simeon Capture Adoni-bezek

1 Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked the Lord, saying, who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?

2 And the Lord said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

3 And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him.

4 And Judah went up; and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand: and they slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men.

5 And they found Adoni-bezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

Here, I The children of Israel consult the oracle of God for direction which of all the tribes should first attempt to clear their country of the Canaanites, and to animate and encourage the rest. It was after the death of Joshua. While he lived he directed them, and all the tribes were obedient to him, but when he died he left no successor in the same authority that he had; but the people must consult the breast-plate of judgment, and thence receive the word of command; for God himself, as he was their King, so he was the Lord of their hosts. The question they ask is, Who shall go up first? Jdg 1:1.

By this time, we may suppose, they were so multiplied that the places they were in possession of began to be too strait for them, and they must thrust out the enemy to make room; now

they enquire who should first take up arms. Whether each tribe was ambitious of being first, and so strove for the honour of it, or whether each was afraid of being first, and so strove to decline it, does not appear; but by common consent the matter was referred to God himself, who is the fittest both to dispose of honours and to cut out work.

II. God appointed that Judah should go up first, and promised him success (Jdg 1:2): "I have delivered the land into his hand, to be possessed, and therefore will deliver the enemy into his hand, that keeps him out of possession, to be destroyed." And why must Judah be first in this undertaking?

1. Judah was the most numerous and powerful tribe, and therefore let Judah venture first. Note, God appoints service according to the strength he has given. Those that are most able, from them most work is expected.

2. Judah was first in dignity, and therefore must be first in duty. He it is whom his brethren must praise, and therefore he it is who must lead in perilous services. Let the burden of honour and the burden of work go together.

3. Judah was first served; the lot came up for Judah first, and therefore Judah must first fight. 4. Judah was the tribe out of which our Lord was to spring: so that in Judah, Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, went before them. Christ engaged the powers of darkness first, and foiled them, which animates us for our conflicts; and it is in him that we are more than conquerors. Observe, The service and the success are put together: "Judah shall go up; let him do his part, and then he shall find that I have delivered the land into his hand." His service will not avail unless God give the success; but God will not give the success unless he vigorously apply himself to the service.

III. Judah hereupon prepares to go up, but courts his brother and neighbour the tribe of Simeon (the lot of which tribe fell

within that of Judah and was assigned out of it) to join forces with him, Jdg 1:3. Observe here,

1. That the strongest should not despise but desire the assistance even of those that are weaker. Judah was the most considerable of all the tribes, and Simeon the least considerable, and yet Judah begs Simeon's friendship, and prays an aid from him; the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee, for we are members one of another.

2. Those that crave assistance must be ready to give assistance: Come with me into my lot, and then I will go with thee into thine. It becomes Israelites to help one another against Canaanites; and all Christians, even those of different tribes, should strengthen one another's hands against the common interests of Satan's kingdom. Those who thus help one another in love have reason to hope that God will graciously help them both.

IV. The confederate forces of Judah and Simeon take the field: Judah went up (Jdg 1:4), and Simeon with him, Jdg 1:3. Caleb, it is probable, was commander-in-chief of this expedition; for who so fit as he who had both an old man's head and a young man's hand, the experience of age and the vigour of youth? Jos 14:10,11. It should seem too, by what follows (Jdg 1:10,11), that he was not yet in possession of his own allotment. It was happy for them that they had such a general as, according to his name, was all heart. Some think that the Canaanites had got together into a body, a formidable body, when Israel consulted who should go and fight against them, and that they then began to stir when they heard of the death of Joshua, whose name had been so dreadful to them; but, if so, it proved they did but meddle to their own hurt.

V. God gave them great success. Whether they invaded the enemy, or the enemy first gave them the alarm, the Lord delivered them into their hand, Jdg 1:4. Though the army of Judah was strong and bold, yet the victory is attributed to God:

he delivered the Canaanites into their hand; having given them authority, he here gives them ability to destroy them--put it in their power, and so tried their obedience to his command, which was utterly to cut them off. Bishop Patrick observes upon this that we meet not with such religious expressions in the heathen writers, concerning the success of their arms, as we have here and elsewhere in this sacred history. I wish such pious acknowledgments of the divine providence had not grown into disuse at this time with many that are called Christians. Now,

1. We are told how the army of the Canaanites was routed in the field, in or near Bezek, the place where they drew up, which afterwards Saul made the place of a general rendezvous (1Sa 11:8); they slew 10,000 men, which blow, if followed, could not but be a very great weakening to those that were already brought so very low.

2. How their king was taken and mortified. His name was Adoni-bezek, which signifies, lord of Bezek. There have been those that called their lands by their own names (Ps 49:11), but here was one (and there has been many another) that called himself by his land's name. He was taken prisoner after the battle, and we are here told how they used him; they cut off his thumbs, to disfit him for fighting, and his great toes, that he might not be able to run away, Jdg 1:6. It had been barbarous thus to triumph over a man in misery, and that lay at their mercy, but that he was a devoted Canaanite, and one that had in like manner abused others, which probably they had heard of. Josephus says, "They cut off his hands and his feet," probably supposing those more likely to be mortal wounds than only the cutting off of his thumbs and his great toes. But this indignity which they did him extorted from him an acknowledgment of the righteousness of God, Jdg 1:7. Here observe,

(1.) What a great man this Adoni-bezek had been, how great in the field, where armies fled before him, how great at home,

where kings were set with the dogs of his flock; and yet now himself a prisoner, and reduced to the extremity of meanness and disgrace. See how changeable this world is, and how slippery its high places are. Let not the highest be proud, nor the strongest secure, for they know not how low they may be brought before they die.

(2.) What desolations he had made among his neighbours: he had wholly subdued seventy kings, to such a degree as to have them his prisoners; he that was the chief person in a city was then called a king, and the greatness of their title did but aggravate their disgrace, and fired the pride of him that insulted over them. We cannot suppose that Adoni-bezek had seventy of these petty princes at once his slaves; but first and last, in the course of his reign, he had thus deposed and abused so many, who perhaps were many of them kings of the same cities that successively opposed him, and whom he thus treated to please his own imperious barbarous fancy, and for a terror to others. It seems the Canaanites had been wasted by civil wars, and those bloody ones, among themselves, which would very much facilitate the conquest of them by Israel. "Judah," says Dr. Lightfoot, "in conquering Adoni-bezek, did, in effect, conquer seventy kings."

(3.) How justly he was treated as he had treated others. Thus the righteous God sometimes, in his providence, makes the punishment to answer the sin, and observes an equality in his judgments; the spoiler shall be spoiled, and the treacherous dealer dealt treacherously with, Isa 33:1. And those that showed no mercy shall have no mercy shown them, Jam 2:13. See Re 13:10,18:6.

(4.) How honestly he owned the righteousness of God herein: As I have done, so God has requited me. See the power of conscience, when God by his judgments awakens it, how it brings sin to remembrance, and subscribes to the justice of God. He that in his pride had set God at defiance now yields to him, and reflects with as much regret upon the kings under

his table as ever he had looked upon them with pleasure when he had them there. He seems to own that he was better dealt with than he had dealt with his prisoners; for though the Israelites maimed him (according to the law of retaliation, an eye for an eye, so a thumb for a thumb), yet they did not put him under the table to be fed with the crumbs there, because, though the other might well be looked upon as an act of justice, this would have savoured more of pride and haughtiness than did become an Israelite.

VI. Particular notice is taken of the conquest of Jerusalem, Jdg 1:8. Our translators judge it spoken of here as done formerly in Joshua's time, and only repeated on occasion of Adoni-bezek's dying there, and therefore read it, "they had fought against Jerusalem," and put this verse in a parenthesis; but the original speaks of it as a thing now done, and this seems most probable because it is said to be done by the children of Judah in particular, not by all Israel in general, whom Joshua commanded.

Joshua indeed conquered and slew Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem (Jos 10:1-43), but we read not there of his taking the city; probably, while he was pursing his conquests elsewhere, this Adoni-bezek, a neighbouring prince, got possession of it, whom Israel having conquered in the field, the city fell into their hands, and they slew the inhabitants, except those who retreated into the castle and held out there till David's time, and they set the city on fire, in token of their detestation of the idolatry wherewith it had been deeply infected, yet probably not so utterly as to consume it, but to leave convenient habitations for as many as they had to put into the possession of it.

6 But Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

7 And Adoni-bezek said, threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their *meat* under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

Judah Conquers Jerusalem and Hebron

8 Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.
9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites, that dwelt in the mountain, and in the south, and in the valley.
10 And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: now the name of Hebron before *was* Kirjath-arba: and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

Othniel Conquers Debir and Receives Achsah

11 And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before *was* Kirjath-sepher:
12 and Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.
13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.
14 And it came to pass, when she came *to him,* that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off *her* ass; and Caleb said unto her, what wilt thou?
15 And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs.

We have here a further account of that glorious and successful campaign which Judah and Simeon made.

1 The lot of Judah was pretty well cleared of the Canaanites, yet not thoroughly. Those that dwelt in the mountain (the mountains that were round about Jerusalem) were driven out (Jdg 1:9,19), but those in the valley kept their ground against them, having chariots of iron, such as we read of, Jos 17:16. Here the men of Judah failed, and thereby spoiled the influence which otherwise their example hitherto might have had on the rest of the tribes, who followed them in this

instance of their cowardice, rather than in all the other instances of their courage.

They had iron chariots, and therefore it was thought not safe to attack them: but had not Israel God on their side, whose chariots are thousands of angels (Ps 68:17), before whom these iron chariots would be but as stubble to the fire? Had not God expressly promised by the oracle (Jdg 1:2) to give them success against the Canaanites in this very expedition, without excepting those that had iron chariots? Yet they suffered their fears to prevail against their faith, they could not trust God under any disadvantages, and therefore durst not face the iron chariots, but meanly withdrew their forces, when with one bold stroke they might have completed their victories; and it proved of pernicious consequence. They did run well, what hindered them? Ga 5:7.

2. Caleb was put in possession of Hebron, which, though given him by Joshua ten or twelve years before (as Dr. Lightfoot computes), yet being employed in public service, for the settling of the tribes, which he preferred before his own private interests, it seems he did not till now make himself master of; so well content was that good man to serve others, while he left himself to be served last; few are like-minded, for all seek their own, Php 2:20,21. Yet now the men of Judah all came in to his assistance for the reducing of Hebron (Jdg 1:10), slew the sons of Anak, and put him in possession of it, Jdg 1:20. They gave Hebron unto Caleb.

And now Caleb, that he might return the kindness of his countrymen, is impatient to see Debir reduced and put into the hands of the men of Judah, to expedite which he proffers his daughter to the person that will undertake to command in the siege of that important place, Jdg 1:11,12. Othniel bravely undertakes it, and wins the town and the lady (Jdg 1:13), and by his wife's interest and management with her father gains a very good inheritance for himself and his family, Jdg 1:14,15.

We had this passage before, Jos 15:16-19, where it was largely explained and improved.

3. Simeon got ground of the Canaanites in his border, Jdg 1:17,18. In the eastern part of Simeon's lot, they destroyed the Canaanites in Zephath, and called it Hormah--destruction, adding this to some other devoted cities not far off, which they had some time ago, with good reason, called by that name, Nu 21:2,3. And this perhaps was the complete performance of the vow they them made that they would utterly destroy these cities of the Canaanites in the south. In the western part they took Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron, cities of the Philistines; they gained present possession of the cities, but, not destroying the inhabitants, the Philistines in process of time recovered the cities, and proved inveterate enemies to the Israel of God, and no better could come of doing their work by the halves.

4. The Kenites gained a settlement in the tribe of Judah, choosing it there rather than in any other tribe, because it was the strongest, and there they hoped to be safe and quiet, Jdg 1:16. These were the posterity of Jethro, who either went with Israel when Moses invited them (Nu 10:29) or met them about the same place when they came up from their wanderings in the wilderness thirty-eight years after, and went with them then to Canaan, Moses having promised them that they should fare as Israel fared, Nu 10:32.

They had at first seated themselves in the city of palm-trees, that is, Jericho, a city which never was to be rebuilt, and therefore the fitter for those who dwelt in tents, and did not mind building. But afterwards they removed into the wilderness of Judah, either out of their affection to that place, because solitary and retired, or out of their affection to that tribe, which perhaps had been in a particular manner kind to them. Yet we find the tent of Jael, who was of that family, far north, in the lot of Naphtali, when Sisera took shelter there, Jdg 4:17. This respect Israel showed them, to let them fix where they pleased, being a quiet people, who, wherever they

were, were content with a little. Those that molested none were molested by none. Blessed are the meek, for thus they shall inherit the earth.

The Extent of the Conquests of Judah and Benjamin

16 And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees with the children of Judah into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.

17 And Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah.

18 Also Judah took Gaza with the coast thereof, and Askelon with the coast thereof, and Ekron with the coast thereof.

19 And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out *the inhabitants of* the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

20 And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

21 And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

Joseph Conquers Beth-el

22 And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el: and the Lord *was* with them.

23 And the house of Joseph sent to descry Beth-el. (Now the name of the city before *was* Luz.)

24 And the spies saw a man come forth out of the city, and they said unto him, Show us, we pray thee, the entrance into the city, and we will show thee mercy.

25 And when he showed them the entrance into the city, they smote the city with the edge of the sword; but they let go the man and all his family.

26 And the man went into the land of the Hittites, and built a city, and called the name thereof Luz: which *is* the name thereof unto this day.

We are here told upon what terms the rest of the tribes stood with the Canaanites that remained.

I. Benjamin neglected to drive the Jebusites out of that part of the city of Jerusalem which fell to their lot, Jdg 1:21. Judah had set them a good example, and gained them great advantages by what they did (Jdg 1:9), but they did not follow the blow for want of resolution.

II The house of Joseph,

1. Bestirred themselves a little to get possession of Beth-el, Jdg 1:22. That city is mentioned in the tribe of Benjamin, Jos 18:22. Yet it is spoken of there (Jdg 1:13) as a city in the borders of that tribe, and, it should seem, the line went through it, so that one half of it only belonged to Benjamin, the other half to Ephraim; and perhaps the activity of the Ephraimites at this time, to recover it from the Canaanites, secured it entirely to them henceforward, or at least the greatest part of it, for afterwards we find it so much under the power of the ten tribes (and Benjamin was none of them) that Jeroboam set up one of his calves in it. In this account of the expedition of the Ephraimites against Beth-el observe,

(1.) Their interest in the divine favour: The Lord was with them, and would have been with the other tribes if they would have exerted their strength. The Chaldee reads it here, as in many other places, The Word of the Lord was their helper, namely, Christ himself, the captain of the Lord's host, now that they acted separately, as well as when they were all in one body.

(2.) The prudent measures they took to gain the city. They sent spies to observe what part of the city was weakest, or which way they might make their attack with most advantage, Jdg 1:23. These spies got very good information from a man they

providentially met with, who showed them a private way into the town, which was left unguarded because, being not generally known, no danger was suspected on that side. And here,

[1.] He is not to be blamed for giving them this intelligence if he did it from a conviction that the Lord was with them, and that by his donation the land was theirs of right, any more than Rahab was for entertaining those whom she knew to be enemies of her country, but friends of God. Nor,

[2.] Are those to be blamed who showed him mercy, gave him and his family not only their lives, but liberty to go wherever they pleased: for one good turn requires another. But, it seems, he would not join himself to the people of Israel, he feared them rather than loved them, and therefore he removed after a colony of the Hittites, which, it should seem, had gone into Arabia and settled there upon Joshua's invasion of the country; with them this man chose to dwell, and among them he built a city, a small one, we may suppose, such as planters commonly build, and in the name of it preserved the ancient name of his native city, Luz, an almond-tree, preferring this before its new name, which carried religion in it, Bethel--the house of God.

(3.) Their success. The spies brought or sent notice of the intelligence they had gained to the army, which improved their advantages, surprised the city, and put them all to the sword, Jdg 1:25. But,

2. Besides this achievement, it seems, the children of Joseph did nothing remarkable (1.) Manasseh failed to drive out the Canaanites from several very considerable cities in their lot, and did not make any attempt upon them, Jdg 1:27. But the Canaanites, being in possession, were resolved not to quit it; they would dwell in that land, and Manasseh had not resolution enough to offer to dispossess them; as if there was no meddling with them unless they were willing to resign, which it was not to be expected they ever would be.

Only as Israel got strength they got ground, and served themselves, both by their contributions and by their personal services, Jdg 1:28,35. (2.) Ephraim likewise, though a powerful tribe, neglected Gezer a considerable city, and suffered the Canaanites to dwell among them (Jdg 1:29), which, some think, intimates their allowing them a quiet settlement, and indulging them with the privileges of an unconquered people, not so much as making them tributaries.

III. Zebulun, perhaps inclining to the sea-trade, for it was foretold that it should be a haven for ships, neglected to reduce Kitron and Nahalol (Jdg 1:30), and only made the inhabitants of those places tributaries to them.

IV. Asher quitted itself worse than any of the tribes (Jdg 1:31,32), not only in leaving more towns than any of them in the hands of the Canaanites, but in submitting to the Canaanites instead of making them tributaries; for so the manner of expression intimates, that the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, as if the Canaanites were the more numerous and the more powerful, would still be lords of the country, and the Israelites must be only upon sufferance among them.

V. Naphtali also permitted the Canaanites to live among them (Jdg 1:33), only by degrees they got them so far under as to exact contributions from them.

VI. Dan was so far from extending his conquests where his lot lay that, wanting spirit to make head against the Amorites, he was forced by them to retire into the mountains and inhabit the cities there, but durst not venture into the valley, where, it is probable, the chariots of iron were, Jdg 1:34. Nay, and some of the cities in the mountains were kept against them, Jdg 1:35. Thus were they straitened in their possessions, and forced to seek for more room at Laish, a great way off, Jdg 18:1-31, &c. In Jacob's blessing Judah is compared to a lion, Dan to a

serpent; now observe how Judah with his lion-like courage prospered and prevailed, but Dan with all his serpenting subtlety could get no ground; craft and artful management do not always effect the wonders they pretend to. What Dan came short of doing, it seems, his neighbours the Ephraimites in part did for him; they put the Amorites under tribute, Jdg 1:35.

Upon the whole matter it appears that the people of Israel were generally very careless both of their duty and interest in this thing; they did not what they might have done to expel the Canaanites and make room for themselves. And,

1. It was owing to their slothfulness and cowardice. They would not be at the pains to complete their conquests; like the sluggard, that dreamed of a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, they fancied insuperable difficulties, and frightened themselves with winds and clouds from sowing and reaping.

2. It was owing to their covetousness; the Canaanites' labour and money would do them more good (they thought) than their blood, and therefore they were willing to let them live among them, that they might make a hand of them.

3. They had not that dread and detestation of idolatry which they ought to have had; they thought it a pity to put these Canaanites to the sword, though the measure of their iniquity was full, thought it would be no harm to let them live among them, and that they should be in no danger from them.

4. The same thing that kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan kept them now out of the full possession of it, and that was unbelief. Distrust of the power and promise of God lost them their advantages, and ran them into a thousand mischiefs.

27 Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the

inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would
dwell in that land.
28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the
Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.
29 Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in
Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

The Extent of the Conquests of the Other Tribes

30 Neither did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, nor the
inhabitants of Nahalol; but the Canaanites dwelt among them, and
became tributaries.
31 Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho, nor the
inhabitants of Zidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helbah,
nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob:
32 but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of
the land: for they did not drive them out.
33 Neither did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, nor
the inhabitants of Beth-anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites,
the inhabitants of the land: nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-
shemesh and of Beth-anath became tributaries unto them.
34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain:
for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley:
35 but the Amorites would dwell in mount Heres in Aijalon, and in
Shaalbim: yet the hand of the house of Joseph prevailed, so that
they became tributaries.
36 And the coast of the Amorites was from the going up to Akrabbim,
from the rock, and upward.

Judges-2

The Angel of the Lord at Bochim

1 And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said,
I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the
land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break
my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

It was the privilege of Israel that they had not only a law in general sent them from heaven, once for all, to direct them into and keep them in the way of happiness, but that they had particular messages sent them from heaven, as there was occasion, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, when at any time they turned aside out of that way. Besides the written word which they had before them to read, they often heard a word behind them, saying, This is the way, Isa 30:21. Here begins that way of God's dealing with them. When they would not hear Moses, let it be tried whether they will hear the prophets. In these verses we have a very awakening sermon that was preached to them when they began to cool in their religion.

I The preacher was an angel of the Lord (Jdg 2:1), not a prophet, not Phinehas, as the Jews conceit; gospel ministers are indeed called angels of the churches, but the Old-Testament prophets are never called angels of the Lord; no doubt this was a messenger we from heaven. Such extraordinary messengers we sometimes find in this book employed in the raising up of the judges that delivered Israel, as Gideon and Samson; and now, to show how various are the good offices they do for God's Israel, here is one sent to preach to them, to prevent their falling into sin and trouble.

This extraordinary messenger was sent to command, if possible, the greater regard to the message, and to affect the minds of a people whom nothing seemed to affect but what was sensible. The learned bishop Patrick is clearly of opinion that this was not a created angel, but the Angel of the covenant, the same that appeared to Joshua as captain of the hosts of the Lord, who was God himself. Christ himself, says Dr.

Lightfoot; who but God and Christ could say, I made you to go up out of Egypt? Joshua had lately admonished them to take heed of entangling themselves with the Canaanites, but they regarded not the words of a dying man; the same warning therefore is here brought them by the living God himself, the Son of God appearing as an angel. If they slight his servants, surely they will reverence his Son.

This angel of the Lord is said to come up from Gilgal, perhaps not walking on the earth, but flying swiftly, as the angel Gabriel did to Daniel, in the open firmament of heaven; but, whether walking or flying, he seemed to come from Gilgal for a particular reason. Gilgal was long their headquarters after they came into Canaan, many signal favours they had there received from God, and there the covenant of circumcision was renewed (Mic 6:5), of all which it was designed they should be reminded by his coming from Gilgal. The remembrance of what we have received and heard will prepare us for a warning to hold fast, Re 3:2,3.

II The persons to whom this sermon was preached were all the children of Israel, Jdg 2:4. A great congregation for a great preacher! They were assembled either for war, each tribe sending in its forces for some great expedition, or rather for worship, and then the place of their meeting must be Shiloh, where the tabernacle was, at which they were all to come together three times a year. When we attend upon God in instituted ordinances we may expect to hear from him, and to receive his gifts at \ his own gates. The place is called Bochim (Jdg 2:1), because it gained that name upon this occasion. All Israel needed the reproof and warning here given, and therefore it is spoken to them all.

III. The sermon itself is short, but very close. God here tells them plainly,

1. What he had done for them, Jdg 2:1. He had brought them out of Egypt, a land of slavery and toil, into Canaan, a land of

rest, liberty, and plenty. The miseries of the one served as a foil to the felicities of the other. God had herein been kind to them, true to the oath sworn to their fathers, had given such proofs of his power as left them inexcusable if they distrusted it, and such engagements to his service as left them inexcusable if they deserted it.

2. What he had promised them: I said, I will never break my covenant with you. When he took them to be his peculiar people, it was not with any design to cast them off again, or to change them for another people at his pleasure; let them but be faithful to him, and they should find him unchangeably constant to them. He told them plainly that the covenant he entered into with them should never break, unless it broke on their side.

3. What were his just and reasonable expectations from them (Jdg 2:2): that being taken into covenant with God they should make no league with the Canaanites, who were both his enemies and theirs,--that having set up his altar they should throw down their altars, lest they should be a temptation to them to serve their gods. Could any thing be demanded more easy?

4. How they had in this very thing, which he had most insisted on, disobeyed him: "But you have not in so small a matter obeyed my voice." In contempt of their covenant with God, and their confederacy with each other in that covenant, they made leagues of friendship with the idolatrous devoted Canaanites, and connived at their altars, though they stood in competition with God's. "Why have you done this? What account can you give of this perverseness of yours at the bar of right reason? What apology can you make for yourselves, or what excuse can you offer?" Those that throw off their communion with God, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, know not what they do now, and will have nothing to say for themselves in the day of account shortly. 5.

How they must expect to smart by and by for this their folly, Jdg 2:3. Their tolerating the Canaanites among them would,

(1.) Put a period to their victories: "You will not drive them out," says God, "and therefore I will not;" thus their sin was made their punishment. Thus those who indulge their lusts and corruptions, which they should mortify, forfeit the grace of God, and it is justly withdrawn from them. If we will not resist the devil, we cannot expect that God should tread him under our feet.

(2.) It would involve them in continual troubles. "They shall be thorns in your sides to gore you, which way soever you turn, always doing you one mischief or other." Those deceive themselves who expect advantage by friendship with those that are enemies to God.

(3.) It would (which was worst of all) expose them to constant temptation and draw them to sin. "Their gods" (their abominations, so the Chaldee) "will be a snare to you; you will find yourselves wretchedly entangled in an affection to them, and it will be your ruin," so some read it. Those that approach sin are justly left to themselves to fall into sin and to perish in it. God often makes men's sin their punishment; and thorns and snares are in the way of the froward, who will walk contrary to God.

IV. The good success of this sermon is very remarkable: The people lifted up their voice and wept, Jdg 2:4.

1 The angel had told them of their sins, for which they thus expressed their sorrow: the lifted up their voice in confession of sin, crying out against their own folly and ingratitude, and wept, as those that were both ashamed of themselves and angry at themselves, as having acted so directly contrary both to their reason and to their interest.

2 The angel had threatened them with the judgments of God, of which they thus expressed their dread: they lifted up their voice in prayer to God to turn away his wrath from them, and wept for fear of that wrath. They relented upon this alarm, and their hearts melted within them, and trembled at the word, and not without cause. This was good, and a sign that the word they heard made an impression upon them: it is a wonder sinners can ever read their Bible with dry eyes. But this was not enough; they wept, but we do not find that they reformed, that they went home and destroyed all the remains of idolatry and idolaters among them. Many are melted under the word that harden again before they are cast into a new mould. However, this general weeping,

(1.) Gave a new name to the place (Jdg 2:5): they called it Bochim, Weepers, a good name for our religious assemblies to answer. Had they kept close to God and their duty, no voice but that of singing would have been heard in their congregation; but by their sin and folly the had made other work for themselves, and now nothing is to be heard but the voice of weeping.

(2.) It gave occasion for a solemn sacrifice: They sacrificed there unto the Lord, having (as is supposed) met at Shiloh, where God's altar was. They offered sacrifice to turn away God's wrath, and to obtain his favour, and in token of their dedication of themselves to him, and to him only, making a covenant by this sacrifice. The disease being thus taken in time, and the physic administered working so well, one would have hoped a cure might be effected. But by the sequel of the story it appears to have been too deeply rooted to be wept out

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim [weepers]: and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.

The Death of Joshua

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel
went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.
7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the
days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great
works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.
8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being a
hundred and ten years old.
9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-
heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.
10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and
there arose another generation after them, which knew not the
Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

Israel's Apostasy and the Ministry of the Judges

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and
served Baalim:
12 and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them
out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the
people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto
them, and provoked the Lord to anger.
13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.
14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered
them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them
into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not
any longer stand before their enemies.

The beginning of this paragraph is only a repetition of what account we had before of the people's good character during the government of Joshua, and of his death and burial (Jos 24:29,30), which comes in here again only to make way for the following account, which this chapter gives, of their degeneracy and apostasy. The angel had foretold that the Canaanites and their idols would be a snare to Israel; now the historian undertakes to show that they were so, and, that this may appear the more clear, he looks back a little, and takes notice, 1. Of their happy settlement in the land of Canaan.

Joshua, having distributed this land among them, dismissed them to the quiet and comfortable possession of it (Jdg 2:6): He sent them away, not only every tribe, but every man to his inheritance, no doubt giving them his blessing.

2. Of their continuance in the faith and fear of God's holy name as long as Joshua lived, Jdg 2:7. As they went to their possessions with good resolutions to cleave to God, so they persisted for some time in these good resolutions, as long as they had good rulers that set them good examples, gave them good instructions, and reproved and restrained the corruptions that crept in among them, and as long as they had fresh in remembrance the great things God did for them when he brought them into Canaan: those that had seen these wonders had so much sense as to believe their own eyes, and so much reason as to serve that God who had appeared so gloriously on their behalf; but those that followed, because they had not seen, believed not.

3. Of the death and burial of Joshua, which gave a fatal stroke to the interests of religion among the people, Jdg 2:8,9. Yet so much sense they had of their obligations to him that they did him honour at his death, and buried him in Timnath-heres; so it is called here, not, as in Joshua, Timnath-serah. Heres signifies the sun, a representation of which, some think, was set upon his sepulchre, and gave name to it, in remembrance of the sun's standing still at his word. So divers of the Jewish writers say; but I much question whether an image of the sun would be allowed to the honour of Joshua at that time, when, by reason of men's general proneness to worship the sun, it would be in danger of being abused to the dishonour of God.

4. Of the rising of a new generation, Jdg 2:10. All that generation in a few years wore off, their good instructions and examples died and were buried with them, and there arose another generation of Israelites who had so little sense of religion, and were in so little care about it, that, notwithstanding all the advantages of their education, one

might truly say that they knew not the Lord, knew him not aright, knew him not as he had revealed himself, else they would not have forsaken him. They were so entirely devoted to the world, so intent upon the business of it or so indulgent of the flesh in ease and luxury, that they never minded the true God and his holy religion, and so were easily drawn aside to false gods and their abominable superstitions.

And so he comes to give us a general idea of the series of things in Israel during the time of the judges, the same repeated in the same order.

I The people of Israel forsook the God of Israel, and gave that worship and honour to the dunghill deities of the Canaanites which was due to him alone. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! Hath a nation, such a nation, so well fed, so well taught, changed its God, such a God, a God of infinite power, unspotted purity, inexhaustible goodness, and so very jealous of a competitor, for stocks and stones that could do neither good nor evil? Jer 2:11,12. Never was there such an instance of folly, ingratitude, and perfidiousness. Observe how it is described here, Jdg 2:11-13. In general, they did evil, nothing could be more evil, that is, more provoking to God, nor more prejudicial to themselves, and it was in the sight of the Lord; all evil is before him, but he takes special notice of the sin of having any other god. In particular,

1. They forsook the Lord (Jdg 2:12,13); this was one of the two great evils they were guilty of, Jer 2:13. They had been joined to the Lord in covenant, but now they forsook him, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband. "They forsook the worship of the Lord," so the Chaldee: for those that forsake the worship of God do in effect forsake God himself. It aggravated this that he was the God of their fathers, so that they were born in his house, and therefore bound to serve him; and that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, he loosed their bonds, and upon that account also they were obliged to serve him.

2. When they forsook the only true God they did not turn atheists, nor were they such fools as to say, There is no God; but they followed other gods: so much remained of pure nature as to own a God, yet so much appeared of corrupt nature as to multiply gods, and take up with any, and to follow the fashion, not the rule, in religious worship. Israel had the honour of being a peculiar people and dignified above all others, and yet so false were they to their own privileges that they were fond of the gods of the people that were round about them. Baal and Ashtaroth, he-gods and she-gods; they made their court to sun and moon, Jupiter and Juno. Baalim signifies lords, and Ashtaroth blessed ones, both plural, for when they forsook Jehovah, who is one, they had gods many and lords many, as a luxuriant fancy pleased to multiply them. Whatever they took for their gods, they served them and bowed down to them, gave honour to them and begged favours from them.

II The God of Israel was hereby provoked to anger, and delivered them up into the hand of their enemies, Jdg 2:14,15. He was wroth with them, for he is a jealous God and true to the honour of his own name; and the way he took to punish them for their apostasy was to make those their tormentors whom they yielded to as their tempters. They made themselves as mean and miserable by forsaking God as they would have been great and happy if they had continued faithful to him.

1 The scale of victory turned against them. After they forsook God, whenever they took the sword in hand they were as sure to be beaten as before they had been sure to conquer. Formerly their enemies could not stand before them, but, wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was for them; when they began to cool in their religion, God suspended his favour, stopped the progress of their successes, and would not drive out their enemies any more (Jdg 2:3), only suffered them to keep their ground; but now, when they had quite revolted to idolatry, the war turned directly against them, and they could not any

longer stand before their enemies. God would rather give the success to those that had never known nor owned him than to those that had done both, but had now deserted him. Wherever they went, they might perceive that God himself had turned to be their enemy, and fought against them, Isa 63:10.

2 The balance of power then turned against them of course. Whoever would might spoil them, whoever would might oppress them. God sold them into the hands of their enemies; not only he delivered them up freely, as we do that which we have sold, but he did it upon a valuable consideration, that he might get himself honour as a jealous God, who would not spare even his own peculiar people when they provoked him. He sold them as insolvent debtors are sold (Mt 18:25), by their sufferings to make some sort of reparation to his glory for the injury it sustained by their apostasy. Observe how their punishment,

(1.) Answered what they had done. They served the gods of the nations that were round about them, even the meanest, and God made then serve the princes of the nations that were round about them, even the meanest. He that is company for every fool is justly made a fool of by every company.

(2.) How it answered what God has spoken. The hand of heaven was thus turned against them, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn (Jdg 2:15), referring to the curse and death set before them in the covenant, with the blessing and life. Those that have found God true to his promises may thence infer that he will be as true to his threatenings.

III. The God of infinite mercy took pity on them in their distresses, though they had brought themselves into them by their own sin and folly, and wrought deliverance for them. Nevertheless, though their trouble was the punishment of their sin and the accomplishment of God's word, yet they were in process of time saved out of their trouble, Jdg 2:16-18. Here observe,

1 The inducement of their deliverance. It came purely from God's pity and tender compassion; the reason was fetched from within himself. It is not said, It repented them because of their iniquities (for it appears, Jdg 2:17, that many of them continued unreformed), but, It repented the Lord because of their groanings; though it is not so much the burden of sin as the burden of affliction that they are said to groan under. It is true they deserved to perish for ever under his curse, yet, this being the day of his patience and our probation, he does not stir up all his wrath. He might in justice have abandoned them, but he could not for pity do it.

2 The instruments of their deliverance. God did not send angels from heaven to rescue them, nor bring in any foreign power to their aid, but raised up judges from among themselves, as there was occasion, men to whom God gave extraordinary qualifications for, and calls to, that special service for which they were designed, which was to reform and deliver Israel, and whose great attempts he crowned with wonderful success: The Lord was with the judges when he raised them up, and so they became saviours. Observe,

(1.) In the days of the greatest degeneracy and distress of the church there shall be some whom God will either find or make to redress its grievances and set things to rights.

(2.) God must be acknowledged in the seasonable rising up of useful men for public service. He endues men with wisdom and courage, gives them hearts to act and venture. All that are in any way the blessings of their country must be looked upon as the gifts of God.

(3.) Whom God calls he will own, and give them his presence; whom he raises up he will be with.

(4.) The judges of a land are its saviours.

IV. The degenerate Israelites were not effectually and thoroughly reformed, no, not by their judges, Jdg 2:17-19.

1. Even while their judges were with them, and active in the work of reformation, there were those that would not hearken to their judges, but at that very time went a whoring after other gods, so mad were they upon their idols, and so obstinately bent to backslide. They had been espoused to God, but broke the marriage-covenant, and went a whoring after these gods. Idolatry is spiritual adultery, so vile, and base, and perfidious a thing is it, and so hardly are those reclaimed that are addicted to it.

2. Those that in the times of reformation began to amend yet turned quickly out of the way again, and became as bad as ever. The way they turned out of was that which their godly ancestors walked in, and set them out in; but they soon started from under the influence both of their fathers' good example and of their own good education. The wicked children of godly parents do so, and will therefore have a great deal to answer for. However, when the judge was dead, they looked upon the dam which checked the stream of their idolatry as removed, and then it flowed down again with so much the more fury, and the next age seemed to be rather the worse for the attempts that had been made towards reformation, Jdg 2:19. They corrupted themselves more than their fathers, strove to outdo them in multiplying strange gods and inventing profane and impious rites of worship, as it were in contradiction to their reformers.

They ceased not from, or, as the word is, they would not let fall, any of their own doings, grew not ashamed of those idolatrous services that were most odious nor weary of those that were most barbarous, would not so much as diminish one step of their hard and stubborn way. Thus those that have forsaken the good ways of God, which they have once known and professed, commonly grow most daring and desperate in sin, and have their hearts most hardened.

V. God's just resolution hereupon was still to continue the rod over them, 1. Their sin was sparing the Canaanites, and this in contempt and violation of the covenant God had made with them and the commands he had given them, Jdg 2:20. 2. Their punishment was that the Canaanites were spared, and so they were beaten with their own rod. They were not all delivered into the hand of Joshua while he lived, Jdg 2:23. Our Lord Jesus, though he spoiled principalities and powers, yet did not complete his victory at first.

We see not yet all things put under him; there are remains of Satan's interest in the church, as there were of the Canaanites in the land; but our Joshua lives for ever, and will in the great day perfect his conquest. After Joshua's death, little was done for a long time against the Canaanites: Israel indulged them, and grew familiar with them, and therefore God would not drive them out any more, Jdg 2:21. If they will have such inmates as these among them, let them take them, and see what will come of it. God chose their delusions, Isa 66:4.

Thus men cherish and indulge their own corrupt appetites and passions, and, instead of mortifying them, make provision for them, and therefore God justly leaves them to themselves under the power of their sins, which will be their ruin. So shall their doom be; they themselves have decided it. These remnants of the Canaanites were left to prove Israel (Jdg 2:22), whether they would keep the way of the Lord or not; not that God might know them, but that they might know themselves. It was to try,

(1.) Whether they could resist the temptations to idolatry which the Canaanites would lay before them. God had told them they could not, Da 7:4. But they thought they could. "Well," said God, "I will try you;" and, upon trial, it was found that the tempters' charms were far too strong for them. God has told us how deceitful and desperately wicked our hearts

are, but we are not willing to believe it till by making bold with temptation we find it too true by sad experience.

(2.) Whether they would make a good use of the vexations which the remaining natives would give them, and the many troubles they would occasion them, and would thereby be convinced of sin and humbled for it, reformed, and driven to God and their duty, whether by continual alarms from them they would be kept in awe and made afraid of provoking God.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

16 Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.

17 And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; *but* they did not so.

18 And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

19 And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

20 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice;

21 I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:

22 that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep *it*, or not.

23 Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua.

Judges-3

The Nations Left to Test Israel

1 Now these *are* the nations which the Lord left, to prove Israel by them, *even* as many of *Israel* as had not known all the wars of Canaan;
2 only that the generations of the children of Israel might know to teach them war, at the least such as before knew nothing thereof;
3 *namely,* five lords of the Philistines, and all the Canaanites, and the Sidonians, and the Hivites that dwelt in mount Lebanon, from mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

We are here told what remained of the old inhabitants of Canaan. 1. There were some of them that kept together in united bodies, unbroken (Jdg 3:3): The five lords of the Philistines, namely, Ashdod, Gaza, Askelon, Gath, and Ekron, 1Sa 6:7. Three of these cities had been in part reduced (Jdg 1:18), but it seems the Philistines (probably with the help of the other two, which strengthened their confederacy with each other thenceforward) recovered the possession of them. These gave the greatest disturbance to Israel of any of the natives, especially in the latter times of the judges, and they were never quite reduced until David's time.

There was a particular nation called Canaanites, that kept their ground with the Sidonians, upon the coast of the great sea. And in the north the Hivites held much of Mount Lebanon, it being a remote corner, in which perhaps they were supported by some of the neighbouring states. But, besides these, 2. There were every where in all parts of the country some scatterings of the nations (Jdg 3:5), Hittites, Amorites, &c., which, by Israel's foolish connivance and indulgence, were so many, so easy, and so insolent, that the children of Israel are said to dwell among them, as if the right had still remained in the Canaanites, and the Israelites had been taken in by their permission and only as tenants at will.

Now concerning these remnants of the natives observe,

I. How wisely God permitted them to remain. It is mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter as an act of God's justice, that he let them remain for Israel's correction. But here another construction is put upon it, and it appears to have been an act of God's wisdom, that he let them remain for Israel's real advantage, that those who had not known the wars of Canaan might learn war, Jdg 3:1,2. It was the will of God that the people of Israel should be inured to war,

1. Because their country was exceedingly rich and fruitful, and abounded with dainties of all sorts, which, if they were not sometimes made to know hardship, would be in danger of sinking them into the utmost degree of luxury and effeminacy. They must sometimes wade in blood, and not always in milk and honey, lest even their men of war, by the long disuse of arms, should become as soft and as nice as the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy, a temper as destructive to every thing that is good as it is to every thing that is great, and therefore to be carefully watched against by all God's Israel.

2. Because their country lay very much in the midst of enemies, by whom they must expect to be insulted; for God's heritage was a speckled bird; the birds round about were against her, Jer 12:9. It was therefore necessary they should be well disciplined, that they might defend their coasts when invaded, and might hereafter enlarge their coast as God had promised them. The art of war is best learnt by experience, which not only acquaints men with martial discipline, but (which is no less necessary) inspires them with a martial disposition. It was for the interest of Israel to breed soldiers, as it is the interest of an island to breed sea-men, and therefore God left Canaanites among them, that, by the less difficulties and hardships they met with in encountering them, they might

be prepared for greater, and, by running with the footmen, might learn to contend with horses, Jer 12:5. Israel was a figure of the church militant, that must fight its way to a triumphant state.

The soldiers of Christ must endure hardness, 2Ti 2:3. Corruption is therefore left remaining in the hearts even of good Christians, that they may learn war, may keep on the whole armour of God, and stand continually upon their guard. The learned bishop Patrick offers another sense of Jdg 3:2: That they might know to teach them war, that is, they shall know what it is to be left to themselves. Their fathers fought by a divine power. God taught their hands to war and their fingers to fight; but now that they have forfeited his favour let them learn what it is to fight like other men.

II. How wickedly Israel mingled themselves with those that did remain. One thing God intended in leaving them among them was to prove Israel (Jdg 3:4), that those who were faithful to the God of Israel might have the honour of resisting the Canaanites' allurements to idolatry, and that those who were false and insincere might be discovered, and might fall under the shame of yielding to those allurements. Thus in the Christian churches there must needs be heresies, that those who are perfect may be made manifest, 1Co 11:19. Israel, upon trial, proved bad.

1. They joined in marriage with the Canaanites (Jdg 3:6), though they could not advance either their honour or their estate by marrying with them. They would mar their blood instead of mending it, and sink their estates instead of raising them, by such marriages.

2. Thus they were brought to join in worship with them; they served their gods (Jdg 3:6), Baalim and the groves (Jdg 3:7), that is, the images that were worshipped in groves of thick trees, which were a sort of natural temples. In such unequal

matches there is more reason to fear that the bad will corrupt the good than to hope that the good will reform the bad, as there is in laying two pears together, the one rotten and the other sound. When they inclined to worship other gods they forgot the Lord their God. In complaisance to their new relations, they talked of nothing by Baalim and the groves, so that by degrees they lost the remembrance of the true God, and forgot there was such a Being, and what obligations they lay under to him. In nothing is the corrupt memory of man more treacherous than in this, that it is apt to forget God; because out of sight, he is out of mind; and here begins all the wickedness that is in the world: they have perverted their way, for they have forgotten the Lord their God.

4 And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

5 And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites:

6 and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods.

Othniel Delivers Israel from Chushan-rishathaim

7 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgat the Lord their God, and served Baalim and the groves.

We now come to the records of the government of the particular judges, the first of which was Othniel, in whom the story of this book is knit to that of Joshua, for even in Joshua's time Othniel began to be famous, by which it appears that it was not long after Israel's settlement in Canaan before their purity began to be corrupted and their peace (by consequence) disturbed.

And those who have taken pains to enquire into the sacred chronology are generally agreed that the Danites' idolatry, and the war with the Benjamites for abusing the Levite's concubine, though related in the latter end of this book, happened about this time, under or before the government of

Othniel, who, though a judge, was not such a king in Israel as would keep men from doing what was right in their own eyes. In this short narrative of Othniel's government we have,

I The distress that Israel was brought into for their sin, Jdg 3:8. God being justly displeased with them for plucking up the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the nations, plucked up the hedge of their protection and laid them open to the nations, set them to sale as goods he would part with, and the first that laid hands on them was Chushan-rishathaim, king of that Syria which lay between the two great rivers of Tigris and Euphrates, thence called Mesopotamia, which signifies in the midst of rivers.

It is probable that this was a warlike prince, and, aiming to enlarge his dominions, he invaded the two tribes first on the other side Jordan that lay next him, and afterwards, perhaps by degrees, penetrated into the heart of the country, and as far as he went put them under contribution, exacting it with rigour, and perhaps quartering soldiers upon them. Laban, who oppressed Jacob with a hard service, was of this country; but it lay at such a distance that one could not have thought Israel's trouble would come from such a far country, which shows so much the more of the hand of God in it.

II. Their return to God in this distress: When he slew them, then they sought him whom before they had slighted. The children of Israel, even the generality of them, cried unto the Lord, Jdg 3:9. At first they made light of their trouble, and thought they could easily shake off the yoke of a prince at such a distance; but, when it continued eight years, they began to feel the smart of it, and then those cried under it who before had laughed at it.

Those who in the day of their mirth had cried to Baalim and Ashtaroth now that they are in trouble cry to the Lord from whom they had revolted, whose justice brought them into this trouble, and whose power and favour could alone help them

out of it. Affliction makes those cry to God with importunity who before would scarcely speak to him.

III. God's return in mercy to them for their deliverance. Though need drove them to him, he did not therefore reject their prayers, but graciously raised up a deliverer, or saviour, as the word is. Observe,

1. Who the deliverer was. It was Othniel, who married Caleb's daughter, one of the old stock that had seen the works of the Lord, and had himself, no question, kept his integrity, and secretly lamented the apostasy of his people, but waited for a divine call to appear publicly for the redress of their grievances. He was now, we may suppose, far advanced in years, when God raised him up to this honour, but the decays of age were no hindrance to his usefulness when God had work for him to do.

2. Whence he had his commission, not of man, nor by man; but the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (Jdg 3:10), the spirit of wisdom and courage to qualify him for the service, and a spirit of power to excite him to it, so as to give him and others full satisfaction that it was the will of God he should engage in it. The Chaldee says, The spirit of prophecy remained on him.

3. What method he took. He first judged Israel, reproved them, called them to account for their sins, and reformed them, and then went out to war. This was the right method. Let sin at home be conquered, that worst of enemies, and then enemies abroad will be the more easily dealt with. Thus let Christ be our Judge and Law-giver, and then he will save us, and on no other terms, Isa 33:22.

4. What good success he had. He prevailed to break the yoke of the oppression, and, as it should seem, to break the neck of the oppressor; for it is said, The Lord delivered Chushan-

rishathaim into his hand. Now was Judah, of which tribe Othniel was, as a lion's whelp gone up from the prey.

5. The happy consequence of Othniel's good services. The land, though not getting ground, yet had rest, and some fruits of the reformation, forty years; and the benefit would have been perpetual if they had kept close to God and their duty.

8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years.

9 And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, *even* Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

10 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered Chushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushan-rishathaim.

11 And the land had rest forty years: and Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Ehud Delivers Israel from Moab

12 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

13 And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees.

14 So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.

15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon *was* a very fat man.

Ehud is the next of the judges whose achievements are related in this history, and here is an account of his actions.

I. When Israel sins again God raises up a new oppressor, Jdg 3:12-14. It was an aggravation of their wickedness that they did evil again after they had smarted so long for their former iniquities, promised so fair when Othniel judged them, and received so much mercy from God in their deliverance. What, and after all this, again to break his commandments! Was the disease obstinate to all the methods of cure, both corrosives and lenitives? It seems it was. Perhaps they thought they might make the more bold with their old sins because they saw themselves in no danger from their old oppressor; the powers of that kingdom were weakened and brought low. But God made them know that he had variety of rods wherewith to chastise them: He strengthened Eglon king of Moab against them. This oppressor lay nearer to them than the former, and therefore would be the more mischievous to them; God's judgments thus approached them gradually, to bring them to repentance.

When Israel dwelt in tents, but kept their integrity, Balak king of Moab, who would have strengthened himself against them, was baffled; but now that they had forsaken God, and worshipped the gods of the nations round about them (and perhaps those of the Moabites among the rest), here was another king of Moab, whom God strengthened against them, put power into his hands, though a wicked man, that he might be a scourge to Israel. The staff in his hand with which he beat Israel was God's indignation; howbeit he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, Isa 10:6,7. Israelites did ill, and, we may suppose, Moabites did worse; yet because God commonly punishes the sins of his own people in this world, that, the flesh being destroyed, the spirit may be saved, Israel is weakened and Moab strengthened against them. God would not suffer the Israelites, when they were the stronger, to distress the Moabites, nor give them any disturbance, though they were idolaters (De 2:9); yet now he suffered the

Moabites to distress Israel, and strengthened them on purpose that they might: Thy judgments, O God! Are a great deep. The king of Moab took to his assistance the Ammonites and Amalekites (Jdg 3:13), and this strengthened him; and we are here told how they prevailed.

1. They beat them in the field: They went and smote Israel (Jdg 3:13), not only those tribes that lay next them on the other side Jordan, who, though first settled, being frontier-tribes, were most disturbed; but those also within Jordan, for they made themselves masters of the city of palm-trees, which, it is probable, was a strong-hold erected near the place where Jericho had stood, for that was so called (De 34:3), into which the Moabites put a garrison, to be a bridle upon Israel, and to secure the passes of Jordan, for the preservation of the communication with their own country. It was well for the Kenites that they had left this city (Jdg 1:16) before it fell into the hands of the enemy. See how quickly the Israelites lost that by their own sin which they had gained by miracles of divine mercy.

2. They made them to serve (Jdg 3:14), that is, exacted tribute from them, either the fruits of the earth in kind or money in lieu of them. They neglected the service of God, and did not pay him his tribute; thus therefore did God recover from them that wine and oil, that silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal, Ho 2:8. What should have been paid to the divine grace, and was not, was distrained for, and paid to the divine justice. The former servitude (Jdg 3:8) lasted but eight years, this eighteen; for, if less troubles do not do the work, God will send greater.

II. When Israel prays again God raises up a new deliverer (Jdg 3:15), named Ehud. We are here told,

1. That he was a Benjamite. The city of palm-trees lay within the lot of this tribe, by which it is probable that they suffered most, and therefore stirred first to shake off the yoke. It is

supposed by the chronologers that the Israelites' war with Benjamin for the wickedness of Gibeah, by which that whole tribe was reduced to 600 men, happened before this, so that we may well think that tribe to be now the weakest of all the tribes, yet out of it God raised up this deliverer, in token of his being perfectly reconciled to them, to manifest his own power in ordaining strength out of weakness, and that he might bestow more abundant honour upon that part which lacked, 1Co 12:24.

2. That he was left-handed, as it seems many of that tribe were, Jdg 20:16. Benjamin signifies the son of the right hand, and yet multitudes of them were left-handed; for men's natures do not always answer their names. The LXX. say he was an ambi-dexter, one that could use both hands alike, supposing that this was an advantage to him in the action he was called to; but the Hebrew phrase, that he was shut of his right hand, intimates that, either through disease of disuse, he made little or no use of that, but of his left hand only, and so was the less fit for war, because he must needs handle his sword but awkwardly; yet God chose this left-handed man to be the man of his right hand, whom he would make strong for himself, Ps 80:17. It was God's right hand that gained Israel the victory (Ps 44:3), not the right hand of the instruments he employed.

3. We are here told what Ehud did for the deliverance of Israel out of the hands of the Moabites. He saved the oppressed by destroying the oppressors, when the measure of their iniquity was full and the set time to favour Israel had come.

(1.) He put to death Eglon the king of Moab; I say, put him to death, not murdered or assassinated him, but as a judge, or minister of divine justice, executed the judgments of God upon him, as an implacable enemy to God and Israel. This story is particularly related.

[1.] He had a fair occasion of access to him. Being an ingenious active man, and fit to stand before kings, his people chose him to carry a present in the name of all Israel, over and above their tribute, to their great lord the king of Moab, that they might find favour in his eyes, Jdg 3:15. The present is called mincha in the original, which is the word used in the law for the offerings that were presented to God to obtain his favour; these the children of Israel had not offered in their season to the God that loved them; and now, to punish them for their neglect, they are laid under a necessity of bringing their offerings to a heathen prince that hated them. Ehud went on his errand to Eglon, offered his present with the usual ceremony and expressions of dutiful respect, the better to colour what he intended and to prevent suspicion.

[2.] It should seem, from the first, he designed to be the death of him, God putting it into his heart, and letting him know also that the motion was from himself, by the Spirit that came upon him, the impulses of which carried with them their own evidence, and so gave him full satisfaction both as to the lawfulness and the success of this daring attempt, of both which he would have had reason enough to doubt.

If he be sure that God bids him do it, he is sure both that he may do it and that he shall do it; for a command from God is sufficient to bear us out, and bring us off, both against our consciences and against all the world. That he compassed and imagined the death of this tyrant appears by the preparation he made of a weapon for the purpose, a short dagger, but half a yard long, like a bayonet, which might easily be concealed under his clothes (Jdg 3:16), perhaps because none were suffered to come near the king with their swords by their sides. This he wore on his right thigh, that it might be the more ready to his left hand, and might be the less suspected.

[3.] He contrived how to be alone with him, which he might the more easily be now that he had not only made himself known to him, but ingratiated himself by the present, and the

compliments which perhaps, on this occasion, he had passed upon him. Observe, how he laid his plot.

First, He concealed his design even from his own attendants, brought them part of the way, and then ordered them to go forward towards home, while he himself, as if he had forgotten something behind him, went back to the king of Moab's court, Jdg 3:18. There needed but one hand to do the execution; had more been engaged they could not so safely have kept counsel, nor so easily have made an escape.

Secondly, He returned from the quarries by Gilgal (Jdg 3:19), from the graven images (so it is in the margin) which were with Gilgal, set up perhaps by the Moabites with the twelve stones which Joshua had set up there. Some suggest that the sight of these idols stirred up in him such an indignation against the king of Moab as put him upon the execution of that design which otherwise he had thought to let fall for the present. Or, perhaps, he came so far as to these images, that, telling from what place he returned, the king of Moab might be the more apt to believe he had a message from God.

Thirdly, He begged a private audience, and obtained it in a withdrawing-room, here called a summer parlour. He told the king he had a secret errand to him, who thereupon ordered all his attendants to withdraw, Jdg 3:19. Whether he expected to receive some private instructions from an oracle, or some private informations concerning the present state of Israel, as if Ehud would betray his country, it was a very unwise thing for him to be all alone with a stronger and one whom he had reason to look upon as an enemy; but those that are marked for ruin are infatuated, and their hearts hid from understanding; God deprives them of discretion.

[4.] When he had him alone he soon dispatched him. His summer parlour, where he used to indulge himself in ease and luxury, was the place of his execution. First, Ehud demands his attention to a message from God (Jdg 3:20), and that

message was a dagger. God sends to us by the judgments of his hand, as well as by the judgments of his mouth. Secondly, Eglon pays respect to a message from God. Though a king, though a heathen king, though rich and powerful, though now tyrannizing over the people of God, though a fat unwieldy man that could not easily rise nor stand long, though in private and what he did was not under observation, yet, when he expected to receive orders from heaven, he rose out of his seat; whether it was low and easy, or whether it was high and stately, he quitted it, and stood up when God was about to speak to him, thereby owning God his superior. This shames the irreverence of many who are called Christians, and yet, when a message from God is delivered to them, study to show, by all the marks of carelessness, how little they regard it.

Ehud, in calling what he had to do a message from God, plainly avouches a divine commission for it; and God's inclining Eglon to stand up to it did both confirm the commission and facilitate the execution. Thirdly, The message was delivered, not to his ear, but immediately, and literally, to his heart, into which the fatal knife was thrust, and was left there, Jdg 3:21,22. His extreme fatness made him unable to resist or to help himself; probably it was the effect of his luxury and excess; and, when the fat closed up the blade, God would by this circumstance show how those that pamper the body do but prepare for their own misery.

However, it was an emblem of his carnal security and senselessness. His heart was a fat as grease, and in that he thought himself enclosed. See Ps 119:70,Ps 17:10. Eglon signifies a calf, and he fell like a fatted calf, by the knife, an acceptable sacrifice to divine justice. Notice is taken of the coming out of the dirt or dung, that the death of this proud tyrant may appear the more ignominious and shameful. He that had been so very nice and curious about his own body, to keep it easy and clean, shall now be found wallowing in his own blood and excrements.

Thus does God pour contempt upon princes. Now this act of Ehud's may justify itself because he had special direction from God to do it, and it was agreeable to the usual method which, under that dispensation, God took to avenge his people of their enemies, and to manifest to the world his own justice. But it will by no means justify any now in doing the like. No such commissions are now given, and to pretend to them is to blaspheme God, and made him patronize the worst of villanies. Christ bade Peter sheathe the sword, and we find not that he bade him draw it again.

[5.] Providence wonderfully favoured his escape, when he had done the execution.

First, The tyrant fell silently, without any shriek or out-cry, which might have been overheard by his servants at a distance. How silently does he go down to the pit, choked up, it may be, with his own fat, which stifled his dying groans, though he had made so great a noise in the world, and had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living!

Secondly, The heroic executioner of this vengeance, with such a presence of mind as discovered not only no consciousness of guilt, but a strong confidence in the divine protection, shut the doors after him, took the key with him, and passed through the guards with such an air of innocence, and boldness, and unconcernedness, as made them not at all to suspect his having done any thing amiss.

Thirdly, The servants that attended in the antechamber, coming to the door of the inner parlour, when Ehud had gone, to know their master's pleasure, and finding it locked and all quiet, concluded he had lain down to sleep, had covered his feet upon his couch, and gone to consult his pillow about the message he had received, and to dream upon it (Jdg 3:24), and therefore would not offer to open the door.

Thus by their care not to disturb his sleep they lost the opportunity of revenging his death. See what comes of men's taking state too much, and obliging those about them to keep their distance; some time or other it may come against them more than they think of. Fourthly, The servants at length opened the door, and found their master had slept indeed his long sleep, Jdg 3:25. The horror of this tragical spectacle, and the confusion it must needs put them into, to reflect upon their own inconsideration in not opening the door sooner, quite put by the thoughts of sending pursuers after him that had done it, whom now they despaired of overtaking.

Lastly, Ehud by this means made his escape to Sierath, a thick wood; so some, Jdg 3:26. It is not said anywhere in this story what was the place in which Eglon lived now; but, there being no mention of Ehud passing and repassing Jordan, I am inclined to think that Eglon had left his own country of Moab, on the other side Jordan, and made his principal residence at this time in the city of palm-trees, within the land of Canaan, a richer country than his own, and that there he was slain, and then the quarries by Gilgal were not far off him. There where he had settled himself, and thought he had sufficiently fortified himself to lord it over the people of God, there he was cut off, and proved to be fed for the slaughter like a lamb in a large place.

(2.) Ehud, having slain the king of Moab, gave a total rout to the forces of the Moabites that were among them, and so effectually shook off the yoke of their oppression.

[1.] He raised an army immediately in Mount Ephraim, at some distance form the headquarters of the Moabites, and headed them himself, Jdg 3:27. The trumpet he blew was indeed a jubilee-trumpet, proclaiming liberty, and a joyful sound it was to the oppressed Israelites, who for a long time had heard no other trumpets than those of their enemies.

[2.] Like a pious man, and as one that did all this in faith, he took encouragement himself, and gave encouragement to his soldiers, from the power of God engaged for them (Jdg 3:28): "Follow me, for the Lord hath delivered your enemies into your hands; we are sure to have God with us, and therefore may go on boldly, and shall go on triumphantly."

[3.] Like a politic general, he first secured the fords of Jordan, set strong guards upon all those passes, to cut off the communications between the Moabites that were in the land of Israel (for upon them only his design was) and their own country on the other side Jordan, that if, upon the alarm given them, they resolved to fly, they might not escape thither, and, if they resolved to fight, they might not have assistance thence. Thus he shut them up in that land as their prison in which they were pleasing themselves as their palace and paradise.

[4.] He then fell upon them, and put them all to the sword, 10,000 of them, which it seems was the number appointed to keep Israel in subjection (Jdg 3:29): There escaped not a man of them. And they were the best and choicest of all the king of Moab's forces, all lusty men, men of bulk and stature, and not only able-bodied, but high spirited too, and men of valour, Jdg 3:29. But neither their strength nor their courage stood them in any stead when the set time had come for God to deliver them into the hand of Israel.

[5.] The consequence of this victory was that the power of the Moabites was wholly broken in the land of Israel. The country was cleared of these oppressors, and the land had rest eighty years, Jdg 3:30. We may hope that there was likewise a reformation among them, and a check give to idolatry, by the influence of Ehud which continued a good part of this time. It was a great while for the land to rest, fourscore years; yet what is that to the saints' everlasting rest in the heavenly Canaan?

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away
the people that bare the present.
19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that *were* by Gilgal,
and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep
silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.
20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlor,
which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message
from God unto thee. And he arose out of *his* seat.
21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his
right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:
22 and the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon
the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and
the dirt came out.
23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the
parlor upon him, and locked them.
24 When he was gone out, his servants came; and when they saw that,
behold, the doors of the parlor *were* locked, they said, Surely he
covereth his feet in his summer chamber.
25 And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he opened
not the doors of the parlor; therefore they took a key, and opened
them: and, behold, their lord *was* fallen down dead on the earth.
26 And Ehud escaped while they tarried, and passed beyond the
quarries, and escaped unto Seirath.
27 And it came to pass, when he was come, that he blew a trumpet in
the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down
with him from the mount, and he before them.
28 And he said unto them, Follow after me: for the Lord hath
delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they
went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan toward Moab,
and suffered not a man to pass over.
29 And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men, all
lusty, and all men of valor; and there escaped not a man.
30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the
land had rest fourscore years.

Shamgar Delivers Israel from the Philistines

31 And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an oxgoad: and he also delivered Israel.

When it is said the land had rest eighty years, some think it meant chiefly of that part of the land which lay eastward on the banks of Jordan, which had been oppressed by the Moabites; but it seems, by this passage here, that the other side of the country which lay south-west was in that time infested by the Philistines, against whom Shamgar made head.

1. It seems Israel needed deliverance, for he delivered Israel; how great the distress was Deborah afterwards related in her song (Jdg 5:6), that in the days of Shamgar the highways were unoccupied, &c.; that part of the country which lay next to the Philistines was so infested with plunderers that people could not travel the roads in safety, but were in danger of being set upon and robbed, nor durst they dwell in the unguarded villages, but were forced to take shelter in the fortified cities.

2. God raised him up to deliver them, as it should seem, while Ehud was yet living, but superannuated. So inconsiderable were the enemies for number that it seems the killing of 600 of them amounted to a deliverance of Israel, and so many he slew with an ox-goad, or, as some read it, a plough-share. It is probable that he was himself following the plough when the Philistines made an inroad upon the country to ravage it, and God put it into his heart to oppose them; the impulse being sudden and strong, and having neither sword nor spear to do execution with, he took the instrument that was next at hand, some of the tools of his plough, and with that killed so many hundred men and came off unhurt. See here,

(1.) That God can make those eminently serviceable to his glory and his church's good whose extraction, education, and employment, are very mean and obscure. He that has the residue of the Spirit could, when he pleased, make ploughmen judges and generals, and fishermen apostles.

(2.) It is no matter how weak the weapon is if God direct and strengthen the arm. An ox-goad, when God pleases, shall do more than Goliath's sword. And sometimes he chooses to work by such unlikely means, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God.

Judges-4

Deborah and Barak Defeat Sisera

1 And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead.

Here is, I. Israel backsliding from God: They again did evil in his sight, forsook his service, and worshipped idols; for this was the sin which now most easily beset them, Jdg 4:1. See in this,

1 The strange strength of corruption, which hurries men into sin notwithstanding the most frequent experience of its fatal consequences. The bent to backslide is with great difficulty restrained.

2 The common ill effects of a long peace. The land had rest eighty years, which should have confirmed them in their religion; but, on the contrary, it made them secure and wanton, and indulgent of those lusts which the worship of the false gods was calculated for the gratification of. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jeshurun waxeth fat and kicketh.

3. The great loss which a people sustains by the death of good governors. He did evil, because Ehud was dead. So it may be read. He kept a strict eye upon them, restrained and punished every thing that looked towards idolatry, and kept them close to God's service. But, when he was gone, they revolted, fearing him more than God.

II. Israel oppressed by their enemies. When they forsook God, he forsook them; and then they became an easy prey to every spoiler. They alienated themselves from God as if he were none of theirs; and then God alienated them as none of his. Those that threw themselves out of God's service threw themselves out of his protection. What has my beloved to do in my house when she has thus played the harlot? Jer 11:15. He sold them into the hand of Jabin, Jdg 4:2. This Jabin reigned in Hazor, as another of the same name, and perhaps his ancestor, had done before him, whom Joshua routed and slew, and burnt his city, Jos 11:1, 10. But it seems, in process of time, the city was rebuilt, the power regained, the loss retrieved, and, by degrees, the king of Hazor becomes able to tyrannize over Israel, who by sin had lost all their advantage against the Canaanites. This servitude was longer than either of the former, and much more grievous. Jabin, and his general Sisera, did mightily oppress Israel. That which aggravated the oppression was,

1. That this enemy was nearer to them than any of the former, in their borders, in their bowels, and by this means had the more opportunity to do them a mischief.

2. That they were the natives of the country, who bore an implacable enmity to them, for invading and dispossessing them, and when they had them in their power would be so much the more cruel and mischievous towards them in revenge of the old quarrel.

3. That these Canaanites had formerly been conquered and subdued by Israel, were of old sentenced to be their servants

(Ge 9:25), and might now have been under their feet, and utterly incapable of giving them any disturbance, if their own slothfulness, cowardice, and unbelief, had not suffered them thus to get head. To be oppressed by those whom their fathers had conquered, and whom they themselves had foolishly spared, could not but be very grievous.

III. Israel returning to their God: They cried unto the Lord, when distress drove them to him, and they saw no other way of relief. Those that slight God in their prosperity will find themselves under a necessity of seeking him when they are in trouble.

2 And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host *was* Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles.

3 And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

4 And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

5 And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

The year of the redeemed at length came, when Israel was to be delivered out of the hands of Jabin, and restored again to their liberty, which we may suppose the northern tribes, that lay nearest to the oppressors and felt most the effects of his fury, did in a particular manner cry to God for. For the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy, now will God arise. Now here we have,

I The preparation of the people for their deliverance, by the prophetic conduct and government of Deborah, Jdg 4:4,5. Her name signifies a bee; and she answered her name by her industry, sagacity, and great usefulness to the public, her sweetness to her friends and sharpness to her enemies. She is said to be the wife of Lapidoth; but, the termination not being

commonly found in the name of a man, some make this the name of a place: she was a woman of Lapidoth. Others take it appellatively, Lapidoth signifies lamps. The Rabbin say she had employed herself in making wicks for the lamps of the tabernacle; and, having stooped to that mean office for God, she was afterwards thus preferred. Or she was a woman of illuminations, or of splendours, one that was extraordinarily knowing and wise, and so came to be very eminent and illustrious. Concerning her we are here told,

1. That she was intimately acquainted with God; she was a prophetess, one that was instructed in divine knowledge by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God, and had gifts of wisdom, to which she attained not in an ordinary way: she heard the words of God, and probably saw the visions of the Almighty.

2. That she was entirely devoted to the service of Israel. She judged Israel at the time that Jabin oppressed them; and perhaps, being a woman, she was the more easily permitted by the oppressor to do it. She judged, not as a princess, by an civil authority conferred upon her, but as a prophetess, and as God's mouth to them, correcting abuses and redressing grievances, especially those which related to the worship of God. The children of Israel came up to her from all parts for judgment, not so much for the deciding of controversies between man and man as for advice in the reformation of what was amiss in things pertaining to God.

Those among them who before had secretly lamented the impieties and idolatries of their neighbours, but knew not where to apply for the restraining of them, now made their complaints to Deborah, who, by the sword of the Spirit, showing them the judgment of God, reduced and reclaimed many, and excited and animated the magistrates in their respective districts to put the laws in execution. It is said she dwelt, or, as some read it, she sat under a palm-tree, called ever after from her the palm-tree of Deborah. Either she had

her house under that tree, a mean habitation which would couch under a tree, or she had her judgment-seat in the open air, under the shadow of that tree, which was an emblem of the justice she sat there to administer, which will thrive and grow against opposition, as palms under pressures. Josephus says that the children of Israel came to Deborah, to desire her to pray to God for them, that they might be delivered out of the hand of Jabin; and Samuel is said at one particular time to judge Israel in Mizpeh, that is, to bring them back again to God, when they made the same address to him upon a like occasion, 1Sa 7:6,8.

II The project laid for their deliverance. When the children of Israel came to her for judgment, with her they found salvation. So those that seek to God for grace shall have grace and peace, grace and comfort, grace and glory. She was not herself fit to command an army in person, being a woman; but she nominated one that was fit, Barak of Naphtali, who, it is probable, had already signalized himself in some rencounters with the forces of the oppressor, living near him (for Hazor and Harosheth lay within the lot of that tribe), and thereby had gained a reputation and interest among his people.

Some struggles, we may suppose, that brave man had made towards the shaking off of the yoke, but could not effect it till he had his commission and instructions from Deborah. He could do nothing without her head, nor she without his hands; but both together made a complete deliverer, and effected a complete deliverance. The greatest and best are not self-sufficient, but need one another.

1. By God's direction, she orders Barak to raise an army, and engage Jabin's forces, that were under Sisera's command, Jdg 4:6,7. Barak, it may be, had been meditating some great attempt against the common enemy; a spark of generous fire was glowing in his breast, and he would fain do something to

the purpose for his people and for the cities of his God. But two things discouraged him:

(1.) He wanted a commission to levy forces; this therefore Deborah here gives him under the broad seal of heaven, which, as a prophetess, she had a warrant to affix to it: "Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded it? Yet, certainly he has; take my word for it." Some think she intends this as an appeal to Barak's own heart. "Has not God, by a secret whisper to thyself, given thee some intimation of his purpose to make use of thee as an instrument in his hands to save Israel? Hast not thou felt some impulse of this kind upon thy own spirit?" If so, the spirit of prophesy in Deborah confirms the spirit of a soldier in Barak: Go and draw towards Mount Tabor.

[1.] She directs him what number of men to raise-10,000; and let him not fear that these will be too few, when God hath said he will by them save Israel.

[2.] Whence he should raise them--only out of his own tribe, and that of Zebulun next adjoining. These two counties should furnish him with an army sufficient; he need not stay to go further. And, [3.] She orders him where to make his rendezvous--at Mount Tabor, in his own neighbourhood.

(2.) When he had an army raised, he knew not how he should have an opportunity of engaging the enemy, who perhaps declined fighting, having heard that Israel, if they had but courage enough to make head against any enemy, seldom failed of success. "Well," says Deborah, in the name of "God, I will draw unto thee Sisera and his army." She assured him that the matter should be determined by one pitched battle, and should not be long in the doing.

[1.] In mentioning the power of the enemy, Sisera, a celebrated general, bold and experienced, his chariots, his iron chariots, and his multitude of soldiers, she obliged Barak

to fortify himself with the utmost degree of resolution; for the enemy he was to engage was a very formidable one. It is good to know the worst, that we may provide accordingly. But,

[2.] In fixing the very place to which Sisera would draw his army, she gave him a sign, which might help to confirm his faith when he came to engage. it was a contingent things, and depended upon Sisera's own will; but, when afterwards Barak should see the event falling out just as Deborah had foretold, he might thence infer that certainly in the rest she said she spoke under a divine direction, which would be a great encouragement to him, especially because with this,

[3.] She gave him an express promise of success I will (that is, God will, in whose name I speak) deliver them into thy hand; so that when he saw them drawn up against him, according to Deborah's word, he might be confident that, according to her word, he should soon see them fallen before him. Observe, God drew them to him only that he might deliver them into his hand. When Sisera drew his forces together, he designed the destruction of Israel; but God gathered them as sheaves into the floor, for their own destruction, Mic 4:11,12. Assemble yourselves, and you shall be broken to pieces, Isa 8:9. See Re 19:17,18.

2. At Barak's request, she promises to go along with him to the field of battle.

(1.) Barak insisted much upon the necessity of her presence, which would be to him better than a council of war (Jdg 4:8): "If thou wilt go with me to direct and advise me, and in every difficult case to let me know God's mind, then I will go with all my heart, and not fear the chariots of iron; otherwise not." Some make this to be the language of a weak faith; he could not take her word unless he had her with him in pawn, as it were, for performance. It seems rather to arise from a conviction of the necessity of God's presence and continual direction, a pledge and earnest of which he would reckon

Deborah's presence to be, and therefore begged thus earnestly for it. "If thou go not up with me, in token of God's going with me, carry me not up hence." Nothing would be a greater satisfaction to him than to have the prophetess with him to animate the soldiers and to be consulted as an oracle upon all occasions.

(2.) Deborah promised to go with him, Jdg 4:9. No toil nor peril shall discourage her from doing the utmost that becomes her to do for the service of her country. She would not send him where she would not go herself. Those that in God's name call others to their duty should be very ready to assist them in it. Deborah was the weaker vessel, yet had the stronger faith. But though she agrees to go with Barak, if he insists upon it, she gives him a hint proper enough to move a soldier not to insist upon it: The journey thou undertakest (so confident was she of the success that she called his engaging in war but the undertaking of a journey) shall not be for thy honour; not so much for thy honour as if thou hadst gone by thyself; for the Lord shall sell Sisera (now his turn comes to be sold as Israel was, Jdg 4:2, by way of reprisal) "into the hands of a woman;" that is,

[1.] The world would ascribe the victory to the hand of Deborah: this he might himself foresee.

[2.] God (to correct his weakness) would complete the victory by the hand of Jael, which would be some eclipse to his glory. But Barak values the satisfaction of his mind, and the good success of his enterprise, more than his honour; and therefore will by no means drop his request. He dares not fight unless he have Deborah with him, to direct him and pray for him. She therefore stood to her word with a masculine courage; this noble heroine arose and went with Barak.

6 And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take

with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

7 And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

8 And Barak said unto her, if thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, *then* I will not go.

9 And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.

10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet: and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, *which was* of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which *is* by Kedesh.

12 And they showed Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to mount Tabor.

13 And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

14 And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

Here, I. Barak beats up for volunteers, and soon has his quota of men ready, Jdg 4:10. Deborah had appointed him to raise an army of 10,000 men (Jdg 4:6), and so many he has presently at his feet, following him, and subject to his command. God is said to call us to his feet (Isa 41:2), that is, into obedience to him. Some think it intimates that they were all footmen, and so the armies of the Jews generally were, which made the disproportion of strength between them and the enemy (who had horses and chariots) very great, and the victory the more illustrious; but the presence of God and his prophetess was abundantly sufficient to balance that disproportion.

Barak had his men at his feet, which intimates their cheerfulness and readiness to attend him whithersoever he went, Re 14:4. Though the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were chiefly depended on, yet it appears by Deborah's song that some had come in to him from other tribes (Manasseh and Issachar), and more were expected that came not, from Reuben, Dan, and Asher, Jdg 5:14-17. But these are overlooked here; and we are only told that to make his 10,000 men effective indeed Deborah went up with him. The Jdg 4:11, concerning the removal of Heber, one of the families of the Kenites, out of the wilderness of Judah, in the south, where those families had fixed themselves (Jdg 1:16), into the northern country, comes in for the sake of what was to follow concerning the exploit of Jael, a wife of that family.

II. Sisera, upon notice of Barak's motions, takes the field with a very numerous and powerful army (Jdg 4:12,13): They showed Sisera, that is, it was shown to him. Yet some think it refers to the Kenites, mentioned immediately before, Jdg 4:11. They gave Sisera notice of Barak's rendezvous, there being peace at this time between Jabin and that family, Jdg 4:17. Whether they intended it as a kindness to him or no, it served to accomplish what God had said by Deborah (Jdg 4:7): I will draw unto thee Sisera. Sisera's confidence was chiefly in his chariots; therefore particular notice is taken of them, 900 chariots of iron, which, with the scythes fastened to their axle-trees, when they were driven into an army of footmen, did terrible execution. So ingenious have men been in inventing methods of destroying one another, to gratify those lusts from which come wars and fightings.

III. Deborah gives orders to engage the enemy, Jdg 4:14. Josephus says that when Barak saw Sisera's army drawn up, and attempting to surround the mountain on the top of which he and his forces lay encamped, his heart quite failed him, and he determined to retire to a place of greater safety; but Deborah animated him to make a descent upon Sisera, assuring him that this was the day marked out in the divine

counsels for his defeat. "Now they appear most threatening they are ripe for ruin.

The thing is as sure to be done as if it were done already: The Lord hath delivered Sisera into thy hand." See how the work and honour of this great action are divided between Deborah and Barak; she, as the head, gives the word, he, as the hand, does the work. Thus does God dispense his gifts variously, 1Co 12:4-11, &c. But, though ordinarily the head of the woman is the man (1Co 11:3), he that has the residue of the Spirit was pleased to cross hands, and to put the head upon the woman's shoulders, choosing the weak things of the world to shame the mighty, that no flesh might glory in his presence. It was well for Barak that he had Deborah with him; for she made up what was defective,

1. In his conduct, by telling him, This is the day.

2. In his courage, by assuring him of God's presence: "Has not the Lord gone out before thee? Darest not thou follow when thou hast God himself for thy leader?" Note,

(1.) In every undertaking it is good to be satisfied that God goes before us, that we are in the way of our duty and under his direction.

(2.) If we have ground to hope that God goes before us, we ought to go on with courage and cheerfulness. Be not dismayed at the difficulties thou meetest with in resisting Satan, in serving God, or suffering for him; for has not the Lord gone out before thee? Follow him fully then.

IV. God himself routs the enemy's army, Jdg 4:15. Barak, in obedience to Deborah's orders, went down into the valley, though there upon the plain the iron chariots would have so much the more advantage against him, quitting his fastnesses upon the mountain in dependence upon the divine power; for in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains; in the

Lord alone is the salvation of his people, Jer 3:23. And he was not deceived in his confidence: The Lord discomfited Sisera. It was not so much the bold and surprising alarm which Barak gave their camp that dispirited and dispersed them, but God's terror seized their spirits and put them into an unaccountable confusion.

The stars, it seems, fought against them, Jdg 5:20. Josephus says that a violent storm of hail which beat in their faces gave them this rout, disabled them, and drove them back; so that they became a very easy prey to the army of Israel, and Deborah's words were made good: "The Lord has delivered them into thy hand; it is now in thy power to do what thou wilt with them."

V. Barak bravely improves his advantage, follows the blow with undaunted resolution and unwearied diligence, prosecutes the victory, pursues the scattered forces, even to their general's head-quarters at Harosheth (Jdg 4:16), and spares none whom God had delivered into his hand to be destroyed: There was not a man left. When God goes before us in our spiritual conflicts we must bestir ourselves; and, when by grace he gives us some success against the enemies of our souls, we must improve it by watchfulness and resolution, and carry on the holy war with vigour.

15 And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet.

16 But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; *and* there was not a man left.

17 Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite: for *there was* peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle.

19 And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink;
for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him
drink, and covered him.
20 Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall
be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, is there
any man here?That thou shalt say, no.

We have seen the army of the Canaanites totally routed. It is said (Ps 83:9, 10, where the defeat of this army is pleaded as a precedent for God's doing the like in after times) that they became as dung for the earth. Now here we have,

I The fall of their general, Sisera, captain of the host, in whom, it is likely, Jabin their king put an entire confidence, and therefore was not himself present in the action. Let us trace the steps of this mighty man's fall.

1. He quitted his chariot, and took to his feet, Jdg 4:15,17. His chariots had been his pride and his confidence; and we may suppose he had therefore despised and defied the armies of the living God, because they were all on foot, and had neither chariot nor horse, as he had. Justly therefore is he thus made ashamed of his confidence, and forced to quit it, and thinks himself then most safe and easy when he has got clear of his chariot, though we may well suppose it the best made, and best drawn, of any of them.

Thus are those disappointed who rest on the creature; like a broken reed, it not only breaks under them, but runs into their hand, and pierceth them with many sorrows. The idol may quickly become a burden (Isa 46:1), and what we were sick for God can make us sick of. How miserable doth Sisera look now he is dismounted! It is hard to say whether he blusheth or trembleth more. Put not your trust in princes, if they may so soon be brought to this, if he who but lately trusted to his arms with so much assurance must now trust to his heels only with so little.

2. He fled for shelter to the tents of the Kenites, having no strong-hold, nor any place of his own in reach to retire to. The mean and solitary way of the Kenites' living, perhaps, he had formerly despised and ridiculed, and the more because religion was kept up among them; yet now he is glad to put himself under the protection of one of these tents: and he chooses the wife's tent or apartment, either because less suspected, or because it happened to be next to him, and the first he came to, Jdg 4:17.

And that which encouraged him to go thither was that at this time there was peace between his master and the house of Heber: not that there was any league offensive and defensive between them, only at present there were no indications of hostility. Jabin did them no harm, did not oppress them as he did the Israelites, their plain, quiet, harmless way of living making them not suspected nor feared, and perhaps God so ordering it as a recompence for their constant adherence to the true religion. Sisera thought he might therefore be safe among them; not considering that, though they themselves suffered not by Jabin's power, they heartily sympathized with the Israel of God that did.

3. Jael invited him in, and bade him very welcome. Probably she stood at the tent door, to enquire what news from the army, and what the success of the battle which was fought not far off.

(1.) She invited him in. Perhaps she stood waiting for an opportunity to show kindness to any distressed Israelite, if there should be occasion for it; but seeing Sisera come in great haste, panting and out of breath, she invited him to come and repose himself in her tent, in which, while she seemed to design the relieving of his fatigue, perhaps she really intended the retarding of his flight, that he might fall into the hands of Barak, who was not in a hot chase after him (Jdg 4:18), and it may well questioned whether she had at first any thought of

taking away his life, but rather God afterwards put it into her heart.

(2.) She made very much of him, and seemed mighty careful to have him easy, as her invited guest. Was he weary? She finds him a very convenient place to repose himself in, and recruit his strength. Was he thirsty? Well he might. Did he want a little water to cool his tongue? The best liquor her tent afforded was at his service, and that was milk (Jdg 4:19), which, we may suppose, he drank heartily of, and, being refreshed with it, was the better disposed to sleep. Was he cold, or afraid of catching cold? Or did he desire to be hid from the pursuers, if they should search that tent? She covered him with a mantle, Jdg 4:18.

All expressions of care for his safety. Only when he desired her to tell a lie for him, and to say he was not there, she declined making any such promise, Jdg 4:20. We must not sin against God, no, not to oblige those we would show ourselves most observant of. Lastly, We must suppose she kept her tent as quiet as she could, and free from noise, that he might sleep the sooner and the faster. And now was Sisera least safe when he was most secure. How uncertain and precarious is human life! And what assurance can we have of it, when it may so easily be betrayed by those with whom it is trusted, and those may prove its destroyers who we hoped would be its protectors! It is best making God our friend, for he will not deceive us.

4. When he lay fast asleep she drove a long nail through his temples, so fastened his head to the ground, and killed him, Jdg 4:21. And, though this was enough to do the business, yet, to make sure work (if we translate it rightly, Jdg 5:26), she cut off his head, and left it nailed there. Whether she designed this or no when she invited him into her tent does not appear; probably the thought was darted into her mind when she saw him lie so conveniently to receive such a fatal blow; and, doubtless, the thought brought with it evidence

sufficient that it came not from Satan as a murderer and destroyer, but from God as a righteous judge and avenger, so much of brightness and heavenly light did she perceive in the inducements to it that offered themselves, the honour of God and the deliverance of Israel, and nothing of the blackness of malice, hatred, or personal revenge.

(1.) It was a divine power that enabled her to do it, and inspired her with a more than manly courage. What if her hand should shake, and she should miss her blow? What if he should awake when she was attempting it? Or suppose some of his own attendants should follow him, and surprise her in the face, how dearly would she and all hers be made to pay for it? Yet, obtaining help of God, she did it effectually.

(2.) It was a divine warrant that justified her in the doing of it; and therefore, since no such extraordinary commissions can now be pretended, it ought not in any case to be imitated. The laws of friendship and hospitality must be religiously observed, and we must abhor the thought of betraying any whom we have invited and encouraged to put a confidence in us. And, as to this act of Jael (like that of Ehud in the chapter before), we have reason to think she was conscious of such a divine impulse upon her spirit to do it as did abundantly satisfy herself (and it ought therefore to satisfy us) that it was well done. God's judgments are a great deep.

The instrument of this execution was a nail of the tent, that is, one of the great pins with which the tent, or the stakes of it, were fastened. They often removing their tents, she had been used to drive these nails, and therefore knew how to do it the more dexterously on this great occasion. He that thought to destroy Israel with his many iron chariots is himself destroyed with one iron nail. Thus do the weak things of the world confound the mighty. See here Jael's glory and Sisera's shame. The great commander dies,

[1.] In his sleep, fast asleep, and weary. It comes in as a reason why he stirred not, to make resistance. So fettered was he in the chains of sleep that he could not find his hands. Thus the stout-hearted are spoiled at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob! They are cast into a dead sleep, and so are made to sleep their last, Ps 76:5,6. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength; for when he sleeps where is it? It is weak, and he can do nothing; a child may insult him then, and steal his life from him; and yet if he sleep not he is soon spent and weary, and can do nothing either. Those words which we here put in a parenthesis (for he was weary) all the ancient versions read otherwise: he struggled (or started, as we say) and died, so the Syriac and Arabic, Exagitans sese mortuus est. He fainted and died, so the LXX. Consocians morte soporem, so the vulgar Latin, joining sleep and death together, seeing they are so near akin. He fainted and died. He dies,

[2.] With his head nailed to the ground, an emblem of his earthly-mindedness. O curve in terram animæ! His ear (says bishop Hall) was fastened close to the earth, as if his body had been listening what had become of his soul. He dies,

[3.] By the hand of a woman. This added to the shame of his death before men; and had he but known it, as Abimelech (Jdg 9:54), we may well imagine how much it would have added to the vexation of his own heart.

II The glory and joy of Israel hereupon.

1. Barak their leader finds his enemy dead, (Jdg 4:22), and no doubt, he was very well pleased to find his work done so well to his hand, and so much to the glory of God and the confusion of his enemies. had he stood too nicely upon a point of honour, he would have resented it as an affront to have the general slain by any hand but his; but now he remembered that this diminution of his honour he was sentenced to undergo, for insisting upon Deborah's going with him (the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman), though then

it was little thought that the prediction would be fulfilled in such a way as this.

2. Israel is completely delivered out of the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, Jdg 4:23,24. They not only shook off his yoke by this day's victory, but they afterwards prosecuted the war against him, till they had destroyed him, he and his nation being by the divine appointment devoted to ruin and not to be spared. The Israelites, having soundly smarted for their foolish pity in not doing it before, resolved now it is in their power to indulge them no longer, but to make a thorough riddance of them, as a people to whom to show mercy was as contrary to their own interest as it was to God's command; and probably it is with an eye to the sentence they were under that this enemy is named three times here in these Jdg 4:23,24, and called king of Canaan; for as such he was to be destroyed; and so thoroughly was he destroyed that I do not remember to read of the kings of Canaan any more after this. The children of Israel would have prevented a great deal of mischief if they had sooner destroyed these Canaanites, as God had both commanded and enabled them; but better be wise late, and buy wisdom by experience, than never wise.

21 Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took a hammer
in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his
temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and
weary. So he died.

22 And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him,
and said unto him, come, and I will show thee the man whom
thou seekest. And when he came into her *tent*, behold, Sisera lay
dead, and the nail *was* in his temples.

23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the
children of Israel.

24 And the hand of the children of Israel prospered, and prevailed
against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin
king of Canaan.

Judges-5

The Song of Deborah and Barak

1 Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

The former chapter let us know what great things God had done for Israel; in this we have the thankful returns they made to God, that all ages of the church might learn that work of heaven to praise God.

I. God is praised by a song, which is, 1. A very natural expression of rejoicing. Is any merry? Let him sing; and holy joy is the very soul and root of praise and thanksgiving. God is pleased to reckon himself glorified by our joy in him, and in his wondrous works. His servants' joy is his delight, and their sons are melody to him. 2. A very proper expedient for spreading the knowledge and perpetuating the remembrance of great events. Neighbours would learn this song one of another and children of their parents; and by that means those who had not books, or could not read, yet would be made acquainted with these works of God; and one generation would thus praise God's works to another, and declare his mighty acts, Ps 145:4, &c.

II. Deborah herself penned this song, as appears by Jdg 5:7: Till I Deborah arose. And the first words should be rendered, Then she sang, even Deborah. 1. She used her gifts as a prophetess in composing the song, and the strain throughout is very fine and lofty, the images are lively, the expressions elegant, and an admirable mixture there is in it of sweetness and majesty. No poetry is comparable to the sacred poetry. And, 2. We may supposed she used her power as a princess, in obliging the conquering army of Israel to learn and sing this son. She expects not that they should, by their poems, celebrate her praises and magnify here, but requires that in

this poem they should join with her in celebrating God's praises and magnifying him. She had been the first wheel in the action, and now is so in the thanksgiving.

III. It was sung on that day, not the very day that the fight was, but on that occasion, and soon after, as soon as a thanksgiving day could conveniently be appointed. When we have received mercy from God, we ought to be speedy in our returns of praise, while the impressions of the mercy are fresh. It is rent to be paid at the day.

1. She begins with a general Hallelujah: Praise (or bless, for that is the word) you the Lord, Jdg 5:2 The design of the song is to give glory to God; this therefore is put first, to explain and direct all that follows, like the first petition of the Lord's prayer, Hallowed be thy name. Two things God is here praised for:-- (1.) The vengeance he took on Israel's enemies, for the avenging of Israel upon their proud and cruel oppressors, recompensing into their bosoms all the injuries they had done to his people. The Lord is known as a righteous God, and the God to whom vengeance belongs by the judgments which he executeth. (2.) The grace he gave to Israel's friends, when the people willingly offered themselves to serve in this war. God is to have the glory of all the good offices that are at any time done us; and the more willingly they are done the more is to be observed of that grace which gives both to will and to do. For these two things she resolves to leave this song upon record, to the honour of the everlasting God (Jdg 5:3): I, even I, will sing unto the Lord, Jehovah, that God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power, even to the Lord God of Israel, who governs all for the good of the church.

2. She calls to the great ones of the world, that sit at the upper end of its table, to attend to her song, and take notice of the subject of it: Hear, O you kings! Give ear, O you princes!

(1.) She would have them know that as great and as high as they were there was one above them with whom it is folly to contend, and to whom it was their interest to submit, that horses and chariots are vain things for safety.

(2.) She would have them to join with her in praising the God of Israel, and no longer to praise their counterfeit deities, as Belshazzar did. Da 5:4, He praised the gods of gold and silver. She bespeaks them as the psalmist (Ps 2:10,11), Be wise now therefore, O you kings! Serve the Lord with fear. (3.) She would have them take warning by Sisera's fate, and not dare to offer any injury to the people of God, whose cause, sooner or later, God will plead with jealousy.

3. She looks back upon God's former appearances, and compares this with them, the more to magnify the glorious author of this great salvation. What God is doing should bring to our mind what he has done; for he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever (Jdg 5:4): Lord, when thou wentest our of Seir. This may be understood either,

(1.) Of the appearances of God's power and justice against the enemies of Israel to subdue and conquer them; and so Hab 3:3,4, &c., is parallel to it, where the destruction of the church's enemies is thus described. When God had led his people Israel from the country of Edom he brought down under their feet Sihon and Og, striking them and their armies with such terror and amazement that they seemed apprehensive heaven and earth were coming together. Their hearts melted, as if all the world had been melting round about them. Or it notes the glorious displays of the divine majesty; and the surprising effects of the divine power, enough to make the earth tremble, the heavens drop like snow before the sun, and the mountains to melt. Compare Ps 18:7. God's counsels are so far from being hindered by any creature that, when the time of their accomplishment comes, that which seemed to stand in their way will not only yield before them, but be made to serve them. See Isa 64:1,2. Or,

(2.) It is meant of the appearances of God's glory and majesty to Israel, when he gave them his law at Mount Sinai. It was then literally true, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, &c. Compare De 33:2,Ps 68:7,8. Let all the kings and princes know that this is the God whom Deborah praises, and not such mean and impotent deities as they paid their homage to. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the giving of the law, but has a strange descant on those words, the mountains melted. Tabor, Hermon, and Carmel, contended among themselves: one said, Let the divine majesty dwell upon me; the other said, Let it dwell upon me; but God made it to dwell upon Mount Sinai, the meanest and least of all the mountains. I suppose it means the least valuable, because barren and rocky.

2 Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when
the people willingly offered themselves.
3 Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I,
even I, will sing unto the Lord;
I will sing *praise* to the Lord God of Israel.
4 Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir,
when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the
earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the
clouds also dropped water.
5 The mountains melted from before the Lord,
even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.
6 In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in
the days of Jael,
the highways were unoccupied,
and the travelers walked through byways.

Here, I. Deborah describes the distressed state of Israel under the tyranny of Jabin, that the greatness of their trouble might make their salvation appear the more illustrious and the more gracious (Jdg 5:6): From the days of Shamgar, who did some thing towards the deliverance of Israel from the Philistines, to the days of Jael, the present day, in which Jael has so signalized herself, the country has been in a manner desolate.

1. No trade. For want of soldiers to protect men of business in their business from the incursions of the enemy, and for want of magistrates to restrain and punish thieves and robbers among them (men of broken fortunes and desperate spirits, that, having no employment, took to rob on the highroad), all commerce ceased, and the highways were unoccupied; no caravans of merchants, as formerly.

2. No travelling. Whereas in times when there was some order and government the travellers might be safe in the open roads, and the robbers were forced to lurk in the by-ways, no, on the contrary, the robbers insulted on the open roads without check, and the honest travellers were obliged to sculk and walk through by-ways, in continual frights.

3. No tillage. The fields must needs be laid waste and unoccupied when the inhabitants of the villages, the country farmers, ceased from their employment, quitted their houses which were continually alarmed and plundered by the banditti, and were obliged to take shelter for themselves and their families in walled and fenced cities.

4. No administration of justice. There was war in the gates where their courts were kept, Jdg 5:8. So that it was not till this salvation was wrought that the people of the Lord durst go down to the gates, Jdg 5:11. The continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrates of the dignity, and the people of the benefit, of their government.

5. No peace to him that went out nor to him that came in. The gates through which they passed and repassed were infested by the enemy; nay, the places of drawing water were alarmed by the archers--a mighty achievement to terrify the drawers of water. 6. Neither arms nor spirit to help themselves with, not a shield nor spear seen among forty thousand, Jdg 5:8. Either they were disarmed by their oppressors, or they themselves neglected the art of war; so that, though they had spears and shields, they were not to be seen, but were thrown

by and suffered to rust, they having neither skill nor will to use them.

II. She shows in one word what it was that brought all this misery upon them: They chose new gods, Jdg 5:8. It was their idolatry that provoked God to give them up thus into the hands of their enemies. The Lord their God was one Lord, but this would not content them: they must have more, many more, still more. Their God was the Ancient of days, still the same, and therefore they grew weary of him, and must have new gods, which they were as fond of as children of new clothes, names newly invented, heroes newly canonized. Their fathers, when put to their choice, chose the Lord for their God (Jos 24:21), but they would not abide by that choice, they must have gods of their own choosing.

III. She takes notice of God's great goodness to Israel in raising up such as should redress these grievances. Herself first (Jdg 5:7): Till that I Deborah arose, to restrain and punish those who disturbed the public peace, and protect men in their business, and then the face of things was changed for the better quickly; those beasts of prey retired upon the breaking forth of this joyful light, and man went forth again to his work and labour, Ps 104:22,23. Thus she became a mother in Israel, a nursing mother, such was the affection she bore to her people, and such the care and pains she took for the public welfare. Under her there were other governors of Israel (Jdg 5:9), who, like her, had done their part as governors to reform the people, and then, like her, offered themselves willingly to serve in the war, not insisting upon the exemption which their dignity and office entitled them to, when the had so fair an opportunity of appearing in their country's cause; and no doubt the example of the governors influenced the people in like manner willingly to offer themselves, Jdg 5:2. Of these governors she says, My heart is towards them, that is, "I truly love and honour them; they have won my heart for ever; I shall never forget them." Note, Those are worthy of double

honour that recede voluntarily from the demands of their honour to serve God and his church.

IV. She calls upon those who had a particular share in the advantages of this great salvation to offer up particular thanks to God for it, Jdg 5:10,11. Let every man speak as he found of the goodness of God in this happy change of the posture of public affairs.

1. You that ride on white asses, that is, the nobility and gentry. Horses were little used in that county; they had, it is probable, a much better breed of asses than we have; but persons of quality, it seems, were distinguished by the colour of the asses they rode on; the white being more rare were therefore more valued. Notice is taken of Abdon's sons and grandsons riding on ass-colts, as indicating them to be men of distinction, Jdg 12:14. Let such as are by this salvation restored, not only to their liberty as other Israelites, but to their dignity, speak God's praises.

2. Let those that sit in judgment be sensible of it, and thankful for it as a very great mercy, that they may sit safely there, that the sword of justice is not struck out of their hand by the sword of war.

3. Let those that walk by the way, and meet with none there to make them afraid, speak to themselves in pious meditations, and to their fellow-travellers in religious discourses, of the goodness of God in ridding the roads of those banditti that had so long infested them.

4. Let those that draw in peace, and have not their wells taken from them, or stopped up, nor are in danger of being caught by the enemy when they go forth to draw, there, where they find themselves so much more safe and easy than they have been, there let them rehearse the acts of the Lord, not Deborah's acts, nor Barak's, but the Lord's, taking notice of his hand making peace in their borders, and creating a defence

upon all the glory. This is the Lord's doing. Observe in these acts of his,

(1.) Justice executed on his daring enemies. They are the righteous acts of the Lord. See him pleading a righteous cause, and sitting in the throne judging aright, and give him glory as the Judge of all the earth.

(2.) Kindness shown to his trembling people, the inhabitants of the villages, who lay most open to the enemy, had suffered most, and were most in danger, Eze 38:11. It is the glory of God to protect those that are most exposed, and to help the weakest. Let us all take notice of the share we in particular have in the public peace and tranquility, the inhabitants of the villages especially, and give God the praise of it.

7 *The inhabitants of* the villages ceased, they
ceased in Israel,
until that I Deborah arose, that I
arose a mother in Israel.
8 They chose new gods;
then *was* war in the gates:
was there a shield or spear seen
among forty thousand in Israel?
9 My heart *is* toward the governors of Israel,
that offered themselves willingly among the people.
Bless ye the Lord.
10 Speak, ye that ride on white asses, ye
that sit in judgment,
and walk by the way.
11 *They that are delivered* from the noise of archers in the places of
drawing water,
there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord,
even the righteous acts *toward the inhabitants* of his villages in Israel:
then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates.
12 Awake, awake, Deborah:
awake, awake, utter a song:
arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive,
thou son of Abinoam.

13 Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people:
the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty.
14 Out of Ephraim *was there* a root of them against Amalek;
after thee, Benjamin, among thy people;
out of Machir came down governors,
and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.
15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
even Issachar, and also Barak:
he was sent on foot into the valley.
For the divisions of Reuben
there were great thoughts of heart.

Here, I. Deborah stirs up herself and Barak to celebrate this victory in the most solemn manner, to the glory of God and the honour of Israel, for the encouragement of their friends and the greater confusion of their enemies, Jdg 5:12.

1. Deborah, as a prophetess, must do it by a song, to compose and sing which she excites herself: Awake, awake, and again, awake, awake, which intimates the sense she had of the excellency and difficulty of the work; it needed and well deserved the utmost liveliness and vigour of soul in the performance of it; all the powers and faculties of the soul in their closest intensity and application ought to be employed in it. Thus too she expresses the sense she had of her own infirmity, and aptness to flag and remit in her zeal in this work. Note, Praising God is work that we should awake to, and awake ourselves to, Ps 108:2.

2. Barak, as a general, must do it by a triumph: Lead thy captivity captive. Though the army of Sisera was cut off in the field, and no quarter given, yet we may suppose in the prosecution of the victory, when the war was carried into the enemy's country, many not found in arms were seized and made prisoners of war. These she would have led in chains after Barak, when he made his public entry into his own city, to grace his triumphs; not as if it should be any pleasure to him to trample upon his fellow-creatures, but thus he must

give glory to God, and serve that great purpose of his government which is to look upon those that are proud and to abase them.

II. She gives good reason for this praise and triumph, Jdg 5:13. This glorious victory had made the remnant of Israel, and Deborah in particular, look very great, a circumstance which they owed entirely to God.

1 The Israelites had become few and inconsiderable, and yet to them God gave dominion over nobles. Many of them were cut off by the enemy, many died of grief, and perhaps some had removed their families and effects into foreign parts; yet those few that remained, by divine assistance, with one brave and generous effort, not only shook off the yoke of oppression from their own neck, but got power over their oppressors. As long as any of God's Israel remain (and a remnant God will have in the worst of times) there is hope, be it ever so small a remnant, for God can make him that remains, though it should be but one single person, triumph over the most proud and potent.

2. Deborah was herself of the weaker sex, and the sex that from the fall had been sentenced to subjection, and yet the Lord that is himself higher than the highest authorized her to rule over the mighty men of Israel, who willingly submitted to her direction, and enabled her to triumph over the mighty men of Canaan, who fell before the army she commanded; so wonderfully did he advance the low estate of his handmaid. "The Lord made me, a woman, to have dominion over mighty men." A despised stone is made head of the corner. This is indeed the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes.

III. She makes particular remarks on the several parties concerned in this great action, taking notice who fought against them, who fought for them, and who stood neuter.

1. Who fought against them. The power of the enemy must be taken notice of, that the victory may appear the more glorious. Jabin and Sisera had been mentioned in the history, but here it appears further,

(1.) That Amalek was in league with Jabin, and sent him in assistance, or endeavoured to do it. Ephraim is here said to act against Amalek (Jdg 5:14), probably intercepting and cutting off some forces of the Amalekites that were upon their march to join Sisera. Amalek had helped Moab to oppress Israel (Jdg 3:13) and now had helped Jabin; they were inveterate enemies to God's people--their hand had always been against the throne of the Lord (Ex 17:16); and therefore they were the more dangerous.

(2.) That others of the kings of Canaan, who had somewhat recovered themselves since their defeat by Joshua, joined with Jabin, and strengthened his army with their forces, having the same implacable enmity to Israel that he had, and those kingdoms, when they were in their strength, having been subject to that of Hazor, Jos 11:10. These kings came and fought, Jdg 5:19. Israel had no king; their enemies had many, whose power and influence, especially acting in confederacy, made them very formidable; and yet Israel, having the Lord for their King, was too hard for them all. It is said of these kings that they took no gain of money, they were not mercenary troops hired into the service of Jabin (such often fail in an extremity), but they were volunteers and hearty in the cause against Israel: they desired not the riches of silver, so the Chaldee, but only the satisfaction of helping to ruin Israel. Acting upon this principle, they were the more formidable, and would be the more cruel.

2. Who fought for them. The several tribes that assisted in this great exploit are here spoken of with honour; for, though God is chiefly to be glorified, instruments must have their due praise, for the encouragement of others: but, after all, it was heaven that turned the scale.

(1.) Ephraim and Benjamin, those tribes among whom Deborah herself lived, bestirred themselves, and did bravely, by her influence upon them; for her palm-tree was in the tribe of Ephraim, and very near to that of Benjamin (Jdg 5:14): Out of Ephraim was there a root, and life in the root, against Amalek. There was in Ephraim a mountain called the mount of Amalek, mentioned, Jdg 12:15, which, some think, is here meant, and some read it, there was a root in Amalek, that is, in that mountain, a strong resolution in the minds of that people to make head against the oppressors, which was the root of the matter. Herein Benjamin had set them a good example among his people. "Ephraim moved after thee, Benjamin;" though Benjamin was the junior tribe, and much inferior, especially at this time, to Ephraim, both in number and wealth, yet when they led Ephraim followed in appearing for the common cause.

If we be not so bold as to lead, yet we must not be so proud and sullen as not to follow even our inferiors in a good work. Ephraim was at a distance from the place of action, and therefore could not send forth many of its boughs to the service; but Deborah, who was one of them, knew there was a root of them, that they were hearty well-wishers to the cause. Dr. Lightfoot gives quite another sense of this. Joshua, of Ephraim, had been a root of such victories against Amalek (Ex 17:8-16), and Ehud of Benjamin lately against Amalek and Moab.

(2.) The ice being broken by Ephraim and Benjamin, Machir (the half-tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan) and Zebulun sent in men that were very serviceable to this great design. When an army is to be raised, especially under such disadvantages as Barak now experienced from the long disuse of arms and the dispiritedness of the people, it is of great consequence to be furnished,

[1.] With men of courage for officers, and such the family of Machir furnished them with, for thence came down governors. The children of Machir were particularly famous for their valour in Moses' time (Nu 32:39), and it seems it continued in their family, the more because they were seated in the frontiers.

[2.] With men of learning and ingenuity for secretaries of war, and with such they were supplied out of Zebulun: thence came men that handle the pen of the writer, clerks that issued out orders, wrote circular letters, drew commissions, mustered their men, and kept their accounts. Thus must every man, according as he has received the gift, minister the same, for the public good (1Pe 4:10); the eyes see, and the ears hear, for the whole body. I know it is generally understood of the forwardness even of the scholars of this tribe, who studied the law and expounded it, to take up arms in this cause, though they were better skilled in books than in the art of war. So Sir Richard Blackmore paraphrases it:--

> The scribes of Zebulun and learned men,
> To wield the sword, laid down the pen.

(3.) Issachar did good service too; though he saw that rest was good, and therefore bowed his shoulder to bear, which is the character of that tribe (Ge 49:15), yet they disdained to bear the yoke of Jabin's tribute, and now preferred the generous toils of war to a servile rest. Though it should seem there were not many common soldiers enlisted out of that tribe, yet the princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak (Jdg 5:15), probably, as a great council of war to advise upon emergencies. And, it should seem, these princes of Issachar did in person accompany Barak into the field of battle. Did he go on foot? They footed it with him, not consulting their honour or ease. Did he go into the valley, the place of most danger? They exposed themselves with him, and were still at his right hand to advise him: for the men of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times, 1Ch 12:32.

(4.) Zebulun and Naphtali were the most bold and active of all the tribes, not only out of a particular affection to Barak their countryman, but because, they lying nearest to Jabin, the yoke of oppression lay heavier on their necks than on those of any other tribe. Better die in honour than live in bondage; and therefore, in a pious zeal for God and their country, they jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field, Jdg 5:18. With what heroic bravery did they charge and push on even upon the chariots of iron, despising danger, and setting death itself at defiance in so good a cause!

(5.) The stars from heaven appeared, or acted at least, on Israel's side (Jdg 5:20): The stars in their courses, according to the order and direction of him who is the great Lord of their hosts, fought against Sisera, by their malignant influences, or by causing the storms of hail and thunder which contributed so much to the rout of Sisera's army. The Chaldee reads it, from heaven, from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera, that is, the power of the God of heaven was engaged against him, making use of the ministration of the angels of heaven.

Some way or other, the heavenly bodies (not arrested, as when the sun stood still at Joshua's word, but going on in their courses) fought against Sisera. Those whom God is an enemy to the whole creation is at war with. Perhaps the flashes of lightning by which the stars fought was that which frightened the horses, so as that they pranced till their very hoofs were broken (Jdg 5:22), and probably overturned the chariots of iron which they drew or turned them back upon their owners.

(6.) The river of Kishon fought against their enemies. It swept away multitudes of those that hoped to make their escape through it, Jdg 5:21. Ordinarily, it was but a shallow river, and, being in their own country, we may suppose they well knew its fords and safest passages, and yet now, probably by the great rain that fell, it was so swollen, and the stream so

deep and strong, that those who attempted to pass it were drowned, being feeble and faint, and unable to make their way through it. And then were the horse-hoofs broken by means of the plungings. So it is in the margin, Jdg 5:22. The river of Kishon is called that ancient river because described or celebrated by ancient historians or poets, or rather because it was designed of old, in the counsel of God, to serve his purposes against Sisera at this time, and did so, as if it had been made on purpose; thus the water of the old pool God is said to have fashioned long ago for that use to which it was put, Isa 22:11.

(7.) Deborah's own soul fought against them; she speaks of it with a holy exultation (Jdg 5:21): O, my soul, thou hast trodden down strength. She did it by exciting others to do it, and assisting them, which she did with all her heart. Also by her prayers; as Moses conquered Amalek by lifting up his hand, so Deborah vanquished Sisera by lifting up her heart. And when the soul is employed in holy exercises, and heart-work is made of them, through the grace of God the strength of our spiritual enemies will be trodden down and will fall before us.

3. In this great engagement she observes who stood neuter, and did not side with Israel as might have been expected. It is strange to find how many, even of those who were called Israelites, basely deserted this glorious cause and declined to appear. No mention is made of Judah nor Simeon among the tribes concerned, because they, lying so very remote from the scene of action, had not an opportunity to appear, and therefore it was not expected from them; but for those that lay near, and yet would not venture, indelible marks of disgrace are here put upon them, as they deserved.

(1.) Reuben basely declined the service, Jdg 5:15,16. Justly had he long ago been deprived of the privileges of the birth-right, and still does his dying father's doom stick by him:

unstable as water, he shall not excel. Two things hindered them from engaging:--

[1.] Their divisions. This jarring string she twice strikes upon to their shame: For the divisions of Reuben (or in these divisions) there were great thoughts, impressions, and searchings of heart. Not only for their division from Canaan by the river Jordan, which needed not to have hindered them had they been hearty in the cause, for Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and yet from Machir of Gilead came down governors; but it means either that they were divided among themselves, could not agree who should go or who should lead, each striving to gain the posts of honour and shun those of danger, some unhappy contests in their tribe kept them from uniting together, and with their brethren, for the common good, or that they were divided in their opinion of this war from the rest of the tribes, thought the attempt either not justifiable or not practicable, and therefore blamed those that engaged in it and did themselves decline it. This occasioned great searchings of heart among the rest, especially when the had reason to suspect that, whatever Reuben pretended, his sitting still now proceeded from a cooling of his affections to his brethren and an alienation of mind from them, which occasioned them many sad thoughts. It grieves us to see our mother's children angry with us for doing our duty and looking strange upon us when we most need their friendship and assistance.

[2.] Their business in the world: Reuben abode among the sheepfolds, a warmer and safer place than the camp, pretending they could not conveniently leave the sheep they tended; he loved to hear the bleatings of the flocks, or, as some read it, the whistlings of the flocks, the music which the shepherds made with their oaten reeds or pipes, and the pastorals which they sung; these Reuben preferred before the martial drum and trumpet. Thus many are kept from doing their duty by the fear of trouble, the love of ease, and an inordinate affection to their worldly business and advantage.

Narrow selfish spirits care not what becomes of the interests of God's church, so they can but get, keep, and save money. All seek their own, Php 2:21.

(2.) Dan and Asher did the same, Jdg 5:17. These two lay on the sea-coast, and,

[1.] Dan pretended he could not leave his ships but they would be exposed, and therefore I pray thee have me excused. Those of that tribe perhaps pleaded that their sea-trade disfitted them for land-service and diverted them from it; but Zebulun also was a haven for ships, a sea-faring tribe, and yet was forward and active in this expedition. There is no excuse we make to shift off duty but what some or other have broken through and set aside, whose courage and resolution will rise up against us and shame us.

[2.] Asher pretended he must stay at home to repair the breaches which the sea had in some places made upon his land, and to fortify his works against the encroachments of it, or he abode in his creeks, or small havens, where his trading vessels lay to attend them. A little thing will serve those for a pretence to stay at home who have no mind to engage in the most necessary services because there are difficulty and danger in them.

(3.) But above all Meroz is condemned, and a curse pronounced upon the inhabitants of it, Because they came not to the help of the Lord, Jdg 5:23. Probably this was some city that lay near the scene of action, and therefore the inhabitants had a fair opportunity of showing their obedience to God and their concern for Israel, and of doing a good service to the common cause; but they basely declined it, for fear of Jabin's iron chariots, being willing to sleep in a whole skin. The Lord needed not their help; he made it to appear he could do his work without them; but no thanks to them: for aught they knew the attempt might have miscarried for want of their hand, and therefore they are cursed for not coming to the help

of the Lord, when it was in effect proclaimed, Who is on the Lord's side?

The cause between God and the mighty (the principalities and powers of the kingdom of darkness) will not admit of neutrality. God looks upon those as against him that are not with him. This curse is pronounced by the angel of the Lord, our Lord Jesus, the captain of the Lord's host (and those whom he curses are cursed indeed), and further than we have warrant and authority from him we may not curse. He that will richly reward all his good soldiers will certainly and severely punish all cowards and deserters. This city of Meroz seems to have been at this time a considerable place, since something great was expected from it; but probably, after the angel of the Lord had pronounced this curse upon it, it dwindled, and, like the fig-tree which Christ cursed, withered away, so that we never read of it after this in scripture.

16 Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to
hear the bleatings of the flocks?
For the divisions of Reuben
there were great searchings of heart.
17 Gilead abode beyond Jordan:
and why did Dan remain in ships?
Asher continued on the seashore,
and abode in his breaches.
18 Zebulun and Naphtali were a people
that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.
19 The kings came *and* fought;
then fought the kings of Canaan
in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo;
they took no gain of money.
20 They fought from heaven;
the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
21 The river of Kishon swept them away, that
ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

22 Then were the horsehoofs broken by
the means of the prancings,
the prancings of their mighty ones.
23 Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse
ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they
came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the
Lord against the mighty.
24 Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be;
blessed shall she be above women in the tent.
25 He asked water, *and* she gave *him* milk;
she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.
26 She put her hand to the nail,
and her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head,
when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

Deborah here concludes this triumphant song,

I. With the praises of Jael, her sister-heroine, whose valiant act had completed and crowned the victory. She had mentioned her before (Jdg 5:6) as one that would have served her country if it had been in her power; now she applauds her as one that did serve it admirably well when it was in her power. Her poetry is finest and most florid here in the latter end of the song. How honourably does she speak of Jael (Jdg 5:24), who preferred her peace with the God of Israel before her peace with the king of Canaan, and though not a native of Israel (for aught that appears) yet heartily espoused the cause of Israel in this critical conjuncture, jeoparded her life as truly as if she had been in the high places of the field, and bravely fought for those whom she saw God fought for! Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

Note, Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a very low and narrow sphere of activity, if they serve God in that according to their capacity, shall in no wise lose their reward. Jael in the tent wins as rich a blessing as Barak in the field. Nothing is more confounding, grievous, and shameful, than disappointment, and Deborah here does most elegantly

describe two great disappointments, the shame of which was typical of sinners' everlasting shame.

1. Sisera found a fatal enemy where he expected a firm and faithful friend.

(1.) Jael showed him the kindness of a friend, and perhaps at that time intended no other than kindness, until God, by an immediate impulse upon her mind (which impulses then were to be regarded, and carried so much of their own evidence with them that they might be relied upon, but cannot now be pretended to), directed her to do otherwise, Jdg 5:25. He asked only for fair water to quench his thirst, but she, not only to show her housewifery and good housekeeping, but to express her respect to him, gave him milk and brought forth butter, that is (say some interpreters), milk which had the butter taken from it; we call it butter-milk. No (say others), it was milk that had the butter still in it; we call it cream. Whichsoever it was, it was probably the best her house afforded; and, to set it off, she brought it in a lordly dish, such as she called so, the finest she had, and better than she ordinarily used at her own table. This confirmed Sisera's opinion of her friendship, and made him sleep the faster and the more secure. But,

(2.) She proved his mortal enemy, gave him his death's stroke: it is curiously described, Jdg 5:26,27.

[1.] How great does Jael look, hammering Sisera, as it is in the margin, mauling that proud man who had been so long the terror of the mighty, and sending him down slain to the pit with his iniquities upon his bones! Eze 32:27. She seems to have gone about it with no more terror nor concern than if she had been going to nail one of the boards or bars of her tent, so confident was she of divine aid and protection. We read it she smote off his head, probably with his own sword, which, now that his head was nailed through, she durst take from his side, but not before, for fear of waking him. But because there

was no occasion for cutting off his head, nor was it mentioned in the history, many think it should be read, she struck through his head. That head which had been proudly lifted up against God and Israel, and in which had been forged bloody designs for the destruction of God's people, Jael finds a soft place in, and into that with a good will strikes her nail.

[2.] How mean does Sisera look, fallen at Jael's feet! Jdg 5:27. At the feet of this female executioner he bowed, he fell; all his struggles for life availed not; she followed her blow until he fell down dead. There lies extended the deserted carcase of that proud man, not on the bed of honour, not in the high places of the field, not having any glorious wound to show from a glittering sword, or a bow of steel, but in the corner of a tent, at the feet of a woman, with a disgraceful wound by a sorry nail struck through his head. Thus is shame the fate of proud men. And this is a very lively representation of the ruin of those sinners whose prosperity slays them; it flatters and caresses them with milk and butter in a lordly dish, as if it would make them easy and happy, but it nails their heads and hearts too to the ground in earthly-mindedness, and pierces them through with many sorrows; its flatteries are fatal, and sink them at last into destruction and perdition, 1Ti 6:9,10.

2. Sisera's mother had the tidings brought her of her son's fall and ruin when she was big with expectation of his glorious and triumphant return, Jdg 5:28-30, where we have,

(1.) Her fond desire to see her son come back in triumph: Why is his chariot so long in coming? She speaks this, not so much out of a concern for his safety, or any jealousy of his having miscarried (she had no fear of that, so confident was she of his success), but out of a longing for his glory, which with a feminine weakness she was passionately impatient to see, chiding the lingering chariot, and expostulating concerning the delays of it, little thinking that her unhappy son had been, before this, forced to quit that chariot which they were so proud of, and which she thought came so slowly. The chariots

of his glory had now become the shame of his house, Isa 22:18. Let us take heed of indulging such desires as these towards any temporal good thing, particularly towards that which cherishes vain-glory, for this was what she here doted on. Eagerness and impatience in our desires do us a great deal of prejudice, and make it intolerable to us to be crossed. But towards the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the glories of that day, we should thus stand affected (Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly), for here we cannot be disappointed.

(2.) Her foolish hope and confidence that he would come at last in so much the greater pomp. Her wise ladies answered her, and thought they gave a very good account of the delay; yea, she (in her wisdom, says the Chaldee) tauntingly made answer to herself, "Have they not sped? No doubt they have, and that which delays them is that they are dividing the prey, which is so much that it is a work of time to make a distribution of it." In the spoil they pleased themselves with the thought of, observe,

[1.] How impudently, and to the reproach and scandal of their sex, these ladies boast of the multitude of damsels which the soldiers would have the abusing of.

[2.] How childishly they pleased themselves with the hope of seeing Sisera himself in a gaudy mantle of divers colours; how charmingly would it look! of divers colours of needle-work, plundered out of the wardrobe of some Israelitish lady; it is repeated again, as that which pleased their fancy above any thing, of divers colours of needle-work on both sides, and therefore very rich; such pieces of embroidery they hoped Sisera would have to present his mother and the ladies with. Thus apt are we to deceive ourselves with great expectations and confident hopes of honour, and pleasure, and wealth in this world, by which we prepare for ourselves the shame and grief of a disappointment. And thus does God often bring ruin on his enemies when they are most elevated.

II. She concludes all with a prayer to God,

1. For the destruction of all his foes: "So, so shamefully, so miserably, let all thy enemies perish, O Lord; let all that hope to triumph in Israel's ruin be thus disappointed and triumphed over. Do to them all as unto Sisera," Ps 83:9. Though our enemies are to be prayed for, God's enemies, as such, are to be prayed against; and, when we see some of God's enemies remarkably humbled and brought down, this is an encouragement to us to pray for the downfall of all the rest. Deborah was a prophetess, and this prayer was a prediction that in due time all God's enemies shall perish, Ps 92:9. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered.

2. For the exaltation and comfort of all his friends. "But let those that love him, and heartily wish well to his kingdom among men, be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength; let them shine so bright, appear so glorious in the eye of the world, cast such benign influences, be as much out of the reach of their enemies, who curse the rising sun because it scorches them; let them rejoice as a strong man to run a race, Ps 19:5. Let them, as burning and shining lights in their places, dispel the mists of darkness, and shine with more and more lustre and power unto the perfect day." Pr 4:18. Such shall be the honour, and such the joy, of all that love God in sincerity, and for ever they shall shine as the sun in the firmament of our Father.

The victory here celebrated with this song was of such happy consequence to Israel that for the best part of one age they enjoyed the peace which it opened the way to: The land had rest forty years, that is, so long it was from this victory to the raising up of Gideon. And well would it have been if, when the churches and the tribes had rest, they had been edified, and had walked in the fear of the Lord.

27 At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down:
at her feet he bowed, he fell:
where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and
cried through the lattice,
Why is his chariot *so* long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?
29 Her wise ladies answered her,
yea, she returned answer to herself,
30 Have they not sped? Have they *not* divided the prey;
to every man a damsel or two;
to Sisera a prey of divers colors,
a prey of divers colors of needlework,
of divers colors of needlework on both sides,
meet for the necks of *them that take* the spoil?
31 So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord:
but *let* them that love him *be* as the sun when he goeth forth in his
might.
And the land had rest forty years.

Judges-6

The Call of Gideon

1 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the
Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.

We have here, I. Israel's sin renewed: They did evil in the sight of the Lord, Jdg 5:1 The burnt child dreads the fire; yet this perverse unthinking people, that had so often smarted sorely for their idolatry, upon a little respite of God's judgments return to it again. This people hath a revolting rebellious heart, not kept in awe by the terror of God's judgments, nor engaged in honour and gratitude by the great things he had done for them to keep themselves in his love. The providence of God will not change the hearts and lives of sinners.

II. Israel's troubles repeated. This would follow of course; let all that sin expect to suffer; let all that return to folly expect to return to misery. With the froward God will show himself

froward (Ps 18:26), and will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Le 26:21,24. Now as to this trouble,

1. It arose from a very despicable enemy. God delivered them into the hand of Midian (Jdg 5:1), not Midian in the south where Jethro lived, but Midian in the east that joined to Moab (Nu 22:4), a people that all men despised as uncultivated and unintelligent; hence we read not here of any king, lord, or general, that they had, but the force with which they destroyed Israel was an undisciplined mob; and, which made it the more grievous, they were a people that Israel had formerly subdued, and in a manner destroyed (see Nu 31:7), and yet by this time (nearly 200 years after) the poor remains of them were so multiplied, and so magnified, that they were capable of being made a very severe scourge to Israel. Thus God moved them to jealousy with those who were not a people, even a foolish nation, De 32:21. The meanest creature will serve to chastise those that have made the great Creator their enemy. And, when those we are authorized to rule prove rebellious and disobedient to us, it concerns us to enquire whether we have not been so to our sovereign Ruler.

2. It arose to a very formidable height (Jdg 5:2): The hand of Midian prevailed, purely by their multitude. God had promised to increase Israel as the sand on the sea shore; but their sin stopped their growth and diminished them, and then their enemies, though otherwise every way inferior to them, overpowered them with numbers.

They came upon them as grasshoppers for multitude (Jdg 5:5), not in a regular army to engage them in the field, but in a confused swarm to plunder the country, quarter themselves upon it, and enrich themselves with its spoils--bands of robbers, and no better. And sinful Israel, being separated by sin from God, had not spirit to make head against them. Observe the wretched havoc that these Midianites made with their bands of plunderers in Israel. Here we have,

(1.) The Israelites imprisoned, or rather imprisoning themselves, in dens and caves, Jdg 5:2. This was owing purely to their own timorousness and faint-heartedness, that they would rather fly than fight; it was the effect of a guilty conscience, which made them tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and the just punishment of their apostasy from God, who thus fought against them with those very terrors with which he would otherwise have fought for them. Had it not been for this, we cannot but think Israel a match for the Midianites, and able enough to make head against them; but the heart that departs from God is lost, not only to that which is good, but to that which is great. Sin dispirits men, and makes them sneak into dens and caves. The day will come when chief captains and mighty men will call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them.

(2.) The Israelites impoverished, greatly impoverished, Jdg 5:6. The Midianites and the other children of the east that joined with them to live by spoil and rapine (as long before the Sabeans and Chaldeans did that plundered Job, free-booters) made frequent incursions into the land of Canaan. This fruitful land was a great temptation to them; and the sloth and luxury into which the Israelites had sunk by forty years' rest made them and their substance an easy prey to them.

They came up against them (Jdg 5:3), pitched their camps among them (Jdg 5:4), and brought their cattle with them, particularly camels innumerable (Jdg 5:5), not a flying party to make a sally upon them and be gone presently, but they resolved to force their way, and penetrated through the heart of the country as far as Gaza on the western side, Jdg 5:4. They let the Israelites alone to sow their ground, but towards harvest they came and seized all, and ate up and destroyed it, both grass and corn, and when they went away took with them the sheep and oxen, so that in short they left no sustenance for Israel, except what was privately taken by the rightful owners into the dens and caves. Now here we may see,

[1.] The justice of God in the punishment of their sin. They had neglected to honour God with their substance in tithes and offerings, and had prepared that for Baal with which God should have been served, and now God justly sends an enemy to take it away in the season thereof, Ho 2:8,9.

[2.] The consequence of God's departure from a people; when he goes all good goes and all mischiefs break in. When Israel kept in with God, they reaped what others sowed (Jos 24:13,Ps 105:44); but now that God had forsaken them others reaped what they sowed. Let us take occasion from this to bless God for our national peace and tranquillity, that we eat the labour of our hands.

III. Israel's sense of God's hand revived at last. Seven years, year after year, did the Midianites make these inroads upon them, each we may suppose worse than the other (Jdg 5:1), until at last, all other succours failing, Israel cried unto the Lord (Jdg 5:6), for crying to Baal ruined them, and would not help them. When God judges he will overcome; and sinners shall be made either to bend or break before him.

2 And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: *and* because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which *are* in the mountains, and caves, and strongholds.

3 And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them;

4 and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.

5 For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; *for* both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it.

6 And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord.

7 And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites,

8 that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage;

Observe here,

I The cognizance God took of the cries of Israel, when at length they were directed towards him. Though in their prosperity they had neglected him and made court to his rivals, and though they never looked towards him until they were driven to it by extremity, yet, upon their complain and prayer, he intended relief for them. Thus would he show how ready he is to forgive, how swift he is to show mercy, and how inclinable to hear prayer, that sinners may be encouraged to return and repent, Ps 130:4.

II The method God took of working deliverance for them.

1. Before he sent an angel to raise them up a saviour he sent a prophet to reprove them for sin, and to bring them to repentance, Jdg 5:8. This prophet is not named, but he was a man, a prophet, not an angel, as Jdg 2:1. Whether this prophet took an opportunity of delivering his message to the children of Israel when they had met together in a general assembly, at some solemn feast or other great occasion, or whether he went from city to city and from tribe to tribe, preaching to this purport, is not certain; but his errand was to convince them of sin, that, in their crying to the Lord, they might confess that with sorrow and shame, and not spend their breath in only complaining of their trouble. They cried to God for a deliverer, and God sent them a prophet to instruct them, and to make them ready for deliverance. Note,

(1.) We have reason to hope God is designing mercy for us if we find he is by his grace preparing us for it. If to those that are sick he sends a messenger, an interpreter, by whom he shows unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious, and grants a recovery, Job 33:23,24.

(2.) The sending of prophets to a people, and the furnishing of a land with faithful ministers, is a token for good, and an evidence that God has mercy in store for them. He thus turns us to him, and then causes his face to shine, Ps 80:19.

2. We have here the heads of the message which this prophet delivered in to Israel, in the name of the Lord.

(1.) He sets before them the great things God had done for them (Jdg 5:8,9): Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; they had worshipped the gods of the nations, as if they had had no God of their own to worship and therefore might choose whom they pleased; but they are here reminded of one whom they had forgotten, who was known by the title of the God of Israel, and to him they must return. They had turned to other gods, as if their own had been either incapable or unwilling to protect them, and therefore they are told what he did for their fathers, in whose loins they were, the benefit of which descended and still remained to this their ungrateful seed.

[1.] He brought them out of Egypt, where otherwise they would have continued in perpetual poverty and slavery.

[2.] He delivered them out of the hands of all that oppressed them; this is mentioned to intimate that the reason why they were not now delivered out of the hands of the oppressing Midianites was not for want of any power or good-will in God, but because by their iniquity they had sold themselves, and God would not redeem them until they by repentance revoked the bargain.

[3.] He put them in quiet possession of this good land; this not only aggravated their sin, and affixed the brand of base ingratitude to it, but it justified God, and cleared him from blame upon account of the trouble they were now in. They could not say he was unkind, for he had given all possible proofs of his designing well for them; if ill befel them notwithstanding, they must thank themselves.

(2.) He shows the easiness and equity of God's demands and expectations from them (Jdg 5:10): "I am the Lord your God, to whom you lie under the highest obligations, fear not the gods of the Amorites," that is, "do not worship them, nor show any respect to them; do not worship them for fear of their doing you any hurt, for what hurt can they do you while I am your God? Fear God, and you need not fear them."

(3.) He charges them with rebellion against God, who had laid this injunction upon them: But you have not obeyed my voice. The charge is short, but very comprehensive; this was the malignity of all their sin, it was disobedience to God; and therefore it was this that brought those calamities upon them under which they were now groaning, pursuant to the threatenings annexed to his commands. He intends hereby to bring them to repentance; and our repentance is then right and genuine when the sinfulness of sin, as disobedience to God, is that in it which we chiefly lament.

9 and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land;

10 and I said unto you, I *am* the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice.

11 And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites.

12 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valor.

13 And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

14 And the Lord looked upon him, and said, go in this thy might,
and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have
not I sent thee?
15 And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel?
behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my
father's house.
16 And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou
shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

It is not said what effect the prophet's sermon had upon the people, but we may hope it had a good effect, and that some of them at least repented and reformed upon it; for here, immediately after, we have the dawning of the day of their deliverance, by the effectual calling of Gideon to take upon him the command of their forces against the Midianites.

I The person to be commissioned for this service was Gideon, the son of Joash, Jdg 5:14. The father was now living, but he was passed by, and this honour put upon the son, for the father kept up in his own family the worship of Baal (Jdg 5:25), which we may suppose this son, as far as was in his power, witnessed against. He was of the half tribe of Manasseh that lay in Canaan, of the family of Abiezer; the eldest house of that tribe, Jos 17:2. Hitherto the judges were raised up out of that tribe which suffered most by the oppression, and probably it was so here.

II The person that gave him the commission was an angel of the Lord; it should seem not a created angel, but the Son of God himself, the eternal Word, the Lord of the angels, who then appeared upon some great occasions in human shape, as a prelude (says the learned bishop Patrick) to what he intended in the fulness of time, when he would take our nature upon him, as we say, for good and all. This angel is here called Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God (Jdg 5:14), and he said, I will be with thee.

1. This divine person appeared here to Gideon, and it is observable how he found him,

(1.) Retired--all alone. God often manifests himself to his people when they are out of the noise and hurry of this world. Silence and solitude befriend our communion with God.

(2.) Employed in threshing wheat, with a staff or rod (so the word signifies), such as they used in beating out fitches and cummin (Isa 28:27), but now used for wheat, probably because he had but little to thresh, he needed not the oxen to tread it out. It was not then looked upon as any diminution to him, though he was a person of some account and a mighty man of valour, to lay his hand to the business of the husbandman. He had many servants (Jdg 5:27), and yet would not himself live in idleness. We put ourselves in the way of divine visits when we employ ourselves in honest business. Tidings of Christ's birth were brought to the shepherds when they were keeping their flocks. The work he was about was an emblem of that greater work to which he was now to be called, as the disciples' fishing was. From threshing corn he is fetched to thresh the Midianites, Isa 41:15.

(3.) Distressed; he was threshing his wheat, not in the threshing-floor, the proper place, but by the wine-press, in some private unsuspected corner, for fear of the Midianites. He himself shared in the common calamity, and now the angel came to animate him against Midian when he himself could speak so feelingly of the heaviness of their yoke. The day of the greatest distress is God's time to appear for his people's relief.

2. Let us now see what passed between the angel and Gideon, who knew not with certainty, till after he was gone, that he was an angel, but supposed he was a prophet.

(1.) The angel accosted him with respect, and assured him of the presence of God with him, Jdg 5:12. He calls him a mighty man of valour, perhaps because he observed how he threshed his corn with all his might; and seest thou a man

diligent in his business? whatever his business is, he shall stand before kings. He that is faithful in a few things shall be ruler over many. Gideon was a man of a brave active spirit, and yet buried alive in obscurity, through the iniquity of the times; but he is here animated to undertake something great, like himself, with that word, The Lord is with thee, or, as the Chaldee reads it, the Word of the Lord is thy help. It was very sure that the Lord was with him when this angel was with him. By this word,

[1.] He gives him his commission. If we have God's presence with us, this will justify us and bear us out in our undertakings.

[2.] He inspires him with all necessary qualifications for the execution of his commission. "The Lord is with thee to guide and strengthen thee, to animate and support thee."

[3.] He assures him of success; for, if God be for us, who can prevail against us? If he be with us, nothing can be wanting to us. The presence of God with us is all in all to our prosperity, whatever we do. Gideon was a mighty man of valour, and yet he could bring nothing to pass without the presence of God, and that presence is enough to make any man mighty in valour and to give a man courage at any time.

(2.) Gideon gave a very melancholy answer to this joyful salutation (Jdg 5:13): O my Lord! if the Lord be with us (which the Chaldee reads, Is the Shechinah of the Lord our help? making that the same with the Word of the Lord) why then has all this befallen us? "all this trouble and distress from the Midianites' incursions, which force me to thresh wheat here by the wine-press--all this loss, and grief, and fright; and where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of?" Observe, In his reply he regards not the praise of his own valour, nor does this in the least elevate him or give him any encouragement, though it is probable the angel adapted what he said to that which Gideon was at the same time thinking

of; while his labouring hands were employed about his wheat, his working head and daring heart were meditating Israel's rescue and Midian's ruin, with which thought he that knows the heart seasonably sets in, calls him a man of valour for his brave projects, and open him a way to put them in execution; yet Gideon, as if not conscious to himself of any thing great or encouraging in his own spirit, fastens only on the assurance the angel had given him of God's presence, as that by which they held all their comfort.

Observe, The angel spoke in particular to him: The Lord is with thee; but he expostulates for all: If the Lord be with us, herding himself with the thousands of Israel, and admitting no comfort but what they might be sharers in, so far is he from the thoughts of monopolizing it, though he had so fair an occasion given him. Note, Public spirits reckon that only an honour and joy to themselves which puts them in a capacity of serving the common interests of God's church. Gideon was a mighty man of valour, but as yet weak in faith, which makes it hard to him to reconcile to the assurances now given him of the presence of God,

[1.] The distress to which Israel was reduced: Why has all this (and all this was no little) befallen us? Note, It is sometimes hard, but never impossible, to reconcile cross providences with the presence of God and his favour.

[2.] The delay of their deliverance: "Where are all the miracles which our fathers told us of? Why does not the same power which delivered our fathers from the yoke of the Egyptians deliver us out of the hands of the Midianites?" As if because God did not immediately work miracles for their deliverance, though they had by their sins forfeited his favour and help, it must be questioned whether ever he had wrought the miracles which their fathers told them of, or, if he had, whether he had now the same wisdom, and power, and good-will to his people, that he had had formerly. This was his weakness.

We must not expect that the miracles which were wrought when a church was in the forming, and some great truth in the settling, should be continued and repeated when the formation and settlement are completed: no, nor that the mercies God showed to our fathers that served him, and kept close to him, should be renewed to us, if we degenerate and revolt from him. Gideon ought not to have said either, First, That God had delivered them into the hands of the Midianites, for by their iniquities they had sold themselves, or, Secondly, That now they were in their hands he had forsaken them, for he had lately sent them a prophet (Jdg 5:8), which was a certain indication that he had not forsaken them.

(3.) The angel gave him a very effectual answer to his objections, by giving him a commission to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Midianites, and assuring him of success therein, Jdg 5:14. Now the angel is called Jehovah, for he speaks as one having authority, and not as a messenger.

[1.] There was something extraordinary in the look he now gave to Gideon; it was a gracious favourable look, which revived his spirits that dropped, and silenced his fears, such a look as that with which God's countenance beholds the upright, Ps 11:7. He looked upon him, and smiled at the objections he made, which he gave him no direct answer to, but girded and clothed him with such power as would shortly enable him to answer them himself, and make him ashamed that ever he had made them. It was a speaking look, like Christ's upon Peter (Lu 22:61), a powerful look, a look that strangely darted new light and life into Gideon's breast, and inspired him with a generous heat, far above what he felt before.

[2.] But there was much more in what he said to him. First, He commissioned him to appear and act as Israel's deliverer. Such a one the few thinking people in the nation, and Gideon among the rest, were now expecting to be raised up,

according to God's former method, in answer to the cries of oppressed Israel; and now Gideon is told, "Thou art the man: Go in this thy might, this might wherewith thou art now threshing wheat; go and employ it to a nobler purpose; I will make thee a thresher of men." Or, rather, "this might wherewith thou art now endued by this look." God gave him his commission by giving him all the qualifications that were necessary for the execution of it, which is more than the mightiest prince and potentate on earth can do for those to whom he gives commissions. God's fitting men for work is a sure and constant evidence of his calling them to it. "Go, not in thy might, that which is natural, and of thyself, depend not on thy own valour; but go in this thy might, this which thou hast now received, go in the strength of the Lord God, that is, the strength with which thou must strengthen thyself." Secondly, He assured him of success.

This was enough to put courage into him; he might be confident he should not miscarry in the attempt; it should not turn either to his own disgrace or the damage of his people (as baffled enterprises do), but to his honour and their happiness: Thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites, and so shalt not only be an eye-witness, but a glorious instrument, of such wonders as thy fathers told thee of. Gideon, we may suppose, looked as one astonished at this strange and surprising power conferred upon him, and questions whether he may depend upon what he hears: the angel ratifies his commission with a teste meipso--an appeal to his own authority; there needed no more. "Have not I commanded thee--I that have all power in heaven and earth, and particular authority here as Israel's King, giving commissions immediately--I who am that I am, the same that sent Moses?" Ex 3:14.

(4.) Gideon made a very modest objection against this commission (Jdg 5:15): O my Lord! Wherewith shall I save Israel? This question bespeaks him either,

[1.] Distrustful of God and his power, as if, though God should be with him, yet it were impossible for him to save Israel. True faith is often weak, yet it shall not be rejected, but encouraged and strengthened. Or,

[2.] Inquisitive concerning the methods he must take: "Lord, I labour under all imaginable disadvantages for it; if I must do it, thou must put me in the way." Note, Those who receive commissions from God must expect and seek for instructions from him. Or rather,

[3.] Humble, self-diffident, and self-denying. The angel had honoured him, but see how meanly he speaks of himself: "My family is comparatively poor in Manasseh" (impoverished, it may be, more than other families by the Midianites), "and I am the least, that have the least honour and interest, in my father's house; what can I pretend to do? I am utterly unfit for the service, and unworthy of the honour." Note, God often chooses to do great things by those that are little, especially that are so in their own eyes. God delights to advance the humble.

(5.) This objection was soon answered by a repetition of the promise that God would be with him, Jdg 5:16. "Object not thy poverty and meanness; such things have indeed often hindered men in great enterprises, but what they are to a man that has the presence of God with him, which will make up all the deficiencies of honour and estate. Surely I will be with thee, to direct and strengthen thee, and put such a reputation upon thee that, how weak soever thy personal interest is, thou shalt have soldiers enough to follow thee, and be assured thou shalt smite the Midianites as one men, as easily as if they were but one man and as effectually. All the thousands of Midian shall be as if they had but one neck, and thou shalt have the cutting of it off."

(6.) Gideon desires to have his faith confirmed touching this commission; for he would not be over-credulous of that

which tended so much to his own praise, would not venture upon an undertaking so far above him, and in which he must engage many more, but he would be well satisfied himself of his authority, and would be able to give satisfaction to others as to him who gave him that authority. He therefore humbly begs of this divine person, whoever he was,

[1.] That he would give him a sign, Jdg 5:17. And, the commission being given him out of the common road of providence, he might reasonably expect it should be confirmed by some act of God out of the common course of nature: "Show me a sign to assure me of the truth of this concerning which thou talkest with me, that it is something more than talk, and that thou art in earnest." Now, under the dispensation of the Spirit, we are not to expect signs before our eyes, such as Gideon here desired, but must earnestly pray to God that, if we have found grace in his sight, he would show us a sign in our heart, by the powerful operations of his Spirit there, fulfilling the work of faith, and perfecting what is lacking in it.

[2.] In order hereunto, that he would accept of a treat, and so give him a further and longer opportunity of conversation with him, Jdg 5:18. Those who know what it is to have communion with God desire the continuance of it, and are loth to part, praying with Gideon, Depart not hence, I pray thee. That which Gideon desired in courting his stay was that he might bring out some provision of meat for this stranger. He did not take him into the house to entertain him there, perhaps because his father's house were not well affected to him and his friends, or because he desired still to be in private with this stranger, and to converse with him alone (therefore he calls not for a servant to bring the provision, but fetches it himself), or because thus his father Abraham entertained angels unawares, not in his tent, but under a tree, Ge 18:8. Upon the angel's promise to stay to dinner with him, he hastened to bring out a kid, which, it is likely, was ready boiled for his own dinner, so that in making it ready he had

nothing to do but to put it in the basket (for here was no sauce to serve it up in, nor the dish garnished) and the broth in a vessel, and so he presented it, Jdg 5:19. Hereby he intended,

First, To testify his grateful and generous respects to this stranger, and, in him, to God who sent him, as one that studied what he should render. He had pleaded the poverty of his family (Jdg 5:15) to excuse himself from being a general, but not here to excuse himself from being hospitable. Out of the little which the Midianites had left him he would gladly spare enough to entertain a friend, especially a messenger from heaven. Secondly, To try who and what this extraordinary person was.

What he brought out is called his present, Jdg 5:18. It is the same word that is used for a meat-offering, and perhaps that word is used which signifies both because Gideon intended to leave it to this divine person to determine which it should be when he had it before him: whether a feast or a meat-offering, and accordingly he would be able to judge concerning him: if he ate of it as common meat, he would suppose him to be a man, a prophet; if otherwise, as it proved, he should know him to be an angel.

(7.) The angel gives him a sign in and by that which he had kindly prepared for his entertainment. For what we offer to God for his glory, and in token of our gratitude to him, will be made by the grace of God to turn to our own comfort and satisfaction. The angel ordered him to take the flesh and bread out of the basket, and lay it upon a hard and cold rock, and to pour out the broth upon it, which, if he brought it hot, would soon be cold there; and Gideon did so (Jdg 5:20), believing that the angel appointed it, not in contempt of his courtesy, but with an intention to give him a sign, which he did, abundantly to his satisfaction. For,

[1.] He turned the meat into an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto himself, showing hereby that he was not a

man who needed meat, but the Son of God who was to be served and honoured by sacrifice, and who in the fulness of time was to make himself a sacrifice.

[2.] He brought fire out of the rock, to consume this sacrifice, summoning it, not by striking the rock, as we strike fire out of a flint, but by a gentle touch given to the offering with the end of his staff, Jdg 5:21. Hereby he gave him a sign that he had found grace in his sight, for God testified his acceptance of sacrifices by kindling them, if public, with fire from heaven, as those of Moses and Elias, if private, as this, with fire out of the earth, which was equivalent: both were the effect of divine power; and this acceptance of his sacrifice evidenced the acceptance of his person, confirmed his commission, and perhaps was intended to signify his success in the execution of it, that he and his army should be a surprising terror and consumption to the Midianites, like this fire out of the rock.

[3.] He departed out of his sight immediately, did not walk off as a man, but vanished and disappeared as a spirit. Here was as much of a sign as he could wish.

(8.) Gideon, though no doubt he was confirmed in his faith by the indications given of the divinity of the person who had spoken to him, yet for the present was put into a great fright by it, till God graciously pacified him and removed his fears.

[1.] Gideon speaks peril to himself (Jdg 5:22): When he perceived that he was an angel (which was not till he had departed, as the two disciples knew not it was Jesus they had been talking with till he was going, Lu 24:31), then he cried out, Alas! O Lord God! Be merciful to me, I am undone, for I have seen an angel, as Jacob, who wondered that his life was preserved when he had seen God, Ge 32:30. Ever since man has by sin exposed himself to God's wrath and curse an express from heaven has been a terror to him, as he scarcely dares to expect good tidings thence; at least, in this world of

sense, it is a very awful thing to have any sensible conversation with that world of spirits to which we are so much strangers. Gideon's courage failed him now.

[2.] God speaks peace to him, Jdg 5:23. It might have been fatal to him, but he assures him it should not. The Lord had departed out of his sight, Jdg 5:21. But though he must no longer walk by sight he might still live by faith, that faith which comes by hearing; for the Lord said to him, with an audible voice (as bishop Patrick thinks) these encouraging words, "Peace be unto thee, all is well, and be thou satisfied that it is so. Fear not; he that came to employ thee did not intend to slay thee; thou shalt not die." See how ready God is to revive the hearts of those that tremble at his word and presence, and to give those that stand in awe of his majesty assurances of his mercy.

3. The memorial of this vision which Gideon set up was a monument in form of an altar, the rather because it was by a kind of sacrifice upon a rock, without the solemnity of an altar, that the angel manifested his acceptance of him; then an altar was unnecessary (the angel's staff was sufficient to sanctify the gift without an altar), but now it was of use to preserve the remembrance of the vision, which was done by the name Gideon gave to this memorial, Jehovah-shalom (Jdg 5:24)--The Lord peace. This is,

(1.) The title of the Lord that spoke to him. Compare Ge 16:13. The same that is the Lord our righteousness is our peace (Eph 2:14), our reconciler and so our Saviour. Or,

(2.) The substance of what he said to him: "The Lord spoke peace, and created that fruit of the lips, bade me be easy when I was in that agitation." Or,

(3.) A prayer grounded upon what he had said, so the margin understands it: The Lord send peace, that is, rest from the

present trouble, for still the public welfare lay nearest his heart.

17 And he said unto him, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.

18 Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set *it* before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.

19 And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought *it* out unto him under the oak, and presented *it*.

20 And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay *them* upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so.

21 Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that *was* in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

22 And when Gideon perceived that he *was* an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God!For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.

23 And the Lord said unto him, Peace *be* unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.

24 Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom [the Lord *send* peace]: unto this day it *is* yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25 And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that *is* by it:

26 and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.

Here, I. Orders are given to Gideon to begin his government with the reformation of his father's house, Jdg 5:25,26. A

correspondence being settled between God and Gideon, by the appearance of the angel to him, it was kept up in another way; the same night after he had seen God, when he was full of thoughts concerning what had passed, which probably he had not yet communicated to any, The Lord said unto him in a dream, Do so and so. Note, God's visits, if gratefully received, shall be graciously repeated. Bid God welcome, and he will come again. Gideon is appointed,

1. To throw down Baal's altar, which it seems hi father had, either for his own house or perhaps for the whole town. See the power of God's grace, that he could raise up a reformer, and the condescensions of his grace, that he would raise up a deliverer, out of the family of one that was a ring-leader in idolatry. But Gideon must not now think it enough not to worship at that altar, which we charitably hope he had not done, but he must throw it down; not consecrate the same altar to God (tit is bishop Hall's observation), but utterly demolish it.

God first commands down the monuments of superstition, and then enjoins his own service. He must likewise cut down the grove that was by it, the plantation of young trees, designed to beautify the place. The learned bishop Patrick, by the grove, understands the image in the grove, probably the image of Ashtaroth (for the word for a grove is Ashereh), which stood upon or close by the altar.

2. To erect an altar to God, to Jehovah his God, which probably was to be notified by an inscription upon the altar to that purport--to Jehovah, Gideon's God, or Israel's. It would have been an improper thing for him to build an altar, even to the God of Israel, especially for burnt-offering and sacrifice, and would have been construed into a contempt of the altar at Shiloh, if God, who has not tied up himself to his own laws, had not bidden him to do it. But now it was his duty and honour to be thus employed.

God directs him to the place where he should build it, on the top of the rock, perhaps in the same place in which the angel had appeared to him, near to the altar he had already built: and he must not do it in a hurry, but with the decency that became a religious action (in an orderly manner, as it is in the margin), according to the ancient law for altars raised on particular occasions, that they must be of earth not of hewn stone. The word here used for the rock on which the altar was to be built signifies a fortress, or strong-hold, erected, some think, to secure them from the Midianites; if so, it was no security while the altar of Baal was so near it, but it was effectually fortified when an altar to the Lord was built on the top of it, for that is the best defence upon our glory. On this altar,

(1.) He was to offer sacrifice. Two bullocks he must offer: his father's young bullock, and the second bullock of seven years old, so it should rather be read, not even the second as we read it. The former, we may suppose, he was to offer for himself, the latter for the sins of the people whom he was to deliver. It was requisite he should thus make peace with God, before he made war on Midian. Till sin be pardoned through the great sacrifice, no good is to be expected. These bullocks, it is supposed, were intended for sacrifices on the altar of Baal, but were now converted to a better use. Thus, when the strong man armed is overcome and dispossessed, the stronger than he divides the spoil, seizes that for himself which was prepared for Baal. Let him come whose right it is, and give it to him.

(2.) Ball's grove, or image, or whatever it was that was the sanctity or beauty of his altar, must not only be burnt, but must be used as fuel for God's altar, to signify not only that whatever sets up itself in opposition to God shall be destroyed, but that the justice of God will be glorified in its destruction. God ordered Gideon to do this,

[1.] To try his zeal for religion, which it was necessary he should give proofs of before he took the field, to give proof of his valour there.

[2.] That some steps might hereby to taken towards Israel's reformation, which must prepare the way for their deliverance. Sin, the cause, must be taken away, else how should the trouble, which was but the effect, come to an end? And it might be hoped that this example of Gideon's, who was now shortly to appear so great a man, would be followed by the rest of the cities and tribes, and the destruction of this one altar of Baal would be the destruction of many.

II. Gideon was obedient to the heavenly vision, Jdg 5:27. He that was to command the Israel of God must be subject to the God of Israel, without disputing, and, as a type of Christ, must first save his people from their sins, and then save them from their enemies.

1. He had servants of his own, whom he could confide in, who, we may suppose, like him, had kept their integrity, and had not bowed the knee to Baal, and therefore were forward to assist him in destroying the altar of Baal. 2. He did not scruple taking his father's bullock and offering it to God without his father's consent, because God, who expressly commanded him to do so, had a better title to it than his father had, and it was the greatest real kindness he could do to his father to prevent his sin.

3. He expected to incur the displeasure of his father's household by it, and the ill-will of his neighbours, yet he did it, remembering how much it was Levi's praise that, in the cause of God, he said to his father and mother, I have not seen him, De 33:9. And, while he was sure of the favour of God, he feared not the anger of men; he that bade him do it would bear him out. Yet,

4. Though he feared not their resentment when it was done, to prevent their resistance in the doing of it he prudently chose to do it by night, that he might not be disturbed in these sacred actions. And some think it was the same night in which God spoke to him to do it, and that, as soon as ever he had received the orders, he immediately applied himself to the execution of them, and finished before morning.

III. He was brought into peril of his life for doing it, Jdg 5:28-30.

1. It was soon discovered what was done. Gideon, when he had gone through with the business, did not desire the concealment of it, nor could it be hid, for the men of the city rose early in the morning, as it should seem, to say their matins at Baal's altar, and so to begin the day with their god, such a one as he was, a shame to those who say the true God is their God, and yet, in the morning, direct no prayer to him, nor look up.

2. It was soon discovered who had done it. Strict enquiry was made. Gideon was known to be disaffected to the worship of Baal, which brought him into suspicion, and positive proof immediately came against him: "Gideon, no doubt, has done this thing."

3. Gideon being found guilty of the fact, to such a pitch of impiety had these degenerate Israelites arrived that they take it for law he must die for the same, and require his own father (who, by patronising their idolatry, had given them too much cause to expect he would comply with them herein) to deliver him up: Bring out thy son, that he may die. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and tremble, O earth! By the law of God the worshippers of Baal were to die, but these wicked men impiously turn the penalty upon the worshippers of the God of Israel. How prodigiously mad were they upon their idols! Was it not enough to offer the choicest of their bullocks to Baal, but must the bravest youth of their city fall as a sacrifice

to that dunghill-deity, when they pretended he was provoked? How soon will idolaters become persecutors!

IV. He was rescued out of the hands of his persecutors by his own father, Jdg 5:31.

1. There were those that stood against Gideon, that not only appeared at the first to make a demand, but insisted on it, and would have him put to death. Notwithstanding the heavy judgments they were at this time under for their idolatry, yet they hated to be reformed, and walked contrary to God even when he was walking contrary to them.

2. Yet then Joash stood for him; he was one of the chief men of the city. Those that have power may do a great deal for the protection of an honest man and an honest cause, and when they so use their power they are ministers of God for good.

(1.) This Joash had patronised Baal's altar, yet now protects him that had destroyed it,

[1.] Out of natural affection to his son, and perhaps a particular esteem for him as a virtuous, valiant, valuable, young man, and never the worse for not joining with him in the worship of Baal. Many that have not courage enough to keep their integrity themselves yet have so much conscience left as makes them love and esteem those that do. If Joash had a kindness for Baal, yet he had a greater kindness for his son. Or,

[2.] Out of a care for the public peace. The mob grew riotous, and, he feared, would grow more so, and therefore, as some think, he bestirred himself to repress the tumult: "Let it be left to the judges; it is not for you to pass sentence upon any man;" he that offers it, let him be put to death: he means not as an idolater, but as a disturber of the peace, and the mover of sedition. Under this same colour Paul was rescued at Ephesus

from those that were as zealous for Diana as these were for Baal, Ac 19:40. Or,

[3.] Out of a conviction that Gideon had done well. His son, perhaps, had reasoned with him, or God, who has all hearts in his hands, had secretly and effectually influenced him to appear thus against the advocates for Baal, though he had complied with them formerly in the worship of Baal. Note, It is good to appear for God when we are called to it, though there be few or none to second us, because God can incline the hearts of those to stand by us from whom we little expect assistance. Let us do our duty, and then trust God with our safety.

(2.) Two things Joash urges:--

[1.] That it was absurd for them to plead for Baal. "Will you that are Israelites, the worshippers of the one only living and true God, plead for Baal, a false god? Will you be so sottish, so senseless? Those whose fathers' god Baal was, and who never knew any other, are more excusable in pleading for him than you are, that are in covenant with Jehovah, and have been trained up in the knowledge of him. You that have smarted so much for worshipping Baal, and have brought all this mischief and calamity upon yourselves by it, will you yet plead for Baal?" Note, It is bad to commit sin, but it is great wickedness indeed to plead for it, especially to plead for Baal, that idol, whatever it is, which possesses that room in the heart which God should have.

[2.] That it was needless for them to plead for Baal. If he were not a god, as was pretended, they could have nothing to say for him; if he were, he was able to plead for himself, as the God of Israel had often done by fire from heaven, or some other judgment against those who put contempt upon him. Here is a fair challenge to Baal to do either good or evil, and the result convinced his worshippers of their folly in praying to one to help them that could not avenge himself; after this

Gideon remarkably prospered, and thereby it appeared how unable Baal was to maintain his own cause.

(3.) Gideon's father hereupon gave him a new name (Jdg 5:32); he called him Jerubbaal: "Let Baal plead; let him plead against him if he can; if he have any thing to say for himself against his destroyer, let him say it." This name was a standing defiance to Baal: "Now that Gideon is taking up arms against the Midianites that worship Baal, let him defend his worshippers if he can." It likewise gave honour to Gideon (a sworn enemy to that great usurper, and that had carried the day against him), that encouragement to his soldiers, that they fought under one that fought for God against this great competitor with him for the throne. It is the probable conjecture of the learned that that Jerombalus whom Sanchoniathon (one of the most ancient of all the heathen writers) speaks of as a priest of the god Jao (a corruption of the name Jehovah), and one to whom he was indebted for a great deal of knowledge, was this Jerubbaal. He is called Jerubbesheth (2Sa 11:12), Baal, a lord, being fitly turned into Besheth, shame.

27 Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and *so* it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do *it* by day, that he did *it* by night.

28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that *was* by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar *that was* built.

29 And they said one to another, who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing.

30 Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that *was* by it.

31 And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal?Will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to

death whilst *it is yet* morning: if he *be* a god, let him plead for himself,
because *one* hath cast down his altar.
32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal [let Baal plead],
saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down
his altar.
33 Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the
east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the
valley of Jezreel.

Here we have, I The descent which the enemies of Israel made upon them, Jdg 5:33. A vast number of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians, got together, and came over Jordan, none either caring or daring to guard that important and advantageous pass against them, and they made their headquarters in the valley of Jezreel, in the heart of Manasseh's tribe, not far from Gideon's city. Some think that the notice they had of Gideon's destroying Baal's altar brought them over, and that they came to plead for Baal and to make that a pretence for quarrelling with Israel; but it is more likely that it was now harvest-time, when they had been wont each year to make such a visit as this (Jdg 5:3), and that they were expected when Gideon was threshing, Jdg 5:11.

God raised up Gideon to be ready against this terrible blow came. Their success so many years in these incursions, the little opposition they had met with and the great booty they had carried off, made them now both very eager and very confident. But it proved that the measure of their iniquity was full and the year of recompence had come; they must now make an end to spoil and must be spoiled, and they are gathered as sheaves to the floor (Mic 4:12,13), for Gideon to thresh.

II The preparation which Gideon makes to attack them in their camp, Jdg 5:34,35.

1. God by his Spirit put life into Gideon: The Spirit of the Lord clothes Gideon (so the word is), clothed him as a robe, to put honour upon him, clothed him as a coat of mail, to put

defence upon him. Those are well clad that are thus clothed. A spirit of fortitude from before the Lord clothed Gideon; so the Chaldee. He was of himself a mighty man of valour; yet personal strength and courage, though vigorously exerted, would not suffice for this great action; he must have the armour of God upon him, and this is what he must depend upon: The Spirit of the Lord clothed him in an extraordinary manner. Whom God calls to his work he will qualify and animate for it.

2. Gideon with his trumpet put life into his neighbours, God working with him; he blew a trumpet, to call in volunteers, and more came in than perhaps he expected.

(1.) The men of Abiezer, though lately enraged against him for throwing down the altar of Baal, and though they had condemned him to death as a criminal, were now convinced of their error, bravely came in to his assistance, and submitted to him as their general: Abiezer was gathered after him, Jdg 5:34. So suddenly can God turn the hearts even of idolaters and persecutors.

(2.) Distant tribes, even Asher and Naphtali, which lay most remote, though strangers to him, obeyed his summons, and sent him in the best of their forces, Jdg 5:35. Though they lay furthest from the danger, yet, considering that if their neighbours were over-run by the Midianites their own turn would be next, they were forward to join against a common enemy.

III. The signs which God gratified him with, for the confirming both of his own faith and that of his followers; and perhaps it was more for their sakes than for his own that he desired them. Or, perhaps, he desired by these to be satisfied whether this was the time of his conquering the Midianites, or whether he was to wait for some other opportunity. Observe,

1. His request for a sign (Jdg 5:36,37): "Let me by this know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand, let a fleece of wool, spread in the open air, be wet with the dew, and let the ground about it be dry." The purport of this is, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief. He found his own faith weak and wavering, and therefore begged of God by this sign to perfect what was lacking in it. We may suppose that God, who intended to give him these signs, for the glorifying of his own power and goodness, put it into his heart to ask them. Yet, when he repeated his request for a second sign, the reverse of the former, he did it with a very humble apology, deprecating God's displeasure, because it looked so like a peevish humoursome distrust of God and dissatisfaction with the many assurances he had already given him (Jdg 6:39): Let not thy anger be hot against me.

Though he took the boldness to ask another sign, yet he did it with such fear and trembling as showed that the familiarity God had graciously admitted him to did not breed any contempt of God's glory, nor presumption on God's goodness. Abraham had given him an example of this, when God gave him leave to be very free with him (Ge 18:30,32), O let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. God's favour must be sought with great reverence, a due sense of our distance, and a religious fear of his wrath.

2. God's gracious grant of his request. See how tender God is of true believers though they be weak, and how ready to condescend to their infirmities, that the bruised reed may not be broken nor the smoking flax quenched. Gideon would have the fleece wet and the ground dry; but then, lest any should object, "It is natural for wool, if ever so little moisture fall, to drink it in and retain it, and therefore there was nothing extraordinary in this," though the quantity wrung out was sufficient to obviate such an objection, yet he desires that next night the ground might be wet and the fleece dry, and it is done, so willing is God to give to the heirs of promise strong consolation (Heb 6:17,18), even by two immutable things. He

suffers himself, not only to be prevailed with by their importunities, but even to be prescribed to by their doubts and dissatisfactions. These signs were,

(1.) Truly miraculous, and therefore abundantly serving to confirm his commission. It is said of the dew that it is from the Lord, and tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men (Mic 5:7); and yet God here in this matter hearkened to the voice of a man; as to Joshua, in directing the course of the sun, so to Gideon in directing that of the dew, by which it appears that it falls not by chance, but by providence. The latter sign inverted the former, and, to please Gideon, it was wrought backward and forward, whence Dr. Fuller observes that heaven's real miracles will endure turning, being inside and outside both alike.

(2.) Very significant. He and his men were going to engage the Midianites; could God distinguish between a small fleece of Israel and the vast floor of Midian? Yes, by this he is made to know that he can. Is Gideon desirous that the dew of divine grace might descend upon himself in particular? He sees the fleece wet with dew to assure him of it. Does he desire that God will be as the dew to all Israel? Behold, all the ground is wet. Some make this fleece an emblem of the Jewish nation, which, when time was, was wet with the dew of God's word and ordinances, while the rest of the world was dry; but since the rejection of Christ and his gospel they are dry as the heath in the wilderness, while the nations about are as a watered garden.

34 But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him.

35 And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

36 And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said,

37 behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; *and* if the dew be on
the fleece only, and *it be* dry upon all the earth *besides,* then shall I
know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.
38 And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the
fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of
water.
39 And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me,
and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this
once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and
upon all the ground let there be dew.
40 And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and
there was dew on all the ground.

Judges-7

Gideon's Men Defeat the Midianites

1 Then Jerubbaal, who *is* Gideon, and all the people that *were* with
him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the
host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of
Moreh, in the valley.
2 And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that *are* with thee
are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest
Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath
saved me.
3 Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying,
Whosoever *is* fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early
from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and
two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.
4 And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people *are* yet *too* many;
bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee
there: and it shall be, *that* of whom I say unto thee, This shall go
with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say
unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.

Here, I. Gideon applies himself with all possible care and industry to do the part of a good general, in leading on the hosts of Israel against the Midianites (Jdg 7:1): He rose up early, as one whose heart was upon his business, and who was

afraid of losing time. Now that he is sure God is with him he is impatient of delay. He pitched near a famous well, that his army might not be distressed for want of water, and gained the higher ground, which possibly might be some advantage to him, for the Midianites were beneath him in the valley. Note, Faith in God's promises must not slacken, but rather quicken, our endeavours. When we are sure God goes before us, then we must bestir ourselves, 2Sa 5:24.

II. God provides that the praise of the intended victory may be reserved wholly to himself, by appointing 300 men only to be employed in this service.

1 The army consisted of 32,000 men, a small army in comparison with what the Midianites had now brought into the field; Gideon was ready to think them too few, but God comes to him, and tells him they are too many, Jdg 7:2. Not but that those did well who offered themselves willingly to this expedition, but God saw fit not to make use of all that came. We often find God bringing great things to pass by a few hands, but this was the only time that he purposely made them fewer. Had Deborah lately blamed those who came not to the help of the Lord, and yet in the next great action must those be turned off that do come? Yes;

(1.) God would hereby show that when he employed suitable instruments in his service he did not need them, but could do his work without them, so that he was not indebted to them for their service, but they to him for employing them.

(2.) He would hereby put those to shame for their cowardice who had tamely submitted to the Midianites, and durst not make head against them, because of the disproportion of their numbers. They now saw that, if they had but made sure of the favour of God, one of them might have chased a thousand.

(3.) He would hereby silence and exclude boasting. This is the reason here given by him who knows the pride that is in

men's hearts: Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me. Justly were those denied the honour of the success. My own hand hath saved me is a word that must never come out of the mouth of such as shall be saved. He that glories must glory in the Lord, and all flesh must be silent before him.

2. Two ways God took to lessen their numbers:--

(1.) He ordered all that would own themselves timorous and faint-hearted to be dismissed, Jdg 7:3. They were now encamped on a mountain close to the enemy, called Mount Gilead, from Gilead, the common ancestor of these families of Manasseh, which were seated on this side Jordan (Nu 26:30), and thence they might see perhaps the vast numbers of the enemy; those therefore who were disheartened at the sight were left to their liberty, to go back if they pleased. There was a law for making such a proclamation as this, De 20:8. But Gideon perhaps thought that concerned only those wars which were undertaken for the enlarging of their coast, not, as this, for their necessary defence against an invader; therefore Gideon would not have proclaimed this if God, who knew how his forces would hereby be diminished, had not commanded him. Cowards would be as likely as any, after the victory, to take the honour of it from God, and therefore God would not do them the honour to employ them in it.

One would have thought there would be scarcely one Israelite to be found that against such an enemy as the Midianites, and under such a leader as Gideon, would own himself fearful; yet above two parts of three took advantage of this proclamation, and filed off, when they saw the strength of the enemy and their own weakness, not considering the assurances of the divine presence which their general had received of the Lord, and, it is likely, delivered unto them. Some think the oppression they had been under so long had broken their spirits, others, more probably, that consciousness of their own guilt had deprived them of their courage. Sin

stared them in the face, and therefore they durst not look death in the face.

Note, Fearful faint-hearted people are not fit to be employed for God; and, among those that are enlisted under the banner of Christ, there are more such than we think there are.

(2.) He directed the cashiering of all that remained except 300 men, and he did it by a sign: The people are yet too many for me to make use off, Jdg 7:4. See how much God's thoughts and ways are above ours. Gideon himself, it is likely, thought they were too few, though they were as many as Barak encountered Sisera with (Jdg 4:14); and, had he not forced his way through the discouragement by dint of faith, he himself would have started back from so hazardous an enterprise, and have made the best of his own way back.

But God saith, they are too many, and, when diminished to a third part, they are yet too many, which may help us to understand those providences which sometimes seem to weaken the church and its interests: its friends are too many, too mighty, too wise, for God to work deliverance by; God is taking a course to lessen them, that he may be exalted in his own strength. Gideon is ordered to bring his soldiers to the watering, probably to the well of Harod (Jdg 7:1) and the stream that ran from it; he, or some appointed by him, must observe how they drank. We must suppose they were all thirsty, and were inclined to drink; it is likely he told them they must prepare to enter upon action immediately, and therefore must refresh themselves accordingly, not expecting, after this, to drink any thing else but the blood of their enemies. Now some, and no doubt the most, would kneel down on their knees to drink, and put their mouths to the water as horses do, and so they might get their full draught.

Others, it may be, would not make such a formal business of it, but as a dog laps with his tongue, a lap and away, so they would hastily take up a little water in their hands, and cool

their mouths with that, and be gone. Three hundred and no more there were of this latter sort, that drank in haste, and by those God tells Gideon he would rout the Midianites, Jdg 7:7. By the former distinction none were retained but hearty men, that were resolved to do their utmost for retrieving the liberties of Israel; but by this further distinction it was provided that none should be made use of but,

[1.] Men that were hardy, that could endure long fatigue, without complaining of thirst or weariness, that had not in them any dregs either of sloth or luxury.

[2.] Men that were hasty, that thought it long till they were engaged with the enemy, preferring the service of God and their country before their necessary refreshment; such as these God chooses to employ, that are not only well affected, but zealously affected in a good thing. And also because these were the smaller number, and therefore the least likely to effect what they were designed for, God would by them save Israel.

It was a great trial to the faith and courage of Gideon, when God bade him let all the rest of the people but these 300 go every man to his place, that is, go where they pleased out of his call, and from under his command; yet we may suppose those that were hearty in the cause, though now set aside, did not go so far out of hearing but that they were ready to follow the blow, when the 300 had broken the ice, though this does not appear. Thus strangely was Gideon's army purged, and modelled, and reduced, instead of being recruited, as one would think in so great an action it both needed and deserved to be. Now,

3. Let us see how this little despicable regiment, on which the stress of the action must lie, was accoutred and fitted out. Had these 300 been double-manned with servants and attendants, and double-armed with swords and spears, we should have thought them the more likely to bring something to pass. But,

instead of making them more serviceable by their equipment, they are made less so. For,

(1.) Every soldier turns butler: They took victuals in their hands (Jdg 7:8), left their bag and baggage behind, and every man burdened himself with his own provision, which was a trial of their faith, whether they could trust God when they had no more provisions with them than they could carry, and a trial of their diligence, whether they would carry as much as they had occasion for. This was indeed living from hand to mouth.

(2.) Every soldier turns trumpeter. The regiments that were cashiered left their trumpets behind them for the use of these 300 men, who were furnished with these instead of weapons of war, as if they had been going rather to a game than to a battle.

5 So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said
unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue,
as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one
that boweth down upon his knees to drink.
6 And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their
mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people
bowed down upon their knees to drink water.
7 And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that
lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand:
and let all the *other* people go every man unto his place.
8 So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and
he sent all *the rest of* Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those
three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the
valley.
9 And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him,
Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into
thine hand.
10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down
to the host:
11 and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands
be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with

Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that *were* in the host.

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

13 And when Gideon was come, behold, *there was* a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

Gideon's army being diminished as we have found it was, he must either fight by faith or not at all; God therefore here provides recruits for his faith, instead of recruits for his forces.

I. He furnishes him with a good foundation to build his faith upon. Nothing but a word from God will be a footing for faith. He has this as full and express as he can desire, Jdg 7:9.

1. A word of command to warrant the action, which otherwise seemed rash and indiscreet, and unbecoming a wise general: Arise, get thee down with this handful of men unto the host.

2. A word of promise to assure him of the success, which otherwise seemed very improbable: I have delivered it into thy hand; it is all thy own. This word of the Lord came to him the same night, when he was (we may suppose) greatly agitated and full of care how he should come off; in the multitude of his thoughts within him these comforts did delight his soul. Divine consolations are given in to believers not only strongly but seasonably.

II. He furnishes him with a good prop to support his faith with.

1. He orders him to be his own spy, and now in the dead of the night to go down privately into the host of Midian, and

see what intelligence he could gain: "If thou fear to go down to fight, go first only with thy own servant (Jdg 7:10) and hear what they say" (Jdg 7:11); and it is intimated to him that he should hear that which would greatly strengthen his faith. God knows the infirmities of his people, and what great encouragement they may sometimes take from a small matter; and therefore, knowing beforehand what would occur to Gideon, in that very part of the camp to which he would go down, he orders him to go down and hearken to what they said, that he might the more firmly believe what God said. He must take with him Phurah his servant, one that he could confide in, probably one of the ten that had helped him to break down the altar of Baal. He must take him and no one else with him, must take him with him to be a witness of what he should hear the Midianites say, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses, when the matter came to be reported to Israel, the word might be established. He must take his servant with him, because two are better than one and a little help is better than none.

2. Being so, he orders him the sight of something that was discouraging. It was enough to frighten him to discern, perhaps by moon-light, the vast numbers of the enemy (Jdg 7:12), the men like grasshoppers for multitude, and they proved no better than grasshoppers for strength and courage; the camels one could not count, any more than the sand. But,

3. He causes him to hear that which was to him a very good omen; and when he had heard it he went back again immediately, supposing he now had what he was sent thither for. He overheard two soldiers of the enemy, that were comrades, talking; probably they were in bed together, waking in the night.

(1.) One of them tells his dream, and as our dreams generally are, and therefore not worth telling again, it is a very foolish one. He dreamed that he saw a barley-cake come rolling down the hill into the camp of the Midianites, and "methought,"

says he (for so we speak in telling our dreams), "this rolling cake struck one of our tents" (perhaps one of the chief of their tents) "and with such violence that" (would you think it?) "it overturned the tent, forced down the stakes, and broke the cords at one blow, so that the tent lay along and buried its inhabitants," Jdg 7:13. In multitudes of dreams there are divers vanities, says Solomon, Ec 5:7. One would wonder what odd incoherent things are often put together by a ludicrous fancy in our dreams.

(2.) The other, it may be between sleeping and waking, undertakes to interpret this dream, and the interpretation is very far-fetched: This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, Jdg 7:14. Our expositors now can tell us how apt the resemblance was, that Gideon, who had threshed corn for his family, and made cakes for his friend (Jdg 6:11-19), was fitly represented by a cake,--that he and his army were as inconsiderable as a cake made of a little flour, as contemptible as a barley-cake, hastily got together as a cake suddenly baked upon the coals, and as unlikely to conquer this great army as a cake to overthrow a tent.

But, after all, do not interpretations belong to God? He put it into the head of the one to dream and into the mouth of the other to give the sense of it; if Gideon had heard the dream only, and he and his servant had been left to interpret it themselves, it had so little significancy in it that it would have done him little service; but, having the interpretation from the mouth of an enemy, it not only appeared to come from God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, but it was likewise an evidence that the enemy was quite dispirited, and that the name of Gideon had become so formidable to them that it disturbed their sleep. The victory would easily be won which was already so tamely yielded: Into his hand hath God delivered Midian. Those were not likely to fight who saw God fighting against them.

Lastly, Gideon, observing the finger of God pointing him to this very place, at this very time, to hear this dream and the interpretation of it, was exceedingly encouraged by it against the melancholy apprehensions he had upon the reducing of his army. He was very well pleased to hear himself compared to a barley-cake, when it proved to effect such great things. Being hereby animated, we are told (Jdg 7:15),

1. How he gave God the glory of it; he worshipped immediately, bowed his head, or, it may be, lifted up his eyes and hands, and in a short ejaculation thanked God for the victory he was now sure of, and for this encouragement to expect it. Wherever we are, we may speak to God, and worship him, and find a way open heavenward. God must have the praise of that which is encouraging to our faith, and his providence must be acknowledged in those events which, though minute and seemingly accidental, prove serviceable to us.

2. How he gave his friends a share in the encouragements he had received: Arise, prepare to march presently; the Lord has delivered Midian into your hand.

14 And his fellow answered and said, This *is* nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: *for* into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

15 And it was *so,* when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

16 And he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

17 And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be *that,* as I do, so shall ye do.

18 When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that *are* with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, *The sword* of the Lord, and of Gideon.

19 So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands.

Here is, I The alarm which Gideon gave to the hosts of Midian in the dead time of the night; for it was intended that those who had so long been a terror to Israel, and had so often frightened them, should themselves be routed and ruined purely by terror.

1 The attack here made was, in many circumstances, like that which Abraham made upon the army that had taken Lot captive. The number of men was much the same: Abraham had 318, Gideon 300; they both divided their forces, both made their attack by night, and were both victorious under great disadvantages (Ge 14:14,15); and Gideon is not only a son of Abraham (so were the Midianites by Keturah) but an heir of his faith. Gideon,

(1.) Divided his army, small as it was, into three battalions (Jdg 7:16), one of which he himself commanded (Jdg 7:19), because great armies (and such a one he would make a show of) were usually divided into the right wing, and left wing, and the body of the army.

(2.) He ordered them all to do as he did, Jdg 7:17. He told them now, it is very likely, what they must do, else the thing was so strange that they would scarcely have done it of a sudden, but he would, by doing it first, give notice to them when to do it, as officers exercise their soldiers with the word of command or by beat of drum: Look on me, and do likewise. Such is the word of command which our Lord Jesus, the captain of our salvation, gives his soldiers; for he has left us an example, with a charge to follow it: As I do, so shall you do.

(3.) He made his descent in the night, when they were secure and least expected it, which would put them into great consternation, and when the smallness of his army would not be discovered. In the night all frights are most frightful, especially in the dead of the night, as this was, a little after midnight, when the middle watch began, and the alarm would wake them out of their sleep. We read of terror by night as very terrible (Ps 91:5), and fear in the night, So 3:8.

(4.) That which Gideon aimed at was to frighten this huge host, to give them not only a fatal rout, but a very shameful one. He accoutred his army with every man a trumpet in his right hand, and an earthen pitcher, with a torch in it, in his left, and he himself thought it no disparagement to him to march before them thus armed. He would make but a jest of conquering this army, and goes out against them rather as against a company of children than against a host of soldiers. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, Isa 37:22. The fewness of his men favoured his design; for, being so few, they marched to the camp with the greater secresy and expedition, so that they were not discovered till they were close by the camp; and he contrived to give the alarm when they had just mounted the guards (Jdg 7:19), that the sentinels, being then wakeful, might the sooner disperse the alarm through the camp, which was the best service they could do him.

Three ways Gideon contrived to strike a terror upon this army, and so put them into confusion.

[1.] With a great noise. Every man must blow his trumpet in the most terrible manner he could and clatter an earthen pitcher to pieces at the same time; probably each dashed his pitcher to his next man's, and so they were broken both together, which would not only make a great crash, but was a figure of what would be the effects of the fright, even the Midianites' killing one another.

[2.] With a great blaze. The lighted torches were hid in the pitchers, like a candle under a bushel, until they came to the camp, and then, being taken out all together of a sudden, would make a glaring show, and run through the camp like a flash of lightning. Perhaps with these they set some of the tents on the outside of the camp on fire, which would very much increase the confusion.

[3.] With a great shout. Every man must cry, For the Lord, and for Gideon, so some think it should be read in Jdg 7:18, for there the sword is not in the original, but it is in Jdg 7:20, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. It should seem, he borrowed the word from the Midianite's dream (Jdg 7:14): it is the sword of Gideon. Finding his name was a terror to them, he thus improves it against them, but prefixes the name of Jehovah, as the figure without which his own was but an insignificant cypher. This would put life into his own men, who might well take courage when they had such a God as Jehovah, and such a man as Gideon, both to fight for, and to fight for them; well might those follow who had such leaders. It would likewise put their enemies into a fright, who had of old heard of Jehovah's great name, and of late of Gideon's.

The sword of the Lord is all in all to the success of the sword of Gideon, yet the sword of Gideon must be employed. Men the instruments, and God the principal agent, must both be considered in their places, but men, the greatest and best, always in subserviency and subordination to God. This army was to be defeated purely by terrors, and these are especially the sword of the Lord. These soldiers, if they had swords by their sides, that was all, they had none in their hands, but they gained the victory by shouting "The sword." So the church's enemies are routed by a sword out of the mouth, Re 19:21.

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2. This method here taken of defeating the Midianites may be alluded to,

(1.) As typifying the destruction of the devil's kingdom in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel, the sounding of that trumpet, and the holding forth of that light out of earthen vessels, for such the ministers of the gospel are, in whom the treasure of that light is deposited, 2Co 4:6. Thus God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, a barley-cake to overthrow the tents of Midian, that the excellency of the power might be of God only; the gospel is a sword, not in the hand, but in the mouth, the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, of God and Jesus Christ, him that sits on the throne and the Lamb.

(2.) As representing the terrors of the great day. So the excellent bishop Hall applies it; if these pitchers, trumpets, and firebrands, did so daunt and dismay the proud troops of Midian and Amalek, who shall be able to stand before the last terror, when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, the elements shall be on a flame, the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the Lord himself shall descend with a shout!

II The wonderful success of this alarm. The Midianites were shouted out of their lives, as the walls of Jericho were shouted down, that Gideon might see what he lately despaired of ever seeing, the wonders that their fathers told them of. Gideon's soldiers observed their orders, and stood every man in his place round about the camp (Jdg 7:21), sounding his trumpet to excite them to fight one another, and holding out his torch to light them to their ruin. They did not rush into the host of Midian, as greedy either of blood or spoil, but patiently stood still to see the salvation of the Lord, a salvation purely of his own working. Observe how the design took effect.

1. They feared the Israelites. All the host immediately took the alarm; it flew like lightning through all their lines, and they ran, and cried, and fled, Jdg 7:21. There was something natural in this fright. We may suppose they had not had intelligence of the great diminution of Gideon's army, but rather concluded that since their last advices it had been growing greater and greater; and therefore they had reason to suspect, knowing how odious and grievous they had made themselves and what bold steps had been taken towards the throwing off of their yoke, that it was a very great army which was to be ushered in with all those trumpeters and torch-bearers. But there was more of a supernatural power impressing this terror upon them. God himself gave it the setting on, to show how that promise should have been fulfilled if they had not forfeited it, One of you shall chase a thousand. See the power of imagination, and how much it may become a terror at some times, as at other times it is a pleasure.

2. They fell foul upon one another: The Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, Jdg 7:22. In this confusion, observing the trumpeters and torch-bearers to stand still without their camp, they concluded the body of the army had already entered and was in the midst of them, and therefore every one ran at the next he met, though a friend, supposing him an enemy, and one such mistake as this would occasion many, for then he that slew him would certainly be taken for an enemy, and would be dispatched immediately. It is our interest to preserve such a command of our own spirits as never to be afraid with any amazement, for we cannot conceive what mischiefs we thereby plunge ourselves into. See also how God often makes the enemies of his church instruments to destroy one another; it is a pity the church's friends should ever be thus infatuated.

3. They fled for their lives. Perhaps when day-light came they were sensible of their mistake in fighting with one another, and concluded that by this fatal error they had so weakened themselves that now it was impossible to make any head

against Israel, and therefore made the best of their way towards their own country, though, for aught that appears, the 300 men kept their ground. The wicked flee when none pursueth, Pr 28:1. Terrors make him afraid on every side, and drive him to his feet, Job 18:11.

20 And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow *withal:* and they cried, the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

21 And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

22 And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, *and* to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.

We have here the prosecution of this glorious victory.

1. Gideon's soldiers that had been dismissed, and perhaps had begun to disperse themselves, upon notice of the enemies' flight got together again, and vigorously pursued those whom they had not courage to face. The men of Israel out of Naphtali and Asher who did this (Jdg 7:23) were not such as now came from those distant countries, but the same that had enlisted themselves (Jdg 6:35), but had been cashiered. Those who were fearful and afraid to fight (Jdg 7:3) now took heart, when the worst was over, and were ready enough to divide the spoil, though backward to make the onset. Those also that might not fight though they had a mind to it, and were disbanded by order from God, did not as those, 2Ch 25:10,13, return in great anger, but waited for an opportunity of doing service in pursuing the victory, though they were denied the honour of helping to force the lines.

2 The Ephraimites, upon a summons from Gideon, came in unanimously, and secured the passes over Jordan, by the

several fords, to cut off the enemies' retreat into their own country, that they might be entirely destroyed, to prevent the like mischief to Israel another time. Now that they had begun to fall, it was easy to say, Down with them, Es 6:13. They took the waters (Jdg 7:24), that is, posted themselves along the river side, so that the Midianites, who fled from those who pursued them, fell into the hands of those that waited to intercept them. Here were fear, and the pit, and the snare, Isa 24:17. 3. Two of the chief commanders of the host of Midian were taken and slain by the Ephraimites on this side Jordan, Jdg 7:25. Their names perhaps signified their nature, Oreb signifies a raven, and Zeeb a wolf (corvus and lupus). These in their flight had taken shelter, one in a rock (Isa 2:21,Re 6:15), the other by a wine-press, as Gideon for fear of them had lately hid his corn by a wine-press, Jdg 6:11. But the places of their shelter were made the places of their slaughter, and the memory of it was preserved to posterity in the names of the places, to their perpetual infamy: Here fell the princes of Midian.

24 And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-barah and Jordan.

25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

Judges-8

Gideon Captures the Kings of Midian

1 And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?And they did chide with him sharply.

2 And he said unto them, what have I done now in comparison of you?*Is* not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?

No sooner were the Midianites, the common enemy, subdued, than, through the violence of some hot spirits, the children of Israel were ready to quarrel among themselves; an unhappy spark was struck, which, if Gideon had not with a great deal of wisdom and grace extinguished immediately, might have broken out into a flame of fatal consequence. The Ephraimites, when they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon as general, instead of congratulating him upon his successes and addressing him with thanks for his great services, as they ought to have done, picked a quarrel with him and grew very hot upon it.

I. Their accusation was very peevish and unreasonable: Why didst thou not call us when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? Jdg 7:1. Ephraim was brother to Manasseh, Gideon's tribe, and had the pre-eminence in Jacob's blessing and in Moses's, and therefore was very jealous of Manasseh, lest that tribe should at any time eclipse the honour of theirs. Hence we find Manasseh against Ephraim and Ephraim against Manasseh, Isa 9:21. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are as the bars of a castle, Pr 18:19. But how unjust was their quarrel with Gideon! They were angry that he did not send for them to begin the attack upon Midian, as well as to follow the blow. Why were they not called to lead the van? The post of honour, they thought, belonged to them. But,

1. Gideon was called of God, and must act as he directed; he neither took the honour to himself nor did he himself dispose of honours, but left it to God to do all. So that the Ephraimites, in this quarrel, reflected upon the divine conduct; and what was Gideon that they murmured against him?

2. Why did not the Ephraimites offer themselves willingly to the service? They knew the enemy was in their country, and had heard of the forces that were raising to oppose them, to which they ought to have joined themselves, in zeal for the common cause, though they had not a formal invitation. Those

seek themselves more than God that stand upon a point of honour to excuse themselves from doing real service to God and their generation. In Deborah's time there was a root of Ephraim, Jdg 5:14. Why did not this appear now? The case itself called them, they needed not wait for a call from Gideon.

3. Gideon had saved their credit in not calling them. If he had sent for them, no doubt many of them would have gone back with the faint-hearted, or been dismissed with the lazy, slothful, and intemperate; so that by not calling them he prevented the putting of those slurs upon them. Cowards will seem valiant when the danger is over, but those consult their reputation who try not their courage when danger is near.

II. Gideon's answer was very calm and peaceable, and was intended not so much to justify himself as to please and pacify them, Jdg 7:2,3. He answers them,

1. With a great deal of meekness and temper. He did not resent the affront, nor answer anger with anger, but mildly reasoned the case with them, and he won as true honour by this command which he had over his own passion as by his victory over the Midianites. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty.

2. With a great deal of modesty and humility, magnifying their performances above his own: Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, who picked up the stragglers of the enemy, and cut off those of them that escaped, better than the vintage of Abiezer--a greater honour to them, and better service to the country, than the first attack Gideon made upon them? The destruction of the church's enemies is compared to a vintage, Re 14:18. In this he owns their gleanings better than his gatherings.

The improving of a victory is often more honourable, and of greater consequence, than the winning of it; in this they had signalized themselves, and their own courage and conduct, or,

rather, God had dignified them; for thought, to magnify their achievements, he is willing to diminish his own performances, yet he will not take any flowers from God's crown to adorn theirs with: "God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, and a great slaughter has been made of the enemy by your numerous hosts, and what was I able to do with 300 men, in comparison of you and your brave exploits?" Gideon stands here a very great example of self-denial, and this instance shows us,

(1.) That humility of deportment is the best way to remove envy. It is true even right works are often envied, Ec 4:4. Yet they are not so apt to be so when those who do them appear not to be proud of them. Those are malignant indeed who seek to cast down from their excellency those that humble and abase themselves,

(2.) It is likewise the surest method of ending strife, for only by pride comes contention, Pr 13:10. (3.) Humility is most amiable and admirable in the midst of great attainments and advancements. Gideon's conquests did greatly set off his condescensions. (4.) It is the proper act of humility to esteem others better than ourselves, and in honour to prefer one another.

Now what was the issue of this controversy? The Ephraimites had chidden with him sharply (Jdg 7:1), forgetting the respect due to their general and one whom God had honoured, and giving vent to their passion in a very indecent liberty of speech, a certain sign of a weak and indefensible cause. Reason runs low when the chiding flies high. But Gideon's soft answer turned away their wrath, Pr 15:1. Their anger was abated towards him, Jdg 7:3. It is intimated that they retained some resentment, but he prudently overlooked it and let it cool by degrees. Very great and good men must expect to have their patience tried by the unkindnesses and follies even of those they serve and must not think it strange.

3 God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb
and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then
their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.
4 And Gideon came to Jordan, *and* passed over, he, and the three
hundred men that *were* with him, faint, yet pursuing *them*.
5 And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of
bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am
pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.
6 And the princes of Succoth said, *Are* the hands of Zebah and
Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine
army?
7 And Gideon said, Therefore when the Lord hath delivered Zebah
and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the
thorns of the wilderness and with briers.
8 And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise:
and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had
answered *him*.
9 And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come
again in peace, I will break down this tower.

In these verses we have,

I. Gideon, as a valiant general, pursuing the remaining Midianites, and bravely following his blow. A very great slaughter was made of the enemy at first: 120,000 men that drew the sword, Jdg 7:10. Such a terrible execution did they make among themselves, and so easy a prey were they to Israel. But, it seems, the two kings of Midian, being better provided than the rest for an escape, with 15,000 men got over Jordan before the passes could be secured by the Ephraimites, and made towards their own country. Gideon thinks he does not fully execute his commission to save Israel if he let them escape. He is not content to chase them out of the country, but he will chase them out of the world, Job 18:18. This resolution is here pushed on with great firmness, and crowned with great success.

1. His firmness was very exemplary. He effected his purpose under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements that could be.

(1.) He took none with him but his 300 men, who now laid aside their trumpets and torches, and betook themselves to their swords and spears. God had said, By these 300 men will I save you (Jdg 7:7); and, confiding in that promise, Gideon kept to them only, Jdg 7:4. He expected more from 300 men, supported by a particular promise, than from so many thousands supported only by their own valour.

(2.) They were faint, and yet pursuing, much fatigued with what they had done, and yet eager to do more against the enemies of their country. Our spiritual warfare must thus be prosecuted with what strength we have, though we have but little; it is many a time the true Christina's case, fainting and yet pursuing.

(3.) Though he met with discouragement from those of his own people, was jeered for what he was doing, as going about what he could never accomplish, yet he went on with it. If those that should be our helpers in the way of our duty prove hindrances to us, let not this drive us off from it. Those know not how to value God's acceptance that know not how to despise the reproaches and contempts of men.

(4.) He made a very long march by the way of those that dwelt in tents (Jdg 7:11), either because he hoped to find them kinder to him than the men of Succoth and Penuel, that dwelt in walled towns (sometimes there is more generosity and charity found in country tents than in city palaces), or because that was a road in which he would be least expected, and therefore that way it would be the greater surprise to them.

It is evident he spared no pains to complete his victory. Now he found it an advantage to have his 300 men such as could bear hunger, and thirst, and toil. It should seem, he set upon

the enemy by night, as he had done before, for the host was secure. The security of sinners often proves their ruin, and dangers are most fatal when least feared.

2. His success was very encouraging to resolution and industry in a good cause. He routed the army (Jdg 7:11), and took the two kings prisoners, Jdg 7:12. Note, The fear of the wicked shall come upon him. Those that think to run from the sword of the Lord and of Gideon do but run upon it. If he flee from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through; for evil pursueth sinners.

II. Here is Gideon, as a righteous judge, chastising the insolence of the disaffected Israelites, the men of Succoth and the men of Penuel, both in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan.

1. Their crime was great. Gideon, with a handful of feeble folk was pursuing the common enemy, to complete the deliverance of Israel. His way led him through the city of Succoth first and afterwards of Penuel. He expected not that the magistrates should meet him in their formalities, congratulate him upon his victory, present him with the keys of their city, and give him a treat, much less that they should send forces in to his assistance, though he was entitled to all this; but he only begs some necessary food for his soldiers that were ready to faint for want, and he does it very humbly and importunately: Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me, Jdg 7:5.

The request would have been reasonable if they had been but poor travellers in distress; but considering that they were soldiers, called, and chose, and faithful (Re 17:14), men whom God had greatly honoured and to whom Israel was highly obliged, who had done great service to their country and were now doing more,--that they were conquerors, and had power to put them under contribution,--and that they were fighting God's battles and Israel's,--nothing could be more just than

that their brethren should furnish them with the best provisions their city afforded. But the princes of Succoth neither feared God nor regarded man. For,

(1.) In contempt of God, they refused to answer the just demands of him whom God had raised up to save them, affronted him, bantered him, despised the success he had already been honoured with, despaired of the success of his present undertaking, did what they could to discourage him in prosecuting the war, and were very willing to believe that the remaining forces of Midian, which they had now seen march through their country, would be too hard for him: Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thy hand? "No, nor ever will be," so they conclude, judging by the disproportion of numbers.

(2.) The bowels of their compassion were shut up against their brethren; they were as destitute of love as they were of faith, would not give morsels of bread (so some read it) to those that were ready to perish. Were these princes? Were these Israelites? Unworthy either title, base and degenerate men! Surely they were worshippers of Baal, or in the interests of Midian. The men of Penuel gave the same answer to the same request, defying the sword of the Lord and of Gideon, Jdg 7:8.

2 The warning he gave them of the punishment of their crime was very fair.

(1.) He did not punish it immediately, because he would not lose so much time from the pursuit of the enemy that were flying from him, because he would not seem to do it in a neat of passion, and because he would do it more to their shame and confusion when he had completed his undertaking, which they thought impracticable. But,

(2.) He told them how he would punish it (Jdg 7:7,9), to show the confidence he had of success in the strength of God, and that, if they had the least grain of grace and consideration left,

they might upon second thoughts repent of their folly, humble themselves, and contrive how to atone for it, by sending after him succours and supplies, which if they had done, no doubt, Gideon would have pardoned them. God gives notice of danger, and space to repent, that sinners may flee from the wrath to come.

3. The warning being slighted, the punishment, though very severe, was really very just.

(1.) The princes of Succoth were first made examples. Gideon got intelligence of their number, seventy-seven men, their names, and places of abode, which were described in writing to him, Jdg 7:14. And, to their great surprise, when they thought he had scarcely overtaken the Midianites, he returned a conqueror. His 300 men were now the ministers of his justice; they secured all these princes, and brought them before Gideon, who showed them his royal captives in chains. "These are the men you thought me an unequal match for, and would give me no assistance in the pursuit of," Jdg 7:15. And he punished them with thorns and briers, but, it should seem, not unto death. With these,

[1.] He tormented their bodies, either by scourging or by rolling them in the thorns and briers; some way or other he tore their flesh, Jdg 7:7. Those shall have judgment without mercy that have shown no mercy. Perhaps he observed them to be soft and delicate men, who despised him and his company for their roughness and hardiness, and therefore Gideon thus mortified them for their effeminacy.

[2.] He instructed their minds: With these he taught the men of Succoth, Jdg 7:16. The correction he gave them was intended, not for destruction, but wholesome discipline, to make them wiser and better for the future. He made them know (so the word is), made them know themselves and their folly, God and their duty, made them know who Gideon was,

since they would not know by the success wherewith God had crowned him.

Note, Many are taught with the briers and thorns of affliction that would not learn otherwise. God gives wisdom by the rod and reproof, chastens and teaches, and by correction opens the ear to discipline. Our blessed Saviour, though he was a Son, yet learnt obedience by the things which he suffered, Heb 5:8. Let every pricking brier, and grieving thorn, especially when it becomes a thorn in the flesh, be thus interpreted, thus improved. "By this God designs to teach me; what good lesson shall I learn?"

(2.) The doom of the men of Penuel comes next, and it should seem he used them more severely than the other, for good reason, no doubt, Jdg 7:17.

[1.] He beat down their tower, of which they gloried, in which they trusted, perhaps scornfully advising Gideon and his men rather to secure themselves in that than to pursue the Midianites. What men make their pride is justly by its ruin made their shame.

[2.] He slew the men of the city, not all, perhaps not the elders or princes, but those that had affronted him, and those only. He slew some of the men of the city that were most insolent and abusive, for terror to the rest, and so he taught the men of Penuel.

10 Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand *men,* all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell a hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.

11 And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.

12 And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.

13 And Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle before the sun *was up*,
14 and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and inquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, *even* threescore and seventeen men.
15 And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me, saying, *Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men *that are* weary?
16 And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.
17 And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.
18 Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men *were they* whom ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou *art*, so *were* they; each one resembled the children of a king.
19 And he said, they *were* my brethren, *even* the sons of my mother: *as* the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you.

Judgment began at the house of God, in the just correction of the men of Succoth and Penuel, who were Israelites, but it did not end there. The kings of Midian, when they had served to demonstrate Gideon's victories, and grace his triumphs, must now be reckoned with.

1. They are indicted for the murder of Gideon's brethren some time ago at Mount Tabor. When the children of Israel, for fear of the Midianites, made themselves dens in the mountains (Jdg 6:2), those young men, it is likely, took shelter in that mountain, where they were found by these two kings, and most basely and barbarously slain in cold blood. When he asks them what manner of men they were (Jdg 7:18), it is not because he was uncertain of the thing, or wanted proof of it; he was not so little concerned for his brethren's blood as not to enquire it out before now, nor were these proud tyrants solicitous to conceal it. But he puts that question to them that by their acknowledgment of the more than ordinary comeliness of the persons they slew their crime might appear

the more heinous, and consequently their punishment the more righteous.

They could not but own that, though they were found in a mean and abject condition, yet they had an unusual greatness and majesty in their countenances, not unlike Gideon himself at this time: they resembled the children of a king, born for something great.

2. Being found guilty of this murder by their own confession, Gideon, though he might have put them to death as Israel's judge for the injuries done to that people in general, as Oreb and Zeeb (Jdg 7:25), yet chooses rather to put on the character of an avenger of blood, as next of kin to the persons slain: They were my brethren, Jdg 7:19. Their other crimes might have been forgiven, at least Gideon would not have slain them himself, let them have answered it to the people; but the voice of his brethren's blood cries, cries to him, now it is in the power of his hand to avenge it, and therefore there is no remedy--by him must their blood be shed, though they were kings. Little did they think to hear of this so long after; but murder seldom goes unpunished even in this life.

3. The execution is done by Gideon himself with his own hand, because he was the avenger of blood; he bade his son slay them, for he was a near relation to the persons murdered, and fittest to be his father's substitute and representative, and he would thus train him up to the acts of justice and boldness, Jdg 7:20. But,

(1.) The young man himself desired to be excused; he feared, though they were bound and could make no resistance, because he was yet a youth, and not used to such work: courage does not always run in the blood.

(2.) The prisoners themselves desired that Gideon would excuse it (Jdg 7:21), begged that, if they must die, they might die by his own hand, which would be somewhat more

honourable to them, and more easy; for by his great strength they would sooner be dispatched and rid out of their pain. As is the man, so is his strength. Either they mean it of themselves (they were men of such strength as called for a better hand than that young man's to overpower quickly) or of Gideon, "Thou art at thy full strength; he has not yet come to it; therefore be thou the executioner." From those that are grown up to maturity, it is expected that what they do in any service be done with so much the more strength. Gideon dispatched them quickly, and seized the ornaments that were on their camels' necks, ornaments like the moon, so it is in the margin, either badges of their royalty or perhaps of their idolatry, for Ashteroth was represented by the moon, as Baal by the sun. With there he took all their other ornaments, as appears Jdg 7:26, where we find that he did not put them to so good a use as one would have wished. The destruction of these two kings, and that of the two princes (Jdg 7:25) is long afterwards pleaded as a precedent in prayer for the ruin of others of the church's enemies, Ps 83:11, Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, and all their princes as Zebah and Zalmunna, let them all be but off in like manner.

20 And he said unto Jether his firstborn, up, *and* slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he *was* yet a youth.

21 Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man *is, so is* his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that *were* on their camels' necks.

22 Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.

24 And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.)

25 And they answered, we will willingly give *them*. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.

26 And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred *shekels* of gold; besides ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that *was* on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that *were* about their camels' necks.

27 And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, *even* in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.

Here is, I. Gideon's laudable modesty, after his great victory, in refusing the government which the people offered him.

1. It was honest in them to offer it: Rule thou over us, for thou hast delivered us, Jdg 7:22. They thought it very reasonable that he who had gone through the toils and perils of their deliverance should enjoy the honour and power of commanding them ever afterwards, and very desirable that he who in this great and critical juncture had had such manifest tokens of God's presence with him should ever afterwards preside in their affairs. Let us apply it to the Lord Jesus: he hath delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, our spiritual enemies, the worst and most dangerous, and therefore it is fit he should rule over us; for how can we be better ruled than by one that appears to have so great an interest in heaven and so great a kindness for this earth? We are delivered that we may serve him without fear, Lu 1:74,75.

2. It was honourable in him to refuse it: I will not rule over you, Jdg 7:23. What he did was with a design to serve them, not to rule them--to make them safe, easy, and happy, not to make himself great or honourable. And, as he was not ambitious of grandeur himself, so he did not covet to entail it upon his family: "My son shall not rule over you, either while I live or when I am gone, but the Lord shall still rule over you, and constitute your judges by the special designation of his own Spirit, as he has done." This intimates,

(1.) His modesty, and the mean opinion he had of himself and his own merits. He thought the honour of doing good was recompence enough for all his services, which needed not to

be rewarded with the honour of bearing sway. He that is greatest, let him be your minister.

(2.) His piety, and the great opinion he had of God's government. Perhaps he discerned in the people a dislike of the theocracy, or divine government, a desire of a king like the nations, and thought they availed themselves of his merits as a colourable pretence to move for this change of government. But Gideon would by no means admit it. No good man can be pleased with any honour done to himself which ought to be peculiar to God. Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 1Co 1:13.

II. Gideon's irregular zeal to perpetuate the remembrance of this victory by an ephod made of the choicest of the spoils.

1. He asked the men of Israel to give him the ear-rings of their prey; for such ornaments they stripped the slain of in abundance. These he demanded, either because they were the finest gold, and therefore fittest for a religious use, or because they had had as ear-rings some superstitious signification, which he thought too well of. Aaron called for the ear-rings to make the golden calf of, Ex 32:2. These Gideon begged Jdg 7:24. And he had reason enough to think that those who offered him a crown, when he declined it, would not deny him their ear-rings, when he begged them, nor did they, Jdg 7:25.

2. He himself added the spoil he took from the kings of Midian, which, it should seem, had fallen to his share, Jdg 7:26. The generals had that part of the prey which was most splendid, the prey of divers colours, Jdg 5:30. 3. Of this he made an ephod, Jdg 7:27. It was plausible enough, and might be well intended to preserve a memorial of so divine a victory in the judge's own city. But it was a very unadvised thing to make that memorial to be an ephod, a sacred garment.

I would gladly put the best construction that can be upon the actions of good men, and such a one we are sure Gideon was.

But we have reason to suspect that this ephod had, as usual, a teraphim annexed to it (Ho 3:4), and that, having an altar already built by divine appointment (Jdg 6:26), which he erroneously imagined he might still use for sacrifice, he intended this for an oracle, to be consulted in doubtful cases. So the learned Dr. Spencer supposes. Each tribe having now very much its government within itself, they were too apt to covet their religion among themselves.

We read very little of Shiloh, and the ark there, in all the story of the Judges. Sometimes by divine dispensation, and much oftener by the transgression of men, that law which obliged them to worship only at that one altar seems not to have been so religiously observed as one would have expected, any more than afterwards, when in the reigns even of very good kings the high places were not taken away, from which we may infer that that law had a further reach as a type of Christ, by whose mediation alone all our services are accepted. Gideon therefore, through ignorance or inconsideration, sinned in making this ephod, though he had a good intention in it.

Shiloh, it is true, was not far off, but it was in Ephraim, and that tribe had lately disobliged him (Jdg 7:1), which made him perhaps not care to go so often among them as his occasions would lead him to consult the oracle, and therefore he would have one nearer home. However this might be honestly intended, and at first did little hurt, yet in process of time,

(1.) Israel went a whoring after it, that is, they deserted God's altar and priesthood, being fond of change, and prone to idolatry, and having some excuse for paying respect to this ephod, because so good a man as Gideon had set it up, and by degrees their respect to it grew more and more superstitious. Note, Many are led into false ways by one false step of a good man. The beginning of sin, particularly of idolatry and will-worship, is as the letting forth of water, so it has been found in the fatal corruptions of the church of Rome; therefore leave it off before it be meddled with.

(2.) It became a snare to Gideon himself, abating his zeal for the house of God in his old age, and much more to his house, who were drawn by it into sin, and it proved the ruin of the family.

III. Gideon's happy agency for the repose of Israel, Jdg 7:28. The Midianites that had been so vexatious gave them no more disturbance. Gideon, though he would not assume the honour and power of a king, governed as a judge, and did all the good offices he could for his people; so that the country was in quietness forty years. Hitherto the times of Israel had been reckoned by forties. Othniel judged forty years, Ehud eighty--just two forties, Barak forty, and now Gideon forty, providence so ordering it to bring in mind the forty years of their wandering in the wilderness. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation. And see Ec 4:6. After these, Eli ruled forty years (1Sa 4:18), Samuel and Saul forty (Ac 13:21), David forty, and Solomon forty. Forty years is about an age.

28 Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.

29 And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house.

30 And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

31 And his concubine that *was* in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech.

32 And Gideon the son of Joash died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

We have here the conclusion of the story of Gideon.

1. He lived privately, Jdg 7:29. He was not puffed up with his great honours, did not covet a palace or castle to dwell in, but retired to the house he had lived in before his elevation. Thus that brave Roman Who was called from the plough upon a sudden occasion to command the army when the action was over returned to his plough again.

2. His family was multiplied. He had many wives (therein he transgressed the law); by them he had seventy sons (Jdg 7:30), but by a concubine he had one whom he named Abimelech (which signifies, my father a king), that proved the ruin of his family, Jdg 7:31.

3. He died in honour, in a good old age, when he had lived as long as he was capable of serving God and his country; and who would desire to live any longer? And he was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.

4. After his death the people corrupted themselves, and went all to naught. As soon as ever Gideon was dead, who had kept them close to the worship of the God of Israel, they found themselves under no restraint, and then they went a whoring after Baalim, Jdg 7:33. They went a whoring first after another ephod (Jdg 7:27), for which irregularity Gideon had himself given them too much occasion, and now they went a whoring after another god. False worships made way for false deities.

They now chose a new god (Jdg 5:8), a god of a new name, Baal-berith (a goddess, say some); Berith, some think, was Berytus, the place where the Phoenicians worshipped this idol. The name signifies the Lord of a covenant. Perhaps he was so called because his worshippers joined themselves by covenant to him, in imitation of Israel's covenanting with God; for the devil is God's ape. In this revolt of Israel to idolatry they showed,

(1.) Great ingratitude to God (Jdg 7:34): They remembered not the Lord, not only who had delivered them into the hands of their enemies, to punish them for their idolatry, but who had also delivered them out of the hands of their enemies, to invite them back again into his service; both the judgments and the mercies were forgotten, and the impressions of them lost.

(2.) Great ingratitude to Gideon, Jdg 7:35. A great deal of goodness he had shown unto Israel, as a father to his country, for which they ought to have been kind to his family when he was gone, for that is one way by which we ought to show ourselves grateful to our friends and benefactors, and may be returning their kindnesses when they are in their graves. But Israel showed not this kindness to Gideon's family, as we shall find in the next chapter. No wonder if those who forget their God forget their friends.

33 And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god.

34 And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side:

35 neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, *namely*, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had showed unto Israel.

Judges-9

The Reign of Abimelech

1 And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether *is* better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, *which are* threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? Remember also that I *am* your bone and your flesh.

3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He *is* our brother.

We are here told by what arts Abimelech got into authority, and made himself great. His mother perhaps had instilled into his mind some towering ambitious thoughts, and the name his father gave him, carrying royalty in it, might help to blow up

these sparks; and now that he has buried his father nothing will serve his proud spirit but he will succeed him in the government of Israel, directly contrary to his father's will, for he had declared no son of his should rule over them. He had no call from God to this honour as his father had, nor was there any present occasion for a judge to deliver Israel as there was when his father was advanced; but his own ambition must be gratified, and its gratification is all he aims at. Now observe here,

I. How craftily he got his mother's relations into his interests. Shechem was a city in the tribe of Ephraim, of great note. Joshua had held his last assembly there. If that city would but appear for him, and set him up, he thought it would go far in his favour. There he had an interest in the family of which his mother was, and by them he made an interest in the leading men of the city. It does not appear that any of them had an eye to him as a man of merit, who had any thing to recommend him to such a choice, but the motion came first from himself. None would have dreamed of making such a one king, if he had not dreamed of it himself. And see here,

1. How he wheedled them into the choice, Jdg 9:2,3. He basely suggested that Gideon having left seventy sons, who made a good figure and had a good interest, they were designing to keep the power which their father had in their hands, and by a joint-influence to reign over Israel. "Now," says he, "you had better have one king than more, than many, than so many. Affairs of state are best managed by a single person," Jdg 9:2. We have no reason to think that all or any of Gideon's sons had the least intention to reign over Israel (they were of their father's mind, that the Lord should reign over them, and they were not called of him), yet this he insinuates to pave the way to his own pretensions. Note, Those who design ill themselves are commonly most apt to suspect that others design ill. As for himself, he only puts them in mind of his relation to them (verbum sapienti--A word to the wise is sufficient): Remember that I am your bone and your flesh. The plot took

wonderfully. The magistrates of Shechem were pleased to think of their city being a royal city and the metropolis of Israel, and therefore they inclined to follow him; for they said, "He is our brother, and his advancement will be our advantage."

2. How he got money from them to bear the charges of his pretensions (Jdg 9:4): They gave him seventy pieces of silver; it is not said what the value of these pieces was; so many shekels are less, and so many talents more, than we can well imagine; therefore it is supposed they were each a pound weight: but they gave this money out of the house of Baal-berith, that is, out of the public treasury, which, out of respect to their idol, they deposited in his temple to be protected by him; or out of the offerings that had been made to that idol, which they hoped would prosper the better in his hands for its having been consecrated to their god. How unfit was he to reign over Israel, because unlikely to defend them, who, instead of restraining and punishing idolatry, thus early made himself a pensioner to an idol! 3. What soldiers he enlisted. He hired into his service vain and light persons, the scum and scoundrels of the country, men of broken fortunes, giddy heads, and profligate lives; none but such would own him, and they were fittest to serve his purpose. Like leader like followers.

II. How cruelly he got his father's sons out of the way.

1 The first thing he did with the rabble he headed was to kill all his brethren at once, publicly and in cold blood, threescore and ten men, one only escaping, all slain upon one stone. See in this bloody tragedy,

(1.) The power of ambition what beasts it will turn men into, how it will break through all the ties of natural affection and natural conscience, and sacrifice that which is most sacred, dear, and valuable, to its designs. Strange that ever it should enter into the heart of a man to be so very barbarous!

(2.) The peril of honour and high birth. Their being the sons of so great a man as Gideon exposed them thus and made Abimelech jealous of them. We find just the same number of Ahab's sons slain together at Samaria, 2Ki 10:1,7. The grand seigniors have seldom thought themselves safe while any of their brethren have been unstrangled. Let none then envy those of high extraction, or complain of their own meanness and obscurity. The lower the safer.

2. Way being thus made for Abimelech's election, the men of Shechem proceeded to choose him king, Jdg 9:6. God was not consulted whether they should have any king at all, much less who it should be; here is no advising with the priest or with their brethren of any other city or tribe, though it was designed that he should reign over Israel, Jdg 9:22. But,

(1.) The Shechemites, as if they were the people and wisdom must die with them, did all; they aided and abetted him in the murder of his brethren (Jdg 9:24), and then they made him king. The men of Shechem (that is, the great men, the chief magistrates of the city), and the house of Millo (that is, the common-council, the full house or house of fulness, as the word signifies), those that met in their guildhall (we read often of the house of Millo, or state-house in Jerusalem, or the city of David, 2Sa 5:9,2Ki 12:20), these gathered together, not to prosecute and punish Abimelech for this barbarous murder, as they ought to have done, he being one of their citizens, but to make him king. Pretium sceleris tulit hic diadema--His wickedness was rewarded with a diadem. What could they promise themselves from a king that laid the foundation of his kingdom in blood?

(2.) The rest of the Israelites were so very sottish as to sit by unconcerned. They took no care to give check to this usurpation, to protect the sons of Gideon, or to avenge their death, but tamely submitted to the bloody tyrant, as men who with their religion had lost their reason, and all sense of

honour and liberty, justice and gratitude. How vigorously had their fathers appeared to avenge the death of the Levite's concubine, and yet so wretchedly degenerate are they now as not to attempt the avenging of the death of Gideon's sons; it is for this that they are charged with ingratitude (Jdg 8:35): Neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal.

4 And they gave him threescore and ten *pieces* of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.

5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, *being* threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding, yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

7 And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

8 The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

11 But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us.

15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands:

We have here the only testimony that appears to have been borne against the wicked confederacy of Abimelech and the men of Shechem. It was a sign they had provoked God to depart from them that neither any prophet was sent nor any remarkable judgment, to awaken this stupid people, and to stop the progress of this threatening mischief. Only Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, who by a special providence escaped the common ruin of his family (Jdg 9:5), dealt plainly with the Shechemites, and his speech, which is here recorded, shows him to have been a man of such great ingenuity and wisdom, and really such an accomplished gentleman, that we cannot but the more lament the fall of Gideon's sons.

Jotham did not go about to raise an army out of the other cities of Israel (in which, one would think, he might have made a good interest for his father's sake), to avenge his brethren's death, much less to set up himself in competition with Abimelech, so groundless was the usurper's suggestion that the sons of Gideon aimed at dominion (Jdg 9:2); but he contents himself with giving a faithful reproof to the Shechemites, and fair warning of the fatal consequences. He got an opportunity of speaking to them from the top of Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessings, at the foot of which probably the Shechemites were, upon some occasion or other, gathered together (Josephus says, solemnizing a festival), and it seems they were willing to hear what he had to say.

I. His preface is very serious: "Hearken unto me, you men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you, Jdg 9:7. As ever you hope to obtain God's favour, and to be accepted of him, give me a patient and impartial hearing." Note, Those who expect God to hear their prayers must be willing to hear reason, to hear a faithful reproof, and to hear the complaints

and appeals of wronged innocency. If we turn away our ear from hearing the law, our prayer will be an abomination, Pr 28:9.

II. His parable is very ingenious--that when the trees were disposed to choose a king the government was offered to those valuable trees the olive, the fig-tree, and the vine, but they refused it, choosing rather to serve than rule, to do good than bear sway. But the same tender being made to the bramble he accepted it with vain-glorious exultation. The way of instruction by parables is an ancient way, and very useful, especially to give reproofs by.

1. He hereby applauds the generous modesty of Gideon, and the other judges who were before him, and perhaps of the sons of Gideon, who had declined accepting the state and power of kings when they might have had them, and likewise shows that it is in general the temper of all wise and good men to decline preferment and to choose rather to be useful than to be great.

(1.) There was no occasion at all for the trees to choose a king; they are all the trees of the Lord which he has planted (Ps 104:16) and which therefore he will protect. Nor was there any occasion for Israel to talk of setting a king over them; for the Lord was their king.

(2.) When they had it in their thoughts to choose a king they did not offer the government to the stately cedar, or the lofty pine, which are only for show and shade, and not otherwise useful till they are cut down, but to the fruit-trees, the vine and the olive. Those that bear fruit for the public good are justly respected and honoured by all that are wise more than those that affect to make a figure. For a good useful man some would even dare to die.

(3.) The reason which all these fruit-trees gave for their refusal was much the same. The olive pleads (Jdg 9:9), Should I leave

my wine, wherewith both God and man are served and honoured? For oil and wine were used both at God's altars and at men's tables. And shall I leave my sweetness, saith the fig-tree, and my good fruit (Jdg 9:11), and go to be promoted over the trees? Or, as the margin reads it, go up and down for the trees? It is intimated,

[1.] That government involves a man in a great deal both of toil and care; he that is promoted over the trees must go up and down for them, and make himself a perfect drudge to business.

[2.] That those who are preferred to places of public trust and power must resolve to forego all their private interests and advantages, and sacrifice them to the good of the community. The fig-tree must lose its sweetness, its sweet retirement, sweet repose, and sweet conversation and contemplation, if it go to be promoted over the trees, and must undergo a constant fatigue.

[3.] That those who are advanced to honour and dignity are in great danger of losing their fatness and fruitfulness. Preferment is apt to make men proud and slothful, and thus spoil their usefulness, with which in a lower sphere they honoured God and man, for which reason those that desire to do good are afraid of being too great.

2. He hereby exposes the ridiculous ambition of Abimelech, whom he compares to the bramble or thistle, Jdg 9:14. He supposes the trees to make their court to him: Come thou and reign over us, perhaps because he knew not that the first motion of Abimelech's preferment came from himself (as we found, Jdg 9:2), but thought the Shechemites had proposed it to him; however, supposing it so, his folly in accepting it deserved to be chastised.

The bramble is a worthless plant, not to be numbered among the trees, useless and fruitless, nay, hurtful and vexatious,

scratching and tearing, and doing mischief; it began with the curse, and its end is to be burned. Such a one was Abimelech, and yet chosen to the government by the trees, by all the trees; this election seems to have been more unanimous than any of the others. Let us not think it strange if we see folly set in great dignity (Ec 10:6), and the vilest men exalted (Ps 12:8), and men blind to their own interest in the choice of their guides. The bramble, being chosen to the government, takes no time to consider whether he should accept it or no, but immediately, as if he had been born and bred to dominion, hectors, and assures them they shall find him as he found them.

See what great swelling words of vanity he speaks (Jdg 9:15), what promises he makes to his faithful subjects: Let them come and trust in my shadow: a goodly shadow to trust in! How unlike to the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, which a good magistrate is compared to! Isa 32:2. Trust in his shadow!--more likely to be scratched if they came near him--more likely to be injured by him than benefited. Thus men boast of a false gift. Yet he threatens with as much confidence as he promises: If you be not faithful, let fire come out of the bramble (a very unlikely thing to emit fire) and devour the cedars of Lebanon--more likely to catch fire, and be itself devoured.

III. His application is very close and plain. In it,

1. He reminds them of the many good services his father had done for them, Jdg 9:17. He fought their battles, at the hazard of his own life, and to their unspeakable advantage. It was a shame that they needed to be put in mind of this.

2. He aggravates their unkindness to his father's family. They had not done to him according to the deserving of his hands, Jdg 9:16. Great merits often meet with very ill returns. especially to posterity, when the benefactor if forgotten, as Joseph was among the Egyptians. Gideon had left many sons

that were an honour to his name and family, and these they had barbarously murdered; one son he had left that was the blemish of his name and family, for he was the son of his maid-servant, whom all that had any respect to Gideon's honour would endeavour to conceal, yet him they made their king. In both they put the utmost contempt imaginable upon Gideon.

3. He leaves it to the event to determine whether they had done well, whereby he lodges the appeal with the divine providence.

(1.) If they prospered long in this villany, he would give them leave to say they had done well, Jdg 9:19. "If your conduct towards the house of Gideon be such as can be justified at any bar of justice, honour, or conscience, much good may it do you with your new king." But,

(2.) If they had, as he was sure they had, dealt basely and wickedly in this matter, let them never expect to prosper, Jdg 9:20. Abimelech and the Shechemites, that had strengthened one another's hands in this villany, would certainly be a plague and ruin one to another. Let none expect to do ill and fare well.

Jotham, having given them this admonition, made a shift to escape with his life, Jdg 9:21. Either they could not reach him or they were so far convinced that they would not add the guilt of his blood to all the rest. But, for fear of Abimelech, he lived in exile, in some remote obscure place. Those whose extraction and education are ever so high know not to what difficulties and straits they may be reduced.

17 (for my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

18 and ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the men of Shechem, because he *is* your brother:)

19 if ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his
house this day, *then* rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice
in you:
20 but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of
Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men
of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.
21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there,
for fear of Abimelech his brother.
22 When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,
23 then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of
Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with
Abimelech:
24 that the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might
come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which
slew them, and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the
killing of his brethren.
25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top of the
mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them:
and it was told Abimelech.
26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to
Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.
27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards,
and trode *the grapes,* and made merry, and went into the house of
their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.
28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, who *is* Abimelech, and who *is*
Shechem, that we should serve him? *Is* not *he* the son of Jerubbaal?
and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of
Shechem: for why should we serve him?
29 And would to God this people were under my hand! Then would I
remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army,
and come out.
30 And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the
son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.
31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold,
Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and,
behold, they fortify the city against thee.
32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that *is* with thee,
and lie in wait in the field:

Three years Abimelech reigned, after a sort, without any disturbance; it is not said, He judged Israel, or did any service at all to his country, but so long he enjoyed the title and dignity of a king; and not only the Shechemites, but many other places, paid him respect. They must have been fond of a king that could please themselves with such a one as this. But the triumphing of the wicked is short. Within three years, as the years of a hireling, all this glory shall be contemned, and laid in the dust, Isa 16:14. The ruin of these confederates in wickedness was from the righteous hand of the God to whom vengeance belongs. He sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the Shechemites (Jdg 9:23), that is, they grew jealous one of another and ill-affected one to another. He slighted those that set him up, and perhaps countenanced other cities which now began to come into his interests more than he did theirs; and then they grew uneasy at his government, blamed his conduct, and quarrelled at his impositions. This was from God. He permitted the devil, that great mischief-maker, to sow discord between them, and he is an evil spirit, whom God not only keeps under his check, but sometimes serves his own purposes by.

Their own lusts were evil spirits; they are devils in men's own hearts; from them come wars and fightings. These God gave them up to, and so might be said to send the evil spirits between them. When men's sin is made their punishment, though God is not the author of the sin, yet the punishment is from him. The quarrel God had with Abimelech and the Shechemites was for the murder of the sons of Gideon (Jdg 9:24): That the cruelty done to them might come and their blood be laid as a burden upon Abimelech that slew them, and the men of Shechem that helped him. Note,

1. Sooner or later God will make inquisition for blood, innocent blood, and will return it on the heads of those that shed it, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

2. Accessaries shall be reckoned with, as well as principals, in that and other sins. The Shechemites that countenanced Abimelech's pretensions, aided and abetted him in his bloody project, and avowed the fact by making him king after he had done it, must fall with him, fall by him, and fall first.

3. Those that combine together to do wickedly are justly dashed in pieces one against another. Blood cannot be a lasting cement to any interest.

I The Shechemites began to affront Abimelech, perhaps they scarcely knew why or wherefore, but they were given to change.

1. They dealt treacherously with him, Jdg 9:23. It is not said, They repented of their sin in owning him. Had they done so, it would have been laudable to disown him; but they did it only upon some particular pique conceived against him by their pride or envy. Those that set him up were the first that deserted him and endeavoured to dethrone him. It is not strange that those who were ungrateful to Gideon were unfaithful to Abimelech; for what will hold those that will not be held by the obligation of such merits as Gideon's? Note, It is just with God that those who tempt others to be cone perfidious should afterwards be themselves betrayed by those whom they have taught to be perfidious.

2. They aimed to seize him when he was at Arumah (Jdg 9:41), his country-seat. Expecting him to come to town, they set liers in wait for him (Jdg 9:25), who should make him their prisoner whom they had lately made their prince. Those who were thus posted, he not coming, took the opportunity of robbing travellers, which would help to make the people more and more uneasy under Abimelech, when they saw he could not or would not protect them from highway-men.

3. They entertained one Gaal, and set him up as their head in opposition to Abimelech, Jdg 9:26. This Gaal is said to be the

son of Ebed, which signifies a servant, perhaps denoting the meanness of his extraction. As Abimelech was by the mother's side, so he by the father's, the son of a servant. Here was one bramble contesting with another. We have reason to suspect that this Gaal was a native Canaanite, because he courts the Shechemites into subjection to the men of Hamor, who was the ancient lord of this city in Jacob's time. He was a bold ambitious man, served their purpose admirably well when they were disposed to quarrel with Abimelech, and they also served his purpose; so he went over to them to blow the coals, and they put their confidence in him.

4. They did all the despite they could to Abimelech's name, Jdg 9:27. They made themselves very merry in his absence, as those who were glad he was out of the way, and who, now that they had another to head them, were in hopes to get clear of him; nay, they went into the house of their god, to solemnize their feast of in-gathering, and there they did eat, and drink, and cursed Abimelech, not only said all the ill they could of him in their table-talk and the song of their drunkards, but wished all the ill they could to him over their sacrifices, praying to their idol to destroy him. They drank healths to his confusion, and with as loud huzzas as ever they had drunk them to his prosperity. That very temple whence they had fetched money to set him up with did they now meet in to curse him and contrive his ruin. Had they deserted their idol-god with their image-king, they might have hoped to prosper; but, while they still cleave to the former, the latter shall cleave to them to their ruin. How should Satan cast out Satan?

5. They pleased themselves with Gaal's vaunted defiance of Abimelech, Jdg 9:28,29. They loved to hear that impudent upstart speak scornfully,

(1.) Of Abimelech, though calling him in disdain Shechem, or a Shechemite, he reflected upon their own city.

(2.) Of his good father likewise, Gideon: Is not he the son of Jerubbaal? So he calls him, perhaps in an impious indignation at his name and memory for throwing down the altar of Baal, turning that to his reproach which was his praise.

(3.) Of his prime minister of state, Zebul his officer, and ruler of the city. "We may well be ashamed to serve them, and need not be afraid to oppose them." Men of turbulent ambitious spirits thus despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Gaal aimed not to recover Shechem's liberty, only to change their tyrant: "O that this people were under my hand! What I would do! I would challenge Abimelech to try titles for the crown;" and it should seem he desired his friends to send him word that he was ready to dispute it with him whenever he pleased: "Increase thy army, and come out. Do thy worst; let the point be determined by the sword." This pleased the Shechemites, who were now as sick of Abimelech as ever they had been fond of him. Men of no conscience will be men of no constancy.

II. Abimelech turned all his force upon them, and, in a little time, quite ruined them. Observe the steps of their overthrow.

1 The Shechemites' counsels were betrayed to Abimelech by Zebul his confidant, the ruler of the city, who continued hearty for him. His anger was kindled (Jdg 9:30), and the more because Gaal had spoken slightly of him (Jdg 9:28), for perhaps, if he had complimented and caressed him now that things were in this ferment, he might have gained him to his interest; but he, being disobliged, sends notice to Abimelech of all that was said and done in Shechem against him, Jdg 9:31. Betrayers are often betrayed by some among themselves, and the cursing of the king is sometimes strangely carried by a bird of the air. He prudently advises him to come against the city immediately, and lose no time, Jdg 9:32,33. He thinks it best that he should march his forces by night into the neighbourhood, surprise the city in the morning, and then make the best of his advantages. How could the Shechemites

hope to speed in their attempt when the ruler of their city was in the interests of their enemy? They knew it, and yet took no care to secure him.

2. Gaal, that headed their faction, having been betrayed by Zebul, Abimelech's confidant, was most wretchedly bantered by him. Abimelech, according to Zebul's advice, drew all his forces down upon Shechem by night, Jdg 9:34. Gaal, in the morning, went out to the gate (Jdg 9:35) to see what posture things were in, and to enquire, What news? Zebul, as a ruler of the city, met him there as a friend. Abimelech and his forces beginning to move towards the city, Gaal discovers them (Jdg 9:36), takes notice of their approach to Zebul that was standing with him, little thinking that he had sent for them and was now expecting them. "Look," says he, "do not I see a body of men coming down from the mountain towards us? Yonder they are," pointing to the place. "No, no," says Zebul; "thy eye-sight deceives thee; it is but the shadow of the mountains which thou takest to be an army." By this he intended,

(1.) To ridicule him, as a man of no sense or spirit, and therefore very unfit for what he pretended to, as a man that might easily be imposed upon and made to believe any thing, and that was so silly and so cowardly that he apprehended danger where there was none, and was ready to fight with a shadow.

(2.) To detain him, and hold him in talk, while the forces of Abimelech were coming up, that thereby they might gain advantage. But when Gaal, being content to believe those he now saw to be but the shadow of the mountains (perhaps the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, which lay close by the city), was undeceived by the discovery of two other companies that marched apace towards the city, then Zebul took another way to banter him, upbraiding him with what he had said but a day or two before, in contempt of Abimelech (Jdg 9:38): Where is now thy mouth, that foul mouth of thine, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech?

Note, Proud and haughty people are often made in a little time to change their note, and to dread those whom they had most despised. Gaal had, in a bravado, challenged Abimelech to increase his army and come out; but now Zebul, in Abimelech's name, challenges him: Go out, and fight with them, if thou darest. Justly are the insolent thus insulted over.

3. Abimelech routed Gaal's forces that sallied out of the town, Jdg 9:39,40. Gaal, disheartened no doubt by Zebul's hectoring him, and perceiving his interest weaker than he thought it was, though he marched out against Abimelech with what little force he had, was soon put to the worst, and obliged to retire into the city with great precipitation. In this action the Shechemites' loss was considerable: Many were overthrown and wounded, the common effect of popular tumults, in which the inconsiderate multitude are often drawn into fatal snare by those that promise them glorious success.

4. Zebul that night expelled Gaal, and the party he had brought with him into Shechem, out of the city (Jdg 9:41), sending him to the place whence he came. For though the generality of the city continued still averse to Abimelech, as appears by the sequel of the story, yet they were willing to part with Gaal, and did not oppose his expulsion, because, though he had talked big, both his skill and courage had failed him when there was occasion for them. Most people judge of men's fitness for business by their success, and he that does not speed well is concluded not to do well. Well, Gaal's interest in Shechem is soon at an end, and he that had talked of removing Abimelech is himself removed, nor do we ever hear of him any more. Exit Gaal--Gaal retires.

5. Abimelech, the next day, set upon the city, and quite destroyed it, for their treacherous dealings with him. Perhaps Abimelech had notice of their expelling Gaal, who had headed the faction, with which they thought he would have been satisfied, but the crime was too keep to be thus atoned for, and

his resentments were too keen to be pacified by so small an instance of submission, besides that it was more Zebul's act than theirs; by it their hands were weakened, and therefore he resolved to follow his blow, and effectually to chastise their treachery.

(1.) He had intelligence brought him that the people of Shechem had come out into the field, Jdg 9:42. Some think into the field of business to plough and sow (having lately gathered in their harvest), or to perfect their harvest, for it was only their vintage that they had made an end of (Jdg 9:27), and then it intimates that they were secure. And because Abimelech had retired (Jdg 9:41) they thought themselves in no danger from him, and then the issue of it is an instance of sudden destruction coming upon those that cry, Peace and safety. Others think they went out into the field of battle; though Gaal was driven out, they would not lay down their arms, but put themselves into a posture for another engagement with Abimelech, in which they hoped to retrieve what they had lost the day before,

(2.) He himself, with a strong detachment, cut off the communication between them and the city, stood in the entering of the gate (Jdg 9:44), that they might neither make their retreat into the city nor receive any succours from the city, and then sent two companies of his men, who were too strong for them, and they put them all to the sword, ran upon those that were in the fields and slew them. When we go out about our business we are not sure that we shall come home again; there are deaths both in the city and in the field.

(3.) He then fell upon the city itself, and, with a rage reaching up to heaven, though it was the place of his nativity, laid it in ruins, slew all the people, beat down all the buildings, and, in token of his desire that it might be a perpetual desolation, sowed it with salt, that it might remain a lasting monument of the punishment of perfidiousness. Yet Abimelech prevailed not to make its desolations perpetual; for it was afterwards

rebuilt, and became so considerable a place that all Israel came thither to make Rehoboam king, 1Ki 12:1. And the place proved an ill omen. Abimelech intended hereby to punish the Shechemites for their serving him formerly in the murder of Gideon's sons. Thus, when God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, he means one thing and they another, Isa 10:6,7. They design to maintain their honour, but God to maintain his.

6. Those that retired into a strong-hold of their idol-temple were all destroyed there. These are called the men of the tower of Shechem (Jdg 9:46,47), some castle that belonged to the city, but lay at some distance from it. They, hearing of the destruction of the city, withdrew into a hold of the temple, trusting, it is likely, not so much to its strength as to its sanctity; they put themselves under the protection of their idol: for thus all people will walk in the name of their god, and shall not we then choose to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life? For in the time of trouble he shall hide us in his pavilion, Pr 27:5. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, Pr 18:10. But that which they hoped would be for their welfare proved to them a snare and a trap, as those will certainly find that run to idols for shelter; it will prove a refuge of lies. When Abimelech had them altogether penned up in that hold he desired no more. That barbarous project immediately came into his head of setting fire to the strong-hold, and, so to speak, burning all the birds together in the nest. He kept the design to himself, but set all his men on work to expedite the execution of it, Jdg 9:48,49. He ordered them all to follow him, and do as he did: as his father had said to his men (Jdg 7:17), Look on me, and do likewise; so saith he to his, as becomes a general that will not be wanting to give both the plainest direction and the highest encouragement that can be to his soldiers: What you have seen me do make haste to do, as I have done. Not Ite illuc--Go thither; but Venite huc--Come hither.

The officers in Christ's army should thus teach by their example, Php 4:9. He and they fetched each of them a bough from a wood not far off, laid all their boughs together under the wall of this tower, which it is probable was of wood, set fire to their boughs, and so burnt down their hold and all that were in it, who were either burnt or stifled with the smoke. What inventions men have to destroy one another! Whence come these cruel wars and fightings but from their lusts? Some think that the men of the tower of Shechem were the same with the house of Millo, and then Jotham's just imprecation was answered in the letter: Let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour not only in general the men of Shechem, but in particular the house of Millo, Jdg 9:20. About 1000 men and women perished in these flames, many of whom, it is probable, were no way concerned in the quarrel between Abimelech and the Shechemites, nor meddled with either side, yet, in this civil war, they came to this miserable end; for men of factious turbulent spirits perish not alone in their iniquity, but involve many more, that follow them in their simplicity, in the same calamity with them.

33 and it shall be, *that* in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city: and, behold, *when* he and the people that *is* with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

34 And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that *were* with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that *were* with him, from lying in wait.

36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as *if they were* men.

37 And Gaal spake again and said, See, there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.

38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where *is* now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, who *is* Abimelech, that we should serve him? *Is* not

this the people that thou hast despised?Go out, I pray now, and
fight with them.
39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with
Abimelech.
40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were
overthrown and wounded, *even* unto the entering of the gate.
41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and
his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.
42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into
the field; and they told Abimelech.
43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies,
and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people *were*
come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote
them.
44 And Abimelech, and the company that *was* with him, rushed
forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the
two *other* companies ran upon all *the people* that *were* in the fields,
and slew them.
45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the
city, and slew the people that *was* therein, and beat down the city,
and sowed it with salt.
46 And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard *that,* they
entered into a hold of the house of the god Berith.
47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of
Shechem were gathered together.
48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people
that *were* with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut
down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid *it* on his
shoulder, and said unto the people that *were* with him, what ye
have seen me do, make haste, *and* do as I *have done.*
49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and
followed Abimelech, and put *them* to the hold, and set the hold on
fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died
also, about a thousand men and women.
50 Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez,
and took it.

51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut *it* to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.
52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire.
53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull.

We have seen the ruin of the Shechemites completed by the hand of Abimelech; and now it comes to his turn to be reckoned with who was their leader in villany. Thebez was a small city, probably not far from Shechem, dependent upon it, and in confederacy with it. Now,

I. Abimelech attempted the destruction of this city (Jdg 9:50), drove all the inhabitants of the town into the castle, or citadel, Jdg 9:51. When he had them there he did not doubt but he should do the same execution here that he had lately done at the strong-hold of the temple of Baal-berith, not considering that the tower of an idol-temple lay more exposed to divine vengeance than any other tower. He attempted to set fire to this tower, at least to burn down the door, and so force an entrance, Jdg 9:52. Those who have escaped and succeeded well in one desperate attempt are apt to think the like attempt another time not desperate. This instance was long after quoted to show how dangerous it is to come near the call of a besieged city, 2Sa 11:20,21, &c. But God infatuates those whom he will ruin.

II. In the attempt he was himself destroyed, having his brains knocked out with a piece of a millstone, Jdg 9:57. No doubt this man was a murderer, whom, though he had escaped the dangers of the war with Shechem, yet vengeance suffered not to live, Ac 28:4. Evil pursues sinners, and sometimes overtakes them when they are not only secure, but triumphant. Thebez, we may suppose, was a weak inconsiderable place, compared with Shechem. Abimelech, having conquered the greater, makes no doubt of being master of the less without any difficulty, especially when he had taken the city, and had

only the tower to deal with; yet he lays his bones by that, and there is all his honour buried.

Thus are the mighty things of the world often confounded by the weakest and those things that are most made light of. See here what rebukes those are justly put under many times by the divine providence that are unreasonable in their demands of satisfaction for injuries received. Abimelech had some reason to chastise the Shechemites, and he had done it with a witness; but when he will carry his revenges further, and nothing will serve but that Thebez also must be sacrificed to his rage, he is not only disappointed there, but destroyed; for verily there is a God that judges in the earth. Three circumstances are worthy of observation in the death of Abimelech:--

1. That he was slain with a stone, as he had slain his brethren all upon one stone.

2. That he had his skull broken. Vengeance aimed at that guilty head which had worn the usurped crown. 3. That the stone was cast upon him by a woman, Jdg 9:53. He saw the stone come; it was therefore strange he did not avoid it, but, no doubt, this made it so much the greater mortification to him to see from what hand it came. Sisera died by a woman's hand and knew it not; but Abimelech not only fell by the hand of a woman but knew it, and, when he found himself ready to breathe his last, nothing troubled him so much as this, that it should be said, A woman slew him. See,

(1.) His foolish pride, in laying so much to heart this little circumstance of his disgrace. Here was no care taken about his precious soul, no concern what would become of that, no prayer to God for his mercy; but very solicitous he is to patch up his shattered credit, when there is no patching his shattered skull. "O let it never be said that such a mighty man as Abimelech was killed by a woman!" The man was dying, but his pride was alive and strong, and the same vain-glorious

humour that had governed him all along appears now at last. Qualis vita, finis ita--As was his life, such was his death. As God punished his cruelty by the manner of his death, so he punished his pride by the instrument of it.

(2.) His foolish project to avoid this disgrace; nothing could be more ridiculous; his own servant must run him through, not to rid him the sooner out of his pain, but that men say not, A woman slew him. Could he think that this would conceal what the woman had done, and not rather proclaim it the more? Nay, it added to the infamy of his death, for hereby he became a self-murderer. Better have it said, A woman slew him, than that it should be said, His servant slew him by his own order; yet now both will be said of him to his everlasting reproach. And it is observable that this very thing which Abimelech was in such care to conceal appears to have been more particularly remembered by posterity than most passages of his history; for Joab speaks of it as that which he expected David would reproach him with, for coming so nigh the wall, 2Sa 11:21. The ignominy we seek to avoid by sin we do but perpetuate the remembrance of.

III. The issue of all is that Abimelech being slain, 1. Israel's peace was restored, and an end was put to this civil war; for those that followed him departed every man to his place, Jdg 9:55. 2. God's justice was glorified (Jdg 9:56,57): Thus God punished the wickedness of Abimelech, and of the men of Shechem, and fulfilled Jotham's curse, for it was not a curse causeless. Thus he preserved the honour of his government, and gave warning to all ages to expect blood for blood. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executes, when the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Though wickedness may prosper awhile, it will not prosper always.

54 Then he called hastily unto the young man his armor-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, a woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.
56 Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:
57 and all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

Judges-10

Tola and Jair Judge Israel

1 And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

Quiet and peaceable reigns, though the best to live in, are the worst to write of, as yielding least variety of matter for the historian to entertain his reader with; such were the reigns of these two judges, Tola and Jair, who make but a small figure and take up but a very little room in this history. But no doubt they were both raised up of God to serve their country in the quality of judges, not pretending, as Abimelech had done, to the grandeur of kings, nor, like him, taking the honour they had to themselves, but being called of God to it.

1. Concerning Tola it is said that he arose after Abimelech to defend Israel, Jdg 10:1. After Abimelech had debauched Israel by his wickedness, disquieted and disturbed them by his restless ambition, and, by the mischiefs he brought on them, exposed them to enemies from abroad, God animated this good man to appear for the reforming of abuses, the putting down of idolatry, the appeasing of tumults, and the healing of the wounds given to the state by Abimelech's usurpation. Thus he saved them from themselves, and guarded them against their enemies.

He was of the tribe of Issachar, a tribe disposed to serve, for he bowed his shoulder to bear (Ge 49:14,15), yet one of that

tribe is here raised up to rule; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted. He bore the name of him that was ancestor to the first family of that tribe; of the sons of Issachar Tola was the first, Ge 46:13,Nu 26:23. It signifies a worm, yet, being the name of his ancestor, he was not ashamed of it. Though he was of Issachar, yet, when he was raised up to the government, he came and dwelt in Mount Ephraim, which was more in the heart of the country, that the people might the more conveniently resort to him for judgment. He judged Israel twenty-three years (Jdg 10:2), kept things in good order, but did not any thing very memorable.

2. Jair was a Gileadite, so was his next successor Jephthah, both of that half tribe of the tribe of Manasseh which lay on the other side Jordan; though they seemed separated from their brethren, yet God took care, while the honour of the government was shifted from tribe to tribe and before it settled in Judah, that those who lay remote should sometimes share in it, putting more abundant honour on that part which lacked. Jair bore the name of a very famous man of the same tribe who in Moses's time was very active in reducing this country, Nu 32:41,Jos 13:30. That which is chiefly remarkable concerning this Jair is the increase and honour of his family: He had thirty sons, Jdg 10:4. And,

(1.) They had good preferments, for they rode on thirty ass colts; that is, they were judges itinerant, who, as deputies to their father, rode from place to place in their several circuits to administer justice. We find afterwards that Samuel made his sons judges, though he could not make them good ones, 1Sa 8:1-3.

(2.) They had good possessions, every one a city, out of those that were called, from their ancestor of the same name with their father, Havoth-jair--the villages of Jair; yet they are called cities, either because those young gentlemen to whom they were assigned enlarged and fortified them, and so improved them into cities, or because they were as well

pleased with their lot in those country towns as if they had been cities compact together and fenced with gates and bars. Villages are cities to a contented mind.

2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was
buried in Shamir.
3 And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty
and two years.
4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had
thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are*
in the land of Gilead.
5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

Jephthah Delivers Israel from the Ammonites

6 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord,
and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the
gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children
of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord,
and served not him.
7 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them
into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children
of Ammon.
8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel:
eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side
Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead.

While those two judges, Tola and Jair, presided in the affairs of Israel, things went well, but afterwards,

I. Israel returned to their idolatry, that sin which did most easily beset them (Jdg 10:6): They did evil again in the sight of the Lord, from whom they were unaccountably bent to backslide, as a foolish people and unwise.

1. They worshipped many gods; not only their old demons Baalim and Ashtaroth, which the Canaanites had worshipped, but, as if they would proclaim their folly to all their neighbours, they served the gods of Syria, Zidon, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines. It looks as if the chief trade of Israel had been to import deities from all countries. It is hard

to say whether it was more impious or impolitic to do this. By introducing these foreign deities, they rendered themselves mean and despicable, for no nation that had any sense of honour changed their gods.

Much of the wealth of Israel, we may suppose, was carried out, in offerings to the temples of the deities in the several countries whence they came, on which, as their mother-churches, their temples in Israel were expected to own their dependence; the priests and devotees of those sorry deities would follow their gods, no doubt, in crowds into the land of Israel, and, if they could not live in their own country, would take root there, and so strangers would devour their strength. If they did it in compliment to the neighbouring nations, and to ingratiate themselves with them, justly were they disappointed; for those nations which by their wicked arts they sought to make their friends by the righteous judgments of God became their enemies and oppressors. In quo quis peccat, in eo punitur--Wherein a person offends, therein he shall be punished.

2. They did not so much as admit the God of Israel to be one of those many deities they worshipped, but quite cast him off: They forsook the Lord, and served not him at all. Those that think to serve both God and Mammon will soon come entirely to forsake God, and to serve Mammon only. If God have not all the heart, he will soon have none of it.

II. God renewed his judgments upon them, bringing them under the power of oppressing enemies. Had they fallen into the hands of the Lord immediately, they might have found that his mercies were great; but God let them fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines that lay south-west of Canaan, and of the Ammonites that lay north-east, both at the same time; so that between those two millstones they were miserably crushed, as the original word is (Jdg 10:8) for oppressed. God had appointed that, if any of the cities of Israel should revolt

to idolatry, the rest should make war upon them and cut them off, De 13:12-18, &c.

They had been jealous enough in this matter, almost to an extreme, in the case of the altar set up by the two tribes and a half (Jos 22:1-34); but now they had grown so very bad that when one city was infected with idolatry the next took the infection and instead of punishing it, imitated and out-did it; and therefore, since those that should have been revengers to execute wrath on those that did this evil were themselves guilty, or bore the sword in vain, God brought the neighbouring nations upon them, to chastise them for their apostasy. The oppression of Israel by the Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, was,

1. Very long. It continued eighteen years. Some make those years to be part of the judgeship of Jair, who could not prevail to reform and deliver Israel as he would. Others make them to commence at the death of Jair, which seems the more probable because that part of Israel which was most infested by the Ammonites was Gilead, Jair's own country, which we cannot suppose to have suffered so much while he was living, but that part at least would be reformed and protected.

2. Very grievous. They vexed them and oppressed them. It was a great vexation to be oppressed by such a despicable people as the children of Ammon were. They began with those tribes that lay next them on the other side Jordan, here called the land of the Amorites (Jdg 10:8) because the Israelites had so wretchedly degenerated, and had made themselves so like the heathen, that they had become, in a manner, perfect Amorites (Eze 16:3), or because by their sin they forfeited their title to this land, so that it might justly be looked upon as the land of the Amorites again, from whom they took it.

But by degrees they pushed forward, came over Jordan, and invaded Judah, and Benjamin, and Ephraim (Jdg 10:9), three of the most famous tribes of Israel, yet thus insulted when they

had forsaken God, and unable to make head against the invader. Now the threatening was fulfilled that they should be slain before their enemies, and should have no power to stand before them, Le 26:17,37. Their ways and their doings procure this to themselves; they have sadly degenerated, and so they come to be sorely distressed.

9 Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

10 And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, we have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

11 And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, *Did* not *I deliver you* from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?

12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

Here is, I. A humble confession which Israel make to God in their distress, Jdg 10:10. Now they own themselves guilty, like a malefactor upon the rack, and promise reformation, like a child under the rod. They not only complain of the distress, but acknowledge it is their own sin that has brought them into the distress; therefore God is righteous, and they have no reason to repine. They confess their omissions, for in them their sin began--"We have forsaken our God," and their commissions--"We have served Baalim, and herein have done foolishly, treacherously, and very wickedly."

II. A humbling message which God thereupon sends to Israel, whether by an angel (as Jdg 2:1) or by a prophet (as Jdg 6:8) is not certain. It was kind that God took notice of their cry, and did not turn a deaf ear to it and send them no answer at all; it was kind likewise that when they began to repent he sent them such a message as was proper to increase their

repentance, that they might be qualified and prepared for deliverance. Now in this message,

1. He upbraids them with their great ingratitude, reminds them of the great things he had done for them, delivering them from such and such enemies, the Egyptians first, out of whose land they were rescued, the Amorites whom they conquered and into whose land they entered, and since their settlement there, when the Ammonites had joined with the Moabites to oppress them (Jdg 3:13), when the Philistines were vexatious in the days of Shamgar, and afterwards other enemies had given them trouble, upon their petition God had wrought many a great salvation for them, Jdg 10:11,12. Of their being oppressed by the Zidonians and the Maonites we read not elsewhere. God had in justice corrected them, and in mercy delivered them, and therefore might reasonably expect that either through fear or through love they would adhere to him and his service. Well therefore might the word cut them to the heart (Jdg 10:13), "Yet you have forsaken me that have brought you out of your troubles and served other gods that brought you into your troubles." Thus did they forsake their own mercies for their own delusions.

2. He shows them how justly he might now abandon them to ruin, by abandoning them to the gods that they had served. To awaken them to a thorough repentance and reformation, he lets them see,

(1.) Their folly in serving Baalim. They had been at a vast expense to obtain the favour of such gods as could not help them when they had most need of their help: "Go, and cry unto the gods which you have chosen (Jdg 10:14), try what they can do for you now. You have worshipped them as gods--try if they have now either a divine power or a divine goodness to be employed for you. You paid your homage to them as your kings and lords--try if they will now protect you. You brought your sacrifices of praise to their altars as your benefactors, imagining that they gave you your corn, and

wine, and oil, but a friend indeed will be a friend in need; what stead will their favour stand you in now?"

Note, It is necessary, in true repentance, that there be a full conviction of the utter insufficiency of all those things to help us and do us any kindness which we have idolized and set upon the throne in our hearts in competition with God. We must be convinced that the pleasures of sense on which we have doted cannot be our satisfaction, nor the wealth of the world which we have coveted be our portion, that we cannot be happy or easy any where but in God.

(2.) Their misery and danger in forsaking God. "See what a pass you have brought yourselves to; now you can expect no other than that I should say, I will deliver you no more, and what will become of you then?" Jdg 10:13. This he tells them, not only as what he might do, but as what he would do if they rested in a confession of what they had done amiss, and did not put away their idols and amend for the future.

III. A humble submission which Israel hereupon made to God's justice, with a humble application to his mercy, Jdg 10:15. The children of Israel met together, probably in a solemn assembly at the door of the tabernacle, received the impressions of the message God had sent them, were not driven by it to despair, though it was very threatening, but resolve to lie at God's feet, and, if they perish, they will perish there. They not only repeat their confession, We have sinned, but,

1. They surrender themselves to God's justice: Do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Hereby they own that they deserved the severest tokens of God's displeasure and were sure he could do them no wrong, whatever he laid upon them; they humbled themselves under his mighty and heavy hand, and accepted of the punishment of their iniquity, which Moses had made the condition of God's return in mercy to them, Le 26:41. Note, True penitents dare and will refer

themselves to God to correct them as he thinks fit, knowing that their sin is highly malignant in its deserts, and that God is not rigorous or extreme in his demands.

2. They supplicate for God's mercy: Deliver us only, we pray thee, this day, from this enemy. They acknowledge what they deserved, yet pray to God not to deal with them according to their deserts. Note, We must submit to God's justice with a hope in his mercy.

IV. A blessed reformation set on foot hereupon. They brought forth fruits meet for repentance (Jdg 10:16): They put away the gods of strangers (as the word is), strange gods, and worshipped by those nations that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and to the covenants of promise, and they served the Lord. Need drove them to him. They knew it was to no purpose to go to the gods whom they had served, and therefore returned to the God whom they had slighted. This is true repentance not only for sin, but from sin.

V. God's gracious return in mercy to them, which is expressed here very tenderly (Jdg 10:16): His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Not that there is any grief in God (he has infinite joy and happiness in himself, which cannot be broken in upon by either the sins or the miseries of his creatures), nor that there is any change in God: he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But his goodness is his glory. By it he proclaims his name, and magnifies it above all names; and, as he is pleased to put himself into the relation of a father to his people that are in covenant with him, so he is pleased to represent his goodness to them by the compassions of a father towards his children; for, as he is the Father of lights, so he is the Father of mercies.

As the disobedience and misery of a child are a grief to a tender father, and make him feel very sensibly from his natural affection, so the provocations of God's people are a grief to him (Ps 95:10), he is broken with their whorish heart

(Eze 6:9); their troubles also are a grief to him; so he is pleased to speak when he is pleased to appear for the deliverance of his people, changing his way and method of proceeding, as tender parents when they begin to relent towards their children with whom they have been displeased. Such are the tender mercies of our God, and so far is he from having any pleasure in the death of sinners.

VI. Things are now working towards their deliverance from the Ammonites' oppression, Jdg 10:17,18. God had said, "I will deliver you no more;" but now they are not what they were, they are other men, they are new men, and now he will deliver them. That threatening was denounced to convince and humble them, and, now that it had taken its desired effect, it is revoked in order to their deliverance.

1 The Ammonites are hardened to their own ruin. They gathered together in one body, that they might be destroyed at one blow, Re 16:16.

2 The Israelites are animated to their own rescue. They assembled likewise, Jdg 10:17. During their eighteen years' oppression, as in their former servitudes, they were run down by their enemies, because they would not incorporate; each family, city, or tribe, would stand by itself, and act independently, and so they all became an easy prey to the oppressors, for want of a due sense of a common interest to cement them: but, whenever they got together, they did well; so they did here.

When God's Israel become as one man to advance a common good and oppose a common enemy what difficulty can stand before them? The people and princes of Gilead, having met, consult first about a general that should command in chief against the Ammonites. Hitherto most of the deliverers of Israel had an extraordinary call to the office, as Ehud, Barak, Gideon; but the next is to be called in a more common way, by a convention of the states, who enquired out a fit man to

command their army, found out one admirably well qualified for the purpose, and God owned their choice by putting his Spirit upon him (Jdg 11:29); so that this instance is of use for direction and encouragement in after-ages, when extraordinary calls are no longer to be expected. Let such be impartially chosen to public trust and power as God has qualified, and then God will graciously own those who are thus chosen.

14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver
you in the time of your tribulation.
15 And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, We have sinned: do
thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only,
we pray thee, this day.
16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served
the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.
17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and
encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled
themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.
18 And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, what
man is *he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon?
he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

Judges-11

1 Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he *was*
the son of a harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah.

The princes and people of Gilead we left, in the close of the foregoing chapter, consulting about the choice of a general, having come to this resolve, that whoever would undertake to lead their forces against the children of Ammon should by common consent be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead. The enterprise was difficult, and it was fit that so great an encouragement as this should be proposed to him that would undertake it. Now all agreed that Jephthah, the Gileadite, was a mighty man of valour, and very fit for that purpose, none so fit as he, but he lay under three disadvantages:--

1. He was the son of a harlot (Jdg 11:1), of a strange woman (Jdg 11:2), one that was neither a wife nor a concubine; some think his mother was a Gentile; so Josephus, who calls him a stranger by the mother's side. An Ishmaelite, say the Jews. If his mother was a harlot, that was not his fault, however it was his disgrace. Men ought not to be reproached with any of the infelicities of their parentage or extraction, so long as they are endeavouring by their personal merits to roll away the reproach. The son of a harlot, if born again, born from above, shall be accepted of God, and be as welcome as any other to the glorious liberties of his children. Jephthah could not read in the law the brand there put on the Ammonites, the enemies he was to grapple with, that they should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, but in the same paragraph he met with that which looked black upon himself, that a bastard should be in like manner excluded, De 23:2,3. But if that law means, as most probably it does, only those that are born of incest, not of fornication, he was not within the reach of it.

2. He had been driven from his country by his brethren. His father's legitimate children, insisting upon the rigour of the law, thrust him out from having any inheritance with them, without any consideration of his extraordinary qualifications, which merited a dispensation, and would have made him a mighty strength and ornament of their family, if they had overlooked his being illegitimate and admitted him to a child's part, Jdg 11:2. One would not have thought this abandoned youth was intended to be Israel's deliverer and judge, but God often humbles those whom he designs to exalt, and makes that stone the head of the corner which the builders refused; so Joseph, Moses, and David, the three most eminent of the shepherds of Israel, were all thrust out by men, before they were called of God to their great offices.

3. He had, in his exile, headed a rabble, Jdg 11:3. Being driven out by his brethren, his great soul would not suffer him either to dig or beg, but by his sword he must live; and, being soon

noted for his bravery, those that were reduced to such straits, and animated by such a spirit, enlisted themselves under him. Vain men they are here called, that is, men that had run through their estates and had to seek for a livelihood. These went out with him, not to rob or plunder, but to hunt wild beasts, and perhaps to make incursions upon those countries which Israel was entitled to, but had not as yet come to the possession of, or were some way or other injured by. This is the man that must save Israel. That people had by their idolatry made themselves children of whoredoms, and aliens from God and his covenant, and therefore, though God upon their repentance will deliver them, yet, to mortify them and remind them of their sin, he chooses to do it by a bastard and an exile.

2 And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou *art* the son of a strange woman.
3 Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him.
4 And it came to pass in process of time, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.
5 And it was so, that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob:
6 and they said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.
7 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? And why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?

Here is, I The distress which the children of Israel were in upon the Ammonites' invasion of their country, Jdg 11:4. Probably this was the same invasion with that mentioned, Jdg 10:17, when the children of Ammon were gathered together and encamped in or against Gilead. And those words, in process of time, refer to what goes immediately before of the

expulsion of Jephthah; many days after he had been thus thrust out in disgrace was he fetched back again with honour.

II The court which the elders made to Jephthah hereupon to come and help them. They did not write or send a messenger to him, but went themselves to fetch him, resolving to have no denial, and the exigence of the case was such as would admit no delay. Their errand to him was, Come, and be our captain, Jdg 11:6. They knew none among themselves that was able to undertake that great trust, but in effect confessed themselves unfit for it; they know him to be a bold man, and inured to the sword, and therefore he must be the man. See how God prepared men for the service he designs them for, and makes their troubles work for their advancement. If Jephthah had not been put to his shifts by his brethren's unkindness, he would not have had such occasion as this gave him to exercise and improve his martial genius, and so to signalize himself and become famous. Out of the eater comes forth meat. The children of Israel were assembled and encamped, Jdg 10:17. But an army without a general is like a body without a head; therefore Come, say they, and be our captain, that we may fight. See the necessity of government; though they were hearty enough in the cause, yet they owned they could not fight without a captain to command them. So necessary is it to all societies that there be a pars imperans and a pars subdita, some to rule and others to obey, that any community would humbly beg the favour of being commanded rather than that every man should be his own master. Blessed be God for government, for a good government.

III. The objections Jephthah makes against accepting their offer: Did you not hate me, and expel me? Jdg 11:7. It should seem that his brethren were some of these elders, or these elders by suffering his brethren to abuse him, and not righting him as they ought to have done (for their business is to defend the poor and fatherless, Ps 83:3,4), had made themselves guilty of his expulsion, and he might justly charge them with it. Magistrates, that have power to protect those that are

injured, if they neglect to redress their grievances are really guilty of inflicting them. "You hated me and expelled me, and therefore how can I believe that you are sincere in this proposal, and how can you expect that I should do you any service?" Not but that Jephthah was very willing to serve his country, but he thought fit to give them a hint of their former unkindness to him, that they might repent of their sin in using him so ill, and might for the future be the more sensible of their obligations. Thus Joseph humbled his brethren before he made himself known to them. The particular case between the Gileadites and Jephthah was a resemblance of the general state of the case between Israel and God at this time. They had thrust God out by their idolatries, yet in their distress begged his help; he told them how justly he might have rejected them, and yet graciously delivered them. So did Jephthah. Many slight God and good men till they come to be in distress, and then they are desirous of God's mercy and good men's prayers.

IV. Their urgency with him to accept the government they offer him, Jdg 11:8. "Therefore because we formerly did thee that wrong, and to show thee that we repent of it and would gladly atone for it, we turn again to thee now, to put such an honour upon thee as shall balance that indignity." Let this instance be,

1. A caution to us not to despise or trample upon any because they are mean, nor to be injurious to any that we have advantage against, because, whatever we think of them now, the time may come when we may have need of them, and may be glad to be beholden to them. It is our wisdom to make no man our enemy, because we know not how soon our distresses may be such as that we may be highly concerned to make him our friend.

2. An encouragement to men of worth that are slighted or ill-treated. Let them bear it with meekness and cheerfulness, and leave it to God to make their light shine out of obscurity. Fuller's remark on this story, in his "Pisgah Sight," is this:

"Virtue once in an age will work her own advancement, and, when such as hate it chance to need it, they will be forced to prefer it," and then the honour will appear the brighter.

V. The bargain he makes with them. He had mentioned the injuries they had formerly done him, but, perceiving their repentance, his spirit was too great and generous to mention them any more. God had forgiven Israel the affronts they had put upon him (Jdg 10:16), and therefore Jephthah will forgive. Only he thinks it prudent to make his bargain wisely for the future, since he deals with men that he had reason to distrust.

1. He puts to them a fair question, Jdg 11:9. He speaks not with too much confidence of his success, knowing how justly God might suffer the Ammonites to prevail for the further punishment of Israel; but puts an if upon it. Nor does he speak with any confidence at all in himself; if he do succeed, it is the Lord that delivers them into his hand, intending hereby to remind his countrymen to look up to God, as arbitrator of the controversy and the giver of victory, for so he did. "Now if, by the blessing of God, I come home a conqueror, tell me plainly shall I be your head? If I deliver you, under God, shall I, under him, reform you?" The same question is put to those who desire salvation by Christ. "If he save you, will you be willing that he shall rule you? For on no other terms will he save you. If he make you happy, shall he make you holy? If he be your helper, shall he be your head?"

2. They immediately give him a positive answer (Jdg 11:10): "We will do according to thy words; command us in war, and thou shalt command us in peace." They do not take time to consider of it. The case was too plain to need a debate, and the necessity too pressing to admit a delay. They knew they had power to conclude a treaty for those whom they represented, and therefore bound it with an oath, The Lord be witness between us. They appeal to God's omniscience as the judge of their present sincerity, and to his justice as an avenger if afterwards they should prove false. The Lord be a hearer, so

the word is. Whatever we speak, it concerns us to remember that God is a hearer, and to speak accordingly. Thus was the original contract ratified between Jephthah and the Gileadites, which all Israel, it should seem, agreed to afterwards, for it is said (Jdg 12:7), he judged Israel. He hereupon went with them (Jdg 11:11) to the place where they were all assembled (Jdg 10:17), and there by common consent they made him head and captain, and so ratified the bargain their representatives had made with him, that he should be not only captain now, but head for life. Jephthah, to obtain this little honour, was willing to expose his life for them (Jdg 12:3), and shall we be discouraged in our Christian warfare by any of the difficulties we may meet with in it, when Christ himself has promised a crown of life to him that overcometh?

VI. Jephthah's pious acknowledgment of God in this great affair (Jdg 11:11): He uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, that is, upon his elevation, he immediately retired to his devotions, and in prayer spread the whole matter before God, both his choice to the office and his execution of the office, as one that had his eye ever towards the Lord, and would do nothing without him, that leaned not to his own understanding or courage, but depended on God and his favour. He utters before God all his thoughts and cares in this matter; for God gives us leave to be free with him.

1. "Lord, the people have made me their head; wilt thou confirm the choice, and own me as thy people's head under thee and for thee?" God justly complains of Israel (Ho 8:4), they have set up kings, but not by me. "Lord," said Jephthah, "I will be no head of their making without thee. I will not accept the government unless thou give me leave." Had Abimelech done this, he might have prospered.

2. "Lord, they have made me their captain, to go before them in this war with the Ammonites; shall I have thy presence? Wilt thou go before me? If not, carry me not up hence. Lord, satisfy me in the justice of the cause. Assure me of success in

the enterprise." This is a rare example, to be imitated by all, particularly by great ones; in all our ways let us acknowledge God, seek his favour, ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; so shall we make our way prosperous. Thus Jephthah opened the campaign with prayer. That was likely to end gloriously which began thus piously.

8 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

9 And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, if ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head?

10 And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

11 Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.

12 And Jephthah sent messengers unto the king of the children of Ammon, saying, what hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?

13 And the king of the children of Ammon answered unto the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt, from Arnon even unto Jabbok, and unto Jordan: now therefore restore those *lands* again peaceably.

14 And Jephthah sent messengers again unto the king of the children of Ammon:

15 and said unto him, thus saith Jephthah, Israel took not away the land of Moab, nor the land of the children of Ammon:

16 but when Israel came up from Egypt, and walked through the wilderness unto the Red sea, and came to Kadesh;

17 then Israel sent messengers unto the king of Edom, saying, let me, I pray thee, pass through thy land: but the king of Edom would not hearken *thereto.* And in like manner they sent unto the king of Moab; but he would not *consent:* and Israel abode in Kadesh.

We have here the treaty between Jephthah, now judge of Israel, and the king of the Ammonites (who is not named), that

the controversy between the two nations might, if possible, be accommodated without the effusion of blood.

I. Jephthah, as one having authority, sent to the king of Ammon, who in this war was the aggressor, to demand his reasons for invading the land of Israel: "Why hast thou come to fight against me in my land? Jdg 11:12. Had I come first into thy land to disturb thee in thy possession, this would have been reason enough for fighting against me, for how must force be repelled but by force? But what hast thou to do to come thus in a hostile manner into my land?" so he calls it, in the name both of God and Israel. Now this fair demand shows,

1. That Jephthah did not delight in war, though he was a mighty man of valour, but was willing to prevent it by a peaceable accommodation. If he could by reason persuade the invaders to retire, he would not compel them to do it by the sword. War should be the last remedy, not to be used till all other methods of ending matters in variance have been tried in vain, ratio ultima regum--the last resource of kings. This rule should be observed in going to law. The sword of justice, as well as the sword of war, must not be appealed to till the contending parties have first endeavoured by gentler means to understand one another, and to accommodate matters in variance, 1Co 6:1.

2. That Jephthah did delight inequity, and designed no other than to do justice. If the children of Ammon could convince him that Israel had done them wrong, he was ready to restore the rights of the Ammonites. If not, it was plain by their invasion that they did Israel wrong, and he was ready to maintain the rights of the Israelites. A sense of justice should guide and govern us in all our undertakings.

II The king of the Ammonites now gives in his demand, which he should have published before he had invaded Israel, Jdg 11:13. His pretence is, "Israel took away my lands long since; now therefore restore those lands." We have reason to think

the Ammonites, when they made this descent upon Israel, meant no other than to spoil and plunder the country, and enrich themselves with the prey, as they had done formerly under Eglon (Jdg 3:13) when no such demand as this was made, though the matter was then fresh; but when Jephthah demanded the cause of their quarrel, and they could not for shame own what was their true intent and meaning, some old musty records were searched, or some ancient traditions enquired into, and from them this reason was drawn to serve the present turn, for a colourable pretence of equity in the invasion. Even those that do the greatest wrong yet have such a conviction in their consciences of justice that they would seem to do right. Restore those lands. See upon what uncertain terms we hold our worldly possessions; what we think we have the surest hold of may be challenged from us, and wrested out of our hands. Those that have got to the heavenly Canaan need not fear having their titles questioned.

III. Jephthah gives in a very full and satisfactory answer to this demand, showing it to be altogether unjust and unreasonable, and that the Ammonites had no title to this country that lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, now in the possession of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. As one very well versed in the history of his country, he shows,

1. That Israel never took any land away either from the Moabites or Ammonites. He puts them together because they were brethren, the children of Lot, near neighbours, and of united interests, having the same god, Chemosh, and perhaps sometimes the same king. The lands in question Israel took away, not from the Moabites or Ammonites (they had particular orders from God not to meddle with them nor any thing they had, De 2:9,19, and religiously observed their orders), but they found them in the possession of Sihon king of the Amorites, and out of his hand they took them justly and honourably, as he will show afterwards. If the Amorites, before Israel came into that country, had taken these lands from the Moabites or Ammonites, as it should seem they had

(Nu 21:26,Jos 13:25), Israel was not concerned to enquire into that or answer for it. If the Ammonites had lost these lands and their title to them, the children of Israel were under no obligation to recover the possession for them. Their business was to conquer for themselves, not for other people. This is his first plea, "Not guilty of the trespass."

2. That they were so far from invading the property of any other nations than the devoted posterity of cursed Canaan (one of the branches of which the Amorites were, Ge 10:16) that they would not so much as force a passage through the country either of the Edomites, the seed of Esau, or of the Moabites, the seed of Lot; but even after a very tedious march through the wilderness, with which they were sadly tired (Jdg 11:16), when the king of Edom first, and afterwards the king of Moab, denied them the courtesy of a way through their country (Jdg 11:17), rather than give them any offence or annoyance, weary as they were, they put themselves to the further fatigue of compassing both the land of Edom and that of Moab, and came not within the border of either, Jdg 11:18. Note, Those that behave themselves inoffensively may take the comfort of it, and plead it against those that charge them with injustice and wrong doing. Our righteousness will answer for us in time to come (Ge 30:33) and will put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1Pe 2:15.

3. That in that war in which they took this land out of the hands of Sihon king of the Amorites he was the aggressor, and not they, Jdg 11:19,20. They sent a humble petition to him for leave to go through his land, willing to give him any security for their good behaviour in their march. "Let us pass (say they) unto our place, that is, to the land of Canaan, which is the only place we call ours, and to which we are pressing forward, not designing a settlement here." But Sihon not only denied them this courtesy, as Edom and Moab had done (had he only done so, who knows but Israel might have gone about some other way?) but he mustered all his forces, and fought against Israel (Jdg 11:20), not only shut them out of his own land, but would

have cut them off from the face of the earth (Nu 21:23,24), aimed at nothing less than their ruin, Jdg 11:20. Israel therefore, in their war with him, stood in their own just and necessary defence, and therefore, having routed his army, might justly, in further revenge of the injury, seize his country as forfeited. Thus Israel came to the possession of this country, and doubted not to make good their title to it; and it is very unreasonable for the Ammonites to question their title, for the Amorites were the inhabitants of that country, and it was purely their land and their coasts that the Israelites then made themselves masters of, Jdg 11:21,22.

4. He pleads a grant from the crown, and claims under that, Jdg 11:23,24. It was not Israel (they were fatigued with their long march, and were not fit for action so soon), but it was the Lord God of Israel, who is King of nations, whose the earth is and the fulness thereof, he it was that dispossessed the Amorites and planted Israel in their room. God gave them the land by an express and particular conveyance, such as vested the title in them, which they might make good against all the world. De 2:24, I have given into thy hand Sihon and his land; he gave it to them, by giving them a complete victory over the present occupants, notwithstanding the great disadvantages they were under. "Can you think that God gave it to us in such an extraordinary manner with design that we should return it to the Moabites or Ammonites again? No, we put a higher value upon God's favours than to part with them so easily." To corroborate this plea, he urges an argument ad hominem--directed to the man: Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee?

He not only appeals to the common resolutions of men to hold their own against all the world, but to the common religion of the nations, which, they thought, obliged them to make much of that which their gods gave them. Not that Jephthah thought Chemosh a god, only he is thy god, and the worshippers even of those dunghill deities that could do neither good nor evil yet thought themselves beholden to them for all they had (Ho

2:12, These are my rewards which my lovers have given me; and see Jdg 16:24) and made this a reason why they would hold it fast, that their gods gave it to them. "This thou thinkest a good title, and shall not we?" The Ammonites had dispossessed those that dwelt in their land before them; they thought they did it by the help of Chemosh their god, but really it was Jehovah the God of Israel that did it for them, as is expressly said, De 2:19,20. "Now," says Jephthah, "we have as good a title to our country as you have to yours." Note, One instance of the honour and respect we owe to God, as our God, is rightly to possess that which he gives us to possess, receive it from him, use it for him, keep it for his sake, and part with it when he calls for it. He has given it to us to possess, not to enjoy. He himself only must be enjoyed.

5. He pleads prescription.

(1.) Their title had not been disputed when they first entered upon it, Jdg 11:25. "Balak who was then king of Moab, from whom the greatest part of these lands had been taken by the Amorites, and who was most concerned and best able to oppose us, if he had had any thing to object against our settlement there, yet sat still, and never offered to strive against Israel." He knew that for his own part he had fairly lost it to the Amorites and was not able to recover it, and could not but acknowledge that Israel had fairly won it of the Amorites, and therefore all his care was to secure what was left: he never pretended a title to what was lost. See Nu 22:2,3. "He then acquiesced in God's way of disposing of kingdoms, and wilt not thou now?"

(2.) Their possession had never yet been disturbed, Jdg 11:26. He pleads that they had kept this country as their own now about 300 years, and the Ammonites in all that time had never attempted to take it from them, no, not when they had it in their power to oppress them, Jdg 3:13,14. So that, supposing their title had not been clear at the first (which yet he had proved it was), yet, no claim having been made for so many

generations, the entry of the children of Ammon, without doubt, was barred for ever. A title so long unquestioned shall be presumed unquestionable.

6. By these arguments Jephthah justifies himself and his own cause ("I have not sinned against thee in taking or keeping what I have no right to; if I had, I would instantly make restitution"), and condemns the Ammonites: "Thou doest me wrong to war against me, and must expect to speed accordingly," Jdg 11:27. It seems to me an evidence that the children of Israel, in the days of their prosperity and power (for some such days they had in the times of the judges) had conducted themselves very inoffensively to all their neighbours and had not been vexatious or oppressing to them (either by way of reprisal or under colour of propagating their religion), that the king of the Ammonites, when he would seek an occasion of quarrelling with them, was forced to look 300 years back for a pretence. It becomes the people of God thus to be blameless and harmless, and without rebuke.

7. For the deciding of the controversy, he puts himself upon God and his sword, and the king of Ammon joins issue with him (Jdg 11:27,28): The Lord the Judge be judge this day. With this solemn reference of the matter to the Judge of heaven and earth he designs either to deter the Ammonites from proceeding and oblige them to retire, when they saw the right of the cause was against them, or to justify himself in subduing them if they should go on.

Note, War is an appeal to heaven, to God the Judge of all, to whom the issues of it belong. If doubtful rights be disputed, he is hereby requested to determine them. If manifest rights be invaded or denied, he is hereby applied to for the vindicating of what is just and the punishing of wrong. As the sword of justice was made for lawless and disobedient persons (1Ti 1:9), so was the sword of war made for lawless and disobedient princes and nations. In war therefore the eye must be ever up to God, and it must always be thought a dangerous

thing to desire or expect that God should patronise unrighteousness.

Neither Jephthah's apology, nor his appeal, wrought upon the king of the children of Ammon; they had found the sweets of the spoil of Israel, in the eighteen years wherein they had oppressed them (Jdg 10:8), and hoped now to make themselves masters of the tree with the fruit of which they had so often enriched themselves. He hearkened not to the words of Jephthah, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

18 Then they went along through the wilderness, and compassed the
land of Edom, and the land of Moab, and came by the east side of
the land of Moab, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, but came
not within the border of Moab: for Arnon was the border of Moab.
19 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, the
king of Heshbon; and Israel said unto him, Let us pass, we pray
thee, through thy land into my place.
20 But Sihon trusted not Israel to pass through his coast: but Sihon
gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought
against Israel.
21 And the Lord God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into
the hand of Israel, and they smote them: so Israel possessed all the
land of the Amorites, the inhabitants of that country.
22 And they possessed all the coasts of the Amorites, from Arnon even
unto Jabbok, and from the wilderness even unto Jordan.
23 So now the Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites
from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it?
24 Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to
possess?So whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from
before us, them will we possess.
25 And now *art* thou any thing better than Balak the son of Zippor,
king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight
against them,
26 while Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her
towns, and in all the cities that *be* along by the coasts of Arnon, three
hundred years?Why therefore did ye not recover *them* within that
time?

27 Wherefore I have not sinned against thee, but thou doest me wrong
to war against me: the Lord the Judge be judge this day between
the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.
28 Howbeit the king of the children of Ammon hearkened not unto
the words of Jephthah which he sent him.
29 Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed
over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and
from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon.
30 And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if thou shalt
without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,
31 then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my
house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of
Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a
burnt offering.
32 So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight
against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.
33 And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith,
even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very
great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before
the children of Israel.
34 And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his
daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and
she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.
35 And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and
said, Alas, my daughter!Thou hast brought me very low, and thou
art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto
the Lord, and I cannot go back.

We have here Jephthah triumphing in a glorious victory, but, as an alloy to his joy, troubled and distressed by an unadvised vow.

I. Jephthah's victory was clear, and shines very brightly, both to his honour and to the honour of God, his in pleading and God's in owning a righteous cause. 1. God gave him an excellent spirit, and he improved it bravely, Jdg 11:29. When it appeared by the people's unanimous choice of him for their leader that he had so clear a call to engage, and by the obstinate deafness of the king of Ammon to the proposals of

accommodation that he had so just a cause to engage in, then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and very much advanced his natural faculties, enduing him with power from on high, and making him more bold and more wise than ever he had been, and more fired with a holy zeal against the enemies of his people. Hereby God confirmed him in his office, and assured him of success in his undertaking.

Thus animated, he loses no time, but with an undaunted resolution takes the field. Particular notice is taken of the way by which he advanced towards the enemy's camp, probably because the choice of it was an instance of that extraordinary discretion with which the Spirit of the Lord had furnished him; for those who sincerely walk after the Spirit shall be led forth the right way. 2. God gave him eminent success, and he bravely improved that too (Jdg 11:32): The Lord delivered the Ammonites into his hand, and so gave judgment upon the appeal in favour of the righteous cause, and made those feel the force of war that would not yield to the force of reason; for he sits in the throne, judging right. Jephthah lost not the advantages given him, but pursued and completed his victory. Having routed their forces in the field, he pursued them to their cities, where he put to the sword all he found in arms, so as utterly to disable them from giving Israel any molestation, Jdg 11:33. But it does not appear that he utterly destroyed the people, as Joshua had destroyed the devoted nations, nor that he offered to make himself master of the country, though their pretensions to the land of Israel might have given him colour to do so: only he took care that they should be effectually subdued. Though others' attempting wrong to us will justify us in the defence of our own right, yet it will not authorize us to do them wrong.

II. Jephthah's vow is dark, and much in the clouds. When he was going out from his own house upon this hazardous undertaking, in prayer to God for his presence with him he makes a secret but solemn vow or religious promise to God, that, if God would graciously bring him back a conqueror,

whosoever or whatsoever should first come out of his house to meet him it should be devoted to God, and offered up for a burnt-offering. At his return, tidings of his victory coming home before him, his own and only daughter meets him with the seasonable expressions of joy. This puts him into a great confusion; but there was no remedy: after she had taken some time to lament her own infelicity, she cheerfully submitted to the performance of his vow. Now,

1. There are several good lessons to be learnt out of this story.

(1.) That there may be remainders of distrust and doubting even in the hearts of true and great believers. Jephthah had reason enough to be confident of success, especially when he found the Spirit of the Lord come upon him, and yet, now that it comes to the settling, he seems to hesitate (Jdg 11:30): If thou wilt without fail deliver them into my hand, then I will do so and so. And perhaps the snare into which his vow brought him was designed to correct the weakness of his faith, and a fond conceit he had that he could not promise himself a victory unless he proffered something considerable to be given to God in lieu of it.

(2.) That yet it is very good, when we are in the pursuit or expectation of any mercy, to make vows to God of some instance of acceptable service to him, not as a purchase of the favour we desire, but as an expression of our gratitude to him and the deep sense we have of our obligations to render according to the benefit done to us. The matter of such a singular vow (Le 27:2) must be something that has a plain and direct tendency either to the advancement of God's glory, and the interests of his kingdom among men, or to the furtherance of ourselves in his service, and in that which is antecedently our duty.

(3.) That we have great need to be very cautious and well advised in the making of such vows, lest, by indulging a present emotion even of pious zeal, we entangle our own

consciences, involve ourselves in perplexities, and are forced at last to say before the angel that it was an error, Ec 5:2-6. It is a snare to a man hastily to devour that which is holy, without due consideration quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusent--what we are able or unable to effect, and without inserting the needful provisos and limitations which might prevent the entanglement, and then after vows to make the enquiry which should have been made before, Pr 20:25. Let Jephthah's harm be our warning in this matter. See De 23:22.

(4.) That what we have solemnly vowed to God we must conscientiously perform, if it be possible and lawful, though it be ever so difficult and grievous to us. Jephthah's sense of the powerful obligation of his vow must always be ours (Jdg 11:35): "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord in a solemn vow, and I cannot go back," that is, "I cannot recall the vow myself, it is too late, nor can any power on earth dispense with it, or give me up my bond." The thing was my own, and in my own power (Ac 5:4), but now it is not. Vow and pay, Ps 76:11. We deceive ourselves if we think to mock God. If we apply this to the consent we have solemnly given, in our sacramental vows, to the covenant of grace made with poor sinners in Christ, what a powerful argument will it be against the sins we have by those vows bound ourselves out from, what a strong inducement to the duties we have hereby bound ourselves up to, and what a ready answer to every temptation! "I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back; I must therefore go forward. I have sworn, and I must, I will, perform it. Let me not dare to play fast and loose with God."

(5.) That it well becomes children obediently and cheerfully to submit to their parents in the Lord, and particularly to comply with their pious resolutions for the honour of God and the keeping up of religion in their families, though they be harsh and severe, as the Rechabites, who for many generations religiously observed the commands of Jonadab their father in forbearing wine, and Jephthah's daughter here, who, for the satisfying of her father's conscience, and for the honour of

God and her country, yielded herself as one devoted (Jdg 11:36): "Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; I know I am dear to thee, but am well content that God should be dearer." The father might disallow any vow made by the daughter (Nu 30:5), but the daughter could not disallow or disannul, no, not such a vow as this, made by the father. This magnifies the law of the fifth commandment.

(6.) That our friends' grievances should be our griefs. Where she went to bewail her hard fate the virgins, her companions, joined with her in her lamentations, Jdg 11:38. With those of her own sex and age she used to associate, who no doubt, now that her father had on a sudden grown so great, expected, shortly after his return, to dance at her wedding, but were heavily disappointed when they were called to retire to the mountains with her and share in her griefs. Those are unworthy the name of friends that will only rejoice with us, and not weep with us.

(7.) That heroic zeal for the honour of God and Israel, though alloyed with infirmity and indiscretion, is worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. It well became the daughters of Israel by an annual solemnity to preserve the honourable memory of Jephthah's daughter, who made light even of her own life like a noble heroine, when God had taken vengeance on Israel's enemies, Jdg 11:36. Such a rare instance of one that preferred the public interest before life itself was never to be forgotten. Her sex forbade her to follow to the war, and so to expose her life in battle, in lieu of which she hazards it much more (and perhaps apprehended that she did so, having some intimation of his vow, and did it designedly; for he tells her, Jdg 11:35, Thou hast brought me very low) to grace his triumphs. So transported was she with the victory as a common benefit that she was willing to be herself offered up as a thank-offering for it, and would think her life well bestowed when laid down on so great an occasion. She thinks it an honour to die, not as a sacrifice of atonement for the people's sins (that honour was

reserved for Christ only), but as a sacrifice of acknowledgment for the people's mercies.

(8.) From Jephthah's concern on this occasion, we must learn not to think it strange if the day of our triumphs in this world prove upon some account or other the day of our griefs, and therefore must always rejoice with trembling; we hope for a day of triumph hereafter which will have no alloy.

2. Yet there are some difficult questions that do arise upon this story which have very much employed the pens of learned men. I will say but little respecting them, because Mr. Poole has discussed them very fully in his English annotations.

(1.) It is hard to say what Jephthah did to his daughter in performance of his vow.

[1.] Some think he only shut her up for a nun, and that it being unlawful, according to one part of his vow (for they make it disjunctive), to offer her up for a burnt-offering, he thus, according to the other part, engaged her to be the Lord's, that is, totally to sequester herself from all the affairs of this life, and consequently from marriage, and to employ herself wholly in the acts of devotion all her days. That which countenances this opinion is that she is said to bewail her virginity (Jdg 11:37,38) and that she knew no man, Jdg 11:39. But, if he sacrificed her, it was proper enough for her to bewail, not her death, because that was intended to be for the honour of God, and she would undergo it cheerfully, but that unhappy circumstance of it which made it more grievous to her than any other, because she was her father's only child, in whom he hoped his name and family would be built up, that she was unmarried, and so left no issue to inherit her father's honour and estate; therefore it is particularly taken notice of (Jdg 11:34) that besides her he had neither son nor daughter.

But that which makes me think Jephthah did not go about thus to satisfy his vow, or evade it rather, is that we do not find any

law, usage, or custom, in all the Old Testament, which does in the least intimate that a single life was any branch or article of religion, or that any person, man or woman, was looked upon as the more holy, more the Lord's, or devoted to him, for living unmarried: it was no part of the law either of the priests or of the Nazarites. Deborah and Huldah, both prophetesses, are both of them particularly recorded to have been married women. Besides, had she only been confined to a single life, she needed not to have desired these two months to bewail it in: she had her whole life before her to do that, if she saw cause. Nor needed she to take such a sad leave of her companions; for those that are of that opinion understand what is said in Jdg 11:40 of their coming to talk with her, as our margin reads it, four days in a year. Therefore,

[2.] It seems more probable that he offered her up for a sacrifice, according to the letter of his vow, misunderstanding that law which spoke of persons devoted by the curse of God as if it were to be applied to such as were devoted by men's vows (Le 27:29, None devoted shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death), and wanting to be better informed of the power the law gave him in this case to redeem her. Abraham's attempt to offer up Isaac perhaps encouraged him, and made him think, if God would not accept this sacrifice which he had vowed, he would send an angel to stay his hand, as he did Abraham's. If she came out designedly to be made a sacrifice, as who knows but she might? Perhaps he thought that would make the case the plainer. Volenti non sit injuria--No injury is done to a person by that to which he himself consents. He imagined, it may be, that where there was neither anger nor malice there was no murder, and that his good intention would sanctify this bad action; and, since he had made such a vow, he thought better to kill his daughter than break his vow, and let Providence bear the blame, that brought her forth to meet him.

(2.) But, supposing that Jephthah did sacrifice his daughter, the question is whether he did well.

[1.] Some justify him in it, and think he did well, and as became one that preferred the honour of God before that which was dearest to him in this world. He is mentioned among the eminent believers who by faith did great things, Heb 11:32. And this was one of the great things he did. It was done deliberately, and upon two months' consideration and consultation. He is never blamed for it by any inspired writer. Though it highly exalts the paternal authority, yet it cannot justify any in doing the like. He was an extraordinary person. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him. Many circumstances, now unknown to us, might make this altogether extraordinary, and justify it, yet not so as that it might justify the like. Some learned men have made this sacrifice a figure of Christ the great sacrifice: he was of unspotted purity and innocency, as she a chaste virgin; he was devoted to death by his Father, and so made a curse, or an anathema, for us; he submitted himself, as she did, to his Father's will: Not as I will, but as thou wilt. But,

[2.] Most condemn Jephthah; he did ill to make so rash a vow, and worse to perform it. He could not be bound by his vow to that which God had forbidden by the letter of the sixth commandment: Thou shalt not kill. God had forbidden human sacrifices, so that it was (says Dr. Lightfoot) in effect a sacrifice to Moloch. And, probably, the reason why it is left dubious by the inspired penman whether he sacrificed her or no was that those who did afterwards offer their children might not take any encouragement from this instance. Concerning this and some other such passages in the sacred story, which learned men are in the dark, divided, and in doubt about, we need not much perplex ourselves; what is necessary to our salvation, thanks be to God, is plain enough.

36 And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

37 And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me
alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains,
and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.
38 And he said, go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she
went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the
mountains.
39 And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned
unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he
had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,
40 *that* the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of
Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

Judges-12

1 And the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and went
northward, and said unto Jephthah, Wherefore passedst thou over
to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us to go
with thee? We will burn thine house upon thee with fire.
2 And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife
with the children of Ammon; and when I called you, ye delivered
me not out of their hands.
3 And when I saw that ye delivered *me* not, I put my life in my hands,
and passed over against the children of Ammon, and the Lord
delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto
me this day, to fight against me?
4 Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought
with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they
said, Ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites,
and among the Manassites.

Here Is, I The unreasonable displeasure of the men of Ephraim against Jephthah, because he had not called them in to his assistance against the Ammonites, that they might share in the triumphs and spoils, Jdg 11:1. Pride was at the bottom of the quarrel. Only by that comes contention. Proud men think all the honours lost that go beside themselves, and then who can stand before envy? The Ephraimites had the same quarrel with Gideon (Jdg 8:1), who was of Manasseh on their side Jordan, as Jephthah was of Manasseh on the other side Jordan.

Ephraim and Manasseh were hearer akin than any other of the tribes, being both the sons of Joseph, and yet they were more jealous one of another than any other of the tribes.

Jacob having crossed hands, and given Ephraim the preference, looking as far forward as the kingdom of the ten tribes, which Ephraim was the head of, after the revolt from the house of David, that tribe, not content with that honour in the promise, was displeased if Manasseh had any honour done it in the mean time. It is a pity that kindred or relationship, which should be an inducement to love and peace, should be ever an occasion (as it often proves) of strife and discord. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions among brethren are as the bars of a castle. The anger of the Ephraimites at Jephthah was,

1. Causeless and unjust. Why didst thou not call us to go with thee? For a good reason. Because it was the men of Gilead that had made him their captain, not the men of Ephraim, so that he had no authority to call them. Had his attempt miscarried for want of their help, they might justly have blamed him for not desiring it. But when the work was done, and done effectually, the Ammonites being subdued and Israel delivered, there was no harm done, though their hands were not employed in it.

2. It was cruel and outrageous. They get together in a tumultuous manner, pass over Jordan as far as Mizpeh in Gilead, where Jephthah lived, and no less will satisfy their fury but they will burn his house and him in it. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce. Those resentments that have the least reason for them have commonly the most rage in them. Jephthah was now a conqueror over the common enemies of Israel, and they should have come to congratulate him, and return him the thanks of their tribe for the good services he had done; but we must not think it strange if we receive ill from those from whom we deserve well. Jephthah was now a mourner for the calamity of his family upon his daughter's

account, and they should have come to condole with him and comfort him; but barbarous men take a pleasure in adding affliction to the afflicted. In this world, the end of one trouble often proves the beginning of another; nor must we ever boast as though we had put off the harness.

II. Jephthah's warm vindication of himself. He did not endeavour to pacify them, as Gideon had done in the like case; the Ephraimites were now more outrageous than they were them, and Jephthah had not so much of a meek and quiet spirit as Gideon had. Whether they would be pacified or no, Jephthah takes care,

1. To justify himself, Jdg 11:2,3. He makes it out that they had no cause at all to quarrel with him, for,

(1.) It was not in pursuit of glory that he had engaged in this war, but for the necessary defence of his country, with which the children of Ammon greatly strove.

(2.) He had invited the Ephraimites to come and join with him, though he neither needed them nor was under any obligation to pay that respect to them, but they had declined the service: I called you, and you delivered me not out of their hands. Had that been true which they charged him with, yet it would not have been a just ground of quarrel; but it seems it was false, and, as the matter of fact now appears, he had more cause to quarrel with them for deserting the common interests of Israel in a time of need. It is no new thing for those who are themselves most culpable to be most clamorous in accusing the innocent.

(3.) The enterprise was very hazardous, and they had more reason to pity him than to be angry with him: I put my life in my hands, that is, "exposed myself to the utmost peril in what I did, having so small an army," The honour they envied was bought dearly enough; they needed not to grudge it to him; few of them would have ventured so far for it.

(4.) He does not take the glory of the success to himself (that would have been invidious), but gives it all to God: "The Lord delivered them into my hands. If God was pleased so far to make use of me for his glory, why should you be offended at that? Have you any reason to fight against me? Is not that in effect to fight against God, in whose hand I have been only an unworthy instrument?"

2. When this just answer (though not so soft an answer as Gideon's) did not prevail to turn away their wrath, he took care both to defend himself from their fury and to chastise their insolence with the sword, by virtue of his authority as Israel's judge.

(1.) The Ephraimites had not only quarrelled with Jephthah, but, when his neighbours and friends appeared to take his part, they had abused them, and given them foul language; for I adhere to our translation, and so take it, Jdg 11:4. They said in scorn, "You Gileadites that dwell here on the other side Jordan are but fugitives of Ephraim, the scum and dregs of the tribes of Joseph, of which Ephraim is the chief, the refuse of the family, and are so accounted among the Ephraimites and among the Manassites. Who cares for you? All your neighbours know what you are, no better than fugitives and vagabonds, separated from your brethren, and driven hither into a corner." The Gileadites were as true Israelites as any other, and at this time had signalized themselves, both in the choice of Jephthah and in the war with Ammon, above all the families of Israel, and yet are most basely and unjustly called fugitives. It is an ill thing to fasten names or characters of reproach upon persons or countries, as is common, especially upon those that lie under outward disadvantages: it often occasions quarrels that prove of ill consequence, as it did here.

See likewise what a mischievous thing an abusive tongue is, that calls ill names, and gives scurrilous language: it sets on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell (Jam 3:6), and many a time cuts the throat of him that uses it, as it did

here, Ps 34:8. If these Ephraimites could have denied themselves the poor satisfaction of calling the Gileadites fugitives, they might have prevented a great deal of bloodshed; for grievous words stir up anger, and who knows how great a matter a little of that fire may kindle?

(2.) This affront raises the Gileadites' blood, and the indignity done to themselves, as well as to their captain, must be revenged.

[1.] They routed them in the field, Jdg 11:4. They fought with Ephraim, and, Ephraim being but a rude unheaded rabble, smote Ephraim, and put them to flight.

[2.] They cut off their retreat, and so completed their revenge, Jdg 11:5,6. The Gileadites, who perhaps were better acquainted with the passages of Jordan than the Ephraimites were, secured them with strong guards, who were ordered to slay every Ephraimite that offered to pass the river. Here was,

First, Cruelty enough in the destruction of them. Sufficient surely was the punishment which was inflicted by many; when they were routed in the field, there needed not this severity to cut off all that escaped. Shall the sword devour for ever? Whether Jephthah is to be praised for this I know not; perhaps he saw it to be a piece of necessary justice.

Secondly, Cunning enough in the discovery of them. It seems the Ephraimites, though they spoke the same language with other Israelites, yet had got a custom in the dialect of their country to pronounce the Hebrew letter Shin like Samech, and they had so strangely used themselves to it that they could not do otherwise, no, not to save their lives. We learn to speak by imitation; those that first used s for sh, did it either because it was shorter or because it was finer, and their children learnt to speak like them, so that you might know an Ephraimite by it; as in England we know a west-country man or a north-

country man, nay, perhaps a Shropshire man, and a Cheshire man, by his pronunciation.

Thou art a Galilean, and thy speech betrays thee. By this the Ephraimites were discovered. If they took a man that they suspected to be an Ephraimite, but he denied it, they bade him say Shibboleth; but either he could not, as our translation reads it, or he did not heed, or frame, or direct himself, as some read, to pronounce it aright, but said Sibboleth, and so was known to be an Ephraimite, and was slain immediately. Shibboleth signifies a river or stream: "Ask leave to go over Shibboleth, the river." Those that were thus cut off made up the whole number of slaughtered Ephraimites forty-two thousand, Jdg 11:6. Thus another mutiny of that angry tribe was prevented.

3. Now let us observe the righteousness of God in the punishment of these proud and passionate Ephraimites, which in several instances answered to their sin.

(1.) They were proud of the honour of their tribe, gloried in this, that they were Ephraimites; but how soon were they brought to be ashamed or afraid to own their country! Art thou an Ephraimite? No, now rather of any tribe than that.

(2.) They had gone in a rage over Jordan to burn Jephthah's house with fire, but now they came back to Jordan as sneakingly as they had passed it furiously, and were cut off from ever returning to their own houses.

(3.) They had upbraided the Gileadites with the infelicity of their country, lying at such a distance, and now they suffered by an infirmity peculiar to their own country, in not being able to pronounce Shibboleth.

(4.) They had called the Gileadites, unjustly, fugitives, and now they really and in good earnest became fugitives

themselves; and in the Hebrew the same word (Jdg 11:5) is used of the Ephraimites that escaped, or that fled, which they had used in scorn of the Gileadites, calling them fugitives. He that rolls the stone of reproach unjustly upon another, let him expect that it will justly return upon himself.

III. Here is the end of Jephthah's government. He judged Israel but six years, and then died, Jdg 11:7. Perhaps the death of his daughter sunk him so that he never looked up afterwards, but it shortened his days, and he went to his grave mourning.

5 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was *so,* that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over, that the men of Gilead said unto him, *Art* thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay;

6 then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce *it* right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then died Jephthah the Gileadite, and was buried in *one of* the cities of Gilead.

Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon Judge Israel

8 And after him Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel.

We have here a short account of the short reigns of three more of the judges of Israel, the first of whom governed but seven years, the second ten, and the third eight. For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof, many in a short time, successively (Pr 28:2), good men being removed in the beginning of their usefulness and by the time that they have applied themselves to their business.

I. Ibzan of Bethlehem, most probably Bethlehem of Judah, David's city, not that in Zebulun, which is only mentioned once, Jos 19:15. He ruled but seven years, but by the number of his children, and his disposing of them all in marriage himself, it appears that he lived long; and probably the great increase of his family, and the numerous alliances he made,

added to his personal merits, made him the more fit to be either chosen by the people as Jephthah was, or called of God immediately, as Gideon was, to be Israel's judge, to keep up and carry on the work of God among them. That which is remarkable concerning him is,

1. That he had many children, sixty in all, a quiver full of these arrows. Thus was Bethlehem of old famous for increase, the very city where he was to be born whose spiritual seed should be as the stars of heaven.

2. That he had an equal number of each sex, thirty sons and thirty daughters, a thing which does not often happen in the same family, yet, in the great family of mankind, he that at first made two, male and female, by his wise providence preserves a succession of both in some sort of equality as far as is requisite to the keeping up of the generations of men upon earth.

3. That he took care to marry them all. His daughters he sent abroad, et maritis dedit, so the vulgar Latin adds--he provided husbands for them; and, as it were in exchange, and both ways, strengthening his interest, he took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. The Jews say, Every father owes three things to his son: to teach him to read the law, give him a trade, and get him a wife. What a difference was there between Ibzan's family and that of his immediate predecessor Jephthah! Ibzan has sixty children and all married, Jephthah but one, a daughter, that dies or lives unmarried. Some are increased, others are diminished: both are the Lord's doing.

II. Elon of Zebulun, in the north of Canaan, was next raised up to preside in public affairs, to administer justice, and to reform abuses. Ten years he continued a blessing to Israel, and then died, Jdg 11:11,12. Dr. Lightfoot computes that in the beginning of his time the forty years' oppression by the Philistines began (spoken of Jdg 13:1), and about that time Samson was born. Probably, his residence being in the north,

the Philistines who bordered upon the southern parts of Canaan took the opportunity of making incursions upon them.

III. Abdon, of the tribe of Ephraim, succeeded, and in him that illustrious tribe begins to recover its reputation, having not afforded any person of note since Joshua; for Abimelech the Shechemite was rather a scandal to it. This Abdon was famous for the multitude of his offspring (Jdg 11:14): he had forty sons and thirty grandsons, all of whom he lived to see grown up, and they rode on seventy ass-colts either as judges and officers or as gentlemen and persons of distinction. It was a satisfaction to him thus to see his children's children, but it is feared he did not see peace upon Israel, for by this time the Philistines had begun to break in upon them. Concerning this, and the rest of these judges that have ever so short an account given of them, yet notice is taken where they were buried (Jdg 11:7,10,12,15), perhaps because the inscriptions upon their monuments (for such were anciently used, 2Ki 23:17) would serve for the confirmation and enlargement of their story, and might be consulted by such as desired further information concerning them. Peter, having occasion to speak of David, says, His sepulchre is with us unto this day, Ac 2:29. Or it is intended for the honour of the places where they laid their bones, but may be improved for the lessening of our esteem of all worldly glory, of which death and the grave will stain the pride. These judges, that were as gods to Israel, died like men, and all their honour was laid in the dust.

It is very strange that in the history of all these judges, some of whose actions are very particularly related, there is not so much as once mention made of the high priest, or any other priest or Levite, appearing either for counsel or action in any public affair, from Phinehas (Jdg 20:28) to Eli, which may well be computed 250 years; only the names of the high priests at that time are preserved, 1Ch 6:4-7,Ezr 7:35. How can this strange obscurity of that priesthood for so long a time, now in the beginning of its days, agree with that mighty splendour with which it was introduced and the figure which

the institution of it makes in the law of Moses? Surely it intimates that the institution was chiefly intended to be typical, and that the great benefits that seemed to be promised by it were to be chiefly looked for in its antitype, the everlasting priesthood of our Lord Jesus, in comparison of the superior glory of which that priesthood had no glory, 2Co 3:10.

9 And he had thirty sons, and thirty daughters, whom he sent abroad, and took in thirty daughters from abroad for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.
10 Then died Ibzan, and was buried at Bethlehem.
11 And after him Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel; and he judged Israel ten years.
12 And Elon the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.
13 And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.
14 And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.
15 And Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mount of the Amalekites.

Judges-13

The Birth of Samson

1 And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.
2 And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren, and bare not.
3 And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou *art* barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.
4 Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean *thing:*

5 for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.

The first verse gives us a short account, such as we have too often met with already, of the great distress that Israel was in, which gave occasion for the raising up of a deliverer. They did evil, as they had done, in the sight of the Lord, and then God delivered them, as he had done, into the hands of their enemies. If there had been no sin, there would have needed no Saviour; but sin was suffered to abound, that grace might much more abound.

The enemies God now sold them to were the Philistines, their next neighbours, that lay among them, the first and chief of the nations which were devoted to destruction, but which God left to prove them (Jdg 3:1,3), the five lords of the Philistines, an inconsiderable people in comparison with Israel (they had but five cities of any note), and yet, when God made use of them as the staff in his hand, they were very oppressive and vexatious. And this trouble lasted longer than any yet: it continued forty years, though probably not always alike violent. When Israel was in this distress Samson was born; and here we have his birth foretold by an angel. Observe,

I. His extraction. He was of the tribe of Dan, Jdg 13:2. Dan signifies a judge or judgment, Ge 30:6. And probably it was with an eye to Samson that dying Jacob foretold, Dan shall judge his people, that is, "he shall produce a judge for his people, though one of the sons of the handmaids, as one, as well as any one, of the tribes of Israel," Ge 49:16. The lot of the tribe of Dan lay next to the country of the Philistines, and therefore one of that tribe was most fit to be made a bridle upon them. His parents had been long childless.

Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been kept a great while in the want of the blessing of children, as Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, and John Baptist, that the mercy might

be the more acceptable when it did come. Sing, O barren! Thou that didst not bear, Isa 54:1. Note, Mercies long waited for often prove signal mercies, and it is made to appear that they were worth waiting for, and by them others may be encouraged to continue their hope in God's mercy.

II The glad tidings brought to his mother, that she should have a son. The messenger was an angel of the Lord (Jdg 13:3), yet appearing as a man, with the aspect and garb of a prophet, or man of God. And this angel (as the learned bishop Patrick supposes, on Jdg 13:18) was the Lord himself, that is, the Word of the Lord, who was to be the Messiah, for his name is called Wonderful, Jdg 13:18, and Jehovah, Jdg 13:19. The great Redeemer did in a particular manner concern himself about this typical redeemer. It was not so much for the sake of Manoah and his wife, obscure Danites, that this extraordinary message was sent, but for Israel's sake, whose deliverer he was to be, and not only so (his services to Israel not seeming to answer to the grandeur of his entry) but for the Messiah's sake, whose type he was to be, and whose birth must be foretold by an angel, as his was. The angel, in the message he delivers,

1. Takes notice of her affliction: Behold now, thou art barren and bearest not. Hence she might gather he was a prophet, that though a stranger to her, and one she had never seen before, yet he knew this to be her grievance. He tells her of it, not to upbraid her with it, but because perhaps at this time she was actually thinking of this affliction and bemoaning herself as one written childless. God often sends in comfort to his people very seasonably, when they feel most from their troubles. "Now thou art barren, but thou shalt not be always so," as she feared, "nor long so."

2. He assures her that she should conceive and bear a son (Jdg 13:3) and repeats the assurance, Jdg 13:5. To show the power of a divine word, the strongest man that ever was was a child of promise, as Isaac, born by force and virtue of a promise,

and faith in that promise, Heb 11:11,Ga 4:23. Many a woman, after having been long barren, has borne a son by providence, but Samson was by promise, because a figure of the promised seed, so long expected by the faith of the Old-Testament saints,

3. He appoints that the child should be a Nazarite from his birth, and therefore that the mother should be subject to the law of the Nazarites (though not under the vow of a Nazarite) and should drink no wine or strong drink so long as this child was to have its nourishment from her, either in the womb or at the breast, Jdg 13:4,5. Observe, This deliverer of Israel must be in the strictest manner devoted to God and an example of holiness. It is spoken of as a kindness to the people that God raised up of their young men for Nazarites, Am 2:11. Other judges had corrected their apostasies from God, but Samson must appear as one, more than any of them, consecrated to God; and, notwithstanding what we read of his faults, we have reason to think that being a Nazarite of God's making he did, in the course of his conversation, exemplify, not only the ceremony, but the substance of that separation to the Lord in which the Nazariteship did consist, Nu 6:2.

Those that would save others must by singular piety distinguish themselves. Samuel, who carried on Israel's deliverance from the Philistines, was a Nazarite by his mother's vow (1Sa 1:11), as Samson by the divine appointment. The mother of this deliverer must therefore deny herself, and not eat any unclean thing; what was lawful at another time was now to be forborne. As the promise tried her faith, so this precept tried her obedience; for God requires both from those on whom he will bestow his favours. Women with child ought conscientiously to avoid whatever they have reason to think will be any way prejudicial to the health or good constitution of the fruit of their body. And perhaps Samson's mother was to refrain from wine and strong drink, not only because he was designed for a Nazarite, but because

he was designed for a man of great strength, which his mother's temperance would contribute to.

4. He foretels the service which this child should do to his country: He shall begin to deliver Israel. Note, It is very desirable that our children may be not only devoted entirely to God themselves, but instrumental for the good of others, and the service of their generation--not recluses, candles under a bushel, but on a candlestick. Observe, He shall begin to deliver Israel. This intimated that the oppression of the Philistines should last long, for Israel's deliverance from it should not so much as begin, not one step be taken towards it, till this child, who was now unborn, should have grown up to a capacity of beginning it. And yet he must not complete the deliverance: he shall only begin to deliver Israel, which intimates that the trouble should still be prolonged. God chooses to carry on his work gradually and by several hands. One lays the foundation of a good work, another builds, and perhaps a third brings forth the top stone. Now herein Samson was a type of Christ,

(1.) As a Nazarite to God, a Nazarite from the womb. For, though our Lord Jesus was not a Nazarite himself, yet he was typified by the Nazarites, as being perfectly pure from all sin, not so much as conceived in it, and entirely devoted to his Father's honour. Of the Jewish church, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, because to them pertained the promise of him, Ro 9:4,5. By virtue of that promise, he long lay as it were in the womb of that church, which for many ages was pregnant of him, and therefore, like Samson's mother, during that pregnancy was made a holy nation and a peculiar people, and strictly forbidden to touch any unclean thing for his sake, who in the fulness of time was to come from them.

(2.) As a deliverer of Israel; for he is Jesus a Saviour, who saves his people from their sins. But with this difference: Samson did only begin to deliver Israel (David was afterwards raised up to complete the destruction of the Philistines), but

our Lord Jesus is both Samson and David too, both the author and finisher of our faith.

III. The report which Manoah's wife, in a transport of joy, brings in all haste to her husband, of this surprising message Jdg 13:6,7. The glad tidings were brought her when she was alone, perhaps religiously employed in meditation or prayer; but she could not, she would not, conceal them from her husband, but gives him an account,

1. Of the messenger. It was a man of God, Jdg 13:6. His countenance she could describe; it was very awful: he had such a majesty in his looks, such a sparkling eye, such a shining face, so powerfully commanding reverence and respect, that according to the idea she had of an angel he had the very countenance of one. But his name she can give no account of, nor to what tribe or city of Israel he belonged, for he did not think fit to tell her, and, for her part, the very sight of him struck such an awe upon her that she durst not ask him. She was abundantly satisfied that he was a servant of God; his person and message she thought carried their own evidence along with them, and she enquired no further.

2. Of the message. She gives him a particular account both of the promise and of the precept (Jdg 13:7), that he also might believe the promise and might on all occasions be a monitor to her to observe the precept. Thus should yoke-fellows communicate to each other their experiences of communion with God, and their improvements in acquaintance with him, that they may be helpful to each other in the way that is called holy.

6 Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, a man of God
came unto me, and his countenance *was* like the countenance of an
angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he *was,*
neither told he me his name:
7 but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son;
and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean

thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.

8 Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.

9 And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband *was* not with her.

10 And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the *other* day.

11 And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, *Art* thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I *am*.

We have here an account of a second visit which the angel of God made to Manoah and his wife.

I. Manoah earnestly prayed for it, Jdg 13:8. He was not incredulous of the story his wife told him; he knew she was a virtuous woman, and therefore the heart of her husband did safely trust in her; he knew she would not go about to impose upon him, much less was he, as Josephus unworthily represents him, jealous of his wife's conversation with this stranger; but,

1. He takes it for granted that this child of promise shall in due time be given them, and speaks without hesitation of the child that shall be born. There was not found so great faith, no, not in Zechariah, a priest, then in waiting at the altar of the Lord, and to whom the angel himself appeared, as was in this honest Danite. Things hidden from the wise and prudent, who value themselves upon the niceness of their enquiries, are often revealed unto babes, who know how to prize God's gifts and to take God's word. Blessed are those that have not seen and yet, as Manoah here, have believed.

2. All his care is what they should do to the child that should be born. Note, Good men are more solicitous and desirous to

know the duty that is to be done by them than to know the events that shall occur concerning them; for duty is ours, events are God's. Solomon enquires concerning the good men should do, not the good they should have, Ec 2:3.

3. He therefore prays to God to send the same blessed messenger again, to give them further instructions concerning the management of this Nazarite, fearing lest his wife's joy for the promise might have made her forget some part of the precept, in which he was desirous to be fully informed, and lie under no mistake: "Lord, let the man of God come again unto us, for we desire to be better acquainted with him." Note, Those that have heard from heaven cannot but wish to hear more thence, again and again to meet with the man of God. Observe, He does not go or send his servants abroad, to find out this man of God, but seeks him upon his knees, prays to God to send him, and, thus seeking, finds him. Would we have God's messengers, the ministers of his gospel, to bring a word proper for us, and for our instruction? Entreat the Lord to send them to us, to teach us, Ro 15:30,32.

II. God graciously granted it: God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, Jdg 13:9. Note, God will not fail some way or other to guide those by his counsel that are sincerely desirous to know their duty, and apply themselves to him to teach them, Ps 25:8,9.

1 The angel appears the second time also to the wife, when she is sitting alone, probably tending the flocks, or otherwise well employed in the field where she has retired. Solitude is often a good opportunity of communion with God; good people have thought themselves never less alone than when alone, if God be with them.

2. She goes in all haste to call her husband, doubtless humbly beseeching the stay of this blessed messenger till she should return and her husband with her, Jdg 13:10,11. She did not desire him to go with her to her husband, but would fetch her

husband to him. Those that would meet with God must attend where he is pleased to manifest himself. "Oh," says she, overjoyed, "my dear love, thy prayers are answered--yonder is the man of God, come to make us another visit--he that came the other day," or, as some read it, this day, for other is not in the original, and it is probable enough that both these visits were on the same day, and at the same place, and that the second time she sat expecting him.

The man of God is very willing she should call her husband, Joh 4:16. Those that have an acquaintance with the things of God themselves should invite others to the same acquaintance, Joh 1:45,46. Manoah is not disgusted that the angel did not this second time appear to him, but very willingly goes after his wife to the man of God. To atone (as it were) for the first fatal miscarriage, when Eve earnestly pressed Adam to that which was evil, and he too easily yielded to her, let yoke-fellows excite one another to love and good works; and, if the wife will lead, let not the husband think it any disparagement to him to follow her in that which is virtuous and praiseworthy.

3. Manoah having come to the angel, and being satisfied by him that he was the same that had appeared to his wife, does, with all humility,

(1.) Welcome the promise (Jdg 13:12): Now let thy words come to pass; this was the language, not only of his desire, but of his faith, like that of the blessed Virgin, Lu 1:38. "Be it according to thy word. Lord, I lay hold on what thou hast said, and depend upon it; let it come to pass."

(2.) Beg that the prescriptions given might be repeated: How shall we order the child? The directions were given to his wife, but he looks upon himself as concerned to assist her in the careful management of this promised seed, according to order; for the utmost care of both the parents, and their constant joint endeavour, are little enough to be engaged for the good

ordering of children that are devoted to God and to be brought up for him. Let not one devolve it on the other, but both do their best. Observe from Manoah's enquiry,

[1.] In general, that, when God is pleased to bestow any mercy upon us, our great care must be how to use it well, and as we ought, because it is then only a mercy indeed when it is rightly managed. God has given us bodies, souls, estates; how shall we order them, that we may answer the intent of the donor, and give a good account of them?

[2.] In particular, those to whom God has given children must be very careful how they order them, and what they do unto them, that they may drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts, form their minds and manners well betimes, and train them in the way wherein they should go. Herein pious parents will beg divine assistance. "Lord, teach us how we may order our children, that they may be Nazarites, and living sacrifices to thee."

4. The angel repeats the directions he had before given (Jdg 13:13,14): Of all that I forbad let her beware; and all that I commanded her let her observe. Note, There is need of a good deal both of caution and observation, for the right ordering both of ourselves and of our children. Beware and observe; take heed not only of drinking wine or strong drink, but of eating any thing that cometh of the vine. Those that would preserve themselves pure must keep at a distance from that which borders upon sin or leads to it. When she was with child of a Nazarite, she must not eat any unclean thing; so those in whom Christ is formed must carefully cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and do nothing to the prejudice of that new man.

12 And Manoah said, now let thy words come to pass. How shall we
order the child, and *how* shall we do unto him?
13 And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I said
unto the woman let her beware.

14 She may not eat of any *thing* that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean *thing:* all that I commanded her let her observe.
15 And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee.
16 And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord. For Manoah knew not that he *was* an angel of the Lord.
17 And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What *is* thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor?
18 And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it *is* secret?
19 So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered *it* upon a rock unto the Lord: and *the angel* did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on.

We have here an account,

I. Of what further passed between Manoah and the angel at this interview. It was in kindness to him that while the angel was with him it was concealed from him that he was an angel; for, had he known it, it would have been such a terror to him that he durst not have conversed with him as he did (Jdg 13:16): He knew not that he was an angel. So Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. We could not bear the sight of the divine glory unveiled. God having determined to speak to us by men like ourselves, prophets and ministers, even when he spoke by his angels, or by his Son, they appeared in the likeness of men, and were taken but for men of God. Now,

1 The angel declined to accept his treat, and appointed him to turn it into a sacrifice. Manoah, being desirous to show some token of respect and gratitude to this venerable stranger who had brought them these glad tidings, begged he would take some refreshment with him (Jdg 13:15): We will soon make ready a kid for thee. Those that welcome the message will be kind to the messengers for his sake that sends them, 1Th 5:13.

But the angel told him (Jdg 13:16) he would not eat of his bread, any more than he would of Gideon's, but, as there, directed him to offer it to God, Jdg 6:20,21. Angels need not meat nor drink; but the glorifying of God is their meat and drink, and it was Christ's, Joh 4:34. And we in some measure do the will of God as they do it if, though we cannot live without meat and drink, yet we eat and drink to the glory of God, and so turn even our common meals into sacrifices.

2 The angel declined telling him his name, and would not so far gratify his curiosity. Manoah desired to know his name (Jdg 13:17), and of what tribe he was, not as if he doubted the truth of his message, but that they might return his visit, and be better acquainted with him (it is good to increase and improve our acquaintance with good men and good ministers); and he has a further design: "That when thy sayings come to pass, we may do thee honour, celebrate thee as a true prophet, and recommend others to thee for divine instructions,--that we may call the child that shall be born after thy name, and so do thee honour,--or that we may send thee a present, honouring one whom God has honoured."

But the angel denies his request with something of a check to his curiosity (Jdg 13:18): Why askest thou thus after my name? Jacob himself could not prevail for this favour, Ge 32:29. Note, We have not what we ask when we ask we know not what. Manoah's request was honestly meant and yet was denied. God told Moses his name (Ex 3:13, 14), because there was a particular occasion for his knowing it, but here there was no occasion. What Manoah asked for instruction in his duty he was readily told (Jdg 13:12,13), but what he asked to gratify his curiosity was denied. God has in his word given us full directions concerning our duty, but never designed to answer all the enquiries of a speculative head. He gives him a reason for his refusal: It is secret. The names of angels were not as yet revealed, to prevent the idolizing of them. After the captivity, when the church was cured of idolatry, angels made themselves known to Daniel by their names, Michael and

Gabriel; and to Zacharias the angel told his name unasked (Lu 1:19): I am Gabriel. But here it is secret, or it is wonderful, too wonderful for us. One of Christ's names is Wonderful, Isa 9:6. His name was long a secret, but by the gospel it is brought to light: Jesus a Saviour. Manoah must not ask because he must not know. Note,

(1.) There are secret things which belong not to us, and which we must content ourselves to be in the dark about while we are here in this world.

(2.) We must therefore never indulge a vain curiosity in our enquiries concerning these things, Col 2:18. Nescire velle quae Magister maximus docere non vult erudita inscitia est--To be willingly ignorant of those things which our great Master refuses to teach us is to be at once ignorant and wise.

3. The angel assisted and owned their sacrifice, and, at parting, gave them to understand who he was. He had directed them to offer their burnt-offering to the Lord, Jdg 13:16. Praises offered up to God are the most acceptable entertainment of the angels; see Re 22:9, worship God. And Manoah, having so good a warrant, though he was no priest and had no altar, turned his meat into a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock to the Lord (Jdg 13:19), that is, he brought and laid it to be offered. "Lord, here it is, do what thou pleasest with it." Thus we must bring our hearts to God as living sacrifices, and submit them to the operation of his Spirit. All things being now ready,

(1.) The angel did wondrously, for his name was Wonderful. Probably the wonder he did was the same with what he had done for Gideon, he made fire to come either down from heaven or up out of the rock to consume the sacrifice.

(2.) He ascended up towards heaven in the flame of the sacrifice, Jdg 13:20. By this it appeared that he was not, as they thought, a mere man, but a messenger immediately from

heaven. Thence certainly he descended, for thither he ascended, Joh 3:13,6:62. This signified God's acceptance of the offering and intimates to what we owe the acceptance of all our offerings, even to the mediation of the angel of the covenant, that other angel, who puts much incense to the prayers of saints and so offers them before the throne, Re 8:3. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God. But it is Christ in the heart by faith that makes it an offering of a sweet-smelling savour: without him our services are offensive smoke, but, in him, acceptable flame. We may apply it to Christ's sacrifice of himself for us; he ascended in the flame of his own offering, for by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, Heb 9:12.

While the angel did this, it is twice said (Jdg 13:19,20) that Manoah and his wife looked on. This is a proof of the miracle: the matter of fact was true, for out of the mouth of these two eye-witnesses the report of it is established. The angel did all that was done in the sacrifice; they did but look on; yet doubtless, when the angel ascended towards heaven, their hearts ascended with him in thanksgiving for the promise which came thence and in expectation of the performance to come thence too. Yet, when the angel has ascended, they dared not, as those that were the witnesses of Christ's ascension, stand gazing up into heaven, but in holy fear and reverence they fell on their faces to the ground. And now,

[1.] They knew that it was an angel, Jdg 13:21. It was plain it was not the body of a man they saw, since it was not chained to the earth, nor prejudiced by fire; but ascended, and ascended in flame, and therefore with good reason they conclude it was an angel; for he maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

[2.] But he did not any more appear to them; it was for a particular occasion, now over, that he was sent, not to settle a constant correspondence, as with prophets. They must

remember and observe what the angel had said and not expect to hear more.

II. We have an account of the impressions which this vision made upon Manoah and his wife. While the angel did wondrously, they looked on, and said nothing (so it becomes us carefully to observe the wondrous works of God, and to be silent before him); but when he had gone, having finished his work, they had time to make their reflections.

1. In Manoah's reflection upon it there is great fear, Jdg 13:22. He had spoken with great assurance of the son they should shortly be the joyful parents of (Jdg 13:8,12), and yet is now put into such a confusion by that very thing which should have strengthened and encouraged his faith that he counts upon nothing but their being both cut off immediately: We shall surely die. It was a vulgar opinion generally received among the ancient Jews that it was present death to see God or an angel; and this notion quite overcome his faith for the present, as it did Gideon's, Jdg 6:22.

2. In his wife's reflection upon it there is great faith, Jdg 13:23. Here the weaker vessel was the stronger believer, which perhaps was the reason why the angel chose once and again to appear to her. Manoah's heart began to fail him, but his wife, as a help meet for him, encouraged him. Two are better than one, for, if one fall into dejections and despondencies, the other will help to raise him up. Yoke-fellows should piously assist each other's faith and joy as there is occasion.

None could argue better than Manoah's wife does here: We shall surely die, said her husband; "Nay," said she, "we need not fear that; let us never turn that against us which is really for us. We shall not die unless God be pleased to kill us: our death must come from his hand and his pleasure. Now the tokens of his favour which we have received forbid us to think that he designs our destruction. Had he thought fit to kill us,

(1.) He would not have accepted our sacrifice, and signified to us his acceptance of it by turning it to ashes, Ps 20:3, margin. The sacrifice was the ransom of our lives, and the fire fastening upon that was a plain indication of the turning away of his wrath from us. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, but you see ours is not so.

(2.) He would not have shown us all these things, these strange sights, now at a time when there is little or no open vision (1Sa 3:1), nor would he have given these exceedingly great and precious promises of a son that shall be a Nazarite and a deliverer of Israel--he would not have told us such things as these if he had been pleased to kill us. We need not fear the withering of those roots out of which such a branch is yet to spring." Note, Hereby it appears that God designs not the death of sinners that he has accepted the great sacrifice which Christ offered up for their salvation, has put them in a way of obtaining his favour, and has assured them of it upon their repentance.

Had he been pleased to kill them, he would not have done so. And let those good Christians who have had communion with God in the word and prayer, to whom he has graciously manifested himself, and who have had reason to think God has accepted their works, take encouragement thence in a cloudy and dark day. "God would not have done what he has done for my soul if he had designed to forsake me, and leave me to perish at last; for his work is perfect, nor will he mock his people with his favours." Learn to reason as Manoah's wife did, "If God had designed me to perish under his wrath, he would not have given me such distinguishing tokens of his favour." O woman! Great is thy faith.

20 For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from
off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of
the altar: and Manoah and his wife looked on *it*, and fell on their
faces to the ground.

21 But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to
his wife. Then Manoah knew that he *was* an angel of the Lord.

22 And Manoah said unto his wife, we shall surely die, because we have seen God.

23 But his wife said unto him, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these *things*, nor would as at this time have told us *such things* as these.

1. Samson's birth. The woman that had been long barren bore a son, according to the promise; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

2. His name, Samson, has been derived by some, from Shemesh, the sun, turned into a diminutive, sol exiguus--the sun in miniature, perhaps because, being born like Moses to be a deliverer, he was like him exceedingly fair, his face shone like a little sun; or his parents so named him in remembrance of the shining countenance of that man of God who brought them the notice of him; though they knew not his name, yet thus, now that his sayings had come to pass, they did him honour. A little sun, because a Nazarite born (for the Nazarites were as rubies and sapphires, La 4:7, and because of his great strength. The sun is compared to a strong man Ps 19:5); why should not a strong man then be compared to the sun when he goes forth in his strength? A little sun, because the glory of, and a light to, his people Israel, a type of Christ, the Sun of righteousness.

3. His childhood. He grew more than is usual in strength and stature, far out-grew other children of his age; and not in that only, but in other instances, it appeared that the Lord blessed him, qualified him, both in body and mind, for something great and extraordinary. Children of promise shall have the blessing. 4. His youth. When he grew up a little the Spirit of the Lord began to move him, Jdg 13:25. This was an evidence that the Lord blessed him. Where God gives his blessing he gives his Spirit to qualify for the blessing. Those are blessed indeed in whom the Spirit of grace begins to work betimes, in the days of their childhood. If the Spirit be poured out upon our offspring, they will spring up as willows by the water

courses, Isa 44:3,4. The Spirit of God moved Samson in the camp of Dan, that is, in the general muster of the trained bands of that tribe, who probably had formed a camp between Zorah and Eshtaol, near the place where he lived, to oppose the incursions of the Philistines; there Samson, when a child, appeared among them, and signalized himself by some very brave actions, excelling them all in manly exercises and trials of strength: and probably he showed himself more than ordinarily zealous against the enemies of his country, and discovered more of a public spirit than could be expected in a child. The Spirit moved him at times, not at all times, but as the wind blows, when he listed, to show that what he did was not from himself, for then he could have done it at any time. Strong men think themselves greatly animated by wine (Ps 78:65), but Samson drank no wine, and yet excelled in strength and courage, and every thing that was bold and brave, for he had the Spirit of God moving him; therefore be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, who will come to those that are sober and temperate.

24 And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the
child grew, and the Lord blessed him.
25 And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp
of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges-14

Samson and the Woman of Timnath

1 And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath
of the daughters of the Philistines.
2 And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, I have
seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now
therefore get her for me to wife.
3 Then his father and his mother said unto him, is *there* never a
woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my
people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised

Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for
she pleaseth me well.
4 But his father and his mother knew not that it *was* of the Lord,
that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time
the Philistines had dominion over Israel.

Here, I. Samson, under the extraordinary guidance of Providence, seeks an occasion of quarrelling with the Philistines, by joining in affinity with them--a strange method, but the truth is Samson was himself a riddle, a paradox of a man, did that which was really great and good, by that which was seemingly weak and evil, because he was designed not to be a pattern to us (who must walk by rule, not by example), but a type of him who, though he knew no sin, was made sin for us, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might condemn and destroy sin in the flesh, Ro 8:3.

1. As the negotiation of Samson's marriage was a common case, we may observe,

(1.) That is was weakly and foolishly done of him to set his affections upon a daughter of the Philistines; the thing appeared very improper. Shall one that is not only an Israelite, but a Nazarite, devoted to the Lord, covet to become one with a worshipper of Dagon? Shall one marked for a patriot of his country match among those that are its sworn enemies? He saw this woman (Jdg 13:1), and she pleased him well, Jdg 13:3. It does not appear that he had any reason to think her wise or virtuous, or in any way likely to be a help-meet for him; but he saw something in her face that was very agreeable to his fancy, and therefore nothing will serve but she must be his wife. He that in the choice of a wife is guided only by his eye, and governed by his fancy, must afterwards thank himself if he find a Philistine in his arms.

(2.) Yet it was wisely and well done not to proceed so much as to make his addresses to her till he had first made his parents acquainted with the matter. He told them, and desired them to get her for him to wife, Jdg 13:2. Herein he is an

example to all children. Conformably to the law of the fifth commandment, children ought not to marry, nor to move towards marrying, without the advice and consent of their parents; those that do (as bishop Hall here expresses it) wilfully unchild themselves, and exchange natural affections for violent. parents have a property in their children as parts of themselves. In marriage this property is transferred; for such is the law of the relation that a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife. It is therefore not only unkind and ungrateful, but very unjust, to alienate this property without their concurrence; whoso thus robbeth his father or mother, stealing himself from them, who is nearer and dearer to them than their goods, and yet saith, It is no transgression, the same is the companion of a destroyer, Pr 28:24.

(3.) His parents did well to dissuade him from yoking himself thus unequally with unbelievers. Let those who profess religion, but are courting an affinity with the profane and irreligious, matching into families where they have reason to think the fear of God is not, nor the worship of God, let them hear their reasoning, and apply it to themselves: "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or, if none of our tribe, never a one among all thy people, never an Israelite, that pleases thee, or that thou canst think worthy of thy affection, that thou shouldest marry a Philistine?" In the old world the sons of God corrupted and ruined themselves, their families, and that truly primitive church, by marrying with the daughters of men, Ge 6:2. God had forbidden the people of Israel to marry with the devoted nations, one of which the Philistines were, De 7:3.

(4.) If there had not been a special reason for it, it certainly would have been improper in him to insist upon his choice, and in them to agree to it at last. Yet their tender compliance with his affections may be observed as an example to parents not to be unreasonable in crossing their children's choices, nor to deny their consent, especially to those that have seasonably

and dutifully asked it, without some very good cause. As children must obey their parents in the Lord, so parents must not provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged. This Nazarite, in his subjection to his parents, asking their consent, and not proceeding till he had it, was not only an example to all children, but a type of the holy child Jesus, who went down with his parents to Nazareth (thence called a Nazarene) and was subject to them, Lu 2:51.

2. But this treaty of marriage is expressly said to be of the Lord, Jdg 13:4. Not only that God afterwards overruled it to serve his designs against the Philistines, but that he put it into Samson's heart to make this choice, that he might have occasion against the Philistine. It was not a thing evil in itself for him to marry a Philistine. It was forbidden because of the danger of receiving hurt by idolaters; where there was not only no danger of that kind, but an opportunity hoped for of doing that hurt to them which would be good service to Israel, the law might well be dispense with. It was said (Jdg 13:25) that the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times, and we have reason to think he himself perceived that Spirit to move him at this time, when he made this choice, and that otherwise he would have yielded to his parents' dissuasives, nor would they have consented at last if he had not satisfied them it was of the Lord.

This would bring him into acquaintance and converse with the Philistines, by which he might have such opportunities of galling them as otherwise he could not have. It should seem, the way in which the Philistines oppressed Israel was, not by great armies, but by the clandestine incursions of their giants and small parties of their plunderers. In the same way therefore Samson must deal with them; let him but by this marriage get among them, and he would be a thorn in their sides. Jesus Christ, having to deliver us from this present evil world, and to cast out the prince of it, did himself visit it, though full of pollution and enmity, and, by assuming a body, did in some sense join in affinity with it, that he might destroy

our spiritual enemies, and his own arm might work the salvation.

II. Samson, by a special providence, is animated and encouraged to attack the Philistines. That being the service for which he was designed, God, when he called him to it, prepared him for it by two occurrences:--

1. By enabling him, in one journey to Timnath, to kill a lion, Jdg 13:5,6. Many decline doing the service they might do because they know not their own strength. God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, that he might never be afraid to look the greatest difficulties in the face. David, who was to complete the destruction of the Philistines, must try his hand first upon a lion and a bear, that thence he might infer, as we may suppose Samson did, that the uncircumcised Philistine should be as one of them, 1Sa 17:36.

(1.) Samson's encounter with the lion was hazardous. It was a young lion, one of the fiercest sort, that set upon him, roaring for his prey, and setting his eye particularly upon him; he roared in meeting him, so the word is. He was all alone in the vineyards, whither he had rambled from his father and mother (who kept the high road), probably to eat grapes. Children consider not how they expose themselves to the roaring lion that seeks to devour when, out of a foolish fondness for liberty, they wander from under the eye and wing of their prudent pious parents. Nor do young people consider what lions lurk in the vineyards, the vineyards of red wines, as dangerous as snakes under the green grass. Had Samson met with this lion in the way, he might have had more reason to expect help both from God and man than here in the solitary vineyards, out of his road. But there was a special providence in it, and the more hazardous the encounter was,

(2.) The victory was so much the more illustrious. It was obtained without any difficulty: he strangled the lion, and tore

his throat as easily as he would have strangled a kid, yet without any instrument, not only no sword nor bow, but not so much as a staff or knife; he had nothing in his hand. Christ engaged the roaring lion, and conquered him in the beginning of his public work (Mt 4:1-11, &c.), and afterwards spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in himself, as some read it, not by any instrument. He was exalted in his own strength. That which added much to the glory of Samson's triumph over the lion was that when he had done this great exploit he did not boast of it, did not so much as tell his father nor mother that which many a one would soon have published through the whole country. Modesty and humility make up the brightest crown of great performances.

2. By providing him, the next journey, with honey in the carcase of this lion, Jdg 13:8,9. When he came down the next time to solemnize his nuptials, and his parents with him, he had the curiosity to turn aside into the vineyard where he had killed the lion, perhaps that with the sight of the place he might affect himself with the mercy of that great deliverance, and might there solemnly give thanks to God for it. It is good thus to remind ourselves of God's former favours to us. There he found the carcase of the lion; the birds or beasts of prey, it is likely, had eaten the flesh, and in the skeleton a swarm of bees had knit, and made a hive of it, and had not been idle, but had there laid up a good stock of honey, which was one of the staple commodities of Canaan; such plenty there was of it that the land is said to flow with milk and honey.

Samson, having a better title than any man to the hive, seizes the honey with his hands. This supposes an encounter with the bees; but he that dreaded not lion's paws had no reason to fear their stings. As by his victory over the lion he was emboldened to encounter the Philistine-giants, if there should be occasion, notwithstanding their strength and fierceness, so by dislodging the bees he was taught not to fear the multitude of the Philistines; though they compassed him about like bees,

yet in the name of the Lord he should destroy them, Ps 118:12. Of the honey he here found,

(1.) He ate himself, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for the dead bones of an unclean beast had not that ceremonial pollution in them that the bones of a man had. John Baptist, that Nazarite of the New Testament, lived upon wild honey.

(2.) He gave to his parents, and they did eat; he did not eat all himself. Hast thou found honey? Eat so much as is sufficient for thee, and no more, Pr 25:16. He let his parents share with him. Children should be grateful to their parents with the fruits of their own industry, and so show piety at home, 1Ti 5:4. Let those that by the grace of God have found sweetness in religion themselves communicate their experience to their friends and relations, and invite them to come and share with them. He told not his parents whence he had it, lest they should scruple eating it. Bishop Hall observes here that those are less wise and more scrupulous than Samson that decline the use of God's gifts because they find them in ill vessels. Honey is hone still, though in a dead lion. Our Lord Jesus having conquered Satan, that roaring lion, believers find honey in the carcase, abundant strength and satisfaction, enough for themselves and for all their friends, from that victory.

5 Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to
Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a
young lion roared against him.
6 And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent
him as he would have rent a kid, and *he had* nothing in his hand:
but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.
7 And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased
Samson well.
8 And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see
the carcass of the lion: and, behold, *there was* a swarm of bees and
honey in the carcass of the lion.
9 And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to
his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he

told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion.

10 So his father went down unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do.

11 And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12 And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find *it* out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments:

13 but if ye cannot declare *it* me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.

We have here an account of Samson's wedding feast and the occasion it gave him to fall foul upon the Philistines.

I. Samson conformed to the custom of the country in making a festival of his nuptial solemnities, which continued seven days, Jdg 13:10. Though he was a Nazarite, he did not affect, in a thing of this nature, to be singular, but did as the young men used to do upon such occasions. It is no part of religion to go contrary to the innocent usages of the places where we live: nay, it is a reproach to religion when those who profess it give just occasion to others to call them covetous, sneaking, and morose. A good man should strive to make himself, in the best sense, a good companion.

II. His wife's relations paid him the accustomed respect of the place upon that occasion, and brought him thirty young men to keep him company during the solemnity, and to attend him as his grooms-men (Jdg 13:11): When they saw him, what a comely man he was, and what an ingenuous graceful look he had, they brought him these to do him honour, and to improve by his conversation while he staid among them. Or, rather, when they saw him, what a strong stout man he was, they brought these, seemingly to be his companions, but really to be a guard upon him, or spies to observe him. Jealous enough they were of him, but would have been more so had they

known of his victory over the lion, which therefore he had industriously concealed. The favours of Philistines have often some mischief or other designed in them.

III. Samson, to entertain the company, propounds a riddle to them, and lays a wager with them that they cannot find it out in seven days, Jdg 13:12-14. The usage, it seems, was very ancient upon such occasions, when friends were together, to be innocently merry, not to spend all the time in dull eating and drinking, as bishop Patrick expresses it, or in other gratifications of sense, as music, dancing, or shows, but to propose questions, by which their learning and ingenuity might be tried and improved. This becomes men, wise men, that value themselves by their reason; but very unlike to it are the infamous and worse than brutish entertainments of this degenerate age, which send nothing round but the glass and the health, till reason is drowned, and wisdom sunk. Now,

1. Samson's riddle was his own invention, for it was his own achievement that gave occasion for it: Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. Read my riddle, what is this? Beasts of prey do not yield meat for man, yet food came from the devourer; and those creatures that are strong when they are alive commonly smell strong and are every way offensive when they are dead, as horses, and yet out of the strong, or out of the bitter, so the Syriac and Arabic read it, came sweetness. If they had but so much sense as to consider what eater is most strong, and what meat is most sweet, they would have found out the riddle, and neither lions nor honey were such strangers to their country that the thoughts of them needed to be out of the way; and the solving of the riddle would have given him occasion to tell them the entertaining story on which it was founded. This riddle is applicable to many of the methods of divine providence and grace. When God, by an over-ruling providence, brings good out of evil to his church and people,--when that which threatened their ruin turns to their advantage,--when their enemies are made serviceable to them, and the wrath of men

turns to God's praise,--then comes meat out of the eater and sweetness out of the strong. See Php 1:12.

2. His water was more considerable to him than to them, because he was one against thirty partners. It was not a wager laid upon God's providence, or upon the chance of a die or a card, but upon their ingenuity, and amounted to no more than an honorary recompence of wit and a disgrace upon stupidity.

IV. His companions, when they could not expound the riddle themselves, obliged his wife to get from him the exposition of it, Jdg 13:15. Whether they were really of a dull capacity, or whether under a particular infatuation at this time, it was strange that none of the thirty could in all this time stumble upon so plain a thing as that, What is sweeter than honey and what stronger than a lion? It should seem that in wit, as well as manners, they were barbarous--barbarous indeed to threaten the bride that, if she would not use means with the bridegroom to let them into the meaning of it, they would burn her and her father's house with fire. Could any thing be more brutish? It was base enough to turn a jest into earnest, and those were unworthy of conversation that would grow so outrageous rather than confess their ignorance and lose so small a wager; nor would it save their credit at all to tell the riddle when they were told it. It was yet more villainous to engage Samson's wife to be a traitor to her own husband, and to pretend a greater interest in her than he had. Now that she was married she must forget her own people. Yet most inhuman of all was it to threaten, if she could not prevail, to burn her and all her relations with fire, and all for fear of losing each of them the value of a shirt and a coat: Have you called us to take what we have? Those must never lay wagers that cannot lose more tamely and easily than thus.

V. His wife, by unreasonable importunity, obtains from him a key to his riddle. It was on the seventh day, that is, the seventh day of the week (as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures), but the fourth

day of the feast, that they solicited her to entice her husband (Jdg 13:15), and she did it,

1. With great art and management (Jdg 13:16), resolving not to believe he loved her, unless he would gratify her in this thing. She knew he could not bear to have his love questioned, and therefore, if any thing would work upon him, that would: "Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not, if thou deniest me;" whereas he had much more reason to say, "Thou dost but hate me, and lovest me not, if thou insistest on it." And, that she might not make this the test of his affection, he assures her he had not told his own parents, notwithstanding the confidence he reposed in them. If this prevail not, she will try the powerful eloquence of tears: she wept before him the rest of the days of the feast, choosing rather to mar the mirth, as the bride's tears must needs do, than not gain her point, and oblige her countrymen, Jdg 13:17.

2. With great success. At last, being quite wearied with her importunity, he told her what was the meaning of his riddle, and though we may suppose she promised secresy, and that if he would but let her know she would tell nobody, she immediately told it to the children of her people; nor could he expect better from a Philistine, especially when the interests of her country were ever so little concerned. See Mic 7:5,6. The riddle is at length unriddled (Jdg 13:18): What is sweeter than honey, or a better meat? Pr 24:13. What is stronger than a lion, or a greater devourer? Samson generously owns they had won the wager, though he had good reason to dispute it, because they had not declared the riddle, as the bargain was (Jdg 13:12), but it had been declared to them. But he only thought fit to tell them of it: If you had not ploughed with my heifer, made use of your interest with my wife, you would not have found out my riddle. Satan, in his temptations, could not do us the mischief he does if he did not plough with the heifer of our own corrupt nature.

VI. Samson pays his wager to these Philistines with the spoils of others of their countrymen, Jdg 13:19. He took this occasion to quarrel with the Philistines, went down to Ashkelon, one of their cities, where probably he knew there was some great festival observed at this time, to which many flocked, out of whom he picked out thirty, slew them, and took their clothes, and gave them to those that had expounded the riddle; so that, in balancing the account, it appeared that the Philistines were the losers, for one of the lives they lost was worth all the suits of clothes they won: the body is more than raiment. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, both to authorize and to enable him to do this.

VII. This proves a good occasion of weaning Samson from his new relations. He found how his companions had abused him and how his wife had betrayed him, and therefore his anger was kindled, Jdg 13:19. Better be angry with Philistines than in love with them, because, when we join ourselves to them, we are most in danger of being ensnared by them. And, meeting with this ill-usage among them, he went up to his father's house. It were well for us if the unkindnesses we meet with from the world, and our disappointments in it, had but this good effect upon us, to oblige us by faith and prayer to return to our heavenly Father's house and rest there. The inconveniences that occur in our way should make us love home and long to be there. No sooner had he gone than his wife was disposed of to another, Jdg 13:20. Instead of begging his pardon for the wrong she had done him, when he justly signified his resentment of it only by withdrawing in displeasure for a time, she immediately marries him that was the chief of the guests, the friend of the bridegroom, whom perhaps she loved too well, and was too willing to oblige, when she got her husband to tell her the riddle. See how little confidence is to be put in man, when those may prove our enemies whom we have used as our friends.

14 And he said unto them,
Out of the eater came forth meat,
and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

And they could not in three days expound the riddle.
15 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samsons
wife, Entice thy husband, that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest
we burn thee and thy father's house with fire: have ye called us to
take that we have? *Is it* not *so?*
16 And Samson's wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate
me, and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children
of my people, and hast not told *it* me. And he said unto her, Behold,
I have not told *it* my father nor my mother, and shall I tell *it* thee?
17 And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted: and
it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay
sore upon him: and she told the riddle to the children of her people.
18 And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before
the sun went down,
What *is* sweeter than honey?
And what *is* stronger than a lion?
And he said unto them,
If ye had not plowed with my heifer,
ye had not found out my riddle.
19 And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he went down to
Ashkelon, and slew thirty men of them, and took their spoil, and
gave change of garments unto them which expounded the riddle.
And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house.
20 But Samson's wife was *given* to his companion, whom he had used
as his friend.

Judges-15

1 But it came to pass within a while after, in the time of wheat harvest,
that Samson visited his wife with a kid; and he said, I will go in to
my wife into the chamber. But her father would not suffer him to
go in.
2 And her father said, I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated
her; therefore I gave her to thy companion: *is* not her younger
sister fairer than she? Take her, I pray thee, instead of her.
3 And Samson said concerning them, Now shall I be more blameless
than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure.

Here is, I. Samson's return to his wife, whom he had left in displeasure; not hearing perhaps that she was given to another, when time had a little cooled his resentments, he came back to her, visited her with a kid, Jdg 15:1 The value of the present was inconsiderable, but it was intended as a token of reconciliation, and perhaps was then so used, when those that had been at variance were brought together again; he sent this, that he might sup with her in her apartments, and she with him, on his provision, and so they might be friends again. It was generously done of Samson, though he was the party offended and the superior relation, to whom therefore she was bound in duty to sue for peace and to make the first motion of reconciliation. When differences happen between near relations, let hose be ever reckoned the wisest and the best that are most forward to forgive and forget injuries and most willing to stoop and yield for peace' sake.

II The repulse he met with. Her father forbade him to come near her; for truly he had married her to another, Jdg 15:2. He endeavours,

1. To justify himself in this wrong: I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her. A very ill opinion he had of Samson, measuring that Nazarite by the common temper of the Philistines; could he think worse of him than to suspect that, because he was justly angry with his wife, he utterly hated her, and, because he had seen cause to return to his father's house for a while, therefore he had abandoned her for ever? Yet this is all he had to say in excuse of this injury. Thus he made the worst of jealousies to patronize the worst of robberies. But it will never bear us out in doing ill to say, "We thought others designed ill."

2. He endeavours to pacify Samson by offering him his younger daughter, whom, because the handsomer, he thought Samson might accept, in full recompence for the wrong. See what confusions those did admit and bring their families to that were not governed by the fear and law of God, marrying

a daughter this week to one and next week to another, giving a man one daughter first and then another. Samson scorned his proposal; he knew better things than to take a wife to her sister, Le 18:18.

III. The revenge Samson took upon the Philistines for this abuse. Had he designed herein only to plead his own cause he would have challenged his rival, and would have chastised him and his father-in-law only. But he looks upon himself as a public person, and the affront as done to the whole nation of Israel, for probably they put this slight upon him because he was of that nation, and pleased themselves with it, that they had put such an abuse upon an Israelite; and therefore he resolves to do the Philistines a displeasure, and does not doubt but this treatment which he had met with among them would justify him in it (Jdg 15:3): Now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines. He had done what became him in offering to be reconciled to his wife, but, she having rendered it impracticable, now they could not blame him if he showed his just resentment. Note, When differences arise we ought to do our duty in order to the ending of them, and then, whatever the ill consequences of them may be, we shall be blameless. Now the way Samson took to be revenged on them was by setting their corn-fields on fire, which would be a great weakening and impoverishing to the country, Jdg 15:4,5.

1 The method he took to do it was very strange. He sent 150 couple of foxes, tied tail to tail, into the corn-fields; every couple had a stick of fire between their tails, with which, being terrified, they ran into the corn for shelter, and so set fire to it; thus the fire would break out in many places at the same time, and therefore could not be conquered, especially if this was done, as it is probable it was, in the night. He might have employed men to do it, but perhaps he could not find Israelites enough that had courage to do it, and he himself could do it but in one place at a time, which would not effect his purpose. We never find Samson, in any of his exploits, making use of any person whatsoever, either servant or soldier, therefore, in

this project, he chose to make use of foxes as his incendiaries. They had injured Samson by their subtlety and malice, and now Samson returns the injury by subtle foxes and mischievous fire-brands. By the meanness and weakness of the animals he employed, he designed to put contempt upon the enemies he fought against. This stratagem is often alluded to to show how the church's adversaries, that are of different interests and designs among themselves, that look and draw contrary ways in other things, yet have often united in a fire-brand, some cursed project or other, to waste the church of God, and particularly to kindle the fire of division in it.

2 The mischief he hereby did to the Philistines was very great. It was in the time of wheat harvest (Jdg 15:1), so that the straw being dry it soon burnt the shocks of corn that were cut, and the standing corn, and the vineyards and olives. This was a waste of the good creatures, but where other acts of hostility are lawful destroying the forage is justly reckoned to be so: if he might take away their lives, he might take away their livelihood. And God was righteous in it: the corn, and the wine, and the oil, which they had prepared for Dagon, to be a meat-offering to him, were thus, in the season thereof, made a burnt-offering to God's justice.

IV. The Philistines' outrage against Samson's treacherous wife and her father. Understanding that they had provoked Samson to do this mischief to the country, the rabble set upon them and burnt them with fire, perhaps in their own house, Jdg 15:6. Samson himself they durst not attack, and therefore, with more justice than perhaps they themselves designed in it, they wreak their vengeance upon those who, they could not but own, had given him cause to be angry. Instead of taking vengeance upon Samson, they took vengeance for him, when he, out of respect to the relation he had stood in to them, was not willing to do it for himself. See his hand in it to whom vengeance belongs. Those that deal treacherously shall be spoiled and dealt treacherously with; and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, especially when, as

here, he makes use of his people's enemies as instruments for revenging one upon another his people's quarrels. When a barbarous Philistine sets fire to a treacherous one, the righteous may rejoice to see the vengeance, Ps 58:10,11.

Thus shall the wrath of man praise God, Ps 76:10. The Philistines had threatened Samson's wife, that, if she would not get the riddle out of him, they would burn her and her father's house with fire, Jdg 14:15. She, to save herself and oblige her countrymen, betrayed her husband; and what came of it? The very thing that she feared, and sought by sin to avoid, came upon her; she and her father's house were burnt with fire, and her countrymen, whom she sought to oblige by the wrong she did to her husband, brought this evil upon her. The mischief we seek to escape by any unlawful practices we often pull upon our own heads. He that will thus save his life shall lose it.

V. The occasion Samson took hence to do them a yet greater mischief, which touched their bone and their flesh, Jdg 15:7,8. "Though you have done this to them, and thereby shown what you would do to me if you could, yet that shall not deter me from being further vexatious to you." Or, "Though you think, by doing this, you have made me satisfaction for the affront I received among you, yet I have Israel's cause to plead as a public person, and for the wrongs done to them I will be avenged on you, and, if you will then forbear your insults, I will cease, aiming at no more than the deliverance of Israel." So he smote them hip and thigh with a great stroke, so the word is. We suppose the wounds he gave them to have been mortal, as wounds in the hip or thigh often prove, and therefore translate it, with a great slaughter. Some think he only lamed them, disabled them for service, as horses were houghed or ham-strung. It seems to be a phrase used to express a desperate attack; he killed them pell-mell, or routed them horse and foot. He smote them with his hip upon thigh, that is, with the strength he had, not in his arms and hands, but in his hips and thighs, for he kicked and spurned at them, and

so mortified them, trod them in his anger, and trampled them in his fury, Isa 63:3. And, when he had done, he retired to a natural fortress in the top of the rock Etam, where he waited to see whether the Philistines would be tamed by the correction he had given them.

4 And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails.

5 And when he had set the brands on fire, he let *them* go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards *and* olives.

6 Then the Philistines said, who hath done this? And they answered, Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he had taken his wife, and given her to his companion. And the Philistines came up, and burnt her and her father with fire.

7 And Samson said unto them, though ye have done this, yet will I be avenged of you, and after that I will cease.

8 And he smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter: and he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam.

Samson Defeats the Philistines at Lehi

9 Then the Philistines went up, and pitched in Judah, and spread themselves in Lehi.

10 And the men of Judah said, why are ye come up against us?And they answered, to bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us.

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines *are* rulers over us?What *is* this that thou hast done unto us? And he said unto them, as they did unto me, so have I done unto them.

12 And they said unto him, we are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves.

13 And they spake unto him, saying, No; but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand: but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock.

Here is, I. Samson violently pursued by the Philistine. They went up in a body, a more formidable force than they had together when Samson smote them hip and thigh; and they pitched in Judah, and spread themselves up and down the country, to find out Samson, who they heard had come this way, Jdg 15:9. When the men of Judah, who had tamely submitted to their yoke, pleaded that they had paid their tribute, and that none of their tribe had given them any offence, they freely own they designed nothing in this invasion but to seize Samson; they would fight neither against small nor great, but only that judge of Israel (Jdg 15:10), to do to him as he has done to us, that is, to smite his hip and thigh, as he did ours--an eye for an eye. Here was an army sent against one man, for indeed he was himself an army. Thus a whole band of men was sent to seize our Lord Jesus, that blessed Samson, though a tenth part would have served now that his hour had come, and ten times as many would have done nothing if he had not yielded.

II. Samson basely betrayed and delivered up by the men of Judah, Jdg 15:11. Of Judah were they? Degenerate branches of that valiant tribe! Utterly unworthy to carry in their standard the lion of the tribe of Judah. Perhaps they were disaffected to Samson because he was not of their tribe. Out of a foolish fondness for their forfeited precedency, they would rather be oppressed by Philistines than rescued by a Danite. Often has the church's deliverance been obstructed by such jealousies and pretended points of honour. Rather it was because they stood in awe of the Philistines, and were willing, at any rate, to get them out of their country. If their spirits had not been perfectly cowed and broken by their sins and troubles, and they had not been given up to a spirit of slumber, they would have taken this fair opportunity to shake off the Philistine's yoke.

If they had had the least spark of ingenuousness and courage remaining in them, having so brave a man as Samson was to head them, they would now have made one bold struggle for

the recovery of their liberty; but no marvel if those that had debased themselves to hell in the worship of their dung-hill gods (Isa 57:9) thus debased themselves to the dust, in submission to their insulting oppressors. Sin dispirits men, nay, it infatuates them, and hides from their eyes the things that belong to their peace. Probably Samson went into the border of that country to offer his service, supposing his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, as Moses did, Ac 7:25. But they thrust him from them, and very disingenuously,

1. Blamed him for what he had done against the Philistines, as if he had done them a great injury. Such ungrateful returns have those often received that have done the best service imaginable to their country. Thus our Lord Jesus did many good works, and for these they were ready to stone him.

2. They begged of him that he would suffer them to bind him, and deliver him up to the Philistines. Cowardly unthankful wretches! Fond of their fetters and in love with servitude! Thus the Jews delivered up our Saviour, under pretence of a fear lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation. With what a sordid servile spirit do they argue, Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us? And whose fault was that? They knew they had no right to rule over them, nor would they have been sold into their hands if they had not first sold themselves to work wickedness.

III. Samson tamely yielding to be bound by his countrymen, and delivered into the hands of his enraged enemies, Jdg 15:12,13. Now easily could he have beaten them off, and kept the top of his rock against these 3000 men, and none of them all could, or durst, have laid hands on him; but he patiently submitted,

1. That he might give an example of great meekness, mixed with great strength and courage; as one that had rule over his own spirit, he knew how to yield as well as how to conquer.

2. That, by being delivered up to the Philistine, he might have an opportunity of making a slaughter among them.

3. That he might be a type of Christ, who, when he had shown what he could do, in striking those down that came to seize him, yielded to be bound and led as a lamb to the slaughter. Samson justified himself in what he had done against the Philistines: "As they did to me, so I did to them; it was a piece of necessary justice, and they ought not to retaliate it upon me, for they began." He covenants with the men of Judah that, if he put himself into their hands, they should not fall upon him themselves, because then he should be tempted to fall upon them, which he was very loth to do. This they promised him (Jdg 15:13), and then he surrendered.

The men of Judah, being his betrayers, were in effect his murderers; they would not kill him themselves, but they did that which was worse, they delivered him into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, who they knew would do worse than kill him, would abuse and torment him to death. Perhaps they thought, as some think Judas did when he betrayed Christ, that he would by his great strength deliver himself out of their hands; but no thanks to them if he had delivered himself, and, if they thought he would do so, they might of themselves have thought this again, that he could and would deliver them too if they would adhere to him and make him their head. Justly is their misery prolonged who, to oblige their worst enemies, thus abuse their best friend. Never were men so infatuated except those who thus treated our blessed Saviour.

IV. Samson making his part good against the Philistines, even when he was delivered into their hands, fast pinioned with two new cords. The Philistines, when they had him among them, shouted against him (Jdg 15:14), so triumphing in their success, and insulting over him. If God had not tied their hands faster than the men of Judah had tied his, they would

have shot at him (as their archers did at Saul) to dispatch him immediately, rather than have shouted at him, and given him time to help himself. But their security and joy were a presage of their ruin. When they shouted against him as a man run down, confident that all was their own, then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, came mightily upon him, inspired him with more than ordinary strength and resolution. Thus fired,

1. He presently got clear of his bonds. The two new cords, upon the first struggle he gave, broke, and were melted (as the original word is) from off his hands, no doubt to the great amazement and terror of those that shouted against him, whose shouts were hereby turned into shrieks. Observe, When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, his cords were loosed. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, and those are free indeed who are thus freed. This typified the resurrection of Christ by the power of the Spirit of holiness. In it he loosed the bands of death, and its cords, the grave-clothes, fell from his hands without being loosed, as Lazarus's were, because it was impossible that the mighty Saviour should be holden of them; and thus he triumphed over the powers of darkness that shouted against him, as if they had him sure.

2. He made a great destruction among the Philistines, who all gathered about him to make sport with him, Jdg 15:15. See how poorly he was armed: he had no better weapon than the jaw-bone of an ass, and yet what execution he did with it! He never laid it out of his hand till he had with it laid 1000 Philistines dead upon the spot; and thus that promise was more than accomplished. One of you shall chase a thousand, Jos 23:10. A jaw-bone was an inconvenient thing to grasp, and, one would think, might easily be wrested out of his hand, and a few such blows as he gave with it might have crushed and broken it, and yet it held good to the last.

Had it been the jaw-bone of a lion, especially that which he himself had slain, it might have helped to heighten his fancy and to make him think himself the more formidable; but to

take the bone of that despicable animal was to do wonders by the foolish things of the world, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of man. One of David's worthies slew 300 Philistines at once, but it was with a spear, 1Ch 11:11. Another slew of them till his hand was weary and stuck to his sword, 2Sa 23:10. But they all came short of Samson. What could be thought too hard, too much, for him to do, on whom the Spirit of the Lord came mightily! Through God we shall do valiantly. It was strange the men of Judah did not now come in to his aid: cowards can strike a falling enemy. But he was to be a type of him that trod the wine-press alone.

V. Samson celebrating his own victory, since the men of Judah would not do even that for him. He composed a short song, which he sang to himself, for the daughters of Israel did not meet him, as afterwards they did Saul, to sing, with more reason, Samson hath slain his thousands. The burden of this song was, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, have I slain a thousand men, Jdg 15:16. The same word in Hebrew (chamor) signifies both an ass and a heap, so that this is an elegant paronomasia, and represents the Philistines falling as tamely as asses. He also gave a name to the place, to perpetuate the Philistines' disgrace, Jdg 15:17. Ramath-lehi, the lifting up of the jaw-bone. Yet he did not vain-gloriously carry the bone about with him for a show, but threw it away when he had done with it. So little were relics valued then.

14 *And* when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him:
and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords
that *were* upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and
his bands loosed from off his hands.
15 And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and
took it, and slew a thousand men therewith.
16 And Samson said,
With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with
the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.
17 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he
cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place

Ramath-lehi [the lifting up of the jawbone, *or* casting away of the jawbone].

18 And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

Here is, I The distress which Samson was in after this great performance (Jdg 15:18): He was sore athirst. It was a natural effect of the great heat he had been in, and the great pains he had taken; his zeal consumed him, ate him up, and made him forget himself, till, when he had time to pause a little, he found himself reduced to the last extremity for want of water and ready to faint. Perhaps there was a special hand of God in it, as there was in the whole transaction; and God would hereby keep him from being proud of his great strength and great achievements, and let him know that he was but a man, and liable to the calamities that are common to men.

And Josephus says, It was designed to chastise him for not making mention of God and his hand in his memorial of the victory he had obtained, but taking all the praise to himself: I have slain a thousand men; now that he is ready to die for thirst he is under a sensible conviction that his own arm could not have saved him, without God's right hand and arm. Samson had drunk largely of the blood of the Philistines, but blood will never quench any man's thirst. Providence so ordered it that there was no water near him, and he was so fatigued that he could not go far to seek it; the men of Judah, one would think, should have met him, now that he had come off a conqueror, with bread and wine, as Melchizedek did Abram, to atone for the injury they had done him; but so little notice did they take of their deliverer that he was ready to perish for want of a draught of water. Thus are the greatest slights often put upon those that do the greatest services. Christ on the cross, said, I thirst.

II. His prayer to God in this distress. Those that forget to attend God with their praises may perhaps be compelled to

attend him with their prayers. Afflictions are often sent to bring unthankful people to God. Two things he pleads with God in this prayer, 1. His having experienced the power and goodness of God in his late success: Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant. He owns himself God's servant in what he had been doing: "Lord, wilt thou not own a poor servant of thine, that has spent himself in thy service? I am thine, save me." He calls his victory a deliverance, a great deliverance; for, if God had not helped him, he had not only not conquered the Philistines, but had been swallowed up by them.

He owns it to come from God, and now corrects his former error in assuming it too much to himself; and this he pleads in his present strait. Note, Past experiences of God's power and goodness are excellent pleas in prayer for further mercy. "Lord, thou hast delivered often, wilt thou not deliver still? 2Co 1:10. Thou hast begun, wilt thou not finish? Thou hast done the greater, wilt thou not do the less?" Ps 56:13. 2. His being now exposed to his enemies: "Lest I fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, and then they will triumph, will tell it in Gath, and in the streets of Ashkelon; and will it not redound to God's dishonour of his champion become so easy a prey to the uncircumcised?" The best pleas are those taken from God's glory.

III. The seasonable relief God sent him. God heard his prayer, and sent him water, either out of the bone or out of the earth through the bone, Jdg 15:19. That bone which he had made an instrument of God's service God, to recompense him, made an instrument of his supply. But I rather incline to our marginal reading: God clave a hollow place that was in Lehi: the place of this action was, from the jaw-bone, called Lehi; even before the action we find it so called, Jdg 15:9,14. And there, in that field, or hill, or plain, or whatever it was, that was so called, God caused a fountain suddenly and seasonably to open just by him, and water to spring up out of it in abundance, which continued a well ever after. Of this fair water he drank, and

his spirits revived. We should be more thankful for the mercy of water did we consider how ill we can spare it. And this instance of Samson's relief should encourage us to trust in God, and seek to him, for, when he pleases, he can open rivers in high places. See Isa 41:17,18.

IV. The memorial of this, in the name Samson gave to this upstart fountain, En-hakkore, the well of him that cried, thereby keeping in remembrance both his own distress, which occasioned him to cry, and God's favour to him, in answer to his cry. Many a spring of comfort God opens to his people, which may fitly be called by this name; it is the well of him that cried. Samson had given a name to the place which denoted him great and triumphant--Ramath-lehi, the lifting up of the jaw-bone; but here he gives it another name, which denotes him needy and dependent.

V. The continuance of Samson's government after these achievements, Jdg 15:20. At length Israel submitted to him whom they had betrayed. Now it was past dispute that God was with him, so that henceforward they all owned him and were directed by him as their judge. The stone which the builders refused became the head-stone. It intimates the low condition of Israel that the government was dated by the days of the Philistines; yet it was a mercy to Israel that, though they were oppressed by a foreign enemy, yet they had a judge that preserved order and kept them from ruining one another. Twenty years his government continued, according to the usages of the judges' administration; but of the particulars we have no account, save of the beginning of his government in this chapter and the end of it in the next.

19 But God clave a hollow place that *was* in the jaw, and there came
water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and
he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof En-hakkore [the
well of him that called *or* cried], which is in Lehi unto this day.
20 And he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years.

Judges-16

Samson at Gaza

1 Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there a harlot, and went in
unto her.
2 *And it was told* the Gazites, saying, Samson is come hither. And they
compassed *him* in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the
city, and were quiet all the night, saying, in the morning, when it is
day, we shall kill him.
3 And Samson lay till midnight, and arose at midnight, and took the
doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with
them, bar and all, and put *them* upon his shoulders, and carried them
up to the top of a hill that *is* before Hebron.

Here is, 1. Samson's sin, Jdg 16:1. His taking a Philistine to wife, in the beginning of his time, was in some degree excusable, but to join himself to a harlot that he accidentally saw among them was such a profanation of his honour as an Israelite, as a Nazarite, that we cannot but blush to read it. Tell it not in Gath. This vile impurity makes the graceful visage of this Nazarite blacker than a coal, La 4:7,8. We find not that Samson had any business in Gaza; if he went thither in quest of a harlot it would make one willing to hope that, as bad as things were otherwise, there were no prostitutes among the daughters of Israel. Some think he went thither to observe what posture the Philistines were in, that he might get some advantages against them; if so, he forgot his business, neglected that, and so fell into this snare. His sin began in his eye, with which he should have made a covenant; he saw there one in the attire of a harlot, and the lust which conceived brought forth sin: he went in unto her.

2. Samson's danger. Notice was sent to the magistrates of Gaza, perhaps by the treacherous harlot herself that Samson was in the town, Jdg 16:2. Probably he came in a disguise, or in the dusk of the evening, and went into an inn or public-house, which happened to be kept by this harlot. The gates of the city were hereupon shut, guards set, all kept quiet, that

Samson might suspect no danger. Now they thought they had him in a prison, and doubted not but to be the death of him the next morning. O that all those who indulge their sensual appetites in drunkenness, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts, would see themselves thus surrounded, waylaid, and marked for ruin, by their spiritual enemies! The faster they sleep, and the more secure they are, the greater is their danger.

3. Samson's escape, Jdg 16:3. He rose at midnight, perhaps roused by a dream, in slumberings upon the bed (Job 33:15), by his guardian angel, or rather by the checks of his own conscience. He arose with a penitent abhorrence (we hope) of the sin he was now committing, and of himself because of it, and with a pious resolution not to return to it,--rose under an apprehension of the danger he was in, that he was as one that slept upon the top of a mast,--rose with such thoughts as these: "Is this a bed fit for a Nazarite to sleep in? Shall a temple of the living God be thus polluted? Can I be safe under this guilt?" It was bad that he lay down without such checks; but it would have been worse if he had lain still under them. He makes immediately towards the gate of the city, probably finds the guards asleep, else he would have made them sleep their last, stays not to break open the gates, but plucks up the posts, takes them, gates and bar and all, all very large and strong and a vast weight, yet he carries them on his back several miles, up to the top of a hill, in disdain of their attempt to secure him with gates and bars, designing thus to render himself more formidable to the Philistines and more acceptable to his people, thus to give a proof of the great strength God had given him

Samson and Delilah

4 And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah.

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth,* and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to

afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred
pieces of silver.
6 And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great
strength *lieth*, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.
7 And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withes
that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.
8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green
withes which had not been dried, and she bound him with them.
9 Now there *were* men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber.
And she said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And
he brake the withes, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth
the fire. So his strength was not known.
10 And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me,
and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou
mightest be bound.

The burnt child dreads the fire; yet Samson, that has more than the strength of a man, in this comes short of the wisdom of a child; for, though he had been more than once brought into the highest degree of mischief and danger by the love of women and lusting after them, yet he would not take warning, but is here again taken in the same snare, and this third time pays for all. Solomon seems to refer especially to this story of Samson when, in his caution against uncleanness, he gives this account of a whorish woman (Pr 7:26), that she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her; and (Pr 6:26) that the adulteress will hunt for the precious life. This bad woman, that brought Samson to ruin, is here named Delilah, an infamous name, and fitly used to express the person, or thing, that by flattery or falsehood brings mischief and destruction on those to whom kindness is pretended. See here,

I The affection Samson had for Delilah: he loved her, Jdg 16:4. Some think she was his wife, but then he would have had her home to his own house; others that he courted her to make her his wife; but there is too much reason to suspect that it was a sinful affection he had for her, and that he lived in uncleanness with her. Whether she was an Israelite or a

Philistine is not certain. If an Israelite, which is scarcely probable, yet she had the heart of a Philistine.

II The interest which the lords of the Philistines made with her to betray Samson, Jdg 16:5.

1. That which they told her they designed was to humble him, or afflict him; they would promise not to do him any hurt, only they would disable him not to do them any. And so much conscience it should seem they made of this promise that even then, when he lay ever so much at their mercy, they would not kill him, no, not when the razor that cut his hair might sooner and more easily have cut his throat.

2. That which they desired, in order hereunto, was to know where his great strength lay, and by what means he might be bound. Perhaps they imagined he had some spell or charm which he carried about with him, by the force of which he did these great things, and doubted not but that, if they could get this from him, he would be manageable; and therefore, having had reason enough formerly to know which was his blind side, hoped to find out his riddle a second time by ploughing with his heifer. They engaged Delilah to get it out of him, telling her what a kindness it would be to them, and perhaps assuring her it should not be improved to any real mischief, either to him or her.

3. For this they bid high, promised to give her each of them 1100 pieces of silver, 5500 in all. So many shekels amounted to above 1000l. Sterling; with this she was hired to betray one she pretended to love. See what horrid wickedness the love of money is the root of. Our blessed Saviour was thus betrayed by one whom he called friend, and with a kiss too, for filthy lucre. No marvel if those who are unchaste, as Delilah, be unjust; such as lose their honesty in one instance will in another.

III. The arts by which he put her off from time to time, and kept his own counsel a great while. She asked him where his great strength lay, and whether it were possible for him to be bound and afflicted (Jdg 16:6), pretending that she only desired he would satisfy her curiosity in that one thing, and that she thought it was impossible he should be bound otherwise than by her charms.

1. When she urged him very much, he told her,

(1.) That he might be bound with seven green withs, Jdg 16:7. The experiment was tried (Jdg 16:8), but it would not do: he broke the withs as easily as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire, Jdg 16:9.

(2.) When she still continued her importunity (Jdg 16:10) he told her that with two new ropes he might be so cramped and hampered that he might be as easily dealt with as any other man, Jdg 16:11. This experiment was tried too, but it failed: the new ropes broke from off his arm like a thread, Jdg 16:12.

(3.) When she still pressed him to communicate the secret, and upbraided him with it as an unkindness that he had bantered her so long, he then told her that the weaving of the seven locks of his head would make a great alteration in him, Jdg 16:13. This came nearer the matter than any thing he had yet said, but it would not do: his strength appeared to be very much in his hair, when, upon the trial of this, purely by the strength of his hair, he carried away the pin of the beam and the web.

2. In the making of all these experiments, it is hard to say whether there appears more of Samson's weakness or Delilah's wickedness.

(1.) Could any thing be more wicked than her restless and unreasonable importunity with him to discover a secret which she knew would endanger his life if ever it were lodged any

where but in his own breast? What could be more base and disingenuous, more false and treacherous, than to lay his head in her lap, as one whom she loved, and at the same time to design the betraying of him to those by whom he was mortally hated?

(2.) Could any thing be more weak than for him to continue a parley with one who, he so plainly saw, was aiming to do him a mischief,--that he should lend an ear so long to such an impudent request, that she might know how to do him a mischief,--that when he perceived liers in wait for him in the chamber, and that they were ready to apprehend him if they had been able, he did not immediately quit the chamber, with a resolution never to come into it any more,--nay, that he should again lay his head in that lap out of which he had been so often roused with that alarm, The Philistines are upon thee, Samson? One can hardly imagine a man so perfectly besotted, and void of all consideration, as Samson now was; but whoredom is one of those things that take away the heart. It is hard to say what Samson meant in suffering her to try so often whether she could weaken and afflict him; some think he did not certainly know himself where his strength lay, but, it should seem, he did know, for, when he told her that which would disable him indeed, it is said, He told her all his heart. It seems, he designed to banter her, and to try if he could turn it off with a jest, and to baffle the liers in wait, and make fools of them; but it was very unwise in him that he did not quit the field as soon as ever he perceived that he was not able to keep the ground.

IV. The disclosure he at last made of this great secret; and, if the disclosure proved fatal to him, he must thank himself, who had not power to keep his own counsel from one that manifestly sought his ruin. Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird, but in Samson's sight is the net spread, and yet he is taken in it. If he had not been blind before the Philistines put out his eyes, he might have seen himself

betrayed. Delilah signifies a consumer; she was so to him. Observe,

1. How she teazed him, telling him she would not believe he loved her, unless he would gratify her in this matter (Jdg 16:15): How canst thou say, I love thee, when they heart is not with me? That is, "when thou canst not trust me with the counsels of they heart?" Passionate lovers cannot bear to have their love called in question; they would do any thing rather than their sincerity should be suspected. Here therefore Delilah had this fond fool (excuse me that I call him so) at an advantage. This expostulation is indeed grounded upon a great truth, that those only have our love, not that have our good words or our good wishes, but that have our hearts.

That is love without dissimulation; but it is falsehood and flattery in the highest degree to say we love those with whom our hearts are not. How can we say we love either our brother, whom we have seen, or God, whom we have not seen, if our hearts be not with him? She continued many days vexatious to him with her importunity, so that he had no pleasure of his life with her (Jdg 16:16); why then did he not leave her? It was because he was captivated to her by the power of love, falsely so called, but truly lust. This bewitched and perfectly intoxicated him, and by the force of it see,

2. How she conquered him (Jdg 16:17): He told her all his heart. God left him to himself to do this foolish thing, to punish him for indulging himself in the lusts of uncleanness. The angel that foretold his birth said nothing of his great strength, but only that he should be a Nazarite, and particularly that no razor should come upon his head, Jdg 13:5.

His consecration to God was to be his strength, for he was to be strengthened according to the glorious power of that Spirit which wrought in him mightily, that his strength, by promise, not by nature, might be a type and figure of the spiritual

strength of believers, Col 1:11,29. Therefore the badge of his consecration was the pledge of his strength; if he lose the former, he knows he forfeits the latter. "If I be shaven, I shall no longer be a Nazarite, and then my strength will be lost." The making of his bodily strength to depend so much on his hair, which could have no natural influence upon it either one way or other, teaches us to magnify divine institutions, and to expect God's grace, and the continuance of it, only the use of those means of grace wherein he has appointed us to attend upon him, the word, sacraments, and prayer. In these earthen vessels is this treasure.

11 And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

12 Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And *there were* liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

13 And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, if thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web.

14 And she fastened *it* with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web.

15 And she said unto him, how canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart *is* not with me?Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength *lieth.*

16 And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, *so* that his soul was vexed unto death;

17 that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I *have been* a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.

18 And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand.

19 And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

We have here the fatal consequences of Samson's folly in betraying his own strength; he soon paid dearly for it. A whore is a deep ditch; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. In that pit Samson sinks. Observe,

1. What care Delilah took to make sure of the money for herself. She now perceived, by the manner of his speaking, that he had told her all his heart, and the lords of the Philistines that hired her to do this base thing are sent for; but they must be sure to bring the money in their hands, Jdg 16:18. The wages of unrighteousness are accordingly produced, unknown to Samson. It would have grieved one's heart to have seen one of the bravest men then in the world sold and bought, as a sheep for the slaughter; how does this instance sully all the glory of man, and forbid the strong man ever to boast of his strength!

2. What course she took to deliver him up to them according to the bargain. Many in the world would, for the hundredth part of what was here given Delilah, sell those that they pretend the greatest respect for. Trust not in a friend then, put no confidence in a guide. See what a treacherous method she took (Jdg 16:19): She made him sleep upon her knees. Josephus says, She gave him some intoxicating liquor, which laid him to sleep. What opiates she might steal into his cup we know not, but we cannot suppose that he knowingly drank wine or strong drink, for that would have been a forfeiture of his Nazariteship as much as the cutting off of his hair. She pretended the greatest kindness even when she designed the greatest mischief, which yet she could not have compassed if she had not made him sleep.

See the fatal consequences of security. Satan ruins men by rocking them asleep, flattering them into a good opinion of their own safety, and so bringing them to mind nothing and

fear nothing, and then he robs them of their strength and honour and leads them captive at his will. When we sleep our spiritual enemies do not. When he was asleep she had a person ready to cut off his hair, which he did so silently and so quickly that it did not awake him, but plainly afflicted him; even in his sleep, his spirit manifestly sunk upon it. I think we may suppose that if this ill turn had been done to him in his sleep by some spiteful body, without his being himself accessory to it, as he was here, it would not have had this strange effect upon him; but it was his own wickedness that corrected him. It was his iniquity, else it would not have been so much his infelicity.

3. What little concern he himself was in at it, Jdg 16:20. He could not but miss his hair as soon as he awoke, and yet said, "I will shake myself as at other times after sleep," or, "as at other times when the Philistines were upon me, to make my part good against them." Perhaps he thought to shake himself the more easily, and that his head would feel the lighter, now that his hair was cut, little thinking how much heavier the burden of guilt was than that of hair. He soon found in himself some change, we have reason to think so, and yet wist not that the Lord had departed from him: he did not consider that this was the reason of the change.

Note, Many have lost the favourable presence of God and are not aware of it; they have provoked God to withdraw from them, but are not sensible of their loss, nor ever complain of it. Their souls languish and grow weak, their gifts wither, every thing goes cross with them; and yet they impute not this to the right cause: they are not aware that God has departed from them, nor are they in any care to reconcile themselves to him or to recover his favour. When God has departed we cannot do as at other times.

4. What improvement the Philistines soon made of their advantages against him, Jdg 16:21. The Philistines took him when God had departed from him. Those that have thrown

themselves out of God's protection become an easy prey to their enemies. If we sleep in the lap of our lusts, we shall certainly wake in the hands of the Philistines. It is probable they had promised Delilah not to kill him, but they took an effectual course to disable him. The first thing they did, when they had him in their hands and found they could manage him, was to put out his eyes, by applying fire to them, says the Arabic version. They considered that his eyes would never come again, as perhaps his hair might, and that the strongest arms could do little without eyes to guide the, and therefore, if now they blind him, they for ever blind him. His eyes were the inlets of his sin: he saw the harlot at Gaza, and went in unto her (Jdg 16:1), and now his punishment began there. Now that the Philistines had blinded him he had time to remember how his own lust had blinded him.

The best preservative of the eyes is to turn them away from beholding vanity. They brought him down to Gaza, that there he might appear in weakness where he had lately given such proofs of his strength (Jdg 16:3), and be a jest to those to whom he had been a terror. They bound him with fetters of brass who had before been held in the cords of his own iniquity, and he did grind in the prison, work in their bridewell, either for their profit or his punishment, or for both. The devil does thus by sinners, blinds the minds of those who believe not, and so enslaves them, and secures them in his interests. Poor Samson, how hast thou fallen! How is thy honour laid in the dust! How has the glory and defence of Israel become the drudge and triumph of the Philistines! The crown has fallen from his head; woe unto him, for he hath sinned. Let all take warning by his fall carefully to preserve their purity, and to watch against all fleshly lusts; for all our glory has gone, and our defence departed from us, when the covenant of our separation to God, as spiritual Nazarites, is profaned.

20 And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and

shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.

21 But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

The Death of Samson

23 Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

25 And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

26 And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me
that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I
may lean upon them.
27 Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the
Philistines *were* there; and *there were* upon the roof about three
thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

Though the last stage of Samson's life was inglorious, and one could wish there were a veil drawn over it, yet this account here given of his death may be allowed to lessen, though it does not quite roll away, the reproach of it; for there was honour in his death. No doubt he greatly repented of his sin, the dishonour he had by it done to God and his forfeiture of the honour God had put upon him; for that God was reconciled to him appears,

1. By the return of the sign of his Nazariteship (Jdg 16:22): His hair began to grow again, as when he was shaven, that is, to be as thick and as long as when it was cut off. It is probable that their general thanksgiving to Dagon was not long deferred, before which Samson's hair had thus grown, by which, and the particular notice taken of it, it seems to have been extraordinary, and designed for a special indication of the return of God's favour to him upon his repentance. For the growth of his hair was neither the cause nor the sign of the return of his strength further than as it was the badge of his consecration, and a token that God accepted him as a Nazarite again, after the interruption, without those ceremonies which were appointed for the restoration of a lapsed Nazarite, which he had not now the opportunity of performing, Nu 6:9. It is strange that the Philistines in whose hands he was were not jealous of the growth of his hair again, and did not cut it; but perhaps they were willing his great strength should return to him, that they might have so much the more work out of him, and now that he was blind they were in no fear of any hurt from him.

2. By the use God made of him for the destruction of the enemies of his people, and that at a time when it would be most for the vindication of the honour of God, and not immediately for the defence and deliverance of Israel. Observe,

I. How insolently the Philistines affronted the God of Israel,

1. By the sacrifices they offered to Dagon, his rival. This Dagon they call their god, a god of their own making, represented by an image, the upper part of which was in the shape of a man, the lower part of a fish, purely the creature of fancy; yet it served them to set up in opposition to the true and living God. To this pretended deity they ascribe their success (Jdg 16:23,24): Our god has delivered Samson our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, into our hands. So they dreamed, though he could do neither good nor evil. They knew Delilah had betrayed him, and they had paid her for doing it, yet they attribute it to their god, and are confirmed by it in their belief of his power to protect them. All people will thus walk in the name of their gods: they will give them the praise of their achievements; and shall not we pay this tribute to our God whose kingdom ruleth over all? Yet, considering what wicked arts they used to get Samson into their hands, it must be confessed it was only such a dunghill-deity as Dagon that was fit to be made a patron of the villany. Sacrifices were offered, and songs of praise sung, on the general thanksgiving day, for this victory obtained over one man; there were great expressions of joy, and all to the honour of Dagon. Much more reason have we to give the praise of all our successes to our God. Thanks be to him who causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus!

2. By the sport they made with Samson, God's champion, they reflected on God himself. When they were merry with wine, to make them more merry Samson must be fetched to make sport for them (Jdg 16:25,27), that is, for them to make sport with. Having sacrificed to their god, and eaten and drunk

upon the sacrifice, they rose up to play, according to the usage of idolaters (1Co 10:7), and Samson must be the fool in the play. They made themselves and one another laugh to see how, being blind, he stumbled and blundered. It is likely they smote this judge of Israel upon the cheek (Mic 5:1), and said, Prophesy who smote thee. It was an instance of their barbarity to trample thus upon a man in misery, at the sight of whom awhile ago they would have trembled. It put Samson into the depth of misery, and as a sword in his bones were their reproaches, when they said, Where is now they God?

Nothing could be more grievous to so great a spirit; yet, being a penitent, his godly sorrow makes him patient, and he accepts the indignity as the punishment of his iniquity. How unrighteous soever the Philistines were, he could not but own that God was righteous. He had sported himself in his own deceivings and with his own deceivers, and justly are the Philistines let loose upon him to make sport with him. Uncleanness is a sin that makes men vile, and exposes them to contempt. A wound and dishonour shall he get whose heart is deceived by a woman, and his reproach shall not be wiped away. Everlasting shame and contempt will be the portion of those that are blinded and bound by their own lusts. The devil that deceived them will insult over them.

II. How justly the God of Israel brought sudden destruction upon them by the hands of Samson. Thousands of the Philistines had got together, to attend their lords in the sacrifices and joys of this day, and to be the spectators of this comedy; but it proved to them a fatal tragedy, for they were all slain, and buried in the ruins of the house: whether it was a temple or a theatre, or whether it was some slight building run up for the purpose, is uncertain. Observe,

1. Who were destroyed: All the lords of the Philistines (Jdg 16:27), who had by bribes corrupted Delilah to betray Samson to them. Evil pursued those sinners. Many of the people likewise, to the number of 3000, and among them a

great many women, one of whom, it is likely, was that harlot of Gaza mentioned, Jdg 16:1. Samson had been drawn into sin by the Philistine women, and now a great slaughter is made among them, as was by Moses's order among the women of Midian, because it was they that caused the children of Israel to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, Nu 31:16.

2. When they were destroyed.

(1.) When they were merry, secure, and jovial, and far from apprehending themselves in any danger. When they saw Samson lay hold of the pillars, we may suppose, his doing so served them for a jest, and they made sport with that too: What will this feeble Jew do? How are sinners brought to desolation in a moment! They are lifted up in pride and mirth, that their fall may be the more dreadful. Let us never envy the mirth of wicked people, but infer from this instance that their triumphing is short and their joy but for a moment.

(2.) It was when they were praising Dagon their god, and giving that honour to him which is due to God only, which is no less than treason against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Justly therefore is the blood of these traitors mingled with their sacrifices. Belshazzar was cut off when he was praising his man-made gods, Da 5:4.

(3.) It was when they were making sport with an Israelite, a Nazarite, and insulting over him, persecuting him whom God had smitten. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any person or people faster than mocking and misusing the servants of God, yea, though it is by their own folly that they are brought low. Those know not what they do, nor whom they affront, that make sport with a good man.

3. How they were destroyed. Samson pulled the house down upon them, God no doubt putting it into his heart, as a public

person, thus to avenge God's quarrel with them, Israel's, and his own.

(1.) He gained strength to do it by prayer, Jdg 16:28. That strength which he had lost by sin he, like a true penitent, recovers by prayer; as David, who, when he had provoked the Spirit of grace to withdraw, prayed (Ps 51:12), Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. We may suppose that this was only a mental prayer, and that his voice was not heard (for it was made in a noisy clamorous crowd of Philistines); but, though his voice was not heard of men, yet his prayer was heard of God and graciously answered, and though he lived not to give an account himself of this his prayer, as Nehemiah did of his, yet God not only accepted it in heaven, but, by revealing it to the inspired penmen, provided for the registering of it in his church. He prayed to God to remember him and strengthen him this once, thereby owning that his strength for what he had already done he had from God, and begged it might be afforded to him once more, to give them a parting blow. That it was not from a principle of passion or personal revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and Israel, that he desired to do this, appears from God's accepting and answering the prayer. Samson died praying, so did our blessed Saviour; but Samson prayed for vengeance, Christ for forgiveness.

(2.) He gained opportunity to do it by leaning on the two pillars which were the chief supports of the building, and were, it seems, so near together that he could take hold of them both at one time, Jdg 16:26,29. Having hold of them, he bore them down with all his might, crying aloud, Let me die with the Philistines, Jdg 16:30. Animamque in vulnere ponit--While inflicting the wound he dies. The vast concourse of people that were upon the roof looking down through it to see the sport, we may suppose, contributed to the fall of it. A weight so much greater than ever it was designed to carry might perhaps have sunk of itself, at least it made the fall

more fatal to those within: and indeed few of either could escape being either stifled or crushed to death. This was done, not by any natural strength of Samson, but by the almighty power of God, and is not only marvellous, but miraculous, in our eyes. Now in this,

[1.] The Philistines were greatly mortified. All their lords and great men were killed, and abundance of their people, and this in the midst of their triumph; the temple of Dagon (as many think the house was) was pulled down, and Dagon buried in it. This would give a great check to the insolence of the survivors, and, if Israel had but had so much sense and spirit left them as to improve the advantages of this juncture, they might now have thrown off the Philistines' yoke.

[2.] Samson may very well be justified, and brought in not guilty of any sinful murder either of himself or the Philistines. He was a public person, a declared enemy to the Philistines, against whom he might therefore take all advantages. They were now in the most barbarous manner making war upon him; all present were aiding and abetting, and justly die with him. Nor was he felo de se, or a self-murderer, in it; for it was not his own life that he aimed at, though he had too much reason to be weary of it, but the lives of Israel's enemies, for the reaching of which he bravely resigned his own, not counting it dear to him, so that he might finish his course with honour.

[3.] God was very much glorified in pardoning Samson's great transgressions, of which this was an evidence. It has been said that the prince's giving a commission to one convicted amounts to a pardon. Yet, though he was a God that forgave him, he took vengeance of his inventions (Ps 99:8), and, by suffering his champion to die in fetters, warned all to take heed of those lusts which war against the soul. However, we have good reason to hope that though Samson died with the Philistines he had not his everlasting portion with them. The Lord knows those that are his.

[4.] Christ was plainly typified. He pulled down the devil's kingdom, as Samson did Dagon's temple; and, when he died, he obtained the most glorious victory over the powers of darkness. Then when his arms were stretched out upon the cross, as Samson's to the two pillars, he gave a fatal shake to the gates of hell, and, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2:14,15), and herein exceeded Samson, that he not only died with the Philistines, but rose again to triumph over them.

Lastly, The story of Samson concludes,

1. With an account of his burial. His own relations, animated by the glories that attended his death, came and found out his body among the slain, brought it honourably to his own country, and buried it in the place of his fathers' sepulchres, the Philistines being in such a consternation that they durst not oppose it.

2. With the repetition of the account we had before of the continuance of his government: He judged Israel twenty years; and, if they had not been as mean and sneaking as he was brave and daring, he would have left them clear of the Philistines' yoke. They might have been easy, safe, and happy, if they would but have given God and their judges leave to make them so.

28 And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

29 And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

30 And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with *all his* might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that *were* therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than *they* which he slew in his life.

31 Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought *him* up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the buryingplace of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years.

Judges-17

Micah's Images and His Priest

1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah.
2 And he said unto his mother, the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver *is* with me; I took it. And his mother said, blessed *be thou* of the Lord, my son.
3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.
4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

Here we have, I. Micah and his mother quarrelling.

1 The son robs the mother. The old woman had hoarded, with long scraping and saving, a great sum of money, 1100 pieces of silver. It is likely she intended, when she died, to leave it to her son: in the mean time it did her good to look upon it, and to count it over. The young man had a family of children grown up, for he had one of age to be a priest, Jdg 17:5. He knows where to find his mother's cash, thinks he has more need of it than she has, cannot stay till she dies, and so takes it away privately for his own use. Though it is a fault in parents to withhold from their children that which is meet, and lead them into temptation to wish them in their graves, yet even this will by no means excuse the wickedness of those children that steal from their parents, and think all their own

that they can get from them, though by the most indirect methods.

2 The mother curses the son, or whoever had taken her money. It should seem she suspected her son; for, when she cursed, she spoke in his cars so loud, and with so much passion and vehemence, as made both his ears to tingle. See what mischief the love of money makes, how it destroys the duty and comfort of every relation. It was the love of money that made Micah so undutiful to his mother as to rob her, and made her so unkind and void of natural affection to her son as to curse him if he had it and concealed it. Outward losses drive good people to their prayers, but bad people to their curses. This woman's silver was her god before it was made thither into a graven or a molten image, else the loss of it would not have put her into such a passion as caused her quite to forget and break through all the laws of decency and piety. It is a very foolish thing for those that are provoked to throw their curses about as a madman that casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, since they know not but they may light upon those that are most dear to them.

II. Micah and his mother reconciled.

1 The son was so terrified with his mother's curses that he restored the money. Though he had so little grace as to take it, he had so much left as not to dare to keep it when his mother had sent a curse after it. He cannot believe his mother's money will do him any good without his mother's blessing, nor dares he deny the theft when he is charged with it, nor retain the money when it is demanded by the right owner. It is best not to do evil, but it is next best, when it is done, to undo it again by repentance, confession, and restitution. Let children be afraid of having the prayers of their parents against them; for, though the curse causeless shall not come, yet that which is justly deserved may be justly feared, even though it was passionately and indecently uttered.

2 The mother was so pleased with her son's repentance that she recalled her curses, and turned them into prayers for her son's welfare: Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son. When those that have been guilty of a fault appear to be free and ingenuous in owning it they ought to be commended for their repentance, rather than still be condemned and upbraided for their fault.

III. Micah and his mother agreeing to turn their money into a god, and set up idolatry in their family; and this seems to have been the first instance of the revolt of any Israelite from God and his instituted worship after the death of Joshua and the elders that out-lived him, and is therefore thus particularly related. And though this was only the worship of the true God by an image, against the second commandment, yet this opened the door to the worship of other gods, Baalim and the groves, against the first and great commandment. Observe,

1 The mother's contrivance of this matter. When the silver was restored she pretended she had dedicated it to the Lord (Jdg 17:3), either before it was stolen, and then she would have this thought to be the reason why she was so much grieved at the loss of it and imprecated evil on him that had taken it, because it was a dedicated and therefore an accursed thing, or after it was stolen she had made a vow that, if she could retrieve it, she would dedicate it to God, and then she would have the providence that had so far favoured her as to bring it back to her hands to be an owning of her vow. "Come," said she to her son, "the money is mine, but thou hast a mind to it; let it be neither mine nor thine, but let us both agree to make it into an image for a religious use." Had she put it to a use that was indeed for the service and honour of God, this would have been a good way of accommodating the matter between them; but, as it was, the project was wicked. Probably this old woman was one of those that came out of Egypt, and would have such images made as she had seen there; now that she began to dote she called to

remembrance the follies of her youth, and perhaps told her son that this way of worshipping God by images was, to her knowledge, the old religion.

2 The son's compliance with her. It should seem, when she first proposed the thing he stumbled at it, knowing what the second commandment was; for, when she said (Jdg 17:3) she designed it for her son to make an image of, yet he restored it to his mother (being loth to have a hand in making the image), and she gave it to the founder and had the thing done, blaming him perhaps for scrupling at it, Jdg 17:4. But, when the images were made, Micah, by his mother's persuasion, was not only well reconciled to them, but greatly pleased and in love with them; so strangely bewitching was idolatry, and so much supported by traditions received from their parents, 1Pe 1:18,Jer 44:17. But observe how the old woman's covetousness prevailed, in part, above her superstition. She had wholly dedicated the silver to make the graven and molten images (Jdg 17:3), all the 1100 pieces; but, when it came to be done, she made less than a fifth part serve, even 200 shekels, Jdg 17:4. She thought that enough, and indeed it was too much to give for an image that is a teacher of lies. Had it been devoted truly to the honour of God, he would not thus have been put off with part of the price, but would have signified his resentment of the affront, as he did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Now observe,

(1.) What was the corruption here introduced, Jdg 17:5. The man Micah had a house of gods, a house of God, so the LXX., for so he thought it, as good as that at Shiloh, and better, because his own, of his own inventing and at his own disposal; for people love to have their religion under their girdle, to manage it as they please. A house of error, so the Chaldee, for really it was so, a deviation from the way of truth and an inlet to all deceit. Idolatry is a great cheat, and one of the worst of errors. That which he aimed at in the progress of his idolatry, whether he designed it at first or no, was to mimic and rival both God's oracles and his ordinances.

[1.] His oracles; for he made teraphim, little images which he might advise with as there was occasion, and receive informations, directions, and predictions from. What the urim and thummim were to the prince and people these teraphim should be to his family; yet he could not think that the true God would own them, or give answers by them, and therefore depended upon such demons as the heathen worshipped to inspire them and make them serviceable to him. Thus, while the honour of Jehovah was pretended (Jdg 17:3), yet, his institution being relinquished, these Israelites unavoidably lapsed into downright idolatry and demon-worship.

[2.] His ordinances. Some room or apartment in the house of Micah was appointed for the temple or house of God; an ephod, or holy garment, was provided for his priest to officiate in, in imitation of those used at the tabernacle of God, and one of his sons he consecrated, probably the eldest, to be his priest. And, when he had set up a graven or molten image to represent the object of his worship, no marvel if a priest of his own getting and his own making served to be the manager of it. Here is no mention of any altar, sacrifice, or incense, in honour of these silver gods, but, having a priest, it is probable he had all these, unless we suppose that, at first, his gods were intended only to be advised with, not to be adored, like Laban's teraphim; but the beginning of idolatry, as of other sins, is like the letting forth of water: break the dam, and you bring a deluge. Here idolatry began, and it spread like a fretting leprosy. Dr. Lightfoot would have us observe that as 1100 pieces of silver were here devoted to the making of an idol, which ruined religion, especially in the tribe of Dan (as we shall presently find), which was Samson's tribe, so 1100 pieces of silver were given by each Philistine lord for the ruin of Samson.

(2.) What was the cause of this corruption (Jdg 17:6): There was no king in Israel, no judge or sovereign prince to take cognizance of the setting up of these images (which,

doubtless, the country about soon resorted to), and to give orders for the destroying of them, none to convince Micah of his error and to restrain and punish him, to take this disease in time, by which the spreading of the infection might have been happily prevented. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes, and then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. When they were without a king to keep good order among them, God's house was forsaken, his priests were neglected, and all went to ruin among them. See what a mercy government is, and what reason there is that not only prayers and intercessions, but giving of thanks, should be made for kings and all in authority, 1Ti 2:1,2. Nothing contributes more, under God, to the support of religion in the world, than the due administration of those two great ordinances, magistracy and ministry.

5 And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes.

7 And there was a young man out of Beth-lehem-judah of the family of Judah, who *was* a Levite, and he sojourned there.

8 And the man departed out of the city from Beth-lehem-judah to sojourn where he could find a *place:* and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

9 And Micah said unto him, whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I *am* a Levite of Beth-lehem-judah, and I go to sojourn where I may find *a place.*

We have here an account of Micah's furnishing himself with a Levite for his chaplain, either thinking his son, because the heir of his estate, too good to officiate, or rather, because not of God's tribe, not good enough. Observe,

I. What brought this Levite to Micah. By his mother's side he was of the family of Judah, and lived at Bethlehem among his mother's relations (for that was not a Levites' city), or, upon some other account, as a stranger or inmate, sojourned there, Jdg 17:7. Thence he went to sojourn where he could find a

place, and in his travels came to the house of Micah in Mount Ephraim, Jdg 17:8. Now,

1. Some think it was his unhappiness that he was under a necessity of removing, either because he was persecuted and abused, or rather neglected and starved, at Bethlehem. God had made plentiful provision for the Levites, but the people withheld their dues, and did not help them into the possession of the cities assigned to them; so that they were reduced to straits, and no care was taken for their relief. Israel's forsaking God began with forsaking the Levites, which therefore they are warned against, De 12:19. It is a sign religion is going to decay when good ministers are neglected and at a loss for a livelihood. But,

2. It seems rather to have been his fault and folly, that he loved to wander, threw himself out where he was, and forfeited the respect of his friends, and, having a roving head, would go to seek his fortune, as we say. We cannot conceive that things had yet come to such a pass among them that a Levite should be poor, unless it was his own fault. As those are fit to be pitied that would fix but may not, so those are fit to be punished that might fix but will not. Unsettledness being, one would think, a constant uneasiness, it is strange that any Israelite, especially any Levite, should affect it.

II. What bargain Micah made with him. Had he not been well enough content with his son for his priest, he would have gone or sent abroad to enquire out a Levite, but now he only takes hold of one that drops into his hands, which showed that he had no great zeal in the matter. It is probable that this rambling Levite had heard, in the country, of Micah's house of gods, his graven and molten image, which, if he had had any thing of the spirit of a Levite in him, would have brought him thither to reprove Micah for his idolatry, to tell how directly contrary it was to the law of God, and how it would bring the judgments of God upon him; but instead of this, like a base and degenerate branch of that sacred tribe, thither he

goes to offer his service, with, Have you any work for a Levite? For I am out of business, and go to sojourn where I may find a place; all he aimed at was to get bread, not to do good, Jdg 17:9. Micah courts him into his family (Jdg 17:10), and promises him,

1. Good preferment: Be unto me a father and a priest. Though a young man, and taken up at the door, yet, if he take him for a priest, he will respect him as a father, so far is he from setting him among his servants. He asks not for his credentials, takes no time to enquire how he behaved in the place of his last settlement, considers not whether, though he was a Levite, yet he might not be of such a bad character as to be a plague and scandal to his family, but thinks, though he should be ever so great a rake, he might serve for a priest to a graven image, like Jeroboam's priest of the lowest of the people, 1Ki 12:31. No marvel if those who can make any thing serve for a god can also make anything serve for a priest.

2. A tolerable maintenance. He will allow him meat, and drink, and clothes, a double suit, so the word is in the margin, a better and a worse, one for every day's wear and one for holy days, and ten shekels, about twenty-five shillings, a year for spending money--a poor salary in comparison of what God provided for the Levites that behaved well; but those that forsake God's service will never better themselves, nor find a better master. The ministry is the best calling but the worst trade in the world.

III. The Levite's settlement with him (Jdg 17:11): He was content to dwell with the man; though his work was superstitious and his wages were scandalous, he objected against neither, but thought himself happy that he had lighted on so good a house. Micah, thinking himself holier than any of his neighbours, presumed to consecrate this Levite, Jdg 17:12. As if his building, furnishing, and endowing this

chapel authorized him, not only to appoint the person that should officiate there, but to confer those orders upon him which he had no right to give nor the other to receive. And now he shows him respect as a father and tenderness as a son, and is willing thus to make up the deficiency of the coin he gave him.

IV. Micah's satisfaction in this (Jdg 17:13): Now know I that the Lord will do me good (that is, he hoped that his new establishment would gain reputation among his neighbours, which would turn to his advantage, for he would share in the profit of his altar; or, rather, he hoped that God would countenance and bless him in all he put his hand unto) because I have a Levite to be my priest.

1. He thought it was a sign of God's favour to him and his images that he had so opportunely sent a Levite to his door. Thus those who please themselves with their own delusions, if Providence unexpectedly bring any thing to their hands that furthers them in their evil way, are too apt to infer thence that God is pleased with them.

2. He thought now that the error of his priesthood was amended all was well, though he still retained his graven and molten image. Note, Many deceive themselves into a good opinion of their state by a partial reformation. They think they are as good as they should be, because, in some one particular instance, they are not so bad as they have been, as if the correcting of one fault would atone for their persisting in all the rest.

3. He thought the making of a Levite into a priest was a very meritorious act, which really was a presumptuous usurpation, and every provoking to God. Men's pride, and ignorance, and self-flattery, will undertake, not only to justify, but magnify and sanctify, the most daring impieties and invasions upon the divine prerogatives. With much reason might Micah have said, "Now may I fear that God will curse me, because I have

debauched one of his own tribe, and drawn him into the worship of a graven image;" yet for this he hopes God will do him good.

4. He thought that having a Levite in the house with him would of course entitle him to the divine favour. Carnal hearts are apt to build too much upon their external privileges, and to conclude that God will certainly do them good because they are born of godly parents, dwell in praying families, are linked in society with those that are very good, and sit under a lively ministry; whereas all this is but like having a Levite to be their priest, which amounts to no security at all that God will do them good, unless they be good themselves, and make a good use of these advantages.

10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father
and a priest, and I will give thee ten *shekels* of silver by the year, and
a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.
11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young
man was unto him as one of his sons.
12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his
priest, and was in the house of Micah.
13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good,
seeing I have a Levite to *my* priest.

Judges-18

Micah and the Danites

1 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe
of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that
day *all their* inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes
of Israel.
2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their
coasts, men of valor, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the
land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land:
who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah,
they lodged there.

3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, who brought thee hither? And what makest thou in this *place?* And what hast thou here?

Here is, 1 The eye which these Danites had upon Laish, not the whole tribe of Dan, but one family of them, to whose lot, in the subdivision of Canaan, that city fell. Hitherto this family had sojourned with their brethren, who had taken possession of their lot, which lay between Judah and the Philistines, and had declined going to their own city, because there was no king in Israel to rule over them, Jdg 18:1. It lay a great way off, separate from the rest of their tribe; it was entirely in the enemy's hand, and therefore they would sponge upon their brethren rather than go far to provide for themselves. But at length necessity forced them to arouse themselves, and they began to think of an inheritance to dwell in. It is better to have a little of one's own than always to hang upon others.

2 The enquiry which this family of the Danites made concerning Laish: They sent five men to search the land (Jdg 18:2), that they might know the character of the country, whether it was an inheritance worth going so far for, and the posture of the people, whether the making of themselves masters of it was a thing practicable, what force was necessary in order thereunto, and which was the best way of making an attack upon it. The men they sent were men of valour, who, if they fell into their enemies' hands, knew how to look danger in the face. It is prudent to look before we leap. Dan had the subtlety of a serpent by the way (Ge 49:17), as well as the courage of a lion's whelp, leaping from Bashan, De 33:22.

3. The acquaintance which their spies got with Micah's priest, and the use they made of that acquaintance. It seems, they had know this Levite formerly, he having in his rambles been sometimes in their country; and, though his countenance might be altered, they knew him again by his voice, Jdg 18:3.

They were surprised to find him so far off, enquired what brought him thither, and he told them (Jdg 18:4) what business he had there, and what encouragement. They, understanding that he had an oracle in his custody, desired he would tell them whether they should prosper in their present undertaking, Jdg 18:5. See their carelessness and regardlessness of God and his providence; they would not have enquired of the Lord at all if this Levite's mentioning the teraphim he had with him had not put it into their heads. Many never think of religion but just when it falls in their way and they cannot avoid it, like chance customers. See their ignorance of the divine law, that they thought God, who had forbidden the religious use of graven images, would yet own them in consulting an image, and give them an answer of peace.

Should he be enquired of by them? Eze 14:3. They seem to have had a greater opinion of Micah's teraphim than of God's urim; for they had passed by Shiloh, and, for aught that appears, had not enquired there of God's high priest, but Micah's shabby Levite shall be an oracle to them. He betakes himself to his usual method of consulting his teraphim; and, whether he himself believed it or no, he humoured the thing so well that he made them believe he had an answer from God encouraging them to go on, and assuring them of good success (Jdg 18:6): "Go in peace, you shall be safe, and may be easy, for before the Lord is your way," that is, "he approves it" (as the Lord is said to know the way of the righteous with acceptation), "and therefore he will make it prosperous, his eye will be upon you for good, he will direct your way, and preserve your going out and coming in." Note, Our great care should be that our way be such as God approves, and, if it be so, we may go in peace. If God care for us, on him let us cast our care, and be satisfied that we cannot miss our way if he go before us.

4 And he said unto them, thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we
may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.
6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord *is*
your way wherein ye go.
7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people
that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the
Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land,
that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from
the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.
8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their
brethren said unto them, what *say* ye?

Here is, I The observation which the spies made upon the city of Laish, and the posture of its inhabitants, Jdg 18:7. Never was place so ill governed and so ill guarded, which would make it a very easy prey to the invader.

1. It was ill governed, for every man might be as bad as he would, and there was no magistrate, no heir of restraint (as the word is), that might so much as put them to shame in any thing, much less put them to death, so that by the most impudent immoralities they provoked God's wrath, and by all manner of mutual mischiefs weakened and consumed one another. See here,

(1.) What the office of magistrates is. They are to be heirs of restraint, that is, to preserve a constant entail of power, as heirs to an inheritance, in the places where they are, for the restraining of that which is evil. They are possessors of restraint, entrusted with their authority for this end, that they may check and suppress every thing that is vicious and be a terror to evil doers. It is only God's grace that can renew men's depraved minds and turn their hearts; but the magistrate's power may restrain their bad practices and tie their hands, so that the wickedness of the wicked may not be either so injurious or so infectious as otherwise it would be. Though the sword of justice cannot cut up the root of bitterness, it may cut off its branches and hinder its growth and spreading, that

vice may not go without a check, for then it becomes daring and dangerous, and the community shares in the guilt.

(2.) See what method must be used for the restraint of wickedness. Sinners must be put to shame, that those who will not be restrained by the shamefulness of the sin before God and their own consciences may be restrained by the shamefulness of the punishment before men. All ways must be tried to dash sin out of countenance and cover it with contempt, to make people ashamed of their idleness, drunkenness, cheating, lying, and other sins, by making reputation always appear on virtue's side.

(3.) See how miserable, and how near to ruin, those places are that either have no magistrates or none that bear the sword to any purpose; the wicked then walk on every side, Ps 12:8. And how happy we are in good laws and a good government.

2. It was ill guarded. The people of Laish were careless, quiet, and secure, their gates left open, their walls out of repair, because under no apprehension of danger in any way, though their wickedness was so great that they had reason to fear divine vengeance every day. It was a sign that the Israelites, through their sloth and cowardice, were not now such a terror to the Canaanites as they were when they first came among them, else the city of Laish, which probably knew itself to be assigned to them, would not have been so very secure. Though they were an open and inland town, they lived secure, like the Zidonians (who were surrounded with the sea and were well fortified both by art and nature), but were far from the Zidonians, who therefore could not come in to their assistance, nor help to defend them from the danger which, by debauching their manners, they had helped to bring them into. And, lastly, they had no business with any man, which bespeaks either the idleness they affected (they followed no trade, and so grew lazy and luxurious, and utterly unable to defend themselves) or the independency they affected: they scorned to be either in subjection to or alliance with any of

their neighbours, and so they had none to protect them nor bring in any aid to them. They cared for nobody and therefore nobody cared for them. Such as these were the men of Laish.

II The encouragement which they consequently gave to their countrymen that sent them to prosecute their design upon this city, Jdg 18:8-10. Probably the Danites had formed notions of the insuperable difficulties of the enterprise, thought it impossible ever to make themselves masters of Laish, and therefore had kept themselves so long out of the possession of it, perhaps suggesting likewise to one another, in their unbelief, that it was not a country worth going so far and running such a risk for, which jealousies the spies (and they were not, in this, evil spies) had an eye to in their report.

1. They represent the place as desirable: "If you will trust our judgments, we have seen the land, and we are agreed in our verdict upon the view, that, behold, it is very good (Jdg 18:9), better than this mountainous country into which we are here crowded by the Philistines. You need not doubt of living comfortably in it, for it is a place where there is no want of any thing," Jdg 18:10. See what a good land Canaan was, that this city which lay furthest of all northward, in the utmost corner of the country, stood on such a fruitful spot.

2. They represent it as attainable. They do not at all question but, with God's blessing, they may soon get possession of it; for the people are secure, Jdg 18:10. And the more secure always the less safe. "God has given it into your hands, and you may have it for the taking." They stir them up to the undertaking: "Arise, that we may go up against them, let us go about it speedily and resolutely." They expostulate with them for their delays, and chide them out of their sluggishness: Are you still? Be not slothful to go. Men need to be thus stirred up to mind even their interest. Heaven is a very good land, where there is no want of any thing; our God has, by the promise, given it into our hands; let us not then be

slothful in making it sure, and laying hold on eternal life, but strive to enter.

III. The Danites' expedition against Laish. This particular family of them, to whose lot that city fell, now at length make towards it, Jdg 18:11-13. The military men were but 600 in all, not a hundredth part of that tribe, for when they entered Canaan the Danites were above 64,000, Nu 26:43. It was strange that none of their brethren of their own tribe, much less of any other, came in to their assistance; but it was long after Israel came to Canaan before there appeared among them any thing of a public spirit, or concern for a common interest, which was the reason why they seldom united in a common head, and this kept them low and inconsiderable.

It appears (by Jdg 18:21) that these 600 were the whole number that went to settle there, for they had their families and effects with them, their little ones and cattle, so confident were they of success. The other tribes gave them a free passage through their country. Their first day's march brought them to Kirjath-jearim (Jdg 18:12), and such rare things had military encampments now become in Israel that the place where they rested that night was thence called Mahaneh-dan, the camp of Dan, and probably the place whence they began their march between Zorah and Eshtaol was called by the same name, and is meant, Jdg 13:25. The second day's march brought them to Mount Ephraim, near Micah's house (Jdg 18:13), and there we must pause awhile.

9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and are ye still?Be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjath-jearim.

13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? Now therefore consider what ye have to do.

15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, what do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

The Danites had sent out their spies to find out a country for them, and they sped well in their search; but here, now that they came to the place (for till this brought it to their mind it does not appear that they had mentioned it to their brethren), they oblige them with a further discovery--they can tell them where there are gods: "Here, in these houses, there are an ephod, and teraphim, and a great many fine things for devotion, such as we have not the like in our country; now therefore consider what you have to do, Jdg 18:14.

We consulted them, and had a good answer from them; they are worth having, nay, they are worth stealing (that is, having

upon the worst terms), and, if we can but make ourselves masters of these gods, we may the better hope to prosper, and make ourselves masters of Laish." So far they were in the right, that it was desirable to have God's presence with them, but wretchedly mistaken when they took these images (which were fitter to be used in a puppet-play than in acts of devotion) for tokens of God's presence. They thought an oracle would be pretty company for them in their enterprise, and instead of a council of war to consult upon every emergency; and, the place they were going to settle in being so far from Shiloh, they thought they had more need of a house of gods among themselves than Micah had that lived so near to it.

They might have made as good an ephod and teraphim themselves as these were, and such as would have served their purpose every whit as well; but the reputation which they found them in possession of (though they had had that reputation but a while) amused them into a strange veneration for this house of gods, which they would soon have dropped if they had had so much sense as to enquire into its origin, and examine whether there were any thing divine in its institution. Being determined to take these gods along with them, we are here told how they stole the images, cajoled the priest, and frightened Micah from attempting to rescue them.

I The five men that knew the house and the avenues to it, and particularly the chapel, went in and fetched out the images, with the ephod, and teraphim, and all the appurtenances, while the 600 kept the priest in talk at the gate, Jdg 18:16-18. See what little care this sorry priest took of his gods; while he was sauntering at the gate, and gazing at the strangers, his treasure (such as it was) was gone. See how impotent these sorry gods were, that could not keep themselves from being stolen. It is mentioned as the reproach of idols that they themselves had gone into captivity, Isa 46:2. O the sottishness of these Danites! How could they imagine those gods should protect them that could not keep themselves from being

stolen? Yet because they went by the name of gods, as if it were not enough that they had with them the presence of the invisible God, nor that they stood in relation to the tabernacle, where there were even visible tokens of his presence, nothing will serve them but they must have gods to go before them, not of their own making indeed, but, which was as bad, of their own stealing.

Their idolatry began in theft, a proper prologue for such an opera. In order to the breaking of the second commandment, they begin with the eighth, and take their neighbour's goods to make them their gods. The holy God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, but the devil loves it. Had these Danites seized the images to deface and abolish them, and the priest to punish him, they would have done like Israelites indeed, and would have appeared jealous for their God as their fathers had done (Jos 22:16); but to take them for their own use was such a complicated crime as showed that they neither feared God nor regarded man, but were perfectly lost both to godliness and honesty.

II. They set upon the priest, and flattered him into a good humour, not only to let the gods go, but to go himself along with them; for without him they knew not well how to make use of the gods. Observe,

1. How they tempted him, Jdg 18:19. They assured him of better preferment with them than what he now had. It would be more honour and profit to be chaplain to a regiment (for they were no more, though they called themselves a tribe) than to be only a domestic chaplain to a private gentleman. Let him go with them, and he shall have more dependants on him, more sacrifices brought to his altar, and more fees for consulting his teraphim, than he had here.

2. How they won him. A little persuasion served: His heart was glad, Jdg 18:20. The proposal took well enough with his rambling fancy, which would never let him stay long at a

place, and gratified his covetousness and ambition. He had no reason to say but that he was well off where he was; Micah had not deceived him, nor changed his wages. He was not moved with any remorse of conscience for attending on a graven image: had he gone away to Shiloh to minister to the Lord's priests, according to the duty of a Levite, he might have been welcome there (De 18:6), and his removal would have been commendable; but, instead of this, he takes the images with him, and carries the infection of the idolatry into a whole city.

It would have been very unjust and ungrateful to Micah if he had only gone away himself, but it was much more so to take the images along with him, which he knew the heart of Micah was set upon. Yet better could not be expected from a treacherous Levite. What house can be sure of him who has forsaken the house of the Lord? Or what friend will he be true to that has been false to his God? He could not pretend that he was under compulsive force, for he was glad in his heart to go. If ten shekels won him (as bishop Hall expresses it), eleven would lose him; for what can hold those that have made shipwreck of a good conscience?

The hireling flees because he is a hireling. The priest and his gods went in the midst of the people. There they placed him, that they might secure him either from going back himself, if his mind should change, or from being fetched back by Micah; or perhaps this post was assigned to him in imitation of the order of Israel's march through the wilderness, in which the ark and the priests went in the midst of their camp.

III. They frightened Micah back when he pursued them to recover his gods. As soon as ever he perceived that his chapel was plundered, and his chaplain had run away from him, he mustered all the forces he could and pursued the robbers, Jdg 18:22. His neighbours, and perhaps tenants, that used to join with him in his devotions, were forward to help him on this occasion; they got together, and pursued the robbers, who,

having their children and cattle before them (Jdg 18:21), could make no great haste, so that they soon overtook them, hoping by strength of reason to recover what was stolen, for the disproportion of their numbers was such that they could not hope to do it by strength of arm. The pursuers called after them, desiring to speak a word with them; those in the rear (where it is probable they posted the fiercest and strongest of their company, expecting there to be attacked) turned about and asked Micah what ailed him that he was so much concerned, and what he would have, Jdg 18:23. He argues with them, and pleads his right, which he thought should prevail; but they, in answer, plead their might, which, it proved, did prevail; for it is common that might overcomes right.

1. He insists upon the wrong they had certainly done him (Jdg 18:24): "You have taken away my gods, my images of God, which I have an incontestable title to, for I made them myself, and which I have such an affection for that I am undone if I lose them; for what have I more that will do me any good if these be lost?" Now,

(1.) This discovers to us the folly of idolaters, and the power that Satan has over them. What a folly was it for him to call those his gods which he had made, when he only that made us is to be worshipped by us as a God! Folly indeed to set his heart upon such silly idle things, and to look upon himself as undone when he had lost them!

(2.) This may discover to us our spiritual idolatry. That creature which we place our happiness in, which we set our affections inordinately upon, and which we can by no means find in our hearts to part with, of which we say, "What have we more?" that we make an idol of. That is put in God's place, and is a usurper, which we are concerned about as if our life and comfort, our hope and happiness, and our all, were bound up in it. But,

(3.) If all people will thus walk in the name of their god, shall we not be in like manner affected towards our God, the true God? Let us reckon the having of an interest in God and communion with him incomparably the richest portion, and the loss of God the sorest loss. Woe unto us if he depart, for what have we more? Deserted souls that are lamenting after the Lord may well wonder, as Micah did, that you should ask what ails them; for the tokens of God's favour are suspended, his comforts are withdrawn, and what have they more?

2. They insist upon the mischief they would certainly do him if he prosecuted his demand. They would not hear reason, nor do justice, nor so much as offer to pay him the prime cost he had been at upon those images, nor promise to make restitution of what they had taken when they had served their present purpose with them in this expedition and had time to copy them and make others like them for themselves: much less had they any compassion for a loss he so bitterly lamented. They would not so much as give him good words, but resolved to justify their robbery with murder if he did not immediately let fall his claims, Jdg 18:25. "Take heed lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, and that is worse than losing thy gods."

Wicked and unreasonable men reckon it a great provocation to be asked to do justice, and support themselves by their power against right and reason. Micah's crime is asking his own, yet, for this, he is in danger of losing his life and the lives of his household. Micah has not courage enough to venture his life for the rescue of his gods, so little opinion has he of their being able to protect him and bear him out, and therefore tamely gives them up (Jdg 18:26): He turned and went back to his house; and if the loss of his idols did but convince him (as, one would think, it should) of their vanity and impotency, and his own folly in setting his heart upon them, and send him back to the true God from whom he had revolted, he that lost them had a much better bargain than

those that by force of arms carried them off. If the loss of our idols cure us of the love of them, and make us say, What have we to do any more with idols? The loss will be unspeakable gain. See Isa 2:20,30:22.

20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

22 *And* when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? And what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, what aileth thee?

25 And the children of Dan said unto him, let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

27 And they took the *things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that *were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

Here is, I. Laish conquered by the Danites. They proceeded on their march, and, because they met with no disaster, perhaps concluded they had not done amiss in robbing Micah. Many justify themselves in their impiety by their prosperity. Observe,

1. What posture they found the people of Laish in, both those of the city and those of the country about. They were quiet and secure, not jealous of the five spies that had been among

them to search out the land, nor had they any intelligence of the approach of this enemy, which made them a very easy prey to this little handful of men that came upon them, Jdg 18:27.

Note, Many are brought to destruction by their security. Satan gets advantage against us when we are careless and off our watch. Happy therefore is the man that feareth always.

2. What a complete victory they obtained over them: They put all the people to the sword, and burnt down so much of the city as they thought fit to rebuild (Jdg 18:27,28), and, for aught that appears, herein they met with no resistance; for the measure of the iniquity of the Canaanites was full, that of the Danites was but beginning to fill.

3. How the conquerors settled themselves in their room, Jdg 18:28,29. They built the city, or much of it, anew (the old buildings having gone to decay), and called the name of it Dan, to be a witness for them that, though separated so far off from their brethren, they were nevertheless Danites by birth, which might hereafter, by reason of their distance, be called in question. We should feel concerned not to lose the privilege of our relation to God's Israel, and therefore should take all occasions to own it and preserve the remembrance of it to ours after us.

II. Idolatry immediately set up there. God had graciously performed his promise, in putting them in possession of that which fell to their lot, obliging them thereby to be faithful to him who had been so to them. They inherited the labour of the people, that they might observe his statues, Ps 105:44,45. But the first thing they do after they are settled is to break his statues. As soon as they began to settle themselves they set up the graven image (Jdg 18:30), perversely attributing their success to that idol which, if God had not been infinitely patient, would have been their ruin. Thus a prosperous idolater goes on to offend, imputing this his power unto his

god, Hab 1:11. Their Levite, who officiated as priest, is at length named here--Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.

The word Manasseh, in the original, has the letter n, set over the head, which, some of the Jewish rabbin say, is an intimation that it should be left out, and then Manasseh will be Moses, and this Levite, they say, was grandson to the famous Moses, who indeed had a son named Gershom; but, say they, the historian, in honour of Moses, by a half interposition of that letter, turned the name into Manasseh. The vulgar Latin reads it Moses. And if indeed Moses had a grandson that was rakish, and was picked up as a fit tool to be made use of in the setting up of idolatry, it is not the only instance (would to God it were!) of the unhappy degenerating of the posterity of great and good men. Children's children are not always the crown of old men. But the learned bishop Patrick takes this to be an idle conceit of the rabbin, and supposes this Jonathan to be of some other family of the Levites. How long these corruptions continued we are told in the close.

1. That the posterity of this Jonathan continued to act as priests to this family of Dan that was seated at Laish, and in the country about, till the captivity, Jdg 18:30. After Micah's image was removed this family retained the character of priests, and had respect paid them as such by that city, and it is very probable that Jeroboam had an eye to them when he set up one of his calves there (which they could welcome at Can, and put some reputation upon, when the priests of the Lord would have nothing to do with them), and that this family officiated as some of his priests.

2. That these images continued till Samuel's time, for so long the ark of God was at Shiloh; and it is probable that in him time effectual care was taken to suppress and abolish this idolatry. See how dangerous it is to admit an infection, for spiritual distempers are not so soon cured as caught.

28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they
had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by
Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.
29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan
their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the
city *was* Laish at the first.
30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan,
the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were
priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.
31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the
time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

Judges-19

The Levite and His Concubine

1 And it came to pass in those days, when there *was* no king in Israel,
that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount
Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Beth-lehem-judah.
2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away
from him unto her father's house to Beth-lehem-judah, and was
there four whole months.
3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto
her, *and* to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a
couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house; and
when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.
4 And his father-in-law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he
abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged
there.
5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the
morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said
unto his son-in-law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread,
and afterward go your way.
6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together:
for the damsel's father had said unto the man, be content, I pray
thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.
7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father-in-law urged him:
therefore he lodged there again.

8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

The domestic affairs of this Levite would not have been related thus largely but to make way for the following story of the injuries done him, in which the whole nation interested themselves. Bishop Hall's first remark upon this story is, That there is no complain of a public ordered state but there is a Levite at one end of it, either as an agent or as a patient. In Micah's idolatry a Levite was active; in the wickedness of Gibeah a Levite was passive; no tribe shall sooner feel the want of government than that of Levi; and, in all the book of Judges, no mention is made of any of that tribe, but of these two. This Levite was of Mount Ephraim, Jdg 19:1. He married a wife of Bethlehem-Judah. She is called his concubine, because she was not endowed, for perhaps he had nothing to endow her with, being himself a sojourner and not settled; but it does not appear that he had any other wife, and the margin calls her a wife, a concubine, Jdg 19:1. She came from the same city that Micah's Levite came from, as if Bethlehem-Judah owed a double ill turn to Mount Ephraim, for she was as bad for a Levite's wife as the other for a Levite.

I. This Levite's concubine played the whore and eloped from her husband, Jdg 19:2 The Chaldee reads it only that she carried herself insolently to him, or despised him, and, he being displeased at it, she went away from him, and (which was not fair) was received and entertained at her father's house. Had her husband turned her out of doors unjustly, her father ought to have pitied her affliction; but, when she treacherously departed from her husband to embrace the bosom of a stranger, her father ought not to have countenanced her sin. Perhaps she would not have violated her duty to her husband if she had not known too well where she should be kindly received. Children's ruin is often owing very much to parents' indulgence.

II The Levite went himself to court her return. It was a sign there was no king, no judge, in Israel, else she would have been prosecuted and put to death as an adulteress; but, instead of that, she is addressed in the kindest manner by her injured husband, who takes a long journey on purpose to beseech her to be reconciled, Jdg 19:3. If he had put her away, it would have been a crime in him to return to her again, Jer 3:1. But, she having gone away, it was a virtue in him to forgive the offence, and, though the party wronged, to make the first motion to her to be friends again. It is part of the character of the wisdom from above that it is gentle and easy to be entreated. He spoke friendly to her, or comfortably (for so the Hebrew phrase of speaking to the heart commonly signifies), which intimates that she was in sorrow, penitent fore what she had done amiss, which probably he heard of when he came to fetch her back. Thus God promises concerning adulterous Israel (Ho 2:14), I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her.

III. Her father made him very welcome, and, by his extraordinary kindness to him, endeavoured to atone for the countenance he had given his daughter in withdrawing from him, and to confirm him in his disposition to be reconciled to her.

1. He entertains him kindly, rejoices to see him (Jdg 19:3), treats him generously for three days, Jdg 19:4. And the Levite, to show that he was perfectly reconciled, accepted his kindness, and we do not find that he upbraided him or his daughter with what had been amiss, but was as easy and as pleasant as at his first wedding-feast. It becomes all, but especially Levites, to forgive as God does. Every thing among them gave a hopeful prospect of their living comfortably together for the future; but, could they have foreseen what befel them within one day or two, how would all their mirth have been embittered and turned into mourning! When the affairs of our families are in the best posture we ought to rejoice with trembling, because we know not what troubles

one day may bring forth. We cannot foresee what evil is near us, but we ought to consider what may be, that we may not be secure, as if to-morrow must needs be as this day and much more abundant, Isa 56:12.

2. He is very earnest for his stay, as a further demonstration of his hearty welcome. The affection he had for him, and the pleasure he took in his company, proceeded,

(1.) From a civil regard to him as his son-in-law and an ingrafted branch of his own house. Note, Love and duty are due to those to whom we are related by marriage as well as to those who are bone of our bone: and those that show kindness as this Levite did may expect to receive kindness as he did. And,

(2.) From a pious respect to him as a Levite, a servant of God's house; if he was such a Levite as he should be (and nothing appears to the contrary) he is to be commended for courting his stay, finding his conversation profitable, and having opportunity to learn from him the good knowledge of the Lord, hoping also that the Lord will do him good because he has a Levite to be his son-in-law, and will bless him for his sake.

[1.] He forces him to stay the fourth day, and this was kind; not knowing when they might be together again, he engages him to stay as long as he possibly could. The Levite, though nobly treated, was very urgent to be gone. A good man's heart is where his business is; for as a bird that wanders from her nest so is the man that wanders form his place. It is a sign a man has either little to do at home, or little heart to do what he has to do, when he can take pleasure in being long abroad where he has nothing to do. It is especially good to see a Levite willing to go home to his few sheep in the wilderness. Yet this Levite was overcome by importunity and kind persuasion to stay longer than he intended, Jdg 19:5-7. We ought to avoid the extreme of an over-easy yielding, to the

neglect of our duty on the one hand, and that of moroseness and wilfulness, to the neglect of our friends and their kindness on the other hand. Our Saviour, after his resurrection, was prevailed upon to stay with his friends longer than he at first intimated to be his purpose, Lu 24:28,29.

[2.] He forces him to stay till the afternoon of the fifth day, and this, as it proved, was unkind, Jdg 19:8,9. He would by no means let him go before dinner, promises him he shall have dinner early, designing thereby, as he had done the day before, to detain him another night; but the Levite was intent on the house of the Lord at Shiloh (Jdg 19:18), and, being impatient to get thither, would stay no longer. Had they set out early, they might have reached some better lodging-place than that which they were now constrained to take up with, nay, they might have got to Shiloh. Note, Our friends' designed kindnesses often prove, in the event, real injuries; what is meant for our welfare becomes a trap. Who knows what is good for a man in this life? The Levite was unwise in setting out so late; he might have got home better if he had staid a night longer and taken the day before him.

IV. In his return home he was forced to lodge at Gibeah, a city in the tribe of Benjamin, afterwards called Gibeah of Saul, which lay on his road towards Shiloh and Mount Ephraim. When it drew towards night, and the shadows of the evening were stretched out, they began to think (as it behoves us to do when we observe the day of our life hastening towards a period) where they must lodge. When night came they could not pursue their journey. He that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goes. They could not but desire rest, for which the night was intended, as the day for labour.

1 The servant proposed that they should lodge in Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, but as yet in the possession of Jebusites. "Come," said the servant, "let us lodge in this city of the Jebusites," Jdg 19:11. And, if they had done so, it is

probable they would have had much better usage than they met with in Gibeah of Benjamin. Debauched and profligate Israelites are worse and much more dangerous than Canaanites themselves. But the master, as became one of God's tribe, would by no means quarter, no, not one night, in a city of strangers (Jdg 19:12), not because he questioned his safety among them, but he was not willing, if he could possibly avoid it, to have so much intimacy and familiarity with them as a night's lodging came to, nor to be so much beholden to them. By shunning this place he would witness against the wickedness of those that contracted friendship and familiarity with these devoted nations. Let Israelites, Levites especially, associate with Israelites, and not with the sons of the stranger.

2. Having passed by Jebus, which was about five or six miles from Bethlehem (the place whence they came), and not having daylight to bring them to Ramah, they stopped at Gibeah (Jdg 19:13-15); there they sat down in the street, nobody offering them a lodging. In these countries, at that time, there were no inns, or public-houses, in which, as with us, travellers might have entertainment for their money, but they carried entertainment along with them, as this Levite did (Jdg 19:19), and depended upon the courtesy and hospitality of the inhabitants for a lodging.

Let us take occasion hence, when we are in journeys, to thank God for this, among other conveniences of travelling, that there are inns to entertain strangers, and in which they may be welcome and well accommodated for their money. Surely there is no country in the world wherein one may stay at home with more satisfaction, or go abroad with more comfort, than in our own nation. This traveller, though a Levite (and to those of that tribe God had particularly commanded his people to be kind upon all occasions), met with very cold entertainment at Gibeah: No man took them into his house. If they had any reason to think he was a Levite perhaps that made those ill-disposed people the more shy of him. There

are those who will have this laid to their charge at the great day, I was a stranger and you took me not in.

9 And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father-in-law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and tomorrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which *is* Jerusalem; and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him.

11 *And* when they *were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

12 And his master said unto him, we will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that *is* not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah.

13 And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah.

14 And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin.

15 And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that took them into his house to lodging.

16 And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, whither goest thou?And whence comest thou?

18 And he said unto him, we *are* passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence *am* I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I *am now* going to the house of the Lord; and there is no man that receiveth me to house.

Though there as not one of Gibeah, yet it proved there was one in Gibeah, that showed some civility to this distressed Levite, who was glad that any one took notice of him. It was strange that some of those wicked people, who, when it was dark, designed so ill to him and his concubine, did not, under pretence of kindness, invite them in, that they might have a fairer opportunity of perpetrating their villany; but either they had not wit enough to be so designing, or not wickedness enough to be so deceiving. Or, perhaps, none of them separately thought of such a wickedness, till in the black and dark night they got together to contrive what mischief they should do. Bad people in confederacy make one another much worse than any of them would be by themselves. When the Levite, and his wife, and servant, were beginning to fear that they must lie in the street all night (and as good have laid in a den of lions) they were at length invited into a house, and we are here told,

I. Who that kind man was that invited them.

1. He was a man of Mount Ephraim, and only sojourned in Gibeah, Jdg 19:16. Of all the tribes of Israel, the Benjamites had most reason to be kind to poor travellers, for their ancestor, Benjamin, was born upon the road, his mother being then upon a journey, and very near to this place, Ge 35:16,17. Yet they were hard-hearted to a traveller in distress, while an honest Ephraimite had compassion on him, and, no doubt, was the more kind to him, when, upon enquiry, he found that he was his countryman, of Mount Ephraim likewise. He that was himself but a sojourner in Gibeah was the more compassionate to a wayfaring man, for he knew the heart of a stranger, Ex 23:9,De 10:19. Good people, that look upon themselves but as strangers and sojourners in this world, should for this reason be tender to one another, because they all belong to the same better country and are not at home here.

2. He was an old man, one that retained some of the expiring virtue of an Israelite. The rising generation was entirely

corrupted; if there was any good remaining among them, it was only with those that were old and going off.

3. He was coming home from his work out of the field at eventide. The evening calls home labourers, Ps 104:23. But, it should seem, this was the only labourer that this evening brought home to Gibeah. The rest had given themselves up to sloth and luxury, and no marvel there was among them, as in Sodom, abundance of uncleanness, when there was among them, as in Sodom, abundance of idleness, Eze 16:49. But he that was honestly diligent in his business all day was disposed to be generously hospitable to these poor strangers at night. Let men labour, that they may have to give, Eph 4:28. It appears from Jdg 19:21 that he was a man of some substance, and yet had been himself at work in the field. No man's estate will privilege him in idleness.

II. How free and generous he was in his invitation. He did not stay till they applied to him to beg for a night's lodging; but when he saw them (Jdg 19:17) enquired into their circumstances, and anticipated them with his kindness. Thus our good God answers before we call. Note, A charitable disposition expects only opportunity, not importunity, to do good, and will succour upon sight, unsought unto. Hence we read of a bountiful eye, Pr 22:9. If Gibeah was like Sodom, this old man was like Lot in Sodom, who sat in the gate to invite strangers, Ge 19:1. Thus Job opened his doors to the traveller, and would not suffer him to lodge in the street, Job 31:32. Observe,

1. How ready he was to give credit to the Levite's account of himself when he saw no reason at all to question the truth of it. Charity is not apt to distrust, but hopeth all things (1Co 13:7) and will not make use of Nabal's excuse for his churlishness to David, Many servants now-a-days break away from their masters, 1Sa 25:10. The Levite, in his account of himself, professed that he was now going to the house of the Lord (Jdg 19:18), for there he designed to attend, either with

a trespass-offering for the sins of his family, or with a peace-offering for the mercies of his family, or both, before he went to his own house. And, if the men of Gibeah had any intimation of his being bound that way, probably they would therefore be disinclined to entertain him. The Samaritans would not receive Christ because his face was towards Jerusalem, Lu 9:53. But for this reason, because he was a Levite and was now going to the house of the Lord, this good old man was the more kind to him. Thus he received a disciples in the name of a disciple, a servant of God for his Master's sake.

2. How free he was to give him entertainment. The Levite was himself provided with all necessaries (Jdg 19:19), wanted nothing but a lodging, but his generous host would be himself at the charge of his entertainment (Jdg 19:20): Let all thy wants be upon me; so he brought him into his house, Jdg 19:21. Thus God will, some way or other, raise up friends for his people and ministers, even when they seem forlorn.

19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread
and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man
which is with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing.
20 And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee; howsoever, *let* all thy
wants lie upon me; only lodge not in the street.
21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the
asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.
22 *Now* as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of
the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat
at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man,
saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we
may know him.
23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said
unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly;
seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.
24 Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I
will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what
seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

Here is, I The great wickedness of the men of Gibeah. One could not imagine that ever it should enter into the heart of men that had the use of human reason, of Israelites that had the benefit of divine revelation, to be so very wicked. "Lord, what is man!" said David, "what a mean creature is he!" "Lord, what is man," may we say upon the reading of this story, "what a vile creature is he, when he is given up to his own heart's lusts!" The sinners are here called sons of Belial, that is, ungovernable men, men that would endure no yoke, children of the devil (for he is Belial), resembling him, and joining with him in rebellion against God and his government. Sons of Benjamin, of whom Moses had said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him (De 33:12), have become such sons of Belial that an honest man cannot lodge in safety among them. The sufferers were a Levite and his wife, and that kind man that gave them entertainment. We are strangers upon earth, and must expect strange usage.

It is said they were making their hearts merry when this trouble came upon them, Jdg 19:22. If the mirth was innocent, it teaches us of what uncertain continuance all our creature comforts and enjoyments are; when we are ever so well pleased with our friends, we know not how near our enemies are; nor, if it be well with us this hour, can we be sure it will be so the next. If the mirth was sinful and excessive, let it be a warning to us to keep a strict guard upon ourselves, that we grow not intemperate in the use of lawful things, nor be transported into indecencies by our cheerfulness; for the end of that mirth is heaviness. God can soon change the note of those that are making their hearts merry, and turn their laughter into mourning and their joy into heaviness. Let us see what the wickedness of these Benjamites was.

1. They made a rude and insolent assault, in the night, upon the habitation of an honest man, that not only lived peaceably among them, but kept a good house and was a blessing and ornament to their city. They beset the house round, and, to the great terror of those within, beat as hard as they could at the door, Jdg 19:22. A man's house is his castle, in which he ought to be both safe and quiet, and, where there is law, it is taken under the special protection of it; but there was no king in Israel to keep the peace and secure honest men from the sons of violence.

2. They had a particular spite at the strangers that were within their gates, that only desired a night's lodging among them, contrary to the laws of hospitality, which all civilized nations have accounted sacred, and which the master of the house pleaded with them (Jdg 19:23): Seeing that this man has come into my house. Those are base and abject spirits indeed that will trample upon the helpless, and use a man the worse for his being a stranger, whom they know no ill of.

3. They designed in the most filthy and abominable manner (not to be thought of without horror and detestation) to abuse the Levite, whom perhaps they had observed to be young and comely: Bring him forth that we may know him. We should certainly have concluded they meant only to enquire whence he came, and to know his character, but that the good man of the house, who understood their meaning too well, by his answer lets us know that they designed the gratification of that most unnatural and worse than brutish lust which was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and called an abomination, Le 18:22. Those that are guilty of it are ranked in the New Testament among the worst and vilest of sinners (1Ti 1:10), and such as shall not inherit the kingdom of God, 1Co 6:9. Now,

(1.) This was the sin of Sodom, and is thence called Sodomy. The Dead Sea, which was the standing monument of God's vengeance upon Sodom, for its filthiness, was one of the

boundaries of Canaan, and lay not many miles off from Gibeah. We may suppose the men of Gibeah had seen it many a time, and yet would not take warning by it, but did worse than Sodom (Eze 16:48), and sinned just after the similitude of their transgression. Who would have expected (says bishop Hall) such extreme abomination to come out of the loins of Jacob? Even the worst pagans were saints to them. What did it avail them that they had the ark of God in Shiloh when they had Sodom in their streets--God's law in their fringes, but the devil in their hearts? Nothing but hell itself can yield a worse creature than a depraved Israelite.

(2.) This was the punishment of their idolatry, that sin to which they were, above all others, most addicted. Because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up to these vile affections, by which they dishonoured themselves as they had by their idolatry dishonoured him and turned his glory into shame, Ro 1:24,28. See and admire, in this instance, the patience of God. Why were not these sons of Belial struck blind, as the Sodomites were? Why were not fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon their city? It was because God would leave it to Israel to punish them by the sword, and would reserve his own punishment of them for the future state, in which those that go after strange flesh shall suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 1:7.

4. They were deaf to the reproofs and reasoning of the good man of the house, who, being well acquainted (we may suppose) with the story of Lot and the Sodomites, set himself to imitate Lot, Jdg 19:23,24. Compare Ge 19:6-8. He went out to them as Lot did, spoke civilly to them, called them brethren, begged of them to desist, pleaded the protection of his house which his guests were under, and represented to them the great wickedness of their attempt: "Do not so wickedly, so very wickedly." He calls it folly and a vile thing.

But in one thing he conformed too far to Lot's example (as we are apt in imitating good men to follow them even in their false steps), in offering them his daughter to do what they would with. He had not power thus to prostitute his daughter, nor ought he to have done this evil that good might come. But this wicked proposal of his may be in part excused from the great surprise and terror he was in, his concern for his guests, and his having too close a regard to what Lot did in the like case, especially not finding that the angels who were by reproved him for it. And perhaps he hoped that his mentioning this as a more natural gratification of their lust would have sent them back to their common harlots. But they would not hearken to him, Jdg 19:25. Headstrong lusts are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; they sear the conscience and make it insensible.

5. They got the Levite's wife among them, and abused her to death, Jdg 19:25. They slighted the old man's offer of his daughter to their lust, either because she was not handsome or because they knew her to be one of great gravity and modesty: but, when the Levite brought them his concubine, they took her with them by force to the place appointed for their filthiness. Josephus, in his narrative of this story, makes her to be the person they had a design upon when they beset the house, and says nothing of their villainous design upon the Levite himself. They saw her (he says) in the street, when they came into the town, and were smitten with her beauty; and perhaps, though she was reconciled to her husband, her looks did not bespeak her to be one of the most modest.

Many bring mischief of this kind upon themselves by their loose carriage and behaviour; a little spark may kindle a great fire. One would think the Levite should have followed them, to see what became of his wife, but it is probable he durst not, lest they should do him a mischief. In the miserable end of this woman, we may see the righteous hand of God punishing her for her former uncleanness, when she played the whore against her husband, Jdg 19:2. Though her father had

countenanced her, her husband had forgiven her, and the fault was forgotten now that the quarrel was made up, yet God remembered it against her when he suffered these wicked men thus wretchedly to abuse her; how unrighteous soever they were in their treatment of her, in permitting it the Lord was righteous.

Her punishment answered her sin, Culpa libido fuit, poena libido fuit--Lust was her sin, and lust was her punishment. By the law of Moses she was to have been put to death for her adultery. She escaped that punishment from men, yet vengeance pursued her; for, if there was no king in Israel, yet there was a God in Israel, a God that judgeth in the earth. We must not think it enough to make our peace with men, whom by our sins we have wronged, but are concerned, by repentance and faith, to make our peace with God, who sees not as men see, nor makes so light of sin as men often do. The justice of God in this matter does not at all extenuate the horrid wickedness of these men of Gibeah, than which nothing could be more barbarous and inhuman.

II The notice that was sent of this wickedness to all the tribes of Israel. The poor abused woman made towards her husband's lodgings as soon as ever the approach of the day-light obliged these sons of Belial to let her go (for these works of darkness hate and dread the light), Jdg 19:25. Down she fell at the door, with her hands on the threshold, begging pardon (as it were) for her former transgression, and in that posture of a penitent, with her mouth in the dust, she expired. There he found her (Jdg 19:26,27), supposed her asleep, or overcome with shame and confusion for what had happened, but soon perceived she was dead (Jdg 19:28), took up her dead body, which, we may suppose, had all over it marks of the hands, the blows, and other abuses, she had received. On this sad occasion he waived his purpose of going to Shiloh, and went directly home.

He that went out in hopes to return rejoicing came in again melancholy and disconsolate, sat down and considered, "Is this an injury fit to be passed by?" He cannot call for fire from heaven to consume the men of Gibeah, as those angels did who were, after the same manner, insulted by the Sodomites. There was no king in Israel, nor (for aught that appears) any sanhedrim, or great council, to appeal to, and demand justice from. Phinehas is high priest, but he attends closely to the business of the sanctuary, and will be no judge or divider. He has therefore no other way left him than to appeal to the people: let the community be judge. Though they had no general stated assembly of all the tribes, yet it is probable that each tribe had a meeting of their chiefs within itself.

To each of the tribes, in their respective meetings, he sent by special messengers a remonstrance of the wrong that was done him, in all its aggravating circumstances, and with it a piece of his wife's dead body (Jdg 19:29), both to confirm the truth of the story and to affect them the more with it. He divided it into twelve pieces, according to the bones, so some read it, that is, by the joints, sending one to each tribe, even to Benjamin among the rest, with the hope that some among them would be moved to join in punishing so great a villany, and the more warmly because committed by some of their own tribe. It did indeed look very barbarous thus to mangle a dead body, which, having been so wretchedly dishonoured, ought to have been decently interred; but the Levite designed hereby, not only to represent their barbarous usage of his wife, whom they had better have cut in pieces thus than have used as they did, but also to express his own passionate concern and thereby to excite the like in them. And it had the desired effect. All that saw the pieces of the dead body, and were told how the matter was, expressed the same sentiments upon it.

1. That the men of Gibeah had been guilty of a very heinous piece of wickedness, the like to which had never been known before in Israel, Jdg 19:30. It was a complicated crime, loaded

and blackened with all possible aggravations. They were not such fools as to make a mock at this sin, or turn the story off with a jest.

2. That a general assembly of all Israel should be called, to debate what was fit to be done for the punishment of this wickedness, that a stop might be put to this threatening inundation of debauchery, and the wrath of God might not be poured upon the whole nation for it. It is not a common case, and therefore they stir up one another to come together upon the occasion with this: Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds. We have here the three great rules by which those that sit in council ought to go in every arduous affair.

(1.) Let every man retire into himself, and weigh the matter impartially and fully in his own thoughts, and seriously and calmly consider it, without prejudice on either side, before he speaks upon it.

(2.) Let them freely talk it over, and every man take advice of his friend, know his opinion and his reasons, and weigh them.

(3.) Then let every man speak his mind, and give his vote according to his conscience. In the multitude of such counsellors there is safety.

26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at
the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.
27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the
house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his
concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands
were upon the threshold.
28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered.
Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and
gat him unto his place.
29 And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid
hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones,
into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

30 And it was so, that all that saw it said, there was no such deed done
nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the
land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak
your minds.

Judges-20

The War against the Benjamites

1 Then all the children of Israel went out, and the congregation was
gathered together as one man, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, with
the land of Gilead, unto the Lord in Mizpeh.
2 And the chief of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel,
presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four
hundred thousand footmen that drew sword.
3 (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel
were gone up to Mizpeh.) Then said the children of Israel, Tell *us,*
how was this wickedness?
4 And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered
and said, I came into Gibeah that *belongeth* to Benjamin, I and my
concubine, to lodge.

Here is, I. A general meeting of all the congregation of Israel to examine the matter concerning the Levite's concubine, and to consider what was to be done upon it, Jdg 20:1,2. It does not appear that they were summoned by the authority of any one common head, but they came together by the consent and agreement, as it were, of one common heart, fired with a holy zeal for the honour of God and Israel.

1 The place of their meeting was Mizpeh; they gathered together unto the Lord there, for Mizpeh was so very near to Shiloh that their encampment might very well be supposed to reach from Mizpeh to Shiloh. Shiloh was a small town, and therefore, when there was a general meeting of the people to represent themselves before God, they chose Mizpeh for their head-quarters, which was the next adjoining city of note, perhaps because they were not willing to give that trouble to

Shiloh which so great an assembly would occasion, it being the resident of the priests that attended the tabernacle.

2 The persons that met were all Israel, from Dan (the city very lately so called, Jdg 18:29) in the north to Beersheba in the south, with the land of Gilead (that is, the tribes on the other side Jordan), all as one man, so unanimous were they in their concern for the public good. Here was an assembly of the people of God, not a convocation of the Levites and priests, though a Levite was the person principally concerned in the cause, but an assembly of the people, to whom the Levite referred himself with an Appello populum--I appeal to the people. The people of God were 400,000 footmen that drew the sword, that is, were armed and disciplined, and fit for service, and some of them perhaps such as had known the wars of Canaan, Jdg 3:1.

In this assembly of all Israel, the chief (or corners) of the people (for rulers are the corner-stones of the people, that keep all together) presented themselves as the representatives of the rest. They rendered themselves at their respective posts, at the head of the thousands and hundreds, the fifties and tens, over which they presided; for so much order and government, we may suppose, at least, they had among them, though they had no general or commander-in-chief. So that here was,

(1.) A general congress of the states for counsel. The chief of the people presented themselves, to lead and direct in this affair.

(2.) A general rendezvous of the militia for action, all that drew sword and were men of war (Jdg 20:17), not hirelings nor pressed men, but the best freeholders, that went at their own charge. Israel were above 600,000 when they came into Canaan, and we have reason to think they were at this time much increased, rather than diminished; but then all between twenty and sixty were military men, now we may suppose more than the one half exempted from bearing arms to

cultivate the land; so that these were as the trained bands. The militia of the two tribes and a half were 40,000 (Jos 4:13), but the tribes were many more.

II. Notice given to the tribe of Benjamin of this meeting (Jdg 20:3): They heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpeh. Probably they had a legal summons sent them to appear with their brethren, that the cause might be fairly debated, before any resolutions were taken up upon it, and so the mischiefs that followed would have been happily prevented; but the notice they had of this meeting rather hardened and exasperated them than awakened them to think of the things that belonged to their peace and honour.

III. A solemn examination of the crime charged upon the men of Gibeah. A very horrid representation of it had been made by the report of the messengers that were sent to call them together, but it was fit it should be more closely enquired into, because such things are often made worse than really they were; a committee therefore was appointed to examine the witnesses (upon oath, no doubt) and to report the matter.

It is only the testimony of the Levite himself that is here recorded, but it is probable his servant, and the old man, were examined, and gave in their testimony, for that more than one were examined appears by the original (Jdg 20:3), which is, Tell you us; and the law was that none should be put to death, much less so many, upon the testimony of one witness only. The Levite gives a particular account of the matter: that he came into Gibeah only as a traveller to lodge there, not giving the least shadow of suspicion that he designed them any ill turn (Jdg 20:4), and that the men of Gibeah, even those that were of substance among them, that should have been a protection to the stranger within their gates, riotously set upon the house where he lodged, and thought to slay him; he could not, for shame relate the demand which they, without shame, made, Jdg 19:22.

They declared their sin as Sodom, even the sin of Sodom, but his modesty would not suffer him to repeat it; it was sufficient to say they would have slain him, for he would rather have been slain than have submitted to their villany; and, if they had got him into their hands, they would have abused him to death, witness what they had done to his concubine: They have forced her that she is dead, Jdg 20:5. And, to excite in his countrymen an indignation at this wickedness, he had sent pieces of the mangled body to all the tribes, which had fetched them together to bear their testimony against the lewdness and folly committed in Israel, Jdg 20:6.

All lewdness is folly, but especially lewdness in Israel. For those to defile their own bodies who have the honourable seal of the covenant in their flesh, for those to defy the divine vengeance to whom it is so clearly revealed from heaven--Nabal is their name, and folly is with them. He concludes his declaration with an appeal to the judgment of the court (Jdg 20:7): You are all children of Israel, and therefore you know law and judgment, Es 1:13. "You are a holy people to God, and have a dread of every thing which will dishonour God and defile the land; you are of the same community, members of the same body, and therefore likely to feel from the distempers of it; you are children of Israel, that ought to take particular care of the Levites, God's tribe, among you, and therefore give your advice and counsel what is to be done."

IV. The resolution they came to hereupon, which was that, being now together, they would not disperse till they had seen vengeance taken upon this wicked city, which was the reproach and scandal of their nation. Observe,

1. Their zeal against the lewdness that was committed. They would not return to their houses, how much soever their families and their affairs at home wanted them, till they had vindicated the honour of God and Israel, and recovered with their swords, if it could not be had otherwise, that satisfaction for the crime which the justice of the nation called for, Jdg

20:8. By this they showed themselves children of Israel indeed, that they preferred the public interest before their private concerns.

2. Their prudence in sending out a considerable body of their forces to fetch provisions for the rest, Jdg 20:9,10. One of ten, and he chosen by lot, 40,000 in all, must go to their respective countries, whence they came, to fetch bread and other necessaries for the subsistence of this great army; for when they came from home they took with them provisions only for a journey to Mizpeh, not for an encampment (which might prove long) before Gibeah. This was to prevent their scattering to forage for themselves, for, if they had done this, it would have been hard to get them all together again, especially all in so good a mind. Note, When there appears in people a pious zeal for any good work it is best to strike while the iron is hot, for such zeal is apt to cool quickly if the prosecution of the work be delayed. Let it never be said that we left that good work to be done to-morrow which we could as well have done to-day.

3. Their unanimity in these counsels, and the execution of them. The resolution was voted, Nemine contradicente--Without a dissenting voice (Jdg 20:8); it was one and all; and, when it was put in execution, they were knit together as one man, Jdg 20:11. This was their glory and strength, that the several tribes had no separate interests when the common good was concerned.

5 And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, *and* thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.

6 And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

7 Behold, ye *are* all children of Israel; give here your advice and counsel.

8 And all the people arose as one man, saying, we will not any *of us* go to his tent, neither will we any *of us* turn into his house.

9 But now this *shall be* the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* by lot against it;
10 and we will take ten men of a hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and a hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victuals for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.
11 So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, knit together as one man.
12 And the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, what wickedness *is* this that is done among you?
13 Now therefore deliver *us* the men, the children of Belial, which *are* in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren the children of Israel:
14 but the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together out of the cities unto Gibeah, to go out to battle against the children of Israel.
15 And the children of Benjamin were numbered at that time out of the cities twenty and six thousand men that drew sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, which were numbered seven hundred chosen men.

Here is, I The fair and just demand which the tribes of Israel, now encamped, sent to the tribe of Benjamin, to deliver up the malefactors of Gibeah to justice, Jdg 20:12,13. If the tribe of Benjamin had come up, as they ought to have done, to the assembly, and agreed with them in their resolution, there would have been none to deal with but the men of Gibeah only, but they, by their absence, taking part with the criminals, application must be made to them all. The Israelites were zealous against the wickedness that was committed, yet they were discreet in their zeal, and did not think it would justify them in falling upon the whole tribe of Benjamin unless they, by refusing to give up the criminals, and protecting them against justice, should make themselves guilty, ex post facto--as accessaries after the fact.

They desire them to consider how great the wickedness was that was committed (Jdg 20:12), and that it was done among them: and how necessary it was therefore that they should either punish the malefactors with death themselves, according to the law of Moses, or deliver them up to the general assembly, to be so much the more publicly and solemnly punished, that evil might be put away from Israel, the national guilt removed, the infection stopped by cutting off the gangrened part, and national judgments prevented; for the sin was so very like that of the Sodomites that they might justly fear, if they did not punish it, God would rain hail from heaven upon them, as he did, not only upon Sodom, but the neighbouring cities. If the Israelites had not made this reasonable demand, they would have had much more reason to lament the following desolations of Benjamin. All methods of accommodation must be used before we go to war or go to law. The demand was like that of Joab's to Abel, 2Sa 20:20,21. "Only deliver up the traitor, and we will lay down our arms." On these terms, and no other, God will be at peace with us, that we part with our sins, that we mortify and crucify our lusts, and then all shall be well; his anger will be turned away.

II The wretched obstinacy and perverseness of the men of Benjamin, who seem to have been as unanimous and zealous in their resolutions to stand by the criminals as the rest of the tribes were to punish them, so little sense had they of their honour, duty, and interest.

1. They were so prodigiously vile as to patronise the wickedness that was committed: They would not hearken to the voice of their brethren (Jdg 20:13), either because those of that tribe were generally more vicious and debauched at this time than the rest of the tribes, and therefore would not bear to have that punished in others of which they knew themselves guilty (some of the most fruitful and pleasant parts of Canaan fell to the lot of this tribe; their land, like that of Sodom, was as the garden of the Lord, which perhaps

helped to make the inhabitants, like the men of Sodom, wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Ge 13:10,13), or because (as bishop Patrick suggests) they took it ill that the other tribes should meddle with their concerns; they would not do that which they knew was their duty because they were reminded of it by their brethren, by whom they scorned to be taught and controlled. If there were any wise men among them that would have complied with the demand made, yet they were overpowered by the majority, who thus made the crime of the men of Gibeah their own. Thus we have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness if we say A confederacy with those that have, and make ourselves guilty of other men's sins by countenancing and defending them. It seems there is no cause so bad but it will find some patrons, some advocates, to appear for it; but woe be to those by whom such offences come. Those will have a great deal to answer for that obstruct the course of necessary justice, and strengthen the hands of the wicked, by saying, O wicked man! Thou shalt not die.

2. They were so prodigiously vain and presumptuous as to make head against the united force of all Israel. Never, surely, were men so wretchedly infatuated as they were when they took up arms in opposition,

(1.) To so good a cause as Israel had. How could they expect to prosper when they fought against justice, and consequently against the just God himself, against those that had the high priest and the divine oracle on their side, and so acted in downright rebellion against the sacred and supreme authority of the nation.

(2.) To so great a force as Israel had. The disproportion of their numbers was much greater than that,: u 14:31,32, where he that had but 10,000 durst not meet him that came against him with 20,000, and therefore desired conditions of peace. There the enemy was but two to one, here above fifteen to

one; yet they despised conditions of peace. All the forces they could bring into the field were but 26,000 men, besides 700 men of Gibeah (Jdg 20:15); yet with these they will dare to face 400,000 men of Israel, Jdg 20:17. Thus sinners are infatuated to their own ruin, and provoke him to jealousy who is infinitely stronger than they, 1Co 10:22. But it should seem they depended upon the skill of their men to make up what was wanting in numbers, especially a regiment of slingers, 700 men, who, though left-handed, were so dexterous at slinging stones that they would not be a hair's breadth beside their mark, Jdg 20:16. But these good marksmen were very much out in their aim when they espoused this bad cause. Benjamin signifies the son of the right hand, yet we find his posterity left-handed.

16 Among all this people there *were* seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at a hair *breadth,* and not miss.

17 And the men of Israel, besides Benjamin, were numbered four hundred thousand men that drew sword: all these *were* men of war.

18 And the children of Israel arose, and went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, which of us shall go up first to the battle against the children of Benjamin?And the Lord said, Judah *shall go up* first.

19 And the children of Israel rose up in the morning, and encamped against Gibeah.

20 And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin; and the men of Israel put themselves in array to fight against them at Gibeah.

21 And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

We have here the defeat of the men of Israel in their first and second battle with the Benjamites.

I. Before their first engagement they asked counsel of God concerning the order of their battle and were directed, and yet they were sorely beaten. They did not think it was proper to ask of God whether they should go up at all against Benjamin (the case was plain enough, the men of Gibeah must be

punished for their wickedness, and Israel must inflict the punishment or it will not be done), but "Who shall go first?" (Jdg 20:18), that is, "Who shall be general of our army?" for, which soever tribe was appointed to go first, the prince of that tribe must be looked upon as commander-in-chief of the whole body. For, if they had meant it of the order of their march only, it would have been proper to ask, "Who shall go next?" and then, "Who next?" But, if they know that Judah must go first, they know they must all observe the orders of the prince of that tribe. This honour was done to Judah because our Lord Jesus was to spring from that tribe, who was in all things to have the pre-eminence.

The tribe that went up first had the most honourable post, but withal the most dangerous, and probably lost most in the engagement. Who would strive for precedency that sees the peril of it? Yet though Judah, that strong and valiant tribe, goes up first, and all the tribes of Israel attend them, little Benjamin (so he is called, Ps 68:27), is too hard for them all. The whole army lays siege to Gibeah, Jdg 20:19. The Benjamites advance to raise the siege, and the army prepares to give them a warm reception, Jdg 20:20. But between the Benjamites that attacked them in the front with incredible fury, and the men of Gibeah that sallied out upon their rear, they were put into confusion and lost 22,000 men, Jdg 20:21. Here were no prisoners taken, for there was no quarter given, but all put to the sword.

II. Before their second engagement they again asked counsel of God, and more solemnly than before; for they wept before the Lord until evening (Jdg 20:23), lamenting the loss of so many brave men, especially as it was a token of God's displeasure and would give occasion to the Benjamites to triumph in the success of their wickedness. Also at this time they did not ask who should go up first, but whether they should go up at all. The intimate a reason why they should scruple to do it, especially now that Providence had frowned upon them, because Benjamin was their brother, and a

readiness to lay down their arms if God should so order them. God bade them go up; he allowed the attempt, for, though Benjamin was their brother, he was a gangrened member of their body and must be cut off.

Upon this they encouraged themselves, perhaps more in their own strength than in the divine commission, and made a second attempt upon the forces of the rebels, in the same place where the former battle was fought (Jdg 20:22), with the hope of retrieving their credit upon the same spot of ground where they had lost it, which they would not superstitiously change, as if there were any thing unlucky in the place. But they were this second time repulsed, with the loss of 18,000 men, Jdg 20:25. The former day's loss and this amounted to 40,000, which was just a tenth part of the whole army, and the same number that they had drawn out by lot to fetch victuals, Jdg 20:10. They decimated themselves for that service, and now God again decimated them for the slaughter. But what shall we say to these things, that so just and honourable a cause should thus be put to the worst once and again? Were they not fighting God's battle against sin? Had they not his commission? What, and yet miscarry thus!

1. God's judgments are a great deep, and his way is in the sea. Clouds and darkness are often round about him, but judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne. We may be sure of the righteousness, when we cannot see the reasons, of God's proceedings.

2. God would hereby show them, and us in them, that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, that we are not to confide in numbers, which perhaps the Israelites did with too much assurance. We must never lay the weight on an arm of flesh, which only the Rock of ages will bear.

3. God designed hereby to correct Israel for their sins. They did well to show such a zeal against the wickedness of Gibeah: but were there not with them, even with them, sins

against the Lord their God? Those must be made to know their own iniquity that are forward in condemning the iniquity of others. Some think it was a rebuke to them for not witnessing against the idolatry of Micah and the Danites, by which their religion was corrupted, as they now did against the lewdness of Gibeah and the Benjamites, by which the public peace was disturbed, though God had particularly ordered them to levy war upon idolaters, De 13:12-18, &c.

4. God would hereby teach us not to think it strange if a good cause should suffer defeat fore a while, nor to judge of the merits of it by the success of it. The interest of grace in the heart, and of religion in the world, may be foiled, and suffer great loss, and seem to be quite run down, but judgment will be brought forth to victory at last. Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello--We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole campaign. Right may fall, but it shall arise.

22 And the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array in the place where they put themselves in array the first day.

23 (And the children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until even, and asked counsel of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother? And the Lord said, Go up against him.)

24 And the children of Israel came near against the children of Benjamin the second day.

25 And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

26 Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

27 And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, (for the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days,

28 and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the

children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease?And the Lord
said, Go up; for tomorrow I will deliver them into thine hand.
29 And Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah.
30 And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin
on the third day, and put themselves in array against Gibeah, as at
other times.
31 And the children of Benjamin went out against the people, *and*
were drawn away from the city; and they began to smite of the
people, *and* kill, as at other times, in the highways, of which one
goeth up to the house of God, and the other to Gibeah in the field,
about thirty men of Israel.
32 And the children of Benjamin said, they *are* smitten down before
us, as at the first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee, and
draw them from the city unto the highways.
33 And all the men of Israel rose up out of their place, and put
themselves in array at Baal-tamar: and the liers in wait of Israel
came forth out of their places, *even* out of the meadows of Gibeah.
34 And there came against Gibeah ten thousand chosen men out of all
Israel, and the battle was sore: but they knew not that evil *was* near
them.
35 And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of
Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day twenty and five
thousand and a hundred men: all these drew the sword.
36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were smitten: for the
men of Israel gave place to the Benjamites, because they trusted
unto the liers in wait which they had set beside Gibeah.
37 And the liers in wait hasted, and rushed upon Gibeah; and the liers
in wait drew themselves along, and smote all the city with the edge
of the sword.
38 Now there was an appointed sign between the men of Israel and
the liers in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke
rise up out of the city.

We have here a full account of the complete victory which the Israelites obtained over the Benjamites in the third engagement: the righteous cause was victorious at last, when the managers of it amended what had been amiss; for, when a good cause suffers, it is for want of good management.

Observe then how the victory was obtained, and how it was pursued.

I. How the victory was obtained. Two things they had trusted too much to in the former engagements--the goodness of their cause and the superiority of their numbers. It was true that they had both right and strength on their side, which were great advantages; but they depended too much upon them, to the neglect of those duties to which now, this third time, when they see their error, they apply themselves.

1. They were previously so confident of the goodness of their cause that they thought it needless to address themselves to God for his presence and blessing. They took it for granted that God would bless them, nay, perhaps they concluded that he owed them his favour, and could not in justice withhold it, since it was in defence of virtue that they appeared and took up arms. But God having shown them that he was under no obligation to prosper their enterprise, that he neither needed them nor was tied to them, that they were more indebted to him for the honour of being ministers of his justice than he to them for the service, now they became humble petitioners for success. Before they only consulted God's oracle, Who shall go up first? And, Shall we go up? But now they implored his favour, fasted and prayed, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings (Jdg 20:26), to make an atonement for sin and an acknowledgment of their dependence upon God, and as an expression of their desire towards him. We cannot expect the presence of God with us, unless we thus seek it in the way he has appointed. And when they were in this frame, and thus sought the Lord, then he not only ordered them to go up against the Benjamites the third time, but gave them a promise of victory: Tomorrow I will deliver them into thy hand, Jdg 20:28.

2. They were previously so confident of the greatness of their strength that they thought it needless to use any art, to lay any ambush, or form a stratagem, not doubting but to conquer

purely by a strong hand; but now they saw it was requisite to use some policy, as if they had an enemy to deal with them that had been superior in number; accordingly, they set liers in wait (Jdg 20:29), and gained their point, as their fathers did before Ai (Jos 8:1-35), stratagems of that kind being most likely to take effect after a previous defeat, which has flushed the enemy, and made the pretended flight the less suspected. The management of this artifice is here very largely described. The assurance God had given them of success in this day's action, instead of making them remiss and presumptuous, set all heads and hands on work for the effecting of what God had promised.

(1.) Observe the method they took. The body of the army faced the city of Gibeah, as they had done before, advancing towards the gates, Jdg 20:30. The Benjamites, the body of whose army was now quartered at Gibeah, sallied out upon them, and charged them with great bravery. The besiegers gave back, retired with precipitation, as if their hearts failed them upon the sight of the Benjamites, which they were willing to believe, proudly imagining that by their former success they had made themselves very formidable. Some loss the Israelites sustained in this counterfeit flight, about thirty men being cut off in their rear, Jdg 20:31,39. But, when the Benjamites were all drawn out of the city, the ambush seized the city (Jdg 20:37), gave a signal to the body of the army (Jdg 20:38,40), which immediately turned upon them (Jdg 20:41), and, it should seem, another considerable party that was posted at Baal-tamar came upon them at the same time (Jdg 20:33); so that the Benjamites were quite surrounded, which put them into the greatest consternation that could be.

A sense of guilt now disheartened them, and the higher their hopes had been raised the more grievous was this confusion. At first the battle was sore (Jdg 20:34), the Benjamites fought with fury; but, when they saw what a snare they were drawn

into, they thought one pair of heels (as we say) was worth two pair of hands, and they made the best of their way towards the wilderness (Jdg 20:42); but in vain: the battle overtook them, and, to complete their distress, those who came out of the cities of Israel, that waited to see the event of the battle, joined with their pursuers, and helped to cut them off. Every man's hand was against them.

(2.) Observe in this story,

[1.] That the Benjamites, in the beginning of the battle, were confident that the day was their own: They are smitten down before us, Jdg 20:32,39. Sometimes God suffers wicked men to be lifted up in successes and hopes, that their fall may be the sorer. See how short their joy is, and their triumphing but for a moment. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast, except he has reason to boast in God.

[2.] Evil was near them and they did not know it, Jdg 20:34. But (Jdg 20:41) they saw, when it was too late to prevent it, that evil had come upon them. What evils may at any time be near us we cannot tell, but the less they are feared the heavier they fall. Sinners will not be persuaded to see evil near them, but how dreadful will it be when it comes and there is no escaping! 1Th 5:3.

[3.] Though the men of Israel played their parts so well in this engagement, yet the victory is ascribed to God (Jdg 20:35): The Lord smote Benjamin before Israel. The battle was his, and so was the success. [4.] They trode down the men of Benjamin with ease when God fought against them, Jdg 20:43. It is an easy thing to trample upon those who have made God their enemy. See Mal 4:3.

II. How the victory was prosecuted and improved in a military execution done upon these sinners against their own souls.

1. Gibeah itself, that nest of lewdness, was destroyed in the first place. The ambush that entered the city by surprise drew themselves along, that is, dispersed themselves into the several parts of it, which they might easily do, now that all the men of war had sallied out and very presumptuously left it defenceless; and they smote all they found, even women and children, with the sword (Jdg 20:37), and set fire to the city, Jdg 20:40. Sin brings ruin upon cities.

2 The army in the field was quite routed and cut off: 18,000 men of valour lay dead upon the spot, Jdg 20:44.

3. Those that escaped from the field were pursued, and cut off in their flight, to the number of 7000, Jdg 20:45. It is to no purpose to think of out-running divine vengeance. Evil pursues sinners, and it will overtake them.

4. Even those that tarried at home were involved in the ruin. They let their sword devour for ever, not considering that it would be bitterness in the latter end, as Abner pleads long after, when he was at the head of an army of Benjamites, probably with an eye to this very story, 2Sa 2:25,26. They put to the sword all that breathed, and set fire to all the cities, Jdg 20:48. So that of all the tribe of Benjamin, for aught that appears, there remained none alive but 600 men that took shelter in the rock Rimmon, and lay close there four months, Jdg 20:47. Now,

(1.) It is difficult to justify this severity as it was Israel's act. The whole tribe of Benjamin was culpable; but must they therefore be treated as devoted Canaanites? That it was done in the heat of war, that this was the way of prosecuting victories which the sword of Israel had been accustomed to, that the Israelites were extremely exasperated against the Benjamites for the slaughter they had made among them in the two former engagements, will go but a little way to excuse the cruelty of this execution. It is true they had sworn that whosoever did not come up to Mizpeh should be put to death,

Jdg 21:5. But that, if it was a justifiable oath, yet extended only to the men of war; the rest were not expected to come. Yet,

(2.) It is easy to justify the hand of God in it. Benjamin had sinner against him, and God had threatened that, if they forgot him, they should perish as the nations that were before them perished (De 8:20), who were all in this manner cut off.

(3.) It is easy likewise to improve it for warning against the beginnings of sin: they are like the letting forth of water, therefore leave it off before it be meddled with, for we know not what will be in the end thereof. The eternal ruin of souls will be worse, and more fearful, than all these desolations of a tribe. This affair of Gibeah is twice spoken of by the prophet Hosea as the beginning of the corruption of Israel and a pattern to all that followed (Ho 9:9): They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah; and (Ho 10:9), Thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah; and it is added that the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not (that is, did not at first) overtake them.

39 And when the men of Israel retired in the battle, Benjamin began
to smite *and* kill of the men of Israel about thirty persons: for they
said, surely they are smitten down before us, as *in* the first battle.
40 But when the flame began to arise up out of the city with a pillar of
smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and, behold, the flame
of the city ascended up to heaven.
41 And when the men of Israel turned again, the men of Benjamin
were amazed: for they saw that evil was come upon them.
42 Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel unto the
way of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them; and them
which came out of the cities they destroyed in the midst of them.
43 *Thus* they inclosed the Benjamites round about, *and* chased them,
and trode them down with ease over against Gibeah toward the
sunrising.
44 And there fell of Benjamin eighteen thousand men; all these *were*
men of valor.
45 And they turned and fled toward the wilderness unto the rock of

Rimmon: and they gleaned of them in the highways five thousand men; and pursued hard after them unto Gidom, and slew two thousand men of them.

46 So that all which fell that day of Benjamin were twenty and five thousand men that drew the sword; all these *were* men of valor.

47 But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.

48 And the men of Israel turned again upon the children of Benjamin, and smote them with the edge of the sword, as well the men of *every* city, as the beast, and all that came to hand: also they set on fire all the cities that they came to.

Judges-21

Wives for the Benjamites

1 Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

2 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;

3 and said, O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be today one tribe lacking in Israel?

4 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

5 And the children of Israel said, who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the Lord?For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the Lord to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother, and said, there is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing we have sworn by the Lord, that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

We may observe in these verses,

I The ardent zeal which the Israelites had expressed against the wickedness of the men of Gibeah, as it was countenanced

by the tribe of Benjamin. Occasion is here given to mention two instances of their zeal on this occasion, which we did not meet with before:--

1. While the general convention of the states was gathering together, and was waiting for a full house before they would proceed, they bound themselves with the great execration, which they called the Cherum, utterly to destroy all those cities that should not send in their representatives and their quota of men upon this occasion, or had sentenced those to that curse who should thus refuse (Jdg 21:5); for they would look upon such refusers as having no indignation at the crime committed, no concern for the securing of the nation from God's judgments by the administration of justice, nor any regard to the authority of a common consent, by which they were summoned to meet.

2. When they had met and heard the cause they made another solemn oath that none of all the thousands of Israel then present, nor any of those whom they represented (not intending to bind their posterity), should, if they could help it, marry a daughter to a Benjamite, Jdg 21:1. This was made an article of the war, not with any design to extirpate the tribe, but because in general they would treat those who were then actors and abettors of this villany in all respects as they treated the devoted nations of Canaan, whom they were not only obliged to destroy, but with whom they were forbidden to marry; and because, in particular, they judged those unworthy to match with a daughter of Israel that had been so very barbarous and abusive to one of the tender sex, than which nothing could be done more base and villainous, nor a more certain indication given of a mind perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. We may suppose that the Levite's sending the mangled pieces of his wife's body to the several tribes helped very much to inspire them with all this fury, and much more than a bare narrative of the fact, though ever so well attested, would have done, so much does the eye affect the heart.

II The deep concern which the Israelites did express for the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin when it was accomplished. Observe,

1 The tide of their anger at Benjamin's crime did not run so high and so strong before but the tide of their grief for Benjamin's destruction ran as high and as strong after: They repented for Benjamin their brother, Jdg 21:6,15. They did not repent of their zeal against the sin; there is a holy indignation against sin, the fruit of godly sorrow, which is to salvation, not to be repented of, 2Co 7:10,11. But they repented of the sad consequences of what they had done, that they had carried the matter further than was either just or necessary. It would have been enough to destroy all they found in arms; they needed not to have cut off the husbandmen and shepherds, the women and children. Note,

(1.) There may be over-doing in well-doing. Great care must be taken in the government of our zeal, lest that which seemed supernatural in its causes prove unnatural in its effects. That is no good divinity which swallows up humanity. Many a war is ill ended which was well begun.

(2.) Even necessary justice is to be done with compassion. God does not punish with delight, nor should men.

(3.) Strong passions make work for repentance. What we say and do in a heat our calmer thoughts commonly wish undone again.

(4.) In a civil war (according to the usage of the Romans) no victories ought to be celebrated with triumphs, because, which soever side gets, the community loses, as here there is a tribe cut off from Israel. What the better is the body for one member's crushing another? Now,

2. How did they express their concern?

(1.) By their grief for the breach that was made. They came to the house of God, for thither they brought all their doubts, all their counsels, all their cares, and all their sorrows. There was to be heard on this occasion, not the voice of joy and praise, but only that of lamentation, and mourning, and woe: They lifted up their voices and wept sore (Jdg 21:2), not so much for the 40,000 whom they had lost (these would not be so much missed out of eleven tribes), but for the entire destruction of one whole tribe; for this was the complaint they poured out before God (Jdg 21:3): There is one tribe lacking. God had taken care of every tribe; their number twelve was that which they were known by; every tribe had his station appointed in the camp, and his stone in the high priest's breast-plate; every tribe had his blessing both from Jacob and Moses; and it would be an intolerable reproach to them if they should drop any out of this illustrious jury, and lose one out of twelve, especially Benjamin, the youngest, who was particularly dear to Jacob their common ancestor, and whom all the rest ought to have been in a particular manner tender of. Benjamin is not; what then will become of Jacob? Benjamin is become a Benoni, the son of the right hand a son of sorrow! In this trouble they built an altar, not in competition, but in communion with the appointed altar at the door of the tabernacle, which was not large enough to contain all the sacrifices they designed; for they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, to give thanks for their victory, yet to atone for their own folly in the pursuit of it, and to implore the divine favour in their present strait. Every thing that grieves us should bring us to God.

(2.) By their amicable treaty with the poor distressed refugees that were hidden in the rock Rimmon, to whom they sent an act of indemnity, assuring them, upon the public faith, that they would now no longer treat them as enemies, but receive them as brethren, Jdg 21:13. The falling out of friends should thus be the renewing of friendship. Even those that have

sinned, if at length they repent, must be forgiven and comforted, 2Co 2:7.

(3.) By the care they took to provide wives for them, that their tribe might be built up again, and the ruins of it repaired. Had the men of Israel sought themselves, they would have been secretly pleased with the extinguishing of the families of Benjamin, because then the land allotted to them would escheat to the rest of the tribes, ob defectum sanguinis--for want of heirs, and be easily seized for want of occupants; but those have not the spirit of Israelites who aim to raise themselves upon the ruins of their neighbours. They were so far from any design of this kind that all heads were at work to find out ways and means for the rebuilding of this tribe. All the women and children of Benjamin were slain: they had sworn not to marry their daughters to any of them; it was against the divine law that they should match with the Canaanites; to oblige them to that would be, in effect, to bid them go and serve other gods. What must they do then for wives for them? While the poor distressed Benjamites that were hidden in the rock feared their brethren were contriving to ruin them, they were at the same time upon a project to prefer them; and it was this:--

[1.] There was a piece of necessary justice to be done upon the city of Jabesh-Gilead, which belonged to the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. It was found upon looking over the muster-roll (which was taken, Jdg 20:2) that none appeared from that city upon the general summons (Jdg 21:8,9), and it was then resolved, before it appeared who were absent, that whatever city of Israel should be guilty of such a contempt of the public authority and interest that city should be an anathema; Jabesh-Gilead lies under that severe sentence, which might by no means be dispensed with. Those that had spared the Canaanites in many places, who were devoted to destruction by the divine command, could not find in their hearts to spare their brethren that were devoted by their own curse.

Why did they not now send men to root the Jebusites out of Jerusalem, to avoid whom the poor Levite had been forced to go to Gibeah? Jdg 19:11,12. Men are commonly more zealous to support their own authority than God's. A detachment is therefore sent of 12,000 men, to execute the sentence upon Jabesh-Gilead. Having found that when the whole body of the army went against Gibeah the people were thought too many for God to deliver them into their hands, on this expedition they sent but a few, Jdg 21:10. Their commission is to put all to the sword, men, women, and children (Jdg 21:11), according to that law (Le 27:29), Whatsoever is devoted of men, by those that have power to do it, shall surely be put to death.

[2.] An expedient is hence formed for providing the Benjamites with wives. When Moses sent the same number of men to avenge the Lord on Midian, the same orders were given as here, that all married women should be slain with their husbands, as one with them, but that the virgins should be saved alive, 31:17,18. That precedent was sufficient to support the distinction here made between a wife and a virgin, Jdg 21:11,12. 400 virgins that were marriageable were found in Jabesh-Gilead, and these were married to so many of the surviving Benjamites, Jdg 21:14. Their fathers were not present when the vow was made not to marry with Benjamites, so that they were not under any colour of obligation by it: and besides, being a prey taken in war, they were at the disposal of the conquerors. Perhaps the alliance now contracted between Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead made Saul, who was a Benjamite, the more concerned for that place (1Sa 11:4), though then inhabited by new families.

8 And they said, what one *is there* of the tribes of Israel that came
not up to Mizpeh to the Lord? And, behold, there came none to
the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly.
9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, *there were* none of the
inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead there.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest, and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this is the thing that ye shall do, ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins, that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan.

13 And the whole congregation sent *some* to speak to the children of Benjamin that *were* in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the Lord had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

16 Then the elders of the congregation said, how shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

17 And they said, *There must be* an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.

We have here the method that was taken to provide the 200 Benjamites that remained with wives. And, though the tribe was reduced to a small number, they were only in care to provide each man with one wife, not with more under pretence of multiplying them the faster. They may not bestow their daughters upon them, but to save their oath, and yet marry some of their daughters to them, they put them into a way of taking them by surprise, and marrying them, which should be ratified by their parents' consent, ex post facto--afterwards. The less consideration is used before the making of a vow, the more, commonly, there is need of afterwards for the keeping of it.

I. That which gave an opportunity for the doing of this was a public ball at Shiloh, in the fields, at which all the young

ladies of that city and the parts adjacent that were so disposed met to dance, in honour of a feast of the Lord then observed, probably the feast of tabernacles (Jdg 21:19), for that feast (bishop Patrick says) was the only season wherein the Jewish virgins were allowed to dance, and that not so much for their own recreation as to express their holy joy, as David when he danced before the ark, otherwise the present melancholy posture of public affairs would have made dancing unseasonable, as Isa 22:12,13. The dancing was very modest and chaste. It was not mixed dancing; no men danced with these daughters of Shiloh, nor did any married women so far forget their gravity as to join with them. However their dancing thus in public made them an easy prey to those that had a design upon them, whence bishop Hall observes that the ambushes of evil spirits carry away many souls from dancing to a fearful desolation.

II The elders of Israel gave authority to the Benjamites to do this, to lie in wait in the vineyards which surrounded the green they used to dance on, and, when they were in the midst of their sport, to come upon them, and catch every man a wife for himself, and carry them straight away to their own country, Jdg 21:20,21. They knew that none of their own daughters would be there, so that the parents of these virgins could not be said to give them, for they knew nothing of the matter. A sorry salvo is better than none, to save the breaking of an oath: it were much better to be cautious in making vows, that there be not occasion afterwards, as there was here, to say before the angel that it was an error. Here was a very preposterous way of match-making, when both the mutual affection of the young people and the consent of the parents must be presumed to come after; the case was extraordinary, and may by no means be drawn into a precedent.

Over hasty marriages often occasion a leisurely repentance; and what comfort can be expected from a match made either by force or fraud? The virgins of Jabesh-Gilead were taken out of the midst of blood and slaughter, but these of Shiloh

out of the midst of mirth and joy; the former had reason to be thankful that they had their lives for a prey, and the latter, it is to be hoped, had no cause to complain, after a while, when they found themselves matched, not to men of broken and desperate fortunes, as they seemed to be, who were lately fetched out of a cave, but to men of the best and largest estates in the nation, as they must needs be when the lot of the whole tribe of Benjamin, which consisted of 45,600 men (Nu 26:41), came to be divided again among 600, who had all by survivorship.

III. They undertook to pacify the fathers of these young women. As to the infringement of their paternal authority, they would easily forgive it when they considered to what fair estates their daughters were matched and what mothers in Israel they were likely to be; but the oath they were bound by, not to give their daughters to Benjamites, might perhaps stick with some of them, whose consciences were tender, yet, as to that, this might satisfy them:--

1. That the necessity was urgent (Jdg 21:22): We reserved not to each man his wife, owning now that they did ill to destroy all the women, and desiring to atone for their too rigorous construction of their vow to destroy them by the most favourable construction of their vow not to match with them. "And therefore for our sakes, who were too severe, let them keep what they have got." For,

2. In strictness it was not a breach of their vow; they had sworn not to give them their daughters, but they had not sworn to fetch them back if they were forcibly taken, so that if there was any fault the elders must be responsible, not the parents. And Quod fieri non debuit, factum valet--That which ought not to have been done is yet valid when it is done. The thing was done, and is ratified only by connivance, according to the law, Nu 30:4.

Lastly, In the close of all we have, 1 The settling of the tribe of Benjamin again. The few that remained returned to the inheritance of that tribe, Jdg 21:23. And soon after from among them sprang Ehud, who was famous in his generation, the second judge of Israel, Jdg 3:15. 2 The disbanding and dispersing of the army of Israel, Jdg 21:24. They did not set up for a standing army, nor pretend to make any alterations or establishments in the government; but when the affair was over for which they were called together, they quietly departed in God's peace, every man to his family. Public services must not make us think ourselves above our own private affairs and the duty of providing for our own house. 3. A repetition of the cause of these confusions, Jdg 21:25. Though God was their King, every man would be his own master, as if there was no king. Blessed be God for magistracy.

18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed *be* he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

19 Then they said, Behold, *there is* a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly, *in a place* which *is* on the north side of Beth-el, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Beth-el to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

21 and see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances, then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, that we will say unto them, Be favorable unto them for our sakes: because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war: for ye did not give unto them at this time, *that* ye should be guilty.

23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took *them* wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught: and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man
to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every
man to his inheritance.
25 In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which*
was right in his own eyes.

The Book of Ruth
[Ruth]

Ruth-1

Ruth and Naomi

1 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was
a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to
sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.
2 And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife
Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion,
Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of
Moab, and continued there.

The first words give all the date we have of this story. It was in the days when the judges ruled (Ru 1:1), not in those disorderly times when there was no king in Israel; but under which of the judges these things happened we are not told, and the conjectures of the learned are very uncertain. It must have been towards the beginning of the judges' time, for Boaz, who married Ruth, was born of Rahab, who received the spies in Joshua's time. Some think it was in the days of Ehud, others of Deborah; the learned bishop Patrick inclines to think it was in the days of Gideon, because in his days only we read of a famine by the Midianites' invasion, Jdg 6:3,4. While the judges were ruling, some one city and some another, Providence takes particular cognizance of Bethlehem, and has an eye to a King, to Messiah himself, who should descend from two Gentile mothers, Rahab and Ruth. Here is,

I. A famine in the land, in the land of Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey. This was one of the judgments which God had threatened to bring upon them for their sins, Le 26:19,20. He has many arrows in his quiver. In the days of the judges they were oppressed by their enemies; and, when by that judgment they were not reformed, God tried this, for

when he judges he will overcome. When the land had rest, yet it had not plenty; even in Bethlehem, which signifies the house of bread, there was scarcity. A fruitful land is turned into barrenness, to correct and restrain the luxury and wantonness of those that dwell therein.

II. An account of one particular family distressed in the famine; it is that of Elimelech. His name signifies my God a king, agreeable to the state of Israel when the judges ruled, for the Lord was their King, and comfortable to him and his family in their affliction, that God was theirs and that he reigns for ever. His wife was Naomi, which signifies my amiable or pleasant one. But his sons' names were Mahlon and Chilion, sickness and consumption, perhaps because weakly children, and not likely to be long-lived. Such are the productions of our pleasant things, weak and infirm, fading and dying.

III. The removal of this family from Bethlehem into the country of Moab on the other side Jordan, for subsistence, because of the famine, Ru 1:1,2. It seems there was plenty in the country of Moab when there was scarcity of bread in the land of Israel. Common gifts of providence are often bestowed in greater plenty upon those that are strangers to God than upon those that know and worship him. Moab is at ease from his youth, while Israel is emptied from vessel to vessel (Jer 48:11), not because God loves Moabites better, but because they have their portion in this life. Thither Elimelech goes, not to settle for ever, but to sojourn for a time, during the dearth, as Abraham, on a similar occasion, went into Egypt, and Isaac into the land of the Philistines. Now here, 1. Elimelech's care to provide for his family, and his taking his wife and children with him, were without doubt commendable. If any provide not for his own, he hath denied the faith, 1Ti 5:8. When he was in his straits he did not forsake his house, go seek his fortune himself, and leave his wife and children to shift for their own maintenance; but, as became a tender husband and a loving father, where he went he took them with him, not as the ostrich, Job 39:16. But, 2. I see not how his removal into

the country of Moab, upon this occasion, could be justified. Abraham and Isaac were only sojourners in Canaan, and it was agreeable to their condition to remove; but the seed of Israel were now fixed, and ought not to remove into the territories of the heathen. What reason had Elimelech to go more than any of his neighbours? If by any ill husbandry he had wasted his patrimony, and sold his land or mortgaged it (as it should seem, Ru 4:3,4), which brought him in to a more necessitous condition than others, the law of God would have obliged his neighbours to relieve him (Le 25:35); but that was not his case, for he went out full, Ru 1:21. By those who tarried at home it appears that the famine was not so extreme but that there was sufficient to keep life and soul together; and his charge was but small, only two sons. But if he could not be content with the short allowance that his neighbours took up with, and in the day of famine could not be satisfied unless he kept as plentiful a table as he had done formerly, if he could not live in hope that there would come years of plenty again in due time, or could not with patience wait for those years, it was his fault, and he did by it dishonour God and the good land he had given them, weaken the hands of his brethren, with whom he should have been willing to take his lot, and set an ill example to others. If all should do as he did Canaan would be dispeopled. Note, It is an evidence of a discontented, distrustful, unstable spirit, to be weary of the place in which God hath set us, and to be for leaving it immediately whenever we meet with any uneasiness or inconvenience in it. It is folly to think of escaping that cross which, being laid in our way, we ought to take up. It is our wisdom to make the best of that which is, for it is seldom that changing our place is mending it. Or, if he would remove, why to the country of Moab? If he had made enquiry, it is probable he would have found plenty in some of the tribes of Israel, those, for instance, on the other side Jordan, that bordered on the land of Moab; if he had had that zeal for God and his worship, and that affection for his brethren which became an Israelite, he would not have persuaded himself so easily to go and sojourn among Moabites.

IV. The marriage of his two sons to two of the daughters of Moab after his death, Ru 1:4. All agree that this was ill done. The Chaldee says, They transgressed the decree of the word of the Lord in taking strange wives. If they would not stay unmarried till their return to the land of Israel, they were not so far off but that they might have fetched themselves wives thence. Little did Elimelech think, when he went to sojourn in Moab, that ever his sons would thus join in affinity with Moabites. But those that bring young people into bad acquaintance, and take them out of the way of public ordinances, though they may think them well-principled and armed against temptation, know not what they do, nor what will be the end thereof. It does not appear that the women they married were proselyted to the Jewish religion, for Orpah is said to return to her gods (Ru 1:15); the gods of Moab were hers still. It is a groundless tradition of the Jews that Ruth was the daughter of Eglon king of Moab, yet the Chaldee paraphrast inserts it; but this and their other tradition, which he inserts likewise, cannot agree, that Boaz who married Ruth was the same with Ibzan, who judged Israel 200 years after Eglon's death, Jdg 12:8-10

V. The death of Elimelech and his two sons, and the disconsolate condition Naomi was thereby reduced to. Her husband died (Ru 1:3) and her two sons (Ru 1:5) soon after their marriage, and the Chaldee says, Their days were shortened, because they transgressed the law in marrying strange wives. See here,

1. That wherever we go we cannot out-run death, whose fatal arrows fly in all places.

2. That we cannot expect to prosper when we go out of the way of our duty. He that will save his life by any indirect course shall lose it.

3. That death, when it comes into a family, often makes breach upon breach. One is taken away to prepare another to follow soon after; one is taken away, and that affliction is not duly improved, and therefore God sends another of the same kind. When Naomi had lost her husband she took so much the more complacency and put so much the more confidence in her sons. Under the shadow of these surviving comforts she thinks she shall live among the heathen, and exceedingly glad she was of these gourds; but behold they wither presently, green and growing up in the morning, cut down and dried up before night, buried soon after they were married, for neither of them left any children.

So uncertain and transient are all our enjoyments here. It is therefore our wisdom to make sure of those comforts that will be made sure and of which death cannot rob us. But how desolate was the condition, and how disconsolate the spirit, of poor Naomi, when the woman was left of her two sons and her husband! When these two things, loss of children and widowhood, come upon her in a moment, come upon her in their perfection, by whom shall she be comforted? Isa 47:9,51:19. It is God alone who has wherewithal to comfort those who are thus cast down.

3 And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

4 And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelt there about ten years.

5 And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.

6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her
mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with
the dead, and with me.
9 The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of
her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and
wept.
10 And they said unto her, surely we will return with thee unto thy
people.
11 And Naomi said, turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with
me? *Are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your
husbands?

See here, I The good affection Naomi bore to the land of Israel, Ru 1:6. Though she could not stay in it while the famine lasted, she would not stay out of it when the famine ceased. Though the country of Moab had afforded her shelter and supply in a time of need, yet she did not intend it should be her rest for ever; no land should be that but the holy land, in which the sanctuary of God was, of which he had said, This is my rest for ever. Observe,

1. God, at last, returned in mercy to his people; for, though he contend long, he will not contend always. As the judgment of oppression, under which they often groaned in the time of the judges, still came to an end, after a while, when God had raised them up a deliverer, so here the judgment of famine: At length God graciously visited his people in giving them bread. Plenty is God's gift, and it is his visitation which by bread, the staff of life, holds our souls in life. Though this mercy be the more striking when it comes after famine, yet if we have constantly enjoyed it, and never knew what famine meant, we are not to think it the less valuable.

2. Naomi then returned, in duty to her people. She had often enquired of their state, what harvests they had and how the markets went, and still the tidings were discouraging; but like the prophet's servant, who, having looked seven times and seen no sign of rain, at length discerned a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, which soon overspread the heavens, so Naomi

at last has good news brought her of plenty in Bethlehem, and then she can think of no other than returning thither again. Hew new alliances in the country of Moab could not make her forget her relation to the land of Israel. Note, Though there be a reason for our being in bad places, yet, when the reason ceases, we must by no means continue in them. Forced absence from God's ordinances, and forced presence with wicked people, are great afflictions; but when the force ceases, and such a situation is continued of choice, then it becomes a great sin. It should seem she began to think of returning immediately upon the death of her two sons,

(1.) Because she looked upon that affliction to be a judgment upon her family for lingering in the country of Moab; and hearing this to be the voice of the rod, and of him that appointed it, she obeys and returns. Had she returned upon the death of her husband, perhaps she might have saved the life of her sons; but, when God judgeth he will overcome, and, if one affliction prevail not to awaken us to a sight and sense of sin and duty, another shall. When death comes into a family it ought to be improved for the reforming of what is amiss in the family: when relations are taken away from us we are put upon enquiry whether, in some instance or other, we are not out of the way of our duty, that we may return to it. God calls our sins to remembrance, when he slays a son, 1Ki 17:18. And, if he thus hedge up our way with thorns, it is that he may oblige us to say, We will go and return to our first husband, as Naomi here to her country, Ho 2:7.

(2.) Because the land of Moab had now become a melancholy place to her. It is with little pleasure that she can breathe in that air in which her husband and sons had expired, or go on that ground in which they lay buried out of her sight, but not out of her thoughts; now she will go to Canaan again. Thus God takes away from us the comforts we stay ourselves too much upon and solace ourselves too much in, here in the land of our sojourning, that we may think more of our home in the

other world, and by faith and hope may hasten towards it. Earth is embittered to us, that heaven may be endeared.

II The good affection which her daughters-in-law, and one of them especially, bore to her, and her generous return of their good affection.

1. They were both so kind as to accompany her, some part of the way at least, when she returned towards the land of Judah. Her two daughters-in-law did not go about to persuade her to continue in the land of Moab, but, if she was resolved to go home, would pay her all possible civility and respect at parting; and this was one instance of it: they would bring her on her way, at least to the utmost limits of their country, and help her to carry her luggage as far as they went, for it does not appear that she had any servant to attend her, Ru 1:7.

By this we see both that Naomi, as became an Israelite, had been very kind and obliging to them and had won their love, in which she is an example to all mothers-in-law, and that Orpah and Ruth had a just sense of her kindness, for they were willing to return it thus far. It was a sign they had dwelt together in unity, though those were dead by whom the relation between them came. Though they retained an affection for the gods of Moab (Ru 1:15), and Naomi was still faithful to the God of Israel, yet that was no hindrance to either side from love and kindness, and all the good offices that the relation required. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are too often at variance (Mt 10:35), and therefore it is the more commendable if they live in love; let all who sustain this relation aim at the praise of doing so.

2. When they had gone a little way with her Naomi, with a great deal of affection, urged them to go back (Ru 1:8,9): Return each to her mother's house. When they were dislodged by a sad providence from the house of their husbands it was a mercy to them that they had their parents yet living, that they had their houses to go to, where they might be welcome and

easy, and were not turned out to the wide world. Naomi suggests that their own mothers would be more agreeable to them than a mother-in-law, especially when their own mothers had houses and their mother-in-law was not sure she had a place to lay her head in which she could call her own. She dismisses them,

(1.) With commendation. This is a debt owing to those who have conducted themselves well in any relation, they ought to have the praise of it: You have dealt kindly with the dead and with me, that is, "You were good wives to your husbands that are gone, and have been good daughters to me, and not wanting to your duty in either relation." Note, When we and our relations are parting, by death or otherwise, it is very comfortable if we have both their testimony and the testimony of our own consciences for us that while we were together we carefully endeavoured to do our duty in the relation. This will help to allay the bitterness of parting; and, while we are together, we should labour so to conduct ourselves as that when we part we may not have cause to reflect with regret upon our miscarriages in the relation.

(2.) With prayer. It is very proper for friends, when they part, to part with prayer. She sends them home with her blessing; and the blessing of a mother-in-law is not to be slighted. In this blessing she twice mentions the name Jehovah, Israel's God, and the only true God, that she might direct her daughters to look up to him as the only fountain of all good. To him she prays in general that he would recompense to them the kindness they had shown to her and hers. It may be expected and prayed for in faith that God will deal kindly with those that have dealt kindly with their relations. He that watereth shall be watered also himself. And, in particular, that they might be happy in marrying again: The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Note,

[1.] It is very fit that, according to the apostle's direction (1Ti 5:14), the younger women, and he speaks there of young widows, should marry, bear children, and guide the house. And it is a pity that those who have approved themselves good wives should not again be blessed with good husbands, especially those that, like these widows, have no children.

[2.] The married state is a state of rest, such rest as this world affords, rest in the house of a husband, more than can be expected in the house of a mother or a mother-in-law.

[3.] This rest is God's gift. If any content and satisfaction be found in our outward condition, God must be acknowledged in it. There are those that are unequally yoked, that find little rest even in the house of a husband. Their affliction ought to make those the more thankful to whom the relation is comfortable. Yet let God be the rest of the soul, and no perfect rest thought of on this side heaven.

(3.) She dismissed them with great affection: She kissed them, wished she had somewhat better to give them, but silver and gold she had none. However, this parting kiss shall be the seal of such a true friendship as (though she never see them more) she will, while she lives, retain the pleasing remembrance of. If relations must part, let them thus part in love, that they may (if they never meet again in this world) meet in the world of everlasting love.

3. The two young widows could not think of parting with their good mother-in-law, so much had the good conversation of that pious Israelite won upon them. They not only lifted up their voice and wept, as loth to part, but they professed a resolution to adhere to her (Ru 1:10): "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people, and take our lot with thee." It is a rare instance of affection to a mother-in-law and an evidence that they had, for her sake, conceived a good opinion of the people of Israel. Even Orpah, who afterwards went back to her gods, now seemed resolved to go forward with Naomi.

The sad ceremony of parting, and the tears shed on that occasion, drew from her this protestation, but it did not hold. Strong passions, without a settled judgment, commonly produce weak resolutions.

4. Naomi sets herself to dissuade them from going along with her, Ru 1:11-13.

(1.) Naomi urges her afflicted condition. If she had had any sons in Canaan, or any near kinsmen, whom she could have expected to marry the widows, to raise up seed to those that were gone, and to redeem the mortgaged estate of the family, it might have been some encouragement to them to hope for a comfortable settlement at Bethlehem. But she had no sons, nor could she think of any near kinsman likely to do the kinsman's part, and therefore argues that she was never likely to have any sons to be husbands for them, for she was too old to have a husband; it became here age to think of dying and going out of the world, not of marrying and beginning the world again.

Or, if she had a husband, she could not expect to have children, nor, if she had sons, could she think that these young widows would stay unmarried till her sons that should yet be born would grow up to be marriageable. Yet this was not all: she could not only not propose to herself to marry them like themselves, but she knew not how to maintain them like themselves. The greatest grievance of that poor condition to which she was reduced was that she was not in a capacity to do for them as she would: It grieveth me more for your sakes than for my own that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. Observe,

[1.] She judges herself chiefly aimed at in the affliction, that God's quarrel was principally with her: "The hand of the Lord has gone out against me. I am the sinner; it is with me that God has a controversy; it is with me that he is contending; I take it to myself." This well becomes us when we are under affliction; though many others share in the trouble, yet we

must hear the voice of the rod as if it spoke only against us and to us, not billeting the rebukes of it at other people's houses, but taking them to ourselves.

[2.] She laments most the trouble that redounded to them from it. She was the sinner, but they were the sufferers: It grieveth me much for your sakes. A gracious generous spirit can better bear its own burden than it can bear to see it a grievance to others, or others in any way drawn into trouble by it. Naomi could more easily want herself than see her daughters want. "Therefore turn again, my daughters, for, alas! I am in no capacity to do you any kindness." But,

(2.) Did Naomi do well thus to discourage her daughters from going with her, when, by taking them with her, she might save them from the idolatry of Moab and bring them to the faith and worship of the God of Israel? Naomi, no doubt, desired to do so. But,

[1.] If they did come with her, she would not have them to come upon her account. Those that take upon them a profession of religion only in complaisance to their relations, to oblige their friends, or for the sake of company, will be converts of small value and of short continuance.

[2.] If they did come with her, she would have them to make it their deliberate choice, and to sit down first and count the cost, as it concerns those to do that may take up a profession of religion. It is good for us to be told the worst. Our Saviour took this course with him who, in the heat of zeal, spoke that bold word, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. "Come, come," says Christ, "canst thou fare as I fare? The Son of man has not where to lay his head; know this, and then consider whether thou canst find in thy heart to take thy lot with him," Mt 8:19,20. Thus Naomi deals with her daughters-in-law. Thoughts ripened into resolves by serious consideration are likely to be kept always in the imagination of the heart, whereas what is soon ripe is soon rotten.

5. Orpah was easily persuaded to yield to her own corrupt inclination, and to go back to her country, her kindred, and her father's house, now when she stood fair for an effectual call from it. They both lifted up their voice and wept again (Ru 1:14), being much affected with the tender things that Naomi had said. But it had a different effect upon them: to Orpah it was a savour of death unto death; the representation Naomi had made of the inconveniences they must count upon if they went forward to Canaan sent her back to the country of Moab, and served her as an excuse for her apostasy; but, on the contrary, it strengthened Ruth's resolution, and her good affection to Naomi, with whose wisdom and goodness she was never so charmed as she was upon this occasion; thus to her it was a savour of life unto life.

(1.) Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, that is, took an affectionate leave of her, bade her farewell for ever, without any purpose to follow her hereafter, as he that said he would follow Christ when he had buried his father or bidden those farewell that were at home. Orpah's kiss showed she had an affection for Naomi and was loth to part from her; yet she did not love her well enough to leave her country for her sake. Thus many have a value and affection for Christ, and yet come short of salvation by him, because they cannot find in their hearts to forsake other things for him. They love him and yet leave him, because they do not love him enough, but love other things better. Thus the young man that went away from Christ went away sorrowful, Mt 19:22. But,

(2.) Ruth clave unto her. Whether, when she came from home, she was resolved to go forward with her or no does not appear; perhaps she was before determined what to do, out of a sincere affection for the God of Israel and to his law, of which, by the good instructions of Naomi, she had some knowledge.

6. Naomi persuades Ruth to go back, urging, as a further inducement, her sister's example (Ru 1:15): Thy sister-in-law

has gone back to her people, and therefore of course gone back to her gods; for, whatever she might do while she lived with her mother-in-law, it would be next to impossible for her to show any respect to the God of Israel when she went to live among the worshippers of Chemosh.

Those that forsake the communion of saints, and return to the people of Moab, will certainly break off their communion with God, and embrace the idols of Moab. Now, return thou after thy sister, that is, "If ever thou wilt return, return now. This is the greatest trial of thy constancy; stand this trial, and thou art mine for ever." Such offences as that of Orpah's revolt must needs come, that those who are perfect and sincere may be made manifest, as Ruth was upon this occasion.

7. Ruth puts an end to the debate by a most solemn profession of her immovable resolution never to forsake her, nor to return to her own country and her old relations again, Ru 1:16, 17.

(1.) Nothing could be said more fine, more brave, than this. She seems to have had another spirit, and another speech, now that her sister had gone, and it is an instance of the grace of God inclining the soul to the resolute choice of the better part. Draw me thus, and we will run after thee. Her mother's dissuasions made her the more resolute; as when Joshua said to the people, You cannot serve the Lord, they said it with the more vehemence, Nay, but we will.

[1.] She begs of her mother-in-law to say no more against her going: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for all thy entreaties now cannot shake that resolution which thy instructions formerly have wrought in me, and therefore let me hear no more of them." Note, It is a great vexation and uneasiness to those that are resolved for God and religion to be tempted and solicited to alter their resolution.

Those that would not think of it would not hear of it. Entreat me not. The margin reads it, Be not against me. Note, We are to reckon those against us, and really our enemies, that would hinder us in our way to the heavenly Canaan. Our relations they may be, but they cannot be our friends, that would dissuade us from and discourage us in the service of God and the work of religion.

[2.] She is very particular in her resolution to cleave to her and never to forsake her; and she speaks the language of one resolved for God and heaven. She is so in love, not with her mother's beauty, or riches, or gaiety (all these were withered and gone), but with her wisdom, and virtue, and grace, which remained with her, even in her present poor and melancholy condition, that she resolves to cleave to her.

First, She will travel with her: Whither thou goest I will go, though to a country I never saw and in a low and ill opinion of which I have been trained up; though far from my own country, yet with thee every road shall be pleasant.

Secondly, She will dwell with her: "Where thou lodgest I will lodge, though it be in a cottage, nay, though it be no better a lodging than Jacob had when he had the stones for his pillow. Where thou settest up thy staff I will set up mine, be it where it may."

Thirdly, She will twist interest with her: Thy people shall be my people. From Naomi's character she concludes certainly that the great nation was a wise and an understanding people. She judges of them all by her good mother, who, wherever she went, was a credit to her country (as all those should study to be who profess relation to the better country, that is, the heavenly), and therefore she will think herself happy if she may be reckoned one of them. "Thy people shall be mine to associate with, to be conformable to, and to be concerned for."

Fourthly, She will join in religion with her. Thus she determined to be hers usque ad aras--to the very altars: "Thy God shall be my God, and farewell to all the gods of Moab, which are vanity and a lie. I will adore the God of Israel, the only living and true God, trust in him alone, serve him, and in every thing be ruled by him;" this is to take the Lord for our God.

Fifthly, She will gladly die in the same bed: Where thou diest will I die. She takes it for granted they must both die, and that in all probability Naomi, as the elder, would die first, and resolves to continue in the same house, if it might be, till her days also were fulfilled, intimating likewise a desire to partake of her happiness in death; she wishes to die in the same place, in token of her dying after the same manner. "Let me die the death of righteous Naomi, and let my last end be like hers."

Sixthly, She will desire to be buried in the same grave, and to lay her bones by hers: There will I be buried, not desiring to have so much as her dead body carried back to the country of Moab, in token of any remaining kindness for it; but, Naomi and she having joined souls, she desires they may mingle dust, in hopes of rising together, and being together for ever in the other world.

[3.] She backs her resolution to adhere to Naomi with a solemn oath: The Lord do so to me, and more also (which was an ancient form of imprecation), if aught but death part thee and me. An oath for confirmation was an end of this strife, and would leave a lasting obligation upon her never to forsake that good way she was now making choice of.

First, It is implied that death would separate between them for a time. She could promise to die and be buried in the same place, but not at the same time; it might so happen that she might die first, and this would part them. Note, Death parts those whom nothing else will part. A dying hour is a parting hour, and should be so thought of by us and prepared for.

Secondly, It is resolved that nothing else should part them; not any kindness from her own family and people, nor any hope of preferment among them, not any unkindness from Israel, nor the fear of poverty and disgrace among them. "No, I will never leave thee." Now,

(2.) This is a pattern of a resolute convert to God and religion. Thus must we be at a point.

[1.] We must take the Lord for our God. "This God is my God for ever and ever; I have avouched him for mine."

[2.] When we take God for our God we must take his people for our people in all conditions; though they be a poor despised people, yet, if they be his, they must be ours.

[3.] Having cast in our lot among them, we must be willing to take our lot with them and to fare as they fare. We must submit to the same yoke and draw in it faithfully, take up the same cross and carry it cheerfully, go where God will have us to go, though it should be into banishment, and lodge where he will have us to lodge, though it be in a prison, die where he will have us die, and lay our bones in the graves of the upright, who enter into peace and rest in their beds, though they be but the graves of the common people.

[4.] We must resolve to continue and persevere, and herein our adherence to Christ must be closer than that of Ruth to Naomi. She resolved that nothing but death should separate them; but we must resolve that death itself shall not separate us from our duty to Christ, and then we may be sure that death itself shall not separate us from our happiness in Christ.

[5.] We must bind our souls with a bond never to break these pious resolutions, and swear unto the Lord that we will cleave to him. Fast bind, fast find. He that means honestly does not startle at assurances.

8. Naomi is hereby silenced (Ru 1:18): When she saw that Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with her (which was the very thing she aimed at in all that she had said, to make her of a stedfast mind in going with her), when she saw that she had gained her point, she was well satisfied, and left off speaking to her. She could desire no more than that solemn protestation which Ruth had just now made. See the power of resolution, how it puts temptation to silence. Those that are unresolved, and go in religious ways without a stedfast mind, tempt the tempter, and stand like a door half open, which invites a thief; but resolution shuts and bolts the door, resists the devil, and forces him to flee.

The Chaldee paraphrase thus relates the debate between Naomi and Ruth:--Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, for I will be a proselyte. Naomi said, We are commanded to keep Sabbaths and good days, on which we may not travel above 2000 cubits--a sabbath-day's journey. Well, said Ruth, whither thou goest I will go. Naomi said, We are commanded not to tarry all night with Gentiles. Well, said Ruth, where thou lodgest I will lodge. Naomi said, We are commanded to keep 613 precepts. Well, said Ruth, whatever thy people keep I will keep, for they shall be my people. Naomi said, We are forbidden to worship any strange god. Well, said Ruth, thy God shall be my God. Naomi said, We have four sorts of deaths for malefactors, stoning, burning, strangling, and slaying with the sword. Well, said Ruth, where thou diest I will die. We have, said Naomi, houses of sepulchre. And there, said Ruth, will I be buried.

12 Turn again, my daughters, go *your way;* for I am too old to have a
husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have a husband
also tonight, and should also bear sons;
13 would ye tarry for them till they were grown? Would ye stay for them
from having husbands? Nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much
for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.
14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed
her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law.
16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God:
17 where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, *if aught* but death part thee and me.
18 When she saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

Naomi and Ruth, after many a weary step (the fatigue of the journey, we may suppose, being somewhat relieved by the good instructions Naomi gave to her proselyte and the good discourse they had together), came at last to Bethlehem. And they came very seasonably, in the beginning of the barley-harvest, which was the first of their harvests, that of wheat following after. Now Naomi's own eyes might convince her of the truth of what she had heard in the country of Moab, that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread, and Ruth might see this good land in its best state; and now they had opportunity to provide for winter. Our times are in God's hand, both the events and the time of them. Notice is here taken,

I. Of the discomposure of the neighbours upon this occasion (Ru 1:19): All the city was moved about them. Her old acquaintance gathered about her, to enquire concerning her state, and to bid her welcome to Bethlehem again. Or perhaps they were moved about her, lest she should be a charge to the town, she looked so bare. By this it appears that she had formerly lived respectably, else there would not have been so much notice taken of her. If those that have been in a high and prosperous condition break, or fall into poverty or disgrace, their fall is the more remarkable. And they said, Is this Naomi? The women of the city said it, for the word is feminine.

Those with whom she had formerly been intimate were surprised to see her in this condition; she was so much broken and altered with her afflictions that they could scarcely believe their own eyes, nor think that this was the same person whom they had formerly seen, so fresh, and fair, and gay: Is this Naomi? So unlike is the rose when it is withered to what it was when it was blooming. What a poor figure does Naomi make now, compared with what she made in her prosperity! If any asked this question in contempt, upbraiding her with her miseries ("is this she that could not be content to fare as her neighbours did, but must ramble to a strange country? See what she has got by it!"), their temper was very base and sordid. Nothing more barbarous than to triumph over those that are fallen. But we may suppose that the generality asked it in compassion and commiseration: "Is this she that lived so plentifully, and kept so good a house, and was so charitable to the poor? How has the gold become dim!" Those that had seen the magnificence of the first temple wept when they saw the meanness of the second; so these here.

Note, Afflictions will make great and surprising changes in a little time. When we see how sickness and old age alter people, change their countenance and temper, we may think of what the Bethlehemites said: "Is this Naomi? One would not take it to be the same person." God, by his grace, fit us for all such changes, especially the great change!

II. Of the composure of Naomi's spirit. If some upbraided her with her poverty, she was not moved against them, as she would have been if she had been poor and proud; but, with a great deal of pious patience, bore that and all the other melancholy effects of her affliction (Ru 1:20,21): Call me not Naomi, call me Mara, &c. "Naomi signifies pleasant or amiable; but all my pleasant things are laid waste; call me Mara, bitter or bitterness, for I am now a woman of a sorrowful spirit." Thus does she bring her mind to her condition, which we all ought to do when our condition is not in every thing to our mind. Observe,

1 The change of her state, and how it is described, with a pious regard to the divine providence, and without any passionate murmurings or complaints.

(1.) It was a very sad and melancholy change. She went out full; so she thought herself when she had her husband with her and two sons. Much of the fulness of our comfort in this world arises from agreeable relations. But she now came home again empty, a widow and childless, and probably had sold her goods, and of all the effects she took with her brought home no more than the clothes on her back. So uncertain is all that which we call fulness in the creature, 1Sa 2:5. Even in the fulness of that sufficiency we may be in straits. But there is a fulness, a spiritual and divine fulness, which we can never be emptied of, a good part which shall not be taken from those that have it.

(2.) She acknowledges the hand of God, his mighty hand, in the affliction. "It is the Lord that has brought me home again empty; it is the Almighty that has afflicted me." Note, Nothing conduces more to satisfy a gracious soul under an affliction than the consideration of the hand of God in it. It is the Lord, 1Sa 3:18,Job 1:21. Especially to consider that he who afflicts us is Shaddai, the Almighty, with whom it is folly to contend and to whom it is our duty and interest to submit. It is that name of God by which he enters into covenant with his people: I am God Almighty, God All-sufficient, Ge 17:1. He afflicts as a God in covenant, and his all-sufficiency may be our support and supply under all our afflictions. He that empties us of the creature knows how to fill us with himself.

(3.) She speaks very feelingly of the impression which the affliction had made upon her: He has dealt very bitterly with me. The cup of affliction is a bitter cup, and even that which afterwards yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, yet, for the present, is not joyous, but grievous, Heb 12:11. Job complains, Thou writest bitter things against me, Job 13:26.

(4.) She owns the affliction to come from God as a controversy: The Lord hath testified against me. Note, When God corrects us he testifies against us and contends with us (Job 10:17), intimating that he is displeased with us. Every rod has a voice, the voice of a witness.

2 The compliance of her spirit with this change: "Call me not Naomi, for I am no more pleasant, either to myself or to my friends; but call me Mara, a name more agreeable to my present state." Many that are debased and impoverished yet affect to be called by the empty names and titles of honour they have formerly enjoyed. Naomi did not so. Her humility regards not a glorious name in a dejected state. If God deal bitterly with her, she will accommodate herself to the dispensation, and is willing to be called Mara, bitter.

Note, It well becomes us to have our hearts humbled under humbling providences. When our condition is brought down our spirits should be brought down with it. And then our troubles are sanctified to us when we thus comport with them; for it is not an affliction itself, but an affliction rightly borne, that does us good. Perdidisti tot mala, si nondum misera esse didicisti--So many calamities have been lost upon you if you have not yet learned how to suffer. Sen. ad Helv. Tribulation works patience.

19 So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to
pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was
moved about them, and they said, *is* this Naomi?
20 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi [pleasant], call me
Mara [bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.
21 I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty:
why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against
me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?
22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-
law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they
came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

Ruth-2

Ruth Gleans in the Field of Boaz

1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name *was* Boaz.

Naomi had now gained a settlement in Bethlehem among her old friends; and here we have an account,

I. Of her rich kinsman, Boaz, a mighty man of wealth, Ru 2:1 The Chaldee reads it, mighty in the law. If he was both, it was a most rare and excellent conjunction, to be mighty in wealth and mighty in the scriptures too; those that are so are mighty indeed. He was grandson of Nahshon, who was prince of the tribe of Judah in the wilderness, and son of Salmon, probably a younger son, by Rahab, the harlot of Jericho. He carries might in his name, Boaz--in him is strength; and he was of the family of Elimelech, that family which was now reduced and brought so low. Observe,

1. Boaz, though a rich and great man, had poor relations. Every branch of the tree is not a top-branch. Let not those that are great in the world be ashamed to own their kindred that are mean and despised, lest they be found therein proud, scornful, and unnatural.

2. Naomi, though a poor contemptible widow, had rich relations, whom yet she boasted not of, nor was burdensome to, nor expected any thing from when she returned to Bethlehem in distress. Those that have rich relations, while they themselves are poor, ought to know that it is the wise providence of God that makes the difference (in which we ought to acquiesce), and that to be proud of our relation to such is a great sin, and to trust to it is great folly.

II. Of her poor daughter-in-law, Ruth.

1. Her condition was very low and poor, which was a great trial to the faith and constancy of a young proselyte. The Bethlehemites would have done well if they had invited Naomi and her daughter-in-law first to one good house and then to another (it would have been a great support to an aged widow and a great encouragement to a new convert); but, instead of tasting the dainties of Canaan, they have no way of getting necessary food but by gleaning corn, and otherwise, for aught that appears, they might have starved. Note, God has chosen the poor of this world; and poor they are likely to be, for, though God has chosen them, commonly men overlook them.

2. Her character, in this condition, was very good Ru 2:2): She said to Naomi, not, "Let me now go to the land of Moab again, for there is no living here, here there is want, but in my father's house there is bread enough." No, she is not mindful of the country from which she came out, otherwise she had now a fair occasion to return. The God of Israel shall be her God, and, though he slay her, yet will she trust in him and never forsake him. But her request is, Let me go to the field, and glean ears of corn. Those that are well born, and have been well brought up, know not what straits they may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be obliged to get their bread by, La 4:5. When the case is thus melancholy, let Ruth be remembered, who is a great example,

(1.) Of humility. When Providence had made her poor she did not say, "To glean, which is in effect to beg, I am ashamed," but cheerfully stoops to the meanness of her circumstances and accommodates herself to her lot. High spirits can more easily starve than stoop; Ruth was none of those. She does not tell her mother she was never brought up to live upon crumbs. Though she was not brought up to it, she is brought down to it, and is not uneasy at it. Nay, it is her own motion, not her mother's injunction. Humility is one of the brightest ornaments of youth, and one of the best omens. Before Ruth's honour was this humility. Observe how humbly she speaks of

herself, in her expectation of leave to glean: Let me glean after him in whose sight I shall find grace. She does not say, "I will go and glean, and surely nobody will deny me the liberty," but, "I will go and glean, in the hope that somebody will allow me the liberty." Note, Poor people must not demand kindness as a debt, but humbly ask it, and take it as a favour, though in ever so small a matter. It becomes the poor to use entreaties.

(2.) Of industry. She does not say to her mother-in-law, "Let me now go a visiting to the ladies of the town, or go a walking in the fields to take the air and be merry; I cannot sit all day moping with you." No, it is not sport, but business, that her heart is upon: "Let me go and glean ears of corn, which will turn to some good account." She was one of those virtuous women that love not to eat the bread of idleness, but love to take pains. This is an example to young people. Let them learn betimes to labour, and, what their hand finds to do, do it with their might. A disposition to diligence bodes well both for this world and the other. Love not sleep, love not sport, love not sauntering; but love business. It is also an example to poor people to work for their living, and not beg that which they are able to earn. We must not be shy of any honest employment, though it be mean, ergon ouden oneidos--No labour is a reproach. Sin is a thing below us, but we must not think any thing else so That Providence calls us to.

(3.) Of regard to her mother. Though she was but her mother-in-law, and though, being loosed by death from the law of her husband, she might easily suppose herself thereby loosed from the law of her husband's mother, yet she is dutifully observant of her. She will not go out without letting her know and asking her leave. This respect young people ought to show to their parents and governors; it is part of the honour due to them. She did not say, "Mother, if you will go with me, I will go glean:" but, "Do you sit at home and take your ease, and I will go abroad, and take pains." Juniores ad labores--Youth should work. Let young people take advice from the aged, but not put them upon toil.

(4.) Of dependence upon Providence, intimated in that, I will glean after him in whose sight I shall find grace. She knows not which way to go, nor whom to enquire for, but will trust Providence to raise her up some friend or other that will be kind to her. Let us always keep us good thoughts of the divine providence, and believe that while we do well it will do well for us. And it did well for Ruth; for when she went out alone, without guide or companion, to glean, her hap was to light on the field of Boaz, Ru 2:3. To her it seemed casual. She knew not whose field it was, nor had she any reason for going to that more than any other, and therefore it is said to be her hap; but Providence directed her steps to this field. Note, God wisely orders small events; and those that seem altogether contingent serve his own glory and the good of his people. Many a great affair is brought about by a little turn, which seemed fortuitous to us, but was directed by Providence with design.

2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the
field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find
grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.
3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers:
and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz,
who was of the kindred of Elimelech.
4 And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the
reapers, The Lord *be* with you. And they answered him, The
Lord bless thee.
5 Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers,
whose damsel *is* this?
6 And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, it
is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the
country of Moab:
7 and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers
among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the
morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.
8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not
to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast
by my maidens:

9 *let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband; and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

Now Boaz himself appears, and a great deal of decency there appears in his carriage both towards his own servants and towards this poor stranger.

I. Towards his own servants, and those that were employed for him in reaping and gathering in his corn. Harvest-time is busy time, many hands must then be at work. Boaz that had much, being a mighty man of wealth, had much to do, and consequently many to work under him and to live upon him. As goods are increased those are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof save the beholding of them with his eyes? Boaz is here an example of a good master.

1. He had a servant that was set over the reapers, Ru 2:6. In great families it is requisite there should be one to oversee the rest of the servants, and appoint to each their portion both of work and meat. Ministers are such servants in God's house, and it is requisite that they be both wise and faithful, and show their Lord all things, as he here, Ru 2:6.

2. Yet he came himself to his reapers, to see how the work went forward, if he found any thing amiss to rectify it, and to give further orders what should be done. This was both for his own interest (he that wholly leaves his business to others will have it done by the halves; the master's eye makes a fat horse) and it was also for the encouragement of his servants, who

would go on the more cheerfully in their work when their master countenanced them so far as to make them a visit. Masters that live at ease should think with tenderness of those that toil for them and bear the burden and heat of the day.

3. Kind and pious salutations were interchanged between Boaz and his reapers.

(1.) He said to them, The Lord be with you; and they replied, The Lord bless thee, Ru 2:4. Hereby they expressed,

[1.] Their mutual respect to each other; he to them as good servants, and they to him as a good master. When he came to them he did not fall a chiding them, as if he came only to find fault and exercise his authority, but he prayed for them: "The Lord be with you, prosper you, and give you health and strength, and preserve you from any disaster." Nor did they, as soon as ever he was out of hearing, fall a cursing him, as some ill-natured servants that hate their master's eye, but they returned his courtesy: "The Lord bless thee, and make our labours serviceable to thy prosperity." Things are likely to go on well in a house where there is such good-will as this between master and servants.

[2.] Their joint-dependence upon the divine providence. They express their kindness to each other by praying one for another. They show not only their courtesy, but their piety, and acknowledgement that all good comes from the presence and blessing of God, which therefore we should value and desire above any thing else both for ourselves and others.

(2.) Let us hence learn to use,

[1.] Courteous salutations, as expressions of a sincere good-will to our friends.

[2.] Pious ejaculations, lifting up our hearts to God for his favour, in such short prayers as these. Only we must take heed

that they do not degenerate into formality, lest in them we take the name of the Lord our God in vain; but, if we be serious in them, we may in them keep up our communion with God, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. It appears to have been the usual custom thus to wish reapers good speed, Ps 129:7,8.

4. He took an account from his reapers concerning a stranger he met with in the field, and gave necessary orders concerning her, that they should not touch her (Ru 2:9) nor reproach her, Ru 2:15. Masters must take care, not only that they do no hurt themselves, but that they suffer not their servants and those under them to do hurt. He also ordered them to be kind to her, and let fall some of the handfuls on purpose for her. Though it is fit that masters should restrain and rebuke their servants' wastefulness, yet they should not tie them up from being charitable, but give them allowance for that, with prudent directions.

II. Boaz was very kind to Ruth, and showed her a great deal of favour, induced to it by the account he had of her, and what he observed concerning her, God also inclining his heart to countenance her. Coming among his reapers, he observed this stranger among them, and got intelligence from his steward who she was, and here is a very particular account of what passed concerning her.

1 The steward gave to Boaz a very fair account of her, proper to recommend her to his favour, Ru 2:6,7.

(1.) That she was a stranger, and therefore one of those that by the law of God were to gather the gleanings of the harvest, Le 19:9,10. She is the Moabitish damsel.

(2.) That she was allied to his family; she came back with Naomi, the wife of Elimelech, a kinsman of Boaz.

(3.) That she was a proselyte, for she came out of the country of Moab to settle in the land of Israel.

(4.) That she was very modest, and had not gleaned till she had asked leave.

(5.) That she was very industrious, and had continued close to her work from morning even until now. And the poor that are industrious and willing to take pains are fit to be encouraged. Now, in the heat of the day, she tarried a little in the house or booth that was set up in the field for shelter from the weather to repose herself, and some suggest that it is probably she retired for her devotion. But she soon came back to her work, and, except that little intermission, kept close to it all day, though it was not what she had been used to. Servants should be just in the character and reports they give to their masters, and take heed they do not misrepresent any person, nor without cause discourage their master's charity.

2. Boaz was hereupon extremely civil to her in divers instances.

(1.) He ordered her to attend his reapers in every field they gathered in and not to glean in the field of another, for she should not need to go any where else to better herself (Ru 2:8): Abide here fast by my maidens; for those of her own sex were the fittest company for her.

(2.) He charged all his servants to be very tender of her and respectful to her, and no doubt they would be so to one to whom they saw their master kind. She was a stranger, and it is probably her language, dress, and mien differed much from theirs; but he charged them that they should not in any thing affront her, or be abusive to her, as rude servants are too apt to be to strangers.

(3.) He bade her welcome to the entertainment he had provided for his own servants. He ordered her, not only to drink of the water which was drawn for them (for that seems to be the liquor he means, Ru 2:9, drawn from the famous well

of Beth-lehem which was by the gate, the water of which David longed for, 2Sa 23:15), but at meal-time to come and eat of their bread (Ru 2:14), yea, and she should be welcome to their sauce too: Come, dip thy morsel in the vinegar, to make it savoury; for God allows us not only nourishing but relishing food, not for necessity only, but for delight. And for encouragement o her, and direction to the servants, he himself, happening to be present when the reapers sat down to meat, reached her parched corn to eat. It is no disparagement to the finest hand to be reached forth to the needy (Pr 31:20), and to be employed in serving the poor. Observe, Boaz was not scanty in his provision for his reapers, but sent them so much more than enough for themselves as would be entertainment for a stranger. Thus there is that scattereth and yet increaseth.

(4.) He commended her for her dutiful respect to her mother-in-law, which, though he did not know her by sight, yet he had heard of (Ru 2:11): It has been fully shown me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law. Note, Those that do well ought to have the praise of it. But that which especially he commended her for was that she had left her own country, and had become a proselyte to the Jewish religion; for so the Chaldee expounds it: "Thou hast come to be proselyted, and to dwell among a people whom thou knowest not." Those that leave all, to embrace the true religion, are worthy of double honour.

(5.) He prayed for her (Ru 2:12): The Lord recompense thy work. Her strong affection to the commonwealth of Israel, to which she was by birth an alien, was such a work of the divine grace in her as would certainly be crowned with a full reward by him under whose wings she had come to trust. Note, Those that by faith come under the wings of the divine grace, and have a full complacency and confidence in that grace, may be sure of a full recompence of reward for their so doing. From this expression, the Jews describe a proselyte to be one that is gathered under the wings of the divine majesty.

(6.) He encouraged her to go on in her gleaning, and did not offer to take her off from that; for the greatest kindness we can do our poor relations is to assist and encourage their industry. Boaz ordered his servants to let her glean among the sheaves, where other gleaners were not allowed to come, and not to reproach her, that is, not to call her thief, or to suspect her of taking more than was allowed her, Ru 2:15. All this shows Boaz to have been a man of a generous spirit, and one that, according to the law, considered the heart of a stranger.

3. Ruth received his favours with a great deal of humility and gratitude, and conducted herself with as much propriety in her place as he did himself in his, but little thinking that she should shortly be the mistress of that field she was now gleaning in.

(1.) She paid all possible respect to him, and gave him honour, according to the usage of the country (Ru 2:10): She fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground. Note, Good breeding is a great ornament to religion; and we must render honour to whom honour is due.

(2.) She humbly owned herself unworthy of his favours: "I am a stranger (Ru 2:10) and not like one of thy handmaids (Ru 2:13), not so well dressed nor so well taught, not so neat nor so handy." Note, It well becomes us all to think meanly of ourselves, and to take notice of that in ourselves which is diminishing, esteeming others better than ourselves.

(3.) She gratefully acknowledged his kindness to her; though it was no great expense to him, nor much more than what he was obliged to by the divine law, yet she magnifies and admires it: Why have I found grace in thy eyes? Ru 2:10.

(4.) She begs the continuance of his good-will: Let me find favour in they sight (Ru 2:13), and owns that what he had said had been a cordial to her: Thou hast comforted me, for that thou hast spoken friendly to me. Those that are great, and in

high places, know not how much good they may do to their inferiors with a kind look or by speaking friendly to them; and so small an expense, one would think, they should not grudge, when it shall be put upon the score of their charity.

(5.) When Boaz gave her her dinner with his reapers she only ate so much as would suffice her, and left the rest, and immediately rose up to glean, Ru 2:14,15. She did not, under pretence either of her want or of her labour, eat more than was convenient for her, nor so much as to unfit her for work in the afternoon. Temperance is a friend to industry; and we must eat and drink to strengthen us for business, not to indispose us to it.

12 The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of
the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.
13 Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou
hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto
thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine
handmaidens.
14 And Boaz said unto her, at mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the
bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the
reapers: and he reached her parched *corn,* and she did eat, and was
sufficed, and left.
15 And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young
men, saying, let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach
her not:
16 and let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave
them that she may glean *them,* and rebuke her not.
17 So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had
gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

Here, I. Ruth finishes her day's work, Ru 2:17. 1. She took care not to lose time, for she gleaned until evening. We must not be weary of well-doing, because in due season we shall reap. She did not make an excuse to sit still, or go home, till the evening. Let us work the works of him that sent us, while it is day. She scarcely used, much less did she abuse, the kindness of Boaz; for, though he ordered his servants to leave handfuls for her, she continued to glean the scattered ears. 2.

She took care not to lose what she had gathered, but threshed it herself, that she might the more easily carry it home, and might have it ready for use. The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting, and so loseth the benefit of it, but the substance of a diligent man is precious, Pr 12:27.

Ruth had gathered it ear by ear, but, when she had put it all together, it was an ephah of barley, about four pecks. Many a little makes a great deal. It is an encouragement to industry that in all labour, even that of gleaning, there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. When she had got her corn into as little compass as she could, she took it up herself, and carried it into the city, though, had she asked them, it is likely some of Boaz's servants would have done that for her. We should study to be as little as possible troublesome to those that are kind to us. She did not think it either too hard or too mean a service to carry her corn herself into the city, but was rather pleased with what she had gotten by her own industry, and careful to secure it; and let us thus take care that we lose not those things which we have wrought, which we have gained, 2Jo 1:8.

II. She paid her respects to her mother-in-law, went straight home to her and did not go to converse with Boaz's servants, showed her what she had gleaned, that she might see she had not been idle.

1. She entertained her with what she had left of the good dinner Boaz had given her. She gave to her what she had reserved, after she was sufficed (Ru 2:18), which refers to Ru 2:14. If she had any thing better than another, her mother should have part with her. Thus, having shown industry abroad, she showed piety at home; so children's maintaining their parents is called (1Ti 5:4), and it is part of the honour due to them by the fifth commandment, Mt 15:6.

2. She gave her an account of her day's work, and how a kind providence had favoured her in it, which made it very

comfortable to her; for the gleanings that a righteous man hath are better than the harvests of many wicked, Ps 37:16.

(1.) Naomi asked her where she had been: Where hast thou gleaned to-day? Note, Parents should take care to enquire into the ways of their children, how, and where, and in what company they spend their time. This may prevent many extravagancies which children, left to themselves, run into, by which they bring both themselves and their parents to shame. If we are not our brethren's, yet surely we are our children's keepers: and we know what a son Adonijah proved, that had never been chidden. Parents should examine their children, not to frighten nor discourage them, not so as to make them hate home or tempt them to tell a lie, but to commend them if they have done well, and with mildness to reprove and caution them if they have done otherwise. It is a good question for us to ask ourselves in the close of every day, "Where have I gleaned to-day? What improvements have I made in knowledge and grace? What have I done or obtained that will turn to a good account?"

(2.) Ruth gave her a particular account of the kindness she had received from Boaz (Ru 2:19) and the hopes she had of further kindness from him, he having ordered her to attend his servants throughout all the harvest, Ru 2:21. Note, Children should look upon themselves as accountable to their parents and to those that are over them, and not think it a disparagement to them to be examined; let them do that which is good, and they shall have praise of the same. Ruth told her mother what kindness Boaz had shown her, that she might take some occasion or another to acknowledge it and return him thanks; but she did not tell her how Boaz had commended her, Ru 2:11. Humility teaches us, not only not to praise ourselves, but not to be forward to publish others' praises of us.

(3.) We are here told what Naomi said to it.

[1.] She prayed heartily for him that had been her daughter's benefactor, even before she knew who it was (Ru 2:19): Blessed be he, whoever he was, that did take knowledge of thee, shooting the arrow of prayer at a venture. But more particularly when she was told who it was (Ru 2:20): Blessed be he of the Lord. Note, The poor must pray for those that are kind and liberal to them, and thus requite them, when they are not capable of making them any other requital. Let the loins of the poor bless those that refresh them, Job 29:13,31:20. And he that hears the cries of the poor against their oppressors (Ex 22:27), it may be hoped, will hear the prayers of the poor for their benefactors. She now remembered the former kindnesses Boaz had shown to her husband and sons, and joins those to this: he has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. If we generously show kindness even to those that seem to have forgotten our former favours, perhaps it may help to revive the remembrance even of those which seem buried.

[2.] She acquainted Ruth with the relation their family was in to Boaz: The man is near of kin to us. It should seem she had been so long in Moab that she had forgotten her kindred in the land of Israel, till by this providence God brought it to her mind. At least she had not told Ruth of it, though it might have been some encouragement to a young proselyte. Unlike to humble Naomi are many, who, though fallen into decay themselves, are continually boasting of their great relations. Nay, Observe the chain of thought here, and in it a chain of providences, bringing about what was designed concerning Ruth. Ruth names Boaz as one that had been kind to her. Naomi bethinks herself who that should be, and presently recollects herself: "The man is near of kin to us; now that I hear his name, I remember him very well." This thought brings in another: "He is our next kinsman, our goel, that has the right to redeem our estate that was mortgaged, and therefore from him we may expect further kindness. He is the likeliest man in all Bethlehem to set us up." Thus God brings

things to our mind, sometimes on a sudden, that prove to have a wonderful tendency to our good.

[3.] She appointed Ruth to continue her attendance in the fields of Boaz (Ru 2:22): "Let them not meet thee in any other field, for that will be construed a contempt of his courtesy." Our blessed Saviour is our Goel; it is he that has a right to redeem. If we expect to receive benefit by him, let us closely adhere to him, and his fields, and his family; let us not go to the world and its fields for that which is to be had with him only, and which he has encouraged us to expect from him. Has the Lord dealt bountifully with us? Let us not be found in any other field, nor seek for happiness and satisfaction in the creature.

Tradesmen take it ill if those that are in their books go to another shop. We lose divine favours if we slight them. Some think Naomi gave her daughter-in-law a tacit rebuke; she had spoken (Ru 2:21) of keeping fast by the young men. "Nay," said Naomi (Ru 2:22), "It is good that thou go out with his maidens; they are fitter company for thee than the young men." But they are too critical. Ruth spoke of the young men because they were the principal labourers, and to them Boaz had given directions concerning her; and Naomi takes it for granted that, while she attended the young men, her society would be with the maidens, as was fit.

Ruth dutifully observed her mother's directions; she continued to glean, to the end, not only of barley-harvest, but of the wheat-harvest, which followed it, that she might gather food in harvest to serve for winter, Pr 6:6-8. She also kept fast by the maidens of Boaz, with whom she afterwards cultivated an acquaintance, which might do her service, Ru 2:23. But she constantly came to her mother at night in due time, as became a virtuous woman, that was for working days, and not for merry nights. And when the harvest was ended (as bishop Patrick expounds it) she did not gad abroad, but kept her aged mother company at home. Dinah went out to see the daughters

of the land, and we know what a disgrace her vanity ended in. Ruth kept at home, and helped to maintain her mother, and went out on no other errand than to get provision for her, and we shall find afterwards what preferment her humility and industry ended in. Seest thou a man diligent in his business? Honour is before him.

18 And she took *it* up, and went into the city; and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

19 And her mother-in-law said unto her, where hast thou gleaned today? And where wroughtest thou?Blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she showed her mother-in-law with whom she had wrought, and said, the man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz.

20 And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law, blessed *be* he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, the man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

21 And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

22 And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter-in-law, *It is* good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

23 So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother-in-law.

Ruth-3

Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing floor

1 Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, my daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshingfloor.

Here is, I. Naomi's care for her daughter's comfort is without doubt very commendable, and is recorded for imitation. She

had no thoughts of marrying herself, Ru 1:12. But, though she that was old had resolved upon a perpetual widowhood, yet she was far from the thoughts of confining her daughter-in-law to it, that was young. Age must not make itself a standard to youth. On the contrary, she is full of contrivance how to get her well married. Her wisdom projected that for her daughter which her daughter's modesty forbade her to project for herself, Ru 3:1. This she did 1. In justice to the dead, to raise up seed to those that were gone, and so to preserve the family from being extinct. 2. In kindness and gratitude to her daughter-in-law, who had conducted herself very dutifully and respectfully to her. "My daughter" (said she, looking upon her in all respects as her own), "shall I not seek rest for thee," that is, a settlement in the married state; "shall I not get thee a good husband, that it may be well with thee," that is, "that thou mayest live plentifully and pleasantly, and not spend all thy days in the mean and melancholy condition we now live in?" Note, (1.) A married state is, or should be, a state of rest to young people. Wandering affections are then fixed, and the heart must be at rest. It is at rest in the house of a husband, and in his heart, Ru 1:9. Those are giddy indeed that marriage does not compose. (2.) That which should be desired and designed by those that enter into the married state is that it may be well with them, in order to which it is necessary that they choose well; otherwise, instead of being a rest to them, it may prove the greatest uneasiness. Parents, in disposing of their children, must have this in their eye, that it may be well with them. And be it always remembered that is best for us which is best for our souls. (3.) It is the duty of parents to seek this rest for their children, and to do all that is fit for them to do, in due time, in order to it. And the more dutiful and respectful they are to them, though they can the worse spare them, yet they should the rather prefer them, and the better.

II The course she took in order to her daughter's preferment was very extraordinary and looks suspicious. If there was any thing improper in it, the fault must lie upon Naomi, who put

her daughter upon it, and who knew, or should know, the laws and usages of Israel better than Ruth.

1. It was true that Boaz, being near of kin to the deceased, and (for aught that Naomi knew to the contrary) the nearest of all now alive, was obliged by the divine law to marry the widow of Mahlon, who was the eldest son of Elimelech, and was dead without issue (Ru 3:2): "Is not Boaz of our kindred, and therefore bound in conscience to take care of our affairs?" This may encourage us to lay ourselves by faith at the feet of Christ, that he is our near kinsman; having taken our nature upon him, he is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

2. It was a convenient time to remind him of it, now that he had got so much acquaintance with Ruth by her constant attendance on his reapers during the whole harvest, which was now ended; and he also, by the kindness he had shown to Ruth in smaller matters, had encouraged Naomi to hope that he would not be unkind, much less unjust, in this greater. And she thought it was a good opportunity to apply to him when he made a winnowing-feast at his threshing-floor (Ru 3:2), then and there completing the joy of the harvest, and treating his workmen like a kind master: He winnoweth barley to-night, that is, he makes his entertainment to-night. As Nabal and Absalom had feasts at their sheep-shearing, so Boaz at his winnowing.

3. Naomi thought Ruth the most proper person to do it herself; and perhaps it was the usage in that country that in this case the woman should make the demand; so much is intimated by the law, De 25:7-9. Naomi therefore orders her daughter-in-law to make herself clean and neat, not to make herself fine (Ru 3:3): "Wash thyself and anoint thee, not paint thee (as Jezebel), put on thy raiment, but not the attire of a harlot, and go down to the floor," whither, it is probable, she was invited to the supper there made; but she must not make herself known, that it, not make her errand known (she herself could not but be very well known among Boaz's reapers) till the

company had dispersed and Boaz had retired. And upon this occasion she would have an easier access to him in private than she could have at his own house. And thus far was well enough.

But, 4. Her coming to lie down at his feet, when he was asleep in his bed, had such an appearance of evil, was such an approach towards it, and might have been such an occasion of it, that we know not well how to justify it. Many expositors think it unjustifiable, particularly the excellent Mr. Poole. We must not to evil that good may come. It is dangerous to bring the spark and the tinder together; for how great a matter may a little fire kindle! All agree that it is not to be drawn into a precedent; neither our laws nor our times are the same that were then; yet I am willing to make the best of it. If Boaz was, as they presumed, the next kinsman, she was his wife before God (as we say), and there needed but little ceremony to complete the nuptials; and Naomi did not intend that Ruth should approach to him any otherwise than as his wife. She knew Boaz to be not only an old man (she would not have trusted to that alone in venturing her daughter-in-law so near him), but a grave sober man, a virtuous and religious man, and one that feared God.

She knew Ruth to be a modest woman, chaste, and a keeper at home, Tit 2:5. The Israelites had indeed been once debauched by the daughters of Moab (Nu 25:1), but this Moabitess was none of those daughters. Naomi herself designed nothing but what was honest and honourable, and her charity (which believeth all things and hopeth all things) banished and forbade all suspicion that either Boaz or Ruth would attempt any thing but what was likewise honest and honourable. If what she advised had been then as indecent and immodest (according to the usage of the country) as it seems now to us, we cannot think that if Naomi had had so little virtue (which yet we have no reason to suspect) she would also have had so little wisdom as to put her daughter upon it, since that alone might have marred the match, and have alienated the

affections of so grave and good a man as Boaz from her. We must therefore think that the thing did not look so ill then as it does now. Naomi referred her daughter-in-law to Boaz for further directions. When she had thus made her claim, Boaz, who was more learned in the laws, would tell her what she must do. Thus must we lay ourselves at the feet of our Redeemer, to receive from him our doom. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Ac 9:6. We may be sure, if Ruth had apprehended any evil in that which her mother advised her to, she was a woman of too much virtue and too much sense to promise as she did (Ru 3:5): All that thou sayest unto me I will do. Thus must the younger submit to the elder, and to their grave and prudent counsels, when they have nothing worth speaking of to object against it.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, all that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her.

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, who *art* thou?And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

10 And he said, blessed *be* thou of the Lord, my daughter: *for* thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman.

Here is, I. Boaz's good management of his common affairs. It is probable, according to the common usage,

1. When his servants winnowed, he was with them, and had his eye upon them, to prevent, not their stealing any of his corn (he had no reason to fear that), but their waste of it through carelessness in the winnowing of it. Masters may sustain great losses by servants that are heedless, though they be honest, which is a reason why men should be diligent to know the state of their own flocks, and look well to them.

2. When he had more than ordinary work to be done, he treated his servants with extraordinary entertainments, and, for their encouragement, did eat and drink with them. It well becomes those that are rich and great to be generous to, and also to be familiar with, those that are under them, and employed for them.

3. When Boaz had supped with his workmen, and been awhile pleasant with them, he went to bed in due time, so early that by midnight he had his first sleep (Ru 3:8), and thus he would be fit for his business betimes next morning. All that are good husbands will keep good hours, and not indulge themselves nor their families in unseasonable mirth. The Chaldee paraphrase tell us (Ru 3:7) that Boaz ate and drank and his heart was good (and so the Hebrew word is), and he blessed the name of the Lord, who had heard his prayers, and taken away the famine from the land of Israel. So that he went sober to bed, his heart was in a good frame, and not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness. And he did not go to bed without prayer. Now that he had eaten and was full he blessed the Lord, and now that he was going to rest he committed himself to the divine protection; it was well he did, for he had an unusual temptation before him, though he knew not of it.

4. He had his bed or couch laid at the end of the heap of corn; not because he had set his heart upon it, nor only that he might watch and keep it safe from thieves, but it was too late to go

home to the city, and here he would be near his work, and ready for it next morning, and he would show that he was not nice or curious in his lodging, neither took state nor consulted his ease, but was, like his father Jacob, a plain man, that, when there was occasion, could make his bed in a barn, and, if need were, sleep contentedly in the straw.

II. Ruth's good assurance in the management of her affair. She observed her mother's orders, went and laid herself down, not by his side, but overcross his bed's feet, in her clothes, and kept awake, waiting for an opportunity to tell her errand. When he awaked in the night, and perceived there was somebody at his feet, and enquired who it was, she told him her name and then her errand (Ru 3:9), that she came to put herself under his protection, as the person appointed by the divine law to be her protector: "Thou art he that has a right to redeem a family and an estate from perishing, and therefore let this ruin be under thy hand: and spread thy skirt over me--be pleased to espouse me and my cause." Thus must we by faith apply ourselves to Jesus Christ as our next kinsman, that is able to redeem us, come under his wings, as we are invited (Mt 23:37), and beg of him to spread his skirt over us. "Lord Jesus, take me into thy covenant and under thy care. I am oppressed, undertake for me."

III. The good acceptance Ruth gained with Boaz. What she did had no ill-effect, either one way or other, so that Naomi was not mistaken in her good opinion of her kinsman. He knew her demand was just and honourable, and treated her accordingly, and did not deal with his sister as with a harlot, Ge 34:31. For,

1. He did not offer to violate her chastity, though he had all the opportunity that could be. The Chaldee paraphrase thus descants upon it:--He subdued his concupiscence, and did not approach to her, but did as Joseph the Just, who would not come near to his Egyptian mistress, and as Phaltiel the Pious, who, when Saul had given him Michal, David's wife (1Sa

25:44), put a sword between himself and her, that he might not touch her. Boaz knew it was not any sinful lust that brought her thither, and therefore bravely maintained both his own honour and hers.

2. He did not put any ill construction upon what she did, did not reproach her as an impudent woman and unfit to make an honest man a wife. She having approved herself well in the fields, and all her conduct having been modest and decent, he would not, from this instance, entertain the least suspicion of her character nor seem to do so, perhaps blaming himself that he had not offered the service of a kinsman to these distressed widows, and saved her this trouble, and ready to say as Judah concerning his daughter-in-law, She is more righteous than I. But on the contrary,

(1.) He commended her, spoke kindly to her, called her his daughter, and spoke honourably of her, as a woman of eminent virtue. She had shown in this instance more kindness to her mother-in-law, and to the family into which she had matched, than in any instance yet. It was very kind to leave her own country and come along with her mother to the land of Israel, to dwell with her, and help to maintain her. For this he had blessed her (Ru 2:12); but now he says, Thou hast shown more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning (Ru 3:10), in that she consulted not her own fancy, but her husband's family, in marrying again. She received not the addresses of young men (much less did she seek them) whether poor or rich, but was willing to marry as the divine law directed, though it was to an old man, because it was for the honour and interest of the family into which she had matched, and for which she had an entire kindness. Young people must aim, in disposing of themselves, not so much to please their own eye as to please God and their parents.

(2.) He promised her marriage (Ru 3:11): "Fear not that I will slight thee, or expose thee; no, I will do all that thou requirest, for it is the same that the law requires, from the next of kin,

and I have no reason to decline it, for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman," Ru 3:11. Note,

[1.] Exemplary virtue ought to have its due praise (Php 4:8), and it will recommend both men and women to the esteem of the wisest and best. Ruth was a poor woman, and poverty often obscures the lustre of virtue; yet Ruth's virtues, even in a mean condition, were generally taken notice of and could not be hid; nay, her virtues took away the reproach of her poverty. If poor people be but good people, they shall have honour from God and man. Ruth had been remarkable for her humility, which paved the way to this honour. The less she proclaimed her own goodness the more did her neighbours take notice of it.

[2.] In the choice of yoke-fellows, virtue should especially be regarded, known approved virtue. Let religion determine the choice, and it will certainly crown the choice and make it comfortable. Wisdom is better than gold, and, when it is said to be good with an inheritance, the meaning is that an inheritance is worth little without it.

(3.) He made his promise conditional, and could not do otherwise, for it seems there was a kinsman that was nearer than he, to whom the right of redemption did belong, Ru 3:12. This he knew, but we may reasonably suppose Naomi (who had been long abroad, and could not be exact in the pedigree of her husband's family) was ignorant of it, otherwise she would never have sent her daughter to make her claim of Boaz. Yet he does not bid her go herself to this other kinsman; this would have been to put too great a hardship upon her: but he promises,

[1.] That he would himself propose it to the other kinsman, and know his mind. The Hebrew word for a widow signifies one that is dumb. Boaz will therefore open his mouth for the dumb (Pr 31:8), and will say that for this widow which she knew not how to say for herself.

[2.] That, if the other kinsman refused to do the kinsman's part, he would do it, would marry the widow, redeem the land, and so repair the family. This promise he backs with a solemn oath, for it was a conditional contract of marriage (Ru 3:13): As the Lord liveth. Thus keeping the matter in suspense, he bade her wait till morning. Bishop Hall thus sums up this matter in his contemplations:--"Boaz, instead of touching her as a wanton, blesseth her as a father, encourageth her as a friend, promiseth her as a kinsman, rewards her as a patron, and sends her away laden with hopes and gifts, no less chaste, more happy, than she came. O admirable temperance, worthy the progenitor of him in whose lips and heart there was no guile!"

12 And now it is true that I *am thy* near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

13 Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning, *that* if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, *as* the Lord liveth: lie down until the morning.

14 And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor.

15 Also he said, bring the veil that *thou hast* upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six *measures* of barley, and laid *it* on her: and she went into the city.

We are here told, I. How Ruth was dismissed by Boaz. It would not have been safe for her to go home in the dead of the night; therefore she lay at his feet (not by his side) until morning. But as soon as ever the day broke, that she had light to go home by, she got away, before one could know another, that, if she were seen, yet she might not be known to be abroad so unseasonably. She was not shy of being known to be a gleaner in the field, nor ashamed of that mark of her poverty. But she would not willingly be known to be a night-walker, for her virtue was her greatest honour, and that which she most valued. Boaz dismissed her,

1. With a charge to keep counsel (Ru 3:14): Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor, and lay all night so near to Boaz; for, though they needed not to care much what people said of them while they were both conscious to themselves of an unspotted purity, yet, because few could have come so near the fire as they did and not have been scorched, had it been known it would have occasioned suspicions in some and reflections from others. Good people would have been troubled, and bad people would have triumphed, and therefore let it not be known. Note, We must always take care, not only to keep a good conscience, but to keep a good name: either we must not do that which, though innocent, is liable to be misinterpreted, or, if we do, we must not let it be known. We must avoid not only sin, but scandal. There was likewise a particular reason for concealment here. If this matter should take wind, it might prejudice the freedom of the other kinsman's choice, and he would make this his reason for refusing Ruth, that Boaz and she had been together.

2. He dismissed her with a good present of corn, which would be very acceptable to her poor mother at home, and an evidence for her that he had not sent her away in dislike, which Naomi might have suspected if he had sent her away empty. He gave it to her in her veil, or apron, or mantle, gave it to her by measure. Like a prudent corn-master, he kept an account of all he delivered out. It was six measures, that is six omers as is supposed, ten of which made an ephah; whatever the measure was, it is probable he gave her as much as she could well carry, Ru 3:15. And the Chaldee says, Strength was given her from the Lord to carry it; and adds that now it was told her by the spirit of prophecy that from her should descend six of the most righteous men of their age, namely, David, Daniel, his three companions, and the king Messiah.

II. How she was welcomed by her mother-in-law. She asked her, "Who art thou, my daughter? Art thou a bride or no? Must

I give thee joy?" So Ruth told her how the matter stood (Ru 3:17), whereupon her mother,

1. Advised her to be satisfied in what was done: Sit still, my daughter, till thou know how the matter will fall (Ru 3:18)--how it is decreed in heaven, so the Chaldee reads it, for marriages are made there. She had done all that was fit for her to do, and now she must patiently wait the issue and not be perplexed about it. Let us learn hence to cast our care upon providence, to follow that and attend the motions of it, composing ourselves into an expectation of the event, with a resolution to acquiesce in it, whatever it be. Sometimes that proves best done for us that is least our own doing. "Sit still, therefore, and see how the matter will fall, and say, Let it fall how it will, I am ready for it."

2. She assured her that Boaz, having undertaken this matter, would approve himself a faithful careful friend: He will not be at rest till he have finished the matter. Though it was a busy time with him in his fields and his floor, yet, having undertaken to serve his friend, he would not neglect the business. Naomi believes that Ruth has won his heart, and that therefore he will not be easy till he knows whether she be his or no. This she gives as a reason why Ruth should sit still and not perplex herself about it, that Boaz had undertaken it, and he would be sure to manage it well. Much more reason have good Christians to be careful for nothing, but cast their care on God, because he has promised to care for them: and what need have we to care if he do? Sit still, and see how the matter will fall, for the Lord will perfect that which concerns thee, and will make it to work for good to thee, Ps 37:4,5,138:8. Your strength is to sit still, Isa 30:7.

16 And when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, who *art* thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

17 And she said, these six *measures* of barley gave him me; for he said to me, go not empty unto thy mother-in-law.

18 Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.

Ruth-4

Boaz Marries Ruth

1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one!Turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which *was* our brother Elimelech's:

Here, 1. Boaz calls a court immediately. It is probable he was himself one of the elders (or aldermen) of the city; for he was a mighty man of wealth. Perhaps he was father of the city, and sat chief; for he seems here to have gone up to the gate as one having authority, and not as a common person; like Job, Job 29:7-25, &c. We cannot suppose him less than a magistrate in his city who was grandson to Nahshon, prince of Judah; and his lying at the end of a heap of corn in the threshing-floor the night before was not at all inconsistent, in those days of plainness, with the honour of his sitting judge in the gate. But why was Boaz so hasty, why so fond of the match? Ruth was not rich, but lived upon alms; not honourable, but a poor stranger.

She was never said to be beautiful; if ever she had been so, we may suppose that weeping, and travelling, and gleaning, had withered her lilies and roses. But that which made Boaz in love with her, and solicitous to expedite the affair, was that all her neighbours agreed she was a virtuous woman. This set her price with him far above rubies (Pr 31:10); and therefore he thinks, if by marrying her he might do her a real kindness, he

should also do himself a very great kindness. He will therefore bring it to a conclusion immediately. It was not court-day, but he gotten men of the elders of the city to meet him in the town-hall over the gate, where public business used to be transacted, Ru 4:2. So many, it is probable, by the custom of the city, made a full court. Boaz, though a judge, would not be judge in his own cause, but desired the concurrence of other elders. Honest intentions dread not a public cognizance.

2. He summons his rival to come and hear the matter that was to be proposed to him (Ru 4:1): "Ho, such a one, sit down here." He called him by his name, no doubt, but the divine historian thought not fit to record it, for, because he refused to raise up the name of the dead, he deserved not to have his name preserved to future ages in this history. Providence favoured Boaz in ordering it so that this kinsman should come by thus opportunely, just when the matter was ready to be proposed to him. Great affairs are sometimes much furthered by small circumstances, which facilitate and expedite them.

3. He proposes to the other kinsman the redemption of Naomi's land, which, it is probable, had been mortgaged for money to buy bread with when the famine was in the land (Ru 4:3): "Naomi has a parcel of land to sell, namely, the equity of the redemption of it out of the hands of the mortgagee, which she is willing to part with;" or, as some think, it was her jointure for her life, and, wanting money, for a small matter she would sell her interest to the heir at law, who was fittest to be the purchaser. This he gives the kinsman legal notice of (Ru 4:4), that he might have the refusal of it. Whoever had it must pay for it, and Boaz might have said, "My money is as good as my kinsman's; if I have a mind to it, why may not I buy it privately, since I had the first proffer of it, and say nothing to my kinsman?" No, Boaz, though fond enough of the purchase, would not do so mean a thing as to take a bargain over another man's head that was nearer a-kin to it; and we are taught by his example to be not only just and honest, but fair

and honourable, in all our dealings, and to do nothing which we are unwilling should see the light, but be above-board.

4. The kinsman seemed forward to redeem the land till he was told that, if he did that, he must marry the widow, and then he flew off. He liked the land well enough, and probably caught at that the more greedily because he hoped that the poor widow being under a necessity of selling he have so much the better bargain: "I will redeem it" (said he) "with all my heart," thinking it would be a fine addition to his estate, Ru 4:4. But Boaz told him there was a young widow in the case, and, if he have the land, he must take her with it, Terra transit cum onere--The estate passes with this incumbrance; either the divine law or the usage of the country would oblige him to it, or Naomi insisted upon it that she would not sell the land but upon this condition, Ru 4:5. Some think this does not relate to the law of marrying the brother's widow (for that seems to oblige only the children of the same father, De 25:5, unless by custom it was afterwards made to extend to the next of kin), but to the law of redemption of inheritances (Le 25:24,25), for it is a goel, a redeemer, that is here enquired for; and if so it was not by the law, but by Naomi's own resolution, that the purchaser was to marry the widow. However it was, this kinsman, when he heard the conditions of the bargain, refused it (Ru 4:6): "I cannot redeem it for myself.

I will not meddle with it upon these terms, lest I mar my own inheritance." The land, he thought, would be an improvement of his inheritance, but not the land with the woman; that would mar it. Perhaps he thought it would be a disparagement to him to marry such a poor widow that had come from a strange country, and almost lived upon alms. He fancied it would be a blemish to his family, it would mar his blood, and disgrace his posterity. Her eminent virtues were not sufficient in his eye to counterbalance this. The Chaldee paraphrase makes his reason for this refusal to be that he had another wife, and, if he should take Ruth, it might occasion strife and contention in his family, which would mar the comfort of his inheritance.

Or he thought she might bring him a great many children, and they would all expect shares out of his estate, which would scatter it into too many hands, so that the family would make the less figure. This makes many shy of the great redemption: they are not willing to espouse religion. They have heard well of it, and have nothing to say against it; they will give it their good word, but at the same time they will give their good word with it; they are willing to part with it, and cannot be bound to it, for fear of marring their own inheritance in this world. Heaven they could be glad of, but holiness they can dispense with; it will not agree with the lusts they have already espoused, and therefore, let who will purchase heaven at that rate, they cannot.

5. The right of redemption is fairly resigned to Boaz. If this nameless kinsman lost a good bargain, a good estate, and a good wife too, he may thank himself for not considering it better, and Boaz will thank him for making his way clear to that which he valued and desired above any thing. In those ancient times it was not the usage to pass estates by writings, as afterwards (Jer 32:10-12, &c.), but by some sign or ceremony, as with us by livery and seisin, as we commonly call it, that is, the delivery of seisin, seisin of a house by giving the key, of land by giving turf and a twig. The ceremony here used was, he that surrendered plucked off his shoe (the Chaldee says it was the glove of his right hand) and gave it to him to whom he made the surrender, intimating thereby that, whatever right he had to tread or go upon the land, he conveyed and transferred it, upon a valuable consideration, to the purchaser: this was a testimony in Israel, Ru 4:7.

And it was done in this case, Ru 4:8. If this kinsman had been bound by the law to marry Ruth, and his refusal had been a contempt of that law, Ruth must have plucked off his shoe and spit in his face, De 25:9. But, though his relation should in some measure oblige him to the duty, yet the distance of his relation might serve to excuse him from the penalty, or Ruth might very well dispense with it, since his refusal was all she

desired from him. But bishop Patrick, and the best interpreters, think this had no relation to that law, and that the drawing off of the shoe was not any disgrace as there, but a confirmation of the surrender, and an evidence that it was not fraudulently nor surreptitiously obtained. Note, Fair and open dealing in all matters of contract and commerce is what all those must make conscience of that would approve themselves Israelites indeed, without guile. How much more honourably and honestly does Boaz come by this purchase than if he had secretly undermined his kinsman, and privately struck up a bargain with Naomi, unknown to him. Honesty will be found the best policy.

4 and I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy *it* before the inhabitants,
and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem *it*, redeem it*:*
but if thou wilt not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know: for *there*
is none to redeem *it* besides thee; and I *am* after
thee. And he said, I will redeem *it*.

5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi,
thou must buy *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to
raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I mar
mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I
cannot redeem *it*.

7 Now this *was the manner* in former time in Israel concerning redeeming
and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked
off his shoe, and gave *it* to his neighbor: and this *was* a testimony in
Israel.

8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy *it* for thee. So he drew
off his shoe.

9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and *unto* all the people, Ye *are*
witnesses this day, that I have bought all that *was* Elimelech's, and
all that *was* Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased
to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his
inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among
his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye *are* witnesses this
day.

Boaz now sees his way clear, and therefore delays not to perform his promise made to Ruth that he would do the kinsman's part, but in the gate of the city, before the elders and all the people, publishes a marriage-contract between himself and Ruth the Moabitess, and therewith the purchase of all the estate that belonged to the family of Elimelech. If he had not been (Ru 2:1) a mighty man of wealth, he could not have compassed this redemption, nor done this service to his kinsman's family. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good in his generation, and especially to those of his own household, if he have but a heart to use it so! Now concerning this marriage it appears,

I. That it was solemnized, or at least published, before many witnesses, Ru 4:9,10. "You are witnesses,"

1. "That I have bought the estate. Whoever has it, or any part of it, mortgaged to him, let him come to me and he shall have his money, according to the value of the land," which was computed by the number of years to the year of jubilee (Le 25:15), when it would have returned of course to Elimelech's family. The more public the sales of estates are the better they are guarded against frauds.

2. "That I have purchased the widow to be my wife." He had no portion with her; what jointure she had was encumbered, and he could not have it without giving as much for it as it was worth, and therefore he might well say he purchased her; and yet, being a virtuous woman, he reckoned he had a good bargain. House and riches are the inheritance of fathers, but a prudent wife is more valuable, is from the Lord as a special gift. He designed, in marrying her, to preserve the memory of the dead, that the name of Mahlon, though he left no son to bear it up, might not be cut off from the gate of his place, but by this means might be preserved, that it should be inserted in the public register that Boaz married Ruth the widow of Mahlon, the son of Elimelech, which posterity, whenever they

had occasion to consult the register, would take particular notice of.

And this history, being preserved for the sake of that marriage and the issue of it, proved an effectual means to perpetuate the name of Mahlon, even beyond the thought or intention of Boaz, to the world's end. And observe that because Boaz did this honour to the dead, as well as this kindness to the living, God did him the honour to bring him into the genealogy of the Messiah, by which his family was dignified above all the families of Israel; while the other kinsman, that was so much afraid of diminishing himself, and marring his inheritance, by marrying the widow, has his name, family, and inheritance, buried in oblivion and disgrace.

A tender and generous concern for the honour of the dead and the comfort of poor widows and strangers, neither of which can return the kindness (Lu 14:14), is sure what God will be well pleased with and will surely recompense. Our Lord Jesus is our Goel, our Redeemer, our everlasting Redeemer. He looked, like Boaz, with compassion on the deplorable state of fallen mankind. At a vast expense he redeemed the heavenly inheritance for us, which by sin was mortgaged, and forfeited into the hands of divine justice, and which we should never have been able to redeem. He likewise purchased a peculiar people, whom he would espouse to himself, though strangers and foreigners, like Ruth, poor and despised, that the name of that dead and buried race might not be cut off for ever. He ventured the marring of his own inheritance, to do this, for, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; but he was abundantly recompensed for it by his Father, who, because he thus humbled himself, hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name.

Let us own our obligations to him, make sure our contract with him, and study all our days how to do him honour. Boaz, by making a public declaration of this marriage and purchase, not only secured his title against all pretenders, as it were by a fine

with proclamations, but put honour upon Ruth, showed that he was not ashamed of her, and her parentage and poverty, and left a testimony against clandestine marriages. It is only that which is evil that hates the light and comes not to it. Boaz called witnesses to what he did, for it was what he could justify, and would never disown; and such regard was then had, even to the contemned crowd, that not only the elders, but all the people that were in the gate, passing and re-passing, were appealed to (Ru 4:9), and hearkened to (Ru 4:11) when they said, We are witnesses.

II. That it was attended with many prayers. The elders and all the people, when they witnessed to it, wished well to it, and blessed it, Ru 4:11,12. Ruth, it should seem, was now sent for; for they speak of her (Ru 4:12) as present: This young woman; and, he having taken her to wife, they look upon her as already come into his house. And very heartily they pray for the new-married couple.

1 The senior elder, it is likely, made this prayer, and the rest of the elders, with the people, joined in it, and therefore it is spoken of as made by them all; for in public prayers, though but one speaks, we must all pray. Observe,

(1.) Marriages ought to be blessed, and accompanied with prayer, because every creature and every condition are that to us, and no more, that God makes them to be. It is civil and friendly to wish all happiness to those who enter into that condition; and what good we desire we should pray for from the fountain of all good. The minister who gives himself to the word and prayer, as he is the fittest person to exhort, so he is the fittest to bless and pray for those that enter into this relation.

(2.) We ought to desire and pray for the welfare and prosperity one of another, so far from envying or grieving at it.

2. Now here,

(1.) They prayed for Ruth: The Lord make the woman that has come into thy house like Rachel and Leah, that is, "God make her a good wife and a fruitful mother." Ruth was a virtuous woman, and yet needed the prayers of her friends, that by the grace of God she might be made a blessing to the family she had come into. They prayed that she might be like Rachel and Leah, rather than like Sarah and Rebekah, for Sarah had but one son, and Rebekah but one that was in covenant, the other was Esau, who was rejected; but Rachel and Leah did build up the house of Israel: all their children were in the church, and their offspring was numerous. "May she be a flourishing, fruitful, faithful vine by thy house side."

(2.) They prayed for Boaz, that he might continue to do worthily in the city to which he was an ornament, and might there be more and more famous. They desired that the wife might be a blessing in the private affairs of the house, and the husband a blessing in the public business of the town, that she in her place, and he in his, might be wise, virtuous, and successful. Observe, The way to be famous is to do worthily. Great reputation must be obtained by great merits. It is not enough not to do unworthily, to be harmless and inoffensive, but we must do worthily, be useful and serviceable to our generation. Those that would be truly illustrious must in their places shine as lights.

(3.) They prayed for the family: "Let thy house be like the house of Pharez," that is, "let it be very numerous, let it greatly increase and multiply, as the house of Pharez did." The Bethlehemites were of the house of Pharez, and knew very well how numerous it was; in the distribution of the tribes, that grandson of Jacob had the honour which none of the rest had but Manasseh and Ephraim, that his posterity was subdivided into two distinct families, Hezron and Hamul, Nu 26:21. Now they prayed that the family of Boaz, which was one branch of that stock, might in process of time become as numerous and great as the whole stock now was.

11 And all the people that *were* in the gate, and the elders, said, *we are* witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem:

12 and let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman.

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.

14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed *be* the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel.

Here is, I. Ruth a wife. Boaz took her, with the usual solemnities, to his house, and she became his wife (Ru 4:13), all the city, no doubt, congratulating the preferment of a virtuous woman, purely for her virtues. We have reason to think that Orpah, who returned from Naomi to her people and her gods, was never half so well preferred as Ruth was. He that forsakes all for Christ shall find more than all with him; it shall be recompensed a hundred-fold in this present time. Now Orpah wished she had gone with Naomi too; but she, like the other kinsman, stood in her own light.

Boaz had prayed that this pious proselyte might receive a full reward of her courage and constancy from the God of Israel, under whose wings she had come to trust; and now he became an instrument of that kindness, which was an answer to his prayer, and helped to make his own words good. Now she had the command of those servants with whom she had associated and of those fields in which she had gleaned. Thus sometimes God raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them with princes, Ps 113:7,8.

II. Ruth a mother: The Lord gave her conception; for the fruit of the womb is his reward, Ps 127:3. It is one of the keys he hath in his hand; and he sometimes makes the barren woman that had been long so to be a joyful mother of children, Ps 113:9,Isa 54:1.

III. Ruth still a daughter-in-law, and the same that she always was, to Naomi, who was so far from being forgotten that she was a principal sharer in these new joys. The good women that were at the labour when this child was born congratulated Naomi upon it more than either Boaz or Ruth, because she was the match-maker, and it was the family of her husband that was hereby built up. See here, as before, what an air of devotion there was then even in the common expressions of civility among the Israelites. Prayer to God attended the birth of the child. What a pity it is that such pious language should either be disused among Christians or degenerate into a formality. "Blessed be the Lord that has sent thee this grandson," Ru 4:14,15.

1. Who was the preserver of the name of her family, and who, they hoped, would be famous, because his father was so. 2. Who would be hereafter dutiful and kind to her, so they hoped, because his mother was so. If he would but take after her, he would be a comfort to his aged grandmother, a restorer of her life, and, if there should be occasion, would have wherewithal to be the nourisher of her old age. It is a great comfort to those that are going into years to see any of those that descend from them growing up, that are likely, by the blessing of God, to be a stay and support to them, when the years come wherein they will need such, and of which they will say they have no pleasure in them. Observe, They say of Ruth that she loved Naomi, and therefore was better to her than seven sons. See how God in his providence sometimes makes up the want and loss of those relations from whom we expected most comfort in those from whom we expected least. The bonds of love prove stronger than those of nature, and there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; so here there was a daughter-in-law better than an own child. See what wisdom and grace will do. Now here,

(1.) The child is named by the neighbours, Ru 4:17. The good women would have it called Obed, a servant, either in

remembrance of the meanness and poverty of the mother or in prospect of his being hereafter a servant, and very serviceable, to his grandmother. It is no dishonour to those that are ever so well born to be servants to God, their friends, and their generation. The motto of the princes of Wales is Ich dien--I serve.

(2.) The child is nursed by the grandmother, that is, dry-nursed, when the mother had weaned him from the breast, Ru 4:16. She laid it in her bosom, in token of her tender affection to it and care of it. Grandmothers are often the most fond.

IV. Ruth is hereby brought in among the ancestors of David and Christ, which was the greatest honour. The genealogy is here drawn from Pharez, through Boaz and Obed, to David, and so leads towards the Messiah, and therefore it is not an endless genealogy.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of
thine old age: for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is
better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him.
16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became
nurse unto it.
17 And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a
son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he *is* the father
of Jesse, the father of David.
18 Now these *are* the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron,
19 and Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab,
20 and Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon,
21 and Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed,
22 and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

The First Book of Samuel

Otherwise Called, The First Book of the Kings
[1 Samuel]

1 Samuel-1

The Birth of Samuel

1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount
Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of
Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:
2 and he had two wives; the name of the one *was* Hannah, and the
name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but
Hannah had no children.
3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice
unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni
and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, *were* there.
4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah
his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

We have here an account of the state of the family into which Samuel the prophet was born. His father's name was Elkanah, a Levite, and of the family of the Kohathites (the most honourable house of that tribe) as appears, 1Ch 6:33,34. His ancestor Zuph was an Ephrathite, that is, of Bethlehem-Judah, which was called Ephrathah, Ru 1:2. There this family of the Levites was first seated, but one branch of it, in process of time, removed to Mount Ephraim, from which Elkanah descended. Micah's Levite came from Bethlehem to Mount Ephraim, Jdg 17:8. Perhaps notice is taken of their being originally Ephrathites to show their alliance to David.

This Elkanah lived at Ramah, or Ramathaim, which signifies the double Ramah, the higher and lower town, the same with Arimathea of which Joseph was, here called Ramathaim-zophim. Zophim signifies watchmen; probably they had one of the schools of the prophets there, for prophets are called

watchmen: the Chaldee paraphrase calls Elkanah a disciple of the prophets. But it seems to me that it was in Samuel that prophecy revived, before his time there being, for a great while, no open vision, 1Sa 3:1. Nor is there any mention of a prophet of the Lord from Moses to Samuel, except Jdg 6:8. So that we have no reason to think that there was any nursery or college of prophets here till Samuel himself founded one, 1Sa 19:19,20. This is the account of Samuel's parentage, and the place of his nativity. Let us now take notice of the state of the family.

I. It was a devout family. All the families of Israel should be so, but Levites' families in a particular manner. Ministers should be patterns of family religion. Elkanah went up at the solemn feasts to the tabernacle at Shiloh, to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts. I think this is the first time in scripture that God is called the Lord of hosts--Jehovah Sabaoth, a name by which he was afterwards very much called and known. Probably Samuel the prophet was the first that used this title of God, for the comfort of Israel, when in his time their hosts were few and feeble and those of their enemies many and mighty; then it would be a support to them to think that the God they served was Lord of hosts, of all the hosts both of heaven and earth; of them he has a sovereign command, and makes what use he pleases of them. Elkanah was a country Levite, and, for aught that appears, had not any place or office which required his attendance at the tabernacle, but he went up as a common Israelite, with his own sacrifices, to encourage his neighbours and set them a good example. When he sacrificed he worshipped, joining prayers and thanksgivings with his sacrifices. In this course of religion he was constant, for he went up yearly. And that which made it the more commendable in him was,

1. That there was a general decay and neglect of religion in the nations. Some among them worshipped other gods, and the generality were remiss in the service of the God of Israel, and

yet Elkanah kept his integrity; whatever others did, his resolution was that he and his house should serve the Lord.

2. That Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were the men that were now chiefly employed in the service of the house of God; and they were men that conducted themselves very ill in their place, as we shall find afterwards; yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice. God had then tied his people to one place and one altar, and forbidden them, under any pretence whatsoever, to worship elsewhere, and therefore, in pure obedience to that command, he attended at Shiloh. If the priests did not do their duty, he would do his. Thanks be to God, we, under the gospel, are not tied to any one place or family; but the pastors and teachers whom the exalted Redeemer has given to his church are those only whose ministration tends to the perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ, Eph 4:11,12. None have dominion over our faith; but our obligation is to those that are the helpers of our holiness and joy, not to any that by their scandalous immoralities, like Hophni and Phinehas, make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, though still the validity and efficacy of the sacraments depend not on the purity of him that administers them.

II. Yet it was a divided family, and the divisions of it carried with them both guilt and grief. Where there is piety, it is a pity but there should be unity. The joint-devotions of a family should put an end to divisions in it.

1 The original cause of this division was Elkanah's marrying two wives, which was a transgression of the original institution of marriage, to which our Saviour reduces it. Mt 19:5,8, From the beginning it was not so. It made mischief in Abraham's family, and Jacob's, and here in Elkanah's. How much better does the law of God provide for our comfort and ease in this world than we should, if we were left to ourselves! It is probable that Elkanah married Hannah first, and, because he had not children by her so soon as he hoped, he married Peninnah, who bore him children indeed, but was in other

things a vexation to him. Thus are men often beaten with rods of their own making.

2. That which followed upon this error was that the two wives could not agree. They had different blessings: Peninnah, like Leah, was fruitful and had many children, which should have made her easy and thankful, though she was but a second wife, and was less beloved; Hannah, like Rachel, was childless indeed, but she was very dear to her husband, and he took all occasions to let both her and others know that she was so, and many a worthy portion he gave her (1Sa 1:5), and this should have made her easy and thankful. But they were of different tempers: Peninnah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she grew melancholy and discontented: and Elkanah had a difficult part to act between them.

(1.) Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar notwithstanding this unhappy difference in his family, and took his wives and children with him, that, if they could not agree in other things, they might agree to worship God together. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.

(2.) He did all he could to encourage Hannah, and to keep up her spirits under her affliction, 1Sa 1:4,5. At the feast he offered peace-offerings, to supplicate for peace in his family; and when he and his family were to eat their share of the sacrifice, in token of their communion with God and his altar, though he carved to Peninnah and her children competent portions, yet to Hannah he gave a worthy portion, the choicest piece that came to the table, the piece (whatever it was) that used to be given on such occasions to those that were most valued; this he did in token of his love to her, and to give all possible assurances of it. Observe,

[1.] Elkanah loved his wife never the less for her being barren. Christ loves his church, notwithstanding her infirmities, her barrenness; and so ought men to love their wives, Eph 5:25. To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is not their sin but their affliction, is to make God's providence quarrel with his precept, and very unkindly to add affliction to the afflicted.

[2.] He studied to show his love so much the more because she was afflicted, insulted, and low-spirited. It is wisdom and duty to support the weakest, and to hold up those that are run down. [3.] He showed his great love to her by the share he gave her of his peace-offerings. Thus we should testify our affection to our friends and relations, by abounding in prayer for them. The better we love them the more room let us give them in our prayers.

(3.) Peninnah was extremely peevish and provoking.

[1.] She upbraided Hannah with her affliction, despised her because she was barren, and gave her taunting language, as one whom Heaven did not favour.

[2.] She envied the interest she had in the love of Elkanah, and the more kind he was to her the more was she exasperated against her, which was all over base and barbarous.

[3.] She did this most when they went up to the house of the Lord, perhaps because then they were more together than at other times, or because then Elkanah showed his affection most to Hannah. But it was very sinful at such a time to show her malice, when pure hands were to be lifted up at God's altar without wrath and quarrelling. It was likewise very unkind at that time to vex Hannah, not only because then they were in company, and others would take notice of it, but then Hannah was to mind her devotions, and desired to be most calm and composed, and free from disturbance. The great adversary to

our purity and peace is then most industrious to ruffle us when we should be most composed. When the sons of God come to present themselves before the Lord Satan will be sure to come among them, Job 1:6.

[4.] She continued to do this from year to year, not once or twice, but it was her constant practice; neither deference to her husband nor compassion to Hannah could break her of it.

[5.] That which she designed was to make her fret, perhaps in hopes to break her heart, that she might possess her husband's heart solely, or because she took a pleasure in her uneasiness, nor could Hannah gratify her more than by fretting. Note, It is an evidence of a base disposition to delight in grieving those that are melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and in putting those out of humour that are apt to fret and be uneasy. We ought to bear one another's burdens, not add to them.

(4.) Hannah (poor woman) could not hear the provocation: She wept, and did not eat, 1Sa 1:7. It made her uneasy to herself and to all her relations. She did not eat of the feast; her trouble took away her appetite, made her unfit for any company, and a jar in the harmony of family-joy. It was of the feast upon the sacrifice that she did not eat, for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning, De 26:14,Le 10:19. Yet it was her infirmity so far to give way to the sorrow of the world as to unfit herself for holy joy in God. Those that are of a fretful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves very much of the comforts both of life and godliness. We find that God took notice of this ill effect of discontents and disagreements in the conjugal relation, that the parties aggrieved covered the altar of the Lord with tears, insomuch that he regarded not the offering, Mal 2:13.

(5.) Elkanah said what he could to her to comfort her. She did not upbraid him with his unkindness in marrying another wife as Sarah did, nor did she render to Peninnah railing for railing, but took the trouble wholly to herself, which made her an object of much compassion. Elkanah showed himself extremely grieved at her grief (1Sa 1:8): Hannah, why weepest thou?

[1.] He is much disquieted to see her thus overwhelmed with sorrow. Those that by marriage are made one flesh ought thus far to be of one spirit too, to share in each other's troubles, so that one cannot be easy while the other is uneasy.

[2.] He gives her a loving reproof for it: Why weepest thou? And why is thy heart grieved? As many as God loves he rebukes, and so should we. He puts her upon enquiring into the cause of her grief. Though she had just reason to be troubled, yet let her consider whether she had reason to be troubled to such a degree, especially so much as to be taken off by it from eating of the holy things. Note, Our sorrow upon any account is sinful and inordinate when it diverts us from our duty to God and embitters our comfort in him, when it makes us unthankful for the mercies we enjoy and distrustful of the goodness of God to us in further mercies, when it casts a damp upon our joy in Christ, and hinders us from doing the duty and taking the comfort of our particular relations.

[3.] He intimates that nothing should be wanting on his part to balance her grief: "Am not I better to thee than ten sons? Thou knowest thou hast my entire affection, and let that comfort thee." Note, We ought to take notice of our comforts, to keep us from grieving excessively for our crosses; for our crosses we deserve, but our comforts we have forfeited. If we would keep the balance even, we must look at that which is for us, as well as at that which is against us, else we are unjust to Providence and unkind to ourselves. God hath set the one over-against the other (Ec 7:14) and so should we.

5 but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah:

but the Lord had shut up her womb.
6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret,
because the Lord had shut up her womb.
7 And *as* he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the
Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.
8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou
? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? *Am* not I
better to thee than ten sons?
9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had
drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of
the Lord.
10 And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and
wept sore.
11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt
indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember
me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine
handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the
days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.
12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that
Eli marked her mouth.

Elkanah had gently reproved Hannah for her inordinate grief, and here we find the good effect of the reproof.

I. It brought her to her meat. She ate and drank, 1Sa 1:9. She did not harden herself in sorrow, nor grow sullen when she was reproved for it; but, when she perceived her husband uneasy that she did not come and eat with them, she cheered up her own spirits as well as she could, and came to table. It is as great a piece of self-denial to control our passions as it is to control our appetites.

II. It brought her to her prayers. It put her upon considering, "Do I well to be angry? Do I well to fret? What good does it do me? Instead of binding the burden thus upon my shoulders, had I not better easy myself of it, and cast it upon the Lord by prayer?" Elkanah had said, Am not I better to thee than ten sons? which perhaps occasioned her to think within herself, "Whether he be so or no, God is, and therefore to him will I

apply, and before him will I pour out my complaint, and try what relief that will give me."

If ever she will make a more solemn address than ordinary to the throne of grace upon this errand, now is the time. They are at Shiloh, at the door of the tabernacle, where God had promised to meet his people, and which was the house of prayer. They had recently offered their peace-offerings, to obtain the favour of God and all good and in token of their communion with him; and, taking the comfort of their being accepted of him, they had feasted upon the sacrifice; and now it was proper to put up her prayer in virtue of that sacrifice, for the peace-offerings, for by it not only atonement is made for sin, but the audience and acceptance of our prayers and an answer of peace to them are obtained for us: to that sacrifice, in all our supplications, we must have an eye. Now concerning Hannah's prayer we may observe,

1 The warm and lively devotion there was in it, which appeared in several instances, for our direction in prayer.

(1.) She improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit for the exciting and quickening of her pious affections in prayer: Being in bitterness of soul, she prayed, 1Sa 1:10. This good use we should make of our afflictions, they should make us the more lively in our addresses to God. Our blessed Saviour himself, being in an agony, prayed more earnestly, Lu 22:44.

(2.) She mingled tears with her prayers. It was not a dry prayer: she wept sore. Like a true Israelite, she wept and made supplication (Ho 12:4), with an eye to the tender mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul. The prayer came from her heart, as the tears from her eyes.

(3.) She was very particular, and yet very modest, in her petition. She begged a child, a man-child, that it might be fit to serve in the tabernacle. God gives us leave, in prayer, not

only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing which we most need and desire. Yet she says not, as Rachel, Give me children, Ge 30:1. She will be very thankful for one.

(4.) She made a solemn vow, or promise, that if God would give her a son she would give him up to God, 1Sa 1:11. He would be by birth a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God, but he should be by her vow a Nazarite, and his very childhood should be sacred. It is probable she had acquainted Elkanah with her purpose before, and had had his consent and approbation. Note, Parents have a right to dedicate their children to God, as living sacrifices and spiritual priests; and an obligation is thereby laid upon them to serve God faithfully all the days of their life. Note further, It is very proper, when we are in pursuit of any mercy, to bind our own souls with a bond, that, if God give it us, we will devote it to his honour and cheerfully use it in his service. Not that hereby we can pretend to merit the gift, but thus we are qualified for it and for the comfort of it. In hope of mercy, let us promise duty.

(5.) She spoke all this so softly that none could hear her. Her lips moved, but her voice was not heard, 1Sa 1:13. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Thoughts are words to him, nor is he one of those gods that must be cried aloud to, 1Ki 18:27. It was likewise an instance of her humility and holy shamefacedness in her approach to God. She was none of those that made her voice to be heard on high, Isa 58:4. It was a secret prayer, and therefore, though made in a public place, yet was thus made secretly, and not, as the Pharisees prayed, to be seen of men. It is true prayer is not a thing we have reason to be ashamed of, but we must avoid all appearances of ostentation. Let what passes between God and our souls be kept to ourselves.

2 The hard censure she fell under for it. Eli was now high priest, and judge in Israel; he sat upon a seat in the temple, to oversee what was done there, 1Sa 1:9. The tabernacle is here

called the temple, because it was now fixed, and served all the purposes of a temple. There Eli sat to receive addresses and give direction, and somewhere (it is probable in a private corner) he espied Hannah at her prayers, and by her unusual manner fancied she was drunken, and spoke to her accordingly (1Sa 1:14): How long wilt thou be drunken?--the very imputation that Peter and the apostles fell under when the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, Ac 2:13. Perhaps in this degenerate age it was no strange thing to see drunken women at the door of the tabernacle; for otherwise, one would think, the vile lust of Hophni and Phinehas could not have found so easy a prey there, 1Sa 2:22. Eli took Hannah for one of these. It is one bad effect of the abounding of iniquity, and its becoming fashionable, that it often gives occasion to suspect the innocent. When a disease is epidemical every one is suspected to be tainted with it. Now,

(1.) This was Eli's fault; and a great fault it was to pass so severe a censure without better observation or information. If his own eyes had already become dim, he should have employed those about him to enquire. Drunkards are commonly noisy and turbulent, but this poor woman was silent and composed. His fault was the worse that he was the priest of the Lord, who should have had compassion on the ignorant, Heb 5:2. Note, It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in our censures of others, and to be forward to believe people guilty of bad things, while either the matter of fact on which the censure is grounded is doubtful and unproved or is capable of a good construction. Charity commands us to hope the best concerning all, and forbids censoriousness. Paul had very good information when he did but partly believe (1Co 11:18), hoping it was not so. Especially we ought to be cautious how we censure the devotions of others, lest we call that hypocrisy, enthusiasm, or superstition, which is really the fruit of an honest zeal, and it is accepted of God.

(2.) It was Hannah's affliction; and a great affliction it was, added to all the rest, vinegar to the wounds of her spirit. She

had been reproved by Elkanah because she would not eat and drink, and now to be reproached by Eli as if she had eaten and drunk too much was very hard. Note, It is no new thing for those that do well to be ill thought of, and we must not think it strange if at any time it be our lot.

3. Hannah's humble vindication of herself from this crime with which she was charged. She bore it admirably well. She did not retort the charge and upbraid him with the debauchery of his own sons, did not bid him look at home and restrain them, did not tell him how ill it became one in his place thus to abuse a poor sorrowful worshipper at the throne of grace. When we are at any time unjustly censured we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not recriminate, and return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to vindicate herself, and so must we, 1Sa 1:15,16.

(1.) In justice to herself, she expressly denies the charge, speaks to him with all possible respect, calls him, My lord, intimates how very desirous she was to stand right in his opinion and how loth to lie under his censure. "No, my lord, it is not as you suspect; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, not any at all" (though it was proper enough to be given to one of such a heavy heart, Pr 31:6), "much less to any excess; therefore count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial." Note, Drunkards are children of Belial (women-drunkards, particularly), children of the wicked one, children of disobedience, children that will not endure the yoke (else they would not be drunk), more especially when they are actually drunk. Those that cannot govern themselves will not bear that any one else should. Hannah owns that the crime would have been very great if she had indeed been guilty of it, and he might justly have shut her out of the courts of God's house; but the very manner of her speaking in her own defence was sufficient to demonstrate that she was not drunk.

(2.) In justice to him, she gives an account of her present behaviour, which had given occasion to his suspicion: "I am a

woman of a sorrowful spirit, dejected and discomposed, and that is the reason I do not look as other people; the eyes are red, not with wine, but with weeping. And at this time I have not been talking to myself, as drunkards and fools do, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord, who hears and understands the language of the heart, and this out of the abundance of my complaint and grief." She had been more than ordinarily fervent in prayer to God, and this, she tells him, was the true reason of the transport and disorder she seemed to be in. Note, When we are unjustly censured we should endeavour, not only to clear ourselves, but to satisfy our brethren, by giving them a just and true account of that which they misapprehended.

4. The atonement Eli made for his rash unfriendly censure, by a kind and fatherly benediction, 1Sa 1:17. He did not (as many are apt to do in such a case) take it for an affront to have his mistake rectified and to be convinced of his error, nor did it put him out of humour. But, on the contrary, he now encouraged Hannah's devotions as much as before he had discountenanced them; not only intimated that he was satisfied of her innocency by those words, Go in peace, but, being high priest, as one having authority he blessed her in the name of the Lord, and, though he knew not what the particular blessing was that she had been praying for, yet he puts his Amen to it, so good an opinion had he now conceived of her prudence and piety: The God of Israel grant thee thy petition, whatever it is, that thou hast asked of him. Note, By our meek and humble carriage towards those that reproach us because they do not know us, we may perhaps make them our friends, and turn their censures of us into prayers for us.

5. The great satisfaction of mind with which Hannah now went away, 1Sa 1:18. She begged the continuance of Eli's good opinion of her and his good prayers for her, and then she went her way and did eat of what remained of the peace-offerings (none of which was to be left until the morning), and her countenance was no more sad, no more as it had been,

giving marks of inward trouble and discomposure; but she looked pleasant and cheerful, and all was well. Why, what had happened? Whence came this sudden happy change? She had by prayer committed her case to God and left it with him, and now she was no more perplexed about it. She had prayed for herself, and Eli had prayed for her; and she believed that God would either give her the mercy she had prayed for or make up the want of it to her some other way. Note, Prayer is heart's-ease to a gracious soul; the seed of Jacob have often found it so, being confident that God will never say unto them, Seek you me in vain, see Php 4:6,7. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so.

13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.
14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.
15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord.
16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.
17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant *thee* thy petition that thou hast asked of him.
18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more *sad*.
19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her.
20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the Lord.
21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.
22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever.

23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee
good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish
his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she
weaned him.

24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three
bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought
him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child *was* young.

Here is, I The return of Elkanah and his family to their own habitation, when the days appointed for the feast were over, 1Sa 1:19. Observe how they improved their time at the tabernacle. Every day they were there, even that which was fixed for their journey home, they worshipped God; and they rose up early to do it. It is good to begin the day with God. Let him that is the first have the first. They had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, and yet they would not stir till they had worshipped God together. Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey. They had spent several days now in religious worship, and yet they attended once more. We should not be weary of well-doing.

II The birth and name of this desired son. At length the Lord remembered Hannah, the very thing she desired (1Sa 1:11), and more she needed not desire, that was enough, for then she conceived and bore a son. Though God seem long to forget his people's burdens, troubles, cares, and prayers, yet he will at length make it to appear that they are not out of his mind. This son the mother called Samuel, 1Sa 1:20. Some make the etymology of this name to be much the same with that of Ishmael--heard of God, because the mother's prayers were remarkably heard, and he was an answer to them. Others, because of the reason she gives for the name, make it to signify asked of God. It comes nearly to the same; she designed by it to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favour to her in answering her prayers. Thus she designed, upon every mention of his name, to take the comfort to herself and to give God the glory of that gracious condescension.

Note, Mercies in answer to prayer are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness, as Ps 116:1,2. How many seasonable deliverances and supplies may we call Samuels, asked of God; and whatever is so we are in a special manner engaged to devote to him. Hannah intended by this name to put her son in mind of the obligation he was under to be the Lord's, in consideration of this, that he was asked of God and was at the same time dedicated to him. A child of prayer is in a special manner bound to be a good child. Lemuel's mother reminds him that he was the son of her vows, Pr 31:2.

III. The close attendance Hannah gave to the nursing of him, not only because he was dear to her, but because he was devoted to God, and for him she nursed him herself, and did not hang him on another's breast. We ought to take care of our children, not only with an eye to the law of nature as they are ours, but with an eye to the covenant of grace as they are given up to God. See Eze 16:20,21. This sanctifies the nursing of them, when it is done as unto the Lord. Elkanah went up every year to worship at the tabernacle, and particularly to perform his vow, perhaps some vow he had made distinct from Hannah's if God would give him a son by her, 1Sa 1:21. But Hannah, though she felt a warm regard for the courts of God's house, begged leave of her husband to stay at home; for the women were not under any obligation to go up to the three yearly feasts, as the men were. However Hannah had been accustomed to go, but now desired to be excused,

1. Because she would not be so long absent from her nursery. Can a woman forget her sucking child? We may suppose she kept constantly at home, for, if she had gone any where, she would have gone to Shiloh.

Note, God will have mercy and not sacrifice. Those that are detained from public ordinances by the nursing and tending of little children may take comfort from this instance, and believe that, if they do that with an eye to God, he will graciously

accept them therein, and though they tarry at home they shall divide the spoil.

2. Because she would not go up to Shiloh till her son was big enough, not only to be taken thither, but to be left there; for, if once she took him thither, she thought she could never find in her heart to bring him back again. Note, Those who are stedfastly resolved to pay their vows may yet see good cause to defer the payment of them. Every thing is beautiful in its season. No animal was accepted in sacrifice till it had been for some time under the dam, Le 22:27. Fruit is best when it is ripe. Elkanah agrees to what she proposes (1Sa 1:23): Do what seemeth thee good. So far was he from delighting to cross her that he referred it entirely to her. Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is, when yoke-fellows thus draw even in the yoke, and accommodate themselves to one another, each thinking well of what the other does, especially in works of piety and charity. He adds a prayer: Only the Lord establish his word, that is, "God preserve the child through the perils of his infancy, that the solemn vow which God signified his acceptance of, by giving us the child, may be performed in its season, and so the whole matter may be accomplished."

Note, Those that have in sincerity devoted their children to God may with comfort pray for them, that God will establish the word sealed to them at the same time that they were sealed for him.

IV. The solemn entering of this child into the service of the sanctuary. We may take it for granted that he was presented to the Lord at forty days old, as all the first-born were (Lu 2:22,23): but this is not mentioned, because there was nothing in it singular; but now that he was weaned he was presented, not to be redeemed. Some think it was as soon as he was weaned from the breast, which, the Jews say, was not till he was three years old; it is said she gave him suck till she had weaned him, 1Sa 1:23. Others think it was not till he was weaned from childish things, at eight or ten years old. But I

see no inconvenience in admitting such an extraordinary child as this into the tabernacle at three years old, to be educated among the children of the priests. It is said (1Sa 1:24), The child was young, but, being intelligent above his years, he was no trouble. None can begin too soon to be religious. The child was a child, so the Hebrew reads it, in his learning-age. For whom shall he teach knowledge but those that are newly weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts? Isa 28:9. Observe how she presented her child,

1. With a sacrifice; no less than three bullocks, with a meat-offering for each, 1Sa 1:24. A bullock, perhaps, for each year of the child's life. Or one for a burnt-offering, another for a sin-offering, and the third of a peace-offering. So far was she from thinking that, by presenting her son to God, she made God her debtor, that she thought it requisite by these slain offerings to seek God's acceptance of her living sacrifice. All our covenants with God for ourselves and ours must be made by sacrifice, the great sacrifice.

2. With a grateful acknowledgement of God's goodness in answer to prayer. This she makes to Eli, because he had encouraged her to hope for an answer of peace (1Sa 1:26,27): "For this child I prayed. Here it was obtained by prayer, and here it is resigned to the prayer-hearing God. You have forgotten me, my lord, but I who now appear so cheerful am the woman, the very same, that three years ago stood by thee here weeping and praying, and this was the child I prayed for." Answers of prayer may thus be humbly triumphed in, to the glory of God. Here is a living testimony for God. "I am his witness that he is gracious (see Ps 66:16-19); for this mercy, this comfort, I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition." See Ps 34:2,4,6. Hannah does not remind Eli of it by adverting to the suspicion he had formerly expressed; she does not say, "I am the woman whom you passed that severe censure upon; what do you think of me now?" Good men ought not to be upbraided with their infirmities and oversights. They have themselves repented of them; let them hear no more of them.

3. With a full surrender of all her interest in this child unto the Lord (1Sa 1:28): I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth. And she repeats it, because she will never revoke it: He shall be (a deodand) lent or given to the Lord. Not that she designed to call for him back, as we do what we lend, but she uses this word Shaol, lent, because it is the same word that she had used before (1Sa 1:20, I asked him of the Lord), only in another conjugation. And (1Sa 1:27) the Lord gave me the petition which I asked (Shaalti, in Kal), therefore I have lent him (Hishilti, the same word in Hiphil), and so it gives another etymology of his name Samuel, not only asked of God, but lent to God. And observe,

(1.) Whatever we give to God, it is what we have first asked and received from him. All our gifts to him were first his gifts to us. Of thy own, Lord, have we given thee, 1Ch 29:14,16.

(2.) Whatever we give to God may upon this account be said to be lent to him, that though we may not recall it, as a thing lent, yet he will certainly repay it, with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, particularly what is given to his poor, Pr 19:17. When by baptism we dedicate our children to God, let us remember that they were his before by a sovereign right, and that they are ours still so much the more to our comfort. Hannah resigns him to the Lord, not for a certain term of years, as children are sent apprentices, but durante vita--as long as he liveth, he shall be lent unto the Lord, a Nazarite for life. Such must our covenant with God be, a marriage-covenant; as long as live we must be his, and never forsake him.

Lastly, The child Samuel did his part beyond what could have been expected from one of his years; for of him that seems to be spoken, He worshipped the Lord there, that is he said his prayers. He was no doubt extraordinarily forward (we have known children that have discovered some sense of religion very young), and his mother, designing him for the sanctuary, took particular care to train him up to that which was to be his

work in the sanctuary. Note, Little children should learn betimes to worship God. Their parents should instruct them in his worship and bring them to it, put them upon engaging in it as well as they can, and God will graciously accept them and teach them to do better.

25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.
26 And she said, O my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord.
27 For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him:
28 therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

1 Samuel-2

The Song of Hannah

1 And Hannah prayed, and said, my
heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine
horn is exalted in the Lord;
my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;
because I rejoice in thy salvation.

We have here Hannah's thanksgiving, dictated, not only by the spirit of prayer, but by the spirit of prophecy. Her petition for the mercy she desired we had before (1Sa 1:11), and here we have her return of praise; in both out of the abundance of a heart deeply affected (in the former with her own wants, and in the latter with God's goodness) her mouth spoke. Observe in general,

1. When she had received mercy from God she owned it, with thankfulness to his praise. Not like the nine lepers, Lu 17:17. Praise is our rent, our tribute. We are unjust if we do not pay it.

2 The mercy she had received was an answer to prayer, and therefore she thought herself especially obliged to give thanks

for it. What we win by prayer we may wear with comfort, and must wear with praise. 3. Her thanksgiving is here called a prayer: Hannah prayed; for thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer. In every address to God we must express a grateful regard to him as our benefactor. Nay, and thanksgiving for mercies received shall be accepted as a petition for further mercy.

4. From this particular mercy which she had received from God she takes occasion, with an elevated and enlarged heart, to speak glorious things of God and of his government of the world for the good of his church. Whatever at any time gives rise to our praises in this manner they should be raised.

5. Her prayer was mental. Her voice was not heard; but in her thanksgiving she spoke, that all might hear her. She made her supplication with groanings that could not be uttered, but now her lips were opened to show forth God's praise.

6. This thanksgiving is here left upon record for the encouragement of those of the weaker sex to attend the throne of grace. God will regard their prayers and praises. The virgin Mary's song has great affinity with this of Hannah, Lu 1:46. Three things we have in this thanksgiving:--

I. Hannah's triumph in God, in his glorious perfections, and the great things he had done for her, 1Sa 2:1-3. Observe,

1. What great things she says of God. She takes little notice of the particular mercy she was now rejoicing in, does not commend Samuel for the prettiest child, the most toward and sensible for his age that she ever saw, as fond parents are too apt to do. No, she overlooks the gift, and praises the giver; whereas most forget the giver and fasten only on the gift. Every stream should lead us to the fountain; and the favours we receive from God should raise our admiration of the infinite perfections there are in God. There may be other Samuels, but no other Jehovah. There is none beside thee.

Note, God is to be praised as a peerless being, and of unparalleled perfection. This glory is due unto his name, to own not only that there is none like him, but that there is none besides him. All others were pretenders, Ps 18:31. Four of God's glorious attributes Hannah here celebrates the glory of:--

(1.) His unspotted purity. This is that attribute which is most praised in the upper world, by those that always behold his face, Isa 6:3,Re 4:8. When Israel triumphed over the Egyptians God was praised as glorious in holiness, Ex 15:11. So here, in Hannah's triumph, There is none holy as the Lord. It is the rectitude of his nature, his infinite agreement with himself, and the equity of his government and judgment in all the administrations of both. At the remembrance of this we ought to give thanks.

(2.) His almighty power: Neither is there any rock (or any strength, for so the word is sometimes rendered) like our God. Hannah had experienced a mighty support by staying herself upon him, and therefore speaks as she had found, and seems to refer to that of Moses, De 32:31.

(3.) His unsearchable wisdom: The Lord, the Judge of all, is a God of knowledge; he clearly and perfectly sees into the character of every person and the merits of every cause, and he gives knowledge and understanding to those that seek them of him.

(4.) His unerring justice: By him actions are weighed. His own are so, in his eternal counsels; the actions of the children of men are so, in the balances of his judgment, so that he will render to every man according to his work, and is not mistaken in what any man is or does.

2. How she solaces herself in these things. What we give God the glory of we may take the comfort of. Hannah does so,

(1.) In holy joy: My heart rejoiceth in the Lord; not so much in her son as in her God; he is to be the gladness of our joy (Ps 43:4), and our joy must not terminate in any thing short of him: "I rejoice in thy salvation; not only in this particular favour to me, but in the salvation of thy people Israel, those salvations especially which this child will be an instrument of, and that, above all, by Christ, which those are but the types of."

(2.) In holy triumph: "My horn is exalted; not only is my reputation saved by my having a son, but greatly raised by having such a son." We read of some of the singers whom David appointed to lift up the horn, an instrument of music, in praising God (1Ch 25:5), so that, My horn is exalted means this, "My praises are very much elevated to an unusual strain." Exalted in the Lord; God is to have the honour of all our exaltations, and in him must we triumph. My mouth is enlarged, that is, "Now I have wherewith to answer those that reproached me." He that has his quiver full of arrows, his house full of children, shall not be ashamed to speak with the enemy in the gate, Ps 127:5.

3. How she herewith silences those that set up themselves as rivals with God and rebels against him (1Sa 2:3): Talk no more so exceedingly proudly. Let not Peninnah and her children upbraid her any more with her confidence in God and praying to him: at length she found it not in vain. See Mic 7:10, Then she that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said, Where is thy God? Or perhaps it was below her to take so much notice of Peninnah, and her malice, in this song; but this is intended as a check to the insolence of the Philistines, and other enemies of God and Israel, that set their mouth against the heavens, Ps 73:9. "Let this put them to silence and shame; he that has thus judged for me against my adversary will judge for his people against all theirs."

II The notice she takes of the wisdom and sovereignty of the divine providence, in its disposals of the affairs of the children of men; such are the vicissitudes of them, and such the strange

and sudden turns and revolutions of them, that it is often found a very short step between the height of prosperity and the depth of adversity. God has not only set the one over against the other (Ec 7:14), but the one very near the other, and no gulf fixed between them, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not and weep as though we wept not.

1 The strong are soon weakened and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleases, 1Sa 2:4. On the one hand, if he speak the word, the bows of the mighty men are broken; they are disarmed, disabled to do as they have before done and as they have designed to do. Those have been worsted in battle who seemed upon all accounts to have the advantage on their side, and thought themselves sure of victory. See Ps 46:9,Ps 37:15,17. Particular persons are soon weakened by sickness and age, and they find that the bow does not long abide in strength; many a mighty man who has gloried in his might has found it a deceitful bow, that failed him when he trusted to it. On the other hand, if the Lord speak the word, those who stumble through weakness, who were so feeble that they could not go straight or steady, are girded with strength, in body and mind, and are able to bring great things to pass. Those who were weakened by sickness return to their vigour (Job 33:25), and those who were brought down by sorrow shall recover their comfort, which will confirm the weak hands and the feeble knees, Isa 35:3. Victory turns in favour of that side that was given up for gone, and even the lame take the prey, Isa 33:23.

2 The rich are soon impoverished and the poor strangely enriched on a sudden, 1Sa 2:5. Providence sometimes does so blast men's estates and cross their endeavours, and with a fire not blown consume their increase, that those who were full (their barns full, and their bags full, their houses full of good things, Job 22:18, and their bellies full of these hidden treasures, Ps 17:14) have been reduced to such straits and extremities as to want the necessary supports of life, and to hire out themselves for bread, and they must dig, since to beg

they are ashamed. Riches flee away (Pr 23:5), and leave those miserable who, when they had them, placed their happiness in them. To those that have been full and free poverty must needs be doubly grievous. But, on the other hand, sometimes Providence so orders it that those who are hungry cease, that is, cease to hire out themselves for bread as they have done.

Having, by God's blessing on their industry, got beforehand in the world, and enough to live upon at ease, they shall hunger no more, not thirst any more. This is not to be ascribed to fortune, nor merely to men's wisdom or folly. Riches are not to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill (Ec 9:11), nor is it always men's own fault that they become poor, but (1Sa 2:7) the Lord maketh some poor and maketh others rich; the impoverishing of one is the enriching of another, and it is God's doing. To some he gives power to get wealth, from others he takes away power to keep the wealth they have. Are we poor? God made us poor, which is a good reason why we should be content, and reconcile ourselves to our condition. Are we rich? God made us rich, which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and serve him cheerfully in the abundance of good things he gives us. It may be understood of the same person; those that were rich God makes poor, and after awhile makes rich again, as Job; he gave, he takes away, and then gives again. Let not the rich be proud and secure, for God can soon make them poor; let not the poor despond and despair, for God can in due time enrich them again.

3. Empty families are replenished and numerous families diminished and made few. This is the instance that comes close to the occasion of the thanksgiving: The barren hath borne seven, meaning herself, for, though at present she had but one son, yet that one being a Nazarite, devoted to God and employed in his immediate service, he was to her as good as seven. Or it is the language of her faith. Now that she had one she hoped for more, and was not disappointed; she had five more (1Sa 2:21), so that if we reckon Samuel but for two, as we well may, she has the number she promised herself: the

barren hath borne seven, while, on the other hand, she that hath many children has waxed feeble, and hath left bearing. She says no more. Peninnah is now mortified and crest-fallen. The tradition of the Jews is that when Hannah bore one child Peninnah buried two. There are many instances both of the increase of families that were inconsiderable and the extinguishing of families that made a figure, Job 22:23,Ps 107:38, &c.

4. God is the sovereign Lord of life and death (1Sa 2:6): The Lord killeth and maketh alive. Understand it,

(1.) Of God's sovereign dominion and universal agency, in the lives and deaths of the children of men. He presides in births and burials. Whenever any die it is God that directs the arrows of death. The Lord killeth. Death is his messenger, strikes whom and when he bids; none are brought to the dust but it is he that brings them down, for in his hand are the keys of death and the grave, Re 1:18. Whenever any are born it is he that makes them alive. None knows what is the way of the spirit, but this we know, that it comes from the Father of spirits. Whenever any are recovered from sickness, and delivered from imminent perils, it is God that bringeth up; for to him belong the issues from death.

(2.) Of the distinction he makes between some and others: He killeth some, and maketh, that is, keepeth, others alive that were in the same danger (in war, suppose, or pestilence), two in a bed together, it may be, one taken by death and the other left alive. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes. Some that were most likely to live are brought down to the grave, and others that were as likely to die are brought up; for living and dying do not go by likelihoods. God's providences towards some are killing, ruining to their comforts, and towards others at the same time reviving.

(3.) Of the change he makes with one and the same person: He killeth and bringeth down to the grave, that is, he brings even

to death's door, and then revives and raises up, when even life was despaired of and a sentence of death received, 2Co 1:8,9. He turns to destruction, and then says, Return, Ps 110:3. Nothing is too hard for God to do, no, not the quickening of the dead, and putting life into dry bones.

5. Advancement and abasement are both from him. He brings some low and lifts up others (1Sa 2:7), humbles the proud and gives grace and honour to the lowly, lays those in the dust that would vie with the God above them and trample upon all about them (Job 40:12), but lifts up those with his salvation that humble themselves before him, Jam 4:10. Or it may be understood of the same persons: those whom he had brought low, when they are sufficiently humbled, he lifteth up. This is enlarged upon, 1Sa 2:8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, a low and mean condition, nay, from the dunghill, a base and servile condition, loathed, and despised, to set them among princes. See Ps 113:7,8. Promotion comes not by chance, but from the counsel of God, which often prefers those that were very unlikely and that men thought very unworthy. Joseph and Daniel, Moses and David, were thus strangely advanced, from a prison to a palace, from a sheep-hook to a sceptre. The princes they are set among may be tempted to disdain them, but God can establish the honour which he gives thus surprisingly, and make them even to inherit the throne of glory. Let not those whom Providence has thus preferred be upbraided with the dust and dunghill they are raised out of, for the meaner their beginnings were the more they are favoured, and God is glorified, in their advancement, if it be by lawful and honourable means.

6. A reason is given for all these dispensations which obliges us to acquiesce in them, how surprising soever they are: For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's.

(1.) If we understand this literally, it intimates God's almighty power, which cannot be controlled. He upholds the whole creation, founded the earth, and still sustains it by the word of

his power. What cannot he do in the affairs of families and kingdoms, far beyond our conception and expectation, who hangs the earth upon nothing? Job 26:7. But,

(2.) If we understand it figuratively, it intimates his incontestable sovereignty, which cannot be disputed. The princes and great ones of the earth, the directors of states and governments, are the pillars of the earth, Ps 75:3. On these hinges the affairs of the world seem to turn, but they are the Lord's, Ps 47:9. From him they have their power, and therefore he may advance whom he pleases; and who may say, What doest thou?

III. A prediction of the preservation and advancement of all God's faithful friends, and the destruction of all his and their enemies. Having testified her joyful triumph in what God had done, and is doing, she concludes with joyful hopes of what he would do, 1Sa 2:9,10. Pious affections (says bishop Patrick) in those days rose many times to the height of prophecy, whereby God continued in that nation his true religion, in the midst of their idolatrous inclinations. This prophecy may refer, 1. More immediately to the government of Israel by Samuel, and by David whom he was employed to anoint. The Israelites, God's saints, should be protected and delivered; the Philistines, their enemies, should be conquered and subdued, and particularly by thunder, 1Sa 7:10.

Their dominions should be enlarged, king David strengthened and greatly exalted, and Israel (that in the time of the judges had made so small a figure and had much ado to subsist) should now shortly become great and considerable, and give law to all its neighbours. An extraordinary change that was; and the birth of Samuel was, as it were, the dawning of that day. But, 2. We have reason to think that this prophecy looks further, to the kingdom of Christ, and the administration of that kingdom of grace, of which she now comes to speak, having spoken so largely of the kingdom of providence. And here is the first time that we meet with the name Messiah, or

his Anointed. The ancient expositors, both Jewish and Christian, make it to look beyond David, to the Son of David. Glorious things are here spoken of the kingdom of the Mediator, both before and since his incarnation; for the method of the administration of it, both by the eternal Word and by that Word made flesh, is much the same. Concerning that kingdom we are here assured,

(1.) That all the loyal subjects of it shall be carefully and powerfully protected (1Sa 2:9): He will keep the feet of his saints. There are a people in the world that are God's saints, his select and sanctified ones; and he will keep their feet, that is, all that belongs to them shall be under his protection, down to their very feet, the lowest part of the body. If he will keep their feet, much more their head and hearts. Or he will keep their feet, that is, he will secure the ground they stand on, and establish their goings; he will set a guard of grace upon their affections and actions, that their feet may neither wander out of the way nor stumble in the way. When their feet are ready to slip (Ps 73:2) his mercy holdeth them up (Ps 94:18) and keepeth them from falling, Jude 1:24. While we keep God's ways he will keep our feet. See Ps 37:23,24.

(2.) That all the powers engaged against it shall not be able to effect the ruin of it. By strength shall no man prevail. God's strength is engaged for the church; and, while it is so, man's strength shall not prevail against it. The church seems destitute of strength, her friends few and feeble, but prevalency does not go by human strength, Ps 33:16. God neither needs it for him (Ps 147:10) nor dreads it against him.

(3.) That all the enemies of it will certainly be broken and brought down: The wicked shall be silent in darkness, 1Sa 2:9. They shall be struck both blind and dumb, not be able to see their way nor have any thing to say for themselves. Damned sinners are sentenced to utter darkness, and in it they will be for ever speechless, Mt 22:12,13. The wicked are called the adversaries of the Lord, and it is foretold (1Sa 2:10) that they

shall be broken to pieces. Their designs against his kingdom among men will all be dashed, and they themselves destroyed; how can those speed better that are in arms against Omnipotence? See Lu 19:27. God has many ways of doing it, and, rather than fail, from heaven shall he thunder upon them, and so, not only put them in terror and consternation, but bring them to destruction. Who can stand before God's thunderbolts?

(4.) That the conquests of this kingdom shall extend themselves to distant regions: The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth. David's victories and dominions reached far, but the uttermost parts of the earth are promised to the Messiah for his possession (Ps 2:8), to be either reduced to his golden sceptre or ruined by his iron rod. God is Judge of all, and he will judge for his people against his and their enemies, Ps 110:5,6.

(5.) That the power and honour of Messiah the prince shall grow and increase more and more: He shall give strength unto his king, for the accomplishing of his great undertaking (Ps 89:21, and see Lu 22:43), strengthen him to go through the difficulties of his humiliation, and in his exaltation he will lift up the head (Ps 110:7), lift up the horn, the power and honour, of his anointed, and make him higher than the kings of the earth, Ps 89:27. This crowns the triumph, and is, more than any thing, the matter of her exultation. Her horn is exalted (1Sa 2:1) because she foresees the horn of the Messiah will be so. This secures the hope. The subjects of Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it will be ruined, for the anointed, the Lord Christ, is girded with strength, and is able to save and destroy unto the uttermost.

2 *There is* none holy as the Lord:
for *there is* none besides thee:
neither *is there* any rock like our God.
3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly;
let *not* arrogancy come out of your mouth:

for the Lord *is* a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.
4 The bows of the mighty men *are* broken,
and they that stumbled are girded with strength.
5 *They that were* full have hired out themselves for bread;
and *they that were* hungry ceased:
so that the barren hath borne seven;
and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.
6 The Lord killeth, and maketh alive:
he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.
7 The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich:
he bringeth low, and lifteth up.
8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill,
to set *them* among princes,
and to make them inherit the throne of glory:
for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's,
and he hath set the world upon them.
9 He will keep the feet of his saints,
and the wicked shall be silent in darkness;
for by strength shall no man prevail.
10 The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces;
out of heaven shall he thunder upon them:
the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth;
and he shall give strength unto his king, and
exalt the horn of his anointed.
11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did
minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest.

The Sins of Eli's Sons

12 Now the sons of Eli *were* sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.

13 And the priest's custom with the people *was, that,* when any man
offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in
seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;
14 and he struck *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the
fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in
Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.
15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to
the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will
not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.
16 And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat
presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth; then he would
answer him, *nay;* but thou shalt give *it me* now: and if not, I will
take *it* by force.
17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the
Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

In these verses we have the good character and posture of Elkanah's family, and the bad character and posture of Eli's family. The account of these two is observably interwoven throughout this whole paragraph, as if the historian intended to set the one over against the other, that they might set off one another. The devotion and good order of Elkanah's family aggravated the iniquity of Eli's house; while the wickedness of Eli's sons made Samuel's early piety appear the more bright and illustrious.

I. Let us see how well things went in Elkanah's family and how much better than formerly.

1. Eli dismissed them from the house of the Lord, when they had entered their little son there, with a blessing, 1Sa 2:20. He blessed as one having authority: The Lord give thee more children of this woman, for the loan that is lent to the Lord. If Hannah had then had many children, it would not have been such a generous piece of piety to part with one out of many for the service of the tabernacle; but when she had but one, an only one whom she loved, her Isaac, to present him to the Lord was such an act of heroic piety as should by no means lose its reward. As when Abraham had offered Isaac he received the

promise of a numerous issue (Ge 22:16,17), so did Hannah, when she had presented Samuel unto the Lord a living sacrifice.

Note, What is lent to the Lord will certainly be repaid with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, and oftentimes in kind. Hannah resigns one child to God, and is recompensed with five; for Eli's blessing took effect (1Sa 2:21): She bore three sons and two daughters. There is nothing lost by lending to God or losing for him; it shall be repaid a hundred-fold, Mt 19:29.

2. They returned to their own habitation. This is twice mentioned, 1Sa 2:11, and again 1Sa 2:20. It was very pleasant to attend at God's house, to bless him, and to be blessed of him. But they have a family at home that must be looked after, and thither they return, cheerfully leaving the dear little one behind them, knowing they left him in a good place; and it does not appear that he cried after them, but was as willing to stay as they were to leave him, so soon did he put away childish things and behave like a man.

3. They kept up their constant attendance at the house of God with their yearly sacrifice, 1Sa 2:19. They did not think that their son's ministering there would excuse them, or that that offering must serve instead of other offerings; but, having found the benefit of drawing near to God, they would omit no appointed season for it, and now they had one loadstone more in Shiloh to draw them thither. We may suppose they went thither to see their child oftener than once a year, for it was not ten miles from Ramah; but their annual visit is taken notice of because then they brought their yearly sacrifice, and then Hannah fitted up her son (and some think oftener than once a year) with a new suit of clothes, a little coat (1Sa 2:19) and every thing belonging to it.

She undertook to find him with clothes during his apprenticeship at the tabernacle, and took care he should be

well provided, that he might appear the more decent and sightly in his ministration, and to encourage him in his towardly beginnings. Parents must take care that their children want nothing that is fit for them, whether they are with them or from them; but those that are dutiful and hopeful, and minister to the Lord, must be thought worthy of double care and kindness.

4. The child Samuel did very well. Four separate times he is mentioned in these verses, and two things we are told of:--

(1.) The service he did to the Lord. He did well indeed, for he ministered to the Lord (1Sa 2:11,18) according as his capacity was. He learned his catechism and was constant to his devotions, soon learned to read, and took a pleasure in the book of the law, and thus he ministered to the Lord. He ministered before Eli, that is, under his inspection, and as he ordered him, not before Eli's sons; all parties were agreed that they were unfit to be his tutors. Perhaps he attended immediately on Eli's person, was ready to him to fetch and bring as he had occasion, and that is called ministering to the Lord.

Some little services perhaps he was employed in about the altar, though much under the age appointed by the law for the Levites' ministration. He could light a candle, or hold a dish, or run on an errand, or shut a door; and, because he did this with a pious disposition of mind it is called ministering to the Lord, and great notice is taken of it. After awhile he did his work so well that Eli appointed that he should minister with a linen ephod as the priests did (though he was no priest), because he saw that God was with him. Note, Little children must learn betimes to minister to the Lord. Parents must train them up to it, and God will accept them. Particularly let them learn to pay respect to their teachers, as Samuel to Eli. None can begin too soon to be religious. See Ps 8:2,Mt 21:15,16.

(2.) The blessing he received from the Lord: He grew before the Lord, as a tender plant (1Sa 2:21), grew on (1Sa 2:26) in strength and stature, and especially in wisdom and understanding and fitness for business. Note, Those young people that serve God as well as they can will obtain grace to improve, that they may serve him better. Those that are planted in God's house shall flourish, Ps 92:13. He was in favour with the Lord and with man.

Note, It is a great encouragement to children to be tractable, and virtuous, and good betimes, that if they be both God and man will love them. Such children are the darlings both of heaven and earth. What is here said of Samuel is said of our blessed Saviour, that great example, Lu 2:52.

II. Let us now see how ill things went in Eli's family, though seated at the very door of the tabernacle. The nearer the church the further from God.

1 The abominable wickedness of Eli's sons (1Sa 2:12): The sons of Eli were sons of Belial. It is emphatically expressed. Nothing appears to the contrary but that Eli himself was a very good man, and no doubt had educated his sons well, giving them good instructions, setting them good examples, and putting up many a good prayer for them; and yet, when they grew up, they proved sons of Belial, profane wicked men, and arrant rakes: They knew not the Lord. They could not but have a notional knowledge of God and his law, a form of knowledge (Ro 2:20), yet, because their practice was not conformable to it, they are spoken of as wholly ignorant of God; they lived as if they knew nothing at all of God. Note, Parents cannot give grace to their children, nor does it run in the blood. Many that are sincerely pious themselves live to see those that come from them notoriously impious and profane; for the race is not to the swift.

Eli was high priest and judge in Israel. His sons were priests by their birth. Their character was sacred and honourable, and

obliged them, for their reputation-sake, to observe decorum. They were resident at the fountain-head both of magistracy and ministry, and yet they were sons of Belial, and their honour, power, and learning, made them so much the worse. They did not go to serve other gods, as those did that lived at a distance from the altar, for from the house of God they had their wealth and dignity; but, which was worse, they managed the service of God as if he had been one of the dunghill deities of the heathen. It is hard to say which dishonours God more, idolatry or profaneness, especially the profaneness of the priests. Let us see the wickedness of Eli's sons; and it is a sad sight.

(1.) They profaned the offerings of the Lord, and made a gain to themselves, or rather a gratification of their own luxury, out of them. God had provided competently for them out of the sacrifices. The offerings of the Lord made by fire were a considerable branch of their revenue, but not enough to please them; they served not the God of Israel, but their own bellies (Ro 16:18), being such as the prophet calls greedy dogs that can never have enough, Isa 56:11.

[1.] They robbed the offerers, and seized for themselves some of their part of the sacrifice of the peace-offerings. The priests had for their share the wave-breast and the heave shoulder (Le 7:34), but these did not content them; when the flesh was boiling for the offerer to feast upon religiously with his friends, they sent a servant with a flesh-hook of three teeth, a trident, and that must be stuck into the pot, and whatever that brought up the priest must have (1Sa 2:13,14), and the people, out of their great veneration, suffered this to grow into a custom, so that after awhile prescription was pleaded for this manifest wrong.

[2.] They stepped in before God himself, and encroached upon his right too. As if it were a small thing to weary men, they wearied my God also, Isa 7:13. Be it observed, to the honour of Israel, that though the people tamely yielded to their

unwarrantable demands from them, yet they were very solicitous that God should not be robbed: Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, 1Sa 2:16. Let the altar have its due, for that is the main matter. Unless God have the fat, they can feast with little comfort upon the flesh. It was a shame that the priests should need to be thus admonished by the people of their duty; but they regarded not the admonition.

The priest will be served first, and will take what he thinks fit of the fat too, for he is weary of boiled meat, he must have roast, and, in order to that, they must give it to him raw; and if the offerer dispute it, though not in his own favour (let the priest take what he pleases of his part) but in favour of the altar (let them be sure to burn the fat first), even the priest's servant had grown so very imperious that he would either have it now or take it by force, than which there could not be a greater affront to God nor a greater abuse to the people. The effect was, First, That God was displeased: The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, 1Sa 2:17. Nothing is more provoking to God than the profanation of sacred things, and men serving their lusts with the offerings of the Lord. Secondly, That religion suffered by it: Men abhorred the offerings of the Lord.

All good men abhorred their management of the offerings, and too many insensibly fell into a contempt of the offerings themselves for their sakes. It was the people's sin to think the worse of God's institutions, but it was the much greater sin of the priests that gave them occasion to do so. Nothing brings a greater reproach upon religion than ministers' covetousness, sensuality, and imperiousness. In the midst of this sad story comes in the repeated mention of Samuel's devotion. But Samuel ministered before the Lord, as an instance of the power of God's grace, in preserving him pure and pious in the midst of this wicked crew; and this helped to keep up the sinking credit of the sanctuary in the minds of the people, who, when they had said all they could against Eli's sons, could not

but admire Samuel's seriousness, and speak well of religion for his sake.

(2.) They debauched the women that came to worship at the door of the tabernacle, 1Sa 2:22. They had wives of their own, but were like fed horses, Jer 5:8. To have gone to the harlots' houses, the common prostitutes, would have been abominable wickedness, but to use the interest which as priests they had in those women that had devout dispositions and were religiously inclined, and to bring them to commit their wickedness, was such horrid impiety as one can scarcely think it possible that men who called themselves priests should ever be guilty of. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and tremble, O earth! No words can sufficiently express the villany of such practices as these.

2 The reproof which Eli gave his sons for this their wickedness: Eli was very old (1Sa 2:22) and could not himself inspect the service of the tabernacle as he had done, but left all to his sons, who, because of the infirmities of his age, slighted him, and did what they would. However, he was told of the wickedness of his sons, and we may well imagine what a heart-breaking it was to him, and how much it added to the burdens of his age; but it should seem he did not so much as reprove them till he heard of their debauching the women, and then he thought fit to give them a check. Had he rebuked them for their greediness and luxury, this might have been prevented. Young people should be told of their faults as soon as it is perceived that they begin to be extravagant, lest their hearts be hardened. Now concerning the reproof he gave them observe,

(1.) That it was very just and rational. That which he said was very proper. [1.] He tells them that the matter of fact was too plain to be denied and too public to be concealed: "I hear of your evil dealings by all this people, 1Sa 2:23. It is not the surmise of one or two, but the avowed testimony of many; all your neighbours cry out shame on you, and bring their

complaints to me, expecting that I should redress the grievance."

[2.] He shows them the bad consequences of it, that they not only sinned, but made Israel to sin, and would have the people's sin to answer for as well as their own: "You that should turn men from iniquity (Mal 2:6), you make the Lord's people to transgress, and corrupt the nation instead of reforming it; you tempt people to go and serve other gods when they see the God of Israel so ill served."

[3.] He warns them of the danger they brought themselves into by it, 1Sa 2:25. He intimates to them what God afterwards told him, that the iniquity would not be purged with sacrifice nor offering, 1Sa 3:14. If one man sin against another, the judge (that is, the priest, who was appointed to be the judge in many cases, De 17:9) shall judge him, shall undertake his cause, arbitrate the matter, and make atonement for the offender; but if a man sin against the Lord (that is, if a priest profane the holy things of the Lord, if a man that deals with God for others do himself affront him) who shall entreat for him?

Eli was himself a judge, and had often made intercession for transgressors, but, says he, "You that sin against the Lord," that is, "against the law and honour of God, in those very things which immediately pertain to him, and by which reconciliation is to be made, how can I entreat for you?" Their condition was deplorable indeed when their own father could not speak a good word for them, nor could have the face to appear as their advocate. Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself, are most dangerous, treading under foot the blood of the covenant, for then there remains no more sacrifice, Heb 10:26.

(2.) It was too mild and gentle. He should have rebuked them sharply. Their crimes deserved sharpness; their temper needed it; the softness of his dealing with them would but harden them the more. The animadversion was too easy when he said, It is

no good report. He should have said, "It is a shameful scandalous thing, and not to be suffered!" Whether it was because he loved them or because he feared them that he dealt thus tenderly with them, it was certainly an evidence of his want of zeal for the honour of God and his sanctuary. He bound them over to God's judgment, but he should have taken cognizance of their crimes himself, as high priest and judge, and have restrained and punished them. What he said was right, but it was not enough.

Note, It is sometimes necessary that we put an edge upon the reproofs we give. There are those that must be saved with fear, Jude 1:23. 3. Their obstinacy against this reproof. His lenity did not at all work upon them: They hearkened not to their father, though he was also a judge. They had no regard either to his authority or to his affection, which was to them an evident token of perdition; it was because the Lord would slay them. They had long hardened their hearts, and now God, in a way of righteous judgment, hardened their hearts, and seared their consciences, and withheld from them the grace they had resisted and forfeited.

Note, Those that are deaf to the reproofs of wisdom are manifestly marked for ruin. The Lord has determined to destroy them, 2Ch 25:16. See Pr 29:1. Immediately upon this, Samuel's tractableness is again mentioned (1Sa 2:26), to shame their obstinacy: The child Samuel grew. God's grace is his own; he denied it to the sons of the high priest and gave it to the child of an obscure country Levite.

18 But Samuel ministered before the Lord, *being* a child, girded
with a linen ephod.
19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought *it* to him
from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the
yearly sacrifice.
20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The Lord give thee
seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the Lord. And
they went unto their own home.

21 And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.

22 Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

23 And he said unto them, why do ye such things? For I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.

24 Nay, my sons; for *it is* no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress.

25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.

26 And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men.

27 And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

28 And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel *to be* my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? And did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded *in my* habitation; and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?

Eli reproved his sons too gently, and did not threaten them as he should, and therefore God sent a prophet to him to reprove him sharply, and to threaten him, because, by his indulgence of them, he had strengthened their hands in their wickedness. If good men be wanting in their duty, and by their carelessness and remissness contribute any thing to the sin of sinners, they must expect both to hear of it and to smart for it. Eli's family was now nearer to God than all the families of the earth, and therefore he will punish them, Am 3:2 The message is sent to Eli himself, because God would bring him to repentance and save him; not to his sons, whom he had determined to destroy.

And it might have been a means of awakening him to do his duty at last, and so to have prevented the judgment, but we do not find it had any great effect upon him. The message this prophet delivers from God is very close.

I. He reminds him of the great things God had done for the house of his fathers and for his family. He appeared to Aaron in Egypt (Ex 4:27), in the house of bondage, as a token of further favour which he designed for him, 1Sa 2:27. He advanced him to the priesthood, entailed it upon his family, and thereby dignified it above any of the families of Israel. He entrusted him with honourable work, to offer on God's altar, to burn incense, and to wear that ephod in which was the breast-plate of judgment. He settled upon him an honourable maintenance, a share out of all the offerings made by fire, 1Sa 2:28. What could he have done more for them, to engage them to be faithful to him? Note, The distinguishing favours we have received from God, especially those of the spiritual priesthood, are great aggravations of sin, and will be remembered against us in the day of account, if we profane our crown and betray our trusts, De 32:6,2Sa 12:7,8.

II. He exhibits a high charge against him and his family. His children did wickedly, and he connived at it, and thereby involved himself in the guilt; the indictment therefore runs against them all, 1Sa 2:29.

1. His sons had impiously profaned the holy things of God: "You kick at my sacrifice which I have commanded; not only trample upon the institution as a mean thing, but spurn at it as a thing you hate to be tied up to." They did the utmost despite imaginable to the offerings of the Lord when they committed all that outrage and rapine about them that we read of, and violently plundered the pots on which, in effect, Holiness to the Lord was written (Zec 14:20), and took that fat to themselves which God had appointed to be burnt on his altar.

2. Eli had bolstered them up in it, by not punishing their insolence and impiety: "Thou for thy part honourest thy sons above me," that is, "thou hadst rather see my offerings disgraced by their profanation of them than see thy sons disgraced by a legal censure upon them for so doing, which ought to have been inflicted, even to suspension and deprivation ab officio et beneficio--of their office and its emoluments." Those that allow and countenance their children in any evil way, and do not use their authority to restrain and punish them, do in effect honour them more than God, being more tender of their reputation than of his glory and more desirous to humour them than to honour him.

3. They had all shared in the gains of the sacrilege. It is to be feared that Eli himself, though he disliked and reproved the abuses they committed, yet did not forbear to eat of the roast meat they sacrilegiously got, 1Sa 2:15. He was a fat heavy man (1Sa 4:18), and therefore it is charged upon the whole family (though Hophni and Phinehas were principally guilty), You make yourselves fat with the chief of all the offerings. God gave them sufficient to feed them, but that would not suffice; they made themselves fat, and served their lusts with that which God was to be served with. See Ho 4:8.

III. He declares the cutting off of the entail of the high priesthood from his family (1Sa 2:30): "The Lord God of Israel, who is jealous for his own honour and Israel's, says, and lets thee know it, that thy commission is revoked and superseded." I said, indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father Ithamar (for from that younger son of Aaron Eli descended), should walk before me for ever. Upon what occasion the dignity of the high priesthood was transferred from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar does not appear; but it seems this had been done, and Eli stood fair to have that honour perpetuated to his posterity. But observe, the promise carried its own condition along with it: They shall walk before me forever, that is, "they shall have the honour, provided they faithfully do the service." Walking before God is the great

condition of the covenant, Ge 17:1. Let them set me before their face, and I will set them before my face continually (41:12), otherwise not.

But now the Lord says, Be it far from me. "Now that you cast me off you can expect no other than that I should cast you off; you will not walk before me as you should, and therefore you shall not." Such wicked and abusive servants God will discard, and turn out of his service. Some think there is a further reach in this recall of the grant, and that it was not only to be fulfilled shortly in the deposing of the posterity of Eli, when Zadok, who descended from Eleazar, was put in Abiathar's room, but it was to have its complete accomplishment at length in the total abolition of the Levitical priesthood by the priesthood of Christ.

IV. He gives a good reason for this revocation, taken from a settled and standing rule of God's government, according to which all must expect to be dealt with (like that by which Cain was tried, Ge 4:7): Those that honour me I will honour, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

1. Observe in general,

(1.) That God is the fountain of honour and dishonour; he can exalt the meanest and put contempt upon the greatest.

(2.) As we deal with God we must expect to be dealt with by him, and yet more favourably than we deserve. See Ps 18:25,26.

2. Particularly,

(1.) Be it spoken, to the everlasting reputation of religion or of serious godliness, that it gives honour to God and puts honour upon men. By it we seek and serve the glory of God, and he will be behind-hand with none that do so, but here and hereafter will secure their glory. The way to be truly great is

to be truly good. If we humble and deny ourselves in any thing to honour God, and have a single eye to him in it, we may depend upon this promise, he will put the best honour upon us. See Joh 12:26.

(2.) Be it spoken, to the everlasting reproach of impiety or profaneness, that this does dishonour to God (despises the greatest and best of beings, whom angels adore) and will bring dishonour upon men, for those that do so shall be lightly esteemed; not only God will lightly esteem them (that perhaps they will not regard, as those that honour him value his honour, of whom therefore it is said, I will honour them), but they shall be lightly esteemed by all the world; the very honour they are proud of shall be laid in the dust; they shall see themselves despised by all mankind, their names a reproach; when they are gone, their memory shall rot, and, when they rise again, it shall be to everlasting shame and contempt. The dishonour which their impotent malice puts upon God and his omnipotent justice will return upon their own heads, Ps 79:12.

V. He foretels the particular judgments which should come upon his family, to its perpetual ignominy. A curse should be entailed upon his posterity, and a terrible curse it is, and shows how jealous God is in the matters of his worship and how ill he takes it when those who are bound by their character and profession to preserve and advance the interests of his glory are false to their trust, and betray them. If God's ministers be vicious and profane, of how much sorer punishment will they be thought worthy, here and for ever, than other sinners! Let such read the doom here passed on Eli's house, and tremble. It is threatened,

1. That their power should be broken (1Sa 2:31): I will cut off thy arm, and the arm of thy father's house. They should be stripped of all their authority, should be deposed, and have no influence upon the people as they had had. God would make them contemptible and base. See Mal 2:8,9. The sons had abused their power to oppress the people and encroach upon

their rights, and the father had not used his power, as he ought to have done, to restrain and punish them, and therefore it was justly threatened that the arm should be cut off which was not stretched out as it should have been.

2. That their lives should be shortened. He was himself an old man; but instead of using the wisdom, gravity, experience, and authority of his age, for the service of God and the support of religion, he had suffered the infirmities of age to make him more cool and remiss in his duty, and therefore it is here threatened that none of his posterity should live to be old, 1Sa 2:31,32. It is twice spoken: "There shall not be an old man in thy house for ever;" and again (1Sa 2:33), "All the increase of thy house, from generation to generation, shall die in the flower of their age, when they are in the midst of the years of their service," so that though the family should not be extinct, yet it should never be considerable, nor should any member of it come to be eminent in his day. Bishop Patrick relates, out of some of the Jewish writers, that long after this, there being a family in Jerusalem none of which commonly lived above eighteen years, upon search it was found that they descended from the house of Eli, on which this sentence was passed.

3. That all their comforts should be embittered.

(1.) The comfort they had in the sanctuary, in its wealth and prosperity: Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation. This was fulfilled in the Philistines' invasions and the mischiefs they did to Israel, by which the country was impoverished (1Sa 13:19), and no doubt the priests' incomes were thereby very much impaired. The captivity of the ark was such an act of hostility committed upon God's habitation as broke Eli's heart. As it is a blessing to a family to see peace upon Israel (Ps 128:5,6), so the contrary is a sore judgment upon a family, especially a family of priests.

(2.) The comfort of their children: "The man of thine whom I shall not cut off by an untimely death shall live to be a blot

and burden to the family, a scandal and vexation to his relations; he shall be to consume thy eyes and grieve thy heart, for his foolishness or his sickliness, his wickedness or his poverty." Grief for a dead child is great, but for a bad child often greater.

4. That their substance should be wasted and they should be reduced to extreme poverty (1Sa 2:36): "He that is left alive in thy house shall have little joy of his life, for want of a livelihood; he shall come and crouch to the succeeding family for a subsistence."

(1.) He shall beg for the smallest alms--a piece of silver (and the word signifies the least piece) and a morsel of bread. See how this answered the sin. Eli's sons must have the best pieces of flesh, but their sons will be glad of a morsel of bread. Note, Want is the just punishment of wantonness. Those who could not be content without dainties and varieties are brought, they or theirs, to want necessaries, and the Lord is righteous in thus visiting them.

(2.) He shall beg for the meanest office: Put me into somewhat belonging to the priesthood (as it is in the original); make me as one of the hired servants, the fittest place for a prodigal. Plenty and power are forfeited when they are abused. They should not be able to pretend to any good preferment, not to any place at the altar, but should petition for some poor employment, be the work ever so hard and the wages ever so small, so they might but get bread. This, it is probable, was fully accomplished when Abiathar, who was of Eli's race, was deposed by Solomon for treason, and he and his turned out of office in the temple (1Ki 2:26,27), by which it is easy to think his posterity were reduced to the extremities here described.

5. That God would shortly begin to execute these judgments in the death of Hophni and Phinehas, the sad tidings of which Eli himself should live to hear: This shall be a sign to thee, 1Sa 2:34. When thou hearest it, say, "Now the word of God

begins to operate; here is one threatening fulfilled, from which I infer that all the rest will be fulfilled in their order." Hophni and Phinehas had many a time sinned together, and it is here foretold that they should die together both in one day. Bind these tares in a bundle for the fire. This was fulfilled, 1Sa 4:11.

VI. In the midst of all these threatenings against the house of Eli, here is mercy promised to Israel (1Sa 2:35): I will raise me up a faithful priest.

1. This was fulfilled in Zadoc, of the family of Eleazar, who came into Abiathar's place in the beginning of Solomon's reign, and was faithful to his trust; and the high priests were of his posterity as long as the Levitical priesthood continued. Note, The wickedness of ministers, though it destroy themselves, yet it shall not destroy the ministry. How bad soever the officers are, the office shall continue always to the end of the world. If some betray their trust, yet others shall be raised up that will be true to it. God's work shall never fall to the ground for want of hands to carry it on. The high priest is here said to walk before God's anointed (that is, David and his seed) because he wore the breast-plate of judgment, which he was to consult, not in common cases, but for the king, in the affairs of state. Note, Notwithstanding the degeneracy we see and lament in many families, God will secure to himself a succession. If some grow worse than their ancestors, others, to balance that, shall grow better.

2. It has its full accomplishment in the priesthood of Christ, that merciful and faithful high priest whom God raised up when the Levitical priesthood was thrown off, who in all things did his father's mind, and for whom God will build a sure house, build it on a rock, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

30 Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed *that* thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of
thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.
32 And thou shalt see an enemy *in my* habitation in all *the wealth*
which *God* shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in
thine house for ever.
33 And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar,
shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the
increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.
34 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two
sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of
them.
35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, *that* shall do according to *that*
which *is* in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure
house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.
36 And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left in thine house
shall come *and* crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of
bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests'
offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

1 Samuel-3

The Lord Calls Samuel

1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the
word of the Lord was precious in those days; *there was* no open
vision.
2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place,
and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see;
3 and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord,
where the ark of God *was*, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep;*
4 that the Lord called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am* I.

To make way for the account of God's revealing himself first to Samuel, we are here told,

1. How industrious Samuel was in serving God, according as his place and capacity were (1Sa 3:1): The child Samuel, though but a child, ministered unto the Lord before Eli. It was an aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons that the child

Samuel shamed them. They rebelled against the Lord, but Samuel ministered to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them; he ministered before Eli, under his eye and direction. It was the praise of Samuel that he was so far from being influenced by their bad example that he did not in the least fall off, but improved and went on. And it was a preparative for the honours God intended him; he that was thus faithful in a little was soon after entrusted with much more. Let those that are young be humble and diligent, which they will find the surest way to preferment. Those are fittest to rule who have learnt to obey.

2. How scarce a thing prophecy then was, which made the call of Samuel to be the greater surprise to himself and the greater favour to Israel: The word of the Lord was precious in those days. Now and then a man of God was employed as a messenger upon an extraordinary occasion (as 1Sa 2:27), but there were no settled prophets, to whom the people might have recourse for counsel, nor from whom they might expect the discoveries of the divine will. And the rarity of prophecy made it the more precious in the account of all those that knew how to put a right value upon it. It was precious, for what there was (it seems) was private: There was no open vision, that is, there were none that were publicly known to have visions. Perhaps the impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle, and no doubt corrupted the whole nation, had provoked God, as a token of his displeasure, to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy, till the decree had gone forth for the raising up of a more faithful priest, and then, as an earnest of that, this faithful prophet was raised up.

The manner of God's revealing himself to Samuel is here related very particularly, for it was uncommon.

I. Eli had retired. Samuel had waited on him to his bed, and the rest that attended the service of the sanctuary had gone, we may suppose, to their several apartments (1Sa 3:2): Eli had

laid down in his place; he went to bed betimes, being unfit for business and soon weary of it, and perhaps loving his ease too well. Probably he kept his chamber much, which gave his sons the greater liberty. And he sought retirement the more because his eyes began to wax dim, an affliction which came justly upon him for winking at his sons' faults.

II Samuel had laid down to sleep, in some closet near to Eli's room, as his page of the back-stairs, ready within call if the old man should want any thing in the night, perhaps to read to him if he could not sleep. He chose to take Samuel into this office rather than any of his own family, because of the towardly disposition he observed in him. When his own sons were a grief to him, his little servitor was his joy. Let those that are afflicted in their children thank God if they have any about them in whom they are comforted. Samuel had laid down ere the lamp of God went out, 1Sa 3:3. It should seem he lay somewhere so near the holy place that he went to bed by that light, before any of the lamps in the branches of the candlestick went out (for the main lamp never went out), which probably was towards midnight. Till that time Samuel had been employing himself in some good exercise or other, reading and prayer, or perhaps cleaning or making ready the holy place; and then went softly to his bed. Then we may expect God's gracious visits, when we are constant and diligent in our duty.

III. God called him by name, and he took it for Eli's call, and ran to him, 1Sa 3:4,5. Samuel lay awake in his bed, his thoughts, no doubt, well employed (as David's Ps 63:6), when the Lord called to him, bishop Patrick thinks out of the most holy place, and so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, A voice was heard out of the temple of the Lord; but Eli, though it is likely he lay nearer, heard it not; yet possibly it might come some other way. Hereupon we have an instance, 1. Of Samuel's industry, and readiness to wait on Eli; supposing it was he that called him, he hastened out of his warm bed and ran to him, to see if he wanted any thing, and perhaps fearing

he was not well. "Here am I," said he--a good example to servants, to come when they are called; and to the younger, not only to submit to the elder, but to be careful and tender of them.

2. Of his infirmity, and unacquaintedness with the visions of the Almighty, that he took that to be only Eli's call which was really the call of God. Such mistakes as these we make oftener than we think of. God calls to us by his word, and we take it to be only the call of the minister, and answer it accordingly; he calls to us by his providences, and we look only at the instruments. His voice cries, and it is but here and there a man of wisdom that understands it to be his voice. Eli assured him he did not call him, yet did not chide him for disturbing him with being over-officious, did not call him a fool, and tell him he dreamed, but mildly bade him lie down again, he had nothing for him to do. If servants must be ready at their masters' call, masters also must be tender of their servants' comfort: that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. So Samuel went and lay down. God calls many by the ministry of the word, and they say, as Samuel did, "Here am I;" but not looking at God, nor discerning his voice in the call, the impressions of it are soon lost; they lie down again, and their convictions come to nothing.

IV. The same call was repeated, and the same mistake made, a second and third time, 1Sa 3:6-9.

1. God continued to call the child yet again (1Sa 3:6), and again the third time, 1Sa 3:8. Note, The call which divine grace designs to make effectual shall be repeated till it is so, that is, till we come at the call; for the purpose of God, according to which we are called, shall certainly stand.

2 Samuel was still ignorant that it was the Lord that called him (1Sa 3:7): Samuel did not yet know the Lord. He knew the written word, and was acquainted with the mind of God in that, but he did not yet apprehend the way in which God

reveals himself to his servants the prophets, especially by a still small voice; this was altogether new and strange to him. Perhaps he would have been sooner aware of a divine revelation had it come in a dream or a vision; but this was a way he had not only not known himself, but not heard of. Those that have the greatest knowledge of divine things must remember the time when they were as babes, unskilful in the word of righteousness.

When I was a child I understood as a child. Yet let us not despise the day of small things. Thus did Samuel (so the margin reads it) before he knew the Lord, and before the word of the Lord was revealed unto him; thus he blundered one time after another, but afterwards he understood his duty better. The witness of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful is often thus mistaken, by which means they lose the comfort of it; and the strivings of the Spirit with the consciences of sinners are likewise often mistaken, and so the benefit of their convictions is lost. God speaketh once, yea, twice, but man perceiveth it not, Job 33:14.

3. Samuel went to Eli this second and third time, the voice perhaps resembling his, and the child being very near to him; and he tells Eli, with great assurance, "Thou didst call me (1Sa 3:6-8), it could be no one else." Samuel's disposition to come when he was called, though but by Eli, proving him dutiful and active, qualified him for the favour now to be shown him; God chooses to employ such. But there was a special providence in it, that he should go thus often to Eli; for hereby, at length, Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child, 1Sa 3:8. And,

(1.) This would be a mortification to him, and he would apprehend it to be a step towards his family's being degraded, that when God had something to say he should choose to say it to the child Samuel, his servant that waited on him, and not to him. And it would humble him the more when afterwards he found it was a message to himself, and yet sent to him by a

child. He had reason to look upon this as a further token of God's displeasure.

(2.) This would put him upon enquiring what it was that God said to Samuel, and would abundantly satisfy him of the truth and certainty of what should be delivered, and no room would be left for him to suggest that it was but a fancy of Samuel's; for before the message was delivered he himself perceived that God was about to speak to him, and yet must not know what it was till he had it from Samuel himself. Thus even the infirmities and mistakes of those whom God employs are overruled by infinite Wisdom, and made serviceable to his purposes.

V. At length Samuel was put into a posture to receive a message from God, not to be lodged with himself and go no further, but, that he might be a complete prophet, to be published and made an open vision.

1. Eli, perceiving that it was the voice of God that Samuel heard, gave him instructions what to say, 1Sa 3:9. This was honestly done, that though it was a disgrace to him for God's call to pass him by, and be directed to Samuel, yet he put him in the way how to entertain it. Had he been envious of this honour done to Samuel, he would have done what he could to deprive him of it, and, since he did not perceive it himself, would have bidden him lie down and sleep, and never heed it, it was but a dream; but he was of a better spirit than to act so; he gave him the best advice he could, for the forwarding of his advancement. Thus the elder should, without grudging, do their utmost to assist and improve the younger that are rising up, though they see themselves likely to be darkened and eclipsed by them.

Let us never be wanting to inform and instruct those that are coming after us, even such as will soon be preferred before us, Joh 1:30. The instruction Eli gave him was, when God called the next time, to say, Speak, Lord, for they servant heareth. He must call himself God's servant, must desire to know the mind

of God. "Speak, Lord, speak to me, speak now:" and he must prepare to hear, and promise to attend: Thy servant heareth. Note, Then we may expect that God will speak to us, when we set ourselves to hearken to what he says, Ps 85:8,Hab 2:1. When we come to read the word of God, and to attend on the preaching of it, we should come thus disposed, submitting ourselves to the commanding light and power of it: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

2. It should seem that God spoke the fourth time in a way somewhat different from the other; though the call was, as at other times, a call to him by name, yet now he stood and called, which intimates that there was now some visible appearance of the divine glory to Samuel, a vision that stood before him, like that before Eliphaz, though he could not discern the form thereof, Job 4:16. This satisfied him that it was not Eli that called; for he now saw the voice that spoke with him, as it is expressed, Re 1:12. Now also the call was doubled--Samuel, Samuel, as if God delighted in the mention of his name, or to intimate that now he should be made to understand who spoke to him. God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this, Ps 62:11. It was an honour to him that God was pleased to know him by name (Ex 33:12), and then his call was powerful and effectual when he called him by name, and so brought it particularly to him, as Saul, Saul. Thus God called to Abraham by name, Ge 22:1.

3. Samuel said, as he was taught, Speak, for thy servant heareth. Note, Good words should be put into children's mouths betimes, and apt expressions of pious and devout affections, by which they may be prepared for a better acquaintance with divine things, and trained up to a holy converse with them. Teach young people what they shall say, for they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. Samuel did not now rise and run as before when he thought Eli called, but lay still and listened. The more sedate and composed our spirits are the better prepared they are for divine discoveries. Let all tumultuous thoughts and passions be kept

under, and every thing be quiet and serene in the soul, and then we are fit to hear from God. All must be silent when he speaks.

But observe, Samuel left out one word; he did not say, Speak, Lord, but only, Speak, for thy servant heareth, way was made for the message he was now to receive, and Samuel was brought acquainted with the words of God and visions of the Almighty, and this ere the lamp of God went out (1Sa 3:3) in the temple of the Lord, which some of the Jewish writers put a mystical sense upon; before the fall of Eli, and the eclipsing of the Urim and Thummim for some time thereby, God called Samuel, and made him an oracle, whence they have an observation among their doctors, That the sun riseth, and the sun goeth down (Ec 1:5), that is, say they, Ere God maketh the sun of one righteous man to set, he makes the sun of another righteous man to rise. Smith ex Kimchi.

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.

8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

Here is, I The message which, after all this introduction, God delivered to Samuel concerning Eli's house. God did not come to him now to tell him how great a man he should be in his day, what a figure he should make, and what a blessing he should be in Israel. Young people have commonly a great curiosity to be told their fortune, but God came to Samuel, not

to gratify his curiosity, but to employ him in his service and send him on an errand to another person, which was much better; and yet the matter of this first message, which no doubt made a very great impression upon him, might be of good use to him afterwards, when his own sons proved, though not so bad as Eli's, yet not so good as they should have been, 1Sa 8:3. The message is short, not nearly so long as that which the man of God brought, 1Sa 2:27.

For, Samuel being a child, it could not be expected that he should remember a long message, and God considered his frame. The memories of children must not be overcharged, no, not with divine things. But it is a sad message, a message of wrath, to ratify the message in the former chapter, and to bind on the sentence there pronounced, because perhaps Eli did not give so much regard to that as he ought to have done. Divine threatenings, the less they are heeded, the surer they will come and the heavier they will fall. Reference is here had to what was there said concerning both the sin and the punishment.

1. Concerning the sin: it is the iniquity that he knoweth, 1Sa 3:13. The man of God told him of it, and many a time his own conscience had told him of it. O what a great deal of guilt and corruption is there in us concerning which we may say, "It is the iniquity which our own heart knoweth, we are conscious to ourselves of it!" In short, the iniquity was this: His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Or, as it is in the Hebrew, he frowned not upon them. If he did show his dislike of their wicked courses, yet not to that degree that he ought to have done: he did reprove them, but he did not punish them, for the mischief they did, nor deprive them of their power to do mischief, which as a father, high priest, and judge, he might have done. Note,

(1.) Sinners do by their own wickedness make themselves vile. They debauch themselves (for every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, Jam 1:14) and thereby they debase themselves, and make themselves not only mean, but

odious to the holy God and holy men and angels. Sin is a vile thing, and degrades men more than any thing, Ps 15:4. Eli's sons made light of God, and made his offerings vile in the people's eyes; but the shame returned into their own bosom: they made themselves vile.

(2.) Those that do not restrain the sins of others, when it is in the power of their hand to do it, make themselves partakers of the guilt, and will be charged as accessaries: Those in authority will have a great deal to answer for if they make not the sword they bear a terror to evil workers.

2. Concerning the punishment: it is that which I have spoken concerning his house, 1Sa 3:12,13. I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, that is, that a curse should be entailed upon his family from generation to generation. The particulars of this curse we had before; they are not here repeated, but it is added,

(1.) That when that sentence began to be executed it would be very dreadful and amazing to all Israel (1Sa 3:11): Both the ears of every one that hears it shall tingle. Every Israelite would be struck with terror and astonishment to hear of the slaying of Eli's sons, the breaking of Eli's neck, and the dispersion of Eli's family. Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Note, God's judgments upon others should affect us with a holy fear, Ps 119:120.

(2.) That these direful first-fruits of the execution would be certain earnests of the progress and full accomplishment of it: When I begin I will proceed and make an end of all that I have threatened, 1Sa 3:12. It is intimated that it might possibly be some time before he would begin, but let them not call that forbearance an acquittance, nor that reprieve a pardon; for when at length he does begin he will make thorough work of it, and, though he stay long, he will strike home.

(3.) That no room should be left for hope that this sentence might be reversed and the execution stayed or mitigated, 1Sa 3:14.

[1.] God would not revoke the sentence, for he backed it with an oath: I have sworn to the house of Eli; and God will not go back from what he has sworn either in mercy or judgment.

[2.] He would never come to a composition for the forfeiture: "The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. No atonement shall be made for the sin, nor any abatement of the punishment." This was the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, that there were iniquities which they did not reach, which they would not purge; but the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and secures all those that by faith are interested in it from that eternal death which is the wages of sin.

II The delivery of this message to Eli. Observe,

1 Samuel's modest concealment of it, 1Sa 3:15.

(1.) He lay till the morning, and we may well suppose he lay awake pondering on what he had heard, repeating it to himself, and considering what use he must make of it. After we have received the spiritual food of God's word, it is good to compose ourselves, and give it time to digest.

(2.) He opened the doors of the house of the Lord, in the morning, as he used to do, being up first in the tabernacle. That he should do so at other times was an instance of extraordinary towardliness in a child, but that he should do so this morning was an instance of great humility. God had highly honoured him above all the children of his people, yet he was not proud of the honour, nor puffed up with it, did not think himself too great and too good to be employed in these mean and servile offices, but, as cheerfully as ever, went and opened the doors of the tabernacle.

Note, Those to whom God manifests himself he makes and keeps low in their own eyes, and willing to stoop to any thing by which they may be serviceable to his glory, though but as door-keepers in his house. One would have expected that Samuel would be so full of his vision as to forget his ordinary service, that he would go among his companions, as one in an ecstasy, to tell them what converse he had had with God this night; but he modestly keeps it to himself, tells the vision to no man, but silently goes on in his business. Our secret communion with God is not to be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

(3.) He feared to show Eli the vision. If he was afraid Eli would be angry with him and chide him, then we have cause to suspect that Eli used to be as severe with this towardly child as he was indulgent to his own wicked sons, and this will bear hard upon him. But we will suppose it was rather because he was afraid to grieve and trouble the good old man that he was so shy. If he had run immediately with the tidings to Eli, this would have looked as if he desired the woeful day and hoped to build his own family upon the ruin of Eli's; therefore it became him not to be forward to declare the vision. No good man can take pleasure in bringing evil tidings, especially not Samuel to Eli, the pupil to the tutor whom he loves and honours.

2. Eli's careful enquiry into it, 1Sa 3:16,17. As soon as ever he heard Samuel stirring he called for him, probably to his bed-side; and, having before perceived that God had spoken to him, he obliged him, not only by importunity (I pray thee, hide it not from me), but, finding him timorous and backward, by an adjuration likewise--God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me! He had reason enough to fear that the message prophesied no good concerning him, but evil; and yet, because it was a message from God, he could not contentedly be ignorant of it. A good man desires to be acquainted with all the will of God, whether it make for him

or against him. His adjuration--God do so to thee, if thou hide any thing from me--may intimate the fearful doom of unfaithful watchmen; if they warn not sinners, they bring upon themselves that wrath and curse which they should have denounced, in God's name, against those that go on still in their trespasses.

3. Samuel's faithful delivery of his message at last (1Sa 3:18): He told him every whit. When he saw that he must tell him he never minced the matter, nor offered to make it better than it was, to blunt that which was sharp, or to gild the bitter pill, but delivered the message as plainly and fully as he received it, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Christ's ministers must deal thus faithfully.

4. Eli's pious acquiescence in it. He did not question Samuel's integrity, was not cross with him, nor had he any thing to object against the equity of the sentence. He did not complain of the punishment, as Cain did, that it was greater than he either deserved or could bear, but patiently submitted, and accepted the punishment of his iniquity. It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. He understood the sentence to intend only a temporal punishment, and the entail of disgrace and poverty upon his posterity, and not a final separation of them from the favour of God, and therefore he cheerfully submitted, did not repine, because he knew the demerits of his family; nor did he now intercede for the reversing of the sentence, because God had ratified it with a solemn oath, of which he would not repent. He therefore composes himself into a humble resignation to God's will, as Aaron, in a case not much unlike. Le 10:3, He held his peace. In a few words,

(1.) He lays down this satisfying truth, "It is the Lord; it is he that pronounces the judgment, from whose bar there lies no appeal and against whose sentence there lies no exception. It is he that will execute the judgment, whose power cannot be resisted, his justice arraigned, nor his sovereignty contested. It is the Lord, who will thus sanctify and glorify himself, and it

is highly fit he should. It is the Lord, with whom there is no unrighteousness, who never did nor ever will do any wrong to any of his creatures, nor exact more than their iniquity deserves."

(2.) He infers from it this satisfying conclusion: "Let him do what seemeth him good. I have nothing to say against his proceedings. He is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works, and therefore his will be done. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Thus we ought to quiet ourselves under God's rebuke, and never to strive with our Maker.

11 And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.
12 In that day I will perform against Eli all *things* which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.
13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.
14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.
15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.
16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, here *am* I.
17 And he said, what *is* the thing that *the* Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide *it* not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide *any* thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.
18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, it *is* the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.
19 And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

Samuel being thus brought acquainted with the visions of God, we have here an account of the further honour done him as a prophet.

I. God did him honour. Having begun to favour him, he carried on and crowned his own work in him: Samuel grew, for the Lord was with him, 1Sa 3:19. All our increase in wisdom and grace is owing to the presence of God with us; this is all in all to our growth. God honoured Samuel,

1. By further manifestations of himself to him. Samuel had faithfully delivered the message he was entrusted with, and therefore God employed him again in his service: The Lord revealed himself again to Samuel in Shiloh, 1Sa 3:21. Note, God will graciously repeat his visits to those that receive them aright.

2. By fulfilling what he spoke by him: God did let none of his words fall to the ground, 1Sa 3:19. Whatever Samuel said, as a prophet, it proved true, and was accomplished in its season. Probably there were some remarkable instances of the truth of Samuel's predictions that happened soon after, which confirmed those that were afterwards to be fulfilled, and gave general satisfaction as to his mission. God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers (Isa 44:26), and will do what he hath said.

II. Israel did him honour. They all knew and owned that Samuel was established to be a prophet, 1Sa 3:20.

1. He grew famous; all that came up to Shiloh to worship took notice of him, and admired him, and talked of him when they returned home. Early piety will be the greatest honour of young people, and bring them, as much as any thing, and as soon, into reputation. Those that honour God he will honour.

2. He grew useful and very serviceable to his generation. He that began betimes to be good soon came to do good. His established commission from God, and established reputation with the people, gave him a great opportunity of shining as a light in Israel. When old Eli was rejected, young Samuel was

established; for God will never leave himself without a witness nor his church without a guide.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel *was* established *to be* a prophet of the Lord.

21 And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

1 Samuel-4

The Philistines Capture the Ark

1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.
Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

The first words of this paragraph, which relate to Samuel, that his word came to all Israel, seem not to have any reference to the following story, as if it was by any direction of his that the Israelites went out against the Philistines. Had they consulted him, though but newly initiated as a prophet, his counsel might have stood them in more stead than the presence of the ark did; but perhaps the princes of Israel despised his youth, and would not have recourse to him as an oracle, and he did not as yet interpose in public affairs; nor do we find any mention of his name henceforward till some years after (1Sa 7:3), only his word came to all Israel, that is, people from all parts that were piously disposed had recourse to him as a prophet and consulted him. Perhaps it is meant of his prophecy against the house of Eli. This was generally known and talked of, and all that were serious and observing compared the events here related, when they came to pass, with the prophecy, and saw it accomplished in them. Here is,

I. A war entered into with the Philistines, 1Sa 4:1. It was an attempt to throw off the yoke of their oppression, and would have succeeded better if they had first repented and reformed, and so begun their work at the right end. It is computed that this was about the middle of the forty years' dominion that the Philistines had over Israel (Jdg 13:1) and soon after the death

of Samson; so bishop Patrick, who thinks the slaughter he made at his death might encourage this attempt; but Dr. Lightfoot reckons it forty years after Samson's death, for so long Eli judged, 1Sa 4:18.

II The defeat of Israel in that war, 1Sa 4:2. Israel, who were the aggressors, were smitten, and had 4000 men killed upon the spot. God had promised that one of them should chase a thousand; but now, on the contrary, Israel is smitten before the Philistines. Sin, the accursed thing, was in the camp, and gave their enemies all the advantage against them they could wish for.

III. The measures they concerted for another engagement. A council of war was called, and, instead of resolving to fast and pray and amend their lives, so ill taught were they (and no wonder when they had such teachers) that,

1. They quarrelled with God for appearing against them (1Sa 4:3): Wherefore has the Lord smitten us? If they meant this as an enquiry into the cause of God's displeasure, they needed not go far to find that out. It was plain enough; Israel had sinned, though they were not willing to see it and own it. But it rather seems that they expostulate boldly with God about it, are displeased at what God has done, and dispute the matter with him. They own the hand of God in their trouble (so far was right): "It is the Lord that has smitten us;" but, instead of submitting to it, they quarrel with it, and speak as those that are angry at him and his providence, and not aware of any just provocation they have given him: "Wherefore shall we, that are Israelites, be smitten before the Philistines? How absurd and unjust is it!" Note, The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord (Pr 19:3) and finds fault with him.

2. They imagined that they could oblige him to appear for them the next time by bringing the ark into their camp. The elders of Israel were so ignorant and foolish as to make the

proposal (1Sa 4:3), and the people soon put it in execution, 1Sa 4:4. They sent to Shiloh for the ark, and Eli had not courage enough to detain it, but sent his ungodly sons, Hophni and Phinehas, along with it, at least permitted them to go, though he knew that wherever they went the curse of God went along with them. Now see here,

(1.) The profound veneration the people had for the ark. "O send for that, and it will do wonders for us." The ark was, by institution, a visible token of God's presence. God had said that he would dwell between the cherubim, which were over the ark and were carried along with it; now they thought that, by paying a great respect to this sacred chest, they should prove themselves to be Israelites indeed, and effectually engage God Almighty to appear in their favour. Note, It is common for those that have estranged themselves from the vitals of religion to discover a great fondness for the rituals and external observances of it, for those that even deny the power of godliness not only to have, but to have in admiration, the form of it.

The temple of the Lord is cried up, and the ark of the Lord stickled for with a great deal of seeming zeal by multitudes that have no regard at all for the Lord of the temple and the God of the ark, as if a fiery concern for the name of Christianity would atone for a profane contempt of the thing. And yet indeed they did but make an idol of the ark, and looked upon it to be as much an image of the God of Israel as those idols which the heathen worshipped were of their gods. To worship the true God, and not to worship him as God, is in effect not to worship him at all.

(2.) Their egregious folly in thinking that the ark, if they had it in their camp, would certainly save them out of the hand of their enemies, and bring victory back to their side. For,

[1.] When the ark set forward Moses prayed, Rise up, Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered, well knowing that it was not

the ark moving with them, but God appearing for them, that must give them success; and here were no proper means used to engage God to favour them with his presence; what good then would the ark do them, the shell without the kernel?

[2.] They were so far from having God's leave to remove his ark that he had plainly enough intimated to them in his law that when they were settled in Canaan his ark should be settled in the place that he should choose (De 12:5,11), and that they must come to it, not it to them. How then could they expect any advantage by it when they had not a just and legal possession of it, nor any warrant to remove it from its place? Instead of honouring God by what they did, they really affronted him. Nay,

[3.] If there had been nothing else to invalidate their expectations from the ark, how could they expect it should bring a blessing when Hophni and Phinehas were the men that carried it? It would have given too much countenance to their villany if the ark had done any kindness to Israel while it was in the hands of those graceless priests.

IV. The great joy there was in the camp of Israel when the ark was brought into it (1Sa 4:5): They shouted, so that the earth rang again. Now they thought themselves sure of victory, and therefore gave a triumphant shout before the battle, as if the day was without fail their own, intending, by this mighty shout, to animate themselves and their own forces, and to intimidate their adversaries. Note, Carnal people triumph much in the external privileges and performances of religion, and build much upon them, as if these would infallibly save them, and as if the ark, God's throne, in the camp, would bring them to heaven, though the world and the flesh should be upon the throne in the heart.

V. The consternation into which the bringing of the ark into the camp of Israel put the Philistines. The two armies lay so near encamped that the Philistines heard the shout the

Israelites gave on this great occasion. They soon understood what it was they triumphed in (1Sa 4:6), and were afraid of the consequences. For,

1. It had never been done before in their days: God has come into their camp, and therefore woe unto us (1Sa 4:7), and again, woe unto us, 1Sa 4:8. The name of the God of Israel was formidable even to those that worshipped other gods, and some apprehensions even the infidels had of the danger of contending with them. Natural conscience suggests this, that those are in a woeful condition who have God against them. Yet see what gross notions they had of the divine presence, as if the God of Israel were not as much in the camp before the ark came thither, which may very well be excused in them, since the notions the Israelites themselves had of that presence were no better. "O," say they, "this is a new design upon us, more frightful than all their stratagems, for there has not been such a thing heretofore; this was the most effectual course they could take to dispirit our men and weaken their hands."

2. When it had been done in the days of old, it had wrought wonders: These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness, 1Sa 4:8. Here they were as much out in their history as in their divinity: the plagues of Egypt were inflicted before the ark was made and before Israel came into the wilderness; but some confused traditions they had of wonders wrought by or for Israel when this ark was carried before them, which they attributed, not to Jehovah, but to the ark. Now, say they, Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty gods? Taking the ark for God, as well they might when the Israelites themselves idolized it.

Yet, it should seem, they scarcely believed themselves when they spoke thus formidably of these mighty gods, but only bantered; for instead of retreating, or proposing conditions of peace, which they would have done had they been really convinced of the power of Israel's God, they stirred up one another to fight so much the more stoutly; this surprising

difficulty did but sharpen their resolution (1Sa 4:9): Be strong, and quit yourselves like men. The commanders inspired bold and generous thoughts into the minds of their soldiers when they bade them remember how they had lorded it over Israel, and what an intolerable grief and shame it would be if they flinched now, and suffered Israel to lord it over them.

2 And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

3 And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.

4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubim: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5 And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, what *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?And they understood that the ark of the Lord was come into the camp.

7 And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us!For there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

8 Woe unto us!Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? These *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.

9 Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

10 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

Here is a short account of the issue of this battle.

I. Israel was smitten, the army dispersed and totally routed, not retiring into the camp, as before (1Sa 4:2) when they hoped to rally again, but returning to their tents, every man shifting for his own safety and making the best of his way home, despairing to make head any more; and 30,000 were slain in the field of battle, 1Sa 4:10. Israel was put to the worse,

1. Though they had the better cause, were the people of God and the Philistines were uncircumcised; they stood up in necessary defence of their just rights and liberties against invaders, and yet they failed of success, for their rock had sold them. A good cause often suffers for the sake of the bad men that undertake it.

2. Though they had the greater confidence, and were the more courageous. They shouted, while the Philistines trembled, and yet, when God pleased so to order it, the Philistines' terrors were turned into triumphs, and Israel's shouts into lamentations. 3. Though they had the ark of God with them. External privileges will secure none that abuse them and do not live up to them. The ark in the camp will add nothing to its strength when there is an Achan in it.

II The ark itself was taken by the Philistines; and Hophni and Phinehas, who it is likely kept close to it, and when it was in danger ventured far in the defense of it, because by it they got their living, were both slain, 1Sa 4:11. To this sad even the Psalmist refers, Ps 78:61,64, He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hands. Their priests fell by the sword.

1 The slaughter of the priests, considering their bad character, was no great loss to Israel, but it was a dreadful judgment upon the house of Eli. The word which God had spoken was

fulfilled in it (1Sa 2:34): This shall be a sign unto thee, an earnest of the judgments threatened, thy two sons shall die both in one day, and so shall all the increase of thy house die in the flower of their age, 1Sa 2:33. If Eli had done his duty, and put them, as polluted, from the priesthood (Ne 7:64), they might have lived, though in disgrace; but now God takes the work into his own hands, and chases them out of the world by the sword of the uncircumcised. The Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth. It is true the sword devours one as well as another, but these were waited for of the sword, marked for vengeance. They were out of the place; what had they to do in the camp? When men leave the way of their duty they shut themselves out of God's protection. But this was not all; they had betrayed the ark, by bringing it into danger, without a warrant from God, and this filled the measure of their iniquities. But,

2 The taking of the ark was a very great judgment upon Israel, and a certain token of God's hot displeasure against them. Now they are made to see their folly in trusting to their external privileges which they had by their wickedness forfeited them, and fancying that the ark would save them when God had departed from them. Now they are made to reflect, with the utmost regret, upon their own rashness and presumption in bringing the ark into the camp and so exposing it, and wish a thousand times they had left it where God had fixed it. Now they are convinced that God will not be prescribed to by vain and foolish men, and that though he has bound us to his ark he has not bound himself to it, but will rather deliver it into the hands of his sworn enemies than suffer it to be profaned by his false friends, and countenance their superstition. Let none think to shelter themselves from the wrath of God under the cloak of a visible profession, for there will be those cast into outer darkness that have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence.

11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told *it*, all the city cried out.

Tidings are here brought to Shiloh of the fatal issue of their battle with the Philistines. Bad news flies fast. This soon spread through all Israel; every man that fled to his tent brought it, with too plain a proof of it, to his neighbours. But no place was so nearly concerned as Shiloh. Thither therefore an express posted away immediately; it was a man of Benjamin; the Jews fancy it was Saul. He rent his clothes, and put earth upon his head, by these signs to proclaim the sorrowful news to all that saw him as he ran, and to show how much he himself was affected with it, 1Sa 4:12. He went straight to Shiloh with it; and here we are told,

I. How the city received it. Eli sat in the gate (1Sa 4:13,18), but the messenger was loth to tell him first, and therefore passed him by, and told it in the city, with all the aggravating circumstances; and now both the ears of every one that heard it tingled, as was foretold, 1Sa 3:11. Their hearts trembled, and every face gathered blackness. All the city cried out (1Sa 4:13), and well they might, for, besides that this was a calamity to all Israel, it was a particular loss to Shiloh, and the ruin of that place; for, though the ark was soon rescued out of the hands of the Philistines, yet it never returned to Shiloh again; their candlestick was removed out of its place, because they had left their first love, and their city dwindled, and sunk, and came to nothing.

Now God forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, they having driven him from them; and the tribe of Ephraim, which had for 340 years been blessed with the presence of the ark in it, lost the honour (Ps 78:60,67), and, some time after, it was transferred to the tribe of Judah, the Mount Sion which he loved, as it follows there (Ps 78:68), because the men of Shiloh knew not

the day of their visitation. This abandoning of Shiloh Jerusalem is long afterwards reminded of, and told to take warning by. Jer 7:12, "Go see what I did to Shiloh. From this day, this fatal day, let the desolations of Shiloh be dated." They had therefore reason enough to cry out when they heard that the ark was taken.

II. What a fatal blow it was to old Eli. Let us see,

1. With what fear he expected the tidings. Though old, and blind, and heavy, yet he could not keep his chamber when he was sensible the glory of Israel lay at stake, but placed himself by the way-side, to receive the first intelligence; for his heart trembled for the ark of God, 1Sa 4:13. His careful thoughts represented to him what a dishonour it would be to God, and what an irreparable loss to Israel, if the ark should fall into the Philistines' hands, with what profane triumphs the tidings would be told in Gath and published in the streets of Ashkelon. He also apprehended what imminent danger there was of it.

Israel had forfeited the ark (his own sons especially) and the Philistines would aim at it; and now the threatening comes to his mind, that he should see an enemy in God's habitation (1Sa 2:32); and perhaps his own heart reproached him for not using his authority to prevent the carrying of the ark into the camp. All these things made him tremble. Note, All good men lay the interests of God's church nearer their hearts than any secular interest or concern of their own, and cannot but be in pain and fear for them if at any time they are in peril. How can we be easy if the ark be not safe?

2. With what grief he received the tidings. Though he could not see, he could hear the tumult and crying of the city, and perceived it to be the voice of lamentation, and mourning, and woe; like a careful magistrate, he asks, What means the noise of this tumult? 1Sa 4:14. He is told there is an express come from the army, who relates the story to him very distinctly, and with great confidence, having himself been an eye-witness

of it, 1Sa 4:16,17. The account of the defeat of the army, and the slaughter of a great number of the soldiers, was very grievous to him as a judge; the tidings of the death of his two sons, of whom he had been so indulgent, and who, he had reason to fear, died impenitent, touched him in a tender part as a father; yet it was not for these that his heart trembled: there is a greater concern upon his spirit, which swallows up the less; he does not interrupt the narrative with any passionate lamentations for his sons, like David for Absalom, but waits for the end of the story, not doubting but that the messenger, being an Israelite, would, without being asked, say something of the ark; and if he could but have said, "Yet the ark of God is safe, and we are bringing that home," his joy for that would have overcome his grief for all the other disasters, and have made him easy; but, when the messenger concludes his story with, The ark of God is taken, he is struck to the heart, his spirits fail, and, it should seem, he swooned away, fell off his seat, and partly with the fainting, and partly with the fall, he died immediately, and never spoke a word more.

His heart was broken first, and then his neck. So fell the high priest and judge of Israel, so fell his heavy head when he had lived within two of 100 years, so fell the crown from his head when he had judged Israel about forty years: thus did his sun set under a cloud, thus were the folly and wickedness of those sons of his, whom he had indulged, his ruin at last. Thus does God sometimes set marks of his displeasure in this life upon good men who have misconducted themselves, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. A man may die miserably and yet not die eternally, may come to an untimely end and yet the end be peace. Dr. Lightfoot observes that Eli died the death of an unredeemed ass, whose neck was to be broken, Ex 13:13. Yet we must observe, to Eli's praise, that it was the loss of the ark that was his death, not the slaughter of his sons. He does, in effect, say, "Let me fall with the ark, for what pious Israelite can live with any comfort when God's ordinances are removed?" Farewell all in this world, even life itself, if the ark be gone.

14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.
15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.
16 And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled today out of the army. And he said, what is there done, my son?
17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.
18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.
19 And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

We have here another melancholy story, that carries on the desolations of Eli's house, and the sorrowful feeling which the tidings of the ark's captivity excited. It is concerning the wife of Phinehas, one of those ungracious sons of Eli that had brought all this mischief on Israel. It cost her her life, though young, as well as that of her father-in-law, that was old; for many a green head, as well as many a hoary head, has been brought by sorrow to the grave: it worketh death. By what is here related of her it appears,

I. That she was a woman of a very tender spirit. Providence so ordered it that, just at this time, she was near her time; and our Saviour hath said, Woe to those that are with child, or give suck, in such days as these, Mt 24:19. So little joy will there then be in the birth, even of a man-child, that it will be said, Blessed are the wombs that bear not, Lu 23:29. The amazing news coming at this unhappy juncture, it put her into labour, as great frights or other strong passions sometimes do.

When she heard of the death of her father-in-law whom she reverenced, and her husband whom, bad as he was, she loved, but especially of the loss of the ark, she travailed, for her pains came thickly upon her (1Sa 4:19), and the tidings so seized her spirits, at a time when they needed all possible supports, that, though she had strength to bear the child, she, soon after, fainted and died away, being very willing to let life go when she had lost the greatest comforts of her life. Those who are drawing near to that trying hour have need to treasure up for themselves comforts from the covenant of grace, to balance, not only the usual sorrows, but any thing extraordinary that may add to the grief which they do not foresee. Faith, at such a time, will keep from fainting, Ps 27:13.

II. That she was a woman of a very gracious spirit though matched to a wicked husband. Her concern for the death of her husband and father-in-law was an evidence of her natural affection; but her much greater concern for the loss of the ark was an evidence of her pious and devout affection to God and sacred things. The former helped to hasten her travail, but it appears by her dying words that the latter lay nearer her heart (1Sa 4:22): She said, The glory has departed from Israel, not lamenting so much the sinking of that particular family to which she was related as the general calamity of Israel in the captivity of the ark. This, this was it that was her grief, that was her death.

1. This made her regardless of her child. The women that attended her, who it is likely were some of the first rank in the city, encouraged her, and, thinking that he concern was mostly about the issue of her pains, when the child was born, said unto her, Fear not, now the worst is past, for thou has borne a son (and perhaps it was her first-born), but she answered not, neither did she regard it. The sorrows of her travail, if she had no other, would have been forgotten, for joy that a man-child was born into the world. Joh 16:21. But what is that joy,

(1.) To one that feels herself dying? No joy but that which is spiritual and divine will stand us in any stead then. Death is too serious a thing to admit the relish of any earthly joy; it is all flat and sapless then.

(2.) What is it to one that is lamenting the loss of the ark? Small comfort could she have of a child born in Israel, in Shiloh, when the ark is lost, and is a prisoner in the land of the Philistines. What pleasure can we take in our creature-comforts and enjoyments if we want God's word and ordinances, especially if we want the comfort of his gracious presence and the light of his countenance? As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs so such heavy hearts.

2. This made her give her child a name which should perpetuate the remembrance of the calamity and her sense of it. She has nothing to say to the child, only it being her province, now that her husband was dead, to name the child, she orders them to call it I-chabod, that is, Where is the glory? Or, Alas for the glory! Or, There is no glory (1Sa 4:21), which she thus explains with her dying lips (1Sa 4:22): "The glory has departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken. Call the child inglorious, for so he is; the beauty of Israel is lost, and there appears no hope of ever retrieving it; never let the name of an Israelite, must less a priest, carry glory in it any more, now that the ark is taken." Note,

(1.) The purity and plenty of God's ordinances, and the tokens of his presence in them, are the glory of any people, much more so than their wealth, and trade, and interest, among the nations.

2. Nothing is more cutting, more killing, to a faithful Israelite, than the want and loss of these. If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Woe unto us if he depart!

20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard *it*.

21 And she named the child Ichabod [*there is* no glory], saying, the glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.
22 And she said, the glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

1 Samuel-5

The Ark in the Land of the Philistines

1 And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.
2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

Here is, I The Philistines' triumph over the ark, which they were the more pleased, the more proud, to be now masters of, because before the battle they were possessed with a great fear of it, 1Sa 4:7. When they had it in their hands God restrained them, that they did not offer any violence to it, did not break it to pieces, as the Israelites were ordered to do by the idols of the heathen, but showed some respect to it, and carefully carried it to a place of safety. Whether their curiosity led them to open it, and to read what was written with the finger of God on the two tables of stone that were in it, we are not told; perhaps they looked no further than the golden outside and the cherubim that covered it, like children that are more affected with the fine binding of their bibles than with the precious matter contained in them. They carried it to Ashdod, one of their five cities, and that in which Dagon's temple was; there they placed the ark of God, by Dagon (1Sa 5:2), either

1. As a sacred thing, which they designed to pay some religious respect to, in conjunction with Dagon; for the gods of the heathen were never looked upon as averse to partners. Though the nations would not change their gods, yet they would multiply them and add to them. But they were mistaken in the God of Israel when, in putting his ark by Dagon's image, they intended to do him honour; for he is not worshipped at all

if he is not worshipped alone. The Lord our God is one Lord. Or rather,

2. They placed it there as a trophy of victory, in honour of Dagon their god, to whom no doubt they intended to offer a great sacrifice, as they had done when they had taken Samson (Jdg 16:23,24), boasting that as then they had triumphed over Israel's champion so now over Israel's God. What a reproach was this to God's great name! What a disgrace to the throne of his glory! Shall the ark, the symbol of God's presence, be a prisoner to Dagon, a dunghill deity?

(1.) So it is, because God will show of how little account the ark of the covenant is if the covenant itself be broken and neglected; even sacred signs are not things that either he is tied to or we can trust to.

(2.) So it is for a time, that God may have so much the more glory, in reckoning with those that thus affront him, and get him honour upon them. Having punished Israel, that betrayed the ark, by giving it into the hands of the Philistines, he will next deal with those that abused it, and will fetch it out of their hands again. Thus even the wrath of man shall praise him; and he is bringing about his own glory even when he seems to neglect it, Ps 76:10. Out of the eater shall come forth meat.

II The ark's triumph over Dagon. Once and again Dagon was made to fall before it. If they designed to do honour to the ark, God thereby showed that he valued not their honour, nor would he accept it; for he will be worshipped, not with any god, but above all gods. He owes a shame (as bishop Hall expresses it) to those who will be making matches betwixt himself and Belial. But they really designed to affront it, and though for some hours Dagon stood by the ark, and it is likely stood above it (the ark, as its footstool), yet the next morning, when the worshippers of Dagon came to pay their devotions to his shrine, they found their triumphing short, Job 20:5.

1. Dagon, that is, the image (for that was all the god), had fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark, 1Sa 5:3. God had seemed to forget the ark, but see how the Psalmist speaks of his appearing, at last, to vindicate his own honour. When he had delivered his strength into captivity, and all seemed going to ruin, then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, Ps 78:59-65. And therefore he prevented the utter desolations of the Jewish church, because he feared the wrath of the enemy, De 32:26,27. Great care was taken, in setting up the images of their gods, to fix them. The prophet takes notice of it, Isa 41:7, He fastened it with nails that it should not be moved; and again, Isa 46:7. And yet Dagon's fastenings stood him in no stead. The ark of God triumphs over him upon his own dunghill, in his own temple. Down he comes before the ark, directly towards it (though the ark was set on one side of him), as it were, pointing to the conqueror, to whom he is constrained to yield and do homage.

Note, The kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of the faithful. When the interests of religion seem to be run down and ready to sink, yet even then we may be confident that the day of their triumph will come. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Dagon by falling prostrate before the ark of God, which was a posture of adoration, did as it were direct his worshippers to pay their homage to the God of Israel, as greater than all gods. See Ex 18:11.

2 The priests, finding their idol on the floor, make all the haste they can, before it be known, to set him in his place again. A sorry silly thing it was to make a god of, which, when it was down, wanted help to get up again; and sottish wretches those were that could pray for help from that idol that needed, and in effect implored, their help. How could they attribute their victory to the power of Dagon when Dagon himself could not keep his own ground before the ark? But they are resolved

Dagon shall be their god still, and therefore set him in his place. Bishop Hall observes hence, It is just with God that those who want grace shall want wit too; and it is the work of superstition to turn men into the stocks and stones they worship. Those that make them are like unto them. What is it that the great upholders of the antichristian kingdom are doing at this day but heaving Dagon up, and labouring to set him in his place again, and healing the deadly wound that has been given to the beast? But if the reformation be the cause of God, before which it has begun to fall, it shall not prevail, but shall surely fall before it.

3. The next night Dagon fell the second time, 1Sa 5:4. They rose early, either, as usual, to make their addresses to their god, or earlier than usual, being impatient to know whether Dagon had kept his standing this night; and, to their great confusion, they find his case worse now than before. Whether the matter of which the image was made was apt to break or no, so it was that the head and hands were cut off upon the threshold, so that nothing remained but the stump, or, as the margin reads it, the fishy part of Dagon; for (as many learned men conjecture) the upper part of this image was in a human shape, the lower in the shape of a fish, as mermaids are painted. Such strong delusions were idolaters given up to, so vain were they in their imaginations, and so wretchedly darkened were their foolish hearts, as to worship the images, not only of creatures, but of nonentities, the mere figments of fancy. Well, the misshapen monster is by this fall made to appear,

(1.) Very ridiculous, and worthy to be despised. A pretty figure Dagon made now, when the fall had anatomized him, and shown how the human part and the fishy part were artificially put together, which perhaps the ignorant devotees had been made to believe was done by miracle!

(2.) Very impotent, and unworthy to be prayed to or trusted in; for his losing his head and hands proved him utterly destitute

both of wisdom and power, and for ever disabled either to advise or act for his worshippers. This they got by setting Dagon in his place again; they had better have let him alone when he was down. But those can speed no better that contend with God, and will set up that which he is throwing down, Mal 1:4. God, by this, magnified his ark and made it honourable, when they vilified and made it contemptible. He also showed what will be the end of all that which is set up in opposition to him. Gird yourselves, but you shall be broken to pieces, Isa 8:9.

4. The threshold of Dagon's temple was ever looked upon as sacred, and not to be trodden on, 1Sa 5:5. Some think that reference is had to this superstitious usage of Dagon's worshippers in Zep 1:9, where God threatens to punish those who, in imitation of them, leaped over the threshold. One would have thought that this incontestable proof of the ark's victory over Dagon would convince the Philistines of their folly in worshipping such a senseless thing, and that henceforward they would pay their homage to the conqueror; but, instead of being reformed, they were hardened in their idolatry, and, as evil men and seducers are wont to do, became worse and worse, 2Ti 3:13. Instead of despising Dagon, for the threshold's sake that beheaded him, they were almost ready to worship the threshold because it was the block on which he was beheaded, and will never set their feet on that on which Dagon lost his head, shaming those who tread under foot the blood of the covenant and trample on things truly sacred.

Yet this piece of superstition would help to perpetuate the remembrance of Dagon's disgrace; for, with the custom, the reason would be transmitted to posterity, and the children that should be born, enquiring why the threshold of Dagon's temple must not be trodden on, would be told that Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord. Thus God would have honour even out of their superstition. We are not told that they repaired the broken image; it is probable that they sent the art of God away first, and then they patched it up again, and set it in its place;

for, it seems, they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in our right hand? Isa 44:20.

3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon *was* fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands *were* cut off upon the threshold; only *the stump of* Dagon was left to him.

5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

6 But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, the ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, what shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither.*

The downfall of Dagon (if the people had made a good use of it, and had been brought by it to repent of their idolatries and to humble themselves before the God of Israel and seek his face) might have prevented the vengeance which God here proceeds to take upon them for the indignities done to his ark, and their obstinate adherence to their idol, in defiance of the plainest conviction. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see, Isa 26:11. And, if they will not see the glory, they shall feel the weight, of God's hand, for so the Philistines did. The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them (1Sa 5:6), and he not only convinced them of their folly, but severely chastised their insolence.

1. He destroyed them, that is, cut many of them off by sudden death, those, we may suppose, that had most triumphed in the captivity of the ark. This is distinguished from the disease with which others were smitten. At Gath it is called a great destruction (1Sa 5:9), a deadly destruction, 1Sa 5:11. And it is expressly said (1Sa 5:12) that those who were smitten with the emerods were the men that died not by the other destruction, which probably was the pestilence. They boasted of the great slaughter which their sword had made among the Israelites, 1Sa 4:10. But God lets them know that though he does not see fit to draw Israel's sword against them (they were unworthy to be employed), yet God had a sword of his own, with which he could make a no less dreadful execution among them, which if he whet, and his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, De 32:41,42.

Note, Those that contend with God, his ark, and his Israel, will infallibly be ruined at last. If conviction conquer not, destruction shall.

2. Those that were not destroyed he smote with emerods (1Sa 5:6), in their secret parts (1Sa 5:9), so grievous that (1Sa 5:12) the cry went up to heaven, that is, it might be heard a great way off, and perhaps, in the extremity of their pain and misery, they cried, not to Dagon, but to the God of heaven. The Psalmist, speaking of this sore judgment upon the Philistines, describes it thus: God smote his enemies in the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual reproach, Ps 78:66. The emerods (which we call the piles, and perhaps it was then a more grievous disease than it is now) is threatened among the judgments that would be the fruit of the curse, De 28:27. It was both a painful and shameful disease; a vile disease for vile deserts. By it God would humble their pride, and put contempt upon them, as they had done upon his ark. The disease was epidemical, and perhaps, among them, a new disease. Ashdod was smitten, and the coasts thereof, the country round. For contempt of God's ordinances, many are weak and sick, and many sleep, 1Co 11:30.

3. The men of Ashdod were soon aware that it was the hand of God, the God of Israel, 1Sa 5:7. Thus they were constrained to acknowledge his power and dominion, and confess themselves within his jurisdiction, and yet they would not renounce Dagon and submit to Jehovah; but rather, now that he touched their bone and their flesh, and in a tender part, they were ready to curse him to his face, and instead of making their peace with him, and courting the stay of his ark upon better terms, they desired to get clear of it, as the Gadarenes, who, when they had lost their swine, desired Christ to depart out of their coasts. Carnal hearts, when they smart under the judgments of God, would rather, if it were possible, put him far from them than enter into covenant and communion with him, and make him their friend. Thus the men of Ashdod resolve, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us.

4. It is resolved to change the place of its imprisonment. A great council was called, and the question proposed to all the lords was, "What shall be we with the ark?" And at last it was agreed that it should be carried to Gath, 1Sa 5:8. Some superstitious conceit they had that the fault was in the place, and that the ark would be better pleased with another lodging, further off from Dagon's temple; and therefore, instead of returning it, as they should have done, to its own place, they contrive to send it to another place. Gath is pitched upon, a place famed for a race of giants, but their strength and stature are no fence against the pestilence and the emerods: the men of that city were smitten, both great and small 1Sa 5:9), both dwarfs and giants, all alike to God's judgments; none so great as to over-top them, none so small as to be over-looked by them. 5. They were all at last weary of the ark, and very willing to get rid of it. It was sent from Gath to Ekron, and, coming by order of council, the Ekronites could not refuse it, but were much exasperated against their great men for sending them such a fatal present (1Sa 5:10): They have sent it to us to slay us and our people. The ark had the tables of the law in it; and nothing more welcome to faithful Israelites than the

word of God (to them it is a savour of life unto life), but to uncircumcised Philistines, that persist in enmity to God, nothing more dreadful nor unwelcome: to them it is a savour of death unto death. A general assembly is instantly called, to advise about sending the ark again to its place, 1Sa 5:11. While they are consulting about it, the hand of God is doing execution; and their contrivances to evade the judgment do but spread it. Many drop down dead among them. Many more are raging ill of the emerods, 1Sa 5:12. What shall they do? Their triumphs in the captivity of the ark are soon turned into lamentations, and they are as eager to quit it as ever they had been to seize it.

Note, God can easily make Jerusalem a burdensome stone to all that heave at it, Zec 12:3. Those that fight against God will soon have enough of it, and, first or last, will be made to know that none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. The wealth that is got by fraud and injustice, especially that which is got by sacrilege and robbing God, though swallowed greedily, and rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be vomited up again; for, till it be, the sinner shall not feel quietness in his belly, Job 20:15-20.

9 And it was *so,* that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the
Lord was against the city with a very great destruction: and he
smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had
emerods in their secret parts.

10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as
the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying,
they have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay
us and our people.

11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines,
and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again
to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a
deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was
very heavy there.

12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the
cry of the city went up to heaven.

1 Samuel-6

The Philistines Return the Ark

1 And the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months.

2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, what shall we do to the ark of the Lord? Tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

The first words of the chapter tell us how long the captivity of the ark continued--it was in the country of the Philistines seven months. In the field of the Philistines (so it is in the original), from which some gather that, having tried it in all their cities, and found it a plague to the inhabitants of each, at length they sent it into the open fields, upon which mice sprang up out of the ground in great multitudes, and destroyed the corn which was now nearly ripe and marred the land. With that judgment they were plagued (1Sa 6:5), and yet it is not mentioned in the foregoing chapter; so God let them know that wherever they carried the ark, so long as they carried it captive, they should find it a curse to them. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed in the field, De 28:16. But, most take it to signify, as we render it, The country of the Philistines. Now, 1. Seven months Israel was punished with the absence of the ark, that special token of God's presence. How bare did the tabernacle look without it! How was the holy city now a desolation, and the holy land a wilderness! A melancholy time no doubt it was to the good people among them, particularly to Samuel; but they had this to comfort themselves with, as we have in the like distress when we are deprived of the comfort of public ordinances, that, wherever the ark is, the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven, and by faith and prayer we may have access with boldness to him there. We may have God nigh unto us when the ark is at a distance. 2. Seven months the Philistines were punished with the presence of the ark; so long it was a plague to them, because they would not send it home sooner. Note, Sinners lengthen out their own miseries by obstinately refusing to part with

their sins. Egypt's plagues would have been fewer than ten if Pharaoh's heart had not been hardened not to let the people go. But at length it is determined that the ark must be sent back; there is no remedy, they are undone if they detain it.

I The priests and the diviners are consulted about it, 1Sa 6:2. They were supposed to be best acquainted both with the rules of wisdom and with the rites of worship and atonement. And the Israelites being their neighbours, and famed above all people for the institutions of their religion, they had no doubt the curiosity to acquaint themselves with their laws and usages; and therefore it was proper to ask them, What shall we do to the ark of Jehovah? All nations have had a regard to their priests, as the men whose lips keep knowledge. Had the Philistines diviners? We have divines, of whom we should enquire wherewith we shall come before the Lord and bow ourselves before the most high God.

II. They give their advice very fully, and seem to be very unanimous in it. It was a wonder they did not, as friends to their country, give it, ex officio--officially, before they were asked.

1. They urge it upon them that it was absolutely necessary to send the ark back, from the example of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, 1Sa 6:6. Some, it may be, were loth to yield, and were willing to try it out with the ark awhile longer, and to them they apply themselves: Wherefore do you harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did? It seems they were well acquainted with the Mosaic history, and could cite precedents out of it. This good use we should make of the remaining records of God's judgments upon obstinate sinners, we should by them be warned not to harden our hearts as they did. It is much cheaper to learn by other people's experience than by our own. The Egyptians were forced at last to let Israel go; therefore let the Philistines yield in time to let the ark go.

2. They advise that, when they sent it back, they should send a trespass-offering with it, 1Sa 6:3. Whatever the gods of other nations were, they knew the God of Israel was a jealous God, and how strict he was in his demands of sin-offerings and trespass-offerings from his own people; and therefore, since they found how highly he resented the affront of holding his ark captive, those with whom he had such a quarrel must in any wise return him a trespass-offering, and they could not expect to be healed upon any other terms. Injured justice demands satisfaction. So far natural light instructed men. But when they began to contrive what that satisfaction should be, they became wretchedly vain in their imaginations. But those who by wilful sin have imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, as the Philistines did the ark (Ro 1:18), may conclude that there is no making their peace with him whom they have thus injured but by a sin-offering; and we know but one that can take away sin.

3. They direct that this trespass-offering should be an acknowledgement of the punishment of their iniquity, by which they might take shame to themselves as conquered and yielding, and guilty before God, and might give glory to the God of Israel as their mighty conqueror and most just avenger, 1Sa 6:5. They must make images of the emerods, that is, of the swellings and sores with which they had been afflicted, so making the reproach of that shameful disease perpetual by their own act and deed (Ps 78:66), also images of the mice that had marred the land, owning thereby the almighty power of the God of Israel, who could chastise and humble them, even in the day of their triumph, by such small and despicable animals. These images must be made of gold, the most precious metal, to intimate that they would gladly purchase their peace with the God of Israel at any rate, and would not think it bought too dearly with gold, with much fine gold. The golden emerods must be, in number, five, according to the number of the lords, who, it is likely, were all afflicted with them, and were content thus to own it; it was advised that the golden mice should be five too, but, because the whole

country was infested with them, it should seem, upon second thoughts, they sent more of them, according to the number both of the fenced cities and of the country villages, 1Sa 6:18. Their priests reminded them that one plague was on them all; they could not blame one another, for they were all guilty, which they were plainly told by being all plagued. Their proposal to offer a trespass-offering for their offence was conformable enough to divine revelation at that time; but to send such things as these for trespass-offerings was very foreign, and showed them grossly ignorant of the methods of reconciliation appointed by the law of Moses; for there it appears all along that it is blood, and not gold, that makes atonement for the soul.

4. They encourage them to hope that hereby they would take an effectual course to get rid of the plague: You shall be healed, 1Sa 6:3. For, it seems, the disease obstinately resisted all the methods of cure their physicians had prescribed. "Let them therefore send back the ark, and then," say they, "It shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you, that is, by this it will appear whether it is for your detaining the ark that you are thus plagued; for, if it be, upon your delivering it up the plague will cease." God has sometimes put his people upon making such a trial, whether their reformation would not be their relief. Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, Mal 3:10,Hag 2:18,19. Yet they speak doubtfully (1Sa 6:5): Peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you; as if now they began to think that the judgment might come from God's hand, and yet not be removed immediately upon the restitution of the ark; however that was the likeliest way to obtain mercy. Take away the cause and the effect will cease.

5. Yet they put them in a way to make a further trial whether it was the hand of the God of Israel that had smitten them with these plagues or no. They must, in honour of the ark, put it on a new cart or carriage, to be drawn by two milch-cows, that had calves daily sucking them (1Sa 6:7), unused to draw, and inclined to home, both for the sake of the crib where they were

fed and of the calves they nourished, and, besides, altogether unacquainted with the road that led towards the land of Israel. They must have no one to lead or drive them, but must take their own way, which, in all reason, one might expect, would be home again; and yet, unless the God of Israel, after all the other miracles he has wrought, will work one more, and by an invisible power lead these cows, contrary to their natural instinct and inclination, to the land of Israel, and particularly to Beth-shemesh, they will retract their former opinion, and will believe it was not the hand of God that smote them, but it was a chance that happened to them, 1Sa 6:8,9. Thus did God suffer himself to be tempted and prescribed to, after he had been otherwise affronted, by these uncircumcised Philistines. Would they have been content that the honour of Dagon, their god, should be put upon such an issue as this? See how willing bad men are to shift off their convictions of the hand of God upon them, and to believe, when they are in trouble, that it is a chance that happens to them; and, if so, the rod has no voice which they are concerned to hear or heed.

3 And they said, if ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it
not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye
shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not
removed from you.

4 Then said they, what *shall be* the trespass offering which we shall
return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five
golden mice, *according to* the number of the lords of the Philistines:
for one plague *was* on you all, and on your lords.

5 Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of
your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God
of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and
from off your gods, and from off your land.

6 Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and
Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully
among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which
there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their
calves home from them:

8 and take the ark of the Lord, and lay it upon the cart; and put the
jewels of gold, which ye return him *for* a trespass offering, in a coffer
by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.
9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh,
then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know
that *it is* not his hand *that* smote us; it *was* a chance *that* happened to
us.
10 And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to
the cart, and shut up their calves at home:
11 and they laid the ark of the Lord upon the cart, and the coffer with
the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.
12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh,
and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not
aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left; and the lords of the Philistines
went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.
13 And *they of* Beth-shemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the
valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced
to see *it*.
14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood
there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the
cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the Lord.

We are here told,

I. How the Philistines dismissed the ark, 1Sa 6:10,11. They were made as glad to part with it as ever they had been to take it. As God had fetched Israel out of the house of bondage, so now he fetched the ark out of its captivity, in such a manner as that Egypt was glad when they departed, Ps 105:38.

1. They received no money or price for the ransom of it, as they hoped to do, even beyond a king's ransom. Thus it is prophesied of Cyrus (Isa 45:13), He shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward. Nay,

2. They gave jewels of gold, as the Egyptians did to the Israelites, to be rid of it. Thus the ark that was carried into the land of the Philistines, a trophy of their victory, carried back with it trophies of its own, and lasting monuments of the

disgrace of the Philistines. Note, God will be no loser in his glory, at last, by the successes of the church's enemies against his ark, but will get himself honour from those that seek to do dishonour to him.

II. How the kine brought it to the land of Israel, 1Sa 6:12. They took the straight way to Beth-shemesh, the next city of the land of Israel, and a priests' city, and turned not aside. This was a wonderful instance of the power of God over the brute-creatures, and, all things considered, no less than a miracle, that cattle unaccustomed to the yoke should draw so even, so orderly, and still go forward,--that, without any driver, they should go from home, to which all tame creatures have a natural inclination, and from their own calves, to which they had a natural affection,--that, without any director, they should go the straight road to Beth-shemesh, a city eight or ten miles off, never miss the way, never turn aside into the fields to feed themselves, nor turn back home to feed their calves.

They went on lowing for their young ones, by which it appeared that they had not forgotten them, but that nature was sensible of the grievance of going from them; the power of the God of nature therefore appeared so much the greater, in overruling one of the strongest instincts of nature. These two kine, says Dr. Lightfoot, knew their owner, their great owner (Isa 1:3), whom Hophni and Phinehas knew not, to which I may add they brought home the ark to shame the stupidity of Israel, that made no attempt to fetch it home. God's providence is conversant about the motions even of brute-creatures, and serves its own purposes by them. The lords of the Philistines, with a suitable retinue no doubt, went after them, wondering at the power of the God of Israel; and thus those who thought to triumph over the ark were made to go like menial servants after it.

III. How it was welcomed to the land of Israel: The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest, 1Sa 6:13. They were going on with their worldly business, and were in

no care about the ark, made no enquiries what had become of it; if they had, it is likely they might have had private intelligence beforehand of its coming, and might have gone to meet it, and conduct it into their own border. But they were as careless as the people that ceiled their own houses and let God's house lie waste. Note, God will in his own time effect the deliverance of his church, not only though it be fought against by its enemies, but though it be neglected by its friends. Some observe that the returning ark found the men of Beth-shemesh, not idling or sporting in the streets of the city, but busy, reaping their corn in their fields, and well employed.

Thus the tidings of the birth of Christ were brought to the shepherds when they were keeping their flock by night. The devil visits idle men with his temptations. God visits industrious men with his favours. The same invisible hand that directed the kine to the land of Israel brought them into the field of Joshua, and in that field they stood, some think for the owner's sake, on whom, being a very good man, they suppose God designed to put this honour. I rather think it was for the sake of the great stone in that field, which was convenient to put the ark upon, and which is spoken of, 1Sa 6:14,15,18. Now,

1. When the reapers saw the ark, they rejoiced (1Sa 6:13); their joy for that was greater than the joy of harvest, and therefore they left their work to bid it welcome. When the Lord turned again the captivity of his ark they were like men that dream; then was their mouth filled with laughter, Ps 126:1,2. Though they had not zeal and courage enough to attempt the rescue or ransom of it, yet, when it did come, they bade it heartily welcome. Note, The return of the ark, and the revival of holy ordinances, after days of restraint and trouble, cannot but be matter of great joy to every faithful Israelite.

2. They offered up the kine for a burnt-offering, to the honour of God, and made use of the wood of the cart for fuel, 1Sa 6:14. Probably the Philistines intended these, when they sent

them, to be a part of their trespass-offering, to make atonement, 1Sa 6:3,7. However, the men of Beth-shemesh looked upon it as proper to make this use of them, because it was by no means fit that ever they should be put to any other use; never shall that cart carry any common thing that has once carried that sacred symbol of the divine presence: and the kine had been under such an immediate guidance of heaven that God had, as it were, already laid claim to them; they were servants to him, and therefore must be sacrifices to him, and no doubt were accepted, though females, whereas, in strictness, every burnt-offering was to be a male.

3. They deposited the ark, with a chest of jewels that the Philistines presented, upon the great stone in the open field, a cold lodging for the ark of the Lord and a very mean one; yet better so than in Dagon's temple, or in the hands of the Philistines. It is desirable to see the ark in its habitation in all the circumstances of solemnity and splendour; but better have it upon a great stone, and in the fields of the wood, than be without it. The intrinsic grandeur of instituted ordinances ought not to be diminished in our eyes by the meanness and poverty of the place where they are administered. As the burning of the cart and cows that brought home the ark might be construed to signify their hopes that it should never be carried away again out of the land of Israel, so the setting of it upon a great stone might signify their hopes that it should be established again upon a firm foundation. The church is built upon a rock.

4. They offered the sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, some think upon the great stone, more probably upon an altar of earth made for the purpose, 1Sa 6:15. And, the case being extraordinary, the law for offering at the altar in the court of the tabernacle was dispensed with, and the more easily because Shiloh was now dismantled; God himself had forsaken it, and the ark, which was its chief glory, they had with them here. Beth-shemesh, though it lay within the lot of the tribe of Dan, yet belonged to Judah, so that this accidental

bringing of the ark hither was an indication of its designed settlement there, in process of time; for, when God refused the tabernacle of Joseph, he chose the tribe of Judah, Ps 78:67,68. It was one of those cities which were assigned out of the lot of Judah to the sons of Aaron, Jos 21:16. Whither should the ark go but to a priests' city? And it was well they had those of that sacred order ready (for though they are here called Levites, 1Sa 6:15, yet it should seem they were priests) both to take down the ark and to offer the sacrifices.

5. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron, much affected, we may suppose, with what they had seen of the glory of God and the zeal of the Israelites, and yet not reclaimed from the worship of Dagon; for how seldom has a nation changed its gods, though they were no gods! Jer 2:11. Though they cannot but think the God of Israel glorious in holiness and fearful in praises, yet they are resolved they will think Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, at least as good as he, and to him they will cleave because he is theirs. 6. Notice is taken of the continuance of the great stone in the same place; there it is unto this day (1Sa 6:18), because it remained a lasting memorial of this great event, and served to support the traditional history by which it was transmitted to posterity. The fathers would say to the children, "This is the stone upon which the ark of God was set when it came out of the Philistines' hands, a thing never to be forgotten."

15 And the Levites took down the ark of the Lord, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were,* and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the Lord.

16 And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it,* they returned to Ekron the same day.

17 And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass offering unto the Lord; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;

18 and the golden mice, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging* to the five lords, *both* of fenced cities, and of

country villages, even unto the great *stone of* Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the Lord : *which stone remaineth* unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Beth-shemite.

19 And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten *many* of the people with a great slaughter.

Here is,

1 The sin of the men of Beth-shemesh: They looked into the ark of the Lord, 1Sa 6:19. Every Israelite had heard great talk of the ark, and had been possessed with a profound veneration for it; but they had been told that it was lodged within a veil, and even the high priest himself might not look upon it but once a year, and then through a cloud of incense. Perhaps this made many say (as we are apt to covet that which is forbidden) what a great deal they would give for a sight of it. Some of these Beth-shemites, we may suppose, for that reason, rejoiced to see the ark (1Sa 6:13) more than for the sake of the public. Yet this did not content them; they might see it, but they would go further, they would take off the covering, which it is likely was nailed or screwed on, and look into it, under pretence of seeing whether the Philistines had not taken the two tables out of it or some way damaged them, but really to gratify a sinful curiosity of their own, which intruded into those things that God had thought fit to conceal from them. Note, It is a great affront to God for vain men to pry into and meddle with the secret things which belong not to them, De 29:29,Col 2:18. We were all ruined by an ambition of forbidden knowledge. That which made this looking into the ark a great sin was that it proceeded from a very low and mean opinion of the ark. The familiarity they had with it upon this occasion bred contempt and irreverence. Perhaps they presumed upon their being priests; but the dignity of the ministerial office will be so far from excusing that it will aggravate a careless and irreverent treatment of holy things. They should, by their example, have taught others to keep their distance and look upon the ark with

a holy awe. Perhaps they presumed upon the kind entertainment they had given the ark, and the sacrifices they had now offered to welcome it home with, for which they thought the ark was indebted to them, and they might be allowed to repay themselves with the satisfaction of looking into it. But let no man think that his service done for God will justify him in any instance of disrespect or irreverence towards the things of God. Or it may be they presumed upon the present mean circumstances the ark was in, newly come out of captivity, and unsettled; now that it stood upon a cold stone, they thought they might make free with it; they should never have such another opportunity of being familiar with it. It is an offence to God if we think meanly of his ordinances because of the meanness of the manner of their administration. Had they looked with an understanding eye upon the ark, and not judged purely by outward appearance, they would have thought that the ark never shone with greater majesty than it did not. It had triumphed over the Philistines, and come out of its house of bondage (like Christ out of the grave) by its own power; had they considered this, they would not have looked into it thus, as a common chest.

2. Their punishment for this sin: He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, many of them, with a great slaughter. How jealous is God for the honour of his ark! He will not suffer it to be profaned. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Those that will not fear his goodness, and reverently use the tokens of his grace, shall be made to feel his justice, and sink under the tokens of his displeasure. Those that pry into what is forbidden, and come too near to holy fire, will find it is at their peril. He smote 50,070 men. This account of the numbers smitten is expressed in a very unusual manner in the original, which, besides the improbability that there should be so many guilty and so many slain, occasions many learned men to question whether we take the matter aright. In the original it is, He smote in (or among) the people three score and ten men, fifty thousand men. The Syriac and Arabic read it, five thousand and seventy men. The Chaldee reads it, seventy men

of the elders, and fifty thousand of the common people. Seventy men as valuable as 50,000, so some, because they were priests. Some think the seventy men were the Beth-shemites that were slain for looking into the ark, and the 50,000 were those that were slain by the ark, in the land of the Philistines. He smote seventy men, that is, fifty out of a thousand, which was one in twenty, a half decimation; so some understand it. The Septuagint read it much as we do, he smote seventy men, and fifty thousand men. Josephus says only seventy were smitten.

3. The terror that was struck upon the men of Beth-shemesh by this severe stroke. They said, as well they might, and Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? 1Sa 6:20. Some think this expresses their murmuring against God, as if he had dealt hardly and unjustly with them. Instead of quarrelling with themselves and their own sins, they quarrelled with God and his judgments; as David was displeased, in a case not much dissimilar, 2Sa 6:8, 9. I rather think it intimates their awful and reverent adoration of God, as the Lord God, as a holy Lord God, and as a God before whom none is able to stand. This they infer from that tremendous judgment, "Who is able to stand before the God of the ark?" To stand before God to worship him (blessed be his name) is not impossible; we are through Christ invited, encouraged, and enabled to do it, but to stand before God to contend with him we are not able. Who is able to stand before the throne of his immediate glory, and look full upon it? 1Ti 6:16. Who is able to stand before the tribunal of his enflexible justice, and make his part good there? Ps 130:3,143:2. Who is able to stand before the arm of his provoked power, and either resist or bear the strokes of it? Ps 76:7.

4. Their desire, hereupon, to be rid of the ark. They asked, To whom shall he go up from us? 1Sa 6:20. They should rather have asked, "How may we make our peace with him, and recover his favour?" Mic 6:6,7. But they begin to be as weary of the ark as the Philistines had been, whereas, if they had

treated it with due reverence, who knows but it might have taken up its residence among them, and they had all been blessed for the ark's sake? But thus, when the word of God works with terror on sinners' consciences, they, instead of taking the blame and shame to themselves, quarrel with the word, and put it from them, Jer 6:10. They sent messengers to the elders of Kirjath-jearim, a strong city further up in the country, and begged of them to come and fetch the ark up thither, 1Sa 6:21. They durst not touch it to bring it thither themselves, but stood aloof from it as a dangerous thing. Thus do foolish men run from one extreme to the other, from presumptuous boldness to slavish shyness. Kirjath-jearim, that is, the city of woods, belonged to Judah, Jos 15:9,60. It lay in the way from Beth-shemesh to Shiloh, so that when they sent to them to fetch it, we may suppose, they intended that the elders of Shiloh should fetch it thence, but God intended otherwise. Thus was it sent from town to town, and no care taken of it by the public, a sign that there was no king in Israel.

20 And the men of Beth-shemesh said, who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? And to whom shall he go up from us?

21 And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, *and* fetch it up to you.

1 Samuel-7

1 And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord.

2 And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

Here we must attend the ark to Kirjath-jearim, and then leave it there, to hear not a word more of it except once (1Sa 14:18), till David fetched it thence, about forty years after, 1Ch 13:6.

I. We are very willing to attend it thither, for the men of Beth-shemesh have by their own folly made that a burden which might have been a blessing; and gladly would we see it among those to whom it will be a savour of life unto life, for in every place where it has been of late it has been a savour of death unto death. Now,

1 The men of Kirjath-jearim cheerfully bring it among them, 1Sa 7:1. They came, at the first word, and fetched up the ark of the Lord. Their neighbours the Beth-shemites, were not more glad to get rid of it than they were to receive it, knowing very well that what slaughter the ark had made at Beth-shemesh was not an act of arbitrary power, but of necessary justice, and those that suffered by it must blame themselves, not the ark; we may depend upon the word which God hath said (Jer 25:6), Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt. Note, The judgments of God on those who profane his ordinances should not make us afraid of the ordinances, but of profaning them and making an ill use of them.

2. They carefully provided for its decent entertainment among them, as a welcome guest, with true affection, and, as an honourable guest, with respect and reverence.

(1.) They provided a proper place to receive it. They had no public building to adorn with it, but they lodged it in the house of Abinadab, which stood upon the highest ground, and, probably, was the best house in their city; or perhaps the master of it was the most eminent man they had for piety, and best affected to the ark. The men of Beth-shemesh left it exposed upon a stone in the open field, and, though it was a city of priests, none of them received it into his house; but the men of Kirjath-jearim, though common Israelites, gave it house-room, and no doubt the best-furnished room in the house to which it was brought. Note,

[1.] God will find out a resting-place for his ark; if some thrust it from them, yet the hearts of others shall be inclined to receive it.

[2.] It is no new thing for God's ark to be thrust into a private house. Christ and his apostles preached from house to house when they could not have public places at command.

[3.] Sometimes priests are shamed and out-done in religion by common Israelites.

(2.) They provided a proper person to attend it: They sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it; not the father, either because he was aged and infirm, or because he had the affairs of his house and family to attend, from which they would not take him off. But the son, who, it is probable, was a very pious devout young man, and zealously affected towards the best things. His business was to keep the ark, not only from being seized by malicious Philistines, but from being touched or looked into by too curious Israelites. He was to keep the room clean and decent in which the ark was, that, though it was in an obscure place, it might no look like a neglected thing, which no man looked after.

It does not appear that this Eleazar was of the tribe of Levi, much less of the house of Aaron, nor was it needful that he should, for here was no altar either for sacrifice or incense, only we may suppose that some devout Israelites would come and pray before the ark, and those that did so he was there ready to attend and assist. For this purpose they sanctified him, that is, by his own consent, they obliged him to make this his business, and to give a constant attendance to it; they set him apart for it in the name of all their citizens. This was irregular, but was excusable because of the present distress. When the ark has but recently come out of captivity we cannot expect it to be on a sudden in its usual solemnity, but must take things as they are, and make the best of them.

II. Yet we are very loth to leave it here, wishing it well at Shiloh again, but that is made desolate (Jer 7:14), or at least wishing it at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle and the altars are; but, it seems, it must lie by the way for want of some public-spirited men to bring it to its proper place.

1 The time of its continuance here was long, very long, above forty years it lay in these fields of the wood, a remote, obscure, private place, unfrequented and almost unregarded (1Sa 7:2): The time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim was long, even till David fetched it thence. It was very strange that all the time that Samuel governed the ark was never brought to its place in the holy of holies, an evidence of the decay of holy zeal among them. God suffered it to be so, to punish them for their neglect of the ark when it was in its place and to show that the great stress which the institution laid upon the ark was but typical of Christ, and those good things to come which cannot be moved, Heb 9:23,12:27. It was a just reproach to the priests that one not of their order was sanctified to keep the ark.

2. Twenty years of this time had passed before the house of Israel was sensible of the want of the ark. The Septuagint read it somewhat more clearly than we do; and it was twenty years, and (that is, when) the whole house of Israel looked up again after the Lord. So long the ark remained in obscurity, and the Israelites were not sensible of the inconvenience, nor ever made any enquiry after it, what has become of it; though, while it was absent from the tabernacle, the token of God's special presence was wanting, nor could they keep the day of atonement as it should be kept. They were content with the altars without the ark; so easily can formal professors rest satisfied in a round of external performances, without any tokens of God's presence or acceptance.

But at length they bethought themselves, and began to lament after the lord, stirred up to it, it is probable, by the preaching of Samuel, with which an extraordinary working of the Spirit of God set in. A general disposition to repentance and

reformation now appears throughout all Israel, and they begin to look unto him whom they had slighted, and to mourn, Zec 12:10. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this was a matter and time as remarkable as almost any we read of in scripture; and that the great conversion, Acts 2 and 3, is the only parallel to it. Note,

(1.) Those that know how to value God's ordinances cannot but reckon it a very lamentable thing to want them.

(2.) True repentance and conversion begin in lamenting after the Lord; we must be sensible that by sin we have provoked him to withdraw and are undone if we continue in a state of distance from him, and be restless till we have recovered his favour and obtained his gracious returns. It was better with the Israelites when they wanted the ark, and were lamenting after it, than when they had the ark, and were prying into it, or priding themselves in it. Better see people longing in the scarcity of the means of grace than loathing in the abundance of them.

Samuel Judges Israel

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

We may well wonder where Samuel was and what he was doing all this while, for we have not had him so much as named till now, since 1Sa 4:1, not as if he were unconcerned, but his labours among his people are not mentioned till there appears the fruit of them. When he perceived that they began to lament after the Lord he struck while the iron was hot, and two things he endeavoured to do for them, as a faithful servant of God and a faithful friend to the Israel of God:--

I. He endeavoured to separate between them and their idols, for there reformation must begin. He spoke to all the house of

Israel (1Sa 7:3), going, as it should seem, from place to place, an itinerant preacher (for we find not that they were gathered together till 1Sa 7:5), and wherever he came this was his exhortation, "If you do indeed return to the Lord, as you seem inclined to do, by your lamentations for your departure from him and his from you, then know,

1. That you must renounce and abandon your idols, put away the strange gods, for your God will admit no rival; put them away from you, each one from himself, nay, and put them from among you, do what you can, in your places, to rid them out of the country. Put away Baalim, the strange gods, and Ashtaroth, the strange goddesses," for such also they had. Or Ashtaroth is particularly named because it was the best-beloved idol, and that which they were most wedded to.

Note, True repentance strikes at the darling sin, and will with a peculiar zeal and resolution put away that, the sin which most easily besets us.

2. "That you must make a solemn business of returning to God, and do it with a serious consideration and a stedfast resolution, for both are included in preparing the heart, directing, disposing, establishing, the heart unto the Lord.

3. That you must be wholly for God, for him and no other, serve him only, else you do not serve him at all so as to please him.

4. That this is the only way and a sure way to prosperity and deliverance. Take this course, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines; for it was because you forsook him and served other gods that he delivered you into their hands." This was the purport of Samuel's preaching, and it had a wonderfully good effect (1Sa 7:4): They put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, not only quitted the worship of them, but destroyed their images, demolished their altars, and quite abandoned

them. What have we to do any more with idols? Ho 14:8,Isa 30:22.

II. He endeavoured to engage them for ever to God and his service. Now that he had them in a good mind he did all he could to keep them in it.

1. He summons all Israel, at least by their elders, as their representatives, to meet him at Mizpeh (1Sa 7:5), and there he promises to pray for them. And it was worth while for them to come from the remotest part of the country to join with Samuel in see king God's favour. Note, Ministers should pray for those to whom they preach, that God by his grace would make the preaching effectual. And, when we come together in religious assemblies, we must remember that it is as much our business there to join in public prayers as it is to hear a sermon. He would pray for them that, by the grace of God, they might be parted from their idols, and that then, by the providence of God, they might be delivered from the Philistines. Ministers would profit their people more if they did but pray more for them.

2. They obey his summons, and not only come to the meeting, but conform to the intentions of it, and appear there very well disposed, 1Sa 7:6.

(1.) They drew water and poured it out before the Lord, signifying,

[1.] Their humiliation and contrition for sin, owning themselves as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again (2Sa 14:14), so mean, so miserable, before God, Ps 22:14. The Chaldee reads it, They poured out their hearts in repentance before the Lord. They wept rivers of tears, and sorrowed after a godly sort, for it was before the Lord and with an eye to him.

[2.] Their earnest prayers and supplications to God for mercy. The soul is, in prayer, poured out before God, Ps 62:8.

[3.] Their universal reformation; they thus expressed their willingness to part with all their sins, and to retain no more of the relish or savour of them than the vessel does of the water that is poured out of it. They were free and full in their confession, and fixed in their resolution to cast away from them all their transgressions. Israel is now baptized from their idols, so Dr. Lightfoot

[4.] Some think it signifies their joy in the hope of God's mercy, which Samuel had assured them of. This ceremony was used with that signification at the feast of tabernacles, Joh 7:37,38, and see Isa 12:3. Taking it in this sense, it must be read, They drew water after they had fasted. In the close of their humiliation they thus expressed their hope of pardon and reconciliation.

(2.) They fasted, abstained from food, afflicted their souls, so expressing repentance and exciting devotion.

(3.) They made a public confession: We have sinned against the Lord, so giving glory to God and taking shame to themselves. And, if we thus confess our sins, we shall find our God faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

3. Samuel judged them at that time in Mizpeh, that is, he assured them, in God's name, of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance, and that God was reconciled to them. It was a judgment of absolution. Or he received informations against those that did not leave their idols, and proceeded against them according to law. Those that would not judge themselves he judged. Or now he settled courts of justice among them, and appointed the terms and circuits which he observed afterwards, 1Sa 7:16. Now he set those wheels a-going; and, whereas he began to act as a magistrate, to prevent their

relapsing into those sins which now they seemed to have renounced.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, we have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it *for* a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

Here, I The Philistines invade Israel (1Sa 7:7), taking umbrage from that general meeting for repentance and prayer as if it had been a rendezvous for war, and, if so, they thought it prudent to keep the war out of their own country. They had no just cause for this suspicion; but those that seek to do mischief to others will be forward to imagine that others design mischief to them. Now see here,

1. How evil sometimes seems to come out of good. The religious meeting of the Israelites at Mizpeh brought trouble upon them from the Philistines, which perhaps tempted them to wish they had staid at home and to blame Samuel for calling them together. But we may be in God's way and yet meet with

distress; nay, when sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments on work to the utmost to oppose and discourage them. But,

2. How good is, at length, brought out of that evil. Israel could never be threatened more seasonably than at this time, when they were repenting and praying, nor could they have been better prepared to receive the enemy; nor could the Philistines have acted more impolitely for themselves than to make war upon Israel at this time, when they were making their peace with God. But God permitted them to do it, that he might have an opportunity immediately of crowning his people's reformation with tokens of his favour, and of confirming the words of his messenger, who had assured them that if they repented God would deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines. Thus he makes man's wrath to praise him, and serves the purposes of his grace to his people even by the malicious designs of their enemies against them, Mic 4:11,12.

II. Israel cleaves closely to Samuel, as their best friend, under God, in this distress; though he was no military man, nor ever celebrated as a mighty man of valour, yet, being afraid of the Philistines, for whom they thought themselves an unequal match, they engaged Samuel's prayers for them: Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, 1Sa 7:8. They were here unarmed, unprepared for war, come together to fast and pray, not to fight; prayers and tears therefore being all the weapons many of them are now furnished with, to these they have recourse. And, knowing Samuel to have a great interest in heaven, they earnestly beg of him to improve it for them.

They had reason to expect it, because he had promised to pray for them (1Sa 7:5), had promised them deliverance from the Philistines (1Sa 7:3), and they had been observant of him in all that which he had spoken to them from the Lord. Thus those who sincerely submit to Christ, as their lawgiver and judge, need not doubt of their interest in his intercession. They

were very solicitous that Samuel should not cease to pray for them: what military preparations were to be made they would undertake them, but let him continue instant in prayer, perhaps remembering that when Moses did but let down his hand ever so little Amalek prevailed. O what a comfort is it to all believers that our great intercessor above never ceases, is never silent, for he always appears in the presence of God for us!

III. Samuel intercedes with God for them, and does it by sacrifice, 1Sa 7:9. He took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering, a whole burnt-offering, to the Lord, and, while the sacrifice was in burning, with the smoke of it his prayers ascended up to heaven for Israel. Observe,

1. He made intercession with a sacrifice. Christ intercedes in the virtue of his satisfaction, and in all our prayers we must have an eye to his great oblation, depending upon that for audience and acceptance. Samuel's sacrifice without his prayer would have been an empty shadow, his prayer without the sacrifice would not have been so prevalent, but both together teach us what great things we may expect from God in answer to those prayers which are made with faith in Christ's sacrifice.

2. It was a burnt-offering, which was offered purely for the glory of God, so intimating that the great plea he relied on in his prayer was taken from the honour of God. "Lord, help thy people now for thy name's sake." When we endeavour to give glory to God we may hope he will, in answer to our prayers, work for his own glory.

3. It was but one sucking lamb that he offered; for it is the integrity and intention of the heart that God looks at, more than the bulk or number of the offerings. This one lamb (typifying the Lamb of God) was more acceptable than thousands of rams or bullocks would have been without faith and prayer. Samuel was no priest, but he was a Levite and a

prophet; the case was extraordinary, and what he did was by special direction, and therefore was accepted of God. And justly was this reproach put upon the priests because they had corrupted themselves.

IV. God gave a gracious answer to Samuel's prayer (1Sa 7:9): The Lord heard him. He was himself a Samuel, asked of God, and many a Samuel, many a mercy in answer to prayer, God gave him. Sons of prayer should be famous for praying, as Samuel was among those that call upon his name, Ps 99:6. The answer was a real answer: the Philistines were discomfited (1Sa 7:10,11), totally routed, and that in such a manner as highly magnified the prayer of Samuel, the power of God, and the valour of Israel.

1 The prayer of Samuel was honoured; for at the very time when he was offering up his sacrifice, and his prayer with it, the battle began, and turned immediately against the Philistines. Thus while he was yet speaking God heard, and answered in thunder, Isa 65:24. God showed that it was Samuel's prayer and sacrifice that he had respect to, and hereby let Israel know that as in a former engagement with the Philistines he had justly chastised their presumptuous confidence in the presence of the ark, on the shoulders of two profane priests, so now he graciously accepted their humble dependence upon the prayer of faith from the mouth and heart of a pious prophet.

2 The power of God was greatly honoured; for he took the work into his own hand, and discomfited them, not with great hail-stones, which would kill them (as Jos 10:11), but with a great thunder, which frightened them and put them into such terror and consternation that they fainted away, and became a very easy prey to the sword of Israel, before whom, being thus confounded, they were smitten. Josephus adds that the earth quaked under them when first they made the onset and in many places opened and swallowed them up, and that, besides the terror of the thunder, their faces and hands were burnt with

lightning, which obliged them to shift for themselves by flight. And, being thus driven to their heels by the immediate hand of God (whom they feared not so much as they had feared his ark, 1Sa 4:7), then,

3. Honour was put upon the hosts of Israel; they were made use of for the completing of the victory, and had the pleasure of triumphing over their oppressors: They pursued the Philistines, and smote them. How soon did they find the benefit of their repentance, and reformation, and return to God! Now that they have thus engaged him for them none of their enemies can stand before them.

V. Samuel erected a thankful memorial of this victory, to the glory of God and for the encouragement of Israel, 1Sa 7:12. He set up an Eben-ezer, the stone of help. If ever the people's hard hearts should lose the impressions of this providence, this stone would either revive the remembrance of it, and make them thankful, or remain a standing witness against them for their unthankfulness.

1 The place where this memorial was set up was the same where, twenty years before, the Israelites were smitten before the Philistines, for that was beside Eben-ezer, 1Sa 4:1 The sin which procured that defeat formerly being pardoned upon their repentance, the pardon was sealed by this glorious victory in the very same place where they then suffered loss; see Ho 1:10.

2 Samuel himself took care to set up this monument. He had been instrumental by prayer to obtain the mercy, and therefore he thought himself in a special manner obliged to make this grateful acknowledgement of it. 3. The reason he gives for the name is, Hitherto the Lord hath helped us, in which he speaks thankfully of what was past, giving the glory of the victory to God only, who had added this to all his former favours; and yet he speaks somewhat doubtfully for the future: "Hitherto things have done well, but what God may yet do with us we

know not, that we refer to him; but let us praise him for what he has done."

Note, The beginnings of mercy and deliverance are to be acknowledged by us with thankfulness so far as they go, though they be not completely finished, nay, though the issue seem uncertain. Having obtained help from God, I continue hitherto, says blessed Paul, Ac 26:22.

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth-car.

12 Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer [the stone of help], saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

We have here a short account of the further good services that Samuel did to Israel. Having parted them from their idols, and brought them home to their God, he had put them into a capacity of receiving further benefits by his ministry. Having prevailed in that, he becomes, in other instances, a great blessing to them; yet, writing it himself, he is brief in the relation. We are not told here, but it appears (2Ch 35:18) that in the days of Samuel the prophet the people of Israel kept the ordinance of the Passover with more than ordinary devotion, notwithstanding the distance of the ark and the desolations of Shiloh. Many good offices, no doubt, he did for Israel, but here we are only told how instrumental he was,

1. In securing the public peace (1Sa 7:13): "In his days the Philistines came no more into the coast of Israel, made no inroads or incursions upon them; they perceived that God now fought for Israel and that his hand was against the Philistines, and this kept them in awe, and restrained the remainder of their wrath." Samuel was a protector and deliverer to Israel, not by dint of sword, as Gideon, nor by strength of arm, as Samson, but by the power of prayer to God and carrying on a work of

reformation among the people. Religion and piety are the best securities of a nation.

2. In recovering the public rights, 1Sa 7:14. By his influence Israel had the courage to demand the cities which the Philistines had unjustly taken from them and had long detained; and the Philistines, not daring to contend with one that had so great an interest in heaven, tamely yielded to the demand, and restored (some think) even Ekron and Gath, two of the capital cities, though afterwards they retook them; others think some small towns that lay between Ekron and Gath, which were forced out of the Philistines' hands. This they got by their reformation and religion, they got ground of their enemies and got forward in their affairs. It is added, There was peace between Israel and the Amorites, that is, the Canaanites, the remains of the natives. Not that Israel made any league with them, but they were quiet, and not so mischievous to Israel as they had sometimes been. Thus when a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him and give him no disturbance, Pr 16:7.

3. In administering public justice (1Sa 7:15,16): He judged Israel; as a prophet he taught them their duty and reproved them for their sins, which is called judging, Eze 20:4,22:2. Moses judged Israel when he made them know the statutes of God and his laws (Ex 18:16); and thus Samuel judged them to the last, even after Saul was made king; so he promised them then, when Saul was inaugurated (1Sa 12:23), I will not cease to teach you the good and the right way. As a magistrate, he received appeals from the inferior courts and gave judgment upon them, tried causes and determined them, tried prisoners and acquitted or condemned them, according to the law.

This he did all his days, till he grew old and past service, and resigned to Saul; and afterwards he exercised authority when application was made to him; nay, he judged even Agag, and Saul himself. But when he was in his prime he rode the circuit, for the convenience of the country, at least of that part of it

which lay most under his influence. He kept courts at Beth-el, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, all in the tribe of Benjamin; but his constant residence was at Ramah, his father's city, and there he judged Israel, thither they resorted to him from all parts with their complaints, 1Sa 7:17.

4. In keeping up the public exercises of religion; for there, where he lived, he built an altar to the Lord, not in contempt of the altar that was at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle was; but divine justice having laid Shiloh waste, and no other place being yet chosen for them to bring their offerings to (De 12:11), he looked upon the law which confined them to one place to be for the present suspended, and therefore, being a prophet, and under divine direction, he did as the patriarchs did, he built an altar where he lived, both for the use of his own family and for the good of the country that resorted to it. Great men should use their wealth, power, and interest, for the keeping up of religion in the places where they live.

14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

17 And his return *was* to Ramah, for there *was* his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.

1 Samuel-8

Israel Asks for a King

1 And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.

Two sad things we find here, but not strange things:--

1. A good and useful man growing old and unfit for service (1Sa 8:1): Samuel was old, and could not judge Israel, as he had done. He is not reckoned to be past sixty years of age now, perhaps not so much; but he was a man betimes, was full of thoughts and cared when he was a child, which perhaps hastened the infirmities of age upon him. The fruits that are the first ripe keep the worst. He had spent his strength and spirits in the fatigue of public business, and now, if he think to shake himself as at other times, he finds he is mistaken: old age has cut his hair. Those that are in the prime of their time ought to be busy in doing the work of life: for, as they go into years, they will find themselves less disposed to it and less able for it.

2 The children of a good man turning aside, and not treading in his steps. Samuel had given his sons so good an education, and they had given him such good hopes of their doing well, and gained such a reputation in Israel, that he made them judges, assistants to him awhile, and afterwards deputies under him at Beer-sheba, which lay remote from Ramah, 1Sa 8:2. Probably the southern countries petitioned for their residence there, that they might not be necessitated to travel far with their causes.

We have reason to think that Samuel gave them their commissions, not because they were his sons (he had no ambition to entail the government upon his family, any more than Gideon had), but because, for aught that yet appeared, they were men very fit for the trust; and none so proper to ease the aged judge, and take some of the burden off him, as (cæteris paribus--other things being equal) his own sons, who no doubt were respected for their good father's sake, and, having such an advantage at setting out, might soon have been great if they had but been good. But, alas! His sons walked not in his ways (1Sa 8:3), and, when their character was the reverse of his, their relation to so good a man, which otherwise would have been their honour, was really their disgrace.

Degeneranti genus opprobrium--A good extraction is a reproach to him that degenerates from it.

Note, Those that have the most grace themselves cannot give grace to their children. It has often been the grief of good men to see their posterity, instead of treading in their steps, trampling upon them, and, as Job speaks, marring their path. Nay, many that have begun well, promised fair, and set out in the right path, so that their parents and friends have had great hopes of them, yet afterwards have turned aside to by-paths, and been the grief of those of whom they should have been the joy. When Samuel's sons were made judges, and settled at a distance form him, then they discovered themselves. Thus,

(1.) Many that have been well educated, and have conducted themselves well while they were under their parents' eye, when they have gone abroad into the world and set up for themselves have proved bad. Let none therefore be secure either of themselves or theirs, but depend on divine grace.

(2.) Many that have done well in a state of meanness and subjection have been spoiled by preferment and power. Honours change men's minds, and too often for the worse. It does not appear that Samuel's sons were so profane and vicious as Eli's sons; but, whatever they were in other respects, they were corrupt judges, they turned aside after lucre, after the mammon of unrighteousness, so the Chaldee reads it.

Note, The love of money is the root of all evil. It is pernicious in any, but especially in judges. Samuel had taken no bribes (1Sa 12:3), but his sons had, though, no doubt, he warned them against it when he made them judges; and then they perverted judgment. In determining controversies, they had an eye to the bribe, not to the law, and enquired who bid highest, not who had right on his side. It is sad with a people when the public justice that should do them right, being perverted, does them the greatest wrong.

2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: *they were* judges in Beer-sheba.
3 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.
4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,
5 and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.
6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.
7 And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

We have here the starting of a matter perfectly new and surprising, which was the setting up of kingly government in Israel. Perhaps the thing had been often talked of among them by those that were given to change and affected that which looked great. But we do not find that it was ever till now publicly proposed and debated. Abimelech was little better than a titular king, though he is said to reign over Israel (Jdg 9:22), and perhaps his fall had for a great while rendered the title of king odious in Israel, as that of Tarquinius did among the Romans; but, if it had, by this time the odium was worn off, and some bold steps are here taken towards so great a revolution as that amounted to. Here is,

I The address of the elders to Samuel in this matter (1Sa 8:4,5): They gathered themselves together, by common consent; and not in a riotous tumultuous manner, but with the respect due to his character, they came to him to his house as Ramah with their address, which contained,

1. A remonstrance of their grievances: in short, Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Many a fairer occasion that people had had to ask a king, when they were oppressed by their neighbours or embroiled at home for want of a king in Israel, but a small thing will serve factious spirits for a colour to desire a change.

(1.) It was true that Samuel was old; but if that made him less able to ride the circuit, and sit long on the bench, yet it made him the more wise and experienced, and, upon that account, the fitter to rule. If he was old, had he not grown old in their service? And it was very unkind, ungrateful, nay, and unjust, to cast him off when he was old, who had spent his days in doing them good. God had saved his youth from being despicable (1Sa 3:20), yet they make his old age so, which should have been counted worthy of double honour. If old people be upbraided with their infirmities, and laid aside for them, let them not think it strange; Samuel himself was so.

(2.) It was true that his sons did not walk in his ways; the more was his grief, but they could not say it was his fault: he had not, like Eli, indulged them in their badness, but was ready to receive complaints against them. And, if that had been the thing desired, we may well suppose, upon the making out of the charge of bribery against them he would have superseded their commissions and punished them. But this would not content the elders of Israel; they had another project in their head.

2. A petition for the redress of these grievances, by setting a king over them: Make us a king to judge us like all the nations. Thus far it was well, that they did not rise up in rebellion against Samuel and set up a king for themselves, vi et armis--by force; but they applied to Samuel, God's prophet, and humbly begged of him to do it. But it appears by what follows that it was an evil proposal and ill made, and was displeasing to God. God designed them a king, a man after his own heart, when Samuel was dead; but they would anticipate God's counsel, and would have one now that Samuel was old. They had a prophet to judge them, that had immediate correspondence with heaven, and therein they were great and happy above any nation, none having God so nigh unto them as they had, De 4:7. But this would not serve; they must have

a king to judge them with external pomp and power, like all the nations.

A poor prophet in a mantle, though conversant in the visions of the Almighty, looked mean in the eyes of those who judged by outward appearance; but a king in a purple robe, with his guards and officers of state, would look great: and such a one they must have. They knew it was in vain to court Samuel to take upon him the title and dignity of a king, but he must appoint them one. They do not say, "Give us a king that is wise and good, and will judge better than thy sons do," but, "Give us a king," any body that will but make a figure. Thus foolishly did they forsake their own mercies, and, under pretence of advancing the dignity of their nation to that of their neighbours, did really thrust themselves down from their own excellency, and profane their crown by casting it to the ground.

II Samuel's resentment of this address, 1Sa 8:6. Let us see how he took it.

1. It cut him to the heart. Probably it was a surprise to him, and he had not any intimation before of their design, which made it the more grievous. The thing displeased Samuel; not when they upbraided him with his own infirmities and his children's irregularities (he could patiently bear what reflected on himself and his own family), but it displeased him when they said, Give us a king to judge us, because that reflected upon God and his honour.

2. It drove him to his knees; he gave them no answer for the present, but took time to consider of what they proposed, and prayed unto the Lord for direction what to do, spreading the case before him and leaving it with him, and so making himself easy. Samuel was a man much in prayer, and we are encouraged in every thing to make our requests known to God, Php 4:6. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest, as well

as our duty, to show before God our trouble, and he gives us leave to be humbly free with him.

III. The instruction God gave him concerning this matter. Those that in straits seek to God shall find him nigh unto them, and ready to direct them. He tells him,

1. That which would be an allay to his displeasure. Samuel was much disturbed at the proposal: it troubled him greatly to see his prophetic office thus slighted, and all the good turns he had done to Israel thus ungratefully returned; but God tells him he must not think it either hard or strange.

(1.) He must not think it hard that they had put this slight upon him, for they had herein put a slight upon God himself: "They have not rejected thee only, but they have rejected me. I share with thee in the affront," 1Sa 8:7. Note, If God interest himself in the indignities that are done us, and the contempts that are put upon us, we may well afford to bear them patiently; nor need we think the worse of ourselves if for his sake we bear reproach (Ps 69:7), but rather rejoice and count it an honour, Col 1:24. Samuel must not complain that they were weary of his government, though just and gentle, for really they were weary of God's government; this was what they disliked:

They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. God reigns over the heathen (Ps 47:8), over all the world, but the government of Israel had hitherto been, in a more peculiar manner than ever any government was, a Theocracy, a divine government; their judges had their call and commission immediately from God; the affairs of their nation were under his peculiar direction. As the constitution, so the administration of their government, was by Thus saith the Lord; this method they were weary of, though it was their honour and safety, above any thing, so long as they kept in with God. They were indeed so much the more exposed to calamities if they provoked God to anger by sin, and found they could not transgress at so cheap a rate as other nations

could, which perhaps was the true reason why they desired to stand upon the same terms with God that other nations did.

(2.) He must not think it strange, nor marvel at the matter, for they do as they always have done: According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, so do they unto thee, 1Sa 8:8; They had at first been so very respectful and obsequious to Samuel that he began to hope they were cured of their old stubborn disposition; but now he found himself deceived in them, and must not be surprised at it. They had always been rude to their governors, witness Moses and Aaron; nay, They have forsaken me and served other gods; the greatness of their crime, in affecting new gods, may make this crime of affecting new governors seem little. Samuel might expect they would deal treacherously, for they were called transgressors from the womb, Isa 58:8. This had been their manner from their youth up, Jer 22:21.

2. He tells him that which would be an answer to their demand. Samuel would not have known what to say if God had not instructed him. Should he oppose the motion, it would bespeak a greater fondness of power and dominion than did become a prophet, and an indulgence of his sons. Should he yield to the motion, it would look like the betraying of his trust, and he would become accessory to all the bad consequences of a change. Aaron sinned in gratifying the people when they said, Make us gods; Samuel dares not therefore comply with them when they say, Make us a king, but he gives them, with assurance, the answer God sent them.

(1.) He must tell them that they shall have a king. Hearken to the voice of the people, 1Sa 8:7, and again, 1Sa 8:9. Not that God was pleased with their request, but, as sometimes he crosses us in love, so at other times he gratifies us in wrath; he did so here. When they said, Give us a king and princes he gave them a king in his anger (see Ho 13:10,11), as he gave

them quails, Ps 106:5,Ps 78:29. God bade Samuel humour them in this matter,

[1.] That they might be beaten with their own rod, and might feel, to their cost, the difference between his government and the government of a king; see 2Ch 12:8. It soon appeared how much worse their condition was, in all respects, under Saul, than it had been under Samuel.

[2.] To prevent something worse. If they were not gratified, they would either rise in rebellion against Samuel or universally revolt from their religion and admit the gods of the nations, that they might have kings like them. Rather than so, let them have a king.

[3.] God knows how to bring glory to himself out of it, and to serve his own wise purposes even by their foolish counsels.

(2.) But he must tell them, withal, that when they have a king they will soon have enough of him, and will, when it is too late, repent of their choice. This he must protest solemnly to them (1Sa 8:9), that, if they would have a king to rule them, as the eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceedingly heavy. They looked only at the pomp or magnificence of a king, and thought that would make their nation great and considerable among its neighbours, and would strike a terror upon their enemies; but he must bid them consider how they would like to bear the charges of that pomp, and how they would endure that arbitrary power which the neighbouring kings assumed. Note, Those that set their hearts inordinately upon any thing in this world ought, for the moderating of their desires, to consider the inconveniences as well as the conveniences that will attend it, and to set the one over against the other in their thoughts. Those that submit to the government of the world and the flesh are told plainly what hard masters they are, and what a tyranny the dominion of sin is; and yet they will exchange God's government for it.

IV. Samuel's faithful delivery of God's mind to them, 1Sa 8:10. He told them all the words of the Lord, how ill he resented it, that he construed it a rejecting of him, and compared it with their serving other gods,--that he would grant their request if they insisted on it, but withal had ordered him to represent to them the certain consequences of their choice, that they would be such that if they had any reason left them, and would allow themselves to consult their own interest, they would withdraw their petition, and beg to continue as they were. Accordingly he lays before them, very particularly, what would be, not the right of a king in general, but the manner of the king that should reign over them, according to the pattern of the nations, 1Sa 8:11. Samuel does not speak (as bishop Patrick expounds it) of a just and honest right of a king to do these things, for his right is quite otherwise described in that part of Moses's law which concerns the king's duty, but such a right as the kings of the nations had then acquired. This shall be the manner of the king, that is, "thus he must support his dignity at the expense of that which is dearest to you, and thus he will abuse his power, as those that have power are apt to do; and, having the militia in his hand, you will be under a necessity of submitting to him."

1. If they will have such a king as the nations have, let them consider,

(1.) That king must have a great retinue, abundance of servants to wait on him, grooms to look after his chariots and horses, gentlemen to ride about with him, and footmen to run before his chariots. This is the chief grandeur of princes, and the imaginary glory of great men, to have a multitude of attendants. And whence must he have these? "Why, he will take your sons, who are free-born, have a liberal education, and whom you now have at your own disposal, and will appoint them for himself," 1Sa 8:11. They must wait upon him, and be at his beck; those that used to work for their parents and themselves must work for him, ear his ground, and

reap his harvest (1Sa 8:12), and count it their preferment too, 1Sa 8:16. This would be a great change.

(2.) He must keep a great table; he will not be content to dine with his neighbours upon a sacrifice, as Samuel used to do (1Sa 9:13); but he must have a variety of dainty dishes, forced meats, and sweet-meats, and delicate sauces; and who must prepare him these? "Why, he will take your daughters, the most ingenious and handy of them, whom you hoped to prefer to houses and tables of their own; and, whether you be willing or no, they must be his confectioners, and cooks, and bakers, and the like."

(3.) "He must needs have a standing army, for guards and garrisons; and your sons, instead of being elders of your cities, and living in quiet and honour at home, must be captains over thousands and captains over fifties, and must be disposed of at the pleasure of the sovereign."

(4.) "You may expect that he will have great favourites, whom, having dignified and ennobled, he must enrich, and give them estates suitable to their honour; and which way can he do that, but out of your inheritances? 1Sa 8:14. He will take your fields and vineyards, which descended to you from your ancestors, and which you hoped to leave to your posterity after you, even the best of them; and will not only take them to himself (you could bear that better), but he will give them to his servants, who will be your masters, and bear rule over that for which you have laboured, How will you like that?"

(5.) "He must have great revenues to maintain his grandeur and power with; and whence must he have them but from you? He will take the tenth of the fruits of your ground (1Sa 8:15), and your cattle, 1Sa 8:17. You think the tenths, the double tenths, which the law of God has appointed for the support of the church, grievous enough, and grudge the payment of them; but, if you have a king, there must issue another tenth out of your estates, which will be levied with more rigour, for the

support of the royal dignity. Consider the expense with the magnificence, and whether it will quit cost."

2. These would be their grievances, and,

(1.) They would have none but God to complain to. Once they complained to the prince himself, and were answered, according to the manner of the king, Your yoke is heavy, and I will add to it, 1Ki 12:11.

(2.) When they complained to God he would not hear them, 1Sa 8:18. Nor could they expect that he should, both because they had been deaf to his calls and admonitions, and this trouble, in particular, they had brought upon themselves by rejecting him, and would not believe when he told them what would come of it. Note, When we bring ourselves into distress by our own irregular desires and projects we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer and the benefit of divine aids, and, if God be not better to us than we deserve, must have our relief in our own hands, and then it is bad with us.

V. The people's obstinacy in their demand, 1Sa 8:19,20. One would think such a representation of the consequences as this was, coming from God himself, who can neither deceive by his word nor be deceived in his knowledge, should have prevailed with them to waive their request: but their hearts were upon it, right or wrong, good or evil: "We will have a king over us, whatever God or Samuel say to the contrary; we will have a king, whatever it cost us, and whatever inconvenience we bring upon ourselves or our posterity by it." See their folly.

1. They were quite deaf to reason and blind to their own interest. They could not answer Samuel's arguments against it, nor deny the force of them, and yet they grow more violent in their request, and more insolent. Before it was, "Pray, make us a king;" now it is, "Nay, but we will have a king; yea, that we will, because we will; nor will we bear to have any thing said

against it." See the absurdity of inordinate desires, and how they rob men of their reason.

2. They could not stay God's time. God had intimated to them in the law that, in due time, Israel should have a king (De 17:14,15), and perhaps they had some intimation that the time was at hand; but they are all in haste: "We, in our day, will have this king over us." Could they but have waited ten or twelve years longer they would have had David, a king of God's giving in mercy, and all the calamities that attended the setting up of Saul would have been prevented. Sudden resolves and hasty desires make work for a long and leisurely repentance.

3. That which they aimed at in desiring a king was not only, as before, that they might be like the nations, and levelled with the one above whom God had so far advanced them, but that they might have one to judge them, and to go out before them when they took the field, and to fight their battles. Foolish people and unwise! Could they ever desire a battle better fought for them that the last was, by Samuel's prayer and God's thunder? 1Sa 7:10. Was victory hereby too sure to them? And were they fond of trying the chance of war at the same uncertainty that others did? So sick, it seems, were they of their privileges: and what was the issue? Their first king was slain in a battle, which none of their judges ever were; so was Josiah, one of the last and best.

VI. The dismissing of them with an intimation that very shortly they should have what they asked.

1. Samuel rehearsed all their words in the ears of the Lord, 1Sa 8:21. Not but that God perfectly knew it, without Samuel's report; but thus he dealt faithfully between God and Israel, as a prophet, returning the answer to him that sent him; and thus he waited on God for further direction. God is fully acquainted with the state of the case we are in care and doubt about, but he will know it from us. His rehearsing it in the ears of the

Lord intimates that it was done in private; for the people were not disposed to join with him in prayer to God for direction in this matter; also it bespeaks a holy familiarity, to which God graciously admits his people: they speak in the ears of the Lord, as one friend whispers with another; their communion with God is meat they have to eat which the world knows not of, Joh 4:32.

2. God gave direction that they should have a king, since they were so inordinately set upon it (1Sa 8:22): "Make them a king, and let them make their best of him, and thank themselves if that very pomp and power which they are so eager to see their sovereign in be their plague and burden." So he gave them up to their own hearts' lusts. Samuel told them this, but sent them home for the present, every man to his city; for the designation of the person must be left to God; they had now no more to do. When God saw fit to notify the choice to Samuel they should hear further from him; in the mean time let them keep the peace and expect the issue.

8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I
brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they
have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.
9 Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest
solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that
shall reign over them.
10 And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that
asked of him a king.
11 And he said, this will be the manner of the king that shall reign over
you: He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his
chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his
chariots.
12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains
over fifties; and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his
harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of
his chariots.
13 And he will take your daughters to *be* confectionaries, and *to be*
cooks, and to *be* bakers.

14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your
oliveyards, *even* the best *of them,* and give *them* to his servants.
15 And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and
give to his officers, and to his servants.
16 And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and
your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his
work.
17 He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.
18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall
have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.
19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and
they said, nay; but we will have a king over us;
20 that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may
judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.
21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed
them in the ears of the Lord.
22 And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make
them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every
man unto his city.

1 Samuel-9

Saul Chosen King

1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name *was* Kish, the son
of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah,
a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

We are here told,

1. What a good family Saul was of, 1Sa 9:1. He was of the tribe of Benjamin; so was the New-Testament Saul, who also was called Paul, and he mentions it as his honour, for Benjamin was a favourite, Ro 11:1,Php 3:5. That tribe had been reduced to a very small number by the fatal war with Gibeah, and much ado there was to provide wives for those 600 men that were the poor remains of it out of that diminished tribe, which is here called, with good reason, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, 1Sa 9:21. Saul sprang as a root out of a dry

ground. That tribe, though fewest in number, was first in dignity, God giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked, 1Co 12:24. His father was Kish, a mighty man of power, or, as the margin reads it, in substance; in spirit bold, in body strong, in estate wealthy. The whole lot of the tribe of Benjamin coming to be distributed among 600 men, we may suppose their inheritances were much larger than theirs who were of other tribes, an advantage which somewhat helped to balance the disadvantage of the smallness of their number.

2. What a good figure Saul made, 1Sa 9:2. No mention is here made of his wisdom or virtue, his learning or piety, or any of the accomplishments of his mind, but that he was a tall, proper, handsome man, that had a good face, a good shape, and a good presence, graceful and well proportioned: Among all the children of Israel there was not a goodlier person than he; and, as if nature had marked him for pre-eminence and superiority, he was taller by the head and shoulders than any of the people, the fitter to be a match for the giants of Gath, the champions of the Philistines. When God chose a king after his own heart he pitched upon one that was not at all remarkable for the height of his stature, nor any thing in his countenance but the innocence and sweetness that appeared there, 1Sa 16:7,12.

But when he chose a king after the people's heart, who aimed at nothing so much as stateliness and grandeur, he pitched upon this huge tall man, who, if he had no other good qualities, yet would look great. It does not appear that he excelled in strength so much as he did in stature; Samson did, and him they slighted, bound, and betrayed into the hands of the Philistines; justly therefore are they now put off with one who, though of uncommon height, is weak as other men. They would have a king like the nations, and the nations commonly chose portly men for their kings.

2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier

person than he: from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than
any of the people.
3 And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul
his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek
the asses.
4 And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the
land of Shalisha, but they found *them* not: then they passed
through the land of Shalim, and *there they were* not: and he passed
through the land of the Benjamites, but they found *them* not.
5 *And* when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his
servant that *was* with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father
leave *caring* for the asses, and take thought for us.
6 And he said unto him, Behold now, there *is* in this city a man of God,
and *he is* an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass:
now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we
should go.
7 Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we
bring the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not
a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

Here is, I. A great man rising from small beginnings. It does not appear that Saul had any preferment at all, or was in any post of honour or trust, till he was chosen king of Israel. Most that are advanced rise gradually, but Saul, from the level with his neighbours, stepped at once into the throne, according to that of Hannah, He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, 1Sa 2:8. Saul, it should seem, though he was himself married and had children grown up, yet lived in his father's house, and was subject to him. Promotion comes not by chance nor human probabilities, but God is the Judge.

II. A great event arising from small occurrences. How low does the history begin! Having to trace Saul to the crown, we find him first employed as meanly as any we meet with called out to preferment.

1. Saul's father sends him with one of his servants to seek some asses that he had lost. It may be they had no way then to give public notice of such a number of asses strayed or stolen out

of the grounds of Kish the Benjamite. A very good law they had to oblige men to bring back an ox or an ass that went astray, but it is to be feared that was, as other good laws, neglected and forgotten. It is easy to observe here that those who have must expect to lose, that it is wisdom to look after what is lost, that no man should think it below him to know the state of his flocks, that children should be forward to serve their parents' interests. Saul readily went to seek his father's asses, 1Sa 9:3,4. His taking care of the asses is to be ascribed, not so much to the humility of his spirit as to the plainness and simplicity of those times. But his obedience to his father in it was very commendable. Seest thou a man diligent in his business, and dutiful to his superiors, willing to stoop and willing to take pains? He does as Saul stand fair for preferment. The servant of Kish would be faithful only as a servant, but Saul as a son, in his own business, and therefore he was sent with him. Saul and his servants travelled far (probably on foot) in quest of the asses, but in vain: they found them not. He missed of what he sought, but had no reason to complain of the disappointment, for he met with the kingdom, which he never dreamed of.

2. When he could not find them, he determined to return to his father (1Sa 9:5), in consideration of his father's tender concern for him, being apprehensive that if they staid out any longer his aged father would begin to fear, as Jacob concerning Joseph, that an evil beast had devoured them or some mischief had befallen them; he will leave caring for the asses, as much as he was in care about them, and will take thought for us. Children should take care that they do nothing to grieve or frighten their parents, but be tender of their tenderness.

3. His servant proposed (for, it should seem, he had more religion in him than his master) that, since they were now at Ramah, they should call on Samuel, and take his advice in this important affair. Observe here,

(1.) They were close by the city where Samuel lived, and that put it into their heads to consult him (1Sa 9:6): There is in this city a man of God. Note, Wherever we are we should improve our opportunities of acquainting ourselves with those that are wise and good. But there are many that will consult a man of God, if he comes in their way, that would not go a step out of their way to get wisdom.

(2.) The servant spoke very respectfully concerning Samuel, though he had not personal knowledge of him, but by common fame only: He is a man of God, and an honourable man. Note, Men of God are honourable men, and should be so in our eyes. Acquaintance with the things of God, and serviceableness to the kingdom of God, put true honour upon men, and make them great. This was the honour of Samuel, as a man of God, that all he saith comes surely to pass. This was observed concerning him when he was a young prophet (1Sa 3:19), God did let none of his words fall to the ground; and still it held true.

(3.) They agreed to consult him concerning the way that they should go; peradventure he can show us. All the use they would make of the man of God was to be advised by him whether they should return home, or, if there were any hopes of finding the asses, which way they must go next--a poor business to employ a prophet about! Had they said, "Let us give up the asses for lost, and, now that we are so near the man of God, let us go and learn from him the good knowledge of God, let us consult him how we may order our conversations a right, and enquire the law at his mouth, since we may not have such another opportunity, and then we shall not lose our journey"--the proposal would have been such as became Israelites; but to make prophecy, that glory of Israel, serve so mean a turn as this, discovered too much what manner of spirit they were of. Note, Most people would rather be told their fortune than told their duty, how to be rich than how to be saved. If it were the business of the men of God to direct for the recovery of lost asses, they would be consulted much more

than they are now that it is their business to direct for the recovery of lost souls; so preposterous is the care of most men!

(4.) Saul was thoughtful what present they should bring to the man of God, what fee they should give him for his advice (1Sa 9:7): What shall we bring the man? They could not present him, as Jeroboam's wife did Ahijah, with loaves and cakes (1Ki 14:3), for their bread was spent; but the servant bethought himself that he had in his pocket the fourth part of a shekel, about seven-pence halfpenny in value, and that he would give to the man of God to direct them, 1Sa 9:8. "That will do," says Saul; "let us go," 1Sa 9:10. Some think that when Saul talked of giving Samuel a fee he measured him by himself, or by his sons, as if he must be hired to do an honest Israelite a kindness, and was like the false prophets, that divined for money, Mic 3:11. He came to him as a fortune-teller, rather than as a prophet, and therefore thought the fourth part of a shekel was enough to give him.

But it rather seems to be agreeable to the general usage of those times, as it is to natural equity, that those who sowed spiritual things should reap not only eternal things from him that employs them, but temporal things from those for whom they are employed. Samuel needed not their money, nor would he have denied them his advice if they had not brought it (it is probable, when he had it, he gave it to the poor); but they brought it to him as a token of their respect and the value they put upon his office; nor did he refuse it, for they were able to give it, and, though it was but little, it was the widow's mite. But Saul, as he never thought of going to the man of God till the servant proposed it, so, it should seem, he mentioned the want of a present as an objection against their going; he would not own that he had money in his pocket, but, when the servant generously offered to be at the charge, then, "Well, said," says Saul; "come, let us go." Most people love a cheap religion, and like it best when they can devolve the expense of it on others.

(5.) The historian here takes notice of the name then given to the prophets: they called them Seers, or seeing men (1Sa 9:9), not but that the name prophet was then used, and applied to such persons, but that of seers was more in use. Note, Those that are prophets must first be seers; those who undertake to speak to others of the things of God must have an insight into those things themselves.

8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here
at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man
of God, to tell us our way.
9 (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he
spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is* now called a
Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)
10 Then said Saul to his servant, well said; come, let us go. So they
went unto the city where the man of God *was.*
11 *And* as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens
going out to draw water, and said unto them, is the seer here?
12 And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, *he is* before you:
make haste now, for he came today to the city; for *there is* a sacrifice
of the people today in the high place:
13 as soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him,
before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat
until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; *and* afterward
they eat that be bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this
time ye shall find him.

Here, I. Saul, by an ordinary enquiry, is directed to Samuel, 1Sa 9:11-14. Gibeah of Saul was not twenty miles from Ramah where Samuel dwelt, and was near to Mizpeh where he often judged Israel, and yet, it seems, Saul had lived so very privately, and had taken so little notice of public affairs, that he had never seen Samuel, for when he met him (1Sa 9:18) he did not know him, so that there was no cause to suspect any secret compact or collusion between them in this matter. I knew him not, says John Baptist concerning Christ, Joh 1:31. Yet I do not think it any commendation to Saul that he was a stranger to Samuel. However,

1 The maid-servants of Ramah, whom they met with at the places of drawing water, could give him and his servant intelligence concerning Samuel; and very particular they were in their directions, 1Sa 9:12,13. We should always be ready to give what assistance we can to those that are enquiring after God's prophets, and to further them in their enquiries. Even the maid-servants could tell them,

(1.) That there was a sacrifice that day in the high place, it being either an ordinary festival or an extraordinary day of prayer and thanksgiving, with which sacrifices were joined. The tabernacle being deprived of the ark, the altar there had not now the reputation it formerly had, nor were they confined to it, as they would be when God had again chosen a place to put his name in; and therefore now other places were allowed. Samuel had built an altar at Ramah (1Sa 7:17), and here we have him making use of that altar.

(2.) That Samuel came that day to the city, either from his circuit or from his country seat. He was such a public person that his movements were generally known.

(3.) That this was just the time of their meeting to feast before the Lord upon the sacrifice: "About this time you will find him in the street going up to the high place." They knew the hour of the solemn feast.

(4.) That the people would not eat till Samuel came, not only because he was the worthiest person, and they ought in good manners to stay for him, and he was, as some think, the maker of this feast, the sacrifice being offered at his charge and upon his account; but because, as a man of God, whoever made the feast, he must bless the sacrifice, that is, those parts of the sacrifice which they feasted upon, which may be considered,

[1.] As a common meal, and so this is an instance of the great duty of craving a blessing upon our meat before we partake of it. We cannot expect benefit from our food without that

blessing, and we have no reason to expect that blessing if we do not pray for it. Thus we must give glory to God as our benefactor, and own our dependence upon him and our obligations to him. Or,

[2.] As a religious assembly. When the sacrifice was offered, which was the ceremony, Samuel blessed it, that is, he prayed over it, and offered up spiritual sacrifices with it, which were the substance; and afterwards, when the holy duties were performed, they did eat. Let the soul first be served. The feast upon the sacrifice being a sacred rite, it was requisite that it should in a particular manner be blessed, as is the Christian eucharist. They feasted in token of their reconciliation to God by virtue of the sacrifice, and their participation of the benefits of it; and Samuel blessed the feast, that is, he prayed to God to grace the solemnity with his special presence, that it might answer those great ends. Bishop Hall observes what a particular account those maid-servants could give of the usages of those sacred feasts, and infers from it that, "where there is the practice and example of piety in the better sort, there will be a reflection of it upon the meanest. It is no small advantage to live in religious places; for we shall be much to blame if all goodness fall beside us."

2. Saul and his servant followed the directions given them, and very opportunely met Samuel going to the high place, the synagogue of the city, 1Sa 9:14. This seemed purely accidental, but the divine providence ordered it for the forwarding of this great event. The wise God serves very great and certain purposes by very small and casual occurrences. A sparrow falls not to the ground without our Father.

II Samuel, by an extraordinary revelation, is informed concerning Saul. He was a seer, and therefore must see this in a way peculiar to himself.

1. God had told him, the day before, that he would, at this time, send him the man that should serve the people of Israel for

such a king as they wished to have, like all the nations, 1Sa 9:15,16. He told him in his ear, that is, privately, by a secret whisper to his mind, or perhaps by a still small voice, some soft and gentle sounds conveyed to his ear, probably when he was praying in secret for direction in that and other affairs of the nation. He had spoken in the ears of the Lord (1Sa 8:21), and now God spoke in his ear, in token of friendship and familiarity, for he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets, as secrets in their ear, Am 3:7. God told him before, that it might not be a surprise to him; and perhaps it was in expectation of it that he appointed the feast and the sacrifice, for the imploring of God's blessing upon this great and important affair, though he might keep the particular occasion in his own breast, God having only told it to him in his ear.

The Hebrew phrase is, He uncovered the ear of Samuel, to which some allude for the explication of the way of God's revealing himself to us; he not only speaks, but uncovers our ear. We have naturally a covering on our ears, so that we perceive not what God says (Job 33:14), but, when God will manifest himself to a soul, he uncovers the ear, says, Ephphratha, Be opened; he takes the veil from off the heart, 2Co 3:16. Though God had, in displeasure, granted their request for a king, yet here he speaks tenderly of Israel; for even in wrath he remembers mercy.

(1.) He calls them again and again his people; though a peevish and provoking people, yet mine still.

(2.) He sends them a man to be captain over them, that they might not be a body without a head, and to save them out of the hand of the Philistines, which perhaps was more than many of them aimed at in desiring a king.

(3.) He does it with a gracious respect to them and to their cry: I have looked upon my people, and their cry has come unto me. He gratified them with what they cried for, as the tender mother humours the froward child, lest it should break its

heart. And (as bishop Patrick observes), though he would not hear their cry to relieve them against the oppression of their kings (1Sa 8:18), yet he was so gracious as to make those kings instruments of their deliverance from the oppression of their neighbours, which was more than they had reason to expect.

2. When Saul came up towards him in the street God again whispered Samuel in the ear (1Sa 9:17): Behold the man whom I spoke to thee of! Saul being a man of unusual stature, it is natural to think that Samuel fixed his eye upon him at a distance, and perhaps looked the more wistfully towards him because the hour had now come when God would send him the man that should be king of Israel, and he fancied this might be he; but, that he might be fully satisfied, God told him expressly, That is the man that shall restrain (for magistrates are heirs of restraint) my people Israel.

14 And they went up into the city: *and* when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

15 Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,

16 Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be* captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.

17 And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! This same shall reign over my people.

18 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house *is.*

19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me today, and tomorrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.

20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel?*Is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

21 And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?And my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

Providence having at length brought Samuel and Saul together, we have here an account of what passed between them in the gate, at the feast, and in private.

I. In the gate of the city; passing through that, Saul found him (1Sa 9:18), and, little thinking that he was Samuel himself, asked him the way to Samuel's house: Tell me where the seer's house is; for there he expected to find him. See how mean a figure Samuel made, though so great a man: he took not any state, had no attendants, no ensigns of honour carried before him, nor any distinguishing habit, no, not when he went to church, but appeared, in all respects, so much a common person that Saul, though he was told he should meet him, never suspected that it was he, but, as if he looked more like a porter than a prophet, asked him the way to the seer's house. Thus is great worth oftentimes hidden under a very despicable appearance. Samuel knew that it was not the house, but the man, that he wanted, and therefore answered him, "I am the seer, the person you enquire for," 1Sa 9:19. Samuel knew him before he knew Samuel; thus, though all that are called to the kingdom of glory are brought to know God, yet first they were known of him, Ga 4:9. Now,

1 Samuel obliges him to stay with him till the next day. The greatest part of this day had been spent in sacrificing, and the rest of it was to be spent in holy feasting, and therefore, "To-morrow I will let thee go, and not sooner; now go up before me to the high place; let us pray together, and then we will talk together." Saul had nothing in his mind but to find his asses, but Samuel would take him off from that care, and dispose him to the exercises of piety; and therefore bids him go to the high place, and go before him, because, it may be, some business obliged Samuel to call by the way.

2. He satisfies him about his asses (1Sa 9:20): Set not thy mind on them, be not in further care about them; they are found. By this Saul might perceive that he was a prophet, that he could give him an answer to the enquiry which he had not yet made, and tell him what he thought; and thence he might infer, if a man of God can do this, much more doth God himself understand our thoughts afar off.

3. He surprises him with an intimation of preferment before him: "On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not a king that they are set upon, and there is never a man in Israel that will suit them as thou wilt." It does not appear that the country had as yet any eye upon him for the government, because they had left it wholly to God to choose for them; but such a one as he they wished for, and his advancement would be the advancement of his family and relations, as Abner, and others.

4. To this strange intimation Saul returns a very modest answer, 1Sa 9:21. Samuel, he thought, did but banter him, because he was a tall man, but a very unlikely man to be a king; for, though the historian says (1Sa 9:1) his father was a mighty man of power, yet he himself speaks diminishingly of his tribe and family. "Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons, when grown up to be a man, was called a little one (Ge 44:20); that tribe was diminished by the war of Gibeah; and I am a Benjamite, my family the least," probably a younger house, not in any place of honour or trust, no, not in their own tribe. Gideon had expressed himself thus, Jdg 6:15. A humble disposition is a good presage of preferment.

II. At the public feast; thither Samuel took him and his servant. Though the advancement of Saul would be the deposing of Samuel, yet that good prophet was so far from envying him, or bearing him any ill-will for it, that he was the first and forwardest man to do him honour, in compliance with the will of God. If this be the man whom God has chosen, though he be none of Samuel's particular friends or confidants, yet he is heartily welcome to his table, nay, to his bosom. We may

suppose it was no unseasonable kindness to Saul to give him a meal's meat, for it seems, by what he said (1Sa 9:7), that all their meat and money were spent. But this was not all. Samuel treats him not as a common person, but a person of quality and distinction, to prepare both him and the people for what was to follow. Two marks of honour he put upon him:--

1. He set him in the best place, as more honourable than any other of the guests, to whom he said, Give this man place, Lu 14:9. Though we may suppose the magistrates were there, who in their own city would claim precedency, yet the master of the feast made Saul and his servant too (who, if Saul was a king, must be respected as his prime minister of state) sit in the chief place, 1Sa 9:22. Note, Civil respects must be paid to those who in civil things have the precedency given them by the divine providence.

2. He presented him with the best dish, which, having had notice from heaven the day before of his coming (1Sa 9:16), he had designed for him, and ordered the cook to secure for him, when he gave orders for inviting the guests and making preparation for them. And what should this precious dish be, which was so very carefully reserved for the king-elect? One would expect it should be something very nice and delicate. No, it was a plain shoulder of mutton (1Sa 9:23,24). The right shoulder of the peace-offerings was to be given to the priests, who were God's receivers (Le 7:32); the next in honour to that was the left shoulder, which probably was always allotted to those that sat at the upper end of the table, and was wont to be Samuel's mess at other times; so that his giving it to Saul now was an implicit resignation of his place to him. Some observe a significancy in this dish. The shoulder denotes strength, and the breast, which some think went with it, denotes affection: he that was king had the government upon his shoulder, for he must bear the weight of it; and the people in his bosom, for they must be dear to him.

III. What passed between them in private. Both that evening and early the next morning Samuel communed with Saul upon the flat roof of the house, 1Sa 9:25,26. We may suppose Samuel now told him the whole story of the people's desire of a king, the grounds of their desire, and God's grant of it, to all which Saul, living very privately, was perhaps a stranger; he satisfied him that he was the person God had pitched upon for the government; and whereas Saul would object that Samuel was in possession, and he would not for all the world take it out of his hands, Samuel, we may suppose, gave him all the assurance he could desire of his willingness to resign. Early in the morning he sent him towards home, brought him part of the way, bade him send his servant before, that they might be private (1Sa 9:27), and there, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, he anointed him, and therein showed him the word of the Lord, that is, gave him full satisfaction that he was the person chosen to be king, for he would not jest with that sacred rite. It is by the unction of the Holy Ghost that Christ, the great prophet, shows us the word of the Lord. 1Jo 2:27, the same anointing teacheth you of all things.

22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlor, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which *were* about thirty persons.

23 And Samuel said unto the cook, bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, set it by thee.

24 And the cook took up the shoulder, and *that* which *was* upon it, and set *it* before Saul. And *Samuel* said, behold that which is left!Set *it* before thee, *and* eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people.
So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

25 And when they were come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

26 And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

27 *And* as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to

Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.

1 Samuel-10

1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured *it* upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *is it* not because the Lord hath anointed thee *to be* captain over his inheritance?

2 When thou art departed from me today, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

Samuel is here executing the office of a prophet, giving Saul full assurance from God that he should be king, as he was afterwards, according to these prophecies which went before of him.

I. He anointed him and kissed him, 1Sa 10:1. This was not done in a solemn assembly, but it was done by divine appointment, which made up the want of all external solemnities, nor was it ever the less valid for its being done in private, under a hedge, or, as the Jews say, by a fountain. God's institutions are great and honourable, though the circumstances of their administration be ever so mean and despicable.

1 Samuel, by anointing Saul, assured him that it was God's act to make him king: Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee? And, in token of that, the high priest was anointed to his office, to signify the conferring of those gifts upon him that were requisite for the discharge of its duties, and the same was intimated in the anointing of kings; for whom God calls he qualifies, and suitable qualifications furnish good proof of a

commission. These sacred unctions, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or anointed one, the king of the church, and high priest of our profession, who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church.

It was common oil, no doubt, which Samuel used, and we read not of his blessing it or praying over it. But it was only a vial of oil that he anointed him with, the vessel brittle, because his kingdom would soon be cracked and broken, and the quantity small, because he had but little of the Spirit conferred upon him to what David had, who was therefore anointed with a horn of oil, as were Solomon and Jehu with a box of oil.

2. By kissing him, he assured him of his own approbation of the choice, not only his consent to it, but his complacency in it, though it abridged his power and eclipsed his glory and the glory of his family. "God has anointed thee," says Samuel, "to be king, and I am satisfied and very well pleased, in pledge of which take this kiss." It was likewise a kiss of homage and allegiance; hereby he not only owns him to be king, but his king, and in this sense we are commanded to kiss the Son, Ps 2:12. God has anointed him, and therefore we must thus acknowledge him and do homage to him. In Samuel's explication of the ceremony, he reminds him,

(1.) Of the nature of the government to which he is called. He was anointed to be a captain, a commander indeed, which bespeaks honour and power, but a commander in war, which bespeaks care, and toil, and danger.

(2.) Of the origin of it: The Lord hath anointed thee. By him he ruled, and therefore must rule for him, in dependence on him, and with an eye to his glory.

(3.) Of the end of it. It is over his inheritance, to take care of that, protect it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, as a

steward whom a great man sets over his estate, to manage it for his service and give an account of it to him.

II. For his further satisfaction he gives him some signs, which should come to pass immediately, this very day; and they were such as would not only confirm the word of Samuel in general, and prove him a true prophet, but would confirm this word to Saul in particular, that he should be king.

1. He should presently meet with some that would bring him intelligence from home of the care his father's house was in concerning him, 1Sa 10:2. These he would meet hard by Rachel's sepulchre. The first place Samuel directed him to was a sepulchre, the sepulchre of one of his ancestors, for Rachel died in travail with Benjamin; there he must read a lecture of his own mortality, and now that he had a crown in his eye must think of his grave, in which all his honour would be laid in the dust. Here two men would meet him, perhaps sent on purpose to look after him, and would tell him the asses were found, and his father was in pain concerning him, saying, What shall I do for my son? He would reckon it happened well that he met with these messengers; and it is good to eye Providence in favourable conjunctures (though the matter be minute) and to be encouraged to trust it in greater matters.

2. He should next meet with others going to Bethel, where, it should seem, there was a high place for religious worship, and these men were bringing their sacrifices thither, 1Sa 10:3,4. It was a token for good to one that was designed for the government of Israel, wherever he came, to meet with people going to worship God. It is supposed that those kids and loaves, and the bottle of wine which the three men had with them, were designed for sacrifice, with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings that were to attend the sacrifice; yet Samuel tells Saul that they will give him two of their loaves, and he must take them. Such a present would look to us now like the relieving of a beggar.

Saul must hereafter remember the time when he received alms, and must therefore be humble and charitable to the poor. But perhaps it would then be construed a fit present for a prince; and, as such, Saul must receive it, the first present that was brought to him, by such as knew not what they did, nor why they did it, but God put it into their hearts, which made it the more fit to be a sign to him. These two loaves, which were the first tribute paid to this newly-anointed king, might serve for an admonition to him not to spend the wealth of his crown in luxury, but still to be content with plain food. Bread is the staff of life. 3. The most remarkable sign of all would be his joining with a company of prophets that he should meet with, under the influence of a spirit of prophecy, which should at that time come upon him. What God works in us by his Spirit serves much more for the confirming of faith than any thing wrought for us by his providence. He here (1Sa 10:5,6) tells him,

(1.) Where this would happen: At the hill of God, where there was a garrison of the Philistines, which is supposed to be near Gibeah, his own city, for there was the Philistines' garrison, 1Sa 13:3. Perhaps it was one of the articles of Samuel's agreement with them that they should have a garrison there, or, rather, after they were subdued in the beginning of his time they got ground again, so far as to force this garrison into that place, and thence God raised up the man that should chastise them. There was a place that was called the hill of God, because of one of the schools of the prophets built upon it; and such respect did even Philistines themselves pay to religion that a garrison of their soldiers suffered a school of God's prophets to live peaceably by them, and did not only not dislodge them, but not restrain nor disturb the public exercises of their devotion.

(2.) Upon what occasion; he should meet a company of prophets with music before them, prophesying, and with them he should join himself. These prophets were not (as it should seem) divinely inspired to foretel things to come, nor did God

reveal himself to them by dreams and visions, but they employed themselves in the study of the law, in instructing their neighbours, and in the acts of piety, especially in praising God, wherein they were wonderfully assisted and enlarged by the Spirit of God. It was happy for Israel that they had not only prophets, but companies of prophets, who gave them good instructions and set them good examples, and helped very much to keep up religion among them.

Now the word of the Lord was not precious, as it had been when Samuel was first raised up, who had been instrumental in founding these colleges, or religious houses, whence, it is probable, the synagogues took their rise. What a pity was it that Israel should be weary of the government of such a man, who though he had not, as a man of war, expelled the Philistines, yet (which was a greater kindness to Israel) had, as a man of God, settled the schools of the prophets! Music was then used as a proper means to dispose the mind to receive the impressions of the good Spirit, as it did Elisha's, 2Ki 3:15.

But we have no reason to look for the same benefit by it now, unless we saw it as effectual as it was then in Saul's case, to drive away the evil spirit. These prophets had been at the high place, probably offering sacrifice, and now they came back singing psalms. We should come from holy ordinances with our hearts greatly enlarged in holy joy and praise. See Ps 138:5. Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned thereby into another man from what he had been while he lived in a private capacity. The Spirit of God, by his ordinances, changes men, wonderfully transforms them; Saul, by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but whether a new man or no may be questioned.

III. He directs him to proceed in the administration of his government as Providence should lead him, and as Samuel should advise him. 1. He must follow Providence in ordinary cases (1Sa 10:7): "Do as occasion shall serve thee. Take such

measures as thy own prudence shall direct thee." But, 2. In an extraordinary strait that would hereafter befall him at Gilgal, and would be the most critical juncture of all, when he would have special need of divine aids, he must wait for Samuel to come to him, and must tarry seven days in expectation of him, 1Sa 10:8. How his failing in this matter proved his fall we find afterwards, 1Sa 13:11. It was now a plain intimation to him that he was upon his good behaviour, and, though a king, must act under the direction of Samuel, and do as he should order him. The greatest of men must own themselves in subjection to God and his word.

4 and they will salute thee, and give thee two *loaves* of bread; which
thou shalt receive of their hands.
5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of
the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come
thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets
coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and
a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:
6 and the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt
prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.
7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, *that* thou do as
occasion serve thee; for God *is* with thee.
8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will
come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, *and* to sacrifice
sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come
to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do.
9 And it was *so,* that, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel,
God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that
day.
10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of
prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he
prophesied among them.
11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that,
behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said
one to another, What *is* this *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is*
Saul also among the prophets?

Saul has now taken his leave of Samuel, much amazed, we may well suppose, at what has been done to him, almost ready to question whether he be awake or no, and whether it be not all a dream. Now here we are told,

I. What occurred by the way, 1Sa 10:9. Those signs which Samuel had given him came to pass very punctually; but that which gave him the greatest satisfaction of all was this, he found immediately that God had given him another heart. A new fire was kindled in his breast, such as he had never before been acquainted with: seeking the asses is quite out of his mind, and he thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines, redressing the grievances of Israel, making laws, administering justice, and providing for the public safety; these are the things that now fill his head. He finds himself raised to such a pitch of boldness and bravery as he never thought he should be conscious of. He has no longer the heart of a husbandman, which is low, and mean, and narrow, and concerned only about his corn and cattle; but the heart of a statesman, a general, a prince. Whom God calls to any service he will make fit for it. If he advance to another station, he will give another heart, to those who sincerely desire to serve him with their power.

II. What occurred when he came near home. They came to the hill (1Sa 10:10), that is, to Gibeah, or Geba, which signifies a hill, and so the Chaldee here takes it as a proper name; he met with the prophets as Samuel had told him, and the Spirit of God came upon him, strongly and suddenly (so the word signifies), but not so as to rest and abide upon him. It came on so as to go off quickly. However, for the present, it had a strange effect upon him; for he immediately joined with the prophets in their devotion, and that with as much decorum and as great a transport of affection as any of them: He prophesied among them. Now,

1. His prophesying was publicly taken notice of, 1Sa 10:11,12. He was now among his acquaintance, who, when they saw

him among the prophets, called one another to come and see a strange sight. This would prepare them to accept him as a king, though one of themselves, when they had seen how God had advanced him to the honour of a prophet. The seventy elders prophesied before they were made judges, Nu 11:25. Now,

(1.) They all wondered to see Saul among the prophets: What is this that has come to the son of Kish? Though this school of the prophets was near his father's house, yet he had never associated with them, nor shown them any respect, perhaps had sometimes spoken slightly of them; and now to see him prophesying among them was a surprise to them, as it was long after when his namesake, in the New Testament, preached that gospel which he had before persecuted, Ac 9:21. Where God gives another heart it will soon show itself.

(2.) One of them, that was wiser than the rest, asked, "Who is their father, or instructor? Is not God? Are they not all taught of him? Do they not all owe their gifts to him? And is he limited? Cannot he make Saul a prophet, as well as any of them, if he please?" Or, "Is not Samuel their father?" Under God, he was so; and Saul had now lately been with him, which, by his servant, he might know. No marvel for him to prophesy who lay last night under Samuel's roof.

(3.) It became a proverb, commonly used in Israel, when they would express their wonder at a bad man's either becoming good, or at least being found in good company, Is Saul among the prophets? Note, Saul among the prophets is a wonder to a proverb. Let not the worst be despaired of, yet let not an external show of devotion, and a sudden change for the present, be too much relied on; for Saul among the prophets was Saul still.

2. His being anointed was kept private. When he had done prophesying,

(1.) It should seem he uttered all his words before the Lord, and recommended the affair to his favour, for he went straight to the high place (1Sa 10:13), to give God thanks for his mercies to him and to pray for the continuance of those mercies. But,

(2.) He industriously concealed from his relations what had passed. His uncle, who met with him either at the high place or as soon as he came home, examined him, 1Sa 10:14. Saul owned, for his servant knew it, that they had been with Samuel, and that he told them the asses were found, but said not a word of the kingdom, 1Sa 10:14,15. This was an instance,

[1.] Of his humility. Many a one would have been so elated with this surprising elevation as to proclaim it upon the house-top. But Saul, though he might please himself with it in his own breast, did not pride himself in it among his neighbours. The heirs of the kingdom of glory are well enough pleased that the world knows them not, 1Jo 3:1.

[2.] Of his prudence. Had he been forward to proclaim it, he would have been envied, and he knew not what difficulty that might have created him. Samuel had communicated it to him as a secret, and he knows how to keep counsel. Thus it appears that he had another heart, a heart fit for government.

[3.] Of his dependence upon God. He does not go about to make an interest for himself, but leaves it to God to carry on his own work by Samuel, and, for his own part, sits still, to see how the matter will fall.

12 And one of the same place answered and said, but who *is* their father?Therefore it became a proverb, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

14 And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, whither went
ye? And he said, to seek the asses: and when we saw that *they were*
no where, we came to Samuel.
15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto
you.
16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were
found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he
told him not.
17 And Samuel called the people together unto the Lord to Mizpeh;
18 and said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God of
Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the
hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, *and* of
them that oppressed you:
19 and ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out
of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto
him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves
before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands.

Saul's nomination to the throne is here made public, in a general assembly of the elders of Israel, the representatives of their respective tribes at Mizpeh. It is probable that this convention of the states was called as soon as conveniently it might, after Saul was anointed, for, if there must be a change in their government, the sooner the better: it might be of bad consequence to be long in the doing. The people having met in a solemn assembly, in which God was in a peculiar manner present (and therefore it is said they were called together unto the Lord, 1Sa 10:17), Samuel acts for God among them.

I. He reproves them for casting off the government of a prophet, and desiring that of a captain.

1. He shows them (1Sa 10:18) how happy they had been under the divine government; when God ruled them, he delivered them out of the hand of those that oppressed them, and what would they desire more? Could the mightiest man of valour do that for them which the Almighty God had done?

2. He likewise shows them (1Sa 10:19) what an affront they had put upon God (who had himself saved them out of all their tribulations, by his own power, and by such as he had immediately called and qualified) in desiring a king to save them. He tells them in plain terms, "You have this day rejected your God; you have in effect done it: so he construes it, and he might justly, for your so doing, reject you." Those that can live better by sense than by faith, that stay themselves upon an arm of flesh rather than upon the almighty arm, forsake a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. And some make their obstinacy in this matter to be a presage of their rejecting Christ, in casting off whom they cast off God, that he should not reign over them.

II. He puts them upon choosing their king by lot. He knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him, but he knew also the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them who would not acquiesce in the choice if it depended upon his single testimony; and therefore, that every tribe and every family of the chosen tribe might please themselves with having a chance for it, he calls them to the lot, 1Sa 10:19. Benjamin is taken out of all the tribes (1Sa 10:20), and out of that tribe Saul the son of Kish, 1Sa 10:21. By this method it would appear to the people, as it already appeared to Samuel, that Saul was appointed of God to be king; for the disposal of the lot is of the Lord.

It would also prevent all disputes and exceptions; for the lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty. When the tribe of Benjamin was taken, they might easily foresee that they were setting up a family that would soon be put down again; for dying Jacob had, by the spirit of prophecy, entailed the dominion upon Judah. Judah is the tribe that must rule as a lion; Benjamin shall only ravin as a wolf, Ge 49:10,27. Those therefore that knew the scriptures could not be very fond of the doing of that which they foresaw must, ere long, be undone again.

III. It is with much ado, and not without further enquiries of the Lord, that Saul is at length produced. When the lot fell upon him, every one expected he should answer to his name at the first call, but, instead of that, none of his friends could find him (1Sa 10:21), he had hidden himself among the stuff (1Sa 10:22), so little fond was he now of that power which yet, when he was in possession of, he could not without the utmost indignation think of parting with.

1. He withdrew, in hopes that, upon his not appearing, they would proceed to another choice, or thus to express his modesty; for, by what had already passed, he knew he must be the man. We may suppose he was at this time really averse to take upon him the government,

(1.) Because he was conscious to himself of unfitness for so great a trust. He had not been bred up to books, or arms, or courts, and feared he should be guilty of some fatal blunder.

(2.) Because it would expose him to the envy of his neighbours that were ill-affected towards him.

(3.) Because he understood, by what Samuel had said, that the people sinned in asking a king, and it was in anger that God granted their request.

(4.) Because the affairs of Israel were at this time in a bad posture; the Philistines were strong, the Ammonites threatening: and he must be bold indeed that will set sail in a storm.

2. But the congregation, believing that choice well made which God himself made, would leave no way untried to find him out on whom the lot fell. They enquired of the Lord, either by the high priest, and his breast-plate of judgment, or by Samuel, and his spirit of prophecy; and the Lord directed them where they should find him, hidden among the carriages, and thence they fetched him, 1Sa 10:23. Note, None will be losers

at last by their humility and modesty. Honour, like the shadow, follows those that flee from it, but flees from those that pursue it.

IV. Samuel presents him to the people, and they accept him. He needed not to mount the bench, or scaffold, to be seen; when he stood upon even ground with the rest he was seen above them all, for he was taller than any of them by head and shoulders, 1Sa 10:23. "Look you," said Samuel, "what a king God has chosen for you, just such a one as you wished for; there is none like him among all the people, that has so much majesty in his countenance and such a graceful stateliness in his mien; he is in the crowd like a cedar among the shrubs. Let your own eyes be judges, is he not a brave and gallant man?" The people hereupon signified their approbation of the choice, and their acceptance of him; they shouted and said, Let the king live, that is, "Let him long reign over us in health and prosperity." Subjects were wont to testify their affection and allegiance to their prince by their good wishes, and those turned (as our translation does this) into addresses to God. Ps 72:15, Prayer shall be made for him continually. See Ps 20:1 Samuel had told them they would soon be weary of their king, but, in the mind they are now in, they will never be so: Let the king live.

V. Samuel settles the original contract between them, and leaves it upon record, 1Sa 10:25. He had before told them the manner of the king (1Sa 8:11), how he would abuse his power; now he tells them the manner of the kingdom, or rather the law, or judgment, or constitution, of it, what power the prince might challenge and the utmost of the property the subject might claim. He fixed the land-marks between them, that neither might encroach upon the other. Let them rightly understand one another at first, and let the agreement remain in black and white, which will tend to preserve a good understanding between them ever after. The learned bishop Patrick thinks he now repeated and registered what he had told them (1Sa 8:11) of the arbitrary power their kings would

assume, that it might hereafter be a witness against them that they had drawn the calamity upon themselves, for they were warned what it would come to and yet they would have a king.

VI. The convention was dissolved when the solemnity was over: Samuel sent every man to his house. Here were no votes passed, nor, for aught that appears, so much as a motion made, for the raising of money to support the dignity of their new-elected king; if therefore he afterwards thinks fit to take what they do not think fit to give (which yet it was necessary that he should have), they must thank themselves. They went every man to his house, pleased with the name of a king over them, and Saul also went home to Gibeah, to his father's house, not puffed up with the name of a kingdom under him. At Gibeah he had no palace, no throne, no court, yet thither he goes. If he must be a king, as one mindful of the rock out of which he was hewn, he will make his own city the royal city, nor will he be ashamed (as too many are when they are preferred) of his mean relations. Such a humble spirit as this puts a beauty and lustre upon great advancements. The condition rising, and the mind not rising with it, behold how good and pleasant it is! But,

1. How did the people stand affected to their new king? The generality of them, it should seem, did not show themselves much concerned: They went every man to his own house. Their own domestic affairs lay nearer their hearts than any interests of the public; this was the general temper. But,

(1.) There were some so faithful as to attend him: A band of men whose hearts God had touched, 1Sa 10:26. Not the body of the people, but a small company, who because they were fond of their own choice of a king, or because they had so much more sense than their neighbours as to conclude that if he was a king he ought to be respected accordingly, went with him to Gibeah, as his life-guard. They were those whose hearts God had touched, in this instance, to do their duty. Note, Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, at any time, it

must be ascribed to the grace of God. If the heart bend at any time the right way, it is because he has touched it. One touch is enough, when it is divine.

(2.) There were others so spiteful as to affront him; children of Belial, men that would endure no yoke, that would be pleased with nothing that either God or Samuel did; they despised him (1Sa 10:27) for the meanness of his tribe and family, the smallness of his estate, and the privacy of his education; and they said, How shall this man save us? Yet they did not propose any man more likely; nor, whomsoever they had, must their salvation come from the man, but from God. They would not join with their neighbours in testifying an affection to him and his government, by bringing him presents, or addressing him upon his accession to the crown.

Perhaps those discontented spirits were most earnest for a king, and yet, now that they had one, they quarrelled with him, because he was not altogether such a one as themselves. It was reason enough for them not to like him because others did. Thus differently are men affected to our exalted Redeemer. God hath set him king upon the holy hill of Sion. There is a remnant that submit to him, rejoice in him, bring him presents, and follow him wherever he goes; and they are those whose hearts God has touched, whom he has made willing in the day of his power. But there are others who despise him, who ask, How shall this man save us? They are offended in him, stumble at his external meanness, and they will be broken by it.

2. How did Saul resent the bad conduct of those that were disaffected to his government? He held his peace. Margin, He was as though he had been deaf. He was so far from resenting it that he seemed not to take notice of it, which was an evidence of his humility and modesty, and the mercifulness of his disposition, and also that he was well satisfied with his title to the crown; for those are commonly most jealous of their honour, and most revengeful of affronts, that gain their power

by improper means. Christ held his peace when he was affronted, for it was the day of his patience; but there is a day of recompence coming.

20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near,
the tribe of Benjamin was taken.
21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their
families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish
was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.
22 Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet
come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself
among the stuff.
23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among
the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders
and upward.
24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the Lord hath
chosen, that *there is* none like him among all the people? And all
the people shouted, and said, God save the king.
25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and
wrote *it* in a book, and laid *it* up before the Lord. And Samuel sent
all the people away, every man to his house.
26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a
band of men, whose hearts God had touched.
27 But the children of Belial said, how shall this man save us? And
they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his
peace.

1 Samuel-11

Saul Defeats the Ammonites

1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against
Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a
covenant with us, and we will serve thee.
2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, on this *condition* will I
make a *covenant* with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes,
and lay it *for* a reproach upon all Israel.

The Ammonites were bad neighbours to those tribes of Israel that lay next them, though descendants from just Lot, and, for that reason, dealt civilly with by Israel. See De 2:19. Jephthah, in his time, had humbled them, but now the sin of Israel had put them into a capacity to make head again, and avenge that quarrel. The city of Jabesh-Gilead had been, some ages ago, destroyed by Israel's sword of justice, for not appearing against the wickedness of Gibeah (Jdg 21:10); and now being replenished again, probably by the posterity of those that then escaped the sword, it is in danger of being destroyed by the Ammonites, as if some bad fate attended the place. Nahash, king of Ammon (1Ch 19:1) laid siege to it. Now here,

I The besieged beat a parley (1Sa 11:1): "Make a covenant with us, and we will surrender upon terms, and serve thee." They had lost the virtue of Israelites, else they would not have thus lost the valour of Israelites, nor tamely yielded to serve an Ammonite, without one bold struggle for themselves. Had they not broken their covenant with God, and forsaken his service, they needed not thus to have courted a covenant with a Gentile nation, and offered themselves to serve them.

II The besiegers offer them base and barbarous conditions; they will spare their lives, and take them to be their servants, upon condition that they shall put out their right eyes, 1Sa 11:2 The Gileadites were content to part with their liberty and estates for the ransom of their blood; and, had the Ammonites taken them at their word, the matter would have been so settled immediately, and the Gileadites would not have sent out for relief. But their abject concessions make the Ammonites more insolent in their demands, and they cannot be content to have them for their servants, but,

1. They must torment them, and put them to pain, exquisite pain, for so the thrusting out of an eye would do.

2. They must disable them for war, and render them incapable, though not of labour (that would have been a loss to their

lords), yet of bearing arms; for in those times they fought with shields in their left hands, which covered their left eye, so that a soldier without his right eye was in effect blind.

3. They must put a reproach upon all Israel, as weak and cowardly, that would suffer the inhabitants of one of their chief cities to be thus miserably used, and not offer to rescue them.

III. The besieged desire, and obtain, seven days' time to consider of this proposal, 1Sa 11:3. If Nahash had not granted them this respite, we may suppose the horror of the proposal would have made them desperate, and they would rather have died with their swords in their hands than have surrendered to such merciless enemies: therefore Nahash, not imagining it possible that, in so short a time, they should have relief, and being very secure of the advantages he thought he had against them, in a bravado gave them seven days, that the reproach upon Israel, for not rescuing them, might be the greater, and his triumphs the more illustrious. But there was a providence in it, that his security might be his infatuation and ruin.

IV. Notice is sent of this to Gibeah. They said they would send messengers to all the coasts of Israel (1Sa 11:3), which made Nahash the more secure, for that, he thought, would be a work of time, and none would be forward to appear if they had not one common head; and perhaps Nahash had not yet heard of the new-elected king. But the messengers, either of their own accord or by order from their masters, went straight to Gibeah, and, not finding Saul within, told their news to the people, who fell a weeping upon hearing it, 1Sa 11:4. They would sooner lament their brethren's misery and danger than think of helping them, shed their tears for them than shed their blood. They wept, as despairing to help the men of Jabesh-Gilead, and fearing lest, if that frontier-city should be lost, the enemy would penetrate into the very bowels of their country, which now appeared in great hazard.

3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite,
that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then,
if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee.
4 Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings
in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices,
and wept.
5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field: and Saul said,
what aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings
of the men of Jabesh.
6 And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings,
and his anger was kindled greatly.
7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them*
throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying,
whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it
be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people,
and they came out with one consent.
8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were
three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

What is here related turns very much to the honour of Saul, and shows the happy fruits of that other spirit with which he was endued. Observe here,

I. His humility. Though he was anointed king, and accepted by his people, yet he did not think it below him to know the state of his own flocks, but went himself to see them, and came in the evening, with his servants, after the herd out of the field, 1Sa 11:5. This was an evidence that he was not puffed up with his advancement, as those are most apt to be that are raised from a mean estate. Providence had not yet found him business as a king; he left all to Samuel; and therefore, rather than be idle, he would, for the present, apply himself to his country business again. Though the sons of Belial would, perhaps, despise him the more for it, such as were virtuous and wise, and loved business themselves, would think never the worse of him. He had no revenues settled upon him for the support of his dignity, and he was desirous not to be burdensome to the people, for which reason, like Paul, he worked with his hands; for, if he neglect his domestic affairs,

how must he maintain himself and his family? Solomon gives it as a reason why men should look well to their herds because the crown doth not endure to every generation, Pr 27:23,24. Saul's did not; he must therefore provide something surer.

II. His concern for his neighbours. When he perceived them in tears, he asked, "What ails the people that they weep? Let me know, that, if it be a grievance which can be redressed, I may help them, and that, if not, I may weep with them." Good magistrates are in pain if their subjects are in tears.

III. His zeal for the safety and honour of Israel. When he heard of the insolence of the Ammonites, and the distress of a city, a mother in Israel, the Spirit of God came upon him, and put great thoughts into his mind, and his anger was kindled greatly, 1Sa 11:6. He was angry at the insolence of the Ammonites, angry at the mean and sneaking spirit of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, angry that they had not sent him notice sooner of the Ammonites' descent and the extremity they were likely to be reduced to. He was angry to see his neighbours weeping, when it was fitter for them to be preparing for war. It was a brave and generous fire that was now kindled in the breast of Saul, and such as became his high station.

IV. The authority and power he exerted upon this important occasion. He soon let Israel know that, though he had retired to his privacy, he had a care for the public, and knew how to command men into the field, as well as how to drive cattle out of the field, 1Sa 11:5,7. He sent a summons to all the coasts of Israel, to show the extent of his power beyond his own tribe, even to all the tribes, and ordered all the military men forthwith to appear in arms at a general rendezvous in Bezek. Observe,

1. His modesty, in joining Samuel in commission with himself. He would not execute the office of a king without a due regard to that of a prophet.

2. His mildness in the penalty threatened against those that should disobey his orders. He hews a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sends the pieces to the several cities of Israel, threatening, with respect to him who should decline the public service, not, "Thus shall it be done to him," but, "Thus shall it be done to his oxen." God had threatened it as a great judgment (De 28:31), Thy ox shall be slain before thy eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof. It was necessary that the command should be enforced with some penalty, but this was not nearly so severe as that which was affixed to a similar order by the whole congregation, Jdg 21:5. Saul wished to show that his government was more gentle than that which they had been under. The effect of this summons was that the militia, or trained bands, of the nation, came out as one man, and the reason given is, because the fear of the Lord fell upon them. Saul did not affect to make them fear him, but they were influenced to observe his orders by the fear of God and a regard to him who had made Saul their king and them members one of another.

Note, Religion and the fear of God will make men good subjects, good soldiers, and good friends to the public interests of the country. Those that fear God will make conscience of their duty to all men, particularly to their rulers.

V. His prudent proceedings in this great affair, 1Sa 11:8. He numbered those that came in to him, that he might know his own strength, and how to distribute his forces in the best manner their numbers would allow. It is the honour of princes to know the number of their men, but it is the honour of the King of kings that there is not any number of his armies, Job 25:3. In this muster, it seems, Judah, though numbered by itself, made no great figure; for, as it was one tribe of twelve, so it was but an eleventh part of the whole number, 30,330, though the rendezvous was at Bezek, in that tribe. They wanted the numbers, or the courage, or the zeal for which that tribe used to be famous; so low was it, just before the sceptre was brought into it in David.

VI. His faith and confidence, and (grounded thereon) his courage and resolution, in this enterprise. It should seem that those very messengers who brought the tidings from Jabesh-Gilead Saul sent into the country to raise the militia, who would be sure to be faithful and careful in their own business, and them he now sends back to their distressed countrymen, with this assurance (in which, it is probable, Samuel encouraged him): "To-morrow, by such an hour, before the enemy can pretend that the seven days have expired, you shall have deliverance, 1Sa 11:9. Be you ready to do your part, and we will not fail to do ours. Do you sally out upon the besiegers, while we surround them." Saul knew he had a just cause, a clear call, and God on his side, and therefore doubted not of success.

This was good news to the besieged Gileadites, whose right eyes had wept themselves dry for their calamities, and now began to fail with looking for relief and to ache in expectation of the doom of the ensuing day, when they must look their last; the greater the exigence the more welcome the deliverance. When they heard it they were glad, relying on the assurances that were sent to them. And they sent into the enemies' camp (1Sa 11:10) to tell them that next day they would be ready to meet them, which the enemies understood as an intimation that they despaired of relief, and so were made the more secure by it. If they took not care, by sending out scouts, to rectify their own mistake, they must thank themselves if they were surprised: the besieged were under no obligation to give them notice of the help they were assured of.

VII. His industry and close application to this business. If he had been bred up to war from his youth, and had led regiments as often as he had followed droves, he could not have gone about an affair of this nature more dexterously nor more diligently. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon men it will make them expert even without experience. A vast army (especially in comparison with the present usage) Saul had

now at his foot, and a long march before him, nearly sixty miles, and over Jordan too. No cavalry in his army, but all infantry, which he divides into three battalions, 1Sa 11:11. And observe,

1. With what incredible swiftness he flew to the enemy. In a day and a night he came to the place of action, where his own fate, and that of Israel, must be determined. He had passed his word, and would not break it; nay, he was better than his word, for he promised help next day, by that time the sun was hot (1Sa 11:9), but brought it before day, in the morning-watch, 1Sa 11:11. Whom God helps he helps right early, Ps 46:5.

2. With what incredible bravery he flew upon the enemy. Betimes in the morning, when they lay dreaming of the triumphs they expected that day over the miserable inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, before they were aware he was in the midst of their host; and his men, being marched against them in three columns, surrounded them on every side, so that they could have neither heart nor time to make head against them.

Lastly, To complete his honour, God crowned all these virtues with success. Jabesh-Gilead was rescued, and the Ammonites were totally routed; he had now the day before him to complete his victory in, and so complete a victory it was that those who remained, after a great slaughter, were scattered so that two of them were not left together to encourage or help one another, 1Sa 11:11. We may suppose that Saul was the more vigorous in this matter,

1. Because there was some alliance between the tribe of Benjamin and the city of Jabesh-Gilead. That city had declined joining with the rest of the Israelites to destroy Gibeah, which was then punished as their crime, but perhaps was now remembered as their kindness, when Saul of Gibeah came with so much readiness and resolution to relieve Jabesh-Gilead. Yet that was not all; two-thirds of the Benjamites that then remained were provided with wives from that city (Jdg 21:14), so that most of the mothers of Benjamin were

daughters of Jabesh-Gilead, for which city Saul, being a Benjamite, had therefore a particular kindness; and we find they returned his kindness, 1Sa 31:11,12.

2. Because it was the Ammonites' invasion that induced the people to desire a king (so Samuel says, Jdg 12:12), so that if he had not done his part, in this expedition, he would have disappointed their expectations, and for ever forfeited their respect.

9 And they said unto the messengers that came, thus shall ye say unto
the men of Jabesh-gilead, tomorrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye
shall have help. And the messengers came and showed *it* to the men
of Jabesh; and they were glad.
10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, tomorrow we will come out unto you,
and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.
11 And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three
companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning
watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it
came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two
of them were not left together.
12 And the people said unto Samuel, Who *is* he that said, Shall Saul
reign over us? Bring the men, that we may put them to death.

We have here the improvement of the glorious victory which Saul had obtained, not the improvement of it abroad, though we take it for granted that the men of Jabesh-Gilead, having so narrowly saved their right eyes, would with them now discern the opportunity they had of avenging themselves upon these cruel enemies and disabling them from ever straitening them in like manner again; now shall they be avenged on the Ammonites for their right eyes condemned, as Samson on the Philistines for his two eyes put out, Jdg 16:28. But the account here given is of the improvement of this victory at home.

I The people took this occasion to show their jealousy for the honour of Saul, and their resentment of the indignities done him. Samuel, it seems, was present, if not in the action (it was too far for him to march) yet to meet them when they returned victorious; and to him, as judge, the motion was made (for

they knew Saul would not be judge in his own cause) that the sons of Belial that would not have him to reign over them should be brought forth and slain, 1Sa 11:12. Saul's good fortune (as foolish men commonly call it) went further with them to confirm his title than either his choice by lot or Samuel's anointing him. They had not courage thus to move for the prosecution of those that opposed him when he himself looked mean, but, now that his victory made him look great, nothing would serve but they must be put to death.

II. Saul took this occasion to give further proofs of his clemency, for, without waiting for Samuel's answer, he himself quashed the motion (1Sa 11:13): There shall not a man be put to death this day, no, not those men, those bad men, that had abused him, and therein reflected on God himself,

1. Because it was a day of joy and triumph: "To day the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel; and, since God has been so good to us all, let us not be harsh one to another. Now that God has made the heart of Israel in general so glad, let not us make sad the hearts of any particular Israelites."

2. Because he hoped they were by this day's work brought to a better temper, were now convinced that this man, under God, could save them, now honoured him whom before they had despised; and, if they are but reclaimed, he is secured from receiving any disturbance by them, and therefore his point is gained. If an enemy be made a friend, that will be more to our advantage than to have him slain. And all good princes consider that their power is for edification, not for destruction.

III. Samuel took this occasion to call the people together before the Lord in Gilgal, 1Sa 11:14,15.

1. That they might publicly give God thanks for their late victory. There they rejoiced greatly, and, that God might have the praise of that which they had the comfort of, they

sacrificed to him, as the giver of all their successes, sacrifices of peace-offerings.

2. That they might confirm Saul in the government, more solemnly than had been yet done, that he might not retire again to his obscurity. Samuel would have the kingdom renewed; he would renew his resignation, and the people should renew their approbation, and so in concurrence with, or rather in attendance upon, the divine nomination, they made Saul king, making it their own act and deed to submit to him.

13 And Saul said, there shall not a man be put to death this day: for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel.

14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kindgom there.

15 And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the Lord; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

1 Samuel-12

Samuel's Address to the People

1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

Here, I Samuel gives them a short account of the late revolution, and of the present posture of their government, by way of preface to what he had further to say to them, 1Sa 12:1,2.

1. For his own part, he had spent his days in their service; he began betimes to be useful among them, and had continued long so: "I have walked before you, as a guide to direct you, as a shepherd that leads his flock (Ps 80:1), from my childhood unto this day." As soon as he was illuminated with the light of prophecy, in his early days, he began to be a burning and

shining light to Israel; "and now my best days are done: I am old and gray-headed;" therefore they were the more unkind to cast him off, yet therefore he was the more willing to resign, finding the weight of government heavy upon his stooping shoulders. He was old, and therefore the more able to advise them, and the more observant they should have been of what he said, for days shall speak and the multitude of years shall teach wisdom; and there is a particular reverence due to the aged, especially aged magistrates and aged ministers. "I am old, and therefore not likely to live long, perhaps may never have an opportunity of speaking to you again, and therefore take notice of what I say."

2. As for his sons, "Behold" (says he), "they are with you, you may, if you please, call them to an account for any thing they have done amiss. They are present with you, and have not, upon this revolution, fled from their country. They are upon the level with you, subjects to the new king as well as you; if you can prove them guilty of any wrong, you may prosecute them now by a due course of law, punish them, and oblige them to make restitution."

3. As for their new king, Samuel had gratified them in setting him over them (1Sa 12:1): "I have hearkened to your voice in all that you said to me, being desirous to please you, if possible, and make you easy, though to the discarding of myself and family; and now will you hearken to me, and take my advice?" The change was now perfected: "Behold, the king walketh before you" (1Sa 12:2); he appears in public, ready to serve you in public business. Now that you have made yourselves like the nations in your civil government, and have cast off the divine administration in that, take heed lest you make yourselves like the nations in religion and cast off the worship of God.

II. He solemnly appeals to them concerning his own integrity in the administration of the government (1Sa 12:3): Witness against me, whose ox have I taken? Observe,

1. His design in this appeal. By this he intended,

(1.) To convince them of the injury they had done him in setting him aside, when they had nothing amiss to charge him with (his government had no fault but that it was too cheap, too easy, too gentle), and also of the injury they had done themselves in turning off one that did not so much as take an ox or an ass from them, to put themselves under the power of one that would take from them their fields and vineyards, nay, and their very sons and daughters (1Sa 8:11), so unlike would the manner of the king be from Samuel's manner.

(2.) To preserve his own reputation. Those that heard of Samuel's being rejected as he was would be ready to suspect that certainly he had done some evil thing, or he would never have been so ill treated; so that it was necessary for him to make this challenge, that it might appear upon record that it was not for any iniquity in his hands that he was laid aside, but to gratify the humour of a giddy people, who owned they could not have a better man to rule them, only they desired a bigger man. There is a just debt which every man owes to his own good name, especially men in public stations, which is to guard it against unjust aspersions and suspicions, that we may finish our course with honour as well as joy.

(3.) As he designed hereby to leave a good name behind him, so he designed to leave his successor a good example before him; let him write after his copy, and he will write fair.

(4.) He designed, in the close of his discourse, to reprove the people, and therefore he begins with a vindication of himself; for he that will, with confidence, tell another of his sin, must see to it that he himself be clear.

2. In the appeal itself observe,

(1.) What it is that Samuel here acquits himself from.

[1.] He had never, under any pretence whatsoever, taken that which was not his own, ox or ass, had never distrained their cattle for tribute, fines, or forfeitures, nor used their service without paying for it.

[2.] He had never defrauded those with whom he dealt, nor oppressed those that were under his power. [3.] He had never taken bribes to pervert justice, nor was ever biassed by favour for affection to give judgment in a cause against his conscience.

(2.) How he calls upon those that had slighted him to bear witness concerning his conduct: "Here I am; witness against me. If you have any thing to lay to my charge, do it before the Lord and the king, the proper judges." He puts honour upon Saul, by owning himself accountable to him if guilty of any wrong.

III. Upon this appeal he is honourably acquitted. He did not expect that they would do him honour at parting, though he well deserved it, and therefore mentioned not any of the good services he had done them, for which they ought to have applauded him, and returned him the thanks of the house; all he desired was that they should do him justice, and that they did (1Sa 12:4) readily owning,

1. That he had not made his government oppressive to them, nor used his power to their wrong.

2. That he had not made it expensive to them: Neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand for the support of thy dignity. Like Nehemiah, he did not require the bread of the governor (Ne 5:18), had not only been righteous, but generous, had coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, Ac 20:33.

IV. This honourable testimony borne to Samuel's integrity is left upon record to his honour (1Sa 12:5): "The Lord is witness, who searcheth the heart, and his anointed is witness, who trieth overt acts;" and the people agree to it: "He is witness." Note, The testimony of our neighbours, and especially the testimony of our own consciences for us, that we have in our places lived honestly, will be our comfort under the slights and contempts that are put upon us. Demetrius is a happy man, that has a good report of all men and of the truth itself, 3Jo 1:12.

2 And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons *are* with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day.

3 Behold, here I *am:* witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received *any* bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it you.

4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand.

5 And he said unto them, The Lord *is* witness against you, and his anointed *is* witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, *He is* witness.

6 And Samuel said unto the people, *It is* the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt.

7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and to your fathers.

8 When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place.

9 And when they forgat the Lord their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them.

10 And they cried unto the Lord, and said, we have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim and

Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee.

Samuel, having sufficiently secured his own reputation, instead of upbraiding the people upon it with their unkindness to him, sets himself to instruct them, and keep them in the way of their duty, and then the change of the government would be the less damage to them.

I. He reminds them of the great goodness of God to them and to their fathers, gives them an abstract of the history of their nation, that, by the consideration of the great things God had done for them, they might be for ever engaged to love him and serve him. "Come," says he (1Sa 12:7), "stand still, stand in token of reverence when God is speaking to you, stand still in token of attention and composedness of mind, and give me leave to reason with you." Religion has reason on its side, Isa 1:18. The work of ministers is to reason with people, not only to exhort and direct, but to persuade, to convince men's judgments, and so to gain their wills and affections. Let reason rule men, and they will be good.

He reasons of the righteous acts of the Lord, that is, "both the benefits he hath bestowed upon you, in performance of his promises, and the punishments he has inflicted on you for your sins." His favours are called his righteous acts (Jdg 5:11), because in them he is just to his own honour. He not only puts them in mind of what God had done for them in their days, but of what he had done of old, in the days of their fathers, because the present age had the benefit of God's former favours. We may suppose that his discourse was much larger than as here related.

1. He reminds them of their deliverance out of Egypt. Into that house of bondage Jacob and his family came down poor and little; when they were oppressed they cried unto God, who advanced Moses and Aaron, from mean beginnings, to be their deliverers, and the founders of their state and settlement in Canaan, 1Sa 12:6,8.

2. He reminds them of the miseries and calamities which their fathers brought themselves into by forgetting God and serving other gods, 1Sa 12:9. They enslaved themselves, for they were sold as criminals and captives into the hand of oppressors. They exposed themselves to the desolation of war, and their neighbours fought against them.

3. He reminds them of their fathers' repentance and humiliation before God for their idolatries: They said, We have sinned, 1Sa 12:10. Let not them imitate the sins of their fathers, for what they had done amiss they had many a time wished undone again. In the day of their distress they had sought unto God, and had promised to serve him; let their children then reckon that good at all times which they found good in bad times.

4. He reminds them of the glorious deliverances God had wrought for them, the victories he had blessed them with, and their happy settlements, many a time, after days of trouble and distress, 1Sa 12:11. He specifies some of their judges, Gideon and Jephthah, great conquerors in their time; among the rest he mentions Bedan, whom we read not of any where else: he might be some eminent person, that was instrumental of salvation to them, though not recorded in the book of Judges, such a one as Shamgar, of whom it is said that he delivered Israel, but not that he judged them, Jdg 3:31. Perhaps this Bedan guarded and delivered them on one side, at the same time when some other of the judges appeared and acted for them on another side. Some think it was the same with Jair (so the learned Mr. Poole), others the same with Samson, who was Ben Dan, a son of Dan, of that tribe, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him Be-Dan, inn Dan, in the camp of Can. Samuel mentions himself, not to his own praise, but to the honour of God, who had made him an instrument of subduing the Philistines.

5. At last he puts them in mind of God's late favour to the present generation, in gratifying them with a king, when they would prescribe to God by such a one to save them out of the hand of Nahash king of Ammon, 1Sa 12:12,13. Now it appears that this was the immediate occasion of their desiring a king: Nahash threatened them; they desired Samuel to nominate a general; he told them that God was commander-in-chief in all their wars and they needed no other, that what was wanting in them should be made up by his power: The Lord is your king. But they insisted on it, Nay, but a king shall reign over us. "And now," said he, "you have a king, a king of your own asking--let that be spoken to your shame; but a king of God's making--let that be spoken to his honour and the glory of his grace." God did not cast them off, even when they in effect cast him off.

II. He shows them that they are now upon their good behaviour, they and their king. Let them not think that they had now cut themselves off from all dependence upon God, and that now, having a king of their own, the making of their own fortunes (as men foolishly call it) was in their own hands; no, still their judgment must proceed from the Lord. He tells them plainly,

1. That their obedience to God would certainly be their happiness, 1Sa 12:14. If they would not revolt from God to idols, nor rebel against him by breaking his commandments, but would persevere in their allegiance to him, would fear his wrath, serve his interests, and obey his will, then they and their king should certainly be happy; but observe how the promise is expressed: Then you shall continue following the Lord your God; that is,

(1.) "You shall continue in the way of your duty to God, which will be your honour and comfort." Note, To those that are sincere in their religion God will give grace to persevere in it: those that follow God faithfully will be divinely strengthened to continue following him. And observe, Following God is a

work that is its own wages. It is the matter of a promise as well as of a precept.

(2.) "You shall continue under the divine guidance and protection:" You shall be after the Lord, so it is in the original, that is, "he will go before you to lead and prosper you, and make your way plain. The Lord is with you while you are with him."

2. That their disobedience would as certainly be their ruin (1Sa 12:15): "If you rebel, think not that your having a king will secure you against God's judgments, and that having in this instance made yourselves like the nations you may sin at as cheap a rate as they can. No, the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers when they offended him, in the days of the judges." We mistake if we think that we can evade God's justice by shaking off his dominion. If God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us.

11 And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelt safe.

12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God *was* your king.

13 Now therefore, behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! And, behold, the Lord hath set a king over you.

14 If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord; then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the Lord your God:

15 but if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord; then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the Lord will do before your eyes.

17 *Is it* not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord,

in asking you a king.

Two things Samuel here aims at:--

I. To convince the people of their sin in desiring a king. They were now rejoicing before God in and with their king (1Sa 11:15), and offering to God the sacrifices of praise, which they hoped God would accept; and this perhaps made them think that there was no harm in their asking a king, but really they had done well in it. Therefore Samuel here charges it upon them as their sin, as wickedness, great wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

Note, Though we meet with prosperity and success in a way of sin, yet we must not therefore think the more favourably of it. They have a king, and if they conduct themselves well their king may be a very great blessing to them, and yet Samuel will have them perceive and see that their wickedness was great in asking a king. We must never think well of that which God in his law frowns upon, though in his providence he may seem to smile upon it. Observe,

1 The expressions of God's displeasure against them for asking a king. At Samuel's word, God sent prodigious thunder and rain upon them, at a season of the year when, in that country, the like was never seen or known before, 1Sa 12:16-18. Thunder and rain have natural causes and sometimes terrible effects. But Samuel made it to appear that this was designed by the almighty power of God on purpose to convince them that they had done very wickedly in asking a king; not only by its coming in an unusual time, in wheat-harvest, and this on a fair clear day, when there appeared not to the eye any signs of a storm, but by his giving notice of it before. Had there happened to be thunder and rain at the time when he was speaking to them, he might have improved it for their awakening and conviction, as we may in a like case; but, to make it no less than a miracle, before it came,

(1.) He spoke to them of it (1Sa 12:16,17): Stand and see this great thing. He had before told them to stand and hear (1Sa 12:7); but, because he did not see that his reasoning with them affected them (so stupid were they and unthinking), now he bids them stand and see. If what he said in a still small voice did not reach their hearts, nor his doctrine which dropped as the dew, they shall hear God speaking to them in dreadful claps of thunder and the great rain of his strength. He appealed to this as a sign: "I will call upon the Lord, and he will send thunder, will send it just now, to confirm the word of his servant, and to make you see that I spoke truly when I told you that God was angry with you for asking a king." And the event proved him a true prophet; the sign and wonder came to pass.

(2.) He spoke to God for it. Samuel called unto the Lord, and, in answer to his prayer, even while he was yet speaking, the Lord sent thunder and rain. By this Samuel made it to appear, not only what a powerful influence God has upon this earth, that he could, of a sudden, when natural causes did not work towards it, produce this dreadful rain and thunder, and bring them out of his treasures (Ps 135:7), but also what a powerful interest he had in heaven, that God would thus hearken to the voice of a man (Jos 10:14) and answer him in the secret place of thunder, Ps 81:7. Samuel, that son of prayer, was still famous for success in prayer. Now by this extraordinary thunder and rain sent on this occasion,

[1.] God testified his displeasure against them in the same way in which he had formerly testified it, and at the prayer of Samuel too, against the Philistines. The Lord discomfited them with a great thunder, 1Sa 7:10. Now that Israel rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them with the same weapons which, not long before, had been employed against their adversaries, Isa 63:10.

[2.] He showed them their folly in desiring a king to save them, rather than God or Samuel, promising themselves more from

an arm of flesh than from the arm of God or from the power of prayer. Could their king thunder with a voice like God? Job 40:9. Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could by his prayers?

[3.] He intimated to them that how serene and prosperous soever their condition seemed to be now that they had a king, like the weather in wheat-harvest, yet, if God pleased, he could soon change the face of their heavens, and persecute them with his tempest, as the Psalmist speaks.

2 The impressions which this made upon the people. It startled them very much, as well it might.

(1.) They greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. Though when they had a king they were ready to think they must fear him only, God made them know that he is greatly to be feared and his prophets for his sake. Now they were rejoicing in their king, God taught them to rejoice with trembling.

(2.) They owned their sin and folly in desiring a king: We have added to all our sins this evil, 1Sa 12:19. Some people will not be brought to a sight of their sins by any gentler methods than storms and thunders. Samuel did not extort this confession from them till the matter was settled and the king confirmed, lest it should look as if he designed by it rather to establish himself in the government than to bring them to repentance. Now that they were flattering themselves in their own eyes, their iniquity was found to be hateful, Ps 36:2.

(3.) They earnestly begged Samuel's prayers (1Sa 12:19): Pray for thy servants, that we die not. They were apprehensive of their danger from the wrath of God, and could not expect that he should hear their prayers for themselves, and therefore they entreat Samuel to pray for them. Now they see their need of him whom awhile ago they slighted. Thus many that will not have Christ to reign over them would yet be glad to have him intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God. And the

time may come when those that have despised and ridiculed praying people will value their prayers, and desire a share in them. "Pray" (say they) "to the Lord thy God; we know not how to call him ours, but, if thou hast any interest in him, improve it for us."

II. He aims to confirm the people in their religion, and engage them for ever to cleave unto the Lord. The design of his discourse is much the same with Joshua's, 1Sa 23:1-24:22

1. He would not that the terrors of the Lord should frighten them from him, for they were intended to frighten them to him (1Sa 12:20): "Fear not; though you have done all this wickedness, and though God is angry with you for it, yet do not therefore abandon his service, nor turn from following him." Fear not, that is, "despair not, fear not with amazement, the weather will clear up after the storm. Fear not; for, though God will frown upon his people, yet he will not forsake them (1Sa 12:22) for his great name's sake; do not you forsake him then."

Every transgression in the covenant, though it displease the Lord, yet does not throw us out of covenant, and therefore God's just rebukes must not drive us from our hope in his mercy. The fixedness of God's choice is owing to the freeness of it; we may therefore hope he will not forsake his people, because it has pleased him to make them his people. Had he chosen them for their good merits, we might fear he would cast them off for their bad merits; but, choosing them for his name's sake, for his name's sake he will not leave them.

2. He cautions them against idolatry: "Turn not aside from God and the worship of him" (1Sa 12:20,21); "for if you turn aside from God, whatever you turn aside to, you will find it is a vain thing, that can never answer your expectations, but will certainly deceive you if you trust to it; it is a broken reed, a broken cistern." Idols could not profit those that sought to them in their wants, nor deliver those that sought to them in

their straits, for they were vain, and not what they pretended to be. An idol is nothing in the world, 1Co 8:4.

3. He comforts them with an assurance that he would continue his care and concern for them, 1Sa 12:23. They desired him to pray for them, 1Sa 12:19. He might have said, "Go to Saul, the king that you have put in my room," and get him to pray for you; but so far is he from upbraiding them with their disrespect to him that he promised them much more than they asked.

(1.) They asked it of him as a favour; he promised it as a duty, and startles at the thought of neglecting it. Pray for you! says he, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in not doing it. Note, It is a sin against God not to pray for the Israel of God, especially for those of them that are under our charge: and good men are afraid of the guilt of omissions.

(2.) They asked him to pray for them at this time, and upon this occasion, but he promised to continue his prayers for them and to cease as long as he lived. Our rule is to pray without ceasing; we sin if we restrain prayer in general, and in particular if we cease praying for the church.

(3.) They asked him only to pray for them, but he promised to do more for them, not only to pray for them, but to teach them; though they were not willing to be under his government as a judge, he would not therefore deny them his instructions as a prophet. And they might be sure he would teach them no other than the good and the right way: and the right way is certainly the good way: the way of duty is the way of pleasure and profit.

4. He concludes with an earnest exhortation to practical religion and serious godliness, 1Sa 12:24,25. The great duty here pressed upon us is to fear the Lord. He had said (1Sa 12:20), "Fear not with a slavish fear," but here, "Fear the Lord, with a filial fear." As the fruit and evidence of this, serve him in the duties of religious worship and of a godly conversation,

in truth and sincerity, and not in show and profession only, with your heart, and with all your heart, not dissembling, not dividing. And two things he urges by way of motive:--

(1.) That they were bound in gratitude to serve God, considering what great things he had done for them, to engage them for ever to his service.

(2.) That they were bound in interest to serve him, considering what great things he would do against them if they should still do wickedly: "You shall be destroyed by the judgments of God, both you and your king whom you are so proud of and expect so much from, and who will be a blessing to you if you keep in with God." Thus, as a faithful watchman, he gave them warning, and so delivered his own soul.

18 So Samuel called unto the Lord;and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king.

20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart;

21 and turn ye not aside: for *then should ye go* after vain *things,* which cannot profit nor deliver; for they *are* vain.

22 For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.

23 Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:

24 only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

1 Samuel-13

War with the Philistines

1 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,
2 Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

We are not told wherein it was that the people of Israel offended God, so as to forfeit his presence and turn his hand against them, as Samuel had threatened (1Sa 12:15); but doubtless they left God, else he would not have left them, as here it appears he did; for,

I. Saul was very weak and impolitic, and did not order his affairs with discretion. Saul was the son of one year (so the first words are in the original), a phrase which we make to signify the date of his reign, but ordinarily it signifies the date of one's birth, and therefore some understand it figuratively--he was as innocent and good as a child of a year old; so the Chaldee paraphrase: he was without fault, like the son of a year. But, if we admit a figurative sense, it may as well intimate that he was ignorant and imprudent, and as unfit for business as a child of a year old: and the subsequent particulars make this more accordant with his character than the former. But we take it rather, as our own translation has it, Saul reigned one year, and nothing happened that was considerable, it was a year of no action; but in his second year he did as follows:--

1. He chose a band of 3000 men, of whom he himself commanded 2000, and his son Jonathan 1000, 1Sa 13:2 The rest of the people he dismissed to their tents. If he intended these only for the guard of his person and his honorary attendants, it was impolitic to have so many, if for a standing

army, in apprehension of danger from the Philistines, it was no less impolitic to have so few; and perhaps the confidence he put in this select number, and his disbanding the rest of that brave army with which he had lately beaten the Ammonites (1Sa 11:8-11), was looked upon as an affront to the kingdom, excited general disgust, and was the reason he had so few at his call when he had occasion for them. The prince that relies on a particular party weakens his own interest in the whole community.

2. He ordered his son Jonathan to surprise and destroy the garrison of the Philistines that lay near him in Geba, 1Sa 13:3. I wish there were no ground for supposing that this was a violation or infraction of some articles with the Philistines, and that it was done treacherously and perfidiously. The reason why I suspect it is because it is said that, for doing it, Israel was had in abomination, or, as the word is, did stink with the Philistines (1Sa 13:4), as men void of common honesty and whose word could not be relied on. If it was so, we will lay the blame, not on Jonathan who did it, but on Saul, his prince and father, who ordered him to do it, and perhaps kept him in ignorance of the truth of the matter. Nothing makes the name of Israel odious to those that are without so much as the fraud and dishonesty of those that are called by that worthy name. If professors of religion cheat and over-reach, break their word and betray their trust, religion suffers by it, and is had in abomination with the Philistines. Whom may one trust if not an Israelite, one that, it is expected, should be without guile?

3. When he had thus exasperated the Philistines, then he began to raise forces, which, if he had acted wisely, he would have done before. When the Philistines had a vast army ready to pour in upon him, to avenge the wrong he had done them, then was he blowing the trumpet through the land, among a careless, if not a disaffected people, saying, Let the Hebrews hear (1Sa 13:3), and so as many as thought fit came to Saul to Gilgal, 1Sa 13:4. But now the generality, we may suppose,

drew back (either in dislike of Saul's politics or in dread of the Philistines' power), who, if he had summoned them sooner, would have been as ready at his beck as they were when he marched against the Ammonites. We often find that after-wit would have done much better before and have prevented much inconvenience.

II. Never did the Philistines appear in such a formidable body as they did now, upon this provocation which Saul gave them. We may suppose they had great assistance from their allies, for (1Sa 13:5), besides 6000 horse, which in those times, when horses were not so much used in war as they are now, was a great body, they had an incredible number of chariots, 30,000 in all: most of them, we may suppose, were carriages for the bag and baggage of so vast an army, not chariots of war. But their foot was innumerable as the sand of the sea-shore, so jealous were they for the honour of their nation and so much enraged at the baseness of the Israelites in destroying their garrison. If Saul had asked counsel of God before he had given the Philistines this provocation, he and his people might the better have borne this threatening trouble which they had now brought on themselves by their own folly.

III. Never were the people of Israel so faint-hearted, so sneaking, so very cowardly, as they were now. Some considerable numbers, it may be, came to Saul to Gilgal; but, hearing of the Philistines' numbers and preparations, their spirits sunk within them, some think because they did not find Samuel there with Saul. Those that, awhile ago, were weary of him, and wished for a king, now had small joy of their king unless they could see him under Samuel's direction. Sooner or later, men will be made to see that God and his prophets are their best friends. Now that they saw the Philistines making war upon them, and Samuel not coming in to help them, they knew not what to do; men's hearts failed them for fear. And.

1. Some absconded. Rather than run upon death among the Philistines, they buried themselves alive in caves and thickets,

1Sa 13:6. See what work sin makes; it exposes men to perils, and then robs them of their courage and dispirits them. A single person, by faith, can say, I will not be afraid of 10,000 (Ps 3:6); but here thousands of degenerate Israelites tremble at the approach of a great crowd of Philistines. Guilt makes men cowards.

2. Others fled (1Sa 13:7): They went over Jordan to the land of Gilead, as far as they could from the danger, and to a place where they had lately been victorious over the Ammonites. Where they had triumphed they hoped to be sheltered.

3. Those that staid with Saul followed him trembling, expecting no other than to be cut off, and having their hands and hearts very much weakened by the desertion of so many of their troops. And perhaps Saul himself, though he had so much honour as to stand his ground, yet had no courage to spare wherewith to inspire his trembling soldiers.

3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in
Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it.* And Saul blew the trumpet
throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.
4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the
Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the
Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.
5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with
Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and
people as the sand which *is* on the seashore in multitude: and they
came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.
6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people
were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and
in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.
7 And some *of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and
Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed
him trembling.
8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had*
appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were
scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

11 And Samuel said, what hast thou done? And Saul said, because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

Here is, I. Saul's offence in offering sacrifice before Samuel came. Samuel, when he anointed him, had ordered him to tarry for him seven days in Gilgal, promising that, at the end of those days, he would be sure to come to him, and both offer sacrifices for him and direct him what he should do. This we had 1Sa 10:8. Perhaps that order, though inserted there, was given him afterwards, or was given him as a general rule to be observed in every public congress at Gilgal, or, as is most probable, though not mentioned again, was lately repeated with reference to this particular occasion; for it is plain that Saul himself understood it as obliging him from God now to stay till Samuel came, else he would not have made so many excuses as he did for not staying, 1Sa 13:11.

This order Saul broke. He staid till the seventh day, yet had not patience to wait till the end of the seventh day. Perhaps he began to reproach Samuel as false to his word, careless of his country, and disrespectful of his prince, and thought it more fit that Samuel should wait for him than he for Samuel. However,

1. He presumed to offer sacrifice without Samuel, and nothing appears to the contrary but that he did it himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet, as if, because he was a king, he might do any thing, a piece of presumption which king Uzziah paid dearly for, 2Ch 26:16-23, &c.

2. He determined to engage the Philistines without Samuel's directions, though he had promised to show him what he

should do. So self-sufficient Saul was that he thought it not worth while to stay for a prophet of the Lord, either to pray for him or to advise him. This was Saul's offence, and that which aggravated it was,

(1.) That for aught that appears, he did not send any messenger to Samuel, to know his mind, to represent the case to him, and to receive fresh directions from him, though he had enough about him that were swift enough of foot at this time.

(2.) That when Samuel came he rather seemed to boast of what he had done than to repent of it; for he went forth to salute him, as his brother-sacrificer, and seemed pleased with the opportunity he had of letting Samuel know that he needed him not, but could do well enough without him. He went out to bless him, so the word is, as if he now thought himself a complete priest, empowered to bless as well as sacrifice, whereas he should have gone out to be blessed by him.

(3.) That he charged Samuel with breach of promise: Thou camest not within the days appointed (1Sa 13:11), and therefore if any thing was amiss Samuel must bear the blame, who was God's minister; whereas he did come according to his word, before the seven days had expired. Thus the scoffers of the latter days think the promise of Christ's coming is broken, because he does not come in their time, though it is certain he will come at the set time.

(4.) That when he was charged with disobedience he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign at all of repentance for it. It is not sinning that ruins men, but sinning and not repenting, falling and not getting up again. See what excuses he made, 1Sa 13:11,12. He would have this act of disobedience pass,

[1.] For an instance of his prudence. The people were most of them scattered from him, and he had no other way than this to keep those with him that remained and to prevent their

deserting too. If Samuel neglected the public concerns, he would not.

[2.] For an instance of his piety. He would be thought very devout, and in great care not to engage the Philistines till he had by prayer and sacrifice engaged God on his side: "The Philistines," said he, "will come down upon me, before I have made my supplication to the Lord, and then I am undone. What! go to war before I have said my prayers!" Thus he covered his disobedience to God's command with a pretence of concern for God's favour. Hypocrites lay a great stress upon the external performances of religion, thinking thereby to excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law.

And yet, lastly, He owns it went against his conscience to do it: I forced myself and offered a burnt-offering, perhaps boasting that he had broken through his convictions and got the better of them, or at least thinking this extenuated his fault, that he knew he should not have done as he did, but did it with reluctancy. Foolish man! to think that God would be well pleased with sacrifices offered in direct opposition both to his general and particular command.

II The sentence passed upon Saul for this offence. Samuel found him standing by his burnt-offering, but, instead of an answer of peace, was sent to him with heavy tidings, and let him know that the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, much more when he brings it, as Saul did, with a wicked mind.

1. He shows him the aggravations of his crime, and says to this king, Thou art wicked, which it is not for any but a prophet of the Lord to say, Job 34:18. He charges him with being an enemy to himself and his interest--Thou hast done foolishly, and a rebel to God and his government--"Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, that commandment wherewith he intended to try thy obedience." Note, Those that

disobey the commandments of God do foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools.

2. He reads his doom (1Sa 13:14): "Thy kingdom shall not continue long to thee or thy family; God has his eye upon another, a man after his own heart, and not like thee, that will have thy own will and way." The sentence is in effect the same with Mene tekel, only now there seems room left for Saul's repentance, upon which this sentence would have been reversed; but, upon the next act of disobedience, it was made irreversible, 1Sa 15:29. And now, better a thousand times he had continued in obscurity tending his asses than to be enthroned and so soon dethroned. But was not this hard, to pass so severe a sentence upon him and his house for a single error, an error that seemed so small, and in excuse for which he had so much to say? No, The Lord is righteous in all his ways and does no man any wrong, will be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges. By this,

(1.) He shows that there is no sin little, because no little god to sin against; but that every sin is a forfeiture of the heavenly kingdom, for which we stood fair.

(2.) He shows that disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, is a great provocation, as in the case of our first parents.

(3.) He warns us to take heed of our spirits, for that which to men may seem but a small offence, yet to him that knows from what principle and with what disposition of mind it is done, may appear a heinous crime.

(4.) God, in rejecting Saul for an error seemingly little, sets off, as by a foil, the lustre of his mercy in forgiving such great sins as those of David, Manasseh, and others.

(5.) We are taught hereby how necessary it is that we wait on our God continually. Saul lost his kingdom for want of two or three hours' patience.

12 therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to *be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the Lord commanded thee.

15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin.
And Saul numbered the people that *were* present with him, about six hundred men.

16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that *were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth to* Ophrah, unto the land of Shual:

18 and another company turned the way *to* Beth-horon: and another company turned *to* the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Here,

1 Samuel departs in displeasure. Saul has set up for himself, and now he is left to himself: Samuel gat him from Gilgal (1Sa 13:15), and it does not appear that he either prayed with Saul or directed him. Yet in going up to Gibeah of Benjamin, which was Saul's city, he intimated that he had not quite abandoned him, but waited to do him a kindness another time. Or he went to the college of the prophets there, to pray for Saul when he did not think fit to pray with him.

2. Saul goes after him to Gibeah, and there musters his army, and finds his whole number to be but 600 men, 1Sa 13:15,16. Thus were they for their sin diminished and brought low.

3. The Philistines ravage the country, and put all the adjacent parts under contribution. The body of their army, or standing camp (as it is called in the margin, 1Sa 13:23), lay in an advantageous pass at Michmash, but thence they sent out three separate parties or detachments that took several ways, to plunder the country, and bring in provisions for the army, 1Sa 13:17,18. By these the land of Israel was both terrified and impoverished, and the Philistines were animated and enriched. This the sin of Israel brought upon them, Isa 42:24.

4. The Israelites that take the field with Saul are unarmed, having only slings and clubs, not a sword or spear among them all, except what Saul and Jonathan themselves have, 1Sa 13:19,22. See here,

(1.) How politic the Philistines were, when they had power in their hands, and did what they pleased in Israel. They put down all the smiths' shops, transplanted the smiths into their own country, and forbade any Israelite, under severe penalties, to exercise the trade or mystery of working in brass or iron, though they had rich mines of both (De 8:9) in such plenty that it was said of Asher, his shoes shall be iron and brass, De 33:25. This was subtilely done of the Philistines, for hereby they not only prevented the people of Israel from making themselves weapons of war (by which they would be both disused to military exercises and unfurnished when there was occasion), but obliged them to a dependence upon them even for the instruments of husbandry; they must go to them, that is, to some or other of their garrisons, which were dispersed in the country, to have all their iron-work done, and no more might an Israelite do than use a file (1Sa 13:20,21), and no doubt the Philistines' smiths brought the Israelites long bills for work done.

(2.) How impolitic Saul was, that did not, in the beginning of his reign, set himself to redress this grievance. Samuel's not doing it was very excusable; he fought with other artillery; thunder and lightning, in answer to his prayer, were to him instead of sword and spear; but for Saul, that pretended to be a king like the kings of the nations, to leave his soldiers without swords and spears, and take no care to provide them, especially when he might have done it out of the spoils of the Ammonites whom he conquered in the beginning of his reign, was such a piece of negligence as could by no means be excused.

(3.) How slothful and mean-spirited the Israelites were, that suffered the Philistines thus to impose upon them and had no thought nor spirit to help themselves. It was reckoned very bad with them when there was not a shield or spear found among 40,000 in Israel (Jdg 5:8), and it was not better now, when there was never an Israelite with a sword by his side but the king and his son, never a soldier, never a gentleman; surely they were reduced to this, or began to be so, in Samuel's time, for we never find him with sword or spear in his hand. If they had not been dispirited, they could not have been disarmed, but it was sin that made them naked to their shame.

19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears:

20 but all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

1 Samuel-14

1 Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said
unto the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over
to the Philistines' garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not
his father.
2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a
pomegranate tree which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were*
with him *were* about six hundred men;
3 and Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of
Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, wearing an
ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.
4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over
unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one
side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one
was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.
5 The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against
Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.
6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armor, Come,
and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may
be that the Lord will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the
Lord to save by many or by few.

We must here take notice,

I. Of the goodness of God in restraining the Philistines, who had a vast army of valiant men in the field, from falling upon that little handful of timorous trembling people that Saul had with him, whom they would easily have swallowed up at once. It is an invisible power that sets bounds to the malice of the church's enemies, and suffers them not to do that which we should think there is nothing to hinder them from.

II. Of the weakness of Saul, who seems here to have been quite at a loss, and unable to help himself.

1. He pitched his tent under a tree, and had but 600 men with him, 1Sa 14:2. Where were now the 3000 men he had chosen, and put such a confidence in? 1Sa 13:2. Those whom he

trusted too much to failed him when he most needed them. He durst not stay in Gibeah, but got into some obscure place, in the uttermost part of the city, under a pomegranate-tree, under Rimmon (so the word is), Ha-Rimmon, that Rimmon near Gibeah, in the caves of which those 600 Benjamites that escaped his themselves, Jdg 20:47. Some think that there Saul took shelter, so mean and abject was his spirit, now that he had fallen under God's displeasure, every hour expecting the Philistines upon him, and thereby the accomplishment of Samuel's threatening, 1Sa 13:14. Those can never think themselves safe that see themselves cast out of God's protection.

2. Now he sent for a priest, and the ark, a priest from Shiloh, and the ark from Kirjath-jearim, 1Sa 14:3,18. Saul had once offended by offering sacrifice himself, 1Sa 13:9. Now he resolves never to fall into that error again, and therefore sends for a priest, and hopes to compromise the matter with God Almighty by a particular reformation, as many do whose hearts are unhumbled and unchanged. Samuel, the Lord's prophet, had forsaken him, but he thinks he can make up that loss by commanding Ahiah, the Lord's priest, to attend him, and he will not make him stay for him nor reprove him, as Samuel had done, but will do just as he bids him, 1Sa 14:18,19.

Many love to have such ministers as will be what they would have them to be, and prophesy smooth things to them; and their caressing them because they are priests, they hope, will atone for their enmity to those ministers that deal faithfully and plainly with them. He will also have the ark brought, perhaps to upbraid Samuel, who in the days of his government, for aught that appears, had not made any public use of it; or in hopes that this would make up the deficiency of his forces; one would have supposed that they would never bring the ark into the camp again, since, the last time, it not only did not save them, but did itself fall into the Philistines' hands. But it is common for those that have lost the substance

of religion to be most fond of the shadows of it, as here is a deserted prince courting a deserted priest.

III. Of the bravery and piety of Jonathan, the son of Saul, who was much fitter than the father to wear the crown. "A sweet imp (says bishop Hall) out of a crab-stock."

1. He resolved to go incognito--unknown to any one, into the camp of the Philistines; he did not acquaint his father with his design, for he knew he would forbid him; nor the people, for he knew they would all discourage him, and, because he resolved not to heed their objections, he resolved not to hear them, nor ask their advice, 1Sa 14:1,3. Nor had he so great an opinion of the priest as to consult him, but, being conscious of a divine impulse putting him upon it, he threw himself into the mouth of danger, in hope of doing service to his country. The way of access to the enemies' camp is described (1Sa 14:4,5) as being peculiarly difficult, and their natural entrenchments impregnable, yet this does not discourage him; the strength and sharpness of the rocks do but harden and whet his resolutions. Great and generous souls are animated by opposition and take a pleasure in breaking through it.

2. He encouraged his armour-bearer, a young man that attended him, to go along with him in the daring enterprise, (1Sa 14:6): "Come, and let us put our lives in our hands, and go over to the enemies' garrison, and try what we can do to put them into confusion." See whence he draws his encouragements.

(1.) "They are uncircumcised, and have not the seal of the covenant in their flesh, as we have. Fear not, we shall do well enough with them, for they are not under the protection of God's covenant as we are, cannot call him theirs as we can, by the sign of circumcision." If such as are enemies to us are also strangers to God, we need not fear them.

(2.) "God is able to make us two victorious over their unnumbered regiments. There is no restraint in the Lord, no limitation to the holy One of Israel, but it is all one to him to save by many or by few." This is a true easily granted in general, that it is all alike to Omnipotence what the instruments are by which it works; and yet it is not so easy to apply it to a particular case; when we are but few and feeble then to believe that God can not only save us, but save by us, this is an instance of faith, which, wherever it is, shall obtain a good report. Let this strengthen the weak and encourage the timid: let it be pleaded with God for the enforcing of our petitions and with ourselves for the silencing of our fears: It is nothing with God to help, whether with many or with those that have no power, 2Ch 14:11.

(3.) "Who knows but he that can use us for his glory will do it? It may be the Lord will work for us, work with us, work a sign or miracle for us." So the Chaldee. We may encourage ourselves with hope that God will appear for us, though we have not ground on which to build an assurance. An active faith will venture far in God's cause upon an it may be. Jonathan's armour-bearer, or esquire, as if he had learned to carry, not his arms only, but his heart, promised to stand by him and to follow him whithersoever he went, 1Sa 14:7. We have reason to think that Jonathan felt a divine impulse and impression putting him upon this bold adventure, in which he was encouraged by his servant's concurrence, otherwise the danger was so great which he ran upon that he would have tempted God rather than trusted him. And perhaps he had an actual regard to that word of Joshua (Jos 23:10), One man of you shall chase a thousand, borrowed from Moses, De 32:30.

3. How bold soever his resolution was, he resolved to follow Providence in the execution of it, which, he believed, would guide him with its eye (Ps 32:8), and which therefore he would carefully attend and take hints of direction from. See how he put himself upon Providence, and resolved to be determined by it. "Come" (says he to his confidant), "we will discover

ourselves to the enemy, as those that are not afraid to look them in the face (1Sa 14:8), and then, if they be so cautious as to bid us stand, we will advance no further, taking it for an intimation of Providence that God would have us act defensively, and we will prepare as well as we can to give them a warm reception (1Sa 14:9); but if they be so presumptuous as to challenge us, and the first sentinel we meet with bid us march on, we will push forward, and make as brisk an onset, assuredly gathering thence that it is the will of God we should act offensively, and then not doubting but he will stand by us," 1Sa 14:10. And upon this issue he puts it, firmly believing, as we all should,

(1.) That God has the governing of the hearts and tongues of all men, even of those that know him not, nor have any regard to him, and serves his own purposes by them, though they mean not so, neither do their hearts think so. Jonathan knew God could discover his mind to him if he pleased, and would do it, since he depended upon him, as surely by the mouth of a Philistine as by the mouth of a priest.

(2.) That God will, some way or other, direct the steps of those that acknowledge him in all their ways, and seek unto him for direction, with full purpose of heart to follow it. Sometimes we find most comfort in that which is least our own doing, and into which we have been led by the unexpected, but well observed, turns of Providence.

4. Providence gave him the sign he expected, and he answered the signal. He and his armour-bearer did not surprise the Philistines when they were asleep, but discovered themselves to them by day-light, 1Sa 14:11. The guards of the Philistines,

(1.) Disdained them, upbraided them with the cowardice of many of their people, and looked upon them to be of the regiment of sneakers: Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of their holes. If some of Christ's soldiers play the coward, others that play the man may perhaps be upbraided with it.

(2.) They defied them (1Sa 14:12): Come, and we will show you a thing, as if they came like children to gaze about them; but meaning, as Goliath (1Sa 17:44), that they would give them as meat to the fowls of the air. They bantered them, not doubting but to make a prey of them. This greatly emboldened Jonathan. With it he encouraged his servant; he had spoken with uncertainty (1Sa 14:6): It may be the Lord will work for us; but now he speaks with assurance (1Sa 14:12): The Lord has delivered them, not into our hands (he sought not his own glory), but into the hand of Israel, for he aimed at nothing but the advantage of the public. His faith being thus strengthened, no difficulty can stand before him; he climbs up the rock upon all four (1Sa 14:13), though he has nothing to cover him, nor any but his own servant to second him, nor any human probability of any thing but death before him.

5. The wonderful success of this daring enterprise. The Philistines, instead of falling upon Jonathan, to slay him, or take him prisoner, fell before him (1Sa 14:13) unaccountably, upon the first blows he gave. They fell, that is,

(1.) They were many of them slain by him and his armour-bearer, 1Sa 14:14. Twenty Philistines fell presently. It was not so much the name of Jonathan that made them yield so tamely (though some think that this had become terrible to them, since he smote one of their garrisons, 1Sa 13:3), but it was God's right hand and his arm that got him this victory.

(2.) The rest were put to flight, and fell foul upon one another (1Sa 14:15): There was trembling in the host. There was no visible cause for fear; they were so numerous, bold, and advantageously posted; the Israelites had fled before them; not an enemy made head against them, but one gentleman and his man; and yet they shook like an aspen-leaf. The consternation was general: they all trembled; even the spoilers, those that had been most bold and forward, shared in the common fright, the joints of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one

against another, and yet none of them could tell why or wherefore. It is called a trembling of God (so the original phrase is), signifying not only, as we render it, a very great trembling, which they could not resist nor reason themselves clear of, but that it was supernatural, and came immediately from the hand of God. He that made the heart knows how to make it tremble. To complete the confusion, even the earth quaked, and made them ready to fear that it would sink under them. Those that will not fear the eternal God, he can make afraid of a shadow. See Pr 21:1,Isa 33:14.

7 And his armor-bearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thy heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart.

8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand; and this *shall be* a sign unto us.

11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armor-bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armor-bearer, Come up after me: for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armor-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armor-bearer slew after him.

14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were a half acre of land, *which* a yoke *of oxen might plow.*

15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one *another.*

17 Then said Saul unto the people that *were* with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer *were* not *there.*

18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.

We have here the prosecution and improvement of the wonderful advantages which Jonathan and his armour-bearer gained against the Philistines.

I The Philistines were, by the power of God, set against one another. They melted away like snow before the sun, and went on beating down one another (1Sa 14:16), for (1Sa 14:20) every man's sword was against his fellow. When they fled for fear, instead of turning back upon those that chased them, they reckoned those only their enemies that stood in their way, and treated them accordingly. The Philistines were very secure, because all the swords and spears were in their hands. Israel had none except what Saul and Jonathan had. But now God showed them the folly of that confidence, by making their own swords and spears the instruments of their own destruction, and more fatal in their own hands than if they had been in the hands of Israel. See the like done, Jdg 7:22,2Ch 20:23.

II The Israelites were hereby animated against them.

1. Notice was soon taken of it by the watchmen of Saul, those that stood sentinel at Gibeah, 1Sa 14:16. They were aware that the host of the enemy was in great confusion, and that a great slaughter was made among them, and yet, upon search, they found none of their own forces absent, but only Jonathan and his servant (1Sa 14:17), which no doubt greatly animated them, and assured them that it could be no other than the Lord's doing, when there was no more of man's doing than what those two could do against a great host.

2. Saul began to enquire of God, but soon desisted. His spirit had not come down so far as to allow him to consult Samuel,

though, it is probable, he was near him; for we read (1Sa 13:15) that he had come to Gibeah of Benjamin; but he called for the ark (1Sa 14:18), desiring to know whether it would be safe for him to attack the Philistines, upon the disorder they perceived them to be in. Many will consult God about their safety that would never consult him about their duty.

But, perceiving by his scouts that the noise in the enemy's camp increased, he commanded the priest that officiated to break off abruptly: "Withdraw thy hand (1Sa 14:19), consult no more, wait no longer for an answer." He was very unwise indeed if (as some think) he forbade him to lift up his hands in prayer; for when Joshua was actually engaged with Amalek Moses continued still to lift up his hands. It is rather a prohibition to his enquiring of the Lord, either,

(1.) Because now he thought he did not need an answer, the case was plain enough. And yet the more evident it was that God did all the more reason he had to enquire whether he would give him leave to do any thing. Or,

(2.) Because now he would not stay for it; he was in such haste to fight a falling enemy that he would not stay to make and end of his devotions, nor hear what answer God would give him. A little thing will divert a vain and carnal mind from religious exercises. He that believeth will not make haste, such haste as this, nor reckon any business so urgent as not to allow time to take God along with him.

3. He, and all the little force he had, made a vigorous attack upon the enemy; and all the people were cried together (so the word is, 1Sa 14:20), for want of the silver trumpets wherewith God appointed them to sound an alarm in the day of battle, Nu 10:9. They summoned them together by shouting, and their number was not so great but that they might soon be got together. And now they seem bold and brave when the work is done to their hands. Our Lord Jesus had conquered our spiritual enemies, routed and dispersed them, so that we are

cowards indeed if we will not stand to our arms when it is only to pursue the victory and to divide the spoil.

4. Every Hebrew, even those from whom one would least have expected it, now turned his hand against the Philistines.

(1.) Those that had deserted and gone over to the enemy, and were among them, now fought against them, 1Sa 14:21. Some think, they were such as had been taken prisoners by them, and now they were goads in their sides. It rather seems that they went in to them voluntarily, but, now that they saw them falling, recovered the hearts of Israelites, and did valiantly for their country.

(2.) Those that had fled their colours, and hid themselves in the mountains, returned to their posts, and joined in with the pursuers (1Sa 14:22), hoping by their great zeal and officiousness, now that the danger was over and the victory sure, to atone for their former cowardice. It was not much to their praise to appear now, but it would have been more their reproach if they had not appeared. Those that are remiss and faint-hearted indeed that will not act in the cause of God when they see it victorious, as well as righteous. Thus all hands were at work against the Philistines, and every Israelite slew as many as he could, without sword or spear; yet it is said (1Sa 14:23), it was the Lord that saved Israel that day. He did it by them, for without him they could do nothing. Salvation is of the Lord.

19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that *was* in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.

20 And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and *there was* a very great discomfiture.

21 Moreover, the Hebrews *that* were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp *from the country* round about, even they also *turned* to be with the Israelites that *were* with Saul and Jonathan.

22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.
23 So the Lord saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.
24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food.
25 And all *they of* the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.
26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.
27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.
28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint.

We have here an account of the distress of the children of Israel, even in the day of their triumphs. Such alloys are all present joys subject to. And such obstructions does many a good cause meet with, even when it seems most prosperous, through the mismanagement of instruments.

I. Saul forbade the people, under the penalty of a curse, to taste any food that day, 1Sa 14:24. Here we will suppose,

1. That as king he had power to put his soldiers under this interdict, and to bind it on with a curse; and therefore they submitted to it, and God so far owned it as to discover, by the lot, that Jonathan was the delinquent that had meddled with the accursed thing (though ignorantly), on which account God would not be at that time enquired of by them.

2. That he did it with a good intention, lest the people, who perhaps had been kept for some time at short allowance, when they found plenty of victuals in the deserted camp of the Philistines, should fall greedily upon that, and so lose time in pursing the enemy, and some of them, it may be, glut themselves to such a degree as not to be fit for any more service that day. To prevent this, he forbade them to taste any food, and laid himself, it is likely, under the same restraint. And yet his making this severe order was,

(1.) Impolitic and very unwise; for, if it gained time, it lost strength, for the pursuit.

(2.) It was imperious, and disobliging to the people, and worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox when he treads out the corn. To forbid them to feast would have been commendable, but to forbid them so much as to taste, though ever so hungry, was barbarous.

(3.) It was impious to enforce the prohibition with a curse and an oath. Had he no penalty less than an anathema wherewith to support his military discipline? Death for such a crime would have been too much, but especially death with a curse. Though superiors may chide and correct, they may not curse their inferiors; our rule is, Bless, and curse not. When David speaks of an enemy he had that loved cursing perhaps he meant Saul, Ps 109:17,18.

II The people observed his order, but it had many inconveniences attending it.

1 The soldiers were tantalized; for, in their pursuit of the enemy, it happened that they went through a wood so full of wild honey that it dropped from the trees upon the ground, the Philistines having perhaps, in their flight, broken in upon the honeycombs, for their own refreshment, and left them running. Canaan flowed with honey, and here is an instance of it. They sucked honey out of the rock, the flinty rock (De

32:13); yet, for fear of the curse, they did not so much as taste the honey, 1Sa 14:25,26. Those are worthy of the name of Israelites that can deny themselves and their own appetites even when they are most craving, and the delights of sense most tempting, for fear of guilt and a curse, and the table becoming a snare. Let us never feed ourselves, much less feast ourselves, without fear.

2. Jonathan fell under the curse through ignorance. He heard not of the charge his father had given; for, having bravely forced the lines, he was then following the chase, and therefore might justly be looked upon as exempted from the charge and intended in it. But it seems it was taken for granted, and he himself did not object against it afterwards, that it extended to him, though absent upon so good an occasion. He, not knowing any peril in it, took up a piece of a honey-comb, upon the end of his staff, and sucked it (1Sa 14:27), and was sensibly refreshed by it: His eyes were enlightened, which began to grow dim through hunger and faintness; it made his countenance look pleasant and cheerful, for it was such as a stander-by might discern (1Sa 14:29): See how my eyes have been enlightened. He thought no harm, nor feared any, till one of the people acquainted him with the order, and then he found himself in a snare. Many a good son has been thus entangled and distressed, in more ways than one, by the rashness of an inconsiderate father. Jonathan, for his part, lost the crown he was heir to by his father's folly, which, it may be, this was an ill omen of.

3. The soldiers were faint, and grew feeble, in the pursuit of the Philistines. Jonathan foresaw this would be the effect of it; their spirits would flag, and their strength would fail, for want of sustenance. Such is the nature of our bodies that they soon grow unfit for service if they be not supplied with fresh recruits. Daily work cannot be done without daily bread, which our Father in heaven graciously gives us. It is bread that strengthens man's heart; therefore Jonathan reasoned very well, If the people had eaten freely, there would have been a

much greater slaughter (1Sa 14:30); but, as it was, they were very faint, too much fatigued (so the Chaldee), and began to think more of their meat than of their work.

4. The worst effect of all was that at evening, when the restraint was taken off and they returned to their food again, they were so greedy and eager upon it that they ate the flesh with the blood, expressly contrary to the law of God, 1Sa 14:32. Two hungry meals, we say, make the third a glutton; it was so here. They would not stay to have their meat either duly killed (for they slew the cattle upon the ground, and did not hang them up, as they used to do, that the blood might all run out of them) or duly dressed, but fell greedily upon it before it was half boiled or half roasted, 1Sa 14:32. Saul, being informed of it, reproved them for the sin (1Sa 14:33): You have transgressed; but did not, as he should have done, reflect upon himself as having been accessory to it, and having made the Lord's people to transgress. To put a stop to this irregularity, Saul ordered them to set up a great stone before him, and let all that had cattle to kill, for their present use, bring them thither, and kill them under his eye upon that stone (1Sa 14:33), and the people did so (1Sa 14:34), so easily were they restrained and reformed when their prince took care to do his part. If magistrates would but use their power as they might, people would be made better than they are with more ease than is imagined.

III. On this occasion Saul built an altar (1Sa 14:35), that he might offer sacrifice, either by way of acknowledgment of the victory they had obtained or by the way of atonement for the sin they had been guilty of. The same was the first altar that he built, and perhaps the rolling of the great stone to kill the beasts on reminded him of converting it into an altar, else he would not have thought of it. Saul was turning aside from God, and yet now he began to build altars, being most zealous (as many are) for the form of godliness when he was denying the power of it. See Ho 8:14, Israel has forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples. Some read it, He began to build that altar;

he laid the first stone, but was so hasty to pursue his victory that he could not stay to finish it.

29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? For had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood.

33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the Lord, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the Lord in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there.

35 And Saul built an altar unto the Lord: the same was the first altar that he built unto the Lord.

36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest. Let us draw near hither unto God.

37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? Wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.

38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

39 For, *as* the Lord liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people *that* answered him.

Here is, I. Saul's boasting against the Philistines. He proposed, as soon as his soldiers had got their suppers, to pursue them

all night, and not leave a man of them, 1Sa 14:36. Here he showed much zeal, but little discretion; for his army, thus fatigued, could as ill spare a night's sleep as a meal's meat. But it is common for rash and foolish men to consider nobody but themselves, and, so that they might but have their humour, not to care what hardships they put upon those that are under them.

However, the people were so obsequious to their king that they would by no means oppose the motion, but resolved to make the best of it, and, if he will go on, they will follow him: Do whatsoever seemeth good to thee. Only the priest thought it convenient to go on with the devotions that were broken off abruptly (1Sa 14:19), and to consult the oracle: Let us draw near hither unto God. Princes and great men have need of such about them as will thus be their remembrancers, wherever they go, to take God along with them. And, when the priest proposed it, Saul could not for shame reject the proposal, but asked counsel of God (1Sa 14:37): "Shall I go down after the Philistines? And shall I speed?"

II. His falling foul on his son Jonathan: and the rest of this paragraph is wholly concerning him: for, while he is prosecuted, the Philistines make their escape. We know not what mischief may ensue upon on rash resolve.

1. God, by giving an intimation of his displeasure, put Saul upon searching for an accursed thing. When, by the priest, he consulted the oracle, God answered him not, 1Sa 14:37. Note, When God denies our prayers it concerns us to enquire what the sin is that has provoked him to do so. Let us see where the sin is, 1Sa 14:38. For God's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but it is sin that separates between us and him. If God turns away our prayer, we have reason to suspect it is for some iniquity regarding our hearts, which we are concerned to find out, that we may put it away, may mortify it, and put it to death. Saul swears by his Maker that whoever was the Achan that troubled the camp, by eating the forbidden fruit, should

certainly die, though it were Jonathan himself, that is, though ever so dear to himself and the people, little thinking that Jonathan was the man (1Sa 14:39): He shall surely die, the curse shall be executed upon him. But none of the people answered him, that is, none of those who knew Jonathan had broken the order would inform against him.

2. Jonathan was discovered by lot to be the offender. Saul would have lots cast between himself and Jonathan on the one side, and the people on the other, perhaps because he was as confident of Jonathan's innocency in this matter as of his own, 1Sa 14:40. The people, seeing him in a heat, durst not gainsay any thing he proposed, but acquiesced: Do as seemeth good unto thee. Before he cast lots, he prayed that God would give a perfect lot (1Sa 14:41), that is, make a full discovery of this matter, or, as it is in the margin, that he would show the innocent. This was with an air of impartial justice. Judges should desire that truth may come out, whoever may suffer by it.

Lots should be cast with prayer, because they are a solemn appeal to Providence, and by them we beg of God to direct and determine us (Ac 1:24), for which reason some have condemned games that depend purely upon lot or chance as making too bold with a sacred thing. Jonathan at length was taken (1Sa 14:42), Providence designing hereby to countenance and support a lawful authority, and to put an honour upon the administration of public justice in general, reserving another way to bring off one that had done nothing worthy of death.

3. Jonathan ingenuously confesses the fact, and Saul, with an angry curse, passes sentence upon him. Jonathan denies not the truth, nor goes about to conceal it, only he thinks it hard that he must die for it, 1Sa 14:43. He might very fairly have pleaded his invincible ignorance of the law, or have insisted upon his merit, but he submitted to the necessity with a great and generous mind: "God's and my father's will be done:" thus

he showed as much valour in receiving the messengers of death himself as in sending them among the Philistines. It is as brave to yield in some cases as it is in other cases to fight. Saul is not mollified by his filial submission nor the hardness of his case; but as one that affected to be thought firm to his word, and much more to his oath; even when it bound him hardest, with another imprecation he gives judgment upon Jonathan (1Sa 14:44): "God do so and more also to me if I do not execute the law upon thee, for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan."

(1.) He passed this sentence too hastily, without consulting the oracle. Jonathan had a very good plea in arrest of the judgment. What he had done was not malum in se--bad in itself; and, as for the prohibition of it, he was ignorant of that, so that he could not be charged with rebellion or disobedience.

(2.) He did it in fury. Had Jonathan been worthy to die, yet it would have become a judge, much more a father, to pass sentence with tenderness and compassion, and not with such an air of triumph, like a man perfectly divested of all humanity and natural affection. Justice is debased when it is administered with wrath and bitterness.

(3.) He backed it with a curse upon himself if he did not see the sentence executed; and this curse did return upon his own head. Jonathan escaped, but God did so to Saul, and more also; for he was rejected of God and made anathema. Let none upon any occasion dare to use such imprecations as these, lest God say Amen to them, and make their own tongues to fall upon them, Ps 64:8. This stone will return upon him that rolleth it. Yet we have reason to think that Saul's bowels yearned toward Jonathan, so that he really punished himself, and very justly, when he seemed so severe upon Jonathan. God made him feel the smart of his own rash edict, which might make him fear being again guilty of the like. By all these vexatious accidents God did likewise correct him for his presumption in offering

sacrifice without Samuel. An expedition so ill begun could not end without some rebukes.

4. The people rescued Jonathan out of his father's hands, 1Sa 14:45. Hitherto they had expressed themselves very observant of Saul. What seemed good to him they acquiesced in, 1Sa 14:36,40. But, when Jonathan is in danger, Saul's word is no longer a law to them, but with the utmost zeal they oppose the execution of his sentence: "Shall Jonathan die--that blessing, that darling, of his country? Shall that life be sacrificed to a punctilio of law and honour which was so bravely exposed for the public service, and to which we owe our lives and triumphs? No, we will never stand by and see him thus treated whom God delights to honour." It is good to see Israelites zealous for the protection of those whom God has made instruments of public good.

Saul had sworn that Jonathan should die, but they oppose their oath to his, and swear he shall not die: "As the Lord liveth there shall not only not his head, but not a hair of his head fall to the ground;" they did not rescue him by violence, but by reason and resolution; and Josephus says they made their prayer to God that he might be loosed from the curse. They pleaded for him that he has wrought with God this day; that is, "he has owned God's cause, and God has owned his endeavours, and therefore his life is too precious to be thrown away upon a nicety." We may suppose Saul had not so perfectly forgotten the relation of a father but that he was willing enough to have Jonathan rescued, and well pleased to have that done which yet he would not do himself: and he that knows the heart of a father knows not how to blame him.

5. The design against the Philistines is quashed by this incident (1Sa 14:46): Saul went up from following them, and so an opportunity was lost of completing the victory. When Israel's shields are clashing with one another the public safety and service suffer by it.

40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan
my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do
what seemeth good unto thee.
41 Therefore Saul said unto the Lord God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*.
And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.
42 And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And
Jonathan was taken.
43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And
Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the
end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die.
44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely
die, Jonathan.
45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought
this great salvation in Israel?God forbid: *as* the Lord liveth, there
shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought
with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.
46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the
Philistines went to their own place.
47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his
enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of
Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and
against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he
vexed *them*.

Here is a general account of Saul's court and camp.

1. Of his court and family, the names of his sons and daughters (1Sa 14:49), and of his wife and his cousin-german that was general of his army, 1Sa 14:50. There is mention of another wife of Saul's (2Sa 21:8), Rizpah, a secondary wife, and of the children he had by her.

2. Of his camp and military actions.

(1.) How he levied his army: When he saw any strong valiant man, that was remarkably fit for service, he took him unto him (1Sa 14:52), as Samuel had told them the manner of the king would be (1Sa 8:11); and, if he must have a standing army, it

was his prudence to fill it up with the ablest men he could make choice of.

(2.) How he employed his army. He guarded his country against the insults of its enemies on every side, and prevented their incursions, 1Sa 14:47,48. It is supposed that he acted only defensively against those that used to invade the borders of Israel; and whithersoever he turned himself, as there was occasion, he vexed them, by checking and disappointing them. But the enemies he struggled most with were the Philistines, with whom he had sore war all his days, 1Sa 14:52. He had little reason to be proud of his royal dignity, nor had any of his neighbours cause to envy him, for he had little enjoyment of himself after he took the kingdom. He could not vex his enemies without some vexation to himself, such thorns are crowns quilted with.

48 And he gathered a host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered
Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.
49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua:
and the names of his two daughters *were these;* the name of the
firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:
50 and the name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam, the daughter of
Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host *was* Abner, the
son of Ner, Saul's uncle.
51 And Kish *was* the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner *was*
the son of Abiel.
52 And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul:
and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him
unto him.

1 Samuel-15

Saul's Disobedience and Rejection

1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee *to be*
king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto
the voice of the words of the Lord.

2 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

Here, I Samuel, in God's name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates that he was now about to put him upon a trial, in one particular instance, whether he would be obedient or no, 1Sa 15:1. And the making of this so expressly the trial of his obedience did very much aggravate his disobedience.

1. He reminds him of what God had done for him: "The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be a king. God gave thee thy power, and therefore he expects thou shouldst use thy power for him. He put honour upon thee, and now thou must study how to do him honour. He made thee king over Israel, and now thou must plead Israel's cause and avenge their quarrels. Thou art advanced to command Israel, but know that thou art a subject to the God of Israel and must be commanded by him." Men's preferment, instead of releasing them from their obedience to God, obliges them so much the more to it. Samuel had himself been employed to anoint Saul, and therefore was the fitter to be send with these orders to him.

2. He tells him, in general, that, in consideration of this, whatever God commanded him to do he was bound to do it: Now therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord. Note, God's favours to us lay strong obligations upon us to be obedient to him. This we must render, Ps 116:12.

II. He appoints him a particular piece of service, in which he must now show his obedience to God more than in any thing

he had done yet. Samuel premises God's authority to the command: Thus says the Lord of hosts, the Lord of all hosts, of Israel's hosts. He also gives him a reason for the command, that the severity he must use might not seem hard: I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, 1Sa 15:2. God had an ancient quarrel with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. We have the story, Ex 17:8-16, &c., and the crime is aggravated, De 25:18. He basely smote the hindmost of them, and feared not God. God then swore that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and that in process of time he would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek; this is the work that Saul is now appointed to do (1Sa 15:3): "Go and smite Amalek. Israel is now strong, and the measure of the iniquity of Amalek is now full; now go and make a full riddance of that devoted nation." He is expressly commanded to kill and slay all before him, man and woman, infant and suckling, and not spare them out of pity; also ox and sheep, camel and ass, and not spare them out of covetousness. Note,

1. Injuries done to God's Israel will certainly be reckoned for sooner or later, especially the opposition given them when they are coming out of Egypt.

2. God often bears long with those that are marked for ruin. The sentence passed is not executed speedily.

3. Though he bear long, he will not bear always. The year of recompence for the controversy of Israel will come at last. Though divine justice strikes slowly it strikes surely.

4. The longer judgment is delayed many times the more severe it is when it comes.

5. God chooses out instruments to do his work that are fittest for it. This was bloody work, and therefore Saul who was a rough and severe man must do it.

III. Saul hereupon musters his forces, and makes a descent upon the country of Amalek. It was an immense army that he brought into the field (1Sa 15:4): 200,000 footmen. When he came to engage the Philistines, and the success was hazardous, he had but 600 attending him, 1Sa 13:15. But now that he was to attack the Amalekites by express order from heaven, in which he was sure of victory, he had thousands at his call. But, whatever it was at other times, it was not now for the honour of Judah that their forces were numbered by themselves, for their quota was scandalously short (whatever was the reason), but a twentieth part of the whole, for they were by 10,000, when the other ten tribes (for I except Levi) brought into the field 200,000. The day of Judah's honour drew near, but had not yet come. Saul numbered them in Telaim, which signifies lambs. He numbered then like lambs (so the vulgar Latin), numbered them by the paschal lambs (so the Chaldee), allowing ten to a lamb, a way of numbering used by the Jews in the later times of their nation. Saul drew all his forces to the city of Amalek, that city that was their metropolis (1Sa 15:5), that he might provoke them to give him battle.

IV. He gave friendly advice to the Kenites to separate themselves from the Amalekites among whom they dwelt, while this execution was in doing, 1Sa 15:6. Herein he did prudently and piously, and, it is probable, according to the direction Samuel gave him. The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, a people that dwelt in tents, which made it easy for them, upon every occasion, to remove to other lands not appropriated. Many of them, at this time, dwelt among the Amalekites, where, though they dwelt in tents, they were fortified by nature, for they put their nest in a rock, being hardy people that could live any where, and affected fastnesses, Nu 24:21. Balaam had foretold that they should be wasted, Nu 24:22. However, Saul must not waste them. But,

1. He acknowledges the kindness of their ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Jethro and his family had been very helpful and serviceable to them in their passage through the wilderness, had been to them instead of eyes, and this is remembered to their posterity many ages after. Thus a good man leaves the divine blessing for an inheritance to his children's children; those that come after us may be reaping the benefit of our good works when we are in our graves. God is not unrighteous to forget the kindnesses shown to his people; but they shall be remembered another day, at furthest in the great day, and recompensed in the resurrection of the just. I was hungry, and you gave me meat. God's remembering the kindness of the Kenites' ancestors in favour to them, at the same time when he was punishing the injuries done by the ancestors of the Amalekites, helped to clear the righteousness of God in that dispensation. If he entail favours, why may he not entail frowns? He espouses his people's cause, so as to bless those that bless them; and therefore so as to curse those that curse them, Nu 24:9, Ge 12:3. They cannot themselves requite the kindnesses nor avenge the injuries done them, but God will do both.

2. He desires them to remove their tents from among the Amalekites: Go, depart, get you down from among them. When destroying judgments are abroad God will take care to separate between the precious and the vile, and to hide the meek of the earth in the day of his anger. It is dangerous being found in the company of God's enemies, and it is our duty and interest to come out from among them, lest we share in their sins and plagues, Re 18:4. The Jews have a saying, Woe to the wicked man and woe to his neighbour.

V. Saul prevailed against the Amalekites, for it was rather an execution of condemned malefactors than a war with contending enemies. The issue could not be dubious when the cause was just and the call so clear: He smote them (1Sa 15:7), utterly destroyed them, 1Sa 15:8. Now they paid dearly for the sin of their ancestors. God sometimes lays up iniquity for the

children. They were idolaters, and were guilty of many other sins, for which they deserved to fall under the wrath of God; yet, when God would reckon with them, he fastened upon the sin of their ancestors in abusing his Israel as the ground of his quarrel. Lord, How unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestable is thy righteousness!

VI. Yet he did his work by halves, 1Sa 15:9. 1. He spared Agag, because he was a king like himself, and perhaps in hope to get a great ransom for him. 2. He spared the best of the cattle, and destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. Many of the people, we may suppose, made their escape, and took their effects with them into other countries, and therefore we read of Amalekites after this; but that could not be helped. It was Saul's fault that he did not destroy such as came to his hands and were in his power. That which was now destroyed was in effect sacrificed to the justice of God, as the God to whom vengeance belongeth; and for Saul to think the torn and the sick, the lame and the lean, good enough for that, while he reserved for his own fields and his own table the firstlings and the fat, was really to honour himself more than God.

5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.
6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.
7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that *is* over against Egypt.
8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.
9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.
10 Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying,
11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the

Lord all night.

12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, blessed *be* thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord.

14 And Samuel said, what *meaneth* then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15 And Saul said, they have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Saul is here called to account by Samuel concerning the execution of his commission against the Amalekites; and remarkable instances we are here furnished with of the strictness of the justice of God and the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man. We are here told,

I. What passed between God and Samuel, in secret, upon this occasion, 1Sa 15:10, 11.

1. God determines Saul's rejection, and acquaints Samuel with it: It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king. Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, a change of his mind, but a change of his method or dispensation. He does not alter his will, but wills an alteration. The change was in Saul: He has turned back from following me; this construction God put upon the partiality of his obedience, and the prevalency of his covetousness. And hereby he did himself make God his enemy. God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom and the honour and power that belonged to it: but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace, and his fear and love; these gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

2 Samuel laments and deprecates it. It grieved Samuel that Saul had forfeited God's favour, and that God had resolved to cast him off; and he cried unto the Lord all night, spent a whole night in interceding for him, that this decree might not go forth

against him. When others were in their beds sleeping, he was upon his knees praying and wrestling with God. He did not thus deprecate his own exclusion from the government; nor was he secretly pleased, as many a one would have been, that Saul, who succeeded him, was so soon laid aside, but on the contrary prayed earnestly for his establishment, so far was he from desiring that woeful day. The rejection of sinners is the grief of good people; God delights not in their death, nor should we.

II. What passed between Samuel and Saul in public. Samuel, being sent of God to him with these heavy tidings, went, as Ezekiel, in bitterness of soul, to meet him, perhaps according to an appointment when Saul went forth on this expedition, for Saul had come to Gilgal (1Sa 15:12), the place where he was made king (1Sa 11:15), and were now he would have been confirmed if he had approved himself well in the trial of his obedience. But Samuel was informed that Saul had set up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory, at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or hand, as the word is) for himself (he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God than boasting of his victory), and also that he had marched in great state to Gilgal, for this seems to be intimated in the manner of expression: He has gone about, and passed on, and gone down, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting, and,

1. Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself (1Sa 15:13): "Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sendest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success, and I have performed the commandment of the Lord." It is very likely, if his conscience had now flown in his face at this time and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his disobedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by

justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord; whereas the only way to do that is by judging ourselves. Those that boast most of their religion may be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

2 Samuel convicts him by a plain demonstration of his disobedience. "Hast thou performed the commandment of the Lord? What means then the bleating of the sheep?" 1Sa 15:14. Saul would needs have it thought than God Almighty was wonderfully beholden to him for the good service he had done; but Samuel shows him that God was so far from being a debtor to him that he had just cause of action against him, and produces for evidence the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, which perhaps Saul appointed to bring up the rear of his triumph, but Samuel appears to them as witnesses against him. He needed not go far to disprove his professions. The noise the cattle made (like the rust of silver, Jam 5:3) would be a witness against him. Note, It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God; but what mean then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them?

3. Saul insists upon his own justification against this charge, 1Sa 15:15. The fact he cannot deny; the sheep and oxen were brought from the Amalekites. But,

(1.) It was not his fault, for the people spared them; as if they durst have done it without the express orders of Saul, when they knew it was against the express orders of Samuel. Note, Those that are willing to justify themselves are commonly very forward to condemn others, and to lay the blame upon any rather than take it to themselves. Sin is a brat that nobody cares to have laid at his doors. It is the sorry subterfuge of an impenitent heart, that will not confess its guilt, to lay the blame

on those that were tempters, or partners, or only followers in it.

(2.) It was with a good intention: "It was to sacrifice to the Lord thy God. He is thy God, and thou wilt not be against any thing that is done, as this is, for his honour." This was a false plea, for both Saul and the people designed their own profit in sparing the cattle. But, if it had been true, it would still have been frivolous, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering. God appointed these cattle to be sacrificed to him in the field, and therefore will give those no thanks that bring them to be sacrificed at his altar; for he will be served in his own way, and according to the rule he himself has prescribed. Nor will a good intention justify a bad action.

4. Samuel overrules, or rather overlooks, his plea, and proceeds, in God's name, to give judgment against him. He premises his authority. What he was about to say was what the Lord had said to him (1Sa 15:16), otherwise he would have been far from passing so severe a censure upon him. Those who complain that their ministers are too harsh with them should remember that, while they keep to the word of God, they are but messengers, and must say as they are bidden, and therefore be willing, as Saul himself here was, that they should say on. Samuel delivers his message faithfully.

(1.) He reminds Saul of the honour of God had done him in making him king (1Sa 15:17), when he was little in his own sight. God regarded the lowness of his state and rewarded the lowliness of his spirit. Note, Those that are advanced to honour and wealth ought often to remember their mean beginnings, that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the God that had advanced them.

(2.) He lays before him the plainness of the orders he was to execute (1Sa 15:18): The Lord sent thee on a journey; so easy was the service, and so certain the success, that it was rather

to be called a journey than a war. The work was honourable, to destroy the sworn enemies of God and Israel; and had he denied himself, and set aside the consideration of his own profit so far as to have destroyed all that belonged to Amalek, he would have been no loser by it at last, nor have gone this warfare on his own charges. God would no doubt have made it up to him, so that he should have no need of spoil. And therefore,

(3.) He shows him how inexcusable he was in aiming to make a profit of this expedition, and to enrich himself by it (1Sa 15:19): "Wherefore then didst thou fly upon the spoil, and convert that to thy own use which was to have been destroyed for God's honour?" See what evil the love of money is the root of; but see what is the sinfulness of sin, and that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord. It is disobedience: Thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord.

5. Saul repeats his vindication of himself, as that which, in defiance of conviction, he resolved to abide by, 1Sa 15:20,21. He denies the charge (1Sa 15:20): "Yea, I have obeyed, I have done all I should do;" for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much wiser was he in his own eyes than God himself. God bade him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience that he brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus carnal deceitful hearts think to excuse themselves from God's commandments with their own equivalents. He insists upon it that he has utterly destroyed the Amalekites themselves, which was the main thing intended; but, as to the spoil, he owns it should have been utterly destroyed; so that he knew his Lord's will, and was under no mistake about the command.

But he thought that would be wilful waste; the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses's time (Nu 31:32-34, &c.), and why not the cattle of the Amalekites now? Better it should be prey to the Israelites than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts; and therefore he connived at the people's

carrying it away. But it was their doing and not his; and, besides, it was for sacrifice to the Lord here at Gilgal, whither they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the children of disobedience of their sin and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

6. Samuel gives a full answer to his apology, since he did insist upon it, 1Sa 15:22,23. He appeals to his own conscience: Has the Lord as great delight in sacrifices as in obedience? Though Saul was not a man of any great acquaintance with religion, yet he could not but know this,

(1.) That nothing is so pleasing to God as obedience, no, not sacrifice and offering, and the fat of rams. See here what we should seek and aim at in all the exercises of religion, even acceptance with God, that he may delight in what we do. If God be well pleased with us and our services, we are happy, we have gained our point, but otherwise to what purpose is it? Isa 1:11. Now here we are plainly told that humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances, Mic 6:6-8,Ho 6:6. Obedience is enjoyed by the eternal law of nature, but sacrifice only by a positive law. Obedience was the law of innocency, but sacrifice supposes sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified and self more denied by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burnt upon the altar than to bring every high thought into obedience to God and the will subject to his will. Obedience is the glory of angels (Ps 103:20), and it will be ours.

(2.) That nothing is so provoking to God as disobedience, setting up our wills in competition with his. This is here called

rebellion and stubbornness, and is said to be as bad as witchcraft and idolatry, 1Sa 15:23. It is as bad to set up other gods as to live in disobedience to the true God. Those that are governed by their own corrupt inclinations, in opposition to the command of God, do, in effect, consult the teraphim (as the word here is for idolatry) or the diviners. It was disobedience that made us all sinners (Ro 5:19), and this is the malignity of sin, that it is the transgression of the law, and consequently it is enmity to God, Ro 8:7. Saul was a king, but if he disobey the command of God, his royal dignity and power will not excuse him from the guilt of rebellion and stubbornness. It is not the rebellion of the people against their prince, but of a prince against God, that this text speaks of.

7. He reads his doom: in short, "Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, hast despised it (so the Chaldee), hast made nothing of it (so the LXX.), hast cast off the government of it, therefore he has rejected thee, despised and made nothing of thee, but cast thee off from being king. He that made thee king has determined to unmake thee again." Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men who are not willing that God should rule over them.

16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the
Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.
17 And Samuel said, when thou *wast* little in thine own sight, *wast* thou
not *made* the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee
king over Israel?
18 And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly
destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until
they be consumed.
19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but
didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?
20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the
Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have
brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the
Amalekites.

21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal.

22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and* to hearken than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is *as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.

24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord.

26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

Saul is at length brought to put himself into the dress of the penitent; but it is too evident that he only acts the part of a penitent, and is not one indeed. Observe,

I. How poorly he expressed his repentance. It was with much ado that he was made sensible of his fault, and not till he was threatened with being deposed. This touched him in a tender part. Then he began to relent, and not till then. When Samuel told him he was rejected from being king, then he said, I have sinned, 1Sa 15:24. His confession was not free nor ingenuous, but extorted by the rack, and forced from him. We observe here several bad signs of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment.

Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of bribe to him, he puts it into his confession: I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and thy word; as if he had been in God's stead, 1Sa 15:24. David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet, in his confession, has his eye to God alone, not to Nathan. Ps 51:4 Against thee only have I sinned. But Saul, ignorantly enough, confesses his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the commandment of the Lord.

He also applies to Samuel for forgiveness (1Sa 15:25): I pray thee, pardon my sin; as if any could forgive sin but God only. Those wretchedly deceive themselves who, when they have fallen into scandalous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the church and their ministers, by the show and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put upon this of Saul is to suppose that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him. However, it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in the confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent (1Sa 15:24): I did it because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doing and not the people's; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them and did not stand in any awe of them. So that the excuse was false and frivolous; whatever he pretended, he did not really fear the people. But it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, because those are things which, how groundless soever, no man can disprove; but they forget that God searchest the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least

despise him. Therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness (1Sa 15:25) to turn again with him, and assist in a public thanksgiving for the victory. Very importunate he was in this matter when he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle to detain him (1Sa 15:27), not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared that if Samuel forsook him the people would do so too. Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But his expression was very gross when he said (1Sa 15:30), I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people. Is this the language of a penitent? No, but the contrary: "I have sinned, shame me now, for to me belongs shame, and no man can loathe me so much as I loathe myself." Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul! It is very common for those who are convicted of sin to show themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent can pretend to no other than that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

II. How little he got by these thin shows of repentance. What point did he gain by them?

1 Samuel repeated the sentence passed upon him, so far was he from giving any hopes of the repeal of it, 1Sa 15:26, the same with 1Sa 15:23. He that covers his sins shall never prosper, Pr 28:13. Samuel refused to turn back with him, but turned about to go away, 1Sa 15:27. As the thing appeared to him upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him so far to countenance one whom God had rejected as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory which was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterwards he did turn again with him (1Sa 15:31), upon further thoughts, and probably by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people or perhaps not to do honour to Saul (for, though Saul worshipped the Lord, 1Sa

15:31, it is not said Samuel presided in that worship), but to do justice on Agag, 1Sa 15:32.

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him he tore his clothes to detain him (1Sa 15:27), so loth was he to part with the prophet; but Samuel put a construction upon this accident which none but a prophet could do. He made it to signify the rending of the kingdom from him (1Sa 15:28), and that, like this, was his own doing. "He hath rent it from thee, and given it to a neighbour better than thou," namely, to David, who afterwards, upon occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe (1Sa 24:4), upon which Saul said (1Sa 24:20), I know that thou shalt surely be king, perhaps remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt of Samuel's mantle.

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible (1Sa 15:29): The Strength of Israel will not lie. The Eternity or Victory of Israel, so some read it; the holy One, so the Arabic; the most noble One, so the Syriac; the triumphant King of Israel, so bishop Patrick. "He is determined to depose thee, and he will not change his purpose. He is not a man that should repent." Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes; something happens which they could not foresee, by which their measures are broken. But with God it is not so. God has sometimes repented of the evil which he thought to have done, repentance was hidden from Saul, and therefore hidden from God's eyes.

28 And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of
Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine,
that is better than thou.
29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not
a man, that he should repent.
30 Then he said, I have sinned: *yet* honor me now, I pray thee, before
the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me,
that I may worship the Lord thy God.

31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the Lord.
32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, surely the bitterness of death is past.

Samuel, as a prophet, is here set over kings, Jer 1:10.

I. He destroys king Agag, doubtless by such special direction from heaven as none now can pretend to. He hewed Agag in pieces. Some think he only ordered it to be done; or perhaps he did it with his own hands, as a sacrifice to God's injured justice (1Sa 15:33), and sacrifices used to be cut in pieces. Now observe in this,

1. How Agag's present vain hopes were frustrated: He came delicately, in a stately manner, to show that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect, or in a soft effeminate manner, as one never used to hardship, that could not set the sole of his foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy (De 28:56), to move compassion: and he said, "Surely, now that the heat of the battle is over, the bitterness of death is past, 1Sa 15:32. Having escaped the sword of Saul," that man of war, he thought he was in no danger from Samuel, and old prophet, a man of peace. Note,

(1.) There is bitterness in death, it is terrible to nature. Surely death is bitter, so divers versions read those words of Agag; as the LXX. read the former clause, He came trembling. Death will dismay the stoutest heart.

(2.) Many think the bitterness of death is past when it is not so; they put that evil day far from them which is very near. True believers may, through grace, say this, upon good grounds, though death be not past, the bitterness of it is. O death! Where is thy sting?

2. How his former wicked practices were now punished. Samuel calls him to account, not only for the sins of his ancestors, but his own sins: Thy sword has made women

childless, 1Sa 15:33. He trod in the steps of his ancestors' cruelty, and those under him, it is likely, did the same; justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek required of this generation, Mt 23:36. Agag, that was delicate and luxurious himself, was cruel and barbarous to others. It is commonly so: those who are indulgent in their appetites are not less indulgent of their passions. But blood will be reckoned for; even kings must account to the King of kings for the guiltless blood they shed or cause to be shed. It was that crime of king Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, 2Ki 24:4. See Re 13:10.

II. He deserts king Saul, takes leave of him (1Sa 15:34), and never came any more to see him (1Sa 15:35), to advise or assist him in any of his affairs, because Saul did not desire his company nor would he be advised by him. He looked upon him as rejected of God, and therefore he forsook him. Though he might sometimes see him accidentally (as 1Sa 19:24), yet he never came to see him out of kindness or respect. Yet he mourned for Saul, thinking it a very lamentable thing that a man who stood so fair for great things should ruin himself so foolishly. He mourned for the bad state of the country, to which Saul was likely to have been so great a blessing, but now would prove a curse and a plague. He mourned for his everlasting state, having no hopes of bringing him to repentance. When he wept for him, it is likely, he made supplication, but the Lord had repented that he had made Saul king, and resolved to undo that work of his, so that Samuel's prayers prevailed not for him. Observe, We must mourn for the rejection of sinners,

1. Though we withdraw from them, and dare not converse familiarly with them. Thus the prophet determines to leave his people and go from them, and yet to weep day and night for them, Jer 9:1,2.

2. Though they do not mourn for themselves. Saul seems unconcerned at the tokens of God's displeasure which he lay

under, and yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was secure when Christ wept over it.

33 And Samuel said, as thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

1 Samuel-16

David Anointed King

1 And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2 And Samuel said, how can I go?If Saul hear *it*, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord.

3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me *him* whom I name unto thee.

Samuel had retired to his own house in Ramah, with a resolution not to appear any more in public business, but to addict himself wholly to the instructing and training up of the sons of the prophets, over whom he presided, as we find, 1Sa 19:20. He promised himself more satisfaction in young prophets than in young princes; and we do not find that, to his dying day, God called him out to any public action relating to the state, but only here to anoint David.

I. God reproves him for continuing so long to mourn for the rejection of Saul. He does not blame him for mourning on that occasion, but for exceeding in his sorrow: How long wilt thou mourn for Saul? 1Sa 16:1. We do not find here that he mourned at all for the setting aside of his own family and the

deposing of his own sons; but for the rejecting of Saul and his seed he mourns without measure, for the former was done by the people's foolish discontent, this by the righteous wrath of God. Yet he must find time to recover himself, and not go mourning to his grave,

1. Because God has rejected him, and he ought to acquiesce in the divine justice, and forget his affection to Saul; if God will be glorified in his ruin, Samuel ought to be satisfied. Besides, to what purpose should he weep? The decree has gone forth, and all his prayers and tears cannot prevail for the reversing of it, 2Sa 12:22,23.

2. Because Israel shall be no loser by it, and Samuel must prefer the public welfare before his own private affection to his friend. "Mourn not for Saul, for I have provided me a king. The people provided themselves a king and he proved bad, now I will provide myself one, a man after my own heart." See Ps 89:20,Ac 13:22. "If Saul be rejected, yet Israel shall not be as sheep having no shepherd. I have another in store for them; let thy joy of him swallow up thy grief for the rejected prince."

II. He sends him to Bethlehem, to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, a person probably not unknown to Samuel. Fill thy horn with oil. Saul was anointed with a glass vial of oil, scanty and brittle, David with a horn of oil, which was more plentiful and durable; hence we read of a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David, Lu 1:69.

III. Samuel objects the peril of going on this errand (1Sa 16:2): If Saul hear it, he will kill me. By this it appears. 1. That Saul had grown very wicked and outrageous since his rejection, else Samuel would not have mentioned this. What impiety would he not be guilty of who durst kill Samuel? 2. That Samuel's faith was not so strong as one would have expected, else he would not have thus feared the rage of Saul. Would not he that sent him protect him and bear him out? But the best men are not perfect in their faith, nor will fear be wholly cast

out any where on this side heaven. But this may be understood as Samuel's desire of direction from heaven how to manage this matter prudently, so as not to expose himself, or any other, more than needed.

IV. God orders him to cover his design with a sacrifice: Say, I have come to sacrifice; and it was true he did, and it was proper that he should, when he came to anoint a king, 1Sa 11:15. As a prophet, he might sacrifice when and where God appointed him; and it was not all inconsistent with the laws of truth to say he came to sacrifice when really he did so, thought he had also a further end, which he thought fit to conceal. Let him give notice of a sacrifice, and invite Jesse (who, it is probable, was the principal man of the city) and his family to come to the feast upon the sacrifice; and, says God, I will show thee what thou shalt do. Those that go about God's work in God's way shall be directed step by step, wherever they are at a loss, to do it in the best manner.

V. Samuel went accordingly to Bethlehem, not in pomp, or with any retinue, only a servant to lead the heifer which he was to sacrifice; yet the elders of Bethlehem trembled at his coming, fearing it was an indication of God's displeasure against them and that he came to denounce some judgment for the iniquities of the place. Guilt causes fear. Yet indeed it becomes us to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to tremble at his word. Or they feared it might be an occasion of Saul's displeasure against them, for probably they knew how much he was exasperated at Samuel, and feared he would pick a quarrel with them for entertaining him. They asked him, "Comest thou peaceably? Art thou in peace thyself, and not flying from Saul? Art thou at peace with us, and not come with any message of wrath?" We should all covet earnestly to stand upon good terms with God's prophets, and dread having the word of God, or their prayers, against us. When the Son of David was born king of the Jews all Jerusalem was troubled, Mt 2:3. Samuel kept at home, and it was a strange thing to see him so far from his own house: they therefore concluded it

must needs be some extraordinary occasion that brought him, and feared the worst till he satisfied them (1Sa 16:5):

"I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice, not with a message of wrath against you, but with the methods of peace and reconciliation; and therefore you may bid me welcome and need not fear my coming; therefore sanctify yourselves, and prepare to join with me in the sacrifice, that you may have the benefit of it." Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be a solemn protestation. When we are to offer spiritual sacrifices it concerns us, by sequestering ourselves from the world and renewing the dedication of ourselves to God, to sanctify ourselves. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, though men had reason enough to tremble, fearing that his errand was to condemn the world, yet he gave full assurance that he came peaceably, for he came to sacrifice, and he brought his offering along with him: A body hast thou prepared me. Let us sanctify ourselves, that we may have an interest in his sacrifice. Note, Those that come to sacrifice should come peaceably; religious exercises must not be performed tumultuously.

VI. He had a particular regard to Jesse and his sons, for with them his private business lay, with which, it is likely, he acquainted Jesse at his first coming, and took up his lodging at his house. He spoke to all the elders to sanctify themselves, but he sanctified Jesse and his sons by praying with them and instructing them. Perhaps he had acquaintance with them before, and it appears (1Sa 20:29, where we read of the sacrifices that family had) that it was a devout religious family. Samuel assisted them in their family preparations for the public sacrifice, and, it is probable, chose out David, and anointed him, at the family-solemnities, before the sacrifice was offered or the holy feast solemnized. Perhaps he offered private sacrifices, like Job, according to the number of them all (Job 1:5), and, under colour of that, called for them all to appear before him. When signal blessings are coming into a family they ought to sanctify themselves.

4 And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem.
And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest
thou peaceably?
5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord:
sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he
sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.
6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on
Eliab, and said, surely the Lord's anointed *is* before him.
7 But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or
on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the*
Lord *seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward
appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.
8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And
he said, neither hath the Lord chosen this.
9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, neither hath
the Lord chosen this.
10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And
Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these.
11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said,
There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the
sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will
not sit down till he come hither.

If the sons of Jesse were told that God would provide himself a king among them (as he had said, 1Sa 16:1), we may well suppose they all made the best appearance they could, and each hoped he should be the man; but here we are told,

I. How all the elder sons, who stood fairest for the preferment, were passed by?

1. Eliab, the eldest, was privately presented first to Samuel, probably none being present but Jesse only, and Samuel thought he must needs be the man: Surely this is the Lord's anointed, 1Sa 16:6. The prophets themselves, when they spoke from under the divine direction, were as liable to mistake as other men; as Nathan, 2Sa 7:3. But God rectified the prophet's mistake by a secret whisper to his mind: Look not on his countenance, 1Sa 16:7. It was strange that Samuel, who had

been so wretchedly disappointed in Saul, whose countenance and stature recommended him as much as any man's could, should be so forward to judge of a man by that rule. When God would please the people with a king he chose a comely man; but, when he would have one after his own heart, he should not be chosen by the outside. Men judge by the sight of the eyes, but God does not, Isa 11:3. The Lord looks on the heart, that is,

(1.) He knows it. We can tell how men look, but he can tell what they are. Man looks on the eyes (so the original word is), and is pleased with the liveliness and sprightliness that appear in them; but God looks on the heart, and sees the thoughts and intents of that.

(2.) He judges of men by it. The good disposition of the heart, the holiness or goodness of that, recommends us to God, and is in his sight of great price (1Pe 3:4), not the majesty of the look, or the strength and stature of the body. Let us reckon that to be true beauty which is within, and judge of men, as far as we are capable, by their minds, not their mien.

2. When Eliab was set aside, Abinadab and Shammah, and, after them, four more of the sons of Jesse, seven in all, were presented to Samuel, as likely for his purpose; but Samuel, who not attended more carefully than he did at first to the divine direction, rejected them all: The Lord has not chosen these, 1Sa 16:8,10. Men dispose of their honours and estates to their sons according to their seniority of age and priority of birth, but God does not. The elder shall serve the younger. Had it been left to Samuel, or Jesse, to make the choice, one of these would certainly have been chosen; but God will magnify his sovereignty in passing by some that were most promising as well as in fastening on others that were less so.

II. How David at length was pitched upon. He was the youngest of all the sons of Jesse; his name signifies beloved, for he was a type of the beloved Son. Observe,

1. How he was in the fields, keeping the sheep (1Sa 16:11), and was left there, though there was a sacrifice and a feast at his father's house. The youngest are commonly the fondlings of the family, but, it should seem, David was least set by of all the sons of Jesse; either they did not discern or did not duly value the excellent spirit he was of. Many a great genius lies buried in obscurity and contempt; and God often exalts those whom men despise and gives abundant honour to that part which lacked.

The Son of David was he whom men despised, the stone which the builders refused, and yet he has a name above every name. David was taken from following ewes to feed Jacob (Ps 78:71), as Moses from keeping the flock of Jethro, an instance of his humility and industry, both which God delights to put honour upon. We should think a military life, but God saw a pastoral life (which gives advantage for contemplation and communion with heaven), the best preparative for kingly power, at least for those graces of the Spirit which are necessary to the due discharge of that trust which attends it. David was keeping sheep, though it was a time of sacrifice; for there is mercy that takes precedence of sacrifice.

2. How earnest Samuel was to have him sent for: "We will not sit down to meat" (perhaps it was not the feast upon the sacrifice, but a common meal) "till he come hither; for, if all the rest be rejected, this must be he." He that designed not to sit at table at all is now waited for as the principal guest. If God will exalt those of low degree, who can hinder?

3. What appearance he made when he did come. No notice is taken of his clothing. No doubt that was according to his employment, mean and coarse, as shepherds' coats commonly are, and he did not change his clothes as Joseph did (Ge 41:14), but he had a very honest look, not stately, as Saul's, but sweet and lovely: He was ruddy, of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to (1Sa 16:12), that is, he had

a clear complexion, a good eye, and a lovely face; the features were extraordinary, and there was something in his looks that was very charming. Though he was so far from using any art to help his beauty that his employment exposed it to the sun and wind, yet nature kept its own, and, by the sweetness of his aspect, gave manifest indications of an amiable temper and disposition of mind. Perhaps his modest blush, when he was brought before Samuel, and received by him with surprising respect, made him look much the handsomer.

4. The anointing of him. The Lord told Samuel in his ear (as he had done, 1Sa 9:15) that this was he whom he must anoint, 1Sa 16:12. Samuel objects not the meanness of his education, his youth, or the little respect he had in his own family, but, in obedience to the divine command, took his horn of oil and anointed him (1Sa 16:13), signifying thereby,

(1.) A divine designation to the government, after the death of Saul, of which hereby he gave him a full assurance. Not that he was at present invested with the royal power, but it was entailed upon him, to come to him in due time.

(2.) A divine communication of gifts and graces, to fit him for the government, and make him a type of him who was to be the Messiah, the anointed One, who received the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure. He is said to be anointed in the midst of his brethren, who yet, possibly, did not understand it as a designation to the government, and therefore did not envy David (as Joseph's brethren did him), because they saw no further marks of dignity put upon him, no, not so much as a coat of divers colours. But bishop Patrick reads it, He anointed him from the midst of his brethren, that is, he singled him out from the rest, and privately anointed him, but with a charge to keep his own counsel, and not to let his own brethren know it, as by what we find (1Sa 17:28), it should seem, Eliab did not. It is computed that David now was about twenty years old; if so, his troubles by Saul lasted ten years, for he was thirty years

old when Saul died. Dr. Lightfoot reckons that he was about twenty-five, and that his troubles lasted but five years.

5. The happy effects of this anointing: The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward, 1Sa 16:13. The anointing of him was not an empty ceremony, but a divine power went along with that instituted sign, and he found himself inwardly advanced in wisdom, and courage, and concern for the public, with all the qualifications of a prince, though not at all advanced in his outward circumstances. This would abundantly satisfy him that his election was of God. The best evidence of our being predestinated to the kingdom of glory is our being sealed with the Spirit of promise, and our experience of a work of grace in our own hearts. Some think that his courage, by which he slew the lion and the bear, and his extraordinary skill in music, were the effects and evidences of the Spirit's coming upon him. However, this made him the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2Sa 23:1 Samuel, having done this, went to Ramah in safety, and we never read of him again but once (1Sa 19:18), till we read of his death; now he retired to die in peace, since his eyes had seen the salvation, even the sceptre brought into the tribe of Judah.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of
a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said,
Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he.
13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst
of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from
that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

David Plays the Harp for Saul

14 But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit
from the Lord troubled him.
15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from
God troubleth thee.
16 Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to
seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come

to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play
with his hand, and thou shalt be well.
17 And Saul said unto his servants, provide me now a man that can
play well, and bring *him* to me.

We have here Saul falling and David rising.

I. Here is Saul made a terror to himself (1Sa 16:14): The Spirit of the Lord departed from him. He having forsaken God and his duty, God, in a way of righteous judgment, withdrew from him those assistances of the good Spirit with which he was directed, animated, and encouraged in his government and wars. He lost all his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of his being rejected by him. Now God took his mercy from Saul (as it is expressed, 2Sam 7:15); for, when the Spirit of the Lord departs from us, all good goes. When men grieve and quench the Spirit, by wilful sin, he departs, and will not always strive.

The consequence of this was that an evil spirit from God troubled him. Those that drive the good Spirit away from the do of course become prey to the evil spirit. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by means of the corrupt humours of his body and passions of his mind. He grew fretful, and peevish, and discontented, timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling; he was sometimes, says Josephus, as if he had been choked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a burden to all about him.

II. Here is David made a physician to Saul, and by this means brought to court, a physician that helped him against the worst of diseases, when none else could. David was newly appointed privately to the kingdom. It would be of use to him to go to court and see the world; and here his doing so is brought about for him without any contrivance of his own or his friends. Note, Those whom God designs for any service his providence

shall concur with his grace to prepare and qualify for it. Saul is distempered; his servants have the honesty and courage to tell him what his distemper is (1Sa 16:15), an evil spirit, not by chance but from God and his providence, troubleth thee. Now,

1 The means they all advised him to for his relief was music (1Sa 16:16): "Let us have a cunning player on the harp to attend thee." How much better friends had they been to him if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to give all diligence to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him and to intercede with God for him! Then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good Spirit would have returned to him. But their project is to make him merry, and so cure him. Many whose consciences are convinced and startled are for ever ruined by such methods as these, which drown all care of the soul in the delights of sense.

Yet Saul's servants did not amiss to send for music as a help to cheer up the spirits, if they had but withal sent for a prophet to give him good counsel. And (as bishop Hall observes) it was well they did not send for a witch or diviner, by his enchantments to cast out the evil spirit, which has been the abominably wicked practice of some that have worn the Christian name, who consult the devil in their distresses and make hell their refuge. It will be no less than a miracle of divine grace if those who thus agree with Satan ever break off from him again.

2. One of his servants recommended David to him, as a fit person to be employed in the use of these means, little imagining that he was the man whom Samuel meant when he told Saul of a neighbour of his, better than he, who should have the kingdom, 1Sa 15:28. It is a very high character which the servant of Saul's here gives of David (1Sa 16:18), that he was not only fit for his purpose as a comely person and skilful in playing, but a man of courage and conduct, a mighty valiant

man, and prudent in all matters, fit to be further preferred, and (which crowned his character) the Lord is with him. By this it appears that though David, after he was anointed, returned to his country business, and there remained on his head no marks of the oil, so careful was he to keep that secret, yet the workings of the Spirit signified by the oil could not be hid, but made him shine in obscurity, so that all his neighbours observed with wonder the great improvements of his mind on a sudden. David, even in his shepherd's garb, has become an oracle, a champion, and every thing that is great. His fame reached the court soon, for Saul was inquisitive after such young men, 1Sa 14:52. When the Spirit of God comes upon a man he will make his face to shine. 3. David is hereupon sent for to court. And it seems,

(1.) His father was very willing to part with him, sent him very readily, and a present with him to Saul, 1Sa 16:20. The present was, according to the usage of those times, bread and wine (compare, 1Sa 10:3,4), therefore acceptable because expressive of the homage and allegiance of him that sent it. Probably Jesse, who knew what his son David was designed for, was aware that Providence was herein fitting him for it, and therefore he would not force Providence by sending him to court uncalled, yet he followed Providence very cheerfully when he saw it plainly putting him into the way of preferment. Some suggest that when Jesse received that message, Send me David thy son, he began to be afraid that Saul had got some intimation of his being anointed, and sent for him to do him a mischief, and therefore Jesse sent a present to pacify him; but it is probable that the person, whoever he was, that brought the message, gave him an account on what design he was sent for.

(2.) Saul became very kind to him (1Sa 16:21), loved him greatly, and designed to make him his armour-bearer, and (contrary to the manner of the king, 1Sa 8:11) asked his father's leave to keep him in his service (1Sa 16:22): Let David, I pray thee, stand before me. And good reason he had to respect him, for he did him a great deal of service with his

music, 1Sa 16:23. Only his instrumental music with his harp is mentioned, but it should seem, by the account Josephus gives, that he added vocal music to it, and sung hymns, probably divine hymns, songs of praise, to his harp. David's music was Saul's physic.

[1.] Music has a natural tendency to compose and exhilarate the mind, when it is disturbed and saddened. Elisha used it for the calming of his spirits, 2Ki 3:15. On some it has a greater influence and effect than on others, and, probably, Saul was one of those. Not that it charmed the evil spirit, but it made his spirit sedate, and allayed those tumults of the animal spirits by which the devil had advantage against him. The beams of the sun (it is the learned Bochart's comparison) cannot be cut with a sword, quenched with water, or blown out with wind, but, by closing the window-shutters, they may be kept out of the chamber. Music cannot work upon the devil, but it may shut up the passages by which he has access to the mind.

[2.] David's music was extraordinary, and in mercy to him, that he might gain a reputation at court, as one that had the Lord with him. God made his performances in music more successful, in this case, than those of others would have been. Saul found, even after he had conceived an enmity to David, that no one else could do him the same service (1Sa 19:9,10), which was a great aggravation of his outrage against him. It is a pity that music, which may be so serviceable to the good temper of the mind, should ever be abused by any to the support of vanity and luxury, and made an occasion of drawing the heart away from God and serious things: if this be to any the effect of it, it drives away the good Spirit, not the evil spirit.

18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a
son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a
mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and
a comely person, and the Lord *is* with him.

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, send me
David thy son, which *is* with the sheep.

20 And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.
21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armor-bearer.
22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favor in my sight.
23 And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

1 Samuel-17

David Kills Goliath

1 Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which *belongeth* to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.
2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.
3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and *there was* a valley between them.
4 And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span.

It was not long ago that the Philistines were soundly beaten, and put to the worse, before Israel, and they would have been totally routed if Saul's rashness had not prevented; but here we have them making head again. Observe,

I. How they defied Israel with their armies, 1Sa 17:1. They made a descent upon the Israelites' country, and possessed themselves, as it should seem, of some part of it, for they encamped in a place which belonged to Judah. Israel's ground would never have been footing for Philistine-armies if Israel had been faithful to their God. The Philistines (it is probable) had heard that Samuel had fallen out with Saul and forsaken

him, and no longer assisted and advised him, and that Saul had grown melancholy and unfit for business, and this news encouraged them to make this attempt for the retrieving of the credit they had lately lost. The enemies of the church are watchful to take all advantages, and they never have greater advantages than when her protectors have provoked God's Spirit and prophets to leave them. Saul mustered his forces, and faced them, 1Sa 17:2,3. And here we must take notice,

1. That the evil spirit, for the present, had left Saul, 1Sa 16:23. David's harp having given him some relief, perhaps the alarms and affairs of the war prevented the return of the distemper. Business is a good antidote against melancholy. Let the mind have something without to fasten on and employ itself about, and it will be the less in danger of preying upon itself. God, in mercy to Israel, suspended the judgment for a while; for how distracted must the affairs of the public have been if at this juncture the prince had been distracted!

2. That David for the present had returned to Bethlehem, and had left the court, 1Sa 17:15. When Saul had no further occasion to use him for the relief of his distemper, though, being anointed, he had a very good private reason, and, having a grant of the place of Saul's armour-bearer, he had a very plausible pretence to have continued his attendance, as a retainer to the court, yet he went home to Bethlehem, and returned to keep his father's sheep; this was a rare instance, in a young man that stood so fair for preferment, of humility and affection to his parents. He knew better than most do how to come down again after he had begun to rise, and strangely preferred the retirements of the pastoral life before all the pleasures and gaieties of the court. None more fit for honour than he, nor that deserved it better, and yet none more dead to it.

II. How they defied Israel with their champion Goliath, whom they were almost as proud of as he was of himself, hoping by him to recover their reputation and dominion. Perhaps the

army of the Israelites was superior in number and strength to that of the Philistines, which made the Philistines decline a battle, and stand at bay with them, desiring rather to put the issue upon a single combat, in which, having such a champion, they hoped to gain the victory. Now concerning this champion observe,

1. His prodigious size. He was of the sons of Anak, who at Gath kept their ground in Joshua's time (Jos 11:22), and kept up a race of giants there, of which Goliath was one, and, it is probable, one of the largest. He was in height six cubits and a span, 1Sa 17:4. They learned bishop Cumberland has made it out that the scripture-cubit was above twenty-one inches (above three inches more than our half-yard) and a span was half a cubit, by which computation Goliath wanted but eight inches of four yard in height, eleven feet and four inches, a monstrous stature, and which made him very formidable, especially if he had strength and spirit proportionable.

2. His armour. Art, as well as nature, made him terrible. He was well furnished with defensive armour (1Sa 17:5,6): A helmet of brass on his head, a coat of mail, made of brass plates laid over one another, like the scales of a fish; and, because his legs would lie most within the reach of an ordinary man, he wore brass boots, and had a large corselet of brass about his neck. The coat is said to weigh 5000 shekels, and a shekel was half an ounce avoirdupois, a vast weight for a man to carry, all the other parts of his armour being proportionable. But some think it should be translated, not the weight of the coat, but the value of it, was 5000 shekels; so much it cost. His offensive weapons were extraordinary, of which his spear only is here described, 1Sa 17:7. It was like a weaver's beam. His arm could manage that which an ordinary man could scarcely heave. His shield only, which was the lightest of all his accoutrements, was carried before him by his esquire, probably for state; for he that was clad in brass little needed a shield.

3. His challenge. The Philistines having chosen him for their champion, to save themselves from the hazard of battle, he here throws down the gauntlet, and bids defiance to the armies of Israel, 1Sa 17:8-10. He came into the valley that lay between the camps, and, his voice probably being as much stronger than other people's as his arm was, he cried so as to make them all hear him, Give me a man, that we may fight together. He looked upon himself with admiration, because he was so much taller and stronger than all about him; his heart (says bishop Hall) nothing but a lump of proud flesh. He looked upon Israel with disdain, because they had none among them of such a monstrous bulk, and defies them to find a man among them bold enough to enter the list with him.

(1.) He upbraids them with their folly in drawing an army together: "Why have you come to set the battle in array? How dare you oppose the mighty Philistines?" Or, "Why should the two armies engage, when the controversy may be sooner decided, with only the expense of one life and the hazard of another?"

(2.) He offers to put the war entirely upon the issue of the duel he proposes: "If your champion kill me, we will be your servants; if I kill him, you shall be ours." This, says bishop Patrick, was only a bravado, for no nation would be willing thus to venture its all upon the success of one man, nor is it justifiable; notwithstanding Goliath's stipulation here, when he was killed the Philistines did not stand to his word, nor submit themselves as servants to Israel. When he boasts, I am a Philistine, and you are servants to Saul, he would have it thought a great piece of condescension in him, who was a chief ruler, to enter the lists with an Israelite; for he looked on them as no better than slaves.

The Chaldee paraphrase brings him in boasting that he was the man that had killed Hophni and Phinehas and taken the ark prisoner, but that the Philistines had never given him so much as the command of a regiment in recompence of his services,

whereas Saul had been made king for his services: "Let him therefore take up the challenge."

4. The terror this struck upon Israel: Saul and his army were greatly afraid, 1Sa 17:11. The people would not have been dismayed but that they observed Saul's courage failed him; and it is not to be expected that, if the leader be a coward, the followers should be bold. We found before, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul (1Sa 11:6), none could be more daring nor forward to answer the challenge of Nahash the Ammonite, but now that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him even the big looks and big words of a single Philistine make him change colour. But where was Jonathan all this while? Why did not he accept the challenge, who, in the last war, had so bravely engaged a whole army of Philistines? Doubtless he did not feel himself stirred up of God to it, as he did in the former case. As the best, so the bravest men, are no more than what God makes them. Jonathan must now sit still, because the honour of engaging Goliath is reserved for David. In great and good actions, the wind of the Spirit blows when and where he listeth. Now the pious Israelites lament their king's breach with Samuel.

5 And *he had* a helmet of brass upon his head, and he *was* armed with
a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels
of brass.
6 And *he had* greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass
between his shoulders.
7 And the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam; and his spear's
head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield
went before him.
8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto
them, why are ye come out to set *your* battle in array? *Am* not I a
Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and
let him come down to me.
9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your
servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be
our servants, and serve us.

10 And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me
a man, that we may fight together.
11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they
were dismayed, and greatly afraid.
12 Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-judah,
whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went
among men *for* an old man in the days of Saul.
13 And the three eldest sons of Jesse went *and* followed Saul to the
battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle *were*
Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third
Shammah.
14 And David *was* the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul.
15 But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at
Bethlehem.
16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented
himself forty days.
17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an
ephah of this parched *corn,* and these ten loaves, and run to the
camp to thy brethren;
18 and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of *their* thousand, and
look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

Forty days the two armies lay encamped facing one another, each advantageously posted, but neither forward to engage. Either they were parleying and treating of an accommodation or they were waiting for recruits; and perhaps there were frequent skirmishes between small detached parties. All this while, twice a day, morning and evening, did the insulting champion appear in the field and repeat his challenge, his own heart growing more and more proud for his not being answered and the people of Israel more and more timorous, while God designed hereby to ripen him for destruction and to make Israel's deliverance the more illustrious. All this while David is keeping his father's sheep, but at the end of forty days Providence brings him to the field to win and wear the laurel which no other Israelite dares venture for. We have in these verses,

I The present state of his family. His father was old (1Sa 17:12): He went among men for an old man, was taken notice of for his great age, above what was usual at that time, and therefore was excused from pubic services, and went not in person to the wars, but sent his sons; he had the honours paid him that were due his age, his hoary head was a crown of glory to him. David's three elder brethren, who perhaps envied his place at the court, got their father to send for him home, and let them go to the camp, where they hoped to signalize themselves and eclipse him (1Sa 17:13,14), while David himself was so far from being proud of the services he had done his prince, or ambitious of further preferment, that he not only returned from court to the obscurity of his father's house, but to care, and toil, and (as it proved, 1Sa 17:34) the peril, of keeping his father's sheep. It was the praise of this humility that it came after he had the honour of a courtier, and the reward of it that it came before the honour of a conqueror. Before honour is humility. Now he had that opportunity of mediation and prayer, and other acts of devotion, which fitted him for what he was destined to more than all the military exercises of that inglorious camp could do.

II The orders his father gave him to go and visit his brethren in the camp. He did not himself ask leave to go, to satisfy his curiosity, or to gain experience and make observations; but his father sent him on a mean and homely errand, on which any of his servants might have gone. He must carry some bread and cheese to his brethren, ten loaves with some parched corn for themselves (1Sa 17:17) and ten cheeses (which, it seems, he thought too good for them) for a present to their colonel, 1Sa 17:18. David must still be the drudge of the family, though he was to be the greatest ornament of it. He had not so much as an ass at command to carry his load, but must take it on his back, and yet run to the camp.

Jesse, we thought, was privy to his being anointed, and yet industriously kept him thus mean and obscure, probably to hide him from the eye of suspicion and envy, knowing that he

was anointed to a crown in reversion. He must observe how his brethren fared, whether they were not reduced to short allowance, now that the encampment continued so long, that, if need were, he might send them more provisions. And he must take their pledge, that is, if they had pawned any thing, he must redeem it; take notice of their company, so some observe, whom they associate with, and what sort of life they lead. Perhaps David, like Joseph, had formerly brought to his father their evil report, and now he sends him to enquire concerning their manners. See the care the pious parents about their children when they are abroad from them, especially in places of temptation; they are solicitous how they conduct themselves, and particularly what company they keep. Let children think of this, and conduct themselves accordingly, remembering that, when they are from under their parents' eye, they are still under God's eye.

III. David's dutiful obedience to his father's command. His prudence and care made him be up early (1Sa 17:20), and yet not to leave his sheep without a keeper, so faithful was he in a few things and therefore the fitter to be made ruler over many things, and so well had he learnt to obey before he pretended to command. God's providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and, as it should seem, were more likely to come to an engagement than they had yet been during all the forty days, 1Sa 17:21. Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little thought of sending his son to the army just at that critical juncture, but the wise God orders the time and all the circumstances of actions and affairs so as to serve his designs of securing the interests of Israel and advancing the men after his own heart. Now observe here,

1. How brisk and lively David was, 1Sa 17:22. What articles he brought he honestly took care of, and left them with those that had the charge of the bag and baggage; but, though he had come a long journey with a great load, he ran into the army, to see what was doing there, and to pay his respects to his

brethren. Seest thou a man thus diligent in his business, he is in the way of preferment, he shall stand before kings.

2. How bold and daring the Philistine was, 1Sa 17:23. Now that the armies were drawn out into a line of battle he appeared first to renew his challenge, vainly imagining that he was in the eager chase of his own glory and triumph, whereas really he was but courting his own destruction.

3. How timorous and faint-hearted the men of Israel were. Though they had, for forty days together, been used to his haughty looks and threatening language, and, having seen no execution done by either, might have learned to despise both, yet, upon his approach, they fled from him and were greatly afraid, 1Sa 17:24. One Philistine could never thus have chased 1000 Israelites, and put 10,000 to flight, unless their Rock, being treacherously forsaken by them, had justly sold them, and shut them up, De 32:30.

4. How high Saul bid for a champion. Though he was the tallest of all the men of Israel, and, if he had not been so, while he kept close to God might himself have safely taken up the gauntlet which this insolent Philistine threw down, yet, the Spirit of the Lord having departed from him, he durst not do it, nor press Jonathan to do it; but whoever will do it shall have as good preferment as he can give him, 1Sa 17:25. If the hope of wealth and honour will prevail with any man to expose himself so far, it is proclaimed that the bold adventurer, if he come off, shall marry the king's daughter and have a good portion with her; but, as it should seem, whether he come off or no, his father's house shall be free in Israel, from all toll, tribute, custom, and services to the crown, or shall be ennobled and advanced to the peerage.

5. How much concerned David was to assert the honour of God and Israel against the impudent challenges of this champion. He asked what reward was promised to him that should slay this Philistine (1Sa 17:26), though he knew

already, not because he was ambitious of the honour, but because he would have it taken notice of, and reported to Saul, how much he resented the indignity hereby done to Israel and Israel's God. He might have presumed so far upon his acquaintance and interest at court as to go himself to Saul to offer his service; but his modesty would not let him do this. It was one of his own rules, before it was one of his son's proverbs, Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men (Pr 25:6); yet his zeal put him upon that method which he hoped would bring him into this great engagement. Two considerations, it seems, fired David with a holy indignation:--

(1.) That the challenger was one that was uncircumcised, a stranger to God and out of covenant with him.

(2.) That the challenged were the armies of the living God, devoted to him, employed by him and for him, so that the affronts offered to them reflected upon the living God himself, and that he could not bear. When therefore some had told him what was the reward proposed for killing the Philistine (1Sa 17:27) he asked others (1Sa 17:30), with the same resentment, which he expected would at length come to Saul's ear.

6. How he was brow-beaten and discouraged by his eldest brother Eliab, who, taking notice of his forwardness, fell into a passion upon it, and gave David very abusive language, 1Sa 17:28. Consider this,

(1.) As the fruit of Eliab's jealousy. He was the eldest brother, and David the youngest, and perhaps it had been customary with him (as it is with too many elder brothers) to trample upon him and take every occasion to chide him. But those who thus exalt themselves over their juniors may perhaps live to see themselves, by a righteous providence, abased, and those to whom they are abusive exalted. Time may come when the elder may serve the younger. But Eliab was now vexed that his younger brother should speak those bold words against the

Philistine which he himself durst not say. He knew what honour David had already had in the court, and, if he should now get honour in the camp (from which he thought he had found means effectually to seclude him, 1Sa 17:15), the glory of his elder brethren would be eclipsed and stained; and therefore (such is the nature of jealousy) he would rather that Goliath should triumph over Israel than that David should be the man that should triumph over him. Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy, especially the envy of a brother, the keenness of which Jacob, and Joseph, and David experienced? See Pr 18:19. It is very ill-favoured language that Eliab here gives him; not only unjust and unkind, but, at this time, basely ungrateful; for David was now sent by his father, as Joseph by his, on a kind of visit to his brethren.

Eliab intended, in what he said, not only to grieve and discourage David himself, and quench that noble fire which he perceived glowing in his breast, but to represent him to those about him as an idle proud lad, not fit to be taken notice of. He gives them to understand that his business was only to keep sheep, and falsely insinuates that he was a careless unfaithful shepherd; though he had left his charge in good hands (1Sa 17:20), yet he must tauntingly be asked, With whom hast thou left those few sheep? Though he came down now to the camp in disobedience to his father and kindness to his brethren, and Eliab knew this, yet his coming is turned to his reproach: "Thou hast come down, not to do any service, but to gratify thy own curiosity, and only to look about thee;" and thence he will infer the pride and naughtiness of his heart, and pretends to know it as certainly as if he were in his bosom. David could appeal to God concerning his humility and sincerity (Ps 17:3,131:1) and at this time gave proofs of both, and yet could not escape this hard character from his own brother. See the folly, absurdity, and wickedness, of a proud and envious passion; how groundless its jealousies are, how unjust its censures, how unfair its representations, how bitter

its invectives, and how indecent its language. God, by his grace, keep us from such a spirit!

(2.) As a trial of David's meekness, patience and constancy. A short trial it was, and he approved himself well in it; for,

[1.] He bore the provocation with admirable temper (1Sa 17:29): "What have I now done? What fault have I committed, for which I should thus be chidden? Is there not a cause for my coming to the camp, when my father sent me? Is there not a cause for my resenting the injury done to Israel's honour by Goliath's challenges?" He had right and reason on his side, and knew it, and therefore did not render railing for railing, but with a soft answer turned away his brother's wrath. This conquest of his own passion was in some respects more honourable than his conquest of Goliath. He that hath rule over his own spirit is better than the mighty. It was no time for David to quarrel with his brother when the Philistines were upon them. The more threatening the church's enemies are the more forbearing her friends should be with one another.

[2.] He broke through the discouragement with admirable resolution. He would not be driven off from his thoughts of engaging the Philistine by the ill-will of his brother. Those that undertake great and public services must not think it strange if they be discountenanced and opposed by those from whom they had reason to expect support and assistance; but must humbly go on with their work, in the face not only of their enemies' threats, but of their friends' slights and suspicions.

19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the

carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.
23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard *them.*
24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.
25 And the men of Israel said, have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, *that* the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.
26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, what shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel?For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?
27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, so shall it be done to the man that killeth him.
28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.
29 And David said, what have I now done? *Is there* not a cause?
30 And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.
31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed *them* before Saul: and he sent for him.
32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.
33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou *art but* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.
34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:
35 and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered *it* out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

David is at length presented to Saul for his champion (1Sa 17:31) and he bravely undertakes to fight the Philistine (1Sa 17:32): Let no man's heart fail because of him. It would have reflected too much upon the valour of his prince if he had said, Let not thy heart fail; therefore he speaks generally: Let no man's heart fail. A little shepherd, come but this morning from keeping sheep, has more courage than all the mighty men of Israel, and encourages them. Thus does God often send good words to his Israel, and do great things for them, by the weak and foolish things of the world. David only desires a commission from Saul to go and fight with the Philistine, but says nothing to him of the reward he had proposed, because that was not the thing he was ambitious of, but only the honour of serving God and his country: nor would he seem to question Saul's generosity. Two things David had to do with Saul:--

I. To get clear of the objection Saul made against his undertaking. "Alas!" says Saul, "thou hast a good heart to it, but art by no means an equal match for this Philistine. To engage with him is to throw away a life which may better be reserved for more agreeable services. Thou art but a youth, rash and inconsiderate, weak and unversed in arms: he is a man that has the head and hands of a man, a man of war, trained up and inured to it from his youth (1Sa 17:33), and how canst thou expect but that he will be too hard for thee?" David, as he had answered his brother's passion with meekness, so he answered Saul's fear with faith, and gives a reason of the hope which was in him that he should conquer the Philistine, to the satisfaction of Saul. We have reason to fear that Saul had no great acquaintance with nor regard to the word of God, and therefore David, in reasoning with him, fetched not his arguments and encouragements thence, how

much soever he had an eye to it in his own mind. But he argues from experience; though he was but a youth, and never in the wars, yet perhaps he had done as much as the killing of Goliath came to, for he had had, by divine assistance, spirit enough to encounter and strength enough to subdue a lion once and another time a bear that robbed him of his lambs, 1Sa 17:34-36. To these he compares this uncircumcised Philistine, looks upon him to be as much a ravenous beast as either of them, and therefore doubts not but to deal as easily with him; and hereby he gives Saul to understand that he was not so inexperienced in hazardous combats as he took him to be.

1. He tells his story like a man of spirit. He is not ashamed to own that he kept his father's sheep, which his brother had just now upbraided him with. So far is he from concealing it that from his employment as a shepherd he fetches the experience that now animated him. But he lets those about him know that he was no ordinary shepherd. Whatever our profession or calling is, be it ever so mean, we should labour to excel in it, and do the business of it in the best manner. When David kept sheep,

(1.) He approved himself very careful and tender of his flock, though it was not his own, but his father's. He could not see a lamb in distress but he would venture his life to rescue it. This temper made him fit to be a king, to whom the lives of subjects should be dear and their blood precious (Ps 72:14), and fit to be a type of Christ, the good Shepherd, who gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom (Isa 40:11), and who not only ventured, but laid down his life for his sheep. Thus too was David fit to be an example to ministers with the utmost care and diligence to watch for souls, that they be not a prey to the roaring lion.

(2.) He approved himself very bold and brave in the defence of his flock. This was that which he was now concerned to give proof of, and better evidence could not be demanded than this: "Thy servant not only rescued the lambs, but, to revenge the injury, slew both the lion and the bear."

2. He applies his story like a man of faith. He owns (1Sa 17:37) it was the Lord that delivered him from the lion and the bear; to him he gives the praise of that great achievement, and thence he infers, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. "The lion and the bear were enemies only to me and my sheep, and it was in defence of my own interest that I attacked them; but this Philistine is an enemy to God and Israel, defies the armies of the living God, and it is for their honour that I attack him." Note,

(1.) Our experiences ought to be improved by us as our encouragements to trust in God and venture in the way of duty. He that has delivered does and will.

(2.) By the care which common Providence takes of the inferior creatures, and the protection they are under, we may be encouraged to depend upon that special Providence which surrounds the Israel of God. He that sets bounds to the waves of the sea and the rage of wild beasts can and will restrain the wrath of wicked men. Paul seems to allude to this of David (2Ti 4:17,18), I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, and therefore, I trust, the Lord shall deliver me. And perhaps David here thought of the story of Samson, and encouraged himself with it; for his slaying a lion was a happy presage of his many illustrious victories over the Philistines in single combat. Thus David took off Saul's objection against his undertaking, and gained a commission to fight the Philistine, with which Saul gave him a hearty good wish; since he would not venture himself, he prayed for him that would: Go, and the Lord be with thee, a good word, if it was not spoken

customarily, and in a formal manner, as too often it is. But David has somewhat to do likewise,

II. To get clear of the armour wherewith Saul would, by all means, have him dressed up when he went upon this great action (1Sa 17:38): He armed David with his armour, not that which he wore himself, the disproportion of his stature would not admit that, but some that he kept in his armoury, little thinking that he on whom he now put his helmet and coat of mail must shortly inherit his crown and robe. David, being not yet resolved which way to attack his enemy, girded on his sword, not knowing, as yet, but he should have occasion to make use of it; but he found the armour would but encumber him, and would be rather his burden than his defence, and therefore he desires leave of Saul to put them off again: I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them, that is, "I have never been accustomed to such accoutrements as these." We may suppose Saul's armour was both very fine and very firm, but what good would it do David if it were not fit, or if he knew not how to manage himself in it? Those that aim at things above their education and usage, and covet the attire and armour of princes, forget that that is the best for us which we are fit for and accustomed to; if we had our desire, we should wish to be in our own coat again, and should say, "We cannot go with these;" we had therefore better go without them.

37 David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.

38 And Saul armed David with his armor, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

39 And David girded his sword upon his armor, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved *it*. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*. And David put them off him.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones
out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had,
even in a scrip; and his sling *was* in his hand: and he drew near to
the Philistine.
41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the
man that bare the shield *went* before him.
42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he
disdained him: for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair
countenance.
43 And the Philistine said unto David, *Am* I a dog, that thou comest to
me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

We are now coming near this famous combat, and have in these verses the preparations and remonstrances made on both sides.

I The preparations made on both sides for the encounter. The Philistine was already fixed, as he had been daily for the last forty days. Well might he go with his armour, for he had sufficiently proved it. Only we are told (1Sa 17:41) that he came on and drew near, a signal, it is likely, being given that his challenge was accepted, and, as if he distrusted his helmet and coat of mail, a man went before him, carrying his shield, for his own hands were full with his sword and spear, 1Sa 17:45. But what arms and ammunition is David furnished with? Truly none but what he brought with him as a shepherd; no breastplate, nor corselet, but his plain shepherd's coat; no spear, but his staff; no sword nor bow, but his sling; no quiver, but his scrip; nor any arrows, but, instead of them, five smooth stones picked up out of the brook, 1Sa 17:40. By this it appeared that his confidence was purely in the power of God, and not in any sufficiency of his own, and that now at length he who put it into his heart to fight the Philistine put it into his head with what weapons to do it.

II The conference which precedes the encounter, in which observe,

1. How very proud Goliath was,

(1.) With what scorn he looked upon his adversary, 1Sa 17:42. He looked about, expecting to meet some tall strong man, but, when he saw what a mean figure he made with whom he was to engage, he disdained him, thought it below him to enter the lists with him, fearing that the contemptibleness of the champion he contended with would lessen the glory of his victory. He took notice of his person, that he was but a youth, not come to his strength, ruddy and of a fair countenance, fitter to accompany the virgins of Israel in their dances (if mixed dancing was then in use) than to lead on the men of Israel in their battles. He took notice of his array with great indignation (1Sa 17:43): "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? Dost thou think to beat me as easily as thou dost thy shepherd's dog?"

(2.) With what confidence he presumed upon his success. He cursed David by his gods, imprecating the impotent vengeance of his idols against him, thinking these fire-balls thrown about him would secure his success: and therefore, in confidence of that, he darts his grimaces, as if threatening words would kill (1Sa 17:44): "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, it will be a tender and delicate feast for them." Thus the security and presumption of fools destroy them.

2. How very pious David was. His speech savours nothing of ostentation, but God is all in all in it, 1Sa 17:45-47.

(1.) He derives his authority from God: "I come to thee by warrant and commission from heaven, in the name of the Lord, who has called me to and anointed me for this undertaking, who, by his universal providence, is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, and therefore has power to do what he

pleases, and, by the special grace of his covenant, is the God of the armies of Israel, and therefore has engaged and will employ his power for their protection, and against thee who hast impiously defied them." The name of God David relied on, as Goliath did on his sword and spear. See Ps 20:7,118:10,11.

(2.) He depends for success upon God, 1Sa 17:46. David speaks with as much assurance as Goliath had done, but upon better ground; it is his faith that says, "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand, and not only thy carcase, but the carcases of the host of the Philistines, shall be given to the birds and beasts of prey."

(3.) He devotes the praise and glory of all to God. He did not, like Goliath, seek his own honour, but the honour of God, not doubting but by the success of this action,

[1.] All the world should be made to know that there is a God, and that the God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie.

[2.] All Israel (whom he calls not this army, but this assembly, or church, because they were now religiously attending the goings of their God and King, as they used to do in the sanctuary) shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear (1Sa 17:47), but can, when he pleases, save without either and against both, Ps 46:9. David addresses himself to this combat rather as a priest that was going to offer a sacrifice to the justice of God than as a soldier that was going to engage an enemy of his country.

44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy
flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.
45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword,
and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name

of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou
hast defied.
46 This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite
thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of
the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to
the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there
is a God in Israel.
47 And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with
sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you
into our hands.
48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and
drew nigh to meet David that David hasted, and ran toward the
army to meet the Philistine.
49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and
slang *it*, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone
sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.
50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a
stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no
sword in the hand of David.
51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his
sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut
off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their
champion was dead, they fled.
52 And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued
the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of
Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to
Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

Here is 1 The engagement between the two champions, 1Sa 17:48. To this engagement the Philistine advanced with a great deal of state and gravity; if he must encounter a pigmy, yet it shall be with the magnificence of a giant and a grandee. This is intimated in the manner of expression: He arose, and came, and drew nigh, like a stalking mountain, overlaid with brass and iron, to meet David. David advanced with no less activity and cheerfulness, as one that aimed more to do execution than to make a figure: He hasted, and ran, being

lightly clad, to meet the Philistine. We may imagine with what tenderness and compassion the Israelites saw such a pleasing youth as this throwing himself into the mouth of destruction, but he knew whom he had believed and for whom he acted.

2 The fall of Goliath in this engagement. He was in no haste, because in no fear, but confident that he should soon at one stroke cleave his adversary's head; but, while he was preparing to do it solemnly, David did his business effectually, without any parade: he slang a stone which hit him in the forehead, and, in the twinkling of an eye, fetched him to the ground, 1Sa 17:49. Goliath knew there were famous slingers in Israel (Jdg 20:16), yet was either so forgetful or presumptuous as to go with the beaver of his helmet open, and thither, to the only part left exposed, not so much David's art as God's providence directed the stone, and brought it with such force that it sunk into his head, notwithstanding the impudence with which his forehead was brazened. See how frail and uncertain life is, even when it thinks itself best fortified, and how quickly, how easily, and with how small a matter, the passage may be opened for life to go out and death to enter. Goliath himself has not power over the spirit to retain the spirit, Ec 8:8. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the armed man in his armour.

See how God resists the proud and pours contempt upon those that bid defiance to him and his people. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. One of the Rabbin thinks that when Goliath said to David, Come, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, he threw up his head so hastily that his helmet fell off, and so left his broad forehead a fair mark for David. To complete the execution, David drew Goliath's own sword, a two-handed weapon for David, and with it cut off his head, 1Sa 17:51. What need had David to take a sword of his own? His enemy's sword shall serve his purpose, when he has occasion for one. God is greatly

glorified when his proud enemies are cut off with their own sword and he makes their own tongues to fall upon them, Ps 64:8. David's victory over Goliath was typical of the triumphs of the son of David over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whom he spoiled, and made a show of them openly (Col 2:15), and we through him are more than conquerors.

3. The defeat of the Philistines' army hereupon. They relied wholly upon the strength of their champion, and therefore, when they saw him slain, they did not, as Goliath had offered, throw down their arms and surrender themselves servants to Israel (1Sa 17:9), but took to their heels, being wholly dispirited, and thinking it to no purpose to oppose one before whom such a mighty man had fallen: They fled (1Sa 17:51), and this put life into the Israelites, who shouted and pursued them (David, it is probable, leading them on in the pursuit) even to the gates of their own cities, 1Sa 17:52. In their return from the chase they seized all the baggage, plundered the tents (1Sa 17:53), and enriched themselves with the spoil.

4. David's disposal of his trophies, 1Sa 17:54. He brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, to be a terror to the Jebusites, who held the strong-hold of Sion: it is probable that he carried it in triumph to other cities. His armour he laid up in his tent; only the sword was preserved behind the ephod in the tabernacle, as consecrated to God, and a memorial of the victory to his honour, 1Sa 21:9.

5. The notice that was taken of David. Though he had been at court formerly, yet, having been for some time absent (1Sa 17:15), Saul had forgotten him, being melancholy and mindless, and little thinking that his musician would have spirit enough to be his champion; and therefore, as if he had never seen him before, he asked whose son he was. Abner was a stranger to him, but brought him to Saul (1Sa 17:57), and he gave a modest account of himself, 1Sa 17:58. And now he was

introduced to the court with much greater advantages than before, in which he owned God's hand performing all things for him.

53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.
54 And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent.
55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son *is* this youth? And Abner said, *as* thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.
56 And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling *is.*
57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.
58 And Saul said to him, whose son *art* thou, thou young man? And David answered, *I am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

1 Samuel-18

Jonathan's Covenant with David

1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.
3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

David was anointed to the crown to take it out of Saul's hand, and over Jonathan's head, and yet here we find,

I. That Saul, who was now in possession of the crown, reposed a confidence in him, God so ordering it, that he might by his preferment at court be prepared for future service. Saul now took David home with him, and would not suffer him to return

again to his retirement, 1Sa 18:2. And David having signalized himself above the men of war, in taking up the challenge which they declined, Saul set him over the men of war (1Sa 18:5), not that he made him general (Abner was in that post), but perhaps captain of the life-guard; or, though he was youngest, he ordered him to have the precedency, in recompence of his great services. He employed him in the affairs of government; and David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, showing himself as dutiful as he was bold and courageous. Those that hope to rule must first learn to obey. He had approved himself a dutiful son to Jesse his father, and now a dutiful servant to Saul his master; those that are good in one relation it is to be hoped will be so in another.

II. That Jonathan, who was heir to the crown, entered into covenant with him, God so ordering it, that David's way might be the clearer when his rival was his friend.

1. Jonathan conceived an extraordinary kindness and affection for him (1Sa 18:1): When he had made an end of speaking to Saul he fell perfectly in love with him. Whether it refers to his conference with Saul before the battle (1Sa 17:34,37), or to that after (1Sa 18:51), in which it is probable much more was said than is there set down, is uncertain. But, in both, David expressed himself with so much prudence, modesty, and piety, such a felicity of expression, with so much boldness and yet so much sweetness, and all this so natural and unaffected, and the more surprising because of the disadvantages of his education and appearance, that the soul of Jonathan was immediately knit unto the soul of David.

Jonathan had formerly set upon a Philistine army with the same faith and bravery with which David had now attacked a Philistine giant; so that there was between them a very near resemblance of affections, dispositions, and counsels, which made their spirits unite to easily, so quickly, so closely, that

they seemed but as one soul in two bodies. None had so much reason to dislike David as Jonathan had, because he was to put him by the crown, yet none regards him more. Those that are governed in their love by principles of wisdom and grace will not suffer their affections to be alienated by any secular regards or considerations: the greater thoughts will swallow up and overrule the less.

2. He testified his love to David by a generous present he made him, 1Sa 18:4. He was uneasy at seeing so great a soul, though lodged in so fair a body, yet disguised in the mean and despicable dress of a poor shepherd, and therefore takes care to put him speedily into the habit of a courtier (for he gave him a robe) and of a soldier, for he gave him, instead of his staff and sling, a sword and bow, and, instead of his shepherd's scrip, a girdle, either a belt or a sash; and, which made the present much more obliging, they were the same that he himself had worn, and (as a presage of what would follow) he stripped himself of them to dress David in them. Saul's would not fit him, but Jonathan's did.

Their bodies were of a size, a circumstance which well agreed with the suitableness of their minds. When Saul put these marks of honour on David he put them off again, because he would first earn them and then wear them; but, now that he had given proofs of the spirit of a prince and a soldier, he was not ashamed to wear the habits of a prince and a soldier. David is seen in Jonathan's clothes, that all may take notice he is a Jonathan's second self. Our Lord Jesus has thus shown his love to us, that he stripped himself to clothe us, emptied himself to enrich us; nay, he did more than Jonathan, he clothed himself with our rags, whereas Jonathan did not put on David's.

3. He endeavored to perpetuate this friendship. So entirely satisfied were they in each other, even at the first interview,

that they made a covenant with each other, 1Sa 18:3. Their mutual affection was sincere; and he that bears an honest mind startles not at assurances. True love desires to be constant. Those who love Christ as their own souls will be willing to join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant.

III. That both court and country agree to bless him. It is but seldom that they agree in their favourites; yet David was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also (which was strange) in the sight of Saul's servants, 1Sa 18:5. The former cordially loved him, the latter could not for shame but caress and compliment him. And it was certainly a great instance of the power of God's grace in David that he was able to bear all this respect and honour flowing in upon him on a sudden without being lifted up above measure. Those that climb so fast have need of good heads and good hearts. It is more difficult to know how to abound than how to be abased.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Saul Becomes Jealous of David

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

Now begin David's troubles, and they not only tread on the heels of his triumphs, but take rise from them, such is the vanity of that in this world which seems greatest.

I. He was too much magnified by the common people. Some time after the victory Saul went a triumphant progress through the cities of Israel that lay next him, to receive the congratulations of the country. And, when he made his public entry into any place, the women were most forward to show him respect, as was usual then in public triumphs (1Sa 18:6), and they had got a song, it seems, which they sang in their dances (made by some poet or other, that was a great admirer of David's bravery, and was more just than wise, in giving his achievements in the late action the preference before Saul's), the burden of which was, Saul had slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. Such a difference as this Moses made between the numbers of Ephraim and Manasseh, De 33:17.

II. This mightily displeased Saul, and made him envy David, 1Sa 18:8,9. He ought to have considered that they referred only to this late action, and intended not to diminish any of Saul's former exploits; and that in the action now celebrated it was undeniably true that David, in killing Goliath, did in effect slay all the Philistines that were slain that day and defeated the whole army; so that they did but give David his due. It may be, he that composed the song only used a poetic liberty, and intended not any invidious comparison between Saul and David; or, if he did, it was below the great mind of a prince to take notice of such a reflection upon his personal honour, when it appeared that the glory of the public was sincerely intended. But Saul was very wroth, and presently suspected some treasonable design at the bottom of it: What can he have more but the kingdom? This made him eye David as one he was jealous of and sought advantages against (1Sa 18:9): his countenance was not towards him as it had been. Proud men cannot endure to hear any praised but themselves,

and think all their honour lost that goes by themselves. It is a sign that the Spirit of God has departed from men if they be peevish in their resentment of affronts, envious and suspicious of all about them, and ill-natured in their conduct; for the wisdom from above makes us quite otherwise.

III. In his fury he aimed to kill David, 1Sa 18:10,11. Jealousy is the rage of a man; it made Saul outrageous against David and impatient to get him out of the way.

1. His fits of frenzy returned upon him. The very next day after he conceived malice against David the evil spirit from God, that had formerly haunted him, seized him again. Those that indulge themselves in envy and uncharitableness give place to the devil, and prepare for the re-entry of the unclean spirit, with seven others more wicked. Where envy is there is confusion. Saul pretended a religious ecstasy: He prophesied in the midst of the house, that is, he had the gestures and motions of a prophet, and humoured the thing well enough to decoy David into a snare, and that he might be fearless of any danger and off his guard; and perhaps designing, if he could but kill him, to impute it to a divine impulse and to charge it upon the spirit of prophecy with which he seemed to be animated: but really it was a hellish fury that actuated him.

2. David, though advanced to a much higher post of honour, disdained not, for his master's service, to return to his harp: He played with his hand as at other times. Let not the highest think any thing below them whereby they may do good and be serviceable to those they are obliged to.

3. He took this opportunity to aim at the death of David. A sword in a madman's hand is a dangerous thing, especially such a madman as Saul was, that was mad with malice. Yet he had a javelin or dart in his hand, which he projected, endeavouring thereby to slay David, not in a sudden passion,

but deliberately: I will smite David to the wall with it, with such a desperate force did he throw it. Justly does David complain of his enemies that they hated him with a cruel hatred, Ps 25:19. No life is thought too precious to be sacrificed to malice. If a grateful sense of the great service David had done to the public could not assuage Saul's fury, yet one would think he should have allowed himself to consider the kindness David was now doing him, in relieving him, as no one else could, against the worst of troubles.

Those are possessed with a devilish spirit indeed that render evil for good. Compare David, with his harp in his hand, aiming to serve Saul, and Saul, with his javelin in his hand, aiming to slay David; and observe the meekness and usefulness of God's persecuted people and the brutishness and barbarity of their persecutors. The bloodthirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul, Pr 29:10.

4. David happily avoided the blow twice (namely, now, and afterwards, 1Sa 19:10); he did not throw the javelin at Saul again, but withdrew, not fighting but flying for his own preservation; though he had both strength and courage enough, and colour of right, to make resistance and revenge the injury, yet he did no more than secure himself, by getting out of the way of it. David, no doubt, had a watchful eye upon Saul's hand, and the javelin in it, and did as bravely in running from it as he did lately in running upon Goliath. Yet his safety must be ascribed to the watchful eye of God's providence upon him, saving his servant from the hurtful sword; and by this narrow escape it seemed he was designed for something extraordinary.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, they have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God
came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and
David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a
javelin in Saul's hand.
11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the
wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.
12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him,
and was departed from Saul.
13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain
over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.
14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord
was with him.
15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he
was afraid of him.
16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came
in before them.
17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will
I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the
Lord's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but
let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

Saul had now, in effect, proclaimed war with David. He began in open hostility when he threw the javelin at him. Now we are here told how his enmity proceeded, and how David received the attacks of it.

I. See how Saul expressed his malice against David.

1. He was afraid of him, 1Sa 18:12. Perhaps he pretended to be afraid that David would do himself mischief, to force his way to the crown. Those that design ill against others are commonly willing to have it thought that others design ill against them. But David's withdrawal (1Sa 18:11) was a plain evidence that he was far from such a thought. However, he really stood in awe of him, as Herod feared John, Mk 6:20. Saul was sensible that he had lost the favourable presence of

God himself, and that David had it, and for this reason he feared him.

Note, Those are truly great and to be reverenced that have God with them. The more wisely David behaved himself the more Saul feared him, 1Sa 18:15, and again 1Sa 18:29. Men think the way to be feared is to hector and threaten, which makes them feared by fools only, but despised by the wise and good; whereas the way to be both feared and loved, feared by those to whom we would wish to be a terror and loved by those to whom we would wish to be a delight, is to behave ourselves wisely. Wisdom makes the face to shine and commands respect.

2. He removed him from court, and gave him a regiment in the country, 1Sa 18:13. He made him captain over 1000, that he might be from under his eye, because he hated the sight of him; and that he might not secure the interest of the courtiers. Yet herein he did impolitely; for it gave David an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the people, who therefore loved him (1Sa 18:16) because he went out and came in before them, that is, he presided in the business of his country, civil as well as military, and have universal satisfaction.

3. He stirred him up to take all occasions of quarrelling with the Philistines and engaging them (1Sa 18:17), insinuating to him that hereby he would do good service to his prince (be thou valiant for me), and good service to his God (fight the Lord's battles), and a kindness to himself too, for hereby he would qualify himself for the honour he designed him, which was to marry his eldest daughter to him. This he had merited by killing Goliath, for it was promised by proclamation to him that should do that exploit (1Sa 17:25); but David was so modest as not to demand it, and now, when Saul proposed it, it was with design of mischief to him, to make him venture upon hazardous attempts, saying in his heart, Let the hand of

the Philistines be upon him, hoping that he would some time or other be the death of him; yet how could he expect this when he saw that God was with him?

4. He did what he could to provoke him to discontent and mutiny, by breaking his promise with him, and giving his daughter to another when the time came that she should have been given to him, 1Sa 18:19. This was as great an affront as he could possibly put upon him, and touched him both in his honour and in his love. He therefore thought David's resentment of it would break out in some indecency or other, in word or deed, which might give him an advantage against him to take him off by the course of law. Thus evil men seek mischief.

5. When he was disappointed in his, he proffered him his other daughter (who it seems had a secret kindness for David, 1Sa 18:20), but with this design, that she might be a snare to him, 1Sa 18:21.

(1.) Perhaps he hoped that she would, even after her marriage to David, take part with her father against her husband, and give him an opportunity of doing David an unkindness. However,

(2.) The conditions of the marriage, he hoped, would be his destruction; for (so zealous will Saul seem against the Philistines) the conditions of the marriage must be that he killed 100 Philistines, and, as proofs that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off; this would be a just reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision as it was an ordinance of God; and perhaps David, in doing this, would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing that Saul desired and designed, much more than to

be avenged on the Philistines: For Saul thought to make David fall by the Philistines, 1Sa 18:25. See here,

[1.] What cheats bad men put upon themselves. Saul's conscience would not suffer him, except when the evil spirit was actually upon him, to aim at David's life himself, for even he could not but conceive a horror at the thought of murdering such an innocent and excellent person; but he thought that to expose him designedly to the Philistines had nothing bad in it (Let not my hand be upon him, but the hand of the Philistines), whereas that malicious design against him was as truly murder before God as if he had slain him with his own hands.

[2.] What cheats they put upon the world. Saul pretended extraordinary kindness for David even when he aimed at his ruin, and was actually plotting it: Thou shalt be my son-in-law, says he (1Sa 18:21), notwithstanding he hated him implacably. Perhaps David refers to this when (Ps 55:21) he speaks of his enemy as one whose words were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart. It is probable that Saul's employing his servants to persuade David to enter into a treaty of a match with his daughter Michal (1Sa 18:22) arose from an apprehension that either his having cheated him about his elder daughter (1Sa 18:19) or the hardness of the terms he intended now to propose would make him decline it.

II. See how David conducted himself when the tide of Saul's displeasure ran thus high against him.

1. He behaved himself wisely in all his ways. He perceived Saul's jealousy of him, which made him very cautious and circumspect in every thing he said and did, and careful to give no offence. He did not complain of hard measure more make himself the head of a party, but managed all the affairs he was entrusted with as one that made it his business to do real service to his king and country, looking upon that to be the

end of his preferment. And then the Lord was with him to give him success in all his undertakings. Though he procured Saul's ill-will by it, yet he obtained God's favour. Compare this with Ps 101:2, where it is David's promise, I will behave myself wisely; and that promise he here performed; and it is his prayer, O, when wilt thou come unto me? And that prayer God here answered: The Lord was with him. However blind fortune may seem to favour fools, God will own and bless those that behave themselves wisely.

2. When it was proposed to him to be son-in-law to the king he once and again received the proposal with all possible modesty and humility. When Saul proposed his elder daughter to him (1Sa 18:18) he said, Who am I, and what is my life? When the courtier proposed the younger, he took no notice of the affront Saul had put upon him in disposing of the elder from him, but continued in the same mind (1Sa 18:23): Seemeth it a light thing to you to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed? He knew Michal loved him, and yet did not offer to improve his interest in her affections for the gaining of her without her father's consent, but waited till it was proposed to him. And then see,

(1.) How highly he speaks of the honour offered him: To be son-in-law to the king. Though his king was but an upstart, in his original as mean as himself, in his management no better than he should be, yet, being a crowned head, he speaks of him and the royal family with all due respect. Note, Religion is so far from teaching us to be rude and unmannerly that it does not allow us to be so. We must render honour to whom honour is due.

(2.) How humbly he speaks of himself: Who am I? This did not proceed from a mean, abject, sneaking spirit, for when there was occasion he made it appear that he had as high a sense of honour as most men; nor was it from his jealousy of

Saul (though he had reason enough to fear a snake under the green grass), but from him true and deep humility: Who am I, a poor man, and lightly esteemed? David had as much reason as any man to value himself. He was of an ancient and honourable family of Judah, a comely person, a great statesman and soldier; his achievements were great, for he had won Goliath's head and Michal's heart.

He knew himself destined by the divine counsels to the throne of Israel, and yet, Whom am I, and what is my life? Note, It well becomes us, however God has advanced us, always to have low thoughts of ourselves. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And, if David thus magnified the honour of being son-in-law to the king, how should we magnify the honour of being sons (not in law, but in gospel) to the King of kings! Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! Who are we that we should be thus dignified?

3. When the slaying of 100 Philistines was made the condition of David's marrying Saul's daughter he readily closed with it (1Sa 18:26): It pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law upon those terms; and, before the time given him for the action had expired, he doubled the demand, and slew 200, 1Sa 18:27. He would not seem to suspect that Saul designed his hurt by it (though he had reason enough), but would rather act as if Saul had meant to consult his honour, and therefore cheerfully undertook it, as became a brave soldier and a true lover, though we may suppose it uneasy to Michal. David hereby discovered likewise,

(1.) A great confidence in the divine protection. He knew God was with him, and therefore, whatever Saul hoped, David did not fear falling by the Philistines, though he must needs expose himself much by such an undertaking as this.

(2.) A great zeal for the good of his country, which he would not decline any occasion of doing service to, though with the hazard of his life.

(3.) A right notion of honour, which consists not so much in being preferred as in deserving to be so. David was then pleased with the thoughts of being the king's son-in-law when he found the honour set at this high price, being more solicitous how to merit it than how to obtain it; nor could he wear it with satisfaction till he had won it.

4. Even after he was married he continued his good services to Israel. When the princes of the Philistines began to move towards another war David was ready to oppose them, and behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, 1Sa 18:30. The law dispensed with men from going to war the first year after they were married (De 24:5), but David loved his country too well to make use of that dispensation. Many that have shown themselves forward to serve the public when they have been in pursuit of preferment have declined it when they have gained their point; but David acted from more generous principles.

III. Observe how God brought good to David out of Saul's project against him.

1. Saul gave him his daughter to be a snare to him, but in this respect that marriage was a kindness to him, that his being Saul's son-in-law made his succeeding him much the less invidious, especially when so many of his sons were slain with him, 1Sa 31:2.

2. Saul thought, by putting him upon dangerous services, to have him taken off, but that very thing confirmed his interest in the people; for the more he did against the Philistines the better they loved him, so that his name was much set by (1Sa

18:30), which would make his coming to the crown the more easy. Thus God makes even the wrath of man to praise him and serves his designs of kindness to his own people by it.

18 And David said unto Saul, Who *am* I?And what *is* my life, *or* my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?

19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in *the one of* the twain.

22 And Saul commanded his servants, *saying*, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son-in-law.

23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, on this manner spake David.

25 And Saul said, thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law: and the days were not expired.

27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

28 And Saul saw and knew that the Lord *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to
pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely
than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

1 Samuel-19

Saul Seeks to Kill David

1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that
they should kill David.
2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan
told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now
therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and
abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:
3 and I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou
art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see,
that I will tell thee.
4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said
unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David;
because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have*
been to thee-ward very good:

Saul and Jonathan appear here in their different characters, with reference to David.

I. Never was enemy so unreasonably cruel as Saul. He spoke to his son and all his servants that they should kill David, 1Sa 19:1. His projects to take him off had failed, and therefore he proclaims him an out-law, and charges all about him, upon their allegiance, to take the first opportunity to kill David. It is strange that he was not ashamed thus to avow his malice when he could give no reason for it, and that knowing all his servants loved David (for so he had said himself, 1Sa 18:22), he was not afraid of provoking them to rebel by this bloody order.

Either malice was not then so politic, or justice was not so corrupted as it has been since, or else Saul would have had him indicted, and have suborned witnesses to swear treason against him, and so have had him taken off, as Naboth was, by colour of law. But there is least danger from this undisguised malice. It was strange that he who knew how well Jonathan loved him should expect him to kill him; but he thought that because he was heir to the crown he must needs be as envious at David as himself was. And Providence ordered it thus that he might befriend David's safety.

II. Never was friend so surprisingly kind as Jonathan. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Such a one Jonathan was to David. He not only continued to delight much in him, though David's glory eclipsed his, but bravely appeared for him now that the stream ran so strongly against him.

1. He took care for his present security by letting him know his danger (1Sa 19:2): "Take heed to thyself, and keep out of harm's way." Jonathan knew not but that some of the servants might be either so obsequious to Saul or so envious at David as to put the orders in execution which Saul had given, if they could light on David.

2. He took pains to pacify his father and reconcile him to David. The next morning he ventured to commune with him concerning David (1Sa 19:3), not that night, perhaps because he observed Saul to be drunk and not fit to be spoken to, or because he hoped that, when he had slept upon it, he would himself revoke the order, or because he could not have an opportunity of speaking to him till morning.

(1.) His intercession for David was very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of the meekness of wisdom; and he showed himself faithful to his friends by speaking good of him, though he was in danger of incurring his father's

displeasure by it--a rare instance of valuable friendship! He pleads,

[1.] The good services David had done to the public, and particularly to Saul: His work has been to thee-ward very good, 1Sa 19:4. Witness the relief he had given him against his distemper with his harp, and his bold encounter with Goliath, that memorable action, which did, in effect, save Saul's life and kingdom. He appeals to himself concerning his: Thou thyself sawest it, and didst rejoice. In that and other instances it appeared that David was a favourite of heaven and a friend to Israel, as well as a good servant to Saul, for by him the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel; so that to order him to be slain was not only base ingratitude to so good a servant, but a great affront to God and a great injury to the public.

[2.] He pleads his innocency. Though he had formerly done many good offices, yet, if he had now been chargeable with any crimes, it would have been another matter; but he has not sinned against thee (1Sa 19:1), his blood is innocent (1Sa 19:5), and, if he be slain, it is without cause. And Jonathan had therefore reason to protest against it because he could not entail any thing upon his family more pernicious than the guilt of innocent blood.

(2.) His intercession, being thus prudent, was prevalent. God inclined the heart of Saul to hearken to the voice of Jonathan. Note, We must be willing to hear reason, and to take all reproofs and good advice even from our inferiors, parents from their own children. How forcible are right words! Saul was, for the present, so far convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David that,

[1.] He recalled the bloody warrant for his execution (1Sa 19:6): As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain. Whether Saul

swore here with due solemnity or no does not appear; perhaps he did, and the matter was of such moment as to deserve it and of such uncertainty as to need it. But at other times Saul swore rashly and profanely, which made the sincerity of this oath justly questionable; for it may be feared that those who can so far jest with an oath as to make a by-word of it, and prostitute it to a trifle, have not such a due sense of the obligation of it but that, to serve a turn, they will prostitute it to a lie. Some suspect that Saul said and swore this with a malicious design to bring David within his reach again, intending to take the first opportunity to slay him. But, as bad as Saul was, we can scarcely think so ill of him; and therefore we suppose that he spoke as he thought for the present, but the convictions soon wore off and his corruptions prevailed and triumphed over them.

[2.] He renewed the grant of his place at court. Jonathan brought him to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past (1Sa 19:7), hoping that now the storm was over, and that his friend Jonathan would be instrumental to keep his father always in this good mind.

5 for he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the
Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it,* and
didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood,
to slay David without a cause?
6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, *As*
the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.
7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those
things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his
presence, as in times past.
8 And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the
Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from
him.

Here I. David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied

him, yet he did not therefore retire in sullenness and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be weary of well doing, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our heavenly Father is, even to the froward and unthankful. Notwithstanding the many affronts Saul had given to David, yet we find him,

1. As bold as ever in using his sword for the service of his country, 1Sa 19:8. The war broke out again with the Philistines, which gave David occasion again to signalize himself. It was a great deal of bravery that he charged them; and he came off victorious, slaying many and putting the rest to flight.

2. As cheerful as ever in using his harp for the service of the prince. When Saul was disturbed with his former fits of melancholy David played with his hand, 1Sa 19:9. He might have pleaded that this was a piece of service now below him; but a humble man will think nothing below him by which he may do good. He might have objected the danger he was in the last time he performed this service for Saul, 1Sa 18:10. But he had learned to render good for evil, and to trust God with his safety in the way of his duty. See how David was affected when his enemy was sick (Ps 35:13,14), which perhaps refers to Saul's sickness.

II. Saul continues his malice against David. He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker that David should not be slain now endeavors to slay him himself. So implacable, so incurable, is the enmity of the serpent against that of the woman, so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, Jer 17:9. The fresh honours David had won in this last war with the Philistines, instead of extinguishing Saul's ill-will to him, and confirming his reconciliation, revived his envy and exasperated him yet more.

And, when he indulged this wicked passion, no marvel that the evil spirit came upon him (1Sa 19:9), for when we let the sun go down upon our wrath we give place to the devil (Eph 4:26,27), we make room for him and invite him. Discomposures of mind, though helped forward by the agency of Satan, commonly owe their origin to men's own sins and follies. Saul's fear and jealousy made him a torment to himself, so that he could not sit in his house without a javelin in his hand, pretending it was for his preservation, but designing it for David's destruction; for he endeavored to nail him to the wall, running at him so violently that he struck the javelin into the wall (1Sa 19:10), so strong was the devil in him, so strong his own rage and passion. Perhaps he thought that, if he killed David now, he would be excusable before God and man, as being non compos mentis--not in his right mind, and that it would be imputed to his distraction. But God cannot be deceived by pretences, whatever men may be.

III. God continues his care of David and still watches over him for good. Saul missed his blow. David was too quick for him and fled, and by a kind providence escaped that night. To these preservations, among others, David often refers in his Psalms, when he speaks of God's being his shield and buckler, his rock and fortress, and delivering his soul from death.

9 And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his
house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand.
10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin;
but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin
into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.
11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to
slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying,
If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain.
12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and
fled, and escaped.

Here is, I. Saul's further design of mischief to David. When David had escaped the javelin, supposing he went straight to his own house, as indeed he did, Saul sent some of his guards after him to lay wait at the door of his house, and to assassinate him in the morning as soon as he stirred out, 1Sa 19:11. Josephus says the design was to seize him and to hurry him before a court of justice that was ordered to condemn him and put him to death as a traitor; but we are here told it was a shorter way they were to take with him: they were ordered to slay him. Well might David complain that his enemies were bloody men, as he did in the psalm which he penned at this time, and upon this occasion (Ps 59:1-17), when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. See 1Sa 19:2,3,7. He complains that swords were in their lips.

II. David's wonderful deliverance out of this danger. Michal was the instrument of it, whom Saul gave him to be a snare to him, but she proved to be his protector and helper. Often is the devil out-shot with his own bow. How Michal came to know the danger her husband was in does not appear; perhaps she had notice sent her from court, or rather was herself aware of the soldiers about the house, when they were going to bed, though they kept so still and silent that they said, Who dost hear? which David takes notice of, Ps 59:7. She, knowing her father's great indignation at David, soon suspected the design, and bestirred herself for her husband's safety.

1. She got David out of the danger. She told him how imminent the peril was (1Sa 19:11): To-morrow thou wilt be slain. As Josephus paraphrases it, she told him that if the sun saw him there next morning it would never see him more; and then put him in a way of escape. David himself was better versed in the art of fighting than of flying, and had it been lawful it would have been easy for him to have cleared his house, by dint of sword, from those that haunted it; but Michal let him down through a window (1Sa 19:12), all the doors

being guarded; and so he fled and escaped. And now it was that, either in his own closet before he went or in the hiding-place to which he fled, he penned that Ps 59:1-17, which shows that, in his fright and hurry, his mind was composed, and, in this great danger, his faith was strong and fixed on God; and, whereas the plot was to slay him in the morning, he speaks there with the greatest assurance (1Sa 19:16), I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.

2. She practised a deception upon Saul and those whom he employed to be the instruments of his cruelty. When the doors of the house were opened in the morning, and David did not appear, the messengers would search the house for him, and did so. But Michal told them he was sick in bed (1Sa 19:14), and, if they would not believe her, they might see, for (1Sa 19:13) she had put a wooden image in the bed, and wrapped it up close and warm as if it had been David asleep, not in a condition to be spoken to; the goats' hair about the image was to resemble David's hair, the better to impose upon them. Michal can by no means be justified in telling a lie, and covering it thus with a cheat. God's truth needed not her lie. But she intended hereby to keep Saul in suspense for a while, that David might have some time to secure himself, not doubting but those messengers would pursue him if they found he had gone. The messengers had so much humanity as not to offer him any disturbance when they heard he was sick; for to those that are in this misery pity should be shown; but Saul, when he heard it, gave positive orders that he should be brought to him sick or well: Bring him to me in the bed, that I may slay him, 1Sa 19:15. It was base and barbarous thus to triumph over a sick man; and to vow the death of one who for aught that he knew was dying by the hand of nature. So earnestly did he thirst after his blood, and so greedy was his revenge, that he could not be pleased to see him dead, unless he himself was the death of him; though awhile ago he had said, Let not my hand be upon him. Thus when men lay the

reins on the neck of their passions they grow more and more outrageous. When the messengers were sent again, the cheat was discovered, 1Sa 19:16.

But by this time it was to be hoped that David was safe, and therefore Michal was not then much concerned at the discovery. Saul chid her for helping David to escape (1Sa 19:17): Why hast thou deceived me so? What a base spirit was Saul of, to expect that, because Michal was his daughter, she must therefore betray her own husband to him unjustly. Ought she not to forsake and forget her father and her father's house, to cleave to her husband? Those that themselves will be held by no bonds of reason or religion are ready to think that others should as easily break those bonds. In answer to Saul's chiding, Michal is not so careful of her husband's reputation as she had been of his person, when she makes this her excuse: He said, Let me go, why should I kill thee? As her insinuating that she would have hindered his flight was false (it was she that put him upon it and furthered it), so it was an unjust unworthy reflection upon him to suggest that he threatened to kill her if she would not let him go, and might confirm Saul in his rage against him. David was far from being so barbarous a man and so imperious a husband, so brutish in his resolves and so haughty in his menaces, as she here represented him. But David suffered both from friends and foes, and so did the son of David.

13 And Michal took an image, and laid *it* in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster, and covered *it* with a cloth.
14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He *is* sick.
15 And Saul sent the messengers *again* to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.
16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, *there was* an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster.
17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

18 So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and
told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went
and dwelt in Naioth.
19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah.
20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the
company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing *as*
appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of
Saul, and they also prophesied.
21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they
prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third
time, and they prophesied also.

Here is, I. David's place of refuge. Having got away in the night from his own house, he fled not to Bethlehem to his relations, nor to any of the cities of Israel that had caressed and cried him up, to make an interest in them for his own preservation; but he ran straight to Samuel and told him all that Saul had done to him, 1Sa 19:18.

1. Because Samuel was the man that had given him assurance of the crown, and his faith in that assurance now beginning to fail, and he being ready to say in his haste (or in his flight, as some read it, Ps 116:11), All men are liars ("not only Saul that promised me my life, but Samuel himself that promised me the throne"), whither should he go but to Samuel, for such encouragements, in this day of distress, as would support his faith? In flying to Samuel he made God his refuge, trusting in the shadow of his wings; where else can a good man think himself safe?

2. Because Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of his distress. In the psalm he penned the night before he had lifted up his prayer to God, and now he takes the first opportunity of waiting upon Samuel to receive direction and instruction from God. If we expect answers of peace to our prayers, we must have our ears open to God's word.

3. Because with Samuel there was a college of prophets with whom he might join in praising God, and the pleasure of this exercise would be the greatest relief imaginable to him in his present distress. He met with little rest or satisfaction in Saul's court, and therefore went to seek it in Samuel's church. And, doubtless, what little pleasure is to be had in this world those have it that live a life of communion with God; to this David retired in the time of trouble, Ps 27:4-6.

II. David's protection in this place: He and Samuel went and dwelt (or lodged) in Naioth, where the school of the prophets was, in Ramah, as in a privileged place, for the Philistines themselves would not disturb that meeting, 1Sa 10:10. But Saul, having notice of it by some of his spies (1Sa 19:19), sent officers to seize David, 1Sa 19:20. When they did not bring him he sent more; when they returned not he sent the third time (1Sa 19:21), and, hearing no tidings of these, he went himself, 1Sa 19:22. So impatient was he in his thirst after David's blood, so restless to compass his design against him, that, though baffled by one providence after another, he could not perceive that David was under the special protection of Heaven.

It was below the king to go himself on such an errand as this; but persecutors will stoop to any thing, and stick at nothing, to gratify their malice. Saul lays aside all public business to hunt David. How was David delivered, now that he was just ready to fall (like his own lamb formerly) into the mouth of the lions? Not as he delivered his lamb, by slaying the lion, or, as Elijah was delivered, by consuming the messengers with fire from heaven, but by turning the lions for the present into lambs.

1. When the messengers came into the congregation where David was among the prophets the Spirit of God came upon

them, and they prophesied, that is, they joined with the rest in praising God. Instead of seizing David, they themselves were seized. And thus,

(1.) God secured David; for either they were put into such an ecstasy by the spirit of prophecy that they could not think of any thing else, and so forgot their errand and never minded David, or they were by it put, for the present, into so good a frame that they could not entertain the thought of doing so bad a thing.

(2.) He put an honour upon the sons of the prophets and the communion of saints, and showed how he can, when he pleases, strike an awe upon the worst of men, by the tokens of his presence in the assemblies of the faithful, and force them to acknowledge that God is with them of a truth, 1Co 14:24,25. See also the benefit of religious societies, and what good impressions may be made by them on minds that seemed unapt to receive such impressions. And where may the influences of the Spirit be expected but in the congregations of the saints?

(3.) He magnified his power over the spirits of men. He that made the heart and tongue can manage both to serve his own purposes. Balaam prophesied the happiness of Israel, whom he would have cursed; and some of the Jewish writers think these messengers prophesied the advancement of David to the throne of Israel.

2. Saul himself was likewise seized with the spirit of prophecy before he came to the place. One would have thought that so bad a man as he was in no danger of being turned into a prophet; yet, when God will take this way of protecting David, even Saul had no sooner come (as bishop Hall expresses it) within smell of the smoke of Naioth but he prophesies, as his messengers did, 1Sa 19:23.

He stripped off his royal robe and warlike habiliments, because they were either too fine or too heavy for this service, and fell into a trance as it should seem, or into a rapture, which continued all that day and night. The saints at Damascus were delivered from the range of the New-Testament Saul by a change wrought on his spirit, but of another nature from this. This was only amazing, but that sanctifying--this for a day, that for ever.

Note, Many have great gifts and yet no grace, prophesy in Christ's name and yet are disowned by him, Mt 7:22,23. Now the proverb recurs, Is Saul among the prophets? See 1Sa 10:12. Then it was different from what it had been, but now contrary. He is rejected of God, and actuated by an evil spirit, and yet among the prophets.

22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that *is* in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where *are* Samuel and David? And *one* said, Behold, *they be* at Naioth in Ramah.

23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, *Is* Saul also among the prophets?

1 Samuel-20

The Friendship of David and Jonathan

1 And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what *is* mine iniquity? and what *is* my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

2 And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it *is* not *so*.

3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly, *as* the Lord liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, *there is* but a step between me and death.

4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do *it* for thee.

Here, I. David makes a representation to Jonathan of his present troubles. While Saul lay bound by his trance at Naioth David escaped to the court, and got to speak with Jonathan. And it was happy for him that he had such a friend at court, when he had such an enemy on the throne. If there be those that hate and despise us, let us not be disturbed at that, for there are those also that love and respect us. God hath set the one over against the other, and so must we. Jonathan was a friend that loved at all times, loved David as well now in his distress, and bade him as welcome into his arms, as he had done when he was in his triumph (1Sa 18:1), and he was a brother that was born for adversity, Pr 17:17. Now,

1. David appeals to Jonathan himself concerning his innocency, and he needed not say much to him for the proof of it, only he desired him that if he knew of any just offence he had given his father he would tell him, that he might humble himself and beg his pardon: What have I done? 1Sa 20:1.

2. He endeavors to convince him that, notwithstanding his innocency, Saul sought his life. Jonathan, from a principal of filial respect to his father, was very loth to believe that he designed or would ever do so wicked a thing, 1Sa 20:2. He the rather hoped so because he knew nothing of any such design, and he had usually been made privy to all his counsels. Jonathan, as became a dutiful son, endeavored to cover his father's shame, as far as was consistent with justice and fidelity to David. Charity is not forward to think evil of any,

especially of a parent, 1Co 13:5. David therefore gives him the assurance of an oath concerning his own danger, swears the peace upon Saul, that he was in fear of his life by him: "As the Lord liveth, than which nothing more sure in itself, and as thy soul liveth, than which nothing more certain to thee, whatever thou thinkest, there is but a step between me and death," 1Sa 20:3. And, as for Saul's concealing it from Jonathan, it was easy to account for that; he knew the friendship between him and David, and therefore, though in other things he advised with him, yet not in that. None more fit than Jonathan to serve him in every design that was just and honourable, but he knew him to be a man of more virtue than to be his confidant in so base a design as the murder of David.

II. Jonathan generously offers him his service (1Sa 20:4): Whatsoever thou desirest, he needed not insert the proviso of lawful and honest (for he knew David too well to think he would ask any thing that was otherwise), I will even do it for thee. This is true friendship. Thus Christ testifies his love to us: Ask, and it shall be done for you; and we must testify ours to him by keeping his commandments.

III. David only desires him to satisfy himself, and then to satisfy him whether Saul did really design his death or no. Perhaps David proposed this more for Jonathan's conviction than his own, for he himself was well satisfied.

1 The method of trial he proposed was very natural, and would certainly discover how Saul stood affected to him. The two next days Saul was to dine publicly, upon occasion of the solemnities of the new moon, when extraordinary sacrifices were offered and feasts made upon the sacrifices. Saul was rejected of God, and the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him, yet he kept up his observance of the holy feasts. There may be the remains of external devotion where there is

nothing but the ruins of real virtue. At these solemn feasts Saul had either all his children to sit with him, and David had a seat as one of them, or all his great officers, and David had a seat as one of them.

However it was, David resolved his seat should be empty (and that it never used to be at a sacred feast) those two days (1Sa 20:5), and he would abscond till the solemnity was over, and put it upon this issue: if Saul admitted an excuse for his absence, and dispensed with it, he would conclude he had changed his mind and was reconciled to him; but if he resented it, and was put into a passion by it, it was easy to conclude he designed him a mischief, since it was certain he did not love him so well as to desire his presence for any other end than that he might have an opportunity to do him a mischief, 1Sa 20:7.

2 The excuse he desired Jonathan to make for his absence, we have reason to think, was true, that he was invited by his elder brother to Bethlehem, his own city, to celebrate this new moon with his relations there, because, besides the monthly solemnity in which they held communion with all Israel, they had now a yearly sacrifice, and a holy feast upon it, for all the family, 1Sa 20:6. They kept a day of thanksgiving in their family for the comforts they enjoyed, and of prayer for the continuance of them. By this it appears that the family David was of was a very religious family, a house that had a church in it. 3. The arguments he used with Jonathan to persuade him to do this kindness for him were very pressing, 1Sa 20:8.

(1.) That he had entered into a league of friendship with him, and it was Jonathan's own proposal: Thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee.

(2.) That he would by no means urge him to espouse his cause if he was not sure that it was a righteous cause: "If there be

iniquity in me, I am so far from desiring or expecting that the covenant between us should bind thee to be a confederate with me in that iniquity that I freely release thee from it, and wish that my hand may be first upon me: Slay me thyself." No honest man will urge his friend to do a dishonest thing for his sake.

5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third *day* at even.

6 If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked *leave* of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

7 If he say thus, *It is* well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, *then* be sure that evil is determined by him.

8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what *if* thy father answer thee roughly?

11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

12 And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, *or* the third *day*, and, behold, *if there be* good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee;

13 the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not:

15 but *also* thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever:
no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one
from the face of the earth.

Here, I. Jonathan protests his fidelity to David in his distress. Notwithstanding the strong confidence David had in Jonathan, yet, because he might have some reason to fear that his father's influence, and his own interest, should make him warp, or grow cool towards him, Jonathan thought it requisite solemnly to renew the professions of his friendship to him (1Sa 20:9): "Far be it from thee to think that I suspect thee of any crime for which I should either slay thee myself or deliver thee to my father; no, if thou hast any jealousy of that, Come let us go into the field (1Sa 20:11), and talk it over more fully." He did not challenge him to the field to fight him for an affront, but to fix him in his friendship. He faithfully promised him that he would let him know how, upon trial, he found his father affected towards him, and would make the matter neither better nor worse than it was. "If there be good towards thee, I will show it thee, that thou mayest be easy (1Sa 20:12), if evil, I will send thee away, that thou mayest be safe" (1Sa 20:13); and thus he would help to deliver him from the evil if it were real and from the fear of evil if it were but imaginary. For the confirmation of his promise he appeals to God,

1. As a witness (1Sa 20:12): "O Lord God of Israel, thou knowest I mean sincerely, and think as I speak." The strength of his passion made the manner of his speaking concise and abrupt.

2. As a judge: "The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan (1Sa 20:13), if I speak deceitfully, or break my word with my friend." He expressed himself thus solemnly that David might be abundantly assured of his sincerity. And thus God has confirmed his promises to us, that we might have strong consolation, Heb 6:17,18. Jonathan adds to his protestations his hearty prayers: "The Lord be with thee, to protect and

prosper thee, as he has been formerly with my father, though now he has withdrawn." Thus he imitates his belief that David would be in his father's place, and his good wishes that he might prosper in it better than his father now did.

II. He provides for the entail of the covenant of friendship with David upon his posterity, 1Sa 20:14-16. He engages David to be a friend to his family when he was gone (1Sa 20:15): Thou shalt promise that thou wilt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever. This he spoke from a natural affection he had to his children, whom he desired it might go well with after his decease, and for whose future welfare he desired to improve his present interest. It also intimates his firm belief of David's advancement, and that it would be in the power of his hand to do a kindness or unkindness to his seed; for, in process of time, the Lord would cut off his enemies, Saul himself was not expected; then "Do not thou cut off thy kindness from my house, nor revenge my father's wrongs upon my children."

The house of David must likewise be bound to the house of Jonathan from generation to generation; he made a covenant (1Sa 20:16) with the house of David. Note, True friends cannot but covet to transmit to theirs after them their mutual affections. Thy own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not. This kindness, 1. He calls the kindness of the Lord, because it is such kindness as God shows to those he takes into covenant with himself; for he is a God to them and to their seed; they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

2. He secures it by an imprecation (1Sa 20:16): The Lord require it at the hand of David's seed (for of David himself he had no suspicion) if they prove so far David's enemies as to deal wrongfully with the posterity of Jonathan, David's friend. He feared lest David, or some of his, should hereafter be tempted, for the clearing and confirming of their title to the

throne, to do by his seed as Abimelech had done by the sons of Gideon (Jdg 9:5), and this he would effectually prevent; but the reason given (1Sa 20:17) why Jonathan was so earnest to have the friendship entailed is purely generous, and has nothing of self in it; it was because he loved him as he loved his own soul, and therefore desired that he and his might be beloved by him. David, though now in disgrace at court and in distress, was as amiable in the eyes of Jonathan as ever he had been, and he loved him never the less for his father's hating him, so pure were the principles on which his friendship was built.

Having himself sworn to David, he caused David to swear to him, and (as we read it) to swear again, which David consented to (for he that bears an honest mind does not startle at assurances), to swear by his love to him, which he looked upon as a sacred thing. Jonathan's heart was so much upon it that, when they parted this time, he concluded with a solemn appeal to God: The Lord be between me and thee for ever (1Sa 20:23), that is, "God himself be judge between us and our families for ever, if on either side this league of friendship be violated." It was in remembrance of this covenant that David was kind to Mephibosheth, 2Sa 9:7,21:7. It will be a kindness to ourselves and ours to secure an interest in those whom God favours and to make his friends ours.

III. He settles the method of intelligence, and by what signs and tokens he would give him notice how his father stood affected towards him. David would be missed the first day, or at least the second day, of the new moon, and would be enquired after, 1Sa 20:18. On the third day, by which time he would have returned from Bethlehem, he must be at such a place (1Sa 20:19), and Jonathan would come towards that place with his bow and arrows to shoot for diversion (1Sa 20:20), would send his lad to fetch his arrows, and, if they were shot short of the lad, David must take it for a signal of

safety, and not be afraid to show his head (1Sa 20:21); but, if he shot beyond the lad, it was a signal of danger, and he must shift for his safety, 1Sa 20:22. This expedient he fixed lest he should not have the opportunity, which yet it proved he had, of talking with David, and making the report by word of mouth.

16 So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, Let the Lord even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.
17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.
18 Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow *is* the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.
19 And *when* thou hast stayed three days, *then* thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was *in hand*, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.
20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side *thereof*, as though I shot at a mark.
21 And, behold, I will send a lad, *saying*, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows *are* on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for *there is* peace to thee, and no hurt; *as* the Lord liveth.
22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows *are* beyond thee; go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away.
23 And *as touching* the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord *be* between thee and me for ever.
24 So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.
25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.
26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he *is* not clean; surely he *is* not clean.
27 And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was* the second *day* of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor today?

28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me *to go* to Bethlehem:

29 and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me *to be there:* and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

Jonathan is here effectually convinced of that which he was so loth to believe, that his father had an implacable enmity to David, and would certainly be the death of him if it were in his power; and he had like to have paid very dearly himself for the conviction.

I. David is missed from the feast on the first day, but nothing is said of him. The king sat upon his seat, to feast upon the peace-offerings as at other times (1Sa 20:25), and yet had his heart as full of envy and malice against David as it could hold. He should first have been reconciled to him, and then have come and offered his gift; but, instead of that, he hoped, at this feast, to drink the blood of David. What an abomination was that sacrifice which was brought with such a wicked mind as this! Pr 21:27. When the king came to take his seat Jonathan arose, in reverence to him both as a father and as his sovereign; every one knew his place, but David's was empty.

It did not use to be so. None more content than he in attending holy duties; nor had he been absent now but that he must have come at the peril of his life; self-preservation obliged him to withdraw. In imminent peril present opportunities may be waived, nay, we ought not to throw ourselves into the mouth of danger. Christ him self absconded often, till he knew that his hour had come. But that day Saul took no notice that he missed David, but said within himself, "Surely he is not clean, 1Sa 20:26. Some ceremonial pollution has befallen him, which forbids him to eat of the holy things till he has washed his clothes, and bathed his flesh in water, and been unclean

until the evening." Saul knew what conscience David made of the law, and that he would rather keep away from the holy feast than come in his uncleanness. Blessed be God, no uncleanness is now a restraint upon us, but what we may by faith and repentance be washed from in the fountain opened, Ps 26:6.

II. He is enquired for the second day, 1Sa 20:27. Saul asked Jonathan, who he knew was his confidant, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat? He was his own son by marriage, but he calls him in disdain, the son of Jesse. He asks for him as if he were not pleased that he should be absent from a religious feast; and so it should be example to masters of families to see to it that those under their charge be not absent from the worship of God, either in public or in the family. It is a bad thing for us, except in case of necessity, to omit an opportunity of statedly attending on God in solemn ordinances. Thomas lost a sight of Christ by being once absent from a meeting of the disciples. But that which displeased Saul was that hereby he missed the opportunity he expected of doing David a mischief.

III. Jonathan makes his excuse, 1Sa 20:28,29. 1. That he was absent upon a good occasion, keeping the feast in another place, though not here, sent for by his elder brother, who was now more respectful to him than he had been (1Sa 17:28), and that he had gone to pay his respects to his relations, for the keeping up of brotherly love; and no master would deny a servant liberty to do that in due time. He pleads, 2. That he did not go without leave humbly asked and obtained from Jonathan, who, as his superior officer, was proper to be applied to for it. Thus he represents David as not wanting in any instance of respect and duty to the government.

IV. Saul hereupon breaks out into a most extravagant passion, and rages like a lion disappointed of his prey. David was out

of his reach, but he falls upon Jonathan for his sake (1Sa 20:30,31), gives him base language, not fit for a gentleman, a prince, to give to any man, especially his own son, heir apparent to his crown, a son that served him, the greatest stay and ornament of his family, before a great deal of company, at a feast, when all should be in good humour, at a sacred feast, by which all irregular passions should be mortified and subdued; yet he does in effect call him,

1. A bastard: Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman; that is, according to the foolish filthy language of men's brutish passion now a day, "Thou son of a whore." He tells him he was born to the confusion of his mother, that is, he had given the world cause to suspect that he was not the legitimate son of Saul, because he loved him whom Saul hated and supported him who would be the destruction of their family.

2. A traitor: Thou son of a perverse rebellion (so the word is), that is, "thou perverse rebel." At other times he reckoned no counsellor or commander that he had more trusty and well-beloved than Jonathan; yet now in this passion he represents him as dangerous to his crown and life. 3. A fool: Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse for thy friend to thy own confusion, for while he lives thou shalt never be established. Jonathan indeed did wisely and well for himself and family to secure an interest in David, whom Heaven had destined to the throne, yet, for this, he is branded as most impolitic. It is good taking God's people for our people and going with those that have him with them. It will prove to our advantage at last, however for the present it may be thought a disparagement, and a prejudice to our secular interest. It is probable Saul knew that David was anointed to the kingdom by the same hand that anointed him, and then not Jonathan, but himself, was the fool, to think to defeat the counsels of God. Yet nothing will serve him but David must die, and Jonathan must fetch him to execution. See how ill Saul's passion looks, and let it warn us

against the indulgence of any thing like it in ourselves. Anger is madness, and he that hates his brother is a murderer.

V. Jonathan is sorely grieved and put into disorder by his father's barbarous passion, and the more because he had hoped better things, 1Sa 20:2. He was troubled for his father, that he should be such a brute, troubled for his friend, whom he knew to be a friend of God, that he should be so basely abused; he was grieved for David (1Sa 20:34), and troubled for himself too, because his father had done him shame, and, though most unjustly, yet he must submit to it. One would pity Jonathan to see how he was put,

1. Into the peril of sin. Much ado that wise and good man had to keep his temper, upon such a provocation as this. His father's reflections upon himself made no return to; it becomes inferiors to bear with meekness and silence the contempts put upon them in wrath and passion. When thou art the anvil lie thou still. But his dooming David to die he could not bear: to that he replied with some heat (1Sa 20:32), Wherefore shall he be slain? What has he done? Generous spirits can much more easily bear to be abused themselves than to hear their friends abused.

2. Into the peril of death. Saul was now so outrageous that he threw his javelin at Jonathan, 1Sa 20:33. He seemed to be in great care (1Sa 20:31) than Jonathan should be established in his kingdom, and yet now he himself aims at his life. What fools, what savage beasts and worse does anger make men! How necessary it is to put a hook in its nose and a bridle in its jaws! Jonathan was fully satisfied that evil was determined against David, which put him out of frame exceedingly: he rose from table, thinking it high time when his life was struck at, and would eat no meat, for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning. All the guests, we may suppose,

were discomposed, and the mirth of the feast was spoiled. He that is cruel troubles his own flesh, Pr 11:17.

30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman,* do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And* as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is* not the arrow beyond thee?

Here is,

1. Jonathan's faithful performance of his promise to give David notice of the success of his dangerous experiment. He went at the time and to the place appointed (1Sa 20:35), within sight of which he knew David lay hid, sent his footboy to fetch his arrows, which he would shoot at random (1Sa 20:36), and gave David the fatal signal by shooting an arrow beyond the lad (1Sa 20:37): Is not the arrow beyond thee? That word [beyond] David knew the meaning of better than the lad. Jonathan dismissed the lad, who knew nothing of the matter, and, finding the coast clear and no danger of a discovery, he

presumed upon one minute's personal conversation with David after he had bidden him flee for his life.

2 The most sorrowful parting of these two friends, who, for aught that appears, never came together again but once, and that was by stealth in a wood, 1Sa 23:16.

(1.) David addressed himself to Jonathan with the reverence of a servant rather than the freedom of a friend: He fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times, as one deeply sensible of his obligations to him for the good services he had done him.

(2.) They took leave of each other with the greatest affection imaginable, with kisses and tears; they wept on each other's neck till David exceeded, 1Sa 20:41. The separation of two such faithful friends was equally grievous to them both, but David's case was the more deplorable; for, when Jonathan was returning to his family and friends, David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary, and therefore his grief exceeded Jonathan's, or perhaps it was because his temper was more tender and his passions were stronger.

(3.) They referred themselves to the covenant of friendship that was between them, both of them comforting themselves with this in this mournful separation: "We have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, for ourselves and our heirs, that we and they will be faithful and kind to each other from generation to generation." Thus, while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, this is our comfort, that he has made with us an everlasting covenant.

38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him,
Go, carry *them* to the city.
41 *And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward
the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself
three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with
another, until David exceeded.
42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have
sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be
between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever.
And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

1 Samuel-21

David Flees from Saul

1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech
was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why *art*
thou alone, and no man with thee?
2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath
commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man
know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I
have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such
and such a place.
3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give *me* five *loaves of*
bread in mine hand, or what there is present.
4 And the priest answered David, and said, *There is* no common bread
under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have
kept themselves at least from women.

Here, I. David, in distress, flies in the tabernacle of God, now pitched at Nob, supposed to be a city in the tribe of Benjamin. Since Shiloh was forsaken, the tabernacle was often removed, though the ark still remained at Kirjath-jearim. Hither David came in his flight from Saul's fury (1Sa 21:1), and applied to Ahimelech the priest. Samuel the prophet could not protect him, Jonathan the prince could not. He therefore has recourse

next to Ahimelech the priest. He foresees he must now be an exile, and therefore comes to the tabernacle,

1. To take an affecting leave of it, for he knows not when he shall see it again, and nothing will be more afflictive to him in his banishment than his distance from the house of God, and his restraint from public ordinances, as appears by many of his psalms. He had given an affectionate farewell to his friend Jonathan, and cannot go till he has given the like to the tabernacle.

2. To enquire of the Lord there, and to beg direction from him in the way both of duty and safety, his case being difficult and dangerous. That this was his business appears 1Sa 22:10, where it is said that Ahimelech enquired of the Lord for him, as he had done formerly, 1Sa 21:15. It is a great comfort to us in a day of trouble that we have a God to go to, to whom we may open our case, and from whom we may ask and expect direction.

II. Ahimelech the priest is surprised to see him in so poor an equipage; having heard that he had fallen into disgrace at court, he looked shy upon him, as most are apt to do upon their friends when the world frowns upon them. He was afraid of incurring Saul's displeasure by entertaining him, and took notice how mean a figure he now made to what he used to make: Why art thou alone? He had some with him (as appears Mk 2:26), but they were only his own servants; he had none of the courtiers, no persons of quality with him, as he used to have at other times, when he came to enquire of the Lord.

He says (Ps 42:4) he was wont to go with a multitude to the house of God; and, having now but two or three with him, Ahimelech might well ask, Why art thou alone? He that was suddenly advanced from the solitude of a shepherd's life to the crowd and hurries of the camp is now as soon reduced to the

desolate condition of an exile and is alone like a sparrow on the housetop, such charges are there in this world and so uncertain are its smiles! Those that are courted to-day may be deserted to-morrow.

III. David, under pretence of being sent by Saul upon public services, solicits Ahimelech to supply his present wants, 1Sa 21:2,3.

1. Here David did not behave like himself. He told Ahimelech a gross untruth, that Saul had ordered him business to despatch, that his attendants were dismissed to such a place, and that he was charged to observe secresy and therefore durst not communicate it, no, not to the priest himself. This was all false. What shall we say to this? The scripture does not conceal it, and we dare not justify it. It was ill done, and proved of bad consequence; for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord, as David reflected upon it afterwards with regret, 1Sa 22:22. It was needless for him thus to dissemble with the priest, for we may suppose that, if he had told him the truth, he would have sheltered and relieved him as readily as Samuel did, and would have known the better how to advise him and enquire of God for him.

People should be free with their faithful ministers. David was a man of great faith and courage, and yet now both failed him, and he fell thus foully through fear and cowardice, and both owing to the weakness of his faith. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry sinful shift as this for his own preservation. It is written, not for our imitation, no, not in the greatest straits, but for our admonition. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; and let us all pray daily, Lord, lead us not into temptation. Let us all take occasion from this to lament,

(1.) The weakness and infirmity of good men; the best are not perfect on this side heaven. There may be true grace where yet there are many failings.

(2.) The wickedness of bad times, which forces good men into such straits as prove temptations too strong for them. Oppression makes a wise man do foolishly.

2. Two things David begged of Ahimelech, bread and a sword.

(1.) He wanted bread: five loaves, 1Sa 21:3. Travelling was then troublesome, when men generally carried their provisions with them in kind, having little money and no public houses, else David would not now have had to seek for bread. It seems David had known the seed of the righteous begging bread occasionally, but not constantly, Ps 37:25. Now,

[1.] The priest objected that he had none but hallowed bread, show-bread, which had stood a week on the golden table in the sanctuary, and was taken thence for the use of the priests and their families, 1Sa 21:4. It seems the priest kept no good house, but wanted either a heart to be hospitable or provisions wherewithal to be so. Ahimelech thinks that the young men that attended David might not eat of this bread unless they had for some time abstained from women, even from their own wives; this was required at the giving of the law (Ex 19:15), but otherwise we never find this made the matter of any ceremonial purity on the one side or pollution on the other, and therefore the priest here seems to be over-nice, not to say superstitious.

[2.] David pleads that he and those that were with him, in this case of necessity, might lawfully eat of the hallowed bread, for they were not only able to answer his terms of keeping from women for three days past, but the vessels (that is, the

bodies) of the young men were holy, being possessed in sanctification and honour at all times (1Th 4:4,5), and therefore God would take particular care of them, that they wanted not necessary supports, and would have his priest to do so. Being thus holy, holy things were not forbidden them. Poor and pious Israelites were in effect priests to God, and, rather than be starved, might feed on the bread which was appropriated to the priests.

Believers are spiritual priests, and the offerings of the Lord shall be their inheritance; they eat the bread of their God. He pleads that the bread is in a manner common, now that what was primarily the religious use of it is over; especially (as our margin reads it) where there is other bread (hot, 1Sa 21:6) sanctified that day in the vessel, and put in the room of it upon the table. This was David's plea, and the Son of David approves it, and shows from it that mercy is to be preferred to sacrifice, that ritual observance must give way to moral duties, and that may be done in a case of an urgent providential necessity which may not otherwise be done. He brings it to justify his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day, for which the Pharisees censured them, Mt 12:3,4.

[3.] Ahimelech hereupon supplies him: He gave him hallowed bread (1Sa 21:6), and some think it was about this that he enquired of the Lord, 1Sa 22:10. As a faithful servant he would not dispose of his master's provisions without his master's leave. This bread, we may suppose, was the more agreeable to David for its being hallowed, so precious were all sacred things to him. The show-bread was but twelve loaves in all, yet out of these he gave David five (1Sa 21:3), though they had no more in the house; but he trusted Providence.

(2.) He wanted a sword. Persons of quality, though officers of the army, did not then wear their swords so constantly as now

they do, else surely David would not have been without one. It was a wonder that Jonathan did not furnish him with his, as he had before done, 1Sa 18:4. However, it happened that he had now no weapons with him, the reason of which he pretends to be because he came away in haste, 1Sa 21:8. Those that are furnished with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith cannot be disarmed of them, nor need they, at any time, to be at a loss. But the priests, it seems, had no swords: the weapons of their warfare were not carnal. There was not a sword to be found about the tabernacle but the sword of Goliath, which was laid up behind the ephod, as a monument of the glorious victory David obtained over him. Probably David had an eye to that when he asked the priest to help him with a sword; for, that being mentioned, O! says he, there is none like that, give it to me, 1Sa 21:9. He could not use Saul's armour, for he had not proved it; but this sword of Goliath he had made trial of and done execution with. By this it appears that he was now well grown in strength and stature, that he could wear and wield such a sword as that. God had taught his hands to war, so that he could do wonders, Ps 18:34. Two things we may observe concerning this sword:--

[1.] That God had graciously given it to him, as a pledge of his singular favour; so that whenever he drew it, nay, whenever he looked upon it, it would be a great support to his faith, by bringing to mind that great instance of the particular care and countenance of the divine providence respecting him.

[2.] That he had gratefully given it back to God, dedicating it to him and to his honour as a token of his thankfulness; and now in his distress it stood him greatly in stead. Note, What we devote to God's praise, and serve him with, is most likely to redound, one way or other, to our own comfort and benefit. What we gave we have.

Thus was David well furnished with arms and victuals; but it fell out very unhappily that there was one of Saul's servants then attending before the Lord, Doeg by name, that proved a base traitor both to David and Ahimelech. He was by birth an Edomite (1Sa 21:7), and though proselyted to the Jewish religion, to get the preferment he now had under Saul, yet he retained the ancient and hereditary enmity of Edom to Israel. He was master of the herds, which perhaps was then a place of as much honour as master of the horse is now. Some occasion or other he had at this time to wait on the priest, either to be purified from some pollution or to pay some vow; but, whatever his business was, it is said, he was detained before the Lord. He must attend and could not help it, but he was sick of the service, snuffed at it, and said, What a weariness is it! Mal 1:13. He would rather have been any where else than before the Lord, and therefore, instead of minding the business he came about, was plotting to do David a mischief and to be revenged on Ahimelech for detaining him. God's sanctuary could never secure such wolves in sheep's clothing. See Ga 2:4.

5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women *have been* kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

6 So the priest gave him hallowed *bread:* for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the Lord, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained before the Lord; and his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that *belonged* to Saul.

8 And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.

9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it *is here* wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take *it:* for *there is* no other save that here. And David said, *There is* none like that; give it me.

10 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

David, though king elect, is here an exile--designed to be master of vast treasures, yet just now begging his bread--anointed to the crown, and yet here forced to flee from his country. Thus do God's providences sometimes seem to run counter to his promises, for the trial of his people's faith, and the glorifying of his name, in the accomplishment of his counsels, notwithstanding the difficulties that lay in the way. Here is,

1. David's flight into the land of the Philistines, where he hoped to be hid, and to remain undiscovered in the court or camp of Achish king of Gath, 1Sa 21:10. Israel's darling is necessitated to quit the land of Israel, and he that was the Philistine's great enemy (upon I know not what inducements) goes to seek for shelter among them. It should seem that as, though the Israelites loved him, yet the king of Israel had a personal enmity to him, which obliged him to leave his own country, so, though the Philistines hated him, yet the king of Gath had a personal kindness for him, valuing his merit, and perhaps the more for his killing Goliath of Gath, who, it may be, had been no friend to Achish. To him David now went directly, as to one he could confide in, as afterwards (1Sa 27:2,3), and Achish would not have protected him but that he was afraid of disobliging his own people. God's persecuted people have often found better usage from Philistines than from Israelites, in the Gentile theatres than in the Jewish synagogues. The king of Judah imprisoned Jeremiah, and the king of Babylon set him at liberty.

2 The disgust which the servants of Achish took at his being there, and their complaint of it to Achish (1Sa 21:11): "Is not this David? Is not this he that has triumphed over the Philistines? witness that burden of the song which was so much talked of, Saul has slain his thousands, but David, this very man, his ten thousands. Nay, Is not this he that (if our intelligence from the land of Israel be true) is, or is to be, king of the land?" As such, "he must be an enemy to our country; and is it safe or honourable for us to protect or entertain such a man?" Achish perhaps had intimated to them that it would be policy to entertain David, because he was now an enemy to Saul, and he might be hereafter a friend to them. It is common for the outlaws of a nation to be sheltered by the enemies of that nation. But the servants of Achish objected to his politics, and thought it not at all fit that he should stay among them.

3. The fright which this put David into. Though he had some reason to put confidence in Achish, yet, when he perceived the servants of Achish jealous of him, he began to be afraid that Achish would be obliged to deliver him up to them, and he was sorely afraid (1Sa 21:12), and perhaps he was the more apprehensive of his own danger, when he was thus discovered, because he wore Goliath's sword, which, we may suppose, was well known in Gath, and with which he had reason to expect they would cut off his head, as he had cut off Goliath's with it. David now learned by experience what he has taught us (Ps 118:9), that it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. Men of high degree are a lie, and, if we make them our hope, they may prove our fear. It was at this time that David penned Ps 55:1-23 (Michtam, a golden psalm), when the Philistines took him in Gath, where having shown before God his distresses, he resolves (1Sa 21:3), "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee; and therefore (1Sa 21:11) will not be afraid what man can do unto me, no, not the sons of giants."

4. The course he took to get out of their hands: He feigned himself mad, 1Sa 21:13. He used the gestures and fashions of a natural fool, or one that had gone out of his wits, supposing they would be ready enough to believe that the disgrace he had fallen into, and the troubles he was now in, had driven him distracted. This dissimulation of his cannot be justified (it was a mean thing thus to disparage himself, and inconsistent with truth thus to misrepresent himself, and therefore not becoming the honour and sincerity of such a man as David); yet it may in some degree be excused, for it was not a downright lie and it was like a stratagem in war, by which he imposed upon his enemies for the preservation of his own life. What David did here in pretence and for his own safety, which made it partly excusable, drunkards do really, and only to gratify a base lust: they made fools of themselves and change their behaviour; their words and actions commonly are either as silly and ridiculous as an idiot's or as furious and outrageous as a madman's, which has often made me wonder that ever men of sense and honour should allow themselves in it.

5. His escape by this means, 1Sa 21:14,15. I am apt to think Achish was aware that the delirium was but counterfeit, but, being desirous to protect David (as we find afterwards he was very kind to him, even when the lord of the Philistines favoured him not, 1Sa 28:1,2,29:6), he pretended to his servants that he really thought he was mad, and therefore had reason to question whether it was David or no; or, if it were, they need not fear him, what harm could he do them now that his reason had departed from him? They suspected that Achish was inclined to entertain him: "Not I," says he. "He is a madman. I'll have nothing to do with him. You need not fear that I should employ him, or give him any countenance."

He humours the thing well enough when he asks, "Have I need of madmen? Shall this fool come into my house? I will show him no kindness, but then you shall do him no hurt, for, if he be a madmen, he is to be pitied." He therefore drove him away, as it is in the title of Ps 34:1, which David penned upon this occasion, and an excellent psalm it is, and shows that he did not change his spirit when he changed his behaviour, but even in the greatest difficulties and hurries his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord; and he concludes that psalm with this assurance, that none of those that trust in God shall be desolate, though they may be, as he now was, solitary and distressed, persecuted, but not forsaken.

11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, *Is not* this David the king
of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances,
saying,
Saul hath slain his thousands,
and David his ten thousands?
12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of
Achish the king of Gath.
13 And he changed his behavior before them, and feigned himself
mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let
his spittle fall down upon his beard.
14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad:
wherefore *then* have ye brought him to me?
15 Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this *fellow* to play the
madman in my presence? shall this *fellow* come into my house?

1 Samuel-22

1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam:
and when his brethren and all his father's house heard *it*, they went
down thither to him.
2 And every one *that was* in distress, and every one that *was* in debt,
and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto

him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

3 And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, *and be* with you, till I know what God will do for me.

Here, I. David shelters himself in the cave of Adullam, 1Sa 22:1. Whether it was a natural or artificial fastness does not appear; it is probable that the access to it was so difficult that David thought himself able, with Goliath's sword, to keep it against all the forces of Saul, and therefore buried himself alive in it, while he was waiting to see (and he says here, 1Sa 22:3) what God would do with him. The promise of the kingdom implied a promise of preservation to it, and yet David used proper means for his own safety, otherwise he would have tempted God. He did not do any thing that aimed to destroy Saul, but only to secure himself.

He that might have done great service to his country as a judge or general is here shut up in a cave, and thrown by as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. We must not think it strange if sometimes shining lights be thus eclipsed and hidden under a bushel. Perhaps the apostle refers to this instance of David, among others, when he speaks of some of the Old-Testament worthies that wandered in deserts, in dens and caves of the earth, Heb 11:38. It was at this time that David penned Ps 142:1-7, which is entitled, A prayer when David was in the cave; and there he complains that no man would know him and that refuge failed him, but hopes that shortly the righteous would compass him about.

II. Thither his relations flocked to him, his brethren and all his father's house, to be protected by him, to give assistance to him, and to take their lot with him. A brother is born for adversity. Now, Joab, and Abishai, and the rest of his relations, came to him, to suffer and venture with him, in hopes shortly to be advanced with him; and they were so. The

first three of his worthies were those that first owed him when he was in the cave, 1Ch 11:15-25, &c.

III. Here he began to raise forces in his own defence, 1Sa 22:2. He found by the late experiments he had made that he could not save himself by flight, and therefore was necessitated to do it by force, wherein he never acted offensively, never offered any violence to his prince nor gave any disturbance to the peace of the kingdom, but only used his forces as a guard to his own person. But, whatever defence his soldiers were to him, they did him no great credit, for the regiment he had was made up not of great men, nor rich men, nor stout men, no, nor good men, but men in distress, in debt, and discontented, men of broken fortunes and restless spirits, that were put to their shifts, and knew not well what to do with themselves. When David had fixed his headquarters in the cave of Adullam, they came and enlisted themselves under him to the number of about 400. See what weak instruments God sometimes makes use of, by which to bring about his own purposes. The Son of David is ready to receive distressed souls, that will appoint him their captain and be commanded by him.

IV. He took care to settle his parents in a place of safety. No such place could he find in all the land of Israel while Saul was so bitterly enraged against him and all that belonged to him for his sake; he therefore goes with them to the king of Moab, and puts them under his protection, 1Sa 22:3,4. Observe here,

1. With what a tender concern he provided for his aged parents. It was not fit they should be exposed either to the frights or to the fatigues which he must expect during his struggle with Saul (their age would by no means bear such exposure); therefore the first thing he does is to find them a quiet habitation, whatever became of himself. Let children

learn from this to show pity at home and requite their parents (1Ti 5:4), in every thing consulting their ease and satisfaction. Though ever so highly preferred, and ever so much employed, let them not forget their aged parents.

2. With what a humble faith he expects the issue of his present distresses: Till I know what God will do for me. He expresses his hopes very modestly, as one that had entirely cast himself upon God and committed his way to him, expecting a good issue, not from his own arts, or arms, or merits, but from what the wisdom, power, and goodness of God would do for him. Now David's father and mother forsook him, but God did not, Ps 27:10.

V. He had the advice and assistance of the prophet Gad, who probably was one of the sons of the prophets that were brought up under Samuel, and was by him recommended to David for his chaplain or spiritual guide. Being a prophet, he would pray for him and instruct him in the mind of God; and David, though he was himself a prophet, was glad of his assistance. He advised him to go into the land of Judah (1Sa 22:5), as one that was confident of his own innocency, and was well assured of the divine protection, and was desirous, even in his present hard circumstances, to do some service to his tribe and country. Let him not be ashamed to own his own cause nor decline the succours that would be offered him. Animated by this word, there he determined to appear publicly. Thus are the steps of a good man ordered by the Lord.

4 And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.

5 And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

Saul Kills the Priests of Nob

6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that *were* with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants *were* standing about him;)

7 then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

8 that all of you have conspired against me, and *there is* none that showeth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and *there is* none of you that is sorry for me, or showeth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

10 And he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.

11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that *were* in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I *am*, my lord.

13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

We have seen the progress of David's troubles; now here we have the progress of Saul's wickedness. He seems to have laid aside the thoughts of all other business and to have devoted himself wholly to the pursuit of David. He heard at length, by the common fame of the country, that David was discovered (that is, that he appeared publicly and enlisted men into his service); and hereupon he called all his servants about him, and sat down under a tree, or grove, in the high place at Gibeah, with his spear in his hand for a sceptre, intimating the

force by which he designed to rule, and the present temper of his spirit, or its distemper rather, which was to kill all that stood in his way. In this bloody court of inquisition,

I. Saul seeks for information against David and Jonathan, 1Sa 22:7,8. Two things he was willing to suspect and desirous to see proved, that he might wreak his malice upon two of the best and most excellent men he had about him:--

1. That his servant David did lie in wait for him and seek his life, which was utterly false. He really sought David's life, and therefore pretended that David sought his life, though he could not charge him with any overt act that gave the least shadow of suspicion.

2. That his son Jonathan stirred him up to do so, and was confederate with him in compassing and imagining the death of the king. This also was notoriously false. A league of friendship there was between David and Jonathan, but no conspiracy in any evil thing; none of the articles of their covenant carried any mischief to Saul. If Jonathan had agreed, after the death of Saul, to resign to David, in compliance with the revealed will of God, what harm would that do to Saul? Yet thus the best friends to their prince and country have often been odiously represented as enemies to both; even Christ himself was so. Saul took it for granted that Jonathan and David were in a plot against him, his crown and dignity, and was displeased with his servants that they did not give him information of it, supposing that they could not but know it; whereas really there was no such thing. See the nature of a jealous malice, and its pitiful arts to extort discoveries of things that are not. He looked upon all about him as his enemies because they did not say just as he said; and told them,

(1.) That they were very unwise, and acted against the interest both of their tribe (for they were Benjamites, and David, if he were advanced, would bring the honour into Judah which was now in Benjamin) and of their families; for David would never be able to give them such rewards as he had for them, of fields and vineyards, and such preferments, to be colonels and captains.

(2.) That they were unfaithful: You have conspired against me. What a continual agitation and torment are those in that give way to a spirit of jealousy! If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked (Pr 29:12), that is, they seem to be so in his eyes.

(3.) That they were very unkind. He thought to work upon their good nature with that word: There is none of you that is so much as sorry for me, or solicitous for me, as some read it. By these reasonings he stirred them up to act vigorously, as the instruments of his malice, that they might take away his suspicions of them.

II. Though he could not learn any thing from his servants against David or Jonathan, yet he got information from Doeg against Ahimelech the priest.

1. An indictment is brought against Ahimelech by Doeg, and he himself is evidence against him, 1Sa 22:9,10. Perhaps Doeg, as bad as he was, would not have given this information if Saul had not extorted it, for had he been very forward to it he would have done it sooner: but now he thinks they must be all deemed traitors if none of them be accusers, and therefore tells Saul what kindness Ahimelech had shown to David, which he himself happened to be an eye-witness of.

He had enquired of God for him (which the priest used not to do but for public persons and about public affairs) and he had

furnished him with bread and a sword. All this was true; but it was not the whole truth. He ought to have told Saul further that David had made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon the king's business; so that what service he did to David, however it proved, was designed in honour to Saul, and this would have cleared Ahimelech, whom Saul had in his power, and would have thrown all the blame upon David, who was out of his reach.

2. Ahimelech is seized, or summoned rather to appear before the king, and upon this indictment he is arraigned. The king sent for him and all the priests who then attended the sanctuary, whom he supposed to be aiding and abetting; and they, not being conscious of any guilt, and therefore not apprehensive of any danger, came all of them to the king (1Sa 22:11), and none of them attempted to make an escape, or to flee to David for shelter, as they would have done now that he had set up his standard if they had been as much in his interests as Saul suspected they were. Saul arraigns Ahimelech himself with the utmost disdain and indignation (1Sa 22:12): Hear now, thou son of Ahitub; not so much as calling him by his name, much less giving him his title of distinction. By this it appears that he had cast off the fear of God, that he showed no respect at all to his priests, but took a pleasure in affronting them and insulting them.

Ahimelech holds up his hand at the bar in those words: "Here I am, my lord, ready to hear my charge, knowing I have done no wrong." He does not object to the jurisdiction of Saul's court, nor insist upon an exemption as a priest, no, not though he is a high priest, to which office that of the judge, or chief magistrate, had not long since been annexed; but Saul having now the sovereignty vested in him, in things pertaining to the king, even the high priest sets himself on a level with common Israelites. Let every soul be subject (even clergymen) to the higher powers.

3. His indictment is read to him (1Sa 22:13), that he, as a false traitor, had joined himself with the son of Jesse in a plot to depose and murder the king. "His design" (says Saul) "was to rise up against me, and thou didst assist him with victuals and arms." See what bad constructions the most innocent actions are liable to, how unsafe those are that live under a tyrannical government, and what reason we have to be thankful for the happy constitution and administration of the government we are under.

4. To this indictment he pleads, Not guilty, 1Sa 22:14,15. He owns the fact, but denies that he did it traitorously or maliciously, or with any design against the king. He pleads that he was so far from knowing of any quarrel between Saul and David that he really took David to have been then as much in favour at court as ever he had been. Observe, He does not plead that David had told him an untruth, and with that had imposed upon him, though really it was so, because he would not proclaim the weakness of so good a man, no, not for his own vindication, especially to Saul, who sought all occasions against him; but he insists upon the settled reputation David had as the most faithful of all the servants of Saul, the honour the king had put upon him in marrying his daughter to him, the use the king had often made of him, and the trust he had reposed on him: "He goes at thy bidding, and is honourable in thy house, and therefore any one would think it a meritorious piece of service to the crown to show him respect, so far from apprehending it to be a crime."

He pleads that he had been wont to enquire of God for him when he was sent by Saul upon any expedition, and did it now as innocently as ever he had done it. He protests his abhorrence of the thought of being in a plot against the king: "Be it far from me. I mind my own business, and meddle not with state matters." He begs the king's favour: "Let him not

impute any crime to us;" and concludes with a declaration of his innocency: Thy servant knew nothing of all this. Could any man plead with more evidences of sincerity? Had he been tried by a jury of honest Israelites, he would certainly have been acquitted, for who can find any fault in him? But,

5. Saul himself gives judgment against him (1Sa 22:16): Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, as a rebel, thou and all thy father's house. What could be more unjust? I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, Ec 3:16.

(1.) It was unjust that Saul should himself, himself alone, give judgment in his own cause, without any appeal to judge or prophet, to his privy council, or to a council of war.

(2.) That so fair a plea should be overruled and rejected without any reason given, or any attempt to disprove the allegations of it, but purely with a high hand.

(3.) That sentence should be passed so hastily and with so much precipitation, the judge taking no time himself to consider of it, nor allowing the prisoner any time to move in arrest of judgment.

(4.) That the sentence should be passed not only on Ahimelech, himself, who was the only person accused by Doeg, but on all his father's house, against whom nothing was alleged: must the children be put to death for the fathers?

(5.) That the sentence should be pronounced in passion, not for the support of justice, but for the gratification of his brutish rage.

6. He issues out a warrant (a verbal warrant only) for the immediate execution of this bloody sentence.

(1.) He ordered his footmen to be the executioners of this sentence, but they refused, 1Sa 22:17. Hereby he intended to put a further disgrace upon the priests; they may not die by the hands of the men of war (as 1Ki 2:29) or his usual ministers of justice, but his footmen must triumph over them, and wash their hands in their blood.

[1.] Never was the command of a prince more barbarously given: Turn and slay the priests of the Lord. This is spoken with such an air of impiety as can scarcely be paralleled. Had he seemed to forget their sacred office or relation to God, and taken no notice of that, he would thereby have intimated some regret that men of that character should fall under his displeasure; but to call them the priests of the Lord, when he ordered his footmen to cut their throats, looked as if, upon that very account, he hated them. God having rejected him, and ordered another to be anointed in his room, he seems well pleased with this opportunity of being revenged on the priests of the Lord, since God himself was out of his reach. What wickedness will not the evil spirit hurry men to, when he gets the dominion! He alleged, in his order that which was utterly false and unproved to him, that they knew when David fled; whereas they knew nothing of the matter. But malice and murder are commonly supported with lies.

[2.] Never was the command of a prince more honourably disobeyed. The footmen had more sense and grace than their master. Though they might expect to be turned out of their places, if not punished and put to death for their refusal, yet, come on them what would, they would not offer to fall upon the priests of the Lord, such a reverence had they for their office, and such a conviction of their innocence.

(2.) He ordered Doeg (the accuser) to be the executioner, and he obeyed. One would have thought that the footmen's refusal would awaken Saul's conscience, and that he would not insist

upon the doing of a thing so barbarous as that his footmen startled at the thought of it. But his mind was blinded and his heart hardened, and, if they will not do it, the hands of the witness shall be upon the victims, De 17:7. The most bloody tyrants have found out instruments of their cruelty as barbarous as themselves. Doeg is no sooner commanded to fall upon the priests than he does it willingly enough, and, meeting with no resistance, slays with his own hand (for aught that appears) on that same day eighty-five priests that were of the age of ministration, between twenty and fifty, for they wore a linen ephod (1Sa 22:18), and perhaps appeared at this time before Saul in their habits, and were slain in them.

This (one would think) was enough to satiate the most blood-thirsty; but the horseleech of persecution still cries, "Give, give." Doeg, by Saul's order no doubt, having murdered the priests, went to their city Nob, and put all to the sword there (1Sa 22:19), men, women, and children, and the cattle too. Barbarous cruelty, and such as one cannot think of without horror! Strange that ever it should enter into the heart of man to be so impious, so inhuman! We may see in this,

[1.] The desperate wickedness of Saul when the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him. Nothing so vile but those may be hurried to it who have provoked God to give them up to their hearts' lusts. He that was so compassionate as to spare Agag and the cattle of the Amalekites, in disobedience to the command of God, could now, with unrelenting bowels, see the priests of the Lord murdered, and nothing spared of all that belonged to them. For that sin God left him to this.

[2.] The accomplishment of the threatenings long since pronounced against the house of Eli; for Ahimelech and his family were descendants from him. Though Saul was unrighteous in doing this, yet God was righteous in permitting it. Now God performed against Eli that at which the ears of

those that heard it must needs tingle, as he had told him that he would judge his house for ever 1Sa 3:11-13. No word of God shall fall to the ground.

[3.] This may be considered as a great judgment upon Israel, and the just punishment of their desiring a king before the time God intended them one. How deplorable was the state of religion at this time in Israel! Though the ark had long been in obscurity, yet it was some comfort to them that they had the altar, and priests to serve at it; but now to see their priests weltering in their own blood, and the heirs of the priesthood too, and the city of the priests made a desolation, so that the altar of God must needs be neglected for want of attendants, and this by the unjust and cruel order of their own king to satisfy his brutish rage--this could not but go to the heart of all pious Israelites, and make them wish a thousand times they had been satisfied with the government of Samuel and his sons. The worst enemies of their nation could not have done them a greater mischief.

14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house?

15 Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute *any* thing unto his servant, *nor* to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

17 And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord; because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord.

18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.
20 And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

Here is, 1 The escape of Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, out of the desolations of the priests' city. Probably when his father went to appear, upon Saul's summons, he was left at home to attend the altar, by which means he escaped the first execution, and, before Doeg and his bloodhounds came to Nob, he had intelligence of the danger, and had time to shift for his own safety. And whither should he go but to David? 1Sa 22:20. Let those that suffer for the Son of David commit the keeping of their souls to him, 1Pe 4:19.

2. David's resentment of the melancholy tidings he brought. He gave David an account of the bloody work Saul had made among the priests of the Lord (1Sa 22:21), as the disciples of John, when their master was beheaded, went and told Jesus, Mt 14:12. And David greatly lamented the calamity itself, but especially his being accessory to it: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house, 1Sa 22:22.

Note, It is a great trouble to a good man to find himself in any way an occasion of the calamities of the church and ministry. David knew Doeg's character so well that he feared he would do some such mischief as this when he saw him at the sanctuary: I knew he would tell Saul. He calls him Doeg the Edomite, because he retained the heart of an Edomite, though, by embracing the profession of the Jewish religion, he had put on the mask of an Israelite.

3. The protection he granted to Abiathar. He perceived him to be terrified, as he had reason to be, and therefore bade him not to fear, he would be as careful for him as for himself: With me thou shalt be in safeguard, 1Sa 22:23. David, having now time

to recollect himself, speaks with assurance of his own safety, and promises that Abiathar shall have the full benefit of his protection. It is promised to the Son of David that God will hide him in the shadow of his hand (Isa 49:2), and, with him, all that are his may be sure that they shall be in safeguard, Ps 91:1. David had now not only a prophet, but a priest, a high-priest, with him, to whom he was a blessing and they to him, and both a happy omen of his success.

Yet it appears (by 1Sa 28:6) that Saul had a high priest too, for he had a urim to consult: it is supposed that he preferred Ahitub the father of Zadok, of the family of Eleazar (1Ch 6:8), for even those that hate the power of godliness yet will not be without the form. It must not be forgotten here that David at this time penned Ps 52:1-9, as appears by the title of that psalm, wherein he represents Doeg not only as malicious and spiteful, but as false and deceitful, because though what he said was, for the substance of it, true, yet he put false colours upon it, with a design to do mischief. Yet even then, when the priesthood had become as a withered branch, he looks upon himself as a green olive-tree in the house of God, Ps 52:8. In this great hurry and distraction that David was continually in, yet he found both time and a heart for communion with God, and found comfort in it.

21 And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests.
22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew *it* that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned *the death* of all the persons of thy father's house.
23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou *shalt be* in safeguard.

1 Samuel-23

David in the Wilderness

1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against

Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

2 Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

Now we find why the prophet Gad (by divine direction, no doubt) ordered David to go into the land of Judah, 1Sa 22:5. It was that, since Saul neglected the public safety, he might take care of it, notwithstanding the ill treatment that was given him; for he must render good for evil, and therein be a type of him who not only ventured his life, but laid down his life, for those that were his enemies.

I. Tidings are brought to David, as to the patron and protector of his country's liberties, that the Philistines had made a descent upon the city of Keilah and plundered the country thereabouts, 1Sa 23:1. Probably it was the departure both of God and David from Saul that encouraged the Philistines to make this incursion. When princes begin to persecute God's people and ministers, let them expect no other than vexation on all sides. The way for any country to be quiet is to let God's church be quiet in it. If Saul fight against David, the Philistines shall fight against his country.

II. David is forward enough to come in for their relief, but is willing to enquire of the Lord concerning it. Here is an instance,

1. Of David's generosity and public-spiritedness. Though his head and hands were full of his own business, and he had enough to do, with the little force he had, to secure himself, yet he was concerned for the safety of his country and could not sit still to see that ravaged: nay, though Saul, whose business it was to guard the borders of his land, hated him and

sought his life, yet he was willing, to the utmost of his power, to serve him and his interests against the common enemy, and bravely abhorred the thought of sacrificing the common welfare to his private revenge. Those are unlike to David who sullenly decline to do good because they have not been so well considered as they deserved for the services they have done.

2. Of David's piety and regard to God. He enquired of the Lord by the prophet Gad; for it should seem (by 1Sa 23:6) that Abiathar came not to him with the ephod till he was in Keilah. His enquiry is, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? He enquires both concerning the duty (whether he might lawfully take Saul's work out of his hand, and act without a commission from him) and concerning the event, whether he might safely venture against such a force as the Philistines had with such a handful of men at his feet, and such a dangerous enemy as Saul was at his back. It is our duty, and will be our case and comfort, whatever happens, to acknowledge God in all our ways and to seek direction from him.

III. God appointed him once and again to go against the Philistines, and promised him success: Go, and smite the Philistines, 1Sa 23:2. His men opposed it, 1Sa 23:3. No sooner did he begin to have soldiers of his own than he found it hard enough to manage them. They objected that they had enemies enough among their own countrymen, they needed not to make the Philistines their enemies. Their hearts failed them when they only apprehended themselves in danger from Saul's band of pursuers, much more when they came to engage the Philistine-armies. To satisfy them, therefore, he enquired of the Lord again, and now received, not only a full commission, which would warrant him to fight though he had no orders from Saul (Arise, go down to Keilah), but also a full assurance of victory: I will deliver the Philistines into thy hand, 1Sa 23:4. This was enough to animate the greatest coward he had in his regiment.

IV. He went accordingly against the Philistines, routed them, and rescued Keilah, (1Sa 23:5), and it should seem he made a sally into the country of the Philistines, for he carried off their cattle by way of reprisal for the wrong they did to the men of Keilah in robbing their threshing-floors. Here notice is taken (1Sa 23:6) that it was while David remained in Keilah, after he had cleared it of the Philistines, that Abiathar came to him with the ephod in his hand, that is, the high priest's ephod, in which the urim and thummim were. It was a great comfort to David, in his banishment, that when he could not go to the house of God he had some of the choicest treasures of that house brought to him, the high priest and his breast-plate of judgment.

4 Then David inquired of the Lord yet again. And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, *that* he came down *with* an ephod in his hand.

7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

Here is, I. Saul contriving within himself the destruction of David (1Sa 23:7,8): He heard that he had come to Keilah; and did he not hear what brought him thither? Was it not told him that he had bravely relieved Keilah and delivered it out of the hands of the Philistines? This, one would think, should have put Saul upon considering what honour and dignity should be done to David for this. But, instead of that, he catches at it as

an opportunity of doing David a mischief. An ungrateful wretch he was, and for ever unworthy to have any service or kindness done him. Well might David complain of his enemies that they rewarded him evil for good, and that for his love they ere his adversaries, Ps 35:12,109:4. Christ was used thus basely, Joh 10:32. Now observe,

1. How Saul abused the God of Israel, in making his providence to patronise and give countenance to his malicious designs, and thence promising himself success in them: God hath delivered him into my hand; as if he who was rejected of God were in this instance owned and favoured by him, and David infatuated. He vainly triumphs before the victory, forgetting how often he had had fairer advantages against David than he had now and had yet missed his aim. He impiously connects God with his cause, because he thought he had gained one point. Therefore David prays (Ps 140:8), Grant not, O Lord! the desires of the wicked; further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves. We must not think that one smiling providence either justifies an unrighteous cause or secures its success.

2. How Saul abused the Israel of God, in making them the servants of his malice against David. He called all the people together to war, and they must with all speed march to Keilah, pretending to oppose the Philistines, but intending to besiege David and his men, though concealing that design; for it is said (1Sa 23:9) that he secretly practised mischief against him. Miserable is that people whose prince is a tyrant, for, while some are sufferers by his tyranny, others (which is worse) are made servants to it and instruments of it.

II. David consulting with God concerning his own preservation. He knew by the information bought him that Saul was plotting his ruin (1Sa 23:9) and therefore applied to his great protector for direction. No sooner is the ephod

brought to him than he makes use of it: Bring hither the ephod. We have the scriptures, those lively oracles, in our hands; let us take advice from them in doubtful cases. "Bring hither the Bible."

1. David's address to God upon this occasion is,

(1.) Very solemn and reverent. Twice he calls God the Lord God of Israel, and thrice calls himself his servant, 1Sa 23:10,11. Those that address God must know their distance, and who they are speaking to.

(2.) Very particular and express. His representation of the case is so (1Sa 23:10): "Thy servant has certainly heard on good authority" (for he would not call for the ephod upon every idle rumour) "that Saul has a design upon Keilah;" he does not say, "to destroy me," but, "to destroy the city" (as he had lately done the city of Nob) "for my sake." He seems more solicitous for their safety than for his own, and will expose himself any where rather than they shall be brought into trouble by his being among them. Generous souls are thus minded. His queries upon the case are likewise very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him: "Lord, direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a loss." He does indeed invert the due order of his queries, but God in his answer puts him into method.

That question should have been put first, and was first answered, "Will Saul come down, as thy servant has heard?" "Yea," says the oracle, "he will come down; he has resolved it, is preparing for it, and will do it, unless he hear that thou hast quitted the town." "Well, but if he do come down will the men of Keilah stand by me in holding the city against him, or will they open to him the gates, and deliver me into his hand?" If he had asked the men (the magistrates or elders) of Keilah themselves what they would do in that case, they could not

have told him, not knowing their own minds, nor what they should do when it came to the trial, much less which way the superior vote of their council would carry it; or they might have told him they would protect him, and yet afterwards have betrayed him; but God could tell him infallibly: "When Saul besieges their city, and demands of them that they surrender thee into his hands, how fond soever they now seem of thee, as their saviour, they will deliver thee up rather than stand the shock of Saul's fury." Note,

[1.] God knows all men better than they know themselves, knows their length, their strength, what is in them, and what they will do if they come into such and such circumstances.

[2.] He therefore knows not only what will be, but what would be if it were not prevented; and therefore knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

2. David, having thus far notice given him of his danger, quitted Keilah, 1Sa 23:13. His followers had now increased in number to 600; with these he went out, not knowing whither he went, but resolving to follow Providence and put himself under its protection. This broke Saul's measures. He thought God had delivered David into his hand, but it proved that God delivered him out of his hand, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. When Saul heard that David had escaped from Keilah, he forbore to go forth with the body of the army, as he intended (1Sa 23:8), and resolved to take only his own guards, and go in quest of his people's enemies and turn their counsels head-long.

10 Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down.

12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver *thee* up.

13 Then David and his men, *which were* about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbare to go forth.

14 And David abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

Here is, I. David absconding. He abode in a wilderness, in a mountain (1Sa 23:14), in a wood, 1Sa 23:15. We must here,

1. Commend his eminent virtues, his humility, modesty, fidelity to his prince, and patient attendance on the providence of his God, that he did not draw up his forces against Saul, fight him in the field, or surprise him by some stratagem or other, and so avenge his own quarrel and that of the Lord's priests upon him, and put an end to his own troubles and the calamities of the country under Saul's tyrannical government. No, he makes no such attempt; he keeps God's way, waits God's time, and is content to secure himself in woods and wildernesses, though with some it might seem a reproach to that courage for which he had been famous. But,

2. We must also lament his hard fate, that an innocent man should be thus terrified and put in fear of his life, that a man of honour should be thus disgraced, a man of merit thus recompensed for his services, and a man that delighted in the service both of God and his country should be debarred from both and wrapped up in obscurity. What shall we say to this? Let it make us think the worse of this world, which often gives such bad treatment to its best men; let it reconcile even great

and active men to privacy and restraint, if Providence make these their lot, for they were David's; and let it make us long for that kingdom where goodness shall for ever be in glory and holiness in honour, and the righteous shall shine as the sun, which cannot be put under a bushel.

II. Saul hunting him, as his implacable enemy. He sought him every day, so restless was his malice, 1Sa 23:14. He sought no less than his life, so cruel was his malice, 1Sa 23:15. As it had been from the beginning, so it was now, and will be, he that is born after the flesh persecuteth him that is born after the spirit, Ga 4:29.

III. God defending him, as his powerful protector. God delivered him not into Saul's hand, as Saul hoped (1Sa 23:7); and, unless God delivered him into his hand, he could not prevail against him, Joh 19:11.

IV. Jonathan comforting him as his faithful and constant friend. True friends will find out means to get together. David, it is likely, appointed time and place for this interview, and Jonathan observed the appointment, though he exposed himself thereby to his father's displeasure, and, had it been discovered, it might have cost him his life. True friendship will not shrink from danger, but can easily venture, will not shrink from condescension, but can easily stoop, and exchange a palace for a wood, to serve a friend. The very sight of Jonathan was reviving to David; but, besides this, he said that to him which was very encouraging.

1. As a pious friend, he directed him to God, the foundation of his confidence and the fountain of his comfort: He strengthened his hand in God. David, though a strong believer, needed the help of his friends for the perfecting of what was lacking in his faith; and herein Jonathan was helpful to him, by reminding him of the promise of God, the holy oil

wherewith he was anointed, the presence of God with him hitherto, and the many experiences he had had of God's goodness to him. Thus he strengthened his hands for action, by encouraging his heart, not in the creature, but in God. Jonathan was not in a capacity of doing any thing to strengthen him, but he assured him God would.

2. As a self-denying friend, he took a pleasure in the prospect of David's advancement to that honour which was his own birthright, 1Sa 23:17. "Thou shalt live to be king, and I shall think it preferment enough to be next thee, near thee, though under thee, and will never pretend to be a rival with thee." This resignation which Jonathan made to David of his title would be a great satisfaction to him, and make his way much the more clear.

This, he tells him, Saul knew very well, Jonathan having sometimes heard him say as much, whence it appears what a wicked man Saul was, to persecute one whom God favoured, and what a foolish man he was, in thinking to prevent that which God had determined and which would certainly come to pass. How could he disannul what God had purposed? 3. As a constant friend, he renewed his league of friendship with him. They made a covenant now, this third time, before the Lord, calling him to witness to it, 1Sa 23:18. True love takes delight in repeating its engagements, giving and receiving fresh assurances of the firmness of the friendship. Our covenant with God should be often renewed, and therein our communion with him kept up. David and Jonathan now parted, and never came together again, that we find, in this world; for Jonathan said what he wished, not what he had ground to expect, when he promised himself that he should be next to David in his kingdom.

15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David *was* in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood,
and strengthened his hand in God.
17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father
shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be
next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.
18 And they two made a covenant before the Lord : and David abode
in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.
19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not
David hide himself with us in strongholds in the wood, in the hill
of Hachilah, which *is* on the south of Jeshimon?
20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy
soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the
king's hand.
21 And Saul said, Blessed *be* ye of the Lord ; for ye have compassion
on me.
22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his
haunt is, *and* who hath seen him there: for it is told me *that* he
dealeth very subtilely.
23 See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he
hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I
will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that
I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.
24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men
were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of
Jeshimon.

Here, 1 The Ziphites offer their service to Saul, to betray David to him, 1Sa 23:19,20. He was sheltering himself in the wilderness of Ziph (1Sa 23:14,15), putting the more confidence in the people of that country because they were of his own tribe. They had reason to think themselves happy that they had an opportunity of serving one who was the ornament of their tribe and was likely to be much more so, who was so far from plundering the country, or giving it any disturbance with his troops, that he was ready to protect it and to them all the good offices that there was occasion for.

But, to ingratiate themselves with Saul, they went to him, and not only informed him very particularly where David quartered (1Sa 23:19), but invited him to come with his forces into their country in pursuit of him, and promised to deliver him into his hand, 1Sa 23:20. Saul had not sent to examine or threaten them, but of their own accord, and even without asking a reward (as Judas did--What will you give me?), they offered to betray David to him who, they knew, thirsted after his blood.

2. Saul thankfully receives their information, and gladly lays hold of the opportunity of hunting David in their wilderness, in hopes to make a prey of him at length. He intimates to them how kindly he took it (1Sa 23:21): Blessed be you of the Lord (so near is God to his mouth, though far from his heart), for you have compassion on me. It seems he looked upon himself as a miserable man and an object of pity; his own envy and ill-nature made him so, otherwise he might have been easy and have needed no man's compassion. He likewise insinuates the little concern that the generality of his people showed for him. "You have compassion on me, which others have not."

Saul gives them instructions to search more particularly for his haunts (1Sa 23:22), "for" (says he) "I hear he deals very subtilely," representing him as a man crafty to do mischief, whereas all his subtlety was to secure himself. It was strange that Saul did not go down with them immediately, but he hoped by their means to set his game with the more certainty, and thus divine Providence gave David time to shift for himself. But the Ziphites had laid their spies upon all the places where he was likely to be discovered, and therefore Saul might come and seize him if he was in the land, 1Sa 23:23. New he thought himself sure of his prey and pleased himself with the thoughts of devouring it.

3. The imminent peril that David was now brought into. Upon intelligence that the Ziphites had betrayed him, he retired from the hill of Hachilah to the wilderness of Maon (1Sa 23:24), and at this time he penned the Ps 54:1-7, as appears by the title, wherein he calls the Ziphites strangers, though they were Israelites, because they used him barbarously; but he puts himself under the divine protection: "Behold, God is my helper, and then all shall be well" Saul, having got intelligence of him, pursued him closely (1Sa 23:25), till he came so near him that there was but a mountain between them (1Sa 23:26), David and his men on one side of the mountain flying and Saul and his men on the other side pursuing, David in fear and Saul in hope.

But this mountain was an emblem of the divine Providence coming between David and the destroyer, like the pillar of cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians. David was concealed by this mountain and Saul confounded by it. David now flees as a bird to his mountain (Ps 11:1) and finds God to him as the shadow of a great rock. Saul hoped with his numerous forces to enclose David, and compass him in and his men; but the ground did not prove convenient for his design, and so it failed. A new name was given to the place in remembrance of this (1Sa 23:28): Selah-hammah-lekoth--the rock of division, because it divided between Saul and David.

4. The deliverance of David out of this danger. Providence gave Saul a diversion, when he was just ready to lay hold of David; notice was brought him that the Philistines were invading the land (1Sa 23:27), probably that part of the land where his own estate lay, which would be seized, or at least spoiled, by the invaders; for the little notice he took of Keilah's distress and David's relief of it, in the beginning of this chapter, gives us cause to suspect that he would not now have left pursuing David, and gone to oppose the Philistines, if some private interests of his own had not been at stake.

However it was, he found himself under a necessity of going against the Philistines (1Sa 23:28), and by this means David was delivered when he was on the brink of destruction. Saul was disappointed of his prey, and God was glorified as David's wonderful protector. When the Philistines invaded the land they were far from intending any kindness to David by it, yet the overruling providence of God, which orders all events and the times of them, made it very serviceable to him. The wisdom of God is never at a loss for ways and means to preserve his people. As this Saul was diverted, so another Saul was converted, just then when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints of the Lord, Ac 9:1.

5. David, having thus escaped, took shelter in some natural fortresses, which he found in the wilderness of En-gedi, 1Sa 23:29. And this Dr. Lightfoot thinks was the wilderness of Judah, in which David was when he penned Ps 63:1-11, which breathes as much pious and devout affection as almost any of his psalms; for in all places and in all conditions he still kept up his communion with God.

25 Saul also and his men went to seek *him.* And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that,* he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philstines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammahlekoth [the rock of divisions].

29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strongholds at Engedi.

1 Samuel-24

David Spares Saul at Engedi

1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the
Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the
wilderness of Engedi.
2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and
went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.
3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and
Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in
the sides of the cave.
4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the
Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine
hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.
Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.
5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him,
because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

Here, I. Saul renews his pursuit of David, 1Sa 24:1,2. No sooner had he come home safely from chasing the Philistines, in which it should seem he had good success, than he enquired after David to do him a mischief, and resolved to have another thrust at him, as if he had been delivered to do all these abominations, Jer 7:10.

By the frequent incursions of the Philistines, he might have seen how necessary it was to recall David from his banishment and restore him to his place in the army again; but so far is he from doing this that now more than ever he is exasperated against him, and, hearing that he is in the wilderness of Engedi, he draws out 3000 choice men, and goes with them at his feet in pursuit of him upon the rocks of the wild goats, where, one would think, David should not have been envied a habitation nor Saul desirous of disturbing him; for what harm could he fear from one who was no better accommodated? But

it is not enough for Saul that David is thus cooped up; he cannot be easy while he is alive.

II. Providence brings Saul alone into the same cave wherein David and his men had hidden themselves, 1Sa 24:3. In those countries there were very large caves in the sides of the rocks or mountains, partly natural, but probably much enlarged by art for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun; hence we read of places where the flocks did rest at noon (So 1:7), and this cave seems to be spoken of as one of the sheep-cotes. In the sides of this cave David and his men remained, perhaps not all his men, the whole 600, but only some few of his particular friends, the rest being disposed of in similar retirements.

Saul, passing by, turned in himself alone, not in search of David (for, supposing him to be an aspiring ambitious man, he thought to find him rather climbing with the wild goats upon the rocks than retiring with the sheep into a cave), but thither he turned aside to cover his feet, that is, to sleep awhile, it being a cool and quiet place, and very refreshing in the heat of the day; probably he ordered his attendants to march before, reserving only a very few to wait for him at the mouth of the cave. Some by the covering of the feet understand the easing of nature, and think that this was Saul's errand into the cave: but the former interpretation is more probable.

III. David's servants stir him up to kill Saul now that he has so fair an opportunity to do it, 1Sa 24:4. They reminded him that this was the day which he had long looked for, and of which God had spoken to him in general when he was anointed to the kingdom, which should put a period to his troubles and open the passage to his advancement. Saul now lay at his mercy, and it was easy to imagine how little mercy he would find with Saul and therefore what little reason he had to show

mercy to him. "By all means" (say his servants) "give him the fatal blow now." See how apt we are to misunderstand,

1 The promises of God. God had assured David that he would deliver him from Saul, and his men interpret this as a warrant to destroy Saul.

2 The providences of God. Because it was now in his power to kill him, they concluded he might lawfully do it.

IV. David cut off the skirt of his robe, but soon repented that he had done this: His heart smote him for it (1Sa 24:5); though it did Saul no real hurt, and served David for a proof that it was in his power to have killed him (1Sa 24:11), yet, because it was an affront to Saul's royal dignity, he wished he had not done it. Note, It is a good thing to have a heart within us smiting us for sins that seem little; it is a sign that conscience is awake and tender, and will be the means of preventing greater sins.

V. He reasons strongly both with himself and with his servants against doing Saul any hurt.

1. He reasons with himself (1Sa 24:6): The Lord forbid that I should do this thing. Note, Sin is a thing which it becomes us to startle at, and to resist the temptations to, not only with resolution, but with a holy indignation. He considered Saul now, not as his enemy, and the only person that stood in the way of his preferment (for then he would be induced to hearken to the temptation), but as God's anointed (that is, the person whom God had appointed to reign as long as he lived, and who, as such, was under the particular protection of the divine law), and as his master, to whom he was obliged to be faithful. Let servants and subjects learn hence to be dutiful and loyal, whatever hardships are put upon them, 1Pe 2:18.

2. He reasons with his servants: He suffered them not to rise against Saul, 1Sa 24:7. He would not only not do this evil thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus did he render good for evil to him from whom he had received evil for good, and was herein both a type of Christ, who saved his persecutors, and an example to all Christians not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

VI. He followed Saul out of the cave, and, though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity, if possible, to slay his enmity, by convincing him that he was not such a man as he took him for.

1. Even in showing his head now he testified that he had an honourable opinion of Saul. He had too much reason to believe that, let him say what he would, Saul would immediately be the death of him as soon as he saw him, and yet he bravely lays aside that jealousy, and thinks Saul so much a man of sense as to hear his reasoning when he had so much to say in his own vindication and such fresh and sensible proofs to give of his own integrity.

2. His behaviour was very respectful: He stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself, giving honour to whom honour was due, and teaching us to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our superiors, even to those that have been most injurious to us.

6 And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this
thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine
hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the Lord.
7 So David stayed his servants with these words and suffered them
not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went
on *his* way.
8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after
Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him,
David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words,
saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?
10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord hath
delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and *some* bade *me*
kill thee: but *mine eye* spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth
mine hand against my lord; for he *is* the Lord's anointed.
11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand:
for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know
thou and see that *there is* neither evil nor transgression in mine
hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul
to take it.

We have here David's warm and pathetic speech to Saul, wherein he endeavours to convince him that he did him a great deal of wrong in persecuting him thus and to persuade him therefore to be reconciled.

I. He calls him father (1Sa 24:11), for he was not only, as king, the father of his country, but he was, in particular, his father-in-law. From a father one may expect compassion and a favourable opinion. For a prince to seek the ruin of any of his good subjects is as unnatural as for a father to seek the ruin of his own children.

II. He lays the blame of his rage against him upon his evil counsellors: Wherefore hearest thou men's words? 1Sa 24:9. It is a piece of respect due to crowned heads, if they do amiss, to charge it upon those about them, who either advised them to it or should have advised them against it. David had reason enough to think that Saul persecuted him purely from his own envy and malice, yet he courteously supposes that others put him on to do it, and made him believe that David was his enemy and sought his hurt. Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, has his agents in all places, and particularly in the courts of those princes that encourage them and give ear to them, who make it their business to represent the people of God as enemies to Caesar and hurtful to kings and provinces,

that, being thus dressed up in bear-skins, they may "be baited."

III. He solemnly protests his own innocence, and that he is far from designing any hurt or mischief to Saul: "There is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, 1Sa 24:11. I am not chargeable with any crime, nor conscious of any guilt, and, had I a window in my breast, thou mightest through it see the sincerity of my heart in this protestation: I have not sinned against thee (however I have sinned against God), yet thou huntest my soul," that is, "my life." Perhaps it was about this time that David penned the seventh psalm, concerning the affair of Cush the Benjamite (that is, Saul, as some think), wherein he thus appeals to God (1Sa 24:3-5): If there be iniquity in my hands, then let the enemy persecute my soul and take it, putting in a parenthesis, with reference to the story of this chapter, Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is my enemy.

IV. He produces undeniable evidence to prove the falsehood of the suggestion upon which Saul's malice against him was grounded. David was charged with seeking Saul's hurt: "See," says he, "yea, see the skirt of thy robe, 1Sa 24:11. Let this be a witness for me, and an unexceptionable witness it is; had that been true of which I am accused, I should now have had thy head in my hand and not the skirt of thy robe, for I could as easily have cut off that as this." To corroborate this evidence he shows him,

1. That God's providence had given him opportunity to do it: The lord delivered thee, very surprisingly, to day into my hand, whence many a one would have gathered an intimation that it was the will of God he should now give the determining blow to him whose neck lay so fair for it. When Saul had but a very small advantage against David he cried out, God has

delivered him into my hand (1Sa 23:7), and resolved to make the best of that advantage; but David did not so.

2. That his counsellors and those about him had earnestly besought him to do it: Some bade me kill thee. He had blamed Saul for hearkening to men's words and justly; "for," says he, "if I had done so, thou wouldest not have been alive now."

3. That it was upon a good principle that he refused to do it; not because Saul's attendants were at hand, who, it may be, would have avenged his death; no, it was not by the fear of them, but by the fear of God, that he was restrained from it. "He is my lord, and the Lord's anointed, whom I ought to protect, and to whom I owe faith and allegiance, and therefore I said, I will not touch a hair of his head." Such a happy command he had of himself that his nature, in the midst of the greatest provocation, was not suffered to rebel against his principles.

V. He declares it to be his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger: "The Lord avenge me of thee, that is, deliver me out of thy hand; but, whatever comes of it, my hand shall not be upon thee" (1Sa 24:12), and again (1Sa 24:13), for saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked. The wisdom of the ancients is transmitted to posterity by their proverbial sayings. Many such we receive by tradition from our fathers; and the counsels of common persons are very much directed by this, "As the old saying is." Here is one that was in use in David's time: Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, that is,

1. Men's own iniquity will ruin them at last, so some understand it. Forward furious men will cut their own throats with their own knives. Give them rope enough, and they will hang themselves. In this sense it comes in very fitly as a reason why his hand should not be upon him.

2. Bad men will do bad things; according as men's principles and dispositions are, so will their actions be. This also agrees very well with the connexion. If David had been a wicked man, as he was represented, he would have done this wicked thing; but he durst not, because of the fear of God. Or thus: Whatever injuries bad men do us (which we are not to wonder at; he that lies among thorns must expect to be scratched), yet we must not return them; never render railing for railing. Though wickedness proceed from the wicked, yet let it not therefore proceed from us by way of retaliation. Though the dog bark at the sheep, the sheep does not bark at the dog. See Isa 32:6-8.

VI. He endeavours to convince Saul that as it was a bad thing, so it was a mean thing, for him to give chase to such an inconsiderable person as he was (1Sa 24:14): Whom does the king of Israel pursue with all this care and force? A dead dog; a flea; one flea, so it is in the Hebrew. It is below so great a king to enter the lists with one that is so unequal a match for him, one of his own servants, bred a poor shepherd, now an exile, neither able nor willing to make any resistance. To conquer him would not be to his honour, to attempt it was his disparagement.

If Saul would consult his own reputation, he would slight such an enemy (supposing he were really his enemy) and would think himself in no danger from him. David was so far from aspiring that he was, in his own account, as a dead dog. Mephibosheth thus calls himself, 2Sa 9:8. This humble language would have wrought upon Saul if he had had any spark of generosity in him. Satis est prostrasse leoni--Enough for the lion that he has laid his victim low. What credit would it be to Saul to trample upon a dead dog? What pleasure could it be to him to hunt a flea, a single flea, which (as some have observed), if it be sought, is not easily found, if it be found, is

not easily caught, and, if it be caught, is a poor prize, especially for a prince. Aquila non captat muscas--The eagle does not dart upon flies. David thinks Saul had no more reason to fear him than to fear a flea-bite.

VII. He once and again appeals to God as the righteous Judge (1Sa 24:12,15): The Lord judge between me and thee. Note, The justice of God is the refuge and comfort of oppressed innocence. If men wrong us, God will right us, at furthest, in the judgment of the great day. With him David leaves his cause, and so rests satisfied, waiting his time to appear for him.

12 The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.
13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.
14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.
15 The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.
16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is* this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.
17 And he said to David, Thou *art* more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.
18 And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the Lord had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

Here we have,

I. Saul's penitent reply to David's speech. It was strange that he had patience to hear him out, considering how outrageous he was against him, and how cutting David's discourse was. But God restrained him and his men; and we may suppose Saul struck with amazement at the singularity of the event, and much more when he found how much he had lain at

David's mercy. His heart must have been harder than a stone if this had not affected him.

1. He melted into tears, and we will not suppose them to have been counterfeit but real expressions of his present concern at the sight of his own iniquity, so plainly proved upon him. He speaks as one quite overcome with David's kindness: Is this thy voice, my son David? And, as one that relented at the thought of his own folly and ingratitude, he lifted up his voice and wept, 1Sa 24:16. Many mourn for their sins that do not truly repent of them, weep bitterly for them, and yet continue in love and league with them.

2. He ingenuously acknowledges David's integrity and his own iniquity (1Sa 24:17): Thou art more righteous than I. Now God made good to David that word on which he had caused him to hope, that he would bring forth his righteousness as the light, Ps 37:6. Those who take care to keep a good conscience may leave it to God to secure them the credit of it. This fair confession was enough to prove David innocent (even his enemy himself being judge), but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, Thou are righteous, but I am wicked; but the utmost he will own is this: Thou art more righteous than I.

Bad men will commonly go no further than this in their confessions; they will own they are not so good as some others are; there are those that are better than they, and more righteous. He now owns himself under a mistake concerning David (1Sa 24:18): "Thou hast shown this day that thou art so far from seeking my hurt that thou hast dealt well with me." We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us then really they are, and than perhaps they are proved to be; and when, afterwards, our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recall our suspicions, as Saul does here.

3. He prays God to recompense David for this his generous kindness to him. He owns that David's sparing him, when he had him in his power, was an uncommon and unparalleled instance of tenderness to an enemy; no man would have done the like; and therefore, either because he thought himself not able to give him a full recompence for so great a favour, or because he found himself not inclined to give him any recompence at all, he turns him over to God for his pay: The Lord reward thee good, 1Sa 24:19. Poor beggars can do no less than pray for their benefactors, and Saul did no more.

4. He prophesies his advancement to the throne (1Sa 24:20): I know well that thou shalt surely be king. He knew it before, by the promise Samuel had made him of it compared with the excellent spirit that appeared in David, which highly aggravated his sin and folly in persecuting him as he did; he had as much reason to say concerning David as David concerning him, How can I put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed? But now he knew it by the interest he found David had in the people, the special providence of God in protecting him, and the generous kingly spirit he had now given a proof of in sparing his enemy. Now he knew it, that is, now that he was in a good temper he was willing to own that he knew it and to submit to the conviction of it.

Note, Sooner or later, God will force even those that are of the synagogue of Satan to know and own those that he has loved, and to worship before their feet; for so is the promise, Re 3:9. This acknowledgement which Saul made of David's incontestable title to the crown was a great encouragement to David himself and a support to his faith and hope. 5. He binds David with an oath hereafter to show the same tenderness of his seed and of his name as he had now shown of his person, 1Sa 24:21.

David had more reason to oblige Saul by an oath that he would not destroy him, yet he insists not on that (if the laws of justice and honour would not bind him, an oath would not), but Saul knew David to be a conscientious man, and would think his interests safe if he could get them secured by his oath. Saul by his disobedience had ruined his own soul, and never took care by repentance to prevent that ruin, and yet is very solicitous that his name might not be destroyed nor his seed cut off. However, David swore unto him, 1Sa 24:22.

Though he might be tempted, not only in revenge, but in prudence, to extirpate Saul's family, yet he binds himself not to do it, knowing that God could and would establish the kingdom to him and his, without the use of such bloody methods. This oath he afterwards religiously observed; he supported Mephibosheth, and executed those as traitors that slew Ishbosheth. The hanging up of seven of Saul's posterity, to atone for the destruction of the Gibeonites, was God's appointment, not David's act, and therefore not the violation of this oath.

II. Their parting in peace.

1. Saul, for the present, desisted from the persecution. He went home convinced, but not converted; ashamed of his envy of David, yet retaining in his breast that root of bitterness; vexed that, when at last he had found David, he could not at that time find in his heart to destroy him, as he had designed. God has many ways to tie the hands of persecutors, when he does not turn their hearts.

2. David continued to shift for his own safety. He knew Saul too well to trust him, and therefore got him up into the hold. It is dangerous venturing upon the mercy of a reconciled enemy. We read of those who believed in Christ, and yet he

did not commit himself to them because he knew all men. Those that like David are innocent as doves must thus like him be wise as serpents.

19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?
wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto
me this day.
20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and
that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.
21 Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut
off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out
of my father's house.
22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and
his men gat them up unto the hold.

1 Samuel-25

David and Abigail

1 And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and
lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.
And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

We have here a short account of Samuel's death and burial.

1. Though he was a great man, and one that was admirably well qualified for public service, yet he spent the latter end of his days in retirement and obscurity, not because he was superannuated (for he knew how to preside in a college of the prophets, 1Sa 19:20), but because Israel had rejected him, for which God thus justly chastised them, and because his desire was to be quiet and to enjoy himself and his God in the exercises of devotion now in his advanced years, and in this desire God graciously indulged him. Let old people be willing to rest themselves, though it look like burying themselves alive.

2. Though he was a firm friend to David, for which Saul hated him, as also for dealing plainly with him, yet he died in peace even in the worst of the days of the tyranny of Saul, who, he sometimes feared, would kill him, 1Sa 16:2. Though Saul loved him not, yet he feared him, as Herod did John, and feared the people, for all knew him to be a prophet. Thus is Saul restrained from hurting him.

3. All Israel lamented him; and they had reason, for they had all a loss in him. His personal merits commanded this honour to be done him at his death. His former services to the public, when he judged Israel, made this respect to his name and memory a just debt; it would have been very ungrateful to have withheld it. The sons of the prophets had lost the founder and president of their college, and whatever weakened them was a public loss. But that was not all: Samuel was a constant intercessor for Israel, prayed daily for them, 1Sa 12:23. If he go, they part with the best friend they have. The loss is the more grievous at this juncture when Saul has grown so outrageous and David is driven from his country; never more need of Samuel than now, yet now he is removed. We will hope that the Israelites lamented Samuel's death the more bitterly because they remembered against themselves their own sin and folly in rejecting him and desiring a king. Note,

(1.) Those have hard hearts who can bury their faithful ministers with dry eyes, who are not sensible of the loss of those who have prayed for them and taught them the way of the Lord.

(2.) When God's providence removes our relations and friends from us we ought to be humbled for our misconduct towards them while they were with us.

4. They buried him, not in the school of the prophets at Naioth, but in his own house (or perhaps in the garden pertaining to it) at Ramah, where he was born.

5. David, thereupon, went down to the wilderness of Paran, retiring perhaps to mourn the more solemnly for the death of Samuel. Or, rather, because now that he had lost so good a friend, who was (and he hoped would be) a great support to him, he apprehended his danger to be greater than ever, and therefore withdrew to a wilderness, out of the limits of the land of Israel; and now it was that he dwelt in the tents of Kedar, Ps 120:5. In some parts of this wilderness of Paran Israel wandered when they came out of Egypt. The place would bring to mind God's care concerning them, and David might improve that for his own encouragement, now in his wilderness-state.

2 And *there was* a man in Maon, whose possessions *were* in Carmel;
and the man *was* very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and
a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.
3 Now the name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife
Abigail; and *she was* a woman of good understanding, and of a
beautiful countenance: but the man *was* churlish and evil in his
doings; and he *was* of the house of Caleb.
4 And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.
5 And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young
men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my
name:
6 and thus shall ye say to him that liveth *in prosperity*, Peace *be* both to
thee, and peace *be* to thine house, and peace *be* unto all that thou
hast.
7 And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds
which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught
missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.

Here begins the story of Nabal.

I. A short account of him, who and what he was (1Sa 25:2,3), a man we should never have heard of if there had not happened some communication between him and David. Observe,

1. His name: Nabal--a fool; so it signifies. It was a wonder that his parents would give him that name and an ill omen of what proved to be this character. Yet indeed we all of us deserve to be so called when we come into the world, for man is born like the wild ass's colt and foolishness is bound up in our hearts.

2. His family: He was of the house of Caleb, but was indeed of another spirit. He inherited Caleb's estate; for Maon and Carmel lay near Hebron, which was given to Caleb (Jos 14:14,15:54,55), but he was far from inheriting his virtues. He was a disgrace to his family, and then it was no honour to him. Degeneranti genus opprobrium--A Good extraction is a reproach to him who degenerates from it. The LXX., and some other ancient versions, read it appellatively, not, He was a Calebite, but He was a dogged man, of a currish disposition, surly and snappish, and always snarling. He was anthropos kynikos--a man that was a cynic.

3. His wealth: He was very great, that is, very rich (for riches make men look great in the eye of the world), otherwise, to one that takes his measures aright, he really looked very mean. Riches are common blessings, which God often gives to Nabals, to whom he gives neither wisdom nor grace.

4. His wife--Abigail, a woman of great understanding. Her name signifies, the joy of her father; yet he could not promise himself much joy of her when he married her to such a husband, enquiring more after his wealth than after his wisdom. Many a child is thrown away upon a great heap of the dirt of worldly wealth, married to that, and to nothing else

that is desirable. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, but an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Many an Abigail is tied to a Nabal; and if it be so, be her understanding, like Abigail's, ever so great, it will be little enough for her exercises.

5. His character. He had no sense either of honour or honesty; not of honour, for he was churlish, cross, and ill-humoured; not of honesty, for he was evil in his doings, hard and oppressive, and a man that cared not what fraud and violence he used in getting and saving, so he could but get and save. This is the character given of Nabal by him who knows what every man is.

II. David's humble request to him, that he would send him some victuals for himself and his men.

1. David, it seems, was in such distress that he would be glad to be beholden to him, and did in effect come a begging to his door. What little reason have we to value the wealth of this world when so great a churl as Nabal abounds and so great a saint as David suffers want! Once before we had David begging his bread, but then it was of Ahimelech the high priest, to whom one would not grudge to stoop. But to send a begging to Nabal was what such a spirit as David had could not admit without some reluctancy; yet, if Providence bring him to these straits, he will not say that to beg he is ashamed. Yet see Ps 37:25.

2. He chose a good time to send to Nabal, when he had many hands employed about him in shearing his sheep, for whom he was to make a plentiful entertainment, so that good cheer was stirring. Had he sent at another time, Nabal would have pretended he had nothing to spare, but now he could not have that excuse. It was usual to make feasts at their sheep-

shearings, as appears by Absalom's feast on that occasion (2Sa 13:24), for wool was one of the staple commodities of Canaan.

3. David ordered his men to deliver their message to him with a great deal of courtesy and respect: "Go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. Tell him I sent you to present my service to him, and to enquire how he does and his family," 1Sa 25:5. He puts words in their mouths (1Sa 25:6): Thus shall you say to him that liveth; our translators add, in prosperity, as if those live indeed that live as Nabal did, with abundance of the wealth of this world about them; whereas, in truth, those thatlive in pleasure are dead while they live, 1Ti 5:6.

This was, methinks too high a compliment to pass upon Nabal, to call him the man that liveth. David knew better things, that in God's favour is life, not in the world's smiles; and by the rough answer he was well enough served, for this too smooth address to such a muck-worm. Yet his good wishes were very commendable. "Peace be to thee, all good both to soul and body. Peace be to thy house and to all that thou hast." Tell him I am a hearty well-wisher to his health and prosperity. He bids them call him his son David (1Sa 25:8), intimating that, for his age and estate, David honoured him as a father, and therefore hoped to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

4. He pleaded the kindness which Nabal's shepherds had received from David and his men; and one good turn requires another. He appeals to Nabal's own servants, and shows that when David's soldiers were quartered among Nabal's shepherds,

(1.) They did not hurt them themselves, did them no injury, gave them no disturbance, were not a terror to them, nor took any of the lambs out of the flock. Yet, considering the character of David's men, men in distress, and debt, and discontented, and the scarcity of provisions in his camp, it was

not without a great deal of care and good management that they were kept from plundering.

(2.) They protected them from being hurt by others. David himself does but intimate this, for he would not boast of his good offices: Neither was there aught missing to them, 1Sa 25:7. But Nabal's servants, to whom he appealed, went further (1Sa 25:16): They were a wall unto us, both by night and day. David's soldiers were a guard to Nabal's shepherds when the bands of the Philistines robbed the threshing-floors (1Sa 23:1) and would have robbed the sheep-folds. From those plunderers Nabal's flocks were protected by David's care, and therefore he says, Let us find favour in thy eyes. Those that have shown kindness may justly expect to receive kindness.

5. He was very modest in his request. Though David was anointed king, he insisted not upon royal dainties, but, "Give whatsoever comes to thy hand, and we will be thankful for it." Beggars must not be choosers. Those that deserved to have been served first will now be glad of what is left. They plead, We come in a good day, a festival, when not only the provision is more plentiful, but the heart and hand are usually more open and free than at other times, when much may be spared and yet not be missed. David demands not what he wanted as a debt, either by way of tribute as he was a king, or by way of contribution as he was a general, but asks it as a boon to a friend, that was his humble servant. David's servants delivered their message faithfully and very handsomely, not doubting but to go back well laden with provisions.

III. Nabal's churlish answer to this modest petition, 1Sa 25:10,11. One could not have imagined it possible that any man should be so very rude and ill-conditioned as Nabal was. David called himself his son, and asked bread and a fish, but, instead thereof, Nabal gave him a stone and a scorpion; not only denied him, but abused him. If he had not thought fit to

send him any supplies for fear of Ahimelech's fate, who paid dearly for his kindness to David; yet he might have given a civil answer, and made the denial as modest as the request was. But, instead of that, he falls into a passion, as covetous men are apt to do when they are asked for any thing, thinking thus to cover one sin with another, and by abusing the poor to excuse themselves from relieving them. But God will not thus be mocked.

1. He speaks scornfully of David as an insignificant man, not worth taking notice of. The Philistines could say of him, This is David the king of the land, that slew his ten thousands (1Sa 21:11), yet Nabal his near neighbour, and one of the same tribe, affects not to know him, or not to know him to be a man of any merit or distinction: Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? He could not be ignorant how much the country was obliged to David for his public services, but his narrow soul thinks not of paying any part of that debt, nor so much as of acknowledging it; he speaks of David as an inconsiderable man, obscure, and not to be regarded. Think it not strange if great men and great merits be thus disgraced.

2. He upbraids him with his present distress, and takes occasion from it to represent him as a bad man, that was fitter to be set in the stocks for a vagrant than to have any kindness shown him. How naturally does he speak the churlish clownish language of those that hate to give alms! There are many servants now-a-days (as if there had been none such in former days) that break every man from his master, suggesting that David was one of them himself ("He might have kept his place with his master Saul, and then he needed not have sent to me for provisions"), and also that he entertained and harboured those that were fugitives like himself. It would make one's blood rise to hear so great and good a man as David thus vilified and reproached by such a base churl as Nabal. But the vile person will speak villany, Isa 32:5-7.

If men bring themselves into straits by their own folly, yet they are to be pitied and helped, and not trampled upon and starved. But D avid was reduced to this distress, not by any fault, no, nor any indiscretion, of his own, but purely by the good services he had done to his country and the honours which his God had put upon him; and yet he was represented as a fugitive and runagate. Le t this help us to bear such reproaches and misrepresentations of us with patience and cheerfulness, and make us easy under them, that it has often been the lot of the excellent ones of the earth. Some of the best men that ever the world was blest with were counted as the off-scouring of all things, 1Co 4:13.

3. He insists much upon the property he had in the provisions of his table, and will by no means admit any body to share in them. "It is my bread and my flesh, yes, and my water too (though I>usus communis aquarum--water is every one's property), and it is prepared for my shearers," priding himself in it that it was all his own; and who denied it? Who offered to dispute his title? But this, he thinks, will justify him in keeping i t all to himself, and giving David none; for may he not do what he will with his own? Whereas we mistake if we think we are absolute lords of what we have and may do what we please with it. No, we are but stewards, and must use it as we are directed, remembering it is not our own, but his that entrusted us with it. Riches are ta allotria (Lu 16:12); they are another's, and we ought not to talk too much of their being our own.

8 Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the
young men find favor in thine eyes; for we come in a good day:
give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy
servants, and to thy son David.

9 And when David’s young men came, they spake to Nabal
according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who *is* David? and who *is* the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master.

11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men, whom I know not whence they *be?*

12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.

13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

Here is, I The report made to David of the abuse Nabal had given to his messengers (1Sa 25:12): They turned their way. They showed their displeasure, as became them to do, by breaking off abruptly from such a churl, but prudently governed themselves so well as not to render railing for railing, not to call him as he deserved, much less to take by force what ought of right to have been given them, but came and told David that he might do as he thought fit. Christ's servants, when they are thus abused, must leave it to him to plead his own cause and wait till he appear in it. The servant showed his lord what affronts he had received, but did not return them, Lu 14:21.

II. David's hasty resolution hereupon. He girded on his sword, and ordered his men to do so too, to the number of 400, 1Sa 25:13. And what he said we are told, 1Sa 25:21,22. 1. He repented of the kindness he had done to Nabal, and looked upon it as thrown away upon him. He said, "surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness. I thought to oblige him and make him my friend, but I see it is to no purpose. He has no sense of gratitude, nor is he capable of receiving the impressions of a good turn, else he could not have used me thus. He hath requited me evil for good." But, when we are thus requited, we should not repent of the good

we have done, nor be backward to do good another time. God is kind to the evil and unthankful, and why may not we?

2. He determined to destroy Nabal and all that belonged to him, 1Sa 25:22. Here David did not act like himself. His resolution was bloody, to cut off all the males of Nabal's house, and spare none, man nor man-child. The ratification of his resolution was passionate: So, and more also do to God (he was going to say to me, but that would better become Saul's mouth, 1Sa 14:44, than David's, and therefore he decently turns it off) to the enemies of David. Is this thy voice, O David? Can the man after God's own heart speak thus unadvisedly with his lips? Has he been so long in the school of affliction, where he should have learned patience, and yet so passionate? Is this he who used to be dumb and deaf when he was reproached (Ps 38:13), who but the other day spared him who sought his life, and yet now will not spare any thing that belongs to him who has only put an affront upon his messengers? He who at other times used to be calm and considerate is now put into such a heat by a few hard words that nothing will atone for them but the blood of a whole family.

Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves, to try them, that they may know what is in their hearts? From Saul David expected injuries, and against those he was prepared and stood upon his guard, and so kept his temper; but from Nabal he expected kindness, and therefore the affront he gave him was a surprise to him, found him off his guard, and, by a sudden and unexpected attack, put him for the present into disorder. What need have we to pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation!

III. The account given of this matter to Abigail by one of the servants, who was more considerate than the rest, 1Sa 25:14. Had this servant spoken to Nabal, and shown him the danger

he had exposed himself to by his own rudeness, he would have said, "Servants are now-a-days so saucy, and so apt to prescribe, that there is no enduring them," and, it may be, would have turned him out of doors. But Abigail, being a woman of good understanding, took cognizance of the matter, even from her servant, who, 1. Did David justice in commending him and his men for their civility to Nabal's shepherds, 1Sa 25:15,16. "The men were very good to us, and, though they were themselves exposed, yet they protected us and were a wall unto us." Those who do that which is good shall, one way or other, have the praise of the same. Nabal's own servant will be a witness for David that he is a man of honour and conscience, whatever Nabal himself says of him. And,

2. He did Nabal no wrong in condemning him for his rudeness to David's messengers: He railed on them (1Sa 25:14), he flew upon them (so the word is) with an intolerable rage; "for," say they, "it is his usual practice, 1Sa 25:17. He is such a son of Belial, so very morose and intractable, that a man cannot speak to him but he flies into a passion immediately." Abigail knew it too well herself.

3. He did Abigail and the whole family a kindness in making her sensible what was likely to be the consequence. He knew David so well that he had reason to think he would highly resent the affront, and perhaps had had information of David's orders to his men to march that way; for he is very positive evil is determined against our master, and all his household, himself among the rest, would be involved in it. Therefore he desires his mistress to consider what was to be done for their common safety. They could not resist the force David would bring down upon them, nor had they time to send to Saul to protect them; something therefore must be done to pacify David.

14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.
15 But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields.
16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.
17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that *a man* cannot speak to him.
18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses.
19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.
20 And it was *so, as* she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.
21 Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fellow* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.
22 So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

We have here an account of Abigail's prudent management for the preserving of her husband and family from the destruction that was just coming upon them; and we find that she did her part admirably well and fully answered her character. The passion of fools often makes those breaches in a little time which the wise, with all their wisdom, have much ado to make up again. It is hard to say whether Abigail was more miserable in such a husband or Nabal happy in such a wife. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, to protect as well as adorn, and will do him good and not evil. Wisdom in such a case as

this was better than weapons of war. 1. It was her wisdom that what she did she did quickly, and without delay; she made haste, 1Sa 25:18. It was no time to trifle or linger when all was in danger. Those that desire conditions of peace must send when the enemy is yet a great way off, Lu 14:32. 2. It was her wisdom that what she did she did herself, because, being a woman of great prudence and very happy address, she knew better how to manage it than any servant she had. The virtuous woman will herself look well to the ways of her household, and not devolve this duty wholly upon others.

Abigail must endeavour to atone for Nabal's faults. Now he had been in two ways rude to David's messengers, and in them to David: He had denied them the provisions they asked for, and he had given them very provoking language. Now,

I. By a most generous present, Abigail atones for his denial of their request. If Nabal had given them what came next to hand, they would have gone away thankful; but Abigail prepares the very best the house afforded and abundance of it (1Sa 25:18), according to the usual entertainments of those times, not only bread and flesh, but raisins and figs, which were their dried sweet-meats. Nabal grudged them water, but she took two bottles (casks or rundlets) of wine, loaded her asses with these provisions, and sent them before; for a gift pacifieth anger, Pr 21:14. Jacob thus pacified Esau.

When the instruments of the churl are evil, the liberal devises liberal things, and loses nothing by it; for by liberal things shall he stand, Isa 32:7,8. Abigail not only lawfully, but laudably, disposed of all these goods of her husband's without his knowledge (even when she had reason to think that if he had known what she did he would not have consented to it), because it was not to gratify her own pride or vanity, but for the necessary defence of him and his family. which otherwise would have been inevitably ruined. Husbands and wives, for their common good and benefit, have a joint-interest in their

worldly possessions; but if either waste, or unduly spend in any way, it is a robbing of the other.

II. By a most obliging demeanour, and charming speech, she atones for the abusive language which Nabal had given them. She met David upon the march, big with resentment, and meditating the destruction of Nabal (1Sa 25:20); but with all possible expressions of complaisance and respect she humbly begs his favour, and solicits him to pass by the offence. Her demeanour was very submissive: She bowed herself to the ground before David (1Sa 25:23) and fell at his feet, 1Sa 25:24. Yielding pacifies great offences. She put herself into the place and posture of a penitent and of a petitioner, and was not ashamed to do it, when it was for the good of her house, in the sight both of her own servants and of David's soldiers. She humbly begs of David that he will give her the hearing: Let thy handmaid speak in thy audience. But she needed not thus to bespeak his attention and patience; what she said was sufficient to command it, for certainly nothing could be more fine nor more moving. No topic of argument is left untouched; every thing is well placed and well expressed, most pertinently and pathetically urged, and improved to the best advantage, with such a force of natural rhetoric as cannot easily be paralleled.

1. She speaks to him all along with the deference and respect due to so great and good a man, calls him My lord, over and over, to expiate her husband's crime in saying, "Who is David?" She does not upbraid him with the heat of his passion, though he deserved to be reproved for it; nor does she tell him how ill it became his character; but endeavours to soften him and bring him to a better temper, not doubting but that then his own conscience would upbraid him with it.

2. She takes the blame of the ill-treatment of his messengers upon herself: "Upon me, my lord, upon me, let this iniquity

be, 1Sa 25:24. If thou wilt be angry, be angry with me, rather than with my poor husband, and look upon it as the trespass of thy handmaid," 1Sa 25:28. Sordid spirits care not how much others suffer for their faults, while generous spirits can be content to suffer for the faults of others. Abigail here discovered the sincerity and strength of her conjugal affection and concern for her family: whatever Nabal was, he was her husband.

3. She excuses her husband's fault by imputing it to his natural weakness and want of understanding (1Sa 25:25): "Let not my lord take notice of his rudeness and ill manners, for it is like him; it is not the first time that he has behaved so churlishly; he must be borne with, for it is for want of wit: Nabal is his name" (which signifies a fool), "and folly is with him. It was owing to his folly, not his malice. He is simple, but not spiteful. Forgive him, for he knows not what he does." What she said was too true, and she said it to excuse his fault and prevent his ruin, else she would not have done well to give such a bad character as this of her own husband, whom she ought to make the best of, and not to speak ill of.

4. She pleads her own ignorance of the matter: "I saw not the young men, else they should have had a better answer, and should not have gone without their errand," intimating hereby that though her husband was foolish, and unfit to manage his affairs himself, yet he had so much wisdom as to be ruled by her and take her advice.

5. She takes it for granted that she has gained her point already, perhaps perceiving, by David's countenance, that he began to change his mind (1Sa 25:26): Seeing the Lord hath withholden thee. She depends not upon her own reasonings, but God's grace, to mollify him, and doubts not but that grace would work powerfully upon him; and then, "Let all thy enemies be as Nabal, that is, if thou forbear to avenge thyself,

no doubt God will avenge thee on him, as he will on all thy other enemies." Or it intimates that it was below him to take vengeance on so weak and impotent an enemy as Nabal was, who, as he would do him no kindness, so he could do him no hurt, for he needed to wish no more concerning his enemies than that they might be as unable to resist him as Nabal was. Perhaps she refers to his sparing Saul, when, but the other day, he had him at his mercy. "Didst thou forbear to avenge thyself on that lion that would devour thee, and wilt thou shed the blood of this dog that can but bark at thee?" The very mentioning of what he was about to do, to shed blood and to avenge himself, was enough to work upon such a tender gracious spirit as David had; and it should seem, by his reply (1Sa 25:33), that it affected him.

6. She makes a tender of the present she had brought, but speaks of it as unworthy of David's acceptance, and therefore desires it may be given to the young men that followed him (1Sa 25:27), and particularly to those ten that were his messengers to Nabal, and whom he had treated so rudely.

7. She applauds David for the good services he had done against the common enemies of his country, the glory of which great achievements, she hoped, he would not stain by any personal revenge: "My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord against the Philistines, and therefore he will leave it to God to fight his battles against those that affront him, 1Sa 25:28. Evil has not been found in thee all thy days. Thou never yet didst wrong to any of thy countrymen (though persecuted as a traitor), and therefore thou wilt not begin now, nor do a thing which Saul will improve for the justifying of his malice against thee."

8. She foretels the glorious issue of his present troubles. "It is true a man pursues thee and seeks thy life" (she names not Saul, out of respect to his present character as king), "but thou

needest not look with so sharp and jealous an eye upon every one that affronts thee;" for all these storms that now ruffle thee will be blown over shortly. She speaks it with assurance,

(1.) That God would keep him safe: The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God, that is, God shall hold thy soul in life (as the expression is, Ps 66:9) as we hold those things which are bundled up or which are precious to us, Ps 116:15. Thy soul shall be treasured up in the treasure of lives (so the Chaldee), under lock and key as our treasure is. "Thou shalt abide under the special protection of the divine providence." The bundle of life is with the Lord our God, for in his hand our breath is, and our times. Those are safe, and may be easy, that have him for their protector. The Jews understand this not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come, even the happiness of separate souls, and therefore use it commonly as an inscription on their gravestones. "Here we have laid the body, but trust that the soul is bound up in the bundle of life, with the Lord our God." There it is safe, while the dust of the body is scattered.

(2.) That God would make him victorious over his enemies. Their souls he shall sling out, 1Sa 25:29. The stone is bound up in the sling, but it is in order to be thrown out again; so the souls of the godly shall be bundled as corn for the barn, but the souls of the wicked as tares for the fire. (3.) That God would settle him in wealth and power: "The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, and no enemy thou hast can hinder it; therefore forgive this trespass," that is, "show mercy, as thou hopest to find mercy. God will make thee great, and it is the glory of great men to pass by offences."

9. She desires him to consider how much more comfortable it would be to him in the reflection to have forgiven this affront than to have revenged it, 1Sa 25:30,31. She reserves this argument for the last, as a very powerful one with so good a

man, that the less he indulged his passion the more he consulted his peace and the repose of his own conscience, which every wise man will be tender of.

(1.) She cannot but think that if he should avenge himself it would afterwards be a grief and an offence of heart to him, Many have done that in a heat which they have a thousand times wished undone again. The sweetness of revenge is soon turned into bitterness.

(2.) She is confident that if he pass by the offence it will afterwards by no grief to him; but, on the contrary, it would yield him unspeakable satisfaction that his wisdom and grace had got the better of his passion. Note, When we are tempted to sin we should consider how it will appear in the reflection. Let us never do any thing for which our own consciences will afterwards have occasion to upbraid us, and which we shall look back upon with regret: My heart shall not reproach me.

10. She recommends herself to his favour: When the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thy handmaid, as one that kept thee from doing that which would have disgraced thy honour, disquieted thy conscience, and made a blot in thy history. We have reason to remember those with respect and gratitude who have been instrumental to keep us from sin.

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and
fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,
24 and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon* me *let this*
iniquity *be:* and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine
audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.
25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal:
for as his name *is,* so *is* he; Nabal [fool] *is* his name, and folly *is* with
him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord,
whom thou didst send.

26 Now therefore, my lord, *as* the Lord liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth,
seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood,
and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine
enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.
27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto
my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my
lord.
28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the Lord
will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth
the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee *all* thy
days.
29 Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul
of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy
God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, *as out*
of the middle of a sling.
30 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my
lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee,
and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;
31 that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my
lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord
hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well
with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.
32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel,
which sent thee this day to meet me:

As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear, Pr 25:12. Abigail was a wise reprover of David's passion, and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof, according to his own principle (Ps 141:5): Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness. Never was such an admonition either better given or better taken.

I. David gives God thanks for sending him this happy check to a sinful way (1Sa 25:32): Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me. Note,

1. God is to be acknowledged in all the kindnesses that our friends do us either for soul or body. Whoever meet us with counsel, direction, comfort, caution, or seasonable reproof, we must see God sending them.

2. We ought to be very thankful for those happy providences which are means of preventing sin.

II. He gives Abigail thanks for interposing so opportunely between him and the mischief he was about to do: Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, 1Sa 25:33. Most people think it enough if they take a reproof patiently, but we meet with few that will take it thankfully and will commend those that give it to them and accept it as a favour. Abigail did not rejoice more that she had been instrumental to save her husband and family from death than David did that Abigail had been instrumental to save him and his men from sin.

III. He seems very apprehensive of the great danger he was in, which magnified the mercy of his deliverance.

1. He speaks of the sin as very great. He was coming to shed blood, a sin of which when in his right mind he had a great horror, witness his prayer, Deliver me from blood-guiltiness. He was coming to avenge himself with his own hand, and that would be stepping into the throne of God, who has said, Vengeance is mine; I will repay. The more heinous any sin is the greater mercy it is to be kept from it. He seems to aggravate the evil of his design with this, that it would have been an injury to so wise and good a woman as Abigail: God has kept me back from hurting thee, 1Sa 25:34. Or perhaps, at the first sight of Abigail, he was conscious of a thought to do her a mischief for offering to oppose him, and therefore reckons it a great mercy that God gave him patience to hear her speak.

2. He speaks of the danger of his falling into it as very imminent: "Except thou hadst hasted, the bloody execution had been done." The nearer we were to the commission of sin the greater was the mercy of a seasonable restraint--Almost gone (Ps 73:2) and yet upheld.

IV. He dismissed her with an answer of peace, 1Sa 25:35. He does, in effect, own himself overcome by her eloquence: "I have hearkened to thy voice, and will not prosecute the intended revenge, for I have accepted thy person, am well pleased with thee and what thou hast said." Note,

1. Wise and good men will hear reason, and let that rule them, though it come from those that are every way their inferiors, and though their passions are up and their spirits provoked.

2. Oaths cannot, bind us to that which is sinful. David had solemnly vowed the death of Nabal. He did evil to make such a vow, but he would have done worse if he had performed it.

3. A wise and faithful reproof is often better taken, and speeds better, than we expected, such is the hold God has of men's consciences. See Pr 28:23.

33 and blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me
this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with
mine own hand.
34 For in very deed, *as* the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept
me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to
meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning
light any that pisseth against the wall.
35 So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and
said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened
to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.
36 And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house,
like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for

he *was* very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

We are now to attend Nabal's funeral and Abigail's wedding.

I. Nabal's funeral. The apostle speaks of some that were twice dead, Jude 1:12. We have hare Nabal thrice dead, though but just now wonderfully rescued from the sword of David and delivered from so great a death; for the preservations of wicked men are but reservations for some further sorer strokes of divine wrath. Here is,

1. Nabal dead drunk, 1Sa 25:36. Abigail came home, and, it should seem, he had so many people and so much plenty about him that he neither missed her nor the provisions she took to David; but she found him in the midst of his jollity, little thinking how near he was to ruin by one whom he had foolishly made his enemy. Sinners are often most secure when they are most in danger and destruction is at the door. Observe,

(1.) How extravagant he was in the entertainment of his company: He held a feast like the feast of a king, so magnificent and abundant, though his guests were but his sheep-shearers. This abundance might have been allowed if he had considered what God gave him his estate for, not to look great with, but to do good with. It is very common for those that are most niggardly in any act of piety or charity to be most profuse in gratifying a vain humour or a base lust. A mite is grudged to God and his poor; but, to make a fair show in the flesh, gold is lavished out of the bag. If Nabal had not answered to his name, he would never have been thus secure and jovial, till he had enquired whether he was safe from David's resentments; but (as bishop Hall observes) thus foolish are carnal men, that give themselves over to their pleasures before they have taken any care to make their peace with God.

(2.) How sottish he was in the indulgence of his own brutish appetite: He was very drunk, a sign he was Nabal, a fool, that could not use his plenty without abusing it, could not be pleasant with his friends without making a beast of himself. There is not a surer sign that a man has but little wisdom, nor a surer way to ruin the little he has, than drinking to excess. Nabal, that never thought he could bestow too little in charity, never thought he could bestow too much in luxury. Abigail, finding him in this condition (and probably those about him little better, when the master of the feast set them so bad an example), had enough to do to set the disordered house to-rights a little, but told Nabal nothing of what she had done with reference to David, nothing of his folly in provoking David, of his danger or of his deliverance, for, being drunk, he was as incapable to hear reason as he was to speak it. To give good advice to those that are in drink is to cast pearls before swine; it is better to stay till they are sober.

2. Nabal again dead with melancholy, 1Sa 25:37. Next morning, when he had come to himself a little, his wife told him how near to destruction he had brought himself and his family by his own rudeness, and with what difficulty she had interposed to prevent it; and, upon this, his heart died within him and he became as a stone. Some suggest that the expense of the satisfaction made to David, by the present Abigail brought him, broke his heart: it seems rather that the apprehension he now had of the danger he had narrowly escaped put him into a consternation, and seized his spirits so that he could not recover it. He grew sullen, and said little, ashamed of his own folly, put out of countenance by his wife's wisdom. How is he changed! His heart over-night merry with wine, next morning heavy as a stone; so deceitful are carnal pleasures, so transient the laughter of the fool. The end of that mirth is heaviness. Drunkards are sometimes sad when they reflect upon their own folly. Joy in God makes the heart

always light. Abigail could never, by her wise reasonings, bring Nabal to repentance; but now, by her faithful reproof, she brings him to despair.

3. Nabal, at last, dead indeed: About ten days after, when he had been kept so long under this pressure and pain, the Lord smote him that he died (1Sa 25:38), and, it should seem, he never held up his head; it is just with God (says bishop Hall) that those who live without grace should die without comfort, nor can we expect better while we go on in our sins. Here is no lamentation made for Nabal. He departed without being lamented. Every one wished that the country might never sustain a greater loss. David, when he heard the news of his death, gave God thanks for it, 1Sa 25:39. He blessed God,

(1.) That he had kept him from killing him: Blessed be the lord, who hath kept his servant from evil. He rejoices that Nabal died a natural death and not by his hand. We should take all occasions to mention and magnify God's goodness to us in keeping us from sin.

(2.) That he had taken the work into his own hands, and had vindicated David's honour, and not suffered him to go unpunished who had been abusive to him; hereby his interest would be confirmed, and all would stand in awe of him, as one for whom God fought.

(3.) That he had thereby encouraged him and all others to commit their cause to God, when they are in any way injured, with an assurance that, in his own time, he will redress their wrongs if they sit still and leave the matter to him.

II. Abigail's wedding. David was so charmed with the beauty of her person, and the uncommon prudence of her conduct and address, that, as soon as was convenient, after he heard she

was a widow, he informed her of his attachment to her (1Sa 25:39), not doubting but that she who approved herself so good a wife to so bad a husband as Nabal would much more make a good wife to him, and having taken notice of her respect to him and her confidence of his coming to the throne.

1. He courted by proxy, his affairs, perhaps, not permitting him to come himself.

2. She received the address with great modesty and humility (1Sa 25:41), reckoning herself unworthy of the honour, yet having such a respect for him that she would gladly be one of the poorest servants of his family, to wash the feet of the other servants. None so fit to be preferred as those that can thus humble themselves.

3. She agreed to the proposal, went with his messenger, took a retinue with her agreeable to her quality, and she became his wife, 1Sa 25:42. She did not upbraid him with his present distresses, and ask him how he could maintain her, but valued him,

(1.) Because she knew he was a very good man.

(2.) Because she believed he would, in due time, be a very great man. She married him in faith, not questioning but that, though now he had not a house of his own that he durst bring her to, yet God's promise go him would at length be fulfilled. Thus those who join themselves to Christ must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him.

Lastly, On this occasion we have some account of David's wives.

1. One that he had lost before he married Abigail, Michal, Saul's daughter, his first, and the wife of his youth, to whom he would have been constant if she would have been so to him, but Saul had given her to another (1Sa 25:44), in token of his displeasure against him and disclaiming the relation of a father-in-law to him.

2. Another that he married besides Abigail (1Sa 25:43), and, as should seem, before her, for she is named first, 1Sa 27:3. David was carried away by the corrupt custom of those times; but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it so now that Messias has come, and the times of reformation, Mt 19:4,5. Perhaps Saul's defrauding David of his only rightful wife was the occasion of his running into this irregularity; for, when the knot of conjugal affection is once loosed, it is scarcely ever tied fast again. When David could not keep his first wife he thought that would excuse him if he did not keep to his second. But we deceive ourselves if we think to make others' faults a cloak for our own.

37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of
Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died
within him, and he became *as* a stone.
38 And it came to pass about ten days *after,* that the Lord smote
Nabal, that he died.
39 And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed *be* the
Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of
Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the Lord hath
returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David
sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.
40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel,
they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to
him to wife.
41 And she arose, and bowed herself on *her* face to the earth, and said,
Behold, *let* thine handmaid *be* a servant to wash the feet of the
servants of my lord.

42 And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of he rs that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.
43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.
44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which *was* of Gallim.

1 Samuel-26

David Spares Saul at Ziph

1 And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, *which is* before Jeshimon?
2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

Here, 1. Saul gets information of David's movements and acts offensively. The Ziphites came to him and told him where David now was, in the same place where he was when they formerly betrayed him, 1Sa 23:19. Perhaps (though it is not mentioned) Saul had given them intimation, under-hand, that he continued his design against David, and would be glad of their assistance. If not, they were very officious to Saul, aware of what would please him, and very malicious against David, to whom they despaired of ever reconciling themselves, and therefore they stirred up Saul (who needed no such spur) against him, 1Sa 26:1.

For aught we know, Saul would have continued in the same good mind that he was in (1Sa 24:17), and would not have given David this fresh trouble, if the Ziphites had not put him on. See what need we have to pray to God that, since we have so much of the tinder of corruption in our own hearts, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from us, lest, if they

come together, we be set on fire of hell. Saul readily caught at the information, and went down with an army of 3000 men to the place where David hid himself, 1Sa 26:2. How soon do unsanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them and return with the dog to their vomit!

2. David gets information of Saul's movements and acts defensively. He did not march out to meet and fight him; he sought only his own safety, not Saul's ruin; therefore he abode in the wilderness (1Sa 26:3), putting thereby a great force upon himself, and curbing the bravery of his own spirit by a silent retirement, showing more true valour than he could have done by an irregular resistance.

(1.) He had spies who informed him of Saul's descent, that he had come in very deed (1Sa 26:4); for he would not believe that Saul would deal so basely with him till he had the utmost evidence of it.

(2.) He observed with his own eyes how Saul was encamped, 1Sa 26:5. He came towards the place where Saul and his men had pitched their tents, so near as to be able, undiscovered, to take a view of their entrenchments, probably in the dusk of the evening.

3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which *is* before Jeshimon,
by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul
came after him into the wilderness.
4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come
in very deed.
5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched:
and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of
Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the
people pitched round about him.
6 Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to
Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go

down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go
down with thee.
7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold,
Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the
ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about
him.
8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into
thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee,
with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him
the second time.

Here is, I. David's bold adventure into Saul's camp in the night, accompanied only by his kinsman Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. He proposed it to him and to another of his confidants (1Sa 26:6), but the other either declined it as too dangerous an enterprise, or at least was content that Abishai, who was forward to it, should run the risk of it rather than himself. Whether David was prompted to do this by his own courage, or by an extraordinary impression upon his spirits, or by the oracle, does not appear; but, like Gideon, he ventured through the guards, with a special assurance of the divine protection.

II The posture he found the camp in Saul lay sleeping in the trench, or, as some read it, in his chariot, and in the midst of his carriages, with his spear stuck in the ground by him, to be ready if his quarters should by beaten up (1Sa 26:7); and all the soldiers, even those that were appointed to stand sentinel, were fast asleep, 1Sa 26:12. Thus were their eyes closed and their hands bound, for a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them; something extraordinary there was in it that they should all be asleep together, and so fast asleep that David and Abishai walked and talked among them, and yet none of them stirred. Sleep, when God gives it to his beloved, is their rest and refreshment; but he can, when he pleases, make it to his enemies their imprisonment.

Thus are the stout-hearted spoiled; they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands, at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob! Ps 76:5,6. It was a deep sleep from the Lord, who has the command of the powers of nature, and makes them to serve his purposes as he pleases. Whom God will disable, or destroy, he binds up with a spirit of slumber, Ro 11:8. How helpless do Saul and all his forces lie, all, in effect, disarmed and chained! and yet nothing is done to them; they are only rocked asleep. How easily can God weaken the strongest, befool the wisest, and baffle the most watchful! Let all his friends therefore trust him and all his enemies fear him.

III. Abishai's request to David for a commission to dispatch Saul with the spear that stuck at his bolster, which (now that he lay so fair) he undertook to do at one blow, 1Sa 26:8. He would not urge David to kill him himself, because he had declined doing this before when he had a similar opportunity; but he begged earnestly that David would give him leave to do it, pleading that he was his enemy, not only cruel and implacable, but false and perfidious, whom no reason would rule nor kindness work upon, and that God had now delivered him into his hand, and did in effect bid him strike. The last advantage he had of this kind was indeed but accidental, when Saul happened to be in the cave with him at the same time. But in this there was something extraordinary; the deep sleep that had fallen on Saul and all his guards was manifestly from the Lord, so that it was a special providence which gave him this opportunity; he ought not therefore to let it slip.

IV. David's generous refusal to suffer any harm to be done to Saul, and in it a resolute adherence to his principles of loyalty, 1Sa 26:9. David charged Abishai not to destroy him, would not only not do it himself, but not permit another to do it. And he gave two reasons for it:--

1. It would be a sinful affront to God's ordinance. Saul was the Lord's anointed, king of Israel by the special appointment and nomination of the God of Israel, the power that was, and to resist him was to resist the ordinance of God, Ro 13:2. No man could do it and be guiltless. The thing he feared was guilt and his concern respected his innocence more than his safety.

2. It would be a sinful anticipation of God's providence. God had sufficiently shown him, in Nabal's case, that, if he left it to him to avenge him, he would do it in due time. Encouraged therefore by his experience in that instance, he resolves to wait till God shall think fit to avenge him on Saul, and he will by no means avenge himself (1Sa 26:10): "The Lord shall smite him, as he did Nabal, with some sudden stroke, or he shall die in battle (as it proved he did soon after), or, if not, his day shall come to die a natural death, and I will contentedly wait till then, rather than force my way to the promised crown by any indirect methods." The temptation indeed was very strong; but, if he should yield, he would sin against God, and therefore he will resist the temptation with the utmost resolution (1Sa 26:11): "The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed; no, I will never do it, nor suffer it to be done." Thus bravely does he prefer his conscience to his interest and trusts God with the issue.

V. The improvement he made of this opportunity for the further evidence of his own integrity. He and Abishai carried away the spear and cruse of water which Saul had by his bed-side (1Sa 26:12), and, which was very strange, none of all the guards were aware of it. If a physician had given them the strongest opiate or stupifying dose, they could not have been faster locked up with sleep. Saul's spear which he had by him for defence, and his cup of water which he had for his refreshment, were both stolen from him while he slept. Thus do we lose our strength and our comfort when we are careless, and secure, and off our watch.

9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch
forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?
10 David said furthermore, *As* the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite
him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle,
and perish.
11 The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the
Lord's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at
his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.
12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster;
and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither
awaked: for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the
Lord was fallen upon them.
13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a
hill afar off; a great space *being* between them:
14 and David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying,
Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who
art thou *that* criest to the king?
15 And David said to Abner, *Art* not thou a *valiant* man? and who *is*
like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord
the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king
thy lord.
16 This thing *is* not good that thou hast done. *As* the Lord liveth, ye
are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's
anointed. And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the cruse of
water that *was* at his bolster.
17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is* this thy voice, my son
David? And David said, *It is* my voice, my lord, O king.

David having got safely from Saul's camp himself, and having brought with him proofs sufficient that he had been there, posts himself conveniently, so that they might hear him and yet not reach him (1Sa 26:13), and then begins to reason with them upon what had passed.

I. He reasons ironically with Abner, and keenly banters him. David knew well that it was from the mighty power of God that Abner and the rest of the guards were cast into so deep a

sleep, and that God's immediate hand was in it; but he reproaches Abner as unworthy to be captain of the lifeguards, since he could sleep when the king his master lay so much exposed. By this it appears that the hand of God locked them up in this deep sleep that, as soon as ever David had got out of danger, a very little thing awakened them, even David's voice at a great distance roused them, 1Sa 26:14. Abner got up (we may suppose it early in a summer's morning) and enquired who called, and disturbed the king's repose. "It is I," says David, and then he upbraids him with his sleeping when he should have been upon his guard. Perhaps Abner, looking upon David as a despicable enemy and one that there was no danger from, had neglected to set a watch; however, he himself ought to have been more wakeful. David, to put him into confusion, told him,

1. That he had lost his honour (1Sa 26:15): "Art not thou a man? (so the word is), a man in office, that art bound, by the duty of thy place, to inspect the soldiery? Art not thou in reputation for a valiant man? So thou wouldst be esteemed, a man of such courage and conduct that there is none like thee; but now thou art shamed for ever. Thou a general! Thou, a sluggard!"

2. That he deserved to lose his head (1Sa 26:16): "You are all worthy to die, by martial law, for being off your guard, when you had the king himself asleep in the midst of you. Ecce signum--Behold this token. See where the king's spear is, in the hand of him whom the king himself is pleased to count his enemy. Those that took away this might as easily and safely have taken away his life. Now see who are the king's best friends, you that neglected him and left him exposed or I that protected him when he was exposed. You pursue me as worthy to die, and irritate Saul against me; but who is worthy to die now?" Note, Sometimes those that unjustly condemn others are justly left to fall into condemnation themselves.

II. He reasons seriously and affectionately with Saul. By this time he was so well awake as to hear what was said, and to discern who said it (1Sa 26:17): Is this thy voice, my son David? In the same manner he had expressed his relentings, 1Sa 24:16. He had given his wife to another and yet calls him son, thirsted after his blood and yet is glad to hear his voice. Those are bad indeed that have never any convictions of good, nor ever sincerely utter good expressions. And now David has as fair an opportunity of reaching Saul's conscience as he had just now of taking away his life. This he lays hold on, though not of that, and enters into a close argument with him, concerning the trouble he still continued to give him, endeavouring to persuade him to let fall the prosecution and be reconciled.

1. He complains of the very melancholy condition he was brought into by the enmity of Saul against him. Two things he laments:--

(1.) That he was driven from his master and from his business: "My lord pursues after his servant, 1Sa 26:18. How gladly would I serve thee as formerly if my service might be accepted! but, instead of being owned as a servant, I am pursued as a rebel, and my lord is my enemy, and he whom I would follow with respect compels me to flee from him."

(2.) That he was driven from his God and from his religion; and this was a much greater grievance than the former (1Sa 26:19): "They have driven me out from the inheritance of the Lord, have made Canaan too hot for me, at least the inhabited parts of it, have forced me into the deserts and mountains, and will, ere long, oblige me entirely to quit the country." And that which troubled him was not so much that he was driven out from his own inheritance as that he was driven out from the inheritance of the Lord, the holy land. It should be more

comfortable to us to think of God's title to our estates and his interest in them then of our own, and that with them we may honour him then that with them we may maintain ourselves. Nor was it so much his trouble that he was constrained to live among strangers as that he was constrained to live among the worshippers of strange gods and was thereby thrust into temptation to join with them in their idolatrous worship. His enemies did, in effect, send him to go and serve other gods, and perhaps he had heard that some of them had spoken to that purport of him.

Those that forbid our attendance on God's ordinances do what in them lies to estrange us from God and to make us heathens. If David had not been a man of extraordinary grace, and firmness to his religion, the ill usage he met with from his own prince and people, who were Israelites and worshippers of the true God, would have prejudiced him against the religion they professed and have driven him to communicate with idolaters. "If these be Israelites," he might have said, "let me live and die with Philistines;" and no thanks to them that their conduct had not that effect. We are to reckon that the greatest injury that can be done us which exposes us to sin. Of those who thus led David into temptation he here says, Cursed be they before the Lord. Those fall under a curse that thrust out those whom God receives, and send those to the devil who are dear to God.

2. He insists upon his own innocency: What have I done or what evil is in my hand? 1Sa 26:18. He had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had never done nor ever designed any mischief to the person, honour, or government, of his prince, nor to any of the interests of his country. He had lately had Saul's own testimony concerning him (1Sa 24:17): Thou art more righteous than I. It was very unreasonable and wicked for Saul to pursue him as a criminal, when he could not charge him with any crime.

3. He endeavours to convince Saul that his pursuit of him is not only wrong, but mean, and much below him: "The king of Israel, whose dignity is great, and who has so much other work to do, has come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains," 1Sa 26:20--a poor game for the king of Israel to pursue. He compares himself to a partridge, a very innocent harmless bird, which, when attempts are made upon its life, flies if it can, but makes no resistance. And would Saul bring the flower of his army into the field only to hunt one poor partridge? What a disparagement was this to his honour! What a stain would it be on his memory to trample upon so weak and patient as well as so innocent an enemy! Jam 5:6, You have killed the just, and he doth not resist you.

4. He desires that the core of the controversy may be searched into and some proper method taken to bring it to an end, 1Sa 26:19. Saul himself could not say that justice put him on thus to persecute David, or that he was obliged to do it for the public safety. David was not willing to say (though it was very true) that Saul's own envy and malice put him on to do it; and therefore he concludes it must be attributed either to the righteous judgment of God or to the unrighteous designs of evil men. Now,

(1.) "If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, either in displeasure to me (taking this way to punish me for my sins against him, though, as to thee, I am guiltless) or in displeasure to thee, if it be the effect of that evil spirit from the Lord which troubles thee, let him accept an offering from us both--let us join in making our peace with God, reconciling ourselves to him, which may be done, by sacrifice; and then I hope the sin will be pardoned, whatever it is, and the trouble, which is so great a vexation both to thee and me, will come to an end." See the right method of peace-making; let us first

make God our friend by Christ the great Sacrifice, and then all other enmities shall be slain, Eph 2:16,Pr 16:7. But,

(2.) "If thou art incited to it by wicked men, that incense thee against me, cursed be they before the Lord," that is, they are very wicked people, and it is fit that they should be abandoned as such, and excluded from the king's court and councils. He decently lays the blame upon the evil counsellors who advised the king to that which was dishonourable and dishonest, and insists upon it that they be removed from about him and forbidden his presence, as men cursed before the Lord, and then he hoped he should gain his petition, which is (1Sa 26:20), "Let not my blood fall to the earth, as thou threatenest, for it is before the face of the Lord, who will take cognizance of the wrong and avenge it." Thus pathetically does David plead with Saul for his life, and, in order to that, for his favourable opinion of him.

18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil *is* in mine hand?

19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be* they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods.

20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

22 And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

Here is, I. Saul's penitent confession of his fault and folly in persecuting David and his promise to do so no more. This second instance of David's respect to him wrought more upon

him than the former, and extorted from him better acknowledgements, 1Sa 26:21.

1. He owns himself melted and quite overcome by David's kindness to him: "My soul was precious in thy eyes this day, which, I thought, had been odious!"

2. He acknowledges he has done very wrong to persecute him, that he has therein acted against God's law (I have sinned), and against his own interest (I have played the fool), in pursuing him as an enemy who would have been one of his best friends, if he could but have thought so. "Herein (says he) I have erred exceedingly, and wronged both thee and myself." Note, Those that sin play the fool and err exceedingly, those especially that hate and persecute God's people, Job 19;28.

3. He invites him to court again: Return, my son David. Those that have understanding will see it to be their interest to have those about them that behave themselves wisely, as David did, and have God with them.

4. He promises him that he will not persecute him as he has done, but protect him: I will no more do thee harm. We have reason to think, according to the mind he was now in, that he meant as he said, and yet neither his confession nor his promise of amendment came from a principle of true repentance.

II. David's improvement of Saul's convictions and confessions and the evidence he had to produce of his own sincerity. He desired that one of the footmen might fetch the spear (1Sa 26:22), and then (1Sa 26:23),

1. He appeals to God as judge of the controversy: The Lord render to every man his righteousness. David, by faith, is sure

that he will do it because he infallibly knows the true characters of all persons and actions and is inflexibly just to render to every man according to his work, and, by prayer, he desires he would do it. Herein he does, in effect, pray against Saul, who had dealt unrighteously and unfaithfully with him (Give them according to their deeds, Ps 28:4); but he principally intends it as a prayer for himself, that God would protect him in his righteousness and faithfulness, and also reward him, since Saul so ill requited him.

2. He reminds Saul again of the proof he had now given of his respect to him from a principle of loyalty: I would not stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed, intimating to Saul that the anointing oil was his protection, for which he was indebted to the Lord and ought to express his gratitude to him (had he been a common person David would not have been so tender of him), perhaps with this further implication, that Saul knew, or had reason to think, David was the Lord's anointed too, and therefore, by the same rule, Saul ought to be as tender of David's life as David had been of his.

3. Not relying much upon Saul's promises, he puts himself under God's protection and begs his favour (1Sa 26:24): "Let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, how light soever thou makest of it." Thus, for his kindness to Saul, he takes God to be his paymaster, which those may with a holy confidence do that do well and suffer for it.

III. Saul's prediction of David's advancement. He commends him (1Sa 26:25): Blessed be thou, my son David. So strong was the conviction Saul was now under of David's honesty that he was not ashamed to condemn himself and applaud David, even in the hearing of his own soldiers, who could not but blush to think that they had come out so furiously against a man whom their master, when he meets him, caresses thus.

He foretels his victories, and his elevation at last: Thou shalt do great things.

Note, Those who make conscience of doing that which is truly good may come, by the divine assistance, to do that which is truly great. He adds, "Thou shalt also still prevail, more and more," he means against himself, but is loth to speak that out. The princely qualities which appeared in David--his generosity in sparing Saul, his military authority in reprimanding Abner for sleeping, his care of the public good, and the signal tokens of God's presence with him--convinced Saul that he would certainly be advanced to the throne at last, according to the prophecies concerning him.

Lastly, A palliative cure being thus made of the wound, they parted friends. Saul returned to Gibeah re infecta--without accomplishing his design, and ashamed of the expedition he had made; but David could not take his word so far as to return with him. Those that have once been false are not easily trusted another time. Therefore David went on his way. And, after this parting, it does not appear that ever Saul and David saw one another again.

23 The Lord render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the Lord delivered thee into *my* hand today, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed.

24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed *be* thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great *things*, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

1 Samuel-27

David Lives among the Philistines

1 And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand
of Saul: *there is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily
escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me,
to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of
his hand.
2 And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that
were with him unto Achish, the son of Maoch, king of Gath.

Here is, I The prevalency of David's fear, which was the effect of the weakness of his faith (1Sa 27:1): He said to his heart (so it may be read), in his communings with it concerning his present condition, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul. He represented to himself the restless rage and malice of Saul (who could not be wrought into a reconciliation) and the treachery of his own countrymen, witness that of the Ziphites, once and again; he looked upon his own forces, and observed how few they were, and that no recruits had come in to him for a great while, nor could he perceive that he got any ground; and hence, in a melancholy mood, he draws this dark conclusion: I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.

But, O thou of little faith! wherefore dost thou doubt? Was he not anointed to be king? Did not that imply an assurance that he should be preserved to the kingdom? Though he had no reason to trust Saul's promises, had he not all the reason in the world to trust the promises of God? His experience of the particular care Providence took of him ought to have encouraged him. He that has delivered does and will. But unbelief is a sin that easily besets even good men. When without are fightings, within are fears, and it is a hard matter to get over them. Lord, increase our faith!

II The resolution he came to hereupon. Now that Saul had, for this time, returned to his place, he determined to take this opportunity of retiring into the Philistines' country. Consulting his own heart only, and not the ephod or the prophet, he concludes, There is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines. Long trials are in danger of tiring the faith and patience even of very good men. Now,

1. Saul was an enemy to himself and his kingdom in driving David to this extremity. He weakened his own interest when he expelled from his service, and forced into the service of his enemies, so great a general as David was, and so brave a regiment as he had the command of.

2. David was no friend to himself in taking this course. God had appointed him to set up his standard in the land of Judah, 1Sa 22:5. There God had wonderfully preserved him, and employed him sometimes for the good of his country; why then should he think of deserting his post? How could he expect the protection of the God of Israel if he went out of the borders of the land of Israel? Could he expect to be safe among the Philistines, out of whose hands he had lately escaped so narrowly by feigning himself mad? Would he receive obligations from those now whom he knew he must not return kindness to when he should come to be king, but be under an obligation to make war upon? Hereby he would gratify his enemies, who bade him go and serve other gods that they might have wherewith to reproach him, and very much weaken the hands of his friends, who would not have wherewith to answer that reproach. See what need we have to pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

III. The kind reception he had at Gath. Achish bade him welcome, partly out of generosity, being proud of entertaining so brave a man, partly out of policy, hoping to engage him for

ever to his service, and that his example would invite many more to desert and come over to him. No doubt he gave David a solemn promise of protection, which he could rely upon when he could not trust Saul's promises. We may blush to think that the word of a Philistine should go further than the word of an Israelite, who, if an Israelite indeed, would be without guile, and that the city of Gath should be a place of refuge for a good man when the cities of Israel refuse him a safe abode. David,

1. Brought his men with him (1Sa 27:2) that they might guard him, and might themselves be safe where he was, and to recommend himself the more to Achish, who hoped to have service out of him.

2. He brought his family with him, his wives and his household, so did all his men, 1Sa 27:2,3. Masters of families ought to take care of those that are committed to them, to protect and provide for those of their own house, and to dwell with them as men of knowledge.

IV. Saul's desisting from the further prosecution of him (1Sa 27:4): He sought no more again for him; this intimates that notwithstanding the professions of repentance he had lately made, if he had had David in his reach, he would have aimed another blow. But, because he dares not come where he is, he resolves to let him alone. Thus many seem to leave their sins, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them if they could. Saul sought no more for him, contenting himself with his banishment, since he could not have his blood, and hoping, it may be (as he had done, 1Sa 18:25), that he would, some time or other, fall by the hand of the Philistines; and, though he would rather have the pleasure of destroying him himself, yet, if they do it, he will be satisfied, so that it be done effectually.

V. David's removal from Gath to Ziklag.

1. David's request for leave to remove was prudent and very modest, 1Sa 27:5.

(1.) It was really prudent. David knew what it was to be envied in the court of Saul, and had much more reason to fear in the court of Achish, and therefore declines preferment there, and wishes for a settlement in the country, where he might be private, more within himself, and less in other people's way. In a town of his own he might have the more free exercise of his religion, and keep his men better to it, and not have his righteous soul vexed, as it was at Gath, with the idolatries of the Philistines.

(2.) As it was presented to Achish it was very modest. He does not prescribe to him what place he should assign him, only begs it may be in some town in the country, where he pleased (beggars must not be choosers); but he gives this for a reason, "Why should thy servant dwell in the royal city, to crowd thee, and disoblige those about thee?" Note, Those that would stand fast must not covet to stand high; and humble souls aim not to dwell in royal cities.

2 The grant which Achish made to him, upon that request, was very generous and kind (1Sa 27:6,7): Achish gave him Ziklag. Hereby,

(1.) Israel recovered their ancient right; for Ziklag was in the lot of the tribe of Judah (Jos 15:31), and afterwards, out of that lot, was assigned, with some other cities, to Simeon, Jos 19:5. But either it was never subdued, or the Philistines had, in some struggle with Israel, made themselves masters of it. Perhaps they had got it unjustly, and Achish, being a man of sense and honour, took this occasion to restore it. The righteous God judgeth righteously.

(2.) David gained a commodious settlement, not only at a distance from Gath, but bordering upon Israel, where he might keep up a correspondence with his own countrymen, and whither they might resort to him at the revolution that was now approaching. Though we do not find that he augmented his forces at all while Saul lived (for, 1Sa 30:10, he had but his six hundred men), yet, immediately after Saul's death, that was the rendezvous of his friends. Nay, it should seem, while he kept himself close because of Saul, multitudes resorted to him, at least to assure him of their sincere intentions, 1Ch 12:1-22. And this further advantage David gained, that Ziklag was annexed to the crown, at least the royalty of it pertained to the kings of Judah, ever after, 1Sa 27:6.

Note, There is nothing lost by humility and modesty, and a willingness to retire. Real advantages follow those that flee from imaginary honours. Here David continued for some days, even four months, as it may very well be read (1Sa 27:7), or some days above four months: the LXX. reads it, some months; so long he waited for the set time of his accession to the throne; for he that believeth shall not make haste.

3 And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man
with his household, *even* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the
Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.
4 And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no
more again for him.
5 And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes,
let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may
dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with
thee?
6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth
unto the kings of Judah unto this day.
7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was
a full year and four months.

8 And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations were* of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

Here is an account of David's actions while he was in the land of the Philistines, a fierce attack he made upon some remains of the devoted nations, his success in it, and the representation he gave of it to Achish.

1. We may acquit him of injustice and cruelty in this action because those people whom he cut off were such as heaven had long since doomed to destruction, and he that did it was one whom heaven had ordained to dominion; so that the thing was very fit to be done, and he was very fit to do it. It was not for him that was anointed to fight the Lord's battles to sit still in sloth, however he might think fit, in modesty, to retire. He desired to be safe from Saul only that he might expose himself for Israel. He avenged an old quarrel that God had with these nations, and at the same time fetched in provisions for himself and his army, for by their swords they must live. The Amalekites were to be all cut off. Probably the Geshurites and Gezrites were branches of Amalek. Saul was rejected for sparing them, David makes up the deficiency of his obedience before he succeeds him. He smote them, and left none alive, 1Sa 27:8,9. The service paid itself, for they carried off abundance of spoil, which served for the subsistence of David's forces.

2. Yet we cannot acquit him of dissimulation with Achish in the account he gave him of this expedition.

(1.) David, it seems, was not willing that he should know the truth, and therefore spared none to carry tidings to Gath (1Sa

27:11), not because he was ashamed of what he had done as a bad thing, but because he was afraid, if the Philistines knew it, they would be apprehensive of danger to themselves or their allies by harbouring him among them and would expel him from their coasts. It would be easy to conclude, If so he did, so will be his manner, and therefore he industriously conceals it from them, which, it seems, he could do by putting them all to the sword, for none of their neighbours would inform against him, nor perhaps would soon come to the knowledge of what was done, intelligence not being so readily communicated then as now.

(2.) He hid it from Achish with an equivocation not at all becoming his character. Being asked which way he had made his sally, he answered, Against the south of Judah, 1Sa 27:13. It was true he had invaded those countries that lay south of Judah, but he made Achish believe he had invaded those that lay south in Judah, the Ziphites for example, that had once and again betrayed him; so Achish understood him, and thence inferred that he had made his people Israel to abhor him, and so riveted himself in the interest of Achish. The fidelity of Achish to him, his good opinion of him, and the confidence he put in him, aggravate his sin in deceiving him thus, which, with some other such instances, David seems penitently to reflect upon when he prays, Remove from me the way of lying.

10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road today? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring *tidings* to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so *will be* his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

1 Samuel-28

1 And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their
armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said
unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to
battle, thou and thy men.
2 And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant
can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee
keeper of mine head for ever.

Saul and the Medium at En-dor

3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried
him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those
that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

Here is, I The design of the Philistines against Israel. They resolved to fight them, 1Sa 28:1. If the Israelites had not forsaken God, there would have been no Philistines remaining to molest them; if Saul had not forsaken him, they would by this time have been put out of all danger by them. The Philistines took an opportunity to make this attempt when they had David among them, whom they feared more than Saul and all his forces.

II The expectation Achish had of assistance from David in this war, and the encouragement David gave him to expect it: "Thou shalt go with me to battle," says Achish. "If I protect thee, I may demand service from thee;" and he will think himself happy if he may have such a man as David on his side, who prospered whithersoever he went. David gave him an ambiguous answer: "We will see what will be done; it will be time enough to talk of that hereafter; but surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do" (1Sa 28:2), that is, "I will consider in what post I may be best able to serve thee, if thou wilt but give me leave to choose it." Thus he keeps himself

free from a promise to serve him and yet keeps up his expectation of it; for Achish took it in no other sense than as an engagement to assist him, and promised him, thereupon, that he would make him captain of the guards, protector, or prime-minister of state.

III. The drawing of the armies, on both sides, into the field (1Sa 28:4): The Philistines pitched in Shunem, which was in the tribe of Issachar, a great way north from their country. The land of Israel, it seems, was ill-guarded, when the Philistines could march their army into the very heart of the country. Saul, while he pursued David, left his people naked and exposed. On some of the adjacent mountains of Gilboa Saul mustered his forces, and prepared to engage the Philistines, which he had little heart to do now that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him.

IV. The terror Saul was in, and the loss he was at, upon this occasion: He saw the host of the Philistines, and by his own view of them, and the intelligence his spies brought him, he perceived they were more numerous, better armed, and in better heart, than his own were, which made him afraid, so that his heart greatly trembled, 1Sa 28:5. Had he kept close to God, he needed not have been afraid at the sight of an army of Philistines; but now that he had provoked God to forsake him his interest failed, his armies dwindled and looked mean, and, which was worse, his spirits failed him, his heart sunk within him, a guilty conscience made him tremble at the shaking of a leaf. Now he remembered the guilty blood of the Amalekites which he had spared, and the innocent blood of the priests which he had spilt. His sins were set in order before his eyes, which put him into confusion, embarrassed all his counsels, robbed him of all his courage, and produced in him a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Note, Troubles are terrors to the children of disobedience.

In this distress Saul enquired of the Lord, 1Sa 28:6. Need drives those to God who in the day of their prosperity slighted his oracles and altars. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, Isa 26:16. Did ever any seek the Lord and not find him? Yes, Saul did; the Lord answered him not, took no notice either of his petitions or of his enquiries; gave him no directions what to do, nor any encouragement to hope that he would be with him. Should he be enquired of at all by such a one as Saul? Eze 14:3. No, he could not expect an answer of peace, for,

1. He enquired in such a manner that it was as if he had not enquired at all. Therefore it is said (1Ch 10:14), He enquired not of the Lord; for he did it faintly and coldly, and with a secret design, if God did not answer him, to consult the devil. He did not enquire in faith, but with a double unstable mind.

2. He enquired of the Lord when it was too late, when the days of his probation were over and he was finally rejected. Seek the Lord while he may be found, for there is a time when he will not be found.

3. He had forfeited the benefit of all the methods of enquiry. Could he that hated and persecuted Samuel and David, who were both prophets, expect to be answered by prophets? Could he that had slain the high priest, expect to be answered by Urim? Or could he that had sinned away the Spirit of grace, expect to be answered by dreams? No. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

V. The mention of some things that had happened a good while ago, to introduce the following story, 1Sa 28:3.

1 The death of Samuel. Samuel was dead, which made the Philistines the more bold and Saul the more afraid; for, had Samuel been alive, Saul probably thought that his presence

and countenance, his good advice and good prayers, would have availed him in his distress.

2. Saul's edict against witchcraft. He had put the laws in execution against those that had familiar spirits, who must not be suffered to live, Ex 22:18. Some think that he did this in the beginning of his reign, while he was under Samuel's influence; others think that it was lately done, for it is spoken of here (1Sa 28:9) as a late edict. Perhaps when Saul was himself troubled with an evil spirit he suspected that he was bewitched, and, for that reason, cut off all that had familiar spirits.

Many seem zealous against sin, when they themselves are any way hurt by it (they will inform against swearers if they swear at them, or against drunkards if in their drink they abuse them), who otherwise have no concern for the glory of God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. However it was commendable in Saul thus to use his power for the terror and restraint of these evil-doers.

Note, Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves. Saul will drive the devil out of his kingdom, and yet harbour him in his heart, by envy and malice.

4 And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

5 And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

6 And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, *there is* a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he
went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by
night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar
spirit, and bring me *him* up, whom I shall name unto thee.
9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul
hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and
the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for
my life, to cause me to die?
10 And Saul sware to her by the Lord, saying, *As* the Lord liveth,
there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

Here, I. Saul seeks for a witch, 1Sa 28:7. When God answered him not, if he had humbled himself by repentance and persevered in seeking God, who knows but that at length he might have been entreated for him? but, since he can discern no comfort either from heaven or earth (Isa 8:21,22), he resolves to knock at the gates of hell, and to see if any there will befriend him and give him advice: Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit, 1Sa 28:7. And his servants were too officious to serve him in this evil affair; they presently recommended one to him at Endor (a city not far off) who had escaped the execution of Saul's edict. To her he resolves to apply. Herein he is chargeable,

1. With contempt of the God of Israel; as if any creature could do him a kindness when God had left him and frowned upon him. 2. With contradiction to himself. He knew the heinousness of the sin of witchcraft, else he would not have cut off those that had familiar spirits; yet now he had recourse to that as an oracle which he had before condemned as an abomination. It is common for men to inveigh severely against those sins which they are in no temptation to, but afterwards to be themselves overcome by them. Had one told Saul, when he was destroying the witches, that he himself would, ere long, consult with one, he would have said, as Hazael did, What? Is thy servant a dog? But who knows what

mischiefs those will run into that forsake God and are forsaken of him?

II. Hearing of one he hastens to her, but goes by night, and in disguise, only with two servants, and probably on foot, 1Sa 28:8. See how those that are led captive by Satan are forced, 1. To disparage themselves. Never did Saul look so mean as when he went sneaking to a sorry witch to know his fortune. 2. To dissemble. Evil works are works of darkness, and they hate the light, neither care for coming to it. Saul went to the witch, not in his robes, but in the habit of a common soldier, not only lest the witch herself, if she had known him, should decline to serve him, either fearing he came to trepan her or resolving to be avenged on him for his edict against those of her profession, but lest his own people should know it and abhor him for it. Such is the power of natural conscience that even those who do evil blush and are ashamed to do it.

III. He tells her his errand and promises her impunity.

1. All he desires of her is to bring up one from the dead, whom he had a mind to discourse with. It was necromancy or divination by the dead, that he hoped to serve his purpose by. This was expressly forbidden by the law (De 18:11), seeking for the living to the dead, Isa 8:19. Bring me up him whom I shall name, 1Sa 28:8. This supposes that it was generally taken for granted that souls exist after death, and that when men die there is not an end of them: it supposes too that great knowledge was attributed to separate souls. But to think that any good souls would come up at the beck of an evil spirit, or that God, who had denied a man the benefit of his own institutions, would suffer him to reap any real advantage by a cursed diabolical invention, was very absurd.

2. She signifies her fear of the law, and her suspicion that this stranger came to draw her into a snare (1Sa 28:9): Thou

knowest what Saul has done. Providence ordered it so that Saul should be told to his face of his edict against witches, at this very time when he was consulting one, for the greater aggravation of his sin. She insists upon the peril of the law, perhaps to raise her price; for, though no mention is made of her fee, no doubt she demanded and had a large one. Observe how sensible she is of danger from the edict of Saul, and what care she is in to guard against it; but not at all apprehensive of the obligations off God's law and the terrors of his wrath. She considered what Saul had done, not what God had done, against such practices, and feared a snare laid for her life more than a snare laid for her soul. It is common for sinners to be more afraid of punishment from men than of God's righteous judgment. But, 3. Saul promises with an oath not to betray her, 1Sa 28:10. It was his duty as a king to punish her and he knew it, yet he swears no to do it; as if he could by his own oath bind himself from doing that which, by the divine command, he was bound to do. But he promised more than he could perform when he said, There shall no punishment happen to thee; for he that could not secure himself could much less secure her from divine vengeance.

IV. Samuel, who was lately dead, is the person whom Saul desired to have some talk with; and the witch, with her enchantments, gratifies his desire, and brings them together.

1. As soon as Saul had given the witch the assurance she desired (that he would not discover her) she applied to her witchcrafts, and asked very confidently, Whom shall I bring up to thee? 1Sa 28:11. Note, Hopes of impunity embolden sinners in their evil ways and harden their hearts.

2. Saul desires to speak with Samuel: Bring me up Samuel. Samuel had anointed him to the kingdom and had formerly been his faithful friend and counsellor, and therefore with him

he wished to advise. While Samuel was living at Ramah, not far from Gibeah of Saul, and presided there in the school of the prophets, we never read of Saul's going to him to consult him in any of the difficulties he was in (it would have been well for him if he had); then he slighted him, and perhaps hated him, looking upon him to be in David's interest. But now that he is dead, "O for Samuel again! By all means, bring me up Samuel."

Note, Many that despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when they are living would be glad to have them again when they are gone. Send Lazarus to me, and send Lazarus to my father's house, Lu 16:24-27. The sepulchres of the righteous are garnished.

3. Here is a seeming defector chasm in the story. Saul said, Bring me up Samuel, and the very next words are, When the woman saw Samuel, (1Sa 28:12), whereas one would have expected to be told how she performed the operation, what spells and charms she used, or that some little intimation would be given of what she said or did; but the profound silence of the scripture concerning it forbids our coveting to know the depths of Satan (Re 2:24) or to have our curiosity gratified with an account of the mysteries of iniquity. It has been said of the books of some of the popish confessors that, by their descriptions of sin, they have taught men to commit it; but the scripture conceals sinful art, that we may be simple concerning evil, Ro 16:9.

4. The witch, upon sight of the apparition, was aware that her client was Saul, her familiar spirit, it is likely, informing her of it (1Sa 28:12): "Why hast thou deceived me with a disguise; for thou art Saul, the very man that I am afraid of above any man?" Thus she gave Saul to understand the power of her art, in that she could discover him through his disguise; and yet she feared lest, hereafter, at least, he should take advantage

against her for what she was now doing. Had she believed that it was really Samuel whom she saw, she would have had more reason to be afraid of him, who was a good prophet, than of Saul, who was a wicked king. But the wrath of earthly princes is feared by most more than the wrath of the King of kings. 5. Saul (who, we may suppose, was kept at a distance in the next room) bade her not to be afraid of him, but go on with the operation, and enquired what she saw? 1Sa 28:13.

O, says the woman, I saw gods (that is, a spirit) ascending out of the earth; they called angels gods, because spiritual beings. Poor gods that ascend out of the earth! But she speaks the language of the heathen, who had their infernal deities and had them in veneration. If Saul had thought it necessary to his conversation with Samuel that the body of Samuel should be called out of the grave, he would have taken the witch with him to Ramah, where his sepulchre was; but the design was wholly upon his soul, which yet, if it became visible, was expected to appear in the usual resemblance of the body; and God permitted the devil, to answer the design, to put on Samuel's shape, that those who would not receive the love of the truth might be given up to strong delusions and believe a lie. That it could not be the soul of Samuel himself they might easily apprehend when it ascended out of the earth, for the spirit of a man, much more of a good man, goes upward, Ec 3:21. But, if people will be deceived, it is just with God to say, "Let them be deceived."

That the devil, by the divine permission, should be able to personate Samuel is not strange, since he can transform himself into an angel of light! nor is it strange that he should be permitted to do it upon this occasion, that Saul might be driven to despair, by enquiring of the devil, since he would not, in a right manner, enquire of the Lord, by which he might have had comfort. Saul, being told of gods ascending, was eager to know what was the form of this deity, and in what

shape he appeared, so far was he from conceiving any horror at it, his heart being wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Saul, it seems, was not permitted to see any manner of similitude himself, but he must take the woman's word for it, that she saw an old man covered with a mantle, or robe, the habit of a judge, which Samuel had sometimes worn, and some think it was for the sake of that, and the majesty of its aspect, that she called this apparition Elohim, a god or gods; for so magistrates are styled, Ps 82:1. 6. Saul, perceiving, by the woman's description, that it was Samuel, stooped with his face to the ground, either, as it is generally taken, in reverence to Samuel, though he saw him not, or perhaps to listen to that soft and muttering voice which he now expected to hear (for those that had familiar spirits peeped and muttered, Isa 8:19); and it should seem Saul bowed himself (probably by the witch's direction) that he might hear what was whispered and listen carefully to it; for the voice of one that has a familiar spirit is said to come out of the ground, and whisper out of the dust, Isa 29:4. He would stoop to that who would not stoop to the word of God.

11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul.

13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

14 And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no

more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called
thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.
16 Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the
Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?
17 And the Lord hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the Lord
hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy
neighbor, *even* to David:

We have here the conference between Saul and Satan. Saul came in disguise (1Sa 28:8), but Satan soon discovered him, 1Sa 28:12. Satan comes in disguise, in the disguise of Samuel's mantle, and Saul cannot discover him. Such is the disadvantage we labour under, in wrestling with the rulers of the darkness of this world, that they know us, while we are ignorant of their wiles and devices.

I The spectre, or apparition, personating Samuel, asks why he is sent for (1Sa 28:15): Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? To us this discovers that it was an evil spirit that personated Samuel; for (as bishop Patrick observes) it is not in the power of witches to disturb the rest of good men and to bring them back into the world when they please; nor would the true Samuel have acknowledged such a power in magical arts: but to Saul this was a proper device of Satan's, to draw veneration from him, to possess him with an opinion of the power of divination, and so to rivet him in the devil's interests.

II. Saul makes his complaint to this counterfeit Samuel, mistaking him for the true; and a most doleful complaint it is: "I am sorely distressed, and know not what to do, for the Philistines make war against me; yet I should do well enough with them if I had but the tokens of God's presence with me; but, alas! God has departed from me." He complained not of God's withdrawings till he fell into trouble, till the Philistines made war against him, and then he began to lament God's departure.

He that in his prosperity enquired not after God in his adversity thought it hard that God answered him not, nor took any notice of his enquiries, either by dreams or prophets, neither gave answers immediately himself nor sent them by any of his messengers. He does not, like a penitent, own the righteousness of God in this; but, like a man enraged, flies out against God as unkind and flies off from him: Therefore I have called thee; as if Samuel, a servant of God, would favour those whom God frowned upon, or as if a dead prophet could do him more service than the living ones. One would think, from this, that he really desired to meet with the devil, and expected no other (though under the covert of Samuel's name), for he desires advice otherwise than from God, therefore from the devil, who is a rival with God. "God denies me, therefore I come to thee. Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo." --If I fail with heaven, I will move hell.

III. It is cold comfort which this evil spirit in Samuel's mantle gives to Saul, and is manifestly intended to drive him to despair and self-murder. Had it been the true Samuel, when Saul desired to be told what he should do he would have told him to repent and make his peace with God, and recall David from his banishment, and would then have told him that he might hope in this way to find mercy with God; but, instead of that, he represents his case as helpless and hopeless, serving him as he did Judas, to whom he was first a tempter and then a tormentor, persuading him first to sell his master and then to hang himself.

1. He upbraids him with his present distress (1Sa 28:16), tells him, not only that God had departed from him, but that he had become his enemy, and therefore he must expect no comfortable answer from him: "Wherefore dost thou ask me? How can I be thy friend when God is thy enemy, or thy counsellor when he has left thee?"

2. He upbraids him with the anointing of David to the kingdom, 1Sa 28:17. He could not have touched upon a string that sounded more unpleasant in the ear of Saul than this. Nothing is said to reconcile him to David, but all tends rather to exasperate him against David and widen the breach. Yet, to make him believe that he was Samuel, the apparition affirmed that it was God who spoke by him. The devil knows how to speak with an air of religion, and can teach false apostles to transform themselves into the apostles of Christ and imitate their language. Those who use spells and charms, and plead, in defence of them, that they find nothing in them but what is good, may remember what good words the devil here spoke, and yet with what a malicious design.

3. He upbraids him with his disobedience to the command of God in not destroying the Amalekites, 1Sa 28:18. Satan had helped him to palliate and excuse that sin when Samuel was dealing with him to bring him to repentance, but now he aggravates it, to make him despair of God's mercy. See what those get that hearken to Satan's temptations. He himself will be their accuser, and insult over them. And see whom those resemble that allure others to that which is evil and reproach them for it when they have done. 4. He foretels his approaching ruin, 1Sa 28:19.

(1.) That his army should be routed by the Philistines. This is twice mentioned: The Lord shall deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines. This he might foresee, by considering the superior strength and number of the Philistines, the weakness of the armies of Israel, Saul's terror, and especially God's departure from them. Yet, to personate a prophet, he very gravely ascribes it once and again to God: The Lord shall do it.

(2.) That he and his sons should be slain in the battle: To-morrow, that is, in a little time (and, supposing that it was now

after midnight, I see not but it may be taken strictly for the very next day after that which had now begun), thou and thy sons shall be with me, that is, in the state of the dead, separate from the body. Had this been the true Samuel, he could not have foretold the event unless God had revealed it to him; and, though it were an evil spirit, God might by him foretel it; as we read of an evil spirit that foresaw Ahab's fall at Ramoth-Gilead and was instrumental in it (1Ki 22:20-23, &c.), as perhaps this evil spirit was, by the divine permission, in Saul's destruction. That evil spirit flattered Ahab, this frightened Saul, and both that they might fall; so miserable are those that are under the power of Satan; for, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest, Pr 29:9.

18 because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst
his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this
thing unto thee this day.

19 Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand
of the Philistines: and tomorrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me:
the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the
Philistines.

20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore
afraid, because of the words of Samuel; and there was no strength
in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

21 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled,
and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice,
and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy
words which thou spakest unto me.

We are here told how Saul received this terrible message from the ghost he consulted. He desired to be told what he should do (1Sa 28:15), but was only told what he had not done and what should be done to him. Those that expect any good counsel or comfort otherwise than from God, and in the way of his institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed as Saul here was. Observe,

I. How he sunk under the load, 1Sa 28:20. He was indeed unfit to bear it, having eaten nothing all the day before, nor that night. He came fasting from the camp, and continued fasting; not for want of food, but for want of an appetite. The fear he was in of the power of the Philistines (1Sa 28:5) took away his appetite, or perhaps the struggle he had with his own conscience, after he had entertained the thought of consulting the witch, made him to nauseate even his necessary food, though ever so dainty. This made him an easy prey to this fresh terror that now came upon him like an armed man. He fell all along on the earth, as if the archers of the Philistines had already hit him, and there was no strength in him to bear up against these heavy tidings. Now he had enough of consulting witches, and found them miserable comforters. When God in his word speaks terror to sinners he opens to them, at the same time, a door of hope if they repent: but those that apply to the gates of hell for succour must there expect darkness without any glimpse of light.

II. With what difficulty he was persuaded to take so much relief as was necessary to carry him back to his post in the camp. The witch, it should seem, had left Saul alone with the spectre, to have his talk with him by himself; but perhaps hearing him fall and groan, and perceiving him to be in great agony, she came to him (1Sa 28:21), and was very importunate with him to take some refreshment, that he might be able to get clear from her house, fearing that if he should be ill, especially if he should die there, she should be punished for it as a traitor, though she had escaped punishment as a witch. This, it is probable, rather than any sentiment of kindness, made her solicitous to help him. But what a deplorable condition had he brought himself to when he needed so wretched a comforter!

1. She showed herself very importunate with him to take some refreshment. She pleaded (1Sa 28:21) that she had obeyed his

voice to the endangering of her life, and why therefore should not he hearken to her voice for the relieving of his life? 1Sa 28:22. She had a fat calf at hand (and the word signifies one that was made use of in treading out the corn, and therefore could the worse be spared); this she prepared for his entertainment, 1Sa 28:24. Josephus is large in applauding the extraordinary courtesy and liberality of this woman, and recommending what she did as an example of compassion to the distressed, and readiness to communicate for their relief, though we have no prospect of being recompensed.

2. He showed himself very averse to it: He refused, and said, I will not eat (1Sa 28:23), choosing rather to die obscurely by famine than honourably by the sword. Had he laboured only under a defect of animal spirits, food might have helped him; but, alas! his case was out of the reach of such succours. What are dainty meats to a wounded conscience? As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart, so disagreeable and unwelcome.

3. The woman at length, with the help of his servants, overpersuaded him, against his inclination and resolution, to take some refreshment. Not by force, but by friendly advice, they compelled him (1Sa 28:23), and of no other than such a rational and courteous compulsion are we to understand that in the parable, Compel them to come in, Lu 14:23.How forcible are right words, when men are pressed by them to that which is for their own interest! Job 6:25. Saul was somewhat revived with this entertainment; so that he and his servants, when they had eaten, rose up and went away before it was light (1Sa 28:25), that they might hasten to their business and that they might not be seen to come out of such a scandalous house. Josephus here much admires the bravery and magnanimity of Saul, that, though he was assured he should lose both his life and honour, yet he would not desert his army, but resolutely returned to the camp, and stood ready for an

engagement. I wonder more at the hardness of his heart, that he did not again apply to God by repentance and prayer, in hopes yet to obtain at least a reprieve; but he desperately ran headlong upon his own ruin.

Perhaps, indeed, now that rage and envy possessed him to the uttermost, he was the better reconciled to his hard fate, being told that his sons, and Jonathan among the rest, whom he hated for his affection to David, should die with him. If he must fall, he cared not what desolations of his family and kingdom accompanied his fall, hoping it would be the worse for his successor. Emou thanontos gaia michtheto pyri.--I care not if, when I am dead, the world should be set on fire. He begged not, as David, "Let thy hand be against me, but not against thy people."

22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of
thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and
eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.
23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together
with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their
voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.
24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and
killed it, and took flour, and kneaded *it*, and did bake unleavened
bread thereof:
25 and she brought *it* before Saul, and before his servants; and they did
eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

1 Samuel-29

The Philistines Distrust David

1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek:
and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which *is* in Jezreel.

2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish.

3 Then said the princes of the Philistines, What *do* these Hebrews *here?* And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, *Is* not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell *unto me* unto this day?

Here is, I The great strait that David was in, which we may suppose he himself was aware of, though we read not of his asking advice from God, nor of any project of his own to get clear of it. The two armies of the Philistines and the Israelites were encamped and ready to engage, 1Sa 29:1. Achish, who had been kind to David, had obliged him to come himself and bring the forces he had into his service. David came accordingly, and, upon a review of the army, was found with Achish, in the post assigned him in the rear, 1Sa 29:2. Now,

1. If, when the armies engaged, he should retire, and quit his post, he would fall under the indelible reproach, not only of cowardice and treachery, but of base ingratitude to Achish, who had been his protector and benefactor and had reposed a confidence in him, and from whom he had received a very honourable commission. Such an unprincipled thing as this he could by no means persuade himself to do.

2. If he should, as was expected from him, fight for the Philistines against Israel, he would incur the imputation of being an enemy to the Israel of God and a traitor to his country, would make his own people hate him, and unanimously oppose his coming to the crown, as unworthy the name of an Israelite, much more the honour and trust of a king of Israel, when he had fought against them under the banner of the uncircumcised. If Saul should be killed (as it proved he was) in this engagement, the fault would be laid at David's door, as if he had killed him. So that on each side there seemed

to be both sin and scandal. This was the strait he was in; and a great strait it was to a good man, greater to see sin before him than to see trouble. Into this strait he brought himself by his own unadvisedness, in quitting the land of Judah, and going among the uncircumcised. It is strange if those that associate themselves with wicked people, and grow intimate with them, come off without guilt, or grief, or both. What he himself proposed to do does not appear. Perhaps he designed to act only as keeper to the king's head, the post assigned him (1Sa 28:2) and not to do any thing offensively against Israel.

But it would have been very hard to come so near the brink of sin and not to fall in. Therefore, though God might justly have left him in this difficulty, to chastise him for his folly, yet, because his heart was upright with him, he would not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but with the temptation made a way for him to escape, 1Co 10:13.

II. A door opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the princes of the Philistines to oppose his being employed in the battle, and to insist upon his being dismissed. Thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness.

1. It was a proper question which they asked, upon the mustering of the forces, "What do these Hebrews here? 1Sa 29:3. What confidence can we put in them, or what service can we expect from them?" A Hebrew is out of his place, and, if he has the spirit of a Hebrew, is out of his element, when he is in the camp of the Philistines, and deserves to be made uneasy there. David used to hate the congregation of evil doers, however he came now to be among them, Ps 26:5. It was an honourable testimony which Achish, on this occasion, gave to David. He looked upon him as a refugee, that fled from a wrongful prosecution in his own country, and had put himself under his protection, whom therefore he was obliged,

in justice, to take care of, and thought he might in prudence employ; "for (says he) he has been with me these days, or these years," that is, a considerable time, many days at his court and a year or two in his country, and he never found any fault in him, nor saw any cause to distrust his fidelity, or to think any other than that he had heartily come over to him. By this it appears that David had conducted himself with a great deal of caution, and had prudently concealed the affection he still retained for his own people. We have need to walk in wisdom towards those that are without, to keep our mouth when the wicked is before us, and to be upon the reserve.

3. Yet the princes are peremptory in it, that he must be sent home; and they give good reasons for their insisting on it.

(1.) Because he had been an old enemy to the Philistines; witness what was sung in honour of his triumphs over them: Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands, 1Sa 29:5. "It will be a reproach to us to harbour and trust so noted a destroyer of our people; nor can it be thought that he will now act heartily against Saul who then acted so vigorously with him and for him." Who would be fond of popular praise or applause when, even that may, another time, be turned against a man to his reproach?

(2.) Because he might be a most dangerous enemy to them, and do them more mischief then all Saul's army could (1Sa 29:4): "He may in the battle be an adversary to us, and surprise us with an attack in the rear, while their army charges us in the front; and we have reason to think he will do so, that, by betraying us, he may reconcile himself to his master. Who can trust a man who, besides his affection to his country, will think it his interest to be false to us?" It is dangerous to put confidence in a reconciled enemy.

4 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return,

that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? *should it* not *be* with the heads of these men?

5 *Is* not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying,
Saul slew his thousands,
and David his ten thousands?

6 Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, *as* the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host *is* good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favor thee not.

7 Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.

8 And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?

If the reasons Achish had to trust David were stronger than the reasons which the princes offered why they should distrust him (as I do not see that, in policy, they were, for the princes were certainly in the right), yet Achish was but one of five, though the chief, and the only one that had the title of king; accordingly, in a council of war held on this occasion, he was over-voted, and obliged to dismiss David, though he was extremely fond of him. Kings cannot always do as they would, nor have such as they would about them.

I The discharge Achish gives him is very honourable, and not a final discharge, but only from the present service.

1. He signifies the great pleasure and satisfaction he had taken in him and in his conversation: Thou art good in my sight as an angel of God, 1Sa 29:9. Wise and good men will gain respect, wherever they go, from all that know how to make a

right estimate of persons and things, though of different professions in religion. What Achish says of David, God, by the prophet, says of the house of David (Zec 12:8), that it shall be as the angel of the Lord. But the former is a court-compliment; the latter is a divine promise.

2. He gives him a testimonial of his good behaviour, 1Sa 29:6. It is very full and in obliging terms: "Thou hast been upright, and thy whole conduct has been good in my sight, and I have not found evil in thee." Saul would not have given him such a testimonial, though he had done far more service to him than Achish. God's people should behave themselves always so inoffensively as if possible to get the good word of all they have dealings with; and it is a debt we owe to those who have acquitted themselves well to give them the praise of it.

3. He lays all the blame of his dismission upon the princes, who would by no means suffer him to continue in the camp. "The king loves thee entirely, and would venture his life in thy hand; but the lords favour thee not, and we must not disoblige them, nor can we oppose them; therefore return and go in peace." He had better part with his favourite than occasion a disgust among his generals and a mutiny in his army. Achish intimates a reason why they were uneasy. It was not so much for David's own sake as for the sake of his soldiers that attended him, whom he calls his master's servants (namely, Saul's), 1Sa 29:10. They could trust him, but not them.

4. He orders him to be gone early, as soon as it was light (1Sa 29:10), to prevent their further resentments, and the jealousies they would have been apt to conceive if he had lingered.

II. His reception of this discourse is very complimental; but, I fear, not without some degree of dissimulation. "What?" says

David, "must I leave my lord the king, whom I am bound by office to protect, just now when he is going to expose himself in the field? Why may not I go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" 1Sa 29:8. He seemed anxious to serve him when he was at this juncture really anxious to leave him, but he was not willing that Achish should know that he was. No one knows how strong the temptation is to compliment and dissemble which those are in that attend great men, and how hard it is to avoid it.

III. God's providence ordered it wisely and graciously for him. For, besides that the snare was broken and he was delivered out of the dilemma to which he was first reduced, it proved a happy hastening of him to the relief of his own city, which sorely wanted him, though he did not know it. Thus the disgrace which the lords of the Philistines put upon him prove, in more ways than one, an advantage to him. The steps of a good man ore ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. What he does with us we know not now, but we shall know hereafter, and shall see it was all for good.

9 And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou *art* good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding, the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.

10 Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.

11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

1 Samuel-30

David Defeats the Amalekites

1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag
on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and
Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;
2 and had taken the women captives, that *were* therein: they slew not
any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their
way.
3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burned
with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were
taken captives.

Here we have, I The descent which the Amalekites made upon Ziklag in David's absence, and the desolations they made there. They surprised the city when it was left unguarded, plundered it, burnt it, and carried all the women and children captives, 1Sa 30:1,2. They intended, by this to revenge the like havoc that David had lately made of them and their country, 1Sa 27:8. He that had made so many enemies ought not to have left his own concerns so naked and defenceless. Those that make bold with others must expect that others will make as bold with them and provide accordingly. Now observe in this,

1 The cruelty of Saul's pity (as it proved) in sparing the Amalekites; if he had utterly destroyed them, as he ought to have done, these would not have been in being to do this mischief.

2. How David was corrected for being so forward to go with the Philistines against Israel. God showed him that he had better have staid at home and looked after his own business. When we go abroad in the way of our duty we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families in our absence, but not otherwise.

3. How wonderfully God inclined the hearts of these Amalekites to carry the women and children away captives, and not to kill them. When David invaded them he put all to the sword (1Sa 27:9), and no reason can be given why they did not retaliate upon this city, but that God restrained them; for he has all hearts in his hands, and says to the fury of the most cruel men, Hitherto thou shalt come, and no further. Whether they spared them to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or to use them for slaves, God's hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make use of the Amalekites for the correction, not for the destruction, of the house of David.

II The confusion and consternation that David and his men were in when they found their houses in ashes and their wives and children gone into captivity. Three days' march they had from the camp of the Philistines to Ziklag, and now that they came thither weary, but hoping to find rest in their houses and joy in their families, behold a black and dismal scene was presented to them (1Sa 30:3), which made them all weep (David himself not excepted), though they were men of war, till they had no more power to weep, 1Sa 30:4. The mention of David's wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and their being carried captive, intimates that this circumstance went nearer his heart than any thing else. Note, It is no disparagement to the boldest and bravest spirits to lament the calamities of relations and friends. Observe,

1. This trouble came upon them when they were absent. It was the ancient policy of Amalek to take Israel at an advantage.

2. It met them at their return, and, for aught that appears, their own eyes gave them the first intelligence of it.

Note, When we go abroad we cannot foresee what evil tidings may meet us when we come home again. The going out may be very cheerful, and yet the coming in be very doleful. Boast not thyself therefore of to-morrow, nor of to-night either, for thou knowest not what a day, or a piece of a day, may bring forth, Pr 27:1. If, when we come off a journey, we find our tabernacles in peace, and not laid waste as David here found his, let the Lord be praised for it.

III. The mutiny and murmuring of David's men against him (1Sa 30:6): David was greatly distressed, for, in the midst of all his losses, his own people spoke of stoning him,

1. Because they looked upon him as the occasion of their calamities, by the provocation he had given the Amalekites, and his indiscretion in leaving Ziklag without a garrison in it. Thus apt are we, when we are in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are in any way the occasion of our trouble, while we overlook the divine providence, and have not that regard to the operations of God's hand in it which would silence our passions, and make us patient.

2. Because now they began to despair of that preferment which they had promised themselves in following David. They hoped ere this to have been all princes; and now to find themselves all beggars was such a disappointment to them as made them grow outrageous, and threaten the life of him on whom, under God, they had the greatest dependence. What absurdities will not ungoverned passions plunge men into? This was a sore trial to the man after God's own heart, and could not but go very near him. Saul had driven him from his country, the Philistines had driven him from their camp, the Amalekites had plundered his city, his wives were taken prisoners, and now, to complete his woe, his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, whom he had sheltered, and who did eat of his bread, instead of sympathizing with him and

offering him any relief, lifted up the heel against him and threatened to stone him. Great faith must expect such severe exercises. But it is observable that David was reduced to this extremity just before his accession to the throne. At this very time, perhaps, the stroke was struck which opened the door to his advancement. Things are sometimes at the worst with the church and people of God just before they begin to mend.

IV. David's pious dependence upon the divine providence and grace in this distress: But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. His men fretted at their loss. The soul of the people was bitter, so the word is. Their own discontent and impatience added wormwood and gall to the affliction and misery, and made their case doubly grievous. But

1. David bore it better, though he had more reason than any of them to lament it; they gave liberty to their passions, but he set his graces on work, and by encouraging himself in God, while they dispirited each other, he kept his spirit calm and sedate. Or,

2. There may be a reference to the threatening words his men gave out against him. They spoke of stoning him; but he, not offering to avenge the affront, nor terrified by their menaces, encouraged himself in the Lord his God, believed, and considered with application to his present case, the power and providence of God, his justice and goodness, the method he commonly takes of bringing low and then raising up, his care of his people that serve him and trust in him, and the particular promises he had made to him of bringing him safely to the throne; with these considerations he supported himself, not doubting but the present trouble would end well.

Note, Those that have taken the Lord for their God may take encouragement from their relation to him in the worst of times. It is the duty and interest of all good people, whatever

happens, to encourage themselves in God as their Lord and their God, assuring themselves that he can and will bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble, and good out of evil, to all that love him and are the called according to his purpose, Ro 8:28. It was David's practice, and he had the comfort of it, What time I am afraid I will trust in thee. When he was at his wits' end he was not at his faith's end.

4 Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice
and wept, until they had no more power to weep.
5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the
Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.
6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning
him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for
his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the
Lord his God.
7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee,
bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod
to David.
8 And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this
troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for
thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*.
9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him,
and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind
stayed.
10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred
abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the
brook Besor.
11 And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to
David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him
drink water;
12 and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins:
and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had
eaten no bread, nor drunk *any* water, three days and three nights.
13 And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art*
thou? And he said, I *am* a young man of Egypt, servant to an

Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days agone I fell sick.

14 We made an invasion *upon* the south of the Cherethites, and upon *the coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.

Solomon observes that the righteous is delivered out of trouble and the wicked cometh in his stead, that the just falleth seven times a-day and riseth again; so it was with David. Many were his troubles, but the Lord delivered him out of them all, and particularly out of this of which we have here an account.

I. He enquired of the Lord both concerning his duty--Shall I pursue after this troop? and concerning the event--Shall I overtake them? 1Sa 30:8. It was a great advantage to David that he had the high priest with him and the breast-plate of judgment, which, as a public person, he might consult in all his affairs, Nu 27:21. We cannot think that he left Abiathar and the ephod at Ziklag, for then he and it would have been carried away by the Amalekites, unless we may suppose them hidden by a special providence, that they might be ready for David to consult at his return. If we conclude that David had his priest and ephod with him in the camp of the Philistines, it was certainly a great neglect in him that he did not enquire of the Lord by them concerning his engagement to Achish. Perhaps he was ashamed to own his religion so far among the uncircumcised; but now he begins to apprehend that this trouble is brought upon him to correct him for that oversight, and therefore the first thing he does is to call for the ephod.

It is well if we get this good by our afflictions, to be reminded by them of neglected duties, and particularly to be quickened by them to enquire of the Lord. See 1Ch 15:13. David had no room to doubt but that his war against these Amalekites was just, and he had an inclination strong enough to set upon them when it was for the recovery of that which was dearest to him

in this world; and yet he would not go about it without asking counsel of God, thereby owning his dependence upon God and submission to him. If we thus, in all our ways, acknowledge God, we may expect that he will direct our steps, as he did David's here, answering him above what he asked, with an assurance that he should recover all.

II. He went himself in person, and took with him all the force he had, in pursuit of the Amalekites, 1Sa 30:9,10. See how quickly, how easily, how effectually the mutiny among the soldiers was quelled by his patience and faith. When they spoke of stoning him (1Sa 30:6), if he had spoken of hanging them, or had ordered that the ringleaders of the faction should immediately have their heads struck off, though it would have been just, yet it might have been of pernicious consequence to his interest in this critical juncture; and, while he and his men were contending, the Amalekites would have clearly carried off their spoil.

But when he, as a deaf man, heard not, smothered his resentments, and encouraged himself in the Lord his God, the tumult of the people was stilled by his gentleness and the power of God on their hearts; and, being thus mildly treated, they are now as ready to follow his foot as they were but a little before to fly in his face. Meekness is the security of any government. All his men were willing to go along with him in pursuit of the Amalekites, and he needed them all; but he was forced to drop a third part of them by the way; 200 out of 600 were so fatigued with their long march, and so sunk under the load of their grief, that they could not pass the brook Besor, but staid behind there. This was,

1. A great trial of David's faith, whether he could go on, in a dependence upon the word of God, when so many of his men failed him. When we are disappointed and discouraged in our expectations from second causes, then to go on with

cheerfulness, confiding in the divine power, this is giving glory to God, by believing against hope, in hope.

2. A great instance of David's tenderness to his men, that he would by no means urge them beyond their strength, though the case itself was so very urgent. The Son of David thus considers the frame of his followers, who are not all alike strong and vigorous in their spiritual pursuits and conflicts; but, where we are weak, there he is kind; nay, more there he is strong, 2Co 12:9,10.

III. Providence threw one in their way that gave them intelligence of the enemy's motions, and guided theirs; a poor Egyptian lad, scarcely alive, is made instrumental of a great deal of good to David. God chooses the foolish things of the world, with them to confound the wise. Observe,

1. His master's cruelty to him. He had got out of him all the service he could, and when the lad fell sick, probably being over-toiled with his work, he barbarously left him to perish in the field, when he was in no such haste but he might have put him into some of the carriages, and brought him home, or, at least, have left him wherewithal to support himself. That master has the spirit of an Amalekite, not of an Israelite, that can thus use a servant worse than one would use a beast. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. This Amalekite thought he should now have servants enough of the Israelite-captives, and therefore cared not what became of his Egyptian slave, but could willingly let him die in a ditch for want of necessaries, while he himself was eating and drinking, 1Sa 30:16. Justly did Providence make this poor servant, that was thus basely abused, instrumental towards the destruction of a whole army of Amalekites and his master among the rest; for God hears the cry of oppressed servants.

2. David's compassion to him. Though he had reason to think he was one of those that had helped to destroy Ziklag, yet, finding him in distress, he generously relieved him, not only with bread and water (1Sa 30:11), but with figs and raisins, 1Sa 30:12. Though the Israelites were in haste, and had no great plenty for themselves, yet they would not forbear to deliver one that was drawn unto death, nor say, Behold, we knew it not, Pr 24:11,12. Those are unworthy the name of Israelites who shut up the bowels of their compassion from persons in distress. It was also prudently done to relieve this Egyptian; for, though despicable, he was capable of doing them service: so it proved, though they were not certain of this when they relieved him. It is a good reason why we should neither do an injury nor deny a kindness to any man that we know not but, some time or other, it may be in his power to return either a kindness or an injury.

3. The intelligence David received from this poor Egyptian when he had come to himself. He gave him an account concerning his party.

(1.) What they had done (1Sa 30:14): We made an invasion, &c. The countries which David had pretended to Achish to have made an incursion upon (1Sa 27:10) they really had invaded and laid waste. What was then false now proved too true.

(2.) Whither they had gone, 1Sa 30:15. This he promised David to inform him of upon condition he would spare his life and protect him from his master, who, if he could hear of him again (he thought), would add cruelty to cruelty. Such an opinion this poor Egyptian had of the obligation of an oath that he desired no greater security for his life than this: Swear unto me by God, not by the gods of Egypt or Amalek, but by the one supreme God.

IV. David, being directed to the place where they lay, securely celebrating their triumphs, fell upon them, and, as he used to pray, saw his desire upon his enemies.

1 The spoilers were cut off. The Amalekites, finding the booty was rich, and having got with it (as they thought) out of the reach of danger, were making themselves very merry with it, 1Sa 30:16. All thoughts of war were laid aside, nor were they in any haste to house their prey, but spread themselves abroad on the earth in the most careless manner that could be, and there they were found eating, and drinking, and dancing, probably in honour of their idol-gods, to whom they gave the praise of their success. In this posture David surprised them, which made the conquest of them, and the blow he gave them, the more easy to him and the more dismal to them. Then are sinners nearest to ruin when they cry, Peace and safety, and put the evil day far from them. Nor does any thing give our spiritual enemies more advantage against us than sensuality and the indulgence of the flesh. Eating, and drinking, and dancing, have been the soft and pleasant way in which many have gone down to the congregation of the dead. Finding them thus off their guard, and from their arms (many of them, it may be, drunk, and unable to make any resistance), he put them all to the sword, and only 400 escaped, 1Sa 30:17. Thus is the triumphing of the wicked short, and wrath comes on them, as on Belshazzar, when they are in the midst of their jollity.

2 The spoil was recovered and brought off, and nothing was lost, but a great deal gotten.

(1.) They retrieved all their own (1Sa 30:18,19): David rescued his two wives; this is mentioned particularly, because this pleased David more than all the rest of his achievements. Providence had so ordered it that the Amalekites carefully preserved all that they had taken, concluding that they kept it

for themselves, though really they preserved it for the right owners, so that there was nothing lacking to them; so it proved, when they concluded all was gone: so much better is God oftentimes to us than our own fears. Our Lord Jesus was indeed the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, in this resembling them both (Abraham, Ge 14:16, and David here), that he took the prey from the mighty, and led captivity captive. But this was not all.

(2.) They took all that belonged to the Amalekites besides (1Sa 30:20): Flocks and herds, either such as were taken from the Philistines and others, which David had the disposal of by the law of war; or perhaps he made a sally into the enemy's country, and fetched off these flocks and herds thence, as interest for his own. This drove was put in the van of the triumph, with this proclamation, "This is David's spoil. This we may thank him for." Those who lately spoke of stoning him now caressed him and cried him up, because they got by him more than they had then lost. Thus are the world and its sentiments governed by interest.

15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company
? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill
me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring
thee down to this company.
16 And when he had brought him down, behold, *they were* spread
abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing,
because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of
the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.
17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of
the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four
hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.
18 And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and
David rescued his two wives.
19 And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great,
neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they
had taken to them: David recovered all.

20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, *which* they drave before those *other* cattle, and said, This *is* David's spoil.

21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

22 Then answered all the wicked men, and *men* of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *aught* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead *them* away, and depart.

23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

We have here an account of the distribution of the spoil which as taken from the Amalekites. When the Amalekites had carried away a rich booty from the land of Judah and the Philistines they spent it in sensuality, in eating, and drinking, and making merry with it; but David disposed of the spoil taken after another manner, as one that knew that justice and charity must govern us in the use we make of whatever we have in this world. What God gives us he designs we should do good with, not serve our lusts with. In the distribution of the spoil,

I. David was just and kind to those who abode by the stuff. They came forth to meet the conquerors, and to congratulate them on this success, though they could not contribute to it (1Sa 30:21); for we should rejoice in a good work done, though Providence had laid us aside and rendered us incapable of lending a hand to it. David received their address very kindly, and was so far from upbraiding them with their weakness that he showed himself solicitous concerning them. He saluted them; he asked them of peace (so the word is),

enquired how they did, because he had left them faint and not well; or wished them peace, bade them be of good cheer, they should lose nothing by staying behind; for of this they seemed afraid, as perhaps David saw by their countenances.

1. There were those that opposed their coming in to share in the spoil; some of David's soldiers, probably the same that spoke of stoning him, spoke now of defrauding their brethren; they are called wicked men and men of Belial, 1Sa 30:22. Let not the best of men think it strange if they have those attending them that are very bad and they cannot prevail to make them better. We may suppose that David had instructed his soldiers, and prayed with them, and yet there were many among them that were wicked men and men of Belial, often terrified with the apprehensions of death and yet wicked men still and men of Belial. These made a motion that the 200 men who abode by the stuff should only have their wives and children given them, but none of their goods. Well might they be called wicked men; for this bespeaks them, (1.) Very covetous themselves and greedy of gain; for hereby the more would fall to their share. Awhile ago they would gladly have given half their own to recover the other half, yet now that they have all their own they are not content unless they can have their brethren's too; so soon do men forget their low estate. All seek their own, and too often more than their own.

(2.) Very barbarous to their brethren; for, to give them their wives and children, and not their estates, was to give them the mouths without the meat. What joy could they have of their families if they had nothing to maintain them with? Was this to do as they would be done by? Those are men of Belial indeed who delight in putting hardships upon their brethren, and care not who is starved, so they may be fed to the full.

2. David would by no means admit this, but ordered that those who tarried behind should come in for an equal share in the spoils with those that went to the battle, 1Sa 30:23,24. This he did,

(1.) In gratitude to God. The spoil we have is that which God has given us; we have it from him, and therefore must use it under his direction as good stewards. Let this check us when we are tempted to misapply that which God has entrusted us with of this world's goods. "Nay, I must not do so with that which God has given me, not serve Satan and a base lust with those things which are not only the creatures of his power, but the gifts of his bounty. God has recompensed us by delivering the company that came against us into our hand, let not us then wrong our brethren. God has been kind to us in preserving us and giving us victory, let not us be unkind to them." God's mercy to us should make us merciful to one another.

(2.) In justice to them. It was true they tarried behind; but,

[1.] It was not for want of good-will to the cause or to their brethren, but because they had not strength to keep up with them. It was not their fault, but their infelicity; and therefore they ought not to suffer for it.

[2.] Though they tarried behind now, they had formerly engaged many times in battle and done their part as well as the best of their brethren, and their former services must be considered now that there was something to enjoy.

[3.] Even now they did good service, for they abode by the stuff, to guard that which somebody must take care of, else that might have fallen into the hands of some other enemy. Every post of service is not alike a post of honour, yet those that are in any way serviceable to the common interest, though in a meaner station, ought to share in the common advantages,

as in the natural body every member has its use and therefore has its share of the nourishment. First, Thus David overruled the wicked men, and men of Belial, with reason, but with a great deal of mildness; for the force of reason is sufficient, without the force of passion. He calls them his brethren, 1Sa 30:23. Superiors often lose their authority by haughtiness, but seldom by courtesy and condescension. Secondly, Thus he settled the matter for the time to come, made it a statute of his kingdom (a statute of distributions, primo Davidis--in the first year of David's reign), an ordinance of war (1Sa 30:25), that as his part is that goes down to the battle, and hazards his life in the high places of the field, so shall his be that guards the carriages. Abraham returned the spoils of Sodom to the right owners, and quitted his title to them jure belli--derived from the laws of war. If we help others to recover their right, we must not think that this alienates the property and makes it ours. God appointed that the spoil of Midian should be divided between the soldiers and the whole congregation, Nu 31:27. The case here was somewhat different, but governed by the same general rule--that we are members one of another. The disciples, at first, had all things common, and we should still be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, 1Ti 6:18. When kings of armies did flee apace, she that tarried at home did divide the spoil, Ps 68:12.

II. David was generous and kind to all his friends. When he had given every one his own with interest there was a considerable overplus, which David, as general, had the disposal of; probably the spoil of the tents of the Amalekites consisted much in plate and jewels (Jdg 8:24,26), and these, because he thought they would but make his own soldiers proud and effeminate, he thought fit to make presents of to his friends, even the elders of Judah, 1Sa 30:26. Several places are here named to which he sent of these presents, all of them in or near the tribe of Judah. The first place named is Bethel, which signifies the house of God; that place shall be first

served for its name's sake; or perhaps it means not the city so called, but the place where the ark was, which was therefore the house of God. Thither David sent the first and best, to those that attended there, for his sake who is the first and best. Hebron is named last (1Sa 30:31), probably because thither he sent the residuum, which was the largest share, having an eye upon that place as fittest for his head-quarters, 2Sa 2:1. In David's sending these presents observe,

1. His generosity. He aimed not to enrich himself, but to serve his country; and therefore God afterwards enriched him, and set him to rule the country he had served. It becomes gracious souls to be generous. There is that scatters, and yet increases.

2. His gratitude. He sent presents to all the places where he and his men were wont to haunt (1Sa 30:31), that is, to all that he had received kindness from, that had sheltered him and sent him intelligence or provisions. Note, Honesty, as well as honour, obliges us to requite the favours that have been done us, or at least to make a real acknowledgment of them as far as is in the power of our hand.

3. His piety. He calls his present a blessing; for no present we give to our friends will be a comfort to them but as it is made so by the blessing of God: it intimates that his prayers for them accompanied his present. He also sent it out of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord (so he calls them, not his enemies), that they might rejoice in the victory for the Lord's sake, and might join with him in thanksgivings for it.

4. His policy. He sent these presents among his countrymen to engage them to be ready to appear for him upon his accession to the throne, which he now saw at hand. A man's gift maketh room for him. He was fit to be a king who thus showed the bounty and liberality of a king. Munificence recommends a man more than magnificence. The Ziphites had

none of his presents, nor the men of Keilah; and thus he showed that, though he was such a saint as not to revenge affronts, yet he was not such a fool as not to take notice of them.

24 For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part *is* that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.

25 And it was *so* from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

26 And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord;

27 to *them* which *were* in Beth-el, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir,

28 and to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa,

29 and to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites,

30 and to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which *were* in Chor-ashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach,

31 and to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

1 Samuel-31

The Death of Saul and His Sons

1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

4 Then said Saul unto his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

The day of recompence has now come, in which Saul must account for the blood of the Amalekites which he had sinfully spared, and that of the priests which he had more sinfully spilt; that of David too, which he would have spilt, must come into the account. Now his day has come to fall, as David foresaw, when he should descend into battle and perish, 1Sa 26:10. Come and see the righteous judgments of God.

I. He sees his soldiers fall about him, 1Sa 31:1. Whether the Philistines were more numerous, better posted, and better led on, or what other advantages they had, we are not told; but it seems they were more vigorous, for they made the onset; they fought against Israel, and the Israelites fled and fell. The best of the troops were put into disorder, and multitudes slain, probably those whom Saul had employed in pursuing David. Thus those who had followed him and served him in his sin went before him in his fall and shared with him in his plagues.

II. He sees his sons fall before him. The victorious Philistines pressed most forcibly upon the king of Israel and those about him. His three sons were next him, it is probable, and they were all three slain before his face, to his great grief (for they were the hopes of his family) and to his great terror, for they were now the guard of his person, and he could conclude no other than that his own turn would come next. His sons are named (1Sa 31:2), and it grieves us to find Jonathan among them: that wise, valiant, good man, who was as much David's friend as Saul was his enemy, yet falls with the rest. Duty to his father would not permit him to stay at home, or to retire when the armies engaged; and Providence so orders it that he falls in the common fate of his family, though he never involved himself in the guilt of it; so that the observation of

Eliphaz does not hold (Job 4:7), Who ever perished being innocent? For here was one. What shall we say to it?

1. God would hereby complete the vexation of Saul in his dying moments, and the judgment that was to be executed upon his house. If the family must fall, Jonathan, that is one of it, must fall with it.

2. He would hereby make David's way to the crown the more clear and open. For, though Jonathan himself would have cheerfully resigned all his title and interest to him (we have no reason to suspect any other), yet it is very probable that many of the people would have made use of his name for the support of the house of Saul, or at least would have come in but slowly to David. If Ish-bosheth (who was now left at home as one unfit for action, and so escaped) had so many friends, what would Jonathan have had, who had been the darling of the people and had never forfeited their favour? Those that were so anxious to have a king like the nations would be zealous for the right line, especially if that threw the crown upon such a head as Jonathan's. This would have embarrassed David; and, if Jonathan could have prevailed to bring in all his interest to David, then it would have been said that Jonathan had made him king, whereas God was to have all the glory. This is the Lord's doing. So that though the death of Jonathan would be a great affliction to David, yet, by making him mindful of his own frailty, as well as by facilitating his accession to the throne, it would be an advantage to him.

3. God would hereby show us that the difference between good and bad is to be made in the other world, not in this. All things come alike to all. We cannot judge of the spiritual or eternal state of any by the manner of their death; for in that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.

III. He himself is sorely wounded by the Philistines and then slain by his own hand. The archers hit him (1Sa 31:3), so that he could neither fight nor fly, and therefore must inevitably fall into their hands. Thus, to make him the more miserable, destruction comes gradually upon him, and he dies so as to feel himself die. To such an extremity was he now reduced that,

1. He was desirous to die by the hand of his own servant rather than by the hand of the Philistines, lest they should abuse him as they had abused Samson. Miserable man! He finds himself dying, and all his care is to keep his body out of the hands of the Philistines, instead of being solicitous to resign his soul into the hands of God who gave it, Ec 12:7. As he lived, so he died, proud and jealous, and a terror to himself and all about him. Those who rightly understand the matter think it of small account, in comparison, how it is with them in death, so it may but be well with them after death. Those are in a deplorable condition indeed who, being bitter in soul, long for death, but it cometh not (Job 3:20,21), especially those who, despairing of the mercy of god, like Judas, leap into a hell before them, to escape a hell within them.

2. When he could not obtain that favour he became his own executioner, thinking hereby to avoid shame, but running upon a heinous sin, and with it entailing upon his own name a mark of perpetual infamy, as felo de se--a self-murderer. Jonathan, who received his death-wound from the hand of the Philistines and bravely yielded to the fate of war, died on the bed of honour; but Saul died as a fool dieth, as a coward dieth--a proud fool, a sneaking coward; he died as a man that had neither the fear of God nor hope in God, neither the reason of a man nor the religion of an Israelite, much less the dignity of a prince or the resolution of a soldier. Let us all pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation, this temptation. His armour-bearer would not run him through, and he did well to refuse it; for no

man's servant ought to be a slave to his master's lusts or passions of any kind. The reason given is that he was sorely afraid, not of death, for he himself ran wilfully upon that immediately; but, having a profound reverence for the king his master, he could not conquer that so far as to do him any hurt; or perhaps he feared lest his trembling hand should give him but half a blow, and so put him to the greater misery.

IV. His armour-bearer who refused to kill him refused not to die with him, but fell likewise upon his sword, 1Sa 31:5. This was an aggravating circumstance of the death of Saul, that, by the example of his wickedness in murdering himself, he drew in his servant to be guilty of the same wickedness, and perished not alone in his iniquity. The Jews say that Saul's armour-bearer was Doeg, whom he preferred to that dignity for killing the priests, and, if so, justly does his violent dealing return on his own head. David had foretold concerning him that God would destroy him for ever, Ps 52:5.

V. The country was put into such confusion by the rout of Saul's army that the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities (on that side Jordan, as it might be read) quitted them, and the Philistines, for a time, had possession of them, till things were settled in Israel (1Sa 31:7), to such a sad pass had Saul by his wickedness brought his country, which might have remained in the hands of the uncircumcised if David had not been raised up to repair the breaches of it. See what a king he proved for whom they rejected God and Samuel. They had still done wickedly (it is to be feared) as well as he, and therefore were consumed both they and their king, as the prophet had foretold concerning them, 1Sa 12:25. And to this reference is had long after. Ho 13:10,11, "Where are thy saviours in all thy cities, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in my anger, and took him away in my wrath; that is, he was a plague to thee living and dying; thou couldst expect no other."

5 And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise
upon his sword, and died with him.
6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his
men, that same day together.
7 And when the men of Israel that *were* on the other side of the
valley, and *they* that *were* on the other side Jordan, saw that the men
of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook
the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.
8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to
strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in
mount Gilboa.
9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armor, and sent into
the land of the Philistines round about, to publish *it in* the house of
their idols, and among the people.
10 And they put his armor in the house of Ashtaroth: and they
fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

The scripture makes no mention of the souls of Saul and his sons, what became of them after they were dead (secret things belong not to us), but of their bodies only.

I. How they were basely abused by the Philistines. The day after the battle, when they had recovered their fatigue, they came to strip the slain, and, among the rest, found the bodies of Saul and his three sons, 1Sa 31:8. Saul's armour-bearer perhaps intended to honour his master by following the example of his self-murder, and to show thereby how well he loved him; but, if he had consulted his reason more than his passions, he would have spared that foolish compliment, not only in justice to his own life, but in kindness to his master, to whom, by the opportunity of survivorship, he might have done all the service that could be done him by any man after he was dead; for he might, in the night, have conveyed away his body, and those of his sons, and buried them decently.

But such false and foolish notions these vain men have (though they would be wise) of giving and receiving honour.

Nay, it should seem, Saul might have saved himself the fatal thrust and have made his escape: for the pursuers (in fear of whom he slew himself) came not to the place where he was till the next day. But whom God will destroy he infatuates and utterly consumes with his terrors. See Job 18:5-21, &c. Finding Saul's body (which now that it lay extended on the bloody turf was distinguishable from the rest by its length, as it was, while erect, by its height, when he proudly overlooked the surrounding crowd), they will, in that, triumph over Israel's crown, and meanly gratify a barbarous and brutish revenge by insulting the deserted corpse, which, when alive, they had stood in awe of.

1. They cut off his head. Had they designed in this to revenge the cutting off of Goliath's head they would rather have cut off the head of David, who did that execution, when he was in their country. They intended it, in general, for a reproach to Israel, who promised themselves that a crowned and an anointed head would save them from the Philistines, and a particular reproach to Saul, who was taller by the head than other men (which perhaps he was wont to boast of), but was now shorter by the head.

2. They stripped him of his armour (1Sa 31:9), and sent that to be set up as a trophy of their victory, in the house of Ashtaroth their goddess (1Sa 31:10); and we are told, 1Ch 10:10 (though it is omitted here), that they fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. Thus did they ascribe the honour of their victory, not as they ought to have done to the real justice of the true God, but to the imaginary power of their false gods, and by this respect paid to pretended deities shame those who give not the praise of their achievements to the living God. Ashtaroth, the idol that Israel had many a time gone a whoring after, now triumphs over them.

3. They sent expresses throughout their country, and ordered public notice to be given in the houses of their gods of the victory they had obtained (1Sa 31:9), that public rejoicings might be made and thanks given to their gods. This David regretted sorely, 2Sa 1:20. Tell it not in Gath.

4. They fastened his body and the bodies of his sons (as appears, 1Sa 31:12) to the wall of Beth-shan, a city that lay not far from Gilboa and very near to the river Jordan. Hither the dead bodies were dragged and here hung up in chains, to be devoured by the birds of prey. Saul slew himself to avoid being abused by the Philistines, and never was royal corpse so abused as his was, perhaps the more if they understood that he slew himself for that reason.

He that thinks to save his honour by sin will certainly lose it. See to what a height of insolence the Philistines had arrived just before David was raised up, who perfectly subdued them. Now that they had slain Saul and his sons they thought the land of Israel was their own for ever, but they soon found themselves deceived. When God has accomplished his whole work by them he will accomplish it upon them. See Isa 10:6,7.

II. How they were bravely rescued by the men of Jabesh-Gilead. Little more than the river Jordan lay between Beth-shan and Jabesh-Gilead, and Jordan was in that place passable by its fords; a bold adventure was therefore made by the valiant men of that city, who in the night passed the river, took down the dead bodies, and gave them decent burial, 1Sa 31:11,13. This they did,

1. Out of a common concern for the honour of Israel, or the land of Israel, which ought not to be defiled by the exposing of any dead bodies, and especially of the crown of Israel, which was thus profaned by the uncircumcised. 2. Out of a particular sense of gratitude to Saul, for his zeal and

forwardness to rescue them from the Ammonites when he first came to the throne, 1Sa 11:1-27 It is an evidence of a generous spirit and an encouragement to beneficence when the remembrance of kindnesses is thus retained, and they are thus returned in an extremity. The men of Jabesh-Gilead would have done Saul better service if they had sent their valiant men to him sooner, to strengthen him against the Philistines. But his day had come to fall, and now this is all the service they can do him, in honour to his memory. We find not that any general mourning was made for the death of Saul, as was for the death of Samuel (1Sa 25:1), only those Gileadites of Jabesh did him honour at his death; for,

(1.) They made a burning for the bodies, to perfume them. So some understand the burning of them. They burnt spices over them, 1Sa 31:12. And that it was usual thus to do honour to their deceased friends, at least their princes, appears by the account of Asa's funeral (2Ch 16:14), that they made a very great burning for him. Or (as some think) they burnt the flesh, because it began to putrefy.

(2.) They buried the bodies, when, by burning over them, they had sweetened them (or, if they burnt them, they buried the bones and ashes), under a tree, which served for a grave-stone and monument. And,

(3.) They fasted seven days, that is, each day of the seven they fasted till the evening; thus they lamented the death of Saul and the present distracted state of Israel, and perhaps joined prayers with their fasting for the re-establishment of their shattered state. Though, when the wicked perish there is shouting (that is, it is to be hoped a better state of things will ensue, which will be matter of joy), yet humanity obliges us to show a decent respect to dead bodies, especially those of princes.

This book began with the birth of Samuel, but now it ends with the burial of Saul, the comparing of which two together will teach us to prefer the honour that comes from God before any of the honours which this world pretends to have the disposal of.

11 And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the
Philistines had done to Saul,
12 all the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of
Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and
came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.
13 And they took their bones, and buried *them* under a tree at Jabesh,
and fasted seven days.

The Second Book of Samuel

Otherwise Called, The Second Book of the Kings
[2 Samuel]

2 Samuel-1

David Learns of Saul's Death

1 Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was
returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had
abode two days in Ziklag;
2 it came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of
the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head:
and *so* it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did
obeisance.
3 And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said
unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped.
4 And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me.
And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many
of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son
are dead also.

Here is, I. David settling again in Ziklag, his own city, after he had rescued his family and friends out of the hands of the Amalekites (2Sa 1:1): He abode in Ziklag. Thence he was now sending presents to his friends (1Sa 30:26), and there he was ready to receive those that came into his interests; not men in distress and debt, as his first followers were, but persons of quality in their country, mighty men, men of war, and captains of thousands (as we find, 1Ch 12:1,8,20); such came day by day to him, God stirring up their hearts to do so, till he had a great host, like the host of God, as it is said, 1Ch 12:22. The secret springs of revolutions are unaccountable, and must be resolved into that Providence which turns all hearts as the rivers of water.

II. Intelligence brought him thither of the death of Saul. It was strange that he did not leave some spies about the camp, to bring him early notice of the issue of the engagement, a sign that he desired not Saul's woeful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him which many a one would have sent more than half-way to meet. He that believes does not make haste, takes good news when it comes and is not uneasy while it is in the coming.

1 The messenger presents himself to David as an express, in the posture of a mourner for the deceased prince and a subject to the succeeding one. He came with his clothes rent, and made obeisance to David (2Sa 1:2), pleasing himself with the fancy that he had the honour to be the first that did him homage as his sovereign, but it proved he was the first that received from him sentence of death as his judge. He told David he came from the camp of Israel, and intimated the bad posture it was in when he said he had escaped out of it, having much ado to get away with his life, 2Sa 1:3.

2. He gives him a general account of the issue of the battle. David was very desirous to know how the matter went, as one that had more reason than any to be concerned for the public; and he told him very distinctly that the army of Israel was routed, many slain, and, among the rest, Saul and Jonathan, 2Sa 1:4. He named only Saul and Jonathan, because he knew David would be most solicitous to know their fate; for Saul was the man whom he most feared and Jonathan the man whom he most loved.

3. He gives him a more particular account of the death of Saul. It is probable that David had heard, by the report of others, what the issue of the war was, for multitudes resorted to him, it should seem, in consequence; but he was desirous to know the certainty of the report concerning Saul and Jonathan,

either because he was not forward to believe it or because he would not proceed upon it to make his own claims till he was fully assured of it. He therefore asks, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan are dead? in answer to which the young man tells him a very ready story, putting it past doubt that Saul was dead, for he himself had been not only an eye-witness of his death, but an instrument of it, and therefore David might rely upon his testimony.

He says nothing, in his narrative, of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul, thinking (as David understood it well enough, 2Sa 4:10) that he should be welcome for that, and rewarded as one that brought good tidings. The account he gives of this matter is,

(1.) Very particular. That he happened to go to the place where Saul was (2Sa 1:6) as a passenger, not as a soldier, and therefore an indifferent person, that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendants being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dexterously for himself: his hand and heart failed him. The miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die; he therefore called this stranger to him (2Sa 1:7), enquired what countryman he was, for, provided he was not a Philistine, he would gladly receive from his hand the coup de grace (as the French call it concerning those that are broken on the wheel)--the merciful stroke, that might dispatch him out of his pain. Understanding that he was an Amalekite (neither one of his subjects nor one of his enemies), he begs this favour from him (2Sa 1:9): Stand upon me, and slay me. He is now sick of his dignity and willing to be trampled upon, sick of his life and willing to be slain. Who then would be inordinately fond of life or honour?

The case may he such, even with those that have no hope in their death, that yet they may desire to die, and death flee from them, Re 9:6. Anguish has come upon me; so we read it, as a complaint of the pain and terror his spirit was seized with. If his conscience now brought to mind the javelin he had cast at David, his pride, malice, and perfidiousness, and especially the murder of the priests, no marvel that anguish came upon him: moles (they say) open their eyes when they are dying. Sense of unpardoned guilt will make death indeed the king of terrors. Those that have baffled their convictions will perhaps, in their dying moments, be overpowered by them. The margin reads it as a complaint of the inconvenience of his clothes; that his coat of mail which he had for defence, or his embroidered coat which he had for ornament, hindered him, that he could not get the spear far enough into his body, or so straitened him, now that his body swelled with anguish, that he could not expire. Let no man's clothes be his pride, for it may so happen that they may be his burden and snare. "Hereupon," saith our young man, "I stood upon him, and slew him" (2Sa 1:10) at which word, perhaps, he observed David look upon him with some show of displeasure, and therefore he excuses himself in the next words: "For I was sure he could not live; his life was whole in him indeed, but he would certainly have fallen into the hands of the Philistines or given himself another thrust."

(2.) It is doubtful whether this story be true. If it be, the righteousness of God is to be observed, that Saul, who spared the Amalekites in contempt of the divine command, received his death's wound from an Amalekite. But most interpreters think that it was false, and that, though he might happen to be present, yet he was not assisting in the death of Saul, but told David so in expectation that he would reward him for it, as having done him a piece of good service.

Those who would rejoice at the fall of an enemy are apt to measure others by themselves, and to think that they will do so too. But a man after God's own heart is not to be judged of by common men. I am not clear whether this young man's story was true or no: it may consist with the narrative in the chapter before, and be an addition to it, as Peter's account of the death of Judas (Ac 1:18) is to the narrative, Mt 27:5. What is there called a sword may here be called a spear, or when he fell upon his sword he leaned on his spear.

(3.) However he produced that which was proof sufficient of the death of Saul, the crown that was upon his head and the bracelet that was on his arm. It should seem Saul was so foolishly fond of these as to wear them in the field of battle, which made him a fair mark for the archers, by distinguishing him from those about him; but as pride (we say) feels no cold, so it fears no danger, from that which gratifies it. These fell into the hands of this Amalekite. Saul spared the best of their spoil, and now the best of his came to one of that devoted nation. He brought them to David, as the rightful owner of them now that Saul was dead, not doubting but by his officiousness herein to recommend himself to the best preferments in his court or camp.

The tradition of the Jews is that this Amalekite was the son of Doeg (for the Amalekites were descendants from Edom), and that Doeg, who they suppose was Saul's armour-bearer, before he slew himself gave Saul's crown and bracelet (the ensigns of his royalty) to his son, and bade him carry them to David, to curry favour with him. But this is a groundless conceit. Doeg's son, it is likely, was so well known to Saul that he needed not ask him as he did this Amalekite (2Sa 1:8), Who art thou? David had been long waiting for the crown, and now it was brought to him by an Amalekite. See how God can serve his own purposes of kindness to his people, even by

designing (ill-designing) men, who aim at nothing but to set up themselves.

5 And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?

6 And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.

7 And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, Here *am* I.

8 And he said unto me, Who *art* thou? And I answered him, I *am* an Amalekite.

9 He said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me: for anguish is come upon me, because my life *is* yet whole in me.

10 So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that *was* upon his head, and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

11 Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that *were* with him:

12 and they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword.

13 And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence *art* thou? And he answered, I *am* the son of a stranger, an Amalekite.

Here is, I. David's reception of these tidings. So far was he from falling into a transport of joy, as the Amalekite expected, that he fell into a passion of weeping, rent his clothes (2Sa 1:11), mourned and fasted (2Sa 1:12), not only for his people Israel and Jonathan his friend but for Saul his enemy. This he did, not only as a man of honour, in observance of that decorum which forbids us to insult over those that are fallen, and requires us to attend our relations to the grave with respect, whatever we lost by their life or got by their death, but as a good man and a man of conscience, that had forgiven the injuries Saul had done him and bore him no malice. He knew it, before his son wrote it (Pr 24:17,18), that if we rejoice

when our enemy falls the Lord sees it, and it displeases him; and that he who is glad at calamities shall not go unpunished, Pr 17:5.

By this it appears that those passages in David's psalms which express his desire of, and triumph in, the ruin of his enemies, proceeded not from a spirit of revenge, nor any irregular passion, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the public good; for by what he did here, when he heard of Saul's death, we may perceive that his natural temper was very tender, and that he was kindly affected even to those that hated him. He was very sincere, no question, in his mourning for Saul, and it was not pretended, or a copy of his countenance only. His passion was so strong, on this occasion, that it moved those about him; all that were with him, at least in complaisance to him, rent their clothes, and they fasted till even, in token of their sorrow; and probably it was a religious fast: they humbled themselves under the hand of God, and prayed for the repairing of the breaches made upon Israel by this defeat.

II The reward he gave to him that brought him the tidings. Instead of preferring him, he put him to death, judged him out of his own mouth, as a murderer of his prince, and ordered him to be forthwith executed for the same. What a surprise was this to the messenger, who thought he should have favour shown him for his pains. In vain did he plead that he had Saul's order for it, that it was a real kindness to him, that he must inevitably have died; all those pleas are overruled: "Thy mouth has testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed (2Sa 1:16), therefore thou must die." Now,

1. David herein did not do unjustly. For,

(1.) The man was an Amalekite. This, lest he should have mistaken it in his narrative, he made him own a second time,

2Sa 1:13. That nation, and all that belonged to it, were doomed to destruction, so that, in slaying him, David did what his predecessor should have done and was rejected for not doing.

(2.) He did himself confess the crime, so that the evidence was, by the consent of all laws, sufficient to convict him; for every man is presumed to make the best of himself. If he did as he said, he deserved to die for treason (2Sa 1:14), doing that which, it is probable, he heard Saul's own armour-bearer refuse to do; if not, yet by boasting that he had done it he plainly showed that if there had been occasion he would have done it, and would have made nothing of it; and, by boasting of it to David, he showed what opinion he had of him, that he would rejoice in it, as one altogether like himself, which was an intolerable affront to him who had himself once and again refused to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. And his lying to David, if indeed it was a lie, was highly criminal, and proved, as sooner or later that sin will prove, lying against his own head.

2. He did honourably and well. Hereby he demonstrated the sincerity of his grief, discouraged all others from thinking by doing the like to ingratiate themselves with him, and did that which might probably oblige the house of Saul and win upon them, and recommend him to the people as one that was zealous for public justice, without regard to his own private interest. We may learn from it that to give assistance to any in murdering themselves, directly or indirectly, if done wittingly, incurs the guilt of blood, and that the lives of princes ought to be, in a special manner, precious to us.

14 And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch
forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?
15 And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, *and* fall
upon him. And he smote him that he died.

16 And David said unto him, Thy blood *be* upon thy head; for thy
mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's
anointed.

David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan

17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over
Jonathan his son:
18 (also he bade them teach the children of Judah *the use of* the bow:
behold, *it is* written in the book of Jasher:)
19 The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
how are the mighty fallen!
20 Tell *it* not in Gath,
publish *it* not in the streets of Askelon;
lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
21 Ye mountains of Gilboa,
let there be no dew, neither *let there be* rain, upon you,
nor fields of offerings:
for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away,
the shield of Saul, *as though he had* not *been* anointed with oil.
22 From the blood of the slain,
from the fat of the mighty,
the bow of Jonathan turned not back,
and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

When David had rent his clothes, mourned, and wept, and fasted, for the death of Saul, and done justice upon him who made himself guilty of it, one would think he had made full payment of the debt of honour he owed to his memory; yet this is not all: we have here a poem he wrote on that occasion; for he was a great master of his pen as well as of his sword. By this elegy he designed both to express his own sorrow for this great calamity and to impress the like on the minds of

others, who ought to lay it to heart. The putting of lamentations into poems made them,

1 The more moving and affecting. The passion of the poet, or singer, is, by this way, wonderfully communicated to the readers and hearers.

2 The more lasting. Thus they were made, not only to spread far, but to continue long, from generation to generation. Those might gain information by poems that would not read history. Here we have,

I The orders David gave with this elegy (2Sa 1:18): He bade them teach the children of Judah (his own tribe, whatever others did) the use of the bow, either.

1 The bow used in war. Not but that the children of Judah knew how to use the bow (it was so commonly used in war, long before this, that the sword and bow were put for all weapons of war, Ge 48:22), but perhaps they had of late made more use of slings, as David in killing Goliath, because cheaper, and David would have them now to see the inconvenience of these (for it was the archers of the Philistines that bore so hard upon Saul, 1Sa 21:3), and to return more generally to the use of the bow, to exercise themselves in this weapon, that they might be in a capacity to avenge the death of their prince upon the Philistines, and to outdo them at their own weapon.

It was a pity but those that had such good heads and hearts as the children of Judah should be well armed. David hereby showed his authority over and concern for the armies of Israel, and set himself to rectify the errors of the former reign. But we find that the companies which had now come to David to Ziklag were armed with bows (1Ch 12:2); therefore,

2. Some understand it either of some musical instrument called a bow (to which he would have the mournful ditties sung) or of the elegy itself: He bade them teach the children of Judah Kesheth, the bow, that is, this song, which was so entitled for the sake of Jonathan's bow, the achievements of which are here celebrated. Moses commanded Israel to learn his song (De 31:19), so David his. Probably he bade the Levites teach them. It is written in the book of Jasher, there it was kept upon record, and thence transcribed into this history. That book was probably a collection of state-poems; what is said to be written in that book (Jos 10:13) is also poetical, a fragment of an historical poem. Even songs would be forgotten and lost if they were not committed to writing, that best conservatory of knowledge.

II The elegy itself. It is not a divine hymn, nor given by inspiration of God to be used in divine service, nor is there any mention of God in it; but it is a human composition, and therefore was inserted, not in the book of Psalms (which, being of divine original, is preserved), but in the book of Jasher, which, being only a collection of common poems, is long since lost. This elegy proves David to have been,

1. A man of an excellent spirit, in four things:--

(1.) He was very generous to Saul, his sworn enemy. Saul was his father-in-law, his sovereign, and the anointed of the Lord; and therefore, though he had done him a great deal of wrong, David does not wreak his revenge upon his memory when he is in his grave; but like a good man, and a man of honour,

[1.] He conceals his faults; and, though there was no preventing their appearance in his history, yet they should not appear in this elegy. Charity teaches us to make the best we can of every body and to say nothing of those of whom we can say no good, especially when they are gone. De mortuis

nil nisi bonum--Say nothing but good concerning the dead. We ought to deny ourselves the satisfaction of making personal reflections upon those who have been injurious to us, much more drawing their character thence, as if every man must of necessity be a bad man that has done ill by us. Let the corrupt part of the memory be buried with the corrupt part of the man--earth to earth, ashes to ashes; let the blemish be hidden and a veil drawn over the deformity.

[2.] He celebrates that which was praiseworthy in him. He does not commend him for that which he was not, says nothing of his piety or fidelity. Those funeral commendations which are gathered out of the spoils of truth are not at all to the praise of those on whom they are bestowed, but very much the dispraise of those who unjustly misplace them. But he has this to say in honour of Saul himself,

First, That he was anointed with oil (2Sa 1:21), the sacred oil, which signified his elevation to, and qualification for, the government. Whatever he was otherwise, the crown of the anointing oil of his God was upon him, as is said of the high priest (Le 21:12), and on that account he was to be honoured, because God, the fountain of honour, had honoured him.

Secondly, That he was a man of war, a mighty man (2Sa 1:19-21), that he had often been victorious over the enemies of Israel and vexed them whithersoever he turned, 1Sa 14:47.His sword returned not empty, but satiated with blood and spoil, 2Sa 1:22. His disgrace and fall at last must not make his former successes and services to be forgotten. Though his sun set under a cloud, time was when it shone brightly.

Thirdly, That take him with Jonathan he was a man of a very agreeable temper, that recommended himself to the affections of his subjects (2Sa 1:23): Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant. Jonathan was always so, and Saul was so as long as

he concurred with him. Take them together, and in the pursuit of the enemy, never were men more bold, more brave; they were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions. Observe, Those that were most fierce and fiery in the camp were no less sweet and lovely in the court, as amiable to the subject as they were formidable to the foe; a rare combination of softness and sharpness they had, which makes any man's temper very happy.

It may be understood of the harmony and affection that for the most part subsisted between Saul and Jonathan: they were lovely and pleasant one to another, Jonathan a dutiful son, Saul an affectionate father; and therefore dear to each other in their lives, and in their death they were not divided, but kept close together in the stand they made against the Philistines, and fell together in the same cause. Fourthly, That he had enriched his country with the spoils of conquered nations, and introduced a more splendid attire. When they had a king like the nations, they must have clothes like the nations; and herein he was, in a particular manner, obliging to his female subjects, 2Sa 1:24. The daughters of Israel he clothed in scarlet, which was their delight.

(2.) He was very grateful to Jonathan, his sworn friend. Besides the tears he shed over him, and the encomiums he gives of him in common with Saul, he mentions him with some marks of distinction (2Sa 1:25): O Jonathan! thou wast slain in thy high places! which (compared with 2Sa 1:19) intimates that he meant him by the beauty of Israel, which, he there says, was slain upon the high places. He laments Jonathan as his particular friend (2Sa 1:26): My brother, Jonathan; not so much because of what he would have been to him if he had lived, very serviceable no doubt in his advancement to the throne and instrumental to prevent those long struggles which, for want of his assistance, he had with the house of Saul (had this been the only ground of his grief it

would have been selfish), but he lamented him for what he had been: "Very pleasant hast thou been unto me; but that pleasantness is now over, and I am distressed for thee." He had reason to say that Jonathan's love to him was wonderful; surely never was the like, for a man to love one who he knew was to take the crown over his head, and to be so faithful to his rival: this far surpassed the highest degree of conjugal affection and constancy. See here,

[1.] That nothing is more delightful in this world than a true friend, that is wise and good, that kindly receives and returns our affection, and is faithful to us in all our true interests.

[2.] That nothing is more distressful than the loss of such a friend; it is parting with a piece of one's self. It is the vanity of this world that what is most pleasant to us we are most liable to be distressed in. The more we love the more we grieve.

(3.) He was deeply concerned for the honour of God; for this is what he has an eye to when he fears lest the daughters of the uncircumcised, that are out of covenant with God, should triumph over Israel, and the God of Israel, 2Sa 1:20. Good men are touched in a very sensible part by the reproaches of those that reproach God.

(4.) He was deeply concerned for the public welfare. It was the beauty of Israel that was slain (2Sa 1:19) and the honour of the public that was disgraced: The mighty have fallen (this is three times lamented, (2Sa 1:19,25,27), and so the strength of the people is weakened. Public losses are most laid to heart by men of public spirit. David hoped God would make him instrumental to repair those losses and yet laments them.

2. A man of a fine imagination, as well as a wise and holy man. The expressions are all excellent, and calculated to work upon the passions.

(1.) The embargo he would fain lay upon Fame is elegant (2Sa 1:20): Tell it not in Gath. It grieved him to the heart to think that it would be proclaimed in the cities of the Philistines, and that they would insult over Israel upon it, and the more in remembrance of the triumphs of Israel over them formerly, when they sang, Saul has slain his thousands; for this would now be retorted.

(2.) The curse he entails on the mountains of Gilboa, the theatre on which this tragedy was acted: Let there be no dew upon you, nor fields of offerings, 2Sa 1:21. This is a poetical strain, like that of Job, Let the day perish wherein I was born. Not as if David wished that any part of the land of Israel might be barren, but, to express his sorrow for the thing, he speaks with a seeming indignation at the place. Observe,

[1.] How the fruitfulness of the earth depends upon heaven. The worst thing he could wish to the mountains of Gilboa was barrenness and unprofitableness to man: those are miserable that are useless. It was the curse Christ pronounced on the fig-tree, Never fruit grow on thee more, and that took effect--the fig-tree withered away: this, on the mountains of Gilboa, did not. But, when he wished them barren, he wished there might be no rain upon them; and, if the heavens be brass, the earth will soon be iron.

[2.] How the fruitfulness of the earth must therefore be devoted to heaven, which is intimated in his calling the fruitful fields fields of offerings. Those fruits of their land that were offered to God were the crown and glory of it: and therefore the failure of the offerings is the saddest consequent of the failure of the corn.

See Joe 1:9. To want that wherewith we should honour God is worse than to want that wherewith we should sustain ourselves. This is the reproach David fastens upon the mountains of Gilboa, which, having been stained with royal blood, thereby forfeited celestial dews. In this elegy Saul had a more honourable interment than that which the men of Jabesh-Gilead gave him.

23 Saul and Jonathan *were* lovely and pleasant in their lives,
and in their death they were not divided:
they were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions.
24 Ye daughters of Israel,
weep over Saul,
who clothed you in scarlet, with *other* delights;
who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
25 How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
O Jonathan, *thou wast* slain in thine high places.
26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
thy love to me was wonderful,
passing the love of women.
27 How are the mighty fallen,
and the weapons of war perished!

2 Samuel-2

David Made King over Judah

1 And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron.

When Saul and Jonathan were dead, though David knew himself anointed to be king, and now saw his way very clear, yet he did not immediately send messengers through all the

coasts of Israel to summon all people to come in and swear allegiance to him, upon pain of death, but proceeded leisurely; for he that believeth doth not make haste, but waits God's time for the accomplishment of God's promises. Many had come in to his assistance from several tribes while he continued at Ziklag, as we find (1Ch 12:1-22), and with such a force he might have come in by conquest. But he that will rule with meekness will not rise with violence. Observe here,

I The direction he sought and had from God in this critical juncture, 2Sa 2:1. He doubted not of success, yet he used proper means, both divine and human. Assurance of hope in God's promise will be so far from slackening that it will quicken pious endeavours. If I be elected to the crown of life, it does not follow, Then I will do nothing; but, Then I will do all that he directs me, and follow the guidance of him who chose me. This good use David made of his election, and so will all whom God has chosen.

1. David, according to the precept, acknowledged God in his way. He enquired of the Lord by the breast-plate of judgment, which Abiathar brought to him. We must apply to God not only when we are in distress, but even when the world smiles upon us and second causes work in favour of us. His enquiry was, Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah? Shall I stir hence? Though Ziklag be in ruins, he will not quit it without direction from God. "If I stir hence, Shall I go to one of the cities of Judah?" not limiting God to them (if God should so direct him, he would go to any of the cities of Israel), but thus expressing his prudence (in the cities of Judah he would find most friends), and his modesty--he would look no further at present than his own tribe. In all our motions and removals it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may, if by faith and prayer we set him before us.

2. God, according to the promise, directed his path, bade him go up, told him whither, unto Hebron, a priest's city, one of the cities of refuge, so it was to David, and an intimation that God himself would be to him a little sanctuary. The sepulchres of the patriarchs, adjoining to Hebron, would remind him of the ancient promise, on which God had caused him to hope. God sent him not to Bethlehem, his own city, because that was little among the thousands of Judah (Mic 5:2), but to Hebron, a more considerable place, and which perhaps was then as the county-town of that tribe.

II The care he took of his family and friends in his removal to Hebron.

1. He took his wives with him (2Sa 2:2), that, as they had been companions with him in tribulation, they might be so in the kingdom. It does not appear that as yet he had any children; his first was born in Hebron, 2Sa 3:2.

2. He took his friends and followers with him, 2Sa 2:3. They had accompanied him in his wanderings, and therefore, when he gained a settlement, they settled with him. Thus, if we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him, 2Ti 2:12. Nay, Christ does more for his good soldiers than David could do for his; David found lodging for them--They dwelt in the cities of Hebron, and adjacent towns; but to those who continue with Christ in his temptations he appoints a kingdom, and will feast them at his own table, Lu 22:29,30.

III. The honour done him by the men of Judah: They anointed him king over the house of Judah, 2Sa 2:4. The tribe of Judah had often stood by itself more than any other of the tribes. In Saul's time it was numbered by itself as a distinct body (1Sa 15:4) and those of this tribe had been accustomed to act separately.

They did so now; yet they did it for themselves only; they did not pretend to anoint him king over all Israel (as Jdg 9:22), but only over the house of Judah. The rest of the tribes might do as they pleased, but, as for them and their house, they would be ruled by him whom God had chosen. See how David rose gradually; he was first anointed king in reversion, then in possession of one tribe only, and at last of all the tribes.

Thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is set up by degrees; he is Lord of all by divine designation, but we see not yet all things put under him, Heb 2:8. David's reigning at first over the house of Judah only was a tacit intimation of Providence that his kingdom would in a short time be reduced to that again, as it was when the ten tribes revolted from his grandson; and it would be an encouragement to the godly kings of Judah that David himself at first reigned over Judah only.

IV. The respectful message he sent to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, to return them thanks for their kindness to Saul. Still he studies to honour the memory of his predecessor, and thereby to show that he was far from aiming at the crown from any principle of ambition or enmity to Saul, but purely because he was called of God to it. It was told him that the men of Jabesh-Gilead buried Saul, perhaps by some that thought he would be displeased at them as over-officious. But he was far from that.

1. He commends them for it, 2Sa 2:5. According as our obligations were to love and honour any while they lived, we ought to show respect to their remains (that is, their bodies, names, and families) when they are dead. "Saul was your lord," says David, "and therefore you did well to show him this kindness and do him this honour."

2. He prays to God to bless them for it, and to recompense it to them: Blessed are you, and blessed may you be of the Lord, who will deal kindly with those in a particular manner that dealt kindly with the dead, as it is in Ru 1:8. Due respect and affection shown to the bodies, names, and families of those that are dead, in conscience towards God, is a piece of charity which shall in no wise lose its reward: The Lord show kindness and truth to you (2Sa 2:6), that is, kindness according to the promise. What kindness God shows is in truth, what one may trust to.

3. He promises to make them amends for it: I also will requite you. He does not turn them over to God for a recompence that he may excuse himself from rewarding them. Good wishes are good things, and instances of gratitude, but they are too cheap to be rested in where there is an ability to do more.

4. He prudently takes this opportunity to gain them to his interest, 2Sa 2:7. They had paid their last respects to Saul, and he would have them to be the last: "The house of Judah have anointed me king, and it will be your wisdom to concur with them and in that to be valiant." We must not so dote on the dead, how much soever we have valued them, as to neglect or despise the blessings we have in those that survive, whom God has raised up to us in their stead.

2 So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the
Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite.
3 And his men that *were* with him did David bring up, every man
with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.
4 And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king
over the house of Judah.
And they told David, saying, *That* the men of Jabesh-gilead *were*
they that buried Saul.
5 And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said
unto them, Blessed *be* ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this
kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

6 And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.
7 Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

David Fights against the Forces of Saul

8 But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;
9 and made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel.
10 Ish-bosheth Saul's son *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David.
11 And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah was seven years and six months.
12 And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon.

Here is, I. A rivalship between two kings--David, whom God made king, and Ishbosheth, whom Abner made king. One would have thought, when Saul was slain, and all his sons that had sense and spirit enough to take the field with him, David would come to the throne without any opposition, since all Israel knew, not only how he had signalized himself, but how manifestly God had designated him to it; but such a spirit of contradiction is there, in the devices of men, to the counsels of God, that such a weak and silly thing as Ishbosheth, who was not thought fit to go with his father to the battle, shall yet be thought fit to succeed him in the government, rather than David shall come peaceably to it. Herein David's kingdom was typical of the Messiah's, against which the heathens rage and the rulers take counsel, Ps 2:1,2.

1. Abner was the person who set up Ishbosheth in competition with David, perhaps in his zeal for the lineal succession (since they must have a king like the nations, in this they must be like them, that the crown must descend from father to son), or rather in his affection to his own family and relations (for he was Saul's uncle), and because he had no other way to secure to himself the post of honour he was in, as captain of the host. See how much mischief the pride and ambition of one man may be the occasion of. Ishbosheth would never have set up himself if Abner had not set him up, and made a tool of him to serve his own purposes.

2. Mahanaim, the place where he first made his claim, was on the other side Jordan, where it was thought David had the least interest, and being at a distance from his forces they might have time to strengthen themselves. But having set up his standard there, the unthinking people of all the tribes of Israel (that is, the generality of them) submitted to him (2Sa 2:9), and Judah only was entirely for David. This was a further trial of the faith of David in the promise of God, and of his patience, whether he could wait God's time for the performance of that promise.

3. Some difficulty there is about the time of the continuance of this competition. David reigned about seven years over Judah only (2Sa 2:11), and yet (2Sa 2:10) Ishbosheth reigned over Israel but two years: before those two years, or after, or both, it was in general for the house of Saul (2Sa 3:6), and not any particular person of that house, that Abner declared. Or these two years he reigned before the war broke out (2Sa 2:12), which continued long, even the remaining five years, 2Sa 3:1.

II. An encounter between their two armies.

1. It does not appear that either side brought their whole force into the field, for the slaughter was but small, 2Sa 2:30. We may wonder,

(1.) That the men of Judah did not appear and act more vigorously for David, to reduce all the nation into obedience to him; but, it is likely, David would not suffer them to act offensively, choosing rather to wait till the thing would do itself or rather till God would do it for him, without the effusion of Israelitish blood; for to him, as a type of Christ, that was very precious, Ps 72:14. Even those that were his adversaries he looked upon as his subjects, and would treat them accordingly.

(2.) That the men of Israel could in a manner stand neuter, and sit down tamely under Ishbosheth, for so many years, especially considering what characters many of the tribes displayed at this time (as we find, 1Ch 12:23, &c.): Wise men, mighty men, men of valour, expert in war, and not of double heart, and yet for seven years together, for aught that appears, most of them seemed indifferent in whose hand the public administration was. Divine Providence serves its own purposes by the stupidity of men at some times and the activity of the same persons at other times; they are unlike themselves, and yet the motions of Providence are uniform.

2. In this battle Abner was the aggressor. David sat still to see how the matter would fall, but the house of Saul, and Abner at the head of it, gave the challenge, and they went by the worst. Therefore go not forth hastily to strive, nor be forward to begin quarrels, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, Pr 25:8. A fool's lips and hands enter into contention.

3. The seat of the war was Gibeon. Abner chose it because it was in the lot of Benjamin, where Saul had the most friends; yet, since he offered battle, Joab, David's general, would not

decline it, but there joined issue with him, and met him by the pool of Gibeon, 2Sa 2:13. David's cause, being built upon God's promise, feared not the disadvantages of the ground. The pool between them gave both sides time to deliberate.

4. The engagement was at first proposed by Abner, and accepted by Joab, to be between twelve and twelve of a side.

(1.) It should seem this trial of skill began in sport. Abner made the motion (2Sa 2:14): Let the young men arise and play before us, as gladiators. Perhaps Saul had used his men to these barbarous pastimes, like a tyrant indeed, and Abner had learnt of him to make a jest of wounds and death and divert himself with the scenes of blood and horror. He meant, "Let them fight before us," when he said, "Let them play before us." Fools thus make a mock at sin. but he is unworthy the name of a man that can be thus prodigal of human blood, that can thus throw about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, Am not I in sport? Pr 26:18,19.

Joab, having been bred up under David, had so much wisdom as not to make such a proposal, yet had not resolution enough to resist and gainsay it when another made it; for he stood upon a point of honour, and thought it a blemish to his reputation to refuse a challenge, and therefore said, Let them arise; not that he was fond of the sport, or expected that the duels would be decisive, but he would not be hectored by his antagonist. How many precious lives have thus been sacrificed to the caprices of proud men! Twelve of each side were accordingly called out as champions to enter the lists, a double jury of life and death, not of others', but their own; and the champions on Abner's side seem to have been most forward, for they took the field first (2Sa 2:15), having perhaps been bred up in a foolish ambition thus to serve the humour of their commander-in-chief. But,

(2.) However it began, it ended in blood (2Sa 2:16): They thrust every man his sword into his fellow's side (spurred on by honour, not by enmity); so they fell down together, that is, all the twenty-four were slain, such an equal match were they for one another, and so resolute, that neither side would either beg or give quarter; they did as it were by agreement (says Josephus) dispatch one another with mutual wounds. Those that strike at other men's lives often throw away their own and death only conquers and rides in triumph.

The wonderful obstinacy of both sides was remembered in the name given to the place: Helkath-hazzurim--the field of rocky men, men that were not only strong in body, but of firm and unshaken constancy, that stirred not at the sight of death. Yet the stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep, Ps 76:5. Poor honour for men to purchase at so vast an expense! Those that lose their lives for Christ shall find them.

5. The whole army at length engaged, and Abner's forces were routed, 2Sa 2:17. The former was a drawn battle, in which all were killed on both sides, and therefore they must put it upon another trial, in which (as it often happens) those that gave the challenge went away with loss. David had God on his side; his side therefore was victorious.

13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

14 And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise.

15 Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which *pertained* to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David.

16 And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and *thrust* his sword in his fellow’s side; so they fell down together: wherefore

that place was called Helkath-hazzurim [the field of strong men],
which *is* in Gibeon.
17 And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten,
and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.
18 And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai,
and Asahel: and Asahel *was as* light of foot as a wild roe.
19 And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the
right hand nor to the left from following Abner.
20 Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art* thou Asahel? And he
answered, I *am*.
21 And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy
left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his
armor. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.
22 And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following
me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should
I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

We have here the contest between Abner and Asahel. Asahel, the brother of Joab and cousin-german to David, was one of the principal commanders of David's forces, and was famous for swiftness in running: he was as light of foot as a wild roe (2Sa 2:18); this he got the name of by swift pursuing, not swift flying. Yet, we may suppose, he was not comparable to Abner as a skilful experienced soldier; we must therefore observe,

I. How rash he was in aiming to make Abner his prisoner. He pursued after him, and no other, 2Sa 2:19. Proud of his relation to David and Joab, his own swiftness, and the success of his party, no less a trophy of victory would now serve the young warrior than Abner himself, either slain or bound, which he thought would put an end to the war and effectually open David's way to the throne. This made him very eager in the pursuit, and careless of the opportunities he had of seizing others in his way, on his right hand and on his left; his eye was on Abner only. The design was brave, had he been par negotio--equal to its accomplishment: but let not the swift man glory in his swiftness, any more than the strong man in

his strength; magnis excidit ausis--he perished in an attempt too vast for him.

II. How generous Abner was in giving him notice of the danger he exposed himself to, and advising him not to meddle to his own hurt, 2Ch 25:19.

1. He bade him content himself with a less prey (2Sa 2:21): "Lay hold of one of the young men, plunder him and make him thy prisoner, meddle with thy match, but pretend not to one who is so much superior to thee." It is wisdom in all contests to compare our own strength with that of our adversaries, and to take heed of being partial to ourselves in making the comparison, lest we prove in the issue enemies to ourselves, Lu 14:31.

2. He begged of him not to put him upon the necessity of slaying him in his own defence, which he was very loth to do, but must do rather than be slain by him, 2Sa 2:22. Abner, it seems, either loved Joab or feared him; for he was very loth to incur his displeasure, which he would certainly do if he slew Asahel. It is commendable for enemies to be thus respectful one to another. Abner's care how he should lift up his face to Joab gives cause to suspect that he really believed David would have the kingdom at last, according to the divine designation, and then, in opposing him, he acted against his conscience.

III. How fatal Asahel's rashness was to him. He refused to turn aside, thinking that Abner spoke so courteously because he feared him; but what came of it? Abner, as soon as he came up to him, gave him his death's wound with a back stroke (2Sa 2:23): He smote him with the hinder end of his spear, from which he feared no danger. This was a pass which Asahel was not acquainted with, nor had learned to stand upon his guard against; but Abner, perhaps, had formerly used it, and done

execution with it; and here it did effectual execution. Asahel died immediately of the wound. See here,

1. How death often comes upon us by ways that we least suspect. Who would fear the hand of a flying enemy or the butt-end of a spear? yet from these Asahel receives his death's wound.

2. How we are often betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of. Asahel's swiftness, which he presumed so much upon, did him no kindness, but forwarded his fate, and with it he ran upon his death, instead of running from it. Asahel's fall was not only Abner's security from him, but put a full stop to the conqueror's pursuit and gave Abner time to rally again; for all that came to the place stood still, only Joab and Abishai, instead of being disheartened, were exasperated by it, pursued Abner with so much the more fury (2Sa 2:24), and overtook him at last about sunset, when the approaching night would oblige them to retire.

23 Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth *rib,* that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

24 Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that *lieth* before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

25 And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of a hill.

Here, I. Abner, being conquered, meanly begs for a cessation of arms. He rallied the remains of his forces on the top of a hill (2Sa 2:25), as if he would have made head again, but becomes a humble supplicant to Joab for a little breathing-time, 2Sa 2:26. He that was most forward to fight was the first that had enough of it. He that made a jest of bloodshed (Let the young men arise and play before us, 2Sa 2:14) is now

shocked at it, when he finds himself on the losing side, and the sword he made so light of drawing threatening to touch himself. Observe how his note is changed. Then it was but playing with the sword; now, Shall the sword devour for ever? It had devoured but one day, yet to him it seemed forever, because it went against him; and very willing he is now that the sun should not go down upon the wrath.

Now he can appeal to Joab himself concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war: Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? It will be reflected upon with regret when the account comes to be made up; for, whoever gets in a civil war, the community is sure to lose. Perhaps he refers to the bitterness that there was in the tribes of Israel, in the end of their war with Benjamin, when they wept sorely for the desolations which they themselves had made, Jdg 21:2. Now he begs of Joab to sound a retreat, and pleads that they were brethren, who ought not thus to bite and devour one another. He that in the morning would have Joab bid the people fall upon their brethren now would have him bid them lay down their arms. See here,

1. How easy it is for men to use reason when it makes for them who would not use it if it made against them. If Abner had been the conqueror, we should not have had him complaining of the voraciousness of the sword and the miseries of a civil war, nor pleading that both sides were brethren; but, finding himself beaten, all these reasonings are mustered up and improved for the securing of his retreat and the saving of his scattered troops from being cut off.

2. How the issue of things alters men's minds. The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning at night looked dismal. Those that are forward to enter into contention will perhaps repent it before they have done with it, and therefore had better leave it off before it be meddled with, as Solomon

advises. It is true of every sin (O that men would consider it in time!) that it will be bitterness in the latter end. At the last it bites like a serpent those on whom it fawned.

II. Joab, though a conqueror, generously grants it, and sounds a retreat, knowing very well his master's mind and how averse he was to the shedding of blood. He does indeed justly upbraid Abner with his forwardness to engage, and lays the blame upon him that there had been so much bloodshed as there was (2Sa 2:27): "Unless thou hadst spoken," that is, "hadst given orders to fight, hadst bidden the young men arise and play before us, none of us would have struck a stroke, nor drawn a sword against our brethren. Thou complainest that the sword devours, but who first unsheathed it? Who began? Now thou wouldst have the people parted, but remember who set them on to fight. We should have retired in the morning if thou hadst not given the challenge." Those that are forward to make mischief are commonly the first to complain of it.

This might have served to excuse Joab if he had pushed on his victory, and made a full end of Abner's forces; but like one that pitied the mistake of his adversaries, and scorned to make an army of Israelites pay dearly for the folly of their commander, he very honourably, by sound of trumpet, put a stop to the pursuit (2Sa 2:28) and suffered Abner to make an orderly retreat. It is good husbandry to be sparing of blood. As the soldiers were here very obsequious to the general's orders, so he, no doubt, observed the instructions of his prince, who sought the welfare of all Israel and therefore not the hurt of any.

III. The armies being separated, both retired to the places whence they came, and both marched in the night, Abner to Mahanaim, on the other side Jordan (2Sa 2:29), and Joab to Hebron, where David was, 2Sa 2:32. The slain on both sides are computed. On David's side only nineteen men were

missing, besides Asahel (2Sa 2:30), who was worth more than all; on Abner's side 360, 2Sa 2:31.

In civil wars formerly great slaughters had been made (as Jdg 12:6,20,44), in comparison with which this was nothing. It is to be hoped that they had grown wiser and more moderate. Asahel's funeral is here mentioned; the rest they buried in the field of battle, but he was carried to Bethlehem, and buried in the sepulchre of his father, 2Sa 2:32. Thus are distinctions made between the dust of some and that of others; but in the resurrection no other difference will be made but that between godly and ungodly, which will remain for ever.

26 Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?

27 And Joab said, *As* God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother.

28 So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more.

29 And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim.

30 And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men and Asahel.

31 But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner's men, *so that* three hundred and threescore men died.

32 And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which *was in* Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

2 Samuel-3

1 Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.

David’s Sons Born at Hebron

2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;

Here is, I The struggle that David had with the house of Saul before his settlement in the throne was completed, 2Sa 3:1.

1. Both sides contested. Saul's house, though beheaded and diminished, would not fall tamely. It is not strange between them, but one would wonder it should be a long war, when David's house had right on its side, and therefore God on its side; but, though truth and equity will triumph at last, God made for wise and holy ends prolonged the conflict. The length of this war tried the faith and patience of David, and made his establishment at last the more welcome to him.

2. David's side got ground. The house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker, lost places, lost men, sunk in its reputation, grew less considerable, and was foiled in every engagement. But the house of David grew stronger and stronger. Many deserted the declining cause of Saul's house, and prudently came into David's interest, being convinced that he would certainly win the day. The contest between grace and corruption in the hearts of believers, who are sanctified but in part, may fitly be compared to this recorded here.

There is a long war between them, the flesh lusted against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; but, as the work of sanctification is carried on, corruption, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; while grace, like the house of

David, grows stronger and stronger, till it come to a perfect man, and judgment be brought forth unto victory.

II The increase of his own house. Here is an account of six sons he had by six several wives, in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. Perhaps this is here mentioned as that which strengthened David's interest. Every child, whose welfare was embarked in the common safety, was a fresh security given to the commonwealth for his care of it. He that has his quiver filled with these arrows shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps 127:5. As the death of Saul's sons weakened his interest, so the birth of David's strengthened his.

1. It was David's fault thus to multiply wives, contrary to the law (De 17:17), and it was a bad example to his successors.

2. It does not appear that in these seven years he had above one son by each of these wives; some have had as numerous a progeny, and with much more honour and comfort, by one wife.

3. We read not that any of these sons came to be famous (three of them were infamous, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah); we have therefore reason to rejoice with trembling in the building up of our families.

4. His son by Abigail is called Chileab (2Sa 3:3), whereas (1Ch 3:1) he is called Daniel. Bishop Patrick mentions the reason which the Hebrew doctors give for these names, that his first name was Daniel--God has judged me (namely, against Nabal), but David's enemies reproached him, and said, "It is Nabal's son, and not David's," to confute which calumny Providence so ordered it that, as he grew up, he became, in his countenance and features, extremely like David, and resembled him more than any of his children, upon which he

gave him the name of Chileab, which signifies, like his father, or the father's picture.

5. Absalom's mother is said to be the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, a heathen prince. Perhaps David thereby hoped to strengthen his interest, but the issue of the marriage was one that proved his grief and shame.

6. The last is called David's wife, which therefore, some think, was Michal, his first and most rightful wife, called here by another name; and, though she had no child after she mocked David, she might have had before.

Thus was David's house strengthened; but it was Abner that made himself strong for the house of Saul, which is mentioned (2Sa 3:6) to show that, if he failed them, they would fall of course.

3 and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite;
and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai
king of Geshur;
4 and the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth,
Shephatiah the son of Abital;
5 and the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to
David in Hebron.

Abner Plans a League with David

6 And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of
Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for
the house of Saul.
7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name *was* Rizpah, the daughter
of Aiah: and *Ish-bosheth* said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in
unto my father's concubine?
8 Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said,
Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do show kindness this day
unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his

friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that
thou chargest me today with a fault concerning this woman?
9 So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the Lord hath
sworn to David, even so I do to him;
10 to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the
throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-
sheba.
11 And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared
him.

Here, I. Abner breaks with Ish-bosheth, and deserts his interest, upon a little provocation which Ish-bosheth unadvisedly gave him. God can serve his own purposes by the sins and follies of men.

1. Ish-bosheth accused Abner of no less a crime than debauching one of his father's concubines, 2Sa 3:7. Whether it was so or no does not appear, nor what ground he had for the suspicion: but, however it was, it would have been Ish-bosheth's prudence to be silent, considering how much it was his interest not to disoblige Abner. If the thing was false, and his jealousy groundless, it was very disingenuous and ungrateful to entertain unjust surmises of one who had ventured his all for him, and was certainly the best friend he had in the world.

2. Abner resented the charge very strongly. Whether he was guilty of the fault concerning this woman or no he does not say (2Sa 3:8), but we suspect he was guilty, for he does not expressly deny it; and, though he was, he lets Ish-bosheth know,

(1.) That he scorned to be reproached with it by him, and would not take reproof at his hands. "What!" says Abner, "Am I a dog's head, a vile and contemptible animal, that thou exposest me thus? 2Sa 3:8. Is this my recompence for the kindness I have shown to thee and thy father's house, and the

good services I have done you?" He magnifies the service with this, that it was against Judah, the tribe on which the crown was settled, and which would certainly have it at last, so that, in supporting the house of Saul, he acted both against his conscience and against his interest, for which he deserved a better requital than this: and yet, perhaps, he would not have been so zealous for the house of Saul if he had not thereby gratified his own ambition and hoped to find his own account in it. Note, Proud men will not bear to be reproved, especially by those whom they think they have obliged.

(2.) That he would certainly be revenged on him, 2Sa 3:9,10. With the utmost degree of arrogance and insolence he lets him know that, as he had raised him up, so he could pull him down again and would do it. He knew that God had sworn to David to give him the kingdom, and yet opposed it with all his might from a principle of ambition; but now he complies with it from a principle of revenge, under colour of some regard to the will of God, which was but a pretence. Those that are slaves to their lusts have many masters, which drive, some one way and some another, and, according as they make head, men are violently hurried into self-contradictions. Abner's ambition made him zealous for Ish-bosheth, and now his revenge made him as zealous for David. If he had sincerely regarded God's promise to David, and acted with an eye to that, he would have been steady and uniform in his counsels, and acted in consistency with himself.

But, while Abner serves his own lusts, God by him serves his own purposes, makes even his wrath and revenge to praise him, and ordains strength to David by it. Lastly, See how Ish-bosheth was thunder-struck by Abner's insolence: He could not answer him again, 2Sa 3:11. If Ish-bosheth had had the spirit of a man, especially of a prince, he might have answered him that his merits were the aggravation of his crimes, that he would not be served by so base a man, and doubted not but to

do well enough without him. But he was conscious to himself of his own weakness, and therefore said not a word, lest he should make bad worse. His heart failed him, and he now became, as David had foretold concerning his enemies, like a bowing wall and a tottering fence, Ps 62:3.

II. Abner treats with David. We must suppose that he began to grow weary of Ish-bosheth's cause, and sought an opportunity to desert it, or else, however he might threaten Ish-bosheth with it, for the quashing of the charge against himself, he would not have made good his angry words so soon as he did, 2Sa 3:12. He sent messengers to David, to tell him that he was at his service. "Whose is the land? Is it not thine? For thou hast the best title to the government and the best interest in the people's affections." Note, God can find out ways to make those serviceable to the kingdom of Christ who yet have no sincere affection for it and who have vigorously set themselves against it. Enemies are sometimes made a footstool, not only to be trodden upon, but to ascend by. The earth helped the woman.

III. David enters into a treaty with Abner, but upon condition that he shall procure him the restitution of Michal his wife, 2Sa 3:13. Hereby,

1. David showed the sincerity of his conjugal affection to his first and most rightful wife; neither her marrying another, nor his, had alienated him from her. Many waters could not quench that love.

2. He testified his respect to the house of Saul. So far was he from trampling upon it, now that it was fallen, that even in his elevation he valued himself not a little on his relation to it. He cannot be pleased with the honours of the throne unless he have Michal, Saul's daughter, to share with him in them, so

far is he from bearing any malice to the family of his enemy. Abner sent him word that he must apply to Ish-bosheth, which he did (2Sa 3:14), pleading that he had purchased her at a dear rate, and she was wrongfully taken from him. Ish-bosheth durst not deny his demand, now that he had not Abner to stand by him, but took her from Phaltiel, to whom Saul had married her (2Sa 3:15), and Abner conducted her to David, not doubting but that then he should be doubly welcome when he brought him a wife in one hand and a crown in the other.

Her latter husband was loth to part with her, and followed her weeping (2Sa 3:16), but there was no remedy: he must thank himself; for when he took her he knew that another had a right to her. Usurpers must expect to resign. Let no man therefore set his heart on that to which he is not entitled. If any disagreement has separated husband and wife, as they expect the blessing of God let them be reconciled, and come together again; let all former quarrels be forgotten, and let them live together in love, according to God's holy ordinance.

IV. Abner uses his interest with the elders of Israel to bring them over to David, knowing that whichever way they went the common people would follow of course. Now that it serves his own turn he can plead in David's behalf that he was, 1. Israel's choice (2Sa 3:17): "You sought for him in times past to be king over you, when he had signalized himself in so many engagements with the Philistines and done you so much good service; no man can pretend to greater personal merit than David nor to less than Ish-bosheth. You have tried them both, Detur digniori--Give the crown to him that best deserves it. Let David be your king."

2. God's choice (2Sa 3:18): "The Lord hath spoken of David. Compare 2Sa 3:9. When God appointed Samuel to anoint him he did, in effect, promise that by his hand he would save

Israel; for for that end he was made king. God having promised, by David's hand, to save Israel, it is both your duty, in compliance with God's will, and your interest, in order to your victories over your enemies, to submit to him; and it is the greatest folly in the world to oppose him."

Who would have expected such reasonings as these out of Abner's mouth? But thus God will make the enemies of his people to know and own that he has loved them, Re 3:9. He particularly applied to the men of Benjamin, those of his own tribe, on whom he had the greatest influence, and whom he had drawn in to appear for the house of Saul. He was the man that had deceived them, and therefore he was concerned to undeceive them. Thus the multitude are as they are managed.

V. David concludes the treaty with Abner; and he did wisely and well therein; for, whatever induced Abner to it, it was a good work to put an end to the war, and to settle the Lord's anointed on the throne; and it was as lawful for David to make use of his agency as it is for a poor man to receive alms from a Pharisee, who gives it in pride and hypocrisy. Abner reported to David the sense of the people and the success of his communications with them, 2Sa 3:19. He came now, not as at first privately, but with a retinue of twenty men, and David entertained them with a feast (2Sa 3:20) in token of reconciliation and joy and as a pledge of the agreement between them: it was a feast upon a covenant, like that, Ge 26:30. If thy enemy hunger, feed him; but, if he submit, feast him.

Abner, pleased with his entertainment, the prevention of his fall with Saul's house (which would have been inevitable if he had not taken this course), and much more with the prospect he had of preferment under David, undertakes in a little time to perfect the revolution, and to bring all Israel into obedience to David, 2Sa 3:21. He tells David he shall reign over all that

his heart desired. He knew David's elevation took rise from God's appointment, yet he insinuates that it sprang from his own ambition and desire of rule; thus (as bad men often do) he measured that good man by himself. However, David and he parted very good friends, and the affair between them was well settled. Thus it behoves all who fear God and keep his commandments to avoid strife, even with the wicked, to live at peace with all men, and to show the world that they are children of the light.

12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose *is* the land? saying *also,* Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand *shall be* with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee.

13 And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

14 And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver *me* my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

15 And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from *her* husband, *even* from Phaltiel the son of Laish.

16 And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

17 And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past *to be* king over you:

18 now then do *it:* for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.

19 And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin.

20 So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him. And David made Abner and the men that *were* with him a feast.

21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with

thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Joab Kills Abner

22 And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from *pursuing* a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but Abner *was* not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.

23 When Joab and all the host that *was* with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace.

24 Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why *is* it *that* thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone?

We have here an account of the murder of Abner by Joab, and David's deep resentment of it.

I. Joab very insolently fell foul upon David for treating with Abner. He happened to be abroad upon service when Abner was with David, pursuing a troop, either of Philistines or of Saul's party; but, upon his return, he was informed that Abner was just gone (2Sa 3:22,23), and that a great many kind things had passed between David and him. He had all the reason in the world to be satisfied of David's prudence and to acquiesce in the measures he took, knowing him to be a wise and good man himself and under a divine conduct in all his affairs; and yet, as if he had the same sway in David's cause that Abner had in Ish-bosheth's, he chides David, and reproaches him to his face as impolitic (2Sa 3:24,25): What hast thou done? As if David were accountable to him for what he did: "Why hast thou sent him away, when thou mightest have made him a prisoner? He came as a spy, and will certainly betray thee." I know not whether to wonder more that Joab had impudence enough to give such an affront to his prince or that David had patience enough to take it. He does, in effect, call David a fool

when he tells him he knew Abner came to deceive him and yet he trusted him. We find no answer that David gave him, not because he feared him, as Ish-bosheth did Abner (2Sa 3:11), but because he despised him, or because Joab had not so much good manners as to stay for an answer.

II. He very treacherously sent for Abner back, and, under colour of a private conference with him, barbarously killed him with his own hand. That he made use of David's name, under pretence of giving him some further instructions, is intimated in that, but David knew it not, 2Sa 3:26. Abner, designing no harm, feared none, but very innocently returned to Hebron, and, when he found Joab waiting for him at the gate, turned aside with him to speak with him privately, forgetting what he himself had said when he slew Asahel, How shall I hold up my face to Joab thy brother? (2Sa 2:22), and there Joab murdered him (2Sa 3:27), and it is intimated (2Sa 3:30) that Abishai was privy to the design, and was aiding and abetting, and would have come in to his brother's assistance if there had been occasion; he is therefore charged as an accessary: Joab and Abishai slew Abner, though perhaps he only knew it who is privy to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts. Now in this,

1. It is certain that the Lord was righteous. Abner had maliciously, and against the convictions of his conscience, opposed David. He had now basely deserted Ish-bosheth, and betrayed him, under pretence of regard to God and Israel, but really from a principle of pride, and revenge, and impatience of control. God will not therefore use so bad a man, though David might, in so good a work as the uniting of Israel. Judgments are prepared for such scorners as Abner was. But,

2. It is as certain that Joab was unrighteous, and, in what he did, did wickedly. David was a man after God's own heart, but could not have those about him, no, not in places of the

greatest trust, after his own heart. Many a good prince, and a good master, has been forced to employ bad men.

(1.) Even the pretence for doing this was very unjust. Abner had indeed slain his brother Asahel, and Joab and Abishai pretended herein to be the avengers of his blood (2Sa 3:27,30); but Abner slew Asahel in an open war, wherein Abner indeed had given the challenge, but Joab himself had accepted it and had slain many of Abner's friends. He did it likewise in his own defence, and not till he had given him fair warning (which he would not take), and he did it with reluctancy; but Joab here shed the blood of war in peace, 1Ki 2:5.

(2.) That which we have reason to think was at the bottom of Joab's enmity to Abner made it much worse. Joab was now general of David's forces; but, if Abner should come into his interest, he would possibly be preferred before him, being a senior officer, and more experienced in the art of war. This Joab was jealous of, and could better bear the guilt of blood than the thoughts of a rival.

(3.) He did it treacherously, and under pretence of speaking peaceably to him, De 27:24. Had he challenged him, he would have done like a soldier; but to assassinate him was done villainously and like a coward. His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords, Ps 55:21. Thus he basely slew Amasa, 2Sa 20:9.

(4.) The doing of it was a great affront and injury to David, who was now in treaty with Abner, as Joab knew. Abner was now actually in his master's service, so that, through his side, he struck at David himself.

(5.) It was a great aggravation of the murder that he did it in the gate, openly and avowedly, as one that was not ashamed,

nor could blush. The gate was the place of judgment and the place of concourse, to that he did it in defiance of justice, both the just sentence of the magistrates and the just resentment of the crowd, as one that neither feared God nor regarded men, but thought himself above all control: and Hebron was a Levites' city and a city of refuge.

III. David laid deeply to heart and in many ways expressed his detestation of this execrable villany.

1. He washed his hands from the guilt of Abner's blood. Lest any should suspect that Joab had some secret intimation from David to do as he did (and the rather because he went so long unpunished), he here solemnly appeals to God concerning his innocency: I and my kingdom are guiltless (and my kingdom is so because I am so) before the Lord for ever, 2Sa 3:28. It is a comfort to be able to say, when any bad thing is done, that we had no hand in it. We have not shed this blood, De 21:7. However we may be censured or suspected, our hearts shall not reproach us.

2. He entailed the curse for it upon Joab and his family (2Sa 3:29): "Let it rest on the head of Joab. Let the blood cry against him, and let divine vengeance follow him. Let the iniquity be visited upon his children and children's children, in some hereditary disease or other. The longer the punishment is delayed, the longer let it last when it shall come. Let his posterity be stigmatized, blemished with an issue or a leprosy, which will shut them out from society; let them be beggars, or cripples, or come to some untimely end, that it may be said, He is one of Joab's race." This intimates that the guilt of blood brings a curse upon families; if men do not avenge it, God will, and will lay up the iniquity for the children. But methinks a resolute punishment of the murderer himself would better have become David than this passionate imprecation of God's judgments upon his posterity.

3. He called upon all about him, even Joab himself, to lament the death of Abner (2Sa 3:31): Rend your clothes and mourn before Abner, that is, before the hearse of Abner, as Abraham is said to mourn before his dead (Ge 23:2,3), and he gives a reason why they should attend his funeral with sincere and solemn mourning (2Sa 3:38), because there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel. His alliance to Saul, his place as general, his interest, and the great services he had formerly done, were enough to denominate him a prince and a great man. When he could not call him a saint or a good man, he said nothing of that, but what was true he gave him the praise of, though he had been his enemy, that he was a prince and a great man. "Such a man has fallen in Israel, and fallen this day, just when he was doing the best deed he ever did in his life, this day, when he was likely to be so serviceable to the public peace and welfare and could so ill be spared."

(1.) Let them all lament it. The humbling change death puts all men under is to be lamented, especially as affecting princes and great men. Alas! alas! (see Re 18:10) how mean, how little, are those made by death who made themselves the terror of the mighty in the land of the living! But we are especially obliged to lament the fall of useful men in the midst of their usefulness and when there is most need of them. A public loss must be every man's grief, for every man shares in it. Thus David took care that honour should be done to the memory of a man of merit, to animate others.

(2.) Let Joab, in a particular manner, lament it, which he has less heart but more reason to do than any of them. If he could be brought to do it sincerely, it would be an expression of repentance for his sin in slaying him. If he did it in show only, as it is likely he did, yet it was a sort of penance imposed upon him, and a present commutation of the punishment. If he do not as yet expiate the murder with his blood, let him do

something towards it with tears. This, perhaps, Joab submitted to with no great reluctancy, now he had gained his point. Now that he is on the bier, no matter in what pomp he lies. Sit divus, modo non sit vivus--Let him be canonized, so that he be but killed.

4. David himself followed the corpse as chief mourner, and made a funeral oration at the grave. He attended the bier (2Sa 3:31) and wept at the grave, 2Sa 3:32. Though Abner had been his enemy, and might possibly have proved no very firm friend, yet because he had been a man of bravery in the field, and might have done great service in the public counsels at this critical juncture, all former quarrels are forgotten and David is a true mourner for his fall. What he said over the grave fetched fresh floods of tears from the eyes of all that were present, when they thought they had already paid the debt in full (2Sa 3:33,34): Died Abner as a fool dieth?

(1.) He speaks as one vexed that Abner was fooled out of his life, that so great a man as he, so famed for conduct and courage, should be imposed upon by a colour of friendship, slain by surprise, and so die as a fool dies. The wisest and stoutest of men have no fence against treachery. To see Abner, who thought himself the main hinge on which the great affairs of Israel turned, so considerable as himself to be able to turn the scale of a trembling government, his head full of great projects and great prospects, to see him made a fool of by a base rival, and falling on a sudden a sacrifice to his ambition and jealousy--this stains the pride of all glory, and should put one out of conceit with worldly grandeur. Put not your trust in princes, Ps 146:3,4.

And let us therefore make that sure which we cannot be fooled out of. A man may have his life, and all that is dear to him, taken from him, and not be able to prevent it with all his wisdom, care, and integrity; but there is that which no thief

can break through to steal. See here how much more we are beholden to God's providence than to our own prudence for the continuance of our lives and comforts. Were it not for the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, how soon would the weak and innocent become an easy prey to the strong and merciless and the wisest die as fools! Or,

(2.) He speaks as one boasting that Abner did not fool himself out of his life: "Died Abner as a fool dies? No, he did not, not as a criminal, a traitor or felon, that forfeits his life into the hands of public justice; his hands were not pinioned, nor his feet fettered, as those of malefactors are: Abner falls not before just men, by a judicial sentence; but as a man, an innocent man, falleth before wicked men, thieves and robbers, so fellest thou." Died Abner as Nabal died? so the LXX. reads it. Nabal died as he lived, like himself, like a sot; but Abner's fate was such as might have been the fate of the wisest and best man in the world. Abner did not throw away his life as Asahel did, who wilfully ran upon the spear, after fair warning, but he was struck by surprise. Note, It is a sad thing to die like a fool, as those do that in any way shorten their own days, and much more those that make no provision for another world.

5. He fasted all that day, and would by no means be persuaded to eat any thing till night, 2Sa 3:35. It was then the custom of great mourners to refrain for the time from bodily refreshments, as 2Sa 1:12,1Sa 31:13. How incongruous is it then to turn the house of mourning into a house of feasting! This respect which David paid to Abner was very pleasing to the people and satisfied them that he was not, in the least, accessory to the murder (2Sa 3:36,37), of which he was solicitous to avoid the suspicion, lest Joab's villany should make him odious, as that of Simeon and Levi did Jacob, Ge 34:30. On this occasion it is said, Whatever the king did pleased all the people. This intimates,

(1.) His good affection to them. He studied to please them in every thing and carefully avoided what might be disobliging.

(2.) Their good opinion of him. They thought every thing he did well done. Such a mutual willingness to please, and easiness to be pleased, will make every relation comfortable.

6. He bewailed it that he could not with safety do justice on the murderers, 2Sa 3:30. He was weak, his kingdom was newly planted, and a little shake would overthrow it. Joab's family had a great interest, were bold and daring, and to make them his enemies now might be of bad consequence. These sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him, too big for the law to take hold of; and therefore, though by man, by the magistrate, the blood of a murderer should be shed (Ge 9:6), David bears the sword in vain, and contents himself, as a private person, to leave them to the judgment of God: The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness. Now this is a diminution,

(1.) To David's greatness. He is anointed king, and yet is kept in awe by his own subjects, and some of them are too hard for him. Who would be fond of power when a man may have the name of it, and must be accountable for it, and yet be hampered in the use of it?

(2.) To David's goodness. He ought to have done his duty, and trusted God with the issue. Fiat justitia, ruat coelum--Let justice be done, though the heavens should fall asunder. If the law had had its course against Joab, perhaps the murder of Ishbosheth, Amnon, and others, would have been prevented. It was carnal policy and cruel pity that spared Joab. Righteousness supports the throne and will never shake it. Yet it was only a reprieve that David gave to Joab; on his death-bed he left it to Solomon (who could the better wield the

sword of justice because he had no occasion to draw the sword of war) to avenge the blood of Abner. Evil pursues sinners, and will overtake them at last. David preferred Abner's son Jaasiel, 1Ch 27:21.

25 Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

26 And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew *it* not.

27 And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth *rib,* that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

28 And afterward when David heard *it,* he said, I and my kingdom *are* guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner.

29 Let it rest on the head of Joab; and on all his father's house; and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread.

30 So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

31 And David said to Joab, and to all the people that *were* with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David *himself* followed the bier.

32 And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

33 And the king lamented over Abner, and said,
Died Abner as a fool dieth?

34 Thy hands *were* not bound,
nor thy feet put into fetters:
as a man falleth before wicked men,
so fellest thou.
And all the people wept again over him.

35 And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it
was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also,
if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down.
36 And all the people took notice *of it,* and it pleased them: as
whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.
37 For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not
of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.
38 And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a
prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?
39 And I *am* this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the
sons of Zeruiah *be* too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer
of evil according to his wickedness.

2 Samuel-4

The Assassination of Ish-bosheth

1 And when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his
hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled.
2 And Saul's son had two men *that were* captains of bands: the name
of the one *was* Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons
of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth
also was reckoned to Benjamin:
3 and the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until
this day.)
4 And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son *that was* lame of *his* feet. He was
five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of
Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as
she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name
was Mephibosheth.

Here is, I The weakness of Saul's house. Still it grew weaker and weaker.

1. As for Ishbosheth, who was in possession of the throne, his hands were feeble, 2Sa 4:1. All the strength they ever had was from Abner's support, and now that he was dead he had no

spirit left in him. Though Abner had, in a passion, deserted his interest, yet he hoped, by his means, to make good terms with David; but now even this hope fails him, and he sees himself forsaken by his friends and at the mercy of his enemies. All the Israelites that adhered to him were troubled and at a loss what to do, whether to proceed in their treaty with David or no.

2. As for Mephibosheth, who in the right of his father Jonathan had a prior title, his feet were lame, and he was unfit for any service, 2Sa 4:4. He was but five years old when his father and grandfather were killed. His nurse, hearing of the Philistines' victory, was apprehensive that, in pursuit of it, they would immediately send a party to Saul's house, to cut off all that pertained to it, and would especially aim at her young master, who was now next heir to the crown. Under the apprehension of this, she fled with the child in her arms, to secure it either in some secret place where he could not be found, or in some strong place where he could not be got at; and, making more haste than good speed, she fell with the child, and by the fall some bone was broken or put out, and not well set, so that he was lame of it as long as he lived, and unfit either for court or camp.

See what sad accidents children are liable to in their infancy, the effect of which may be felt by them, to their great uneasiness, all their days. Even the children of princes and great men, the children of good men, for such a one Jonathan was, children that are well tended, and have nurses of their own to take care of them, yet are not always safe. What reason have we to be thankful to God for the preservation of our limbs and senses to us, through the many perils of the weak and helpless state of infancy, and to own his goodness in giving his angels a charge concerning us, to bear us up in their arms, out of which there is no danger of falling, Ps 91:12.

II The murder of Saul's son. We are here told,

1. Who were the murderers: Baanah and Rechab, 2Sa 4:2,3. They were own brothers, as Simeon and Levi, and partners in iniquity. They were or had been Ish-bosheth's own servants, employed under him, so much the more base and treacherous was it in them to do him a mischief. They were Benjamites, of his own tribe. They were of the city of Beeroth; for some reason which we cannot now account for care is here taken to let us know (in a parenthesis) that that city belonged to the lot of Benjamin, so we find (Jos 18:25), but that the inhabitants, upon some occasion or other, perhaps upon the death of Saul, retired to Gittaim, another city which lay not far off in the same tribe, and was better fortified by nature, being situate (if we may depend upon Mr. Fuller's map) between the two rocks Bozez and Seneh. There the Beerothites were when this was written, and probably took root there, and never returned to Beeroth again, which made Beeroth, that had been one of the cities of the Gibeonites (Jos 9:17), to be forgotten, and Gittaim to be famous long after, as we find, Ne 11:33.

2. How the murder was committed, 2Sa 4:5-7. See here,

(1.) The slothfulness of Ish-bosheth. He lay upon his bed at noon. It does not appear that the country was at any time of the year so hot as to oblige the inhabitants to retire at noon, as we are told they do in Spain in the heat of summer; but Ishbosheth was a sluggish man, loved his ease and hated business: and when he should have been, at this critical juncture, at the head of his forces in the field, or at the head of his counsels in a treaty with David, he was lying upon his bed and sleeping, for his hands were feeble (2Sa 4:1), and so were his head and heart. When those difficulties dispirit us which should rather invigorate us and sharpen our endeavours we betray both our crowns and lives. Love not sleep, lest thou

come to poverty and ruin. The idle soul is an easy prey to the destroyer.

(2.) The treachery of Baanah and Rechab. They came into the house, under pretence of fetching wheat for the victualling of their regiments; and such was the plainness of those times that the king's corn-chamber and his bed-chamber lay near together, which gave them an opportunity, when they were fetching wheat, to murder him as he lay on the bed. We know not when and where death will meet us. When we lie down to sleep we are not sure but that we may sleep the sleep of death before we awake; nor do we know from what unsuspected hand a fatal stroke may come. Ish-bosheth's own men, who should have protected his life, took it away.

3. The murderers triumphed in what they had done. As if they had performed some very glorious action, and the doing of it for David's advantage was enough not only to justify it, but to sanctify it, they made a present of Ish-bosheth's head to David (2Sa 4:8): Behold the head of thy enemy, than which they thought nothing could be more acceptable to him; yea, and they made themselves instruments of God's justice, ministers to bear his sword, though they had no commission: The Lord hath avenged thee this day of Saul and of his seed. Not that they had any regard either to God or to David's honour; they aimed at nothing but to make their own fortunes (as we say) and to get preferment in David's court; but, to ingratiate themselves with him, they pretended a concern for his life, a conviction of his title, and a zealous desire to see him in full possession of the throne. Jehu pretended zeal for the Lord of hosts when an ambition to set up himself and his own family was the spring of his actions.

5 And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon.

6 And they came thither into the midst of the house, *as though* they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth *rib:* and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7 For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.

8 And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

9 And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, *As* the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity,

10 when one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings:

We have here justice done upon the murderers of Ish-bosheth.

I. Sentence passed upon them. There needed no evidence, their own tongues witnessed against them; they were so far from denying the fact that they gloried in it. David therefore shows them the heinousness of the crime, and that blood called for blood from his hand, who was now the chief magistrate, and was by office the avenger of blood. And, perhaps, he was the more vigorous in the prosecution because for reasons of state he had spared Joab: "Shall I not require the blood of the slain at the hand of the slayers, and, since they cannot make restitution, take theirs instead of it?" Observe,

1. How he aggravates the crime, 2Sa 4:11. Ish-bosheth was a righteous person, he had done them no wrong, nor designed them any. As to himself, David was satisfied that what opposition he gave him was not from malice, but mistake, from an idea he had of his own title to the crown, and the influence of others upon him, who urged him to put in for it.

Note, Charity teaches us to make the best, not only of our friends, but of our enemies, and to think those may be righteous persons who yet, in some instances, do us wrong. I must not presently judge a man a bad man because I think him so to me.

David owns Ish-bosheth an honest man, though he had created him a great deal of trouble unjustly. The manner of it much aggravated the crime. To slay him in his own house, which should have been his castle, and upon his bed, when he was in no capacity of making any opposition, this is treacherous and barbarous, and all that is base, and that which the heart of every man who is not perfectly lost to all honour and humanity will rise with indignation at the thought of. Assassinating is confessedly the most odious and villainous way of murdering. Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.

2. He quotes a precedent (2Sa 4:10): he had put him to death who had brought him the tidings of the death of Saul, because he thought it would be good tidings to David. Nothing is here said of that Amalekite's helping Saul to kill himself, only of his bringing the tidings of his death, by which it should seem that the story he told was upon enquiry found to be false, and that he lied against his own head. "Now" (says David) "did I treat him as a criminal, and not a favourite" (as he expected), "who brought me Saul's crown, and shall those be held guiltless that bring me Ish-bosheth's head?"

3. He ratifies the sentence with an oath (2Sa 4:9): As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity. He expresses himself thus resolutely, to prevent the making of any intercession for the criminals by those about him, and thus piously to intimate that his dependence was upon God for the putting of him in possession of the promised throne, and that he would not be beholden to any man to help him to it by any indirect or unlawful practices.

God had redeemed him from all adversity hitherto, helped him over many a difficulty and through many a danger, and therefore he would depend upon him to crown and complete his own work. He speaks of his redemption from all adversity as a thing done, though he had many a storm yet before him, because he knew that he who had delivered would deliver.

4. Hereupon he signs a warrant for the execution of these men, 2Sa 4:12. This may seem severe, when they intended him a kindness in what they did; but,

(1.) He would thus show his detestation of the villany. When he heard that the Lord smote Nabal, he gave thanks (1Sa 25:38,39), for he is the God to whom vengeance belongeth; but, if wicked men smite Ish-bosheth, they deserve to die for taking God's work out of his hand.

(2.) He would thus show his resentment of the great affront they put upon him in expecting that he should patronize and reward it; they could scarcely have done him a greater injury than thus to think him altogether such a one as themselves, one that cared not what blood he waded through to the crown.

II. Execution done. The murderers were put to death according to law, and their hands and feet were hung up; not their whole bodies, the law forbade that; but only their hands and feet, in terrorem--to frighten others, to be monuments of David's justice, and to make that to be taken notice of which would recommend him to the esteem of the people, as a man fit to rule, and that aimed not at his own preferment, nor had any enmity to the house of Saul, but only and sincerely designed the public welfare.

But what a confusion was this to the two murderers! What a horrid disappointment! And such those will meet with who

think to serve the interests of the Son of David by any immoral practices, by war and persecution, fraud and rapine, who, under colour of religion, murder princes, break solemn contracts, lay countries waste, hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, Let the Lord be glorified, kill them, and think they do God good service. However men may canonize such methods of serving the church and the catholic cause, Christ will let them know, another day, that Christianity was not intended to destroy humanity; and those who thus think to merit heaven shall not escape the damnation of hell.

11 how much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person
in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require
his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?
12 And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut
off their hands and their feet, and hanged *them* up over the pool in
Hebron. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried *it* in the
sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

2 Samuel-5

David Made King over Israel

1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake,
saying, Behold, we *are* thy bone and thy flesh.
2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that
leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord said to thee,
Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over
Israel.
3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king
David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and
they anointed David king over Israel.
4 David *was* thirty years old when he began to reign, *and* he reigned
forty years.

Here is, I The humble address of all the tribes to David, beseeching him to take upon him the government (for they were now as sheep having no shepherd), and owning him for

their king. Though David might by no means approve the murder of Ish-bosheth, yet he might improve the advantages he gained thereby, and accept the applications made to him thereupon.

Judah had submitted to David as their king above seven years ago, and their ease and happiness, under his administration, encouraged the rest of the tribes to make their court to him. What numbers came from each tribe, with what zeal and sincerity they came, and how they were entertained for three days at Hebron, when they were all of one heart to make David king, we have a full account, 1Ch 12:23-40. Here we have only the heads of their address, containing the grounds they went upon in making David king.

1. Their relation to him was some inducement: "We are thy bone and thy flesh (2Sa 5:1), not only thou art our bone and our flesh, not a stranger, unqualified by the law to be king (De 17:15), but we are thine," that is, "we know that thou considerest us as thy bone and thy flesh, and hast as tender a concern for us as a man has for his own body, which Saul and his house had not. We are thy bone and thy flesh, and therefore thou wilt be as glad as we shall be to put an end to this long civil war; and thou wilt take pity on us, protect us, and do thy utmost for our welfare." Those who take Christ for their king may thus plead with him: "We are thy bone and thy flesh, thou hast made thyself in all things like unto thy brethren (Heb 2:17); therefore be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand," Isa 3:6.

2. His former good services to the public were a further inducement (2Sa 5:2): "When Saul was king he was but the cypher, thou wast the figure, thou wast he that leddest out Israel to battle, and broughtest them in in triumph; and therefore who so fit now to fill the vacant throne?" He that is faithful in a little deserves to be entrusted with more. Former

good offices done for us should be gratefully remembered by us when there is occasion.

3. The divine appointment was the greatest inducement of all: The Lord said, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, that is, thou shalt rule them; for princes are to feed their people as shepherds, in every thing consulting the subjects' benefit, feeding them and not fleecing them. "And thou shalt be not only a king to govern in peace, but a captain to preside in war, and be exposed to all the toils and perils of the camp." Since God has said so, now at length, when need drives them to it, they are persuaded to say so too.

II The public and solemn inauguration of David, 2Sa 5:3. A convention of the states was called; all the elders of Israel came to him; the contract was settled, the pacta conventa--covenants, sworn to, and subscribed on both sides. He obliged himself to protect them as their judge in peace and captain in war; and they obliged themselves to obey him. He made a league with them to which God was a witness: it was before the Lord. Hereupon he was, for the third time, anointed king. His advances were gradual, that his faith might be tried and that he might gain experience. And thus his kingdom typified that of the Messiah, which was to come to its height by degrees; for we see not yet all things put under him (Heb 2:8), but we shall see it, 1Co 15:25.

III. A general account of his reign and age. He was thirty years old when he began to reign, upon the death of Saul, 2Sa 5:4. At that age the Levites were at first appointed to begin their administration, Nu 4:3. About that age the Son of David entered upon his public ministry, Lu 3:23. Then men come to their full maturity of strength and judgment. He reigned, in all, forty years and six months, of which seven years and a half in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem, 2Sa 5:5. Hebron had been famous, Jos 14:15. It was a priest's city. But

Jerusalem was to be more so, and to be the holy city. Great kings affected to raise cities of their own, Ge 10:11,36,Ge 10:32-35. David did so, and Jerusalem was the city of David. It is a name famous to the end of the Bible (Re 21:1-27), where we read of a new Jerusalem.

5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

David Captures Zion

6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying,
Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

7 Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion: the same *is* the city of David.

If Salem, the place of which Melchizedec was king, was Jerusalem (as seems probable from Ps 76:2), it was famous in Abraham's time. Joshua, in his time, found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan, Jos 10:1-3. It fell to Benjamin's lot (Jos 18:28), but joined close to Judah's, Jos 15:8. The children of Judah had taken it (Jdg 1:8), but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them (Jdg 1:21), and they grew so upon them that it became a city of Jebusites, Jdg 19:11. Now the very first exploit David did, after he was anointed king over all Israel, was to gain Jerusalem out of the hand of the Jebusites, which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul's house (1Ch 12:29), submitted to him. Here we have,

I The Jebusites' defiance of David and his forces. They said, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither, 2Sa 5:6. They sent David this provoking message, because, as it is said afterwards, on another

occasion, they could not believe that ever an enemy would enter into the gates of Jerusalem, La 4:12. They confided either, 1. In the protection of their gods, which David, in contempt, had called the blind and the lame, for they have eyes and see not, feet and walk not. "But," say they, "these are the guardians of our city, and except thou take these away (which thou canst never do) thou canst not come in hither." Some think they were constellated images of brass set up in the recess of the fort, and entrusted with the custody of the place. They called their idols their Mauzzim, or strong-holds (Da 11:38) and as such relied on them. The name of the Lord is our strong tower, and his arm is strong, his eyes are piercing. Or,

2. In the strength of their fortifications, which they thought were made so impregnable by nature or art, or both, that the blind and the lame were sufficient to defend them against the most powerful assailant. The strong-hold of Zion they especially depended on, as that which could not be forced. Probably they set blind and lame people, invalids or maimed soldiers, to make their appearance upon the walls, in scorn of David and his men, judging them an equal match for him. Though there remain but wounded men among them, yet they should serve to beat back the besiegers. Compare Jer 37:10. Note, The enemies of God's people are often very confident of their own strength and most secure when their day to fall draws nigh.

II. David's success against the Jebusites. Their pride and insolence, instead of daunting him, animated him, and when he made a general assault he gave this order to his men: "He that smiteth the Jebusites, let him also throw down into the ditch, or gutter, the lame and the blind, which are set upon the wall to affront us and our God." It is probable they had themselves spoken blasphemous things, and were therefore hated of David's soul. Thus 2Sa 5:8 may be read; we fetch our

reading of it from 1Ch 11:6, which speaks only of smiting the Jebusites, but nothing of the blind and the lame. The Jebusites had said that if these images of theirs did not protect them the blind and the lame should not come into the house, that is, they would never again trust their palladium (so Mr. Gregory understands it) nor pay the respect they had paid to their images; and David, having gained the fort, said so too, that these images, which could not protect their worshippers, should never have any place there more.

III. His fixing his royal seat in Sion. He himself dwelt in the fort (the strength whereof, which had given him opposition, and was a terror to him, now contributed to his safety), and he built houses round about for his attendants and guards (2Sa 5:9) from Millo (the town-hall, or state-house) and inward. He proceeded and prospered in all he set his hand to, grew great in honour, strength, and wealth, more and more honourable in the eyes of his subjects and formidable in the eyes of his enemies; for the Lord God of hosts was with him. God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes by them; and he was with him, to direct, preserve, and prosper him, Those that have the Lord of hosts for them need not fear what hosts of men or devils can do against them. Those who grow great must ascribe their advancement to the presence of God with them, and give him the glory of it. The church is called Sion, and the city of the living God. The Jebusites, Christ's enemies, must first be conquered and dispossessed, the blind and the lame taken away, and then Christ divides the spoil, sets up his throne there, and makes it his residence by the Spirit.

8 And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter,
and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, *that are* hated
of David's soul, *he shall be chief and captain.* Wherefore they said,
The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. And
David built round about from Millo and inward.

10 And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts
was with him.

Hiram's Recognition of David

11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees,
and carpenters, and masons: and they built David a house.

Here is, I. David's house built, a royal palace, fit for the reception of the court he kept and the homage that was paid to him, 2Sa 5:11. The Jews were husbandmen and shepherds, and did not much addict themselves either to merchandise or manufactures; and therefore Hiram, king of Tyre, a wealthy prince, when he sent to congratulate David on his accession to the throne, offered him workmen to build him a house. David thankfully accepted the offer, and Hiram's workmen built David a house to his mind. Many have excelled in arts and sciences who were strangers to the covenants of promise. Yet David's house was never the worse, nor the less fit to be dedicated to God, for being built by the sons of the stranger. It is prophesied of the gospel church, The sons of the strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee, Isa 60:10.

II. David's government settled and built up, 2Sa 5:12.

1. His kingdom was established, there was nothing to shake it, none to disturb his possession or question his title. He that made him king established him, because he was to be a type of Christ, with whom God's hand should be established, and his covenant stand fast, Ps 89:21-28. Saul was made king, but not established; so Adam in innocency. David was established king, so is the Son of David, with all who through him are made to our God kings and priests.

2. It was exalted in the eyes both of its friends and enemies. Never had the nation of Israel looked so great or made such a

figure as it began now to do. Thus it is promised of Christ that he shall be higher than the kings of the earth, Ps 89:27. God has highly exalted him, Php 2:9. 3. David perceived, by the wonderful concurrence of providences to his establishment and advancement, that God was with him. By this I know that thou favourest me, Ps 41:11. Many have the favour of God and do not perceive it, and so want the comfort of it: but to be exalted to that and established in it, and to perceive it, is happiness enough. 4. He owned that it was for his people Israel's sake that God had done great things for him, that he might be a blessing to them and they might be happy under his administration. God did not make Israel his subjects for his sake, that he might be great, and rich, and absolute: but he made him their king for their sake, that he might lead, and guide, and protect them. Kings are ministers of God to their people for good, Ro 13:4.

III. David's family multiplied and increased. All the sons that were born to him after he came to Jerusalem are here mentioned together, eleven in all, besides the six that were born to him before in Hebron, 2Sa 3:2,5. There the mothers are mentioned, not here; only, in general, it is said that he took more concubines and wives, 2Sa 5:13. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; we justify him not; nor can we scarcely excuse him. The bad example of the patriarchs might make him think there was no harm in it, and he might hope it would strengthen his interest, by multiplying his alliances, and increasing the royal family. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of these arrows.

But one vine by the side of the house, with the blessing of God, may send boughs to the sea and branches to the rivers. Adam, by one wife, peopled the world, and Noah re-peopled it. David had many wives, and yet that did not keep him from coveting his neighbour's wife and defiling her; for men that have once broken the fence will wander endlessly. Of David's

concubines, see 2Sa 15:16,16:22,19:5. Of his sons, see 1Ch 3:1-9.

12 And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

David's Children Born at Jerusalem

13 And David took *him* more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

14 And these *be* the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon,

15 Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

16 and Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

David Defeats the Philistines

17 But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard *of it*, and went down to the hold.

18 The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

The particular service for which David was raised up was to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, 2Sa 3:18. This therefore divine Providence, in the first place, gives him an opportunity of accomplishing. Two great victories obtained over the Philistines we have here an account of, by which David not only balanced the disgrace and retrieved the loss Israel had sustained in the battle wherein Saul was slain, but went far towards the total subduing of those vexatious neighbours, the last remains of the devoted nations.

I. In both these actions the Philistines were the aggressors, stirred first towards their own destruction, and pulled it on their own heads.

1. In the former they came up to seek David (2Sa 5:17), because they heard that he was anointed king over Israel. He that under Saul had slain his ten thousands, what would he do when he himself came to be king! They therefore thought it was time to look about them, and try to crush his government in its infancy, before it was well settled. Their success against Saul, some years ago, perhaps encouraged them to make this attack upon David; but they considered not that David had that presence of God with him which Saul had forfeited and lost. The kingdom of the Messiah, as soon as ever it was set up in the world, was thus vigorously attacked by the powers of darkness, who, with the combined force both of Jews and Gentiles, made head against it. The heathen raged, and the kings of the earth set themselves to oppose it; but all in vain, Ps 2:1-12, &c. The destruction will turn, as this did, upon Satan's own kingdom. They took counsel together, but were broken in pieces, Isa 8:9,10.

2. In the latter they came up yet again, hoping to recover what they had lost in the former engagement, and their hearts being hardened to their destruction, 2Sa 5:22.

3. In both they spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim, which lay very near Jerusalem. That city they hoped to make themselves masters of before David had completed the fortifications of it. Jerusalem, from its infancy, has been aimed at, and struck at, with a particular enmity. Their spreading themselves intimates that they were very numerous and that they made a very formidable appearance. We read of the church's enemies going up on the breadth of the earth (Re 20:9), but the further they spread themselves the fairer mark they are to God's arrows.

II. In both, David, though forward enough to go forth against them (for as soon as he heard it he went down to the hold, to secure some important and advantageous post, 2Sa 5:17), yet

entered not upon action till he had enquired of the Lord by the breast-plate of judgment, 2Sa 5:19, and again, 2Sa 5:23. His enquiry was twofold:--

1. Concerning his duty: "Shall I go up? Shall I have a commission from heaven to engage them?" One would think he needed not doubt this; what was he made king for, but to fight the battles of the Lord and Israel? But a good man loves to see God going before him in every step he takes. "Shall I go up now?" It is to be done, but is it to be done at this time? In all thy ways acknowledge him. And besides, though the Philistines were public enemies, yet some of them had been his particular friends. Achish had been kind to him in his distress, and had protected him. "Now," says David, "ought not I, in remembrance of that, rather to make peace with them than to make war with them?" "No," says God, "they are Israel's enemies, and are doomed to destruction, and therefore scruple not, but go up."

2. Concerning his success. His conscience asked the former question, Shall I go up? His prudence asked this, Wilt thou deliver them into my hand? Hereby he owns his dependence on God for victory, that he could not conquer them unless God delivered them into his hand, and refers his cause to the good pleasure of God: Wilt thou do it? Yea, says God, I will doubtless do it. If God send us, he will bear us out and stand by us. The assurance God has given us of victory over our spiritual enemies, that he will tread Satan under our feet shortly, should animate us in our spiritual conflicts. We do not fight at uncertainty. David had now a great army at command and in good heart, yet he relied more on God's promise than his own force.

III. In the former of these engagements David routed the army of the Philistines by dint of sword (2Sa 5:20): He smote them; and when he had done,

1. He gave his God the glory; he said, "The Lord has broken forth upon my enemies before me. I could not have done it if he had not done it before me; he opened the breach like the breach of waters in a dam, which when once opened grows wider and wider." The principal part of the work was God's doing; nay, he did all; what David did was not worth speaking of; and therefore, Not unto us, but unto the Lord, give glory. He hoped likewise that this breach, like that of waters, was as the opening of the sluice, to let in a final desolation upon them; and, to perpetuate the remembrance of it, he called the place Baal-perazim, the master of the breaches, because, God having broken in upon their forces, he soon had the mastery of them. Let posterity take notice of it to God's honour.

2. He put their gods to shame. They brought the images of their gods into the field as their protectors, in imitation of the Israelites bringing the ark into their camp; but, being put to flight, they could not stay to carry off their images, for they were a burden to the weary beasts (Isa 46:1), and therefore they left them to fall with the rest of their baggage into the hands of the conqueror. Their images failed them, and gave them no assistance, and therefore they left their images to shift for themselves. God can make men weary of those things that they have been most fond of, and compel them to desert what they dote upon, and cast even the idols of silver and gold to the moles and the bats, Isa 2:20,21. David and his men converted to their own use the rest of the plunder, but the images they burnt, as God had appointed (De 7:5): "You shall burn their graven images with fire, in token of your detestation of idolatry, and lest they should be a snare." Bishop Patrick well observes here that when the ark fell into the Philistines' hands it consumed them, but, when these images fell into the hands of Israel, they could not save themselves from being consumed.

IV. In the latter of these engagements God gave David some sensible tokens of his presence with him, bade him not fall upon them directly, as he had done before, but fetch a compass behind them, 2Sa 5:23.

1. God appoints him to draw back, as Israel stood still to see the salvation of the Lord.

2. He promised him to charge the enemy himself, by an invisible host of angels, 2Sa 5:24. "Thou shalt hear the sound of a going, like the march of an army in the air, upon the tops of the mulberry trees." Angels tread light, and he that can walk upon the clouds can, when he pleases, walk on the tops of trees, or (as bishop Patrick understands it) at the head of the mulberry-trees, that is, of the wood, or hedge-row of those trees. "And, by that sign, thou shalt know that the Lord goes out before thee; though thou see him not, yet thou shalt hear him, and faith shall come and be confirmed by hearing.

He goes forth to smite the host of the Philistines." When David had himself smitten them (2Sa 5:20), he ascribed it to God: The Lord has broken forth upon my enemies, to reward him for which thankful acknowledgment the next time God did it himself alone, without putting him to any toil or peril. Those that own God in what he has done for them will find him doing more. But observe, Though God promised to go before him and smite the Philistines, yet David, when he heard the sound of the going must bestir himself and be ready to pursue the victory.

Note, God's grace must quicken our endeavours. If God work in us both to will and to do, it does not follow that we must sit still, as those that have nothing to do, but we must therefore, work out our own salvation with all possible care and diligence, Php 2:12,13. The sound of the going was,

(1.) A signal to David when to move; it is comfortable going out when God goes before us. And,

(2.) Perhaps it was an alarm to the enemy, and put them into confusion. Hearing the march of an army against their front, they retreated with precipitation, and fell into David's army which lay behind them in their rear. Of those whom God fights against it is said (Le 26:36), The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them.

(3.) The success of this is briefly set down, 2Sa 5:25. David observed his orders, waited till God moved, and stirred them, but not till then. Thus he was trained up in a dependence on God and his providence. God performed his promise, went before him, and routed all the enemies' force, and David failed not to improve his advantages; he smote the Philistines, even to the borders of their own country.

When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the apostles that were to beat down the devil's kingdom must not attempt any thing till they received the promise of the Spirit, who came with a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind (Ac 2:2), which was typified by this sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry trees; and, when they heard that, they must bestir themselves, and did so; they went forth conquering and to conquer.

19 And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

20 And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim [the place of breaches].

21 And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.

22 And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in
the valley of Rephaim.
23 And when David inquired of the Lord, he said, Thou shalt not go
up; *but* fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over
against the mulberry trees.
24 And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of
the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall
the Lord go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.
25 And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote
the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

2 Samuel-6

David Goes to Bring the Ark

1 Again, David gathered together all the chosen *men* of Israel, thirty
thousand.
2 And David arose, and went with all the people that *were* with him
from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose
name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwelleth
between the cherubim.

We have not heard a word of the ark since it was lodged in Kirjath-jearim, immediately after its return out of its captivity among the Philistines (1Sa 7:1,2), except that, once, Saul called for it, 1Sa 14:18. That which in former days had made so great a figure is now thrown aside, as a neglected thing, for many years. And, if now the ark was for so many years in a house, let it not seem strange that we find the church so long in the wilderness, Re 12:14. Perpetual visibility is no mark of the true church. God is graciously present with the souls of his people even when they want the external tokens of his presence. But now that David is settled in the throne the honour of the ark begins to revive, and Israel's care of it to flourish again, wherein also, no doubt, the good people among

them had been careful, but they lacked opportunity. See Php 4:10.

I. Here is honourable mention made of the ark. Because it had not been spoken of a great while, now that it is spoken of observe how it is described (2Sa 6:2): it is the ark of God whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim, or at which the name, even the name of the Lord of hosts, was called upon, or upon which the name of the Lord of hosts was called, or because of which the name is proclaimed, the name of the Lord of hosts (that is, God was greatly magnified in the miracles done before the ark), or the ark of God, who is called the name (Le 24:11,16), the name of the Lord of hosts, sitting on the cherubim upon it. Let us learn hence,

1. To think and speak highly of God. He is the name above every name, the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures in heaven and earth at his command, and receives homage from them all, and yet is pleased to dwell between the cherubim, over the propitiatory or mercy-seat, graciously manifesting himself to his people, reconciled in a Mediator, and ready to do them good.

2. To think and speak honourably of holy ordinances, which are to us, as the ark was to Israel, the tokens of God's presence (Mt 28:2), and the means of our communion with him, Ps 27:4. It is the honour of the ark that it is the ark of God; he is jealous for it, is magnified in it, his name is called upon it. The divine institution puts a beauty and grandeur upon holy ordinances, which otherwise have no form nor comeliness. Christ is our ark. In and by him God manifests his favour and communicates his grace to us, and accepts our adoration and addresses.

II. Here is an honourable attendance given to the ark upon the removal of it. Now, at length, it is enquired after, David made the motion (1Ch 13:1-3), and the heads of the congregation agreed to it, 2Sa 6:4. All the chosen men of Israel are called together to grace the solemnity, to pay their respect to the ark, and to testify their joy in its restoration. The nobility and gentry, elders and officers, came to the number of 30,000 (2Sa 6:1), and the generality of the common people besides (1Ch 13:5); for, some think, it was done at one of the three great festivals. This would make a noble cavalcade, and would help to inspire the young people of the nation, who perhaps had scarcely heard of the ark, with a great veneration for it, for this was certainly a treasure of inestimable value which the king himself and all the great men waited upon, and were a guard to.

III. Here are great expressions of joy upon the removal of the ark, 2Sa 6:5. David himself, and all that were with him that were musically inclined, made use of such instruments as they had to excite and express their rejoicing upon this occasion. It might well put them into a transport of joy to see the ark rise out of obscurity and move towards a public station. It is better to have the ark in a house than not at all, better in a house than a captive in Dagon's temple; but it is very desirable to have it in a tent pitched on purpose for it, where the resort to it may be more free and open. As secret worship is better the more secret it is, so public worship is better the more public it is; and we have reason to rejoice when restraints are taken off, and the ark of God finds welcome in the city of David, and has not only the protection and support, but the countenance and encouragement, of the civil powers; for joy of this they played before the Lord.

Note, Public joy must always be as before the Lord, with an eye to him and terminating in him, and must not degenerate into that which is carnal and sensual. Dr. Lightfoot supposes

that, upon this occasion, David penned the Ps 68:1-35, because it begins with that ancient prayer of Moses at the removing of the ark, Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and notice is taken there (Ps 68:25) of the singers and players on instruments that attended, and (Ps 68:27) of the princes of several of the tribes; and perhaps those words in the Ps 68:35, O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places, were added upon occasion of the death of Uzzah.

IV. Here is an error that they were guilty of in this matter, that they carried the ark in a cart or carriage, whereas the priests should have carried it upon their shoulders, 2Sa 6:3. The Kohathites that had the charge of the ark had no wagons assigned them, because their service was to bear it upon their shoulders, Nu 7:9. The ark was no such heavy burden but that they might, among them, have carried it as far as Mount Sion upon their shoulders, they needed not to put it in a cart like a common thing. It was no excuse for them that the Philistines had done so and were not punished for it; they knew no better, nor had they any priests or Levites with them to undertake the carrying of it; better carry it in a cart than that any of Dagon's priests should carry it. Philistines may cart the ark with impunity; but, if Israelites do so, they do it at their peril. And it mended the matter very little that it was a new cart; old or new, it was not what God had appointed. I wonder how so wise and good a man as David was, that conversed so much with the law of God, came to be guilty of such an oversight. We will charitably hope that it was because he was so extremely intent upon the substance of the service that he forgot to take care of this circumstance.

3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that *was* in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which *was* at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of *instruments made of* fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.
6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth *his hand* to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook *it*.
7 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for *his* error; and there he died by the ark of God.

We have here Uzzah struck dead for touching the ark, when it was upon its journey towards the city of David, a sad providence, which damped their mirth, stopped the progress of the ark, and for the present, dispersed this great assembly, which had come together to attend it, and sent them home in a fright.

I. Uzzah's offence seems very small. He and his brother Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, in whose house the ark had long been lodged, having been used to attend it, to show their willingness to prefer the public benefit to their own private honour and advantage, undertook to drive the cart in which the ark was carried, this being perhaps the last service they were likely to do it; for others would be employed about it when it came to the city of David. Ahio went before, to clear the way, and, if need were, to lead the oxen. Uzzah followed close to the side of the cart. It happened that the oxen shook it, 2Sa 6:6. The critics are not agreed about the signification of the original word: They stumbled (so our margin); they kicked (so some), perhaps against the goad with which Uzzah drove them; they stuck in the mire, by some. By some accident or other the ark was in danger of being overthrown. Uzzah thereupon laid hold of it, to save it from falling, we have reason to think with a very good intention, to preserve the reputation of the ark and to prevent a bad omen. Yet this was his crime. Uzzah was a Levite, but priests only might touch the ark. The law was express concerning the Kohathites, that, though they were to carry the ark by the staves, yet they must

not touch any holy thing, lest they die, Nu 4:15. Uzzah's long familiarity with the ark, and the constant attendance he had given to it, might occasion his presumption, but would not excuse it.

II. His punishment for this offence seems very great (2Sa 6:7): The anger of the Lord was kindled against him (for in sacred things he is a jealous God) and he smote him there for his rashness, as the word is, and struck him dead upon the spot. There he sinned, and there he died, by the ark of God; even the mercy-seat would not save him. Why was God thus severe with him?

1 The touching of the ark was forbidden to the Levites expressly under pain of death--lest they die; and God, by this instance of severity, would show how he might justly have dealt with our first parents, when they had eaten that which was forbidden under the same penalty--lest you die.

2. God saw the presumption and irreverence of Uzzah's heart. Perhaps he affected to show, before this great assembly, how bold he could make with the ark, having been so long acquainted with it. Familiarity, even with that which is most awful, is apt to breed contempt.

3. David afterwards owned that Uzzah died for an error they were all guilty of, which was carrying the ark in a cart. Because it was not carried on the Levites' shoulders, the Lord made that breach upon us, 1Ch 15:13. But Uzzah was singled out to be made an example, perhaps because he had been most forward in advising that way of conveyance; however he had fallen into another error, which was occasioned by that. Perhaps the ark was not covered, as it should have been, with the covering of badgers' skins (Nu 4:6), and that was a further provocation.

4. God would hereby strike an awe upon the thousands of Israel, would convince them that the ark was never the less venerable for its having been so long in mean circumstances, and thus he would teach them to rejoice with trembling, and always to treat holy things with reverence and holy fear.

5. God would hereby teach us that a good intention will not justify a bad action; it will not suffice to say of that which is ill done that it was well meant. He will let us know that he can and will secure his ark, and needs not any man's sin to help him to do it.

6. If it was so great a crime for one to lay hold on the ark of the covenant that had no right to do so, what is it for those to lay claim to the privileges of the covenant that come not up to the terms of it? To the wicked God says, What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth? Ps 50:16. Friend, how camest thou in hither? If the ark was so sacred, and not to be touched irreverently, what is the blood of the covenant? Heb 10:29.

III. David's feelings on the infliction of this stroke were keen, and perhaps not altogether as they should have been. He should have humbled himself under God's hand, confessed his error, acknowledged God's righteousness, and deprecated the further tokens of his displeasure, and then have gone on with the good work he had in hand. But we find,

1. He was displeased. It is not said because Uzzah had affronted God, but because God had made a breach upon Uzzah (2Sa 6:8): David's anger was kindled. It is the same word that is used for God's displeasure, 2Sa 6:7. Because God was angry, David was angry and out of humour. As if God might not assert the honour of his ark, and frown upon one that touched it rudely, without asking David leave. Shall mortal man pretend to be more just than God, arraign his

proceedings, or charge him with iniquity? David did not now act like himself, like a man after God's own heart. It is not for us to be displeased at any thing that God does, how unpleasing soever it is to us. The death of Uzzah was indeed an eclipse to the glory of a solemnity which David valued himself upon more than any thing else, and might give birth to some speculations among those that were disaffected to him, as if God were departing from him too; but he ought nevertheless to have subscribed to the righteousness and wisdom of God in it, and not to have been displeased at it. When we lie under God's anger we must keep under our own.

2. He was afraid, 2Sa 6:9. It should seem he was afraid with amazement; for he said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? As if God sought advantages against all that were about him, and was so extremely tender of his ark that there was no dealing with it; and therefore better for him to keep it at a distance. Que procul a Jove, procul a fulmine--To retire from Jove is to retire from the thunder-bolt. He should rather have said, "Let the ark come to me, and I will take warning by this to treat it with more reverence." Provoke me not (says God, Jer 25:6) and I will do you no hurt. Or this may be looked upon as a good use which David made of this tremendous judgment. He did not say, "Surely Uzzah was a sinner above all men, because he suffered such things," but is concerned for himself, as one conscious, not only of his own unworthiness of God's favour, but his obnoxiousness to God's displeasure. "God might justly strike me dead as he did Uzzah. My flesh trembles for fear of thee," Ps 119:120. This God intends in his judgments, that others may hear and fear. David therefore will not bring the ark into his own city (2Sa 6:10) till he is better prepared for its reception.

3. He took care to perpetuate the remembrance of this stroke by a new name he gave to the place: Perez-uzzah, the breach of Uzzah, 2Sa 6:8. He had been lately triumphing in the

breach made upon his enemies, and called the place Baal-perazim, a place of breaches. But here is a breach upon his friends. When we see one breach, we should consider that we know not where the next will be. The memorial of this stroke would be a warning to posterity to take heed of all rashness and irreverence in dealing about holy things; for God will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. 4. He lodged the ark in a good house, the house of Obed-edom a Levite, which happened to be near the place where this disaster happened, and there,

(1.) It was kindly entertained and welcomed, and continued there three months, 2Sa 6:10,11. Obed-edom knew what slaughter the ark had made among the Philistines that imprisoned it and the Bethshemites that looked into it. He saw Uzzah struck dead for touching it, and perceived that David himself was afraid of meddling with it; yet he cheerfully invites it to his own house, and opens his doors to it without fear, knowing it was a savour of death unto death only to those that treated it ill. "O the courage," says bishop Hall, "of an honest and faithful heart! nothing can make God otherwise than amiable to his own people: even his very justice is lovely."

(2.) It paid well for its entertainment: The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household. The same hand that punished Uzzah's proud presumption rewarded Obed-edom's humble boldness, and made the ark to him a savour of life unto life. Let none think the worse of the gospel for the judgements inflicted on those that reject it, but set in opposition to them the blessings it brings to those that duly receive it. None ever had, nor ever shall have, reason to say that it is in vain to serve God.

Let masters of families be encouraged to keep up religion in their families, and to serve God and the interests of his

kingdom with their houses and estates, for that is the way to bring a blessing upon all they have. The ark is a guest which none shall lose by that bid it welcome. Josephus says that, whereas before Obed-edom was poor, on a sudden, in these three months, his estate increased, to the envy of his neighbours. Piety is the best friend to prosperity. In wisdom's left hand are riches and honour. His household shared in the blessing. It is good living in a family that entertains the ark, for all about it will fare the better for it.

8 And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah [the breach of Uzzah] to this day.

9 And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?

10 So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

11 And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

12 And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that *pertaineth* unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness.

13 And it was *so,* that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

14 And David danced before the Lord with all *his* might; and David *was* girded with a linen ephod.

15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

We have here the second attempt to bring the ark home to the city of David; and this succeeded, though the former miscarried.

I. It should seem the blessing with which the house of Obed-edom was blessed for the ark's sake was a great inducement to David to bring it forward; for when that was told him (2Sa 6:12) he hastened to fetch it to him. For, 1. It was an evidence that God was reconciled to them, and his anger was turned away. As David could read God's frowns upon them all in Uzzah's stroke, so he could read God's favour to them all in Obed-edom's prosperity; and, if God be at peace with them, they can cheerfully go on with their design. 2. It was an evidence that the ark was not such a burdensome stone as it was taken to be, but, on the contrary, happy was the man that had it near him.

Christ is indeed a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to those that are disobedient; but to those who believe he is a corner-stone, elect, precious, 1Pe 2:6-8. When David heard that Obed-edom had such joy of the ark, then he would have it in his own city. Note, The experience others have had of the gains of godliness should encourage us to be religious. Is the ark a blessing to others' houses? let us bid it welcome to ours; we may have it, and the blessing of it, without fetching it from our neighbours.

II. Let us see how David managed the matter now.

1. He rectified the former error. He did not put the ark in a cart now, but ordered those whose business it was to carry it on their shoulders. This is implied here (2Sa 6:13) and expressed 1Ch 15:15. Then we make a good use of the judgments of God on ourselves and others when we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss.

2. At their first setting out he offered sacrifices to God (2Sa 6:13) by way of atonement for their former errors and in a thankful acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed on the house of Obed-edom. Then we are likely to speed in our enterprises when we begin with God and give diligence to

make our peace with him, When we attend upon God in holy ordinances our eye must be to the great sacrifice, to which we owe it that we are taken into covenant and communion with God, Ps 50:5.

3. He himself attended the solemnity with the highest expressions of joy that could be (2Sa 6:14): He danced before the Lord with all his might; he leaped for joy, as one transported with the occasion, and the more because of the disappointment he met with the last time. It is a pleasure to a good man to see his errors rectified and himself in the way of his duty. His dancing, I suppose, was not artificial, by any certain rule or measure, nor do we find that any danced with him; but it was a natural expression of his great joy and exultation of mind. He did it with all his might; so we should perform all our religious services, as those that are intent upon them and desire to do them in the best manner. All our might is little enough to be employed in holy duties: the work deserves it all. On this occasion David laid aside his imperial purple, and put on a plain linen ephod, which was light and convenient for dancing, and was used in religious exercises by those who were no priests, for Samuel wore one, 1Sa 2:18. That great prince thought it no disparagement to him to appear in the habit of a minister to the ark.

4. All the people triumphed in this advancement of the ark (2Sa 6:15): They brought it up into the royal city with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, so expressing their own joy in loud acclamations, and giving notice to all about them to rejoice with them. The public and free administration of ordinances, not only under the protection, but under the smiles, of the civil powers, is just matter of rejoicing to any people.

5. the ark was safely brought to, and honourably deposited in, the place prepared for it, 2Sa 6:17. They set it in the midst of the tabernacle, or tent, which David had pitched for it; not the tabernacle which Moses reared, for that was at Gibeon (2Ch 1:13), and, we may suppose, being made of cloth, in so many hundred years it had gone to decay and was not fit to be removed; but this was a tent set up on purpose to receive the ark. He would not bring it into a private house, no, not his own, lest it should seem to be too much engrossed, and people's resort to it, to pray before it, should be less free; yet he would not build a house for it, lest that should supersede the building of a more stately temple in due time, and therefore, for the present, he placed it within curtains, under a canopy, in imitation of Moses's tabernacle.

As soon as ever it was lodged, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, in thankfulness to God that the business was now done without any more errors or breaches, and in supplication to God for the continuance of his favour. Note, All our joys must be sanctified both with praises and prayers; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Now, it should seem, he penned the Ps 132:1-8. 6. The people were then dismissed with great satisfaction. He sent them away,

(1.) With a gracious prayer: He blessed them in the name of the Lord of hosts (2Sa 6:18), having not only a particular interest in heaven as a prophet, but an authority over them as a prince; for the less is blessed of the better, Heb 7:7. He prayed to God to bless them, and particularly to reward them for the honour and respect they had now shown to his ark, assuring them they should be no losers by their journey, but the blessing of God upon their affairs at home would more than bear their charges. He testified his desire for their welfare by this prayer for them, and let them know they had a king that loved them.

(2.) With a generous treat; for so it was, rather than a distribution of alms. The great men, it is probable, he entertained at his own house, but to the multitude of Israel, men and women (and children, says Josephus), he dealt to every one a cake of bread (a spice-cake, so some), a good piece of flesh--a handsome decent piece (so some)--a part of the peace-offerings (so Josephus), that they might feast with him upon the sacrifice, and a flagon, or bottle, of wine, 2Sa 6:19. Probably he ordered this provision to be made for them at their respective quarters, and this he did,

[1.] In token of his joy and gratitude to God. When the heart is enlarged in cheerfulness the hand should be opened in liberality. The feast of Purim was observed with sending portions one to another, Es 9:22. As those to whom God is merciful ought to show mercy in forgiving, so those to whom God is bountiful ought to exercise bounty in giving.

[2.] To recommend himself to the people, and confirm his interest in them; for every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts. Those that cared not for his prayers would love him for his generosity; and this would encourage them to attend him another time if he saw cause to call them together.

16 And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal
Saul's daughter looked through a window, and saw king David
leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her
heart.
17 And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in
the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David
offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.
18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings
and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord
of hosts.
19 And he dealt among all the people, *even* among the whole
multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a

cake of bread, and a good piece *of flesh,* and a flagon *of wine.* So all the people departed every one to his house.

20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

David, having dismissed the congregation with a blessing, returned to bless his household (2Sa 6:20), that is, to pray with them and for them, and to offer up his family thanksgiving for this national mercy. Ministers must not think that their public performances will excuse them from their family-worship; but when they have, with their instructions and prayers, blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless their households, for with them they are in a particular manner charged. David, though he had prophets, and priests, and Levites, about him, to be his chaplains, yet did not devolve the work upon them, but himself blessed his household. It is angels' work to worship God, and therefore surely that can be no disparagement to the greatest of men.

Never did David return to his house with so much pleasure and satisfaction as he did now that he had got the ark into his neighbourhood; and yet even this joyful day concluded with some uneasiness, occasioned by the pride and peevishness of his wife. Even the palaces of princes are not exempt from domestic troubles. David had pleased all the multitude of Israel, but Michal was not pleased with his dancing before the ark. For this, when he was at a distance, she scorned him, and when he came home she scolded him. She was not displeased at his generosity to the people, nor did she grudge the entertainment he gave them; but she thought he degraded himself too much in dancing before the ark. It was not her covetousness, but her pride, that made her fret.

I. When she saw David in the street dancing before the Lord she despised him in her heart, 2Sa 6:16. She thought this mighty zeal of his for the ark of God, and the transport of joy he was in upon its coming home to him, was but a foolish thing, and unbecoming so great a soldier, and statesman, and monarch, as he was. It would have been enough for him to encourage the devotion of others, but she looked upon it as a thing below him to appear so very devout himself. "What a fool" (thinks she) "does my husband make of himself now! How fond is he of this ark, that might as well have lain still where it had lain for so many years! Much devotion has almost made him mad." Note, The exercises of religion appear very mean in the eyes of those that have little or no religion themselves.

II. When he came home in the very best disposition she began to upbraid him, and was so full of disdain and indignation that she could not contain till she had him in private, but went out to meet him with her reproaches. Observe,

1. How she taunted him (2Sa 6:20): "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day! What a figure didst thou make to-day in the midst of the mob! How unbecoming thy post and character!" Her contempt of him and his devotion began in the heart, but out of the abundance of that the mouth spoke. That which displeased her was his affection to the ark, which she wished he had no greater kindness for than she had: but she basely represents his conduct, in dancing before the ark, as lewd and immodest; and, while really she was displeased at it as a diminution to his honour, she pretended to dislike it as a reproach to his virtue, that he uncovered himself in the eyes of the maid-servants, as no man would have done but one of the vain fellows that cared not how much he shamed himself. We have no reason to think that this was true in fact. David, no doubt, observed decorum, and governed his zeal with discretion.

But it is common for those that reproach religion thus to put false colours upon it and lay it under the most odious characters. To have abused any man thus for his pious zeal would have been very profane, but to abuse her own husband thus, whom she ought to have reverenced, and one whose prudence and virtue were above the reach of malice itself to disparage, one who had shown such affection for her that he would not accept a crown unless he might have her restored to him (2Sa 3:13), was a most base and wicked thing, and showed her to have more of Saul's daughter in her than of David's wife or Jonathan's sister.

2. How he replied to her reproach. He did not upbraid her with her treacherous departure from him to embrace the bosom of a stranger. He had forgiven that, and therefore had forgotten it, though, it may be, his own conscience, on this occasion, upbraided him with his folly in receiving her again (for that is said to pollute the land, Jer 3:1), but he justifies himself in what he did.

(1.) He designed thereby to honour God (2Sa 6:21): It was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. Whatever invidious construction she was pleased to put upon it, he had the testimony of his conscience for him that he sincerely aimed at the glory of God, for whom he thought he could never do enough. Here he reminds her indeed of the setting aside of her father's house, to make way for him to the throne, that she might not think herself the most proper judge of propriety: "God chose me before thy father, and appointed me to be ruler over Israel, and now I am the fountain of honour; and, if the expressions of a warm devotion to God were looked upon as mean and unfashionable in thy father's court, yet I will play before the Lord, and thereby bring them into reputation again. And, if this be to be vile (2Sa 6:22), I will be yet more vile." Note,

[1.] We should be afraid of censuring the devotion of others though it may not agree with our sentiments, because, for aught that we know, the heart may be upright in it, and who are we that we should despise those whom God has accepted?

[2.] If we can approve ourselves to God in what we do in religion, and do it as before the Lord, we need not value the censures and reproaches of men. If we appear right in God's eyes, no matter how mean we appear in the eyes of the world.

[3.] The more we are vilified for well-doing the more resolute we should be in it, and hold our religion the faster, and bind it the closer to us, for the endeavours of Satan's agents to shake us and to shame us out of it. I will be yet more vile.

(2.) He designed thereby to humble himself: "I will be base in my own sight, and will think nothing too mean to stoop to for the honour of God." In the throne of judgment, and in the field of battle, none shall do more to support the grandeur and authority of a prince than David shall; but in acts of devotion he lays aside the thought of majesty, humbles himself to the dust before the Lord, joins in with the meanest services done in honour of the ark, and thinks all this no diminution to him. The greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

(3.) He doubted not but even this would turn to his reputation among those whose reproach Michal pretended to fear: Of the maid-servants shall I be had in honour. The common people would be so far from thinking the worse of him for these pious condescensions that they would esteem and honour him so much the more. Those that are truly pious are sometimes manifested in the consciences even of those that speak ill of them, 2Co 5:11. Let us never be driven from our duty by the fear of reproach; for to be steady and resolute in it will perhaps

turn to our reputation more than we think it will. Piety will have its praise. Let us not then be indifferent in it, nor afraid or ashamed to own it.

David was contented thus to justify himself, and did not any further animadvert upon Michal's insolence; but God punished her for it, writing her for ever childless from this time forward, 2Sa 6:23. She unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. Those that honour God he will honour; but those that despise him, and his servants and service, shall be lightly esteemed.

21 And David said unto Michal, *It was* before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord.

22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor.

23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

2 Samuel-7

God's Covenant with David

1 And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies;

2 that the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

Here is, I. David at rest. He sat in his house (2Sa 7:1), quiet and undisturbed, having no occasion to take the field: The Lord had given him rest round about, from all those that were enemies to his settlement in the throne, and he set himself to enjoy that rest. Though he was a man of war, he was for peace

(Ps 120:7) and did not delight in war. He had not been long at rest, nor was it long before he was again engaged in war; but at present he enjoyed a calm, and he was in his element when he was sitting in his house, meditating in the law of God.

II. David's thought of building a temple for the honour of God. He had built a palace for himself and a city for his servants; and now he thinks of building a habitation for the ark.

1. Thus he would make a grateful return for the honours God put upon him. Note, When God, in his providence, has remarkably done much for us, it should put us upon contriving what we may do for him and his glory. What shall I render unto the Lord?

2. Thus he would improve the present calm, and make a good use of the rest God had given him. Now that he was not called out to serve God and Israel in the high places of the field, he would employ his thoughts, and time, and estate, in serving him another way, and not indulge himself in ease, much less in luxury. When God, in his providence, gives us rest, and finds us little to do of worldly business, we must do so much the more for God and our souls. How different were the thoughts of David when he sat in his palace from Nebuchadnezzar's when he walked in his! Da 4:29,30.

That proud man thought of nothing but the might of his own power, and the honour of his own majesty; this humble soul is full of contrivance how to glorify God, and give honour to him. And how God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace and glory to the humble, the event showed. David considered (2Sa 7:2) the stateliness of his own habitation (I dwell in a house of cedar) and compared with that the meanness of the habitation of the ark (the ark dwells within curtains), and thought this incongruous, that he should dwell in a palace and the ark in a tent. David had been uneasy till he found out a

place for the ark (Ps 132:4,5), and now he is uneasy till he finds out a better place. Gracious grateful souls,

(1.) Never think they can do enough for God, but, when they have done much, are still projecting to do more and devising liberal things.

(2.) They cannot enjoy their own accommodations while they see the church of God in distress and under a cloud. David can take little pleasure in a house of cedar for himself, unless the ark have one. Those who stretched themselves upon beds of ivory, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, though they had David's music, had not David's spirit (Am 6:4,6) nor those who dwelt in their ceiled houses while God's house lay waste.

III. His communicating this thought to Nathan the prophet. He told him, as a friend and confidant, whom he used to advise with. Could not David have gone about it himself? Was it not a good work? Was not he himself a prophet? Yes, but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. David told him, that by him he might know the mind of God. It was certainly a good work, but it was uncertain whether it was the will of God that David should have the doing of it.

IV. Nathan's approbation of it: Go, do all that is in thy heart; for the Lord is with thee, 2Sa 7:3. We do not find that David told him that he purposed to build a temple, only that it was a trouble to him that there was not one built, from which Nathan easily gathered what was in his heart, and bade him go on and prosper. Note, We ought to do all we can to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and put in a good word, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work.

Nathan spoke this, not in God's name, but as from himself; not as a prophet, but as a wise and good man; it was agreeable to the revealed will of God, which requires that all in their places should lay out themselves for the advancement of religion and the service of God, though it seems his secret will was otherwise, that David should not do this. It was Christ's prerogative always to speak the mind of God, which he perfectly knew. Other prophets spoke it only when the spirit of prophecy was upon them; but, if in any thing they mistook (as Samuel, 1Sa 16:6, and Nathan here) God soon rectified the mistake.

3 And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that *is* in thine heart; for the Lord *is* with thee.

4 And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying,

5 Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me a house for me to dwell in?

6 Whereas I have not dwelt in *any* house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle.

7 In all *the places* wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me a house of cedar?

8 Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:

We have here a full revelation of God's favour to David and the kind intentions of that favour, the notices and assurances of which God sent him by Nathan the prophet, whom he entrusted to deliver this long message to him. The design of it is to take him off from his purpose of building the temple and it was therefore sent,

1. By the same hand that had given him encouragement to do it, lest, if it had been sent by any other, Nathan should be

despised and insulted and David should be perplexed, being encouraged by one prophet and discouraged by another.

2 The same night, that Nathan might not continue long in an error nor David have his head any further filled with thoughts of that which he must never bring to pass. God might have said this to David himself immediately, but he chose to send it by Nathan, to support the honour of his prophets, and to preserve in David a regard to them. Though he be the head, they must be the eyes by which he must see the visions of the Almighty, and the tongue by which he must hear the word of God. He that delivered this long message to Nathan assisted his memory to retain it, that he might deliver it fully (he being resolved to deliver it faithfully) as he received it of the Lord. Now in this message,

I. David's purpose to build God a house is superseded. God took notice of that purpose, for he knows what is in man; and he was well pleased with it, as appears 1Ki 8:18, Thou didst well that it was in thy heart; yet he forbade him to go on with his purpose (2Sa 7:5): "Shalt thou build me a house? No, thou shalt not (as it is explained in the parallel place, 1Ch 17:4); there is other work appointed for thee to do, which must be done first." David is a man of war, and he must enlarge the borders of Israel, by carrying on their conquests.

David is a sweet psalmist, and he must prepare psalms for the use of the temple when it is built, and settle the courses of the Levites; but his son's genius will better suit for building the house, and he will have a better treasure to bear the charge of it, and therefore let it be reserved for him to do. As every man hath received the gift, so let him minister. The building of a temple was to be a work of time, and preparation made for it; but it was a thing that had never been spoken of till now. God tells him,

1. That hitherto he had never had a house built for him (2Sa 7:6), a tabernacle had served hitherto, and it might serve awhile longer. God regards not outward pomp in his service; his presence was as surely with his people when the ark was in a tent as when it was in a temple. David was uneasy that the ark was in curtains (a mean and movable habitation), but God never complained of it as any uneasiness to him. He did not dwell, but walk, and yet fainted not, nor was weary. Christ, like the ark, when here on earth walked in a tent or tabernacle, for he went about doing good, and dwelt not in any house of his own, till he ascended on high, to the mansions above, in his Father's house, and there he sat down.

The church, like the ark, in this world is ambulatory, dwells in a tent, because its present state is both pastoral and military; its continuing city is to come. David, in his psalms, often calls the tabernacle a temple (as Ps 5:7,27:4,29:9,65:4,138:2), because it answered the intention of a temple, though it was made but of curtains. Wise and good men value not the show, while they have the substance. David perhaps had more true devotion, and sweeter communion with God, in a house of curtains, than any of his successors in the house of cedar.

2. That he had never given any orders or directions, or the least intimation, to any of the sceptres of Israel, that is, to any of the judges, 1Ch 17:6 (for rulers are called sceptres, Eze 19:14, the great Ruler is called so, Nu 24:17), concerning the building of the temple, 2Sa 7:7. That worship only is acceptable which is instituted; why should David therefore design what God never ordained? Let him wait for a warrant, and then let him do it. Better a tent of God's appointing than a temple of his own inventing.

II. David is reminded of the great things God had done for him, to let him know that he was a favourite of heaven, though he had not the favour to be employed in this service, as also

that God was not indebted to him for his good intentions, but, whatever he did for God's honour, God was beforehand with him, 2Sa 7:8,9.

1. He had raised him from a very mean and low condition: He took him from the sheep-cote. It is good for those who have come to great preferment to be often reminded of their small beginnings, that they may always be humble and thankful.

2. He had given him success and victory over his enemies (2Sa 7:9): "I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, to protect thee when pursued, to prosper thee when pursuing. I have cut off all thy enemies, that stood in the way of thy advancement and settlement."

3. He had crowned him not only with power and dominion in Israel, but with honour and reputation among the nations about: I have made thee a great name. He had become famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements, and was more talked of than any of the great men of his day. A great name is what those who have it have great reason to be thankful for and may improve to good purposes, but what those who have it not have no reason to be ambitious of: a good name is more desirable. A man may pass through the world very obscurely and yet very comfortably.

III. A happy establishment is promised to God's Israel, 2Sa 7:10,11. This comes in in a parenthesis, before the promises made to David himself, to let him understand that what God designed to do for him was for Israel's sake, that they might be happy under his administration, and to give him the satisfaction of foreseeing peace upon Israel, when it was promised him that he should see his children's children, Ps 128:6. A good king cannot think himself happy unless his kingdom be so. The promises that follow relate to his family and posterity; these therefore, which speak of the settlement

of Israel, intend the happiness of his own reign. Two things are promised:--

1. A quiet place: I will appoint a place for my people Israel. It was appointed long ago, yet they were disappointed, but now that appointment should be made good. Canaan should be clearly their own without any ejection or molestation.

2. A quiet enjoyment of that place: The children of wickedness (meaning especially the Philistines, who had been so long a plague to them) shall not afflict them any more; but, as in the time that I caused judges to be over my people Israel, I will cause thee to rest from all thy enemies (so 2Sa 7:11 may be read), that is, "I will continue and complete that rest; the land shall rest from war, as it did under the judges."

IV. Blessings are entailed upon the family and posterity of David. David had purposed to build God a house, and, in requital, God promises to build him a house, 2Sa 7:11. Whatever we do for God, or sincerely design to do though Providence prevents our doing it, we shall in no wise lose our reward. He had promised to make him a name (2Sa 7:9); here he promises to make him a house, which should bear up that name. It would be a great satisfaction to David, while he lived, to have the inviolable assurance of a divine promise that his family should flourish when he was dead. Next to the happiness of our souls, and the church of God, we should desire the happiness of our seed, that those who come of us may be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven.

1. Some of these promises relate to Solomon, his immediate successor, and to the royal line of Judah.

(1.) That God would advance him to the throne. Those words, when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy

fathers, intimate that David himself should come to his grave in peace; and then I will set up thy seed. This favour was so much the greater because it was more than God had done for Moses, or Joshua, or any of the judges whom he called to feed his people. David's government was the first that was entailed; for the promise made to Christ of the kingdom was to reach to his spiritual seed. If children, then heirs.

(2.) That he would settle him in the throne: I will establish his kingdom (2Sa 7:12), the throne of his kingdom, 2Sa 7:13. His title shall be clear and uncontested, his interest confirmed, and his administration steady.

(3.) That he would employ him in that good work of building the temple, which David had only the satisfaction of designing: He shall build a house for my name, 2Sa 7:13. The work shall be done, though David shall not have the doing of it.

(4.) That he would take him into the covenant of adoption (2Sa 7:14,15): I will be his father, and he shall be my son. We need no more to make us and ours happy than to have God to be a Father to us and them; and all those to whom God is a Father he by his grace makes his sons, by giving them the disposition of children. If he be a careful, tender, bountiful Father to us, we must be obedient, tractable, dutiful children to him. The promise here speaks as unto sons.

[1.] That his Father would correct him when there was occasion; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Afflictions are an article of the covenant, and are not only consistent with, but flow from, God's fatherly love. "If he commit iniquity, as it proved he did (1Ki 11:1), I will chasten him to bring him to repentance, but it shall be with the rod of men, such a rod as men may wield--I will not plead against him with the great power of God," Job 23:6. Or rather such a

rod as men may bear--"I will consider his frame, and correct him with all possible tenderness and compassion when there is need, and no more than there is need of; it shall be with the stripes, the touches (so the word is) of the children of men; not a stroke, or wound, but a gentle touch."

[2.] That yet he would not disinherit him (2Sa 7:15): My mercy (and that is the inheritance of sons) shall not depart from him. The revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David was their correction for iniquity, but the constant adherence of the other two to that family, which was a competent support of the royal dignity, perpetuated the mercy of God to the seed of David, according to this promise; though that family was cut short, yet it was not cut off, as the house of Saul was. Never any other family swayed the sceptre of Judah than that of David. This is that covenant of royalty celebrated (Ps 89:3,4, &c.) as typical of the covenant of redemption and grace.

2. Others of them relate to Christ, who is often called David and the Son of David, that Son of David to whom these promises pointed and in whom they had their full accomplishment. He was of the seed of David, Ac 13:23. To him God gave the throne of his father David (Lu 1:32), all power both in heaven and earth, and authority to execute judgment. He was to build the gospel temple, a house for God's name, Zec 6:12,13. That promise, I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle, Heb 1:5. But the establishing of his house, and his throne, and his kingdom, for ever (2Sa 7:13, and again, and a third time 2Sa 7:16. for ever), can be applied to no other than Christ and his kingdom.

David's house and kingdom have long since come to an end; it is only the Messiah's kingdom that is everlasting, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

The supposition of committing iniquity cannot indeed be applied to the Messiah himself, but it is applicable (and very comfortable) to his spiritual seed. True believers have their infirmities, for which they may expect to be corrected, but they shall not be cast off. Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant. Now,

(1.) This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David (2Sa 7:17); though, in forbidding him to build the temple, he contradicted his own words, yet he was not backward to do it when he was better informed concerning the mind of God.

(2.) These promises God faithfully performed to David and his seed in due time. Though David came short of making good his purpose to build God a house, yet God did not come short of making good his promise to build him a house. Such is the tenour of the covenant we are under; though there are many failures in our performances, there are none in God's.

9 and I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off
all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great
name, like unto the name of the great *men* that *are* in the earth.
10 Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant
them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no
more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any
more, as beforetime,
11 and as since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people
Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the
Lord telleth thee that he will make thee a house.
12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers,
I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy
bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.
13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will stablish the throne
of his kingdom for ever.
14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I
will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the
children of men:

15 but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took *it* from
Saul, whom I put away before thee.
16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever
before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.
17 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did
Nathan speak unto David.
18 Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said,
Who *am* I, O Lord God? and what *is* my house, that thou hast
brought me hitherto?
19 And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou
hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come.
And *is* this the manner of man, O Lord God?
20 And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God,
knowest thy servant.
21 For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou
done all these great things, to make thy servant know *them.*
22 Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for *there is* none like thee,
neither *is there any* God besides thee, according to all that we have
heard with our ears.
23 And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people, *even* like Israel,
whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him
a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land,
before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from
Egypt, *from* the nations and their gods?
24 For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel *to be* a people
unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God.

We have here the solemn address David made to God, in answer to the gracious message God had sent him. We are not told what he said to Nathan; no doubt he received him very kindly and respectfully as God's messenger. But his answer to God he took himself, and did not send by Nathan. When ministers deliver God's message to us, it is not to them, but to God, that our hearts must reply; he understands the language of the heart, and to him we may come boldly. David had no sooner received the message than, while the impressions of it were fresh, he retired to return an answer. Observe,

I The place he retired to: He went in before the Lord, that is, into the tabernacle where the ark was, which was the token of God's presence; before that he presented himself. God's will now is that men pray everywhere; but, wherever we pray, we must set ourselves as before the Lord and set him before us.

II The posture he put himself into: He sat before the Lord.

1. It denotes the posture of his body. Kneeling or standing is certainly the most proper gesture to be used in prayer; but the Jews, from this instance, say, "It was allowed to the kings of the house of David to sit in the temple, and to no other." But this will by no means justify the ordinary use of that gesture in prayer, whatever may be allowed in a case of necessity. David went in, and took his place before the Lord, so it may be read; but, when he prayed, he stood up as the manner was. Or he went in and continued before the Lord, staid some time silently meditating, before he began his prayer, and then remained longer than usual in the tabernacle. Or,

2. It may denote the frame of his spirit at this time. He went in, and composed himself before the Lord; thus we should do in all our approaches to God. O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.

III. The prayer itself, which is full of the breathings of pious and devout affection towards God.

1. He speaks very humbly of himself and his own merits. So he begins as one astonished: Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house? 2Sa 7:18. God had reminded him of the meanness of his original (2Sa 7:8) and he subscribed to it; he had low thoughts,

(1.) Of his personal merits: Who am I? He was upon all accounts a very considerable and valuable man. His endowments both of body and mind were extraordinary. His gifts and graces were eminent. He was a man of honour, success, and usefulness, the darling of his country and the dread of its enemies. Yet, when he comes to speak of himself before God, he says, "Who am I? A man not worth taking notice of."

(2.) Of the merits of his family: What is my house? His house was of the royal tribe, and descended from the prince of that tribe; he was allied to the best families of the country, and yet, like Gideon, thinks his family poor in Judah and himself the least in his father's house, Jdg 6:15. David thus humbled himself when Saul's daughter was proposed to him for a wife (1Sa 18:18), but now with much more reason.

Note, It very well becomes the greatest and best of men, even in the midst of the highest advancements, to have low and mean thoughts of themselves; for the greatest of men are worms, the best are sinners, and those that are highest advanced have nothing but what they have received: "What am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto, brought me to the kingdom, and to a settlement in it, and rest from all my enemies?" It intimates that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God's vouchsafements.

2. He speaks very highly and honourably of God's favours to him.

(1.) In what he had done for him: "Thou hast brought me hitherto, to this great dignity and dominion. Hitherto thou hast helped me." Though we should be left at uncertainty

concerning further mercy, we have great reason to be thankful for that which has been done for us hitherto, Ac 26:22.

(2.) In what he had yet further promised him. God had done great things for him already, and yet, as if those had been nothing, he had promised to do much more, 2Sa 7:19. Note, What God has laid out upon his people is much, but what he has laid up for them is infinitely more, Ps 31:19. The present graces and comforts of the saints are invaluable gifts; and yet, as if these were too little for God to bestow upon his children, he has spoken concerning them for a great while to come, even as far as eternity itself reaches. Of this we must own, as David here,

[1.] That it is far beyond what we could expect: Is this the manner of men? that is,

First, Can man expect to be so dealt with by his Maker? Is this the law of Adam? Note, Considering what the character and condition of man are, it is very surprising and amazing that God should deal with him as he does. Man is a mean creature, and therefore under a law of distance--unprofitable to God, and therefore under a law of disesteem and disregard--guilty and obnoxious, and therefore under a law of death and damnation. But how unlike are God's dealings with man to this law of Adam! He is brought near to God, purchased at a high rate, taken into covenant and communion with God; could this ever have been thought of?

Secondly, Do men usually deal thus with one another? No, the way of our God is far above the manner of men. Though he be high, he has respect to the lowly; and is this the manner of men? Though he is offended by us, he beseeches us to be reconciled, waits to be gracious, multiplies his pardons: and is this the manner of men? Some give another sense of this, reading it thus: And this is the law of man, the Lord Jehovah,

that is, "This promise of one whose kingdom shall be established for ever must be understood of one that is a man and yet the Lord Jehovah, this must be the law of such a one. A Messiah from my loins must be man, but, reigning for ever, must be God."

[2.] That beyond this there is nothing we can desire: "And what can David say more unto thee? 2Sa 7:20. What can I ask or wish for more? Thou, Lord, knowest thy servant, knowest what will make me happy, and what thou hast promised is enough to do so." The promise of Christ includes all. If that man, the Lord God, be ours, what can we ask or think of more? Eph 3:20. The promises of the covenant of grace are framed by him that knows us, and therefore knows how to adapt them to every branch of our necessity. He knows us better than we know ourselves; and therefore let us be satisfied with the provision he has made for us. What can we say more for ourselves in our prayers than he has said for us in his promises?

3. He ascribes all to the free grace of God (2Sa 7:21), both the great things he had done for him and the great things he had made known to him. All was,

(1.) For his word's sake, that is, for the sake of Christ the eternal Word; it is all owing to his merit. Or, "That thou mayest magnify thy word of promise above all thy name, in making it the stay and store-house of thy people."

(2.) According to thy own heart, thy gracious counsels and designs, ex mero motu--of thy own good pleasure. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes. All that God does for his people in his providences, and secures to them in his promises, is for his pleasure and for his praise, the pleasure of his will and the praise of his word.

4. He adores the greatness and glory of God (2Sa 7:22): Thou art great, O Lord God! for there is none like thee. God's gracious condescension to him, and the honour he had put upon him, did not at all abate his awful veneration for the divine Majesty; for the nearer any are brought to God the more they see of his glory, and the dearer we are in his eyes the greater he should be in ours. And this we acknowledge concerning God, that there is no being like him, nor any God besides him, and that what we have seen with our eyes of his power and goodness is according to all that we have heard with our ears, and the one half not told us.

5. He expresses a great esteem for the Israel of God, 2Sa 7:23,24. As there was none among the gods to be compared with Jehovah, so none among the nations to be compared with Israel, considering,

(1.) The works he had done for them. He went to redeem them, applied himself to it as a great work, went about it with solemnity. Elohim halecu, dii iveruni--Gods went, as if there was the same consultation and concurrence of all the persons in the blessed Trinity about the work of redemption that there was about the work of creation, when God said, Let us make man. Whom those that were sent of God went to redeem; so the Chaldee, meaning, I suppose, Moses and Aaron. The redemption of Israel, as described here, was typical of our redemption by Christ in that,

[1.] They were redeemed from the nations and their gods; so are we from all iniquity and all conformity to this present world. Christ came to save his people from their sins.

[2.] They were redeemed to be a peculiar people unto God, purified and appropriated to himself, that he might make himself a great name and do for them great things. The honour

of God, and the eternal happiness of the saints, are the two things aimed at in their redemption.

(2.) The covenant he had made with them, 2Sa 7:24. It was,

[1.] Mutual: "They to be a people to thee, and thou to be a God to them; all their interests consecrated to thee, and all thy attributes engaged for them."

[2.] Immutable: "Thou hast confirmed them." He that makes the covenant makes it sure and will make it good.

6. He concludes with humble petitions to God.

(1.) He grounds his petitions upon the message which God had sent him (2Sa 7:27): Thou hast revealed this to thy servant, that is, "Thou hast of thy own good will given me the promise that thou wilt build me a house, else I could never have found in my heart to pray such a prayer as this. I durst not have asked such great things if I had not been directed and encouraged by thy promise to ask them. They are indeed too great for me to beg, but not too great for thee to give. Thy servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer;" so it is in the original, and the LXX. Many, when they go to pray, have their hearts to seek, but David's heart was found, that is, it was fixed, gathered in from its wanderings, and entirely engaged to the duty and employed in it. That prayer which is found in the tongue only will not please God; it must be found in the heart; the heart must be lifted up and poured out before God. My son, give God thy heart.

(2.) He builds his faith and hopes to speed upon the fidelity of God's promise (2Sa 7:25): "Thou art that God (thou art he, even that God, the Lord of hosts, and God of Israel, or that God whose words are true, that God whom one may depend

upon); and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant, which I am therefore bold to pray for."

(3.) Thence he fetches the matter of his prayer, and refers to that as the guide of his prayers.

[1.] He prays for the performance of God's promise (2Sa 7:25): "Let the word be made good to me, on which thou hast caused me to hope (Ps 119:49) and do as thou hast said; I desire no more, and I expect no less; so full is the promise, and so firm." Thus we must turn God's promises into prayers, and then they shall be turned into performances; for, with God, saying and doing are not two things, as they often are with men. God will do as he hath said.

[2.] He prays for the glorifying of God's name (2Sa 7:26): Let thy name be magnified for ever. This ought to be the summary and centre of all our prayers, the Alpha and the Omega of them. Begin with Hallowed be thy name, and end with Thine is the glory for ever. "Whether I be magnified or no, let thy name be magnified." And he reckons that nothing magnifies God's name more than this, to say, with suitable affections, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel. This bespeaks the God of Israel gloriously great, that he is the Lord of hosts; and this bespeaks the Lord of hosts gloriously good, that he is God over Israel. In both, let his name be magnified for ever. Let all the creatures and all the churches give him the glory of these two. David desired the performance of God's promise for the honour, not of his own name, but of God's. Thus the Son of David prayed, Father, glorify thy name (Joh 12:28), and (Joh 17:1), Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee.

[3.] He prays for his house, for to that the promise has special reference,

First, That it might be happy (2Sa 7:29): Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant; and again, with thy blessing. "Let the house of thy servant be truly and eternally blessed. Those whom thou blessest are blessed indeed." The care of good men is very much concerning their families; and the best entail on their families is that of the blessing of God. The repetition of this request is not a vain repetition, but expressive of the value he had of the divine blessing, and his earnest desire of it, as all in all to the happiness of his family.

Secondly, That the happiness of it might remain: "Let it be established before thee (2Sa 7:26); let it continue for ever before thee." 2Sa 7:29. He prayed,

1. That the entail of the crown might not be cut off, but remain in his family, that none of his might ever forfeit it, but that they might walk before God, which would be their establishment.

2. That his kingdom might have its perfection and perpetuity in the kingdom of the Messiah. When Christ for ever sat down on the right hand of God (Heb 10:12), and received all possible assurance that his seed and throne shall be as the days of heaven, this prayer of David the son of Jesse for his seed was abundantly answered, that it might continue before God for ever. See Ps 72:17. The perpetuity of the Messiah's kingdom is the desire and faith of all good people.

25 And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning
thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do
as thou hast said.
26 And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts
is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be
established before thee.
27 For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy
servant, saying, I will build thee a house: therefore hath thy
servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

28 And now, O Lord God, thou *art* that God, and thy words be true,
and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:
29 therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant,
that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast
spoken *it:* and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be
blessed for ever.

2 Samuel-8

David Extends His Kingdom

1 And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and
subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of
the Philistines.
2 And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them
down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to
death, and with one full line to keep alive. And *so* the Moabites
became David's servants, *and* brought gifts.
3 David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as
he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.
4 And David took from him a thousand *chariots,* and seven hundred
horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all
the chariot *horses,* but reserved of them *for* a hundred chariots.
5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succor Hadadezer king
of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him and made head against him; and he having made a good use of that rest, has now commission given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the avenging of Israel's quarrels and the recovery of their rights; for as yet they were not in full possession of that country to which by the promise of God they were entitled.

I. He quite subdued the Philistines, 2Sa 8:1. They had attacked him when they thought him weak (2Sa 5:17), and went by the worst then; but, when he found himself strong, he attacked

them, and made himself master of their country. They had long been vexatious and oppressive to Israel. Saul got no ground against them; but David completed Israel's deliverance out of their hands, which Samson had begun long before, Jdg 13:5. Metheg-ammah was Gath (the chief and royal city of the Philistines) and the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garrison kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah (2Sa 2:24), which was Metheg, a bridle (so it signifies) or curb upon the people of Israel; this David took out of their hand and used it as a curb upon them. Thus, when the strong man is disarmed, the armour wherein he trusted is taken from him, and used against him, Lu 11:22. And after the long and frequent struggles which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, the Son of David shall tread them all under their feet and make the saints more than conquerors.

II. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, 2Sa 8:2. He divided the country into three parts, two of which he destroyed, casting down the strong-holds, and putting all to the sword; the third part he spared, to till the ground and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot says, "He laid them on the ground and measured them with a cord, who should be slain and who should live;" and this is called meting out the valley of Succoth, Ps 60:6. The Jews say he used this severity with the Moabites because they had slain his parents and brethren, whom he put under the protection of the king of Moab during his exile, 1Sa 22:3,4.

He did it in justice, because they had been dangerous enemies to the Israel of God; and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been so. But observe, Though it was necessary that two-thirds should be cut off, yet the line that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line. Be sure to give that length enough; let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost in favorem vitæ--so as to

favour life. Acts of indemnity must be construed so as to enlarge the favour. Now Balaam's prophecy was fulfilled, A sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, to the utmost of which the fatal line extended, Nu 24:17. The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel till after the death of Ahab, 2Ki 3:4,5. Then they rebelled and were never reduced.

III. He smote the Syrians or Aramites. Of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the Ps 60:1-12: Aram Naharaim,--Syria of the rivers, whose head city was Damascus (famed for its rivers, 2Ki 5:12), and Aram Zobah, which joined to it, but extended to Euphrates. These were the two northern crowns.

1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, 2Sa 8:3,4. As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates (for so far the land conveyed by the divine grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, Ge 15:18), the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of those countries which belonged to Israel; but David routed his forces, and took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be 700, but 1Ch 18:4 they are said to be 7000.

If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were 700, but the horsemen were 7000. David houghed the horses, cut the sinews of their hams, and so lamed them, and made them unserviceable, at least in war, God having forbidden them to multiply horses, De 17:16. David reserved only 100 chariots out of 1000 for his own use: for he placed his strength not in chariots nor horses, but in the living God (Ps 20:7), and wrote it from his own observation that a horse is a vain thing for safety, Ps 33:16,17.

2 The Syrians of Damascus coming in to the relief of the king of Zobah fell with him. 22,000 were slain in the field, 2Sa 8:5. So that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garrison it for himself, 2Sa 8:6. The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will prove, in the end, to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other. Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces, Isa 8:9.

IV. In all these wars,

1. David was protected: The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went. It seems, he went in person, and, in the cause of God and Israel, jeoparded his own life in the high places of the field; but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he often speaks of, in his psalms, to the glory of God.

2. He was enriched. He took the shields of gold which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody (2Sa 8:7) and much brass from several cities of Syria (2Sa 8:8), which he was entitled to, not only jure belli--by the uncontrollable right of the longest sword ("Get it, and take it"); but by commission from heaven, and the ancient entail of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians
became servants to David, *and* brought gifts. And the Lord
preserved David whithersoever he went.
7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of
Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.
8 And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king
David took exceeding much brass.
9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the
host of Hadadezer,
10 then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to
bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten

him: for Hadadezer had wars with Toi. And *Joram* brought with
him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass:
11 which also king David did dedicate unto the Lord, with the silver
and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued;

Here is, 1 The court made to David by the king of Hamath, who, it seems was at this time at war with the king of Zobah. He hearing of David's success against his enemy, sent his own son ambassador to him (2Sa 8:9,10), to congratulate him on his victory, to return him thanks for the favour he had done him in breaking the power of one he was in fear of, and to beg his friendship. Thus he not only secured but strengthened himself. And David lost nothing by taking this little prince under his protection, any more than the old Romans did by the like policy; for the wealth he had from the countries he conquered by way of spoil he had from this by way of present or gratuity: Vessels of silver and gold. Better get by composition than by compulsion.

2 The offering David made to God of the spoils of the nations and all the rich things that were brought him. He dedicated all to the Lord, 2Sa 8:11,12. This crowned all his victories, and made them far to out-shine Alexander's or Caesar's, that they sought their own glory, but he aimed at the glory of God. All the precious things he was master of were dedicated things, that is, they were designed for the building of the temple; and a good omen it was of kindness to the Gentiles in the fulness of time, and of the making of God's house a house of prayer for all people, that the temple was built of the spoils and presents of Gentile nations, in allusion to which we find the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem, Re 21:24.

Their gods of gold David burnt (2Sa 5:21), but their vessels of gold he dedicated. Thus in the conquest of a soul, by the grace of the Son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust mortified and crucified, but

what may glorify him must be dedicated and the property of it altered. Even the merchandise and the hire must be holiness to the Lord (Isa 23:18), the gain consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth (Mic 4:13), and then it is truly our own and that most comfortably.

3. The reputation he got, in a particular manner, by his victory over the Syrians and their allies the Edomites, who acted in conjunction with them, as appears by comparing the title of the 60th Psalm, which was penned on this occasion, with 2Sa 8:13. He got himself a name for all that conduct and courage which are the praise of a great and distinguished general. Something extraordinary, it is likely, there was in that action, which turned very much to his honour, yet he is careful to transfer the honour to God, as appears by the psalm he penned on this occasion, 2Sa 8:12. It is through God that we do valiantly.

4. His success against the Edomites. They all became David's servants, 2Sa 8:14. Now, and not till now, Isaac's blessing was accomplished, by which Jacob was made Esau's Lord (Ge 27:37-40) and the Edomites continued long tributary to the kings of Judah, as the Moabites were to the kings of Israel, till, in Joram's time, they revolted (2Ch 21:8) as Isaac had there foretold that Esau should, in process of time, break the yoke from off his neck. Thus David by his conquests,

(1.) Secured peace to his son, that he might have time to build the temple. And,

(2.) Procured wealth for his son, that he might have wherewith to build it. God employs his servants variously, some in one employment, others in another, some in the spiritual battles, others in the spiritual buildings; and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all. All David's victories

were typical of the success of the gospel against the kingdom of Satan, in which the Son of David rode forth, conquering and to conquer, and he shall reign till he has brought down all opposing rule, principality, and power: and he has, as David had (2Sa 8:2), a line to kill and a line to save; for the same gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death.

12 of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the
Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of
Rehob, king of Zobah.
13 And David gat *him* a name when he returned from smiting of the
Syrians in the valley of salt, *being* eighteen thousand *men*.
14 And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he
garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the
Lord preserved David whithersoever he went.

David's Officers

15 And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment
and justice unto all his people.

David was not so engaged in his wars abroad as to neglect the administration of the government at home.

I. His care extended itself to all the parts of his dominion: He reigned over all Israel (2Sa 8:15); not only he had a right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so; they were all safe under his protection, and shared in the fruits of his good government.

II. He did justice with an unbiased unshaken hand: He executed judgment unto all his people, neither did wrong nor denied or delayed right to any. This intimates,

1. His industry and close application to business, his easiness of access and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him. All his people, even the meanest, and those too of the meanest tribes, were welcome to his council-board.

2. His impartiality and the equity of his proceedings, in administering justice. He never perverted justice through favour or affection, nor had respect of persons in judgment. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth in righteousness both judge and make war, Re 19:11. See Ps 72:1,2.

III. He kept good order and good officers in his court. David being the first king that had an established government (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled) he had the modelling of the administration. In Saul's time we read of no other great officer than Abner, that was captain of the host. But David appointed more officers: Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Banaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city train-bands (archers and slingers, so the Chaldee), or rather the life-guards, or standing force, that attended the king's person, the pretorian band, the militia. They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administering of justice, and to preserve the public peace. We find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, 1Ki 1:38.

2. Two ecclesiastical officers: Zadok and Ahimelech were priests, that is, they were most employed in the priests' work under Abiathar, the high priest.

3. Two civil officers: one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in its season (he was prime minister of state, yet not entrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our lord chancellor, but only of the king's memory; let the king be put in mind of business and he would do it himself); another that was scribe, or secretary of state, that drew up public orders and despatches, and recorded judgments given.

4. David's sons, as they grew up to be fit for business, were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them. They were chief about the king (so it is explained, 1Ch 18:17), employed near him, that they might be under his eye. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community; when he ascended on high he gave these gifts (Eph 4:8-11), to every man his work, Mk 13:34. David made his sons chief rulers; but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are made to our God kings and priests, Re 1:6.

16 And Joab the son of Zeruiah *was* over the host; and Jehoshaphat the
son of Ahilud *was* recorder;
17 and Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar,
were the priests; and Seraiah *was* the scribe;
18 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was over* both the Cherethites and
the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

2 Samuel-9

David's Kindness to Mephibosheth

1 And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul,
that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?
2 And *there was* of the house of Saul a servant whose name *was* Ziba.
And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him,
Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant *is he.*
3 And the king said, *Is* there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I
may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the
king, Jonathan hath yet a son, *which is* lame on *his* feet.
4 And the king said unto him, Where *is* he? And Ziba said unto the
king, Behold, he *is* in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in
Lo-debar.

Here is, I. David's enquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, 2Sa 9:1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul died, had now a son born, 2Sa 9:12. David had too long forgotten his obligations to Jonathan, but now, at length, they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to bethink ourselves whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never. The compendium which Paul gives us of the life of David is this (Ac 13:36), that he served his generation according to the will of God, that is, he was a man that made it his business to do good; witness this instance, where we may observe,

1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might perhaps have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he does more, he enquires of those about him first (2Sa 9:1), and, when he met with a person that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, Is there any yet left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness? 2Sa 9:3. "Is there any, not only to whom I may do justice (Nu 5:8), but to whom I may show kindness?" Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. The liberal deviseth liberal things, Isa 32:8. For, the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are such as will not be frequently met with without enquiry. The most necessitous are the least clamorous.

2. Those he enquired after were the remains of the house of Saul, to whom he would show kindness for Jonathan's sake: Is there any left of the house of Saul? Saul had a very numerous family (1Ch 8:33), enough to replenish a country, and was yet so emptied that none of it appeared; but it was a matter of enquiry, Is there any left? See how the providence of God can empty full families; see how the sin of man will

do it. Saul's was a bloody house, no marvel it was thus reduced, 2Sa 21:1. But, though God visited the iniquity of the father upon the children, David would not. "Is there any left that I can show kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but for Jonathan's?"

(1.) Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he would show kindness to his house with all his heart and was forward to do it. He does not say, "Is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may find some way to take them off, and prevent their giving disturbance to me or my successor?" It was against Abimelech's mind that any one was left of the house of Gideon (Jdg 9:5), and against Athaliah's mind that any one was left of the seed royal, 2Ch 22:10,11. Those were usurped governments. David's needed no such vile supports. He was desirous to show kindness to the house of Saul, not only because he trusted in God and feared not what they could do unto him, but because he was of a charitable disposition and forgave what they had done to him.

Note, We must evince the sincerity of our forgiving those that have been any way unjust or injurious to us by being ready, as we have opportunity, to show kindness both to them and theirs. We must not only not avenge ourselves upon them, but we must love them, and do them good (Mt 5:44), and not be backward to do any office of love and good-will to those that have done us many an injury. 1Pe 3:9-- but, contrari-wise, blessing. This is the way to overcome evil, and to find mercy for ourselves and ours, when we or they need it.

(2.) Jonathan was David's sworn friend, and therefore he would show kindness to his house. This teaches us,

[1.] To be mindful of our covenant. The kindness we have promised we must conscientiously perform, though it should

not be claimed. God is faithful to us; let us not be unfaithful to one another.

[2.] To be mindful of our friendships, our old friendships. Note, Kindness to our friends, even to them and theirs, is one of the laws of our holy religion. He that has friends must show himself friendly, Pr 18:24. If Providence has raised us, and our friends and their families are brought low, yet we must not forget former acquaintance, but rather look upon that as giving us so much the fairer opportunity of being kind to them: then our friends have most need of us and we are in the best capacity to help them. Though there be not a solemn league of friendship tying us to this constancy of love, yet there is a sacred law of friendship no less obliging, that to him that is in misery pity should be shown by his friend, Job 6:14. A brother is born for adversity. Friendship obliges us to take cognizance of the families and surviving relations of those we have loved, who, when they left us, left behind them their bodies, their names, and their posterity, to be kind to.

3. The kindness he promised to show them he calls the kindness of God; not only great kindness, but,

(1.) Kindness in pursuance of the covenant that was between him and Jonathan, to which God was a witness. See 1Sa 20:42.

(2.) Kindness after God's example; for we must be merciful as he is. He spares those whom he has advantage against, and so must we. Jonathan's request to David was (1Sa 20:14,15), "Show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not, and the same to my seed." The kindness of God is some greater instance of kindness than one can ordinarily expect from men.

(3.) It is kindness done after a godly sort, and with an eye to God, and his honour and favour.

II. Information given him concerning Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Ziba was an old retainer to Saul's family, and knew the state of it. He was sent for and examined, and informed the king that Jonathan's son was living, but lame (how he came to be so we read before, 2Sa 4:4), and that he lived in obscurity, probably among his mother's relations in Lo-debar in Gilead, on the other side Jordan, where he was forgotten, as a dead man out of mind, but bore this obscurity the more easily because he could remember little of the honour he fell from.

III. The bringing of him to court. The king sent (Ziba, it is likely) to bring him up to Jerusalem with all convenient speed, 2Sa 9:5. Thus he eased Machir of his trouble, and perhaps recompensed him for what he had laid out on Mephibosheth's account. This Machir appears to have been a very generous free-hearted man, and to have entertained Mephibosheth, not out of any disaffection to David or his government, but in compassion to the reduced son of a prince, for afterwards we find him kind to David himself when he fled from Absalom. He is named (2Sa 17:27) among those that furnished the king with what he wanted at Mahanaim, though David, when he sent for Mephibosheth from him, little thought that the time would come when he himself would gladly be beholden to him: and perhaps Machir was then the more ready to help David in recompence for his kindness to Mephibosheth. Therefore we should be forward to give, because we know not but we ourselves may some time be in want, Ec 11:2. And he that watereth shall be watered also himself, Pr 11:25. Now,

1. Mephibosheth presented himself to David with all the respect that was due to his character. Lame as he was, he fell on his face, and did homage, 2Sa 9:6. David had thus made his honours to Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan, when he was next to the throne (1Sa 20:41, he bowed himself to him three times), and now Mephibosheth, in like manner, addresses

him, when affairs are so completely reversed. Those who, when they are in inferior relations, show respect, shall, when they come to be advanced, have respect shown to them.

2. David received him with all the kindness that could be.

(1.) He spoke to him as one surprised, but pleased to see him. "Mephibosheth! Why, is there such a man living?" He remembered his name, for it is probable that he was born about the time of the intimacy between him and Jonathan.

(2.) He bade him not be afraid: Fear not, 2Sa 9:7. It is probable that the sight of David put him into some confusion, to free him from which he assures him that he sent for him, not out of any jealousy he had of him, nor with any bad design upon him, but to show him kindness. Great men should not take a pleasure in the timorous approaches of their inferiors (for the great God does not), but should encourage them.

(3.) He gives him, by grant from the crown, all the land of Saul his father, that is, his paternal estate, which was forfeited by Ishbosheth's rebellion and added to his own revenue. This was a real favour, and more than giving him a kind word. True friendship will be generous.

(4.) Though he had thus given him a good estate, sufficient to maintain him, yet for Jonathan's sake (whom perhaps he saw some resemblance of in Mephibosheth's face), he will take him to be a constant guest at his own table, where he will not only be comfortably fed, but have company and attendance suitable to his birth and quality. Though Mephibosheth was lame and unsightly, and does not appear to have had any great fitness for business, yet, for his good father's sake, David took him to be one of his family.

3. Mephibosheth accepts this kindness with great humility and self-abasement. He was not one of those that take every favour as a debt, and think every thing too little that their friends do for them; but, on the contrary, speaks as one amazed at the grants David made him (2Sa 9:8): What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am? How does he vilify himself! Though the son of a prince, and the grandson of a king, yet his family being under guilt and wrath, and himself poor and lame, he calls himself a dead dog before David.

Note, It is good to have the heart humble under humbling providences. If, when divine Providence brings our condition down, divine grace brings our spirits down with it, we shall be easy. And those who thus humble themselves shall be exalted. How does he magnify David's kindness! It would have been easy to lessen it if he had been so disposed. Had David restored him his father's estate? It was but giving him his own. Did he take him to his table? This was policy, that he might have an eye upon him. But Mephibosheth considered all that David said and did as very kind, and himself as less than the least of all his favours. See 1Sa 18:18.

5 Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.

6 Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant!

7 And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.

8 And he bowed himself, and said, What *is* thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I *am?*

The matter is here settled concerning Mephibosheth.

1. This grant of his father's estate is confirmed to him, and Ziba called to be a witness to it (2Sa 9:9); and, it should seem, Saul had a very good estate, for his father was a mighty man of substance (1Sa 9:1), and he had fields and vineyards to bestow, 1Sa 22:7. Be it ever so much, Mephibosheth is now master of it all.

2 The management of the estate is committed to Ziba, who knew what it was and how to make the most of it, in whom, having been his father's servant, he might confide, and who, having a numerous family of sons and servants, had hands sufficient to be employed about it, 2Sa 9:10. Thus Mephibosheth is made very easy, having a good estate without care, and is in a fair way of being very rich, having much coming in and little occasion to spend, himself being kept at David's table.

Yet he must have food to eat besides his own bread, provisions for his son and servants; and Ziba's sons and servants would come in for their share of his revenue, for which reason perhaps their number is here mentioned, fifteen sons and twenty servants, who would require nearly all there was; for as goods are increased those are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof save the beholding of them with his eyes? Ec 5:11. All that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth (2Sa 9:12), that is, they all lived upon him, and made a prey of his estate, under pretence of waiting on him and doing him service.

The Jews have a saying, "He that multiplies servants multiplies thieves." Ziba is now pleased, for he loves wealth, and will have abundance. "As the king has commanded, so will thy servant do, 2Sa 9:11. Let me alone with the estate: and as for Mephibosheth" (they seem to be Ziba's words), "if the king please, he need not trouble the court, he shall eat at my table, and be as well treated as one of the king's sons." But

David will have him at his own table, and Mephibosheth is as well pleased with his post as Ziba with his. How unfaithful Ziba was to him we shall find afterwards, 2Sa 16:3. Now because David was a type of Christ, his Lord and son, his root and offspring, let his kindness to Mephibosheth serve to illustrate the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards fallen man, which yet he was under no obligation to, as David was to Jonathan.

Man was convicted of rebellion against God, and, like Saul's house, under a sentence of rejection from him, was not only brought low and impoverished, but lame and impotent, made so by the fall. The Son of God enquires after this degenerate race, that enquired not after him, comes to seek and save them. To those of them that humble themselves before him, and commit themselves to him, he restores the forfeited inheritance, he entitles them to a better paradise than that which Adam lost, and takes them into communion with himself, sets them with his children at his table, and feasts them with the dainties of heaven. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him!

9 Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house.

10 Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in *the fruits,* that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

11 Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king*, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.

12 And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name *was* Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants unto Mephibosheth.

13 So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

2 Samuel-10

The Defeat of the Ammonites and Syrians

1 And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead.
2 Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.
3 And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David *rather* sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?

Here is, I The great respect David paid to his neighbour, the king of the Ammonites, 2Sa 10:1,2.

1 The inducement to it was some kindness he had formerly received from Nahash the deceased king. He showed kindness to me, says David (2Sa 10:2), and therefore (having lately had satisfaction in showing kindness to Mephibosheth for his father's sake) he resolves to show kindness to his son, and to keep up a friendly correspondence with him. Thus the pleasure of doing one kind and generous action should excite us to another. Nahash had been an enemy to Israel, a cruel enemy (1Sa 11:2), and yet had shown kindness to David, perhaps only in contradiction to Saul, who was unkind to him: however, if David receives kindness, he is not nice in examining the grounds and principles of it, but resolves gratefully to return it. If a Pharisee give alms in pride, though God will not reward him, yet he that receives the alms ought to return thanks for it. God knows the heart, but we do not.

2 The particular instance of respect was sending an embassy to condole with him on his father's death, as is common among princes in alliance with each other: David sent to comfort him. Note, It is a comfort to children, when their parents are dead, to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and that they intend to keep up an acquaintance with them. It is a comfort to mourners to find that there are those who mourn with them, are sensible of their loss and share with them in it. It is a comfort to those who are honouring the memory of their deceased relations to find there are others who likewise honour it and who had a value for those whom they valued.

II The great affront which Hanun the king of the Ammonites put upon David in his ambassadors.

1. He hearkened to the spiteful suggestions of his princes, who insinuated that David's ambassadors, under pretence of being comforters, were sent as spies, 2Sa 10:3. False men are ready to think others as false as themselves; and those that bear ill-will to their neighbours are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good-will to them. They would not thus have imagined that David dissembled but that they were conscious to themselves that they could have dissembled, to serve a turn. Unfounded suspicion argues a wicked mind. Bishop Patrick's note on this is that "there is nothing so well meant but it may be ill interpreted, and is wont to be so by men who love nobody but themselves." Men of the greatest honour and virtue must not think it strange if they be thus misrepresented. Charity thinketh no evil.

2. Entertaining this vile suggestion, he basely abused David's ambassadors, like a man of a sordid villainous spirit, that was fitter to rake a kennel than to wear a crown. If he had any reason to suspect that David's messengers came on a bad

design, he would have done prudently enough to be upon the reserve with them, and to dismiss them as soon as he could; but it is plain he only sought an occasion to put the utmost disgrace he could upon them, out of an antipathy to their king and their country. They were themselves men of honour, and much more so as they represented the prince that sent them; they and their reputation were under the special protection of the law of nations; they put a confidence in the Ammonites, and came among them unarmed; yet Hanun used them like rogues and vagabonds, and worse, shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the midst, to expose them to the contempt and ridicule of his servants, that they might make sport with them and that these men might seem vile.

III. David's tender concern for his servants that were thus abused. He sent to meet them, and to let them know how much he interested himself in their quarrel and how soon he would avenge it, and directed them to stay at Jericho, a private place, where they would not have occasion to come into company, till that half of their beards which was shaved off had grown to such a length that the other half might be decently cut to it, 2Sa 10:5.

The Jews wore their beards long, reckoning it an honour to appear aged and grave; and therefore it was not fit that persons of their rank and figure should appear at court unlike their neighbours. Change of raiment, it is likely, they had with them, to put on, instead of that which was cut off; but the loss of their beards would not be so soon repaired; yet in time these would grow again, and all would be well. Let us learn not to lay too much to heart unjust reproaches; after awhile they will wear off of themselves, and turn only to the shame of their authors, while the injured reputation in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will bring forth thy

righteousness as the light, therefore wait patiently for him, Ps 37:6,7.

Some have thought that David, in the indignity he received from the king of Ammon, was but well enough served for courting and complimenting that pagan prince, whom he knew to be an inveterate enemy to Israel, and might now remember how, when he would have put out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, he designed that, as he did this, for a reproach upon all Israel, 1Sa 11:2. What better usage could he expect from such a spiteful family and people? Why should he covet the friendship of a people whom Israel must have so little to do with as that an Ammonite might not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation? De 23:3.

4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, *even* to their buttocks, and sent them away.

5 When they told *it* unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.

6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ishtob twelve thousand men.

7 And when David heard of *it*, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

8 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ishtob, and Maacah, *were* by themselves in the field.

Here we have, I The preparation which the Ammonites made for war, 2Sa 10:6. They saw they had made themselves very odious to David and obnoxious to his just displeasure. This they might easily have foreseen when they abused his ambassadors, which was no other than a challenge to war, and a bold defiance of him. Yet, it seems, they had not considered

how unable they were, with their thousands, to meet his; for now they found themselves an unequal match, and were forced to hire forces of other nations into their service.

Thus sinners daringly provoke God, and expose themselves to his wrath, and never consider that he is stronger than they, 1Co 10:22. The Ammonites gave the affront first, and they were the first that raised forces to justify it. Had they humbled themselves, and begged David's pardon, probably an honorary satisfaction might have atoned for the offence. But, when they were thus desperately resolved to stand by what they had done, they courted their own ruin.

II The speedy descent which David's forces made upon them, 2Sa 10:7. When David heard of their military preparations, he sent Joab with a great army to attack them, 2Sa 10:7. Those that are at war with the Son of David not only give the provocation, but begin the war; for he waits to be gracious, but they strengthen themselves against him, and therefore, if they turn not, he will whet his sword, Ps 7:12. God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance (Isa 5:19), which will convince them, when it is too late, that none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. It was David's prudence to carry the war into their country, and fight them at the entering in of the gate of their capital city, Rabbah, as some think, or Medeba, a city in their borders, before which they pitched to guard their coast, 1Ch 19:7. Such are the terrors and desolations of war that every good prince will, in love to his people, keep it as much as may be at a distance from them.

III. Preparations made on both sides for an engagement.

1 The enemy disposed themselves into two bodies, one of Ammonites, which, being their own, were posted at the gate of the city; the other of Syrians, whom they had taken into

their pay, and who were therefore posted at a distance in the field, to charge the forces of Israel in the flank or rear, while the Ammonites charged them in the front, 2Sa 10:8.

2. Joab, like a wise general, was soon aware of the design, and accordingly divided his forces: the choicest men he took under his own command, to fight the Syrians, whom probably he knew to be the better soldiers, and, being hired men, better versed in the arts of war, 2Sa 10:9. The rest of the forces he put under the command of Abishai his brother, to engage the Ammonites, 2Sa 10:10. It should seem, Joab found the enemy so well prepared to receive them that his conduct and courage were never so tried as now.

IV. Joab's speech before the battle, 2Sa 10:11,12. It is not long, but pertinent, and brave.

1. He prudently concerts the matter with Abishai his brother, that the dividing of the forces might not be the weakening of them, but that, which part soever was borne hard upon, the other should come in to its assistance. He supposes the worst, that one of them should be obliged to give back; and in that case, upon a signal given, the other should send a detachment to relieve it. Note, Mutual helpfulness is brotherly duty. If occasion be, thou shalt help me, and I will help thee. Christ's soldiers should thus strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare. The strong must succour and help the weak. Those that through grace are conquerors over temptation must counsel, and comfort, and pray for, those that are tempted. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren, Lu 22:32. The members of the natural body help one another, 1Co 12:21.

2. He bravely encourages himself, and his brother, and the rest of the officers and soldiers, to do their utmost. Great dangers put an edge upon true courage. When Joab saw the front of the battle was against him, both before and behind, instead of

giving orders to make an honourable retreat, he animated his men to charge so much more furiously: Be of good courage and let us play the men, not for pay and preferment, for honour and fame, but for our people, and for the cities of our God, for the public safety and welfare, in which the glory of God is so much interested. God and our country was the word. "Let us be valiant, from a principle of love to Israel, that are our people, descended from the same stock, for whom we are employed, and in whose peace we shall have peace; and from a principle of love to God, for they are his cities that we are fighting in the defence of." The relation which any person or thing stands in to God should endear it to us, and engage us to do our utmost in its service.

3. He piously leaves the issue with God: "When we have done our part, according to the duty of our place, let the Lord do that which seemeth to him good." Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be; let God's work be done by us, and then God's will be done concerning us. When we make conscience of doing our duty we may, with the greatest satisfaction, leave the event with God, not thinking that our valour binds him to prosper us, but that still he may do as he pleases, yet hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.

V. The victory Joab obtained over the confederate forces of Syria and Ammon, 2Sa 10:13,14. He provided for the worst, and put the case that the Syrians and Ammonites might prove too strong for him (2Sa 10:11), but he proved too strong for them both. We do not hinder our success by preparing for disappointment. The Syrians were first routed by Joab, and then the Ammonites by Abishai; the Ammonites seem not to have fought at all, but, upon the retreat of the Syrians, to have fled into the city. It is a temptation to soldiers to fly when they have a city at their backs to fly to. It is one thing when men may either fight or fly and another thing when they must either fight or die.

9 When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before
and behind, he chose of all the choice *men* of Israel, and put *them* in
array against the Syrians:
10 and the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his
brother, that he might put *them* in array against the children of
Ammon.
11 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help
me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will
come and help thee.
12 Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for
the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him
good.
13 And Joab drew nigh, and the people that *were* with him, unto the
battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him.
14 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled,
then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab
returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.
15 And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel,
they gathered themselves together.
16 And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that *were* beyond
the river [Euphrates]; and they came to Helam: and Shobach the
captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them.

Here is, 1. A new attempt of the Syrians to recover their lost honour and to check the progress of David's victorious arms. The forces that were lately dispersed rallied again, and gathered themselves together, 2Sa 10:15. Even the baffled cause will make head as long as there is any life in it; the enemies of the Son of David do so, Mt 22:34,Re 19:19. These, being conscious of their insufficiency, called in the aid of their allies and dependencies on the other side of the river (2Sa 10:16), and, being thus recruited, they hoped to make their part good against Israel, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathered them as sheaves into the floor; see Mic 4:11-13.

2 The defeat of this attempt by the vigilance and valour of David, who, upon notice of their design, resolved not to stay till they attacked him, but went in person at the head of his army over Jordan (2Sa 10:17), and, in a pitched battle, routed the Syrians (2Sa 10:18), slew 7000 men, who belonged to 700 chariots, and 40,000 other soldiers, horse and foot, as appears by comparing 1Ch 19:18. Their general was killed in the battle, and David came home in triumph, no doubt.

3. The consequence of this victory over the Syrians. (1.) David gained several tributaries, 2Sa 10:19. The kings, or petty princes, that had been subject to Hadarezer, when they saw how powerful David was, very wisely made peace with Israel, whom they found they could not make war with, and served them, since they were able to give them protection. Thus the promise made to Abraham (Ge 15:18), and repeated to Joshua (2Sa 1:4), that the borders of Israel should extend to the river Euphrates, was performed, at length. (2.) The Ammonites lost their old allies: The Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon, not because they had an unrighteous cause (justifying a crime which was a breach of the law of nations), but because they found it was an unsuccessful cause. It is dangerous helping those that have God against them; for, when they fall, their helpers will fall with them.

Jesus Christ, the Son of David, sent his ambassadors, his apostles and ministers, after all his servants the prophets, to the Jewish church and nation; but they treated them shamefully, as Hanun did David's ambassadors, mocked them, abused them, slew them; and it was this that filled the measure of their iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy (Mt 21:35,41,22:7,2Ch 26:16); for Christ takes the affronts and injuries done to his ministers as done to himself and will avenge them accordingly.

17 And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him.

18 And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew *the men of* seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there.

19 And when all the kings *that were* servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

2 Samuel-11

David and Bath-sheba

1 And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth *to battle,* that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon.

Here is, I. David's glory, in pursuing the war against the Ammonites, 2Sa 11:1. We cannot take that pleasure in viewing this great action which hitherto we have taken in observing David's achievements, because the beauty of it was stained and sullied by sin; otherwise we might take notice of David's wisdom and bravery in following his blow. Having routed the army of the Ammonites in the field, as soon as ever the season of the year permitted he sent more forces to waste the country and further to avenge the quarrel of his ambassadors. Rabbah, their metropolis, made a stand, and held out a great while. To this city Joab laid close siege, and it was at the time of this siege that David fell into this sin.

II. David's shame, in being himself conquered, and led captive by his own lust. The sin he was guilty of was adultery, against the letter of the seventh commandment, and (in the judgment of the patriarchal age) a heinous crime, and an iniquity to be punished by the judges (Job 31:11), a sin which takes away the heart, and gets a man a wound and dishonour, more than any other, and the reproach of which is not wiped away.

1. Observe the occasions which led to this sin.

(1.) Neglect of his business. When he should have been abroad with his army in the field, fighting the battles of the Lord, he devolved the care upon others, and he himself tarried still at Jerusalem, 2Sa 11:1. To the war with the Syrians David went in person, 2Sa 10:17. Had he been now at his post at the head of his forces, he would have been out of the way of this temptation. When we are out of the way of our duty we are in the way of temptation.

(2.) Love of ease, and the indulgence of a slothful temper: He came off his bed at evening-tide, 2Sa 11:2. There he had dozed away the afternoon in idleness, which he should have spent in some exercise for his own improvement or the good of others. He used to pray, not only morning and evening, but at noon, in the day of his trouble: it is to be feared he had, this noon, omitted to do so. Idleness gives great advantage to the tempter. Standing waters gather filth. The bed of sloth often proves the bed of lust.

(3.) A wandering eye: He saw a woman washing herself, probably from some ceremonial pollution, according to the law. The sin came in at the eye, as Eve's did. Perhaps he sought to see her, at least he did not practise according to his own prayer, Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and his son's caution in a like case, Look not thou on the wine it is

red. Either he had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or, at this time, he had forgotten it.

2 The steps of the sin. When he saw her, lust immediately conceived, and,

(1.) He enquired who she was (2Sa 11:3), perhaps intending only, if she were unmarried, to take her to wife, as he had taken several; but, if she were a wife, having no design upon her.

(2.) The corrupt desire growing more violent, though he was told she was a wife, and whose wife she was, yet he sent messengers for her, and then, it may be, intended only to please himself with her company and conversation. But,

(3.) When she came he lay with her, she too easily consenting, because he was a great man, and famed for his goodness too. Surely (thinks she) that can be no sin which such a man as David is the mover of. See how the way of sin is down-hill; when men begin to do evil they cannot soon stop themselves. The beginning of lust, as of strife, is like the letting forth of water; it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with. The foolish fly fires her wings, and fools away her life at last, by playing about the candle.

3. The aggravations of the sin.

(1.) He was now in years, fifty at least, some think more, when those lusts which are more properly youthful, one would think, should not have been violent in him,

(2.) He had many wives and concubines of his own; this is insisted on, 2Sa 12:8.

(3.) Uriah, whom he wronged, was one of his own worthies, a person of honour and virtue, one that was now abroad in his service, hazarding his life in the high places of the field for the honour and safety of him and his kingdom, where he himself should have been.

(4.) Bath-sheba, whom he debauched, was a lady of good reputation, and, till she was drawn by him and his influence into this wickedness, had no doubt preserved her purity. Little did she think that ever she could have done so bad a thing as to forsake the guide of her youth, and forget the covenant of her God; nor perhaps could any one in the world but David have prevailed against her. The adulterer not only wrongs and ruins his own soul, but, as much as he can, another's soul too.

(5.) David was a king, whom God had entrusted with the sword of justice and the execution of the law upon other criminals, particularly upon adulterers, who were, by the law, to be put to death; for him therefore to be guilty of those crimes himself was to make himself a pattern, when he should have been a terror, to evil doers. With what face could he rebuke or punish that in others which he was conscious to himself of being guilty of? See Ro 2:22.

Much more might be said to aggravate the sin; and I can think but of one excuse for it, which is that it was done but once; it was far from being his practice; it was by the surprise of a temptation that he was drawn into it. He was not one of those of whom the prophet complains that they were as fed horses, neighing every one after his neighbour's wife (Jer 5:8); but this once God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, that he might know what was in his heart, 2Ch 32:31. Had he been told of it before, he would have said, as Hazael, What! is thy servant a dog? But by this instance we are taught what need we have to pray every day, Father, in heaven, lead us not into temptation, and to watch, that we enter not into it.

3 And David sent and inquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I *am* with child.

6 And David sent to Joab, *saying*, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded *of him* how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess *of meat* from the king.

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from *thy* journey? why *then* didst thou not go down unto thine house?

Uriah, we may suppose, had now been absent from his wife some weeks, making the campaign in the country of the Ammonites, and not intending to return till the end of it. The situation of his wife would bring to light the hidden works of darkness; and when Uriah, at his return, should find how he had been abused, and by whom, it might well be expected,

1. That he would prosecute his wife, according to law, and have her stoned to death; for jealousy is the rage of a man, especially a man of honour, and he that is thus injured will not spare in the day of vengeance, Pr 6:34. This Bath-sheba was apprehensive of when she sent to let David know she was with child, intimating that he was concerned to protect her, and, it is likely, if he had not promised her so to do (so wretchedly abusing his royal power), she would not have consented to him. Hope of impunity is a great encouragement to iniquity.

2. It might also be expected that since he could not prosecute David by law for an offence of this nature he would take his revenge another way, and raise a rebellion against him. There have been instances of kings who by provocations of this nature, given to some of their powerful subjects, have lost their crowns. To prevent this double mischief, David endeavours to father the child which should be born upon Uriah himself, and therefore sends for him home to stay a night or two with his wife. Observe,

I. How the plot was laid. Uriah must come home from the army under pretence of bringing David an account how the war prospered, and how they went on with the siege of Rabbah, 2Sa 11:7. Thus does he pretend a more than ordinary concern for his army when that was the least thing in his thoughts; if he had not had another turn to serve, an express of much less figure than Uriah might have sufficed to bring him a report of the state of the war. David, having had as much conference with Uriah as he thought requisite to cover the design, sent him to his house, and, that he might be the more pleasant there with the wife of his youth, sent a dish of meat after him for their supper, 2Sa 11:8.

When that project failed the first night, and Uriah, being weary of his journey and more desirous of sleep than meat, lay all night in the guard-chamber, the next night he made him drunk (2Sa 11:13), or made him merry, tempted him to drink more than was fit, that he might forget his vow (2Sa 11:11), and might be disposed to go home to his own bed, to which perhaps, if David could have made him dead drunk, he would have ordered him to be carried. It is a very wicked thing, upon any design whatsoever, to make a person drunk. Woe to him that does so, Hab 2:15,16.

God will put a cup of trembling into the hands of those who put into the hands of others the cup of drunkenness. Robbing a man of his reason is worse than robbing him of his money, and drawing him into sin worse than drawing him into any trouble whatsoever. Every good man, especially every magistrate, should endeavour to prevent this sin, by admonishing, restraining, and denying the glass to those whom they see falling into excess; but to further it is to do the devil's work, to officiate as factor for him.

II. How this plot was defeated by Uriah's firm resolution not to lie in his own bed. Both nights he slept with the life-guard, and went not down to his house, though, it is probable, his wife pressed him to do it as much as David, 2Sa 11:9,12. Now,

1. Some think he suspected what was done, being informed of his wife's attendance at court, and therefore he would not go near her. But if he had had any suspicion of that kind, surely he would have opened the letter that David sent by him to Joab.

2. Whether he suspected any thing or no, Providence put this resolution into his heart, and kept him to it, for the discovering of David's sin, and that the baffling of his design to conceal it might awaken David's conscience to confess it and repent of it.

3. The reason he gave to David for this strange instance of self-denial and mortification was very noble, 2Sa 11:11. While the army was encamped in the field, he would not lie at ease in his own house. "The ark is in a tent," whether at home, in the tent David had pitched for it, or abroad, with Joab in the camp, is not certain. "Joab, and all the mighty men of Israel, lie hard and uneasy, and much exposed to the weather and to the enemy; and shall I go and take my ease and pleasure at my own house?" No, he protests he will not do it. Now,

(1.) This was in itself a generous resolution, and showed Uriah to be a man of a public spirit, bold and hardy, and mortified to the delights of sense. In times of public difficulty and danger it does not become us to repose ourselves in security, or roll ourselves in pleasure, or, with the king and Haman, to sit down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed, Es 3:15. We should voluntarily endure hardness when the church of God is constrained to endure it.

(2.) It might have been of use to awaken David's conscience, and make his heart to smite him for what he had done.

[1.] That he had basely abused so brave a man as Uriah was, a man so heartily concerned for him and his kingdom, and that acted for him and it with so much vigour.

[2.] That he was himself so unlike him. The consideration of the public hardships and hazards kept Uriah from lawful pleasures, yet could not keep David, though more nearly interested, from unlawful ones. Uriah's severity to himself should have shamed David for his indulgence of himself. The law was, When the host goeth forth against the enemy then, in a special manner, keep thyself from every wicked thing, De 23:9. Uriah outdid that law, but David violated it.

11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also, and tomorrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah.
15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.
16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men *were*.
17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell *some* of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

When David's project of fathering the child upon Uriah himself failed, so that, in process of time, Uriah would certainly know the wrong that had been done him, to prevent the fruits of his revenge, the devil put it into David's heart to take him off, and then neither he nor Bath-sheba would be in any danger (what prosecution could there be when there was no prosecutor?), suggesting further that, when Uriah was out of the way, Bath-sheba might, if he pleased, be his own for ever. Adulteries have often occasioned murders, and one wickedness must be covered and secured with another.

The beginnings of sin are therefore to be dreaded; for who knows where they will end? It is resolved in David's breast (which one would think could never possibly have harboured so vile a thought) that Uriah must die. That innocent, valiant, gallant man, who was ready to die for his prince's honour, must die by his prince's hand. David has sinned, and Bath-sheba has sinned, and both against him, and therefore he must die; David determines he must. Is this the man whose heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt? Quantum mutatus ab illo!--But ah, how changed! Is this he that executed judgment and justice to all his people? How can he now do so unjust a thing? See how fleshly lusts war against the soul, and what devastations they make in that war; how they blink the eyes, harden the heart, sear the conscience, and deprive men of all sense of honour and justice. Whoso committeth adultery

with a woman lacketh understanding and quite loses it; he that doth it destroys his own soul, Pr 6:32.

But, as the eye of the adulterer, so the hand of the murderer seeks concealment, Job 24:14,15. Works of darkness hate the light. When David bravely slew Goliath it was done publicly, and he gloried in it; but, when he basely slew Uriah, it must be done clandestinely, for he is ashamed of it, and well he may. Who would do a thing that he dare not own? The devil, having as a poisonous serpent, put it into David's heart to murder Uriah, as a subtle serpent he puts it into his head how to do it. Not as Absalom slew Amnon, by commanding his servants to assassinate him, nor as Ahab slew Naboth by suborning witnesses to accuse him, but by exposing him to the enemy, a way of doing it which, perhaps, would not seem so odious to conscience and the world, because soldiers expose themselves of course. If Uriah had not been in that dangerous post, another must; he has (as we say) a chance for his life; if he fight stoutly, he may perhaps come off; and, if he die, it is in the field of honour, where a soldier would choose to die; and yet all this will not save it from being a wilful murder, of malice prepense.

I. Orders are sent to Joab to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, and then to desert him, and abandon him to the enemy, 2Sa 11:14,15. This was David's project to take off Uriah, and it succeeded, as he designed. Many were the aggravations of this murder.

1. It was deliberate. He took time to consider of it; and though he had time to consider of it, for he wrote a letter about it, and though he had time to have countermanded the order afterwards before it could be put in execution, yet he persisted in it.

2. He sent the letter by Uriah himself, than which nothing could be more base and barbarous, to make him accessory to his own death. And what a paradox was it that he could bear such a malice against him in whom yet he could repose such a confidence as that he would carry letters which he must not know the purport of.

3. Advantage must be taken of Uriah's own courage and zeal for his king and country, which deserve the greatest praise and recompence, to betray him the more easily to his fate. If he had not been forward to expose himself, perhaps he was a man of such importance that Joab could not have exposed him; and that this noble fire should be designedly turned upon himself was a most detestable instance of ingratitude.

4. Many must be involved in the guilt. Joab, the general, to whom the blood of his soldiers, especially the worthies, ought to be precious, must do it; he, and all that retire from Uriah when they ought in conscience to support and second him, become guilty of his death.

5. Uriah cannot thus die alone: the party he commands is in danger of being cut off with him; and it proved so: some of the people, even the servants of David (so they are called, to aggravate David's sin in being so prodigal of their lives), fell with him, 2Sa 11:17. Nay, this wilful misconduct by which Uriah must be betrayed might be of fatal consequence to the whole army, and might oblige them to raise the siege.

6. It will be the triumph and joy of the Ammonites, the sworn enemies of God and Israel; it will gratify them exceedingly. David prayed for himself, that he might not fall into the hands of man, nor flee from his enemies (2Sa 24:13,14); yet he sells his servant Uriah to the Ammonites, and not for any iniquity in his hand.

II. Joab executes these orders. In the next assault that is made upon the city Uriah has the most dangerous post assigned him, is encouraged to hope that if he be repulsed by the besieged he shall be relieved by Joab, in dependence on which he marches on with resolution, but, succours not coming on, the service proves too hot, and he is slain in it, 2Sa 11:16,17. It was strange that Joab would do such a thing merely upon a letter, without knowing the reason. But,

1. Perhaps he supposed Uriah had been guilty of some great crime, to enquire into which David had sent for him, and that, because he would not punish him openly, he took this course with him to put him to death.

2. Joab had been guilty of blood, and we may suppose it pleased him very well to see David himself falling into the same guilt, and he was willing enough to serve him in it, that he might continue to be favourable to him. It is common for those who have done ill themselves to desire to be countenanced therein by others doing ill likewise, especially by the sins of those that are eminent in the profession of religion. Or, perhaps, David knew that Joab had a pique against Uriah, and would gladly be avenged on him; otherwise Joab, when he saw cause, knew how to dispute the king's orders, as 2Sa 19:5,24:3.

III. He sends an account of it to David. An express is despatched away immediately with a report of this last disgrace and loss which they had sustained, 2Sa 11:18. And, to disguise the affair,

1. He supposes that David would appear to be angry at his bad conduct, would ask why they came so near the wall (2Sa 11:20), did they not know that Abimelech lost his life by doing do? 2Sa 11:21. We had the story (Jdg 9:53), which book, it is likely, was published as a part of the sacred history in

Samuel's time; and (be it noted to their praise, and for imitation) even the soldiers were conversant with their bibles, and could readily quote the scripture-story, and make use of it for admonition to themselves not to run upon the same attempts which they found had been fatal.

2. He slyly orders the messenger to soothe it with telling him that Uriah the Hittite was dead also, which gave too broad an intimation to the messenger, and by him to others, that David would be secretly pleased to hear that; for murder will out. And, when men do such base things, they must expect to be bantered and upbraided with them, even by their inferiors. The messenger delivered his message agreeably to orders, 2Sa 11:22-24. He makes the besieged to sally out first upon the besiegers (they came out unto us into the field), represents the besiegers as doing their part with great bravery (we were upon them even to the entering of the gate--we forced them to retire into the city with precipitation), and so concludes with a slight mention of the slaughter made among them by some shot from the wall: Some of the king's servants are dead, and particularly Uriah the Hittite, an officer of note, stood first in the list of the slain.

IV. David receives the account with a secret satisfaction, 2Sa 11:25. Let not Joab be displeased, for David is not. He blames not his conduct, nor thinks they did wrong in approaching so near the wall; all is well now that Uriah is put out of the way. This point being gained, he can make light of the loss, and turn it off easily with an excuse: The sword devours one as well as another; it was a chance of war, nothing more common. He orders Joab to make the battle more strong next time, while he, by his sin, was weakening it, and provoking God to blast the undertaking.

V. He marries the widow in a little time. She submitted to the ceremony of mourning for her husband as short a time as

custom would admit (2Sa 11:26), and then David took her to his house as his wife, and she bore him a son. Uriah's revenge was prevented by his death, but the birth of the child so soon after the marriage published the crime. Sin will have shame. Yet that was not the worst of it: The thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

The whole matter of Uriah (as it is called, 1Ki 15:5), the adultery, falsehood, murder, and this marriage at last, it was all displeasing to the Lord. He had pleased himself, but displeased God. Note, God sees and hates sin in his own people. Nay, the nearer any are to God in profession the more displeasing to him their sins are; for in them there is more ingratitude, treachery, and reproach, than in the sins of others. Let none therefore encourage themselves in sin by the example of David; for those that sin as he did will fall under the displeasure of God as he did. Let us therefore stand in awe and sin not, not sin after the similitude of his transgression.

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;
19 and charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,
20 and if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?
21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.
22 So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for.
23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.
24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and *some* of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto
Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one
as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and
overthrow it: and encourage thou him.
26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was
dead, she mourned for her husband.
27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to
his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the
thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

2 Samuel-12

Nathan Reproves David

1 And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him,
and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich,
and the other poor.
2 The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds:
3 but the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he
had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him,
and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his
own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.
4 And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take
of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man
that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed
it for the man that was come to him.
5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said
to Nathan, *As* the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this *thing*
shall surely die:

It seems to have been a great while after David had been guilty of adultery with Bath-sheba before he was brought to repentance for it. For, when Nathan was sent to him, the child was born (2Sa 12:14), so that it was about nine months that David lay under the guilt of that sin, and, for aught that appears, unrepented of. What shall we think of David's state

all this while? Can we imagine that his heart never smote him for it, or that he never lamented it in secret before God? I would willingly hope that he did, and that Nathan was sent to him, immediately upon the birth of the child, when the thing by that means came to be publicly known and talked of, to draw from him an open confession of the sin, to the glory of God, the admonition of others, and that he might receive, by Nathan, absolution with certain limitations. But, during these nine months, we may well suppose his comforts and the exercises of his graces suspended, and his communion with God interrupted; during all that time, it is certain, he penned no psalms, his harp was out of tune, and his soul like a tree in winter, that has life in the root only. Therefore, after Nathan had been with him, he prays, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and open thou my lips, Ps 51:12,15. Let us observe,

I The messenger God sent to him. We were told by the last words of the foregoing chapter that the thing David had done displeased the Lord, upon which, one would think, it should have followed that the Lord sent enemies to invade him, terrors to take hold on him, and the messengers of death to arrest him. No, he sent a prophet to him--Nathan, his faithful friend and confidant, to instruct and counsel him, 2Sa 12:1. David did not send for Nathan (though he had never had so much occasion as he had now for his confessor), but God sent Nathan to David.

Note, Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. He went on frowardly in the way of his heart, and if left to himself, would have wandered endlessly, but (saith God) I have seen his ways, and will heal him, Isa 57:17,18. He sends after us before we seek after him, else we should certainly be lost. Nathan was the prophet by whom God had sent him notice of his kind intentions towards him (2Sa 7:4), and now, by the same hand, he sends him this message of wrath. God's word in the mouth

of his ministers must be received, whether it speak terror or comfort. Nathan was obedient to the heavenly vision, and went on God's errand to David. He did not say, "David has sinned, I will not come near him." No; count him not an enemy, but admonish him as a brother, 2Th 3:15. He did not say, "David is a king, I dare not reprove him." No; if God sends him, he sets his face like a flint, Isa 50:7.

II The message Nathan delivered to him, in order to his conviction.

1. He fetched a compass with a parable, which seemed to David as a complaint made to him by Nathan against one of his subjects that had wronged his poor neighbour, in order to his redressing the injury and punishing the injurious. Nathan, it is likely, used to come to him upon such errands, which made this the less suspected. It becomes those who have interest in princes, and have free access to them, to intercede for those that are wronged, that they may have justice done them.

(1.) Nathan represented to David a grievous injury which a rich man had done to an honest neighbour that was not able to contend with him: The rich man had many flocks and herds (2Sa 12:2); the poor man had one lamb only; so unequally is the world divided; and yet infinite wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, make the distribution, that the rich may learn charity and the poor contentment. This poor man had but one lamb, a ewe-lamb, a little ewe-lamb, having not wherewithal to buy or keep more. But it was a cade--lamb (as we call it); it grew up with his children, 2Sa 12:3. He was fond of it, and it was familiar with him at all times. The rich man, having occasion for a lamb to entertain a friend with, took the poor man's lamb from him by violence and made use of that (2Sa 12:4), either out of covetousness, because he grudged to make use of his own, or rather out of luxury, because he fancied the

lamb that was thus tenderly kept, and ate and drank like a child, must needs be more delicate food than any of his own and have a better relish.

(2.) In this he showed him the evil of the sin he had been guilty of in defiling Bath-sheba. He had many wives and concubines, whom he kept at a distance, as rich men keep their flocks in their fields. Had he had but one, and had she been dear to him, as the ewe-lamb was to its owner, had she been dear to him as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, her breasts would have satisfied him at all times, and he would have looked no further, Pr 5:19. Marriage is a remedy against fornication, but marrying many is not; for, when once the law of unity is transgressed, the indulged lust will hardly stint itself. Uriah, like the poor man, had only one wife, who was to him as his own soul, and always lay in his bosom, for he had no other, he desired no other, to lie there.

The traveller or wayfaring man was, as bishop Patrick explains it from the Jewish writers, the evil imagination, disposition, or desire, which came into David's heart, which he might have satisfied with some of his own, yet nothing would serve but Uriah's darling. They observe that this evil disposition is called a traveller, for in the beginning it is only so, but, in time, it becomes a guest, and, in conclusion, is master of the house. For he that is called a traveller in the beginning of the verse is called a man (ish--a husband) in the close of it. Yet some observe that in David's breast lust was but as a wayfaring man that tarries only for a night; it did not constantly dwell and rule there.

(3.) By this parable he drew from David a sentence against himself. For David supposing it to be a case in fact, and not doubting the truth of it when he had it from Nathan himself, gave judgment immediately against the offender, and confirmed it with an oath, 2Sa 12:5,6.

[1.] That, for his injustice in taking away the lamb, he should restore four-fold, according to the law (Ex 22:1), four sheep for a sheep.

[2.] That for his tyranny and cruelty, and the pleasure he took in abusing a poor man, he should be put to death. If a poor man steal from a rich man, to satisfy his soul when he is hungry, he shall make restitution, though it cost him all the substance of his house, Pr 6:30 (and Solomon there compares the sin of adultery with that, Pr 6:32); but if a rich man steal for stealing sake, not for want but wantonness, merely that he may be imperious and vexatious, he deserves to die for it, for to him the making of restitution is no punishment, or next to none. If the sentence be thought too severe, it must be imputed to the present roughness of David's temper, being under guilt, and not having himself as yet received mercy.

2. He closed in with him, at length, in the application of the parable. In beginning with a parable he showed his prudence, and great need there is of prudence in giving reproofs. It is well managed if, as here, the offender can be brought ere he is aware, to convict and condemn himself. But here, in his application, he shows his faithfulness, and deals as plainly and roundly with king David himself as if he had been a common person. In plain terms, "Thou art the man who hast done this wrong, and a much greater, to thy neighbour; and therefore, by thy own sentence, thou deservest to die, and shalt be judged out of thy own mouth.

Did he deserve to die who took his neighbour's lamb? and dost not thou who hast taken thy neighbour's wife? Though he took the lamb, he did not cause the owner thereof to lose his life, as thou hast done, and therefore much more art thou worthy to die." Now he speaks immediately from God, and in his name. He begins with, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, a

name sacred and venerable to David, and which commanded his attention. Nathan now speaks, not as a petitioner for a poor man, but as an ambassador from the great God, with whom is no respect of persons.

(1.) God, by Nathan, reminds David of the great things he had done and designed for him, anointing him to be king, and preserving him to the kingdom (2Sa 12:7), giving him power over the house and household of his predecessor, and of others that had been his masters, Nabal for one. He had given him the house of Israel and Judah. The wealth of the kingdom was at his service and every body was willing to oblige him. Nay, he was ready to bestow any thing upon him to make him easy: I would have given thee such and such things, 2Sa 12:8. See how liberal God is in his gifts; we are not straitened in him. Where he has given much, yet he gives more. And God's bounty to us is a great aggravation of our discontent and desire of forbidden fruit. It is ungrateful to covet what God has prohibited, while we have liberty to pray for what God has promised, and that is enough.

(2.) He charges him with a high contempt of the divine authority, in the sins he had been guilty of: Wherefore hast thou (presuming upon thy royal dignity and power) despised the commandment of the Lord? 2Sa 12:9. This is the spring and this is the malignity of sin, that it is making light of the divine law and the law-maker; as if the obligation of it were weak, the precepts of it trifling, and the threats not at all formidable. Though no man ever wrote more honourably of the law of God than David did, yet, in this instance, he is justly charged with a contempt of it. His adultery with Bath-sheba, which began the mischief, is not mentioned, perhaps because he was already convinced of that, but,

[1.] The murder of Uriah is twice mentioned: "Thou hast killed Uriah with the sword, though not with thy sword, yet,

which is equally heinous, with thy pen, by ordering him to be set in the forefront of the battle." Those that contrive wickedness and command it are as truly guilty of it as those that execute it. It is repeated with an aggravation: Thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon, those uncircumcised enemies of God and Israel.

[2.] The marrying of Bath-sheba is likewise twice mentioned, because he thought there was no harm in that (2Sa 12:9): Thou hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and again, 2Sa 12:10. To marry her whom he had before defiled, and whose husband he had slain, was an affront upon the ordinance of marriage, making that not only to palliate, but in a manner to consecrate, such villanies. In all this he despised the word of the Lord (so it is in the Hebrew), not only his commandment in general which forbade such things, but the particular word of promise which God had, by Nathan, sent to him some time before, that he would build him a house. If he had had a due value and veneration for this sacred promise, he would not thus have polluted his house with lust and blood.

(3.) He threatens an entail of judgements upon his family for this sin (2Sa 12:10): "The sword shall never depart from thy house, not in thy time nor afterwards, but, for the most part, thou and thy posterity shall be engaged in war." Or it points at the slaughters that should be among his children, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, all falling by the sword. God had promised that his mercy should not depart from him and his house (2Sa 7:15), yet here threatens that the sword should not depart. Can the mercy and the sword consist with each other? Yes, those may lie under great and long afflictions who yet shall not be excluded from the grace of the covenant. The reason given is, Because thou hast despised me. Note, Those who despise the word and law of God despise God himself and shall be lightly esteemed. It is particularly threatened,

[1.] That his children should be his grief: I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house. Sin brings trouble into a family, and one sin is often made the punishment of another.

[2.] That his wives should be his shame, that by an unparalleled piece of villany they should be publicly debauched before all Israel, 2Sa 12:11,12. It is not said that this should be done by his own son, lest the accomplishment should have been hindered by the prediction being too plain; but it was done by Absalom, at the counsel of Ahithophel, 2Sa 16:21,22. He that defiled his neighbour's wife should have his own defiled, for thus that sin used to be punished, as appears by Job's imprecation, Job 31:10, Then let my wife grind unto another, and that threatening, Ho 4:14.

The sin was secret, and industriously concealed, but the punishment should be open, and industriously proclaimed, to the shame of David, whose sin in the matter of Uriah, though committed many years before, would then be called to mind and commonly talked of upon that occasion. As face answers to face in a glass, so does the punishment often answer to the sin; here is blood for blood and uncleanness for uncleanness. And thus God would show how much he hates sin, even in his own people, and that, wherever he find it, he will not let it go unpunished.

3. David's penitent confession of his sin hereupon. He says not a word to excuse himself or extenuate his sin, but freely owns it: I have sinned against the Lord, 2Sa 12:13. It is probable that he said more to this purport; but this is enough to show that he was truly humbled by what Nathan said, and submitted to the conviction. He owns his guilt--I have sinned, and aggravates it--It was against the Lord: on this string he harps in the psalm he penned on this occasion. Ps 51:1, Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.

4. His pardon declared, upon this penitent confession, but with a proviso. When David said I have sinned, and Nathan perceived that he was a true penitent,

(1.) He did, in God's name, assure him that his sin was forgiven: "The Lord also has put away thy sin out of the sight of his avenging eye; thou shalt not die," that is, "not die eternally, nor be for ever put away from God, as thou wouldest have been if he had not put away the sin." The obligation to punishment is hereby cancelled and vacated. He shall not come into condemnation: that is the nature of forgiveness. "Thy iniquity shall not be thy everlasting ruin. The sword shall not depart from thy house, but,

[1.] It shall not cut thee off, thou shalt come to thy grave in peace." David deserved to die as an adulterer and murderer, but God would not cut him off as he might justly have done.

[2.] "Though thou shalt all thy days be chastened of the Lord, yet thou shalt not be condemned with the world." See how ready God is to forgive sin. To this instance, perhaps, David refers, Ps 32:5, I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. Let not great sinners despair of finding mercy with God if they truly repent; for who is a God like unto him, pardoning iniquity?

(2.) Yet he pronounces a sentence of death upon the child, 2Sa 12:14. Behold the sovereignty of God! The guilty parent lives, and the guiltless infant dies; but all souls are his, and he may, in what way he pleases, glorify himself in his creatures.

[1.] David had, by his sin, wronged God in his honour; he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The wicked people of that generation, the infidels, idolaters, and profane, would triumph in David's fall, and speak ill of God and of his law, when they saw one guilty of such foul

enormities that professed such an honour both for him and it. "These are your professors! This is he that prays and sings psalms, and is so very devout! What good can there be in such exercises, if they will not restrain men from adultery and murder?"

They would say, "Was not Saul rejected for a less matter? why then must David live and reign still?" not considering that God sees not as man sees, but searches the heart. To this day there are those who reproach God, and are hardened in sin, through the example of David. Now, though it is true that none have any just reason to speak ill of God, or of his word and ways, for David's sake, and it is their sin that do so, yet he shall be reckoned with that laid the stumbling-block in their way, and gave, though not cause, yet colour, for the reproach. Note, There is this great evil in the scandalous sins of those that profess religion, and relation to God, that they furnish the enemies of God and religion with matter for reproach and blasphemy, Ro 2:24.

[2.] God will therefore vindicate his honour by showing his displeasure against David for this sin, and letting the world see that though he loves David he hates his sin; and he chooses to do it by the death of the child. The landlord may distrain on any part of the premises where he pleases. Perhaps the diseases and deaths of infants were not so common in those days as they are now, which might make this, as an unusual thing, the more evident token of God's displeasure; according to the word he had often said, that he would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.

6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing,
and because he had no pity.
7 And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the
Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I
delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die.

15 And Nathan departed unto his house.
And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17 And the elders of his house arose, *and went* to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

Nathan, having delivered his message, staid not at court, but went home, probably to pray for David, to whom he had been preaching. God, in making use of him as an instrument to bring David to repentance, and as the herald both of mercy and judgment, put an honour upon the ministry, and magnified

his word above all his name. David named one of his sons by Bath-sheba Nathan, in honour of this prophet (1Ch 3:5), and it was that son of whom Christ, the great prophet, lineally descended, Lu 3:31.

When Nathan retired, David, it is probable, retired likewise, and penned the Ps 51:1-19, in which (though he had been assured that his sin was pardoned) he prays earnestly for pardon, and greatly laments his sin; for then will true penitents be ashamed of what they have done when God is pacified towards them, Eze 16:63.

Here is, I The child's illness: The Lord struck it, and it was very sick, perhaps with convulsions, or some other dreadful distemper, 2Sa 12:15. The diseases and death of infants that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, especially as they are sometimes sadly circumstanced, are sensible proofs of the original sin in which they are conceived.

II. David's humiliation under this token of God's displeasure, and the intercession he made with God for the life of the child (2Sa 12:16,17): He fasted, and lay all night upon the earth, and would not suffer any of his attendants either to feed him or help him up. This was an evidence of the truth of his repentance. For,

1. Hereby it appeared that he was willing to bear the shame of his sin, to have it ever before him, and to be continually upbraided with it; for this child would be a continual memorandum of it, both to himself and others, if he lived: and therefore he was so far from desiring its death, as most in such circumstances do, that he prayed earnestly for its life. True penitents patiently bear the reproach of their youth, and of their youthful lusts, Jer 31:19.

2. A very tender compassionate spirit appeared in this, and great humanity, above what is commonly found in men, especially men of war, towards little children, even their own; and this was another sign of a broken contrite spirit. Those that are penitent will be pitiful.

3. He discovered, in this, a great concern for another world, which is an evidence of repentance. Nathan had told him that certainly the child should die; yet, while it is in the reach of prayer, he earnestly intercedes with God for it, chiefly (as we may suppose) that its soul might be safe and happy in another world, and that his sin might not come against the child, and that it might not fare the worse for that in the future state. 4. He discovered, in this, a holy dread of God and of his displeasure. He deprecated the death of the child chiefly as it was a token of God's anger against him and his house, and was inflicted in performance of a threatening; therefore he prayed thus earnestly that, if it were the will of God, the child might live, because that would be to him a token of God's being reconciled to him. Lord, chasten me not in thy hot displeasure. Ps 6:1.

III. The death of the child: It died on the seventh day (2Sa 12:18), when it was seven days old, and therefore not circumcised, which David might perhaps interpret as a further token of God's displeasure, that it died before it was brought under the seal of the covenant; yet he does not therefore doubt of its being happy for the benefits of the covenant do not depend upon the seals. David's servants, judging of him by themselves, were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, concluding that then he would disquiet himself most of all; so that he knew not till he asked, 2Sa 12:19.

IV. David's wonderful calmness and composure of mind when he understood the child was dead. Observe,

1. What he did.

(1.) He laid aside the expressions of his sorrow, washed and anointed himself, and called for clean linen, that he might decently appear before God in his house.

(2.) He went up to the tabernacle and worshipped, like Job when he heard of the death of his children. He went to acknowledge the hand of God in the affliction, and to humble himself under it, and to submit to his holy will in it, to thank God that he himself was spared and his sin pardoned, and to pray that God would not proceed in his controversy with him, nor stir up all his wrath. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Weeping must never hinder worshipping.

(3.) Then he went to his own house and refreshed himself, as one who found benefit by his religion in the day of his affliction; for, having worshipped, he did eat, and his countenance was no more sad.

2 The reason he gave for what he did. His servants thought it strange that he should afflict himself so for the sickness of the child and yet take the death of it so easily, and asked him the reason of it (2Sa 12:21), in answer to which he gives this plain account of his conduct,

(1.) That while the child was alive he thought it his duty to importune the divine favour towards it, 2Sa 12:22. Nathan had indeed said the child should die, but, for aught that he knew, the threatening might be conditional, as that concerning Hezekiah: upon his great humiliation and earnest prayer, he that had so often heard the voice of his weeping might be pleased to reverse the sentence, and spare the child: Who can tell whether God will yet be gracious to me? God gives us leave to be earnest with him in prayer for particular blessings, from a confidence in his power and general mercy, though we

have no particular promise to build upon: we cannot be sure, yet let us pray, for who can tell but God will be gracious to us, in this or that particular? When our relations and friends have fallen sick, the prayer of faith has prevailed much; while there is life there is hope, and, while there is hope, there is room for prayer.

(2.) That now the child was dead he thought it as much his duty to be satisfied in the divine disposal concerning it (2Sa 12:23): Now, wherefore should I fast? Two things checked his grief:--

[1.] I cannot bring him back again; and again, He shall not return to me. Those that are dead are out of the reach of prayer; nor can our tears profit them. We can neither weep nor pray them back to this life. Wherefore then should we fast? To what purpose is this waste? Yet David fasted and wept for Jonathan when he was dead, in honour to him.

[2.] I shall go to him.

First, To him to the grave. Note, The consideration of our own death should moderate our sorrow at the death of our relations. It is the common lot; instead of mourning for their death, we should think of our own: and, whatever loss we have of them now, we shall die shortly, and go to them.

Secondly, To him to heaven, to a state of blessedness, which even the Old Testament saints had some expectation of. Godly parents have great reason to hope concerning their children that die in infancy that it is well with their souls in the other world; for the promise is to us and to our seed, which shall be performed to those that do not put a bar in their own door, as infants do not. Favores sunt ampliandi--Favours received should produce the hope of more. God calls those his children that are born unto him; and, if they be his, he will save them.

This may comfort us when our children are removed from us by death, they are better provided for, both in work and wealth, than they could have been in this world. We shall be with them shortly, to part no more.

V. The birth of Solomon. Though David's marrying Bath-sheba had displeased the Lord, yet he was not therefore commanded to divorce her; so far from this that God gave him that son by her on whom the covenant of royalty should be entailed. Bath-sheba, no doubt, was greatly afflicted with the sense of her sin and the tokens of God's displeasure. But, God having restored to David the joys of his salvation, he comforted her with the same comforts with which he himself was comforted of God (2Sa 12:24): He comforted Bath-sheba. And both he and she had reason to be comforted in the tokens of God's reconciliation to them,

1. Inasmuch as, by his providence, he gave them a son, not as the former, who was given in anger and taken away in wrath, but a child graciously given, and written among the living in Jerusalem. They called him Solomon--peaceful, because his birth was a token of God's being at peace with them, because of the prosperity which was entailed upon him, and because he was to be a type of Christ, the prince of peace. God had removed one son from them, but now gave them another instead of him, like Seth instead of Abel, Ge 4:25. Thus God often balances the griefs of his people with comforts in the same thing wherein he hath afflicted them, setting the one over-against the other. David had very patiently submitted to the will of God in the death of the other child, and now God made up the loss of that, abundantly to his advantage, in the birth of this. The way to have our creature-comforts either continued or restored, or the loss of them made up some other way, is cheerfully to resign them to God.

2. Inasmuch as, by his grace, he particularly owned and favoured that son: The Lord loved him (2Sa 12:24,25), ordered him, by the prophet Nathan, to be called Jedidiah--Beloved of the Lord: though a seed of evil-doers (for such David and Bath-sheba were), yet so well ordered was the covenant, and the crown entailed by it, that it took away all attainders and corruption of blood, signifying that those who were by nature children of wrath and disobedience should, by the covenant of grace, not only be reconciled, but made favourites. And, in this name, he typified Jesus Christ, that blessed Jedidiah, the son of God's love, concerning whom God declared again and again, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed *himself,* and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing *is* this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, *while it was* alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

24 And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him.

25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah [beloved of the Lord], because of the Lord.

David Captures Rabbah

26 And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

27 And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

28 Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.

We have here an account of the conquest of Rabbah, and other cities of the Ammonites. Though this comes in here after the birth of David's child, yet it is most probable that it was effected a good while before, and soon after the death of Uriah, perhaps during the days of Bath-sheba's mourning for him. Observe,

1. That God was very gracious in giving David this great success against his enemies, notwithstanding the sin he had been guilty of just at that time when he was engaged in this war, and the wicked use he had made of the sword of the children of Ammon in the murder of Uriah. Justly might he have made that sword, thenceforward, a plague to David and his kingdom; yet he breaks it, and makes David's sword victorious, even before he repents, that this goodness of God might lead him to repentance. Good reason had David to own that God dealt not with him according to his sins, Ps 103:10.

2. That Joab acted very honestly and honourably; for when he had taken the city of waters, the royal city, where the palace was, and from which the rest of the city was supplied with

water (and therefore, upon the cutting off of that, would be obliged speedily to surrender), he sent to David to come in person to complete this great action, that he might have the praise of it, 2Sa 12:26-28. Herein he showed himself a faithful servant, that sought his master's honour, and his own only in subordination to his, and left an example to the servants of the Lord Jesus, in every thing they do, to consult his honour. Not unto us, but to thy name, give glory. 3. That David was both too haughty and too severe upon this occasion, and neither so humble nor so tender as he should have been.

(1.) He seems to have been too fond of the crown of the king of Ammon, 2Sa 12:30. Because it was of extraordinary value, by reason of the precious stones with which it was set, David would have it set upon his head, though it would have been better to have cast it at God's feet, and at this time to have put his own mouth in the dust, under guilt. The heart that is truly humbled for sin is dead to worldly glory and looks upon it with a holy contempt.

(2.) He seems to have been too harsh with his prisoners of war, 2Sa 12:31. Taking the city by storm, after it had obstinately held out against a long and expensive siege, if he had put all whom he found in arms to the sword in the heat of battle, it would have been severe enough; but to kill them afterwards in cold blood, and by cruel tortures, with saws and harrows, tearing them to pieces, did not become him who, when he entered upon the government, promised to sing of mercy as well as judgment, Ps 101:1.

Had he made examples of those only who had abused his ambassadors, or advised or assisted in it, that being a violation of the law of nations, it might have been looked upon as a piece of necessary justice for terror to other nations; but to be thus severe with all the cities of the children of Ammon (that is, the garrisons or soldiers of the cities) was extremely

rigorous, and a sign that David's heart was not yet made soft by repentance, else the bowels of his compassion would not have been thus shut up--a sign that he had not yet found mercy, else he would have been more ready to show mercy.

29 And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

30 And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof *was* a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was *set* on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

31 And he brought forth the people that *were* therein, and put *them* under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brickkiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

2 Samuel-13

Amnon and Tamar

1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name *was* Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.

2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she *was* a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.

3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name *was* Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab *was* a very subtile man.

4 And he said unto him, Why *art* thou, *being* the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister.

5 And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see *it*, and eat *it* at her hand.

We have here a particular account of the abominable wickedness of Amnon in ravishing his sister, a subject not fit

to be enlarged upon nor indeed to be mentioned without blushing, that ever any man should be so vile, especially that a son of David should be so. Amnon's character, we have reason to think, was bad in other things; if he had not forsaken God, he would never have been given up to these vile affections.

Godly parents have often been afflicted with wicked children; grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does. We do not find that David's children imitated him in his devotion; but his false steps they trod in, and in those did much worse, and repented not. Parents know not how fatal the consequences may be if in any instance they give their children bad examples. Observe the steps of Amnon's sin.

I The devil, as an unclean spirit, put it into his heart to lust after his sister Tamar. Beauty is a snare to many; it was so to her. She was fair, and therefore Amnon coveted her, 2Sa 13:1. Those that are peculiarly handsome have no reason, on that account, to be proud, but great reason to stand upon their watch. Amnon's lust was,

1. Unnatural in itself, to lust after his sister, which even natural conscience startles at and cannot think of without horror. Such a spirit of contradiction there is in man's corrupt nature that still it desires forbidden fruit, and the more strongly it is forbidden the more greedily it is desired. Can he entertain the thought of betraying that virtue and honour of which, as a brother, he ought to have been the protector? But what wickedness so vile as not to find admittance into an unsanctified unguarded heart, left to itself?

2. It was very uneasy to him. He was so vexed that he could not gain an opportunity to solicit her chastity (for innocent converse with her was not denied him) that he fell sick, 2Sa 13:2. Fleshly lusts are their own punishment, and not only war

against the soul, but against the body too, and are the rottenness of the bones. See what a hard master sinners serve, and how heavy his yoke is.

II The devil, as a subtle serpent, put it into his head how to compass this wicked design. Amnon had a friend (so he called him, but he was really an enemy to him), a kinsman, that had in him more of David's blood (for he was his nephew) than of David's spirit, for he was a subtle man, cunning to carry on any bad design, especially an intrigue of this nature, 2Sa 13:3.

1. He took notice that Amnon looked ill, and, being a subtle man, concluded that he was love-sick (2Sa 13:4), and asks him, "Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? Why dost thou pine, being the king's eldest son, and heir to the crown. Being the king's son,"

(1.) "Thou hast the pleasures of the court to divert thee; take those pleasures then, and with them drive away the sorrow, whatever it is." Content and comfort are not always to be found in royal palaces. With much more reason may we ask dejected and disconsolate saints why they, who are the children of the King of kings and heirs of the crown of life, are thus lean from day to day.

(2.) "Thou hast the power of a prince to command what thou wantest and wishest for; use that power therefore, and gratify thyself. Pine not away for that which, lawful or unlawful, thou, being the king's son, mayest have. Quicquid libet licet--Your will is law." Thus Jezebel to Ahab in a like case (1Ki 21:7), Dost not thou govern Israel? The abuse of power is the most dangerous temptation of the great.

2. Amnon having the impudence to own his wicked lust, miscalling it love (I love Tamar), Jonadab put him in a way to compass his design, 2Sa 13:5. Had he been what he pretended

(Amnon's friend), he would have startled at the mention of such horrid wickedness, would have laid before him the evil of it, what an offence it was to God and what a wrong to his own soul to entertain such a vile thought, of what fatal consequence it would be to him to cherish and prosecute it; he would have used his subtlety to divert Amnon from it, by recommending some other person to him, whom he might lawfully marry. But he seems not at all surprised at it, objects not either the unlawfulness or the difficulty, the reproach or so much as his father's displeasure, but puts him in the way to get Tamar to his bed-side, and then he might do as he pleased.

Note, The case of those is very miserable whose friends, instead of admonishing and reproving them, flatter them and forward them in their sinful ways, and are their counsellors and contrivers to do wickedly. Amnon is already sick, but goes about; he must take upon him to be so ill (and his thin looks will give colour enough to the pretence) as not to be able to get up, and to have no appetite to any thing but just that which pleases his fancy. Dainty meat is abhorred, Job 33:20. The best dish from the king's table cannot please him; but, if he can eat any thing, it must be from his sister Tamar's fair hand. This is what he is advised to.

3. Amnon followed these directions, and thus got Tamar within his reach: He made himself sick, 2Sa 13:6. Thus he lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den, to catch the poor, and to draw them into his net, Ps 10:8-10. David was always fond of his children, and concerned if any thing ailed them; he no sooner hears that Amnon is sick than he comes himself to visit him. Let parents learn hence to be tender of their children and compassionate towards them. The sick child commonly the mother comforteth (Isa 66:13), but let not the father be unconcerned. We may suppose that when David came to see his sick son he gave him good counsel to make a right use of his affliction, and prayed with him, which yet did not alter his

wicked purpose. At parting, the indulgent father asks, "Is there any thing thou hast a mind to, that I can procure for thee?" "Yes, Sir," says the dissembling son, "my stomach is weak, and I know not of any thing I can eat, unless it be a cake of my sister Tamar's making, and I cannot be satisfied that it is so unless I see her make it, and it will do me the more good if I eat it at her hand." David saw no reason to suspect any mischief intended. God hid his heart from understanding in this matter. He therefore immediately orders Tamar to go and attend her sick brother, 2Sa 13:7. He does it very innocently, but afterwards, no doubt, reflected upon it with great regret. Tamar as innocently goes to her brother's chamber, neither dreading any abuse (why should she from a brother, a sick brother?) nor disdaining, in obedience to her father and love to her brother (though but her half-brother), to be his nurse, 2Sa 13:8,9. Though she was a king's daughter, a great beauty (2Sa 13:1), and well dressed (2Sa 13:18), yet she did not think it below her to knead cakes and bake them, nor would she have done this now if she had not been used to it. Good house-wifery is not a thing below the greatest ladies, nor ought they to think it a disparagement to them. The virtuous woman, whose husband sits among the elders, yet works willingly with her hands, Pr 31:13. Modern ages have not been destitute of such instances, nor is it so unfashionable as some would make it. Preparing for the sick should be more the care and delight of the ladies than preparing for the nice, charity more than curiosity.

4. Having got her to him, he contrives to have her alone; for the adulterer (much more so vile an adulterer as this) is in care that no eye see him, Job 24:15. The meat is ready, but he cannot eat while he is looked at by those about him; they must all be turned out, 2Sa 13:9. The sick must be humoured, and think they have a privilege to command. Tamar is willing to humour him; her chaste and virtuous soul has not the least thought of that which his polluted breast is full of; and

therefore she makes no scruple of being alone with him in the inner chamber, 2Sa 13:10. And now the mask is thrown off, the meat is thrown by, and the wicked wretch calls her sister, and yet impudently courts her to come and lie with him, 2Sa 13:11. It was a base affront to her virtue to think it possible to persuade her to consent to such wickedness when he knew her behaviour to be always exemplarily modest and virtuous. But it is common for those that live in uncleanness to think others such as themselves, at least tinder to their sparks.

III. The devil, as a strong tempter, deafens his ear to all the reasonings with which she resisted his assaults and would have persuaded him to desist. We may well imagine what a surprise and terror it was to the young lady to be thus attacked, how she blushed and how she trembled; yet, in this great confusion, nothing could be said more pertinently, nor with greater strength of argument, than what she said to him.

1. She calls him brother, reminding him of the nearness of the relation, which made it unlawful for him to marry her, much more to debauch her. It was expressly forbidden (Le 18:9) under a severe penalty, Le 20:17. Great care must be taken lest the love that should be among relations degenerate into lust.

2. She entreats him not to force her, which intimates that she would never consent to it in any degree; and what satisfaction could he take in offering violence?

3. She lays before him the great wickedness of it. It is folly; all sin is so, especially uncleanness. It is wickedness of the worst kind. Such abominations ought not to be committed in Israel, among the professing people of God, that have better statutes than the heathen have. We are Israelites; if we do such things, we are more inexcusable than others, and our

condemnation will be more intolerable, for we reproach the Lord, and that worthy name by which we are called.

4. She represents to him the shame of it, which perhaps might influence him more than the sin of it: "For my part, whither shall I cause my shame to go? If it should be concealed, yet I shall blush to think of it as long as I live; and, if ever it be known, how shall I be able to look any of my friends in the face? For thy part, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel," that is, "Thou wilt be looked upon as an atrocious debauchee, the worst of men; thou wilt lose thy interest in the esteem of all that are wise and good, and so wilt be set aside as unfit to rule, though the first-born; for Israel will never submit to the government of such a fool." Prospect of shame, especially everlasting shame, should deter us from sin.

5. To divert him from his wicked purpose at this time, and (if possible) to get clear of him, she intimates to him that probably the king, rather than he should die for love of her, would dispense with the divine law and let him marry her: not as if she thought he had such a dispensing power, or would pretend to it; but she was confident that, upon notice given to the king by himself of this wicked desire, which he would scarcely have believed from any one else, he would take an effectual course to protect her from him. But all her arts and all her arguments availed not.

His proud spirit cannot bear a denial; but her comfort, and honour, and all that was dear to her, must be sacrificed to his brutish and outrageous lust, 2Sa 13:14. It is to be feared that Amnon, though young, had long lived a lewd life, which his father either knew not or punished not; for a man could not, of a sudden, arrive at such a pitch of wickedness as this. But is this his love to Tamar? Is this the recompence he gives her for her readiness to attend him in his sickness? Will he deal with his sister as with a harlot? Base villain! God deliver all

that are modest and virtuous from such wicked and unreasonable men.

IV. The devil, as a tormentor and betrayer, immediately turns his love of her into hatred (2Sa 13:15): He hated her with great hatred, greatly, so it is in the margin, and grew as outrageous in his malice as he had been in his lust.

1. He basely turned her out of doors by force; nay, as if he now disdained to touch her with his own hands, he ordered his servant to pull her out and bolt the door after her, 2Sa 13:17. Now,

(1.) The innocent injured lady had reason to resent this as a great affront, and in some respects (as she says, 2Sa 13:16) worse than the former; for nothing could have been done more barbarous and ill-natured, or more disgraceful to her. Had he taken care to conceal what was done, her honour would have been lost to herself only. Had he gone down on his knees and begged her pardon, it might have been some little reparation. Had he given her time to compose herself after the horrid confusion she was put into, she might have kept her countenance when she went out, and so have kept her counsel. But to dismiss her thus hurried, thus rudely, as if she had done some wicked thing, obliged her, in her own defence, to proclaim the wrong that had been done her.

(2.) We may learn from it both the malignity of sin (unbridled passions are as bad as unbridled appetites) and the mischievous consequences of sin (at last, it bites like a serpent); for here we find,

[1.] That sins, sweet in the commission, afterwards become odious and painful, and the sinner's own conscience makes them so to himself. Amnon hated Tamar because she would not consent to his wickedness, and so take part of the blame

upon herself, but to the last resisted it, and reasoned against it, and so threw all the blame upon him. Had he hated the sin, and loathed himself for it, we might have hoped he was penitent. Godly sorrow worketh indignation, 2Co 7:11. But to hate the person he had abused showed that his conscience was terrified, but his heart not at all humbled. See what deceitful pleasures those of the flesh are, how soon they pass away, and turn into loathing; see Eze 23:17.

[2.] That sins, secret in the commission, afterwards become open and public, and the sinners themselves often make them so. Their own tongues fall upon them. The Jewish doctors say that, upon the occasion of this wickedness of Amnon, a law was made that a young man and a young woman should never be alone together; for, said they, if the king's daughter be so used, what will become of the children of private men?

2. We must now leave the criminal to the terrors of his own guilty conscience, and enquire what becomes of the poor victim.

(1.) She bitterly lamented the injury she had received, as it was a stain to her honour, though no real blemish to her virtue. She tore her fine clothes in token of her grief, and put ashes upon her head, to deform herself, loathing her own beauty and ornaments, because they had occasioned Amnon's unlawful love; and she went on crying for another's sin, 2Sa 13:19.

(2.) She retired to her brother Absalom's house, because he was her own brother, and there she lived in solitude and sorrow, in token of her modesty and detestation of uncleanness. Absalom spoke kindly to her, bade her pass by the injury for the present, designing himself to revenge it, 2Sa 13:20. It should seem by Absalom's question (Has Amnon been with thee?) that Amnon was notorious for such lewd practices, so that it was dangerous for a modest woman to be

with him; this Absalom might know, and yet Tamar be wholly ignorant of it.

6 So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand.

7 Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat.

8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded *it*, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes.

9 And she took a pan, and poured *them* out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me. And they went out every man from him.

10 And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* into the chamber to Amnon her brother.

11 And when she had brought *them* unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister.

12 And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.

13 And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

14 Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

15 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.

16 And she said unto him, *There is* no cause: this evil in sending me away *is* greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her.

17 Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this *woman* out from me, and bolt the door after her.

18 And *she had* a garment of divers colors upon her: for with such
robes were the king's daughters *that were* virgins appareled. Then
his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.
19 And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers
colors that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on
crying.

Absalom's Revenge and Flight

20 And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy
brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he *is* thy
brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her
brother Absalom's house.
21 But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth.
22 And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad:
for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.
23 And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had
sheepshearers in Baal-hazor, which *is* beside Ephraim: and
Absalom invited all the king's sons.

What Solomon says of the beginning of strife is as true of the beginning of all sin, it is as the letting forth of water; when once the flood-gates are plucked up, an inundation follows; one mischief begets another, and it is hard to say what shall be in the end thereof.

I. We are here told how David resented the tidings of Amnon's sin: He was very wroth, 2Sa 13:21. So he had reason to be, that his own son should do such a wicked thing and draw him to be accessory to it. It would be a reproach to him for not giving him a better education; it would be a blot upon his family, the ruin of his daughter, a bad example to his kingdom, and a wrong to his son's soul. But was it enough for him to be angry? He ought to have punished his son for it, and have put him to open shame; both as a father and as a king he had power

to do it. But the LXX. here adds these words: But he saddened not the spirit of his son Amnon, because he loved him, because he was his first-born.

He fell into Eli's error, whose sons made themselves vile, and he frowned not on them. If Amnon was dear to him, his punishing him would have been so much the greater punishment to himself for his own uncleanness. But he cannot bear the shame those must submit to who correct that in others which they are conscious of in themselves, and therefore his anger must serve instead of his justice; and this hardens sinners, Ec 8:11.

II. How Absalom resented it. He resolves already to do the part of a judge in Israel; and, since his father will not punish Amnon, he will, from a principle, not of justice or zeal for virtue, but of revenge, because he reckons himself affronted in the abuse done to his sister. Their mother was daughter to a heathen prince (2Sa 3:3), which perhaps they were upbraided with sometimes by their brethren, as children of a stranger. As such a one Absalom thought his sister was now treated; and, if Amnon thought her fit to be made his harlot, he would think him fit to be made his slave. This enraged him, and nothing less than the blood of Amnon will quench his rage. Here we have,

1 The design conceived: Absalom hated Amnon (2Sa 13:22), and he that hateth his brother is a murderer already, and, like Cain, is of that wicked one, 1Jo 3:12,15. Absalom's hatred of his brother's crime would have been commendable, and he might justly have prosecuted him for it by a due course of law, for example to others, and the making of some compensation to his injured sister; but to hate his person, and design his death by assassination, was to put a great affront upon God, by offering to repair the breach of his seventh commandment by the violation of his sixth, as if they were not all alike sacred.

But he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill, Jam 2:11.

2 The design concealed. He said nothing to Amnon of this matter, either good or bad, appeared as if he did not know it, and maintained towards him his usual civility, only waiting for a fair opportunity to do him a mischief. That malice is the worst,

(1.) Which is hidden closely, and has no vent given to it. If Absalom had reasoned the matter with Amnon, he might have convinced him of his sin and brought him to repentance; but, saying nothing, Amnon's heart was hardened, and his own more and more embittered against him; therefore rebuking our neighbour is opposed to hating him in our hearts, Le 19:17. Let passion have vent and it will spend itself.

(2.) Which is gilded over with a show of friendship; so Absalom's was, his words smoother than butter but war in his heart. See Pr 26:26.

(3.) Which is harboured long. Two full years Absalom nursed this root of bitterness, 2Sa 13:24. It may be, at first, he did not intend to kill his brother (for, if he had, he might have had as fair an opportunity to do it as he had at last), and only waited for an occasion to disgrace him or do him some other mischief; but in time his hatred ripened to this, that he would be no less than the death of him. If the sun going down once upon the wrath gives such place to the devil (as is intimated, Eph 4:26,27), what would the sunsets of two full years do?

3. The design laid.

(1.) Absalom has a feast at his house in the country, as Nabal had, on occasion of his sheep-shearing, 2Sa 13:23. Attentive as Absalom was to his person (2Sa 14:26), and as high as he

looked, he knew the state of his flocks and looked well to his herds. Those who have no other care about their estates in the country than how to spend them in the town take a ready way to see the end of them. When Absalom had sheep-shearers he would himself be with them.

(2.) To this feast he invites the king his father, and all the princes of the blood (2Sa 13:24), not only that he might have this opportunity to pay his respects to them, but that he might make himself the more respected among his neighbours. Those that are akin to great folks are apt to value themselves too much on their kindred.

(3.) The king would not go himself, because he would not put him to the expense of his entertainment, 2Sa 13:25. It seems Absalom had an estate in his own hands, on which he lived like himself; the king had given it to him, but would have him to be a good husband of it: in both these he is an example to parents, when their children have grown up, to give them a competency to live upon, according to their rank, and then to take care that they do not live above it, especially that they be no way accessory to their doing so. It is prudent for young house-keepers to begin as they can hold out, and not to spend the wool upon the shearing of it.

(4.) Absalom got leave for Amnon, and all the rest of the king's sons, to come and grace his table in the country, 2Sa 13:26,27. Absalom had so effectually concealed his enmity to Amnon that David saw no reason to suspect any design upon him in that particular invitation: "Let my brother Amnon go;" but this would make the stroke more cutting to David that he was himself drawn in to consent to that which gave the opportunity for it, as before, 2Sa 13:7. It seems, David's sons, though grown up, continued to pay such a deference to their father as not to go such a small journey as this without leave. Thus ought children, even when they have become men and

women, to honour their parents, consult them, and do nothing material without their consent, much less against their mind.

4. The design executed, 2Sa 13:28,29.

(1.) Absalom's entertainment was very plentiful; for he resolves that they shall all be merry with wine, at least concludes that Amnon will be so, for he knew that he was apt to drink to excess. But,

(2.) The orders he gave to his servants concerning Amnon, that they should mingle his blood with his wine, were very barbarous. Had he challenged him, and, in reliance upon the goodness of his cause and the justice of God, fought him himself, though that would have been bad enough, yet it would have been more honourable and excusable (our ancient law, in some cases, allowed trial by battle); but to murder him, as he did, was to copy Cain's example, only that the reason made a difference: Abel was slain for his righteousness, Amnon for his wickedness. Observe the aggravations of this sin:--

[1.] He would have Amnon slain when his heart was merry with wine, and he was consequently least apprehensive of danger, least able to resist it, and also least fit to go out of the world; as if his malice aimed to destroy both soul and body, not giving him time to say, Lord, have mercy upon me. What a dreadful surprise hath death been to many, whose hearts have been overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness!

[2.] His servants must be employed to do it, and so involved in the guilt. He was to give the word of command--Smite Amnon; and then they, in obedience to him, and, upon presumption that his authority would bear them out, must kill him. What an impious defiance does he bid to the divine law, when, though the command of God is express, Thou shalt not

kill, he bids them kill Amnon, with this warrant, "Have not I commanded you? That is enough. Be courageous, and fear neither God nor man." Those servants are ill taught who obey their masters in contradiction to God, and those are wicked masters who have taught them to do so. Those are too obsequious that will damn their souls to please their masters, whose big words cannot secure them from God's wrath. Masters must always command their servants as those that know they also have a Master in heaven.

[3.] He did it in the presence of all the king's sons, of whom it is said (2Sa 8:18) that they were chief rulers; so that it was an affront to public justice which they had the administration of, and to the king his father whom they represented, and a contempt of that sword which should have been a terror to his evil deeds, while his evil deeds, on the contrary, were a terror to those that bore it.

[4.] There is reason to suspect that Absalom did this, not only to revenge his sister's quarrel, but to make way for himself to the throne, which he was ambitious of, and which he would stand fair for if Amnon the eldest son was taken off. When the word of command was given Absalom's servants failed not to execute it, being buoyed up with an opinion that their master, being now next heir to the crown (for Chileab was dead, as bishop Patrick thinks), would save them from harm. Now the threatened sword is drawn in David's house which should not depart from it.

First, His eldest son falls by it, himself being, by his wickedness, the cause of it, and his father, by his connivance, accessory to it.

Secondly, All his sons flee from it, and come home in terror, not knowing how far their brother Absalom's bloody design might extend. See what mischief sin makes in families.

24 And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant
hath sheepshearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants go
with thy servant.
25 And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go,
lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he
would not go, but blessed him.
26 Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go
with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee?
27 But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons
go with him.
28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now
when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you,
Smite Amnon; then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you?
be courageous, and be valiant.
29 And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had
commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him
up upon his mule, and fled.
30 And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to
David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there
is not one of them left.
31 Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth;
and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent.
32 And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother, answered and said,
Let not my lord suppose *that* they have slain all the young men the
king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of
Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his
sister Tamar.
33 Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart,
to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead.

Here is, I The fright that David was put into by a false report brought to Jerusalem that Absalom had slain all the king's sons, 2Sa 13:30. It is common for fame to make bad worse; and the first news of such a thing as this represents it as more dreadful than afterwards it proves. Let us not therefore be afraid of evil tidings, while they want confirmation, but, when we hear the worst, hope the best, at least hope better.

However, this false news gave as much affliction to David, for the present, as if it had been true; he tore his garments, and lay on the earth, while as yet it was only a flying story, 2Sa 13:31. It was well that David had grace; he had need enough of it, for he had strong passions.

II The rectifying of the mistake in two ways:--

1. By the sly suggestions of Jonadab, David's nephew, who could tell him, Amnon only is dead, and not all the king's sons (2Sa 13:32,33), and could tell him too that it was done by the appointment of Absalom, and designed from the day Amnon forced his sister Tamar. What a wicked man was he, if he knew all this or had any cause to suspect it, that he did not make David acquainted with it sooner, that means might be used to make up the quarrel, or at least that David might not throw Amnon into the mouth of danger by letting him go to Absalom's house.

If we do not our utmost to prevent mischief, we make ourselves accessory to it. If we say, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider whether we did or no? See Pr 24:11,12. It is well if Jonadab was not as guilty of Amnon's death as he was of his sin; such friends do those prove who are hearkened to as counsellors to do wickedly: he that would not be so kind as to prevent Amnon's sin would not be so kind as to prevent his ruin, when, it should seem, he might have done both.

2. By the safe return of all the king's sons except Amnon. They and their attendants were speedily discovered by the watch (2Sa 13:34,35), and soon arrived, to show themselves alive, but to bring the certain sad news that Absalom had murdered their brother Amnon. The grief David had been in for that which was not made him the better able to bear that which was, by giving him a sensible occasion, when he was

undeceived, to thank God that all his sons were not dead: yet that Amnon was dead, and slain by his own brother is such a treacherous barbarous manner, was enough to put the king and court, the king and kingdom, into real mourning. Sorrow is never more reasonable than when there is sin in the case.

III. Absalom's flight from justice: Absalom immediately fled, 2Sa 13:34. He was now as much afraid of the king's sons as they were of him; they fled from his malice, he from their justice. No part of the land of Israel could shelter him. The cities of refuge gave no protection to a wilful murderer. Though David had let Amnon's incest go unpunished, Absalom could not promise himself his pardon for this murder; so express was the law in this case, and so well known David's justice, and his dread of blood-guiltiness. He therefore made the best of his way to his mother's relations, and was entertained by his grandfather Talmai, king of Geshur (2Sa 13:37), and there he was protected three years (2Sa 13:38), David not demanding him, and Talmai not thinking himself obliged to send him back unless he were demanded.

IV. David's uneasiness for his absence. He mourned for Amnon a good while (2Sa 13:37), but, he being past recall, time wore off that grief: he was comforted concerning Amnon. It also wore off too much his detestation of Absalom's sin; instead of loathing him as a murderer, he longs to go forth to him, 2Sa 13:39. At first he could not find in his heart to do justice on him; now he can almost find in his heart to take him into his favour again. This was David's infirmity. Something God saw in his heart that made a difference, else we should have thought that he, as much as Eli, honoured his sons more than God.

34 But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hillside behind him.

35 And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as
thy servant said, so it is.
36 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking,
that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and
wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.
37 But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of
Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day.
38 So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.
39 And *the soul of* king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he
was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

2 Samuel-14

Joab's Scheme for Absalom's Return

1 Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was*
toward Absalom.
2 And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said
unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now
mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a
woman that had a long time mourned for the dead:
3 and come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab
put the words in her mouth.
4 And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her
face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O king.
5 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I
am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead.
6 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in
the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the
other, and slew him.

Here is, I. Joab's design to get Absalom recalled out of banishment, his crime pardoned, and his attainder reversed, 2Sa 14:1. Joab made himself very busy in this affair.

1. As a courtier that was studious, by all ways possible, to ingratiate himself with his prince and improve his interest in his favour: He perceived that the king's heart was towards Absalom, and that, the heat of his displeasure being over, he still retained his old affection for him, and only wanted a friend to court him to be reconciled, and to contrive for him how he might do it without impeaching the honour of his justice. Joab, finding how David stood affected, undertook this good office.

2. As a friend to Absalom, for whom perhaps he had a particular kindness, whom at least he looked upon as the rising sun, to whom it was his interest to recommend himself. He plainly foresaw that his father would at length be reconciled to him, and therefore thought he should make both his friends if he were instrumental to bring it about.

3. As a statesman, and one concerned for the public welfare. He knew how much Absalom was the darling of the people, and, if David should die while he was in banishment, it might occasion a civil war between those that were for him and those that were against him; for it is probable that though all Israel loved his person, yet they were much divided upon his case.

4. As one who was himself a delinquent, by the murder of Abner. He was conscious to himself of the guilt of blood, and that he was himself obnoxious to public justice, and therefore whatever favour he could procure to be shown to Absalom would corroborate his reprieve.

II. His contrivance to do it by laying somewhat of a parallel case before the king, which was done so dexterously by the person he employed that the king took it for a real case, and gave judgment upon it, as he had done upon Nathan's parable; and, the judgment being in favour of the criminal, the manager might, by that, discover his sentiments so far as to venture

upon the application of it, and to show that it was the case of his own family, which, it is probable, she was instructed not to proceed to if the king's judgment upon her case should be severe.

1 The person he employed is not named, but she is said to be a woman of Tekoah, one whom he knew to be fit for such an undertaking: and it was requisite that the scene should be laid at a distance, that David might not think it strange that he had not heard of the case before. It is said, She was a wise woman, one that had a quicker wit and a readier tongue than most of her neighbours, 2Sa 14:2 The truth of the story would be the less suspected when it came, as was supposed, from the person's own mouth.

2 The character she put on was that of a disconsolate widow, 2Sa 14:2. Joab knew such a one would have an easy access to the king, who was always ready to comfort the mourners, especially the mourning widows, having himself mentioned it among the titles of God's honour that he is a Judge of the widows, Ps 68:5. God's ear, no doubt, is more open to the cries of the afflicted, and his heart too, than that of the most merciful princes on earth can be.

3. It was a case of compassion which she had to represent to the king, and a case in which she could have no relief but from the chancery in the royal breast, the law (and consequently the judgment of all the inferior courts) being against her. She tells the king that she had buried her husband (2Sa 14:5),--that she had two sons that were the support and comfort of her widowed state,--that these two (as young men are apt to do) fell out and fought, and one of them unhappily killed the other (2Sa 14:6),--that, for her part, she was desirous to protect the manslayer (for, as Rebekah argued concerning her two sons, Why should she be deprived of them both in one day? Ge 27:45), but though she, who was nearest of kin to the slain,

was willing to let fall the demands of an avenger of blood, yet the other relations insisted upon it that the surviving brother should be put to death according to law, not out of any affection either to justice or to the memory of the slain brother, but that, by destroying the heir (which they had the impudence to own was the thing they aimed at), the inheritance might be theirs: and thus they would cut off,

(1.) Her comfort: "They shall quench my coal, deprive me of the only support of my old age, and put a period to all my joy in this world, which is reduced to this one coal."

(2.) Her husband's memory: "His family will be quite extinct, and they will leave him neither name nor remainder," 2Sa 14:7.

4. The king promised her his favour and a protection for her son. Observe how she improved the king's compassionate concessions.

(1.) Upon the representation of her case he promised to consider of it and to give orders about it, 2Sa 14:8. This was encouraging, that he did not dismiss her petition with "Currat lex--Let the law take its course; blood calls for blood, and let it have what it calls for:" but he will take time to enquire whether the allegations of her petition be true.

(2.) The woman was not content with this, but begged that he would immediately give judgment in her favour; and if the matter of fact were not as she represented it, and consequently a wrong judgment given upon it, let her bear the blame, and free the king and his throne from guilt, 2Sa 14:9. Yet her saying this would not acquit the king if he should pass sentence without taking due cognizance of the case.

(3.) Being thus pressed, he made a further promise that she should not be injured nor insulted by her adversaries, but he would protect her from all molestation, 2Sa 14:10. Magistrates ought to be the patrons of oppressed widows.

(4.) Yet this does not content her, unless she can get her son's pardon, and protection for him too. Parents are not easy, unless their children be safe, safe for both worlds: "Let not the avenger of blood destroy my son (2Sa 14:11), for I am undone if I lose him; as good take my life as his. Therefore let the king remember the Lord thy God," that is,

[1.] "Let him confirm this merciful sentence with an oath, making mention of the Lord our God, by way of appeal to him, that the sentence may be indisputable and irreversible; and then I shall be easy." See Heb 6:17,18.

[2.] "Let him consider what good reason there is for this merciful sentence, and then he himself will be confirmed in it. Remember how gracious and merciful the Lord thy God is, how he bears long with sinners and does not deal with them according to their deserts, but is ready to forgive. Remember how the Lord thy God spared Cain, who slew his brother, and protected him from the avengers of blood, Ge 4:15. Remember how the Lord thy God forgave thee the blood of Uriah, and let the king, that has found mercy, show mercy." Note, Nothing is more proper, nor more powerful, to engage us to every duty, especially to all acts of mercy and kindness, than to remember the Lord our God.

(5.) This importunate widow, by pressing the matter thus closely, obtains at last a full pardon for her son, ratified with an oath as she desired: As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth, that is, "I will undertake he shall come to no damage upon this account." The Son of David has assured all that put themselves under his protection

that, though they should be put to death for his sake, not a hair of their head shall perish (Lu 21:16-18), though they should lose for him, they shall not lose by him. Whether David did well this to undertake the protection of a murderer, whom the cities of refuge would not protect, I cannot say.

But, as the matter of fact appeared to him, there was not only great reason for compassion to the mother, but room enough for a favourable judgment concerning the son: he had slain his brother, but he hated him not in time past; it was upon a sudden provocation, and, for aught that appeared, it might be done in his own defence. He pleaded not this himself, but the judge must be of counsel for the prisoner; and therefore, Let mercy at this time rejoice against judgment.

5. The case being thus adjudged in favour of her son, it is now time to apply it to the king's son, Absalom. The mask here begins to be thrown off, and another scene opened. The king is surprised, but not at all displeased, to find his humble petitioner, of a sudden, become his reprover, his privy-counsellor, an advocate for the prince his son, and the mouth of the people, undertaking to represent to him their sentiments. She begs his pardon, and his patience, for what she had further to say (2Sa 14:12), and has leave to say it, the king being very well pleased with her wit and humour.

(1.) She supposes Absalom's case to be, in effect, the same with that which she had put as her son's; and therefore, if the king would protect her son, though he had slain his brother, much more ought he to protect his own, and to fetch home his banished, 2Sa 14:13. Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur--Change but the name, to you the tale belongs. She names not Absalom, nor needed she to name him. David longed so much after him, and had him so much in his thoughts, that he was soon aware whom she meant by his banished. And in those two words were two arguments which the king's tender spirit

felt the force of: "He is banished, and has for three years undergone the disgrace and terror, and all the inconveniences, of banishment. Sufficient to such a one is this punishment. But he is thy banished, thy own son, a piece of thyself, thy dear son, whom thou lovest."

It is true, Absalom's case differed very much from that which she had put. Absalom did not slay his brother upon a hasty passion, but maliciously, and upon an old grudge; not in the field, where there were no witnesses, but at table, before all his guests. Absalom was not an only son, as hers was; David had many more, and one lately born, more likely to be his successor than Absalom, for he was called Jedidiah, because God loved him. But David was himself too well affected to the cause to be critical in his remarks upon the disparity of the cases, and was more desirous than she could be to bring that favourable judgment to his own son which he had given concerning hers.

(2.) She reasons upon it with the king, to persuade him to recall Absalom out of banishment, give him his pardon, and take him into his favour again.

[1.] She pleads the interest which the people of Israel had in him. "What is done against him is done against the people of God, who have their eye upon him as heir of the crown, at least have their eye upon the house of David in general, with which the covenant is made, and which therefore they cannot tamely see the diminution and decay of by the fall of so many of its branches in the flower of their age. Therefore the king speaks as one that is faulty, for he will provide that my husband's name and memory be not cut off, and yet takes no care though his own be in danger, which is of more value and importance than ten thousand of ours."

[2.] She pleads man's mortality (2Sa 14:14): "We must needs die. Death is appointed for us; we cannot avoid the thing itself, nor defer it till another time. We are all under a fatal necessity of dying; and, when we are dead, we are past recall, as water spilt upon the ground; nay, even while we are alive, we are so, we have lost our immortality, past retrieve. Amnon must have died, some time, if Absalom had not killed him; and, if Absalom be now put to death for killing him, that will not bring him to life again." This was poor reasoning, and would serve against the punishment of any murderer: but, it should seem, Amnon was a man little regarded by the people and his death little lamented, and it was generally thought hard that so dear a life as Absalom's should go for one so little valued as Amnon's.

[3.] She pleads God's mercy and his clemency towards poor guilty sinners: "God does not take away the soul, or life, but devises means that his banished, his children that have offended him, and are obnoxious to his justice, as Absalom is to thine, be not for ever expelled from him," 2Sa 14:14. Here are two great instances of the mercy of God to sinners, properly urged as reasons for showing mercy:--

First, The patience he exercises towards them. His law is broken, yet he does not immediately take away the life of those that break it, does not strike sinners dead, as justly he might, in the act of sin, but bears with them, and waits to be gracious. God's vengeance had suffered Absalom to live; why then should not David's justice suffer him? Secondly, The provision he has made for their restoration to his favour, that though by sin they have banished themselves from him, yet they might not be expelled, or cast off, for ever. Atonement might be made for sinners by sacrifice.

Lepers, and others ceremonially unclean, were banished, but provision was made for their cleansing, that, though for a time

excluded, they might not be finally expelled. The state of sinners is a state of banishment from God. Poor banished sinners are likely to be for ever expelled from God if some course be not taken to prevent it. It is against the mind of God that they should be so, for he is not willing that any should perish. Infinite wisdom has devised proper means to prevent it; so that it is the sinners' own fault if they be cast off. This instance of God's good-will toward us all should incline us to be merciful and compassionate one towards another, Mt 18:32,33.

6. She concludes her address with high compliments to the king, and strong expressions of her assurance that he would do what was just and kind both in the one case and in the other (2Sa 14:15-17); for, as if the case had been real, still she pleads for herself and her son, yet meaning Absalom.

(1.) She would not have troubled the king thus but that the people made her afraid. Understanding it of her own case, all her neighbours made her apprehensive of the ruin she and her son were upon the brink of, from the avengers of blood, the terror of which made her thus bold in her application to the king himself. Understanding it of Absalom's case, she gives the king to understand, what he did not know before, that the nation was disgusted at his severity towards Absalom to such a degree that she was really afraid it would occasion a general mutiny or insurrection, for the preventing of which great mischief she ventured to speak to the king himself. The fright she was in must excuse her rudeness.

(2.) She applied to him with a great confidence in his wisdom and clemency: "I said, I will speak to the king myself, and ask nobody to speak for me; for the king will hear reason, even from so mean a creature as I am, will hear the cries of the oppressed, and will not suffer the poorest of his subjects to be destroyed out of the inheritance of God," that is, "driven out

of the land of Israel, to seek for shelter among the uncircumcised, as Absalom is, whose case is so much the worse, that, being shut out of the inheritance of God, he wants God's law and ordinances, which might help to bring him to repentance, and is in danger of being infected with the idolatry of the heathen among whom he sojourns, and of bringing home the infection."

To engage the king to grant her request, she expressed a confident hope that his answer would be comfortable, and such as angels bring (as bishop Patrick explains it), who are messengers of divine mercy. What this woman says by way of compliment the prophet says by way of promise (Zec 12:8), that, when the weak shall be as David, the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord. "And, in order to this, the Lord thy God will be with thee, to assist thee in this and every judgment thou givest." Great expectations are great engagements, especially to persons of honour, to do their utmost not to disappoint those that depend upon them.

7. The hand of Joab is suspected by the king, and acknowledged by the woman, to be in all this, 2Sa 14:18-20.

(1.) The king soon suspected it. For he could not think that such a woman as this would appeal to him, in a matter of such moment, of her own accord; and he knew none so likely to set her on as Joab, who was a politic man and a friend of Absalom.

(2.) The woman very honestly owned it: "Thy servant Joab bade me. If it be well done, let him have the thanks; if ill, let him bear the blame." Though she found it very agreeable to the king, yet she would not take the praise of it to herself, but speaks the truth as it was, and gives us an example to do likewise, and never to tell a lie for the concealing of a well-managed scheme. Dare to be true; nothing can need a lie.

7 And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name nor remainder upon the earth.
8 And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee.
9 And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity *be* on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne *be* guiltless.
10 And the king said, Whosoever saith *aught* unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more.
11 Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, *As* the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth.
12 Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak *one* word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on.
13 And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished.
14 For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person; yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.
15 Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, *it is* because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid.
16 For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man *that would* destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God.
17 Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so *is* my lord the king to discern good and bad: therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee.

18 Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not
from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the
woman said, Let my lord the king now speak.
19 And the king said, *Is not* the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And
the woman answered and said, *As* thy soul liveth, my lord the king,
none can turn to the right hand or to the left from aught that my lord
the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put
all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:
20 to fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this
thing: and my lord *is* wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of
God, to know all *things* that *are* in the earth.
21 And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing:
go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.
22 And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and
thanked the king: and Joab said, Today thy servant knoweth that I
have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath
fulfilled the request of his servant.
23 So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to
Jerusalem.

Observe here, I. Orders given for the bringing back of Absalom. The errand on which the woman came to David was so agreeable, and her management of it so very ingenious and surprising, that he was brought into a peculiarly kind humour: Go (says he to Joab), bring the young man Absalom again, 2Sa 14:21. He was himself inclined to favour him, yet, for the honour of his justice, he would not do it but upon intercession made for him, which may illustrate the methods of divine grace.

It is true God has thought of compassion towards poor sinners, not willing that any should perish, yet he is reconciled to them through a Mediator, who intercedes with him on their behalf, and to whom he has given these orders, Go, bring them again. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and he came to this land of our banishment to bring us to God. Joab, having received these orders,

1. Returns thanks to the king for doing him the honour to employ him in an affair so universally grateful, 2Sa 14:22. Joab took it as a kindness to himself, and (some think) as an indication that he would never call him to an account for the murder he had been guilty of. But, if he meant so, he was mistaken, as we shall find, 1Ki 2:5,6.

2. Delays not to execute David's orders; he brought Absalom to Jerusalem, 2Sa 14:23. I see not how David can be justified in suspending the execution of the ancient law (Ge 9:6), Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, in which a righteous magistrate ought not to acknowledge even his brethren, or know his own children. God's laws were never designed to be like cobwebs, which catch the little flies, but suffer the great ones to break through. God justly made Absalom, whom his foolish pity spared, a scourge to him. But, though he allowed him to return to his own house, he forbade him the court, and would not see him himself, 2Sa 14:24. He put him under this interdict,

(1.) For his own honour, that he might not seem to countenance so great a criminal, nor to forgive him too easily.

(2.) For Absalom's greater humiliation. Perhaps he had heard something of his conduct when Joab went to fetch him, which gave him too much reason to think that he was not truly penitent; he therefore put him under this mark of his displeasure, that he might be awakened to a sight of his sin and to sorrow for it, and might make his peace with God, upon the first notice of which, no doubt, David would be forward to receive him again into his favour.

II. Occasion taken hence to give an account of Absalom. Nothing is said of his wisdom and piety. Though he was the son of such a devout father, we read nothing of his devotion.

Parents cannot give grace to their children, though they give them ever so good an education. All that is here said of him is,

1. That he was a very handsome man; there was not his equal in all Israel for beauty, (2Sa 14:25), a poor commendation for a man that had nothing else in him valuable. Handsome are those that handsome do. Many a polluted deformed soul dwells in a fair and comely body; witness Absalom's, that was polluted with blood, and deformed with unnatural disaffection to his father and prince. In his body there was no blemish, but in his mind nothing but wounds and bruises. Perhaps his comeliness was one reason why his father was so fond of him and protected him from justice. Those have reason to fear affliction in their children who are better pleased with their beauty than with their virtue.

2. That he had a very fine head of hair. Whether it was the length, or colour, or extraordinary softness of it, something there was which made it very valuable and very much an ornament to him, 2Sa 14:26. This notice is taken of his hair, not as the hair of a Nazarite (he was far from that strictness), but as the hair of a beau. He let it grow till it was a burden to him, and was heavy on him, nor would he cut it as long as ever he could bear it; as pride feels no cold, so it feels no heat, and that which feeds and gratifies it is not complained of, though very uneasy.

When he did poll it at certain times, for ostentation he had it weighed, that it might be seen how much it excelled other men's, and it weighed 200 shekels, which some reckon to be three pounds and two ounces of our weight; and with the oil and powder, especially if powdered (as Josephus says the fashion then was) with gold-dust, bishop Patrick thinks it is not at all incredible that it should weigh so much. This fine hair proved his halter, 2Sa 18:9.

3. That his family began to be built up. It is probable that it was a good while before he had a child; and then it was that, despairing of having one, he set up that pillar which is mentioned 2Sa 18:18, to bear up his name; but afterwards he had three sons and one daughter, 2Sa 14:27. Or perhaps these sons, while he was hatching his rebellion, were all cut off by the righteous hand of God, and thereupon he set up that monument.

24 And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

25 But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

26 And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled *it;* because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

27 And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name *was* Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

28 So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

29 Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

Three years Absalom had been an exile from his father-in-law, and now two years a prisoner at large in his own house, and, in both, better dealt with than he deserved; yet his spirit was still unhumbled, his pride unmortified, and, instead of being thankful that his life is spared, he thinks himself sorely wronged that he is not restored to all his places at court. Had he truly repented of his sin, his distance from the gaieties of the court, and his solitude and retirement in his own house, especially being in Jerusalem the holy city, would have been

very agreeable to him. If a murderer must live, yet let him be for ever a recluse.

But Absalom could not bear this just and gentle mortification. He longed to see the king's face, pretending it was because he loved him, but really because he wanted an opportunity to supplant him. He cannot do his father a mischief till he is reconciled to him; this therefore is the first branch of his plot; this snake cannot sting again till he be warmed in his father's bosom. He gained this point, not by pretended submissions and promises of reformation, but (would you think it?) by insults and injuries.

1. By his insolent carriage towards Joab, he brought him to mediate for him. Once and again he sent to Joab to come and speak with him, for he durst not go to him; but Joab would not come (2Sa 14:29), probably because Absalom had not owned the kindness he had done him in bringing him to Jerusalem so gratefully as he thought he should have done; proud men take every service done them for a debt. One would think that a person in Absalom's circumstances should have sent to Joab a kindly message, and offered him a large gratuity: courtiers expect noble presents. But, instead of this, he bids his servants set Joab's corn-fields on fire (2Sa 14:30), as spiteful a thing as he could do. Samson could not think of a greater injury to do the Philistines than this. Strange that Absalom should think, by doing Joab a mischief, to prevail with him to do him a kindness, or to recommend himself to the favour of his prince or people by showing himself so very malicious and ill-natured, and such an enemy to the public good, for the fire might spread to the corn of others. Yet by this means he brings Joab to him, 2Sa 14:31.

Thus God, by afflictions, brings those to him that kept at a distance from him. Absalom was obliged by the law to make restitution (Ex 22:6), yet we do not find either that he offered

it or that Joab demanded it. Joab (it might be) thought he could not justify his refusal to go and speak with him; and therefore Absalom thought he could justify his taking this way to fetch him. And now Joab (perhaps frightened at the surprising boldness and fury of Absalom, and apprehensive that he had made an interest in the people strong enough to bear him out in doing the most daring things, else he would never have done this) not only puts up with this injury, but goes on his errand to the king. See what some men can do by threats, and carrying things with a high hand.

2. By his insolent message (for I can call it no better) to the king, he recovered his place at court, to see the king's face, that is, to become a privy counsellor, Es 1:14.

(1.) His message was haughty and imperious, and very unbecoming either a son or a subject, 2Sa 14:32. He undervalued the favour that had been shown him in recalling him from banishment, and restoring him to his own house, and that in Jerusalem: Wherefore have I come from Geshur? He denies his own crimes, though most notorious, and will not own that there was any iniquity in him, insinuating that therefore he had been wronged in the rebuke he had been under. He defies the king's justice: "Let him kill me, if he can find in his heart," knowing he loved him too well to do it.

(2.) Yet with this message he carried his point, 2Sa 14:33. David's strong affection for him construed all this to be the language of a great respect to his father, and an earnest desire of his favour, when alas! it was far otherwise. See how easily wise and good men may be imposed upon by their own children that design ill, especially when they are blindly fond of them. Absalom, by the posture of his body, testified his submission to his father: He bowed himself on his face to the ground; and David, with a kiss, sealed his pardon.

Did the bowels of a father prevail to reconcile him to an impenitent son, and shall penitent sinners question the compassion of him who is the Father of mercy? If Ephraim bemoan himself, God soon bemoans him, with all the kind expressions of a fatherly tenderness: He is a dear son, a pleasant child, Jer 31:20.

30 Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire.

31 Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto *his* house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

32 And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? *it had been* good for me *to have been* there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be *any* iniquity in me, let him kill me.

33 So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

2 Samuel-15

Absalom Revolts against David

1 And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

2 And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was *so,* that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city *art* thou? And he said, Thy servant *is* of one of the tribes of Israel.

Absalom is no sooner restored to his place at court than he aims to be in the throne. He that was unhumbled under his troubles became insufferably proud when they were over; and he cannot be content with the honour of being the king's son, and the prospect of being his successor, but he must be king

now. His mother was a king's daughter; on that perhaps he valued himself, and despised his father, who was but the son of Jesse. She was the daughter of a heathen king, which made him the less concerned for the peace of Israel. David, in this unhappy issue of that marriage, smarted for his being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. When Absalom was restored to the king's favour, if he had had any sense of gratitude, he would have studied how to oblige his father, and make him easy; but, on the contrary, he meditates how to undermine him, by stealing the hearts of the people from him. Two things recommend a man to popular esteem--greatness and goodness.

I. Absalom looks great, 2Sa 15:1. He had learned of the king of Geshur (what was not allowed to the kings of Israel) to multiply horses, which made him look desirable, while his father, on his mule, looked despicable. The people desired a king like the nations; and such a one Absalom will be, appearing in pomp and magnificence, above what had been seen in Jerusalem. Samuel had foretold that this would be the manner of the king: He shall have chariots and horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots (1Sa 8:11); and this is Absalom's manner. Fifty footmen (in rich liveries we may suppose) running before him, to give notice of his approach, would highly gratify his pride and the people's foolish fancy. David thinks that this parade is designed only to grace his court, and connives at it. Those parents know not what they do who indulge a proud humour in their children; for I have seen more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever.

II. Absalom will seem very good too, but with a very bad design. Had he proved himself a good son and a good subject, and set himself to serve his father's interest, he would have done his present duty, and shown himself worthy of future honours, after his father's death. Those that know how to obey

well know how to rule. But to show how good a judge and how good a king he will be is but to deceive himself and others. Those are good indeed that are good in their own place, not that pretend how good they would be in other people's places. But this is all the goodness we find in Absalom.

1. He wishes that he were a judge in Israel, 2Sa 15:4. He had all the pomp and all the pleasure he could wish, lived as great and in as much ease as any man could; yet this will not content him, unless he have power too: O that I were a judge in Israel! He that should himself have been judged to death for murder has the impudence to aim at being a judge of others. We read not of Absalom's wisdom, virtue, or learning in the laws, nor had he given any proofs of his love to justice, but the contrary; yet he wishes he were judge.

Note, Those are commonly most ambitious of preferment that are least fit for it; the best qualified are the most modest and self-diffident, while it is no better than the spirit of an Absalom that says, O that I were a judge in Israel!

2. He takes a very bad course for the accomplishing of his wish. Had he humbly petitioned his father to employ him in the administration of justice, and studied to qualify himself for it (according to the rule, Ex 18:21), no doubt he would have been sure of the next judge's place that fell; but this is too mean a post for his proud spirit. It is below him to be subordinate, though to the king his father; he must be supreme or nothing.

He wants to be such a judge that every man who has any cause shall come to him: in all causes, and over all persons, he must preside, little thinking what a fatigue this would be to have every man come to him. Moses himself could not bear it. Those know not what power is that grasp at so much, so very

much. To gain the power he aims at, he endeavours to instil into the people's minds,

(1.) A bad opinion of the present administration, as if the affairs of the kingdom were altogether neglected, and no care taken about them. He got round him all he could that had business at the council-board, enquired what their business was; and,

[1.] Upon a slight and general enquiry into their cause, he pronounced it good: Thy matters are right. A fit man indeed to be a judge, who would give judgment upon hearing one side only! For he has a bad cause indeed that cannot put a good colour upon it, when he himself has the telling of the story. But,

[2.] He told them that it was to no purpose to appeal to the throne: "There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. The king is himself old, and past business, or so taken up with his devotions that he never minds business; his sons are so addicted to their pleasures that, though they have the name of chief rulers, they take no care of the affairs committed to them." He further seems to insinuate what a great want there was of him while he was banished and confined, and how much the public suffered by his exile; what his father said truly in Saul's reign (Ps 75:3) he says falsely: The land and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved, all will go to wreck and ruin, unless I bear up the pillars of it.

Every appellant shall be made to believe that he will never have justice done him, unless Absalom be viceroy or lord-justice. It is the way of turbulent, factious, aspiring men, to reproach the government they are under. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities, 2Pe 2:10. Even David himself, the best of kings, and his administration, could not escape the worst of censures. Those

that aim to usurp cry out of grievances, and pretend to design nothing but the redress of them: as Absalom here.

(2.) A good opinion of his own fitness to rule. That the people might say, "O that Absalom were a judge!" (and they are apt enough to desire changes), he recommends himself to them,

[1.] As very diligent. He rose up early, and appeared in public before the rest of the king's sons were stirring, and he stood beside the way of the gate, where the courts of judgment sat, as one mightily concerned to see justice done and public business despatched.

[2.] As very inquisitive and prying, and desirous to be acquainted with every one's case. He would know of what city every one was that came for judgment, that he might inform himself concerning every part of the kingdom and the state of it, 2Sa 15:2.

[3.] As very familiar and humble. If any Israelite offered to do obeisance to him he took him and embraced him as a friend. No man's conduct could be more condescending, while his heart was as proud as Lucifer's. Ambitious projects are often carried on by a show of humility, Col 2:23. He knew what a grace it puts upon greatness to be affable and courteous, and how much it wins upon common people: had he been sincere in it, it would have been his praise; but to fawn upon the people that he might betray them was abominable hypocrisy. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, to draw them into his net, Ps 10:9,10.

3 And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters *are* good and right; but *there is* no man *deputed* of the king to hear thee.

4 Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

5 And it was *so,* that when any man came nigh *to him* to do him
obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.
6 And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king
for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.
7 And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the
king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed
unto the Lord, in Hebron.
8 For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying,
If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will
serve the Lord.
9 And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to
Hebron.

We have here the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion, which he had long been contriving. It is said to be after forty years, 2Sa 15:7. But whence it is to be dated we are not told; not from David's beginning his reign, for then it would fall in the last year of his life, which is not probable; but either from his first anointing by Samuel seven years before, or rather (I think) from the people's desiring a king, and the first change of the government into a monarchy, which might be about ten years before David began to reign; it is fitly dated thence, to show that the same restless spirit was still working, and still they were given to change: as fond now of a new man as then of a new model. So it fell about the thirtieth year of David's reign. Absalom's plot being now ripe for execution,

I The place he chose for the rendezvous of his party was Hebron, the place where he was born and where his father began his reign and continued it several years, which would give some advantage to his pretensions. Every one knew Hebron to be a royal city; and it lay in the heart of Judah's lot, in which tribe, probably, he thought his interest strong.

II The pretence he had both to go thither and to invite his friends to him there was to offer a sacrifice to God, in performance of a vow he had made during his banishment,

2Sa 15:7,8. We have cause enough to suspect that he had not made any such vow; it does not appear that he was so religiously inclined. But he that stuck not at murder and treason would not make conscience of a lie to serve his purpose. If he said he had made such a vow, nobody could disprove him. Under this pretence,

1. He got leave of his father to go to Hebron. David would be well pleased to hear that his son, in his exile, was so desirous to return to Jerusalem, not only his father's city, but the city of the living God,--that he looked up to God, to bring him back,--that he had vowed, if he were brought back, to serve the Lord, whose service he had hitherto neglected,--and that now, being brought back, he remembered his vow, and resolved to perform it. If he think fit to do it in Hebron, rather than in Sion or Gibeon, the good king is so well pleased with the thing itself that he will not object against his choice of the place.

See how willing tender parents are to believe the best concerning their children, and, upon the least indication of good, to hope, even concerning those that have been untoward, that they will repent and reform. But how easy is it for children to take advantage of their good parents' credulity, and to impose upon them with the show of religion, while still they are what they were! David was overjoyed to hear that Absalom inclined to serve the Lord, and therefore readily gave him leave to go to Hebron, and to go thither with solemnity.

2. He got a good number of sober substantial citizens to go along with him, 2Sa 15:11. There went 200 men, probably of the principal men of Jerusalem, whom he invited to join with him in his feast upon his sacrifice; and they went in their simplicity, not in the least suspecting that Absalom had any bad design in this journey. He knew that it was to no purpose to tempt them in to his plot: they were inviolably firm to David. But he drew them in to accompany him, that the

common people might think that they were in his interest, and that David was deserted by some of his best friends.

Note, It is no new thing for very good men, and very good things, to be made use of by designing men to put a colour upon bad practices. When religion is made a stalking-horse, and sacrifice a shoeing-horn, to sedition and usurpation it is not to be wondered at if some that were well affected to religion, as these followers of Absalom here, are imposed upon by the fallacy, and drawn in to give countenance to that, with their names, which in their heart they abhor, not having known the depths of Satan.

III. The project he laid was to get himself proclaimed king throughout all the tribes of Israel upon a signal given, 2Sa 15:10. Spies were sent abroad, to be ready in every country to receive the notice with satisfaction and acclamations of joy, and to make the people believe that the news was both very true and very good, and that they were all concerned to take up arms for their new king. Upon the sudden spreading of this proclamation, "Absalom reigns in Hebron," some would conclude that David was dead, others that he had resigned: and thus those that were in the secret would draw in many to appear for Absalom, and to come into his assistance, who, if they had rightly understood the matter, would have abhorred the thought of it, but, being drawn in, would adhere to him. See what artifices ambitious men use for the compassing of their ends; and in matters of state, as well as in matters of religion, let us not be forward to believe every spirit, but try the spirits.

IV. The person he especially courted and relied upon in this affair was Ahithophel, a politic thinking man, and one that had a clear head and a great compass of thought, that had been David's counsellor, his guide and his acquaintance (Ps 55:13), his familiar friend, in whom he trusted, who did eat of his

bread, Ps 41:9. But, upon some disgust of David's against him, or his against David, he was banished, or retired from public business, and lived privately in the country. How should a man of such good principles as David, and a man of such corrupt principles as Ahithophel, long agree?

A fitter tool Absalom could not find in all the kingdom than one that was so great a statesman, and yet was disaffected to the present ministry. While Absalom was offering his sacrifices, in performance of his pretended vow, he sent for this man. So much was his heart on the projects of his ambition that he could not stay to make an end of his devotion, which showed what his eye was upon in all, and that it was but for a pretence that he made long offerings.

V. The party that joined with him proved at last very considerable. The people increased continually with Absalom, which made the conspiracy strong and formidable. Every one whom he had complimented and caressed (pronouncing his matters right and good, especially if afterwards the cause went against him) not only came himself, but made all the interest he could for him, so that he wanted not for numbers. The majority is no certain rule to judge of equity by. All the world wondered after the beast. Whether Absalom formed this design merely in the height of his ambition and fondness to rule, or whether there was not in it also malice against his father and revenge for his banishment and confinement, though this punishment was so much less than he deserved, does not appear. But, generally, that which aims at the crown aims at the head that wears it.

10 But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, *that were* called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

12 And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city, *even* from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

13 And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

14 And David said unto all his servants that *were* with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

15 And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants *are ready to do* whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.

Here is, I The notice brought to David of Absalom's rebellion, 2Sa 15:13. The matter was bad enough, and yet it seems to have been made worse to him (as such things commonly are) than really it was; for he was told that the hearts of the men of Israel (that is, the generality of them, at least the leading men) were after Absalom. But David was the more apt to believe it because now he could call to mind the arts that Absalom had used to inveigle them, and perhaps reflected upon it with regret that he had not done more to counterwork him, and secure his own interest, which he had been too confident of.

Note, It is the wisdom of princes to make sure of their subjects; for, if they have them, they have their purses, and arms, and all, at their service.

II The alarm this gave to David, and the resolutions he came to thereupon. We may well imagine him in a manner thunderstruck, when he heard that the son he loved so dearly, and had been so indulgent to, was so unnaturally and ungratefully in arms against him. Well might he say with Caesar, Kai su teknon--What, thou my son? Let not parents raise their hopes too high from their children, lest they be disappointed. David did not call a council, but, consulting only with God and his own heart, determined immediately to

quit Jerusalem, 2Sa 15:14. He took up this strange resolve, so disagreeable to his character as a man of courage, either,

1. As a penitent, submitting to the rod, and lying down under God's correcting hand. Conscience now reminded him of his sin in the matter of Uriah, and the sentence he was under for it, which was that evil should arise against him out of his own house. "Now," thinks he, "the word of God begins to be fulfilled, and it is not for me to contend with it or fight against it; God is righteous and I submit." Before unrighteous Absalom he could justify himself and stand it out; but before the righteous God he must condemn himself and yield to his judgments. Thus he accepts the punishment of his iniquity. Or,

2. As a politician. Jerusalem was a great city, but not tenable; it should seem, by David's prayer (Ps 51:18), that the walls of it were not built up, much less was it regularly fortified. It was too large to be garrisoned by so small a force as David had now with him, He had reason to fear that the generality of the inhabitants were too well affected to Absalom to be true to him.

Should he fortify himself here, he might lose the country, in which, especially among those that lay furthest from Absalom's tampering, he hoped to have the most friends. And he had such a kindness for Jerusalem that he was loth to make it the seat of war, and expose it to the calamities of a siege; he will rather quit it tamely to the rebels. Note, Good men, when they suffer themselves, care not how few are involved with them in suffering.

III. His hasty flight from Jerusalem. His servants agreed to the measures he took, faithfully adhered to him (2Sa 15:15), and assured him of their inviolable allegiance, whereupon,

1. He went out of Jerusalem himself on foot, while his son Absalom had chariots and horses. It is not always the best man, nor the best cause, that makes the best figure. See here, not only the servant, but the traitor, on horseback, while the prince, the rightful prince, walks as a servant upon the earth, Ec 10:7. Thus he chose to do, to abase himself so much the more under God's hand, and in condescension to his friends and followers, with whom he would walk, in token that he would live and die with them.

2. He took his household with him, his wives and children, that he might protect them in this day of danger, and that they might be a comfort to him in this day of grief. Masters of families, in their greatest frights, must not neglect their households. Ten women, that were concubines, he left behind, to keep the house, thinking that the weakness of their sex would secure them from murder, and their age and relation to him would secure them from rape; but God overruled this for the fulfilling of his word.

3. He took his life-guard with him, or band of pensioners, the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were under the command of Benaiah, and the Gittites, who were under the command of Ittai, 2Sa 15:18. These Gittites seem to have been, by birth, Philistines of Gath, who came, a regiment of them, 600 in all, to enter themselves in David's service, having known him at Gath, and being greatly in love with him for his virtue and piety, and having embraced the Jews' religion. David made them of his garde du corps--his body-guard, and they adhered to him in his distress. The Son of David found not such great faith in Israel as in a Roman centurion and a woman of Canaan.

4. As many as would, of the people of Jerusalem, he took with him, and made a halt at some distance from the city, to draw them up, 2Sa 15:17. He compelled none. Those whose hearts

were with Absalom, to Absalom let them go, and so shall their doom be: they will soon have enough of him. Christ enlists none but volunteers.

IV. His discourse with Ittai the Gittite, who commanded the Philistine-proselytes.

1. David dissuaded him from going along with him, 2Sa 15:19,20. Though he and his men might be greatly serviceable to him yet,

(1.) He would try whether he was hearty for him, and not inclined to Absalom. He therefore bids him return to his post in Jerusalem, and serve the new king. If he was no more than a soldier of fortune (as we say), he would be for that side which would pay and prefer him best; and to that side let him go.

(2.) If he was faithful to David, yet David would not have him exposed to the fatigues and perils he now counted upon. David's tender spirit cannot bear to think that a stranger and an exile, a proselyte and a new convert, who ought, by all means possible, to be encouraged and made easy, should, at his first coming, meet with such hard usage: "Should I make thee go up and down with us? No, return with thy brethren." Generous souls are more concerned at the share others have in their troubles than at their own.

Ittai shall therefore be dismissed with a blessing: Mercy and truth be with thee, that is, God's mercy and truth, mercy according to promise, the promise made to those who renounce other gods and put themselves under the wings off the divine Majesty. This is a very proper pious farewell, when we part with a friend, "Mercy and truth be with thee, and then thou art safe, and mayest be easy, wherever thou art." David's

dependence was upon the mercy and truth of God for comfort and happiness, both for himself and his friends; see Ps 61:7.

2. Ittai bravely resolved not to leave him, 2Sa 15:21. Where David is, whether in life or death, safe or in peril, there will this faithful friend of his be; and he confirms this resolution with an oath, that he might not be tempted to break it. Such a value has he for David, not for the sake of his wealth and greatness (for then he would have deserted him now that he saw him thus reduced), but for the sake of his wisdom and goodness, which were still the same, that, whatever comes of it, he will never leave him. Note, That is a friend indeed who loves at all times, and will adhere to us in adversity. Thus should we cleave to the Son of David with full purpose of heart that neither life nor death shall separate us from his love.

V. The common people's sympathy with David in his affliction. When he and his attendants passed over the brook Kidron (the very same brook that Christ passed over when he entered upon his sufferings, Joh 18:1), towards the way of the wilderness, which lay between Jerusalem and Jericho, all the country wept with a loud voice, 2Sa 15:23. Cause enough there was for weeping,

1. To see a prince thus reduced, one that had lived so great forced from his palace and in fear of his life, with a small retinue seeking shelter in a desert, to see the city of David, which he himself won, built, and fortified, made an unsafe abode for David himself. It would move the compassion even of strangers to see a man fallen thus low from such a height, and this by the wickedness of his own son; a piteous case it was. Parents that are abused and ruined by their own children merit the tender sympathy of their friends as much as any of the sons or daughters of affliction. Especially,

2. To see their own prince thus wronged, who had been so great a blessing to their land, and had not done any thing to forfeit the affections of his people; to see him in this distress, and themselves unable to help him, might well draw floods of tears from their eyes.

16 And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, *which were* concubines, to keep the house.
17 And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off.
18 And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king.
19 Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou *art* a stranger, and also an exile.
20 Whereas thou camest *but* yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth *be* with thee.
21 And Ittai answered the king, and said, *As* the Lord liveth, and *as* my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.
22 And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that *were* with him.
23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness.
24 And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites *were* with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.
25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me *both* it, and his habitation:
26 but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, *here am* I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

Here we have, I The fidelity of the priests and Levites and their firm adherence to David and his interest. They knew David's great affection to them and their office, notwithstanding his failings. The method Absalom took to gain people's affections made no impression upon them; he had little religion in him, and therefore they steadily adhered to David. Zadok and Abiathar, and all the Levites, if he go, will accompany him, and take the ark with them, that, by it, they may ask counsel of God for him, 2Sa 15:24.

Note, Those that are friends to the ark in their prosperity will find it a friend to them in their adversity. Formerly David would not rest till he had found a resting-place for the ark; and now, if the priests may have their mind, the ark shall not rest till David return to his rest.

II. David's dismission of them back into the city, 2Sa 15:25,26. Abiathar was high priest (1Ki 2:35), but Zadok was his assistant, and attended the ark most closely, while Abiathar was active in public business, 2Sa 15:24. Therefore David directs his speech to Zadok, and an excellent speech it is, and shows him to be in a very good frame under his affliction, and that still he holds fast his integrity.

1. He is very solicitous for the safety of the ark: "By all means carry the ark back into the city, let not that be unsettled and exposed with me, lodge that again in the tent pitched for it; surely Absalom, bad as he is, will do that no harm." David's heart, like Eli's trembles for the ark of God. Note, It argues a good principle to be more concerned for the church's prosperity than for our own, to prefer Jerusalem before our chief joy (Ps 137:6), the success of the gospel, and the flourishing of the church, above our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, even when they are most in hazard.

2. He is very desirous to return to the enjoyment of the privileges of God's house. He will reckon it the greatest instance of God's favour to him if he may but once more be brought back to see it and his habitation. This will be more his joy than to be brought back to his own palace and throne again. Note, Gracious souls measure their comforts and conveniences in this world by the opportunity they give them of communion with God. Hezekiah wished for the recovery of his health for this reason, that he might go up to the house of the Lord, Isa 38:22.

3. He is very submissive to the holy will of God concerning the issue of this dark dispensation. He hopes the best (2Sa 15:25), and hopes for it from the favour of God, which he looks upon to be the fountain of all good: "If God favour me so far, I shall be settled again as formerly." But he provides for the worst: "If he deny me this favour--if he thus say, I have no delight in thee--I know I deserve the continuance of his displeasure; his holy will be done." See him here patiently awaiting the event: "Behold, here am I, as a servant expecting orders;" and see him willing to commit himself to God concerning it: "Let him do to me as seemeth good to him.

I have nothing to object. All is well that God does." Observe with what satisfaction and holy complacency he speaks of the divine disposal: not only, "He can do what he will," subscribing to his power (Job 9:12), or, "He has a right to do what he will," subscribing to his sovereignty (Job 33:13), or, "He will do what he will," subscribing to his unchangeableness (Job 23:13,15), but, "Let him to what he will," subscribing to his wisdom and goodness.

Note, It is our interest, as well as duty, cheerfully to acquiesce in the will of God, whatever befals us. That we may not complain of what is, let us see God's hand in all events; and,

that we may not be afraid of what shall be, let us see all events in God's hand.

III. The confidence David put in the priests that they would serve his interest to the utmost of their power in his absence. He calls Zadok a seer (2Sa 15:27), that is, a wise man, a man that can see into business and discern time and judgment: "Thou hast thy eyes in thy head (Ec 2:14), and therefore art capable of doing me service, especially by sending me intelligence of the enemy's motions and resolutions." One friend that is a seer, in such an exigency as this, was worth twenty that were not so quick-sighted. For the settling of a private correspondence with the priests in his absence, he appoints,

1. Whom they should send to him--their two sons, Ahimaaz and Jonathan, whose coat, it might be hoped, would be their protection, and of whose prudence and faithfulness he had probably had experience.

2. Whither they should send. He would encamp in the plain of the wilderness till he heard from them (2Sa 15:28), and then would move according to the information and advice they should send him. Hereupon they returned to the city, to await the event. It was a pity that any disturbance should be given to a state so happy as this was, when the prince and the priests had such an entire affection for the confidence in each other.

IV. The melancholy posture that David and his men put themselves into, when, at the beginning of their march, they went up the mount of Olives, 2Sa 15:30.

1. David himself, as a deep mourner, covered his head and face for shame and blushing, went bare-foot, as a prisoner or a slave, for mortification, and went weeping. Did it become a man of his reputation for courage and greatness of spirit thus

to cry like a child, only for fear of an enemy at a distance, against whom he might easily have made head, and perhaps with one bold stroke have routed him? Yes, it did not ill become him, considering how much there was in this trouble,

(1.) Of the unkindness of his son. He could not but weep to think that one who came out of his bowels, and had so often lain in his arms, should thus lift up the heel against him. God himself is said to be grieved with the rebellions of his own children (Ps 95:10) and even broken with their whorish heart, Eze 6:9.

(2.) There was much of the displeasure of his God in it. This infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, La 3:19. His sin was ever before him (Ps 51:3), but never so plain nor ever appearing so black as now. He never wept thus when Saul hunted him: but a wounded conscience makes troubles lie heavily, Ps 38:4.

2. When David wept all his company wept likewise, being much affected with his grief and willing to share in it. It is our duty to weep with those that weep, especially our superiors, and those that are better than we; for, if this be done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry? We must weep with those that weep for sin. When Hezekiah humbled himself for his sin all Jerusalem joined with him, 2Ch 32:26. To prevent suffering with sinners, let us sorrow with them.

27 The king said also unto Zadok the priest, *Art not* thou a seer? return
into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son,
and Jonathan the son of Abiathar.
28 See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come
word from you to certify me.
29 Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to
Jerusalem: and they tarried there.
30 And David went up by the ascent of *mount* Olivet, and wept as he
went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all

the people that *was* with him covered every man his head, and they
went up, weeping as they went up.
31 And *one* told David, saying, Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators
with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the
counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.
32 And it came to pass, that *when* David was come to the top *of the*
mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite
came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:

Nothing, it seems, appeared to David more threatening in Absalom's plot than that Ahithophel was in it; for one good head, in such a design, is worth a thousand good hands. Absalom was himself no politician, but he had got one entirely in his interest that was, and would be the more dangerous because he had been all along acquainted with David's counsels and affairs; if therefore he can be baffled, Absalom is as good as routed and the head of the conspiracy cut off. This David endeavours to do.

I. By prayer. When he heard that Ahithophel was in the plot he lifted up his heart to God in this short prayer: Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, 2Sa 15:31. He had not opportunity for a long prayer, but he was not one of those that thought he should be heard for his much speaking. It was a fervent prayer: "Lord, I pray thee, do this." God is well pleased with the importunity of those that come to him with their petitions.

David is particular in this prayer; he names the person whose counsels he prays against. God gives us leave, in prayer, to be humbly and reverently free with him, and to mention the particular care, and fear, and grief, that lies heavily upon us. David prayed not against Ahithophel's person, but against his counsel, that God would turn it into foolishness, that, though he was a wise man, he might at this time give foolish counsel, or, if he gave wise counsel, that it might be rejected as foolish,

or, if it were followed, that by some providence or other it might be defeated, and not attain the end.

David prayed this in a firm belief that God has all hearts in his hand, and tongues too, that, when he pleases, he can take away the understanding of the aged and make the judges fools, (Job 12:7,Isa 3:2,3), and in hope that God would own and plead his just and injured cause. Note, We may pray in faith, and should pray with fervency, that God will turn that counsel into foolishness which is taken against his people.

II. By policy. We must second our prayer with our endeavours, else we tempt God. It is good service to countermine the policy of the church's enemies. When David came to the top of the mount, he worshipped God, 2Sa 15:32. Note, Weeping must not hinder worshipping, but quicken it rather. Now he penned the Ps 3:1-8, as appears by the title; and some think that his singing this was the worship he now paid to God. Just now Providence brought Hushai to him. While he was yet speaking, God heard, and sent him the person that should be instrumental to befool Ahithophel.

He came to condole with David on his present trouble, with his coat rent and earth upon his head; but David, having a great deal of confidence in his conduct and faithfulness, resolved to employ him as a spy upon Absalom. He would not take him with him (2Sa 15:33), for he had now more need of soldiers than counsellors, but sent him back to Jerusalem, to wait for Absalom's arrival, as a deserter from David, and to offer him his service, 2Sa 15:34. Thus he might insinuate himself into his counsels, and defeat Ahithophel, either by dissuading Absalom from following his advice or by discovering it to David, that he might know where to stand upon his guard.

How this gross dissimulation, which David put Hushai upon, can be justified, as a stratagem in war, I do not see. The best that can be made of it is that Absalom, if he rebel against his father, must stand upon his guard against all mankind, and, if he will be deceived, let him be deceived. David recommended Hushai to Zadok and Abiathar, as persons proper to be consulted with (2Sa 15:35), and to their two sons, as trusty men to be sent on errands to David, 2Sa 15:36. Hushai, thus instructed, came to Jerusalem (2Sa 15:37), whither also Absalom soon after came with his forces. How soon do royal palaces and royal cities change their masters! But we look for a kingdom which cannot be thus shaken and in the possession of which we cannot be disturbed.

33 unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me:

34 but if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king; *as* I *have been* thy father's servant hitherto, so *will* I now also *be* thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel.

35 And *hast thou* not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, *that* what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell *it* to Zadok and Abiathar the priests.

36 Behold, *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's *son,* and Jonathan Abiathar's *son;* and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear.

37 So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

2 Samuel-16

1 And when David was a little past the top *of the hill,* behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred *loaves* of bread, and a hundred bunches of raisins, and a hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

2 And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses *be* for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

We read before how kind David was to Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, how he prudently entrusted his servant Ziba with the management of his estate, while he generously entertained him at his own table, 2Sa 9:10. This matter was well settled; but, it seems, Ziba is not content to be manager, he longs to be master, of Mephibosheth's estate. Now, he thinks, is his time to make himself so; if he can procure a grant of it from the crown, whether David or Absalom get the better it is all one to him, he hopes he shall secure his prey, which he promises himself by fishing in troubled waters. In order hereunto,

He made David a handsome present of provisions, which was the more welcome because it came seasonably (2Sa 16:1), and with this he designed to incline him to himself; for a man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men, Ps 18:16. Nay, Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth, Pr 17:8. David inferred from this that Ziba was a very discreet and generous man, and well affected to him, when, in all, he designed nothing but to make his own market and to get Mephibosheth's estate settled upon himself. Shall the prospect of advantage in this world make men generous to the rich? and shall not the belief of an abundant recompence in the resurrection of the just make us charitable to the poor? Lu 14:14. Ziba was very considerate in the present he brought to David; it was what would do him some good in his present distress, 2Sa 16:2.

Observe, The wine was intended for those that were faint, not for the king's own drinking, or the courtiers; it seems, they did not commonly use it, but it was for cordials for those that were ready to perish, Pr 31:6. Blessed art thou, O land! when thy

princes use wine for strength, as David did, and not for drunkenness, as Absalom did, 2Sa 18:28. See Ec 10:17. Whatever Ziba intended in this present, God's providence sent it to David for his support very graciously.

God makes use of bad men for good purposes to his people, and sends them meat by ravens. Having by his present insinuated himself into David's affection, and gained credit with him, the next thing he has to do for the compassing of his end is to incense him against Mephibosheth, which he does by a false accusation, representing him as ungratefully designing to raise himself by the present broils, and to recover the crown to his own head, now that David and his son were contending for it. David enquires for him as one of his family, which gives Ziba occasion to tell this false story of him, 2Sa 16:3.

What immense damages do masters often sustain by the lying tongues of their servants! David knew Mephibosheth not to be an ambitious man, but easy in his place, and well-affected to him and his government; nor could he be so weak as to expect with his lame legs to climb the ladder of preferment; yet David gives credit to the calumny, and, without further enquiry or consideration, convicts Mephibosheth of treason, seizes his lands as forfeited, and grants them to Ziba: Behold, thine are all that pertained to Mephibosheth (2Sa 16:4), a rash judgment, and which afterwards he was ashamed of, when the truth came to light, 2Sa 19:29.

Princes cannot help it, but they will be sometimes (as our law speaks) deceived in their grants; but they ought to use all means possible to discover the truth and to guard against malicious designing men, who would impose upon them, as Ziba did upon David. Having by his wiles gained his point, Ziba secretly laughed at the king's credulity, congratulated himself on his success, and departed, with a great compliment upon the king, that he valued his favour more than

Mephibosheth's estate: "Let me find grace in thy sight, O king! and I have enough." Great men ought always to be jealous of flatterers, and remember that nature has given them two ears, that they may hear both sides.

3 And the king said, And where *is* thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

4 Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine *are* all that *pertained* unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee *that* I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

5 And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.

7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial.

8 The Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because thou *art* a bloody man.

We here find how David bore Shimei's curses much better than he had borne Ziba's flatteries. By the latter he was brought to pass a wrong judgment on another, by the former to pass a right judgment on himself. The world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns. Observe here,

I. How insolent and furious Shimei was, and how his malice took occasion from David's present distress to be so much the more outrageous. David, in his flight, had come to Bahurim, a city of Benjamin in or near which this Shimei lived, who, being of the house of Saul (with the fall of which all his hopes of preferment fell), had an implacable enmity to David, unjustly looking upon him as the ruin of Saul and his family

only because, by the divine appointment, he succeeded Saul. While David was in prosperity and power, Shimei hated him as much as he did now, but he durst not then say anything against him. God knows what is in the hearts of those that are disaffected to him and his government, but earthly princes do not. Now he came forth, and cursed David with all the bad words and wishes he could invent, 2Sa 16:5. Observe,

1. Why he took this opportunity to give vent to his malice.

(1.) Because now he thought he might do it safely; yet, if David had thought proper to resent the provocation, it would have cost Shimei his life.

(2.) Because now it would be most grievous to David, would add affliction to his grief, and pour vinegar into his wounds. He complains of those as most barbarous who talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded, Ps 69:26. So Shimei did, loading him with curses whom no generous eye could look upon without compassion.

(3.) Because now he thought that Providence justified his reproaches, and that David's present afflictions proved him to be as bad a man as he was willing to represent him. Job's friends condemned him upon this false principle. Those that are under the rebukes of a gracious God must not think it strange if these bring upon them the reproaches of evil men. If once it be said, God hath forsaken him, presently it follows, Persecute and take him, Ps 71:11. But it is the character of a base spirit thus to trample upon those that are down, and insult over them.

2. How his malice was expressed. See,

(1.) What this wretched man did: He cast stones at David (2Sa 16:6), as if his king had been a dog, or the worst of criminals,

whom all Israel must stone with stones till he die. Perhaps he kept at such a distance that the stones he threw could not reach David, nor any of his attendants, yet he showed what he would have done if it had been in his power. He cast dust (2Sa 16:13), which, probably, would blow into his own eyes, like the curses he threw, which, being causeless, would return upon his own head.

Thus, while his malice made him odious, the impotency of it made him ridiculous and contemptible. Those that fight against God cannot hurt him, though they hate him. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? Job 35:6. It was an aggravation of his wickedness that David was attended with his mighty men on his right hand and on his left, so that he was not in so forlorn a condition as he thought (persecuted but not forsaken), and that he continued to do it, and did it the more passionately, for David's bearing it patiently.

(2.) What he said. With the stones he shot his arrows, even bitter words (2Sa 16:7,8), in contempt of that law, Thou shalt not curse the gods, Ex 22:28. David was a man of honour and conscience, and in great reputation for every thing that was just and good; what could this foul mouth say against him? Why, truly, what was done long since to the house of Saul was the only thing which he could recollect, and with this he upbraided David because it was the thing that he himself was a loser by.

See how apt we are to judge of men and their character by what they are to us, and to conclude that those are certainly evil men that have ever so justly been, or that we ever so unjustly think have been, instruments of evil to us. So partial are we to ourselves that no rule can be more fallacious than this. No man could be more innocent of the blood of the house of Saul than David was. Once and again he spared Saul's life, while Saul sought his. When Saul and his sons were slain by

the Philistines, David and his men were many miles off; and, when they heard it, they lamented it. From the murder of Abner and Ish-bosheth he had sufficiently cleared himself; and yet all the blood of the house of Saul must be laid at his door. Innocency is no fence against malice and falsehood; nor are we to think it strange if we be charged with that from which we have been most careful to keep ourselves. It is well for us that men are not to be our judges, but he whose judgment is according to truth. The blood of the house of Saul is here most unjustly charged upon David,

[1.] As that which gave him his character, and denominated him a bloody man and a man of Belial, 2Sa 16:7. And, if a man of blood, no doubt a man of Belial, that is, a child of the devil, who is called Belial (2Co 6:15), and who was a murderer from the beginning. Bloody men are the worst of men.

[2.] As that which brought the present trouble upon him: "Now that thou art dethroned, and driven out to the wilderness, the Lord has returned upon thee the blood of the house of Saul." See how forward malicious men are to press God's judgments into the service of their own passion and revenge. If any who have, as they think, wronged them, should come into trouble, the injury done to them must be made the cause of the trouble. But we must take heed lest we wrong God by making his providence thus to patronise our foolish and unjust resentments. As the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God serves not the wrath of man.

[3.] As that which would now be his utter ruin; for he endeavours to make him despair of ever recovering his throne again. Now they said, There is no help for him in God (Ps 3:2), the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom (not Mephibosheth--the house of Saul never dreamed of

making him king, as Ziba suggested), and thou art taken in thy mischief, that is, "the mischief that will be thy destruction, and all because thou art a bloody man." Thus Shimei cursed.

II. See how patient and submissive David was under this abuse. The sons of Zeruiah, Abishai particularly, were forward to maintain David's honour with their swords; they resented the affront keenly, as well they might: Why should this dead dog be suffered to curse the king? 2Sa 16:9. If David will but give them leave, they will put these lying cursing lips to silence, and take off his head; for his throwing stones at the king was an overt act, which abundantly proved that he compassed and imagined his death. But the king would by no means suffer it: What have I to do with you? So let him curse. Thus Christ rebuked the disciples, who, in zeal for his honour, would have commanded fire from heaven on the town that affronted him, Lu 9:55. Let us see with what considerations David quieted himself.

1 The chief thing that silenced him was that he had deserved this affliction. This is not mentioned indeed; for a man may truly repent, and yet needs not, upon all occasions, proclaim his penitent reflections. Shimei unjustly upbraided him with the blood of Saul: from that his conscience acquitted him, but, at the same time, it charged him with the blood of Uriah. "The reproach is too true" (thinks David), "though false as he means it." Note, A humble tender spirit will turn reproaches into reproofs, and so get good by them, instead of being provoked by them.

2. He observes the hand of God in it: The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David (2Sa 16:10), and again, So let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him, 2Sa 16:11. As it was Shimei's sin, it was not from God, but from the devil and his own wicked heart, nor did God's hand in it excuse or extenuate it, much less justify it, any more than it did the sin of those who put

Christ to death, Ac 2:23,4:28. But, as it was David's affliction, it was from the Lord, one of the evils which he raised up against him. David looked above the instrument of his trouble to the supreme director, as Job, when the plunderers had stripped him, acknowledged, The Lord hath taken away. Nothing more proper to quiet a gracious soul under affliction than an eye to the hand of God in it. I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. The scourge of the tongue is God's rod.

3. He quiets himself under the less affliction with the consideration of the greater (2Sa 16:11): My son seeks my life, much more may this Benjamite. Note, Tribulation works patience in those that are sanctified. The more we bear the better able we should be to bear still more; what tries our patience should improve it. The more we are inured to trouble the less we should be surprised at it, and not think it strange. Marvel not that enemies are injurious, when even friends are unkind; nor that friends are unkind, when even children are undutiful.

4. He comforts himself with hopes that God would, in some way or other, bring good to him out of his affliction, would balance the trouble itself, and recompense his patience under it: "The Lord will requite me good for his cursing. If God bid Shimei grieve me, it is that he himself may the more sensibly comfort me; surely he has mercy in store for me, which he is preparing me for by this trial." We may depend upon God as our pay-master, not only for our services, but for our sufferings. Let them curse, but bless thou. David, at length, is housed at Bahurim (2Sa 16:14), where he meets with refreshment, and is hidden from this strife of tongues.

9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?
11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this* Benjamite *do it?* let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him.
12 It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.
13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hillside over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.
14 And the king, and all the people that *were* with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.
15 And Absalom, and all the people the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him.
16 And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king.

Absalom had notice sent him speedily by some of his friends at Jerusalem that David had withdrawn, and with what a small retinue he had gone; so that the coasts were clear, Absalom might take possession of Jerusalem when he pleased. The gates were open, and there was none to oppose him. Accordingly he came without delay (2Sa 16:15), extremely elevated, no doubt, with this success at first, and that that in which, when he formed his design, he probably apprehended the greatest difficulty, was so easily and effectually done. Now that he is master of Jerusalem he concludes all his own, the country will follow of course.

God suffers wicked men to prosper awhile in their wicked plots, even beyond their expectation, that their disappointment may be the more grievous and disgraceful. The most celebrated politicians of that age were Ahithophel and Hushai. The former Absalom brings with him to Jerusalem (2Sa

16:15), the other meets him there (2Sa 16:16), so that he cannot but think himself sure of success, when he has both these to be his counsellors; on them he relies, and consults not the ark, though he has that with him. But miserable counsellors were they both; for,

I. Hushai would never counsel him to do wisely. He was really his enemy, and designed to betray him, while he pretended to be in his interest; so that Absalom could not have a more dangerous man about him.

1. Hushai complimented him upon his accession to the throne, as if he had been abundantly satisfied in this title, and well pleased that he had come to the possession, 2Sa 16:16. What arts of dissimulation are those tempted to use who govern themselves by fleshly wisdom! and how happy are those who have not known these depths of Satan, but have their conversation in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity!

2. Absalom was surprised to find him for him who was known to be David's intimate friend and confidant. He asks him, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? (2Sa 16:17), pleasing himself with this thought, that all would be his, since Hushai was. He doubts not of his sincerity, but easily believes what he wishes to be true, that David's best friends are so in love with himself as to take the first opportunity to declare for him, though the pride of his heart deceived him, Ob 1:3. Hushai confirmed him in the belief that he was hearty for him. For, though David is his friend, yet he is for the king in possession, 2Sa 16:18. Whom the people choose, and Providence smiles upon, he will be faithful to; and he is for the king in succession (2Sa 16:19), the rising sun. It was true, he loved his father; but he had had his day, and it was over; and why should he not love his successor as well? Thus he pretended to give reasons for a resolution he abhorred the thought of.

II. Ahithophel counselled him to do wickedly, and so did as effectually betray him as he did who was designedly false to him; for those that advise men to sin certainly advise them to their hurt; and that government which is founded in sin is founded in the sand.

1. It seems, Ahithophel was noted as a deep politician; his counsel was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God, 2Sa 16:23. Such reputation was he in for subtlety and sagacity in public affairs, such reaches had he beyond other privy-counselors, such reasons would he give for his advice, and such success generally his projects had, that all people, good and bad, both David and Absalom, had a profound regard for his sentiments, too much by far, when they regarded him as an oracle of God; shall the prudence of any mortal compare with him who only is wise? Let us observe from this account of Ahithophel's fame for policy,

(1.) That many excel in worldly wisdom who are utterly destitute of heavenly grace, because those who set up for oracles themselves are apt to despise the oracles of God. God has chosen the foolish things of the world; and the greatest statesmen are seldom the greatest saints.

(2.) That frequently the greatest politicians act most foolishly for themselves. Ahithophel was cried up for an oracle, and yet very unwisely took part with Absalom, who was not only a usurper, but a rash youth, never likely to come to good, whose fall, and the fall of all that adhered to him, any one, with the tenth part of the policy that Ahithophel pretended to, might foresee. Well, after all, honesty is the best policy, and will be found so in the long run. But,

2. His policy in this case defeated its own aim. Observe,

(1.) The wicked counsel Ahithophel gave to Absalom. Finding that David had left his concubines to keep the house, he advised him to lie with them (2Sa 16:21), a very wicked thing. The divine law had made it a capital crime, Le 20:11. The apostle speaks of it as a piece of villany not so much as named among the Gentiles, 1Co 5:1. Reuben lost his birthright for it. But Ahithophel advised Absalom to it as a public thing, because it would give assurance to all Israel,

[1.] That he was in good earnest in his pretensions. No doubt he resolved to make himself master of all that belonged to his predecessor when he began with his concubines.

[2.] That he was resolved never to make peace with his father upon any terms; for by this he would render himself so odious to his father that he would never be reconciled to him, which perhaps the people were jealous of and that they must be sacrificed to the reconciliation. Having drawn the sword, he did, by this provocation, throw away the scabbard, which would strengthen the hands of his party and keep them firmly to him. This was Ahithophel's cursed policy, which bespoke him rather an oracle of devil than of God.

(2.) Absalom's compliance with this counsel. It entirely suited his lewd and wicked mind, and he delayed not to put it in execution, 2Sa 16:22. When an unnatural rebellion was the opera, what fitter prologue could there be to it than such unnatural lust? Thus was his wickedness all of a piece, and such as a conscience not quite seared could not entertain the thoughts of without the utmost horror. Nay, the client outdoes what his counsel advises. Ahithophel advised him to do it, that all Israel shall see it. A tent is accordingly spread on the top of the house for the purpose; so impudently does he declare his sin as Sodom.

Yet, in this, the word of God was fulfilled in the letter of it: God had threatened, by Nathan, that, for defiling Bath-sheba, David should have his own wives publicly debauched (2Sa 12:11,12), and some think that Ahithophel, in advising it, designed to be revenged on David for the injury done to Bath-sheba, who was his grand-daughter: for she was the daughter of Eliam (2Sa 11:3), who was the son of Ahithophel, 2Sa 23:34. Job speaks of this as the just punishment of adultery (Let my wife grind to another, Job 31:9,10), and the prophet, Ho 4:13,14. What to think of these concubines, who submitted to this wickedness, I know not; but how unrighteous soever Absalom and they were, we must say, The Lord is righteous: nor shall any word of his fall to the ground.

17 And Absalom said to Hushai, *Is* this thy kindness to thy friend?
why wentest thou not with thy friend?
18 And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the Lord, and
this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with
him will I abide.
19 And again, whom should I serve? *should I* not *serve* in the presence
of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in
thy presence.
20 Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we
shall do.
21 And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's
concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel
shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands
of all that *are* with thee be strong.
22 So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and
Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all
Israel.
23 And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days,
was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the
counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom.

2 Samuel-17

The Counsel of Ahithophel and Hushai

1 Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out
twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this
night:
2 and I will come upon him while he *is* weary and weak-handed, and
will make him afraid: and all the people that *are* with him shall
flee; and I will smite the king only:
3 and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou
seekest *is* as if all returned: *so* all the people shall be in peace.

Absalom is now in peaceable possession of Jerusalem; the palace-royal is his own, as are the thrones of judgment, even the thrones of the house of David. His good father reigned in Hebron, and only over the tribe of Judah, above seven years, and was not hasty to destroy his rival; his government was built upon a divine promise, the performance of which he was sure of in due time, and therefore he waited patiently in the mean time. But the young man, Absalom, not only hastens from Hebron to Jerusalem, but is impatient there till he has destroyed his father, cannot be content with his throne till he has his life; for his government is founded in iniquity, and therefore feels itself tottering and thinks itself obliged to do every thing with violence.

That so profligate a wretch as Absalom should aim at the life of so good a father is not so strange (there are here and there monsters in nature); but that the body of the people of Israel, to whom David had been so great a blessing in all respects, should join with him in his attempt, is very amazing. But their fathers often mutinied against Moses. The best of parents, and the best of princes will not think it strange if they be made uneasy by those who should be their support and joy, when they consider what sons and what subjects David himself had.

David and all that adhered to him must be cut off. This was resolved, for aught that appears, nemine contradicente--unanimously. None durst mention his personal merits, and the great services done to his country, in opposition to this resolve, nor so much as ask, "Why, what evil has he done to forfeit his crown, much less his head?" None durst propose that his banishment should suffice, for the present, nor that agents should be sent to treat with him to resign the crown, which, having so tamely quitted the city, they might think he would easily be persuaded to do. It was not long since that Absalom himself fled for a crime, and David contented himself with his being an exile, though he deserved death, nay, he mourned and longed for him; but so perfectly void of all natural affection is this ungrateful Absalom that he eagerly thirsts after his own father's blood. It is past dispute that David must be destroyed; all the question is how he may be destroyed.

I. Ahithophel advises that he be pursued immediately, this very night, with a flying army (which he himself undertakes the command of), that the king only be smitten and his forces dispersed, and then the people that were now for him would fall in with Absalom of course, and there would not be such a long war as had been between the house of Saul and David: The man whom thou seekest is as if all returned, 2Sa 17:1-3. By this it appears that Absalom had declared his design to be upon David's life, and Ahithophel concurs with him in it. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and be an easy prey to the wolf. Thus he contrives to include the war in a little compass, by fighting neither with small nor great but the king of Israel only, and to conclude it in a little time, by falling upon him immediately.

Nothing could be more fatal to David than the taking of these measures. It was too true that he was weary and weak-handed, that a little thing would make him afraid, else he would not

have fled from his house upon the first alarm of Absalom's rebellion; it was probable enough that upon a fierce attack, especially in the night, the small force he had would be put into confusion and disorder, and it would bean easy thing to smite the king only, and then the business would be done, the whole nation would be reduced, of course, and all the people, says he, shall be in peace. See how a general ruin is called by usurpers a general peace; but thus the devil's palace is in peace, while he, as a strong man armed, keeps it. Compare with this the plot of Caiaphas (that second Ahithophel) against the Son of David, to crush his interest by destroying him. Let that one man die for the people, Joh 11:50. Kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours, Mt 21:38.

But the counsel of them both was turned into foolishness. Yet the children of light may, in their generation, learn wisdom from the children of this world. What our hand finds to do let us do quickly, and with all our might. It is prudence to be vigorous and expeditious, and not to lose time, particularly in our spiritual warfare. If Satan flee from us, let us follow our blow. Those that have quarrelled with crowned heads have generally observed the decorum of declaring only against their evil counsellors, and calling them to an account (The king himself can do no wrong, it is they that do it); but Absalom's bare-faced villany strikes at the king directly, nay, at the king only; for (would you think it?) this saying, I will smite the king only, pleased Absalom well (2Sa 17:4), nor had he so much sense of humor and virtue left him to pretend to startle at it or even to be reluctant in this barbarous and monstrous resolution. What good can stand before the heat of a furious ambition?

II. Hushai advises that they be not too hasty in pursuing David, but take time to draw up all their force against him, and to overpower him with numbers, as Ahithophel had advised to take him by surprise. Now Hushai, in giving this

counsel, really intended to serve David and his interest, that he might have time to send him notice of his proceedings, and that David might gain time to gather an army and to remove into those countries beyond Jordan, in which, lying more remote, Absalom had probably least interest. Nothing would be of greater advantage to David in this juncture than time to turn himself in; that he may have this, Hushai counsels Absalom to do nothing rashly, but to proceed with caution and secure his success by securing his strength. Now,

1. Absalom gave Hushai a fair invitation to advise him. All the elders of Israel approved of Ahithophel's counsel, yet God overruled the heart of Absalom not to proceed upon it, till he had consulted Hushai (2Sa 17:5): Let us hear what he saith. Herein he thought he did wisely (two heads are better than one), but God taketh the wise in their own craftiness. See Mr. Poole's note on this.

2. Hushai gave very plausible reasons for what he said.

(1.) He argued against Ahithophel's counsel, and undertook to show the danger of following his advice. It is with modesty, and all possible deference to Ahithophel's settled reputation, that he begs leave to differ from him, 2Sa 17:7. He acknowledges that the counsel of Ahithophel is usually the best, and such as may be relied on; but, with submission to that noble peer, he is of opinion that his counsel is not good at this time, and that it is by no means safe to venture so great a cause as that in which they are now engaged upon so small a number, and such a hasty sally, as Ahithophel advises, remembering the defeat of Israel before Ai, Jos 7:4. It has often proved of bad consequence to despise an enemy. See how plausibly Hushai reasoned.

[1.] He insisted much upon it that David was a great soldier, a man of great conduct, courage, and experience; all knew and owned this, even Absalom himself: "Thy father is a man of war (2Sa 17:8), a mighty man (2Sa 17:10), and not so weary and weak-handed as Ahithophel imagines. His retiring from Jerusalem must be imputed, not to his cowardice, but his prudence."

[2.] His attendants, though few, were mighty men (2Sa 17:8), valiant men (2Sa 17:10), men of celebrated bravery and versed in all the arts of war. Ahithophel, who perhaps had worn the gown more than the sword, would find himself an unequal match for them. One of them would chase a thousand.

[3.] They were all exasperated against Absalom, who was the author of all this mischief, were chafed in their minds, and would fight with the utmost fury; so that, what with their courage, and what with their rage, there would be no standing before them, especially for such raw soldiers as Absalom's generally were. Thus did he represent them as formidable as Ahithophel had made them despicable.

[4.] He suggested that probably David and some of his men would lie in ambush, in some pit, or other close place, and fall upon Absalom's soldiers before they were aware the terror of which would put them to flight; and the defeat, though but of a small party, would dispirit all the rest, especially their own consciences at the same time accusing them of treason against one that, they were sure, was not only God's anointed, but a man after his own heart, 2Sa 17:9. "It will soon be given out that there is a slaughter among Absalom's men, and then they will all make the best of their way, and the heart of Ahithophel himself, though now it seems like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt. In short, he will not find it so easy a matter to deal with David and his men as he thinks it is; and, if he be foiled, we shall all be routed."

(2.) He offered his own advice, and gave his reasons; and,

[1.] He counselled that which he knew would gratify Absalom's proud vain-glorious humour, though it would not be really serviceable to his interest. First, He advised that all Israel should be gathered together, that is, the militia of all the tribes. His taking it for granted that they are all for him, and giving him an opportunity to see them all together under his command, would gratify him as much as any thing. Secondly, He advises that Absalom go to battle in his own person, as if he looked upon him to be a better soldier than Ahithophel, more fit to give command and have the honour of the victory, insinuating that Ahithophel had put a slight upon him in offering to go without him. See how easy it is to betray proud men, by applauding them, and feeding their pride.

[2.] He counselled that which seemed to secure the success, at last, infallibly, without running any hazard. For, if they could raise such vast numbers as they promised themselves, wherever they found David they could not fail to crush him.

First, If in the field, they should fall upon him, as the dew that covers the face of the ground, and cut off all his men with him, 2Sa 17:12. Perhaps Absalom was better pleased with the design of cutting off all the men that were with him, having a particular antipathy to some of David's friends, than with Ahithophel's project of smiting the king only. Thus Hushai gained his point by humouring his revenge, as well as his pride.

Secondly, If in a city, they need not fear conquering him, for they should have hands enough, if occasion were, to draw the city itself into its river with ropes, 2Sa 17:13. This strange suggestion, how impracticable soever, being new, served for

an amusement, and recommended itself by pleasing the fancy, for they would all smile at the humour of it.

(3.) By all these arts, Hushai gained not only Absalom's approbation of his advice, but the unanimous concurrence of this great counsel of war; they all agreed that the counsel of Hushai was better than the counsel of Ahithophel, 2Sa 17:14. See here,

[1.] How much the policy of man can do; If Hushai had not been there, Ahithophel's counsel would certainly have prevailed; and, though all had given their opinion, nothing could be really more for Absalom's interest than that which he advised; yet Hushai, with his management, brings them all over to his side, and none of them are aware that he says all this in favour of David and his interest, but all say as he says. See how the unthinking are imposed upon by the designing part of mankind; what tools, what fools, great men make of one another by their intrigues; and what tricks there are often in courts and councils, which those are happiest that are least conversant with.

[2.] See how much more the providence of God can do. Hushai managed the plot with dexterity, yet the success is ascribed to God, and his agency on the minds of those concerned: The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel. Be it observed, to the comfort of all that fear God, he turns all men's hearts as the rivers of water, though they know not the thoughts of the Lord. He stands in the congregation of the mighty, has an overruling hand in all counsels and a negative voice in all resolves, and laughs at men's projects against his anointed.

4 And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel.

5 Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith.

6 And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him,
saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do *after*
his saying? if not, speak thou.
7 And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath
given *is* not good at this time.
8 For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they *be*
mighty men, and they *be* chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of
her whelps in the field: and thy father *is* a man of war, and will not
lodge with the people.
9 Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some *other* place: and it will
come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that
whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the
people that follow Absalom.
10 And he also *that is* valiant, whose heart *is* as the heart of a lion, shall
utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father *is* a mighty man,
and *they* which *be* with him *are* valiant men.
11 Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee,
from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that *is* by the sea for
multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.
12 So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found,
and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of
him and of all the men that *are* with him there shall not be left so
much as one.
13 Moreover if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes
to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one
small stone found there.
14 And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai
the Archite *is* better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the Lord
had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the
intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.
15 Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and
thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and
thus and thus have I counseled.
16 Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this
night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the
king be swallowed up, and all the people that *are* with him.

We must now leave David's enemies pleasing themselves with the thoughts of a sure victory by following Hushai's counsel, and sending a summons, no doubt, to all the tribes of Israel, to come to the general rendezvous at a place appointed, pursuant to that counsel; and we next find David's friends consulting how to get him notice of all this, that he might steer his course accordingly. Hushai tells the priests what had passed in council, 2Sa 17:15.

But, it should seem, he was not sure but that yet Ahithophel's counsel might be followed, and was therefore jealous lest, if he made not the best of his way, the king would be swallowed up, and all the people that were with him, 2Sa 17:16. Perhaps, as he was called in to give advice (2Sa 17:5), so he was dismissed before they came to that resolve (2Sa 17:14) in favour of his advice, or he feared they might afterwards change their mind.

However, it was good to provide against the worst, and therefore to hasten those valuable lives out of the reach of these destroyers. Such strict guards did Absalom set upon all the avenues to Jerusalem that they had much ado to get this necessary intelligence to David.

1 The young priests that were to be the messengers were forced to retire secretly out of the city, by En-rogel, which signifies, as some say, the fountain of a spy. Surely it went ill with Jerusalem when two such faithful priests as they were might not be seen to come into the city.

2. Instructions were sent to them by a poor simple young woman, who probably went to that well under pretence of fetching water, 2Sa 17:17. If she carried the message by word of mouth, there was danger of her making some mistake or blunder in it; but Providence can make an ignorant girl a trusty

messenger, and serve its wise counsels by the foolish things of the world.

3. Yet, by the vigilance of Absalom's spies, they were discovered, and information was brought to Absalom of their motions: A lad saw them and told him, 2Sa 17:18.

4. They, being aware that they were discovered, sheltered themselves in a friend's house in Bahurim, where David had refreshed himself but just before, 2Sa 16:14. There they were happily hidden in a well, which now, in summer time, perhaps was dry, 2Sa 17:18. The woman of the house very ingeniously covered the mouth of the well with a cloth, on which she spread corn to dry, so that the pursuers were not aware that there was a well; else they would have searched it, 2Sa 17:19. Thus far the woman did well; but we know not how to justify her further concealing them with a lie, 2Sa 17:20. We must not do evil that good may come of it.

However, hereby the messengers were protected, and the pursuers were defeated and returned to Absalom without their prey. It was well that Absalom did not hereupon fall upon their two fathers, Zadok and Abiathar, as Saul on Ahimelech for his kindness to David: but God restrained him. Being thus preserved, they brought their intelligence very faithfully to David (2Sa 17:21), with this advice of his friends, that he should not delay to pass over Jordan, near to which, it seems, he now was. There, as some think, he penned the Ps 42:1-11,Ps 43:1-5, looking back upon Jerusalem from the land of Jordan, Ps 42:6.

17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel; for they might not be seen to come into the city: and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David.

18 Nevertheless, a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court; whither they went down.

19 And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth,
and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known.
20 And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house,
they said, Where *is* Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said
unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they
had sought and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem.
21 And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out
of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David,
Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel
counseled against you.
22 Then David arose, and all the people that *were* with him, and they
passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of
them that was not gone over Jordan.
23 And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he
saddled *his* ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city,
and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and
was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Here is, I The transporting of David and his forces over Jordan, pursuant to the advice he had received from his friends at Jerusalem, 2Sa 17:22. He, and all that were with him, went over in the night, whether in ferryboats, which probably always plied there, or through the fords, does not appear. But special notice is taken of this, that there lacked not one of them: none deserted him, though his distress was great, none staid behind sick or weary, nor were any lost or cast away in passing the river. Herein some make him a type of the Messiah, who said, in a difficult day, Of all that thou hast given me have I lost none.

Having got over Jordan, he marched many miles forward to Mahanaim, a Levites' city in the tribe of Gad, in the utmost border of that tribe, and not far from Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites. This city, which Ishbosheth had made his royal city (2Sa 2:8), David now made his head-quarters, 2Sa 17:24. And now he had time to raise an army wherewith to oppose the rebels and give them a warm reception.

II The death of Ahithophel, 2Sa 17:23. He died by his own hands, felo de se--a suicide. He hanged himself for vexation that his counsel was not followed; for thereby,

1. He thought himself slighted, and an intolerable slur cast upon his reputation for wisdom. His judgment always used to sway at the counsel-board, but now another's opinion is thought wiser and better than his. His proud heart cannot bear the affront; it rises and swells, and the more he thinks of it the more violent his resentments grow, till they bring him at last to this desperate resolve not to live to see another preferred before him. All men think him a wise man, but he thinks himself the only wise man; and therefore to be avenged upon mankind for not thinking so too, he will die, that wisdom may die with him. The world is not worthy of such an oracle as he is, and therefore he will make them know the want of him. See what real enemies those are to themselves that think too well of themselves, and what mischiefs those run upon that are impatient of contempt. That will break a proud man's heart that will not break a humble man's sleep.

2. He thought himself endangered and his life exposed. He concluded that, because his counsel was not followed, Absalom's cause would certainly miscarry, and then, whoever would find David's mercy, he concluded that he, who was the greatest criminal, and had particularly advised him to lie with his father's concubines, must be sacrificed to justice. To prevent therefore the shame and terror of a public and solemn execution, he does justice upon himself, and, after his reputation for wisdom, by this last act puts a far greater disgrace upon himself than Absalom's privy-council had put upon him, and answers his name Ahithophel, which signifies, the brother of a fool. Nothing indicates so much folly as self-murder. Observe, How deliberately he did it, and of malice prepense against himself; not in a heat, but he went home to

his city, to his house, to do it; and, which is strange, took time to consider of it, and yet did it.

And, to prove himself compos mentis--in his senses, when he did it, he first put his household in order, made his will as a man of sane memory and understanding, settled his estate, balanced his accounts; yet he that had sense and prudence enough to do this had not consideration enough to revoke the sentence his pride and passion had passed upon his own neck, nor so much as to suspend the execution of it till he saw the event of Absalom's rebellion. Now herein we may see,

(1.) Contempt poured upon the wisdom of man. He that was more renowned for policy than any man played the fool with himself more abundantly. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, when he sees him that was so great an oracle dying as a fool dies.

(2.) Honour done to the justice of God. When the wicked are thus snared in the work of their own hands, and sunk in a pit of their own digging, the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, and we must say, Higgaion, Selah; it is a thing to be marked and meditated upon, Ps 7:15,16. (3.) Prayer answered, and an honest cause served even by its enemies. Now, as David had prayed, Ahithophel's counsel was turned into foolishness to himself.

Dr. Lightfoot supposes that David penned the Ps 55:1-23 upon occasion of Ahithophel's being in the plot against him, and that he is the man complained of (2Sa 17:13) that had been his equal, his guide, and his acquaintance; and, if so, this was an immediate answer to his prayer there (2Sa 17:15): Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quickly into hell. Ahithophel's death was an advantage to David's interest; for had he digested that affront (as those must resolve often to do that will live in this world), and continued his post at

Absalom's elbow, he might have given him counsel afterwards that might have been of pernicious consequence to David. It is well that that breath is stopped and that head laid from which nothing could be expected but mischief. It seems, it was not then usual to disgrace the dead bodies of self-murderers, for Ahithophel was buried, we may suppose honourably buried, in the sepulchre of his father, though he deserved no better than the burial of an ass. See Ec 8:10.

III. Absalom's pursuit of his father. He had now got all the men of Israel with him, as Hushai advised, and he himself, at the head of them, passed over Jordan, 2Sa 17:24. Not content that he had driven his good father to the utmost corner of his kingdom, he resolved to chase him out of the world. He pitched in the land of Gilead with all his forces, ready to give David battle, 2Sa 17:26. Absalom made one Amasa his general (2Sa 17:25), whose father was by birth Jether, an Ishmaelite (1Ch 2:17), but by religion Ithra (as he is here called), an Israelite; probably he was not only proselyted, but, having married a near relation of David's, was, by some act of the state, naturalized, and is therefore called an Israelite. His wife, Amasa's mother, was Abigail, David's sister, whose other sister, Zeruiah, was Joab's mother (1Ch 2:16), so that Amasa was in the same relation to David that Joab was. In honour to his family, even while he was in arms against his father, Absalom made him commander-in-chief of all his forces. Jesse is here called Nahash, for many had two names; or perhaps this was his wife's name.

IV. The friends David met with in this distant country. Even Shobi, a younger brother of the royal family of the Ammonites, was kind to him, 2Sa 17:27. It is probable that he had detested the indignity which his brother Hanun had done to David's ambassadors, and for that had received favours from David, which he now returned. Those that think their prosperity most confirmed know not but, some time or other,

they may stand in need of the kindness of those that now lie at their mercy, and may be glad to be beholden to them, which is a reason why we should, as we have opportunity, do good to all men, for he that watereth shall be watered also himself, when there is occasion. Machir, the son of Ammiel, was he that maintained Mephibosheth (2Sa 9:4), till David eased him of that charge, and is now repaid for it by that generous man, who, it seems, was the common patron of distressed princes.

Barzillai we shall hear of again. These, compassionating David and his men, now that they were weary with a long march, brought him furniture for his house, beds and basins, and provision for his table, wheat and barley, &c., 2Sa 17:28,29. He did not put them under contribution, did not compel them to supply him, much less plunder them; but in token of their dutiful affection to him, and their sincere concern for him in his present straits, of their own good will they brought in plenty of all that which he had occasion for. Let us learn hence to be generous and open-handed, according as our ability is, to all in distress, especially great men, to whom it is most grievous, and good men, who deserve better treatment; and see how God sometimes makes up to his people that comfort from strangers which they are disappointed of in their own families.

24 Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over
Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him.
25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which
Amasa *was* a man's son, whose name *was* Ithra an Israelite, that
went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah Joab's
mother.
26 So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead.
27 And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi
the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir
the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of
Rogelim,

28 brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched *corn*, and beans, and lentils, and parched *pulse*,
29 and honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that *were* with him, to eat: for they said, The people *is* hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

2 Samuel-18

The Death of Absalom

1 And David numbered the people that *were* with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.
2 And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.
3 But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now *thou art* worth ten thousand of us: therefore now *it is* better that thou succor us out of the city.

Which way David raised an army here, and what reinforcements were sent him, we are not told; many, it is likely, from all the coasts of Israel, at least from the neighbouring tribes, came in to his assistance, so that, by degrees, he was able to make head against Absalom, as Ahithophel foresaw. Now here we have,

I. His army numbered and marshalled, 2Sa 18:1,2. He had, no doubt, committed his cause to God by prayer, for that was his relief in all his afflictions; and then he took an account of his forces. Josephus says they were, in all, but about 4000. These he divided into regiments and companies, to each of which he appointed proper officers, and then disposed them, as is usual, into the right wing, the left wing, and the centre, two of which

he committed to his two old experienced generals, Joab and Abishai, and the third to his new friend Ittai. Good order and good conduct may sometimes be as serviceable in an army as great numbers. Wisdom teaches us to make the best of the strength we have, and let it reach to the utmost.

II. Himself over-persuaded not to go in person to the battle. He was Absalom's false friend that persuaded him to go, and served his pride more than his prudence; David's true friends would not let him go, remembering what they had been told of Ahithophel's design to smite the king only. David showed his affection to them by being willing to venture with them (2Sa 18:2), and they showed theirs to him by opposing it. We must never reckon it an affront to be gain-said for our good, and by those that therein consult our interest.

1. They would by no means have him to expose himself, for (say they) thou art worth 10,000 of us. Thus ought princes to be valued by their subjects, who, for their safety, must be willing to expose themselves.

2. They would not so far gratify the enemy, who would rejoice more in his fall than in the defeat of the whole army.

3. He might be more serviceable to them by tarrying in the city, with a reserve of his forces there, whence he might send them recruits. That may be a post of real service which yet is not a post of danger. The king acquiesced in their reasons, and changed his purpose (2Sa 18:4): What seemeth to you best I will do. It is no piece of wisdom to be stiff in our resolutions, but to be willing to hear reason, even from our inferiors, and to be overruled by their advice when it appears to be for our own good. Whether the people's prudence had an eye to it or no, God's providence wisely ordered it, that David should not be in the field of battle; for then his tenderness would certainly

have interposed to save the life of Absalom, whom God had determined to destroy.

III. The charge he gave concerning Absalom, 2Sa 18:5. When the army was drawn out, rank and file, Josephus says, he encouraged them, and prayed for them, but withal bade them all take heed of doing Absalom any hurt. How does he render good for evil! Absalom would have David only smitten. David would have Absalom only spared. What foils are these to each other! Never was unnatural hatred to a father more strong than in Absalom; nor was ever natural affection to a child more strong than in David.

Each did his utmost, and showed what man is capable of doing, how bad it is possible for a child to be to the best of fathers and how good it is possible for a father to be to the worst of children; as if it were designed to be a resemblance of man's wickedness towards God and God's mercy towards man, of which it is hard to say which is more amazing. "Deal gently," says David, "by all means, with the young man, even with Absalom, for my sake; he is a young man, rash and heady, and his age must excuse him; he is mine, whom I love; if you love me, be not severe with him." This charge supposes David's strong expectation of success. Having a good cause and a good God, he doubts not but Absalom would lie at their mercy, and therefore bids them deal gently with him, spare his life and reserve him for his judgment.

Bishop Hall thus descants on this: "What means this ill-placed love? This unjust mercy? Deal gently with a traitor? Of all traitors, with a son? Of all sons, with an Absalom? That graceless darling of so good a father? And all this, for thy sake, whose crown, whose blood, he hunts after? For whose sake must he be pursued, if forborne for thine? Must the cause of the quarrel be the motive of mercy? Even in the holiest

parents, nature may be guilty of an injurious tenderness, of a bloody indulgence.

But was not this done in type of that immeasurable mercy of the true King and Redeemer of Israel, who prayed for his persecutors, for his murderers, Father, forgive them? Deal gently with them for my sake." When God sends and affliction to correct his children, it is with this charge, "Deal gently with them for my sake;" for he knows our frame.

IV. A complete victory gained over Absalom's forces. The battle was fought in the wood of Ephraim (2Sa 18:6), so called from some memorable action of the Ephraimites there, though it lay in the tribe of Gad. David thought fit to meet the enemy with his forces at some distance, before they came up to Mahanaim, lest he should bring that city into trouble which had so kindly sheltered him. The cause shall be decided by a pitched battle.

Josephus represents the fight as very obstinate, but the rebels were at length totally routed and 20,000 of them slain, 2Sa 18:7. Now they smarted justly for their treason against their lawful prince, their uneasiness under so good a government, and their base ingratitude to so good a governor; and they found what it was to take up arms for a usurper, who with his kisses and caresses had wheedled them into their own ruin. Now where are the rewards, the preferments, the golden days, they promised themselves from him? Now they see what it is to take counsel against the Lord and his anointed, and to think of breaking his bands asunder. And that they might see that God fought against them,

1. They are conquered by a few, an army, in all probability, much inferior to theirs in number.

2. By that flight with which they hoped to save themselves they destroyed themselves. The wood, which they sought to for shelter, devoured more than the sword, that they might see how, when they thought themselves safe from David's men, and said, Surely the bitterness of death is past, yet the justice of God pursued them and suffered them not to live. What refuge can rebels find from divine vengeance? The pits and bogs, the stumps and thickets, and, as the Chaldee paraphrase understands it, the wild beasts of the wood, were probably the death of multitudes of the dispersed distracted Israelites, besides the 20,000 that were slain with the sword. God herein fought for David, and yet fought against him; for all these that were slain were his own subjects, and the common interest of his kingdom was weakened by the slaughter. The Romans allowed no triumph for a victory in a civil war.

4 And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best I will do. And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands.

5 And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, *Deal* gently for my sake with the young man, *even* with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

6 So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim;

7 where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand *men*.

8 For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.

9 And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that *was* under him went away.

10 And a certain man saw *it*, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

11 And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest *him*, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten *shekels* of silver, and a girdle.

Here is Absalom quite at a loss, at his wit's end first, and then at his life's end. He that began the fight, big with the expectation of triumphing over David himself, with whom, if he had had him in his power, he would not have dealt gently, is now in the greatest consternation, when he meets the servants of David, 2Sa 18:9. Though they were forbidden to meddle with him, he durst not look them in the face; but, finding they were near him, he clapped spurs to his mule and made the best of his way, through thick and thin, and so rode headlong upon his own destruction.

Thus he that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare, Jer 48:44. David is inclined to spare him, but divine justice passes sentence upon him as a traitor, and sees it executed--that he hang by the neck, be caught alive, be embowelled, and his body dispose of disgracefully.

I. He is hanged by the neck. Riding furiously, neck or nothing, under the thick boughs of a great oak which hung low and had never been cropped, either the twisted branches, or some one forked bough of the oak, caught hold of his head, either by his neck, or, as some think, by his long hair, which had been so much his pride, and was now justly made a halter for him, and there he hung, so astonished that he could not use his hands to help himself or so entangled that his hands could not help him, but the more he struggled the more he was embarrassed. This set him up for a fair mark to the servants of David, and he had the terror and shame of seeing himself thus exposed, while he could do nothing for his own relief, neither fight nor fly. Observe concerning this,

1. That his mule went away from under him, as if glad to get clear of such a burden, and resign it to the ignominious tree. Thus the whole creation groans under the burden of man's corruption, but shall shortly be delivered from its load, Ro 8:21,22.

2. The he hung between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either, as abandoned of both; earth would not keep him, heaven would not take him, hell therefore opens her mouth to receive him.

3. That this was a very surprising unusual thing. It was fit that it should be so, his crime being so monstrous: if, in his flight, his mule had thrown him, and left him half-dead upon the ground, till the servants of David had come up and dispatched him, the same thing would have been done as effectually; but that would have been too common a fate for so uncommon a criminal. God will here, as in the case of those other rebels, Dathan and Abiram, create a new thing, that it may be understood how much this man has provoked the Lord, Nu 16:29,30. Absalom is here hung up, in terrorem--to frighten children from disobedience to their parents. See Pr 30:17.

II. He is caught alive by one of the servants of David, who goes directly and tells Joab in what posture he found that archrebel, 2Sa 18:10. Thus was he set up for a spectacle, as well as a mark, that the righteous might see him and laugh at him (Ps 52:6), while he had this further vexation in his breast, that of all the friends he had courted and confided in, and thought he had sure in his interest, though he hung long enough to have been relieved, yet he had none at hand to disentangle him. Joab chides the man for not dispatching him (2Sa 18:11), telling him, if he had given that bold stroke, he would have rewarded him with ten half-crowns and a girdle, that is, a captain's commission, which perhaps was signified by the delivery of a belt or girdle; see Isa 22:21. But the man,

though zealous enough against Absalom, justified himself in not doing it: "Dispatch him!" says he, "not for all the world: it would have cost my head: and thou thyself wast witness to the king's charge concerning him (2Sa 18:12), and, for all thy talk, wouldst have been my prosecutor if I had done it," 2Sa 18:13. Those that love the treason hate the traitor. Joab could not deny this, nor blame the man for his caution, and therefore makes him no answer, but breaks off the discourse, under colour of haste (2Sa 18:14): I may not tarry thus with thee. Superiors should consider a reproof before they give it, lest they be ashamed of it afterwards, and find themselves unable to make it good.

III. He is (as I may say) embowelled and quartered, as traitors are, so pitifully mangled is he as he hangs there, and receives his death in such a manner as to see all its terrors and feel all its pain.

1. Joab throws three darts into his body, which put him, no doubt, to exquisite torment, while he is yet alive in the midst of the oak, 2Sa 18:14. I know not whether Joab can be justified in this direct disobedience to the command of his sovereign; was this to deal gently with the young man? Would David have suffered him to do it if he had been upon the spot? Yet this may be said for him, that, while he broke the order of a too indulgent father, he did real service both to his king and country, and would have endangered welfare of both if he had not done it. Salus populi suprema lex--The safety of the people is the supreme law.

2. Joab's young men, ten of them, smite him, before he is dispatched, 2Sa 18:15. They surrounded him, made a ring about him in triumph, and then smote him and slew him. So let all they enemies perish, O Lord! Joab hereupon sounds a retreat, 2Sa 18:16. The danger is over, now that Absalom is slain; the people will soon return to their allegiance to David,

and therefore no more blood shall be spilt; no prisoners are taken, to be tried as traitors and made examples; let every man return to his tent; they are all the king's subjects, all his good subjects again.

IV. His body is disposed of disgracefully (2Sa 18:17,18): They cast it into a great pit in the wood; they would not bring it to his father (for that circumstance would but have added to his grief), nor would they preserve it to be buried, according to his order, but threw it into the next pit with indignation. Now where is the beauty he had been so proud of and for which he had been so much admired? Where are his aspiring projects, and the castles he had built in the air? His thoughts perish, and he with them. And, to signify how heavy his iniquity lay upon his bones, as the prophet speaks (Eze 32:27), they raised a great heap of stones upon him, to be a monument of his villany, and to signify that he ought to have been stoned as a rebellious son, De 21:21.

Travelers say that the place is taken note of to this day, and that it is common for passengers to throw a stone to this heap, with words to this purport: Cursed be the memory of rebellious Absalom, and cursed for ever be all wicked children that rise up in rebellion against their parents. To aggravate the ignominy of Absalom's burial, the historian takes notice of a pillar he had erected in the valley of Kidron, near Jerusalem, to be a monument for himself, and keep his name in remembrance (2Sa 18:18), at the foot of which, it is probable, he designed to be buried.

What foolish insignificant projects do proud men fill their heads with! And what care do many people take about the disposal of their bodies, when they are dead, that have no care at all what shall become of their precious souls! Absalom had three sons (2Sa 14:27), but, it seems, now he had none; God had taken them away by death; and justly is a rebellious son

written childless. To make up the want, he erects this pillar for a memorial; yet in this also Providence crosses him, and a rude heap of stones shall be his monument, instead of this marble pillar. Thus those that exalt themselves shall be abased. His care was to have his name kept in remembrance, and it is so, to his everlasting dishonour. He could not be content in the obscurity of the rest of David's sons, of whom nothing is recorded but their names, but would be famous, and is therefore justly made for ever infamous. The pillar shall bear his name, but not to his credit; it was designed for Absalom's glory, but proved Absalom's folly.

12 And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand *shekels* of silver in mine hand, *yet* would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none *touch* the young man Absalom.

13 Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against *me*.

14 Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he *was* yet alive in the midst of the oak.

15 And ten young men that bare Joab's armor compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

16 And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people.

17 And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.

18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which *is* in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

19 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies.

20 And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead.
21 Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran.
22 Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready?
23 But howsoever, *said he,* let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi.

Absalom's business is done; and we are now told,

I. How David was informed of it. He staid behind at the city of Mahanaim, some miles from the wood where the battle was, and in the utmost border of the land. Absalom's scattered forces all made homeward toward Jordan, which was the contrary way from Mahanaim, so that his watchmen could not perceive how the battle went, till an express came on purpose to bring advice of the issue, which the king sat in the gate expecting to hear, 2Sa 18:24.

1. Cushi was the man Joab ordered to carry the tidings (2Sa 18:21), an Ethiopian, so his name signifies, and some think that he was so by birth, a black that waited on Joab, probably one of the ten that had helped to dispatch Absalom (2Sa 18:15) as some think, though it was dangerous for one of those to bring the news to David, lest his fate should be the same with theirs that reported to him Saul's death, and Ish-bosheth's.

2. Ahimaaz, the young priest (one of those who brought David intelligence of Absalom's motions, 2Sa 17:17), was very forward to be the messenger of these tidings, so transported was he with joy that this cloud was blown over; let him go and tell the king that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies,

2Sa 18:19. This he desired, not so much in hope of a reward (he was above that) as that he might have the pleasure and satisfaction of bringing the king, whom he loved, this good news. Joab knew David better than Ahimaaz did, and that the tidings of Absalom's death, which must conclude the story, would spoil the acceptableness of all the rest; and he loves Ahimaaz too well to let him be the messenger of those tidings (2Sa 18:20); they are fitter to be brought by a footman than by a priest. However, when Cushi was gone, Ahimaaz begged hard for leave to run after him, and with great importunity obtained it, 2Sa 18:22,23. One would wonder why he should be so fond of this office, when another was employed in it.

(1.) Perhaps it was to show his swiftness; observing how heavily Cushi ran, and that he took the worse way, though the nearest, he had a mind to show how fast he could run, and that he could go the furthest way about and yet beat Cushi. No great praise for a priest to be swift of foot, yet perhaps Ahimaaz was proud of it.

(2.) Perhaps it was in prudence and tenderness to the king that he desired it. He knew he could get before Cushi, and therefore was willing to prepare the king, by a vague and general report, for the plain truth which Cushi was ordered to tell him. If bad news must come, it is best that it come gradually, and will be the better borne.

3. They are both discovered by the watchman on the gate of Mahanaim, Ahimaaz first (2Sa 18:24), for, though Cushi had the lead, Ahimaaz soon outran him; but presently after Cushi appeared, 2Sa 18:26.

(1.) When the king hears of one running alone he concludes he is an express (2Sa 18:25): If he be alone, there are tidings in his mouth; for if they had been beaten, and were flying back from the enemy, there would have been many.

(2.) When he hears it is Ahimaaz he concludes he brings good news, 2Sa 18:27. Ahimaaz, it seems, was so famous for running that he was known by it at a distance, and so eminently good that it is taken for granted, if he be the messenger, the news must needs be good: He is a good man, zealously affected to the king's interest, and would not bring bad news. It is pity but the good tidings of the gospel should always be brought by good men; and how welcome should the messengers be to us for their message sake!

4. Ahimaaz is very forward to proclaim the victory (2Sa 18:28), cries at a distance, "Peace, there is peace;" peace after war, which is doubly welcome. "All is well, my lord O king! the danger is over, and we may return, when the king pleases, to Jerusalem." And, when he comes near, he tells him the news more particularly. "They are all cut off that lifted up their hands against the king;" and, as became a priest, while he gives the king the joy of it, he gives God the glory of it, the God of peace and war, the God of salvation and victory: "Blessed be the Lord thy God, that has done this for thee, as thy God, pursuant to the promises made to uphold thy throne," 2Sa 7:16.

When he said this, he fell down upon his face, not only in reverence to the king, but in humble adoration of God, whose name he praised for this success. By directing David thus to give God thanks for his victory, he prepared him for the approaching news of its allay. The more our hearts are fixed and enlarged in thanksgiving to God for our mercies the better disposed we shall be to bear with patience the afflictions mixed with them.

Poor David is so much a father that he forgets he is a king, and therefore cannot rejoice in the news of a victory, till he know whether the young man Absalom be safe, for whom his heart

seems to tremble, almost as Eli's, in a similar case, for the ark of God. Ahimaaz soon discerned, what Joab intimated to him, that the death of the king's son would make the tidings of the day very unwelcome, and therefore in his report left that matter doubtful; and, though he gave occasion to suspect how it was, yet, that the thunderclap might not come too suddenly upon the poor perplexed king, he refers him to the next messenger, whom they saw coming, for a more particular account of it.

"When Joab sent the king's servant (namely, Cushi) and me thy servant, to bring the news, I saw a great tumult, occasioned by something extraordinary, as you will hear by and by; but I have nothing to say about it. I have delivered that which was my message. Cushi is better able to inform you than I am. I will not be the messenger of evil tidings; nor will I pretend to know that which I cannot give a perfect account of." He is therefore told to stand by till Cushi come (2Sa 18:30), and now, we may suppose, he gives the king a more particular account of the victory, which was the thing he came to bring the news of.

5. Cushi, the slow post, proves the sure one, and besides the confirmation of the news of the victory which Ahimaaz had brought--The Lord has avenged thee of all those that rose up against thee (2Sa 18:31)--he satisfied the king's enquiry concerning Absalom, 2Sa 18:32. Is he safe? says David. "Yes," says Cushi, "he is safe in his grave;" but he tells the news so discreetly that, how unwelcome soever the message is, the messenger can have no blame.

He did not tell him plainly that Absalom was hanged, and run through and buried under a heap of stones; but only that his fate was what he desired might be the fate of all that were traitors against the king, his crown and dignity: "The enemies of my lord the king, whoever they are, and all that rise against

thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is; I need wish them no worse."

II. How David received the intelligence. He forgets all the joy of his deliverance, and is quite overwhelmed with the sorrowful tidings of Absalom's death, 2Sa 18:33. As soon as he perceived by Cushi's reply that Absalom was dead, he asked no more questions, but fell into a passion of weeping, retired from company, and abandoned himself to sorrow; as he was going up to his chamber he was overheard to say "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! alas for thee! I lament thee.

How hast thou fallen! Would God I had died for thee, and that thou hadst remained alive this day" (so the Chaldee adds) "O Absalom! my son, my son!" I wish I could see reason to think that this arose from a concern about Absalom's everlasting state, and that the reason why he wished he had died for him was because he had good hopes of his own salvation, and of Absalom's repentance if he had lived. It rather seems to have been spoken inconsiderately, and in a passion, and it was his infirmity. He is to be blamed,

1. For showing so great a fondness for a graceless son only because he was handsome and witty, while he was justly abandoned both of God and man.

2. For quarrelling, not only with divine providence, in the disposals of which he ought silently to have acquiesced, but with divine justice, the judgments of which he ought to have adored and subscribed to. See how Bildad argues (Job 8:3,4), If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away in their transgression, thou shouldst submit, for doth God pervert judgment? See Le 10:3.

3. For opposing the justice of the nation, which, as king, he was entrusted with the administration of, and which, with other public interests, he ought to have preferred before nay natural affection.

4. For despising the mercy of his deliverance, and the deliverance of his family and kingdom, from Absalom's wicked designs, as if this were no mercy, nor worth giving thanks for, because it cost the life of Absalom.

5. For indulging in a strong passion, and speaking unadvisedly with his lips. He now forgot his own reasonings upon the death of another child (Can I bring him back again?) and his own resolution to keep his mouth as with a bridle when his heart was hot within him, as well as his own practice at other times, when he quieted himself as a child that was weaned from his mother.

The best men are not always in an equally good frame. What we over-loved we are apt to over-grieve for: in each affection, therefore, it is wisdom to have rule over our own spirits and to keep a strict guard upon ourselves when that is removed from us which was very dear to us. Losers think they may have leave to speak; but little said is soon amended. The penitent patient sufferer sitteth alone and keepeth silence (La 3:28), or rather, with Job, says, Blessed be the name of the Lord.

24 And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone.

25 And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he *be* alone, *there is* tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near.

26 And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold *another* man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings.

27 And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He *is* a good man, and cometh with good tidings.
28 And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed *be* the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king.
29 And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and *me* thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what *it was.*
30 And the king said *unto him*, Turn aside, *and* stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still.
31 And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee.
32 And the king said unto Cushi, *Is* the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do *thee* hurt, be as *that* young man *is.*
33 And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

2 Samuel-19

David Returns to Jerusalem

1 And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.
2 And the victory that day was *turned* into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.
3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.
4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!

Soon after the messengers had brought the news of the defeat and death of Absalom to the court of Mahanaim, Joab and his victorious army followed, to grace the king's triumphs and receive his further orders. Now here we are told,

I. What a damp and disappointment it was to them to find the king in tears for Absalom's death, which they construed as a token of displeasure against them for what they had done, whereas they expected him to have met them with joy and thanks for their good services: It was told Joab, 2Sa 19:1 The report of it ran through the army (2Sa 19:2), how the king was grieved for his son.

The people will take particular notice what their princes say and do. The more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is, the more need we have to speak and act wisely and to govern our passions strictly. When they came to the city they found the king in close mourning, 2Sa 19:4. He covered his face, and would not so much as look up, nor take any notice of the generals when they attended him. It could not but surprise them to find,

1. How the king proclaimed his passion, of which he ought to have been ashamed, and which he would have striven to smother and conceal if he had consulted either his reputation for courage, which was lessened by his mean submission to the tyranny of so absurd a passion, or his interest in the people, which would be prejudiced by his discountenancing what was done in zeal for his honour and the public safety. Yet see how he avows his grief: He cries with a loud voice, O my son Absalom! "My servants have all come home safe, but where is my son? He is dead; and, dying in sin, I fear he is lost for ever. I cannot now say, I shall go to him, for my soul shall not be gathered with such sinners; what shall be done for thee, O Absalom! my son, my son!"

2. How he prolonged his passion, even till the army had come up to him, which must be some time after he received the first intelligence. If he had contented himself with giving vent to his passion for an hour or two when he first heard the news, it would have been excusable, but to continue it thus for so bad a son as Absalom, like Jacob for so good a son as Joseph, with a resolution to go to the grave mourning and to stain his triumphs with his tears, was very unwise and very unworthy. Now see how ill this was taken by the people.

They were loth to blame the king, for whatever he did used to please them (2Sa 3:36), but they took it as a great mortification to them. Their victory was turned into mourning, 2Sa 19:2. They stole into the city as men ashamed, 2Sa 19:3. In compliment to their sovereign, they would not rejoice in that which they perceived so afflictive to him, and yet they could not but be uneasy that they were thus obliged to conceal their joy. Superiors ought not to put such hardships as these on their inferiors.

II. How plainly and vehemently Joab reproved David for this indiscreet management of himself in this critical juncture. David never more needed the hearts of his subjects than now, nor was ever more concerned to secure his interest in their affections; and therefore whatever tended to disoblige them now was the most impolitic thing he could do, and the greatest wrong imaginable to his friends that adhered to him. Joab therefore censures him, 2Sa 19:5-7.

He speaks a great deal of reason, but not with the respect and deference which he owed to his prince. Is is fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? A plain case may be fairly pleaded with those that are above us, and they may be reproved for what they do amiss, but it must not be done with rudeness and insolence. David did indeed need to be roused and alarmed; and Joab thought it no time to dally with him. If superiors do

that which is foolish, they must neither think it strange nor take it ill if their inferiors tell them of it, perhaps too bluntly.

1. Joab magnifies the services of David's soldiers: "This day they have saved thy life, and therefore deserve to be taken notice of, and have reason to resent it if they be not." It is implied that Absalom, whom he honoured with his tears, sought his ruin and the ruin of his family, while those whom by his tears he puts a slight upon were such as preserved from ruin him and all that was dear to him. Great mischiefs have arisen to princes from the contempt of great merits.

2. He aggravates the discouragement David had given them: "Thou hast shamed their faces; for, while they have shown such a value for thy life, thou hast shown no value for theirs, but preferrest a spoiled wicked youth, a false traitor to his king and country, whom we are happily rid of, before all thy wise counsellors, brave commanders, and loyal subjects. What can be more absurd than to love thy enemies and hate thy friends?"

3. He advises him to present himself immediately at the head of his troops, to smile upon them, welcome them home, congratulate their success, and return them thanks for their services. Even those that may be commanded yet expect to be thanked when they do well, and ought to be.

4. He threatens him with another rebellion if he would not do this, intimating that rather than serve so ungrateful a prince he himself would head a revolt from him, and then (so confident is Joab of his own interest in the people) "there will not tarry with thee one man. If I go, they will go. Thou hast now nothing to mourn for: but, if thou persist, I will give thee something to mourn for (as Josephus expresses it) with a true and more bitter mourning."

III. How prudently and mildly David took the reproof and counsel given him, 2Sa 19:8. He shook off his grief, anointed his head, and washed his face, that he might not appear unto men to mourn, and then made his appearance in public in the gate, which was as the guild-hall of the city. Hither the people flocked to him to congratulate his and their safety, and all was well. Note, When we are convinced of a fault, we must amend, though we are told of it by our inferiors, and indecently, or in heat and passion.

5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

6 in that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

9 And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

11 And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, *even* to his house.

It is strange that David did not immediately upon the defeat and dispersion of Absalom's forces march with all expedition back to Jerusalem, to regain the possession of his capital city, while the rebels were in confusion and before they could rally again. What occasion was there to bring him back? Could not he himself go back with the victorious army he had with him in Gilead? He could, no doubt; but,

1. He would go back as a prince, with the consent and unanimous approbation of the people, and not as a conqueror forcing his way: he would restore their liberties, and not take occasion to seize them, or encroach upon them.

2. He would go back in peace and safety, and be sure that he should meet with no difficulty or opposition in his return, and therefore would be satisfied that the people were well-affected to have him before he would stir.

3. He would go back in honour, and like himself, and therefore would go back, not at the head of his forces, but in the arms of his subjects; for the prince that has wisdom and goodness enough to make himself his people's darling, without doubt, looks greater and makes a much better figure than the prince that has strength enough to make himself his people's terror. It is resolved therefore that David must be brought back to Jerusalem his own city, and his own house there, with some ceremony, and here we have that matter concerted.

I The men of Israel (that is, the ten tribes) were the first that talked of it, 2Sa 19:9,10. The people were at strife about it; it was the great subject of discourse and dispute throughout all the country. Some perhaps opposed it: "Let him either come back himself or stay where he is;" others appeared zealous for it, and reasoned as follows here, to further the design,

1. That David had formerly helped them, had fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and done them much service, and therefore it was a shame that he should continue banished from their country who had been so great a benefactor to it. Note, Good services done to the public, though they may be forgotten for a while, yet will be remembered again when men come to their right minds.

2. That Absalom had now disappointed them. "We were foolishly sick of the cedar, and chose the branch to reign over us; but we have had enough of him: he is consumed, and we narrowly escaped being consumed with him. Let us therefore return to our allegiance, and think of bringing the king back." Perhaps this was all the strife among them, not a dispute whether the king should be brought back or no (all agreed it was to be done), but whose fault is was that it was not done. As is usual in such cases, every one justified himself and blamed his neighbour. The people laid the fault on the elders, and the elders on the people, and one tribe upon another. Mutual excitements to the doing of a good work are laudable, but not mutual accusations for the not doing of it; for usually when public services are neglected all sides must share in the blame; every one might do more than he does, in the reformation of manners, the healing of divisions, and the like.

II The men of Judah, by David's contrivance, were the first that did it. It is strange that they, being David's own tribe, were not so forward as the rest. David had intelligence of the good disposition of all the rest towards him, but nothing from Judah, though he had always been particularly careful of them. But we do not always find the most kindness from those from whom we have most reason to expect it. Yet David would not return till he knew the sense of his own tribe. Judah was his lawgiver, Ps 60:7. That his way home might be the more clear,

1. He employed Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, to treat with the elders of Judah, and to excite them to give the king an invitation back to his house, even to his house, which was the glory of their tribe, 2Sa 19:11,12. No men more proper to negociate this affair than the two priests, who were firm to David's interest, were prudent men, and had great influence with the people. Perhaps the men of Judah were remiss and careless, and did it not, because nobody put them on to do it, and then it was proper to stir them up to it. Many will follow in a good work who will not lead: it is a pity that they should continue idle for want of being spoken to. Or perhaps they were so sensible of the greatness of the provocation they had given to David, by joining with Absalom, that they were afraid to bring him back, despairing of his favour; he therefore warrants his agents to assure them of it, with this reason: "You are my brethren, my bone and my flesh, and therefore I cannot be severe with you."

The Son of David has been pleased to call us brethren, his bone and his flesh, which encourages us to hope that we shall find favour with him. Or perhaps they were willing to see what the rest of the tribes would do before they stirred, with which they are here upbraided: "The speech of all Israel has come to the king to invite him back, and shall Judah be the last, that should have been the first? Where is now the celebrated bravery of that royal tribe? Where is its loyalty?" Note, We should be stirred up to that which is great and good by the examples both of our ancestors and of our neighbours, and by the consideration of our rank. Let not the first in dignity be last in duty.

2. He particularly courted into his interest Amasa, who had been Absalom's general, but was his own nephew as well as Joab, 2Sa 19:13. He owns him for his kinsman, and promises him that, if he will appear for him now, he will make him captain-general of all his forces in the room of Joab, will not

only pardon him (which, it may be, Amasa questioned), but prefer him. Sometimes there is nothing lost in purchasing the friendship of one that has been an enemy. Amasa's interest might do David good service at this juncture. But, if David did wisely for himself in designating Amasa for this post (Joab having now grown intolerably haughty), he did not do kindly by Amasa in letting his design be known, for it occasioned his death by Joab's hand, 2Sa 20:10.

3. The point was hereby gained. He bowed the heart of the men of Judah to pass a vote, nemine contradicente--unanimously, for the recall of the king, 2Sa 19:14. God's providence, by the priests' persuasions and Amasa's interest, brought them to this resolve. David stirred not till he received this invitation, and then he came as far back as Jordan, at which river they were to meet him, 2Sa 19:15. Our Lord Jesus will rule in those that invite him to the throne in their hearts and not till he be invited. He first bows the heart and makes it willing in the day of his power, and then rules in the midst of his enemies, Ps 110:2,3.

12 Ye *are* my brethren, ye *are* my bones and my flesh: wherefore then
are ye the last to bring back the king?
13 And say ye to Amasa, *Art* thou not of my bone, and of my flesh?
God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host
before me continually in the room of Joab.
14 And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as *the heart of*
one man; so that they sent *this word* unto the king, Return thou, and
all thy servants.
15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to
Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.
16 And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which *was* of Bahurim,
hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David.
17 And *there were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the
servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty
servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king.

18 And there went over a ferryboat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;

Perhaps Jordan was never passed with so much solemnity, nor with so many remarkable occurrences, as it was now, since Israel passed it under Joshua. David, in his afflictive flight, remembered God particularly from the land of Jordan (Ps 42:6), and now that land, more than any other, was graced with the glories of his return. David's soldiers furnished themselves with accommodations for their passage over this river, but, for his own family, a ferry-boat was sent on purpose, 2Sa 19:18. A fleet of boats, say some; a bridge of boats was made, say others; the best convenience they had to serve him with. Two remarkable persons met him on the banks of Jordan, both of whom had abused him wretchedly when he was in his flight.

I. Ziba, who had abused him with his fair tongue, and by accusing his master, had obtained from the king a grant of his estate, 2Sa 16:4. A greater abuse he could not have done him, than, by imposing upon his credulity, to draw him in to do a thing so unkind to the son of his friend Jonathan. He comes now, with a retinue of sons and servants, to meet the king (2Sa 19:17), that he may obtain the king's favour, and so come off the better when Mephibosheth shall shortly undeceive him, and clear himself, 2Sa 19:26.

II. Shimei, who had abused him with his foul tongue, railed at him, and cursed him, 2Sa 16:5. If David had been defeated, no doubt he would have continued to trample upon him, and have gloried in what he had done; but now that he sees him coming home in triumph, and returning to his throne, he thinks it his interest to make his peace with him. Those who now slight and abuse the Son of David would be glad to make their peace too when he shall come in his glory; but it will be too late. Shimei, to recommend himself to the king,

1. Came with good company, with the men of Judah, as one in their interest.

2. He brought a regiment of the men of Benjamin with him, 1000, of which perhaps he was chiliarch, or commander-in-chief, offering his own and their service to the king; or perhaps they were volunteers, whom by his interest he had got together to meet the king, which was the more obliging because of all the tribes of Israel there were none, except these and Judah, that appeared to pay him this respect.

3. What he did he hastened to do; he lost no time. Agree with thy adversary quickly, while thou art in the way. Here is,

(1.) The criminal's submission (2Sa 19:18-20): He fell down before the king, as a penitent, as a supplicant; and, that he might be thought sincere, he did it publicly before all David's servants, and his friends the men of Judah, yea, and before his own thousand. The offence was public, therefore the submission ought to be so. He owns his crime: Thy servant doth know that I have sinned. He aggravates it: I did perversely. He begs the king's pardon: Let not the king impute iniquity to thy servant, that is, deal with me as I deserve. He intimates that it was below the king's great and generous mind to take it to his heart; and pleads his early return to his allegiance, that he was the first of all the house of Joseph (that is, of Israel, who in the beginning of David's reign had distinguished themselves from Judah by their adherence to Ishbosheth, 2Sa 2:10) that came to meet the king. He came first, that by his example of duty the rest might be induced, and by his experience of the king's clemency the rest might be encouraged to follow.

(2.) A motion made for judgment against him (2Sa 19:21): "Shall not Shimei be put to death as a traitor? Let him, of all

men, be made an example." This motion was made by Abishai, who would have ventured his life to have been the death of Shimei when he was cursing, 2Sa 16:9. David did not think fit to have it done then, because his judicial power was cut short; but, now that it was restored, why should not the law have its course? Abishai herein consulted what he supposed to be David's feelings more than his true interest. Princes have need to arm themselves against temptations to severity.

(3.) His discharge by the king's order, 2Sa 19:22,23. He rejected Abishai's motion with displeasure: What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? The less we have to do with those who are of an angry revengeful spirit, and who put us upon doing what is harsh and rigorous, the better. He looks upon these prosecutors as adversaries to him, though they pretended friendship and zeal for his honour. Those who advise us to what is wrong are really Satans, adversaries to us.

[1.] They were adversaries to his inclination, which was to clemency. He knew that he was this day king in Israel, restored to, and re-established in, his kingdom, and therefore his honour inclined him to forgive. It is the glory of kings to forgive those that humble and surrender themselves: Satis est prostrasse leoni--it suffices the lion that he has laid his victim prostrate. His joy inclined him to forgive. The pleasantness of his spirit on this great occasion forbade the entrance of any thing that was sour and peevish: joyful days should be forgiving days.

Yet this was not all; his experience of God's mercy in restoring him to his kingdom, his exclusion from which he attributed to his sin, inclined him to show mercy to Shimei. Those that are forgiven must forgive. David had severely revenged the abuses done to his ambassadors by the Ammonites (2Sa 12:31), but easily passes by the abuse done to himself by an

Israelite. That was an affront to Israel in general, and touched the honour of his crown and kingdom; this was purely personal, and therefore (according to the usual disposition of good men) he could the more easily forgive it.

[2.] They were adversaries to his interest. If he should put to death Shimei, who cursed him, those would expect the same fate who had taken up arms and actually levied war against him, which would drive them from him, while he was endeavouring to draw them to him. Acts of severity are seldom acts of policy. The throne is established by mercy. Shimei, hereupon, had his pardon signed and sealed with an oath, yet being bound, no doubt, to his good behaviour, and liable to be prosecuted if he afterwards misbehaved; and thus he was reserved to be, in due time, as much a monument of the justice of the government as he was now of its clemency, and in both of its prudence.

19 and said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me,
neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely
the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king
should take it to his heart.
20 For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I
am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to
meet my lord the king.
21 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei
be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?
22 And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that
ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be
put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I *am* this day
king over Israel?
23 Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the
king sware unto him.
24 And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and
had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his
clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came *again*
in peace.

25 And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

The day of David's return was a day of bringing to remembrance, a day of account, in which what had passed in his flight was called over again; among other things, after the case of Shimei, that of Mephibosheth comes to be enquired into, and he himself brings it on.

I. He went down in the crowd to meet the king (2Sa 19:24), and as a proof of the sincerity of his joy in the king's return, we are here told what a true mourner he was for the king's banishment. During that melancholy time, when one of the greatest glories of Israel had departed, Mephibosheth continued in a very melancholy state. He was never trimmed, nor put on clean linen, but wholly neglected himself, as one abandoned to grief for the king's affliction and the kingdom's misery. In times of public calamity we ought to abridge our enjoyments in the delights of sense, in conformity to the season. There are times when God calls to weeping and mourning, and we must comply with the call.

II. When the king came to Jerusalem (since he could not sooner have an opportunity) he made his appearance before him (2Sa 19:25); and when the king asked him why he, being one of his family, had staid behind, and not accompanied him in his exile, he opened his case fully to the king.

1. He complained of Ziba, his servant who should have been his friend, but had been in two ways his enemy; for, first, he had hindered him from going along with the king, by taking the ass himself which he was ordered to make ready for his master (2Sa 19:26), basely taking advantage of his lameness and his inability to help himself; and, secondly, he had accused him to David of a design to usurp the government,

2Sa 19:27. How much mischief is it in the power of a wicked servant to do to the best master!

2. He gratefully acknowledged the king's great kindness to him when he and all his father's house lay at the king's mercy, 2Sa 19:28. When he might justly have been dealt with as a rebel, he was treated as a friend, as a child: Thou didst set thy servant among those that did eat at thy own table. This shows that Ziba's suggestion was improbable; for could Mephibosheth be so foolish as to aim higher when he lived so easily, so happily as he did? And could he be so very disingenuous as to design any harm to David, of whose great kindness to him he was thus sensible?

3. He referred his cause to the king's pleasure (Do what is good in thy eyes with me and my estate), depending on the king's wisdom, and his ability to discern between truth and falsehood (My lord the king is as an angel from God), and disclaiming all pretensions of his own merit: "So much kindness I have received above what I deserved, and what right have I to cry any more unto the king? Why should I trouble the king with my complaints when I have already been so troublesome to him? Why should I think any thing hard that is put upon me when I hitherto been so kindly treated?" We were all as dead men before God; yet he has not only spared us, but taken us to sit at his table. How little reason then have we to complain of any trouble we are in, and how much reason to take all well that God does!

III. David hereupon recalls the sequestration of Mephibosheth's estate; being deceived in his grant, he revokes it, and confirms his former settlement of it: "I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land (2Sa 19:29), that is, Let it be as I first ordered it (2Sa 9:10); the property shall still be vested in thee, but Ziba shall have occupancy: he shall till the land, paying thee a rent."

Thus Mephibosheth is where he was; no harm is done, only Ziba goes away unpunished for his false and malicious information against his master. David either feared him too much, or loved him too well, to do justice upon him according to that law, De 19:18,19; and he was now in the humour of forgiving and resolved to make every body easy.

IV. Mephibosheth drowns all he cares about his estate in his joy for the king's return (2Sa 19:30): "Yea, let him take all, the presence and favour of the king shall be to me instead of all." A good man can contentedly bear his own private losses and disappointments, while he see Israel in peace, and the throne of the Son of David exalted and established. Let Ziba take all, so that David may be in peace.

26 And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant *is* lame.

27 And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king *is* as an angel of God: do therefore *what is* good in thine eyes.

28 For all *of* my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

29 And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

30 And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan.

32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, *even* fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he *was* a very great man.

33 And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I

will feed thee with me in Jerusalem.

34 And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem?

35 I *am* this day fourscore years old: *and* can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?

David had already graced the triumphs of his restoration with the generous remission of the injuries that had been done to him; we have him here gracing them with a no less generous reward of the kindnesses that had been shown to him. Barzillai, the Gileadite, who had a noble seat at Rogelim, not far from Mahanaim, was the man who, of all the nobility and gentry of that country, had been most kind to David in his distress. If Absalom had prevailed, it is likely he would have suffered for his loyalty; but now he and his shall be no losers by it. Here is,

I. Barzillai's great respect to David, not only as a good man, but as his righteous sovereign: He provided him with much sustenance, for himself and his family, while he lay at Mahanaim, 2Sa 19:32. God had given him a large estate, for he was a very great man, and, it seems, he had a large heart to do good with it: what else but that is a large estate good for? To reduced greatness generosity obliges us, and to oppressed goodness piety obliges us, to be in a particular manner kind, to the utmost of our power. Barzillai, to show that he was not weary of David, though he was so great a charge to him, attended him to Jordan, and went over with him, 2Sa 19:31. Let subjects learn hence to render tribute to whom tribute is due and honour to whom honour, Ro 13:7.

II The kind invitation David gave to him to court (2Sa 19:33): Come thou over with me. He invited him,

1. That he might have the pleasure of his company and the benefit of his counsel; for we may suppose that he was very wise and good, as well as very rich, otherwise he would not have been called here a very great man; for it is what a man is, more than what he has, that renders him truly great.

2. That he might have an opportunity of returning his kindness: "I will feed thee with me; thou shalt fare as sumptuously as I fare, and this at Jerusalem, the royal and holy city." David did not take Barzillai's kindness to him as a debt (he was not one of those arbitrary princes who think that whatever their subjects have is theirs when they please), but accepted it and rewarded it as a favour. We must always study to be grateful to our friends, especially to those who have helped us in distress.

III. Barzillai's reply to this invitation, wherein,

1. He admires the king's generosity in making him this offer, lessening his service, and magnifying the king's return for it: Why should the king recompense it with such a reward? 2Sa 19:36. Will the master thank that servant who only does what was his duty to do? He though he had done himself honour enough in doing the king any service. Thus, when the saints shall be called to inherit the kingdom in consideration of what they have done for Christ in this world, they will be amazed at the disproportion between the service and the recompence. Mt 25:37, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee?

2. He declines accepting the invitation. He begs his majesty's pardon for refusing so generous an offer: he should think himself very happy in being near the king, but,

(1.) He is old, and unfit to remove at all, especially to court. He is old, and unfit for the business of the court: "Why should I go up with the king to Jerusalem? I can do him no service

there, in the council, the camp, the treasury, or the courts of justice; for how long have I to live? 2Sa 19:34. Shall I think of going into business, now that I am going out of this world?" He is old and unfit for the diversions of the court, which will be ill-bestowed, and even thrown away, upon one that can relish them so little, 2Sa 19:35.

As it was in Moses's time, so it was in Barzillai's and it is not worse now, that, if men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, their strength then is labour and sorrow, Ps 90:10. These were then, and are still, years of which men say they have no pleasure in them, Ec 12:1. Dainties are insipid when desire fails, and songs to the aged ear are little better than those sung to a heavy heart, very disagreeable: how should they be otherwise when the daughters of music are brought low? Let those that are old learn of Barzillai to be dead to the delights of sense; let grace second nature, and make a virtue of the necessity. Nay, Barzillai, being old, thinks he shall be a burden to the king, rather than any credit to him; and a good man would not go any where to be burdensome, or, if he must be so, will rather be so to his own house than to another's.

(2.) He is dying, and must begin to think of his long journey, his removal out of the world, 2Sa 19:37. It is good for us all, but it especially becomes old people to think and speak much of dying. "Talk of going to court!" says Barzillai; "Let me go home and die in my own city, the place of my father's sepulchre; let me die by the grave of my father, that my bones may be quietly carried to the place of their rest. The grave is ready for me, let me go and get ready for it, go and die in my nest."

3. He desires the king to be kind to his son Chimham: Let him go over with my lord the king, and have preferment at court. What favour is done to him Barzillai will take as done to

himself. Those that are old must not grudge young people those delights which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, nor confine them to their retirements. Barzillai will go back himself, but he will not make Chimham go back with him; though he could ill spare Chimham, yet, thinking it would gratify and advance him, he is willing to do it.

IV. David's farewell to Barzillai.

1. He sends him back into his country with a kiss and a blessing (2Sa 19:39), signifying that in gratitude for his kindnesses he would love him and pray for him, and with a promise that whatever request he should at any time make to him he would be ready to oblige him (2Sa 19:38): Whatsoever thou shalt think of, when thou comest home, to ask of me, that will I do for thee. What is the chief excellency of power but this, that it gives men a capacity of doing the more good?

2. He takes Chimham forward with him, and leaves it to Barzillai to choose him his preferment. I will do to him what shall seem good to thee, 2Sa 19:38. And, it should seem, Barzillai, who had experienced the innocency and safety of retirement, begged a country seat for him near Jerusalem, but not in it; for, long after, we read of a place near Beth-lehem, David's city, which is called the habitation of Chimham, allotted to him, probably, not out of the crown-lands or the forfeited estates, but out of David's paternal estate.

36 Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward?

37 Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, *and be buried* by the grave of my father and of my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.

38 And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, *that* will I do for thee.

39 And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

40 Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel.

41 And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah stolen thee away, and have brought the king, and his household, and all David's men with him, over Jordan?

David came over Jordan attended and assisted only by the men of Judah; but when he had advanced as far as Gilgal, the first stage on this side Jordan, half the people of Israel (that is, of their elders and great men) had come to wait upon him, to kiss his hand, and congratulate him on his return, but found they came too late to witness the solemnity of his first entrance. This put them out of humour, and occasioned a quarrel between them and the men of Judah, which was a damp to the joy of the day, and the beginning of further mischief. Here is,

1 The complaint which the men of Israel brought to the king against the men of Judah (2Sa 19:41), that they had performed the ceremony of bringing the king over Jordan, and not given them notice, that they might have come to join in it. This reflected upon them, as if they were not so well affected to the king and his restoration as the men of Judah were, whereas the king himself knew that they had spoken of it before the men of Judah thought of it, 2Sa 19:11. It seemed likewise as if they intended to monopolize the king's favours when he had come back, and to be looked upon as his only friends. See what mischief comes from pride and jealousy.

2 The excuse which the men of Judah made for themselves, 2Sa 19:42.

(1.) They plead relations to the king: "He is near of kin to us, and therefore in a matter of mere ceremony, as this was, we may claim precedency. It was into our country that he was to be brought, and therefore who so fit as we to bring him?"

(2.) They deny the insinuated charge of self-seeking in what they had done: "Have we eaten at all of the king's cost? No, we have all borne our own charges. Hath he given us any gift? No, we have no design to engross the advantages of his return; you have come time enough to share in them." Too many that attend princes do so only for what they can get.

3. The men of Israel's vindication of their charge, 2Sa 19:43. They pleaded, "We have ten parts in the king" (Judah having Simeon only, whose lot lay within his, to join with him), "and therefore it is a slight upon us that our advice was not asked about bringing back the king." See how uncertain the multitude is. They were lately striving against the king, to drive him out; now they are striving about him, which shall honour him most.

A good man and a good cause will thus recover their credit and interest, though, for a time, they may seem to have lost them. See what is commonly the origin of strife, nothing so much as impatience of contempt or the least seeming slight. The men of Judah would have done better if they had taken their brethren's advice and assistance; but, since they did not, why should the men of Israel be so grievously offended? If a good work be done, and well done, let us not be displeased, nor the work disparaged, though we had no hand in it.

4. The scripture takes notice, by way of blame, which of the contending parties managed the cause with most passion: The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than those of the men of Israel. Though we have right and reason on our side, yet, if

we express ourselves with fierceness, God takes notice of it and is much displeased with it.

42 And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king *is* near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's *cost?* or hath he given us any gift?
43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more *right* in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

2 Samuel-20

The Revolt of Sheba

1 And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name *was* Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.
2 So every man of Israel went up from after David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

David, in the midst of his triumphs, has here the affliction to see his kingdom disturbed and his family disgraced.

I. His subjects revolting from him at the instigation of a man of Belial, whom they followed when they forsook the man after God's own heart. Observe,

1. That this happened immediately upon the crushing of Absalom's rebellion. We must not think it strange, while we are in this world, if the end of one trouble be the beginning of another: deep sometimes calls unto deep.

2. That the people were now just returning to their allegiance, when, of a sudden, they flew off from it. When a reconciliation is newly made, it ought to be handled with great tenderness and caution, lest the peace break again before it be settled. A broken bone, when it is set, must have time to knot.

3. That the ring-leader of this rebellion was Sheba, a Benjamite by birth (2Sa 20:1), who had his habitation in Mount Ephraim, 2Sa 20:21. Shimei and he were both of Saul's tribe, and both retained the ancient grudge of that house. Against the kingdom of the Messiah there is an hereditary enmity in the serpent's seed, and a succession of attempts to overthrow it (Ps 2:1,2); but he that sits in heaven laughs at them all.

4. That the occasion of it was that foolish quarrel, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, between the elders of Israel and the elders of Judah, about bringing the king back. It was a point of honour that was disputed between them, which had most interest in David. "We are more numerous," say the elders of Israel. "We are nearer akin to him," say the elders of Judah.

Now one would think David very safe and happy when his subjects are striving which shall love him best, and be most forward to show him respect; yet even that strife proves the occasion of a rebellion. The men of Israel complained to David of the slight which the men of Judah had put upon them. If he had now countenanced their complaint, commended their zeal, and returned them thanks for it, he might have confirmed them in his interest; but he seemed partial to his own tribe: Their words prevailed above the words of the men of Israel; as some read the last words of the foregoing chapter.

David inclined to justify them, and, when the men of Israel perceived this, they flew off with indignation. "If the king will

suffer himself to be engrossed by the men of Judah, let him and them make their best of one another, and we will set up one for ourselves. We thought we had ten parts in David, but such an interest will not be allowed us; the men of Judah tell us, in effect, we have no part in him, and therefore we will have none, nor will we attend him any further in his return to Jerusalem, nor own him for our king." This was proclaimed by Sheba (2Sa 20:1), who probably was a man of note, and had been active in Absalom's rebellion; the disgusted Israelites took the hint, and went up from after David to follow Sheba (2Sa 20:2), that is, the generality of them did so, only the men of Judah adhered to him. Learn hence,

(1.) That it is as impolitic for princes to be partial in their attentions to their subjects as it is for parents to be so to their children; both should carry it with an even hand.

(2.) Those know not what they do that make light of the affections of their inferiors, by not countenancing and accepting it. Their hatred may be feared whose love is despised.

(3.) The beginning of strife is as the letting forth of water; it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with, Pr 17:14. How great a matter doth a little of this fire kindle!

(4.) The perverting of words is the subverting of peace; and much mischief is made by forcing invidious constructions upon what is said and written and drawing consequences that were never intended. The men of Judah said, The king is near of kin to us. "By this," say the men of Israel, "you mean that we have no part in him;" whereas they meant no such thing.

(5.) People are very apt to run into extremes. We have ten parts in David, said they; and, almost in the next breath, We have no part in him. Today Hosanna, to-morrow Crucify.

II. His concubines imprisoned for life, and he himself under a necessity of putting them in confinement, because they had been defiled by Absalom, 2Sa 20:3. David had multiplied wives, contrary to the law and they proved a grief and shame to him. Those whom he had sinfully taken pleasure in he was now,

1. Obliged, in duty, to put away, they being rendered unclean to him by the vile uncleanness his son had committed with them. Those whom he had loved must now be loathed.

2. Obliged, in prudence, to shut up in privacy, not to be seen abroad for shame, lest the sight of them should give occasion to people to speak of what Absalom had done to them, which ought not to be so much as named, 1Co 5:1. That that villany might be buried in obscurity.

3. Obliged, in justice to shut up in prison, to punish them for their easy submission to Absalom's lust, despairing perhaps of David's return, and giving him up for gone. Let none expect to do ill and fare well.

3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women *his* concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

4 Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present.

5 So Amasa went to assemble *the men of* Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

6 And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than *did* Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

7 And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

We have here Amasa's fall just as he began to rise. He was nephew to David (2Sa 17:25), had been Absalom's general and commander-in-chief of his rebellious army, but, that being routed, he came over into David's interest, upon a promise that he should be general of his forces instead of Joab. Sheba's rebellion gives David an occasion to fulfil his promise sooner than he could wish, but Joab's envy and emulation rendered its fulfillment of ill consequence both to him and David.

I. Amasa has a commission to raise forces for the suppressing of Sheba's rebellion, and is ordered to raise them with all possible expedition, 2Sa 20:4. It seems, the men of Judah, though forward to attend the king's triumphs, were backward enough to fight his battles; else, when they were all in a body attending him to Jerusalem, they might immediately have pursued Sheba, and have crushed that cockatrice in the egg. But most love a loyalty, as well as a religion, that is cheap and easy. Many boast of their being akin to Christ that yet are very loth to venture for him. Amasa is sent to assemble the men of Judah within three days; but he finds them so backward and unready that he cannot do it within the time appointed (2Sa 20:5), though the promotion of Amasa, who had been their general under Absalom, was very obliging to them, and a proof of the clemency of David's government.

II. Upon Amasa's delay, Abishai, the brother of Joab, is ordered to take the guards and standing forces, and with them to pursue Sheba (2Sa 20:6,7), for nothing could be of more dangerous consequence than to give him time. David gives these orders to Abishai, because he resolves to mortify Joab, and degrade him, not so much, I doubt, for the blood of Abner,

which he had shed basely, as for the blood of Absalom, which he had shed justly and honourably.

"Now (says bishop Hall) Joab smarteth for a loyal disobedience. How slippery are the stations of earthly honours and subject to continual mutability! Happy are those who are in favour with him in whom there is no shadow of change." Joab, without orders, though in disgrace, goes along with his brother, knowing he might be serviceable to the public, or perhaps now meditating the removal of his rival.

III. Joab, near Gibeon, meets with Amasa, and barbarously murders him, 2Sa 20:8-10. It should seem, the great stone in Gibeon was the place appointed for the general rendezvous. There the rivals met; and Amasa, relying upon his commission, went before, as general both of the new-raised forces which he had got together, and of the veteran troops which Abishai had brought in; but Joab there took an opportunity to kill him with his own hand; and,

1. He did it subtilely, and with contrivance, and not upon a sudden provocation. He girded his coat about him, that it might not hang in his way, and girded his belt upon his coat, that his sword might be the readier to his hand; he also put his sword in a sheath too big for it, that, whenever he pleased, it might, upon a little shake, fall out, as if it fell by accident, and so he might take it into his hand, unsuspected, as if he were going to return it into the scabbard, when he designed to sheath it in the bowels of Amasa. The more there is of plot in a sin the worse it is.

2. He did it treacherously, and under pretence of friendship, that Amasa might not be upon his guard. He called him brother, for they were own cousins, enquired of his welfare (Art thou in health?) and took him by the beard, as one he was free with, to kiss him, while with the drawn sword in his other

hand he was aiming at his heart. Was this done like a gentleman, like a soldier, like a general? No, but like a villain, like a base coward. Just thus he slew Abner, and went unpunished for it, which encouraged him to do the like again.

3. He did it impudently, not in a corner, but at the head of his troops, and in their sight, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to do it, that was so hardened in blood and murders that he could neither blush nor tremble.

4. He did it at one blow, gave the fatal push with a good-will, as we say, so that he needed not strike him again; with such a strong and steady hand he gave this one stroke that it was fatal.

5. He did it in contempt and defiance of David and the commission he had given to Amasa; for that commission was the only ground of his quarrel with him, so that David was struck at through the side of Amasa, and was, in effect, told to his face that Joab would be general, in spite of him. 6. He did it very unseasonably, when they were going against a common enemy and were concerned to be unanimous. This ill-timed quarrel might have scattered their forces, or engaged them one against another, and so have made them all an easy prey to Sheba. So contentedly could Joab sacrifice the interest both of king and kingdom to his personal revenge.

IV. Joab immediately resumes his general's place, and takes care to lead the army on in pursuit of Sheba, that, if possible, he might prevent any prejudice to the common cause by what he had done.

1. He leaves one of his men to make proclamation to the forces that were coming up that they were still engaged in David's cause, but under Joab's command, 2Sa 20:11. He knew what an interest he had in the soldiery, and how many favoured him rather than Amasa, who had been a traitor, was now a turn-

coat, and had never been successful; on this he boldly relied, and called them all to follow him. What man of Judah would not be for his old king and his old general? But one would wonder with what face a murderer could pursue a traitor; and how, under such a heavy load of guilt, he had courage to enter upon danger. Surely his conscience was seared with a hot iron.

2. Care is taken to remove the dead body out of the way, because at that they made a stand (as 2Sa 2:23), and to cover it with a cloth, 2Sa 20:12,13. Wicked men think themselves safe in their wickedness if they can but conceal it from the eye of the world: if it be hidden, it is with them as if it were never done. But the covering of blood with a cloth cannot stop its cry in God's ear for vengeance, or make it the less loud.

However, since this was no time to arraign Joab for what he had done, and the common safety called for expedition, it was prudent to remove that which retarded the march of the army; and then they all went on after Joab, while David, who no doubt had notice soon brought him of this tragedy, could not but reflect upon it with regret that he had not formerly done justice upon Joab for the death of Abner, and that he now had exposed Amasa by preferring him. And perhaps his conscience reminded him of his employing Joab in the murder of Uriah, which had helped to harden him in cruelty.

8 When they *were* at the great stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle *with* a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

9 And Joab said to Amasa, *Art* thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

10 But Amasa took no heed of the sword that *was* in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib,* and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died.

So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri.

11 And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoreth
Joab, and he that *is* for David, *let him go* after Joab.
12 And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And
when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed
Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him,
when he saw that every one that came by him stood still.
13 When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on
after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.
14 And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to
Beth-maachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered
together, and went also after him.
15 And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and
they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and
all the people that *were* with Joab battered the wall, to throw it
down.

We have here the conclusion of Sheba's attempt.

I The rebel, when he had rambled over all the tribes of Israel, and found them not so willing, upon second thoughts, to follow him, as they had been upon a sudden provocation to desert David (having only picked up a few like himself, that sided with him), at length entered Abel-Beth-maacah, a strong city in the north, in the lot of Naphtali, where we find it placed, 2Ki 15:29. Here he took shelter, whether by force or with consent does not appear; but his adherents were most Berites, of Beeroth in Benjamin, 2Sa 20:14. One bad man will find or make more.

II. Joab drew up all his force against the city, besieged it, battered the wall, and made it almost ready for a general storm, 2Sa 20:15. Justly is that place attacked with all this fury which dares harbour a traitor; nor will that heart fare better which indulges those rebellious lusts that will not have Christ to reign over them.

III. A discreet good woman of the city of Abel brings this matter, by her prudent management, to a good issue, so as to satisfy Joab and yet save the city. Here is,

1. Her treaty with Joab, and her capitulation with him, by which he is engaged to raise the siege, upon condition that Sheba be delivered up. It seems, none of all the men of Abel, none of the elders or magistrates, offered to treat with Joab, no, not when they were reduced to the last extremity. They were stupid and unconcerned for the public safety, or they stood in awe of Sheba, or they despaired of gaining any good terms with Joab, or they had not sense enough to manage the treaty.

But this one woman and her wisdom saved the city. Souls know no difference of sexes. Though the man be the head, it does not therefore follow that he has the monopoly of the brains, and therefore he ought not, by any salique law, to have the monopoly of the crown. Many a masculine heart, and more than masculine, has been found in a female breast; nor is the treasure of wisdom the less valuable for being lodged in the weaker vessel. In the treaty between this nameless heroine and Joab,

(1.) She gains his audience and attention, 2Sa 20:16,17. We may suppose it was the first time he had ever treated with a woman in martial affairs.

(2.) She reasons with him on behalf of her city, and very ingeniously.

[1.] That it was a city famous for wisdom (2Sa 20:18), as we translate it. She pleads that this city had been long in such reputation for prudent knowing men that it was the common referee of the country, and all agreed to abide by the award of its elders. Their sentence was an oracle; let them be consulted

and the matter is ended, all sides will acquiesce. Now shall such a city as this be laid in ashes and never treated with?

[2.] That the inhabitants were generally peaceable and faithful in Israel, 2Sa 20:19. She could speak, not for herself only, but for all those whose cause she pleaded, that they were not of turbulent and seditious spirits, but of known fidelity to their prince and peaceableness with their fellow-subjects; they were neither seditious nor litigious.

[3.] That it was a mother in Israel, a guide and nurse to the towns and country about; and that it was a part of the inheritance of the Lord, a city of Israelites, not of heathen; and the destruction of it would lessen and weaken that nation which God had chosen for his heritage.

[4.] That they expected him to offer them peace before he made an attack upon the, according to that known law of war, De 20:10. So the margin reads (2Sa 20:18): They plainly spoke in the beginning (of the siege), saying, Surely they will ask of Abel, that is, "The besiegers will demand the traitor, and will ask us to surrender him; and if they do, we will soon come to an agreement, and so end the matter." Thus she tacitly upbraids Joab for not offering them peace, but hopes it is not too late to beg it.

(3.) Joab and Abel's advocate soon agree that Sheba's head shall be the ransom of the city. Joab, though in a personal quarrel he had lately swallowed up and destroyed Amasa, yet, when he acts as a general, will by no means bear the imputation of delighting in bloodshed: "Far be it from me that I should delight to swallow up or destroy, or design it but when it is necessary for the public safety, 2Sa 20:20. The matter is not so. Our quarrel is not with your city; we would hazard our lives for its protection.

Our quarrel is only with the traitor that is harboured among you; deliver him up, and we have done." A great deal of mischief would be prevented if contending parties would but understand one another. The city obstinately holds out, believing Joab aims at its ruin. Joab furiously attacks it, believing the citizens all confederates with Sheba. Whereas both were mistaken; let both sides be undeceived, and the matter is soon accommodated. The single condition of peace is the surrender of the traitor. It is so in God's dealing with the soul, when it is besieged by conviction and distress: sin is the traitor; the beloved lust is the rebel; part with that, cast away the transgression, and all shall be well. No peace on any other terms. Our wise woman immediately agrees to the proposal: Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee presently.

2 . Her treaty with the citizens. She went to them in her wisdom (and perhaps she had as much need of it in dealing with them as in dealing with Joab) and persuaded them to cut off Sheba's head, probably by some public order of their government, and it was thrown over the wall to Joab. He knew the traitor's face, and therefore looked no further, intending not that any of his adherents should suffer. The public safety was secured, and he felt no wish to gratify the public revenge. Joab hereupon raised the siege, and marched back to Jerusalem, with the trophies rather of peace than victory.

16 Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.

17 And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, *Art* thou Joab? And he answered, I *am he*. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

18 Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask *counsel* at Abel: and so they ended *the matter*.

19 I *am one of them that are* peaceable *and* faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?

20 And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I
should swallow up or destroy.
21 The matter *is* not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son
of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, *even*
against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.
And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to
thee over the wall.
22 Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom: and they
cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast *it* out to Joab.
And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man
to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

David's Officers

23 Now Joab *was* over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of
Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and over the Pelethites:

Here is an account of the state of David's court after his restoration. Joab retained the office of general, being too great to be displaced. Benaiah, as before, was captain of the guards. Here is one new office erected, which we had not (2Sa 8:16-18), that of treasurer, or one over the tribute, for it was not till towards the latter end of his time that David began to raise taxes. Adoram was long in this office, but it cost him his life at last, 1Ki 12:18.

24 and Adoram *was* over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of
Ahilud *was* recorder:
25 and Sheva *was* scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar *were* the priests:
26 and Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

2 Samuel-21

The Avenging of the Gibeonites

1 Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, *It is* for Saul, and for *his* bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.
2 And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah:)
3 wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?

Here I. Were are told of the injury which Saul had, long before this, done to the Gibeonites, which we had no account of in the history of his reign, nor should we have heard of it here but that it came now to be reckoned for. The Gibeonites were of the remnant of the Amorites (2Sa 21:2), who by a stratagem had made peace with Israel, and had the public faith pledged to them by Joshua for their safety. We had the story Jos 9:1-27, where it was agreed (2Sa 21:23) that they should have their lives secured, but be deprived of their lands and liberties, that they and theirs should be tenants in villanage to Israel. It does not appear that they had broken their part of the covenant, either by denying their service or attempting to recover their lands or liberties; nor was this pretended; but Saul, under colour of zeal for the honour of Israel, that it might not be said that they had any of the natives among them, aimed to root them out, and, in order to that, slew many of them.

Thus he would seem wiser than his predecessors the judges, and more zealous for the public interest; and perhaps he designed it for an instance of his royal prerogative and the power which as king he assumed to rescind the former acts of

government and to disannul the most solemn leagues. It may be, he designed, by this severity towards the Gibeonites, to atone for his clemency towards the Amalekites. Some conjecture that he sought to cut off the Gibeonites at the same time when he put away the witches (1Sa 28:3), or perhaps many of them were remarkably pious, and he sought to destroy them when he slew the priests their masters. That which made this an exceedingly sinful sin was that he not only shed innocent blood, but therein violated the solemn oath by which the nation was bound to protect them. See what brought ruin on Saul's house: it was a bloody house.

II. We find the nation of Israel chastised with a sore famine, long after, for this sin of Saul. Observe,

1. Even in the land of Israel, that fruitful land, and in the reign of David, that glorious reign, there was a famine, not extreme (for then notice would sooner have been taken of it and enquiry made into the cause of it), but great drought, and scarcity of provisions, the consequence of it, for three years together. If corn miss one year, commonly the next makes up the deficiency; but, if it miss three years successively, it will be a sore judgment; and the man of wisdom will by it hear God's voice crying to the country to repent of the abuse of plenty.

2. David enquired of God concerning it. Though he was himself a prophet, he must consult the oracle, and know God's mind in his own appointed way. Note, When we are under God's judgments we ought to enquire into the grounds of the controversy. Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. It is strange that David did not sooner consult the oracle, not till the third year; but perhaps, till then, he apprehended it not to be an extraordinary judgment for some particular sin. Even good men are often slack and remiss in doing their duty.

We continue in ignorance, and under mistake, because we delay to enquire.

3. God was ready in his answer, though David was slow in his enquiries: It is for Saul. Note, God's judgments often look a great way back, which obliges us to do so when we are under his rebukes. It is not for us to object against the people's smarting for the sin of their king (perhaps they were aiding and abetting), nor against this generation's suffering for the sin of the last God often visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children, and his judgments are a great deep. He gives not account of any of his matters. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin; nor can we build hopes of impunity upon the delay of judgments. There is no statute of limitation to be pleaded against God's demands. Nullum tempus occurrit Deo--God may punish when he pleases.

III. We have vengeance taken upon the house of Saul for the turning away of God's wrath from the land, which, at present, smarted for his sin.

1. David, probably by divine direction, referred it to the Gibeonites themselves to prescribe what satisfaction should be given them for the wrong that had been done them, 2Sa 21:3. They had many years remained silent, had not appealed to David, nor given the kingdom any disturbance with their complaints or demands; and now, at length, God speaks for them (I heard not, for thou wilt hear, Ps 38:14,15); and they are recompensed for their patience with this honour, that they are made judges in their own case, and have a blank given them to write their demands on: What you shall say, that will I do (2Sa 21:4), that atonement may be made, and that you may bless the inheritance of the Lord, 2Sa 21:3. It is sad for any family or nation to have the prayers of oppressed innocency against them, and therefore the expense of a just restitution is well bestowed for the retrieving of the blessing

of those that were ready to perish, Job 29:13. "My servant Job, whom you have wronged, shall pray for you," says God, "and then I will be reconciled to you, and not till then." Those understand not themselves that value not the prayers of the poor and despised.

2. They desired that seven of Saul's posterity might be put to death, and David granted their demand.

(1.) They required no silver, nor gold, 2Sa 21:4. Note, Money is no satisfaction for blood, see Nu 35:31-33. It is the ancient law that blood calls for blood (Ge 9:6); and those over-value money and under-value life, that sell the blood of their relations for corruptible things, such as silver and gold. The Gibeonites had now a fair opportunity to get a discharge from their servitude, in compensation for the wrong done them, according to the equity of that law (Ex 21:26), If a man strike out his servant's eye, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. But they did not insist on this; though the covenant was broken on the other side, it should not be broken on theirs. They were Nethinim, given to God and his people Israel, and they would not seem weary of the service.

(2.) They required no lives but of Saul's family. He had done them the wrong, and therefore his children must pay for it. We sue the heirs for the parents' debts. Men may not extend this principle so far as life, De 24:16. The children in an ordinary course of law, shall never be put to death for the parents. But this case of the Gibeonites was altogether extraordinary. God had made himself an immediate party to the cause and no doubt put it into the heart of the Gibeonites to make this demand, for he owned what was done (2Sa 21:14), and his judgments are not subject to the rules which men's judgments must be subject to. Let parents take heed of sin, especially the sin of cruelty and oppression, for their poor children's sake, who may be smarting for it by the just hand of God when they

themselves are in their graves. Guilt and a curse are a bad entail upon a family. It should seem, Saul's posterity trod in his steps, for it is called a bloody house; it was the spirit of the family, and therefore they are justly reckoned with for his sin, as well as for their own.

(3.) They would not impose it upon David to do this execution: Thou shalt not for us kill any man (2Sa 21:4), but we will do it ourselves, we will hang them up unto the Lord (2Sa 21:6), that if there were any hardship in it, they might bear the blame, and not David or his house. By our old law, if a murderer had judgment given against him upon an appeal, the relations that appealed had the executing of him.

(4.) They did not require this out of malice against Saul or his family (had they been revengeful, they would have moved it themselves long before), but out of love to the people of Israel, whom they saw plagued for the injury done to them: "We will hang them up unto the Lord (2Sa 21:6), to satisfy his justice, not to gratify any revenge of our own--for the good of the public, not for our own reputation."

(5.) The nomination of the persons they left to David, who took care to secure Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, that, while he was avenging the breach of one oath, he might not himself break another (2Sa 21:7); but he delivered up two of Saul's sons whom he had by a concubine, and five of his grandsons, whom his daughter Merab bore to Adriel (1Sa 18:19), but his daughter Michal brought up, 2Sa 21:8. Now Saul's treachery was punished, in giving Merab to Adriel, when he had promised her to David, with a design to provoke him. "It is a dangerous matter," says bishop Hall upon this, "to offer injury to any of God's faithful ones; if their meekness have easily remitted it, their God will not pass it over without a severe retribution, though it may be long first."

(6.) The place, time, and manner, of their execution, all added to the solemnity of their being sacrificed to divine justice.

[1.] They were hanged up, as anathemas, under a peculiar mark of God's displeasure; for the law had said, He that is hanged is accursed of God, De 21:23,Ga 3:13. Christ being made a curse for us, and dying to satisfy for our sins and to turn away the wrath of God, became obedient to this ignominious death.

[2.] They were hanged up in Gibeah of Saul (2Sa 21:6), to show that it was for his sin that they died. They were hanged, as it were, before their own door, to expiate the guilt of the house of Saul; and thus God accomplished the ruin of that family, for the blood of the priests, and their families, which, doubtless, now came in remembrance before God, and inquisition was made for it, Ps 9:12. Yet the blood of the Gibeonites only is mentioned, because that was shed in violation of a sacred oath, which, though sworn long before, though obtained by a wile, and the promise made to Canaanites, yet is thus severely reckoned for. The despising of the oath, and breaking of the covenant, will be recompensed on the head of those who thus profane God's sacred name, Eze 17:18,19. And thus God would show that with him rich and poor meet together. Even royal blood must go to atone for the blood of the Gibeonites, who were but the vassals for the congregation.

[3.] They were put to death in the days of harvest (2Sa 21:9), at the beginning of harvest (2Sa 21:10), to show that they were thus sacrificed for the turning sway of that wrath of God which had withheld from them their harvest-mercies for some years past, and to obtain his favour in the present harvest. Thus there is no way of appeasing God's anger but by mortifying and crucifying our lusts and corruptions. In vain do we expect mercy from God, unless we do justice upon our

sins. Those executions must not be complained of as cruel which have become necessary to the public welfare. Better that seven of Saul's bloody house be hanged than that all Israel be famished.

4 And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold
of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in
Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, *that* will I do for you.
5 And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that
devised against us *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in
any of the coasts of Israel,
6 let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang
them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the Lord did
choose. And the king said, I will give *them*.
7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of
Saul, because of the Lord's oath that *was* between them, between
David and Jonathan the son of Saul.
8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom
she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of
Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the
son of Barzillai the Meholathite:
9 and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they
hanged them in the hill before the Lord: and they fell *all* seven
together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first
days, in the beginning of barley harvest.
10 And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for
her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water
dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of
the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

Here we have, I. Saul's sons not only hanged, but hanged in chains, their dead bodies left hanging, and exposed, till the judgment ceased, which their death was to turn away, by the sending of rain upon the land. They died as sacrifices, and thus they were, in a manner, offered up, not consumed all at once by fire, but gradually by the air. They died as anathemas, and by this ignominious usage they were represented as execrable,

because iniquity was laid upon them. When our blessed Saviour was made sin for us he was made a curse for us. But how shall we reconcile this with the law which expressly required that those who were hanged should be buried on the same day? De 21:23.

One of the Jewish rabbin wishes this passage of story expunged, that the name of God might be sanctified, which, he thinks, is dishonoured by his acceptance of that which was a violation of his law: but this was an extraordinary case, and did not fall within that law; nay, the very reason for that law is a reason for this exception. He that is thus left hanged is accursed; therefore ordinary malefactors must not be so abused; but therefore these must, because they were sacrificed, not to the justice of the nation, but for the crime of the nation (no less a crime than the violation of the public faith) and for the deliverance of the nation from no less a judgment than a general famine. Being thus made as the off-scouring of all things, they were made a spectacle to the world (1Co 4:9,13), God appointing, or at least allowing it.

II. Their dead bodies watched by Rizpah, the mother of two of them, 2Sa 21:10. It was a great affliction to her, now in her old age, to see her two sons, who, we may suppose, had been a comfort to her, and were likely to be the support of her declining years, cut off in this dreadful manner. None know what sorrows they are reserved for. She may not see them decently interred, but they shall be decently attended.

She attempts not to violate the sentence passed upon them, that they should hang there till God sent rain; she neither steals nor forces away their dead bodies, though the divine law might have been cited to bear her out; but she patiently submits, pitches a tent of sackcloth near the gibbets, where, with her servants and friends, she protects the dead bodies from birds and beasts of prey. Thus,

1. She indulged her grief, as mourners are too apt to do, to no good purpose. When sorrow, in such cases, is in danger of growing excessive, we should rather study how to divert and pacify it than how to humour and gratify it. Why should we thus harden ourselves in sorrow?

2. She testified her love. Thus she let the world know that her sons died, not for any sin of their own, not as stubborn and rebellious sons, whose eye had despised to obey their mother; if that had been the case, she would have suffered the ravens of the valley to pick it out and the young eagles to eat it, Pr 30:17. But they died for their father's sin and therefore her mind could not be alienated from them by their hard fate. Though there is not remedy, but they must die, yet they shall die pitied and lamented.

III. The solemn interment of their dead bodies, with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, in the burying-place of their family. David was so far from being displeased at what Rizpah had done that he was himself stirred up by it to do honour to the house of Saul, and to these branches of it among the rest; thus it appeared that it was not out of any personal disgust to the family that he delivered them up, and that he had not desired the woeful day, but that he was obliged to do it for the public good.

1. He now bethought himself of removing the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from the place where the men of Jabesh-Gilead had decently, but privately and obscurely, interred them, under a tree, 1Sa 31:12,13. Though the shield of Saul was vilely cast away, as if he had not been anointed with oil, yet let not royal dust be lost in the graves of the common people. Humanity obliges us to respect human bodies, especially of the great and good, in consideration both of what they have been and what they are to be.

2. With them he buried the bodies of those that were hanged; for, when God's anger was turned away, they were no longer to be looked upon as a curse, 2Sa 21:13,14. When water dropped upon them out of heaven (2Sa 21:10), that is, when God sent rain to water the earth (which perhaps was not many days after they were hung up), then they were taken down, for then it appeared that God was entreated for the land. When justice is done on earth vengeance from heaven ceases. Through Christ, who was hanged on a tree and so made a curse for us, to expiate our guilt (though he was himself guiltless), God is pacified, and is entreated for us: and it is said (Ac 13:29) that when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, in token of the completeness of the sacrifice and of God's acceptance of it, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre.

11 And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the
concubine of Saul, had done.
12 And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of
Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen
them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had
hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:
13 and he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of
Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were
hanged.
14 And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the
country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father:
and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that
God was entreated for the land.

Abishai Rescues David from the Giant

15 Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David
went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the
Philistines: and David waxed faint.

16 And Ishbi-benob, which *was* of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear *weighed* three hundred *shekels* of brass in weight, he being girded with a new *sword,* thought to have slain David.

17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succored him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

The Giants Slain by David's Men

18 And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which *was* of the sons of the giant.

We have here the story of some conflicts with the Philistines, which happened, as it should seem, in the latter end of David's reign. Though he had so subdued them that they could not bring any great numbers into the field, yet as long as they had any giants among them to be their champions, they would never be quiet, but took all occasions to disturb the peace of Israel, to challenge them, or make incursions upon them.

I. David himself was engaged with one of the giants. The Philistines began the war yet again, 2Sa 21:15. The enemies of God's Israel are restless in their attempts against them. David, though old, desired not a writ of ease from the public service, but he went down in person to fight against the Philistines (Senescit, non segnescit--He grows old, but not indolent), a sign that he fought not for his own glory (at this age he was loaded with glory, and needed no more), but for the good of his kingdom. But in this engagement we find him,

1. In distress and danger. He thought he could bear the fatigues of war as well as he had done formerly; his will was good, and he hoped he could do as at other times. But he found himself deceived; age had cut his hair, and, after a little toil, he waxed faint. His body could not keep pace with his mind.

The champion of the Philistines was soon aware of his advantage, perceived that David's strength failed him, and, being himself strong and well-armed, he thought to slay David; but God was not in his thoughts, and therefore in that very day they all perished. The enemies of God's people are often very strong, very subtle, and very sure of success, like Isbi-benob, but there is no strength, nor counsel, nor confidence against the Lord.

2. Wonderfully rescued by Abishai, who came seasonably in to his relief, 2Sa 21:17. Herein we must own Abishai's courage and fidelity to his prince (to save whose life he bravely ventured his own), but much more the good providence of God, which brought him in to David's succour in the moment of his extremity.

Such a cause and such a champion, though distressed, shall not be deserted. When Abishai succoured him, gave him a cordial, it may be, to relieve his fainting spirits, or appeared as his second, he (namely, David, so I understand it) smote the Philistine and killed him; for it is said (2Sa 21:22) that David had himself a hand in slaying the giants. David fainted, but he did not flee; though his strength failed him, he bravely kept his ground, and then God sent him this help in the time of need, which, though brought him by his junior and inferior, he thankfully accepted, and, with a little recruiting, gained his point, and came off a conqueror.

Christ, in his agonies, was strengthened by an angel. In spiritual conflicts, even strong saints sometimes wax faint; then Satan attacks them furiously; but those that stand their ground and resist him shall be relieved, and made more than conquerors.

3. David's servants hereupon resolved that he should never expose himself thus any more. They had easily persuaded him not to fight against Absalom (2Sa 18:3), but against the Philistines he would go, till, having had this narrow escape, it was resolved in council, and confirmed with an oath, that the light of Israel (its guide and glory, so David was) should never be put again into such hazard of being blown out. The lives of those who are as valuable to their country as David was ought to be preserved with a double care, both by themselves and others.

II The rest of the giants fell by the hand of David's servants.

1. Saph was slain by Sibbechai, one of David's worthies, 2Sa 21:18,1Ch 11:29.

2. Another, who was brother to Goliath, was slain by Elhanan, who is mentioned 2Sa 23:24.

3. Another, who was of very unusual bulk, who had more fingers and toes than other people (2Sa 21:20), and such an unparalleled insolence that, though he had seen the fall of other giants, yet he defied Israel, was slain by Jonathan the son of Shimea. Shimea had one son named Jonadab (2Sa 13:3), whom I should have taken for the same with this Jonathan, but that the former was noted for subtlety, the latter for bravery. These giants were probably the remains of the sons of Anak, who, though long feared, fell at last. Now observe,

(1.) It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength. David's servants were no bigger nor stronger than other men; yet thus, by divine assistance, they mastered one giant after another. God chooses by the weak things to confound the mighty.

(2.) It is common for those to go down slain to the pit who have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Eze 32:27.

(3.) The most powerful enemies are often reserved for the last conflict. David began his glory with the conquest of one giant, and here concludes it with the conquest of four. Death is a Christian's last enemy, and a son of Anak; but, through him that triumphed for us, we hope to be more than conquerors at last, even over that enemy.

19 And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where
Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew *the brother of*
Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear *was* like a weaver's beam.
20 And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of *great* stature,
that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four
and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.
21 And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimeah the
brother of David slew him.
22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of
David, and by the hand of his servants.

2 Samuel-22

David's Song of Deliverance

1 And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day
that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies,
and out of the hand of Saul:

Observe here, I. That it has often been the lot of God's people to have many enemies, and to be in imminent danger of falling into their hands. David was a man after God's heart, but not after men's heart: many were those that hated him, and sought his ruin; Saul is particularly named, either, 1. As distinguished from his enemies of the heathen nations. Saul hated David,

but David did not hate Saul, and therefore would not reckon him among his enemies; or, rather, 2. As the chief of his enemies, who was more malicious and powerful than any of them. Let not those whom God loves marvel if the world hate them.

II. Those that trust God in the way of duty shall find him a present help to them in their greatest dangers. David did so. God delivered him out of the hand of Saul. He takes special notice of this. Remarkable preservations should be mentioned in our praises with a particular emphasis. He delivered him also out of the hand of all his enemies, one after another, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another; and David, from his own experience, has assured us that, though many are the troubles of the righteous, yet the Lord delivers them out of them all, Ps 34:19. We shall never be delivered from all our enemies till we get to heaven; and to that heavenly kingdom God will preserve all that are his, 2Ti 4:18.

III. Those that have received many signal mercies from God ought to give him the glory of them. Every new mercy in our hand should put a new song into our mouth, even praises to our God. Where there is a grateful heart, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. David spoke, not only to himself, for his own pleasure, not merely to those about him, for their instruction, but to the Lord, for his honour, the words of this song. Then we sing with grace when we sing to the Lord. In distress he cried with his voice (Ps 142:1), therefore with his voice he gave thanks. Thanksgiving to God is the sweetest vocal music.

IV. We ought to be speedy in our thankful returns to God: In the day that God delivered him he sang this song. While the mercy is fresh, and our devout affections are most excited by it, let the thank-offering be brought, that it may be kindled with the fire of those affections.

2 and he said, The Lord *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
3 the God of my rock; in him will I trust:
he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge,
my saviour; thou savest me from violence.
4 I will call on the Lord, *who is* worthy to be praised:
so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
5 When the waves of death compassed me, the
floods of ungodly men made me afraid;

Let us observe, in this song of praise,

I. How David adores God, and gives him the glory of his infinite perfections. There is none like him, nor any to be compared with him (2Sa 22:32): Who is God, save the Lord? All others that are adored as deities are counterfeits and pretenders. None is to be relied on but he. Who is a rock, save our God? They are dead, but the Lord liveth, 2Sa 22:47. They disappoint their worshippers when they most need them. But as for God his way is perfect, 2Sa 22:31. Men begin in kindness, but end not-promise, but perform not; but God will finish his work, and his word is tried, and what we may trust.

II. How he triumphs in the interest he has in this God, and his relation to him, which he lays down as the foundation of all the benefits he has received from him: He is my God; as such he cries to him (2Sa 22:7), and cleaves to him (2Sa 22:22); "and, if my God, then my rock" (2Sa 22:2), that is, "my strength and my power (2Sa 22:33), the rock under which I take shelter (he who is to me as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land), the rock on which I build my hope," 2Sa 22:3. Whatever is my strength and support, it is the God of my rock that makes it so; nay, he is the God of the rock of my salvation (2Sa 22:47): my saving strength is in him and from him. David often hid himself in a rock (1Sa 24:2), but God was his chief hiding-place. "He is my fortress, in which I am safe and think myself so--my high tower, or stronghold, in which I am out of

the reach of real evils--the tower of salvation (2Sa 22:51), which can never be sealed nor battered, nor undermined.

Salvation itself saves me. Am I in distress? he is my deliverer--struck at, shot at? he is my shield--pursued? he is my refuge--oppressed? he is my saviour, that rescues me out of the hand of those that seek my ruin. Nay, he is the horn of my salvation, by which I am strongly protected, and my enemies are strongly pushed." Christ is spoken of as the horn of salvation in the house of David, Lu 1:69. "Am I burdened, and ready to sink? The Lord is my stay (2Sa 22:19), by whom I am supported. Am I in the dark, benighted, at a loss? Thou art my lamp, O Lord! to show me my way, and thou wilt dispel my darkness," 2Sa 22:29. If we sincerely take the Lord for our God, all this, and much more, he will be to us, all we need and can desire.

III. What improvement he makes of his interest in God. If he be mine,

1. In him will I trust (2Sa 22:3), that is, "I will resign myself to his direction, and then depend upon his power, and wisdom, and goodness, to conduct me well."

2. On him I will call (2Sa 22:4), for he is worthy to be praised. What we have found in God that is worthy to be praised should engage us to pray to him and give glory to him.

3. To him will I give thanks (2Sa 22:50), and that publicly. When he was among the heathen he would neither be afraid nor ashamed to own his obligations to the God of Israel.

IV. The full and large account he keeps for himself, and gives to others, of the great and kind things God had done for him. This takes up most of the song. He gives God the glory both of his deliverances and of his successes, showing both the

perils he was delivered from and the power he was advanced to.

1. He magnifies the great salvations God had wrought for him. God sometimes brings his people into very great difficulties and dangers, that he may have the honour of saving them and they the comfort of being saved by him. He owns, Thou hast saved me from violence (2Sa 22:3), from my enemies (2Sa 22:4), from my strong enemy, meaning Saul, who, if God had not succoured him, would have been too hard for him, 2Sa 22:18. Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation, 2Sa 22:36. To magnify the salvation, he observes,

(1.) That the danger was very great and threatening out of which he was delivered. Men rose up against him (2Sa 22:40,49) that hated him (2Sa 22:41), a violent man (2Sa 22:49) namely, Saul, who was malicious in his designs against him and vigorous in his pursuit. This is expressed figuratively, 2Sa 22:5,6. He was surrounded with death on every side, threatened to be overwhelmed, and saw no way of escape. So violently did the waves of death beat upon him, so strongly did the cords and snares of death hold him, that he could not help himself, any more than a man in the grave can. The floods of Belial, the wicked one, and his wicked instruments, made him afraid; he trembled to see not only earth, but death and hell, in arms against him.

(2.) That his deliverance was an answer to prayer, 2Sa 22:7. He has here left us a good example, when we are in distress, to cry unto God with importunity, as children in a fright cry to their parents; and great encouragement to do so, in that he found God ready to answer prayer out of his temple in heaven, where he is continually served and adored.

(3.) That God appeared in a singular and extraordinary manner for him and against his enemies. The expressions are

borrowed from the descent of the divine Majesty upon Mount Sinai, 2Sa 22:8,9, &c. We do not find that in any of David's battles God fought for him with thunder (as in Samuel's time), or with hail (as in Joshua's time), or with the stars in their courses (as in Deborah's time); but these lofty metaphors are used,

[1.] To set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance. God's wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, his justice and holiness, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God's glory to an eye of faith as such miraculous interpositions would have been to an eye of sense.

[2.] To set forth God's displeasure against his enemies, God so espoused his cause that he showed himself an enemy to all his enemies; his anger is set forth by a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth (2Sa 22:9), coals kindled (2Sa 22:13), arrows, 2Sa 22:15. Who knows the power and terror of his wrath?

[3.] To set forth the extraordinary confusion which his enemies were put into, and the consternation that seized them; as if the earth had trembled and the foundations of the world had been discovered, 2Sa 22:8,16. Who can stand before God when he is angry?

[4.] To show how ready God was to help him: He rode upon a cherub and did fly, 2Sa 22:11. God hastened to his succour, and came to him with seasonable relief, though he had seemed at a distance; yet he was a God hiding himself (Isa 14:15), for he made darkness his pavilion (2Sa 22:12), for the amazement of his enemies and the protection of his own people.

(4.) That God manifested his particular favour and kindness to him in these deliverances (2Sa 22:20): He delivered me, because he delighted in me. The deliverance came not from common providence, but covenant-love; he was herein treated as a favourite: so he perceived by the communications of divine grace and comfort to his soul with these deliverances, and the communion he had with God in them. Herein he was a type of Christ, whom God upheld because he delighted in him, Isa 42:1,2.

2. He magnifies the great successes God had crowned him with. He had not only preserved but prospered him. He was blessed,

(1.) With liberty and enlargement. He was brought into a large place (2Sa 22:20), where he had room to thrive, and his steps were enlarged under him, so that he had room to stir (2Sa 22:37), being no longer straitened and confined.

(2.) With military skill, and strength, and swiftness. Though he was bred up to the crook, he was well instructed in the arts of war and qualified for the toils and perils of it.

God, having called him to fight his battles, qualified him for the service. He made him very ingenious (He teacheth my hands to war, 2Sa 22:35. And this ingenuity was as good as strength, for it follows, "so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms," not so much by main force as by dexterity), and very vigorous and valiant. (Thou hast girded me with strength to battle, 2Sa 22:40. He gives God the glory of all his courage and ability for service), and very expeditious: He maketh my feet swift like hinds feet (2Sa 22:34), which is of great advantage both in charging and retreating.

(3.) With victory over his enemies, not only Saul and Absalom, but the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians,

and other neighbouring nations, whom he subdued and made tributaries to Israel. His wonderful victories are here described, 2Sa 22:38-43. They were speedy victories (I turned not again till I had consumed them, 2Sa 22:38) and complete victories. The enemies of Israel were wounded, destroyed, consumed, fell under his feet, trampled upon, and disabled to rise, and their necks lay at his mercy.

They cried both to earth and heaven for help, but in vain. There was none to save, none that durst appear for them. God answered them, not for they were not on his side, nor did they cry unto him till they were brought to the last extremity. Being thus abandoned, they became an easy prey to David's righteous and victorious sword, so that he beat them as small as the dust of the earth, which is scattered by the wind and trodden on by every foot.

(4.) With advancement to honour and power. To this he was anointed before his troubles began, and at length, post tot discrimina rerum--after all his dangers and disasters, he gained his point. God made his way perfect (2Sa 22:33), gave him success in all his undertakings, set him upon his high places (2Sa 22:34), denoting both safety and dignity. God's gentleness, his grace and tender mercy, made him great (2Sa 22:36), gave him great wealth, and great authority, and a name like that of the great men of the earth.

He was kept to be the head of the heathen (2Sa 22:44); his signal preservations evinced that he was designed and reserved for something great--to rule over all Israel, notwithstanding the strivings of the people, and so that those whom he had not known should serve him, many of the nations that lay remote. Thus he was lifted up on high, as high as the throne, above those that rose up against him, 2Sa 22:49.

V. The comfortable reflections he makes upon his own integrity, which God, by those wonderful deliverances, had graciously owned and witnessed to, 2Sa 22:21-25. He means especially his integrity with reference to Saul and Ishbosheth, Absalom and Sheba, and those who either opposed his coming to the crown or endeavoured to dethrone him. They falsely accused him and misrepresented him, but he had the testimony of this conscience for him that he was not an ambitious aspiring man, a false and bloody man, as they called him,--that he had never taken any indirect unlawful courses to secure or raise himself, but in his whole conduct had kept in the way of his duty,--and that in the whole course of his conversation he had, for the main, made religion his business, so that he could take God's favours to him as the rewards of his righteousness, not of debt, but of grace. God had recompensed him, though not for his righteousness, as if that had merited any thing at the hand of God, yet according to his righteousness, which he was well pleased with, and had an eye to. His conscience witnessed for him,

1. That he had made the word of God his rule, and had kept to it, 2Sa 22:23. Wherever he was, God's judgments were before him as his guide; whithersoever he went, he took his religion along with him, and though he was forced to depart from his country, and sent, as it were, to serve other gods, yet as for God's statutes, he did not depart from them, but kept the way of the Lord and walked in it.

2. That he had carefully avoided the bye-paths of sin. He had not wickedly departed from his God. He could not say but that he had taken some false steps, but he had not deserted God, nor forsaken his way. Sins of infirmity he could not acquit himself from, but the grace of God had kept him from presumptuous sins. Though he had sometimes weakly departed from his God. By this it appeared that he was upright before God, or to God (in his sight, and with an eye to him),

that he kept himself from his own iniquity, not only from that particular sin of killing Saul when it was in the power of his hand to do it, but, in general, he was afraid of sin and watchful against it, and made conscience of what he said and did. The matter of Uriah is an exception (1Ki 15:5), like that in Hezekiah's character, 2Ch 32:31.

Note, A careful abstaining from our own iniquity is one of the best evidences of our own integrity; and the testimony of our conscience for us that we have done so will be such a rejoicing as will not only lessen the griefs of an afflicted state, but increase the comforts of a prosperous state. David reflected with more comfort upon his victories over his own iniquity than upon his conquest of Goliath and all the hosts of the uncircumcised Philistines; and the witness of his own heart to his uprightness was sweeter though more silent music than theirs that sang, David has slain his ten thousands. If a great man be a good man, his goodness will be much more his satisfaction than his greatness. Let favour be shown to the upright and his uprightness will sweeten it, will double it.

VI. The comfortable prospects he has of God's further favour. As he looks back, so he looks forward, with pleasure, and assures himself of the kindness God has in store for all the saints, for himself, and also for his seed.

1. For all good people, 2Sa 22:26-28. As God had dealt with him according to his uprightness, so he will with all others. He takes occasion here to lay down the established rules of God's procedure with the children of men:--

(1.) That he will do good to those that are upright in their hearts. As we are found towards God, he will be found towards us.

[1.] God's mercy and grace will be the joy of those that are merciful and gracious. Even the merciful need mercy; and they shall obtain it.

[2.] God's uprightness, his justice and faithfulness, will be the joy of those that are upright, just, and faithful, both towards God and man.

[3.] God's purity and holiness will be the joy of those that are pure and holy, who therefore give thanks at the remembrance thereof. And, if any of these good people be afflicted people, he will save them, either out of their afflictions or by and after them. On the other hand,

(2.) That those who turn aside to crooked ways he will lead forth with the workers of iniquity, as he says in another psalm. With the froward he will wrestle; and those with whom God wrestles are sure to be foiled. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! God will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him and be displeased with those that are displeased with him. As for the haughty, his eyes are upon them, marking them out, as it were, to be brought down; for he resists the proud.

2. For himself. He foresaw that his conquests and kingdom would be yet further enlarged, 2Sa 22:45,46. Even the sons of the stranger, that would hear the report of his victories and the tokens of God's presence with him, would be possessed with a fear of him, would be forced to submit to him, though feignedly, and would be obedient to him. The successes which he had had he looked upon as earnests of more and means of more. Who durst oppose him by whom so many had been overcome? Thus the Son of David goes on conquering and to conquer, Re 6:2. His gospel, which has been victorious, shall be so more and more.

3. For his seed: He showeth mercy to his Messiah (2Sa 22:51), not only to David himself, but to that seed of his for evermore. David was himself anointed of God, not a usurper, but duly called to the government and qualified for it; therefore he doubted not but God would show mercy to him, that mercy which he had promised not to take from him nor from his posterity (2Sa 7:15,16); on that promise he depends, with an eye to Christ, who alone is his seed for evermore, whose throne and kingdom still continue, and will to the end, whereas the seed and lineage of David are long since extinct. See Ps 89:28,29. Thus all his joys and all his hopes terminate, as ours should, in the great Redeemer.

6 the sorrows of hell compassed me about;
the snares of death prevented me.
7 In my distress I called upon the Lord,
and cried to my God:
and he did hear my voice out of his temple,
and my cry *did enter* into his ears.
8 Then the earth shook and trembled;
the foundations of heaven moved
and shook, because he was wroth.
9 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
and fire out of his mouth devoured:
coals were kindled by it.
10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down;
and darkness *was* under his feet.
11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:
and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.
12 And he made darkness pavilions round about him,
dark waters, *and* thick clouds of the skies.
13 Through the brightness before him
were coals of fire kindled.
14 The Lord thundered from heaven, and
the Most High uttered his voice.
15 And he sent out arrows, and scattered them;
lightning, and discomfited them.

16 And the channels of the sea appeared,
the foundations of the world were discovered, at
the rebuking of the Lord,
at the blast of the breath of his nostrils.
17 He sent from above, he took me;
he drew me out of many waters:
18 he delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from them that hated me:
for they were too strong for me.
19 They prevented me in the day of my calamity:
but the Lord was my stay.
20 He brought me forth also into a large place:
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
21 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the Lord,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
23 For all his judgments *were* before me:
and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them.
24 I was also upright before him,
and have kept myself from mine iniquity.
25 Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my
righteousness;
according to my cleanness in his eyesight.
26 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful,
and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.
27 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure;
and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavory.
28 And the afflicted people thou wilt save:
but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, *that* thou mayest bring *them*
down.
29 For thou *art* my lamp, O Lord:
and the Lord will lighten my darkness.
30 For by thee I have run through a troop:
by my God have I leaped over a wall.
31 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect;

the word of the Lord *is* tried:
he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him.
32 For who *is* God, save the Lord?
and who *is* a rock, save our God?
33 God *is* my strength *and* power;
and he maketh my way perfect.
34 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet;*
and setteth me upon my high places.
35 He teacheth my hands to war;
so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
36 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:
and thy gentleness hath made me great.
37 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me;
so that my feet did not slip.
38 I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them;
and turned not again until I had consumed them.
39 And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise:
yea, they are fallen under my feet.
40 For thou hast girded me with strength to battle:
them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me.
41 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies,
that I might destroy them that hate me.
42 They looked, but *there was* none to save;
even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.
43 Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth:
I did stamp them as the mire of the street, *and* did spread them abroad.
44 Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people,
thou hast kept me *to be* head of the heathen:
a people *which* I knew not shall serve me.
45 Strangers shall submit themselves unto me:
as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me.
46 Strangers shall fade away,
and they shall be afraid out of their close places.
47 The Lord liveth; and blessed *be* my rock;

and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation.
48 It *is* God that avengeth me,
and that bringeth down the people under me,
49 and that bringeth me forth from mine enemies:
thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me:
thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
50 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen,
and I will sing praises unto thy name.
51 *He is* the tower of salvation for his king:
and showeth mercy to his anointed,
unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

2 Samuel-23

The Last Words of David

1 Now these *be* the last words of David.
David the son of Jesse said,
and the man *who was* raised up on high,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said,

We have here the last will and testament of king David, or a codicil annexed to it, after he had settled the crown upon Solomon and his treasures upon the temple which was to be built. The last words of great and good men are thought worthy to be in a special manner remarked and remembered. David would have those taken notice of, and added either to his Psalms (as they are here to that in the foregoing chapter) or to the chronicles of his reign. Those words especially in 2Sa 23:5, though recorded before, we may suppose he often repeated for his own consolation, even to his last breath, and therefore they are called his last words. When we find death approaching we should endeavor both to honour God and to edify those about us with our last words. Let those that have

had long experience of God's goodness and the pleasantness of wisdom, when they come to finish their course, leave a record of that experience and bear their testimony to the truth of the promise. We have upon record the last words of Jacob and Moses, and here of David, designed, as those, for a legacy to those that were left behind. We are here told,

I. Whose last will and testament this is. This is related either, or is usual, by the testator himself, or rather, by the historian, 2Sa 23:1. He is described,

1. By the meanness of his original: He was the son of Jesse. It is good for those who are advanced to be corner-stones and top-stones to be reminded, and often to remind themselves, of the rock out of which they were hewn.

2 The height of his elevation: He was raised up on high, as one favoured of God, and designed for something great, raised up as a prince, to sit higher than his neighbours, and as a prophet, to see further; for,

(1.) He was the anointed of the God of Jacob, and so was serviceable to the people of God in their civil interests, the protection of their country and the administration of justice among them.

(2.) He was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and so was serviceable to them in their religious exercises. He penned the psalms, set the tunes, appointed both the singers and the instruments of music, by which the devotions of good people were much excited and enlarged.

Note, The singing of psalms is a sweet ordinance, very agreeable to those that delight in praising God. It is reckoned among the honours to which David was raised up that he was a psalmist: in that he was as truly great as in his being the

anointed of the God of Jacob. Note, It is true preferment to be serviceable to the church in acts of devotion and instrumental to promote the blessed work of prayer and praise. Observe, Was David a prince? He was so for Jacob. Was he a psalmist? He was so for Israel. Note, the dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and therefore, as every man has received the gift, so let him minister the same.

II. What the purport of it is. It is an account of his communion with God. Observe,

1. What God said to him both for his direction and for his encouragement as a king, and to be in like manner, of use to his successors. Pious persons take a pleasure in calling to mind what they have heard from God, in recollecting his word, and revolving it in their minds. Thus what God spoke once David heard twice, yea often. See here,

(1.) Who spoke: The Spirit of the Lord, the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel, which some think is an intimation of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead--the Father the God of Israel, the Son the Rock of Israel, and the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets, and particularly by David, and whose word was not only in his heart, but in his tongue for the benefit of others. David here avows his divine inspiration, that in his psalms, and in this composition, The Spirit of God spoke by him. He, and other holy men, spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This puts an honour upon the book of Psalms, and recommends them to our use in our devotions, that they are words which the Holy Ghost teaches.

(2.) What was spoken. Here seems to be a distinction made between what the Spirit of God spoke by David, which includes all his psalms, and what the Rock of Israel spoke to David, which concerned himself and his family. Let ministers

observe that those by whom God speaks to others are concerned to hear and heed what he speaks to themselves. Those whose office it is to teach others their duty must be sure to learn and do their own. Now that which is here said (2Sa 23:3,4) may be considered,

[1.] With application to David, and his royal family. And so here is, First, The duty of magistrates enjoined them. When a king was spoken to from God he was not to be complimented with the height of his dignity and the extent of his power, but to be told his duty. "Must is for the king," we say. Here is a must for the king: He must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and so must all inferior magistrates in their places. Let rulers remember that they rule over men--not over beasts which they may enslave and abuse at pleasure, but over reasonable creatures and of the same rank with themselves. They rule over men that have their follies and infirmities, and therefore must be borne with. They rule over men, but under God, and for him; and therefore,

1. They must be just, both to those over whom they rule, in allowing them their rights and properties, and between those over whom they rule, using their power to right the injured against the injurious; see De 1:16,17. It is not enough that they do no wrong, but they must not suffer wrong to be done.

2. They must rule in the fear of God, that is, they must themselves be possessed with a fear of God, by which they will be effectually restrained from all acts of injustice and oppression. Nehemiah was so (Ne 5:15, So did not I, because of the fear of God), and Joseph, Ge 43:18. They must also endeavor to promote the fear of God (that is, the practice of religion) among those over whom they rule. The magistrate is to be the keeper of both tables, and to protect both godliness and honesty. Secondly, Prosperity promised them if they do,

this duty. He that rules in the fear of God shall be as the light of the morning, 2Sa 23:4.

Light is sweet and pleasant, and he that does his duty shall have the comfort of it; his rejoicing will be the testimony of his conscience. Light is bright, and a good prince is illustrious; his justice and piety will be his honour. Light is a blessing, nor are there any greater and more extensive blessings to the public than princes that rule in the fear of God. As the light of the morning, which is most welcome after the darkness of the night (so was David's government after Saul's, Ps 75:3), which is increasing, shines more and more to the perfect day, such is the growing lustre of a good government. It is likewise compared to the tender grass, which the earth produces for the service of man; it brings with it a harvest of blessings. See Ps 72:6,16, which were also some of the last words of David, and seem to refer to those recorded here.

[2.] With application to Christ, the Son of David, and then it must all be taken as a prophecy, and the original will bear it: There shall be a rule among men, or over men, that shall be just, and shall rule in the fear of God, that is, shall order the affairs of religion and divine worship according to his Father's will; and he shall be as the light to the morning, &c., for he is the light of the world, and as the tender grass, for he is the branch of the Lord, and the fruit of the earth, Isa 11:1-5,32:1,2,Ps 72:2. God, by the Spirit, gave David the foresight of this, to comfort him under the many calamities of his family and the melancholy prospects he had of the degeneracy of his seed.

2. What comfortable use he made of this which God spoke to him, and what were his devout meditations on it, by way of reply, 2Sa 23:5. It is not unlike his meditation on occasion of such a message, 2Sa 7:18-29, &c. That which goes before the

Rock of Israel spoke to him; this the Spirit of God spoke by him, and it is a most excellent confession of his faith and hope in the everlasting covenant. Here is,

(1.) Trouble supposed: Although my house be not so with God, and although he make it not to grow. David's family was not so with God as is described (2Sa 23:3,4), and as he could wish, not so good, not so happy; it had not been so while he lived; he foresaw it would not be so when he was gone, that his house would be neither so pious nor so prosperous as one might have expected the offspring of such a father to be.

[1.] Not so with God. Note, We and ours are that really which we are with God. This was what David's heart was upon concerning his children, that they might be right with God, faithful to him and zealous for him. But the children of godly parents are often neither so holy nor so happy as might be expected. We must be made to know that it is corruption, not grace, that runs in the blood, that the race is not to the swift, but that God gives his Spirit as a free-agent.

[2.] Not made to grow, in number, in power; it is God that makes families to grow or not to grow, Ps 107:41. Good men have often the melancholy prospect of a declining family. David's house was typical of the church of Christ, which is his house, Heb 3:3. Suppose this be not so with God as we could wish, suppose it be diminished, distressed, disgraced, and weakened, by errors and corruptions, yea, almost extinct, yet God has made a covenant with the church's head, the Son of David, that he will preserve to him a seed, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his house. This our Saviour comforted himself with in his sufferings, that the covenant with him stood firm, Isa 53:10-12.

(2.) Comfort ensured: Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. Whatever trouble a child of God may

have the prospect of, still he has some comfort or other to balance it with (2Co 4:8,9), and there is none like this of the Psalmist, which may be understood,

[1.] Of the covenant of royalty (in the type) which God made with David and his seed, touching the kingdom, Ps 132:11,12. But,

[2.] It must look further, to the covenant of grace made with all believers, that God will be, in Christ, to them a God, which was signified by the covenant of royalty, and therefore the promises of the covenant are called the sure mercies of David, Isa 55:3. It is this only that is the everlasting covenant, and it cannot be imagined that David, who, in so many of his psalms, speaks so clearly concerning Christ and the grace of the gospel, should forget it in his last words. God has made a covenant of grace with us in Jesus Christ, and we are here told,

First, That it is an everlasting covenant, from everlasting in the contrivance and counsel of it, and to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it.

Secondly, That it is ordered, well ordered in all things, admirably well, to advance the glory of God and the honour of the Mediator, together with the holiness and comfort of believers. It is herein well ordered, that whatever is required in the covenant is promised, and that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, and that it puts our salvation, not in our own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator.

Thirdly, That it is sure, and therefore sure because well ordered; the general offer of it is sure; the promised mercies are sure on the performance of the conditions. The particular application of it to true believers is sure; it is sure to all the seed.

Fourthly, That it is all our salvation. Nothing but this will save us, and this is sufficient: it is this only upon which our salvation depends.

Fifthly, That therefore it must be all our desire. Let me have an interest in this covenant and the promises of it, and I have enough, I desire no more.

3. Here is the doom of the sons of Belial read, 2Sa 23:6,7.

(1.) They shall be thrust away as thorns--rejected, abandoned. They are like thorns, not to be touched with hands, so passionate and furious that they cannot be managed or dealt with by a wise and faithful reproof, but must be restrained by law and the sword of justice (Ps 32:9); and therefore, like thorns,

(2.) They shall, at length, be utterly burnt with fire in the same place, Heb 6:8. Now this is intended,

[1.] As a direction to magistrates to use their power for the punishing and suppressing of wickedness. Let them thrust away the sons of Belial; see Ps 101:8. Or,

[2.] As a caution to magistrates, and particularly to David's sons and successors, to see that they be not themselves sons of Belial (as too many of them were), for then neither the dignity of their place nor their relation to David would secure them from being thrust away by the righteous judgments of God. Though men could not deal with them, God would. Or,

[3.] As a prediction of the ruin of all the implacable enemies of Christ's kingdom. There are enemies without, that openly oppose it and fight against it, and enemies within, that secretly betray it and are false to it; both are sons of Belial, children of

the wicked one, of the serpent's seed; both are as thorns, grievous and vexatious: but both shall be so thrust away as that Christ will set up his kingdom in despite of their enmity, will go through them (Isa 27:4), and will, in due time, bless his church with such peace that there shall be no pricking brier nor grieving thorn. And those that will not repent, to give glory to God, shall, in the judgment-day (to which the Chaldee paraphrast refers this), be burnt with unquenchable fire. See Lu 19:27.

2 The Spirit of the Lord spake by me,
and his word *was* in my tongue.
3 The God of Israel said,
the Rock of Israel spake to me,
He that ruleth over men *must be* just,
ruling in the fear of God.
4 And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth,
even a morning without clouds;
as the tender grass *springing* out of the earth
by clear shining after rain.
5 Although my house *be* not so with God;
yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all *things,* and sure:
for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire,
although he make *it* not to grow.
6 But *the sons* of Belial *shall be* all of them as thorns thrust away,
because they cannot be taken with hands:
7 but the man *that* shall touch them
must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear;
and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the *same* place.

David's Mighty Men

8 These *be* the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same *was* Adino the Eznite: *he lifted up his spear* against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.

9 And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines *that* were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away:

10 he arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.

11 And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines.

12 But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory.

13 And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.

14 And David *was* then in a hold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then *in* Bethlehem.

I The catalogue which the historian has here left upon record of the great soldiers that were in David's time is intended,

1. For the honour of David, who trained them up in the arts of exercises of war, and set them an example of conduct and courage. It is the reputation as well as the advantage of a prince to be attended and served by such brave men as are here described.

2. For the honour of those worthies themselves, who were instrumental to bring David to the crown, settle and protect him in the throne, and enlarge his conquests. Note, Those that in public stations venture themselves, and lay out themselves, to serve the interests of their country, are worthy of double honour, both to be respected by those of their own age and to be remembered by posterity.

3. To excite those that come after to a generous emulation.

4. To show how much religion contributes to the inspiring of men with true courage. David, both by his psalms and by his offerings for the service of the temple, greatly promoted piety among the grandees of the kingdom (1Ch 29:6), and, when they became famous for piety, they became famous for bravery.

II. Now these mighty men are here divided into three ranks:--

1 The first three, who had done the greatest exploits and thereby gained the greatest reputation--Adino (2Sa 23:8), Eleazar (2Sa 23:9,10), and Shammah, 2Sa 23:11,12. I do not remember that we read of any of these, or of their actions, any where in all the story of David but here and in the parallel place, 1Ch 11:11-47. Many great and remarkable events are passed by in the annals, which relate rather the blemishes than the glories of David's reign, especially after his sin in the matter Uriah; so that we may conclude his reign to have been really more illustrious than it has appeared to us while reading the records of it. The exploits of this brave triumvirate are here recorded. They signalized themselves in the wars of Israel against their enemies, especially the Philistines.

(1.) Adino slew 800 at once with his spear.

(2.) Eleazar defied the Philistines, as they by Goliath, had defied Israel, but with better success and greater bravery; for when the men of Israel had gone away, he not only kept his ground, but arose, and smote the Philistines, on whom God struck a terror equal to the courage with which this great hero was inspired. His hand was weary, and yet it clave to his sword; as long as he had any strength remaining he held his weapon and followed his blow.

Thus, in the service of God, we should keep up the willingness and resolution of the spirit, notwithstanding the weakness and weariness of the flesh--faint, yet pursuing (Jdg 8:4), the hand weary, yet not quitting the sword. Now that Eleazar had beaten the enemy, the men of Israel, who had gone away from the battle (2Sa 23:9), returned to spoil, 2Sa 23:10. It is common for those who quit the field, when any thing is to be done to hasten to it when any thing is to be gotten.

(3.) Shammah met with a party of the enemy, that were foraging, and routed them, 2Sa 23:11,12. But observe, both concerning this exploit and the former, it is here said, The Lord wrought a great victory. Note, How great soever the bravery of the instruments is, the praise of the achievement must be given to God. These fought the battles, but God wrought the victory. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, nor in any of his military operations, but let him that glories glory in the Lord.

2 The next three were distinguished from, and dignified above, the thirty, but attained not to the first three, 2Sa 23:23. All great men are not of the same size. Many a bright and benign star there is which is not of the first magnitude, and many a good ship not of the first rate. Of this second triumvirate two only are named, Abishai and Benaiah, whom we have often met with in the story of David, and who seem to have been not inferior in serviceableness, though they were in dignity, to the first three. Here is,

(1.) A brave action of these three in conjunction. They attended David in his troubles, when he absconded, in the cave of Adullam (2Sa 23:13), suffered with him, and therefore were afterwards preferred by him. When David and his brave men who attended him, who had acted so vigorously against the Philistines, were, by the iniquity of the times, in Saul's reign, driven to shelter themselves from his rage in caves and

strong holds, no marvel that the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim, and put a garrison even in Bethlehem itself, 2Sa 23:13,14. If the church's guides are so misled as to persecute some of her best friends and champions, the common enemy will, no doubt, get advantage by it. If David had had his liberty, Bethlehem would not have been now in the Philistines' hands. But, being so, we are here told,

[1.] How earnestly David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem. Some make it a public-spirited wish, and that he meant, "O that we could drive the garrison of the Philistines out of Bethlehem, and make that beloved city of mine our own again!" the well being put for the city, as the river often signifies the country it passes through. But if he meant so, those about him did not understand him; therefore it seems rather to be an instance of his weakness. It was harvest-time; the weather was hot; he was thirsty; perhaps good water was scarce, and therefore he earnestly wished, "O that I could but have one draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" With the water of that well he had often refreshed himself when he was a youth, and nothing now will serve him but that, though it is almost impossible to come at it.

He strangely indulged a humour which he could give no reason for. Other water might quench his thirst as well, but he had a fancy for that above any. It is folly to entertain such fancies and greater folly to insist upon the gratification of them. We ought to check our appetites when they go out inordinately towards those things that really are more pleasant and grateful than other things (Be not desirous of dainties), much more when they are thus set upon such things as only please a humour.

[2.] How bravely his three mighty men, Abishai, Benaiah, and another not named, ventured through the camp of the Philistines, upon the very mouth of danger, and fetched water

from the well of Bethlehem, without David's knowledge, 2Sa 23:16. When he wished for it he was far from desiring that any of his men should venture their lives for it; but those three did, to show,

First, How much they valued their prince, and with what pleasure they could run the greatest hardships in his service. David, though anointed king, was as yet an exile, a poor prince that had no external advantages to recommend him to the affection and esteem of his attendants, nor was he in any capacity to prefer or reward them; yet those three were thus zealous for his satisfaction, firmly believing the time of recompence would come.

Let us be willing to venture in the cause of Christ, even when it is a suffering cause, as those who are assured that it will prevail and that we shall not lose by it at last. Were they so forward to expose themselves upon the least hint of their prince's mind and so ambitious to please him? And shall not we covet to approve ourselves to our Lord Jesus by a ready compliance with every intimation of his will given us by his word, Spirit and providence?

Secondly, How little they feared the Philistines. They were glad of an occasion to defy them. Whether they broke through the host clandestinely, and with such art that the Philistines did not discover them, or openly, and with such terror in their looks that the Philistines durst not oppose them, is not certain; it should seem, they forced their way, sword in hand. But see,

[3.] How self-denyingly David, when he had this far-fetched dear-bought water, poured it out before the Lord, 2Sa 23:17.

First, Thus he would show the tender regard he had to the lives of his soldiers, and how far he was from being prodigal of

their blood, Ps 72:14. In God's sight the death of his saints is precious.

Secondly, Thus he would testify his sorrow for speaking that foolish word which occasioned those men to put their lives in their hands. Great men should take heed what they say, lest any bad use be made of it by those about them.

Thirdly, Thus he would prevent the like rashness in any of his men for the future.

Fourthly, Thus he would cross his own foolish fancy, and punish himself for entertaining and indulging it, and show that he had sober thoughts to correct his rash ones, and knew how to deny himself even in that which he was most fond of. Such generous mortifications become the wise, the great, and the good.

Fifthly, Thus he would honour God and give glory to him. The water purchased at this rate he thought too precious for his own drinking and fit only to be poured out to God as a drink-offering. If it was the blood of these men, it was God's due, for the blood was always his.

Sixthly, Bishop Patrick speaks of some who think that David hereby showed that it was not material water he longed for, but the Messiah, who had the water of life, who, he knew, should be born at Bethlehem, which the Philistines therefore should not be able to destroy.

Seventhly, Did David look upon that water as very precious which was got at the hazard of these men's blood, and shall not we much more value those benefits for the purchasing of which our blessed Saviour shed his blood? Let us not undervalue the blood of the covenant, as those do that undervalue the blessings of the covenant.

(2.) The brave actions of two of them on other occasions. Abishai slew 300 men at once, 2Sa 23:18,19. Benaiah did many great things.

[1.] He slew two Moabites that were lion-like men, so bold and strong, so fierce and furious.

[2.] He slew an Egyptian, on what occasion it is not said; he was well armed but Benaiah attacked him with no other weapon than a walking staff, dexterously wrested his spear out of his hand, and slew him with it, 2Sa 23:21. For these and similar exploits David preferred him to be captain of the life-guard or standing forces, 2Sa 23:23.

3. Inferior to the second three, but of great note, were the thirty-one here mentioned by name, 2Sa 23:24-39, &c. Asahel is the first, who was slain by Abner in the beginning of David's reign, but lost not his place in this catalogue. Elhanan is the next, brother to Eleazar, one of the first three, 2Sa 23:9. The surnames here given them are taken, as it should seem, from the places of their birth or habitation, as many surnames with us originally were. From all parts of the nation, the most wise and valiant were picked up to serve the king. Several of those who are named we find captains of the twelve courses which David appointed, one for each month in the year, 1Ch 27:1-5.

Those that did worthily were preferred according to their merits. One of them was the son of Ahithophel (2Sa 23:34), the son famous in the camp as the father at the council-board. But to find Uriah the Hittite bringing up the rear of these worthies, as it revives the remembrance of David's sin, so it aggravates it, that a man who deserved so well of his king and

country should be so ill treated. Joab is not mentioned among all these, either,

(1.) to be mentioned; the first, of the first three sat chief among the captains, but Joab was over them as general. Or,

(2.) Because he was so bad that he did not deserve to be mentioned; for though he was confessedly a great soldier, and one that had so much religion in him as to dedicate of his spoils to the house of God (1Ch 21:28), yet he lost as much honour by slaying two of David's friends as ever he got by slaying his enemies.

Christ, the Son of David, has his worthies too, who like David's, are influenced by his example, fight his battles against the spiritual enemies of his kingdom, and in his strength are more than conquerors. Christ's apostles were his immediate attendants, did and suffered great things for him, and at length came to reign with him. They are mentioned with honour in the New Testament, as these in the Old, especially, Re 21:14. Nay, all the good soldiers of Jesus Christ have their names better preserved than even these worthies have; for they are written in heaven. This honour have all his saints.

15 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!

16 And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that *was* by the gate, and took *it*, and brought *it* to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord.

17 And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: *is not this* the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

18 And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, *and* slew *them*, and had the name among three.

19 Was he not most honorable of three? therefore he was their
captain: howbeit he attained not unto the *first* three.
20 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of
Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of
Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in
time of snow.
21 And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear
in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the
spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.
22 These *things* did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name
among three mighty men.
23 He was more honorable than the thirty, but he attained not to the
first three. And David set him over his guard.
24 Asahel the brother of Joab *was* one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of
Dodo of Bethlehem,
25 Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite,
26 Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite,
27 Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite,
28 Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite,
29 Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out
of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin,
30 Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash,
31 Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite,
32 Eliahba the Shaalbonite, of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan,
33 Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite,
34 Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the
son of Ahithophel the Gilonite,
35 Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite,
36 Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite,
37 Zelek the Ammonite, Nahari the Beerothite, armor-bearer to Joab
the son of Zeruiah,
38 Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite,
39 Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

2 Samuel-24

David Numbers Israel and Judah

1 And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he
moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.
2 For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which *was* with
him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to
Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the
number of the people.
3 And Joab said unto the king, Now the Lord thy God add unto the
people, how many soever they be, a hundredfold, and that the eyes
of my lord the king may see *it:* but why doth my lord the king delight
in this thing?
4 Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against
the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went
out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel.

Here we have,

I The orders which David gave to Joab to number the people of Israel and Judah, 2Sa 24:1,2. Two things here seem strange:--

1 The sinfulness of this. What harm was there in it? Did not Moses twice number the people without any crime? Does not political arithmetic come in among the other policies of a prince? Should not the shepherd know the number of his sheep? Does not the Son of David know all his own by name? Might not he make good use of this calculation? What evil has he done, if he do this? Answer, It is certain that it was a sin, and a great sin; but where the evil of it lay is not so certain.

(1.) Some think the fault was that he numbered those that were under twenty years old if they were but of stature and strength able to bear arms, and that this was the reason why this account was not enrolled, because it was illegal, 1Ch 27:23,24.

(2.) Others think the fault was that he did not require the half-shekel, which was to be paid for the service of the sanctuary whenever the people were numbered, as a ransom for their souls, Ex 30:12.

(3.) Others think that he did it with a design to impose a tribute upon them for himself, to be put into his treasury, and this by way of poll, so that when he knew their numbers he could tell what it would amount to. But nothing of this appears, nor was David ever a raiser of taxes.

(4.) This was the fault, that he had no orders from God to do it, nor was there any occasion for the doing of it. It was a needless trouble both to himself and to his people.

(5.) Some think that it was an affront to the ancient promise which God made to Abraham, that his seed should be innumerable as the dust of the earth; it savoured of distrust of that promise, or a design to show that it was not fulfilled in the letter of it. He would number those of whom God had said that they could not be numbered. Those know not what they do that go about to disprove the word of God.

(6.) That which was the worst thing in numbering the people was that David did it in the pride of his heart, which was Hezekiah's sin in showing his treasures to the ambassadors.

[1.] It was a proud conceit of his own greatness in having the command of so numerous a people, as if their increase, which

was to be ascribed purely to the blessing of God, had been owing to any conduct of his own.

[2.] It was a proud confidence in his own strength. By publishing among the nations the number of his people, he thought to appear the more formidable, and doubted not that, if he should have any war, he should overpower his enemies with the multitude of his forces, trusting in God only. God judges not of sin as we do. What appears to us harmless, or at least but a small offence, may be a great sin in the eye of God, who sees men's principles, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth.

2 The spring from which it is here said to arise is yet more strange, 2Sa 24:1. It is not strange that the anger of the Lord should be kindled against Israel. There was cause enough for it. They were unthankful for the blessings of David's government, and strangely drawn in to take part with Absalom first and afterwards with Sheba. We have reason to think that their peace and plenty made them secure and sensual, and that God was therefore displeased with them. But that, in this displeasure, he should move David to number the people is very strange.

We are sure that God is not the author of sin; he tempts no man: we are told (1Ch 21:1) that Satan provoked David to number Israel. Satan, as an enemy, suggested it for a sin, as he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. God, as righteous Judge, permitted it, with a design, from this sin of David, to take an occasion to punish Israel for other sins, for which he might justly have punished them without this. But, as before he brought a famine upon them for the sin of Saul, so now a pestilence for the sin of David, that princes may from these instances learn, when the judgments of God are abroad, to suspect that their sins are the ground of the controversy, and

may therefore repent and reform themselves, which should have a great influence upon national repentance and reformation, and that people may learn to pray for those in authority, that God would keep them from sin, because, if they sin, the kingdom smarts.

II The opposition which Joab made to these orders. Even he was aware of David's folly and vain-glory in this design. He observed that David gave no reason for it, only, Number the people, that I may know the number of the people; and therefore he endeavored to divert his pride, and in a much more respectful manner than he had before endeavoured to divert his passion upon the death of Absalom; then he spoke rudely and insolently (2Sa 19:5-7), but now as became him: Now the Lord thy God add unto the people a hundred fold, 2Sa 24:3. There was no occasion to tax them, nor to enlist them, nor to make any distribution of them. They were all easy and happy; and Joab wished both that their number might increase and that the king, though old, might live to see their increase, and have the satisfaction of it.

"But why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? What need is there of doing it?" Pauperis est numerare pecus--Leave it to the poor to count their flocks. Especially why should David, who speaks so much of delighting in God and the exercises of devotion, and who, being old, one would think, should have put away childish things, take a pleasure (so he calls it modestly, but he means taking pride) in a thing of this nature? Note, Many things, not in themselves sinful, turn into sin to us by our inordinately delighting in them. Joab was aware of David's vanity herein, but he himself was not. It would be good for us to have a friend that would faithfully admonish us when we say or do any thing proud or vain-glorious, for we often do so and are not ourselves aware of it.

III. The orders executed notwithstanding. The king's word prevailed, 2Sa 24:4. He would have it done; Joab must not gainsay it, lest he be thought to grudge his time and pains in the king's service. It is an unhappiness to great men to have those about them that will aid them and serve them in that which is evil. Joab, according to order, applied himself with some reluctancy to this unpleasing task, and took the captains of the host to help him. They began in the most distant places, in the east first, on the other side Jordan (2Sa 24:5), then they went towards Dan in the north (2Sa 24:6), so to Tyre on the east, and thence to Beer-sheba in the south, 2Sa 24:7.

Above nine months were spent in taking this account, a great deal of trouble and amazement were occasioned by it in the country (2Sa 24:8), and the sum total was, at length, brought to the king at Jerusalem, 2Sa 24:9. Whether the numbers answered David's expectation or no we are not told, nor whether the account fed his pride or mortified it. The people were very many, but, it may be, not so many as he thought they were. They had not increased in Canaan as they had in Egypt, nor were much more than double to what they were when they came into Canaan under Joshua, about 400 years before; yet it is an evidence that Canaan was a very fruitful land that so many thousands were maintained within so narrow a compass.

5 And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Aroer, on the right
side of the city that *lieth* in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward
Jazer:
6 then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and
they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon,
7 and came to the stronghold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the
Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of
Judah, *even* to Beer-sheba.
8 So when they had gone through all the land, they came to
Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.

9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah *were* five hundred thousand men.

10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

11 For when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying,

We have here David repenting of the sin and yet punished for it, God repenting of the judgment and David thereby made more penitent.

I. Here is David's penitent reflection upon and confession of his sin in numbering the people. While the thing was in doing, during all those nine months, we do not find that David was sensible of his sin, for had he been so he would have countermanded the orders he had given; but, when the account was finished and laid before him, that very night his conscience was awakened, and he felt the pain of it just then when he promised himself the pleasure of it. When he was about to feast on the satisfaction of the number of his people, it was turned into the gall of asps within him; sense of the sin cast a damp upon the joy, 2Sa 24:10.

1. He was convinced of his sin: His heart smote him before the prophet came to him (I think it should not be read for, 2Sa 24:11, but and, when David was up, so it is in the original), his conscience showed him the evil of what he had done; now that appeared sin, and exceedingly sinful, which before he saw no harm in. He reflected upon it with great regret and his heart reproached him for it.

Note, It is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it; it is a good sign of a

principle of grace in the heart, and a good step towards repentance and reformation.

2. He confessed it to God and begged earnestly for the forgiveness of it.

(1.) He owned that he had sinned, sinned greatly, though to others it might seem no sin at all, or a very little one. True penitents, whose consciences are tender and well informed, see that evil in sin which others do not see.

(2.) He owned that he had done foolishly, very foolishly, because he had done it in the pride of his heart; and it was folly for him to be proud of the numbers of his people, when they were God's people, not his, and, as many as they were, God could soon make them fewer.

(3.) He cried to God for pardon: I beseech thee, O Lord! take away the iniquity of thy servant. If we confess our sins, we may pray in faith that God will forgive them, and take away, by pardoning mercy, that iniquity which we cast away by sincere repentance.

II The just and necessary correction which he suffered for this sin. David had been full of tossings to and fro all night under the sense of his sin, having no rest in his bones because of it, and he arose in the morning expecting to hear of God's displeasure against him for what he had done, or designing to speak with Gad his seer concerning it. Gad is called his seer because he had him always at hand to advise with in the things of God, and made use of him as his confessor and counsellor; but God prevented him, and directed the prophet Gad what to say to him (2Sa 24:11), and,

1. Three things are taken for granted,

(1.) That David must be corrected for his fault. It is too great a crime, and reflects too much dishonour upon God, to go unpunished, even in David himself. Of the seven things that God hates, pride is the first, Pr 6:17. Note, Those who truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned are yet often made to smart for them in this world.

(2.) The punishment must answer to the sin. He was proud of the judgment he must be chastised with for this sin must be such as will make them fewer. Note, What we make the matter of our pride it is just with God to take from us, or embitter to us, and, some way or other, to make the matter of our punishment.

(3.) It must be such a punishment as the people must have a large share in, for God's anger was kindled against Israel, 2Sa 24:1. Though it was David's sin that immediately opened the sluice, the sins of the people all contributed to the deluge.

2. As to the punishment that must be inflicted,

(1.) David is told to choose what rod he will be beaten with, 2Sa 24:12,13. His heavenly Father must correct him, but, to show that he does not do it willingly, he gives David leave to make choice whether it shall be by war, famine, or pestilence, three sore judgments, which greatly weaken and diminish a people. God, by putting him thus to his choice, designed,

[1.] To humble him the more for his sin, which we would see to be exceedingly sinful when he came to consider each of these judgments as exceedingly dreadful. Or,

[2.] To upbraid him with the proud conceit he had of his own sovereignty over Israel. He that is so great a prince begins to think he may have what he will. "Come then," says God,

"which wilt thou have of these three things?" Compare Jer 34:17, I proclaim a liberty for you, but it is such a liberty as this of David's to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and Jer 15:2, Such as are for death to death. Or

[3.] To give him some encouragement under the correction, letting him know that God did not cast him out of communion with himself, but that still his secret was with him, and in afflicting him he considered his frame and what he could best bear. Or

[4.] That he might the more patiently bear the rod when it was a rod of his own choosing. The prophet bids him advise with himself, and then tell him what answer he should return to him that sent him. Note, Ministers are sent of God to us, and they must give an account of the success of their embassy. It concerns us therefore to consider what answer they shall return from us, that they may give up their account of us with joy.

(2.) He objects only against the judgments of the sword, and, for the other two, he refers the matter to God, but intimates his choice of the pestilence rather (2Sa 24:14): I am in a great strait; and well he might be when fear, and the pit, and the snare, were before him, and if he escape one, he must inevitably fall into the other, jer 48:43,44. Note, Sin brings men into straits; wise and good men often distress themselves by their own folly.

[1.] He begs that he may not fall into the hand of man. "Whatever comes, let us not flee three months before our enemies;" this would sully all the glory of David's triumphs and give occasion to the enemies of God and Israel to behave themselves proudly. See De 32:26,27. "Their tender mercies are cruel; and in three months they will do that damage to the nation which many years will not repair." But,

[2.] He casts himself upon God: Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great. Men are God's hand (so they are called, Ps 17:14, the sword of his sending), yet there are some judgments which come more immediately from his hand than others, as famine and pestilence, and David refers it to God which of these shall be the scourge, and God chooses the shortest, that he may the sooner testify his being reconciled. But some think that David, by these words, intimates his choice of the pestilence.

The land had not yet recovered the famine under which it smarted three years upon the Gibeonites' account, and therefore, "Let us not be corrected with that rod, for that also will be the triumph of our neighbours," hence we read of the reproach of famine (Eze 36:30); "but if Israel must be diminished, let it be by the pestilence, for that is falling into the hands of the Lord," who usually inflicted that judgment by the hand of his own immediate servants, the angels, as in the death of the first-born of Egypt. That is a judgment to which David himself, and his own family, lie as open as the meanest subject, but not so either to famine or sword, and therefore David, tenderly conscious of his guilt, chooses that. Sword and famine will devour one as well as another, but, it may be thought, the destroying angel will draw his sword against those who are known to God to be most guilty. This will be of the shortest continuance, and he dreads the thought of lying long under the tokens of God's displeasure. It is a dreadful thing, the apostle says, to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31), a fearful thing indeed for sinners that have, by their impenitency, shut themselves out from all hope of his mercy. But David, a penitent, dares cast himself into God's hand, knowing he shall find that his mercies are great. Good men, even when they are under God's frowns, yet will entertain no other than good thoughts of him. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

(3.) A pestilence is accordingly sent (2Sa 24:15), which, for the extent of it, spread from Dan to Beer-sheba, from one end of the kingdom to the other, which showed it to come immediately from God's hand and not from any natural causes. David has his choice; he suffers by miracle, and not by ordinary means. For the continuance of it, it lasted from morning (this very morning on which it was put to David's choice) to the time appointed that is, to the third day (so Mr. Poole), or only to the evening of the first day, the time appointed for the evening sacrifice, so bishop Patrick and others, who reckon that the pestilence lasted but nine hours, and that, in compassion to David, God shortened the time he had first mentioned. The execution the pestilence did was very severe.

There died 70,000 men, that were all well, and sick, and dead, in a few hours. What a great cry, may we suppose, was there now throughout all the land of Israel, as there was in Egypt when the first-born were slain! but that was at midnight, this in the daytime, Ps 91:6. See the power of the angels, when God gives them commission, either to save or to destroy. Joab is nine months in passing with his pen, the angel but nine hours in passing with his sword, through all the coasts and corners of the land of Israel. See how easily God can bring down the proudest sinners, and how much we owe daily to the divine patience. David's adultery is punished, for the present, only with the death of one infant, his pride with the death of all those thousands, so much does God hate pride. The number slain amounted to almost half a decimation, 70,000 being about one in twenty. Now, we may suppose, David's flesh trembled for fear of God and he was afraid of his judgments, Ps 119:120.

III. God's gracious relaxation of the judgment, when it began to be inflicted upon Jerusalem (2Sa 24:16): The angel

stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem, as if he intended to do greater execution there than any where else, even to destroy it. The country had drunk of the bitter cup, but Jerusalem must drink the dregs. It should seem that was last numbered, and therefore was reserved to be last plagued; perhaps there was more wickedness, especially more pride (and that was the sin now chastised), in Jerusalem than elsewhere, therefore the hand of the destroyer is stretched out upon that; but then the Lord repented him of the evil, changed not his mind, but his way; and said to the destroying angel, It is enough; stay now thy hand, and let mercy rejoice against judgment.

Jerusalem shall be spared for the ark's sake, for it is the place God hath chosen to put his name there. See here how ready God is to forgive and how little pleasure he takes in punishing; and let it encourage us to meet him by repentance in the way of his judgments. This was on Mount Moriah. Dr. Lightfoot observes that in the very place where Abraham, by a countermand from heaven, was stayed from slaying his son, this angel, by a like countermand, was stayed from destroying Jerusalem. It is for the sake of the great sacrifice that our forfeited lives are preserved from the destroying angel.

IV. David's renewed repentance for his sin upon this occasion, 2Sa 24:17. He saw the angel (God opening his eyes for that purpose), saw his sword stretched out to destroy, a flaming sword, saw him ready to sheath it upon the orders given him to stay proceedings; seeing all this, he spoke, not to the angel (he knew better than to address himself to the servant in the presence of the Master, or to give that honour to the creature which is the Creator's due), but to the Lord, and said, Lo, I have sinned. Note, True penitents, the more they perceive of God's sparing pardoning mercy the more humbled they are for sin and the more resolved against it. They shall be ashamed when I am pacified towards them, Eze 16:63. Observe,

1. How he criminates himself, as if he could never speak ill enough of his own fault: "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; mine is the crime, and therefore on me be the cross. Let thy hand be against me, and my father's house. I am the sinner, let me be the sufferer;" so willing was he to accept the punishment of his iniquity, though he was worth 10,000 of them.

2. How he intercedes for the people, whose bitter lamentations made his heart to ache, and his ears to tingle: These sheep, what have they done? Done! Why they had done much amiss; it was their sin that provoked God to leave David to himself to do as he did; yet, as becomes a penitent, he is severe upon his own faults, while he extenuates theirs. Most people, when God's judgments are abroad, charge others with being the cause of them, and care not who falls by them, so they can escape. But David's penitent and public spirit was otherwise affected. Let this remind us of the grace of our Lord Jesus, who gave himself for our sins and was willing that God's hand should be against him, that we might escape. The shepherd was smitten that the sheep might be spared.

12 Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three
things; choose thee one of them, that I may do *it* unto thee.
13 So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven
years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three
months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there
be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see
what answer I shall return to him that sent me.
14 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into
the hand of the Lord; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall
into the hand of man.
15 So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to
the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to
Beer-sheba seventy thousand men.
16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy
it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that

destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

17 And David spake unto the Lord when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

18 And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.

Here is, I. A command sent to David to erect an altar in the place where he saw the angel, 2Sa 24:18. This was to intimate to David,

1. That, upon his repeated submission and humiliation, God was now thoroughly reconciled to him; for, if the Lord had been pleased to kill him, he would not have accepted an offering, and therefore would not have ordered him to build an altar. God's encouraging us to offer to him spiritual sacrifices is a comfortable evidence of his reconciling us to himself.

2. That peace is made between God and sinners by sacrifice, and not otherwise, even by Christ the great propitiation, of whom all the legal sacrifices were types. It is for his sake that the destroying angel is told to stay his hand.

3. That when God's judgments are graciously stayed we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to his praise. This altar was to be for thank-offerings. See Isa 12:1.

II The purchase which David made of the ground in order hereunto. It seems the owner was a Jebusite, Araunah by name, proselyted no doubt to the Jewish religion, though by birth a Gentile, and therefore allowed, not only to dwell among the Israelites, but to have a possession of his own in a

city, Le 25:29,30. The piece of ground was a threshing-floor, a mean place, yet thus dignified--a place of labour, therefore thus dignified. Now,

1. David went in person to the owner, to treat with him. See his justice, that he would not so much as use this place in the present exigence, though the proprietor was an alien, though he himself was a king, and though he had express orders from God to rear an altar there, till he had bought it and paid for it.

God hates robbery for burnt-offering. See his humility, how far he was from taking state; though a king, he was now a penitent, and therefore, in token of his self-abasement, he neither sent for Araunah to come to him nor sent another to deal with him, but went himself (2Sa 24:19), and, though it looked like a diminution of himself, he lost no honour by it. Araunah, when he saw him, went and bowed himself to the ground before him 2Sa 24:20. Great men will never be the less respected for their humility, but the more.

2. Araunah, when he understood his business (2Sa 24:21), generously offered him, not only the ground to build his altar on, but oxen for sacrifices, and other things that might be of use to him in the service (2Sa 24:22), and all this gratis, and a good prayer into the bargain: The Lord thy God accept thee! This he did,

(1.) Because he had a generous spirit with a great estate. He gave as a king (2Sa 24:23); though an ordinary subject, he had the spirit of a prince. In the Hebrew it is, He gave, even the king to the king, whence it is supposed that Araunah had been king of the Jebusites in that place, or was descended from their royal family, though now a tributary to David.

(2.) Because he highly esteemed David, though his conqueror, upon the score of his personal merits, and never thought he could do too much to oblige him.

(3.) Because he had an affection for Israel, and earnestly desired that the plague might be stayed; and the honour of its being stayed at his threshing-floor, he would account a valuable consideration for all he now tendered to David.

3. David resolved to pay the full value of it, and did so, 2Sa 24:24. Here were two generous souls well met. Araunah is very willing to give; but David is determined to buy, and for a good reason: he will not offer that to God which costs him nothing. He would not take advantage of the pious Jebusite's generosity. He thanked him, no doubt, for his kind offer, but paid him fifty shekels of silver for the floor and the oxen for the present service, and afterwards 600 shekels of gold for the ground adjoining, to build the temple on.

Note, Those know not what religion is whose chief care it is to make it cheap and easy to themselves, and who are best pleased with that which costs them least pains or money. What have we our substance for but to honour God with it? and how can it be better bestowed?

III. The building of the altar, and the offering of the proper sacrifices upon it (2Sa 24:25), burnt-offerings to the glory of God's justice in the execution that had been done, and peace-offerings to the glory of his mercy in the seasonable staying of the process. Hereupon God showed (it is supposed by fire from heaven consuming the sacrifices) that he was entreated for the land, and that it was in mercy that the plague was removed and in token of God's being reconciled both to prince and people. Christ is our altar, our sacrifice; in him alone we may expect to find favour with God, to escape his wrath, and

the sword, the flaming sword, of the cherubim who keep the way of the tree of life.

19 And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up as the Lord commanded.

20 And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground.

21 And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshingfloor of thee, to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague may be stayed from the people.

22 And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what *seemeth* good unto him: behold, *here be* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and *other* instruments of the oxen for wood.

23 All these *things* did Araunah, *as* a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The Lord thy God accept thee.

24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

25 And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

The First Book of the Kings

Commonly Called, The Third Book of the Kings

[1 Kings]

1 Kings-1

Abishag Ministers to David

1 Now king David was old *and* stricken in years; and they covered him
with clothes, but he gat no heat.
2 Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord
the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her
cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may
get heat.

David, as recorded in the foregoing chapter, had, by the great mercy of God, escaped the sword of the destroying angel. But our deliverances from or through diseases and dangers are but reprieves; if the candle be not blown out, it will burn out of itself. We have David here sinking under the infirmities of old age, and brought by them to the gates of the grave. He that cometh up out of the pit shall fall into the snare; and, one way or other, we must needs die.

1. It would have troubled one to see David so infirm. He as old, and his natural heat so wasted that no clothes could keep him warm, 1Ki 1:1. David had been a valiant active man and a man of business, and very vehement had the flame always been in his breast; and yet now his blood is chilled and stagnated, he is confined to his bed, and there can get no heat. He was now seventy years old. Many, at that age, are as lively and fit for business as ever; but David was now chastised for his former sins, especially that in the matter of Uriah, and felt from his former toils and the hardships he had gone through in his youth, which then he made nothing of, but was now the worse for. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, which may soon be weakened by sickness, or at last will be weakened by old age.

Let young people remember their Creator in the days of their youth, before these evil days come. What our hand finds to do for God, and our souls, and our generation, let us do with all our might, because the night comes, the night of old age, in which no man can work; and, when our strength has gone, it will be a comfort to remember that we used it well.

2. It would have troubled one to see his physicians so weak and unskilful that they knew no other way of relieving him than by outward applications. No cordials, no spirits, but,

(1.) They covered him with clothes, which, where there is any inward heat, will keep it in, and so increase it; but, where it is not, they have none to communicate, no, not royal clothing. Elihu makes it a difficulty to understand how our garments are warm upon us (Job 37:17); but, if God deny his blessing, men clothe themselves, and there is none warm (Hag 1:6), David here was not.

(2.) They foolishly prescribed nuptials to one that should rather have been preparing for his funeral (1Ki 1:2-4); but they knew what would gratify their own corruptions, and perhaps were too willing to gratify his, under colour of consulting his health. His prophets should have been consulted as well as his physicians in an affair of this nature. However, this might be excused then, when even good men ignorantly allowed themselves to have many wives. We now have not so learned of Christ, but are taught that one man must have but one wife (Mt 19:5), and further that it is good for a man not to touch a woman, 1Co 7:1. That Abishag was married to David before she lay with him, and was his secondary wife, appears from its being imputed as a great crime to Adonijah that he desired to marry her (1Ki 2:22) after his father's death.

3 So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

4 And the damsel *was* very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

Adonijah Usurps the Throne

5 Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

David had much affliction in his children. Amnon and Absalom had both been his grief; the one his first-born, the other his third, 2Sa 3:2,3. His second, whom he had by Abigail, we will suppose he had comfort in; his fourth was Adonijah (2Sa 3:4); he was one of those that were born in Hebron; we have heard nothing of him till now, and here we are told that he was a comely person, and that he was next in age, and (as it proved) next in temper to Absalom, 1Ki 1:6. And, further, that in his father's eyes he had been a jewel, but was now a thorn.

I. His father had made a fondling of him, 1Ki 1:6. He had not displeased him at any time. It is not said that he never displeased his father; it is probably that he had done so frequently, and his father was secretly troubled at his misconduct and lamented it before God. But his father had not displeased him, by crossing him in his humours, denying him any thing he had a mind to, or by calling him to an account as to what he had done and where he had been, or by keeping him to his book or his business, or reproving him for what he saw or heard of that he did amiss; he never said to him, Why hast thou done so? because he saw it was uneasy to him, and he could not bear it without fretting. It was the son's fault that he was displeased at reproof and took it for affront, whereby he lost the benefit of it; and it was the father's fault that, because he saw it displeased him, he did not reprove him; and now he justly smarted for indulging him. Those who honour their sons more than God, as those do who keep them not under good

discipline, thereby forfeit the honour they might expect from their sons.

II. He, in return, made a fool of his father. Because he was old, and confined to his bed, he thought no notice was to be taken of him, and therefore exalted himself, and said, I will be king, 1Ki 1:5. Children that are indulged learn to be proud and ambitious, which is the ruin of a great many young people. The way to keep them humble is to keep them under. Observe Adonijah's insolence.

1. He looked upon the days of mourning for his father to be at hand, and therefore he prepared to succeed him, though he knew that by the designation both of God and David Solomon was to be the man; for public notice had been given of it by David himself, and the succession settled, as it were by act of parliament, in pursuance of God's appointment, 1Ch 22:9,23:1. This entail Adonijah attempted by force to cut off, in contempt both of God and his father. Thus is the kingdom of Christ opposed, and there are those that say, "We will not have him to reign over us."

2. He looked upon his father as superannuated and good for nothing, and therefore he entered immediately upon the possession of the throne. He cannot wait till his father's head be laid low, but it must now be said, Adonijah reigns (1Ki 1:18), and, God save king Adonijah, 1Ki 1:25. His father is not fit to govern, for he is old and past ruling, nor Solomon, for he is young, and not yet able to rule; and therefore Adonijah will take the government upon him. It argues a very base and wicked mind for children to insult over their parents because of the infirmities of their age. 3. In pursuance of this ambitious project,

(1.) He got a great retinue (1Ki 1:5), chariots and horsemen, both for state and strength, to wait on him, and to fight for him.

(2.) He made great interest with no less than Joab, the general of the army, and Abiathar the high priest, 1Ki 1:7. That he should make his court to those who by their influence in church and camp were capable of doing him great service is not strange; but we may well wonder by what arts they could be drawn to follow him and help him. They were old men, who had been faithful to David in the most difficult and troublesome of his times, men of sense and experience, who, one would think, would not easily be wheedled. They could not propose any advantage to themselves by supporting Adonijah, for they were both at the top of their preferment and stood fast in it.

They could not be ignorant of the entail of the crown upon Solomon, which it was not in their power to cut off, and therefore it was their interest to oblige him. But God, in this matter, left them to themselves, perhaps to correct them for some former misconduct with a scourge of their own making. We are told (1Ki 1:8) who those were that were of such approved fidelity to David that Adonijah had not the confidence so much as to propose his project to them--Zadok, Benaiah, and Nathan. A man that has given proofs of his resolute adherence to that which is good shall not be asked to do a bad thing.

(3.) He prepared a great entertainment (1Ki 1:9) at En-rogel, not far from Jerusalem; his guests were the king's sons, and the king's servants, whom he feasted and caressed to bring them over to his party; but Solomon was not invited, either because he despised him or because he despaired of him, 1Ki 1:10. Such as serve their own belly, and will be in the interest of those that will feast them what side soever they are of, are an easy prey to seducers, Ro 16:18. Some think that Adonijah

slew these sheep and oxen, even fat ones, for sacrifice, and that it was a religious feast he made, beginning his usurpation with a show of devotion, as Absalom under the colour of a vow (2Sa 15:7), which he might do the more plausibly when he had the high priest himself on his side. It is a pity that any occasion should ever be given to say, In nomine Domini incipit omne malam--In the name of the Lord begins all evil, and that all religious exercises should be made to patronise all religious practices.

6 And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also *was* a very goodly man; and *his mother* bare him after Absalom.

7 And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped *him*.

8 But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which *belonged* to David, were not with Adonijah.

9 And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth, which *is* by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants:

10 but Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not.

11 Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth *it* not?

12 Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon.

13 Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign?

14 Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words.

15 And Bath-sheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king.

We have here the effectual endeavours that were used by Nathan and Bathsheba to obtain from David a ratification of Solomon's succession, for the crushing of Adonijah's usurpation.

1. David himself knew not what was doing. Disobedient children think that they are well enough off if they can but keep their good old parents ignorant of their bad courses; but a bird of the air will carry the voice.

2. Bathsheba lived retired, and knew nothing of it either, till Nathan informed her. Many get very comfortably through this world that know little how the world goes.

3. Solomon, it is likely, knew of it, but was as a deaf man that heard not. Though he had years, and wisdom above his years, yet we do not find that he stirred to oppose Adonijah, but quietly composed himself and left it to God and his friends to order the matter. Hence David, in his Psalm for Solomon, observes that while men, in pursuit of the world, in vain rise early and sit up late, God giveth his beloved (his Jedidiahs) sleep, in giving them to be easy, and to gain their point without agitation, Ps 127:1,2. How then is the design brought about?

I. Nathan the prophet alarms Bathsheba by acquainting her with the case, and puts her in a way to get an order from the king for the confirming of Solomon's title. He was concerned, because he knew God's mind, and David's and Israel's interest; it was by him that God had named Solomon Jedidiah (2Sa 12:25), and therefore he could not sit still and see the throne usurped, which he knew was Solomon's right by the will of him from whom promotion cometh. When crowns were disposed of by immediate direction from heaven, no marvel that prophets were so much interested and employed in that matter; but now that common providence rules the affairs of the kingdom of men (Da 4:32) the subordinate agency must be left to common

persons, and let not prophets intermeddle in them, but keep to the affairs of the kingdom of God among men. Nathan applied to Bathsheba, as one that had the greatest concern for Solomon, and could have the freest access to David. He informed her of Adonijah's attempt (1Ki 1:11), and that it was not with David's consent or knowledge. He suggested to her that not only Solomon was in danger of losing the crown, but that he and she too were in danger of losing their lives if Adonijah prevailed. A humble spirit may be indifferent to a crown, and may be content, notwithstanding the prospect of it, to sit down short of the possession of it.

But the law of self-preservation, and the sixth commandment, obliges us to use all possible endeavours to secure our own life and the life of others. Now, says Nathan, let me give thee counsel how to save thy own life and the life of thy son, 1Ki 1:12. Such as this is the counsel that Christ's ministers give us in his name, to give all diligence, not only that no man take our crown (Re 3:11), but that we save our lives, even the lives of our souls. He directs her (1Ki 1:13) to go to the king, to remind him of his word and oath, that Solomon should be his successor; and to ask him in the most humble manner, Why doth Adonijah reign? He thought David was not so cold but this would warm him. Conscience, as well as a sense of honour, would put life into him upon such an occasion as this; and he promised (1Ki 1:24) that, while she was reasoning with the king in this matter, he would come in and second her, as if he came accidentally, which perhaps the king might look upon as a special providence (and he was one that took notice of such evidences, 1Sa 25:32,33), or, at least, it would help to awaken him so much the more.

II. Bathsheba, according to Nathan's advice and direction, loses no time, but immediately makes her application to the king, on the same errand on which Esther came to king Ahasuerus, to intercede for her life. She needed not wait for a call as Esther

did, she knew she should be welcome at any time; but it is remarked that when she visited the king Abishag was ministering to him (1Ki 1:15), and Bathsheba took no displeasure either at him or her for it, also that she bowed and did obeisance to the king (1Ki 1:16), in token of her respect to him both as her prince and as her husband; such a genuine daughter was she of Sarah, who obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. Those that would find favour with superiors mush show them reverence, and be dutiful to those whom they expect to be kind to them. Her address to the king, on this occasion, is very discreet.

1. She reminded him of his promise made to her and confirmed with a solemn oath, that Solomon should succeed him, 1Ki 1:17. She knew how fast this would hold such a conscientious man as David was.

2. She informed him of Adonijah's attempt, which he was ignorant of (1Ki 1:18): "Adonijah reigns, in competition with thee for the present and in contradiction to thy promise for the future. The fault is not thine, for thou knewest it not; but now that thou knowest it thou wilt, in pursuance of thy promise, take care to suppress this usurpation." She told him who were Adonijah's guests, and who were in his interest, and added, but "Solomon thy servant has he not called, which plainly shows he looks upon him as his rival, and aims to undermine him, 1Ki 1:19. It is not an oversight, but a contempt of the act of settlement, that Solomon is neglected."

3. She pleads that it is very much in his power to obviate this mischief (1Ki 1:20): The eyes of all Israel are upon thee, not only as a king, for we cannot suppose it the prerogative of any prince to bequeath his subjects by will (as if they were his goods and chattels) to whom he pleases, but as a prophet. All Israel knew that David was not only himself the anointed of the God of Jacob, but that the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him (2Sa

23:1,2), and therefore waiting for and depending upon a divine designation, in a matter of such importance, David's word would be an oracle and a law to them; this therefore (says Bathsheba) they expect, and it will end the controversy and effectually quash all Adonijah's pretensions. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king. Note, Whatever power, interest or influence, men have, they ought to improve it to the utmost for the preserving and advancing of the kingdom of the Messiah, of which Solomon's kingdom was a type.

4. She suggested the imminent peril which she and her son would be in if this matter was not settled in David's life-time, 1Ki 1:21. "If Adonijah prevail, as he is likely to do (having Joab the general and Abiathar the priest on his side) unless speedily suppressed, Solomon and all his friends will be looked upon as traitors and dealt with accordingly." Usurpers are most cruel. If Adonijah had got into the throne, he would not have dealt so fairly with Solomon as Solomon did with him. Those hazard everything who stand in the way of such as against right force their entrance.

III. Nathan the prophet, according to his promise, seasonably stepped in, and seconded her, while she was speaking, before the king had given his answer, lest, if he had heard Bathsheba's representation only, his answer should be dilatory and only that he would consider of it: but out of the mouth of two witnesses, two such witnesses, the word would be established, and he would immediately give positive orders. The king is told that Nathan the prophet has come, and he is sure to be always welcome to the king, especially when either he is not well or has any great affair upon his thoughts; for, in either case, a prophet will be, in a particular manner, serviceable to him. Nathan knows he must render honour to whom honour is due, and therefore pays the king the same respect now that he finds him sick in bed as he would have done if he had found him in his throne: He bowed himself with his face to the ground, 1Ki

1:23. He deals a little more plainly with the king than Bathsheba had done. In this his character would support him, and the present languor of the king's spirits made it necessary that they should be roused.

1. He makes the same representation of Adonijah's attempt as Bathsheba had made (1Ki 1:25,26), adding that his party had already got to such a height of assurance as to shout, God save king Adonijah, as if king David were already dead, taking notice also that they had not invited him to their feast (Me thy servant has he not called), thereby intimating that they resolved not to consult either God or David in the matter, for Nathan was secretioribus consiliis--intimately acquainted with the mind of both.

2. He makes David sensible how much he was concerned to clear himself from having a hand in it: Hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me? (1Ki 1:24), and again (1Ki 1:27), "Is this thing done by my lord the king? If it be, he is not so faithful either to God's word or to his own as we all took him to be; if it be not, it is high time that we witness against the usurpation, and declare Solomon his successor. If it be, why is not Nathan made acquainted with it, who is not only in general, the king's confidant, but is particularly concerned in this matter, having been employed to notify to David the mind of God concerning the succession; but, if my lord the king knows nothing of the matter (as certainly he does not), what daring insolence are Adonijah and his party guilty of!" Thus he endeavoured to incense David against them, that he might act the more vigorously for the support of Solomon's interest. Note, Good men would do their duty if they were reminded of it, and put upon it, and told what occasion there is for them to appear; and those who thus are their remembrancers do them a real kindness, as Nathan here did to David.

IV. David, hereupon, made a solemn declaration of his firm adherence to his former resolution, that Solomon should be his successor. Bathsheba is called in (1Ki 1:28), and to her, as acting for and on behalf of her son, the king gives these fresh assurances.

1. He repeats his former promise and oath, owns that he had sworn unto her by the Lord God of Israel that Solomon would reign after him, 1Ki 1:30. Though he is old, and his memory begins to fail him, yet he remembers this. Note, An oath is so sacred a thing that the obligations of it cannot be broken, and so solemn a thing that the impressions of it, one would think, cannot be forgotten.

2. He ratifies it with another, because the occasion called for it: As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even so will I certainly do this day, without dispute, without delay. His form of swearing seems to be what he commonly used on solemn occasions, for we find it, 2Sa 4:9. And it carries in it a grateful acknowledgment of the goodness of God to him, in bringing him safely through the many difficulties and hardships which had lain in his way, and which he now makes mention of to the glory of God (as Jacob, when he lay a dying, Ge 48:16), thus setting to his seal, from his own experience, that that was true which the Spirit of the Lord spoke by him. Ps 34:22, The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants. Dying saints ought to be witnesses for God, and speak of him as they have found. Perhaps he speaks thus, on this occasion, for the encouragement of his son and successor to trust in God in the distresses he also might meet with.

V. Bathsheba receives these assurances (1Ki 1:31), 1. With great complaisance to the king's person; she did reverence to him; while Adonijah and his party affronted him. 2. With hearty good wishes for the king's health; Let him live. So far was she from thinking that he lived too long that she prayed he might

live for ever, if it were possible, to adorn the crown he wore and to be a blessing to his people. We should earnestly desire the prolonging of useful lives, however it may be the postponing of any advantages of our own.

16 And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou?

17 And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the Lord thy God unto thine handmaid, *saying*, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.

18 And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest *it* not:

19 and he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called.

20 And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel *are* upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

21 Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.

22 And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in.

23 And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground.

24 And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne?

25 For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah.

26 But me, *even* me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called.

27 Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not showed *it*
unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king
after him?

Solomon Made King

28 Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba. And she
came into the king's presence, and stood before the king.
29 And the king sware, and said, *As* the Lord liveth, that hath
redeemed my soul out of all distress,
30 even as I sware unto thee by the Lord God of Israel, saying,
Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit
upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day.
31 Then Bath-sheba bowed with *her* face to the earth, and did
reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for
ever.
32 And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the
prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before
the king.
33 The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your
lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and
bring him down to Gihon:
34 and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there
king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save
king Solomon.

We have here the effectual care David took both to secure Solomon's right and to preserve the public peace, by crushing Adonijah's project in the bud. Observe,

I The express orders he gave for the proclaiming of Solomon. The persons he entrusted with this great affair were Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, men of power and interest whom David had always reposed a confidence in and found faithful to him, and whom Adonijah had passed by in his invitation, 1Ki 1:10. David orders them forthwith, with all possible solemnity, to proclaim Solomon. They must take with them the servants of

their lord, the lifeguards, and all the servants of the household. They must set Solomon on the mule the king used to ride, for he kept not such stables of horses as his son afterwards did. He appoints them whither to go (1Ki 1:33-35), and what to do.

1. Zadok and Nathan, the two ecclesiastical persons, must, in God's name, anoint him king; for though he was not the first of his family, as Saul and David were, yet he was a younger son, was made king by divine appointment, and his title was contested, which made it necessary that hereby it should be settled. This unction was typical of the designation and qualification of the Messiah, or Christ, the anointed one, on whom the Spirit, that oil of gladness, was poured without measure, Heb 1:9,Ps 89:20. And all Christians, being heirs of the kingdom (Jam 2:5), do from him receive the anointing, 1Jo 2:27.

2 The great officers, civil and military, are ordered to give public notice of this, and to express the public joy upon this occasion by sound of trumpet, by which the law of Moses directed the gracing of great solemnities; to this must be added the acclamations of the people: "Let king Solomon live, let him prosper, let his kingdom be established and perpetuated, and let him long continue in the enjoyment of it;" so it had been promised concerning him. Ps 72:15, He shall live. 3. They must then bring him in state to the city of David, and he must sit upon the throne of his father, as his substitute now, or viceroy, to despatch public business during his weakness and be his successor after his death: He shall be king in my stead. It would be a great satisfaction to David himself, and to all parties concerned, to have this done immediately, that upon the demise of the king there might be no dispute, or agitation, in the public affairs. David was far from grudging his successor the honour of appearing such in his life-time, and yet perhaps was so taken up with his devotions on his sick-bed that, if he had not been put in mind of it by others, this great good work, which was so necessary to the public repose, would have been left undone.

II The great satisfaction which Benaiah, in the name of the rest, professed in these orders. The king said, "Solomon shall reign for me, and reign after me." "Amen" (says Benaiah heartily); "as the king says, so say we; we are entirely satisfied in the nomination, and concur in the choice, we give our vote for Solomon, nemine contradicente--unanimously, and since we can bring nothing to pass, much less establish it, without the concurrence of a propitious providence, The Lord God of my lord the king say so too!" 1Ki 1:36. This is the language of his faith in that promise of God on which Solomon's government was founded. If we say as God says in his word, we may hope that he will say as we say by his providence. To this he adds a prayer for Solomon (1Ki 1:37), that God would be with him as he had been with David, and make his throne greater. He knew David was not one of those that envy their children's greatness, and that therefore he would not be disquieted at this prayer, nor take it as an affront, but would heartily say Amen to it. The wisest and best man in the world desires his children may be wiser and better than he, for he himself desires to be wiser and better than he is; and wisdom and goodness are true greatness.

III. The immediate execution of these orders, 1Ki 1:38-40. No time was lost, but Solomon was brought in state to the place appointed, and there Zadok (who, though he was not as yet high priest, was, we may suppose, the suffragan, the Jews called him the sagan, or second priest) anointed him by the direction of Nathan the prophet and David the king, 1Ki 1:39. In the tabernacle, where the ark was now lodged, was kept among other sacred things, the holy oil for many religious services thence Zadok took a horn of oil, which denotes both power and plenty, and therewith anointed Solomon. We do not find that Abiathar pretended to anoint Adonijah: he was made king by a feast, not by an unction. Whom God calls, he will qualify, which was signified by the anointing; usurpers had it not. Christ signifies anointed, and he is the king whom God hath set upon his holy

hill of Sion, according to decree, Ps 2:6,7. Christians also are made to our God (and by him) kings, and they have an unction from the Holy One, 1Jo 2:20. The people, hereupon, express their great joy and satisfaction in the elevation of Solomon, surround him with their Hosannas--God save king Solomon, and attend him with their music and shouts of joy, 1Ki 1:40. Hereby they declared their concurrence in the choice, and that he was not forced upon them, but cheerfully accepted by them. The power of a prince can be little satisfaction to himself, unless he knows it to be a satisfaction to his people. Every Israelite indeed rejoices in the exaltation of the Son of David.

35 Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon
my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed
him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah.
36 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said,
Amen: the Lord God of my lord the king say so *too.*
37 As the Lord hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with
Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord
king David.
38 So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son
of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down,
and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought
him to Gihon.
39 And Zadok the priest took a horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and
anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people
said, God save king Solomon.
40 And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with
pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the
sound of them.
41 And Adonijah and all the guests that *were* with him heard *it* as they
had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the
trumpet, he said, Wherefore *is this* noise of the city being in an uproar
?
42 And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the
priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou *art* a
valiant man, and bringest good tidings.

43 And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king.

44 And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule:

45 and Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This *is* the noise that ye have heard.

We have here,

I The tidings of Solomon's inauguration brought to Adonijah and his party, in the midst of their jollity: They had made an end of eating, and, it should seem, it was a great while before they made an end, for all the affair of Solomon's anointing was ordered and finished while they were at dinner, glutting themselves. Thus those who serve not our Lord Christ, but oppose him, are commonly such as serve their own belly (Ro 16:18) and made a god of it, Php 3:19. Their long feast intimates likewise that they were very secure and confident of their interest, else they would not have lost so much time. The old world and Sodom were eating and drinking, secure and sensual, when their destruction came, Lu 17:26-29, &c.

When they made an end of eating, and were preparing themselves to proclaim their king, and bring him in triumph into the city, they heard the sound of the trumpet (1Ki 1:41), and a dreadful sound it was in their ears, Job 15:21. Joab was an old man, and was alarmed at it, apprehending the city to be in an uproar; but Adonijah was very confident that the messenger, being a worthy man, brought good tidings, 1Ki 1:42. Usurpers flatter themselves with the hopes of success, and those are commonly least timorous whose condition is most dangerous. But how can those who do evil deeds expect to have good tidings? No, the worthiest man will bring them the worst news,

as the priest's son did here to Adonijah, 1Ki 1:43. "Verily, the best tidings I have to bring you is that Solomon is made king, so that your pretensions are all quashed." He relates to them very particularly,

1. With what great solemnity Solomon was made king (1Ki 1:44,45), and that he was now sitting on the throne of the kingdom, 1Ki 1:46. Adonijah thought to have stepped into the throne before him, but Solomon was too quick for him. 2. With what general satisfaction Solomon was made king, so that that which was done was not likely to be undone again. (1.) The people were pleased, witness their joyful acclamations, 1Ki 1:45.

(2.) The courtiers were pleased: The kings servants attended him with an address of congratulation upon this occasion, 1Ki 1:47. We have here the heads of their address: They blessed king David, applauded his prudent care for the public welfare, acknowledged their happiness under his government, and prayed heartily for his recovery. They also prayed for Solomon, that God would make his name better than his father's, which it might well be when he had his father's foundation to build upon. A child, on a giant's shoulders, is higher than the giant himself.

(3.) The king himself was pleased: He bowed himself upon the bed, not only to signify his acceptance of his servants' address, but to offer up his own address to God (1Ki 1:48): "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who, as Israel's God, for Israel's good, has brought this matter to such a happy issue, my eyes even seeing it." Note, It is a great satisfaction to good men, when they are going out of the world, to see the affairs of their families in a good posture, their children rising up in their stead to serve God and their generation, and especially to see peace upon Israel and the establishment of it.

II The effectual crush which this gave to Adonijah's attempt. It spoiled the sport of his party, dispersed the company, and obliged every man to shift for his own safety. The triumphing of the wicked is short. They were building a castle in the air, which, having no foundation, would soon fall and crush them. They were afraid of being taken in the fact, while they were together hatching their treason, and therefore each one made the best of his way.

III. The terror Adonijah himself was in, and the course he took to secure himself. He was now as much depressed as he had been elevated, 1Ki 1:42,50. He had despised Solomon as not worthy to be his guest (1Ki 1:10), but now he dreads him as his judge: He feared because of Solomon. Thus those who oppose Christ and his kingdom will shortly be made to tremble before him, and call in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from his wrath. He took hold on the horns of the altar, which was always looked upon as a sanctuary, or place of refuge (Ex 21:14), intimating hereby that he durst not stand a trial, but threw himself upon the mercy of his prince, in suing for which he relied upon no other plea than the mercy of God, which was manifested in the institution and acceptance of the sacrifices that were offered on that altar and the remission of sin thereupon. Perhaps Adonijah had formerly slighted the service of the altar, yet now he courts the protection of it. Many who in the day of their security neglect the great salvation, under the arrests of the terrors of the Lord would gladly be beholden to Christ and his merit, and, when it is too late, will catch hold of the horns of the altar.

IV. His humble address to Solomon for mercy. By those who brought Solomon tidings where he was, he sent a request for his life (1Ki 1:51): Let king Solomon swear to me that he will not slay his servant. He owns Solomon for his prince, and himself his servant, dares not justify himself, but makes supplication to his judge. It was a great change with him. He that in the morning

was grasping at a crown is before night begging for his life. Then Adonijah reigned, now Adonijah trembles, and cannot think himself safe unless Solomon promise, with an oath, not to put him to death.

V. The orders Solomon gave concerning him. He discharges him upon his good behaviour, 1Ki 1:52,53. He considered that Adonijah was his brother, and that it was the first offence. Perhaps, being so soon made sensible of his error and then not persisting in his rebellion, he might prove not only a peaceable, but a serviceable subject, and therefore, if he will conduct himself well for the future, what is past shall be pardoned: but if he be fond disaffected, turbulent, and aspiring, this offence shall be remembered against him, he shall be called up upon his former conviction (as our law speaks), and execution shall be awarded against him. Thus the Son of David receives those to mercy that have been rebellious: if they will return to their allegiance, and be faithful to their Sovereign, their former crimes shall not be mentioned against them; but, if still they continue in the interests of the world and the flesh, this will be their ruin. Adonijah is sent for, and told upon what terms he stands, which he signifies his grateful submission to, and then is told to go to his house and live retired there. Solomon not only gave him his life, but his estate, thus establishing his throne by mercy.

46 And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom.

47 And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed.

48 And also thus said the king, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, which hath given *one* to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing *it*.

49 And all the guests that *were* with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way.

50 And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.

51 And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me today that he will not slay his servant with the sword.
52 And Solomon said, If he will show himself a worthy man, there shall not a hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die.
53 So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

1 Kings-2

David's Charge to Solomon

1 Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying,
2 I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man;
3 and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:
4 that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.

David, that great and good man, is here a dying man (1Ki 2:1), and a dead man, 1Ki 2:10. It is well there is another life after this, for death stains all the glory of this, and lays it in the dust. We have here,

I The charge and instructions which David, when he was dying, gave to Solomon, his son and declared successor. He feels himself declining, and is not backward to own it, nor

afraid to hear or speak of dying: I go the way of all the earth, 1Ki 2:2. Heb. I am walking in it. Note, Death is a way; not only a period of this life, but a passage to a better. It is the way of all the earth, of all mankind who dwell on earth, and are themselves earth, and therefore must return to their earth. Even the sons and heirs of heaven must go the way of all the earth, they must needs die; but they walk with pleasure in this way, through the valley of the shadow of death, Ps 23:4. Prophets, and even kings, must go this way to brighter light and honour than prophecy or sovereignty. David is going this way, and therefore gives Solomon directions what to do.

1. He charges him, in general, to keep God's commandments and to make conscience of his duty, 1Ki 2:2-4. He prescribes to him,

(1.) A good rule to act by--the divine will: "Govern thyself by that." David's charge to him is to keep the charge of the Lord his God. The authority of a dying father is much, but nothing to that of a living God. There are great trusts which we are charged with by the Lord our God--let us keep them carefully, as those that must give account; and excellent statutes, which we must be ruled by--let us also keep them. The written word is our rule. Solomon must himself do as was written in the law of Moses.

(2.) A good spirit to act with: Be strong and show thyself a man, though in years but a child. Those that would keep the charge of the Lord their God must put on resolution.

(3.) Good reasons for all this. This would effectually conduce,

[1.] To the prosperity of his kingdom. It is the way to prosper in all thou doest, and to succeed with honour and satisfaction in every undertaking.

[2.] To the perpetuity of it: That the Lord may continue and so confirm his word which he spoke concerning me. Those that rightly value the treasure of the promise, that sacred depositum, cannot but be solicitous to preserve the entail of it, and very desirous that those who come after them may do nothing to cut it off. Let each, in his own age, successively, keep God's charge, and then God will be sure to continue his word. We never let fall the promise till we let fall the precept. God had promised David that the Messiah should come from his loins, and that promise was absolute: but the promise that there should not fail him a man on the throne of Israel was conditional--if his seed behave themselves as they should. If Solomon, in his day, fulfil the condition, he does his part towards the perpetuating of the promise. The condition is that he walk before God in all his institutions, in sincerity, with zeal and resolution; and, in order hereunto, that he take heed to his way. In order to our constancy in religion, nothing is more necessary than caution and circumspection.

2. He gives him directions concerning some particular persons, what to do with them, that he might make up his deficiencies in justice to some and kindness to others.

(1.) Concerning Joab, 1Ki 2:5. David was now conscious to himself that he had not done well to spare him, when he had made himself once again obnoxious to the law, but the murder of Abner first and afterwards of Amasa, both of them great men, captains of the hosts of Israel. He slew them treacherously (shed the blood of war in peace), and injuriously to David: Thou knowest what he did to me therein. The murder of a subject is a wrong to the prince, it is a loss to him, and is against the peace of our sovereign lord the king. These murders were particularly against David, reflecting upon his reputation, he being, at that time, in treaty with the victims, and hazarded his interest, which they were very capable of serving. Magistrates are the avengers of the blood of those

they have the charge of. It aggravated Joab's crime that he was neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment, but daringly wore the girdle and shoes that were stained with innocent blood, in defiance of the justice both of God and the king. David refers him to Solomon's wisdom (1Ki 2:6), with an intimation that he left him to his justice. Say not, "He has a hoary head; it is a pity it should be cut off, for it will shortly fall of itself." No, let it not go down to the grave in peace. Though he has been long reprieved, he shall be reckoned with at last; time does not wear out the guilt of any sin, particularly that of murder.

(2.) Concerning Barzillai's family, to whom he orders him to be kind for Barzillai's sake, who, we may suppose, by this time, was dead, 1Ki 2:7. When David, upon his death-bed, was remembering the injuries that had been done, he could not forget the kindnesses that had been shown, but leaves it as a charge upon his son to return them. Note, the kindnesses we have received from our friends must not be buried either in their graves or ours, but our children must return them to theirs. Hence, perhaps, Solomon fetched that rule (Pr 27:10), Thy own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not. Paul prays for the house of Onesiphorus, who had often refreshed him.

(3.) Concerning Shimei, 1Ki 2:8,9.

[1.] His crime is remembered: He cursed me with a grievous curse; the more grievous because he insulted him when he was in misery and poured vinegar into his wounds. The Jews say that one thing which made this a grievous curse was that, besides all that is mentioned (2Sa 16:1-23), Shimei upbraided him with his descent from Ruth the Moabitess.

[2.] His pardon is not forgotten. David owned he had sworn to him that he would not himself put him to death, because he seasonably submitted, and cried Peccavi--I have sinned, and

he was not willing, especially at that juncture, to use the sword of public justice for the avenging of wrongs done to himself. But,

[3.] His case, as it now stands, is left with Solomon, as one that knew what was fit to be done and would do as he found occasion. David intimates to him that his pardon was not designed to be perpetual, but only a reprieve for David's life: "Hold him not guiltless; do not think him any true friend to thee or thy government, nor fit to be trusted. He has no less malice than he had then, though he has more sense to conceal it. He is still a debtor to the public justice for what he did then; and, though I promised him that I would not put him to death, I never promised that my successor should not. His turbulent spirit will soon give thee an occasion, which thou shouldst not fail to take, for the bringing of his hoary head to the grave with blood." This proceeded not from personal revenge, but a prudent zeal for the honour of the government and the covenant God had made with his family, the contempt of which ought not to go unpunished. Even a hoary head, if a guilty and forfeited head, ought not to be any man's protection from justice. The sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed, Isa 65:20.

II. David's death and burial (1Ki 2:10): He was buried in the city of David, not in the burying place of his father, as Saul was, but in his own city, which he was the founder of. There were set the thrones, and there the tombs, of the house of David. Now David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption, Ac 13:36, and see Ac 2:29. His epitaph may be taken from 2Sa 23:1. Here lies David the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, adding his own words (Ps 16:9), My flesh also shall rest in hope. Josephus says that, besides the usual magnificence with which his son Solomon

buried him, he put into his sepulchre a vast deal of money; and that 1300 years after (so he reckons) it was opened by Hircanus the high priest, in the time of Antiochus, and 3000 talents were taken out for the public service. The years of his reign are here computed (1Ki 2:11) to be forty years; the odd six months which he reigned above seven years in Hebron are not reckoned, but the even sum only.

5 Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me,
and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner
the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and
shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his
girdle that *was* about his loins, and in his shoes that *were* on his feet.
6 Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go
down to the grave in peace.
7 But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let
them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when
I fled because of Absalom thy brother.
8 And, behold, *thou hast* with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite
of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when
I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and
I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with
the sword.
9 Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou *art* a wise man, and
knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring
thou down to the grave with blood.

The Death of David

10 So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of
David.
11 And the days that David reigned over Israel *were* forty years: seven
years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he
in Jerusalem.
12 Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his
kingdom was established greatly.

Solomon Establishes His Kingdom

13 And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.

14 He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on.

15 And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and *that* all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the Lord.

Here is, I. Solomon's accession to the throne, 1Ki 2:12. He came to it much more easily and peaceably than David did, and much sooner saw his government established. It is happy for a kingdom when the end of one good reign is the beginning of another, as it was here.

II. His just and necessary removal of Adonijah his rival, in order to the establishment of his throne. Adonijah had made some bold pretensions to the crown, but was soon obliged to let them fail and throw himself upon Solomon's mercy, who dismissed him upon his good behaviour, and, had he been easy, he might have been safe. But here we have him betraying himself into the hands of Solomon's justice, and falling by it, the righteous God leaving him to himself, that he might be punished for his former treason and that Solomon's throne might be established. Many thus ruin themselves, because they know not when they are well off, or well done to; and sinners, by presuming on God's patience, treasure up wrath to themselves. Now observe,

1. Adonijah's treasonable project, which was to marry Abishag, David's concubine, not because he was in love with her, but because, by her, he hoped to renew his claim to the crown, which might stand him in stead, or because it was then looked upon as a branch of the government to have the wives

of the predecessor, 2Sa 12:8. Absalom thought his pretensions much supported by lying with his father's concubines. Adonijah flatters himself that if he may succeed him in his bed, especially with the best of his wives, he may by that means step up to succeed him in his throne. Restless and turbulent spirits reach high. It was but a small game to play at, as it should seem, yet he hoped to make it an after-game for the kingdom, and now to gain that by a wife which he could not gain by force.

2 The means he used to compass this. He durst not make suit to Abishag immediately (he knew she was at Solomon's disposal, and he would justly resent it if his consent were not first obtained, as even Ishbosheth did, in a like case, 2Sa 3:7), nor durst he himself apply immediately to Solomon, knowing that he lay under his displeasure; but he engaged Bathsheba to be his friend in this matter, who would be forward to believe it a matter of love, and not apt to suspect it a matter of policy. Bathsheba was surprised to see Adonijah in her apartment, and asked him if he did not come with a design to do her a mischief, because she had been instrumental to crush his late attempt. "No," says he, "I come peaceably (1Ki 2:13), and to beg a favour" (1Ki 2:14), that she would use the great interest she had in her son to gain his consent, that he might marry Abishag (1Ki 2:16,17), and, if he may but obtain this, he will thankfully accept it,

(1.) As a compensation for his loss of the kingdom. He insinuates (1Ki 2:15), "Thou knowest the kingdom was mine, as my father's eldest son, living at the time of his death, and all Israel set their faces on me." This was false; they were but a few that he had on his side; yet thus he would represent himself as an object of compassion, that had been deprived of a crown, and therefore might well be gratified in a wife. If he may not inherit his father's throne, yet let him have something

valuable that was his father's, to keep for his sake, and let it be Abishag.

(2.) As his reward for his acquiescence in that loss. He owns Solomon's right to the kingdom: "It was his from the Lord. I was foolish in offering to contest it; and now that it is turned about to him I am satisfied." Thus he pretends to be well pleased with Solomon's accession to the throne, when he is doing all he can to give him disturbance. His words were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart.

3. Bathsheba's address to Solomon on his behalf. She promised to speak to the king for him (1Ki 2:18) and did so, 1Ki 2:19. Solomon received her with all the respect that was due to a mother, though he himself was a king: He rose up to meet her, bowed himself to her, and caused her to sit on his right hand, according to the law of the fifth commandment. Children, not only when grown up, but when grown great, must give honour to their parents, and behave dutifully and respectfully towards them.

Despise not thy mother when she is old. As a further instance of the deference he paid to his mother's wisdom and authority, when he understood she had a petition to present to him, he promised not to say her nay, a promise which both he and she understood with this necessary limitation, provided it be just and reasonable and fit to be granted; but, if it were otherwise, he was sure he should convince her that it was so, and that then she would withdraw it. She tells him her errand at last (1Ki 2:21): Let Abishag be given to Adonijah thy brother. It was strange that she did not suspect the treason, but more strange that she did not abhor the incest, that was in the proposal. But either she did not take Abishag to be David's wife, because the marriage was not consummated, or she thought it might be dispensed with to gratify Adonijah, in consideration of his

tame submission to Solomon. This was her weakness and folly: it was well that she was not regent.

Note, Those that have the ear of princes and great men, as it is their wisdom not to be too prodigal of their interest, so it is their duty never to use it for the assistance of sin or the furtherance of any wicked design. Let not princes be asked that which they ought not to grant. It ill becomes a good man to prefer a bad request or appear in a bad cause.

4. Solomon's just and judicious rejection of the request. Though his mother herself was the advocate, and called it a small petition, and perhaps it was the first she had troubled him with since he was king, yet he denied it, without violation of the general promise he had made, 1Ki 2:20. If Herod had not had a mind to cut off John Baptist's head, he would not have thought himself obliged to do it by a general promise, like this, made to Herodias. The best friend we have in the world must not have such an interest in us as to bring us to do a wrong thing, either unjust or unwise.

(1.) Solomon convinces his mother of the unreasonableness of the request, and shows her the tendency of it, which, before, she was not aware of. His reply is somewhat sharp: "Ask for him the kingdom also, 1Ki 2:22. To ask that he may succeed the king in his bed is, in effect, to ask that he may succeed him in his throne; for that is it he aims at." Probably he had information, or cause for a strong suspicion, that Adonijah was plotting with Joab and Abiathar to give him disturbance, which warranted him to put this construction upon Adonijah's request.

(2.) He convicts and condemns Adonijah for his pretensions, and both with an oath. He convicts him out of his own mouth, 1Ki 2:23. His own tongue shall fall upon him; and a heavier load a man needs not fall under. Bathsheba may be imposed

upon, but Solomon cannot; he plainly sees what Adonijah aims at, and concludes, "He has spoken this word against his own life; he is snared in the words of his own lips; now he shows what he would be at." He condemns him to die immediately: He shall be put to death this day, 1Ki 2:24. God had himself declared with an oath that he would establish David's throne (Ps 89:35), and therefore Solomon pledges the same assurance to secure that establishment, by cutting off the enemies of it. "As God liveth, that establisheth the government, Adonijah shall die, that would unsettle it."

Thus the ruin of the enemies of Christ's kingdom is as sure as the stability of his kingdom, and both are as sure as the being and life of God, the founder of it. The warrant is immediately signed for his execution, and no less a man than Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, general of the army, is ordered to be the executioner, 1Ki 2:25. It is strange that Adonijah may not be heard to speak for himself: but Solomon's wisdom did not see it needful to examine the matter any further; it was plain enough that Adonijah aimed at the crown, and Solomon could not be safe while he lived. Ambitious turbulent spirits commonly prepare for themselves the instruments of death. Many a head has been lost by catching at a crown.

16 And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on.

17 And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife.

18 And Bath-sheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king.

19 Bath-sheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.

20 Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; *I pray thee*, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother; for I will not say thee nay.

21 And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife.
22 And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he *is* mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah.
23 Then king Solomon sware by the Lord, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life.
24 Now therefore, *as* the Lord liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me a house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day.
25 And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died.
26 And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou *art* worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted.

Abiathar and Joab were both aiding and abetting in Adonijah's rebellious attempt, and it is probable were at the bottom of this new motion made of Adonijah for Abishag, and it should seem Solomon knew it, 1Ki 2:22. This was, in both, an intolerable affront both to God and to the government, and the worse because of their high station and the great influence their examples might have upon many. They therefore come next to be reckoned with. They are both equally guilty of the treason, but, in the judgment passed upon them, a difference is made and with good reason.

I. Abiathar, in consideration of his old services, is only degraded, 1Ki 2:26,27. 1. Solomon convicts him, and by his great wisdom finds him guilty: "Thou art worthy of death, for joining with Adonijah, when thou knewest on whose head God intended to set the crown."

2. He calls to mind the respect he had formerly shown to David his father, and that he had both ministered to him in holy things (had borne before him the ark of the Lord), and also had tenderly sympathized with him in his afflictions and been afflicted in them all, particularly when he was in exile and distress both by Saul's persecution and Absalom's rebellion. Note, Those that show kindness to God's people shall have it remembered to their advantage one time or other.

3. For this reason he spares Abiathar's life, but deposes him from his offices, and confines him to his country seat at Anathoth, forbids him the court, the city, the tabernacle, the altar, and all inter-meddling in public business, with an intimation likewise that he was upon his good behaviour, and that though Solomon did not put him to death at this time he might another time, if he did not conduct himself well. But, for the present, he was only thrust out from being priest, as rendered unworthy that high station by the opposition he had given to that which he knew to be the will of God. Saul, for a supposed crime, had barbarously slain Abiathar's father, and eighty-five priests, their families, and city. Solomon spares Abiathar himself, though guilty of a real crime. Thus was Saul's government ruined and Solomon's established. As men are to God's ministers, they will find him to them.

4. The depriving of Abiathar was the fulfilling of the threatening against the house of Eli (1Sa 2:30), for he was the last high priest of that family. It was now above eighty years since the ruin was threatened; but God's judgments, though not executed speedily, will be executed surely.

II. Joab, in consideration of his old sins, is put to death.

1. His guilty conscience sent him to the horns of the altar. He heard that Adonijah was executed and Abiathar deposed, and therefore, fearing his turn would be next, he fled for refuge to

the altar. Many that, in the day of their security, care not for the service of the altar, will be glad of the protection of it in the day of their distress. Some think Joab designed thereby to devote himself for the future to a constant attendance upon the altar, hoping thereby to obtain his pardon, as some that have lived a dissolute life all their days have thought to atone for their crimes by retiring into a monastery when they are old, leaving the world when it has left them and no thanks to them.

2. Solomon ordered him to be put to death there for the murder of Abner and Amasa; for these were the crimes upon which he thought fit to ground the sentence, rather than upon his treasonable adherence to Adonijah. Joab was indeed worthy of death for turning after Adonijah, in contempt of Solomon and his designation to the throne, though he had not turned after Absalom, 1Ki 2:28. Former fidelity will not serve to excuse any after treachery; yet, besides that, Joab had merited well of the house of David, to which and to his country he had done a great deal of good service in his day, in consideration of which, it is probable, Solomon would have pardoned him his offence against him (for clemency gives great reputation and establishment to an infant government), and would have only displaced him as he did Abiathar; but he must die for the murders he had formerly been guilty of, which his father had charged Solomon to call him to an account for.

The debt he owed to the innocent blood that was shed, by answering its cries with the blood of him that shed, he could not pay himself, but left it to his son to pay it, who, having power wherewithal, failed not to do it. On this he grounds the sentence, aggravating the crime (1Ki 2:32), that he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, that had done him no wrong nor meant him any, and, had they lived, might probably have done David better service (if the blood shed be not only innocent, but excellent, the life more valuable that common lives, the crime is the more heinous), that David

knew not of it, and yet the case was such that he would be suspected as privy to it; so that Joab endangered his prince's reputation in taking away the life of his rivals, which was a further aggravation. For these crimes,

(1.) He must die, and die by the sword of public justice. By man must his blood be shed, and it lies upon his own head (1Ki 2:32), as theirs does whom he had murdered, 1Ki 2:33. Woe to the head that lies under the guilt of blood! Vengeance for murder was long in coming upon Joab; but, when it did come, it remained the longer, being here entailed upon the head of his seed for ever (1Ki 2:33), who, instead of deriving honour, as otherwise they might have done, from his heroic actions, derived guilt, and shame, and a curse, from his villainous actions, on account of which they fared the worse in this world. The seed of such evil doers shall never be renowned.

(2.) He must die at the altar, rather than escape. Joab resolved not to stir from the altar (1Ki 2:30), hoping thereby either to secure himself or else to render Solomon odious to the people, as a profaner of the holy place, if he should put him to death there. Benaiah made a scruple of either killing him there or dragging him thence; but Solomon knew the law, that the altar of God should give no protection to wilful murderers. Ex 21:14, Thou shalt take him from my altar that he may die, may die a sacrifice. In case of such sins as the blood of beasts would atone for the altar was a refuge, but not in Joab's case. He therefore orders him to be executed there, if he could not be got thence, to show that he feared not the censure of the people in doing his duty, but would rectify their mistake, and let them know that the administration of justice is better than sacrifice, and that the holiness of any place should never countenance the wickedness of any person. Those who, by a lively faith, take hold on Christ and his righteousness, with a resolution, if they perish, to perish there, shall find in him a more powerful protection than Joab found at the horns of the altar. Benaiah

slew him (1Ki 2:34), with the solemnity, no doubt, of a public execution. The law being thus satisfied, he was buried in his own house in the wilderness, privately, like a criminal, not pompously, like a soldier; yet no indignity was done to his dead body. It is not for man to lay the iniquity upon the bones, whatever God does.

3. Solomon pleased himself with this act of justice, not as it gratified any personal revenge, but as it was the fulfilling of his father's orders and a real kindness to himself and his own government.

(1.) Guilt was hereby removed, 1Ki 2:31. By returning the innocent blood that had been shed upon the head of him that shed it, it was taken away from him and from the house of his father, which implies that the blood which is not required from the murderer will be required from the magistrate, at least there is danger lest it should. Those that would have their houses safe and built up must put away iniquity far from them.

(2.) Peace was hereby secured (1Ki 2:33) upon David. He does not mean his person, but, as he explains himself in the next words, Upon his seed, his house, and his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the Lord; thus he expresses his desire that it may be so and his hope that it shall be so. "Now that justice is done, and the cry of blood is satisfied, the government will prosper." Thus righteousness and peace kiss each other. Now that such a turbulent man as Joab is removed there shall be peace. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness, Pr 25:5. Solomon, in this blessing of peace upon his house and throne, piously looks upward to God as the author of it. "It shall be peace from the Lord, and peace for ever from the Lord." The Lord of peace himself give us that peace which is everlasting.

27 So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord;
that he might fulfil the word of the Lord, which he spake
concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.
28 Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah,
though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the
tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar.
29 And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the
tabernacle of the Lord; and, behold, *he is* by the altar. Then
Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon
him.
30 And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said unto
him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will
die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus
said Joab, and thus he answered me.
31 And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him,
and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood,
which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father.
32 And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell
upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them
with the sword, my father David not knowing *thereof, to wit,* Abner
the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of
Jether, captain of the host of Judah.
33 Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon
the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed,
and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for
ever from the Lord.
34 So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and
slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.
35 And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the
host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of
Abiathar.
36 And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build
thee a house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence
any whither.

37 For it shall be, *that* on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head.

Here is, I The preferment of Benaiah and Zadok, two faithful friends to Solomon and his government, 1Ki 2:35. Joab being put to death, Benaiah was advanced to be general of the forces in his room, and, Abiathar being deposed, Zadok was made high priest in his room, and therein was fulfilled the word of God, when he threatened to cut off the house of Eli (1Sa 2:35), I will raise me up a faithful priest, and will build him a sure house. Though sacred offices may be disgraced, they shall not be destroyed, by the mal-administration of those that are entrusted with them, nor shall God's work ever stand still for want of hands to carry it on. No wonder that he who was a king so immediately of God's making was empowered to make whom he though fit high priest; and he exercised this power with equity, for the ancient right was in Zadok, he being of the family of Eleazar, whereas Eli and his house were of Ithamar.

II The course that was taken with Shimei. He is sent for, by a messenger, from his house at Bahurim, expecting perhaps no better than Adonijah's doom, being conscious of his enmity to the house of David; but Solomon knows how to make a difference of crimes and criminals. David had promised Shimei his life for his time. Solomon is not bound by that promise, yet he will not go directly contrary to it.

1. He confines him to Jerusalem, and forbids him, upon any pretence whatsoever, to go out of the city any further than the brook Kidron, 1Ki 2:36,37. He would suffer him to continue at his country seat lest he should make mischief among his neighbours, but took him to Jerusalem, where he kept him prisoner at large. This might make Shimei's confinement easy to himself, for Jerusalem was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the royal city, the holy city (he had no reason to complain of being shut up in such a paradise); it would also

make it the more safe for Solomon, for there he would have him under his eye and be able to watch his motions; and he plainly tells him that if he ever go out of the rules he shall certainly die for it. This was a fair trial of his obedience, and such a test of his loyalty as he had no reason to complain of. He has his life upon easy terms: he shall live if he will but be content to live at Jerusalem.

2. Shimei submits to the confinement, and thankfully takes his life upon those terms. He enters into recognizance (1Ki 2:38), under the penalty of death, not to stir out of Jerusalem, and owns that the saying is good. Even those that perish cannot but own the conditions of pardon and life unexceptionable, so that their blood, like Shimei's, must rest upon their own heads. Shimei promised, with an oath, to keep within his bounds, 1Ki 2:42. 3. Shimei forfeits his recognizance, which was the thing Solomon expected; and God was righteous in suffering him to do it, that he might now suffer for his old sins. Two of his servants (it seems, though he was a prisoner, he lived like himself, well attended) ran from him to the land of the Philistines, 1Ki 2:39.

Thither he pursued them, and thence brought them back to Jerusalem, 1Ki 2:40. For the keeping of it private he saddled his ass himself, probably went in the night, and came home he thought undiscovered. "Seeking his servants," says bishop Hall, "he lost himself; those earthly things either are, or should be, our servants. How commonly do we see men run out of the bounds set by God's law, to hunt after them, till their souls incur a fearful judgment!" 4. Solomon takes the forfeiture. Information is given him that Shimei has transgressed, 1Ki 2:41. The king sends for him, and,

(1.) charges him with the present crime (1Ki 2:42,43), that he had put a great contempt upon the authority and wrath both of God and the king, that he had broken the oath of the Lord and

disobeyed the commandment of his prince, and by this it appeared what manner of spirit he was of, that he would not be held by the bonds of gratitude or conscience. Had he represented to Solomon the urgency of the occasion, and begged leave to go, perhaps Solomon might have given him leave; but to presume either upon his ignorance or his connivance was to affront him in the highest degree.

(2.) He condemns him for his former crime, cursing David, and throwing stones at him in the day of his affliction: The wickedness which thy heart is privy to, 1Ki 2:44. There was no need to examine witnesses for the proof of the fact, his own conscience was instead of a thousand witnesses. That wickedness which men's own hearts alone are privy to is enough, if duly considered, to fill them with confusion, in expectation of its return upon their own heads; for if the heart be privy to it, God is greater than the heart and knoweth all things. Others knew of Shimei's cursing David, but Shimei himself knew of the wicked principles of hatred and malice against David which he displayed in cursing him and that his submission was but feigned and forced.

(3.) He blessed himself and his government (1Ki 2:45): King Solomon shall be blessed, notwithstanding Shimei's impotent curses, which perhaps, in fury and despair, he now vented freely: Let them curse, but bless thou. And the throne of David shall be established, by taking away those that would undermine it. It is a comfort, in reference to the enmity of the church's enemies, that, how much soever they rage, it is a vain thing they imagine. Christ's throne is established, and they cannot shake it.

(4.) He gives orders for the execution of Shimei immediately, 1Ki 2:46. All judgment is committed to the Lord Jesus, and, though he be King of peace, he will be found a King of righteousness; and this will shortly be his word of command

concerning all his enemies, that would not have him to reign over them: Bring them forth, and slay them before me; the reproaches of those that blasphemed him will fall on themselves, to their eternal condemnation.

38 And Shimei said unto the king, The saying *is* good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.

39 And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants *be* in Gath.

40 And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath.

41 And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again.

42 And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the Lord, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word *that* I have heard *is* good.

43 Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the Lord, and the commandment that I have charged thee with?

44 The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father; therefore the Lord shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head:

45 and king Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the Lord for ever.

46 So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died.

And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

1 Kings-3

Solomon Marries Pharaoh's Daughter

1 And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

We are here told concerning Solomon,

I. Something that was unquestionably good, for which he is to be praised and in which he is to be imitated.

1. He loved the Lord, 1Ki 3:3. Particular notice was taken of God's love to him, 2Sa 12:24. He had his name from it: Jedidiah--beloved of the Lord. And here we find he returned that love, as John, the beloved disciple, was most full of love. Solomon was a wise man, a rich man; yet the brightest encomium of him is that which is the character of all the saints, even the poorest, He loved the Lord, so the Chaldee; all that love God love his worship, love to hear from him and speak to him, and so to have communion with him.

2. He walked in the statutes of David his father, that is, in the statutes that David gave him, 1Ki 2:2,3; 1Ch 28:9,10 (his dying father's charge was sacred, and as a law to him), or in God's statutes, which David his father walked in before him; he kept close to God's ordinances, carefully observed them and diligently attended them. Those that trulylove God will make conscience of walking in his statutes.

3. He was very free and generous in what he did for the honour of God. When he offered sacrifice he offered like a king, in some proportion to his great wealth, a thousand burnt-

offerings, 1Ki 3:4. Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly; and those that truly love God and his worship will not grudge the expenses of their religion. We may be tempted to say, To what purpose is this waste? Might not these cattle have been given to the poor? But we must never think that wasted which is laid out in the service of God.

It seems strange how so many beasts should be burnt upon one altar in one feast, though it continued seven days; but the fire on the altar is supposed to be more quick and devouring than common fire, for it represented that fierce and mighty wrath of God which fell upon the sacrifices, that the offerers might escape. Our God is a consuming fire. Bishop Patrick quotes it as a tradition of the Jews that the smoke of the sacrifices ascended directly in a straight pillar, and was not scattered, otherwise it would have choked those that attended, when so many sacrifices were offered as were here.

II. Here is something concerning which it may be doubted whether it was good or no.

1. His marrying Pharaoh's daughter, 1Ki 3:1. We will suppose she was proselyted, otherwise the marriage would not have been lawful; yet, if so, surely it was not advisable. He that loved the Lord should, for his sake, have fixed his love upon one of the Lord's people. Unequal matches of the sons of God with the daughters of men have often been of pernicious consequence; yet some think that he did this with the advice of his friends, that she was a sincere convert (for the gods of the Egyptians are not reckoned among the strange gods which his strange wives drew him in to the worship of, 1Ki 11:5,6), and that the book of Ca 1:1 and the Ps 45:1-17 were penned on this occasion, by which these nuptials were made typical of the mystical espousals of the church to Christ, especially the Gentile church.

2. His worshipping in the high places, and thereby tempting the people to do so too, 1Ki 3:2,3. Abraham built his altars on mountains (Ge 12:8,22:2), and worshipped in a grove, Ge 21:33. Thence the custom was derived, and was proper, till the divine law confined them to one place, De 12:5,6. David kept to the ark, and did not care for the high places, but Solomon, though in other things he walked in the statutes of his father, in this came short of him. He showed thereby a great zeal for sacrificing, but to obey would have been better. This was an irregularity.

Though there was as yet no house built, there was a tent pitched, to the name of the Lord, and the ark ought to have been the centre of their unity. It was so by divine institution; from it the high places separated; yet while they worshipped God only, and in other things according to the rule, he graciously overlooked their weakness, and accepted their services; and it is owned that Solomon loved the Lord, though he burnt incense in the high places, and let not men be more severe than God is.

2 Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the Lord, until those days.

Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom

3 And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.
4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that *was* the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.
5 In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.
6 And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou

hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.

7 And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I *am but* a little child: I know not *how* to go out or come in.

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God paid to Solomon, and the communion he had with God in it, which put a greater honour upon Solomon than all the wealth and power of his kingdom did.

I The circumstances of this visit, 1Ki 3:5.

1 The place. It was in Gibeon; that was the great high place, and should have been the only one, because there the tabernacle and the brazen altar were, 2Ch 1:3. There Solomon offered his great sacrifices, and there God owned him more than in any other of the high places. The nearer we come to the rule in our worship the more reason we have to expect the tokens of God's presence. Where God records his name, there he will meet us and bless us.

2 The time. It was by night, the night after he had offered that generous sacrifice, 1Ki 3:4. The more we abound in God's work the more comfort we may expect in him; if the day has been busy for him, the night will be easy in him. Silence and retirement befriend our communion with God. His kindest visits are often in the night, Ps 17:3. 3. The manner. It was in a dream, when he was asleep, his senses locked up, that God's access to his mind might be the more free and immediate. In this way God used to speak to the prophets (Nu 12:6) and to private persons, for their own benefit, Job 33:15,16. These divine dreams, no doubt, were plainly distinguishable from those in which there are divers vanities, Ec 5:7.

II The gracious offer God made him of the favour he should choose, whatever it might be, 1Ki 3:5. He saw the glory of

God shine about him, and heard a voice saying, Ask what I shall give thee. Not that God was indebted to him for his sacrifices, but thus he would testify his acceptance of them, and signify to him what great mercy he had in store for him, if he were not wanting to himself. Thus he would try his inclinations and put an honour upon the prayer of faith. God, in like manner, condescends to us, and puts us in the ready way to be happy by assuring us that we shall have what we will for the asking, Joh 16:23,1Jo 5:14. What would we more? Ask, and it shall be given you.

III. The pious request Solomon hereupon made to God. He readily laid hold of this offer. Why do we neglect the like offer made to us, like Ahaz, who said, I will not ask? Isa 7:12. Solomon prayed in his sleep, God's grace assisting him; yet it was a lively prayer. What we are most in care about, and which makes the greatest impression upon us when we are awake, commonly affects us when we are asleep; and by our dreams, sometimes, we may know what our hearts are upon and how our pulse beats. Plutarch makes virtuous dreams one evidence of increase in virtue.

Yet this must be attributed to a higher source. Solomon's making such an intelligent choice as this when he was asleep, and the powers of reason were least active, showed that it came purely from the grace of God, which wrought in him these gracious desires. If his reins thus instruct him in the night season, he must bless the Lord who gave him counsel, Ps 16:7. Now, in this prayer,

1. He acknowledges God's great goodness to his father David, 1Ki 3:6. He speaks honourably of his father's piety, that he had walked before God in uprightness of heart, drawing a veil over his faults. It is to be hoped that those who praise their godly parents will imitate them. But he speaks more honourably of God's goodness to his father, the mercy he had shown to him

while he lived, in giving him to be sincerely religious and then recompensing his sincerity and the great kindness he had kept for him, to be bestowed on the family when he was gone, in giving him a son to sit on his throne. Children should give God thanks for his mercies to their parents, for the sure mercies of David. God's favours are doubly sweet when we observe them transmitted to us through the hands of those that have gone before us. The way to get the entail perpetuated is to bless God that it has hitherto been preserved.

2. He owns his own insufficiency for the discharge of that great trust to which he is called, 1Ki 3:7,8. And here is a double plea to enforce his petition for wisdom:--

(1.) That his place required it, as he was successor to David ("Thou hast made me king instead of David, who was a very wise and good man: Lord, give me wisdom, that I may keep up what he wrought, and carry on what he began") and as he was ruler over Israel: "Lord, give me wisdom to rule well; for they are a numerous people, that will not be managed without much care, and they are thy people, whom thou hast chosen, and therefore to be ruled for thee, and the more wisely they are ruled the more glory thou wilt have from them."

(2.) That he wanted it. As one that had a humble sense of his own deficiency, he pleads, "Lord, I am but a little child (so he calls himself, a child in understanding, though his father called him a wise man, 1Ki 2:9); I know not how to go out or come in as I should, nor to do so much as the common daily business of the government, much less what to do in a critical juncture."

Note, Those who are employed in public stations ought to be very sensible of the weight and importance of their work and their own insufficiency for it, and then they are qualified for receiving divine instruction. Paul's question (Who is sufficient for these things?) is much like Solomon's here, Who is able to

judge this thy so great a people? 1Ki 3:9. Absalom, who was a wise man, trembles at the undertaking and suspects his own fitness for it. The more knowing and considerate men are the better acquainted they are with their own weakness and the more jealous of themselves.

3. He begs of God to give him wisdom (1Ki 3:9); Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart. He calls himself God's servant, pleased with that relation to God (Ps 116:16) and pleading it with him: "I am devoted to thee, and employed for thee; give me that which is requisite to the services in which I am employed." Thus his good father prayed, and thus he pleaded. Ps 119:125, I am thy servant, give me understanding. An understanding heart is God's gift, Pr 2:6. We must pray for it (Jam 1:5), and pray for it with application to our particular calling and the various occasions we have for it; as Solomon, Give me an understanding, not to please my own curiosity with, or puzzle my neighbours, but to judge thy people. That is the best knowledge which will be serviceable to us in doing our duty; and such that knowledge is which enables us to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, sin and duty, truth and falsehood, so as not to be imposed upon by false colours in judging either of others' actions or of our own.

4. The favourable answer God gave to his request. It was a pleasing prayer (1Ki 3:10): The speech pleased the Lord. God is well pleased with his own work in his people, the desires of his own kindling, the prayers of his Spirit's inditing. By this choice Solomon made it appear that he desired to be good more than great, and to serve God's honour more than to advance his own. Those are accepted of God who prefer spiritual blessings to temporal, and are more solicitous to be found in the way of their duty than in the way to preferment. But that was not all; it was a prevailing prayer, and prevailed for more than he asked.

(1.) God gave him wisdom, 1Ki 3:12. He fitted him for all that great work to which he had called him, gave him such a right understanding of the law which he was to judge by, and the cases he was to judge of, that he was unequalled for a clear head, a solid judgment, and a piercing eye. Such an insight, and such a foresight, never was prince so blessed with.

(2.) He gave him riches and honour over and above into the bargain (1Ki 3:13), and it was promised that in these he should as much exceed his predecessors, his successors, and all his neighbours, as in wisdom. These also are God's gift, and, as far as is good for them, are promised to all that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, Mt 6:33. Let young people learn to prefer grace to gold in all that they choose, because godliness has the promise of the life that now is, but the life that now is has not the promise of godliness. How completely blessed was Solomon, that had both wisdom and wealth! He that has wealth and power without wisdom and grace is in danger of doing hurt with them; he that has wisdom and grace without wealth and power is not capable of doing so much good with them as he that has both. Wisdom is good, is so much the better, with an inheritance, Ec 7:11.

But, if we make sure of wisdom and grace, these will either bring outward prosperity with them or sweeten the want of it. God promised Solomon riches and honour absolutely, but long life upon condition (1Ki 3:14). If thou wilt walk in my ways, as David did, then I will lengthen thy days. He failed in the condition; and therefore, though he had riches and honour, he did not live so long to enjoy them as in the course of nature he might have done. Length of days is wisdom's right-hand blessing, typical of eternal life; but it is in her left hand that riches and honour are, Pr 3:16. Let us see here,

[1.] That the way to obtain spiritual blessings is to be importunate for them, to wrestle with God in prayer for them, as Solomon did for wisdom, asking that only, as the one thing needful.

[2.] That the way to obtain temporal blessings is to be indifferent to them and to refer ourselves to God concerning them. Solomon had wisdom given him because he did ask it and wealth because he did not ask it.

5. The grateful return Solomon made for the visit God was pleased to pay him, 1Ki 3:15. He awoke, we may suppose in a transport of joy, awoke, and his sleep was sweet to him, as the prophet speaks (Jer 31:26); being satisfied of God's favour, he was satisfied with it, and he began to think what he should render to the Lord. He had made his prayer at the high place at Gibeon, and there God had graciously met him; but he comes to Jerusalem to give thanks before the ark of the covenant, blaming himself, as it were, that he had not prayed there, the ark being the token of God's presence, and wondering that God had met him any where else. God's passing by our mistakes should persuade us to amend them. There he,

(1.) Offered a great sacrifice to God. We must give God praise for his gifts in the promise, though not yet fully performed. David used to praise God's word, as well as his works (Ps 56:10, and particularly, 2Sa 7:18), and Solomon trod in his steps.

(2.) He made a great feast upon the sacrifice, that those about him might rejoice with him in the grace of God.

8 And thy servant *is* in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.

9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy
people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to
judge this thy so great a people?
10 And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this
thing.
11 And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and
hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for
thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for
thyself understanding to discern judgment;
12 behold, I have done according to thy word: lo, I have given thee a
wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee
before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.
13 And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both
riches, and honor: so that there shall not be any among the kings
like unto thee all thy days.
14 And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my
commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen
thy days.
15 And Solomon awoke; and, behold, *it was* a dream. And he came
to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord,
and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made
a feast to all his servants.

Solomon's Wisdom and Prosperity

16 Then came there two women, *that were* harlots, unto the king,
and stood before him.
17 And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in
one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house.
18 And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this
woman was delivered also: and we *were* together; *there was* no
stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house.
19 And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it.
20 And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while
thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead
child in my bosom.

An instance is here given of Solomon's wisdom, to show that the grant lately made him had a real effect upon him. The proof is fetched, not from the mysteries of state and the policies of the council-board, though there no doubt he excelled, but from the trial and determination of a cause between party and party, which princes, though they devolve them upon their judges, must not think it below them to take cognizance of. Observe,

I The case opened, not by lawyers, but by the parties themselves, though they were women, which made it the easier to such a piercing eye as Solomon had to discern between right and wrong by their own showing. These two women were harlots, kept a public house, and their children, some think, were born of fornication, because here is no mention of their husbands. It is probable the cause had been heard in the inferior courts, before it was brought before Solomon, and had been found special, the judges being unable to determine it, that Solomon's wisdom in deciding it at last might be the more taken notice of. These two women, who lived in a house together, were each of them delivered of a son within three days of one another, 1Ki 3:17,18. They were so poor that they had no servant or nurse to be with them, so slighted, because harlots, that they had no friend or relation to accompany them. One of them overlaid her child, and, in the night, exchanged it with the other (1Ki 3:19,20), who was soon aware of the cheat put upon her, and appealed to public justice to be righted, 1Ki 3:21. See,

1. What anxiety is caused by little children, how uncertain their lives are, and to how many dangers they are continually exposed. The age of infancy is the valley of the shadow of death; and the lamp of life, when first lighted, is easily blown out. It is a wonder of mercy that so few perish in the perils of nursing.

2. How much better it was in those times with children born in fornication than commonly it is now. harlots then loved their

children, nursed them, and were loth to part with them; whereas now they are often sent to a distance, abandoned, or killed. But thus is was foretold that in the last days perilous times should come, when people should be without natural affection, 2Ti 3:1,3.

II The difficulty of the case. The question was, Who was the mother of this living child, which was brought into court, to be finally adjudged either to the one or to the other? Both mothers were vehement in their claim, and showed a deep concern about it. Both were peremptory in their asseverations: "It is mine," says one. "Nay, it is mine," says the other. Neither will own the dead child, though it would be cheaper to bury that than to maintain the other: but it is the living one they strive for. The living child is therefore the parent's joy because it is their hope; and may not the dead children be so? See Jer 31:17. Now the difficulty of the case was that there was no evidence on either side. The neighbours, though it is probable that some of them were present at the birth and circumcision of the children, yet had not taken so much notice of them as to be able to distinguish them. To put the parties to the rack would have been barbarous; not she who had justice on her side, but she who was most hardy, would have had the judgment in her favour. Little stress is to be laid on extorted evidence. Judges and juries have need of wisdom to find out truth when it thus lies hid.

III. The determination of it. Solomon, having patiently heard what both sides had to say, sums up the evidence, 1Ki 3:23. And now the whole court is in expectation what course Solomon's wisdom will take to find out the truth. One knows not what to say to it; another, perhaps, would determine it by lot. Solomon calls for a sword, and gives orders to divide the living child between the two contenders. Now,

1. This seemed a ridiculous decision of the case, and a brutal cutting of the knot which he could not untie. "Is this," think the

sages of the law, "the wisdom of Solomon?" little dreaming what he aimed at in it. The hearts of kings, such kings, are unsearchable, Pr 25:3. There was a law concerning the dividing of a living ox and a dead one. (Ex 21:35), but that did not reach this case. But,

2. It proved an effectual discovery of the truth. Some think that Solomon did himself discern it, before he made this experiment, by the countenances of the women and their way of speaking: but by this he gave satisfaction to all the company, and silenced the pretender. To find out the true mother, he could not try which the child loved best, and must therefore try which loved the child best; both pretended to a motherly affection, but their sincerity will be tried when the child is in danger.

(1.) She that knew the child was not her own, but in contending for it stood upon a point of honour, was well content to have it divided. She that had overlaid her own child cared not what became of this, so that the true mother might not have it: Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. By this it appeared that she knew her own title to be bad, and feared Solomon would find it so, though she little suspected she was betraying herself, but thought Solomon in good earnest. If she had been the true mother she would not have forfeited her interest in the child by agreeing so readily to this bloody decision. But,

(2.) She that knew the child was her own, rather than the child should be butchered, gives it up to her adversary. How feelingly does she cry out, O, my lord! give her the living child, 1Ki 3:26. "Let me see it hers, rather than not see it at all." By this tenderness towards the child it appeared that she was not the careless mother that had overlaid the dead child, but was the true mother of the living one, that could not endure to see its death, having compassion on the son of her womb. "The case is plain," says Solomon; "what need of witnesses? Give her the living child; for you all see, by this undissembled compassion,

she is the mother of it." Let parents show their love to their children by taking care of them, especially by taking care of their souls, and, with a holy violence, snatching them as brands out of the burning. Those are most likely to have the comfort of children that do their duty to them. Satan pretends to the heart of man, but by this it appears that he is only a pretender, that he would be content to divide with God, whereas the rightful sovereign of the heart will have all or none.

IV. We are told what a great reputation Solomon got among his people by this and other instances of his wisdom, which would have a great influence upon the ease of his government: They feared the king (1Ki 3:28), highly reverenced him, durst not in any thing oppose him, and were afraid of doing an unjust thing; for they knew, if ever it came before him, he would certainly discover it, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, that is, that wisdom with which God had promised to endue him. This made his face to shine, Ec 8:1. This strengthened him, Ec 7:19. This was better to him than weapons of war, Ec 9:18. For this he was both feared and loved.

21 And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear.

22 And the other woman said, Nay; but the living *is* my son, and the dead *is* thy son. And this said, No; but the dead *is* thy son, and the living *is* my son. Thus they spake before the king.

23 Then said the king, The one saith, This *is* my son that liveth, and thy son *is* the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son *is* the dead, and my son *is* the living.

24 And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king.

25 And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other.

26 Then spake the woman whose the living child *was* unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her

the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be
neither mine nor thine, *but* divide *it*.
27 Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in
no wise slay it: she *is* the mother thereof.
28 And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged;
and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God *was*
in him to do judgment.

1 Kings-4

1 So king Solomon was king over all Israel.
2 And these *were* the princes which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok
the priest,
3 Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the
son of Ahilud, the recorder.
4 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the host: and Zadok and
Abiathar *were* the priests:
5 and Azariah the son of Nathan *was* over the officers: and Zabud the
son of Nathan *was* principal officer, *and* the king's friend:
6 and Ahishar *was* over the household: and Adoniram the son of
Abda *was* over the tribute.

Here we have,

I. Solomon upon his throne (1Ki 4:1): So king Solomon was king, that is, he was confirmed and established king over all Israel, and not, as his successors, only over two tribes. He was a king, that is, he did the work and duty of a king, with the wisdom God had given him. Those preserve the name and honour of their place that mind the business of it and make conscience of it.

II The great officers of his court, in the choice of whom, no doubt, his wisdom much appeared. It is observable, 1. That several of them are the same that were in his father's time. Zadok and Abiathar were then priests (2Sa 20:25), so they were now; only then Abiathar had the precedency, now Zadok. Jehoshaphat was then recorder, or keeper of the great seal, so

he was now. Benaiah, in his father's time, was a principal man in military affairs, and so he was now. Shisha was his father's scribe, and his sons were his, 1Ki 4:3. Solomon, though a wise man, would not affect to be wiser than his father in this matter. When sons come to inherit their father's wealth, honour, and power, it is a piece of respect to their memory, cæteris paribus--where it can properly be done, to employ those whom they employed, and trust those whom they trusted. Many pride themselves in being the reverse of their good parents. 2 The rest were priests' sons. His prime-minister of state was Azariah the son of Zadok the priest. Two others of the first rank were the sons of Nathan the prophet, 1Ki 4:5. In preferring them he testified the grateful respect he had for their good father, whom he loved in the name of a prophet.

III. The purveyors for his household, whose business it was to send in provisions from several parts of the country, for the king's tables and cellars (1Ki 4:7) and for his stables (1Ki 4:27,28), that thus,

1. His house might always be well furnished at the best hand. Let great men learn hence good house-keeping, to be generous in spending according to their ability, but prudent in providing. It is the character of the virtuous woman that she bringeth her food from afar (Pr 31:14), not far-fetched and dear-bought, but the contrary, every thing bought where it is cheapest.

2. That thus he himself, and those who immediately attended him, might be eased of a great deal of care, and the more closely apply themselves to the business of the state, not troubled about much serving, provision for that being got ready to their hand.

3. That thus all the parts of the kingdom might be equally benefited by the taking off of the commodities that were the productions of their country and the circulating of the coin. Industry would hereby be encouraged, and consequently wealth

increased, even in those tribes that lay most remote from the court. The providence of God extends itself to all places of his dominions (Ps 103:22); so should the prudence and care of princes.

4. The dividing of this trust into so many hands was prudent, that no man might be continually burdened with the care of it nor grow exorbitantly rich with the profit of it, but that Solomon might have those, in every district, who, having a dependence upon the court, would be serviceable to him and his interest as there was occasion. These commissioners of the victualling-office, not for the army or navy (Solomon was engaged in no war), but for the household, are here named, several of them only by their surnames, as great men commonly call their servants: Ben-hur, Ben-dekar, &c., though several of them have also their proper names prefixed.

Two of them married Solomon's daughters, Ben-Abinadab (1Ki 4:11) and Ahimaaz (1Ki 4:15), and no disparagement to them to marry men of business. Better match with the officers of their father's court that were Israelites than with the sons of princes that were strangers to the covenant of promise. The son of Geber was in Ramoth-Gilead (1Ki 4:19), and Geber himself was in the country of Sihon and Og, which included that and Mahanaim, 1Ki 4:14. He is therefore said to be the only officer in that land, because the other two, mentioned 1Ki 4:13,14, depended on him, and were subordinate to him.

7 And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided
victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a
year made provision.
8 And these *are* their names: The son of Hur, in mount Ephraim:
9 the son of Dekar, in Makaz, and in Shaalbim, and Beth-shemesh,
and Elon-beth-hanan:
10 the son of Hesed, in Aruboth; to him *pertained* Sochoh, and all the
land of Hepher:

11 the son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor; which had Taphath
the daughter of Solomon to wife:
12 Baana the son of Ahilud; *to him pertained* Taanach and Megiddo,
and all Beth-shean, which *is* by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from
Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, *even* unto *the place that is* beyond
Jokneam:
13 the son of Geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him *pertained* the towns of
Jair the son of Manasseh, which *are* in Gilead; to him *also pertained*
the region of Argob, which *is* in Bashan, threescore great cities with
walls and brazen bars:
14 Ahinadab the son of Iddo *had* Mahanaim:
15 Ahimaaz *was* in Naphtali; he also took Basmath the daughter of
Solomon to wife:
16 Baanah the son of Hushai *was* in Asher and in Aloth:
17 Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar:
18 Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin:
19 Geber the son of Uri *was* in the country of Gilead, *in* the country of
Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and *he was*
the only officer which *was* in the land.
20 Judah and Israel *were* many, as the sand which *is* by the sea in
multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry.
21 And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the
land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought
presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.
22 And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine
flour, and threescore measures of meal,

Such a kingdom, and such a court, surely never any prince had, as Solomon's are here described to be.

I. Such a kingdom. Never did the crown of Israel shine so brightly as it did when Solomon wore it, never in his father's days, never in the days of any of his successors; nor was that kingdom ever so glorious a type of the kingdom of the Messiah as it was then. The account here given of it is such as fully answers the prophecies which we have concerning it in Ps

72:1-20, which is a psalm for Solomon, but with reference to Christ.

1 The territories of his kingdom were large and its tributaries many; so it was foretold that he should have dominion from sea to sea, Ps 72:8-11. Solomon reigned not only over all Israel, who were his subjects by choice, but over all the neighbouring kingdoms, who were his subjects by constraint. All the princes from the river Euphrates, north-east to the border of Egypt south-west, not only added to his honour by doing him homage and holding their crowns from him, but added to his wealth by serving him, and bringing him presents, 1Ki 4:21. David, by his successful wars, compelled them to this subjection, and Solomon, by his admirable wisdom, made it easy and reasonable; for it is fit that the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. If they gave him presents, he gave them instructions, and still taught the people knowledge, not only his own people, but those of other nations: and wisdom is better than gold. He had peace on all sides, 1Ki 4:24. None of all the nations that were subject to him offered to shake off his yoke, or to give him any disturbance, but rather thought themselves happy in their dependence upon him. Herein his kingdom typified the Messiah's; for to him it is promised that he shall have the heathen for his inheritance and that princes shall worship him, Isa 49:6,7,53:12.

2 The subjects of his kingdom and its inhabitants, were many and cheerful. (1.) They were numerous and country was exceedingly populous (1Ki 4:20): Judah and Israel were many, and that good land was sufficient to maintain them all. They were as the sand of the sea in multitude. Now was fulfilled the promise made to Abraham concerning the increase of his seed (Ge 22:17), as well as that concerning the extent of their dominion, Ge 15:18. This was their strength and beauty, the honour of their prince, the terror of their enemies, and an advancement of the wealth of the nation. If they grew so

numerous that the place was any where too strait for them, they might remove with advantage into the countries that were subject to them. God's spiritual Israel are many, at least they will be so when they come all together, Re 7:9.

(2.) They were easy, they dwelt safely, or with confidence and assurance (1Ki 4:25), not jealous of their king or of his officers, not disaffected either to him or one to another, nor under any apprehension or danger from enemies foreign or domestic. They were happy and knew it, safe and willing to think themselves so. They dwelt every man under his vine and fig-tree. Solomon invaded no man's property, took not to himself their vineyards and olive-yards, as sometimes was the manner of the king (1Sa 8:14), but what they had they could call their own: he protected every man in the possession and enjoyment of his property. Those that had vines and fig-trees ate the fruit of them themselves; and so great was the peace of the country that they might, if they pleased, dwell as safely under the shadow of them as within the walls of a city. Or, because it was usual to have vines by the sides of their houses (Ps 128:3), they are said to dwell under their vines.

(3.) They were cheerful in the use of their plenty, eating and drinking, and making merry, 1Ki 4:20. Solomon did not only keep a good table himself, but enabled all his subjects, according to their rank, to do so too, and taught them that God gave them their abundance that they might use it soberly and pleasantly, not that they might hoard it up. There is nothing better than for a man to eat the labour of his hands (Ec 2:24), and that with a merry heart, Ec 9:7. His father, in the Psalms, had led his people into the comforts of communion with God, and now he led them into the comfortable use of the good things of this life. This pleasant posture of Israel's affairs extended, in place, from Dan to Beer-sheba--no part of the country was exposed nor upon any account uneasy; and it continued a long time, all the days of Solomon, without any

material interruption. Go where you would, you might see all the marks of plenty, peace, and satisfaction. The spiritual peace, and joy, and holy security, of all the faithful subjects of the Lord Jesus were typified by this. The kingdom of God is not, as Solomon's was, meat and drink, but, what is infinitely better, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. Such a court Solomon kept as can scarcely be paralleled. We may guess at the vast number of his attendants, and the great resort there was to him, by the provision that was made daily for his table. Of bread there were so many measures of flour and meal as, it is computed, would richly serve 3000 men (Carellus computes above 4800 men), and the provision of flesh (1Ki 4:23) was rather more in proportion. What vast quantities were here of beef, mutton, and venison, and the choicest of all fatted things, as some read that which we translate fatted fowl! Ahasuerus, once in his reign, made a great feast, to show the riches of his kingdom, Es 1:3,4. But it was much more the honour of Solomon that he kept a constant table and a very noble one, not of dainties or deceitful meats (he himself witnessed against them, Pr 23:3), but substantial food, for the entertainment of those who came to hear his wisdom. Thus Christ fed those whom he taught, 5000 at a time, more than ever Solomon's table would entertain at once: and all believers have in him a continual feast. Herein he far outdoes Solomon, that he feeds all his subjects, not with the bread that perishes, but with that which endures to eternal life.

It added much both to the strength and glory of Solomon's kingdom that he had such abundance of horses, 40,000 for chariots and 12,000 for his troops, 1000 horse, perhaps, in every tribe, for the preserving of the public peace, 1Ki 4:26. God had commanded that their king should not multiply horses (De 17:16), nor, according to the account here given, considering the extent and wealth of Solomon's kingdom, did he multiply horses in proportion to his neighbours; for we find

even the Philistines bringing into the field 30,000 chariots (1Sa 13:5) and the Syrians at least 40,000 horse, 2Sa 10:18. The same officers that provided for his house provided also for his stable, 1Ki 4:27,28. Every one knew his place, and work, and time; and so this great court was kept without confusion. Solomon, that had vast incomes, lived at a vast expense, and perhaps wrote that with application to himself, Ec 5:11. When goods increase those are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes, unless withal they have the satisfaction of doing good with them?

23 ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred
sheep, besides harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl.
24 For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side the river, from
Tiphsah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and
he had peace on all sides round about him.
25 And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and
under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of
Solomon.
26 And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots,
and twelve thousand horsemen.
27 And those officers provided victuals for king Solomon, and for all
that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they
lacked nothing.
28 Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they
unto the place where *the officers* were, every man according to his
charge.
29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding
much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the
seashore.
30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of
the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.
31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and
Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame
was in all nations round about.

32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

Solomon's wisdom was more his glory than his wealth, and here we have a general account of it.

I The fountain of his wisdom: God gave it him, 1Ki 4:29. He owns it himself. Pr 2:6, The Lord giveth wisdom. He gives the powers of reason (Job 38:36), preserves and improves them. The ordinary advances of them are owing to his providence, the sanctification of them to his grace, and this extraordinary pitch at which they arrived in Solomon to a special grant of his favour to him in answer to prayer.

II The fulness of it: He had wisdom and understanding, exceeding much, great knowledge of distant countries and the histories of former times, a quickness of thought, strength of memory, and clearness of judgment, such as never any man had. It is called largeness of heart; for the heart is often put for the intellectual powers. He had a vast compass of knowledge, could take things entire, and had an admirable faculty of laying things together. Some, by his largeness of heart, understand his courage and boldness, and that great assurance with which he delivered his dictates and determinations. Or it may be meant of his disposition to do good with his knowledge. He was very free and communicative, had the gift of utterance as well as wisdom, was as free of his learning as he was of his meat, and grudged neither to any that were about him.

Note, It is very desirable that those who have large gifts of any kind should have large hearts to use them for the good of others; and this is from the hand of God, Ec 2:24. He shall enlarge the heart, Ps 119:32. The greatness of Solomon's wisdom is illustrated by comparison. Chaldea and Egypt were nations famous for learning; thence the Greeks borrowed theirs; but the greatest scholars of these nations came short of Solomon, 1Ki 4:30. If nature excels art, much more does grace. The knowledge

which God gives by special favour goes beyond that which man gets by his own labour. Some wise men there were in Solomon's time, who were in great repute, particularly Heman, and others who were Levites, and employed by David in the temple-music, 1Ch 15:19. Heman was his seer in the word of God, 1Ch 25:5. Chalcol and Darda were own brothers, and they also were noted for learning and wisdom. But Solomon excelled them all (1Ki 4:30), he out-did them and confounded them; his counsel was much more valuable.

III. The fame of it. It was talked of in all nations round about. His great wealth and glory made his wisdom much more illustrious, and have him those opportunities of showing it which those cannot have that live in poverty and obscurity. The jewel of wisdom may receive great advantage by the setting of it.

IV. The fruits of it; by these the tree is known: he did not bury his talent, but showed his wisdom,

1. In his compositions. Those in divinity, written by divine inspiration, are not mentioned here, for they are extant, and will remain to the world's end monuments of his wisdom, and are, as other parts of scripture, of use to make us wise unto salvation. But, besides these, it appears by what he spoke, or dictated to be written from him,

(1.) That he was a moralist, and a man of great prudence, for he spoke 3000 proverbs, wise sayings, apophthegms, of admirable use for the conduct of human life. The world is much governed by proverbs, and was never better furnished with useful ones than by Solomon. Whether those proverbs of Solomon that we have were any part of the 3000 is uncertain.

(2.) That he was a poet and a man of great wit: His songs were 1005, of which one only is extant, because that only was divinely inspired, which is therefore called his Song of songs. His wise

instructions were communicated by proverbs, that they might be familiar to those whom he designed to teach and ready on all occasions, and by songs, that they might be pleasant and move the affections.

(3.) That he was a natural philosopher, and a man of great learning and insight into the mysteries of nature. From his own and others' observations and experience, he wrote both of plants and animals (1Ki 4:33), descriptions of their natures and qualities, and (some think) of the medicinal use of them.

2. In his conversation. There came persons from all parts, who were more inquisitive after knowledge than their neighbours, to hear the wisdom of Solomon, 1Ki 4:34. Kings that had heard of it sent their ambassadors to hear it and to bring them instructions from it. Solomon's court was the staple of learning, and the rendezvous of philosophers, that is, the lovers of wisdom, who all came to light their candle at his lamp and to borrow from him. Let those who magnify the modern learning above that of the ancients produce such a treasure of knowledge any where in these latter ages as that was which Solomon was master of; yet this puts an honour upon human learning, that Solomon was praised for it, and recommends it to the great men of the earth, as well worthy their diligent search.

33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that *is* in Lebanon even
unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of
beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.
34 And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from
all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

1 Kings-5

Solomon’s Agreement with King Hiram

1 And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David.
2 And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying,
3 Thou knowest how that David my father could not build a house unto the name of the Lord his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet.

We have here an account of the amicable correspondence between Solomon and Hiram. Tyre was a famous trading city, that lay close upon the sea, in the border of Israel; its inhabitants (as should seem) were none of the devoted nations, nor ever at enmity with Israel, and therefore David never offered to destroy them, but lived in friendship with them. It is here said of Hiram their king that he was ever a lover of David; and we have reason to think he was a worshipper of the true God, and had himself renounced, though he could not reform, the idolatry of his city. David's character will win the affections even of those that are without. Here is,

I. Hiram's embassy of compliment to Solomon, 1Ki 5:1. He sent, as is usual among princes, to condole with him on the death of David, and to renew his alliances with him upon his succession to the government. It is good keeping up friendship and communion with the families in which religion is uppermost.

II. Solomon's embassy of business to Hiram, sent, it is likely, by messengers of his own. In wealth, honour, and power, Hiram was very much inferior to Solomon, yet Solomon had occasion to be beholden to him and begged his favour. Let us never look with disdain on those below us, because we know

not how soon we may need them. Solomon, in his letter to Hiram, acquaints him,

1. With his design to build a temple to the honour of God. Some think that temples among the heathen took their first rise and copy from the tabernacle which Moses erected in the wilderness, and that there were none before that; however there were many houses built in honour of the false gods before this was built in honour of the God of Israel, so little is external splendour a mark of the true church. Solomon tells Hiram, who was himself no stranger to the affair,

(1.) That David's wars were an obstruction to him, that he could not build this temple, though he designed it, 1Ki 5:3. They took up much of his time, and thoughts, and cares, were a constant expense to him and a constant employment of his subjects; so that he could not do it so well as it must be done, and therefore, it not being essential to religion, he must leave it to be done by his successor. See what need we have to pray that God will give peace in our time, because, in time or war, the building of the gospel temple commonly goes on slowly.

(2.) That peace gave him an opportunity to build it, and therefore he resolved to set about it immediately: God has given me rest both at home and abroad, and there is no adversary (1Ki 5:4), no Satan (so the word is), no instrument of Satan to oppose it, or to divert us from it. Satan does all he can to hinder temple work (1Th 2:18,Zec 3:1), but when he is bound (Re 20:2) we should be busy. When there is no evil occurrent, then let us be vigorous and zealous in that which is good and get it forward. When the churches have rest let them be edified, Ac 9:31. Days of peace and prosperity present us with a fair gale, which we must account for if we improve not. As God's providence excited Solomon to think of building the temple, by giving him wealth and leisure, so his promise encouraged him. God had told David that his son should build

him a house, 1Ki 5:5. He will take it as a pleasure to be thus employed, and will not lose the honour designed him by that promise. It may stir us up much to good undertakings to be assured of good success in them. Let God's promise quicken our endeavours.

2. With his desire that Hiram would assist him herein. Lebanon was the place whence timber must be had, a noble forest in the north of Canaan, particularly expressed in the grant of that land to Israel--all Lebanon, Jos 13:5. So that Solomon was proprietor of all its productions. The cedars of Lebanon are spoken of as, in a special manner, the planting of the Lord (Ps 109:16), being designed for Israel's use and particularly for temple service. But Solomon owned that though the trees were his the Israelites had not skill to hew timber like the Sidonians, who were Hiram's subjects. Canaan was a land of wheat and barley (De 8:8), which employed Israel in the affairs of husbandry, so that they were not at all versed in manufactures: in them the Sidonians excelled. Israel, in the things of God, are a wise and understanding people; and yet, in curious arts, inferior to their neighbours. True piety is a much more valuable gift of heaven than the highest degree of ingenuity. Better be an Israelite skilful in the law than a Sidonian skilful to hew timber. But, the case being thus, Solomon courts Hiram to send him workmen, and promises (1Ki 5:6) both to assist them (my servants shall be with thy servants, to work under them), and to pay them (unto thee will I give hire for thy servants); for the labourer, even in church-work, though it be indeed its own wages, is worthy of his hire, The evangelical prophet, foretelling the glory of the church in the days of the Messiah, seems to allude to this story, Isa 60:1-22, where he prophesies,

(1.) That the sons of strangers (such were the Tyrians and Sidonians) shall build up the wall of the gospel temple, Isa

60:10. Ministers were raised up among the Gentiles for the edifying of the body of Christ.

(2.) That the glory of Lebanon shall be brought to it to beautify it, Isa 60:13. All external endowments and advantages shall be made serviceable to the interests of Christ's kingdom.

3. Hiram's reception of, and return to, this message.

(1.) He received it with great satisfaction to himself: He rejoiced greatly (1Ki 5:7) that Solomon trod in his father's steps, and carried on his designs, and was likely to be so great a blessing to his kingdom. In this Hiram's generous spirit rejoiced, and not merely in the prospect he had of making an advantage to himself by Solomon's employing him. What he had the pleasure of he gave God the praise of: Blessed be the Lord, who has given to David (who was himself a wise man) a wise son to rule over this great people. See here,

[1.] With what pleasure Hiram speaks of Solomon's wisdom and the extent of his dominion. Let us learn not to envy others either those secular advantages or those endowments of the mind wherein they excel us. What a great comfort it is to those that wish well to the Israel of God to see religion and wisdom kept up in families from one generation to another, especially in great families and those that have great influence on others! where it is so, God must have the glory of it. If to godly parents be given a godly seed (Mal 2:15), it is a token for good, and a happy indication that the entail of the blessing shall not be cut off.

(2.) He answered it with great satisfaction to Solomon, granting him what he desired, and showing himself very forward to assist him in this great and good work to which he was laying his hand. We have here his articles of agreement

with Solomon concerning this affair, in which we may observe Hiram's prudence.

[1.] He deliberated upon the proposal, before he returned an answer (1Ki 5:8): I have considered the things. It is common for those that make bargains rashly afterwards to wish them unmade again. The virtuous woman considers a field and then buys it, Pr 31:16. Those do not lose time who take time to consider.

[2.] He descended to particulars in the articles, that there might be no misunderstanding afterwards, to occasion a quarrel. Solomon had spoken of hewing the trees (1Ki 5:6), and Hiram agrees to what he desired concerning that (1Ki 5:8); but nothing had been said concerning carriage, and this matter therefore must be settled. Land-carriage would be very troublesome and chargeable; he therefore undertakes to bring all the timber down from Lebanon by sea, a coasting voyage. Conveyance by water is a great convenience to trade, for which God is to have praise, who taught man that discretion. Observe what a definite bargain Hiram made. Solomon must appoint the place where the timber shall be delivered, and thither Hiram will undertake to bring it and be responsible for its safety. As the Sidonians excelled the Israelites in timber-work, so they did in sailing; for Tyre and Sidon were situate at the entry of the sea (Eze 27:3): they therefore were fittest to take care of the water-carriage. Tractant fabrilia fabri--Every artist has his trade assigned. And,

[3.] If Hiram undertake for the work, and do all Solomon's desire concerning the timber (1Ki 5:8), he justly expects that Solomon shall undertake for the wages: "Thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household (1Ki 5:9), not only for the workmen, but for my own family." If Tyre supply Israel with craftsmen, Israel will supply Tyre with corn, Eze 27:17. Thus, by the wise disposal of Providence, one

country has need of another and is benefited by another, that there may be mutual correspondence and dependence, to the glory of God our common parent.

4 But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side, *so that there is* neither adversary nor evil occurrent.

5 And, behold, I purpose to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God, as the Lord spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build a house unto my name.

6 Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that *there is* not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians.

7 And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed *be* the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people.

8 And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: *and* I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir.

9 My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon unto the sea; and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive *them:* and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household.

10 So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees *according to* all his desire.

Here is, I The performance of the agreement between Solomon and Hiram. Each of the parties made good his engagement. 1. Hiram delivered Solomon the timber, according to his bargain, 1Ki 5:10. The trees were Solomon's, but perhaps--Materiam superabat opus--The workmanship was of more value than the article. Hiram is therefore said to deliver the trees. 2. Solomon conveyed to Hiram the corn which he had promised him, 1Ki

5:11. Thus let justice be followed (as the expression is, De 16:20), justice on both sides, in every bargain.

II The confirmation of the friendship that was between them hereby. God gave Solomon wisdom (1Ki 5:12), which was more and better than any thing Hiram did or could give him; but this made Hiram love him, and enabled Solomon to improve his kindness, so that they were both willing to ripen their mutual love into a mutual league, that it might be lasting. It is wisdom to strengthen our friendship with those whom we find to be honest and fair, lest new friends prove not so firm and so kind as old ones.

III. The labourers whom Solomon employed in preparing materials for the temple.

1. Some were Israelites, who were employed in the more easy and honourable part of the work, felling trees and helping to square them, in conjunction with Hiram's servants; for this he appointed 30,000, but employed only 10,000 at a time, so that for one month's work they had two months' vacation, both for rest and for the despatch of their own affairs at home, 1Ki 5:13,14. It was temple service, yet Solomon takes care that they shall not be over-worked. Great men ought to consider that their servants must rest as well as they.

2. Others were captives of other nations, who were to bear burdens and to hew stone (1Ki 5:15), and we read not that these had their resting times as the other had, for they were doomed to servitude.

3. There were some employed as directors and overseers (1Ki 5:16), 3300 that ruled over the people, and they were as necessary and useful in their place as the labourers in theirs; here were many hands and many eyes employed, for preparation was now to be made, not only for the temple, but

for all the rest of Solomon's buildings, at Jerusalem, and here in the forest of Lebanon, and in other places of his dominion, of which see 1Ki 9:17-19. He speaks of the vastness of his undertakings (Ec 2:4, I made me great works), which required this vast number of workmen.

IV. The laying of the foundation of the temple; for that is the building his heart is chiefly upon, and therefore he begins with that, 1Ki 5:17,18. It should seem, Solomon was himself present, and president, at the founding of the temple, and that the first stone (as has been usual in famous buildings) was laid with some solemnity. Solomon commanded and they brought costly stones for the foundation; he would do every thing like himself, generously, and therefore would have some of the costliest stones laid, or buried rather, in the foundation, though, being out of sight, worse might have served. Christ, who is laid for a foundation, is an elect and precious stone (Isa 28:16), and the foundations of the church are said to be laid with sapphires, Isa 54:11, compare Re 21:19. That sincerity which is our gospel perfection obliges us to lay our foundation firm and to bestow most pains on that part of our religion which lies out of the sight of men.

11 And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat *for* food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.

12 And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.

13 And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men.

14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, *and* two months at home: and Adoniram *was* over the levy.

15 And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains;

16 besides the chief of Solomon's officers which *were* over the work,
three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people
that wrought in the work.
17 And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly
stones, *and* hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house.
18 And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew *them*, and
the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the
house.

1 Kings-6

Solomon Builds the House of the Lord

1 And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the
children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth
year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which *is* the
second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.
2 And the house which king Solomon built for the Lord, the length
thereof *was* threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty *cubits*,
and the height thereof thirty cubits.
3 And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits *was*
the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; *and* ten
cubits *was* the breadth thereof before the house.

Here, I The temple is called the house of the Lord (1Ki 6:1), because it was,

1. Directed and modelled by him. Infinite Wisdom was the architect, and gave David the plan or pattern by the Spirit, not by word of mouth only, but, for the greater certainty and exactness, in writing (1Ch 28:11,12), as he had given to Moses in the mouth a draught of the tabernacle.

2. Dedicated and devoted to him and to his honour, to be employed in his service, so his as never any other house was, for he manifested his glory in it (so as never in any other) in a

way agreeable to that dispensation; for, when there were carnal ordinances, there was a worldly sanctuary, Heb 9:1,10. This gave it its beauty of holiness, that it was the house of the Lord, which far transcended all its other beauties.

II The time when it began to be built is exactly set down.

1. It was just 480 years after the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt. Allowing forty years to Moses, seventeen to Joshua, 299 to the Judges, forty to Eli, forty to Samuel and Saul, forty to David, and four to Solomon before he began the work, we have just the sum of 480. So long it was after that holy state was founded before that holy house was built, which, in less than 430 years, was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar. It was thus deferred because Israel had, by their sins, rendered themselves unworthy of this honour, and because God would show how little he values external pomp and splendour in his service: he was in no haste for a temple. David's tent, which was clean and convenient, though it was neither stately nor rich, nor, for aught that appears, ever consecrated, is called the house of the Lord (2Sa 12:20), and served as well as Solomon's temple; yet, when God gave Solomon great wealth, he put it into his heart thus to employ it, and graciously accepted him, chiefly because it was to be a shadow of good things to come, Heb 9:9.

2. It was in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the first three years being taken up in settling the affairs of his kingdom, that he might not find any embarrassment from them in this work. It is not time lost which is spent in composing ourselves for the work of God, and disentangling ourselves from every thing which might distract or divert us. During this time he was adding to the preparations which his father had made (1Ch 22:14), hewing the stone, squaring the timber, and getting every thing ready, so that he is not to be blamed for slackness

in deferring it so long. We are truly serving God when we are preparing for his service and furnishing ourselves for it.

III. The materials are brought in, ready for their place (1Ki 6:7), so ready that there was neither hammer nor ax heard in the house while it was in building. In all building Solomon prescribes it as a rule of prudence to prepare the work in the field, and afterwards build, Pr 24:27. But here, it seems, the preparation was more than ordinarily full and exact, to such a degree that, when the several parts came to be put together, there was nothing defective to be added, nothing amiss to be amended. It was to be the temple of God of peace, and therefore no iron tool must be heard in it. Quietness and silence both become and befriend religious exercises: God's work should be done with as much care and as little noise as may be. The temple was thrown down with axes and hammers, and those that threw it down roared in the midst of the congregation (Ps 74:4,6); but it was built up in silence. Clamour and violence often hinder the work of God, but never further it.

IV. The dimensions are laid down (1Ki 6:2,3) according to the rules of proportion. Some observe that the length and breadth were just double to that of the tabernacle. Now that Israel had grown more numerous the place of their meeting needed to be enlarged (Isa 54:1,2), and now that they had grown richer they were the better able to enlarge it. Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap so.

V. An account of the windows (1Ki 6:4): They were broad within, and narrow without, Marg. Such should the eyes of our mind be, reflecting nearer on ourselves than on other people, looking much within, to judge ourselves, but little without, to censure our brethren. The narrowness of the lights intimated the darkness of that dispensation, in comparison with the gospel day.

VI. The chambers are described (1Ki 6:5,6), which served as vestries, in which the utensils of the tabernacle were carefully laid up, and where the priests dressed and undressed themselves and left the clothes in which they ministered: probably in some of these chambers they feasted upon the holy things. Solomon was not so intent upon the magnificence of the house as to neglect the conveniences that were requisite for the offices thereof, that every thing might be done decently and in order. Care was taken that the beams should not be fastened in the walls to weaken them, 1Ki 6:6. Let not the church's strength be impaired under pretence of adding to its beauty or convenience.

4 And for the house he made windows of narrow lights.

5 And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, *against* the walls of the house round about, *both* of the temple and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about.

6 The nethermost chamber *was* five cubits broad, and the middle *was* six cubits broad, and the third *was* seven cubits broad: for without *in the wall* of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that *the beams* should not be fastened in the walls of the house.

7 And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe *nor* any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

8 The door for the middle chamber *was* in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle *chamber,* and out of the middle into the third.

9 So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar.

10 And *then* he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar.

11 And the word of the Lord came to Solomon, saying,

12 *Concerning* this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my

commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father:

Here is, I The word God sent to Solomon, when he was engaged in building the temple. God let him know that he took notice of what he was doing, the house he was now building, 1Ki 6:12. None employ themselves for God without having his eye upon them. "I know thy works, thy good works." He assured him that if he would proceed and persevere in obedience to the divine law, and keep in the way of duty and the true worship of God, the divine loving-kindness should be drawn out both to himself (I will perform my word with thee) and to his kingdom: "Israel shall be ever owned as my people; I will dwell among them, and not forsake them." This word God sent him probably by a prophet,

1. That by the promise he might be encouraged and comforted in his work. Perhaps sometimes the great care, expense, and fatigue of it, made him ready to wish he had never begun it; but this would help him through the difficulties of it, that the promised establishment of his family and kingdom would abundantly recompense all his pains. An eye to the promise will carry us cheerfully through our work; and those who wish well to the public will think nothing too much that they can do to secure and perpetuate to it the tokens of God's presence.

2. That, by the condition annexed, he might be awakened to consider that though he built the temple ever so strong the glory of it would soon depart, unless he and his people continued to walk in God's statutes. God plainly let him know that all this charge which he and his people were at, in erecting this temple, would neither excuse them from obedience to the law of God nor shelter them from his judgments in case of disobedience. Keeping God's commandments is better, and more pleasing to him, than building churches.

II The work Solomon did for God: So he built the house (1Ki 6:14), so animated by the message God had sent him, so admonished not to expect that God should own his building unless he were obedient to his laws: "Lord, I proceed upon these terms, being firmly resolved to walk in thy statutes." The strictness of God's government will never drive a good man from his service, but quicken him in it. Solomon built and finished, he went on with the work, and God went along with him till it was completed. It is spoken both to God's praise and his: he grew not weary of the work, met not with any obstructions (as Ezr 4:24), did not out-build his property, nor do it by halves, but, having begun to build, was both able and willing to finish; for he was a wise builder.

13 and I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake
my people Israel.
14 So Solomon built the house, and finished it.
15 And he built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both
the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling: *and* he covered
them on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house
with planks of fir.
16 And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor
and the walls with boards of cedar: he even built *them* for it within,
even for the oracle, *even* for the most holy *place.*

Here, I. We have a particular account of the details of the building.

1 The wainscot of the temple. It was of cedar (1Ki 6:15), which was strong and durable, and of a very sweet smell. The wainscot was curiously carved with knops (like eggs or apples) and flowers, no doubt as the fashion then was, 1Ki 6:18.

2 The gilding. It was not like ours, washed over, but the whole house, all the inside of the temple (1Ki 6:22), even the floor (1Ki 6:30), he overlaid with gold, and the most holy place with pure gold, 1Ki 6:21. Solomon would spare no expense

necessary to make it every way sumptuous. Gold was under foot there, as it should be in all the living temples: the abundance of it lessened its worth.

3. The oracle, or speaking-place (for so the word signifies), the holy of holies, so called because thence God spoke to Moses, and perhaps to the high priest, when he consulted with the breast-plate of judgment. In this place the ark of the covenant was to be set, 1Ki 6:19. Solomon made every thing new, and more magnificent than it had been, except the ark, which was still the same that Moses made, with its mercy-seat and cherubim; that was the token of God's presence, which is always the same with his people whether they meet in tent or temple, and changes not with their condition.

4. The cherubim. Besides those at the ends of the mercy-seat, which covered the ark, (1.) Solomon set up two more, very large ones, images of young men (as some think), with wings made of olive-wood, and all overlaid with gold, 1Ki 6:23-28, &c. This most holy place was much larger than that in the tabernacle, and therefore the ark would have seemed lost in it, and the dead wall would have been unsightly, if it had not been thus adorned. (2.) He carved cherubim upon all the walls of the house, 1Ki 6:29. The heathen set up images of their gods and worshipped them; but these were designed to represent the servants and attendants of the God of Israel, the holy angels, not to be themselves worshipped (see thou do it not), but to show how great he is whom we are to worship.

5. The doors. The folding doors that led into the oracle were but a fifth part of the wall (1Ki 6:31), those into the temple were a fourth part (1Ki 6:33); but both were beautified with cherubim engraven on them, 1Ki 6:32,35.

6. The inner court, in which the brazen altar was at which the priests ministered. This was separated from the court where

the people were by a low wall, three rows of hewn stone tipped with a cornice of cedar (1Ki 6:36), that over it the people might see what was done and hear what the priests said to them; for, even under that dispensation, they were not kept wholly either in the dark or at a distance.

7. The time spent in this building. It was but seven years and a half from the founding to the finishing of it, 1Ki 6:38. Considering the vastness and elegance of the building, and the many appurtenances to it which were necessary to fit it for use, it was soon done. Solomon was in earnest in it, had money enough, had nothing to divert him from it, and many hands made quick work. He finished it (as the margin reads it) with all the appurtenances thereof, and with all the ordinances thereof, not only built the place, but set forward the work for which it was built.

II. Let us now see what was typified by this temple.

1. Christ is the true temple; he himself spoke of the temple of his body, Joh 2:21. God himself prepared him his body, Heb 10:5. In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, as the Shechinah in the temple. In him meet all God's spiritual Israel. Through him we have access with confidence to God. All the angels of God, those blessed cherubim, have a charge to worship him.

2. Every believer is a living temple, in whom the Spirit of God dwells, 1Co 3:16. Even the body is such by virtue of its union with the soul, 1Co 6:19. We are not only wonderfully made by the divine providence, but more wonderfully made anew by the divine grace. This living temple is built upon Christ as its foundation and will be perfected in due time.

3. The gospel church is the mystical temple; it grows to a holy temple in the Lord (Eph 2:21), enriched and beautified with

the gifts and graces of the Spirit, as Solomon's temple with gold and precious stones. Only Jews built the tabernacle, but Gentiles joined with them in building the temple. Even strangers and foreigners are built up a habitation of God, Eph 2:19,22. The temple was divided into the holy place and the most holy, the courts of it into the outer and inner; so there are the visible and the invisible church. The door into the temple was wider than that into the oracle. Many enter into profession that come short of salvation. This temple is built firm, upon a rock, not to be taken down as the tabernacle of the Old Testament was. The temple was long in preparing, but was built at last. The top-stone of the gospel church will, at length, be brought forth with shoutings, and it is a pity that there should be the clashing of axes and hammers in the building of it. Angels are ministering spirits, attending the church on all sides and all the members of it.

4. Heaven is the everlasting temple. There the church will be fixed, and no longer movable. The streets of the new Jerusalem, in allusion to the flooring of the temple, are said to be of pure gold, Re 21:21. The cherubim there always attend the throne of glory. The temple was uniform, and in heaven there is the perfection of beauty and harmony. In Solomon's temple there was no noise of axes and hammers. Every thing is quiet and serene in heaven; all that shall be stones in that building must in the present sate of probation and preparation be fitted and made ready for it, must be hewn and squared by divine grace, and so made meet for a place there.

17 And the house, that *is,* the temple before it, was forty cubits *long*.
18 And the cedar of the house within *was* carved with knops and open flowers: all *was* cedar; there was no stone seen.
19 And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the Lord.
20 And the oracle in the forepart *was* twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof:

and he overlaid it with pure gold; and *so* covered the altar *which was of* cedar.
21 So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle; and he overlaid it with gold.
22 And the whole house he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that *was* by the oracle he overlaid with gold.
23 And within the oracle he made two cherubim *of* olive tree, *each* ten cubits high.
24 And five cubits *was* the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing unto the uttermost part of the other *were* ten cubits.
25 And the other cherub *was* ten cubits: both the cherubim *were* of one measure and one size.
26 The height of the one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was it* of the other cherub.
27 And he set the cherubim within the inner house: and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubim, so that the wing of the one touched the *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house.
28 And he overlaid the cherubim with gold.
29 And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, within and without.
30 And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold, within and without.
31 And for the entering of the oracle he made doors *of* olive tree: the lintel *and* side posts *were* a fifth part *of the wall*.
32 The two doors also *were of* olive tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubim, and upon the palm trees.
33 So also made he for the door of the temple posts *of* olive tree, a fourth part *of the wall*.
34 And the two doors *were of* fir tree: the two leaves of the one door

were folding, and the two leaves of the other door *were* folding.
35 And he carved *thereon* cherubim and palm trees and open flowers:
and covered *them* with gold fitted upon the carved work.
36 And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a
row of cedar beams.
37 In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the Lord
laid, in the month Zif:
38 and in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which *is* the eighth
month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof,
and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in
building it.

1 Kings-7

Solomon's Other Buildings

1 But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he
finished all his house.

Never had any man so much of the spirit of building as Solomon had, nor to better purpose; he began with the temple, built for God first, and then all his other buildings were comfortable. The surest foundations of lasting prosperity are those which are laid in an early piety, Mt 6:33.

1. He built a house for himself (1Ki 7:1), where he dwelt, 1Ki 7:8. His father had built a good house; but it was no reflection upon his father for him to build a better, in proportion to the estate wherewith God had blessed him. Much of the comfort of this life is connected with an agreeable house. He was thirteen years building this house, whereas he built the temple in little more than seven years; not that he was more exact, but less eager and intent, in building his own house than in building God's. He was in no haste for his own palace, but impatient till the temple was finished and fit for use. Thus we ought to prefer God's honour before our own ease and satisfaction.

2. He built the house of the forest at Lebanon (1Ki 7:2), supposed to be a country seat near Jerusalem, so called from the pleasantness of its situation and the trees that encompassed it. I rather incline to think that it was a house built in the forest of Lebanon itself, whither (though far distant from Jerusalem) Solomon (having so many chariots and horses, and those dispersed into chariot-cities, which probably were his stages) might frequently retire with ease. It does not appear that his throne (mentioned 1Ki 7:7) was at the house of the forest of Lebanon, and it was not at all improper to put his shields there as in a magazine. Express notice is taken of his buildings, not only in Jerusalem, but in Lebanon (1Ki 9:19), and we read of the tower of Lebanon, which looks towards Damascus (So 7:4), which probably was part of this house. A particular account is given of this house, that being built in Lebanon, a place famed for cedars, the pillars, and beams, and roof, were all cedar (1Ki 7:2,3), and, being designed for pleasant prospects, there were three tiers of windows on each side, light against light (1Ki 7:4,5), or, as it may be read, prospect against prospect. Those whose lost i cast in the country may be well reconciled to a country life by this, that some of the greatest princes have thought those the most pleasant of their days which they have spent in their country retirements.

3. He built piazzas before one of his houses, either that at Jerusalem or that in Lebanon, which were very famous--a porch of pillars (1Ki 7:6), perhaps for an exchange or a guard-house, or for those to walk in that attended him about business till they could have audience, or for state and magnificence. He himself speaks of Wisdom's building her house, and hewing out her seven pillars (Pr 9:1), for the shelter of those that, three verses before (1Ki 8:34), are said to watch daily at her gates and to wait at the posts of her doors.

4. At his house where he dwelt in Jerusalem he built a great hall, or porch of judgment, where was set the throne, or king's bench, for the trial of causes, in which he himself was appealed to (placita coram ipso rege tenenda--causes were to be adjusted in the king's presence,) and this was richly wainscoted with cedar, from the floor to the roof, 1Ki 7:7. He had there also another court within the porch, nearer his house, of similar work, for his attendants to walk in, 1Ki 7:8. 5. He built a house for his wife, where she kept her court, 1Ki 7:8. It is said to be like the porch, because built of cedar like it, though not in the same form; this, no doubt, was nearer adjoining to his own palace, yet perhaps if it had been as near as it ought to have been Solomon would not have multiplied wives as he did.

The wonderful magnificence of all these buildings is taken notice of, 1Ki 7:9-12, &c. All the materials were the best of their kind. The foundation-stones were costly for their size, four or five yards square, or at least so many yards long (1Ki 7:10), and the stones of the building were costly for the workmanship, hewn and sawn, and in all respects finely wrought, 1Ki 7:9,11. The court of his own house was like that of the temple (1Ki 7:12,1Ki 6:36); so well did he like the model of God's courts that he made his own by it.

2 He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof *was* a hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars.

3 And *it was* covered with cedar above upon the beams, that *lay* on forty-five pillars, fifteen *in* a row.

4 And *there were* windows *in* three rows, and light *was* against light *in* three ranks.

5 And all the doors and posts *were* square, with the windows: and light *was* against light *in* three ranks.

6 And he made a porch of pillars; the length thereof *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch *was* before them: and the *other* pillars and the thick beam *were* before them.

7 Then he made a porch for the throne where he might judge, *even* the porch of judgment: and *it was* covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other.

8 And his house where he dwelt *had* another court within the porch, *which* was of the like work. Solomon made also a house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken *to wife,* like unto this porch.

9 All these *were of* costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and *so* on the outside toward the great court.

10 And the foundation *was of* costly stones, *even* great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits.

11 And above *were* costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars.

12 And the great court round about *was* with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the Lord, and for the porch of the house.

Solomon Employs Hiram of Tyre

13 And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre.

14 He *was* a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work.

We have here an account of the brass-work about the temple. There was no iron about the temple, though we find David preparing for the temple iron for things of iron, 1Ch 29:2. What those things were we are not told, but some of the things of brass are here described and the rest mentioned.

I The brasier whom Solomon employed to preside in this part of the work was Hiram, or Huram (2Ch 4:11), who was by his mother's side an Israelite, of the tribe of Naphtali, by his father's side a man of Tyre, 1Ki 7:14. If he had the ingenuity

of a Tyrian, and the affection of an Israelite to the house of God (the head of a Tyrian and the heart of an Israelite), it was happy that the blood of the two nations mixed in him, for thereby he was qualified for the work to which he was designed. As the tabernacle was built with the wealth of Egypt, so the temple with the wit of Tyre. God will serve himself by the common gifts of the children of men.

II The brass he made use of was the best he could get. All the brazen vessels were of bright brass (1Ki 7:45), good brass, so the Chaldee, that which was strongest and looked finest. God, who is the best, must be served and honoured with the best.

III. The place where all the brazen vessels were cast was the plain of Jordan, because the ground there was stiff and clayey, fit to make moulds of for the casting of the brass (1Ki 7:46), and Solomon would not have this dirty smoky work done in or near Jerusalem.

IV. The quantity was not accounted for. The vessels were unnumbered (so it may be read, 1Ki 7:47, as well as unweighed), because they were exceedingly numerous, and it would have been an endless thing to keep the account of them; neither was the weight of the brass, when it was delivered to the workmen, searched or enquired into; so honest were the workmen, and such great plenty of brass they had, that there was no danger of wanting. We must ascribe it to Solomon's care that he provided so much, not to his carelessness that he kept no account of it.

V. Some particulars of the brass-work are described.

1. Two brazen pillars, which were set up in the porch of the temple (1Ki 7:21), whether under the cover of the porch or in the open air is not certain; it was between the temple and the court of the priests. These pillars were neither to hang gates

upon nor to rest any building upon, but purely for ornament and significancy.

(1.) What an ornament they were we may gather from the account here given of the curious work that was about them, chequer-work, chain-work, net-work, lily-work, and pomegranates in rows, and all of bright brass, and framed no doubt according to the best rules of proportion, to please the eye.

(2.) Their significancy is intimated in the names given them (1Ki 7:21): Jachin--he will establish; and Boaz--in him is strength. Some think they were intended for memorials of the pillar of cloud and fire which led Israel through the wilderness: I rather think them designed for memorandums to the priests and others that came to worship at God's door,

[1.] To depend upon God only, and not upon any sufficiency of their own, for strength and establishment in all their religious exercises. When we come to wait upon God, and find our hearts wandering and unfixed, then by faith let us fetch in help from heaven: Jachin--God will fix this roving mind. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. We find ourselves weak and unable for holy duties, but this is our encouragement: Boaz--in him is our strength, who works in us both to will and to do. I will go in the strength of the Lord God. Spiritual strength and stability are to be had at the door of God's temple, where we must wait for the gifts of grace in the use of the means of grace.

[2.] It was a memorandum to them of the strength and establishment of the temple of God among them. Let them keep close to God and duty, and they should never lose their dignities and privileges, but the grant should be confirmed and perpetuated to them. The gospel church is what God will establish, what he will strengthen, and what the gates of hell

can never prevail against. But, with respect to this temple, when it was destroyed particular notice was taken of the destroying of these pillars (2Ki 25:13,17), which had been the tokens of its establishment, and would have been so if they had not forsaken God.

2. A brazen sea, a very large vessel, above five yards in diameter, and which contained above 500 barrels of water for the priests' use, in washing themselves and the sacrifices, and keeping the courts of the temple clean, 1Ki 7:23-26, &c. It stood raised upon the figures of twelve oxen in brass, so high that either they must have stairs to climb up to it or cocks at the bottom to draw water from it. The Gibeonites, or Nethinim, who were to draw water for the house of God, had the care of filling it. Some think Solomon made the images of oxen to support this great cistern in contempt of the golden calf which Israel had worshipped, that (as bishop Patrick expresses it) the people might see there was nothing worthy of adoration in those figures; they were fitter to make posts of than to make gods of. Yet this prevailed not to prevent Jerusalem's setting up the calves for deities. In the court of the tabernacle there was only a laver of brass provided to wash in, but in the court of the temple a sea of brass, intimating that by the gospel of Christ much fuller preparation is made for our cleansing than was by the law of Moses. That had a laver, this has a sea, a fountain opened, Zec 13:1.

3. Ten bases, or stands, or settles, of brass, on which were put ten lavers, to be filled with water for the service of the temple, because there would not be room at the molten sea for all that had occasion to wash there. The bases on which the lavers were fixed are very largely described here, 1Ki 7:27-30, &c. They were curiously adorned and set upon wheels, that the lavers might be removed as there was occasion; but ordinarily they stood in two rows, five on one side of the court and five on the other, 1Ki 7:39. Each laver contained forty baths, that

is, about ten barrels, 1Ki 7:38. Those must be very clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Spiritual priests and spiritual sacrifices must be washed in the laver of Christ's blood and of regeneration. We must wash often, for we daily contract pollution, must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. Plentiful provision is made for our cleansing; so that if we have our lot for ever among the unclean it will be our own fault.

4. Besides these, there was a vast number of brass pots made to boil the flesh of the peace-offerings in, which the priests and offerers were to feast upon before the Lord (see 1Sa 2:14); also shovels, wherewith they took out the ashes of the altar. Some think the word signifies flesh-hooks, with which they took meat out of the pot. The basins also were made of brass, to receive the blood of the sacrifices. These are put for all the utensils of the brazen altar, Ex 38:3. While they were about it they made abundance of them, that they might have a good stock by them when those that were first in use wore out and went to decay. Thus Solomon, having wherewithal to do so, provided for posterity.

15 For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about.

16 And he made two chapiters *of* molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapiter *was* five cubits, and the height of the other chapiter *was* five cubits:

17 *and* nets of checkerwork, and wreaths of chainwork, for the chapiters which *were* upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapiter, and seven for the other chapiter.

18 And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapiters that *were* upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapiter.

19 And the chapiters that *were* upon the top of the pillars *were* of lily work in the porch, four cubits.

20 And the chapiters upon the two pillars *had pomegranates* also above, over against the belly which *was* by the network: and the

pomegranates *were* two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapiter.

21 And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin [he shall establish]: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz [in it *is* strength].

22 And upon the top of the pillars *was* lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished.

The Furnishings for the Temple

23 And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: *it was* round all about, and his height *was* five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

24 And under the brim of it round about *there were* knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops *were* cast in two rows, when it was cast.

25 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea *was set* above upon them, and all their hinder parts *were* inward.

26 And it *was* a handbreadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths.

27 And he made ten bases of brass; four cubits *was* the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it.

28 And the work of the bases *was* on this *manner:* they had borders, and the borders *were* between the ledges:

29 and on the borders that *were* between the ledges *were* lions, oxen, and cherubim: and upon the ledges *there was* a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen *were* certain additions made of thin work.

30 And every base had four brazen wheels, and plates of brass: and the four corners thereof had undersetters: under the laver *were* undersetters molten, at the side of every addition.

31 And the mouth of it within the chapiter and above *was* a cubit: but
the mouth thereof *was* round *after* the work of the base, a cubit and
a half: and also upon the mouth of it *were* gravings with their
borders, foursquare, not round.
32 And under the borders *were* four wheels; and the axletrees of the
wheels *were joined* to the base: and the height of a wheel *was* a cubit
and half a cubit.
33 And the work of the wheels *was* like the work of a chariot wheel:
their axletrees, and their naves, and their felloes, and their spokes,
were all molten.
34 And *there were* four undersetters to the four corners of one base: *and*
the undersetters *were* of the very base itself.
35 And in the top of the base *was there* a round compass of half a cubit
high: and on the top of the base the ledges thereof and the borders
thereof *were* of the same.
36 For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof,
he graved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the
proportion of every one, and additions round about.
37 After this *manner* he made the ten bases: all of them had one
casting, one measure, *and* one size.
38 Then made he ten lavers of brass: one laver contained forty baths:
and every laver was four cubits: *and* upon every one of the ten bases
one laver.
39 And he put five bases on the right side of the house, and five on the
left side of the house: and he set the sea on the right side of the house
eastward, over against the south.
40 And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basins. So
Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king
Solomon for the house of the Lord:
41 the two pillars, and the *two* bowls of the chapiters that *were* on the
top of the two pillars; and the two networks, to cover the two bowls
of the chapiters which *were* upon the top of the pillars;
42 and four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, *even* two
rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of
the chapiters that *were* upon the pillars;
43 and the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases;

44 and one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea.
45 And the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the Lord, *were of* bright brass.
46 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan.
47 And Solomon left all the vessels *unweighed*, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out.
48 And Solomon made all the vessels that *pertained* unto the house of the Lord : the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the showbread *was*,

Here is, 1 The making of the gold work of the temple, which it seems was done last, for with it the work of the house of God ended. All within doors was gold, and all made new (except the ark, with its mercy-seat and cherubim), the old being either melted down or laid by--the golden altar, table, and candlestick, with all their appurtenances.

The altar of incense was still one, for Christ and his intercession are so: but he made ten golden tables, 2Ch 4:8 (though here mention is made of that one only on which the show-bread was, 1Ki 7:48, which we may suppose was larger than the rest and to which the rest were as side-boards), and ten golden candlesticks (1Ki 7:49), intimating the much greater plenty both of spiritual food and heavenly light which the gospel blesses us with than the law of Moses did our could afford. Even the hinges of the door were of gold (1Ki 7:50), that every thing might be alike magnificent, and bespeak Solomon's generosity. Some suggest that every thing was made thus splendid in God's temple to keep the people from idolatry, for none of the idol-temples were so rich and fine as this: but how little the expedient availed the event showed.

2 The bringing in of the dedicated things, which David had devoted to the honour of God, 1Ki 7:51. What was not expended in the building and furniture was laid up in the

treasury, for repairs, exigencies, and the constant charge of the temple-service. What the parents have dedicated to God the children ought by no means to alienate or recall, but should cheerfully devote what was intended for pious and charitable uses, that they may, with their estates, inherit the blessing.

49 and the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right *side,* and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs *of* gold,

50 and the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censers *of* pure gold; and the hinges *of* gold, *both* for the doors of the inner house, the most holy *place, and* for the doors of the house, *to wit,* of the temple.

51 So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; *even* the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord.

1 Kings-8

Solomon Brings the Ark into the Temple

1 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which *is* Zion.

2 And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which *is* the seventh month.

3 And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.

4 And they brought up the ark of the Lord, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that *were* in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up.

5 And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, *were* with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

6 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy *place*, *even* under the wings of the cherubim.

The temple, though richly beautified, yet while it was without the ark was like a body without a soul, or a candlestick without a candle, or (to speak more properly) a house without an inhabitant. All the cost and pains bestowed on this stately structure are lost if God do not accept them; and, unless he please to own it as the place where he will record his name, it is after all but a ruinous heap. When therefore all the work is ended (1Ki 7:51), the one thing needful is yet behind, and that is the bringing in of the ark. This therefore is the end which must crown the work, and which here we have an account of the doing of with great solemnity.

I. Solomon presides in this service, as David did in the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem; and neither of them thought it below him to follow the ark nor to lead the people in their attendance on it. Solomon glories in the title of the preacher (Ec 1:1), and the master of assemblies, Ec 12:11. This great assembly he summons (1Ki 8:1), and he is the centre of it, for to him they all assembled (1Ki 8:2) at the feast in the seventh month, namely, the feast of tabernacles, which was appointed on the fifteenth day of that month, Le 23:34. David, like a very good man, brings the ark to a convenient place, near him; Solomon, like a very great man, brings it to a magnificent place. As every man has received the gift, so let him minister; and let children proceed in God's service where their parents left off.

II. All Israel attend the service, their judges and the chief of their tribes and families, all their officers, civil and military, and (as they speak in the north) the heads of their clans. A convention of these might well be called an assembly of all Israel. These came together, on this occasion,

1. To do honour to Solomon, and to return him the thanks of the nation for all the good offices he had done in kindness to them.

2. To do honour to the ark, to pay respect to it, and testify their universal joy and satisfaction in its settlement. The advancement of the ark in external splendour, though it has often proved too strong a temptation to its hypocritical followers, yet, because it may prove an advantage to its true interests, is to be rejoiced in (with trembling) by all that wish well to it. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments. Those that appeared before the Lord did not appear empty, for they all sacrificed sheep and oxen innumerable, 1Ki 8:5. The people in Solomon's time were very rich, very easy, and very cheerful, and therefore it was fit that, on this occasion, they should consecrate not only their cheerfulness, but a part of their wealth, to God and his honour.

III. The priests do their part of the service. In the wilderness, the Levites were to carry the ark, because then there were not priests enough to do it; but here (it being the last time that the ark was to be carried) the priests themselves did it, as they were ordered to do when it surrounded Jericho. We are here told,

1. What was in the ark, nothing but the two tables of stone (1Ki 8:9), a treasure far exceeding all the dedicated things both of David and Solomon. The pot of manna and Aaron's rod were by the ark, but not in it.

2. What was brought up with the ark (1Ki 8:4): The tabernacle of the congregation. It is probable that both that which Moses set up in the wilderness, which was in Gibeon, and that which David pitched in Zion, were brought to the temple, to which they did, as it were, surrender all their holiness, merging it in that of the temple, which must henceforward be the place where God must be sought unto. Thus will all the church's holy things

on earth, that are so much its joy and glory, be swallowed up in the perfection of holiness above.

3. Where it was fixed in its place, the place appointed for its rest after all its wanderings (1Ki 8:6): In the oracle of the house, whence they expected God to speak to them, even in the most holy place, which was made so by the presence of the ark, under the wings of the great cherubim which Solomon set up (1Ki 6:27), signifying the special protection of angels, under which God's ordinances and the assemblies of his people are taken. The staves of the ark were drawn out, so as to be seen from under the wings of the cherubim, to direct the high priest to the mercy-seat, over the ark, when he went in, once a year, to sprinkle the blood there; so that still they continued of some use, though there was no longer occasion for them to carry it by.

IV. God graciously owns what is done and testifies his acceptance of it, 1Ki 8:10,11. The priests might come into the most holy place till God manifested his glory there; but, thenceforward, none might, at their peril, approach the ark, except the high priest, on the day of atonement. Therefore it was not till the priests had come out of the oracle that the Shechinah took possession of it, in a cloud, which filled not only the most holy place, but the temple, so that the priests who burnt incense at the golden altar could not bear it. By this visible emanation of the divine glory,

1. God put an honour upon the ark, and owned it as a token of his presence. The glory of it had been long diminished and eclipsed by its frequent removes, the meanness of its lodging, and its being exposed too much to common view; but God will now show that it is as dear to him as ever, and he will have it looked upon with as much veneration as it was when Moses first brought it into his tabernacle.

2. He testified his acceptance of the building and furnishing of the temple as good service done to his name and his kingdom among men.

3. He struck an awe upon this great assembly; and, by what they saw, confirmed their belief of what they read in the books of Moses concerning the glory of God's appearance to their fathers, that hereby they might be kept close to the service of the God of Israel and fortified against temptations to idolatry.

4. He showed himself ready to hear the prayer Solomon was now about to make; and not only so, but took up his residence in this house, that all his praying people might there be encouraged to make their applications to him. But the glory of God appeared in a cloud, a dark cloud, to signify,

(1.) The darkness of that dispensation in comparison with the light of the gospel, by which, with open face, we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

(2.) The darkness of our present state in comparison with the vision of God, which will be the happiness of heaven, where the divine glory is unveiled. Now we can only say what he is not, but then we shall see him as he is.

7 For the cherubim spread forth *their* two wings over the place of the
ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above.
8 And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen
out in the holy *place* before the oracle, and they were not seen
without: and there they are unto this day.
9 *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which
Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made *a covenant* with
the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.
10 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy
place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord,
11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud:
for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.

The Dedication of the Temple

12 Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the
thick darkness.
13 I have surely built thee a house to dwell in, a settled place for thee
to abide in for ever.
14 And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation
of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood;
15 and he said, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, which spake with
his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled
it, saying,

Here, I. Solomon encourages the priests, who came out of the temple from their ministration, much astonished at the dark cloud that overshadowed them. The disciples of Christ feared when they entered into the cloud, though it was a bright cloud (Lu 9:34), so did the priests when they found themselves wrapped in a thick cloud. To silence their fears,

1. He reminds them of that which they could not but know, that this was a token of God's presence (1Ki 8:12): The Lord said he would dwell in the thick darkness. It is so far from being a token of his displeasure that it is an indication of his favour; for he had said, I will appear in a cloud, Le 16:2. Note, Nothing is more effectual to reconcile us to dark dispensations than to consider what God hath said, and to compare his word and works together; as Le 10:3, This is that which the Lord hath said. God is light (1Jo 1:5), and he dwells in light (1Ti 6:16), but he dwells with men in the thick darkness, makes that his pavilion, because they could not bear the dazzling brightness of his glory. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. Thus our holy faith is exercised and our holy fear is increased. Where God dwells in light faith is swallowed up in vision and fear in love.

2. He himself bids it welcome, as worthy of all acceptation; and since God, by this cloud, came down to take possession, he does, in a few words, solemnly give him possession (1Ki 8:13): "Surely I come," says God. "Amen," says Solomon, "Even so, come, Lord,. The house is thy own, entirely thy own, I have surely built it for thee, and furnished it for thee; it is for ever thy own, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever; it shall never be alienated nor converted to any other use; the ark shall never be removed from it, never unsettled again." It is Solomon's joy that God has taken possession; and it is his desire that he would keep possession. Let not the priests therefore dread that in which Solomon so much triumphs.

II. He instructs the people, and gives them a plain account concerning this house, which they now saw God take possession of. He spoke briefly to the priests, to satisfy them (a word to the wise), but turned his face about (1Ki 8:14) from them to the congregation that stood in the outer court, and addressed himself to them largely.

1. He blessed them. When they saw the dark cloud enter the temple they blessed themselves, being astonished at it and afraid lest the thick darkness should be utter darkness to them. The amazing sight, such as they had never seen in their days, we may suppose, drove every man to his prayers, and the vainest minds were made serious by it. Solomon therefore set in with their prayers, and blessed them all, as one having authority (for the less is blessed of the better); in God's name, he spoke peace to them, and a blessing, like that with which the angel blessed Gideon when he was in a fright, upon a similar occasion. Jdg 6:22,23, Peace be unto thee. Fear not; thou shalt not die. Solomon blessed them, that is, he pacified them, and freed them from the consternation they were in. To receive this blessing, they all stood up, in token of reverence and readiness to hear and accept it. It is a proper posture to be in when the blessing is pronounced.

2. He informed them concerning this house which he had built and was now dedicating.

(1.) He began his account with a thankful acknowledgment of the good hand of his God upon him hitherto: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, 1Ki 8:15. What we have the pleasure of God must have the praise of. He thus engaged the congregation to lift up their hearts in thanksgivings to God, which would help to still the tumult of spirit which, probably, they were in. "Come," says he, "let God's awful appearances not drive us from him, but draw us to him; let us bless the Lord God of Israel." Thus Job, under a dark scene, blessed the name of the Lord. Solomon here blessed God,

[1.] For his promise which he spoke with his mouth to David.

[2.] For the performance, that he had now fulfilled it with his hand. We have then the best sense of God's mercies, and most grateful both to ourselves and to our God, when we run up those streams to the fountain of the covenant, and compare what God does with what he has said.

(2.) Solomon is now making a solemn surrender or dedication of this house unto God, delivering it to God by his own act and deed. Grants and conveyances commonly begin with recitals of what has been before done, leading to what is now done: accordingly, here is a recital of the special causes and considerations moving Solomon to build this house.

[1.] He recites the want of such a place. It was necessary that this should be premised; for, according to the dispensation they were under, there must be but one place in which they must expect God to record his name. If, therefore, there were any other chosen, this would be a usurpation. But he shows, from what God himself had said, that there was no other (1Ki 8:16):

I chose no city to build a house in for my name; therefore there is occasion for the building of this.

[2.] He recites David's purpose to build such a place. God chose the person first that should rule his people (I chose David, 1Ki 8:16) and then put it into his heart to build a house for God's name, 1Ki 8:17. It was not a project of his own, for the magnifying of himself; but his good father, of blessed memory, laid the first design of it, though he lived not to lay the first stone.

[3.] He recites God's promise concerning himself. God approved his father's purpose (1Ki 8:18): Thou didst well, that it was in thy heart. Note, Sincere intentions to do good shall be graciously approved and accepted of God, though Providence prevent our putting them in execution. The desire of a man is his kindness. See 2Co 8:12. God accepted David's good will, yet would not permit him to do the good work, but reserved the honour of it for his son (1Ki 8:19): He shall build the house to my name; so that what he had done was not of his own head, nor for his own glory, but the work itself was according to his father's design and his doing it was according to God's designation.

[4.] He recites what he himself had done, and with what intention: I have built a house, not for my own name, but for the name of the Lord God of Israel (1Ki 8:20), and set there a place for the ark, 1Ki 8:21. Thus all the right, title, interest, claim, and demand, whatsoever, which he or his had or might have in or to this house, or any of its appurtenances, he resigns, surrenders, and gives up, to God for ever. It is for his name, and his ark. In this, says he, the Lord hath performed his word that he spoke.

Note, Whatever good we do, we must look upon it as the performance of God's promise to us, rather than the

performance of our promises to him. The more we do for God the more we are indebted to him; for our sufficiency is of him, and not of ourselves.

16 Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

17 And it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

18 And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.

19 Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name.

20 And the Lord hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.

21 I have set there a place for the ark, wherein *is* the covenant of the Lord, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

23 and he said, Lord God of Israel, *there is* no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart:

24 who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled *it* with thine hand, as *it is* this day.

25 Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me.

26 And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified,
which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father.
27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and
heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house
that I have builded?
28 Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his
supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the
prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee today:
29 that thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, *even*
toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there:
that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall
make toward this place.

Solomon having made a general surrender of this house to God, which God had signified his acceptance of by taking possession, next follows Solomon's prayer, in which he makes a more particular declaration of the uses of that surrender, with all humility and reverence, desiring that God would agree thereto. In short, it is his request that this temple may be deemed and taken, not only for a house of sacrifice (no mention is made of that in all this prayer, that was taken for granted), but a house of prayer for all people; and herein it was a type of the gospel church; see Isa 56:7, compared with Mt 21:13. Therefore Solomon opened this house, not only with an extraordinary sacrifice, but with an extraordinary prayer.

I The person that prayed this prayer was great. Solomon did not appoint one of the priests to do it, nor one of the prophets, but did it himself, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, 1Ki 8:22.

1. It was well that he was able to do it, a sign that he had made a good improvement of the pious education which his parents gave him. With all his learning, it seems, he learnt to pray well, and knew how to express himself to God in a suitable manner, pro re nata--on the spur of the occasion, without a prescribed form. In the crowd of his philosophical transactions, his

proverbs, and songs, he did not forget his devotions. He was a gainer by prayer (1Ki 3:11-14, &c.), and, we may suppose, gave himself much to it, so that he excelled, as we find here, in praying gifts.

2. It was well that he was willing to do it, and not shy of performing divine service before so great a congregation. He was far from thinking it any disparagement to him to be his own chaplain and the mouth of the assembly to God; and shall any think themselves too great to do this office for their own families? Solomon, in all his other glory, even on his ivory throne, looked not so great as he did now. Great men should thus support the reputation of religious exercises and so honour God with their greatness. Solomon was herein a type of Christ, the great intercessor for all over whom he rules.

II The posture in which he prayed was very reverent, and expressive of humility, seriousness, and fervency in prayer. He stood before the altar of the Lord, intimating that he expected the success of his prayer in virtue of that sacrifice which should be offered up in the fulness of time, typified by the sacrifices offered at that altar. But when he addressed himself to prayer,

1. He kneeled down, as appears, 1Ki 8:54, where he is said to rise from his knees; compare 2Ch 6:13. Kneeling is the most proper posture for prayer, Eph 3:14. The greatest of men must not think it below them to kneel before the Lord their Maker. Mr. Herbert says, "Kneeling never spoiled silk stocking."

2. He spread forth his hands towards heaven, and (as it should seem by 1Ki 8:54) continued so to the end of the prayer, hereby expressing his desire towards, and expectations from, God, as a Father in heaven. He spread forth his hands, as it were to offer up the prayer from an open enlarged heart and to present it to heaven, and also to receive thence, with both

arms, the mercy which he prayed for. Such outward expressions of the fixedness and fervour of devotion ought not to be despised or ridiculed.

III. The prayer itself was very long, and perhaps much longer than is here recorded. At the throne of grace we have liberty of speech, and should use our liberty. It is not making long prayers, but making them for a pretence, that Christ condemns. In this excellent prayer Solomon does, as we should in every prayer,

1. Give glory to God. This he begins with, as the most proper act of adoration. He addresses himself to God as the Lord God of Israel, a God in covenant with them And,

(1.) He gives him the praise of what he is, in general, the best of beings in himself ("There is no God like thee, none of the powers in heaven or earth to be compared with thee"), and the best of masters to his people: "Who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants; not only as good as thy word in keeping covenant, but better than thy word in keeping mercy, doing that for them of which thou hast not given them an express promise, provided they walk before thee with all their heart, are zealous for thee, with an eye to thee."

(2.) He gives him thanks for what he had done, in particular, for his family (1Ki 8:24): "Thou hast kept with thy servant David, as with thy other servants, that which thou promisedst him." The promise was a great favour to him, his support and joy, and now performance is the crown of it: Thou hast fulfilled it, as it is this day. Fresh experiences of the truth of God's promises call for enlarged praises.

2. He sues for grace and favour from God.

(1.) That God would perform to him and his the mercy which he had promised, 1Ki 8:25,26. Observe how this comes in. He thankfully acknowledges the performance of the promise in part; hitherto God had been faithful to his word: "Thou hast kept with thy servant David that which thou promisedst him, so far that his son fills his throne and has built the intended temple; therefore now keep with thy servant David that which thou hast further promised him, and which yet remains to be fulfilled in its season."

Note, The experiences we have had of God's performing his promises should encourage us to depend upon them and plead them with God: and those who expect further mercies must be thankful for former mercies. Hitherto God has helped, 2Co 1:10. Solomon repeats the promise (1Ki 8:25): There shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne, not omitting the condition, so that thy children take heed to their way; for we cannot expect God's performance of the promise but upon our performance of the condition. And then he humbly begs this entail (1Ki 8:26): Now, O God of Israel! let thy word be verified. God's promises (as we have often observed) must be both the guide of our desires and the ground of our hopes and expectations in prayer. David had prayed (2Sa 7:25): Lord, do as thou hast said. Note, Children should learn of their godly parents how to pray, and plead in prayer.

(2.) That God would have respect to this temple which he had now taken possession of, and that his eyes might be continually open towards it (1Ki 8:29), that he would graciously own it, and so put an honour upon it. To this purpose,

[1.] He premises, First, A humble admiration of God's gracious condescension (1Ki 8:27): "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Can we imagine that a Being infinitely high, and holy, and happy, will stoop so low as to let it be said

of him that he dwells upon the earth and blesses the worms of the earth with his presence--the earth, that is corrupt, and overspread with sin--cursed, and reserved to fire? Lord, how is it?" Secondly, A humble acknowledgment of the incapacity of the house he had built, though very capacious, to contain God: "The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, for no place can include him who is present in all places; even this house is too little, too mean to be the residence of him that is infinite in being and glory." Note, When we have done the most we can for God we must acknowledge the infinite distance and disproportion between us and him, between our services and his perfections.

[2.] This premised, he prays in general,

First, That God would graciously hear and answer the prayer he was now praying, 1Ki 8:28. It was a humble prayer (the prayer of thy servant), an earnest prayer (such a prayer as is a cry), a prayer made in faith (before thee, as the Lord, and my God): "Lord, hearken to it, have respect to it, not as the prayer of Israel's king (no man's dignity in the world, or titles of honour, will recommend him to God), but as the prayer of thy servant."

Secondly, That God would in like manner hear and answer all the prayers that should, at any time hereafter, be made in or towards this house which he had now built, and of which God had said, My name shall be there (1Ki 8:29), his own prayers (Hearken to the prayers which thy servant shall make), and the prayers of all Israel, and of every particular Israelite (1Ki 8:30): "Hear it in heaven, that is indeed thy dwelling-place, of which this is but a figure; and, when thou hearest, forgive the sin that separates between them and God, even the iniquity of their holy things." a. He supposes that God's people will ever be a prayer people; he resolves to adhere to that duty himself.

b. He directs them to have an eye, in their prayers, to that place where God was pleased to manifest his glory as he did not any where else on earth. None but priests might come into that place; but, when they worshipped in the courts of the temple, it must be with an eye towards it, not as the object of their worship (that were idolatry), but as an instituted medium of their worship, helping the weakness of their faith, and typifying the mediation of Jesus Christ, who is the true temple, to whom we must have an eye in every thing wherein we have to do with God. Those that were at a distance looked towards Jerusalem, for the sake of the temple, even when it was in ruins, Da 6:10.

c. He begs that God will hear the prayers, and forgive the sins, of all that look this way in their prayers. Not as if he thought all the devout prayers offered up to God by those who had no knowledge of this house, or regard to it, were therefore rejected; but he desired that the sensible tokens of the divine presence with which this house was blessed might always give sensible encouragement and comfort to believing petitioners.

[3.] More particularly, he here puts divers cases in which he supposed application would be made to God by prayer in or towards this house of prayer.

First, If God were appealed to by an oath for the determining of any controverted right between man and man, and the oath were taken before this altar, he prayed that God would, in some way or other, discover the truth, and judge between the contending parties, 1Ki 8:31,32. He prayed that, in difficult matters, this throne of grace might be a throne of judgment, from which God would right the injured that believingly appealed to it, and punish the injurious that presumptuously appealed to it. It was usual to swear by the temple and altar (Mt 23:16,18), which corruption perhaps took its rise from this

supposition of an oath taken, not by the temple or altar, but at or near them, for the greater solemnity.

Secondly, If the people of Israel were groaning under any national calamity, or any particular Israelite under any personal calamity, he desired that the prayers they should make in or towards this house might be heard and answered.

a. In case of public judgments, war (1Ki 8:33), want of rain (1Ki 8:35), famine, or pestilence (1Ki 8:37), and he ends with an et cetera--any plague or sickness; for no calamity befals other people which may not befal God's Israel. Now he supposes,

(a.) That the cause of the judgment would be sin, and nothing else. "If they be smitten before the enemy, if there be no rain, it is because they have sinned against thee." It is sin that makes all the mischief.

(b.) That the consequence of the judgment would be that they would cry to God, and make supplication to him in or towards that house. Those that slighted him before would solicit him then. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. In their afflictions they will seek me early and earnestly.

(c.) That the condition of the removal of the judgment was something more than barely praying for it. He could not, he would not, ask that their prayer might be answered unless they did also turn from their sin (1Ki 8:35) and turn again to God (1Ki 8:33), that is, unless they did truly repent and reform. On no other terms may we look for salvation in this world or the other. But, if they did thus qualify themselves for mercy, he prays,

[a.] That God would hear from heaven, his holy temple above, to which they must look, through this temple.

[b.] That he would forgive their sin; for then only are judgments removed in mercy when sin is pardoned.

[c.] That he would teach them the good way wherein they should walk, by his Spirit, with his word and prophets; and thus they might be both profited by their trouble (for blessed is the man whom God chastens and teaches), and prepared for deliverance, which then comes in love when it finds us brought back to the good way of God and duty.

[d.] That he would then remove the judgment, and redress the grievance, whatever it might be--not only accept the prayer, but give in the mercy prayed for.

b. In case of personal afflictions, 1Ki 8:38-40. "If any man of Israel has an errand to thee, here let him find thee, here let him find favour with thee." He does not mention particulars, so numerous, so various, are the grievances of the children of men.

(a.) He supposes that the complainants themselves would very sensibly feel their own burden, and would open that case to God which otherwise they kept to themselves and did not make any man acquainted with: They shall know every man the plague of his own heart, what it is that pains him, and (as we say) where the shoe pinches, and shall spread their hands, that is, spread their case, as Hezekiah spread the letter, in prayer, towards this house; whether the trouble be of body or mind, they shall represent it before God. Inward burdens seem especially meant. Sin is the plague of our own heart; our indwelling corruptions are our spiritual diseases. Every Israelite indeed endeavours to know these, that he may mortify them and watch against the risings of them. These he complains of. This is the burden he groans under: O wretched man that I am! These drive him to his knees, drive him to the

sanctuary. Lamenting these, he spreads forth his hands in prayer.

(b.) He refers all cases of this kind, that should be brought hither, to God.

[a.] To his omniscience: "Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men, not only the plagues of their hearts, their several wants and burdens" (these he knows, but he will know them from us), "but the desire and intent of the heart, the sincerity or hypocrisy of it. Thou knowest which prayer comes from the heart, and which from the lips only." The hearts of kings are not unsearchable to God.

[b.] To his justice: Give to every man according to his ways; and he will not fail to do so, by the rules of grace, not the law, for then we should all be undone.

[c.] To his mercy: Hear, and forgive, and do (1Ki 8:39), that they may fear thee all their days, 1Ki 8:40. This use we should make of the mercy of God to us in hearing our prayers and forgiving our sins, we should thereby he engaged to fear him while we live. Fear the Lord and his goodness. There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.

c. The case of the stranger that is not an Israelite is next mentioned, a proselyte that comes to the temple to pray to the God of Israel, being convinced of the folly and wickedness of worshipping the gods of his country.

(a.) He supposed that there would be many such (1Ki 8:41,42), that the fame of God's great works which he had wrought for Israel, by which he proved himself to be above all gods, nay, to be God alone, would reach to distant countries: "Those that live remote shall hear of thy strong hand, and thy stretched-out arm; and this will bring all thinking considerate people to

pray towards this house, that they may obtain the favour of a God that is able to do them a real kindness."

(b.) He begged that God would accept and answer the proselyte's prayer (1Ki 8:43): Do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for. Thus early, thus ancient, were the indications of favour towards the sinners of the Gentiles: as there was then one law for the native and for the stranger (Ex 12:49), so there was one gospel for both.

(c.) Herein he aimed at the glory of God and the propagating of the knowledge of him: "O let the stranger, in a special manner, speed well in his addresses, that he may carry away with him to his own country a good report of the God of Israel, that all people may know thee and fear thee (and, if they know thee aright, they will fear thee) as do thy people Israel." So far was Solomon from monopolizing the knowledge and service of God, and wishing to have them confined to Israel only (which was the envious desire of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles), that he prayed that all people might fear God as Israel did. Would to God that all the children of men might receive the adoption, and be made God's children! Father, thus glorify thy name.

d. The case of an army going forth to battle is next recommended by Solomon to the divine favour. It is supposed that the army is encamped at a distance, somewhere a great way off, sent by divine order against the enemy, 1Ki 8:44. "When they are ready to engage, and consider the perils and doubtful issues of battle, and put up a prayer to God for protection and success, with their eye towards this city and temple, then hear their prayer, encourage their hearts, strengthen their hands, cover their heads, and so maintain their cause and give them victory." Soldiers in the field must not think it enough that those who tarry at home pray for them, but must pray for themselves, and they are here encouraged to

hope fore a gracious answer. Praying should always go along with fighting.

e. The case of poor captives is the last that is here mentioned as a proper object of divine compassion.

(a.) He supposes that Israel will sin. He knew them, and himself, and the nature of man, too well to think this a foreign supposition; for there is no man that sinneth not, that does not enough to justify God in the severest rebukes of his providence, no man but what is in danger of falling into gross sin, and will if God leave him to himself.

(b.) He supposes, what may well be expected, that, if Israel revolt from God, God will be angry with them, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, to be carried captive into a strange country, 1Ki 8:46.

(c.) He then supposes that they will bethink themselves, will consider their ways (for afflictions put men upon consideration), and, when once they are brought to consider, they will repent and pray, will confess their sins, and humble themselves, saying, We have sinned and have done perversely (1Ki 8:47), and in the land of their enemies will return to God, whom they had forsaken in their own land.

(d.) He supposes that in their prayers they will look towards their own land, the holy land, Jerusalem, the holy city, and the temple, the holy house, and directs them so to do (1Ki 8:48), for his sake who gave them that land, chose that city, and to whose honour that house was built.

(e.) He prays that then God would hear their prayers, forgive their sins, plead their cause, and incline their enemies to have compassion on them, 1Ki 8:49,50. God has all hearts in his hand, and can, when he pleases, turn the strongest stream the

contrary way, and make those to pity his people who have been their most cruel persecutors. See this prayer answered, Ps 106:46. He made them to be pitied of those that carried them captive, which, if it did not release them, yet eased their captivity.

(f.) He pleads their relation to God, and his interest in them: "They are thy people, whom thou hast taken into thy covenant and under thy care and conduct, thy inheritance, from which, more than from any other nation, thy rent and tribute of glory issue and arise (1Ki 8:51), separated from among all people to be so and by distinguishing favours appropriated to thee," 1Ki 8:53.

Lastly, After all these particulars, he concludes with this general request, that God would hearken to all his praying people in all that they call unto him for, 1Ki 8:52. No place now, under the gospel, can be imagined to add any acceptableness to the prayers made in or towards it, as the temple then did. That was a shadow: the substance is Christ; whatever we ask in his name, it shall be given us.

30 And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy
people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear
thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive.
31 If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon
him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in
this house:
32 then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants,
condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and
justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.
33 When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because
they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and
confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this
house:

34 then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel,
and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their
fathers.
35 When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have
sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy
name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them:
36 then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and
of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein
they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast
given to thy people for an inheritance.
37 If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting,
mildew, locust, *or* if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege
them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever
sickness *there be;*
38 what prayer and supplication soever be *made* by any man, *or* by all
thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his
own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:
39 then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do,
and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou
knowest; (for thou, *even* thou only, knowest the hearts of all the
children of men;)
40 that they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which
thou gavest unto our fathers.
41 Moreover concerning a stranger, that *is* not of thy people Israel,
but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake;
42 (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and
of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this
house:
43 hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that
the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know
thy name, to fear thee, as *do* thy people Israel; and that they may
know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name.
44 If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou
shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which
thou hast chosen, and *toward* the house that I have built for thy
name:

45 then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and
maintain their cause.
46 If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man that sinneth not,) and
thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they
carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;
47 *yet* if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were
carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the
land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned,
and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;
48 and *so* return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul,
in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray
unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers,
the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for
thy name:
49 then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy
dwelling place, and maintain their cause,
50 and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their
transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and
give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that
they may have compassion on them:
51 for they *be* thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou
broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of
iron:
52 that thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant,
and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto
them in all that they call for unto thee.
53 For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth,
to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy
servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord
God.
54 And it was *so,* that when Solomon had made an end of praying all
this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before
the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands
spread up to heaven.

Solomon, after his sermon in Ecclesiastes, gives us the conclusion of the whole matter; so he does here, after this long

prayer; it is called his blessing the people, 1Ki 8:55. He pronounced it standing, that he might be the better heard, and because he blessed as one having authority. Never were words more fitly spoken, nor more pertinently. Never was congregation dismissed with that which was more likely to affect them and abide with them.

I. He gives God the glory of the great and kind things he had done for Israel, 1Ki 8:56. He stood up to bless the congregation (1Ki 8:55), but began with blessing God; for we must in every thing give thanks. Do we expect God should do well for us and ours? let us take all occasion to speak well of him and his. He blesses God who has given, he does not say wealth, and honour, and power, and victory, to Israel, but rest, as if that were a blessing more valuable than any of those. Let not those who have rest under-value that blessing, though they want some others. He compares the blessings God had bestowed upon them with the promises he had given them, that God might have the honour of his faithfulness and the truth of that word of his which he has magnified above all his name.

1. He refers to the promises given by the hand of Moses, as he did (1Ki 8:15,24) to those which were made to David. There were promises given by Moses, as well as precepts. It was long ere God gave Israel the promised rest, but they had it at last, after many trials. The day will come when God's spiritual Israel will rest from all their labours.

2. He does, as it were, write a receipt in full on the back of these bonds: There has not failed one word of all his good promises. This discharge he gives in the name of all Israel, to the everlasting honour of the divine faithfulness, and the everlasting encouragement of all those that build upon the divine promises.

II. He blesses himself and the congregation, expressing his earnest desire and hope of these four things:--

1 The presence of God with them, which is all in all to the happiness of a church and nation and of every particular person. This great congregation was now shortly to be scattered, and it was not likely that they would ever be all together again in this world. Solomon therefore dismisses them with this blessing: "The Lord be present with us, and that will be comfort enough when we are absent from each other. The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers (1Ki 8:57); let him not leave us, let him be to us to day, and to ours for ever, what he was to those that went before us."

2 The power of his grace upon them: "Let him be with us, and continue with us, not that he may enlarge our coasts and increase our wealth, but that he may incline our hearts to himself, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments," 1Ki 8:58. Spiritual blessings are the best blessings, with which we should covet earnestly to be blessed. Our hearts are naturally averse to our duty, and apt to decline from God; it is his grace that inclines them, grace that must be obtained by prayer.

3. An answer to the prayer he had now made: "Let these my words be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, 1Ki 8:59. Let a gracious return be made to every prayer that shall be made here, and that will be a continual answer to this prayer." What Solomon asks here for his prayer is still granted in the intercession of Christ, of which his supplication was a type; that powerful prevailing intercession is before the Lord our God day and night, for our great Advocate attends continually to this very thing, and we may depend upon him to maintain our cause (against the adversary that accuses us day and night, Re 12:10) and the common cause of his people Israel, at all times, upon all occasions, as the matter shall require, so as to

speak for us the word of the day in its day, as the original here reads it, from which we shall receive grace sufficient, suitable, and seasonable, in every time of need.

4. The glorifying of God in the enlargement of his kingdom among men. Let Israel be thus blessed, thus favoured; not that all people may become tributaries to us (Solomon sees his kingdom as great as he desires), but that all people may know that the Lord is God, and he only, and may come and worship him, 1Ki 8:60. With this Solomon's prayers, like the prayers of his father David, the son of Jesse, are ended (Ps 72:19,20): Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. We cannot close our prayers with a better summary than this, Father, glorify thy name.

III. He solemnly charges his people to continue and persevere in their duty to God. Having spoken to God for them, he here speaks from God to them, and those only would fare the better for his prayers that were made better by his preaching. His admonition, at parting, is, "Let your heart be perfect with the Lord our God, 1Ki 8:61. Let your obedience be universal, without dividing--upright, without dissembling--constant, without declining;" this is evangelical perfection.

55 And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying,

56 Blessed *be* the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.

57 The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us:

58 that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.

59 And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night,

that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his
people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require:
60 that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord *is* God,
and that there is none else.
61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk
in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.
62 And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the
Lord.

We read before that Judah and Israel were eating and drinking, and very cheerful under their own vines and fig-trees; here we have them so in God's courts. Now they found Solomon's words true concerning Wisdom's ways, that they are ways of pleasantness.

I. They had abundant joy and satisfaction while they attended at God's house, for there, 1. Solomon offered a great sacrifice, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, enough to have drained the country of cattle if it had not been a very fruitful land. The heathen thought themselves very generous when they offered sacrifices by hundreds (hecatombs they called them), but Solomon out-did them: he offered them by thousands. When Moses dedicated his altar, the peace-offerings were twenty-four bullocks, and of rams, goats, and lambs, 180 (Nu 7:88); then the people were poor, but now that they had increased in wealth more was expected from them. Where God sows plentifully he must reap accordingly.

All these sacrifices could not be offered in one day, but in the several days of the feast. Thirty oxen a day served Solomon's table, but thousands shall go to God's altar. Few are thus minded, to spend more on their souls than on their bodies. The flesh of the peace-offerings, which belonged to the offerer, it is likely, Solomon treated the people with. Christ fed those who attended him. The brazen altar was not large enough to receive all these sacrifices, so that, to serve the present occasion, they were forced to offer many of them in the middle of the court, (1Ki 8:64),

some think on altars, altars of earth or stone, erected for the purpose and taken down when the solemnity was over, others think on the bare ground. Those that will be generous in serving God need not stint themselves for want of room and occasion to be so. 2. He kept a feast, the feast of tabernacles, as it should seem, after the feast of dedication, and both together lasted fourteen days (1Ki 8:65), yet they said not, Behold, what a weariness is this!

II. They carried this joy and satisfaction with them to their own houses. When they were dismissed they blessed the king (1Ki 8:66), applauded him, admired him, and returned him the thanks of the congregation, and then went to their tents joyful and glad of heart, all easy and pleased. God's goodness was the matter of their joy, so it should be of ours at all times. They rejoiced in God's blessing both on the royal family and on the kingdom; thus should we go home rejoicing from holy ordinances, and go on our way rejoicing for God's goodness to our Lord Jesus (of whom David his servant was a type, in the advancement and establishment of his throne, pursuant to the covenant of redemption), and to all believers, his spiritual Israel, in their sanctification and consolation, pursuant to the covenant of grace. If we rejoice not herein always it is our own fault.

63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that *was* before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brazen altar that *was* before the Lord *was* too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of

Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days and seven days, *even* fourteen days.

66 On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

1 Kings-9

The Lord's Covenant with Solomon

1 And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do,

2 that the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon.

3 And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

God had given a real answer to Solomon's prayer, and tokens of his acceptance of it, immediately, by the fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifices (as we find 2Ch 7:1); but here we have a more express and distinct answer to it. Observe,

I. In what way God gave him this answer. He appeared to him, as he had done at Gibeon, in the beginning of his reign, in a dream or vision, 1Ki 9:2 The comparing of it with that intimates that it was the very night after he had finished the solemnities of his festival, for so that was, 2Ch 1:6,7. And then 1Ki 9:1, speaking of Solomon's finishing all his buildings, which was not till many years after the dedication of the temple, must be read thus, Solomon finished (as it is 2Ch 7:11), and 1Ki 9:2 must be read, and the Lord had appeared.

II The purport of this answer.

1. He assures him of his special presence in the temple he had built, in answer to the prayer he had made (1Ki 9:3): I have hallowed this house. Solomon had dedicated it, but it was God's prerogative to hallow it--to sanctify or consecrate it. Men cannot make a place holy, yet what we, in sincerity, devote to God, we may hope he will graciously accept as his; and his eyes and his heart shall be upon it. Apply it to persons, the living temples. Those whom God hallows or sanctifies, whom he sets apart for himself, have his eye, his heart, his love and care, and this perpetually.

2. He shows him that he and his people were for the future upon their good behaviour. Let them not be secure now, as if they might live as they please now that they have the temple of the Lord among them, Jer 7:4. No, this house was designed to protect them in their allegiance to God, but not in their rebellion or disobedience. God deals plainly with us, sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, and lets us know what we must trust to. God here tells Solomon,

(1.) That the establishment of his kingdom depended upon the constancy of his obedience (1Ki 9:4,5): "If thou wilt walk before me as David did, who left thee a good example and encouragement enough to follow it (and advantage thou wilt be accountable for if thou do not improve it), if thou wilt walk as he did, in integrity of heart and uprightness" (for that is the main matter--no religion without sincerity), "then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom, and not otherwise," for on that condition the promise was made, Ps_132:12. If we perform our part of the covenant, God will not fail to perform his; if we improve the grace God has given us, he will confirm us to the end. Let not the children of godly parents expect the entail of the blessing, unless they tread in the steps of those

that have gone before them to heaven, and keep up the virtue and piety of their ancestors.

(2.) That the ruin of his kingdom would be the certain consequence of his or his children's apostasy from God (1Ki 9:6): "But know thou, and let thy family and kingdom know it, and be admonished by it, that if you shall altogether turn from following me" (so it is thought it should be read), "if you forsake my service, desert my altar, and go and serve other gods" (for that was the covenant-breaking sin), "if you or your children break off from me, this house will not save you. But,

[1.] Israel, though a holy nation, will be cut off (1Ki 9:7), by one judgment after another, till they become a proverb and a by-word, and the most despicable people under the sun, though now the most honourable." This supposes the destruction of the royal family, though it is not particularly threatened; the king is, of course, undone, if the kingdom be.

[2.] "The temple, though a holy house, which God himself has hallowed for his name, shall be abandoned and laid desolate (1Ki 9:8,9): This house which is high." They prided themselves in the stateliness and magnificence of the structure, but let them know that it is not so high as to be out of the reach of God's judgments, if they vilify it so as to exchange it for groves and idol-temples, and yet, at the same time, magnify it so as to think it will secure the favour of God to them though they ever so much corrupt themselves.

This house which is high. Those that now pass by it are astonished at the bulk and beauty of it; the richness, contrivance, and workmanship, are admired by all spectators, and it is called a stupendous fabric; but, if you forsake God, its height will make its fall the more amazing, and those that pass by will be as much astonished at its ruins, while the guilty, self-convicted, self-condemned, Israelites, will be forced to

acknowledge, with shame, that they themselves were the ruin of it; for when it shall be asked, Why hath the Lord done thus to his house? they cannot but answer, It was because they forsook the Lord their God. See De 29:24,25. Their sin will be read in their punishment. They deserted the temple, and therefore God deserted it; they profaned it with their sins and laid it common, and therefore God profaned it with his judgments and laid it waste. God gave Solomon fair warning of this, now that he had newly built and dedicated it, that he and his people might not be high-minded, but fear.

4 And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in
integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I
have commanded thee, *and* wilt keep my statutes and my
judgments;
5 then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever,
as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a
man upon the throne of Israel.
6 *But* if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children,
and will not keep my commandments *and* my statutes which I have
set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them;
7 then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them;
and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out
of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all
people:
8 and at this house, *which* is high, every one that passeth by it shall be
astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the Lord
done thus unto this land, and to this house?
9 And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God,
who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have
taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served
them: therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil.

Solomon's Further Activities

10 And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord, and the king's house,

What agreement was made between Solomon and Hiram, when the building-work was to be begun, we read before, 1Ki 5:1-18 Here we have an account of their fair and friendly parting when the work was done.

1. Hiram made good his bargain to the utmost. He had furnished Solomon with materials for his buildings, according to all his desire (1Ki 9:11), and with gold, 1Ki 9:15. So far was he from envying Solomon's growing greatness and reputation, and being jealous of him, that he helped to magnify him. Solomon's power, with Solomon's wisdom, needs not be dreaded by any of his neighbours. God honours him; therefore Hiram will.

2. Solomon, no doubt, made good his bargain, and gave Hiram food for his household, as was agreed, 1Ki 5:9. But here we are told that, over and above that, he gave him twenty cities (small ones we may suppose, like those mentioned here, 1Ki 9:19) in the land of Galilee, 1Ki 9:11. It should seem, these were not allotted to any of the tribes of Israel (for the border of Asher came up to them, Jos 19:27, which intimates that it did not include them), but continued in the hands of the natives till Solomon made himself master of them, and then made a present of them to Hiram.

It becomes those that are great and good to be generous. Hiram came to see these cities, and did not like them (1Ki 9:12): They pleased him not. He called the country the land of Cabul, a Phoenician word (says Josephus) which signifies displeasing, 1Ki 9:13. He therefore returned them to Solomon (as we find, 2Ch 8:2), who repaired them, and then caused the children of Israel to inhabit them, which intimates that before they did not;

but, when Solomon received back what he had given, no doubt he honourably gave Hiram an equivalent in something else. But what shall we think of this? Did Solomon act meanly in giving Hiram what was not worth his acceptance? Or was Hiram humoursome and hard to please? I am willing to believe it was neither the one nor the other. The country was truly valuable, and so were the cities in it, but not agreeable to Hiram's genius.

The Tyrians were merchants, trading men, that lived in fine houses, and became rich by navigation, but knew not how to value a country that was fit for corn and pasture (that was business that lay out of their way); and therefore Hiram desired Solomon to take them again, he knew not what to do with them, and, if he would please to gratify him, let it be in his own element, by becoming his partner in trade, as we find he did, 1Ki 9:27.

Hiram, who was used to the clean streets of Tyre, could by no means agree with the miry lanes in the land of Cabul, whereas the best lands have commonly the worst roads through them. See how the providence of God suits both the accommodation of this earth to the various dispositions of men and the dispositions of men to the various accommodations of the earth, and all for the good of mankind in general. Some take delight in husbandry, and wonder what pleasure sailors can take on a rough sea; others take as much delight in navigation, and wonder what pleasure husbandmen can take in a dirty country, like the land of Cabul. It is so in many other instances, in which we may observe the wisdom of him whose all souls are and all lands.

11 (*now* Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees
and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then
king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.
12 And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon
had given him; and they pleased him not.

13 And he said, What cities *are* these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day.
14 And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold.
15 And this *is* the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the Lord, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.
16 *For* Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it *for* a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife.
17 And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether.
18 And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land,
19 and all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

We have here a further account of Solomon's greatness.

I. His buildings. He raised a great levy both of men and money, because he projected a great deal of building, which would both employ many hands and put him to a vast expense, 1Ki 9:15. And he was a wise builder, who sat down first, and counted the cost, and would not begin to build till he found himself able to finish. Perhaps there was some complaint of the heaviness of the taxes, which the historian excuses from the greatness of his undertakings. He raised it, not for war (as other princes), which would spend the blood of his subjects, but for building, which would require only their labour and purses.

Perhaps David observed Solomon's genius to lie towards building, and foresaw he would have his head and hands full of it, when he penned that song of degrees for Solomon, which begins, Except the Lord build the house, those labour in vain that build it (Ps 127:1), directing him to acknowledge God in all his ways, and, by prayer and faith in his providence, to take him along with him in all his designs of this kind. And Solomon verily began his work at the right end, for he built God's house first, and finished that before he began his own; and then God

blessed him, and he prospered in all his other buildings. If we begin with God, he will go on with us. Let the first-fruits be his, and the after-fruits will the more comfortably be ours, Mt 6:33.

Solomon built a church first and then he was enabled to build houses, and cities, and walls. Those consult not their own interest that defer to the last what they design for pious uses. The further order in Solomon's buildings is observable. God's house first for religion, then his own for his own convenience, then a house for his wife, to which she removed as soon as it was ready for her (1Ki 9:24), then Millo, the town-house or guild-hall, then the wall of Jerusalem, the royal city, then some cities of note and strength in the country, which were decayed and unfortified, Hazor, Megiddo, &c.

As he rebuilt these at his own charge, the inhabitants would be not only his subjects, but his tenants, which would increase the revenues of the crown for the benefit of his successors. Among the rest, he built Gezer, which Pharaoh took out of the hands of the Canaanites, and made a present of to his daughter, Solomon's wife, 1Ki 9:16. See how God maketh the earth to help the woman. Solomon was not himself a warlike prince, but the king of Egypt, who was, took cities for him to build. Then he built cities for convenience, for store, for his chariots, and for his horsemen, 1Ki 9:19. And, lastly, he built for pleasure in Lebanon, for his hunting perhaps, or other diversions there. Let piety begin, and profit proceed, and leave pleasure to the last.

II. His workmen and servants. In doing such great works, he must needs employ abundance of workmen. The honour of great men is borrowed from their inferiors, who do that which they have the credit of.

1. Solomon employed those who remained of the conquered and devoted nations in all the slavish work, 1Ki 9:20,21. We may suppose that they renounced their idolatry and submitted

to Solomon's government, so that he could not, in honour, utterly destroy them, and they were so poor that he could not levy money on them; therefore he served himself of their labour. Herein he observed God's law (Le 25:44, Thy bondmen shall be of the heathen), and fulfilled Noah's curse upon Canaan, A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren, Ge 9:25.

2. He employed Israelites in the more creditable services (1Ki 9:22,23): Of them he made no bondmen, for they were God's freemen, but he made them soldiers and courtiers, and gave them offices, as he saw them qualified, among his chariots and horsemen, appointing some to support the service of the inferior labourers. Thus he preserved the dignity and liberty of Israel and honoured their relation to God as a kingdom of priests.

III. His piety and devotion (1Ki 9:25): Three times in a year he offered burnt-offerings extraordinary (namely, at the three yearly feasts, the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles) in honour of the divine institution, besides what he offered at other times, both statedly and upon special occasions. With his sacrifices he burnt incense, not himself (that was king Uzziah's crime), but the priest for him, at his charge, and for his particular use. It is said, He offered on the altar which he himself built. He took care to build it, and then,

1. He himself made use of it. Many will assist the devotions of others that neglect their own. Solomon did not think his building an altar would excuse him from sacrificing, but rather engage him the more to it.

2. He himself had the benefit and comfort of it. Whatever pains we take, for the support of religion, to the glory of God and the edification of others, we ourselves are likely to have the advantage of it.

IV. His merchandise. He built a fleet of trading ships at Ezion-geber (1Ki 9:26), a port on the coast of the Red Sea, the furthest stage of the Israelites when they wandered in the wilderness, Nu 33:35. Probably that wilderness now began to be peopled by the Edomites, which it was not then. To them this port had belonged, but, David having subdued the Edomites, it now pertained to the crown of Judah. The fleet traded to Ophir in the East Indies, supposed to be that which is now called Ceylon. Gold was the commodity traded for, substantial wealth. It should seem, Solomon had before been Hiram's partner, or put a venture into his ships, which made him a rich return of 120 talents (1Ki 9:14), which encouraged him to build a fleet of his own. The success of others in any employment should quicken our industry; for in all labour there is profit. Solomon sent his own servants as factors, and merchants, and super-cargoes, but hired Tyrians for sailors, for they had knowledge of the sea, 1Ki 9:27.

Thus one nation needs another, Providence so ordering it that there may be mutual commerce and assistance; for not only as Christians, but as men, we are members one of another. The fleet brought home to Solomon 420 talents of gold, 1Ki 9:28. Canaan, the holy land, the glory of all lands, had no gold in it, which teaches us that that part of the wealth of this world which is for hoarding and trading is not the best part of it, but that which is more immediately for the present support and comfort of life, our own and others'; such were the productions of Canaan. Solomon got much by his merchandise, but, it should seem, David got much more by his conquests. What were Solomon's 420 talents to David's 100,000 talents of gold? 1Ch 22:14,29:4. Solomon got much by his merchandise, and yet has directed us to a better trade, within reach of the poorest, having assured us from his own experience of both that the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof than fine gold, Pr 3:14.

20 *And* all the people *that were* left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites,
Hivites, and Jebusites, which *were* not of the children of Israel,
21 their children that were left after them in the land, whom the
children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those
did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice unto this day.
22 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but
they *were* men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his
captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen.
23 These *were* the chief of the officers that *were* over Solomon's work,
five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that
wrought in the work.
24 But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her
house which *Solomon* had built for her: then did he build Millo.
25 And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt offerings and
peace offerings upon the altar which he built unto the Lord, and
he burnt incense upon the altar that *was* before the Lord. So he
finished the house.
26 And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which *is*
beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom.
27 And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had
knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon.
28 And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four
hundred and twenty talents, and brought *it* to king Solomon.

1 Kings-10

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

1 And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon
concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with
hard questions.
2 And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that
bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she
was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her
heart.

3 And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not *any* thing
hid from the king, which he told her not.

We have here an account of the visit which the queen of Sheba made to Solomon, no doubt when he was in the height of his piety and prosperity. Our Saviour calls her the queen of the south, for Sheba lay south of Canaan. The common opinion is that it was in Africa; and the Christians in Ethiopia, to this day, are confident that she came from their country, and that Candace was her successor, who is mentioned Ac 8:27. But it is more probable that she came from the south part of Arabia the happy. It should seem she was a queen regent, sovereign of her country. Many a kingdom would have been deprived of its greatest blessings if a Salique law had been admitted into its constitution. Observe,

I. On what errand the queen of Sheba came--not to treat of trade or commerce, to adjust the limits of their dominions, to court his alliance for their mutual strength or his assistance against some common enemy, which are the common occasions of the congress of crowned heads and their interviews, but she came,

1. To satisfy her curiosity; for she had heard of his fame, especially for wisdom, and she came to prove him, whether he was so great a man as he was reported to be, 1Ki 10:1. Solomon's fleet sailed near the coast of her country, and probably might put in there for fresh water; perhaps it was thus that she heard of the fame of Solomon, that he excelled in wisdom all the children of the east, and nothing would serve her but she would go herself and know the truth of the report.

2. To receive instruction from him. She came to hear his wisdom, and thereby to improve her own (Mt 12:42), that she might be the better able to govern her own kingdom by his maxims of policy. Those whom God has called to any public employment, particularly in the magistracy and ministry, should, by all means possible, be still improving themselves in that knowledge which

will more and more qualify them for it, and enable them to discharge their trust well.

But, it should seem, that which she chiefly aimed at was to be instructed in the things of God. She was religiously inclined, and had heard not only of the fame of Solomon, but concerning the name of the Lord (1Ki 10:1), the great name of that God whom Solomon worshipped and from whom he received his wisdom, and with this God she desired to be better acquainted. Therefore does our Saviour mention her enquiries after God, by Solomon, as an aggravation of the stupidity of those who enquire not after God by our Lord Jesus Christ, though he, having lain in his bosom, was much better able to instruct them.

II. With what equipage she came, with a very great retinue, agreeable to her rank, intending to try Solomon's wealth and generosity, as well as his wisdom, what entertainment he could and would give to a royal visitant, 1Ki 10:2. Yet she came not as one begging, but brought enough to bear her charges, and abundantly to recompense Solomon for his attention to her, nothing mean or common, but gold, and precious stones, and spices, because she came to trade for wisdom, which she would purchase at any rate.

III. What entertainment Solomon gave her. He despised not the weakness of her sex, blamed her not for leaving her own business at home to come so long a journey, and put herself and him to so much trouble and expense merely to satisfy her curiosity; but he made her welcome and all her train, gave her liberty to put all her questions, though some perhaps were frivolous, some captious, and some over-curious; he allowed her to commune with him of all that was in her heart (1Ki 10:2) and gave her a satisfactory answer to all her questions (1Ki 10:3), whether natural, moral, political, or divine. Were they designed to try him? he gave them such turns as abundantly satisfied her of his uncommon knowledge. Were they designed for her own

instruction? (as we suppose most of them were), she received abundant instruction from him, and he made things surprisingly easy which she apprehended insuperably difficult, and satisfied her that there was a divine sentence in the lips of this king. But he informed her no doubt, with particular care, concerning God, and his law and instituted worship. He had taken it for granted (1Ki 8:42) that strangers would hear of his great name, and would come thither to enquire after him; and now that so great a stranger came we may be sure he was not wanting to assist and encourage her enquiries, and give her a description of the temple, and the officers and services of it, that she might be persuaded to serve the Lord whom she now sought.

IV. How she was affected with what she saw and heard in Solomon's court. Divers things are here mentioned which she admired, the buildings and furniture of his palace, the provision that was made very day for his table (when she saw that perhaps she wondered where there were mouths for all that meat, but when she saw the multitude of his attendants and guests she was as ready to wonder where was the meat for all those mouths), the orderly sitting of his servants, every one in his place, and the ready attendance of his ministers, without any confusion, their rich liveries, and the propriety with which his cup-bearers waited at his table. These things she admired, as adding much to his magnificence. But, above all these, the first thing mentioned (which contained all) is his wisdom (1Ki 10:4), of the transcendency of which she now had incontestable proofs: and the last thing mentioned, which crowned all, is his piety, the ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, with what gravity and seriousness, and an air of devotion in his countenance, he appeared, when he went to the temple to worship God, with as much humility then as majesty at other times. Many of the ancient versions read it, The burnt-offerings which he offered in the house of the Lord; she observed with what a generous bounty he brought his sacrifices, and with what a pious fervour he attended the offering of them; never did she

see so much goodness with so much greatness. Every thing was so surprising that there was no more spirit in her, but she stood amazed; she had never seen the like.

V. How she expressed herself upon this occasion. 1. She owned her expectation far out-done, though it was highly raised by the report she heard, 1Ki 10:6,7. She is far from repenting her journey or calling herself a fool for undertaking it, but acknowledges it was well worth her while to come so far for the sight of that which she could not believe the report of. Usually things are represented to us, both by common fame and by our own imagination, much greater than we find them when we come to examine them; but here the truth exceeded both fame and fancy. Those who, through grace, are brought to experience the delights of communion with God will say that the one-half was not told them of the pleasures of Wisdom's ways and the advantages of her gates. Glorified saints, much more, will say that it was a true report which they heard of the happiness of heaven, but that the thousandth part was not told them, 1Co 2:9. 2. She pronounced those happy that constantly attended him, and waited on him at table: "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants (1Ki 10:8); they may improve their own wisdom by hearing thine." She was tempted to envy them and to which herself one of them. Note, It is a great advantage to be in good families, and to have opportunity of frequent converse with those that are wise, and good, and communicative. Many have this happiness who know not how to value it. With much more reason may we say this of Christ's servants, Blessed are those that dwell in his house, they will be still praising him. 3. She blessed God, the giver of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, and the author of his advancement, who had made him king,

(1.) In kindness to him, that he might have the larger opportunity of doing good with his wisdom: He delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel, 1Ki 10:9. Solomon's preferment began in the prophet's calling him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him,

2Sa 12:25. It more than doubles our comforts if we have reason to hope they come from God's delight in us. It was his pleasure concerning thee (so it may be read) to set thee on the throne, not for thy merit's sake, but because it so seemed good unto him.

(2.) In kindness to the people, because the Lord loved Israel for ever, designed them a lasting bliss, long to survive him that laid the foundations of it. "He has made thee king, not that thou mayest live in pomp and pleasure, and do what thou wilt, but to do judgment and justice." This she kindly reminded Solomon of, and no doubt he took it kindly. Both magistrates and ministers must be more solicitous to do the duty of their places than to secure the honours and profits of them. To this she attributes his prosperity, not to his wisdom, for bread is not always to the wise (Ec 9:11), but whoso doeth judgment and justice, it shall be well with him, Jer 22:15. Thus giving of thanks must be made for kings, for good kings, for such kings; they are what God makes them to be.

VI. How they parted.

1. She made a noble present to Solomon of gold and spices, 1Ki 10:10. David had foretold concerning Solomon that to him should be given of the gold of Sheba, Ps 72:15. The present of gold and spices which the wise men of the east brought to Christ was signified by this, Mt 2:11. Thus she paid for the wisdom she had learned and did not think she bought it dearly. Let those that are taught of God give him their hearts, and the present will be more acceptable than this of gold and spices. Mention is made of the great abundance Solomon had of his own, notwithstanding she presented and he accepted this gold. What we present to Christ he needs not, but will have us so to express our gratitude. The almug-trees are here spoken of (1Ki 10:11,12) as extraordinary, because perhaps much admired by the queen of Sheba.

2. Solomon was not behind-hand with her: He gave her whatsoever, she asked, patterns, we may suppose, of those things that were curious, by which she might make the like; or perhaps he gave her his precepts of wisdom and piety in writing, besides that which he gave her of his royal bounty, 1Ki 10:13. Thus those who apply to our Lord Jesus will find him not only greater than Solomon, and wiser, but more kind; whatsoever we ask, it shall be done for us; nay, he will, out of his divine bounty, which infinitely exceeds royal bounty, even Solomon's, do for us more than we are able to ask or think.

4 And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,

5 and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.

6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it;* and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.

8 Happy *are* thy men, happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom.

9 Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.

10 And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon.

11 And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones.

12 And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for

singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

13 And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides *that* which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

Solomon's Riches and Fame

14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold,

15 besides *that he had* of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.

16 And king Solomon made two hundred targets *of* beaten gold: six hundred *shekels* of gold went to one target.

17 And *he made* three hundred shields *of* beaten gold; three pounds of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

18 Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold.

19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne *was* round behind: and *there were* stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays.

We have here a further account of Solomon's prosperity.

I. How he increased his wealth. Though he had much, he still coveted to have more, being willing to try the utmost the things of this world could do to make men happy.

1. Besides the gold that came from Ophir (1Ki 9:28), he brought so much into his country from other places that the whole amounted, every year, to 666 talents (1Ki 10:14), an ominous number, compare Re 13:18,Ezr 2:13. 2. He received a great deal in customs from the merchants, and in land-taxes from the

countries his father had conquered and made tributaries to Israel, 1Ki 10:15.

3. He was Hiram's partner in a Tharshish fleet, of and for Tyre, which imported once in three years, not only gold, and silver, and ivory, substantial goods and serviceable, but apes to play with and peacocks to please the eye with their feathers, 1Ki 10:22. I wish this may not be an evidence that Solomon and his people, being overcharged with prosperity, by this time grew childish and wanton.

4. He had presents made him, every year, from the neighbouring princes and great men, to engage the continuance of his friendship, not so much because they feared him or were jealous of him as because they loved him and admired his wisdom, had often occasion to consult him as an oracle, and sent him these presents by way of recompence for his advice in politics, and (whether it became his grandeur and generosity or no we will not enquire) he took all that came, even garments and spices, horses and mules, 1Ki 10:24,25.

5. He traded to Egypt for horses and linen-yarn (or, as some read it, linen-cloth), the staple commodities of that country, and had his own merchants or factors whom he employed in this traffic and who were accountable to him, 1Ki 10:28,29. The custom to be paid to the king of Egypt for exported chariots and horses out of Egypt was very high, but (as bishop Patrick understands it) Solomon, having married his daughter, got him to compound for the customs, so that he could bring them up cheaper than his neighbours, which obliged them to buy them of him, which he was wise enough no doubt to make his advantage of. This puts an honour upon the trading part of a nation, and sets a tradesman not so much below a gentleman as some place him, that Solomon, one of the greatest men that ever was, thought it no disparagement to him to deal in trade. In all labour there is profit.

II. What use he made of his wealth. He did not hoard it up in his coffers, that he might have it to look upon and leave behind him. He has, in his Ecclesiastes, so much exposed the folly of hoarding that we cannot suppose he would himself be guilty of it. No, God that had given him riches, and wealth, and honour, gave him also power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, Ec 5:19.

1. He laid out his gold in fine things for himself, which he might the better be allowed to do when he had before laid out so much in fine things for the house of God.

(1.) He made 200 targets, and 300 shields, of beaten gold (1Ki 10:16,17), not for service, but for state, to be carried before him when he appeared in pomp. With us, magistrates have swords and maces carried before them, as the Romans had their rods and axes, in token of their power to correct and punish the bad, to whom they are to be a terror. But Solomon had shields and targets carried before him, to signify that he took more pleasure in using his power for the defence and protection of the good, to whom he would be a praise. Magistrates are shields of the earth.

(2.) He made a stately throne, on which he sat, to give laws to his subjects, audience to ambassadors, and judgment upon appeals, 1Ki 10:18-20. It was made of ivory, or elephants' teeth, which was very rich; and yet, as if he had so much gold that he knew not what to do with it, he overlaid that with gold, the best gold. Yet some think he did not cover the ivory all over, but here and there. He rolled it, flowered it, or inlaid it, with gold. The stays or arms of this stately chair were supported by the images of lions in gold; so were the steps and paces by which he went up to it, to be a memorandum to him of that courage and resolution wherewith he ought to execute judgment, not

fearing the face of man. The righteous, in that post, is bold as a lion.

(3.) He made all his drinking vessels, and all the furniture of his table, even at his country seat, of pure gold, 1Ki 10:21. He did not grudge himself what he had, but took the credit and comfort of it, such as it was. That is good that does us good.

2. He made it circulate among his subjects, so that the kingdom was as rich as the king; for he had no separate interests of his own to consult, but sought the welfare of his people. Those princes are not governed by Solomon's maxims who think it policy to keep their subjects poor. Solomon was herein a type of Christ, who is not only rich himself, but enriches all that are his. Solomon was instrumental to bring so much gold into the country, and disperse it, that silver was nothing accounted of, 1Ki 10:21.

There was such plenty of it in Jerusalem that it was as the stones; and cedars, that used to be great rarities, were as common as sycamore trees, 1Ki 10:27. Such is the nature of worldly wealth, plenty of it makes it the less valuable; much more should the enjoyment of spiritual riches lessen our esteem of all earthly possessions. If gold in abundance would make silver to seem so despicable, shall not wisdom, and grace, and the foretastes of heaven, which are far better than gold, make earthly wealth seem much more despicable?

Lastly, Well, thus rich, thus great, was Solomon, and thus did he exceed all the kings of the earth, 1Ki 10:23. Now let us remember,

1. That this was he who, when he was setting out in the world, did not ask for the wealth and honour of it, but asked for a wise and understanding heart. The more moderate our desires are towards earthly things the better qualified we are for the

enjoyment of them and the more likely to have them. See, in Solomon's greatness, the performance of God's promise (1Ki 3:13), and let it encourage us to seek first the righteousness of God's kingdom.

2. That this was he who, having tasted all these enjoyments, wrote a whole book to show the vanity of all worldly things and the vexation of spirit that attends them, their insufficiency to make us happy and the folly of setting our hearts upon them, and to recommend to us the practice of serious godliness, as that which is the whole of man, and will do infinitely more towards the making of us easy and happy than all the wealth and power that he was master of, and which, through the grace of God, is within our reach, when the thousandth part of Solomon's greatness is a thousand times more than we can ever be so vain as to promise ourselves in this world.

20 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom.

21 And all king Solomon's drinking vessels *were of* gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were of* pure gold; none *were of* silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

22 For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

24 And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

25 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots

26 And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand

horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with
the king at Jerusalem.
27 And the king made silver *to be* in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars
made he *to be* as the sycamore trees that *are* in the vale, for
abundance.
28 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the
king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.
29 And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred *shekels*
of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings
of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring *them* out
by their means.

1 Kings-11

Solomon's Apostasy and Adversaries

1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the
daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites,
Edomites, Zidonians, *and* Hittites;
2 of the nations *concerning* which the Lord said unto the children of
Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto
you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods:
Solomon clave unto these in love.

This is a sad story, and very surprising, of Solomon's defection and degeneracy.

I. Let us enquire into the occasions and particulars of it. Shall Solomon fall, that was the beauty of Israel, and so great a blessing of his generation? Yes, it is too true, and the scripture is faithful in relating it, and repeating it, and referring to it long after, Ne 13:26. There was no king like Solomon who was beloved of his God, yet even him did outlandish women cause to sin. There is the summary of his apostasy; it was the woman that deceived him, and was first in the transgression.

1. He doted on strange women, many strange women. Here his revolt began.

(1.) He gave himself to women, which his mother had particularly cautioned him against. Pr 31:3, Give not thy strength unto women (perhaps alluding to Samson, who lost his strength by giving information of it to a woman), for it is that which, as much as any thing, destroys kings. His father David's fall began with the lusts of the flesh, which he should have taken warning by. The love of women has cast down many wounded (Pr 7:26) and many (says bishop Hall) have had their head broken by their own rib.

(2.) He took many women, so many that, at last, they amounted to 700 wives and 300 concubines, 1000 in all, and not one good one among them, as he himself owns in his penitential sermon (Ec 7:28), for no woman of established virtue would be one of such a set. God had, by his law, particularly forbidden the kings to multiply either horses or wives, De 17:16,17. How he broke the former law, in multiplying horses, and having them out of Egypt too (which was expressly prohibited in that law) we read 1Ki 10:29, and here we are told how he broke the latter (which proved of more fatal consequence) in multiplying wives. Note, Less sins, made gold with, open the door to greater.

David had multiplied wives too much, and perhaps that made Solomon presume it lawful. Note, If those that are in reputation for religion in any thing set a bad example, they know not what a deal of mischief they may do by it, particularly to their own children. One bad act of a good man may be of more pernicious consequence to others than twenty of a wicked man. Probably Solomon, when he began to multiply wives, intended not to exceed his father's number. But the way of sin is down-hill; those that have got into it cannot easily stop themselves. Divine wisdom has appointed one woman for one man, did so at first; and those who do not think one enough will not think two or

three enough. Unbridled lust will be unbounded, and the loosened hind will wander endlessly. But this was not all:

(3.) They were strange women, Moabites, Ammonites, &c., of the nations which God had particularly forbidden them to intermarry with, 1Ki 11:2. Some think it was in policy that he married these foreigners, by them to get intelligence of the state of those countries. I rather fear it was because the daughters of Israel were too grave and modest for him, and those foreigners pleased him with the looseness and wantonness of their dress, and air, and conversation. Or, perhaps, it was looked upon as a piece of state to have his seraglio, as his other treasures, replenished with that which was far-fetched; as if that were too great an honour for the best of his subjects which would really have been a disgrace to the meanest of them--to be his mistresses. And,

(4.) To complete the mischief, Solomon clave unto these in love, 1Ki 11:2. He not only kept them, but was extravagantly fond of them, set his heart upon them, spent his time among them, thought every thing well they said and did, and despised Pharaoh's daughter, his rightful wife, who had been dear to him, and all the ladies of Israel, in comparison of them. Solomon was master of a great deal of knowledge, but to what purpose, when he had no better a government of his appetites?

2. He was drawn by them to the worship of strange gods, as Israel to Baal-peor by the daughters of Moab. This was the bad consequence of his multiplying wives. We have reason to think it impaired his health, and hastened upon him the decays of age; it exhausted his treasure, which, though vast indeed, would be found little enough to maintain the pride and vanity of all these women; perhaps it occasioned him, in his latter end, to neglect his business, by which he lost his supplies from abroad, and was forced, for the keeping up of his grandeur, to burden his subjects with those taxes which they complained of, 1Ki 12:4.

But none of these consequences were so bad as this: His wives turned away his heart after other gods, 1Ki 11:3,4.

(1.) He grew cool and indifferent in his own religion and remiss in the service of the God of Israel: His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God (1Ki 11:4), nor did he follow him fully (1Ki 11:6), like David. We cannot suppose that he quite cast off the worship of God, much less that he restrained or hindered it (the temple-service went on as usual); but he grew less frequent, and less serious, in his ascent to the house of the Lord and his attendance on his altar. He left his first love, lost his zeal for God, and did not persevere to the end as he had begun; therefore it is said he was not perfect, because he was not constant; and he followed not God fully, because he turned from following him, and did not continue to the end. His father David had many faults, but he never neglected the worship of God, nor grew remiss in that, as Solomon did (his wives using all their arts to divert him from it), and there began his apostasy.

(2.) He tolerated and maintained his wives in their idolatry and made no scruple of joining with them in it. Pharaoh's daughter was proselyted (as is supposed) to the Jews' religion, but, when he began to grow careless in the worship of God himself, he used no means to convert his other wives to it; in complaisance to them, he built chapels for their gods (1Ki 11:7,8), maintained their priests, and occasionally did himself attend their altars, making a jest of it, asking, "What harm is there in it? Are not all religions alike?" which (says bishop Patrick) has been the disease of some great wits. When he humoured one thus, the rest would take it ill if he did not, in like manner, gratify them, so that he did it for all his wives (1Ki 11:8), and at last came to such a degree of impiety that he set up a high place for Chemosh in the hill that is before Jerusalem, the mount of Olives, as if to confront the temple which he himself had built. These high places continued here, not utterly demolished, till Josiah's time,

2Ki 23:13. This is the account here given of Solomon's apostasy.

II. Let us now pause awhile, and lament Solomon's fall; and we may justly stand and wonder at it. How has the gold become dim! How has the most fine gold changed! Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and be horribly afraid, as the prophet exclaims in a like case, Jer 2:12.

1. How strange,

(1.) That Solomon, in his old age, should be ensnared with fleshly lusts, youthful lusts. As we must never presume upon the strength of our resolutions, so neither upon the weakness of our corruptions, so as to be secure and off our guard.

(2.) That so wise a man as Solomon was, so famed for a quick understanding and sound judgment, should suffer himself to be made such a fool of by these foolish women.

(3.) That one who had so often and so plainly warned others of the danger of the love of women should himself be so wretchedly bewitched with it; it is easier to see a mischief, and to show it to others, than to shun it ourselves.

(4.) That so good a man, so zealous for the worship of God, who had been so conversant with divine things, and who prayed that excellent prayer at the dedication of the temple, should do these sinful things. Is this Solomon? Have all his wisdom and devotion come to this at last? Never was gallant ship so wrecked; never was crown so profaned.

2. What shall we say to all this? Why God permitted it it is not for us to enquire; his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters; he knew how to bring glory to himself out of it. God foresaw it when he said concerning him that should build the

temple, If he commit iniquity, &c., 2Sa 7:14. But it concerns us to enquire what good use we may make of it.

(1.) Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. We see how weak we are of ourselves, without the grace of God; let us therefore live in a constant dependence on that grace.

(2.) See the danger of a prosperous condition, and how hard it is to overcome the temptations of it. Solomon, like Jeshurun, waxed fat and then kicked. The food convenient, which Agur prayed for, is safer and better than the food abundant, which Solomon was even surfeited with.

(3.) See what need those have to stand upon their guard who have made a great profession of religion, and shown themselves forward and zealous in devotion, because the devil will set upon them most violently, and, if they misbehave, the reproach is the greater. It is the evening that commends the day; let us therefore fear, lest, having run well, we seem to come short.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.
4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as *was* the heart of David his father.
5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.
6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as *did* David his father.
7 Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that *is* before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.
8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.
9 And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded.

Here is, I. God's anger against Solomon for his sin. The thing he did displeased the Lord. Time was then the Lord loved Solomon (2Sa 12:24) and delighted in him (1Ki 10:9), but now the Lord was angry with Solomon (1Ki 11:9), for there was in his sin,

1 The most base ingratitude that could be. He turned from the Lord who had appeared unto him twice, once before he began to build the temple (1Ki 3:5) and once after he had dedicated it, 1Ki 9:2. God keeps account of the gracious visits he makes us, whether we do or no, knows how often he has appeared to us and for us, and will remember it against us if we turn from him. God's appearing to Solomon was such a sensible confirmation of his faith as should have for ever prevented his worshipping any other god; it was also such a distinguishing favour, and put such an honour upon him, as he ought never to have forgotten, especially considering what God said to him in both these appearances.

2 The most wilful disobedience. This was the very thing concerning which God had commanded him--that he should not go after other gods, yet he was not restrained by such an express admonition, 1Ki 11:10. Those who have dominion over men are apt to forget God's dominion over them; and, while they demand obedience from their inferiors, to deny it to him who is the Supreme.

II The message he sent him hereupon (1Ki 11:11): The Lord said unto Solomon (it is likely by a prophet) that he must expect to smart for his apostasy. And here, 1 The sentence is just, that, since he had revolted from God, part of his kingdom should revolt from his family; he had given God's glory to the creature, and therefore God would give his crown to his

servant: "I will rend the kingdom from thee, in thy posterity, and will give it to thy servant, who shall bear rule over much of that for which thou hast laboured."

This was a great mortification to Solomon, who pleased himself no doubt with the prospect of the entail of his rich kingdom upon his heirs for ever. Sin brings ruin upon families, cuts off entails, alienates estates, and lays men's honour in the dust. 2. Yet the mitigations of it are very kind, for David's sake (1Ki 11:12,13), that is, for the sake of the promise made to David. Thus all the favour God shows to man is for Christ's sake, and for the sake of the covenant made with him. The kingdom shall be rent from Solomon's house, but,

(1.) Not immediately. Solomon shall not live to see it done, but it shall be rent out of the hand of his son, a son that was born to him by one of his strange wives, for his mother was an Ammonitess (1Ki 14:31) and probably had been a promoter of idolatry. What comfort can a man take in leaving children and an estate behind him if he do not leave a blessing behind him? Yet, if judgments be coming, it is a favour to us if they come not in our days, as 2Ki 20:19.

(2.) Not wholly. One tribe, that of Judah, the strongest and most numerous, shall remain to the house of David (1Ki 11:13), for Jerusalem's sake, which David built, and for the sake of the temple there, which Solomon built; these shall not go into other hands. Solomon did not quickly nor wholly turn away from God; therefore God did not quickly nor wholly take the kingdom from him.

Upon this message which God graciously sent to Solomon, to awaken his conscience and bring him to repentance, we have reason to hope that he humbled himself before God, confessed his sin, begged pardon, and returned to his duty, that he then published his repentance in the book of Ecclesiastes, where he

bitterly laments his own folly and madness (Ec 7:25,26), and warns others to take heed of the like evil courses, and to fear God and keep his commandments, in consideration of the judgment to come, which, it is likely, had made him tremble, as it did Felix. That penitential sermon was as true an indication of a heart broken for sin and turned from it as David's penitential psalms were, though of another nature. God's grace in his people works variously.

Thus, though Solomon fell, he was not utterly cast down; what God had said to David concerning him was fulfilled: I will chasten him with the rod of men, but my mercy shall not depart from him, 2Sa 7:14,15. Though God may suffer those whom he loves to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. Solomon's defection, though it was much his reproach and a great blemish to his personal character, yet did not so far break in upon the character of his reign but that it was afterwards made the pattern of a good reign, 2Ch 11:17, where the kings are said to have done well, while they walked in the way of David and Solomon.

But, though we have all this reason to hope he repented and found mercy, yet the Holy Ghost did not think fit expressly to record his recovery, but left it doubtful, for warning to others not to sin upon presumption of repenting, for it is but a peradventure whether God will give them repentance, or, if he do, whether he will give the evidence of it to themselves or others. Great sinners may recover themselves and have the benefit of their repentance, and yet be denied both the comfort and credit of it; the guilt may be taken away, and yet not the reproach.

11 Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.

12 Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's
sake: *but* I will rend it out of the hand of thy son.
13 Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; *but* will give one
tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's
sake which I have chosen.
14 And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the
Edomite: he *was* of the king's seed in Edom.
15 For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain
of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every
male in Edom;
16 (for six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had
cut off every male in Edom:)

While Solomon kept closely to God and to his duty there was no adversary nor evil occurrent (1Ki 5:4), nothing to create him any disturbance or uneasiness in the least; but here we have an account of two adversaries that appeared against him, inconsiderable, and that could not have done any thing worth taking notice of if Solomon had not first made God his enemy. What hurt could Hadad or Rezon have done to so great and powerful a king as Solomon was if he had not, by sin, made himself mean and weak? And then those little people menace and insult him. If God be on our side, we need not fear the greatest adversary; but, if he be against us, he can made us fear the least, and the very grasshopper shall be a burden. Observe,

I. Both these adversaries God stirred up, 1Ki 11:14,23. Though they themselves were moved by principles of ambition or revenge, God made use of them to serve his design of correcting Solomon. The principal judgment threatened was deferred, namely, the rending of the kingdom from him, but he himself was made to fee the smart of the rod, for his greater humiliation. Note, Whoever are, in any way, adversaries to us, we must take notice of the hand of God stirring them up to be so, as he bade Shimei curse David; we must look through the instruments of our trouble to the author of it and hear the Lord's controversy in it.

II. Both these adversaries had the origin of their enmity to Solomon and Israel laid in David's time, and in his conquests of their respective countries, 1Ki 11:15,24. Solomon had the benefit and advantage of his father's successes both in the enlargement of his dominion and the increase of his treasure, and would never have known any thing but the benefit of them if he had kept closely to God; but now he finds evils to balance the advantages, and that David had made himself enemies, who were thorns in his sides. Those that are too free in giving provocation ought to consider that perhaps it may be remembered in time to come and returned with interest to theirs after them; having so few friends in this world, it is our wisdom not to make ourselves more enemies than we needs must.

1. Hadad, an Edomite, was an adversary to Solomon. We are not told what he did against him, nor which way he gave him disturbance, only, in general, that he was an adversary to him: but we are told,

(1.) What induced him to bear Solomon a grudge. David had conquered Edom, 2Sa 8:14. Joab put all the males to the sword, 1Ki 11:15,16. A terrible execution he made, avenging on Edom their old enmity to Israel, yet perhaps with too great a severity. From this general slaughter, while Joab was burying the slain (for he left not any alive of their own people to bury them, and buried they must be, or they would be an annoyance to the country, Eze 39:12), Hadad, a branch of the royal family, then a little child, was taken and preserved by some of the king's servants, and conveyed to Egypt, 1Ki 11:17.

They halted by the way, in Midian first, and then in Paran, where they furnished themselves with men, not to fight for them or force their passage, but to attend them, that their young master might go into Egypt with an equipage agreeable to his quality. There he was kindly sheltered and entertained by

Pharaoh, as a distressed prince, as well provided for, and so recommended himself that, in process of time, he married the queen's sister (1Ki 11:19), and by her had a child, which the queen herself conceived such a kindness for that she brought him up in Pharaoh's house, among the king's children.

(2.) What enabled him to do Solomon a mischief. Upon the death of David and Joab, he returned to his own country, in which, it should seem, he settled and remained quiet while Solomon continued wise and watchful for the public good, but from which he had opportunity of making inroads upon Israel when Solomon, having sinned away his wisdom as Samson did his strength (and in the same way), grew careless of public affairs, was off his guard himself, and had forfeited the divine protection.

What vexation Hadad gave to Solomon we are not here told, but only how loth Pharaoh was to part with him and how earnestly he solicited his stay (1Ki 11:22): What hast thou lacked with me? "Nothing," says Hadad; "but let me go to my own country, my native air, my native soil." Peter Martyr has a pious reflection upon this: "Heaven is our home, and we ought to keep up a holy affection to that, and desire towards it, even when the world, the place of our banishment, smiles most upon us." Does it ask, What have you lacked, that you are so willing to be gone? We may answer, "Nothing that the world can do for us; but still let us go thither, where our hope, and honour, and treasure are."

2. Rezon, a Syrian, was another adversary to Solomon. When David conquered the Syrians, he headed the remains, lived at large by spoil and rapine, till Solomon grew careless, and then he got possession of Damascus, reigned there (1Ki 11:24) and over the country about (1Ki 11:25), and he created troubles to Israel, probably in conjunction with Hadad, all the days of Solomon (namely, after his apostasy), or he was an enemy to

Israel during all Solomon's reign, and upon all occasions vented his then impotent malice against them, but till Solomon's revolt, when his defence had departed from him, he could not do them any mischief. It is said of him that he abhorred Israel. Other princes loved and admired Israel and Solomon, and courted their friendship, but here was one that abhorred them. The greatest and best of princes and people, however much they may in general be respected, will yet perhaps be hated and abhorred by some.

17 that Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants
with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad *being* yet a little child.
18 And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took
men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto
Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him a house, and appointed
him victuals, and gave him land.
19 And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he
gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes
the queen.
20 And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom
Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in
Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh.
21 And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers,
and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to
Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country.
22 Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me,
that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he
answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise.
23 And God stirred him up *another* adversary, Rezon the son of
Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah:
24 and he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band,
when David slew them *of Zobah:* and they went to Damascus, and
dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus.
25 And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, besides
the mischief that Hadad *did:* and he abhorred Israel, and reigned
over Syria.

26 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda,
Solomon's servant, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow
woman, even he lifted up *his* hand against the king.
27 And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king:
Solomon built Millo, *and* repaired the breaches of the city of David
his father.
28 And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valor: and Solomon
seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler
over all the charge of the house of Joseph.
29 And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of
Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the
way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two
were alone in the field:
30 and Ahijah caught the new garment that *was* on him, and rent it *in*
twelve pieces:

We have here the first mention of that infamous name Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that made Israel to sin; he is here brought upon the stage as an adversary to Solomon, whom God had expressly told (1Ki 11:11) that he would give the greatest part of his kingdom to his servant, and Jeroboam was the man. We have here an account,

I. Of his extraction, 1Ki 11:26. He was of the tribe of Ephraim, he next in honour to Judah. His mother was a widow, to whom Providence had made up the loss of a husband in a son that was active and ingenious, and (we may suppose) a great support and comfort to her.

II. Of his elevation. It was Solomon's wisdom, when he had work to do, to employ proper persons in it. He observed Jeroboam to be a very industrious young man, one that minded his business, took a pleasure in it, and did it with all his might, and therefore he gradually advanced him, till at length he made him receiver-general for the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, or perhaps put him into an office equivalent to that of lord-lieutenant of those two counties, for he was ruler of the

burden, or tribute, that is, either of the taxes or of the militia of the house of Joseph.

Note, Industry is the way to preferment. Seest thou a man diligent in his business, that will take care and pains, and go through with it? he shall stand before kings, and not always be on the level with mean men. Observe a difference between David, and both his predecessor and his successor: when Saul saw a valiant man he took him to himself (1Sa 14:52); when Solomon saw an industrious man he preferred him; but David's eyes were upon the faithful in the land, that they might dwell with him: if he saw a godly man, he preferred him, for he was a man after God's own heart, whose countenance beholds the upright.

III. Of his designation to the government of the ten tribes after the death of Solomon. Some think he was himself plotting against Solomon, and contriving to rise to the throne, that he was turbulent and aspiring. The Jews say that when he was employed by Solomon in building Millo he took opportunities of reflecting upon Solomon as oppressive to his people, and suggesting that which would alienate them from his government. It is not indeed probable that he should say much to that purport, for Solomon would have got notice of it, and it would have hindered his preferment; but it is plainly intimated that he had it in his thoughts, for the prophet tells him (1Ki 11:37), Thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth. But this was the cause, or rather this was the story, of the lifting up of his hand against the king: Solomon made him ruler over the tribes of Joseph, and, as he was going to take possession of his government, he was told by a prophet in God's name that he should be king, which emboldened him to aim high, and in some instances to oppose the king and give him vexation.

1 The prophet by whom this message was sent was Ahijah of Shiloh; we shall read of him again, 1Ki 14:2. It seems, Shiloh was not so perfectly forsaken and forgotten of God but that, in remembrance of the former days, it was blessed with a prophet. He delivered his message to Jeroboam in the way, his servants being probably ordered to retire, as in a like case (1Sa 9:27), when Samuel delivered his message to Saul. God's word was not the less sacred and sure for being delivered to him thus obscurely, under a hedge it may be.

2 The sign by which it was represented to him was the rending of a garment into twelve pieces, and giving him ten, 1Ki 11:30,31. It is not certain whether the garment was Jeroboam's, as is commonly taken for granted, or Ahijah's, which is more probable: He (that is, the prophet) had clad himself with a new garment, on purpose that he might with it give him a sign. The rending of the kingdom from Saul was signified by the rending of Samuel's mantle, not Saul's, 1Sa 15:27,28. And it was more significant to give Jeroboam ten pieces of that which was not his own before than of that which was. The prophets, both true and false, used such signs, even in the New Testament, as Agabus, Ac 21:10,11.

3. The message itself, which is very particular,

(1.) He assures him that he shall be king over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, 1Ki 11:31. The meanness of his extraction and employment shall be no hindrance to his advancement, when the God of Israel says (by whom kings reign), I will give ten tribes unto thee.

(2.) He tells him the reason; not for his good character or deserts, but for the chastising of Solomon's apostasy: "Because he, and his family, and many of his people with him, have forsaken me, and worshipped other gods," 1Ki 11:33. It was because they had done ill, not because he was likely to do

much better. Thus Israel must know that it is not for their righteousness that they are made masters of Canaan, but for the wickedness of the Canaanites, De 9:4. Jeroboam did not deserve so good a post, but Israel deserved so bad a prince. In telling him that the reason why he rent the kingdom from the house of Solomon was because they had forsaken God, he warns him to take heed of sinning away his preferment in like manner.

(3.) He limits his expectations to the ten tribes only, and to them in reversion after the death of Solomon, lest he should aim at the whole and give immediate disturbance to Solomon's government. He is here told,

[1.] That two tribes (called here one tribe, because little Benjamin was in a manner lost in the thousands of Judah) should remain sure to the house of David, and he must never make any attempt upon them: He shall have one tribe (1Ki 11:32), and again (1Ki 11:36), That David may have a lamp, that is, a shining name and memory (Ps 132:17), and his family, as a royal family, may not be extinct. He must not think that David was rejected, as Saul was. No, God would not take his loving-kindness from him, as he did from Saul. The house of David must be supported and kept in reputation, for all this, because out of it the Messiah must arise. Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it.

[2.] That Solomon must keep possession during his life, 1Ki 11:34,35. Jeroboam therefore must not offer to dethrone him, but wait with patience till his day shall come to fall. Solomon shall be prince, all the days of his life, not for his own sake (he had forfeited his crown to the justice of God), but for David my servant's sake, because he kept my commandments. Children that do not tread in their parents' steps yet often fare the better in this world for their good parents' piety.

(4.) He gives him to understand that he will be upon his good behaviour. The grant of the crown must run quamdiu se bene gesserit--during good behaviour. "If thou wilt do what is right in my sight, I will build thee a sure house, and not otherwise" (1Ki 11:38), intimating that, if he forsook God, even his advancement to the throne would in time lay his family in the dust; whereas the seed of David, though afflicted, should not be afflicted for ever (1Ki 11:39), but should flourish again, as it did in many of the illustrious kings of Judah, who reigned in glory when Jeroboam's family was extirpated.

IV. Jeroboam's flight into Egypt, 1Ki 11:40. In some way or other Solomon came to know of all this, probably from Jeroboam's own talk of it; he could not conceal it as Saul did, nor keep his own counsel; if he had, he might have staid in his country, and been preparing there for his future advancement; but letting it be known,

1. Solomon foolishly sought to kill his successor. Had not he taught others that, whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand? And yet does he himself think to defeat that counsel?

2. Jeroboam prudently withdrew into Egypt. Though God's promise would have secured him any where, yet he would use means for his own preservation, and was content to live in exile and obscurity for a while, being sure of a kingdom at last. And shall not we be so, who have a better kingdom in reserve?

31 and he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the
Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the
hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee:
32 (but he shall have one tribe for my servant David’s sake, and for
Jerusalem’s sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of
Israel:)
33 because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth
the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and

Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in
my ways, to do *that which is* right in mine eyes, and *to keep* my statutes
and my judgments, as *did* David his father.
34 Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I
will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's
sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my
statutes:
35 but I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it
unto thee, *even* ten tribes.
36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may
have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have
chosen me to put my name there.
37 And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy
soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.
38 And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee,
and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that is* right in my sight, to keep
my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I
will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David,
and will give Israel unto thee.
39 And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever.
40 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose,
and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt
until the death of Solomon.

The Death of Solomon

41 And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his
wisdom, *are* they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

We have here the conclusion of Solomon's story, and in it,

1. Reference is had to another history then extant, but (not being divinely inspired) since lost, the Book of the Acts of Solomon, 1Ki 11:41. Probably this book was written by a chronologer or historiographer, whom Solomon employed to write his annals, out of which the sacred writer extracted what God saw fit to transmit to the church.

2. A summary of the years of his reign (1Ki 11:42): He reigned in Jerusalem (not, as his father, part of his time in Hebron and part in Jerusalem), over all Israel (not as his son, and his father in the beginning of his time, over Judah only), forty years. His reign was as long as his father's, but not his life. Sin shortened his days. 3. His death and burial, and his successor, 1Ki 11:43.

(1.) He followed his fathers to the grave, slept with them, and was buried in David's burying-place, with honour no doubt.

(2.) His son followed him in the throne. Thus the graves are filling with the generations that go off, and houses are filling with those that are growing up. As the grave cries, "Give, give," so land is never lost for want of an heir.

42 And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel *was* forty years.

43 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

1 Kings-12

Israel's Revolt

1 And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard *of it,* (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt,)

3 that they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.

Solomon had 1000 wives and concubines, yet we read but of one son he had to bear up his name, and he a fool. It is said (Ho

4:10), They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase. Sin is a bad way of building up a family. Rehoboam was the son of the wisest of men, yet did not inherit his father's wisdom, and then it stood him in little stead to inherit his father's throne. Neither wisdom nor grace runs in the blood.

Solomon came to the crown very young, yet he was then a wise man. Rehoboam came to the crown at forty years old, when men will be wise if ever they will, yet he was then foolish. Wisdom does not go by age, nor is it the multitude of years nor the advantage of education that reaches it. Solomon's court was a mart of wisdom and the rendezvous of learned men, and Rehoboam was the darling of the court; and yet all was not sufficient to make him a wise man. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. No dispute is made of Rehoboam's succession; upon the death of his father, he was immediately proclaimed. But,

I The people desired a treaty with him at Shechem, and he condescended to meet them there.

1. Their pretence was to make him king, but the design was to unmake him. They would give him a public inauguration in another place than the city of David, that he might not seem to be king of Judah only. They had ten parts in him, and would have him among themselves for once, that they might recognize his title.

2 The place was ominous: at Shechem, where Abimelech set up himself (Jdg 9:1-57); yet it had been famous for the convention of the states there, Jos 24:1. Rehoboam, we may suppose, knew of the threatening, that the kingdom should be rent from him, and hoped by going to Shechem, and treating there with the ten tribes, to prevent it: yet it proved the most impolitic thing he could do, and hastened the rupture.

II The representatives of the tribes addressed him, praying to be eased of the taxes they were burdened with. The meeting being appointed, they sent for Jeroboam out of Egypt to come and be their speaker. This they needed not to have done: he knew what God had designed him for, and would have come though he had not been sent for, for now was his time to expect the possession of the promised crown. In their address,

1. They complain of the last reign: Thy father made our yoke grievous, 1Ki 12:4. They complain not of his father's idolatry and revolt from God; that which was the greatest grievance of all was none to them, so careless and indifferent were they in the matters of religion, as if God or Moloch were all one, so they might but live at ease and pay no taxes. Yet the complaint was groundless and unjust.

Never did people live more at ease than they did, nor in great plenty. Did they pay taxes? It was to advance the strength and magnificence of their kingdom. If Solomon's buildings cost them money, they cost them no blood, as war would do. Were many servile hands employed about them? They were not the hands of the Israelites. Were the taxes a burden? How could that be, when Solomon imported bullion in such plenty that silver was, in a manner, as common as the stones? So that they did but render to Solomon the things that were Solomon's.

Nay, suppose there was some hardship put upon them, were they not told before that this would be the manner of the king and yet they would have one? The best government cannot secure itself from reproach and censure, no, not Solomon's. Factious spirits will never want something to complain of. I know nothing in Solomon's administration that could make the people's yoke grievous, unless perhaps the women whom in his latter days he doted on were connived at in oppressing them.

2. They demand relief from him, and on this condition will continue in their allegiance to the house of David. They asked not to be wholly free from paying taxes, but to have the burden made lighter; this was all their care, to save their money, whether their religion was supported and the government protected or no. All seek their own.

III. Rehoboam consulted with those about him concerning the answer he should give to this address. It was prudent to take advice, especially having so weak a head of his own; yet, upon this occasion, it was impolitic to take time himself to consider, for thereby he gave time to the disaffected people to ripen things for a revolt, and his deliberating in so plain a case would be improved as an indication of the little concern he had for the people's ease. They saw what they must expect, and prepared accordingly. Now,

1 The grave experienced men of his council advised him by all means to give the petitioners a kind answer, to give them good words, to promise them fair, and this day, this critical day, to serve them, that is, to tell them that he was their servant, and that he would redress all their grievances and make it his business to please them and make them easy. "Deny thyself (say they) so far as to do this for this once, and they will be thy servants for ever. When the present heat is allayed with a soft answer, and the assembly dismissed, their cooler thoughts will reconcile and fix them to Solomon's family still." Note, The way to rule is to serve, to do good, and stoop to do it, to become all things to all men and so win their hearts. Those who are in power really sit highest, and easiest, and safest, when they take this method.

2 The young men of his council were hot and haughty, and they advised him to return a severe and threatening answer to the people's demands. It was an instance of Rehoboam's weakness,

(1.) That he did not prefer aged counsellors, but had a better opinion of the young men that had grown up with him and with whom he was familiar, 1Ki 12:8. Days should speak. It was a folly for him to think that, because they had been his agreeable companions in the sports and pleasures of his youth, they were therefore fit to have the management of the affairs of his kingdom. Great wits have not always the most wisdom; nor are those to be relied on as our best friends that know how to make us merry, for that will not make us happy. It is of great consequence to young people, that are setting out in the world, whom they associate with, accommodate themselves to, and depend upon for advice. If they reckon those that feed their pride, gratify their vanity, and further them in their pleasures, their best friends, they are already marked for ruin.

(2.) That he did not prefer moderate counsels, but was pleased with those that put him upon harsh and rigorous methods, and advised him to double the taxes, whether there was occasion for so doing or no, and to tell them in plain terms that he would do so, 1Ki 12:10,11. These young counsellors thought the old men expressed themselves but dully, 1Ki 12:7. They affect to be witty in their advice, and value themselves on that. The old men did not undertake to put words into Rehoboam's mouth, only counselled him to speak good words; but the young men will furnish him with very quaint and pretty phrases, with pointed and pert similitudes: My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins, &c. That is not always the best sense that is best worded.

IV. He answered the people according to the counsel of the young men, 1Ki 12:14,15. He affected to be haughty and imperious, and fancied he could carry all before him with a high hand, and therefore would rather run the risk of losing them than deny himself so far as to give them good words. Note, Many ruin themselves by consulting their humour more than their interest. See,

1. How Rehoboam was infatuated in his counsels. He could not have acted more foolishly and impoliticly.

(1.) He owned their reflections upon his father's government to be true: My father made your yoke heavy; and therein he was unjust to his father's memory, which he might easily have vindicated from the imputation.

(2.) He fancied himself better able to manage them, and impose upon them, than his father was, not considering that he was vastly inferior to him in capacity. Could he think to support the blemishes of his father's reign who could never pretend to come near the glories of it?

(3.) He threatened not only to squeeze them by taxes, but to chastise them by cruel laws and severe executions of them, which should be not as whips only, but as scorpions, whips with rowels in them, that will fetch blood at every lash. In short, he would use them as brute beasts, load them and beat them at his pleasure: not caring whether they loved him or no, he would make them fear him.

(4.) He gave this provocation to a people that by long ease and prosperity were made wealthy, and strong, and proud, and would not be trampled upon (as a poor cowed dispirited people may), to a people that were now disposed to revolt, and had one ready to head them. Never, surely, was man so blinded by pride and affectation of arbitrary power, than which nothing is more fatal.

2. How God's counsels were hereby fulfilled. It was from the Lord, 1Ki 12:15. He left Rehoboam to his own folly, and hid from his eyes the things which belonged to his peace, that the kingdom might be rent from him. Note, God serves his own wise and righteous purposes by the imprudences and iniquities

of men, and snares sinners in the work of their own hands. Those that lose the kingdom of heaven throw it away, as Rehoboam did his, by their own wilfulness and folly.

5 And he said unto them, Depart yet *for* three days, then come again
to me. And the people departed.
6 And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before
Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise
that I may answer this people?
7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this
people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak
good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.
8 But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given
him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with
him, *and* which stood before him:
9 and he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer
this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which
thy father did put upon us lighter?
10 And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him,
saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee,
saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter
unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be
thicker than my father's loins.
11 And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will
add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I
will chastise you with scorpions.
12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as
the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.
13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old
men's counsel that they gave him;
14 and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My
father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father
also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with
scorpions.
15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause
was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which
Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of

Nebat.

16 So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David ? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

We have here the rending of the kingdom of the ten tribes from the house of David, to effect which,

I The people were hold and resolute in their revolt. They highly resented the provocation that Rehoboam had given them, were incensed at his menaces, concluded that that government would in the progress of it be intolerably grievous which in the beginning of it was so very haughty, and therefore immediately came to this resolve, one and all: What portion have we in David? 1Ki 12:16. They speak here very unbecomingly of David, that great benefactor of their nation, calling him the son of Jesse, no greater a man than his neighbours. How soon are good men, and their good services to the public, forgotten! The rashness of their resolution was also much to be blamed. In time, and with prudent management, they might have settled the original contract with Rehoboam to mutual satisfaction. Had they enquired who gave Rehoboam this advice, and taken a course to remove those evil counsellors from about him, the rupture might have been prevented: otherwise their jealousy for their liberty and property well became that free people. Israel is not a servant, is not a homeborn slave; why should he be spoiled? Jer 2:14.

They are willing to be ruled, but not to be ridden. Protection draws allegiance, but destruction cannot. No marvel that Israel falls away from the house of David (1Ki 12:19) if the house of David fall away from the great ends of their advancement, which was to be ministers of God to them for good. But thus to rebel against the seed of David, whom God had advanced to the kingdom (entailing it on his seed), and to set up another king in opposition to that family, was a great sin; see 2Ch 13:5-8. To this God refers, Ho 8:4. They have set up kings, but not by me. And it is here mentioned to the praise of the tribe of Judah that they followed the house of David (1Ki 12:17,20), and, for aught that appears, they found Rehoboam better than his word, nor did he rule with the rigour which at first he threatened.

II. Rehoboam was imprudent in the further management of this affair, and more and more infatuated. Having foolishly thrown himself into a quick-sand, he sunk the further in with plunging to get out.

1. He was very unadvised in sending Adoram, who was over the tribute, to treat with them, 1Ki 12:18. The tribute was the thing, and, for the sake of that, Adoram was the person, they most complained of. The very sight of him, whose name was odious among them, exasperated them, and made them outrageous. He was one to whom they could not so much as give a patient hearing, but stoned him to death in a popular tumult. Rehoboam was now as unhappy in the choice of his ambassador as before of his counsellors.

2. Some think he was also unadvised in quitting his ground, and making so much haste to Jerusalem, for thereby he deserted his friends and gave advantage to his enemies, who had gone to their tents indeed (1Ki 12:16) in disgust, but did not offer to make Jeroboam king till Rehoboam had gone, 1Ki 12:20. See how soon this foolish prince went from one extreme to the other. He hectored and talked big when he thought all was his

own, but sneaked and looked very mean when he saw himself in danger. It is common for those that are most haughty in their prosperity to be most abject in adversity.

III. God forbade his attempt to recover by the sword what he had lost. What was done was of God, who would not suffer that it should be undone again (as it would be if Rehoboam got the better and reduced the ten tribes), nor that more should be done to the prejudice of the house of David, as would be if Jeroboam got the better and conquered the two tribes. The thing must rest as it is, and therefore God forbids the battle.

1. It was brave in Rehoboam to design the reducing of the revolters by force. His courage came to him when he had come to Jerusalem, 1Ki 12:21. There he thought himself among his firm friends, who generously adhered to him and appeared for him. Judah and Benjamin (who feared the Lord and the king, and meddled not with those that were given to change) presently raised an army of 180,000 men, for the recovery of their king's right to the ten tribes, and were resolved to stand by him (as we say) with their lives and fortunes, having either not such cause, or rather not such a disposition, to complain, as the rest had.

2. It as more brave in Rehoboam to desist when God, by a prophet, ordered him to lay down his arms. He would not lose a kingdom tamely, for then he would have been unworthy the title of a prince; and yet he would not contend for it in opposition to God, for then he would have been unworthy the title of an Israelite. To proceed in this war would be not only to fight against their brethren (1Ki 12:24), whom they ought to love, but to fight against their God, to whom they ought to submit: This thing is from me.

These two considerations should reconcile us to our losses and troubles, that God is the author of them and our brethren are the

instruments of them; let us not therefore meditate revenge. Rehoboam and his people hearkened to the word of the Lord, disbanded the army, and acquiesced. Though, in human probability, they had a fair prospect of success (for their army was numerous and resolute, Jeroboam's party weak and unsettled), though it would turn to their reproach among their neighbours to lose so much of their strength and never have one push for it, to make a flourish and do nothing, yet,

(1.) They regarded the command of God though sent by a poor prophet. When we know God's mind we must submit to it, how much soever it crosses our own mind.

(2.) They consulted their own interest, concluding that though they had all the advantages, even that of right, on their side, yet they could not prosper if they fought in disobedience to God; and it was better to sit still than to rise up and fall. In the next reign God allowed them to fight, and gave them victory (2Ch 13:1-22), but not now.

19 So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20 And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

21 And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

22 But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

23 Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying,

24 Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for

this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart, according to the word of the Lord.

Jeroboam Leads Israel into Sin

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel.
26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David:
27 if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah.

We have here the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam. He built Shechem first and then Penuel--beautified and fortified them, and probably had a palace in each of them for himself (1Ki 12:25), the former in Ephraim, the latter in Gad, on the other side Jordan. This might be proper; but he formed another project for the establishing of his kingdom which was fatal to the interests of religion in it.

I. That which he designed was by some effectual means to secure those to himself who had now chosen him for their king, and to prevent their return to the house of David, 1Ki 12:26,27. It seems,

1. He was jealous of the people, afraid that, some time or other, they would kill him and go again to Rehoboam. Many that have been advanced in one tumult have been hurled down in another. Jeroboam could not put any confidence in the affections of his people, though now they seemed extremely fond of him; for what is got by wrong and usurpation cannot be enjoyed nor kept with any security or satisfaction.

2. He was distrustful of the promise of God, could not take his word that, if he would keep close to his duty, God would build

him a sure house (1Ki 11:38); but he would contrive ways and means, and sinful ones too, for his own safety. A practical disbelief of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all our treacherous departures from him.

II The way he took to do this was by keeping the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship. That was the place God had chosen, to put his name there. Solomon's temple was there, which God had, in the sight of all Israel, and in the memory of many now living, taken solemn possession of in a cloud of glory. At the altar there the priest of the Lord attended, there all Israel were to keep the feasts, and thither they were to bring their sacrifices. Now,

1. Jeroboam apprehended that, if the people continued to do this, they would in time return to the house of David, allured by the magnificence both of the court and of the temple. If they cleave to their old religion, they will go back to their old king. We may suppose, if he had treated with Rehoboam for the safe conduct of himself and his people to and from Jerusalem at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, it would not have been denied him; therefore he fears not their being driven back by force, but their going back voluntarily to Rehoboam.

2. He therefore dissuaded them from going up to Jerusalem, pretending to consult their ease: "It is too much for you to go so far to worship God, 1Ki 12:28. It is a heavy yoke, and it is time to shake it off; you have gone long enough to Jerusalem" (so some read it); "the temple, now that you are used to it, does not appear so glorious and sacred as it did at first" (sensible glories wither by degrees in men's estimation); "you have greed yourselves from other burdens, free yourselves from this: why should we now be tied to one place any more than in Samuel's time?"

3. He provided for the assistance of their devotion at home. Upon consultation with some of his politicians, he came to this resolve, to set up two golden calves, as tokens or signs of the divine presence, and persuade the people that they might as well stay at home and offer sacrifice to those as go to Jerusalem to worship before the ark: and some are so charitable as to think they were made to represent the mercy-seat and the cherubim over the ark; but more probably he adopted the idolatry of the Egyptians, in whose land he had sojourned for some time and who worshipped their god Apis under the similitude of a bull or calf.

(1.) He would not be at the charge of building a golden temple, as Solomon had done; two golden calves are the most that he can afford.

(2.) He intended, no doubt, by these to represent, or rather make present, not any false god, as Moloch or Chemosh, but the true God only, the God of Israel, the God that brought them up out of the land of Egypt, as he declares, 1Ki 12:28. So that it was no violation of the first commandment, but the second. And he chose thus to engage the people's devotion because he knew there were many among them so in love with images that for the sake of the calves they would willingly quit God's temple, where all images were forbidden.

(3.) He set up two, by degrees to break people off from the belief of the unity of the godhead, which would pave the way to the polytheism of the Pagans. He set up these two at Dan and Beth-el (one the utmost border of his country northward), the other southward, as if they were the guardians and protectors of the kingdom. Beth-el lay close to Judah. He set up one there, to tempt those of Rehoboam's subjects over to him who were inclined to image-worship, in lieu of those of his subjects that would continue to go to Jerusalem. He set up the other at Dan, for the convenience of those that lay most remote, and because Micah's images had been set up there, and great veneration paid

to them for many ages, Jdg 18:30,31. Beth-el signifies the house of God, which gave some colour to the superstition; but the prophet called it Beth-aven, the house of vanity, or iniquity.

4. The people complied with him herein, and were fond enough of the novelty: They went to worship before the one, even unto Dan (1Ki 12:30), to that at Dan first because it was first set up, or even to that at Dan, though it lay such a great way off. Those that thought it much to go to Jerusalem, to worship God according to his institution, made no difficulty of going twice as far, to Dan, to worship him according to their own inventions. Or they are said to go to one of the calves at Dan because Abijah, king of Judah, within twenty years, recovered Beth-el (2Ch 13:19), and it is likely removed the golden calf, or forbade the use of it, and then they had only that at Dan to go to.

This became a sin; and a great sin it was, against the express letter of the second commandment. God had sometimes dispensed with the law concerning worshipping in one place, but never allowed the worship of him by images. Hereby they justified their fathers in making the calf at Horeb, though God had so fully shown his displeasure against them for it and threatened to visit for it in the day of visitation (Ex 32:34), so that it was as great a contempt of God's wrath as it was of his law; and thus they added sin to sin. Bishop Patrick quotes a saying of the Jews, That till Jeroboam's time the Israelites sucked but one calf, but from that time they sucked two.

5. Having set up the gods, he fitted up accommodations for them; and wherein he varied from the divine appointment we are here told, which intimates that in other things he imitated what was done in Judah (1Ki 12:32) as well as he could. See how one error multiplied into many.

(1.) He made a house of high-places, or of altars, one temple at Dan, we may suppose, and another at Beth-el (1Ki 12:31), and

in each many altars, probably complaining of it as an inconvenience that in the temple at Jerusalem there was but one. The multiplying of altars passed with some for a piece of devotion, but God, by the prophet, puts another construction upon it, Ho 8:11. Ephraim has made many altars to sin.

(2.) He made priests of the lowest of the people; and the lowest of the people were good enough to be priests to his calves, and too good. He made priests from the extremest parts of the people, that is, some out of every corner of the country, whom he ordered to reside among their neighbours, to instruct them in his appointments and reconcile them to them. Thus were they dispersed as the Levites, but were not of the sons of Levi. But the priests of the high-laces, or altars, he ordered to reside in Beth-el, as the priests at Jerusalem (1Ki 12:32), to attend the public service.

(3.) The feast of tabernacles, which God had appointed on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he adjourned to the fifteenth day of the eighth month (1Ki 12:32), the month which he devised of his own heart, to show his power in ecclesiastical matters, 1Ki 12:33. The passover and pentecost he observed in their proper season, or did not observe them at all, or with little solemnity in comparison with this.

(4.) He himself assuming a power to make priests, no marvel if he undertook to do the priests' work with his own hands: He offered upon the altar. This is twice mentioned (1Ki 12:32,33), as also that he burnt incense. This was connived at in him because it was of a piece with the rest of his irregularities; but in king Uzziah it was immediately punished with the plague of leprosy. He did it himself, to make himself look great among the people and to get the reputation of a devout man, also to grace the solemnity of his new festival, with which, it is likely, at this time he joined the feast of the dedication of his altar. And thus,

[1.] Jeroboam sinned himself, yet perhaps excused himself to the world and his own conscience with this, that he did not do so ill as Solomon did, who worshipped other gods.

[2.] He made Israel to sin, drew them off from the worship of God and entailed idolatry upon their seed. And hereby they were punished for deserting the thrones of the house of David. The learned Mr. Whiston, in his chronology, for the adjusting of the annals of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, supposes that Jeroboam changed the calculation of the year and made it to contain but eleven months, and that by those years the reigns of the kings of Israel are measured till Jehu's revolution and no longer, so that during this interval eleven years of the annals of Judah answer to twelve in those of Israel.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

31 And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi.

32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made.

33 So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

1 Kings-13

The Prophet of Judah Warns Jeroboam

1 And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of
the Lord unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn
incense.
2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O
altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto
the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer
the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's
bones shall be burnt upon thee.
3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, this *is* the sign which the
Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes
that *are* upon it shall be poured out.

Here is, I. A messenger sent to Jeroboam, to signify to him God's displeasure against his idolatry, 1Ki 13:1 The army of Judah that aimed to ruin him was countermanded, and might not draw a sword against him (2Ki 12:24); but a prophet of Judah is, instead thereof, sent to reclaim him from his evil way, and is sent in time, while he is but dedicating his altar, before his heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of his sin; for God delights not in the death of sinners, but would rather they would burn and live. How bold was the messenger that durst attack the king in his pride and interrupt the solemnity he was proud of! Those that go on God's errand must not fear the face of man; they know who will bear them out. How kind was he that sent him to warn Jeroboam of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against his ungodliness and unrighteousness!

II The message delivered in God's name, not whispered, but cried with a loud voice, denoting both the prophet's courage, that he was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it, and his earnestness, that he desired to be heard and heeded by all that were present, who were not a few, on this great occasion. It was directed, not to Jeroboam nor to the people, but to the altar, the

stones of which would sooner hear and yield than those who were mad upon their idols and deaf to divine calls.

Yet, in threatening the altar, God threatened the founder and worshippers, to whom it was as dear as their own souls, and who might conclude, "If God's wrath fasten upon the lifeless guiltless altar, how shall we escape?" That which was foretold concerning the altar (1Ki 13:2) was that, in process of time, a prince of the house of David, Josiah by name, should pollute this altar by sacrificing the idolatrous priests themselves upon it, and burning the bones of dead men. Let Jeroboam know and be sure,

1. That the altar he now consecrated should be desecrated. Idolatrous worship will not continue, but the word of the Lord will endure for ever.

2. That the priests of the high places he now made should themselves be made sacrifices to the justice of God, and the first and only sacrifices upon this altar that would be pleasing to him. If the offering be such as is an abomination to God, it will follow, of course, that the offerers must themselves fall under his wrath, which will abide upon them, since it is not otherwise transmitted.

3. That this should be done by a branch of the house of David. That family which he and his kingdom had despised and treacherously deserted should recover so much power as to demolish that altar which he thought to establish; so that right and truth should at length prevail, both in civil and sacred matters, notwithstanding the present triumphs of those that were given to change the fear both of God and the king. It was about 356 years ere this prediction was fulfilled, yet it was spoken of as sure and nigh at hand, for a thousand years with God are but as one day. Nothing more contingent and arbitrary than the giving of names to persons, yet Josiah was here named

above 300 years before he was born. Nothing future is hidden from God. There are names in the book of the divine prescience (Php 4:3), names written in heaven.

III. A sign is given for the confirming of the truth of this prediction, that the altar should be shaken to pieces by an invisible power and the ashes of the sacrifice scattered (1Ki 13:3), which came to pass immediately, 1Ki 13:5. This was,

1. A proof that the prophet was sent of God, who confirmed the word with this sign following, Mk 16:20.

2. A present indication of God's displeasure against these idolatrous sacrifices. How could the gift be acceptable when the altar that should sanctify it was an abomination?

3. It was a reproach to the people, whose hearts were harder than these stones and rent not under the word of the Lord.

4. It was a specimen of what should be done to it in the accomplishment of this prophecy by Josiah; it was now rent, in token of its being then ruined.

IV. Jeroboam's hand withered, which he stretched out to seize or smite the man of God, 1Ki 13:4. Instead of trembling at the message, as he might well have done, he assaulted him that brought it, in defiance of the wrath of which he was warned and contempt of that grace which sent him the warning. Rebuke a sinner and he will hate thee, and do thee a mischief if he can; yet God's prophets must rather expose themselves than betray their trust: he that employs them will protect them, and restrain the wrath of man, as he did Jeroboam's here by withering his hand, so that he could neither hurt the prophet nor draw it in to help himself. When his hand was stretched out to burn incense to his calves it was not withered; but, when it is stretched out

against a prophet, he shall have no use of it till he humble himself.

Of all the wickedness of the wicked there is none more provoking to God than their malicious attempts against his prophets, of whom he has said, Touch them not, do them no harm. As this was a punishment of Jeroboam, and answering to the sin, so it was the deliverance of the prophet. God has many ways of disabling the enemies of his church from executing their mischievous purposes. Jeroboam's inability to pull in his hand made him a spectacle to all about him, that they might see and fear. If God, in justice, harden the hearts of sinners, so that the hand they have stretched out in sin they cannot pull in again by repentance, that is a spiritual judgment, represented by this, and much more dreadful.

V. The sudden healing of the hand that was suddenly dried up, upon his submission, 1Ki 13:6. That word of God which should have touched his conscience humbled him not, but this which touched his bone and his flesh brings down his proud spirit. He looks for help now,

1. Not from his calves, but from God only, from his power and his favour. He wounded, and no hand but his can make whole.

2. Not by his own sacrifice or incense, but by the prayer and intercession of the prophet, whom he had just now threatened and aimed to destroy. The time may come when those that hate the preaching would be glad of the prayers of faithful ministers. "Pray to the Lord thy God," says Jeroboam; "thou hast an interest in him; improve it for me."

But observe, He did not desire the prophet to pray that his sin might be pardoned, and his heart changed, only that his hand might be restored; thus Pharaoh would have Moses to pray that God would take away this death only (Ex 10:17), not this sin.

The prophet, as became a man of God, renders good for evil, upbraids not Jeroboam with his impotent malice, nor triumphs in his submission, but immediately addresses himself to God for him. Those only are entitled to the blessing Christ pronounced on the persecuted that learn of him to pray for their persecutors, Mt 5:10,44. When the prophet thus honoured God, by showing himself of a forgiving spirit, God put this further honour upon him, that at his word he recalled the judgment and by another miracle healed the withered hand, that by the goodness of God Jeroboam might be led to repentance, and, if he were not broken by the judgment, yet might be melted by the mercy. With both he seemed affected for the present, but the impressions wore off.

VI. The prophet's refusal of Jeroboam's kind invitation, in which observe,

1. That God forbade his messenger to eat or drink in Beth-el (1Ki 13:9), to show his detestation of their execrable idolatry and apostasy from God, and to teach us not to have fellowship with the works of darkness, lest we have infection from them or give encouragement to them. He must not turn back the same way, but deliver his message, as it were, in transitu--as he passes along. He shall not seem to be sent on purpose (they were unworthy such a favour), but as if he only called by the way, his spirit being stirred, like Paul's at Athens, as he passed and saw their devotions. God would, by this command, try his prophet, as he did Ezekiel, whether he would not be rebellious, like that rebellious house, Eze 2:8.

2. That Jeroboam was so affected with the cure of his hand that though we read not of his thanksgivings to God for the mercy, or of his sending an offering to the altar at Jerusalem in acknowledgment of it, yet he was willing to express his gratitude to the prophet and pay him for his prayers, 1Ki 13:7.

Favours to the body will make even graceless men seem grateful to good ministers.

3. That the prophet, though hungry and weary, and perhaps poor, in obedience to the divine command refused both the entertainment and the reward proffered him. He might have supposed his acceptance of it would give him an opportunity of discoursing further with the king, in order to his effectual reformation, now that he was convinced; yet he will not think himself wiser than God, but, like a faithful careful messenger, hastens home when he has done his errand. Those have little learned the lessons of self-denial that cannot forbear one forbidden meal.

4 And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.

5 The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

6 And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as *it was* before.

7 And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward.

8 And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place:

9 for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest.

10 So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el.

11 Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and
told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in
Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they
told also to their father.
12 And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons
had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.
13 And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him
the ass: and he rode thereon,

The man of God had honestly and resolutely refused the king's invitation, though he promised him a reward; yet he was over-persuaded by an old prophet to come back with him, and dine in Beth-el, contrary to the command given him. Here we find how dearly his dinner cost him. Observe with wonder,

I The old prophet's wickedness. I cannot but call him a false prophet and a bad man, it being much easier to believe that from one of such a bad character should be extorted a confirmation of what the man of God said (as we find, 1Ki 13:32) than that a true prophet, and a good man, should tell such a deliberate lie as he did, and father it upon God. A good tree could never bring forth such corrupt fruit. Perhaps he was trained up among the sons of the prophets, in one of Samuel's colleges not far off, whence he retained the name of a prophet, but, growing worldly and profane, the spirit of prophecy had departed from him. If he had been a good prophet he would have reproved Jeroboam's idolatry, and not have suffered his sons to attend his altars, as, it should seem, they did. Now,

1. Whether he had any good design in fetching back the man of God is not certain. One may hope that he did it in compassion to him, concluding he wanted refreshment, and out of a desire to be better acquainted with him and more fully to understand his errand than he could from the report of his sons; yet his sons having told him all that passed, and particularly that the prophet was forbidden to eat or drink there, which he had openly told Jeroboam, I suppose it was done with a bad design, to draw him

into a snare, and so to expose him; for false prophets have ever been the worst enemies to the true prophets, usually aiming to destroy them, but sometimes, as here, to debauch them and draw them from their duty. Thus they gave the Nazarites wine to drink (Am 2:12), that they might glory in their fall. But,

2. It is certain that he took a very bad method to bring him back. When the man of God had told him, "I may not, and therefore I will not, return to eat bread with thee" (his resolutions concurring with the divine command, 1Ki 13:16,17), he wickedly pretended that he had an order from heaven to fetch him back. He imposed upon him by asserting his quondam character as a prophet: I am a prophet also as thou art; he pretended he had a vision of an angel that sent him on this errand. But it was all a lie; it was a banter upon prophecy, and profane in the highest degree. When this old prophet is spoken of (2Ki 23:18) he is called the prophet that came out of Samaria, whereas there was no such place as Samaria till long after, 1Ki 16:24. Therefore I take it he is so called there, though he was of Beth-el, because he was like those who were afterwards the prophets of Samaria, who caused God's people Israel to err, Jer 23:13.

II The good prophet's weakness, in suffering himself to be thus imposed upon: He went back with him, 1Ki 13:19. He that had resolution enough to refuse the invitation of the king, who promised him a reward, could not resist the insinuations of one that pretended to be a prophet. God's people are more in danger of being drawn from their duty by the plausible pretences of divinity and sanctity than by external inducements; we have therefore need to beware of false prophets, and not believe every spirit.

III. The proceedings of divine justice hereupon; and here we may well wonder that the wicked prophet, who told the lie and did the mischief, went unpunished, while the holy man of God, that was drawn by him into sin, was suddenly and severely punished

for it. What shall we make of this! The judgments of God are unfathomable. The deceived and the deceiver are his, and he giveth not account of any of his matters. Certainly there must be a judgment to come, when these things will be called over again, and when those that sinned most and suffered least, in this world, will receive according to their works.

1 The message delivered to the man of God was strange. His crime is recited, 1Ki 13:21,22. It was, in one word, disobedience to an express command. Judgment is given upon it: Thy carcase shall not come to the sepulchre of thy fathers, that is, "Thou shalt never reach thy own house, but shalt be a carcase quickly, nor shall thy dead body be brought to the place of thy fathers' sepulchres, to be interred."

2. Yet it was more strange that the old prophet himself should be the messenger. Of this we can give no account but that God would have it so, as he spoke to Balaam by his ass and read Saul his doom by the devil in Samuel's likeness. We may think God designed hereby,

(1.) To startle the lying prophet, and make him sensible of his sin. The message could not but affect him the more when he himself had the delivering of it, and had so strong an impression made upon his spirit by it that he cried out, as one in an agony, 1Ki 13:21. He had reason to think, if he must die for his disobedience in a small matter who sinned by surprise, of how much sorer punishment he should be thought worthy who had belied an angel of God and cheated a man of God by a deliberate forgery. If this were done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? Perhaps it had a good effect upon him. Those who preach God's wrath to others have hard hearts indeed if they fear it not themselves.

(2.) To put the greater mortification upon the prophet that was deceived, and to show what those must expect who hearken to

the great deceiver. Those that yield to him as a tempter will be terrified by him as a tormentor; whom he now fawns upon he will afterwards fly upon, and whom he now draws into sin he will do what he can to drive to despair.

14 and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an
oak: and he said unto him, *Art* thou the man of God that camest
from Judah? And he said, I *am*.
15 Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread.
16 And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee:
neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place:
17 for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no
bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that
thou camest.
18 He said unto him, I *am* a prophet also as thou *art;* and an angel spake
unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee
into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But* he lied
unto him.
19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and
drank water.
20 And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the
Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back:
21 and he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying,
Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth
of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the
Lord thy God commanded thee,
22 but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place,
of the which *the* Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no
water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.
23 And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk,
that he saddled for him the ass, *to wit,* for the prophet whom he had
brought back.

Here is, I The death of the deceived disobedient prophet. The old prophet that had deluded him, as if he would make him some amends for the wrong he had done him or help to prevent the mischief threatened him, furnished him with an ass to ride home on; but by the way a lion set upon him, and killed him, 1Ki

13:23,24. He did but return back to refresh himself when he was hungry, and behold he must die for it; see 1Sa 14:43. But we must consider,

1. That his offence was great, and it would by no means justify him that he was drawn into it by a lie; he could not be so certain of the countermand sent by another as he was of the command given to himself, nor had he any ground to think that the command would be recalled, when the reason of it remained in force, which was that he might testify his detestation of the wickedness of that place. He had great reason to suspect the honesty of this old prophet, who did not himself bear his testimony, nor did God think fit to make use of him as a witness against the idolatry of the city he lived in.

However, he should have taken time to beg direction from God, and not have complied so soon. Did he think this old prophet's house safer to eat in than other houses at Beth-el, when God had forbidden him to eat in any? That was to refine upon the command, and make himself wiser than God. Did he think to excuse himself that he was hungry? Had he never read that man lives not by bread alone?

2. That his death was for the glory of God; for by this it appeared,

(1.) That nothing is more provoking to him than disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, which makes his proceedings against our first parents, for eating the forbidden fruit, the easier to be accounted for.

(2.) That God is displeased at the sins of his own people, and no man shall be protected in disobedience by the sanctity of his profession, the dignity of his office, his nearness to God, or any good services he has done for him. Perhaps God by this intended, in a way of righteous judgment, to harden Jeroboam's heart, since he was not reformed by the withering of his hand; for he

would be apt to make a bad use of it, and to say that the prophet was well enough served for meddling with his altar, he had better have staid at home; any, he would say that Providence had punished him for his insolence, and the lion had done that which his withered hand might not do. However, by this God intended to warn all those whom he employs strictly to observe their orders, at their peril.

II The wonderful preservation of his dead body, which was a token of God's mercy remembered in the midst of wrath. The lion that gently strangled him, or tore him, did not devour his dead body, nor so much as tear the ass, 1Ki 13:24-26. Nay, what was more, he did not set upon the travellers that passed by and saw it, nor upon the old prophet (who had reason enough to fear it) when he came to take up the corpse. His commission was to kill the prophet; hitherto he should go, but no further. Thus God showed that, though he was angry with him, his anger was turned away, and the punishment went no further than death.

III. The care which the old prophet took of his burial. When he heard of this unusual accident, he concluded it was the man of God, who was disobedient to his Master (and whose fault was that?), therefore the Lord has delivered him to the lion, 1Ki 13:26. It would well have become him to ask why the lion was not sent against him and his house, rather than against the good man whom he had cheated. He took up the corpse, 1Ki 13:29. If there by any truth in the vulgar opinion, surely the corpse bled afresh when he touched it, for he was in effect the murderer, and it was but a poor reparation for the injury to inter the dead body. Perhaps when he cheated him into his ruin he intended to laugh at him; yet now his conscience so far relents that he weeps over him, and, like Joab at Abner's funeral, is compelled to be a mourner for him whom he had been the death of.

They said, Alas! my brother, 1Ki 13:30. The case was indeed very lamentable that so good a man, a prophet so faithful, and so

bold in God's cause, should, for one offence, die as a criminal, while an old lying prophet lives at ease and an idolatrous prince in pomp and power. Thy way, O God! is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters. We cannot judge of men by their sufferings, nor of sins by their present punishments; with some the flesh is destroyed that the spirit may be saved, while with others the flesh is pampered that the soul may ripen for hell.

IV. The charge which the old prophet gave his sons concerning his own burial, that they should be sure to bury him in the same grave where the man of God was buried (1Ki 13:31): "Lay my bones beside his bones, close by them, as near as may be, so that my dust may mingle with his." Though he was a lying prophet, yet he desired to die the death of a true prophet. "Gather not my soul with the sinners of Beth-el, but with the man of God." The reason he gives is because what he cried against the altar of Beth-el, that men's bones should be burnt upon it, shall surely come to pass, 1Ki 13:32.

Thus, 1. He ratifies the prediction, that out of the mouth of two witnesses (and one of them such a one as St. Paul quotes, Tit 1:12, one of themselves, even a prophet of their own) the word might be established, if possible to convince and reclaim Jeroboam.

2. He does honour to the deceased prophet, as one whose word would not fall to the ground, though he did. Ministers die, die prematurely it may be; but the word of the Lord endures for ever, and does not die with them.

3. He consults his own interest. It was foretold that men's bones should be burnt upon Jeroboam's altar: "Lay mine (says he) close to his, and then they will not be disturbed;" and it was, accordingly, their security, as we find, 2Ki 23:18. Sleeping and waking, living and dying, it is safe being in good company. No mention is made here of the inscription on the prophet's tomb;

but it is spoken of 2Ki 23:17, where Josiah asks, What title is that? and is told, It is the sepulchre of the man of God that came from Judah, who proclaimed these things which thou hast done; so that the epitaph upon the prophet's grave preserved the remembrance of his prophecy, and was a standing testimony against the idolatries of Beth-el, which it would not have been so remarkably if he had died and been buried elsewhere. The cities of Israel are here called cities of Samaria, though that name was not yet known; for, however the old prophet spoke, the inspired historian wrote in the language of his own time.

V. The obstinacy of Jeroboam in his idolatry (1Ki 13:33): He returned not from his evil way; some hand was found that durst repair the altar God had rent, and then Jeroboam offered sacrifice on it again, and the more boldly because the prophet who disturbed him before was in his grave (Re 11:10) and because the prophecy was for a great while to come. Various methods had been used to reclaim him, but neither threats nor signs, neither judgments nor mercies, wrought upon him, so strangely was he wedded to his calves. He did not reform, no, not his priesthood, but whoever would, he filled his hand, and made him priest, though ever so illiterate or immoral, and of what tribe soever; and this became sin, that is, a snare first, and then a ruin, to Jeroboam's house, to cut if off, 1Ki 13:34.

Note, The diminution, disquiet, and desolation of families, are the fruit of sin; he promised himself that the calves would secure the crown to his family, but it proved they lost it, and sunk his family. Those betray themselves that think by any sin to support themselves.

24 And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcass was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcass.

25 And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcass cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcass: and they came and told *it* in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

26 And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard
thereof, he said, It *is* the man of God, who was disobedient unto the
word of the Lord : therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto
the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the
word of the Lord, which he spake unto him.
27 And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they
saddled *him.*
28 And he went and found his carcass cast in the way, and the ass and
the lion standing by the carcass: the lion had not eaten the carcass,
nor torn the ass.
29 And the prophet took up the carcass of the man of God, and laid it
upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the
city, to mourn and to bury him.
30 And he laid his carcass in his own grave; and they mourned over
him, *saying*, Alas, my brother!
31 And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his
sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre
wherein the man of God *is* buried; lay my bones beside his bones:
32 for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the
altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which
are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.
33 After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but
made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places:
whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the
priests of the high places.
34 And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut
it off, and to destroy *it* from off the face of the earth.

1 Kings-14

Ahijah's Prophecy against Jeroboam

1 At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick.
2 And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise
thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get

thee to Shiloh: behold, there *is* Ahijah the prophet, which told me
that *I should be* king over this people.
3 And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey,
and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.

How Jeroboam persisted in his contempt of God and religion we read in the close of the foregoing chapter. Here we are told how God proceeded in his controversy with him; for when God judges he will overcome, and sinners shall either bend or break before him.

I. His child fell sick, 1Ki 14:1. It is probable that he was his eldest son, and heir-apparent to the crown; for at his death all the kingdom went into mourning for him, 1Ki 13:1-34 His dignity as a prince, his age as a young prince, and his interest in heaven as a pious prince, could not exempt him from sickness, dangerous sickness. Let none be secure of the continuance of their health, but improve it, while it continues, for the best purposes.

Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, thy favourite, he whom Israel loves, their darling, is sick. At that time, when Jeroboam prostituted the profaned the priesthood (1Ki 13:33), his child sickened. When sickness comes into our families we should enquire whether there be not some particular sin harboured in our houses, which the affliction is sent to convince us of and reclaim us from.

II. He sent his wife in disguise to enquire of Ahijah the prophet what should become of the child, 1Ki 14:2,3. The sickness of his child touched him in a tender part. The withering of this branch of the family would, perhaps, be as sore an affliction to him as the withering of that branch of his body, 2Ki 13:4. Such is the force of natural affection; our children are ourselves but once removed. Now,

1. Jeroboam's great desire, under this affliction, is to know what shall become of the child, whether he will live or die.

(1.) It would have been more prudent if he had desired to know what means they should use for the recovery of the child, what they should give him, and what they should do to him; but by this instance, and those of Ahaziah (2Ki 1:2) and Benhadad (2Ki 8:8), it should seem they had then such a foolish notion of fatality as took them off from all use of means; for, if they were sure the patient would live, they thought means needless; if he would die, they thought them useless; not considering that duty is ours, events are God's, and that he that ordained the end ordained the means. Why should a prophet be desired to show that which a little time will show?

(2.) It would have been more pious if he had desired to know wherefore God contended with him, had begged the prophet's prayers, and cast away his idols from him; then the child might have been restored to him, as his hand was. But most people would rather be told their fortune than their faults or their duty.

2. That he might know the child's doom, he sent to Ahijah the prophet, who lived obscurely and neglected in Shiloh, blind through age, yet still blest with the visions of the Almighty, which need not bodily eyes, but are rather favoured by the want of them, the eyes of the mind being then most intent and least diverted. Jeroboam sent not to him for advice about the setting up of his calves, or the consecrating of his priests, but had recourse to him in his distress, when the gods he served could give him no relief.

Lord, in trouble have those visited thee who before slighted thee. Some have by sickness been reminded of their forgotten ministers and praying friends. He sent to Ahijah, because he

had told him he should be king, 1Ki 14:2. "He was once the messenger of good tidings, surely he will be so again." Those that by sin disqualify themselves for comfort, and yet expect their ministers, because they are good men, should speak peace and comfort to them, greatly wrong both themselves and their ministers.

3. He sent his wife to enquire of the prophet, because she could best put the question without naming names, or making any other description than this, "Sir, I have a son ill; will he recover or not?" The heart of her husband safely trusted in her that she would be faithful both in delivering the message and bringing him the answer; and it seems there were none of all his counsellors in whom he could repose such a confidence; otherwise the sick child could very ill spare her, for mothers are the best nurses, and it would have been much fitter for her to have staid at home to tend him than go to Shiloh to enquire what would become of him.

If she go, she must be incognito--in disguise, must change her dress, cover her face, and go by another name,not only to conceal herself from her own court and the country through which she passed (as if it were below her quality to go upon such an errand, and what she had reason to be ashamed of, as Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night, whereas it is no disparagement to the greatest to attend God's prophets), but also to conceal herself from the prophet himself, that he might only answer her question concerning her son, and not enter upon the unpleasing subject of her husband's defection. Thus some people love to prescribe to their ministers, limit them to smooth things, and care not for having the whole counsel of God declared to them, lest it prove to prophesy no good concerning them, but evil.

But what a strange notion had Jeroboam of God's prophet when he believed that he could and would certainly tell what

would become of the child, and yet either could not or would not discover who was the mother! Could he see into the thick darkness of futurity, and yet not see through the thin veil of this disguise? Did Jeroboam think the God of Israel like his calves, just what he pleased? Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

III. God gave Ahijah notice of the approach of Jeroboam's wife, and that she came in disguise, and full instructions what to say to her (1Ki 14:5), which enabled him, as she came in at the door, to call her by her name, to her great surprise, and so to discover to all about him who she was (1Ki 14:6): Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another? He had no regard,

1. To her rank. She was a queen, but what was that to him, who had a message to deliver to her immediately from God, before whom all the children of men stand upon the same level? Nor,

2. To her present. It was usual for those who consulted prophets to bring them tokens of respect, which they accepted, and yet were no hirelings. She brought him a handsome country present (1Ki 14:3), but he did not think himself obliged by that to give her any finer language than the nature of her message required. Nor, 3. To her industrious concealment of herself. It is a piece of civility not to take notice of those who desire not to be taken notice of; but the prophet was no courtier, nor gave flattering titles; plain dealing is best, and she shall know, at the first word, what she has to trust to: I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.

Note, Those who think by their disguises to hide themselves from God will be wretchedly confounded when they find themselves disappointed in the day of discovery. Sinners now appear in the garb of saints, and are taken to be such; but how

will they blush and tremble when they find themselves stripped of their false colours, and are called by their own name: "Go out, thou treacherous false-hearted hypocrite. I never knew thee. Why feignest thou thyself to be another?" Tidings of a portion with hypocrites will be heavy tidings. God will judge men according to what they are, not according to what they seem.

4 And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and
came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes
were set by reason of his age.
5 And the Lord said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam
cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he *is* sick: thus and
thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in,
that she shall feign herself *to be* another *woman.*
6 And it was *so,* when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came
in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why
feignest thou thyself *to be* another? for I *am* sent to thee *with* heavy
tidings.
7 Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Forasmuch as
I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over
my people Israel,
8 and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it
thee: and *yet* thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my
commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do *that*
only *which was* right in mine eyes;
9 but hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone
and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to
anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:
10 therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and
will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, *and*
him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant
of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all
gone.
11 Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat; and him
that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the Lord
hath spoken *it*.

When those that set up idols, and keep them up, go to enquire of the Lord, he determines to answer them, not according to the pretensions of their enquiry, but according to the multitude of their idols, Eze 14:4. So Jeroboam is answered here.

I The prophet anticipates the enquiry concerning the child, and foretels the ruin of Jeroboam's house for the wickedness of it. No one else durst have carried such a message: a servant would have smothered it, but his own wife cannot be suspected of ill-will to him.

1. God calls himself the Lord God of Israel. Though Israel had forsaken God, God had not cast them off, nor given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms. He is Israel's God, and therefore will take vengeance on him who did them the greatest mischief he could do them, debauched them and drew them away from God.

2. He upbraids Jeroboam with the great favour he had bestowed upon him, in making him king, exalting him from among the people, the common people, to be prince over God's chosen Israel, and taking the kingdom from the house of David, to bestow it upon him. Whether we keep an account of God's mercies to us or no, he does, and will set even them in order before us, if we be ungrateful, to our greater confusion; otherwise he gives and upbraids not.

3. He charges him with his impiety and apostasy, and his idolatry particularly: Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee, 1Ki 14:9. Saul, that was rejected, never worshipped idols; Solomon did it but occasionally, in his dotage, and never made Israel to sin. Jeroboam's calves, though pretended to be set up in honour of the God of Israel, that brought them up out of Egypt, yet are here called other gods, or strange gods, because in them he worshipped God as the heathen worshipped their strange gods, because by them he changed the truth of God

into a lie and represented him as altogether different from what he is, and because many of the ignorant worshippers terminated their devotion in the image, and did not at all regard the God of Israel. Though they were calves of gold, the richness of the metal was so far from making them acceptable to God that they provoked him to anger, designedly affronted him, under colour of pleasing him. In doing this,

(1.) He had not set David before him (1Ki 14:8): Thou hast not been as my servant David, who, though he had his faults and some bad ones, yet never forsook the worship of God nor grew loose nor cold to that; his faithful adherence to that gained him this honourable character, that he followed God with all his heart, and herein he was proposed for an example to all his successors. Those did not do well that did not do like David.

(2.) He had not set God before him, but (1Ki 14:9), "Thou hast cast me behind thy back, my law, my fear; thou hast neglected me, forgotten me, and preferred thy policies before my precepts."

4. He foretels the utter ruin of Jeroboam's house, 1Ki 14:10,11. He thought, by his idolatry, to establish his government, and by that he not only lost it, but brought destruction upon his family, the universal destruction of all the males, whether shut up or left, married or unmarried.

(1.) Shameful destruction. They shall be taken away as dung, which is loathsome and which men are glad to be rid of. He worshipped dunghill-deities, and God removed his family as a great dunghill. Noble and royal families, if wicked, are no better in God's account.

(2.) Unusual destruction. Their very dead bodies should be meat for the dogs in the street, or the birds of prey in the field,

1Ki 14:11. Thus evil pursues sinners. See this fulfilled, 1Ki 15:29.

5. He foretels the immediate death of the sick child, 1Ki 14:12,13.

(1.) In mercy to him, lest, if he live, he be infected with the sin, and so involved in the ruin, of his father's house. Observe the character given of him: In him was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam. He had an affection for the true worship of God and disliked the worship of the calves.

Note, [1.] Those are good in whom are good things towards the Lord God of Israel, good inclinations, good intentions, good desires, towards him.

[2.] Where there is but some good thing of that kind it will be found: God, who seeks it, sees it be it ever so little and is pleased with it.

[3.] A little grace goes a great way with great people. It is so rare to find princes well affected to religion that, when they are so, they are worthy of double honour.

[4.] Pious dispositions are in a peculiar manner amiable and acceptable when they are found in those that are young. The divine image in miniature has a peculiar beauty and lustre in it.

[5.] Those that are good in bad times and places shine very brightly in the eyes of God. A good child in the house of Jeroboam is a miracle of divine grace: to be there untainted is like being in the fiery furnace unhurt, unsinged. Observe the care taken of him: he only, of all Jeroboam's family, shall die in honour, shall be buried, and shall be lamented as one that lived desired.

Note, Those that are distinguished by divine grace shall be distinguished by divine providence. This hopeful child dies first of all the family, for God often takes those soonest whom he loves best. Heaven is the fittest place for them; this earth is not worthy of them.

(2.) In wrath to the family.

[1.] It was a sign the family would be ruined when he was taken by whom it might have been reformed. The righteous are removed from the evil to come in this world, to the good to come in a better world. It is a bad omen to a family when the best in it are buried out of it; when what was valuable is picked out the rest is for the fire.

[2.] It was likewise a present affliction to the family and kingdom, by which both ought to have been bettered; and this aggravated the affliction to the poor mother that she should not reach home time enough to see her son alive: When thy feet enter into the city, just then the child shall die. This was to be a sign to her of the accomplishment of the rest of the threatenings, as 1Sa 2:34.

6. He foretels the setting up of another family to rule over Israel, 1Ki 14:14. This was fulfilled in Baasha of Issachar, who conspired against Nadab the son of Jeroboam, in the second year of his reign, murdered him and all his family. "But what? Even now. Why do I speak of it as a thing at a distance? It is at the door. It shall be done even now." Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners; he did so with the house of Jeroboam. It was not twenty-four years from his first elevation to the final extirpation of his family.

7. He foretels the judgments which should come upon the people of Israel for conforming to the worship which Jeroboam

had established. If the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall into the ditch. It is here foretold, 1Ki 14:15,

(1.) That they should never be easy, nor rightly settled in their land, but continually shaken like a reed in the water. After they left the house of David, the government never continued long in one family, but one undermined and destroyed another, which must needs occasion great disorders and disturbances among the people.

(2.) That they should, ere long, be totally expelled out of their land, that good land, and given up to ruin, 1Ki 14:16. This was fulfilled in the captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. Families and kingdoms are ruined by sin, ruined by the wickedness of the heads of them. Jeroboam did sin, and made Israel to sin. If great men do wickedly, they involve many others both in the guilt and in the snare; multitudes follow their pernicious ways. They go to hell with a long train, and their condemnation will be the more intolerable, for they must answer, not only for their own sins, but for the sins which others have been drawn into and kept in by their influence.

II. Jeroboam's wife has nothing to say against the word of the Lord, but she goes home with a heavy heart to their house in Tirzah, a sweet delightful place, so the name signifies, famed for its beauty, So 6:4. But death, which will stain its beauty and embitter all its delights, cannot be shut out from it. Hither she came, and here we leave her attending the funeral of her son, and expecting the fate of her family.

1. The child died (1Ki 14:17), and justly did all Israel mourn, not only for the loss of so hopeful a prince, whom they were not worthy of, but because his death plucked up the flood-gates, and made a breach, at which an inundation of judgments broke in.

2. Jeroboam himself died soon after, 1Ki 14:20. It is said (2Ch 13:20), The Lord struck him with some sore disease, so that he died miserably, when he had reigned twenty-two years, and left his crown to a son who lost it, and his life too, and all the lives of his family, within two years after. For a further account of him the reader is referred to the annals of his reign, drawn up by his own secretaries, or to the public records, like those in the Tower, called here, The Book or register, of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel, to which recourse might then be had; but, not being divinely inspired, these records are long since lost.

12 Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: *and* when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.

13 And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found *some* good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

14 Moreover the Lord shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now.

15 For the Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the Lord to anger.

16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.

17 And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: *and* when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died;

18 and they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

19 And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they *are* written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

20 And the days which Jeroboam reigned *were* two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Rehoboam

21 And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam *was* forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess.

Judah's story and Israel's are intermixed in this book. Jeroboam out-lived Rehoboam, four or five years, yet his history is despatched first, that the account of Rehoboam's reign may be laid together; and a sad account it is.

I. Here is no good said of the king. All the account we have of him here is,

1. That he was forty-one years old when he began to reign, by which reckoning he was born in the last year of David, and had his education, and the forming of his mind, in the best days of Solomon; yet he lived not up to these advantages. Solomon's defection at last did more to corrupt him than his wisdom and devotion had done to give him good principles.

2. That he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city where God put his name, where he had opportunity enough to know his duty, if he had but had a heart to do it.

3. That his mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess; this is twice mentioned, 1Ki 14:21,31. It was strange that David would marry his son Solomon to an Ammonitess (for it was done while he lived), but it is probable that Solomon was in love with her, because she was Naamah, a beauty (so it signifies), and his father was loth to cross him, but it proved to have a very bad influence upon posterity. Probably she was daughter to Shobi the Ammonite, who was kind to David (2Sa 17:27), and David was too willing to requite him by matching his son into his

family. None can imagine how lasting and how fatal the consequences may be of being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

4. That he had continual war with Jeroboam (1Ki 14:30), which could not but be a perpetual uneasiness to him.

5. That when he had reigned but seventeen years he died, and left his throne to his son. His father, and grandfather, and grandson, that reigned well, reigned long, forty years apiece. But sin often shortens men's lives and comforts.

II. Here is much evil said of the subjects, both as to their character and their condition.

1. See here how wicked and profane they were. It is a most sad account that is here given of their apostasy from God, 1Ki 14:22-24. Judah, the only professing people God had in the world, did evil in his sight, in contempt and defiance of him and the tokens of his special presence with them; they provoked him to jealousy, as the adulterous wife provokes her husband by breaking the marriage-covenant.

Their fathers had been bad enough, especially in the times of the judges, but they did abominable things, above all that their fathers had done. The magnificence of their temple, the pomp of their priesthood, and all the secular advantages with which their religion was attended, could not prevail to keep them to it. Nothing less than the pouring out of the Spirit from on high will keep God's Israel in their allegiance to him. The account here given of the wickedness of the Jews agrees with that which the apostle gives of the wickedness of the Gentile world (Ro 1:21,24), so that both Jew and Gentile are alike under sin, Ro 3:9.

(1.) They became vain in their imaginations concerning God, and changed his glory into an image, for they built themselves high places, images, and groves (1Ki 14:23), profaning God's name by affixing to it their images, and God's ordinances by serving their idols with them. They foolishly fancies that they exalted God when they worshipped him on high hills and pleased him when they worshipped him under the pleasant shadow of green trees.

(2.) They were given up to vile affections (as those idolaters Ro 1:26,27), for there were sodomites in the land (1Ki 14:24), men with men working that which is unseemly, and not to be thought of, much less mentioned, without abhorrence and indignation. They dishonoured God by one sin and then God left them to dishonour themselves by another. They profaned the privileges of a holy nation, therefore God gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, to imitate the abominations of the accursed Canaanites; and herein the Lord was righteous. And, when they did like those that were cast out, how could they expect any other than to be cast out like them?

2. See here how weak and poor they were; and this was the consequence of the former. Sin exposes, impoverishes, and weakens any people. Shishak, king of Egypt, came against them, and so far, either by force or surrender, made himself master of Jerusalem itself that he took away the treasures both of the temple and of the exchequer, of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, which David and Solomon had amassed, 1Ki 14:25,26. These, it is likely, tempted him to make his descent; and, to save the rest, Rehoboam perhaps tamely surrendered them, as Ahab, 1Ki 20:4. He also took away the golden shields that were made but in his father's time, 1Ki 14:26.

These the king of Egypt carried off as trophies of his victory; and, instead of them, Rehoboam made brazen shields, which

the life-guard carried before him when he went to church in state, 1Ki 14:27,28. This was an emblem of the diminution of his glory. Sin makes the gold become dim, changes the most fine gold, and turns it into brass. We commend Rehoboam for going to the house of the Lord, perhaps the oftener for the rebuke he had been under, and do not condemn him for going in pomp. Great men should honour God with their honour, and then they are themselves most honoured by it.

22 And Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

23 For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

24 And there were also sodomites in the land: *and* they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.

25 And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, *that* Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem:

26 and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

27 And king Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields, and committed *them* unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house.

28 And it was *so,* when the king went into the house of the Lord, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?

30 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all *their* days.

31 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

1 Kings-15

The Reign of Abijam

1 Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat
reigned Abijam over Judah.
2 Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was*
Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.
3 And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done
before him: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God,
as the heart of David his father.
4 Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a
lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish
Jerusalem:

We have here a short account of the short reign of Abijam the son of Rehoboam king of Judah. He makes a better figure, 2Ch 13:1-22, where we have an account of his war with Jeroboam, the speech which he made before the armies engaged, and the wonderful victory he obtained by the help of God. There he is called Abijah--My father is the Lord, because no wickedness is there laid to his charge. But here, where we are told of his faults, Jah, the name of God, is, in disgrace to him, taken away from his name, and he is called Abijam. See Jer 22:24.

I. Few particulars are related concerning him.

1. Here began his reign in the beginning of Jeroboam's eighteenth year; for Rehoboam reigned but seventeen, 1Ki 14:21. Jeroboam indeed survived Rehoboam, but Rehoboam's Abijah lived to succeed him and to be a terror to Jeroboam, while Jeroboam's Abijah (whom we read of 1Ki 14:1) died before him.

2. He reigned scarcely three years, for he died before the end of Jeroboam's twentieth year, 1Ki 15:9. Being made proud and secure by his great victory over Jeroboam (2Ch 13:21), God cut

him off, to make way for his son Asa, who would be a better man.

3. His mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom, that is, Absalom, David's son, as I am the rather inclined to think because two other of Rehoboam's wives were his near relations (2Ch 11:18), one the daughter of Jerimoth, David's son, and another the daughter of Eliab, David's brother. He took warning by his father not to marry strangers; yet thought it below him to marry his subjects, except they were of the royal family.

4. He carried on his father's wars with Jeroboam. As there was continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, not set battles (these were forbidden, 1Ki 12:24), but frequent encounters, especially upon the borders, one making incursions and reprisals on the other, so there was between Abijam and Jeroboam (1Ki 15:7), till Jeroboam, with a great army, invaded him, and then Abijam, not being forbidden to act in his own defence, routed him, and weakened him, so that he compelled him to be quiet during the rest of his reign, 2Ch 13:20.

II. But, in general, we are told,

1. That he was not like David, had no hearty affection for the ordinances of God, though, to serve his purpose against Jeroboam, he pleaded his possession of the temple and priesthood, as that upon which he valued himself, 2Ch 13:10-12. Many boast of their profession of godliness who are strangers to the power of it, and plead the truth of their religion who yet are not true to it. His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God.

He seemed to have zeal, but he wanted sincerity; he began pretty well, but he fell off, and walked in all the sins of his father, followed his bad example, though he had seen the bad consequences of it. He that was all his days in war ought to have been so wise as to make and keep his peace with God, and not

to make him his enemy, especially having found him so good a friend in his war with Jeroboam, 2Ch 13:18. Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness, Isa 26:10.

2. That yet it was for David's sake that he was advanced, and continued upon the throne; it was for his sake (1Ki 15:4,5) that God thus set up his son after him; not for his own sake, nor for the sake of his father, in whose steps he trod, but for the sake of David, whose example he would not follow. Note, It aggravates the sin of a degenerate seed that they fare the better for the piety of their ancestors and owe their blessings to it, and yet will not imitate it. They stand upon that ground, and yet despise it, and trample upon it, and unreasonably ridicule and oppose that which they enjoy the benefit of. The kingdom of Judah was supported,

(1.) That David might have a lamp, pursuant to the divine ordination of a lamp for his anointed, Ps 132:17.

(2.) That Jerusalem might be established, not only that the honours put upon it in David's and Solomon's time might be preserved to it, but that it might be reserved to the honours designed for it in after-times. The character here given of David is very great--that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord; but the exception is very remarkable--save only in the matter of Uriah, including both his murder and the debauching of his wife.

That was a bad matter; it was a remaining blot upon his name, a bar in his escutcheon, and the reproach of it was not wiped away, though the guilt was. David was guilty of other faults, but they were nothing in comparison of that; yet even that being repented of, though it be mentioned for warning to others, did not prevail to throw him out of the covenant, nor to cut off the entail of the promise upon his seed.

5 because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and
turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the
days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.
6 And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days
of his life.
7 Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? And
there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.
8 And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city
of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Asa

9 And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa
over Judah.
10 And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's
name *was* Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom.
11 And Asa did *that which was* right in the eyes of the Lord, as *did*
David his father.
12 And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all
the idols that his fathers had made.
13 And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from *being*
queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed
her idol, and burnt *it* by the brook Kidron.
14 But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was
perfect with the Lord all his days.

We have here a short account of the reign of Asa; we shall find a more copious history of it 2Ch 14:1-16:14 Here is,

I The length of it: He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem, 1Ki 15:10. In the account we have of the kings of Judah we find the number of the good kings and the bad ones nearly equal; but then we may observe, to our comfort, that the reign of the good kings was generally long, but that of the bad kings short, the consideration of which will make the state of God's church not altogether so bad within that period as it appears at first sight.

Length of days is in Wisdom's right hand. Honour thy father, much more thy heavenly Father, that thy days may be long.

II The general good character of it (1Ki 15:11): Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and that is right indeed which is so in God's eyes; those are approved whom he commends. He did as did David his father, kept close to God, and to his instituted worship, was hearty and zealous for that, which gave him this honourable character, that he was like David, though he was not a prophet, or psalmist, as David was. If we come up to the graces of those that have gone before us it will be our praise with God, though we come short of their gifts. Asa was like David, though he was neither such a conqueror nor such an author; for his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days (1Ki 15:14), that is, he was both cordial and constant in his religion. What he did for God he was sincere in, steady and uniform, and did it from a good principle, with a single eye to the glory of God.

III. The particular instances of Asa's piety. His times were times of reformation. For,

1. He removed that which was evil. There reformation begins; and a great deal of work of that kind his hand found to do. For, though it was but twenty years after the death of Solomon that he began to reign, yet very gross corruption had spread far and taken deep root. Immorality he first struck at: He took away the sodomites out of the land, suppressed the brothels; for how can either prince or people prosper while those cages of unclean and filthy birds, more dangerous than pest-houses, are suffered to remain? Then he proceeded against idolatry: He removed all the idols, even those that his father had made, 1Ki 15:12.

His father having made them, he was the more concerned to remove them, that he might cut off the entail of the curse, and prevent the visiting of that iniquity upon him and his. Nay

(which redounds much to his honour, and shows his heart was perfect with God), when he found idolatry in the court, he rooted it out thence, 1Ki 15:13. When it appeared that Maachah his mother, or rather his grandmother (but called his mother because she had the educating of him in his childhood), had an idol in a grove, though she was his mother, his grandmother,--though, it is likely, she had a particular fondness for it,--though, being old, she could not live long to patronise it,--though she kept it for her own use only, yet he would by no means connive at her idolatry. Reformation must begin at home. Bad practices will never be suppressed in the country while they are supported in the court. Asa, in every thing else, will honour and respect his mother; he loves her well, but he loves God better, and (like the Levite, De 33:9) readily forgets the relation when it comes in competition with his duty. If she be an idolater,

(1.) Her idol shall be destroyed, publicly exposed to contempt, defaced, and burnt to ashes by the brook Kidron, on which, it is probable, he strewed the ashes, in imitation of Moses (Ex 32:20) and in token of his detestation of idolatry and his indignation at it wherever he found it. Let no remains of a court-idol appear.

(2.) She shall be deposed, He removed her from being queen, or from the queen, that is, from conversing with his wife; he banished her from the court, and confined her to an obscure and private life. Those that have power are happy when thus they have hearts to use it well.

2. He re-established that which was good (1Ki 15:15): He brought into the house of God the dedicated things which he himself had vowed out of the spoils of the Ethiopians he had conquered, and which his father had vowed, but lived not to bring in pursuant to his vow. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well, not only cast away the idols of our iniquity, but dedicate ourselves and our all to God's honour and glory. When those who, in their infancy, were by baptism devoted to

God, make it their own act and deed to join themselves to him and vigorously employ themselves in his service, this is bringing in the dedicated things which they and their fathers have dedicated: it is necessary justice--rendering to God the things that are his.

VI. The policy of his reign. He built cities himself, to encourage the increase of his people (1Ki 15:23) and to invite others to him by the conveniences of habitation; and he was very zealous to hinder Baasha from building Ramah, because he designed it for the cutting off of communication between his people and Jerusalem and to hinder those who in obedience to God would come to worship there. An enemy must by no means be suffered to fortify a frontier town.

V. The faults of his reign. In both the things for which he was praised he was found defective. The fairest characters are not without some but or other in them.

1. Did he take away the idols? That was well; but the high places were not removed (1Ki 15:14); therein his reformation fell short. He removed all images which were rivals with the true God or false representations of him; but the altars which were set up in high places, and to which those sacrifices were brought which should have been offered on the altar in the temple, those he suffered to stand, thinking there was no great harm in them, they having been used by good men before the temple was built, and being loth to disoblige the people, who had a kindness to them and were wedded to them both by custom and convenience; whereas in Judah and Benjamin, the only tribes under Asa's government which lay so near Jerusalem and the altars there, there was less pretence for them than in those tribes which lay more remote. They were against the law, which obliged them to worship at one place, De 12:11.

They lessened men's esteem of the temple and the altars there, and were an open gap for idolatry to enter in at, while the people were so much addicted to it. It was not well that Asa, when his hand was in, did not remove these. Nevertheless his heart was perfect with the Lord. This affords us a comfortable note, That those may be found honest and upright with God, and be accepted of him, who yet, in some instances, come short of doing the good they might and should do. The perfection which is made the indispensable condition of the new covenant is not to be understood of sinlessness (then we were all undone), but sincerity.

2. Did he bring in the dedicated things? That was well; but he afterwards alienated the dedicated things, when he took the gold and silver out of the house of God and sent them as a bribe to Benhadad, to hire him to break his league with Baasha, and, by making an inroad upon his country, to give him a diversion from the building of Ramah, 1Ki 15:18,19. Here he sinned,

(1.) In tempting Benhadad to break his league, and so to violate the public faith. If he did wrong in doing it, as certainly he did, Asa did wrong in persuading him to do it.

(2.) In that he could not trust God, who had done so much for him, to free him out of this strait, without using such indirect means to help himself.

(3.) In taking the gold out of the treasury of the temple, which was not to be made use of but on extraordinary occasions. The project succeeded. Benhadad made a descent upon the land of Israel, which obliged Baasha to retire with his whole force from Ramah (1Ki 15:20,21), which gave Asa a fair opportunity to demolish his works there, and the timber and stones served him for the building of some cities of his own, 1Ki 15:22. But, though the design prospered, we find it was displeasing to God; and though Asa valued himself upon the policy of it, and promised

himself that it would effectually secure his peace, he was told by the prophet that he had done foolishly, and that thenceforth he should have wars; see 2Ch 16:7-9.

VI. The troubles of his reign. For the most part he prospered; but,

1. Baasha king of Israel was a very troublesome neighbour to him. He reigned twenty-four years, and all his days had war, more or less, with Asa, 1Ki 15:16. This was the effect of the division of the kingdoms, that they were continually vexing one another, and so weakened one another, which made them both an easier prey to the common enemy.

2. In his old age he was himself afflicted with the gout: He was diseased in his feet, which made him less fit for business and peevish towards those about him.

VII. The conclusion of his reign. The acts of it were more largely recorded in the common history (to which reference is here had, 1Ki 15:23) than in this sacred one. He reigned long, but finished at last with honour, and left his throne to a successor no way inferior to him.

15 And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the Lord, silver, and gold, and vessels.

Asa's League with Ben-hadad

16 And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

17 And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

18 Then Asa took all the silver and the gold *that were* left in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and

delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

19 *There is* a league between me and thee, *and* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

20 So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali.

21 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *thereof,* that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah.

22 Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none *was* exempted: and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah.

23 The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet.

24 And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Nadab

25 And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years.

26 And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

We are now to take a view of the miserable state of Israel, while the kingdom of Judah was happy under Asa's good government. It was threatened that they should be as a reed shaken in the water (1Ki 14:15), and so they were, when, during the single reign of Asa, the government of their kingdom was in six or

seven different hands, as we find in this and the following chapter. Jeroboam was upon the throne in the beginning of his reign and Ahab at the end of it, and between them were Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri, undermining and destroying one another. This they got by deserting the house both of God and of David. Here we have,

1 The ruin and extirpation of the family of Jeroboam, according to the word of the Lord by Ahijah. His son Nadab succeeded him. If the death of his brother Abijah had had a due influence upon him to make him religious, and the honour done him at his death had engaged him to follow his good example, his reign might have been long and glorious; but he walked in the way of his father (1Ki 15:26), kept up the worship of his calves, and forbade his subjects to go up to Jerusalem to worship, sinned and made Israel to sin, and therefore God brought ruin upon him quickly, in the second year of his reign. He was besieging Gibbethon, a city which the Philistines had taken from the Danites, and was endeavouring to re-take it; and there, in the midst of his army, did Baasha, with others, conspire against him and kill him, (1Ki 15:27), and so little interest had he in the affections of his people that his army did not only not avenge his death, but chose his murderer for his successor.

Whether Baasha did it upon a personal pique against Nadab, or to be avenged on the house of Jeroboam for some affront received from them, or whether under pretence of freeing his country from the tyranny of a bad prince, or whether merely from a principle of ambition, to make way for himself to the throne, does not appear; but he slew him and reigned in his stead, 1Ki 15:28. And the first thing he did when he came to the crown was to cut off all the house of Jeroboam, that he might the better secure himself and his own usurped government. He thought it not enough to imprison or banish them, but he destroyed them, left not only no males (as was foretold, 1Ki 14:10), but none that breathed. Herein he was

barbarous, but God was righteous. Jeroboam's sin was punished (1Ki 15:30); for those that provoke God do it to their own confusion; see Jer 7:19. Ahijah's prophecy was accomplished (1Ki 15:29); for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Divine threatenings are not bugbears.

2 The elevation of Baasha. He shall be tried awhile, as Jeroboam was. Twenty-four years he reigned (1Ki 15:33), but showed that it was not from any dislike to Jeroboam's sin that he destroyed his family, but from malice and ambition; for, when he had rooted out the sinner, he himself clave to the sin, and walked in the way of Jeroboam (1Ki 15:34), though he had seen the end of that way; so strangely was his heart hardened with the deceitfulness of sin.

27 And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon.
28 Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead.
29 And it came to pass, when he reigned, *that* he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite:
30 because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger.
31 Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?
32 And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

The Reign of Baasha

33 In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years.
34 And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of

Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

1 Kings-16

1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,
2 For as much as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins;
3 behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
4 Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat.

Here is, I The ruin of the family of Baasha foretold. He was a man likely enough to have raised and established his family--active, politic, and daring; but he was an idolater, and this brought destruction upon his family.

1. God sent him warning of it before.

(1.) That, if he were thereby wrought upon to repent and reform, the ruin might be prevented; for God threatens, that he may not strike, as one that desires not the death of sinners.

(2.) That, if not, it might appear that the destruction when it did come, whoever might be instruments of it, was the act of God's justice and the punishment of sin.

2 The warning was sent by Jehu the son of Hanani. The father was a seer, or prophet, at the same time (2Ch 16:7), and was sent to Asa king of Judah; but the son, who was young and more active, was sent on this longer and more dangerous expedition to Baasha king of Israel. Juniores ad labores--Toil

and adventure are for the young. This Jehu was a prophet and the son of a prophet.

Prophecy, thus happily entailed, was worthy of so much the more honour. This Jehu continued long in his usefulness, for we find him reproving Jehoshaphat (2Ch 19:2) above forty years after, and writing the annals of that prince, 2Ch 20:34. The message which this prophet brought to Baasha is much the same with that which Ahijah sent to Jeroboam by his wife.

(1.) He reminds Baasha of the great things God had done for him (1Ki 16:2): I exalted thee out of the dust to the throne of glory, a great instance of the divine sovereignty and power, 1Sa 2:8. Baasha seemed to have raised himself by his own treachery and cruelty, yet there was a hand of Providence in it, to bring about God's counsel, concerning Jeroboam's house; and God's owning his advancement as his act and deed does by no means amount to the patronising of his ambition and treachery.

It is God that puts power into bad men's hands, which he makes to serve his good purposes, notwithstanding the bad use they make of it. I made thee prince over my people. God calls Israel his people still, though wretchedly corrupted, because they retained the covenant of circumcision, and there were many good people among them; it was not till long after that they were called Loammi, not a people, Ho 1:9.

(2.) He charges him with high crimes and misdemeanours,

[1.] That he had caused Israel to sin, had seduced God's subjects from their allegiance and brought them to pay to dunghill-deities the homage due to him only, and herein he had walked in the way of Jeroboam (1Ki 16:2), and been like his house, 1Ki 16:7.

[2.] That he had himself provoked God to anger with the work of his hands, that is, by worshipping images, the work of men's hands; though perhaps others made them, yet he served them and thereby avowed the making of them, and they are therefore called the work of his hands.

[3.] That he had destroyed the house of Jeroboam (1Ki 16:7), because he killed him, namely, Jeroboam's son and all his: if he had done that with an eye to God, to his will and glory, and from a holy indignation against the sins of Jeroboam and his house, he would have been accepted and applauded as a minister of God's justice; but, as he did it, he was only the tool of God's justice, but a servant to his own lusts, and is justly punished for the malice and ambition which actuated and governed him in all he did.

Note, Those who are in any way employed in denouncing or executing the justice of God (magistrates or ministers) are concerned to do it from a good principle and in a holy manner, lest it turn into sin to them and they make themselves obnoxious by it.

(3.) He foretels the same destruction to come upon his family which he himself had been employed to bring upon the family of Jeroboam, 1Ki 16:3,4. Note, Those who resemble others in their sins may expect to resemble them in their plagues, especially those who seem zealous against such sins in others as they allow themselves in; the house of Jehu was reckoned with for the blood of the house of Ahab, Ho 1:4.

II. A reprieve granted for some time, so long that Baasha himself dies in peace, and is buried with honour in his own royal city (1Ki 16:6), so far is he from being a prey either to the dogs or to the fowls, which yet was threatened to his house, 1Ki 16:4. He lives not either to see or feel the punishment threatened, yet he was himself the greatest delinquent.

Certainly there must be a future state, in which impenitent sinners will suffer in their own persons, and not escape, as often they do in this world. Baasha died under no visible stroke of divine vengeance for aught that appears, but God laid up his iniquity for his children, as Job speaks, Job 21:19.

Thus he often visits sin. Observe, Baasha is punished by the destruction of his children after his death, and his children are punished by the abuse of their bodies after their death; that is the only thing which the threatening specifies (1Ki 16:4), that the dogs and the fowls of the air should eat them, as if herein were designed a tacit intimation that there are punishments after death, when death has done its worst, which will be the sorest punishments and are most to be dreaded; these judgments on the body and posterity signified judgments on the soul when separated from the body, by him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell.

III. Execution done at last. Baasha's son Elah, like Jeroboam's son Nadab, reigned two years, and then was slain by Zimri, one of his own soldiers, as Nadab was by Baasha; so like was his house made to that of Jeroboam, as was threatened, 1Ki 16:3. Because his idolatry was like his, and one of the sins for which God contended with him being the destruction of Jeroboam's family, the more the destruction of his own resembled that, the nearer did the punishment resemble the sin, as face answers to face in a glass.

1. As then, so now, the king himself was first slain, but Elah fell more ingloriously than Nadab. Nadab was slain in the field of action and honour, he and his army then besieging Gibbethon (1Ki 15:27); but the siege being then raised upon that disaster, and the city remaining still in the Philistines' hands, the army of Israel was now renewing the attempt (1Ki 16:15) and Elah should have been with them to command in chief, but he loved his own ease and safety better than his

honour or duty, or the public good, and therefore staid behind to take his pleasure; and, when he was drinking himself drunk in his servant's house, Zimri killed him, 1Ki 16:9,10. Let it be a warning to drunkards, especially to those who designedly drink themselves drunk, that they know not but death may surprise them in that condition.

(1.) Death comes easily upon men when they are drunk. Besides the chronic diseases which men frequently bring themselves into by hard drinking, and which cut them off in the midst of their days, men in that condition are more easily overcome by an enemy, as Amnon by Absalom, and are liable to more bad accidents, being unable to help themselves,

(2.) Death comes terribly upon men in that condition. Finding them in the act of sin, and incapacitated for any act of devotion, that day comes upon them unawares (Lu 21:34), like a thief.

2. As then, so now, the whole family was cut off, and rooted out. The traitor was the successor, to whom the unthinking people tamely submitted, as if it were all one to them what kind they had, so that they had one. The first thing Zimri did was to slay all the house of Baasha; thus he held by cruelty what he got by treason.

His cruelty seems to have extended further than Baasha's did against the house of Jeroboam, for he left to Elah none of his kinsfolks or friends (1Ki 16:11), none of his avengers (so the word is), none that were likely to avenge his death; yet divine justice soon avenged it so remarkably that it was used as a proverb long after, Had Zimri peace who slew his master? 2Ki 9:31. In this,

(1.) The word of God was fulfilled, 1Ki 16:12.

(2.) The sins of Baasha and Elah were reckoned for, with which they provoked God by their vanities, 1Ki 16:13. Their idols are called their vanities, for they cannot profit nor help. Miserable are those whose deities are vanities.

5 Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might,
are they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings
of Israel?
6 So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah
his son reigned in his stead.
7 And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came
the word of the Lord against Baasha, and against his house, even
for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in provoking
him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of
Jeroboam; and because he killed him.

The Reigns of Elah and Zimri

8 In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the
son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years.
9 And his servant Zimri, captain of half *his* chariots, conspired
against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the
house of Arza steward of *his* house in Tirzah.
10 And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty
and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.
11 And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his
throne, *that* he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that
pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolk, nor of his
friends.
12 Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the
word of the Lord, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the
prophet,
13 for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which
they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the
Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.
14 Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

15 In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people *were* encamped against Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines.

16 And the people *that were* encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp.

Solomon observes (Pr 28:2) that for the transgression of a land many were the princes thereof (so it was here in Israel), but by a man of understanding the state thereof shall be prolonged--so it was with Judah at the same time under Asa. When men forsake God they are out of the way of rest and establishment. Zimri, and Tibni, and Omri, are here striving for the crown. Proud aspiring men ruin one another, and involve others in the ruin. These confusions end in the settlement of Omri; we must therefore take him along with us through this part of the story.

I. How he was chosen, as the Roman emperors often were, by the army in the field, now encamped before Gibbethon. Notice was soon brought thither that Zimri had slain their king (1Ki 16:16) and set up himself in Tirzah, the royal city, whereupon they chose Omri king in the camp, that they might without delay avenge the death of Elah upon Zimri. Though he was idle and intemperate, yet he was their king, and they would not tamely submit to his murderer, nor let the treason go unpunished. They did not attempt to avenge the death of Nadab upon Baasha, perhaps because the house of Baasha had ruled with more gentleness than the house of Jeroboam; but Zimri shall feel the resentments of the provoked army. The siege of Gibbethon is quitted (Philistines are sure to gain when Israelites quarrel) and Zimri is prosecuted.

II. How he conquered Zimri, who is said to have reigned seven days (1Ki 16:15), so long before Omri was proclaimed king and himself proclaimed traitor; but we may suppose it was a longer time before he died, for he continued long enough to show his inclination to the way of Jeroboam, and to make

himself obnoxious to the justice of God by supporting his idolatry, 1Ki 16:19.

Tirzah was a beautiful city, but not fortified, so that Omri soon made himself master of it (1Ki 16:17), forced Zimri into the palace, which being unable to defend, and yet unwilling to surrender, he burnt, and himself in it, 1Ki 16:18. Unwilling that his rival should ever enjoy that sumptuous palace, he burnt it; and fearing that if he fell into the hands of the army, either alive or dead, he should be ignominiously treated, he burnt himself in it. See what desperate practices men's wickedness sometimes brings them to, and how it hurries them into their own ruin; see the disposition of incendiaries, who set palaces and kingdoms on fire, though they are themselves in danger of perishing in the flame.

III. How he struggled with Tibni, and at length got clear of him: Half of the people followed this Tibni (1Ki 16:21), probably those who were in Zimri's interest, with whom others joined, who would not have a king chosen in the camp (lest he should rule by the sword and a standing army), but in a convention of the states. The contest between these two lasted some years, and, it is likely, cost a great deal of blood on both sides, for it was in the twenty-seventh year of Asa that Omri was first elected (1Ki 16:15) and thence the twelve years of his reign are to be dated; but it was not till the thirty-first year of Asa that he began to reign without a rival; then Tibni died, it is likely in battle, and Omri reigned, 1Ki 16:22.

Sir Walter Raleigh, in his History of the World (2.19.6), enquires here why it was that in all these confusions and revolutions of the kingdom of Israel they never thought of returning to the house of David, and uniting themselves again to Judah, for then it was better with them than now; and he thinks the reason was because the kings of Judah assumed a more absolute, arbitrary, and despotic power than the kings of

Israel. It was the heaviness of the yoke that they complained of when they first revolted from the house of David, and the dread of that made them ever after averse to it, and attached to kings of their own, who ruled more by law and the rules of a limited monarchy.

IV. How he reigned when he was at length settled on the throne.

1. He made himself famous by building Samaria, which, ever after, was the royal city of the kings of Israel (the palace at Tirzah being burnt), and in process of time grew so considerable that it gave name to the middle part of Canaan (which lay between Galilee on the north and Judea on the south) and to the inhabitants of that country, who were called Samaritans. He bought the ground for two talents of silver, somewhat more than 700l. of our money, for a talent was 353l. 11s. 10 1/2d.

Perhaps Shemer, who sold him the ground, let him have it considerably the cheaper upon condition that the city should be called after his name, for otherwise it would have borne the name of the purchaser; it was called Samaria, or Shemeren (as it is in the Hebrew), from Shemer, the former owner, 1Ki 16:24. The kings of Israel changed their royal seats, Shechem first, then Tirzah, now Samaria; but the kings of Judah were constant to Jerusalem, the city of God. Those that cleave to the Lord fix, but those that leave him ever wander.

2. He made himself infamous by his wickedness; for he did worse than all that were before him, 1Ki 16:25. Though he was brought to the throne with much difficulty, and Providence had remarkably favoured him in his advancement, yet he was more profane, or more superstitious, and a greater persecutor, than either of the houses of Jeroboam or Baasha. He went further than they had done in establishing iniquity by a law,

and forcing his subjects to comply with him in it; for we read of the statutes of Omri, the keeping of which made Israel a desolation, Mic 6:16. Jeroboam caused Israel to sin by temptation, example, and allurement; but Omri did it by compulsion.

V. How he ended his reign, 1Ki 16:27. He was in some repute for the might which he showed. Many a bad man has been a stout man. He died in his bed, as did Jeroboam and Baasha themselves; but, like them, left it to his posterity to fill up the measure, and then pay off the scores, of his iniquity.

17 And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah.
18 And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died,
19 for his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin.
20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

The Reign of Omri

21 Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri.
22 But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned.
23 In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah.
24 And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria.

25 But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that *were* before him.
26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.
27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he showed, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?
28 So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Ahab

29 And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.
30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that *were* before him.
31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.
32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

We have here the beginning of the reign of Ahab, of whom we have more particulars recorded than of any of the kings of Israel. We have here only a general idea given us of him, as the worst of all the kings, that we may expect what the particulars will be. He reigned twenty-two years, long enough to do a great deal of mischief.

I. He exceeded all his predecessors in wickedness, did evil above all that were before him (1Ki 16:30), and, as if it were done with a particular enmity both to God and Israel, to affront him and ruin them, it is said, He did more purposely to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, and, consequently, to send judgments on his

land, than all the kings of Israel that were before him, 1Ki 16:33. It was bad with the people when every successive king was worse than his predecessor. What would they come to at last? He had seen the ruin of other wicked kings and their families; yet, instead of taking warning, his heart was hardened and enraged against God by it.

He thought it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, 1Ki 16:31. It was nothing to break the second commandment by image-worship, he would set aside the first also by introducing other gods; his little finger should fall heavier upon God's ordinances than Jeroboam's loins. Making light of less sins makes way for greater, and those that endeavour to extenuate other people's sins will but aggravate their own.

II. He married a wicked woman, who he knew would bring in the worship of Baal, and seemed to marry her with that design. As if it had been a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he took to wife Jezebel (1Ki 16:31), a zealous idolater, extremely imperious and malicious in her natural temper, addicted to witchcrafts and whoredoms (2Ki 9:22), and every way vicious. The false prophetess spoken of Re 2:20 is there called Jezebel, for a wicked woman could not be called by a worse name than hers; what mischiefs she did, and what mischief at last befel her (2Ki 9:33), we shall find in the following story; this one strange wife debauched Israel more than all the strange wives of Solomon.

III. He set up the worship of Baal, forsook the God of Israel and served the god of the Sidonians, Jupiter instead of Jehovah, the sun (so some think), a deified hero of the Phoenicians (so others): he was weary of the golden calves, and thought they had been worshipped long enough; such vanities were they that those who had been fondest of them at length grew sick of them, and, like adulterers, much have variety. In honour of this mock deity, whom they called Baal--lord, and for the convenience of his worship,

1. Ahab built a temple in Samaria, the royal city, because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the royal city of the other kingdom. He would have Baal's temple near him, that he might the better frequent it, protect it, and put honour upon it.

2. He reared an altar in that temple, on which to offer sacrifice to Baal, by which they acknowledged their dependence upon him and sought his favour. O the stupidity of idolaters, who are at a great expense to make one their friend whom they might have chosen whether they would make a god of or no! 3. He made a grove about his temple, either a natural one, by planting shady trees there, or, if those would be too long in growing, an artificial one in imitation of it; for it is not said he planted, but he made a grove, something that answered the intention, which was to conceal and so countenance the abominable impurities that were committed in the filthy worship of Baal. Lucus, a lucendo, quia non lucet--He that doeth evil hateth the light.

IV. One of his subjects, in imitation of his presumption, ventured to build Jericho, in defiance of the curse Joshua had long since pronounced on him that should attempt it, 1Ki 16:34. It comes in as an instance of the height of impiety to which men had arrived, especially at Bethel, where one of the calves was, for of that city this daring sinner was. Observe,

1. How ill he did. Like Achan he meddled with the accursed thing, turned that to his own use which was devoted to God's honour. He began to build, in defiance of the curse well known in Israel, jesting with it perhaps as a bugbear, or fancying its force worn out by length of time, for it was above 500 years since it was pronounced, Jos 6:26. He went on to build, in defiance of the execution of the curse in part; for, though his eldest son died when he began, yet he would proceed in contempt of God and his wrath revealed from heaven against his ungodliness.

2. How ill he sped. He built for his children, but God wrote him childless; his eldest son died when he began, the youngest when he finished, and all the rest (it is supposed) between. Note, Those whom God curses are cursed indeed; none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. God keep us back from presumptuous sins, those great transgressions!

33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

34 In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest *son* Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

1 Kings-17

Elijah Predicts Drought

1 And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, *As* the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

2 And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan.

The history of Elijah begins somewhat abruptly. Usually, when a prophet enters, we have some account of his parentage, are told whose son he was and of what tribe; but Elijah drops (so to speak) out of the clouds, as if, like Melchisedek, he were without father, without mother, and without descent, which made some of the Jews fancy that he was an angel sent from heaven; but the apostle has assured us that he was a man subject to like passions as we are (Jam 5:17), which perhaps intimates, not only that he was liable to the common infirmities of human nature, but that, by his natural temper, he was a man of strong

passions, more hot and eager than most men, and therefore the more fit to deal with the daring sinners of the age he lived in: so wonderfully does God suit men to the work he designs them for. Rough spirits are called to rough services. The reformation needed such a man as Luther to break the ice. Observe,

1 The prophet's name: Elijahu--"My God Jehovah is he" (so it signifies), "is he who sends me and will own me and bear me out, is he to whom I would bring Israel back and who alone can effect that great work."

2. His country: He was of the inhabitants of Gilead, on the other side Jordan, either of the tribe of Gad or the half of Manasseh, for Gilead was divided between them; but whether a native of either of those tribes is uncertain. The obscurity of his parentage was no prejudice to his eminency afterwards. We need not enquire whence men are, but what they are: if it be a good thing, no matter though it come out of Nazareth. Israel was sorely wounded when God sent them this balm from Gilead and this physician thence. He is called a Tishbite from Thisbe, a town in that country. Two things we have an account of here in the beginning of his story:--

I. How he foretold a famine, a long and grievous famine, with which Israel should be punished for their sins. That fruitful land, for want of rain, should be turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein. He went and told Ahab this; did not whisper it to the people, to make them disaffected to the government, but proclaimed it to the king, in whose power it was to reform the land, and so to prevent the judgment. It is probable that he reproved Ahab for his idolatry and other wickedness, and told him that unless he repented and reformed this judgment would be brought upon his land. There should be neither dew nor rain for some years, none but according to my word, that is, "Expect none till you hear from me again."

The apostle teaches us to understand this, not only of the word of prophecy, but the word of prayer, which turned the key of the clouds, Jam 5:17,18. He prayed earnestly (in a holy indignation at Israel's apostasy, and a holy zeal for the glory of God, whose judgments were defied) that it might not rain; and, according to his prayers, the heavens became as brass, till he prayed again that it might rain. In allusion to this story it is said of God's witnesses (Re 11:6), These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy. Elijah lets Ahab know,

1. That the Lord Jehovah is the God of Israel, whom he had forsaken.

2. That he is a living God, and not like the gods he worshipped, which were dead dumb idols.

3. That he himself was God's servant in office, and a messenger sent from him: "It is he before whom I stand, to minister to him," or "whom I now represent, in whose stead I stand, and in whose name I speak, in defiance of the prophets of Baal and the groves."

4. That, notwithstanding the present peace and prosperity of the kingdom of Israel, God was displeased with them for their idolatry and would chastise them for it by the want of rain (which, when he withheld it, it was not in the power of the gods they served to bestow; for are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain? Jer 14:22), which would effectually prove their impotency, and the folly of those who left the living God, to make their court to such as could do neither good nor evil; and this he confirms with a solemn oath--As the Lord God of Israel liveth, that Ahab might stand the more in awe of the threatening, the divine life being engaged for the accomplishment of it.

5. He lets Ahab know what interest he had in heaven: It shall be according to my word. With what dignity does he speak when he speaks in God's name, as one who well understood that commission of a prophet (Jer 1:10), I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms. See the power of prayer and the truth of God's word; for he performeth the counsel of his messengers.

II. How he was himself taken care of in that famine.

1. How he was hidden. God bade him go and hide himself by the brook Cherith, 1Ki 17:3. This was intended, not so much for his preservation, for it does not appear that Ahab immediately sought his life, but as a judgment to the people, to whom, if he had publicly appeared, he might have been a blessing both by his instructions and his intercession, and so have shortened the days of their calamity; but God had determined it should last three years and a half, and therefore, so long, appointed Elijah to abscond, that he might not be solicited to revoke the sentence, the execution of which he had said should be according to his word.

When God speaks concerning a nation, to pluck up and destroy, he finds some way or other to remove those that would stand in the gap to turn away his wrath. It bodes ill to a people when good men and good ministers are ordered to hide themselves. When God intended to send rain upon the earth then he bade Elijah go and show himself to Ahab, 1Ki 18:1. For the present, in obedience to the divine command, he went and dwelt all alone in some obscure unfrequented place, where he was not discovered, probably among the reeds of the brook. If Providence calls us to solitude and retirement, it becomes us to acquiesce; when we cannot be useful we must be patient, and when we cannot work for God we must sit still quietly for him.

2. How he was fed. Though he could not work there, having nothing to do but to meditate and pray (which would help to prepare him for his usefulness afterwards), yet he shall eat, for he is in the way of his duty, and verily he shall be fed, in the day of famine he shall be satisfied. When the woman, the church, is driven into the wilderness, care it taken that she be fed and nourished there, time, times, and half a time, that is, three years and a half, which was just the time of Elijah's concealment. See Re 12:6,14. Elijah must drink of the brook, and the ravens were appointed to bring him meat (1Ki 17:4) and did so, 1Ki 17:6. Here,

(1.) The provision was plentiful, and good, and constant, bread and flesh twice a day, daily bread and food convenient. We may suppose that he fared not so sumptuously as the prophets of the groves, who did eat at Jezebel's table (1Ki 18:19), and yet better than the rest of the Lord's prophets, whom Obadiah fed with bread and water, 1Ki 18:4. It ill becomes God's servants, especially his servants the prophets, to be nice and curious about their food and to affect dainties and varieties; if nature be sustained, no matter though the palate be not pleased; instead of envying those who have daintier fare, we should think how many there are, better than we, who live comfortably upon coarser fare and would be glad of our leavings. Elijah had but one meal brought him at a time, every morning and every evening, to teach him not to take thought for the morrow. Let those who have but from hand to mouth learn to live upon Providence, and trust it for the bread of the day in the day; thank God for bread this day, and let to-morrow bring bread with it.

(2.) The caterers were very unlikely; the ravens brought it to him. Obadiah, and others in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal, would gladly have entertained Elijah; but he was a man by himself, and must be red in an extraordinary way. He was a figure of John the baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey. God could have sent angels to minister to him, as he did

afterwards (1Ki 19:5) and as he did to our Saviour (Mt 4:11), but he chose to send by winged messengers of another nature, to show that when he pleases he can serve his own purposes by the meanest creatures as effectually as by the mightiest. If it be asked whence the ravens had this provision, how and where it was cooked, and whether they came honestly by it, we must answer, as Jacob did (Ge 27:20), The Lord our God brought it to them, whose the earth is and the fulness thereof, the world and those that dwell therein. But why ravens?

[1.] They are birds of prey, ravenous devouring creatures, more likely to have taken his meat from him, or to have picked out his eyes (Pr 30:17); but thus Samson's riddle is again unriddled, Out of the eater comes forth meat.

[2.] They are unclean creatures.Every raven after his kind was, by the law, forbidden to be eaten (Le 11:15), yet Elijah did not think the meat they brought ever the worse for that, but ate and gave thanks, asking no question for conscience' sake. Noah's dove was to him a more faithful messenger than his raven; yet here the ravens are faithful and constant to Elijah.

[3.] Ravens feed on insects and carrion themselves, yet they brought the prophet man's meat and wholesome food. It is a pity that those who bring the bread of life to others should themselves take up with that which is not bread.

[4.] Ravens could bring but a little, and broken meat, yet Elijah was content with such things as he had, and thankful that the was fed, though not feasted.

[5.] Ravens neglect their own young ones, and do not feed them; yet when God pleases they shall feed his prophet. Young lions and young ravens may lack, and suffer hunger, but not those that fear the Lord, Ps 34:10. [6.] Ravens are themselves fed by special providence (Job 38:41,Ps 147:9), and now they

fed the prophet. Have we experienced God's special goodness to us and ours? Let us reckon ourselves obliged thereby to be kind to those that are his, for his sake. Let us learn hence, First, To acknowledge the sovereignty and power of God over all the creatures; he can make what use he pleases of them, either for judgment or mercy. Secondly, To encourage ourselves in God in the greatest straits, and never to distrust him. He that could furnish a table in the wilderness, and make ravens purveyors, cooks, and servitors to his prophet, is able to supply all our need according to his riches in glory.

Thus does Elijah, for a great while, eat his morsels alone, and his provision of water, which he has in an ordinary way from the brook, fails him before that which he has by miracle. The powers of nature are limited, but not the powers of the God of nature. Elijah's brook dried up (1Ki 17:7) because there was no rain. If the heavens fail, earth fails of course; such are all our creature-comforts; we lose them when we most need them, like the brooks in summer, Job 6:15. But there is a river which makes glad the city of God and which never runs dry (Ps 46:4), a well of water that springs up to eternal life. Lord, give us that living water!

4 And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have
commanded the ravens to feed thee there.
5 So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord : for he
went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan.
6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and
bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.
7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because
there had been no rain in the land.

Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath

8 And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

We have here an account of the further protection Elijah was taken under, and the further provision made for him in his retirement. At destruction and famine he shall laugh that has God for his friend to guard and maintain him. The brook Cherith is dried up, but God's care of his people, and kindness to them, never slacken, never fail, but are still the same, are still continued and drawn out to those that know him, Ps 36:10. When the brook was dried up Jordan was not; why did not God send him thither? Surely because he would show that he has a variety of ways to provide for his people and is not tied to any one. God will now provide for him where he shall have some company and opportunity of usefulness, and not be, as he had been, buried alive. Observe,

I The place he is sent to, to Zarephath, or Sarepta, a city of Sidon, out of the borders of the land of Israel, 1Ki 17:9. Our Saviour takes notice of this as an early and ancient indication of the favour of God designed for the poor Gentiles, in the fulness of time, Lu 4:25,26. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, and some, it is likely, that would have bidden him welcome to their houses; yet he is sent to honour and bless with his presence a city of Sidon, a Gentile city, and so becomes (says Dr. Lightfoot) the first prophet of the Gentiles. Israel had corrupted themselves with the idolatries of the nations and become worse than they; justly therefore is the casting off of them the riches of the world. Elijah was hated and driven out by

his countrymen; therefore, lo, he turns to the Gentiles, as the apostles were afterwards ordered to do, Ac 18:6.

But why to a city of Sidon? Perhaps because the worship of Baal, which was now the crying sin of Israel, came lately thence with Jezebel, who was a Sidonian (1Ki 16:31); therefore thither he shall go, that thence may be fetched the destroyer of that idolatry, "Even out of Sidon have I called my prophet, my reformer." Jezebel was Elijah's greatest enemy; yet, to show her the impotency of her malice, God will find a hiding-place for him even in her country. Christ never went among the Gentiles except once into the coast of Sidon, Mt 15:21.

II The person that is appointed to entertain him, not one of the rich merchants or great men, of Sidon, not such a one as Obadiah, that was governor of Ahab's house and fed the prophets; but a poor widow woman, destitute and desolate, is commanded (that is, is made both able and willing) to sustain him. It is God's way, and it is his glory, to make use of the weak and foolish things of the world and put honour upon them. He is, in a special manner, the widows' God, and feeds them, and therefore they must study what they shall render to him.

III. The provision made for him there. Providence brought the widow woman to meet him very opportunely at the gate of the city (1Ki 17:10), and, by what is here related of what passed between Elijah and her, we find,

1. Her case and character; and it appears,

(1.) That she was very poor and necessitous. She had nothing to live upon but a handful of meal and a little oil, needy at the best, and now, by the general scarcity, reduced to the last extremity. When she has eaten the little she has, for aught she yet sees, she must die for want, she and her son, 1Ki 17:12. She had no fuel but the sticks she gathered in the streets, and, having no servant,

she must gather them herself (1Ki 17:10), being thus more in a condition to receive alms than give entertainment. To her Elijah was sent, that he might still live upon Providence as much as he did when the ravens fed him. It was in compassion to the low estate of his handmaiden that God sent the prophet to her, not to beg of her, but to board with her, and he would pay well for his table.

(2.) That she was very humble and industrious. He found her gathering sticks, and preparing to bake her own bread, 1Ki 17:10,12. Her mind was brought to her condition, and she complained not of the hardship she was brought to, nor quarrelled with the divine Providence for withholding rain, but accommodated herself to it as well as she could. Such as are of this temper in a day of trouble are best prepared for honour and relief from God.

(3.) That she was very charitable and generous. When this stranger desired her to go and fetch him some water to drink, she readily went, at the first word, 1Ki 17:10,11. She objected not to the present scarcity of it, nor asked him what he would give her for a draught of water (for now it was worth money), nor hinted that he was a stranger, an Israelite, with whom perhaps the Sidonians cared not for having any dealings, any more than the Samaritans, Joh 4:9.

She did not excuse herself on account of her weakness through famine, or the urgency of her own affairs, did not tell him she had something else to do than to go on his errands, but left off gathering the sticks for herself to fetch water for him, which perhaps she did the more willingly, being moved with the gravity of his aspect. We should be ready to do any office of kindness even to strangers; if we have not wherewith to give to the distressed, we must be the more ready to work for them. A cup of cold water, though it cost us no more than the labour of fetching, shall in no wise lose its reward.

(4.) That she had a great confidence in the word of God. It was a great trial for her faith and obedience when, having gold the prophet how low her stock of meal and oil was and that she had but just enough for herself and her son, he bade her make a cake for him, and make his first, and then prepare for herself and her son. If we consider, it will appear as great a trial as could be in so small a matter. "Let the children first be served" (might she have said); "charity begins at home. I cannot be expected to give, having but little, and not knowing, when that is gone, where to obtain more."

She had much more reason than Nabal to ask, "Shall I take my meat and my oil and give it to one that I know not whence he is?" Elijah, it is true, made mention of the God of Israel (1Ki 17:14), but what was that to a Sidonian? Or if she had a veneration for the name Jehovah, and valued the God of Israel as the true God, yet what assurance had she that this stranger was his prophet or had any warrant to speak in his name? It was easy for a hungry vagrant to impose upon her.

But she gets over all these objections, and obeys the precept in dependence upon the promise: She went and did according to the saying of Elijah, 1Ki 17:15. O woman! great was thy faith; one has not found the like, no, not in Israel: all things considered, it exceeded that of the widow who, when she had but two mites, cast them into the treasury. She took the prophet's word, that she should not lose by it, but it should be repaid with interest. Those that can venture upon the promise of God will make no difficulty of exposing and emptying themselves in his service, by giving him his dues out of a little and giving him his part first. Those that deal with God must deal upon trust; seek first his kingdom, and then other things shall be added.

By the law, the first-fruits were God's, the tithe was taken out first, and the heave-offering of their dough was first offered, Nu

15:20,21. But surely the increase of this widow's faith, to such a degree as to enable her thus to deny herself and to depend upon the divine promise, was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace as the increase of her oil was in the kingdom of providence. Happy are those who can thus, against hope, believe and obey in hope.

2 The care God took of her guest: The barrel of meal wasted not, nor did the cruse of oil fail, but still as they took from them more was added to them by the divine power, 1Ki 17:16. Never did corn or olive so increase in the growing (says bishop Hall) as these did in the using; but the multiplying of the seed sown (2Co 9:10) in the common course of providence is an instance of the power and goodness of God not to be overlooked because common. The meal and the oil multiplied, not in the hoarding, but in the spending; for there is that scattereth and yet increaseth. When God blesses a little, it will go a great way, even beyond expectation; as, on the contrary, though there be abundance, if he blow upon it, it comes to little, Hag 1:9,2:16.

(1.) This was a maintenance for the prophet. Still miracles shall be his daily bread. Hitherto he had been fed with bread and flesh, now he was fed with bread and oil, which they used as we do butter. Manna was both, for the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil, Nu 11:8. This Elijah was thankful for, though he had been used to flesh twice a day and now had none at all. Those that cannot live without flesh, once a day at least, because they have been used to it, could not have boarded contentedly with Elijah, no, not to live upon a miracle.

(2.) It was a maintenance for the poor widow and her son, and a recompence to her for entertaining the prophet. There is nothing lost by being kind to God's people and ministers; she that received a prophet had a prophet's reward; she gave him house-room, and he repaid her with food for her household. Christ has

promised to those who open their doors to him that he will come in to them, and sup with them, and they with him, Re 3:20. Like Elijah here, he brings to those who bid him welcome, not only his own entertainment, but theirs too. See how the reward answered the service. She generously made one cake for the prophet, and was repaid with many for herself and her son.

When Abraham offers his only son to God he is told he shall be the father of multitudes. What is laid out in piety or charity is let out to the best interest, upon the best securities. One poor meal's meat this poor widow gave the prophet, and, in recompence of it, she and her son did eat many days (1Ki 17:15), above two years, in a time of general scarcity; and to have their food from God's special favour, and to eat it in such good company as Elijah's, made it more than doubly sweet. It is promised to those that trust in God that they shall not be ashamed in the evil time, but in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, Ps 37:19.

12 And she said, *As* the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

16 *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.

17 And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him.

18 And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

19 And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed.

20 And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?

21 And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

We have here a further recompence made to the widow for her kindness to the prophet; as if it were a small thing to be kept alive, her son, when dead, is restored to life, and so restored to her. Observe,

I The sickness and death of the child. For aught that appears he was her only son, the comfort of her widowed estate. He was fed miraculously, and yet that did not secure him from sickness and death. Your fathers did eat manna, and are dead, but there is bread of which a man may eat and not die, which was given for the life of the world, Joh 6:49,50. The affliction was to this widow as a thorn in the flesh, lest she should be lifted up above measure with the favours that were done her and the honours that were put upon her.

1. She was nurse to a great prophet, was employed to sustain him, and had strong reason to think the Lord would do her good; yet now she loses her child. Note, We must not think it strange if we meet with very sharp afflictions, even when we are in the way of duty, and of eminent service to God.

2. She was herself nursed by miracle, and kept a good house without charge or care, by a distinguishing blessing from heaven; and in the midst of all this satisfaction she was thus

afflicted. Note, When we have the clearest manifestations of God's favour and good-will towards us, even then we must prepare for the rebukes of Providence. Our mountain never stands so strong but it may be moved, and therefore, in this world, we must always rejoice with trembling.

II. Her pathetic complaint to the prophet of this affliction. It should seem, the child died suddenly, else she would have applied to Elijah, while he was sick, for the cure of him; but being dead, dead in her bosom, she expostulates with the prophet upon it, rather to give vent to her sorrow than in any hope of relief, 1Ki 17:18.

1. She expresses herself passionately: What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? How calmly had she spoken of her own and her child's death when she expected to die for want (1Ki 17:12) --that we may eat, and die! Yet now that her child dies, and not so miserably as by famine, she is extremely disturbed at it. We may speak lightly of an affliction at a distance, but when it toucheth us we are troubled, Job 4:5.

Then she spoke deliberately, now in haste; the death of her child was now a surprise to her, and it is hard to keep our spirits composed when troubles come upon us suddenly and unexpectedly, and in the midst of our peace and prosperity. She calls him a man of God, and yet quarrels with him as if he had occasioned the death of her child, and is ready to which she had never seen him, forgetting past mercies and miracles: "What have I done against thee?" (so some understand it), "Wherein have I offended thee, or been wanting in my duty? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

2. Yet she expresses herself penitently: "Hast thou come to call my sin to thy remembrance, as the cause of the affliction, and so to call it to my remembrance, as the effect of the affliction?" Perhaps she knew of Elijah's intercession against Israel, and,

being conscious to herself of sin, perhaps her former worshipping of Baal the god of the Sidonians, she apprehends he had made intercession against her. Note,

(1.) When God removes our comforts from use he remembers our sins against us, perhaps the iniquities of our youth, though long since past, Job 13:26. Our sins are the death of our children.

(2.) When God thus remembers our sins against us he designs thereby to make us remember them against ourselves and repent of them.

III. The prophet's address to God upon this occasion. He gave no answer to her expostulation, but brought it to God, and laid the case before him, not knowing what to say to it himself. He took the dead child from the mother's bosom to his own bed, 1Ki 17:19. Probably he had taken a particular kindness to the child, and found the affliction his own more than by sympathy. He retired to his chamber, and,

1. He humbly reasons with God concerning the death of the child, 1Ki 17:20. He sees death striking by commission from God: Thou hast brought this evil for is there any evil of this kind in the city, in the family, and the Lord has not done it? He pleads the greatness of the affliction to the poor mother: "It is evil upon the widow; thou art the widow's God, and dost not usually bring evil upon widows; it is affliction added to the afflicted." He pleads his own concern: "It is the widow with whom I sojourn; wilt thou, that art my God, bring evil upon one of the best of my benefactors? I shall be reflected upon, and others will be afraid of entertaining me, if I bring death into the house where I come."

2. He earnestly begs of God to restore the child to life again, 1Ki 17:21. We do not read before this of any that were raised to life; yet Elijah, by a divine impulse, prays for the resurrection of this child, which yet will not warrant us to do the like. David

expected not, by fasting and prayer, to bring his child back to life (2Sa 12:23), but Elijah had a power to work miracles, which David had not. He stretched himself upon the child, to affect himself with the case and to show how much he was affected with it and how desirous he was of the restoration of the child--he would if he could put life into him by his own breath and warmth; also to give a sign of what God would do by his power, and what he does by his grace, in raising dead souls to a spiritual life; the Holy Ghost comes upon them, overshadows them, and puts life into them. He is very particular in his prayer: I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again, which plainly supposes the existence of the soul in a state of separation from the body, and consequently its immortality, which Grotius thinks God designed by this miracle to give intimation and evidence of, for the encouragement of his suffering people.

IV. The resurrection of the child, and the great satisfaction it gave to the mother: the child revived, 1Ki 17:22. See the power of prayer and the power of him that hears prayer, who kills and makes alive. Elijah brought him to his mother, who, we may suppose, could scarcely believe her own eyes, and therefore Elijah assures her it is her own: "It is thy son that liveth; see it is thy own, and not another," 1Ki 17:23. The good woman hereupon cries out, Now I know that thou art a man of God; though she knew it before, by the increase of her meal, yet the death of her child she took so unkindly that she began to question it (a good man surely would not serve her so); but now she was abundantly satisfied that he had both the power and goodness of a man of God, and will never doubt of it again, but give up herself to the direction of his word and the worship of the God of Israel. Thus the death of the child (like that of Lazarus, Joh 11:4) was for the glory of God and the honour of his prophet.

22 And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child
came into him again, and he revived.

23 And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.
24 And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou *art* a man of God, *and* that the word of the Lord in thy mouth *is* truth.

1 Kings-18

Elijah Returns to Ahab

1 And it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.
2 And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.
3 And Ahab called Obadiah, which *was* the governor of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly:
4 for it was *so,* when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)
5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

In these verses we find,

I The sad state of Israel at this time, upon two accounts:--

1. Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord (1Ki 18:4), slew them, 1Ki 18:13. Being an idolater, she was a persecutor, and made Ahab one. Even in those bad times, when the calves were worshipped and the temple at Jerusalem deserted, yet there were some good people that feared God and served him, and some good prophets that instructed them in the knowledge of him and assisted them in their devotions. The priests and the Levites had all gone to Judah and Jerusalem (2Ch 11:13,14), but, instead of

them, God raised up these prophets, who read and expounded the law in private meetings, or in the families that retained their integrity, for we read not of any synagogues at this time; they had not the spirit of prophecy as Elijah, nor did they offer sacrifice, or burn incense, but taught people to live well, and keep close to the God of Israel.

These Jezebel aimed to extirpate, and put many of them to death, which was as much a public calamity as a public iniquity, and threatened the utter ruin of religion's poor remains in Israel. Those few that escaped the sword were forced to abscond, and hide themselves in caves, where they were buried alive and cut off, though not from life, yet from usefulness, which is the end and comfort of life; and, when the prophets were persecuted and driven into corners, no doubt their friends, those few good people that were in the land, were treated in like manner. Yet, bad as things were,

(1.) There was one very good man, who was a great man at court, Obadiah, who answered his name--a servant of the Lord, one who feared God and was faithful to him, and yet was steward of the household to Ahab. Observe his character: He feared the Lord greatly (1Ki 18:3), was not only a good man, but zealously and eminently good; his great place put a lustre upon his goodness, and gave him great opportunities of doing good; and he feared the Lord from his youth (1Ki 18:12), he began betimes to be religious and had continued long. Note, Early piety, it is to be hoped, will be eminent piety; those that are good betimes are likely to be very good; he that feared God from his youth came to fear him greatly. He that will thrive must rise betimes. But it is strange to find such an eminently good man governor of Ahab's house, an office of great honour, power, and trust.

[1.] It was strange that so wicked a man as Ahab would prefer him to it and continue him in it; certainly it was because he was a man of celebrated honesty, industry, and ingenuity, and one in

whom he could repose a confidence, whose eyes he could trust as much as his own, as appears here, 1Ki 18:5. Joseph and Daniel were preferred because there were none so fit as they for the places they were preferred to. Note, Those who profess religion should study to recommend themselves to the esteem even of those that are without by their integrity, fidelity, and application to business.

[2.] It was strange that so good a man as Obadiah would accept of preferment in a court so addicted to idolatry and all manner of wickedness. We may be sure it was not made necessary to qualify him for preferment that he should be of the king's religion, that he should conform to the statues of Omri, or the law of the house of Ahab. Obadiah would not have accepted the place if he could not have had it without bowing the knee to Baal, nor was Ahab so impolitic as to exclude those from offices that were fit to serve him, merely because they would not join with him in his devotions. That man that is true to his God will be faithful to his prince. Obadiah therefore could with a good conscience enjoy the place, and therefore would not decline it, nor give it up, though he foresaw he could not do the good he desired to do in it. Those that fear God need not go out of the world, bad as it is.

[3.] It was strange that either he did not reform Ahab or Ahab corrupt him; but it seems they were both fixed; he that was filthy would be filthy still, and he that was holy would be holy still. Those fear God greatly that keep up the fear of him in bad times and places; thus Obadiah did. God has his remnant among all sorts, high and low; there were saints in Nero's household, and in Ahab's.

(2.) This great good man used his power for the protection of God's prophets. He hid 100 of them in two caves, when the persecution was hot, and fed them with bread and water, 1Ki 18:4. He did not think it enough to fear God himself, but, having

wealth and power wherewith to do it, he thought himself obliged to assist and countenance others that feared God; nor did he think his being kind to them would excuse him from being good himself, but he did both, he both feared God greatly himself and patronised those that feared him likewise. See how wonderfully God raises up friends for his ministers and people, for their shelter in difficult times, even where one would least expect them. Bread and water were now scarce commodities, yet Obadiah will find a competence of both for God's prophets, to keep them alive for service hereafter, though now they were laid aside.

2. When Jezebel cut off God's prophets God cut off the necessary provisions by the extremity of the drought. Perhaps Jezebel persecuted God's prophets under pretence that they were the cause of the judgment, because Elijah had foretold it. Christianos ad leones--Away with Christians to the lions. But God made them know the contrary, for the famine continued till Baal's prophets were sacrificed, and so great a scarcity of water there was that the king himself and Obadiah went in person throughout the land to seek for grass for the cattle, 1Ki 18:5,6. Providence ordered it so, that Ahab might, with his own eyes, see how bad the consequences of this judgment were, that so he might be the better inclined to hearken to Elijah, who would direct him into the only way to put an end to it.

Ahab's care was not to lose all the beasts, many being already lost; but he took no care about his soul, not to lose that; he took a deal of pains to seek grass, but none to seek the favour of God, fencing against the effect, but not enquiring how to remove the cause. The land of Judah lay close to the land of Israel, yet we find no complaint there of the want of rain; for Judah yet ruled with God, and was faithful with the saints and prophets (Ho 11:12), by which distinction Israel might plainly have seen the ground of God's controversy, when God caused it to rain upon

one city and not upon another (Am 4:7,8); but they blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, and would not see.

II The steps taken towards redressing the grievance, by Elijah's appearing again upon the stage, to act as a Tishbite, a converter or reformer of Israel, for so (some think) that title of his signifies. Turn them again to the Lord God of hosts, from whom they have revolted, and all will be well quickly; this must be Elijah's doing. See Lu 1:16,17.

1. Ahab had made diligent search for him (1Ki 18:10), had offered rewards to any one that would discover him, sent spies into every tribe and lordship of his own dominions, as some understand it, or, as others, into all the neighbouring nations and kingdoms that were in alliance with him; and, when they denied that they knew any thing of him, he would not believe them unless they swore it, and, as should seem, promised likewise upon oath that, if ever they found him among them, they would discover him and deliver him up.

It should seem, he made this diligent search for him, not so much that he might punish him for what he had done in denouncing the judgment as that he might oblige him to undo it again, by recalling the sentence, because he had said it should be according to his word, having such an opinion of him as men foolishly conceive of witches (that, if they can but compel them to bless that which they have bewitched, it will be well again), or such as the king of Moab had of Balaam. I incline to this because we find, when they came together, Elijah, knowing what Ahab wanted him for, appointed him to meet him on Mount Carmel, and Ahab complied with the appointment, though Elijah took such a way to revoke the sentence and bless the land as perhaps he little thought of.

2. God, at length, ordered Elijah to present himself to Ahab, because the time had now come when he would send rain upon

the earth (1Ki 18:1), or rather upon the land. Above two years he had lain hid with the widow at Zarephath, after he had been concealed one year by the brook Cherith; so that the third year of his sojourning there, here spoken of (1Ki 18:1), was the fourth of the famine, which lasted in all three years and six months, as we find, Lu 4:25,Jam 5:17. Such was Elijah's zeal, no doubt, against the idolatry of Baal, and such his compassion to his people, that he thought it long to be thus confined to a corner; yet he appeared not till God bade him: "Go and show thyself to Ahab, for now thy hour has come, even the time to favour Israel."

Note, It bodes well to any people when God calls his ministers out of their corners, and bids them show themselves--a sign that he will give rain on the earth; at least we may the better be content with the bread of affliction while our eyes see our teachers, Isa 30:20,21.

3. Elijah first surrendered, or rather discovered, himself to Obadiah. He knew, by the Spirit, where to meet him, and we are here told what passed between them.

(1.) Obadiah saluted him with great respect, fell on his face, and humbly asked, Art thou that my lord Elijah? 1Ki 18:7. As he had shown the tenderness of a father to the sons of the prophets, so he showed the reverence of a son to this father of the prophets; and by this made it appear that he did indeed fear God greatly, that he did honour to one that was his extraordinary ambassador and had a great interest in heaven.

(2.) Elijah, in answer to him,

[1.] Transfers the title of honour he gave him to Ahab: "Call him thy lord, not me;" that is a fitter title for a prince than for a prophet, who seeks not honour from men. Prophets should be

called seers, and shepherds, and watchmen, and ministers, rather than lords, as those that mind duty more than dominion.

[2.] He bids Obadiah go and tell the king that he is there to speak with him: Tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is forth-coming, 1Ki 18:8. He would have the king know before, that it might not be a surprise to him and that he might be sure it was the prophet's own act to present himself to him.

(3.) Obadiah begs to be excused from carrying this message to Ahab, for it might prove as much as his life was worth.

[1.] He tells Elijah what great search Ahab had made for him and how much his heart was upon it to find him out, 1Ki 18:10.

[2.] He takes it for granted that Elijah would again withdraw (1Ki 18:12): The Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee (as it is likely he had done sometimes, when Ahab thought he had been sure of him) whither I know not. See 2Ki 2:16. He thought Elijah was not in good earnest when he bade him tell Ahab where he was, but intended only to expose the impotency of his malice; for he knew Ahab was not worthy to receive any kindness from the prophet and it was not fit that the prophet should receive any mischief from him.

[3.] He is sure Ahab would be so enraged at the disappointment that he would put him to death for making a fool of him, or for not laying hands on Elijah himself, when he had him in his reach, 1Ki 18:12. Tyrants and persecutors, in their passion, are often unreasonably outrageous, even towards their friends and confidants.

[4.] He pleads that he did not deserve to be thus exposed, and put in peril of his life: What have I said amiss? 1Ki 18:9. Nay (1Ki 18:13), Was it not told my lord how I hid the prophets? He mentions this, not in pride or ostentation, but to convince Elijah

that though he was Ahab's servant he was not in his interest, and therefore deserved not to be bantered as one of the tools of his persecution. He that had protected so many prophets, he hoped, should not have his own life hazarded by so great a prophet.

(4.) Elijah satisfied him that he might with safety deliver this message to Ahab, by assuring him, with an oath, that he would, this very day, present himself to Ahab, 1Ki 18:15. Let but Obadiah know that he spoke seriously and really intended it, and he will make no scruple to carry the message to Ahab. Elijah swears by the Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hands, and is therefore able to protect his servants against all the powers of hell and earth.

(5.) Notice is hereby soon brought to Ahab that Elijah had sent him a challenge to meet him immediately at such a place, and Ahab accepts the challenge: He went to meet Elijah, 1Ki 18:16. We may suppose it was a great surprise to Ahab to hear that Elijah, whom he had so long sought and not found, was now found without seeking. He went in quest of grass, and found him from whose word, at God's mouth, he must expect rain. Yet his guilty conscience gave him little reason to hope for it, but, rather, to fear some other more dreadful judgment. Had he, by his spies, surprised Elijah, he would have triumphed over him; but, now that he was thus surprised by him, we may suppose he even trembled to look him in the face, hated him, and yet feared him, as Herod did John.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab
went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by
himself.
7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he
knew him, and fell on his face, and said, *Art* thou that my lord
Elijah?
8 And he answered him, I *am:* go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here.*
9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy
servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10 *As* the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom,
whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, *He*
is not *there;* he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they
found thee not.
11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here.*
12 And it shall come to pass, *as soon as* I am gone from thee, that the
Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and *so*
when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay
me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.
13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets
of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by
fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?
14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here:* and
he shall slay me.
15 And Elijah said, *As* the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I
will surely show myself unto him today.
16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to
meet Elijah.
17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto
him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel?

We have here the meeting between Ahab and Elijah, as bad a king as ever the world was plagued with and as good a prophet as ever the church was blessed with.

1. Ahab, like himself, basely accused Elijah. He durst not strike him, remembering that Jeroboam's hand withered when it was stretched out against a prophet, but gave him bad language, which was no less an affront to him that sent him. It was a very coarse compliment with which he accosted him at the first word: Art thou he that troubleth Israel? 1Ki 18:17. How unlike was this to that with which his servant Obadiah saluted him (1Ki 18:7): Art thou that my lord Elijah? Obadiah feared God greatly; Ahab had sold himself to work wickedness; and both discovered their character by the manner of their address to the prophet. One may guess how people stand affected to God by observing how they stand affected to his people and ministers.

Elijah now came to bring blessings to Israel, tidings of the return of the rain; yet he was thus affronted. Had it been true that he was the troubler of Israel, Ahab, as king, would have been bound to animadvert upon him. There are those who trouble Israel by their wickedness, whom the conservators of the public peace are concerned to enquire after. But it was utterly false concerning Elijah; so far was he from being an enemy to Israel's welfare that he as the stay of it, the chariots and horsemen of Israel. Note, It has been the lot of the best and most useful men to be called and counted the troublers of the land, and to be run down as public grievances. Even Christ and his apostles were thus misrepresented, Ac 17:6.

2. Elijah, like himself, boldly returned the charge upon the king, and proved it upon him, that he was the troubler of Israel, 1Ki 18:18. Elijah is not the Achan: "I have not troubled Israel, have neither done them any wrong nor designed them any hurt." Those that procure God's judgments do the mischief, not he that merely foretels them and gives warning of them, that the nation may repent and prevent them. I would have healed Israel, but they would not be healed. Ahab is the Achan, the troubler, who follows Baalim, those accursed things. Nothing creates more trouble to a land than the impiety and profaneness of princes and their families.

3. As one having authority immediately from the King of kings, he ordered a convention of the states to be forthwith summoned to meet at Mount Carmel, where there had been an altar built to God, 1Ki 18:30. Probably on that mountain they had an eminent high place, where formerly the pure worship of God had been kept up as well as it could be any where but at Jerusalem. Thither all Israel must come, to give Elijah the meeting; and the prophets of Baal who were dispersed all the country over, with those of the groves who were Jezebel's domestic chaplains, must there make their personal appearance.

4. Ahab issued out writs accordingly, for the convening of this great assembly (1Ki 18:20), either because he feared Elijah and durst not oppose him (Saul stood in awe of Samuel more than of God), or because he hoped Elijah would bless the land, and speak the word that they might have rain, and upon those terms they would be all at his beck. Those that slighted and hated his counsels would gladly be beholden to him for his prayers. Now God made those who said they were Jews and were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan, to come, and, in effect, to worship at his feet, and to know that God had loved him, Re 3:9.

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.

19 Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

The Contest on Mount Carmel

20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under:* and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under:*

24 and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire *under.*

Ahab and the people expected that Elijah would, in this solemn assembly, bless the land, and pray for rain; but he had other work to do first. The people must be brought to repent and reform, and then they may look for the removal of the judgment, but not till then. This is the right method. God will first prepare our heart, and then cause his ear to hear, will first turn us to him, and then turn to us, Ps 10:17,80:3. Deserters must not look for God's favour till they return to their allegiance. Elijah might have looked for rain seventy times seven times, and not have seen it, if he had not thus begun his work at the right end.

Three years and a half's famine would not bring them back to God. Elijah would endeavour to convince their judgments, and no doubt it was by special warrant and direction from heaven that he put the controversy between God and Baal upon a public trial. It was great condescension in God that he would suffer so plain a case to be disputed, and would permit Baal to be a competitor with him; but thus God would have every mouth to be stopped and all flesh to become silent before him. God's cause is so incontestably just that it needs not fear to have the evidences of its equity searched into and weighed.

I. Elijah reproved the people for mixing the worship of God and the worship of Baal together. Not only some Israelites worshipped God and others Baal, but the same Israelites sometimes worshipped one and sometimes the other. This he calls (1Ki 18:21) halting between two opinions, or thoughts. They worshipped God to please the prophets, but worshipped Baal to please Jezebel and curry favour at court. They thought to trim the matter, and play on both sides, as the Samaritans, 2Ki 17:33. Now Elijah shows them the absurdity of this. He does not insist upon their relation to Jehovah--"Is he not yours, and the God of your fathers, while Baal is the god of the Sidonians? And

will a nation change their god?" Jer 2:11. No, he waives the prescription, and enters upon the merits of the cause:--"There can be but one God, but one infinite and but one supreme: there needs but one God, one omnipotent, one all-sufficient. What occasion for addition to that which is perfect? Now if, upon trial, it appears that Baal is that one infinite omnipotent Being, that one supreme Lord and all-sufficient benefactor, you ought to renounce Jehovah and cleave to Baal only: but, if Jehovah be that one God, Baal is a cheat, and you must have no more to do with him." Note,

1. It is a very bad thing to halt between God and Baal. "In reconcilable differences (says bishop Hall) nothing more safe than indifferency both of practice and opinion; but, in cases of such necessary hostility as betwixt God and Baal, he that is not with God is against him." Compare Mk 9:38,39,Mt 21:30. The service of God and the service of sin, the dominion of Christ and the dominion of our lusts, these are the two thoughts which it is dangerous halting between. Those halt between them that are unresolved under their convictions, unstable and unsteady in their purposes, promise fair, but do not perform, begin well, but do not hold on, that are inconsistent with themselves, or indifferent and lukewarm in that which is good. Their heart is divided (Ho 10:2), whereas God will have all or none.

2. We are fairly put to our choice whom we will serve, Jos 24:15. If we can find one that has more right to us, or will be a better master to us, than God, we may take him at our peril. God demands no more from us than he can make out a title to. To this fair proposal of the case, which Elijah here makes, the people knew not what to say: They answered him not a word. They could say nothing to justify themselves, and they would say nothing to condemn themselves, but, as people confounded, let him say what he would.

II. He proposed to bring the matter to a fair trial; and it was so much the fairer because Baal had all the external advantages on his side. The king and court were all for Baal; so was the body of the people. The managers of Baal's cause were 450 men, fat and well fed (1Ki 18:22), besides 400 more, their supporters or seconds, 1Ki 18:19. The manager of God's cause was but one man, lately a poor exile, hardly kept from starving; so that God's cause has nothing to support it but its own right. However, it is put to this experiment, "Let each side prepare a sacrifice, and pray to its God, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God; if neither shall thus answer, let the people turn Atheists; if both, let them continue to halt between two."

Elijah, doubtless, had a special commission from God to put it to this test, otherwise he would have tempted God and affronted religion; but the case was extraordinary, and the judgment upon it would be of use, not only then, but in all ages. It is an instance of the courage of Elijah that he durst stand alone in the cause of God against such powers and numbers; and the issue encourages all God's witnesses and advocates never to fear the face of man. Elijah does not say, "The God that answers by water" (though that was the thing the country needed), but "that answers by fire, let him be God;" because the atonement was to be made by sacrifice, before the judgment could be removed in mercy. The God therefore that has power to pardon sin, and to signify it by consuming the sin-offering, must needs be the God that can relieve us against the calamity. He that can give fire can give rain; see Mt 9:2,6.

III. The people join issue with him: It is well spoken, 1Ki 18:24. They allow the proposal to be fair and unexceptionable "God has often answered by fire; if Baal cannot do so, let him be cast out for a usurper." They were very desirous to see the experiment tried, and seemed resolved to abide by the issue, whatever it should be. Those that were firm for God doubted not but it would end to his honour; those that were indifferent were willing to be

determined; and Ahab and the prophets of Baal durst not oppose for fear of the people, and hoped that either they could obtain fire from heaven (though they never had yet), and the rather because, as some think, they worshipped the sun in Baal, or that Elijah could not, because not at the temple, where God was wont thus to manifest his glory. If, in this trial, they could but bring it to a drawn battle, their other advantages would give them the victory. Let it go on therefore to a trial.

IV. The prophets of Baal try first, but in vain, with their god. They covet the precedency, not only for the honour of it, but that, if they can but in the least seem to gain their point, Elijah may not be admitted to make the trial. Elijah allows it to them (1Ki 18:25), gives them the lead for their greater confusion; only, knowing that the working of Satan is with lying wonders, he takes care to prevent a fraud: Be sure to put no fire under. Now in their experiment observe,

1 . How importunate and noisy the prophets of Baal were in their applications to him. They got their sacrifices ready; and we may well imagine what a noise 450 men made, when they cried as one man, and with all their might, O Baal! hear us, O Baal! answer us; as it is in the margin: and this for some hours together, longer than Diana's worshippers made their cry, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, Ac 19:34. How senseless, how brutish, were they in their addresses to Baal!

(1.) Like fools, they leaped upon the altar, as if they would themselves become sacrifices with their bullock; or thus they expressed their great earnestness of mind. They leaped up and down, or danced about the altar (so some): they hoped, by their dancing, to please their deity, as Herodias did Herod, and so to obtain their request.

(2.) Like madmen they cut themselves in pieces with knives and lancets (1Ki 18:28) for vexation that they were not answered, or

in a sort of prophetic fury, hoping to obtain the favour of their god by offering to him their own blood, when they could not obtain it with the blood of their bullock. God never required his worshippers thus to honour him; but the service of the devil, though in some instances it pleases and pampers the body, yet in other things it is really cruel to it, as in envy and drunkenness. It seems, this was the manner of the worshippers of Baal. God expressly forbade his worshippers to cut themselves, De 14:1. He insists upon it that we mortify our lusts and corruptions; but corporeal penances and severities, such as the Papists use, which have no tendency to that, are no pleasure to him. Who has required these things at your hands?

2. How sharp Elijah was upon them, 1Ki 18:27. He stood by them, and patiently heard them for so many hours praying to an idol, yet with secret indignation and disdain; and at noon, when the sun was at the hottest, and they too expecting fire (then if ever), he upbraided them with their folly; and notwithstanding the gravity of his office, and the seriousness of the work he had before him, bantered them: "Cry aloud, for he is a god, a goodly god that cannot be made to hear without all this clamour. Surely you think he is talking or meditating (as the word is) or he is pursuing some deep thoughts, (in a brown study, as we say), thinking of somewhat else and not minding his own matter, when not your credit only, but all his honour lies at stake, and his interest in Israel. His new conquest will be lost if he do not look about him quickly." Note, The worship of idols is a most ridiculous thing, and it is but justice to represent it so and expose it to scorn. This will, by no means, justify those who ridicule the worshippers of God in Christ because the worship is not performed just in their way. Baal's prophets were so far from being convinced and put to shame by the just reproach Elijah cast upon them that it made them the more violent and led them to act more ridiculously. A deceived heart had turned them aside, they could not deliver their souls by saying, Is there not a lie in our right hand?

3. How deaf Baal was to them. Elijah did not interrupt them, but let them go on till they were tired, and quite despaired of success, which was not till the time of the evening sacrifice, 1Ki 18:29. During all that time some of them prayed, while others of them prophesied, sang hymns, perhaps to the praise of Baal, or rather encouraged those that were praying to proceed, telling them that Baal would answer them at last; but there was no answer, nor any that regarded. Idols could do neither good nor evil. The prince of the power of the air, if God has permitted him, could have caused fire to come down from heaven on this occasion, and gladly would have done it for the support of his Baal. We find that the beast which deceived the world does it. He maketh fire come down from heaven in the sight of men and so deceiveth them, Re 13:13,14. But God would not suffer the devil to do it now, because the trial of his title was put on that issue by consent of parties.

V. Elijah soon obtains from his God an answer by fire. The Baalites are forced to give up their cause, and now it is Elijah's turn to produce his. Let us see if he speed better.

1. He fitted up an altar. He would not make use of theirs, which had been polluted with their prayers to Baal, but, finding the ruins of an altar there, which had formerly been used in the service of the Lord, he chose to repair that (1Ki 18:30), to intimate to them that he was not about to introduce any new religion, but to revive the faith and worship of their fathers' God, and reduce them to their first love, their first works. He could not bring them to the altar at Jerusalem unless he could unite the two kingdoms again (which, for correction to both, God designed should not now be done), therefore, by his prophetic authority, he builds an altar on Mount Carmel, and so owns that which had formerly been built there. When we cannot carry a reformation so far as we would we must do what we can, and rather comply with some corruptions than not do our utmost

towards the extirpation of Baal. He repaired this altar with twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes, 1Ki 18:31.

Though ten of the tribes had revolted to Baal, he would look upon them as belonging to God still, by virtue of the ancient covenant with their fathers: and, though those ten were unhappily divided from the other two in civil interest, yet in the worship of the God of Israel they had communion with each other, and they twelve were one. Mention is made of God's calling their father Jacob by the name of Israel, a prince with God (1Ki 18:31), to shame his degenerate seed, who worshipped a god which they saw could not hear nor answer them, and to encourage the prophet who was now to wrestle with God as Jacob did; he also shall be a prince with God. Ps 24:6, Thy face, O Jacob! Ho 12:4. There he spoke with us.

2. Having built his altar in the name of the Lord (1Ki 18:32), by direction from him and with an eye to him, and not for his own honour, he prepared his sacrifice, 1Ki 18:33. Behold the bullock and the wood; but where is the fire? Ge 22:7,8. God will provide himself fire. If we, in sincerity, offer our hearts to God, he will, by his grace, kindle a holy fire in them. Elijah was no priest, nor were his attendants Levites. Carmel had neither tabernacle nor temple; it was a great way distant from the ark of the testimony and the place God had chosen; this was not the altar that sanctified the gift; yet never was any sacrifice more acceptable to God than this. The particular Levitical institutions were so often dispensed with (as in the time of the Judges, Samuel's time, and now) that one would be tempted to think they were more designed for types to be fulfilled in the evangelical anti-types than for laws to be fulfilled in the strict observance of them. Their perishing thus is the using, as the apostle speaks of them (Col 3:22), was to intimate the utter abolition of them after a little while, Heb 8:13.

3. He ordered abundance of water to be poured upon his altar, which he had prepared a trench for the reception of (1Ki 18:32), and, some think, made the altar hollow. Twelve barrels of water (probably sea-water, for the sea was near, and so much fresh water in this time of drought was too precious for him to be so prodigal of it), thrice four, he poured upon his sacrifice, to prevent the suspicion of any fire under (for, if there had been any, this would have put it out), and to make the expected miracle the more illustrious.

4. He then solemnly addressed himself to God by prayer before his altar, humbly beseeching him to turn to ashes his burnt-offering (as the phrase is, Ps 20:3), and to testify his acceptance of it. His prayer was not long, for he used no vain repetitions, nor thought he should be heard for his much speaking; but it was very grave and composed, and showed his mind to be calm and sedate, and far from the heats and disorders that Baal's prophets were in, 1Ki 18:36,37. Though he was not at the place appointed, he chose the appointed time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, thereby to testify his communion with the altar at Jerusalem. Though he expected an answer by fire, yet he came near to the altar with boldness, and feared not that fire. He addressed himself to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, acting faith on God's ancient covenant, and reminding people too (for prayer may prevail) of their relation both to God and to the patriarchs. Two things he pleads here:--

(1.) The glory of God: "Lord, hear me, and answer me, that it may be known (for it is now by the most denied or forgotten) that thou art God in Israel, to whom alone the homage and devotion of Israel are due, and that I am thy servant, and do all that I have done, am doing, and shall do, as thy agent, at thy word, and not to gratify any humour or passion of my own. Thou employest me; Lord, make it appear that thou dost so;" see Nu 16:28,29. Elijah sought not his own glory but in subserviency to God's, and for his own necessary vindication.

(2.) The edification of the people: "That they may know that thou art the Lord, and may experience thy grace, turning their heart, by this miracle, as a means, back again to thee, in order to thy return in a way of mercy to them."

5. God immediately answered him by fire, 1Ki 18:38. Elijah's God was neither talking nor pursuing, needed not to be either awakened or quickened; while he was yet speaking, the fire of the Lord fell, and not only, as at other times (Le 9:24,1Ch 21:26,2Ch 7:1) consumed the sacrifice and the wood, in token of God's acceptance of the offering, but licked up all the water in the trench, exhaling that, and drawing it up as a vapour, in order to the intended rain, which was to be the fruit of this sacrifice and prayer, more than the product of natural causes. Compare Ps 135:7.

He causeth vapours to ascend, and maketh lightnings for the rain; for this rain he did both. As for those who fall as victims to the fire of God's wrath, no water can shelter them from it, any more than briers or thorns, Isa 27:4,5. But this was not all; to complete the miracle, the fire consumed the stones of the altar, and the very dust, to show that it was no ordinary fire, and perhaps to intimate that, though God accepted this occasional sacrifice from this altar, yet for the future they ought to demolish all the altars on their high places, and, for their constant sacrifices, make use of that at Jerusalem only. Moses's altar and Solomon's were consecrated by the fire from heaven; but this was destroyed, because no more to be used. We may well imagine what a terror the fire struck on guilty Ahab and all the worshippers of Baal, and how they fled from it as far and as fast as they could, saying, Lest it consume us also, alluding to Nu 16:34.

VI. What was the result of this fair trial. The prophets of Baal had failed in their proof, and could give no evidence at all to

make out their pretensions on behalf of their god, but were perfectly non-suited Elijah had, by the most convincing and undeniable evidence, proved his claims on behalf of the God of Israel. And now,

1 The people, as the jury, gave in their verdict upon the trial, and they are all agreed in it; the case is so plain that they need not go from the bar to consider of their verdict or consult about it: They fell on their faces, and all, as one man, said, "Jehovah, he is the God, and not Baal; we are convinced and satisfied of it: Jehovah, he is the God" (1Ki 18:39), whence, one would think, they should have inferred, "If he be the God, he shall be our God, and we will serve him only," as Jos 24:24. Some, we hope, had their hearts thus turned back, but the generality of them were convinced only, not converted, yielded to the truth of God, that he is the God, but consented not to his covenant, that he should be theirs. Blessed are those that have not seen what they saw and yet have believed and been wrought upon by it more than those that saw it. Let it for ever be looked upon as a point adjudged against all pretenders (for it was carried, upon a full hearing, against one of the most daring and threatening competitors that ever the God of Israel was affronted by) that Jehovah, he is God, God alone.

2 The prophets of Baal, as criminals, are seized, condemned, and executed, according to law, 1Ki 18:40. If Jehovah be the true God, Baal is a false God, to whom these Israelites had revolted, and seduced others to the worship of him; and therefore, by the express law of God, they were to be put to death, De 13:1-11. There needed no proof of the fact; all Israel were witnesses of it: and therefore Elijah (acting still by an extraordinary commission, which is not to be drawn into a precedent) orders them all to be slain immediately as the troublers of the land, and Ahab himself is so terrified, for the present, with the fire from heaven, that he dares not oppose it. These were the 450 prophets of Baal; the 400 prophets of the groves (who, some think, were

Sidonians), though summoned (1Ki 18:19), yet, as it should seem, did not attend, and so escaped this execution, which fair escape perhaps Ahab and Jezebel thought themselves happy in; but it proved they were reserved to be the instruments of Ahab's destruction, some time after, by encouraging him to go up to Ramoth-Gilead, 1Ki 22:6.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord *that was* broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice,
that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham,
Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in
Israel, and *that* I *am* thy servant, and *that* I have done all these things
at thy word.
37 Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou
art the Lord God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.
38 Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice,
and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water
that *was* in the trench.
39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they
said, The Lord, he *is* the God; the Lord, he *is* the God.
40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of
them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down
to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Elijah Prays for Rain

41 And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is*
a sound of abundance of rain.

Israel being thus far reformed that they had acknowledged the Lord to be God, and had consented to the execution of Baal's prophets, that they might not seduce them any more, though this was far short of a thorough reformation, yet it was so far accepted that God thereupon opened the bottles of heaven, and poured out blessings upon his land, that very evening (as it should seem) on which they did this good work, which should have confirmed them in their reformation; see Hag 2:18,19.

I. Elijah sent Ahab to eat and drink, for joy that God had now accepted his works, and that rain was coming; see Ec 9:7. Ahab had continued fasting all day, either religiously, it being a day of prayer, or for want of leisure, it being a day of great expectation; but now let him eat and rink for, though others perceive no sign of it, Elijah, by faith, hears the sound of abundance of rain, 1Ki 18:41. God reveals his secrets to his servants the prophets; and

yet, without a revelation, we may foresee that when man's judgments run down like a river God's mercy will. Rain is the river of God, Ps 65:9.

II. He himself retired to pray (for though God had promised rain, he must ask it, Zec 10:1), and to give thanks for God's answer by fire, now hoping for an answer by water. What he said we are not told; but,

1. He withdrew to a strange place, to the top of Carmel, which was very high and very private. Hence we read of those that hide themselves in the top of Carmel, Am 9:3. There he would be alone. Those who are called to appear and act in public for God must yet find time to be private with him and keep up their converse with him in solitude. There he set himself, as it were, upon his watch-tower, like the prophet, Hab 2:1.

2. He put himself into a strange posture. He cast himself down on his knees upon the earth, in token of humility, reverence, and importunity, and put his face between his knees (that is, bowed his head so low that it touched his knees), thus abasing himself in the sense of his own meanness now that God had thus honoured him.

III. He ordered his servant to bring him notice as soon as he discerned a cloud arising out of the sea, the Mediterranean Sea, which he had a large prospect of from the top of Carmel. The sailors at this day call it Cape Carmel. Six times his servant goes to the point of the hill and sees nothing, brings no good news to his master; yet Elijah continues praying, will not be diverted so far as to go and see with his own eyes, but still sends his servant to see if he can discover any hopeful cloud, while he keeps his mind close and intent in prayer, and abides by it, as one that has taken up his father Jacob's resolution, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. Note, Though the answer of our fervent and believing supplications may not come quickly, yet we must

continue instant in prayer, and not faint nor desist; for at the end it shall speak and not lie.

IV. A little cloud at length appeared, no bigger than a man's hand, which presently overspread the heavens and watered the earth, 1Ki 18:44,45. Great blessings often arise from small beginnings, and showers of plenty from a cloud of a span long. Let us therefore never despise the day of small things, but hope and wait for great things from it. This was not as a morning cloud, which passes away (though Israel's goodness was so), but one that produced a plentiful rain (Ps 68:9), and an earnest of more.

V. Elijah hereupon hastened Ahab home, and attended him himself. Ahab rode in his chariot, at ease and in state, 1Ki 18:45. Elijah ran on foot before him. If Ahab had paid the respect to Elijah that he deserved he would have taken him into his chariot, as the eunuch did Philip, that he might honour him before the elders of Israel, and confer with him further about the reformation of the kingdom. But his corruptions got the better of his convictions, and he was glad to get clear of him, as Felix of Paul, when he dismissed him, and adjourned his conference with him to a more convenient season. But, since Ahab invites him not to ride with him, he will run before him (1Ki 18:46) as one of his footmen, that he may not seem to be lifted up with the great honour God had put upon him or to abate in his civil respect to his prince, though he reproved him faithfully. God's ministers should make it appear that, how great soever they look when they deliver God's message, yet they are far from affecting worldly grandeur: let them leave that to the kings of the earth.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43 and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

1 Kings-19

Elijah Flees to Horeb

1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

One would have expected, after such a public and sensible manifestation of the glory of God and such a clear decision of the controversy depending between him and Baal, to the honour of Elijah, the confusion of Baal's prophets, and the universal satisfaction of the people--after they had seen both fire and water come from heaven at the prayer of Elijah, and both in mercy to them, the one as it signified the acceptance of their offering, the other as it refreshed their inheritance, which was weary--that now they would all, as one man, return to the worship of the God of Israel and take Elijah for their guide and oracle, that he would thenceforward be prime-minister of state, and his directions would be as laws both to king and kingdom. But it is quite otherwise; he is neglected whom God honoured; no respect is paid to him, nor care taken of him, nor any use made of him, but, on the contrary, the land of Israel, to which he had been, and might have been, so great a blessing, is now made too hot for him.

1. Ahab incensed Jezebel against him. That queen-consort, it seems, was in effect queen-regent, as she was afterwards when she was queen-dowager, an imperious woman that managed king and kingdom and did what she would. Ahab's conscience would not let him persecute Elijah (some remains he had in him of the blood and spirit of an Israelite, which tied his hands), but he told Jezebel all that Elijah had done (1Ki 19:1), not to convince, but to exasperate her. It is not said he told her what God had done, but what Elijah had done, as if he, by some spell or charm, had brought fire from heaven, and the hand of the Lord had not been in it. Especially he represented to her, as that which would make her outrageous against him, that he had slain the prophets; the prophets of Baal he calls the prophets, as if none but they were worthy of the name. His heart was set upon them, and he aggravated the slaying of them as Elijah's crime, without taking notice that it was a just reprisal upon Jezebel for killing God's prophets, 1Ki 18:4. Those who, when they cannot for shame or fear do mischief themselves, yet stir up others to do it, will have it laid to their charge as if they had themselves done it.

2. Jezebel sent him a threatening message (1Ki 19:2), that she had vowed and sworn to be the death of him within twenty-four hours. Something prevents her from doing it just now, but she resolves it shall not be long undone. Note, Carnal hearts are hardened and enraged against God by that which should convince and conquer them and bring them into subjection to him. She swears by her gods, and, raging like one distracted, curseth herself if she slay not him, without any proviso of a divine permission. Cruelty and confidence often meet in persecutors.

I will pursue, I will overtake, Ex 15:9. But how came she to send him word of her design, and so to give him an opportunity of making his escape? Did she think him so daring that he would not flee, or herself so formidable that she could prevent him? Or was there a special providence in it, that she should be thus infatuated by her own fury? I am apt to think that though she desired nothing

more than his blood, yet, at this time, she durst not meddle with him for fear of the people, all counting him a prophet, a great prophet, and therefore sent this message to him merely to frighten him and get him out of the way. for the present, that he might not carry on what he had begun. The backing of her threats with an oath and imprecation does not at all prove that she really intended to slay him, but only that she intended to make him believe so. The gods she swore by could do her no harm.

3. Elijah, hereupon, in a great fright, fled for his life, it is likely by night, and came to Beer-sheba, 1Ki 19:3. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not. Where was the courage with which he had lately confronted Ahab and all the prophets of Baal? Nay, which kept him by his sacrifice when the fire of God fell upon it? He that stood undaunted in the midst of the terrors both of heaven and earth trembles at the impotent menaces of a proud passionate woman. Lord, what is man! Great faith is not always alike strong. He could not but know that he might be very serviceable to Israel at this juncture, and had all the reason in the world to depend upon God's protection while he was doing God's work; yet he fled. In his former danger God had bidden him hide himself (1Ki 17:3), therefore he supposed he might do so now.

4. From Beer-sheba he went forward into the wilderness, that vast howling wilderness in which the Israelites wandered. Beer-sheba was so far distant from Jezreel, and within the dominion of so good a king as Jehoshaphat, that he could not but be safe there; yet, as if his fears haunted him even when he was out of the reach of danger, he could not rest there, but went a day's journey into the desert. Yet perhaps he retired thither not so much for his safety as that he might be wholly retired from the world, in order to a more free and intimate communion with God. He left his servant at Beer-sheba that he might be private in the wilderness, as Abraham left his servants at the bottom of the hill when he went up into the mount to worship God, and as Christ in the garden was withdrawn from his disciples, or perhaps it was because he would

not expose his servant, who was young and tender, to the hardships of the wilderness, which would have been putting new wine into old bottles. We ought thus to consider the frame of those who are under our charge, for God considers ours.

5. Being wearied with his journey, he grew cross (like children when they are sleepy) and wished he might die, 1Ki 19:4. He requested for his life (so it is in the margin), that he might die; for death is life to a good man; the death of the body is the life of the soul. Yet that was not the reason why he wished to die; it was not the deliberate desire of grace, as Paul's, to depart and be with Christ, but the passionate wish of his corruption, as Job's. Those that are, in this manner, forward to die are not in the fittest frame for dying. Jezebel has sworn his death, and therefore he, in a fret, prays for it, runs from death to death, yet with this difference, he wishes to die by the hand of the Lord, whose tender mercies are great, and not to fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel.

He would rather die in the wilderness than as Baal's prophet died, according to Jezebel's threatening (1Ki 19:2), lest the worshippers of Baal should triumph and blaspheme the God of Israel, whom they will think themselves too hard for, if they can run down his advocate. He pleads, "It is enough. I have done enough, and suffered enough. I am weary of living." Those that have secured a happiness in the other world will soon have enough of this world. He pleads, "I am not better than my fathers, not better able to bear those fatigues, and therefore why should I be longer burdened with them than they were?" But is this that my lord Elijah? Can that great and gallant spirit shrink thus? God thus left him to himself, to show that when he was bold and strong it was in the Lord and the power of his might, but of himself he was no better than his fathers or brethren.

6. God, by an angel, fed him in that wilderness, into the wants and perils of which he had wilfully thrown himself, and in which, if

God had not graciously succoured him, he would have perished. How much better does God deal with his froward children than they deserve! Elijah, in a pet, wished to die; God needed him not, yet he designed further to employ and honour him, and therefore sent an angel to keep him alive. Our case would be bad sometimes if God should take us at our word and grant us our foolish passionate requests. Having prayed that he might die, he laid down and slept (1Ki 19:5), wishing it may be to die in his sleep, and not to awake again; but he is awakened out of his sleep, and finds himself not only well provided for with bread and water (1Ki 19:6), but, which was more, attended by an angle, who guarded him when he slept, and twice called him to his food when it was ready for him, 1Ki 19:5,7. He needed not to complain of the unkindness of men when it was thus made up by the ministration of angels. Thus provided for, he had reason to think he had fared better than the prophets of the groves, that did eat at Jezebel's table. Wherever God's children are, as they are still upon their Father's ground, so they are still under their Father's eye and care. They may lose themselves in a wilderness, but God has not lost them; there they may look at him that lives and sees them, as Hagar, Ge 16:13.

7. He was carried, in the strength of this meat, to Horeb, the mount of God, 1Ki 19:8. Thither the Spirit of the Lord led him, probably beyond his own intention, that he might have communion with God in the same place where Moses had, the law that was given by Moses being revived by him. The angel bade him eat the second time, because of the greatness of the journey that was before him, 1Ki 19:7.

Note God knows what he designs us for, though we do not, what service, what trials, and will take care for us when we, for want of foresight, cannot for ourselves, that we be furnished for them with grace sufficient. He that appoints what the voyage shall be will victual the ship accordingly. See how many different ways God took to keep Elijah alive; he fed him by ravens, with

multiplied meals--then by an angel--and now, to show that man lives not by bread alone, he kept him alive forty days without meat, not resting and sleeping, which might make him the less to crave sustenance, but continually traversing the mazes of the desert, a day for a year of Israel's wanderings; yet he neither needs food nor desires it. The place, no doubt, reminds him of the manna, and encourages him to hope that God will sustain him here, and in due time bring him hence, as he did Israel, though, like him, fretful and distrustful.

3 And when he saw *that,* he arose, and went for his life, and came to
Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there.
4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came
and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself
that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away
my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers.
5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel
touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and* eat.
6 And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baked on the coals, and
a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him
down again.
7 And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and
touched him, and said, Arise *and* eat; because the journey *is* too
great for thee.
8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of
that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of
God.
9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold,
the word of the Lord *came* to him, and he said unto him, What
doest thou here, Elijah?
10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts:
for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down
thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only,
am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.
11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.
And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent
the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; *but*

the Lord *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the Lord *was* not in the earthquake:

Here is, I. Elijah housed in a cave at Mount Horeb, which is called the mount of God, because on it God had formerly manifested his glory. And perhaps this was the same cave, or cleft of a rock, in which Moses was hidden when the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed his name, Ex 33:22. What Elijah proposed to himself in coming to lodge here, I cannot conceive, unless it was to indulge his melancholy, or to satisfy his curiosity and assist his faith and devotion with the sight of that famous place where the law was given and where so many great things were done, and hoping to meet with God himself there, where Moses met with him, or in token of his abandoning his people Israel, who hated to be reformed (in the latter case, it agrees with Jeremiah's wish, Jer 9:2, O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them, for they are all adulterers) and so it was a bad omen of God's forsaking them; or it was because the thought he could not be safe any where else, and to this instance of the hardships this good man was reduced to the apostle refers, Heb 11:38. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

II The visit God paid to him there and the enquiry he made concerning him: The word of the Lord came to him. We cannot go any where to be out of the reach of God's eye, his arm, and his word. Whither can I flee from thy Spirit? Ps 139:7-10, &c. God will take care of his out-casts; and those who, for his sake, are driven out from among men, he will find, and own, and gather with everlasting loving-kindnesses. John saw the visions of the Almighty when he was in banishment in the isle of Patmos, Re 1:9. The question God puts to the prophet it, What doest thou here, Elijah? 1Ki 19:9, and again 1Ki 19:13. This is a reproof,

1. For his fleeing hither. "What brings thee so far from home? Dost thou flee from Jezebel? Couldst thou not depend upon almighty power for thy protection?" Lay the emphasis upon the pronoun thou. "What thou! So great a man, so great a prophet, so famed for resolution--dost thou flee thy country, forsake thy colours thus?" This cowardice would have been more excusable in another, and not so bad an example. Should such a man as I flee? Ne 6:11. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be thus shaken.

2. For his fixing here. "What doest thou here, in this cave? Is this a place for a prophet of the Lord to lodge in? Is this a time for such men to retreat, when the public has such need of them?" In the retirement to which God sent Elijah (1Ki 17:1-24) he was a blessing to a poor widow at Sarepta, but here he had no opportunity of doing good. Note, It concerns us often to enquire whether we be in our place and in the way of our duty. "Am I where I should be, whither God calls me, where my business lies, and where I may be useful?"

III. The account he gives of himself, in answer to the question put to him (1Ki 19:10), and repeated, in answer to the same question, 1Ki 19:14.

1. He excuses his retreat, and desires it may not be imputed to his want of zeal for reformation, but to his despair of success. For God knew, and his own conscience witnessed for him, that as long as there was any hope of doing good he had been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts; but now that he had laboured in vain, and all his endeavours were to no purpose, he thought it was time to give up the cause, and mourn for what he could not mend. Abi in cellam, et dic, Miserere mei--"Away to thy cell, and cry, Have compassion on me."

2. He complains of the people, their obstinacy in sin, and the height of impiety to which they had arrived: "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, and that is the reason I have

forsaken them; who can stay among them, to see every thing that is sacred ruined and run down?" This the apostle calls his making intercession against Israel, Ro 11:2,3. He had often been, of choice, their advocate, but now he is necessitated to be their accuser, before God. Thus Joh 5:45, There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, whom you trust. Those are truly miserable that have the testimony and prayers of God's prophets against them.

(1.) He charges them with having forsaken God's covenant; though they retained circumcision, that sign and seal of it, yet they had quitted his worship and service, which was the intention of it. Those who neglect God's ordinances, and let fall their communion with him, do really forsake his covenant, and break their league with him.

(2.) With having thrown down his altars, not only deserted them and suffered them to go to decay, but, in their zeal for the worship of Baal, wilfully demolished them. This alludes to the private altars which the prophets of the Lord had, and which good people attended, who could not go up to Jerusalem and would not worship the calves nor Baal. These separate altars, though breaking in upon the unity of the church, yet, being erected and attended by those that sincerely aimed at the glory of God and served him faithfully, the seeming schism was excused. God owned them for his altars, as well as that at Jerusalem, and the putting of them down is charged upon Israel as a crying sin. But this was not all.

(3.) They have slain thy prophets with the sword, who, it is probable, ministered at those altars. Jezebel, a foreigner, slew them (1Ki 18:4), but the crime is charged upon the body of the people because the generality of them were consenting to their death, and pleased with it.

3. He gives the reasons why he retired into this desert and took up his residence in this cave.

(1.) It was because he could not appear to any purpose: "I only am left, and have none to second or support me in any good design. They all said, The Lord he is God, but none of them would stand by me nor offer to shelter me. That point then gained was presently lost again, and Jezebel can do more to debauch them than I can to reform them. What can one do against thousands?" Despair of success hinders many a good enterprise. No one is willing to venture alone, forgetting that those are not alone who have God with them.

(2.) It was because he could not appear with any safety: "They seek my life to take it away; and I had better spend my life in a useless solitude than lose my life in a fruitless endeavour to reform those that hate to be reformed."

IV. God's manifestation of himself to him. Did he come hither to meet with God? He shall find that God will not fail to give him the meeting. Moses was put into the cave when God's glory passed before him; but Elijah was called out of it: Stand upon the mount before the Lord, 1Ki 19:11. He saw no manner of similitude, any more than Israel did when God talked to them in Horeb. But,

1. He heard a strong wind, and saw the terrible effects of it, for it rent the mountains and tore the rocks. Thus was the trumpet sounded before the Judge of heaven and earth, by his angels, whom he makes spirits, or winds (Ps 104:4), sounded so loud that the earth not only rang, but rent again.

2. He felt the shock of an earthquake.

3. He saw an eruption of fire, 1Ki 19:12. These were to usher in the designed manifestation of the divine glory, angels being employed in them, whom he maketh a flame of fire, and who, as

his ministers, march before him, to prepare in this desert a highway for our God. But,

4. At last he perceived a still small voice, in which the Lord was, that is, by which he spoke to him, and not out of the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire. Those struck an awe upon him, awakened his attention, and inspired humility and reverence; but God chose to make known his mind to him in whispers soft, not in those dreadful sounds. When he perceived this,

(1.) He wrapped hi face in his mantle, as one afraid to look upon the glory of God, and apprehensive that it would dazzle his eyes and overcome him. The angels cover their faces before God in token of reverence, Isa 6:2. Elijah hid his face in token of shame for having been such a coward as to flee from his duty when he had such a God of power to stand by him in it. The wind, and earthquake, and fire, did not make him cover his face, but the still voice did. Gracious souls are more affected by the tender mercies of the Lord than by his terrors.

(2.) He stood at the entrance of the cave, ready to hear what God had to say to him. This method of God's manifesting himself here at Mount Horeb seems to refer to the discoveries God formerly made of himself at this place to Moses.

[1.] Then there was a tempest, an earthquake, and fire (Heb 12:18); but, when God would show Moses his glory, he proclaimed his goodness; and so here: He was, the Word was, in the still small voice.

[2.] Then the law was thus given to Israel, with the appearances of terror first and then with a voice of words; and Elijah being now called to revive that law, especially the first two commandments of it, is here taught how to manage it; he must not only awaken and terrify the people with amazing signs, like the earthquake and fire, but he must endeavour, with a still small

voice, to convince and persuade them, and not forsake them when he should be addressing them. Faith comes by hearing the word of God; miracles do but make way for it.

[3.] Then God spoke to his people with terror; but in the gospel of Christ, which was to be introduced by the spirit and power of Elias, he would speak by a still small voice, the dread of which should not make us afraid; see Heb 12:18-24, &c.

V. The orders God gives him to execute. He repeats the question he had put to him before, "What doest thou here? This is not a place for thee now." Elijah gives the same answer (1Ki 19:14), complaining of Israel's apostasy from God and the ruin of religion among them. To this God gives him a reply. When he wished he might die (1Ki 19:4) God answered him not according to his folly, but was so far from letting him die that he not only kept him alive then but provided that he should never die, but be translated. But when he complained of his discouragement (and whither should God's prophets go with their complaints of that kind but to their Master?) God gave him an answer.

He sends him back with directions to appoint Hazael king of Syria (1Ki 19:15), Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha his successor in the eminency of the prophetical office (1Ki 19:16), which is intended as a prediction that by these God would chastise the degenerate Israelites, plead his own cause among them, and avenge the quarrel of his covenant, 1Ki 19:17. Elijah complained that the wickedness of Israel was unpunished. The judgment of famine was too gentle, and had not reclaimed them; it was removed before they were reformed: "I have been jealous," says he, "for God's name, but he himself has not appeared jealous for it." "Well," says God, "be content; it is all in good time; judgments are prepared for those scorners, though they are not yet inflicted; the persons are pitched upon, and shall now be nominated, for they are now in being, who shall do the business."

1. "When Hazael comes to be king of Syria, he shall make bloody work among the people (2Ki 8:12) and so correct them for their idolatry."

2. "When Jehu comes to be king of Israel he shall make bloody work with the royal family, and shall utterly destroy the house of Ahab, that set up and maintained idolatry."

3. "Elisha, while thou art on earth, shall strengthen thy hands; and, when thou art gone, shall carry on thy work, and be a remaining witness against the apostasy of Israel, and even he shall slay the children of Bethel, that idolatrous city." Note, The wicked are reserved to judgment. Evil pursues sinners, and there is no escaping it; to attempt an escape is but to run from one sword's point upon another. See Jer 48:44, He that flees from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that gets up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare. Elisha, with the sword of the Spirit, shall terrify and wound the consciences of those who escape Hazael's sword of war and Jehu's sword of justice. With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked, Isa 11:4,2Th 2:8,Ho 6:5. It is a great comfort to good men and good ministers to think that God will never want instruments to do his work in his time, but, when they are gone, others shall be raised up to carry it on.

VI. The comfortable information God gives him of the number of Israelites who retained their integrity, though he thought he was left alone (1Ki 19:18): I have left 7000 in Israel (besides Judea) who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Note,

1. In times of the greatest degeneracy and apostasy God has always had, and will have, a remnant faithful to him, some that keep their integrity and do not go down the stream. The apostle mentions this answer of God to Elijah (Ro 11:4) and applies it to his own day, when the Jews generally rejected the gospel. Yet, says he, at this time also there is a remnant, Ro 11:5.

2. It is God's work to preserve that remnant, and distinguish them from the rest, for without his grace they could not have distinguished themselves: I have left me; it is therefore said to be a remnant according to the election of grace.

. It is but a little remnant, in comparison with the degenerate race; what are 7000 to the thousands of Israel? Yet, when those of every age come together, they will be found many more, 12,000 sealed out of each tribe, Re 7:4.

4. God's faithful ones are often his hidden ones (Ps 83:3), and the visible church is scarcely visible, the wheat lost in the chaff and the gold in the dross, till the sifting, refining, separating day comes.

5. The Lord knows those that are his, though we do not; he sees in secret.

6. There are more good people in the world than some wise and holy men think there are. Their jealousy of themselves, and for God, makes them think the corruption is universal; but God sees not as they do. When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many whom we thought to meet there, so we shall meet a great many whom we little thought to find there. God's love often proves larger than man's charity and more extensive.

12 and after the earthquake a fire; *but* the Lord *was* not in the fire:
and after the fire a still small voice.
13 And it was *so,* when Elijah heard *it,* that he wrapped his face in his
mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.
And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou
here, Elijah?
14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts:
because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown
down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even*
I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael *to be* king over Syria:
16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint *to be* king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint *to be* prophet in thy room.
17 And it shall come to pass, *that* him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.
18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

The Call of Elisha

19 So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of oxen* before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.

Elisha was named last in the orders God gave to Elijah, but he was first called, for by him the other two were to be called. He must come in Elijah's room; yet Elijah is forward to raise him, and is far from being jealous of his successor, but rejoices to think that he shall leave the work of God in such good hands. Concerning the call of Elisha observe,

1. That it was an unexpected surprising call. Elijah found him by divine direction, or perhaps he was before acquainted with him and knew where to find him. He found him, not in the schools of the prophets, but in the field, not reading, nor praying, nor sacrificing, but ploughing, 1Ki 19:19. Though a great man (as appears by his feast, 1Ki 19:21), master of the ground, and oxen, and servants, yet he did not think it any disparagement to him to follow his business himself, and not only to inspect his servants, but himself to lay his hand to the plough.

Idleness is no man's honour, nor is husbandry any man's disgrace. An honest calling in the world does not at all put us out

of the way of our heavenly calling, any more than it did Elisha, who was taken from following the plough the feed Israel and to sow the seed of the word, as the apostles were taken from fishing to catch men. Elisha enquired not after Elijah, but was anticipated with this call. We love God, and choose him, because he chose us, and loved us, first.

2. That it was a powerful call. Elijah did but cast his mantle upon him. (1Ki 19:19), in token of friendship, that he would take him under his care and tuition as he did under his mantle, and to be one with him in the same clothes, or in token of his being clothed with the spirit of Elijah (now he put some of his honour upon him, as Moses on Joshua, Nu 27:20); but, when Elijah went to heaven, he had the mantle entire, 2Ki 2:13. And immediately he left the oxen to go as they would, and ran after Elijah, and assured him that he would follow him presently, 1Ki 19:20. An invisible hand touched his heart, and unaccountably inclined him by a secret power, without any external persuasions, to quit his husbandry and give himself to the ministry.

It is in a day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing (Ps 110:3), nor would any come to Christ unless they were thus drawn. Elisha came to a resolution presently, but begged a little time, not to ask leave, but only to take leave, of his parents. This was not an excuse for delay, like his (Lu 9:61) that desired he might bid those farewell that were at home, but only a reservation of the respect and duty he owed to his father and mother. Elijah bade him to back and do it, he would not hinder him; nay, if he would, he might go back, and not return, for any thing he had done to him. He will not force him, nor take him against his will; let him sit down and count the cost, and make it his own act. The efficacy of God's grace preserves the native liberty of man's will, so that those who are good are good of choice and not by constraint, not pressed men, but volunteers.

3. That it was a pleasant and acceptable call to him, which appears by the farewell-feast he made for his family (1Ki 19:21), though he not only quitted all the comforts of his father's house, but exposed himself to the malignity of Jezebel and her party. It was a discouraging time for prophets to set out in. A man that had consulted with flesh and blood would not be fond of Elijah's mantle, nor willing to wear his coat; yet Elisha cheerfully, and with a great deal of satisfaction, leaves all to accompany him. Thus Matthew made a great fast when he left the receipt of custom to follow Christ.

4. That it was an effectual call. Elijah did not stay for him, lest he should seem to compel him, but left him to his own choice, and he soon arose, went after him, and not only associated with him, but ministered to him as his servitor, poured water on his hands, 2Ki 3:11. It is of great advantage to young ministers to spend some time under the direction of those that are aged and experienced, whose years teach wisdom, and not to think much, if occasion be, to minister to them. Those that would be fit to teach must have time to learn; and those that hope hereafter to rise and rule must be willing at first to stoop and serve.

20 And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray
thee, kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow thee.
And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?
21 And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew
them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and
gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went
after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

1 Kings-20

Ahab Defeats the Syrians

1 And Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and
there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots:
and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it.

2 And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and
said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad,
3 Thy silver and thy gold *is* mine; thy wives also and thy children,
even the goodliest, *are* mine.
4 And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king,
according to thy saying, I *am* thine, and all that I have.
5 And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben- hadad,
saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver
me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children;
6 yet I will send my servants unto thee tomorrow about this time,
and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants;
and it shall be, *that* whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall
put *it* in their hand, and take *it* away.

Here is, I The threatening descent which Ben-hadad made upon Ahab's kingdom, and the siege he laid to Samaria, his royal city, 1Ki 20:1. What the ground of the quarrel was we are not told; covetousness and ambition were the principle, which would never want some pretence or other. David in his time had quite subdued the Syrians and made them tributaries to Israel, but Israel's apostasy from God makes them formidable again. Asa had tempted the Syrians to invade Israel once (1Ki 15:18-20), and now they did it of their own accord. It is dangerous bringing a foreign force into the country: posterity may pay dearly for it. Ben-hadad had with him thirty-two kings, who were either tributaries to him, and bound in duty to attend him, or confederates with him, and bound in interest to assist him. How little did the title of king look when all these poor petty governors pretended to it!

II The treaty between these two kings. Surely Israel's defence had departed from them, or else the Syrians could not have marched so readily, and with so little opposition, to Samaria, the head and heart of the country, a city lately built, and therefore, we may suppose, not well fortified, but likely to fall quickly into the hands of the invaders; both sides are aware of this, and therefore,

1. Ben-hadad's proud spirit sends Ahab a very insolent demand, 1Ki 20:2,3. A parley is sounded, and a trumpeter (we may suppose) is sent into the city, to let Ahab know that he will raise the siege upon condition that Ahab become his vassal (Nay, his villain), and not only pay him a tribute out of what he has, but make over his title to Ben-hadad, and hold all at his will, even his wives and children, the godliest of them. The manner of expression is designed to gall them; "All shall be mine, without exception."

2. Ahab's poor spirit sends Ben-hadad a very disgraceful submission. It is general indeed (he cannot mention particulars in his surrender with so much pleasure as Ben-hadad did in his demand), but it is effectual: I am thine, and all that I have, 1Ki 20:4. See the effect of sin.

(1.) If he had not by sin provoked God to depart from him, Ben-hadad could not have made such a demand. Sin brings men into such straits, by putting them out of divine protection. If God may not rule us, our enemies shall. A rebel to God is a slave to all besides. Ahab had prepared his silver and gold for Baal, Ho 2:8. Justly therefore is it taken from him; such an alienating amounts to a forfeiture.

(2.) If he had not by sin wronged his own conscience, and set that against him, he could not have made such a mean surrender. Guilt dispirits men, and makes them cowards. He knew Baal could not help, and had no reason to think that God would, and therefore was content to buy his life upon any terms. Skin for skin, and all that is dear to him, he will give for it; he will rather live a beggar than not die a prince.

3. Ben-hadad's proud spirit rises upon his submission, and becomes yet more insolent and imperious, 1Ki 20:5,6. Ahab had laid his all at his feet, at his mercy, expecting that one king would use another generously, that this acknowledgment of Ben-hadad's sovereignty would content him, the honour was sufficient for the

present, and he might hereafter make use of it if he saw cause (Satis est prostrasse leoni--It suffices the lion to have laid his victim prostrate); but this will not serve.

(1.) Ben-hadad is as covetous as he is proud, and cannot go away unless he have the possession as well as the dominion. He thinks it not enough to call it his, unless he have it in his hands. He will not so much as lend Ahab the use of his own goods above a day longer.

(2.) He is as spiteful as he is haughty. Had he come himself to select what he had a mind for, it would have shown some respect to a crowned head; but he will send his servants to insult the prince, and hector over him, to rifle the palace, and strip it of all its ornaments; nay, to give Ahab the more vexation, they shall be ordered, not only to take what they please, but, if they can learn which are the persons or things that Ahab is in a particular manner fond of, to take those: Whatsoever is pleasant in thy eyes they shall take away. We are often crossed in that which we most dote upon; and that proves least safe which is most dear.

(3.) He is as unreasonable as he is unjust, and will construe the surrender Ahab made for himself as made for all his subjects too, and will have them also to lie at his mercy: "They shall search, not only thy house, but the houses of thy servants too, and plunder them at discretion." Blessed be God for peace and property, and that what we have we can call our own.

4. Ahab's poor spirit begins to rise too, upon this growing insolence; and, if it becomes not bold, yet it becomes desperate, and he will rather hazard his life than give up all thus.

(1.) How he takes advice of his privy-council, who encourage him to stand it out. He speaks but poorly (1Ki 20:7), appeals to them whether Ben-hadad be not an unreasonable enemy, and do not seek mischief. What else could he expect from one who, without any

provocation given him, had invaded his country and besieged his capital city? He owns to them how he had truckled to him before, and will have them advise him what he should do in this strait; and they speak bravely (Hearken not to him, nor consent, 1Ki 20:8), promising no doubt to stand by him in the refusal.

(2.) Yet he expresses himself very modestly in his denial, 1Ki 20:9. He owns Ben-hadad's dominion over him: "Tell my lord the king I have no design to affront him, nor to receded from the surrender I have already made; what I offered at first I will stand to, but this thing I may not do; I must not give what is none of my own." It was a mortification to Ben-hadad that even such an abject spirit as Ahab's durst deny him; yet it should seem, by his manner of expressing himself, that he durst not have done it if his people had not animated him.

5. Ben-hadad proudly swears the ruin of Samaria. The threatening waves of his wrath, meeting with this check, rage and foam, and make a noise. In his fury, he imprecates the impotent revenge of his gods, if the dust of Samaria serve for handfuls for his army (1Ki 20:10), so numerous, so resolute, an army will be bring into the field against Samaria, and so confident is he of their success; it will be done as easily as the taking up of a handful of dust; all shall be carried away, even the ground on which the city stands. Thus confident is his pride, thus cruel is his malice; this prepares him to be ruined, though such a prince and such a people are unworthy of the satisfaction of seeing him ruined.

6. Ahab sends him a decent rebuke to his assurance, dares not defy his menaces, only reminds him of the uncertain turns of war (1Ki 20:11): "Let not him that begins a war, and is girding on his sword, his armour, his harness, boast of victory, or think himself sure of it, as if he had put it off, and had come home a conqueror." This was one of the wisest words that ever Ahab spoke, and is a good item or momento to us all; it is folly to boast beforehand of any day, since we know not what it may bring forth (Pr 27:1), but

especially to boast of a day of battle, which may prove as much against us as we promise ourselves it will be for us. It is impolitic to despise an enemy, and to be too sure of victory is the way to be beaten. Apply it to our spiritual conflicts. Peter fell by his confidence. While we are here we are but girding on the harness, and therefore must never boast as though we had put it off. Happy is the man that feareth always, and is never off his watch.

7 Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this *man* seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not.

8 And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not *unto him,* nor consent.

9 Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again.

10 And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me.

11 And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell *him,* Let not him that girdeth on *his harness* boast himself as he that putteth it off.

12 And it came to pass, when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he *was* drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array.* And they set *themselves in array* against the city.

13 And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord.

14 And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the Lord, *Even* by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou.

The treaty between the besiegers and the besieged being broken off abruptly, we have here an account of the battle that ensued immediately.

I The Syrians, the besiegers, had their directions from a drunken king, who gave orders over his cups, as he was drinking (1Ki 20:12), drinking himself drunk (1Ki 20:16) with the kings in the pavilions, and this at noon. Drunkenness is a sin which armies and their officers have of old been addicted to. Say not thou then that the former days were, in this respect, better than these, though these are bad enough. Had he not been very secure he would not have sat to drink; and, had he not been intoxicated, he would not have been so very secure. Security and sensuality went together in the old world, and Sodom, Lu 17:26-29, &c. Ben-hadad's drunkenness was the forerunner of his fall, as Belshazzar's was, Da 5:1-31. How could he prosper that preferred his pleasure before his business, and kept his kings to drink with him when they should have been at their respective posts to fight for him? In his drink,

1. He orders the town to be invested, the engines fixed, and every thing got ready for the making of a general attack (1Ki 20:12), but stirs not from his drunken club to see it done. Woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is such a child.

2. When the besieged made a sally (and, by that time, he was far gone) he gave orders to take them alive (1Ki 20:18), not to kill them, which might have been done more easily and safely, but to seize them, which gave them an opportunity of killing the aggressors; so imprudent was he in the orders he gave, as well as unjust, in ordering them to be taken prisoners though they came for peace and to renew the treaty. Thus, as is usual, he drinks, and forgets the law, both the policies and the justice of war.

II The Israelites, the besieged, had their directions from an inspired prophet, one of the prophets of the Lord, whom Ahab had hated and persecuted: And behold a prophet, even one, drew near to the king of Israel; so it may be read, 1Ki 20:13.

1. Behold, and wonder, that God should send a prophet with a kind and gracious message to so wicked a prince as Ahab was; but he did it,

(1.) For his people Israel's sake, who, though wickedly degenerated, were the seed of Abraham his friend and Jacob his chosen, the children of the covenant, and not yet cast off.

(2.) That he might magnify his mercy, in doing good to one so evil and unthankful, might either bring him to repentance or leave him the more inexcusable.

(3.) That he might mortify the pride of Ben-hadad and check his insolence. Ahab's idolatry shall be punished hereafter, but Ben-hadad's haughtiness shall be chastised now; for God resists the proud, and is pleased to say that he fears the wrath of the enemy, De 32:26,27. There was but one prophet perhaps to be had in Samaria, and he drew near with this message, intimating that he had been forced to keep at a distance. Ahab, in his prosperity, would not have borne the sight of him, but now he bids him welcome, when none of the prophets of the groves can give him any assistance. He enquired not for a prophet of the Lord, but God sent one to him unasked, for he waits to be gracious.

2. Two things the prophet does:--

(1.) He animates Ahab with an assurance of victory, which was more than all the elders of Israel could give him (1Ki 20:8), though they promised to stand by him. This prophet, who is not named (for he spoke in God's name), tells him from God that this very day the siege shall be raised, and the army of the Syrians routed, 1Ki 20:13. When the prophet said, Thus saith the Lord, we may suppose Ahab began to tremble, expecting a message of wrath; but he is revived when it proves a gracious one. He is informed what use he ought to make of this blessed turn of affairs: "Thou shalt know that I am Jehovah, the sovereign Lord of all."

God's foretelling a thing that was so very unlikely proved that it was his own doing.

(2.) He instructs him what to do for the gaining of this victory.

[1.] He must not stay till the enemy attacked him, but must sally out upon them and surprise them in their trenches.

[2.] The persons employed must be the young men of the princes of the provinces, the pages, the footmen, who were few in number, only 232, utterly unacquainted with war, and the unlikeliest men that could be thought of for such a bold attempt; yet these must do it, these weak and foolish things must be instruments of confounding the wise and strong, that, while Ben-hadad's boasting is punished, Ahab's may be prevented and precluded, and the excellency of the power may appear to be of God.

[3.] Ahab must himself so far testify his confidence in the word of God as to command in person, though, in the eye of reason, he exposed himself to the utmost danger by it. But it is fit that those who have the benefit of God's promises should enter upon them.

Yet, [4.] He is allowed to make use of what other forces he has at hand, to follow the blow, when these young men have broken the ice. All he had in Samaria, or within call, were but 7000 men, 1Ki 20:15. It is observable that it is the same number with theirs that he not bowed the knee to Baal (1Ki 19:18), though, it is likely, not the same men.

III. The issue was accordingly. The proud Syrians were beaten, and the poor despised Israelites were more than conquerors. The young men gave an alarm to the Syrians just at noon, at high dinner-time, supported by what little force they had, 1Ki 20:16. Ben-hadad despised them at first (1Ki 20:18), but when they had, with unparalleled bravery and dexterity, slain every one his man,

and so put the army into disorder, that proud man durst not face them, but mounted immediately, drunk as he was, and made the best of his way, 1Ki 20:20. See how God takes away the spirit of princes, and makes himself terrible to the kings of the earth. Now where are the silver and gold he demanded of Ahab? Where are the handfuls of Samaria's dust? Those that are most secure are commonly least courageous. Ahab failed not to improve this advantage, but slew the Syrians with a great slaughter, 1Ki 20:21. Note, God oftentimes makes one wicked man a scourge to another.

15 Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two: and after them he numbered all the people, *even* all the children of Israel, *being* seven thousand.

16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad *was* drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him.

17 And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria.

18 And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive.

19 So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the horsemen.

21 And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

22 And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.

23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods *are* gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they.

24 And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms:
25 and number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, *and* surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so.

We have here an account of another successful campaign which Ahab, by divine aid, made against the Syrians, in which he gave them a greater defeat than in the former. Strange! Ahab idolatrous and yet victorious, a persecutor and yet a conqueror! God has wise and holy ends in suffering wicked men to prosper, and glorifies his own name thereby.

I. Ahab is admonished by a prophet to prepare for another war, 1Ki 20:22. It should seem, he was now secure, and looked but a little way before him. Those that are careless of their souls are often as careless of their outwards affairs; but the prophet (to whom God made known the following counsels of the Syrians) told him they would renew their attempt at the return of the year, hoping to retrieve the honour they had lost and be avenged for the blow they had received. He therefore bade him strengthen himself, put himself into a posture of defence, and be ready to give them a warm reception. God had decreed the end, but Ahab must use the means, else he tempts God: "Help thyself, strengthen thyself, and God will help and strengthen thee." The enemies of God's Israel are restless in their malice, and, though they may take some breathing-time for themselves, yet they are still breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church. It concerns us always to expect assaults from our spiritual enemies, and therefore to mark and see what we do.

II. Ben-hadad is advised by those about him concerning the operations of the next campaign.

1. They advised him to change his ground, 1Ki 20:23. They took it for granted that it was not Israel, but Israel's gods, that beat them

(so great a regard was then universally had to invisible powers); but they speak very ignorantly of Jehovah--that he was many, whereas he is one and his name one,--that he was their God only, a local deity, peculiar to that nation, whereas he is the Creator and ruler of all the world,--and that he was a God of the hills only, because David their great prophet had said, I will lift up my eyes to the hills whence cometh my help (Ps 121:1), and that his foundation was in the holy mountain (Ps 87:1,Ps 78:54), and much was said of his holy hill (Ps 15:1,24:3); supposing him altogether such a one as their imaginary deities, they fancied he was confined to his hills, and could not or would not come down from them, and therefore an army in the valley would be below his cognizance and from under his protection. Thus vain were the Gentiles in their imaginations concerning God, so wretchedly were their foolish hearts darkened, and, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

2. They advised him to change his officers (1Ki 20:24,25), not to employ the kings, who were commanders by birth, but captains rather, who were commanders by merit, who were inured to war, would not affect to make a show like the kings, but would go through with business. Let every man be employed in that which he is brought up to and used to, and preferred to that which he is fit for. Syria, it seems, was rich and populous, when it could furnish recruits sufficient, after so great a defeat, horse for horse, chariot for chariot.

III. Both armies take the field. Ben-hadad, with his Syrians, encamps near Aphek, in the tribe of Asher. It is probable that Asher was a city in his own possession, one of those which his father had won (1Ki 20:34), and the country about it was flat and level, and fit for his purpose, 1Ki 20:26. Ahab, with his forces, posted himself at some distance over against them, 1Ki 20:27. The disproportion of numbers was very remarkable. The children of Israel, who were cantoned in two battalions, looked like two little flocks of kids, their numbers small, their equipage mean, and

the figure they made contemptible; but the Syrians filled the country with their numbers, their noise, their chariots, their carriages, and their baggage.

IV. Ahab is encouraged to fight the Syrians, notwithstanding their advantages and confidence. A man of God is sent to him, to tell him that this numerous army shall all be delivered into his hand (1Ki 20:28), but not for his sake; be it known to him, he is utterly unworthy for whom God will do this. God would not do it because Ahab had praised God or prayed to him (we do not read that he did either), but because the Syrians had blasphemed God, and had said, He is the God of the hills and not of the valleys; therefore God will do it in his own vindication, and to preserve the honour of his own name.

If the Syrians had said, "Ahab and his people have forgotten their God, and so put themselves out of his protection, and therefore we may venture to attack them," God would probably have delivered Israel into their hands; but when they go upon a presumption so very injurious to the divine omnipotence, and the honour of him who is Lord of all hosts, not only in hills and valleys, but in heaven and earth, which they are willingly ignorant of, they shall be undeceived, at the expense of that vast army which is so much their pride and confidence.

V. After the armies had faced one another seven days (the Syrians, it is likely, boasting, and the Israelites trembling), they engaged, and the Syrians were totally routed, 100,000 men slain by the sword of Israel in the field of battle (1Ki 20:29), and 27,000 men, that thought themselves safe under the walls of Aphek, a fortified city (from the walls of which the shooters might annoy the enemy if they pursued them, 2Sa 11:24), found their bane where they hoped for protection: the wall fell upon them, probably overthrown by an earthquake, and, the cities of Canaan being walled up to heaven, it reached a great way, and they were all killed, or hurt, or overwhelmed with dismay.

Ben-hadad, who thought his city Aphek would hold out against the conquerors, finding it thus unwalled, and the remnant of his forces dispirited and dispersed, had nothing but secresy to rely upon for safety, and therefore hid himself in a chamber within a chamber, lest the pursuers should seize him. See how the greatest confidence often ends in the greatest cowardice. "Now is the God of Israel the God of the valleys or no?" He shall know now that he is forced into an inner chamber to hide himself, see 1Ki 22:25.

26 And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad
numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against
Israel.

27 And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and
went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them
like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country.

28 And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel,
and said, Thus saith the Lord, Because the Syrians have said, The
Lord *is* God of the hills, but he *is* not God of the valleys, therefore
will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall
know that I *am* the Lord.

29 And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And *so* it
was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children
of Israel slew of the Syrians a hundred thousand footmen in one
day.

30 But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and *there* a wall fell upon
twenty and seven thousand of the men *that were* left.
And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner
chamber.

31 And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that
the kings of the house of Israel *are* merciful kings: let us, I pray
thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go
out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.

32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and *put* ropes on their heads,
and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben- hadad
saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, *Is* he yet alive? he *is* my
brother.

Here is an account of what followed upon the victory which Israel obtained over the Syrians.

I. Ben-hadad's tame and mean submission. Even in his inner chamber he feared, and would, if he could, flee further, though none pursued. His servants, seeing him and themselves reduced to the last extremity, advised that they should surrender at discretion, and make themselves prisoners and petitioners to Ahab for their lives, 1Ki 20:31. The servants will put their lives in their hands, and venture first, and their master will act according as they speed.

Their inducement to take this course is the great reputation the kings of Israel had for clemency above any of their neighbours: "We have heard that they are merciful kings, not oppressive to their subjects that are under their power" (as governments then went, that of Israel was one of the most easy and gentle), "and therefore not cruel to their enemies when they lie at their mercy." Perhaps they had this notion of the kings of Israel because they had heard that the God of Israel proclaimed his name gracious and merciful, and they concluded their kings would make their God their pattern. It was an honour to the kings of Israel to be thus represented, as indeed every Israelite is then dressed as becomes him when he puts on bowels of mercies.

"They are merciful kings, therefore we may hope to find mercy upon our submission." This encouragement poor sinners have to repent and humble themselves before God. "Have we not heard that the God of Israel is a merciful God? Have we not found him so? Let us therefore rend our hearts and return to him." Joe 2:13. That is evangelical repentance which flows from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ; there is forgiveness with him. Two things Ben-hadad's servants undertake to represent to Ahab:--

1. Their master a penitent; for they girded sackcloth on their loins, as mourners, and put ropes on their heads, as condemned

criminals going to execution, pretending to be sorry that they had invaded his country and disturbed his repose, and owning that they deserved to be hanged for it. Here they are ready to do penance for it, and throw themselves at the feet of him whom they had injured. Many pretend to repent of their wrong-doing, when it does not succeed, who, if they had prospered in it, would have justified it and gloried in it.

2. Their master a beggar, a beggar for his life: Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, "I pray thee, let me live, 1Ki 20:32. Though I live a perpetual exile from my own country, and captive in this, yet, upon any terms, let me live." What a great change is here,

(1.) In his condition! How has he fallen from the height of power and prosperity to the depths of disgrace and distress, and all the miseries of poverty and slavery! See the uncertainty of human affairs; such turns are they subject to that the spoke which was uppermost may soon come to be undermost.

(2.) In his temper--in the beginning of the chapter hectoring, swearing, and threatening, and none more high in his demands, but here crouching and whining and none more low in his requests! How meanly does he beg hi life at the hand of him upon whom he had there been trampling! The most haughty in prosperity are commonly most abject in adversity: an even spirit will be the same in both conditions. See how God glorified himself when he looks upon proud men and abases them, and hides them in the dust together, Job 40:11-13.

II. Ahab's foolish acceptance of his submission, and the league he suddenly made with him upon it. He was proud to be thus courted by him whom he had feared, and enquired for him with great tenderness: Is he yet alive? He is my brother, brother-king, though not brother-Israelite: and Ahab valued himself more upon his royalty than on his religion, and others accordingly. "Is he thy

brother, Ahab? Did he use thee like a brother when he sent thee that barbarous message? 1Ki 20:5,6. Would he have called thee brother if he had been the conqueror? Would he now have called himself thy servant if he had not been reduced to the utmost strait? Canst thou suffer thyself to be thus imposed upon by a forced and counterfeit submission?"

This word brother they caught at (1Ki 20:33), and were thereby encouraged to go and fetch him to the king. He that calls him brother will let him live. Let poor penitents hear God, in his word, calling them children (Jer 31:20), catch at it, echo to it, and call him Father. Ben-hadad, upon his submission, shall not only be honourably conveyed (he took him up into the chariot), but treated with as an ally (1Ki 20:34): he made a covenant with him, not consulting God's prophets, or the elders of the land, or himself, concerning what was fit to be insisted on, but, as if Ben-hadad had been conqueror, he shall make his own terms.

He might now have demanded some of Ben-hadad's cities, when all of them lay at the mercy of his victorious army; but was content with the restitution of his own. He might now have demanded the stores, and treasures, and magazines of Damascus, to augment the wealth and strength of his own kingdom, but was content with a poor liberty, at his own expense, to build streets there, a point of honour and no advantage, or no more than what the kings of Syria had had in Samaria, though they had never had so much power as he had now to support the demand of it. With this covenant he sent him away, without so much as reproving him for his blasphemous reflections upon the God of Israel, for whose honour Ahab had no concern.

Note, There are those on whom success is ill bestowed; they know not how to serve God, or their generation, or even their own true interests, with their prosperity. Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.

III. The reproof given to Ahab for his clemency to Ben-hadad and his covenant with him. It was given him by a prophet, in the name of the Lord, the Jews say by Micaiah, and not unlikely, for Ahab complains of him (1Ki 22:8) that he used to prophesy evil concerning him. This prophet designed to reprove Ahab by a parable, that he might oblige him to condemn himself, as Nathan and the woman of Tekoa did David. To make his parable the more plausible, he finds it necessary to put himself into the posture of a wounded soldier.

1. With some difficulty he gets himself wounded, for he would not wound himself with his own hands. He commanded one of his brother prophets, his neighbour, or companion (for so the word signifies), to smite him, and this in God's name (1Ki 20:35), but finds him not so willing to give the blow as he is to receive it; he refused to smite him: others, he thought, were forward enough to smite prophets, they need not smite one another. We cannot but think it was from a good principle he declined it. "If it must be done, let another do it, not I; I cannot find it in my heart to strike my friend." Good men can much more easily receive a wrongful blow than give one; yet because he disobeyed an express command of God (which was so much the worse if he was himself a prophet), like that other disobedient prophet (1Ki 13:24), he was presently slain by a lion, 1Ki 20:36.

This was intended, not only to show, in general, how provoking disobedience is (Col 3:6), but to intimate to Ahab (who no doubt was told the story) that if a good prophet were thus punished for sparing his friend and God's, when God said, Smite, of much sorer punishment should a wicked king be thought worthy, who spared his enemy and God's, when God said, Smite. Shall mortal man pretend to be more just than God, more pure or more compassionate than his Maker? We must be merciful as he is merciful, and not otherwise. The next he met with made no difficulty of smiting him (Volentinon fit injuria--He that asks for

an injury is not wronged by it) and did it so that he wounded him, 1Ki 20:37. He fetched blood with the blow, probably in his face.

2. Wounded as he was, and disguised with ashes that he might not be known to be a prophet, he made his application to the king in a story wherein he charged himself with such a crime as the king was now guilty of in sparing Ben-hadad, and waited for the king's judgment upon it. The case in short is this--A prisoner taken in the battle was committed to his custody by a man (we may suppose one that had authority over him as his superior officer) with this charge, If he be missing, thy life shall be for his life, 1Ki 20:39. The prisoner has made his escape through his carelessness. Can the chancery in the king's breast relieve him against his captain, who demands his life in lieu of the prisoner's? "By no means," says the king, "thou shouldst either not have undertaken the trust or been more careful and faithful to it; there is no remedy (Currat lex--Let the law take its course), thou hast forfeited thy bond, and execution must go out upon it: So shall thy doom be, thou thyself hast decided it." Now the prophet has what he would have, puts off his disguise, and is known by Ahab himself to be a prophet (1Ki 20:41) and plainly tells him, "Thou art the man. Is it my doom?

No, it is thine; thou thyself hast decided it. Out of thy own mouth art thou judged. God, thy superior and commander-in-chief, delivered into thy hands one plainly marked for destruction both by his own pride and God's providence, and thou hast not carelessly lost him, but wittingly and willingly dismissed him, and so hast been false to thy trust, and lost the end of thy victory; expect therefore no other than that thy life shall go for his life, which thou hast spared" (and so it did, 1Ki 22:35), "and thy people for his people, whom likewise thou hast spared," and so they did afterwards, 2Ki 10:32,33. When their other sins brought them low, this came into the account. There is a time when keeping back the sword from blood is doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, Jer 48:10. Foolish pity spoils the city.

3. We are told how Ahab resented this reproof. He went to his house heavy and displeased (1Ki 20:43), not truly penitent, or seeking to undo what he had done amiss, but enraged at the prophet, exasperated against God (as if he had been too severe in the sentence passed upon him), and yet vexed at himself, every way out of humour, notwithstanding his victory. He who by his providence had mortified the pride of one king, by his word cast a damp upon the triumphs of another. Be wise therefore, O you kings! and be instructed to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling, Ps 2:10,11.

33 Now the men did diligently observe whether *any thing would come* from him, and did hastily catch *it:* and they said, Thy brother Ben- hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

34 And *Ben-hadad* said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then *said Ahab,* I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbor in the word of the Lord, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him.

36 Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the Lord, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him.

37 Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded *him*.

38 So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

39 And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver.

40 And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the
king of Israel said unto him, So *shall* thy judgment *be;* thyself hast
decided *it*.
41 And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king
of Israel discerned him that he *was* of the prophets.
42 And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let
go out of *thy* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction,
therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.
43 And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and
came to Samaria.

1 Kings-21

Ahab and Naboth's Vineyard

1 And it came to pass after these things, *that* Naboth the Jezreelite
had a vineyard, which *was* in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab
king of Samaria.
2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I
may have it for a garden of herbs, because it *is* near unto my house:
and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; *or,* if it seem good
to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

Here is, 1. Ahab coveting his neighbour's vineyard, which unhappily lay near his palace and conveniently for a kitchen-garden. Perhaps Naboth had been pleased that he had a vineyard which lay so advantageously for a prospect of the royal gardens, or the vending of its productions to the royal family; but the situation of it proved fatal to him. If he had had no vineyard, or it had lain obscure in some remote place, he would have preserved his life. But many a man's possessions have been his snare, and his neighbourhood to greatness has been of pernicious consequence. Ahab sets his eye and heart on this vineyard, 1Ki 21:2. It will be a pretty addition to his demesne, a convenient outlet to his palace; and nothing will serve him but it must be his own. He is welcome to the fruits of it, welcome to walk in it; Naboth perhaps would have made him a lease of it for his life, to

please him; but nothing will please him unless he have an absolute property in it, he and his heirs for ever.

Yet he is not such a tyrant as to take it by force, but fairly proposes either to give Naboth the full value of it in money or a better vineyard in exchange. He had tamely quitted the great advantages God had given him of enlarging his dominion for the honour of his kingdom, by his victory over the Syrians, and now is eager to enlarge his garden, only for the convenience of his house, as if to be penny wise would atone for being pound foolish. To desire a convenience to his estate was not evil (there would be no buying if there were no desire of what is bought; the virtuous woman considers a field and buys it); but to desire any thing inordinately, though we would compass it by lawful means, is a fruit of selfishness, as if we must engross all the conveniences, and none must live, or live comfortably, by us, contrary to the law of contentment, and the letter of the tenth commandment, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.

2 The repulse he met with in this desire. Naboth would by no means part with it (1Ki 21:3): The Lord forbid it me; and the Lord did forbid it, else he would not have been so rude and uncivil to his prince as not to gratify him in so small a matter. Canaan was in a peculiar manner God's land; the Israelites were his tenants; and this was one of the conditions of their leases, that they should not alienate (no, not to one another) any part of that which fell to their lot, unless in case of extreme necessity, and then only till the year of jubilee, Le 25:28. Now Naboth foresaw that, if his vineyard were sold to the crown, it would never return to his heirs, no, not in the jubilee. He would gladly oblige the king, but he must obey God rather than men, and therefore in this matter desires to be excused.

Ahab knew the law, or should have known it, and therefore did ill to ask that which his subject could not grant without sin. Some conceive that Naboth looked upon his earthly inheritance as an

earnest of his lot in the heavenly Canaan, and therefore would not part with the former, lest it should amount to a forfeiture of the latter. He seems to have been a conscientious man, who would rather hazard the king's displeasure than offend God, and probably was one of the 7000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal, for which, it may be, Ahab owed him a grudge.

3. Ahab's great discontent and uneasiness hereupon. He was as before (1Ki 20:43) heavy and displeased (1Ki 21:4), grew melancholy upon it, threw himself upon his bed, would not eat nor admit company to come to him. He could by no means digest the affront. His proud spirit aggravated the indignity Naboth did him in denying him, as a thing not to be suffered. He cursed the squeamishness of Naboth's conscience, which he pretended to consult the peace of, and secretly meditated revenge. Nor could he bear the disappointment; it cut him to the heart to be crossed in his desires, and he was perfectly sick for vexation.

Note, (1.) Discontent is a sin that is its own punishment and makes men torment themselves; it makes the spirit sad, the body sick, and all the enjoyments sour; it is the heaviness of the heart and the rottenness of the bones.

(2.) It is a sin that is its own parent. It arises not from the condition, but from the mind. As we find Paul contented in a prison, so Ahab discontent in a palace. He had all the delights of Canaan, that pleasant land, at command the wealth of a kingdom, the pleasures of a court, and the honours and powers of a throne; and yet all this avails him nothing without Naboth's vineyard. Inordinate desires expose men to continual vexations, and those that are disposed to fret, be they ever so happy, will always find something or other to fret at.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should
give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.
4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the
word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had

said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid
him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat
no bread.
5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy
spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?
6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite,
and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it
please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it: and he
answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.
7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the
kingdom of Israel? arise, *and* eat bread, and let thine heart be
merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.
8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed *them* with his seal,
and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in
his city, dwelling with Naboth.

Nothing but mischief is to be expected when Jezebel enters into the story--that cursed woman, 2Ki 9:34.

I. Under pretence of comforting her afflicted husband, she feeds his pride and passion, and blows the coals of his corruptions. It became her to take notice of his grief and to enquire into the cause of it, 1Ki 21:5. Those have forgotten both the duty and affection of the conjugal relation that interest not themselves in each other's troubles. He told her what troubled him (1Ki 21:6), yet invidiously concealed Naboth's reason for his refusal, representing it as peevish, when it was conscientious--I will not give it thee, whereas he said, I may not. What! says Jezebel (1Ki 21:7), Dost thou govern Israel? Arise, and eat bread. She does well to persuade him to shake off his melancholy, and not to sink under his burden, to be easy and cheerful; whatever was his grief, grieving would not redress it, but pleasantness would alleviate it.

Her plea is, Dost thou now govern Israel? This is capable of a good sense: "Does it become so great a prince as thou art to cast thyself down for so small a matter? Thou shamest thyself, and profanest thy crown; it is below thee to take notice of so

inconsiderable a thing. Art thou fit to govern Israel, who hast no better a government of thy own passions? Or hast thou so rich a kingdom at command and canst not thou be without this one vineyard?" We should learn to quiet ourselves, under our crosses, with the thoughts of the mercies we enjoy, especially our hopes of the kingdom.

But she meant it in a bad sense: "Dost thou govern Israel, and shall any subject thou hast deny thee any thing thou hast a mind to? Art thou a king? It is below thee to buy and pay, much more to beg and pray; use thy prerogative, and take by force what thou canst not compass by fair means; instead of resenting the affront thus, revenge it. If thou knowest not how to support the dignity of a king, let me alone to do it; give me but leave to make use of thy name, and I will soon give thee the vineyard of Naboth; right or wrong, it shall be thy own shortly, and cost thee nothing." Unhappy princes those are, and hurried apace towards their ruin, who have those about them that stir them up to acts of tyranny and teach them how to abuse their power.

II. In order to gratify him, she projects and compasses the death of Naboth. No less than his blood will serve to atone for the affront he has given to Ahab, which she thirsts after the more greedily because of his adherence to the law of the God of Israel.

1. Had she aimed only at his land, her false witnesses might have sworn him out of that by a forged deed (she could not have set up so weak a title but the elders of Jezreel would have adjudged it good); but the adulteress will hunt for the precious life, Pr 6:26. Revenge is sweet. Naboth must die, and die as a malefactor, to gratify it.

(1.) Never were more wicked orders given by any prince than those which Jezebel sent to the magistrates of Jezreel, 1Ki 21:8-10. She borrows the privy-seal, but the king shall not know what she will do with it. It is probable this was not the first time he had

lent it to her, but that with it she had signed warrants for the slaying of the prophets. She makes use of the king's name, knowing the thing would please him when it was done, yet fearing he might scruple at the manner of doing it; in short, she commands them, upon their allegiance, to put Naboth to death, without giving them any reason for so doing.

Had she sent witnesses to inform against him, the judges (who must go secundum allegata et probata--according to allegations and proofs) might have been imposed upon, and their sentence might have been rather their unhappiness than their crime; but to oblige them to find the witnesses, sons of Belial, to suborn them themselves, and then to give judgment upon a testimony which they knew to be false, was such an impudent defiance to every thing that is just and sacred as we hope cannot be paralleled in any story. She must have looked upon the elders of Jezreel as men perfectly lost to every thing that is honest and honourable when she expected these orders should be obeyed. But she will put them in a way how to do it, having as much of the serpent's subtlety as she had of his poison.

[1.] It must be done under colour of religion: "Proclaim a fast; signify to your city that you are apprehensive of some dreadful judgment coming upon you, which you must endeavour to avert, not only by prayer, but by finding out and by putting away the accursed thing; pretend to be afraid that there is some great offender among you undiscovered, for whose sake God is angry with your city; charge the people, if they know of any such, on that solemn occasion to inform against him, as they regard the welfare of the city; and at last let Naboth be fastened upon as the suspected person, probably because he does not join with his neighbours in their worship. This may serve for a pretence to set him on high among the people, to call him to the bar.

Let proclamation be made that, if any one can inform the court against the prisoner, and prove him to be the Achan, they shall be

heard; and then let the witnesses appear to give evidence against him." Note, There is no wickedness so vile, so horrid, but religion has sometimes been made a cloak and cover for it. We must not think at all the worse of fasting and praying for their having been sometimes thus abused, but much the worse of those wicked designs that have at any time been carried on under the shelter of them.

[2.] It must be done under colour of justice too, and with the formalities of a legal process. Had she sent to them to hire some of their banditti, some desperate ruffians, to assassinate him, to stab him as he went along the streets in the night, the deed would have been bad enough; but to destroy him by a course of law, to use that power for the murdering of the innocent which ought to be their protection, was such a violent perversion of justice and judgment as was truly monstrous, yet such as we are directed not to marvel at, Ec 5:8. The crime they must lay to his charge was blaspheming God and the king-- a complicated blasphemy. Surely she could not think to put a blasphemous sense upon the answer he had given to Ahab, as if denying him his vineyard were blaspheming the king, and giving the divine law for the reason were blaspheming God.

No, she pretends not any ground at all for the charge: though there was no colour of truth in it, the witnesses must swear it, and Naboth must not be permitted to speak for himself, or cross-examine the witnesses, but immediately, under pretence of a universal detestation of the crime, they must carry him out and stone him. His blaspheming God would be the forfeiture of his life, but not of his estate, and therefore he is also charged with treason, in blaspheming the king, for which his estate was to be confiscated, that so Ahab might have his vineyard.

(2.) Never were wicked orders more wickedly obeyed than these were by the magistrates of Jezreel. They did not so much as dispute the command nor make any objections against it, though

so palpably unjust, but punctually observed all the particulars of it, either because they feared Jezebel's cruelty or because they hated Naboth's piety, or both: They did as it was written in the letters (1Ki 21:11,12), neither made any difficulty of it, nor met with any difficulty in it, but cleverly carried on the villany. They stoned Naboth to death (1Ki 21:13), and, as it should seem, his sons with him, or after him; for, when God came to make inquisition for blood, we find this article in the account (2Ki 9:26), I have seen the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons. Perhaps they were secretly murdered, that they might not claim their father's estate nor complain of the wrong done him.

2. Let us take occasion from this sad story,

(1.) To stand amazed at the wickedness of the wicked, and the power of Satan in the children of disobedience. What a holy indignation may we be filled with to see wickedness in the place of judgment! Ec 3:16.

(2.) To lament the hard case of oppressed innocency, and to mingle our tears with the tears of the oppressed that have no comforter, while on the side of the oppressors there is power, Ec 4:1.

(3.) To commit the keeping of our lives and comforts to God, for innocency itself will not always be our security.

(4.) To rejoice in the belief of a judgment to come, in which such wrong judgments as these will be called over. Now we see that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked (Ec 8:14), but all will be set to rights in the great day.

III. Naboth being taken off, Ahab takes possession of his vineyard.

1 The elders of Jezreel sent notice to Jezebel very unconcernedly, sent it to her as a piece of agreeable news, Naboth is stoned and is dead, 1Ki 21:14. Here let us observe that, as obsequious as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel's orders which she sent from Samaria for the murder of Naboth, so obsequious were the elders of Samaria afterwards to Jehu's orders which he sent from Jezreel for the murder of Ahab's seventy sons, only that was not done by course of law, 2Ki 10:6,7. Those tyrants that by their wicked orders debauch the consciences of their inferior magistrates may perhaps find at last the wheel return upon them, and that those who will not stick to do one cruel thing for them will be as ready to do another cruel thing against them.

2. Jezebel, jocund enough that her plot succeeded so well, brings notice to Ahab that Naboth is not alive, but dead; therefore, says she, Arise, take possession of his vineyard, 1Ki 21:15. He might have taken possession by one of his officers, but so pleased is he with this accession to his estate that he will make a journey to Jezreel himself to enter upon it; and it should seem he went in state too, as if he had obtained some mighty victory, for Jehu remembers long after that he and Bidkar attended him at this time, 2Ki 9:25.

If Naboth's sons were all put to death, Ahab thought himself entitled to the estate, ob defectum sanguinis--in default of heirs (as our law expresses it); if not, yet, Naboth dying as a criminal, he claimed it ob delictum criminis--as forfeited by his crime. Or, if neither would make him a good title, the absolute power of Jezebel would give it to him, and who would dare to oppose her will? Might often prevails against right, and wonderful is the divine patience that suffers it to do so. God is certainly of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet for a time keeps silence when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he, Hab 1:13.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

10 and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.
11 And the men of his city, *even* the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, *and* as it *was* written in the letters which she had sent unto them.
12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.
13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, *even* against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.
14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.
15 And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.
16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.
17 And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,
18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

In these verses we may observe,

I The very bad character that is given of Ahab (1Ki 21:25,26), which comes in here to justify God in the heavy sentence passed upon him, and to show that though it was passed upon occasion of his sin in the matter of Naboth (which David's sin in the matter of Uriah did too much resemble), yet God would not have punished him so severely if he had not been guilty of many other sins, especially idolatry; whereas David, except in that one matter, did that which was right. But, as to Ahab, there was none like him, so ingenious and industrious in sin, and that made a trade of it. He sold himself to work wickedness, that is, he made himself

a perfect slave to his lusts, and was as much at their beck and command as ever any servant was at his master's.

He was wholly given up to sin, and, upon condition he might have the pleasures of it, he would take the wages of it, which is death, Ro 6:23. Blessed Paul complained that he was sold under sin (Ro 7:14), as a poor captive against his will; but Ahab was voluntary: he sold himself to sin; of choice, and as his own act and deed, he submitted to the dominion of sin. It was no excuse of his crimes that Jezebel his wife stirred him up to do wickedly, and made him, in many respects, worse than otherwise he would have been. To what a pitch of impiety did he arrive who had such tinder of corruption in his heart and such a temper in his bosom to strike fire into it! In many things he did ill, but he did most abominably in following idols, like the Canaanites; his immoralities were very provoking to God, but his idolatries were especially so. Israel's case was sad when a prince of such a character as this reigned over them.

II The message with which Elijah was sent to him, when he went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, 1Ki 21:17-19.

1. Hitherto God kept silence, did not intercept Jezebel's letters, nor stay the process of the elders of Jezreel; but now Ahab is reproved and his sin set in order before his eyes.

(1.) The person sent is Elijah. A prophet of lower rank was sent with messages of kindness to him, 1Ki 20:13. But the father of the prophets is sent to try him, and condemn him, for his murder.

(2.) The place is Naboth's vineyard and the time just when he is taking possession of it; then, and there, must his doom be read him. By taking possession, he avowed all that was done, and made himself guilty ex post facto--as an accessary after the fact. There he was taken in the commission of the errors, and therefore the conviction would come upon him with so much the more

force. "What hast thou to do in this vineyard? What good canst thou expect from it when it is purchased with blood (Hab 2:12) and thou hast caused the owner thereof to lose his life?" Job 31:39. Now that he is pleasing himself with his ill-gotten wealth, and giving direction for the turning of this vineyard into a flower-garden, his meat in his bowels is turned. He shall not feel quietness. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, Job 20:14,20,23.

2. Let us see what passed between him and the prophet.

(1.) Ahab vented his wrath against Elijah, fell into a passion at the sight of him, and, instead of humbling himself before the prophet, as he ought to have done (2Ch 36:12), was ready to fly in his face. Hast thou found me, O my enemy? 1Ki 21:20. This shows,

[1.] That he hated him. The last time we found them together they parted very good friends, 1Ki 18:46. Then Ahab had countenanced the reformation, and therefore then all was well between him and the prophet; but now he had relapsed, and was worse than ever. His conscience told him he had made God his enemy, and therefore he could not expect Elijah should be his friend.

Note, That man's condition is very miserable that has made the word of God his enemy, and his condition is very desperate that reckons the ministers of that word his enemies because they tell him the truth, Ga 4:16. Ahab, having sold himself to sin, was resolved to stand to his bargain, and could not endure him that would have helped him to recover himself,

[2.] That he feared him: Hast thou found me? intimating that he shunned him all he could, and it was now a terror to him to see him. The sight of him was like that of the handwriting upon the wall to Belshazzar; it made his countenance change, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

Never was poor debtor or criminal so confounded at the sight of the officer that came to arrest him. Men may thank themselves if they make God and his word a terror to them.

(2.) Elijah denounced God's wrath against Ahab: I have found thee (says he, 1Ki 21:20), because thou hast sold thyself to work evil. Note, Those that give up themselves to sin will certainly be found out, sooner or later, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. Ahab is now set to the bar, as Naboth was, and trembles more than he did.

[1.] Elijah finds the indictment against him, and convicts him upon the notorious evidence of the fact (1Ki 21:19): Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? He was thus charged with the murder of Naboth, and it would not serve him to say the law killed him (perverted justice is the highest injustice), nor that, if he was unjustly prosecuted, it was not his doing--he knew nothing of it; for it was to please him that it was done, and he had shown himself pleased with it, and so had made himself guilty of all that was done in the unjust prosecution of Naboth. He killed, for he took possession. If he takes the garden, he takes the guilt with it. Terra transit cum onere--The land with the incumbrance.

[2.] He passes judgment upon him. He told him from God that his family should be ruined and rooted out (1Ki 21:21) and all his posterity cut off,--that his house should be made like the houses of his wicked predecessors, Jeroboam and Baasha (1Ki 21:22), particularly that those who died in the city should be meat for dogs and those who died in the field meat for birds (1Ki 21:24), which had been foretold of Jeroboam's house (1Ki 14:11), and of Baasha's (1Ki 16:4),-- that Jezebel, particularly, should be devoured by dogs (1Ki 21:23), which was fulfilled (2Ki 9:36),--and, as for Ahab himself, that the dogs should lick his blood in the very same place where they licked Naboth's (1Ki 21:19-- "Thy blood, even thine, though it be royal blood, though it swell thy veins with pride and boil in thy heart with anger, shall ere long be

an entertainment for the dogs"), which was fulfilled, 1Ki 22:38. This intimates that he should die a violent death, should come to his grave with blood, and that disgrace should attend him, the foresight of which must needs be a great mortification to such a proud man. Punishments after death are here most insisted on, which, though such as affected the body only, were perhaps designed as figures of the soul's misery after death.

III. Ahab's humiliation under the sentence passed upon him, and the favourable message sent him thereupon. 1. Ahab was a kind of penitent. The message Elijah delivered to him in God's name put him into a fright for the present, so that he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth, 1Ki 21:27. He was still a proud hardened sinner, and yet thus reduced. Note, God can make the stoutest heart to tremble and the proudest to humble itself. His word is quick and powerful, and is, when the pleases to make it so, like a fire and a hammer, Jer 23:29. It made Felix tremble. Ahab put on the garb and guise of a penitent, and yet his heart was unhumbled and unchanged. After this, we find, he hated a faithful prophet, 1Ki 22:8.

Note, It is no new thing to find the show and profession of repentance where yet the truth and substance of it are wanting. Ahab's repentance was only what might be seen of men: Seest thou (says God to Elijah) how Ahab humbles himself; it was external only, the garments rent, but not the heart. A hypocrite may go very far in the outward performance of holy duties and yet come short.

2. He obtained hereby a reprieve, which I may call a kind of pardon. Though it was but an outside repentance (lamenting the judgment only, and not the sin), though he did not leave his idols, nor restore the vineyard to Naboth's heirs, yet, because he did hereby give some glory to God, God took notice of it, and bade Elijah take notice of it: Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself? 1Ki 21:29. In consideration of this the threatened ruin of his

house, which had not been fixed to any time, should be adjourned to his son's days. The sentence should not be revoked, but the execution suspended. Now,

(1.) This discovers the great goodness of God, and his readiness to show mercy, which here rejoices against judgment. Favour was shown to this wicked man that God might magnify his goodness (says bishop Sanderson) even to the hazard of his other divine perfections; as if (says he) God would be thought unholy, or untrue, or unjust (though he be none of these), or any thing, rather than unmerciful.

(2.) This teaches us to take notice of that which is good even in those who are not so good as they should be: let it be commended as far as it goes.

(3.) This gives a reason why wicked people sometimes prosper long; God is rewarding their external services with external mercies.

(4.) This encourages all those that truly repent and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel. If a pretending partial penitent shall go to his house reprieved, doubtless a sincere penitent shall go to his house justified.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee:* because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord.

21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel,

22 and will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the

provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin.

23 And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

24 Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

26 And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all *things* as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.

27 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

28 And the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

29 Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: *but* in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

1 Kings-22

Micaiah Prophesies the Defeat of Ahab and Jehoshaphat

1 And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel.

2 And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.

3 And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead *is* ours, and we *be* still, *and* take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?

4 And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

Though Ahab continued under guilt and wrath, and the dominion of the lusts to which he had sold himself, yet, as a reward for his

professions of repentance and humiliation, though the time drew near when he should descend into battle and perish, yet we have him blessed with a three years' peace (1Ki 22:1) and an honourable visit made him by Jehoshaphat king of Judah, 1Ki 22:2 The Jews have a fabulous conceit, that when Ahab humbled himself for his sin, and lay in sackcloth, he sent for Jehoshaphat to come to him, to chastise him; and that he staid with him for some time, and gave him so many stripes every day. This is a groundless tradition. He came now, it is probable, to consult him about the affairs of their kingdoms. It is strange that so great a man as Jehoshaphat would pay so much respect to a kingdom revolted from the house of David, and that so good a man should show so much kindness to a king revolted from the worship of God. But, though he was a godly man, his temper was too easy, which betrayed him into snares and inconveniences. The Syrians durst not give Ahab any disturbance. But,

I. Ahab here meditates a war against the Syrians, and advises concerning it with those about him, 1Ki 22:3. The king of Syria gave him the provocation; when he lay at his mercy, he promised to restore him his cities (1Ki 20:34), and Ahab foolishly took his word, when he ought not to have dismissed him till the cities were put into his possession. But now he knows by experience, what he ought before to have considered, that as the kisses, so the promises, of an enemy are deceitful, and there is no confidence to be put in leagues extorted by distress. Benhadad is one of those princes that think themselves bound by their word no further and no longer than it is for their interest. Whether any other cities were restored we do not find, but Ramoth-Gilead was not, a considerable city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan, a Levites' city, and one of the cities of refuge. Ahab blames himself, and his people, that they did not bestir themselves to recover it out of the hands of the Syrians, and to chastise Ben-hadad's violation of his league; and resolves to let that ungrateful perfidious prince know that as he had given him peace he could

give him trouble. Ahab has a good cause, yet succeeds not. Equity is not to be judged of by prosperity.

II. He engages Jehoshaphat, and draws him in, to join with him in this expedition, for the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead, 1Ki 22:4. And here I do not wonder that Ahab should desire the assistance of so pious and prosperous a neighbour. Even bad men have often coveted the friendship of the good. It is desirable to have an interest in those that have an interest in heaven, and to have those with us that have God with them. But it is strange that Jehoshaphat will go so entirely into Ahab's interests as to say, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people. I hope not; Jehoshaphat and his people are not so wicked and corrupt as Ahab and his people. Too great a complaisance to evildoers has brought many good people, through unwariness, into a dangerous fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Jehoshaphat had like to have paid dearly for his compliment when, in battle, he was taken for Ahab. Yet some observe that in joining with Israel against Syria he atoned for his father's fault in joining with Syria against Israel, 1Ki 15:19,20.

III. At the special instance and request of Jehoshaphat, he asks counsel of the prophets concerning this expedition. Ahab thought it enough to consult with his statesmen, but Jehoshaphat moves that they should enquire of the word of the Lord, 1Ki 22:5. Note,

1. Whithersoever a good man goes he desires to take God along with him, and will acknowledge him in all his ways, ask leave of him, and look up to him for success.

2. Whithersoever a good man goes he ought to take his religion along with him, and not be ashamed to own it, no, not when he is with those who have no kindness for it. Jehoshaphat has not left behind him, at Jerusalem, his affection, his veneration, for the word of the Lord, but both avows it and endeavours to introduce

it into Ahab's court. If Ahab drew him into his wars, he will draw Ahab into his devotions.

IV. Ahab's 400 prophets, the standing regiment he had of them (prophets of the groves they called them), agreed to encourage him in this expedition and to assure him of success, 1Ki 22:6. He put the question to them with a seeming fairness: Shall I go or shall I forbear? But they knew which way his inclination was and designed only to humour the two kings. To please Jehoshaphat, they made use of the name Jehovah: He shall deliver it into the hand of the king; they stole the word from the true prophets (Jer 23:30) and spoke their language.

To please Ahab they said, Go up. They had indeed probabilities on their side: Ahab had, not long since, beaten the Syrians twice; he had now a good cause, and was much strengthened by his alliance with Jehoshaphat. But they pretended to speak by prophecy, not by rational conjecture, by divine, not human, foresight: "Thou shalt certainly recover Ramoth-Gilead." Zedekiah, a leading man among these prophets, in imitation of the true prophets, illustrated his false prophecy with a sign, 1Ki 22:11. He made himself a pair of iron horns, representing the two kings, and their honour and power (both of which were signified by horns, exaltation and force), and with these the Syrians must be pushed. All the prophets agreed, as one man, that Ahab should return from this expedition a conqueror, 1Ki 22:12. Unity is not always the mark of a true church and a true ministry. Here were 400 men that prophesied with one mind and one mouth, and yet all in an error.

V. Jehoshaphat cannot relish this sort of preaching; it is not like what he was used to. The false prophets cannot so mimic the true but that he who had spiritual senses exercised could discern the fallacy, and therefore he enquired for a prophet of the Lord besides, 1Ki 22:7. He is too much of a courtier to say any thing by way of reflection on the king's chaplains, but he waits to see a

prophet of the Lord, intimating that he could not look upon these to be so. They seemed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it made no matter to him), but, in conference, they added nothing to him, they gave him no satisfaction, Ga 2:6. One faithful prophet of the Lord was worth them all.

VI. Ahab has another, but one he hates, Micaiah by name, and, to please Jehoshaphat, he is willing to have him sent for, 1Ki 22:8-10. Ahab owned that they might enquire of the Lord by him, that he was a true prophet, and one that knew God's mind. And yet,

1. He hated him, and was not ashamed to own to the king of Judah that he did so, and to give this for a reason. He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And whose fault was that? If Ahab had done well, he would have heard nothing but good from heaven; if he do ill, he may thank himself for all the uneasiness which the reproofs and threats of God's word gave him. Note, Those are wretchedly hardened in sin, and are ripening apace for ruin, who hate God's ministers because they deal plainly with them and faithfully warn them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and reckon those their enemies that tell them the truth.

2. He had (it should seem) imprisoned him; for, when he committed him (1Ki 22:26), he bade the officer carry him back, namely, to the place whence he came. We may suppose that this was he that reproved him for his clemency to Ben-hadad (1Ki 20:38-43, &c.) and for so doing was cast into prison, where he had lain these three years.

This was the reason why Ahab knew where to find him so readily, 1Ki 22:9. But his imprisonment had not excluded him for divine visits: the spirit of prophecy continued with him there. He was bound, but the word of the Lord was not. Nor did it in the lease abate his courage, nor make him less confident or faithful in delivering his message. Jehoshaphat gave too gentle a reproof to

Ahab for expressing his indignation against a faithful prophet: Let not the king say so, 1Ki 22:8. He should have said, "Thou art unjust to the prophet, unkind to thyself, and puttest an affront upon his Lord and thine, in saying so." Such sinners as Ahab must be rebuked sharply.

However he so far yielded to the reproof that, for fear of provoking Jehoshaphat to break off from his alliance with him, he orders Micaiah to be sent for with all speed, 1Ki 22:9. The two kings sat each in their robes and chairs of state, in the gate of Samaria, ready to receive this poor prophet, and to hear what he had to say; for many will give God's word the hearing that will not lend it an obedient ear. They were attended with a crowd of flattering prophets, that could not think of prophesying any thing but what was very sweet and very smooth to two such glorious princes now in confederacy. Those that love to be flattered shall not want flatterers.

VII. Micaiah is pressed by the officer that fetches him to follow the cry, 1Ki 22:13. That officer was unworthy the name of an Israelite who pretended to prescribe to a prophet; but he thought him altogether such a one as the rest, who studied to please men and not God. He told Micaiah how unanimous the other prophets were in foretelling the king's good success, how agreeable it was to the king, intimating that it was his interest to say as they said--he might thereby gain, not only enlargement, but preferment. Those that dote upon worldly things themselves think every body else should do so too, and true or false, right or wrong, speak and act for their secular interest only.

He intimated likewise that it would be to no purpose to contradict such a numerous and unanimous vote; he would be ridiculed, as affecting a foolish singularity, if he should. But Micaiah, who knows better things, protests, and backs his protestation with an oath, that he will deliver his message from God with all faithfulness, whether it be pleasing or displeasing to his prince

(1Ki 22:14): "What the Lord saith to me, that will I speak, without addition, diminution, or alteration." This was nobly resolved, and as became one who had his eye to a greater King than either of these, arrayed with brighter robes, and sitting on a higher throne.

5 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.

6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

7 And Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?

8 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten *hither* Micaiah the son of Imlah.

10 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

11 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them.

12 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver *it* into the king's hand.

13 And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets *declare* good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak *that which is* good.

14 And Micaiah said, *As* the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.

15 So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he

answered him, Go, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

16 And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but *that which is* true in the name of the Lord?

17 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace.

18 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?

19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

20 And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

Here Micaiah does well, but, as is common, suffers ill for so doing.

I. We are told how faithfully he delivered his message, as one that was more solicitous to please God than to humour either the great or the many. In three ways he delivers his message, and all displeasing to Ahab:--

1. He spoke as the rest of the prophets had spoken, but ironically: Go, and prosper, 1Ki 22:15. Ahab put the same question to him that he had put to his own prophets (Shall we go, or shall we forbear?) seeming desirous to know God's mind, when, like Balaam, he was strongly bent to do his own, which Micaiah plainly took notice of when he bade him go, but with such an air and pronunciation as plainly showed he spoke it by way of derision; as if he had said, "I know you are determined to go, and I hear your own prophets are unanimous in assuring you of success; go then and take what follows.

They say, The Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king; but I do not tell thee that thus saith the Lord; no, he saith otherwise." Note, Those deserve to be bantered that love to be flattered; and it is just with God to give up those to their own counsels that give up themselves to their own lusts. Ec 11:9. In answer to this Ahab adjured him to tell him the truth, and not to jest with him (1Ki 22:16), as if he sincerely desired to know both what God would have him to do and what he would do with him, yet intending to represent the prophet as a perverse ill-humoured man, that would not tell him the truth till he was thus put to his oath, or adjured to do it.

2. Being thus pressed, he plainly foretold that the king would be cut off in this expedition, and his army scattered, 1Ki 22:17. He saw them in a vision, or in a dream, dispersed upon the mountains, as sheep that had no one to guide them. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, Zec 13:7. This intimates,

(1.) That Israel should be deprived of their king, who was their shepherd. God took notice of it, These have no master.

(2.) That they would be obliged to retire re infecta--without accomplishing their object. He does not foresee any great slaughter in the army, but that they should make a dishonorable retreat. Let them return every man to his house in peace, put into disorder indeed for the present, but no great losers by the death of their king; he shall fall in war, but they shall go home in peace. Thus Micaiah, in his prophecy, testified what he had seen and heard (let them take it how they pleased), while the others prophesied merely out of their own hearts; see Jer 23:28. "The prophet that has a dream let him tell that, and so quote his authority; and he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully, and not his own; for what is the chaff to the wheat?"

Now Ahab finds himself aggrieved, turns to Jehoshaphat, and appeals to him whether Micaiah had not manifestly a spite against

him, 1Ki 22:18. Those that bear malice to others are generally willing to believe that others bear malice to them, though they have no cause for it, and therefore to put the worst constructions upon all they say. What evil did Micaiah prophesy to Ahab in telling him that, if he proceeded in this expedition, it would be fatal to him, while he might choose whether he would proceed in it or no? The greatest kindness we can do to one that is going a dangerous way is to tell him of his danger.

3. He informed the king how it was that all his prophets encouraged him to proceed, that God permitted Satan by them to deceive him into his ruin, and he by vision knew of it; it was represented to him, and he represented it to Ahab, that the God of heaven had determined he should fall at Ramoth-Gilead (1Ki 22:19,20), that the favour he had wickedly shown to Ben-hadad might be punished by him and his Syrians, and that he being in some doubt whether he should go to Ramoth-Gilead or no, and resolving to be advised by his prophets, they should persuade him to it and prevail (1Ki 22:21,22); and hence it was that they encouraged him with so much assurance (1Ki 22:23); it was a lie from the father of lies, but by divine permission.

This matter is here represented after the manner of men. We are not to imagine that God is ever put upon new counsels, or is ever at a loss for means whereby to effect his purposes, nor that he needs to consult with angels, or any creature, about the methods he should take, nor that he is the author of sin or the cause of any man's either telling or believing a lie; but, besides what was intended by this with reference to Ahab himself, it is to teach us,

(1.) That God is a great king above all kings, and has a throne above all the thrones of earthly princes. "You have your thrones," said Micaiah to these two kings, "and you think you may do what you will, and we must all say as you would have us; but I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and every man's judgment

proceeding from him, and therefore I must say as he says; he is not a man, as you are."

(2.) That he is continually attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, those heavenly hosts, who stand by him, ready to go where he sends them and to do what he bids them, messengers of mercy on his right hand, of wrath on his left hand.

(3.) That he not only takes cognizance of, but presides over, all the affairs of this lower world, and overrules them according to the counsel of his own will. The rise and fall of princes, the issues of war, and all the great affairs of state, which are the subject of the consultations of wise and great men, are no more above God's direction than the meanest concerns of the poorest cottages are below his notice.

(4.) That God has many ways of bringing about his own counsels, particularly concerning the fall of sinners when they are ripe for ruin; he can do it either in this manner or in that manner.

(5.) That there are malicious and lying spirits which go about continually seeking to devour, and, in order to that, seeking to deceive, and especially to put lies into the mouths of prophets, by them to entice many to their destruction.

(6.) It is not without the divine permission that the devil deceives men, and even thereby God serves his own purposes. With him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceivers are his, Job 12:16. When he pleases, for the punishment of those who receive not the truth in the love of it, he not only lets Satan loose to deceive them (Re 20:7,8), but gives men up to strong delusions to believe him, 2Th 2:11,12.

(7.) Those are manifestly marked for ruin that are thus given up. God has certainly spoken evil concerning those whom he had given up to be imposed upon by lying prophets. Thus Micaiah

gave Ahab fair warning, not only of the danger of proceeding in this war, but of the danger of believing those that encouraged him to proceed. Thus we are warned to beware of false prophets, and to try the spirits; the lying spirit never deceives so fatally as in the mouth of prophets.

II. We are told how he was abused for delivering his message thus faithfully, thus plainly, in a way so very proper both to convince and to affect.

1. Zedekiah, a wicked prophet, impudently insulted him in the face of the court, smote him on the cheek, to reproach him, to silence him and stop his mouth, and to express his indignation at him (thus was our blessed Saviour abused, Mt 26:67, that Judge of Israel, Mic 5:1); and as if he not only had the spirit of the Lord, but the monopoly of this Spirit, that he might not go without his leave, he asks, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee? 1Ki 22:24. The false prophets were always the worst enemies the true prophets had, and not only stirred up the government against them, but were themselves abusive to them, as Zedekiah here.

To strike within the verge of the court, especially in the king's presence, is looked upon by our law as a high misdemeanour; yet this wicked prophet gives this abuse to a prophet of the Lord, and is not reprimanded nor bound to his good behaviour for it. Ahab was pleased with it, and Jehoshaphat had not courage to appear for the injured prophet, pretending it was out of his jurisdiction; but Micaiah, though he returns not his blow (God's prophets are not strikers nor persecutors, dare not avenge themselves, render blow for blow, or be in any way accessory to the breach of the peace), yet, since he boasted so much of the Spirit, as those commonly do that know least of his operations, he leaves him to be convinced of his error by the event: Thou shalt know when thou hidest thyself in an inner chamber, 1Ki 22:25.

It is likely Zedekiah went with Ahab to the battle, and took his horns of iron with him to encourage the soldiers, to see with pleasure the accomplishment of his prophecy, and return in triumph with the king; but, the army being routed, he fled among the rest from the sword of the enemy, sheltered himself as Ben-hadad had done in a chamber within a chamber (1Ki 20:30), lest he should perish, as he knew he deserved to do, with those whom he had deluded, as Balaam did (Nu 31:8), and lest the blind prophet should fall into the ditch with the blinded prince whom he had misled. Note, Those that will not have their mistakes rectified in time by the word of God will be undeceived, when it is too late, by the judgments of God.

2. Ahab, that wicked king, committed him to prison (1Ki 22:27), not only ordered him to be taken into custody, or remitted to the prison whence he came, but to be fed with bread and water, coarse bread and puddle-water, till he should return, not doubting but that he should return a conqueror, and then he would put him to death for a false prophet (1Ki 22:27)-- hard usage for one that would have prevented his ruin! But by this it appeared that God had determined to destroy him, as 2Ch 25:16. How confident is Ahab of success. He doubts not but he shall return in peace, forgetting what he himself had reminded Ben-hadad of, Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast; but there was little likelihood of his coming home in peace when he left one of God's prophets behind him in prison.

Mcaiah put it upon the issue, and called all the people to be witnesses that he did so: "If thou return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me, 1Ki 22:28. Let me incur the reproach and punishment of a false prophet, if the king come home alive." He ran no hazard by this appeal, for he knew whom he had believed; he that is terrible to the kings of the earth, and treads upon princes as mortar, will rather let thousands of them fall to the ground than one jot or tittle of his own word; he will not fail to confirm the word of his servants, Isa 44:26.

21 And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said,
I will persuade him.
22 And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go
forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.
And he said, Thou shalt persuade *him*, and prevail also: go forth,
and do so.
23 Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the
mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil
concerning thee.
24 But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah
on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord
from me to speak unto thee?
25 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou
shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.
26 And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto
Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;
27 and say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and feed
him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I
come in peace.
28 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not
spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.
29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to
Ramoth-gilead.
30 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself,
and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king
of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.
31 But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that
had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor
great, save only with the king of Israel.
32 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw
Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it *is* the king of Israel. And they
turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out.
33 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived
that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from
pursuing him.

34 And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

The matter in contest between God's prophet and Ahab's prophets is here soon determined, and it is made to appear which was in the right. Here,

I The two kings march with their forces to Ramoth-Gilead, 1Ki 22:29. That the king of Israel, who hated God's prophet, should so far disbelieve his admonition as to persist in his resolution, notwithstanding, is not strange; but that Jehoshaphat, that pious prince, who had desired to enquire by a prophet of the Lord, as disrelishing and discrediting Ahab's prophets, should yet proceed, after so fair a warning, is matter of astonishment. But by the easiness of his temper he was carried away with the delusion (as Barnabas was with the dissimulation, Ga 2:13) of his friends.

He gave too much heed to Ahab's prophets, because they pretended to speak from God too, and in his country he had never been imposed upon by such cheats. He was ready to give his opinion with the majority, and to conclude that it was 400 to one but they should succeed. Micaiah had not forbidden them to go; nay, at first, he said, Go, and prosper. If it came to the worst, it was only Ahab's fall that was foretold, and therefore Jehoshaphat hoped he might safely venture.

II. Ahab adopts a contrivance by which he hopes to secure himself and expose his friend (1Ki 22:30): "I will disguise myself, and go in the habit of a common soldier, but let Jehoshaphat put on his robes, to appear in the dress of a general." He pretended thereby to do honour to Jehoshaphat, and to compliment him with the sole command of the army in this action. He shall direct and give orders, and Ahab will serve as a soldier under him. But he intended,

1. To make a liar of a good prophet. Thus he hoped to elude the danger, and so to defeat the threatening, as if, by disguising himself, he could escape the divine cognizance and the judgments that pursued him.

2. To make a fool of a good king, whom he did not cordially love, because he was one that adhered to God and so condemned his apostasy. He knew that if any perished it must be the shepherd (so Micaiah had foretold); and perhaps he had intimation of the charge the enemy had to fight chiefly against the king of Israel, and therefore basely intended to betray Jehoshaphat to the danger, that he might secure himself.

Ahab was marked for ruin; one would not have been in his coat for a great sum; yet he will over-persuade this godly king to muster for him. See what those get that join in affinity with vicious men, whose consciences are debauched, and who are lost to every thing that is honourable. How can it be expected that he should be true to his friend that has been false to his God?

III. Jehoshaphat, having more piety than policy, put himself into the post of honour, though it was the post of danger, and was thereby brought into the peril of his life, but God graciously delivered him. The king of Syria charged his captains to level their force, not against the king of Judah, for with him he had no quarrel, but against the king of Israel only (1Ki 22:31), to aim at his person, as if against him he had a particular enmity.

Now Ahab was justly repaid for sparing Ben-hadad, who, as the seed of the serpent commonly do, stung the bosom in which he was fostered and saved from perishing. Some think that he designed only to have him taken prisoner, that he might now give him as honourable a treatment as he had formerly received from him. Whatever was the reason, this charge the officers received, and endeavoured to oblige their prince in this matter; for, seeing

Jehoshaphat in his royal habit, they took him for the king of Israel, and surrounded him. Now,

1. By his danger God let him know that he was displeased with him for joining in confederacy with Ahab. Jehoshaphat had said, in compliment to Ahab (1Ki 22:4), I am as thou art; and now he was indeed taken for him. Those that associate with evil doers are in danger of sharing in their plagues.

2. By his deliverance God let him know that, though he was displeased with him, yet he had not deserted him. Some of the captains that knew him perceived their mistake, and so retired from the pursuit of him; but it is said (2Ch 18:31) that God moved them (for he has all hearts in his hand) to depart from him. To him he cried out, not in cowardice, but devotion, and from him his relief came: Ahab was in no care to succour him. God is a friend that will not fail us when other friends do.

IV. Ahab receives his mortal wound in the battle, notwithstanding his endeavours to secure himself in the habit of a private sentinel. Let no man think to hide himself from God's judgment, no, not in masquerade. Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies, whatever disguise they are in, 1Ki 22:34. The Syrian that shot him little thought of doing such a piece of service to God and his king; for he drew a bow at a venture, not aiming particularly at any man, yet God so directed the arrow that,

1. He hit the right person, the man that was marked for destruction, whom, if they had taken alive, as was designed, perhaps Ben-hadad would have spared. Those cannot escape with life whom God hath doomed to death.

2. He hit him in the right place, between the joints of the harness, the only place about him where this arrow of death could find entrance. No armour is of proof against the darts of divine vengeance. Case the criminal in steel, and it is all one, he that

made him can make his sword to approach him. That which to us seems altogether casual is done by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God.

V. The army is dispersed by the enemy and sent home by the king. Either Jehoshaphat or Ahab ordered the retreat of the sheep, when the shepherd was smitten: Every man to his city, for it is to no purpose to attempt any thing more, 1Ki 22:36. Ahab himself lived long enough to see that part of Micaiah's prophecy accomplished that all Israel should be scattered upon the mountains of Gilead (1Ki 22:17), and perhaps with his dying lips did himself give orders for it; for though he would be carried out of the army, to have his wounds dressed (1Ki 22:34), yet he would be held up in his chariot, to see if his army were victorious.

But, when he saw the battle increase against them, his spirits sunk, and he died, but his death was so lingering that he had time to feel himself die; and we may well imagine with what horror he now reflected upon the wickedness he had committed, the warnings he had slighted, Baal's altars, Naboth's vineyard, Micaiah's imprisonment. Now he sees himself flattered into his own ruin, and Zedekiah's horns of iron pushing, not the Syrians, but himself, into destruction. Thus is he brought to the king of terrors without hope in his death.

VI. The royal corpse is brought to Samaria and buried there (1Ki 22:37), and hither are brought the bloody chariot and bloody armour in which he died, 1Ki 22:38. One particular circumstance is taken notice of, because there was in it the accomplishment of a prophecy, that when they brought the chariot to the pool of Samaria, to be washed, the dogs (and swine, says the LXX.) gathered about it, and, as is usual, licked the blood, or, as some think, the water in which it was washed, with which the blood was mingled: the dogs made no difference between royal blood and other blood. Now Naboth's blood was avenged (1Ki 21:19), and that word of David, as well as Elijah's word, was fulfilled (Ps

68:23), That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thy enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. The dogs licking the guilty blood was perhaps designed to represent the terrors that prey upon the guilty soul after death.

Lastly, The story of Ahab is here concluded in the usual form, 1Ki 22:39,40. Among his works mention is made of an ivory house which he built, so called because many parts of it were inlaid with ivory; perhaps it was intended to vie with the stately palace of the kings of Judah, which Solomon built.

35 And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.

36 And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.

37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria.

38 And *one* washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armor; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake.

39 Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

40 So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Jehoshaphat

41 And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.

42 Jehoshaphat *was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

43 And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing *that which was* right in the eyes of the Lord :

nevertheless the high places were not taken away; *for* the people
offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.44 And Jehoshaphat
made peace with the king of Israel.

45 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he showed,
and how he warred, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles
of the kings of Judah?

Here is, I. A short account of the reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, of which we shall have a much fuller narrative in the book of Chronicles, and of the greatness and goodness of that prince, neither of which was lessened or sullied by any thing but his intimacy with the house of Ahab, which, upon several accounts, was a diminution to him. His confederacy with Ahab in war we have already found dangerous to him, and his confederacy with Ahaziah his son in trade sped no better. He offered to go partner with him in a fleet of merchant-ships, that should fetch gold from Ophir, as Solomon's navy did, 1Ki 22:49. See 2Ch 20:35,36.

But, while they were preparing to set sail, they were exceedingly damaged and disabled by a storm (broken at Ezion-geber), which a prophet gave Jehoshaphat to understand was a rebuke to him for his league with wicked Ahaziah (2Ch 20:37); and therefore, as we are told here (1Ki 22:49), when Ahaziah desired a second time to be a partner with him, or, if that could not be obtained, that he might but send his servants with some effects of board Jehoshaphat's ships, he refused: Jehoshaphat would not. The rod of God, expounded by the word of God, had effectually broken him off from his confederacy with that ungodly unhappy prince. Better buy wisdom dear than be without it; but experience is therefore said to be the mistress of fools because those are fools that will not learn till they are taught by experience, and particularly till they are taught the danger of associating with wicked people. Now Jehoshaphat's reign appears here to have been none of the longest, but one of the best.

1. It was none of the longest, for he reigned but twenty-five years (1Ki 22:42), but then it was in the prime of his time, between

thirty-five and sixty, and these twenty-five, added to his father's happy forty-one, give us a grateful idea of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah, and of religion in it, for a great while, even when things were very bad, upon all accounts, in the kingdom of Israel. If Jehoshaphat reigned not so long as his father, to balance this he had not those blemishes on the latter end of his reign that his father had (2Ch 16:9,10,12), and it is better for a man that has been in reputation for wisdom and honour to die in the midst of it than to outlive it.

2. Yet is was one of the best, both in respect of piety and prosperity.

(1.) He did well: He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord (1Ki 22:43), observed the commands of his God, and trod in the steps of his good father; and he persevered therein: He turned not aside from it. Yet every man's character has some but or other, so had his; the high places were not taken away, no not out of Judah and Benjamin, though those tribes lay so near Jerusalem that they might easily bring their offerings and incense to the altar there, and could not pretend, as some other of the tribes, the inconveniency of lying remote. But old corruptions are with difficulty rooted out, especially when they have formerly had the patronage of those that were good, as the high places had of Samuel, Solomon, and some others.

(2.) His affairs did well. He prevented the mischiefs which had attended their wars with the kingdom of Israel, establishing a lasting peace (1Ki 22:44), which would have been a greater blessing if he had contented himself with a peace, and not carried it on to an affinity with Israel; he put a deputy, or viceroy, in Edom, so that the kingdom was tributary to him (1Ki 22:47), and therein the prophecy concerning Esau and Jacob was fulfilled, that the elder should serve the younger. And, in general, mention is made of his might and his wars, 1Ki 22:45. He pleased God, and God blessed him with strength and success. His death is

spoken of (1Ki 22:50), to shut up his story, yet, in the history of the kings of Israel, we find mention of him afterwards, 2Ki 3:7.

II The beginning of the story of Ahaziah the son of Ahab, 1Ki 22:51-53. His reign was very short, not two years. Some sinners God makes quick work with. It is a very bad character that is here given him. He not only kept up Jeroboam's idolatry, but the worship of Baal likewise; though he had heard of the ruin of Jeroboam's family, and had seen his own father drawn into destruction by the prophets of Baal, who had often been proved false prophets, yet he received no instruction, took no warning, but followed the example of his wicked father and the counsel of his more wicked mother Jezebel, who was still living. Miserable are the children that not only derive a stock of corruption from their parents, but are thus taught by them to trade with it; and unhappy, most unhappy parents, are those that help to damn their children's souls.

46 And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he took out of the land.

47 *There was* then no king in Edom: a deputy *was* king.

48 Jehoshaphat made ships of Tharshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.

49 Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not.

50 And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Ahaziah of Israel

51 Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel.

52 And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of
his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam
the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin:
53 for he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the
Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

The Second Book of the Kings

Commonly Called, The Fourth Book of the Kings

[2 Kings]

2 Kings-1

The Death of Ahaziah

1 Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.
2 And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that *was* in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease.
3 But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it* not because *there is* not a God in Israel, *that* ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?
4 Now therefore thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

We have here Ahaziah, the wicked king of Israel, under God's rebukes both by his providence and by his prophet, by his rod and by his word.

I. He is crossed in his affairs. How can those expect to prosper that do evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoke him to anger? When he rebelled against God, and revolted from his allegiance to him, Moab rebelled against Israel, and revolted from the subjection that had long paid to the kings of Israel, 2Ki 1:1 The Edomites that bordered on Judah, and were tributaries to the kings of Judah, still continued so, as we find in the chapter before (1Ki 22:47), till, in the wicked reign of Joram, they broke that yoke (2Ki 8:22) as the Moabites did now. If men break their covenants with us, and neglect their duty, we must reflect upon our breach of covenant with God, and the neglect of our duty to him. Sin

weakens and impoverishes us. We shall hear of the Moabites, 2Ki 3:5.

II. He is seized with sickness in body, not from any inward cause, but by a severe accident. He fell down through a lattice, and was much bruised with the fall; perhaps it threw him into a fever, 2Ki 1:2. Whatever we go, there is but a step between us and death. A man's house is his castle, but not to secure him against the judgments of God. The cracked lattice is a fatal to the son, when God pleases to make it so, as the bow drawn at a venture was to the father. Ahaziah would not attempt to reduce the Moabites, lest he should perish in the field of battle: but he is not safe, though he tarry at home. Royal palaces do not always yield firm footing. The snare is laid for the sinner in the ground where he thinks least of it, Job 18:9,10. The whole creation, which groans under the man's sin, will at length sink and break under the weight, like this lattice. He is never safe that has God for his enemy.

III. In his distress he sends messengers to enquire of the god Ekron whether he should recover or no, 2Ki 1:2. And here,

1. His enquiry was very foolish: Shall I recover? Even nature itself would rather have asked, "What means may I use that I may recover?" But as one solicitous only to know his fortune, not to know his duty, his question is only this, Shall I recover? to which a little time would give an answer. We should be more thoughtful what will become of us after death than how, or when, or where, we shall die, and more desirous to be told how we may conduct ourselves well in our sickness, and get good to our souls by it, than whether we shall recover from it.

2. His sending to Baal-zebub was very wicked; to make a dead and dumb idol, perhaps newly erected (for idolaters were fond of new gods), his oracle, was not less a reproach to his reason than to his religion. Baal-zebub, which signifies the lord of a fly, was one of their Baals that perhaps gave his answers either by the

power of the demons or the craft of the priests, with a humming noise, like that of a great fly, or that had (as they fancied) rid their country of the swarms of flies wherewith it was infested, or of some pestilential disease brought among them by flies. Perhaps this dunghill-deity was as famous then as the oracle of Delphos was, long afterwards, in Greece. In the New Testament the prince of the devils is called Beel-zebub (Mt 12:24), for the gods of the Gentiles were devils, and this perhaps grew to be one of the most famous.

IV. Elijah, by direction from God, meets the messengers, and turns them back with an answer that shall save them the labour of going to Ekron. Had Ahaziah sent for Elijah, humbled himself, and begged his prayers, he might have had an answer of peace; but if he send to the god of Ekron, instead of the God of Israel, this, like Saul's consulting the witch, shall fill the measure of his iniquity, and bring upon him a sentence of death. Those that will not enquire of the word of God for their comfort shall be made to hear it, whether they will or not, to their amazement.

1. He faithfully reproves his sin (2Ki 1:3): Is it not because there is not (that is, because you think there is not) a God in Israel (because there is no God, none in Israel, so it may be read), that you go to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, a despicable town of the Philistines (Zec 9:7), long since vanquished by Israel? Here,

(1.) The sin was bad enough, giving that honour to the devil which is due to God alone, which was done as much by their enquiries as by their sacrifices. Note, It is a very wicked thing, upon any occasion or pretence whatsoever, to consult with the devil. This wickedness reigned in the heathen world (Isa 47:12,13) and remains too much even in the Christian world, and the devil's kingdom is supported by it.

(2.) The construction which Elijah, in God's name, puts upon it, makes it much worse: "It is because you think not only that the God of Israel is not able to tell you, but that there is no God at all in Israel, else you would not send so far for a divine answer." Note, A practical and constructive atheism is the cause and malignity of our departures from God. Surely we think there is no God in Israel when we live at large, make flesh our arm, and seek a portion in the things of this world.

2. He plainly reads his doom: Go, tell him he shall surely die, 2Ki 1:4. "Since he is so anxious to know his fate, this is it; let him make the best of it." The certain fearful looking for of judgment and indignation which this message must needs cause cannot but cut him to the heart.

V. The message being delivered to him by his servants, he enquires of them by whom it was sent to him, and concludes, by their description of him, that it must be Elijah, 2Ki 1:7,8. For,

1. His dress was the same that he had seen him in, in his father's court. He was clad in a hairy garment, and had a leathern girdle about him, was plain and homely in his garb. John Baptist, the Elias of the New Testament, herein resembled him, for his clothes were made of hair cloth, and he was girt with a leathern girdle, Mt 3:4. He that was clothed with the Spirit despised all rich and gay clothing.

2. His message was such as he used to deliver to his father, to whom he never prophesied good, but evil. Elijah is one of those witnesses that still torment the inhabitants of the earth, Re 11:10. He that was a thorn in Ahab's eyes will be so in the eyes of his son while he treads in the steps of his father's wickedness; and he is ready to cry out, as his father did, Hast thou found me, O my enemy? Let sinners consider that the word which took hold of their fathers is still as quick and powerful as ever. See Zec 1:6,Heb 4:12.

5 And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them,
Why are ye now turned back?
6 And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto
us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus
saith the Lord, *Is it* not because *there is* not a God in Israel, *that* thou
sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt
not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt
surely die.
7 And he said unto them, What manner of man *was he* which came up
to meet you, and told you these words?
8 And they answered him, *He was* a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of
leather about his loins. And he said, It *is* Elijah the Tishbite.
9 Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he
went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of a hill. And he
spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come
down.
10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I *be* a man of
God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and
thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed
him and his fifty.
11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty.
And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the
king said, Come down quickly.

Here, I The king issues out a warrant for the apprehending of Elijah. If the God of Ekron had told him he should die, it is probable he would have taken it quietly; but now that a prophet of the Lord tells him so, reproving him for his sin and reminding him of the God of Israel, he cannot bear it. So far is he from making any good improvement of the warning given him that he is enraged against the prophet; neither his sickness, nor the thoughts of death, made any good impressions upon him, nor possessed him with any fear of God.

No external alarms will startle and soften secure sinners, but rather exasperate them. Did the king think Elijah a prophet, a true prophet? Why then durst he persecute him? Did he think

him a common person? What occasion was there to send such a force, in order to seize him? Thus a band of men must take our Lord Jesus.

II The captain that was sent with his fifty soldiers found Elijah on the top of a hill (some think Carmel), and commanded him, in the king's name, to surrender himself, 2Ki 1:9. Elijah was now so far from absconding, as formerly, into the close recesses of a cave, that he makes a bold appearance on the top of a hill; experience of God's protection makes him more bold. The captain calls him a man of God, not that he believed him to be so, or reverenced him a such a one, but because he was commonly called so. Had he really looked upon him as a prophet, he would not have attempted to make him his prisoner; and, had he thought him entrusted with the word of God, he would not have pretended to command him with the word of a king.

III. Elijah calls for fire from heaven, to consume this haughty daring sinner, not to secure himself (he could have done that some other way), nor to avenge himself (for it was not his own cause that he appeared and acted in), but to prove his mission, and to reveal the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. This captain had, in scorn, called him a man of God: "If I be so," says Elijah, "thou shalt pay dearly for making a jest of it." He valued himself upon his commission (the king has said, Come down), but Elijah will let him know that the God of Israel is superior to the king of Israel and has a greater power to enforce his commands. It was not long since Elijah had fetched fire from heaven, to consume the sacrifice (1Ki 17:38), in token of God's acceptance of that sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of the people; but, they having slighted that, now the fire falls, not on the sacrifice, but on the sinners themselves, 2Ki 1:10. See here,

1. What an interest the prophets had in heaven; what the Spirit of God in them demanded the power of God effected. Elijah did but speak, and it was done. He that formerly had fetched water from heaven now fetches fire. O the power of prayer! Concerning the work of my hands, command you me, Isa 14:11.

2. What an interest heaven had in the prophets! God was always ready to plead their cause, and avenge the injuries done to them; kings shall still be rebuked for their sakes, and charged to do his prophets no harm; one Elijah is more to God than 10,000 captains and their fifties. Doubtless Elijah did this by a divine impulse, and yet our Saviour would not allow the disciples to draw it into a precedent, Lu 9:54. They were now not far from the place where Elias did this act of justice upon provoking Israelites, and would needs, in like manner, call for fire upon those provoking Samaritans. "No," says Christ, "by no means, you know not what manner of spirit you are of," that is,

(1.) "You do not consider what manner of spirit, as disciples, you are called to, and how different from that of the Old-Testament dispensation; it was agreeable enough to that dispensation of terror, and of the letter, for Elias to call for fire, but the dispensation of the Spirit and of grace will by no means allow it."

(2.) "You are not aware what manner of spirit you are, upon this occasion, actuated by, and how different from that of Elias: he did it in holy zeal, you in passion; he was concerned for God's glory, you for your own reputation only." God judges men's practices by their principles, and his judgment is according to truth.

IV. This is repeated a second time; would one think it?

1. Ahaziah sends, a second time, to apprehend Elijah (2Ki 1:11), as if he were resolved not to be baffled by omnipotence itself. Obstinate sinners must be convinced and conquered, at last, by the fire of hell, for fire from heaven, it seems, will not subdue them.

2. Another captain is ready with his fifty, who, in his blind rage against the prophet, and his blind obedience to the king, dares engage in that service which had been fatal to the last undertakers. This is as impudent and imperious as the last, and more in haste; not only, "Come down quietly, and do not struggle," but without taking any notice of what had been done, he says, "Come down quickly, and do not trifle, the king's business requires haste; come down, or I will fetch thee down."

3. Elijah relents not, but calls for another flash of lightning, which instantly lays this captain and his fifty dead upon the spot. Those that will sin like others must expect to suffer like them; God is inflexibly just.

V. The third captain humbled himself and cast himself upon the mercy of God and Elijah. It does not appear that Ahaziah ordered him to do so (his stubborn heart is as hard as ever; so regardless is he of the terrors of the Lord, so little affected with the manifestations of his wrath, and withal so prodigal of the lives of his subjects, that he sends a third with the same provoking message to Elijah), but he took warning by the fate of his predecessors, who, perhaps, lay dead before his eyes; and, instead of summoning the prophet down, fell down before him, and begged for his life and the lives of his soldiers, acknowledging their own evil deserts and the prophet's power (2Ki 1:13,14): Let my life be precious in thy sight.

Note, There is nothing to be got by contending with God: if we would prevail with him, it must be by supplication; if we would not fall before God, we must bow before him; and those are

wise for themselves who learn submission from the fatal consequences of the obstinacy of others.

VI. Elijah does more than grant the request of this third captain. God is not so severe with those that stand it out against him but he is as ready to show mercy to those that repent and submit to him; never any found it in vain to cast themselves upon the mercy of God. This captain, not only has his life spared, but is permitted to carry his point: Elijah, being so commanded by the angel, goes down with him to the king, 2Ki 1:15. Thus he shows that he before refused to come, not because he feared the king or court, but because he would not be imperiously compelled, which would lessen the honour of his master; he magnifies his office. He comes boldly to the king, and tells him to his face (let him take it as he may) what he had before sent to him (2Ki 1:16), that he shall surely and shortly die; he mitigates not the sentence, either for fear of the king's displeasure or in pity to his misery.

The God of Israel has condemned him, let him send to see whether the god of Ekron can deliver him. So thunder-struck is Ahaziah with this message, when it comes from the prophet's own mouth, that neither he nor any of those about him durst offer him any violence, nor so much as give him an affront; but out of that den of lions he comes unhurt, like Daniel. Who can harm those whom God will shelter?

Lastly, The prediction is accomplished in a few days. Ahaziah died (2Ki 1:17), and, dying childless, left his kingdom to his brother Jehoram. His father reigned wickedly twenty-two years, he not two. Sometimes the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power; but those who therefore promise themselves prosperity in impiety may perhaps find themselves deceived; for (as bishop Hall observes here), "Some sinners live long, to aggravate their judgment, others die soon, to hasten it;" but it is certain that evil pursues sinners, and, sooner or later, it

will overtake them; nor will any thing fill the measure sooner than that complicated iniquity of Ahaziah--honouring the devil's oracles and hating God's oracles.

12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I *be* a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

13 And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.

14 Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

15 And the angel of the Lord said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

16 And he said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, *is it* not because *there is* no God in Israel to inquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

17 So he died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

2 Kings-2

Elisha Succeeds Elijah

1 And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into
heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.
2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord
hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said *unto him, As* the Lord
liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went
down to Beth-el.
3 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Beth-el came forth to
Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take
away thy master from thy head today? And he said, Yea, I know *it;*
hold ye your peace.
4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the
Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, *As* the Lord liveth,
and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho.

Elijah's times, and the events concerning him, are as little dated as those of any great man in scripture; we are not told of his age, nor in what year of Ahab's reign he first appeared, nor in what year of Joram's he disappeared, and therefore cannot conjecture how long he flourished; it is supposed about twenty years in all. Here we are told,

I. That God had determined to take him up into heaven by a whirlwind, 2Ki 2:1. He would do it, and it is probable let him know of his purpose some time before, that he would shortly take him from the world, not by death, but translate him body and soul to heaven, as Enoch was, only causing him to undergo such a change as would be necessary to the qualifying of him to be an inhabitant in that world of spirits, and such as those shall undergo who will be found alive at Christ's coming. It is not for us to say why God would put such a peculiar honour upon Elijah above any other of the prophets; he was a man subject to like passions as we are, knew sin, and yet never tasted death. Wherefore is he thus

dignified, thus distinguished, as a man whom the Kings of kings did delight to honour? We may suppose that herein,

1. God looked back upon his past services, which were eminent and extraordinary, and intended a recompence for those and an encouragement to the sons of the prophets to tread in the steps of his zeal and faithfulness, and, whatever it cost them, to witness against the corruptions of the age they lived in.

2. He looked down upon the present dark and degenerate state of the church, and would thus give a very sensible proof of another life after this, and draw the hearts of the faithful few upward towards himself, and that other life. 3. He looked forward to the evangelical dispensation, and, in the translation of Elijah, gave a type and figure of the ascension of Christ and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Elijah had, by faith and prayer, conversed much with heaven, and now he is taken thither, to assure us that if we have our conversation in heaven, while we are here on earth, we shall be there shortly, the soul shall (and that is the man) be happy there, there for ever.

II. That Elisha had determined, as long as he continued on earth to cleave to him, and not to leave him. Elijah seemed desirous to shake him off, would have had him stay behind at Gilgal, at Bethel, at Jericho, 2Ki 2:2,4,6. Some think out of humility; he knew what glory God designed for him, but would not seem to glory in it, nor desired it should be seen of men (God's favourites covet not to have it proclaimed before them that they are so, as the favourites of earthly princes do), or rather it was to try him, and make his constant adherence to him the more commendable, like Naomi's persuading Ruth to go back. In vain does Elijah entreat him to tarry here and tarry there; he resolves to tarry nowhere behind his master, till he goes to heaven, and leaves him behind on this earth. "Whatever comes of it, I will not leave thee;" and why so? Not only because he loved him, but,

1. Because he desired to be edified by his holy heavenly converse as long as he staid on earth; it had always been profitable, but, we may suppose, was now more so than ever. We should do all the spiritual good we can one to another, and get all we can one by another, while we are together, because we are to be together but a little while.

2. Because he desired to be satisfied concerning his departure, and to see him when he was taken up, that his faith might be confirmed and his acquaintance with the invisible world increased. He had long followed Elijah, and he would not leave him now when he hoped for the parting blessing. Let not those that follow Christ come short by tiring at last.

III. That Elijah, before his departure, visited the schools of the prophets and took leave of them. It seems that there were such schools in many of the cities of Israel, probably even in Samaria itself. Here we find sons of the prophets, and considerable numbers of them, even at Bethel, where one of the calves was set up, and at Jericho, which was lately built in defiance of a divine curse. At Jerusalem, and in the kingdom of Judah, they had priests and Levites, and the temple-service, the want of which, in the kingdom of Israel, God graciously made up by those colleges, where men were trained up and employed in the exercises of religion and devotion, and whither good people resorted to solemnize the appointed feasts with praying and hearing, when they had not conveniences for sacrifice or incense, and thus religion was kept up in a time of general apostasy.

Much of God was among these prophets, and more were the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife. None of all the high priests were comparable to those two great men Elijah and Elisha, who, for aught we know, never attended in the temple at Jerusalem. These seminaries of religion and virtue, which Elijah, it is probable, had been instrumental to found, he now visits, before his departure, to instruct, encourage,

and bless them. Note, Those that are going to heaven themselves ought to be concerned for those they leave behind them on earth, and to leave with them their experiences, testimonies, counsels, and prayers, 2Pe 1:15. When Christ said, with triumph, Now I am no more in the world, he added, with tenderness, But these are. Father, keep them.

IV. That the sons of the prophets had intelligence (either from Elijah himself, or by the spirit of prophecy in some of their own society), or suspected by the solemnity of Elijah's farewell, that he was now shortly to be removed; and,

1. They told Elisha of it, both at Bethel (2Ki 2:3) and at Jericho (2Ki 2:5): Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? This they said, not as upbraiding him with his loss, or expecting that when his master was gone he would be upon the level with them, but to show how full they were of the thoughts of this matter and big with expectation of the event, and to admonish Elisha to prepare for the loss. Know we not that our nearest relations, and dearest friends, must shortly be taken from us? The Lord will take them; we lose them not till he calls for them whose they are, and who taketh away and none can hinder him. He takes away superiors from our head, inferiors from our feet, equals from our arms; let us therefore carefully do the duty of every relation, that we may reflect upon it with comfort when it comes to be dissolved.

Elisha knew it too well, and sorrow had filled his heart upon this account (as the disciples in a like case, Joh 16:6), and therefore he did not need to be told of it, did not care for hearing of it, and would not be interrupted in his contemplations on this great concern, or in the least diverted from his attendance upon his master. I know it; hold you your peace. He speaks not this peevishly, or in contempt of the sons of the prophets, but as one that was himself and would have them composed and sedate, and

with an awful silence expecting the event: I know it; be silent, Zec 2:13.

2. They went themselves to be witnesses of it at a distance, though they might not closely attend (2Ki 2:7): Fifty of them stood to view afar off, intending to satisfy their curiosity, but God so ordered it that they might be eye-witnesses of the honour heaven did to that prophet, who was despised and rejected of men. God's works are well worthy our notice; when a door is opened in heaven the call is, Come up hither, come and see.

V. That the miraculous dividing of the river Jordan was the preface to Elijah's translation into the heavenly Canaan, as it had been to the entrance of Israel into the earthly Canaan, 2Ki 2:8. He must go on to the other side Jordan to be translated, because it was his native country, and that he might be near the place where Moses died, and that thus honour might be put on that part of the country which was most despised. he and Elisha might have gone over Jordan by a ferry, as other passengers did, but God would magnify Elijah in his exit, as he did Joshua in his entrance, by the dividing of this river, Jos 3:7.

As Moses with his rod divided the sea, so Elijah with his mantle divided Jordan, both being the insignia--the badges of their office. These waters of old yielded to the ark, now to the prophet's mantle, which, to those that wanted the ark was an equivalent token of God's presence. When God will take up his faithful ones to heaven death is the Jordan which, immediately before their translation, they must pass through, and they find a way through it, as safe and comfortable way; the death of Christ has divided those waters, that the ransomed of the Lord may pass over. O death! where is thy sting, thy hurt, thy terror?

5 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head today? And he answered, Yea, I know *it;* hold ye your peace.

6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, *As* the Lord liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless,* if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so.*

Here, I. Elijah makes his will, and leaves Elisha his heir, now anointing him to be prophet in his room, more than when he cast his mantle upon him, 1Ki 19:19.

1. Elijah, being greatly pleased with the constancy of Elisha's affection and attendance, bade him ask what he should do for him, what blessing he should leave him at parting; he does not say (as bishop Hall observes), "Ask of me when I am gone, in heaven I shall be better able to befriend thee," but, "Ask before I go." Our friends on earth may be spoken to, and can give us an answer, but we know not that we can have access to any friend in heaven but Christ, and God in him. Abraham is ignorant of us.

2. Elisha, having this fair opportunity to enrich himself with the best riches, prays for a double portion of his spirit. He asks not for wealth, nor honour, nor exemption from trouble, but to be qualified for the service of God and his generation, he asks,

(1.) For the Spirit, not that the gifts and graces of the Spirit were in Elijah's power to give, therefore he says not, "Give me the Spirit" (he knew very well it was God's gift), but "Let it be upon

me, intercede with God for this for me." Christ bade his disciples ask what they would, not one, but all, and promised to send the Spirit, with much more authority and assurance than Elijah could.

(2.) For his spirit, because he was to be a prophet in his room, to carry on his work, to father the sons of the prophets and face their enemies, because he had the same perverse generation to deal with that he had, so that, if he have not his spirit, he has not strength according to the day.

(3.) For a double portion of his spirit; he does not mean double to what Elijah had, but double to what the rest of the prophets had, from whom so much would not be expected as from Elisha, who had been brought up under Elijah. It is a holy ambition to covet earnestly the best gifts, and those which will render us most serviceable to God and our brethren. Note, We all ought, both ministers and people, to set before us the example of our predecessors, to labour after their spirit, and to be earnest with God for that grace which carried them through their work and enabled them to finish well.

3. Elijah promised him that which he asked, but under two provisos, 2Ki 2:10.

(1.) Provided he put a due value upon it and esteem it highly: this he teaches him to do by calling it a hard thing, not too hard for God to do, but too great for him to expect. Those are best prepared for spiritual blessings that are most sensible of their worth and their own unworthiness to receive them.

(2.) Provided he kept close to his master, even to the last, and was observant of him: If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so, otherwise not. A diligent attendance upon his master's instructions, and a careful observance of his example, particularly now in his last scene, were the condition and would be a proper means of obtaining much of his spirit. Taking strict notice of the

manner of his ascension would likewise be of great use to him. The comforts of departing saints, and their experiences, will mightily help both to gild our comforts and to steel our resolutions. Or, perhaps, this was intended only as a sign: "If God favour thee so far as to give thee a sight of me when I ascend, take that for a token that he will do this for thee, and depend upon it." Christ's disciples saw him ascend, and were thereupon assured that they should, in a little time, be filled with his Spirit, Ac 1:8. Elisha, we may suppose, hereupon prayed earnestly, Lord, show me this token for good.

II. Elijah is carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot, 2Ki 2:11. Like Enoch, he was translated, that he should not see death; and was (as Mr. Cowley expresses it) the second man that leaped the ditch where all the rest of mankind fell, and went not downward to the sky. Many curious questions might be asked about this matter, which could not be answered. Let it suffice that we are here told,

1. What his Lord, when he came, found him doing. He was talking with Elisha, instructing and encouraging him, directing him in his work, and quickening him to it, for the good of those whom he left behind. He was not meditating nor praying, as one wholly taken up with the world he was going to, but engaged in edifying discourse, as one concerned about the kingdom of God among men. We mistake if we think our preparation for heaven is carried on only by contemplation and the acts of devotion. Usefulness to others will pass as well in our account as any thing. Thinking of divine things is good, but talking of them (if it come from the heart) is better, because for edification, 1Co 14:4. Christ ascended as he was blessing his disciples.

2. What convoy his Lord sent for him--a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which appeared either descending upon them from the clouds or (as bishop Patrick thinks) running towards them upon the ground: in this form the angels appeared. The souls of all the faithful are carried by an invisible guard of angels into the bosom

of Abraham; but, Elijah being to carry his body with him, this heavenly guard was visible, not in a human shape, as usual, though they might so have borne him up in their arms, or carried him as on eagles' wings, but that would have been to carry him like a child, like a lamp (Isa 40:11,31); they appear in the form of a chariot and horses, that he may ride in state, may ride in triumph, like a prince, like a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror. The angels are called in scripture cherubim and seraphim, and their appearance here, though it may seem below their dignity, answers to both those names; for

(1.) Seraphim signifies fiery, and God is said to make them a flame of fire, Ps 104:4.

(2.) Cherubim (as many think) signifies chariots, and they are called the chariots of God (Ps 68:17), and he is said to ride upon a cherub (Ps 18:10), to which perhaps there is an allusion in Ezekiel's vision of four living creatures, and wheels, like horses and chariots; in Zechariah's vision, they are so represented, Zec 1:8,6:1,Re 6:2, &c. See the readiness of the angels to do the will go God, even in the meanest services, for the good of those that shall be heirs of salvation. Elijah must remove to the world of angels, and therefore, to show how desirous they were of his company, some of them would come to fetch him. The chariot and horses appeared like fire, not for burning, but brightness, not to torture or consume him, but to render his ascension conspicuous and illustrious in the eyes of those that stood afar off to view it. Elijah had burned with holy zeal for God and his honour, and now with a heavenly fire he was refined and translated.

3. How he was separated from Elisha. This chariot parted them both asunder. Note, The dearest friends must part. Elisha had protested he would not leave him, yet now is left behind by him.

4. Whither he was carried. He went up by a whirlwind into heaven. The fire tends upward; the whirlwind helped to carry him through the atmosphere, out of the reach of the magnetic virtue of this earth, and then how swiftly he ascended through the pure ether to the world of holy and blessed spirits we cannot conceive. "But where he stopped will ne'er be known, 'Till Phenix-nature, aged grown, To a better being shall aspire, Mounting herself, like him, to eternity in fire."
COWLEY.

Elijah had once, in a passion, wished he might die; yet God was so gracious to him as not only not to take him at his word then, but to honour him with this singular privilege, that he should never see death; and by this instance, and that of Enoch,

(1.) God showed how men should have left the world if they had not sinned, not by death, but by a translation.

(2.) He gave a glimpse of that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel, of the glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, as then to Elijah. It was also a figure of Christ's ascension.

III. Elisha pathetically laments the loss of that great prophet, but attends him with an encomium, 2Ki 2:12.

1. He saw it; thus he received the sign by which he was assured of the grant of his request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. He looked stedfastly towards heaven, whence he was to expect that gift, as the disciples did, Ac 1:10. He saw it awhile, but the vision was presently out of his sight; and he saw him no more.

2. He rent his own clothes, in token of the sense he had of his own and the public loss. Though Elijah had gone triumphantly to heaven, yet this world could ill spare him, and therefore his

removal ought to be much regretted by the survivors. Surely their hearts are hard whose eyes are dry when God, by taking away faithful useful men, calls for weeping and mourning. Though Elijah's departure made way for Elisha's eminency, especially since he was now sure of a double portion of his spirit, yet he lamented the loss of him, for he loved him, and could have served him for ever.

3. He gave him a very honourable character, as the reason why he thus lamented the loss of him.

(1.) He himself had lost the guide of his youth: My father, my father. He saw his own condition like that of a fatherless child thrown upon the world, and lamented it accordingly. Christ, when he left his disciples, did not leave them orphans (Joh 14:15), but Elijah must.

(2.) The public had lost its best guard; he was the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. He would have brought them all to heaven, as in this chariot, if it had not been their own fault; they used not chariots and horses in their wars, but Elijah was to them, by his counsels, reproofs, and prayers, better than the strongest force of chariot and horse, and kept off the judgments of God. His departure was like the routing of an army, an irreparable loss. "Better have lost all our men of war than this man of God."

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold,
there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them
both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.
12 And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of
Israel, and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more.
And he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.
13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went
back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;
14 and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the
waters, and said, Where *is* the Lord God of Elijah? And when he

also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets which *were* to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

We have here an account of what followed immediately after the translation of Elijah.

I The tokens of God's presence with Elisha, and the marks of his elevation into Elijah's room, to be, as he had been, a father to the sons of the prophets, and the chariots and horsemen of Israel.

1. He was possessed of Elijah's mantle, the badge of his office, which, we may suppose, he put on and wore for his master's sake, 2Ki 2:13. When Elijah went to heaven, though he did not let fall his body as others do, he let fall his mantle instead of it; for he was unclothed, that he might be clothed upon with immortality: he was going to a world where he needed not the mantle to adorn him, nor to shelter him from the weather, nor to wrap his face in, as 1Ki 19:13. He left his mantle as a legacy to Elisha, and, though in itself it was of small value, yet as it was a token of the descent of the Spirit upon him, it was more than if he had bequeathed to him thousands of gold and silver.

Elisha took it up, not as a sacred relic to be worshipped, but as a significant garment to be worn, and a recompence to him for his own garments which he had rent. he loved this cloak ever since it was first cast over him, 1Ki 19:19. He that then so cheerfully obeyed the summons of it, and became Elijah's servant, is now dignified with it, and becomes his successor. There are remains of great and good men, which, like this mantle, ought to be gathered up and preserved by the survivors, their sayings, their writings, their examples, that, as their works follow them in the reward of them, they may stay behind in the benefit of them.

2. He was possessed of Elijah's power to divide Jordan, 2Ki 2:14. Having parted with his father, he returns to his sons in the schools of the prophets. Jordan was between him and them; it had been divided to make way for Elijah to his glory; he will try whether it will divide to make way for him to his business, and by that he will know that God is with him, and that he has the double portion of Elijah's spirit. Elijah's last miracle shall be Elisha's first; thus he begins where Elijah left off and there is no vacancy. In dividing the waters,

(1.) He made use of Elijah's mantle, as Elijah himself had done (2Ki 2:8), to signify that he designed to keep to his master's methods and would not introduce any thing new, as those affect to do that think themselves wiser than their predecessors.

(2.) He applied to Elijah's God: Where is the Lord God of Elijah? He does not ask, "Where is Elijah?" as poring upon the loss of him, as if he could not be easy now that he was gone,--or as doubting of his happy state, as if, like the sons of the prophets here, he knew not what had become of him,--or as curiously enquiring concerning him, and the particular of that state he was removed to (no, that is a hidden life, it does not yet appear what we shall be),--nor as expecting help from him; no, Elijah is happy, but is neither omniscient nor omnipotent; but he asks, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Now that Elijah was taken to heaven God had abundantly proved himself the God of Elijah; if he had not prepared for him that city, and done better for him there than ever he did for him in this world, he would have been ashamed to be called his God, Heb 11:16; Mt 27:31,32. Now that Elijah was taken to heaven Elisha enquired,

[1.] After God. When our creature-comforts are removed, we have a God to go to, that lives for ever.

[2.] After The God of Elijah, the God that Elijah served, and honoured, and pleaded for, and adhered to when all Israel had

deserted him. This honour is done to those who cleave to God in times of general apostasy, that God will be, in a peculiar manner, their God. "The God that owned, and protected, and provided for Elijah, and many ways honoured him, especially now at last, where is he? Lord, am not I promised Elijah's spirit? Make good that promise." The words which next follow in the original, Aph-his--even he, which we join to the following clause, when he also had smitten the waters, some make an answer to this question, Where is Elijah's God? Etiam ille adhuc superest--"He is in being still, and nigh at hand. We have lost Elijah, but we have not lost Elijah's God. He has not forsaken the earth; it is even he that is still with me." Note,

First, It is the duty and interest of the saints on earth to enquire after God, and apply to him as the Lord God of the saints that have gone before to heaven, the God of our fathers.

Secondly, It is very comfortable to those who enquire of him; it is even he that is in his holy temple (Ps 11:4) and nigh to all who call upon him, Ps 145:18.

Thirdly, Those that walk in the spirit and steps of their godly faithful predecessors shall certainly experience the same grace that they experienced; Elijah's God will be Elisha's too. The Lord God of the holy prophets is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and what will it avail us to have the mantles of those that are gone, their places, their books, if we have not their spirit, their God?

3. He was possessed of Elijah's interest in the sons of the prophets, 2Ki 2:15. Some of the fellows of the college at Jericho, who had placed themselves conveniently near Jordan, to see what passed, were surprised to see Jordan divided before Elisha in his return, and took that as a convincing evidence that the spirit of Elijah did rest upon him, and that therefore they ought to pay the same respect and deference to him that they had paid to Elijah.

Accordingly they went to meet him, to congratulate him on his safe passage through fire and water, and the honour God had put upon him; and they bowed themselves to the ground before him. They were trained up in the schools; Elisha was taken from the plough; yet when they perceived that God was with him, and that this was the man whom he delighted to honour, they readily submitted to him as their head and father, as the people to Joshua when Moses was dead, Jos 1:17. Those that appear to have God's Spirit and presence with them ought to have our esteem and best affections, notwithstanding the meanness of their extraction and education. This ready submission of the sons of the prophets, no doubt, was a great encouragement to Elisha, and helped to clear his call.

II The needless search which the sons of the prophets made for Elijah.

1. They suggested that possibly he was dropped, either alive or dead, upon some mountain, or in some valley; and it would be a satisfaction to them if they sent some strong men, whom they had at command, in quest of him, 2Ki 2:16. Some of them perhaps started this as a demurrer to the choice of Elisha: "Let us first be sure that Elijah has quite gone. Can we think Elijah thus neglected by heaven, that chosen vessel thus cast away as a vessel in which was no pleasure?"

2. Elisha consented not to their motion till they overcame him with importunity, 2Ki 2:17. They urged him till he was ashamed to oppose it any further lest he should be thought wanting in his respect to his old master or loth to resign the mantle again. Wise men may yield to that, for the sake of peace and the good opinion of others, which yet their judgment is against as needless and fruitless.

3. The issue made them as much ashamed of their proposal as they, by their importunity, had made Elisha ashamed of his

opposing it. Their messengers, after they had tired themselves with fruitless search, returned with a non est inventus--he is not to be found, and gave Elisha an opportunity of upbraiding his friends with their folly: Did I not say unto you, Go not? 2Ki 2:18. This would make them the more willing to acquiesce in his judgment another time. Traversing hills and valleys will never bring us to Elijah, but the imitation of his holy faith and zeal will, in due time.

16 And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

17 And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not.

18 And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

19 And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water *is* naught, and the ground barren.

20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought *it* to him.

21 And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren *land*.

Elisha had, in this respect, a double portion of Elijah's spirit, that he wrought more miracles than Elijah. Some reckon them in number just double. Two are recorded in these verses--a miracle of mercy to Jericho and a miracle of judgment to Bethel, Ps 101:1.

I. Here is a blessing upon the waters of Jericho, which was effectual to heal them. Jericho was built in disobedience to a command, in defiance to a threatening, and at the expense of the lives of all the builder's children; yet, when it was built, it was not ordered to be demolished again, nor were God's prophets or

people forbidden to dwell in it, but even within those walls that were built by iniquity we find a nursery of piety. Fools, they say, build houses for wise men to dwell in. Here the wealth of the sinner provided a habitation for the just. We find Christ at Jericho, Lu 19:1. Hither Elisha came, to confirm the souls of the disciples with a more particular account of Elijah's translation than their spies, who saw at a distance, could give them. Here he staid while the fifty men were searching for him. And,

1 The men of Jericho represented to him their grievance, 2Ki 2:19. God's faithful prophets love to be employed; it is wisdom to make use of them during the little while that their light is with us. They had not applied to Elijah concerning the matter, perhaps because he was not so easy of access as Elisha was; but now, we may hope, by the influence of the divinity-school in their city, they were reformed. The situation was pleasant and afforded a good prospect; but they had neither wholesome water to drink nor fruitful soil to yield them food, and what pleasure could they take in their prospect? Water is a common mercy, which we should estimate by the greatness of the calamity which the want or unwholesomeness of it would be. Some think that it was not all the ground about Jericho that was barren and had bad water, but some one part only, and that where the sons of the prophets had their lodgings, who are here called the men of the city.

2. He soon redressed their grievance. Prophets should endeavour to make every place they come to, some way or other, the better for them, endeavouring to sweeten bitter spirits, and to make barren souls fruitful, by the due application of the word of God. Elisha will heal their waters; but,

(1.) They must furnish him with salt in a new cruse, 2Ki 2:20. If salt had been proper to season the water, yet what could so small a quantity do towards it and what the better for being in a new cruse? But thus those that would be helped must be employed and have their faith and obedience tried. God's works of grace are

wrought, not by any operations of ours, but in observance of his institutions.

(2.) He cast the salt into the spring of the waters, and so healed the streams and the ground they watered. Thus the way to reform men's lives is to renew their hearts; let those be seasoned with the salt of grace; for out of them are the issues of life. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good. Purify the heart and that will cleanse the hands.

(3.) He did not pretend to do this by his own power, but in God's name: Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters. He is but the instrument, the channel through which God is pleased to convey this healing virtue. By doing them this kindness with a Thus saith the Lord, they would be made the more willing hereafter, to receive from him a reproof, admonition, or command, with the same preface. If, in God's name, he can help them, in God's name let him teach and rule them. Thus saith the Lord, out of Elisha's mouth, must, ever after, be of mighty force with them.

(4.) The cure was lasting, and not for the present only: The waters were healed unto this day, 2Ki 2:22. What God does shall be for ever, Ec 3:14. When he, by his Spirit, heals a soul, there shall be no more death nor barrenness; the property is altered: what was useless and offensive becomes grateful and serviceable.

II. Here is a curse upon the children of Bethel, which was effectual to destroy them; for it was not a curse causeless. At Bethel there was another school of prophets. Thither Elisha went next, in this his primary visitation, and the scholars there no doubt welcomed him with all possible respect, but the townsmen were abusive to him. One of Jeroboam's calves was at Bethel; this they were proud of, and fond of, and hated those that reproved them. The law did not empower them to suppress this pious academy, but we may suppose it was their usual practice to jeer the prophets

as they went along the streets, to call them by some nickname or other, that they might expose them to contempt, prejudice their youth against them, and, if possible, drive them out of their town. Had the abuse done to Elisha been the first offence of that kind, it is probable that it would not have been so severely punished. But mocking the messengers of the Lord, and misusing the prophets, was one of the crying sins of Israel, as we find, 2Ch 36:16. Now here we have,

1. An instance of that sin. The little children of Bethel, the boys and girls that were playing in the streets (notice, it is likely, having come to the town of his approach), went out to meet him, not with their hosannas, as they ought to have done, but with their scoffs; they gathered about him and mocked him, as if he had been a fool, or one fit to make sport with. Among other things that they used to jeer the prophets with, they had this particular taunt for him, Go up, thou bald head, go up, thou bald head. It is a wicked thing to reproach persons for their natural infirmities or deformities; it is adding affliction to the afflicted; and, if they are as God made them, the reproach reflects upon him.

But this was such a thing as scarcely deserved to be called a blemish, and would never have been turned to his reproach if they had had any thing else to reproach him with. It was his character as a prophet that they designed to abuse. The honour God had crowned him with should have been sufficient to cover his bald head and protect him from their scoffs. They bade him go up, perhaps reflecting on the assumption of Elijah: "Thy master," they say, "has gone up; why dost not thou go up after him? Where is the fiery chariot? When shall we be rid of thee too?" These children said as they were taught; they had learned of their idolatrous parents to call foul names and give bad language, especially to prophets. These young cocks, as we say, crowed after the old ones. Perhaps their parents did at this time send them out and set them on, that, if possible, they might keep the prophet out of their town.

2. A specimen of that ruin which came down upon Israel at last, for misusing God's prophets, and of which this was intended to give them fair warning. Elisha heard their taunts, a good while, with patience; but at length the fire of holy zeal for God was kindled in his breast by the continued provocation, and he turned and looked upon them, to try if a grave and severe look would put them out of countenance and oblige them to retire, to see if he could discern in their faces any marks of ingenuousness; but they were not ashamed, neither could they blush; and therefore he cursed them in the name of the Lord, both imprecated and denounced the following judgment, not in personal revenge for the indignity done to himself, but as the mouth of divine justice to punish the dishonour done to God. His summons was immediately obeyed. Two she-bears (bears perhaps robbed of their whelps) came out of an adjacent wood, and presently killed forty-two children, 2Ki 2:24. Now in this,

(1.) The prophet must be justified, for he did it by divine impulse. Had the curse come from any bad principle God would not have said Amen to it. We may think it would have been better to have called for two rods for the correction of these children than two bears for the destruction of them. But Elisha knew, by the Spirit, the bad character of these children. He knew what a generation of vipers those were, and what mischievous enemies they would be to God's prophets if they should live to be men, who began so early to be abusive to them. He intended hereby to punish the parents and to make them afraid of God's judgments.

(2.) God must be glorified as a righteous God, that hates sin, and will reckon for it, even in little children. Let the wicked wretched brood make our flesh tremble for fear of God. Let little children be afraid of speaking wicked words, for God notices what they say. Let them not mock any for their defects in mind or body, but pity them rather; especially let them know that it is at their peril if they jeer God's people or ministers, and scoff at any for well-

doing. Let parents, that would have comfort in their children, train them up well, and do their utmost betimes to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; for, as bishop Hall says, "In vain do we look for good from those children whose education we have neglected; and in vain do we grieve for those miscarriages which our care might have prevented." Elisha comes to Bethel and fears not the revenges of the bereaved parents; God, who bade him do what he did, he knew would bear him out. Thence he goes to Mount Carmel (2Ki 2:25), where it is probable there was a religious house fit for retirement and contemplation. Thence he returned to Samaria, where, being a public place, this father of the prophets might be most serviceable. Bishop Hall observes here, "That he can never be a profitable seer who is either always or never alone."

22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

23 And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

24 And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

2 Kings-3

The Reign of Jehoram of Israel

1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and brother of Ahaziah, is here upon the throne of Israel; and, though he was but a bad man, yet two commendable things are here recorded of him:--

I. That he removed his father's idols. He did evil in many things, but not like his father Ahab or his mother Jezebel, 2Ki 3:2. Bad he was, but not so bad, so overmuch wicked, as Solomon speaks, Ec 7:17. Perhaps Jehoshaphat, though by his alliance with the house of Ahab he made his own family worse, did something towards making Ahab's better. Jehoram saw his father and brother cut off for worshipping Baal, and wisely took warning by God's judgments on them, and put away the image of Baal, resolving to worship the God of Israel only, and consult none but his prophets. So far was well, yet it did not prevent the destruction of Ahab's family, nay, that destruction came in his days, and fell immediately upon him (2Ki 9:24), though he was one of the best of the family, for then the measure of its iniquity was full. Jehoram's reformation was next to none; for,

1. He only put away the image of Baal which his father had made, and this probably in compliment to Jehoshaphat, who otherwise would not have come into confederacy with him, any more than with his brother, 1Ki 22:49. But he did not destroy the worship of Baal among the people, for Jehu found it prevalent, 2Ki 10:19. It was well to reform his family, but it was not enough; he ought to have used his power for the reforming of his kingdom.

2. When he put away the image of Baal, he adhered to the worship of the calves, that politic sin of Jeroboam, 2Ki 3:3. He departed not therefrom, because that was the state engine by which the division between the two tribes was supported. Those do not truly, nor acceptably, repent or reform, who only part with the sins that they lose by, but continue their affection to the sins that they get by.

3. He only put away the image of Baal, he did not break it in pieces, as he ought to have done. He laid it aside for the present, yet not knowing but he might have occasion for it another time;

and Jezebel, for reasons of state, was content to worship her Baal in private.

II. That he did what he could to recover his brother's losses. As he had something more of the religion of an Israelite than his father, so he had something more of the spirit of a king than his brother. Moab rebelled against Israel, immediately upon the death of Ahab, 2Ki 1:1. And we do not find that Ahaziah made any attempt to chastise or reduce them, but tamely let go his interest in them, rather than entertain the cares, undergo the fatigues, and run the hazards, of a war with them. His folly and pusillanimity herein, and his indifference to the public good, were the more aggravated because the tribute which the king of Moab paid was a very considerable branch of the revenue of the crown of Israel: 100,000 lambs, and 100,000 wethers, 2Ki 3:4.

The riches of kings then lay more in cattle than coin, and they thought it not below them to know the state of their flocks and herds themselves, because, as Solomon observes, the crown doth not endure to every generation, Pr 27:23,24. Taxes were then paid not so much in money as in the commodities of the country, which was an ease to the subject, whether it was an advantage to the prince or no. The revolt of Moab was a great loss to Israel, yet Ahaziah sat still in sloth and ease. But an upper chamber in his house proved as fatal to him as the high places of the field could have been (2Ki 1:2), and the breaking of his lattice let into his throne a man of the more active genius, that would not lose the dominion of Moab without making at least one push for its preservation.

2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord; but not like his father,
and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his
father had made.

3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of
Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

Elisha Predicts Victory over Moab

4 And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto
the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred
thousand rams, with the wool.
5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab
rebelled against the king of Israel.
6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and
numbered all Israel.
7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying,
The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me
against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I *am* as thou *art*,
my people as thy people, *and* my horses as thy horses.
8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The
way through the wilderness of Edom.
9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of
Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there
was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.
10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the Lord hath called these
three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!
11 But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the Lord, that we
may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's
servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which
poured water on the hands of Elijah.

Jehoram has no sooner got the sceptre into his hand than he takes the sword into his hand, to reduce Moab. Crowns bring great cares and perils to the heads that wear them; no sooner in honour than in war. Now here we have,

I The concerting of this expedition between Jehoram king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Jehoram levied an army (2Ki 3:6), and such an opinion he had of the godly king of Judah that,

1. He courted him to be his confederate: Wilt thou go with me against Moab? And he gained him. Jehoshaphat said, I will go up.

I am as thou art, 2Ki 3:7. Judah and Israel, though unhappily divided from each other, yet can unite against Moab a common enemy. Jehoshaphat upbraids them not with their revolt from the house of David, nor makes it an article of their alliance that they shall return to their allegiance, though he had good reason to insist upon it, but treats with Israel as a sister-kingdom. Those are no friends to their own peace and strength who can never find in their hearts to forgive and forget an old injury, and unite with those that have formerly broken in upon their rights. Quod initio non vulvit, tractu temporis invalescit--That which was originally destitute of authority in the progress of time acquires it.

2. He consulted him as his confidant, 2Ki 3:8. He took advice of Jehoshaphat, who had more wisdom and experience than himself, which way they should make their descent upon the country of Moab; and he advised that they should not march against them the nearest way, over Jordan, but go round through the wilderness of Edom, that they might take the king of Edom (who was tributary to him) and his forces along with them If two be better than one, much more will not a three-fold cord be easily broken. Jehoshaphat had like to have paid dearly for joining with Ahab, yet he joined with his son, and this expedition also had like to have been fatal to him. There is nothing got by being yoked with unbelievers.

II The great straits that the army of the confederates was reduced to in this expedition. Before they saw the face of an enemy they were all in danger of perishing for want of water, 2Ki 3:9. This ought to have been considered before they ventured a march through the wilderness, the same wilderness (or very near it) where their ancestors wanted water, Nu 20:2. God suffers his people, by their own improvidence, to bring themselves into distress, that the wisdom, power, and goodness of his providence may be glorified in their relief. What is more cheap and common than water? It is drink to every beast of the field, Ps 104:11. Yet the want of it will soon humble and ruin kings and armies. The

king of Israel sadly lamented the present distress, and the imminent danger it put them in of falling into the hands of their enemies the Moabites, to whom, when weakened by thirst, they would be an easy prey, 2Ki 3:10. it was he that had called these kings together; yet he charges it upon Providence, and reflects upon that as unkind: The Lord has called them together. Thus the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord, Pr 19:3.

III. Jehoshaphat's good motion to ask counsel of God in this exigency, 2Ki 3:11. The place they were now in could not but remind them of the wonders of which their fathers told them, the waters fetched out of the rock for Israel's seasonable supply. The thought of this, we may suppose, encouraged Jehoshaphat to ask, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, like unto Moses? He was the more concerned because it was by his advice that they fetched this compass through the wilderness, 2Ki 3:8. It was well that Jehoshaphat enquired of the Lord now, but it would have been much better if he had done it sooner, before he engaged in this war, or steered this course; so the distress might have been prevented. Good men are sometimes remiss and forgetful, and neglect their duty till necessity and affliction drive them to it.

IV. Elisha recommended as a proper person for them to consult with 2Ki 3:11. And here we may wonder,

1. That Elisha should follow the camp, especially in such a tedious march as this, as a volunteer, unasked, unobserved, and in no post of honour at all; not in the office of priest of the war (De 20:2) or president of the council of war, but in such obscurity that none of the kings knew they had such a jewel in the treasures of their camp, nor so good a friend in their retinue. We may suppose it was by special direction from heaven that Elisha attended the war, as the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. Thus does God anticipate his people with the blessings of his goodness and provide his oracles for those that provide them not for themselves.

It would often be bad with us if God did not take more care of us, both for soul and body, than we take for ourselves.

2. That a servant of the king of Israel knew of his being there when the king himself did not. Probably it was such a servant as Obadiah was to his father Ahab, one that feared the Lord; to such a one Elisha made himself known, not to the kings. The account he gives of him is that it was he that poured water on the hands of Elijah, that is, he was his servant, and particularly attended him when he washed his hands. He that will be great, let him learn to minister: he that will rise high, let him begin low.

V. The application which the kings made to Elisha. They went down to him to his quarters, 2Ki 3:12. Jehoshaphat had such an esteem for a prophet with whom the word of the Lord was that he would condescend to visit him in his own person and not send for him up to him. The other two were moved by the straits they were in to make their court to the prophet. He that humbled himself was thus exalted, and looked great, when three kings came to knock at his door, and beg his assistance; see Re 3:9.

VI. The entertainment which Elisha gave them.

1. He was very plain with the wicked king of Israel (2Ki 3:13): "What have I to do with thee? How canst thou expect an answer of peace from me? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and mother, whom thou hast countenanced and maintained in thy prosperity, and let them help thee now in thy distress." Elisha was not imposed upon, as Jehoshaphat was, by his partial and hypocritical reformation; he knew that, though he had put away the image of Baal, Baal's prophets were still dear to him, and perhaps some of the were now in his camp. "Go," said he, "go to them. Get you to the gods whom you have served, Jdg 10:14. The world and the flesh have ruled you, let them help you; why should God be enquired of by you?" Ex 14:3.

Elisha tells him to his face, in a holy indignation at his wickedness, that he can scarcely find in his heart to look towards him or to see him, 2Ki 3:14. Jehoram is to be respected as a prince, but as a wicked man he is a vile person, and is to be condemned, Ps 15:4. Elisha, as a subject, will honour him, but as a prophet he will cause him to know his iniquity. For those that had such an extraordinary commission it was fit (though not for a common person) to say to a king, Thou art wicked, Job 34:18. Jehoram has so much self-command as to take this plain dealing patiently; he cares not now for hearing of the prophets of Baal, but is a humble suitor to the God of Israel and his prophet, representing the present case as very deplorable and humbly recommending it to the prophet's compassionate consideration. In effect, he owns himself unworthy, but let not the other kings be ruined for his sake.

2. Elisha showed a great respect to the godly king of Judah, regarded his presence, and, for his sake, would enquire of the Lord for them all. It is good being with those that have God's favour and his prophet's love. Wicked people often fare the better for the friendship and society of those that are godly.

3. He composed himself to receive instructions from God. His mind was somewhat ruffled and disturbed at the sight of Jehoram; though he was not put into a sinful heat or passion, nor had spoken unadvisedly, yet his zeal for the present indisposed him for prayer and the operations of the Spirit, which required a mind very calm and sedate. He therefore called for a musician (2Ki 3:15), a devout musician, one accustomed to play upon his harp and sign psalms to it. To hear God's praises sweetly sung, as David had appointed, would cheer his spirits, and settle his mind, and help to put him into a right frame both to speak to him and to hear from him. We find a company of prophets prophesying with a psaltery and a tabret before them, 1Sa 10:5. Those that desire communion with God must keep their spirits quiet and serene. Elisha being refreshed, and having the tumult of his spirits laid by this divine

music, the hand of the Lord came upon him, and his visit did him more honour than that of three kings.

4. God, by him, gave them assurance that the issue of the present distress would be comfortable and glorious.

(1.) They should speedily be supplied with water, 2Ki 3:16,17. To try their faith and obedience, he bids them make the valley full of ditches to receive the water. Those that expect God's blessings must prepare room for them, dig the pools for the rain to fill, as they did in the valley of Baca, and so made even that a well, Ps 84:6. To raise the wonder, he tells them they shall have water enough, and yet there shall be neither wind nor rain. Elijah, by prayer, obtained water out of the clouds, but Elisha fetches it nobody knows whence. The spring of these waters shall be as secret as the head of the Nile. God is not tied to second causes. Ordinarily it is by a plentiful rain that God confirms his inheritance (Ps 68:9), but here it is done without rain, at least without rain in that place. Some of the fountains of the great deep, it is likely, were broken up on this occasion; and, to increase the miracle, that valley only (as it should seem) was filled with water, and no other place had any share of it.

(2.) That supply should be an earnest of victory (2Ki 3:18): "This is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord; you shall not only be saved from perishing, but shall return in triumph." As God gives freely to the unworthy, so he gives richly, like himself, more than we are able to ask or think. His grants out-do our requests and expectations. Those that sincerely seek for the dew of God's grace shall have it, and by it be made more than conquerors. It is promised that they shall be masters of the rebellious country, and they are permitted to lay it waste and ruin it, 2Ki 3:19. The law forbade them to fell fruit-trees to be employed in their sieges (De 20:19), but not when it was intended, in justice, for the starving of a country that had forfeited its fruits, by denying tribute to those to whom tribute was due.

12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14 And Elisha said, *As* the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.

16 And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

18 And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

20 And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armor, and upward, and stood in the border.

22 And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side *as* red as blood:

I. We have here the divine gift of both those things which God had promised by Elisha--water and victory, and the former not only a pledge of the latter, but a means of it. God, who created, and commands, all the waters, both above and beneath the

firmament, sent them an abundance of water on a sudden, which did them double service.

1. It relieved their armies, which were ready to perish, 2Ki 3:20. And, which was very observable, this relief came just at the time of the offering of the morning sacrifice upon the altar at Jerusalem, a certain time, and universally known. That time Elisha chose for his hour of prayer (it is likely looking towards the temple, for so there were to do in their prayers when they were going out to battle and encamped at a distance, 1Ki 8:44), in token of his communion with the temple-service, and his expectation of success by virtue of the great sacrifice. We now cannot pitch upon any hour more acceptable than another, because our high priest is always appearing for us, to present and plead his sacrifice. That time God chose for the hour of mercy to put an honour upon the daily sacrifice, which had been despised. God answered Daniel's prayer just at the time of the evening sacrifice (Da 9:21); for he will acknowledge his own institutions.

2. It deceived their enemies, who were ready to triumph, into the destruction. Notice was given to the Moabites of the advances of the confederate army, to oppose which all that were able to put on armour were posted upon the frontiers, where they were ready to give the Israelites a warm reception (2Ki 3:21), promising themselves that it would be easy dealing with an army fatigued by so long a march through the wilderness of Edom. But see here,

(1.) How easily they were drawn into their own delusions. Observe the steps of their self-deceit.

[1.] They saw the water in the valley where the army of Israel encamped, and conceited it was blood (2Ki 3:22), because they knew the valley to be dry, and (there having been no rain) could not imagine it should be water. The sun shone upon it, and

probably the sky was red and lowering, a presage of foul weather that day (Mt 16:3), and so it proved to them. But, this making the water look red, their own fancies, which made them willing to believe what made for them, suggested, This is blood, God permitting them thus to impose upon themselves.

[2.] If their camp was thus full of blood, they conclude, "Certainly the kings have fallen out (as confederates of different interests are apt to do) and they have slain one another (2Ki 3:23), for who else should slay them?" And,

[3.] "If the armies have slain one another, we have nothing to do but to divide the prey. Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil." These were the gradual suggestions of some sanguine spirits among them, that thought themselves wiser and happier in their conjectures than their neighbours; and the rest, being desirous it should be so, were forward to believe it was so. Quod volumus facile credimus--What we wish we readily believe. Thus those that are to be destroyed are first deceived (Re 20:8), and none are so effectually deceived as those that deceive themselves.

(2.) How fatally they thereby ran upon their own destruction. They rushed carelessly into the camp of Israel, to plunder it, but were undeceived when it was too late. The Israelites, animated by the assurances Elisha had given them of victory, fell upon them with the utmost fury, routed them, and pursued them into their own country (2Ki 3:24), which they laid waste (2Ki 3:25), destroyed the cities, marred the ground, stopped up the wells, felled the timber, and left only the royal city standing, in the walls of which they made great breaches with their battering engines. This they got by rebelling against Israel. Who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered?

II. In the close of the chapter we are told what the king of Moab did when he found himself reduced to the last extremity by the

besiegers, and that his capital city was likely to fall into their hands.

1. He attempted that which was bold and brave. he got together 700 choice men, and with them sallied out upon the intrenchments of the king of Edom, who, being but a mercenary in this expedition, would not, he hoped, make any great resistance if vigorously attacked, and so he might make his escape that way. But it would not do; even the king of Edom proved too hard for him, and obliged him to retire, 2Ki 3:26.

2. This failing, he did that which was brutish and barbarous; he took his own son, his eldest son, that was to succeed him, than whom nothing could be more dear to himself and his people, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall, 2Ki 3:27. He designed by this,

(1.) To obtain the favour of Chemosh his god, which, being a devil, delighted in blood and murder, and the destruction of mankind. The dearer any thing was to them the more acceptable those idolaters thought it must needs be if offered in sacrifice to their gods, and therefore burnt their children in the fire to their honour.

(2.) To terrify the besiegers, and oblige them to retire. Therefore he did it upon the wall, in their sight, that they might see what desperate courses he resolved to take rather than surrender, and how dearly he would sell his city and life. He intended hereby to render them odious, and to exasperate and enrage his own subjects against them. This effect it had: There was great indignation against Israel for driving him to this extremity, whereupon they raised the siege and returned. Tender and generous spirits will not do that, though just, which will drive any man distracted, or make him desperate.

23 and they said, This *is* blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

24 And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up
and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they
went forward smiting the Moabites, even in *their* country.
25 And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast
every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of
water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kir-haraseth left they the
stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about *it*, and smote it.
26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for
him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to
break through *even* unto the king of Edom: but they could not.
27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead,
and offered him *for* a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was
great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and
returned to *their own* land.

2 Kings-4

The Widow's Oil

1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the
prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and
thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord : and the creditor
is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.
2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what
hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not
any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.
3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors,
even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

Elisha's miracles were for use, not for show; this recorded here was an act of real charity. Such also were the miracles of Christ, not only great wonders, but great favours to those for whom they were wrought. God magnifies his goodness with his power.

I. Elisha readily receives a poor widow's complaint. She was a prophet's widow; to whom therefore should she apply, but to him that was a father to the sons of the prophets, and concerned

himself in the welfare of their families? It seems, the prophets had wives as well as the priests, though prophecy went not by entail, as the priesthood did. Marriage is honourable in all, and not inconsistent with the most sacred professions. Now, by the complaint of this poor woman (2Ki 4:1), we are given to understand,

1. That her husband, being one of the sons of the prophets, was well know to Elisha. Ministers of eminent gifts and stations should make themselves familiar with those that are every way their inferiors, and know their character and state.

2. That he had the reputation of a godly man. Elisha knew him to be one that feared the Lord, else he would have been unworthy of the honour and unfit for the work of a prophet. He was one that kept his integrity in a time of general apostasy, one of the 7000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal.

3. That he was dead, though a good man, a good minister. The prophets--do they live for ever? Those that were clothed with the Spirit of prophecy were not thereby armed against the stroke of death.

4. That he died poor, and in debt more than he was worth. He did not contract his debts by prodigality, and luxury, and riotous living, for he was one that feared the Lord, and therefore durst not allow himself in such courses: nay, religion obliges men not to live above what they have, nor to spend more than what God gives them, no, not in expenses otherwise lawful; for thereby, of necessity, they must disable themselves, at last, to give every one his own, and so prove guilty of a continued act of injustice all along.

Yet it may be the lot of those that fear God to be in debt, and insolvent, through afflictive providences, losses by sea, or bad debts, or their own imprudence, for the children of light are not

always wise for this world. Perhaps this prophet was impoverished by persecution: when Jezebel ruled, prophets had much ado to live, and especially if they had families. 5. That the creditors were very severe with her Two sons she had to be the support of her widowed state, and their labour is reckoned assets in her hand; that must go therefore, and they must be bondmen for seven years (Ex 21:2) to work out this debt. Those that leave their families under a load of debt disproportionable to their estates know not what trouble they entail. In this distress the poor widow goes to Elisha, in dependence upon the promise that the seed of the righteous shall not be forsaken. The generation of the upright may expect help from God's providence and countenance from his prophets.

II. He effectually relieves this poor widow's distress, and puts her in a way both to pay her debt and to maintain herself and her family. He did not say, Be warmed, be filled, but gave her real help. He did not give her some small matter for her present provision, but set her up in the world to sell oil, and put a stock into her hand to begin with. This was done by miracle, but it is an indication to us what is the best method of charity, and the greatest kindness one can do to poor people, which is, if possible, to help them into a way of improving what little they have by their own industry and ingenuity.

1. He directed her what to do, considered her case: What shall I do for thee? The sons of the prophets were poor, and it would signify little to make a collection for her among them: but the God of the holy prophets is able to supply all her need; and, if she has a little committed to her management, her need must be supplied by his blessing and increasing that little. Elisha therefore enquired what she had to make money of, and found she had nothing to sell but one pot of oil, 2Ki 4:2. If she had had any plate or furniture, he would have bidden her part with it, to enable her to be just to her creditors. We cannot reckon any thing really, nor comfortably, our own, but what is so when all our

debts are paid. If she had not had this pot of oil, the divine power could have supplied her; but, having this, it will work upon this, and so teach us to make the best of what we have. The prophet, knowing her to have credit among her neighbours, bids her borrow of them empty vessels (2Ki 4:3), for, it seems, she had sold her own, towards the satisfying of her creditors. He directs her to shut the door upon herself and her sons, while she filled all those vessels out of that one. She must shut the door, to prevent interruptions from the creditors, and others while it was in the doing, that they might not seem proudly to boast of this miraculous supply, and that they might have opportunity for prayer and praise to God upon this extraordinary occasion. Observe,

(1.) The oil was to be multiplied in the pouring, as the other widow's meal in the spending. The way to increase what we have is to use it; to him that so hath shall be given. It is not hoarding the talents, but trading with them, that doubles them.

(2.) It must be poured out by herself, not by Elisha nor by any of the sons of the prophets, to intimate that it is in connexion with our own careful and diligent endeavours that we may expect the blessing of God to enrich us both for this world and the other. What we have will increase best in our own hand.

2. She did it accordingly. She did not tell the prophet he designed to make a fool of her; but firmly believing the divine power and goodness, and in pure obedience to the prophet, she borrowed vessels large and many of her neighbours, and poured out her oil into them. One of her sons was employed to bring her empty vessels, and the other carefully to set aside those that were full, while they were all amazed to find their pot, like a fountain of living water, always flowing, and yet always full. They saw not the spring that supplied it, but believed it to be in him in whom all our springs are. Job's metaphor was now verified in the letter (Job 29:6), The rock poured me out rivers of oil. Perhaps this

was in the tribe of Asher, part of whose blessing it was that he should dip his foot in oil, De 33:24.

3. The oil continued flowing as long as she had any empty vessels to receive it; when every vessel was full the oil stayed (2Ki 4:6), for it was not fit that this precious liquor should run over, and be as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Note, We are never straitened in God, in his power and bounty, and the riches of his grace; all our straitness is in ourselves. It is our faith that fails, not his promise. He gives above what we ask: were there more vessels, there is enough in God to fill them--enough for all, enough for each. Was not this pot of oil exhausted as long as there were any vessels to be filled from it? And shall we fear lest the golden oil which flows from the very root and fatness of the good olive should fail, as long as there are any lamps to be supplied from it? Zec 4:12.

4. The prophet directed her what to do with the oil she had, 2Ki 4:7. She must not keep it for her own use, to make her face to shine. Those whom Providence has made poor must be content with poor accommodations for themselves (this is knowing how to want), and must not think, when they get a little of that which is better than ordinary, to feed their own luxury: no,

(1.) She must sell the oil to those that were rich, and could afford to bestow it on themselves. We may suppose, being produced by miracle, it was the best of its kind, like the wine (Joh 2:10), so that she might have both a good price and a good market for it. Probably the merchants bought it to export, for oil was one of the commodities that Israel traded in, Eze 27:17.

(2.) She must pay her debt with the money she received for her oil. Though her creditors were too rigorous with her, yet they must not therefore lose their debt. Her first care, now that she has wherewithal to do so, must be to discharge that, even before she makes any provision for her children. It is one of the

fundamental laws of our religion that we render to all their due, pay every just debt, give every one his own, though we leave ever so little for ourselves; and this, not of constraint but willingly and without grudging; not only for wrath, to avoid being sued, but also for conscience' sake. Those that possess an honest mind cannot with pleasure eat their daily bread, unless it be their own bread.

(3.) The rest must not be laid up, but she and her children must live upon it, not upon the oil, but upon the money received from it, with which they must put themselves into a capacity of getting an honest livelihood. No doubt she did as the man of God directed; and hence,

[1.] Let those that are poor and in distress be encouraged to trust God for supply in the way of duty. Verily thou shalt be fed, though not feasted. It is true we cannot now expect miracles, yet we may expect mercies, if we wait on God and seek to him. Let widows particularly, and prophets' widows in a special manner, depend upon him to preserve them and their fatherless children alive, for to them he will be a husband, a father.

[2.] Let those whom God has blessed with plenty use it for the glory of God and under the direction of his word: let them do justly with it, as this widow did, and serve God cheerfully in the use of it, and as Elisha, be ready to do good to those that need them, be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame.

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee
and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and
thou shalt set aside that which is full.
5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her
sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured out.
6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto
her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, *There is* not a
vessel more. And the oil stayed.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the
oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

Elisha and the Shunammite Woman

8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was* a great
woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And *so* it was, *that,*
as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.
9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this *is* a
holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.
10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set
for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and
it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. 11
And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the
chamber, and lay there.
12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And
when he had called her, she stood before him.

The giving of a son to such as were old, and had been long childless, was an ancient instance of the divine power and favour, in the case of Abraham, and Isaac, and Manoah, and Elkanah; we find it here among the wonders wrought by Elisha. This was wrought in recompence for the kind entertainment which a good woman gave him, as the promise of a son was given to Abraham when he entertained angels. Observe here,

I The kindness of the Shunammite woman to Elisha. Things are bad enough in Israel, yet not so bad but that God's prophet finds friends, wherever he goes. Shunem was a city in the tribe of Issachar, that lay in the road between Samaria and Carmel, a road that Elisha often travelled, as we find 2Ki 2:25. There lived a great woman, who kept a good house, and was very hospitable, her husband having a good estate, and his heart safely trusting in her, and in her discreet management, Pr 31:11. So famous a man as Elisha could not pass and repass unobserved. Probably he had been accustomed to take some private obscure lodgings in the town; but this pious matron, having notice once of his being

there, pressed him with great importunity, and, with much difficulty, constrained him to dine with her, 2Ki 4:8.

He was modest and loth to be troublesome, humble and affected not to associate with those of the first rank; so that it was not without some difficulty that he was first drawn into an acquaintance there; but afterwards, whenever he went that way in his circuit, he constantly called there. So well pleased was she with her guest, and so desirous of his company, that she would not only bid him welcome to her table, but provide a lodging-room for him in her house, that he might make the longer stay, not doubting but her house would be blessed for his sake, and all under her roof edified by his pious instructions and example--a good design, yet she would not do it without acquainting her husband, would neither lay out his money nor invite strangers to his house without his consent asked and obtained, 2Ki 4:9,10. She suggests to him,

1. That the stranger she would invite was a holy man of God, who therefore would do good to their family, and God would recompense the kindness done to him; perhaps she had heard how well paid the widow of Sarepta was for entertaining Elijah.

2. That the kindness she intended him would be no great charge to them; she would build him only a little chamber. Perhaps she had no spare room in the house, or none private and retired enough for him, who spent much of his time in contemplation, and cared not for being disturbed with the noise of the family. The furniture shall be very plain; no costly hangings, no stands, no couches, no looking-glasses, but a bed, and a table, a stool, and a candlestick, all that was needful for his convenience, not only for his repose, but for his study, his reading and writing. Elisha seemed highly pleased with these accommodations, for he turned in and lay there (2Ki 4:11), and, as it should seem, his man in the same chamber, for he was far from taking state.

II. Elisha's gratitude for this kindness. Being exceedingly pleased with the quietness of his apartment, and the friendliness of his entertainment, he began to consider with himself what recompence he should make her. Those that receive courtesies should study to return them; it ill becomes men of God to be ungrateful, or to sponge upon those that are generous.

1. He offered to use his interest for her in the king's court (2Ki 4:13): Thou hast been careful for us with all this care (thus did he magnify the kindness he received, as those that are humble are accustomed to do, though in the purse of one so rich, and in the breast of one so free, it was as nothing); now what shall be done for thee? As the liberal devise liberal things, so the grateful devise grateful things. "Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or the captain of the host, for an office for thy husband, civil or military? Hast thou any complaint to make, any petition to present, any suit at law depending, that needs the countenance of the high powers? Wherein can I serve thee?" It seems Elisha had got such an interest by his late services that, though he chose not to prefer himself by it, yet he was capable of preferring his friends. A good man can take as much pleasure in serving others as in raising himself.

But she needs not any good offices of this kind to be done for her: I dwell (says she) among my own people, that is, "We are well off as we are, and do not aim at preferment." It is a happiness to dwell among our own people, that love and respect us, and to whom we are in a capacity of doing good; and a greater happiness to be content to do so, to be easy, and to know when we are well off. Why should those that live comfortably among their own people covet to live delicately in kings' palaces? It would be well with many if they did but know when they were well off. Some years after this we find this Shunammite had occasion to be spoken for to the king, though now she needed it not, 2Ki 8:3,4. Those that dwell among their own people must not think their mountain stands so strong as that it cannot be

moved; they may be driven, as this good woman was, to sojourn among strangers. Our continuing city is above.

2. He did use his interest for her in the court of heaven, which was far better. Elisha consulted with his servant what kindness he should do for her, to such a freedom did this great prophet admit even his servant. Gehazi reminded him that she was childless, had a great estate, but no son to leave it to, and was past hopes of having any, her husband being old. If Elisha could obtain this favour from God for her, it would be the removal of that which at present was her only grievance. Those are the most welcome kindnesses which are most suited to our necessities. He sent for her immediately. She very humbly and respectfully stood in the door (2Ki 4:15), according to her accustomed modesty, and then he assured her that within a year she should bring forth a son, 2Ki 4:16. She had received this prophet in the name of a prophet, and now she had not a courtier's reward, in being spoken for to the king, but a prophet's reward, a signal mercy given by prophets and in answer to prayer: the promise was a surprise to her, and she begged that she might not be flattered by it: "Nay, my lord, thou are a man of God, and therefore I hope speakest seriously, and doth not jest with me, nor lie unto thy handmaid." The event, within the time limited, confirmed the truth of the promise: She bore a son at the season that Elisha spoke of, 2Ki 4:17. God built up her house, in reward to her kindness in building the prophet a chamber. We may well imagine what joy this brought to the family. Sing, O barren! thou that didst not bear.

13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what *is* to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

14 And he said, What then *is* to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16 And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, *thou* man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.
17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.
18 And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.
19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.
20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died.

We may well suppose that, after the birth of this son, the prophet was doubly welcome to the good Shunammite. He had thought himself indebted to her, but henceforth, as long as she lives, she will think herself in his debt, and that she can never do too much for him. We may also suppose that the child was very dear to the prophet, as the son of his prayers, and very dear to the parents, as the son of their old age. But here is,

I The sudden death of the child, though so much a darling. He was so far past the perils of infancy that he was able to go to the field to his father, who no doubt was pleased with his engaging talk, and his joy of his son was greater than the joy of his harvest; but either the cold or the heat of the open field overcame the child, who was bred tenderly, and he complained to his father that his head ached, 2Ki 4:19. Whither should we go with our complaints, but to our heavenly Father? Thither the Spirit of adoption brings believers with all their grievances, all their desires, teaching them to cry, with groanings that cannot be uttered, "My head, my head; my heart, my heart." The father sent him to his mother's arms, his mother's lap, little suspecting any danger in his indisposition, but hoping he would drop asleep in his mother's bosom and awake well; but the sickness proved fatal; he slept the sleep of death (2Ki 4:20), was well in the morning and dead by noon: all the mother's care and tenderness could not keep him alive. A child of promise, a child

of prayer, and given in love, yet taken away. Little children lie open to the arrests of sickness and death.

But how admirably does the prudent pious mother guard her lips under this surprising affliction! Not one peevish murmuring word comes from her. She has a strong belief that the child will be raised to life again: like a genuine daughter of Abraham's faith, as well as loins, she accounts that God is able to raise him from the dead, for thence at first she received him in a figure, Heb 11:19. She had heard of the raising of the widow's son of Sarepta, and that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha; and such confidence had she of God's goodness that she was very ready to believe that he who so soon took away what he had given would restore what he had now taken away. By this faith women received their dead raised to life, Heb 11:35. In this faith she makes no preparation for the burial of her dead child, but for its resurrection; for she lays him on the prophet's bed (2Ki 4:21), expecting that he will stand her friend. O woman! great is thy faith. he that wrought it would not frustrate it.

II The sorrowful mother's application to the prophet on this sad occasion; for it happened very opportunely that he was now at the college upon Mount Carmel, not far off.

1. She begged leave of her husband to go to the prophet, yet not acquainting him with her errand, lest he should not have faith enough to let her go, 2Ki 4:22. He objected, It is neither new moon nor sabbath (2Ki 4:23), which intimates that on those feasts of the Lord she used to go to the assembly in which he presided, with other good people, to hear the word, and to join with him in prayers and praises. She did not think it enough to have his help sometimes in her own family, but, though a great woman, attended on public worship, for which this was none of the times appointed; therefore, said the husband, "why wilt thou go to day? What is the matter?" "No harm," said she, "It shall

be well, so you will say yourself hereafter." See how this husband and wife vied with each other in showing mutual regard; she was so dutiful to him that she would not go till she had acquainted him with her journey, and he so kind to her that he would not oppose it, though she did not think fit to acquaint him with her business.

2. She made all the haste she could to the prophet (2Ki 4:24), and he, seeing her at a distance, sent his servant to enquire whether any thing was amiss, 2Ki 4:25,26. The questions were particular: Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? Note, It well becomes the men of God, with tenderness and concern, to enquire about the welfare of their friends and their families. The answer was general It is well. Gehazi was not the man that she came to complain to, and therefore she put him off with this; she said little, and little said is soon amended (Ps 39:1,2), but what she did say was very patient: "It is well with me, with my husband, with the child"--all well, and yet the child dead in the house.

Note, When God calls away our dearest relations by death it becomes us quietly to say, "It is well both with us and them;" it is well, for all is well that God does; all is well with those that are gone if they have gone to heaven, and all well with us that stay behind if by the affliction we are furthered in our way thither.

3. When she came to the prophet she humbly reasoned with him concerning her present affliction. She threw herself at his feet, as one troubled and in grief, which she never showed till she came to him who, she believed, could help her, 2Ki 4:27. When her passion would do her service she knew how to discover it, as well as how to conceal it when it would do her disservice. Gehazi knew his master would not be pleased to see her lie at his feet, and therefore would have raised her up; but Elisha waited to hear from her, since he might not know immediately

from God, what was the cause of her trouble. God discovered things to his prophets as he saw fit, not always as they desired; God did not show this to the prophet, because he might know it from the good woman herself. What she said was very pathetic. She appealed to the prophet,

(1.) Concerning her indifference to this mercy which was now taken from her: "Did I desire a son of my lord? No, thou knowest I did not; it was thy own proposal, not mine; I did not fret for the want of a son, as Hannah, nor beg, as Rachel, Give me children or else I die." Note, When any creature-comfort is taken from us, it is well if we can say, through grace, that we did not set our hearts inordinately upon it; for, if we did, we have reason to fear it was given in anger and taken away in wrath.

(2.) Concerning her entire dependence upon the prophet's word: Did I not say, Do not deceive me? Yes, she did say so (2Ki 4:16), and this reflection upon it may be considered either,

[1.] As quarrelling with the prophet for deceiving her. She was ready to think herself mocked with the mercy when it was so soon removed, and that it would have been better she had never had this child than to be deprived of him when she began to have comfort in him. Note, The loss of a mercy should not make us undervalue the gift of it. Or,

[2.] As pleading with the prophet for the raising of the child to life again: "I said, Do not deceive me, and I know thou wilt not." Note, However the providence of God may disappoint us, we may be sure the promise of God never did, nor ever will, deceive us: hope in that will not make us ashamed.

III. The raising of the child to life again. We may suppose that the woman gave Elisha a more express account of the child's

death, and he gave her a more express promise of his resurrection, than is here related, where we are briefly told,

1. That Elisha sent Gehazi to go in all haste to the dead child, gave him his staff, and bade him lay that on the face of the child, 2Ki 4:29. I know not what to make of this. Elisha knew that Elijah raised the dead child with a very close application, stretching himself upon the child, and praying again and again, and could he think to raise this child by so slight a ceremony as this, especially when nothing hindered him from coming himself? Shall such a power as this be delegated, and to no better man that Gehazi? Bishop Hall suggests that it was done out of human conceit, and not by divine instinct, and therefore it failed of the effect; God will not have such great favours made too cheap, nor shall they be too easily come by, lest they be undervalued.

2 The woman resolved not to go back without the prophet himself (2Ki 4:30): I will not leave thee. She had no great expectation from the staff, she would have the hand, and she was in the right of it. Perhaps God intended hereby to teach us not to put that confidence in creatures, that are servants, which the power of the Creator, their Master and ours, will alone bear the weight of. Gehazi returns re infecta--without success, without the tidings of any sign of life in the child (2Ki 4:31): The child is not awaked, intimating, to the comfort of the mother, that its death was but a sleep, and that he expected that it would shortly be awaked. In the raising of dead souls to spiritual life ministers can do no more by their own power than Gehazi here could; they lay the word, like the prophet's staff, before their faces, but there is neither voice nor hearing, till Christ, by his Spirit, comes himself. The letter alone kills; it is the Spirit that gives life. It is not prophesying upon dry bones that will put life into them, breath must come from heaven and breathe upon those slain.

3. The prophet, by earnest prayer, obtained from God the restoring of this dead child to life again. He found the child dead upon his own bed (2Ki 4:32), and shut the door upon them twain, 2Ki 4:33. Even the dead child is spoken of as a person, one of the twain, for it was still in being and not lost. He shut out all company, that he might not seem to glory in the power God had given him, or to use it for ostentation and to be seen of men. Observe,

(1.) How closely the prophet applied himself to this great operation, perhaps being sensible that he had tempted God too much in thinking to effect it by the staff in Gehazi's hand, for which he thought himself rebuked by the disappointment. He now found it a harder task than he then thought, and therefore addressed himself to it with great solemnity.

[1.] He prayed unto the Lord (2Ki 4:33), probably as Elijah had done, Let this child's soul come into him again. Christ raised the dead to life as one having authority--Damsel, arise--young man, I say unto thee, Arise--Lazarus, come forth (for he was powerful and faithful as a Son, the Lord of life), but Elijah and Elisha did it by petition, as servants.

[2.] He lay upon the child (2Ki 4:34), as if he would communicate to him some of his vital heat or spirits. Thus he expressed the earnestness of his desire, and gave a sign of that divine power which he depended upon for the accomplishment of this great work. He first put his mouth to the child's mouth, as if, in God's name, he would breathe into him the breath of life; then his eyes to the child's eyes, to open them again to the light of life; then his hands to the child's hands, to put strength into them. He then returned, and walked in the house, as one full of care and concern, and wholly intent upon what he was about. Then he went up stairs again, and the second time, stretched himself upon the child, 2Ki 4:35. Those that would be instrumental in conveying spiritual life to dead souls must thus

affect themselves with their case, and accommodate themselves to it, and labour fervently in prayer for them.

(2.) How gradually the operation was performed. At the first application, the flesh of the child waxed warm (2Ki 4:34), which gave the prophet encouragement to continue instant in prayer. After a while, the child sneezed seven times, which was an indication, not only of life, but liveliness. Some have reported it as an ancient tradition that when God breathed into Adam the breath of life the first evidence of his being alive was sneezing, which gave rise to the usage of paying respect to those that sneeze. Some observe here that sneezing clears the head, and there lay the child's distemper.

(3.) How joyfully the child was restored alive to his mother (2Ki 4:36,37), and all parties concerned were not a little comforted, Ac 20:12. See the power of God, who kills and makes alive again. See the power of prayer; as it has the key of the clouds, so it has the key of death. See the power of faith; that fixed law of nature (that death is a way whence there is no returning) shall rather be dispensed with than this believing Shunammite shall be disappointed.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out.

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him today? *it is* neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, *It shall be* well.

24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not *thy* riding for me, except I bid thee.

25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, *yonder is* that Shunammite:

26 run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, *Is it* well with
thee? *is it* well with thy husband? *is it* well with the child? And she
answered, *It is* well.
27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him
by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man
of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* vexed within her: and the
Lord hath hid *it* from me, and hath not told me.
28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not
deceive me?
29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine
hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if
any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the
face of the child.
30 And the mother of the child said, *As* the Lord liveth, and *as* thy
soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.
31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face
of the child; but *there was* neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he
went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not
awaked.
32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was
dead, *and* laid upon his bed.
33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and
prayed unto the Lord.
34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his
mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and
he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed
warm.
35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went
up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven
times, and the child opened his eyes.
36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called
her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.
37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the
ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Elisha's Miracles for the Prophets

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and *there was* a dearth in the land;
and the sons of the prophets *were* sitting before him: and he said
unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the
sons of the prophets.
39 And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild
vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and
shred *them* into the pot of pottage: for they knew *them* not.
40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they
were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O *thou* man
of God, *there is* death in the pot. And they could not eat *thereof.*

We have here Elisha in his place, in his element, among the sons of the prophets, teaching them, and, as a father, providing for them; and happy it was for them that they had one over them who naturally cared for their state, under whom they were well fed and well taught. There was a dearth in the land, for the wickedness of those that dwelt therein, the same that we read of, 2Ki 8:1. It continued seven years, just as long again as that in Elijah's time. A famine of bread there was, but not of hearing the word of God, for Elisha had the sons of the prophets sitting before him, to hear his wisdom, who were taught, that they might teach others. Two instances we have here of the care he took about their meat. Christ twice fed those to whom he preached. Elisha was in the more care about it now because of the dearth, that the sons of the prophets might not be ashamed in this evil time, but, even in the days of famine, might be satisfied, Ps 37:19.

I. He made hurtful food to become safe and wholesome.

1. On the lecture-day, the sons of the prophets being all to attend, he ordered his servant to provide food for their bodies, while he was breaking to them the bread of life for their souls. Whether there was any flesh-meat for them does not appear; he orders only that pottage should be seethed for them of

herbs, 2Ki 4:38. The sons of the prophets should be examples of temperance and mortification, not desirous of dainties, but content with plain food. If they have neither savoury meats nor sweet meats, nay, if a mess of pottage be all the dinner, let them remember that this great prophet entertained himself and his guests no better.

2. One of the servitors, who was sent to gather herbs (which, it should seem, must serve instead of flesh for the pottage), by mistake brought in that which was noxious, or at least very nauseous, and shred it into the pottage: wild gourds they are called, 2Ki 4:39. Some think it was coloquintida, a herb strongly cathartic, and, if not qualified, dangerous. The sons of the prophets, it seems, were better skilled in divinity than in natural philosophy, and read their Bibles more than their herbals. If any of the fruits of the earth be hurtful, we must look upon it as an effect of the curse (thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee), for the original blessing made all good.

3. The guests complained to Elisha of the unwholesomeness of their food. Nature has given man the sense of tasting, not only that wholesome food may be pleasant, but that that which is unwholesome may be discovered before it comes to the stomach; the mouth tries meat by tasting it, Job 12:11. This pottage was soon found by the taste of it to be dangerous, so that they cried out, There is death in the pot, 2Ki 4:40. The table often becomes a snare, and that which should be for our welfare proves a trap, which is a good reason why we should not feed ourselves without fear; when we are receiving the supports and comforts of life we must keep up an expectation of death and a fear of sin.

4. Elisha immediately cured the bad taste and prevented the bad consequences of this unwholesome pottage; as before he had healed the bitter waters with salt, so now the bitter broth

with meal, 2Ki 4:41. It is probable that there was meal in it before, but that was put in by a common hand, only to thicken the pottage; this was the same thing, but cast in by Elisha's hand, and with intent to heal the pottage, by which it appears that the change was not owing to the meal (that was the sign only, not the means), but to the divine power. Now all was well, not only no death, but no harm in the pot. We must acknowledge God's goodness in making our food wholesome and nourishing. I am the Lord that healeth thee.

II. He made a little food to go a great way.

1. Elisha had a present brought him of twenty barley-loaves and some ears of corn (2Ki 4:42), a present which, in those ages, would not be despicable at any time, but now in a special manner valuable, when there was a dearth in the land. It is said to be of the first-fruits, which was God's due out of their increase; and when the priests and Levites were all at Jerusalem, out of their reach, the religious people among them, with good reason, looked upon the prophets as God's receivers, and brought their first-fruits to them, which helped to maintain their schools.

2. Having freely received, he freely gave, ordering it all to be set before the sons of the prophets, reserving none for himself, none for the hereafter. "Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself, give it all to the people that they may eat." It well becomes the men of God to be generous and open-handed, and the fathers of the prophets to be liberal to the sons of the prophets.

3. Though the loaves were little, it is likely no more than what one man would ordinarily eat at a meal, yet with twenty of them he satisfied 100 men, 2Ki 4:43,44. His servant thought that to set so little meat before so many men was but to tantalize them, and shame his master for making so great an

invitation to such short commons; but he in God's name, pronounced it a full meal for them, and so it proved; they did eat, and left thereof, not because their stomachs failed them, but because the bread increased in the eating. God has promised his church (Ps 132:15) that he will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread; for whom he feeds he fills, and what he blesses comes to much, as what he blows upon comes to little, Hag 1:9. Christ's feeding his hearers was a miracle far beyond this; but both teach us that those who wait upon God in the way of duty may hope to be both protected and supplied by a particular care of divine Providence.

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast *it* into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

42 And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

43 And his servitor said, What, should I set this before a hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave *thereof.*

44 So he set *it* before them, and they did eat, and left *thereof,* according to the word of the Lord.

2 Kings-5

The Cure of Naaman's Leprosy

1 Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valor, *but he was* a leper.

2 And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.
3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord *were* with the prophet that *is* in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.
4 And *one* went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that *is* of the land of Israel.

Our saviour's miracles were intended for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet one, like a crumb, fell from the table to a woman of Canaan; so this one miracle Elisha wrought for Naaman, a Syrian; for God does good to all, and will have all men to be saved. Here is,

I The great affliction Naaman was under, in the midst of all his honours, 2Ki 5:1. He was a great man, in a great place; not only rich and raised, but particularly happy for two things:--

1. That he had been very serviceable to his country. God made him so: By him the Lord had often given deliverance to Syria, success in their wars even with Israel. The preservation and prosperity even of those that do not know God and serve him must be ascribed to him, for he is the Saviour of all men, but especially of those that believe. Let Israel know that when the Syrians prevailed it was from the Lord.

2. That he was very acceptable to his prince, was his favourite, and prime-minister of state; so great was he, so high, so honourable, and a mighty man of valour; but he was a leper, was under that loathsome disease, which made him a burden to himself. Note,

(1.) No man's greatness, or honour, or interest, or valour, or victory, can set him out of the reach of the sorest calamities of human life; there is many a sickly crazy body under rich and gay clothing.

(2.) Every man has some but or other in his character, something that blemishes and diminishes him, some allay to his grandeur, some damp to his joy; he may be very happy, very good, yet, in something or other, not so good as he should be nor so happy as he would be. Naaman was a great as the world could make him, and yet (as bishop Hall expresses it) the basest slave in Syria would not change skins with him.

II The notice that was given him of Elisha's power, by a little maid that waited on his lady, 2Ki 5:2,3. This maid was, by birth, an Israelite, providentially carried captive into Syria, and there preferred into Naaman's family, where she published Elisha's fame to the honour of Israel and Israel's God. The unhappy dispersing of the people of God has sometimes proved the happy occasion of the diffusion of the knowledge of God, Ac 8:4. This little maid,

1. As became a true-born Israelite, consulted the honour of her country, and could give an account, though but a girl, of the famous prophet they had among them. Children should betimes acquaint themselves with the wondrous works of God, that, wherever they go, they may have them to talk of. See Ps 8:2.

2. As became a good servant, she desired the health and welfare of her master, though she was a captive, a servant by force; much more should servants of choice seek their masters' good. The Jews in Babylon were to seek the peace of the land of their captivity. Jer 29:7. Elisha had not cleansed any leper in Israel (Lu 4:27), yet this little maid, from the other miracles he had wrought, inferred that he could cure her master, and from his common beneficence inferred that he would do it, though he was a Syrian. Servants may be blessings to the families where they are, by telling what they know of the glory of God and the honour of his prophets.

III. The application which the king of Syria hereupon made to the king of Israel on Naaman's behalf. Naaman took notice of the intelligence, though given by a simple maid, and did not despise it for the sake of her meanness, when it tended to his bodily health. He did not say, "The girl talks like a fool; how can any prophet of Israel do that for me which all the physicians of Syria have attempted in vain?" Though he neither loved nor honoured the Jewish nation, yet, if one of that nation can but cure him of his leprosy, he will thankfully acknowledge the obligation. O that those who are spiritually diseased would hearken thus readily to the tidings brought them of the great Physician! See what Naaman did upon this little hint.

1. He would not send for the prophet to come to him, but such honour would he pay to one that had so much of a divine power with him as to be able to cure diseases that he would go to him himself, though he himself was sickly, unfit for society, the journey long, and the country an enemy's; princes, he thinks, must stoop to prophets when they need them.

2. He would not go incognito--in disguise, though his errand proclaimed his loathsome disease, but went in state, and with a great retinue, to do the more honour to the prophet.

3. He would not go empty-handed, but took with him gold, silver, and raiment, to present to his physician. Those that have wealth, and want health show which they reckon the more valuable blessing; what will they not give for ease, and strength, and soundness of body?

4. He would not go without a letter to the king of Israel from the king his master, who did himself earnestly desire his recovery. He knows not where in Samaria to find this wonder-working prophet, but takes it for granted the king knows where to find him; and, to engage the prophet to do his utmost for Naaman, he will go to him supported with the interest of two

kings. If the king of Syria must entreat his help, he hopes the king of Israel, being his liege-lord, may command it. The gifts of the subject must all be (he thinks) for the service and honour of the prince, and therefore he desires the king that he would recover the leper (2Ki 5:6), taking it for granted that there was a greater intimacy between the king and the prophet than really there was.

IV. The alarm this gave to the king of Israel, 2Ki 5:7. He apprehended there was in this letter,

1. A great affront upon God, and therefore he rent his clothes, according to the custom of the Jews when they heard or read that which they thought blasphemous; and what less could it be than to attribute to him a divine power? "Am I a God, to kill whom I will, and make alive whom I will? No, I pretend not to such an authority." Nebuchadnezzar did, as we find, Da 5:19. "Am I a God, to kill with a word, and make alive with a word? No, I pretend not to such a power;" thus this great man, this bad man, is made to own that he is but a man. Why did he not, with this consideration, correct himself for his idolatry, and reason thus:--Shall I worship those as gods that can neither kill nor make alive, can do neither good nor evil?

2. A bad design upon himself. He appeals to those about him for this: "See how he seeketh a quarrel against me; he requires me to recover the leper, and if I do not, though I cannot, he will make that a pretence to wage war with me," which he suspects the rather because Naaman is his general. Had he rightly understood the meaning of the letter, that when the king wrote to him to recover the leper he meant that he would take care he might be recovered, he would not have been in this fright. Note, We often create a great deal of uneasiness to ourselves by misinterpreting the words and actions of others that are well intended: it is charity to ourselves to think no evil. If he had bethought himself of Elisha, and his power, he would easily

have understood the letter, and have known what he had to do; but he is put into this confusion by making himself a stranger to the prophet: the captive maid had him more in her thoughts than the king had.

V. The proffer which Elisha made of his services. He was willing to do any thing to make his prince easy, though he was neglected and his former good services were forgotten by him. Hearing on which occasion the king had rent his clothes, he sent to him to let him know that if his patient would come to him he should not lose his labour (2Ki 5:8): He shall know that there is a prophet in Israel (and it were sad with Israel if there were not), that there is a prophet in Israel who can do that which the king of Israel dares not attempt, which the prophets of Syria cannot pretend to. It was not for his own honour, but for the honour of God, that he coveted to make them all know that there was a prophet in Israel, though obscure and overlooked.

5 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel.
And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment.
6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have *therewith* sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.
7 And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am* I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.
8 And it was *so,* when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.
9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 *Are* not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it?* how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

We have here the cure of Naaman's leprosy.

I The short and plain direction which the prophet gave him, with assurance of success. Naaman designed to do honour to Elisha when he came in his chariot, and with all his retinue, to Elisha's door, 2Ki 5:9. Those that showed little respect to prophets at other times were very complaisant to them when they needed them. He attended at Elisha's door as a beggar for an alms. Those that would be cleansed from the spiritual leprosy must wait at Wisdom's gate, and watch at the posts of her doors. Naaman expected to have his compliment returned, but Elisha gave him his answer without any formality, would not go to the door to him, lest he should seem too much pleased with the honour done him, but sent a messenger to him, saying, Go wash in Jordan seven times, and promising him that if he did so his disease should be cured.

The promise was express: Thou shalt be clean. The method prescribed was plain: Go wash in Jordan. This was not intended as any means of the cure; for, though cold bathing is recommended by many as a very wholesome thing, yet some think that in the case of a leprosy it was rather hurtful. But it was intended as a sign of the cure, and a trial of his obedience. Those

that will be helped of God must do as they are bidden. But why did Elisha send a messenger to him with these directions?

1. Because he had retired, at this time, for devotion, was intent upon his prayers for the cure, and would not be diverted; or,

2. Because he knew Naaman to be a proud man, and he would let him know that before the great God all men stand upon the same level.

II. Naaman's disgust at the method prescribed, because it was not what he expected. Two things disgusted him:--

1. That Elisha, as he thought, put a slight upon his person, in sending him orders by a servant, and not coming to him himself, 2Ki 5:11. Being big with the expectation of a cure, he had been fancying how this cure would be wrought, and the scheme he had laid was this: "He will surely come out to me, that is the least he can do to me, a peer of Syria, to me that have come to him in all this state, to me that have so often been victorious over Israel. He will stand, and call on the name of his God, and name me in his prayer, and then he will wave his hand over the place, and so effect the cure." And, because the thing was not done just thus, he fell into a passion, forgetting,

(1.) That he was a leper, and the law of Moses, which Elisha would religiously observe, shut lepers out from society--a leper, and therefore he ought not to insist upon the punctilios of honor. Note, Many have hearts unhumbled under humbling providences; see Nu 12:14.

(2.) That he was a petitioner, suing for a favour which he could not demand; and beggars must not be choosers, patients must not prescribe to their physicians. See in Naaman the folly of pride. A cure will not content him unless he be cured with ceremony, with

a great deal of pomp and parade; he scorns to be healed, unless he be humoured.

2. That Elisha, as he thought, put a slight upon his country. He took it hard that he must be sent to wash in Jordan, a river of Israel, when he thought Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel. How magnificently does he speak of these two rivers that watered Damascus, which soon after fell into one, called by geographers Chrysoroas--the golden stream! How scornfully does he speak of all the waters of Israel, though God had called the land of Israel the glory of all lands, and particularly for its brooks of water! De 8:7. So common it is for God and man to differ in their judgments.

How slightly does he speak of the prophet's directions! May I not wash in them and be clean? He might wash in them and be clean from dirt, but not wash in them and be clean from leprosy. He was angry that the prophet bade him wash and be clean; he thought that the prophet must do all and was not pleased that he was bidden to do any thing,--or he thought this too cheap, too plain, too common a thing for so great a man to be cured by,--or he did not believe it would at all effect the cure, or, if it would, what medicinal virtue was there in Jordan more than in the rivers of Damascus? But he did not consider,

(1.) That Jordan belonged to Israel's God, from whom he was to expect the cure, and not from the gods of Damascus; it watered the Lord's land, the holy land, and, in a miraculous cure, relation to God was much more considerable than the depth of the channel or the beauty of the stream.

(2.) That Jordan had more than once before this obeyed the commands of omnipotence. It had of old yielded a passage to Israel, and of late to Elijah and Elisha, and therefore was fitter for such a purpose than those rivers which had only observed the

common law of their creation, and had never been thus distinguished; but, above all,

(3.) Jordan was the river appointed, and, if he expected a cure from the divine power, he ought to acquiesce in the divine will, without asking why or wherefore. Note, It is common for those that are wise in their own conceit to look with contempt on the dictates and prescriptions of divine wisdom and to prefer their own fancies before them; those that are for establishing their own righteousness will not submit to the righteousness of God, Ro 10:3. Naaman talked himself into such a heat (as passionate men usually do) that he turned away from the prophet's door in a rage, ready to swear he would never have any thing more to say to Elisha; and who then would be the loser? Note, Those that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies. Jon 2:8. Proud men are the worst enemies to themselves and forego their own redemption.

III. The modest advice which his servants gave him, to observe the prophet's prescriptions, with a tacit reproof of his resentments, 2Ki 5:13. Though at other times they kept their distance, and now saw him in a passion, yet, knowing him to be a man that would hear reason at any time, and from any body (a good character of great men, and a very rare one), they drew near, and made bold to argue the matter a little with him. They had conceived a great opinion of the prophet (having, perhaps, heard more of him from the common people, whom they had conversed with, than Naaman had heard from the king and courtiers, whom he had conversed with), and therefore begged of him to consider: "If the prophet had bidden thee to do some great thing, had ordered thee into a tedious course of physic, or to submit to some painful operation, blistering, or cupping, or salivating, Wouldst thou not have done it? No doubt thou wouldst. And wilt thou not submit to so easy a method as this, Wash and be clean?" Observe,

1. His own servants gave him this reproof and counsel, which was no more disparagement to him than that he had intelligence of one that could cure him from his wife's maid, 2Ki 5:3. Note, It is a great mercy to have those about us that will be free with us, and faithfully tell us of our faults and follies, though they be our inferiors. Masters must be willing to hear reason from their servants, Job 31:13,14. As we should be deaf to the counsel of the ungodly, though given by the greatest and most venerable names, so we should have our ear open to good advice, though brought us by those who are much below us: no matter who speaks, if the thing be well said.

2 The reproof was very modest and respectful. They call him Father; for servants must honour and obey their masters with a kind of filial affection. In giving reproof or counsel we must make it appear that it comes from love and true honour, and that we intend, not reproach, but reformation.

3. It was very rational and considerate. If the rude and unthinking servants had stirred up their master's angry resentment, and offered to avenge his quarrel upon the prophet, who (he thought) affronted him, how mischievous would the consequences have been! Fire from heaven, probably, upon them all! But they, to our great surprise, took the prophet's part. Elisha, though it is likely he perceived that what he had said had put Naaman out of humour, did not care to pacify him: it was at his peril if he persisted in his wrath. But his servants were made use of by Providence to reduce him to temper. They reasoned with him,

(1.) From his earnest desire of a cure: Wouldst thou not do any thing? Note, When diseased sinners come to this, that they are content to do any thing, to submit to any thing, to part with any thing, for a cure, then, and not till then, there begin to be some hopes of them. Then they will take Christ on his own terms when they are made willing to have Christ upon any terms.

(2.) From the easiness of the method prescribed: "It is but, Wash and be clean. It is but trying; the experiment is cheap and easy, it can do no hurt, but may do good." Note, the methods prescribed for the healing of the leprosy of sin are so plain that we are utterly inexcusable if we do not observe them. It is but, "Believe, and be saved"--"Repent, and be pardoned"--"Wash, and be clean."

IV. The cure effected, in the use of the means prescribed, 2Ki 5:14. Naaman, upon second thoughts, yielded to make the experiment, yet, it should seem, with no great faith and resolution; for, whereas the prophet bade him wash in Jordan seven times, he did but dip himself so many times, as lightly as he could. However God was pleased so far to honour himself and his word as to make that effectual. His flesh came again, like the flesh of a child. to his great surprise and joy. This men get by yielding to the will of God, by attending to his institutions. His being cleansed by washing put an honour on the law for cleansing lepers. God will magnify his word above all his name.

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15 And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that *there is* no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16 But he said, *As* the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take *it;* but he refused.

17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord.

Of the ten lepers that our Saviour cleansed, the only one that returned to give thanks was a Samaritan, Lu 17:16. This Syrian did so, and here expresses himself.

I. Convinced of the power of the God of Israel, not only that he is God, but that he is God alone, and that indeed there is no God in all the earth but in Israel (2Ki 5:15)-- a noble confession, but such as intimates the misery of the Gentile world; for the nations that had many gods really had no God, but were without God in the world. He had formerly thought the gods of Syria gods indeed, but now experience had rectified his mistake, and he knew Israel's God was God alone, the sovereign Lord of all. Had he seen other lepers cleansed, perhaps the sight would not have convinced him, but the mercy of the cure affected him more than the miracle of it. Those are best able to speak of the power of divine grace who have themselves experienced it.

II. Grateful to Elisha the prophet: "Therefore, for his sake whose servant thou art, I have a present for thee, silver, and gold, and raiment, whatever thou wilt please to accept." He valued the cure, not by the easiness of it to the prophet, but the acceptableness of it to himself, and would gladly pay for it accordingly. But Elisha generously refused the fee, though urged to accept it; and, to prevent further importunity, backed his refusal with an oath: As the Lord liveth, I will receive none (2Ki 5:16), not because he did not need it, for he was poor enough, and knew what to do with it, and how to bestow it among the sons of the prophets, nor because he thought it unlawful, for he received presents from others; but he would not be beholden to this Syrian, nor should he say, I have made Elisha rich, Ge 14:23. It would be much for the honour of God to show this new convert that the servants of the God of Israel were taught to look upon the wealth of this world with a holy contempt, which would confirm him in his belief that there was no God but in Israel. See 1Co 9:18,2Co 11:9.

III. Proselyted to the worship of the God of Israel. He will not only offer a sacrifice to the Lord, in thanks for his present cure, but he resolves he will never offer sacrifice to any other gods, 2Ki 5:17. It was a happy cure of his leprosy which cured him of his

idolatry, a more dangerous disease. But here are two instances of his weakness and infirmity in his conversion:--

1. In one instance he over-did it, that he would not only worship the God of Israel, but he would have clods of earth out of the prophet's garden, or at least of the prophet's ordering, to make an altar of, 2Ki 5:17. He that awhile ago had spoken very slightly of the waters of Israel (2Ki 5:12) now is in another extreme, and over-values the earth of Israel, supposing (since God has appointed altars of earth, Ex 20:24) that an altar of that earth would be most acceptable to him, not considering that all the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. Or perhaps the transport of his affection and veneration for the prophet, not only upon the account of his power, but of his virtue and generosity, made him, as we say, love the very ground he went upon and desire to have some of it home with him. The modern compliment equivalent to this would be, "Pray, sir, let me have your picture."

2. In another instance he under-did it, that he reserved to himself a liberty to bow in the house of Rimmon, in complaisance to the king his master, and according to the duty of his place at court (2Ki 5:18), in this thing he must be excused. He owns he ought not to do it, but that he cannot otherwise not do it, but that he cannot otherwise keep his place,--protests that his bowing is not, nor ever shall be, as it had been, in honour to the idol, but only in honour to the king,--and therefore he hopes God will forgive him. Perhaps, all things considered, this might admit of some apology, though it was not justifiable. But, as to us, I am sure,

(1.) If, in covenanting with God, we make a reservation for any known sin, which we will continue to indulge ourselves in, that reservation is a defeasance of his covenant. We must cast away all our transgressions and not except any house of Rimmon.

(2.) Though we are encouraged to pray for the remission of the sins we have committed, yet, if we ask for a dispensation to go on in any sin for the future, we mock God, and deceive ourselves.

(3.) Those that know not how to quit a place at court when they cannot keep it without sinning against God, and wronging their consciences, do not rightly value the divine favour.

(4.) Those that truly hate evil will make conscience of abstaining from all appearances of evil. Though Naaman's dissembling his religion cannot be approved, yet because his promise to offer no sacrifice to any god but the God of Israel only was a great point gained with a Syrian, and because, by asking pardon in this matter, he showed such a degree of conviction and ingenuousness as gave hopes of improvement, the prophet took fair leave of him, and bade him Go in peace, 2Ki 5:19. Young converts must be tenderly dealt with.

18 In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.

19 And he said unto him, Go in peace.
So he departed from him a little way.

20 But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, *as* the Lord liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw *him* running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, *Is* all well?

22 And he said, All *is* well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23 And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid *them* upon two of his servants; and they bare *them* before him.

Naaman, a Syrian, a courtier, a soldier, had many servants, and we read how wise and good they were, 2Ki 5:13. Elisha, a holy prophet, a man of God, has but one servant, and he proves a base, lying, naughty fellow. Those that heard of Elisha at a distance honoured him, and got good by what they heard; but he that stood continually before him, to hear his wisdom, had no good impressions made upon him either by his doctrine or miracles.

One would have expected that Elisha's servant should be a saint (even Ahab's servant, Obadiah, was), but even Christ himself had a Judas among his followers. The means of grace cannot give grace. The best men, the best ministers have often had those about them that have been their grief and shame. The nearer the church the further from God. Many come from the east and west to sit down with Abraham when the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. Here is,

I. Gehazi's sin. It was a complicated sin.

1 The love of money, that root of all evil, was at the bottom of it. His master contemned Naaman's treasures, but he coveted them, 2Ki 5:20. His heart (says bishop Hall) was packed up in Naaman's chests, and he must run after him to fetch it. Multitudes, by coveting worldly wealth, have erred from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

2. He blamed his master for refusing Naaman's present, condemned him as foolish in not taking gold when he might have it, envied and grudged his kindness and generosity to this stranger, though it was for the good of his soul. In short, he thought himself wiser than his master.

3. When Naaman, like a person of accomplished manners, alighted from his chariot to meet him (2Ki 5:21), he told him a deliberate lie, that his master sent him to him, and so he received that courtesy to himself that Naaman intended to his master.

4. He abused his master, and basely misrepresented him to Naaman as one that had soon repented of his generosity, that was fickle, and did not know his own mind, that would say and unsay, swear and unswear, that would not do an honourable thing but he must presently undo it again. his story of the two sons of the prophets was as silly as it was false; if he would have begged a token for two young scholars, surely less than a talent of silver might serve them.

5. There was danger of his alienating Naaman from that holy religion which he had espoused, and lessening his good opinion of it. he would be ready to say, as Paul's enemies suggested concerning him (2Co 12:16,17), that, though Elisha himself did not burden him, yet being crafty he caught him with guile, sending those that made a gain of him. We hope that he understood afterwards that Elisha's hand was not in it, and that Gehazi was forced to restore what he had unjustly got, else it might have driven him to his idols again. 6. His seeking to conceal what he had unjustly got added much to his sin.

(1.) He hid it, as Achan did his gain, by sacrilege, in the tower, a secret place, a strong place, till he should have an opportunity of laying it out, 2Ki 5:24. Now he thought himself sure of it, and applauded his own management of a fraud by which he had imposed, not only upon the prudence of Naaman, but upon Elisha's spirit of discerning, as Ananias and Sapphira upon the apostles.

(2.) He denied it: He went in, and stood before his master, ready to receive his orders. None looked more observant of his master, though really none more injurious to him; he thought, as Ephraim,

I have become rich, but they shall find no iniquity in me, Ho 12:8. His master asked him where he had been, "Nowhere, sir" (said he), "out of the house." Note, One lie commonly begets another: the way of that sin is down-hill; therefore dare to be true.

II The punishment of this sin. Elisha immediately called him to an account for it; and observe,

1. How he was convicted. He thought to impose upon the prophet, but was soon given to understand that the Spirit of prophecy could not be deceived, and that it was in vain to lie to the Holy Ghost. Elisha could tell him,

(1.) What he had done, though he had denied it. "Thou sayest thou wentest nowhere, but went not my heart with thee?" 2Ki 5:26. Had Gehazi yet to learn that prophets had spiritual eyes? or could he think to hide any thing from a seer, from him with whom the secret of the Lord was? Note, It is folly to presume upon sin in hopes of secresy. When thou goest aside into any by-path does not thy own conscience go with thee? Does not the eye of God go with thee? He that covers his sin shall not prosper, particularly a lying tongue is but for a moment, Pr 12:19. Truth will transpire, and often comes to light strangely, to the confusion of those that make lies their refuge.

(2.) What he designed, though he kept that in his own breast. He could tell him the very thoughts and intents of his heart, that he was projecting, now that he had got these two talents, to purchase ground and cattle, to leave Elisha's service, and to set up for himself. Note, All the foolish hopes and contrivances of carnal worldlings are open before God. And he tells him also the evil of it: "Is it a time to receive money? Is this an opportunity of enriching thyself? Couldst thou find no better way of getting money than by belying thy master and laying a stumbling-block before a young convert?"

Note, Those that are for getting wealth at any time, and by any ways and means whatsoever, right or wrong, lay themselves open to a great deal of temptation. Those that will be rich (per fas, per nefas; rem, rem, quocunque modo rem--by fair means, by foul means; careless of principle, intent only on money) drown themselves in destruction and perdition, 1Ti 6:9. War, and fire, and plague, and shipwreck, are not, as many make them, things to get money by. It is not a time to increase our wealth when we cannot do it but in such ways as are dishonourable to God and religion or injurious to our brethren or the public.

2. How he was punished for it: The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee, 2Ki 5:27. If he will have his money, he shall take his disease with it, Transit cum onere--It passes with this incumbrance. He was contriving to entail lands upon his posterity; but, instead of them, he entails a loathsome disease on the heirs of his body, from generation to generation. The sentence was immediately executed on himself; no sooner said than done: He went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. Thus he is stigmatized and made infamous, and carries the mark of his shame wherever he goes: thus he loads himself and family with a curse, which shall not only for the present proclaim his villany, but for ever perpetuate the remembrance of it.

Note, The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of those that seek death, Pr 21:6. Those who get wealth by fraud and injustice cannot expect either the comfort or the continuance of it. What was Gehazi profited, though he gained his two talents, when thereby he lost his health, his honour, his peace, his service, and, if repentance prevented not, his soul for ever? See Job 20:12-14, &c.

24 And when he came to the tower, he took *them* from their hand, and bestowed *them* in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

25 But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence *comest thou*, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26 And he said unto him, Went not mine heart *with thee*, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? *Is it* a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

27 The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white* as snow.

2 Kings-6

The Axe Head Made to Float

1 And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

Several things may be observed here,

I. Concerning the sons of the prophets, and their condition and character. The college here spoken of seems to be that at Gilgal, for there Elisha was (2Ki 4:38), and it was near Jordan; and, probably, wherever Elisha resided as many as could of the sons of the prophets flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions, counsels, and prayers. Every one would covet to dwell with him and be near him. Those that would be teachers should lay out themselves to get the best advantages for learning. Now observe,

1. Their number increased so that they wanted room: The place is too strait for us (2Ki 6:1)-- a good hearing, for it is a sign many are added to them. Elisha's miracles doubtless drew in many. Perhaps they increased the more now that Gehazi was cashiered, and, it is likely, an honester man put in his room, to take care of their provisions; for it should seem (by that instance, 2Ki 4:43)

that Naaman's case was not the only one in which he grudged his master's generosity.

2. They were humble men and did not affect that which was gay or great. When they wanted room they did not speak of sending for cedars, and marble stones, and curious artificers, but only of getting every man a beam, to run up a plain hut or cottage with. It becomes the sons of the prophets, who profess to look for great things in the other world, to be content with mean things in this.

3. They were poor men, and men that had no interest in great ones It was a sign that Joram was king, and Jezebel ruled too, or the sons of the prophets, when they wanted room, would have needed only to apply to the government, not to consult among themselves about the enlargement of their buildings. God's prophets have seldom been the world's favourites. Nay, so poor were they that they had not wherewithal to hire workmen (but must leave their studies, and work for themselves), no, nor to buy tools, but must borrow of their neighbours. Poverty then is no bar to prophecy.

4. They were industrious men, and willing to take pains. They desired not to live, like idle drones (idle monks, I might have said), upon the labours of others, but only desired leave of their president to work for themselves. As the sons of the prophets must not be so taken up with contemplation as to render themselves unfit for action, so much less must they so indulge themselves in their ease as to be averse to labour. He that must eat or die must work or starve, 2Th 3:8,10. Let no man think an honest employment either a burden or disparagement.

5. They were men that had a great value and veneration for Elisha; though they were themselves prophets, they paid much deference to him.

(1.) They would not go about to build at all without his leave, 2Ki 6:2. It is good for us all to be suspicious of our own judgment,

even when we think we have most reason for it, and to be desirous of the advice of those who are wiser and more experienced; and it is especially commendable in the sons of the prophets to take their fathers along with them, and to act in all things of moment under their direction, permissu superiorum--by permission of their superiors.

(2.) They would not willingly go to fell timber without his company: "Go with thy servants (2Ki 6:3), not only to advise us in any exigence, but to keep good order among us, that, being under they eye, we may behave as becomes us." Good disciples desire to be always under good discipline.

6. They were honest men, and men that were in care to give all men their own. When one of them, accidentally fetching too fierce a stroke (as those that work seldom are apt to be violent), threw off his axe-head into the water, he did not say, "It was a mischance, and who can help it? It was the fault of the helve, and the owner deserved to stand to the loss." No, he cries out with deep concern, Alas, master! For it was borrowed, 2Ki 6:5. Had the axe been his own, it would only have troubled him that he could not be further serviceable to his brethren; but now, besides that, it troubles him that he cannot be just to the owner, to whom he ought to be not only just but grateful.

Note, We ought to be as careful of that which is borrowed as of that which is our own, that it receives no damage, because we must love our neighbour as ourselves and do as we would be done by. It is likely this prophet was poor, and had not wherewithal to pay for the axe, which made the loss of it so much the greater trouble. To those that have an honest mind the sorest grievance of poverty is not so much their own want or disgrace as their being by it rendered unable to pay their just debts.

II. Concerning the father of the prophets, Elisha.

1. That he was a man of great condescension and compassion; he went with the sons of the prophets to the woods, when they desired his company, 2Ki 6:3. Let no man, especially no minister, think himself too great to stoop to do good, but be tender to all.

2. That he was a man of great power; he could make iron to swim, contrary to its nature (2Ki 6:6), for the God of nature is not tied up to its laws. He did not throw the helve after the hatchet, but cut down a new stick, and cast it into the river. We need not double the miracle by supposing that the stick sunk to fetch up the iron, it was enough that it was a signal of the divine summons to the iron to rise. God's grace can thus raise the stony iron heart which has sunk into the mud of this world, and raise up affections naturally earthly, to things above.

2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a
beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And
he answered, Go ye.
3 And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants.
And he answered, I will go.
4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut
down wood.
5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and
he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.
6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the
place. And he cut down a stick, and cast *it* in thither; and the iron
did swim.
7 Therefore said he, Take *it* up to thee. And he put out his hand, and
took it.

Elisha and the Syrians

8 Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with
his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp.
9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware
that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come
down.

10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

Here we have Elisha, with his spirit of prophecy, serving the king, as before helping the sons of the prophets; for that, as other gifts, is given to every man to profit withal; and, whatever abilities any man has of doing good, he is by them made a debtor both to the wise and unwise. Observe here,

I. How the king of Israel was informed by Elisha of all the designs and motions of his enemy, the king of Syria, more effectually than he could have been by the most vigilant and faithful spies. If the king of Syria, in a secret council of war, determined in which place to make an inroad upon the coasts of Israel, where he thought it would be the greatest surprise and they would be least able to make resistance, before his forces could receive his orders the king of Israel had notice of them from Elisha, and so had opportunity of preventing the mischief; and many a time, 2Ki 6:8-10. See here,

1. That the enemies of God's Israel are politic in their devices, and restless in their attempts, against him. They shall not know, nor see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, Ne 4:11.

2. All those devices are known to God, even those that are deepest laid. He knows not only what men do, but what they design, and has many ways of countermining them.

3. It is a great advantage to us to be warned of our danger, that we may stand upon our guard against it. The work of God's prophets is to give us warning; if, being warned, we do not save ourselves, it is our own fault, and our blood will be upon our own head. The king of Israel would regard the warnings Elisha gave him of his danger by the Syrians, but not the warnings he gave him of his

danger by his sins. Such warnings are little heeded by the most; they will save themselves from death, but not from hell.

II. How the king of Syria resented this. He suspected treachery among his senators, and that his counsels were betrayed, 2Ki 6:11. But one of his servants, that had heard, by Naaman and others, of Elisha's wondrous works, concludes it must needs be he that gave this intelligence to the king of Israel, 2Ki 6:12. What could not he discover who could tell Gehazi his thoughts? Here a confession of the boundless knowledge, as before of the boundless power, of Israel's God, is extorted from Syrians. Nothing done, said, thought, by any person, in any place, at any time, is out of the reach of God's cognizance.

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us *is* for the king of Israel?

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that *is* in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13 And he said, Go and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, *he is* in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

Here is, 1 The great force which the king of Syria sent to seize Elisha. He found out where he was, at Dothan (2Ki 6:13), which was not far from Samaria; thither he sent a great host, who were

to come upon him by night, and to bring him dead or alive, 2Ki 6:14. Perhaps he had heard that when only one captain and his fifty men were sent to take Elijah they were baffled in the attempt, and therefore he sent an army against Elisha, as if the fire from heaven that consumed fifty men could not as easily consume 50,000. Naaman could tell him that Elisha dwelt not in any strong-hold, nor was attended with any guards, nor had any such great interest in the people that he needed to fear a tumult among them; what occasion then was there for this great force?

But thus he hoped to make sure of him, especially coming upon him by surprise. Foolish man! Did he believe that Elisha had informed the king of Israel of his secret counsels or not? If not, what quarrel had he with him? If he did, could he be so weak as to imagine that Elisha would not discover the designs laid against himself, and that, having interest enough in heaven to discover them, he would not have interest enough to defeat them? Those that fight against God, his people, and prophet, know not what they do.

II The grievous fright which the prophet's servant was in, when he perceived the city surrounded by the Syrians, and the effectual course which the prophet took to pacify him and free him from his fears. It seems, Elisha accustomed his servant to rise early, that is the way to bring something to pass, and to do the work of a day in its day. Being up, we may suppose he heard the noise of soldiers, and thereupon looked out, and was aware of an army compassing the city (2Ki 6:15), with great assurance no doubt of success, and that they should have this troublesome prophet in their hands presently. Now observe,

1. What a consternation he was in. He ran straight to Elisha, to bring him an account of it: "Alas, master!" (said he) "what shall we do? We are undone, it is to no purpose to think either of fighting or flying, but we must unavoidably fall into their hands." Had he but studied David's Psalms, which were then extant, he

might have learnt not to be afraid of 10,000 of people (Ps 3:6), no, not of a host encamped against him, Ps 27:3. Had he considered that he was embarked with his master, by whom God had done great things, and whom he would not now leave to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised, and who, having saved others, would no doubt save himself, he would not have been thus at a loss. If he had only said, What shall I do? it would have been like that of the disciples: Lord, save us, we perish; but he needed not to include his master as being in distress, nor to say, What shall we do?

2. How his master quieted him,

(1.) By word. What he said to him (2Ki 6:16) is spoken to all the faithful servants of God, when without are fightings and within are fears: "Fear not with that fear which has torment and amazement, for those that are with us, to protect us, are more than those that are against us, to destroy us--angels unspeakably more numerous--God infinitely more powerful." When we are magnifying the causes of our fear we ought to possess ourselves with clear, and great, and high thoughts of God and the invisible world. If God be for us, we know what follows, Ro 8:31.

(2.) By vision, 2Ki 6:17. [1.] It seems Elisha was much concerned for the satisfaction of his servant. Good men desire, not only to be easy themselves, but to have those about them easy. Elisha had lately parted with his old man, and this, having newly come into his service, had not the advantage of experience; his master was therefore desirous to give him other convincing evidence of that omnipotence which employed him and was therefore employed for him.

Note, Those whose faith is strong ought tenderly to consider and compassionate those who are weak and of a timorous spirit, and to do what they can to strengthen their hands.

[2.] He saw himself safe, and wished no more than that his servant might see what he saw, a guard of angels round about him; such as were his master's convoy to the gates of heaven were his protectors against the gates of hell--chariots of fire, and horses of fire. Fire is both dreadful and devouring; that power which was engaged for Elisha's protection could both terrify and consume the assailants. As angels are God's messengers, so they are his soldiers, his hosts (Ge 32:2), his legions, or regiments, (Mt 26:53), for the good of his people.

[3.] For the satisfaction of his servant there needed no more than the opening of his eyes; that therefore he prayed for, and obtained for him: Lord, open his eyes that he may see. The eyes of his body were open, and with them he saw the danger. "Lord, open the eyes of his faith, that with them he may see the protection we are under." Note, First, The greatest kindness we can do for those that are fearful and faint-hearted is to pray for them, and so to recommend them to the mighty grace of God. Secondly, The opening of our eyes will be the silencing of our fears. In the dark we are most apt to be frightened. The clearer sight we have of the sovereignty and power of heaven the less we shall fear the calamities of this earth.

III. The shameful defeat which Elisha gave to the host of Syrians who came to seize him. They thought to make a prey of him, but he made fools of them, perfectly played with them, so far was he from fearing them or any damage by them.

1. He prayed to God to smite them with blindness, and they were all struck blind immediately, not stone-blind, nor so as to be themselves aware that they were blind, for they could see the light, but their sight was so altered that they could not know the persons and places they were before acquainted with, 2Ki 6:18. They were so confounded that those among them whom they depended upon for information did not know this place to be Dothan nor this person to be Elisha, but groped at noon day as in

the night (Isa 59:10,Job 12:24,25); their memory failed them, and their distinguishing faculty.

See the power of God over the minds and understanding of men, both ways; he enlightened the eyes of Elisha's friend, and darkened the eyes of his foes, that they might see indeed, but not perceive, Isa 6:9 For this twofold judgment Christ came into this world, that those who see not might see, and that those who see might be made blind (Joh 9:39), a savour of life to some, of death to others.

2. When they were thus bewildered and confounded he led them to Samaria (2Ki 6:19), promising that he would show them the man whom they sought, and he did so. He did not lie to them when he told them, This is not the way, nor is this the city where Elisha is; for he had now come out of the city; and if they would see him, they must go to another city to which he would direct them. Those that fight against God and his prophets deceive themselves, and are justly given up to delusions.

3. When he had brought them to Samaria he prayed to God so to open their eyes and restore them their memories that they might see where they were (2Ki 6:20), and behold, to their great terror, they were in the midst of Samaria, where, it is probable, there was a standing force sufficient to cut them all off, or make them prisoners of war.

Satan, the god of this world, blinds men's eyes, and so deludes them into their own ruin; but, when God enlightens their eyes, they then see themselves in the midst of their enemies, captives to Satan and in danger of hell, though before they thought their condition good. The enemies of God and his church, when they fancy themselves ready to triumph, will find themselves conquered and triumphed over.

4. When he had them at his mercy he made it appear that he was influenced by a divine goodness as well as a divine power.

(1.) He took care to protect them from the danger into which he had brought them, and was content to show them what he could have done; he needed not the sword of an angel to avenge his cause, the sword of the king of Israel is at his service if he please (2Ki 6:21): My father (so, respectfully does the king now speak to him, though, soon after, he swore his death), shall I smite them? And, again, as if he longed for the assault, Shall I smite them? Perhaps, he remembered how God was displeased at his father for letting go out of his hands those whom he had put it in his power to destroy, and he would not offend in like manner; yet such a reverence has he for the prophet that he will not strike a stroke without his commission.

But the prophet would by no means suffer him to meddle with them; they were brought hither to be convinced and shamed, not to be killed, 2Ki 6:22. Had they been his prisoners, taken captive by his sword and bow, when they asked quarter it would have been barbarous to deny, and, when he had given it to them, it would have been perfidious to do them any hurt, and against the laws of arms to kill men in cool blood. But they were not his prisoners; they were God's prisoners and the prophet's, and therefore he must do them no harm. Those that humble themselves under God's hand take the best course to secure themselves.

(2.) He took care to provide for them; he ordered the king to treat them handsomely and then dismiss them fairly, which he did, 2Ki 6:23.

[1.] It was the king's praise that he was so obsequious to the prophet, contrary to his inclination, and, as it seemed, to his interest, 1Sa 24:19. Nay, so willing was he to oblige Elisha that, whereas he was ordered openly to set bread and water before them

(which are good fare for captives), he prepared great provision for them, for the credit of his court and country and of Elisha.

[2.] It was the prophet's praise that he was so generous to his enemies, who, though they came to take him, could not but go away admiring him, as both the mightiest and kindest man they ever met with. The great duty of loving enemies, and doing good to those that hate us, was both commanded in the Old Testament (Pr 25:21,22, If thy enemy hunger, feed him, Ex 23:4,5) and practised, as here by Elisha. His predecessor had given a specimen of divine justice when he called for flames of fire on the heads of his persecutors to consume them, but he have a specimen of divine mercy in heaping coals of fire on the heads of his persecutors to melt them. Let not us then be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

IV. The good effect this had, for the present, upon the Syrians. They came no more into the land of Israel (2Ki 6:23), namely, upon this errand, to take Elisha; they saw it was to no purpose to attempt that, nor would any of their bands be persuaded to make an assault on so great and good a man. The most glorious victory over an enemy is to turn him into a friend.

18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19 And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not the way, neither *is* this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these *men,* that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, *they were* in the midst of Samaria.

21 And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite *them?* shall I smite *them?*

22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them:* wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy

bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink,
and go to their master.
23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had
eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.
So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Elisha and the Siege of Samaria

24 And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria
gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.
25 And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they
besieged it, until an ass's head was *sold* for fourscore *pieces* of silver,
and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver.
26 And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a
woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.
27 And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help
thee? out of the barnfloor, or out of the winepress?
28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered,
This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him today,
and we will eat my son tomorrow.

This last paragraph of this chapter should, of right, have been the first of the next chapter, for it begins a new story, which is there continued and concluded. Here is,

I The siege which the king of Syria laid to Samaria and the great distress which the city was reduced to thereby. The Syrians had soon forgotten the kindnesses they had lately received in Samaria, and very ungratefully, for aught that appears without any provocation, sought the destruction of it, 2Ki 6:24. There are base spirits that can never feel obliged. The country, we may suppose, was plundered and laid waste when this capital city was brought to the last extremity, 2Ki 6:25. The dearth which had of late been in the land was probably the occasion of the emptiness of their stores, or the siege was so sudden that they had not time to lay in provisions; so that, while the sword devoured without, the famine within was more grievous (La

4:9): for, it should seem, the Syrians designed not to storm the city, but to starve it. So great was the scarcity that an ass's head, that has but little flesh on it and that unsavoury, unwholesome, and ceremonially unclean, was sold for five pounds, and a small quantity of fitches, or lentiles, or some such coarse corn, then called dove's dung, no more of it than the quantity of six eggs, for five pieces of silver, about twelve or fifteen shillings. Learn to value plenty, and to be thankful for it; see how contemptible money is, when, in time of famine, it is so freely parted with for anything that is eatable.

II The sad complaint which a poor woman had to make to the king, in the extremity of the famine. He was passing by upon the wall to give orders for the mounting of the guard, the posting of the archers, the repair of the breaches, and the like, when a woman of the city cried to him, Help, my lord, O king! 2Ki 6:26. Whither should the subject, in distress, go for help but to the prince, who is, by office, the protector of right and the avenger of wrong? He returns but a melancholy answer (2Ki 6:27): If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I? Some think it was a quarrelling word, and the language of his fretfulness: "Why dost thou expect anything from me, when God himself deals thus hardly with us?" Because he could not help her as he would, out of the floor or the wine-press, he would not help her at all. We must take heed of being made cross by afflictive providences. It rather seems to be a quieting word: "Let us be content, and make the best of our affliction, looking up to God, for, till he help us, I cannot help thee."

1. He laments the emptiness of the floor and the wine-press. These were not as they had been; even the king's failed. We read (2Ki 6:23) of great provisions which he had a command, sufficient for the entertainment of an army, yet now he has not wherewithal to relieve one poor woman. Scarcity sometimes follows upon great plenty; we cannot be sure that to-morrow shall be as this day, Isa 56:12,Ps 30:6.

2. He acknowledges himself thereby disabled to help, unless God would help them. Note, Creatures are helpless things without God, for every creature is that, all that, and only that, which he makes it to be. However, though he cannot help her, he is willing to hear her (2Ki 6:28): "What ails thee? Is there anything singular in thy case, or dost thou fare worse than thy neighbours?" Truly yes; she and one of her neighbours had made a barbarous agreement, that, all provisions failing, they should boil and eat her son first and then her neighbour's; hers was eaten (who can think of it without horror?) and now her neighbour hid hers, 2Ki 6:28,29. See an instance of the dominion which the flesh has got above the spirit, when the most natural affections of the mind may be thus overpowered by the natural appetites of the body. See the word of God fulfilled; among the threatenings of God's judgments upon Israel for their sins this was one (De 28:53-57), that they should eat the flesh of their own children, which one would think incredible, yet it came to pass.

III. The king's indignation against Elisha upon this occasion. He lamented the calamity, rent his clothes, and had sackcloth upon his flesh (2Ki 6:30), as one heartily concerned for the misery of his people, and that it was not in his power to help them; but he did not lament his own iniquity, nor the iniquity of his people, which was the procuring cause of the calamity; he was not sensible that his ways and his doings had procured this to himself; this is his wickedness, for it is bitter. The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord. Instead of vowing to pull down the calves at Dan and Beth-el, or letting the law have its course against the prophets of Baal and of the groves, he swears the death of Elisha, 2Ki 6:31.

Why, what is the matter? What had Elisha done? his head is the most innocent and valuable in all Israel, and yet that must be

devoted, and made an anathema. Thus in the days of the persecuting emperors, when the empire groaned under any extraordinary calamity, the fault was laid on the Christians, and they were doomed to destruction. Christianos ad leones--Away with the Christians to the lions. Perhaps Jehoram was in this heat against Elisha because he had foretold this judgment, or had persuaded him to hold out, and not surrender, or rather because he did not, by his prayers, raise the siege, and relieve the city, which he though he could do but would not; whereas till they repented and reformed, and were ready for deliverance, they had no reason to expect that the prophet should pray for it.

IV. The foresight Elisha had of the king's design against him, 2Ki 6:32. He sat in his house well composed, and the elders with him, well employed no doubt, while the king was like a wild bull in a net, or like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; he told the elders there was an officer coming from the king to cut off his head, and bade them stop him at the door, and not let him in, for the king his master was just following him, to revoke the order, as we may suppose. The same spirit of prophecy that enabled Elisha to tell him what was done at a distance authorized him to call the king the son of a murderer, which, unless we could produce such an extraordinary commission, it is not for us to initiate; far be it from us to despise dominion and to speak evil of dignities. He appealed to the elders whether he had deserved so ill at the king's hands: "See whether in this he be not the son of a murderer?" For what evil had Elisha done? He had not desired the woeful day, Jer 17:16.

V. The king's passionate speech, when he came to prevent the execution of his edict for the beheading of Elisha. He seems to have been in a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions, knew not what to say, but, seeing things brought to the last extremity, he even abandoned himself to despair (2Ki 6:33): This evil is of the Lord. Therein his notions were right and well applied; it is a general truth that all penal evil is of the

Lord, as the first cause, and sovereign judge (Am 3:6), and this we ought to apply to particular cases: if all evil, then this evil, whatever it is we are now groaning under, whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent of it. But his inference from this truth was foolish and wicked: What should I wait for the Lord any longer? When Eli, and David, and Job, said, It is of the Lord, they grew patient upon it, but this bad man grew outrageous upon it: "I will neither fear worse nor expect better, for worse cannot come and better never will come: we are all undone, and there is no remedy." It is an unreasonable thing to be weary of waiting for God, for he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all those that wait for him.

29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

30 And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, *he had* sackcloth within upon his flesh.

31 Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and *the king* sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: *is* not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

33 And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil *is* of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?

2 Kings-7

1 Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, Tomorrow about this time *shall* a measure of fine flour *be sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

Here, I. Elisha foretels that, notwithstanding the great straits to which the city of Samaria is reduced, yet within twenty-four hours they shall have plenty, 2Ki 7:1 The king of Israel despaired of it and grew weary of waiting: then Elisha foretold it, when things were at the worst. Man's extremity is God's opportunity of magnifying his own power; his time to appear for his people is when their strength is gone, De 32:36. When they had given over expecting help it came. When the son of man comes shall he find faith on the earth? Lu 18:8. The king said, What shall I wait for the Lord any longer? And perhaps some of the elders were ready to say the same: "Well," said Elisha, "you hear what these say; now hear you the word of the Lord, hear what he says, hear it and heed it and believe it: to-morrow corn shall be sold at the usual rate in the gate of Samaria;" that is, the siege shall be raised, for the gate of the city shall be opened, and the market shall be held there as formerly. The return of peace is thus expressed (Jdg 5:11), Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates, to buy and sell there.

2 The consequence of that shall be great plenty. This would, in time, follow of course, but that corn should be thus cheap in so short a time was quite beyond what could be thought of. Though the king of Israel had just now threatened Elisha's life, God promises to save his life and the life of his people; for where sin abounded grace doth much more abound.

II. A peer of Israel that happened to be present openly declared his disbelief of this prediction, 2Ki 7:2. He was a courtier

whom the king had an affection for, as the man of his right hand, on whom he leaned, that is, on whose prudence he much relied, and in whom he reposed much confidence. He thought it impossible, unless God should rain corn out of the clouds, as once he did manna; no less than the repetition of Moses's miracle will serve him, though that of Elijah might have served to answer this intention, the increasing of the meal in the barrel.

III. The just doom passed upon him for his infidelity, that he should see this great plenty for this conviction, and yet not eat of it to his comfort. Note, Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God, and deprive themselves of the favours he designed for them. The murmuring Israelites saw Canaan, but could not enter in because of unbelief. Such (says bishop Patrick) will be the portion of those that believe not the promise of eternal life; they shall see it at a distance--Abraham afar off, but shall never taste of it; for they forfeit the benefit of the promise if they cannot find in their heart to take God's word.

2 Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, *if* the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see *it* with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

3 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4 If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, *there was* no man there.

We are here told,

I. How the siege of Samaria was raised in the evening, at the edge of night (2Ki 7:6,7), not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, striking terror upon the spirits of the besiegers. Here was not a sword drawn against them, not a drop of blood shed, it was not by thunder or hailstones that they were discomfited, nor were they slain, as Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem, by a destroying angel; but,

1. The Lord made them to hear a noise of chariots and horses. The Syrians that besieged Dothan had their sight imposed upon, 2Ki 6:18. These had their hearing imposed upon. For God knows how to work upon every sense, pursuant to his own counsels as he makes the hearing ear and the seeing eye, so he makes the deaf and the blind, Ex 4:11. Whether the noise was really made in the air by the ministry of angels, or whether it was only a sound in their ears, is not certain; which soever it was, it was from God, who both brings the wind out of his treasures, and forms the spirit of man within him. The sight of horses and chariots had encouraged the prophet's servant, 2Ki 6:17. The noise of horses and chariots terrified the hosts of Syria. For notices from the invisible world are either very comfortable or very dreadful, according as men are at peace with God or at war with him.

2. Hearing this noise, they concluded the king of Israel had certainly procured assistance from some foreign power: He has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians. There was, for aught we know but one king of Egypt, and what kings there were of the Hittites nobody can imagine; but, as they were imposed upon by that dreadful sound in their ears, so they imposed upon themselves by the interpretation they made of it. Had they supposed the king of Judah to have come with his forces, there would have been

more of probability in their apprehensions than to dream of the kings of the Hittites and the Egyptians. If the fancies of any of them raised this spectre, yet their reasons might soon have laid it: how could the king of Israel, who was closely besieged, hold intelligence with those distant princes? What had he to hire them with? It was impossible but some notice would come, before, of the motions of so great a host; but there were they in great fear where no fear was.

3. Hereupon they all fled with incredible precipitation, as for their lives, left their camp as it was: even their horses, that might have hastened their flight, they could not stay to take with them, 2Ki 7:7. None of them had so much sense as to send out scouts to discover the supposed enemy, much less courage enough to face the enemy, though fatigued with a long march. The wicked flee when none pursues. God can, when he pleases, dispirit the boldest and most brave, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. Those that will not fear God he can make to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

II. How the Syrians' flight was discovered by four leprous men. Samaria was delivered, and did not know it. The watchmen on the walls were not aware of the retreat of the enemy, so silently did they steal away. But Providence employed four lepers to be the intelligencers, who had their lodging without the gate, being excluded from the city, as ceremonially unclean: the Jews say they were Gehazi and his three sons; perhaps Gehazi might be one of them, which might cause him to be taken notice of afterwards by the king, 2Ki 8:4. See here,

1. How these lepers reasoned themselves into a resolution to make a visit in the night to the camp of the Syrians, 2Ki 7:3,4. They were ready to perish for hunger; none passed through the gate to relieve them. Should they go into the city, there was

nothing to be had there, they mist die in the streets; should they sit still, they must pine to death in their cottage.
They therefore determine to go over to the enemy, and throw themselves upon their mercy: if they killed them, better die by the sword than by famine, one death than a thousand; but perhaps they would save them alive, as objects of compassion. Common prudence will put us upon that method which may better our condition, but cannot make it worse.

The prodigal son resolves to return to his father, whose displeasure he had reason to fear, rather than perish with hunger in the far country. These lepers conclude, "If they kill us, we shall but die;" and happy they who, in another sense, can thus speak of dying. "We shall but die, that is the worst of it, not die and be damned, not be hurt of the second death." According to this resolution, they went, in the beginning of the night, to the camp of the Syrians, and, to their great surprise, found it wholly deserted, not a man to be seen or heard in it, 2Ki 7:5. Providence ordered it, that these lepers came as soon as ever the Syrians had fled, for they fled in the twilight, the evening twilight (2Ki 7:7), and in the twilight the lepers came (2Ki 7:5), and so no time was lost.

2. How they reasoned themselves into a resolution to bring tidings of this to the city. They feasted in the first tent they came to (2Ki 7:8) and then began to think of enriching themselves with the plunder; but they corrected themselves (2Ki 7:9): "We do not well to conceal these good tidings from the community we are members of, under colour of being avenged upon them for excluding us from their society; it was the law that did it, not they, and therefore let us bring them the news. Though it awake them from sleep, it will be life from the dead to them."

Their own consciences told them that some mischief would befal them if they acted separately, and sought themselves

only. Selfish narrow-spirited people cannot expect to prosper; the most comfortable advantage is that which our brethren share with us in. According to this resolution, they returned to the gate, and acquainted the sentinel with what they had discovered (2Ki 7:10), who straightway brought the intelligence to court (2Ki 7:11), and it was not the less acceptable for being first brought by lepers.

6 For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it *was,* and fled for their life.

8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid *it;* and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence *also,* and went and hid *it*.

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day *is* a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, *there was* no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they *were*.

11 And he called the porters; and they told *it* to the king's house within.

12 And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we *be* hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.

13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let *some* take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they *are* as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, *I say*, they *are* even as all the multitude of the Isrealites that are consumed:) and let us send and see.

Here we have,

I The king's jealousy of a stratagem in the Syrian's retreat, 2Ki 7:12. He feared that they had withdrawn into an ambush, to draw out the besieged, that they might fall on them with more advantage. He knew he had no reason to expect that God should appear thus wonderfully for him, having forfeited his favour by his unbelief and impatience. He knew no reason the Syrians had to fly, for it does not appear that he or any of this attendants heard the noise of the chariots which the Syrians were frightened at. Let not those who, like him, are unstable in all their ways, think to receive any thing from God; nay, a guilty conscience fears the worst and makes men suspicious.

II The course they took for their satisfaction, and to prevent their falling into a snare. They sent out spies to see what had become of the Syrians, and found they had all fled indeed, commanders as well a common soldiers. They could track them by the garments which they threw off, and left by the way, for their greater expedition, 2Ki 7:15. He that gave this advice seems to have been very sensible of the deplorable condition the people were in (2Ki 7:13); for speaking of the horses, many of which were dead and the rest ready to perish for hunger, he says, and repeats it, "They are as all the multitude of Israel. Israel used to glory in their multitude, but now they are diminished and brought low." He advised to send five horsemen, but, it should seem, there were only two horses fit to be sent, and those chariot-horses, 2Ki 7:14. Now the Lord repented himself concerning his servants, when he saw that their strength was gone, De 32:36.

III. The plenty that was in Samaria, from the plunder of the camp of the Syrians, 2Ki 7:16. Had the Syrians been governed by the modern policies of war, when they could not take their baggage and their tents with them they would rather have burnt them (as it is common to do with the forage of a country) than let them fall into their enemies' hands; but God determined that the besieging of Samaria, which was intended for its ruin, should turn to its advantage, and that Israel should now be enriched with the spoil of the Syrians as of old with that of the Egyptians. Here see,

1 The wealth of the sinner laid up for the just (Job 27:16,17) and the spoilers spoiled, Isa 33:1.

2 The wants of Israel supplied in a way that they little thought of, which should encourage us to depend upon the power and goodness of God in our greatest straits.

3. The word of Elisha fulfilled to a tittle: A measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel; those that spoiled the camp had not only enough to supply themselves with, but an overplus to sell at an easy rate for the benefit of others, and so even those that tarried at home did divide the spoil, Ps 68:12,Isa 33:23. God's promise may be safely relied on, for no word of his shall fall to the ground.

IV. The death of the unbelieving courtier, that questioned the truth of Elisha's word. Divine threatenings will as surely be accomplished as divine promises. He that believeth not shall be damned stands as firm as He that believeth shall be saved. This lord,

1. Was preferred by the king to the charge of the gate (2Ki 7:17), to keep the peace, and to see that there was no tumult or disorder in dividing and disposing of the spoil. So much trust did the king repose in him, in his prudence and gravity, and so

much did he delight to honour him. He that will be great, let him serve the public.

2. Was trodden to death by the people in the gate, either by accident, the crowd being exceedingly great, and he in the thickest of it, or perhaps designedly, because he abused his power, and was imperious in restraining the people from satisfying their hunger. However it was, God's justice was glorified, and the word of Elisha was fulfilled. He saw the plenty, for the silencing and shaming of his unbelief, corn cheap without opening windows in heaven, and therein saw his own folly in prescribing to God; but he did not eat of the plenty he saw.

When he was about to fill his belly God cast the fury of his wrath upon him (Job 20:23) and it came between the cup and the lip. Justly are those thus tantalized with the world's promises that think themselves tantalized with the promises of God. If believing shall not be seeing, seeing shall not be enjoying. This matter is repeated, and the event very particularly compared with the prediction (2Ki 7:18-20), that we might take special notice of it, and might learn,

(1.) How deeply God resents out distrust of him, of his power, providence, and promise. When Israel said, Can God furnish a table? the Lord heard it and was wroth. Infinite wisdom will not be limited by our folly. God never promises the end without knowing where to provide the means.

(2.) How uncertain life and the enjoyments of it are. Honour and power cannot secure men from sudden and inglorious deaths. He whom the king leaned upon the people trod upon; he who fancied himself the stay and support of the government was trampled under foot as the mire in the streets. Thus hath the pride of men's glory been often stained.

(3.) How certain God's threatenings are, and how sure to alight on the guilty and obnoxious heads. Let all men fear before the great God, who treads upon princes as mortar and is terrible to the kings of the earth.

14 They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the
host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see.
15 And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way *was* full
of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their
haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.
16 And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a
measure of fine flour was *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of
barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.
17 And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have
the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate,
and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king
came down to him.
18 And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king,
saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine
flour for a shekel, shall be tomorrow about this time in the gate of
Samaria:
19 and that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, *if* the
Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And
he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat
thereof.
20 And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the
gate, and he died.

2 Kings-8

The Shunammite Woman's Land Restored

1 Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to
life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn
wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the Lord hath called for a
famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

2 And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.

Here we have,

I The wickedness of Israel punished with a long famine, one of God's sore judgments often threatened in the law. Canaan, that fruitful land, was turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein. The famine in Samaria was soon relieved by the raising of that siege, but neither that judgment nor that mercy had a due influence upon them, and therefore the Lord called for another famine; for when he judgeth he will overcome. If less judgments do not prevail to bring men to repentance, he will send greater and longer; they are at his beck, and will come when he calls for them. He does, by his ministers, call for reformation and obedience, and, if those calls be not regarded, we may expect he will call for some plague or other, for he will be heard. This famine continued seven years, as long again as that in Elijah's time; for if men will walk contrary to him, he will heat the furnace yet hotter.

II The kindness of the good Shunammite to the prophet rewarded by the care that was taken of her in that famine; she was not indeed fed by miracle, as the widow of Sarepta was, but,

1. She had notice given her of this famine before it came, that she might provide accordingly, and was directed to remove to some other country; any where but in Israel she would find plenty. It was a great advantage to Egypt in Joseph's time that they had notice of the famine before it came, so it was to this Shunammite; others would be forced to remove at last, after they had long borne the grievances of the famine, and had wasted their substance, and could not settle elsewhere upon such good terms as she might that went early, before the crowd, and took her stock with her unbroken. It is our

happiness to foresee an evil, and our wisdom, when we foresee an evil, and our wisdom, when we foresee it, to hide ourselves.

2. Providence gave her a comfortable settlement in the land of the Philistines, who, though subdued by David, yet were not wholly rooted out. It seems the famine was peculiar to the land of Israel, and other countries that joined close to them had plenty at the same time, which plainly showed the immediate hand of God in it (as in the plagues of Egypt, when they distinguished between the Israelites and the Egyptians) and that the sins of Israel, against whom this judgment was directly levelled, were more provoking to God than the sins of their neighbours, because of their profession of relation to God. You only have I known, therefore will I punish you, Am 3:2. Other countries had rain when they had none, were free from locusts and caterpillars when they were eaten up with them; for some think this was the famine spoken of, Joe 1:3,4. It is strange that when there was plenty in the neighbouring countries there were not those that made it their business to import corn into the land of Israel, which might have prevented the inhabitants from removing; but, as they were befooled with their idolatries, so they were infatuated even in the matters of their civil interest.

III. Her petition to the king at her return, favoured by the seasonableness of her application to him.

1. When the famine was over she returned out of the land of the Philistines; that was no proper place for an Israelite to dwell any longer than there was a necessity for so doing, for there she could not keep her new moons and her sabbaths as she used to do in her own country, among the schools of the prophets, 2Ki 4:23.

2. At her return she found herself kept out of the possession of her own estate, it being either confiscated to the exchequer,

seized by the lord, or usurped in her absence by some of the neighbours; or perhaps the person she had entrusted with the management of it proved false, and would neither resign it to her nor come to an account with her for the profits: so hard is it to find a person that one can put a confidence in in a time of trouble, Pr 25:19,Mic 7:5.

3. She made her application to the king himself for redress; for, it seems (be it observed to his praise), he was easy of access, and did himself take cognizance of the complaint of his injured subjects. Time was when she dwelt so securely among her own people that she had no occasion to be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host (2Ki 4:13); but now her own familiar friends, in whom she trusted, proved so unjust and unkind that she was glad to appeal to the king against them. Such uncertainty there is in the creature that that may fail us which we most depend upon and that befriend us which we think we shall never need.

4. She found the king talking with Gehazi about Elisha's miracles, 2Ki 8:4. It was his shame that he needed now to be informed concerning them, when he might have acquainted himself with them as they were done from Elisha himself, if he had not been willing to shut his eyes against the convincing evidence of his mission; yet it was his praise that he was now better disposed, and would rather talk with a leper that was capable of giving a good account of them than continue ignorant of them. The law did not forbid all conversation with lepers, but only dwelling with them. There being then no priests in Israel, perhaps the king, or some one appointed by him, had the inspection of lepers, and passed the judgment upon them, which might bring him acquainted with Gehazi.

5. This happy coincidence befriended both Gehazi's narrative and her petition. Providence is to be acknowledged in ordering the circumstances of events, for sometimes those that are

minute in themselves prove of great consequence, as this did, for,

(1.) It made the king ready to believe Gehazi's narrative when it was thus confirmed by the persons most nearly concerned: "This is the woman, and this her son; let them speak for themselves," 2Ki 8:5. Thus did God even force him to believe what he might have had some colour to question if he had only had Gehazi's word for it, because he was branded for a liar, witness his leprosy.

(2.) It made him ready to grant her request; for who would not be ready to favour one whom heaven had thus favoured, and to support a life which was given once and again by miracle? In consideration of this the king gave orders that her land should be restored to her and all the profits that were made of it in her absence. If it was to himself that the land and profits had escheated, it was generous and kind to make so full a restitution; he would not (as Pharaoh did in Joseph's time) enrich the crown by the calamities of his subjects. If it was by some other person that her property was invaded, it was an act of justice in the king, and part of the duty of his place, to give her redress, Ps 82:3,4,Pr 31:9. It is not enough for those in authority that they do no wrong themselves, but they must support the right of those that are wronged.

3 And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.

4 And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done.

5 And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this *is* the woman, and this *is* her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

6 And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that *was* hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

Hazael Becomes King of Syria

7 And Elisha came to Damascus; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.
8 And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?
9 So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?
10 And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely Die
11 And he settled his countenance steadfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.

Here, I. We may enquire what brought Elisha to Damascus, the chief city of Syria. Was he sent to any but the lost sheep of the house of Israel? It seems he was. Perhaps he went to pay a visit to Naaman his convert, and to confirm him in his choice of the true religion, which was the more needful now because, it should seem, he was not out of his place (for Hazael is supposed to be captain of that host); either he resigned it or was turned out of it, because he would not bow, or not bow heartily, in the house of Rimmon. Some think he went to Damascus upon account of the famine, or rather he went thither in obedience to the orders God gave Elijah, 1Ki 19:15, "Go to Damascus to anoint Hazael, thou, or thy successor."

II. We may observe that Ben-hadad, a great king, rich and mighty, lay sick. No honour, wealth, or power, will secure men

from the common diseases and disasters of human life; palaces and thrones lie as open to the arrests of sickness and death as the meanest cottage.

III. We may wonder that the king of Syria, in his sickness, should make Elisha his oracle.

1. Notice was soon brought him that the man of God (for by that title he was well known in Syria since he cured Naaman) had come to Damascus, 2Ki 8:7. "Never in better time," says Ben-hadad. "Go, and enquire of the Lord by him." In his health he bowed in the house of Rimmon, but now that he is sick he distrusts his idol, and sends to enquire of the God of Israel. Affliction brings those to God who in their prosperity had made light of him; sometimes sickness opens men's eyes and rectifies their mistakes. This is the more observable,

(1.) Because it was not long since a king of Israel had, in his sickness, sent to enquire of the god of Ekron (2Ki 1:2), as if there had been no God in Israel. Note, God sometimes fetches to himself that honour from strangers which is denied him and alienated from him by his own professing people.

(2.) Because it was not long since this Ben-hadad had sent a great force to treat Elisha as an enemy (2Ki 6:14), yet now he courts him as a prophet. Note, Among other instances of the change of men's minds by sickness and affliction, this is one, that it often gives them other thoughts of God's ministers, and teaches them to value the counsels and prayers of those whom they had hated and despised.

2. To put an honour upon the prophet,

(1.) He sends to him, and does not send for him, as if, with the centurion, he thought himself not worthy that the man of God should come under his roof.

(2.) He sends to him by Hazael, his prime-minister of state, and not by a common messenger. It is no disparagement to the greatest of men to attend the prophets of the Lord. Hazael must go and meet him at a place where he had appointed a meeting with his friends.

(3.) He sends him a noble present, of every good thing of Damascus, as much as loaded forty camels (2Ki 8:9), testifying hereby his affection to the prophet, bidding him welcome to Damascus, and providing for his sustenance while he sojourned there. It is probable that Elisha accepted it (why should he not?), though he refused Naaman's.

(4.) He orders Hazael to call him his son Ben-hadad, conforming to the language of Israel, who called the prophets fathers.

(5.) He puts an honour upon him as one acquainted with the secrets of heaven, when he enquires of him, Shall I recover? It is natural to us to desire to know things to come in time, while things to come in eternity are little thought of or enquired after.

IV. What passed between Hazael and Elisha is especially remarkable.

1. Elisha answered his enquiry concerning the king, that he might recover, the disease was not mortal, but that he should die another way (2Ki 8:10), not a natural but a violent death. There are many ways out of the world, and sometimes, while men think to avoid one, they fall by another.

2. He looked Hazael in the face with an unusual concern, till he made Hazael blush and himself weep, 2Ki 8:11. The man of God could outface the man of war. It was not in Hazael's countenance that Elisha read what he would do, but God did, at

this time, reveal it to him, and it fetched tears from his eyes. The more foresight men have the more grief they are liable to.

3. When Hazael asked him why he wept he told him what a great deal of mischief he foresaw he would do to the Israel of God (2Ki 8:12), what desolations he would make of their strong-holds, and barbarous destruction of their men, women, and children. The sins of Israel provoked God to give them up into the hands of their cruel enemies, yet Elisha wept to think that ever Israelites should be thus abused; for, though he foretold, he did not desire the woeful day. See what havock war makes, what havock sin makes, and how the nature of man is changed by the fall, and stripped even of humanity itself.

4. Hazael was greatly surprised at this prediction (2Ki 8:13): What, says he, Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? This great thing he looks upon to be,

(1.) An act of great power, not to be done but by a crowned head. "It must be some mighty potentate that can think to prevail thus against Israel, and therefore not I." Many are raised to that dominion which they never thought of and it often proves to their own hurt, Ec 8:9.

(2.) An act of great barbarity, which could not be done but by one lost to all honour and virtue: "Therefore," says he, "it is what I shall never find in my heart to be guilty of: Is thy servant a dog, to rend, and tear, and devour? Unless I were a dog, I could not do it." See here,

[1.] What a bad opinion he had of the sin; he looked upon it to be great wickedness, fitter for a brute, for a beast of prey, to do than a man. Note, It is possible for a wicked man, under the convictions and restraints of natural conscience, to express great abhorrence of a sin, and yet afterwards to be well reconciled to it.

[2.] What a good opinion he had of himself, how much better than he deserved; he thought it impossible he should do such barbarous things as the prophet foresaw. Note, We are apt to think ourselves sufficiently armed against those sins which yet we are afterwards overcome by, as Peter, Mt 26:35.

5. In answer to this Elisha only told him he should be king over Syria; then he would have power to do it, and then he would find in his heart to do it. Honours change men's tempers and manners, and seldom for the better: "Thou knowest not what thou wilt do when thou comest to be king, but I tell thee this thou wilt do." Those that are little and low in the world cannot imagine how strong the temptations of power and prosperity are, and, if ever they arrive at them, they will find how deceitful their hearts were and how much worse than they suspected.

V. What mischief Hazael did to his master hereupon. If he took any occasion to do it from what Elisha had said the fault was in him, not in the word.

1. He basely cheated his master, and belied the prophet (2Ki 8:14): He told me thou shouldst certainly recover. This was abominably false; he told him he should die (2Ki 8:10), but he unfairly and unfaithfully concealed that, either because he was loth to put the king out of humour with bad news or because hereby he might the more effectually carry on that bloody design which he conceived when he was told he should be his successor. The devil ruins men by telling them they shall certainly recover and do well, so rocking them asleep in security, than which nothing is more fatal. This was an injury to the king, who lost the benefit of this warning to prepare for death, and an injury to Elisha, who would be counted a false prophet.

2. He barbarously murdered his master, and so made good the prophet's word, 2Ki 8:15. He dipped a thick cloth in cold water, and spread it upon his face, under pretence of cooling and refreshing him, but so that it stopped his breath, and stifled him presently, he being weak (and not able to help himself) or perhaps asleep: such a bubble is the life of the greatest of men, and so much exposed are princes to violence. Hazael, who was Ben-hadad's confidant, was his murderer, and some think, was not suspected, nor did the truth ever come out but by the pen of this inspired historian. We found this haughty monarch (1Ki 20:1-43) the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, but he goes down slain to the pit with his iniquity upon his bones, Eze 32:27.

12 And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.

13 And Hazael said, But what, *is* thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou *shalt be* king over Syria.

14 So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me *that* thou shouldest surely recover.

15 And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped *it* in water, and spread *it* on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Jehoram of Judah

16 And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat *being* then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

17 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

We have here a brief account of the life and reign of Jehoram (or Joram), one of the worst of the kings of Judah, but the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, one of the best.

Note, 1. Parents cannot give grace to their children. Many that have themselves been godly have had the grief and shame of seeing those that came forth out of their bowels wicked and vile. Let not the families that are thus afflicted think it strange.

2. If the children of good parents prove wicked, commonly they are worse than others. The unclean spirit brings in seven others more wicked than himself, Lu 11:26.

3. A nation is sometimes justly punished with the miseries of a bad reign for not improving the blessings and advantages of a good one.

Concerning this Jehoram observe,

I The general idea here given of his wickedness (2Ki 8:18): He did as the house of Ahab, and worse he could not do. His character is taken from the bad example he followed, for men are according to the company they converse with and the copies they write after. No mistake is more fatal to young people than a mistake in the choice of those whom they would recommend themselves to and take their measures from, and whose good opinion they value themselves by. Jehoram chose the house of Ahab for his pattern rather than his father's house, and this choice was his ruin. We have a particular account of his wickedness (2Ch 21:1-30), murder, idolatry, persecution, everything that was bad.

II The occasions of his wickedness. His father was a very good man, and no doubt took care to have him taught the good knowledge of the Lord, but,

1. It is certain he did ill to marry him to the daughter of Ahab; no good could come of an alliance with an idolatrous family, but all mischief with such a daughter of such a mother as Athaliah the daughter of Jezebel. The degeneracy of the old world took rise from the unequal yoking of professors with profane. Those that are ill-matched are already half-ruined.

2. I doubt he did not do well to make him king in his own life-time. It is said here (2Ki 8:16) that he began to reign, Jehoshaphat being then king; hereby he gratified his pride (than which nothing is more pernicious to young people), indulged him in his ambition, in hopes to reform him by humouring him, and so brought a curse upon his family, as Eli did, whose sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. Jehoshaphat had made this wicked son of his viceroy once when he went with Ahab to Ramoth-Gilead, from which Jehoshaphat's seventeenth year (1Ki 22:51) is made Jehoram's second (2Ki 1:17), but afterwards, in his twenty-second year, he made him partner in his government, and thence Joram's eight years are to be dated, three years before his father's death. It has been hurtful to many young men to come too soon to their estates. Samuel got nothing by making his sons judges.

III. The rebukes of Providence which he was under for his wickedness. 1 The Edomites revolted, who had been under the government of the kings of Judah ever since David's time, about 150 years, 2Ki 8:20. He attempted to reduce them, and gave them a defeat (2Ki 8:21), but he could not improve the advantage he had got, so as to recover his dominion over them: Yet Edom revolted (2Ki 8:22), and the Edomites were, after this, bitter enemies to the Jews, as appears by the prophecy of Ob 1:1-21 and Ps 137:7.

Now Isaac's prophecy was fulfilled, that this Esau the elder should serve Jacob the younger; yet, in process of time, he should break that yoke from off his neck, Ge 27:40. 2. Libnah

revolted. This was a city in Judah, in the heart of his country, a priests' city; the inhabitants of this city shook off his government because he had forsaken God, and would have compelled them to do so too, 2Ch 21:10,11. In order that they might preserve their religion they set up for a free state. Perhaps other cities did the same. 3. His reign was short. God cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but forty years old, and had reigned but eight years. Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

IV. The gracious care of Providence for the keeping up of the kingdom of Judah, and the house of David, notwithstanding the apostasies and calamities of Jehoram's reign (2Ki 8:19): Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah. He could easily have done it; he might justly have done it; it would have been no loss to him to have done it; yet he would not do it, for David's sake, not for the sake of any merit of his which could challenge this favour to his family as a debt, but for the sake of a promise made to him that he should always have a lamp (that is, a succession of kings from one generation to another, by which his name should be kept bright and illustrious, as a lamp is kept burning by a constant fresh supply of oil), that his family should never be extinct till it terminated in the Messiah, that Son of David on whom was to be hung all the glory of his Father's house and in whose everlasting kingdom that promise to David is fulfilled (Ps 132:17), I have ordained a lamp for my anointed.

V. The conclusion of this impious and inglorious reign, 2Ki 8:23,24. Nothing peculiar is here said of him; but we are told (2Ch 21:19,20) that he died of sore diseases and died without being desired.

18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

19 Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him always a light, *and* to his children.

20 In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.
21 So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he rose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled into their tents
22 Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.
23 And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
24 And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Ahaziah of Judah

25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign.

As among common persons there are some that we call little men, who make no figure, are little regarded, as less valued, so among kings there are some whom, in comparison with others, we may call little kings. This Ahaziah was one of these; he looks mean in the history, and in God's account vile, because wicked. It is too plain an evidence of the affinity between Jehoshaphat and Ahab that they had the same names in their families at the same time, in which, we may suppose, they designed to compliment one another.

Ahab had two sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram, who reigned successively; Jehoshaphat had a son and grandson names Jehoshaphat had a son and grandson names Jehoram and Ahaziah, who, in like manner, reigned successively. Names indeed do not make natures, but it was a bad omen to Jehoshaphat's family to borrow names from Ahab's; or, if he lent the names to that wretched family, he could not communicate with them the devotion of their significations, Ahaziah--Taking hold of the Lord, and Jehoram--The Lord

exalted. Ahaziah king of Israel had reigned but two years, Ahaziah king of Judah reigned but one. We are here told that his relation to Ahab's family was the occasion,

1. Of his wickedness (2Ki 8:27): He walked in the way of the house of Ahab, that idolatrous bloody house; for his mother was Ahab's daughter (2Ki 8:26), so that he sucked in wickedness with his milk. Partus sequitur ventrem--The child may be expected to resemble the mother. When men choose wives for themselves they must remember they are choosing mothers for their children, and are concerned to choose accordingly.

2. Of his fall. Joram, his mother's brother, courted him to join with him for the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead, an attempt fatal to Ahab; so it was to Joram his son, for in that expedition he was wounded (2Ki 8:28), and returned to Jezreel to be cured, leaving his army there in possession of the place. Ahaziah likewise returned, but went to Jezreel to see how Jehoram did, 2Ki 8:29. Providence so ordered it, that he who had been debauched by the house of Ahab might be cut off with them, when the measure of their iniquity was full, as we shall find in the next chapter. Those who partake with sinners in their sins must expect to partake with them in their plagues.

26 Two and twenty years old *was* Ahaziah when he began to reign; and
he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was*
Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.
27 And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the
sight of the Lord, as *did* the house of Ahab: for he *was* the son-in-
law of the house of Ahab.
28 And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael
king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram.
29 And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds
which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against
Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah
went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was
sick.

2 Kings-9

Jehu Anointed King of Israel

1 And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets,
and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in
thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead:
2 and when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of
Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up
from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber;
3 then take the box of oil, and pour *it* on his head, and say, Thus saith
the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door,
and flee, and tarry not.

We have here the anointing of Jehu to be king, who was, at this time, a commander (probably commander-in-chief) of the forces employed at Ramoth-Gilead, 2Ki 9:14. There he was fighting for the king his master, but received orders from a higher king to fight against him. It does not appear that Jehu aimed at the government, or that he ever thought of it, but the commission given him was a perfect surprise to him. Some think that he had been anointed before by Elijah, whom God ordered to do it, but privately, and with an intimation that he must not act till further orders, as Samuel anointed David long before he was to come to the throne: but that it not at all probable, for then we must suppose Elijah had anointed Hazael too. No, when God bade him do these things he bade him anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, to do them when he was gone, as God should direct him. Here is,

I The commission sent.

1. Elisha did not go himself to anoint Jehu, because he was old and unfit for such a journey and so well known that he could not do it privately, could not go and come without observation; therefore he sends one of the sons of the prophets to do it, 2Ki 9:1. They not only reverences him as their father (2Ki 2:15),

but observed and obeyed him as their father. This service of anointing Jehu,

(1.) Had danger in it (1Sa 16:2), and therefore it was not fit that Elisha should expose himself, but one of the sons of the prophets, whose life was of less value, and who could do it with less danger.

(2.) It required labour and was therefore fitter for a young man in his full strength. Let youth work and age direct.

(3.) Yet it was an honourable piece of service, to anoint a king, and he that did it might hope to be preferred for it afterwards, and therefore, for the encouragement of the young prophets, Elisha employed one of them: he would not engross all the honours to himself, nor grudge the young prophets a share in them.

2. When he sent him,

(1.) He put the oil into his hand with which he must anoint Jehu: Take this box of oil Solomon was anointed with oil out of the tabernacle, 1Ki 1:39. That could not now be had, but oil from a prophet's hand was equivalent to oil out of God's house. Probably it was not the constant practice to anoint kings, but upon the disturbance of the succession, as in the case of Solomon, or the interruption of it, as in the case of Joash (2Ki 11:12), or the translation of the government to a new family, as here and in the case of David; yet it might be used generally, though the scripture does not mention it.

(2.) He put the words into his mouth which he must say (2Ki 9:3)-- I have anointed thee king, and, no doubt, told him all the rest that he said, 2Ki 9:7-10. Those whom God sends on his errands shall not go without full instructions.

(3.) He also ordered him,

[1.] To do it privately, to single out Jehu from the rest of the captains and anoint him in an inner chamber (2Ki 9:2), that Jehu's confidence in his commission might be tried, when he had no witness to attest it. His being suddenly animated for the service would be proof sufficient of his being anointed to it. There needed no other proof. The thing signified was the best evidence of the sign.

[2.] To do it expeditiously. When he went about it he must gird up his loins; when he had done it he must flee and not tarry for a fee, or a treat, or to see what Jehu would do. It becomes the sons of the prophets to be quick and lively at their work, to go about it and go through it as men that hate sauntering and trifling. They should be as angels that fly swiftly.

II The commission delivered. The young prophet did his business with despatch, was at Ramoth-Gilead presently, 2Ki 9:4. There he found the general officers sitting together, either at dinner or in a council of war, 2Ki 9:5. With the assurance that became a messenger from God, notwithstanding the meanness of his appearance, he called Jehu out from the rest, not waiting his leisure, or begging his pardon for disturbing him, but as one having authority: I have an errand to thee, O captain. Perhaps Jehu had some intimation of his business; and therefore, that he might not seem too forward to catch at the honour, he asked, To which of all us? that it might not be said afterwards he got it by speaking first, but they might all be satisfied he was indeed the person designed. When the prophet had him alone he anointed him, 2Ki 9:6. The anointing of the Spirit is a hidden thing, that new name which none knows but those that have it. Herewith,

1. He invests him with the royal dignity: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, whose messenger I am, in his name I have

anointed thee king over the people of the Lord. He gives him an incontestable title, but reminds him that he was made king,

(1.) By the God of Israel; from him he must see his power derived (for by him kings reign), for he must use it, and to him he must be accountable. Magistrates are the ministers of God, and must therefore act in dependence upon him and with an entire devotedness to him and to his glory.

(2.) Over the Israel of God. Though the people of Israel were wretchedly corrupted, and had forfeited all the honour of relationship to God, yet they are here called the people of the Lord, for he had a right to them and had not yet given them a bill of divorce. Jehu must look upon the people he was made king of as the people of the Lord, not as his vassals, but God's freemen, his sons, his first-born, not to be abused or tyrannized over, God's people, and therefore to be ruled for him, and according to his laws.

2. He instructs him in his present service, which was to destroy all the house of Ahab (2Ki 9:7), not that he might clear his own way to the throne, and secure to himself the possession of it, but that he might execute the judgments of God upon that guilty and obnoxious family. He calls Ahab his master, that the relation might be no objection. "He was thy master, and to lift up thy hand against his son and successor would be not only base ingratitude, but treason, rebellion, and all that is bad, if thou hadst not an immediate command from God to do it.

But thou art under higher obligations to thy Master in heaven than to thy master Ahab. He has determined that the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and by thy hand; fear not: has not he commanded thee? Fear not sin; his command will justify thee and bear thee out: fear not danger; his command will secure and prosper thee." That he might intelligently, and in a

right manner, do this great execution on the house of Ahab, he tells him,

(1.) What was their crime, what the ground of the controversy, and wherefore God had quarrel with them, that he might have an eye to that which God had an eye to, and that was the blood of God's servants, the prophets and others, faithful worshippers, which they had shed, and which must now be required at the hand of Jezebel. That they were idolaters was bad enough, and merited all that was brought upon them; yet that is not mentioned here, but the controversy God has with them is for their being persecutors, not so much their throwing down God's altars as their slaying his prophets with the sword. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any prince or people as this does nor brings a surer or a sorer ruin. This was the sin that brought on Jerusalem its first destruction (2Ch 36:16) and its final one, Mt 23:37,38. Jezebel's whoredoms and witchcrafts were not so provoking as her persecuting the prophets, killing some and driving the rest into corners and caves, 1Ki 18:4.

(2.) What was their doom. They were sentenced to utter destruction; not to be corrected, but to be cut off and rooted out. This Jehu must know, that his eye might not spare for pity, favour, or affection. All that belonged to Ahab must be slain, 2Ki 9:8. A pattern is given him of the destruction intended, in the destruction of the families of Jeroboam and Baasha (2Ki 9:9), and he is particularly directed to throw Jezebel to the dogs, 2Ki 9:10. The whole stock of royal blood was little enough, and too little, to atone for the blood of the prophets, the saints and martyrs, which, in God's account, is of great price.

The prophet, having done this errand, made the best of his way home again, and left Jehu alone to consider what he had to do and beg direction from God.

4 So the young man, *even* the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.

5 And when he came, behold, the captains of the host *were* sitting;
and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said,
Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain.
6 And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on
his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I
have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, *even* over
Israel.
7 And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may
avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all
the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel.
8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from
Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and
left in Israel:
9 and I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the
son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah:
10 and the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and *there
shall be* none to bury *her*. And he opened the door, and fled.
11 Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and *one* said unto
him, *Is* all well? wherefore came this mad *fellow* to thee? And he
said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication.
12 And they said, *It is* false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus
spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee
king over Israel.

Jehu, after some pause, returned to his place at the board, taking no notice of what had passed, but, as it should seem, designing, for the present, to keep it to himself, if they had not urged him to disclose it. Let us therefore see what passed between him and the captains.

I. With what contempt the captains speak of the young prophet (2Ki 9:11): "Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? What business had he with thee? And why wouldst thou humour him so far as to retire for conversation with him? Are prophets company for captains?" They are called him a mad fellow, because he was one of those that would not run with them to an excess of riot (1Pe 4:4), but lived a life of self-denial,

mortification, and contempt of the world, and spent their time in devotion; for these things they thought the prophets were fools and the spiritual men were mad, Ho 9:7.

Note, Those that have no religion commonly speak with disdain of those that are religious, and look upon them as mad. They said of our Saviour, He is beside himself, of John Baptist, He has a devil (is a poor melancholy man), of St. Paul, Much learning has made him mad. The highest wisdom is thus represented as folly, and those that best understand themselves are looked upon as beside themselves.

Perhaps Jehu intended it for a rebuke to his friends when he said, "You know the man to be a prophet, why then do you call him a mad fellow? You know the way of his communication to be not from madness, but inspiration." Or, "Being a prophet, you may guess what his business is, to tell me of my faults, and to teach me my duty; I need not inform you concerning it." Thus he thought to put them off, but they urged him to tell them. "It is false," say they, "we cannot conjecture what was his errand, and therefore tell us."

Being thus pressed to it, he told them that the prophet had anointed him king, and it is probable showed them the oil upon his head, 2Ki 9:12. He knew not but some of them either out of loyalty to Joram or envy of him, might oppose him, and go near to crush his interest in its infancy; but he relied on the divine appointment, and was not afraid to own it, knowing whom he had trusted: he that raised him would stand by him.

II. With what respect they compliment the new king upon the first notice of his advancement, 2Ki 9:13. How meanly soever they thought of the prophet that anointed him, and of his office, they expressed a great veneration for the royal dignity of him that was anointed, and were very forward to proclaim him and sound of trumpet. In token of their subjection and allegiance to

him, their affection to his person and government, and their desire to see him high and easy in it, they put their garments under him, that he might stand or sit upon them on the top of the stairs, in sight of the soldiers, who, upon the first intimation, came together to grace the solemnity. God put it into their hearts thus readily to own him, for he turns the hearts of people as well as kings, like the rivers of water, into what channel he pleases. Perhaps they were disquieted at Joram's government or had a particular affection for Jehu; or, however this might be, things it seems were ripe for the revolution, and they all came into Jehu's interest and conspired against Joram, 2Ki 9:14.

III. With what caution Jehu proceeded. He had advantages against Joram, and he knew how to improve them. He had the army with him. Joram had left it, and had gone home badly wounded. Jehu's good conduct appears in two things:--

1. That he complimented the captains, and would do nothing without their advice and consent ("If it be your minds, we will do so and so, else not"), thereby intimating the deference he paid to their judgment and the confidence he had in their fidelity, both which tended to please and fix them. It is the wisdom of those that would rise fast, and stand firm, to take their friends along with them.

2. That he contrived to surprise Joram; and, in order thereto, to come upon him with speed, and to prevent his having notice of what was now done: "Let none go forth to tell it in Jezreel, that, as a snare, the ruin may come on him and his house." The suddenness of an attack sometimes turns to as good an account as the force of it.

13 Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put *it* under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

14 So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria.
15 But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it be your minds, *then* let none go forth *nor* escape out of the city to go to tell *it* in Jezreel.
16 So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram.
17 And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take a horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, *Is it* peace?

From Ramoth-Gilead to Jezreel was more than one day's march; about the mid-way between them the river Jordan must be crossed. We may suppose Jehu to have marched with all possible expedition, and to have taken the utmost precaution to prevent the tidings from getting to Jezreel before him; and, at length, we have him within sight first, and then within reach, of the devoted king.

I. Joram's watchman discovers him first at a distance, him and his retinue, and gives notice to the king of the approach of a company, whether of friends or foes he cannot tell. But the king (impatient to know what is the matter, and perhaps jealous that the Syrians, who had wounded him, had traced him by the blood to his own palace, and were coming to seize him) sent first one messenger, and then another, to bring him intelligence, 2Ki 9:17-19. He had scarcely recovered from the fright he was put into in the battle, and his guilty conscience put him into a continual terror. Each messenger asked the same question: "Is it peace? are you for us or for our adversaries?

Do you bring good tidings or bad?" Each had the same answer: What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thee behind me, 2Ki 9:18,19. As if he had said, "It is not to thee, but to him that sent

thee, that I will give answer; for thy part, if thou consult thy own safety, turn thee behind me, and enlist thyself among my followers." The watchman gave notice that the messengers were taken prisoners, and at length observed that the leader of this troop drove like Jehu, who it seems was noted for driving furiously, thereby discovering himself to be a man of a hot eager spirit, intent upon his business, and pushing forward with all his might.

A man of such a violent temper was fittest for the service to which Jehu was designated. The wisdom of God is seen in the choice of proper instruments to be employed in his work. But it is not much for any man's reputation to be known by his fury. He that has rule over his own spirit is better than the mighty. The Chaldee paraphrase gives this a contrary sense: The leading is like that of Jehu, for he leads quietly. And, it should seem, he did not come up very fast, for then there would not have been time for all this that passed. And some think he chose to march slowly, that he might give Joram time to come out to him, and so dispatch him before he entered the city.

II. Joram himself goes out to meet him, and takes Ahaziah king of Judah along with him, neither of them equipped for war, as not expecting an enemy, but in haste to have their curiosity satisfied. How strangely has Providence sometimes ordered it, that men have been in haste to meet their ruin when their day has come to fall.

1 The place where Joram met Jehu was ominous: In the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite, 2Ki 9:21. The very sight of that ground was enough to make Joram tremble and Jehu triumph; for Joram had the guilt of Naboth's blood fighting against him and Jehu had the force of Elijah's curse fighting for him. The circumstances of events are sometimes so ordered by divine Providence as to make the punishment answer to the sin as face answers to face in a glass.

2. Joram's demand was still the same: "Is it peace, Jehu? Is all well? Dost thou come home thus flying from the Syrians or more than a conqueror over them?" It seems, he looked for peace, and could not entertain any other thought. Note, It is very common for great sinners, even when they are upon the brink of ruin, to flatter themselves with an opinion that all is well with them, and to cry peace to themselves.

3. Jehu's reply was very startling. He answered him with a question: What peace canst thou expect, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel (who, though queen dowager, was in effect queen regent) and her witchcrafts are so many? See how plainly Jehu deals with him. Formerly he durst not do so, but now he had another spirit. Note, Sinners will not always be flattered; one time or other, they will have their own given them, Ps 36:2. Observe,

(1.) He charges upon him his mother's wickedness, because he had at first learned it and then with his kingly power protected it. She stands impeached for whoredom, corporal and spiritual (serving idols and serving them with the very acts of lewdness), for witchcraft likewise, enchantments and divinations, used in honour of her idols; and these multiplied, the whoredoms and the witchcrafts many; for those that abandon themselves to wicked courses know not where they will stop. One sin begets another.

(2.) Upon that account he throws him off from all pretensions to peace: "What peace can come to that house in which there is so much wickedness unrepented of?" Note, The way of sin can never be the way of peace, Isa 57:21. What peace can sinners have with God, what peace with their own consciences, what good, what comfort, can they expect in life, in death, or after death, who go on still in their trespasses? No peace so long as

sin is persisted in; but, as soon as it is repented of and forsaken, there is peace.

4. The execution was done immediately. When Joram heard of his mother's crimes his heart failed him; he presently concluded the long-threatened day of reckoning had now come, and cried out, "There is treachery, O Ahaziah! Jehu is our enemy, and it is time for us to shift for our safety." Both fled, and,

(1.) Joram king of Israel was slain presently, 2Ki 9:24. Jehu dispatched him with his own hands. The bow was not drawn at a venture, as that which sent the fatal arrow through the joints of his father's harness, but Jehu directed the arrow between his shoulders as he fled (it was one of God's arrows which he has ordained against the persecutor, Ps 7:13), and it reached to his heart, so that he died upon the spot. He was now the top branch of Ahab's house, and therefore was first cut off. He died a criminal, under the sentence of the law, which Jehu, the executioner, pursues in the disposal of the dead body.

Naboth's vineyard was hard by, which put him in mind of that circumstance of the doom Elijah passed upon Ahab, "I will requite thee in this plat, said the Lord (2Ki 9:25,26), for the blood of Naboth himself, and for the blood of his sons," who were either put to death with him as partners in his crime, or secretly murdered afterwards, lest they should bring an appeal, or find some way to avenge their father's death, or break their hearts for the loss of him, or (his whole estate being confiscated, as well as his vineyard) lose their livelihoods, which was in effect to lose their lives. For this the house of Ahab must be reckoned with; and that very piece of ground which he, with so much pride and pleasure, had made himself master of at the expense of the guilt of innocent blood, now became the theatre on which his son's dead body lay exposed a spectacle to the world. Thus the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth. Higgaion. Selah.

(2.) Ahaziah king of Judah was pursued, and slain in a little time, and not far off, 2Ki 9:27,28.

[1.] Though he was now in Joram's company, he would not have been slain but that he was joined with the house of Ahab both in affinity and in iniquity. He was one of them (so he had made himself by his sins) and therefore he must fare as they fared. Jehu justly construed his commission as extending to them. Yet,

[2.] Perhaps he would not at this time have fallen with them if he had not been found in company with them. It is a dangerous thing to associate with evil-doers; we may be entangled both in guilt and misery by it.

18 So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, *Is it* peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

19 Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, *Is it* peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

20 And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving *is* like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

21 And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

22 And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, *Is it* peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts *are so* many?

23 And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, *There is* treachery, O Ahaziah.

24 And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram
between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk
down in his chariot.
25 Then said *Jehu* to Bidkar his captain, Take up, *and* cast him in the
portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how
that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the
Lord laid this burden upon him;
26 Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of
his sons, saith the Lord; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith
the Lord. Now therefore take *and* cast him into the plat *of ground,*
according to the word of the Lord.

Jehu Kills Ahaziah

27 But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw *this,* he fled by the way of
the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite
him also in the chariot. *And they did so* at the going up to Gur, which
is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there.
28 And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried
him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.
29 And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to
reign over Judah.

The Death of Jezebel

30 And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it;* and she
painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

The greatest delinquent in the house of Ahab was Jezebel: it was she that introduced Baal, slew the Lord's prophets, contrived the murder of Naboth, stirred up her husband first, and then her sons, to do wickedly; a cursed woman she is here called (2Ki 9:34), a curse to the country, and whom all that wished well to their country had a curse for. Three reigns her reign had lasted, but now, at length, her day had come to fall. We read of a false prophetess in the church of Thyatira that is compared to Jezebel, and called by her name (Re 2:20), her

wickedness the same, seducing God's servants to idolatry, a long space given her to repent (2Ki 9:21) as to Jezebel, and a fearful ruin brought upon her at last (2Ki 9:22,23), as here upon Jezebel.

So that Jezebel's destruction may be looked upon as typical of the destruction of idolaters and persecutors, especially that great whore, that mother of harlots, that hath made herself drunk with the blood of saints and the nations drunk with the wine of her fornications, when God shall put it into the heart of the kings of the earth to hate her, Re 17:5,6,16. Now here we have,

I. Jezebel daring the judgment. She heard that Jehu had slain her son, and slain him for her whoredoms and witchcrafts, and thrown his dead body into the portion of Naboth, according to the word of the Lord, and that he was now coming to Jezreel, where she could not but expect herself to fall next a sacrifice to his revenging sword. Now see how she meets her fate; she posted herself in a window at the entering of the gate, to affront Jehu and set him at defiance.

1. Instead of hiding herself, as one afraid of divine vengeance, she exposed herself to it and scorned to flee, mocked at fear and was not affrighted. See how a heart hardened against God will brave it out to the last, run upon him, even upon his neck, Job 15:26. But never did any thus harden their hearts against him and prosper.

2. Instead of humbling herself, and putting herself into close mourning for her son, she painted her face, and tired her head, that she might appear like herself, that is (as she thought), great and majestic, hoping thereby to daunt Jehu, to put him out of countenance, and to stop his career. The Lord God called to baldness and girding with sackcloth, but behold painting and dressing, walking contrary to God, Isa 22:12,13. There is not a

surer presage of ruin than an unhumbled heart under humbling providences. Let painted faces look in Jezebel's glass, and see how they like themselves.

3. Instead of trembling before Jehu, the instrument of God's vengeance, she thought to make him tremble with that threatening question, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master? Observe,

(1.) She took no notice of the hand of God gone out against her family, but flew in the face of him that was only the sword in his hand. We are very apt, when we are in trouble, to break out into a passion against the instruments of our trouble, when we ought to be submissive to God and angry at ourselves only.

(2.) She pleased herself with the thought that what Jehu was now doing would certainly end in his own ruin, and that he would not have peace in it. He had cut her off from all pretensions to peace (2Ki 9:22), and now she thought to cut him off likewise. Note, It is no new thing for those that are doing God's work to be looked upon as out of the way of peace. Active reformers, faithful reprovers, are threatened with trouble; but let them be in nothing terrified, Php 1:28.

(3.) She quoted a precedent, to deter him from the prosecution of this enterprise: "Had Zimri peace? No, he had not; he came to the throne by blood and treachery, and within seven days was constrained to burn the palace over his head and himself in it: and canst thou expect to fare any better?" Had the case been parallel, it would have been proper enough to give him this memorandum; for the judgments of God upon those that have gone before us in any sinful way should be warnings to us to take heed of treading in their steps. But the instance of Zimri was misapplied to Jehu. Zimri had no warrant for what he did, but was incited to it merely by his own ambition and cruelty; whereas Jehu was anointed by one of the sons of the prophets,

and did this by order from heaven, which would bear him out. In comparing persons and things we must carefully distinguish between the precious and the vile, and take heed lest from the fate of sinful men we read the doom of useful men.

II. Jehu demanding aid against her. He looked up to the window, not daunted at the menaces of her impudent but impotent rage, and cried, Who is on my side? Who? 2Ki 9:32. He was called out to do God's work, in reforming the land and punishing those that had debauched it; and here he calls out for assistance in the doing of it, looked as if there were any to help, any to uphold, Isa 63:5. He lifts up a standard, and makes proclamation, as Moses (Ex 23:26), Who is on the Lord's side? And the Psalmist (Ps 94:16), Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Note, When reformation-work is set on foot, it is time to ask, "Who sides with it?"

III. Her own attendants delivering her up to his just revenge. Two or three chamberlains looked out to Jehu with such a countenance as encouraged him to believe they were on his side, and to them he called not to seize or secure her till further orders, but immediately to throw her down, which was one way of stoning malefactors, casting them headlong from some steep place. Thus was vengeance taken on her for the stoning of Naboth. They threw her down, 2Ki 9:33. If God's command would justify Jehu, his command would justify them. Perhaps they had a secret dislike of Jezebel's wickedness, and hated her, though they served her; or, it may be, she was barbarous and injurious to those about her, and they were pleased with this opportunity of being avenged on her; or, observing Jehu's success, they hoped thus to ingratiate themselves with him, and keep their places in his court. However it was, thus she was most shamefully put to death, dashed against the wall and the pavement, and then trodden on by the horses, which were all besmeared with her blood and brains. See the end of pride and cruelty, and say, The Lord is righteous.

IV. The very dogs completing her shame and ruin, according to the prophecy. When Jehu had taken some refreshment in the palace, he bethought himself of showing so much respect to Jezebel's sex and quality as to bury her. As bad as she was, she was a daughter, a king's daughter, a king's wife, a king's mother: Go and bury her, 2Ki 9:34. But, though he had forgotten what the prophet said (2Ki 9:10, Dogs shall eat Jezebel), God had not forgotten it. While he was eating and drinking, the dogs had devoured her dead body, the dogs that went about the city (Ps 59:6) and fed upon the carrion, so that there was nothing left but her bare skull (the painted face gone) and her feet and hands. The hungry dogs had no respect to the dignity of her extraction; a king's daughter was no more to them than a common person. When we pamper our bodies, and use them deliciously, let us think how vile they are, and that shortly they will be either a feast for worms under ground or beasts above ground.

When notice was brought of this to Jehu, he remembered the threatening (1Ki 21:23), The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Nothing should remain of her but the monuments of her infamy. She had been used to appear on public days in great state, and the cry was, "This is Jezebel. What a majestic port and figure! How great she looks!" But now it shall be said no more. We have often seen the wicked buried (Ec 8:10), yet sometimes, as here, they have no burial, Ec 6:3. Jezebel's name nowhere remained, but as stigmatized in sacred writ: they could not so much as say, "This is Jezebel's dust, This is Jezebel's grave," or "This is Jezebel's seed." Thus the name of the wicked shall rot--rot above ground.

31 And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, *Had* Zimri peace, who slew his master?

32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who *is* on my side? who? And there looked out to him two *or* three eunuchs.

33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and *some*
of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he
trode her under foot.
34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see
now this cursed *woman,* and bury her: for she *is* a king's daughter.
35 And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the
skull, and the feet, and the palms of *her* hands.
36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This *is* the
word of the Lord, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite,
saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:
37 And the carcass of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field
in the portion of Jezreel; *so* that they shall not say, This *is* Jezebel.

2 Kings-10

Jehu Destroys the House of Ahab

1 And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and
sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to
them that brought up Ahab's *children,* saying,
2 Now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons
are with you, and *there are* with you chariots and horses, a fenced
city also, and armor;
3 look even out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set
him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.
4 But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood
not before him: how then shall we stand?
5 And he that *was* over the house, and he that *was* over the city, the
elders also, and the bringers up *of the children,* sent to Jehu, saying,
We *are* thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will
not make any king: do thou *that which is* good in thine eyes.
6 Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye *be* mine,
and *if* ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men
your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by tomorrow this time.
Now the king's sons, *being* seventy persons, *were* with the great men
of the city, which brought them up.

7 And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him *them* to Jezreel.

We left Jehu in quiet possession of Jezreel, triumphing over Joram and Jezebel; and we must now attend his further motions. He knew the whole house of Ahab must be cut off, and therefore proceeded in this bloody work, and did not do it deceitfully, or by halves, Jer 48:10.

I. He got the heads of all the sons of Ahab cut off by their own guardians at Samaria. Seventy sons (or grandsons) Ahab had, Gideon's number, Jdg 8:30. In such a number that bore his name his family was likely to be perpetuated, and yet it is extirpated all at once. Such a quiver full of arrows could not protect his house from divine vengeance. Numerous families, if vicious, must not expect to be long prosperous.

These sons of Ahab were now at Samaria, a strong city, perhaps brought thither upon occasion of the war with Syria, as a place of safety, or upon notice of Jehu's insurrection; with them were the rulers of Jezreel, that is, the great officers of the court, who went to Samaria to secure themselves or to consult what was to be done. Those of them that were yet under tuition had their tutors with them, who were entrusted with their education in learning, agreeable to their birth and quality, but, it is to be feared, brought them up in the idolatries of their father's house and made them all worshippers of Baal. Jehu did not think fit to bring his forces to Samaria to destroy them, but, that the hand of God might appear the more remarkably in it, made their guardians their murderers.

1. He sent a challenge to their friends to stand by them, 2Ki 10:2,3. "You that are hearty well-wishers to the house of Ahab, and entirely in its interests, now is your time to appear for it. Samaria is a strong city; you are in possession of it; you have forces at command; you may choose out the likeliest person of

all the royal family to head you; you know you are not tied to the eldest, unless he be the best and meetest of your master's sons. If you have any spirit in you, show it, and set one of them on his father's throne, and stand by him with your lives and fortunes." Not that he desired they should do this, or expected they would, but thus he upbraided them with their cowardice and utter inability to contest with the divine counsels. "Do if you dare, and see what will come of it." Those that have forsaken their religion have often, with it, lost both their sense and their courage, and deserve to be upbraided with it.

2. Hereby he gained from them a submission. They prudently reasoned with themselves: "Behold, two kings stood not before him, but fell as sacrifices to his rage; how then shall we stand?" 2Ki 10:4. Therefore they sent him a surrender of themselves: "We are thy servants, thy subjects, and will do all that thou shalt bid us, right or wrong, and will set up nobody in competition with thee." They saw it was to no purpose to contend with him, and therefore it was their interest to submit to him. With much more reason may we thus argue ourselves into a subjection to the great God. Many kings and great men have fallen before his wrath, for their wickedness; and how then shall we stand? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? No, we must either bend or break.

3. This was improved so far as to make them the executioners of those whom they had the tuition of (2Ki 10:6): If you be mine, bring me the heads of your master's sons by to-morrow at this time. Though he knew it must be done, and was loth to do it himself, one would think he could not expect they should do it. Could they betray such a trust? Could they be cruel to their master's sons? It seems, so low did they stoop in their adoration to the rising sun that they did it; they cut off the heads of those seventy princes, and sent them in baskets a present to Jehu, 2Ki 10:7. Learn hence not to trust in a friend nor to put confidence in a guide not governed by conscience. One can scarcely expect

that he who has been false to his God should ever be faithful to his prince.

But observe God's righteousness in their unrighteousness. These elders of Jezreel had been wickedly obsequious to Jezebel's order for the murder of Naboth, 1Ki 21:11. She gloried, it is likely, in the power she had over them; and now the same base spirit makes them as pliable to Jehu and as ready to obey his orders for the murder of Ahab's sons. Let none aim at arbitrary power, lest they be found rolling a stone which, some time or other, will return upon them. Princes that make their people slaves take the readiest way to make them rebels; and by forcing men's consciences, as Jezebel did, they lose their hold of them. When the separated heads were presented to Jehu, he slyly upbraided those that were the executioners of this vengeance.

The heads were laid in two heaps at the gate, the proper place of judgment. There he acquitted the people before God and the world (2Ki 10:9, You are righteous), and, by what the rulers of Samaria had now done, comparatively acquitted himself: "I slew but one; they have slain all these: I did it by conspiracy and with design; they have done this merely in compliance and with an implicit obedience. Let not the people of Samaria, nor any of the friends of the house of Ahab, ever reproach me for what I have done, when their own elders, and the very guardians of the orphans, have done this." It is common for those who have done something base to attempt the mitigation of their own reproach by drawing others in to do something worse. But,

He resolves all into the righteous judgment of God (2Ki 10:10): The Lord hath done that which he spoke by Elijah. God is not the author of any man's sin, but even by that which men do from bad principles God serves his own purposes and glorifies his own name; and he is righteous in that wherein men are unrighteous. When the Assyrian is made the rod of God's anger,

and the instrument of his justice, he meaneth not so, neither does his heart think so, Isa 10:7.

II. He proceeded to destroy all that remained of the house of Ahab, not only those that descended from him, but those that were in any relation to him, all the officers of his household, ministers of state, and those in command under him, called here his great men (2Ki 10:11), all his kinsfolks and acquaintance, who had been partners with him in his wickedness, and his priests, or domestic chaplains, whom he employed in his idolatrous services and who strengthened his hand that he should not turn from his evil way. Having done this in Jezreel, he did the same in Samaria (2Ki 10:17), slew all that remained to Ahab in Samaria. This was bloody work, and is not now, in any case, to be drawn into a precedent. Let the guilty suffer, but not the guiltless for their sakes. Perhaps such terrible destructions as these were intended as types of the final destruction of all the ungodly. God has a sword, bathed in heaven, which will come down upon the people of his curse, and be filled with blood. Isa 34:5,6. Then his eye will not spare, neither will he pity.

III. Providence bringing the brethren of Ahaziah in his way, as he was going on with this execution, he slew them likewise, 2Ki 10:12-14. The brethren of Ahaziah were slain by the Arabians (2Ch 22:1), but these were the sons of his brethren, as it is there explained (2Ki 10:8), and they are said to be princes of Judah, and to minister to Ahaziah. Several things concurred to make them obnoxious to the vengeance Jehu was now executing.

1. They were branches of Ahab's house, being descended from Athaliah, and therefore fell within his commission.

2. They were tainted with the wickedness of the house of Ahab.

3. They were now going to make their court to the princes of the house of Ahab, to salute the children of the king and the queen,

Joram and Jezebel, which showed that they were linked to them in affection as well as in affinity. These princes, forty-two in number, being appointed as sheep for the sacrifice, were slain with solemnity, at the pit of the shearing-house. The Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth.

8 And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning.

9 And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, Ye *be* righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these?

10 Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the Lord hath done *that* which he spake by his servant Elijah.

11 So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolk, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

12 And he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. *And* as he *was* at the shearing house in the way,

13 Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who *are* ye? And they answered, We *are* the brethren of Ahaziah; and we go down to salute the children of the king and the children of the queen.

14 And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing house, *even* two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

15 And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab *coming* to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart *is* with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give *me* thine hand. And he gave *him* his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

16 And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord. So they made him ride in his chariot.

17 And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the Lord, which he spake to Elijah.

Jehu Wipes Out the Worship of Baal

18 And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; *but* Jehu shall serve him much.

Jehu, pushing on his work, is here,

I. Courting the friendship of a good man, Jehonadab the son of Rechab, 2Ki 10:15,16. This Jehonadab, though mortified to the world and meddling little with the business of it (as appears by his charge to his posterity, which they religiously observed 300 years after, not to drink wine nor dwell in cities, Jer 35:6, &c.), yet, upon this occasion, went to meet Jehu, that he might encourage him in the work to which God had called him. The countenance of good men is a thing which great men, if they be wise, will value, and value themselves by. David prayed, Let those that fear thee turn to me, Ps 119:79. This Jehonadab, though no prophet, priest, or Levite, no prince or ruler, was, we may suppose, very eminent for prudence and piety, and generally respected for that life of self-denial and devotion which he lived: Jehu, though a soldier, knew him and honoured him. He did not indeed think of sending for him, but when he met him (though it is likely he drove now as furiously as ever) he stopped to speak to him; and we are here told what passed between them.

1. Jehu saluted him; he blessed him (so the word is), paid him the respect and showed him the good-will that were due to so great an example of serious godliness.

2. Jehonadab assured him that he was sincerely in his interest and a hearty well-wisher to his cause. Jehu professed that his heart was right with him, that he had a true affection for his person and a veneration for the crown of his Nazariteship, and desired to know whether he had the same affection for him and satisfaction in that crown of royal dignity which God had put upon his head: Is thy heart right? a question we should often put

to ourselves. "I make a plausible profession, have gained a reputation among men, but is my heart right? Am I sincere and inward with God?" Jehonadab gave him his word (It is), and gave him his hand as a pledge of his heart, yielded to him (so giving the hand is rendered, 2Ch 30:8), concurred and covenanted with him, and owned him in the work both of revenge and of reformation he was now about.

3. Jehu took him up into his chariot and took him along with him to Samaria. He put some honour upon him, by taking him into the chariot with him (Jehonadab was not accustomed to ride in a chariot, much less with a king); but he received more honour from him, and from the countenance he gave to his present work. All sober people would think the better of Jehu when they saw Jehonadab in the chariot with him. This was not the only time in which the piety of some has been made to serve the policy of others, and designing men have strengthened themselves by drawing good men into their interests. Jehonadab is a stranger to the arts of fleshly wisdom, and has his conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity; and therefore, if Jehu be a servant of God and an enemy to Ball, he will be his faithful friend. "Come then" (says Jehu), "come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord; and then thou wilt see reason to espouse my cause." This is commonly taken as not well said by Jehu, and as giving cause to suspect that his heart was not right with God in what he did, and that the zeal he pretended for the Lord was really zeal for himself and his own advancement.

For, (1.) He boasted of it, and spoke as if God and man were mightily indebted to him for it.

(2.) He desired it might be seen and taken notice of, like the Pharisees, who did all to be seen of men. An upright heart approves itself to God and covets no more than his acceptance. If we aim at the applause of men, and make their praise our highest end, we are upon a false bottom. Whether Jehu looked

any further we cannot judge; however Jehonadab went with him, and, it is likely, animated and assisted him in the further execution of his commission (2Ki 10:17), destroying all Ahab's friends in Samaria. A man may hate cruelty and yet love justice, may be far from thirsting after blood and yet may wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, Ps 58:10.

II. Contriving the destruction of all the worshippers of Baal. The service of Baal was the crying sin of the house of Ahab: that root of this idolatry was plucked up, but multitudes yet remained that were infected with it, and would be in danger of infecting others. The law of God was express, that they were to be put to death; but they were so numerous, and so dispersed throughout all parts of the kingdom, and perhaps so alarmed with Jehu's beginnings, that it would be a hard matter to find them all out and an endless task to prosecute and execute them one by one. Jehu's project therefore is to cut them all off together.

1. By a wile, by a fraud, he brought them together to the temple of Baal. He pretended he would worship Baal more than ever Ahab had done, 2Ki 10:18. Perhaps he spoke this ironically, or to try the body of the people whether they would oppose such a resolution as this, and would resent his threatening to increase his predecessor's exactions, and say, "If it be so, we have no part in Jehu, nor inheritance in the son of Nimshi." But it rather seems to have been spoken purposely to deceive the worshippers of Baal, and then it cannot be justified. The truth of God needs not any man's lie. He issued a proclamation, requiring the attendance of all the worshippers of Baal to join with him in a sacrifice to Baal (2Ki 10:19,20), not only the prophets and priests, but all, throughout the kingdom, who worshipped Baal, who were not nearly so many as they had been in Elijah's time.

Jehu's friends, we may suppose, were aware of what he designed, and were not offended at it; but the bigoted besotted Baalites began to think themselves very happy, and that now they should

see golden days again. Joram had put away the image of Baal, 2Ki 3:2. If Jehu will restore it, they have what they would have, and come up to Samaria with joy from all parts to celebrate the solemnity; and they are pleased to see the house of Baal crowded (2Ki 10:21), to see his priests in their vestments (2Ki 10:22), and themselves perhaps with some badges or other to notify their relation to Baal, for there were vestments for all his worshippers.

2. He took care that none of the servants of the Lord should be among them, 2Ki 10:23. This they took as a provision to preserve the worship of Baal from being profaned by strangers; but it was a wonder that they did not, by this, see themselves brought into a snare and discern a design upon them. No marvel if those that suffer themselves to be deceived by Baal (as all idolaters were by their idols), are deceived by Jehu to their destruction.

3. He gave order for the cutting of them all off, and Jehonadab joined with him therein, 2Ki 10:23. When a strict search was made lest any of the servants of God should, either for company or curiosity, have got among them--lest any wheat should be mixed with those tares, and when eighty men were set to stand guard at all the avenues to Baal's temple, that none might escape (2Ki 10:24), then the guards were sent in to put them all to the sword and to mingle their blood with their sacrifices, in a way of just revenge, as they themselves had sometimes done, when, in their blind devotion, they cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out, 1Ki 18:28. This was accordingly done, and the doing of it, though seemingly barbarous, was, considering the nature of their crime, really righteous. The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.

4. The idolaters being thus destroyed, the idolatry itself was utterly abolished. The buildings about the house of Baal (which were so many and so stately that they are here called a city), where Baal's priests and their families lived, were destroyed; all

the little images, statues, pictures, or shrines, which beautified Baal's temple, with the great image of Baal himself, were brought out and burnt (2Ki 10:26,27), and the temple of Baal was broken down, and made a dunghill, the common sink, or sewer, of the city, that the remembrance of it might be blotted out or made infamous. Thus was the worship of Baal quite destroyed, at least for the present, out of Israel, though it had once prevailed so far that there were but 7000 of all the thousands of Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and those concealed. Thus will God destroy all the gods of the heathen, and, sooner or later, triumph over them all.

19 Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice *to do* to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did *it* in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal.

20 And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed *it*.

21 And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another.

22 And he said unto him that *was* over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments.

23 And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the Lord, but the worshippers of Baal only.

24 And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, *If* any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, *he that letteth him go,* his life *shall be* for the life of him.

25 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, *and* slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the

edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast *them* out, and
went to the city of the house of Baal.
26 And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and
burned them.
27 And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house
of Baal, and made it a draught house unto this day
28 Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.
29 Howbeit, *from* the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made
Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit,* the golden
calves that *were* in Beth-el, and that *were* in Dan.
30 And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in
executing *that which is* right in mine eyes, *and* hast done unto the
house of Ahab according to all that *was* in mine heart, thy children
of the fourth *generation* shall sit on the throne of Israel.

Here is all the account of the reign of Jehu, though it continued twenty-eight years. The progress of it answered not to the glory of its beginning. We have here,

I. God's approbation of what Jehu had done. Many, it is probable, censured him as treacherous and barbarous--called him a rebel, a usurper, a murderer, and prognosticated ill concerning him, that a family thus raised would soon be ruined; but God said, Well done (2Ki 10:30), and then it signified little who said otherwise.

1. God pronounced that to be right which he had done. It is justly questionable whether he did it from a good principle and whether he did not take some false steps in the doing of it; and yet (says God), Thou hast done well in executing that which is right in my eyes. The extirpating of idolaters and idolatry was a thing right in God's eyes, for it is an iniquity he visits as surely and severely as any: it was according to all that was in his heart, all he desired, all he designed. Jehu went through with his work.

2. God promised him a reward, that his children of the fourth generation from him should sit upon the throne of Israel. This

was more than what took place in any of the dignities or royal families of that kingdom; of the house of Ahab there were indeed four kings, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram, but the last two were brothers, so that it reached but to the third generation, and that whole family continued but about forty-five years in all, whereas Jehu's continued in four, besides himself, and in all about 120 years. Note, No services done for God shall go unrewarded.

II. Jehu's carelessness in what he was further to do. By this it appeared that his heart was not right with God, that he was partial in his reformation.

1. He did not put away all the evil. He departed from the sins of Ahab, but not from the sins of Jeroboam--discarded Baal, but adhered to the calves. The worship of Baal was indeed the greater evil, and more heinous in the sight of God, but the worship of the calves was a great evil, and true conversion is not only from gross sin, but from all sin--not only from false gods, but from false worships. The worship of Baal weakened and diminished Israel, and made them beholden to the Sidonians, and therefore he could easily part with that; but the worship of the calves was a politic idolatry, was begun and kept up for reasons of state, to prevent the return of the ten tribes to the house of David, and therefore Jehu clave to that. True conversion is not only from wasteful sins, but from gainful sins--not only from those sins that are destructive to the secular interest, but from those that support and befriend it, in forsaking which is the great trial whether we can deny ourselves and trust God.

2. He put away evil, but he did not mind that which was good (2Ki 10:31): He took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel. He abolished the worship of Baal, but did not keep up the worship of God, nor walk in his law. He had shown great care and zeal for the rooting out of a false religion; but in the true religion,

(1.) He showed no care, took no heed, lived at large, was not at all solicitous to please God and to do his duty, took no heed to the scriptures, to the prophets, to his own conscience, but walked at all adventures. Those that are heedless, it is to be feared, are graceless; for, where there is a good principle in the heart, it will make men cautious and circumspect, desirous to please God and jealous of doing any thing to offend him.

(2.) He showed no zeal; what he did in religion he did not do with his heart, with all his heart, but did it as if he did it not, without any liveliness or concern. It seems, he was a man that had little religion himself, and yet God made use of him as an instrument of reformation in Israel. It is a pity but that those that do good to others should always be good themselves.

III. The judgment that came upon Israel in his reign. We have reason to fear that when Jehu took no heed himself to walk in God's law the people were generally as careless as he, both in their devotions and in their conversations. There was a general decay of piety and increase of profaneness; and therefore it is not strange that the next news we hear is, In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short, 2Ki 10:32. Their neighbours encroached upon them on every side; they were short in their duty to God, and therefore God cut them short in their extent, wealth, and power.

Hazael king of Syria was, above any other, vexatious and mischievous to them, smote them in all the coasts of Israel, particularly the countries on the other side Jordan, which lay next him, and most exposed; on these he made continual inroads, and laid them waste. Now the Reubenites and Gadites smarted for the choice which their ancestors made of an inheritance on that side Jordan, which Moses reproved them for, Nu 32:1-42 Now Hazael did what Elisha foresaw and foretold he would do. Yet, for doing it, God had a quarrel with him and with his

kingdom, as we may find, Am 1:3,4. Because those of Damascus have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron, therefore (says God) I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad.

Lastly, The conclusion of Jehu's reign, 2Ki 10:34-36. Notice is taken, in general, of his might; but, because he took no heed to serve God, the memorials of his mighty enterprises and achievements are justly buried in oblivion.

31 But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel
with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam,
which made Israel to sin.
32 In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael
smote them in all the coasts of Israel;
33 from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the
Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which *is* by the river
Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.
34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his
might, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the
kings of Israel?
35 And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria.
And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.
36 And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria *was* twenty
and eight years.

2 Kings-11

Athaliah Usurps the Throne

1 And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was
dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

God had assured David of the continuance of his family, which is called his ordaining a lamp for his anointed; and this cannot but appear a great thing, now that we have read of the utter extirpation of so many royal families, one after another. Now

here we have David's promised lamp almost extinguished and yet wonderfully preserved.

I. It was almost extinguished by the barbarous malice of Athaliah, the queen-mother, who, when she heard that her son Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, arose and destroyed all the seed-royal (2Ki 11:1), all that she knew to be akin to the crown. Her husband Jehoram had slain all his brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, 2Ch 21:4. The Arabians had slain all Jehoram's sons except Ahaziah, 2Ch 22:1. Jehu had slain all their sons (2Ch 22:8) and Ahaziah himself. Surely never was royal blood so profusely shed. Happy the men of inferior birth, who live below envy and emulation! But, as if all this were but a small matter, Athaliah destroyed all that were left of the seed-royal. It was strange that one of the tender sex could be so barbarous, that one who had been herself a king's daughter, a king's wife, and a king's mother, could be so barbarous to a royal family, and a family into which she was herself ingrafted; but she did it,

1. From a spirit of ambition. She thirsted after rule, and thought she could not get to it any other way. That none might reign with her, she slew even the infants and sucklings that might have reigned after her. For fear of a competitor, not any must be reserved for a successor.

2. From a spirit of revenge and rage against God. The house of Ahab being utterly destroyed, and her son Ahaziah among the rest, because he was akin to it, she resolved, as it were, by way of reprisal, to destroy the house of David, and cut off his line, in defiance of God's promise to perpetuate it--a foolish attempt and fruitless, for who can disannul what God hath purposed? Grandmothers have been thought more fond of their grandchildren than they were of their own; yet Ahaziah's own mother is the wilful murderer of Ahaziah own sons, and in their infancy too, when she was obliged, above any other, to nurse them and take care of them. Well might she be called Athaliah,

that wicked woman (2Ch 24:7), Jezebel's own daughter; yet herein God was righteous, and visited the iniquity of Joram and Ahaziah, those degenerate branches of David's house, upon their children.

II. It was wonderfully preserved by the pious care of one of Joram's daughters (who was wife to Jehoiada the priest), who stole away one of the king's sons, Joash by name, and hid him, 2Ki 11:2,3. This was a brand plucked out of the fire; what number were slain we are not told, but, it seems, this being a child in the nurse's arms was not missed, or not enquired after, or at least no found. The person that delivered him was his own aunt, the daughter of wicked Joram; for God will raise up protectors for those whom he will have protected. The place of his safety was the house of the Lord, one of the chambers belonging to the temple, a place Athaliah seldom troubled. His aunt, by bringing him hither, put him under God's special protection, and so hid him by faith, as Moses was hidden. Now were David's words made good to one of his seed (Ps 27:5), In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me. With good reason did this Joash, when he grew up, set himself to repair the house of the Lord, for it had been a sanctuary to him. Now was the promise made to David bound up in one life, and yet it did not fail.

Thus to the son of David will God, according to his promise, secure a spiritual seed, which, though sometimes reduced to a small number, brought very low, and seemingly lost, will be perpetuated to the end of time, hidden sometimes and unseen, but hidden in God's pavilion and unhurt. It was a special providence that Joram, though a king, a wicked king, married his daughter to Jehoiada a priest, a godly priest. Some perhaps thought it a disparagement to the royal family to marry a daughter to a clergyman, but it proved a happy marriage, and the saving of the royal family from ruin; for Jehoiada's interest in the temple gave her an opportunity to preserve the child, and her

interest in the royal family gave him an opportunity to set him on the throne. See the wisdom and care of Providence, and how it prepares for what it designs; and see what blessings those lay up in store for their families that marry their children to those that are wise and good.

2 But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons *which were* slain; and they hid him, *even* him and his nurse, in the bedchamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.

3 And he was with her hid in the house of the Lord six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

4 And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the Lord, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the Lord, and showed them the king's son.

5 And he commanded them, saying, This *is* the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

6 and a third part *shall be* at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.

Six years Athaliah tyrannised. We have not a particular account of her reign; no doubt it was of a piece with the beginning. While Jehu was extirpating the worship of Baal in Israel, she was establishing it in Judah, as appears, 2Ch 24:7. The court and kingdom of Judah had been debauched by their alliance with the house of Ahab, and now one of that house is a curse and a plague to both: sinful friendships speed no better. All this while, Joash lay hid, entitled to a crown and intended for it, and yet buried alive in obscurity.

Though the sons and heirs of heaven are now hidden, the world knows them not (1Jo 3:1), yet the time is fixed when they shall appear in glory, as Joash in his seventh year; by that time he was ready to be shown, not a babe, but, having served his first

apprenticeship to life and arrived at his first climacterical year, he had taken a good step towards manhood; by that time the people had grown weary of Athaliah's tyranny and ripe for a revolution. How that revolution was effected we are here told.

I The manager of this great affair was Jehoiada the priest, probably the high priest, or at least the sagan (as the Jews called him) or suffragan to the high priest. By his birth and office he was a man in authority, whom the people were bound by the law to observe and obey, especially when there was no rightful king upon the throne, De 17:12. By marriage he was allied to the royal family, and, if all the seed-royal were destroyed, his wife, as daughter to Joram, had a better title to the crown than Athaliah had. By his eminent gifts and graces he was fitted to serve his country, and better service he could not do it than to free it from Athaliah's usurpation; and we have reason to think he did not make this attempt till he had first asked counsel of God and known his mind, either by prophets or Urim, perhaps by both.

II The management was very discreet and as became so wise and good a man as Jehoiada was.

1. He concerted the matter with the rulers of hundreds and the captains, the men in office, ecclesiastical, civil, and military; he got them to him to the temple, consulted with them, laid before them the grievances they at present laboured under, gave them an oath of secresy, and, finding them free and forward to join with him, showed them the king's son (2Ki 11:4), and so well satisfied were they with his fidelity that they saw no reason to suspect an imposition. We may well think what a pleasing surprise it was to the good people among them, who feared that the house and lineage of David were quite cut off, to find such a spark as this in the embers.

2. He posted the priests and Levites, who were more immediately under his direction, in the several avenues to the

temple, to keep the guard, putting them under the command of the rulers of hundreds, 2Ki 11:9. David had divided the priests into courses, which waited by turns. Every sabbath-day morning a new company came into waiting, but the company of the foregoing week did not go out of waiting till the sabbath evening, so that on the sabbath day, when double service was to be done, there was a double number to do it, both those that were to come in and those that were to go out.

These Jehoiada employed to attend on this great occasion; he armed them out of the magazines of the temple with David's spears and shields, either his own or those he had taken from his enemies, which he devoted to God's honour, 2Ki 11:10. If they were old and unfashionable, yet those that used them might, by their being David's, be reminded of God's covenant with him, which they were now acting in the defence of. Two things they were ordered to do:--

(1.) To protect the young king from being insulted; they must keep the watch of the king's house (2Ki 11:5), compass the king, and be with him (2Ki 11:8), to guard him from Athaliah's partizans, for still there were those that thirsted after royal blood.

(2.) To preserve the holy temple from being profaned by the concourse of people that would come together on this occasion (2Ki 11:6): Keep the watch of the house, that it be neither broken through nor broken down, and so strangers should crowd in, or such as were unclean. He was not so zealous for the projected revolution as to forget his religion. In times of the greatest hurry care must be taken, Ne detrimentum capiat ecclesia--That the holy things of God be not trenched upon. It is observable that Jehoiada appointed to each his place as well as his work (2Ki 11:6,7), for good order contributes very much to the expediting and accomplishing of any great enterprise. Let every man know, and keep, and make good, his post, and then the work will be done quickly.

3. When the guards were fixed, then the king was brought forth, 2Ki 11:12. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion! for even in thy holy mountain thy king appears, a child indeed, but not such a one as brings a woe upon the land, for he is the son of nobles, the son of David (Ec 10:17)-- a child indeed, but he had a good guardian, and, which was better, a good God, to go to. Jehoiada, without delay, proceeded to the coronation of this young king; for, though he was not yet capable of despatching business, he would be growing up towards it by degrees. This was done with great solemnity, 2Ki 11:12.

(1.) In token of his being invested with kingly power, he put the crown upon him, though it was yet too large and heavy for his head. The regalia, it is probable, were kept in the temple, and so the crown was ready at hand.

(2.) In token of his obligation to govern by law, and to make the word of God his rule, he gave him the testimony, put into his hand a Bible, in which he must read all the days of his life, De 17:18,19.

(3.) In token of his receiving the Spirit, to qualify him for this great work to which he before was called, he anointed him. Though notice is taken of the anointing of the kings only in case of interruption, as here, and in Solomon's case, yet I know not but the ceremony might be used for all their kings, at least those of the house of David, because their royalty was typical of Christ's, who was to be anointed above his fellows, above all the sons of David.

(4.) In token of the people's acceptance of him and subjection to his government, they clapped their hands for joy, and expressed their hearty good wishes to him: Let the king live; and thus they made him king, made him their king, consented to, and concurred with, the divine appointment. They had reason to

rejoice in the period now put to Athaliah's tyranny, and the prospect they had of the restoration and establishment of religion by a king under the tuition of so good a man as Jehoiada. They had reason to bid him welcome to the crown whose right it was, and to pray, Let him live, concerning him who came to them as life from the dead and in whom the house of David was to live. With such acclamations of joy and satisfaction must the kingdom of Christ be welcomed into our hearts when his throne is set up there and Satan the usurper is deposed. Hosanna, blessed is he that comes: clap hands, and say, "Let King Jesus live, for ever live and reign, in my soul, and in all the world;" it is promised (Ps 72:15), He shall live, and prayer shall be made for him, and his kingdom, continually.

7 And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they
shall keep the watch of the house of the Lord about the king.
8 And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his
weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let
him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he
cometh in.
9 And the captains over the hundreds did according to all *things* that
Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men
that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on
the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.
10 And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's
spears and shields, that *were* in the temple of the Lord.
11 And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand,
round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the
left corner of the temple, *along* by the altar and the temple.
12 And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him,
and *gave him* the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed
him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.
13 And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard *and* of the
people, she came to the people into the temple of the Lord.
14 And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the
manner *was,* and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and
all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and

Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason.

We may suppose it was designed when they had finished the solemnity of the king's inauguration, to pay a visit to Athaliah, and call her to an account for her murders, usurpation, and tyranny; but, like her mother Jezebel, she saved them the labour, went out to meet them, and hastened her own destruction.

1. Hearing the noise, she came in a fright to see what was the matter, 2Ki 11:13. Jehoiada and his friends began in silence, but now that they found their strength, they proclaimed what they were doing. It seems, Athaliah was little regarded, else she would have had intelligence brought her of this daring attempt before with her own ears she heard the noise; had the design been discovered before it was perfected, it might have been quashed, but now it was too late. When she heard the noise it was strange that she was so ill advised as to come herself, and, for aught that appears, to come alone. Surely she was not so neglected as to have none to go for her, or none to go with her, but she was wretchedly infatuated by the transport both of fear and indignation she was in. Whom God will destroy he befools.

2. Seeing what was done she cried out for help. She saw the king's place by the pillar possessed by one to whom the princes and people did homage (2Ki 11:14) and had reason to conclude her power at an end, which she knew was usurped; this made her rend her clothes, like one distracted, and cry, "Treason! treason! Come and help against the traitors." Josephus adds that she cried to have him killed that possessed the king's place. What was now doing was the highest justice, yet it was branded as the highest crime; she herself was the greatest traitor, and yet was first and loudest in crying Treason! treason! Those that are themselves most guilty are commonly most forward to reproach others.

3. Jehoiada gave orders to put her to death as an idolater, a usurper, and an enemy to the public peace. Care was taken,

(1.) That she should not be killed in the temple, or any of the courts of it, in reverence to that holy place, which must not be stained with the blood of any human sacrifice, though ever so justly offered.

(2.) That whoever appeared for her should die with her: "Him that follows her, to protect or rescue her, any of her attendants that resolve to adhere to her and will not come into the interests of their rightful sovereign, kill with the sword, but not unless they follow her now," 2Ki 11:15. According to these orders, she endeavouring to make her escape the back way to the palace, through the stalls, they pursued her, and there killed her, 2Ki 11:16. So let thy enemies perish, O Lord! thus give the bloody harlot blood to drink, for she is worthy.

15 But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds,
the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without
the ranges; and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the
priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the Lord.
16 And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which
the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.
17 And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king
and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between
the king also and the people.
18 And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and
brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces
thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.
And the priest appointed officers over the house of the Lord.

Jehoiada had now got over the harlot part of his work, when, by the death of Athaliah, the young prince had his way to the throne cleared of all opposition. He had now to improve his advantages for the perfecting of the revolution and the settling of the government. Two things we have an account of here:--

I The good foundations he laid, by an original contract, 2Ki 11:17. Now that prince and people were together in God's house, as it should seem before they stirred, Jehoiada took care that they

should jointly covenant with God, and mutually covenant with each other, that they might rightly understand their duty both to God and to one another, and be firmly bound to it.

1. He endeavoured to settle and secure the interests of religion among them, by a covenant between them and God. King and people would then cleave most firmly to each other when both had joined themselves to the Lord. God had already, on his part, promised to be their God (Jehoiada could show them that in the book of the testimony); now the king and people on their part must covenant and agree that they will be the Lord's people: in this covenant, the king stands upon the same level with his subjects and is as much bound as any of them to serve the Lord. By this engagement they renounced Baal, whom many of them had worshipped, and resigned themselves to God's government. It is well with a people when all the changes that pass over them help to revive, strengthen, and advance the interests of religion among them. And those are likely to prosper who set out in the world under fresh and sensible obligations to God and their duty. By our bonds to God the bonds of every relation are strengthened. They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us, 2Co 8:5.

2. He then settled both the coronation-oath and the oath of allegiance, the pacta conventa--covenant, between the king and the people, by which the king was obliged to govern according to law and to protect his subjects, and they were obliged, while he did so, to obey him and to bear faith and true allegiance to him. Covenants are of use both to remind us of and to bind us to those duties which are already binding on us. It is good, in all relations, for the parties to understand one another fully, particularly in that between prince and subject, that the one may understand the limits of his power and prerogative, the other those of his liberty and property; and never may the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set before them be removed.

II The good beginnings he raised on those foundations.

1. Pursuant to their covenant with God they immediately abolished idolatry, which the preceding kings, in compliance with the house of Ahab, had introduced (2Ki 11:18): All the people of the land, the mob, got together, to show their zeal against idolatry; and every one, now that they were so well headed, would lend a hand to pull down Baal's temple, his altars, and his images. All his worshippers, it should seem, deserted him; only his priest Mattan stuck to his altar. Though all men forsook Baal, he would not, and there he was slain, the best sacrifice that ever was offered upon that altar. Having destroyed Baal's temple, they appointed officers over the house of God, to see that the service of God was regularly performed by the proper persons, in due time, and according to the institutional manner.

2. Pursuant to their covenant with one another they expressed a mutual readiness to and satisfaction in each other.

(1.) The king was brought in state to the royal palace, and sat there on the throne of judgment, the thrones of the house of David (2Ki 11:19), ready to receive petitions and appeals, which he would refer it to Jehoiada to give answers to and to give judgment upon.

(2.) The people rejoiced, and Jerusalem was in quiet (2Ki 11:20), and Josephus says they kept a feast of joy many days, making good Solomon's observation (Pr 11:10), When it goes well with the righteous the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish there is shouting.

19 And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the Lord, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

20 And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet:
and they slew Athaliah with the sword *beside* the king's house.
21 Seven years old *was* Jehoash when he began to reign.

2 Kings-12

The Reign of Jehoash of Judah

1 In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; and forty years
reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Zibiah of
Beer-sheba.

The general account here given of Joash is,

1. That he reigned forty years. As he began his reign when he was very young, he might, in the course of nature, have continued much longer, for he was cut off when he was but forty-seven years old, 2Ki 12:1.

2. That he did that which was right as long as Jehoiada lived to instruct him, 2Ki 12:2. Many young men have come too soon to an estate--have had wealth, and power, and liberty, before they knew how to use them--and it has been of bad consequence to them; but against this danger Joash was well guarded by having such a good director as Jehoiada was, so wise, and experienced, and faithful to him, and by having so much wisdom as to hearken to him and be directed by him, even when he was grown up. Note, It is a great mercy to young people, and especially to young princes, and all young men of consequence, to be under good direction, and to have those about them that will instruct them to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord; and they then do wisely and well for themselves when they are willing to be counselled and ruled by such. A child left to himself brings his mother to shame, but a child left to such a tuition may bring himself to honour and comfort.

3. That the high places were not taken away, 2Ki 12:3. Up and down the country they had altars both for sacrifice and incense, to the honour of the God of Israel only, but in competition with, and at least in tacit contempt of, his altar at Jerusalem. These private altars, perhaps, had been more used in the late bad reigns than formerly, because it was not safe to go up to Jerusalem, nor was the temple-service performed as it should have been; and, it may be, Jehoiada connived at them, because some well-meaning people were glad of them when they could not have better, and he hoped that the reforming of the temple, and putting things into a good posture there, would by degrees draw people from their high places and they would dwindle of themselves; or perhaps neither the king nor the priest had zeal enough to carry on their reformation so far, nor courage and strength enough to encounter such an inveterate usage.

2 And Jehoash did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

3 But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

4 And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the Lord, *even* the money of every one that passeth *the account,* the money that every man is set at, *and* all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord,

5 let the priests take *it* to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

6 But it was *so, that* in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.

7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the *other* priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no *more* money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

We have here an account of the repairing of the temple in the reign of Joash.

I. It seems, the temple had gone out of repair. Though Solomon built it very strong, of the best materials and in the best manner, yet in time it went to decay, and there were breaches found in it (2Ki 12:5), in the roofs, or walls, or floors, the ceiling, or wainscoting, or windows, or the partitions of the courts. Even temples themselves are the worse for the wearing; but the heavenly temple will never wax old. Yet it was not only the teeth of time that made these breaches, the sons of Athaliah had broken up the house of God (2Ch 24:7), and, out of enmity to the service of the temple, had damaged the buildings of it, and the priests had not taken care to repair the breaches in time, so that they went worse and worse.

Unworthy were those husbandmen to have this valuable vineyard let out to them upon such easy terms who could not afford to keep the winepress in due and tenantable repair, Mt 21:33. Justly did their great Lord sue them for this permissive waste, and by his judgments recover locum vastatum--for dilapidations (as the law speaks), when this neglected temple was laid even with the ground.

II The king himself was (as it should seem) the first and forwardest man that took care for the repair of it. We do not find that the priests complained of it or that Jehoiada himself was active in it, but the king was zealous in the matter,

1. Because he was king, and God expects and requires from those who have power that they use it for the maintenance and support of religion, the redress of grievances, and reparation of decays, for the exciting and engaging of ministers to do their part and people theirs.

2. Because the temple had been both his nursery and his sanctuary when he was a child, in a grateful remembrance of which he now appeared zealous for the honour of it. Those who have experienced the comfort and benefit of religious assemblies

will make the reproach of them their burden (Zep 3:18), the support of them their care, and the prosperity of them their chief joy.

III. The priests were ordered to collect money for these repairs, and to take care that the work was done. The king had the affairs of his kingdom to mind, and could not himself inspect this affair, but he employed the priests to manage it, the fittest persons, and most likely, one would think, to be hearty in it.

1. He gave them orders for the levying of the money of the dedicated things. They must not stay till it was paid in, but they must call for it where they knew it was due, in their respective districts, as redemption-money (by virtue of the law, Le 27:2,3), or as a free-will offering, 2Ki 12:4. This they were to gather every man of his acquaintance, and it was supposed that there was no man but had acquaintance with some or other of the priests. Note, We should take the opportunity that God gives us of exciting those we have a particular acquaintance with to that which is good.

2. He gave them orders for laying out the money they had levied in repairing the breaches of the house, 2Ki 12:5.

IV. This method did not answer the intention, 2Ki 12:6. Little money was raised. Either the priests were careless, and did not call on the people to pay in their dues, or the people had so little confidence in the priests' management that they were backward to pay money into their hands; if they were distrusted without cause, it was the people's shame; if with, it was more theirs. But what money was raised was not applied to the proper use: The breaches of the house were not repaired; the priests thought it might serve as well as it had done, and therefore put off repairing from time to time. Church work is usually slow work, but it is a pity that churchmen, of all men, should be slow at it. Perhaps what little money they raised they thought it necessary to use for

the maintenance of the priests, which must needs fall much short when ten tribes had wholly revolted and the other two were wretchedly corrupted.

V. Another method was therefore taken. The king had his heart much set upon having the breaches of the house repaired, 2Ki 12:7. His apostasy, at last, gives us cause to question whether he had as good an affection for the service of the temple as he had for the structure. Many have been zealous for building and beautifying churches, and for other forms of godliness, who yet have been strangers to the power of it. However, we commend his zeal, and blame him not for reproving even his tutor Jehoiada himself when he saw him remiss; and so convincing was his reproof that the priests owned themselves unworthy to be any longer employed, and consented to the taking of some other measures, and the giving up of the money they had received into other hands, 2Ki 12:8. It was honestly done, when they found they had not spirit to do it themselves, not to hinder other people from doing it. Another course was taken,

1. For raising money, 2Ki 12:9,10. The money was not paid into private hands, but put into a public chest, and then people brought it in readily and in great abundance, not only their dues, but their free-will offerings for so good a work. The high priest and the secretary of state counted the money out of the chest, and laid it by in specie for the use to which it was appropriated. When public distributions are made faithfully public contributions will be made cheerfully. The money that was given,

(1.) Was dropped into the chest through a hole in the lid, past recall, to intimate that what has been once resigned to God must never be resumed. Every man, as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give.

(2.) The chest was put on the right hand as they went in, which, some think, is alluded to in that rule of charity which our Saviour

gives, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. But, while they were getting all they could for the repair of the temple, they did not break in upon that which was the stated maintenance of the priests, 2Ki 12:16. The trespass-money and the sin-money (which were given to them by that law, Le 5:15,16) were reserved to them. Let not the servants of the temple be starved under colour of repairing the breaches of it.

2. For laying out the money that was raised.

(1.) They did not put it into the hands of the priests, who were not versed in affairs of this nature, having other work to mind, but into the hands of those that did the work, or at least had the oversight of it, 2Ki 12:11. Those were fittest to be entrusted with this business whose employment lay that way. Tractant fabrilia fabri--Every artist has his trade assigned; but let not those who are called to war the holy warfare entangle themselves in the affairs of this life. Those that were thus entrusted did the business,

[1.] Carefully, purchasing materials and paying workmen, 2Ki 12:12. Business is done with expedition when those are employed in it that understand it and know which way to go about it.

[2.] Faithfully; such a reputation they got for honesty that there was no occasion to examine their bills or audit their accounts. Let all that are entrusted with public money, or public work, learn hence to deal faithfully, as those that know God will reckon with them, whether men do or no. Those that think it is no sin to cheat the government, cheat the country, or cheat the church, will be of another mind when God shall set their sins in order before them.

(2.) They did not lay it out in ornaments for the temple, in vessels of gold or silver, but in necessary repairs first (2Ki 12:13),

whence we may learn, in all our expenses to give that the preference which is most needful, and, in dealing for the public, to deal as we would for ourselves. After the repairs were finished we find the overplus turned into plate for the service of the temple, 2Ch 24:14.

8 And the priests consented to receive no *more* money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the Lord: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money *that was* brought into the house of the Lord.

10 And it was *so,* when they saw that *there was* much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the Lord.

11 And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the Lord: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the Lord,

12 and to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the Lord, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair *it*.

13 Howbeit there were not made for the house of the Lord bowls of silver, snuffers, basins, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money *that was* brought into the house of the Lord:

14 but they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the Lord.

15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

16 The trespass money and sin money was not brought into the house of the Lord: it was the priests'.

17 Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

18 And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of

Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and sent *it* to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

When Joash had revolted from God and become both an idolater and a persecutor the hand of the Lord went out against him, and his last state was worse than his first.

I. His wealth and honour became an easy prey to his neighbours. Hazael, when he had chastised Israel (2Ki 10:32), threatened Judah and Jerusalem likewise, took Gath, a strong city (2Ki 12:17), and thence intended to march with his forces against Jerusalem, the royal city, the holy city, but whose defence, on account of its sinfulness, had departed. Joash had neither spirit nor strength to make head against him, but gave him all the hallowed things, and all the gold that was found both in his exchequer and in the treasures of the temple (2Ki 12:18), to bribe him to march another way. If it were lawful to do this for the public safety, better part with the gold of the temple than expose the temple itself; yet,

1. If he had not forsaken God, and forfeited his protection, his affairs would not have been brought to this extremity, but he might have forced Hazael to retire. 2. He diminished himself, and made himself very mean, lost the honour of a prince and a soldier, and of an Israelite too, in alienating the dedicated things. 3. He impoverished himself and his kingdom. And, 4. He tempted Hazael to come again, when he could carry home so rich a booty without striking a stroke. And it had this effect, for the next year the host of Syria came up against Jerusalem, destroyed the prince, and plundered the city, 2Ch 24:23,24.

II. His life became an easy prey to his own servants. They conspired against him and slew him (2Ki 12:20,21), not aiming at his kingdom, for they opposed not his son's succeeding him, but to be avenged on him for some crime he had committed;

and we are told in Chronicles that his murdering the prophet, Jehoiada's son, was the provocation. In this, how unrighteous soever they were (vengeance was not theirs, nor did it belong to them to repay), God was righteous; and this was not the only time that he let even kings know that it was at their peril if they touched his anointed and did his prophets any harm, and that, when he comes to make inquisition for blood, the blood of prophets will run the account very high. Thus fell Joash, who began in the spirit and ended in the flesh. God usually sets marks of his displeasure upon apostates, even in this life; for they, of all sinners, do most reproach the Lord.

19 And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
20 And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in
the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla.
21 For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of
Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him
with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned
in his stead.

2 Kings-13

The Reign of Jehoahaz

1 In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of
Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in
Samaria, *and reigned* seventeen years.
2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed
the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he
departed not therefrom.
3 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he
delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the
hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all *their* days.

This general account of the reign of Jehoahaz, and of the state of Israel during his seventeen years, though short, is long

enough to let us see two things which are very affecting and instructive:--

I The glory of Israel raked up in the ashes, buried and lost, and turned into shame. How unlike does Israel appear here to what it had been and might have been! How is its crown profaned and its honour laid in the dust!

1. It was the honour of Israel that they worshipped the only living and true God, who is a Spirit, an eternal mind, and had rules by which to worship him of his own appointment; but by changing the glory of their incorruptible God into the similitude of an ox, the truth of God into a lie, they lost this honour, and levelled themselves with the nations that worshipped the work of their own hands. We find here that the king followed the sins of Jeroboam (2Ki 13:2), and the people departed not from them, but walked therein, 2Ki 13:6. There could not be a greater reproach than these two idolized calves were to a people that were instructed in the service of God and entrusted with the lively oracles. In all the history of the ten tribes we never find the least shock given to that idolatry, but, in every reign, still the calf was their god, and they separated themselves to that shame.

2. It was the honour of Israel that they were taken under the special protection of heaven; God himself was their defence, the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency. Happy wast thou, O Israel! upon this account. But here, as often before, we find them stripped of this glory, and exposed to the insults of all their neighbours. They by their sins provoked God to anger, and then he delivered them into the hands of Hazael and Benhadad, 2Ki 13:3. Hazael oppressed Israel 2Ki 13:22. Surely never was any nation so often plucked and pillaged by their neighbours as Israel was.

This the people brought upon themselves by sin; when they had provoked God to pluck up their hedge, the goodness of their land did but tempt their neighbours to prey upon them. So low was Israel brought in this reign, by the many depredations which the Syrians made upon them, that the militia of the kingdom and all the force they could bring into the field were but fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and 10,000 footmen, a despicable muster, 2Ki 13:7. Have the thousands of Israel come to this? How has the gold become dim! The debauching of a nation will certainly be the debasing of it.

II. Some sparks of Israel's ancient honour appearing in these ashes. It is not quite forgotten, notwithstanding all these quarrels, that this people is the Israel of God and he is the God of Israel. For,

1. It was the ancient honour of Israel that they were a praying people: and here we find somewhat of that honour revived; for Jehoahaz their king, in his distress, besought the Lord (2Ki 13:4), applied for help, not to the calves (what help could they give him?) but to the Lord. It becomes kings to be beggars at God's door, and the greatest of men to be humble petitioners at the footstool of his throne. Need will drive them to it.

2. It was the ancient honour of Israel that they had God nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for (De 4:7), and so he was here. Though he might justly have rejected the prayer as an abomination to him, yet the Lord hearkened unto Jehoahaz, and to his prayer for himself and for his people (2Ki 13:4), and he gave Israel a saviour (2Ki 13:5), not Jehoahaz himself, for all his days Hazael oppressed Israel (2Ki 13:22), but his son, to whom, in answer to his father's prayers, God gave success against the Syrians, so that he recovered the cities which they had taken from his father, 2Ki 13:25.

This gracious answer God gave to the prayer of Jehoahaz, not for his sake, or the sake of that unworthy people, but in remembrance of his covenant with Abraham (2Ki 13:23), which, in such exigencies as these, he had long since promised to have respect to, Le 26:42. See swift God is to show mercy, how ready to hear prayers, how willing to find out a reason to be gracious, else he would not look so far back as that ancient covenant which Israel had so often broken and forfeited all the benefit of. Let this invite and engage us for ever to him, and encourage even those that have forsaken him to return and repent; for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared.

4 And Jehoahaz besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

5 (And the Lord gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.

6 Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, *but* walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)

7 Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

9 And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Jehoash of Israel

10 In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* sixteen years.

11 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed
not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel
sin: *but* he walked therein.
12 And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might
wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they not
written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?
13 And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne:
and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

Elisha's Final Prophecy and Death

14 Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash
the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and
said, O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen
thereof.

We have here Jehoash, or Joash, the son of Jehoahaz and grandson of Jehu, upon the throne of Israel. Probably the house of Jehu intended some respect to the house of David when they gave this heir-apparent to the crown the same name with him that was then king of Judah.

I The general account here given of him and his reign is much the same with what we have already met with, and has little in it remarkable, 2Ki 13:10-13. He was none of the worst, and yet, because he kept up that ancient and politic idolatry of the house of Jeroboam, it is said, He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. That one evil was enough to leave an indelible mark of infamy upon his name; for, how little evil soever men saw in it, it was, in the sight of the Lord, a very wicked thing; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth.

It is observable how lightly the inspired penman passes over his acts, and his might wherewith he warred, leaving it to the common historians to record them, while he takes notice only of the respect he showed to Elisha. One good action shall make a better figure in God's book than twenty great ones; and, in his

account, it gains a man a much better reputation to honour a prophet than to conquer a king and his army.

II The particular account of what passed between him and Elisha has several things in it remarkable.

1. Elisha fell sick, 2Ki 13:14. Observe,

(1.) He lived long; for it was now about sixty years since he was first called to be a prophet. It was a great mercy to Israel, and especially to the sons of the prophets, that he was continued so long a burning and shining light. Elijah finished his testimony in a fourth part of that time. God's prophets have their day set them, some longer, others shorter, as Infinite Wisdom sees fit.

(2.) All the latter part of his time, from the anointing of Jehu, which was forty-five years before Joash began his reign, we find no mention made of him, or of any thing he did, till we find him here upon his death-bed. He might be useful to the last, and yet not so famous as he had sometimes been. The time of his flourishing was less than the time of his living. Let not old people complain of obscurity, but rather be well pleased with retirement.

(3.) The spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and yet he was not sent for to heaven in a fiery chariot, as Elijah was, but went the common road out of the world, and was visited with the visitation of all men. If God honour some above others, who yet are not inferior to them in gifts or graces, who shall find fault? May he not do what he will with his own?

2 King Joash visited him in his sickness, and wept over him, 2Ki 13:14. This was an evidence of some good in him, that he had a value and affection for a faithful prophet; so far was he from hating and persecuting him as a troubler of Israel that he loved and honoured him as one of the greatest blessings of his

kingdom, and lamented the loss of him. There have been those who would not be obedient to the word of God, and yet have the faithful ministers of it so manifested in their consciences that they could not but have an honour for them. Observe here,

(1.) When the king heard of Elisha's sickness he came to visit him, and to receive his dying counsel and blessing; and it was no disparagement to him, though a king, thus to honour one whom God honoured. Note, It may turn much to our spiritual advantage to attend the sick-beds and death-beds of good ministers and other good men, that we may learn to die, and may be encouraged in religion by the living comforts they have from it in a dying hour.

(2.) Though Elisha was very old, had been a great while useful, and, in the course of nature, could not continue long, yet the king, when he saw him sick and likely to die, wept over him. The aged are most experienced and therefore can worst be spared. In many causes, one old witness is worth ten young ones.

(3.) He lamented him in the same words with which Elisha had himself lamented the removal of Elijah: My father, my father. It is probable he had heard or read them in that famous story. Note, Those that give just honours to the generation that goes before them are often recompensed with the like from the generation that comes after them. He that watereth, that watereth with tears, shall be watered, shall be so watered, also himself, when it comes to his own turn, Pr 11:25.

(4.) This king was herein selfish; he lamented the loss of Elisha because he was as the chariot and horsemen of Israel, and therefore could be ill spared when Israel was so poor in chariots and horsemen, as we find they were (2Ki 13:7), when they had in all but fifty horsemen and ten chariots. Those who consider how much good men contribute to the defence of a nation, and

the keeping off of God's judgments, will see cause to lament the removal of them.

3. Elisha gave the king great assurances of his success against the Syrians, Israel's present oppressors, and encouraged him to prosecute the war against them with vigour. Elisha was aware that therefore he was loth to part with him because he looked upon him as the great bulwark of the kingdom against that common enemy, and depended much upon his blessings and prayers in his designs against them. "Well," says Elisha, "if that be the cause of your grief, let not that trouble thee, for thou shalt be victorious over the Syrians when I am in my grave.

I die, but God will surely visit you. He has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up other prophets to pray for you." God's grace is not tied to one hand. He can bury his workmen and yet carry on his work. To animate the king against the Syrians he gives him a sign, orders him to take bow and arrows (2Ki 13:15), to intimate to him that, in order to the deliverance of his kingdom from the Syrians, he must put himself into a military posture and resolve to undergo the perils and fatigues of war. God would be the agent, but he must be the instrument. And that he should be successful he gives him a token, by directing him,

(1.) To shoot an arrow towards Syria, 2Ki 13:16,17. The king, no doubt, knew how to manage a bow better than the prophet did, and yet, because the arrow now to be shot was to have its significancy from the divine institution, as if he were now to be disciplined, he received the words of command from the prophet: Put thy hand upon the bow--Open the window--Shoot. Nay, as if he had been a child that never drew a bow before, Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands, to signify that in all his expeditions against the Syrians he must look up to God for direction and strength, must reckon his own hands not sufficient

for him, but go on in a dependence upon divine aid. He teacheth my hands to war, Ps 18:34,144:1

The trembling hands of a dying prophet, as they signified the concurrence and communication of the power of God, gave this arrow more force than the hands of the king in his full strength. The Syrians had made themselves masters of the country that lay eastward, 2Ki 10:33. Thitherward therefore the arrow was directed, and such an interpretation given by the prophet of the shooting of this arrow, though shot in one respect at random, as made it,

[1.] A commission to the king to attack the Syrians, notwithstanding their power and possession.

[2.] A promise of success therein. It is the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, even the arrow of deliverance from Syria. It is God that commands deliverance; and, when he will effect it, who can hinder? The arrow of deliverance is his. He shoots out his arrows, and the work is done, Ps 18:14. "Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, where they are now encamped, or where they are to have a general rendezvous of their forces, till thou have consumed those of them that are vexatious and oppressive to thee and thy kingdom."

(2.) To strike with the arrows, 2Ki 13:18,19. The prophet having in God's name assured him of victory over the Syrians, he will now try him and see what improvement he will make of his victories, whether he will push them on with more zeal than Ahab did when Benhadad lay at his mercy. For the trial of this he bids him smite with the arrows on the ground: "Believe them brought to the ground by the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and laid at thy feet; and now show me what thou wilt do to them when thou hast them down, whether thou wilt do as David did when God gave him the necks of his enemies, beat them small as the dust before the wind," Ps 18:40,42.

The king showed not that eagerness and flame which one might have expected upon this occasion, but smote thrice, and no more. Either out of foolish tenderness to the Syrians, he smote as if he were afraid of hurting them, at least of ruining them, willing to show mercy to those that never did, nor ever would, show mercy to him or his people. Or, perhaps, he smote thrice, and very coldly, because he thought it but a silly thing, that it looked idle and childish for a king to beat the floor with his arrows; and thrice was often enough for him to play the fool merely to please the prophet.

But, by contemning the sign, he lost the thing signified, sorely to the grief of the dying prophet, who was angry with him, and told him he should have smitten five or six times. Not being straitened in the power and promise of God, why should he be straitened in his own expectations and endeavours? Note, It cannot but be a trouble to good men to see those they wish well to stand in their own light and forsake their own mercies, to see them lose their advantages against their spiritual enemies, and to give them advantage.

15 And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand *upon it:* and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17 And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed *them*.

18 And he said, Take the arrows. And he took *them*. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest
have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou
hadst consumed *it:* whereas now thou shalt smite Syria *but* thrice.
20 And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the
Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.
21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they
spied a band *of men;* and they cast the man into the sepulchre of
Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of
Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.
22 But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.
23 And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on
them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither
cast he them from his presence as yet.
24 So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his
stead.

We must here attend,

I The sepulchre of Elisha: he died in a good old age, and they buried him; and what follows shows,

1. What power there was in his life to keep off judgments; for, as soon as he was dead, the bands of the Moabites invaded the land--not great armies to face them in the field, but roving skulking bands, that murdered and plundered by surprise. God has many ways to chastise a provoking people. The king was apprehensive of danger only from the Syrians, but, behold, the Moabites invade him. Trouble comes sometimes from that point whence we least feared it. The mentioning of this immediately upon the death of Elisha intimates that the removal of God's faithful prophets is a presage of judgments coming. When ambassadors are recalled heralds may be expected.

2. What power there was in his dead body: it communicated life to another dead body, 2Ki 13:21. This great miracle, though very briefly related, was a decided proof of his mission and a

confirmation of all his prophecies. It was also a plain indication of another life after this. When Elisha died, there was not an end of him, for then he could not have done this. From operation we may infer existence.

By this it appeared that the Lord was still the God of Elisha; therefore Elisha still lived, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And it may, perhaps, have a reference to Christ, by whose death and burial the grave is made to all believers a safe and happy passage to life. It likewise intimated that though Elisha was dead, yet, in virtue of the promises made by him, Israel's interests, though they seemed quite sunk and lost, should revive and flourish again. The neighbours were carrying the dead body of a man to the grave, and, fearing to fall into the hands of the Moabites, a party of whom they saw at a distance near the place where the body was to be interred, they laid the corpse in the next convenient place, which proved to be Elisha's sepulchre. The dead man, upon touching Elisha's bones, revived, and, it is likely, went home again with his friends.

Josephus relates the story otherwise, That some thieves, having robbed and murdered an honest traveller, threw his dead body into Elisha's grave, and it immediately revived. Elijah was honoured in his departure. Elisha was honoured after his departure. God thus dispenses honours as he pleases, but, one way or other, the rest of all the saints will be glorious, Isa 11:10. It is good being near the saints and having our lot with them both in life and death.

II The sword of Joash king of Israel; and we find it successful against the Syrians.

1 The cause of his success was God's favour (2Ki 13:23): The Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them in their miseries and respect unto them. The several expressions here of the same import call upon us to observe and admire the triumphs

of divine goodness in the deliverance of such a provoking people. It was of the Lord's mercies that they were not consumed, because he would not destroy them as yet. He foresaw they would destroy themselves at last, but as yet he would reprieve them, and give them space to repent. The slowness of God's processes against sinners must be construed to the honour of his mercy, not the impeachment of his justice.

2 The effect of his success was Israel's benefit. He recovered out of the hands of Benhadad the cities of Israel which the Syrians were possessed of, 2Ki 13:25. This was a great kindness to the cities themselves, which were hereby brought from under the yoke of oppression, and to the whole kingdom, which was much strengthened by the reduction of those cities. Thrice Joash beat the Syrians, just as often as he had struck the ground with the arrows, and then a full stop was put to the course of his victories. Many have repented, when it was too late, of their distrusts and the straitness of their desires.

25 And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-
hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand
of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and
recovered the cities of Israel.

2 Kings-14

The Reign of Amaziah

1 In the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel reigned
Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah.
2 He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and
reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's
name *was* Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.
3 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, yet not
like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his
father did.

Amaziah, the son and successor of Joash, is the king whom here we have an account of. Let us take a view of him,

I. In the temple; and there he acted, in some measure, well, like Joash, but not like David, 2Ki 14:3. He began well, but did not persevere: He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, kept up his attendance on God's altars and his attention to God's word, yet not like David. It is not enough to do that which our pious predecessors did, merely to keep up the usage, but we must do it as they did it, from the same principle of faith and devotion and with the same sincerity and resolution. It is here taken notice of, as before, that the high places were not taken away, 2Ki 14:4. It is hard to get clear of those corruptions which, by long usage, have gained both prescription and a favourable opinion.

II. On the bench; and there we have him doing justice on the traitors that murdered his father, not as soon as ever he came to the crown, lest it should occasion some disturbance, but he prudently deferred it till the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, 2Ki 14:5. To weaken a factious party gradually, when it is not safe to provoke, often proves the way to ruin it effectually. Justice strikes surely by striking slowly, and is often executed most prudently when it is not executed presently. Wisdom here is profitable to direct. Amaziah did thus,

1. According to the rule of the law, that ancient rule, that he that sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. Never let traitors or murderers expect to come to their graves like other men. Let them flee to the pit, and let no man stay them.

2. Under the limitation of the law: The children of the murderers he slew not, because the law of Moses had expressly provided that the children should not be put to death for the fathers, 2Ki 14:6. It is probable that this is taken notice of because there were those about him that advised him to that rigour, both in revenge (because the crime was extraordinary--the murder of a king) and

in policy, that the children might not plot against him, in revenge of their father's death. But against these insinuations he opposed the express law of God (De 24:16), which he was to judge by, and which he resolved to adhere to and trust God with the issue.

God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, because every man is guilty before him and owes him a death; so that, if he require the life for the father's sin, he does not wrong, the sinner having forfeited it already by his own. But he does not allow earthly princes to do thus: the children, before them, are innocent, and therefore must not suffer as guilty.

III. In the field; and there we find him triumphing over the Edomites, 2Ki 14:7. Edom had revolted from under the hand of Judah in Joram's time, 2Ki 8:22. Now he makes war upon them to bring them back to their allegiance, kills 10,000 and takes the chief city of Arabia the stony (called Selah--a rock), and gave it a new name. We shall find a larger account of this expedition, 2Ch 25:5-13, &c.

4 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did
sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places.
5 And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his
hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father.
6 But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that
which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the
Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for
the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but
every man shall be put to death for his own sin.
7 He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took
Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.
8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son
of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the
face.
9 And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying,
The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in

Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

For several successions after the division of the kingdoms that of Judah suffered much by the enmity of Israel. After Asa's time, for several successions, it suffered more by the friendship of Israel, and by the alliance and affinity made with them. But now we meet with hostility between them again, which had not been for some ages before.

I. Amaziah, upon no provocation, and without showing any cause of quarrel, challenged Joash into the field (2Ki 14:8): "Come, let us look one another in the face; let us try our strength in battle." Had he challenged him to a personal duel only, the error would have remained with himself, but each must bring all their forces into the field, and thousands of lives on both sides must be sacrificed to his capricious humour. Hereby he showed himself proud, presumptuous, and prodigal of blood.

Some think that he intended to avenge the injury which the dismissed disgusted Israelites had lately done to his country, in their return (2Ch 25:13), and that he had also the vanity to think of subduing the kingdom of Israel, and reuniting it to Judah. A fool's lips thus enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. Those that challenge are chargeable with that beginning of strife, which is as the letting forth of water. He that is eager either to fight or to go to law may perhaps have enough of it quickly, and be the first that repents it.

II. Joash sent him a grave rebuke for his challenge, with advice to withdraw it, 2Ki 14:9,10.

1. He mortifies his pride, by comparing himself to a cedar, a stately tree, and Amaziah to a thistle, a sorry weed, telling him he was so far from fearing him that he despised him, and scorned as much to have any thing to do with him, or make any alliance

with him, as the cedar would to match his daughter to a thistle. The ancient house of David he thinks not worthy to be named the same day with the house of Jehu, though an upstart. How may a humble man smile to hear two proud and scornful men set their wits on work to vilify and undervalue one another!

2. He foretels his fall: A wild beast trode down the thistle, and so put an end to his treaty with the cedar; so easily does Joash think his forces can crush Amaziah, and so unable does he think him to make any resistance.

3. He shows him the folly of his challenge: "Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, a weak, unarmed, undisciplined body of men, and therefore thinkest thou canst carry all before thee and subdue the regular forces of Israel with as much ease. Thy heart has lifted thee up." See where the root of all sin lies; it is in the heart, thence it flows, and that must bear the blame. It is not Providence, the event, the occasion (whatever it is), that makes men proud, or secure, or discontented, or the like, but it is their own heart that does it. "Thou art proud of the blow thou hast given to Edom, as if that had made thee formidable to all mankind." Those wretchedly deceive themselves that magnify their own performances, and, because they have been blessed with some little success and reputation, conclude themselves fit for any thing and no less sure of it.

4. He counsels him to be content with the honour he has won, and not to hazard that, by grasping at more that was out of his reach: Why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, as fools often do, that will be meddling? Pr 20:3. Many would have had wealth and honour enough if they had but known when they had enough. He warns him of the consequence, that it would be fatal not to himself only, but to his kingdom, which he ought to protect.

III. Amaziah persisted in his resolution, and the issue was bad; he had better have tarried at home, for Joash gave him such a look in the face as put him to confusion. Challengers commonly prove to be on the losing side.

1. His army was routed and dispersed, 2Ki 14:12. Josephus says, When they were to engage they were struck with such terror that they did not strike a stroke, but every one made the best of his way.

2. He himself was taken prisoner by the king of Israel, and then had enough of looking him in the face. Amaziah's pedigree comes in here somewhat abruptly (the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah), because perhaps he had gloried in the dignity of his ancestors, or because he now smarted for their iniquity.

3. The conqueror entered Jerusalem, which tamely opened to him, and yet he broke down their wall (and, as Josephus says, drove his chariot in triumph through the breach), in reproach to them, and that he might, when he pleased, take possession of the royal city.

4. He plundered Jerusalem, took away all that was valuable, and returned to Samaria, laden with spoils, 2Ki 14:14. It was said of Joash that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and of Amaziah that he did that which was right; and yet Joash triumphs thus over Amaziah, and why so? Because God would show, in Amaziah's fate, that he resists the proud, or because, whatever they were otherwise, Joash had lately been respectful to one of God's prophets (2Ki 13:14), but Amaziah had been abusive to another (2Ch 25:16), and God will honour those who honour him in his prophets, but those who despise them, and him in them, shall be lightly esteemed.

10 Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory *of this,* and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to *thy* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou, and Judah with

thee?

11 But Amaziah would not hear. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which *belongeth* to Judah.

12 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to their tents.

13 And Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits.

14 And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

15 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

16 And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.

Here are three kings brought to their graves in these few verses:--

1. Joash king of Israel, 2Ki 14:15,16. We attended his funeral once before, 2Ki 13:12,13. But, because the historian had occasion to give a further account of his life and actions, he again mentions his death and burial.

2. Amaziah king of Judah. Fifteen years he survived his conqueror the king of Israel, 2Ki 14:17. A man may live a great while after he has been shamed, may be thoroughly mortified (as Amaziah no doubt was) and yet not dead. His acts are said to be found written in his annals (2Ki 14:18), but not his might; for his cruelty when he was a conqueror over the Edomites, and his insolence when he challenged the king of Israel, showed him void of true courage. He was slain by his own subjects, who hated him for his maladministration (2Ki 14:19) and made Jerusalem too hot for him, the ignominious breach made in their

walls being occasioned by his folly and presumption. He fled to Lachish. How long he continued concealed or sheltered there we are not told, but, at last, he was there murdered, 2Ki 14:19. No further did the rage of the rebels extend, for they brought him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him there among his ancestors.

3. Azariah succeeded Amaziah, but not till twelve years after his father's death, for Amaziah died in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam (as appears by comparing 2Ki 14:23,2Ki 13:2), but Azariah did not begin his reign till the twenty-seventh of Jeroboam (2Ki 15:1), for he was but four years old at the death of his father, so that, for twelve years, till he came to be sixteen, the government was in the hands of protectors. He reigned very long (2Ki 15:2) and yet the account of his reign is here industriously huddled up, and broken off abruptly (2Ki 14:22): He built Elath (which had belonged to the Edomites, but, it is probable, was recovered by his father, 2Ki 14:7), after that the king slept with his fathers, as if that had been all he did that was worth mentioning, or rather it is meant of king Amaziah: he built it soon after Amaziah died.

17 And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of
Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.
18 And the rest of the acts of Amaziah, *are* they not written in the
book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
19 Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled
to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.
20 And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem
with his fathers in the city of David.
21 And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which *was* sixteen years
old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah.
22 He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept
with his fathers.

The Reign of Jeroboam

23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, *and reigned* forty and one years.

Here is an account of the reign of Jeroboam the second. I doubt it is an indication of the affection and adherence of the house of Jehu to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, that they called an heir-apparent to the crown by his name, thinking that an honourable name which in the book of God is infamous and stigmatized as much as any.

I. His reign was long, the longest of all the reigns of the kings of Israel: He reigned forty-one years; yet his contemporary Azariah, the king of Judah, reigned longer, even fifty-two years. This Jeroboam reigned just as long as Asa had done (1Ki 15:10), yet one did that which was good and the other that which was evil. We cannot measure men's characters by the length of their lives or by their outward prosperity. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.

II. His character was the same with that of the rest of those kings: He did that which was evil (2Ki 14:24), for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam; he kept up the worship of the calves, and never left that, thinking there was no harm in it, because it had been the way of all his ancestors and predecessors. But a sin is never the less evil in God's sight, whatever it is in ours, for its being an ancient usage; and a frivolous plea it will be against doing good, that we have been accustomed to do evil.

III. Yet he prospered more than most of them, for though, in that one thing, he did evil in the sight of the Lord, yet it is likely, in other respects, there was some good found in him and therefore God owned him,

1. By prophecy. He raised up Jonah the son of Amittai, a Galilean (so much were those mistaken that said, Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet, Joh 7:52), and by him intimated the purposes

of his favour to Israel, notwithstanding their provocations, encouraged him and his kingdom to take up arms for the recovery of their ancient possessions, and (which would contribute not a little to their success) assured them of victory. It is a sign that God has not cast off his people if he continue faithful ministers among them; when Elisha, who strengthened the hands of Joash, was removed, Jonah was sent to encourage his son. Happy is the land that has a succession of prophets running parallel with a succession of princes, that the word of the Lord may endure for ever.

Of this Jonah we read much in that little book of scripture that bears his name. It is probable that it was when he was a young man, and fit for such an expedition, that God sent him to Nineveh, and that it was when he had yet been but a little conversant with the visions of God that he flew off and fretted as he did; and, if so, this is an undoubted evidence of the forgiveness of his faults and follies, that he was afterwards employed as a messenger of mercy to Israel. A commission amounts to a pardon, and he that had himself found mercy, notwithstanding his provocations, could the better encourage them with the hope of mercy notwithstanding theirs. Some that have been foolish and passionate, and have gone about their work very awkwardly at first, yet afterwards have proved useful and eminent. Men must not be thrown away for every fault.

2. By providence. The event was according to the word of the Lord: his arms were successful; he restored the coast of Israel, recovered those frontier-towns and countries that lay from Hamath in the north to the sea of the plain, (that is, the sea of Sodom) in the south, all which the Syrians had possessed themselves of, 2Ki 14:25. Two reasons are here given why God blessed them with those victories:--

(1.) Because their distress was very great, which made them the objects of his compassion, 2Ki 14:26. Though he saw not any

signs of their repentance and formation, yet he saw their affliction, that it was very bitter. Those that lived in those countries which the enemies were masters of were miserably oppressed and enslaved, and could call nothing their own; the rest, we may suppose, were much impoverished by the frequent incursions the enemy made upon them to plunder them, and continually terrified by their threatenings, so that there was none shut up or left, both towns and countries were laid waste and stripped of their wealth, and no helper appeared.

To this extremity were they reduced, in many parts of the country, in the beginning of Jeroboam's reign, when God, in mere pity to them, heard the cry of their affliction (for no mention is made here of the cry of their prayers), and wrought this deliverance for them by the hand of Jeroboam. Let those whose case is pitiable take comfort from the divine pity; we read of God's bowels of mercy (Isa 63:15,Jer 31:20) and that he is full of compassion, Ps 86:15.

(2.) Because the decree had not yet gone forth for their utter destruction; he had not as yet said he would blot out the name of Israel (2Ki 14:27), and because he had not said it he would not do it. If this be understood of the dispersion of the ten tribes, he did say it and do it, for that name still remains under heaven in the gospel Israel, and will to the end of time; and because they, at present, bore that name which was to have this lasting honour, he showed them this favour, as well as for the sake of the ancient honour of that name, 2Ki 13:23.

IV. Here is the conclusion of Jeroboam's reign. We read (2Ki 14:28) of his might, and how he warred, but (2Ki 14:29) he slept with his fathers; for the mightiest must yield to death, and there is no discharge in that war. Many prophets there had been in Israel, a constant succession of them in every age, but none of the prophets had left any of their prophecies in writing till those of this age began to do it, and their prophecies are part of the

canon of scripture. It was in the reign of this Jeroboam that Hosea (who continued very long a prophet) began to prophesy, and he was the first that wrote his prophecies; therefore the word of the Lord by him is called the beginning of the word of the Lord, Ho 1:2. Then that part of the word of the Lord began to be written. At the same time Amos prophesied, and wrote his prophecy, soon afterwards Micah, and then Isaiah, in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Thus God never left himself without witness, but, in the darkest and most degenerate ages of the church, raised up some to be burning and shining lights in it to their own age by their preaching and living, and a few by their writings to reflect light upon us on whom the ends of the world have come.

24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed
not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel
to sin.

25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto
the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of
Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of
Amittai, the prophet, which *was* of Gath-hepher.

26 For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, *that it was* very bitter: for
there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

27 And the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from
under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of
Joash.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his
might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and
Hamath, *which belonged* to Judah, for Israel, *are* they not written in
the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

29 And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, *even* with the kings of Israel;
and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings-15

The Reign of Azariah

1 In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began
Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign.
2 Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned
two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was*
Jecholiah of Jerusalem.

This is a short account of the reign of Azariah.

1. Most of it is general, and the same that has been given of others; he began young and reigned long (2Ki 15:2), did, for the most part, that which was right, 2Ki 15:3 (it was happy for the kingdom that a good reign was a long one), only he had not zeal and courage enough to take away the high places, 2Ki 15:4.

2. That which is peculiar, 2Ki 15:5 (that God smote him with a leprosy) is more largely related, with the occasion of it, 2Ch 26:16-21, &c., where we have also a fuller account of the glories of the former part of his reign, as well as of the disgraces of the latter part of it. He did that which was right, as Amaziah had done; like him, he began well, but failed before he finished. Here we are told,

(1.) That he was a leper. The greatest of men are not only subject to the common calamities, but also to the common infirmities, of human nature; and, if they be guilty of any heinous sin, they lie as open as the meanest to the most grievous strokes of divine vengeance.

(2.) God smote him with this leprosy, to chastise him for his presumptuous invasion of the priests' office. If great men be proud men, some way or other God will humble them, and make them know he is both above them and against them, for he resisteth the proud.

(3.) That he was a leper to the day of his death. Though we have reason to think he repented and the sin was pardoned, yet, for warning to others, he was continued under this mark of God's displeasure as long as he lived, and perhaps it was for the good of his soul that he was so.

(4.) That he dwelt in a separate house, as being made ceremonially unclean by the law, to the discipline of which, though a king, he must submit. He that presumptuously intruded into God's temple, and pretended to be a priest, was justly shut out from his own palace, and shut up as a prisoner or recluse, ever after. We suppose that his separate house was made as convenient and agreeable as might be. Some translate it a free house, where he had liberty to take his pleasure. However, it was a great mortification to one that had been so much a man of honour, and a man of business, as he had been, to be cut off from society and dwell always in a separate house: it would almost make life itself a burden, even to kings, though they have never any to converse with but their inferiors; the most contemplative men would soon be weary of it.

(5.) That his son was his viceroy in the affairs both of his court (for he was over the house) and of his kingdom (for he was judging the people of the land); and it was both a comfort to him and a blessing to his kingdom that he had such a son to fill up his room.

3 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, according
to all that his father Amaziah had done;
4 save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed
and burnt incense still on the high places.
5 And the Lord smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day
of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king's
son *was* over the house, judging the people of the land.
6 And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?

7 So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Zachariah

8 In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months.

9 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

10 And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

11 And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they *are* written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

12 This *was* the word of the Lord which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth *generation.* And so it came to pass.

The Reign of Shallum

13 Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

14 For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

15 And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they *are* written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

16 Then Menahem smote Tiphsah, and all that *were* therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not *to him,* therefore he smote *it; and* all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.

The Reign of Menahem

17 In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, *and reigned* ten years in Samaria.

The best days of the kingdom of Israel were while the government was in Jehu's family. In his reign, and the next three reigns, though there were many abominable corruptions and miserable grievances in Israel, yet the crown went in succession, the kings died in their beds, and some care was taken of public affairs; but, now that those days are at an end, the history which we have in these verses of about thirty-three years represents the affairs of that kingdom in the utmost confusion imaginable.

Woe to those that were with child (2Ki 15:16) and to those that gave suck in those days, for then must needs be great tribulations, when, for the transgression of the land, many were the princes thereof.

I. Let us observe something, in general, concerning these unhappy revolutions and the calamities which must needs attend them--these bad times, as they may truly be called.

1. God had tried the people of Israel both with judgments and mercies, explained and enforced by his servants the prophets, and yet they continued impenitent and unreformed, and therefore God justly brought these miseries upon them, as Moses had warned them. If you will yet walk contrary to me, I will punish you yet seven times more, Le 26:21-26, &c.

2. God made good his promise to Jehu, that his sons to the fourth generation after him should sit upon the throne of Israel, which was a greater favour than was shown to any of the royal families either before or after his. God had said it should be so (2Ki 10:30) and we are told in this chapter (2Ki 15:12) that so

it came to pass. See how punctual God is to his promises. These calamities God long designed for Israel, and they deserved them, yet they were not inflicted till that word had taken effect to the full. Thus God rewarded Jehu for his zeal in destroying the worship of Baal and the house of Ahab; and yet, when the measure of the sins of the house of Jehu was full, God avenged upon it the blood then shed, called the blood of Jezreel, Ho 1:4.

3. All these kings did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, for they walked in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Though at variance with one another, yet in this they agreed, to keep up idolatry, and the people loved to have it so; though they were emptied from vessel to vessel, that taste remained in them, and that scent was not changed. It was sad indeed when their government was so often altered, yet never for the better--that among all those contending interests none of them should think it as much their interest to destroy the calves as others had done to support them.

4. Each of these (except one) conspired against his predecessor, and slew him--Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea, all traitors and murderers, and yet all kings awhile, one of them ten, another twenty, and another nine years; for God may suffer wickedness to prosper and to carry away the wealth and honours awhile, but, sooner or later, blood shall have blood, and he that dealt treacherously shalt be dealt treacherously with. One wicked man is often made a scourge to another, and every wicked man, at length, a ruin to himself.

5. The ambition of the great men made the nation miserable. Here is Tiphsah, a city of Israel, barbarously destroyed, with all the coasts thereof, by one of these pretenders (2Ki 15:16), and no doubt it was through blood that each of them waded to the throne, nor could any of these kings perish alone. No land can have greater pests, nor Israel worse troubles, than such men as

care not how much the welfare and repose of their country are sacrificed to their revenge and affectation of dominion.

6. While the nation was thus shattered by divisions at home the kings of Assyria, first one (2Ki 15:19) and then another (2Ki 15:29), came against it and did what they pleased. Nothing does more towards the making of a nation an easy prey to a common enemy than intestine broils and contests for the sovereignty. Happy the land where that is settled.

7. This was the condition of Israel just before they were quite ruined and carried away captive, for that was in the ninth year of Hoshea, the last of these usurpers. If they had, in these days of confusion and perplexity, humbled themselves before God and sought his face, that final destruction might have been prevented; but when God judgeth he will overcome. These factions, the fruit of an evil spirit sent among them, hastened that captivity, for a kingdom thus divided against itself will soon come to desolation.

II. Let us take a short view of the particular reigns.

1. Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam, began to reign in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah, or Uzziah, king of Judah, 2Ki 15:8. Some of the most critical chronologers reckon that between Jeroboam and his son Zachariah the throne was vacant twenty-two years, others eleven years, through the disturbances and dissensions that were in the kingdom; and then it was not strange that Zachariah was deposed before he was well seated on the throne: he reigned but six months, and then Shallum slew him before the people, perhaps as Caesar was slain in the senate, or he put him to death publicly as a criminal, with the approbation of the people, to whom he had, some way or other, made himself odious; so ended the line of Jehu.

2. But had Shallum peace, who slew his master? No, he had not (2Ki 15:13), one month of days measured his reign and then he was cut off; perhaps to this the prophet, who then lived, refers (Ho 5:7), Now shall a month devour them with their portions. That dominion seldom lasts long which is founded in blood and falsehood. Menahem, either provoked by his crime or animated by his example, soon served him as he had served his master--slew him and reigned in his stead, 2Ki 15:14. Probably he was general in the army, which then lay encamped at Tirzah, and, hearing of Shallum's treason and usurpation, hastened to punish it, as Omri did that of Zimri in a like case, 1Ki 16:17.

3. Menahem held the kingdom ten years, 2Ki 15:17. But, whereas we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel were merciful kings (1Ki 20:31), this Menahem (the scandal of his country) was so prodigiously cruel to those of his own nation who hesitated a little at submitting to him that he not only ruined a city, and the coasts thereof, but, forgetting that he himself was born of a woman, ripped up all the women with child, 2Ki 15:16. We may well wonder that ever it should enter into the heart of any man to be so barbarous, and to be so perfectly lost to humanity itself. By these cruel methods he hoped to strengthen himself and to frighten all others into his interests; but it seems he did not gain his point, for when the king of Assyria came against him,

(1.) So little confidence had he in his people that he durst not meet him as an enemy, but was obliged, at a vast expense, to purchase a peace with him.

(2.) Such need had he of help to confirm the kingdom in his hand that he made it part of his bargain with him (a bargain which, no doubt, the king of Assyria knew how to make a good hand of another time) that he should assist him against his own subjects that were disaffected to him. The money wherewith he purchased his friendship was a vast sum, no less than 1000

talents of silver (2Ki 15:19), which Menahem exacted, it is probable, by military execution, of all the mighty men of wealth, very considerately sparing the poor, and laying the burden (as was fit) on those that were best able to bear it; being raised, it was given to the king of Assyria, as pay for his army, fifty shekels of silver for each man in it. Thus he got clear of the king of Assyria for this time; he staid not to quarter in the land (2Ki 15:20), but his army now got so rich a booty with so little trouble that it encouraged them to come again, not long after, when they laid all waste. Thus was he the betrayer of his country that should have been the protector of it.

4. Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, succeeded his father, but reigned only two years, and then was treacherously slain by Pekah, falling under the load both of his own and of his father's wickedness. It is repeated concerning him as before that he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam. Still this is mentioned, to show that God was righteous in bringing that destruction upon them which came not long after, because they hated to be reformed, 2Ki 15:24. Pekah, it seems, had some persons of figure in his interest, two of whom are here named (2Ki 15:25), and with their help he compassed his design.

5. Pekah, though he got the kingdom by treason, kept it twenty years (2Ki 15:27), so long it was before his violent dealing returned upon his own head, but it returned at last. This Pekah, son of Remaliah,

(1.) Made himself more considerable abroad than any of these usurpers, for he was, even in the latter end of his time (in the reign of Ahaz, which began in his seventeenth year), a great terror to the kingdom of Judah, as we find, Isa 7:1-25, &c.

(2.) He lost a great part of his kingdom to the king of Assyria. Several cities are here named (2Ki 15:29) which were taken from him, all the land of Gilead on the other side Jordan, and

Galilee in the north containing the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, were seized, and the inhabitants carried captive into Assyria. By this judgment God punished him for his attempt upon Judah and Jerusalem. It was then foretold that within two or three years after he made that attempt, before a child, then born, should be able to cry My father and my mother, the riches of Samaria should be taken away before the king of Assyria (Isa 8:4), and here we have the accomplishment of that prediction.

(3.) Soon after this he forfeited his life to the resentments of his countrymen, who, it is probable, were disgusted at him for leaving them exposed to a foreign enemy, while he was invading Judah, of which Hoshea took advantage and, to gain his crown, seized his life, slew him, and reigned in his stead. Surely he was fond of a crown indeed who, at this time, would run such a hazard as a traitor did; for the crown of Israel, now that it had lost the choicest of its flowers and jewels, was lined more than ever with thorns, had of late been fatal to all the heads that had worn it, was forfeited to divine justice, and now ready to be laid in the dust--a crown which a wise man would not have taken up in the street, yet Hoshea not only ventured upon it but ventured for it, and it cost him dear.

18 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed
not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made
Israel to sin.
19 *And* Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem
gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with
him to confirm the kingdom in his hand.
20 And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, *even* of all the mighty
men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king
of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there
in the land.
21 And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are* they
not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?
22 And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned
in his stead.

The Reign of Pekahiah

23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of
Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* two
years.
24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed
not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to
sin.
25 But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against
him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house,
with Argob and Arieh, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites:
and he killed him, and reigned in his room.
26 And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they
are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

The Reign of Pekah

27 In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son
of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned*
twenty years.
28 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed
not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to
sin.
29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of
Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and
Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of
Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.
30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the
son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his
stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.
31 And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they
are written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel.

The Reign of Jotham

32 In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel
began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.
33 Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he
reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was*
Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

We have here a short account of the reign of Jotham king of Judah, of whom we are told,

1. That he reigned very well, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, 2Ki 15:34. Josephus gives him a very high character, stating that he was pious towards God, just towards men, and laid out himself for the public good,--that, whatever was amiss, he took care to have it rectified,--and, in short, wanted no virtue that became a good prince. Though the high places were not taken away, yet to draw people from them, and keep them close to God's holy place, he showed great respect to the temple, and built the higher gate which he went through to the temple. If magistrates cannot do all they would for the suppressing of vice and profaneness, let them do so much the more for the support and advancement of piety and virtue, and the bringing of them into reputation. If they cannot pull down the high places of sin, yet let them build and beautify the high gate of God's house.

2. That he died in the midst of his days, 2Ki 15:33. Of most of the kings of Judah we are told how old they were when they began their reign, and by that may compute how old they were when they died; but no account is kept of the age of any of the kings of Israel that I remember, only of the years of their reigns. This honour God would put upon the kings of the house of David above those of other families. And by these accounts it appears that there was none of all the kings of Judah that reached David's age, seventy, the common age of man. Asa's age I do not find. Uzziah lived to be sixty-eight, Manasseh sixty-seven, and Jehoshaphat sixty; and these were the three oldest; many of those that were of note did not reach fifty. This

Jotham died at forty-one. He was too great a blessing to be continued long to such an unworthy people. His death was a judgment, especially considering the character of his son and successor.

3. That in his days the confederacy was formed against Judah by Rezin and Remaliah's son, the king of Syria and the king of Israel, which appeared so very formidable in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz that, upon notice of it, the heart of that prince was moved and the heart of the people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, Isa 7:2 The confederates were unjust in the attempt, yet it is here said (2Ki 15:37), The Lord began to send them against Judah, as he bade Shimei curse David, and took away from Job what the Sabeans robbed him of. Men are God's hand--the sword, the rod in his hand--which he makes use of as he pleases to serve his own righteous counsels, though men be unrighteous in their intentions. This storm gathered in the reign of pious Jotham, but he came to his grave in peace and it fell upon his degenerate son.

34 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

35 Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the Lord.

36 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?

37 In those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.

38 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings-16

The Reign of Ahaz

1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son
of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.
2 Twenty years old *was* Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned
sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not *that which was* right in the
sight of the Lord his God, like David his father.
3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his
son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the
heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of
Israel.

We have here a general character of the reign of Ahaz. Few and evil were his days--few, for he died at thirty-six--evil, for we are here told,

1. That he did not that which was right like David (2Ki 16:2), that is, he had none of that concern and affection for the instituted service and worship of God for which David was celebrated. He had no love for the temple, made no conscience of his duty to God, nor had any regard to his law. Herein he was unlike David; it was his honour that he was of the house and lineage of David, and it was owing to God's ancient covenant with David that he was now upon the throne, which aggravated his wickedness; for he was a reproach to that honourable name and family, which therefore was really a reproach to him (Degeneranti genus opprobrium--A good extraction is a disgrace to him who degenerates from it), and though he enjoyed the benefit of David's piety he did not tread in the steps of it.

2. That he walked in the way of the kings of Israel (2Ki 16:3), who all worshipped the calves. He was not joined in any affinity with them, as Jehoram and Ahaziah were with the house of Ahab, but, ex mero motu--without any instigation, walked in their way.

The kings of Israel pleaded policy and reasons of state for their idolatry, but Ahaz had no such pretence: in him it was the most unreasonable impolitic thing that could be. They were his enemies, and had proved enemies to themselves too by their idolatry; yet he walked in their way.

3. That he made his sons to pass through the fire, to the honour of his dunghill-deities. He burnt them, so it is expressly said of him (2Ch 28:3), burnt some of them, and perhaps made others of them (Hezekiah himself not excepted, though afterwards he was never the worse for it) to pass between two fires, or to be drawn through a flame, in token of their dedication to the idol.

4. That he did according to the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out. it was an instance of his great folly that he would be guided in his religion by those whom he saw fallen into the ditch before his eyes, and follow them; and it was an instance of his great impiety that he would conform to those usages which God had declared to be abominable to him, and set himself to write after the copy of those whom God had cast out, thus walking directly contrary to God.

5. That he sacrificed in the high places, 2Ki 16:4. If his father had but had zeal enough to take them away, the debauching of his sons might have been prevented; but those that connive at sin know not what dangerous snares they lay for those that come after them. He forsook God's house, was weary of that place where, in his father's time, he had often been detained before the Lord, and performed his devotions on high hills, where he had a better prospect, and under green trees, where he had a more pleasant shade. It was a religion little worth, which was guided by fancy, not by faith.

4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Then Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome *him*.
6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.
7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I *am* thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

Here is, 1 The attempt of his confederate neighbours, the kings of Syria and Israel, upon him. They thought to make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and to set a king of their own in it, Isa 7:6. In this they fell short, but the king of Syria recovered Elath, a considerable port upon the Red Sea, which Amaziah had taken from the Syrians, 2Ki 14:22. What can those keep that have lost their religion? Let them expect, thenceforward, to be always on the losing hand.

2. His project to get clear of them. Having forsaken God, he had neither courage nor strength to make head against his enemies, nor could he, with any boldness, ask help of God; but he made his court to the king of Assyria, and got him to come in for his relief. Those whose hearts condemn them will go any where in a day of distress rather than to God. Was it because there was not a God in Israel that he sent to the Assyrian for help? Was the rock of ages removed out of its place, that he stayed himself on this broken reed? The sin itself was its own punishment; for, though it is true that he gained his point (the king of Assyria hearkened to him, and, to serve his own turn, made a descent upon Damascus, whereby he gave a powerful diversion to the king of Syria, 2Ki 16:9, and obliged him to let fall his design against Ahaz, carrying the Syrians captive to Kir, as Amos had expressly foretold, Am 1:5), yet, considering all, he made but a bad bargain; for, to compass this,

(1.) He enslaved himself (2Ki 16:7): I am thy servant and thy son, that is, "I will be as dutiful and obedient to thee as to a master or father, if thou wilt but do me this good turn." Had he thus humbled himself to God, and implored his favour, he might have been delivered upon easier terms; he might have saved his money, and needed only to have parted with his sins. But, if the prodigal forsake his father's house, he soon becomes a slave to the worst of masters, Lu 15:15.

(2.) He impoverished himself; for he took the silver and gold that were laid up in the treasury both of the temple and of the kingdom, and sent it to the king of Assyria, 2Ki 16:8. Both church and state must be squeezed and exhausted, to gratify this his new patron and guardian. I know not what authority he had thus to dispose of the public stock; but it is common for those that have brought themselves into straits by one sin to help themselves out by another; and those that have alienated themselves from God will make no difficulty of alienating any of his rights.

8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent *it for* a present to the king of Assyria.

9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of* it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

10 And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that *was* at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made *it* against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

Though Ahaz had himself sacrificed in high places, on hills, and under every green tree (2Ki 16:4), yet God's altar had hitherto continued in its place and in use, and the king's burnt-offering

and his meat-offering (2Ki 16:15) had been offered upon it by the priests that attended it; but here we have it taken away by wicked Ahaz, and another altar, an idolatrous one, put in the room of it--a bolder stroke than the worst of the kings had yet given to religion. We have here,

I The model of this new altar, taken from one at Damascus, by the king himself, 2Ki 16:10. The king of Assyria having taken Damascus, thither Ahaz went, to congratulate him on his success, to return him thanks for the kindness he had done him by this expedition, and, as his servant and son, to receive his commands. Had he been faithful to his God, he would not have needed to crouch thus meanly to a foreign power. At Damascus, either while viewing the rarities of the place, or rather while joining with them in their devotions (for, when he was there, he thought it no harm to do as they did), he saw an altar that pleased his fancy extremely, not such a plain old-fashioned one as that which he had been trained up in attendance upon at Jerusalem, but curiously carved, it is likely, and adorned with image-work; there were many pretty things about it which he thought significant, surprising, very charming, and calculated to excite his devotion.

Solomon had but a dull fancy, he thought, compared with the ingenious artist that made this altar. Nothing will serve him but he must have an altar just like this: a pattern of it must be taken immediately; he cannot stay till he returns himself, but sends it before him in all haste, with orders to Urijah the priest to get one made exactly according to this model and have it ready against he came home. The pattern God showed to Moses in the mount or to David by the Spirit was not comparable to this pattern sent from Damascus. The hearts of idolaters walked after their eyes, which are therefore said to go a whoring after their idols; but the true worshippers worship the true God by faith.

II The making of it by Urijah the priests, 2Ki 16:11. This Urijah, it is likely, was the chief priest who at this time presided in the temple-service. To him Ahaz sent an intimation of his mind (for we read not of any express orders he gave him), to get an altar made by this pattern. And, without any dispute or objection, he put it in hand immediately, being perhaps as fond of it as the king was, at least being very willing to humour the king and desirous to curry favour with him. Perhaps he might have this excuse for gratifying the king herein, that, by this means, he might keep him to the temple at Jerusalem and prevent his totally deserting it for the high places and the groves. "Let us oblige him in this," thinks Urijah, "and then he will bring all his sacrifices to us; for by this craft we get our living." But, whatever pretence he had, it was a most base wicked thing for him that was a priest, a chief priest, to make this altar, in compliance with an idolatrous prince, for hereby,

1. He prostituted his authority and profaned the crown of his priesthood, making himself a servant to the lusts of men. There is not a greater disgrace to the ministry than obsequiousness to such wicked commands as this was.

2. He betrayed his trust. As priest, he was bound to maintain and defend God's institutions, and to oppose and witness against all innovations; and, for him to assist and serve the king in setting up an altar to confront the altar which by divine appointment he was consecrated to minister at, was such a piece of treachery and perfidiousness as may justly render him infamous to all posterity. Had he only connived at the doing of it,--had he been frightened into it by menaces,--had he endeavoured to dissuade the king from it, or but delayed the doing of it till he came home, that he might first talk with him about it,--it would not have been so bad; but so willingly to walk after his commandment, as if he were glad of the opportunity to oblige him, was such an affront to the God he served as was utterly inexcusable.

III. The dedicating of it. Urijah, perceiving that the king's heart was much upon it, took care to have it ready against he came down, and set it near the brazen altar, but somewhat lower and further from the door of the temple. The king was exceedingly pleased with it, approached it with all possible veneration, and offered thereon his burnt-offering, &c., 2Ki 16:12,13. His sacrifices were not offered to the God of Israel, but to the gods of Damascus (as we find 2Ch 28:23), and, when he borrowed the Syrians' altar, no marvel that he borrowed their gods. Naaman, the Syrian, embraced the God of Israel when he got earth from the land of Israel to make an altar of.

IV. The removal of God's altar, to make room for it. Urijah was so modest that he put this altar at the lower end of the court, and left God's altar in its place, between this and the house of the Lord, 2Ki 16:14. But that would not satisfy Ahaz; he removed God's altar to an obscure corner in the north side of the court, and put his own before the sanctuary, in the place of it. He thinks his new altar is much more stately, and much more sightly, and disgraces that; and therefore "let that be laid aside as a vessel in which there is no pleasure." His superstitious invention, at first, jostled with God's sacred institution, but at length jostled it out.

Note, Those will soon come to make nothing of God that will not be content to make him their all. Ahaz durst not (perhaps for fear of the people) quite demolish the brazen altar and knock it to pieces; but, while he ordered all the sacrifices to be offered upon this new altar (2Ki 16:15), The brazen altar (says he) shall be for me to enquire by. Having thrust it out from the use for which it was instituted, which was to sanctify the gifts offered upon it, he pretends to advance it above its institution, which it is common for superstitious people to do. The altar was never designed for an oracle, yet Ahaz will have it for that use.

The Romish church seemingly magnifies Christ's sacraments, yet wretchedly corrupts them. But some give another sense of

Ahaz's purpose: "As for the brazen altar, I will consider what to do with it, and give order about it." The Jews say that, afterwards, of the brass of it he made that famous dial which was called the dial of Ahaz, 2Ki 20:11. The base compliance of the poor-spirited priest with the presumptuous usurpations of an ill-spirited king is again taken notice of (2Ki 16:16): Urijah the priest did according to all that king Ahaz commanded. Miserable is the case of great men when those that should reprove them for their sins strengthen and serve them in their sins.

13 And he burnt his burnt offering and his meat offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings, upon the altar.

14 And he brought also the brazen altar, which *was* before the Lord, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the Lord, and put it on the north side of the altar.

15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meat offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to inquire *by*.

16 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

17 And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that *were* under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

Here is, I. Ahaz abusing the temple, not the building itself, but some of the furniture of it.

1. He defaced the bases on which the lavers were set (1Ki 7:28,29) and took down the molten sea, 2Ki 16:17. These the priests used for washing; against them therefore he seems to have had a particular spite. It is one of the greatest prejudices that can be done to religion to obstruct the purifying of the priests, the Lord's ministers.

2. He removed the covert for the sabbath, erected either in honour of the sabbath or for the conveniency of the priests, when, on the sabbath, they officiated in greater numbers than on other days. Whatever it was, it should seem that in removing it he intended to put a contempt upon the sabbath, and so to open as wide an inlet as any to all manner of impiety.

3. The king's entry, which led to the house of the Lord, for the convenience of the royal family (perhaps that ascent which Solomon had made, and which the queen of Sheba admired, 1Ki 10:5), he turned another way, to show that he did not intend to frequent the house of the Lord any more. This he did for the king of Assyria, to oblige him, who perhaps returned his visit, and found fault with this entry, as an inconvenience and disparagement to his palace. When those that have had a ready passage to the house of the Lord, to please their neighbours, turn it another way, they are going down the hill apace towards their ruin.

II. Ahaz resigning his life in the midst of his days, at thirty-six years of age (2Ki 16:19) and leaving his kingdom to a better man, Hezekiah his son (2Ki 16:20), who proved as much a friend to the temple as he had been an enemy to it. Perhaps this very son he had made to pass through the fire, and thereby dedicated him to Moloch; but God, by his grace, snatched him as a brand out of the burning.

18 And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria.

19 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings-17

The Fall of Samaria and the Captivity of Israel

1 In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of
Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.
2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as
the kings of Israel that were before him.
3 Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea
became his servant, and gave him presents.

We have here the reign and ruin of Hoshea, the last of the kings of Israel, concerning whom observe,

I. That, though he forced his way to the crown by treason and murder (as we read 2Ki 15:30), yet he gained not the possession of it till seven or eight years after; for it was in the fourth year of Ahaz that he slew Pekah, but did not himself begin to reign till the twelfth year of Ahaz, 2Ki 17:1. Whether by the king of Assyria, or by the king of Judah, or by some of his own people, does not appear, but it seems so long he was kept out of the throne he aimed at. Justly were his bad practices thus chastised, and the word of the prophet was thus fulfilled (Ho 10:3), Now they shall say We have no king, because we feared not the Lord.

II. That, though he was bad, yet not so bad as the kings of Israel had been before him (2Ki 17:2), not so devoted to the calves as they had been. One of them (that at Dan), the Jews say, had been, before this, carried away by the king of Assyria in the expedition recorded 2Ki 15:29, (to which perhaps the prophet refers, Ho 8:5, Thy calf, O Samaria! has cast thee off), which made him put the less confidence in the other. And some say that this Hoshea took off the embargo which the former kings had put their subjects under, forbidding them to go up to Jerusalem to worship, which he permitted those to do that had a mind to it. But what shall we think of this dispensation of providence, that the destruction of the kingdom of Israel should come in the reign

of one of the best of its kings? Thy judgments, O God! are a great deep. God would hereby show that in bringing this ruin upon them he designed to punish,

1. Not only the sins of that generation, but of the foregoing ages, and to reckon for the iniquities of their fathers, who had been long in filing the measure and treasuring up wrath against this day of wrath.

2. Not only the sins of their kings, but the sins of the people. If Hoshea was not so bad as the former kings, yet the people were as bad as those that went before them, and it was an aggravation of their badness, and brought ruin the sooner, that their king did not set them so bad an example as the former kings had done, nor hinder them from reforming; he gave them leave to do better, but they did as bad as ever, which laid the blame of their sin and ruin wholly upon themselves.

III. That the destruction came gradually. They were for some time made tributaries before they were made captives to the king of Assyria (2Ki 17:3), and, if that less judgment had prevailed to humble and reform them, the greater would have been prevented.

IV. That they brought it upon themselves by the indirect course they took to shake off the yoke of the king of Assyria, 2Ki 17:4. Had the king and people of Israel applied to God, made their peace with him and their prayers to him, they might have recovered their liberty, ease, and honour; but they withheld their tribute, and trusted to the king of Egypt to assist them in their revolt, which, if it had taken effect, would have been but to change their oppressors. But Egypt became to them the staff of a broken reed. This provoked the king of Assyria to proceed against them with the more severity. Men get nothing by struggling with the net, but entangle themselves the more.

V. That it was an utter destruction that came upon them.

1 The king of Israel was made a prisoner; he was shut up and bound, being, it is probable, taken by surprise, before Samaria was besieged.

2 The land of Israel was made a prey. The army of the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, made themselves master of it (2Ki 17:5), and treated the people as traitors to be punished with the sword of justice rather than as fair enemies.

3. The royal city of Israel was besieged, and at length taken. Three years it held out after the country was conquered, and no doubt a great deal of misery was endured at that time which is not particularly recorded; but the brevity of the story, and the passing of this matter over lightly, methinks, intimate that they were abandoned of God and he did not now regard the affliction of Israel, as sometimes as he had done.

4. The people of Israel were carried captives into Assyria, 2Ki 17:6. The generality of the people, those that were of any note, were forced away into the conqueror's country, to be slaves and beggars there.

(1.) Thus he was pleased to exercise a dominion over them, and to show that they were entirely at his disposal.

(2.) By depriving them of their possessions and estates, real and personal, and exposing them to all the hardships and reproaches of a removal to a strange country, under the power of an imperious army, he chastised them for their rebellion and their endeavour to shake off his yoke.

(3.) Thus he effectually prevented all such attempts for the future and secured their country to himself.

(4.) Thus he got the benefit of their service in his own country, as Pharaoh did that of their fathers; and so this unworthy people were lost as they were found, and ended as they began, in servitude and under oppression.

(5.) Thus he made room for those of his own country that had little, and little to do, at home, to settle in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. In all these several ways he served himself by this captivity of the ten tribes. We are here told in what places of his kingdom he disposed of them--in Halah and Habor, in places, we may suppose, far distant from each other, lest they should keep up a correspondence, incorporate again, and become formidable. There, we have reason to think, after some time they were so mingled with the nations that they were lost, and the name of Israel was no more in remembrance. Those that forgot God were themselves forgotten; those that studied to be like the nations were buried among them; and those that would not serve God in their own land were made to serve their enemies in a strange land.

It is probable that they were the men of honour and estates who were carried captive, and that many of the meaner sort of people were left behind, many of every tribe, who either went over to Judah or became subject to the Assyrian colonies, and their posterity were Galileans or Samaritans. But thus ended Israel as a nation; now they became Lo-ammi--not a people, and Lo-ruhamah--unpitied. Now Canaan spued them out. When we read of their entry under Hoshea the son of Nun who would have thought that such as this should be their exit under Hoshea the son of Elah? Thus Rome's glory in Augustus sunk, many ages after, in Augustulus. Providence so ordered the eclipsing of the honour of the ten tribes that the honour of Judah (the royal tribe) and Levi (the holy tribe), which yet remained, might shine the brighter. Yet we find a number sealed of every one of the twelve tribes (Re 7:1-8) except Dan. James writes to the twelve tribes

scattered abroad (Jam 1:1) and Paul speaks of the twelve tribes which instantly served God day and night (Ac 26:7); so that though we never read of those that were carried captive, nor have any reason to credit the conjecture of some (that they yet remain a distinct body in some remote corner of the world), yet a remnant of them did escape, to keep up the name of Israel, till it came to be worn by the gospel church, the spiritual Israel, in which it will ever remain, Ga 6:16.

4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 For *so* it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

8 and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 And the children of Israel did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger:

Though the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes was but briefly related, it is in these verses largely commented upon by our historian, and the reasons of it assigned, not taken from the second causes--the weakness of Israel, their impolitic

management, and the strength and growing greatness of the Assyrian monarch (these things are overlooked)--but only from the First Cause.

Observe, 1. It was the Lord that removed Israel out of his sight; whoever were the instruments, he was the author of this calamity. It was destruction from the Almighty; the Assyrian was but the rod of his anger, Isa 10:5. It was the Lord that rejected the seed of Israel, else their enemies could not have seized upon them, 2Ki 17:20. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord? Isa 43:24. We lose the benefit of national judgments if we do not eye the hand of God in them, and the fulfilling of the scripture, for that also is taken notice of here (2Ki 17:23): The Lord removed Israel out of his favour, and out of their own land, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. Rather shall heaven and earth pass than one tittle of God's word fall to the ground. When God's word and his works are compared, it will be found not only that they agree, but that they illustrate each other. But why would God ruin a people that were raised and incorporated, as Israel was, by miracles and oracles? Why would he undo that which he himself had done at so vast an expense? Was it purely an act of sovereignty? No, it was an act of necessary justice.

For, 2. They provoked him to do this by their wickedness. Was it God's doing? Nay, it was their own; by their way and their doings they procured all this to themselves, and it was their own wickedness that did correct them. This the sacred historian shows here at large, that it might appear that God did them no wrong and that others might hear and fear. Come and see what it was that did all this mischief, that broke their power and laid their honour in the dust; it was sin; that, and nothing else, separated between them and God. This is here very movingly laid open as the cause of all the desolations of Israel. He here shows,

I. What God had done for Israel, to engage them to serve him.

1. He gave them their liberty (2Ki 17:7): He brought them from under the hand of Pharaoh who oppressed them, asserted their freedom (Israel is my son), and effected their freedom with a high hand. Thus they were bound in duty and gratitude to be his servants, for he had loosed their bonds; nor would he that rescued them out of the hand of the king of Egypt have contradicted himself so far as to deliver them into the hand of the king of Assyria, as he did, if they had not, by their iniquity, betrayed their liberty and sold themselves.

2. He gave them their law, and was himself their king. They were immediately under a divine regimen. They could not plead ignorance of good and evil, sin and duty, for God had particularly charged them against those very things which here he charges them with (2Ki 17:15), That they should not do like the heathen. Nor could they be in any doubt concerning their obligation to observe the laws which they are here charged with rejecting, for they were the commandments and statutes of the Lord their God (2Ki 17:13), so that no room was left to dispute whether they should keep them or no. He had not dealt so with other nations, Ps 147:19,20. 3. He gave them their land, for he cast out the heathen from before them (2Ki 17:8), to make room for them; and the casting out of them for their idolatries was as fair a warning as could be given to Israel not to do like them.

II. What they had done against God, notwithstanding these engagements which he had laid upon them.

1. In general. They sinned against the Lord their God (2Ki 17:7), they did those things that were not right (2Ki 17:9), but secretly. So wedded were they to their evil practices that when they could not do them publicly, could not for shame or could not for fear, they would do them secretly--an evidence of their atheism, that they thought what was done in secret was from under the eye of

God himself and would not be required. Again, they wrought wicked things in such a direct contradiction to the divine law that they seemed as if they were done on purpose to provoke the Lord to anger (2Ki 17:11), in contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice.

They rejected God's statutes and his covenant (2Ki 17:15), would not be bound up either by his command or the consent they themselves had given to the covenant, but threw off the obligations of both, and therefore God justly rejected them, 2Ki 17:20. See Ho 4:6. They left all the commandments of the Lord their God (2Ki 17:16), left the way, left the work, which those commandments prescribed them and directed them in. Nay, lastly, they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, that is, they wholly addicted themselves to sin, as slaves to the service of those to whom they are sold, and, by their obstinately persisting in sin, so hardened their own hearts that at length it had become morally impossible for them to recover themselves, as one that has sold himself has put his liberty past recall.

2. In particular. Though they were guilty (no doubt) of many immoralities, and violated all the commands of the second table, yet nothing is here specified, but their idolatry. This was the sin that did most easily beset them; this was, of all sins, most provoking to God: it was the spiritual adultery that broke the marriage-covenant, and was the inlet of all other wickedness. Hence it is again and again mentioned here as the sin that ruined them.

(1.) They feared other gods (2Ki 17:7), that is, worshipped them and paid their homage to them, as if they feared their displeasure.

(2.) They walked in the statutes of the heathen, which were contrary to God's statutes (2Ki 17:8), did as did the heathen (2Ki 17:11), went after the heathen that were round about them (2Ki 17:15), so prostituting the honour of their peculiarity, and

defeating God's design concerning them, which was that they should be distinguished from the heathen. Must those that were taught of God go to school to the heathen--those that were appropriated to God take their measures from the nations that were abandoned by him?

(3.) They walked in the statutes of the idolatrous kings of Israel (2Ki 17:8), in all the sins of Jeroboam, 2Ki 17:22. When their kings assumed a power to alter and add to the divine institutions they submitted to them, and thought the command of their kings would bear them out in disobedience to the command of their God.

(4.) They built themselves high places in all their cities, 2Ki 17:9. If in any place there was but the tower of the watchmen (a country tower that had no walls, but only a tower to shelter the watch in time of danger), or but a lodge for shepherds, it must be honoured with a high place, and that with an altar. If there was a fenced city, it must be further fortified with a high place. Having forsaken God's only place, they knew no end of high places, in which every man followed his own fancy and directed his devotion to what god he pleased. Sacred things were hereby profaned and laid common, when their altars were as heaps in the furrows of the field, Ho 12:11.

(5.) They set them up images and groves--Asherim (even wooden images, so some think the term, which we translate groves, should be rendered) or Ashtaroth (so others)--directed contrary to the second commandment, 2Ki 17:10. They served idols (2Ki 17:12), the works of their own hands and creatures of their own fancy, though God had warned them particularly not to do this thing.

(6.) They burnt incense in all the high places, to the honour of strange gods, for it was to the dishonour of the true God, 2Ki 17:11.

(7.) They followed vanity. Idols are called so, because they could do neither good nor evil, but were the most insignificant things that could be; those that worshipped them were like unto them, and so they became vain and good for nothing (2Ki 17:16), vain in their devotions, which were brutish and ridiculous, and so became vain in their whole conversation.

(8.) Besides the molten images, even the two calves, they worshipped all the host of heaven--the sun, moon, and stars: for it is not meant of the heavenly host of angels; they could not rise so far above sensible things as to think of them. And, withal, they served Baal, the deified heroes of the Gentiles, 2Ki 17:16.

(9.) They caused their children to pass through the fire, in token of their dedicating them to their idols.

(10.) They used divinations and enchantments, that they might receive directions from the gods to whom they paid their devotions.

III. What means God used with them, to bring them off from their idolatries, and to how little purpose. He testified against them, showed them their sins and warned them of the fatal consequences of them by all the prophets and all the seers (for so the prophets had been formerly called), and pressed them to turn from their evil ways, 2Ki 17:13. We have read of prophets, more or less, in every reign. Though they had forsaken God's family of priests, he did not leave them without a succession of prophets, who made it their business to teach them the good knowledge of the Lord, but all in vain (2Ki 17:14); they would not hear, but hardened their necks, persisted in their idolatries, and were like their fathers, that would not bow their necks to God's yoke, because they did not believe in him, did not receive his truths, nor would venture upon his promises: it seems to refer

to their fathers in the wilderness; the same sin that kept them out of Canaan turned these out, and that was unbelief.

IV. How God punished them for their sins. He was very angry with them (2Ki 17:18); for, in the matter of his worship, he is a jealous God, and resents nothing more deeply than giving that honour to any creature which is due to himself only. He afflicted them (2Ki 17:20) and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, in the days of the judges and of Saul, and afterwards in the days of most of their kings, to see if they would be awakened by the judgments of God to consider and amend their ways; but, when all these corrections did not prevail to drive out the folly, God first rent Israel from the house of David, under which they might have been happy.

As Judah was hereby weakened, so Israel was hereby corrupted; for they made a man king who drove them from following the Lord and caused them to sin a great sin, 2Ki 17:21. This was a national judgment, and the punishment of their former idolatries; and, at length, he removed them quite out of his sight (2Ki 17:18,23), without giving them any hopes of a return out of their captivity.

Lastly, Here is a complaint against Judah in the midst of all (2Ki 17:19): Also Judah kept not the commandments of God; though they were not as yet quite so bad as Israel, yet they walked in the statutes of Israel; and this aggravated the sin of Israel, that they communicated the infection of it to Judah; see Eze 23:11. Those that bring sin into a country or family bring a plague into it and will have to answer for all the mischief that follows.

12 for they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes, according to all the

law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by
my servants the prophets.
14 Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks,
like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord
their God.
15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with
their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them;
and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the
heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning* whom the Lord
had charged them, that they should not do like them.
16 And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and
made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and
worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.
17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the
fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to
do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.
18 Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them
out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.
19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God,
but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.
20 And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them,
and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast
them out of his sight.
21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made
Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from
following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin.
22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which
he did; they departed not from them;
23 until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all
his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own
land to Assyria unto this day.

The Repopulation of Samaria

24 And the king of Assyria brought *men* from Babylon, and from
Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim,

and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of
Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.
25 And *so* it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they
feared not the Lord : therefore the Lord sent lions among them,
which slew *some* of them.

Never was land lost, we say, for want of an heir. When the children of Israel were dispossessed, and turned out of Canaan, the king of Assyria soon transplanted thither the supernumeraries of his own country, such as it could well spare, who should be servants to him and masters to the Israelites that remained; and here we have an account of these new inhabitants, whose story is related here that we may take our leave of Samaria, as also of the Israelites that were carried captive into Assyria.

I. Concerning the Assyrians that were brought into the land of Israel we are here told,

1. That they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof, 2Ki 17:24. It is common for lands to change their owners, but sad that the holy land should become a heathen land again. See what work sin makes.

2. That at their first coming God sent lions among them. They were probably insufficient to people the country, which occasioned the beasts of the field to multiply against them (Ex 23:29); yet, besides the natural cause, there was a manifest hand of God in it, who is Lord of hosts, of all the creatures, and can serve his own purposes by which he pleases, small or great, lice or lions. God ordered them this rough welcome to check their pride and insolence, and to let them know that though they had conquered Israel the God of Israel had power enough to deal with them--that he could have prevented their settling here, by ordering lions into the service of Israel, and that he permitted it, not for their righteousness, but the wickedness of his own people--and that they were now under his visitation. They had lived

without God in their own land, and were not plagued with lions; but, if they do so in this land, it is at their peril.

3. That they sent a remonstrance of this grievance to the king their master, setting forth, it is likely, the loss their infant colony had sustained by the lions and the continual fear they were in of them, and stating that they looked upon it to be a judgment upon them for not worshipping the God of the land, which they could not, because they knew not how, 2Ki 17:26. The God of Israel was the God of the whole world, but they ignorantly call him the God of the land, apprehending themselves therefore within his reach, and concerned to be upon good terms with him. Herein they shamed the Israelites, who were not so ready to hear the voice of God's judgments as they were, and who had not served the God of that land, though he was the God of their fathers and their great benefactor, and though they were well instructed in the manner of his worship. Assyrians begged to be taught that which Israelites hated to be taught.

4. That the king of Assyria took care to have them taught the manner of the God of the land (2Ki 17:27,28), not out of any affection to that God, but to save his subjects from the lions. On this errand he sent back one of the priests whom he had carried away captive. A prophet would have done them more good, for this was but one of the priests of the calves, and therefore chose to dwell at Bethel for old acquaintance' sake, and, though he might teach them to do better than they did, he was not likely to teach them to do well, unless he had taught his own people better. However, he came and dwelt among them, to teach them how they should fear the Lord. Whether he taught them out of the book of the law, or only by word of mouth, is uncertain.

5. That, being thus taught, they made a mongrel religion of it, worshipped the God of Israel for fear and their own idols for love (2Ki 17:33): They feared the Lord, but they served their own gods. They all agreed to worship the God of the land according to

the manner, to serve the Jewish festivals and rites of sacrificing, but every nation made gods of their own besides, not only for their private use in their own families, but to be put in the houses of their high places, 2Ki 17:9. The idols of each country are here named, 2Ki 17:30,31. The learned are at a loss for the signification of several of these names, and cannot agree by what representations these gods were worshipped.

If we may credit the traditions of the Jewish doctors, they tell us that Succoth-Benoth was worshipped in a hen and chickens, Nergal in a cock, Ashima in a smooth goat, Nibhaz in a dog, Tartak in an ass, Adrammelech in a peacock, Anammelech in a pheasant. Our own tell us, more probably, that Succoth-Benoth (signifying the tents of the daughters) was Venus. Nergal, being worshipped by the Cuthites, or Persians, was the fire, Adrammelech and Anammelech were only distinctions of Moloch. See how vain idolaters were in their imaginations, and wonder at their sottishness. Our very ignorance concerning these idols teaches us the accomplishment of that word which God has spoken, that these false gods should all perish (Jer 10:11); they are all buried in oblivion, while the name of the true God shall continue for ever.

6. This medley superstition is here said to continue unto this day (2Ki 17:41), till the time when this book was written and long after, above 300 years in all, till the time of Alexander the Great, when Manasse, brother to Jaddus the high priest of the Jews, having married the daughter of Sanballat, governor of the Samaritans, went over to them, got leave of Alexander to build a temple in Mount Gerizim, drew over many of the Jews to him, and prevailed with the Samaritans to cast away all their idols and to worship the God of Israel only; yet their worship was mixed with so much superstition that our Saviour told them they knew not what they worshipped, Joh 4:22.

II. Concerning the Israelites that were carried into the land of Assyria. This historian has occasion to speak of them (2Ki 17:22), showing that their successors in the land did as they had done (after the manner of the nations whom they carried away), they worshipped both the God of Israel and those other gods; but what did the captives do in the land of their affliction? Were they reformed, and brought to repentance, by their troubles? No, they did after the former manner, 2Ki 17:34. When the two tribes were afterwards carried into Babylon, they were cured by it of their idolatry, and therefore, after seventy years, they were brought back with joy; but the ten tribes were hardened in the furnace, and therefore were justly lost in it and left to perish. This obstinacy of theirs is here aggravated by the consideration,

1. Of the honour God had put upon them, as the seed of Jacob, whom he named Israel, and from him they were so named, but were a reproach to that worthy name by which they were called.

2. Of the covenant he made with them, and the charge he gave them upon that covenant, which is here very fully recited, that they should fear and serve the Lord Jehovah only, who had brought them up out of Egypt (2Ki 17:36), that, having received his statutes and ordinances in writing, they should observe to do them for evermore (2Ki 17:37), and never forget that covenant which God had made with them, the promises and conditions of that covenant, especially that great article of it which is here thrice repeated, because it had been so often inculcated and so much insisted on, that they should not fear other gods. He had told them that, if they kept close to him, he would deliver them out of the hand of all their enemies (2Ki 17:39); yet when they were in the hand of their enemies, and stood in need of deliverance, they were so stupid, and had so little sense of their own interest, that they did after the former manner (2Ki 17:40), they served both the true God and false gods, as if they knew no difference. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. So they did, and so did the nations that succeeded them. Well might the apostle ask, What then, Are

we better than they? No, in no wise, for both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, Ro 3:9.

26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.

29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

30 And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

31 and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

32 So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

33 They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

34 Unto this day they do after the former manners. They fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

35 with whom the Lord had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

36 but the Lord, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.
37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.
38 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.
39 But the Lord your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.
40 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.
41 So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

2 Kings-18

The Reign of Hezekiah

1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, *that* Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.
2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.
3 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.
4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan [a piece of brass].

We have here a general account of the reign of Hezekiah. It appears, by comparing his age with his father's, that he was born when his father was about eleven or twelve years old, divine Providence so ordering that he might be of full age, and fit for

business, when the measure of his father's iniquity should be full. Here is,

I. His great piety, which was the more wonderful because his father was very wicked and vile, one of the worst of the kings, yet he was one of the best, which may intimate to us that what good there is in any is not of nature, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, which, contrary to nature, grafts into the good olive that which was wild by nature (Ro 11:24), and also that grace gets over the greatest difficulties and disadvantages: Ahaz, it is likely, gave his son a bad education as well as a bad example; Urijah his priest perhaps had the tuition of him; his attendants and companions, we may suppose, were such as were addicted to idolatry; and yet Hezekiah became eminently good. When God's grace will work what can hinder it?

1. He was a genuine son of David, who had a great many degenerate ones (2Ki 18:3): He did that which was right, according to all that David his father did, with whom the covenant was made, and therefore he was entitled to the benefit of it. We have read of some of them who did that which was right, but not like David, 2Ki 14:3. They did not love God's ordinances, nor cleave to them, as he did; but Hezekiah was a second David, had such a love for God's word, and God's house, as he had. Let us not be frightened with an apprehension of the continual decay of virtue, as if, when times and men are bad, they must needs, of course, grow worse and worse; that does not follow, for, after many bad kings, God raised up one that was like David himself.

2. He was a zealous reformer of his kingdom, and as we find (2Ch 29:3) he began betimes to be so, fell to work as soon as ever he came to the crown, and lost no time. He found his kingdom very corrupt, the people in all things too superstitious. They had always been so, but in the last reign worse than ever. By the influence of his wicked father, a deluge of idolatry had

overspread the land; his spirit was stirred against this idolatry, we may suppose (as Paul's at Athens), while his father lived, and therefore, as soon as ever he had power in his hands, he set himself to abolish it (2Ki 18:4), though, considering how the people were wedded to it, he might think it could not be done without opposition.

(1.) The images and the groves were downright idolatrous and of heathenish original. These he broke and destroyed. Though his own father had set them up, and shown an affection for them, yet he would not protect them. We must never dishonour God in honour to our earthly parents.

(2.) The high places, though they had sometimes been used by the prophets upon special occasions and had been hitherto connived at by the good kings, were nevertheless an affront to the temple and a breach of the law which required them to worship there only, and, being from under the inspection of the priests, gave opportunity for the introducing of idolatrous usages.

Hezekiah therefore, who made God's word his rule, not the example of his predecessors, removed them, made a law for the removal of them, the demolishing of the chapels, tabernacles, and altars there erected, and the suppressing of the use of them, which law was put in execution with vigour; and, it is probable, the terrible judgments which the kingdom of Israel was now under for their idolatry made Hezekiah the more zealous and the people the more willing to comply with him. It is well when our neighbours' harms are our warnings.

(3.) The brazen serpent was originally of divine institution, and yet, because it had been abused to idolatry, he broke it to pieces. The children of Israel had brought that with them to Canaan; where they set it up we are not told, but, it seems, it had been carefully preserved, as a memorial of God's goodness to their

fathers in the wilderness and a traditional evidence of the truth of that story, Nu 21:9, for the encouragement of the sick to apply to God for a cure and of penitent sinners to apply to him for mercy.

But in process of time, when they began to worship the creature more than the Creator, those that would not worship images borrowed from the heathen, as some of their neighbours did, were drawn in by the tempter to burn incense to the brazen serpent, because that was made by order from God himself and had been an instrument of good to them. But Hezekiah, in his pious zeal for God's honour, not only forbade the people to worship it, but, that it might never be so abused any more, he showed the people that it was Nehushtan, nothing else but a piece of brass, and that therefore it was an idle wicked thing to burn incense to it; he then broke it to pieces, that is, as bishop Patrick expounds it, ground it to powder, which he scattered in the air, that no fragment of it might remain. If any think that the just honour of the brazen serpent was hereby diminished they will find it abundantly made up again, Joh 3:14, where our Saviour makes it a type of himself. Good things, when idolized, are better parted with than kept.

3. Herein he was a nonesuch, 2Ki 18:5. None of all the kings of Judah were like him, either before or after him. Two things he was eminent for in his reformation:--

(1.) Courage and confidence in God. In abolishing idolatry, there was danger of disobliging his subjects, and provoking them to rebel; but he trusted in the Lord God of Israel to bear him out in what he did and save him from harm. A firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to protect and reward us will conduce much to make us sincere, bold, and vigorous, in the way of our duty, like Hezekiah. When he came to the crown he found his kingdom compassed with enemies, but he did not seek for succour to

foreign aids, as his father did, but trusted in the God of Israel to be the keeper of Israel.

(2.) Constancy and perseverance in his duty. For this there was none like him, that he clave to the Lord with a fixed resolution and never departed from following him, 2Ki 18:6. Some of his predecessors that began well fell off: but he, like Caleb, followed the Lord fully. He not only abolished all idolatrous usages, but kept God's commandments, and in every thing made conscience of his duty.

II. His great prosperity, 2Ki 18:7,8. He was with God, and then God was with him, and, having the special presence of God with him, he prospered whithersoever he went, had wonderful success in all his enterprises, in his wars, his buildings, and especially his reformation, for that good work was carried on with less difficulty than he could have expected. Those that do God's work with an eye to his glory, and with confidence in his strength, may expect to prosper in it. Great is the truth and will prevail. Finding himself successful,

1. He threw off the yoke of the king of Assyria, which his father had basely submitted to. This is called rebelling against him, because so the king of Assyria called it; but it was really an asserting of the just rights of his crown, which it was not in the power of Ahaz to alienate. If it was imprudent to make this bold struggle so soon, yet I see not that it was, as some think, unjust; when he had thrown out the idolatry of the nations he might well throw off the yoke of their oppression. The surest way to liberty is to serve God.

2. He made a vigorous attack upon the Philistines, and smote them even unto Gaza, both the country villages and the fortified town, the tower of the watchmen and the fenced cities, reducing those places which they had made themselves masters of in his father's time, 2Ch 28:18. When he had purged out the

corruptions his father had brought in he might expect to recover the possessions his father had lost. Of his victories over the Philistines Isaiah prophesied, Isa 14:28-32, &c.

5 He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor *any* that were before him.

6 For he clave to the Lord, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.

7 And the Lord was with him; *and* he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

8 He smote the Philistines, *even* unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

The Fall of Samaria

9 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which *was* the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, *that* Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that *is* the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:

12 because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, *and* all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear *them*, nor do *them*.

The Invasion of Sennacherib

13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

The kingdom of Assyria had now grown considerable, though we never read of it till the last reign. Such changes there are in the affairs of nations and families: those that have been despicable become formidable, and those, on the contrary, are brought low that have made a great noise and figure. We have here an account,

I. Of the success of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, against Israel, his besieging Samaria (2Ki 18:9), taking it (2Ki 18:10), and carrying the people into captivity (2Ki 18:11), with the reason why God brought this judgment upon them (2Ki 18:12): Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God. This was related more largely in the foregoing chapter, but it is here repeated,

1. As that which stirred up Hezekiah and his people to purge out idolatry with so much zeal, because they saw the ruin which it brought upon Israel. When their neighbour's house was on fire, and their own in danger, it was time to cast away the accursed thing.

2. As that which Hezekiah much lamented, but had not strength to prevent. Though the ten tribes had revolted from, and often been vexatious to, the house of David, no longer ago than in his father's reign, yet being of the seed of Israel he could not be glad at their calamities.

3. As that which laid Hezekiah and his kingdom open to the king of Assyria, and made it much more easy for him to invade the land. It is said of the ten tribes here that they would neither hear God's commandments nor do them, 2Ki 18:12. Many will be content to give God the hearing that will give him no more (Eze 33:31), but these, being resolved not to do their duty, did not care to hear of it.

II. Of the attempt of Sennacherib, the succeeding king of Assyria, against Judah, in which he was encouraged by his

predecessor's success against Israel, whose honours he would vie with and whose victories he would push forward. The descent he made upon Judah was a great calamity to that kingdom, by which God would try the faith of Hezekiah and chastise the people, who are called a hypocritical nation (Isa 10:6), because they did not comply with Hezekiah's reformation, nor willingly part with their idols, but kept them up in their hearts, and perhaps in their houses, though their high places were removed. Even times of reformation may prove troublesome times, made so by those that oppose it, and then the blame is laid upon the reformers. This calamity will appear great upon Hezekiah if we consider,

1. How much he lost of his country, 2Ki 18:13. The king of Assyria took all or most of the fenced cities of Judah, the frontier-towns and the garrisons, and then all the rest fell into his hands of course. The confusion which the country was put into by this invasion is described by the prophet, Isa 10:28-31.

2. How dearly he paid for his peace. He saw Jerusalem itself in danger of falling into the enemies' hand, as Samaria had done, and was willing to purchase its safety at the expense,

(1.) Of a mean submission: "I have offended in denying the usual tribute, and am ready to make satisfaction as shall be demanded," 2Ki 18:14. Where was Hezekiah's courage? Where his confidence in God? Why did he not advise with Isaiah before he sent this crouching message?

(2.) Of a vast sum of money-300 talents of silver and thirty of gold (above 200,000l.), not to be paid annually, but as a present ransom. To raise this sum, he was forced not only to empty the public treasures (2Ki 18:15), but to take the golden plates off from the doors of the temple, and from the pillars, 2Ki 18:16. Though the temple sanctified the gold which he had dedicated, yet, the necessity being urgent, he thought he might make as bold with that as his father David (whom he took for his pattern) did

with the show-bread, and that it was neither impious nor imprudent to give a part for the preservation of the whole. His father Ahaz had plundered the temple in contempt of it, 2Ch 28:24. He had repaid with interest what his father took; and now, with all due reverence, he only begged leave to borrow it again in an exigency and for a greater good, with a resolution to restore it in full as soon as he should be in a capacity to do so.

14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

15 And Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house.

16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off *the gold from* the doors of the temple of the Lord, and *from* the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rab-saris and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem: and they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which *is* in the highway of the fuller's field.

18 And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

19 And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence *is* this wherein thou trustest?

20 Thou sayest, (but *they are but* vain words,) *I have* counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, *even* upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

Here is, I. Jerusalem besieged by Sennacherib's army, 2Ki 18:17. He sent three of his great generals with a great host

against Jerusalem. Is this the great king, the king of Assyria? No, never call him so; he is a base, false, perfidious man, and worthy to be made infamous to all ages; let him never be named with honour that could do such a dishonourable thing as this, to take Hezekiah's money, which he gave him upon condition he should withdraw his army, and then, instead of quitting his country according to the agreement, to advance against his capital city, and not send him his money again either. Those are wicked men indeed, and, let them be ever so great, we will call them so, whose principle it is not to make their promises binding any further than is for their interest. Now Hezekiah had too much reason to repent his treaty with Sennacherib, which made him much the poorer and never the safer.

II. Hezekiah, and his princes and people, railed upon by Rabshakeh, the chief speaker of the three generals, and one that had the most satirical genius. He was no doubt instructed what to say by Sennacherib, who intended hereby to pick a new quarrel with Hezekiah. He had promised, upon the receipt of Hezekiah's money, to withdraw his army, and therefore could not for shame make a forcible attack upon Jerusalem immediately; but he sent Rabshakeh to persuade Hezekiah to surrender it, and, if he should refuse, the refusal would serve him for a pretence (and a very poor one) to besiege it, and, if it hold out, to take it by storm. Rabshakeh had the impudence to desire audience of the king himself at the conduit of the upper pool, without the walls; but Hezekiah had the prudence to decline a personal treaty, and sent three commissioners (the prime ministers of state) to hear what he had to say, but with a charge to them not to answer that fool according to his folly (2Ki 18:36), for they could not convince him, but would certainly provoke him, and Hezekiah had learned of his father David to believe that God would hear when he, as a deaf man, heard not, Ps 38:13-15.

One interruption they gave him in his discourse, which was only to desire that he would speak to them now in the Syrian

language, and they would consider what he said and report it to the king, and, if they did not give him a satisfactory answer, then he might appeal to the people, by speaking in the Jews' language, 2Ki 18:26. This was a reasonable request, and agreeable to the custom of treaties, which is that the plenipotentiaries should settle matters between themselves before any thing be made public; but Hilkiah did not consider what an unreasonable man he had to deal with, else he would not have made this request, for it did but exasperate Rabshakeh, and make him the more rude and boisterous, 2Ki 18:27. Against all the rules of decency and honour, instead of treating with the commissioners, he menaces the soldiery, persuades them to desert or mutiny, threatens if they hold out to reduce the to the last extremities of famine, and then goes on with his discourse, the scope of which is to persuade Hezekiah, and his princes and people, to surrender the city. Observe how, in order to do this,

1. He magnifies his master the king of Assyria. Once and again he calls him That great king, the king of Assyria, 2Ki 18:19,28. What an idol did he make of that prince whose creature he was! God is the great King, but Sennacherib was in his eye a little god, and he would possess them with the same veneration for him that he had, and thereby frighten them into a submission to him. But to those who by faith see the King of kings in his power and glory even the king of Assyria looks mean and little. What are the greatest of men when either they come to compare with God or God comes to contend with them? Ps 82:6,7.

2. He endeavours to make them believe that it will be much for their advantage to surrender. If they held out, they must expect no other than to eat their own dung, by reason of the want of provisions, which would be entirely cut off from them by the besiegers; but if they would capitulate, seek his favour with a present and cast themselves upon his mercy, he would give them very good treatment, 2Ki 18:31. I wonder with what face Rabshakeh could speak of making an agreement with a present

when his master had so lately broken the agreement Hezekiah made with him with that great present, 2Ki 18:14. Can those expect to be trusted that have been so grossly perfidious? But, Ad populum phaleras--Gild the chain and the vulgar will let you bind them. He thought to soothe up all with a promise that if they would surrender upon discretion, though they must expect to be prisoners and captives, yet it would really be happy for them to be so. One would wonder he should ever think to prevail by such gross suggestions as these, but that the devil does thus impose upon sinners every day by his temptations. He will needs persuade them,

(1.) That their imprisonment would be to their advantage, for they should eat every man of his own vine (2Ki 18:31); though the property of their estates would be vested in the conquerors, yet they should have the free use of them. But he does not explain it now to them as he would afterwards, that it must be understood just as much, and just as long, as the conqueror pleases.

(2.) That their captivity would be much more to their advantage: I will take you away to a land like your own land; and what the better would they be for that, when they must have nothing in it to call their own?

3. That which he aims at especially is to convince them that it is to no purpose for them to stand it out: What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? So he insults over Hezekiah, 2Ki 18:19. To the people he says (2Ki 18:29), "Let not Hezekiah deceive you into your own ruin, for he shall not be able to deliver you; you must either bend or break." It were well if sinners would submit to the force of this argument, in making their peace with God--That it is therefore our wisdom to yield to him, because it is in vain to contend with him: what confidence is that which those trust in who stand it out against him? Are we stronger than he? Or what shall we get by setting briars and thorns before a

consuming fire? But Hezekiah was not so helpless and defenceless as Rabshakeh would here represent him. Three things he supposes Hezekiah might trust to, and he endeavours to make out the insufficiency of these:--

(1.) His own military preparations: Thou sayest, I have counsel and strength for the war; and we find that so he had, 2Ch 32:3. But this Rabshakeh turns off with a slight: "They are but vain words; thou art an unequal match for us," 2Ki 18:20. With the greatest haughtiness and disdain imaginable, he challenges him to produce 2000 men of all his people that know how to manage a horse, and will venture to give him 2000 horses if he can. He falsely insinuates that Hezekiah has no men, or none fit to be soldiers, 2Ki 18:23. Thus he thinks to run him down with confidence and banter, and will lay him any wager that one captain of the least of his master's servants is able to baffle him and all his forces.

(2.) His alliance with Egypt. He supposes that Hezekiah trusts to Egypt for chariots and horsemen (2Ki 18:24), because the king of Israel had done so, and of this confidence he truly says, It is a broken reed (2Ki 18:21), it will not only fail a man when he leans on it and expects it to bear his weight, but it will run into his hand and pierce it, and rend his shoulder, as the prophet further illustrates this similitude, with application to Egypt, Eze 29:6,7. So is the king of Egypt, says he; and truly so had the king of Assyria been to Ahaz, who trusted in him, but he distressed him, and strengthened him not, 2Ch 28:20. Those that trust to any arm of flesh will find it no better than a broken reed; but God is the rock of ages.

(3.) His interest in God and relation to him. This was indeed the confidence in which Hezekiah trusts, 2Ki 18:22. He supported himself by depending on the power and promise of God; with this he encouraged himself and his people (2Ki 18:30): The Lord will surely deliver us, and again 2Ki 18:32. This Rabshakeh was

sensible was their great stay, and therefore he was most large in his endeavours to shake this, as David's enemies, who used all the arts they had to drive him from his confidence in God (Ps 3:2,11:1), and thus did Christ's enemies, Mt 27:43. Three things Rabshakeh suggested to discourage their confidence in God, and they were all false:--

[1.] That Hezekiah had forfeited God's protection, and thrown himself out of it, by destroying the high places and the altars, 2Ki 18:22. Here he measures the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, who delighted in the multitude of altars and temples, and concludes that Hezekiah has given a great offence to the God of Israel, in confining his people to one altar: thus is one of the best deeds he ever did in his life misconstrued as impious and profane, by one that did not, or would not, know the law of the God of Israel. If that be represented by ignorant and malicious men as evil and a provocation to God which is really good and pleasing to him, we must not think it strange. If this was to be sacrilegious, Hezekiah would ever be so.

[2.] That God had given orders for the destruction of Jerusalem at this time (2Ki 18:25): Have I now come up without the Lord? This is all banter and rhodomontade. He did not himself think he had any commission from God to do what he did (by whom should he have it?) but he made this pretence to amuse and terrify the people that were on the wall. If he had any colour at all for what he said, it might be taken from the notice which perhaps he had had, by the writings of the prophets, of the hand of God in the destruction of the ten tribes, and he thought he had as good a warrant for the seizing of Jerusalem as of Samaria. Many that have fought against God have pretended commissions from him.

[3.] That if Jehovah, the God of Israel, should undertake to protect them from the king of Assyria, yet he was notable to do it. With this blasphemy he concluded his speech (2Ki 18:33-35),

comparing the God of Israel with the gods of the nations whom he had conquered and putting him upon the level with them, and concluding that because they could not defend and deliver their worshippers the God of Israel could not defend and deliver his. See here,

First, His pride. When he conquered a city he reckoned himself to have conquered its gods, and valued himself mightily upon it. His high opinion of the idols made him have a high opinion of himself as too hard for them.

Secondly, His profaneness. The God of Israel was not a local deity, but the God of the whole earth, the only living and true God, the ancient of days, and had often proved himself to be above all gods; yet he makes no more of him than of the upstart fictitious gods of Hamath and Arpad, unfairly arguing that the gods (as some now say the priests) of all religions are the same, and himself above them all. The tradition of the Jews is that Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew, which made him so ready in the Jews' language; if so, his ignorance of the God of Israel was the less excusable and his enmity the less strange, for apostates are commonly the most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. A great deal of art and management, it must be owned, there were in this speech of Rabshakeh, but, withal, a great deal of pride, malice, falsehood, and blasphemy. One grain of sincerity would have been worth all this wit and rhetoric.

Lastly, We are told what the commissioners on Hezekiah's part did.

1. They held their peace, not for want of something to say both on God's behalf and Hezekiah's: they might easily and justly have upbraided him with his master's treachery and breach of faith, and have asked him, What religion encourages you to hope that such conduct will prosper? At least they might have given that grave hint which Ahab gave to Benhadad's like insolent

demands--Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as though he had put it off.

But the king had commanded them not to answer him, and they observed their instructions. There is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak, and there are those to whom to offer any thing religious or rational is to cast pearls before swine. What can be said to a madman? It is probable that their silence made Rabshakeh yet more proud and secure, and so his heart was lifted up and hardened to his destruction.

2. They rent their clothes in detestation of his blasphemy and in grief for the despised afflicted condition of Jerusalem, the reproach of which was a burden to them. 3. They faithfully reported the matter to the king, their master, and told him the words of Rabshakeh, that he might consider what was to be done, what course they should take and what answer they should return to Rabshakeh's summons.

22 But if ye say unto me, We trust in the Lord our God: *is* not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

24 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

25 Am I now come up without the Lord against this place to destroy it? The Lord said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand *it:* and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall.

27 But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he* not *sent me* to the

men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and
drink their own piss with you?
28 Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews'
language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the
king of Assyria:
29 thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not
be able to deliver you out of his hand:
30 neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The
Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into
the hand of the king of Assyria.
31 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make
an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and *then* eat
ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink
ye every one the waters of his cistern:
32 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land
of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive
and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto
Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver
us.
33 Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of
the hand of the king of Assyria?
34 Where *are* the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where *are* the gods
of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out
of mine hand?
35 Who *are* they among all the gods of the countries, that have
delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should
deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?
36 But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word:
for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.
37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the
household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the
recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the
words of Rab-shakeh.

2 Kings-19

Judah Delivered from Sennacherib

1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.

2 And he sent Eliakim, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

The contents of Rabshakeh's speech being brought to Hezekiah, one would have expected (and it is likely Rabshakeh did expect) that he would call a council of war and it would be debated whether it was best to capitulate or no. Before the siege, he had taken counsel with his princes and his mighty men, 2Ch 32:3. But that would not do now; his greatest relief is that he has a God to go to, and what passed between him and his God on this occasion we have here an account of.

I. Hezekiah discovered a deep concern at the dishonour done to God by Rabshakeh's blasphemy. When he heard it, though at second hand, he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, 2Ki 19:1. Good men were wont to do so when they heard of any reproach cast on God's name; and great men must not think it any disparagement to them to sympathize with the injured honour of the great God. Royal robes are not too good to be rent, nor royal flesh too good to be clothed with sackcloth, in humiliation for indignities done to God and for the perils and terrors of his Jerusalem. To this God now called, and was displeased with those who were not thus affected. Isa 22:12-14, Behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, though it was a day of trouble and perplexity in the valley of vision (2Ki

19:5), which refers to this very event. The king was in sackcloth, but many of his subjects were in soft clothing.

II. He went up to the house of the Lord, according to the example of the psalmist, who, when he was grieved at the pride and prosperity of the wicked, went into the sanctuary of God and there understood their end, Ps 73:17. He went to the house of God, to meditate and pray, and get his spirit into a sedate composed frame, after this agitation. He was not considering what answer to return to Rabshakeh, but refers the matter to God. "Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me."--Herbert. In the house of the Lord he found a place both of rest and refuge, a treasury, a magazine, a council-chamber, and all he needed, all in God. Note, When the church's enemies are very daring and threatening it is the wisdom and duty of the church's friends to apply to God, appeal to him, and leave their cause with him.

III. He sent to the prophet Isaiah, by honourable messengers, in token of the great respect he had for him, to desire his prayers, 2Ki 19:2-4. Eliakim and Shebna were two of those that had heard the words of Rabshakeh and were the better able both to acquaint and to affect Isaiah with the case. The elders of the priests were themselves to pray for the people in time of trouble (Joe 2:17); but they must go to engage Isaiah's prayers, because he could pray better and had a better interest in heaven. The messengers were to go in sackcloth, because they were to represent the king, who was so clothed.

1. Their errand to Isaiah was, "Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left, that is, for Judah, which is but a remnant now that the ten tribes are gone--for Jerusalem, which is but a remnant now that the defenced cities of Judah are taken."

Note, (1.) It is very desirable, and what we should be desirous of when we are in trouble, to have the prayers of our friends for us.

In begging to have them we honour God, we honour prayer, and we honour our brethren.

(2.) When we desire the prayers of others for us we must not think we are excused from praying for ourselves. When Hezekiah sent to Isaiah to pray for him he himself went into the house of the Lord to offer up his own prayers.

(3.) Those who speak from God to us we should in a particular manner desire to speak to God for us. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, Ge 20:7. The great prophet is the great intercessor.

(4.) Those are likely to prevail with God that lift up their prayers, that is, that lift up their hearts in prayer.

(5.) When the interests of God's church are brought very low, so that there is but a remnant left, few friends, and those weak and at a loss, then it is time to lift up our prayer for that remnant.

2. Two things are urged to Isaiah, to engage his prayers for them:--

(1.) Their fears of the enemy (2Ki 19:3): "He is insolent and haughty; it is a day of rebuke and blasphemy. We are despised. God is dishonoured. Upon this account it is a day of trouble. Never were such a king and kingdom so trampled on and abused as we are: our soul is exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud, and it is a sword in our bones to hear them reproach our confidence in God, and say, Where is now your God? and, which is worst of all, we see not which way we can help ourselves and get clear of the reproach. Our cause is good, our people are faithful; but we are quite overpowered with numbers. The children are brought to the birth; now is the time, the critical moment, when, if ever, we must be relieved. One successful blow given to the enemy would accomplish our wishes. But,

alas! we are not able to give it: There is not strength to bring forth. Our case is as deplorable, and calls for as speedy help, as that of a woman in travail, that is quite spent with her throes, so that she has not strength to bear the child. Compare with this Ho 13:13. We are ready to perish; if thou canst do any thing, have compassion upon us and help us."

(2.) Their hopes in God. To him they look, on him they depend, to appear for them. One word from him will turn the scale, and save the sinking remnant. If he but reprove the words of Rabshakeh (that is, disprove them, 2Ki 19:4)-- if he undertake to convince and confound the blasphemer--all will be well. And this they trust he will do, not for their merit's sake, but for his own honour's sake, because he has reproached the living God, by levelling him with deaf and dumb idols. They have reason to think the issue will be good, for they can interest God in the quarrel. Ps 74:22, Arise O God! plead thy own cause. "He is the Lord thy God," say they to Isaiah--"thine, whose glory thou art concerned for, and whose favour thou art interested in. He has heard and known the blasphemous words of Rabshakeh, and therefore, it may be, he will hear and rebuke them. We hope he will. Help us with thy prayers to bring the cause before him, and then we are content to leave it with him."

IV. God, by Isaiah, sent to Hezekiah, to assure him that he would glorify himself in the ruin of the Assyrians. Hezekiah sent to Isaiah, not to enquire concerning the event, as many did that sent to the prophets (Shall I recover? or the like), but to desire his assistance in his duty. It was this that he was solicitous about; and therefore God let him know what the event should be, in recompence of his care to do his duty, 2Ki 19:6,7.

1. God interested himself in the cause: They have blasphemed me.

2. He encouraged Hezekiah, who was much dismayed: Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard; they are but words (though swelling and fiery words), and words are but wind.

3. He promised to frighten the king of Assyria worse than Rabshakeh had frightened him: "I will send a blast upon him (that pestilential breath which killed his army), upon which terrors shall seize him and drive him into his own country, where death shall meet him." This short threatening from the mouth of God would do execution, when all the impotent menaces that came from Rabshakeh's mouth would vanish into air.

4 It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that are left.

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee; he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Thelasar?

Rabshakeh, having delivered his message and received no answer (whether he took this silence for a consent or a slight does not appear), left his army before Jerusalem, under the command of the other generals, and went himself to attend the king his master for further orders. He found him besieging Libnah, a city that had revolted from Judah, 2Ki 8:22. Whether he had taken Lachish or no is not certain; some think he departed from it because he found the taking of it impracticable, 2Ki 19:8.

However, he was now alarmed with the rumour that the king of the Cushites, who bordered upon the Arabians, was coming out against him with a great army, 2Ki 19:9. This made him very desirous to gain Jerusalem with all speed. To take it by force would cost him more time and men than he could well spare, and therefore he renewed his attack upon Hezekiah to persuade him tamely to surrender it. Having found him an easy man once (2Ki 18:14), when he said, That which thou puttest on me I will bear, he hoped again to frighten him into a submission, but in vain. Here,

I. Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah, a railing letter, a blaspheming letter, to persuade him to surrender Jerusalem, because it would be to no purpose for him to think of standing it out. His letter is to the same purport with Rabshakeh's speech; there is nothing new offered in it. Rabshakeh had said to the people, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, 2Ki 18:29. Sennacherib writes to Hezekiah, Let not thy God deceive thee, 2Ki 19:10. Those that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, need not fear being deceived by him, as the heathen were by their gods. To terrify Hezekiah, and drive him from his anchor, he magnifies himself and his own achievements. See how proudly he boasts,

1. Of the lands he had conquered (2Ki 19:11): All lands, and destroyed utterly! How are the mole-hills of his victories swelled to mountains! So far was he from destroying all lands that at this time the land of Cush, and Tirhakah its king, were a terror to him. What vast hyperboles may one expect in proud men's praises of themselves!

2. Of the gods he had conquered, 2Ki 19:12. "Each vanquished nation and its gods, which were so far from being able to deliver them that they fell with them: and shall thy God deliver thee?"

3. Of the kings he had conquered (2Ki 19:13), the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad. Whether he means the prince or the idol, he means to make himself appear greater than either, and therefore very formidable, and the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

II. Hezekiah encloses this in another letter, a praying letter, a believing letter, and sends it to the King of kings, who judges among the gods. Hezekiah was not so haughty as not to receive the letter, though we may suppose the superscription did not give him his due titles; when he had received it he was not so careless as not to read it; when he had read it he was not in such a passion as to write an answer to it in the same provoking language; but he immediately went up to the temple, presented himself, and then spread the letter before the Lord (2Ki 19:14), not as if God needed to have the letter shown to him (he knew what was in it before Hezekiah did), but hereby he signified that he acknowledged God in all his ways,--that he desired not to aggravate the injuries his enemies did him nor to make them appear worse than they were, but desired they might be set in a true light,--and that he referred himself to God, and his righteous judgment, upon the whole matter. Hereby likewise he would affect himself in the prayer he came to the temple to

make; and we have need of all possible helps to quicken us in that duty. In the prayer which Hezekiah prayed over this letter,

1. He adores the God whom Sennacherib had blasphemed (2Ki 19:15), calls him the God of Israel, because Israel was his peculiar people, and the God that dwelt between the cherubim, because there was the peculiar residence of his glory upon earth; but he gives glory to him as the God of the whole earth, and not, as Sennacherib fancied him to be, the God of Israel only, and confined to the temple. "Let them say what they will, thou art sovereign Lord, for thou art the God, the God of gods, sole Lord, even thou alone, universal Lord of all the kingdoms of the earth, and rightful Lord, for thou hast made heaven and earth. Being Creator of all, by an incontestable title thou art owner and ruler of all."

2. He appeals to God concerning the insolence and profaneness of Sennacherib (2Ki 19:16): "Lord, hear; Lord, see. Here it is under his own hand; here it is in black and white." Had Hezekiah only been abused, he would have passed it by; but it is God, the living God, that is reproached, the jealous God. Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name?

3. He owns Sennacherib's triumphs over the gods of the heathen, but distinguishes between them and the God of Israel (2Ki 19:17,18): He has indeed cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, unable to help either themselves or their worshipers, and therefore no wonder that he has destroyed them; and, in destroying them, though he knew it not, he really served the justice and jealousy of the God of Israel, who has determined to extirpate all the gods of the heathen. But those are deceived who think they can therefore be too hard for him.

He is none of the gods whom men's hands have made, but he has himself made all things, Ps 115:3,4. 4. He prays that God will now glorify himself in the defeat of Sennacherib and the

deliverance of Jerusalem out of his hands (2Ki 19:19): "Now therefore save us; for if we be conquered, as other lands are, they will say that thou art conquered, as the gods of those lands were: but, Lord, distinguish thyself, by distinguishing us, and let all the world know, and be made to confess, that thou art the Lord God, the self-existent sovereign God, even thou only, and that all pretenders are vanity and a lie." Note, The best pleas in prayer are those which are taken from God's honour; and therefore the Lord's prayer begins with Hallowed be thy name, and concludes with Thine is the glory.

13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

14 And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest *between* the cherubim, thou art the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

16 Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17 Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

18 and have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19 Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the Lord God, *even* thou only.

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, *That* which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

21 This *is* the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

22 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom
hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even*
against the Holy *One* of Israel.
23 By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and hast said,
With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of
the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall
cedar trees thereof, *and* the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter
into the lodgings of his borders, *and into* the forest of his Carmel.
24 I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my
feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

We have here the gracious copious answer which God gave to Hezekiah's prayer. The message which he sent him by the same hand (2Ki 19:6,7), one would think, was an answer sufficient to his prayer; but, that he might have strong consolation, he was encouraged by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, Heb 6:18. In general, God assured him that his prayer was heard, his prayer against Sennacherib, 2Ki 19:20. Note, The case of those that have the prayers of God's people against them is miserable. For, if the oppressed cry to God against the oppressor, he will hear, Ex 22:23. God hears and answers, hears with the saving strength of his right hand, Ps 20:6.

This message bespeaks two things:--

I. Confusion and shame to Sennacherib and his forces. It is here foretold that he should be humbled and broken. The prophet elegantly directs his speech to him, as he does, Isa 10:5. O Assyrian! the rod of my anger. Not that this message was sent to him, but what is here said to him he was made to know by the event. Providence spoke it to him with a witness; and perhaps his own heart was made to whisper this to him: for God has more ways than one of speaking to sinners in his wrath, so as to vex them in his sore displeasure, Ps 2:5. Sennacherib is here represented,

1. As the scorn of Jerusalem, 2Ki 19:21. He thought himself the terror of the daughter of Zion, that chaste and beautiful virgin, and that by his threats he could force her to submit to him: "But, being a virgin in her Father's house and under his protection, she defies thee, despises thee, laughs thee to scorn. Thy impotent malice is ridiculous; he that sits in heaven laughs at thee, and therefore so do those that abide under his shadow." By this word God intended to silence the fears of Hezekiah and his people. Though to an eye of sense the enemy looked formidable, to an eye of faith he looked despicable.

2. As an enemy to God; and that was enough to make him miserable. Hezekiah pleaded this: "Lord, he has reproached thee," 2Ki 19:16. "He has," saith God, "and I take it as against myself (2Ki 19:22): Whom hast thou reproached? Is it not the Holy One of Israel, whose honour is dear to him, and who has power to vindicate it, which the gods of the heathen have not?" Nemo me impune lacesset--No one shall provoke me with impunity.

3. As a proud vainglorious fool, that spoke great swelling words of vanity, and boasted of a false gift, by his boasts, as well as by his threats, reproaching the Lord. For,

(1.) He magnified his own achievements out of measure and quite above what really they were (2Ki 19:23,24): Thou hast said so and so. This was not in the letter he wrote, but God let Hezekiah know that he not only saw what was written there, but heard what he said elsewhere, probably in the speeches he made to his councils or armies. Note, God takes notice of the boasts of proud men, and will call them to an account, that he may look upon them and abuse them, Job 40:11. What a mighty figure does Sennacherib think he makes! Driving his chariots to the tops of the highest mountains, forcing his way through woods and rivers, breaking through all difficulties, making himself master of all he had a mind to. Nothing could stand before him or be withheld from him; no hills too high for him to climb, no trees too strong

for him to fell, no waters too deep for him to dry up; as if he had the power of a God, to speak and it is done.

(2.) He took to himself the glory of doing these great things, whereas they were all the Lord's doing, 2Ki 19:25,26. Sennacherib, in his letter, had appealed to what Hezekiah had heard (2Ki 19:11): Thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done; but, in answer to that, he is reminded of what God has done for Israel of old, drying up the Red Sea, leading them through the wilderness, planting them in Canaan. "What are all thy doings to these? And as for the desolations thou hast made in the earth, and particularly in Judah, thou art but the instrument in God's hand, a mere tool: it is I that have brought it to pass. I gave thee thy power, gave thee thy success, and made thee what thou art, raised thee up to lay waste fenced cities and so to punish them for their wickedness, and therefore their inhabitants were of small power." What a foolish insolent thing was it for him to exalt himself above God, and against God, upon that which he had done by him and under him. Sennacherib's boasts here are expounded in Isa 10:13,14, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, &c.; and they are answered (2Ki 19:15), Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? It is surely absurd for the fly upon the wheel to say, What a dust do I make! or for the sword in the hand to say, What execution I do! If God be the principal agent in all that is done, boasting is for ever excluded.

4. As under the check and rebuke of that God whom he blasphemed. All his motions were,

(1.) Under the divine cognizance (2Ki 19:27): "I have thy abode, and what thou dost secretly devise and design, thy going out and coming in, marches and counter-marches, and thy rage against me and my people, the tumult of thy passions, the tumult of thy preparations, the noise and bluster thou makest: I know it all." That was more than Hezekiah did, who wished for intelligence of

the enemy's motions; but what need was there for this when the eye of God was a constant spy upon him? 2Ch 16:9.

(2.) Under the divine control (2Ki 19:28): "I will put my hook in thy nose, thou great Leviathan (Job 41:1,2), my bridle in thy jaws, thou great Behemoth. I will restrain thee, manage thee, turn thee where I please, send thee home like a fool as thou camest, re infecta--disappointed of thy aim." Note, It is a great comfort to all the church's friends that God has a hook in the nose and a bridle in the jaws of all her enemies, can make even their wrath to serve and praise him and then restrain the remainder of it. Here shall its proud waves be stayed.

II. Salvation and joy to Hezekiah and his people. This shall be a sign to them of God's favour, and that he is reconciled to them, and his anger is turned away (Isa 12:1), a wonder in their eyes (for so a sign sometimes signifies), a token for good, and an earnest of the further mercy God has in store for them, that a good issue shall be put to their present distress in every respect.

1. Provisions were scarce and dear; and what should they do for food? The fruits of the earth were devoured by the Assyrian army, Isa 32:9,10, &c. Why, they shall not only dwell in the land, but verily they shall be fed. If God save them, he will not starve them, nor let them die by famine, when they have escaped the sword: "Eat you this year that which groweth of itself, and you shall find enough of that. Did the Assyrians reap what you sowed? You shall reap what you did not sow." But the next year was the sabbatical year, when the land was to rest, and they must neither sow nor reap. What must they do that year? Why, Jehovah-jireh--The Lord will provide. God's blessing shall save them seed and labour, and, that year too, the voluntary productions of the earth shall serve to maintain them, to remind them that the earth brought forth before there was a man to till it, Ge 1:11. And then, the third year, their husbandry should return into its former channel, and they should sow and reap as they used to do.

2 The country was laid waste, families were broken up and scattered, and all was in confusion; how should it be otherwise when it was over-run by such an army? As to this, it is promised that the remnant that has escaped of the house of Judah (that is, of the country people) shall yet again be planted in their own habitations, upon their own estates, shall take root there, shall increase and grow rich, 2Ki 19:30. See how their prosperity is described: it is taking root downwards, and bearing fruit upwards, being well fixed and well provided for themselves, and then doing good to others. Such is the prosperity of the soul: it is taking root downwards by faith in Christ, and then being fruitful in fruits of righteousness.

3. The city was shut up, none went out or came in; but now the remnant in Jerusalem and Zion shall go forth freely, and there shall be none to hinder them, or make them afraid, 2Ki 19:31. Great destruction had been made both in city and country, bit in both there was a remnant that escaped, which typified the saved remnant of Israelites indeed (as appears by comparing Isa 10:22,23, which speaks of this very event, with Ro 9:27,28), and they shall go forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

4. The Assyrians were advancing towards Jerusalem, and would in a little time besiege it in form, and it was in great danger of falling into their hands. But it is here promised that the siege they feared should be prevented,--that, though the enemy had now (as it should seem) encamped before the city, yet they should never come into the city, no, nor so much as shoot an arrow into it (2Ki 19:32,33),-- that he should be forced to retire with shame, and a thousand times to repent his undertaking. God himself undertakes to defend the city (2Ki 19:34), and that person, that place, cannot but be safe, the protection of which he undertakes. 5. The honour and truth of God are engaged for the doing of all this. These are great things, but how will they be effected? Why, the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this, 2Ki 19:31. He is Lord of hosts, has all

creatures at his beck, therefore he is able to do it; he is jealous for Jerusalem with great jealousy (Zec 1:14); having espoused her a chaste virgin to himself, he will not suffer he to be abused, 2Ki 19:21. "You have reason to think yourselves unworthy that such great things should be done for you; but God's own zeal will do it." His zeal,

(1.) For his own honour (2Ki 19:34): "I will do it for my own sake, to make myself an everlasting name." God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself.

(2.) For his own truth: "I will do it for my servant David's sake; not for the sake of his merit, but the promise made to him and the covenant made with him, those sure mercies of David." Thus all the deliverances of the church are wrought for the sake of Christ, the Son of David.

25 Hast thou not heard long ago *how* I have done it, *and* of ancient times
that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou
shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.
26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were
dismayed and confounded; they were *as* the grass of the field, and
as the green herb, *as* the grass on the housetops, and *as corn* blasted
before it be grown up.
27 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and
thy rage against me.
28 Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine
ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy
lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.
29 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as
grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of
the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards,
and eat the fruits thereof.
30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet
again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.
31 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape
out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord *of hosts* shall do this.

32 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.
33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord.
34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.
35 And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

Sometimes it was long ere prophecies were accomplished and promises performed; but here the word was no sooner spoken than the work was done.

I The army of Assyria was entirely routed. That night which immediately followed the sending of this message to Hezekiah, when the enemy had just set down before the city and were preparing (as we now say) to open the trenches, that night was the main body of their army slain upon the spot by an angel, 2Ki 19:35. Hezekiah had not force sufficient to sally out upon them and attack their camp, nor would God do it by sword or bow; but he sent his angel, a destroying angel, in the dead of the night, to make an assault upon them, which their sentinels, though ever so wakeful, could neither discover nor resist. It was not by the sword of a mighty man or of a mean man, that is, not of any man at all, but of an angel, that the Assyrians army was to fall (Isa 31:8), such an angel as slew the first-born of Egypt.

Josephus says it was done by a pestilential disease, which was instant death to them. The number slain was very great, 185,000 men, and Rabshakeh, it is likely, among the rest. When the besieged arose, early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses, scarcely a living man among them. Some think the Ps 76:1-12 was penned on this occasion, where we read that the stout-hearted were spoiled and slept their sleep, their last, their

long sleep, Ps 76:5. See how great, in power and might, the holy angels are, when one angel, in one night, could make so great a slaughter. See how weak the mightiest of men are before almighty God: who ever hardened himself against him and prospered? The pride and blasphemy of the king are punished by the destruction of his army. All these lives are sacrificed to God's glory and Zion's safety. The prophet shows that therefore God suffered this vast rendezvous to be made, that they might be gathered as sheaves into the floor, Mic 4:12,13.

II The king of Assyria was hereby put into the utmost confusion. Ashamed to see himself, after all his proud boasts, thus defeated and disabled to pursue his conquests and secure what he had (for this, we may suppose, was the flower of his army), and continually afraid of falling under the like stroke himself, He departed, and went, and returned; the manner of the expression intimates the great disorder and distraction of mind he was in, 2Ki 19:36. And it was not long before God cut him off too, by the hands of two of his own sons, 2Ki 19:37.

1. Those that did it were very wicked, to kill their own father (whom they were bound to protect) and in the act of his devotion; monstrous villany! But,

2. God was righteous in it. Justly are the sons suffered to rebel against their father that begat them, when he was in rebellion against the God that made him. Those whose children are undutiful to them ought to consider whether they have not been so to their Father in heaven. The God of Israel had done enough to convince him that he was the only true God, whom therefore he ought to worship; yet he persists in his idolatry, and seeks to his false god for protection against a God of irresistible power. Justly is his blood mingled with his sacrifices, since he will not be convinced by such a plain and dear-bought demonstration of his folly in worshipping idols.

His sons that murdered him were suffered to escape, and no pursuit was made after them, his subjects perhaps being weary of the government of so proud a man and thinking themselves well rid of him. And his sons would be looked upon as the more excusable in what they had done if it be true (as bishop Patrick suggested) that he was now vowing to sacrifice them to his god, so that it was for their own preservation that they sacrificed him. His successor was another son, Esarhaddon, who (as it should seem) did not aim, like his father, to enlarge his conquests, but rather to improve them; for he it was that first sent colonies of Assyrians to inhabit the country of Samaria, though it is mentioned before (2Ki 17:24), as appears, Ezr 4:2, where the Samaritans say it was Esarhaddon that brought them thither.

36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings-20

Hezekiah's Sickness

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying,

3 I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying,

5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord.

The historian, having shown us blaspheming Sennacherib destroyed in the midst of the prospects of life, here shows us praying Hezekiah delivered in the midst of the prospects of death--the days of the former shortened, of the latter prolonged.

I. Here is Hezekiah's sickness. In those days, that is, in the same year in which the king of Assyria besieged Jerusalem; for he reigning reigned? in all twenty-nine years, and surviving this fifteen years, this must be in his fourteenth year, and so was that, 2Ki 18:13. Some think it was at the time that the Assyrian army was besieging the city or preparing for it, because God promises (2Ki 20:6): I will defend the city, which promise was afterwards repeated, when the danger came to be most imminent, 2Ki 19:34. Others think it was soon after the defeat of Sennacherib; and then it shows us the uncertainty of all our comforts in this world.

Hezekiah, in the midst of his triumphs in the favour of God, and over the forces of his enemies, is seized with sickness, and under the arrest of death. We must therefore always rejoice with trembling. It should seem he was sick of the plague, for we read of the boil or plague-sore, 2Ki 20:7. The same disease which was killing to the Assyrians was trying to him; God took it from him, and put it upon his enemies. Neither greatness nor goodness can exempt us from sickness, from sore and mortal sicknesses. Hezekiah, lately favoured of heaven above most men, yet is sick unto death--in the midst of his days (under forty) and yet sick and dying; and perhaps he was the more apprehensive of its being fatal to him because his father died when he was about his age, two or three years younger. "In the midst of life we are in death."

II. Warning brought him to prepare for death. It is brought by Isaiah, who had been twice, as stated in the former chapter, a messenger of good tidings to him. We cannot expect to receive from God's prophets any other than what they have received from the Lord, and we must welcome that, be it pleasing or unpleasing. The prophet tells him,

1. That his disease is mortal, and, if he be not recovered by a miracle of mercy, will certainly be fatal: Thou shalt die, and not live.

2. That therefore he must, with all speed, get ready for death: Set thy house in order. This we should feel highly concerned to do when we are in health, but are most loudly called to do when we come to be sick. Set the heart in order by renewed acts of repentance, and faith, and resignation to God, with cheerful farewells to this world and welcomes to another; and, if not done before (which is the best and wisest course), set the house in order, make thy will, settle thy estate, put thy affairs in the best posture thou canst, for the ease of those that shall come after thee. Isaiah speaks not to Hezekiah of his kingdom, only of his house. David, being a prophet, had authority to appoint who should reign after him, but other kings did not pretend to bequeath their crowns as part of their goods and chattels.

III. His prayer hereupon: He prayed unto the Lord, 2Ki 20:2. Is any sick? Let him be prayed for, let him be prayed with, and let him pray. Hezekiah had found, as recorded in the foregoing chapter, that it was not in vain to wait upon God, but that the prayers of faith bring in answers of peace; therefore will he call upon God as long as he lives. Happy experiences of the prevalency of prayer are engagements and encouragements to continue instant in prayer. He had now received the sentence of death within himself, and, if it was reversible, it must be reversed by prayer. When God purposes mercy he will, for this, be enquired of, Eze 36:37. We have not if we ask not, or ask amiss.

If the sentence was irreversible, yet prayer is one of the best preparations for death, because by it we fetch in strength and grace from God to enable us to finish well. Observe,

1 The circumstances of this prayer.

(1.) He turned his face to the wall, probably as he lay in his bed. This he did perhaps for privacy; he could not retire to his closet as he used to do, but he retired as well as he could, turned from the company that were about him, to converse with God. When we cannot be so private as we would be in our devotions, nor perform them with the usual outward expressions of reverence and solemnity, yet we must not therefore omit them, but compose ourselves to them as well as we can. Or, as some think, he turned his face towards the temple, to show how willingly he would have gone up thither, to pray this prayer (as he did, 2Ki 19:1,14), if he had been able, and remembering what encouragements were given to all the prayers that should be made in or towards that house. Christ is our temple; to him we must have an eye in all our prayers, for no man, no service, comes to the Father but by him.

(2.) He wept sorely. Some gather from this that he was unwilling to die. It is in the nature of man to have some dread of the separation of soul and body, and it was not strange if the Old-Testament saints, to whom another world was but darkly revealed, were not so willing to leave this as Paul and other New-Testament saints were. There was also something peculiar in Hezekiah's case: he was now in the midst of his usefulness, had begun a good work of reformation, which he feared would, through the corruption of the people, fall to the ground, if he should die. If this was before the defeat of the Assyrian army, as some think, he might therefore be loth to die, because his kingdom was in imminent danger of being ruined.

However, it does not appear that he had now any son: Manasseh, that succeeded him, was not born till three years after; and, if he should die childless, both the peace of his kingdom and the promise to David would be in danger. But perhaps these were only tears of importunity, and expressions of a lively affection in prayer. Jacob wept and made supplication; and our blessed Saviour, though most willing to die, yet offered up strong cries, with tears, to him whom he knew to be able to save him, Heb 5:7. Let Hezekiah's prayer interpret his tears, and in that we find nothing that intimates him to have been under any of that fear of death which has either bondage or torment.

2 The prayer itself: "Remember now, O Lord! how I have walked before thee in truth; and either spare me to live, that I may continue thus to walk, if, if my work be done, receive me to that glory which thou hast prepared for those that have thus walked." Observe here,

(1.) The description of Hezekiah's piety. He had had his conversation in the world with right intentions ("I have walked before thee, as under thy eye and with an eye ever towards thee"), from a right principle ("in truth, and with an upright heart"), and by a right rule--"I have done that which is good in thy sight."

(2.) The comfort he now had in reflecting upon it; it made his sick-bed easy. Note, The testimony of conscience for us that we have walked with God in our integrity will be much our support and rejoicing when we come to look death in the face, 2Co 1:12.
(3.) The humble mention he makes of it to God. Lord, remember it now; not as if God needed to be put in mind of any thing by us (he is greater than our hearts, and knows all things), or as if the reward were of debt, and might be demanded as due (it is Christ's righteousness only that is the purchase of mercy and grace); but our own sincerity may be pleaded as the condition of the covenant which God has wrought in us: "It is the work of thy

own hands. Lord, own it." Hezekiah does not pray, "Lord, spare me," or, "Lord, take me; God's will be done;" but, Lord, remember me; whether I live or die, let me be thine.

IV. The answer which God immediately gave to this prayer of Hezekiah. The prophet had got but to the middle court when he was sent back with another message to Hezekiah (2Ki 20:4,5), to tell him that he should recover; not that there is with God yea and nay, or that he ever says and unsays; but upon Hezekiah's prayer, which he foresaw and which his Spirit inclined him to, God did that for him which otherwise he would not have done. God here calls Hezekiah the captain of his people, to intimate that he would reprieve him for his people's sake, because, in this time of war, they could ill spare such a captain: he calls himself the God of David, to intimate that he would reprieve him out of a regard to the covenant made with David and the promise that he would always ordain a lamp for him. In this answer,

1. God honours his prayers by the notice he takes of them and the reference he has to them in this message: I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears. Prayers that have much life and affection in them are in a special manner pleasing to God.

2. God exceeds his prayers; he only begged that God would remember his integrity, but God here promises

(1.) To restore him from his illness: I will heal thee. Diseases are his servants; as they go where he sends them, so they come when he remands them. Mt 8:8,9. I am the Lord that healeth thee, Ex 15:26.

(2.) To restore him to such a degree of health that on the third day he should go up to the house of the Lord, to return thanks. God knew Hezekiah's heart, how dearly he loved the habitation of God's house and the place where his honour dwelt, and that as soon as he was well he would go to attend on public ordinances;

thitherward he turned his face when he was sick, and thitherward he would turn his feet when he was recovered; and therefore, because nothing would please him better, he promises him this, Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee. The man whom Christ healed was soon after found in the temple, Joh 5:14.

(3.) To add fifteen years to his life. This would not bring him to be an old man; it would reach but to fifty-four or fifty-five; yet that was longer than he had lately expected to live. His lease was renewed, which he thought was expiring. We have not the instance of any other that was told before-hand just how long he should live; that good man no doubt made a good use of it; but God has wisely kept us at uncertainties, that we may be always ready.

(4.) To deliver Jerusalem from the king of Assyria, 2Ki 20:6. This was the thing which Hezekiah's heart was upon a much as his own recovery, and therefore the promise of this is here repeated. If this was after the raising of the siege, yet there was cause to fear Sennacherib's rallying again. "No," says God, "I will defend this city."

V. The means which were to be used for his recovery, 2Ki 20:7. Isaiah was his physician. He ordered an outward application, a very cheap and common thing: "Lay a lump of figs to the boil, to ripen it and bring it to a head, that the matter of the disease may be discharged that way." This might contribute something to the cure, and yet, considering to what a height the disease had come, and how suddenly it was checked, the cure was no less than miraculous. Note,

1. It is our duty, when we are sick, to make use of such means as are proper to help nature, else we do not trust God, but tempt him.

2. Plain and ordinary medicines must not be despised, for many such God has graciously made serviceable to man, in consideration of the poor.

3. What God appoints he will bless and make effectual.

VI. The sign which was given for the encouragement of his faith.

1. He begged it, not in any distrust of the power or promise of God, or as if he staggered at that, but because he looked upon the things promised to be very great things and worthy to be so confirmed, and because it had been usual with God thus to glorify himself and favour his people; and he remembered how much God was displeased with his father for refusing to ask a sign, Isa 7:10-12. Observe, Hezekiah asked What is the sign, not that I shall go up to the thrones of judgment or up to the gate, but up to the house of the Lord? He desired to recover that he might glorify God in the gates of the daughter of Zion. It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to serve God.

2. It was put to his choice whether the sun should go back or go forward; for it was equal to Omnipotence, and it would be the more likely to confirm his faith if he chose that which he thought the more difficult of the two. Perhaps to this that of this prophet may refer (Isa 45:11), Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command you me. It is supposed that the degrees were half hours, and that it was just noon when the proposal was made, and the question is, "Shall the sun go back to its place at seven in the morning or forward to its place at five in the evening?"

3. He humbly desired the sun might go back ten degrees, because, though either would be a great miracle, yet, it being the natural course of the sun to go forward, its going back would seem more strange, and would be more significant of Hezekiah's returning to the days of his youth (Job 33:25) and the

lengthening out of the day of his life. It was accordingly done, upon the prayer of Isaiah (2Ki 20:11): He cried unto the Lord by special warrant and direction, and God brought the sun back ten degrees, which appeared to Hezekiah (for the sign was intended for him) by the going back of the shadow upon the dial of Ahaz, which, it is likely, he could see through his chamber-window; and the same was observed upon all other dials, even in Babylon, 2Ch 32:31.

Whether this retrograde motion of the sun was gradual or per saltum--suddenly--whether it went back at the same pace that it used to go forward, which would make the day ten hours longer than usual--or whether it darted back on a sudden, and, after continuing a little while, was restored again to its usual place, so that no change was made in the state of the heavenly bodies (as the learned bishop Patrick thinks)--we are not told; but this work of wonder shows the power of God in heaven as well as on earth, the great notice he takes of prayer, and the great favour he bears to his chosen.

The most plausible idolatry of the heathen was theirs that worshipped the sun; yet that was hereby convicted of the most egregious folly and absurdity, for by this it appeared that their god was under the check of the God of Israel. Dr. Lightfoot suggests that the fifteen songs of degrees (Ps 120:1-134:3, &c.) might perhaps be so called because selected by Hezekiah to be sung to his stringed instruments (Isa 38:20) in remembrance of the degrees on the dial which the sun went back and the fifteen years added to his life; and he observes how much of these psalms is applicable to Jerusalem's distress and deliverance and Hezekiah's sickness and recovery.

6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid *it* on
the boil, and he recovered.
8 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What *shall be* the sign that the
Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the
Lord the third day?
9 And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the
Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go
forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?
10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go
down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten
degrees.
11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord : and he brought the
shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the
dial of Ahaz.

Hezekiah Receives Envoys from Babylon

12 At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon,
sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that
Hezekiah had been sick.
13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house
of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the
precious ointment, and *all* the house of his armor, and all that was
found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his
dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

Here is, I. An embassy sent to Hezekiah by the king of Babylon, to congratulate him on his recovery, 2Ki 20:12. The kings of Babylon had hitherto been only deputies and tributaries to the kings of Assyria, and Nineveh was the royal city. We find Babylon subject to the king of Assyria, 2Ki 17:24. But this king of Babylon began to set up for himself, and by degrees things were so changed that Assyria became subject to the kings of Babylon. This king of Babylon sent to compliment Hezekiah, and ingratiate himself with him upon a double account.

1. Upon the account of religion. The Babylonians worshipped the sun, and, perceiving what honour their god had done to Hezekiah, in going back for his sake, they thought themselves obliged to do honour to him likewise. It is good having those our friends whom we perceive to be the favourites of heaven.

2. Upon the account of civil interest. If the king of Babylon was now mediating a revolt from the king of Assyria, it was policy to get Hezekiah into his interest, in answer to whose prayers, and for whose protection, heaven had given that fatal blow to the king of Assyria. He found himself obliged to Hezekiah, and his God, for the weakening of the Assyrian forces, and had reason to think he could not have a more powerful and valuable ally than one that had so good an interest in the upper world. He therefore made his court to him with all possible respect by ambassadors, letters, and a present.

II The kind entertainment Hezekiah gave to these ambassadors, 2Ki 20:13. It was his duty to be civil to them, and receive them with the respect due to ambassadors; but he exceeded, and was courteous to a fault.

1. He was too fond of them. He hearkened unto them. Though they were idolaters, yet he became intimate with them, was forward to come into a confederacy with the king their master, and granted them all they came for. He was more open and free than he should have been, and stood not so much upon his guard. What reason had he that was in covenant with God so eagerly to catch at an alliance with a heathen prince, or to value himself at all upon his respectful notice? What honour could this embassy add to one whom God had so highly favoured, that he should please himself so much with it?

2. He was too fond of showing them his palace, his treasures, and his magazines, that they might see, and might report to their master, what a great king he was, and how well worthy of the

honour their master did him. It is not said that he showed them the temple, the book of the law, and the manner of his worship, that he might proselyte them to the true religion, which he had now a fair opportunity of doing; but in compliment to them, lest he should affront them, he waived that, and showed them the rich furniture of his closet, that house of his precious things, the wealth he had heaped up since the king of Assyria had emptied his coffers, his silver, and gold, and spices.

All the valuable things he had he showed them, either himself or by his officers. And what harm was there in this? What is more commonly, and (as we think) more innocently, done, than to show strangers the riches and rarities of a country--to show our friends our houses and their furniture, our gardens, stables, and libraries? But if we do this in the pride of our hearts, as Hezekiah did, to gain applause from men, and not giving praise to God, it turns into sin to us, as it did to him.

III. The examination of Hezekiah concerning this matter, 2Ki 20:14,15. Isaiah, who had often been his comforter, is now his reprover. The blessed Spirit is both, Joh 16:7,8. Ministers must be both, as there is occasion. Isaiah spoke in God's name, and therefore called him to account as one having authority: "Who are these? Whence come they? What is their business? What have they seen?" Hezekiah not only submitted to the examination (did not ask him, "Why should you concern yourself and question me about this affair?"), but made an ingenuous confession: There is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them. Why then did he not bring them to Isaiah, and show him to them who was without doubt the best treasure he had in his dominions, and who by his prayers and prophecies had been instrumental in all those wonders which these ambassadors came to enquire into? I hope Hezekiah had the same value for Isaiah now that he had in his distress; but it would have become him to show it by bringing these ambassadors to him in the first place, which might have prevented the false step he took.

IV. The sentence passed upon him for his pride and vanity, and the too great relish he had of the things of the world, after that intimate acquaintance he had so lately been admitted into with divine things. The sentence is (2Ki 20:17,18), 1. That the treasures he was so proud of should hereafter become a prey, and his family should be robbed of them all. It is just with God to take that from us which we make the matter of our pride and in which we put our confidence. 2. That the king of Babylon, with whom he was so fond of an alliance, should be the enemy that should make a prey of them. Not that it was for this sin that that judgment should be brought upon them: the sins of Manasseh, his idolatries and murders, were the cause of that calamity; but it is now foretold to Hezekiah, to convince him of the folly of his pride and of the value he had for the king of Babylon, and to make him ashamed of it. Hezekiah was fond of assisting the king of Babylon to rise, and to reduce the exorbitant power of the kings of Assyria; but he is told that the snake he is cherishing will ere long sting the bosom that cherishes it, and that his royal seed shall become the king of Babylon's slave (which was fulfilled, Da 1:1-7, &c.), than which there could not be any thing more mortifying to Hezekiah to think of. Babylon will be the ruin of those that are fond of Babylon. Wise therefore and happy are those that come out from her, Re 18:4.

V. Hezekiah's humble and patient submission to this sentence, 2Ki 20:19. Observe how he argues himself into this submission. 1. He lays it down for a truth that "good is the word of the Lord, even this word, though a threatening; for every word of his is so. It is not only just, but good; for, as he does no wrong to any, so he means no hurt to good men. It is good; for he will bring good out of it, and do me good by the foresight of it." We should believe this concerning every providence, that it is good, is working for good.

2. He takes notice of that in this word which was good, that he should not live to see this evil, much less to share in it. He makes

the best of the bad: "Is it not good? Yes, certainly it is, and better than I deserve."

Note, (1.) True penitents, when they are under divine rebukes, call them not only just, but good; not only submit to the punishment of their iniquity, but accept of it. So Hezekiah did, and by this it appeared that he was indeed humbled for the pride of his heart.

(2.) When at any time we are under dark dispensations, or have dark prospects, public or personal, we must take notice of what is for us as well as what is against us, that we may by thanksgiving honour God, and may in our patience possess our own souls.

(3.) As to public affairs, it is good, and we are bound to think it so, if peace and truth be in our days. That is,

[1.] Whatever else we want, it is good if we have peace and truth, if we have the true religion professed and protected, Bibles and ministers, and enjoy these in peace, not terrified with the alarms of war or persecution.

[2.] Whatever trouble may come when we are gone, it is good if all be well in our days. Not that we should be unconcerned for posterity; it is a grief to foresee evils: but we should own that the deferring of judgments is a great favour in general, and to have them deferred so long as what we may die in peace is a particular favour to us, for charity begins at home. We know not how we shall bear the trial, and therefore have reason to think it well if we may but get safely to heaven before it comes.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of Hezekiah's life and story, 2Ki 20:20,21. In 2Ch 29:1-32:33 much more is recorded of Hezekiah's work of reformation than in this book of Kings; and it seems that in the civil chronicles, not now extant, there were many things recorded of his might and the good offices he did for Jerusalem, particularly his bringing water by pipes into the city.

To have water in plenty, without striving for it and without being terrified with the noise of archers in the drawing of it, to have it at hand and convenient for us, is to be reckoned a great mercy; for the want of water would be a great calamity.

But here this historian leaves him asleep with his fathers, and a son in his throne that proved very untoward; for parents cannot give grace to their children. Wicked Ahaz was the son of a godly father and the father of a godly son; holy Hezekiah was the son of a wicked father and the father of a wicked son. When the land was not reformed, as it should have been, by a good reign, it was plagued and ripened for ruin by a bad one; yet then tried again with a good one, that it might appear how loth God was to cut off his people.

14 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, *even* from Babylon.

15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All *the things* that *are* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

16 And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord.

17 Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried unto Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.

18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

19 Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good *is* the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. And he said, *Is it* not *good,* if peace and truth be in my days?

The Death of Hezekiah

20 And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
21 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings-21

The Reign of Manasseh

1 Manasseh *was* twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hephzibah.
2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel.
3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
4 And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.
5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.
6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, to provoke *him* to anger.

How delightful were our meditations on the last reign! How many pleasing views had we of Sion in its glory (that is, in its purity and in its triumphs), of the king in his beauty! (for Isa 33:17 refers to Hezekiah), and (as it follows there, 2Ki 21:20)

Jerusalem was a quiet habitation because a city of righteousness, Isa 1:26.

But now we have melancholy work upon our hands, unpleasant ground to travel, and cannot but drive heavily. How has the gold become dim and the most fine gold changed! The beauty of Jerusalem is stained, and all her glory, all her joy, sunk and gone. These verses give such an account of this reign as make it, in all respects, the reverse of the last, and, in a manner, the ruin of it.

I. Manasseh began young. He was but twelve years old when he began to reign (2Ki 21:1), born when his father was about forty-two years old, three years after his sickness. If he had sons before, either they were dead, or set by as unpromising. As yet they knew of nothing bad in him, and they hoped he would prove good; but he proved very bad, and perhaps his coming to the crown so young might help to make it so, which yet will by no means excuse him, for his grandson Josiah came to it younger than he and yet acted well. But being young,

1. He was puffed up with his honour and proud of it; and thinking himself very wise, because he was very great, valued himself upon his undoing what his father had done. It is too common for novices to be lifted up with pride, and so to fall into the condemnation of the devil.

2. He was easily wrought upon and drawn aside by seducers, that lay in wait to deceive. Those that were enemies to Hezekiah's reformation, and retained an affection for the old idolatries, flattered him, and so gained his ear, and used his power at their pleasure. Many have been undone by coming too soon to their honours and estates.

II. He reigned long, longest of any of the kings of Judah, fifty-five years. This was the only very bad reign that was a long one; Joram's was but eight years, and Ahaz's sixteen; as for Manasseh's, we hope that in the beginning of his reign for some time affairs continued to move in the course that his father left them in, and that in the latter end of his reign, after his repentance, religion got head again; and, no doubt, when things were at the worst God had his remnant that kept their integrity. Though he reigned long, yet some of this time he was a prisoner in Babylon, which may well be looked upon as a drawback from these years, though they are reckoned in the number because then he repented and began to reform.

III. He reigned very ill.

1. In general,

(1.) He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and which, having been well educated, he could not but know was so (2Ki 21:2): He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord, as if on purpose to provoke him to anger, 2Ki 21:6.

(2.) He did after the abominations of the heathen (2Ki 21:2) and as did Ahab (2Ki 21:3), not taking warning by the destruction both of the nations of Canaan and the house of Ahab for their idolatry; nay (2Ki 21:9), he did more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed. When the holy seed degenerate, they are commonly worse than the worst of the profane.

2. More particularly,

(1.) He rebuilt the high places which his father had destroyed, 2Ki 21:3. Thus did he trample upon the dust, and affront the memory, of his worthy father, though he knew how much he was favoured of God and honoured of men. He concurred, it is

probable, with Rabshakeh's sentiments (2Ki 18:22), that Hezekiah had done ill in destroying those high places, and pretended the honour of God, and the edification and convenience of the people, in rebuilding them. This he began with, but proceeded to that which was much worse; for,

(2.) He set up other gods, Baal and Ashtaroth (which we translate a grove), and all the host of heaven, the sun and moon, the other planets, and the constellations; these he worshipped and served (2Ki 21:3), gave their names to the images he made, and then did homage to them and prayed for help from them. To these he built altars (2Ki 21:5), and offered sacrifices, no doubt, on these altars.

(3.) He made his son pass through the fire, by which he dedicated him a votary to Moloch, in contempt of the seal of circumcision by which he had been dedicated to God.

(4.) He made the devil his oracle, and, in contempt both of urim and prophecy, he used enchantments and dealt with familiar spirits (2Ki 21:6) like Saul. Conjurers and fortune-tellers (who pretended, by the stars or the clouds, lucky and unlucky days, good and bad omens, the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, to foretel things to come) were great men with him, his intimates, his confidants; their arts pleased his fancy, and gained his belief, and his counsels were under their direction.

(5.) We find afterwards (2Ki 21:16) that he shed innocent blood very much in gratification of his own passion and revenge; some perhaps were secretly murdered, others taken off by colour of law. Probably much of the blood he shed was theirs that opposed idolatry and witnessed against it, that would not bow the knee to Baal. The blood of the prophets is, in a particular manner, charged upon Jerusalem, and it is probable that he put to death many of them. The tradition of the Jews is that he

caused the prophet Isaiah to be sawn asunder; and many think the apostle refers to this in Heb 11:37, where he speaks of those that had so suffered.

3. Three things are here mentioned as aggravations of Manasseh's idolatry:--

(1.) That he set up his images and altars in the house of the Lord (2Ki 21:4), in the two courts of the temple (2Ki 21:5), in the very house of which God had said to Solomon, Here will I put my name, 2Ki 21:7. Thus he defied God to his face, and impudently affronted him with his rivals immediately under his eye, as one that was neither afraid of God's wrath nor ashamed of his own folly and wickedness. Thus he desecrated what had been consecrated to God, and did, in effect, turn God out of his own house and put the rebels in possession of it. Thus, when the faithful worshippers of God came to the place he had appointed for the performance of their duty to him, they found, to their great grief and terror, other gods ready to receive their offerings. God had said that here he would record his name, here he would put it for ever, and here it was accordingly preserved, while the idolatrous altars were kept at a distance; but Manasseh, by bringing them into God's house, did what he could to alter the property, and to make the name of the God of Israel to be no more in remembrance.

(2.) That hereby he put a great slight upon the word of God, and his covenant with Israel. Observe the favour he had shown to that people in putting his name among them,--the kindness he intended them, never to make them move out of that good land,--and the reasonableness of his expectations from them, only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, 2Ki 21:7,8. Upon these good terms did Israel stand with God, and had as fair a prospect of being happy as any people could have; but they hearkened not, 2Ki 21:9. They would not

be kept close to God either by his precepts or by his promises; both were cast behind their back.

(3.) That hereby he seduced the people of God, debauched them, and drew them into idolatry, 2Ki 21:9. He caused Judah to sin (2Ki 21:11), as Jeroboam had caused Israel to sin. His very example was enough to corrupt the generality of unthinking people, who would do as their king did, right or wrong. All that aimed at preferment would do as the court did; and others thought it safest to comply, for fear of making their king their enemy. Thus, one way or other, the holy city became a harlot, and Manasseh made her so. Those will have a great deal to answer for that not only are wicked themselves, but help to make others so.

7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8 neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

9 But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets, saying,

11 Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, *and* hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which *were* before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols:

12 therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I *am* bringing *such* evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

Here is the doom of Judah and Jerusalem read, and it is heavy doom. The prophets were sent, in the first place, to teach them the knowledge of God, to remind them of their duty and direct them in it. If they succeeded not in that, their next work was to

reprove them for their sins, and to set them in view before them, that they might repent and reform, and return to their duty.

If in this they prevailed not, but sinners went on frowardly, their next work was to foretel the judgments of God, that the terror of them might awaken those to repentance who would not be made sensible of the obligations of his love, or else that the execution of them, in their season, might be a demonstration of the divine mission of the prophets that foretold them. The prophets were deputed judges to those that would not hear and receive them as teachers. We have here,

I. A recital of the crime. The indictment is read upon which the judgment is grounded, 2Ki 21:11. Manasseh had done wickedly himself, though he knew better things, had even justified the Amorites, whose copy he wrote after, by outdoing them in impieties, and debauched the people of God, whom he had taught to sin and forced to sin; and besides that (though that was bad enough) he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood (2Ki 21:16), had multiplied his murders in every corner of the city, and filled the measure of Jerusalem's blood-guiltiness (Mt 23:32) up to the brim, and all this against the crown and dignity of the King of kings, the peace of his kingdom, and the statutes in these cases made and provided.

II. A prediction of the judgment God would bring upon them for this: They have done that which was evil, and therefore I am bringing evil upon them (2Ki 21:12); it will come and it is not far off. The judgment should be,

1. Very terrible and amazing; the very report of it should make men's ears to tingle (2Ki 21:12), that is, their hearts to tremble. It should make a great noise in the world and occasion many speculations.

2. It should be copied out (as the sins of Jerusalem had been) from Samaria and the house of Ahab, 2Ki 21:13. When God lays righteousness to the line it shall be the line of Samaria, measuring out to Jerusalem that which had been the lot of Samaria; when he lays judgment to the plummet it shall be the plummet of the house of Ahab, marking out for the same ruin to which that wretched family was devoted. See Isa 28:17.

Note, Those who resemble and imitate others in their sins must expect to fare as they fared.

3. That it should be an utter destruction: I will wipe it as a man wipes a dish. This intimates,

(1.) That every thing should be put into disorder, and their state subverted; they should be turned upside down, and all their foundations put out of course.

(2.) That the city should be emptied of its inhabitants, which had been the filth of it, as a dish is emptied when it is wiped: "They shall all be carried captive, the land shall enjoy her sabbaths, and be laid by as a dish when it is wiped." See the comparison of the boiled pot, not much unlike this, Eze 24:1-14.

(3.) That yet this should be in order to the purifying, not the destroying, of Jerusalem. The dish shall not be dropped, not broken to pieces, or melted down, but only wiped. This shall be the fruit, the taking away of the sinners first, and then of the sin.

4. That therefore they should be destroyed, because they should be deserted (2Ki 21:14): I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance. Justly are those that forsake God forsaken of him; nor does he ever leave any till they have first left him: but, when God has forsaken a people, their defence has departed, and they

become a prey, an easy prey, to all their enemies. Sin is spoken of here as the alpha and omega of their miseries.

(1.) Old guilt came in remembrance, as that which began to fill the measure (2Ki 21:15): "They have provoked me to anger from their conception and birth as a people, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt." The men of this generation, treading in their fathers' steps, are justly reckoned with for their fathers' sins.

(2.) The guilt of blood was that which filled the measure, 2Ki 21:16. Nothing has a louder cry, nor brings a sorer vengeance, than that.

This is all we have here of Manasseh; he stands convicted and condemned; but we hope in the book of Chronicles to hear of his repentance, and acceptance with God. Meantime, we must be content, in this place, to have only one intimation of his repentance (for so we are willing to take it), that he was buried, it is likely by his own order, in the garden of his own house (2Ki 21:18); for, being truly humbled for his sins, he judged himself no more worthy to be called a son, a son of David, and therefore not worthy to have even his dead body buried in the sepulchres of his fathers. True penitents take shame to themselves, not honour; yet, having lost the credit of an innocent, the credit of a penitent was the next best he was capable of. And better it is, and more honourable, for a sinner to die repenting, and be buried in a garden, than to die impenitent, and be buried in the abbey.

13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as *a man* wipeth a dish, wiping *it*, and turning *it* upside down.

14 And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies;

15 because they have done *that which was* evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord.

17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?

18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Amon

19 Amon *was* twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.

20 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh did.

Here is a short account of the short and inglorious reign of Amon, the son of Manasseh. Whether Manasseh, in his blind and brutish zeal for his idols, had sacrificed his other sons--or whether, having been dedicated to his idols, they were refused by the people--so it was that his successor was a son not born till he was forty-five years old. And of him we are here told,

1. That his reign was very wicked: He forsook the God of his fathers (2Ki 21:22), disobeyed the commands given to his fathers, and disclaimed the covenant made with his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord, but in all the way which his father walked in, 2Ki 21:20,21. He trod in the steps of his father's idolatry, and revived that which he, in the latter end of his days, had put down. Note, Those who set bad examples,

though they may repent themselves, yet cannot be sure that those whom they have drawn into sin by their example will repent; it is often otherwise.

2. That his end was very tragical. He having rebelled against God, his own servants conspired against him and slew him, probably upon some personal disgust, when he had reigned but two years, 2Ki 21:23. His servants, who should have guarded him, murdered him; his own house, that should have been his castle of defence, was the place of his execution. He had profaned God's house with his idols, and now God suffered his own house to be polluted with his blood. How unrighteous soever those were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done. Two things the people of the land did, by their representatives, hereupon:--

(1.) They did justice on the traitors that had slain the king, and put them to death; for, though he was a bad king, he was their king, and it was a part of their allegiance to him to avenge his death. Thus they cleared themselves from having any hand in the crime, and did what was incumbent on them to deter others from the like villainous practices.

(2.) They did a kindness to themselves in making Josiah his son king in his stead, whom probably the conspirators had a design to put by, but the people stood by him and settled him in the throne, encouraged, it may be, by the indications he gave, even in his early days, of a good disposition. Now they made a happy change from one of the worst to one of the best of all the kings of Judah. "Once more," says God, "they shall be tried with a reformation; and, if that succeed, well; if not, then after that I will cut them down." Amon was buried in the same garden where his father was, 2Ki 21:26. If his father put himself under that humiliation, the people will put him under it.

21 And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them:

22 and he forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord.
23 And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house.
24 And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.
25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
26 And he was buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Kings-22

The Reign of Josiah

1 Josiah *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath.
2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

The Book of the Law Discovered

3 And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, *that* the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying,
4 Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people:

Concerning Josiah we are here told,

I. That he was very young when he began to reign (2Ki 22:1), only eight years old. Solomon says, Woe unto thee, O land!

when thy king is a child; but happy art thou, O land! when thy king is such a child. Our English Israel had once a king that was such a child, Edward VI. Josiah, being young, had not received any bad impressions from the example of his father and grandfather, but soon saw their errors, and God gave his grace to take warning by them. See Eze 18:14-22, &c.

II. That he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, 2Ki 22:2. See the sovereignty of divine grace--the father passed by and left to perish in his sin, the son a chosen vessel. See the triumphs of that grace--Josiah born of a wicked father, no good education nor good example given him, but many about him who no doubt advised him to tread in his father's steps and few that gave him any good counsel, and yet the grace of God made him an eminent saint, cut him off from the wild olive and grafted him into the good olive, Ro 11:24. Nothing is too hard for that grace to do. He walked in a good way, and turned not aside (as some of his predecessors had done who began well) to the right hand nor to the left. There are errors on both hands, but God kept him in the right way; he fell neither into superstition nor profaneness.

III. That he took care for the repair of the temple. This he did in the eighteenth year of his reign, 2Ki 22:3. Compare 2Ch 34:8. He began much sooner to seek the Lord (as appears, 2Ch 34:3), but it is to be feared the work of reformation went slowly on and met with much opposition, so that he could not effect what he desired and designed, till his power was thoroughly confirmed. The consideration of the time we unavoidably lost in our minority should quicken us, when we have come to years, to act with so much the more vigour in the service of God. Having begun late we have need work hard. He sent Shaphan, the secretary of state, to Hilkiah the high priest, to take an account of the money that was collected for this use by the door-keepers (2Ki 22:4); for, it seems, they took much the same way of raising the money that Joash took, 2Ki 12:9.

When people gave by a little at a time the burden was insensible, and, the contribution being voluntary, it was not complained of. This money, so collected, he ordered him to lay out for the repair of the temple, 2Ki 22:5,6. And now, it seems, the workmen (as in the days of Joash) acquitted themselves so well that there was no reckoning made with them (2Ki 22:7), which is certainly mentioned to the praise of the workmen, that they gained such a reputation for honesty, but whether to the praise of those that employed them I know not; a man should count money (we say) after his own father; it would not have been amiss to have reckoned with the workmen, that others also might be satisfied of their honesty.

IV. That, in repairing the temple, the book of the law was happily found and brought to the king, 2Ki 22:8,10. Some think this book was the autograph, or original manuscript, of the five books of Moses, under his own hand; others think it was only an ancient and authentic copy. Most likely it was that which, by the command of Moses, was laid up in the most holy place, De 21:24-26, &c.

1. It seems, this book of the law was lost or missing. Perhaps it was carelessly mislaid and neglected, thrown by into a corner (as some throw their Bibles), by those that knew not the value of it, and forgotten there; or it was maliciously concealed by some of the idolatrous kings, or their agents, who were restrained by the providence of God or their own consciences from burning and destroying it, but buried it, in hopes it would never see the light again; or, as some think, it was carefully laid up by some of its friends, lest it should fall into the hands of its enemies.

Whoever were the instruments of its preservation, we ought to acknowledge the hand of God in it. If this was the only authentic

copy of the Pentateuch then in being, which had (as I may say) so narrow a turn for its life and was so near perishing, I wonder the hearts of all good people did not tremble for that sacred treasure, as Eli's for the ark, and I am sure we now have reason to thank God, upon our knees, for that happy providence by which Hilkiah found this book at this time, found it when he sought it not, Isa 65:1. If the holy scriptures had not been of God, they would not have been in being at this day; God's care of the Bible is a plain indication of his interest in it.

2. Whether this was the only authentic copy in being or no, it seems the things contained in it were new both to the king himself and to the high priest; for the king, upon the reading of it, rent his clothes. We have reason to think that neither the command for the king's writing a copy of the law, nor that for the public reading of the law every seventh year (De 17:18,31:10,11), had been observed for a long time; and when the instituted means of keeping up religion are neglected religion itself will soon go to decay. Yet, on the other hand, if the book of the law was lost, it seems difficult to determine what rule Josiah went by in doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and how the priests and people kept up the rites of their religion.

I am apt to think that the people generally took up with abstracts of the law, like our abridgements of the statutes, which the priests, to save themselves the trouble of writing and the people of reading the book at large, had furnished them with--a sort of ritual, directing them in the observances of their religion, but leaving out what they thought fit, and particularly the promises and threatenings (Le 26:1-14,De 28:1-68, &c.), for I observe that these were the portions of the law which Josiah was so much affected with (2Ki 22:13), for these were new to him. No summaries, extracts, or collections, out of the Bible (though they may have their use) can be effectual to convey and preserve the knowledge of God and his will like the Bible itself. It was

no marvel that the people were so corrupt when the book of the law was such a scarce thing among them; where that vision is not the people perish. Those that endeavoured to debauch them no doubt used all the arts they could to get that book out of their hands. The church of Rome could not keep up the use of images but by forbidding the use of the scripture.

3. It was a great instance of God's favour, and a token for good to Josiah and his people, that the book of the law was thus seasonably brought to light, to direct and quicken that blessed reformation which Josiah had begun. It is a sign that God has mercy in store for a people when he magnifies his law among them and makes that honourable, and furnishes them with means for the increase of scripture-knowledge. The translating of the scriptures into vulgar tongues was the glory, strength, and joy of the Reformation from Popery. It is observable that they were about a good work, repairing the temple, when they found the book of the law. Those that do their duty according to their knowledge shall have their knowledge increased. To him that hath shall be given. The book of the law was an abundant recompence for all their care and cost about the repair of the temple.

4. Hilkiah the priest was exceedingly well pleased with the discovery. "O," says he to Shaphan, "rejoice with me, for I have found the book of the law, eureka, eureka,--I have found, I have found, that jewel of inestimable value. Here, carry it to the king; it is the richest jewel of his crown. Read it before him. He walks in the way of David his father, and, if he be like him, he will love the book of the law and bid that welcome; that will be his delight and his counsellor."

5 and let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord: and let them give it to the doers of the work, which *is* in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches of the house,

6 unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and
hewn stone to repair the house.
7 Howbeit, there was no reckoning made with them of the money
that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.
8 And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have
found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah
gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.
9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word
again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was
found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that
do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord.
10 And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest
hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.
11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the
book of the law, that he rent his clothes.
12 And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son
of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the
scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,
13 Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all
Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great *is*
the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers
have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according
unto all that which is written concerning us.
14 So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan,
and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of
Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the
wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they
communed with her.

We hear no more of the repairing of the temple: no doubt that good work went on well; but the book of the law that was found in it occupies us now, and well it may. It is not laid up in the king's cabinet as a piece of antiquity, a rarity to be admired, but it is read before the king. Those put the truest honour upon their Bibles that study them and converse with them daily, feed on that bread and walk by that light. Men of honour and

business must look upon an acquaintance with God's word to be their best business and honour. Now here we have,

I The impressions which the reading of the law made upon Josiah. He rent his clothes, as one ashamed of the sin of his people and afraid of the wrath of God; he had long thought the case of his kingdom bad, by reason of the idolatries and impieties that had been found among them, but he never thought it so bad as he perceived it to be by the book of the law now read to him. The rending of his clothes signified the rending of his heart for the dishonour done to God, and the ruin he saw coming upon his people.

II The application he made to God hereupon: Go, enquire of the Lord for me, 2Ki 22:13.

1. Two things we may suppose he desired to know:--"Enquire,

(1.) What we shall do; what course we shall take to turn away God's wrath and prevent the judgments which our sins have deserved." Convictions of sin and wrath should put us upon this enquiry, What shall we do to be saved? Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord? If you will thus enquire, enquire quickly, before it be too late.

(2.) "What we may expect and must provide for." He acknowledges, "Our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book; if this be the rule of right, certainly our fathers have been much in the wrong." Now that the commandment came sin revived, and appeared sin; in the glass of the law, he saw the sins of his people more numerous and more heinous than he had before seen them, and more exceedingly sinful. He infers hence, "Certainly great is the wrath that is kindled against us; if this be the word of God, as no doubt it is, and he

will be true to his word, as no doubt he will be, we are all undone.

I never thought the threatenings of the law so severe, and the curses of the covenant so terrible, as now I find them to be; it is time to look about us if these be in force against us." Note, Those who are truly apprehensive of the weight of God's wrath cannot but be very solicitous to obtain his favour, and inquisitive how they may make their peace with him. Magistrates should enquire for their people, and study how to prevent the judgments of God that they see hanging over them.

2. This enquiry Josiah sent,

(1.) By some of his great men, who are named 2Ki 22:12, and again 2Ki 22:14. Thus he put an honour upon the oracle, by employing those of the first rank to attend it.

(2.) To Huldah the prophetess, 2Ki 22:14. The spirit of prophecy, that inestimable treasure, was sometimes put not only into earthen vessels, but into the weaker vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Miriam helped to lead Israel out of Egypt (Mic 6:4), Deborah judged them, and now Huldah instructed them in the mind of God, and her being a wife was no prejudice at all to her being a prophetess; marriage is honourable in all. It was a mercy to Jerusalem that when Bibles were scarce they had prophets, as afterwards, when prophecy ceased, that they had more Bibles; for God never leaves himself without witness, because he will leave sinners without excuse.

Jeremiah and Zephaniah prophesied at this time, yet the king's messengers made Huldah their oracle, probably because her husband having a place at court (for he was keeper of the wardrobe) they had had more and longer acquaintance with her

and greater assurances of her commission than of any other; they had, it is likely, consulted her upon other occasions, and had found that the word of God in her mouth was truth. She was near, for she dwelt at Jerusalem, in a place called Mishneh, the second rank of buildings from the royal palace. The Jews say that she prophesied among the women, the court ladies, being herself one of them, who it is probable had their apartments in that place. Happy the court that had a prophetess within the verge of it, and knew how to value her.

III. The answer he received from God to his enquiry. Huldah returned it not in the language of a courtier--"Pray give my humble service to his Majesty, and let him know that this is the message I have for him from the God of Israel;" but in the dialect of a prophetess, speaking from him before whom all stand upon the same level--Tell the man that sent you to me, 2Ki 22:15. Even kings, though gods to us, are men to God, and shall so be dealt with; for with him there is no respect of persons.

1. She let him know what judgments God had in store for Judah and Jerusalem (2Ki 22:16,17): My wrath shall be kindled against this place; and what is hell itself but the fire of God's wrath kindled against sinners? Observe,

(1.) The degree and duration of it. It is so kindled that it shall not be quenched; the decree has gone forth; it is too late now to think of preventing it; the iniquity of Jerusalem shall not be purged with sacrifice or offering. Hell is unquenchable fire.

(2.) The reference it has,

[1.] To their sins: "They have committed them, as it were, with design, and on purpose to provoke me to anger. It is a fire of

their own kindling; they would provoke me, and at length I am provoked."

[2.] To God's threatenings: "The evil I bring is according to the words of the book which the king of Judah has read; the scripture is fulfilled in it. Those that would not be bound by the precept shall be bound by the penalty." God will be found no less terrible to impenitent sinners than his word makes him to be.

2. She let him know what mercy God had in store for him.

(1.) Notice is taken of his great tenderness and concern for the glory of God and the welfare of his kingdom (2Ki 22:19): Thy heart was tender. Note, God will distinguish those that distinguish themselves. The generality of the people were hardened and their hearts unhumbled, so were the wicked kings his predecessors, but Josiah's heart was tender. He received the impressions of God's word, trembled at it and yielded to it; he was exceedingly grieved for the dishonour done to God by the sins of his fathers and of his people; he was afraid of the judgments of God, which he saw coming upon Jerusalem, and earnestly deprecated them. This is tenderness of heart, and thus he humbled himself before the Lord, and expressed these pious affections by rending his clothes and weeping before God, probably in his closet; but he that sees in secret says it was before him, and he heard it, and put every tear of tenderness into his bottle.

Note, Those that most fear God's wrath are least likely to feel it. It should seem that those words (Le 26:32) much affected Josiah, I will bring the land into desolation; for when he heard of the desolation and of the curse, that is, that God would forsake them and separate them to evil (for till it came to that

they were neither desolate nor accursed), then he rent his clothes: the threatening went to his heart.

(2.) A reprieve is granted till after his death (2Ki 22:20): I will gather thee to thy fathers. The saints then, no doubt, had a comfortable prospect of happiness on the other side death, else being gathered to their fathers would not have been so often made the matter of a promise as we find it was. Josiah could not prevail to prevent the judgment itself, but God promised him he should not live to see it, which (especially considering that he died in the midst of his days, before he was forty years old) would have been but a small reward for his eminent piety if there had not been another world in which he should be abundantly recompensed, Heb 11:16.

When the righteous is taken away from the evil to come he enters into peace, Isa 57:1,2. This is promised to Josiah here: Thou shalt go to thy grave in peace, which refers not to the manner of his death (for he was killed in a battle), but to the time of it; it was a little before the captivity in Babylon, that great trouble, in comparison with which the rest were as nothing, so that he might be truly said to die in peace that did not live to share in that. He died in the love and favour of God, which secure such a peace as no circumstances of dying, no, not dying in the field of war, could alter the nature of, or break in upon.

15 And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell
the man that sent you to me,
16 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and
upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the words of the book which
the king of Judah hath read:
17 because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other
gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their
hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and
shall not be quenched.

18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, *As touching* the words which thou hast heard;
19 because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard *thee,* saith the Lord.
20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

2 Kings-23

1 And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.
2 And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.
3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all *their* heart and all *their* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

Josiah had received a message from God that there was no preventing the ruin of Jerusalem, but that he should deliver only his own soul; yet he did not therefore sit down in despair, and resolve to do nothing for his country because he could not do all he would. No, he would do his duty, and then leave the event to God. A public reformation was the thing resolved on; if any thing could prevent the threatened ruin it

must be that; and here we have the preparations for that reformation.

1. He summoned a general assembly of the states, the elders, the magistrates or representatives of Judah and Jerusalem, to meet him in the house of the Lord, with the priests and prophets, the ordinary and extraordinary ministers, that, they all joining in it, it might become a national act and so be the more likely to prevent national judgments; they were all called to attend (2Ki 23:1,2), that the business might be done with the more solemnity, that they might all advise and assist in it, and that those who were against it might be discouraged from making any opposition. Parliaments are no diminution at all to the honour and power of good princes, but a great support to them.

2. Instead of making a speech to this convention, he ordered the book of the law to be read to them; nay, it should seem, he read it himself (2Ki 23:2), as one much affected with it and desirous that they should be so too. Josiah thinks it not below him to be a reader, any more than Solomon did to be a preacher, nay, and David himself to be a door-keeper in the house of God. Besides the convention of the great men, he had a congregation of the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to hear the law read. It is really the interest of princes to promote the knowledge of the scriptures in their dominions. If the people be but as stedfastly resolved to obey by law as he is to govern by law, the kingdom will be happy. All people are concerned to know the scripture, and all in authority to spread the knowledge of it.

3. Instead of proposing laws for the confirming of them in their duty, he proposed an association by which they should all jointly engage themselves to God, 2Ki 23:3. The book of the law was the book of the covenant, that, if they would be to God a people, he would be to them a God; they here engage

themselves to do their part, not doubting but that then God would do his.

(1.) The covenant was that they should walk after the Lord, in compliance with his will, in his ordinances and his providences, should answer all his calls and attend all his motions--that they should make conscience of all his commandments, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, and should carefully observe them with all their heart and all their soul, with all possible care and caution, sincerity, vigour, courage, and resolution, and so fulfil the conditions of this covenant, in dependence upon the promises of it.

(2.) The covenanters were, in the first place, the king himself, who stood by his pillar (2Ki 11:14) and publicly declared his consent to this covenant, to set them an example, and to assure them not only of his protection but of his presidency and all the furtherance his power could give them in their obedience. It is no abridgment of the liberty even of princes themselves to be in bonds to God. All the people likewise stood to the covenant, that is, they signified their consent to it and promised to abide by it. It is of good use to oblige ourselves to our duty with all possible solemnity, and this is especially seasonable after notorious backslidings to sin and decays in that which is good. He that bears an honest mind does not shrink from positive engagements: fast bind, fast find.

Josiah's Reforms

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them

without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the Lord, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped *it* small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that *were* by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that *were* in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

We have here an account of such a reformation as we have not met with in all the history of the kings of Judah, such thorough riddance made of all the abominable things and such foundations laid of a glorious good work; and here I cannot but wonder at two things:--

1. That so many wicked things should have got in, and kept standing so long, as we find here removed.

2. That notwithstanding the removal of these wicked things, and the hopeful prospects here given of a happy settlement, yet within a few years Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, and even this did not save it; for the generality of the people, after all, hated to be reformed. The founder melteth in vain, and therefore reprobate silver shall men call them, Jer 6:29,30. Let us here observe,

I. What abundance of wickedness there was, and had been, in Judah and Jerusalem. One would not have believed it possible that in Judah, where God was known--in Israel, where his name was great--in Salem, in Sion, where his dwelling place was, such abominations should be found as here we have an account of. Josiah had now reigned eighteen years, and had himself set the people a good example, and kept up religion according to law; and yet, when he came to make inquisition for idolatry, the depth and extent of the dunghill he had to carry away appeared almost incredible.

1. Even in the house of the Lord, that sacred temple which Solomon built, and dedicated to the honour and for the worship of the God of Israel, there were found vessels, all manner of utensils, for the worship of Baal, and of the grove (or Ashtaroth), and of all the host of heaven, 2Ki 23:4. Though Josiah had suppressed the worship of idols, yet the utensils made for that worship were all carefully preserved, even in the temple itself, to be used again whenever the present restraint should be taken off; nay, even the grove itself, the image of it, was yet standing in the temple (2Ki 23:6); some make it the image of Venus, the same with Ashtaroth.

2. Just at the entering in of the house of the Lord was a stable for horses kept (would you think it?) for a religious use; they were holy horses, given to the sun (2Ki 23:11), as if he needed them who rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race (Ps 19:5), or rather they would thus represent to themselves the swiftness of his motion, which they much admired, making their religion to conform to the poetical fictions of the chariot of the sun, the follies of which even a little philosophy, without any divinity, would have exposed and made them ashamed of. Some say that those horses were to be led forth in pomp every morning to meet the rising sun, others that the worshippers of the sun rode out upon them to adore the rising sun; it should seem that they drew the chariots of the sun, which the people worshipped.

Strange that ever men who had the written word of God among them should be thus vain in their imaginations!

3. Hard by the house of the Lord there were houses of the Sodomites, where all manner of lewdness and filthiness, even that which was most unnatural, was practised, and under pretence of religion too, in honour of their impure deities. Corporal and spiritual whoredom went together, and the vile affections to which the people were given up were the punishment of their vain imaginations. Those that dishonoured their God were justly left thus to dishonour themselves, Ro 1:24-32, &c. There were women that wove hangings for the grove (2Ki 23:7), tents which encompassed the image of Venus, where the worshippers committed all manner of lewdness, and this in the house of the Lord. Those did ill that made our Father's house a house of merchandise; those did worse that made it a den of thieves; but those did worst of all that made it (Horrendum dictu!--Horrible to relate!) a brothel, in an impudent defiance of the holiness of God and of his temple. Well might the apostle call them abominable idolatries.

4. There were many idolatrous altars found (2Ki 23:12), some in the palace, on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz. The roofs of their houses being flat, they made them their high places, and set up altars upon them (Jer 19:13,Zep 1:5), domestic altars. The kings of Judah did so: and, though Josiah never used them, yet to this time they remained there. Manasseh had built altars for his idols in the house of the Lord. When he repented he removed them, and cast them out of the city (2Ch 33:15), but, not destroying them, his son Amon, it seems, had brought them again into the courts of the temple; there Josiah found them, and thence he broke them down, 2Ki 23:12.

5. There was Tophet, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, very near Jerusalem, where the image of Moloch (that god of unnatural cruelty, as others were of unnatural uncleanness) was kept, to which some sacrificed their children, burning them in the fire, others dedicated them, making them to pass through the fire (2Ki 23:10), labouring in the very fire, Hab 2:13. It is supposed to have been called Tophet from toph, a drum, because they beat drums at the burning of the children, that their shrieks might not be heard.

6. There were high places before Jerusalem, which Solomon had built, 2Ki 23:13. The altars and images on those high places, we may suppose, had been taken away by some of the preceding godly kings, or perhaps Solomon himself had removed them when he became a penitent; but the buildings, or some parts of them, remained, with other high places, till Josiah's time. Those that introduce corruptions into religion know not how far they will reach nor how long they will last. Antiquity is no certain proof of verity. There were also high places all the kingdom over, from Geba to Beer-sheba (2Ki 23:8), and high places of the gates, in the entering in of the gate of the governor. In these high places (bishop Patrick thinks) they burnt incense to those tutelar gods to whom their idolatrous kings had committed the protection of their city; and probably the governor of the city had a private altar for his penates--his household-gods.

7. There were idolatrous priests, that officiated at all those idolatrous altars (2Ki 23:5), chemarim, black men, or that wore black. See Zep 1:4. Those that sacrificed to Osiris, or that wept for Tammuz (Eze 8:14), or that worshipped the infernal deities, put on black garments as mourners. These idolatrous priests the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places; they were, it should seem, priests of the house of Aaron, who thus profaned their dignity, and there were others also who had no right at all to the priesthood, who burnt

incense to Baal. 8. There were conjurers and wizards, and such as dealt with familiar spirits, 2Ki 23:24. When they worshipped the devil as their god no marvel that they consulted him as their oracle.

II. What a full destruction good Josiah made of all those relics of idolatry. Such is his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and his holy indignation against all that is displeasing to him, that nothing shall stand before him. The law was that the monuments of the Canaanites' idolatry must be all destroyed (De 7:5), much more those of the idolatry of the Israelites, in whom it was much more impious, profane, and perfidious. 1. He ordered Hilkiah, and the other priests, to clear the temple. This was their province, 2Ki 23:4. Away with all the vessels that were made for Baal. They must never be employed in the service of God, no, nor reserved for any common use; they must all be burnt, and the ashes of them carried to Bethel. That place had been the common source of idolatry, for there was set up one of the calves, and, that lying next to Judah, the infection had thence spread into that kingdom, and therefore Josiah made it the lay-stall of idolatry, the dunghill to which he carried the filth and offscouring of all things, that, if possible, it might be made loathsome to those that had been fond of it.

2 The idolatrous priests were all put down. Those of them that were not of the house of Aaron, or had sacrificed to Baal or other false gods, he put to death, according to the law, 2Ki 23:20. He slew them upon their own altars, the most acceptable sacrifice that ever had been offered upon them, a sacrifice to the justice of God. Those that were descendants from Aaron, and yet had burnt incense in the high places, but to the true God only, he forbade ever to approach the altar of the Lord; they had forfeited that honour (2Ki 23:9): He brought them out of the cities of Judah (2Ki 23:8), that they might not do mischief in the country by secretly keeping up their old idolatrous usages; but he allowed them to eat of the unleavened

bread (the bread of the meat-offering, Le 2:4,5) among their brethren, with whom they were to reside, that being under their eye they might be kept from doing hurt and taught to do well; that bread, that unleavened bread (heavy and unpleasant as it was), was better than they deserved, and that would serve to keep them alive. But whether they were permitted to eat of all the sacrifices, as blemished priests were (Le 21:22), which is called, in general, the bread of their God, may be justly questioned.

3. All the images were broken to pieces and burnt. The image of the grove (2Ki 23:6), some goddess or other, was reduced to ashes, and the ashes cast upon the graves of the common people (2Ki 23:6), the common burying-place of the city. By the law a ceremonial uncleanness was contracted by the touch of a grave, so that in casting them here he declared them most impure, and none could touch them without thereby making themselves unclean.

He cast it into the graves (so the Chaldee), intimating that he would have all idolatry buried out of his sight, as a loathsome thing, and forgotten, as dead men are out of mind, 2Ki 23:14. He filled the places of the groves with the bones of men; as he carried the ashes of the images to the graves, to mingle them with dead men's bones, so he carried dead men's bones to the places where the images had been, and put them in the room of them, that, both ways, idolatry might be rendered loathsome, and the people kept both from the dust of the images and from the ruins of the places where they had been worshipped. Dead men and dead gods were much alike and fittest to go together.

4. All the wicked houses were suppressed, those nests of impiety that harboured idolaters, the houses of the Sodomites, 2Ki 23:7. "Down with them, down with them, rase them to the foundations." The high places were in like manner broken

down and levelled with the ground (2Ki 23:8), even that which belonged to the governor of the city; for no man's greatness or power may protect him in idolatry or profaneness. Let governors be obliged, in the first place, to reform, and then the governed will be the sooner influenced. He defiled the high places (2Ki 23:8 and again 2Ki 23:13), did all he could to render them abominable, and put the people out of conceit with them, as Jehu did when he made the house of Baal a draught-house, 2Ki 10:27. Tophet, which, contrary to other places of idolatry, was in a valley, whereas they were on hills or high places, was likewise defiled (2Ki 23:10), was made the burying-place of the city. Concerning this we have a whole sermon, Jer 19:1-15, &c., where it is said, They shall bury in Tophet, and the whole city is threatened to be made like Tophet.

5. The horses that had been given to the sun were taken away and put to common use, and so were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subject; and the chariots of the sun (what a pity was it that those horses and chariots should be kept as the chariots and horsemen of Israel!) he burnt with fire; and, if the sun be a flame, they never resembled him so much as they did when they were chariots of fire.

6. The workers with familiar spirits and the wizards were put away, 2Ki 23:24. Those of them that were convicted of witchcraft, it is likely, he put to death, and so deterred others from those diabolical practices. In all this he had a sincere regard to the words of the law which were written in the book lately found, 2Ki 23:24. He made that law his rule and kept that in his eye throughout this reformation.

III. How his zeal extended itself to the cities of Israel that were within his reach. The ten tribes were carried captive and the Assyrian colonies did not fully people the country, so that, it is likely, many cities had put themselves under the protection of

the kings of Judah, 2Ch 30:1,34:6. These he here visits, to carry on his reformation. As far as our influence goes our endeavours should go to do good and bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end.

1. He defiled and demolished Jeroboam's altar at Bethel, with the high place and the grove that belonged to it, 2Ki 23:15,16. The golden calf, it should seem, was gone (thy calf, O Samaria! has cast thee off), but the altar was there, which those that were wedded to their old idolatries made use of still. This was,

(1.) Defiled, 2Ki 23:16. Josiah, in his pious zeal, was ransacking the old seats of idolatry, and spied the sepulchres in the mount, in which probably the idolatrous priests were buried, not far from the altar at which they had officiated, and which they were so fond of that they were desirous to lay their bones by it; these he opened, took out the bones, and burnt them upon the altar, to show that thus he would have done by the priests themselves if they had been alive, as he did by those whom he found alive, 2Ki 23:20. Thus he polluted the altar, desecrated it, and made it odious.

It is threatened against idolaters (Jer 8:1,2) that their bones shall be spread before the sun; that which is there threatened and this which is here executed (bespeaking their iniquity to be upon their bones, Eze 32:27) are an intimation of a punishment after death, reserved for those that live and die impenitent in that or any other sin; the burning of the bones, if that were all, is a small matter, but, if it signify the torment of the soul in a worse flame (Lu 16:24), it is very dreadful. This, as it was Josiah's act, seems to have been the result of a very sudden resolve; he would not have done it but that he happened to turn himself, and spy the sepulchres; and yet it was foretold above 350 years before, when this altar was first built by Jeroboam, 1Ki 13:2. God always foresees, and has sometimes foretold as certain, that which yet to us seems most contingent. The king's

heart is in the hand of the Lord; king Josiah's was so, and he turned it (or ever he himself was aware, So 6:12) to do this. No work of God shall fall to the ground.

(2.) It was demolished. He broke down the altar and all its appurtenances (2Ki 23:15), burnt what was combustible, and, since an idol is nothing in the world, he went as far towards the annihilating of it as he could; for he stamped it small to powder and made it as dust before the wind.

2. He destroyed all the houses of the high places, all those synagogues of Satan that were in the cities of Samaria, 2Ki 23:19. These the kings of Israel built, and God raised up this king of Judah to pull them down, for the honour of the ancient house of David, from which the ten tribes had revolted; the priests he justly made sacrifices upon their own altars, 2Ki 23:20.

3. He carefully preserved the sepulchre of that man of God who came from Judah to foretel this, which now a king who came from Judah executed. This was that good prophet who proclaimed these things against the altar of Bethel, and yet was himself slain by a lion for disobeying the word of the Lord; but to show that God's displeasure against him went no further than his death, but ended there, God so ordered it that when all the graves about his were disturbed his was safe (2Ki 23:17,18) and no man moved his bones. He had entered into peace, and therefore should rest in his bed, Isa 57:2 The old lying prophet, who desired to be buried as near him as might be, it should seem, knew what he did; for his dust also, being mingled with that of the good prophet, was preserved for his sake; see Nu 23:10.

IV. We are here told what a solemn passover Josiah and his people kept after all this. When they had cleared the country of

the old leaven they then applied themselves to the keeping of the feast. When Jehu had destroyed the worship of Baal, yet he took no heed to walk in the commandments and ordinances of God; but Josiah considered that we must learn to do well, and no only cease to do evil, and that the way to keep out all abominable customs is to keep up all instituted ordinances (see Le 18:30), and therefore he commanded all the people to keep the passover, which was not only a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, but a token of their dedication to him that brought them out and their communion with him.

This he found written in the book of the law, here called the book of the covenant; for, though the divine authority may deal with us in a way of absolute command, divine grace condescends to federal transactions, and therefore he observed it. We have not such a particular account of this passover as of that in Hezekiah's time, 2Ch 30:1-27 But, in general, we are told that there was not holden such a passover in any of the foregoing reigns, no, not from the days of the judges (2Ki 23:22), which, by the way, intimates that, though the account which the book of Judges gives of the state of Israel under that dynasty looks but melancholy, yet there were then some golden days.

This passover, it seems, was extraordinary for the number and devotion of the communicants, their sacrifices and offerings, and their exact observance of the laws of the feast; and it was not now as in Hezekiah's passover, when many communicated that were not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, and the Levites were permitted to do the priests' work. We have reason to think that during all the remainder of Josiah's reign religion flourished and the feasts of the Lord were very carefully observed; but in this passover the satisfaction they took in the covenant lately renewed, the reformation in pursuance of it, and the revival of an ordinance of which they had lately found the divine original in the book

of the law, and which had long been neglected or carelessly kept, put them into great transports of holy joy; and God was pleased to recompense their zeal in destroying idolatry with uncommon tokens of his presence and favour. All this concurred to make it a distinguished passover.

9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which *was* in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12 And the altars that *were* on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down, and brake *them* down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

13 And the high places that *were* before Jerusalem, which *were* on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 Moreover the altar that *was* at Beth-el, *and* the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, *and* stamped *it* small to powder, and burned the grove.

16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that *were* there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned *them* upon the altar, and polluted it,

according to the word of the Lord which the man of God
proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.
17 Then he said, What title *is* that that I see? And the men of the city
told him, *It is* the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from
Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the
altar of Beth-el.
18 And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let
his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of
Samaria.
19 And all the houses also of the high places that *were* in the cities of
Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the* Lord to
anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that
he had done in Beth-el.
20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that *were* there upon
the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to
Jerusalem.

The Passover Kept

21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover
unto the Lord your God, as *it is* written in the book of this
covenant.
22 Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the
judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel,
nor of the kings of Judah;
23 but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, *wherein* this passover was
holden to the Lord in Jerusalem.

The Lord's Persistent Anger against Judah

24 Moreover the *workers with* familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the
images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in
the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he
might perform the words of the law, which were written in the book
that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord.

25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there *any* like him.

Upon the reading of these verses we must say, Lord, though thy righteousness be as the great mountains--evident, conspicuous, and past dispute, yet thy judgments are a great deep, unfathomable and past finding out, Ps 36:6. What shall we say to this?

I. It is here owned that Josiah was one of the best kings that ever sat upon the throne of David, 2Ki 23:25. As Hezekiah was a non-such for faith and dependence upon God in straits (2Ki 18:5), so Josiah was a non-such for sincerity and zeal in carrying on a work of reformation. For this there was none like him,

1. That he turned to the Lord from whom his fathers had revolted. It is true religion to turn to God as one we have chosen and love. He did what he could to turn his kingdom also to the Lord.

2. That he did this with his heart and soul; his affections and aims were right in what he did. Those make nothing of their religion that do not make heart-work of it.

3. That he did it with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his might--with vigour, and courage, and resolution: he could not otherwise have broken through the difficulties he had to grapple with. What great things may we bring to pass in the service of God if we be but lively and hearty in it!

4. That he did this according to all the law of Moses, in an exact observance of that law and with an actual regard to it. His zeal

did not transport him into any irregularities, but, in all he did, he walked by rule.

II. Notwithstanding this he was cut off by a violent death in the midst of his days, and his kingdom was ruined within a few years after. Consequent upon such a reformation as this, one would have expected nothing but the prosperity and glory both of king and kingdom; but, quite contrary, we find both under a cloud.

1. Even the reformed kingdom continues marked for ruin. For all this (2Ki 23:26) the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath. That is certainly true, which God spoke by the prophet (Jer 18:7,8), that if a nation, doomed to destruction, turn from the evil of sin, God will repent of the evil of punishment; and therefore we must conclude that Josiah's people, though they submitted to Josiah's power, did not heartily imbibe Josiah's principles. They were turned by force, and did not voluntarily turn from their evil way, but still continued their affection for their idols; and therefore he that knows men's hearts would not recall the sentence, which was, That Judah should be removed, as Israel had been, and Jerusalem itself cast off, 2Ki 23:27. Yet even this destruction was intended to be their effectual reformation; so that we must say, not only that the criminals had filled their measure and were ripe for ruin, but also that the disease had come to a crisis, and was ready for a cure; and this shall be all the fruit, even the taking away of sin.

2. As an evidence of this, even the reforming king is cut off in the midst of his usefulness--in mercy to him, that he might not see the evil which was coming upon his kingdom, but in wrath to his people, for his death was an inlet to their desolations. The king of Egypt waged war, it seems, with the king of Assyria: so the king of Babylon is now called. Josiah's kingdom lay between them. He therefore thought himself

concerned to oppose the king of Egypt, and check the growing, threatening, greatness of his power; for though, at this time, he protested that he had no design against Josiah, yet, if he should prevail to unite the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates, the land of Judah would soon be overflowed between them. Therefore Josiah went against him, and was killed in the first engagement, 2Ki 23:29,30. Here,

(1.) We cannot justify Josiah's conduct. He had no clear call to engage in this war, nor do we find that he asked counsel of God by urim or prophets concerning it. What had he to do to appear and act as a friend and ally to the king of Assyria? Should he help the ungodly and love those that hate the Lord? If the kings of Egypt and Assyria quarrelled, he had reason to think God would bring good out of it to him and his people, by making them instrumental to weaken one another. Some understand the promise made to him that he should come to his grave in peace in a sense in which it was not performed because, by his miscarriage in this matter, he forfeited the benefit of it. God has promised to keep us in all our ways; but, if we go out of our way, we throw ourselves out of his protection. I understand the promise so as that I believe it was fulfilled, for he died in peace with God and his own conscience, and saw not, nor had any immediate prospect of, the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; yet I understand the providence to be a rebuke to him for his rashness.

(2.) We must adore God's righteousness in taking away such a jewel from an unthankful people that knew not how to value it. They greatly lamented his death (2Ch 35:25), urged to it by Jeremiah, who told them the meaning of it, and what a threatening omen it was; but they had not made a due improvement of the mercies they enjoyed by his life, of which God taught them the worth by the want.

26 Notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.
27 And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

The Death of Josiah

28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
29 In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.
30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

The Reign and Dethronement of Jehoahaz

31 Jehoahaz *was* twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.
32 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.
33 And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.
34 And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there.

Jerusalem saw not a good day after Josiah was laid in his grave, but one trouble came after another, till within twenty-two years it was quite destroyed. Of the reign of two of his sons here is a

short account; the former we find here a prisoner and the latter a tributary to the king of Egypt, and both so in the very beginning of their reign. This king of Egypt having slain Josiah, though he had not had any design upon Judah, yet, being provoked by the opposition which Josiah gave him, now, it should seem, he bent all his force against his family and kingdom. If Josiah's sons had trodden in his steps, they would have fared the better for his piety; but, deviating from them, they fared the worse for his rashness.

I. Jehoahaz, a younger son, was first made king by the people of the land, probably because he was observed to be of a more active warlike genius than his elder brother, and likely to make head against the king of Egypt and to avenge his father's death, which perhaps the people were more solicitous about, in point of honour, than the keeping up and carrying on of his father's reformation; and the issue was accordingly.

1. He did ill, 2Ki 23:32. Though he had a good education and a good example given him, and many a good prayer, we may suppose, put up for him, yet he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and, it is to be feared, began to do so in his father's lifetime, for his reign was so short that he could not, in that, show much of his character. He did according to all that his wicked fathers had done. Though he had not time to do much, yet he had chosen his patterns, and showed whom he intended to follow and whose steps he resolved to tread in; and, having done this, he is here reckoned to have done according to all the evil which those did whom he proposed to imitate. It is of great consequence to young people whom they choose to take for their patterns and whom they emulate. An error in this choice is fatal. Php 3:17,18.

2. Doing ill, no wonder that he fared ill. He was but three months a prince, and was then made a prisoner, and lived and died so. The king of Egypt seized him, and put him in bands

(2Ki 23:33), fearing lest he should give him disturbance, and carried him to Egypt, where he died soon after, 2Ki 23:34. This Jehoahaz is that young lion whom Ezekiel speaks of in his lamentation for the princes of Israel, that learnt to catch the prey and devour men (that was the evil which he did in the sight of the Lord); but the nations heard of him, he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains into the land of Egypt, Eze 19:1-4. See Jer 22:10-12.

II. Eliakim, another son of Josiah, was made king by the king of Egypt, it is not said in the room of Jehoahaz (his reign was so short that it was scarcely worth taking notice of), but in the room of Josiah. The crown of Judah had hitherto always descended from a father to a son, and never, till now, from one brother to another; once the succession had so happened in the house of Ahab, but never, till now, in the house of David. The king of Egypt, having used his power in making him king, further showed it in changing his name; he called him Jehoiakim, a name that has reference to Jehovah, for he had no design to make him renounce or forget the religion of his country. "All people will walk in the name of their God, and let him do so." The king of Babylon did not do so by those whose names he changed, Da 1:7. Of this Jehoiakim we are here told,

1. That the king of Egypt made him poor, exacted from him a vast tribute of 100 talents of silver and a talent of gold (2Ki 23:33), which, with much difficulty, he squeezed out of his subjects and gave to Pharaoh, 2Ki 23:35. Formerly the Israelites had spoiled the Egyptians; now the Egyptians spoil Israel. See what woeful changes sin makes.

2. That which made him poor, yet did not make him good. Notwithstanding the rebukes of Providence he was under, by which he should have been convinced, humbled, and reformed, he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord (2Ki 23:37),

and so prepared against himself greater judgments; for such God will send if less do not do the work for which they are sent.

35 And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give *it* unto Pharaoh-nechoh.

The Reign of Jehoiakim

36 Jehoiakim *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

37 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.

2 Kings-24

1 In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.

2 And the Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

We have here the first mention of a name which makes a great figure both in the histories and in the prophecies of the Old Testament; it is that of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2Ki 24:1), that head of gold. He was a potent prince, and one that was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living; and yet his name would not have been known in sacred writ if he had not been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews.

I. He made Jehoiakim his tributary and kept him in subjection three years, 2Ki 24:1. Nebuchadnezzar began his reign in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. In his eighth year he made him his prisoner, but restored him upon his promise of faithfulness to him. That promise he kept about three years, but then rebelled, probably in hopes of assistance from the king of Egypt. If Jehoiakim had served his God as he should have done, he would not have been servant to the king of Babylon; but God would thus make him know the difference between his service and the service of the kings of the countries, 2Ch 12:8. If he had been content with his servitude, and true to his word, his condition would have been no worse; but, rebelling against the king of Babylon, he plunged himself into more trouble.

II. When he rebelled Nebuchadnezzar sent his forces against him to destroy his country, bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, who were all now in the service and pay of the king of Babylon (2Ki 24:2), and withal retained, and now showed, their ancient enmity to the Israel of God. Yet no mention is here made of their commission from the king of Babylon, but only of that from the King of kings: The Lord sent against him all these bands; and again (2Ki 24:3), Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, else the commandment of Nebuchadnezzar could not have brought it. Many are serving God's purposes who are not aware of it. Two things God intended in suffering Judah to be thus harassed:--

The punishment of the sins of Manasseh, which God now visited upon the third and fourth generation. So long he waited before he visited them, to see if the nation would repent; but they continued impenitent, notwithstanding Josiah's endeavours to reform them, and ready to relapse, upon the first turn, into their former idolatries. Now that the old bond was put in suit they were called up upon the former

judgment; that was revived which God had laid up in store, and sealed among his treasures (De 32:34,Job 14:17), and in remembrance of that he removed Judah out of his sight, and let the world know that time will not wear out the guilt of sin and that reprieves are not pardons.

All that Manasseh did was called to mind, but especially the innocent blood that he shed, much of which, we may suppose, was the blood of God's witnesses and worshippers, which the Lord would not pardon. Is there then any unpardonable sin but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? This is meant of the remitting of the temporal punishment. Though Manasseh repented, and we have reason to think even the persecutions and murders he was guilty of were pardoned, so that he was delivered from the wrath to come; yet, as they were national sins, they lay still charged upon the land, crying for national judgments. Perhaps some were now living who were aiding and abetting; and the present king was guilty of innocent blood, as appears Jer 22:17.

See what a provoking sin murder is, how loud it cries, and how long. See what need nations have to lament the sins of their fathers, lest they smart for them. God intended hereby the accomplishment of the prophecies; it was according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by his servants the prophets. Rather shall Judah be removed out of his sight, nay, rather shall heaven and earth pass away, than any word of God fall to the ground. Threatenings will be fulfilled as certainly as promises, if the sinner's repentance prevent not.

III. The king of Egypt was likewise subdued by the king of Babylon, and a great part of his country taken from him, 2Ki 24:7. It was but lately that he had oppressed Israel, 2Ki 23:33. Now he is himself brought down and disabled to attempt any thing for the recovery of his losses or the assistance of his allies. He dares not come any more out of his land.

Afterwards he attempted to give Zedekiah some relief, but was obliged to retire, Jer 37:7.

IV. Jehoiakim, seeing his country laid waste and himself ready to fall into the enemy's hand, as it should seem, died of a broken heart, in the midst of his days (2Ki 24:6). So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers; but it is not said that he was buried with them, for no doubt the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, that he should not be lamented, as his father was, but buried with the burial of an ass (Jer 22:18,19), and his dead body cast out, Jer 36:30.

3 Surely at the commandment of the Lord came *this* upon Judah, to
remove *them* out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to
all that he did;
4 and also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem
with innocent blood; which the Lord would not pardon.
5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, *are* they
not written in the book of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah?
6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned
in his stead.
7 And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for
the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river
Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

Jehoiachin and the Nobles Taken Captive to Babylon

8 Jehoiachin *was* eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he
reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name *was*
Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.
9 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, according to
all that his father had done.
10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon
came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.
11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his
servants did besiege it.

This should have been the history of king Jehoiachin's reign, but, alas! it is only the history of king Jehoiachin's captivity, as it is called, Eze 1:2. He came to the crown, not to have the honour of wearing it, but the shame of losing it. Ideo tantum venerat, ut exiret--He came in only to go out.

I. His reign was short and inconsiderable. He reigned but three months, and then was removed and carried captive to Babylon, as his father, it is likely, would have been if he had lived but so much longer. What an unhappy young prince was this, that was thrust into a falling house, a sinking throne! What an unnatural father had he, who begat him to suffer for him, and by his own sin and folly had left himself nothing to bequeath to his son but his own miseries! Yet this young prince reigned long enough to show that he justly smarted for his fathers' sins, for he trod in their steps (2Ki 24:9): He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as they had done; he did nothing to cut off the entail of the curse, to discharge the incumbrances of his crown, and therefore (transit cum onere--the incumbrance descends with the crown) with his own iniquity that of his fathers shall come into the account.

II The calamities that came upon him, and his family, and people, in the very beginning of his reign, were very grievous.

1. Jerusalem was besieged by the king of Babylon, 2Ki 24:10,11. He had sent his forces to ravage the country, 2Ki 24:2. Now he came himself, and laid siege to the city. Now the word of God was fulfilled (De 28:49-69, &c.), The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, of fierce countenance, that shall first eat of the fruit of thy land and then besiege thee in all thy gates.

2. Jehoiachin immediately surrendered at discretion. As soon as he heard the king of Babylon had come in person against the city, his name having at this time become very formidable, he beat a parley and went out to him, 2Ki 24:12. Had he made his peace with God, and taken the method that Hezekiah did in the like case, he needed not to have feared the king of Babylon, but might have held out with courage, honour, and success (one should have chased a thousand); but, wanting the faith and piety of an Israelite, he had not the resolution of a man, of a soldier, of a prince. He and his royal family, his mother and wives, his servants and princes, delivered themselves up prisoners of war; this was the consequence of their being servants of sin.

3. Nebuchadnezzar rifled the treasuries both of the church and of the state, and carried away the silver and gold of both, 2Ki 24:13. Now the word of God by Isaiah was fulfilled (2Ki 20:17), All that is in thy house shall be carried to Babylon. Even the vessels of the temple which Solomon had made, and laid up in store to be used as the old ones were worn out, he cut off from the temple, and began to cut them in pieces, but, upon second thoughts, reserved them for his own use, for we find Belshazzar drinking wine in them, Da 5:2,3.

4. He carried away a great part of Jerusalem into captivity, to weaken it, that he might effectually secure to himself the dominion of it and prevent its revolt, and to enrich himself with the wealth or service of those he took away. There had been some carried away eight years before this, in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar and the third of Jehoiakim, among whom were Daniel and his fellows. See Da 1:1,6. They had approved themselves so well that this politic prince coveted more of them. Now he carried off,

(1.) The young king himself and his family (2Ki 24:15), and we find (2Ki 25:27-29) that for thirty-seven years he continued a close prisoner.

(2.) All the great men, the princes and officers, whose riches were kept for the owners thereof to their hurt (Ec 5:13), tempting the enemies to make a prey of them first.

(3.) All the military men, the mighty men of valour (2Ki 24:14), the mighty of the land (2Ki 24:15), the men of might, even all that were strong and apt for war, 2Ki 24:16. These could not defend themselves, and the conqueror would not leave them to defend their country, but took them away, to be employed in his service.

(4.) All the craftsmen and smiths who made weapons of war; in taking them he did, in effect, disarm the city, according to the Philistines' policy, 1Sa 13:19. In this captivity Ezekiel the prophet was carried away (Eze 1:1,2) and Mordecai, Ex 2:6. This Jehoiachin was also called Jeconiah (1Ch 3:16), and in contempt (Jer 22:24, where his captivity is foretold) Coniah.

III. The successor whom the king of Babylon appointed in the room of Jehoiachin. God had written him childless (Jer 22:30) and therefore his uncle was entrusted with the government. The king of Babylon made Mattaniah king, the son of Josiah; and to remind him, and let all the world know, that he was his creature, he changed his name and called him Zedekiah, 2Ki 24:17. God had sometimes charged it upon his people, They have set up kings, but not by me (Ho 8:4), and now, to punish them for that, the king of Babylon shall have the setting up of their kings. Those are justly deprived of their liberty that use it, and insist upon it, against God's authority. This Zedekiah was the last of the kings of Judah. The name which the king of Babylon gave him signifies The justice of

the Lord, and was a presage of the glorifying of God's justice in his ruin.

1. See how impious this Zedekiah was. Though the judgments of God upon his three immediate predecessors might have been a warning to him not to tread in their steps, yet he did that which was evil, like all the rest, 2Ki 24:19.

2. See how impolitic he was. As his predecessor lost his courage, so he his wisdom, with his religion, for he rebelled against the king of Babylon (2Ki 24:20), whose tributary he was, and so provoked him whom he was utterly unable to contend with, and who, if he had continued true to him, would have protected him. This was the most foolish thing he could do, and hastened the ruin of his kingdom. This came to pass through the anger of the Lord, that he might cast them out from his presence. Note, When those that are entrusted with the counsels of a nation act unwisely, and against their true interest, we ought to take notice of the displeasure of God in it. It is for the sins of a people that God removes the speech of the trusty and takes away the understanding of the aged, and hides from their eyes the things that belong to the public peace. Whom God will destroy he infatuates.

12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said.

14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother,
and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land,
those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.
16 And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and
smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong *and* apt for war, even them
the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.
17 And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king
in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

The Reign of Zedekiah

18 Zedekiah *was* twenty and one years old when he began to reign,
and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name
was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.
19 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, according to
all that Jehoiakim had done.
20 For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and
Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah
rebelled against the king of Babylon.

2 Kings-25

The Fall of Jerusalem

1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month,
in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon
came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it;
and they built forts against it round about.
2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.
3 And on the ninth *day* of the *fourth* month the famine prevailed in
the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

We left king Zedekiah in rebellion against the king of Babylon (2Ki 24:20), contriving and endeavouring to shake off his yoke, when he was no way able to do it, nor took the

right method by making God his friend first. Now here we have an account of the fatal consequences of that attempt.

I The king of Babylon's army laid siege to Jerusalem, 2Ki 25:1. What should hinder them when the country was already in their possession? 2Ki 24:2. They built forts against the city round about, whence, by such arts of war as they then had, they battered it, sent into it instruments of death, and kept out of it the necessary supports of life. Formerly Jerusalem had been compassed with the favour of God as with a shield, but now their defence had departed from them and their enemies surrounded them on every side. Those that by sin have provoked God to leave them will find that innumerable evils will compass them about. Two years this siege lasted; at first the army retired, for fear of the king of Egypt (Jer 37:11), but, finding him not so powerful as they thought, they soon returned, with a resolution not to quit the city till they had made themselves masters of it.

II. During this siege the famine prevailed (2Ki 25:3), so that for a long time they ate their bread by weight and with care, Eze 4:16. Thus they were punished for their gluttony and excess, their fulness of bread and feeding themselves without fear. At length there was no bread for the people of the land, that is, the common people, the soldiers, whereby they were weakened and rendered unfit for service. Now they ate their own children for want of food. See this foretold by one prophet (Eze 5:10) and bewailed by another, La 4:3-12, &c. Jeremiah earnestly persuaded the king to surrender (Jer 38:17), but his heart was hardened to his destruction.

III. At length the city was taken by storm: it was broken up, 2Ki 25:4. The besiegers made a breach in the wall, at which they forced their way into it. The besieged, unable any longer to defend it, endeavoured to quit it, and make the best of their

way; and many, no doubt, were put to the sword, the victorious army being much exasperated by their obstinacy.

IV. The king, his family, and all his great men, made their escape in the night, by some secret passages which the besiegers either had not discovered or did not keep their eye upon, 2Ki 25:4. But those as much deceive themselves who think to escape God's judgments as those who think to brave them; the feet of him that flees from them will as surely fail as the hands of him that fights against them. When God judges he will overcome. Intelligence was given to the Chaldeans of the king's flight, and which way he had gone, so that they soon overtook him, 2Ki 25:5. His guards were scattered from him, every man shifting for his own safety. Had he put himself under God's protection, that would not have failed him now. He presently fell into the enemies' hands, and here we are told what they did with him.

1. He was brought to the king of Babylon, and tried by a council of war for rebelling against him who set him up, and to whom he had sworn fidelity. God and man had a quarrel with him for this; see Eze 17:16-21, &c. The king of Babylon now lay at Riblah (which lay between Judea and Babylon), that he might be ready to give orders both to his court at home and his army abroad.

2. His sons were slain before his eyes, though children, that this doleful spectacle, the last his eyes were to behold, might leave an impression of grief and horror upon his spirit as long as he lived. In slaying his sons, they showed their indignation at his falsehood, and in effect declared that neither he nor any of his were fit to be trusted, and therefore that they were not fit to live.

3. His eyes were put out, by which he was deprived of that common comfort of human life which is given even to those that are in misery, and to the bitter in soul, the light of the sun, by which he was also disabled for any service. He dreaded being mocked, and therefore would not be persuaded to yield (37:19), but that which he feared came upon him with a witness, and no doubt added much to his misery; for, as those that are deaf suspect that every body talks of them, so those that are blind suspect that every body laughs at them. By this two prophecies that seemed to contradict one another were both fulfilled. Jeremiah prophesied that Zedekiah should be brought to Babylon, Jer 32:5,34:3. Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon, Eze 12:13. He was brought thither, but, his eyes being put out, he did not see it. Thus he ended his days, before he ended his life.

4. He was bound in fetters of brass and so carried to Babylon. He that was blind needed not be bound (his blindness fettered him), but, for his greater disgrace, they led him bound; only, whereas common malefactors are laid in irons (Ps 105:18,107:10), he, being a prince, was bound with fetters of brass; but that the metal was somewhat nobler and lighter was little comfort, while still he was in fetters. Let it not seem strange if those that have been held in the cords of iniquity come to be thus held in the cords of affliction, Job 36:8.

4 And the city was broken up, and all the men of war *fled* by night by
the way of the gate between two walls, which *is* by the king's
garden: (now the Chaldees *were* against the city round about:) and
the king went the way toward the plain.
5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook
him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from
him.
6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon
to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

The Captivity of Judah

8 And in the fifth month, on the seventh *day* of the month, which *is* the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

9 and he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great *man's* house burnt he with fire.

10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that *were with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

11 Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away.

Though we have reason to think that the army of the Chaldeans were much enraged against the city for holding out with so much stubbornness, yet they did not therefore put all to fire and sword as soon as they had taken the city (which is too commonly done in such cases), but about a month after (compare 2Ki 25:8,2Ki 25:3) Nebuzar-adan was sent with orders to complete the destruction of Jerusalem. This space God gave them to repent, after all the foregoing days of his patience, but in vain; their hearts (for aught that appears) were still hardened, and therefore execution is awarded to the utmost.

1 The city and temple are burnt, 2Ki 25:9. It does not appear that the king of Babylon designed to send any colonies to people Jerusalem and therefore he ordered it to be laid in ashes, as a nest of rebels. At the burning of the king's house and the houses of the great men one cannot so much wonder (the inhabitants had, by their sins, made them combustible),

but that the house of the Lord should perish in these flames, that that holy and beautiful house should be burnt with fire (Isa 64:11), is very strange. That house which David prepared for, and which Solomon built at such a vast expense--that house which had the eye and heart of God perpetually upon it (1Ki 9:3)-- might not that have been snatched as a brand out of this burning? No, it must not be fire-proof against God's judgments.

This stately structure must be turned into ashes, and it is probable the ark in it, for the enemies, having heard how dearly the Philistines paid for the abusing of it, durst not seize that, nor did any of its friends take care to preserve it, for then we should have heard of it again in the second temple. One of the apocryphal writers does indeed tell us that the prophet Jeremiah got it out of the temple, and conveyed it to a cave in Mount Nebo on the other side Jordan, and hid it there (2 Macc. ii. 4, 5), but that could not be, for Jeremiah was a close prisoner at that time. By the burning of the temple God would show how little cares for the external pomp of his worship when the life and power of religion are neglected. The people trusted to the temple, as if that would protect them in their sins (Jer 7:4), but God, by this, let them know that when they had profaned it they would find it but a refuge of lies. This temple had stood about 420, some say 430 years.

The people having forfeited the promises made concerning it, those promises must be understood of the gospel-temple, which is God's rest for ever. It is observable that the second temple was burnt by the Romans the same month, and the same day of the month, that the first temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, which, Josephus says, was the tenth of August.

2 The walls of Jerusalem are demolished (2Ki 25:10), as if the victorious army would be revenged on them for having kept them out so long, or at least prevent the like opposition

another time. Sin unwalls a people and takes away their defence. These walls were never repaired till Nehemiah's time.

3. The residue of the people are carried away captive to Babylon, 2Ki 25:11. Most of the inhabitants had perished by sword or famine, or had made their escape when the king did (for it is said, 2Ki 25:5, His army was scattered from him), so that there were very few left, who with the deserters, making in all but 832 persons (as appears, Jer 52:29), were carried away into captivity; only the poor of the land were left behind (2Ki 25:12), to till the ground and dress the vineyards for the Chaldeans. Sometimes poverty is a protection; for those that have nothing have nothing to lose. When the rich Jews, who had been oppressive to the poor, were made strangers, nay, prisoners, in an enemy's country, the poor whom they had despised and oppressed had liberty and peace in their own country. Thus Providence sometimes remarkably humbles the proud and favours those of low degree.

4. The brazen vessels, and other appurtenances of the temple, are carried away, those of silver and gold being most of them gone before. Those two famous columns of brass, Jachin and Boaz, which signified the strength and stability of the house of God, were broken to pieces and the brass of them was carried to Babylon, 2Ki 25:13. When the things signified were sinned away what should the signs stand there for? Ahaz had profanely cut off the borders of the bases, and put the brazen sea upon a pavement of stones (2Ki 16:17); justly therefore are the brass themselves, and the brazen sea, delivered into the enemy's hand. It is just with God to take away his ordinances from those that profane and abuse them, that curtail and depress them. Some things remained of gold and silver (2Ki 25:15) which were now carried off; but most of this plunder was brass, such a vast quantity of it that it is

said to be without weight, 2Ki 25:16. The carrying away of the vessels wherewith they ministered (2Ki 25:14) put an end to the ministration. It was a righteous thing with God to deprive those of the benefit of his worship who had slighted it so long and preferred false worships before it. Those that would have many altars shall now have none.

5. Several of the great men are slain in cold blood--Seraiah the chief priest (who was the father of Ezra as appears, Ezr 7:1), the second priest (who, when there was occasion, officiated for him), and three door-keepers of the temple (2Ki 25:18), the general of the army, five privy-counsellors (afterwards they made them up seven, Jer 52:25), the secretary of war, or pay-master of the army, and sixty country gentlemen who had concealed themselves in the city. These, being persons of some rank, were brought to the king of Babylon (2Ki 25:19,20), who ordered them to be all put to death (2Ki 25:21), when, in reason, they might have hoped that surely the bitterness of death was past.

These the king of Babylon's revenge looked upon as most active in opposing him; but divine justice, we may suppose, looked upon them as ringleaders in that idolatry and impiety which were punished by these desolations. This completed the calamity: So Judah was carried away out of their land, about 860 years after they were put in possession of it by Joshua. Now the scripture was fulfilled, The Lord shall bring thee, and the king which thou shalt set over thee, into a nation which thou hast not known, De 28:36. Sin kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, and now turned them out. The Lord is known by those judgments which he executes, and makes good that word which he has spoken, Am 3:2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land *to be* vinedressers and husbandmen.

13 And the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the Lord, and the
bases, and the brazen sea that *was* in the house of the Lord, did the
Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.
14 And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons,
and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they
away.
15 And the firepans, and the bowls, *and* such things as *were* of gold, *in*
gold, and of silver, *in* silver, the captain of the guard took away.
16 The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made
for the house of the Lord ; the brass of all these vessels was without
weight.
17 The height of the one pillar *was* eighteen cubits, and the chapiter
upon it *was* brass: and the height of the chapiter three cubits; and

the wreathed work, and pomegranates upon the chapiter round
about, all of brass: and like unto these had the second pillar with
wreathed work.
18 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and
Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:
19 and out of the city he took an officer that was set over the the men
of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which
were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which
mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people
of the land *that were* found in the city:
20 and Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard took these, and brought
them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:
21 and the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in
the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

The Remnant Flee to Egypt

22 And *as for* the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler.

In these verses we have,

I The dispersion of the remaining people. The city of Jerusalem was quite laid waste. Some people there were in the land of Judah (2Ki 25:22) that had weathered the storm, and (which was no small favour at this time, Jer 45:5) had their lives given them for a prey. Now see,

1. What a good posture they were put into. The king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah, one of themselves, to be their governor and protector under him, a very good man, and one that would make the best of the bad, 2Ki 25:22. His father Ahikam was one that countenanced and protected Jeremiah when the princes had vowed his death, Jer 26:24. It is probable that this Gedaliah, by the advice of Jeremiah, had gone over the Chaldeans, and had conducted himself so well that the king of Babylon entrusted him with the government. He resided not at Jerusalem, but at Mizpah, in the land of Benjamin, a place famous in Samuel's time. Thither those came who had fled from Zedekiah (2Ki 25:4) and put themselves under his protection (2Ki 25:23), which he assured them of if they would be patient and peaceable under the government of the king of Babylon, 2Ki 25:24. Gedaliah, though he had not the pomp and power of a sovereign prince, yet might have been a greater blessing to them than many of their kings had been, especially having such a privy-council as Jeremiah, who was now with them, and interested himself in their affairs, Jer 40:5,6.

2. What a fatal breach was made upon them, soon afterwards, by the death of Gedaliah, within two months after he entered upon his government. The utter extirpation of the Jews, for the present, was determined, and therefore it was in vain for them to think of taking root again: the whole land must be plucked up, Jer 45:4. Yet this hopeful settlement is dashed to pieces, not by the Chaldeans, but by some of themselves. The things of their peace were so hidden from their eyes that they

knew not when they were well off, nor would believe when they were told.

(1.) They had a good governor of their own, and him they slew, out of spite to the Chaldeans, because he was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, 2Ki 25:25. Ishmael, who was of the royal family, envying Gedaliah's advancement and the happy settlement of the people under him, though he could not propose to set up himself, resolved to ruin him, and basely slew him and all his friends, both Jews and Chaldeans. Nebuchadnezzar would not, could not, have been a more mischievous enemy to their peace than this degenerate branch of the house of David was.

(2.) They were as yet in their own good land, but they forsook it, and went to Egypt, for fear of the Chaldeans, 2Ki 25:26. The Chaldeans had reason enough to be offended at the murder of Gedaliah; but if those that remained had humbly remonstrated, alleging that it was only the act of Ishmael and his party, we may suppose that those who were innocent of it, nay, who suffered greatly by it, would not have been punished for it: but, under pretence of this apprehension, contrary to the counsel of Jeremiah, they all went to Egypt, where, it is probable, they mixed with the Egyptians by degrees, and were never heard of more as Israelites. Thus was there a full end made of them by their own folly and disobedience, and Egypt had the last of them, that the last verse of that chapter of threatenings might be fulfilled, after all the rest, De 28:68, The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again. These events are more largely related by the prophet Jeremiah, Jer 40:1-45:5 Quaeque ipse miserrima vidit, et quorum pars magna fuit--Which scenes he was doomed to behold, and in which he bore a melancholy part.

II The reviving of the captive prince. Of Zedekiah we hear no more after he was carried blind to Babylon; it is probable that he did not live long, but that when he died he

was buried with some marks of honour, Jer 34:5. Of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, who surrendered himself (2Ki 24:12), we are here told that as soon as Evil-merodach came to the crown, upon the death of his father Nebuchadnezzar, he released him out of prison (where he had lain thirty-seven years, and was now fifty-five years old), spoke kindly to him, paid more respect to him than to any other of the kings his father had left in captivity (2Ki 25:28), gave him princely clothing instead of his prison-garments, maintained him in his own palace (2Ki 25:29), and allowed him a pension for himself and his family in some measure corresponding to his rank, a daily rate for every day as long as he lived. Consider this,

1. As a very happy change of Jehoiachin's condition. To have honour and liberty after he had been so long in confinement and disgrace, the plenty and pleasure of a court after he had been so long accustomed to the straits and miseries of a prison, was like the return of the morning after a very dark and tedious night. Let none say that they shall never see good again because they have long seen little but evil; the most miserable know not what blessed turn Providence may yet give to their affairs, nor what comforts they are reserved for, according to the days wherein they have been afflicted, Ps 110:15. However the death of afflicted saints is to them such a change as this was to Jehoiachin: it will release them out of their prison, shake off the body, that prison-garment, and open the way to their advancement; it will send them to the throne, to the table, of the King of kings, the glorious liberty of God's children.

2. As a very generous act of Evil-merodach's. He thought his father made the yoke of his captives too heavy, and therefore, with the tenderness of a man and the honour of a prince, made it lighter. It should seem all the kings he had in his power were favoured, but Jehoiachin above them all, some think for

the sake of the antiquity of his family and the honour of his renowned ancestors, David and Solomon. None of the kings of the nations, it is likely, had descended from so long a race of kings in a direct lineal succession, and by a male line, as the king of Judah.

The Jews say that this Evil-merodach had been himself imprisoned by his own father, when he returned from his madness, for some mismanagement at that time, and that in prison he contracted a friendship with Jehoiachin, in consequence of which, as soon as he had it in his power, he showed him this kindness as a sufferer, as a fellow-sufferer. Some suggest that Evil-merodach had learned from Daniel and his fellows the principles of the true religion, and was well affected to them, and upon that account favoured Jehoiachin.

3. As a kind dispensation of Providence, for the encouragement of the Jews in captivity, and the support of their faith and hope concerning their enlargement in due time. This happened just about the midnight of their captivity. Thirty-six of the seventy years were now past, and almost as many were yet behind, and now to see their king thus advanced would be a comfortable earnest to them of their own release in due time, in the set time. Unto the upright there thus ariseth light in the darkness, to encourage them to hope, even in the cloudy and dark day, that at evening time it shall be light; when therefore we are perplexed, let us not be in despair.

23 And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Careah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

24 And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them,
Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and
serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you.
25 But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of
Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men
with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the
Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.
26 And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the
armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the
Chaldees.

Jehoiachin Released and Honored in Babylon

27 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity
of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven
and twentieth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-merodach king of
Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of
Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison;
28 and he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of
the kings that *were* with him in Babylon;
29 and changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually
before him all the days of his life.
30 And his allowance *was* a continual allowance given him of the king,
a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

The First Book of the Chronicles
[1 Chronicles]

1 Chronicles-1

The Descendants of Adam

1 Adam, Sheth, Enosh,
2 Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered,
3 Henoch, Methuselah, Lamech,
4 Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

The Descendants of the Sons of Noah

5 The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.
6 And the sons of Gomer; Ashchenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah.
7 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

This paragraph has Adam for its first word and Abraham for its last. Between the creation of the former and the birth of the latter were 2000 years, almost the one-half of which time Adam himself lived. Adam was the common father of our flesh, Abraham the common father of the faithful. By the breach which the former made of the covenant of innocency, we were all made miserable; by the covenant of grace made with the latter, we all are, or may be, made happy. We all are, by nature, the seed of Adam, branches of that wild olive. Let us see to it that, by faith, we become the seed of Abraham (Ro 4:11,12), that we be grafted into the good olive and partake of its root and fatness.

I The first four verses of this paragraph, and the last four, which are linked together by Shem (1Ch 1:4,24), contain the sacred line of Christ from Adam to Abraham, and are inserted in his pedigree, Lu 3:34-38, the order ascending as here it

descends. This genealogy proves the falsehood of that reproach, As for this man, we know not whence he is. Bishop Patrick well observes here that, a genealogy being to be drawn of the families of the Jews, this appears as the peculiar glory of the Jewish nation, that they alone were able to derive their pedigree from the first man that God created, which no other nation pretended to, but abused themselves and their posterity with fabulous accounts of their originals, the Arcadians fancying that they were before the moon, the people of Thessaly that they sprang from stones, the Athenians that they grew out of the earth, much like the vain imaginations which some of the philosophers had of the origin of the universe. The account which the holy scripture gives both of the creation of the world and of the rise of nations carries with it as clear evidences of its own truth as those idle traditions do of their own vanity and falsehood.

II. All the verses between repeat the account of the replenishing of the earth by the sons of Noah after the flood.

1 The historian begins with those who were strangers to the church, the sons of Japhet, who were planted in the isles of the Gentiles, those western parts of the world, the countries of Europe. Of these he gives a short account (1Ch 1:5-7), because with these the Jews had hitherto had little or no dealings.

2. He proceeds to those who had many of them been enemies to the church, the sons of Ham, who moved southward towards Africa and those parts of Asia which lay that way. Nimrod the son of Cush began to be an oppressor, probably to the people of God in his time. But Mizraim, from whom came the Egyptians, and Canaan, from whom came the Canaanites, are both of them names of great note in the Jewish story; for with their descendants the Israel of God had severe struggles to get out of the land of Egypt and into the

land of Canaan; and therefore the branches of Mizraim are particularly recorded (1Ch 1:11,12), and of Canaan, 1Ch 1:13-16. See at what a rate God valued Israel when he gave Egypt for their ransom (Isa 43:3), and cast out all these nations before them, Ps 70:8.

3. He then gives an account of those that were the ancestors and allies of the church, the posterity of Shem, 1Ch 1:17-23. These peopled Asia, and spread themselves eastward. The Assyrians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Arabians, descended from these. At first the originals of the respective nations were known; but at this day, we have reason to think, the nations are so mingled with one another, by the enlargement of commerce and dominion, the transplanting of colonies, the carrying away of captives, and many other circumstances, that no one nation, no, nor the greatest part of any, is descended entire from any one of these fountains. Only this we are sure of, that God has created of one blood all nations of men; they have all descended from one Adam, one Noah. Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Mal 2:10. Our register hastens to the line of Abraham, breaking off abruptly from all the other families of the sons of Noah but that of Arphaxad, from whom Christ was to come. The great promise of the Messiah (says bishop Patrick) was translated from Adam to Seth, from him to Shem, from him to Eber, and so to the Hebrew nation, who were entrusted, above all nations, with that sacred treasure, till the promise was performed and the Messiah had come, and then that nation was made not a people.

8 The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.
9 And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raamah, and Sabtecha. And the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan.
10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth.
11 And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim,
12 and Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (of whom came the Philistines,) and

Caphtorim.
13 And Canaan begat Zidon his firstborn, and Heth,
14 the Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite,
15 and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite,
16 and the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.
17 The sons of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech.
18 And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber.
19 And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one *was* Peleg [division]; because in his days the earth was divided: and his brother's name *was* Joktan.
20 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazar-maveth, and Jerah,
21 Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah,
22 and Ebal, and Abimael, and Sheba,
23 and Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab. All these *were* the sons of Joktan.

The Descendants of Shem

24 Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah,
25 Eber, Peleg, Reu,
26 Serug, Nahor, Terah,
27 Abram; the same *is* Abraham.

The Descendants of Ishmael and Keturah

28 The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael.

All nations but the seed of Abraham are already shaken off from this genealogy: they have no part nor lot in this matter. The Lord's portion is his people. Of them he keeps an account, knows them by name; but those who are strangers to him he beholds afar off. Not that we are to conclude that therefore no particular persons of any other nation but the seed of Abraham found favour with God.

It was a truth, before Peter perceived it, that in every nation he that feared God and wrought righteousness was accepted of him. Multitudes will be brought to heaven out of all nations (Re 7:9), and we are willing to hope there were many, very many, good people in the world, that lay out of the pale of God's covenant of peculiarity with Abraham, whose names were in the book of life, though not descended from any of the following families written in this book.

The Lord knows those that are his. But Israel was a chosen nation, elect in type; and no other nation, in its national capacity, was so dignified and privileged as the Jewish nation was. That is the holy nation which is the subject of the sacred story; and therefore we are next to shake off all the seed of Abraham but the posterity of Jacob only, which were all incorporated into one nation and joined to the Lord, while the other descendants from Abraham, for aught that appears, were estranged both from God and from one another.

I. We shall have little to say of the Ishmaelites. They were the sons of the bondwoman, that were to be cast out and not to be heirs with the child of the promise; and their case was to represent that of the unbelieving Jews, who were rejected (Ga 4:22,23, &c.), and therefore there is little notice taken of that nation. Ishmael's twelve sons are just named here (1Ch 1:29-31), to show the performance of the promise God made to Abraham, in answer to his prayer for him, that, for Abraham's sake, he should become a great nation, and particularly that he should beget twelve princes, Ge 17:20.

II. We shall have little to say of the Midianites, who descended from Abraham's children by Keturah. They were children of the east (probably Job was one of them), and were separated from Isaac, the heir of the promise (Ge 25:6), and therefore they are only named here, 1Ch 1:32. The sons of Jokshan, the son of Keturah, are named also, and the sons of

Midian (1Ch 1:32,33), who became most eminent, and perhaps gave denomination to all these families, as Judah to the Jews.

III. We shall not have much to say of the Edomites. They had an inveterate enmity to God's Israel; yet because they descended from Esau, the son of Isaac, we have here an account of their families, and the names of some of their famous men, 1Ch 1:35 to the end. Some slight differences there are between some of the names here, and as we had them in Ge 36:1-43, whence this whole account is taken. Three of four names that were written with a Vau there are written with a Jod here, probably the pronunciation being altered, as is usual in other languages. We now write many words very differently from what they were written but 200 years ago. Let us take occasion, from the reading of these genealogies, to think,

1. Of the multitudes that have gone through this world, have acted their part in it, and then quitted it. Job, even in his early day, saw not only every man drawing after him, but innumerable before him, Job 21:33. All these, and all theirs, had their day; many of them made a mighty noise and figure in the world; but their day came to fall, and their place knew them no more. The paths of death are trodden paths, but vestigia nulla retrorsum--none can retrace their steps.

2. Of the providence of God, which keeps up the generations of men, and so preserves that degenerate race, though guilty and obnoxious, in being upon earth. How easily could he cut it off without either a deluge or a conflagration! Write but all the children of men childless, as some are, and in a few years the earth will be eased of the burden under which it groans; but the divine patience lets the trees that cumber the ground not only grow, but propagate. As one generation, even of sinful men, passes away, another comes (Ec 1:4,Nu 32:14),

and will do so while the earth remains. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.

29 These *are* their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth;
then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,
30 Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema,
31 Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael.
32 Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran,
and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And
the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan.
33 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Henoch, and
Abida, and Eldaah. All these *are* the sons of Keturah.

The Descendants of Esau

34 And Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel.
35 The sons of Esau; Eliphaz, Reuel, and Jeush, and Jaalam, and
Korah.
36 The sons of Eliphaz; Teman, and Omar, Zephi, and Gatam, Kenaz,
and Timna, and Amalek.
37 The sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.
38 And the sons of Seir; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and
Dishon, and Ezar, and Dishan.
39 And the sons of Lotan; Hori, and Homam: and Timna *was* Lotan's
sister.
40 The sons of Shobal; Alian, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shephi, and
Onam. And the sons of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah.
41 The sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of Dishon; Amram, and
Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran.
42 The sons of Ezer; Bilhan, and Zavan, *and* Jakan. The sons of
Dishan; Uz, and Aran.
43 Now these *are* the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before
any king reigned over the children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor:
and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah.
44 And when Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned
in his stead.

45 And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites
reigned in his stead.
46 And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad, which
smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the
name of his city *was* Avith.
47 And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his
stead.
48 And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river
reigned in his stead.
49 And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned
in his stead.
50 And when Baal-hanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead: and
the name of his city *was* Pai; and his wife's name *was* Mehetabel,
the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.
51 Hadad died also.
And the dukes of Edom were; duke Timnah, duke Aliah, duke
Jetheth,
52 duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon,
53 duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar,
54 duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These *are* the dukes of Edom.

1 Chronicles-2

The Sons of Israel

1 These *are* the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,
Issachar, and Zebulun,
2 Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

The Descendants of Judah

Here is, I The family of Jacob. His twelve sons are here named, that illustrious number so often celebrated almost throughout the whole Bible, from the first to the last book of it. At every turn we meet with the twelve tribes that descended from these twelve patriarchs. The personal character of several of them was none of the best (the first

four were much blemished), and yet the covenant was entailed on their seed; for it was of grace, free grace, that it was said, Jacob have I loved--not of works, lest any man should boast.

II The family of Judah. That tribe was most praised, most increased, and most dignified, of any of the tribes, and therefore the genealogy of it is the first and largest of them all. In the account here given of the first branches of that illustrious tree, of which Christ was to be the top branch, we meet,

1. With some that were very bad. Here is Er, Judah's eldest son, that was evil in the sight of the Lord, and was cut off, in the beginning of his days, by a stroke of divine vengeance: The Lord slew him, 1Ch 2:3. His next brother, Onan, was no better, and fared no better. Here is Tamar, with whom Judah, her father-in-law, committed incest, 1Ch 2:4. And here is Achan, called Achar--a troubler, that troubled Israel by taking of the accursed thing, 1Ch 2:7. Note, The best and most honourable families may have those belonging to them that are blemishes.

2. With some that were very wise and good, as Heman and Ethan, Calcol and Dara, who were not perhaps the immediate sons of Zerah, but descendants from him, and are named because they were the glory of their father's house; for, when the Holy Ghost would magnify the wisdom of Solomon, he declares him wiser than these four men, who, though the sons of Mahol, are called Ezrahites, from Zerah, 1Ki 4:31. That four brothers should be eminent for wisdom and grace was a rare thing. 3. With some that were very great, as Nahshon, who was prince of the tribe of Judah when the camp of Israel was formed in the wilderness, and so led the van in that glorious march, and Salman, or Salmon, who was in that post of honour when they entered into Canaan, 1Ch 2:10,11.

III. The family of Jesse, of which a particularly account is kept for the sake of David, and the Son of David, who is a rod out of the stem of Jesse, Isa 11:1. Hence it appears that David was a seventh son, and that his three great commanders, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, were the sons of one of his sisters, and Amasa of another. Three of the four went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty.

3 The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: *which* three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanitess. And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the sight of the Lord ; and he slew him.

4 And Tamar his daughter-in-law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah *were* five.

5 The sons of Pharez; Hezron, and Hamul.

6 And the sons of Zerah; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all.

7 And the sons of Carmi; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed.

8 And the sons of Ethan; Azariah.

9 The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai.

10 And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah;

11 and Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz,

12 and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse.

13 And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third,

14 Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth,

15 Ozem the sixth, David the seventh:

16 whose sisters *were* Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three.

17 And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa *was* Jether the Ishmaelite.

18 And Caleb the son of Hezron begat *children* of Azubah *his* wife, and
of Jerioth: her sons *are* these; Jesher, and Shobab, and Ardon.
19 And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which
bare him Hur.
20 And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel.
21 And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the
father of Gilead, whom he married when he *was* threescore years
old; and she bare him Segub.
22 And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land
of Gilead.

The persons mentioned in the former paragraph are most of them such as we read of, and most of them such as we read much of, in other scriptures; but very few of those to whom this paragraph relates are mentioned any where else. It should seem, the tribe of Judah were more full and exact in their genealogies than any other of the tribes, in which we must acknowledge a special providence, for the clearing of the genealogy of Christ.

1. Here we find Bezaleel, who was head-workman in building the tabernacle, Ex 31:2.

2. Hezron, who was the son of Pharez (1Ch 2:5), was the father of all this progeny, his sons, Caleb and Jerahmeel, being very fruitful, and he himself likewise, even in his old age, for he left his wife pregnant when he died, 1Ch 2:24. This Hezron was one of the seventy that went down with Jacob into Egypt, Ge 46:12. There his family thus increased, as other oppressed families there did. We cannot but suppose that he died during the Israelites' bondage in Egypt; and yet it is here said he died in Caleb-Ephratah (that is, Bethlehem), in the land of Canaan, 1Ch 2:24. Perhaps, though the body of the people continued in Egypt, yet some that were more active than the rest, at least before their bondage came to be extreme, visited Canaan sometimes and got footing there, though afterwards they lost it. The achievements of Jair, here

mentioned (1Ch 2:22,23), we had an account of in Nu 32:41; and, it is supposed, they were long after the conquest of Canaan. The Jews say, Hezron married his third wife when he was sixty years old (1Ch 2:21), and another afterwards (1Ch 2:24), because he had a great desire of posterity in the family of Pharez, from whom the Messiah was to descend.

3. Here is mention of one that died without children (1Ch 2:30), and another (1Ch 2:32), and of one that had no sons, but daughters, 1Ch 2:34. Let those that are in any of these ways afflicted not think their case new or singular. Providence orders these affairs of families by an incontestable sovereignty, as pleaseth him, giving children, or withholding them, or giving all of one sex. He is not bound to please us, but we are bound to acquiesce in his good pleasure. To those that love him he will himself be better than ten sons, and give them in his house a place and a name better than of sons and daughters. Let not those therefore that are written childless envy the families that are built up and replenished. Shall our eye be evil because God's is good?

4. Here is mention of one who had an only daughter, and married her to his servant an Egyptian, 1Ch 2:34,35. If it be mentioned to his praise, we must suppose that this Egyptian was proselyted to the Jewish religion and that he was very eminent for wisdom and virtue, otherwise it would not have become a true-born Israelite to match a daughter to him, especially an only daughter. If Egyptians become converts, and servants do worthily, neither their parentage nor their servitude should be a bar to their preferment. Such a one this Egyptian servant might be that she who married him might live as happily with him as if she had married one of the rulers of her tribe.

5. The pedigree of several of these terminates, not in a person, but in a place or country, as one is said to be the father of

Kirjath-jearim (1Ch 2:50), another of Bethlehem (1Ch 2:51), which was afterwards David's city, because these places fell to their lot in the division of the land.

6. Here are some that are said to be families of scribes (1Ch 2:55), such as kept up learning in their family, especially scripture-learning, and taught the people the good knowledge of God. Among all these great families we are glad to find some that were families of scribes. Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets--all the families of Israel families of scribes, well instructed to the kingdom of heaven, and able to bring out of their treasury things new and old!

23 And he took Geshur, and Aram, with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath, and the towns thereof, *even* threescore cities. All these *belonged to* the sons of Machir the father of Gilead.

24 And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephratah, then Abiah Hezron's wife bare him Ashur the father of Tekoa.

25 And the sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron were, Ram the firstborn, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozem, *and* Ahijah.

26 Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name *was* Atarah; she *was* the mother of Onam.

27 And the sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel were, Maaz, and Jamin, and Eker.

28 And the sons of Onam were, Shammai, and Jada. And the sons of Shammai; Nadab, and Abishur.

29 And the name of the wife of Abishur *was* Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid.

30 And the sons of Nadab; Seled, and Appaim: but Seled died without children.

31 And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Sheshan. And the children of Sheshan; Ahlai.

32 And the sons of Jada the brother of Shammai; Jether, and Jonathan: and Jether died without children.

33 And the sons of Jonathan; Peleth, and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel.

34 Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had a
servant, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Jarha.
35 And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and she
bare him Attai.
36 And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad,
37 and Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed,
38 and Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah,
39 and Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah,
40 and Eleasah begat Sisamai, and Sisamai begat Shallum,
41 and Shallum begat Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begat Elishama.
42 Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel *were*, Mesha his
firstborn, which *was* the father of Ziph; and the sons of Mareshah
the father of Hebron.
43 And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and
Shema.
44 And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat
Shammai.
45 And the son of Shammai *was* Maon: and Maon *was* the father of
Beth-zur.
46 And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez:
and Haran begat Gazez.
47 And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Gesham, and
Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph.
48 Maachah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah.
49 She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of
Machbenah, and the father of Gibea: and the daughter of Caleb *was*
Achsa.
50 These were the sons of Caleb the son of Hur, the firstborn of
Ephratah; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim,
51 Salma the father of Bethlehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader.
52 And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim had sons; Haroeh, *and* half
of the Manahethites.
53 And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites,
and the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; of them came the
Zareathites, and the Eshtaulites.

54 The sons of Salma; Bethlehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth,
the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites.
55 And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites,
the Shimeathites, *and* Suchathites. These *are* the Kenites that came
of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

1 Chronicles-3

The Sons of David

1 Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in
Hebron; the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: the
second, Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess:

We had an account of David's sons, 2Sa 3:2-5,5:14-16, &c.

1. He had many sons; and no doubt wrote as he thought, Ps 127:5. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of these arrows.

2. Some of them were a grief to him, as Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah; and we do not read of any of them that imitated his piety or devotion except Solomon, and he came far short of it.

3. One of them, which Bath-sheba bore to him, he called Nathan, probably in honour of Nathan the prophet, who reproved him for his sin in that matter and was instrumental to bring him to repentance. It seems he loved him the better for it as long as he lived. It is wisdom to esteem those our best friends that deal faithfully with us. From this son of David our Lord Jesus descended, as appears Lu 3:31.

4. Here are two Elishamas, and two Eliphelets, 1Ch 3:6,8. Probably the two former were dead, and therefore David called two more by their names, which he would not have

done if there had been any ill omen in this practice as some fancy.

5. David had many concubines; but their children are not named, as not worthy of the honour (1Ch 3:9), the rather because the concubines had dealt treacherously with David in the affair of Absalom.

6. Of all David's sons Solomon was chosen to succeed him, perhaps not for any personal merits (his wisdom was God's gift), but so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

2 the third, Absalom the son of Maachah the daughter of Talmai king
of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith:
3 the fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his
wife.
4 *These* six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven
years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three
years.
5 And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab,
and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bath-shua the daughter of
Ammiel:
6 Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet,
7 and Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia,
8 and Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine.
9 *These were* all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines,
and Tamar their sister.

The Decendants of Solomon

10 And Solomons son *was* Rehoboam, Abia his son, Asa his son,
Jehoshaphat his son,
11 Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son,
12 Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son,
13 Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son,
14 Amon his son, Josiah his son.
15 And the sons of Josiah *were*, the firstborn Johanan, the second

Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum.

16 And the sons of Jehoiakim; Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son.

David having nineteen sons, we may suppose them to have raised many noble families in Israel whom we never hear of in the history. But the scripture gives us an account only of the descendants of Solomon here, and of Nathan, Lu 3:31 The rest had the honour to be the sons of David; but these only had the honour to be related to the Messiah. The sons of Nathan were his fathers as man, the sons of Solomon his predecessors as king. We have here,

1 The great and celebrated names by which the line of David is drawn down to the captivity, the kings of Judah in a lineal succession, the history of whom we have had at large in the two books of Kings and shall meet with again in the second book of Chronicles. Seldom has a crown gone in a direct line from father to son for seventeen descents together, as here. This was the recompence of David's piety. About the time of the captivity the lineal descent was interrupted, and the crown went from one brother to another and from a nephew to an uncle, which was a presage of the eclipsing of the glory of that house.

2 The less famous, and most of them very obscure, names, in which the house of David subsisted after the captivity. The only famous man of that house that we meet with at their return from captivity was Zerubbabel, elsewhere called the son of Salathiel, but appearing here to be his grandson (1Ch 3:17-19), which is usual in scripture. Belshazzar is called Nebuchadnezzar's son, but was his grandson. Salathiel is said to be the son of Jeconiah because adopted by him, and because, as some think, he succeeded him in the dignity to which he was restored by Evil-merodach. Otherwise Jeconiah was written childless: he was the signet God plucked from his right hand (Jer 22:24), and in his room

Zerubbabel was placed, and therefore God saith to him (Hag 2:23), I will make thee as a signet.

The posterity of Zerubbabel here bear not the same names that they do in the genealogies (Mt 1:1-17,Lu 3:23-38), but those no doubt were taken from the then herald's office, the public registers which the priests kept of all the families of Judah, especially that of David. The last person named in this chapter is Anani, of whom bishop Patrick says that the Targum adds these words, He is the king Messiah, who is to be revealed, and some of the Jewish writers give this reason, because it is said (Da 7:13), the son of man came gnim gnanani--with the clouds of heaven. The reason indeed is very foreign and far-fetched; but that learned man thinks it may be made use of as an evidence that their minds were always full of the thoughts of the Messiah and that they expected it would not be very long after the days of Zerubbabel before the set time of his approach would come.

17 And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son,
18 Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.
19 And the sons of Pedaiah *were,* Zerubbabel, and Shimei: and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister:
20 and Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushab-hesed, five.
21 And the sons of Hananiah; Pelatiah, and Jesaiah: the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shechaniah.
22 And the sons of Shechaniah; Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six.
23 And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three.
24 And the sons of Elioenai *were,* Hodaiah, and Eliashib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Dalaiah, and Anani, seven.

1 Chronicles-4

The Descendants of Judah

1 The sons of Judah; Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and
Shobal.
2 And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath; and Jahath begat
Ahumai, and Lahad. These *are* the families of the Zorathites.
3 And these *were of* the father of Etam; Jezreel, and Ishma, and
Idbash: and the name of their sister *was* Hazelelponi:
4 and Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah.
These *are* the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephratah, the father of
Bethlehem.
5 And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.
6 And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hepher, and Temeni, and
Haahashtari. These *were* the sons of Naarah.
7 And the sons of Helah *were,* Zereth, and Jezoar, and Ethnan.

One reason, no doubt, why Ezra is here most particular in the register of the tribe of Judah is because it was that tribe which, with its appendages, Simeon, Benjamin, and Levi, made up the kingdom of Judah, which not only long survived the other tribes in Canaan, but in process of time, now when this was written, returned out of captivity, when the generality of the other tribes were lost in the kingdom of Assyria. The most remarkable person in this paragraph is Jabez. It is not said whose son he was, nor does it appear in what age he lived; but, it should seem, he was the founder of one of the families of Aharhel, mentioned 1Ch 4:8. Here is,

I The reason of his name: his mother gave him the name with this reason, Because I bore him with sorrow, 1Ch 4:9. All children are borne with sorrow (for the sentence upon the woman is, In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children), but some with much more sorrow than others. Usually the sorrow in bearing is afterwards forgotten for joy that the child is born; but here it seems it was so extraordinary that it was

remembered when the child came to be circumcised, and care was taken to perpetuate the remembrance of it while he lived. Perhaps the mother called Habez, as Rachel called her son Benoni, when she was dying of the sorrow. Or, if she recovered it, yet thus she recorded it,

1. That it might be a continual memorandum to herself, to be thankful to God as long as she lived for supporting her under and bringing her through that sorrow. It may be of use to be often reminded of our sorrows, that we may always have such thoughts of things as we had in the day of our affliction, and may learn to rejoice with trembling.

2. That it might likewise be a memorandum to him what this world is into which she bore him, a vale of tears, in which he must expect few days and full of trouble. The sorrow he carried in his name might help to put a seriousness upon his spirit. It might also remind him to love and honour his mother, and labour, in every thing, to be a comfort to her who brought him into the world with so much sorrow. It is piety in children thus to requite their parents, 1Ti 5:4.

II The eminence of his character: He was more honourable than his brethren, qualified above them by the divine grace and dignified above them by the divine providence; they did virtuously, but he excelled them all. Now the sorrow with which his mother bore him was abundantly recompensed. That son which of all her children cost her most dear she was most happy in, and was made glad in proportion to the affliction, Ps 90:15. We are not told upon what account he was more honourable than his brethren, whether because he raised a greater estate, or was preferred to the magistracy, or signalized himself in war; we have most reason to think it was upon the account of his learning and piety, not only because these, above any thing, put honour upon a man, but

because we have reason to think that in these Jabez was eminent.

1. In learning, because we find that the families of the scribes dwelt at Jabez (1Ch 2:55), a city which, it is likely, took its name from him. The Jews say that he was a famous doctor of the law and left many disciples behind him. And it should seem, by the mentioning of him so abruptly here, that his name was well known when Ezra wrote this.

2. In piety, because we find here that he was a praying man. His inclination to devotion made him truly honourable, and by prayer he obtained those blessings from God which added much to his honour. The way to be truly great is to be truly good and to pray much.

III. The prayer he made, probably like Solomon's prayer for wisdom, just when he was setting out in the world. He set himself to acknowledge God in all his ways, put himself under the divine blessing and protection, and prospered accordingly. Perhaps these were the heads on which he enlarged in his daily prayers; for this purpose it was his constant practice to pray alone, and with his family, as Daniel. Some think that it was upon some particular occasion, when he was straitened and threatened by his enemies, that he prayed this prayer. Observe,

1. To whom he prayed, not to any of the gods of the Gentiles; no, he called on the God of Israel, the living and true God, who alone can hear and answer prayer, and in prayer had an eye to him as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, the God with whom Jacob wrestled and prevailed and was thence called Israel.

2. What was the nature of his prayer.

(1.) As the margin reads it, it was a solemn vow--If thou wilt bless me indeed, &c. and then the sense is imperfect, but may easily be filled up from Jacob's vow, or some such like--then thou shalt be my God. He did not express his promise, but left it to be understood, either because he was afraid to promise in his own strength or because he resolved to devote himself entirely to God. He does, as it were, give God a blank paper, let him write what he pleases: "Lord, if thou wilt bless me and keep me, do what thou wilt with me, I will be at thy command and disposal for ever."

(2.) As the text reads it, it was the language of a most ardent and affectionate desire: O that thou wouldst bless me!

3. What was the matter of his prayer. Four things he prayed for:--

(1.) That God would bless him indeed: "That, blessing, thou wilt bless me, bless me greatly with manifold and abundant blessings." Perhaps he had an eye to the promise God made to Abraham (Ge 22:17), In blessing, I will bless thee. "Let that blessing of Abraham come upon me." Spiritual blessings are the best blessings, and those are blessed indeed who are blessed with them. God's blessings are real things and produce real effects. We can but wish a blessing: he commands it. Those whom he blesses are blessed indeed.

(2.) That he would enlarge his coast, that he would prosper his endeavours for the increase of what fell to his lot either by work or war. That God would enlarge our hearts, and so enlarge our portion in himself and in the heavenly Canaan, ought to be our desire and prayer.

(3.) That God's hand might be with him. The prayer of Moses for this tribe of Judah was, That his own hands might be sufficient for him, De 33:7; but Jabez expects not that this can be the case, unless he have God's hand with him and the presence of his power. God's hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is indeed a hand sufficient for us, all-sufficient.

(4.) That he would keep him from evil, the evil of sin, the evil of trouble, all the evil designs of his enemies, that they might not hurt him, nor grieve him, nor make him a Jabez indeed, a man of sorrow: in the original there is an allusion to his name. Father in heaven, deliver me from evil.

4. What was the success of his prayer: God granted him that which he requested, prospered him remarkably, and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, in his conflicts with the Canaanites, and so he became more honourable than his brethren. God was of old always ready to hear prayer, and his ear is not yet heavy.

8 And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the
son of Harum.
9 And Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother
called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.
10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest
bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be
with me, and that thou wouldest keep *me* from evil, that it may not
grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.
11 And Chelub the brother of Shuah begat Mehir, which *was* the
father of Eshton.

We may observe in these verses,

1. That here is a whole family of craftsmen, handicraft tradesmen, that applied themselves to all sorts of manufactures, in which they were ingenious and industrious

above their neighbours, 1Ch 4:14. There was a valley where they lived which was, from them, called the valley of craftsmen. Those that are craftsmen are not therefore to be looked upon as mean men. These craftsmen, though two of a trade often disagree, yet chose to live together, for the improving of arts by comparing notes, and that they might support one another's reputation.

2. That one of these married the daughter of Pharaoh (1Ch 4:18), which was the common name of the kings of Egypt. If an Israelite in Egypt before the bondage began, while Joseph's merits were yet fresh in mind, was preferred to be the king's son-in-law, it is not to be thought strange: few Israelites could, like Moses, refuse an alliance with the court.

3. That another is said to be the father of the house of those that wrought fine linen, 1Ch 4:21. It is inserted in their genealogy as their honour that they were the best weavers in the kingdom, and they brought up their children, from one generation to another, to the same business, not aiming to make them gentlemen. This Laadah is said to be the father of those that wrought fine linen, as before the flood Jubal is said to be the father of musicians and Jabal of shepherds, &c. His posterity inhabited the city of Mareshah, the manufacture or staple commodity of which place was linen-cloth, with which their kings and priests were clothed.

4. That another family had had dominion in Moab, but were now in servitude in Babylon, 1Ch 4:22,23.

(1.) It was found among the ancient things that they had the dominion in Moab. Probably in David's time, when that country was conquered, they transplanted themselves thither, and were put in places of power there, which they held for

several generations; but this was a great while ago, time out of mind.

(2.) Their posterity were now potters and gardeners, as is supposed in Babylon, where they dwelt with the king for his work, got a good livelihood by their industry, and therefore cared not for returning with their brethren to their own land, after the years of captivity had expired. Those that now have dominion know not what their posterity may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be glad to take up with. But those were unworthy the name of Israelites that would dwell among plants and hedges rather than be at the pains to return to Canaan.

12 And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father
of Ir-nahash. These *are* the men of Rechah.
13 And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel, and Seraiah: and the sons of
Othniel; Hathath.
14 And Meonothai begat Ophrah: and Seraiah begat Joab, the father
of the valley of Charashim; for they were craftsmen.
15 And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh; Iru, Elah, and Naam:
and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz.
16 And the sons of Jehaleleel; Ziph, and Ziphah, Tiria, and Asareel.
17 And the sons of Ezra *were,* Jether, and Mered, and Epher, and Jalon:
and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of
Eshtemoa.
18 And his wife Jehudijah bare Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the
father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these *are*
the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took.
19 And the sons of *his* wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of
Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite.
20 And the sons of Shimon *were,* Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan,
and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi *were,* Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth.
21 The sons of Shelah the son of Judah *were,* Er the father of Lecah,
and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of
them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea,

22 and Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who
had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. And *these are*
ancient things.
23 These *were* the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and
hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.

The Descendants of Simeon

24 The sons of Simeon *were,* Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, *and*
Shaul:

We have here some of the genealogies of the tribe of Simeon (though it was not a tribe of great note), especially the princes of that tribe, 1Ch 4:38. Of this tribe it is said that they increased greatly, but not like the children of Judah, 1Ch 4:27. Those whom God increases ought to be thankful, though they see others that are more increased. Here observe,

1 The cities allotted them (1Ch 4:28), of which see Jos 19:1-9, &c. When it is said that they were theirs unto the reign of David (1Ch 4:31) intimation is given that when the ten tribes revolted from the house of David many of the Simeonites quitted these cities, because they lay within Judah, and seated themselves elsewhere.

2 The ground they got elsewhere. When those of this tribe that revolted from the house of David were carried captive with the rest into Assyria those that adhered to Judah were remarkably owned of God and prospered in their endeavours to enlarge their coasts. It was in the days of Hezekiah that a generation of Simeonites, whose tribe had long crouched and truckled, was animated to make these bold efforts.

(1.) Some of them attacked a place in Arabia, as it should seem, called the entrance of Gedor, inhabited by the posterity of accursed Ham (1Ch 4:40), made themselves masters of it, and dwelt there. This adds to the glory of Hezekiah's pious

reign, that, as his kingdom in general prospered, so did particular families. It is said that they found fat pastures, and yet the land was quiet; even when the kings of Assyria were giving disturbance to all their neighbours this land escaped their alarms. The inhabitants being shepherds, who molested none, were not themselves molested, till the Simeonites came and drove them out and succeeded them, not only in the plenty, but in the peace, of their land. Those who dwell (as we do) in a fruitful country, and whose land is wide, and quiet, and peaceable, have reason to own themselves indebted to that God who appoints the bounds of our habitation.

(2.) Others of them, to the number of 500, under the command of four brethren here named, made a descent upon Mount Seir, and smote the remainder of the devoted Amalekites, and took possession of their country, 1Ch 4:42,43. Now the curses on Ham and Amalek had a further accomplishment, when they seemed dormant, if not dead; as had also the curse on Simeon, that he should be divided and scattered (Ge 49:7): yet to him it was turned into a blessing, for the families of Simeon, which thus transplanted themselves into those distant countries, are said to dwell there unto this day (1Ch 4:43), by which it should seem they escaped the calamities of the captivity. Providence sometimes sends those out of trouble that are designed for preservation.

25 Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son.
26 And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, Shimei his son.
27 And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah.
28 And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Moladah, and Hazar-shual,
29 and at Bilhah, and at Ezem, and at Tolad,
30 and at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag,

31 and at Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susim, and at Beth-birei, and at
Shaaraim. These *were* their cities unto the reign of David.
32 And their villages *were,* Etam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and
Ashan, five cities:
33 and all their villages that *were* round about the same cities, unto
Baal. These *were* their habitations, and their genealogy.
34 And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Joshah the son of Amaziah,
35 and Joel, and Jehu the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of
Asiel,
36 and Elioenai and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiah, and Asaiah, and Adiel,
and Jesimiel, and Benaiah,
37 and Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the
son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah;
38 these mentioned by *their* names were princes in their families: and
the house of their fathers increased greatly.
39 And they went to the entrance of Gedor, *even* unto the east side of
the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks.
40 And they found fat pasture and good, and the land *was* wide, and
quiet, and peaceable; for *they* of Ham had dwelt there of old.
41 And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of
Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found
there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their
rooms: because *there was* pasture there for their flocks.
42 And *some* of them, *even* of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men,
went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and
Neariah, and Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi.
43 And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and
dwelt there unto this day.

1 Chronicles-5

The Descendants of Reuben

1 Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he *was* the
firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright

was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.

2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but the birthright *was* Joseph's:)

3 the sons, *I say,* of Reuben the firstborn of Israel *were,* Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

4 The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son,

5 Micah his son, Reaia his son, Baal his son,

We have here an extract out of the genealogies,

I. Of the tribe of Reuben, where we have,

1 The reason why this tribe is thus postponed. It is confessed that Reuben was the first-born of Israel, and, upon that account, might challenge the precedency; but he forfeited his birthright by defiling his father's concubine, and was, for that, sentenced not to excel, Ge 49:4. Sin lessens men, thrusts them down from their excellency. Seventh-commandment sins especially leave an indelible stain upon men's names and families, a reproach which time will not wipe away. Reuben's seed, to the last, bear the disgrace of Reuben's sin. Yet, though that tribe was degraded, it was not discarded or disinherited. The sullying of the honour of an Israelite is not the losing of his happiness. Reuben loses his birthright, yet it does not devolve upon Simeon the next in order; for it was typical, and therefore must attend, not the course of nature, but the choice of grace. The advantages of the birthright were dominion and a double portion. Reuben having forfeited these, it was thought too much that both should be transferred to any one, and therefore they were divided.

(1.) Joseph had the double portion; for two tribes descended from him, Ephraim and Manasseh, each of whom had a child's part (for so Jacob by faith blessed them, Heb 11:21,Ge 48:15,22), and each of those tribes was as considerable, and

made as good a figure, as any one of the twelve, except Judah.

But, (2.) Judah had the dominion; on him the dying patriarch entailed the sceptre, Ge 49:10. Of him came the chief ruler, David first, and, in the fulness of time, Messiah the Prince, Mic 5:2. This honour was secured to Judah, though the birthright was Joseph's; and, having this, he needed not envy Joseph the double portion.

2 The genealogy of the princes of this tribe, the chief family of it (many, no doubt, being omitted), to Beerah, who was head of this clan when the king of Assyria carried them captive, 1Ch 5:4-6. Perhaps he is mentioned as prince of the Reubenites at that time because he did not do his part to prevent the captivity.

3. The enlargement of the coasts of this tribe. They increasing, and their cattle being multiplied, they crowded out their neighbours the Hagarites, and extended their conquests, though not to the river Euphrates, yet to the wilderness which abutted upon that river, 1Ch 5:9,10. Thus God did for his people as he promised them: he cast out the enemy from before them by little and little, and gave them their land as they had occasion for it, Ex 23:30.

II. Of the tribe of Gad. Some great families of that tribe are here named (1Ch 5:12), seven that were the children of Abihail, whose pedigree is carried upwards from the son to the father (1Ch 5:14,15), as that 1Ch 5:4,5, is brought downwards from father to son. These genealogies were perfected in the days of Jotham king of Judah, but were begun some years before, in the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. What particular reason there was for taking these accounts then does not appear; but it was just before they were carried

away captive by the Assyrians, as appears 2Ki 15:29,31. When the judgments of God were ready to break out against them for their wretched degeneracy and apostasy then were they priding themselves in their genealogies, that they were the children of the covenant; as the Jews, in our Saviour's time, who, when they were ripe for ruin, boasted, We have Abraham to our father. Or there might be a special providence in it, and a favourable intimation that though they were, for the present, cast out, they were not cast off for ever. What we design to call for hereafter we keep an inventory of.

6 Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away
captive: he *was* prince of the Reubenites.
7 And his brethren by their families, when the genealogy of their
generations was reckoned, *were* the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah,
8 and Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who
dwelt in Aroer, even unto Nebo and Baal-meon:
9 and eastward he inhabited unto the entering in of the wilderness
from the river Euphrates: because their cattle were multiplied in
the land of Gilead.
10 And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell
by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east
land of Gilead.

The Descendants of Gad

11 And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of
Bashan unto Salcah:
12 Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaanai, and Shaphat in
Bashan.
13 And their brethren of the house of their fathers *were,* Michael, and
Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber,
seven.
14 These *are* the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah,
the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son
of Jahdo, the son of Buz;

15 Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers.
16 And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders.
17 All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

The History of the Two and a Half Tribes

18 The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, *were* four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war.

The heads of the half-tribe of Manasseh, that were seated on the other side Jordan, are named here, 1Ch 5:23,24. Their lot, at first, was Bashan only; but afterwards they increased so much in wealth and power that they spread far north, even unto Hermon. Two things only are here recorded concerning these tribes on the other side Jordan, in which they were all concerned. They all shared,

I. In a glorious victory over the Hagarites, so the Ishmaelites were now called, to remind them that they were the sons of the bond-woman, that was cast out. We are not told when this victory was obtained: whether it be the same with that of the Reubenites (which is said 1Ch 5:10 to be in the days of Saul), or whether that success of one of these tribes animated and excited the other two to join with them in another expedition, is not certain. It seems, though in Saul's time the common interests of the kingdom were weak and low, some of the tribes that acted separately did well for themselves. We are here told,

1. What a brave army these frontier-tribes brought into the field against the Hagarites, 44,000 men and upwards, all strong, and brave, and skilful in war, so many effective men,

that knew how to manage their weapons, 1Ch 5:18. How much more considerable might Israel have been than they were in the time of the judges if all the tribes had acted in conjunction!

2. What course they took to engage God for them: They cried to God, and put their trust in him, 1Ch 5:20. Now they acted as Israelites indeed.

(1.) As the seed of believing Abraham, they put their trust in God. Though they had a powerful army, they relied not on that, but on the divine power. They depended on the commission they had from God to wage war with their neighbours for the enlarging of their coasts, if there was occasion, even with those that were very far off, besides the devoted nations. See De 20:15. They depended on God's providence to give them success.

(2.) As the seed of praying Jacob, they cried unto God, especially in the battle, when perhaps, at first, they were in danger of being overpowered. See the like done, 2Ch 13:14. In distress, God expects we should cry to him; he distrains upon us for this tribute, this rent. In our spiritual conflicts, we must look up to heaven for strength; and it is the believing prayer that will be the prevailing prayer.

3. We are told what success they had: God was entreated of them, though need drove them to him; so ready is he to hear and answer prayer. They were helped against their enemies; for God never yet failed any that trusted in him. And then they routed the enemy's army, though far superior in number to theirs, slew many (1Ch 5:22), took 100,000 prisoners, enriched themselves greatly with the spoil, and settled themselves in their country (1Ch 5:21,22), and all this because the war was of God, undertaken in his fear and

carried on in a dependence upon him. If the battle be the Lord's, there is reason to hope it will be successful. Then we may expect to prosper in any enterprise, and then only, when we take God along with us.

II. They shared, at length, in an inglorious captivity. Had they kept close to God and their duty, they would have continued to enjoy both their ancient lot and their new conquests; but they transgressed against the God of their fathers, 1Ch 5:25. They lay upon the borders, and conversed most with the neighbouring nations, by which means they learned their idolatrous usages and transmitted the infection to the other tribes; for this God had a controversy with them. He was a husband to them, and no marvel that his jealousy burnt like fire when they went a whoring after other gods. Justly is a bill of divorce given to the adulteress.

God stirred up the spirit of the kings of Assyria, first one and then another, against them, served his own purposes by the designs of those ambitious monarchs, employed them to chastise these revolters first, and, when that humbled them not, then wholly to root them out, 1Ch 5:26. These tribes were first placed, and they were first displaced. They would have the best land, not considering that it lay most exposed. But those who are governed more by sense than by reason or faith in their choices may expect to fare accordingly.

19 And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab.

20 And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that *were* with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them; because they put their trust in him.

21 And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men a hundred thousand.

22 For there fell down many slain, because the war *was* of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.
23 And the children of the half tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon and Senir, and unto mount Hermon.
24 And these *were* the heads of the house of their fathers, even Epher, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valor, famous men, *and* heads of the house of their fathers.
25 And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them.
26 And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

1 Chronicles-6

The Descendants of Levi

1 The sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The priests and Levites were more concerned than any other Israelites to preserve their pedigree clear and to be able to prove it, because all the honours and privileges of their office depended upon their descent. And we read of those who, though perhaps they really were children of the priests, yet, because they could not find the register of their genealogies, nor make out their descent by any authentic record, were, as polluted, put from the priesthood, and forbidden to eat of the holy things, Ezr 2:62,63. It is but very little that is here recorded of the genealogies of this sacred tribe. I The first fathers of it are here named twice, 1Ch 6:1,16. Gershom, Kohath, and Merari, are three names which we were very conversant with in the book of Numbers, when the families

of the Levites were marshalled and had their work assigned to them.

Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam, we have known much more of than their names, and cannot pass them over here without remembering that this was that Moses and Aaron whom God honoured in making them instruments of Israel's deliverance and settlement and figures of him that was to come, Moses as a prophet and Aaron as a priest. And the mention of Nadab and Abihu (though, having no children, there was no occasion to bring them into the genealogy) cannot but remind us of the terrors of that divine justice which they were made monuments of for offering strange fire, that we may always fear before him.

2 The line of Eleazar, the successor of Aaron, is here drawn down to the time of the captivity, 1Ch 6:4-15. It begins with Eleazar, who came out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and ends with Jehozadak, who went into the house of bondage in Babylon. Thus, for their sins, they were left as they were found, which might also intimate that the Levitical priesthood did not make anything perfect, but this was to be done by the bringing in of a better hope. All these here named were not high priests; for, in the time of the judges, that dignity was, upon some occasion or other, brought into the family of Ithamar, of which Eli was; but in Zadok it returned again to the right line. Of Azariah it is here said (1Ch 6:10), He it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built.

It is supposed that this was that Azariah who bravely opposed the presumption of king Uzziah when he invaded the priest's office (2Ch 26:17,18), though he ventured his neck by so doing. This was done like a priest, like one that was truly zealous for his God. He that thus boldly maintained and defended the priest's office, and made good its barriers

against such a daring insult, might well be said to execute it; and this honour is put upon him for it; while Urijah, one of his successors, for a base compliance with King Ahaz, in building him an idolatrous altar, has the disgrace put upon him of being left out of this genealogy, as perhaps some others are. But some think that this remark upon this Azariah should have been added to his grandfather of the same name (1Ch 6:9), who was the son of Ahimaaz, and that he was the priest who first officiated in Solomon's temple.

3. Some other of the families of the Levites are here accounted for. One of the families of Gershom (that of Libni) is here drawn down as far as Samuel, who had the honour of a prophet added to that of a Levite. One of the families of Merari (that of Mahli) is likewise drawn down for several descents, 1Ch 6:29,30.

2 And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel.
3 And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
4 Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua,
5 and Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi,
6 and Uzzi begat Zerahiah, and Zerahiah begat Meraioth,
7 Meraioth begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub,
8 and Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz,
9 and Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan,
10 and Johanan begat Azariah; (he *it is* that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem:)
11 and Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub,
12 and Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum,
13 and Shallum begat Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begat Azariah,
14 And Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak,
15 and Jehozadak went *into captivity,* when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.
16 The sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.
17 And these *be* the names of the sons of Gershom; Libni, and Shimei.
18 And the sons of Kohath *were,* Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and

Uzziel.
19 The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. And these *are* the families
of the Levites according to their fathers.
20 Of Gershom; Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son,
21 Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son.
22 The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his
son,
23 Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son, and Assir his son,
24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his son, and Shaul his son.
25 And the sons of Elkanah; Amasai, and Ahimoth.
26 *As for* Elkanah: the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath
his son,
27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son.
28 And the sons of Samuel; the firstborn Vashni, and Abiah.
29 The sons of Merari; Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his
son,
30 Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, Asaiah his son.

The Temple Singers Appointed by David

31 And these *are they* whom David set over the service of song in the
house of the Lord, after that the ark had rest.

When the Levites were first ordained in the wilderness much of the work then appointed them lay in carrying and taking care of the tabernacle and the utensils of it, while they were in their march through the wilderness. In David's time their number was increased; and, though the greater part of them was dispersed all the nation over, to teach the people the good knowledge of the Lord, yet those that attended the house of God were so numerous that there was not constant work for them all; and therefore David, by special commission and direction from God, new-modelled the Levites, as we shall find in the latter part of this book. Here we are told what the work was which he assigned them.

I. Singing-work, 1Ch 6:31. David was raised up on high to be the sweet psalmist of Israel (2Sa 23:1), not only to pen psalms, but to appoint the singing of them in the house of the Lord (not so much because he was musical as because he was devout), and this he did after that the ark had rest. While that was in captivity, obscure, and unsettled, the harps were hung upon the willow-trees: singing was then thought unseasonable (when the bridegroom is taken away they shall fast); but the harps being resumed, and the songs revived, at the bringing up of the ark, they were continued afterwards. For we should rejoice as much in the prolonging of our spiritual privileges as in the restoring of them. When the service of the ark was much superseded by its rest they had other work cut out for them (for Levites should never be idle) and were employed in the service of song.

Thus when the people of God come to the rest which remains for them above they shall take leave of all their burdens and be employed in everlasting songs. These singers kept up that service in the tabernacle till the temple was built, and then they waited on their office there, 1Ch 6:32. When they came to that stately magnificent house they kept as close both to their office and to their order as they had done in the tabernacle. It is a pity that the preferment of the Levites should ever make them remiss in their business. We have here an account of the three great masters who were employed in the service of the sacred song, with their respective families; for they waited with their children, that is, such as descended from them or were allied to them, 1Ch 6:33. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were the three that were appointed to this service, one of each of the three houses of the Levites, that there might be an equality in the distribution of this work and honour, and that every one might know his post, such an admirable order was there in this choir service.

1. Of the house of Kohath was Heman with his family (1Ch 6:33), a man of a sorrowful spirit, if it be the same Heman that penned the Ps 88:1-18, and yet a singer. He was the grandson of Samuel the prophet, the son of Joel, of whom it is said that he walked not in the ways of Samuel (1Sa 8:2,3); but it seems, though the son did not, the grandson did. Thus does the blessing entailed on the seed of the upright sometimes pass over one generation and fasten upon the next. And this Heman, though the grandson of that mighty prince, did not think it below him to be a precentor in the house of God. David himself was willing to be a door-keeper. Rather we may look upon this preferment of the grandson in the church as a recompense for the humble modest resignation which the grandfather made of his authority in the state. Many such ways God has of making up his people's losses and balancing their disgraces. Perhaps David, in making Heman the chief, had some respect to his old friend Samuel.

2. Of the house of Gershom was Asaph, called his brother, because in the same office and of the same tribe, though of another family. He was posted on Heman's right hand in the choir, 1Ch 6:39. Several of the psalms bear his name, being either penned by him or tuned by him as the chief musician. It is plain that he was the penman of some psalms; for we read of those that praised the Lord in the words of David and of Asaph. He was a seer as well as a singer, 2Ch 29:30. His pedigree is traced up here, through names utterly unknown, as high as Levi, 1Ch 6:39-43.

3. Of the house of Merari was Ethan (1Ch 6:44), who was appointed to Heman's left hand. His pedigree is also traced up to Levi, 1Ch 6:47. If these were the Heman and Ethan that penned the Ps 88:1-89:52, there appears no reason here why they should be called Ezrahites (see the titles of those psalms), as there does why those should be called so who are mentioned 1Ch 2:6, and who were the sons of Zerah.

II. There was serving-work, abundance of service to be done in the tabernacle of the house of God (1Ch 6:48), to provide water and fuel,--to wash and sweep, and carry out ashes,--to kill, and flay, and boil the sacrifices; and to all such services there were Levites appointed, those of other families, or perhaps those that were not fit to be singers, that had either no good voice or no good ear. As every one has received the gift, so let him minister. Those that could not sing must not therefore be laid aside as good for nothing; though they were not fit for that service, there was other service they might be useful in.

III. There was sacrificing-work, and that was to be done by the priests only, 1Ch 6:49. They only were to sprinkle the blood and burn the incense; as for the work of the most holy place, that was to be done by the high priest only. Each had his work, and they both needed one another and both helped one another in it. Concerning the work of the priests we are here told, 1. What was the end they were to have in their eye. They were to make an atonement for Israel, to mediate between the people and God; not to magnify and enrich themselves, but to serve the public. They were ordained for men. 2. What was the rule they were to have in their eye. They presided in God's house, yet must do as they were bidden, according to all that God commanded. That law the highest are subject to.

32 And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of
the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house
of the Lord in Jerusalem: and *then* they waited on their office
according to their order.
33 And these *are* they that waited with their children. Of the sons of
the Kohathites; Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of
Shemuel,
34 the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of
Toah,

35 the son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai,
36 the son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah,
37 the son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah,
38 the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel.
39 And his brother, Asaph, who stood on his right hand, *even* Asaph the son of Berachiah, the son of Shimea,
40 the son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah,
41 the son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah,
42 the son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei,
43 the son of Jahath, the son of Gershom, the son of Levi.
44 And their brethren the sons of Merari *stood* on the left hand: Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch,
45 the son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah,
46 the son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer,
47 the son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi.
48 Their brethren also the Levites *were* appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God.

The Descendants of Aaron

49 But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt offering, and on the altar of incense, *and were appointed* for all the work of the *place* most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.
50 And these *are* the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son,
51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son,
52 Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son,

53 Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

The Cities of the Levites

54 Now these *are* their dwelling places throughout their castles in their coasts, of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites: for theirs was the lot.

55 And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it.

We have here an account of the Levites' cities. They are here called their castles (1Ch 6:54), not only because walled and fortified, and well guarded by the country (for it is the interest of every nation to protect its ministers), but because they and their possessions were, in a particular manner, the care of the divine providence: as God was their portion, so God was their protection; and a cottage will be a castle to those that abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

This account is much the same with that which we had, Jos 21:1-45 We need not be critical in comparing them (what good will it do us?) nor will it do any hurt to the credit of the holy scripture if the names of some of the places be not spelt just the same here as they were there. We know it is common for cities to have several names. Sarum and Salisbury, Salop and Shrewsbury, are more unlike than Hilen (1Ch 6:58) and Holon (Jos 21:15), Ashan (1Ch 6:59) and Ain (Jos 21:16), Alemeth (1Ch 6:60) and Almon (Jos 21:18); and time changes names. We are only to observe that in this appointment of cities for the Levites God took care,

1. For the accomplishment of dying Jacob's prediction concerning this tribe, that it should be scattered in Israel, Ge 49:7.

2. For the diffusing of the knowledge of himself and his law to all parts of the land of Israel. Every tribe had Levites' cities in it; and so every room was furnished with a candle, so that

none could be ignorant of his duty but it was either his own fault or the Levites'.

3. For a comfortable maintenance for those that ministered in holy things. Besides their tithes and offerings, they had glebe-lands and cities of their own to dwell in. Some of the most considerable cities of Israel fell to the Levites' lot. Every tribe had benefit by the Levites, and therefore every tribe must contribute to their support. Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth, and do it cheerfully.

56 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb
the son of Jephunneh.
57 And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, *namely*,
Hebron, *the city* of refuge, and Libnah with her suburbs, and Jattir,
and Eshtemoa, with their suburbs,
58 and Hilen with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs,
59 and Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs:
60 and out of the tribe of Benjamin; Geba with her suburbs, and
Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All
their cities throughout their families *were* thirteen cities.
61 And unto the sons of Kohath, *which were* left of the family of that
tribe, *were cities given* out of the half tribe, *namely, out of* the half *tribe*
of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities.
62 And to the sons of Gershom throughout their families out of the
tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe
of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen
cities.
63 Unto the sons of Merari *were given* by lot, throughout their families,
out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of
the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.
64 And the children of Israel gave to the Levites *these* cities with their
suburbs.
65 And they gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and
out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of
the children of Benjamin, these cities, which are called by *their*
names.

66 And *the residue* of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of
their coasts out of the tribe of Ephraim.
67 And they gave unto them, *of* the cities of refuge, Shechem in mount
Ephraim with her suburbs; *they gave* also Gezer with her suburbs,
68 and Jokmeam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs,
69 and Ajalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs:
70 and out of the half tribe of Manasseh; Aner with her suburbs, and
Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons
of Kohath.
71 Unto the sons of Gershom *were given,* out of the family of the half
tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, and Ashtaroth
with her suburbs:
72 and out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath
with her suburbs,
73 and Ramoth with her suburbs, and Anem with her suburbs:
74 and out of the tribe of Asher; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon
with her suburbs,
75 and Hukok with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs:
76 and out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs,
and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjathaim with her suburbs.
77 Unto the rest of the children of Merari *were given,* out of the tribe of
Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs, Tabor with her suburbs:
78 and on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east side of Jordan,
were given them, out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the wilderness
with her suburbs, and Jahzah with her suburbs,
79 Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs:
80 and out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs,
and Mahanaim with her suburbs,
81 and Heshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.

1 Chronicles-7

The Descendants of Issachar

1 Now the sons of Issachar *were,* Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and
Shimrom, four.

We have here a short view given us,

I. Of the tribe of Issachar, whom Jacob had compared to a strong ass, couching between two burdens (Ge 49:14), an industrious tribe, that minded their country business very closely and rejoiced in their tents, De 33:18. And here it appears,

1. That they were a numerous tribe; for they had many wives. So fruitful their country was that they saw no danger of over-stocking the pasture, and so ingenious the people were that they could find work for all hands. Let no people complain of their numbers, provided they suffer none to be idle.

2. That they were a valiant tribe, men of might (1Ch 7:2,5), chief men, 1Ch 7:3. Those that were inured to labour and business were of all men the fittest to serve their country when there was occasion, The number of the respective families, as taken in the days of David, is here set down, amounting in the whole to above 145,000 men fit for war. The account, some think, was taken when Joab numbered the people, 2Sa 24:1-25 But I rather think it refers to some other computation that was made, perhaps among themselves, because it is said (1Ch 27:24) that that account was not inserted in the chronicles of king David, it having offended God.

II. Of the tribe of Benjamin. Some account is here given of this tribe, but much larger in the next chapter. The militia of this tribe scarcely reached to 60,000; but they are said to be mighty men of valour, 1Ch 7:7,9,11. Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf, Ge 49:27. It was the honour of this tribe that it produced Saul the first king, and more its honour that it adhered to the rightful kings of the house of David when the other tribes revolted.

Here is mention (1Ch 7:12) of Hushim the sons of Aher. The sons of Dan are said to be Hushim (Ge 46:23), and therefore some read Aher appellatively, Hushim--the sons of another (that is, another of Jacob's sons) or the sons of a stranger, which Israelites should not be, but such the Danites were when they set up Micah's graven and molten image among them.

III. Of the tribe of Naphtali, 1Ch 7:13. The first fathers only of that tribe are named, the very same that we shall find, Ge 46:24, only that Shillem there is Shallum here. None of their descendents are named, perhaps because their genealogies were lost.

IV. Of the tribe of Manasseh, that part of it which was seated within Jordan; for of the other part we had some account before, 1Ch 5:23-26, &c. Of this tribe observe,

1. That one of them married an Aramitess, that is, a Syrian, 1Ch 7:14. This was during their bondage in Egypt, so early did they begin to mingle with the nations.

2. That, though the father married a Syrian, Machir, the son of that marriage, perhaps seeing the inconvenience of it in his father's house, took to wife a daughter of Benjamin, 1Ch 7:15. It is good for the children to take warning by their father's mistakes and not stumble at the same stone.

3. Here is mention of Bedan (1Ch 7:17), who perhaps is the same with that Bedan who is mentioned as one of Israel's deliverers, 1Sa 12:11. Jair perhaps, who was of Manasseh (Jdg 10:3), was the man.

2 And the sons of Tola; Uzzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Jibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their father's house, *to wit,* of

Tola: *they were* valiant men of might in their generations; whose
number *was* in the days of David two and twenty thousand and six
hundred.
3 And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael,
and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men.
4 And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers,
were bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand *men:* for they
had many wives and sons.
5 And their brethren among all the families of Issachar *were* valiant
men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies fourscore and
seven thousand.

The Descendants of Benjamin

6 *The sons* of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediael, three.
7 And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth,
and Iri, five; heads of the house of *their* fathers, mighty men of valor;
and were reckoned by their genealogies twenty and two thousand
and thirty and four.
8 And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and
Elioenai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abiah, and Anathoth, and
Alameth. All these *are* the sons of Becher.
9 And the number of them, after their genealogy by their
generations, heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of
valor, *was* twenty thousand and two hundred.
10 The sons also of Jediael; Bilhan: and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and
Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish,
and Ahishahar.
11 All these the sons of Jediael, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men
of valor, *were* seventeen thousand and two hundred *soldiers,* fit to go
out for war *and* battle.
12 Shuppim also, and Huppim, the children of Ir, *and* Hushim, the
sons of Aher.

The Descendants of Naphtali

13 The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum, the
sons of Bilhah.

The Descendants of Manasseh

14 The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare; (*but* his
concubine the Aramitess bare Machir the father of Gilead:
15 and Machir took to wife *the sister* of Huppim and Shuppim, whose
sister's name *was* Maachah;) and the name of the second *was*
Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters.
16 And Maachah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his
name Peresh; and the name of his brother *was* Sheresh; and his
sons *were* Ulam and Rakem.
17 And the sons of Ulam; Bedan. These *were* the sons of Gilead, the
son of Machir, the son of Manasseh.
18 And his sister Hammoleketh bare Ishod, and Abiezer, and
Mahalah.
19 And the sons of Shemidah were, Ahian, and Shechem, and Likhi,
and Aniam.

The Descendants of Ephraim

20 And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and
Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son,

We have here an account,

I. Of the tribe of Ephraim. Great things we read of that tribe when it came to maturity. Here we have an account of the disasters of its infancy, while it was in Egypt as it should seem; for Ephraim himself was alive when those things were done, which yet is hard to imagine if it were, as is here computed, seven generations off. Therefore I am apt to think that either it was another Ephraim or that those who were slain were the immediate sons of that Ephraim that was the

son of Joseph. In this passage, which is related here only, we have,

1 The great breach that was made upon the family of Ephraim. The men of Gath, Philistines, giants, slew many of the sons of that family, because they came down to take away their cattle, 1Ch 7:21. It is uncertain who were the aggressors here. Some make the men of Gath the aggressors, men born in the land of Egypt, but now resident in Gath, supposing that they came down into the land of Goshen, to drive away the Ephraimites' cattle, and slew the owners, because they stood up in the defence of them. Many a man's life has been exposed and betrayed by his wealth; so far is it from being a strong city. Others think that the Ephraimites made a descent upon the men of Gath to plunder them, presuming that the time had come when they should be put in possession of Canaan; but they paid dearly for their rashness and precipitation.

Those that will not wait God's time cannot expect God's blessing. I rather think that the men of Gath came down upon the Ephraimites, because the Israelites in Egypt were shepherds, not soldiers, abounded in cattle of their own, and therefore were not likely to venture their lives for their neighbours' cattle: and the words may be read, The men of Gath slew them, for they came down to take away their cattle. Zabad the son of Ephraim, and Shuthelah, and Ezer, and Elead (his grandchildren), were, as Dr. Lightfoot thinks, the men that were slain. Jacob had foretold that the seed of Ephraim should become a multitude of nations (Ge 48:19), and yet that plant is thus nipped in the bud. God's providences often seem to contradict his promises; but, when they do so, they really magnify the promise, and make the performance of it, notwithstanding, so much more illustrious. The Ephraimites were the posterity of Joseph, and yet his power

could not protect them, though some think he was yet living. The sword devours one as well as another.

2 The great grief which oppressed the father of the family hereupon: Ephraim mourned many days. Nothing brings the aged to the grave with more sorrow than their following the young that descend from them to the grave first, especially if in blood. It is often the burden of those that live to be old that they see those go before them of whom they said, These same shall comfort us. It was a brotherly friendly office which his brethren did, when they came to comfort him under this great affliction, to express their sympathy with him and concern for him, and to suggest that to him which would support and quiet him under this sad providence. Probably they reminded him of the promise of increase which Jacob had blessed him when he laid his right hand upon his head. Although his house was not so with God as he hoped, but a house of mourning, a shattered family, yet that promise was sure, 2Sa 23:5.

3. The repair of this breach, in some measure, by addition of another son to his family in his old age (1Ch 7:23), like Seth, another seed instead of that of Abel whom Cain slew, Ge 4:25. When God thus restores comfort to his mourners, makes glad according to the days wherein he afflicted, setting the mercies over against the crosses, we ought therein to take notice of the kindness and tenderness of divine Providence; it is as if it repented God concerning his servants, Ps 90:13,15. Yet joy that a man was born into his family could not make him forget his grief; for he gives a melancholy name to his son, Beriah--in trouble, for he was born when the family was in mourning, when it went evil with his house. It is good to have in remembrance the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall, that our souls may be humbled within us, La 3:19,20. What name more proper for man that is born of a woman than Beriah, because born into a

troublesome world? It is added, as a further honour to the house of Ephraim,

(1.) That a daughter of that tribe, Sherah by name, at the time of Israel's setting in Canaan, built some cities, either at her own charge or by her own care; one of them bore her name, Uzzen-sherah, 1Ch 7:24. A virtuous woman may be as great an honour and blessing to a family as a mighty man.

(2.) That a son of that tribe was employed in the conquest of Canaan, Joshua the son of Nun, 1Ch 7:27. In this also the breach made on Ephraim's family was further repaired; and perhaps the resentment of this injury formerly done by the Canaanites to the Ephraimites might make him more vigorous in the war.

II. Of the tribe of Asher. Some men of note of that tribe are here named. Their militia was not numerous in comparison with some other tribes, only 26,000 men in all; but their princes were choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes (1Ch 7:40), and perhaps it was their wisdom that they coveted not to make their trained bands numerous, but rather to have a few, and those apt to the war and serviceable men.

21 and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead,
whom the men of Gath *that were* born in *that* land slew, because
they came down to take away their cattle.
22 And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren
came to comfort him.
23 And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bare a son, and
he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house.
24 (And his daughter *was* Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether,
and the upper, and Uzzen-sherah.)
25 And Rephah *was* his son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and
Tahan his son,
26 Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son,
27 Non his son, Jehoshuah his son.

28 And their possessions and habitations *were,* Beth-el and the towns
thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, with the towns
thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the
towns thereof:
29 and by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and
her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor
and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of
Israel.

The Descendants of Asher

30 The sons of Asher; Imnah, and Isuah, and Ishuai, and Beriah, and
Serah their sister.
31 And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who *is* the father of
Birzavith.
32 And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua
their sister.
33 And the sons of Japhlet; Pasach, and Bimhal, and Ashvath. These
are the children of Japhlet.
34 And the sons of Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram.
35 And the sons of his brother Helem; Zophah, and Imna, and
Shelesh, and Amal.
36 The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harnepher, and Shual, and Beri,
and Imrah,
37 Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilshah, and Ithran, and
Beera.
38 And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Ara.
39 And the sons of Ulla; Arah, and Haniel, and Rezia.
40 All these *were* the children of Asher, heads of *their* father's house,
choice *and* mighty men of valor, chief of the princes. And the number
throughout the genealogy of them that were apt to the war *and* to
battle *was* twenty and six thousand men.

1 Chronicles-8

The Descendants of Benjamin

There is little or nothing of history in all these verses; we have not therefore much to observe.

1. As to the difficulties that occur in this and the foregoing genealogies we need not perplex ourselves. I presume Ezra took them as he found them in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah (1Ch 9:1), according as they were given in by the several tribes, each observing what method they thought fit. Hence some ascend, others desecnd; some have numbers affixed, others places; some have historical remarks intermixed, others have not; some are shorter, others longer; some agree with other records, others differ; some, it is likely, were torn, erased, and blotted, others more legible.

Those of Dan and Reuben were entirely lost. This holy man wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; but there was no necessity for the making up of the defects, no, nor for the rectifying of the mistakes, of these genealogies by inspiration. It was sufficient that he copied them out as they came into his hand, or so much of them as was requisite to the present purpose, which was the directing of the returned captives to settle as nearly as they could with those of their own family, and in the places of their former residence. We may suppose that many things in these genealogies which to us seem intricate, abrupt, and perplexed, were plain and easy to them then (who knew how to fill up the deficiencies) and abundantly answered the intention of the publishing of them.

2. Many great and mighty nations there were now in being upon earth, and many illustrious men in them, whose names are buried in perpetual oblivion, while the names of

multitudes of the Israel of God are here carefully preserved in everlasting remembrance. They are Jasher, Jeshurun--just ones, and the memory of the just is blessed. Many of these we have reason to fear, came short of everlasting honour (for even the wicked kings of Judah come into the genealogy), yet the perpetuating of their names here was a figure of the writing of the names of all God's spiritual Israel in the Lamb's book of life.

3. This tribe of Benjamin was once brought to a very low ebb, in the time of the judges, upon the occasion of the iniquity of Gibeah, when only 600 men escaped the sword of justice; and yet, in these genealogies, it makes as good a figure as almost any of the tribes: for it is the honour of God to help the weakest and raise up those that are most diminished and abased.

4. Here is mention of one Ehud (1Ch 8:6), in the preceding verse of one Gera (1Ch 8:5) and (1Ch 8:8) of one that descended from him, that begat children in the country of Moab, which inclines me to think it was that Ehud who was the second of the judges of Israel; for he is said to be the son of Gera and a Benjamite (Jdg 3:15), and he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Moabites by killing the king of Moab, which might give him a greater sway in the country of Moab than we find evidence of in his history and might occasion some of his posterity to settle there.

5. Here is mention of some of the Benjamites that drove away the inhabitants of Gath (1Ch 8:13), perhaps those that had slain the Ephraimites (1Ch 7:21) or their posterity, by way of reprisal: and one of those that did this piece of justice was named Beriah too, that name in which the memorial of that injury was preserved. 6. Particular notice is taken of those that dwelt in Jerusalem (1Ch 8:28 and again 1Ch 8:32), that those whose ancestors had had their residence there might

thereby be induced, at their return from captivity, to settle there too, which, for aught that appears, few were willing to do, because it was the post of danger: and therefore we find (Ne 11:2) the people blessed those that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, the greater part being inclined to prefer the cities of Judah. Those whose godly parents had their conversation in the new Jerusalem should thereby be engaged to set their faces thitherward and pursue the way thither, whatever it cost them.

1 Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and
Aharah the third,
2 Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.
3 And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abihud,
4 and Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah,
5 and Gera, and Shephuphan, and Huram.
6 And these *are* the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of
the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath:
7 and Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat
Uzza, and Ahihud.
8 And Shaharaim begat *children* in the country of Moab, after he had
sent them away; Hushim and Baara *were* his wives.
9 And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobab, and Zibia, and Mesha, and
Malcham,
10 and Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These *were* his sons, heads of
the fathers.
11 And of Hushim he begat Abitub, and Elpaal.
12 The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Misham, and Shamed, who built
Ono, and Lod, with the towns thereof:
13 Beriah also, and Shema, who *were* heads of the fathers of the
inhabitants of Ajalon, who drove away the inhabitants of Gath:
14 and Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth,
15 and Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader,
16 and Michael, and Ispah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah;
17 and Zebadiah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber,
18 Ishmerai also, and Jezliah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal;

19 and Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi,
20 and Elienai, and Zilthai, and Eliel,
21 and Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimrath, the sons of Shimhi;
22 and Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel,
23 and Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan,
24 and Hananiah, and Elam, and Antothijah,
25 and Iphedeiah, and Penuel, the sons of Shashak;
26 and Shamsherai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah,
27 and Jaresiah, and Eliah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham.
28 These *were* heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief *men*. These dwelt in Jerusalem.
29 And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon; whose wife's name *was* Maachah:
30 and his firstborn son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab,
31 and Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher.
32 And Mikloth begat Shimeah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem, over against them.
33 And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

It is observable that among all the genealogies of the tribes there is no mention of any of the kings of Israel after the defection from the house of David, much less of their families; not a word of Jeroboam's house or Baasha's, of Umri's or Jehu's; for they were all idolaters. But of the family of Saul, which was the royal family before the elevation of David, we have here a particular account.

1. Before Saul, Kish and Ner only are named, his father and grandfather, 1Ch 8:33. His pedigree is carried higher 1Sa 9:1, only there Kish is said to be the son of Abiel, here of Ner. He was in truth the son of Ner but the grandson of Abiel, as appears by 1Sa 14:51, where it is said that Ner was the son of Abiel, and that Abner, who was the son of Ner, was Saul's uncle (that is, his father's brother); therefore his father was also the son of Ner. It is common in all languages to put sons

for grandsons and other descendents, much more in the scanty language of the Hebrews.

2. After Saul, divers of his sons are named, but the posterity of none of them, save Jonathan only, who was blessed with numerous issue and those honoured with a place in the sacred genealogies for the sake of his sincere kindness to David. The line of Jonathan is drawn down here for about ten generations. Perhaps David was, in a particular manner, careful to preserve that, and assigned it a page by itself, because of the covenant made between his seed and Jonathan's seed forever, 1Sa 20:15,23,42. This genealogy ends in Ulam, whose family became famous in the tribe of Benjamin for the number of its valiant men. Of that one man's posterity there were, as it should seem, at one time, 150 archers brought into the field of battle, that were mighty men of valour, 1Ch 8:40. That is taken notice of concerning them which is more a man's praise than his pomp or wealth is, that they were qualified to serve their country.

34 And the son of Jonathan *was* Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah.

35 And the sons of Micah *were,* Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz.

36 And Ahaz begat Jehoadah; and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza;

37 and Moza begat Binea: Rapha *was* his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son.

38 And Azel had six sons, whose names *are* these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these *were* the sons of Azel.

39 And the sons of Eshek his brother *were,* Ulam his firstborn, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third.

40 And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, a hundred and fifty. All these *are* of the sons of Benjamin.

1 Chronicles-9

Those Who Returned from Babylon

1 So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they *were* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, *who* were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.

1Ch 9:1 looks back upon the foregoing genealogies, and tells us they were gathered out of the books of the kings of Israel and Judah, not that which we have in the canon of scripture, but another civil record, which was authentic, as the king's books with us. Mentioning Israel and Judah, the historian takes notice of their being carried away to Babylon for their transgression. Let that judgment never be forgotten, but ever be remembered, for warning to posterity to take heed of those sins that brought it upon them. Whenever we speak of any calamity that has befallen us, it is good to add this, "it was for my transgression," that God may be justified and clear when he judges. Then follows an account of the first inhabitants, after their return from captivity, that dwelt in their cities, especially in Jerusalem.

1 The Israelites. That general name is used (1Ch 9:2) because with those of Judah and Benjamin there were many of Ephraim and Manasseh, and the other ten tribes (1Ch 9:3), such as had escaped to Judah when the body of the ten tribes were carried captive or returned to Judah upon the revolutions in Assyria, and so went into captivity with them, or met them when they were in Babylon, associated with them, and so shared in the benefit of their enlargement.

It was foretold that the children of Judah and of Israel should be gathered together and come up out of the land (Ho 1:11), and that they should be one nation again, Eze 37:22. Trouble drives those together that have been at variance; and the pieces of metal that had been separated will run together

again when melted in the same crucible. Many both of Judah and Israel staid behind in captivity; but some of both, whose spirit God stirred up, enquired the way to Zion again. Divers are here named, and many more numbered, who were chief of the fathers (1Ch 9:9), who ought to be remembered with honour, as Israelites indeed.

2 The priests, 1Ch 9:10. It was their praise that they came with the first. Who should lead in a good work if the priests, the Lord's ministers, do not? It was the people's praise that they would not come without them; for who but the priests should keep knowledge? Who but the priests should bless them in the name of the Lord?

(1.) It is said of one of them that he was the ruler of the house of God (1Ch 9:11) not the chief ruler, for Joshua was then the high priest, but the sagan, and the next under him, his deputy, who perhaps applied more diligently to the business than the high priest himself. In the house of God it is requisite that there be rulers, not to make new laws, but to take care that the laws of God be duly observed by priests as well as people.

(2.) It is said of many of them that they were very able men for the service of the house of God, 1Ch 9:13. In the house of God there is service to be done, constant service; and it is well for the church when those are employed in that service who are qualified for it, able ministers of the New Testament, 2Co 3:6. The service of the temple was such as required at all times, especially in this critical juncture, when they had newly come out of Babylon, great courage and vigour of mind, as well as strength of body; and therefore they are praised as mighty men of valour.

2 Now the first inhabitants that *dwelt* in their possessions in their cities *were*, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinim.

3 And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh;
4 Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah.
5 And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons.
6 And of the sons of Zerah; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety.
7 And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hasenuah,
8 and Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah;
9 and their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men *were* chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers.
10 And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin,
11 and Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God;
12 and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasiai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer;
13 and their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.
14 And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari;

We have here a further account of the good posture which the affairs of religion were put into immediately upon the return of the people out of Babylon. They had smarted for their former neglect of ordinances and under the late want of ordinances. Both these considerations made them very zealous and forward in setting up the worship of God among them; so they began their worship of God at the right end. Instances hereof we have here.

I. Before the house of the Lord was built they had the house of the tabernacle, a plain and movable tent, which they made use of in the mean time. Those that cannot yet reach to have a temple must not be without a tabernacle, but be thankful for that and make the best of it. Never let God's work be left undone for want of a place to do it in.

II. In allotting to the priests and Levites their respective employments, they had an eye to the model that was drawn up by David, and Samuel the seer, 1Ch 9:22. Samuel, in his time, had drawn the scheme of it, and laid the foundation, though the ark was then in obscurity, and David afterwards finished it, and both acted by immediate direction from God. Or David, as soon as he was anointed had this matter in his mind and consulted Samuel about it, though he was then in his troubles, and the plan was formed in concert between them. This perhaps had been little regarded for many ages; but now, after a long interruption, it was revived. In dividing the work, they observed these ancient land-marks.

III. The most of them dwelt at Jerusalem (1Ch 9:34), yet there were some that dwelt in the villages (1Ch 9:16,22), because, it may be, there was not yet room for them in Jerusalem. However they were employed in the service of the tabernacle (1Ch 9:25): They were to come after seven days from time to time. They had their week's attendance in their turns.

IV. Many of the Levites were employed as porters at the gates of the house of God, four chief porters (1Ch 9:26), and, under them, others, to the number of 212, 1Ch 9:22. They had the oversight of the gates (1Ch 9:23), were keepers of the thresholds, as in the margin (1Ch 9:19), and keepers of the entry. This seemed a mean office; and yet David would rather

have it than dwell in the tents of wickedness, Ps 84:10. Their office was,

1. To open the doors of God's house every morning (1Ch 9:27) and shut them at night.

2. To keep off the unclean, and hinder those from thrusting in that were forbidden by the law.

3. To direct and introduce into the courts of the Lord those that came thither to worship, and to show them where to go and what to do, that they might not incur punishment. This required care, and diligence, and constant attendance. Ministers have work to do of this kind.

V. Here is one Phinehas, a son of Eleazar, that is said to be a ruler over them in time past (1Ch 9:20), not the famous high priest of that name, but (as is supposed) an eminent Levite, of whom it is here said that the Lord was with him, or (as the Chaldee reads it) the Word of the Lord was his helper--the eternal Word, who is Jehovah, the mighty one on whom help is laid.

VI. It is said of some of them that, because the charge was upon them, they lodged round about the house of God, 1Ch 9:27. It is good for ministers to be near their work, that they may give themselves wholly to it. The Levites pitched about the tabernacle when they marched through the wilderness. Then they were porters in one sense, bearing the burdens of the sanctuary, now porters in another sense, attending the gates and the doors--in both instances keeping the charge of the sanctuary.

VII. Every one knew his charge. Some were entrusted with the plate, the ministering vessels, to bring them in and out by

tale, 1Ch 9:28. Others were appointed to prepare the fine flour, wine, oil, &c., 1Ch 9:29. Others, that were priests, made up the holy anointing oil, 1Ch 9:30. Others took care of the meat-offerings, 1Ch 9:31. Others of the show-bread, 1Ch 9:32. As in other great houses, so in God's house, the work is likely to be done well when every one knows the duty of his place and makes a business of it. God is the God of order: but that which is every body's work will be nobody's work.

VIII. The singers were employed in that work day and night, 1Ch 9:33. They were the chief fathers of the Levites that made a business of it, not mean singing-men, that made a trade of it. They remained in the chambers of the temple, that they might closely and constantly attend it, and were therefore excused from all other services. It should seem, some companies were continually singing, at least at stated hours, both day and night. Thus was God continually praised, as it is fit he should be who is continually doing good. Thus devout people might, at any hour, have assistance in their devotion. Thus was the temple a figure of the heavenly one, where they rest not day nor night from praising God, Re 4:8. Blessed are those that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee.

15 and Bakbakkar, Heresh, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of
Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph;
16 and Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of
Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that
dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites.
17 And the porters *were,* Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and
Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum *was* the chief;
18 who hitherto *waited* in the king's gate eastward: they *were* porters
in the companies of the children of Levi.
19 And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah,
and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, *were* over
the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and

their fathers, *being* over the host of the Lord, *were* keepers of the entry.
20 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, *and* the Lord *was* with him.
21 *And* Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah *was* porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.
22 All these *which were* chosen to be porters in the gates *were* two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office.
23 So they and their children *had* the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord, *namely,* the house of the tabernacle, by wards.
24 In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south.
25 And their brethren, *which were* in their villages, *were* to come after seven days from time to time with them.
26 For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in *their* set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God.
27 And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge *was* upon them, and the opening thereof every morning *pertained* to them.
28 And *certain* of them had the charge of the ministering vessels, that they should bring them in and out by tale.
29 *Some* of them also *were* appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices.
30 And *some* of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices.
31 And Mattithiah, *one* of the Levites, who *was* the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the set office over the things that were made in the pans.
32 And *other* of their brethren, of the sons of the Kohathites, *were* over the showbread, to prepare *it* every sabbath.
33 And these *are* the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, *who remaining* in the chambers *were* free: for they were employed in *that* work day and night.

34 These chief fathers of the Levites *were* chief throughout their generations; these dwelt at Jerusalem.

The Genealogy of Saul

35 And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wife's name *was* Maachah:

1Ch 9:35-44 are the very same with 1Ch 8-29-38, giving an account of the ancestors of Saul and the posterity of Jonathan. There it is the conclusion of the genealogy of Benjamin; here it is an introduction to the story of Saul. We take the repetition as we find it; but if we admit that there are in the originals, especially in these books, some errors of the transcribers, I should be tempted to think this repetition arose from a blunder. Some one, in copying out these genealogies, having written those words, 1Ch 9:34 (These dwelt in Jerusalem), cast his eye on the same words, 1Ch 8:28. (These dwelt in Jerusalem), and so went on with what followed there, instead of going on with what followed here; and, when he perceived his mistake, was loth to make a blot in his book, and so let it stand. We have a rule in our law, Redundans non nocet--Redundancies do no harm.

36 and his firstborn son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab,
37 and Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth.
38 And Mikloth begat Shimeam. And they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren.
39 And Ner begat Kish; and Kish begat Saul; and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal.
40 And the son of Jonathan *was* Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah.
41 And the sons of Micah *were,* Pithon, and Melech, and Tahrea, *and Ahaz.*
42 And Ahaz begat Jarah; and Jarah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza;

43 and Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel
his son.
44 And Azel had six sons, whose names *are* these, Azrikam, Bocheru,
and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. These *were*
the sons of Azel.

1 Chronicles-10

The Death of Saul and His Sons

1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled
from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.
2 And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and
the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchi-shua, the
sons of Saul.

This account of Saul's death is the same with that which we had, 1Sa 31:1-13, &c. We need not repeat the exposition of it. Only let us observe,

1. Princes sin and the people suffer for it. It was a bad time with Israel when they fled before the Philistines and fell down slain (1Ch 10:1), when they quitted their cities, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them, 1Ch 10:7. We do not find that they were at this time guilty of idolatry, as they had been before, in the days of the judges, and were afterwards, in the days of the kings. Samuel had reformed them, and they were reformed: and yet they are thus given to the spoil and to the robbers. No doubt there was enough in them to deserve this judgment; but that which divine Justice had chiefly an eye to was the sin of Saul. Note, Princes and great men should in a special manner take heed of provoking God's wrath; for, if they kindle that fire, they know not how many may be consumed by it for their sakes.

2. Parents sin and the children suffer for it. When the measure of Saul's iniquity was full, and his day came to fall (which

David foresaw, 1Sa 26:10), he not only descended into battle and perished himself, but his sons (all but Ishbosheth) perished with him, and Jonathan among the rest, that gracious, generous man; for all things come alike to all. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children, and they fell as parts of the condemned father. Note, Those that love their seed must leave their sins, lest they perish not alone in their iniquity, but bring ruin on their families with themselves, or entail a curse upon them when they are gone.

3. Sinners sin and at length suffer for it themselves, though they be long reprieved; for, although sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed. It was so upon Saul; and the manner of his fall was such as, in various particulars, answered to his sin.

(1.) He had thrown a javelin more than once at David, and missed him; but the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

(2.) He had commanded Doeg to slay the priests of the Lord; and now, in despair, he commands his armour-bearer to draw his sword and thrust him through.

(3.) He had disobeyed the command of God in not destroying the Amalekites, and his armour-bearer disobeys him in not destroying him.

(4.) He that was the murderer of the priests is justly left to himself to be his own murderer; and his family is cut off who cut off the city of the priests. See, and say, The Lord is righteous.

3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

4 Then said Saul to his armor-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armor-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.
5 And when his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died.
6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together.
7 And when all the men of Israel that *were* in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.
8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

Here, I. From the triumph of the Philistines over the body of Saul we may learn,

1. That the greater dignity men are advanced to the greater disgrace they are in danger of falling into. Saul's dead body, because he was king, was abused more than any other of the slain. Advancement makes men a mark for malice.

2. That, if we give not to God the glory of our successes, even the Philistines will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for, when they had obtained a victory over Saul, they sent tidings to their idols--poor idols, that knew not what was done a few miles off till the tidings were brought to them, nor then either! They also put Saul's armour in the house of their gods, 1Ch 10:10. Shall Dagon have so honourable a share in their triumphs and the true and living God be forgotten in ours?

II. From the triumph of the men of Jabesh-Gilead in the rescue of the bodies of Saul and his sons we learn that there is a respect due to the remains of the deceased, especially of deceased princes. We are not to enquire concerning the eternal state; that must be left to God: but we must treat the

dead body as those who remember it has been united to an immortal soul and must be so again.

III. From the triumphs of divine Justice in the ruin of Saul we may learn,

1. That the sin of sinners will certainly find them out, sooner or later: Saul died for his transgression.

2. That no man's greatness can exempt him from the judgments of God.

3. Disobedience is a killing thing. Saul died for not keeping the word of the Lord, by which he was ordered to destroy the Amalekites.

4. Consulting with witches is a sin that fills the measure of iniquity as soon as any thing. Saul enquired of one that had a familiar spirit, and enquired not of the Lord, therefore he slew him, 1Ch 10:13,14. Saul slew himself, and yet it is said, God slew him. What is done by wicked hands is yet done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Those that abandon themselves to the devil shall be abandoned to him; so shall their doom be. It is said (1Sa 28:6) that Saul did enquire of the Lord and he answered him not: but here it is said, Saul did not enquire of God; for he did not till he was brought to the last extremity, and then it was too late.

9 And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people.

10 And they put his armor in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

11 And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul,

12 they arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and
the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their
bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.
13 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the
Lord, *even* against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and
also for asking *counsel* of *one that had* a familiar spirit, to inquire *of it;*
14 and inquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned
the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

1 Chronicles-11

David Made King over Israel

1 Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying,
Behold, we *are* thy bone and thy flesh.

David is here brought to the possession.

I. Of the throne of Israel, after he had reigned seven years in Hebron, over Judah only. In consideration of his relation to them (1Ch 11:1), his former good services, and especially the divine designation (1Ch 11:2), they anointed him their king: he covenanted to protect them, and they to bear faith and true allegiance to him, 1Ch 11:3. Observe,

1. God's counsels will be fulfilled at last, whatever difficulties lie in the way. If God had said, David shall rule, it is in vain to oppose it.

2. Men that have long stood in their own light, when they have long wearied themselves with their lying vanities, it is to be hoped, will understand the things that belong to their peace and return to their own mercies.

3. Between prince and people there is an original contract, which both ought religiously to observe. If ever any prince

might have claimed an absolute despotic power, David might, and might as safely as any have been entrusted with it; and yet he made a covenant with the people, took the coronation-oath, to rule by law.

II. Of the strong-hold of Zion, which was held by the Jebusites till David's time. Whether David had a particular eye upon it as a place fit to make a royal city, or whether he had a promise of it from God, it seems that one of his first exploits was to make himself master of that fort; and, when he had it, he called it the city of David, 1Ch 11:7. To this reference is had, Ps 2:6. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. See here what quickens and engages resolution in great undertakings.

1. Opposition. When the Jebusites set David at defiance, and said, Thou shalt not come hither. he resolved to force it, whatever it cost him.

2. Prospect of preferment. When David proposed to give the general's place to him that would lead the attack upon the castle of Zion, Joab was fired with the proposal, and he went up first, and was chief. It has been said, "Take away honour out of the soldier's eye and you cut off the spurs from his heels."

2 And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou *wast* he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel.

3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel.

David Captures Zion

4 And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which *is* Jebus; where
the Jebusites *were,* the inhabitants of the land.
5 And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come
hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which *is* the city
of David.
6 And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief
and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief.
7 And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of
David.
8 And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about:
and Joab repaired the rest of the city.
9 So David waxed greater and greater: for the Lord of hosts *was* with
him.

David's Mighty Men

10 These also *are* the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who
strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, *and* with
Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the Lord
concerning Israel.
11 And this *is* the number of the mighty men whom David had;
Jashobeam, a Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his
spear against three hundred slain *by him* at one time.

We have here an account of David's worthies, the great men of his time that served him and were preferred by him. The first edition of this catalogue we had, 2Sa 23:8-39, &c. This is much the same, only that those named here from 1Ch 11:41-47 to the end are added. Observe,

I The connexion of this catalogue with that which is said concerning David, 1Ch 11:9. 1. David waxed greater and greater, and these were his mighty men. Much of the strength and honour of great men is borrowed from their servants and

depends upon them, which cannot but somewhat diminish pomp and power in the opinion of those that are wise. David is great because he has great men about him; take these away, and he is where he was.

2. The Lord of hosts was with him, and these were the mighty men which he had. God was with him and wrought for him, but by men and means and the use of second causes. By this it appeared that God was with him, that he inclined the hearts of those to come over to him that were able to serve his interest. As, if God be for us none can be against us, so, if God be for us, all shall be for us that we have occasion for. Yet David ascribed his success and increase, not to the hosts he had, but to the Lord of hosts, not to the mighty men that were with him, but to the mighty God whose presence with us is all in all.

II The title of this catalogue (1Ch 11:10): These are the men who strengthened themselves with him. In strengthening him they strengthened themselves and their own interest; for his advancement was theirs. What we do in our places for the support of the kingdom of the Son of David we shall be gainers by. In strengthening it we strengthen ourselves. It may be read, They held strongly with him and with all Israel. Note, When God has work to do he will not want fit instruments to do it with. If it be work that requires mighty men, mighty men shall either be found or made to effect it, according to the word of the Lord.

III. That which made all these men honourable was the good service that they did to their king and country; they helped to make David king (1Ch 11:10)-- a good work. They slew the Philistines, and other public enemies, and were instrumental to save Israel. Note, The way to be great is to do good. Nor did they gain this honour without labour and the hazard of their lives. The honours of Christ's kingdom are prepared for

those that fight the good fight of faith, that labour and suffer, and are willing to venture all, even life itself, for Christ and a good conscience. It is by a patient continuance in well-doing that we must seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; and those that are faithful to the Son of David shall find their names registered and enrolled much more to their honour than these are in the records of fame.

IV. Among all the great exploits of David's mighty men, here is nothing great mentioned concerning David himself but his pouring out water before the Lord which he had longed for, 1Ch 11:18,19. Four very honourable dispositions of David appeared in that action, which, for aught I know, made it as great as any of the achievements of those worthies.

1. Repentance for his own weakness. It is really an honour to a man, when he is made sensible that he has said or done any thing unadvisedly, to unsay it and undo it again by repentance, as it is a shame to a man when he has said or done amiss to stand to it.

2. Denial of his own appetite. He longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem; but, when he had it, he would not drink it, because he would not so far humour himself and gratify a foolish fancy. He that has such a rule as this over his own spirit is better than the mighty. It is an honour to a man to have the command of himself; but he that will command himself must sometimes cross himself.

3. Devotion towards God. That water which he thought too good, too precious, for his own drinking, he poured out to the Lord for a drink offering. If we have any thing better than another, let God be honoured with it, who is the best, and should have the best.

4. Tenderness of his servants. It put him into the greatest confusion imaginable to think that three brave men should hazard their lives to fetch water for him. In his account it turns the water into blood. It is the honour of great men not to be prodigal of the blood of those they employ, but, in all the commands they give them, to put their own souls into their souls' stead.

V. In the wonderful achievements of these heroes the power of God must be acknowledged. How could one slay 300 and another the same number (1Ch 11:11,20), another two lion-like men (1Ch 11:22), and another an Egyptian giant (1Ch 11:23), if they had not had the extraordinary presence of God with them, according to that promise, Jos 23:10, One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God fighteth for you?

VI. One of these worthies is said to be an Ammonite (1Ch 11:39), another a Moabite (1Ch 11:46), and yet the law was that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, De 23:3. These, it is likely, had approved themselves so hearty for the interest of Israel that in their case it was thought fit to dispense with that law, and the rather because it was an indication that the Son of David would have worthies among the Gentiles: with him there is neither Greek nor Jew.

12 And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who *was one* of the three mighties.

13 He was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines.

14 And they set themselves in the midst of *that* parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the Lord saved *them* by a great deliverance.

15 Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David,
into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped
in the valley of Rephaim.
16 And David *was* then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison *was*
then at Bethlehem.
17 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of
the water of the well of Bethlehem, that *is* at the gate!
18 And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew
water out of the well of Bethlehem, that *was* by the gate, and took
it, and brought *it* to David: but David would not drink *of* it, but
poured it out to the Lord,
19 and said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I
drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?
for with *the jeopardy of* their lives they brought it: therefore he would
not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.
20 And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting
up his spear against three hundred, he slew *them*, and had a name
among the three.
21 Of the three, he was more honorable than the two; for he was their
captain: howbeit he attained not to the *first* three.
22 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who
had done many acts; he slew two lionlike men of Moab: also he went
down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day.
23 And he slew an Egyptian, a man of *great* stature, five cubits high; and
in the Egyptian's hand *was* a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went
down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's
hand, and slew him with his own spear.
24 These *things* did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had a name
among the three mighties.
25 Behold, he was honorable among the thirty, but attained not to the
first three: and David set him over his guard.
26 Also the valiant men of the armies *were*, Asahel the brother of
Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem,
27 Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite,
28 Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Antothite,
29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite,

30 Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the
Netophathite,
31 Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, *that pertained* to the children of
Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite,
32 Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite,
33 Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite,
34 the sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the
Hararite,
35 Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur,
36 Hepher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite,
37 Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai,
38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri,
39 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite, the armor-bearer of
Joab the son of Zeruiah,
40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,
41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai,
42 Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites,
and thirty with him,
43 Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite,
44 Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the
Aroerite,
45 Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite,
46 Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai and Joshaviah the sons of Elnaam,
and Ithmah the Moabite,
47 Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.

1 Chronicles-12

David's Army

1 Now these *are* they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept
himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they *were* among
the mighty men, helpers of the war.
2 *They were* armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and
the left in *hurling* stones and *shooting* arrows out of a bow, *even* of
Saul's brethren of Benjamin.

3 The chief *was* Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite,
4 and Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite,
5 Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite,
6 Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azareel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korhites,
7 and Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor.
8 And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, *and* men of war *fit* for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as the roes upon the mountains;

We have here an account of those that appeared and acted as David's friends, upon the death of Saul, to bring about the revolution. All the forces he had, while he was persecuted, was but 600 men, who served for his guards; but, when the time had come that he must begin to act offensively, Providence brought in more to his assistance. Even while he kept himself close, because of Saul (1Ch 12:1), while he did not appear, to invite or encourage his friends and well-wishers to come in to him (not foreseeing that the death of Saul was so near), God was inclining and preparing them to come over to him with seasonable succours. Those that trust God to do his work for them in his own way and time shall find his providence outdoing all their forecast and contrivance. The war was God's, and he found out helpers of the war, whose forwardness to act for the man God designed for the government is here recorded to their honour.

I. Some, even of Saul's brethren, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a-kin to him, came over to David, 1Ch 12:2. What moved them to it we are not told. Probably a generous indignation at the base treatment which Saul, one of their tribe, gave him,

animated them to appear the more vigorously for him, that the guilt and reproach of it might not lie upon them. These Benjamites are described to be men of great dexterity, that were trained up in shooting and slinging, and used both hands alike--ingenious active men; a few of these might do David a great deal of service. Several of the leading men of them are here named. See Jdg 20:16.

II. Some of the tribe of Gad, though seated on the other side Jordan, had such a conviction of David's title to the government, and fitness for it, that they separated themselves from their brethren (a laudable separation it was) to go to David, though he was in the hold in the wilderness (1Ch 12:8), probably some of his strong holds in the wilderness of Engedi. They were but few, eleven in all, here named, but they added much to David's strength. Those that had hitherto come in to his assistance were most of them men of broken fortunes, distressed, discontented, and soldiers of fortune, that came to him rather for protection than to do him any service, 1Sa 22:2. But these Gadites were brave men, men of war, and fit for the battle, 1Ch 12:8.

For, 1. They were able-bodied men, men of incredible swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon, the enemy, and to pursue the scattered forces. In this they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains, so that no man could escape from them; and yet they had faces like the faces of lions, so that no man could out-fight them.

2. They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercises; they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons.

3. They were officers of the militia in their own tribe (1Ch 12:14), so that though they did not bring soldiers with them they had them at command, hundreds, thousands.

4. They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties. Upon some expedition or other, perhaps this to David, they swam over the Jordan, when it overflowed all its banks, 1Ch 12:15. Those are fit to be employed in the cause of God that can venture thus in a dependence upon the divine protection.

5. They were men that would go through with the business they engaged in. What enemies those were that they met with in the valleys, when they had passed Jordan, does not appear; but they put them to flight with their lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury, both towards the east and towards the west; which way soever they turned, they followed their blow, and did not do their work by halves.

III. Some of Judah and Benjamin came to him, 1Ch 12:16. Their leader was Amasai, whether the same with that Amasa that afterwards sided with Absalom (2Sa 17:25) or no does not appear. Now here we have,

1. David's prudent treaty with them, 1Ch 12:17. He was surprised to see them, and could not but conceive some jealousy of the intentions of their coming, having been so often in danger by the treachery of the men of Ziph and the men of Keilah, who yet were all men of Judah. He might well be timorous whose life was so much struck at; he might well be suspicious who had been deceived in so many that he said, in his haste, All men are liars. No marvel that he meets these men of Judah with caution. Observe,

(1.) How he puts the matter to themselves, how fairly he deals with them. As they are, they shall find him; so shall all that deal with the Son of David.

[1.] If they be faithful and honourable, he will be their rewarder: "If you have come peaceably unto me, to help me, though you have come late and have left me exposed a great while, though you bring no great strength with you to turn the scale for me, yet I will thankfully accept your good-will, and my heart shall be knit unto you; I will love you and honour you, and do you all the kindness I can." Affection, respect, and service, that are cordial and sincere, will find favour with a good man, as they do with a good God, though clogged with infirmities, and turning to no great account.

But, [2.] If they be false, and come to betray him into the hands of Saul, under colour of friendship, he leaves them to God to be their avenger, as he is, and will be, of every thing that is treacherous and perfidious. Never was man more violently run upon, and run down, than David was (except the Son of David himself), and yet he had the testimony of his conscience that there was no wrong in his hands. He meant no harm to any man, which was his rejoicing in the day of evil, and enabled him, when he feared treachery, to commit his cause to him that judges righteously. He will not be judge in his own cause, though a wise man, nor avenge himself, though a man of valour; but let the righteous God, who hath said, Vengeance is mine, do both. The God of our fathers look thereon and rebuke it.

(2.) In this appeal observe,

[1.] He calls God the God of our fathers, both his fathers and theirs. Thus he reminded them not to deal ill with him; for they were both descendants from the same patriarchs, and

both dependents on the same God. Thus he encouraged himself to believe that God would right him if he should be abused; for he was the God of his fathers and therefore a blessing was entailed on him, and a God to all Israel and therefore not only a Judge to all the earth, but particularly concerned in determining controversies between contesting Israelites.

[2.] He does not imprecate any fearful judgement upon them, though they should deal treacherously, but very modestly refers his cause to the divine wisdom and justice: The Lord look thereon, and judge as he sees (for he sees men's hearts), and rebuke it. It becomes those that appeal to God to express themselves with great temper and moderation; for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.

2. Their hearty closure with him, 1Ch 12:18. Amasai was their spokesman, on whom the Spirit of the Lord came, not a spirit of prophecy, but a spirit of wisdom and resolution, according to the occasion, putting words into his mouth, unpremeditated, which were proper both to give David satisfaction and to animate those that accompanied him. Nothing could be said finer, more lively, or more pertinent to the occasion. For himself and all his associates,

(1.) He professed a very cordial adherence to David, and his interest, against all that opposed him, and a resolution to stand by him with the hazard of all that was dear to him: Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse. In calling him son of Jesse they reminded themselves that he was lineally descended from Nahshon and Salmon, who in their days were princes of the tribe of Judah. Saul called him so in disdain (1Sa 20:27,22:7), but they looked upon it as his honour. They were convinced that God was on his side; and therefore, Thine are we, David, and on thy side. It is good, if

we must side, to side with those that side with God and have God with them.

(2.) He wished prosperity to David and his cause, not drinking a health, but praying for peace to him and all his friends and well-wishers: "Peace, peace, be unto thee, all the good thy heart desires, and peace be to thy helpers, among whom we desire to be reckoned, that peace may be on us."

(3.) He assured him of help from heaven: "For thy God helpeth thee; therefore we wish peace may be, and therefore we doubt not but peace shall be, to thee and thy helpers. God is thy God, and those that have him for their God no doubt have him for their helper in every time of need and danger." From these expressions of Amasai we may take instruction how to testify our affection and allegiance to the Lord Jesus. His we must be without reservation or power of revocation. On his side we must be forward to appear and act. To his interest we must be hearty well-wishers: "Hosanna! prosperity to his gospel and kingdom;" for his God helpeth him, and will till he shall have put down all opposing rule, principality, and power.

3. David's cheerful acceptance of them into his interest and friendship. Charity and honour teach us to let fall our jealousies as soon as satisfaction is given us: David received them, and preferred them to be captains of the band.

IV. Some of Manasseh likewise joined with him, 1Ch 12:19. Providence gave them a fair opportunity to do so when he and his men marched through their country upon this occasion. Achish took David with him when he went out to fight with Saul; but the lords of the Philistines obliged him to withdraw. We have the story, 1Sa 29:4-11, &c. In his return some great men of Manasseh, who had no heart to join with

Saul against the Philistines struck in with David, and very seasonably, to help him against the band of Amalekites who plundered Ziklag; they were not many, but they were all mighty men and did David good service upon that occasion, 1Sa 30:1-31 See how Providence provides. David's interest grew strangely just when he had occasion to make use of it, 1Ch 12:22. Auxiliary forces flocked in daily, till he had a great host. When the promise comes to the birth, leave it to God to find strength to bring forth.

9 Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third,
10 Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth,
11 Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh,
12 Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth,
13 Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh.
14 These *were* of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least *was* over a hundred, and the greatest over a thousand.
15 These *are* they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflown all his banks; and they put to flight all *them* of the valleys, *both* toward the east, and toward the west.
16 And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David.
17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if *ye be come* to betray me to mine enemies, seeing *there is* no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look *thereon*, and rebuke *it*.
18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, *who was* chief of the captains, *and he said*, Thine *are we*, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: peace, peace *be* unto thee, and peace *be* to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.
19 And there fell *some* of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle; but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to *the jeopardy of* our heads.

20 As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediael, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that *were* of Manasseh.
21 And they helped David against the band *of the rovers:* for they *were* all mighty men of valor, and were captains in the host.
22 For at *that* time day by day there came to David to help him, until *it was* a great host, like the host of God.
23 And these *are* the numbers of the bands *that were* ready armed to the war, *and* came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord.
24 The children of Judah that bare shield and spear *were* six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war.
25 Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valor for the war, seven thousand and one hundred.
26 Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred.

We have here an account of those who were active in perfecting the settlement of David upon the throne, after the death of Ishbosheth. We read (1Ch 11:1, and before 2Sa 5:1) that all the tribes of Israel came, either themselves or by their representatives, to Hebron, to make David king; now here we have an account of the quota which every tribe brought in ready armed to the war, in case there should be any opposition, 1Ch 12:23. We may observe here,

I. That those tribes that lived nearest brought the fewest- Judah but 6800 (1Ch 12:24), Simeon but 7100 (1Ch 12:25); whereas Zebulun, that lay remote, brought 50,000, Asher 40,000, and the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan 120,000. Not as if the next adjacent tribes were cold in the cause; but they showed as much of their prudence in bringing few, since all the rest lay so near within call, as the others did of their zeal in bringing so many. The men of Judah had enough to do to entertain those that came from afar.

II The Levites themselves, and the priests (called here the Aaronites), appeared very hearty in this cause, and were

ready, if there were occasion, to fight for David, as well as pray for him, because they knew he was called of God to the government, 1Ch 12:26-28.

III. Even some of the kindred of Saul came over to David (1Ch 12:29), not so many as of the other tribes, because a foolish affection for their own tribe, and a jealousy for the honour of it, kept many of them long in the sinking interest of Saul's family. Kindred should never over-rule conscience. Call no man Father to this extent, but God only.

IV. It is said of most of these that they were mighty men of valour (1Ch 12:25,28,30), of others that they were expert in war (1Ch 12:35,36), and of them all that they could keep rank, 1Ch 12:38. They had a great deal of martial fire, and yet were governable and subject to the rules of order--warm hearts but cool heads.

V. Some were so considerate as to bring with them arms, and all instruments for war (1Ch 12:24,33,37), for how could they think that David should be able to furnish them?

VI. The men of Issachar were the fewest of all, only 200, and yet as serviceable to David's interest as those that brought in the greatest numbers, these few being in effect the whole tribe.

For, 1. They were men of great skill above any of their neighbours, men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. They understood the natural times, could discern the face of the sky, were weather-wise, could advise their neighbours in the proper times for ploughing, sowing reaping, &c. Or the ceremonial times, the times appointed for the solemn feasts; therefore they are said to call the people to the mountain (De 33:19), for almanacs were not

then so common as now. Or, rather, the political times; they understood public affairs, the temper of the nation, and the tendencies of the present events. It is the periphrasis of statesmen that they know the times, Es 1:13.

Those of that tribe were greatly intent on public affairs, had good intelligence from abroad and made a good use of it. They knew what Israel ought to do: from their observation and experience they learned both their own and others' duty and interest. In this critical juncture they knew Israel ought to make David king. It was not only expedient, but necessary; the present posture of affairs called for it. The men of Issachar dealt mostly in country business, and did not much intermeddle in public affairs, which gave them an opportunity of observing others and conversing with themselves. A stander-by sees sometimes more than a gamester.

2. They were men of great interests; for all their brethren were at their commandment. The commonality of that tribe having bowed their shoulder to bear (Ge 49:15), the great men had them at their beck. Hence we read of the princes of Issachar, Jdg 5:15. They knew how to rule, and the rest knew how to obey. It is happy indeed when those that should lead are intelligent and judicious, and those who are to follow are modest and obsequious.

VII. It is said of them all that they engaged in this enterprise with a perfect heart (1Ch 12:38), and particularly of the men of Zebulun that they were not of double heart, 1Ch 12:33. They were, in this matter, Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile. And this was their perfection, that they were of one heart, 1Ch 12:38. None had any separate interests, but all for the public good.

VIII. The men of Judah, and others of the adjacent tribes, prepared for the victualling of their respective camps when they came to Hebron, 1Ch 12:39,40. Those that were at the least pains in travelling to this convention, or congress of states, thought themselves obliged to be at so much the more charge in entertaining the rest, that there might be something of an equality. A noble feast was made (was made for laughter, Ec 10:19) upon this occasion, for there was joy in Israel, 1Ch 12:40. And good reason; for when the righteous bear rule the city rejoices. Thus, when the throne of Christ is set up in a soul, there is, or ought to be, great joy in that soul: and provision is made for the feasting of it, not as here for two or three days, but for the whole life, nay, for eternity.

27 And Jehoiada *was* the leader of the Aaronites, and with him *were* three thousand and seven hundred;

28 and Zadok, a young man mighty of valor, and of his father's house twenty and two captains.

29 And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul.

30 And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valor, famous throughout the house of their fathers.

31 And of the half tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king.

32 And of the children of Issachar, *which were men* that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them *were* two hundred; and all their brethren *were* at their commandment.

33 Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: *they were* not of double heart.

34 And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand.

35 And of the Danites expert in war twenty and eight thousand and six hundred.

36 And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand.
37 And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, a hundred and twenty thousand.
38 All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel *were* of one heart to make David king.
39 And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them.
40 Moreover they that were nigh them, *even* unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, *and* meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for *there was* joy in Israel.

1 Chronicles-13

David Proposes to Bring the Ark to Jerusalem

1 And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, *and* with every leader.

Here is, I. David's pious proposal to bring up the ark of God to Jerusalem, that the royal city might be the holy city, 1Ch 13:1-3. This part of the story we had not in Samuel. We may observe in this proposal,

1. That as soon as David was well seated on his throne he had thoughts concerning the ark of God: Let us bring the ark to us, 1Ch 13:3. Two things he aimed at herein:--

(1.) To do honour to God, by showing respect to his ark, the token of his presence. As soon as he had power in his hand he would use it for the advancement and encouragement of religion. Note, It ought to be the first and great care of those that are enriched and preferred to honour God with their

honours, and to serve him, and the interests of his kingdom among men, with their wealth and power. David said not, "What pompous thing shall I do now?" or, "What pleasant thing?" but, "What pious thing?"

(2.) To have the comfort and benefit of that sacred oracle. "Let us bring it to us, not only that we may be a credit to it, but that it may be a blessing to us." Those that honour God profit themselves. Note, It is the wisdom of those who are setting out in the world to take God's ark with them, to make his oracles their counsellors and his laws their rule. Those are likely to proceed in the favour of God who thus begin in the fear of God.

2. That he consulted with the leaders of the people about it, 1Ch 13:1. Though it was without doubt a very good work, and being king, he had the authority to command the doing of it, yet he chose rather to do it by consultation,

(1.) That he might show respect to the great men of the kingdom and put honour upon them. Though they made him king, yet he would not rule with a high hand. He did not say, "We will and command, and it is our royal pleasure, that you do so and so; and we will be obeyed," but, "If it seem good to you, and you think that the motion comes from the Lord our God, let us send out orders for this purpose." No prince that is wise will covet to be absolute. The people's allegiance is best secured by taking their concurrence in their representatives. Happy then art thou, O Britain!

(2.). That he might be advised by them in the manner of doing it, whether just now, whether publicly. David was a very intelligent man himself, and yet consulted with his captains; for in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. It is wisdom to make use of the wisdom of others.

(3.) That, they joining in it, it might pass the better for a national act and so might procure a national blessing.

3. That he would have all the people summoned to attend on this occasion, both for the honour of the ark and for the people's satisfaction and edification, 1Ch 13:2. Observe,

(1.) He calls the common people brethren, which bespeaks his humility and condescension (notwithstanding his advancement), and the tender concern he had for them. Thus our Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call his people brethren, Heb 2:11.

(2.) He speaks of the people as a remnant that had escaped: Our brethren that are left in all the land of Israel. They had been under scattering providences. Their wars with the Philistines, and with the house of Saul, had wasted the country and cut off many. We now hope to see an end of these troubles. Let those that are left be quickened by late judgments, and present mercies, to seek unto God.

(3.) He takes care that the priests and Levites especially should be summoned to attend the ark; for it was their province in a particular manner. Thus Christian magistrates should stir up ministers to do their duty when they see them remiss.

4. That all this is upon supposition that it is of the Lord their God. "Though it should seem good to you and me, yet if it be not of the Lord our God, we will not do it." What ever we undertake, this must be our enquiry, "Is it of the Lord? Is it agreeable to his mind? Can we approve ourselves to him in it? May we expect that he will own us?"

5. That thus it was requisite they should amend what has been amiss in the last reign, and, as it were, atone for their neglect: "For we enquired not at it in the days of Saul, and this was the reason why things went so ill with us: let that original error be amended, and then we may hope to see our affairs in a better posture." Observe, David makes no peevish reflections upon Saul. He does not say, "Saul never cared for the ark, at least in the latter end of this reign;" but, in general, We enquired not at it, making himself with others guilty of this neglect. It better becomes us to judge ourselves than others. Humble good men lament their own share in national guilt, and take shame to themselves, Da 9:5-19, &c.

II The people's ready agreement to this proposal (1Ch 13:4): The thing was right in the eyes of all the people. Nobody could say to the contrary, but that it was a very good work and very seasonable; so that it was resolved, nemine contradicente--unanimously, that they would do so. Those that prudently proposed a good work, and lead in it, will perhaps find a more ready concurrence in it than they expected. Great men know not what a great deal of good they are capable of doing by their influence on others.

III. The solemnity of bringing up the ark, 1Ch 13:5-8, &c., which we read before, 2Sa 6:1-3, &c. Here therefore we shall only observe,

1. That it is worth while to travel far to attend the ark of God. They came out of all parts of the country, from the river of Egypt, the utmost part south, to the entering of Hemath, which lay furthest north, (1Ch 13:5), to grace this solemnity.

2. That we have reason greatly to rejoice in the revival of neglected ordinances and the return of the tokens of God's presence. When the light of religion shines out of obscurity,

when it is openly and freely professed, is brought into reputation, and countenanced by princes and great ones, it is such a happy omen to a people as is worthy to be welcomed with all possible expressions of joy.

3. When, after long disuse, ordinances come to be revived, it is too common for even wise and good men to make some mistakes. Who would have thought that David would commit such an error as this, to carry the ark upon a cart? 1Ch 13:7. Because the Philistines so carried it, and a special providence drove the cart (1Sa 6:12), he thought they might do so too. But we must walk by rule, not by example when it varies from the rule, no, not even by those examples which Providence has owned.

2 And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If *it seem* good unto
you, and *that it be* of the Lord our God, let us send abroad unto our
brethren every where, *that are* left in all the land of Israel, and with
them *also* to the priests and Levites *which are* in their cities *and*
suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:
3 and let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we inquired not
at it in the days of Saul.
4 And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing
was right in the eyes of all the people.

David Goes to Get the Ark

5 So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even
unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-
jearim.
6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, *that is,* to Kirjath-
jearim, which *belonged* to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God
the Lord, that dwelleth *between* the cherubim, whose name is
called *on it*.
7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of
Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart.

8 And David and all Israel played before God with all *their* might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

9 And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

This breach upon Uzza, which caused all the joy to cease, we had an account of, 2Sa 6:6-8, &c.

1. Let the sin of Uzza warn us all to take heed of presumption, rashness, and irreverence, in dealing about holy things (1Ch 13:9), and not to think that a good intention will justify a bad action. In our communion with God we must carefully watch over our own hearts, lest familiarity breed contempt, and we think God is in any way beholden to us.

2. Let the punishment of Uzza convince us that the God with whom we have to do is a jealous God. His death, like that of Nadab and Abihu, proclaims aloud that God will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him (Le 10:3), and that the nearer any are to him the more displeased he is with their presumptions. Let us not dare to trifle with God in our approaches to him; and yet let us, through Christ, come boldly to the throne of grace; for we are under the dispensation of liberty and grace, not of bondage and terror.

3. Let the damp this gave to the joy of Israel be a memorandum to us always to rejoice with trembling, and to serve the Lord with fear, even when we serve him with gladness.

4. Let David's displeasure upon this occasion caution us to take heed to our spirits when we are under divine rebukes, lest, instead of submitting to God, we quarrel with him. If God be angry with us, shall we dare to be angry with him?

5. Let the stop thus put to the solemnity caution us not to be driven off from our duty by those providences which are only intended to drive us from our sins. David should have gone on with the work notwithstanding the breach made upon Uzza; so might the breach have been made up.

6. Let the blessing which the ark brought with it to the house of Obed-edom encourage us to welcome God's ordinances into our houses, as those that believe the ark is a guest that nobody shall lose by; not let it be less precious to us for its being to some a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. If the gospel be to some a savour of death unto death, as the ark was to Uzza, yet let us receive it in the love of it and it will be to us a saviour of life unto life.

10 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

11 And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza [the breach of Uzza] to this day.

12 And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God *home* to me?

13 So David brought not the ark *home* to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

14 And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

1 Chronicles-14

Hiram's Recognition of David

1 Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him a house.

We may observe here,

1. There is no man that has such a sufficiency in himself but he has need of his neighbours and has reason to be thankful for their help: David had a very large kingdom, Hiram a very little one; yet David could not build himself a house to his mind unless Hiram furnished him with both workmen and materials, 1Ch 14:1. This is a reason why we should despise none, but, as we have opportunity, be obliging to all.

2. It is a great satisfaction to a wise man to be settled, and to a good man to see the special providences of God in his settlement. The people had made David king; but he could not be easy, nor think himself happy, till he perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel, 1Ch 14:2. "Who shall unfix me if God hath fixed me?"

3. We must look upon all our advancements as designed for our usefulness. David's kingdom was lifted up on high, not for his own sake, that he might look great, but because of his people Israel, that he might be a guide and protector to them. We are blessed in order that we may be blessings. See Ge 12:2. We are not born, nor do we live, for ourselves.

4. It is difficult to thrive without growing secure and indulgent to the flesh. It was David's infirmity that when he settled in his kingdom he took more wives (1Ch 14:3), yet the numerous issue he had added to his honour and strength. Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord. We had an account of David's children, not only in Samuel, but in this book (1Ch 3:1-9, &c.) and now here again; for it was their honour to have such a father.

2 And David perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel.

David's Children Born at Jerusalem

3 And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more
sons and daughters.
4 Now these *are* the names of *his* children which he had in Jerusalem;
Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon,
5 and Ibhar, and Elishua, and Elpalet,
6 and Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia,
7 and Elishama, and Beeliada, and Eliphalet.

David Defeats the Philistines

8 And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over
all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard
of it, and went out against them.

This narrative of David's triumph over the Philistines is much the same with that, 2Sa 5:17-25, &c.

1. Let the attack which the Philistines made upon David forbid us to be secure in any settlement or advancement, and engage us to expect molestation in this world. When we are most easy something or other may come to be a terror or vexation to us. Christ's kingdom will thus be insulted by the serpent's seed, especially when it makes any advances.

2. Let David's enquiry of God, once and again, upon occasion of the Philistines' invading him, direct us in all our ways to acknowledge God--in distress to fly to him, when we are wronged to appeal to him, and, when we know not what to do, to ask counsel at his oracles, to put ourselves under his direction, and to beg of him to show us the right way.

3. Let David's success encourage us to resist our spiritual enemies, in observance of divine directions and dependence on divine strength. Resist the devil, and he shall flee as the Philistines did before David.

4. Let the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees direct us to attend God's motions both in his providence and in the influences of his Spirit. When we perceive God to go before us let us gird up our loins, gird on our armour, and follow him.

5. Let David's burning the gods of the Philistines, when they fell into his hands, teach us a holy indignation against idolatry and all the remains of it.

6. Let David's thankful acknowledgment of the hand of God in his successes direct us to bring all our sacrifices of praise to God's altar. Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but to thy name give glory.

7. Let the reputation which David obtained, not only in his kingdom, but among his neighbours, be looked upon as a type and figure of the exalted honour of the Son of David (1Ch 14:17): The fame of David went out into all lands; he was generally talked of, and admired by all people, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations. All looked upon him as a formidable enemy and a desirable ally. Thus has God highly exalted our Redeemer, and given him a name above every name.

9 And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

10 And David inquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the Lord said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand.

11 So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim [a place of breaches].

12 And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire.

13 And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley.
14 Therefore David inquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.
15 And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees, *that* then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines.
16 David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer.
17 And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations.

1 Chronicles-15

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

1 And *David* made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.

Preparation is here made for the bringing of the ark home to the city of David from the house of Obed-edom. It is here owned that in the former attempt, though it was a very good work and in it they sought God, yet they sought him, not after the due order, 1Ch 15:13. "We did not go about our work considerately; and therefore we sped so ill." Note, It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well--not enough that we seek God in a due ordinance, but we must seek after him, in a due order.

Note, also, When we have suffered for our irregularities we must learn thereby to be more regular; then we answer the end of chastisement. Let us see how the matter was mended.

1. David now prepared a place for the reception of the ark, before he brought it to him; and thus he sought in the due order. He had not time to build a house, but he pitched a tent

for it (1Ch 15:1), probably according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, or as near it as might be, of curtains and boards. Observe, When he made houses for himself in the city of David he prepared a place for the ark. Note, Wherever we build for ourselves, we must be sure to make room for God's ark, for a church in the house.

2. David now ordered that the Levites or priests should carry the ark upon their shoulders. Now he bethought himself of that which he could not but know before, that, none ought to carry the ark but the Levites, 1Ch 15:2 The Kohathites carried it in their ordinary marches, and therefore had no wagons allotted them, because their work was to bear upon their shoulders, Nu 7:9. But upon extraordinary occasions, as when they passed Jordan and compassed Jericho, the priests carried it. This rule was express, and yet David himself forgot it, and put the ark upon a cart.

Note, Even those that are very knowing in the word of God, yet have it not always so ready to them as were to be wished when they have occasion to use it. Wise and good men may be guilty of an oversight, which, as soon as they are aware of, they will correct. David did not go about to justify what had been done amiss, nor to lay the blame on others, but owned himself guilty, with others, of not seeking God in a due order, and now took care not only to summon the Levites to the solemnity, as he did all Israel (1Ch 15:3), and had done before (1Ch 13:2), but to see that they assembled (1Ch 15:4), especially the sons of Aaron, 1Ch 15:11.

To them he gives the solemn charge (1Ch 15:12): You are the chief of the fathers of the Levites, therefore do you bring up the ark of the Lord. It is expected that those who are advanced above others in dignity should go before others in duty. "You are the chief, and therefore more is expected from you than from others, both by way of service yourselves and

influence on the rest. You did it not at first, neither did your duty yourselves nor took care to instruct us, and we smarted for it: The Lord made a breach upon us; we have all smarted for your neglect; this has been by your means (see Mal 1:9): therefore sanctify yourselves, and mind your business." When those that have suffered for doing ill thus learn to do better the correction is well bestowed.

3. The Levites and priests sanctified themselves (1Ch 15:14) and were ready to carry the ark on their shoulders, according to the law, 1Ch 15:15. Note, Many that are very remiss in their duty, if they were but faithfully told of it, would reform and do better. The breach upon Uzza made the priests more careful to sanctify themselves, that is, to cleanse themselves from all ceremonial pollution and to compose themselves for the solemn service of God, so as to strike a reverence upon the people. Some are made examples, that others may be made exemplary and very cautious.

4. Officers were appointed to be ready to bid the ark welcome, with every possible expression of joy, 1Ch 15:16. David ordered the chief of the Levites to nominate those that they knew to be proficients for this service. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were now first appointed, 1Ch 15:17. They undertook to sound with symbols (1Ch 15:19), others with psalteries (1Ch 15:20), others with harps, on the Sheminith, or eighth, eight notes higher or lower than the rest, according to the rules of the concert, 1Ch 15:21. Some that were priests blew with the trumpet (1Ch 15:24), as was usual at the removal of the ark (Nu 10:8) and at solemn feasts, Ps 81:3. And one was appointed for song (1Ch 15:22), for he was skilful in it, could sing well himself and instruct others.

Note, As every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same, 1Pe 4:10. And those that excel in any endowment should not only use it for the common good

themselves, but teach others also, and not grudge to make others as wise as themselves. This way of praising God by musical instruments had not hitherto been in use. But David, being a prophet, instituted it by divine direction, and added it to the other carnal ordinances of that dispensation, as the apostle calls them, Heb 9:10. The New Testament keeps up singing of psalms, but has not appointed church-music. Some were appointed to be porters (1Ch 15:18), others door-keepers for the ark (1Ch 15:23,24), and one of these was Obed-edom, who reckoned it no doubt a place of honour, and accepted it as recompence for the entertainment he had given to the ark. He had been for three months housekeeper to the ark, and indeed its landlord. But, when he might not be so any longer, such an affection had he for it that he was glad to be its door-keeper.

2 Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the
Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God,
and to minister unto him for ever.
3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the
ark of the Lord unto his place, which he had prepared for it.
4 And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites:
5 of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren a hundred
and twenty:
6 of the sons of Merari; Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two
hundred and twenty:
7 of the sons of Gershom; Joel the chief, and his brethren a hundred
and thirty:
8 of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two
hundred:
9 of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore:
10 of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren a
hundred and twelve.
11 And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the
Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and
Amminadab,

12 and said unto them, Ye *are* the chief of the fathers of the Levites:
sanctify yourselves, *both* ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up
the ark of the Lord God of Israel unto *the place that* I have prepared
for it.
13 For because ye *did it* not at the first, the Lord our God made a
breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.
14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the
ark of the Lord God of Israel.
15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their
shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according
to the word of the Lord.
16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren
to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and
cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.
17 So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his
brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari
their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah;
18 and with them their brethren of the second *degree,* Zechariah, Ben,
and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and
Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and
Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters.
19 So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, *were appointed* to sound
with cymbals of brass;
20 and Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni,
and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth;
21 and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and
Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel.
22 And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, *was* for song: he instructed
about the song, because he *was* skilful.
23 And Berechiah and Elkanah *were* doorkeepers for the ark.
24 And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and
Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the
trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom and Jehiah *were*
doorkeepers for the ark.

25 So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy.

All things being got ready for the carrying of the ark to the city of David, and its reception there, we have here an account of the solemnity of this conveyance thither from the house of Obed-edom.

I. God helped the Levites that carried it. The ark was no very great burden, that those who carried it needed any extraordinary help. But,

1. It is good to take notice of the assistance of the divine providence even in those things that fall within the compass of our natural powers: if God did not help us, we could not stir a step.

2. In all our religious exercises we must particularly derive help from heaven. See Ac 26:22. All our sufficiency for holy duties is from God. 3. The Levites, remembering the breach upon Uzza, were probably ready to tremble when they took up the ark; but God helped them, that is, he encouraged them to it, silenced their fears, and strengthened their faith.

4. God helped them to do it decently and well, and without making any mistake. If we perform any religious duties so as to escape a breach, and come off with our lives, we must own it is God that helps us; for, if left to ourselves, we should be guilty of some fatal miscarriages. God's ministers that bear the vessels of the Lord have special need of divine help in their ministrations, that God in them may be glorified and his

church edified. And, if God help the Levites, the people have the benefit of it.

II. When they experienced the tokens of God's presence with them they offered sacrifices of praise to him, 1Ch 15:26. This also he helped them to do. They offered these bullocks and rams perhaps by way of atonement for the former error, that it might not now be remembered against them, as well as by way of acknowledgment for the help now received.

III. There were great expressions of rejoicing used: the sacred music was played, David danced, the singers sang, and the common people shouted, 1Ch 15:27,28. This we had before, 2Sa 6:14,15. Learn hence,

1. That we serve a good master, who delights to have his servants sing at their work.

2. That times of public reformation are, and should be, times of public rejoicing. Those are unworthy of the ark that are not glad of it.

3. It is not any disparagement to the greatest of men to show themselves zealous in the acts of devotion. Michal indeed despised David (1Ch 15:29); but her despising him did not make him at all despicable; he did not regard it himself, nor did any that were wise and good (and why should we covet the esteem of any but such?) think the worse of him.

26 And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

27 And David *was* clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also *had* upon him an ephod of linen.

28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.
29 And it came to pass, *as* the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

1 Chronicles-16

1 So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God.

It was a glorious day when the ark of God was safely lodged in the tent David had pitched for it. That good man had his heart much upon it, could not sleep contentedly till it was done, Ps 132:4,5.

I The circumstances of the ark were now,

1. Better than what they had been. It had been obscure in a country town, in the fields of the wood; now it was removed to a public place, to the royal city, where all might resort to it. It had been neglected, as a despised broken vessel; now it was attended with veneration, and God was enquired of by it. It had borrowed a room in a private house, which it enjoyed by courtesy; now it had a habitation of its own entirely to itself, was set in the midst of it, and not crowded into a corner. Note, Though God's word and ordinances may be clouded and eclipsed for a time, they shall at length shine out of obscurity. Yet,

2. They were much short of what was intended in the next reign, when the temple was to be built. This was but a tent, a poor mean dwelling; yet this was the tabernacle, the temple

which David in his psalms often speaks of with so much affection. David, who pitched a tent for the ark and continued steadfast to it, did far better than Solomon, who built a temple for it and yet in his latter end turned his back upon it. The church's poorest times were its purest.

II. Now David was easy in his mind, the ark was fixed, and fixed near him. Now see how he takes care, 1. That God shall have the glory of it. Two ways he gives him honour upon this occasion:--

(1.) By sacrifices (1Ch 16:1), burnt-offerings in adoration of his perfections, peace-offerings in acknowledgment of his favours.

(2.) By songs: he appointed Levites to record this story in a song for the benefit of others, or to celebrate it themselves by thanking and praising the God of Israel, 1Ch 16:4. All our rejoicings must express themselves in thanksgivings to him from whom all our comforts are received.

2. That the people shall have the joy of it. They shall fare the better for this day's solemnity; for he gives them all what is worth coming for, not only a royal treat in honour of the day (1Ch 16:3), in which David showed himself generous to his subjects, as he had found God gracious to him (those whose hearts are enlarged with holy joy should show it by being open-handed); but (which is far better) he gives them also a blessing in the name of the Lord, as a father, as a prophet, 1Ch 16:2. He prayed to God for them, and commended them to his grace. In the name of the Word of the Lord (so the Targum), the essential eternal Word, who is Jehovah, and through whom all blessings come to us.

2 And when David had made an end of offering the burnt offerings
and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the
Lord.

3 And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every
one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon *of wine*.
4 And he appointed *certain* of the Levites to minister before the ark of
the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of
Israel:
5 Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth,
and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-
edom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a
sound with cymbals;
6 Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually
before the ark of the covenant of God.

David's Psalm of Thanksgiving

7 Then on that day David delivered first *this psalm* to thank the
Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren.
8 Give thanks unto the Lord,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the people.
9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk
ye of all his wondrous works.

We have here the thanksgiving psalm which David, by the Spirit, composed, and delivered to the chief musician, to be sung upon occasion of the public entry the ark made into the tent prepared for it. Some think he appointed this hymn to be daily used in the temple service, as duly as the day came; whatever other psalms they sung, they must not omit this. David had penned many psalms before this, some in the time of his trouble by Saul.

This was composed before, but was now first delivered into the hand of Asaph, for the use of the church. It is gathered out of several psalms (from the 1Ch 16:7-23 is taken from Ps 105:1-15, &c.; and then 1Ch 16:23-34 is the whole Ps 96:1-13, with little variation; 1Ch 16:34 is taken from Ps 136:1 and divers others; and then the 1Ch 16:35,36 are taken from

the close of Ps 106:47,48), which some think warrants us to do likewise, and make up hymns out of David's psalms, a part of one and a part of another put together so as may be most proper to express and excite the devotion of Christians. These psalms will be best expounded in their proper places (if the Lord will); here we take them as they are put together, with a design to thank the Lord (1Ch 16:7), a great duty, to which we need to be excited and in which we need to be assisted.

1. Let God be glorified in our praises; let his honour be the centre in which all the lines meet. Let us glorify him by our thanksgivings (Give thanks to the Lord), by our prayers (Call on his name, 1Ch 16:8), by our songs (Sing psalms unto him), by our discourse--Talk of all his wondrous works, 1Ch 16:9. Let us glorify him as a great God, and greatly to be praised (1Ch 16:25), as supreme God (above all gods), as sole God, for all others are idols, 1Ch 16:26. Let us glorify him as most bright and blessed in himself (Glory and honour are in his presence, 1Ch 16:27), as creator (The Lord made the heavens), as the ruler of the whole creation (His judgments are in all the earth, 1Ch 16:14), and as ours--He is the Lord our God. Thus must we give unto the Lord the glory due to his name (1Ch 16:28,29), and own it, and much more, his due.

2. Let other be edified and instructed: Make known his deeds among the people (1Ch 16:8), declare his glory among the heathen (1Ch 16:24), that those who are strangers to him may be led into acquaintance with him, allegiance to him, and the adoration of him. Thus must we serve the interests of his kingdom among men, that all the earth may fear before him, 1Ch 16:30.

3. Let us be ourselves encouraged to triumph and trust in God. Those that give glory to God's name are allowed to glory in it (1Ch 16:10), to value themselves upon their

relation to God and venture themselves upon his promise to them. Let the heart of those rejoice that seek the Lord, much more of those that have found him. Seek him, and his strength, and his face: that is, seek him by the ark of his strength, in which he manifests himself.

4. Let the everlasting covenant be the great matter of our joy and praise (1Ch 16:15): Be mindful of his covenant. In the parallel place it is, He will be ever mindful of it, Ps 105:8. Seeing God never will forget it, we never must. The covenant is said to be commanded, because God has obliged us to obey the conditions of it, and because he has both authority to make the promise and ability to make it good. This covenant was ancient, yet never to be forgotten. It was made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were long since dead (1Ch 16:16-18), yet still sure to the spiritual seed, and the promises of it pleadable.

5. Let God's former mercies to his people of old, to our ancestors and our predecessors in profession, be commemorated by us now with thankfulness to his praise. Let it be remembered how God protected the patriarchs in their unsettled condition. When they came strangers to Canaan and were sojourners in it, when they were few and might easily have been swallowed up, when they were continually upon the remove and so exposed, when there were many that bore them ill-will and sought to do them mischief, yet no man was suffered to do them wrong--not the Canaanites, Philistines, Egyptians. Kings were reproved and plagued for their sakes. Pharaoh was so, and Abimelech.

They were the anointed of the Lord, sanctified by his grace, sanctified by his glory, and had received the unction of the Spirit. They were his prophets, instructed in the things of God themselves and commissioned to instruct others (and prophets are said to be anointed, 1Ki 19:16,Isa 61:1);

therefore, if any touch them, they touch the apple of God's eye; if any harm them, it is at their peril, 1Ch 16:19-22.

6. Let the great salvation of the Lord be especially the subject of our praises (1Ch 16:23): Show forth from day to day his salvation, that is (says bishop Patrick), his promised salvation by Christ. We have reason to celebrate that from day to day; for we daily receive the benefits of it, and it is a subject that can never be exhausted.

7. Let God be praised by a due and constant attendance upon him in the ordinances he has appointed: Bring an offering, then the fruit of the ground, now the fruit of the lips, of the heart (Heb 13:15), and worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the holy places and in a holy manner, 1Ch 16:29. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord, the beauty of all sanctified souls and all religious performances.

8. Let God's universal monarchy be the fear and joy of all people. Let us reverence it: Fear before him, all the earth. And let us rejoice in it: Let the heavens be glad and rejoice, because the Lord reigns, and by his providence establishes the world, so that, though it be moved, it cannot be removed, nor the measures broken which Infinite Wisdom has taken in the government of it, 1Ch 16:30,31.

9. Let the prospect of the judgment to come inspire us with an awful pleasure, Let earth and sea, fields and woods, though in the great day of the Lord they will all be consumed, yet rejoice that he will come, doth come, to judge the earth, 1Ch 16:32,33.

10. In the midst of our praises we must not forget to pray for the succour and relief of those saints and servants of God that are in distress (1Ch 16:35): Save us, gather us, deliver us

from the heathen, those of us that are scattered and oppressed. When we are rejoicing in God's favours to us we must remember our afflicted brethren, and pray for their salvation and deliverance as our own. We are members one of another; and therefore when we mean, "Lord, save them," it is not improper to say, "Lord, save us."

Lastly, Let us make God the Alpha and Omega of our praises. David begins with (1Ch 16:8), Give thanks to the Lord; he concludes (1Ch 16:36), Blessed be the Lord. And whereas in the place whence this doxology is taken (Ps 106:48) it is added, Let all the people say, Amen, Hallelujah, here we find they did according to that directory: All the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord. When the Levites had finished this psalm or prayer and praise, then, and not till then, the people that attended signified their consent and concurrence by saying, Amen, And so they praised the Lord, much affected no doubt with this newly instituted way of devotion, which had been hitherto used in the schools of the prophets only, 1Sa 10:5. And, if this way of praising God please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock that has horns and hoofs, the humble shall see it and be glad, Ps 69:31,32.

10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the
heart of them rejoice that seek
the Lord.
11 Seek the Lord and his strength, seek
his face continually.
12 Remember his marvelous works that he hath done, his
wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
13 O ye seed of Israel his servant,
ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.
14 He *is* the Lord our God;
his judgments *are* in all the earth.
15 Be ye mindful always of his covenant;
the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations;

16 *even of the covenant* which he made with Abraham, and
of his oath unto Isaac;
17 and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law,
and to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant,
18 saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the
lot of your inheritance.
19 When ye were but few,
even a few, and strangers in it,
20 and *when* they went from nation to nation, and
from *one* kingdom to another people;
21 he suffered no man to do them wrong:
yea, he reproved kings for their sakes,
22 *saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and
do my prophets no harm.
23 Sing unto the Lord, all the earth;
show forth from day to day his salvation.
24 Declare his glory among the heathen;
his marvelous works among all nations.
25 For great *is* the Lord, and greatly to be praised:
he also *is* to be feared above all gods.
26 For all the gods of the people *are* idols:
but the Lord made the heavens.
27 Glory and honor *are* in his presence;
strength and gladness *are* in his place.
28 Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people,
give unto the Lord glory and strength.
29 Give unto the Lord the glory *due* unto his name:
bring an offering, and come before him:
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
30 Fear before him, all the earth:
the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.
31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice:
and let *men* say among the nations, The Lord reigneth.
32 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof:
let the fields rejoice, and all that *is* therein.
33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the

Lord,
because he cometh to judge the earth.
34 O give thanks unto the Lord; for *he is* good;
for his mercy *endureth* for ever.
35 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation,
and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen,
that we may give thanks to thy holy name,
and glory in thy praise.
36 Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel
for ever and ever.
And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.

The Levites Appointed for the Ark

The worship of God is not only to be the work of a solemn day now and then, brought in to grace a triumph; but it ought to be the work of every day. David therefore settles it here for a constancy, puts it into a method, which he obliged those that officiated to observe in their respective posts. In the tabernacle of Moses, and afterwards in the temple of Solomon, the ark and the altar were together; but, ever since Eli's time, they had been separated, and still continued so till the temple was built.

I cannot conceive what reason there was why David, who knew the law and was zealous for it, did not either bring the ark to Gibeon, where the tabernacle and the altar were, or bring them to Mount Zion, where the ark was. Perhaps the curtains and hangings of Moses's tabernacle were so worn with time and weather that they were not fit to be removed, nor fit to be a shelter for the ark; and yet he would not make all new, but only a tent for the ark, because the time was at hand when the temple should be built. Whatever was the reason, all David's time they were asunder, but he took care that neither of them should be neglected.

1. At Jerusalem, where the ark was, Asaph and his brethren were appointed to attend, to minister before the ark continually, with songs of praise, as every day's work required, 1Ch 16:37. No sacrifices were offered there, nor incense burnt, because the altars were not there: but David's prayers were directed as incense, and the lifting up of his hands as the evening sacrifice (Ps 141:2), so early did spiritual worship take place of ceremonial.

2. Yet the ceremonial worship, being of divine institution, must by no means be omitted; and therefore at Gibeon were the altars where the priests attended, for their work was to sacrifice and burn incense, which they did continually, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses, 1Ch 16:39,40. These must be kept up because, however in their own nature they were inferior to the moral services of prayer and praise, yet, as they were types of the mediation of Christ, they had a great deal of honour put upon them, and the observance of them was of great consequence.

Here Zadok attended, to preside in the service of the altar; as (it is probable) Abiathar settled at Jerusalem, to attend the ark, because he had the breast-plate of judgment, which must be consulted before the ark: this is the reason why we read in David's time both Zadok and Abiathar were the priests (2Sa 8:17,20:25), one where the altar was and the other where the ark was. At Gibeon, where the altars were, David also appointed singers to give thanks to the Lord, and the burden of all their songs must be, For his mercy endureth for ever, 1Ch 16:41. They did it with musical instruments of God, such instruments as were appointed and appropriated to this service, not such as they used on other occasions. Between common mirth and holy joy there is a vast difference, and the limits and distances between them must be carefully observed and kept up. Matters being thus settled, and the affairs of religion put into a happy channel,

(1.) The people were satisfied, and went home pleased.

(2.) David returned to bless his house, resolving to keep up family worship still, which public worship must not supersede.

37 So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord Asaph and
his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's
work required:
38 and Obed-edom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obed-
edom also the son of Jeduthun and Hosah *to be* porters:
39 and Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the
tabernacle of the Lord in the high place that *was* at Gibeon,
40 to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord upon the altar of the burnt
offering continually morning and evening, and *to do* according to
all that is written in the law of the Lord, which he commanded
Israel;
41 and with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen,
who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord, because
his mercy *endureth* for ever;
42 and with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals
for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments
of God. And the sons of Jeduthun *were* porters.
43 And all the people departed every man to his house: and David
returned to bless his house.

1 Chronicles-17

God's Covenant with David

1 Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to
Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of
the covenant of the Lord *remaineth* under curtains.
2 Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that *is* in thine heart; for God
is with thee.
3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to

Nathan, saying,

4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in:

5 for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from *one* tabernacle *to another.*

6 Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me a house of cedars?

7 Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, *even* from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel:

Let us observe here,

I. How desirous and solicitous good people should be to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world, to the utmost of their capacity. David could not be easy in a house of cedar while the ark was lodged within curtains, 1Ch 17:1 The concerns of the public should always be near our hearts. What pleasure can we take in our own prosperity if we see not the good of Jerusalem? When David is advanced to wealth and power see what his cares and projects are.

Not, "What shall I do for my children to get portions for them? What shall I do to fill my coffers and enlarge my dominions?" But, "What shall I do for God, to serve and honour him?" Those that are contriving where to bestow their fruits and their good would do well to enquire what condition the ark is in, and whether some may not be well bestowed upon it.

II. How ready God's prophets should be to encourage every good purpose. Nathan was no sooner aware of David's good design than he bade him go and do all that was within his

heart (1Ch 17:2), for he had no reason to doubt but that God was with him in it. Ministers should stir up the gifts and graces that are in others as well as in themselves.

III. How little God affects external pomp and splendour in his service. His ark was content with a tabernacle (1Ch 17:5) and he never so much as mentioned the building of a house for it; no, not when he had fixed his people in great and goodly cities which they builded not, De 6:10. He commanded the judges to feed his people, but never bade them build him a house, 1Ch 17:6. We may well be content awhile with mean accommodations; God's ark was so.

IV. How graciously God accepts his people's good purposes, yea, though he himself prevents the performance of them. David must not build this house, 1Ch 17:4. He must prepare for it, but not do it; as Moses must bring Israel within sight of Canaan, but must them leave it to Joshua to put them in possession of it. It is the prerogative of Christ to be both the author and finisher of his work. Yet David must not think that, because he was not permitted to build the temple,

1. His preferment was in vain; no, "I took thee from the sheep-cote, though not to be a builder of the temple, yet to be ruler over my people Israel; that is honour enough for thee; leave the other to one that shall come after thee," 1Ch 17:7. Why should one man think to engross all the business and to bring every good work to perfection? Let something be left for those that succeed. God had given him victories, and made him a name (1Ch 17:8), and, further, intended by him to establish his people Israel and secure them against their enemies, 1Ch 17:9. That must be his work, who is a man of war and fit for it, and he must let the building of churches be left to one that was never cut out for a soldier.

Nor, 2. Must he think that his good purpose was in vain, and that he should lose the reward of it; no, it being God's act to prevent the execution of it, he shall be as fully recompensed as if he had done it; "The Lord will build thee a house, and annex the crown of Israel to it," 1Ch 17:10. If there be a willing mind, it shall not only be accepted, but thus rewarded.

Nor, 3. Must he think that because he might not do this good work therefore it would never be done, and that it was in vain to think of it; no, I will raise up thy seed, and he shall build me a house, 1Ch 17:11,12. God's temple shall be built in the time appointed, though we may not have the honour of helping to build it or the satisfaction of seeing it built. Nor,

4. Must he confine his thoughts to the temporal prosperity of his family, but must entertain himself with the prospect of the kingdom of the Messiah, who should descend from his loins, and whose throne should be established for evermore, 1Ch 17:14. Solomon was not himself so settled in God's house as he should have been, nor was his family settled in the kingdom: "But there shall one descend from thee whom I will settle in my house and in my kingdom," which intimates that he should be both a high priest over the house of God and should have the sole administration of the affairs of God's kingdom among men, all power both in heaven and in earth, in the house and in the kingdom, in the church and in the world. He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both, and he shall build the temple of the Lord, Zec 6:12,13.

8 and I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that *are* in the earth.

9 Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning,

10 and since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over my people
Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell
thee, that the Lord will build thee a house.
11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must
go *to be* with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee,
which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.
12 He shall build me a house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.
13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my
mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* that was before thee:
14 but I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever:
and his throne shall be established for evermore.
15 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did
Nathan speak unto David.
16 And David the king came and sat before the Lord, and said, Who
am I, O Lord God, and what *is* mine house, that thou hast
brought me hitherto?
17 And *yet* this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast
also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast
regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord
God.
18 What can David *speak* more to thee for the honor of thy servant?
for thou knowest thy servant.
19 O Lord, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart,
hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all *these* great
things.

We have here David's solemn address to God, in answer to the gracious message he had now received from him. By faith he receives the promises, embraces them, and is persuaded of them, as the patriarchs, Heb 11:13. How humbly does he here abase himself, and acknowledge his own unworthiness! How highly does he advance the name of God and admire his condescending grace and favour! With what devout affections does he magnify the God of Israel and what a value has he for the Israel of God! With what assurance does he build upon the promise, and with what a lively faith does he put it in suit! What an example is this to us of humble,

believing, fervent prayer! The Lord enable us all thus to seek him! These things were largely observed, 2Sa 7:1-29 We shall therefore here observe only those few expressions in which the prayer, as we find it here, differs from the record of it there, and has something added to it.

I. That which is there expressed by way of question (Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?) is here an acknowledgment: "Thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree. Thou hast made me a great man, and then treated me accordingly." God, by the covenant-relations into which he admits believers, the titles he gives them, the favours he bestows on them, and the preparations he has made for them, regards them according to the estate of men of high degree, though they are mean and vile.

Having himself distinguished them, he treats them as persons of distinction, according to the quality he has been pleased to put upon them. Some give these words here another reading: "Thou hast looked upon me in the form of a man who art in the highest, the Lord God; or, Thou hast made me to see according to the form of a man the majesty of the Lord God." And so it points at the Messiah; for, as Abraham, so David, saw his day and was glad, saw it by faith, saw it in fashion as a man, the Word made flesh, and yet saw his glory as that of the only-begotten of the Father.

And this was that which God spoke concerning his house for a great while to come, the foresight of which affected him more than any thing. And let it not be thought strange that David should speak so plainly of the two natures of Christ who in spirit called him Lord, though he knew he was to be his Son (Ps 110:1), and foresaw him lower than the angels for a little while, but afterwards crowned with glory and honour, Heb 2:6,7.

II. After the words What can David say more unto thee, it is here added, for the honour of they servant? 1Ch 17:18. Note, The honour God puts upon his servants, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, is so great that they need not, they cannot, desire to be more highly honoured. Were they to sit down and wish, they could not speak more for their own honour than the word of God has spoken.

III. It is very observable that what in Samuel is said to be for thy word's sake is here said to be for thy servant's sake, 1Ch 17:19. Jesus Christ is both the Word of God (Re 19:13) and the servant of God (Isa 42:1), and it is for his sake, upon the score of his meditation, that the promises are both made and made good to all believers; it is in him that they are yea and amen. For his sake is all kindness done, for his sake it is made known; to him we owe all this greatness and from him we are to expect all these great things; they are the unsearchable riches of Christ, which, if by faith we see in themselves and see in the hand of the Lord Jesus, we cannot but magnify as great things, the only true greatness, and speak honourably of accordingly.

IV. In Samuel, the Lord of hosts is said to be the God over Israel; here he is said to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, 1Ch 17:24. His being the God of Israel bespeaks his having the name of their God and so calling himself; his being a God to Israel bespeaks his answering to the name, his filling up the relation, and doing all that to them which might be expected from him. There were those that were called gods of such and such nations, gods of Assyria and Egypt, gods of Hamad and Arpad; but they were no gods to them, for they stood them in no stead at all, were mere ciphers, nothing but a name. But the God of Israel is a God to Israel; all his attributes and perfections redound to their real benefit and advantage. Happy therefore, thrice happy, is the people

whose God is Jehovah; for he will be a God to them, a God all-sufficient.

V. The closing words in Samuel are, With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever. That is the language of a holy desire. But the closing words here are the language of a most holy faith: For thou blessest, O Lord! and it shall be blessed for ever, 1Ch 17:27.

1. He was encouraged to beg a blessing because God had intimated to him that he had blessings in store for him and his family: "Thou blessest, O Lord! and therefore unto thee shall all flesh come for a blessing; unto thee do I come for the blessing promised to me." Promises are intended to direct and excite prayer. Has God said, I will bless? Let our hearts answer, Lord, bless me,

2. He was earnest for the blessing because he believed that those whom God blesses are truly and eternally blessed: Thou blessest, and it shall be blessed. Men can but beg the blessing; it is God that commands it. What he designs he effects; what he promises he performs; saying and doing are not two things with him. Nay, it shall be blessed for ever. His blessings shall not be revoked, cannot be opposed, and the benefits conferred by them are such as will survive time and days. David's prayer concludes as God's promise did (1Ch 17:14) with that which is for ever. God's word looks at things eternal, and so should our desires and hopes.

20 O Lord, *there is* none like thee, neither *is there any* God besides thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

21 And what one nation in the earth *is* like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem *to be* his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?

22 For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, Lord, becamest their God.

23 Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken
concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for
ever, and do as thou hast said.
24 Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever,
saying, The Lord of hosts *is* the God of Israel, *even* a God to Israel:
and *let* the house of David thy servant *be* established before thee.
25 For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him
a house: therefore thy servant hath found *in his heart* to pray before
thee.
26 And now, Lord, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness
unto thy servant:
27 now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant,
that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O Lord, and *it*
shall be blessed for ever.

1 Chronicles-18

David Extends His Kingdom

1 Now after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and
subdued them, and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the
Philistines.

After this, it is said (1Ch 18:1), David did those great exploits. After the sweet communion he had had with God by the word and prayer, as mentioned in the foregoing chapter, he went on his work with extraordinary vigour and courage, conquering and to conquer. Thus Jacob, after his vision, lifted up his feet, Ge 29:1.

We have taken a view of these victories before, and shall now only observe,

1. Those that have been long enemies to the Israel of God will be brought down at last. The Philistines had, for several generations, been vexatious to Israel, but now David subdued

them, 1Ch 18:1. Thus shall all opposing rule, principality, and power, be, at the end of time, put down by the Son of David, and the most inveterate enemies shall fall before him.

2. Such is the uncertainty of this world that frequently men lose their wealth and power when they think to confirm it. Hadarezer was smitten as he went to establish his dominion, 1Ch 18:3.

3. A horse is a vain thing for safety, so David said (Ps 33:17), and it seems he believed what he said, for he houghed the chariot-horses, 1Ch 18:4. Being resolved not to trust to them (Ps 20:7), he would not use them.

4. The enemies of God's church are often made to ruin themselves by helping one another, 1Ch 18:5. The Syrians of Damascus were smitten when they came to help Hadarezer. When hand thus joins in hand they shall not only not go unpunished, but thereby they shall be gathered as the sheaves into the floor, Mic 4:11,12. 5. The wealth of the sinner sometimes proves to have been laid up for the just. The Syrians brought gifts, 1Ch 18:6. Their shields of gold and their brass were brought to Jerusalem, 1Ch 18:7,8. As the tabernacle was built of the spoils of the Egyptians, so the temple of the spoils of other Gentile nations, a happy presage of the interest the Gentiles should have in the gospel church.

2 And he smote Moab; and the Moabites became David's servants, *and* brought gifts.

3 And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to stablish his dominion by the river Euphrates.

4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot *horses,* but reserved of them a hundred chariots.

5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

6 Then David put *garrisons* in Syriadamascus; and the Syrians became

David's servants, *and* brought gifts. Thus the Lord preserved
David whithersoever he went.
7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of
Hadarezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.
8 Likewise from Tibhath, and from Chun, cities of Hadarezer,
brought David very much brass, wherewith Solomon made the
brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass.
9 Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all
the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah;

Here let us learn,

1. That it is our interest to make those our friends who have the presence of God with them. The king of Hamath, hearing of David's great success, sent to congratulate him and to court his favour with a noble present, 1Ch 18:9,10. It is in vain to contend with the Son of David. Kiss the Son, therefore, lest he be angry; let the kings and judges of the earth, and all inferior people too, be thus wise, thus instructed. The presents we are to bring him are not vessels of gold and silver, as here (those shall be welcomed to him who have no such presents to bring), but our hearts and sincere affections, our whole selves, we must present to him as living sacrifices.

2. That what God blesses us with we must honour him with. The presents of his friends, as well as the spoils of his enemies, David dedicated unto the Lord (1Ch 18:11), that is, he laid them up towards the building and enriching of the temple. That is most truly and most comfortably our own which we have consecrated unto the Lord, and which we use for his glory. Let our merchandise and our hire be holiness to the Lord, Isa 23:18.

3. That those who take God along with them whithersoever they go may expect to prosper, and be preserved, whithersoever they go. It was said before (1Ch 18:6) and here it is repeated (1Ch 18:13) that the Lord preserved David

whithersoever he went. Those are always under the eye of God that have God always in their eye.

4. God gives men power, not that they may look great with it, but that they may do good with it. When David reigned over all Israel he executed judgment and justice among all his people, and so answered the end of his elevation. He was not so intent on his conquests abroad as to neglect the administration of justice at home. Herein he served the purposes of the kingdom of providence, and of that God who sits in the throne judging right; and he was an eminent type of the Messiah, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre.

10 he sent Hadoram his son to king David, to inquire of his welfare,
and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer,
and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had war with Tou;) and *with him*
all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass.
11 Them also king David dedicated unto the Lord, with the silver
and the gold that he brought from all *these* nations; from Edom,
and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the
Philistines, and from Amalek.
12 Moreover, Abishai the son of Zeruiah slew of the Edomites in the
valley of salt eighteen thousand.
13 And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became
David's servants. Thus the Lord preserved David whithersoever
he went.

David's Officers

14 So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and
justice among all his people.
15 And Joab the son of Zeruiah *was* over the host; and Jehoshaphat the
son of Ahilud, recorder;
16 and Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar,
were the priests; and Shavsha was scribe;
17 and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and the

Pelethites; and the sons of David *were* chief about the king.

1 Chronicles-19

The Defeat of the Ammonites and Syrians

1 Now it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead.

Let us here observe,

1. That is becomes good people to be neighbourly, and especially to be grateful. David will pay respect to Hanun because he is his neighbour; and religion teaches us to be civil and obliging to all, to honour all men, and to be ready to do all offices of kindness to those we live among; nor must difference in religion be any obstruction to this. But, besides this, David remembered the kindness which his father showed to him. Those that have received kindness must return it as they have ability and opportunity: those that have received it from the parents must return it to the children when they are gone.

2. That, as saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, 1Sa 24:13. The vile person will speak villany, and the instruments of the churl will be evil, to destroy those with lying words that speak right, Isa 32:6,7. Those that are base, and design ill themselves, are apt to be jealous and to suspect ill of others without cause. Hanun's servant suggested that David's ambassadors came as spies, as if so great and mighty a man as David needed to do so mean a thing (if he had any design upon the Ammonites, he could effect it by open force, and had no occasion for any fraudulent practices), or as if a man of such virtue and honour would do so base a thing. Yet Hanun hearkened to the

suggestion, and, against the law of nations, treated David's ambassadors villainously.

3. Masters ought to protect their servants, and with the greatest tenderness to concern themselves for them if they come by any loss or damage in their service. David did so for his ambassadors, 1Ch 19:5. Christ will do so for his ministers; and let all masters thus give unto their servants that which is just and equal.

2 And David said, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. So the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him.

3 But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land?

4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst hard by their buttocks, and sent them away.

5 Then there went *certain*, and told David how the men were served; and he sent to meet them: for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.

6 And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia and out of Syria-maachah, and out of Zobah.

7 So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people; who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle.

We may see here,

1. How the hearts of sinners that are marked for ruin are hardened to their destruction. The children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David (1Ch 19:6), and then it would have been their wisdom to desire conditions of peace, to humble themselves and offer any satisfaction for the injury they had done him, the rather because they had made themselves not only odious to David, but obnoxious to the justice of God, who is King of nations, and will assert the injured rights and maintain the violated laws of nations. But, instead of this, they prepared for war, and so brought upon themselves, by David's hand, those desolations which he never intended them.

2. How the courage of brave men is heightened and invigorated by difficulties. When Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind (1Ch 19:10), instead of meditating a retreat, he doubled his resolution; and, though he could not double, he divided his army, and not only spoke, but acted, like a gallant man, that had great presence of mind when he saw himself surrounded. He engaged with his brother for mutual assistance (1Ch 19:12), excited himself and the rest of the officers to act vigorously in their respective posts, with an eye to God's glory and their country's good, not to any honour and advantage of their own, and then left the issue to God: Let the Lord do that which is right in his sight.

3. How vain the greatest art and strength are against justice and equity. The Ammonites did their utmost to make the best of their position: they brought as good a force into the field, and disposed it with as much policy as possible; yet, having a bad cause, and acting in defence of wrong, it would not do; they were put to the worst. Right will prevail and triumph at last.

4. To how little purpose it is for those to rally again, and reinforce themselves, that have not God on their side. The Syrians, though in no way concerned in the merits of the cause, but serving only as mercenaries to the Ammonites, when they were beaten, thought themselves concerned to retrieve their honour, and therefore called in the assistance of the Syrians on the other side Euphrates; but to no purpose, for still they fled before Israel (1Ch 19:18); they lost 7000 men, who are said to be the men of 700 chariots, 2Sa 10:18. For, as now in a man of war for sea-service they allot ten men to a gun, so then, in land-service, ten men to a chariot.

5. those who have meddled with strife that belongs not to them, and have found that they meddled to their own heart, do well to learn wit at length and meddle no further. The Syrians, finding that Israel was the conquering side, not only broke off their alliance with the Ammonites and would help them no more (1Ch 19:19), but made peace with David and became his servants. Let those who have in vain stood it out against God be thus wise for themselves, and agree with him quickly, while they are in the way. Let them become his servants; for they cannot but see themselves undone if they be his enemies.

8 And when David heard *of it,* he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

9 And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array before the gate of the city: and the kings that were come *were* by themselves in the field.

10 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put *them* in array against the Syrians.

11 And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set *themselves* in array against the children of Ammon.

12 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee.
13 Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the Lord do *that which is* good in his sight.
14 So Joab and the people that *were* with him drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him.
15 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.
16 And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that *were* beyond the river [Euphrates]: and Shophach the captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them.
17 And it was told David; and he gathered all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set *the battle* in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him.
18 But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand *men which fought in* chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host.
19 And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.

1 Chronicles-20

David Captures Rabbah

1 And it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out *to battle,* Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it.

How the army of the Ammonites and their allies was routed in the field we read in the foregoing chapters. Here we have the destruction of Rabbah, the metropolis of their kingdom (1Ch 20:1), the putting of their king's crown upon David's head (1Ch 20:2), and the great severity that was used towards the people, 1Ch 20:3. Of this we had a more full account in 2Sa 11:1-12:31, and cannot but remember it by this sad token, that while Joab was besieging Rabbah David fell into that great sin in the matter of Uriah. But it is observable that, though the rest of the story is repeated, that is not: a hint only is given of it, in those words which lie here in a parenthesis--But David tarried at Jerusalem.

If he had been abroad with his army, he would have been out of the way of that temptation; but, indulging his ease, he fell into uncleanness. Now, as the relating of the sin David fell into is an instance of the impartiality and fidelity of the sacred writers, so the avoiding of the repetition of it here, when there was a fair occasion given to speak of it again, is designed to teach us that, though there may be a just occasion to speak of the faults and miscarriages of others, yet we should not take delight in the repetition of them. That should always be looked upon as an unpleasing subject which, though sometimes one cannot help falling upon, yet one would not choose to dwell upon, any more than we should love to rake in a dunghill. The persons, or actions, we can say no good of, we had best say nothing of.

2 And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and *there were* precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city.

3 And he brought out the people that *were* in it, and cut *them* with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

The Giants Slain by David's Men

4 And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines; at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Sippai, *that was* of the children of the giant: and they were subdued.

The Philistines were nearly subdued (1Ch 18:1); but, as in the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua the sons of Anak were last subdued (Jos 11:21), so here in the conquest of the Philistines the giants of Gath were last brought down. In the conflicts between grace and corruption there are some sins which, like these giants, keep their ground a great while and are not mastered without much difficulty and a long struggle: but judgment will be brought forth unto victory at last.

Observe, 1. We never read of giants among the Israelites as we do of the giants among the Philistines-giants of Gath, but not giants of Jerusalem. The growth of God's plants is in usefulness, not in bulk. Those who covet to have cubits added to their stature do not consider that it will but make then more unwieldy. In the balance of the sanctuary David far outweighs Goliath.

2 The servants of David, though men of ordinary stature, were too hard for the giants of Gath in every encounter, because they had God on their side, who takes pleasure in abasing lofty looks, and mortifying the giants that are in the earth, as he did of old by the deluge, though they were men of renown. Never let the church's friends be disheartened by the power and pride of the church's enemies. We need not fear great men against us while we have the great God for us. What will a finger more on each hand do, or a toe more on each foot, in contest with Omnipotence?

3. These giants defied Israel (1Ch 20:7) and were thus made to pay for their insolence. None are more visibly marked for ruin that those who reproach God and his Israel. God will do

great things rather than suffer the enemy to behave themselves proudly, De 32:27. The victories of the Son of David, like those of David himself, are gradual. We see not yet all things put under him; but it will be seen shortly: and death itself, the last enemy, like these giants, will be triumphed over.

5 And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff *was* like a weaver's beam.

6 And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, whose fingers and toes *were* four and twenty, six *on each hand,* and six *on each foot:* and he also was the son of the giant.

7 But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother slew him.

8 These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

1 Chronicles-21

David Numbers Israel and Judah

1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

Numbering the people, one would think, was no bad thing. Why should not the shepherd know the number of his flock? But God sees not as man sees. It is plain it was wrong in David to do it, and a great provocation to God, because he did it in the pride of his heart; and there is no sin that has in it more of contradiction and therefore more of offence to God than pride. The sin was David's; he alone must bear the blame of it. But here we are told,

I. How active the tempter was in it (1Ch 21:1): Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to do it. Is is said (2Sa 24:1) that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David to do it. The righteous judgments of God

are to be observed and acknowledged even in the sins and unrighteousness of men. We are sure that God is not the author of sin--he tempts no man; and therefore, when it is said that he moved David to do it, it must be explained by what is intimated here, that, for wise and holy ends, he permitted the devil to do it.

Here we trace this foul stream to its foundation. That Satan, the enemy of God and all good, should stand up against Israel, is not strange; it is what he aims at, to weaken the strength, diminish the numbers, and eclipse the glory of God's Israel, to whom he is Satan, a sworn adversary. But that he should influence David, the man of God's own heart to do a wrong thing, may well be wondered at. One would think him one of those whom the wicked one touches not. No, even the best saints, till they come to heaven, must never think themselves out of the reach of Satan's temptations. Now, when Satan meant to do Israel a mischief, what course did he take? He did not move God against them to destroy them (as Job, Job 2:3), but he provoked David, the best friend they had, to number them, and so to offend God, and set him against them.

Note, 1 The devil does us more mischief by tempting us to sin against our God than he does by accusing us before our God. He destroys none but by their own hands, 2 The greatest spite he can do to the church of God is to tempt the rulers of the church to pride; for none can conceive the fatal consequences of that sin in all, especially in church-rulers. You shall not be so, Lu 22:26.

II. How passive the instrument was. Joab, the person whom David employed, was an active man in public business; but to this he was perfectly forced, and did it with the greatest reluctance imaginable.

1. He put in a remonstrance against it before he began it. No man more forward that he in any thing that really tended to the honour of the king or the welfare of the kingdom; but in this matter he would gladly be excused.

For, (1.) It was a needless thing. There was not occasion at all for it. God had promised to multiply them, and he needed not question the accomplishment of that promise. They were all his servants, and he needed not doubt of their loyalty and affection to him. Their number was as much his strength as he could desire.

(2.) It was a dangerous thing. In doing it he might be a cause of trespass to Israel, and might provoke God against them. This Joab apprehended, and yet David himself did not. The most learned in the laws of God are not always the most quick-sighted in the application of those laws.

2. He was quite weary of it before he had done it; for the king's word was abominable to Joab, 1Ch 21:6. Time was when whatever king David did pleased all the people, 2Sa 3:36. But now there was a general disgust at these orders, which confirmed Joab in his dislike of them, so that, though the produce of this muster was really very great, yet he had no heart to perfect it, but left two tribes unnumbered (1Ch 21:5,6), two considerable ones, Levi and Benjamin, and perhaps was not very exact in numbering the rest, because he did not do it with any pleasure, which might be one occasion of the difference between the sums here and 2Sa 24:9.

2 And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number
Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them
to me, that I may know *it*.
3 And Joab answered, The Lord make his people a hundred times so
many more as they *be:* but, my lord the king, *are* they not all my lord's
servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be
a cause of trespass to Israel?

4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.
5 And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all *they of* Israel were a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah *was* four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.
6 But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.
7 And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.
8 And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.
9 And the Lord spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying,
10 Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three *things:* choose thee one of them, that I may do *it* unto thee.

David is here under the rod for numbering the people, that rod of correction which drives out the foolishness that is bound up in the heart, the foolishness of pride. Let us briefly observe,

I. How he was corrected. If God's dearest children do amiss, they must expect to smart for it.

1. He is given to understand that God is displeased; and that it is no small uneasiness to so good a man as David, 1Ch 21:7. God takes notice of, and is displeased with, the sins of his people; and no sin is more displeasing to him than pride of heart: nor is anything more humbling, and grieving, and mortifying to a gracious soul, than to see itself under God's displeasure.

2. He is put to his choice whether he will be punished by war, famine, or pestilence; for punished he must be, and by one of these. Thus, for his further humiliation, he is put into a strait,

a great strait, and has the terror of all the three judgments impressed upon his mind, no doubt to his great amazement, while he is considering which he shall choose.

3. He hears of 70,000 of his subjects who in a few hours were struck dead by the pestilence, 1Ch 21:14. He was proud of the multitude of his people, but divine Justice took a course to make them fewer. Justly is that taken from us, weakened, or embittered to us, which we are proud of. David must have the people numbered: Bring me the number of them, says he, that I may know it. But now God numbers them after another manner, numbers to the sword, Isa 65:12. And David had another number of them brought, more to his confusion than was to his satisfaction, namely, the number of the slain--a black bill of mortality, which is a drawback to his muster-roll.

4. He sees the destroying angel, with his sword drawn against Jerusalem, 1Ch 21:16. This could not but be very terrible to him, as it was a visible indication of the anger of Heaven, and threatened the utter destruction of that beloved city. Pestilences make the greatest devastations in the most populous places. The sight of an angel, though coming peaceably and on a friendly errand, has made even mighty men to tremble; how dreadful then must this sight be of an angel with a drawn sword in his hand, a flaming sword, like that of the cherubim, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life! While we lie under the wrath of God the holy angels are armed against us, though we see them not as David did.

II. How he bore the correction.

1. He made a very penitent confession of his sin, and prayed earnestly for the pardon of it, 1Ch 21:8. Now he owned that

he had sinned, had sinned greatly, had done foolishly, very foolishly; and he entreated that, however he might be corrected for it, the iniquity of it might be done away.

2. He accepted the punishment of his iniquity: "Let thy hand be on me, and on my father's house, 1Ch 21:17. I submit to the rod, only let me be the sufferer, for I am the sinner; mine is the guilty head at which the sword should be pointed."

3. He cast himself upon the mercy of God (though he knew he was angry with him) and did not entertain any hard thoughts of him. However it be, Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great, 1Ch 21:13. Good men, even when God frowns upon them, think well of him. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

4. He expressed a very tender concern for the people, and it went to his heart to see them plagued for his transgression: These sheep, what have they done?

11 So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Choose thee
12 either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh *thee;* or else three days the sword of the Lord, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.
13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great *are* his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.
14 So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.
15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand.

And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

16 And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders *of Israel, who were* clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

17 And David said unto God, *Is it* not I *that* commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but *as for* these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

18 Then the angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the Lord in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the Lord.

20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat.

We have here the controversy concluded, and, upon David's repentance, his peace made with God. Though thou wast angry with me, thy anger is turned away.

1. A stop was put to the progress of the execution, 1Ch 21:15. When David repented of the sin God repented of the judgment, and ordered the destroying angel to stay his hand and sheath his sword, 1Ch 21:27.

2. Direction was given to David to rear an altar in the threshing-floor of Ornan, 1Ch 21:18. The angel commanded the prophet Gad to bring David this direction. The same angel that had, in God's name, carried on the war, is here forward to set on foot the treaty of peace; for angels do not desire the woeful day. The angel could have given this order to David himself; but he chose to do it by his seer, that he might put an honour upon the prophetic office. Thus the revelation of Jesus Christ was notified by the angel to John, and by him to

the churches. The commanding of David to build an altar was a blessed token of reconciliation; for, if God had been pleased to kill him, he would not have appointed, because he would not have accepted, a sacrifice at his hands.

3. David immediately made a bargain with Ornan for the threshing-floor; for he would not serve God at other people's charge. Ornan generously offered it to him gratis, not only in complaisance to the king, but because he had himself seen the angel (1Ch 21:20), which so terrified him that he and his four sons hid themselves, as unable to bear the brightness of his glory and afraid of his drawn sword. Under these apprehensions he was willing to do anything towards making the atonement. Those that are duly sensible of the terrors of the Lord will do all they can, in their places, to promote religion, and encourage all the methods of reconciliation for the turning away of God's wrath.

4. God testified his acceptance of David's offerings on this altar; He answered him from heaven by fire, 1Ch 21:26. To signify that God's anger was turned away from him, the fire that might justly have fastened upon the sinner fastened upon the sacrifice and consumed that; and, upon this, the destroying sword was returned into its sheath. Thus Christ was made sin and a curse for us, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that through him God might be to us, not a consuming fire, but a reconciled Father.

5. He continued to offer his sacrifices upon this altar. The brazen altar which Moses made was at Gibeon (1Ch 21:29), and there all the sacrifices of Israel were offered; but David was so terrified at the sight of the sword of the angel that he could not go thither, 1Ch 21:30. The business required haste, when the plague was begun. Aaron must go quickly, nay, he must run, to make atonement, Nu 16:46,47. And the case here was no less urgent; so that David had not time to go to

Gibeon: nor durst he leave the angel with his sword drawn over Jerusalem, lest the fatal stroke should be given before he came back. And therefore God, in tenderness to him, bade him build an altar in that place, dispensing with his own law concerning one altar because of the present distress, and accepting the sacrifices offered on this new altar, which was not set up in opposition to that, but in concurrence with it. The symbols of unity were not so much insisted on as unity itself.

Nay, when the present distress was over (as it should seem), David, as long as he lived, sacrificed there, though the altar at Gibeon was still kept up; for God had owned the sacrifices that were here offered and had testified his acceptance of them, 1Ch 21:28. On those administrations in which we have experienced the tokens of God's presence, and have found that he is with us of a truth, it is good to continue our attendance. "Here God had graciously met me, and therefore I will still expect to meet with him."

21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and
went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with
his face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of *this*
threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord:
thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be
stayed from the people.

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take *it* to thee, and let my lord the king
do *that which is* good in his eyes: lo, I give *thee* the oxen *also* for burnt
offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat
for the meat offering; I give it all.

24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the
full price: for I will not take *that* which *is* thine for the Lord, nor
offer burnt offerings without cost.

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by
weight.

26 And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt
offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord ; and he
answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.
27 And the Lord commanded the angel; and he put up his sword
again into the sheath thereof.

The Site for the Temple

28 At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the
threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.
29 For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses made in the
wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering, *were* at that season
in the high place at Gibeon.
30 But David could not go before it to inquire of God: for he was afraid
because of the sword of the angel of the Lord.

1 Chronicles-22

1 Then David said, This *is* the house of the Lord God, and this *is* the
altar of the burnt offering for Israel.

Here is, I The place fixed for the building of the temple (1Ch 22:1): Then David said, by inspiration of God, and as a declaration of his mind, This is the house of the Lord God. If a temple must be built for God, it is fit that it be left to him to choose the ground, for all the earth is his; and this is the ground he makes choice of-ground that pertained to a Jebusite, and perhaps there was not a spot of ground besides, in or about Jerusalem, that did so--a happy presage of the setting up of the gospel temple among the Gentiles. See Ac 15:16,17. The ground was a threshing-floor; for the church of the living God is his floor, his threshing, and the corn of his floor, Isa 21:10. Christ's fan is in his hand, thoroughly to purge his floor. This is to be the house because this is the altar. The temple was built for the sake of the altar. There were altars long before there were temples.

II. Preparation made for that building. David must not build it, but he would do all he could towards it: He prepared abundantly before his death, 1Ch 22:5. This intimates that the consideration of his age and growing infirmities, which showed him his death approaching, quickened him, towards his latter end, to be very diligent in making this preparation. What our hands find to do for God, and our souls, and our generation, let us do it with all our might before our death, because, after death, there is no device nor working. Now we are here told,

1. What induced him to make such preparation. Two things he considered:--

(1.) That Solomon was young and tender, and not likely to apply with any great vigour to this business at first; so that, unless he found the wheels set a-going, he would be in danger of losing a great deal of time at first, the rather because, being young, he would be tempted to put it off; whereas, if he found the materials got ready to his hand, the most difficult part of the work would be over, and this would excite and encourage him to go about it in the beginnings of his reign. Note, Those that are aged and experienced should consider those that are young and tender, and provide them what help they can, that they may make the work of God as easy to them as possible.

(2.) That the house must be exceedingly magnificent, very stately and sumptuous, strong and beautiful, every thing about it the best in its kind, and for a good reason, since it was intended for the honour of the great God, the Lord of the whole earth, and was to be a type of Christ, in whom all fulness dwells and in whom are hid all treasures. Men were then to be taught by sensible methods. The grandeur of the house would help to affect the worshippers with a holy awe

and reverence of God, and would invite strangers to come to see it, and the wonder of the world, who thereby would be brought acquainted with the true God. Therefore it is here designed to be of fame and glory throughout all countries. David foretold this good effect of its being magnificent, Ps 68:29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

2. What preparation he made. In general, he prepared abundantly, as we shall find afterwards; cedar and stones, iron and brass, are here specified, 1Ch 22:2-4. Cedar he had from the Tyrians and the Zidonians. The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift, Ps 45:12. He also got workmen together, the strangers that were in the land of Israel. Some think that he employed them because they were generally better artists, and more ingenious in manual operations, than the Israelites; or, rather, because he would not employ the free-born Israelites in any thing that looked mean and servile. They were delivered from the bondage of making bricks in Egypt, and must not return to hew stone. These strangers were proselytes to the Jewish religion, but, though not enslaved, they were not of equal dignity with Israelites.

David's Preparation for the Temple

2 And David commanded to gather together the strangers that *were* in
the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build
the house of God.
3 And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of
the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without
weight;
4 also cedar trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre
brought much cedar wood to David.
5 And David said, Solomon my son *is* young and tender, and the
house *that is* to be builded for the Lord *must be* exceeding
magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will

therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

6 Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build a house for the Lord God of Israel.

Though Solomon was young and tender, he was capable of receiving instructions, which his father accordingly gave him, concerning the work for which he was designed. When David came to the throne he had many things to do, for the foundations were all out of course; but Solomon had only one thing in charge, and that was to build a house for the Lord God of Israel, 1Ch 22:6. Now,

I. David tells him why he did not do it himself. It was in his mind to do it (1Ch 22:7), but God forbade him, because he had shed much blood, 1Ch 22:8. Some think this refers to the blood of Uriah, which fastened such a reproach upon him as rendered him unworthy the honour of building the temple: but that honour was forbidden him before he had shed that blood; therefore it must be meant, as it is here explained, of the blood he shed in his wars (for he had been a man of war from his youth), which, though shed very justly and honourably in the service of God and Israel, yet made him unfit to be employed in this service, or rather less fit than another that had never been called to such bloody work. God, by assigning this as the reason of laying David aside from this work, showed how precious human life is to him, and intended a type of him who should build the gospel temple, not by destroying men's lives, but by saving them, Lu 9:56.

II. He gives him the reason why he imposed this task upon him.

1. Because God had designed him for it, nominated him as the man that should do it: A son shall be born to thee, that shall be called Solomon, and he shall build a house for my name, 1Ch 22:9,10. Nothing is more powerful to engage us

to any service for God, and encourage us in it, than to know that hereunto we are appointed.

2. Because he would have leisure and opportunity to do it. He should be a man of rest, and therefore should not have his time, or thoughts, or wealth, diverted from this business. He should have rest from his enemies abroad (none of them should invade or threaten him, or give him provocation), and he should have peace and quietness at home; and therefore let him build the house. Note, Where God gives rest he expects work. 3. Because God had promised to establish his kingdom. Let this encourage him to honour God, that God had honour in store for him; let him build up God's house, and God will build up his throne. Note, God's gracious promises should quicken and invigorate our religious service.

III. He delivers him an account of the vast preparations he had made for this building (1Ch 22:14), not in a way of pride and vain glory (he speaks of it as a poor thing--I have, in my poverty, prepared, margin), but as an encouragement to Solomon to engage cheerfully in the work, for which so solid a foundation was laid. The treasure here mentioned of the 100,000 talents of gold, and 1,000,000 talents of silver, amounts to such an incredible sum that most interpreters either allow an error in the copy or think the talent here signifies no more than a plate or piece: ingots we call them. I am inclined to suppose that a certain number is here put for an uncertain, because it is said (1Ch 22:16) that of the gold and silver, as well as of the brass and iron, there was no number, and that David here includes all the dedicated things (1Ch 18:11) which he designed for the house of the Lord, that is, not only for the building of it, but for the treasure of it; and putting all together, it might come pretty near what is here spoken of. Hundreds and thousands are numbers which we often use to express that which is very much, when yet we would not be understood strictly.

IV. He charges them to keep God's commandments and to take heed to his duty in every thing, 1Ch 22:13. He must not think by building the temple to purchase a dispensation to sin; no, on the contrary, his doing that would not be accepted, nor accounted of, if he did not take heed to fulfil the statutes which the Lord charged Moses with, 1Ch 22:13. Though he was to be king of Israel, he must always remember that he was a subject to the God of Israel.

V. He encourages him to go about this great work, and to go on in it (1Ch 22:13): "Be strong, and of good courage, Though it is a vast undertaking, thou needest not fear coming under the reproach of the foolish builder, who began to build and was not able to finish it; it is God's work, and it shall come to perfection. Dread not, nor be dismayed." In our spiritual work, as well as in our spiritual warfare, we have need of courage and resolution.

VI. He quickens him not to rest in the preparations he had made, but to add thereto, 1Ch 22:14. Those that enter into the labours of others, and build upon their advantages, must still be improving.

VII. He prays for him: The Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, 1Ch 22:12. Whatever charge we have, if we see God giving us the charge and calling us to it, we may hope he will give us wisdom for the discharge of it. Perhaps Solomon had an eye to this prayer of his father for him, in the prayer he offered for himself: Lord, give me a wise and understanding heart. He concludes (1Ch 22:16), Up, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee. Hope of God's presence must not slacken our endeavours. Though the Lord be with us, we must rise and be doing, and, if we do this, we have reason to believe he is

and will be with us. Work out your salvation, and God will work in you.

7 And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind
to build a house unto the name of the Lord my God:
8 but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood
abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build a house
unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth
in my sight.
9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I
will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name
shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in
his days.
10 He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I
will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom
over Israel for ever.
11 Now, my son, the Lord be with thee; and prosper thou, and build
the house of the Lord thy God, as he hath said of thee.
12 Only the Lord give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee
charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the
Lord thy God.
13 Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and
judgments which the Lord charged Moses with concerning Israel:
be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.
14 Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the
Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand
thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for
it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou
mayest add thereto.
15 Moreover, *there are* workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and
workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for
every manner of work.
16 Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, *there is* no
number. Arise *therefore,* and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.
17 David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon
his son, *saying,*

David here engages the princes of Israel to assist Solomon in the great work he had to do, and every one to lend him a hand towards the carrying of it on. Those that are in the throne cannot do the good they would, unless those about the throne set in with them. David would therefore have the princes to advise Solomon and quicken him, and make the work as easy to him as they could, by promoting it every one in his place.

1. He shows them what obligations they lay under to be zealous in this matter, in gratitude to God for the great things he had done for them. He had given them victory, and rest, and a good land for an inheritance, 1Ch 22:18. The more God has done for us the more we should study to do for him.

2. He presses that upon them which should make them zealous in it (1Ch 22:19): "Set your heart and soul to seek God, place your happiness in his favour, and keep your eye upon his glory. Seek him as your chief good and highest end, and this with your heart and soul. Make religion your choice and business; and then you will grudge no pains nor cost to promote the building of his sanctuary." Let but the heart be sincerely engaged for God, and the head and hand, the estate and interest, and all will be cheerfully employed for him.

18 *Is* not the Lord your God with you? and hath he *not* given you rest
on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into
mine hand; and the land is subdued before the Lord, and before
his people.

19 Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God; arise
therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the Lord God, to bring the
ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the holy vessels of God, into
the house that is to be built to the name of the Lord.

1 Chronicles-23

1 So when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel.

2

The Divisions and Duties of the Levites

2 And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites.

Here we have, I The crown entailed, according to the divine appointment, 1Ch 23:1. David made Solomon king, not to reign with him, or reign under him, but only to reign after him. This he did,

1. When he was old and full of days. He was but seventy years old when he died, and yet he was full of days, satur dierum--satisfied with living in this world. When he found himself going off, he made provision for the welfare of the kingdom after his decease, and pleased himself with the hopeful prospect of a happy settlement both in church and state.

2. He did it in parliament, in a solemn assembly of all the princes of Israel, which made Adonijah's attempt to break in upon Solomon's title and set it aside, notwithstanding this public recognition and establishment of it, the more impudent, impious, and ridiculous. Note, The settling or securing of the crown in the interests of the temple is a great blessing to the people and a great satisfaction to those who are themselves leaving the world.

II The Levites numbered, according to the rule in Moses's time, from thirty years old to fifty, Nu 4:2,3. Their number in Moses's time. by this rule, was 8580 (Nu 4:47,48), but now it had increased above four-fold, much more in proportion than

the rest of the tribes; for the serviceable men of Levi's tribe were now 38,000, unless we suppose that here those were reckoned who were above fifty, which was not the case there. Joab had not numbered the Levites (1Ch 21:6), but David now did, not in pride, but for a good purpose, and then he needed not fear wrath for it.

III. The Levites distributed to their respective posts (1Ch 23:4,5), that every hand might be employed (for, of all men, an idle Levite makes the worst figure), and that every part of the work might be carefully done. Now it was for the honour of God that so great a number of servants attended his house and the business of it. Much of the state of great men consists in the greatness of their retinue. When God kept house in Israel see what a great household he had, and all well fed and well taught. But what were these to the attendants of his throne above, and the innumerable company of angels? It was the happiness of Israel that they had among them such a considerable body of men who were obliged by their office to promote and keep up religion among them. If the worship of God go to decay in Israel, let it not be said that it was for want of due provision for the support of it, but that those who should have done it were careless and false. The work assigned the Levites was four-fold:--

1. Some, and indeed far the greater number, were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord: 24,000, almost two-thirds, were appointed for this service, to attend the priests in killing the sacrifices, flaying them, washing them, cutting them up, burning them, to have the meat-offerings and drink-offerings ready, to carry out dirt, and keep all the vessels and utensils of the temple clean, and every thing in its place, that the service might be performed both with expedition and with exactness. These served 1000 a-week, and so went round in twenty-four courses. Perhaps while the temple was in building some of these were employed to set

forward that work, to assist the builders, at least to quicken them, and keep good order among them, and the decorum which became temple-work.

2. Others were officers and judges, not in the affairs of the temple, and in the controversies that arose there (for there, we may suppose, the priests presided), but in the country. They were magistrates, to give the laws of God in charge, to resolves difficulties, and to determine controversies that arose upon them. Of these there were 6000, in the several parts of the kingdom, that assisted the princes and elders of every tribe in the administration of justice.

3. Others were porters, to guard all the avenues of the house of God, to examine those that desired entrance, and to resist those that would force an entrance. These were the life-guards of the temple, and probably were armed accordingly.

4. Others were singers and players on instruments, whose business it was to keep up that part of the service; this was a new-erected office.

IV. The Levites mustered, and disposed of into their respective families and kindreds, that an account of them might the better be kept, and those that neglected their duty might be the more easily discovered, by calling over the roll, and obliging them to answer to their names, which each family might do for itself. When those of the same family were employed together it would engage them to love and assist one another. When Christ sent forth his disciples two and two he put together those that were brethren.

Two families were here joined in one (1Ch 23:11) because they had not many sons. Those that are weak and little, separately, may be put together and appear considerable.

That which is most observable in this account of the families of the Levites is that the posterity of Moses (that great man) stood upon the level with common Levites, and had no dignities or privileges at all peculiar to them; whilst the posterity of Aaron were advanced to the priest's office, to sanctify the most holy things, 1Ch 23:13. It is said indeed of the grandson of Moses, Rehabiah, that his sons were highly multiplied, 1Ch 23:17, margin. When God proposed to him that, if he would let fall his intercession for Israel, he would make of him a great nation, he generously refused it, in recompence for which his family is here greatly increased, and makes up in number what it wants in figure, in the tribe of Levi.

Now, 1 The levelling of Moses' family with the rest is an evidence of his self-denial. Such an interest had he both with God and man that if he had aimed to raise his own family, to dignify and enrich that, he might easily have done so; but he was no self-seeking man, as appears from his leaving to his children no marks of distinction, which was a sign that he had the spirit of God and not the spirit of the world.

2 The elevation of Aaron's family above the rest was a recompence for his self-denial. When Moses (his younger brother) was made a god to Pharaoh, and he only his prophet or spokesman, to observe his orders and do as he was bidden, Aaron never disputed it, nor insisted upon his seniority, but readily took the inferior post God put him in, submitted to Moses, and, upon occasion, called him his lord; and because he thus submitted himself, in his own person, to his junior, in compliance with the will of God, God highly exalted his family, even above that of Moses himself. Those that are content to stoop are in the fairest way to rise. Before honour is humility.

3 Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand.
4 Of which, twenty and four thousand *were* to set forward the work of the house of the Lord ; and six thousand *were* officers and judges:
5 moreover four thousand *were* porters; and four thousand praised the Lord with the instruments which I made, *said David,* to praise *therewith.*
6 And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, *namely,* Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
7 Of the Gershonites *were* Laadan, and Shimei.
8 The sons of Laadan; the chief *was* Jehiel, and Zetham, and Joel, three.
9 The sons of Shimei; Shelomith, and Haziel, and Haran, three. These *were* the chief of the fathers of Laadan.
10 And the sons of Shimei *were,* Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah. These four *were* the sons of Shimei.
11 And Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second: but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons; therefore they were in one reckoning, according to *their* father's house.
12 The sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four.
13 The sons of Amram; Aaron, and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever.
14 Now *concerning* Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi.
15 The sons of Moses *were,* Gershom, and Eliezer.
16 Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel *was* the chief.
17 And the sons of Eliezer *were,* Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many.
18 Of the sons of Izhar; Shelomith the chief.
19 Of the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth.
20 Of the sons of Uzziel; Micah the first, and Jesiah the second.

21 The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. The sons of Mahli;
Eleazar, and Kish.
22 And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters: and their
brethren the sons of Kish took them.
23 The sons of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three.
24 These *were* the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; *even* the
chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by
their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the
Lord, from the age of twenty years and upward.

Here is, I. An alteration made in the computation of the effective men of the Levites--that whereas, in Moses's time, they were not enlisted, or taken into service, till they were thirty-years old, nor admitted as probationers till twenty-five (Nu 8:24), David ordered, by direction from God, that they should be numbered for the service of the house of the Lord, from the age of twenty years and upwards, 1Ch 23:24. This order he confirmed by his last words, 1Ch 23:27. When he put his last hand to the draught of this establishment he expressly appointed this to be done for ever after; yet not he; but the Lord.

1. Perhaps the young Levites, having no work appointed them till twenty-five years old, had many of them got a habit of idleness, or grew addicted to their pleasures, which proved both a blemish to their reputation and a hindrance to their usefulness afterwards, to prevent which inconvenience they are set to work, and brought under discipline, at twenty-years old. Those that will be eminent must learn to take care and take care betimes.

2. When the work of the Levites was to carry burdens, heavy burdens, the tabernacle and the furniture of it, God would not call any to it till they had come to their full strength; for he considers our frame, and, in service as well as sufferings, will lay no more upon us than we are able to bear. But now God had given rest to his people, and made Jerusalem his

dwelling-place for ever, so that there was no more occasion to carry the tabernacle and the vessels thereof, the service was much easier, and what would not over-work them nor over-load them if they entered upon it at twenty-years old.

3. Now the people of Israel were multiplied, and there was a more general resort to Jerusalem, and would be when the temple was built, than had ever been at Shiloh, or Nob, or Gibeon; it was therefore requisite there should be more hands employed in the temple-service, that every Israelite who brought an offering might find a Levite ready to assist him. When more work is to be done it is a pity but there should be more workmen fetched in for the doing of it. When the harvest is plenteous why should the labourers be few?

II. A further account of the Levites' work. What the work of the priests was we are told (1Ch 23:13): To sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the Lord, and to bless in his name; that work the Levites were not to meddle with, and yet they had work enough, and good work, according to that to which they were appointed, 1Ch 23:4,5.

1. Those of them that were to set forward the work of the house of God (1Ch 23:4) were therein to wait on the sons of Aaron (1Ch 23:28), were to do the drudgery-work (if any work for God is to be called drudgery) of the house of God, to keep the courts and chambers clean, set things in their places, and have them ready when there was occasion to use them. They were to prepare the show-bread which the priests were to set on the table, to provide the flour and cakes for the meat-offerings, that the priests might have every thing ready to their hands.

2. Those of them that were judges and officers had an eye particularly upon all measure and size, 1Ch 23:29. The standards of all weights and measures were kept in the sanctuary; and the Levites had the care of them, to see that they were exact, and to try other weights and measures by them when they were appealed to.

3. The work of the singers was to thank and praise the Lord (1Ch 23:30), at the offering of the morning and evening sacrifices, and other oblations on the sabbaths, new moons, &c., 1Ch 23:31. Moses appointed that they should blow with trumpets over their burnt offerings and other sacrifices, and on their solemn days, Nu 10:10. The sound of the trumpet was awful, and might be affecting to the worshippers, but was not articulate, nor such a reasonable service as this which David appointed, of singing psalms on those occasions. As the Jewish church grew up from its infancy, it grew more and more intelligent in its devotions, till it came at length, in the gospel, to put away childish things, 1Co 13:11,Ga 4:3,9.

4. The work of the porters (1Ch 23:5) was to keep the charge of the tabernacle and of the holy place, that none might come nigh but such as were allowed, and those no nearer than was allowed them, 1Ch 23:32. They were likewise to keep the charge of the sons of Aaron, to be at their beck and go on their errands, who are yet called their brethren, to be a memorandum to the priests that, though they were advanced to a high station, yet they were hewn out of the same rock with common Levites, and therefore must not lord it over them, but in all instances treat them as brethren.

25 For David said, The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto his
people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem for ever:
26 and also unto the Levites: they shall no *more* carry the tabernacle,
nor any vessels of it for the service thereof.
27 For by the last words of David the Levites *were* numbered from
twenty years old and above:

28 because their office *was* to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service
of the house of the Lord, in the courts, and in the chambers, and
in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the
house of God:
29 both for the showbread, and for the fine flour for meat offering,
and for the unleavened cakes, and for *that which is baked in* the pan,
and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size;
30 and to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and
likewise at even;
31 and to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord in the sabbaths, in
the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the
order commanded unto them, continually before the Lord:
32 and that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the
congregation, and the charge of the holy *place*, and the charge of the
sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the
Lord.

1 Chronicles-24

1 Now these *are* the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron;
Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
2 But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children:
therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office.
3 And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and
Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their
service.

The particular account of these establishments is of little use to us now; but, when Ezra published it, it was of great use to direct their church affairs after their return from captivity into the old channel again. The title of this record we have 1Ch 24:1-- These are the divisions of the sons of Aaron, not by which they divided one from another, or were at variance one with another (it is a pity there should ever be any such divisions among the sons of Israel, but especially among the sons of Aaron), but the distribution of them in order to the

dividing of their work among themselves; it was a division which God made, and was made for him.

1. This distribution was made for the more regular discharge of the duties of their office. God was, and still is, the God of order, and not of confusion, particularly in the things of his worship. Number without order is but a clog and an occasion of tumult; but when every one has, and knows, and keeps, his place and work, the more the better. In the mystical body, every member has its use, for the good of the whole, Ro 12:4,5,1Co 12:12.

2. It was made by lot, that the disposal thereof might be of the Lord, and so all quarrels and contentions might be prevented, and no man could be charged with partiality, nor could any say that they had wrong done them. As God is the God or order, so he is the God of peace. Solomon says of the lot that it causeth contention to cease.

3. The lot was cast publicly, and with great solemnity, in the presence of the king, princes, and priests, that there might be no room for any fraudulent practices or the suspicion of them. The lot is an appeal to God, and ought to be managed with corresponding reverence and sincerity. Matthias was chosen to the apostleship by lot, with prayer (Ac 1:24,26), and I know not but it might be still used in faith in parallel cases, as an instituted ordinance. We have here the name of the public notary that was employed in writing the names, and drawing the lots, (1Ch 24:6): Shemaiah, one of the Levites.

4. What those priests were chosen to was to preside in the affairs of the sanctuary (1Ch 24:5), in their several courses and turns. That which was to be determined by the lot was only the precedency, not who should serve (for they chose all the chief men), but who should serve first, and who next, that

every one might know his course, and attend in it. Of the twenty-four chief men of the priests sixteen were of the house of Eleazar and eight of Ithamar; for the house of Ithamar may well be supposed to have dwindled since the sentence passed on the family of Eli, who was of that house. The method of drawing the lots is intimated (1Ch 24:6), one chief household being taken for Eleazar, and one for Ithamar. The sixteen chief names of Eleazar were put in one urn, the eight for Ithamar in another, and they drew out of them alternately, as long as those for Ithamar lasted, and then out of those only for Eleazar, or two for Eleazar, and then one for Ithamar, throughout.

5. Among these twenty-four courses the eighth is that of Abijah or Abia (1Ch 24:10), which is mentioned (Lu 1:5) as the course which Zechariah was of, the father of John the Baptist, by which it appears that these courses which David now settled, though interrupted perhaps in the bad reigns and long broken off by the captivity, yet continued in succession till the destruction of the second temple by the Romans. And each course was called by the name of him in whom it was first founded, as the high priest is here called Aaron (1Ch 24:19), because succeeding in his dignity and power, though we read not of any of them that bore that name. Whoever was high priest must be reverenced and observed by the inferior priests as their father, as Aaron their father. Christ is high priest over the house of God, to whom all believers, being made priests, are to be in subjection.

4 And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of
the sons of Ithamar; and *thus* were they divided. Among the sons of
Eleazar *there were* sixteen chief men of the house of *their* fathers,
and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of
their fathers.

5 Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the
governors of the sanctuary, and governors *of the house* of God, were
of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar.

6 And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, *one* of the Levites,
wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest,
and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and *before* the chief of the
fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being
taken for Eleazar, and *one* taken for Ithamar.
7 Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,
8 the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,
9 the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin,
10 the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,
11 the ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shecaniah,
12 the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim,
13 the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,
14 the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,
15 the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses,
16 the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezekel,
17 the one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul,
18 the three and twentieth to Delaiah, the four and twentieth to
Maaziah.
19 These *were* the orderings of them in their service to come into the
house of the Lord, according to their manner, under Aaron their
father, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded him.
20 And the rest of the sons of Levi *were these:* Of the sons of Amram;
Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah.

Most of the Levites here named were mentioned before, 1Ch 23:16-23, &c. They were of those who were to attend the priests in the service of the house of God. But they are here mentioned again as heads of the twenty-four courses of Levites (and about so many are here named), who were to attend the twenty-four courses of the priests: they are therefore said to cast lots over against their brethren (so they are called, not their lords), the sons of Aaron, who were not to lord it over God's clergy, as the original word is, 1Pe 5:3. And, that the whole disposal of the affair might be of the Lord, the principal fathers cast lots over against their younger brethren; that is, those that were of the elder house came upon he level with those of the younger families, and took their

place, not by seniority, but as God by the lot directed. Note, In Christ no difference is made between bond and free, elder and younger. The younger brethren, if they be faithful and sincere, shall be no less acceptable to Christ than the principal fathers.

21 Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first *was* Isshiah.
22 Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath.
23 And the sons *of Hebron;* Jeriah *the first,* Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth.
24 *Of* the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir.
25 The brother of Michah *was* Isshiah: of the sons of Isshiah; Zechariah.
26 The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno.
27 The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri.
28 Of Mahli *came* Eleazar, who had no sons.
29 Concerning Kish: the son of Kish *was* Jerahmeel.
30 The sons also of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These *were* the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers.
31 These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren.

1 Chronicles-25

The Divisions of the Musicians

1 Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was:

2 of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king.

Observe, I. Singing the praises of God is here called prophesying (1Ch 25:1-3), not that all those who were employed in this service were honoured with the visions of God, or could foretel things to come. Heman indeed is said to be the king's seer in the words of God (1Ch 25:5); but the psalms they sang were composed by the prophets, and many of them were prophetical; and the edification of the church was intended in it, as well as the glory of God. In Samuel's time singing the praises of God went by the name of prophesying (1Sa 10:5,19:20), and perhaps that is intended in what St. Paul calls prophesying, 1Co 11:4,14:24.

II. This is here called a service, and the persons employed in it workmen, 1Ch 25:1. Not but that it is the greatest liberty and pleasure to be employed in praising God: what is heaven but that? But it intimates that it is our duty to make a business of it, and stir up all that is within us to it; and that, in our present state of corruption and infirmity, it will not be done as it should be done without labour and struggle. We must take pains with our hearts to bring them, and keep them, to this work, and to engage all that is within us.

III. Here were, in compliance with the temper of that dispensation, a great variety of musical instruments used, harps, psalteries, cymbals (1Ch 25:1,6), and here was one that lifted up the horn (1Ch 25:5), that is, used wind-music. The bringing of such concerts of music into the worship of God now is what none pretend to. But those who use such concerts for their own entertainment should feel themselves obliged to preserve them always free from any thing that savours of immorality or profaneness, by this consideration, that time was when they were sacred; and then those were justly condemned who brought them into common use, Am

6:5. They invented to themselves instruments of music like David.

IV. The glory and honour of God were principally intended in all this temple-music, whether vocal or instrumental. It was to give thanks, and praise the Lord, that the singers were employed, 1Ch 25:3. It was in the songs of the Lord that they were instructed (1Ch 25:7), that is, for songs in the house of the Lord, 1Ch 25:6. This agrees with the intention of the perpetuating of psalmody in the gospel-church, which is to make melody with the heart, in conjunction with the voice, unto the Lord, Eph 5:19.

V. The order of the king is likewise taken notice of, 1Ch 25:2 and again 1Ch 25:6. In those matters indeed David acted as a prophet; but his taking care for the due and regular observance of divine institutions, both ancient and modern, is an example to all in authority to use their power for the promoting of religion, and the enforcing of the laws of Christ. Let them thus be ministers of God for good.

VI. The fathers presided in this service, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (1Ch 25:1), and the children were under the hands of their father, 1Ch 25:2,3,6. This gives a good example to parents to train up their children, and indeed to all seniors to instruct their juniors in the service of God, and particularly in praising him, than which there is no part of our work more necessary or more worthy to be transmitted to the succeeding generations. It gives also an example to the younger to submit themselves to the elder (whose experience and observation fit them for direction), and, as far as may be, to do what they do under their hand.

It is probable that Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun, were bred up under Samuel, and had their education in the schools of

the prophets which he was the founder and president of; then they were pupils, now they came to be masters. Those that would be eminent must begin early, and take time to prepare themselves. This good work of singing God's praises Samuel revived, and set on foot, but lived not to see it brought to the perfection it appears in here. Solomon perfects what David began, so David perfects what Samuel began. Let all, in their day, do what they can for God and his church, though they cannot carry it so far as they would; when they are gone God can out of stones raise up others who shall build upon their foundation and bring forth the top-stone.

VII. There were others also, besides the sons of these three great men, who are called their brethren (probably because they had been wont to join with them in their private concerts), who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, and were cunning or well skilled therein, 1Ch 25:7. They were all Levites and were in number 288. Now,

1. These were a good number, and a competent number to keep up the service in the house of God; for they were all skilful in the work to which they were called. When David the king was so much addicted to divine poesy and music many others, all that had a genius for it, applied their studies and endeavours that way. Those do religion a great deal of good service that bring the exercises of devotion into reputation.

2. Yet these were but a small number in comparison with the 4000 whom David appointed thus to praise the Lord, 1Ch 23:5. Where were all the rest when only 288, and those but by twelve in a course, were separated to this service? It is probable that all the rest were divided into as many courses, and were to follow as these led. Or, perhaps, these were for songs in the house of the Lord (1Ch 25:6), with whom any that worshipped in the courts of that house might join; and

the rest were disposed of, all the kingdom over, to preside in the country congregations, in this good work: for, though the sacrifices instituted by the hand of Moses might be offered but at one place, the psalms penned by David might be sung every where, 1Ti 2:8.

3 Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six [*with Shimei, mentioned in ver. 17*], under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord.

4 Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, *and* Mahazioth:

5 all these *were* the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

6 All these *were* under the hands of their father for song *in* the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

7 So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, *even* all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight.

8 And they cast lots, ward against *ward*, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar.

Twenty-four persons are named in the beginning of this chapter as sons of those three great men, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. Ethan was the third (1Ch 6:44), but probably he was dead before the establishment was perfected and Jeduthun came in his room. [Or perhaps Ethan and Jeduthun were two names for the same person.] Of these three Providence so ordered it that Asaph had four sons, Jeduthun six [only five are mentioned 1Ch 25:3; Shimei, mentioned 1Ch 25:17, is supposed to have been the sixth], and Heman fourteen, in all twenty-four (who were named, 1Ch 25:2-4), who were all qualified for the service and called to it. But the question was, In what order must they serve? This was

determined by lot, to prevent strife for precedency, a sin which most easily besets many that otherwise are good people.

I The lot was thrown impartially. They were placed in twenty-four companies, twelve in a company, in two rows, twelve companies in a row, and so they cast lots, ward against ward, putting them all upon a level, small and great, teacher and scholar. They did not go according to their age, or according to their standing, or the degrees they had taken in the music-schools; but it was referred to God, 1Ch 25:8. Small and great, teachers and scholars, stand alike before God, who goes not according to our rules of distinction and precedency. See Mt 20:23.

II. God determined it as he pleased, taking account, it is probable, of the respective merits of the persons, which are of much more importance than seniority of age or priority of birth. Let us compare them with the preceding catalogue and we shall find that, 1. Josephus was the second son of Asaph. 2. Gedaliah the eldest son of Jeduthun. 3. Zaccur the eldest of Asaph. 4. Izri the second of Jeduthun. 5. Nethaniah the third of Asaph. 6. Bukkiah the eldest of Heman. 7. Jesharelah the youngest of Asaph. 8. Jeshaiah the third of Jeduthun. 9. Mattaniah the second of Heman. 10. Shimei the youngest of Jeduthun. 11. Azareel the third of Heman. 12. Hashabiah the fourth of Jeduthun. 13. Shubael the fourth of Heman. 14. Mattithiah the fifth of Jeduthun. 15. Jeremoth the fifth of Heman. 16. Hananiah the sixth of Heman. 17. Joshbekashah the eleventh of Heman. 18. Hanani the seventh of Heman. 19. Mallothi the twelfth of Heman. 20. Eliathah the eighth of Heman. 21. Hothir the thirteenth of Heman. 22. Giddalti the ninth of Heman. 23. Mehazioth the fourteenth of Heman. And, lastly, Romamti-ezer, the tenth of Heman. See how God increased some and preferred the younger before the elder.

III. Each of these had in his chorus the number of twelve, called their sons and their brethren, because they observed them as sons, and concurred with them as brethren. Probably twelve, some for the voice and others for the instrument, made up the concert. Let us learn with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, and that will be the best concert.

9 Now the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph: the second to
Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons *were* twelve:
10 the third to Zaccur, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
11 the fourth to Izri, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
12 the fifth to Nethaniah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
13 the sixth to Bukkiah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
14 the seventh to Jesharelah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
15 the eighth to Jeshaiah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
16 the ninth to Mattaniah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
17 the tenth to Shimei, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
18 the eleventh to Azareel, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve:
19 the twelfth to Hashabiah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
20 the thirteenth to Shubael, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
21 the fourteenth to Mattithiah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
22 the fifteenth to Jeremoth, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
23 the sixteenth to Hananiah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
24 the seventeenth to Joshbekashah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren,
were twelve:
25 the eighteenth to Hanani, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
26 the nineteenth to Mallothi, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:
27 the twentieth to Eliathah, *he,* his sons, and his brethren, *were*
twelve:

28 the one and twentieth to Hothir, *he,* his sons, and his brethren,
were twelve:
29 the two and twentieth to Giddalti, *he,* his sons, and his brethren,
were twelve:
30 the three and twentieth to Mahazioth, *he,* his sons, and his
brethren, *were* twelve:
31 the four and twentieth to Romamti-ezer, *he,* his sons, and his
brethren, *were* twelve.

1 Chronicles-26

The Porters and Overseers

1 Concerning the divisions of the porters: Of the Korhites *was*
Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.
2 And the sons of Meshelemiah *were,* Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael
the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth,
3 Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Elioenai the seventh.
4 Moreover the sons of Obed-edom *were,* Shemaiah the firstborn,
Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and
Nethaneel the fifth,
5 Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth: for
God blessed him.
6 Also unto Shemaiah his son were sons born, that ruled throughout
the house of their father: for they *were* mighty men of valor.
7 The sons of Shemaiah; Othni, and Rephael, and Obed, Elzabad,
whose brethren *were* strong men, Elihu, and Semachiah.
8 All these of the sons of Obed-edom: they and their sons and their
brethren, able men for strength for the service, *were* threescore and
two of Obed-edom.

Observe, I. There were porters appointed to attend the temple, who guarded all the avenues that let to it, opened and shut all the outer gates and attended at them, not only for the state, but for service, to direct and instruct those who were going to worship in the courts of the sanctuary in the decorum they were

to observe, to encourage those that were timorous, to send back the strangers and unclean, and to guard against thieves and others that were enemies to the house of God. In allusion to this office, ministers are said to have the keys to the kingdom of heaven committed to them (Mt 16:19), that they may admit, and exclude, according to the law of Christ.

II. Of several of those that were called to this service, it is taken notice of that they were mighty men of valour (1Ch 26:6), strong men (1Ch 26:7), able men (1Ch 26:8), and one of them that he was a wise counsellor (1Ch 26:14), who probably, when he had used this office of a deacon well and given proofs of more than ordinary wisdom, purchased to himself a good degree, and was preferred from the gate to the council-board, 1Ti 3:13. As for those that excelled in strength of body, and courage and resolution of mind, they were thereby qualified for the post assigned them; for whatever service God calls men to he either finds them fit or makes them so.

III. The sons of Obed-edom were employed in this office, sixty-two of that family. This was he that entertained the ark with reverence and cheerfulness; and see how he was rewarded for it.

1. He had eight sons (1Ch 26:5), for God blessed him. The increase and building up of families are owing to the divine blessing; and a great blessing it is to a family to have many children, when like these they are able for, and eminent in, the service of God.

2. His sons were preferred to places of trust in the sanctuary. They had faithfully attended the ark in their own house, and now were called to attend it in God's house. He that is trusty in little shall be trusted with more. He that keeps God's ordinances in his own tent is fit to have the custody of them in God's tabernacle, 1Ti 3:4,5. I have kept thy law, says David, and this I had because I kept thy precepts, Ps 119:55,56.

IV. It is said of one here that though he was not the first-born his father made him the chief (1Ch 26:10), either because he was very excellent, or because the elder son was very weak. He was made chief, perhaps not in inheriting the estate (for that was forbidden by the law, De 21:16,17), but in this service, which required personal qualifications.

V. The porters, as the singers, had their post assigned them by lot, so many at such a gate, and so many at such a one, that every one might know his post and make it good, 1Ch 26:13. It is not said that they were cast into twenty-four courses, as before; but here are the names of about twenty-four (1Ch 26:1-11), and the posts assigned are twenty-four, 1Ch 26:17,18. We have therefore reason to think they were distributed into as many companies. Happy are those who dwell in God's house: for, as they are well fed, well taught, and well employed, so they are well guarded. Men attended at the gates of the temple, but angels attend at the gates of the New Jerusalem, Re 21:12.

9 And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, strong men, eighteen.
10 Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons; Simri the chief,
(for *though* he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him the
chief;)
11 Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all
the sons and brethren of Hosah *were* thirteen.
12 Among these *were* the divisions of the porters, *even* among the
chief men, *having* wards one against another, to minister in the
house of the Lord.
13 And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the
house of their fathers, for every gate.
14 And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah. Then for Zechariah his son,
a wise counselor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward.
15 To Obed-edom southward; and to his sons the house of Asuppim.
16 To Shuppim and Hosah *the lot came forth* westward, with the gate
Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up, ward against ward.

17 Eastward *were* six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a
day, and toward Asuppim two *and* two.
18 At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, *and* two at Parbar.
19 These *are* the divisions of the porters among the sons of Kore, and
among the sons of Merari.
20 And of the Levites, Ahijah *was* over the treasures of the house of
God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things.

Observe, 1. There were treasures of the house of God. A great house cannot be well kept without stores of all manner of provisions. Much was expended daily upon the altar-flour, wine, oil, salt, fuel, besides the lamps; quantities of these were to be kept beforehand, besides the sacred vestments and utensils. These were the treasures of the house of God. And, because money answers all things, doubtless they had an abundance of it, which was received from the people's offerings, wherewith they bought in what they had occasion for. And perhaps much was laid up for an exigence. These treasures typified the plenty there is in our heavenly Father's house, enough and to spare. In Christ, the true temple, are hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and unsearchable riches.

2. There were treasures of dedicated things, dedicated mostly out of the spoils won in battle (1Ch 26:27), as a grateful acknowledgment of the divine protection. Abraham gave Melchisedec the tenth of the spoils Heb 7:4. In Moses's time the officers of the army, when they returned victorious, brought of their spoils an oblation to the Lord, Nu 31:50. Of late this pious custom had been revived; and not only Samuel and David, but Saul, and Abner, and Joab, had dedicated of their spoils to the honour and support of the house of God, 1Ch 26:28. Note, The more God bestows upon us the more he expects from us in works of piety and charity. Great successes call for proportionable returns. When we look over our estates we should consider, "Here are convenient things, rich things, it may be, and fine things; but where are the dedicated things?" Men of war must honour God with their spoils.

3. These treasures had treasurers, those that were over them (1Ch 26:20,26), whose business it was to keep them, that neither moth nor rust might corrupt them, nor thieves break through and steal, to give out as there was occasion and to see that they were not wasted, embezzled, or alienated to the common use; and it is probable that they kept accounts of all that was brought in and how it was laid out.

21 *As concerning* the sons of Laadan; the sons of the Gershonite
Laadan, chief fathers, *even* of Laadan the Gershonite, *were* Jehieli.
22 The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, *which were* over
the treasures of the house of the Lord.
23 Of the Amramites, *and* the Izharites, the Hebronites, *and* the
Uzzielites:
24 and Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, *was* ruler of the
treasures.
25 And his brethren by Eliezer; Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiah his son,
and Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son:
26 which Shelomith and his brethren *were* over all the treasures of the
dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the
captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host,
had dedicated.
27 Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the
house of the Lord.
28 And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner
the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah, had dedicated; *and*
whosoever had dedicated *any thing, it was* under the hand of
Shelomith, and of his brethren.
29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons *were* for the outward
business over Israel, for officers and judges.

All the offices of the house of God being well provided with Levites, we have here an account of those that were employed as officers and judges in the outward business, which must not be neglected, no, not for the temple itself. The magistracy is an ordinance of God for the good of the church as truly as the ministry is. And here we are told,

1. That the Levites were employed in the administration of justice in concurrence with the princes and elders of the several tribes, who could not be supposed to understand the law so well as the Levites, who made it their business to study it. None of those Levites who were employed in the service of the sanctuary, none of the singers or porters, were concerned in this outward business; either one was enough to engage the whole man or it was presumption to undertake both.

2. Their charge was both in all business of the Lord, and in the service of the kings, 1Ch 26:30 and again 1Ch 26:32. They managed the affairs of the country, as well ecclesiastical as civil, took care both of God's tithes and the king's taxes, punished offences committed immediately against God and his honour and those against the government and the public peace, guarded both against idolatry and against injustice, and took care to put the laws in execution against both. Some, it is likely, applied themselves to the affairs of religion, others to secular affairs; and so, between both, God and the king were well served. It is happy with a kingdom when its civil and sacred interests are thus interwoven and jointly minded and advanced.

3. There were more Levites employed as judges with the two tribes and a half on the other side of Jordan than with all the rest of the tribes; there were 2700; whereas as the west side of Jordan there were 1700, 1Ch 26:30,32. Either those remote tribes were not so well furnished as the rest with judges of their own, or because they, lying furthest from Jerusalem and on the borders of the neighbouring nations, were most in danger of being infected with idolatry, and most needed the help of Levites to prevent it. The frontiers must be well guarded.

4. This is said to be done (as were all the foregoing settlements) in the fortieth year of the reign of David (1Ch 26:31), that is, the last year of his reign. We should be so much the more

industrious to do good as we can see the day approaching. If we live to enjoy the fruit of our labours, grudge it not to those that shall come after us.

30 *And* of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, men of valor, a thousand and seven hundred, *were* officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward in all the business of the Lord, and in the service of the king.

31 Among the Hebronites *was* Jerijah the chief, *even* among the Hebronites, according to the generations of his fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valor at Jazer of Gilead.

32 And his brethren, men of valor, *were* two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.

1 Chronicles-27

The Officers of the Kingdom

1 Now the children of Israel after their number, *to wit,* the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course *were* twenty and four thousand.

We have here an account of the regulation of the militia of the kingdom. David was himself a man of war, and had done great things with the sword; he had brought into the field great armies. Now here we are told how he marshalled them when God had given him rest from all his enemies. He did not keep them all together, for that would have been a hardship on them and the country; yet he did not disband and disperse them all, for then he would have left his kingdom naked, and his people would have forgotten the arts of war, wherein they had been instructed. He therefore contrived to keep up a constant force, and yet not a standing army. The model is very prudent.

1. He kept up 24,000 constantly in arms, I suppose in a body, and disciplined, in one part or other of the kingdom, the freeholders carrying their own arms and bearing their own charges while they were up. This was a sufficient strength for the securing of the public peace and safety. Those that are Israelites indeed must learn war; for we have enemies to grapple with, whom we are concerned constantly to stand upon our guard against.

2. He changed them every month; so that the whole number of the militia amounted to 288,000, perhaps about a fifth part of the able men of the kingdom. By being thus distributed into twelve courses, they were all instructed in, and accustomed to, military exercises; and yet none were compelled to be in service, and at expenses, above one month in the year (which they might very well afford), unless upon extraordinary occasions, and then they might all be got together quickly. It is the wisdom of governors, and much their praise, while they provide for the public safety, to contrive how to make it effectual and yet easy, and as little as possible burdensome to the people.

3. Every course had a commander in chief over it. Besides the subaltern officers that were rulers over thousands, and hundreds, and fifties, there was one general officer to each course or legion. All these twelve great commanders are mentioned among David's worthies and champions, 2Sa 23:8-39,1Ch 11:10-47 They had first signalized themselves by their great actions and then they were advanced to those great preferments. It is well with a kingdom when honour thus attends merit. Benaiah is here called a chief priest, 1Ch 27:5. But, cohen signifying both a priest and a prince, it might better be translated here a chief ruler, or (as in the margin) a principal officer. Dodai had Mikloth (1Ch 27:4) either for his substitute when he was absent or infirm, or for his successor when he was dead. Benaiah had his son under him, 1Ch 27:6. Asahel had his son after him

(1Ch 27:7), and by this it seems that this plan of the militia was laid in the beginning of David's reign; for Asahel was killed by Abner while David reigned in Hebron. When his wars were over he revived this method, and left the military affairs in this posture, for the peaceable reign of his son Solomon. When we think ourselves most safe, yet, while we are here in the body, we must keep in a readiness for spiritual conflicts. Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that puts it off.

2 Over the first course for the first month *was* Jashobeam the son of
Zabdiel: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.
3 Of the children of Perez *was* the chief of all the captains of the host
for the first month.
4 And over the course of the second month *was* Dodai an Ahohite,
and of his course *was* Mikloth also the ruler: in his course likewise
were twenty and four thousand.
5 The third captain of the host for the third month *was* Benaiah the
son of Jehoiada, a chief priest: and in his course *were* twenty and
four thousand.
6 This *is that* Benaiah, *who was* mighty *among* the thirty, and above
the thirty: and in his course *was* Ammizabad his son.
7 The fourth *captain* for the fourth month *was* Asahel the brother of
Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course *were* twenty
and four thousand.
8 The fifth captain for the fifth month *was* Shamhuth the Izrahite:
and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.
9 The sixth *captain* for the sixth month *was* Ira the son of Ikkesh the
Tekoite: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.
10 The seventh *captain* for the seventh month *was* Helez the Pelonite,
of the children of Ephraim: and in his course *were* twenty and four
thousand.
11 The eighth *captain* for the eighth month *was* Sibbecai the Hushathite,
of the Zarhites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.
12 The ninth *captain* for the ninth month *was* Abiezer the Anetothite,
of the Benjamites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

13 The tenth *captain* for the tenth month *was* Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

14 The eleventh *captain* for the eleventh month *was* Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

15 The twelfth *captain* for the twelfth month *was* Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

16 Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: the ruler of the Reubenites *was* Eliezer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maachah:

We have here an account,

I. Of the princes of the tribes. Something of the ancient order instituted by Moses in the wilderness was still kept up, that every tribe should have its prince or chief. It is probable that it was kept up all along, either by election or by succession, in the same family; and those are here named who were found in that office when this account was taken. Elihu, or Eliab, who was prince of Judah, was the eldest son of Jesse, and descended in a right line from Nahshon and Salmon, the princes of this tribe in Moses's time. Whether these princes were of the nature of lord-lieutenants that guided them in their military affairs, or chief-justices that presided in their courts of judgment, does not appear. Their power, we may suppose, was much less now that all the tribes were united under one king than it had been when, for the most part, they acted separately. Our religion obliges us to be subject, not only to the king as supreme, but unto governors under him (1Pe 2:13,14), the princes that decree justice. Of Benjamin was Jaaziel the son of Abner, 1Ch 27:21. Though Abner was David's enemy, and opposed his coming to the throne, yet David would not oppose the preferment of his son, but perhaps nominated him to this post of honour, which teaches us to render good for evil.

II. Of the numbering of the people, 1Ch 27:23,24. It is here said,

1. That when David ordered the people to be numbered he forbade the numbering of those under twenty years old, thinking thereby to save the reflection which what he did might otherwise cast upon the promise that they should be innumerable; yet it was but a poor salvo, for it had never been customary to number those under twenty, and the promise of their numbers chiefly respected the effective men.

2. That the account which David took of the people, in the pride of his heart, turned to no good account; for it was never perfected, nor done with exactness, nor was it ever recorded as an authentic account. Joab was disgusted with it, and did it by halves; David was ashamed of it, and willing it should be forgotten, because there fell wrath for it against Israel. A good man cannot, in the reflection, please himself with that which he knows God is displeased with, cannot make use of that, nor take comfort in that, which is obtained by sin.

III. Of the officers of the court.

1 The rulers of the king's substance (as they are called, 1Ch 27:31), such as had the oversight and charge of the king's tillage, his vineyards, his olive-yards, his herds, his camels, his asses, his flocks. Here are no officers for state, none for sport, no master of the wardrobe, no master of the ceremonies, no master of the horse, no master of the hounds, but all for service, agreeable to the simplicity and plainness of those times. David was a great soldier, a great scholar, and a great prince, and yet a great husband of his estate, kept a great deal of ground in his own hand, and stocked it, not for pleasure, but for profit; for the king himself is served of the field, Ec 5:9. Those magistrates that would have their subjects industrious must themselves be examples of industry and application to business. We find, however, that afterwards the poor of the land were thought good

enough to be vine-dressers and husbandmen, 2Ki 25:12. Now David put his great men to preside in these employments.

2 The attendants on the king's person. They were such as were eminent for wisdom, being designed for conversation. His uncle, who was a wise man and a scribe, not only well skilled in politics, but well read in the scriptures, was his counsellor, 1Ch 27:32. Another, who no doubt excelled in learning and prudence, was tutor to his children. Ahithophel, a very cunning man, was his counsellor: but Hushai, an honest man, was his companion and confidant. It does not appear that he had many counsellors; but those he had were men of great abilities. Much of the wisdom of princes is seen in the choice of their ministry. But David, though he had all these trusty and well-beloved cousins and counsellors about him, preferred his Bible before them all. Ps 119:24, Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.

17 of the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel: of the Aaronites, Zadok:
18 of Judah, Elihu, *one* of the brethren of David: of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael:
19 of Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of Obadiah: of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel:
20 of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah:
21 of the half *tribe* of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner:
22 of Dan, Azareel the son of Jeroham. These *were* the princes of the tribes of Israel.
23 But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the Lord had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens.
24 Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the Chronicles of king David.

25 And over the king's treasures *was* Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and
over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages,
and in the castles, *was* Jehonathan the son of Uzziah:
26 and over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the
ground *was* Ezri the son of Chelub:
27 and over the vineyards *was* Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase
of the vineyards for the wine cellars *was* Zabdi the Shiphmite:
28 and over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that *were* in the low
plains *was* Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil *was*
Joash:
29 and over the herds that fed in Sharon *was* Shitrai the Sharonite:
and over the herds *that were* in the valleys *was* Shaphat the son of
Adlai:
30 over the camels also *was* Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses *was*
Jehdeiah the Meronothite:
31 and over the flocks *was* Jaziz the Hagerite. All these *were* the rulers
of the substance which *was* king David's.
32 Also Jonathan David's uncle was a counselor, a wise man, and a
scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni *was* with the king's sons:
33 and Ahithophel *was* the king's counselor: and Hushai the Archite
was the king's companion:
34 and after Ahithophel *was* Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and
Abiathar: and the general of the king's army *was* Joab.

1 Chronicles-28

Solomon Succeeds David as King

1 And David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the
tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the
king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains
over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and
possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with
the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.

A great deal of service David had done in his day, had served his generation according to the will of God, Ac 13:36. But now

the time draws night that he must die, and, as a type of the Son of David, the nearer he comes to his end the more busy he is, and does his work with all his might. He is now a little recovered from the indisposition mentioned 1Ki 1:1, when they covered him with clothes, and he got no heat: but was cure is there for old age? He therefore improves his recovery, as giving him an opportunity of doing God and his country a little more service.

I. He summoned all the great men to attend him, that he might take leave of them all together, 1Ch 28:1. Thus Moses did (De 31:28), and Joshua, 1Ch 23:2,24:1. David would not declare the settlement of the crown but in the presence, and to the satisfaction, of those that were the representatives of the people.

II. He addressed them with a great deal of respect and tenderness. He not only exerted himself to rise from his bed, to give them the meeting (the occasion putting new spirits into him), but he rose out of his chair, and stood up upon his feet (1Ch 28:2), in reverence to God whose will he was to declare, and in reverence to this solemn assembly of the Israel of God, as if he looked upon himself, though major singulis--greater than any individual among them, yet minor universis--less than the whole of them together. His age and infirmities, as well as his dignity, might well have allowed him to keep his seat; but he would show that he was indeed humbled for the pride of his heart both in the numbers of his people and his dominion over them. It had been too much his pleasure that they were all his servants (1Ch 21:3), but now he calls them his brethren, whom he loved, his people, whom he took care of, not his servants, whom he had command of: Hear me, my brethren, and my people. It becomes superiors thus to speak with affection and condescension even to their inferiors; they will not be the less honoured for it, but the more beloved. Thus he engages their attention to what he was about to say.

III. He declared the purpose he had formed to build a temple for God, and God's disallowing that purpose, 1Ch 28:2,3. This he had signified to Solomon before, 1Ch 22:7,8. A house of rest for the ark is here said to be a house of rest for the footstool of our God; for heaven is his throne of glory; the earth, and the most magnificent temples that can be built upon it, are but his footstool: so much difference is there between the manifestations of the divine glory in the upper and lower world. Angels surround his throne, Isa 6:1. We poor worms do but worship at his footstool Ps 99:5,123:7. As an evidence of the sincerity of his purpose to build the temple, he tells them that he had made ready for it, but that God would not suffer him to proceed because he had appointed other work for him to do, which was enough for one man, namely, the managing of the wars of Israel. He must serve the public with the sword; another must do it with the line and plummet. Times of rest are building times, Ac 9:31.

IV. He produced his own title first, and then Solomon's, to the crown; both were undoubtedly jure divino--divine. They could make out such a title as no monarch on earth can; the Lord God of Israel chose them both immediately, by prophecy, not providence, 1Ch 28:4,5. No right of primogeniture is pretended. Detur digniori, non seniori--It went by worth, not by age.

1. Judah was not the eldest son of Jacob, yet God chose that tribe to be the ruling tribe; Jacob entailed the sceptre upon it, Ge 49:10.

2. It does not appear that the family of Jesse was the senior house of that tribe; from Judah it is certain that it was not, for Shelah was before Pharez; whether from Nahshon and Salmon is not certain. Ram, the father of Nahshon, had a elder brother, 1Ch 2:9. Perhaps so had Boaz, Obed, and Jesse. Yet "God chose the house of my father." 3. David was the youngest son of Jesse, yet God liked him to make him king; so it seemed good unto him.

God takes whom he likes, and likes whom he makes like himself, as he did David, a man after his own heart. 4. Solomon was one of the youngest sons of David, and yet God chose him to sit upon the throne, because he was the likeliest of them all to build the temple, the wisest and best inclined.

V. He opened to them God's gracious purposes concerning Solomon (1Ch 28:6,7): I have chosen him to be my son. Thus he declares the decree, that the Lord had said to Solomon, as a type of Christ, Thou art my son (Ps 2:7), the son of my love; for he was called Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, and Christ is his beloved Son. Of him God said, as a figure of him that was to come,

1. He shall build my house. Christ is both the founder and the foundation of the gospel temple.

2. I will establish his kingdom for ever. This must have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, which shall continue in his hands through all the ages of time (Isa 9:7,Lu 1:33) and shall then be delivered up to God, even the Father, yet perhaps to be delivered back to the Redeemer for ever. As to Solomon, this promise of the establishment of his kingdom is here made conditional: If he be constant to do my commandments, as at this day. Solomon was now very towardly and good: "If he continue so, his kingdom shall continue, otherwise not."

Note, If we be constant to our duty, then, and not otherwise, we may expect the continuance of God's favour. Let those that are well taught, and begin well, take notice of this--if they be constant, they are happy; perseverance wears the crown, though it wins it not.

VI. He charged them to adhere stedfastly to God and their duty, 1Ch 28:8. Observe,

1 The matter for this charge: Keep, and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God. The Lord was their God; his commandments must be their rule; they must have respect to them all, must make conscience of keeping them, and, in order thereunto, must seek for them, that is, must be inquisitive concerning their duty, search the scriptures, take advice, seek the law at the mouth of those whose lips were to keep this knowledge, and pray to God to teach and direct them. God's commandments will not be kept without great care.

2 The solemnity of it. He charged them in the sight of all Israel, who would all have notice of this public charge, and in the audience of their God. "God is witness, and this congregation is witness, that they have good counsel given them, and fair warning; if they do not take it, it is their fault, and God and man will be witnesses against them." See 1Ti 5:21,2Ti 4:1. Those that profess religion, as they tender the favour of God and their reputation with men, must be faithful to their profession.

3. The motive to observe this charge. It was the way to be happy, to have the peaceable possession of this good land themselves and to preserve the entail of it upon their children.

VII. He concluded with a charge to Solomon himself, 1Ch 28:9,10. He was much concerned that Solomon should be religious. He was to be a great man, but he must not think religion below him--a wise man, and this would be his wisdom. Observe,

1 The charge he gives him. He must look upon God and the God of his father, his good father, who had devoted him to God and educated him for God. He was born in God's house and therefore bound in duty to be his, brought up in his house and therefore bound in gratitude. Thy own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not. He must know God and serve him. We cannot serve

God aright if we do not know him; and in vain do we know him if we do not serve him, serve him with heart and mind. We make nothing of religion if we do not mind it, and make heart-work of it. Serve him with a perfect, that is, an upright heart (for sincerity is our gospel perfection), and with a willing mind, from a principle of love, and as a willing people, cheerfully and with pleasure.

2 The arguments to enforce this charge.

(1.) Two arguments of general inducement:--

[1.] That the secrets of our souls are open before God; he searches all hearts, even the hearts of kings, which to men are unsearchable, Pr 25:3. We must therefore be sincere, because, if we deal deceitfully, God sees it, and cannot be imposed upon; we must therefore employ our thoughts, and engage them in God's service, because he fully understands all the imaginations of them, both good and bad.

[2.] That we are happy or miserable here, and for ever, according as we do, or do not, serve God. If we seek him diligently, he will be found of us, and that is enough to make us happy, Heb 11:6. If we forsake him, desert his service and turn from following him, he will cast us off for ever, and that is enough to make us miserable. Note, God never casts any off till they have first cast him off. Here is,

(2.) One argument peculiar to Solomon (1Ch 28:10): "Thou art to build a house for the sanctuary; therefore seek and serve God, that that work may be done from a good principle, in a right manner, and may be accepted."

3. The means prescribed in order hereunto, and they are prescribed to us all.

(1.) Caution: Take heed; beware of every thing that looks like, or leads to, that which is evil.

(2.) Courage: Be strong, and do it. We cannot do our work as we should unless we put on resolution, and fetch in strength from divine grace.

2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me,* I *had* in mine heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

3 but God said unto me, Thou shalt not build a house for my name, because thou *hast been* a man of war, and hast shed blood.

4 Howbeit the Lord God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah *to be* the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make *me* king over all Israel:

5 and of all my sons, (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.

6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him *to be* my son, and I will be his father.

7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day.

8 Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave *it* for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.

9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

10 Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build a house for
the sanctuary: be strong, and do *it*.
11 Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and
of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper
chambers thereof, and of the inner parlors thereof, and of the place
of the mercy seat,
12 and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the
house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the
treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated
things:
13 also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work
of the service of the house of the Lord, and for all the vessels of
service in the house of the Lord.

As for the general charge that David gave his son to seek God and serve him, the book of the law was, in that, his only rule, and there needed no other; but, in building the temple, David was now to give him three things:--

1. A model of the building, because it was to be such a building as neither he nor his architects ever saw. Moses had a pattern of the tabernacle shown him in the mount (Heb 8:5), so had David of the temple, by the immediate hand of God upon him, 1Ch 28:19. It was given him in writing, probably by the ministry of an angel, or as clearly and exactly represented to his mind as if it had been in writing. But it is said (1Ch 28:12), He had this pattern by the Spirit. The contrivance either of David's devotion or of Solomon's wisdom must not be trusted to in an affair of this nature. The temple must be a sacred thing and a type of Christ; there must be in it not only convenience and decency, but significancy: it was a kind of sacrament, and therefore it must not be left to man's art or invention to contrive it, but must be framed by divine institution. Christ the true temple, the church the gospel temple, and heaven the everlasting temple, are all framed according to the divine councils, and the plan laid in the divine wisdom, ordained before the world for God's glory and ours. This pattern David gave to Solomon, that he might

know what to provide and might go by a certain rule. When Christ left with his disciples a charge to build his gospel church he gave them an exact model of it, ordering them to observe that, and that only, which he commanded.

The particular models are here mentioned, of the porch, which was higher than the rest, like a steeple,--then the houses, both the holy place and the most holy, with the rooms adjoining, which were for treasuries, chambers, and parlours,--especially the place of the mercy-seat (1Ch 28:11),-- of the courts likewise, and the chambers about them, in which the dedicated things were laid up. Bishop Patrick supposes that, among other things, the tabernacle which Moses reared and all the utensils of it, which there was now no further occasion for, were laid up here, signifying that in the fulness of time all the Mosaic economy, all the rites and ceremonies of that dispensation, should be respectfully laid aside, and something better come in their room. He gave him a table of the courses of the priests, patterns of the vessels of service (1Ch 28:13), and a pattern of the chariot of the cherubim, 1Ch 28:18. Besides the two cherubim over the mercy-seat, there were two much larger, whose wings reached from wall to wall (1Ki 6:23-28, &c.), and of these David here gave Solomon the pattern, called a chariot; for the angels are the chariots of God, Ps 68:17.

2. Materials for the most costly of the utensils of the temple. That they might not be made any less than the patterns, he weighed out the exact quantity for each vessel both of gold and silver, 1Ch 28:14. In the tabernacle there was but one golden candlestick; in the temple there were ten (1Ki 7:49), besides silver ones, which, it is supposed, were hand-candlesticks, 1Ch 28:15. In the tabernacle there was but one table; but in the temple, besides that on which the show-bread was set, there were ten others for other uses (2Ch 4:8), besides silver tables; for, this house being much larger than that, it would look bare if it had not furniture proportionable. The gold for the altar of

incense is particularly said to be refined gold (1Ch 28:18), purer than any of the rest; for that was typical of the intercession of Christ, than which nothing is more pure and perfect.

3. Directions which way to look for help in this great undertaking. "Fear not opposition; fear not the charge, care, and trouble; fear not miscarrying in it, as in the case of Uzza; fear not the reproach of the foolish builder, that began to build and was not able to finish. Be not dismayed.

(1.) God will help thee, and thou must look up to him in the first place (1Ch 28:20): The Lord God, even my God, whom I have chosen and served, who has all along been present with me and prospered me, and to whom, from my own experience of his power and goodness, I recommend thee, he will be with thee, to direct, strengthen, and prosper thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

Note, We may be sure that God, who owned our fathers and carried them through the services of their day, will, in like manner, if we be faithful to him, go along with us in our day, and will never leave us, while he has any work to do in us or by us. The same that was Joshua's encouragement (Jos 1:5), and Solomon's, is given to all believers, Heb 13:5. He will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. God never leaves any unless they first leave him.

(2.) "Good men will help thee, 1Ch 28:21. The priests and Levites will advise thee, and thou mayest consult them. Thou hast good workmen, who are both willing and skilful;" and these are two very good properties in a workman, especially in those that work at the temple. And, lastly, "The princes and the people will be so far from opposing or retarding the work that they will be wholly at thy command, every one in his place ready to further it." Then good work is likely to go on when all parties

concerned are hearty in it, and none secretly clog it, but all drive on heartily in it.

14 *He gave* of gold by weight for *things* of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; *silver also* for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service:

15 even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, *both* for the candlestick, and *also* for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick.

16 And by weight *he gave* gold for the tables of showbread, for every table; and *likewise* silver for the tables of silver:

17 also pure gold for the fleshhooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basins *he gave gold* by weight for every basin; and *likewise silver* by weight for every basin of silver:

18 and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubim, that spread out *their wings,* and covered the ark of the covenant of the Lord.

19 All *this, said David,* the Lord made me understand in writing by *his* hand upon me, *even* all the works of this pattern.

20 And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do *it:* fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord God, *even* my God, *will be* with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.

21 And, behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, *even they shall be with thee* for all the service of the house of God: and *there shall be* with thee for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man, for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people *will be* wholly at thy commandment.

1 Chronicles-29

1 Furthermore David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom alone God hath chosen, *is yet* young and tender, and the work *is* great: for the palace *is* not for man, but for the Lord God.

We may here observe,

I. How handsomely David spoke to the great men of Israel, to engage them to contribute towards the building of the temple. It is our duty to provoke one another to love and to good works, not only to do good ourselves, but to draw in others to do good too as much as we can. There were many very rich men in Israel; they were all to share in the benefit of the temple, and of those peaceable days which were to befriend the building of it; and therefore, though David would not impose on them, as a tax, what they should give towards it, he would recommend the present as a fair occasion for a free-will offering, because what is done in works of piety and charity should be done willingly and not by constraint; for God loves a cheerful giver.

1. He would have them consider that Solomon was young and tender, and needed help; but that he was the person whom God had chosen to do this work, and therefore was well worthy their assistance. It is good service to encourage those in the work of God that are as yet young and tender.

2. That the world was great, and all hands should contribute to the carrying of it on. The palace to be built was not for man, but for the Lord God; and the more was contributed towards the building the more magnificent it would be, and therefore the better would it answer the intention.

3. He tells them what great preparations had been made for this work. He did not intend to throw all the burden upon them, nor that it should be built wholly by contributions, but that they

should show their good will, by adding to what was done (1Ch 29:2): I have prepared with all my might, that is, "I have made it my business." Work for God must be done with all our might, or we shall bring nothing to pass in it.

4. He sets them a good example. Besides what was dedicated to this service out of the spoils and presents of the neighbouring nations, which was for the building of the house (of which before, 1Ch 22:14), he had, out of his own share, offered largely for the beautifying and enriching of it, 3000 talents of gold and 7000 talents of silver (1Ch 29:4,5), and this because he had set his affection on the house of his God. He gave all this, not as Papists build churches, in commutation of penance, or to make atonement for sin, nor as Pharisees give alms, to be seen of men; but purely because he loved the habitation of God's house; so he professed (Ps 26:8) and here he proved it.

Those who set their affection upon the service of God will think no pains nor cost too much to bestow upon it; and then our offerings are pleasing to God when they come from love. Those that set their affection on things above will set their affection on the house of God, through which our way to heaven lies. Now this he gives them an account of, to stir them up to do likewise. Note, Those who would draw others to do that which is good must themselves lead. Those especially who are advanced above others in place and dignity should particularly contrive how to make their light shine before men, because the influence of their example is more powerful and extensive than that of other people.

5. He stirs them up to do as he had done (1Ch 29:5): And who then is willing to concentrate his service this day unto the Lord?

(1.) We must each of us, in our several places, serve the Lord, and consecrate our service to him, separate it from other things

that are foreign and interfere with it, and direct and design it for the honour and glory of God.

(2.) We must make the service of God our business, must fill our hands to the Lord, so the Hebrew phrase is. Those who engage themselves in the service of God will have their hands full; there is work enough for the whole man in that service. The filling of our hands with the service of God intimates that we must serve him only, serve him liberally, and serve him in the strength of grace derived from him.

(3.) We must be free herein, do it willingly and speedily, do it this day, when we are in a good mind. Who is willing? Now let him show it.

II. How handsomely they all contributed towards the building of the temple when they were thus stirred up to it. Though they were persuaded to it, yet it is said, They offered willingly, 1Ch 29:6. So he said who knew their hearts. Nay, they offered with a perfect heart, from a good principle and with a sincere respect to the glory of God, 1Ch 29:9. How generous they were appears by the sum total of the contributions, 1Ch 29:7. They gave like themselves, like princes, like princes of Israel. And a pleasant day's work it was; for,

1. The people rejoiced, which may be meant of the people themselves that offered: they were glad of the opportunity of honouring God thus with their substance, and glad of the prospect of bringing this good work to perfection. Or the common people rejoiced in the generosity of their princes, that they had such rulers over them as were forward to this good work. Every Israelite is glad to see temple work carried on with vigour.

2. David rejoiced with great joy to see the good effects of his psalms and the other helps of devotion he had furnished them

with, rejoiced that his son and successor would have those about him that were so well affected to the house of God, and that this work, upon which his heart was so much set, was likely to go on. Note, It is a great reviving to good men, when they are leaving the world, to see those they leave behind zealous for religion and likely to keep it up. Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace.

2 Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God
the gold for *things to be made* of gold, and the silver for *things* of
silver, and the brass for *things* of brass, the iron for *things* of iron,
and wood for *things* of wood; onyx stones, and *stones* to be set,
glistering stones, and of divers colors, and all manner of precious
stones, and marble stones in abundance.
3 Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I
have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, *which* I have
given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have
prepared for the holy house,
4 *even* three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven
thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses
withal:
5 the gold for *things* of gold, and the silver for *things* of silver, and for
all manner of work *to be made* by the hands of artificers. And who
then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?
6 Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and
the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the
king's work, offered willingly,
7 and gave, for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand
talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents,
and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand
talents of iron.
8 And they with whom *precious* stones were found gave *them* to the
treasure of the house of the Lord, by the hand of Jehiel the
Gershonite.
9 Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because
with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David
the king also rejoiced with great joy.

10 Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed *be* thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

We have here,

I The solemn address which David made to God upon occasion of the noble subscriptions of the princes towards the building of the temple (1Ch 29:10): Wherefore David blessed the Lord, not only alone in his closet, but before all the congregation. This I expected when we read (1Ch 29:9) that David rejoiced with great joy; for such a devout man as he would no doubt make that the matter of his thanksgiving which was so much the matter of his rejoicing. He that looked round with comfort would certainly look up with praise.

David was now old and looked upon himself as near his end; and it well becomes aged saints, and dying saints, to have their hearts much enlarged in praise and thanksgiving. This will silence their complaints of their bodily infirmities, and help to make the prospect of death itself less gloomy. David's psalms, toward the latter end of the book, are most of them psalms of praise. The nearer we come to the world of everlasting praise the more we should speak the language and do the work of that world. In this address,

1. He adores God, and ascribes glory to him as the God of Israel, blessed for ever and ever. Our Lord's prayer ends with a doxology much like this which David here begins with--for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. This is properly praising God--with holy awe and reverence, and agreeable affection, acknowledging,

(1.) His infinite perfections; not only that he is great, powerful, glorious, &c., but that his is the greatness, power, and glory, that is, he has them in and of himself, 1Ch 29:11. He is the fountain and centre of every thing that is bright and blessed. All that we

can, in our most exalted praises, attribute to him he has an unquestionable title to. His is the greatness; his greatness is immense and incomprehensible; and all others are little, are nothing, in comparison of him. His is the power, and it is almighty and irresistible; power belongs to him, and all the power of all the creatures is derived from him and depends upon him. His is the glory; for his glory is his own end and the end of the whole creation. All the glory we can give him with our hearts, lips, and lives, comes infinitely short of what is his due. His is the victory; he transcends and surpasses all, and is able to conquer and subdue all things to himself; and his victories are incontestable and uncontrollable. And his is the majesty, real and personal; with him is terrible majesty, inexpressible and inconceivable.

(2.) His sovereign dominion, as rightful owner and possessor of all: "All that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine, and at thy disposal, by the indisputable right of creation, and as supreme ruler and commander of all: thine is the kingdom, and all kings are thy subjects; for thou art head, and art to be exalted and worshipped as head above all."

(3.) His universal influence and agency. All that are rich and honourable among the children of men have their riches and honours from God. This acknowledgment he would have the princes take notice of and join in, that they might not think they had merited any thing of God by their generosity; for from God they had their riches and honour, and what they had returned to him was but a small part of what they had received from him. Whoever are great among men, it is God's hand that makes them so; and, whatever strength we have, it is God that gives it to us, as the God of Israel our father, 1Ch 29:10,Ps 68:35.

2. He acknowledges with thankfulness the grace of God enabling them to contribute so cheerfully towards the building of the temple (1Ch 29:13,14): Now therefore, our God, we thank

thee. Note, The more we do for God the more we are indebted to him for the honour of being employed in his service, and for grace enabling us, in any measure, to serve him. Does he therefore thank that servant? Lu 17:9. No: but that servant has a great deal of reason to thank him. He thanks God that they were able to offer so willingly.

Note, (1.) It is a great instance of the power of God's grace in us to be able to do the work of God willingly. He works both to will and to do; and it is in the day of his power that his people are made willing, Ps 110:3.

(2.) We must give God all the glory of all the good that is at any time done by ourselves or others. Our own good works must not be the matter of our pride, nor the good works of others the matter of our flattery, but both the matter of our praise; for certainly it is the greatest honour and pleasure in the world faithfully to serve God.

3. He speaks very humbly of himself, and his people, and the offerings they had now presented to God.

(1.) For himself, and those that joined with him, though they were princes, he wondered that God should take such notice of them and do so much for them (1Ch 29:14): Who am I, and what is my people? David was the most honourable person, and Israel the most honourable person, then in the world; yet thus does he speak of himself and them, as unworthy the divine cognizance and favour. David now looks very great, presiding in an august assembly, appointing his successor, and making a noble present to the honour of God; and yet he is little and low in his own eyes: Who am I, O Lord? for (1Ch 29:15) we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, poor despicable creatures. Angels in heaven are at home there; saints on earth are but strangers here: Our days on the earth are as a shadow.

David's days had as much of substance in them as most men's; for he was a great man, a good man, a useful man, and now an old man, one that lived long and lived to good purpose: and yet he puts himself not only into the number, but in the front, of those who must acknowledge that their days on the earth are as a shadow, which intimates that our life is a vain life, a dark life, a transient life, and a life that will have its periods either in perfect light or perfect darkness. The next words explain it: There is no abiding, Heb. no expectation. We cannot expect any great matters from it, nor can we expect any long continuance of it. This is mentioned here as that which forbids us to boast of the service we do to God. Alas! it is confined to a scantling of time, it is the service of a frail and short life, and therefore what can we pretend to merit by it?

(2.) As to their offerings, Lord, says he, of thy own have we given thee (1Ch 29:14), and again (1Ch 29:16), It cometh of thy hand, and is all thy own. "We have it from thee as a free gift, and therefore are bound to use it for thee; and what we present to thee is but rent or interest from thy own." "In like manner" (says bishop Patrick) "we ought to acknowledge God in all spiritual things, referring every good thought, good purpose, good work, to his grace, from whom we receive it." Let him that glories therefore glory in the Lord.

4. He appeals to God concerning his own sincerity in what he did, 1Ch 29:17. It is a great satisfaction to a good man to think that God tries the heart and has pleasure in uprightness, that, whoever may misinterpret or contemn it, he is acquainted with and approves of the way of the righteous. It was David's comfort that God knew with what pleasure he both offered his own and saw the people's offering. He was neither proud of his own good work nor envious of the good works of others.

5. He prays to God both for the people and for Solomon, that both might hold on as they began. In this prayer he addresses

God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God in covenant with them and with us for their sakes. Lord, give us grace to make good our part of the covenant, that we may not forfeit the benefit of it. Or thus: they were kept in their integrity by the grace of God establishing their way; let the same grace that was sufficient for them be so for us.

(1.) For the people he prays (1Ch 29:18) that what good God had put into their minds he would always keep there, that they might never be worse than they were now, might never lose the convictions they were now under, nor cool in their affections to the house of God, but always have the same thoughts of things as they now seemed to have. Great consequences depend upon what is innermost, and what uppermost, in the imagination of the thoughts of our heart, what we aim at and what we love to think of. If any good have got possession of our hearts, or the hearts of our friends, it is good by prayer to commit the custody of it to the grace of God: "Lord, keep it there, keep it for ever there. David has prepared materials for the temple; but, Lord, do thou prepare their hearts for such a privilege;" establish their hearts, so the margin. "Confirm their resolutions. They are in a good mind; keep them so when I am gone, them and theirs for ever."

(2.) For Solomon he prays (1Ch 29:19), Give him a perfect heart. He had charged him (1Ch 28:9) to serve God with a perfect heart; now here he prays to God to give him such a heart. He does not pray, "Lord, make him a rich man, a great man, a learned man;" but, "Lord, make him an honest man;" for that is better than all. "Lord, give him a perfect heart, not only in general to keep thy commandments, but in particular to build the palace, that he may do that service with a single eye." Yet his building the house would not prove him to have a perfect heart unless he made conscience of keeping God's commandments. It is not helping to build churches that will save us if we live in disobedience to God's law.

II The cheerful concurrence of this great assembly in this great solemnity.

1. They joined with David in the adoration of God. When he had done his prayer he called to them to testify their concurrence (Now bless the Lord your God, 1Ch 29:20), which accordingly they did, by bowing down their heads, a gesture of adoration. Whoever is the mouth of the congregation, those only have the benefit who join with him, not by bowing down the head so much as by lifting up the soul.

2. They paid their respects to the king, looking upon him as an instrument in God's hand of much good to them; and, in honouring him, they honoured God.

3. The next day they offered abundance of sacrifices to God (1Ch 29:21), both burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed, and peace-offerings, which the offerer had the greatest part of to himself. Hereby they testified a generous gratitude to God for the good posture their public affairs were in, though David was going the way of all the earth.

4. They feasted and rejoiced before God, 1Ch 29:22. In token of their joy in God, and communion with him, they feasted upon their peace-offerings in a religious manner before the Lord. What had been offered to God they feasted upon, by which was intimated to them that they should be never the poorer for their late liberal contributions to the service of the temple; they themselves should feast upon the comfort of it.

5. They made Solomon king the second time. He having been before anointed in haste, upon occasion of Adonijah's rebellion, it was thought fit to repeat the ceremony, for the greater satisfaction of the people. They anointed him to the Lord. Magistrates must look upon themselves as set apart for God, to

be his ministers, and must rule accordingly in the fear of God. Zadok also was anointed to be priest in the room of Abiathar, who had lately forfeited his honour. Happy art thou, O Israel! under such a prince and such a pontiff.

11 Thine, O Lord, *is* the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is thine;* thine *is* the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

12 Both riches and honor *come* of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.

13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

14 But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

15 For we *are* strangers before thee, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding.

16 O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee a house for thine holy name *cometh* of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

17 I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

18 O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

19 and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all *these things,* and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision.

20 And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord, and the king.

21 And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the Lord, and offered burnt
offerings unto the Lord, on the morrow after that day, *even* a
thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, *and* a thousand lambs, with
their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:
22 and did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great
gladness.
And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time,
and anointed *him* unto the Lord *to be* the chief governor, and
Zadok *to be* priest.
23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of
David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.
24 And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise
of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king.
25 And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all
Israel, and bestowed upon him *such* royal majesty as had not been
on any king before him in Israel.

The Death of David

26 Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel.
27 And the time that he reigned over Israel *was* forty years; seven years
reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three *years* reigned he in
Jerusalem.

These verses bring king Solomon to his throne and king David to his grave. Thus the rising generation thrusts out that which went before, and says, "Make room for us." Every one has his day.

I. Here is Solomon rising (1Ch 29:23): Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord. Not his throne which he prepared in the heavens, but the throne of Israel is called the throne of the Lord because not only is he King of all nations, and all kings rule under him, but he was in a peculiar manner King of Israel, 1Sa 12:12. He had the founding, he had the filling, of their throne, by immediate direction. The municipal laws of their kingdom were divine. Urim and prophets were the privy counsellors of

their princes; therefore is their throne called the throne of the Lord. Solomon's kingdom typified the kingdom of the Messiah, and his is indeed the throne of the Lord; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to him; hence he calls him his King, Ps 2:6. Being set on the throne of the Lord, the throne to which God called him, he prospered. Those that follow the divine guidance may expect success by the divine blessing. Solomon prospered; for,

1. His people paid honour to him, as one to whom honour is due: All Israel obeyed him, that is, were ready to swear allegiance to him (1Ch 29:23), the princes and mighty men, and even the sons of David, though by seniority their title to the crown was prior to his, and they might think themselves wronged by his advancement. God thought fit to make him king, and made him fit to be so, and therefore they all submitted themselves to him. God inclined their hearts to do so, that his reign might, from the first, be peaceable. His father was a better man than he, and yet came to the crown with much difficulty, after long delay, and by many and slow steps. David had more faith, and therefore had it more tried. They submitted themselves (Heb. They gave the hand under Solomon), that is, bound themselves by oath to be true to him (putting the hand under the thigh was a ceremony anciently used in swearing); or they were so entirely devoted that they would put their hand under his feet to serve him.

2. God put honour upon him; for those that honour him he will honour: The Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly, 1Ch 29:25. His very countenance and presence, I am apt to think, had something in them very great and awful. All he said and all he did commanded respect. None of all the judges or kings of Israel, his predecessors, made such a figure as he did nor lived in such splendour.

II. Here is David's setting, that great man going off the stage. The historian here brings him to the end of his day, leaves him asleep, and draws the curtains about him.

1. He gives a summary account of the years of his reign, 1Ch 29:26,27. He reigned forty years, as did Moses, Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Eli, Samuel, and Saul, who were before him, and Solomon after him.

2. He gives a short account of his death (1Ch 29:28), that he died full of days, riches, and honour; that is,

(1.) Loaded with them. He was very old, and very rich, and very much honoured both of God and man. He had been a man of war from his youth, and, as such, had his soul continually in his hand; yet he was not cut off in the midst of his days, but was preserved through all dangers of a military life, lived to a good old age, and died in peace, died in his bed, and yet in the bed of honour.

(2.) Satiated with them. He was full of days, riches, and honour; that is, he had enough of this world and of the riches and honours of it, and knew when he had enough, for he was very willing to die and leave it, having said (Ps 49:15), God shall receive me, and (Ps 23:4), Thou art with me. A good man will soon be full of days, riches, and honour, but will never be satisfied with them; no satisfaction but in God's loving kindness.

3. For a fuller account of David's life and reign he refers to the histories or records of those times, which were written by Samuel while he lived, and continued, after his death, by Nathan and Gad, 1Ch 29:29. There was related what was observable in his government at home and his wars abroad, the times, that is, the events of the times, that went over him, 1Ch 29:29,30. These registers were then in being, but are now lost. Note, Good use

may be made of those histories of the church which are authentic though not sacred or of divine inspiration.

28 And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

29 Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer,

30 with all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.

The Second Book of the Chronicles

[2 Chronicles]

2 Chronicles-1

Solomon's Prayer for Wisdom

1 And Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the Lord his God *was* with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

Here is, I. Solomon's great prosperity, 2Ch 1:1. Though he had a contested title, yet, God being with him, he was strengthened in his kingdom; his heart and hands were strengthened, and his interest in the people. God's presence will be our strength.

II. His great piety and devotion. His father was a prophet, a psalmist, and kept mostly to the ark; but Solomon, having read much in his Bible concerning the tabernacle which Moses built and the altars there, paid more respect to them than, it should seem, David had done. Both did well, and let neither be censured. If the zeal of one be carried out most to one instance of religion, and of another to some other instance, let them not judge nor despise each other.

1. All his great men must thus far be good men that they must join with him in worshipping God. He spoke to the captains and judges, the governors and chief of the fathers, to go with him to Gibeon, 2Ch 1:2,3. Authority and interest are well bestowed on those that will thus use them for the glory of God, and the promoting of religion. It is our duty to engage all with whom we have influence in the solemnities of religion, and it is very desirable to have many join with us in those solemnities--the more the better; it is the more like heaven. Solomon began his reign with this public pious visit to God's altar, and it was a very good omen. Magistrates are then likely to do well for themselves and their people when they thus take God along with them at their setting out.

2. He offered abundance of sacrifices to God there (2Ch 1:6): 1000 burnt-offerings, and perhaps a greater number of peace-offerings, on which he and his company feasted before the Lord. Where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly. His father David had left him flocks and herds in abundance (1Ch 27:29,31), and thus he gave God his dues out of them. The ark was at Jerusalem (2Ch 1:4), but the altar was at Gibeon (2Ch 1:5), and thither he brought his sacrifices; for it is the altar that sanctifieth every gift.

3. He prayed a good prayer to God: this, with the answer to it, we had before, 1Ki 3:5-15, &c.

(1.) God bade him ask what he would; not only that he might put him in the right way of obtaining the favours that were intended him (Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full), but that he might try him, how he stood affected, and might discover what was in his heart. Men's characters appear in their choices and desires. What wouldst thou have? tries a man as much as, What wouldst thou do? Thus God tried whether Solomon was one of the children of this world, that say, Who will show us any good, or of the children of light, that say, Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. As we choose we shall have, and that is likely to be our portion to which we give the preference, whether the wealth and pleasure of this world or spiritual riches or delights.

(2.) Like a genuine son of David, he chose spiritual blessings rather than temporal. His petition here is, Give me wisdom and knowledge. He owns those to be desirable gifts, and God to be the giver of them, Pr 2:6. God gave the faculty of understanding, and to him we must apply for the furniture of it. Two things are here pleaded which we had not in Kings:--

[1.] Thou hast made me reign in my father's stead, 2Ch 1:8. "Lord, thou hast put me into this place, and therefore I can in faith ask of thee grace to enable me to do the duty of it." What service we have reason to believe God calls us to we have reason to hope he will qualify us for. But that is not all. "Lord, thou hast put me into this

place in the stead of David, the great and good man that filled it up so well; therefore give me wisdom, that Israel may not suffer damage by the change. Must I reign in my father's stead? Lord, give me my father's spirit."

Note, The eminency of those that went before us, and the obligation that lies upon us to keep up and carry on the good work they were engaged in, should provoke us to a gracious emulation, and quicken our prayers to God for wisdom and grace, that we may do the work of God in our day as faithfully and well as they did in theirs.

[2.] Let thy promise to David my father be established, 2Ch 1:9. He means the promise of concerning his successor. "In performance of that promise, Lord, give me wisdom." We do not find that wisdom was any of the things promised, but it was necessary in order to the accomplishment of what was promised, 2Sa 7:13-15. The promise was, He shall build a house for my name, I will establish his throne, he shall be my son, and my mercy shall not depart from him. "Now, Lord, unless thou give me wisdom, thy house will not be built, nor my throne established; I shall behave in a manner unbecoming my relation to thee as a Father, shall forfeit thy mercy, and fool it away; therefore, Lord, give me wisdom." Note, First, God's promises are our best pleas in prayer. Remember thy word unto thy servant.

Secondly, Children may take the comfort of the promises of that covenant which their parents, in their baptism, laid claim to, and took hold of, for them. Thirdly, The best way to obtain the benefit of the promises and privileges of the covenant is to be earnest in prayer with God for wisdom and grace to do the duties of it.

4. He received a gracious answer to this prayer, 2Ch 1:11,12.

(1.) God gave him the wisdom that he asked for because he asked for it. Wisdom is a gift that God gives as freely and liberally as any gift to those that value it, and wrestle for it; and will resolve to make use of it; and he upbraids not the poor petitioners with their folly, Jam 1:5. God's grace shall never be wanting to those who sincerely desire to know and do their duty.

(2.) God gave him the wealth and honour which he did not ask for because he asked not for them. Those that pursue present things most earnestly are most likely to miss of them; while those that refer themselves to the providence of God, if they have not the most of those things, have the most comfort in them. Those that make this world their end come short of the other and are disappointed in this too; but those that make the other world their end shall not only obtain that, and full satisfaction in it, but shall enjoy as much as is convenient of this world in their way.

2 Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers.

3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in the wilderness.

4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to *the place which* David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.

5 Moreover the brazen altar, that Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the Lord : and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it.

6 And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the Lord, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it.

7 In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, *that is so* great?

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine

enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom
and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over
whom I have made thee king:
12 wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee
riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had
that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have
the like.
13 Then Solomon came *from his journey* to the high place that *was* at
Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the
congregation, and reigned over Israel.

Here is,

1. Solomon's entrance upon the government (2Ch 1:13): He came from before the tabernacle, and reigned over Israel. He would not do any acts of government till he had done his acts of devotion, would not take honour to himself till he had given honour to God--first the tabernacle, and then the throne. But, when he had obtained wisdom from God, he did not bury his talent, but as he received the gift ministered the same, did not give up himself to ease and pleasure, but minded business: he reigned over Israel.

2 The magnificence of his court (2Ch 1:14): He gathered chariots and horsemen. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; for the king was forbidden to multiply horses, De 17:16. I do not remember that ever we find his good father in a chariot or on horseback; a mule was the highest he mounted. We should endeavor to excel those that went before us in goodness rather than in grandeur.

3. The wealth and trade of his kingdom. He made silver and gold very cheap and common, 2Ch 1:15. The increase of gold lowers the value of it; but the increase of grace advances its price; the more men have of that the more they value it. How much better therefore is it to get wisdom than gold! He opened also a trade with Egypt, whence he imported horses and linen-yarn, which he exported again to the kings of Syria, with great advantage no doubt, 2Ch 1:16,17. This we had before, 1Ki 10:28,29. It is the wisdom of princes to promote industry and encourage trade in their dominions. Perhaps Solomon

took the hint of setting up the linen-manufacture, bringing linen-yarn out of Egypt, working it into cloth, and then sending that to other nations, from what his mother taught when she specified this as one of the characteristics of the virtuous woman, She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles of it to the merchant, Pr 31:24. In all labour there is profit.

Solomon's Trade in Horses and Chariots

14 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

15 And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem *as plenteous* as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that *are* in the vale for abundance.

16 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.

17 And they fetched up, and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty: and so brought they out *horses* for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

2 Chronicles-2

Solomon's Agreement with King Huram

1 And Solomon determined to build a house for the name of the Lord, and a house for his kingdom.

Solomon's wisdom was given him, not merely for speculation, to entertain himself (though it is indeed a princely entertainment), nor merely for conversation, to entertain his friends, but for action; and therefore to action he immediately applies himself. Observe,

I. His resolution within himself concerning his business (2Ch 2:1): He determined to build, in the first place, a house for the name of the Lord. It is fit that he who is the first should be served--first a

temple and then a palace, a house not so much for himself, or his own convenience and magnitude, as for the kingdom, for the honour of it among its neighbours and for the decent reception of the people whenever they had occasion to apply to their prince; so that in both he aimed at the public good. Those are the wisest men that lay out themselves most for the honour of the name of the Lord and the welfare of communities. We are not born for ourselves, but for God and our country.

II. His embassy to Huram, king of Tyre, to engage his assistance in the prosecution of his designs. The purport of his errand to him is much the same here as we had it 1Ki 5:2-6, &c., only here it is more largely set forth.

1 The reasons why he makes this application to Huram are here more fully represented, for information to Huram as well as for inducement.

(1.) He pleads his father's interest in Huram, and the kindness he had received from him (2Ch 2:3): As thou didst deal with David, so deal with me. As we must show kindness to, so we may expect kindness from, our fathers' friends, and with them should cultivate a correspondence.

(2.) He represents his design in building the temple: he intended it for a place of religious worship (2Ch 2:4), that all the offerings which God had appointed for the honour of his name might be offered up there. The house was built that it might be dedicated to God and used in his service. This we should aim at in all our business, that our havings and doings may be all to the glory of God. He mentions various particular services that were there to be performed, for the instruction of Huram. The mysteries of the true religion, unlike those of the Gentile superstition, coveted not concealment.

(3.) He endeavors to inspire Huram with very great and high thoughts of the God of Israel, by expressing the mighty veneration he had for his holy name: Great is our God above all gods, above

all idols, above all princes. Idols are nothing, princes are little, and both under the control of the God of Israel; and therefore,

[1.] "The house must be great; not in proportion to the greatness of that God to whom it is to be dedicated (for between finite and infinite there can be no proportion), but in some proportion to the great value and esteem we have for this God."

[2.] "Yet, be it ever so great, it cannot be a habitation for the great God. Let not Huram think that the God of Israel, like the gods of the nations, dwells in temples made with hands, Ac 17:24. No, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. It is intended only for the convenience of his priests and worshippers, that they may have a fit place wherein to burn sacrifice before him."

[3.] He looked upon himself, though a mighty prince, as unworthy the honour of being employed in this great work: Who am I that I should build him a house? It becomes us to go about every work for God with a due sense of our utter insufficiency for it and our incapacity to do any thing adequate to the divine perfections. It is part of the wisdom wherein we ought to walk towards those that are without carefully to guard against all misapprehension which any thing we say or do may occasion concerning God; so Solomon does here in his treaty with Huram.

2 The requests he makes to him are more particularly set down here.

(1.) He desired Huram would furnish him with a good hand to work (2Ch 2:7): Send me a man. He had cunning men with him in Jerusalem and Judah, whom David provided, 1Ch 22:15. Let them not think but that Jews had some among them that were artists. But "send me a man to direct them. There are ingenious men in Jerusalem, but not such engravers as are in Tyre; and therefore, since temple-work must be the best in its kind, let me have the best workmen that can be got."

(2.) With good materials to work on (2Ch 2:8), cedar and other timber in abundance (2Ch 2:8,9); for the house must be wonderfully

great, that is, very stately and magnificent, no cost must be spared, nor any contrivance wanting in it.

3. Here is Solomon's engagement to maintain the workmen (2Ch 2:10), to give them so much wheat and barley, so much wine and oil. He did not feed his workmen with bread and water, but with plenty, and every thing of the best. Those that employ labourers ought to take care they be not only well paid, but well provided for with sufficient of that which is wholesome and fit for them. Let the rich masters do for their poor workmen as they would be done by if the tables were turned.

2 And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear
burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and
three thousand and six hundred to oversee them.
3 And Solomon sent to Huram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst
deal with David my father, and didst send him cedars to build him
a house to dwell therein, *even so deal with me*.
4 Behold, I build a house to the name of the Lord my God, to
dedicate *it* to him, *and* to burn before him sweet incense, and for
the continual showbread, and for the burnt offerings morning and
evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the
solemn feasts of the Lord our God. This *is an ordinance* for ever to
Israel.
5 And the house which I build *is* great: for great *is* our God above all
gods.
6 But who is able to build him a house, seeing the heaven and heaven
of heavens cannot contain him? who *am* I then, that I should build
him a house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?
7 Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in
silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and
blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that *are* with
me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide.
8 Send me also cedar trees, fir trees, and algum trees, out of Lebanon:
for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon;
and, behold, my servants *shall be* with thy servants,
9 even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am
about to build *shall be* wonderful great.

10 And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

11 Then Huram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the Lord hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.

12 Huram said moreover, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and understanding, that might build a house for the Lord, and a house for his kingdom.

13 And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Huram my father's,

14 the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father.

Here we have, I The return which Huram made to Solomon's embassy, in which he shows a great respect for Solomon and a readiness to serve him. Meaner people may learn of these great ones to be neighbourly and complaisant.

1. He congratulates Israel on having such a king as Solomon was (2Ch 2:11): Because the Lord loved his people, he has made thee king. Note, A wise and good government is a great blessing to a people, and may well be accounted a singular token of God's favour. He does not say, Because he loved thee (though that was true, 2Sa 12:24) he made thee king, but because he loved his people. Princes must look upon themselves as preferred for the public good, not for their own personal satisfaction, and should rule so as to prove that they were given in love and not in anger.

2. He blesses God for raising up such a successor to David, 2Ch 2:12. It should seem that Huram was not only very well affected to the Jewish nation, and well pleased with their prosperity, but that he was proselyted to the Jewish religion, and worshipped Jehovah,

the God of Israel (who was now known by that name to the neighbouring nations), as the God that made heaven and earth, and as the fountain of power as well as being; for he sets up kings. Now that the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, and so preserved their honour, the neighbouring nations were as willing to be instructed by them in the true religion as Israel had been, in the days of their apostasy, to be infected with the idolatries and superstitions of their neighbours. This made them high, that they lent to many nations and did not borrow, lent truth to them, and did not borrow error from them; as when they did the contrary it was their shame.

3. He sent him a very ingenious curious workman, that would not fail to answer his expectations in every thing, one that had both Jewish and Gentile blood meeting in him; for his mother was an Israelite (Huram though she was of the tribe of Dan, and therefore says so here, 2Ch 2:14, but it seems she was of the tribe of Naphtali, 1Ki 7:14), but his father was a Tyrian--a good omen of uniting Jew and Gentile in the gospel temple, as it was afterwards when the building of the second temple was greatly furthered by Darius (Ezr 6:1-12), who is supposed to have been the son of Esther--an Israelite by the mother's side.

4. He engaged for the timber, as much as he would have occasion for, and undertook to deliver it at Joppa, and withal signified his dependence upon Solomon for the maintenance of the workmen as he had promised, 2Ch 2:15,16. This agreement we had, 1Ki 5:8,9.

II The orders which Solomon gave about the workmen. He would not employ the free-born Israelites in the drudgery work of the temple itself, not so much as to be overseers of it. In this he employed the strangers who were proselyted to the Jewish religion, who had not lands of inheritance in Canaan as the Israelites had, and therefore applied to trades, and got their living by their ingenuity and industry. There were, at this time, vast numbers of them in the land (2Ch 2:17), who, if they were of any of the devoted nations, perhaps fell within the case, and therefore fell under the law, of the Gibeonites, to be hewers of wood for the congregation:

if not, yet being in many respects well provided for by the law of Moses, and put upon an equal footing with the native Israelites, they were bound in gratitude to do what they could for the service of the temple. Yet, no doubt, they were well paid in money or money's worth: the law was, Thou shalt not oppress a stranger. The distribution of them we have here (2Ch 2:2, and again 2Ch 2:18), in all 150,000.

Canaan was a fruitful land, that found meat for so many mouths more than the numerous natives; and the temple was a vast building, that found work for so many bands. Mr. Fuller suggests that the expedient peculiar to this structure, of framing all beforehand, must needs increase the work. I think it rather left so much the more room for this vast multitude of hands to be employed in it; for in the forest of Lebanon they might all be at work together, without crowding one another, which they could not have been upon Mount Sion. And, if there had not been such vast numbers employed, so large and curious a fabric, which was begun and ended in seven years, might, for aught I know, have been as long in building as St. Paul's.

15 Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine,
which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants:
16 and we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need:
and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt
carry it up to Jerusalem.
17 And Solomon numbered all the strangers that *were* in the land of
Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had
numbered them; and they were found a hundred and fifty
thousand and three thousand and six hundred.
18 And he set threescore and ten thousand of them *to be* bearers of
burdens, and fourscore thousand *to be* hewers in the mountain, and
three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people awork.

2 Chronicles-3

Solomon Builds the House of the Lord

1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem
in mount Moriah, where *the* Lord appeared unto David his father,
in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of
Ornan the Jebusite.

Here is, I The place where the temple was built. Solomon was neither at liberty to choose nor at a loss to fix the place. It was before determined (1Ch 22:1), which was an ease to his mind.

1. It must be at Jerusalem; for that was the place where God had chosen to put his name there. The royal city must be the holy city. There must be the testimony of Israel; for there are set the thrones of judgment, Ps 122:4,5.

2. It must be on Mount Moriah, which, some think, was that very place in the land of Moriah where Abraham offered Isaac, Ge 22:2. So the Targum says expressly, adding, But he was delivered by the word of the Lord, and a ram provided in his place. That was typical of Christ's sacrifice of himself; therefore fitly was the temple, which was likewise a type of him, built there.

3. It must be where the Lord appeared to David, and answered him by fire, 1Ch 21:18,26. There atonement was made once; and therefore, in remembrance of that, there atonement must still be made. Where God has met with me it is to be hoped that he will still manifest himself.

4. It must be in the place which David has prepared, not only which he had purchased with his money, but which he had purchased with his money, but which he had pitched upon divine direction. It was Solomon's wisdom not to enquire out a more convenient place, but to acquiesce in the appointment of God, whatever might be objected against it.

5. It must be in the threshold floor of Ornan, which, if (as a Jebusite) it gives encouragement to the Gentiles, obliges us to look upon temple-work as that which requires the labour of the mind, no less than threshing-work does that of the body.

II The time when it was begun; not till the fourth year of Solomon's reign, 2Ch 3:2. Not that the first three years were trifled away, or spent in deliberating whether they should build the temple or no; but they were employed in the necessary preparations for it, wherein three years would be soon gone, considering how many hands were to be got together and set to work. Some conjecture that this was a sabbatical year, or year of release and rest to the land, when the people, being discharged from their husbandry, might more easily lend a hand to the beginning of this work; and then the year in which it was finished would fall out to be another sabbatical year, when they would likewise have leisure to attend the solemnity of the dedication of it.

III. The dimensions of it, in which Solomon was instructed (2Ch 3:3), as he was in other things, by his father. This was the foundation (so it may be read) which Solomon laid for the building of the house. This was the rule he went by, so many cubits the length and breadth, after the first measure, that is, according to the measure first fixed, which there was no reason to make any alteration of when the work came to be done; for the dimensions were given by divine wisdom, and what God does shall be for ever; nothing can be put to it, or taken from it, Ec 3:14. His first measure will be the last.

IV. The ornaments of the temple. The timber-work was very fine, and yet, within, it was overlaid with pure gold (2Ch 3:4), with fine gold (2Ch 3:5), and that embossed with palm-trees and chains. It was gold of Parvaim (2Ch 3:6), the best gold. The beams and posts, the walls and doors, were overlaid with gold, 2Ch 3:7. The most holy place, which was ten yards square, was all overlaid with fine gold (2Ch 3:8), even the upper chambers, or rather the upper floor or roof--top, bottom, and sides, were all overlaid with gold.

Every nail, or screw, or pin, with which the golden plates were fastened to the walls that were overlaid with them, weighed fifty shekels, or was worth so much, workmanship and all. A great many precious stones were dedicated to God (1Ch 29:2,8), and these were set here and there, where they would show to the best advantage. The finest houses now pretend to no better garnishing than good paint on the roof and walls; but the ornaments of the temple were most substantially rich. It was set with precious stones, because it was a type of the new Jerusalem, which has no temple in it because it is all temple, and the walls, gates, and foundations of which are said to be of precious stones and pearls, Re 21:18,19,21.
The Furniture of the Temple.
B. C. 1012.

2 And he began to build in the second *day* of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.
3 Now these *are the things wherein* Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure *was* threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits.
4 And the porch that *was* in the front *of the house,* the length *of it was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height *was* a hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold.
5 And the greater house he ceiled with fir tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm trees and chains.
6 And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty: and the gold *was* gold of Parvaim.
7 He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubim on the walls.
8 And he made the most holy house, the length whereof *was* according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, *amounting* to six hundred talents.
9 And the weight of the nails *was* fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.
10 And in the most holy house he made two cherubim of image work, and overlaid them with gold.

11 And the wings of the cherubim *were* twenty cubits long: one wing *of the one cherub was* five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing *was likewise* five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub.

12 And *one* wing of the other cherub *was* five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing *was* five cubits *also,* joining to the wing of the other cherub.

Here is an account of

1 The two cherubim, which were set up in the holy of holies. There were two already over the ark, which covered the mercy-seat with their wings; these were small ones. Now that the most holy place was enlarged, though these were continued (being appurtenances to the ark, which was not to be made new, as all the other utensils of the tabernacle were), yet those two large ones were added, doubtless by divine appointment, to fill up the holy place, which otherwise would have looked bare, like a room unfurnished. These cherubim are said to be of image-work (2Ch 3:10), designed, it is likely, to represent the angels who attend the divine Majesty. Each wing extended five cubits, so that the whole was twenty cubits (2Ch 3:12,13), which was just the breadth of the most holy place, 2Ch 3:8.

They stood on their feet, as servants, their faces inward toward the ark (2Ch 3:13), that it might appear they were not set there to be adored (for then they would have been made sitting, as on a throne, and their faces towards their worshippers), but rather as themselves attendants on the invisible God. We must not worship angels, but we must worship with angels; for we have come into communion with them (Heb 12:22), and must do the will of God as the angels do it. The thought that we are worshipping him before whom the angels cover their faces will help to inspire us with reverence in all our approaches to God. Compare 1Co 11:10,Isa 6:2.

2 The veil that parted between the temple and the most holy place, 2Ch 3:14. This denoted the darkness of that dispensation, and the distance which the worshippers were kept at; but, at the death of Christ, this veil was rent; for through him we are made nigh, and have boldness not only to look, but to enter, into the holiest. On this

he was wrought cherubim. Heb. he caused them to ascend, that is, they were made in raised work, embossed. Or he made them on the wing in an ascending posture, as the other two that stood on their feet in an attending posture, to remind the worshippers to lift up their hearts, and to soar upwards in their devotions.

3. The two pillars which were set up before the temple. Both together were somewhat above thirty-five cubits in length (2Ch 3:15), about eighteen cubits high a-piece. See 1Ki 7:15-22, &c., where we took a view of those pillars, Jachin and Boaz, establishment and strength in temple-work and by it.

13 The wings of these cherubim spread themselves forth twenty
cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces *were* inward.
14 And he made the veil *of* blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine
linen, and wrought cherubim thereon.

The Two Pillars

15 Also he made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits
high, and the chapiter that *was* on the top of each of them *was* five
cubits.
16 And he made chains, *as* in the oracle, and put *them* on the heads of
the pillars; and made a hundred pomegranates, and put *them* on the
chains.
17 And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right
hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the
right hand Jachin [he shall establish], and the name of that on the
left Boaz [in it *is* strength].

2 Chronicles-4

The Furnishings for the Temple

1 Moreover he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length
thereof, and twenty cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the
height thereof.

David often speaks with much affection both of the house of the Lord and of the courts of our God. Both without doors and within there

was that which typified the grace of the gospel and shadowed out good things to come, of which the substance is Christ.

I. There were those things in the open court, in the view of all the people, which were very significant.

1. There was the brazen altar, 2Ch 4:1 The making of this was not mentioned in the Kings. On this all the sacrifices were offered, and it sanctified the gift. This altar was much larger than that which Moses made in the tabernacle; that was five cubits square, this was twenty cubits square. Now that Israel had become both numerous and more rich, and it was to be hoped more devout (for every age should aim to be wiser and better than that which went before it), it was expected that there would be a greater abundance of offerings brought to God's altar than had been. It was therefore made such a capacious scaffold that it might hold them all, and none might excuse themselves from bringing those temptations of their devotion by alleging that there was not room to receive them. God had greatly enlarged their borders; it was therefore fit that they should enlarge his altars.

Our returns should bear some proportion to our receivings. It was ten cubits high, so that the people who worshipped in the courts might see the sacrifice burnt, and their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for sin: "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not thus consumed, and that this is accepted as an expiation of my guilt." They might thus be led to consider the great sacrifice which should be offered in the fulness of time to take away sin and abolish death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly do. And with the smoke of the sacrifices their hearts might ascend to heaven in holy desires towards God and his favour. In all our devotions we must keep the eye of faith fixed upon Christ, the great propitiation. How they went up to this altar, and carried the sacrifices up to it, we are not told; some think by a plain ascent like a hill: if by steps, doubtless they were so contrived as that the end of the law (mentioned Ex 20:26) might be answered.

2. There was the molten sea, a very large brass pan, in which they put water for the priests to wash in, 2Ch 4:2,6. It was put just at the entrance into the court of the priests, like the font at the church door. If it were filled to the brim, it would hold 3000 baths (as here, 2Ch 4:5), but ordinarily there were only 2000 baths in it, 1Ki 7:26. The Holy Ghost by this signified,

(1.) Our great gospel privilege, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, 1Jo 1:7. To us there is a fountain opened for all believers (who are spiritual priests, Re 1:5,6), nay, for all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to wash in, from sin, which is uncleanness. There is a fulness of merit in Jesus Christ for all those that by faith apply to him for the purifying of their consciences, that they might serve the living God, Heb 9:14.

(2.) Our great gospel duty, which is to cleanse ourselves by true repentance from all the pollutions of the flesh and the corruption that is in the world. Our hearts must be sanctified, or we cannot sanctify the name of God. Those that draw nigh to God must cleanse their hands, and purify their hearts, Jam 4:8. If I was thee not, thou hast no part with me; and he that is washed still needs to wash his feet, to renew his repentance, whenever he goes in to minister, Joh 13:10.

3. There were ten lavers of brass, in which they washed such things as they offered for the burnt-offerings, 2Ch 4:6. As the priests must be washed, so must the sacrifices. We must not only purify ourselves in preparation for our religious performances, but carefully put away all those vain thoughts and corrupt aims which cleave to our performances themselves and pollute them.

4. The doors of the court were overlaid with brass (2Ch 4:9), both for strength and beauty, and that they might not be rotted with the weather, to which they were exposed. Gates of brass we read of, Ps 107:16.

II. There were those things in the house of the Lord (into which the priests alone went to minister) that were very significant. All was

gold there. The nearer we come to God the purer we must be, the purer we shall be.

1. There were ten golden candlesticks, according to the form of that one which was in the tabernacle, 2Ch 4:7. The written word is a lamp and a light, shining in a dark place. In Moses's time they had but one candlestick, the Pentateuch; but the additions which, in process of time, were to be made of other books of scripture might be signified by this increase of the number of the candlesticks. Light was growing. The candlesticks are the churches, Re 1:20. Moses set up but one, the church of the Jews; but, in the gospel temple, not only believers, but churches, are multiplied.

2. There were ten golden tables (2Ch 4:8), tables whereon the show-bread was set, 2Ch 4:19. Perhaps every one of the tables had twelve loaves of show-bread on it. As the house was enlarged, the house-keeping was. In my father's house there is bread enough for the whole family. To those tables belonged 100 golden basins, or dishes; for God's table is well furnished. 3. There was a golden altar (2Ch 4:19), on which they burnt incense. It is probable that this was enlarged in proportion to the brazen altar. Christ, who once for all made atonement for sin, ever lives, making intercession, in virtue of that atonement.

2 Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round
in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty
cubits did compass it round about.
3 And under it *was* the similitude of oxen, which did compass it
round about: ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about. Two
rows of oxen *were* cast, when it was cast.
4 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and
three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the
south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea *was set* above
upon them, and all their hinder parts *were inward*.
5 And the thickness of it *was* a handbreadth, and the brim of it like
the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; *and* it received
and held three thousand baths.
6 He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five
on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the

burnt offering they washed in them; but the sea *was* for the priests to
wash in.

7 And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set *them* in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left.

8 He made also ten tables, and placed *them* in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left. And he made a hundred basins of gold.

9 Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass.

10 And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

11 And Huram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basins. And Huram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God;

We have here such a summary both of the brass-work and the gold-work of the temple as we had before (1Ki 7:13-51, &c.), in which we have nothing more to observe than, 1. That Huram the workman was very punctual: He finished all that he was to make (2Ch 4:11), and left no part of his work undone. Huram, his father, he is called, 2Ch 4:16. Probably it was a sort of nickname by which he was commonly known, Father Huram; for the king of Tyre called him Huram Abi, my father, in compliance with whom Solomon called him his, he being a great artist and father of the artificers in brass and iron. He acquitted himself well both for ingenuity and industry.

2. Solomon was very generous. He made all the vessels in great abundance (2Ch 4:18), many of a sort, that many hands might be employed, and so the work might go on with expedition, or that some might be laid up for use when others were worn out. Freely he has received, and he will freely give. When he had made vessels enough for the present he could not convert the remainder of the brass to his own use; it is devoted to God, and it shall be used for him.

12 *to wit,* the two pillars, and the pommels, and the chapiters *which were* on the top of the two pillars, and the two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapiters which *were* on the top of the pillars;

13 and four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows
of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of
the chapiters which *were* upon the pillars.
14 He made also bases, and lavers made he upon the bases;
15 one sea, and twelve oxen under it.
16 The pots also, and the shovels, and the fleshhooks, and all their
instruments, did Huram his father make to king Solomon for the
house of the Lord, of bright brass.
17 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground
between Succoth and Zeredathah.
18 Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the
weight of the brass could not be found out.
19 And Solomon made all the vessels that *were for* the house of God,
the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the showbread *was set;*
20 moreover the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn
after the manner before the oracle, of pure gold;
21 and the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, *made he of* gold, *and*
that perfect gold;
22 and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censers,
of pure gold: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof
for the most holy *place,* and the doors of the house of the temple,
were of gold.

2 Chronicles-5

1 Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the Lord
was finished: and Solomon brought in *all* the things that David his
father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the
instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.

This agrees with what we had 1Ki 8:2-10, &c., where an account was given of the solemn introduction of the ark into the new-erected temple.

1. There needed no great solemnity for the bringing in of the dedicated things, 2Ch 5:1. They added to the wealth, and perhaps were so disposed as to add to the beauty of it; but they could not add to the holiness, for it was the temple that sanctified the gold, Mt

23:17. See how just Solomon was both to God and to his father. Whatever David had dedicated to God, however much he might have liked it himself, he would by no means alienate it, but put it among the treasures of the temple. Those children that would inherit their godly parents' blessing must religiously pursue their pious intentions and not defeat them. When Solomon had made all the vessels of the temple in abundance (2Ch 4:18), many of the materials were left, which he would not convert to any other use, but laid up in the treasury for a time of need. Dedicated things must not be alienated. It is sacrilege to do it.

2. But it was fit that the ark should be brought in with great solemnity; and so it was. All the other vessels were made new, and larger, in proportion to the house, than they had been in the tabernacle. But the ark, with the mercy-seat and the cherubim, was the same; for the presence and the grace of God are the same in little assemblies that they are in large ones, in the poor condition of the church that they are in its prosperous estate. Wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name there is he as truly present with them as if there were 2000 or 3000. The ark was brought in attended by a very great assembly of the elders of Israel, who came to grace and solemnity; and a very sumptuous appearance no doubt they made, 2Ch 5:2-4.

It was carried by the priests (2Ch 5:7), brought into the most holy place, and put under the wings of the great cherubim which Solomon had set up there, 2Ch 5:7,8. There they are unto this day (2Ch 5:9), not the day when this book was written after the captivity, but when that was written out of which this story was transcribed. Or they were there (so it might be read) unto this day, the day of Jerusalem's desolations, that fatal day, Ps 137:7. The ark was a type of Christ, and, as such, a token of the presence of God. That gracious promise, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, does in effect bring the ark into our religious assemblies if we by faith and prayer put that promise in suit; and this we should be most solicitous and earnest for. Lord, if thy presence go not up with us, wherefore should we go up? The temple itself, if Christ leave it, is a desolate place, Mt 23:38.

3. With the ark they brought up the tabernacle and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, 2Ch 5:5. Those were not alienated, because they had been dedicated to God, were not altered or melted down for the new work, though there was no need of them; but they were carefully laid up as monuments of antiquity, and probably as many of the vessels as were fit for use were still used.

4. This was done with great joy. They kept a holy feast upon the occasion (2Ch 5:3), and sacrificed sheep and oxen without number, 2Ch 5:6. Note,

(1.) The establishment of the public worship of God according to his institution, and with the tokens of his presence, is, and ought to be, matter of great joy to any people.

(2.) When Christ is formed in a soul, the law written in the heart, the ark of the covenant settled there, so that it becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, there is true satisfaction in that soul.

(3.) Whatever we have the comfort of we must, by the sacrifice of praise, give God the glory of, and not be straitened therein; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. If God favour us with his presence, we must honour him with our services, the best we have.

Solomon Brings the Ark into the Temple

2 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of
the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto
Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of
the city of David, which *is* Zion.
3 Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the
king in the feast which *was* in the seventh month.
4 And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark.
5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the
congregation, and all the holy vessels that *were* in the tabernacle,
these did the priests *and* the Levites bring up.

6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were
assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen,
which could not be told nor numbered for multitude.
7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord
unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy *place,*
even under the wings of the cherubim:
8 for the cherubim spread forth *their* wings over the place of the ark,
and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above.
9 And they drew out the staves *of the ark,* that the ends of the staves
were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen
without. And there it is unto this day.
10 *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put
therein at Horeb, when the Lord made *a covenant* with the children
of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.
11 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy
place: (for all the priests *that were* present were sanctified, *and* did
not *then* wait by course:

Solomon, and the elders of Israel, had done what they could to grace the solemnity of the introduction of the ark; but God, by testifying his acceptance of what they did, put the greatest honour upon it. The cloud of glory that filled the house beautified it more than all the gold with which it was overlaid or the precious stones with which it was garnished; and yet that was no glory in comparison with the glory of the gospel dispensation, 2Co 3:8-10. Observe,

I. How God took possession of the temple: He filled it with a cloud, 2Ch 5:13.

1. Thus he signified his acceptance of this temple to be the same to him that the tabernacle of Moses was, and assured them that he would be the same in it; for it was by a cloud that he made his public entry into that, Ex 40:34.

2. Thus he considered the weakness and infirmity of those to whom he manifested himself, who could not bear the dazzling lustre of the divine light: it would have overpowered them; he therefore spread his cloud upon it, Job 26:9. Christ revealed things unto his disciples

as they were able to bear them, and in parables, which wrapped up divine things as in a cloud.

3. Thus he would affect all that worshipped in his courts with holy reverence and fear. Christ's disciples were afraid when they entered into a cloud, Lu 9:34.

4. Thus he would intimate the darkness of that dispensation, by reason of which they could not stedfastly look to the end of those things which were now abolished, 2Co 3:13.

II. When he took possession of it.

1. When the priests had come out of the holy place, 2Ch 5:11. This is the way of giving possession. All must come out, that the rightful owner may come in. Would we have God dwell in our hearts? We must leave room for him; let every thing else give way. We are here told that upon this occasion the whole family of the priests attended, and not any one particular course: All the priests that were present were sanctified (2Ch 5:11), because there was work enough for them all, when such a multitude of sacrifices were to be offered, and because it was fit that they should all be eye-witnesses of this solemnity and receive the impressions of it.

2. When the singers and musicians praised God, then the house was filled with a cloud. This is very observable; it was not when they offered sacrifices, but when they sang the praises of God, that God gave them this token of his favour; for the sacrifice of praise pleaseth the Lord better than that of an ox or bullock, Ps 69:31. All the singers and musicians were employed, those of all the three families; and, to complete the concert, 120 priests, with their trumpets, joined with them, all standing at the east end of the altar, on that side of the court which lay outmost towards the people, 2Ch 5:12. And, when this part of the service began, the glory of God appeared. Observe,

(1.) It was when they were unanimous, when they were as one, to make one sound. The Holy God descended on the apostles when they

met with one accord, Ac 2:1-4. Where unity is the Lord commands the blessing.

(2.) It was when they were lively and hearty, and lifted up their voice to praise the Lord. Then we serve God acceptably when we are fervent in spirit serving him.

(3.) It was when they were, in their praises, celebrating the everlasting mercy and goodness of God. As there is one saying oftener repeated in scripture than this, his mercy endureth for ever (twenty-six times in one psalm, Ps 136:1-26, and often elsewhere), so there is none more signally owned from heaven; for it was not the expression of some rapturous flights that the priests were singing when the glory of God appeared, but this plain song, He is good, and his mercy endureth for ever. God's goodness is his glory, and he is pleased when we give him the glory of it.

III. What was the effect of it. The priests themselves could not stand to minister, by reason of the cloud (2Ch 5:14), which, as it was an evidence that the law made men priests that had infirmity, so (as bishop Patrick observes) it was a plain intimation that the Levitical priesthood should cease, and stand no longer to minister, when the Messiah should come, in whom the fulness of the godhead should dwell bodily. In him the glory of God dwelt among us, but covered with a cloud. The Word was made flesh; and when he comes to his temple, like a refiner's fire, who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? Mal 3:1,2.

12 also the Levites *which were* the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, *being* arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)

13 it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, *even* the house of the Lord;

14 so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the
cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

2 Chronicles-6

The Dedication of the Temple

1 Then said Solomon, The Lord hath said that he would dwell in
the thick darkness.

It is of great consequence, in all our religious actions, that we design well, and that our eye be single. If Solomon had built this temple in the pride of his heart, as Ahasuerus made his feast, only to show the riches of his kingdom and the honour of his majesty, it would not have turned at all to his account. But here he declares upon what inducements he undertook it, and they are such as not only justify, but magnify, the undertaking.

1. He did it for the glory and honour of God; this was his highest and ultimate end in it. It was for the name of the Lord God of Israel (2Ch 6:10), to be a house of habitation for him, 2Ch 6:2. He has indeed, as to us, made darkness his pavilion (2Ch 6:1), but let this house be the residence of that darkness; for it is in the upper world that he dwells in light, such as no eye can approach.

2. He did it in compliance with the choice God had been pleased to make of Jerusalem, to be the city in which he would record his name (2Ch 6:6): I have chosen Jerusalem. A great many stately buildings there were in Jerusalem for the king, his princes, and the royal family. If God chooses that place, it is fit that there be a building for him which may excel all the rest. If men were thus honoured there, let God be thus honoured.

3. He did it in pursuance of his father's good intentions, which he never had an opportunity to put into execution: "It was in the heart of David my father to build a house for God;" the project was his, be it known, to his honour (2Ch 6:7), and God approved of it, though he permitted him not to put it in execution (2Ch 6:8), Thou didst well that it was in thy heart. Temple-work is often thus done; one sows

and another reaps (Joh 4:37,38), one age begins that which the next brings to perfection. And let not the wisest of men think it any disparagement to them to pursue the good designs which those that went before them have laid, and to build upon their foundation. Every good piece is not an original.

4. He did it in performance of the word which God had spoken. God had said, Thy son shall build the house for my name; and now he had done it, 2Ch 6:9,10. The service was appointed him, and the honour of it designed him, by the divine promise; so that he did not do it of his own head, but was called of God to do it. It is fit that he who appoints the work should have the appointing of the workmen; and those may go on in their work with great satisfaction who see their call to it clear.

2 But I have built a house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.
3 And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood.
4 And he said, Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled *that* which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying,
5 Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel:
6 but I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.
7 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.
8 But the Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build a house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart:
9 notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.

10 The Lord therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken:
for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the
throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house
for the name of the Lord God of Israel.
11 And in it have I put the ark, wherein *is* the covenant of the Lord,
that he made with the children of Israel.
12 And he stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all
the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands:
13 for Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and
five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst
of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his
knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his
hands toward heaven,

Solomon had, in the foregoing verses, signed and sealed, as it were, the deed of dedication, by which the temple was appropriated to the honour and service of God. Now here he prays the consecration-prayer, by which it was made a figure of Christ, the great Mediator, through whom we are to offer all our prayers, and to expect all God's favours, and to whom we are to have an eye in every thing where we have to do with God. We have opened the particulars of this prayer (1Ki 8:12-53) and therefore shall now only glean up some few passages in it which may be the proper subjects of our meditation.

I. Here are some doctrinal truths occasionally laid down. As,

1. That the God of Israel is a being of incomparable perfection. We cannot describe him; but this we know, there is none like him in heaven or in earth, 2Ch 6:14. All the creatures have their fellow-creatures, but the Creator has not his peer. He is infinitely above all, and over all, God blessed for ever.

2. That he is, and will be, true to every word that he has spoken; and all that serve him in sincerity shall certainly find him both faithful and kind. Those that set God always before them, and walk before him with all their hearts, shall find him as good as his word and better; he will both keep covenant with them and show mercy to them, 2Ch 6:14.

3. That he is a being infinite and immense, whom the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain, and to whose felicity nothing is added by the utmost we can do in his service, 2Ch 6:18. He is infinitely beyond the bounds of the creation and infinitely above the praises of all intelligent creatures.

4. That he, and he only, knows the hearts of the children of men, 2Ch 6:30. All men's thoughts, aims, and affections, are naked and open before him; and, however the imaginations and intents of our hearts may be concealed from men, angels, and devils, they cannot be hidden from God, who knows not only what is in the heart, but the heart itself and all the beatings of it.

5. That there is no such thing as a sinless perfection to be found in this life (2Ch 6:36): There is no man who sinneth not; nay, who doeth good and sinneth not; so he writes, agreeable to what he here says, Ec 7:20.

II. Here are some suppositions or cases put which are to be taken notice of.

1. He supposed that if doubts and controversies arose between man and man both sides would agree to appeal to God, and lay an oath upon the person whose testimony must decide the matter, 2Ch 6:22. The religious reverence of an oath, as it was ancient, so, it may be presumed, it will continue as long as there are any remains of conscience and right reason among men.

2. He supposed that, though Israel enjoyed a profound peace and tranquillity, yet troublesome times would come. He did not think the mountain of their prosperity stood so strong but that it might be moved; nay, he expected sin would move it.

3. He supposed that those who had not called upon God at other times, yet, in their affliction, would seek him early and earnestly. "When they are in distress they will confess their sins, and confess

thy name, and make supplication to thee." Trouble will drive those to God who have said to him, Depart, 2Ch 6:24,26,28.

4. He supposed that strangers would come from afar to worship the God of Israel and to pay homage to him; and this also might reasonably be expected, considering what worthless things the gods of the nations were, and what proofs the God of Israel had given of his being Lord of the whole earth.

III. Here are petitions very pertinent.

1. That God would own this house, and have an eye to it, as the place of which he had said that he would put his name there, 2Ch 6:20. He could not, in faith, have asked God to show such peculiar favour to this house above any other if he himself had not said that it should be his rest for ever. The prayer that will speed must be warranted by the word. We may with humble confidence pray to God to be well pleased with us in Jesus Christ, because he had declared himself well pleased in him--This is my beloved Son; but he says not now of any house, "This is my beloved place."

2. That God would hear and accept the prayers which should be made in or towards that place, 2Ch 6:21. He asked not that God should help them whether they prayed for themselves or no, but that God would help them in answer to their prayers. Even Christ's intercessions do not supersede but encourage our supplications. He prayed that God would hear from his dwelling-place, even from heaven. Heaven in his dwelling-place still, not this temple; and thence help must come. When thou hearest forgive.

Note, The forgiveness of our sins is that which makes way for all the other answers to our prayers, Removendo prohibens--The evil which it drives away it keeps away.

3. That God would give judgment according to equity upon all the appeals that should be made to him, 2Ch 6:23,30. This we may, in faith, pray for, for we are sure it shall be done. God sitteth on the throne judging right.

4. That God would return in mercy to his people when they repented, and reformed, and sought unto him, 2Ch 6:25,27,38,39. This we also may, in faith, pray for, building upon the repeated declarations God has made of his readiness to accepts penitents.

5. That God would bid the strangers welcome to this house, and answer their prayers (2Ch 6:33); for, if there be in duty, why should there not be in privilege one law for the stranger and for one born in the land? Le 24:22.

6. That God would, upon all occasions, own and plead the cause of his people Israel, against all the opposers of it (2Ch 6:35): Maintain their cause; and again, 2Ch 6:39. If they be the Israel of God, their cause is the cause of God, and he would espouse it.

7. He concludes this prayer with some expressions which he had learned of his good father, and borrowed from one of his psalms. We had then not in the Kings, but here we have them, 2Ch 6:41,42. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; and how can we express ourselves in better language to God than that of his own Spirit? But these words were of use, in a special manner, to direct Solomon, because they had reference to this very work that he was now doing. We have them, Ps 132:8-10. He prayer (2Ch 6:41),

(1.) That God would take possession of the temple, and keep possession, that he would make it his resting-place: Thou and the ark; what will the ark do without the God of the ark-ordinances without the God of the ordinances?

(2.) That he would make the ministers of the temple public blessings: Clothe them with salvation, that is, not only save them, but make them instrumental to save others, by offering the sacrifices of righteousness.

(3.) That the service of the temple might turn abundantly to the joy and satisfaction of all the Lord's people: Let thy saints rejoice in goodness, that is, in the goodness of thy house, Ps 65:4. "Let all that

come hither to worship, like the eunuch, go away rejoicing." He pleads two things, 2Ch 6:42.

[1.] His own relation to God: "Turn not away the face of thy anointed. Lord, thou hast appointed me to be king, and wilt not thou own me?"

[2.] God's covenant with his father: Remember thy mercies of David thy servant--the piety of David towards God (so some understand it and so the word sometimes signifies), his pious care of the ark, and concern for it (see Ps 132:1,2, &c.), or the promises of God to David, which were mercies to him, his great support and comforts in all his troubles. We may plead, as Solomon does here, with an eye to Christ:--"We deserve that God should turn away our face, that he should reject us and our prayers; but we come in the name of the Lord Jesus, thy anointed, thy Messiah (so the word is), thy Christ, so the LXX. Him thou hearest always, and wilt never turn away his face. We have no righteousness of our own to plead, but, Lord, remember the mercies of David thy servant." Christ is God's servant (Isa 42:1), and is called David, Hos 3:5. "Lord, remember his mercies, and accept us on the account of them. Remember his tender concern for his Father's honour and man's salvation, and what he did and suffered from that principle. Remember the promises of the everlasting covenant, which free grace has made to us in Christ, and which are called the sure mercies of David," Isa 55:3,Ac 13:34. This must be all our desire and all our hope, all our prayer and all our plea; for it is all our salvation.

14 and said, O Lord God of Israel, *there is* no God like thee in the
heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and *showest*
mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:
15 thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which
thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast
fulfilled *it* with thine hand, as *it is* this day.
16 Now therefore, O Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David
my father that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall
not fail thee a man in my sight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet
so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as
thou hast walked before me.

17 Now then, O Lord God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which
thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.
18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold,
heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much
less this house which I have built!
19 Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his
supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the
prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee:
20 that thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon
the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name
there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth
toward this place.
21 Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy
people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou
from thy dwelling place, *even* from heaven; and when thou hearest,
forgive.
22 If a man sin against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to
make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this
house;
23 then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by
requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head;
and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his
righteousness.
24 And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy,
because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess
thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this
house;
25 then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people
Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to
them and to their fathers.
26 When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they
have sinned against thee; *yet* if they pray toward this place, and
confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict
them;
27 then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants,
and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way,
wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which
thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.

28 If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be
blasting or mildew, locusts or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege
them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore, or whatsoever
sickness *there be:*
29 *then* what prayer *or* what supplication soever shall be made of any
man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his
own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this
house:
30 then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and
render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart
thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of
men;)
31 that they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in
the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.
32 Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people
Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake,
thy mighty hand, and thy stretched out arm; if they come and pray
in this house;
33 then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling place, and
do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all
people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as *doth* thy
people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is
called by thy name.
34 If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that
thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city
which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy
name;
35 then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their
supplication, and maintain their cause.
36 If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man which sinneth not,)
and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their*
enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or
near;
37 yet *if* they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried
captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity,
saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt
wickedly;

38 if they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in
the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives,
and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers,
and *toward* the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house
which I have built for thy name:
39 then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling place,
their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and
forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.
40 Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and *let* thine
ears *be* attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place.
41 Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and
the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed
with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.
42 O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember
the mercies of David thy servant.

2 Chronicles-7

1 Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came
down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the
sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Here is, I The gracious answer which God immediately made to Solomon's prayer: The fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, 2Ch 7:1. In this way God testified his acceptance of Moses (Le 9:24), of Gideon (Jdg 6:21), of David (1Ch 21:26), of Elijah (1Ki 18:38); and, in general, to accept the burnt-sacrifice is, in the Hebrew phrase, to turn it to ashes, Ps 20:3. The fire came down here, not upon the killing of the sacrifices, but the praying of the prayer.

1. This fire intimated that God was,

(1.) Glorious in himself; for our God is a consuming fire, terrible even in his holy places. This fire, breaking forth (as it is probable) out of the thick darkness, made it the more terrible, as on Mount

Sinai, Ex 24:16,17. The sinners in Sion had reason to be afraid at that sight, and to say, Who among us shall dwell near this devouring fire? Isa 33:14. And yet,

(2.) Gracious to Israel; for this fire, which might justly have consumed them, fastened upon the sacrifice which was offered in their stead, and consumed that, by which God signified to them that he accepted their offerings and that his anger was turned away from them.

2. Let us apply this,

(1.) To the suffering of Christ. When it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief, in that he showed his good-will to men, having laid on him the iniquity of us all. His death was our life, and he was made sin and a curse that we might inherit righteousness and a blessing. That sacrifice was consumed that we might escape. Here am I, let these go their way.

(2.) To the sanctification of the Spirit, who descends like fire, burning up our lusts and corruptions, those beasts that must be sacrificed or we are undone, and kindling in our souls a holy fire of pious and devout affections, always to be kept burning on the altar of the heart. The surest evidence of God's acceptance of our prayers is the descent of the holy fire upon us. Did not our hearts burn within us? Lu 24:32. As a further evidence that God accepted Solomon's prayer, still the glory of the Lord filled the house. The heart that is thus filled with a holy awe and reverence of the divine glory, the heart to which God manifests himself in his greatness, and (which is no less his glory) in his goodness, is thereby owned as a living temple.

II The grateful return made to God for this gracious token of his favour.

1 The people worshipped and praised God, 2Ch 7:3. When they saw the fire of God come down from heaven thus they did not run away

affrighted, but kept their ground in the courts of the Lord, and took occasion from it,

(1.) With reverence to adore the glory of God: They bowed their faces to the ground and worshipped, thus expressing their awful dread of the divine majesty, their cheerful submission to the divine authority, and the sense they had of their unworthiness to come into God's presence and their inability to stand before the power of his wrath.

(2.) With thankfulness to acknowledge the goodness of God; even when the fire of the Lord came down they praised him, saying, He is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. This is a song never out of season, and for which our hearts and tongues should be never out of tune. However it be, yet God is good. When he manifests himself as a consuming fire to sinners, his people can rejoice in him as their light. Nay, they had reason to say that in this God was good. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but the sacrifice in our stead, for which we are bound to be very thankful."

2 The king and all the people offered sacrifices in abundance, 2Ch 7:4,5. With these they feasted this holy fire, and bade it welcome to the altar. They had offered sacrifices before, but now they increased them.

Note, The tokens of God's favour to us should enlarge our hearts in his service, and make us to abound therein more and more. The king's example stirred up the people. Good work is then likely to go on when the leaders of a people lead in it.

The sacrifices were so numerous that the altar could not contain them all; but, rather than any of them should be turned back (though we may suppose the blood of them all was sprinkled upon the altar), the flesh of the burnt-offerings and the fat of the peace-offerings were burnt in the midst of the court (2Ch 7:7), which Solomon either hallowed for that service or hallowed by it. In case of necessity the pavement might be an altar.

3. The priests did their part; they waited on their offices, and the singers and musicians on theirs (2Ch 7:6), with the instruments that David made, and the hymn that David had put into their hand, as some think it may be read (meaning that 1Ch 16:7), or, as we read it, when David praised by their ministry. He employed, directed, and encouraged them in this work of praising God; and therefore their performances were accepted as his act, and he is said to praise by their ministry.

4. The whole congregation expressed the greatest joy and satisfaction imaginable. They kept the feast of the dedication of the altar seven days, from the second to the ninth; the tenth day was the day of atonement, when they were to afflict their souls for sin, and that was not unseasonable in the midst of their rejoicings; on the fifteenth day began the feast of tabernacles, which continued to the twenty-second, and they did not separate till the twenty-third. We must never grudge the time that we spend in the worship of God and communion with him, nor think it long, or grow weary of it.

5. Solomon went on in his work, and prosperously effected all he designed for the adorning both of God's house and his own, 2Ch 7:11. Those that begin with the service of God are likely to go on successfully in their own affairs. It was Solomon's praise that what he undertook he went through with, and it was by the grace of God that he prospered in it.

2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord,
because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.
3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down,
and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves
with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped,
and praised the Lord, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth*
for ever.
4 Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the
Lord.
5 And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand
oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and
all the people dedicated the house of God.

6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of music of the Lord, which David the king had made to praise the Lord, because his mercy *endureth* for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

7 Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that *was* before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt offerings, and the meat offerings, and the fat.

8 Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt.

9 And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

10 And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the Lord had showed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.

The Lord's Covenant with Solomon

11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the Lord, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

12 And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

14 if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

That God accepted Solomon's prayer appeared by the fire from heaven. But a prayer may be accepted and yet not answered in the letter of it; and therefore God appeared to him in the night, as he did once before (2Ch 1:7), and after a day of sacrifice too,

as then, and gave him a peculiar answer to his prayer. We had the substance of it before, 1Ki 9:2-9.

I. He promised to own this house for a house of sacrifice to Israel and a house of prayer for all people (Isa 56:7): My name shall be there for ever (2Ch 7:12,16), that is, "There will I make myself known, and there will I be called upon."

II. He promised to answer the prayers of his people that should at any time be made in that place, 2Ch 7:13-15. National judgments are here supposed (2Ch 7:13), famine, and pestilence, and perhaps war, for by the locusts devouring the land meant enemies as greedy as locusts, and laying all waste.

2. National repentance, prayer, and reformation, are required, 2Ch 7:14. God expects that his people who are called by his name, if they have dishonoured his name by their iniquity, should honour it by accepting the punishment of their iniquity. They must be humble themselves under his hand, must pray for the removal of the judgment, must seek the face and favour of God; and yet all this will not do unless they turn from their wicked ways, and return to the God from whom they have revolted.

3. National mercy is then promised, that God will forgive their sin, which brought the judgment upon them, and then heal their land, redress all their grievances. Pardoning mercy makes ways for healing mercy, Ps 103:3,Mt 9:2.

III. He promised to perpetuate Solomon's kingdom, upon condition that he persevered in his duty, 2Ch 7:17,18. If he hoped for the benefit of God's covenant with David, he must imitate the example of David. But he set before him death as well as life, the curse as well as the blessing.

1. He supposed it possible that though they had this temple built to the honour of God, yet they might be drawn aside to worship

other gods, 2Ch 7:19. He knew their proneness to backslide into that sin.

2. He threatened it as certain that, if they did so, it would certainly be the ruin of both church and state.

(1.) It would be the ruin of their state, 2Ch 7:20. "Though they have taken deep root, and taken root long, in this good land, yet I will pluck them up by the roots, extirpate the whole nation, pluck them up as men pluck up weeds out of their garden, which are thrown to the dunghill."

(2.) It would be the ruin of their church. This sanctuary would be no sanctuary to them, to protect them from the judgment of God, as they imagined, saying, The temple of the Lord are we, Jer 7:4. "This house which is high, not only for the magnificence of its structure, but for the designed ends and uses of it, shall be an astonishment, it shall come down wonderfully (La 1:9), to the amazement of all the neighbours."

15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer
that is made in this place.
16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name
may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there
perpetually.
17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father
walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and
shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;
18 then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have
covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee
a man *to be* ruler in Israel.
19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my
commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and
serve other gods, and worship them;
20 then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have
given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name,
will I cast out of my sight, and will make it *to be* a proverb and a
byword among all nations.

21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every
one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord
done thus unto this land, and unto this house?
22 And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the Lord God of
their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt,
and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served
them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

2 Chronicles-8

Solomon's Further Activities

1 And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon
had built the house of the Lord, and his own house,

This we had 1Ki 9:10-24, and therefore shall only observe here,

I. Though Solomon was a man of great learning and knowledge, yet he spent his days, not in contemplation, but in action, not in his study, but in his country, in building cities and fortifying them, in a time of peace preparing for a time of war, which is as much a man's business as it is in summer to provide food for winter.

II. As he was a man of business himself, and did not consult his own ease, so he employed a great many hands, kept abundance of people to work. It is the interest of a state by all means possible to promote and encourage industry, and to keep its subjects from idleness. A great many strangers there were in Israel, many that remained of the Canaanites; and they were welcome to live there, but not to live and do nothing. The men of Laish, who had no business, were an easy prey to the invaders, Jdg 18:7.

III. When Solomon had begun with building the house of God, and made good work and quick work of that, he prospered in all his undertakings, so that he built all that he desired to build, 2Ch 8:6. Those who have a genius for building find that one project draws on another, and the latter must amend and improve the former. Now observe,

1. How the divine providence gratified even Solomon's humour, and gave him success, not only in all that he needed to build and that it was for his advantage to build, but in all that he had a mind to build. So indulgent a Father God is sometimes to the innocent desires of his children that serve him. Thus he pleased Jacob with that promise, Joseph shall put his hand on thy eyes.

2. Solomon knew how to set bounds to his desires. He was not one of those that enlarge them endlessly, and can never be satisfied, but knew when to draw in; for he finished all he desired, and then he desired no more. He did not sit down and fret that he had not more cities to build, as Alexander did that he had not more worlds to conquer, Hab 2:5.

IV. That one reason why Solomon built a palace on purpose for the queen, and removed her and her court to it, was because he thought it by no means proper that she should dwell in the house of David (2Ch 8:11), considering that that had been a place of great piety, and perhaps her house was a place of great vanity. She was proselyted, it is likely, to the Jewish religion; but it is a question whether all her servants were. Perhaps they had among them the idols of Egypt, and a great deal of profaneness and debauchery.

Now, though Solomon had not zeal and courage enough to suppress and punish what was amiss there, yet he so far consulted the honour of his father's memory that he would not suffer that place to be thus profaned where the ark of God had been and where holy David had prayed many a good prayer and sung many a sweet psalm. Not that all the places where the ark had been were so holy as never to be put to a common use; for then the houses of Abinadab and Obed-edom must have been so. But the place where it had been so long, and had been so publicly attended on, was so venerable that it was not fit to be the place of so much gaiety, not to say iniquity, as was to be found, I fear, in the court that Pharaoh's daughter kept. Note, Between things sacred and things common the ancient landmarks ought to be kept up. It was an outer-court of the temple that was the court of the women.

2 that the cities which Huram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.
3 And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it.
4 And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store cities, which he built in Hamath.
5 Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars;
6 and Baalath, and all the store cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion.
7 *As for* all the people *that were* left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which *were* not of Israel,
8 *but* of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day.
9 But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they *were* men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen.
10 And these *were* the chief of king Solomon's officers, *even* two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people.
11 And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because *the places are* holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come.
12 Then Solomon offered burnt offerings unto the Lord on the altar of the Lord, which he had built before the porch,

Here is, I. Solomon's devotion. The building of the temple was in order to the service of the temple. Whatever cost he was at in rearing the structure, if he had neglected the worship that was to be performed there, it would all have been to no purpose. Assisting the devotion of others will not atone for our own neglects. When Solomon had built the temple,

1. He kept up the holy sacrifices there, according to the law of Moses, 2Ch 8:12,13. In vain had the altar been built, and in vain had fire come down from heaven, if sacrifices had not been constantly

brought as the food of the altar and the fuel of that fire. There were daily sacrifices, a certain rate every day, as duly as the day came, weekly sacrifices on the sabbath, double to what was offered on other days, monthly sacrifices on the new moons, and yearly sacrifices at the three solemn feasts. Those are spiritual sacrifices that are now required of us, which we are to bring daily and weekly; and it is good to be in a settled method of devotion.

2. He kept up the holy songs there, according to the law of David, who is here called the man of God, as Moses was, because he was both instructed and authorised of God to make these establishments; and Solomon took care to see them observed as the duty of every day required, 2Ch 8:14. Solomon, though a wise and great man and the builder of the temple, did not attempt to amend, alter, or add to what the man of God had, in God's name, commanded, but closely adhered to that, and used his authority to have that duly observed; and then none departed from the commandment of the king concerning any matter, 2Ch 8:15. He observed God's laws, and then all obeyed his orders. When the service of the temple was put into this good order, then it is said, The house of the Lord was perfected, 2Ch 8:16. The work was the main matter, not the place; the temple was unfinished till all this was done.

II. Solomon's merchandise. He did himself in person visit the sea-port towns of Eloth and Ezion-geber; for those that deal much in the world will find it their interest, as far as they can, to inspect their affairs themselves and to see with their own eyes, 2Ch 8:17. Canaan was a rich country, and yet must send to Ophir for gold; the Israelites were a wise and understanding people, and yet must be beholden to the king of Tyre for men that had knowledge of the seas, 2Ch 8:18. Yet Canaan was God's peculiar land, and Israel God's peculiar people. This teaches us that grace, and not gold, is the best riches, and acquaintance with God and his law, not with arts and sciences, the best knowledge.

13 even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, *even* in the feast

of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

14 And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded.

15 And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

16 Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the Lord, and until it was finished. *So* the house of the Lord was perfected.

17 Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea side in the land of Edom.

18 And Huram sent him, by the hands of his servants, ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought *them* to king Solomon.

2 Chronicles-9

The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon

1 And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

This passage of story had been largely considered in the Kings; yet, because our Saviour has proposed it as an example to us in our enquiries after him (Mt 12:42), we must not pass it over without observing briefly,

1. Those who honour God he will honour, 1Sa 2:30. Solomon had greatly honoured God, in building, beautifying, and dedicating the temple; all his wisdom and all his wealth were employed for the

making of that a consummate piece: and now God made his wisdom and wealth to redound greatly to his reputation. The way to have both the credit and comfort of all our endowments and all our enjoyments is to consecrate them to God and use them for him.

2. Those who know the worth of true wisdom will grudge no pains nor cost to obtain it. The queen of Sheba put herself to a great deal of trouble and expense to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and yet, learning from him to serve God and do her duty, she thought herself well paid for her pains. Heavenly wisdom is that pearl of great price which is a good bargain to purchase by parting with all that we have.

3. As every man has received the gift so he ought to minister the same for the edification of others, as he has opportunity. Solomon was communicative of his wisdom and willing to teach others what he knew himself. Being taught of God, freely he had received, and freely he gave. Let those that are rich in wisdom, as well as wealth, learn to do good and be ready to distribute. Give to every one that asketh.

4. Good order in a family, a great family, especially in the things of God, and a regular discharge of the duties of religious worship, are highly expedient, and to be much admired wherever found. The queen of Sheba was exceedingly affected to see the propriety with which Solomon's servants attended him and with which both he and they attended in the house of God. David's ascent to the house of the Lord was also pleasant and interesting, Ps 42:4.

5. Those are happy who have the opportunity of a constant converse with such as are knowing, wise, and good. The queen of Sheba thought Solomon's servants happy who continually heard his wisdom; for, it seems, even to them he was communicative. And it is observable that the posterity of those who had places in his court were willing to have the names of their ancestors forgotten, and thought themselves sufficiently distinguished and dignified when they were called the children of Solomon's servants (Ezr 2:55,Ne 7:57); so eminent were they that it was honour enough to be named from them.

6. We ought to rejoice and give God thanks for the gifts, graces, and usefulness, of others. The queen of Sheba blessed God for the honour he put upon Solomon, and the favour he did to Israel, in advancing him to the throne, 2Ch 9:8. By giving God the praise of the prosperity of others, we share in the comfort of it; whereas, by envying the prosperity of others, we lose the comfort even of our own. The happiness of both king and kingdom she traces up to the fountain of all bliss, the divine favour: it was because thy God delighted in thee and because he loved Israel. Those mercies are doubly sweet in which we can taste the kindness and good will of God as our God.

7. It becomes those that are wise and good to be generous according to their place and power. The queen of Sheba was so to Solomon, Solomon was so to her, 2Ch 9:9,12. They both knew how to value wisdom, and therefore were neither of them covetous of their money, but cultivated the acquaintance and confirmed the friendship they had contracted by mutual presents. Our Lord Jesus has promised to give us all our desire: Ask, and it shall be given you. Let us study what we shall render to him, and not think any thing too much to do, or suffer, or part with, for him.

2 And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid
from Solomon which he told her not.
3 And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon,
and the house that he had built,
4 and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the
attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers
also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into
the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her.
5 And she said to the king, *It was* a true report which I heard in
mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom:
6 howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had
seen *it:* and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom
was not told me: *for* thou exceedest the fame that I heard.
7 Happy *are* thy men, and happy *are* these thy servants, which stand
continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom.

8 Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee
on his throne, *to be* king for the Lord thy God: because thy God
loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king
over them, to do judgment and justice.
9 And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and
of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there
any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon.
10 And the servants also of Huram, and the servants of Solomon,
which brought gold from Ophir, brought algum trees and precious
stones.
11 And the king made *of* the algum trees terraces to the house of the
Lord, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for singers:
and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah.
12 And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire,
whatsoever she asked, besides *that* which she had brought unto the
king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her
servants.

Solomon's Riches and Fame

13 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six
hundred and threescore and six talents of gold;

We have here Solomon in his throne, and Solomon in his grave; for the throne would not secure him from the grave. Mors sceptra ligonibus aequat--Death wrenches from the hand the sceptre as well as the spade.

I. Here is Solomon reigning in wealth and power, in ease and fulness, such as, for aught I know, could never since be paralleled by any king whatsoever. In cannot pretend to be critical in comparing the grandeur of Solomon with that of some of the great princes of the earth. But I may observe that the most illustrious of them were famed for their wars, whereas Solomon reigned forty years in profound peace. Some of those that might be thought to vie with Solomon affected retirement, kept people in awe by keeping them at a great distance; nobody must see them, or come near him, upon pain of death: but Solomon went much abroad, and appeared in public business. So that, all things considered, the promise was fulfilled,

that God would give him riches, and wealth, and honour, such as no kings have had, or shall have, 2Ch 1:12.

1. Never any prince appeared in public with great splendour than Solomon did, which to those that judge by the sight of the eye, as most people do, would very much recommend him. He had 200 targets and 300 shields, all of beaten gold, carried before him (2Ch 9:15,16), and sat upon a most stately throne, 2Ch 9:17-19. There was not the like in any kingdom. The lustre wherein he appeared was typical of the spiritual glory of the kingdom of the Messiah and but a faint representation of his throne, which is above every throne. Solomon's pomp was all artificial; and therefore our Saviour prefers the natural beauty of the lilies of the field before it. Mt 6:29, Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.

2. Never any prince had greater plenty of gold and silver, though there were no gold or silver mines in his own kingdom. Either he made himself master of the mines in other countries, and, having a populous country, sent hands to dig out those rich metals, or, having a fruitful country, he exported the commodities of it and with them fetched home all this gold that is here spoken of, 2Ch 9:13,14-21.

3. Never any prince had such presents brought him by all his neighbours as Solomon had: All the kings of Arabia, and governors of the country, brought him gold and silver (2Ch 9:14), not as tribute which he extorted from them, but as freewill offerings to procure his favour, or in a way of exchange for some of the productions of his husbandry, corn or cattle. All the kings of the earth brought him presents, that is, all in those parts of the world (2Ch 9:24,28), because they coveted his acquaintance and friendship. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom, as soon as he was born, the wise men of the east brought presents, gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Mt 2:11), and to whom all that are about him must bring presents, Ps 76:11,Ro 12:1.

4. Never any prince was so renowned for wisdom, so courted, so consulted, so admired (2Ch 9:23): The kings of the earth (for it was too great a favour for common persons to pretend to) sought to hear his wisdom--his natural philosophy, or his skill in physic, or his state

policy, or his rules of prudence for the conduct of human life, or perhaps the principles of his religion, and the reasons of it. The application which they then made to Solomon to hear his wisdom will aggravate, shame, and condemn, men's general contempt of Christ and his gospel. Though in them are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet none of the princes of this world desire to know them, for they are foolishness to them, 1Co 2:8,14.

II. Here is Solomon dying, stripped of his pomp, and leaving all his wealth and power, not to one concerning whom he knew not whether he would be a wise man or a fool (Ec 2:19), but who he knew would be a fool. This was not only vanity but vexation of spirit, 2Ch 9:29-31. It is very observable that no mention is here made of Solomon's departure from God in his latter days, not the least hint given of it,

1. Because the Holy Ghost would teach us not to take delight in repeating the faults and follies of others. If those that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour misbehave, though it may be of use to take notice of their misconduct for warning to ourselves and others, yet we must not be forward to mention it, once the speaking of it is enough; why should that unpleasing string be again struck upon? Why can we not do as the sacred historian here does, speak largely of that in others which is praise-worthy, without saying any thing of their blemishes, yea, though they have been gross and obvious? This is but doing as we would be done by.

2. Because, though he fell, yet he was not utterly cast down. His sin is not again recorded, because it was repented of, and pardoned, and became as if it had never been. Scripture-silence sometimes speaks. I am willing to believe that its silence here concerning the sin of Solomon is an intimation that none of the sins he committed were mentioned against him, Eze 33:16. When God pardons sin he casts it behind his back and remembers it no more.

14 besides *that which* chapmen and merchants brought. And all the
kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and
silver to Solomon.

15 And king Solomon made two hundred targets *of* beaten gold:
six hundred *shekels* of beaten gold went to one target.

16 And three hundred shields *made he of* beaten gold: three hundred
shekels of gold went to one shield. And the king put them in the
house of the forest of Lebanon.
17 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid
it with pure gold.
18 And *there were* six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, *which*
were fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting
place, and two lions standing by the stays:
19 and twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon
the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom.
20 And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon *were of* gold, and all
the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were of* pure gold:
none *were of* silver; it was *not* any thing accounted of in the days of
Solomon.
21 For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Huram:
every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold,
and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.
22 And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and
wisdom.
23 And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to
hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.
24 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels
of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate
year by year.
25 And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and
twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot
cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.
26 And he reigned over all the kings from the river [Euphrates] even
unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt.
27 And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar trees
made he as the sycamore trees that *are* in the low plains in
abundance.
28 And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all
lands.

The Death of Solomon

29 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not
written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of

Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against
Jeroboam the son of Nebat?
30 And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.
31 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city
of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-10

Israel's Revolt

1 And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel
come to make him king.
2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who *was* in
Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king,
heard *it*, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt.

We may observe here,

1 The wisest and best cannot give every body content. Solomon enriched and advanced his kingdom, did all (one would think) that could be done to make then happy and easy; and yet either he was indiscreet in burdening them with the imposition of taxes and services, or at least there was some colour of reason to think him so. No man is perfectly wise. It is probable that it was when Solomon had declined from God and his duty that his wisdom failed him, and God left him to himself to act in this impolitic manner. Even Solomon's treasures were exhausted by his love of women; and probably it was to maintain them, and their pride, luxury, and idolatry, that he burdened his subjects.

2. Turbulent and ungrateful spirits will find fault with the government, and complain of grievances, when they have very little reason to do so. Had they not peace in Solomon's time? They were never plundered by invaders, as formerly, never put in fear by the alarms of war, nor obliged to hazard their lives in the high places of the field. Had they not plenty--meat enough, and money enough? What would they more? O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint!--O happy, if they knew their happy state!

And yet they complain that Solomon made their yoke grievous. If any complain thus of the yoke of Christ, that they might have a pretence to break his bands in sunder and cast away his cords from them, we are sure that he never gave them any cause at all for the complaint, whatever Solomon did. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. He never made us serve with an offering, nor wearied us with incense.

3. Many ruin themselves and their interests by trampling upon and provoking their inferiors. Rehoboam thought that because he was king he might assume as much authority as his father had done, might have what he would, and do what he would, and carry all before him. But, though he wore his father's crown, he wanted his father's brains, and ought to have considered that, being quite a different man from what his father was, he ought to take other measures. Such a wise man as Solomon may do as we will, but such a fool as Rehoboam must do as he can.

The high-mettled horse may be kicked and spurred by him that has the art of managing him; but, if an unskilful horseman do it, it is at his peril. Rehoboam paid dearly for threatening, and talking big, and thinking to carry matters with a high hand. It was Job's wisdom, as well as his virtue, that he despised not the cause of his man-servant or maid-servant, when they argued with him (Job 31:13), but heard them patiently, considered their reasons, and gave them a soft answer. And a similar tender consideration of those in subjection, and a forwardness to make them easy, will be the comfort and praise of all in authority, in the church, in the state, and in families.

4. Moderate counsels are generally wisest and best. Gentleness will do what violence will not do. Most people love to be accosted mildly. Rehoboam's old experienced counsellors directed him to this method (2Ch 10:7): "Be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, and thou art sure of them for ever." Good words cost nothing but a little self-denial, and yet they purchase good things. 5. God often fulfils the counsels of his own wisdom by infatuating men, and giving them up to the counsels of

their own folly. No more needs to be done to ruin men than to leave them to themselves, and their own pride and passion.

3 And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

5 And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye *me* to return answer to this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.

9 And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?

10 And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins.

11 For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day.

13 And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men,

14 and answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

We may learn here,

1. That when public affairs are in a ferment violent proceedings do but make bad worse. Rough answers (such as Rehoboam here gave) do but stir up anger and bring oil to the flames. The pilot has need to steer steadily in a storm. Many have been driven to the mischief they did not intend by being too severely dealt with for what they did intend.

2. That, whatever the devices and designs of men are, God is, by all, doing his own work, and fulfilling the word which he has spoken, no iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground. The cause of the king's obstinacy and thoughtlessness was of God, that he might perform the word which he spoke by Ahijah, 2Ch 10:15. This does not at all excuse Rehoboam's folly, nor lessen the guilt of his haughtiness and passion, that God was pleased to serve his own ends by them.

3. That worldly wealth, honour, and dominion, are very uncertain things. Solomon reigned over all Israel, and, one would think, had done enough to secure the monarchy entire to his family for many ages; and yet he is scarcely cold in his grave before ten of the twelve tribes finally revolt from his son. All the good services he had done for Israel were now forgotten: What portion have we in David? Thus is the government of Christ cast off by many, notwithstanding all he has done to bind the children of men for ever to himself; they say, We will not have this man to reign over us. But this rebellion will certainly be their ruin.

4. That God often visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Solomon forsakes God, and therefore not he, but his son after him, is forsaken by the greatest part of his people. Thus God, by making the penal consequences of sin to last long and visibly to continue after the sinner's death, would give an indication of its malignity, and perhaps some intimation of the perpetuity of its punishment. He that sins against God not only wrongs his soul, but perhaps wrongs his seed more than he thinks of.

5. That, when God is fulfilling his threatenings, he will take care of that, at the same time, promises do not fall to the ground. When

Solomon's iniquity is remembered, and for it his son loses ten tribes, David's piety is not forgotten, nor the promise made to him; but for the sake of that his grandson had two tribes preserved to him. The failings of the saints shall not frustrate any promise made to Christ their Head. They shall be chastised, but the covenant not broken, Ps 89:31-34.

15 So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 And when all Israel *saw* that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and *we have* none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: *and* now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that *was* over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to *his* chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

19 And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

2 Chronicles-11

1 And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin a hundred and fourscore thousand chosen *men*, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam.

How the ten tribes deserted the house of David we read in the foregoing chapter. They had formerly sat loose to that family (2Sa 20:1,2), and now they quite threw it off, not considering how much it would weaken the common interest and take Israel down from that pitch of glory at which it had arrived in the last reign. But thus the kingdom must be corrected as well as the house of David.

1. Rehoboam at length, like a bold man, raises an army, with a design to reduce the revolters, 2Ch 11:1. Judah and Benjamin were not only resolved to continue their allegiance to him, but ready to

give him the best assistance they could for the recovery of his right. Judah was his own tribe, that owned him some years before the rest did; Benjamin was the tribe in which Jerusalem, or the greatest part of it, stood, which perhaps was one reason why that tribe clave to him.

2. Yet, like a conscientious man, when God forbade him to prosecute this design, in obedience to him he let it fall, either because he reverenced the divine authority or because he knew that he should not prosper if he should go contrary to God's command, but instead of retrieving what was lost would be in danger of losing what he had. It is dangerous undertaking any thing, but especially undertaking a war, contrary to the will of God. God calls him (2Ch 11:3), Rehoboam the son of Solomon, to intimate that this was determined for the sin of Solomon, and it would be to no purpose to oppose a decree that had gone forth. They obeyed the words of the Lord; and though it looked mean, and would turn to their reproach among their neighbours, yet, because God would have it so, they laid down their arms.

3. Like a discreet man, he fortified his own country. He saw it was to no purpose to think of reducing those that had revolted. A few good words might have prevented their defection, but now all the forces of his kingdom cannot bring them back. The think is done, and so it must rest; it is his wisdom to make the best of it. Perhaps the same young counsellors that had advised him to answer them roughly urged him to fight them, notwithstanding the divine inhibition; but he had paid dearly enough for being advised by them, and therefore now, we may suppose, his aged and experienced counsellors were hearkened to, and they advised him to submit to the will of God concerning what was lost, and to make it his business to keep what he had. It was probably by their advice that,

(1.) He fortified his frontiers, and many of the principal cities of his kingdom, which, in Solomon's peaceable reign, no care had been taken for the defence of.

(2.) He furnished them with good stores of victuals and arms, 2Ch 11:11,12. Because God forbade him to fight, he did not therefore sit down sullenly, and say that he would do nothing for the public safety if he might not do that, but prudently provided against an attack. Those that may not be conquerors, yet may be builders.

2 But the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah the man of God,
saying,
3 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to
all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying,
4 Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your
brethren: return every man to his house; for this thing is done of
me. And they obeyed the words of the Lord, and returned from
going against Jeroboam.

The Prosperity of Rehoboam

5 And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in
Judah.
6 He built even Bethlehem, and Etam, and Tekoa,
7 and Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam,
8 and Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph,
9 and Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah,
10 and Zorah, and Ajalon, and Hebron, which *are* in Judah and in
Benjamin, fenced cities.
11 And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and
store of victuals, and of oil and wine.
12 And in every several city *he put* shields and spears, and made them
exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.
13 And the priests and the Levites that *were* in all Israel resorted to
him out of all their coasts.

See here, I. How Rehoboam was strengthened by the accession of the priests and Levites, and all the devout and pious Israelites, to him, even all that were true to their God and their religion.

1. Jeroboam cast them off, that is, he set up such a way of worship as he knew they could not in conscience comply with, which obliged them to withdraw from his altar, and at the same time he would not

allow them to go up to Jerusalem to worship at the altar there; so that he totally cast them off from executing the priest's office, 2Ch 11:14. And very willing he was that they should turn themselves out of their places, that room might be made for those mean and scandalous persons whom he ordained priests for the high places, 2Ch 11:15. Compare 1Ki 12:31. No marvel if he that cast off God cast off his ministers; they were not for his purpose, would not do whatever he might bid them do, would not serve his gods, nor worship the golden image which he had set up.

2. They thereupon left their suburbs and possessions, 2Ch 11:14. Out of the lot of each tribe the Levites had cities allowed them, where they were comfortable provided for and had opportunity of doing much good. But now they were driven out of all their cities except those in Judah and Benjamin. One would think their maintenance well settled, and yet they lost it. It was a comfort to them that the law so often reminded them that the Lord was their inheritance, and so they should find him when they were turned out of their house and possessions. But why did they leave their possessions?

(1.) Because they saw they could do no good among their neighbours, in whom (now that Jeroboam set up his calves) the old proneness to idolatry revived.

(2.) Because they themselves would be in continual temptation to some base compliances, and in danger of being drawn insensibly to that which was evil. If we pray, in sincerity, not to be led into temptation, we shall get and keep as far as we can out of the way of it.

(3.) Because, if they retained their integrity, they had reason to expect persecution from Jeroboam and his sons. The priests they made for the devils would not let the Lord's priests be long among them. No secular advantages whatsoever should draw us thither, or detain us there, where we are in danger of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

3. They came to Judah and Jerusalem (2Ch 11:14) and presented themselves to Rehoboam, 2Ch 11:13, margin. Where should God's priests and Levites be, but where his altar was? Thither they came because it was their business to attend at the times appointed.

(1.) It was a mercy to them that they had a place of refuge to flee to, and that when Jeroboam cast them off there were those so near that would entertain them, and bid them welcome, and they were not forced into the lands of the heathen.

(2.) It was an evidence that they loved their work better than their maintenance, in that they left their suburbs and possessions in the country (where they might have lived at ease upon their own), because they were restrained from serving God there, and cast themselves upon God's providence and the charity of their brethren in coming to a place where they might have the free enjoyment of God's ordinances, according to his institution. Poverty in the way of duty is to be chosen rather than plenty in the way of sin. Better live upon alms, or die in a prison, with a good conscience, than roll in wealth and pleasure with a prostituted one.

(3.) It was the wisdom and praise of Rehoboam and his people that they bade them welcome, though they crowded themselves perhaps to make room for them. Conscientious refugees will bring a blessing along with them to the countries that entertain them, as they leave a curse behind them with those that expel them. Open the gates, that the righteous nation, which keepeth truth, may enter in; it will be good policy. See Isa 26:1,2.

4. When the priests and Levites came to Jerusalem all the devout pious Israelites of every tribe followed them. Such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, that made conscience of their duty to God and were sincere and resolute in it, left the inheritance of their fathers and went and took houses in Jerusalem, that they might have free access to the altar of God and be out of the temptation to worship the calves, 2Ch 11:16.

Note, (1.) That is best for us which is best for our souls; and, in all our choices, advantages for religion must take place of all outward conveniences.

(2.) Where God's faithful priests are his faithful people should be. If Jeroboam cast off God's ministers, every true-born Israelite will think himself obliged to own them and stand by them. Forsake not the Levite, the out-cast Levite, as long as thou livest. When the ark removes do you remove and go after it, Jos 3:3.

5. They strengthened the kingdom of Judah (2Ch 11:17), not only by the addition of so many persons to it, who, it is likely, brought what they could of their effects with them, but by their piety and their prayers they procured a blessing upon the kingdom which was a sanctuary to them. See Zec 12:5. It is the interest of a nation to protect and encourage religion and religious people, and adds more than any thing to its strength. They made him and his people strong three years; for so long they walked in the way of David and Solomon, their good way. But when they forsook that, and so threw themselves out of God's favour and protection, the best friends they had could no longer help to strengthen them. We retain our strength while we cleave to God and our duty, and no longer.

II. How Rehoboam was weakened by indulging himself in his pleasures. He desired many wives, as his father did (2Ch 11:23), yet,

1. In this he was more wise than his father, that he does not appear to have married strange wives. The wives mentioned here were not only daughters of Israel, but of the family of David; one was a descendant from Eliab, David's brother (2Ch 11:18), another from Absalom, probably that Absalom who was David's son (2Ch 11:20), another from Jerimoth, David's son.

2. In this he was more happy than his father, that he had many sons and daughters; whereas we read not of more than one son that his father had. One can scarcely imagine that he had no more; but, if he had, they were not worth mentioning; whereas several of Rehoboam's sons are here named (2Ch 11:19,20) as men of note, and

such active men that he thought it his wisdom to disperse them throughout the countries of Judah and Benjamin (2Ch 11:23), either,

(1.) That they might not be rivals with his son Abijah, whom he designed for his successor, or rather,

(2.) Because he could repose a confidence in them for the preserving of the public peace and safety, could trust them with fenced cities, which he took care to have well victualled, that they might stand him in stead in case of an invasion. After-wisdom is better than none at all; nay, they say, "Wit is never good till it is bought;" though he was dearly bought with the loss of a kingdom.

14 For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to
Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off
from executing the priest's office unto the Lord:
15 and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils,
and for the calves which he had made.
16 And after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts
to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto
the Lord God of their fathers.
17 So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam
the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they walked
in the way of David and Solomon.
18 And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the
son of David to wife, *and* Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of
Jesse;
19 which bare him children; Jeush, and Shemariah, and Zaham.
20 And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom; which
bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith.
21 And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all
his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives,
threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and
threescore daughters.)
22 And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, *to be*
ruler among his brethren: for *he thought* to make him king.
23 And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all
the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and
he gave them victuals in abundance. And he desired many wives.

2 Chronicles-12

Shishak's Invasion of Judah

1 And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him.

Israel was very much disgraced and weakened by being divided into two kingdoms; yet the kingdom of Judah, having both the temple and the royal city, both the house of David and the house of Aaron, might have done very well if they had continued in the way of their duty; but here we have all out of order there.

I. Rehoboam and his people left God: He forsook the law of the Lord, and so in effect forsook God, and all Israel with him, 2Ch 12:1. He had his happy triennium, when he walked in the way of David and Solomon (2Ch 11:17), but it expired, and he grew remiss in the worship of God; in what instances we are not told, but he fell off, and Judah with him, here called Israel, because they walked in the evil ways into which Jeroboam had drawn the kingdom of Israel. Thus he did when he had established the kingdom and strengthened himself. As long as he thought his throne tottered he kept to his duty, that he might make God his friend; but, when he found it stood pretty firmly, he thought he had no more occasion for religion; he was safe enough without it. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. When men prosper, and are in no apprehension of troubles, they are ready to say to God, Depart from us.

II. God quickly brought troubles upon them, to awaken them, and recover them to repentance, before their hearts were hardened. It was but in the fourth year of Rehoboam that they began to corrupt themselves, and in the fifth year the king of Egypt came up against them with a vast army, took the fenced cities of Judah, and came against Jerusalem, 2Ch 12:2,3,4. This great calamity coming upon them so soon after they began to desert the worship of God, by a

hand they had little reason to suspect (having had a great deal of friendly correspondence with Egypt in the last reign), and coming with so much violence that all the fenced cities of Judah, which Rehoboam had lately fortified and garrisoned and on which he relied much for the safety of his kingdom, fell immediately into the hands of the enemy, without making any resistance, plainly showed that it was from the Lord, because they had transgressed against him.

III. Lest they should not readily or not rightly understand the meaning of this providence, God by the word explains the rod, 2Ch 12:5. When the princes of Judah had all met at Jerusalem, probably in a great council of war, to concert measures for their own safety in this critical juncture, he sent a prophet to them, the same that had brought them an injunction from God not to fight against the ten tribes (2Ch 11:2), Shemaiah by name; he told them plainly that the reason why Shishak prevailed against them was not because they had been impolitic in the management of their affairs (which perhaps the princes in this congress were at this time scrutinizing), but because they had forsaken God. God never leaves any till they first leave him.

IV. The rebukes both of the word and of the rod being thus joined, the king and princes humbled themselves before God for their iniquity, penitently acknowledged the sin, and patiently accepted the punishment of it, saying, The Lord is righteous, 2Ch 12:6. "We have none to blame but ourselves; let God be clear when he judgeth." Thus it becomes us, when we are under the rebukes of Providence, to justify God and judge ourselves. Even kings and princes must either bend or break before God, either be humbled or be ruined.

V. Upon the profession they made of repentance God showed them some favour, saved them from ruin, and yet left them under some remaining fears of the judgment, to prevent their revolt again.

1. God, in mercy, prevented the destruction they were now upon the brink of. Such a vast and now victorious army as Shishak had,

having made themselves masters of all the fenced cities, what could be expected but that the whole country, and even Jerusalem itself, would in a little time be theirs? But when God saith, Here shall the proud waves be stayed, the most threatening force strangely dwindles and becomes impotent. Here again the destroying angel, when he comes to Jerusalem, is forbidden to destroy it: "My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem; not at this time, not by this hand, not utterly to destroy it," 2Ch 12:7,12.

Note, Those that acknowledge God righteous in afflicting them shall find him gracious. Those that humble themselves before him shall find favour with him. So ready is the God of mercy to take the first occasion to show mercy. If we have humbled hearts under humbling providences, the affliction has done its work, and it shall either be removed or the property of it altered.

2. He granted them some deliverance, not complete, but in part; he gave them some advantages against the enemy, so that they recruited a little; he gave them deliverance for a little while, so some. They reformed but partially, and for a little while, soon relapsing again; and, as their reformation was, so was their deliverance. Yet it is said (2Ch 12:12), in Judah things went well, and began to look with a better face.

(1.) In respect of piety. There were good things in Judah (so it is in the margin), good ministers, good people, good families, who were made better by the calamities of their country. Note, In times of great corruption and degeneracy it is some comfort if there be a remnant among whom good things ar found; this is a ground of hope in Israel.

(2.) In respect of prosperity. In Judah things went ill when all the fenced cities were taken (2Ch 12:4), but when they repented the posture of their affairs altered, and things went well. Note, If things do not go so well as we could wish, yet we have reason to take notice of it with thankfulness if they go better than was to have been expected, better than formerly, and better than we deserved. We should own God's goodness if he do but grant us some deliverance.

3. Yet he left them to smart sorely by the hand of Shishak, both in their liberty and in their wealth.

(1.) In their liberty (2Ch 12:8): They shall be his servants (that is, they shall lie much at his mercy and be put under contribution by him, and some of them perhaps be taken prisoners and held in captivity by him), that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. They complained, it may be, of the strictness of their religion, and forsook the law of the Lord (2Ch 12:1) because they thought it a yoke to hard, too heavy, upon them. "Well," saith God, "let them better themselves if they can; let the neighbouring princes rule them awhile, since they are not willing that I should rule them, and let them try how they like that. They might have served God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and would not; let them serve their enemies then in hunger and thirst (De 28:47,48), till they think of returning to their first Master, for then it was better with them," Ho 2:7. This, some think, is the meaning of Eze 20:24,25. Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good. Note,

[1.] The more God's service is compared with other services the more reasonable and easy it will appear.

[2.] Whatever difficulties or hardships we may imagine there are in the way of obedience, it is better a thousand times to go through them than to expose ourselves to the punishment of disobedience. Are the laws of temperance thought hard? The effects of intemperance will be much harder. The service of virtue is perfect liberty; the service of lust is perfect slavery.

(2.) In their wealth. The king of Egypt plundered both the temple and the exchequer, the treasuries of both which Solomon left very full; but he took them away; yea, he took all, all he could lay his hands on, 2Ch 12:9. This was what he came for. David and Solomon, who walked in the way of God, filled the treasuries, one by war and the other by merchandise; but Rehoboam, who forsook the law of God, emptied them. The taking away of the golden

shields, and the substituting of brazen ones in their place (2Ch 12:9-11), we had an account of before, 1Ki 14:25-28.

2 And it came to pass, *that* in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord,

3 with twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people *were* without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians.

4 And he took the fenced cities which *pertained* to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.

5 Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and *to* the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

6 Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The Lord *is* righteous.

7 And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves; *therefore* I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

8 Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

9 So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

10 Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed *them* to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

11 And when the king entered into the house of the Lord, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber.

12 And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he would not destroy *him* altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

13 So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam *was* one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the Lord had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name *was* Naamah an Ammonitess.

The story of Rehoboam's reign is here concluded, much as the story of the other reigns concludes. Two things especially are observable here:--

1. That he was at length pretty well fixed in his kingdom, 2Ch 12:13. His fenced cities in Judah did not answer his expectation, so he now strengthened himself in Jerusalem, which he made it his business to fortify, and there he reigned seventeen years, in the city which the Lord had chosen to put his name there. This intimates his honour and privilege, that he had his royal seat in the holy city, which yet was but an aggravation of his impiety--near the temple, but far from God. Frequent skirmishes there were between his subjects and Jeroboam's, such as amounted to continual wars, (2Ch 12:15), but he held his own, and reigned, and, as it should seem, did not so grossly forsake the law of God as he had done (2Ch 12:1) in his fourth year.

2. That he was never rightly fixed in his religion, 2Ch 12:14. He never quite cast off God; and yet in this he did evil, that he prepared not, he engaged not, his heart to seek the Lord. See what the fault is laid upon.

(1.) He did not serve the Lord because he did not seek the Lord. He did not pray, as Solomon did, for wisdom and grace. If we prayed better, we should be every way better. Or he did not consult the word of God, did not seek to that as his oracle, nor take directions from it.

(2.) He made nothing of his religion because he did not set his heart to it, never minded it with any closeness of application, and never any hearty disposition to it, nor ever came up to a steady resolution in it. What little goodness he had was transient and passed away like the morning cloud. He did evil because he was never determined

for that which is good. Those are easily drawn by Satan to any evil who are wavering and inconstant in that which is good and are never persuaded to make religion their business.

14 And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.

15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And *there were* wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

16 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-13

The Reign of Abijah

1 Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah.

2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Michaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.
And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

3 And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, *even* four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set
the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, *being* mighty men of valor.

4 And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which *is* in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel;

Abijah's mother was called Maachah, the daughter of Absalom, 2Ch 11:20; here she is called Michaiah, the daughter of Uriel. It is most probable that she was a grand-daughter of Absalom, by his daughter Tamar (2Sa 14:27), and that her immediate father was this Uriel. But we are here to attend Abijah into the field of battle with Jeroboam king of Israel.

I. God gave him leave to engage with Jeroboam, and owned him in the conflict, though he would not permit Rehoboam to do it, 2Ch 11:4.

1. Jeroboam, it is probable, was now the aggressor, and what Abijah did was in his own necessary defence. Jeroboam, it may be, happening to survive Rehoboam, claimed the crown of Judah be survivorship, at least hoped to get it from this young king, upon his accession to the throne. Against these impudent pretensions it was brave in Abijah to take up arms, and God stood by him.

2. When Rehoboam attempted to recover his ten tribes Jeroboam was upon his good behaviour, and there must be some trial of him; but now that he had discovered what manner of man he was, by setting up the calves and casting off the priests, Abijah is allowed to chastise him, and it does not appear that he intended any more; whereas Rehoboam aimed at no less than the utter reduction of the ten tribes, which was contrary to the counsel of God.

II. Jeroboam's army was double in number to that of Abijah (2Ch 13:3), for he had ten tribes to raise an army out of, while Abijah had but two. Of the army on both sides it is said, they were mighty men, chosen men, and valiant; but the army of Judah consisted only of 400,000, while Jeroboam's army amounted to 800,000. The inferior number however proved victorious; for the battle is not always to the strong nor the cause to the majority.

III. Abijah, before he fought them, reasoned with them, to persuade them, though not to return to the house of David (that matter was settled by the divine determination and he acquiesced), yet to desist from fighting against the house of David. He would not have them withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David (2Ch 13:8), but at least to be content with what they had. Note, It is good to try reason before we use force. If the point may be gained by dint of argument, better so than by dint of sword. We must never fly to violent methods till all the arts of persuasion have been tried in vain.

War must be the ultima ratio regum--the last resort of kings. Fair reasoning may do a great deal of good and prevent a good deal of mischief. How forcible are right words! Abijah had got with his

army into the heart of their country; for he made this speech upon a hill in Mount Ephraim, where he might be heard by Jeroboam and the principal officers, with whom it is probable he desired to have a treaty, to which they consented. It has been usual for great generals to make speeches to their soldiers to animate them, and this speech of Abijah had some tendency to do this, but was directed to Jeroboam and all Israel. Two things Abijah undertakes to make out, for the satisfaction of his own men and the conviction of the enemy:--

1. That he had right on his side, a jus divinum--a divine right: "You know, or ought to know, that God gave the kingdom to David and his sons for ever" (2Ch 13:5), not by common providence, his usual way of disposing of kingdoms, but by a covenant of salt, a lasting covenant, a covenant made by sacrifice, which was always salted; so bishop Patrick. All Israel had owned that David was a king of God's making, and that God had entailed the crown upon his family; so that Jeroboam's taking the crown of Israel at first was not justifiable: yet it is not certain that Abijah referred chiefly to that, for he knew that Jeroboam had a grant from God of the ten tribes. His attempt, however, to disturb the peace and possession of the king of Judah was by no means excusable; for when the ten tribes were given to him two were reserved for the house of David. Abijah shows,

(1.) That there was a great deal of dishonesty and disingenuousness in Jeroboam's first setting himself up: He rebelled against his lord (2Ch 13:6) who had preferred him (1Ki 11:28), and basely took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness in a critical juncture, when, in gratitude to his old master and in justice to his title, he ought rather to have stood by him, and helped to secure the people in their allegiance to him, than to head a party against him and make a prey of him, which was unworthily done and what he could not expect to prosper in.

Those that supported him are here called vain men (a character perhaps borrowed from Jdg 11:3), men that did not act from any steady principle, but were given to change, and men of Belial, that

were for shaking off the yoke of government and setting those over them that would do just as they would have them do.

(2.) That there was a great deal of impiety in his present attempt; for, in fighting against the house of David, he fought against the kingdom of the Lord. Those who oppose right oppose the righteous God who sits in the throne judging right, and cannot promise themselves success in so doing. Right may indeed go by the worst for a time, but it will prevail at last.

2. That he had God on his side. This he insisted much upon, that the religion of Jeroboam and his army was false and idolatrous, but that he and his people, the men of Judah, had the pure worship of the true and living God among them. It appears from the character given of Abijah (1Ki 15:3) that he was not himself in this war chiefly from the religion of his kingdom. For,

(1.) Whatever he was otherwise, it should seem that he was no idolator, or, if he connived at the high places and images (2Ch 14:3,5), yet he constantly kept up the temple-service.

(2.) Whatever corruptions there were in the kingdom of Judah, the state of religion among them was better than in the kingdom of Israel, with which they were now contending.

(3.) It is common for those that deny the power of godliness to boast of the form of it.

(4.) It was the cause of his kingdom that he was pleading; and, though he was not himself so good as he should have been, yet he hoped that, for the sake of the good men and good things that were in Judah, God would now appear for them. Many that have little religion themselves yet have so much sense and grace as to value it in others. See how he describes,

[1.] The apostasy of Israel from God. "You are a great multitude," said he, "far superior to us in number; but we need not fear you, for you have that among yourselves which is enough to ruin you. For,"

First, "You have calves for your gods (2Ch 13:8), that are unable to protect and help you and will certainly cause the true and living God to oppose you. Those will be Achans, troublers of your camp."

Secondly, "You have base men for your priests, 2Ch 13:9. You have cast off the tribes of Levi, and the house of Aaron, whom God appointed to minister in holy things; and, in conformity to the custom of the idolatrous nations, make any man a priest that has a mind to the office and will be at the charge of the consecration, though ever so much a scandal to the office." Yet such, though very unfit to be priests, were fittest of all to be their priests; for what more agreeable to gods that were no gods than priests that were no priests? Like to like, both pretenders and usurpers.

[2.] The adherence of Judah to God: "But as for us (2Ch 13:10) we have not forsaken God. Jehovah is our God, the God of our fathers, the God of Israel, who is able to protect us, and give us success. He is with us, for we are with him." First, "At home in his temple: We keep his charge, 2Ch 13:10,11. We worship no images, have no priests but what he has ordained, no rites of worship but what he has prescribed. Both the temple service and the temple furniture are of his appointing. His appointment we abide by, and neither add nor diminish.

These we have the comfort of, these we now stand up in the defence of: so that upon a religious as well as a civil account we have the better cause. Secondly, Here in the camp; he is our captain, and we may therefore be sure that he is with us, because we are with him, 2Ch 13:12. And, as a token of his presence, we have here with us his priests, sounding his trumpets according to the law, as a testimony against you, and an assurance to us that in the day of battle we shall be remembered before the Lord our God and saved from our enemies;" for so this sacred signal is explained, Nu 10:9. Nothing is more effectual to embolden men, and put spirit into them, than to be sure that God is with them and fights for them. He concludes with fair warning to his enemies. "Fight not against the God of your fathers. It is folly to fight against the God of almighty

power; but it is treachery and base ingratitude to fight against your fathers' God, and you cannot expect to prosper."

5 ought ye not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord.

7 And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them.

8 And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the Lord in the hand of the sons of David; and ye *be* a great multitude, and *there are* with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods.

9 Have ye not cast out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of *other* lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, *the same* may be a priest of *them that are* no gods.

10 But as for us, the Lord *is* our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the Lord, *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites *wait* upon *their* business:

11 and they burn unto the Lord every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the showbread also *set they in order* upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the Lord our God; but ye have forsaken him.

12 And, behold, God himself *is* with us for *our* captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

13 But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment *was* behind them.

We do not find that Jeroboam offered to make any answer at all to Abijah's speech. Though it was much to the purpose, he resolved not to heed it, and therefore he heard it as though he heard it not. He came to fight, not to dispute. The longest sword, he thought, would

determine the matter, not the better cause. Let us therefore see the issue, whether right and religion carried the day or no.

I. Jeroboam, who trusted to his politics, was beaten. He was so far from fair reasoning that he was not for fair fighting. We may suppose that he felt a sovereign contempt for Abijah's harangue. "One stratagem," thinks he, "is worth twenty such speeches; we will soon give him an answer to all his arguments; he shall soon find himself overpowered with numbers, surrounded on every side with the instruments of death, and then let him boast of his religion and his title to the crown."

A parley, it is probable, was agreed on, yet Jeroboam basely takes the advantage of it, and, while he was treating, laid his ambushment behind Judah, against all the laws of arms. What honour could be expected in a servant when he reigned? Abijah was for peace, but, when he spoke, they were for war, Ps 120:7.

II. Abijah and his people, who trusted in their God, came off conquerors, notwithstanding the disproportion of their strength and numbers.

1. They were brought into a great strait, put into a great fright, for the battle was before and behind. A good cause, and one which is designed to be victorious, may for a season be involved in embarrassment and distress. It was David's case. They compassed me about like bees, Ps 118:10-12.

2. In their distress, when danger was on every side, which way should they look but upwards for deliverance? It is an unspeakable comfort that no enemy (not the most powerful or politic), no stratagem or ambushment, can cut off our communication with heaven; our way thitherward is always open.

(1.) They cried unto the Lord, 2Ch 13:14. We hope they did this before they engaged in this war, but the distress they were in made them renew their prayers and quickened them to be importunate.

God brings his people into straits, that he may teach them to cry unto him. Earnest praying is crying.

(2.) They relied on the God of their fathers, depended upon his power to help them and committed themselves to him, 2Ch 13:18. The prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer, and this is that by which we overcome the world, even our faith, 1Jo 5:4.

(3.) The priests sounded the trumpets to animate them by giving them an assurance of God's presence with them. It was not only a martial but a sacred sound, and put life into their faith.

(4.) They shouted in confidence of victory: "The day is our own, for God is with us." To the cry of the prayer they added the shout of faith, and so became more than conquerors.

3. Thus they obtained a complete victory: As the men of Judah shouted for joy in God's salvation, God smote Jeroboam and his army with such terror and amazement that they could not strike a stroke, but fled with the greatest precipitation imaginable, and the conquerors gave no quarter, so that they put to the sword 500,000 chosen men (2Ch 13:17), more, it is said, than ever we read of in any history to have been killed in one battle; but the battle was the Lord's, who would thus chastise the idolatry of Israel and own the house of David. But see the sad effect of division: it was the blood of Israelites that was thus shed like water by Israelites, while the heathen, their neighbours, to whom the name of Israel had formerly been a terror, cried, Aha! so would we have it.

4. The consequence of this was that the children of Israel, though they were not brought back to the house of David (which by so great a blow surely they would have been had not the determinate counsel of God been otherwise), yet, for that time, were brought under, 2Ch 13:18. Many cities were taken, and remained in the possession of the kings of Judah; as Bethel particularly, 2Ch 13:19. What became of the golden calf there, when it came into the hands of the king of Judah, we are not told; perhaps it was removed to some place of greater safety, and at length to Samaria (Ho 8:5); yet in Jehu's time

we find it at Bethel, 1Ki 10:29. Perhaps Abijah, when it was in his power to demolish it, suffered it to stand, for his heart was not perfect with God; and, not improving what he had got for the honour of God, he soon lost it all again.

Lastly, The death of both of the conquered and of the conqueror, not long after.

1. Jeroboam never looked up after this defeat, though he survived it two or three years. He could not recover strength again, 2Ch 13:20. The Lord struck him either with some bodily disease, of which he languished, or with melancholy and trouble of mind; his heart was broken, and vexation at his loss brought his head, probably by this time a hoary head, with sorrow to the grave. He escaped the sword of Abijah, but God struck him: and there is no escaping his sword.

2. Abijah waxed mighty upon it. What number of wives and children he had before does not appear; but now he multiplied his wives to fourteen in all, by whom he had thirty-eight children, 2Ch 13:21. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of those arrows. It seems, he had ways peculiar to himself, and sayings of his own, which were recorded with his acts in the history of those times, 2Ch 13:22. But the number of his months was cut off in the midst, and, soon after his triumphs, death conquered the conqueror. Perhaps he was too much lifted up with his victories, and therefore God would not let him live long to enjoy the honour of them.

14 And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

16 And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.

17 And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

18 Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord

God of their fathers.
19 And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him,
Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns
thereof, and Ephrain with the towns thereof.
20 Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah:
and the Lord struck him, and he died.
21 But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat
twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.
22 And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, *are*
written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

2 Chronicles-14

The Reign of Asa

1 So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of
David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land
was quiet ten years.

Here is, I. Asa's general character (2Ch 14:2): He did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.

1. He aimed at pleasing God, studied to approve himself to him. Happy are those that walk by this rule, to do that which is right, not in their own eyes, or in the eye of the world, but in the eyes of God.

2. He saw God's eye always upon him, and that helped much to keep him to what was good and right. 3. God graciously accepted him in what he did, and approved his conduct as good and right.

II. A blessed work of reformation which he set on foot immediately upon his accession to the crown.

1. He removed and abolished idolatry. Since Solomon admitted idolatry, in the latter end of his reign, nothing had been done to suppress it, and so, we presume, it had got ground. Strange gods were worshipped and had their altars, images, and groves; and the temple service, though kept up by the priests (2Ch 13:10), was

neglected by many of the people. Asa, as soon as he had power in his hands, made it his business to destroy all those idolatrous altars and images (2Ch 14:3,5), they being a great provocation to a jealous God and a great temptation to a careless unthinking people. He hoped by destroying the idols to reform the idolaters, which he aimed at, rather than to ruin them.

2. He revived and established the pure worship of God; and, since the priests did their part in attending God's altars, he obliged the people to do theirs (2Ch 14:4): He commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and not the gods of the heathen, and to do the law and the commandments, that is, to observe all divine institutions, which many had utterly neglected. In doing this, the land was quiet before him, 2Ch 14:5. Though they were much in love with their idols, and very loth to leave them, yet the convictions of their consciences sided with the commands of Asa, and they could not, for shame, refuse to comply with them.

Note, Those that have power in their hands, and will use it vigorously for the suppression of profaneness and the reformation of manners, will not meet with so much difficulty and opposition therein as perhaps they feared. Vice is a sneaking thing, and virtue has reason enough on its side to make all iniquity stop her mouth, Ps 107:42.

III. The tranquillity of his kingdom, after constant alarms of war during the last two reigns: In his days the land was quiet ten years (2Ch 14:1), no war with the kingdom of Israel, who did not recover the blow given them in the last reign for a great while. Abijah's victory, which was owing, under God, to his courage and bravery, laid a foundation for Asa's peace, which was the reward of his piety and reformation. Though Abijah had little religion himself, he was instrumental to prepare the way for one that had much. If Abijah had not done what he did to quiet the land, Asa could not have done what he did to reform it; for inter arma silent leges--amidst the din of arms the voice of law is unheard.

IV. The prudent improvement he made of that tranquillity: The land had rest, for the Lord had given him rest. Note, If God give quietness, who then can make trouble? Job 34:29. Those have rest indeed to whom God gives rest, peace indeed to whom Christ gives peace, not as the world giveth, Joh 14:27. Now,

1. Asa takes notice of the rest they had as the gift of God (He hath given us rest on every side. Note, God must be acknowledged with thankfulness in the rest we are blessed with, of body and mind, family and country), and as the reward of the reformation begun: Because we have sought the Lord our God, he has given us rest.

Note, As the frowns and rebukes of Providence should be observed for a check to us in an evil way, so the smiles of Providence should be taken notice of for our encouragement in that which is good. See Hag 2:18,19,Mal 3:10. We find by experience that it is good to seek the Lord; it gives us rest. While we pursue the world we meet with nothing but vexation.

2. He consults with his people, by their representatives, how to make a good use of the present gleams of peace they enjoyed, and concludes with them,

(1.) That they must not be idle, but busy. Times of rest from war should be employed in work, for we must always find ourselves something to do. In the years when he had no war he said, "Let us build; still let us be doing." When the churches had rest they were built up, Ac 9:31. When the sword is sheathed take up the trowel.

(2.) That they must not be secure, but prepare for wars. In times of peace we must be getting ready for trouble, expect it and lay up in store for it.

[1.] He fortified his principle cities with walls, towers, gates, and bars, 2Ch 14:7. "This let us do," says he, "while the land is yet before us," that is, "while we have opportunity and advantage for it and have nothing to hinder us." He speaks as if he expected that, some way or other, trouble would arise, when it would be too late

to fortify, and when they would wish they had done it. So they built and prospered.

[2.] He had a good army ready to bring into the field (2Ch 14:8), not a standing army, but the militia or trained-bands of the country. Judah and Benjamin were mustered severally; and Benjamin (which not long ago was called little Benjamin, Ps 68:27) had almost as many soldiers as Judah, came as near as 28 to 30, so strangely had that tribe increased of late. The blessing of God can make a little one to become a thousand. It should seem, these two tribes were differently armed, both offensively and defensively.

The men of Judah guarded themselves with targets, the men of Benjamin with shields, the former of which were much larger than the latter, 1Ki 10:16,17. The men of Judah fought with spears when they closed in with the enemy; the men of Benjamin drew bows, to reach the enemy at a distance. Both did good service, and neither could say to the other, I have no need of thee. Different gifts and employments are for the common good.

2 And Asa did *that which was* good and right in the eyes of the Lord
his God:
3 for he took away the altars of the strange *gods,* and the high places,
and brake down the images, and cut down the groves:
4 and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers,
and to do the law and the commandment.
5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places
and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.
6 And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and
he had no war in those years; because the Lord had given him
rest.
7 Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and
make about *them* walls and towers, gates and bars, *while* the land
is yet before us; because we have sought the Lord our God, we
have sought *him,* and he hath given us rest on every side. So
they built and prospered.
8 And Asa had an army *of men* that bare targets and spears, out of
Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare

shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand:
all these *were* mighty men of valor.

9 And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with a host
of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came
unto Mareshah.

10 Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array
in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah.

11 And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, *it is* nothing
with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no
power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy
name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou *art* our God; let
not man prevail against thee.

12 So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah;
and the Ethiopians fled.

Here is, I. Disturbance given to the peace of Asa's kingdom by a formidable army of Ethiopians that invaded them, 2Ch 14:9,10. Though still they sought God, yet this fear came upon them, that their faith in God might be tried, and that God might have an opportunity of doing great things for them. It was a vast number that the Ethiopians brought against him: 1,000,000 men; and now he found the benefit of having an army ready raised against such a time of need. That provision which we thought needless may soon appear to be of great advantage.

II The application Asa made to God on occasion of the threatening cloud which now hung over his head, 2Ch 14:11. He that sought God in the day of his peace and prosperity could with holy boldness cry to God in the day of his trouble, and call him his God. His prayer is short, but has much in it.

1. He gives to God the glory of his infinite power and sovereignty: It is nothing with thee to help and save by many or few, by those that are mighty or by those that have no power. See 1Sa 14:6. God works in his own strength, not in the strength of instruments (Ps 21:13), nay, it is his glory to help the weakest and to perfect strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. "We do not say, Lord, take our part, for we have a good army for thee to work by; but, take our part, for without thee we have no power."

2. He takes hold of their covenant-relation to God as theirs. O Lord, our God! and again, "Thou art our God, whom we have chosen and cleave to as ours, and who hast promised to be ours."

3. He pleads their dependence upon God, and the eye they had to him in this expedition. He was well prepared for it, yet trusted not to his preparations; but, "Lord, we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude, by warrant from thee, aiming at thy glory, and trusting to thy strength."

4. He interests God in their cause: "Let not man" (mortal man, so the word is) "prevail against thee. If he prevail against us, it will be said that he prevails against thee, because thou art our God, and we rest on thee and go forth in thy name, which thou hast encouraged us to do. The enemy is a mortal man; make it to appear what an unequal match he is for an immortal God. Lord, maintain thy own honour; hallowed by thy name."

III. The glorious victory God gave him over his enemies.

1. God defeated the enemy, and put their forces into disorder (2Ch 14:12): The Lord smote the Ethiopians, smote them with terror, and an unaccountable consternation, so that they fled, and knew neither why nor whither.

2. Asa and his soldiers took the advantage God gave them against the enemy.

(1.) They destroyed them. They fell before the Lord (for who can stand before him?) and before his host, either an invisible host of angels that were employed to destroy them or the host of Israel, called God's host because owned by him.

(2.) They took the plunder of their camp, carried away very much spoil from the slain and from the baggage.

(3.) They smote the cities that were in league with them, to which they fled for shelter, and carried off the spoil of them (2Ch 14:14); and they were not able to make any resistance, for the fear of the Lord came upon them, that is, a fear which God struck them with to such a degree that they had no heart to withstand the conquerors.

(4.) They fetched away the cattle out of the enemy's country, in vast numbers, 2Ch 14:15. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.

13 And Asa and the people that *were* with him pursued them unto
Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not
recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the Lord, and
before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.
14 And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the
Lord came upon them: and they spoiled all the cities; for there
was exceeding much spoil in them.
15 They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and
camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles-15

Asa's Reforms

1 And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded:
2 and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa,
and all Judah and Benjamin; The Lord *is* with you, while ye be
with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye
forsake him, he will forsake you.
3 Now for a long season Israel *hath been* without the true God, and
without a teaching priest, and without law.

It was a great happiness to Israel that they had prophets among them; yet, while they were thus blessed, they were strangely addicted to idolatry, whereas, when the spirit of prophecy had ceased under the second temple, and the canon of the Old Temple was completed (which was constantly read in their synagogues), they were pure from idolatry; for the scriptures are of all other the most sure word

of prophecy, and most effectual, and the church could not be so easily imposed upon by a counterfeit Bible as by a counterfeit prophet.

Here was a prophet sent to Asa and his army, when they returned victorious from the war with the Ethiopians, not to compliment them and congratulate them on their success, but to quicken them to their duty; this is the proper business of God's ministers, even with princes and the greatest men. The Spirit of God came upon the prophet (2Ch 15:1), both to instruct him what he should say and to enable him to say it with clearness and boldness.

I. He told them plainly upon what terms they stood with God. Let them not think that, having obtained this victory, all was their own for ever; no, he must let them know they were upon their good behaviour. Let them do well, and it will be well with them, otherwise not.

1. The Lord is with you while you are with him. This is both a word of comfort, that those who keep close to God shall always have his presence with them, and also a word of caution: "He is with you, while you are with him, but no longer; you have now a signal token of his favourable presence with you, but the continuance of it depends upon your perseverance in the way of your duty."

2. "If you seek him, he will be found of you. Sincerely desire his favour, and aim at it, and you shall obtain it. Pray, and you shall prevail. He never said, nor ever will, Seek you me in vain." See Heb 11:6. But,

3. "If you forsake him and his ordinances, he is not tied to you, but will certainly forsake you, and then you are undone, your present triumphs will be no security to you; woe to you when God departs."

II. He set before them the dangerous consequence of forsaking God and his ordinances, and that there was no way of having grievances redressed, but by repenting, and returning unto God. When Israel forsook their duty they were over-run with a deluge of atheism,

impiety, irreligion, and all irregularity (2Ch 15:3), and were continually embarrassed with vexatious and destroying wars, foreign and domestic, 2Ch 15:5,6. But when their troubles drove them to God they found it not in vain to seek him, 2Ch 15:4. But the question is, What time does this refer to?

1. Some think it looks as far back as the days of the Judges. A long season ago Israel was without the true God, for they worshipped false gods; it was a time of ignorance, for, though they had priests, they had no teaching priests, though they had elders, yet no law to any purpose, 2Ch 15:3. These were sad times, when they were frequently oppressed by one enemy or other and grievously harassed by Moabites, Midianites, Ammonites, and other nations. They were vexed with all adversity (2Ch 15:6), yet when, in their perplexity, they turned to God by repentance, prayer, and reformation, he raised up deliverers for them. Then was that maxim often verified, that God is with us while we are with him. Whatsoever things of this kind were written aforetime were written for our admonition.

2. Others think it describes the state of the ten tribes (who were now properly called Israel) in the days of Asa. "Now, since Jeroboam set up the calves, though he pretended to honour the God that brought them out of Egypt, yet his idolatry has brought them to downright infidelity; they are without the true God," and no marvel when they were without teaching priests. Jeroboam's priests were not teachers, and thus they came to be without law. It is next to impossible that any thing of religion should be kept up without a preaching ministry. In those times there was no peace, 2Ch 15:5. Their war with Judah gave them frequent alarms; so did the late insurrection of Baasha and other occasions not mentioned. They provoked God with all iniquity, and then he vexed them with all adversity; yet, when they turned to God, he was entreated for them. Let Judah take notice of this; let their neighbours' harms be their warnings. Give no countenance to graven images for you see what mischiefs they produce.

3. Others think the whole passage may be read in the future tense, and that it looks forward: Hereafter Israel will be without the true God and a teaching priest, and they will be destroyed by one

judgment after another till they return to God and seek him. See Ho 3:4.

III. Upon this he grounded his exhortation to prosecute the work of reformation with vigour (2Ch 15:7): Be strong, for your work shall be rewarded.

Note, 1. God's work should be done with diligence and cheerfulness, but will not be done without resolution.

2. This should quicken us to the work of religion, that we shall be sure not to lose by it ultimately. It will not go unrewarded. How should it, when the work is its own reward?

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the Lord God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.

8 And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that *was* before the porch of the Lord.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the
Lord his God *was* with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered unto the Lord the same time, of the spoil *which* they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

We are here told what good effect the foregoing sermon had upon Asa.

I. He grew more bold for God than he had been. His victory would inspire him with some new degrees of resolution, but this message from God with much more. Now he took courage. he saw how necessary a further reformation was, and what assurance he had of God's presence with him in it; and this made him daring, and helped him over the difficulties which had before deterred him and driven him off from the undertaking. Now he ventured to destroy all the abominable idols (and all idolatries are abominable, 1Pe 4:3) as far as ever his power went. Away with them all. He also renewed the altar of the Lord, which, it seems, had gone out of repair, though it was not above thirty-five years since Solomon's head was laid, who erected it. So soon did these ceremonial institutions begin to wax old, as things which, in the fulness of time, must vanish away, Heb 8:13.

II. He extended his influence further than before, 2Ch 15:9. He summoned a solemn assembly, and particularly brought the strangers to it, who had come over to him from the ten tribes.

1. Their coming was a great encouragement to him; for the reason of their coming was because they saw that the Lord his God was with him. It is good to be with those that have God with them, to come into relation to, and contract acquaintance and friendship with, those that live in the fear and favour of God. We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zec 8:23.

2 The cognizance he took of them, and the invitation he gave them to the general assembly, were a great encouragement to them. All strangers are to be helped, but those that cast themselves upon God's good providence, purely to keep a good conscience, are worthy of double honour. Asa gave orders for the gathering of them together (2Ch 15:9), yet it is said (2Ch 15:10) that they gathered themselves together, made it their own act, so forward were they to obey the king's orders. This meeting was held in the third month, probably at the feast of Pentecost, which was in that month.

III. He and his people offered sacrifices to God, as his share of the spoil they had got, 2Ch 15:11. Their offering here was nothing to Solomon's (2Ch 7:5), which was owing to the diminution either of their zeal or of their wealth, or of both. These sacrifices were intended by way of thanksgiving for the favours they had received, and supplication for further favours. Prayers and praises are now our spiritual sacrifices. And, as he took care that the altar should have its gift, so he took care that the temple should have its gold: He brought into the house of God all the dedicated things, 2Ch 15:18. It is honesty to render to God the things that are his. What has been long designed for him, and long laid by for him, as it should seem these dedicated things had been, should at length be laid out for him. Will a man rob God, or make slow payment to him, who is always ready to do us good?

IV. They entered into covenant with God, repenting that they had violated their engagements to him and resolving to do better for the future. It is proper for penitents, for converts, to renew their covenants. It should seem, the motion came not from Asa, but from the people themselves. Let every man be a volunteer that covenants with God. Thy people shall be willing, Ps 110:3. Observe,

1. What was the matter of this covenant. Nothing but what they were before obliged to; and, though no vow or promise of theirs could lay any higher obligation upon them than they were already under from the divine precept, yet it would help to increase their sense of the obligation, to arm them against temptations, and would be a testimony to the equity and goodness of the precept. And, by joining all together in this covenant, they strengthened the hands one of another. Two things they engaged themselves to:--

(1.) That they would diligently seek God themselves, seek his precepts, seek his favour. What is religion but seeking God, enquiring after him, applying to him, upon all occasions? We shall not enjoy him till we come to heaven; while we are here we must continue seeking. They would seek God as the God of their fathers, in the way that their fathers sought him and in dependence upon the promise made to their fathers; and they would do it with all their

heart and with all their soul, for those only seek God acceptably and successfully that are inward with him, intent upon him, and entire for him, in their seeking him. We make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart-work of it. God will have all the heart or none; and, when a jewel of such inestimable value as the divine favour is to be found, it is worth while to seek it with all our soul.

(2.) That they would, to the utmost of their power, oblige others to seek him, 2Ch 15:13. They agreed that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel (that is, would either worship other gods or refuse to join with them in the worship of the true God, that was either an obstinate idolater or an obstinate atheist) he should be put to death. This was no new law of their own making, but an order to put in execution that law of God to this purport, De 17:2-5, &c. If this law had been duly executed, there would not have been so many abominable idols found in Judah and Benjamin, 2Ch 15:8. Whether men may now, under the gospel, be compelled by such methods as these to seek the Lord is justly questioned; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and yet mighty.

2. In what manner they made this covenant.

(1.) With great cheerfulness, and all possible expressions of joy: The swore unto the Lord; not secretly, as if they were either ashamed of what they did or afraid of binding themselves too fast to him, but with a loud voice, to express their own zeal and to animate one another; and they all rejoiced at the oath, 2Ch 15:14,15. They did not swear to God with reluctancy (as the poor debtor confesses a judgment to his creditor), but with all the pleasure and satisfaction imaginable, as the bridegroom plights his troth to the bride in the marriage covenant.

Every honest Israelite was pleased with his own engagements to God, and they were all pleased with one another's. They rejoiced in it as a hopeful expedient to prevent their apostasy from God and a happy indication of God's presence with them. Note, The times of renewing our covenant with God should be times of rejoicing, and

national reformation cannot but give general satisfaction to all that are good. It is an honour and happiness to be in bonds to God.

(2.) They did it with great sincerity, zeal and resolution: They swore to God with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire. The Israelites were now in an extraordinarily good frame. O that there had always been such a heart in them! This comes in as the reason why they rejoiced so much in what they did: it was because they were hearty in it. Note, Those only experience the pleasure and comfort of religion that are sincere and upright in it. What is done in hypocrisy is a mere drudgery. But, if God has the heart, we have the joy.

V. We are told what was the effect of this their solemn covenanting with God.

1. God did well for them: He was found of them, and gave them rest round about (2Ch 15:15), so that there was no war for a long time after (2Ch 15:19), no open general war, though there were constant bickerings between Judah and Israel upon the frontiers, 1Ki 15:16. National piety procures national blessings.

2. They did, on the whole, well for him. They carried on the reformation so far that Maachah the queen-mother was deposed for idolatry and her idol destroyed, 2Ch 15:16. This was bravely done of Asa, that he would not connive at idolatry in those that were nearest to him, like Levi, that said to his father and mother, I have not seen him, De 33:9.

Asa knows he must honour God more than his grandmother, and dares not leave an idol in an apartment of his palace while he is destroying idols in the cities of his kingdom. We may suppose this Maachah was so far convinced of her sin that she was willing to subscribe the association mentioned (2Ch 15:12,13), binding herself to seek the Lord, and therefore was not put to death as those were that refused to sign it, great as well as small, women as well as men: probably it was with an eye to her that women were specified. But because she had been an idolater Asa thought fit to divest her of the

dignity and authority she had, and probably he banished her the court and confined her to privacy, lest she should influence and infect others.

But the reformation was not complete; the high places were not all taken away, though many of them were, 2Ch 15:3,5. Those in the cities were removed, but not those in the cities of Judah, but not those in the cities of Israel which were reduced to the house of David; or those that were used in the service of false gods, but not those that were used in the service of the God of Israel. These he connived at, and yet his heart was perfect. There may be defects in some particular duties where yet the heart, in the man, is upright with God. Sincerity is something less than sinless perfection.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;
13 that whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.
14 And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.
15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about.
16 And also *concerning* Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron.
17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.
18 And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.
19 And there was no *more* war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

2 Chronicles-16

Asa's League with Ben-hadad

1 In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

How to reconcile the date of this event with the history of the kings I am quite at a loss. Baasha died in the twenty-sixth year of Asa, 1Ki 16:8. How then could this be done in his thirty-sixth year, when Baasha's family was quite cut off, and Omri was upon the throne? It is generally said to be meant of the thirty-sixth year of the kingdom of Asa, namely, that of Judah, beginning from the first of Rehoboam, and so it coincides with the sixteenth of Asa's reign; but then (2Ch 15:19 must be so understood; and how could it be spoken of as a great thing that there was no more war till the fifteenth year of Asa, when that passage immediately before was in his fifteenth year? (2Ch 15:10), and after this miscarriage of his, here recorded, he had wars, 2Ch 16:9. Josephus places it in his twenty-sixth year, and then we must suppose a mistake in the transcriber here and (2Ch 15:19, the admission of which renders the computation easy. This passage we had before (1Ki 15:17-24, &c.) and Asa was in several ways faulty in it.

1. He did not do well to make a league with Benhadad, a heathen king, and to value himself so much upon it as he seems to have done, 2Ch 16:3. Had he relied more upon his covenant, and his father's, with God, he would not have boasted so much of his league, and his father's, with the royal family of Syria.

2. If he had had a due regard to the honour of Israel in general, he would have found some other expedient to give Baasha a diversion than by calling in a foreign force, and inviting into the country a common enemy, who, in process of time, might be a plague to Judah too.

3. It was doubtless a sin in Benhadad to break his league with Baasha upon no provocation, but merely through the influence of a bribe; and, if so, certainly it was a sin in Asa to move him to it, especially to hire him to do it. The public faith of kings and kingdoms must not be made so cheap a thing.

4. To take silver and gold out of the house of the Lord for this purpose was a great aggravation of the sin, 2Ch 16:2. Must the temple be plundered to serve his carnal politics? He had better have brought gifts and offerings with prayers and supplications, to the house of the Lord, that he might have engaged God on his side and made him his friend; then he would not have needed to be at this expense to make Benhadad his friend. 5. It was well if Asa had not to answer for all the mischief that the army of Benhadad did unjustly to the cities of Israel, all the blood they shed and all the spoil they made, 2Ch 16:4. Perhaps Asa intended not that they should carry the matter so far. But those that draw others to sin know not what they do, nor where it will end. The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. However the project succeeded. Benhadad gave Baasha a powerful diversion, obliged him to leave off building Ramah and betake himself to the defence of his own country northward, which gave Asa an opportunity, not only to demolish his fortifications, but to seize the materials and convert them to his own use.

2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

3 *There is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

4 And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali.

5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *it*, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

7 And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

Here is, I. A plain and faithful reproof given to Asa by a prophet of the Lord, for making this league with Baasha. The reprover was Hanani the seer, the father of Jehu, another prophet, whom we read of 1Ki 16:1,2Ch 19:2. We observed several things amiss in Asa's treaty with Benhadad. But that which the prophet here charges upon him as the greatest fault he was guilty of in that matter is his relying on the king of Syria and not on the Lord his God, 2Ch 16:7. He thought that, though God was on his side, this would not stand him in stead unless he had Benhadad on his side, that God either could not or would not help him, but he must take this indirect course to help himself.

Note, God is much displeased when he is distrusted and when an arm of flesh is relied on more than his power and goodness. By putting our confidence in God we give honour to him, and therefore he thinks himself affronted if we give that honour to another. He plainly tells the king that herein he had done foolishly, 2Ch 16:9. It is a foolish thing to lean on a broken reed, when we have the rock of ages to rely upon. To convince him of his folly he shows him,

1. That he acted against his experience, 2Ch 16:8. He, of all men, had no reason to distrust God, who had found him such a present powerful helper, by whom he had been made to triumph over a threatening enemy, as his father before him, because he relied upon the Lord his God, (2Ch 13:18,14:11. "What!" said the prophet, "Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, enough to swallow up a kingdom? And yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thy hand; and was not he sufficient to help thee against Baasha?"

Note, The many experiences we have had of the goodness of God to us aggravate our distrust of him. Has he not helped us in six troubles? And have we any reason to suspect him in the seventh? But see how deceitful our hearts are! We trust in God when we have nothing else to trust to, when need drives us to him; but, when we have other things to stay on, we are apt to stay too much on them and to lean on our own understanding as long as that has any thing to offer; but a believing confidence will be in God only, when a smiling world courts it most.

2. That he acted against his knowledge of God and his providence, 2Ch 16:9. Asa could not be ignorant that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, strongly to hold with those (so it may be read) whose heart is perfect towards him; that is,

(1.) That God governs the world in infinite wisdom, and the creatures, and all their actions, are continually under his eye. The eye of Providence is quick-sighted--it runs; it is intent--it runs to and fro; it reaches far--through the whole earth, no corner of which is from under it, not the most dark or distant; and his eye directs his hand, and the arm of his power; for he shows himself strong. Does Satan walk to and fro in the earth? Providence runs to and fro, is never out of the way, never to seek, never at a loss.

(2.) That God governs the world for the good of his people, does all in pursuance of the counsels of his love concerning their salvation, all for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect, Isa 45:4. Christ is head over all things to his church, Eph 1:22.

(3.) That those whose hearts are upright with him may be sure of his protection and have all the reason in the world to depend upon it. He is able to protect them in the way of their duty (for wisdom and might are his), and he actually intends their protection. A practical disbelief of this is at the bottom of all our departures from God and double-dealing with him. Asa could not trust God and therefore made court to Benhadad.

3. That he acted against his interest.

(1.) He had lost an opportunity of checking the growing greatness of the king of Syria, (2Ch 16:7): His host has escaped out of thy hand, which otherwise would have joined with Baasha's and fallen with it.

(2.) He had incurred God's displeasure and henceforth must expect no peace, but the constant alarms of war, 2Ch 16:9. Those that cannot find in their hearts to trust God forfeit his protection and throw themselves out of it.

II. Asa's displeasure at this reproof. Though it came from God by one that was known to be his messenger, though the reproof was just and the reasoning fair, and all intended for his good, yet he was wroth with the seer for telling him of his folly; nay, he was in a rage with him, 2Ch 16:10. Is this Asa? Is this he whose heart was perfect with the Lord all his days? Well, let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. A wise man, and yet in a rage! An Israelite, and yet in a rage with a prophet! A good man, and yet impatient of reproof, and that cannot bear to be told of his faults! Lord, what is man, when God leaves him to himself? Those that idolize their own conduct cannot bear contradiction; and those that indulge a peevish passionate temper may be transported by it into impieties as well as into indecencies, and will, some time or other, fly in the face of God himself. See what gall and wormwood this root of bitterness bore.

1. In his rage he committed the prophet to the jail, put him in a prison-house, as a malefactor, in the stocks (so some read it,) or into little-ease. God's prophets meet with many that cannot bear reproof, but take it much amiss, yet they must do their duty.

2. Having proceeded thus far, he oppressed some of the people, probably such as owned the prophet in his sufferings, or were known to be his particular friends. He that abused his power for the persecuting of God's prophet was left to himself further to abuse it for the crushing of his own subjects, whereby he weakened himself and lost his interest. Most persecutors have been tyrants.

III. His sickness. Two years before he died he was diseased in his feet (2Ch 16:12), afflicted with the gout in a high degree. He had put the prophet in the stocks, and now God put him in the stocks; so his punishment answered his sin. His disease was exceedingly great; it came to the height (so some); it flew up to his head (so others), and then it was mortal. This was his affliction; but his sin was that in his disease, instead of seeking to the Lord for relief, he sought to the physicians. His making use of physicians was his duty; but trusting to them, and expecting that from them which was to be had from God only, were his sin and folly. The help of creatures must always be used with an eye to the Creator, and in dependence upon him, who makes every creature that to us which it is, and without whom the most skilful and faithful are physicians of no value. Some think that these physicians were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and were a sort of conjurers, to whom he applied as if there were not a God in Israel.

IV. His death and burial. His funeral had something of extraordinary solemnity in it, 2Ch 16:14. They made a very magnificent burying for him. I am loth to think (as some do) that he himself ordered this funeral pomp, and that it was an instance of his vanity, that he would be buried like the Gentiles, and not after the way of the Jews. It is said indeed, He digged the sepulchre for himself, as one mindful of his grave; but I am willing to believe that this funeral pomp was rather an expression of the great respect his people retained for him, notwithstanding the failings and infirmities of his latter days. It was agreed to do him honour at his death.

Note, The eminent piety and usefulness of good men ought to be remembered to their praise, though they have had their blemishes. Let their faults be buried in their graves, while their services are remembered over their graves. He that said, There is not a just man that doeth good and sinneth not, yet said also, The memory of the just is blessed; and let it be so.

8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand.

9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time.

11 And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

12 And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease *was* exceeding *great:* yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians.

13 And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign.

14 And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds *of spices* prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

2 Chronicles-17

Jehoshaphat's Kingdom Established

1 And Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel.

Here we find concerning Jehoshaphat,

I. What a wise man he was. As soon as he came to the crown he strengthened himself against Israel, 2Ch 17:1. Ahab, an active warlike prince, had now been three years upon the throne of Israel, the vigour of his beginning falling in with the decay of Asa's conclusion. It is probable that the kingdom of Israel had, of late, got ground of the kingdom of Judah and began to grow formidable to it; so that the first thing Jehoshaphat had to do was to make his part good on that side, and to check the growing greatness of the king of Israel, which he did so effectually, and without bloodshed, that

Ahab soon courted his alliance, so far was he from giving him any disturbance, and proved more dangerous as a friend than he could have been as an enemy.

Jehoshaphat strengthened himself not to act offensively against Israel or invade them, but only to maintain his own, which he did by fortifying the cities that were on his frontiers, and putting garrisons, stronger than had been, in the cities of Ephraim, which he was master of, 2Ch 17:2. He did not strengthen himself, as his father did, by a league with the king of Syria, but by fair and regular methods, on which he might expect the blessing of God and in which he trusted God.

II. What a good man he was. It is an excellent character that is here given him.

1. He walked in the ways of his father David. In the characters of the kings, David's ways are often made the standard, as 1Ki 15:3,11,2Ki 14:3,18:3. But the distinction is nowhere so strongly marked as here between his first ways and his last ways; for the last were not so good as the first. His ways, before he fell so foully in the matter of Uriah (which is mentioned long afterwards as the bar in his escutcheon, 1Ki 15:5), were good ways, and, though he happily recovered from that fall, yet perhaps he never, while he lived, fully retrieved the spiritual strength and comfort he lost by it. Jehoshaphat followed David as far as he followed God and no further. Paul himself thus limits our imitation of him (1Co 11:1): Follow me, as I follow Christ, and not otherwise.

Many good people have had their first ways, which were their best ways, their first love, which was their strongest love; and in every copy we propose to write after, as we must single out that only which is good, so that chiefly which is best. The words here will admit another reading; they run thus: He walked in the ways of David his father (Hareshonim), those first ways, or those ancient ways. He proposed to himself, for his example, the primitive times of the royal family, those purest times, before the corruptions of the late reigns came in. See Jer 6:16. The LXX. leaves out David, and

so refers it to Asa: He walked in the first ways of his father, and did not imitate him in what was amiss in him, towards the latter end of his time. It is good to be cautious in following the best men, lest we step aside after them.

2. He sought not to Baalim, but sought to the Lord God of his father, 2Ch 17:3,4. The neighbouring nations had their Baalim, one had one Baal and another had another; but he abhorred them all, had nothing to do with them. He worshipped the Lord God of his father and him only, prayed to him only and enquired of him only; both are included in seeking him.

3. That he walked in God's commandments, not only worshipped the true God, but worshipped him according to his own institution, and not after the doings of Israel, 2Ch 17:4. Though the king of Israel was his neighbour and ally, yet he did not learn his way. Whatever dealings he had with him in civil matters, he would not have communion with him, nor comply with him in his religion. In this he kept close to the rule.

4. His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord (2Ch 17:6), or he lifted up his heart. He brought his heart to his work, and lifted up his heart in it; that is, he had a sincere regard to God in it. Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul. His heart was enlarged in that which is good, Ps 119:32. He never thought he could do enough for God. He was lively and affectionate in his religion, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, cheerful and pleasant in it; he went on in his work with alacrity, as Jacob, who, after his vision of God at Bethel, lifted up his feet, Ge 29:1, margin. He was bold and resolute in the ways of God and went on with courage. His heart was lifted up above the consideration of the difficulties that were in the way of his duty; he easily got over them all, and was not frightened with winds and clouds from sowing and reaping, Ec 11:4. Let us walk in the same spirit.

III. What a useful man he was, not only a good man, but a good king. He not only was good himself, but did good in his generation, did a great deal of good.

1. He took away the teachers of lies, so images are called (Hab 2:18), the high places and the groves, 2Ch 17:6. It is meant of those in which idols were worshipped; for those that were dedicated to the true God only were not taken away, 2Ch 20:33. It was only idolatry that he abolished. Nothing debauched the nation more than those idolatrous groves or images which he took away.

2. He sent forth teachers of truth. When he enquired into the state of religion in his kingdom he found his people generally very ignorant: they knew not that they did evil. Even in the last good reign there had been little care taken to instruct them in their duty; and therefore Jehoshaphat resolves to begin his work at the right end, deals with them as reasonable creatures, will not lead them blindfold, no, not into a reformation, but endeavours to have them well taught, knowing that that was the way to have them well cured. In this good work he employed,

(1.) His princes. Those about him he sent forth; those in the country he sent to teach in the cities of Judah, 2Ch 17:7. He ordered them, in the administration of justice, not only to correct the people when they did ill, but to teach them how to do better, and to give a reason for what they did, that the people might be informed of the difference between good and evil. The princes or judges upon the bench have a great opportunity of teaching people their duty to God and man, and it is not out of their province, for the laws of God are to be looked upon as laws of the land.

(2.) The Levites and priests went with the princes, and taught in Judah, having the book of the law with them, 2Ch 17:8,9. They were teachers by office, De 33:10. Teaching was part of the work for which they had their maintenance. The priests and the Levites had little else to do. But, it seems, they had neglected it, pretending perhaps that they could not get the people to hear them. "Well," says Jehoshaphat, "you shall go along with the princes, and they with their authority shall oblige the people to come and hear you; and then, if they be not well instructed, it is your fault." What an abundance of good may be done when Moses and Aaron thus go

hand in hand in the doing of it, when princes with their power, and priests and Levites with their scripture learning, agree to teach the people the good knowledge of God and their duty! These itinerant judges and itinerant preachers together were instrumental to diffuse a blessed light throughout the cities of Judah. But it is said, They had the book of the law of the Lord with them.

[1.] For their own direction, that thence they might fetch all the instructions they gave to the people, and not teach for doctrines the commandments of men.

[2.] For the conviction of the people, that they might see that they had a divine warrant for what they said and delivered to them that only which they received from the Lord. Note, Ministers, when they go to teach the people, should have their Bibles with them.

IV. What a happy man he was.

1. How happy he was in the favour of his God, who signally owned and blessed him: The Lord was with him (2Ch 17:3); the word of the Lord was his helper (so the Chaldee paraphrase); the Lord established the kingdom in his hand, 2Ch 17:5. Those stand firmly that have the presence of God with them. If the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, that will establish the work of our hands and establish us in our integrity.

2. How happy he was in the affections of his people (2Ch 17:5): All Judah brought him presents, in acknowledgment of his kindness in sending preachers among them. The more there is of true religion among a people the more there will be of conscientious loyalty. A government that answers the end of government will be supported. The effect of the favour both of God and his kingdom was that he had riches and honour in abundance. It is undoubtedly true, though few will believe it, that religion and piety are the best friends to outward prosperity. And, observe, it follows immediately, His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord. Riches and honour in abundance prove to many a clog and a hindrance in the ways of the Lord, an occasion of pride, security, and sensuality; but they had a

quite contrary effect upon Jehoshaphat: his abundance was oil to the wheels of his obedience, and the more he had of the wealth of this world the more was his heart lifted up in the ways of the Lord.

2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken.

3 And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim;

4 but sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

5 Therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honor in abundance.

6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord : moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.

7 Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, *even* to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.

8 And with them *he sent* Levites, *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests.

9 And they taught in Judah, and *had* the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

10 And the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

11 Also *some* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred
he goats.

12 And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store.

We have here a further account of Jehoshaphat's great prosperity and the flourishing state of his kingdom.

I. He had good interest in the neighbouring princes and nations. Though he was not perhaps so great a soldier as David (which might have made him their terror), nor so great a scholar as Solomon (which might have made him their oracle), yet the fear of the Lord fell so upon them (that is, God so influenced and governed their spirits) that they had all a reverence for him, 2Ch 17:10.

And, 1. None of them made war against him. God's good providence so ordered it that, while the princes and priests were instructing and reforming the country, none of his neighbours gave him any molestations, to take him off from that good work. Thus when Jacob and his sons were going to worship at Bethel the terror of God was upon the neighbouring cities, that they did not pursue after them, Ge 35:5, and see Ex 34:24.

2. Many of them brought presents to him (2Ch 17:11), to secure his friendship. Perhaps these were a tribute imposed upon them by Asa, who made himself master of the cities of the Philistines, and the tents of the Arabians, 2Ch 14:14,15. With the 7700 rams, and the same number of he-goats, which the Arabians brought, there was probably a proportionable number of ewes and lambs, she-goats and kids.

II. He had a very considerable stores laid up in the cities of Judah. He pulled down his barns, and built larger (2Ch 17:12), castles and cities of store, for arms and victuals. He was a man of business, and aimed at the public good in all his undertakings, either to preserve the peace or prepare for war.

III. He had the militia in good order. It was never in better since David modelled it. Five lord-lieutenants (if I may so call them) are here named, with the numbers of those under their command (the serviceable men, that were fit for war in their respective districts), three in Judah, and two in Benjamin. It is said of one of these great commanders, Amasiah, that he willingly offered himself unto the

Lord (2Ch 17:16), not only to the king, to serve him in this post, but to the Lord, to glorify him in it. He was the most eminent among them for religion, he accepted the place, not for the honour, or power, or profit of it, but for conscience' sake towards God, that he might serve his country,.

It was usual for great generals then to offer of their spoils to the Lord, 1Ch 26:26. But this good man offered himself first to the Lord, and then his dedicated things. The number of the soldiers under these five generals amounts to 1,160,000 men, a vast number for so small a compass of ground as Judah's and Benjamin's lot to furnish out and maintain. Abijah could bring into the field but 400,000 (2Ch 13:3), Asa not 600,000 (2Ch 14:8), yet Jehoshaphat has at command almost 1,200,000. But it must be considered,

1. That God had promised to make the seed of Abraham like the sand of the sea for number.

2. There had now been a long peace.

3. We may suppose that the city of Jerusalem was very much enlarged.

4. Many had come over to them from the kingdom of Israel (2Ch 15:19), which would increase the numbers of the people.

5. Jehoshaphat was under a special blessing of God, which made his affairs to prosper greatly. The armies, we may suppose, were dispersed all the country over, and each man resided for the most part on his own estate; but they appeared often, to be mustered and trained, and were ready at call whenever there was occasion. The commanders waited on the king (2Ch 17:19) as officers of his court, privy-counsellors, and ministers of state.

But, lastly, observe, It was not this formidable army that struck a terror upon the neighbouring nations, that restrained them from attempting any thing against Israel, or obliged them to pay tribute, but the fear of God which fell upon them when Jehoshaphat

reformed his country and set up a preaching ministry in it, 2Ch 17:10. The ordinances of God are more the strength and safety of a kingdom than its military force--its men of God more than its men of war

13 And he had much business in the cities of Judah: and the men
of war, mighty men of valor, *were* in Jerusalem.
14 And these *are* the numbers of them according to the house of their
fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief,
and with him mighty men of valor three hundred thousand.
15 And next to him *was* Jehohanan the captain, and with him
two hundred and fourscore thousand.
16 And next him *was* Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly
offered himself unto the Lord ; and with him two hundred
thousand mighty men of valor.
17 And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valor, and with him
armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand.
18 And next him *was* Jehozabad, and with him a hundred
and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war.
19 These waited on the king, besides *those* whom the king put in
the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

2 Chronicles-18

Micaiah Prophesies the Defeat of Ahab and Jehoshaphat

1 Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance, and
joined affinity with Ahab.

Here is, I. Jehoshaphat growing greater. It was said before (2Ch 17:5) that he had riches and honour in abundance; and here it is said again that his wealth and honour increased upon him by piety and good management.

II. Not growing wiser, else he would not have joined with Ahab, that degenerate Israelite, who had sold himself to work wickedness. What good could he get by a man that was so bad? What good could he do to a man that was so obstinately wicked--an idolater, a persecutor?

With him he joined in affinity, that is, married his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah.

1. This was the worst match that ever was made by any of the house of David. I wonder what Jehoshaphat could promise himself by it.

(1.) Perhaps pride made the match, as it does many a one, which speeds accordingly. His religion forbade him to marry his son to a daughter of any of the heathen princes that were about him--Thou shalt not take their daughters to thy sons; and, having riches and honour in abundance, he thought it a disparagement to marry him to a subject. A king's daughter it must be, and therefore Ahab's, little considering that Jezebel was her mother.

(2.) Some think he did it in policy, hoping by this expedient to unite the kingdoms in his son, Ahab perhaps flattering him with hopes that he would make him his heir, when he intended no such thing.

2. This match drew Jehoshaphat,

(1.) Into an intimate familiarity with Ahab. He paid him a visit at Samaria, and Ahab, proud of the honour which Jehoshaphat did him, gave him a very splendid entertainment, according to the splendour of those times: He killed sheep and oxen for him, plain meat, in abundance, 2Ch 18:2. In this Jehoshaphat did not walk so closely as he should have done in the ways of his father David, who hated the congregation of evil-doers and would not sit with the wicked (Ps 26:5), nor desired to eat of their dainties, Ps 141:4.

(2.) Into a league with Ahab against the Syrians. Ahab persuaded him to join forces with him in an expedition for the recovery of Ramoth-Gilead, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan. Did not Ahab know that that, and all the other cities of Israel, did of right belong to Jehoshaphat, as heir of the house of David? With what face then could he ask Jehoshaphat to assist him in recovering it for himself, whose title to the crown was usurped and precarious? Yet Jehoshaphat, an easy man, yields to go with him: I am as thou art, 2Ch 18:3. Some men's kindnesses are dangerous, as well as their

society infectious. The feast Ahab made for Jehoshaphat was designed only to wheedle him into the expedition. The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

2 And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramoth-gilead.

3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war.

4 And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today.

5 Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver *it* into the king's hand.

6 But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?

7 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, *There is* yet one man, by whom we may inquire of the Lord : but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same *is* Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

8 And the king of Israel called for one *of his* officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla.

9 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in *their* robes, and they sat in a void place at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

10 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the Lord, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed.

11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

This is almost word for word the same with what we had, 1Ki 22:41-50 We will not repeat what was there said, nor have we much to add, but may take occasion to think,

1. Of the great duty of acknowledging God in all our ways and enquiring at his word, whatever we undertake. Jehoshaphat was not willing to proceed till he had done this, 2Ch 18:4. By particular believing prayer, by an unbiased consultation of the scripture and our own consciences, and by an observant regard to the hints of providence, we may make such enquiries and very much to our satisfaction.

2. Of the great danger of bad company even to good men. Those that have more wisdom, grace, and resolution, cannot be sure that they can converse familiarly with wicked people and get no hurt by them. Jehoshaphat here, in complaisance to Ahab, sits in his robes, patiently hearing the false prophets speaking lies in the name of the Lord (2Ch 18:9), can scarcely find in his heart to give him a too mild and gentle reproof for hating a prophet of the Lord (2Ch 18:7), and dares not rebuke that false prophet who basely abused the faithful seer nor oppose Ahab who committed him to prison. Those who venture among the seats of the scornful cannot come off without a great deal of the guilt attaching to at least the omission of their duty, unless they have such measures of wisdom and courage as few can pretend to.

3. Of the unhappiness of those who are surrounded with flatterers, especially flattering prophets, who cry peace to them and prophesy nothing but smooth things. Thus was Ahab cheated into his ruin, and justly; for he hearkened to such, and preferred those that humoured him before a good prophet that gave him fair warning of his danger. Those do best for themselves that give their friends leave, and particularly their ministers, to deal plainly and faithfully with them, and take their reproofs not only patiently, but kindly. That counsel is not always best for us that is most pleasing to us.

4. Of the power of Satan, by the divine permission, in the children of disobedience. One lying spirit can make 400 lying prophets and

make use of them to deceive Ahab, 2Ch 18:21. The devil becomes a murderer by being a liar and destroys men by deceiving them.

5. Of the justice of God in giving those up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, who will not receive the love of the truth, but rebel against it, 2Ch 18:21. Let the lying spirit prevail to entice those to their ruin that will not be persuaded to their duty and happiness.

6. Of the hard case of faithful ministers, whose lot it has often been to be hated, and persecuted, and ill-treated, for being true to their God and just and kind to the souls of men. Micaiah, for discharging a good conscience, was buffeted, imprisoned, and condemned to the bread and water of affliction. But he could with assurance appeal to the issue, as all those may do who are persecuted for their faithfulness, 2Ch 18:27. The day will declare who is in the right and who in the wrong, when Christ will appear, to the unspeakable consolation of his persecuted people and the everlasting confusion of their persecutors, who will be made to see in that day (2Ch 18:24) what they will not now believe.

12 And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets *declare* good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good.

13 And Micaiah said, *As* the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.

14 And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand.

15 And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the Lord?

16 Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master; let them return *therefore* every man to his house in peace.

17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee *that* he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil?

18 Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the Lord; I saw the

Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing
on his right hand and *on* his left.
19 And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that
he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying
after this manner, and another saying after that manner.
20 Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and
said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him,
Wherewith?
21 And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of
all his prophets. And *the* Lord said, Thou shalt entice *him*, and
thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do *even* so.
22 Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in
the mouth of these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken
evil against thee.
23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote
Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit
of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?
24 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when
thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.
25 Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back
to
Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;
26 and say, Thus saith the king, Put this *fellow* in the prison, and
feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction,
until I return in peace.
27 And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, *then* hath
not the Lord spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, all ye
people.
28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up
to Ramoth-gilead.

We have here,

1. Good Jehoshaphat exposing himself in his robes, thereby endangered, and yet delivered. We have reason to think that Ahab, while he pretended friendship, really aimed at Jehoshaphat's life, to take him off, that he might have the management of his successor, who was his son-in-law, else he would never have advised him to enter into the battle with his robes on, which was but to make himself

an easy mark to the enemy: and, if really he intended that, it was as unprincipled a piece of treachery as ever man was guilty of, and justly was he himself taken in the pit he digged for his friend.

The enemy had soon an eye upon the robes, and vigorously attacked the unwary prince who now, when it was too late, wished himself in the habit of the poorest soldier, rather than in his princely raiment. He cried out, either to his friends to relieve him (but Ahab took no care of that), or to his enemies, to rectify their mistake, and let them know that he was not the king of Israel. Or perhaps he cried to God for succour and deliverance (to whom else should he cry?) and he found it was not in vain: The Lord helped him out of his distress, by moving the captains to depart from him, 2Ch 18:31. God has all men's hearts in his hand, and turns them as he pleases, contrary to their own first intentions, to serve his purposes. Many are moved unaccountably both to themselves and others, but an invisible power moves them.

2. Wicked Ahab disguising himself, arming himself thereby as he thought securing himself, and yet slain, 2Ch 18:33. No art, no arms, can save those whom God has appointed to ruin. What can hurt those whom God will protect? And what can shelter those whom God will destroy? Jehoshaphat is safe in his robes, Ahab killed in his armour; for the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong.

29 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle.

30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that *were* with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel.

31 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It *is* the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him; and God moved them *to depart* from him.

32 For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

33 And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.
34 And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed *himself* up in *his* chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.

2 Chronicles-19

The Prophet Jehu Rebukes Jehoshaphat

1 And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.
2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord ? therefore *is* wrath upon thee from before the Lord.

Here is, I The great favour God showed to Jehoshaphat,

1. In bringing him back in safety from his dangerous expedition with Ahab, which had like to have cost him dearly (2Ch 19:1): He returned to his house in peace. Notice is taken of this to intimate,

(1.) That he fared better than he had expected. He had been in imminent peril, and yet came home in peace. Whenever we return in peace to our houses we ought to acknowledge God's providence in preserving our going out and our coming in. But, if we have been kept through more than ordinary dangers, we are in a special manner bound to be thankful. There was but a step perhaps between us and death, and yet we are alive.

(2.) That he fared better than he deserved. He was out of the way of his duty, had been out upon an expedition which he could not well account for to God and his conscience, and yet he returned in peace; for God is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor does he withdraw his protection every time we forfeit it.

(3.) That he fared better than Ahab king of Israel did, who was brought home slain. Though Jehoshaphat had said to Ahab, I am as thou art, God distinguished him; for he knows and owns the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish. Distinguishing mercies are very obliging. Here were two kings in the field together, one taken and the other left, one brought home in blood, the other in peace.

2. In sending him a reproof for his affinity with Ahab. It is a great mercy to be made sensible of our faults, and to be told in time wherein we have erred, that we may repent and amend the error before it be too late. The prophet by whom the reproof is sent is Jehu the son of Hanani. The father was an eminent prophet in the last reign, as appeared by Asa's putting him in the stocks for his plain dealing; yet the son was not afraid to reprove another king. Paul would have his son Timothy not only discouraged, but animated by his sufferings, 2Ti 3:11,14.

(1.) The prophet told him plainly that he had done very ill in joining with Ahab: "Shouldst thou, a godly man, help the ungodly, give them a hand of fellowship, and lend them a hand of assistance?" Or, "Shouldst thou love those that hate the Lord; wilt thou lay those in thy bosom whom God beholds afar off?" It is the black character of wicked people that they are haters of God, Ro 1:30. Idolaters are so reputed in the second commandment; and therefore it is not for those that love God to take delight in them or contract an intimacy with them. Do I not hate those, says David, that hate thee? Ps 139:11,21. Those whom the grace of God has dignified ought not to debase themselves. Let God's people be of God's mind.

(2.) That God was displeased with him for doing this: "There is wrath upon thee from before the Lord, and thou must, by repentance, make thy peace with him, or it will be the worse for thee." He did so, and God's anger was turned away. Yet his trouble, as recorded in the next chapter, was a rebuke to him for meddling with strife that belonged not to him. If he be so fond of war, he shall have enough of it. And

the great mischief which his seed after him fell into by the house of Ahab was the just punishment of his affinity with that house.

(3.) Yet he took notice of that which was praiseworthy, as it is proper for us to do when we give a reproof (2Ch 19:3): "There are good things found in thee; and therefore, though God be displeased with thee, he does not, he will not, cast thee off." His abolishing idolatry with a heart fixed for God and engaged to seek him was a good thing, which God accepted and would have him go on with, notwithstanding the displeasure he had now incurred.

II The return of duty which Jehoshaphat made to God for this favour. he took the reproof well, was not wroth with the seer as his father was, but submitted. Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness. See what effect the reproof had upon him.

1. He dwelt at Jerusalem (2Ch 19:4), minded his own business at home, and would not expose himself by paying any more such visits to Ahab. Rebuke a wise man, and he will be yet wiser, and will take warning, Pr 9:8,9.

2. To atone (as I may say) for the visit he had paid to Ahab, he made a pious profitable visitation of his own kingdom: He went out through the people in his own person from Beersheba in the south to Mount Ephraim in the north, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers, that is, did all he could towards recovering them.

(1.) By what the prophet said he perceived that his former attempts for reformation were well pleasing to God, and therefore he revived them, and did what was then left undone. It is good when commendations thus quicken us to our duty, and when the more we are praised for doing well the more vigorous we are in well-doing.

(2.) Perhaps he found that his late affinity with the idolatrous house of Ahab and kingdom of Israel had had a bad influence upon his own kingdom. Many, we may suppose, were emboldened to revolt to idolatry when they saw even their reforming king so intimate with idolaters; and therefore he thought himself doubly obliged to do all

he could to restore them. If we truly repent of our sin, we shall do our utmost to repair the damage we have any way done by it to religion or the souls of others. We are particularly concerned to recover those that have fallen into sin, or been hardened in it, by our example.

3 Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine
heart to seek God.

Jehoshaphat Appoints Judges

4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers.
5 And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city,
6 and said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who *is* with you in the judgment.

Jehoshaphat, having done what he could to make his people good, is here providing, if possible, to keep them so by the influence of a settled magistracy. He had sent preachers among them, to instruct them (2Ch 17:7-9), and that provision did well; but now he saw it further requisite to send judges among them, to see the laws put in execution, and to be a terror to evil-doers. It is probable that there were judges up and down the country before, but either they neglected their business or the people slighted them, so that the end of the institution was not answered; and therefore it was necessary it should be new-modelled, new men employed, and a new charge given them. That is it which is here done.

I. He erected inferior courts of justice in the several cities of the kingdom, 2Ch 19:5. The judges of these courts were to keep the people in the worship of God, to punish the violations of the law, and to decide controversies between man and man. Here is the charge he gave them (2Ch 19:6), in which we have,

1 The means he prescribes to them for the keeping of them closely to their duty; and these are two:--

(1.) Great caution and circumspection: Take heed what you do, 2Ch 19:6. And again, "Take heed and do it, 2Ch 19:7. Mind your business; take heed of making any mistakes; be afraid of misunderstanding any point of law, or the matter of fact." Judges, of all men, have need to be cautious, because so much depends upon the correctness of their judgment.

(2.) Great piety and religion: "Let the fear of God be upon you, and that will be a restraint upon you to keep you from doing wrong (Ne 5:15,Ge 42:18) and an engagement to you to be active in doing the duty of your place." Let destruction from God be a terror to them, as Job speaks (Job 31:23), and then they will be a terror to none but evil-doers.

2 The motives he would have them consider, to engage them to faithfulness. These are three, all taken from God:--

(1.) That from him they had their commission; his ministers they were. The powers that be are ordained by him and for him: "You judge not for man, but for the Lord; your business is to glorify him, and serve the interests of his kingdom among men."

(2.) That his eye was upon them: "He is with you in the judgment, to take notice what you do and call you to an account if you do amiss."

(3.) That he is the great example of justice to all magistrates: There is no iniquity with him, no bribery, nor respect of persons. Magistrates are called gods, and therefore must endeavour to resemble him.

II. He erected a supreme court at Jerusalem, which was advised with, and appealed to, in all the difficult causes that occurred in the inferior courts, and which gave judgment upon demurrers (to speak in the language of our own law), special verdicts, and writs of error.

This court sat in Jerusalem; for there were set the thrones of judgment: there they would be under the inspection of the king himself. Observe,

1 The causes cognizable in this court; and they were of two kinds, as with us:--

(1.) Pleas of the crown, called here the judgment of the Lord, because the law of God was the law of the realm. All criminals were charged with the breach of some part of his law and were said to offend against his peace, his crown and dignity.

(2.) Common pleas, between party and party, called here controversies (2Ch 19:8) and causes of their brethren (2Ch 19:10), differences between blood and blood (this refers to De 17:8), between the blood of the person slain and the blood of the man-slayer. Since the revolt of the ten tribes all the cities of refuge, except Hebron, belonged to the kingdom of Israel; and therefore, we may suppose, the courts of the temple, or the horns of the altar, were chiefly used as sanctuaries in that case, and hence the trial of homicides was reserved for the court at Jerusalem. If the inferior judges did not agree about the sense of any law or commandment, any statute or judgment, this court must determine the controversy.

2 The judges of this court were some of the Levites and priests that were most learned in the law, eminent for wisdom, and of approved integrity, and some of the chief of the fathers of Israel, peers of the realm, as I may call them, or persons of age and experience, that had been men of business, who would be the most competent judges of matters of fact, as the priests and Levites were of the sense of the law.

3. The two chiefs, or presidents, of this court. Amariah, the high priest, was to preside in ecclesiastical causes, to direct the court and be the mouth of it, or perhaps to be last consulted in cases which the judges themselves doubted of. Zebadiah, the prime-minister of that state, was to preside in all civil causes, 2Ch 19:11. Thus there are diversities of gifts and operations, but all from the same Spirit, and

for the good of the body. Some best understand the matters of the Lord, others the king's matters; neither can say to the other, I have no need of thee, for God's Israel has need of both; and, as every one has received the gift, so let him minister the same. Blessed be God both for magistrates and ministers, scribes and statesmen, men of books and men of business.

4. The inferior officers of the court. "Some of the Levites (such as had not abilities to qualify them for judges) shall be officers before you," 2Ch 19:11. They were to bring causes into the court, and to see the sentence of the judges executed. And these hands and feet were as necessary in their places as the eyes and heads (the judges) in theirs.

5. The charge which the king gave them.

(1.) They must see to it that they acted from a good principle; they must do all in the fear of the Lord, setting him always before them, and then they would act faithfully, conscientiously, and with a perfect upright heart, 2Ch 19:9.

(2.) They must make it their great and constant care to prevent sin, to warn the people that they trespass not against the Lord, inspire them with a dread of sin, not only as hurtful to themselves and the public peace, but as an offence to God, and that which would bring wrath upon the people if they committed it and upon the magistrates if they did not punish it. "This do, and you shall not trespass;" this implies that those who have power in their hands contract the guilt of sin themselves if they do not use their power for the preventing and restraining of sin in others. "You trespass if you do not keep them from trespassing."

(3.) They must act with resolution. "Deal courageously, and fear not the face of man; be bold and daring in the discharge of your duty, and, whoever is against you, God will protect you: The Lord shall be with the good." Wherever he finds a good man, a good magistrate, he will be found a good God.

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take
heed and do *it:* for *there is* no iniquity with the Lord our God,
nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.
8 Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and *of*
the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the
judgment of the Lord, and for controversies, when they returned
to Jerusalem.
9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the
Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart.
10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that
dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and
commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn
that they trespass not against the Lord, and *so* wrath come
upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not
trespass.
11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest *is* over you in all matters of
the Lord ; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the
house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites *shall be*
officers before you. Deal courageously, and the Lord shall be with
the good.

2 Chronicles-20

The Victory over Moab and Ammon

1 It came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the
children of Ammon, and with them *other* besides the
Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

We left Jehoshaphat, in the foregoing chapter, well employed in reforming his kingdom and providing for the due administration of justice and support of religion in it, and expected nothing but to hear of the peace and prosperity of his reign; but here we have him in distress, which distress, however, was followed by such a glorious deliverance as was an abundant recompence for his piety. If we meet with trouble in the way of duty, we may believe it is that God may have an opportunity of showing us so much the more of his marvellous loving-kindness. We have here,

I. A formidable invasion of Jehoshaphat's kingdom by the Moabites, and Ammonites, and their auxiliaries, 2Ch 20:1. Jehoshaphat was surprised with the intelligence of it when the enemy had already entered his country, 2Ch 20:2. What pretence they had to quarrel with Jehoshaphat does not appear; they are said to come from beyond the sea, meaning the Dead Sea, where Sodom had stood. It should seem, they marched through those of the ten tribes that lay beyond Jordan, and they gave them passage through their borders; so ungrateful were they to Jehoshaphat, who had lately put his hand to help them in recovering Ramoth-Gilead. Several nations joined in this confederacy, but especially the children of Lot, whom the rest helped, Ps 83:6-8. The neighbouring nations had feared Jehoshaphat (2Ch 17:10), but perhaps his affinity with Ahab had lessened him in their esteem, and they had some intimation that his God was displeased with him for it, which they fancied would give them an opportunity to make a prey of his kingdom.

II The preparation Jehoshaphat made against the invaders. No mention is made of his mustering his forces, which yet it is most probable he did, for God must be trusted in the use of means. But his great care was to obtain the favour of God, and secure him on his side, which perhaps he was the more solicitous about because he had been lately told that there was wrath upon him from before the Lord, 2Ch 19:2. But he is of the mind of his father David. If we must be corrected, yet let us not fall into the hands of man.

1. He feared. Consciousness of guilt made him fear. Those that have least sin are the most sensible of it. The surprise added to the fright. Holy fear is a spur to prayer and preparation, Heb 11:7.

2. He set himself to seek the Lord, and, in the first place, to make him his friend. Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him, and to find favour with him, must set themselves to seek him, must do it with fixedness of thought, with sincerity of intention, and with the utmost vigour and resolution to continue seeking him.

3. He proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah, appointed a day of humiliation and prayer, that they might join together in confessing their sins and asking help of the Lord. Fasting from bodily refreshments, upon such extraordinary occasions, is a token of self-judging for the sins we have committed (we own ourselves unworthy of the bread we eat, and that God might justly withhold it from us), and of self-denial for the future; fasting for sin implies a resolution to fast from it, though it has been to us as a sweet morsel. Magistrates are to call their people to the duty of fasting and prayer upon such occasions, that it may be a national act, and so may obtain national mercies.

4. The people readily assembled out of all the cities of Judah in the court of the temple to join in prayer (2Ch 20:4), and they stood before the Lord, as beggars at his door, with their wives and children; they and their families were in danger, and therefore they bring their families with them to seek the Lord. "Lord, we are indeed a provoking people, that deserve to be abandoned to ruin; but here are little ones that are innocent, let not them perish in the storm."

Nineveh was spared for the sake of the little ones, Jon 4:11. The place they met in was the house of the Lord, before the new court, which was perhaps lately added to the former courts (that, as some think, which was called the court of the women); thus they came within reach of that gracious promise which God had made, in answer to Solomon's prayer, 2Ch 7:15. My ears shall be attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. 5. Jehoshaphat himself was the mouth of the congregation to God, and did not devolve the work upon his chaplains. Though the kings were forbidden to burn incense, they were allowed to pray and preach; as Solomon and Jehoshaphat here. The prayer Jehoshaphat prayed, upon this occasion, is here recorded, or part of it; and an excellent prayer it is.

(1.) He acknowledges the sovereign dominion of the divine Providence, gives to God the glory of it and takes to himself the comfort of it (2Ch 20:6): "Art not thou God in heaven? No doubt thou art, which none of the gods of the heathen are; make it to appear then. Is not thy dominion, supreme over kingdoms themselves, and

universal, over all kingdoms, even those of the heathen that know thee not? Control these heathen then; set bounds to their daring threatening insults. Is there not in thy hand the power and might which none is able to withstand? Lord, exert it on our behalf. Glorify thy own omnipotence."

(2.) He lays hold on their covenant-relation to God and interest in him. "Thou that art God in heaven art the God of our fathers (2Ch 20:6) and our God, 2Ch 20:7. Whom should we seek to, whom should we trust to, for relief, but to the God we have chosen and served?"

(3.) He shows the title they had to this good land they were now in possession of; an indisputable title it was: "Thou gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend. He was thy friend (this is referred to, Jam 2:23, to show the honour of Abraham, that he was called the friend of God); we are his seed, and hope to be beloved for the father's sake," Ro 11:28,De 7:8,9. "We hold this land by grant from thee. Lord, maintain thy own grant, and warrant it against all unjust claims. Suffer us not to be cast out of they possession. We are tenants; thou art our landlord; wilt thou not hold thy own?" 2Ch 20:11. Those that use what they have for God may comfortably hope that he will secure it to them.

(4.) He makes mention of the sanctuary, the temple they had built for God's name (2Ch 20:8), not as if that merited any thing at God's hand, for of his own they gave him, but it was such a token of God's favourable presence with them that they had promised themselves he would hear and help them when, in their distress, they cried to him before that house, 2Ch 20:8,9. "Lord, when it was built it was intended for the encouragement of our faith at such a time as this. Here thy name is; here we are. Lord, help us, for the glory of thy name."

(5.) He pleads the ingratitude and injustice of his enemies: "We are such as it will be thy glory to appear for; they are such as it will be thy glory to appear against; for,

[1.] They ill requite our ancient kindnesses. Thou wouldst not let Israel invade them, nor give them any disturbance." De 2:5,9,19, Meddle not with the Edomites, distress not the Moabites, come not

nigh the children of Ammon, no not though they provoke you. "Yet now see how they invade us." We may comfortably appear to God against those that render us evil for good.

[2.] "They break in upon our ancient rights. They come to cast us out of our possessions, and seize our land for themselves. O! our God, wilt thou not judge them? 2Ch 20:12. Wilt thou not give sentence against them, and execute it upon them?" The justice of God is the refuge of those that are wronged.

(6.) He professes his entire dependence upon God for deliverance. Though he had a great army on foot, and well disciplined; yet he said, "We have no might against this great company, none without thee, none that we can expect any thing from without thy special presence and blessing, none to boast of, none to trust to; but our eyes are upon thee. We rely upon thee, and from thee is all our expectation. The disease seems desperate: we know not what to do, are quite at a loss, in a great strait. But this is a sovereign remedy, our eyes are upon thee, an eye of acknowledgment and humble submission, an eye of faith and entire dependence, an eye of desire and hearty prayer, an eye of hope and patient expectation. In thee, O God! do we put our trust; our souls wait on thee."

2 Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There
cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this
side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazon-tamar, which *is*
Engedi.
3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord,
and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.
4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the Lord:
even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.
5 And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and
Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court,
6 and said, O Lord God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven
? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and
in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to
withstand thee?

7 *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this
land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of
Abraham thy friend for ever?
8 And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein
for thy name, saying,
9 If, *when* evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence,
or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for
name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then
thou wilt hear and help.
10 And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount
Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came
out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed
them not;
11 behold, *I say*, *how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of
thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.
12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against
this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what
to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee.
13 And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their
wives, and their children.
14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the
son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph,
came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation;

We have here God's gracious answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer; and it was a speedy answer. While he was yet speaking God heard: before the congregation was dismissed they had assurance given them that they should be victorious; for it is never in vain to seek God.

1 The spirit of prophecy came upon a Levite that was present, not in any place of eminency, but in the midst of the congregation, 2Ch 20:14. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where and on whom he listeth. He was of the sons of Asaph, and therefore one of the singers; on that office God would put an honour. Whether he was a prophet before this or no is uncertain, most probably he was, which would make him the more regarded. There needed no sign, the thing itself was to be performed the very next day, and that would be confirmation enough to his prophecy.

2. He encouraged them to trust in God, though the danger was very threatening (2Ch 20:15): "Be not afraid; you have admitted fear enough to bring you to God, do not now admit that which will drive you to God, do not now admit that which will drive you from him again. The battle is not yours; it is not in your own strength, not for your own cause, that you engage; the battle is God's: he does and will, as you have desired, interest himself in the cause."

3. He gives them intelligence of the motions of the enemy, and orders them to march towards them, with particular directions where they should find them. To-morrow (the day after the fast) go you down against them, 2Ch 20:16,17. It is fit that he who commands the deliverance should command those for whom the deliverance is to be wrought, and give the necessary orders, both for time and place.

4. He assures them that they should be, not the glorious instruments, but the joyful spectators, of the total defeat of the enemy: "You shall not need to strike a stroke; the work shall be done to your hands; only stand still and see it," 2Ch 20:17. As Moses said to Israel at the Red Sea (Ex 14:13), "God is with you, who is able to do his work himself, and will do it. If the battle be his, the victory shall be his too." Let but the Christian soldier go out against his spiritual enemies, and the God of peace will tread them under his feet and make him more than a conqueror. 5. Jehoshaphat and his people received these assurances with faith, reverence, and thankfulness.

(1.) They bowed their heads, Jehoshaphat first, and then all the people, fell before the Lord, and worshipped, receiving with a holy awe and fear of God this token of his favour, and saying with faith, Be it unto us according to thy word.

(2.) They lifted up their voices in praise to God, 2Ch 20:19. An active faith can give thanks for a promise though it be not yet performed, knowing that God's bonds are as good as ready money. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, Ps 60:5.

15 and he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not

afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle
is not yours, but God's.
16 Tomorrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by
the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook,
before the wilderness of Jeruel.
17 Ye shall not *need* to fight in this *battle:* set yourselves, stand ye *still,*
and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and
Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against
them: for the Lord *will be* with you.
18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground: and
all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord,
worshipping the Lord.
19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the
children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the Lord God of
Israel with a loud voice on high.
20 And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the
wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and
said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe
in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his
prophets, so shall ye prosper.

We have here the foregoing prayer answered and the foregoing promise performed, in the total overthrow of the enemies' forces and the triumph (for so it was rather than a victory) of Jehoshaphat's forces over them.

I. Never was army drawn out to the field of battle as Jehoshaphat's was. He had soldiers ready prepared for war (2Ch 17:18), but here is no notice taken of their military equipment, their swords or spears, their shields or bows. But Jehoshaphat took care,

1. That faith should be their armour. As they went forth, instead of calling them to handle their arms, and stand to them, to keep ranks, observe orders, and fight valiantly, he bade them believe in the Lord God and give credit to his word in the mouth of his prophets, and assured them that they should prosper and be established, 2Ch 20:20. That is true courage which faith inspires a man with; nor will any thing contribute more to the establishing of the heart in shaking times than a firm belief of the power, and mercy, and

promise of God. The heart is fixed that thus trusteth in the Lord, and is kept in perfect peace. In our spiritual conflicts, this is the victory, this is the prosperity, even our faith.

2. That praise and thanksgiving should be their vanguard, 2Ch 20:21. Jehoshaphat called a council of war, and it was resolved to appoint singers to go out before the army, to charge in the front, who had nothing else to do but to praise God, to praise his holiness, which is his beauty, to praise him as they did in the temple (that beauty of holiness) with that ancient and good doxology which eternity itself will not wear thread-bare, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever. By this strange advance towards the field of battle, Jehoshaphat intended to express his firm reliance upon the word of God (which enabled him to triumph before the battle), to animate his own soldiers, to confound the enemy, and to engage God on their side; for praise pleases God better than all burnt offering and sacrifice.

II. Never was army so unaccountably destroyed as that of the enemy; not by thunder, or hail, or the sword of an angel, not by dint of sword, or strength of arm, or any surprising alarm, like that which Gideon gave the Midianites; but the Lord set ambushments against them, either hosts of angels, or, as bishop Patrick thinks, their own ambushments, whom God struck with such confusion that they fell upon their own friends as if they had been enemies, and every one helped to destroy another, so that none escaped. This God did when his people began to sing and to praise (2Ch 20:22), for he delights to furnish those with matter for praise that have hearts for it. We read of his being angry at the prayers of his people (Ps 80:4), but never at their praises.

When they did but begin the work of praise God perfected the work of their deliverance. What ground there was for their jealousies one of another does not appear, perhaps there was none; but so it was that the Ammonites and the Moabites fell foul upon the Edomites and cut them off, and then they fell out with one another and cut one another off, 2Ch 20:23. Thus God often makes wicked people instruments of destruction to one another; and what alliances can

be so firm as to keep those together whom God designs to dash in pieces one against another? See the mischievous consequences of divisions which neither of the contending parties can give any good account of the reason of. Those are wretchedly infatuated, to their ruin, that fall foul upon their friends as if they were enemies.

III. Never was spoil so cheerfully divided, for Jehoshaphat's army had nothing to do besides; the rest was done for them. When they came to the view of this vast army, instead of finding living men to fight with, they found them all dead men, and their carcases spread as dung upon the face of the earth, 2Ch 20:24. See how rich God is in mercy to those that call upon him in truth, and how often he out-does him in truth, and how often he out-does the prayers and expectations of his people. Jehoshaphat and his people prayed to be delivered from being spoiled by the enemy; and God not only delivered them, but enriched them with the spoil of the enemy.

The plunder of the field was very great and very rich. They found precious jewels with the dead bodies, which yet could not save them from being loathsome carcases. The spoil was more than they could carry away at once, and they were three days in gathering it, 2Ch 20:25. Now it appeared what was God's end in bringing this great army against Judah; it was to humble them and prove them, that he might do them good in their latter end. It seemed at first a disturbance to their reformation, but it proved a recompence of it.

IV. Never was victory celebrated with more solemn and enlarged thanksgivings.

1. They kept a day of praise in the camp, before they drew their forces out of the field. Many thanksgivings, no doubt, were offered up to God immediately; but on the fourth day they assembled in a valley, where they blessed God with so much zeal and fervency that that day's work gave a name to the place, the valley of Berachah, that is, of blessing, 2Ch 20:26. The remembrance of this work of wonder was hereby perpetuated, for the encouragement of succeeding generations to trust in God.

2. Yet they did not think this enough, but came in solemn procession, all in a body, and Jehoshaphat at the head of them, to Jerusalem, that the country, as they passed along, might join with them in their praises, and that they might give thanks for the mercy where they had by prayer obtained it, in the house of the Lord, 2Ch 20:27,28. Praising God must not be the work of a day only; but our praises, when we have received mercy, must be often repeated, as our prayers were when we were in the pursuit of it. Every day we must bless God; as long as we live, and while we have any being, we must praise him, spending our time in that work in which we hope to spend our eternity. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments in the courts of the Lord's house, Ps 116:19.

V. Never did victory turn to a better account than this; for, 1. Jehoshaphat's kingdom was hereby made to look very great and considerable abroad, 2Ch 20:29. When they heard that God fought thus for Israel, they could not but say, There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, and Happy art thou, O Israel! It begat in the neighbours a reverence of God and a cautious fear of doing any injury to his people. It is dangerous fighting against those who have God with them. 2. It was made very easy and quiet at home, 2Ch 20:30.

(1.) They were quiet among themselves. Those that were displeased at the destroying of the images and groves were now satisfied, and obliged to own that since the God of Israel could deliver after this sort he only is to be worshipped, in that way only which he himself has appointed.

(2.) They were quiet from the fear of insults from their neighbours, God having given them rest round about. And, if he give rest, who can give disturbance?

21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

22 And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and

mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

23 For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them:* and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

24 And when Judah came toward the watchtower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

25 And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much.

26 And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the Lord : therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah [blessing], unto this day.

27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

28 And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord.

29 And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.

30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

The Reign of Jehoshaphat

31 And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: *he was* thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

We are now drawing towards the close of the history of Jehoshaphat's reign, for a further account of which those who lived when this book

was published were referred to an authentic history of it, written by Jehu the prophet (2Ch 19:2), which was then extant, 2Ch 20:34. This was the general character of his reign, that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, kept close to the worship of God himself and did what he could to keep his people close to it. But two things are here to be lamented:--

1 The people still retained a partiality for the high places, 2Ch 20:33. Those that were erected to the honour of strange gods were taken away (2Ch 17:6); but those where the true God was worshipped, being less culpable, were thought allowable, and Jehoshaphat was loth to disoblige the people so far as to take them away, for as yet they had not prepared their hearts to serve the God of their fathers. They complied with Jehoshaphat's reformation because they could not for shame do otherwise, but they were not hearty in it, did not direct their hearts to God in it, did not act in it from any good principle nor with any zeal or resolution: and the best magistrates cannot bring to pass what they would, in reformation, when the people are cool in it.

2. Jehoshaphat himself still retained a partiality for the house of Ahab, because he had married his son to a daughter of that family, though he had been plainly reproved for it and had like to have smarted for it. He saw and knew that Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, did very wickedly, and therefore could not expect to prosper; yet he joined himself with him, not in war, as with his father, but in trade, became his partner in an East India fleet bound for Ophir, 2Ch 20:35,36. There is an emphasis laid upon the time--after this, after God had done such great things for him, without any such scandalous and pernicious confederacies, given him not only victory, but wealth, yet after this to go and join himself with a wicked king was very ungrateful. After God had given him such a deliverance as this should he again break God's commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? What could he expect but that God should be angry with him? Ezr 9:13,14. Yet he sends to him, to show him his error and bring him to repentance,

(1.) By a prophet, who foretold the blasting of his project, 2Ch 20:37. And,

(2.) By a storm, which broke the ships in the port before they set sail, by which he was warned to break off his alliance with Ahaziah; and it seems he took the warning, for, when Ahaziah afterwards pressed him to join with him, he would not, 1Ki 22:49. See how pernicious a thing it is to join in friendship and society with evil-doers. It is a hard matter to break off from it. A man may much better keep himself from being taken in the snare than recover himself out of it.

32 And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not
from it, doing *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord.
33 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the
people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their
fathers.
34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold,
they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who *is*
mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.
35 And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with
Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:
36 and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish:
and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber.
37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied
against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself
with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships
were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

2 Chronicles-21

The Reign of Jehoram of Judah

1 Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with
his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in
his stead.
2 And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel,
and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all
these *were* the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.

3 And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he *was* the firstborn.

We find here,

I. That Jehoshaphat was a very careful indulgent father to Jehoram. He had many sons, who are here named (2Ch 21:2), and it is said (2Ch 21:13) that they were better than Jehoram, had a great deal more wisdom and virtue, and lived up to their education, which he went counter to. They were very hopeful, and any of them more fit for the crown than he; and yet, because he was the first-born (2Ch 21:3), his father secured the kingdom to him, and portioned his brethren and disposed of them so as that they would be easy and give him no disturbance; as Abraham, when he made Isaac his heir, dismissed his other children with gifts. Herein Jehoshaphat was very kind and fair to his son, which might have obliged him to be respectful to him, and tread in the steps of so good a father.

But it is no new thing for the children that have been most indulged by their parents to be least dutiful to them. Whether in doing this he acted wisely and well for his people, and was just to them, I cannot say. His birthright entitled him to a double portion of his father's estate, De 21:171. But if he appeared utterly unfit for government (the end of which is the good of the people), and likely to undo all that his father had done, it would have been better perhaps to have set him aside, and taken the next that was hopeful, and not inclined as he was to idolatry. Power is a sacred thing, with which men may either do much good or much hurt; and therefore Detur digniori--Let him that deserves it have it. Salus populi suprema lex--The security of the people is the first consideration.

II. That Jehoram was a most barbarous brother to his father's sons. As soon as he had settled himself in the throne he slew all his brethren with the sword, either by false accusation, under colour of law, or rather by assassination. By some wicked hand or other he got them all murdered, pretending (it is likely) that he could not think himself safe in the government till they were taken out of the way. Those that mean ill themselves are commonly, without cause,

jealous of those about them. The wicked fear where no fear is, or pretend to do so, in order to conceal their malice.

Jehoram, it is likely, hated his brethren and slew them for the same reason that Cain hated Abel and slew him, because their piety condemned his impiety and won them that esteem with the people which he had lost. With them he slew divers of the princes of Israel, who adhered to them, or were likely to avenge their death. The princes of Judah, those who had taught the good knowledge of the Lord (2Ch 17:7), are here called princes of Israel, as before fathers of Israel (2Ch 19:8), because they were Israelites indeed, men of integrity. The sword which the good father had put into their hands this wicked son sheathed in their bowels. Woe unto him that thus foundeth a kingdom in blood (Hab 2:12); it will prove a foundation that will sink the superstructure.

III. That Jehoram was a most wicked king, who corrupted and debauched his kingdom, and ruined the reformation that his good father and grandfather had carried on: He walked in the way of the house of Ahab (2Ch 21:6), made high places, which the people were of themselves too forward to make, and did his utmost to set up idolatry again, 2Ch 21:11. 1. As for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, where he kept his court, he easily drew them into his spiritual whoredom: He caused them to commit fornication, seducing them to eat things sacrificed to idols, Re 2:20. 2 The country people seem to have been brought to it with more difficulty; but those that would not be corrupted by flatteries were driven by force to partake in his abominable idolatries: He compelled Judah thereto. He used that power for the destruction of the church which was given him for the edification of it.

IV. That when he forsook God and his worship his subjects withdrew from their allegiance to him. 1. Some of the provinces abroad that were tributaries to him did so. The Edomites revolted (2Ch 21:8), and, though he chastised them (2Ch 21:9), yet he could not reduce them, 2Ch 21:10. 2. One of the cities of his own kingdom did so. Libnah revolted (2Ch 21:10) and set up for a free state, as of old it had a king of its own, Jos 12:15. And the reason

is here given, not only why God permitted it, but why they did it; they shook off his government because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers, had become an idolater and a worshipper of false gods, and they could not continue subject to him without some danger of being themselves also drawn away from God and their duty. While he adhered to God they adhered to him; but, when he cast God off, they cast him off. Whether this reason will justify them in their revolt of no, it will justify God's providence which ordered it so.

V. That yet God was tender of his covenant with the house of David, and therefore would not destroy the royal family, though it was so wretchedly corrupted and degenerated, 2Ch 21:7. These things we had before, 2Ki 8:19-22. The tenour of the covenant was that David's seed should be visited for their transgressions, but the covenant should never be broken, Ps 89:30-37, &c.

4 Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and *divers* also of the princes of Israel.

5 Jehoram *was* thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

6 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was* evil in the eyes of the Lord.

7 Howbeit the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

8 In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king.

9 Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots.

10 So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time *also* did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers.

11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto.*

12 And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying,
Thus saith the Lord God of David thy father, Because thou hast
not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the
ways of Asa king of Judah,
13 but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made
Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to
the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy
brethren of thy father's house, *which were* better than thyself:
14 behold, with a great plague will the Lord smite thy people,
and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods:
15 and thou *shalt have* great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until
thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.
16 Moreover the Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the
Philistines, and of the Arabians, that *were* near the Ethiopians:

Here we have,

I. A warning from God sent to Jehoram by a writing from Elijah the prophet. By this it appears that Jehoram came to the throne, and showed himself what he was before Elijah's translation. It is true we find Elisha attending Jehoshaphat, and described as pouring water on the hands of Elijah, after the story of Elijah's translation (2Ki 3:11); but that might be, and that description might be given of him, while Elijah was yet on earth: and it is certain that that history is put out of its proper place, for we read of Jehoshaphat's death, and Jehoram's coming to the crown, before we read of Elijah's translation, 1Ki 22:50. We will suppose that the time of his departure was at hand, so that he could not go in person to Jehoram; but that, hearing of his great wickedness in murdering his brethren, he left this writing it is probable with Elisha, to be sent him by the first opportunity, that it might either be a means to reclaim him or a witness against him that he was fairly told what would be in the end hereof.

The message is sent him in the name of the Lord God of David his father (2Ch 21:12), upbraiding him with his relation to David as that which, though it was his honour, was an aggravation of his degeneracy. 1. His crimes are plainly charged upon him--his departure from the good ways of God, in which he had been

educated, and which he had been directed and encouraged to walk in by the example of his good father and grandfather, who lived and died in peace and honour (2Ch 21:12)-- his conformity to the ways of the house of Ahab, that impious scandalous family--his setting up and enforcing idolatry in his kingdom--and his murdering his brethren because they were better than himself, 2Ch 21:13. These are the heads of the indictment against him. 2. Judgment is given against him for these crimes; he is plainly told that his sin should certainly be the ruin,

(1.) Of his kingdom and family (2Ch 21:14): "With a heavy stroke, even that of war and captivity, will the Lord smite thy people and thy children," &c. Bad men bring God's judgments upon all about them. His people justly suffer because they had complied with his idolatry, and his wives because they had drawn him to it.

(2.) Of his health and life: "Thou shalt have great sickness, very painful and tedious, and at last mortal," 2Ch 21:15. This he is warned of before, that his blood might be upon his own head, the watchman having delivered his soul; and that when these things so particularly foretold, came to pass, it might appear that they did not come by chance, but as the punishment of his sins, and were so intended. And now if, as he had learned of Ahab to do wickedly, he had but learned even of Ahab to humble himself upon the receipt of this threatening message from Elijah--if, like (1Ki 21:27), he had rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted--who knows but, like him, he might have obtained at least a reprieve? But it does not appear that he took any notice of it; he threw it by as waste-paper; Elijah seemed to him as one that mocked. But those that will not believe shall feel.

II The threatened judgments brought upon him because he slighted the warning. No marvel that hardened sinners are not frightened from sin and to repentance by the threatenings of misery in another world, which is future and out of sight, when the certain prospect of misery in this world, the sinking of their estates and the ruin of their healths, will not restrain them from vicious courses.

1. See Jehoram here stripped of all his comforts. God stirred up the spirit of his neighbours against him, who had loved and feared Jehoshaphat, but hated and despised him, looking upon it as a scandalous thing for a nation to change their gods. Some occasion or other they took to quarrel with him, invaded his country, but, as it should seem, fought neither against small nor great, but the king's house only; they made directly to that, and carried away all the substance that was found in it. No mention is made of their carrying any away captive but the king's wives and his sons, 2Ch 21:17. Thus God made it evident that the controversy was with him and his house. Here it is only said, They carried away his sons; but we find (2Ch 22:1) that they slew them all. Blood for blood. He had slain all his brethren, to strengthen himself; and now all his sons are slain but one, and so he is weakened. If he had not been of the house of David, that one would not have escaped. When Jeroboam's house, and Baasha's, and Ahab's, were destroyed, there was none left; but David's house must not be wholly extirpated, though sometimes wretchedly degenerated, because a blessing was in it, no less a blessing than that of the Messiah.

2. See him tormented with sore diseases and of long continuance, such as were threatened in the law against those that would not fear the Lord their God, De 28:58,59. His disease was very grievous. It lay in his bowels, producing a continual griping, and with this there was a complication of other sore diseases. The affliction was moreover very tedious. Two years he continued ill, and could get no relief; for the disease was incurable, though he was in the prime of life, not forty years old. Asa, whose heart was perfect with God though in some instances he stepped aside, was diseased only in his feet; but Jehoram, whose heart was wicked, was struck in his inwards, and he that had no bowels of compassion towards his brethren was so plagued in his bowels that they fell out. Even good men, and those who are very dear to God, may be afflicted with diseases of this kind; but to them they are fatherly chastisements, and by the support of divine consolations the soul may dwell at ease even then when the body lies in pain. These sore diseases seized him just after his house was plundered and his wives and children were carried away.

(1.) Perhaps his grief and anguish of mind for that calamity might occasion his sickness, or at least contribute to the heightening of it.

(2.) By this sickness he was disabled to do any thing for the recovery of them or the revenge of the injury done him.

(3.) It added, no doubt, very much to his grief, in his sickness, that he was deprived of the society of his wives and children and that all the substance of his house was carried away. To be sick and poor, sick and solitary, but especially to be sick and in sin, sick and under the curse of God, sick and destitute of grace to bear the affliction, and of comfort to counter-balance it--is a most deplorable case.

3. See him buried in disgrace. He reigned but eight years, and then departed without being desired, 2Ch 21:20. Nobody valued him while he lived, none lamented him when he died, but all wished that no greater loss might ever come to Jerusalem. To show what little affection or respect they had for him, they would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings, as thinking him unworthy to be numbered among them who had governed so ill. The excluding of his body from the sepulchres of his fathers might be ordered by Providence as an intimation of the everlasting separation of the souls of the wicked after death, from the spirits of just men.

This further disgrace they put upon him, that they made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers, 2Ch 21:19. His memory was far from being sweet and precious to them, and therefore they did not honour it with any sweet odours or precious spices, though we may suppose that his dead body, after so long and loathsome a disease, needed something to perfume it. The generality of the people, though prone to idolatry, yet had no true kindness for their idolatrous kings. Wickedness and profaneness make men despicable even in the eyes of those who have but little religion themselves, while natural conscience itself often gives honour to

those who are truly pious. Those that despise God shall be lightly esteemed, as Jehoram was.

17 and they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

18 And after all this the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease.

19 And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers.

20 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

2 Chronicles-22

The Reign of Ahaziah of Judah

1 And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned.

2 Forty and two years old *was* Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counselor to do wickedly.

4 Wherefore he did evil in the sight of the Lord like the house of Ahab: for they were his counselors, after the death of his father, to his destruction.

5 He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote Joram.

We have here an account of the reign of Ahaziah, a short reign (of one year only), yet long enough, unless it had been better. He was called Jeho-ahaz (2Ch 21:17); here he is called Ahaz-iah, which is the same name and of the same signification, only the words of which it is compounded are transposed. He is here said to be forty-two years old when he began to reign (2Ch 22:2), which could not be, for his father, his immediate predecessor, was but forty when he died, and it is said (2Ki 8:26) that he was twenty-two years old when he began to reign.

Some make this forty-two to be the age of his mother Athaliah, for in the original it is, he was the son of forty-two years, that is, the son of a mother that was of that age; and justly is her age put for his, in reproach to him, because she managed him, and did what she would--she, in effect, reigned, and he had little more than the title of king. Many good expositors are ready to allow that this, with some few more such difficulties, arise from the mistake of some transcriber, who put forty-two for twenty-two, and the copies by which the error should have been corrected might be lost. Many ancient translations read it here twenty-two. Few books are now printed without some errata, yet the authors do not therefore disown them, nor are the errors of the press imputed to the author, but the candid reader amends them by the sense, or by comparing them with some other part of the work, as we may easily do this.

The history of Ahaziah's reign is briefly summed up in two clauses, 2Ch 22:3,4. His mother and her relations were his counselors to do wickedly, and it was to his destruction.

I. He did wickedly. Though by a special providence of God he was preserved alive, when all his brethren were slain, and reserved for the crown, notwithstanding he was the youngest of them--though the inhabitants of Jerusalem, when they had buried his father ingloriously, made him king, in hopes he would take warning by that not to tread in his steps, but would do better for himself and his kingdom--yet he was not influenced by the favours either of God or man, but walked in the way of the house of Ahab, did evil in the sight of the Lord like them (2Ch 22:3,4), that is, he

worshipped, Baalim and Ashtaroth, supposing (as the learned bishop Patrick thinks) that by these demons, as mediators, they might have easier access to the supreme Numen, the God of Israel, or that these they might resort to at all times and for all matters, as being nearer at hand, and not of so high a dignity, but of a middle nature between the immortal God and mortal men--deified heroes; so they worshipped them as the church of Rome does saints and angels.

That was sufficiently bad; but I wish there was no reason to suspect worse. I am apprehensive that they looked upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers, to be altogether such a one as these Baalim, and them to be as great and as good as he, nay, upon one account, more eligible inasmuch as these Baalim encouraged in their worshippers all manner of lewdness and sensuality, which the God of Israel strictly forbade.

II. He was counselled by his mother and her relations to do so. She was his counsellor (2Ch 22:3) and so were they, after the death of his father, 2Ch 22:4. While his father lived he took care to keep him to idolatry; but, when he was dead, the house of Ahab feared lest his father's miserable end should deter him from it, and therefore they were very industrious to keep him closely to it, and to make him seven times more a child of hell than themselves. The counsel of the ungodly is the ruin of many young persons when they are setting out in the world. This young prince might have had better advice if he had pleased from the princes and the judges, the priests and the Levites, that had been famous in his good grandfather's time for teaching in the knowledge of God; but the house of Ahab humoured him, and he walked after their counsel, gave himself up to be led by them, and did just as they would have him. Thus do those debase and destroy themselves that forsake the divine guidance.

III. He was counselled by them to his destruction. So it proved. Those that counsel us to do wickedly counsel us to our destruction; while they fawn, and flatter, and pretend friendship, they are really our worst enemies. Those that debauch young men destroy them.

It was bad enough that they exposed him to the sword of the Syrians, drawing him in to join with Joram king of Israel in an expedition to Ramoth-Gilead, where Joram was wounded, an expedition that was not for his honour. Those that give us bad counsel in the affairs of religion, if regarded by us, may justly be made of God our counsellors to do foolishly in our own affairs. But that was not all: by engaging him in an intimacy with Joram king of Israel, they involved him in the common ruin of the house of Ahab. He came on a visit to Joram (2Ch 22:6) just at the time that Jehu was executing the judgment of God upon that idolatrous family, and so was cut off with them, 2Ch 22:7-9. Here,

1. See and dread the mischief of bad company--of joining in with sinners. If not the infection, yet let the destruction be feared. Come out from Babylon, that falling house, Re 18:4.

2. See and acknowledge the justice of God. His providence brought Ahaziah, just at this fatal juncture, to see Joram, that he might fall with him and be taken as in a snare. This we had an account of before, 2Ki 9:27,28. It is here added that he was decently buried (not as Jehoram, whose dead body was cast into Naboth's vineyard, 2Ki 9:26), and the reason given is because he was the son (that is, the grandson) of good Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with his heart. Thus is he remembered with honour long after his death, and some respect shown even to his degenerate unworthy seed for his sake. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

6 And he returned to be healed in Jezreel because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab at Jezreel, because he was sick.

Jehu Kills Ahaziah

7 And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the Lord had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab.

8 And it came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them.

9 And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he *is* the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

Athaliah Usurps the Throne

10 But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.

We have here what we had before, 2Ki 11:1-16, &c. 1. A wicked woman endeavouring to destroy the house of David, that she might set up a throne for herself upon the ruins of it. Athaliah barbarously cut off all the seed-royal (2Ch 22:10), perhaps intending to transmit the crown of Judah after herself to some of her own relations, that though her family was cut off in Israel by Jehu it might be planted in Judah. 2. A good woman effectually preserving it from being wholly extirpated. One of the late king's sons, a child of a year old, was rescued from among the dead, and saved alive by the care of Jehoiada's wife (2Ch 22:11,12), that a lamp might be ordained for God's anointed; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

11 But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not.

12 And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

2 Chronicles-23

1 And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him.

We may well imagine the bad posture of affairs in Jerusalem during Athaliah's six years' usurpation, and may wonder that God permitted it and his people bore it so long; but after such a dark and tedious night the returning day in this revolution was the brighter and the more welcome. The continuance of David's seed and throne was what God had sworn by his holiness (Ps 89:35), and an interruption was no defeasance; the stream of government here runs again in the right channel. The instrument and chief manager of the restoration is Jehoiada, who appears to have been,

1. A man of great prudence, who reserved the young prince for so many years till he was fit to appear in public, and till the nation had grown weary of the usurper, who prepared his work beforehand, and then effected it with admirable secresy and expedition. When God has work to do he will qualify and animate men for it.

2. A man of great interest. The captains joined with him, 2Ch 23:1 The Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel came at his call to Jerusalem (2Ch 23:2) and were there ready to receive his orders. See what a command wisdom and virtue will give men. The Levites and all Judah did as Jehoiada commanded (2Ch 23:8), and, which is strange, all that were entrusted with the secret kept their own counsel till it was executed. Thus the words of the wise are heard in quiet, Ec 9:17.

3. A man of great faith. It was not only common equity (much less his wife's relation to the royal family) that put him upon this undertaking, but a regard to the word of God, and the divine entail of the crown (2Ch 23:3): The king's son shall reign, must reign, as

the Lord hath said. His eye to the promise, and dependence upon that, added a great deal of glory to this undertaking.

4. A man of great religion. This matter was to be done in the temple, which might occasion some breach of rule, and the necessity of the case might be thought to excuse it; but he gave special order that none of the people should come into the house of the Lord, but the priests and Levites only, who were holy, upon pain of death, 2Ch 23:6,7. Never let sacred things be profaned, no, not for the support of civil rights.

5. A man of great resolution. When he had undertaken this business he went through with it, brought out the king, crowned him, and gave him the testimony, 2Ch 23:11. He ventured his head, but it was in a good cause, and therefore he went on boldly. It is here said that his sons joined with him in anointing the young king. One of them, it is likely, was that Zechariah whom Joash afterwards put to death for reproving him (2Ch 24:20), which was so much the more ungrateful because he bore a willing part in anointing him.

2 And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of
all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and
they came to Jerusalem.
3 And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the
house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son
shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David.
4 This *is* the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on
the sabbath, of the priests and of the Levites, *shall be* porters of the
doors;
5 and a third part *shall be* at the king's house; and a third part at
the gate of the foundation: and all the people *shall be* in the
courts of the house of the Lord.
6 But let none come into the house of the Lord, save the priests,
and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they *are*
holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the Lord.
7 And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man
with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever *else* cometh into
the house, he shall be put to death: but be ye with the king when
he cometh in, and when he goeth out.

8 So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go *out* on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses.

9 Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that *had been* king David's, which *were* in the house of God.

10 And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the
temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about.

11 Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and *gave him* the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

12 Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the Lord:

Here we have, I The people pleased, 2Ch 23:12,13. When the king stood at his pillar, whose right it was to stand there, all the people of the land rejoiced to see a rod sprung out of the stem of Jesse, Isa 11:1. When it seemed a withered root in a dry ground, to see what they despaired of ever seeing--a king of the house of David, what a pleasing surprise was it to them! They ran in transports of joy to see this sight, praised the king, and praised God, for they had with them such as taught to sing praise.

II. Athaliah slain. She ran upon the point of the sword of justice; for, imagining her interest much better than it was, she ventured into the house of the Lord at that time, and cried, Treason, treason! But nobody seconded her, or sided with her. The pride of her heart deceived her. She thought all her own, whereas none were cordially so. Jehoiada, as protector in the king's minority, ordered her to be slain (2Ch 23:14), which was done immediately (2Ch 23:15), only care was taken that she should not be slain in the house of the Lord, that sacred place must not be so far disgraced, nor that wicked woman so far honoured.

III. The original contract agreed to, 2Ch 23:16. In the Kings it is said that Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, the people, and the king, 2Ki 11:17. Here it is said to be between himself, the people, and the king; for he, as God's priest, was his representative in this transaction, or a sort of mediator, as Moses was. The indenture was tripartite, but the true intent and meaning of the whole was that they should be the Lord's people. God covenanted by Jehoiada to take them for his people; the king and people covenanted with him to be his; and then the king covenanted with the people to govern them as the people of God, and the people with the king to be subject to him as the Lord's people, in his fear and for his sake. Let us look upon ourselves and one another as the Lord's people, and this will have a powerful influence upon us in the discharge of all our duty both to God and man.

IV. Baal destroyed, 2Ch 23:17. They would not have done half their work if they had only destroyed the usurper of the king's right, and not the usurper of God's right--if they had asserted the honour of the throne, and not that of the altar. The greatest grievance of Athaliah's reign was the bringing in of the worship of Baal, and supporting of that; therefore that must be abolished in the first place. Down with Baal's house, his altars, his images; down with them all, and let the blood of his priests be mingled with his sacrifices; for God had commanded that seducers to idolatry should be put to death, De 13:5,6.

V. The temple service revived, 2Ch 23:18,19. This had been neglected in the last reigns, the priest and people wanting either power or zeal to keep it up when they had princes that were disaffected to it. But Jehoiada restored the offices of the house of the Lord, which in the late times had been disturbed and invaded, to the proper course and proper hands.

1. He appointed the priests to their courses, for the due offering of sacrifices, according to the law of Moses.

2 The singers to theirs, according to the appointment of David. The sacrifices (it should seem) were offered with rejoicing and singing, and with good reason. We joy in God when we receive the atonement, Ro 5:11.

3. The porters were put in their respective posts as David ordered (2Ch 23:19), and their office was to take care that none who were upon any account ceremonially unclean should be admitted into the courts of the temple.

VI. The civil government re-established, 2Ch 23:20. They brought the king in state to his own palace, and set him upon the throne of the kingdom, to give law, and give judgment, either in his own person or by Jehoiada his tutor. Thus was this happy revolution perfected. The generality of the people rejoiced in it, and the rest were quiet and made no opposition, 2Ch 23:21. When the Son of David is enthroned in the soul all is quiet and springs of joy are opened.

13 and she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of music, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason.

14 Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the Lord.

15 So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there.

16 And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the Lord's people.

17 Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

18 Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the Lord by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in

the house of the Lord, to offer the burnt offerings of the Lord, as
it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, *as*
it was ordained by David.

19 And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the Lord, that
none *which was* unclean in any thing should enter in.

20 And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the
governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and
brought down the king from the house of the Lord : and they
came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king
upon the
throne of the kingdom.

21 And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after
that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

2 Chronicles-24

The Reign of Joash of Judah

1 Joash *was* seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned
forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Zibiah of
Beer-sheba.

This account of Joash's good beginnings we had as it stands here 2Ki 12:1-21, &c., though the latter part of this chapter, concerning his apostasy, we had little of there. What is good in men we should take all occasions to speak of and often repeat it; what is evil we should make mention of but sparingly, and no more than is needful. We shall here only observe,

1. That it is a happy thing for young people, when they are setting out in the world, to be under the direction of those that are wise and good and faithful to them, as Joash was under the influence of Jehoiada, during whose time he did that which was right. Let those that are young reckon it a blessing to them, and not a burden and check upon them, to have those with them that will caution them against that which is evil and advise and quicken them to that which is good; and let them reckon it not a mark of weakness and subjection, but of wisdom and discretion, to hearken to such.

He that will not be counselled cannot be helped. It is especially prudent for young people to take advice in their marriages, as Joash did, who left it to his guardian to choose him his wives, because Jezebel and Athaliah had been such plagues, 2Ch 24:3. This is a turn of life which often proves either the making or marring of young people, and therefore should be attended to with great care.

2. Men may go far in the external performances of religion, and keep long to them, merely by the power of their education and the influence of their friends, who yet have no hearty affection for divine things nor any inward relish of them. Foreign inducements may push men on to that which is good who are not actuated by a living principle of grace in their hearts.

3. In the outward expressions of devotion it is possible that those who have only the form of godliness may out-strip those who have the power of it. Joash is more solicitous and more zealous about the repair of the temple than Jehoiada himself, whom he reproves for his remissness in that matter, 2Ch 24:6. It is easier to build temples than to be temples to God.

4. The repairing of churches is a good work, which all in their places should promote, for the decency and conveniency of religious assemblies. The learned tell us that in the Christian church, anciently, part of the tithes were applied that way.

5. Many a good work would be done that now lies undone if there were but a few active men to stir in it and to put it forward. When Joash found the money did not come in as he expected in one way he tried another way, and that answered the intention. Many have honesty enough to follow that have not zeal enough to lead in that which is good. The throwing of money into a chest, through a hole in the lid of it, was a way that had not been used before, and perhaps the very novelty of the thing made it a successful expedient for the raising of money; a great deal was thrown in and with a great deal of cheerfulness: they all rejoiced, 2Ch 24:10. An

invention to please people's humour may sometimes bring them to their duty. Wisdom herein is profitable to direct.

6. Faithfulness is the greatest praise and will be the greatest comfort of those that are entrusted with public treasure or employed in public business. The king and Jehoiada faithfully paid the money to the workmen, who faithfully did the work, 2Ch 24:12,13.

2 And Joash did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord all
the days of Jehoiada the priest.
3 And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons
and daughters.
4 And it came to pass after this, *that* Joash was minded to repair the
house of the Lord.
5 And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to
them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel
money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and
see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened *it*
not.
6 And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why
hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and
out of Jerusalem the collection, *according to the commandment* of
Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel,
for the tabernacle of witness?
7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the
house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of
the Lord did they bestow upon Baalim.
8 And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it
without at the gate of the house of the Lord.
9 And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to
bring in to the Lord the collection *that* Moses the servant of
God *laid* upon Israel in the wilderness.
10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in,
and cast into the chest, until they had made an end.
11 Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto
the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that
there was much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's

officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance.

12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the Lord, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the Lord.

13 So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

14 And when they had finished *it*, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the Lord, *even* vessels to minister, and to offer *withal*, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Jehoiada.

15 But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died; a hundred and thirty years old *was he* when he died.

16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

17 Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

18 And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.

19 Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord ;
and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

20 And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you.

We have here a sad account of the degeneracy and apostasy of Joash. God had done great things for him; he had done something for God; but now he proved ungrateful to his God and false to the

engagements he had laid himself under to him. How has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! Here we find,

I The occasions of his apostasy. When he did that which was right it was not with a perfect heart. He never was sincere, never acted from principle, but in compliance to Jehoiada, who had helped him to the crown, and because he had been protected in the temple and rose upon the ruins of idolatry; and therefore, when the wind turned, he turned with it.

1. His good counsellor left him, and was by death removed from him. It was a mercy to him and his kingdom that Jehoiada lived so long-130 years (2Ch 24:15), by which it appears that he was born in Solomon's time, and had lived six entire reigns before this. It was an encouragement to him to go on in that good way which Jehoiada had trained him up in to see what honour was done to Jehoiada at his death: They buried him among the kings, with this honourable encomium (perhaps it was part of the inscription on his grave-stone), that he had done good in Israel. Judah is called Israel, because, the other tribes having revolted from God, they only were Israelites indeed. Note, It is the greatest honour to do good in our generations, and those who do that which is good shall have praise of the same.

He had done good towards God; not that any man's goodness can extend unto him, but he had done good towards his house, in reviving the temple service, 2Ch 23:8. Note, Those do the greatest good to their country that lay out themselves in their places to promote religion. Well, Jehoiada finished his course with honour; but the little religion that Joash had was all buried in his grave, and, after his death, both king and kingdom miserably degenerated. See how much one head may sustain, and what a great judgment to any prince or people the death of godly, zealous, useful men is. See how necessary it is that, as our Saviour speaks, we have salt in ourselves, that we act in religion from an inward principle, which will carry us on through all changes. Then the loss of a parent, a minister, a friend, will not involve the loss of our religion.

2. Bad counsellors got about him, insinuated themselves into his affections, wheedled him, flattered him, made obeisance to him, and, instead of condoling, congratulated him upon the death of his old tutor, as his release from the discipline he had been so long under, unworthy a man, a king. They tell him he must be priest-ridden no longer, he is now discharged from grave lessons and restraints, he may do as he pleases: and (would you think it?) the princes of Judah were the men that were so industrious to debauch him, 2Ch 24:17. His father and grandfather were corrupted by the house of Ahab, from whom no better could be expected. But that the princes of Judah should be seducers to their king was very sad. But those that incline to the counsels of the ungodly will never want ungodly counsellors.

They made obeisance to the king, flattered him into an opinion of his absolute power, promised to stand by him in making his royal will and pleasure pass for a law, any divine precept or institution to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding. And he hearkened to them: their discourse pleased him, and was more agreeable than Jehoiada's dictates used to be. Princes and inferior people have been many a time thus flattered into their ruin by those who have promised them liberty and dignity, but who have really brought them into the greatest servitude and disgrace.

II The apostasy itself: They left the house of God, and served groves and idols, 2Ch 24:18. The princes, it is likely, had a request to the king, which they tell him they durst not offer while Jehoiada lived; but now they hope it will give no offence: it is that they may set up the groves and idols again which were thrown down in the beginning of his reign, for they hate to be always confined to the dull old-fashioned service of the temple. And he not only gave them leave to do it themselves, but he joined with them. The king and princes, who, a little while ago, were repairing the temple, now forsook the temple; those who had pulled down groves and idols now themselves served them. So inconstant a thing is man and so little confidence is to be put in him!

III. The aggravations of this apostasy and the additions of guilt to it. God sent prophets to them (2Ch 24:19) to reprove them for their wickedness, and to tell them what would be in the end thereof, and so to bring them again unto the Lord. It is the work of ministers to bring people, not to themselves, but to God--to bring those again to him who have gone a whoring from him. In the most degenerate times God left not himself without witness; though they had dealt very disingenuously with God, yet he sent prophets to them to convince and instruct them, and to assure them that they should find favour with him if yet they would return; for he would rather sinners should turn and live than go on and die, and those that perish shall be left inexcusable. The prophets did their part: they testified against them; but, few or none received their testimony.

1. They slighted all the prophets; they would not give ear, were so strangely wedded to their idols that no reproofs, warnings, threatenings, nor any of the various methods which the prophets took to convince them would reclaim them. Few would hear them, fewer would heed them, but fewest of all would believe them or be governed by them.

2. They slew one of the most eminent, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, and perhaps others. Concerning him observe,

(1.) The message which he delivered to them in the name of God, 2Ch 24:20. The people were assembled in the court of the temple (for they had not quite left it), probably on occasion of some solemn feast, when this Zechariah, being filled with the spirit of prophecy, and known (it is likely) to be a prophet, stood up in some of the desks that were in the court of the priests, and very plainly, but without any provoking language, told the people of their sin and what would be the consequences of it. He did not impeach any particular persons, nor predict any particular judgments, as sometimes the prophets did, but as inoffensively as possible reminded them of what was written in the law. Let them but look into their Bibles, and there they would find,

[1.] The precept they broke: "You transgress the commandments of the Lord, you know you do so, in serving groves and idols: and why will you so offend God and wrong yourselves?"

[2.] The penalty they incurred: "You know, if the word of God be true, you cannot prosper in this evil way; never expect to do ill and fare well. Nay, you find already that because you have forsaken the Lord he hath forsaken you, as he told you he would," De 29:25,31:16,17. This is the work of ministers, by the word of God, as a lamp and a light, to expose the sin of men and expound the providences of God.

(2.) The barbarous treatment they gave him for his kindness and faithfulness in delivering this message to them, 2Ch 24:21. By the conspiracy of the princes, or some of their party, and by the commandment of the king, who thought himself affronted by this fair warning, they stoned him to death immediately, not under colour of law, accusing him as a blasphemer, a traitor, or a false prophet, but in a popular tumult, in the court of the house of the Lord--as horrid a piece of wickedness as perhaps any we read of in all the history of the kings. The person was sacred--a priest, the place sacred--the court of the temple (the inner court, between the porch and the altar), the message yet more sacred, and we have reason to think that they knew it came from the spirit of prophecy.

The reproof was just, the warning fair, both backed with scripture, and the delivery very gentle and tender; and yet so impudently and daringly do they defy God himself that nothing less than the blood of the prophet can satisfy their indignation at the prophecy. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and tremble, O earth! that ever such villany should be committed by men, by Israelites, in contempt and violation of every thing that is just, honourable, and sacred--that a king, a king in covenant with God, should command the murder of one whom it was his office to protect and countenance! The Jews say there were seven transgressions in this; for they killed a priest, a prophet, a judge, they shed innocent blood, and polluted the court of the temple, the sabbath, and the

day of expiation: for on that day, their tradition says, this happened.

(3.) The aggravation of this sin, that this Zechariah, who suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness to God and his country, was the son of Jehoiada, who had done so much good in Israel, and particularly had been as a father to Joash, 2Ch 24:22. The affront done by it to God, and the contempt put on religion, are not so particularly taken notice of as the ingratitude there was in it to the memory of Jehoiada. He remembered not the kindness of the father, but slew the son for doing his duty, and what the father would have done if he had been there. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse.

(4.) The dying martyr's prophetic imprecation of vengeance upon his murderers: The Lord look upon it, and require it! This came not from a spirit of revenge, but a spirit of prophecy: He will require it. This would be the continual cry of the blood they shed, as Abel's blood cried against Cain: "Let the God to whom vengeance belongs demand blood for blood. He will do it, for he is righteous." This precious blood was quickly reckoned for in the judgments that came upon this apostate prince; it came into the account afterwards in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans--their misusing the prophets was that which brought upon them ruin without remedy (2Ch 36:16); nay, our Saviour makes the persecutors of him and his gospel answerable for the blood of this Zechariah; so loud, so long, does the blood of the martyrs cry. See Mt 23:35. Such as this is the cry of the souls under the altar (Re 6:10), How long ere thou avenge our blood? For it shall not always go unrevenged.

IV. The judgments of God which came upon Joash for this aggravated wickedness of his.

1. A small army of Syrians made themselves masters of Jerusalem, destroyed the princes, plundered the city, and sent the spoil of it to Damascus, 2Ch 24:23,24. God's people, while they kept in with God, had often been conquerors when the enemy had

the advantage of the greater number; but now, on the contrary, an inconsiderable handful of Syrians routed a very great host of Israelites, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers, and then they were not only put upon the level with their enemies, but opposed them with the utmost disadvantage; for their God not only departed from them, but turned to be their enemy and fought against them. The Syrians were employed as instruments in God's hand to execute judgments against Joash, though they little thought so, Isa 10:6,7, and see De 32:30.

2. God smote him with great diseases, of body, or mind, or both, either like his grandfather (2Ch 21:18), or, like Saul, an evil spirit from God troubling him. While he was plagued with the Syrians he thought that, if he could but get clear of them, he should do well enough. But, before they departed from him, God smote him with diseases. If vengeance pursue men, the end of one trouble will but be the beginning of another.

3. His own servants conspired against him. Perhaps he began to hope his disease would be cured--he was but a middle-aged man and might recover it; but he that cometh up out of the pit shall fall into the snare. When he thought he should escape death by sickness he met it by the sword. They slew him in his bed for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada, by which it should seem that he did not only slay Zechariah, but others of the sons of Jehoiada for his sake. Perhaps those that slew him intended to take vengeance for that blood; but, whether they did or not, this was what God intended in permitting them to slay him. Those that drink the blood of the saints shall have their own blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. The regicides are here named (2Ch 24:26), and it is observable that the mothers of them both were foreigners, one an Ammonitess and the other a Moabitess. The idolatrous kings, it is likely, countenanced those marriages which the law prohibited for the prevention of idolatry; and see how they resulted in their own destruction.

4. His people would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings because he had stained his honour by his mal-administration. Let

him not be written with the righteous, Ps 69:28. These judgments are called the burdens laid upon him (2Ch 24:27), for the wrath of God is a heavy burden, too heavy for any man to bear. Or it may be meant of the threatenings denounced against him by the prophets, for those are called burdens. Usually God sets some special marks of his displeasure upon apostates in this life, for warning to all to remember Lot's wife.

21 And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.

22 Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The Lord look upon *it*, and require *it*.

23 And it came to pass at the end of the year, *that* the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash.

25 And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.

26 And these are they that conspired against him; Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess.

27 Now *concerning* his sons, and the greatness of the burdens *laid* upon him, and the repairing of the house of God, behold, they *are* written in the story of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-25

The Reign of Amaziah

1 Amaziah *was* twenty and five years old *when* he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

Here is, I The general character of Amaziah: He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, worshipped the true God, kept the temple service a going, and countenanced religion in his kingdom; but he did not do it with a perfect heart (2Ch 25:2), that is, he was not a man of serious piety or devotion himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was no enemy to it, but a cool and indifferent friend. Such is the character of too many in this Laodicean age: they do that which is good, but not with the heart, not with a perfect heart.

II. A necessary piece of justice which he did upon the traitors that murdered his father: he put them to death, 2Ch 25:3. Though we should suppose they intended to avenge on their king the death of the prophet (as was intimated, 2Ch 24:25), yet this would by no means justify their wickedness; for they were not the avengers, but presumptuously took God's work out of his hands: and therefore Amaziah did what became him in calling them to an account for it, but forbade the putting of the children to death for the parents' sin, 2Ch 25:4.

III. An expedition of his against the Edomites, who, some time ago, had revolted from under the dominion of Judah, to which he attempted to reduce them. Observe,

1 The great preparation he made for this expedition.

(1.) He mustered his own forces, and marshalled them (2Ch 25:5), and found Judah and Benjamin in all but 300,000 men that were fit for war, whereas, in Jehoshaphat's time, fifty or sixty years before, they were four times as many. Sin weakens a people,

diminishes them, dispirits them, and lessens their number and figure.

(2.) He hired auxiliary troops out of the kingdom of Israel, 2Ch 25:6. Finding his own kingdom defective in men, he thought to make up the deficiency with his money, and therefore took into his pay 100,000 Israelites. If he had advised with any of his prophets before he did this, or had but considered how little any of his ancestors got by their alliances with Israel, he would not have had this to undo again. But rashness makes work for repentance.

2 The command which God sent him by a prophet to dismiss out of his service the forces of Israel, 2Ch 25:7,8. He would not have him call in any assistance at all: it looked like distrust of God. If he made sure of God's presence, the army he had of his own was sufficient. But particularly he must not take in their assistance: For the Lord is not with the children of Ephraim, because they are not with him, but worship the calves. This was a good reason why he should not make use of them, because he could not depend upon them to do him any service. What good could be expected from those that had not God with them, nor his blessings upon their undertakings? It is comfortable to employ those who, we have reason to hope, have an interest in heaven, and dangerous to associate with those from whom the Lord has departed. The prophet assured him that if he persisted in his resolution to take these idolatrous apostate Israelites with him, in hopes thereby to make himself strong for the battle, it was at his peril; they would prove a dead weight to his army, would sink and betray it: "God shall make thee fall before the enemy, and these Israelites will be the ruin of thy cause; for God has power to help thee without them, and to cast thee down though thou hast them with thee."

3. The objection which Amaziah made against this command, and the satisfactory answer which the prophet gave to that objection, 2Ch 25:9. The king had remitted 100 talents to the men of Israel for advance-money. "Now," says he, "if I send them back, I shall lose that: But what shall we do for the 100 talents?" This is an

objection men often make against their duty: they are afraid of losing by it. "Regard not that," says the prophet: "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this; and, thou mayest depend upon it, he will not see thee lose by him. What are 100 talents between thee and him? He has ways enough to make up the loss to thee; it is below thee to speak of it." Note, A firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to bear us out in our duty, and to make up all the loss and damage we sustain in his service abundantly to our advantage, will make his yoke very easy and his burden very light.

What is it to trust in God, but to be willing to venture the loss of any thing for him, in confidence of the goodness of the security he gives us that we shall not lose by him, but that whatever we part with for his sake shall be made up to us in kind or kindness. When we grudge to part with any thing for God and our religion, this should satisfy us, that God is able to give us much more than this. He is just, and he is good, and he is solvent. The king lost 100 talents by his obedience; and we find just that sum given to his grandson Jotham as a present (2Ch 27:5); then the principal was repaid, and, for interest, 10,000 measures of wheat and as many of barley.

4. His obedience to the command of God, which is upon record to his honour. He would rather lose his money, disoblige his allies, and dismiss a fourth part of his army just as they were going to take the field, than offend God: He separated the army of Ephraim, to go home again, 2Ch 25:10. And they went home in great anger, taking it as a great affront thus to be made fools of, and to be cashiered as men not fit to be employed, and being perhaps disappointed of the advantages they promised themselves in spoil and plunder by joining with Judah against Edom. Men are apt to resent that which touches them in their profit or reputation, though it frees them from trouble.

5. His triumphs over the Edomites, 2Ch 25:11,12. He left dead upon the spot, in the field of battle, 10,000 men; 10,000 more he took prisoners, and barbarously killed them all by throwing them

down some steep and craggy precipice. What provocation he had to exercise this cruelty towards them we are not told; but it was certainly very severe.

6. The mischief which the disbanded soldiers of Israel did to the cities of Judah, either in their return or soon after, 2Ch 25:13. They were so enraged at being sent home that, if they might not go to share with Judah in the spoil of Edom, they would make a prey of Judah. Several cities that lay upon the borders they plundered, killing 3000 men that made resistance. But why should God suffer this to be done? Was it not in obedience to him that they were sent home, and yet shall the country thus suffer by it? Surely God's way is in the sea! Did not the prophet say that God was not with the children of Ephraim, and yet they are suffered to prevail against Judah? Doubtless God intended hereby to chastise those cities of Judah for their idolatries, which were found most in those parts that lay next to Israel. The men of Israel had corrupted them, and now they were made a plague to them. Satan both tempts and torments.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, but
not with a perfect heart.
3 Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him,
that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father.
4 But he slew not their children, but *did* as *it is* written in the law in
the book of Moses, where the Lord commanded, saying, The
fathers shall not die for the children, neither shall the children
die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.
5 Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them
captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to
the houses of *their* fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin:
and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and
found them three hundred thousand choice *men, able* to go forth
to war, that could handle spear and shield.
6 He hired also a hundred thousand mighty men of valor out of
Israel for a hundred talents of silver.
7 But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the
army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord *is* not with Israel, *to*
wit, with all the children of Ephraim.

8 But if thou wilt go, do *it*, be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down.

9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this.

10 Then Amaziah separated them, *to wit*, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was

greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

11 And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

12 And *other* ten thousand *left* alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they all were broken in pieces.

13 But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

14 Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up *to be* his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.

Here is, I The revolt of Amaziah from the God of Israel to the gods of the Edomites. Egregious folly! Ahaz worshipped the gods of those that had conquered him, for which he had some little colour, 2Ch 28:23. But to worship the gods of those whom he had conquered, who could not protect their own worshippers, was the greatest absurdity that could be. What did he see in the gods of the children of Seir that could tempt him to set them up for his gods and bow himself down before them? 2Ch 25:14. If he had cast the idols down from the rock and broken them to pieces, instead of the prisoners, he would have manifested more of the piety as well as more of the pity of an Israelite; but perhaps for

that barbarous inhumanity he was given up to this ridiculous idolatry.

II The reproof which God sent to him, by a prophet, for this sin. The anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and justly; yet, before he sent to destroy him, he sent to convince and reclaim him, and so to prevent his destruction. The prophet reasoned with him very fairly and very mildly: Why hast thou sought the favour of those gods which could not deliver their own people? 2Ch 25:15. If men would but duly consider the inability of all those things to help them to which they have recourse when they forsake God, they would not be such enemies to themselves.

III. The check he gave to the reprover, 2Ch 25:16. He could say nothing in excuse of his own folly; the reproof was too just to be answered. But he fell into a passion with the reprover.

1. He taunted him as saucy and impertinent, and meddling with that which did not belong to him: Art thou made of the king's counsel? Could not a man speak reasonably to him, but he must be upbraided as usurping the place of a privy-counsellor? But, as a prophet, he really was made of the king's counsel by the King of kings, in duty to whom the king was bound not only to hear, but to ask and take his counsel.

2. He silenced him, bade him forbear and say not a word more to him. He said to the seer, See not, Isa 30:10. Men would gladly have their prophets thus under their girdles, as we say, to speak just when and what they would have them speak, and not otherwise.

3. He threatened him: "Why shouldst thou be smitten? It is at thy peril if thou sayest a word more of this matter." He seems to remind him of Zechariah's fate in the last reign, who was put to death for making bold with the king; and bids him take warning by him. Thus he justifies the killing of that prophet by menacing this, and so, in effect, makes himself guilty of the blood of both. He had hearkened to the prophet who ordered him to send back

the army of Israel, and was ruled by him, though he contradicted his politics and lost him 100 talents, 2Ch 25:10. But this prophet, who dissuaded him from worshipping the gods of the Edomites, he ran upon with an unaccountable rage, which must be attributed to the witchcraft of idolatry. He was easily persuaded to part with his talents of silver, but by no means with his gods of silver.

IV. The doom which the prophet passed upon him for this. He had more to say to him by way of instruction and advice; but, finding him obstinate in his iniquity, he forbore. He is joined to idols; let him alone, Ho 4:17. Miserable is the condition of that man with whom the blessed Spirit, by ministers and conscience, forbears to strive, Ge 6:3. And both the reprovers in the gate and that in the bosom, if long brow-beaten and baffled, will at length forbear. So I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts. The secure sinner perhaps values himself upon it as a noble and happy achievement to have silenced his reprovers and monitors, and to get clear of them; but what comes of it? "I know that God has determined to destroy thee; it is a plain indication that thou art marked for ruin that thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel." Those that are deaf to reproof are ripening apace for destruction, Pr 29:1.

15 Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?

16 And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that *the king* said unto him, Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbare, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

17 Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face.

18 And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there

passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

19 Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to *thine* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou, and Judah with thee?

20 But Amaziah would not hear; for it *came* of God, that he might deliver them into the hand *of their enemies,* because they sought after the gods of Edom.

We have here this degenerate prince mortified by his neighbour and murdered by his own subjects.

I. Never was proud prince more thoroughly mortified than Amaziah was by Joash king of Israel.

1. This part of the story (which was as fully related 2Ki 14:8-22, &c., as it is here)--embracing the foolish challenge which Amaziah sent to Joash (2Ch 25:17), his haughty scornful answer to it (2Ch 25:18), with the friendly advice he gave him to sit still and know when he was well off, (2Ch 25:19),-- his wilfully persisting in his challenge (2Ch 25:20,21), the defeat that was given him (2Ch 25:22), and the calamity he brought upon himself and his city thereby (2Ch 25:23,24),-- verifies two of Solomon's proverbs:--

(1.) That a man's pride will bring him low, Pr 29:23. It goes before his destruction; not only procures it meritoriously, but is often the immediate occasion of it. He that exalteth himself shall be abased.

(2.) That he that goes forth hastily to strive will probably not know what to do in the end thereof, when his neighbour has put him to shame, Pr 25:8. He that is fond of contention may have enough of it sooner than he thinks of.

2. But there are two passages in this story which we had not before in the Kings.

(1.) That Amaziah took advice before he challenged the king of Israel, 2Ch 25:17. But of whom? Not of the prophet--he was not made of the king's counsel; but of his statesmen that would flatter him and bid him go up and prosper. It is good to take advice, but then it must be of those that are fit to advise us. Those that will not take advice from the word of God, which would guide them aright, will justly be left to the bad advice of those that will counsel them to their destruction. Let those be made fools that will not be made wise.

(2.) Amaziah's imprudence is here made the punishment of his impiety (2Ch 25:20): It was of the Lord; he left him to himself to act thus foolishly, that he and his people might be delivered into the hands of their enemies, because they had forsaken God and sought after the gods of Edom. Those that will not persuaded to do well for their souls will justly be given up to their own counsels to do ill for themselves even in their outward affairs.

II. Never was poor prince more violently pursued by his own subjects. From the time that he departed from the Lord (so it may be read, 2Ch 25:27) the hearts of his subjects departed from him, and they began to form a design against him in Jerusalem. It is probable they were exasperated against him more for his rashly engaging in a war against Israel than for his worshipping the gods of Edom. But at length the ferment grew so high, and he perceived the plot to be laid so deeply, that he thought fit to quit his royal city and flee to Lachish, either as a private place where he might be hid or as a strong place where he might be guarded; but they sent after him thither, and slew him there. By this the putting of him to death seems to have been done deliberately, and to have been the act, not of a disgusted servant or two, but of a considerable body that durst avow it. How unrighteous soever they were herein, God was righteous.

21 So Joash the king of Israel went up; and they saw one another
in the face, *both* he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Beth-
shemesh, which *belongeth* to Judah.

22 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled
every man to his tent.

23 And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate, four hundred cubits.
24 And *he took* all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.
25 And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.
26 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, *are* they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel?
27 Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there.
28 And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

2 Chronicles-26

The Reign of Uzziah

1 Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.
2 He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.
3 Sixteen years old *was* Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

We have here an account of two things concerning Uzziah:--

I. His piety. In this he was not very eminent or zealous; yet he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He kept up the pure worship of the true God as his father did, and was better than his father, inasmuch as we have no reason to think he ever worshipped idols as his father did, no, not in his latter days, when his heart was lifted up. It is said (2Ch 26:5), He sought God in the

days of Zechariah, who, some think, was the son of the Zechariah whom his grandfather Joash slew. This Zechariah was one that had understanding in the visions of God, either the visions which he himself was favoured with or the visions of the preceding prophets. He was well versed in prophecy, and conversed much with the upper world, was an intelligent, devout, good man; and, it seems, had great influence with Uzziah. Happy are the great men who have such about them and are willing to be advised by them; but unhappy those who seek God only while they have such with them and have not a principle in themselves to bear them out to the end.

II. His prosperity.

1. In general, as long as he sought the Lord, and minded religion, God made him to prosper.
Note,

(1.) Those only prosper whom God makes to prosper; for prosperity is his gift.

(2.) Religion and piety are very friendly to outward prosperity. Many have found and owned this, that as long as they sought the Lord and kept close to their duty they prospered; but since they forsook God every thing has gone cross.

2. Here are several particular instances of his prosperity:--

(1.) His success in his wars: God helped him (2Ch 26:7), and then he triumphed over the Philistines (those old enemies of God's people), demolished the fortifications of their cities, and put garrisons of his own among them, 2Ch 26:6. He obliged the Ammonites to pay him tribute, 2Ch 26:8. He made all quiet about him, and kept them in awe.

(2.) The greatness of his fame and reputation. His name was celebrated throughout all the neighbouring countries (2Ch 26:8) and it was a good name, a name for good things with God and

good people. This is true fame, and makes a man truly honourable. (3.) His buildings. While he acted offensively abroad, he did not neglect the defence of his kingdom at home, but built towers in Jerusalem and fortified them, 2Ch 26:9. Much of the wall of Jerusalem was in his father's time broken down, particularly at the corner gate. But his best fortification of Jerusalem was his close adherence to the worship of God: if his father had not forsaken this the wall of Jerusalem would not have been broken down. While he fortified the city, he did not forget the country, but built towers in the desert too (2Ch 26:10), to protect the country people from the inroads of the plunderers, bands of whom sometimes alarmed them and plundered them, as 2Ch 21:16.

(4.) His husbandry. He dealt much in cattle and corn, employed many hands, and got much wealth by his dealing; for he took a pleasure in it: he loved husbandry (2Ch 26:10), and probably did himself inspect his affairs in the country, which was no disparagement to him, but an advantage, as it encouraged industry among his subjects. It is an honour to the husbandman's calling that one of the most illustrious princes of the house of David followed it and loved it. He was not one of those that delight in war, nor did he addict himself to sport and pleasure, but delighted in the innocent and quiet employments of the husbandman.

(5.) His standing armies. He had, as it should seem, two military establishments.

[1.] A host of fighting men that were to make excursions abroad. These went out to war by bands, 2Ch 26:11. They fetched in spoil from the neighbouring countries by way of reprisal for the depredations they had so often made upon Judah,

[2.] Another army for guards and garrisons, that were ready to defend the country in case it should be invaded, 2Ch 26:12,13. So great were their number and valour that they made war with mighty power; no enemy durst face them, or, at least, could stand before them. Men unarmed can do little in war. Uzziah therefore

furnished himself with a great armoury, whence his soldiers were supplied with arms offensive and defensive (2Ch 26:14), spears, bows, and slings, shields, helmets, and habergeons: swords are not mentioned, because it is probable that every man had a sword of his own, which he wore constantly. Engines were invented, in his time, for annoying besiegers with darts and stones shot from the towers and bulwarks, 2Ch 26:15. What a pity it is that the wars and fightings which come from men's lusts have made it necessary for cunning men to employ their skill in inventing instruments of death.

4 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, according
to all that his father Amaziah did.
5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had
understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the
Lord, God made him to prosper.
6 And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake
down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of
Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines.
7 And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the
Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunim.
8 And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread
abroad *even* to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened *himself*
exceedingly.
9 Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and
at the valley gate, and at the turning *of the wall,* and fortified them.
10 Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he
had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains;
husbandmen *also,* and vinedressers in the mountains, and in
Carmel: for he loved husbandry.
11 Moreover Uzziah had a host of fighting men, that went out to war
by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of
Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of
Hananiah, *one* of the king's captains.
12 The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of
valor *were* two thousand and six hundred.
13 And under their hand *was* an army, three hundred thousand and
seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty
power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings *to cast* stones.

15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

Here is the only blot we find on the name of king Uzziah, and it is such a one as lies not on any other of the kings. Whoredom, murder, oppression, persecution, and especially idolatry, gave characters to the bad kings and some of them blemishes to the good ones, David himself not excepted, witness the matter of Uriah. But we find not Uzziah charged with any of these; and yet he transgressed against the Lord his God, and fell under the marks of his displeasure in consequence, not, as other kings, in vexatious wars or rebellions, but an incurable disease.

I. His sin was invading the priest's office. The good way is one; by-paths are many. The transgression of his predecessors was forsaking the temple of the Lord, flying off from it (2Ch 24:18), and burning incense upon idolatrous altars, 2Ch 25:14. His was intruding into the temple of the Lord further than was allowed him, and attempting him to burn incense upon the altar of God, for which, it is likely, he pretended an extraordinary zeal and affection. See how hard it is to avoid one extreme and not run into another.

1. That which was at the bottom of his sin was pride of heart, a lust that ruins more than any other whatsoever (2Ch 26:16): When he was strong (and he was marvellously helped by the good providence of God till he was so, 2Ch 26:15), when he had grown very great and considerable in wealth, interest, and power, instead of lifting up the name of God in gratitude to him who had done so much for him, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. Thus the prosperity of fools, by puffing them up with pride, destroys them. Now that he had done so much business, and won so much honour,

he began to think no business, no honour, too great or too good for him, no, not that of the priesthood Men's pretending to forbidden knowledge, and exercising themselves in things too high for them, are owing to the pride of their heart, and the fleshly mind they are vainly puffed up with.

2. His sin was going into the temple of the Lord to burn incense, probably on some solemn feast day, or when he himself had some special occasion for supplicating the divine favour. What could move him to this piece of presumption, or put it into his head, I cannot conjecture. None of all his predecessors, not the best, not the worst, attempted it. The law, he knew, was express against him, and there was no usage or precedent for him. He could not pretend any necessity, as there was for David's eating the show-bread.

(1.) Perhaps he fancied the priests did not do their office so dexterously, decently, and devoutly, as they ought, and he could do it better. Or,

(2.) He observed that the idolatrous kings did themselves burn incense at the altars of their gods; his father did so, and Jeroboam (1Ki 13:1), an ambition of which honour was perhaps one thing that tempted them from the house of God, where it was not permitted them; and he, being resolved to cleave to God's altar, would try to break through this restraint and come as near it as the idolatrous kings did to their altars. But it is called a transgression against the Lord his God. He was not content with the honours God had put upon him, but would usurp those that were forbidden him, like our first parents.

3. He was opposed in this attempt by the chief priest and other priests that attended and assisted him, 2Ch 26:17,18. They were ready to burn incense for the king, according to the duty of their place; but, when he offered to do it himself, they plainly let him know that he meddled with that which did not belong to him, and that it was at his peril. They did not resist him by laying violent hands on him, though they were valiant men, but by reasoning with him and showing him,

(1.) That it was not lawful for him to burn incense: "It appertaineth not to thee, O Uzziah! but to the priests, whose birthright it is, as sons of Aaron, and who are consecrated to the service." Aaron and his sons were appointed by the law to burn incense, Ex 30:7. See De 33:10,1Ch 23:13. David had blessed the people and Solomon and Jehoshaphat had prayed with them and preached to them. Uzziah might have done this, and it would have been to his praise; but as for burning incense, that service was to be performed by the priests only. The kingly and priestly offices were separated by the law of Moses, not to be united again but in the person of the Messiah. If Uzziah did intend to honour God, and gain acceptance with him, in what he did, he was quite out in his aim; for, being a service purely of divine institution, he could not expect it should be accepted unless it were done in the way and by the hands that God had appointed.

(2.) That it was not safe. It shall not be for thy honour from the Lord God. More is implied: "It will be thy disgrace, and it is at thy peril." The law runs expressly against all strangers that came nigh (Nu 3:10,18:7), that is, all that were not priests. Korah and his accomplices, though Levites, paid dearly for offering to burn incense, which was the work of the priests only, Nu 16:35. The incense of our prayers must be by faith put into the hands of our Lord Jesus, the great high priest of our profession, else we cannot expect it should be accepted by God, Re 8:3.

4. He fell into a passion with the priests that reproved him, and would push forward to do what he intended notwithstanding (2Ch 26:19): Uzziah was wroth, and would not part with the censer out of his hand. He took it ill to be checked, and would not bear interference. Nitimur in vetitum--We are prone to do what is forbidden.

II. His punishment was an incurable leprosy, which rose up in his forehead while he was contending with the priests. If he had submitted to the priests' admonition, acknowledged his error, and gone back, all would have been well; but when he was wroth with

the priests, and fell foul upon them, then God was wroth with him and smote him with a plague of leprosy. Josephus says that he threatened the priests with death if they opposed him, and that then the earth shook, the roof of the temple opened, and through the cleft a beam of the sun darted directly upon the king's face, wherein immediately the leprosy appeared. And some conjecture that that was the earthquake in the days of Uzziah which we read of Am 1:1,Zec 14:5. Now this sudden stroke,

1. Ended the controversy between him and the priests; for, when the leprosy appeared, they were emboldened to thrust him out of the temple; nay, he himself hasted to go out, because the Lord had smitten him with a disease which was in a particular manner a token of his displeasure, and which he knew secluded him from common converse with men, much more from the altar of God. He would not be convinced by what the priests said, but God took an effectual course to convince him. If presumptuous men will not be made to see their error by the judgments of God's mouth, they shall be made to see it by the judgments of his hand. It evinced some religious fear of God in the heart of this king, even in the midst of his transgression, that, as soon as he found God was angry with him, he not only let fall his attempt, but retired with the utmost precipitation. Though he strove with the priests, he would not strive with his Maker.

2. It remained a lasting punishment of his transgression; for he continued a leper to the day of his death, shut up in confinement, and shut out from society, and forced to leave it to his son to manage all his business, 2Ch 26:21. Thus God gave an instance of his resisting the proud and of his jealousy for the purity and honour of his own institutions; thus he gave fair warning even to great and good men to know and keep their distance, and not to intrude into those things which they have not seen; and thus he gave Uzziah a loud and constant call to repentance, and a long space to repent, which we have reason to hope he improved. He had been a man of much business in the world; but being taken off from that, and confined to a separate house, he had leisure to think of another world and prepare for it. By this judgment upon the king God

intended to possess the people with a great veneration for the temple, the priesthood, and other sacred things, which they had been apt to think meanly of. While the king was a leper, he was as good as dead, dead while he lived, and buried alive; and so the law was, in effect, answered, that the stranger who cometh nigh shall be put to death. The disgrace survived him; for, when he was dead, they would not bury him in the sepulchres of the kings because he was a leper, which stained all his other glory.

3. It was a punishment that answered the sin as face does face in a glass.

(1.) Pride was at the bottom of his transgression, and thus God humbled him and put dishonour upon him.

(2.) He invaded the office of the priests in contempt of them, and God struck him with a disease which in a particular manner made him subject to the inspection and sentence of the priests; for to them pertained the judgment of the leprosy, De 24:8.

(3.) He thrust himself into the temple of God, whither the priests only had admission, and for that was thrust out of the very courts of the temple, into which the meanest of his subjects that was ceremonially clean had free access.

(4.) He confronted the priests that faced him and opposed his presumption, and for that the leprosy rose in his forehead, which, in Miriam's case, is compared to her father's spitting in her face, Nu 12:14.

(5.) He invaded the dignity of the priesthood, which he had no right to, and for that he was deprived even of his royal dignity, which he had a right to. Those that covet forbidden honours forfeit allowed ones. Adam, by catching at the tree of knowledge of which he might not eat, debarred himself from the tree of life, of which he might have eaten. Let all that read it say, The Lord is righteous.

17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore
priests of the Lord, *that were* valiant men:

18 and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honor from the Lord God.
19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar.
20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the
Lord had smitten him.
21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord : and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.
22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write.
23 So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which *belonged* to the kings; for they said, He *is* a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-27

The Reign of Jotham

1 Jotham *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok.

Never surely had a man greater opportunity of doing well than Ahaz had, finding things in a good posture, the kingdom rich and strong and religion established; and yet here we have him in these few verses,

1. Wretchedly corrupted and debauched. He had had a good education given him and a good example set him: but parents cannot give grace to their children. All the instructions he had were lost upon him: He did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord (2Ch 28:1), nay, he did a great deal that was wrong, a wrong to God, to his own soul, and to his people; he walked in the way of the revolted Israelites and the devoted Canaanites, made molten images and worshipped them, contrary to the second commandment; nay, he made them for Baalim, contrary to the first commandment. He forsook the temple of the Lord and sacrificed and burnt incense on the hills, as if they would place him nearer heaven, and under every green tree, as if they would signify the protection and influence of heaven by their shade and dropping.

To complete his wickedness, as one perfectly divested of all natural affection as well as religion and perfectly devoted to the service and interest of the great enemy of mankind, he burnt his children in the fire to Moloch (2Ch 28:3), not thinking it enough to dedicate them to that infernal fiend by causing them to pass through the fire. See what an absolute sway the prince of the power of the air bears among the children of disobedience.

2. Wretchedly spoiled and made a prey of. When he forsook God, and at a vast expense put himself under the protection of false gods, God, who of right was his God, delivered him into the hands of his enemies, 2Ch 28:5.

(1.) The Syrians insulted him and triumphed over him, beat him in the field and carried away a great many of his people into captivity.

(2.) The king of Israel, though an idolater too, was made a scourge to him, and smote him with a great slaughter. The people suffered by these judgments: their blood was shed, their country wasted, their families ruined; for when they had a good king, though they did corruptly (2Ch 27:2), yet then his goodness sheltered them; but now that they had a bad one all the defence had departed from them and an inundation of judgments broke in upon them. Those that knew not their happiness in the foregoing reign were taught to value it by the miseries of this reign.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, according
to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the
temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly.
3 He built the high gate of the house of the Lord, and on the wall of
Ophel he built much.
4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in
the forests he built castles and towers.
5 He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed
against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same
year a hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of
wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of
Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third.
6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the
Lord his God.
7 Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways,
lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

We have here,

I. Treacherous Judah under the rebukes of God's providence, and they are very severe. Never was such bloody work made among them since they were a kingdom, and by Israelites too. Ahaz walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and the king of Israel was the instrument God made use of for his punishment. It is just with God to make those our plagues whom we make our patterns or make ourselves partners with in sin. A war broke out between Judah and Israel, in which Judah was worsted.

For, 1. There was a great slaughter of men in the field of battle. Vast numbers (120,000 men, and valiant men too at other times)

were slain (2Ch 28:6) and some of the first rank, the king's son for one. He had sacrificed some of this sons to Moloch; justly therefore is this sacrificed to the divine vengeance. Here is another that was next the king, his friend, the prime-minister of state, or perhaps next him in the battle, so that the king himself had a narrow escape, 2Ch 28:7. The kingdom of Israel was not strong at this time, and yet strong enough to bring this great destruction upon Judah.

But certainly so many men, great men, stout men, could not have been cut off in one day if they had not been strangely dispirited both by the consciousness of their own guilt and by the righteous hand of God upon them. Even valiant men were numbered as sheep for the slaughter, and became an easy prey to the enemy because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers, and he had therefore forsaken them.

2. There was a great captivity of women and children, 2Ch 28:8. When the army in the field was routed, the cities, and towns, and country villages, were all easily stripped, the inhabitants taken for slaves, and their wealth for a prey.

II. Even victorious Israel under the rebuke of God's word for the bad principle they had gone upon in making war with Judah and the bad use they had made of their success, and the good effect of this rebuke. Here is,

1 The message which God sent them by a prophet, who went out to meet them, not to applaud their valour or congratulate them on their victory, though they returned laden with spoils and triumphs, but in God's name to tell them of their faults and warn them of the judgments of God.

(1.) He told them how they came by this victory of which they were so proud. It was not because God favoured them, or that they had merited it at his hand, but because he was wroth with Judah, and made them the rod of his indignation. Not for your righteousness, be it known to you, but for their wickedness (De

9:5) they are broken off; therefore be not you high-minded, but fear lest God also spare not you, Ro 11:20,21.

(2.) He charged them with the abuse of the power God had given them over their brethren. Those understand not what victory is who think it gives them authority to do what they will, and that the longest sword is the clearest claim to lives and estates (Jusque datum sceleri--might is right); no, as it is impolitic not to use a victory, so it is impious to abuse it. The conquerors are here reproved,

[1.] For the cruelty of the slaughter they had made in the field. They had indeed shed the blood of war in war; we suppose that to be lawful, but it turned into sin to them, because they did it from a bad principle of enmity to their brethren and after a bad manner, with a barbarous fury, a rage reaching up to heaven, that is, that cried to God for vengeance against such bloody men, that delighted in military execution. Those that serve God's justice, if they do it with rage and a spirit of revenge, make themselves obnoxious to it, and forfeit the honour of acting for him; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

[2.] For the imperious treatment they gave their prisoners. "You now purpose to keep them under, to use them or sell them as slaves, though they are your brethren and free-born Israelites." God takes notice of what men purpose, as well as of what they say and do.

(3.) He reminded them of their own sins, by which they also were obnoxious to the wrath of God: Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? 2Ch 28:10. He appeals to their own consciences, and to the notorious evidence of the thing. "Though you are now made the instruments of correcting Judah for sin, yet do not think that you are therefore innocent yourselves; no, you also are guilty before God." This is intended as a check,

[1.] To their triumph in their success. "You are sinners, and it ill becomes sinners to be proud; you have carried the day now, but be not secure, the wheel may ere long return upon yourselves, for, if judgment begin thus with those that have the house of God among them, what shall be the end of such as worship the calves?"

[2.] To their severity towards their brethren. "You have now got them under, but you ought to show mercy to them, for you yourselves are undone if you do not find mercy with God. It ill becomes sinners to be cruel. You have transgressions enough to answer for already, and need not add this to the rest."

(4.) He commanded them to release the prisoners, and to send them home again carefully (2Ch 28:11); "for you having sinned, the fierce wrath of God is upon you, and there is no other way of escaping it than by showing mercy."

2 The resolution of the princes thereupon not to detain the prisoners. They stood up against those that came from the war, though flushed with victory, and told them plainly that they should not bring their captives into Samaria, 2Ch 28:12,13. They had sin enough already to answer for, and would have nothing done to add to their trespass. In this they discovered an obedient regard to the word of God by his prophet and a tender compassion towards their brethren, which was wrought in them by the tender mercy of God; for he regarded the affliction of this poor people, and hears their cry, and made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captive, Ps 106:44,46.

3. The compliance of the soldiers with the resolutions of the princes in this matter, and the dismission of the captives thereupon.

(1.) The armed men, though being armed they might be force have maintained their title to what they got by the sword, acquiesced, and left their captives and the spoil to the disposal of the princes (2Ch 28:14), and herein they showed more truly heroic bravery

than they did in taking them. It is a great honour for any man to yield to the authority of reason and religion against his interest.

(2.) The princes very generously sent home the poor captives well accommodated, 2Ch 28:15. Those that hope to find mercy with God must learn hence with what tenderness to carry themselves towards those that lie at their mercy. It is strange that these princes, who in this instance discovered such a deference to the word of God, and such an influence upon the people, had not so much grace as, in obedience to the calls of God by so many prophets, to root idolatry out of their kingdom, which, soon after this, was the ruin of it.

8 He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

9 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-28

The Reign of Ahaz

1 Ahaz *was* twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, like David his father:

2 for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

Here is, I. Hezekiah's age when he came to the crown. He was twenty-five years old. Joash, who came to the crown after two bad reigns, was but seven years old; Josiah, who came after two bad reigns, was but eight, which occasioned the delay of the reformation; but Hezekiah had come to years, and so applied himself immediately to it. We may well think with what a sorrowful heart he beheld his father's idolatry and profaneness,

how it troubled him to see the doors of the temple shut, though, while his father lived, he durst not open them. His soul no doubt wept in secret for it, and he vowed that when he should receive the congregation he would redress these grievances, which made him do it with more readiness and resolution.

II. His general character. He did that which was right like David, 2Ch 29:2. Of several of his predecessors it had been said that they did that which was right, but not like David, not with David's integrity and zeal. But here was one that had as hearty an affection for the ark and law of God as ever David had.

III. His speedy application to the great work of restoring religion. The first thing he did was to open the doors of the house of the Lord, 2Ch 29:3. We are willing to hope his father had not quite suppressed the temple service; for then the holy fire on the altar must have gone out, and we do not read of the re-kindling of it; but he had hindered the people from attending it, and the priests, except such of them as were of his own party, 2Ki 16:5. But Hezekiah immediately threw the church doors open, and brought in the priests and Levites. He found Judah low and naked, yet did not make it his first business to revive the civil interests of his kingdom, but to restore religion to its good posture again. Those that begin with God begin at the right end of their work, and it will prosper accordingly.

IV. His speech to the priests and Levites. It was well known, no doubt, that he had a real kindness for religion and was disaffected to the corruptions of the last reign; yet we do not find the priests and Levites making application to him for the restoration of the temple service but he calls upon them, which, I doubt, bespeaks their coldness as much as his zeal; and perhaps, if they had done their part with vigour, things would not have been brought into so very bad a posture as Hezekiah found them in. Hezekiah's exhortation to the Levites is very pathetic.

1. He laid before them the desolations of religion and the deplorable state to which it was brought among them (2Ch

29:6,7): Our fathers have trespassed. He said not "My father," because it became him, as a son, to be as tender as might be of his father's name, and because his father would not have done all this if their fathers had not neglected their duty. Urijah the priest had joined with Ahaz in setting up an idolatrous altar. He complained,

(1.) That the house of God had been deserted: They have forsaken God, and turned their backs upon his habitation. Note, Those that turn their backs upon God's ordinances may truly be said to forsake God himself.

(2.) That the instituted worship of God there had been let fall. The lamps were not lighted, and incense was not burnt. There are still such neglects as these, and they are no less culpable, when the word is not duly read and opened (for that was signified by the lighting of the lamps) and when prayers and praises are not duly offered up, for that was signified by the burning of incense.

2. He showed the sad consequences of the neglect and decay of religion among them, 2Ch 29:8,9. This was the cause of all the calamities they had lain under. God had in anger delivered them to trouble, to the sword, and to captivity. When we are under the rebukes of God's providence it is good for us to enquire whether we have not neglected God's ordinances and whether the controversy he has with us may not be traced to this neglect.

3. He declared his own full purpose and resolution to revive religion and make it his business to promote it (2Ch 29:10): "It is in my heart (that is, I am fully resolved) to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel (that is, to worship him only, and in that way which he has appointed); for I am sure that, otherwise, his fierce anger will not turn away from us." This covenant he would not only make himself, but bring his people into the bond of.

4. He engaged and excited the Levites and priests to do their duty on this occasion. This he begins with (2Ch 29:5); this he ends with, 2Ch 29:11. He called them Levites to remind them of their obligation to God, called them his sons to remind them of the

relation to himself, that he expected that, as a son with the father, they should serve with him in the reformation of the land.

(1.) he told them what was their duty, to sanctify themselves first (by repenting of their neglects, reforming their own hearts and lives, and renewing their covenants with God to do their duty better for the time to come), and then to sanctify the house of God, as his servants, to make it clean from every thing that was disagreeable, either through the disuse or the profanation of it, and to set it up for the purposes for which it was made.

(2.) He stirred them up to do it (2Ch 29:11): "Be not now negligent, or remiss, in your duty. Let not this good work be retarded through your carelessness." Be not deceived, so the margin. Note, Those that by their negligence in the service of God think to mock God, and put a cheat upon him, do but deceive themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Be not secure (so some), as if there were no urgent call to do it or no danger in not doing it. Note, Men's negligence in religion is owing to their carnal security. The consideration he quickens them with is derived from their office. God had herein put honour upon them: He has chosen you to stand before him. God therefore expected work from them. They were not chosen to be idle, to enjoy the dignity and leave the duty to be done by others, but to serve him and to minister to him. They must therefore be ashamed of their late remissness, and, now that the doors of the temple were opened again, must set about their work with double diligence.

5 Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought *them* to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

6 For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day, *which were* all valiant men; because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers.

7 And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's
son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah *that*
was next to the king.
8 And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren
two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took
also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to
Samaria.
9 But a prophet of the Lord was there, whose name *was* Oded:
and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said
unto them, Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was
wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and
ye have slain them in a rage *that* reacheth up unto heaven.
10 And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and
Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: *but are there*
not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?
11 Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which
ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of
the
Lord *is* upon you.
12 Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the
son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and the son
of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them
that came from the war,
13 and said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for
whereas we have offended against the Lord *already*, ye intend
to add *more* to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is
great, and *there is* fierce wrath against Israel.
14 So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes
and all the congregation.

We have here busy work, good work, and needful work, the cleansing of the house of the Lord.

I The persons employed in this work were the priests and Levites, who should have kept the temple clean, but, not having done that, were concerned to make it clean. Several of the Levites are here named, two of each of the three principal houses, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari (2Ch 29:12), and two of each of the three families of singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, 2Ch 29:13,14. We cannot

think these are named merely because they were chief in place (for then surely the high priest, or some of the heads of the courses of the priests, would have been mentioned), but because they were more zealous and active than the rest. When God has work to do he will raise up leading men to preside in it.

And it is not always that the first in place and rank are most fit for service or most forward to it. These Levites not only bestirred themselves, but gathered their brethren, and quickened them to do according to the commandment of the king by the word of the Lord. Observe, They did according to the king's command, but with an eye to God's word. The king commanded them what was already their duty by the word of God, and, in doing it, they regarded God's word as a rule to them and the king's commandment as a spur to them.

II The work was cleansing the house of God, 1. From the common dirt it had contracted while it was shut up-dust, and cobwebs, and the rust of the vessels. 2. From the idols and idolatrous altars that were set up in it, which, though kept ever so neat, were a greater pollution to it than if it had been made the common sewer of the city. The priests were none of them mentioned as leading men in this work, yet none but they durst go into the inner part of the house, no, not to cleanse it, which they did, and perhaps the high priest into the holy of holies, to cleanse that. And, though the Levites had the honour to be the leaders in the work, they did not disdain to be servitors to the priests according to their office; for what filth the priests brought into the court the Levites carried to the brook Kidron. Let not men's usefulness, be it ever so eminent, make them forget their place.

III. The expedition with which they did this work was very remarkable. They began on the first day of the first month, a happy beginning of the new-year, and one that promised a good year. Thus should every year begin with the reformation of what is amiss, and the purging away, by true repentance, of all the defilements contracted the foregoing year. In eight days they cleared and cleansed the temple, and in eight days more the courts

of the temple, 2Ch 29:17. Let those that do good work learn to rid work and get it done. Let what is amiss be amended quickly.

IV. The report they made of it to Hezekiah was very agreeable, 2Ch 29:18,19. They gave him an account of what they had done, because it was he that set them on work, boasted not of their own care and pains, nor did they come to him to be paid, but to let him know that all things that had been profaned were now sanctified according to law, and were ready to be used again whenever he pleased. They knew the good king had set his heart upon God's altar, and longed to be attending that, and therefore they insisted most upon the readiness they had put that into--that the vessels for the altar were scoured and brightened. Those vessels which Ahaz, in his transgression, had cast away as vessels in which there was no pleasure, they gathered together, sanctified them, and laid them in their place before the altar. Though the vessels of the sanctuary may be profaned for a while, God will find a time and a way to sanctify them. Neither his ordinances nor his people shall be suffered to fail for ever.

15 And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

19 For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord.

20 And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

21 For Ahaz took away a portion *out* of the house of the Lord, and
out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave *it* unto
the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.
22 And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the
Lord: this *is that* king Ahaz.
23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and
he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, *therefore*
will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were
the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

The temple being cleansed, we have here an account of the good use that was immediately made of it. A solemn assembly was called to meet the king at the temple, the very next day (2Ch 29:20); and very glad, no doubt, all the good people in Jerusalem were, when it was said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord, Ps 122:1. As soon as Hezekiah heard that the temple was ready for him he lost no time, but made it appear that he was ready for it. He rose early to go up to the house of the Lord, earlier on that day than on other days, to show that his heart was upon his work there. Now this day's work was to look two ways:--

I. Atonement must be made for the sins of the last reign. They thought it not enough to lament and forsake those sins, but they brought a sin-offering. Even our repentance and reformation will not obtain pardon but in and through Christ, who was made sin (that is, a sin-offering) for us. No peace but through his blood, no, not for penitents.

Observe, 1 The sin-offering was for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah (2Ch 29:21), that is, to make atonement for the sins of princes, priests, and people, for they had all corrupted their way. The law of Moses appointed sacrifices to make atonement for the sins of the whole congregation (Le 4:13,14,Nu 15:24,25), that the national judgments which their national sins deserved might be turned away. For this purpose we must now have an eye to Christ the great propitiation, as well as for the remission and salvation of particular persons.

2 The law appointed only one goat for a sin-offering, as on the day of atonement (Le 16:15) and on such extraordinary occasions as this, Nu 15:24. But they here offered seven (2Ch 29:21), because the sins of the congregation had been very great and long continued in. Seven is a number of perfection. Our great sin-offering is but one, yet that one perfects for ever those that are sanctified.

3. The king and the congregation (that is, the representatives of the congregation) laid their hands on the heads of the goats that were for the sin-offering (2Ch 29:23), thereby owning themselves guilty before God and expressing their desire that the guilt of the sinner might be transferred to the sacrifice. By faith we lay our hands on the Lord Jesus, and so receive the atonement, Ro 5:11.

4. Burnt-offerings were offered with the sin-offerings, seven bullocks, seven rams, and seven lambs. The intention of the burnt-offerings was to give glory to the God of Israel, whom they owned as the only true God, which it was proper to do at the same time that they were by the sin-offering making atonement for their offences. The blood of those, as well as of the sin-offering, was sprinkled upon the altar (2Ch 29:22), to make reconciliation for all Israel (2Ch 29:24), and not for Judah only. Christ is a propitiation, not for the sins of Israel only, but of the whole world, 1Jo 2:1,22.

5. While the offerings were burning upon the altar the Levites sang the song of the Lord (2Ch 29:27), the Psalms composed by David and Asaph (2Ch 29:30), accompanied by the musical instruments which God by his prophets had commanded the use of (2Ch 29:25), and which had been long neglected. Even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. By faith we must rejoice in Christ Jesus as our righteousness; and our prayers and praises must ascend with his offering, to be accepted only in virtue of it.

6. The king and all the congregation testified their consent to and concurrence in all that was done, by bowing their heads and worshipping, expressing an awful veneration of the divine Majesty, by postures of adoration. This is taken notice of, 2Ch 29:28-30. It is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped,

if we do not ourselves worship him, and that not with bodily exercise only, which profits little, but with the heart.

II The solemnities of this day did likewise look forward. The temple service was to be set up again, that it might be continually kept up; and this Hezekiah calls them to, 2Ch 29:31. "Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord--have both made an atonement and made a covenant by sacrifice, are solemnly reconciled and engaged to him--now come near, and bring sacrifices." Note, Our covenant with God must be pursued and improved in communion with him. Having consecrated ourselves, in the first place, to the Lord, we must bring the sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and alms, to his house. Now, in this work, it was found.

1. That the people were free. Being called to it by the king, they brought in their offerings, though not in such abundance as in the glorious days of Solomon (for Judah was now diminished, impoverished, and brought low), but according to what they had, and as much as one could expect considering their poverty and the great decay of piety among them.

(1.) Some were so generous as to bring burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no part. Of this sort there were seventy bullocks, 100 rams, and 200 lambs, 2Ch 29:32.

(2.) Others brought peace-offerings and thank-offerings, the fat of which was burnt upon the altar, and the flesh divided between the priests and the offerers, 2Ch 29:35. Of this sort there were 600 oxen and 3000 sheep, 2Ch 29:33. Perhaps the remembrance of their sin in sacrificing on the high places made them more willing to bring their sacrifices now to God's altar.

2. That the priests were few, too few for the service, 2Ch 29:34. Many of them, it is likely, were suspended and laid aside as polluted and uncanonical, for having sacrificed to idols in the last reign, and the rest had not the zeal that one might have expected

upon such an occasion. They thought that the king needed not to be so forward, that there was no necessity for such haste in opening the doors of the temple, and therefore they took no care to sanctify themselves, and being unsanctified, and so unqualified, they made that their excuse for being absent from the service; as if their offence would be their defence. It is recorded here, to the perpetual shame of the priests, that, though they were so well provided for out of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, yet they did not mind their business. Here was work to do, and there wanted proper hands to do it.

3. That the Levites were forward. They had been more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests (2Ch 29:34), were better affected to the work and better prepared and qualified for it. This was their praise, and, in recompence for it, they had the honour to be employed in that which was the priests' work: they helped them to flay the offerings. This was not according to the law (Le 1:5,6), but the irregularity was dispensed with in cases of necessity, and thus encouragement was given to the faithful zealous Levites and a just disgrace put upon the careless priests. What the Levites wanted in the ceremonial advantages of their birth and consecration was abundantly made up in their eminent qualifications of skill and will to do the work.

4. That all were pleased. The king and all the people rejoiced in this blessed turn of affairs and the new face of religion which the kingdom had put on, 2Ch 29:36. Two things in this matter pleased them:--

(1.) That it was soon brought about: The thing was done suddenly, in a little time, with a great deal of ease, and without any opposition. Those that go about the work of God in faith and with resolution will find that there is not that difficulty in it which they sometimes imagine, but it will be a pleasing surprise to them to see how soon it is done.

(2.) That the hand of God was plainly in it: God had prepared the people by the secret influences of his grace, so that many of those

who had in the last reign doted on the idolatrous altars were now as much in love with God's altar. This change, which God wrought on their minds, did very much expedite and facilitate the work. Let magistrates and ministers do their part towards the reforming of a land, and ascribe to him the glory of what is done, especially when it is done suddenly and is a pleasing surprise. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous.

24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and
cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors
of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner
of Jerusalem.
25 And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn
incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God
of his fathers.
26 Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold,
they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.
27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city,
even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres
of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-29

The Reign of Hezekiah

1 Hezekiah began to reign *when he was* five and twenty years old, and
he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's
name *was* Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.
2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, according
to all that David his father had done.

Hezekiah Restores the Temple Worship

3 He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the
doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them.
4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them
together into the east street,
5 and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites; sanctify now yourselves,
and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry
forth the filthiness out of the holy *place.*
6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done *that which was* evil in the
eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and have
turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and
turned *their* backs.
7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the
lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings
in the holy *place* unto the God of Israel.
8 Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem,
and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to
hissing, as ye see with your eyes.
9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and
our daughters and our wives *are* in captivity for this.
10 Now *it is* in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of
Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.
11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you
to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister
unto him, and burn incense.
12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the
son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of
Merari; Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and
of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of
Joah:
13 and of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of
Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah:
14 and of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of
Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel.
15 And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and
came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words
of the Lord, to cleanse the house of the Lord.

16 And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord,
to cleanse *it*, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found
in the temple of the Lord into the court of the house of the Lord.
And the Levites took *it*, to carry *it* out abroad into the brook
Kidron.
17 Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify,
and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the
Lord : so they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days;
and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.
18 Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have
cleansed all the house of the Lord, and the altar of burnt offering,
with all the vessels thereof, and the showbread table, with all the
vessels thereof.
19 Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast
away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and,
behold, they *are* before the altar of the Lord.
20 Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the
city, and went up to the house of the Lord.
21 And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven
lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and
for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests
the sons
of Aaron to offer *them* on the altar of the Lord.
22 So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and
sprinkled *it* on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams,
they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the
lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar.
23 And they brought forth the he goats *for* the sin offering before
the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon
them:
24 and the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with
their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel:
for the king commanded *that* the burnt offering and the sin
offering *should be made* for all Israel.
25 And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals,
with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment
of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for
so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets.

26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and
the priests with the trumpets.
27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the
altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord
began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by
David king of Israel.
28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the
trumpeters sounded: *and* all *this continued* until the burnt offering
was finished.
29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that
were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.
30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the
Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and
of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they
bowed their heads and worshipped.
31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated
yourselves unto the Lord, come near and bring sacrifices and
thank offerings into the house of the Lord. And the congregation
brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of
a free heart, burnt offerings.
32 And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation
brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, a hundred rams, *and*
two hundred lambs: all these *were* for a burnt offering to the
Lord.
33 And the consecrated things *were* six hundred oxen and three
thousand sheep.
34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the
burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help
them, till the work was ended, and until the *other* priests had
sanctified themselves: for the Levites *were* more upright in heart
to sanctify themselves than the priests.
35 And also the burnt offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the
peace offerings, and the drink offerings for *every* burnt offering.
So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order.
36 And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared
the people: for the thing was *done* suddenly.

The Celebration of the Passover

1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel.

Here is, I. A passover resolved upon. That annual feast was instituted as a memorial of the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt. It happened that the reviving of the temple service fell within the appointed days of that feast, the seventeenth day of the first month: this brought that forgotten solemnity to mind. "What shall we do," says Hezekiah, "about the passover? It is a very comfortable ordinance, and has been long neglected. How shall we revive it? The time has elapsed for this year; we cannot go about it immediately; the congregation is thin, the people have not notice, the priests are not prepared, 2Ch 30:3.

Must we defer it till another year?" Many, it is likely, were for deferring it; but Hezekiah considered that by that time twelve-month the good affections of the people would cool, and it would be too long to want the benefit of the ordinance; and therefore, finding a proviso in the law of Moses that particular persons who were unclean in the first month might keep the passover the fourteenth day of the second month and be accepted (Nu 9:11), he doubted not but that it might be extended to the congregation. Whereupon they resolved to keep the passover in the second month. Let the circumstance give way to the substance, and let not the thing itself be lost upon a nicety about the time. It is good striking while the iron is hot, and taking people when they are in a good mind. Delays are dangerous.

II. A proclamation issued out to give notice of this passover and to summon the people to it.

1. An invitation was sent to the ten revolted tribes to stir them up to come and attend this solemnity. Letters were written to Ephraim and Manasseh to invite them to Jerusalem to keep this passover

(2Ch 30:1), not with any political design, to bring them back to the house of David, but with a pious design to bring them back to the Lord God of Israel. "Let them take whom they will for their king," says Hezekiah, "so they will but take him for their God." The matters in difference between Judah and Israel, either upon a civil or sacred account, shall not hinder but that if the people of Israel will sincerely return to the Lord their God Hezekiah will bid them as welcome to the passover as any of his own subjects. Expresses are sent post throughout all the tribes of Israel with memorials earnestly pressing the people to take this opportunity of returning to the God from whom they had revolted. Now here we have,

(1.) The contents of the circular letters that were despatched upon the occasion, in which Hezekiah discovers a great concern both for the honour of God and for the welfare of the neighbouring kingdom, the prosperity of which he seems passionately desirous of, though he not only received no toll, tribute, or custom, from it, but it had often, and not long since, been vexatious to his kingdom. This is rendering good for evil. Observe,

[1.] What it is which he presses them to (2Ch 30:8): "Yield yourselves unto the Lord. Before you can come into communion with him you must come into covenant with him." Give the hand to the Lord (so the word is), that is, "Consent to take him for your God." A bargain is confirmed by giving the hand. "Strike this bargain. Join yourselves to him in an everlasting covenant. Subscribe with the hand to be his, Isa 44:5. Give him your hand, in token of giving him your heart. Lay your hand to his plough. Devote yourselves to his service, to work for him. Yield to him," that is, "Come up to his terms, come under his government, stand it not out any longer against him." "Yield to him, to be absolutely and universally at his command, at his disposal, to be, and do, and have, and suffer, whatever he pleases. In order to this, be not stiff-necked as your fathers were; let not your corrupt and wicked wills rise up in resistance of and rebellion against the will of God. Say not that you will do what you please, but resolve to do what he pleases."

There is in the carnal mind a stiffness, an obstinacy, an unaptness to comply with God. We have it from our fathers; it is bred in the bone with us. This must be conquered; and the will that had in it a spirit of contradiction must be melted into the will of God; and to his yoke the neck that was an iron sinew must be bowed and fitted. In pursuance of this resignation to God, he presses them to enter into his sanctuary, that is, to attend upon him in that place which he had chosen, to put his name there, and serve him in the ordinances which he had appointed. "The doors of the sanctuary are now opened, and you have liberty to enter; the temple service is now revived, and you are welcome to join in it." The king says, Come; the princes and priests say, Come; whosoever will, let him come. This he calls (2Ch 30:6) turning to the Lord God; for they had forsaken him, and worshipped other gods. Repent now, and be converted. Thus those who through grace have turned to God themselves should do all they can to bring others back to him.

[2.] What arguments he uses to persuade them to do this.

First, "You are children of Israel, and therefore stand related, stand obliged, to the God of Israel, from whom you have revolted."

Secondly, "The God you are called to return to is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a God in covenant with your first fathers, who served him and yielded themselves to him; and it was their honour and happiness that they did so."

Thirdly, "Your late fathers that forsook him and trespassed against him have been given up to desolation; their apostasy and idolatry have been their ruin, as you see (2Ch 30:7); let their harms be your warnings."

Fourthly, "You yourselves are but a remnant narrowly escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria (2Ch 30:6), and therefore are concerned to put yourselves under the protection of the God of your fathers, that you be not quite swallowed up."

Fifthly, "This is the only way of turning away the fierceness of God's anger from you (2Ch 30:8), which will certainly consume you if you continue stiff-necked." Lastly, "If you return to God in a way of duty, he will return to you in a way of mercy." This he begins with (2Ch 30:6) and concludes with, 2Ch 30:9. In general, "You will find him gracious and merciful, and one that will not turn away his face from you, if you seek him, notwithstanding the provocations you have given him." Particularly, "You may hope that he will turn again the captivity of your brethren that are carried away, and bring them back to their own land." Could any thing be expressed more pathetically, more movingly? Could there be a better cause, or could it be better pleaded?

(2.) The entertainment which Hezekiah's messengers and message met with. It does not appear that Hoshea, who was now king of Israel, took any umbrage from, or gave any opposition to, the dispersing of these proclamations through his kingdom, nor that he forbade his subjects to accept the invitation. He seems to have left them entirely to their liberty. They might go to Jerusalem to worship if they pleased; for, though he did evil, yet not like the kings of Israel that were before him, 2Ki 17:2. He saw ruin coming upon his kingdom, and, if any of his subjects would try this expedient to prevent it, they had his full permission. But, for the people,

[1.] The generality of them slighted the call and turned a deaf ear to it. The messengers went from city to city, some to one and some to another, and used pressing entreaties with the people to come up to Jerusalem to keep the passover; but they were so far from complying with the message that they abused those that brought it, laughed them to scorn, and mocked them (2Ch 30:10), not only refused, but refused with disdain. Tell them of the God of Abraham! they knew him not, they had other gods to serve, Baal and Ashtaroth. Tell them of the sanctuary! their high places were as good. Tell them of God's mercy and wrath! they neither dreaded the one nor desired the other. No marvel that the king's messengers were thus despitefully used by this apostate race when God's

messengers were so, his servants the prophets, who produced credentials from him.

The destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes was now at hand. It was but two or three years after this that the king of Assyria laid siege to Samaria, which ended in the captivity of those tribes. Just before this they had not only a king of their own that permitted them to return to God's sanctuary, but a king of Judah that earnestly invited them to do it. Had they generally accepted this invitation, it might have prevented their ruin; but their contempt of it hastened and aggravated it, and left them inexcusable.

[2.] Yet there were some few that accepted the invitation. The message, though to some it was a savour of death unto death, was to others a savour of life unto life, 2Ch 30:11. In the worst of times God has had a remnant; so he had here, many of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun (here is no mention of any out of Ephraim, though some of that tribe are mentioned, 2Ch 30:18), humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem, that is, were sorry for their sins and submitted to God. Pride keeps men from yielding themselves to the Lord; when that is brought down, the work is done.

2. A command was given to the men of Judah to attend this solemnity; and they universally obeyed it, 2Ch 30:12. They did it with one heart, were all of a mind in it, and the hand of God gave them that one heart; for it is in the day of power that Christ's subjects are made willing. It is God that works both to will and to do. When people, at any time, manifest an unexpected forwardness to do that which is good, we must acknowledge that hand of God in it.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they
had not done *it* of a long *time in such sort* as it was written.
6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of
the kings of Assyria.
7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, *who* therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.
8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers *were, but* yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.
9 For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children *shall find* compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God
is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away *his* face from you, if ye return unto him.
10 So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.
11 Nevertheless, divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.
12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the
Lord.
13 And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

14 And they arose and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast *them* into the brook Kidron.

The time appointed for the passover having arrived, a very great congregation came together upon the occasion, 2Ch 30:13. Now here we have,

I The preparation they made for the passover, and good preparation it was: They took away all the idolatrous altars that were found, not only in the temple, but in Jerusalem, 2Ch 30:14. Before they kept the feast, they cast out this old leaven. The best preparation we can make for the gospel passover is to cast away our iniquities, our spiritual idolatries.

II The celebration of the passover. In this the people were so forward and zealous that the priests and Levites blushed to see themselves out-done by the commonalty, to see them more ready to bring sacrifices than they were to offer them. This put them upon sanctifying themselves (2Ch 30:15), that the work might not stand still for want of hands to carry it on. The notice we take of the zeal of others should make us ashamed of our own coldness, and quicken us not only to do our duty, but to do it well, and to sanctify ourselves to it. They did according to the duty of their place (2Ch 30:16), sprinkling the blood upon the altar, which was a type of Christ our passover sacrificed for us.

III. The irregularities they were guilty of in this solemnity. The substance was well managed, and with a great deal of devotion; but, besides that it was a month out of time,

1 The Levites killed the passover, which should have been done by the priests only, 2Ch 30:17. They also assisted more than the law ordinarily allowed in offering the other sacrifices, particularly those that were for the purifying of the unclean, many of which there was now occasion for. Some think that it was the offerers' work, not the priests', that the Levites had here the charge of. Ordinarily every man killed his lamb, but now for those that were under any ceremonial pollution the Levites killed it.

2. Many were permitted to eat the passover who were not purified according to the strictness of the law, 2Ch 30:18. This was the second month, and there was not warrant to put them off further to the third month, as, if it had been the first month, the law would have permitted them to eat it the second. And they were loth to forbid them communicating at all, lest they should discourage new converts, and send those away complaining whom they desired to send away rejoicing. Grotius observes from this that ritual institutions must give way, not only to a public necessity, but to a public benefit and advantage.

IV. Hezekiah's prayer to God for the forgiveness of this irregularity. It was his zeal that had called them together in such haste, and he would not that any should fare the worse for being straitened of time in their preparation. He therefore thought himself concerned to be an intercessor for those that ate the passover otherwise than it was written, that there might not be wrath upon them from the Lord. His prayer was,

1. A short prayer, but to the purpose: The good Lord pardon every one in the congregation that has fixed, engaged, or prepared, his heart to those services, though the ceremonial preparation be wanting.

Note, (1.) The great thing required in our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances is that we prepare our hearts to seek him, that we be sincere and upright in all we do, that the inward man be engaged and employed in it, and that we make heart-work of it; it is all nothing without this. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part. Hezekiah does not pray that this might be dispensed with, nor that the want of other things might be pardoned where there was not this. For this is the one thing needful, that we seek God, his favour, his honour, and that we set our hearts to do it.

(2.) Where this sincerity and fixedness of heart are there may still be many defects and infirmities, both the frame of the spirit and the performance of the service may be short of the purification of

the sanctuary. Corruptions may not be so fully conquered, thoughts not so closely fixed, affections not so lively, faith not so operative, as they should be. Here is a defect in sanctuary purification. There is nothing perfect under the sun, nor a just man that doeth good, and sinneth not.

(3.) These defects need pardoning healing grace; for omissions in duty are sins as well as omissions of duty. If God should deal with us in strict justice according to the best of our performances, we should be undone.

(4.) The way to obtain pardon for our deficiencies in duty, and all the iniquities of our holy things, is to seek it of God by prayer; it is not so a pardon of course but that it must be obtained by petition through the blood of Christ.

(5.) In this prayer we must take encouragement from the goodness of God: The good Lord pardon; for, when he proclaimed his goodness, he insisted most upon this branch of it, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. (6.) It is the duty of those that have the charge of others, not only to look to themselves, but to those also that are under their charge, to see wherein they are wanting, and to pray for them, as Hezekiah here. See Job 1:5.

2. A successful prayer: The Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, was well pleased with his pious concern for the congregation, and, in answer to his prayer, healed the people (2Ch 30:20), not only did not lay their sin to their charge, but graciously accepted their services notwithstanding; for healing denotes not only forgiveness (Isa 6:10,Ps 103:3), but comfort and peace, Isa 57:18,Mal 4:2.

15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt offerings into the house of the Lord.

16 And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood, *which they received* of the hand of the Levites.

17 For *there were* many in the congregation that were not sanctified:
therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the
passovers for every one *that was* not clean, to sanctify *them* unto
the Lord.
18 For a multitude of the people, *even* many of Ephraim and
Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves,
yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But
Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every
one
19 *that* prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers,
though *he be* not *cleansed* according to the purification of the
sanctuary.
20 And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.
21 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept
the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness:
and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day,
singing with loud instruments unto the Lord.

After the passover followed the feast of unleavened bread, which continued seven days. How that was observed we are here told, and every thing in this account looks pleasant and lively.

1. Abundance of sacrifices were offered to God in peace-offerings, by which they both acknowledged and implored the favour of God, and on part of which the offerers feasted with their friends during these seven days (2Ch 30:22), in token of their communion with God and the comfort they took in his favour and their reconciliation to him. To keep up this part of the service, that God's altar might be abundantly regaled with the fat and blood and his priests and people with the flesh of the peace-offerings, Hezekiah gave out of his own stock 1000 bullocks and 7000 sheep, and the princes, excited by his pious example, gave the same number of bullocks and a greater number of sheep, and all for peace-offerings, 2Ch 30:24. By this God was honoured, the joy of the festival was kept up, and the strangers were encouraged to come again to Jerusalem. It was generously done of the king and the princes thus plentifully to entertain the whole congregation; but what is a great estate good for but that it puts men into a capacity of doing so much the more good? Christ feasted those that followed him. I believe

neither Hezekiah nor his princes were the poorer at the year's end for this their pious liberality.

2. Many good prayers were put up to God with the peace-offerings, 2Ch 30:22. They made confession to the Lord God of their fathers, in which the intent and meaning of the peace-offerings were directed and explained. When the priests sprinkled the blood and burnt the fat they made confession, so did the people when they feasted on their part. They made a religious confession of their relation to God and dependence upon him, a penitent confession of their sins and infirmities, a thankful confession of God's mercies to them, and a supplicatory confession of their wants and desires; and, in all these, they had an eye to God as the God of their fathers, a God in covenant with them.

3. There was a great deal of good preaching. The Levites (whose office it was, De 33:10) taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, read and opened the scriptures, and instructed the congregation concerning God and their duty to him; and great need there was of this, after so long a famine of the word as there had been in the last reign. Hezekiah did not himself preach, but he spoke comfortably to the Levites that did, attended their preaching, commended their diligence, and assured them of his protection and countenance. Hereby he encouraged them to study hard and take pains, and put a reputation upon them, that the people might respect and regard them the more. Princes and magistrates, by owning and encouraging faithful and laborious preachers, greatly serve the interest of God's kingdom among men.

4. They sang psalms every day (2Ch 30:21): The Levites and priests praised the Lord day by day, both with songs and musical instruments, thus expressing their own and exciting one another's joy in God and thankfulness to him. Praising God should be much of our work in our religious assemblies.

5. Having kept the seven days of the feast in this religious manner, they had so much comfort in the service that they kept other seven days, 2Ch 30:23. They did not institute any new modes of worship,

but repeated and continued the old. The case was extraordinary: they had been long without the ordinance; guilt had been contracted by the neglect of it; they had now got a very great congregation together, and were in a devout serious frame; they knew not when they might have such another opportunity, and therefore could not now find in their hearts to separate till they had doubled the time. Many of them were a great way from home, and had business in the country to look after, for, this being the second month, they were in the midst of their harvest; yet they were in no haste to return: the zeal of God's house made them forget their secular affairs. How unlike those who snuffed at God's service, and said, What a weariness is it! Or those who asked, When will the sabbath be gone? The servants of God should abound in his work.

6. All this they did with gladness (2Ch 30:23); they all rejoiced, and particularly the strangers, 2Ch 30:25. So there was great joy in Jerusalem, 2Ch 30:26. Never was the like since the dedication of the temple in Solomon's time. Note, Holy duties should be performed with holy gladness; we should be forward to them, and take pleasure in them, relish the sweetness of communion with God, and look upon it as matter of unspeakable joy and comfort that we are thus favoured and have such earnests of everlasting joy.

7. The congregation was at length dismissed with a solemn blessing, 2Ch 30:27.

(1.) The priests pronounced it; for it was part of their office to bless the people (Nu 6:22,23), in which they were both the people's mouth to God by way of prayer and God's mouth to the people by way of promise; for their blessing included both. In it they testified both their desire of the people's welfare and their dependence upon God and that word of his grace to which they commended them. What a comfort is it to a congregation to be sent home thus crowned!

(2.) God said Amen to it. The voice of the priests, when they blessed the people, was heard in heaven and came up to the habitation of God's holiness. When they pronounced the blessing

God commanded it, and perhaps gave some sensible token of the ratification of it. The prayer that comes up to heaven in a cloud of incense will come down again to this earth in showers of blessings.

22 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught
the good knowledge of the Lord: and they did eat throughout the
feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession
to the Lord God of their fathers.
23 And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days:
and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.
24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a
thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes
gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand
sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.
25 And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites,
and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers
that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah,
rejoiced.
26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon
the son of David king of Israel *there was* not the like in Jerusalem.
27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and
their voice was heard, and their prayer came *up* to his holy
dwelling place, *even* unto heaven.

2 Chronicles-31

1 Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went
out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut
down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars
out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh,
until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of
Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.

Hezekiah's Provision for the Priests and Levites

2 And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord.

We have here an account of what was done after the passover. What was wanting in the solemnities of preparation for it before was made up in that which is better, a due improvement of it after. When the religious exercises of a Lord's day or a communion are finished we must not think that then the work is done. No, then the hardest part of our work begins, which is to exemplify the impressions of the ordinance upon our minds in all the instances of a holy conversation. So it was here; when all this was finished there was more to be done.

I. They applied themselves with vigour to destroy all the monuments of idolatry, 2Ch 31:1 The king had done what he could of this kind (2Ki 18:4), but the people could discover those profane relics which escaped the eye of the king's officers, and therefore they went out to see what they could do, 2Ch 31:1. This was done immediately after the passover. Note, The comfort of communion with God should kindle in us a holy zeal and indignation against sin, against every thing that is offensive to God. If our hearts have been made to burn within us at an ordinance, that spirit of burning will consume the dross of corruption. What have I now to do any more with idols? Their zeal here in destroying the images and groves, the high places and altars, appeared,

1. In that they did this, not only in the cities of Judah and Benjamin, but in those of Ephraim and Manasseh. Some think that those cities are meant which had come under the protection and the jurisdiction of the kings of Judah. Others think that, Hoshea king of Israel not forbidding it, their zeal carried them out to the destruction of idolatry even in many parts of his kingdom. At least those that came out of Ephraim and Manasseh to keep the passover (as many did, 2Ch 30:18) destroyed all their own images and groves, and did the like for as many more as they had

influence upon or could make interest in for leave to do it. We should not only reform ourselves, but do all we can to reform others too.

2. They destroyed all: they utterly destroyed all; they spared none through favour or affection either to the images or to their worshippers; though ever so ancient, ever so costly, ever so beautiful, and ever so well patronised, yet they must all be destroyed. Note, Those that sincerely set themselves against sin will set themselves against all sin.

3. They would not return to their houses, though they had been long absent, till this was done. They could not be easy, nor think themselves safe, in their cities, as long as the images and groves, those betrayers and destroyers of their country, were left standing. Perhaps the prophet Isaiah pointed to this when, a little before, he spoke of a day in which men should cast away the very idols that they themselves had made. So surprising was this blessed change, Isa 2:20,31:6,7.

II. Hezekiah revived and restored the courses of the priests and Levites, which David had appointed and which had of late been put out of course, 2Ch 31:2 The temple service was put into its proper method again, to run in the old channel. Every man was made to know his work, his place, his time, and what was expected from him. Note, Good order contributes much to the carrying on of a good work. The priests were appointed in their courses for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; the Levites in their courses were some to minister to the priests, others to give thanks and praise. See 1Ch 23:4,5. And all this in the gates or courts of the tents of the Lord. The temple is here called a tent because the temple privileges are movable things and this temple was shortly to be removed.

III. He appropriated a branch of the revenue of his crown to the maintenance and support of the altar. Though the people were to be at the charge of the daily offerings, and those on the sabbaths, new moons, and feasts, yet, rather than they should be burdened

with the expense, he allowed out of his own estate, or out of his exchequer, for all those offerings, 2Ch 31:3. It was a generous act of piety, wherein he consulted both God's honour and his people's ease, as a faithful servant to him and a tender father to them. Let princes and great men reckon that well bestowed, and set out to the best interest, which they give for the support and encouragement of religion in their country.

IV. He issued out an order to the inhabitants of Jerusalem first, 2Ch 31:4 (that those who were nearest the temple, and both saved and got by being so, might give a good example to others), but which was afterwards extended to, or at least admitted by, the cities of Judah, that they should carefully pay in their dues, according to the law, to the priests and Levites. This had been long neglected, which made the work to be neglected (for a scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry); but Hezekiah, having himself been liberal, might with a good grace require his subjects to be just to the temple service. And observe the end he aims at in recovering and restoring to the priests and Levites their portion, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord, in the study of it, and in doing their duty according to it. Observe here,

1. It is fit that ministers should be not only maintained, but encouraged, that they should not only be kept to do their work, but that they should also have wherewith to live comfortably, that they may do it with cheerfulness.

2. Yet they are to be maintained, not in idleness, pride, and luxury, but in the law of the Lord, in their observance of it themselves and in teaching others the good knowledge of it.

V. The people thereupon brought in their tithes very readily. They wanted nothing but to be called upon; and therefore, as soon as the commandment came abroad, the first-fruits and all the holy things were duly brought in, 2Ch 31:5,6. What the priests had occasion for, for themselves and their families, they made use of, and the overplus was laid in heaps, 2Ch 31:6. All harvest-time

they were increasing these heaps, as the fruits of the earth were gathered in; for God was to have his dues out of them all. Though a prescription may be pleaded for a modus decimandi--tenth proportion, yet it cannot be pleaded pro non decminado--for the omission of the tenth. When harvest ended they finished their heaps, 2Ch 31:7. Now here we have,

1 The account given to Hezekiah concerning those heaps. He questioned the priests and Levites concerning them, why they did not use what was paid in, but hoarded it up thus, (2Ch 31:9), to which it was answered that they had made use of all they had occasion for, for the maintenance of themselves and their families and for their winter store, and that this was that which was left over and above, 2Ch 31:10. They did not hoard these heaps for covetousness, but to show what plentiful provision God by his law had made for them, if they could but have it collected and brought in, and that those who conscientiously give God his dues out of their estates bring a blessing upon all they have: Since they began to bring in the offerings the Lord has blessed his people. See for this Hag 2:19. "Try me," says God, "if you will not otherwise trust me, whether, upon your bringing the tithes into the store-house, you have not a blessing poured out upon you," Mal 3:10,11,Eze 44:30.

2 The acknowledgment which the king and princes made of it, 2Ch 31:8. They gave thanks to God for his good providence, which gave them something to bring, and his good grace, which gave them hearts to bring it. And they also blessed the people, that is, commended them for their doing well now, without reproaching them for their former neglects. It is observable that after they had tasted the sweetness of God's ordinance, in the late comfortable passover, they were thus free in maintaining the temple service. Those that experience the benefit of a settled ministry will not grudge the expense of it.

3 *He appointed* also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, *to wit,* for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as *it is* written in the law of the Lord.

4 Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to
give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might
be encouraged in the law of the Lord.
5 And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of
Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and
oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe
of all *things* brought they in abundantly.
6 And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in
the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and
sheep,
and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord
their God, and laid *them* by heaps.
7 In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps,
and finished *them* in the seventh month.
8 And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they
blessed the Lord, and his people Israel.
9 Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites
concerning the heaps.
10 And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him,
and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house
of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for
the Lord hath blessed his people; and that which is left *is* this great
store.
11 Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of
the Lord; and they prepared *them*,
12 and brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated *things*
faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite *was* ruler, and Shimei
his brother *was* the next.

Here we have,

I. Two particular instances of the care of Hezekiah concerning church matters, having put them into good order, to keep them so. The tithes and other holy things being brought in, he provided,

1. That they should be carefully laid up, and not left exposed in loose heaps, liable to be wasted and embezzled. He ordered chambers to be made ready in some of the courts of the temple for store-chambers (2Ch 31:11), and into them the offerings were

brought and there kept under lock and key, 2Ch 31:12,13. Treasures or store-keepers were appointed, who had the oversight of them, to see that moth and rust did not corrupt them nor thieves break through to steal. This wisdom of laying up the surplus in days of plenty we may learn from the ant, who provideth meat in summer. The laying up in store what was brought in was an encouragement to people to pay in their contributions. That will be given cheerfully by the public which appears to be well husbanded.

2. That they should be faithfully laid out, according to the uses they were intended for. Church treasures are not to be hoarded any longer than till there is occasion for them, lest even the rust should be a witness against those who hoard them. Officers were appointed, men (no doubt) of approved wisdom and faithfulness, to distribute the oblations of the Lord and the most holy things among the priests (2Ch 31:14), and to see that they all had a competent maintenance for themselves and their families.

The law provided sufficient for them all, and therefore, if some had too little, it must be because others had too much; to prevent such inequality these officers were to go by some certain rule of proportion in the disposal of the incomes of the temple. It is said of the priests here (2Ch 31:18) that in their set office they sanctified themselves; in faith they sanctified themselves (so the word is), that is, as bishop Patrick explains it, they attended their ministry at the house of God, not doubting but they should be provided with all things necessary. Now, because they served God in that confidence, care was taken that they should not be made ashamed of their hope.

Note, Those that sanctify themselves to God and his service in faith, believing that he will see them want for nothing that is good for them, shall certainly be fed. Out of the offerings of the Lord distribution was made,

(1.) To the priests in the cities (2Ch 31:15), who staid at home while their brethren went to Jerusalem, and did good there in teaching the good knowledge of the Lord. The preaching priests

were maintained as well as the sacrificing priests, and those that abode by the stuff as well as those that warred the warfare.

(2.) To those that entered into the house of the Lord, all the males from three years old and upwards; for the male children even at that tender age, it seems, were allowed to come into the temple with their parents, and shared with them in this distribution, 2Ch 31:16.

(3.) Even the Levites from twenty years old and upwards had their share, 2Ch 31:17.

(4.) The wives and children of the priests and Levites had a comfortable maintenance out of those offerings, 2Ch 31:18. In maintaining ministers, regard must be had to their families, that not they only, but theirs, may have food convenient. In some countries where ministers have their salary paid them by the state an addition is made to it upon the birth of a child.

(5.) The priests in the country, that lived in the fields of the suburbs, were not overlooked in this ministration, 2Ch 31:19. Those also had their share who were inhabitants of the villages, though they might be supposed to live at a less expense.

II. A general character of Hezekiah's services for the support of religion, 2Ch 31:20,21.

1. His pious zeal reached to all the parts of his kingdom: Thus he did throughout all Judah; every part of the country, and not those only that lay next him, shared in the good fruits of his government.

2. He sincerely designed to please God, and approved himself to him in all he did: He wrought that which was good before the Lord his God; all his care was to do that which should be accepted of God, which was right (that is, agreeable to natural equity), and truth (that is, agreeable to divine revelation and his covenant with God), before the Lord; to do according to that law which is holy, just, and good.

3. What he began he went through with, prosecuted it with vigour, and did it with all his heart.

4. All his good intentions were brought to a good issue; whatever he did in the service of the house of God, and in the government of his kingdom, he prospered in it. Note, What is undertaken with a sincere regard to the glory of God will succeed to our own honour and comfort at last.

13 And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, *were* overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.

14 And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, *was* over the freewill offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things.

15 And next him *were* Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in *their* set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small:

16 besides their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, *even* unto every one that entereth into the house of the Lord, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses;

17 both to the genealogy of the priests by the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses;

18 and to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness:

19 also of the sons of Aaron the priests, *which were* in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites.

20 And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought *that which was* good and right and truth before the Lord his God.

21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did
it with all his heart, and prospered.

2 Chronicles-32

The Invasion of Sennacherib

1 After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

Here is, I The formidable design of Sennacherib against Hezekiah's kingdom, and the vigorous attempt he made upon it. This Sennacherib was now, as Nebuchadnezzar was afterwards, the terror and scourge and great oppressor of that part of the world. He aimed to raise a boundless monarchy for himself upon the ruins of all his neighbours. His predecessor Shalmaneser had lately made himself master of the kingdom of Israel, and carried the ten tribes captives. Sennacherib thought, in like manner, to win Judah for himself. Pride and ambition put men upon grasping at universal dominion. It is observable that, just about this time, Rome, a city which afterwards came to reign more than any other had done over the kings of the earth, was built by Romulus. Sennacherib invaded Judah immediately after the reformation of it and the re-establishment of religion in it: After these things he entered into Judah, 2Ch 32:1.

1. It was well ordered by the divine Providence that he did not give them this disturbance before the reformation was finished and established, as it might then have put a stop to it.

2. Perhaps he intended to chastise Hezekiah for destroying that idolatry to which he himself was devoted. He looked upon Hezekiah as profane in what he had done, and as having thrown himself out of the divine protection. He accordingly considered him as one who might easily be made a prey of.

3. God ordered it at this time that he might have an opportunity of showing himself strong on the behalf of this returning reforming people. He brought this trouble upon them that he might have the honour, and might put on them the honour, of their deliverance. After these things, and the establishment thereof, one would have expected to hear of nothing but perfect peace, and that none durst meddle with a people thus qualified for the divine favour; yet the next news we hear is that a threatening destroying army enters the country, and is ready to lay all waste. We may be in the way of our duty and yet meet with trouble and danger. God orders it so for the trial of our confidence in him and the manifestation of his care concerning us. The little opposition which Sennacherib met with in entering Judah induced him to imagine that all was his own. He thought to win all the fenced cities (2Ch 32:1), and purposed to fight against Jerusalem, 2Ch 32:2. See 2Ki 18:7,13.

II The preparation which Hezekiah prudently made against this storm that threatened him: He took counsel with his princes what he should do, what measures he should take, 2Ch 32:3. With their advice he provided,

1. That the country should give him a cold reception, for he took care that he should find no water in it (and then his army must perish for thirst), or at least that there should be a scarcity of water, by which his army would be weakened and unfitted for service. A powerful army, if it want water but a few days, will be but a heap of dry dust. All hands were set immediately to work to stop up the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, turning that (it is probable) into the city by pipes under-ground. Such as this is the policy commonly practised now-a-days of destroying the forage before an invading army.

2. That the city should give him a warm reception. In order to this he repaired the wall, raised towers, and made darts (or, as it is in the margin, swords or weapons) and shields in abundance (2Ch 32:5), and appointed captains, 2Ch 32:6. Note, Those that trust God with their safety must yet use proper means for their safety,

otherwise they tempt him, and do not trust him. God will provide, but so must we also.

III. The encouragement which he gave to his people to depend upon God in this distress. He gathered them together in a broad open street, and spoke comfortably to them, 2Ch 32:6. He was himself undaunted, being confident the invasion would issue well. He was not like his father, who had much guilt to terrify him and no faith to encourage him, so that, in a time of public danger, his heart was moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, and then no marvel that the heart of his people was so too, Isa 7:2. With what he said he put life into his people, his captains especially, and spoke to their heart, as the word is.

1. He endeavoured to keep down their fears: "Be strong and courageous; do not think of surrendering the city or capitulating, but resolve to hold it out to the last man; do not think of losing the city, nor of falling into the enemy's hand; there is no danger. Let the soldiers be bold and brave, make good their posts, stand to their arms, and fight manfully, and let the citizens encourage them to do so: Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria." The prophet had thus encouraged them from God (Isa 10:24): Be not afraid of the Assyrians; and here the king from him. Now it was that the sinners in Zion were afraid (Isa 33:14), but the righteous dwelt on high (Isa 33:15,16) and meditated on terror so as to conquer it. See Isa 33:18, which refers to what is recorded here.

2. He endeavoured to keep up their faith, in order to the silencing and suppressing of their fears. "Sennacherib has a multitude with him, and yet there are more with us than with him; for we have God with us, and how many do you reckon him for? With our enemy is an arm of flesh, which he trusts to; but with us is the Lord, whose power is irresistible, our God, whose promise is inviolable, a God in covenant with us, to help us, and to fight our battles, not only to help us to fight them, but to fight them for us if he please:" and so he did here.

Note, A believing confidence in God will raise us above the prevailing fear of man. He that feareth the fury of the oppressor forgetteth the Lord his Maker, Isa 51:12,13. It is probable that Hezekiah said more to this purport, and that the people rested themselves upon what he said, not merely upon his word, but on the things he said concerning the presence of God with them and his power to relieve them, the belief of which made them easy. Let the good subjects and soldiers of Jesus Christ rest thus upon his word, and boldly say, Since God is for us, who can be against us?

2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem,
3 he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which *were* without the city: and they did help him.
4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?
5 Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised *it* up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo *in* the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.
6 And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,
7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him.
8 With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.
9 After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem, (but he *himself laid siege* against Lachish, and all his power with him,) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that *were* at Jerusalem, saying,
10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?

11 Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The Lord our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

This story of the rage and blasphemy of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's prayer, and the deliverance of Jerusalem by the destruction of the Assyrian army, we had more at large in the book of Kings, 2Ki 18:1-19:37 It is contracted here, yet large enough to show these three things:--

I The impiety and malice of the church's enemies. Sennacherib has his hands full in besieging Lachish (2Ch 32:9), but hears that Hezekiah is fortifying Jerusalem and encouraging his people to stand it out; and therefore, before he come in person to besiege it, he sends messengers to make speeches, and he himself writes letters to frighten Hezekiah and his people into a surrender of the city.

See, 1. His great malice against the king of Judah, in endeavouring to withdraw his subjects from their allegiance to him. He did not treat with Hezekiah as a man of honour would have done, nor propose fair terms to him, but used mean and base artifices, unbecoming a crowned head, to terrify the common people and persuade them to desert him. He represented Hezekiah as one who designed to deceive his subjects into their ruin and betray them to famine and thirst (2Ch 32:11), as one who had done them great wrong and exposed them already to the divine displeasure by taking away the high places and altars (2Ch 32:12), and who, against the common interest of his people, held out against a force that would certainly be their ruin, 2Ch 32:15.

2. His great impiety against the God of Israel, the God of Jerusalem he is called (2Ch 32:19), because that was the place he had chosen to put his name there, and because that was the place which was now threatened by the enemy and which the divine Providence had under its special protection. This proud blasphemer compared the great Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth, with the dunghill gods of the nations, the work of men's hands, and thought him no more able to deliver his worshippers than they were to deliver

theirs (2Ch 32:19), as if an infinite and eternal Spirit had no more wisdom and power than a stone or the stock of a tree. He boasted of his triumphs over the gods of the nations, that they could none of them protect their people (2Ch 32:13-15), and thence inferred not only, How shall your God deliver you? (2Ch 32:14), but, as if he were inferior to them all, How much less shall your God deliver you? as if he were less able to help than any of them. Thus did they rail, rail in writing (which, being more deliberate, is so much the worse), on the Lord God of Israel, as if he were a cipher and an empty name, like all the rest, 2Ch 32:17.

Sennacherib, in the instructions he gave, said more than enough; but, as if his blasphemies had been too little, his servants, who learned insolence from their master, spoke yet more than he bade them against the Lord God and his servant Hezekiah, 2Ch 32:16. And God resents what is said against his servants, and will reckon for it, as well as what is said against himself. All this was intended to frighten the people from their hope in God, which David's enemies sought to take him off from (Ps 11:1,42:10), saying, There is no help for him in God, Ps 3:2,71:11. Thus they hoped to take the city by weakening the hands of those that should defend it. Satan, in his temptations, aims to destroy our faith in God's all-sufficiency, knowing that he shall gain his point if he can do that; as we keep our ground if our faith fail not, Lu 22:32.

II The duty as well as the interest of the church's friends, and that is in the day of distress to pray and cry to Heaven. So Hezekiah did, and the prophet Isaiah, 2Ch 32:20. It was a happy time when the king and the prophet joined thus in prayer. Is any troubled? Is any terrified? Let him pray. So we engage God for us; so we encourage ourselves in him. Praying to God is here called crying to Heaven, because we are, in prayer, to eye him as our Father in heaven, whence he beholds the children of men, and where he has prepared his throne.

III. The power and goodness of the church's God. He is able both to control his enemies, be they ever so high, and to relieve his friends, be they ever so low.

1. As the blasphemies of his enemies engage him against them (De 32:27), so the prayers of his people engage him for them. They did so here.

(1.) The army of the Assyrians was cut off by the sword of an angel, which triumphed particularly in the slaughter of the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, who defied the sword of any man. God delights to abase the proud and secure. The Targum says, The Word of the Lord (the eternal Word) sent Gabriel to do this execution, and that it was done with lightning, and in the passover night: that was the night in which the angel destroyed the first-born of Egypt. But that was not all.

(2.) The king of the Assyrians, having received this disgrace, was cut off by the sword of his own sons. Those that came forth of his own bowels slew him, 2Ch 32:21. Thus was he mortified first, and then murdered--shamed first, and then slain. Evil pursues sinners; and, when they escape one mischief, they run upon another unseen.

2. By this work of wonder,

(1.) God was glorified, as the protector of his people. Thus he saved Jerusalem, not only from the hand of Sennacherib, but from the hand of all others, 2Ch 32:22; for such a deliverance as this was an earnest of much mercy in store; and he guided them, that is, he guarded them, on every side. God defends his people by directing them, shows them what they should do, and so saves them from what is designed or done against them. For this many brought gifts unto the Lord, when they saw the great power of God in the defence of his people. Strangers were thereby induced to supplicate his favour and enemies to deprecate his wrath, and both brought gifts to his temple, in token of their care and desire.

(2.) Hezekiah was magnified as the favourite and particular care of Heaven. Many brought presents to him (2Ch 32:22,23), in token of the honour they had for him, and to make an interest in him. By the favour of God enemies are lost and friends gained.

12 Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his
altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall
worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it?
13 Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people
of *other* lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways
able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?
14 Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers
utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand,
that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?
15 Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on
this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or
kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out
of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver
you out of mine hand?
16 And his servants spake yet *more* against the Lord God, and
against his servant Hezekiah.
17 He wrote also letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel, and to
speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of *other* lands
have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the
God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.
18 Then they cried with a loud voice, in the Jews' speech, unto the
people of Jerusalem that *were* on the wall, to affright them, and
to trouble them; that they might take the city.
19 And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods
of the people of the earth, *which were* the work of the hands of
man.

The Lord Delivers Hezekiah

20 And for this *cause* Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the
son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven.
21 And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men
of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king
Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And
when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth
of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.

22 Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem
from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the
hand of all *other*, and guided them on every side.
23 And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents
to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight
of all nations from thenceforth.

Hezekiah's Sickness

24 In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the
Lord: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign.

Here we conclude the story of Hezekiah with an account of three things concerning him:--

I. His sickness and his recovery from it, 2Ch 32:24. The account of his sickness is but briefly mentioned here; we had a large narrative of it, 2Ki 20:1-11 His disease seemed likely to be mortal. In the extremity of it he prayed. God answered him, and gave him a sign that he should recover, the going back of the sun ten degrees.

II. His sin and his repentance for it, which were also more largely related, 2Ki 20:12-21, &c. Yet several things are here observed concerning his sin which we had not there.

1 The occasion of it was the king of Babylon's sending an honourable embassy to him to congratulate him on his recovery. But here it is added that they came to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land (2Ch 32:31), either the destruction of the Assyrian army or the going back of the sun. The Assyrians were their enemies; they came to enquire concerning their fall, that they might triumph in it. The sun was their god; they came to enquire concerning the favour he had shown to Hezekiah, that they might honour him whom their god honoured, 2Ch 32:31. These miracles were wrought to alarm and awaken a stupid careless world, and turn them from dumb and lame idols to the living God; and men were startled by them, but not converted till a greater wonder was done in that land, in the appearing of Jesus Christ, Mt 2:1,2.

2. God left him to himself in it, to try him, 2Ch 32:31. God, by the power of his almighty grace, could have prevented the sin; but he permitted it for wise and holy ends, that, by this trial and his weakness in it, he might know, that is, it might be known (a usual Hebraism), what was in his heart, that he was not so perfect in grace as he thought he was, but had his follies and infirmities as other men. God left him to himself to be proud of his wealth, to keep him from being proud of his holiness. It is good for us to know ourselves, and our own weakness and sinfulness, that we may not be conceited or self-confident, but may always think meanly of ourselves and live in a dependence upon divine grace. We know not the corruption of our own hearts, nor what we shall do if God leave us to ourselves. Lord, lead us not into temptation.

3. His sin was the his heart was lifted up, 2Ch 32:25. He was proud of the honour God had put upon him in so many instances, the honour his neighbours did him in bringing him presents, and now that the king of Babylon should send an embassy to him to caress and court him: this exalted him above measure. When Hezekiah had destroyed other idolatries he began to idolize himself. O what need have great men, and good men, and useful men, to study their own infirmities and follies, and their obligations to free grace, that they may never think highly of themselves, and to beg earnestly of God that he will hide pride from them and always keep them humble!

4. The aggravation of his sin was the he made so bad a return to God for his favours to him, making even those favours the food and fuel of his pride (2Ch 32:25): He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.

Note, It is justly expected that those who have received mercy from God should study to make some suitable returns for the mercies they have received; and, if they do not, their ingratitude will certainly be charged upon them. Though we cannot render an equivalent, or the payment of a debt, we must render the acknowledgment of a favour. What shall I render that may be so accepted? Ps 116:12.

5. The divine displeasure he was under for this sin; though it was but a heart-sin, and the overt-act seemed not only innocent but civil (the showing of his treasures to a friend), yet wrath came upon him and his kingdom for it, 2Ch 32:25. Note, Pride is a sin that God hates as much as any, and particularly in his own people. Those that exalt themselves must expect to be abased, and put under humbling providences. Wrath came on David for his pride in numbering the people.

6. His repentance for this sin: He humbled himself for the pride of his heart.

Note, (1.) Though God may, for wise and holy ends, suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it; they shall not be utterly cast down.

(2.) Heart-sins are to be repented of, though they go no further.

(3.) Self-humiliation is a necessary branch of repentance.

(4.) Pride of heart, by which we have lifted up ourselves, is a sin for which we ought in a special manner to humble ourselves.

(5.) People ought to mourn for the sins of their rulers. The inhabitants of Jerusalem humbled themselves with Hezekiah, because they either knew that they also had been guilty of the same sin, or at least feared that they might share in the punishment. When David, in his pride, numbered the people, they all smarted for his sin.

7. The reprieve granted thereupon. The wrath came not in his days. While he lived the country had peace and truth prevailed; so much does repentance avail to put by, or at least to put off, the tokens of God's anger.

III. Here is the honour done to Hezekiah,

1. By the providence of God while he lived. He had exceeding much riches and honour (2Ch 32:27), replenished his stores, victualled his campus, fortified his city, and did all he wished to do; for God had given him very much substance, 2Ch 32:29. Among his great performances, his turning the water-course of Gihon is mentioned (2Ch 32:30), which was done upon occasion of Sennacherib's invasion, 2Ch 32:3,4. The water had come into that which is called the old pool (Isa 22:11) and the upper pool (Isa 7:3); but he gathered the waters into a new place, for the greater convenience of the city, called the lower pool, Isa 22:9. And, in general, he prospered in all his works, for they were good works.

2. By the respect paid to his memory when he was dead.

(1.) The prophet Isaiah wrote his life and reign (2Ch 32:32), his acts and his goodness or piety, or which it is part of the honour to be recorded and remembered, for examples to others.

(2.) The people did him honour at his death (2Ch 32:33), buried him in the chief of the sepulchres, made as great a burning for him as for Asa, or, which is a much greater honour, made great lamentation for him, as for Josiah. See how the honour of serious godliness is manifested in the consciences of men. Though it is to be feared that the generality of the people did not heartily comply with the reforming kings, yet they could not but praise their endeavours for reformation, and the memory of those kings was blessed among them. It is a debt we owe to those who have been eminently useful in their day to do them honour at their death, when they are out of the reach of flattery and we have seen the end of their conversation. The due payment of this debt will be an encouragement to others to do likewise.

25 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

26 Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, *both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah Receives Envoys from Babylon

27 And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;
28 storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.
29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.
30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.
31 Howbeit, in *the business of* the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was *done* in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart.

The Death of Hezekiah

32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they *are* written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, *and* in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.
33 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

2 Chronicles-33

The Reign of Manasseh

1 Manasseh *was* twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem:

We have here an account of the great wickedness of Manasseh. It is the same almost word for word with that which we had 2Ki 21:1-9, and took a melancholy view of. It is no such pleasing subject

that we should delight to dwell upon it again. This foolish young prince, in contradiction to the good example and good education his father gave him, abandoned himself to all impiety, transcribed the abominations of the heathen (2Ch 33:2), ruined the established religion, unravelled his father's glorious reformation (2Ch 33:3), profaned the house of God with his idolatry (2Ch 33:4,5), dedicated his children to Moloch, and made the devil's lying oracles his guides and his counsellors, 2Ch 33:6. In contempt of the choice God had made of Sion to be his rest for ever and Israel to be his covenant-people (2Ch 33:8), and the fair terms he stood upon with God, he embraced other gods, profaned God's chosen temple, and debauched his chosen people.

He made them to err, and do worse than the heathen (2Ch 33:9); for, if the uncle an spirit returns, he brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. That which aggravated the sin of Manasseh was that God spoke to him and his people by the prophets, but they would not hearken, 2Ch 33:10. We may here admire the grace of God in speaking to them, and their obstinacy in turning a deaf ear to him, that either their badness did not quite turn away his goodness, but still he waited to be gracious, or that his goodness did not turn them from their badness, but still they hated to be reformed. Now from this let us learn,

1. That it is no new thing, but a very sad thing, for the children of godly parents to turn aside from that good way of God in which they have been trained. Parents may give many good things to their children, but they cannot give them grace.

2. Corruptions in worship are such diseases of the church as it is very apt to relapse into again even when they seem to be cured. 3. The god of this world has strangely blinded men's minds, and has a wonderful power over those that are led captive by him; else he could not draw them from God, their best friend, to depend upon their sworn enemy.

2 but did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.

3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had
broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made
groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.
4 Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereof the Lord
had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.
5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of
the house of the Lord.
6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of
the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used
enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar
spirit,
and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord,
to provoke him to anger.
7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the
house of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his
son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before
all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:
8 neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the
land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take
heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the
whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of
Moses.
9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err,
and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had
destroyed before the children of Israel.
10 And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they
would not hearken.
11 Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host
of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns,
and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

We have seen Manasseh by his wickedness undoing the good that his father had done; here we have him by repentance undoing the evil that he himself had done. It is strange that this was not so much as mentioned in the book of Kings, nor does any thing appear there to the contrary but that he persisted and perished in his son. But perhaps the reason was because the design of that history was to show the wickedness of the nation which brought destruction upon them; and this repentance of Manasseh and the benefit of it, being

personal only and not national, is overlooked there; yet here it is fully related, and a memorable instance it is of the riches of God's pardoning mercy and the power of his renewing grace. Here is,

I The occasion of Manasseh's repentance, and that was his affliction. In his distress he did not (like king Ahaz) trespass yet more against God, but humbled himself and returned to God. Sanctified afflictions often prove happy means of conversion. What his distress was we are told, 2Ch 33:11. God brought a foreign enemy upon him; the king of Babylon, that courted his father who faithfully served God, invaded him now that he had treacherously departed from God. He is here called king of Assyria, because he had made himself master of Assyria, which he would the more easily do for the defeat of Sennacherib's army, and its destruction before Jerusalem. He aimed at the treasures which the ambassadors had seen, and all those precious things; but God sent him to chastise a sinful people, and subdue a straying prince.

The captain took Manasseh among the thorns, in some bush or other, perhaps in his garden, where he had hid himself. Or it is spoken figuratively: he was perplexed in his counsels and embarrassed in his affairs. He was, as we say, in the briers, and knew not which way to extricate himself, and so became an easy prey to the Assyrian captains, who no doubt plundered his house and took away what they pleased, as Isaiah had foretold, 2Ki 20:17,18. What was Hezekiah's pride was their prey. They bound Manasseh, who had been held before with the cords of his own iniquity, and carried him prisoner to Babylon. About what time of his reign this was we are not told; the Jews say it was in his twenty-second year.

II The expressions of his repentance (2Ch 33:12,13): When he was in affliction he had time to bethink himself and reason enough too. He saw what he had brought himself to by his sin. He found the gods he had served unable to help him. He knew that repentance was the only way of restoring his affairs; and therefore to him he returned from whom he had revolted.

1. He was convinced the Jehovah is the only living and true God: Then he knew (that is, he believed and considered) that the Lord he was God. He might have known it at a less expense if he would have given due attention and credit to the word written and preached: but it was better to pay thus dearly for the knowledge of God than to perish in ignorance and unbelief. Had he been a prince in the palace of Babylon, it is probable he would have been confirmed in his idolatry; but, being a captive in the prisons of Babylon, he was convinced of it and reclaimed from it.

2. He applied to him as his God now, renouncing all others, and resolving to cleave to him only, the God of his fathers, and a God on covenant with him.

3. He humbled himself greatly before him, was truly sorry for his sins, ashamed of them, and afraid of the wrath of God. It becomes sinners to humble themselves before the face of that God whom they have offended. It becomes sufferers to humble themselves under the hand of that God who corrects them, and to accept the punishment of their iniquity. Our hearts should be humbled under humbling providences; then we accommodate ourselves to them, and answer God's end in them.

4. He prayed to him for the pardon of sin and the return of his favour. Prayer is the relief of penitents, the relief of the afflicted. That is a good prayer, and very pertinent in this case, which we find among the apocryphal books, entitled, The prayer of Manasses, king of Judah, when he was holden captive in Babylon. Whether it was his or no is uncertain; if it was, in it he gives glory to God as the God of their fathers and their righteous seed, as the Creator of the world, a God whose anger is insupportable, and yet his merciful promise unmeasurable. He pleads that God has promised repentance and forgiveness to those that have sinned, and has appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved, not unto the just, as to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but to me (says he) that am a sinner; for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea: so he confesses his sin largely, and aggravates it. He prays, Forgive me, O Lord! forgive me, and destroy me not; he pleads,

Thou art the God of those that repent, &c., and concludes, Therefore I will praise thee for ever, &c.

III. God's gracious acceptance of his repentance: God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication. Though affliction drive us to God, he will not therefore reject us if in sincerity we seek him, for afflictions are sent on purpose to bring us to him. As a token of God's favour to him, he made a way for his escape. Afflictions are continued no longer than till they have done their work. When Manasseh is brought back to his God and to his duty he shall soon be brought back to his kingdom. See how ready God is to accept and welcome returning sinners, and how swift to show mercy. Let not great sinners despair, when Manasseh himself, upon his repentance, found favour with God; in him God showed forth a pattern of long-suffering, as 1Ti 1:16,Isa 1:18.

IV. The fruits meet for repentance which he brought forth after his return to his own land, 2Ch 33:15,16.

1. He turned from his sins. He took away the strange gods, the images of them, and that idol (whatever it was) which he had set up with so much solemnity in the house of the Lord, as if it had been master of that house. He cast out all the idolatrous altars that were in the mount of the house and in Jerusalem, as detestable things. Now (we hope) he loathed them as much as ever he had loved them, and said to them, Get you hence, Isa 30:22. "What have I to do any more with idols? I have had enough of them."

2. He returned to his duty; for he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had either been abused and broken down by some of the idolatrous priests, or, at least, neglected and gone out of repair. He sacrificed thereon peace-offerings to implore God's favour, and thank-offerings to praise him for his deliverance. Nay, he now used his power to reform his people, as before he had abused it to corrupt them: He commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.

Note, Those that truly repent of their sins will not only return to God themselves, but will do all they can to recover those that have by

their example been seduced and drawn away from God; else they do not thoroughly (as they ought) undo what they have done amiss, nor make the plaster as wide as the wound. We find that he prevailed to bring them off from their false gods, but not from their high places, 2Ch 33:17. They still sacrificed in them, yet to the Lord their God only; Manasseh could not carry the reformation so far as he had carried the corruption. It is an easy thing to debauch men's manners, but not so easy to reform them again.

V. His prosperity, in some measure, after his repentance. He might plainly see it was sin that ruined him; for, when he returned to God in a way of duty, God returned to him in a way of mercy: and then he built a wall about the city of David (2Ch 33:14), for by sin he had unwalled it and exposed it to the enemy. He also put captains of war in the fenced cities for the security of his country. Josephus says that all the rest of his time he was so changed for the better that he was looked upon as a very happy man.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of his history. The heads of those things for a full narrative of which we are referred to the other writings that were then extant are more than of any of the kings, 2Ch 33:18,19. A particular account, it seems, was kept,

1. Of all his sin, and his trespass, the high places he built, the groves and images he set up, before he was humbled. Probably this was taken from his own confession which he made of his sin when God gave him repentance, and which he left upon record, in a book entitled, The words of the seers. To those seers that spoke to him (2Ch 33:18) to reprove him for his sin he sent his confession when he repented, to be inserted in their memoirs, as a token of his gratitude to them for their kindness in reproving him. Thus it becomes penitents to take shame to themselves, to give thanks to their reprovers, and warning to others.

2. Of the words of the seers that spoke to him in the name of the Lord (2Ch 33:10,18), the reproofs they gave him for his sin and their exhortations to repentance. Note, Sinners ought to consider, that, how little notice soever they take of them, an account is kept of the

words of the seers that speak to them from God to admonish them of their sins, warn them of their danger, and call them to their duty, which will be produced against them in the great day.

3. Of his prayer to God (this is twice mentioned as a remarkable thing) and how God was entreated of him. This was written for the generations to come, that the people that should be created might praise the Lord for his readiness to receive returning prodigals. Notice is taken of the place of his burial, not in the sepulchres of the kings, but in his own house; he was buried privately, and nothing of that honour was done him at his death that was done to his father. Penitents may recover their comfort sooner than their credit.

12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,
13 and prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he *was* God.
14 Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.
15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast *them* out of the city.
16 And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the
Lord God of Israel.
17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, *yet* unto the Lord their God only.
18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, behold, they *are written* in the book of the kings of Israel.
19 His prayer also, and *how God* was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and

set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold,
they *are* written among the sayings of the seers.
20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his
own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

The Reign of Amon

21 Amon *was* two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and
reigned two years in Jerusalem.

His great wickedness. He did as Manasseh had done in the days of his apostasy, 2Ch 33:22. Those who think this an evidence that Manasseh did not truly repent forget how many good kings had wicked sons. Only it should seem that Manasseh was in this defective, that, when he cast out the images, he did not utterly deface and destroy them, according to the law which required Israel to burn the images with fire, De 7:2. How necessary that law was this instance shows; for the carved images being only thrown by, and not burnt, Amon knew where to find them, soon set them up, and sacrificed to them. It is added, to represent him exceedingly sinful and to justify God in cutting him off so soon,

1. That he out-did his father in sinning: He trespassed more and more, 2Ch 33:23. His father did ill, but he did worse. Those that were joined to idols grew more and more mad upon them.

2. That he came short of his father in repenting: He humbled not himself before the Lord, as his father had humbled himself. He fell like him, but did not get up again like him. It is not so much sin as impenitence in sin that ruins men, not so much that they offend as that they do not humble themselves for their offences, not the disease, but the neglect of the remedy.

II. His speedy destruction. He reigned but two years and then his servants conspired against him and slew him, 2Ch 33:24. Perhaps when Amon sinned as his father did in the beginning of his days he promised himself that he should repent as his father did in the latter end of his days. But his case shows what a madness it is to

presume upon that. If he hoped to repent when he was old, he was wretchedly disappointed; for he was cut off when he was young. He rebelled against God, and his own servants rebelled against him. Herein God was righteous, but they were wicked, and justly did the people of the land put them to death as traitors. The lives of kings are particularly under the protection of Providence and the laws both of God and man.

22 But he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;

23 and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

24 And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

25 But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

2 Chronicles-34

The Reign of Josiah

1 Josiah *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither* to the right hand, nor to the left.

Josiah's Reforms

3 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the

twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

4 And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that *were* on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust *of them,* and strewed *it* upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

Concerning Josiah we are here told,

1. That he came to the crown when he was very young, only eight years old (yet his infancy did not debar him from his right), and he reigned thirty-one years (2Ch 34:1), a considerable time. I fear, however, that in the beginning of his reign things went much as they had done in his father's time, because, being a child, he must have left the management of them to others; so that it was not till his twelfth year, which goes far in the number of his years, that the reformation began, 2Ch 34:3. He could not, as Hezekiah did, fall about it immediately.

2. That he reigned very well (2Ch 34:2), approved himself to God, trod in the steps of David, and did not decline either to the right hand of to the left: for there are errors on both hands.

3. That while he was young, about sixteen years old, he began to seek after God, 2Ch 34:3. We have reason to think he had not so good an education as Manasseh had (it is well if those about him did not endeavour to corrupt and debauch him); yet he thus sought God when he was young. It is the duty and interest of young people, and will particularly be the honour of young gentlemen, as soon as they come to years of understanding, to begin to seek God; for those that seek him early shall find him.

4. That in the twelfth year of his reign, when it is probable he took the administration of the government entirely into his own hands, he began to purge his kingdom from the remains of idolatry; he destroyed the high places, groves, images, altars, all the utensils of idolatry, 2Ch 34:3,4. He not only cast them out as Manasseh did,

but broke them to pieces, and made dust of them. This destruction of idolatry is here said to be in his twelfth year, but it was said (2Ki 23:23) to be in his eighteenth year. Something was probably done towards it in his twelfth year; then he began to purge out idolatry, but that good work met with opposition, so that it was not thoroughly done till they had found the book of the law six years afterwards. But here the whole work is laid together briefly which was much more largely and particularly related in the Kings. His zeal carried him out to do this, not only in Judah and Jerusalem, but in the cities of Israel too, as far as he had any influence upon them.

5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars,
and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.
6 And *so did he* in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon,
even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about.
7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and
had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the
idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

The Book of the Law Discovered

8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the
land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and
Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the
recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.

Here, 1. Orders are given by the king for the repair of the temple, 2Ch 34:8. When he had purged the house of the corruptions of it he began to fit it up for the services that were to be performed in it. Thus we must do by the spiritual temple of the heart, get it cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and then renewed, so as to be transformed into the image of God. Josiah, in this order, calls God the Lord his God. Those that truly love God will love the habitation of his house.

2. Care is taken about it, effectual care. The Levites went about the country and gathered money towards it, which was returned to the three trustees mentioned, 2Ch 34:8. They brought it to Hilkiah the high priest (2Ch 34:9), and he and they put it into the hands of

workmen, both overseers and labourers, who undertook to do it by the great, as we say, or in the gross, 2Ch 34:10,11. It is observed that the workmen were industrious and honest: They did the work faithfully (2Ch 34:12); and workmen are not completely faithful if they are not both careful and diligent, for a confidence is reposed in them that they will be so. It is also intimated that the overseers were ingenious; for it is said that all those were employed to inspect this work who were skilful in instruments of music; not that their skill in music could be of any use in architecture, but it was an evidence that they were men of sense and ingenuity, and particularly that their genius lay towards the mathematics, which qualified them very much for this trust. Witty men are then wise men when they employ their wit in doing good, in helping their friends, and, as they have opportunity, in serving the public. Observe, in this work, how God dispenses his gifts variously; here were some that were bearers of burdens, cut out for bodily labour and fit to work.

Here were others (made meliori luto--of finer materials) that had skill in music, and they were overseers of those that laboured, and scribes and officers. The former were the hands: these were the heads. They had need of one another, and the work needed both. Let not the overseers of the work despise the bearers of burdens, nor let those that work in the service grudge at those whose office it is to direct; but let each esteem and serve the other in love, and let God have the glory and the church the benefit of the different gifts and dispositions of both.

9 And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem.

10 And they put *it* in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord, to repair and amend the house:

11 even to the artificers and builders gave they *it*, to buy hewn stone,
and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings
of Judah had destroyed.
12 And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them
were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and
Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set *it*
forward; and *other of* the Levites, all that could skill of
instruments of music.
13 Also *they were* over the bearers of burdens, and *were* overseers of
all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the
Levites *there were* scribes, and officers, and porters.
14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the
house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of
the Lord *given* by Moses.

This whole paragraph we had, just as it is here related, 2Ki 22:8-20, and have nothing to add here to what was there observed. But,

1. We may hence take occasion to bless God that we have plenty of Bibles, and that they are, or may be, in all hands,--that the book of the law and gospel is not lost, is not scarce,--that, in this sense, the word of the Lord is not precious. Bibles are jewels, but, thanks be to God, they are not rarities. The fountain of the waters of life is not a spring shut up or a fountain sealed, but the streams of it, in all places, make glad the city of our God. Usus communis aquarum--These waters flow for general use. What a great deal shall we have to answer for if the great things of God's law, being thus made common, should be accounted by us as strange things!

2. We may hence learn, whenever we read or hear the word of God, to affect our hearts with it, and to get them possessed with a holy fear of that wrath of God which is there revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, as Josiah's tender heart was. When he heard the words of the law he rent his clothes (2Ch 34:19), and God was well pleased with his doing so, 2Ch 34:27. Were the things contained in the scripture new to us, as they were here to Josiah, surely they would make deeper impressions upon us than commonly they do; but they are not the less weighty, and

therefore should not be the less considered by us, for their being well known. Rend the heart therefore, not the garments.

3. We are here directed when we are under convictions of sin, and apprehensions of divine wrath, to enquire of the Lord; so Josiah did, 2Ch 34:21. It concerns us to ask (as they did, Ac 2:37), Men and brethren, what shall we do? and more particularly (as the jailor), What must I do to be saved? Ac 16:30. If you will thus enquire, enquire (Isa 21:12); and, blessed be God, we have the lively oracles to which to apply with these enquiries.

4. We are here warned of the ruin that sin brings upon nations and kingdoms. Those that forsake God bring evil upon themselves (2Ch 34:24,25), and kindle a fire which shall not be quenched. Such will the fire of God's wrath be when the decree has gone forth against those that obstinately and impenitently persist in their wicked ways.

5. We are here encouraged to humble ourselves before God and seek unto him, as Josiah did. If we cannot prevail thereby to turn away God's wrath from our land, yet we shall deliver our own souls, 2Ch 34:27,28. And good people are here taught to be so far from fearing death as to welcome it rather when it takes them away from the evil to come. See how the property of it is altered by making it the matter of a promise: Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, housed in that ark, as Noah, when a deluge is coming.

15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do *it*.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the
priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the
king.
19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the
law, that he rent his clothes.
20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of
Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the
scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying,
21 Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel
and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for
great *is* the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because
our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all
that is written in this book.
22 And Hilkiah, and *they* that the king *had appointed*, went to
Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath,
the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in
Jerusalem in the college;) and they spake to her to that *effect*.
23 And she answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell
ye the man that sent you to me,
24 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place,
and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the curses that are
written in the book which they have read before the king of
Judah:
25 because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto
other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the
works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out
upon this place, and shall not be quenched.
26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord,
so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel
concerning the words which thou hast heard;
27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself
before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and
against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before
me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even
heard *thee* also, saith the Lord.
28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered
to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I

will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.
So they brought the king word again.
29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah
and Jerusalem.
30 And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men
of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and
the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in
their
ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in
the house of the Lord.
31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the
Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments,
and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with
his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written
in this book.

We have here an account of the further advances which Josiah made towards the reformation of his kingdom upon the hearing of the law read and the receipt of the message God sent him by the prophetess. Happy the people that had such a king; for here we find that,

1. They were well taught. He did not go about to force them to do their duty, till he had first instructed them in it. He called all the people together, great and small, young and old, rich and poor, high and low. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear the words of the book of the covenant; for they are all concerned in those words. To put an honour upon the service, and to engage attention the more, though there were priests and Levites present, the king himself read the book to the people (2Ch 34:30), and he read it, no doubt, in such a manner as to show that he was himself affected with it, which would be a means of affecting the hearers.

2. They were well fixed. The articles of agreement between God and Israel being read, that they might intelligently covenant with God, both king and people with great solemnity did as it were subscribe the articles. The king in his place covenanted to keep God's commandments with all his heart and soul, according to what was written in the book (2Ch 34:31), and urged the people to

declare their consent likewise to this covenant, and solemnly to promise that they would faithfully perform, fulfil, and keep, all and every thing that was on their part to be done, according to this covenant: this they did; they could not for shame do otherwise. He caused all that were present to stand to it (2Ch 34:32), and made them all to serve, even to serve the Lord their God (2Ch 34:33), to do it and to make a business of it. He did all he could to bring them to it--to serve, even to serve; the repetition denotes that this was the only thing his heart was set on; he aimed at nothing else in what he did but to engage them to God and their duty.

3. They were well tended, were honest with good looking to. All his days they departed not from following the Lord; he kept them, with much ado, from running into idolatry again. All his days were days of restraint upon them; but this intimated that there was in them a bent to backslide, a strong inclination to idolatry. Many of them wanted nothing but to have him out of the way, and then they would have their high places and their images up again. And therefore we find that in the days of Josiah (Jer 3:6) God charged it upon treacherous Judah that she had not returned to him with all her heart, but feignedly (2Ch 34:10), nay, had played the harlot (2Ch 34:8) and thereby had even justified backsliding Israel, 2Ch 34:11. In the twenty-third year of this reign, four or five years after this, they had gone on to provoke God to anger with the works of their hands (Jer 25:3-7); and, which is very observable, it is from the beginning of Josiah's reformation, his twelfth or thirteenth year, that the iniquity of the house of Judah, which brought ruin upon them, and which the prophet was to bear lying on his right side, was dated (Eze 4:6), for thence to the destruction of Jerusalem was just forty years.

Josiah was sincere in what he did, but the generality of the people were averse to it and hankered after their idols still; so that the reformation, though well designed and well prosecuted by the prince, had little or no effect upon the people. It was with reluctancy that they parted with their idols; still they were in heart joined to them, and wished for them again. This God saw, and therefore from that time, when one would have thought the

foundations had been laid for a perpetual security and peace, from that very time did the decree go forth for their destruction. Nothing hastens the ruin of a people nor ripens them for it more than the baffling of hopeful attempts for reformation and a hypocritical return to God. Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

32 And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin
to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to
the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.
33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries
that *pertained* to the children of Israel, and made all that were
present in Israel to serve, *even* to serve the Lord their God. *And*
all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God
of their fathers.

2 Chronicles-35

Josiah Keeps the Passover

1 Moreover, Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem:
and they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first
month.
2 And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to
the service of the house of the Lord,
3 and said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy
unto the Lord, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon
the son of David king of Israel did build; *it shall* not *be* a burden
upon *your* shoulders: serve now the Lord your God, and his
people Israel,
4 and prepare *yourselves* by the houses of your fathers, after
your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel,
and according to the writing of Solomon his son:
5 and stand in the holy *place* according to the divisions of the families
of the fathers of your brethren the people, and *after* the division of
the families of the Levites.
6 So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your
brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the Lord
by the hand of Moses.

7 And Josiah gave to the people, of the flocks, lambs and kids, all
for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the
of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these *were* of
the king's substance.
8 And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests,
and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, rulers of
the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover offerings
two thousand and six hundred *small cattle,* and three hundred
oxen.

The destruction which Josiah made of idols and idolatry was more largely related in the Kings, but just mentioned here in the foregoing chapter (2Ch 35:33); but his solemnizing the passover, which was touched upon there (2Ki 23:21), is very particularly related here. Many were the feasts of the Lord, appointed by the ceremonial law, but the passover was the chief. It began them all in the night wherein Israel came out of Egypt; it concluded them all in the night wherein Christ was betrayed; and in the celebration of it Hezekiah and Josiah, those two great reformers, revived religion in their day.

The ordinance of the Lord's supper resembles the passover more than it does any of the Jewish festivals; and the due observance of that ordinance, according to the rule, is an instance and means both of the growing purity and beauty of churches and of the growing piety and devotion of particular Christians. Religion cannot flourish where that passover is either wholly neglected or not duly observed; return to that, revive that, make a solemn business of that affecting binding ordinance, and then, it is to be hoped, there will be a reformation in other instances also.

In the account we had of Hezekiah's passover the great zeal of the people was observable, and the transport of devout affection that they were in; but little of the same spirit appears here. It was more in compliance with the king that they all kept the passover (2Ch 35:17,18) than from any great inclination they had to it themselves. Some pride they took in this form of godliness, but little pleasure in the power of it. But, whatever

defect there was among the people in the spirit of the duty, both the magistrates and the ministers did their part and took care that the external part of the service should be performed with due solemnity.

I The king exhorted and directed, quickened and encouraged, the priests and Levites to do their office in this solemnity. Perhaps he saw them remiss and indifferent, unwilling to go out of their road or mend their pace. If ministers are so, it is not amiss for any, but most proper for magistrates, to stir them up to their business. Say to Archippus, Take heed to thy ministry, Col 4:17. Let us see how this good king managed his clergy upon this occasion.

1. He reduced them to the office they were appointed to by the law of Moses (2Ch 35:6) and the order they were put into by David and Solomon, 2Ch 35:4. He set them in their charge, 2Ch 35:2. He did not cut them out new work, nor put them into any new method, but called them back to their institution. Their courses were settled in writing; let them have recourse to that writing, and marshal themselves according to the divisions of their families, 2Ch 35:5. Our rule is settled in the written word; let magistrates take care that ministers walk according to that rule and they do their duty.

2. He ordered the ark to be put in its place. It should seem, it had of late been displaced, either by the wicked kings, to make room for their idols in the most holy place, or by Hezekiah, to make room for the workmen that repaired the temple. However it was, Josiah bids the Levites put the ark in the house (2Ch 35:3), and not carry it about from place to place, as perhaps of late they had done, justifying themselves therein by the practice before the temple was built. Now that the priests were discharged from this burden of the ark they must be careful in other services about it. 3. He charged them to serve God and his people Israel, 2Ch 35:3. Ministers must look upon themselves as servants both to Christ and to his church for his sake, 2Co

4:5. They must take care, and take pains, and lay out themselves to the utmost,

(1.) For the glory and honour of God, and to advance the interests of his kingdom among men. Paul, a servant of God, Tit 1:1.

(2.) For the welfare and benefit of his people, not as having dominion over their faith, but as helpers of their holiness and joy; and there will be no difficulty, in the strength of God, in honestly serving these two masters.

4. He charged them to sanctify themselves, and prepare their brethren, 2Ch 35:6. Ministers' work must begin at home, and they must sanctify themselves in the first place, purify themselves from sin, sequester themselves from the world, and devote themselves to God. But it must not end there; they must do what they can to prepare their brethren by admonishing, instructing, exhorting, quickening, and comforting, them. The preparation of the heart is indeed from the Lord; but ministers must be instruments in his hand.

5. He encouraged them to the service, 2Ch 35:2. He spoke comfortably to them, as Hezekiah did, 2Ch 30:22. He promised them his countenance. Note, Those whom we charge we should encourage. Most people love to be commended, and will be wrought upon by encouragements more than by threats.

II The king and the princes, influenced by his example, gave liberally for the bearing of the charges of this passover. The ceremonial services were expensive, which perhaps was one reason why they had been neglected. People had not zeal enough to be at the charge of them; nor were they now very fond of them, for that reason, and therefore,

1. Josiah, at his own proper cost, furnished the congregation with paschal lambs, and other sacrifices, to be offered during the seven days of the feast. He allowed out of his own estate

30,000 lambs for passover offerings, which the offerers were to feast upon, and 3000 bullocks (2Ch 35:7) to be offered during the following seven days. Note, Those who are serious in religion should, when they persuade others to do that which is good, make it as cheap and easy to them as may be. And where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly. It is to be feared that the congregation generally had not come provided; so that, if Josiah had not furnished them, the work of God must have stood still.

2 The chief of the priests, who were men of great estates, contributed towards the priests' charges, as Josiah did towards the people's. The princes (2Ch 35:8), that is, the chief of the priests, the princes of the holy tribe, rulers of the house of God, bore the priests' charges. And some of the rich and great men of the Levites furnished them also with cattle, both great and small, for offerings, 2Ch 35:9. For, as to those that sincerely desire to be found in the way of their duty, Providence sometimes raises up friends to bear them out in it, beyond what they could have expected.

III. The priests and Levites performed their office very readily, 2Ch 35:10. They killed the paschal lambs in the court of the temple, the priests sprinkled the blood upon the altar, the Levites flayed them, and then gave the flesh to the people according to their families (2Ch 35:11,12), not fewer than ten, nor more than twenty, to a lamb. They took it to their several apartments, roasted it, and ate it according to the ordinance, 2Ch 35:13. As for the other sacrifices that were eucharistical, the flesh of them was boiled according to the law of the peace-offerings and was divided speedily among the people, that they might feast upon it as a token of their joy in the atonement made and their reconciliation to God thereby.

And, lastly, The priests and Levites took care to honour God by eating of the passover themselves, 2Ch 35:14. Let not ministers think that the care they take for the souls of others will excuse their neglect of their own, or that being employed so much in

public worship will supersede the religious exercises of their closets and families. The Levites here mace ready for themselves and for the priests, because the priests were wholly taken up all day in the service of the altar; therefore, that they might not have their lamb to dress when they should eat it, the Levites got it ready for them against supper time. Let ministers learn hence to help one another, and to forward one another's work, as brethren, and fellow-servants of the same Master.

IV. The singers and porters attended in their places, and did their office, 2Ch 35:15. The singers with their sacred songs and music expressed and excited the joy of the congregation, and made the service very pleasant to them; and the porters at the gates took care that there should be no breaking in of any thing to defile or disquiet the assembly, nor going out of any from it, that none should steal away till the service was done. While they were thus employed their brethren the Levites prepared paschal lambs for them.

V. The whole solemnity was performed with great exactness, according to the law (2Ch 35:16,17), and, upon that account, there was none like it since Samuel's time (2Ch 35:18), for in Hezekiah's passover there were several irregularities. And bishop Patrick observes that in this also it exceeded the other passovers which the preceding kings had kept, that though Josiah was by no means so rich as David, and Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, yet he furnished the whole congregation with beasts for sacrifice, both paschal and eucharistical, at his own proper cost and charge, which was more than any king ever did before him.

9 Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethaneel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites for passover offerings five thousand *small cattle*, and five hundred oxen.

10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment.

11 And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled *the blood*

from their hands, and the Levites flayed *them*.

12 And they removed the burnt offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the Lord, as *it is* written in the book of Moses. And so *did they* with the oxen.

13 And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance: but the *other* holy *offerings* sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided *them* speedily among all the people.

14 And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron *were busied* in offering of burnt offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron.

15 And the singers the sons of Asaph *were* in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the porters *waited* at every gate; they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them.

16 So all the service of the Lord was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the Lord, according to the commandment of king Josiah.

17 And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.

18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

The Death of Josiah

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I come* not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from *meddling with* God, who *is* with me, that he destroy thee not.

It was thirteen years from Josiah's famous passover to his death. During this time, we may hope, thing went well in his kingdom, that he prospered, and religion flourished; yet we are not entertained with the pleasing account of those years, but they are passed over in silence, because the people, for all this, were not turned from the love of their sins nor God from the fierceness of his anger.

The next news therefore we hear of Josiah is that he is cut off in the midst of his days and usefulness, before he is full forty years old. We had this sad story, 2Ki 23:29,30. Here it is somewhat more largely related. That appears here, more than did there, which reflects such blame on Josiah and such praise on the people as one would not have expected.

I. Josiah was a very good prince, yet he was much to be blamed for his rashness and presumption in going out to war against the king of Egypt without cause or call. It was bad enough, as it appeared in the Kings, that he meddled with strife which belonged not to him. But here it looks worse; for, it seems, the king of Egypt sent ambassadors to him, to warn him against this enterprise, 2Ch 35:21.

1 The king of Egypt argued with Josiah,

(1.) From principles of justice. He professed that he had no desire to do him any hurt, and therefore it was unfair, against common equity and the law of nations, for Josiah to take up arms against him. If even a righteous man engage

in an unrighteous cause, let him not expect to prosper. God is no respecter of persons. See Pr 3:20,25:8.

(2.) From principles of religion: "God is with me; nay, He commanded me to make haste, and therefore, if thou retard my motions, thou meddlest with God." It cannot be that the king of Egypt only pretended this (as Sennacherib did in a like case, 2Ki 18:25), hoping thereby to make Josiah desist, because he knew he had a veneration for the word of God; for it is said here (2Ch 35:22) that the words of Necho were from the mouth of God. We must therefore suppose that either by a dream, or by a strong impulse upon his spirit which he had reason to think was from God, or by Jeremiah or some other prophet, he had ordered him to make war upon the king of Assyria.

(3.) From principles of policy: "That he destroy thee not; it is at thy peril if thou engage against one that has not only a better army and a better cause, but God on his side."

2. It was not in wrath to Josiah, whose heart was upright with the Lord his God, but in wrath to a hypocritical nation, who were unworthy of so good a king, that he was so far infatuated as not to hearken to these fair reasonings and desist from his enterprise. He would not turn his face from him, but went in person and fought the Egyptian army in the valley of Megiddo, 2Ch 35:22. If perhaps he could not believe that the king of Egypt had a command from God to do what he did, yet, upon his pleading such a command, he ought to have consulted the oracles of God before he went out against him. His not doing that was his great fault, and of fatal consequence. In this matter he walked not in the ways of David his father; for, had it been his case, he would have enquired of the Lord, Shall I go up? Wilt thou deliver them into my hands? How can we think to prosper in our ways if we do not acknowledge God in them?

II The people were a very wicked people, yet they were much to be commended for lamenting the death of Josiah as they did. That Jeremiah lamented him I do not wonder; he was the weeping prophet, and plainly foresaw the utter ruin of his country following upon the death of this good king. But it is strange to find that all Judah and Jerusalem, that stupid senseless people, mourned for him (2Ch 35:24), contrived how to have their mourning excited by singing men and singing women, how to have it spread through the kingdom (they made an ordinance in Israel that the mournful ditties penned on this sad occasion should be learned and sung by all sorts of people), and also how to have the remembrance of it perpetuated: these elegies were inserted in the collections of state poems; they are written in the Lamentations. Hereby it appeared,

1. That they had some respect to their good prince, and that, though they did not cordially comply with him in all his good designs, they could not but greatly honour him. Pious useful men will be manifested in the consciences even of those that will not be influenced by their example; and many that will not submit to the rules of serious godliness themselves yet cannot but give it their good word and esteem it in others. Perhaps those lamented Josiah when he was dead that were not thankful to God for him while he lived. The Israelites murmured at Moses and Aaron while they were with them and spoke sometimes of stoning them, and yet, when they died, they mourned for them many days. We are often taught to value mercies by the loss of them which, when we enjoyed them, we did not prize as we ought.

2. That they had some sense of their own danger now that he was gone. Jeremiah told them, it is likely, of the evil they might now expect to come upon them, from which he was taken away; and so far they credited what he said that they lamented the death of him that was their defence. Note, Many will more easily be persuaded to lament the miseries

that are coming upon them than to take the proper way by universal reformation to prevent them, will shed tears for their troubles, but will not be prevailed upon to part with their sins. But godly sorrow worketh repentance and that repentance will be to salvation.

22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.
23 And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded.
24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in *one of* the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.
25 And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they *are* written in the lamentations.
26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to *that which was* written in the law of the Lord,
27 and his deeds, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

2 Chronicles-36

The Reign and Dethronement of Jehoahaz

1 Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem.

The destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here coming on by degrees. God so ordered it to show that he has no pleasure in

the ruin of sinners, but had rather they would turn and live, and therefore gives them both time and inducement to repent and waits to be gracious. The history of these reigns was more largely recorded in the last three chapters of the second of Kings.

1. Jehoahaz was set up by the people (2Ch 36:1), but in one quarter of a year was deposed by Pharaoh-necho, and carried a prisoner to Egypt, and the land fined for setting him up, 2Ch 36:2-4. Of this young prince we hear no more. Had he trodden in the steps of his father's piety he might have reigned long and prospered; but we are told in the Kings that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and therefore his triumphing was short and his joy but for a moment.

2. Jehoiakim was set up by the king of Egypt, an old enemy to their land, gave what king he pleased to the kingdom and what name he pleased to the king! 2Ch 36:4. He made Eliakim king, and called him Jehoiakim, in token of his authority over him. Jehoiakim did that which was evil (2Ch 36:5), nay, we read of the abominations which he did (2Ch 36:8); he was very wild and wicked. Idolatries generally go under the name of abominations. We hear no more of the king of Egypt, but the king of Babylon came up against him (2Ch 36:6), seized him, and bound him with a design to carry him to Babylon; but, it seems, he either changed his mind, and suffered him to reign as his vassal, or death released the prisoner before he was carried away.

However the best and most valuable vessels of the temple were now carried away and made use of in Nebuchadnezzar's temple in Babylon (2Ch 36:7); for, we may suppose, no temple in the world was so richly furnished as that of Jerusalem. The sin of Judah was that they had brought the idols of the heathen into God's temple; and now their punishment was that the vessels of the temple were carried away to the service of the gods of the nations. If men will profane God's institutions by their sins, it is just with God to suffer them to be profaned by their

enemies. These were the vessels which the false prophets flattered the people with hopes of the return of, Jer 27:16. But Jeremiah told them that the rest should go after them (Jer 27:21,22), and they did so.

But, as the carrying away of these vessels to Babylon began the calamity of Jerusalem, so Belshazzar's daring profanation of them there filled the measure of the iniquity of Babylon; for, when he drank wine in them to the honour of his gods, the handwriting on the wall presented him with his doom, Da 5:3-6, &c. In the reference to the book of the Kings concerning this Jehoiakim mention is made of that which was found in him (2Ch 36:8), which seems to be meant of the treachery that was found in him towards the king of Babylon; but some of the Jewish writers understand it of certain private marks or signatures found in his dead body, in honour of his idol, such cuttings as God had forbidden, Le 19:28.

3. Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, attempted to reign in his stead, and reigned long enough to show his evil inclination; but, after three months and ten days, the king of Babylon sent and fetched him away captive, with more of the goodly vessels of the temple. He is here said to be eight years old, but in Kings he is said to be eighteen when he began to reign, so that this seems to be a mistake of the transcriber, unless we suppose that his father took him at eight years old to join with him in the government, as some think.

2 Jehoahaz *was* twenty and three years old when he began to reign,
and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.
3 And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and
condemned the land in a hundred talents of silver and a talent of
gold.
4 And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah
and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho
took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

The Reign of Jehoiakim

5 Jehoiakim *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign,
and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did *that which*
was evil in the sight of the Lord his God.
6 Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and
bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.
7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the
Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.
8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which
he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they *are* written
in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his
son reigned in his stead.

Jehoiachin Taken Captive to Babylon

9 Jehoiachin *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he
reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did
that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.
10 And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and
brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of
the Lord, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and
Jerusalem.

The Reign of Zedekiah

11 Zedekiah *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign,
and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

We have here an account of the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Abraham, God's friend, was called out of that country, from Ur of the Chaldees, when God took him into covenant and communion with himself; and now his degenerate seed were carried into that country again, to signify that they had forfeited all that kindness wherewith they had been regarded for the father's sake, and the benefit of that covenant into which he was called; all was now undone again. Here we have,

I The sins that brought this desolation.

1. Zedekiah, the king in whose days it came, brought it upon himself by his own folly; for he conducted himself very ill both towards God and towards the king of Babylon.

(1.) If he had but made God his friend, that would have prevented the ruin. Jeremiah brought him messages from God, which, if he had given due regard to them, might have secured a lengthening of his tranquillity; but it is here charged upon him that he humbled not himself before Jeremiah, 2Ch 36:12. It was expected that this mighty prince, high as he was, should humble himself before a poor prophet, when he spoke from the mouth of the Lord, should submit to his admonitions and be amended by them, to his counsels and be ruled by them, should lay himself under the commanding power of the word of God in his mouth; and, because he would not thus make himself a servant to God, he was made a slave to his enemies. God will find some way or other to humble those that will not humble themselves. Jeremiah, as a prophet, was set over the nations and kingdoms (Jer 1:10), and, as mean a figure as he made, whoever would not humble themselves before him found that it was at their peril.

(2.) If he had but been true to his covenant with the king of Babylon, that would have prevented his ruin; but he rebelled against him, though he had sworn to be his faithful tributary, and perfidiously violated his engagements to him, 2Ch 36:13. It was this that provoked the king of Babylon to deal so severely with him as he did. All nations looked upon an oath as a sacred thing, and on those that durst break through the obligations of it as the worst of men, abandoned of God and to be abhorred by all mankind. If therefore Zedekiah falsify his oath, when, lo, he has given his hand, he shall not escape, Eze 17:18. Though Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen, an enemy, yet if, having sworn to him, he be false to him, he shall know there is a God to whom vengeance belongs. The thing that ruined Zedekiah was not only that he turned not to the Lord God of Israel, but that he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning to him, that is, he as obstinately resolved not to return to him, would not lay his neck under God's yoke nor his heart under the impressions of

his word, and so, in effect, he would not be healed, he would not live.

2 The great sin that brought this destruction was idolatry. The priests and people went after the abominations of the heathen, forsook the pure worship of God for the lewd and filthy rites of the Pagan superstition, and so polluted the house of the Lord, 2Ch 36:14. The priests, the chief of the priests, who should have opposed idolatry, were ring-leaders in it. That place is not far from ruin in which religion is already ruined.

3. The great aggravation of their sin, and that which filled the measure of it, was the abuse they gave to God's prophets, who were sent to call them to repentance, 2Ch 36:15,16. Here we have,

(1.) God's tender compassion towards them in sending prophets to them. Because he was the God of their fathers, in covenant with them, and whom they worshipped (though this degenerate race forsook him), therefore he sent to them by his messengers, to convince them of their sin and warn them of the ruin they would bring upon themselves by it, rising up betimes and sending, which denotes not only that he did it with the greatest care and concern imaginable, as men rise betimes to set their servants to work when their heart is upon their business, but that, upon their first deviation from God to idols, if they took but one step that way, God immediately sent to them by his messengers to reprove them for it. He gave them early timely notice both of their duty and danger. Let this quicken us to seek God early, that he rises betimes to send to us. The prophets that were sent rose betimes to speak to them, were diligent and faithful in their office, lost no time, slipped no opportunity of dealing with them; and therefore God is said to rise betimes. The more pains ministers take in their work the more will the people have to answer for if it be all in vain. The reason given why God by his prophets did thus strive with them is because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling-lace, and would by these means have prevented their ruin.

Note, The methods God takes to reclaim sinners by his word, by ministers, by conscience, by providences, are all instances of his compassion towards them and his unwillingness that any should perish.

(2.) Their base and disingenuous carriage towards God (2Ch 36:16): They mocked the messengers of God (which was a high affront to him that sent them), despised his word in their mouths, and not only so, but misused the prophets, treating them as their enemies. The ill usage they gave Jeremiah who lived at this time, and which we read much of in the book of his prophecy, is an instance of this. This was an evidence of an implacable enmity to God, and an invincible resolution to go on in their sins. This brought wrath upon them without remedy, for it was sinning against the remedy.

Nothing is more provoking to God than abuses given to his faithful ministers; for what is done against them he takes as done against himself. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Persecution was the sin that brought upon Jerusalem its final destruction by the Romans. See Mt 23:34-37. Those that mock at God's faithful ministers, and do all they can to render them despicable or odious, that vex and misuse them, to discourage them and to keep others from hearkening to them, should be reminded that a wrong done to an ambassador is construed as done to the prince that sends him, and that the day is coming when they will find it would have been better for them if they had been thrown into the sea with a mill-stone about their necks; for hell is deeper and more dreadful.

II The desolation itself, and some few of the particular so fit, which we had more largely 2Ki 25:1. Multitudes were put to the sword, even in the house of their sanctuary (2Ch 36:17), whither they fled for refuge, hoping that the holiness of the place would be their protection. But how could they expect to find it so when they themselves had polluted it with their abominations? 2Ch 36:14. Those that cast off the dominion of their religion forfeit

all the benefit and comfort of it. The Chaldeans not only paid no reverence to the sanctuary, but showed no natural pity either to the tender sex or to venerable age. They forsook God, who had compassion on them (2Ch 36:15), and would have none of him; justly therefore are they given up into the hands of cruel men, for they had no compassion on young man or maiden.

2. All the remaining vessels of the temple, great and small, and all the treasures, sacred and secular, the treasures of God's house and of the king and his princes, were seized, and brought to Babylon, 2Ch 36:18.

3. The temple was burnt, the walls of Jerusalem were demolished, the houses (called here the palaces, as Ps 48:3, so stately, rich, and sumptuous were they) laid in ashes, and all the furniture, called here the goodly vessels thereof, destroyed, 2Ch 36:19. Let us see where what woeful havock sin makes, and, as we value the comfort and continuance of our estates, keep that worm from the root of them.

4. The remainder of the people that escaped the sword were carried captives to Babylon (2Ch 36:20), impoverished, enslaved, insulted, and exposed to all the miseries, not only of a strange and barbarous land, but of an enemy's land, where those that hated them bore rule over them. They were servants to those monarchs, and no doubt were ruled with rigour so long as that monarchy lasted. Now they sat down by the rivers of Babylon, with the streams of which they mingled their tears, Ps 137:1. And though there, it should seem, they were cured of idolatry, yet, as appears by the prophet Ezekiel, they were not cured of mocking the prophets.

5. The land lay desolate while they were captives in Babylon, 2Ch 36:21. That fruitful land, the glory of all lands, was now turned into a desert, not tilled, nor husbanded. The pastures were not clothed as they used to be with flocks, nor the valleys with corn, but all lay neglected. Now this may be considered,

(1.) As the just punishment of their former abuse of it. They had served Baal with its fruits; cursed therefore is the ground for their sakes. Now the land enjoyed her sabbaths; (2Ch 36:21), as God had threatened by Moses, Le 26:34, and the reason there given (2Ch 36:35) is, "Because it did not rest on your sabbaths; you profaned the sabbath-day, did not observe the sabbatical year." They many a time ploughed and sowed their land in the seventh year, when it should have rested, and now it lay unploughed and unsown for ten times seven years. Note, God will be no loser in his glory at last by the disobedience of men: if the tribute be not paid, he will distrain and recover it, as he speaks, Ho 2:9. If they would not let the land rest, God would make it rest whether they would or no. Some think they had neglected the observance of seventy sabbatical years in all, and just so many, by way of reprisal, the land now enjoyed; or, if those that had been neglected were fewer, it was fit that the law should be satisfied with interest. We find that one of the quarrels God had with them at this time was for not observing another law which related to the seventh year, and that was the release of servants; see Jer 34:14, &c.

(2.) Yet we may consider it as giving some encouragement to their hopes that they should, in due time, return to it again. Had others come and taken possession of it, they might have despaired of ever recovering it; but, while it lay desolate, it did, as it were, lie waiting for them again, and refuse to acknowledge any other owners.

12 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the Lord his God, *and* humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet *speaking* from the mouth of the Lord.

13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel.

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

15 And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his
messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he
had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place:
16 but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words,
and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose
against his people, till *there was* no remedy.

The Captivity of Judah

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who
slew their young men with the sword in the house of their
sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old
man, or him that stooped for age: he gave *them* all into his hand.
18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the
treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king,
and of his princes; all *these* he brought to Babylon.
19 And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall
of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and
destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.
20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to
Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the
reign of the kingdom of Persia:
21 to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the
land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for* as long as she lay desolate she
kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

The Proclamation of Cyrus

22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the
Lord *spoken* by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the
Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a
proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in
writing, saying,

These last two verses of this book have a double aspect.

1. They look back to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and show how that was accomplished, 2Ch 36:22. God had, by him, promised the restoring of the captives and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, at

the end of seventy years; and that time to favour Sion, that set time, came at last. After a long and dark night the day-spring from on high visited them. God will be found true to every word he has spoken.

2. They look forward to the history of Ezra, which begins with the repetition of 2Ch 36:22,23,Ezr 1:1-3. They are there the introduction to a pleasant story; here they are the conclusion of a very melancholy one; and so we learn from them that, though God's church be cast down, it is not cast off, though his people be corrected, they are not abandoned, though thrown into the furnace, yet not lost there, nor left there any longer than till the dross be separated. Though God contend long, he will not contend always. The Israel of God shall be fetched out of Babylon in due time, and even the dry bones made to live. It may be long first; but the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie; therefore, though it tarry, wait for it.

23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath
the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to
build him a house in Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there*
among you of all his people? The Lord his God *be* with him, and
let him go up.

Ezra

[Ezra]

Ezra-1

The Proclamation of Cyrus

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the
Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord

stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

It will be proper for us here to consider,

1. What was the state of the captive Jews in Babylon. It was upon many accounts very deplorable; they were under the power of those that hated them, had nothing they could call their own; they had no temple, no altar; if they sang psalms, their enemies ridiculed them; and yet they had prophets among them. Ezekiel and Daniel were kept distinct from the heathen. Some of them were preferred at court, others had comfortable settlements in the country, and they were all borne up with hope that, in due time, they should return to their own land again, in expectation of which they preserved among them the distinction of their families, the knowledge of their religion, and an aversion to idolatry.

2. What was the state of the government under which they were. Nebuchadnezzar carried many of them into captivity in the first year of his reign, which was the fourth of Jehoiakim; he reigned forty-five years, his son Evil-merodach twenty-three, and his grandson Belshazzar three years, which make up the seventy years. So Dr. Lightfoot, It is charged upon Nebuchadnezzar that he opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa 14:17. And, if he had shown mercy to the poor Jews, Daniel told him it would have been the lengthening of his tranquillity, Da 4:27.

But the measure of the sins of Babylon was at length full, and then destruction was brought upon them by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, which we read of, Da 5:31 Darius, being old, left the government to Cyrus, and he was employed as the instrument of the Jews' deliverance, which he gave orders for as soon as ever he was master of the kingdom of Babylon, perhaps in contradiction to Nebuchadnezzar, whose family he had cut off, and because he took a pleasure in undoing what he had done, or in policy, to recommend his newly-acquired dominion as merciful and gentle, or (as some think) in a pious regard to the prophecy of Isaiah,

which had been published, and well known, above 150 years before, where he was expressly named as the man that should do this for God, and for whom God would do great things (Isa 44:28,45:1, &c.), and which perhaps was shown to him by those about him. His name (some say) in the Persian language signifies the sun, for he brought light and healing to the church of God, and was an eminent type of Christ the Sun of righteousness. Some was that his name signifies a father, and Christ is the everlasting Father. Now here we are told,

I. Whence this proclamation took its rise. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. Note, The hearts of kings are in the hand of the Lord, and, like the rivulets of water, he turneth them which way soever he will. It is said of Cyrus that he knew not God, nor how to serve him; but God knew him, and how to serve himself by him, Isa 45:4. God governs the world by his influence on the spirits of men, and, whatever good is done at any time, it is God that stirs up the spirit to do it, puts thoughts into the mind, gives to the understanding to form a right judgment, and directs the will which way he pleases. Whatever good offices therefore are, at any time, done for the church of God, he must have the glory of them.

II The reference it had to the prophecy of Jeremiah, by whom God had not only promised that they should return, but had fixed the time, which set time to favour Sion had now come. Seventy years were determined (Jer 25:12,29:10); and he that kept the promise made concerning Israel's deliverance out of Egypt to a day (Ex 12:41) was doubtless as punctual to this. What Cyrus now did was long since said to be the confirming of the word of God's servants, Isa 44:26. Jeremiah, while he lived, was hated and despised; yet thus did Providence honour him long after, that a mighty monarch was influenced to act in pursuance of the word of the Lord by his mouth.

III. The date of this proclamation. It was in his first year, not the first of his reign over Persia, the kingdom he was born to, but the first of his reign over Babylon, the kingdom he had conquered.

Those are much honoured whose spirits are stirred up to begin with God and to serve him in their first years.

IV. The publication of it, both by word of mouth (he caused a voice to pass throughout all his kingdom, like a jubilee-trumpet, a joyful sabbatical year after many melancholy ones, proclaiming liberty to the captives), and also in black and white: he put it in writing, that it might be the more satisfactory, and might be sent to those distant provinces where the ten tribes were scattered in Assyria and Media, 2Ki 17:6.

V. The purport of this proclamation of liberty.

1 The preamble shows the causes and considerations by which he was influenced, Ezr 1:2. It should seem, his mind was enlightened with the knowledge of Jehovah (for so he calls him), the God of Israel, as the only living and true God, the God of heaven, who is the sovereign Lord and disposer of all the kingdoms of the earth; of him he says Ezr 1:3), He is the God, God alone, God above all. Though he had not known God by education, God made him so far to know him now as that he did this service with an eye to him. He professes that he does it,

(1.) In gratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon him: The God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth. This sounds a little vain-glorious, for there were many kingdoms of the earth which he had nothing to do with; but he means that God had given him all that was given to Nebuchadnezzar, whose dominion, Daniel says, was to the end of the earth, Da 4:22,5:19. Note, God is the fountain of power; the kingdoms of the earth are at his disposal; whatever share any have of them they have from him: and those whom God has entrusted with great power and large possessions should look upon themselves as obliged thereby to do much for him.

(2.) In obedience to God. He hat charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem; probably by a dream or vision of the night,

confirmed by comparing it with the prophecy of Isaiah, where his doing it was foretold. Israel's disobedience to God's charge, which they were often told of, is aggravated by the obedience of this heathen king.

2. He gives free leave to all the Jews that were in his dominions to go up to Jerusalem, and to build the temple of the Lord there, Ezr 1:3. His regard to God made him overlook,

(1.) The secular interest of his government. It would have been his policy to keep so great a number of serviceable men in his dominions, and seemed impolitic to let them go and take root again in their own land; but piety is the best policy.

(2.) The honour of the religion of his country. Why did he not order them to build a temple to the gods of Babylon or Persia? He believed the God of Israel to be the God of heaven, and therefore obliged his Israel to worship him only. Let them walk in the name of the Lord their God.

3. He subjoins a brief for a collection to bear the charges of such as were poor and not able to bear their own, Ezr 1:4. "Whosoever remaineth, because he has not the means to bear his charges to Jerusalem, let the men of his place help him." Some take it as an order to the king's officers to supply them out of his revenue, as Ezr 6:8. But it may mean a warrant to the captives to ask and receive the alms and charitable contributions of all the king's loving subjects. And we may suppose the Jews had conducted themselves so well among their neighbours that they would be as forward to accommodate them because they loved them as the Egyptians were because they were weary of them. At least many would be kind to them because they saw the government would take it well. Cyrus not only gave his good wishes with those that went (Their God be with them, Ezr 1:3), but took care also to furnish them with such things as they needed. He took it for granted that those among them who were of ability would offer

their free-will offerings for the house of God, to promote the rebuilding of it. But, besides that, he would have them supplied out of his kingdom. Well-wishers to the temple should be well-doers for it.

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.

3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he *is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem.

The Return of the Exiles to Jerusalem

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which *is* in Jerusalem.

We are here told,

I. How Cyrus's proclamation succeeded with others. 1. He having given leave to the Jews to go up to Jerusalem, many of them went up accordingly, Ezr 1:5. The leaders herein were the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, eminent and experienced men, from whom it might justly be expected that, as they were above their brethren in dignity, so they should go before them in duty. The priests and Levites were (as became them) with the first that set their faces again towards Zion. If any good work is to be done, let ministers lead in it. Those that accompanied them were such as God had inclined to go up. The same God that had raised up the spirit of Cyrus to proclaim this liberty raised up their spirits to take the benefit of it; for it was done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zec 4:6. The temptation perhaps was strong to some of them to stay in Babylon.

They had convenient settlements there, had contracted an agreeable acquaintance with the neighbours, and were ready to say, It is good to be here. The discouragements of their return were many and great, the journey long, their wives and children unfit for travelling, their own land was to them a strange land, the road to it an unknown road. Go up to Jerusalem! And what should they do there? It was all in ruins, and in the midst of enemies to whom they would be an easy prey. Many were wrought upon by these considerations to stay in Babylon, at least not to go with the first. But there were some that got over these difficulties, that ventured to break the ice, and feared not the lion in the way, the lion in the streets; and they were those whose spirits God raised.

He, by his Spirit and grace, filled them with a generous ambition of liberty, a gracious affection to their own land, and a desire of the free and public exercise of their religion. Had God left them to themselves, and to the counsels of flesh and blood, they would have staid in Babylon; but he put it into their hearts to set their faces Zionward, and, as strangers, to ask the way thither (Jer 50:5); for they, being a new generation, went out like their father Abraham from this land of the Chaldees, not knowing whither they went, Heb 11:8.

Note, Whatever good we do, it is owing purely to the grace of God, and he raises up our spirits to the doing of it, works in us both to will and to do. Our spirits naturally incline to this earth and to the things of it. If they move upwards, in any good affections or good actions, it is God that raises them. The call and offer of the gospel are like Cyrus's proclamation. Deliverance is preached to the captives, Lu 4:18. Those that are bound under the unrighteous dominion of sin, and bound over to the righteous judgment of God, may be made free by Jesus Christ. Whoever will, by repentance and faith, return to God, his duty to God, his happiness in God, Jesus Christ has opened the way for him, and let him go up out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The offer is general to all. Christ makes it, in pursuance of the grant which the Father has made him of all power both in heaven and in

earth (a much greater dominion than that given to Cyrus, Ezr 1:2) and of the charge given him to build God a house, to set him up a church in the world, a kingdom among men. Many that hear this joyful sound choose to sit still in Babylon, are in love with their sins and will not venture upon the difficulties of a holy life; but some there are that break through the discouragements, and resolve to build the house of God, to make heaven of their religion, whatever it cost them, and they are those whose spirit God has raised above the world and the flesh and whom he has made willing in the day of his power, Ps 110:3. Thus will the heavenly Canaan be replenished, though many perish in Babylon; and the gospel-offer will not be made in vain.

2. Cyrus having given order that their neighbours should help them, they did so, Ezr 1:6. All those that were about them furnished them with plate and goods to bear the charges of their journey, and to help them in building and furnishing both their own houses and God's temple. As the tabernacle was made of the spoils of Egypt, and the first temple built by the labours of the strangers, so the second by the contributions of the Chaldeans, all intimating the admission of the Gentiles into the church in due time. God can, where he pleases, incline the hearts of strangers to be kind to his people, and make those to strengthen their hands that have weakened them. The earth helped the woman. Besides what was willingly offered by the Jews themselves who staid behind, from a principle of love to God and his house, much was offered, as one may say, unwillingly by the Babylonians, who were influenced to do it by a divine power on their minds of which they themselves could give no account.

How this proclamation was seconded by Cyrus himself. To give proof of the sincerity of his affection to the house of God, he not only released the people of God, but restored the vessels of the temple, Ezr 1:7,8. Observe here,

1. How careful Providence was of the vessels of the temple, that they were not lost, melted down, or so mixed with other vessels that they could not be known, but that they were all now forthcoming.

Such care God has of the living vessels of mercy, vessels of honour, of whom it is said (2Ti 2:19,20), The Lord knows those that are his, and they shall none of them perish.

2. Though they had been put into an idol's temple, and probably used in the service of idols, yet they were given back, to be used for God. God will recover his own; and the spoil of the strong man armed shall be converted to the use of the conqueror.

3. Judah had a prince, even in captivity. Sheshbazzar, supposed to be the same with Zerubbabel, is here called prince of Judah; the Chaldeans called him Sheshbazzar, which signifies joy in tribulation; but among his own people he went by the name of Zerubbabel--a stranger in Babylon; so he looked upon himself, and considered Jerusalem his home, though, as Josephus says, he was captain of the life-guard to the king of Babylon. He took care of the affairs of the Jews, and had some authority over them, probably from the death of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, who made him his heir, he being of the house of David.

4. To him the sacred vessels were numbered out (Ezr 1:8), and he took care for their safe conveyance to Jerusalem, Ezr 1:11. It would encourage them to build the temple that they had so much rich furniture ready to put into it when it was built. Though God's ordinances, like the vessels of the sanctuary, may be corrupted and profaned by the New-Testament Babylon, they shall, in due time, be restored to their primitive use and intention; for not one jot or tittle of divine institution shall fall to the ground.

6 And all they that *were* about them strengthened their hands with
vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with
precious things, besides all *that* was willingly offered.
7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the
Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem,
and had put them in the house of his gods;
8 even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of
Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto
Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

9 And this *is* the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand
chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,
10 thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second *sort* four hundred and
ten, *and* other vessels a thousand.
11 All the vessels of gold and of silver *were* five thousand and four
hundred. All *these* did Sheshbazzar bring up with *them of* the
captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

Ezra-2

The List of Returning Exiles

1 Now these *are* the children of the province that went up out of
the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom
Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto
Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one
unto his city;

We may observe here,

1. That an account was kept in writing of the families that came up out of captivity, and the numbers of each family. This was done for their honour, as part of their recompence for their faith and courage, their confidence in God and their affection to their own land, and to stir up others to follow their good example. Those that honour God he will thus honour. The names of all those Israelites indeed that accept the offer of deliverance by Christ shall be found, to their honour, in a more sacred record than this, even in the Lamb's book of life. The account that was kept of the families that came up from the captivity was intended also for the benefit of posterity, that they might know from whom they descended and to whom they were allied.

2. That they are called children of the province. Judah, which had been an illustrious kingdom, to which other kingdoms had been made provinces, subject to it and dependent on it, was now itself made a province, to receive laws and commissions

from the king of Persia and to be accountable to him. See how sin diminishes and debases a nation, which righteousness would exalt. But by thus being made servants (as the patriarchs by being sojourners in a country which was theirs by promise) they were reminded of the better country, that is, the heavenly (Heb 11:16), a kingdom which cannot be moved, or changed into a province.

3. That they are said to come every one to his city, that is, the city appointed them, in which appointment an eye, no doubt, was had to their former settlement by Joshua; and to that, as near as might be, they returned: for it does not appear that any others, at least any that were able to oppose them, had possessed them in their absence.

4. That the leaders are first mentioned, Ezr 2:2. Zerubbabel and Jeshua were their Moses and Aaron, the former their chief prince, the latter their chief priest. Nehemiah and Mordecai are mentioned here; some think not the same with the famous men we afterwards meet with of those names: probably they were the same, but afterwards returned to court for the service of their country.

5. Some of these several families are named from the persons that were their ancestors, others from the places in which they had formerly resided; as with us many surnames are the proper names of persons, others of places.

6. Some little difference there is between the numbers of some of the families here and in Ne 7:5-73, where this catalogue is repeated, which might arise from this, that some who had given in their names at first to come afterwards drew back--said, I go, Sir, but went not, which would lessen the number of the families they belonged to; others that declined, at first, afterwards repented and went, and so increased the number.

7. Here are two families that are called the children of Elam (one Ezr 2:7, another Ezr 2:31), and, which is strange, the number of both is the same, 1254.

8. The children of Adonikam, which signifies a high lord, were 666, just the number of the beast (Re 13:18), which is there said to be the number of a man, which, Mr. Hugh Broughton thinks, has reference to this man.

9. The children of Bethlehem (Ezr 2:21) were but 123, though it was David's city; for Bethlehem was little among the thousands of Judah, yet there must the Messiah arise, Mic 5:2.

10. Anathoth had been a famous place in the tribe of Benjamin and yet here it numbered but 128 (Ezr 2:23), which is to be imputed to the divine curse which the men of Anathoth brought upon themselves by persecuting Jeremiah, who was of their city. Jer 11:21,23, There shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth. And see Isa 10:30, O poor Anathoth! Nothing brings ruin on a people sooner than persecution.

2 which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah,
Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum,
Baanah.
The number of the men of the people of Israel:
3 the children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two.
4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.
5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five.
6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua *and* Joab,
two thousand eight hundred and twelve.
7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five.
9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.
10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two.
11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three.
12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two.
13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six.

14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six.
15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four.
16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.
17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and three.
18 The children of Jorah, a hundred and twelve.
19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty and three.
20 The children of Gibbar, ninety and five.
21 The children of Bethlehem, a hundred twenty and three.
22 The men of Netophah, fifty and six.
23 The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight.
24 The children of Azmaveth, forty and two.
25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three.
26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one.
27 The men of Michmas, a hundred twenty and two.
28 The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three.
29 The children of Nebo, fifty and two.
30 The children of Magbish, a hundred fifty and six.
31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.
33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five.
34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.
35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.
36 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three.
37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two.
38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven.
39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.
40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four.
41 The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred twenty and eight.
42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, *in* all a hundred thirty and nine.

43 The Nethinim: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,

Here is an account, I. Of the priests that returned, and they were a considerable number, about a tenth part of the whole company: for the whole were above 42,000 (Ezr 2:64), and four families of priests made up above 4200 (Ezr 2:36-39); thus was the tenth God's part--a blessed decimation. Three of the fathers of the priests here named were heads of courses, 1Ch 24:7,8,14. The fourth was Pashur, Ezr 2:38. If these were of the posterity of that Pashur that abused Jeremiah (Jer 20:1), it is strange that so bad a man should have so good a seed, and so numerous.

II. Of the Levites. I cannot but wonder at the small number of them, for, taking in both the singers and the porters (Ezr 2:40-42), they did not make 350. Time was when the Levites were more forward to their duty than the priests (2Ch 29:34), but they were not so now. If one place, one family, has the reputation for pious zeal now, another may have it another time. The wind blows where it listeth, and shifts its points.

III. Of the Nethinim, who, it is supposed, were the Gibeonites, given (so their name signifies) by Joshua first (Jos 9:27), and again by David (Ezr 8:20), when Saul had expelled them, to be employed by the Levites in the work of God's house as hewers of wood and drawers of water; and, with them, of the children of Solomon's servants, whom he gave for the like use (whether they were Jews or Gentiles does not appear) and who were here taken notice of among the retainers of the temple and numbered with the Nethinim, Ezr 2:55,58. Note, It is an honour to belong to God's house, though in the meanest office there.

IV. Of some that were looked upon as Israelites by birth, and others as priests, and yet could not make out a clear title to the honour.

1. There were some that could not prove themselves Israelites (Ezr 2:59,60), a considerable number, who presumed they were of the seed of Jacob, but could not produce their pedigrees, and yet would go up to Jerusalem, having an affection to the house and people of God. These shamed those who were true-born Israelites, and yet were not called Israelites indeed, who came out of the waters of Judah (Isa 48:1), but had lost the relish of those waters.

2. There were others that could not prove themselves priests, and yet were supposed to be of the seed of Aaron. What is not preserved in black and white will, in all likelihood, be forgotten in a little time. Now we are here told,

(1.) How they lost their evidence. One of their ancestors married a daughter of Barzillai, that great man whom we read of in David's time; he gloried in an alliance to that honourable family, and, preferring that before the dignity of his priesthood, would have his children called after Barzillai's family, and their pedigree preserved in the registers of that house, not of the house of Aaron, and so they lost it. In Babylon there was nothing to be got by the priesthood, and therefore they cared not for being akin to it. Those who think their ministry, or their relation to ministers, a diminution or disparagement to them, forget who it was that said, I magnify my office.

(2.) What they lost with it. It could not be taken for granted that they were priests when they could not produce their proofs, but they were, as polluted, put from the priesthood. Now that the priests had recovered their rights, and had the altar to live upon again, they would gladly be looked upon as priests. But they had sold their birthright for the honour of being gentlemen, and therefore were justly degraded, and forbidden to eat of the most holy things.

Note, Christ will be ashamed of those that are ashamed of him and his service. It was the tirshatha, or governor, that put them under this sequestration, which some understand of Zerubbabel the present governor, others of Nehemiah (who is so called, Ne 8:9,10:1, and who gave this order when he came some years after); but the prohibition was not absolute, it was only a suspension, till there should be a high priest with Urim and Thummin, by whom they might know God's mind in this matter. This, it seems, was expected and desired, but it does not appear that ever they were blessed with it under the second temple.

They had the canon of the Old Testament complete, which was better than Urim; and, by the want of that oracle, they were taught to expect the Messiah the great Oracle, which the Urim and Thummim was but a type of. Nor does it appear that the second temple had the ark in it, either the old one or a new one. Those shadows by degrees vanished, as the substance approached; and God, by the prophet, intimates to his people that they should sustain no damage by the want of the ark, Jer 3:16,17. In those days, when they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord, neither shall it come to mind, for they shall do very well without it.

44 the children of Keros, the children of Siaha, the children of Padon,
45 the children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub,
46 the children of Hagab, the children of Shalmai, the children of Hanan,
47 the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah,
48 the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam,
49 the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai,
50 the children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim,

51 the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,
52 the children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,
53 the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah,
54 the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.
55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda,
56 the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,
57 the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.
58 All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred ninety and two.
59 And these *were* they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, *and* Immer: but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they *were* of Israel:
60 the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two.
61 And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name:
62 these sought their register *among* those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.
63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.
64 The whole congregation together *was* forty and two thousand three hundred *and* threescore,

Here is, I The sum total of the company that returned out of Babylon. The particular sums before mentioned amount not quite to 30,000 (29,818), so that there were above 12,000 that come out into any of those accounts, who, it is probable, were of the rest of the tribes of Israel, besides Judah and Benjamin,

that could not tell of what particular family or city they were, but that they were Israelites, and of what tribe. Now, 1. This was more than double the number that were carried captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, so that, as in Egypt, the time of their affliction was the time of their increase. 2. These were but few to begin a nation with, and yet, by virtue of the old promise made to their fathers, they multiplied so as before their last destruction by the Romans, about 500 years after, to be a very numerous people. When God says, "Increase and multiply," a little one shall become a thousand.

II. Their retinue. They were themselves little better than servants, and therefore no wonder that their servants were comparatively but few (Ezr 2:65) and their beasts of burden about as many, Ezr 2:66,67. It was not with them now as in days past. But notice is taken of 200 singing-men and women whom they had among them, who, we will suppose, were intended (as those 2Ch 35:25) to excite their mourning, for it was foretold that they should, upon this occasion, go weeping (Jer 50:4), with ditties of lamentation.

III. Their oblations. It is said (Ezr 2:68,69),

1. That they came to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem; and yet that house, that holy and beautiful house, was now in ruins, a heap of rubbish. But, like their father Abraham, when the altar was gone they came with devotion to the place of the altar (Ge 13:4); and it is the character of the genuine sons of Zion that they favour even the dust thereof, Ps 102:14.

2. That they offered freely towards the setting of it up in its place. That, it seems, was the first house they talked of setting up; and though they came off a journey, and were beginning the world (two chargeable things), yet they offered, and offered freely, towards the building of the temple. Let none complain of the necessary expenses of their religion, but believe that when they come to balance the account they will

find that it clears the cost. Their offering was nothing in comparison with the offerings of the princes in David's time; then they offered by talents (1Ch 29:7), now by drams, yet these drams, being after their ability, were as acceptable to God as those talents, like the widow's two mites. The 61,000 drams of gold amount, by Cumberland's calculation, to so many pounds of our money and so many groats. Every maneh, or pound of silver, he reckons to be sixty shekels (that is, thirty ounces), which we may reckon 7l. 10s. of our money, so that this 5000 pounds of silver will be above 37,000l. of our money. It seems, God had blessed them with an increase of their wealth, as well as of their numbers, in Babylon; and, as God had prospered them, they gave cheerfully to the service of his house.

3. That they dwelt in their cities, Ezr 2:70. Though their cities were out of repair, yet, because they were their cities, such as God had assigned them, they were content to dwell in them, and were thankful for liberty and property, though they had little of pomp, plenty, or power. Their poverty was a bad cause, but their unity and unanimity were a good effect of it. Here was room enough for them all and all their substance, so that there was no strife among them, but perfect harmony, a blessed presage of their settlement, as their discords in the latter times of that state were of their ruin.

65 besides their servants and their maids, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and *there were* among them two hundred singing men and singing women.

66 Their horses *were* seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five;

67 their camels, four hundred thirty and five; *their* asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68 And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the Lord which *is* at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:

69 they gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

70 So the priests, and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

Ezra-3

The Restoration of Worship

1 And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

Here is, I. A general assembly of the returned Israelites at Jerusalem, in the seventh month, Ezr 3:1. We may suppose that they came from Babylon in the spring, and must allow at least four months for the journey, for so long Ezra and his company were in coming, Ezr 7:9. The seventh month therefore soon came, in which many of the feasts of the Lord were to be solemnized; and then they gathered themselves together by agreement among themselves, rather than by the command of authority, to Jerusalem. Though they had newly come to their cities, and had their hands full of business there, to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, which might have excused them from attending on God's altar till the hurry was a little over, as many foolishly put off their coming to the communion till they are settled in the world, yet such was their zeal for religion, now that they had newly come from under correction for their irreligion, that they left all their business in the country, to attend God's altar; and (which is strange) in this pious zeal they were all of a mind, they came as one man. Let worldly business be postponed to the business of religion and it will prosper the better.

II The care which their leading men took to have an altar ready for them to attend upon.

1. Joshua and his brethren the priests, Zerubbabel and his brethren the princes, built the altar of the God of Israel (Ezr

3:2), in the same place (it is likely) where it had stood, upon the same bases, Ezr 3:3. Bishop Patrick, observing that before the temple was built there seems to have been a tabernacle pitched for the divine service, as was in David's time, not on Mount Moriah, but Mount Sion (1Ch 9:23), supposes that this altar was erected there, to be sued while the temple was in building. Let us learn hence,

(1.) To begin with God. The more difficult and necessitous our case is the more concerned we are to take him along with us in all our ways. If we expect to be directed by his oracles, let him be honoured by our offerings.

(2.) To do what we can in the worship of God when we cannot do what we would. They could not immediately have a temple, but they would not be without an altar. Abraham, wherever he came, built an altar; and wherever we come, though we may perhaps want the benefit of the candlestick of preaching, and the showbread of the eucharist, yet, if we bring not the sacrifices of prayer and praise, we are wanting in our duty, for we have an altar that sanctifies the gift ever ready.

2. Observe the reason here given why they hastened to set up the altar: Fear was upon them, because of the people of the land. They were in the midst of enemies that bore ill will to them and their religion, for whom they were an unequal match. And,

(1.) Though they were so, yet they built the altar (so some read it); they would not be frightened from their religion by the opposition they were likely to meet with in it. Never let the fear of man bring us into this snare.

(2.) Because they were so, therefore they set up the altar. Apprehension of danger should stir us up to our duty. Have we many enemies? Then it is good to have God our friend and to keep up our correspondence with him. This good use we

should make of our fears, we should be driven by them to our knees. Even Saul would think himself undone if the enemy should come upon him before he had made his supplication to God, 1Sa 13:12.

III. The sacrifices they offered upon the altar. The altar was reared to be used, and they used it accordingly. Let not those that have an altar starve it.

1. They began on the first day of the seventh month, Ezr 3:6. It does not appear that they had any fire from heaven to begin with, as Moses and Solomon had, but common fire served them, as it did the patriarchs.

2. Having begun, they kept up the continual burnt-offering (Ezr 3:5), morning and evening, Ezr 3:3. They had known by sad experience what it was to want the comfort of the daily sacrifice to plead in their daily prayers, and now that it was revived they resolved not to let it fall again. The daily lamb typified the Lamb of God, whose righteousness must be our confidence in all our prayers.

3. They observed all the set feasts of the Lord, and offered the sacrifices appointed for each, and particularly the feast of tabernacles, Ezr 3:4,5. Now that they had received such great mercy from God that joyful feast was in a special manner seasonable. And now that they were beginning to settle in their cities it might serve well to remind them of their fathers dwelling in tents in the wilderness. That feast also which had a peculiar reference to gospel times (as appears, Zec 14:18) was brought, in a special manner, into reputation, now that those times drew on. Of the services of this feast, which continued seven days and had peculiar sacrifices appointed, it is said that they did as the duty of every day required (see Nu 29:13-38, &c.), Verbum die in die suo--the word, or matter, of the day in its day (so it is in the original)--a phrase that has

become proverbial with those that have used themselves to scripture-language.

If the feast of tabernacles was a figure of a gospel conversation, in respect of continual weanedness from the world and joy in God, we may infer that it concerns us all to do the work of the day in its day, according as the duty of the day requires, that is, (1.) We must improve time, by finding some business to do every day that will turn to a good account. (2.) We must improve opportunity, by accommodating ourselves to that which is the proper business of the present day. Every thing is beautiful in its season. The tenth day of this month was the day of atonement, a solemn day, and very seasonable now: it is very probable that they observed it, yet it is not mentioned, nor indeed in all the Old Testament do I remember the least mention of the observance of that day; as if it were enough that we have the law of it in Le 16:1-34, and the gospel of it, which was the chief intention of it, in the New Testament.

4. They offered every man's free-will offering, Ezr 3:5. The law required much, but they brought more; for, though they had little wealth to support the expense of their sacrifices, they had much zeal, and, we may suppose, spared at their own tables that they might plentifully supply God's altar. Happy are those that bring with them out of the furnace of affliction such a holy heat as this.

IV. The preparation they made for the building of the temple, Ezr 3:7. This they applied themselves immediately to; for, while we do what we can, we must still be aiming to do more and better. Tyre and Sidon must now, as of old, furnish them with workmen, and Lebanon with timber, orders for both which they had from Cyrus. What God calls us to we may depend upon his providence to furnish us for.

2 Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren,

and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as *it is* written in the law of Moses the man of God.

3 And they set the altar upon his bases; for fear *was* upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, *even* burnt offerings morning and evening.

4 They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as *it is* written, and *offered* the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

5 and afterward *offered* the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord.

6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not *yet* laid.

7 They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

The Rebuilding of the Temple Begun

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord.

There was no dispute among the returned Jews whether they should build the temple or no; that was immediately resolved on, and that it should be done with all speed; what comfort could they take in their own land if they had not that token of

God's presence with them and the record of his name among them? We have here therefore an account of the beginning of that good work. Observe,

I. When it was begun-in the second month of the second year, as soon as ever the season of the year would permit (Ezr 3:8), and when they had ended the solemnities of the passover. They took little more than half a year for making preparation of the ground and materials; so much were their hearts upon it. Note, When any good work is to be done it will be our wisdom to set about it quickly, and not to lose time, yea, though we foresee difficulty and opposition in it. Thus we engage ourselves to it, and engage God for us. Well begun (we say) is half ended.

II. Who began it--Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and their brethren. Then the work of God is likely to go on well when magistrates, ministers, and people, are hearty for it, and agree in their places to promote it. It was God that gave them one heart for this service, and it boded well.

III. Who were employed to further it. They appointed the Levites to set forward the work (Ezr 3:8), and they did it by setting forward the workmen (Ezr 3:9), and strengthening their hands with good and comfortable words. Note, Those that do not work themselves may yet do good service by quickening and encouraging those that do work.

IV. How God was praised at the laying of the foundation of the temple (Ezr 3:10,11); the priests with the trumpets appointed by Moses, and the Levites with the cymbals appointed by David, made up a concert of music, not to please the ear, but to assist the singing of that everlasting hymn which will never be out of date, and to which our tongues should never be out of tune, God is good, and his mercy endureth for ever, the burden of Ps 136:1-26 Let all the streams of mercy be traced up to the fountain. Whatever our

condition is, how many soever our griefs and fears, let it be owned that God is good; and, whatever fails, that his mercy fails not. Let this be sung with application, as here; not only his mercy endures for ever, but it endures for ever towards Israel, Israel when captives in a strange land and strangers in their own land. However it be, yet God is good to Israel (Ps 73:1), good to us. Let the reviving of the church's interests, when they seemed dead, be ascribed to the continuance of God's mercy for ever, for therefore the church continues.

V. How the people were affected. A remarkable mixture of various affections there was upon this occasion. Different sentiments there were among the people of God, and each expressed himself according to his sentiments, and yet there was no disagreement among them, their minds were not alienated from each other nor the common concern retarded by it.

1. Those that only knew the misery of having no temple at all praised the Lord with shouts of joy when they saw but the foundation of one laid, Ezr 3:11. To them even this foundation seemed great, and was as life from the dead; to their hungry souls even this was sweet. They shouted, so that the noise was heard afar off. Note, We ought to be thankful for the beginnings of mercy, though we have not yet come to the perfection of it; and the foundations of a temple, after long desolations, cannot but be fountains of joy to every faithful Israelite.

2. Those that remembered the glory of the first temple which Solomon built, and considered how far this was likely to be inferior to that, perhaps in dimensions, certainly in magnificence and sumptuousness, wept with a loud voice, Ezr 3:12. If we date the captivity with the first, from the fourth of Jehoiakim, it was about fifty-two years since the temple was burnt; if from Jeconiah's captivity, it was but fifty-nine. So that many now alive might remember it standing; and a great

mercy it was to the captives that they had the lives of so many of their priests and Levites lengthened out, who could tell them what they themselves remembered of the glory of Jerusalem, to quicken them in their return. These lamented the disproportion between this temple and the former. And,

(1.) There was some reason for it; and if they turned their tears into the right channel, and bewailed the sin that was the cause of this melancholy change, they did well. Sin sullies the glory of any church or people, and, when they find themselves diminished and brought low, that must bear the blame.

(2.) Yet it was their infirmity to mingle those tears with the common joys and so to cast a damp upon them. They despised the day of small things, and were unthankful for the good they enjoyed, because it was not so much as their ancestors had, though it was much more than they deserved. In the harmony of public joys, let not us be jarring strings. It was an aggravation of the discouragement they hereby gave to the people that they were priests and Levites, who should have known and taught others how to be duly affected under various providences, and not to let the remembrance of former afflictions drown the sense of present mercies.

This mixture of sorrow and joy here is a representation of this world. Some are bathing in rivers of joy, while others are drowned in floods of tears. In heaven all are singing, and none sighing; in hell all are weeping and wailing, and none rejoicing; but here on earth we can scarcely discern the shouts of joy from the noise of the weeping. Let us learn to rejoice with those that do rejoice and weep with those that weep, and ourselves to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

9 Then stood Jeshua *with* his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites.

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.
11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because *he is* good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.
12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, *who were* ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:
13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

Ezra-4

The Adversaries Stop the Work

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel;
2 then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye
do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

We have here an instance of the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. God's temple cannot be built, but Satan will rage, and the gates of hell will fight against it. The gospel kingdom was, in like manner, to be set up with much struggling and contention. In this respect the glory of the latter house was greater than the glory of the former, and it was more a figure of the temple of Christ's church, in that Solomon built his temple when there was no adversary nor evil occurrent, (1Ki 5:4); but this second temple was built notwithstanding great opposition, in the removing and conquering of which, and the bringing of the work to perfection at last in spite of it, the wisdom, power, and goodness of God were much glorified, and the church was encouraged to trust in him.

I The undertakers are here called the children of the captivity (Ezr 4:1), which makes them look very little. They had newly come out of captivity, were born in captivity, had still the marks of their captivity upon them; though they were not now captives, they were under the control of those whose captives they had lately been. Israel was God's son, his first-born; but by their iniquity the people sold and enslaved themselves, and so became children of the captivity. But, it should seem, the thought of their being so quickened them to this work, for it was by their neglect of the temple that they lost their freedom.

II The opposers of the undertaking are here said to be the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, not the Chaldeans or Persians (they gave them no disturbance--"let them build and welcome"), but the relics of the ten tribes, and the foreigners that had joined themselves to them, and patched up that mongrel religion we had an account of, 2Ki 17:33. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods too. They are called the people of the land, Ezr 4:4. The worst enemies Judah and Benjamin had were those that said they were Jews and were not, Re 3:9.

III. The opposition they gave had in it much of the subtlety of the old serpent. When they heard that the temple was in building they were immediately aware that it would be a fatal blow to their superstition, and set themselves to oppose it. They had not power to do it forcibly, but they tried all the ways they could to do it effectually.

1. They offered their service to build with the Israelites only that thereby they might get an opportunity to retard the work, while they pretended to further it. Now,

(1.) Their offer was plausible enough, and looked kind: "We will build with you, will help you to contrive, and will contribute towards the expense; for we seek your God as you do," Ezr 4:2. This was false, for, though they sought the same God, they did not seek him only, nor seek him in the way he appointed, and therefore did not seek him as they did. Herein they designed, if it were possible, to hinder the building of it, at least to hinder their comfortable enjoyment of it; as good almost not have it as not have it to themselves, for the pure worship of the true God and him only. Thus are the kisses of an enemy deceitful; his words are smoother than butter when war is in his heart. But,

(2.) The refusal of their proffered service was very just, Ezr 4:3. The chief of the fathers of Israel were soon aware that they meant them no kindness, whatever they pretended, but really designed to do them a mischief, and therefore (though they had need enough of help if it had been such as they could confide in) told them plainly, "You have nothing to do with us, have no part nor lot in this matter, are not true-born Israelites nor faithful worshippers of God; you worship you know not what, Joh 4:22. You are none of those with whom we dare hold communion, and therefore we ourselves will build it." They plead not to them the law of their God, which forbade them to mingle with strangers (though that especially they had an eye to), but that which they would take more

notice of, the king's commission, which was directed to them only: "The king of Persia has commanded us to build this house, and we shall distrust and affront him if we call in foreign aid."

Note, In doing good there is need of the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocency of the dove, and we have need, as it follows there, to beware of men, Mt 10:16,17. We should carefully consider with whom we are associated and on whose hand we lean. While we trust God with a pious confidence we must trust men with a prudent jealousy and caution.

2. When this plot failed they did what they could to divert them from the work and discourage them in it. They weakened their hands by telling them it was in vain to attempt it, calling them foolish builders, who began what they were not able to finish, and by their insinuations troubled them, and made them drive heavily in the work. All were not alike zealous in it. Those that were cool and indifferent were by these artifices drawn off from the work, which wanted their help, Ezr 4:4. And because what they themselves said the Jews would suspect to be ill meant, and not be influenced by, they, underhand, hired counsellors against them, who, pretending to advise them for the best, should dissuade them from proceeding, and so frustrate their purpose (Ezr 4:5), or dissuade the men of Tyre and Sidon from furnishing them with the timber they had bargained for (Ezr 3:7); or whatever business they had at the Persian court, to solicit for any particular grants or favours, pursuant to the general edict for their liberty, there were those that were hired and lay ready to appear of counsel against them. Wonder not at the restlessness of the church's enemies in their attempts against the building of God's temple. He whom they serve, and whose work they are doing, is unwearied in walking to and fro through the earth to do mischief. And let those who discourage a good work,

and weaken the hands of those that are employed in it, see whose pattern they follow.

3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

5 and hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Cyrus stedfastly adhered to the Jews' interest, and supported his own grant. It was to no purpose to offer any thing to him in prejudice of it. What he did was from a good principle, and in the fear of God, and therefore he adhered to it. But, though his reign in all was thirty years, yet after the conquest of Babylon, and his decree for the release of the Jews, some think that he reigned but three years, others seven, and then either died or gave up that part of his government, in which his successor was Ahasuerus (Ezr 4:6), called also Artaxerxes (Ezr 4:7), supposed to be the same that in heathen authors is called Cambyses, who had never taken such cognizance of the despised Jews as to concern himself for them, nor had he that knowledge of the God of Israel which his predecessor had. To him these Samaritans applied by letter for an order to stop the building of the temple; and they did it in the beginning of his reign, being resolved to lose no time when they thought they had a king for their purpose. See how watchful the church's enemies are to take the first opportunity of doing it a mischief; let not its friends be less careful to do it a kindness. Here is,

I The general purport of the letter which they sent to the king, to inform him of this matter. It is called (Ezr 4:6) an

accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. The devil is the accuser of the brethren (Re 12:10), and he carries on his malicious designs against them, not only by accusing them himself before God, as he did Job, but by acting as a lying spirit in the mouths of his instruments, whom he employs to accuse them before magistrates and kings and to make them odious to the many and obnoxious to the mighty. Marvel not if the same arts be still used to depreciate serious godliness.

II The persons concerned in writing this letter. The contrivers are named (Ezr 4:7) that plotted the thing, the writers (Ezr 4:8) that put it into form, and the subscribers (Ezr 4:9) that concurred in it and joined with them in this representation, this misrepresentation I should call it. Now see here, 1. How the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his temple, with their companions. The building of the temple would do them no harm, yet they appear against it with the utmost concern and virulence, perhaps because the prophets of the God of Israel had foretold the famishing and perishing of all the gods of the heathen, Zep 2:11,Jer 10:11. 2. How the people concurred with them in imagining this vain thing. They followed the cry, though ignorant of the merits of the cause. All the several colonies of that plantation (nine are here mentioned), who had their denomination from the cities or countries of Assyria, Chaldea, Persia, &c., whence they came, set their hands, by their representatives, to this letter. Perhaps they were incensed against these returned Jews because many of the ten tribes were among them, whose estates they had got into their possession, and of whom they were therefore jealous, lest they should attempt the recovery of them hereafter.

III. A copy of the letter itself, which Ezra inserts here out of the records of the kingdom of Persia, into which it had been entered; and it is well we have it, that we may see whence the

like methods, still taken to expose good people and baffle good designs, are copied.

1. They represent themselves as very loyal to the government, and greatly concerned for the honour and interest of it, and would have it thought that the king had no such loving faithful subjects in all his dominions as they were, none so sensible of their obligations to him, Ezr 4:14. Because we are salted with the salt of the palace (so it is in the margin), "we have our salary from the court, and could no more live without it than flesh could be preserved without salt;" or, as some think, their pay or pension was sent them in salt; or "Because we had our education in the palace, and were brought up at the king's table," as we find, Da 1:5. These were those whom he intended to prefer; they did eat their portion of the king's meat. "Now, in consideration of this, it is not meet for us to see the king's dishonour;" and therefore they urge him to stop the building of the temple, which would certainly be the king's dishonour more than any thing else. Note, A secret enmity to Christ and his gospel is often gilded over with a pretended affection to Caesar and his power. The Jews hated the Roman government, and yet, to serve a turn, could cry, We have no king but Caesar. But (to allude to this), if those that lived upon the crown thought themselves bound in gratitude thus to support the interest of it, much more reason have we thus to argue ourselves into a pious concern for God's honour; we have our maintenance from the God of heaven and are salted with his salt, live upon his bounty and are the care of his providence; and therefore it is not meet for us to see his dishonour without resenting it and doing what we can to prevent it.

2. They represent the Jews as disloyal, and dangerous to the government, that Jerusalem was the rebellious and bad city (Ezr 4:12), hurtful to kings and provinces, Ezr 4:15. See how Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth (Ps 48:2), is here reproached as the scandal of the whole earth. The enemies of

the church could not do the bad things they design against it if they did not first give it a bad name. Jerusalem had been a loyal city to its rightful princes, and its present inhabitants were as well affected to the king and his government as any of his provinces whatsoever. Daniel, who was a Jew, had lately approved himself so faithful to his prince that his worst enemies could find no fault in his management, Da 6:4. But thus was Elijah most unjustly charged with troubling Israel, the apostles with turning the world upside down, and Christ himself with perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar; and we must not think it strange if the same game be still played. Now here,

(1.) Their history of what was past was invidious, that within this city sedition had been moved of old time, and, for that cause, it was destroyed, Ezr 4:15. It cannot be denied but that there was some colour given for this suggestion by the attempts of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, which, if they had kept close to their religion and the temple they were now rebuilding, they would never have come under. But it must be considered,

[1.] That they were themselves, and their ancestors, sovereign princes, and their efforts to recover their rights, if there had not been in them the violation of an oath, for aught I know, would have been justifiable, and successful too, had they taken the right method and made their peace with God first.

[2.] Though these Jews, and their princes, had been guilty of rebellion, yet it was unjust therefore to fasten this as an indelible brand upon this city, as if that must for ever after go under the name of the rebellious and bad city. The Jews, in their captivity, had given such specimens of good behaviour as were sufficient, with any reasonable men, to roll away that one reproach; for they were instructed (and we have reason to hope that they observed their instructions) to seek the peace of the city where they were captives and pray to the Lord for

it, Jer 29:7. It was therefore very unfair, though not uncommon, thus to impute the iniquity of the fathers to the children.

(2.) Their information concerning what was now doing was grossly false in matter of fact. Very careful they were to inform the king that the Jews had set up the walls of this city, nay, had finished them (so it is in the margin) and joined the foundations (Ezr 4:12), when this was far from being the case. They had only begun to build the temple, which Cyrus commanded them to do, but, as for the walls, there was nothing done nor designed towards the repair of them, as appears by the condition they were in many years after (Ne 1:3), all in ruins. What shall be given, and what done, to these false tongues, nay, which is worse, these false pens? sharp arrows, doubtless, of the mighty, and coals of juniper, Ps 120:3,4. If they had not been perfectly lost to all virtue and honour they would not, and if they had not been very secure of the king's countenance they durst not, have written that to the king which all their neighbours knew to be a notorious lie. See Pr 29:12.

(3.) Their prognostics of the consequences were altogether groundless and absurd. They were very confident, and would have the king believe it upon their word, that if this city should be built, not only the Jews would pay no toll, tribute, or custom (Ezr 4:13), but (since a great lie is as soon spoken as a little one) that the king would have no portion at all on this side the river (Ezr 4:16), that all the countries on this side Euphrates would instantly revolt, drawn in to do so by their example; and, if the prince in possession should connive at this, he would wrong, not only himself, but his successors: Thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. See how every line in this letter breathes both the subtlety and malice of the old serpent

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king

of Persia; and the writing of the letter *was* written in the Syrian
tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.
8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a
letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:
9 then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and
the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites,
the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians,
the Susanchites, the Dehavites, *and* the Elamites,
10 and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper
brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that
are* on this side the river, and at such a time.
11 This *is* the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, *even* unto
Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the
river, and at such a time.
12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from
thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and
the bad city, and have set up the walls *thereof,* and joined the
foundations.
13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and
the walls set up *again, then* will they not pay toll, tribute, and
custom, and *so* thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.
14 Now because we have maintenance from *the king's* palace, and
it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonor, therefore have
we sent and certified the king;
15 that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers:
so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this
city *is* a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces,
and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time:
for which cause was this city destroyed.
16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded *again,* and the walls
thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this
side the river.
17 *Then* sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and *to*
Shimshai the scribe, and *to* the rest of their companions that
dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river, Peace, and
at such a time.

Here we have,

I The orders which the king of Persia gave, in answer to the information sent him by the Samaritans against the Jews. He suffered himself to be imposed upon by their fraud and falsehood, took no care to examine the allegations of their petition concerning that which the Jews were now doing, but took it for granted that the charge was true, and was very willing to gratify them with an order of council to stay proceedings.

1. He consulted the records concerning Jerusalem, and found that it had indeed rebelled against the king of Babylon, and therefore that it was, as they called it, a bad city (Ezr 4:19), and withal that in times past kings had reigned there, to whom all the countries on that side the river had been tributaries (Ezr 4:20), and that therefore there was danger that if ever they were able (which they were never likely to be) they would claim them again. Thus he says as they said, and pretends to give a reason for so doing. See the hard fate of princes, who must see and hear with other men's eyes and ears, and give judgment upon things as they are represented to them, though often represented falsely. God's judgment is always just because he sees things as they are, and it is according to truth. 2. He appointed these Samaritans to stop the building of the city immediately, till further orders should be given about it, Ezr 4:21,22.

Neither they, in their letter, nor he, in his order, make any mention of the temple, and the building of that, because both they and he knew that they had not only a permission, but a command, from Cyrus to rebuild that, which even these Samaritans had not the confidence to move for the repeal of. They spoke only of the city: "Let not that be built," that is, as a city with walls and gates; "whatever you do, prevent that, lest damage grow to the hurt of the kings:" he would not that the crown should lose by his wearing it.

II The use which the enemies of the Jews made of these orders, so fraudulently obtained; upon the receipt of them they went up in haste to Jerusalem, Ezr 4:23. Their feet ran to evil, Pr 1:16. They were impatient till the builders were served with this prohibition, which they produced as their warrant to make them cease by force and power. As they abused the king in obtaining this order by their mis-informations, so they abused him in the execution of it; for the order was only to prevent the walling of the city, but, having force and power on their side, they construed it as relating to the temple, for it was that to which they had an ill will, and which they only wanted some colour to hinder the building of. There was indeed a general clause in the order, to cause these men to cease, which had reference to their complaint about building the walls; but they applied it to the building of the temple.

See what need we have to pray, not only for kings, but for all in authority under them, and the governors sent by them, because the quietness and peaceableness of our lives, in all godliness and honesty, depend very much upon the integrity and wisdom of inferior magistrates, as well as the supreme. The consequence was that the work of the house of God ceased for a time, through the power and insolence of its enemies; and so, through the coldness and indifference of its friends, it stood still till the second year of Darius Hystaspes, for to me it seems clear by the thread of this sacred history that it was that Darius, Ezr 4:24.

Though now a stop was put to it by the violence of the Samaritans, yet that they might soon after have gone on by connivance, if they had had a due affection to the work, appears by this, that before they had that express warrant from the king for doing it (Ezr 6:1-12) they were reproved by the prophets for not doing it, Ezr 5:1,Hag 1:1, compared with Ezr 5:1,Hag 1:1, &c. If they had taken due care to inform Cambyses of the truth of this case, perhaps he would have recalled his order; but, for aught I know, some of the builders

were almost as willing it should cease as the adversaries themselves were. At some periods the church has suffered more by the coldness of its friends than by the heat of its enemies; but both together commonly make church-work slow work.

18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.
19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition have been made therein.
20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.
21 Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until *another* commandment shall be given from me.
22 Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?
23 Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter *was* read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.
24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezra-5

The Temple Rebuilt

1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.

Some reckon that the building of the temple was suspended for only nine years; I am willing to believe that fifteen years were the utmost. During this time they had an altar and a tabernacle, which no doubt they made use of. When we cannot do what we would we must do what we can in the service of God, and be

sorry we can do no better. But the counsellors that were hired to hinder the work (Ezr 4:5) told them, and perhaps with a pretence to inspiration, that the time had not come for the building of the temple (Hag 1:2), urging that it was long ere the time came for the building of Solomon's temple; and thus the people were made easy in their own ceiled houses, while God's house lay waste. Now here we are told how life was put into that good cause which seemed to lie dead.

I. They had two good ministers, who, in God's name, earnestly persuaded them to put the wheel of business in motion again. Observe,

1. Who these ministers were, namely, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who both began to prophesy in the second year of Darius, as appears, Hag 1:1,Zec 1:1.

Note, (1.) The temple of God among men is to be built by prophecy, not by secular force (that often hinders it, but seldom furthers it), but by the word of God. As the weapons of our warfare, so the instruments of our building, are not carnal, but spiritual, and they are the ministers of the gospel that are the master-builders.

(2.) It is the business of God's prophets to stir up God's people to that which is good, and to help them in it, to strengthen their hands, and, by suitable considerations fetched from the word of God, to quicken them to their duty and encourage them in it. (3.) It is a sign that God has mercy in store for a people when he raises up prophets among them to be their helpers in the way and work of God, their guides, overseers, and rulers.

2. To whom they were sent. They prophesied unto the Jews (for, as to them pertained the giving of the law, so also the gift of prophecy, and therefore they are called the children of the prophets, Ac 3:25, because they were educated under their tuition and instruction), even unto them, upon them, even upon

them (so it is in the original), as Ezekiel prophesied upon the dry bones, that they might live, Eze 37:4. They prophesied against them (so bishop Patrick), for they reproved them because they did not build the temple. The word of God, if it be not received now as a testimony to us, will be received now as a testimony to us, will be received another day as a testimony against us, and will judge us.

3. Who sent them. They prophesied in the name, or (as some read it) in the cause, or for the sake, of the God of Israel; they spoke by commission from him, and argued from his authority over them, his interest in them, and the concern of his glory among them.

II. They had two good magistrates, who were forward and active in this work. Zerubbabel their chief prince, and Jeshua their chief priest, Ezr 5:2. Those that are in places of dignity and power ought with their dignity to put honour upon and with their power to put life into every good work: thus it becomes those that preceded, and those that preside, with an exemplary care and zeal to fulfil all righteousness and to go before in a good work. These great men thought it no disparagement to them, but a happiness, to be taught and prescribed to by the prophets of the Lord, and were glad of their help in reviving this good work. Read the Ezr 5:1,2,Hag 1:1-15 here (for that is the best comment on these two verses) and see what great things God does by his word, which he magnifies above all his name, and by his Spirit working with it.

2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son
of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at
Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.
3 At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the
river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus
unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and
to make up this wall?
4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names
of the men that make this building?

5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this *matter.*

We have here,

I The cognizance which their neighbours soon took of the reviving of this good work. A jealous eye, it seems, they had upon them, and no sooner did the Spirit of God stir up the friends of the temple to appear for it than the evil spirit stirred up its enemies to appear against it. While the people built and ceiled their own houses their enemies gave them no molestation (Hag 1:4), though the king's order was to put a stop to the building of the city (Ezr 4:21); but when they fell to work again at the temple then the alarm was taken, and all heads were at work to hinder them, Ezr 5:3,4. The adversaries are here named: Tatnai and Shethar-boznai. The governors we read of (Ezr 4:1-24) were, it is probable, displaced at the beginning of this reign, as is usual. It is the policy of princes often to change their deputies, proconsuls, and rulers of provinces. These, though real enemies to the building of the temple, were men of better temper than the other, and made some conscience of telling truth. If all men have not faith (2Th 3:2), it is well some have, and a sense of honour. The church's enemies are not all equally wicked and unreasonable. The historian begins to relate what passed between the builders and those inquisitors (Ezr 5:3,4), but breaks off his account, and refers to the ensuing copy of the letter they sent to the king, where the same appears more fully and at large, which he began to abridge (Ezr 5:4), or make an extract out of, though, upon second thoughts, he inserted the whole.

II The care which the divine Providence took of this good work (Ezr 5:5): The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, who were active in the work, so that their enemies could not cause them to cease, as they would have done, till the matter came to Darius. They desired they would only

cease till they had instructions from the king about it. But they would not so much as yield them that, for the eye of God was upon them, even their God. And,

1. That baffled their enemies, infatuated and enfeebled them, and protected the builders from their malicious designs. While we are employed in God's work we are taken under his special protection; his eye is upon us for good, seven eyes upon one stone in his temple; see Zec 3:9,4:10.

2. That quickened them. The elders of the Jews saw the eye of God upon them, to observe what they did and own them in what they did well, and then they had courage enough to face their enemies and to go on vigorously with their work, notwithstanding all the opposition they met with. Our eye upon God, observing his eye upon us, will keep us to our duty and encourage us in it when the difficulties are ever so discouraging.

III. The account they sent to the king of this matter, in which we may observe,

1. How fully the elders of the Jews gave the Samaritans an account of their proceedings. They, finding them both busy and prosperous, that all hands were at work to run up this building and that it went on rapidly, put these questions to them:--"By what authority do you do these things, and who gave you that authority? Who set you to work? Have you that which will bear you out?" To this they answered that they had sufficient warrant to do what they did; for,

(1.) "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth. The God we worship is not a local deity, and therefore we cannot be charged with making a faction, or setting up a sect, in building this temple to his honour: but we pay our homage to a God on whom the whole creation depends, and therefore ought to be protected and assisted by all and hindered by

none." It is the wisdom as well as duty of kings to countenance the servants of the God of heaven.

(2.) "We have a prescription to this house; it was built for the honour of our God by Solomon many ages ago. It is no novel invention of our own; we are but raising the foundations of many generations," Isa 58:12.

(3.) "It was to punish us for our sins that we were, for a time, put out of the possession of this house; not because the gods of the nations had prevailed against our God, but because we had provoked him (Ezr 5:12), for which he delivered us and our temple into the hands of the king of Babylon, but never intended thereby to put a final period to our religion. We were only suspended for a time, not deprived for ever."

(4.) "We have the royal decree of Cyrus to justify us and bear us out in what we do. He not only permitted and allowed us, but charged and commanded us to build this house (Ezr 5:13), and to build it in its place (Ezr 5:15), the same place where it had stood before." He ordered this, not only in compassion to the Jews, but in veneration of their God, saying, He is the God. He also delivered the vessels of the temple to one whom he entrusted to see them restored to their ancient place and use, Ezr 5:14. And they had these to show in confirmation of what they alleged.

(5.) "The building was begun according to this order as soon as ever we had returned, so that we have not forfeited the benefit of the order for want of pursuing it in time; still it has been in building, but, because we have met with opposition, it is not finished." But, observe, they mention not the falsehood and malice of the former governors, nor make any complaint of them, though they had cause enough, to teach us not to render bitterness for bitterness, nor the most just reproach for that which is most unjust, but to think it enough if we can obtain fair treatment for the future, without an

invidious reference to former injuries, Ezr 5:16. This is the account they give of their proceedings, not asking what authority they had to examine them, nor upbraiding them with their idolatry, and superstitions, and medley religion. Let us learn hence with meekness and fear to give a reason of the hope that is in us (1Pe 3:15), rightly to understand, and then readily to declare, what we do in God's service and why we do it.

2. How fairly the Samaritans represented this to the king.

(1.) They called the temple at Jerusalem the house of the great God (Ezr 5:8); for though the Samaritans, as it should seem, had yet gods many and lords many, they owned the God of Israel to be the great God, who is above all gods. "It is the house of the great God, and therefore we dare not oppose the building of it without orders from thee."

(2.) They told him truly what was done, not stating, as their predecessors did, that they were fortifying the city as if they intended war, but only that they were rearing the temple as those that intended worship, Ezr 5:8.

(3.) They fully represented their plea, told him what they had to say for themselves, and were willing that the cause should be set in a true light.

(4.) They left it to the king to consult the records whether Cyrus had indeed made such a decree, and then to give directions as he should think fit, Ezr 5:17. We have reason to think that if Artaxerxes, in the foregoing chapter, had had the Jews' cause as fairly represented to him as it was here to Darius, he would not have ordered the work to be hindered. God's people could not be persecuted if they were not belied, could not be baited if they were not dressed up in bears' skins. Let but the cause of God and truth be fairly stated, and fairly heard, and it will keep its ground.

6 The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river,
and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites,
which *were* on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king:
7 they sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius
the king, all peace.
8 Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of
Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great
stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast
on, and prospereth in their hands.
9 Then asked we those elders, *and* said unto them thus, Who
commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls
?
10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write
the names of the men that *were* the chief of them.
11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of
the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was
builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded
and set up.
12 But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto
wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king
of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried
the people away into Babylon.
13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, *the same* king
Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.
14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which
Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that *was* in Jerusalem,
and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus
the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were
delivered unto *one*, whose name *was* Sheshbazzar, whom he had
made governor;
15 and said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the
temple that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded
in his place.
16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *and* laid the foundation of the
house of God which *is* in Jerusalem: and since that time even
until now hath it been in building, and *yet* it is not finished.
17 Now therefore, if *it seem* good to the king, let there be search
made in the king's treasure house, which *is* there at Babylon,

whether it be *so,* that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

Ezra-6

1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein *was* a record thus written:

3 In the first year of Cyrus the king, *the same* Cyrus the king made a decree *concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be

builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

We have here, I The decree of Cyrus for the building of the temple repeated. To this the Samaritans referred because the Jews pleaded it, and perhaps hoped it would not be found, and then their plea would be over-ruled and a stop put to their work. Search was ordered to be made for it among the records; for, it seems, the tribes had not taken care to provide themselves with an authentic copy of it, which might have stood them in good stead, but they must appeal to the original. It was looked for in Babylon (Ezr 6:1), where Cyrus was when he signed it.

But, when it was not found there, Darius did not make that a pretence to conclude that therefore there was no such decree, and thereupon to give judgment against the Jews; but it is probable, having himself heard that such a decree was certainly made, he ordered the rolls in other places to be searched, and at length it was found at Achmetha, in the province of the Medes, Ezr 6:2. Perhaps some that durst not

destroy it, yet hid it there, out of ill will to the Jews, that they might lose the benefit of it. But Providence so ordered that it came to light; and it is here inserted, Ezr 6:3-5.

1. Here is a warrant for the building of the temple: Let the house of God at Jerusalem, yea, let that house be built (so it may be read), within such and such dimensions, and with such and such materials.

2. A warrant for the taking of the expenses of the building out of the king's revenue, Ezr 6:4. We do not find that they had received what was here ordered them, the face of things at court being soon changed. 3. A warrant for the restoring of the vessels and utensils of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away (Ezr 6:5), with an order that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should return them all to their places in the house of God.

II The confirmation of it by a decree of Darius, grounded upon it and in pursuance of it.

1 The decree of Darius is very explicit and satisfactory.

(1.) He forbids his officers to do any thing in opposition to the building of the temple. The manner of expression intimates that he knew they had a mind to hinder it: Be you far hence (Ezr 6:6); let the work of this house of God alone, Ezr 6:7. Thus was the wrath of the enemy made to praise God and the remainder thereof did he restrain.

(2.) He orders them out of his own revenue to assist the builders with money,

[1.] For carrying on the building, Ezr 6:8. Herein he pursues the example of Cyrus, Ezr 6:4.

[2.] For maintaining the sacrifices there when it was built, Ezr 6:9. He ordered that they should be supplied with every thing they wanted both for burnt-offerings and meat-offerings. He was content it should be a rent-charge upon his revenue, and ordered it to be paid every day, and this without fail, that they might offer sacrifices and prayers with them (for the patriarchs, when they offered sacrifice, called on the name of the Lord, so did Samuel, Elijah, and others) for the life (that is, the happiness and prosperity) of the king and his sons, Ezr 6:10. See here how he gives honour,

First, To Israel's God, whom he calls once and again the God of heaven.

Secondly, To his ministers, in ordering his commissioners to give out supplies for the temple service at the appointment of the priests. Those that thought to control them must now be, in this matter, at their command. It was a new thing for God's priests to have such an interest in the public money.

Thirdly, To prayer: That they may pray for the life of the king. He knew they were a praying people, and had heard that God was nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. He was sensible he needed their prayers and might receive benefit by them, and was kind to them in order that he might have an interest in their prayers. It is the duty of God's people to pray for those that are in authority over them, not only for the good and gentle, but also for the forward; but they are particularly bound in gratitude to pray for their protectors and benefactors; and it is the wisdom of princes to desire their prayers, and to engage them. Let not the greatest princes despise the prayers of the meanest saints; it is desirable to have them for us, and dreadful to have them against us.

(3.) He enforces his decree with a penalty (Ezr 6:11): "Let none either oppose the work and service of the temple or withhold the supports granted to it by the crown upon pain of

death. If any alter this decree, let him be (hanged before his own door as we say), hanged upon a beam of his own house, and, as an execrable man, let his house be made a dunghill."

(4.) He entails a divine curse upon all those kings and people that should ever have any hand in the destruction of this house, Ezr 6:12. What he would not do himself for the protection of the temple he desired that God, to whom vengeance belongs, would do. This bespeaks him zealous in the cause; and though this temple was, at length, most justly destroyed by the righteous hand of God, yet perhaps the Romans, who were the instruments of that destruction, felt the effects of this curse, for that empire sensibly declined ever after.

2. From all this we learn,

(1.) That the heart of kings is in the hand of God, and he turns it which way soever he pleases; what they are he makes them to be, for he is King of kings.

(2.) That when God's time has come for the accomplishing of his gracious purposes concerning his church he will raise up instruments to promote them from whom such good service was not expected. The earth sometimes helps the woman (Re 12:16), and those are made use of for the defence of religion who have little religion themselves.

(3.) That what is intended for the prejudice of the church has often, by the overruling providence of God, been made serviceable to it, Php 1:12. The enemies of the Jews, in appealing to Darius, hoped to get an order to suppress them, but, instead of that, they got an order to supply them. Thus out of the eater comes forth meat. The apocryphal Esdras (or Ezra), Book I. ch. iii. and iv., gives another account of this decree in favour of the Jews, that Darius had vowed that if ever he came to the kingdom he would build the temple at

Jerusalem, and that Zerubbabel, who was one of his attendants (whereas it is plain here that he was now at Jerusalem), for making an ingenious discourse before him on that subject (Great is the truth and will prevail), was told to ask what recompence he would, and asked only for this order, in pursuance of the king's vow.

4 *with* three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let
the expenses be given out of the king's house:
5 and also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which
Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which *is* at
Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought
again unto the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, *every one* to his place,
and place *them*
in the house of God.
6 Now *therefore,* Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai,
and your companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the
river, be ye far from thence:
7 let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the
Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his
place.
8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these
Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's
goods, *even* of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be
given unto these men, that they be not hindered.
9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and
rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven,
wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the
priests
which *are* at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:
10 that they may offer sacrifices of sweet savors unto the God
of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.
11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word,
let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let
him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for
this.
12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all
kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to

destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.

13 Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

Here we have, I The Jews' enemies made their friends. When they received this order from the king they came with as much haste to encourage and assist the work as their predecessors had done to put a stop to it, Ezr 4:23. What the king ordered they did, and, because they would not be thought to do it with reluctance, they did it speedily, Ezr 6:13. The king's moderation made them, contrary to their own inclination, moderate too.

II The building of the temple carried on, and finished in a little time, Ezr 6:14,15. Now the elders of the Jews built with cheerfulness. For aught I know, the elders themselves laboured at it with their own hands; and, if they did, it was no disparagement to their eldership, but an encouragement to the other workmen.

1. They found themselves bound to it by the commandment of the God of Israel, who had given them power that they might use it in his service.

2. They found themselves shamed into it by the commandment of the heathen kings, Cyrus formerly, Darius now, and Artaxerxes some time after. Can the elders of the Jews be remiss in this good work when these foreign princes appear so warm in it? Shall native Israelites grudge their pains

and care about this building when strangers grudge not to be at the expense of it?

3. They found themselves encouraged in it by the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, who, it is likely, represented to them (as bishop Patrick suggests) the wonderful goodness of God in inclining the heart of the king of Persia to favour them thus. And now the work went on so prosperously that, in four hears' time, it was brought to perfection. As for God, his work is perfect. The gospel church, that spiritual temple, is long in the building, but it will be finished at last, when the mystical body is completed. Every believer is a living temple, building up himself in his most holy faith. Much opposition is given to this work by Satan and our own corruptions. We trifle, and proceed in it with many stops and pauses; but he that has begun the good work will see it performed, and will bring forth judgment unto victory. Spirits of just men will be made perfect.

III. The dedication of the temple. When it was built, being designed only for sacred uses, they showed by an example how it should be used, which (says bishop Patrick) is the proper sense of the word dedicate. They entered upon it with solemnity and probably with a public declaration of the separating of it from common uses and the surrender of it to the honour of God, to be employed in his worship.

1 The persons employed in this service were not only the priests and Levites who officiated, but the children of Israel, some of each of the twelve tribes, though Judah and Benjamin were the chief, and the rest of the children of the captivity or transportation, which intimates that there were many besides the children of Israel, of other nations, who transported themselves with them, and became proselytes to their religion, unless we read it, even the remnant of the children of the captivity, and then, we may suppose, notice is hereby taken of their mean and afflicted condition, because the

consideration of that helped to make them devout and serious in this and other religious exercises. A sad change! The children of Israel have become children of the captivity, and there appears but a remnant of them, according to that prediction (Isa 7:3), Shear-jashub--The remnant shall return.

2 The sacrifices that were offered upon this occasion were bullocks, rams, and lambs (Ezr 6:17), for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; not to be compared, in number, with what had been offered at the dedication of Solomon's temple, but, being according to their present ability, they were accepted, for, after a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, and their deep poverty, abounded to the riches of their liberality, 2Co 8:2. These hundreds were more to them than Solomon's thousands were to him. But, besides these, they offered twelve he-goats for sin-offerings, one for every tribe, to make atonement for their sins, which they looked upon as necessary in order to the acceptance of their services. Thus, by getting iniquity taken away, they would free themselves from that which had been the sting of their late troubles, and which, if not removed, would be a worm at the root of their present comforts.

3. This service was performed with joy. They were all glad to see the temple built and the concerns of it in so good a posture. Let us learn to welcome holy ordinances with joy and attend on them with pleasure. Let us serve the Lord with gladness. Whatever we dedicate to God, let it be done with joy that he will please to accept of it.

4. When they dedicated the house they settled the household. Small comfort could they have in the temple without the temple service, and therefore they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses, Ezr 6:18. Having set up the worship of God in this dedication, they took care to keep it up, and made the book of Moses their rule, to which they had an eye in this establishment. Though the temple

service could not now be performed with so much pomp and plenty as formerly, because of their poverty, yet perhaps it was performed with as much purity and close adherence to the divine institution as ever, which was the true glory of it. No beauty like the beauty of holiness.

IV. The celebration of the passover in the newly-erected temple. Now that they were newly delivered out of their bondage in Babylon it was seasonable to commemorate their deliverance out of their bondage in Egypt. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies. We may suppose that they had kept the passover, after a sort, every year since their return, for they had an altar and a tabernacle. But they were liable to frequent disturbances from their enemies, were straitened for room, and had not conveniences about them, so that they could not do it with due solemnity till the temple was built; and now they made a joyful festival of it, it falling out in the next month after the temple was finished and dedicated, Ezr 6:19. Notice is here taken,

1. Of the purity of the priests and Levites that killed the passover, Ezr 6:20. In Hezekiah's time the priests were many of them under blame for not purifying themselves. But now it is observed, to their praise, that they were purified together, as one man (so the word is); they were unanimous both in their resolutions and in their endeavours to make and keep themselves ceremonially clean for this solemnity; they joined together in their preparations, that they might help one another, so that all of them were pure, to a man. The purity of ministers adds much to the beauty of their ministrations; so does their unity.

2. Of the proselytes that communicated with them in this ordinance: All such as had separated themselves unto them, had left their country and the superstitions of it and cast in their lot with the Israel of God, and had turned from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, both their idolatries and

immoralities, to seek the Lord God of Israel as their God, did eat the passover. See how the proselytes, the converts, are described. They separated themselves from the filthiness of sin and fellowship with sinners, joined themselves with the Israel of God in conformity and communion, and set themselves to seek the God of Israel; and those that do so in sincerity, though strangers and foreigners, are welcome to eat of the gospel feast, as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

3. Of the great pleasure and satisfaction wherewith they kept the feast of unleavened bread, Ezr 6:22. The Lord had made them joyful, had given them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice. It was now about twenty years since the foundation of this temple was laid, and we may suppose the old men that then wept at the remembrance of the first temple were most of them dead by this time, so that now there were no tears mingled with their joys. Those that are, upon good grounds, joyful, have therefore reason to be thankful, because it is God that makes them to rejoice. He is the fountain whence all the streams of our joy flow. God has promised to all those who take hold of his covenant that he will make them joyful in his house of prayer. The particular occasion they had for joy at this time was that God had turned the heart of the emperor to them, to strengthen their hands. If those that have been, or who we feared would have been, against us, prove to be for us, we may rejoice in it as a token for good, that our ways please the Lord (Pr 16:7), and he must have the glory of it.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar,
which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.
16 And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the
rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this
house of God with joy,
17 and offered at the dedication of this house of God a hundred
bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin
offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number
of the tribes of Israel.

18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.
19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth *day* of the first month.
20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.
21 And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel, did eat,
22 and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Ezra-7

Ezra and His Company Come to Jerusalem

1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,
2 the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

Here is, I. Ezra's pedigree. He was one of the sons of Aaron, a priest. Him God chose to be an instrument of good to Israel, that he might put honour upon the priesthood, the glory of which had been much eclipsed by the captivity. He is said to be the son of Seraiah, that Seraiah, as is supposed, whom the king of Babylon put to death when he sacked Jerusalem, 2Ki 25:18,21. If we take the shortest computation, it was seventy-five years since Seraiah died; many reckon it much longer, and,

because they suppose Ezra called out in the prime of his time to public service, do therefore think that Seraiah was not his immediate parent, but his grandfather or great-grandfather, but that he was the first eminent person that occurred in his genealogy upwards, which is carried up here as high as Aaron, yet leaving out many for brevity-sake, which may be supplied from 1Ch 6:4-81, &c. He was a younger brother, or his father was Jozadak, the father of Jeshua, so that he was not high priest, but nearly allied to the high priest.

II. His character. Though of the younger house, his personal qualifications made him very eminent.

1. He was a man of great learning, a scribe, a ready scribe, in the law of Moses, Ezr 7:6. He was very much conversant with the scriptures, especially the writings of Moses, had the words ready and was well acquainted with the sense and meaning of them. It is to be feared that learning ran low among the Jews in Babylon; but Ezra was instrumental to revive it. The Jews say that he collected and collated all the copies of the law he could find out, and published an accurate edition of it, with all the prophetical books, historical and poetical, that were given by divine inspiration, and so made up the canon of the Old Testament, with the addition of the prophecies and histories of his own time. If he was raised up of God, and qualified and inclined to do this, all generations have reason to call him blessed, and to bless God for him. God sent to the Jews prophets and scribes, Mt 23:34. Ezra went under the latter denomination. Now that prophecy was about to cease it was time to promote scripture-knowledge, pursuant to the counsel of God by the last of the prophets, Mal 4:4. Remember the law of Moses. Gospel ministers are called scribes instructed to the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13:52), New-Testament scribes. It was a pity that such a worthy name as this should be worn, as it was in the degenerate ages of the Jewish church, by men who were professed enemies to Christ and his gospel (Woe unto you,

scribes and Pharisees), who were learned in the letter of the law, but strangers to the spirit of it.

2. He was a man of great piety and holy zeal (Ezr 7:10): He had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, &c.

(1.) That which he chose for his study was the law of the Lord. The Chaldeans, among whom he was born and bred, were famed for literature, especially the study of the stars, to which, being a studious man, we may suppose that Ezra was tempted to apply himself. But he got over the temptation; the law of his God was more to him than all the writings of their magicians and astrologers, which he knew enough of with good reason to despise them.

(2.) He sought the law of the Lord, that is, he made it his business to enquire into it, searched the scriptures, and sought the knowledge of God, of his mind and will, in the scriptures, which is to be found there, but not without seeking.

(3.) He made conscience of doing according to it; he set it before him as his rule, formed his sentiments and temper by it, and managed himself in his whole conversation according to it. This use we must make of our knowledge of the scriptures; for happy are we if we do what we know of the will of God.

(4.) He set himself to teach Israel the statutes and judgments of that law. What he knew he was willing to communicate for the good of others; for the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. But observe the method: he first learned and then taught, sought the law of the Lord and so laid up a good treasure, and then instructed others and laid out what he had laid up. He also first did and then taught, practised the commandments himself and then directed others in the practice of them; thus his example confirmed his doctrine.

(5.) He prepared his heart to do all this, or he fixed his heart. He took pains in his studies, and thoroughly furnished himself for what he designed, and then put on resolution to proceed and persevere in them, and thus he became a ready scribe. Moses in Egypt, Ezra in Babylon, and both in captivity, were wonderfully fitted for eminent services to the church.

III. His expedition to Jerusalem for the good of his country: He went up from Babylon (Ezr 7:6), and, in four months' time, came to Jerusalem, Ezr 7:8. It was strange that such a man as he staid so long in Babylon after his brethren had gone up; but God sent him not thither till he had work for him to do there; and none went but those whose spirits God raised to go up. Some think that this Artaxerxes was the same with that Darius whose decree we had (Ezr 6:1-12), and that Ezra came the very year after the temple was finished: that was the sixth year, this the seventh (Ezr 7:8), so Dr. Lightfoot. My worthy and learned friend, lately deceased, Mr. Talents, in his chronological tables, places it about fifty-seven years after the finishing of the temple; others further on. I have only to observe,

1. How kind the king was to him. He granted him all his request, whatever he desired to put him into a capacity to serve his country.

2. How kind his people were to him. When he went many more went with him, because they desired not to stay in Babylon when he had gone thence, and because they would venture to dwell in Jerusalem when he had gone thither. 3. How kind his God was to him. He obtained this favour from his king and country by the good hand of the Lord that was upon him, Ezr 7:6,9. Note, Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be, and from him our judgment proceeds. As we must see the events that shall occur in the hand of God, so we must see the hand of God in the events that do occur, and acknowledge him with thankfulness when we have reason to call it his good hand.

3 the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,
4 the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,
5 the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:
6 this Ezra went up from Babylon; and he *was* a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given: and the
king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.
7 And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.
8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was* in the seventh year of the king.
9 For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.
10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.
11 Now this *is* the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel.
12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time.
13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and *of* his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.
14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counselors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which *is* in thine hand;

We have here the commission which the Persian emperor granted to Ezra, giving him authority to act for the good of the Jews; and it is very ample and full, and beyond what could have been expected. The commission runs, we suppose, in the usual form: Artaxerxes, King of kings. This however is too high a title for any mortal man to assume; he was indeed king

of some kings, but to speak as if he were king of all kings was to usurp his prerogative who hath all power both in heaven and in earth. He sends greeting to his trusty and well-beloved Ezra, whom he calls a scribe of the law of the God of heaven (Ezr 7:12), a title which (it seems by this) Ezra valued himself by, and desired no other, no, not when he was advanced to the proconsular dignity. He reckoned it more his honour to be a scribe of God's law than to be a peer or prince of the empire. Let us observe the articles of this commission.

I. He gives Ezra leave to go up to Jerusalem, and as many of his countrymen as pleased to go up with him, Ezr 7:13. He and they were captives, and therefore they would not quit his dominions without his royal license.

II. He gives him authority to enquire into the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem, Ezr 7:14. The rule of his enquiry was to be the law of his God, which was in his hand. He must enquire whether the Jews, in their religion, had and did according to that law--whether the temple was built, the priesthood was settled, and the sacrifices were offered conformably to the divine appointment. If, upon enquiry, he found any thing amiss, he must see to get it amended, and, like Titus in Crete, must set in order the things that were wanting, Tit 1:5. Thus is God's law magnified and made honourable, and thus are the Jews restored to their ancient privilege of governing themselves by that law, and are no longer under the statutes that were not good, the statutes of their oppressors, Eze 20:25.

III. He entrusts him with the money that was freely given by the king himself and his counsellors, and collected among his subjects, for the service of the house of God, Ezr 7:15,16.

1. Let this be taken notice of,

(1.) To the honour of God, as the one only living and true God;' for even those that worshipped other gods were so convinced

of the sovereignty of the God of Israel that they were willing to incur expenses in order to recommend themselves to his favour. See Ps 45:12,68:26.

(2.) To the praise of this heathen king, that he honoured the God of Israel though his worshippers were a despicable handful of poor men, who were not able to bear the charges of their own religion and were now his vassals, and that, though he was not wrought upon to quit his own superstitions, yet he protected and encouraged the Jews in their religion, and did not only say, Be you warmed, and be you filled, but gave them such things as they needed.

(3.) To the reproach of the memory of the wicked kings of Judah. Those that had been trained up in the knowledge and worship of the God of Israel, and had his law and his prophets, often plundered and impoverished the temple; but here a heathen prince enriched it. Thus afterwards the gospel was rejected by the Jews, but welcomed by the Gentiles. See Ro 11:11, Through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles. Ac 13:46.

2. We are here told that Ezra was entrusted,

(1.) To receive this money and to carry it to Jerusalem; for he was a man of known integrity, whom they could confide in, that he would not convert to his own use the least part of that which was given to the public. We find Paul going to Jerusalem upon such an errand, to bring alms to his nation and offerings, Ac 24:17.

(2.) To lay out this money in the best manner, in sacrifices to be offered upon the altar of God (Ezr 7:17), and in whatever else he or his brethren thought fit (Ezr 7:18), with this limitation only that it should be after the will of their God, which they were better acquainted with than the king was. Let the will of our God be always our rule in our expenses, and

particularly in what we lay out for his service. God's work must always be done according to his will. Besides money, he had vessels also given him for the service of the temple, Ezr 7:19. Cyrus restored what of right belonged to the temple, but these were given over and above: thus it receiveth its own with usury. These he must deliver before the God of Jerusalem, as intended for his honour, there where he had put his name.

IV. He draws him a bill, or warrant rather, upon the treasurers on that side the river, requiring them to furnish him with what he had occasion for out of the king's revenues, and to place it to the king's account, Ezr 7:20,22. This was considerately done; for Ezra, having yet to enquire into the sate of things, knew not what he should have occasion for and was modest in his demand. It was also kindly done, and evinced a great affection to the temple and a great confidence in Ezra. It is the interest of princes and great men to use their wealth and power for the support and encouragement of religion. What else are great revenues good for but that they enable men to do much good of this kind if they have but hearts to do it?

V. He charges him to let nothing be wanting that was requisite to be done in or about the temple for the honour of the God of Israel. Observe, in this charge (Ezr 7:23),

1. How honourably he speaks of God. He had called him before the God of Jerusalem; but here, lest it should be thought that he looked upon him as a local deity, he calls him twice, with great veneration, the God of heaven.

2. How strictly he eyes the word and law of God, which, it is likely, he had read and admired: "Whatsoever is commanded by your God" (whose institutions, though he wrote himself King of kings, he would not presume in the least iota or tittle to alter or add to) "let it be done, let it be diligently done, with care and speed." And,

3. How solicitously he deprecates the wrath of God: Why should there be wrath against the realm? The neglect and contempt of religion bring the judgments of God upon kings and kingdoms; and the likeliest expedient to turn away his wrath, when it is ready to break out against a people, is to support and encourage religion. Would we secure our peace and prosperity? Let us take care that the cause of God be not starved.

VI. He exempts all the ministers of the temple from paying taxes to the government. From the greatest of the priests to the least of the Nethinim, it shall not be lawful for the king's officers to impose that toll, tribute, or custom upon them, which the rest of the king's subjects paid, Ezr 7:24. This put a great honour upon them as free denizens of the empire, and would gain them respect as favourites of the crown; and it gave them liberty to attend their ministry with more cheerfulness and freedom. We suppose it was only what they needed for themselves and their families, and the maintenance of their ministry, that was hereby allowed to come to them custom-free. If any of them should take occasion from this privilege to meddle in trade and merchandise, they justly lost the benefit of it.

VII. He empowers Ezra to nominate and appoint judges and magistrates for all the Jews on that side the river, Ezr 7:25,26. It was a great favour to the Jews to have such nobles of themselves, and especially to have them of Ezra's nomination.

1. All that knew the laws of Ezra's God (that is, all that professed the Jewish religion) were to be under the jurisdiction of these judges, which intimates that they were exempted from the jurisdiction of the heathen magistrates.

2. These judges were allowed and encouraged to make proselytes: Let them teach the laws of God to those that do not

know them. Though he would not turn Jew himself, he cared not how many of his subjects did.

3. They were authorized to enforce the judgments they gave, and the orders they made, conformable to the law of God (which was hereby made the law of the king), with severe penalties--imprisonment, banishment, fine, or death, according as their law directed. They were not allowed to make new laws, but must see the laws of God duly executed; and they were entrusted with the sword in order that they might be a terror to evil doers. What could Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah, or David himself, as king, have done more for the honour of God and the furtherance of religion?

15 and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counselors
have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation *is* in
Jerusalem,
16 and all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province
of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the
priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which *is* in
Jerusalem:
17 that thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams,
lambs, with their meat offerings and their drink offerings,
and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which
is in Jerusalem.
18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to
do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do after the will of
your God.
19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house
of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.
20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy
God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow *it* out
of the king's treasure house.
21 And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the
treasurers which *are* beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the
priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require
of you, it be done speedily,

22 unto a hundred talents of silver, and to a hundred measures of wheat, and to a hundred baths of wine, and to a hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much.*

23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

24 Also we certify you, that, touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinim, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that *is* in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that *are* beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that know *them* not.

26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

27 Blessed *be* the Lord God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which *is* in Jerusalem:

Ezra cannot proceed in his story without inserting his thankful acknowledgement of the goodness of God to him and his people in this matter. As soon as he has concluded the king's commission, instead of subjoining, God save the king (though that would have been proper enough), he adds, Blessed be the Lord; for we must in every thing give thanks, and, whatever occurrences please us, we must own God's hand in them, and praise his name. Two things Ezra blessed God for:--

1. For his commission. We suppose he kissed the king's hand for it, but that was not all: Blessed be God (says he) that put such a thing as this into the king's heart. God can put things into men's hearts which would not arise there of themselves, and into their heads too, both by his providence and by his grace, in things pertaining both to life and godliness. If any good appear to be in our own hearts, or in the hearts of others,

we must own it was God that put it there, and bless him for it; for it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do that which is good. When princes and magistrates act for the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of religion, we must thank God that put it into their hearts to do so, as much as if they had granted us some particular favour. When God's house was built Ezra rejoiced in what was done to beautify it. We read not of any orders given to paint or gild it, or to garnish it with precious stones, but to be sure that the ordinances of God were administered there constantly, and carefully, and exactly according to the institution; and that was indeed the beautifying of the temple.

2. For the encouragement he had to act in pursuance of his commission (Ezr 7:28): He has extended mercy to me. The king, in the honour he did him, we may suppose, had an eye to his merit, and preferred him because he looked upon him to be a very sensible ingenious man; but he himself ascribes his preferment purely to God's mercy. It was this that recommended him to the favour of his prince. Ezra himself was a man of courage, yet he attributed his encouragement not to his own heart, but to God's hand: "I was strengthened to undertake the services, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me to direct and support me." If God gives us his hand, we are bold and cheerful; if he withdraws it, we are weak as water. Whatever service we are enabled to do for God and our generation, God must have all the glory of it. Strength for it is derived from him, and therefore the praise of it must be given to him.

28 and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God *was* upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

1 These *are* now the chief of their fathers, and *this is* the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.
2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush.
3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males a hundred and fifty.
4 Of the sons of Pahath-moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males.
5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males.
6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males.
7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males.
8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males.

Ezra, having received his commission from the king, beats up for volunteers, as it were, sets up an ensign to assemble the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah, Isa 11:12. "Whoever of the sons of Sion, that swell with the daughters of Babylon, is disposed to go to Jerusalem, now that the temple there is finished and the temple-service set a-going, now is their time." Now one would think that under such a leader, with such encouragements, all the Jews should at length have shaken themselves from their dust, and loosed the bands of their neck, according to that call, Isa 52:1,2, &c. I wonder how any of them could read that chapter and yet stay behind. But multitudes did. They loved their ease better than their religion, thought themselves well off where they were, and either believed not that Jerusalem would better their condition or durst not go thither through any difficulties. But here we are told,

I. That some offered themselves willingly to go with Ezra. The heads of the several families are here named, for their

honour, and the numbers of the males that each brought in, amounting in all to 1496. Two priests are named (Ezr 8:2) and one of the sons of David; but, it should seem, they came without their families, probably intending to see how they liked Jerusalem and then either to send for their families or return to them as they saw cause. Several of their families, or clans, here named, we had before, Ezr 2:3-20 Some went up from them at that time, more went up now, as God inclined their hearts; some were called into the vineyard at the third hour, others not till the eleventh, yet even those were not rejected. But here we read of the last sons of Adonikam (Ezr 8:13), which some understand to their dispraise, that they were the last that enlisted themselves under Ezra; I rather understand it to their honour, that now all the sons of that family returned and none staid behind.

II. That the Levites who went in this company were in a manner pressed into the service. Ezra appointed a general rendezvous of all his company at a certain place upon new-year's day, the first day of the first month. Ezr 7:9. Then and there he took a view of them, and mustered them, and (which was strange) found there none of the sons of Levi, Ezr 8:15. Some priests there were, but no others that were Levites. Where was the spirit of that sacred tribe? Ezra, a priest, like Moses proclaims, Who is on the Lord's side? They, unlike to Levi, shrink, and desire to abide among the sheep-folds to hear the bleatings of the flock. Synagogues we suppose they had in Babylon, in which they prayed, and preached, and kept sabbaths (and, when they could not have better, they had reason to be thankful for them); but now that the temple at Jerusalem was opened, to the service of which they were ordained, they ought to have preferred the gates of Zion before all those synagogues. It is upon record here, to their reproach; but tell it not in Gath. Ezra, when he observed that he had no Levites in his retinue, was much at a loss. He had money enough for the service of the temple, but wanted men. The king and princes had more than done their part, but the

sons of Levi had not half done theirs. Eleven men, chief men, and men of understanding, he chooses out of his company, to be employed for the filling up of this lamentable vacancy; and here we are informed,

1. Of their being sent. Ezra sent them to a proper place, where there as a college of Levites, the place Casiphia, probably a street or square in Babylon allowed for that purpose--Silver Street one may call it, for ceseph signifies silver. He sent them to a proper person, to Iddo, the chief president of the college, not to urge him to come himself (we will suppose him to be old and unfit for such a remove), but to send some of the juniors, ministers for the house of our God, Ezr 8:17. The furnishing of God's house with good ministers is a good work, which will redound to the comfort and credit of all that have a hand in it.

2. Of their success. They did not return without their errand, but, though the warning was short, they brought about forty Levites to attend Ezra, Sherebiah, noted as a very intelligent man, and eighteen with him (Ezr 8:18). Hashabiah, and Jeshaiah, and twenty with them, Ezr 8:19. By this it appears that they were not averse to go, but were slothful and inattentive, and only wanted to be called upon and excited to go. What a pity it is that good men should omit a good work, merely for want of being spoken to! What a pity that they should need it, but, if they do, what a pity that they should be left without it! Of the Nethinim, the servitors of the sacred college, the species infima--the lowest order of the temple ministers, more appeared forward to go than of the Levites themselves. Of them 220, upon this hasty summons, enlisted themselves, and had the honour to be expressed by name in Ezra's muster-roll, Ezr 8:20. "Thus," says Ezra, "were we furnished with Levites, by the good hand of our God upon us." If, where ministers have been wanting, the vacancies are well supplied, let God have the glory, and his good hand be

acknowledged as qualifying them for the service, inclining them to it, and then opening a door of opportunity for them.

9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him
two hundred and eighteen males.
10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him
a hundred and threescore males.
11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him
twenty and eight males.
12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with
him a hundred and ten males.
13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names *are* these,
Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore
males.
14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them
seventy males.
15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava;
and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people,
and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi.
16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan,
and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah,
and for Meshullam, chief men; also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan,
men of understanding.
17 And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the
place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo,
and to his brethren the Nethinim, at the place Casiphia, that
they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.
18 And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man
of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of
Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen;
19 and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari,
his brethren and their sons, twenty;
20 also of the Nethinim, whom David and the princes had
appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty
Nethinim: all of them were expressed by name.
21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we
might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right
way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

Ezra has procured Levites to go along with him; but what will that avail, unless he have God with him? That is therefore his chief care. In all our ways we must acknowledge God, and in those particularly wherein we are endeavouring to serve the interest of his kingdom among men. Ezra does so here. Observe,

I The stedfast confidence he had in God and in his gracious protection. He told the king (Ezr 8:22) what principles he went upon, that those who seek God are safe under the shadow of his wings, even in their greatest dangers, but that those who forsake him are continually exposed, even when they are most secure. God's servants have his power engaged for them; his enemies have it engaged against them. This Ezra believed with his heart, and with his mouth made confession of it before the king; and therefore he was ashamed to ask of the king a convoy, lest thereby he should give occasion to the king, and those about him, to suspect either God's power to help his people or Ezra's confidence in that power.

Those that trust in God, and triumph in him, will be ashamed of seeking to the creature for protection, especially of using any sorry shifts for their own safety, because thereby they contradict themselves and their own confidence. Not but that those who depend upon God must use proper means for their preservation, and they need not be ashamed to do so; but, when the honour of God is concerned, one would rather expose one's-self than do any thing to the prejudice of that, which ought to be dearer to us than our lives.

II The solemn application he made to God in that confidence: He proclaimed a fast, Ezr 8:21. No doubt he had himself begged of God direction in this affair from the first time he had it in his thoughts; but for public mercies public prayers must be made, that all who are to share in the comfort of them may join in the request for them. Their fasting was,

1. To express their humiliation. This he declares to be the intent and meaning of it. "that we might afflict ourselves before our God for our sins, and so be qualified for the pardon of them." When we are entering upon any new condition of life our care should be to bring none of the guilt of the sins of our former condition into it. When we are in any imminent peril let us be sure to make our peace with God, and then we are safe: nothing can do us any real hurt.

2. To excite their supplications. Prayer was always joined with religious fasting. Their errand to the throne of grace was to seek of God the right way, that is, to commit themselves to the guidance of the divine Providence, to put themselves under the divine protection, and to beg of God to guide and keep them in their journey and bring them safely to their journey's end. They were strangers in the road, were to march through their enemies' countries, and had not a pillar of cloud and fire to lead them, as their fathers had; but they believed that the power and favour of God, and the ministration of his angels, would be to them instead of that, and hoped by prayer to obtain divine assistance. Note, All our concerns about ourselves, our families, and our estates, it is our wisdom and duty by prayer to commit to God, and leave the care of with him, Php 4:6.

III. The good success of their doing so (Ezr 8:23): We besought our God by joint-prayer, and he was entreated of us. They had some comfortable assurance in their own minds that their prayers were answered, and the event declared it; for never any that sought God in earnest sought him in vain.

22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God *is* upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath *is* against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.

24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,
25 and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, *even* the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counselors, and his lords, and all Israel *there* present, had offered:
26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels a hundred talents, *and* of gold a hundred talents;

We have here an account of the particular care which Ezra took of the treasure he had with him, that belonged to God's sanctuary, Observe,

1. Having committed the keeping of it to God, he committed the keeping of it to proper men, whose business it was to watch it, though without God they would have waked in vain. Note, Our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours; the care of Christ's gospel, his church, and ordinances, must not be so left with him but that it must also be committed to faithful men, 2Ti 2:2.

2. Having prayed to God to preserve all the substance they had with them, he shows himself especially solicitous for that part of it which belonged to the house of God and was an offering to him. Do we expect that God should, by his providence, keep that which belongs to us? Let us, by his grace, keep that which belongs to him. Let God's honour and interest be our care; and then we may expect that our lives and comforts will be his. Observe,

(1.) The persons to whom he delivered the offerings of the house of God. Twelve chief priests, and as many Levites, he appointed to this trust (Ezr 8:24,30), who were bound by their office to take care of the things of God, and were in a particular manner to have the benefit of these sacred treasures. Ezra tells them why he put those things into their hands (Ezr 8:28): You are holy unto the Lord, the vessels are holy also;

and who so fit to take care of holy things as holy persons? Those that have the dignity and honour of the priesthood must take along with them the trust and duty of it. The prophet is foretelling the return of God's people and ministers out of Babylon, when he gives the solemn charge (Isa 52:11), Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

(2.) The great exactness with which he lodged this trust in their hands: He weighed to them the silver, the gold, and the vessels (Ezr 8:25), because he expected to have it from them again by weight. In all trust, but especially sacred ones, we ought to be punctual, and preserve a right understanding on both sides. In Zerubbabel's time the vessels were delivered by number, here by weight, that all might be forth-coming and it might easily appear if any were missing, to intimate that such as are entrusted with holy things (as all the stewards of the mysteries of God are) are concerned to remember, both in receiving their trust and in discharging it, that they must shortly give a very particular account of it, that they may be faithful to it and so give up their account with joy.

(3.) The charge he have them with these treasures (Ezr 8:29): "Watch you, and keep them, that they be not lost, nor embezzled, nor mingled with the other articles. Keep them together; keep them by themselves; keep them safely, till you weigh them in the temple, before the great men there," hereby intimating how much it was their concern to be careful and faithful and how much it would be their honour to be found so. Thus when Paul charges Timothy with the gospel treasure he bids him keep it until the appearing of Jesus Christ, and his appearing before him to give account of his trust, when his fidelity would be his crown.

27 also twenty basins of gold, of a thousand drams; and two vessels
of fine copper, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye *are* holy unto the Lord; the vessels
are holy also; and the silver and the gold *are* a freewill offering
unto the Lord God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep *them*, until ye weigh *them* before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord.
30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring *them* to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.
31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.
32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.
33 Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him *was* Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them *was* Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;

We are now to attend Ezra to Jerusalem, a journey of about four months in all; but his multitude made his marches slow and his stages short. Now here we are told,

I. That his God was good, and he acknowledged his goodness: The hand of our God was upon us, to animate us for our undertaking. To him they owed it,

1. That they were preserved in their journey, and not all cut off; for there were enemies that laid wait for them by the way to do them a mischief, or at least, like Amalek, to smite the hindmost of them, but God protected them, Ezr 8:31. Even the common perils of journeys are such as oblige us to sanctify our going out with prayer and our returns in peace with praise and thanksgiving; much more ought God to be thus eyed in such a dangerous expedition as this was.

2. That they were brought in safety to their journey's end, Ezr 8:32. Let those that have stedfastly set their faces towards the new Jerusalem proceed and persevere to the end till they

appear before God in Zion, and they shall find that he who has begun the good work will perform it.

II. That his treasurers were faithful. When they had come to Jerusalem they were impatient to be discharged of their trust, and therefore applied to the great men of the temple, who received it from them and gave them an acquittance in full, Ezr 8:33,34. It is a great ease to one's mind to be discharged from a trust, and a great honour to one's name to be able to make it appear that it has been faithfully discharged.

III. That his companions were devout. As soon as they came to be near the altar they thought themselves obliged to offer sacrifice, whatever they had done in Babylon, Ezr 8:35. That will be dispensed with when we want opportunity which when the door is opened again will be expected from us. It is observable,

1. That among their sacrifices they had a sin-offering; for it is the atonement that sweetens and secures every mercy to us, which will not be truly comfortable unless iniquity be taken away and our peace made with God.

2. That the number of their offerings related to the number of the tribes, twelve bullocks, twelve he-goats, and ninety-six rams (that is, eight times twelve), intimating the union of the two kingdoms, according to what was foretold, Eze 37:22. They did not any longer go two tribes one way and ten another, but all the twelve met by their representatives at the same altar.

IV. That even the enemies of the Jews became their friends, bowed to Ezra's commission, and, instead of hindering the people of God, furthered them (Ezr 8:36), purely in complaisance to the king: when he appeared moderate they all coveted to appear so too. Then had the churches rest.

34 by number *and* by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.

35 *Also* the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats *for* a sin offering: all *this was* a burnt offering unto the Lord.

36 And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

Ezra-9

Ezra's Prayer of Confession

1 Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

Ezra, like Barnabas when he came to Jerusalem and saw the grace of God to his brethren there, no doubt was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord, Ac 11:23. He saw nothing amiss (many corruptions lurk out of the view of the most vigilant rulers); but here is a damp upon his joys: information is brought him that many of the people, yea, and some of the rulers, had married wives out of heathen families, and joined themselves in affinity with strangers. Observe,

I. What the sin was that they were guilty of: it was mingling with the people of those lands (Ezr 9:2), associating with them both in trade and in conversation, making themselves familiar with them, and, to complete the affinity, taking their daughters in marriages to their sons. We are willing to hope that they did not worship their gods, but that their captivity had cured them of their idolatry: it is said indeed that they did according to their abominations; but that (says bishop Patrick) signifies here only the imitation of the heathen in promiscuous marriages with any nation whatsoever, which by degrees would lead them to idolatry.

Herein, 1. They disobeyed the express command of God, which forbade all intimacy with the heathen, and particularly in matrimonial contracts, De 7:3.

2. They profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and set themselves upon a level with those above whom God had by singular marks of his favour, of late as well as formerly, dignified them. 3. They distrusted the power of God to protect and advance them, and were led by carnal policy, hoping to strengthen themselves and make an interest among their neighbours by these alliances. A practical disbelief of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all the sorry shifts we make to help ourselves. 4. They exposed themselves, and much more their children, to the peril of idolatry, the very sin, and introduced by this very way, that had cone been the ruin of their church and nation.

II. Who were the persons that were guilty of this sin, not only some of the unthinking people of Israel, that knew no better, but many of the priests and Levites, whose office it was to teach the law, and this law among the rest, and in whom, by reason of their elevation above common Israelites, it was a greater crime. It was a diminution to the sons of that tribe to match into any other tribe, and they seldom did except into the royal tribe; but for them to match with heathen, with

Canaanites, and Hittites, and I know not whom, was such a disparagement as, if they had had any sense, though not of duty, yet of honour, one would think, they would never have been guilty of. Yet this was not the worst: The hand of the princes and rulers, who by their power should have prevented or reformed this high misdemeanour, was chief in this trespass. If princes be in a trespass, they will be charged as chief in it, because of the influence their examples will have upon others. Many will follow their pernicious ways. But miserable is the case of that people whose leaders debauch them and cause them to err.

III. The information that was given of this to Ezra. It was given by the persons that were most proper to complain, the princes, those of them that had kept their integrity and with it their dignity; they could not have accused others if they themselves had not been free from blame. It was given to the person who had power to mend the matter, who, as a ready scribe in the law of God, could argue with them, and, as king's commissioner, could awe them. It is probable that these princes had often endeavoured to redress this grievance and could not; but now they applied to Ezra, hoping that his wisdom, authority, and interest, would prevail to do it. Those that cannot of themselves reform public abuses may yet do good service by giving information to those that can.

IV. The impression this made upon Ezra (Ezr 9:3): He rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down astonished. Thus he expressed the deep sense he had, 1. Of the dishonour hereby done to God. It grieved him to the heart to think that a people called by his name should so grossly violate his law, should be so little benefited by his correction, and make such bad returns for his favours. 2. Of the mischief the people had hereby done to themselves and the danger they were in of the wrath of God breaking out against them.

Note, (1.) The sins of others should be our sorrow, and the injury done by them to God's honour and the souls of men is what we should lay to heart.

(2.) Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow; such Ezra's was, as for an only son or a first-born.

(3.) The scandalous sins of professors are what we have reason to be astonished at. We may stand amazed to see men contradict, disparage, prejudice, ruin, themselves. Strange that men should act so inconsiderately and so inconsistently with themselves! Upright men are astonished at it.

V. The influence which Ezra's grief for this had upon others. We may suppose that he went up to the house of the Lord, there to humble himself, because he had an eye to God in his grief and that was the proper place for deprecating his displeasure. Public notice was soon taken of it, and all the devout serious people that were at hand assembled themselves to him, it should seem of their own accord, for nothing is said of their being sent, to, Ezr 9:4.

Note, 1. It is the character of good people that they tremble at God's word; they stand in awe of the authority of its precepts and the severity and justice of its threatenings, and to those that do so will God look, Isa 66:2.

2. Those that tremble at the word of God cannot but tremble at the sins of men, by which the law of God is broken and his wrath and curse are incurred.

3. The pious zeal of one against sin may perhaps provoke very many to the like, as the apostle speaks in another case, 2Co 9:2. Many will follow who have not consideration, talent, and courage, enough to lead in a good work. 4. All good people ought to own those that appear and act in the cause of God

against vice and profaneness, to stand by them, and do what they can to strengthen their hands.

2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

5 And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God,

6 and said,

O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

What the meditations of Ezra's heart were, while for some hours he sat down astonished, we may guess by the words of his mouth when at length he spoke with his tongue; and a most pathetic address he here makes to Heaven upon this occasion. Observe,

I The time when he made this address--at the evening sacrifice, Ezr 9:5. Then (it is likely) devout people used to come into the courts of the temple, to grace the solemnity of the sacrifice and to offer up their own prayers to God in concurrence with it. In their hearing Ezra chose to make this confession, that they might be made duly sensible of the sins of their people, which hitherto they had either not taken notice of or had made light of. Prayer may preach. The sacrifice, and especially the evening sacrifice, was a type of the great propitiation, that blessed Lamb of God which in the evening of the world was to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, to which we may

suppose Ezra had an eye of faith in this penitential address to God; he makes confession with his hand, as it were, upon the head of that great sacrifice, through which we receive the atonement. Certainly Ezra was no stranger to the message which the angel Gabriel had some years ago delivered to Daniel, at the time of the evening sacrifice, and as it were in explication of it, concerning Messiah the Prince (Da 9:21,24); and perhaps he had regard to that in choosing this time.

II. His preparation for this address.

1. He rose up from his heaviness, and so far shook off the burden of his grief as was necessary to the lifting up of his heart to God. He recovered from his astonishment, got the tumult of his troubled spirits somewhat stilled and his spirit composed for communion with God.

2. He fell upon his knees, put himself into the posture of a penitent humbling himself and a petitioner suing for mercy, in both representing the people for whom he was now an intercessor.

3. He spread out his hands, as one affected with what he was going to say, offering it up unto God, waiting, and reaching out, as it were, with an earnest expectation, to receive a gracious answer. In this he had an eye to God as the Lord, and as his God, a God of power, but a God of grace.

III. The address itself. It is not properly to be called a prayer, for there is not a word of petition in it; but, if we give prayer its full latitude, it is the offering up of pious and devout affections to God, and very devout, very pious, are the affections which Ezra here expresses. His address is a penitent confession of sin, not his own (from a conscience burdened with its own guilt and apprehensive of his own danger), but the sin of his people, from a gracious concern for the honour of

God and the welfare of Israel. Here is a lively picture of ingenuous repentance. Observe in this address,

1 The confession he makes of the sin and the aggravations of it, which he insists upon, to affect his own heart and theirs that joined with him with holy sorrow and shame and fear, in the consideration of it, that they might be deeply humbled for it. And it is observable that, though he himself was wholly clear from this guilt, yet he puts himself into the number of the sinners, because he was a member of the same community--our sins and our trespass. Perhaps he now remembered it against himself, as his fault, that he had staid so long after his brethren in Babylon, and had not separated himself so soon as he might have done from the people of those lands. When we are lamenting the wickedness of the wicked, it may be, if we duly reflect upon ourselves and give our own hearts leave to deal faithfully with us, we may find something of the same nature, though in a lower degree, that we also have been guilty of. However, he speaks that which was, or should have been, the general complaint.

(1.) He owns their sins to have been very great: "Our iniquities are increased over our heads (Ezr 9:6); we are ready to perish in them as in keep waters;" so general was the prevalency of them, so violent the power of them, and so threatening were they of the most pernicious consequences. "Iniquity has grown up to such a height among us that it reaches to the heavens, so very impudent that it dares heaven, so very provoking that, like the sin of Sodom, it cries to heaven for vengeance." But let this be the comfort of true penitents that though their sins reach to the heavens God's mercy is in the heavens, Ps 36:5. Where sin abounds grace will much more abound.

(2.) Their sin had been long persisted in (Ezr 9:7): Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass. The example of those that had gone before them he thought so far from excusing their fault that it aggravated it. "We should have

taken warning not to stumble at the same stone. The corruption is so much the worse that it has taken deep root and begins to plead prescription, but by this means we have reason to fear that the measure of the iniquity is nearly full."

(3.) The great and sore judgments which God had brought upon them for their sins did very much aggravate them: "For our iniquities we have been delivered to the sword and to captivity (Ezr 9:7), and yet not reformed, yet not reclaimed--brayed in the mortar, and yet the folly not gone (Pr 27:22)-- corrected, but not reclaimed."

(4.) The late mercies God had bestowed upon them did likewise very much aggravate their sins. This he insists largely upon, Ezr 9:8,9. Observe,

[1.] The time of mercy: Now for a little space, that is, "It is but a little while since we had our liberty, and it is not likely to continue long." This greatly aggravated their sin, that they were so lately in the furnace and that they knew not how soon they might return to it again; and could they yet be secure?

[2.] The fountain of mercy: Grace has been shown us from the Lord. The kings of Persia were the instruments of their enlargement; but he ascribes it to God and to his grace, his free grace, without any merit of theirs.

[3.] The streams of mercy,--that they were not forsaken in their bondage, but even in Babylon had the tokens of God's presence,--that they were a remnant of Israelites left, a few out of many, and those narrowly escaped out of the hands of their enemies, by the favour of the kings of Persia,--and especially that they had a nail in his holy place, that is (as it is explained, Ezr 9:9), that they had set up the house of God. They had their religion settled and the service of the temple in a constant method. We are to reckon it a great comfort and advantage to have stated opportunities of worshipping God. Blessed are

those that dwell in God's house, like Anna that departed not from the temple. This is my rest for ever, says the gracious soul.

[4.] The effects of all this. It enlightened their eyes, and it revived their hearts; that is, it was very comfortable to them, and the more sensibly so because it was in their bondage: it was life from the dead to them. Though but a little reviving, it was a great favour, considering that they deserved none and the day of small things was an earnest of greater. "Now," says Ezra, "how ungrateful are we to offend a God that has been so kind to us! how disingenuous to mingle in sin with those nations from whom we have been, in wonderful mercy, delivered! how unwise to expose ourselves to God's displeasure when we are tried with the returns of his favour and are upon our good behaviour for the continuance of it!"

(5.) It was a great aggravation of the sin that it was against an express command: We have forsaken thy commandments, Ezr 9:10. It seems to have been an ancient law of the house of Jacob not to match with the families of the uncircumcised, Ge 34:14. But, besides that, God had strictly forbidden it. He recites the command, Ezr 9:11,12. For sin appears sin, appears exceedingly sinful, when we compare it with the law which is broken by it. Nothing could be more express: Give not your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons. The reason given is because, if they mingled with those nations, they would pollute themselves. It was an unclean land, and they were a holy people; but if they kept themselves distinct from them it would be their honour and safety, and the perpetuating of their prosperity. Now to violate a command so express, backed with such reasons, and a fundamental law of their constitution, was very provoking to the God of heaven.

(6.) That in the judgments by which they had already smarted for their sins God had punished them less than their iniquities deserved, so that he looked upon them to be still in debt upon

the old account. "What! and yet shall we run up a new score? Has God dealt so gently with us in correcting us, and shall we thus abuse his favour and turn his grace into wantonness?" God, in his grace and mercy, had said concerning Sion's captivity, She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins (Isa 40:2); but Ezra, in a penitential sense of the great malignity that was in their sin, acknowledged that, though the punishment was very great, it was less than they deserved.

2 The devout affections that were working in him, in making this confession. Speaking of sin,

(1.) He speaks as one much ashamed. With this he begins (Ezr 9:6), O my God! I am ashamed and blush, O my God! (so the words are placed) to lift up my face unto thee. Note,

[1.] Sin is a shameful thing; as soon as ever our first parents had eaten forbidden fruit they were ashamed of themselves.

[2.] Holy shame is as necessary an ingredient in true and ingenuous repentance as holy sorrow.

[3.] The sins of others should be our shame, and we should blush for those who do not blush for themselves. We may well be ashamed that we are any thing akin to those who are so ungrateful to God and unwise for themselves. This is clearing ourselves, 2Co 7:11.

[4.] Penitent sinners never see so much reason to blush and be ashamed as when they come to lift up their faces before God. A natural sense of our own honour which we have injured will make us ashamed, when we have done a wrong thing, to look men in the face; but a gracious concern for God's honour will make us much more ashamed to look him in the face. The publican, when he went to the temple to pray, hung down his head more than ever, as one ashamed, Lu 18:13.

[5.] An eye to God as our God will be of great use to us in the exercise of repentance. Ezra begins, O my God! and again in the same breath, My God. The consideration of our covenant-relation to God as ours will help to humble us, and break our hearts for sin, that we should violate both his precepts to us and our promises to him; it will also encourage us to hope for pardon upon repentance. "He is my God, notwithstanding this;" and every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant.

(2.) He speaks as one much amazed (Ezr 9:10) "What shall we say after this? For my part I know not what to say: if God do not help us, we are undone." The discoveries of guilt excite amazement: the more we think of sin the worse it looks. The difficulty of the case excites amazement. How shall we recover ourselves? Which way shall we make our peace with God?

[1.] True penitents are at a loss what to say. Shall we say, We have not sinned, or, God will not require it? If we do, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Shall we say, Have patience with us and we will pay thee all, with thousands of rams, or our first-born for our transgression? God will not thus be mocked: he knows we are insolvent. Shall we say, There is no hope, and let come on us what will? That is but to make bad worse.

[2.] True penitents will consider what to say, and should, as Ezra, beg of God to teach them. What shall we say? Say, "I have sinned; I have done foolishly; God be merciful to me a sinner;" and the like. See Ho 14:2.

(3.) He speaks as one much afraid, Ezr 9:13,14. "After all the judgments that have come upon us to reclaim us from sin, and all the deliverances that have been wrought for us to engage us to God and duty, if we should again break God's commandments, by joining in affinity with the children of

disobedience and learning their ways, what else could we expect but that God should be angry with us till he had consumed us, and there should not be so much as a remnant left, nor any to escape the destruction?" There is not a surer nor sadder presage of ruin to any people than revolting to sin, to the same sins again, after great judgments and great deliverances. Those that will be wrought upon neither by the one nor by the other are fit to be rejected, as reprobate silver, for the founder melteth in vain.

(4.) He speaks as one much assured of the righteousness of God, and resolved to acquiesce in that and to leave the matter with him whose judgment is according to truth (Ezr 9:15): "Thou art righteous, wise, just, and good; thou wilt neither do us wrong nor be hard upon us; and therefore behold we are before thee, we lie at thy feet, waiting our doom; we cannot stand before thee, insisting upon any righteousness of our own, having no plea to support us or bring us off, and therefore we fall down before thee, in our trespass, and cast ourselves on thy mercy. Do unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, Jdg 10:15. We have nothing to say, nothing to do, but to make supplication to our Judge," Job 9:15. Thus does this good man lay his grief before God and then leave it with him.

7 Since the days of our fathers *have* we *been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, *and* our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day.

8 And now for a little space grace hath been *showed* from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

9 For we *were* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,
11 which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.
12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* for an inheritance to your children for ever.
13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve,* and hast given us *such* deliverance as this;
14 should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed *us,* so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping?
15 O Lord God of Israel, thou *art* righteous; for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day: behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

Ezra-10

Foreign Wives and Children Put Away

1 Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.

We are here told,

I. What good impressions were made upon the people by Ezra's humiliation and confession of sin. No sooner was it noised in the city that their new governor, in whom they

rejoiced, was himself in grief, and to so great a degree, for them and their sin, than presently there assembled to him a very great congregation, to see what the matter was and to mingle their tears with his, Ezr 10:1. Our weeping for other people's sins may perhaps set those a weeping for them themselves who otherwise would continue senseless and remorseless. See what a happy influence the good examples of great ones may have upon their inferiors. When Ezra, a scribe, a scholar, a man in authority under the king, so deeply lamented the public corruptions, they concluded that they were indeed very grievous, else he would not thus have grieved for them; and this drew tears from every eye: men, women, and children, wept very sore, when he wept thus.

II. What a good motion Shechaniah made upon this occasion. The place was Bochim--a place of weepers; but, for aught that appears, there was a profound silence among them, as among Job's friends, who spoke not a word to him, because they saw that his grief was very great, till Shechaniah (one of Ezra's companions from Babylon, Ezr 8:3,5) stood up, and made a speech addressed to Ezra, in which,

1. He owns the national guilt, sums up all Ezra's confession in one word, and sets to his seal that it is true: "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives, Ezr 10:2 The matter is too plain to be denied and too bad to be excused." It does not appear that Shechaniah was himself culpable in this matter (if he had had the beam in his own eye, he could not have seen so clearly to pluck it out of his brother's eye), but his father was guilty, and several of his father's house (as appears Ezr 10:26), and therefore he reckons himself among the trespassers; nor does he seek to excuse or palliate the sin, though some of his own relations were guilty of it, but, in the cause of God, says to his father, I have not known him, as Levi, De 33:9. Perhaps the strange wife that his father had married had been an unjust unkind step-mother to him, and had made mischief in the family, and

he supposed that others had done the like, which made him the more forward to appear against this corruption; if so, this was not the only time that private resentments have been over ruled by the providence of God to serve the public good.

2. He encourages himself and others to hope that though the matter was bad it might be amended: Yet now there is hope in Israel (where else should there be hope but in Israel? those that are strangers to that commonwealth are said to have no hope, Eph 2:12) even concerning this thing. The case is sad, but it is not desperate; the disease is threatening, but not incurable. There is hope that the people may be reformed, the guilty reclaimed, a stop put to the spreading of the contagion; and so the judgments which the sin deserves may be prevented and all will be well. Now there is hope; now that the disease is discovered it is half-cured. Now that the alarm is taken the people begin to be sensible of the mischief, and to lament it, a spirit of repentance seems to be poured out upon them, and they are all thus humbling themselves before God for it, now there is hope that God will forgive, and have mercy. The valley of Achor (that is, of trouble) is the door of hope (Ho 2:15); for the sin that truly troubles us shall not ruin us. There is hope now that Israel has such a prudent, pious, zealous governor as Ezra to manage this affair. Note,

(1.) In melancholy times we must see and observe what makes for us, as well as what makes against us.

(2.) There may be good hopes through grace, even when there is the sense of great guilt before God.

(3.) Where sin is seen and lamented, and good steps are taken towards a reformation, even sinners ought to be encouraged.

(4.) Even great saints must thankfully receive seasonable counsel and comfort from those that are much their inferiors, as Ezra from Shechaniah.

3. He advises that a speedy and effectual course should be taken for the divorcing of the strange wives. The case is plain; what has been done amiss must be undone again as far as possible; nothing less than this is true repentance. Let us put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, Ezr 10:3. Ezra, though he knew this was the only way of redressing the grievance, yet perhaps did not think it feasible, and despaired of ever bringing the people to it, which put him into that confusion in which we left him in the foregoing chapter; but Shechaniah, who conversed more with the people than he did, assured him the thing was practicable if they went wisely to work. As to us now, it is certain that sin must be put away, a bill of divorce must be given it, with a resolution never to have any thing more to do with it, though it be dear as the wife of thy bosom, nay, as a right eye or a right hand, otherwise there is no pardon, no peace. What has been unjustly got cannot be justly kept, but must be restored; but, as to the case of being unequally yoked with unbelievers, Shechaniah's counsel, which he was then so clear in, will not hold now; such marriages, it is certain, are sinful, and ought not to be made, but they are not null. Quod fierinon debuit, factum valet--That which ought not to have been done must, when done, abide. Our rule, under the gospel, is, If a brother has a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away, 1Co 7:12,13.

4. He puts them in a good method for the effecting of this reformation, and shows them not only that it must be done, but how.

(1.) "Let Ezra, and all those that are present in this assembly, agree in a resolution that this must be done (pass a vote immediately to this effect: it will now pass nemine contradicente--unanimously), that it may be said to be done according to the counsel of my lord, the president of the assembly, with the unanimous concurrence of those that

tremble at the commandment of our God, which is the description of those that were gathered to him, Ezr 9:4. Declare it to be the sense of all the sober serious people among us, which cannot but have a great sway among Israelites."

(2.) "Let the command of God in this matter, which Ezra recited in his prayer, be laid before the people, and let them see that it is done according to the law; we have that to warrant us, nay, that binds us to what we do; it is not an addition of our own to the divine law, but the necessary execution of it."

(3.) "While we are in a good mind, let us bind ourselves by a solemn vow and covenant that we will do it, lest, when the present impressions are worn off, the thing be left undone. Let us covenant, not only that, if we have strange wives ourselves, we will put them away, but that, if we have not, we will do what we can in our places to oblige others to put away theirs."

(4.) "Let Ezra himself preside in this matter, who is authorized by the king's commission to enquire whether the law of God be duly observed in Judah and Jerusalem (Ezr 7:14), and let us all resolve to stand by him in it (Ezr 10:4): Arise, be of good courage. Weeping, in this case, is good, but reforming is better." See what God said to Joshua in a like case, Jos 7:10,11.

III. What a good resolution they came to upon this good motion, Ezr 10:5. They not only agreed that it should be done, but bound themselves with an oath that they would do according to this word. Fast bind, fast find.

2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam,
answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our
God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet
now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.
3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away
all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the

counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our
God; and let it be done according to the law.
4 Arise; for *this* matter *belongeth* unto thee: we also *will be* with thee:
be of good courage, and do *it*.
5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and
all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word.
And they sware.
6 Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into
the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he came
thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned
because of the transgression of them that had been carried
away.
7 And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem
unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather
themselves together unto Jerusalem;
8 and that whosoever would not come within three days, according
to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance
should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation
of those that had been carried away.

We have here an account of the proceedings upon the resolutions lately taken up concerning the strange wives; no time was lost; they struck when the iron was hot, and soon set the wheels of reformation a-going.

1. Ezra went to the council-chamber where, it is probable, the priests used to meet upon public business; and till he came thither (so bishop Patrick thinks it should be read), till he saw something done, and more likely to be done, for the redress of this grievance, he did neither eat nor drink, but continued mourning. Sorrow for sin should be abiding sorrow; be sure to let it continue till the sin be put away.

2. He sent orders to all the children of the captivity to attend him at Jerusalem within three days (Ezr 10:7,8); and, being authorized by the king to enforce his orders with penalties annexed (Ezr 7:26), he threatened that whosoever refused to

obey the summons should forfeit his estate and be outlawed. The doom of him that would not attend on this religious occasion should be that his substance should, in his stead, be for ever after appropriated to the service of their religion, and he himself, for his contempt, should for ever after be excluded from the honours and privileges of their religion; he should be excommunicated.

3. Within the time limited the generality of the people met at Jerusalem and made their appearance in the street of the house of God, Ezr 10:9. Those that had no zeal for the work they were called to, nay, perhaps had a dislike to it, being themselves delinquents, yet paid such a deference to Ezra's authority, and were so awed by the penalty, that they durst not stay away.

4. God gave them a token of his displeasure in the great rain that happened at that time (Ezr 10:9,13), which perhaps kept some away, and was very grievous to those that met in the open street. When they wept the heavens wept too, signifying that, though God was angry with them for their sin, yet he was well pleased with their repentance, and (as it is said, Jdg 10:16) his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel; it was also an indication of the good fruits of their repentance, for the rain makes the earth fruitful.

5. Ezra gave the charge at this great assize. He told them upon what account he called them together now, that it was because he found that since their return out of captivity they had increased the trespass of Israel by marrying strange wives, had added to their former sins this new transgression, which would certainly be a means of again introducing idolatry, the very sin they had smarted for and which he hoped they had been cured of in their captivity; and he called them together that they might confess their sin to God, and, having done that, might declare themselves ready and willing to do his pleasure, as it should be made known to

them (which all those will do that truly repent of what they have done to incur his displeasure), and particularly that they might separate themselves from all idolaters, especially idolatrous wives, Ezr 10:10,11. On these heads, we may suppose, he enlarged, and probably made such another confession of the sin now as he made Ezr 9:5-15, to which he required them to say Amen.

6. The people submitted not only to Ezra's jurisdiction in general, but to his inquisition and determination in this matter: "As thou hast said, so must we do, Ezr 10:12. We have sinned in mingling with the heathen, and have thereby been in danger, not only of being corrupted by them, for we are frail, but of being lost among them, for we are few; we are therefore convinced that there is an absolute necessity of our separating from them again." There is hope concerning people when they are convinced, not only that it is good to part with their sins, but that it is indispensably necessary: we must do it, or we are undone.

7. It was agreed that this affair should be carried on, not in a popular assembly, nor that they should think to go through with it all on a sudden, but that a court of delegates should be appointed to receive complaints and to hear and determine upon them. It could not be done at this time, for it was not put into a method, nor could the people stand out because of the rain. The delinquents were many, and it would require time to discover and examine them. Nice cases would arise, which could not be adjudged without debate and deliberation, Ezr 10:13. "And therefore let the crowd be dismissed, and the rulers stand to receive informations; let them proceed city by city, and let the offenders be convicted before them in the presence of the judges and elders of their own city; and let them be entrusted to see the orders executed. Thus take time and we shall have done the sooner; whereas, if we do it in a hurry, we shall do it by halves, Ezr 10:14. If, in this method, a thorough reformation be made,

the fierce wrath of God will be turned from us, which, we are sensible, is ready to break forth against us for this transgression." Ezra was willing that his zeal should be guided by the people's prudence, and put the matter into this method; he was not ashamed to own that the advice came from them, any more than he was to comply with it.

9 Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It *was* the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, and for the great rain.

10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel.

11 Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

13 But the people *are* many, and *it is* a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither *is this* a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.

14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.

15 Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this *matter:* and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, *with* certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by *their* names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

18 And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: *namely*, of the sons of Jeshua the son of

Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib,
and Gedaliah.
19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives;
and *being* guilty, *they offered* a ram of the flock for their trespass.
20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah.

The method of proceeding in this matter being concluded on, and the congregation dismissed, that each in his respective place might gain and give intelligence to facilitate the matter, we are here told,

1. Who were the persons that undertook to manage the matter and bring the causes regularly before the commissioners--Jonathan and Jahaziah, two active men, whether of the priests or of the people does not appear; probably they were the men that made that proposal (Ezr 10:13,14) and were therefore the fittest to see it pursued; two honest Levites were joined with them, and helped them, Ezr 10:15. Dr. Lightfoot gives a contrary sense of this: only (or nevertheless) Jonathan and Jahaziah stood against this matter (which reading the original will very well bear), and these two Levites helped them in opposing it, either the thing itself or this method of proceeding. It was strange if a work of this kind was carried on and met with no opposition.

2. Who were the commissioners that sat upon this matter. Ezra was president, and with him certain chief men of the fathers who were qualified with wisdom and zeal above others for this service, Ezr 10:16. It was happy for them that they had such a man as Ezra to head them; they could not have done it well without his direction, yet he would not do it without their concurrence.

3. How long they were about it. They began the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter (Ezr 10:16), which was but ten days after this method was proposed (Ezr 10:9), and they finished in three months, Ezr 10:17. They sat closely and minded their business, otherwise they could not have

despatched so many causes as they had before them in so little time; for we may suppose that all who were impeached were fairly asked what cause they could show why they should not be parted, and, if we may judge by other cases, provided the wife were proselyted to the Jewish religion she was not to be put away, the trial of which would require great care.

4. Who the persons were that were found guilty of this crime. Their names are here recorded to their perpetual reproach; many of the priests, nay, of the family of Jeshua, the high priest, were found guilty (Ezr 10:18), though the law had particularly provided, for the preserving of their honour in their marriages, that being holy themselves they should not marry such as were profane, Le 21:7. Those that should have taught others the law broke it themselves and by their example emboldened others to do likewise.

But, having lost their innocency in this matter, they did well to recant and give an example of repentance; for they promised under their hand to put away their strange wives (some think that they made oath to do so with their hands lifted up), and they took the appointed way of obtaining pardon, bringing the ram which was appointed by the law for a trespass offering (Le 6:6), so owning their guilt and the desert of it, and humbly suing for forgiveness. About 113 in all are here named who had married strange wives, and some of them, it is said (Ezr 10:44), had children by them, which implies that not many of them had, God not crowning those marriages with the blessing of increase.

Whether the children were turned off with the mothers, as Shechaniah proposed, does not appear; it should seem not: however it is probable that the wives which were put away were well provided for, according to their rank. One would think this grievance was now thoroughly redressed, yet we meet with it again (Ne 13:23,Mal 2:11), for such corruptions are easily and insensibly brought in, but not without great

difficulty purged out again. The best reformers can but do their endeavour, but, when the Redeemer himself shall come to Sion, he shall effectually turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziah.
22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah.
23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same *is* Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.
24 Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.
25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah.
26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah.
27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza.
28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, *and* Athlai.
29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, and Ramoth.
30 And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh.
31 And *of* the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,
32 Benjamin, Malluch, *and* Shemariah.
33 Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, *and* Shimei.
34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel,
35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh,
36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau,
38 and Bani, and Binnui, Shimei,
39 and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah,
40 Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai,
41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah,

42 Shallum, Amariah, *and* Joseph.
43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and
Joel, Benaiah.
44 All these had taken strange wives: and *some* of them had wives by
whom they had children.

The Book of Nehemiah
[Nehemiah]

Nehemiah-1

Nehemiah's Prayer for Jerusalem

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.
And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace,

What a tribe Nehemiah was of does nowhere appear; but, if it be true (which we are told by the author of the Maccabees, 2 Mac. i. 18) that he offered sacrifice, we must conclude him to have been a priest. Observe,

I. Nehemiah's station at the court of Persia. We are here told that he was in Shushan the palace, or royal city, of the king of Persia, where the court was ordinarily kept (Ne 1:1), and (Ne 1:11) that he was the king's cup-bearer. Kings and great men probably looked upon it as a piece of state to be attended by those of other nations. By this place at court he would be the better qualified for the service of his country in that post for which God had designed him, as Moses was the fitter to govern for being bred up in Pharaoh's court, and David in Saul's. He would also have the fairer opportunity of serving his country by his interest in the king and those about him. Observe, He is not forward to tell us what great preferment he had at court; it is not till the end of the chapter that he tells us he was the king's cup-bearer (a place of great trust, as well as of honour and profit), when he could not avoid the mentioning of it because of the following story; but at first he only said, I was in Shushan the palace. We may hence learn to be humble and modest, and slow to speak of our own advancements. But in the providences of God concerning him we may observe, to our comfort,

1. That when God has work to do he will never want instruments to do it with.

2. That those whom God designs to employ in his service he will find out proper ways both to fit for it and to call to it. 3. That God has his remnant in all places; we read of Obadiah in the house of Ahab, saints in Caesar's household, and a devout Nehemiah in Shushan the palace. 4. That God can make the courts of princes sometimes nurseries and sometimes sanctuaries to the friends and patrons of the church's cause.

II. Nehemiah's tender and compassionate enquiry concerning the state of the Jews in their own land, Ne 1:2. It happened that a friend and relation of his came to the court, with some other company, by whom he had an opportunity of informing himself fully how it went with the children of the captivity and what posture Jerusalem, the beloved city, was in. Nehemiah lived at ease, in honour and fulness, himself, but could not forget that he was an Israelite, nor shake off the thoughts of his brethren in distress, but in spirit (like Moses, Ac 7:23) he visited them and looked upon their burdens. As distance of place did not alienate his affections from them (though they were out of sight, yet not out of mind), so neither did,

1 The dignity to which he was advanced. Though he was a great man, and probably rising higher, yet he did not think it below him to take cognizance of his brethren that were low and despised, nor was he ashamed to own his relation to them and concern for them.

2 The diversity of their sentiments from his, and the difference of their practice accordingly. Though he did not go to settle at Jerusalem himself (as we think he ought to have done now that liberty was proclaimed), but conformed to the court, and staid there, yet he did not therefore judge nor despise those that had returned, nor upbraid them as impolitic, but kindly concerned himself for them, was ready to do them all the good offices he

could, and, that he might know which way to do them a kindness, asked concerning them.

Note, It is lawful and good to enquire, "What news?" We should enquire especially concerning the state of the church and religion, and how it fares with the people of God; and the design of our enquiry must be, not that, like the Athenians, we may have something to talk of, but that we may know how to direct our prayers and our praises.

III. The melancholy account which is here given him of the present state of the Jews and Jerusalem, Ne 1:3. Hanani, the person he enquired of, has this character given of him (Ne 7:2), that he feared God above many, and therefore would not only speak truly, but, when he spoke of the desolations of Jerusalem, would speak tenderly. It is probable that his errand to court at this time was to solicit some favour, some relief or other, that they stood in need of. Now the account he gives is,

1. That the holy seed was miserably trampled on and abused, in great affliction and reproach, insulted upon all occasions by their neighbours, and filled with the scorning of those that were at ease.

2. That the holy city was exposed and in ruins. The wall of Jerusalem was still broken down, and the gates were, as the Chaldeans left them, in ruins. This made the condition of the inhabitants both very despicable under the abiding marks of poverty and slavery, and very dangerous, for their enemies might when they pleased make an easy prey of them. The temple was built, the government settled, and a work of reformation brought to some head, but here was one good work yet undone; this was still wanting. Every Jerusalem, on this side the heavenly one, will have some defect or other in it, for the making up of which it will required the help and service of its friends.

IV. The great affliction this gave to Nehemiah and the deep concern it put him into, Ne 1:4.

1. He wept and mourned. It was not only just when he heard the news that he fell into a passion of weeping, but his sorrow continued certain days. Note, The desolations and distresses of the church ought to be the matter of our grief, how much soever we live at ease.

2. He fasted and prayed; not in public (he had no opportunity of doing that), but before the God of heaven, who sees in secret, and will reward openly. By his fasting and praying,

(1.) He consecrated his sorrows, and directed his tears aright, sorrowed after a godly sort, with an eye to God, because his name was reproached in the contempt cast on his people, whose cause therefore he thus commits to him.

(2.) He eased his sorrows, and unburdened his spirit, by pouring out his complaint before God and leaving it with him.

(3.) He took the right method of fetching in relief for his people and direction for himself in what way to serve them. Let those who are forming any good designs for the service of the public take God along with them for the first conception of them, and utter all their projects before him; this is the way to prosper in them.

2 that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah;
and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were
left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.
3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there
in the province *are* in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem
also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.
4 And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept,
and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of
heaven,
5 and said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible
God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and
observe his commandments:

We have here Nehemiah's prayer, a prayer that has reference to all the prayers which he had for some time before been putting up to God day and night, while he continued his sorrows for the desolations of Jerusalem, and withal to the petition he was now intending to present to the king his master for his favour to Jerusalem. We may observe in this prayer,

I. His humble and reverent address to God, in which he prostrates himself before him, and gives unto him the glory due unto his name, Ne 1:5. It is much the same with that of Daniel, Ne 9:4. It teaches us to draw near to God,

1. With a holy awe of his majesty and glory, remembering that he is the God of heaven, infinitely above us, and sovereign Lord over us, and that he is the great and terrible God, infinitely excelling all the principalities and powers both of the upper and of the lower world, angels and kings; and he is a God to be worshipped with fear by all his people, and whose powerful wrath all his enemies have reason to be afraid of. Even the terrors of the Lord are improvable for the comfort and encouragement of those that trust in him.

2. With a holy confidence in his grace and truth, for he keepeth covenant and mercy for those that love him, not only the mercy that is promised, but even more than he promised: nothing shall be thought too much to be done for those that love him and keep his commandments.

II. His general request for the audience and acceptance of all the prayers and confessions he now made to God (Ne 1:6): "Let thy ear be attentive to the prayer, not which I say (barely saying prayer will not serve), but which I pray before thee (then we are likely to speed in praying when we pray in praying), and let they eyes be open upon the heart from which the prayer comes, and the case which is in prayer laid before thee." God formed the eye and planted the ear; and therefore shall he not see clearly? shall not he hear attentively?

III. His penitent confession of sin; not only Israel has sinned (it was no great mortification to him to own that), but I and my father's house have sinned, Ne 1:6. Thus does he humble himself, and take shame to himself, in this confession. We have (I and my family among the rest) dealt very corruptly against thee, Ne 1:7. In the confession of sin, let these two things be owned as the malignity of it--that it is a corruption of ourselves and an affront to God; it is dealing corruptly against God, setting up the corruptions of our own hearts in opposition to the commands of God.

IV. The pleas he urges for mercy for his people Israel.

1. He pleads what God had of old said to them, the rule he had settled of his proceedings towards them, which might be the rule of their expectations from him, Ne 1:8,9. He had said indeed that, if they broke covenant with him, he would scatter them among the nations, and that threatening was fulfilled in their captivity: never was people so widely dispersed as Israel was at this time, though at first so closely incorporated; but he had said withal that if they turned to him (as now they began to do, having renounced idolatry and kept to the temple service) he would gather them again.

This he quotes from De 30:1-5, and begs leave to put God in mind of it (though the Eternal Mind needs no remembrancer) as that which he guided his desires by, and grounded his faith and hope upon, in praying this prayer: Remember, I beseech thee, that word; for thou hast said, Put me in remembrance. He had owned (Ne 1:7), We have not kept the judgments which thou commandedst thy servant Moses; yet he begs (Ne 1:8), Lord, remember the word which thou commandedst thy servant Moses; for the covenant is often said to be commanded. If God were not more mindful of his promises than we are of his precepts we should be undone. Our best pleas therefore in prayer are those that are taken from the promise of God, the word on which he has caused us to hope, Ps 119:49.

2. He pleads the relation wherein of old they stood to God: "These are thy servants and thy people (Ne 1:10), whom thou hast set apart for thyself, and taken into covenant with thee. Wilt thou suffer thy sworn enemies to trample upon and oppress thy sworn servants? If thou wilt not appear for thy people, whom wilt thou appear for?" See Isa 63:19. As an evidence of their being God's servants he gives them this character (Ne 1:11): "They desire to fear thy name; they are not only called by thy name, but really have a reverence for thy name; they now worship thee, and thee only, according to thy will, and have an awe of all the discoveries thou art pleased to make of thyself; this they have a desire to do," which denotes,

(1.) Their good will to it. "It is their constant care and endeavour to be found in the way of their duty, and they aim at it, though in many instances they come short."

(2.) Their complacency in it. "They take pleasure to fear thy name (so it may be read), not only do their duty, but do it with delight." Those shall graciously be accepted of God that truly desire to fear his name; for such a desire is his own work.

3. He pleads the great things God had formerly done for them (Ne 1:10): "Whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, in the days of old. Thy power is still the same; wilt thou not therefore still redeem them and perfect their redemption? Let not those be overpowered by the enemy that have a God of infinite power on their side."

Lastly, He concludes with a particular petition, that God would prosper him in his undertaking, and give him favour with the king: this man he calls him, for the greatest of men are but men before God; they must know themselves to be so (Ps 9:20), and others must know them to be so. Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man? Mercy in the sight of this man is what he prays for, meaning not the king's mercy, but mercy from God in his

address to the king. Favour with men is then comfortable when we can see it springing from the mercy of God.

6 let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If* ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

9 but *if* ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, *yet* will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.
For I was the king's cupbearer.

Nehemiah-2

Nehemiah Sent to Jerusalem

1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that* wine *was* before him: and I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence.

When Nehemiah had prayed for the relief of his countrymen, and perhaps in David's words (Ps 51:18, Build thou the walls of Jerusalem), he did not sit still and say, "Let God now do his own work, for I have no more to do," but set himself to forecast

what he could do towards it. Our prayers must be seconded with our serious endeavours, else we mock God.

Nearly four months passed, from Chisleu to Nisan (from November to March), before Nehemiah made his application to the king for leave to go to Jerusalem, either because the winter was not a proper time for such a journey, and he would not make the motion till he could pursue it, or because it was so long before his month of waiting came, and there was no coming into the king's presence uncalled, Es 4:11. Now that he attended the king's table he hoped to have his ear. We are not thus limited to certain moments in our addresses to the King of kings, but have liberty of access to him at all times; to the throne of grace we never come unseasonably. Now here is,

I The occasion which he gave the king to enquire into his cares and griefs, by appearing sad in his presence. Those that speak to such great men must not fall abruptly upon their business, but fetch a compass. Nehemiah would try whether he was in a good humour before he ventured to tell him his errand, and this method he took to try him. He took up the wine and gave it to the king when he called for it, expecting that then he would look him in the face. He had not used to be sad in the king's presence, but conformed to the rules of the court (as courtiers must do), which would admit no sorrows, Es 4:2.

Though he was a stranger, a captive, he was easy and pleasant. Good men should do what they can by their cheerfulness to convince the world of the pleasantness of religious ways and to roll away the reproach cast upon them as melancholy; but there is a time for all things, Ec 3:4. Nehemiah now saw cause both to be sad and to appear so. The miseries of Jerusalem gave him cause to be sad, and his showing his grief would give occasion to the king to enquire into the cause. He did not dissemble sadness, for he was really in grief for the afflictions of Joseph, and was not like the hypocrites who disfigure their faces; yet he could have concealed his grief if it had been necessary (the heart

knows its own bitterness, and in the midst of laughter is often sad), but it would now serve his purpose to discover his sadness. Though he had wine before him, and probably, according to the office of the cup-bearer, did himself drink of it before he gave it to the king, yet it would not make his heart glad, while God's Israel was in distress.

II The kind notice which the king took of his sadness and the enquiry he made into the cause of it (Ne 2:2): Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? Note,

1. We ought, from a principle of Christian sympathy, to concern ourselves in the sorrows and sadnesses of others, even of our inferiors, and not say, What is it to us? Let not masters despise their servants' griefs, but desire to make them easy. The great God is not pleased with the dejections and disquietments of his people, but would have them both serve him with gladness and eat their bread with joy.

2. It is not strange if those that are sick have sad countenances, because of what is felt and what is feared; sickness will make those grave that were most airy and gay: yet a good man, even in sickness, may be of good cheer if he knows that his sins are forgiven.

3. Freedom from sickness is so great a mercy that while we have that we ought not to be inordinately dejected under any outward burden; yet sorrow for our own sins, the sins of others, and the calamities of God's church, may well sadden the countenance, without sickness.

III. The account which Nehemiah gave the king of the cause of his sadness, which he gave with meekness and fear. 1. With fear. He owned that now (though it appears by the following story that he was a man of courage) he was sorely afraid, perhaps of the king's wrath (for those eastern monarchs assumed an absolute power of life and death, Da 2:12,13,5:19)

or of misplacing a word, and losing his request by the mismanagement of it.

Though he was a wise man, he was jealous of himself, lest he should say any thing imprudently; it becomes us to be so. A good assurance is indeed a good accomplishment, yet a humble self-diffidence is not man's dispraise. 2. With meekness. Without reflection upon any man, and with all the respect, deference, and good-will, imaginable to the king his master, he says, "Let the king live for ever; he is wise and good, and the fittest man in the world to rule." He modestly asked, "Why should not my countenance be sad as it is when (though I myself am well and at east) the city" (the king knew what city he meant), "the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste?" Many are melancholy and sad but can give no reason for being so, cannot tell why nor wherefore; such should chide themselves for, and chide themselves out of, their unjust and unreasonable griefs and fears. But Nehemiah could give so good a reason for his sadness as to appeal to the king himself concerning it. Observe,

(1.) He calls Jerusalem the place of his fathers' sepulchres, the place where his ancestors were buried. It is good for us to think often of our fathers' sepulchres; we are apt to dwell in our thoughts upon their honours and titles, their houses and estates, but let us think also of their sepulchres, and consider that those who have gone before us in the world have also gone before us out of the world, and their monuments are momentos to us. There is also a great respect owing to the memory of our fathers, which we should not be willing to see injured. All nations, even those that have had no expectation of the resurrection of the dead, have looked upon the sepulchres of their ancestors as in some degree sacred and not to be violated.

(2.) He justifies himself in his grief: "I do well to be sad. Why should I not be so?" There is a time even for pious and prosperous men to be sad and to show their grief. The best men

must not think to antedate heaven by banishing all sorrowful thoughts; it is a vale of tears we pass through, and we must submit to the temper of the climate.

(3.) He assigns the ruins of Jerusalem as the true cause of his grief. Note, All the grievances of the church, but especially its desolations, are, and ought to be, matter of grief and sadness to all good people, to all that have a concern for God's honour and that are living members of Christ's mystical body, and are of a public spirit; they favour even Zion's dust, Ps 102:14.

IV. The encouragement which the king gave him to tell his mind, and the application he thereupon made in his heart to God, Ne 2:4. The king had an affection for him, and was not pleased to see him melancholy. It is also probable that he had a kindness for the Jews' religion; he had discovered it before in the commission he gave to Ezra, who was a churchman, and now again in the power he put Nehemiah into, who was a statesman. Wanting therefore only to know how he might be serviceable to Jerusalem, he asks this its anxious friend, "For what dost thou make request? Something thou wouldst have; what is it?"

He was afraid to speak (Ne 2:2), but this gave him boldness; much more may the invitation Christ has given us to pray, and the promise that we shall speed, enable us to come boldly to the throne of grace. Nehemiah immediately prayed to the God of heaven that he would give him wisdom to ask properly and incline the king's heart to grant him his request. Those that would find favour with kings must secure the favour of the King of kings. He prayed to the God of heaven as infinitely above even this mighty monarch. It was not a solemn prayer (he had not opportunity for that), but a secret sudden ejaculation; he lifted up his heart to that God who understands the language of his heart: Lord, give me a mouth and wisdom; Lord, give me favour in the sight of this man.

Note, It is good to be much in pious ejaculations, especially upon particular occasions. Wherever we are we have a way open heaven-ward. This will not hinder any business, but further it rather; therefore let no business hinder this, but give rise to it rather. Nehemiah had prayed very solemnly with reference to this very occasion (Ne 1;11), yet, when it comes to the push, he prays again. Ejaculations and solemn prayers must not jostle out one another, but each have its place.

V. His humble petition to the king. When he had this encouragement he presented his petition very modestly and with submission to the king's wisdom (Ne 2:5), but very explicitly. He asked for a commission to go as governor to Judah, to build the wall of Jerusalem, and to stay there for a certain time, so many months, we may suppose; and then either he had his commission renewed or went back and was sent again, so that he presided there twelve years at least, Ne 5:14. He also asked for a convoy (Ne 2:7), and an order upon the governors, not only to permit and suffer him to pass through their respective provinces, but to supply him with what he had occasion for, with another order upon the keeper of the forest of Lebanon to give him timber for the work that he designed.

VI. The king's great favour to him in asking him when he would return, Ne 2:6. He intimated that he was unwilling to lose him, or to be long without him, yet to gratify him, and do a real office of kindness to his people, he would spare him awhile, and let him have what clauses he pleased inserted in his commission, Ne 2:8. Here was an immediate answer to his prayer; for the seed of Jacob never sought the God of Jacob in vain. In the account he gives of the success of his petition he takes notice,

1. Of the presence of the queen; she sat by (Ne 2:6), which (they say) was not usual in the Persian court, Es 1:11. Whether the queen was his back friend, that would have hindered him, and he observes it to the praise of God's powerful providence that though she was by yet he succeeded, or whether she was his

true friend, and it is observed to the praise of God's kind providence that she was present to help forward his request, is not certain.

2. Of the power and grace of God. He gained his point, not according to his merit, his interest in the king, or his good management, but according to the good hand of his God upon him. Gracious souls take notice of God's hand, his good hand, in all events which turn in favour of them. This is the Lord's doing, and therefore doubly acceptable.

2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this *is* nothing *else* but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

3 and said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.

7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

8 and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which *appertained* to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard *of it,* it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

Nehemiah Encourages the People to Rebuild the Walls

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

We are here told,

I. Now Nehemiah was dismissed by the court he was sent from. The king appointed captains of the army and horsemen to go with him (Ne 2:9), both for his guard and to show that he was a man whom the king did delight to honour, that all the king's servants might respect him accordingly. Those whom the King of kings sends he thus protects, he thus dignifies with a host of angels to attend them.

II. How he was received by the country he was sent to.

1. By the Jews and their friends at Jerusalem. We are told,

(1.) That while he concealed his errand they took little notice of him. He was at Jerusalem three days (Ne 2:11), and it does not appear that any of the great men of the city waited on him to congratulate him on his arrival, but he remained unknown. The king sent horsemen to attend him, but the Jews sent none to meet him; he had no beast with him, but that which he himself rode on, Ne 2:12. Wise men, and those who are worthy of double honour, yet covet not to come with observation, to make a show, or make a noise, no, not when they come with the greatest blessings. Those that shortly are to have the dominion in the morning the world now knows not, but they lie hid, 1Jo 3:1.

(2.) That though they took little notice of him he took great notice of them and their state. He arose in the night, and viewed the ruins of the walls, probably by moon-light (Ne 2:13), that he might see what was to be done and in what method they must go

about it, whether the old foundation would serve, and what there was of the old materials that would be of use.

Note, [1.] Good work is likely to be well done when it is first well considered.

[2.] It is the wisdom of those who are engaged in public business, as much as may be, to see with their own eyes, and not to proceed altogether upon the reports and representations of others, and yet to do this without noise, and if possible unobserved.

[3.] Those that would build up the church's walls must first take notice of the ruins of those walls. Those that would know how to amend must enquire what is amiss, what needs reformation, and what may serve as it is.

(3.) That when he disclosed his design to the rulers and people they cheerfully concurred with him in it. He did not tell them, at first, what he came about (Ne 2:16), because he would not seem to do it for ostentation, and because, if he found it impracticable, he might retreat the more honourably. Upright humble men will not sound a trumpet before their alms or any other of their good offices. But when he had viewed and considered the thing, and probably felt the pulse of the rulers and people, he told them what God had put into his heart (Ne 2:12), even to build up the wall of Jerusalem, Ne 2:17.

Observe, [1.] How fairly he proposed the undertaking to them: "You see the distress we are in, how we lie exposed to the enemies that are round about us, how justly they reproach us as foolish and despicable, how easily they may make a prey of us whenever they have a mind; come, therefore, and let us build up the wall." He did not undertake to do the work without them (it could not be the work of one man), nor did he charge or command imperiously, though he had the king's commission; but in a friendly brotherly way he exhorted and excited them to join

with him in this work. To encourage them hereto, he speaks of the design, First, As that which owed it origin to the special grace of God. He takes not the praise of it to himself, as a good thought of his own, but acknowledges that God put it into his heart, and therefore they all ought to countenance it (whatever is of God must be promoted), and might hope to prosper in it, for what God puts men upon he will own them in. Secondly, As that which owed its progress hitherto to the special providence of God. He produced the king's commission, told them how readily it was granted and how forward the king was to favour his design, in which he saw the hand of his God good upon him. It would encourage both him and them to proceed in an undertaking which God had so remarkably smiled upon. Thus he proposed it to them; and,

[2.] They presently came to a resolution, one and all, to concur with him: Let us rise up and build. They are ashamed that they have sat still so long without so much as attempting this needful work, and now resolve to rise up out of their slothfulness, to bestir themselves, and to stir up one another. "Let us rise up," that is, "let us do it with vigour, and diligence, and resolution, as those that are determined to go through with it." So they strengthened their hands, their own and one another's, for this good work. Note, First, Many a good work would find hands enough to be laid to it if there were but one good head to lead in it. They all saw the desolations of Jerusalem, yet none proposed the repair of them; but, when Nehemiah proposed it, they all consented to it. It is a pity that a good motion should be lost purely for want of one to move it and to break the ice in it. Secondly, By stirring up ourselves and one another to that which is good, we strengthen ourselves and one another for it; for the great reason why we are weak in our duty is because we are cold to it, indifferent and unresolved. Let us now see how Nehemiah was received,

2. By those that wished ill to the Jews. Those whom God and his Israel blessed they cursed.

(1.) When he did but show his face it vexed them, Ne 2:10. Sanballat and Tobiah, two of the Samaritans, but by birth the former a Moabite, the latter an Ammonite, when they saw one come armed with a commission from the king to do service to Israel, were exceedingly grieved that all their little paltry arts to weaken Israel were thus baffled and frustrated by a fair, and noble, and generous project to strengthen them. Nothing is a greater vexation to the enemies of good people, who have misrepresented them to princes as turbulent, and factious, and not fit to live, than to see them stand right in the opinion of their rulers, their innocency cleared and their reproach rolled away, and that they are thought not only fit to live, but fit to be trusted. When they saw a man come in that manner, who professedly sought the welfare of the children of Israel, it vexed them to the heart. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved.

(2.) When he began to act they set themselves to hinder him, but in vain, Ne 2:19,20.

[1.] See here with what little reason the enemies attempted to discourage him. They represented the undertaking as a silly thing: They laughed us to scorn and despised us as foolish builders, that could not finish what we began. They represented the undertaking also as a wicked thing, no better than treason: Will you rebel against the king? Because this was the old invidious charge, though now they had a commission from the king and were taken under his protection, yet still they must be called rebels.

[2.] See also with what good reason the Jews slighted these discouragements. They bore up themselves with this that they were the servants of the God of heaven, the only true and living God, that they were acting for him in what they did, and that therefore he would bear them out and prosper them, though the heathen raged, Ps 2:1. They considered also that the reason why these enemies did so malign them was because they had no right

in Jerusalem, but envied them their right in it. Thus may the impotent menaces of the church's enemies be easily despised by the church's friends.

12 And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told
I *any* man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem:
neither *was there any* beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.
13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the
dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of
Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were
consumed with fire.
14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool:
but *there was* no place for the beast *that was* under me to pass.
15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and
turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and *so* returned.
16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had
I as yet told *it* to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to
the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.
17 Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we *are* in, how
Jerusalem *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire:
come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more
a reproach.
18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me;
as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said,
Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for *this*
good *work*.
19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the
Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *it*, they laughed us to
scorn, and despised us, and said, What *is* this thing that ye do? will
ye rebel against the king?
20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he
will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but
ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah-3

The Sections Assigned for Repair

1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

3 But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who *also* laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

4 And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana.

5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

6 Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

The best way to know how to divide this chapter is to observe how the work was divided among the undertakers, that every one might know what he had to do, and mind it accordingly with a holy emulation, and desire to excel, yet without any contention, animosity, or separate interest. No strife appears among them but which should do most for the public good. Several things are observable in the account here given of the building of the wall about Jerusalem:--

I. That Eliashib the high priest, with his brethren the priests, led the van in this troop of builders, Ne 3:1. Ministers should be foremost in every good work; for their office obliges them to teach and quicken by their example, as well as by their doctrine. If there be labour in it, who so fit as they to work? if

danger, who so fit as they to venture? The dignity of the high priest was very great, and obliged him to signalize himself in this service. The priests repaired the sheep-gate, so called because through it were brought the sheep that were to be sacrificed in the temple; and therefore the priests undertook the repair of it because the offerings of the Lord made by fire were their inheritance. And of this gate only it is said that they sanctified it with the word and prayer, and perhaps with sacrifices perhaps, 1. Because it led to the temple; or, 2. Because with this the building of the wall began, and it is probable (though they were at work in all parts of the wall at the same time) that this was first finished, and therefore at this gate they solemnly committed their city and the walls of it to the divine protection; or, 3. Because the priests were the builders of it; and it becomes ministers above others, being themselves in a peculiar manner sanctified to God, to sanctify to him all their performances, and to do even their common actions after a godly sort.

II. That the undertakers were very many, who each took his share, some more and some less, in this work, according as their ability was. Note, What is to be done for the public good every one should assist in, and further, to the utmost of his place and power. United force will conquer that which no individual dares venture on. Many hands will make light work.

III. That many were active in this work who were not themselves inhabitants of Jerusalem, and therefore consulted purely the public welfare and not any private interest or advantage of their own. Here are the men of Jericho with the first (Ne 3:2), the men of Gibeon and Mizpah (Ne 3:7), and Zanoah, Ne 3:13. Every Israelite should lend a hand towards the building up of Jerusalem.

IV. That several rulers, both of Jerusalem and of other cities, were active in this work, thinking themselves bound in honour to do the utmost that their wealth and power enabled them to

do for the furtherance of this good work. But it is observable that they are called rulers of part, or the half part, of their respective cities. One was ruler of the half part of Jerusalem (Ne 3:12), another of part of Beth-haccerem (Ne 3:14), another of part of Mizpah (Ne 3:15), another of the half part of Beth-zur (Ne 3:16), one was ruler of one half part, and another of the other half part, of Keilah, Ne 3:17,18. Perhaps the Persian government would not entrust any one with a strong city, but appointed two to be a watch upon each other. Rome had two consuls.

V. Here is a just reproach fastened upon the nobles of Tekoa, that they put not their necks to the work of their Lord (Ne 3:5), that is, they would not come under the yoke of an obligation to this service; as if the dignity and liberty of their peerage were their discharge from serving God and doing good, which are indeed the highest honour and the truest freedom. Let not nobles think any thing below them by which they may advance the interests of their country; for what else is their nobility good for but that it puts them in a higher and larger sphere of usefulness than that in which inferior persons move?

VI. Two persons joined in repairing the old gate (Ne 3:6), and so were co-founders, and shared the honour of it between them. The good work which we cannot compass ourselves we must be thankful to those that will go partners with us in. Some think that this is called the old gate because it belonged to the ancient Salem, which was said to be first built by Melchizedek.

VII. Several good honest tradesmen, as well as priests and rulers, were active in this work--goldsmiths, apothecaries, merchants, Ne 3:8,32. They did not think their callings excused them, nor plead that they could not leave their shops to attend the public business, knowing that what they lost would certainly be made up to them by the blessing of God upon their callings.

VIII. Some ladies are spoken of as helping forward this work--Shallum and his daughters (Ne 3:12), who, though not capable of personal service, yet having their portions in their own hands, or being rich widows, contributed money for buying materials and paying workmen. St. Paul speaks of some good women that laboured with him in the gospel, Php 4:3.

IX. Of some it is said that they repaired over against their houses (Ne 3:10,23,28,29), and of one (who, it is likely, was only a lodger) that he repaired over against his chamber, Ne 3:30. When a general good work is to be done each should apply himself to that part of it that falls nearest to him and is within his reach. If every one will sweep before his own door, the street will be clean; if every one will mend one, we shall be all mended. If he that has but a chamber will repair before that, he does his part.

X. Of one it is said that he earnestly repaired that which fell to his share (Ne 3:20)-- he did it with an inflamed zeal; not that others were cold or indifferent, but he was the most vigorous of any of them and consequently made himself remarkable. It is good to be thus zealously affected in a good thin; and it is probable that this good man's zeal provoked very many to take the more pains and make the more haste.

XI. Of one of these builders it is observed that he was the sixth son of his father, Ne 3:30. His five elder brethren, it seems, laid not their hand to this work, but he did. In doing that which is good we need not stay to see our elders go before us; if they decline it, it does not therefore follow that we must. Thus the younger brother, if he be the better man, and does God and his generation better service, is indeed the better gentleman; those are most honourable that are most useful.

XII. Some of those that had first done helped their fellows, and undertook another share where they saw there was most need.

Meremoth repaired, Ne 3:4 and again, Ne 3:21. And the Tekoites, besides the piece they repaired (Ne 3:5), undertook another piece (Ne 3:27), which is the more remarkable because their nobles set them a bad example by withdrawing from the service, which, instead of serving them for an excuse to sit still, perhaps made them the more forward to do double work, that by their zeal they might either shame or atone for the covetousness and carelessness of their nobles.

Lastly, Here is no mention of any particular share that Nehemiah himself had in this work. A name-sake of his is mentioned, Ne 3:16. But did he do nothing? Yes, though he undertook not any particular piece of the wall, yet he did more than any of them, for he had the oversight of them all; half of his servants worked where there was most need, and the other half stood sentinel, as we find afterwards (Ne 4:16), while he himself in his own person walked the rounds, directed and encouraged the builders, set his hand to the work where he saw occasion, and kept a watchful eye upon the motions of the enemy, as we shall find in the next chapter. The pilot needs not haul at a rope: it is enough for him to steer.

7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon
the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the
throne of the governor on this side the river.
8 Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the
goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of *one of*
the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.
9 And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of
the half part of Jerusalem.
10 And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even
over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the
son of Hashabniah.
11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath-moab,
repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces.
12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohesh, the
ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

13 The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they
built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars
thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.
14 But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of
part of Beth-haccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the
locks thereof, and the bars thereof.
15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col- hozeh,
the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the
doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of
the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go
down from the city of David.
16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the
half part of Beth-zur, unto *the place* over against the sepulchres of
David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the
mighty.
17 After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto
him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his
part.
18 After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the
ruler of the half part of Keilah.
19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of
Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armory at
the turning *of the wall.*
20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other
piece, from the turning *of the wall* unto the door of the house of
Eliashib the high priest.
21 After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz
another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the
end of the house of Eliashib.
22 And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain.
23 After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house.
After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah
by his house.
24 After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from
the house of Azariah unto the turning *of the wall,* even unto the
corner.

25 Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning *of the wall,* and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that *was* by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh.
26 Moreover the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel, unto *the place* over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out.
27 After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel.
28 From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.
29 After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate.
30 After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber.
31 After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinim, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner.
32 And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

Nehemiah-4

The Workmen Guard against the Adversaries

1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

Here is,

I The spiteful scornful reflection which Sanballat and Tobiah cast upon the Jews for their attempt to build the wall about Jerusalem. The country rang of it presently; intelligence was brought of it to Samaria, that nest of enemies to the Jews and their prosperity; and here we are told how they received the tidings.

1. In heart. They were very angry at the undertaking, and had great indignation, Ne 4:1. It vexed them that Nehemiah came to seek the welfare of the children of Israel (Ne 2:10); but, when they heard of this great undertaking for their good, they were out of all patience. They had hitherto pleased themselves with the thought that while Jerusalem was unwalled they could swallow it up and make themselves masters of it when they pleased; but, if it be walled, it will not only be fenced against them, but by degrees become formidable to them. The strength and safety of the church are the grief and vexation of its enemies.

2. In word. They despised it, and made it the subject of their ridicule. In this they sufficiently displayed their malice; but good was brought out of it; for, looking upon it as a foolish undertaking that would sink under its own weight, they did not go about to obstruct it till it was too late. Let us see with what pride and malice they set themselves publicly to banter it.

(1.) Sanballat speaks with scorn of the workmen: "These feeble Jews" (Ne 4:2), "what will they do for materials? Will they revive the stones out of the rubbish? And what mean they by being so hasty? Do they think to make the walling of a city but one day's work, and to keep the feast of dedication with sacrifice the next day? Poor silly people! See how ridiculous they make themselves!"

(2.) Tobiah speaks with no less scorn of the work itself. He has his jest too, and must show his wit, Ne 4:3. Profane scoffers sharpen one another. "Sorry work," says he, "they are likely to make of it; they themselves will be ashamed of it: If a fox go up, not with his subtlety, but with his weight, he will break down their stone wall." Many a good work has been thus looked upon with contempt by the proud and haughty scorners.

II. Nehemiah's humble and devout address to God when he heard of these reflections. He had notice brought him of what they said. It is probable that they themselves sent him a message to this

purport, to discourage him, hoping to jeer him out of his attempt; but he did not answer these fools according to their folly; he did not upbraid them with their weakness, but looked up to God by prayer.

1. He begs of God to take notice of the indignities that were done them (Ne 4:4), and in this we are to imitate him: Hear, O our God! for we are despised.

Note, (1.) God's people have often been a despised people, and loaded with contempt.

(2.) God does, and will, hear all the slights that are put upon his people, and it is their comfort that he does so and a good reason why they should be as though they were deaf, Ps 38:13,15. "Thou art our God to whom we appeal; our cause needs no more than a fair hearing."

2. He begs of God to avenge their cause and turn the reproach upon the enemies themselves (Ne 4:4,5); and this was spoken rather by a spirit of prophecy than by a spirit of prayer, and is not to be imitated by us who are taught of Christ to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute us. Christ himself prayed for those that reproached him: Father, forgive them. Nehemiah here prays, Cover not their iniquity.

Note, (1.) Those that cast contempt on God's people do but prepare everlasting shame for themselves.

(2.) It is a sin from which sinners are seldom recovered. Doubtless Nehemiah had reason to think the hearts of those sinners were desperately hardened, so that they would never repent of it, else he would not have prayed that it might never be blotted out. The reason he gives is not, They have abused us, but, They have provoked thee, and that before the builders, to whom, it is likely, they sent a spiteful message. Note, We should be angry at the malice of persecutors, not because it is abusive to

us, but because it is offensive to God; and on that we may ground an expectation that God will appear against it, Ps 74:18,22.

III. The vigour of the builders, notwithstanding these reflections, Ne 4:6. They made such good speed that in a little time they had run up the wall to half its height, for the people had a mind to work; their hearts were upon it, and they would have it forwarded. Note, 1. Good work goes on well when people have a mind to it. 2 The reproaches of enemies should rather quicken us to our duty than drive us from it.

2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:

5 and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders.

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

8 and conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

We have here,

I The conspiracy which the Jews' enemies formed against them, to stay the building by slaying the builders. The conspirators were not only Sanballat and Tobiah, but other neighbouring people whom they had drawn into the plot. They flattered themselves with a fancy that the work would soon stand still of itself; but, when they heard that it went on a prospered, they were angry at the Jews for being so hasty to push the work forward and angry at themselves for being so slow in opposing it (Ne 4:7): They were very wroth. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. Nothing would serve but they would fight against Jerusalem, Ne 4:8. Why, what quarrel had they with the Jews? Had they done them any wrong? Or did they design them any? No, they lived peaceably by them; but it was merely out of envy and malice; they hated the Jews' piety, and were therefore vexed at their prosperity and sought their ruin. Observe,

1. How unanimous they were: They conspired all of them together, though of different interests among themselves, yet one in their opposition to the work of God.

2. How close they were; they said, "They shall not know, neither see, till we have them at our mercy." Thus they took crafty counsel, and digged deep to hide it from the Lord, and promised themselves security and success from the secresy of their management.

3. How cruel they were: We will come and slay them. If nothing less than the murder of the workmen will put a stop to the work, they will not stick at that; nay, it is their blood they thirst for, and they are glad of any pretence to glut themselves with it. 4. What the design was and how confident they were of success: it was to cause the work to cease (Ne 4:11), and this they were confident that they should effect. The hindering of good work is that which bad men aim at and promise themselves; but good work is God's work, and it shall prosper.

II The discouragements which the builders themselves laboured under. At the very time when the adversaries said, Let us cause the work to cease, Judah said, "Let us even let it fall, for we are not able to go forward with it," Ne 4:10. They represent the labourers as tired, and the remaining difficulties, even of that first part of their work, the removing of the rubbish, as insuperable, and therefore they think it advisable to desist for the present. Can Judah, that warlike valiant tribe, sneak thus? Active leading men have many times as much ado to grapple with the fears of their friends as with the terrors of their enemies.

III. The information that was brought to Nehemiah of the enemies' designs, Ne 4:12. There were Jews that dwelt by them, in the country, who, though they had not zeal enough to bring them to Jerusalem to help their brethren in building the wall, yet, having by their situation opportunity to discover the enemies' motions, had so much honesty and affection to the cause as to give intelligence of them; nay, that their intelligence might be the more credited, they came themselves to give it, and they said it ten times, repeating it as men in earnest, and under a concern, and the report was confirmed by many witnesses. The intelligence they gave is expressed abruptly, and finds work for the critics to make out the sense of it, which perhaps is designed to intimate that they gave this intelligence as men out of breath and in confusion, whose very looks would make up the deficiencies of their words. I think it may be read, without supplying any thing: "Whatever place you turn to, they are against us, so that you have need to be upon your guard on all sides,"

Note, God has many ways of bringing to light, and so bringing to nought, the devices and designs of his and his church's enemies. Even the cold and feeble Jews that contentedly dwell by them shall be made to serve as spies upon them; nay, rather than fail, a bird of the air shall carry their voice.

IV. The pious and prudent methods which Nehemiah, hereupon, took to baffle the design, and to secure his work and workmen.

1. It is said (Ne 4:14) he looked.

(1.) He looked up, engaged God for him, and put himself and his cause under the divine protection (Ne 4:9): We made our prayer unto our God. That was the way of this good man, and should be our way; all his cares, all his griefs, all his fears, he spread before God, and thereby made himself easy. This was the first thing he did; before he used any means, he made his prayer to God, for with him we must always begin.

(2.) He looked about him. Having prayed, he set a watch against them. The instructions Christ has given us in our spiritual warfare agree with this example, Mt 26:41. Watch and pray. If we think to secure ourselves by prayer only, without watchfulness, we are slothful and tempt God; if by watchfulness, without prayer, we are proud and slight God; and, either way, we forfeit his protection.

2. Observe,

(1.) How he posted the guards, Ne 4:13. In the lower places he set them behind the wall, that they might annoy the enemy over it, as a breast-work; but in the higher places, where the wall was raised to its full height, he set them upon it, that from the top of it they might throw down stones or darts upon the heads of the assailants: he set them after their families, that mutual relation might engage them to mutual assistance.

(2.) How he animated and encouraged the people, Ne 4:14. He observed even the nobles and rulers themselves, as well as the rest of the people, to be in a great consternation upon the intelligence that was brought them, and ready to conclude that they were all undone, by which their hands were weakened both

for work and war, and therefore, he endeavours to silence their fears. "Come," says he, "be not afraid of them, but behave yourselves valiantly, considering,

[1.] Whom you fight under. You cannot have a better captain: Remember the Lord, who is great and terrible; you think your enemies great and terrible, but what are they in comparison with God, especially in opposition to him? He is great above them to control them, and will be terrible to them when he comes to reckon with them." Those that with an eye of faith see the church's God to be great and terrible will see the church's enemies to be mean and despicable. The reigning fear of God is the best antidote against the ensnaring fear of man. He that is afraid of a man that shall die forgets the Lord his Maker, Isa 51:12,13.

[2.] "Whom you fight for. You cannot have a better cause; you fight for your brethren (Ps 122:8), your sons, and your daughters. All that is dear to you in their world lies at stake; therefore behave yourselves valiantly."

V. The happy disappointment which this gave to the enemies, Ne 4:15. When they found that their design was discovered, and that the Jews were upon their guard, they concluded that it was to no purpose to attempt any thing, but that God had brought their counsel to nought. They knew they could not gain their point but by surprise, and, if their plot was known, it was quashed. The Jews hereupon returned every one to his work, with so much the more cheerfulness because they saw plainly that God owned it and owned them in the doing of it. Note, God's care of our safety should engage and encourage us to go on with vigour in our duty. As soon as ever a danger is over let us return to our work, and trust God another time.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you.*

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Judah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work *is* great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

When the builders had so far reason to think the design of the enemies broken as to return to their work, yet they were not so secure as to lay down their arms, knowing how restless and unwearied they were in their attempts, and that, if one design failed, they would be hatching another. Thus must we watch always against our spiritual enemies, and not expect that our warfare will be accomplished till our work is. See what course Nehemiah took, that the people might hold themselves in a readiness, in case there should be an attack.

1. While one half were at work, the other half were under their arms, holding spears, and shields, and bows, not only for themselves but for the labourers too, who would immediately quit their work, and betake themselves to their weapons, upon the first alarm, Ne 4:16. It is probable that they changed services at stated hours, which would relieve the fatigue of both, and particularly would be an ease to the bearers of burdens, whose strength had decayed (Ne 4:10); while they held the weapons, they were eased and yet not idle. Thus dividing their time between the trowels and the spears, they are said to work with one hand and hold their weapons with the other (Ne 4:17), which cannot be understood literally, for the work would require both hands; but it intimates that they were equally employed in both. Thus must we work out our salvation with the weapons of our warfare in our hand; for in every duty we must expect to meet with opposition from our spiritual enemies, against whom we must still be fighting the good fight of faith.

2. Every builder had a sword by his side (Ne 4:18), which he could carry without hindering his labour. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, which we ought to have always at hand and never to seek, both in our labours and in our conflicts as Christians.

3. Care was taken both to get and give early notice of the approach of the enemy, in case they should endeavour to surprise them. Nehemiah kept a trumpeter always by him to sound an alarm, upon the first intimation of danger. The work was large, and the builders were dispersed; for in all parts of the wall they were labouring at the same time. Nehemiah continually walked round to oversee the work and encourage the workmen, and so would have speedy intelligence if the enemy made an attack, of which, by sound of trumpet, he would soon give notice to all, and they must immediately repair to him with a full assurance that their God would fight for them, Ne 4:18-20. When they acted as workmen, it was requisite they should be dispersed

wherever there was work to do; but when as soldiers it was requisite they should come into close order, and be found in a body. Thus should the labourers in Christ's building be ready to unite against a common foe.

4. The inhabitants of the villages were ordered to lodge within Jerusalem, with their servants, not only that they might be the nearer to their work in the morning, but that they might be ready to help in case of an attack in the night, Ne 4:22. The strength of a city lies more in its hands than in its walls; secure them, and God's blessing upon them, and be secure.

5. Nehemiah himself, and all his men, kept closely to their business. The spears were held up, with the sight of them to terrify the enemy, not only from sun to sun, but from twilight to twilight every day, Ne 4:21. Thus ought we to be always upon our guard against our spiritual enemies, not only (as here) while it is light, but when it is dark, for they are the rulers of the darkness of this world. Nay, so very intent was Nehemiah upon his work, and so fast did he hold his servants to it, that while the heat of the business lasted neither he himself nor his attendants went into bed, but every night lay and slept in their clothes (Ne 4:23), except that they shifted them now and then, either for cleanliness or in a case of ceremonial pollution. It was a sign that their heart was upon their work when they could not find time to dress and undress, but resolved they would be at all times ready for service. Good work is likely to go on successfully when those that labour in it thus make a business of it.

21 So we labored in the work: and half of them held the spears from
the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.
22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one
with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may
be a guard to us, and labor on the day.
23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the
guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that*
every one put them off for washing.

Nehemiah-5

The Payment of Interest Abolished

1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

We have here the tears of the oppressed, which Solomon considered, Ec 4:1. Let us consider them as here they are dropped before Nehemiah, whose office it was, as governor, to deliver the poor and needy, and rid them out of the hand of the wicked oppressors, Ps 82:4. Hard times and hard hearts made the poor miserable.

I The times they lived in were hard. There was a dearth of corn (Ne 5:3), probably for want of rain, with which God had chastised their neglect of his house (Hag 1:9-11) and the non-payment of their church-dues, Mal 3:9,10. Thus foolish sinful men bring God's judgments upon themselves, and then fret and complain of them. When the markets are high, and provisions scarce and dear, the poor soon feel from it, and are pinched by it. Blessed be God for the mercy, and God deliver us from the sin, of fulness of bread, Eze 16:49. That which made the scarcity here complained of the more grievous was that their sons and their daughters were many, Ne 5:2 The families that were most necessitous were most numerous; here were the mouths, but where was the meat? Some have estates and no children to inherit them; others have children and no estates to leave them. Those who have both have reason to be thankful; those who have neither may the more easily be content.

Those who have great families and little substance must learn to live by faith in God's providence and promise; and those who have little families and great substance must make their abundance a supply for the wants of others. But this was not all: as corn was dear, so the taxes were high; the king's tribute must be paid, Ne 5:4. This mark of their captivity still remained upon them. Perhaps it was a poll-money that was required, and then,

their sons and their daughters being many, it rose the higher. The more they had to maintain (a hard case!) the more they had to pay. Now, it seems, they had not wherewithal of their own to buy corn and pay taxes, but were necessitated to borrow. Their families came poor out of Babylon; they had been at great expense in building them houses, and had not yet got up their strength when these new burdens came upon them. The straits of poor housekeepers who make hard shift to get an honest livelihood, and sometimes want what is fitting for them and their families, are well worthy the compassionate consideration of those who either with their wealth or with their power are in a capacity to help them.

II The persons they dealt with were hard. Money must be had, but it must be borrowed; and those that lent them money, taking advantage of their necessity, were very hard upon them and made a prey of them.

1. They exacted interest from them at twelve per cent, the hundredth part every month, Ne 5:11. If men borrow large sums to trade with, to increase their stocks, or to purchase land, there is no reason why the lender should not share with the borrower in his profit; or if to spend upon their lusts, or repair what they have so spent, why should they not pay for their extravagances? But if the poor borrow to maintain their families, and we be able to help them, it is certain we ought either to lend freely what they have occasion for, or (if they be not likely to repay it) to give freely something towards it.

Nay, 2. They forced them to mortgage to them their lands and houses for the securing of the money (Ne 5:3), and not only so, but took the profits of them for interest (Ne 5:5,11), that by degrees they might make themselves masters of all they had. Yet this was not the worst.

3. They took their children for bond-servants, to be enslaved or sold at pleasure, Ne 5:5. This they complain of most sensibly, as

that which touched them in a tender part, and they aggravate it with this: "Our children are as their children, as dear to us as theirs are to them; not only of the same human nature, and entitled to the honours and liberties of that (Mal 2:10,Job 31:15), but of the same holy nation, free-born Israelites, and dignified with the same privileges. Our flesh carries in it the sacred seal of the covenant of circumcision, as well as the flesh of our brethren; yet our heirs must be their slaves, and it is not in our power to redeem them." This they made a humble remonstrance of to Nehemiah, not only because they saw he was a great man that could relieve them, but a good man that would. Whither should the injured poor flee for succour but to the shields of the earth? Whither but to the chancery, to the charity, in the royal breast, and those deputed by it for relief against the summum jus--the extremity of the law?

Lastly, We will leave Nehemiah hearing the complaint, and enquiring into the truth of the complainants' allegations (for the clamours of the poor are not always just), while we sit down and look,

(1.) With a gracious compassion upon the oppressed, and lament the hardships which many in the world are groaning under; putting our souls into their souls' stead, and remembering in our prayers and succours those that are burdened, as burdened with them.

(2.) With a gracious indignation at the oppressors, and abhorrence of their pride and cruelty, who drink the tears, the blood, of those they have under their feet. But let those who show no mercy expect judgment without mercy. It was an aggravation of the sin of these oppressing Jews that they were themselves so lately delivered out of the house of bondage, which obliged them in gratitude to undo the heavy burdens, Isa 58:6.

2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, *are* many: therefore we take up corn *for them,* that we may eat, and live.

3 *Some* also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.
4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, *and that upon* our lands and vineyards.
5 Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and *some* of our daughters are brought into bondage *already:* neither *is it* in our power to *redeem them;* for other men have our lands and vineyards.
6 And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.
7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.
8 And I said unto them, We, after our ability, have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing *to answer.*

It should seem the foregoing complaint was made to Nehemiah at the time when he had his head and hands as full as possible of the public business about building the wall; yet, perceiving it to be just, he did not reject it because it was unseasonable; he did not chide the petitioners, nor fall into a passion with them, for disturbing him when they saw how much he had to do, a fault which men of business are too often guilty of; nor did he so much as adjourn the hearing of the cause or proceedings upon it till he had more leisure. The case called for speedy interposition, and therefore he applied himself immediately to the consideration of it, knowing that, let him build Jerusalem's walls ever so high, so thick, so strong, the city could not be safe while such abuses as these were tolerated. Now observe, What method he took for the redress of this grievance which was so threatening to the public.

I. He was very angry (Ne 5:6); he expressed a great displeasure at it, as a very bad thing. Note, It well becomes rulers to show themselves angry at sin, that by the anger itself they may be

excited to their duty, and by the expressions of it others may be deterred from evil.

II. He consulted with himself, Ne 5:7. By this it appears that his anger was not excessive, but kept within bounds, that, though his spirit was provoked, he did not say or do any thing unadvisedly. Before he rebuked the nobles, he consulted with himself what to say, and when, and how.

Note, Reproofs must be given with great consideration, that what is well meant may not come short of its end for want of being well managed. It is the reproof of instruction that giveth life. Even wise men lose the benefit of their wisdom sometimes for want of consulting with themselves and taking time to deliberate.

III. He rebuked the nobles and rulers, who were the monied men, and whose power perhaps made them the more bold to oppress. Note, Even nobles and rulers, if they do that which is evil, ought to be told of it by proper persons. Let no man imagine that his dignity sets him above reproof.

IV. He set a great assembly against them. He called the people together to be witnesses of what he said, and to bear their testimony (which the people will generally be forward to do) against the oppressions and extortions their rulers were guilty of, Ne 5:12. Ezra and Nehemiah were both of them very wise, good, useful men, yet, in cases not unlike, there was a great deal of difference between their management: when Ezra was told of the sin of the rulers in marrying strange wives he rent his clothes, and wept, and prayed, and was hardly persuaded to attempt a reformation, fearing it to be impracticable, for he was a man of a mild tender spirit; when Nehemiah was told of as bad a thing he kindled immediately, reproached the delinquents, incensed the people against them, and never rested till, by all the rough methods he could use, he forced them to reform; for he was a man of a hot and eager spirit.

Note, 1. Very holy men may differ much from each other in their natural temper and in other things that result from it.

2. God's work may be done, well done, and successfully, and yet different methods taken in the doing of it, which is a good reason why we should neither arraign the management of others nor make our own a standard. There are diversities of operation, but the same Spirit.

V. He fairly reasoned the case with them, and showed them the evil of what they did. The regular way of reforming men's lives is to endeavour, in the first place, to convince their consciences. Several things he offered to their consideration, which are so pertinent and just that it appeared he had consulted with himself. He lays it before them,

1. That those whom they oppressed were their brethren: You exact every one of his brother. It was bad enough to oppress strangers, but much worse to oppress their poor brethren, from whom the divine law did not allow them to take any usury, De 23:19,20.

2. That they were but lately redeemed out of the hand of the heathen. The body of the people were so by the wonderful providence of God; some particular persons among them were so, who, besides their share in the general captivity, were in servitude to heathen masters, and ransomed at the charge of Nehemiah and other pious and well-disposed persons. "Now," says he, "have we taken all this pains to get their liberty out of the hands of the heathen, and shall their own rulers enslave them? What an absurd thing is this! Must we be at the same trouble and expense to redeem them from you as we were to redeem them from Babylon?" Ne 5:8. Those whom God by his grace has made free ought not to be again brought under a yoke of bondage, Ga 5:1,1Co 7:23.

3. That it was a great sin thus to oppress the poor (Ne 5:9): "It is not good that you do; though you get money by it, you contract guilt by it, and ought you not to walk in the fear of God? Certainly you ought, for you profess religion, and relation to him; and, if you do walk in the fear of God, you will not be either covetous of worldly gain or cruel towards your brethren." Those that walk in the fear of God will not dare to do a wicked thing, Job 31:13,14,23.

4. That it was a great scandal, and a reproach to their profession. "Consider the reproach of the heathen our enemies, enemies to us, to our God, and to our holy religion. They will be glad of any occasion to speak against us, and this will give them great occasion; they will say, These Jews, that profess so much devotion to God, see how barbarous they are one to another." Note,

(1.) All that profess religion should be very careful that they do nothing to expose themselves to the reproach of those that are without, lest religion be wounded through their sides.

(2.) Nothing exposes religion more to the reproach of its enemies than the worldliness and hard-heartedness of the professors of it.
5. That he himself had set them a better example (Ne 5:10), which he enlarges upon afterwards, Ne 5:14-19, &c. Those that rigorously insist upon their right themselves will with a very ill grace persuade others to recede from theirs.

VI. He earnestly pressed them not only not to make their poor neighbours any more such hard bargains, but to restore that which they had got into their hands, Ne 5:11. See how familiarly he speaks to them: Let us leave off this usury, putting himself in, as becomes reprovers, though far from being any way guilty of the crime. See how earnestly, and yet humbly, he persuades them: I pray you leave off; and I pray you restore. Though he had authority to command, yet, for love's sake, he rather beseeches. See how particularly he presses them to be kind to the

poor, to give them up their mortgages, put them again in possession of their estates, remit the interest, and give them time to pay in the principal. He urged them to their loss, yet, urging them to their duty, it would be, at length, to their advantage. What we charitably forgive will be remembered and recompensed, as well as what we charitably give.

VII. He laid them under all the obligations possible to do what he pressed them to. 1. He got a promise from them (Ne 5:12): We will restore them. 2. He sent for the priests to give them their oath that they would perform this promise; now that their convictions were strong, and they seemed resolved, he would keep them to it. 3. He bound them by a solemn curse or execration, hoping that would strike some awe upon them: So let God shake out every man that performeth not this promise, Ne 5:13. This was a threatening that he would certainly do so, to which the people said Amen, as to those curses at Mount Ebal (De 27:1-26), that their throats might be cut with their own tongues if they should falsify their engagement, and that by the dread of that they might be kept to their promise. With this Amen the people praised the Lord; so far were they from promising with regret that they promised with all possible expressions of joy and thankfulness. Thus David, when he took God's vows upon him, sang and gave praise, Ps 56:12. This cheerfulness in promising was well, but that which follows was better: They did according to this promise, and adhered to what they had done, not as their ancestors in a like case, who re-enslaved those whom a little before they had released, Jer 34:10,11. Good promises are good things, but good performances are all in all.

9 Also I said, It *is* not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear
of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?
10 I likewise, *and* my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them
money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.
11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their
vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth
part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye
exact of them.

12 Then said they, We will restore *them,* and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.

13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord. And the people did according to this promise.

14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is,* twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.

Nehemiah had mentioned his own practice, as an inducement to the nobles not to burden the poor, no, not with just demands; here he relates more particularly what his practice was, not inn pride or vain-glory, nor to pass a compliment upon himself, but as an inducement both to his successors and to the inferior magistrates to be as tender as might be of the people's ease.

I. He intimates what had been the way of his predecessors, Ne 5:15. He does not name them, because what he had to say of them was not to their honour, and in such a case it is good to spare names; but the people knew how chargeable they had been, and how dearly the country paid for all the benefit of their government. The government allowed them forty shekels of silver, which was nearly five pounds (so much a day, it is probable); but, besides that, they obliged the people to furnish them with bread and wine, which they claimed as perquisites of their office; and not only so, but they suffered their servants to squeeze the people, and to get all they could out of them.

Note, 1. It is no new thing for those who are in public places to seek themselves more than the public welfare, any, and to serve themselves by the public loss. 2. Masters must be accountable for all the acts of fraud and injustice, violence and oppression, which they connive at in their servants.

II. He tells us what had been his own way.

1. In general, he had not done as the former governors did; he would not, he durst not, because of the fear of God. He had an awe of God's majesty and a dread of his wrath.

And, (1.) The fear of God restrained him from oppressing the people. Those that truly fear God will not dare to do any thing cruel or unjust.

(2.) It was purely that which restrained him. He was thus generous, not that he might have praise of men, or serve a turn by his interest in the people, but purely for conscience' sake, because of the fear of God. This will not only be a powerful, but an acceptable principle both of justice and charity. What a good hand his predecessors made of their place appeared by the estates they raised; but Nehemiah, for his part, got nothing, except the satisfaction of doing good: Neither bought we any land, Ne 5:16. Say not then that he was a bad husband, but that he was a good governor, who aimed not to feather his own nest. Let us remember the words of the Lord, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35.

2. More particularly, observe here,

(1.) How little Nehemiah received of what he might have required. He did the work of the governor, but he did not eat the bread of the governor (Ne 5:14), did not require it, Ne 5:18. So far was he from extorting more than his due that he never demanded that, but lived upon what he had got in the king of Persia's court and his own estate in Judea: the reason he gives for this piece of self-denial is, Because the bondage was heavy upon the people. He might have used the common excuse for rigour in such cases, that it would be a wrong to his successors not to demand his dues; but let them look to themselves: he considered the afflicted state of the Jews, and, while they

groaned under so much hardship, he could not find it in his heart to add to their burden, but would rather lessen his own estate than ruin them. note, In our demands we must consider not only the justice of them, but the ability of those on whom we make them; where there is nothing to be had we know who loses his right.

(2.) How much he gave which he might have withheld.

[1.] His servants' work, Ne 5:16. The servants of princes think themselves excused from labour; but Nehemiah's servants, by his order no doubt, were all gathered to the work. Those that have many servants should contrive how they may do good with them and keep them well employed.

[2.] His own meat, Ne 5:17,18. He kept a very good table, not on certain days, but constantly; he had many honourable guests, at least 150 of his own countrymen, persons of the first rank, besides strangers that came to him upon business; and he had plentiful provisions for his guests, beef, and mutton, and fowl, and all sorts of wine. Let those in public places remember that they were preferred to do good, not to enrich themselves; and let people in humbler stations learn to use hospitality one to another without grudging, 1Pe 4:9.

III. He concludes with a prayer (Ne 5:19): Think upon me, my God, for good.

1. Nehemiah here mentions what he had done for this people, not in pride, as boasting of himself, nor in passion, as upbraiding them, nor does it appear that he had occasion to do it in his own vindication, as Paul had to relate his like self-denying tenderness towards the Corinthians, but to shame the rulers out of their oppressions; let them learn of him to be neither greedy in their demands nor paltry in their expenses, and then they would have the credit and comfort of their liberality, as he had.

2. He mentions it to God in prayer, not as if he thought he had hereby merited any favour from God, as a debt, but to show that he looked not for any recompence of his generosity from men, but depended upon God only to make up to him what he had lost and laid out for his honour; and he reckoned the favour of God reward enough. "If God do but think upon me for good, I have enough." His thoughts to us-ward are our happiness, Ps 40:5. He refers it to God to recompense him in such a manner as he pleased. "If men forget me, let my God think on me, and I desire no more."

15 But the former governors that *had been* before me were chargeable
unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, besides
forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the
people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.
16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we
any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work.
17 Moreover *there were* at my table a hundred and fifty of the Jews and
rulers, besides those that came unto us from among the heathen
that *are* about us.
18 Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily *was* one ox *and* six choice
sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store
of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the
governor, because the bondage was heavy upon this people.
19 Think upon me, my God, for good, *according* to all that I have done
for this people.

Nehemiah-6

The Plots of the Adversaries

1 Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the
Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the
wall, and *that* there was no breach left therein; (though at that time
I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

Two plots upon Nehemiah we have here an account of, how cunningly they were laid by his enemies and how happily frustrated by God's good providence and his prudence.

I. A plot to trepan him into a snare. The enemies had an account of the good forwardness the work was in, that all the breaches of the wall were made up, so that they considered it as good as done, though at that time the doors of the gates were off the hinges (Ne 6:1); they must therefore now or never, by one bold stroke, take off Nehemiah. They heard how well guarded he was, so that there was no attacking him upon the spot; they will therefore try by all the arts of wheedling to get him among them. Observe,

1. With what hellish subtlety they courted him to meet them, not in any city, lest that should excite a suspicion that they intended to secure him, but in a village in the lot of Benjamin: "Come, let us meet together to consult about the common interests of our provinces." Or they would have him think that they coveted his friendship, and would be glad to be better acquainted with him, in order to a good understanding between them and the settling of a good correspondence. But they thought to do him a mischief. It is probable that he had some secret intelligence given him that they designed to imprison or murder him; or he knew them so well that, without breach of charity, he concluded they aimed at his life, and therefore, when they spoke fair, he believed them not.

2. See with what heavenly wisdom he declined the motion. His God did instruct him to give them that prudent answer by messengers of his own: "I am doing a great work, am very busy, and am loth to let the work stand still while I leave it to come down to you," Ne 6:3. His care was that the work might not cease; he knew it would if he left it ever so little; and why should it cease while I come down to you? He says nothing of his jealousies, nor reproaches them for their treacherous design, but gives them a good reason and one of the true reasons why he would not come. Compliment must always give way to business.

Let those that are tempted to idle merry meetings by their vain companions thus answer the temptation, "We have work to do, and must not neglect it." Four times they attacked him with the same solicitation, and he as often returned the same answer, which, we may suppose, was very vexatious to them; for really it was the ceasing of the work that they aimed at, and it would make them despair of breaking the undertaking to see the undertaker so intent upon it. I answered them (says he) after the same manner, Ne 6:4. Note, We must never suffer ourselves to be overcome by the greatest importunity to do any thing sinful or imprudent; but, when we are attacked with the same temptation, must still resist it with the same reason and resolution.

II. A plot to terrify him from his work. Could they but drive him off, the work would cease of course. This therefore Sanballat attempts, but in vain.

1. He endeavours to possess Nehemiah with an apprehension that his undertaking to build the walls of Jerusalem was generally represented as factious and seditious, and would be resented accordingly at court, Ne 6:5-7. The best men, even in their most innocent and excellent performances, have lain under this imputation. This is written to him in an open letter, as a thing generally known and talked of, that it was reported among the nations, and Gashmu will aver it for truth, that Nehemiah was aiming to make himself king and to shake off the Persian yoke. Note, It is common for that which is the sense only of the malicious to be falsely represented by them as the sense of the many.

Now Sanballat pretends to inform Nehemiah of this as a friend, that he might hasten to court to clear himself, or stay his proceedings, for fear they should be thus misconstrued; at least, upon this surmise, he urges him to give him the meeting--"Let us take counsel together how to quell the report," hoping by this means either to take him off, or at least to take him off from his

business. Thus were his words softer than oil, and yet war was in his heart, and he hoped, like Judas, to kiss and kill. But surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. Nehemiah was soon aware what they aimed at, to weaken their hands from the work (Ne 6:9), and therefore not only denied that such things were true, but that they were reported; he was better known than to be thus suspected.

2. Thus he escaped the snare and kept his ground, nor would he be frightened by winds and clouds from sowing and reaping. Suppose it was thus reported, we must never omit known duty merely for fear it should be misconstrued; but, while we keep a good conscience, let us trust God with our good name. But indeed it was not thus reported. God's people, though sufficiently loaded with reproach, yet are not really so low in reputation as some would have them thought to be.

In the midst of his complaint of their malice, in endeavouring to frighten him, and so weaken his hands, he lifts up his heart to Heaven in this short prayer: Now therefore, O God! strengthen my hands. It is the great support and relief of good people that in all their straits and difficulties they have a good God to go to, from whom, by faith and prayer, they may fetch in grace to silence their fears and strengthen their hands when their enemies are endeavouring to fill them with fears and weaken their hands. When, in our Christian work and warfare, we are entering upon any particular services or conflicts, this is a good prayer for us to put up: "I have such a duty to do, such a temptation to grapple with; now therefore, O God! strengthen my hands." Some read it, not as a prayer, but as a holy resolution (for O God is supplied in our translation): Now therefore I will strengthen my hands. Note, Christian fortitude will be sharpened by opposition. Every temptation to draw us from duty should quicken us so much the more to duty.

2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in *some one of* the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

6 wherein *was* written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith *it, that* thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is* a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God,* strengthen my hands.

10 Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

The Jews' enemies leave no stone unturned, no way untried, to take Nehemiah off from building the wall about Jerusalem. In order to this they had tried to fetch him into the country to them, but in vain; now they try to drive him into the temple for his own safety; let him be any where but at his work. Observing him to be a cautious man, they will endeavour to gain their point by making him cowardly. Observe,

I. How basely the enemies managed this temptation.

1. That which they designed was to bring Nehemiah to do a foolish thing, that they might laugh at him, and insult over him

for doing it, and so lessen his interest and influence (Ne 6:13): That I should be afraid, and so they might have matter for an evil report, and might reproach me. This was indeed doing the devil's work, who is men's tempter that he may be their accuser, draws men to sin that he may glory in their shame. The greatest mischief our enemies can do us is to frighten us from our duty and bring us to do what is sinful.

2 The tools they made use of were a pretended prophet and prophetess, whom they hired to persuade Nehemiah to quit his work and retire for his own safety. The pretended prophet was Shemaiah, of whom it is said that he was shut up in his own house, either under pretence of retirement for meditation and to consult the mind of God or to give Nehemiah a sign in like manner to make himself a recluse. It should seem, Nehemiah had a value for him, for he went to his house to consult him, Ne 6:10. Other prophets there were, and one prophetess, Noadiah (Ne 6:14), that were in the interest of the Jews' enemies, pensioners to them and traitors to their country. Whether they pretended to inspiration does not appear; they do not say, Thus saith the Lord, as the false prophets of old did; if not so, yet they would be thought to excel in divine knowledge, and human prudence, and to have uncommon measures of insight and foresight, and were therefore consulted in difficult cases, as prophets had been. These the enemies feed to be of counsel for them. Let us hence take occasion to lament,

(1.) The wickedness of such bad men as these prophets, that ever any should be so perfidious as to betray the cause of God and their country even under the pretence of communion with God and concern for their country.

(2.) The unhappiness of such good men as Nehemiah, who are in danger of being imposed upon by such cheats, and to whom no temptation comes with more force than that which comes under a colour of religion, of revelation and devotion, and is brought by the hand of prophets.

3. The pretence was plausible. These prophets suggested to Nehemiah that the enemies would come and slay him, in the night they would slay him, which he had reason enough to believe was true; they would, if they could, if they durst. They pretended to be much concerned for his safety. The people would be all undone if any harm should come to him; and therefore they very gravely advised him to hide himself in the temple till the danger was over; that was a strong and sacred place, where he would be under the special protection of Heaven, Ps 27:5. If Nehemiah had been prevailed upon to do this, immediately the people would both have left off their work and thrown down their arms, and every one would have shifted for his own safety; and then the enemies might easily, and without opposition, have demolished the works, broken down the wall again, and so gained their point. Though self-preservation is a fundamental principle of the law of nature, yet that is not always the best and wisest counsel which pretends to go upon that principle.

II. See how bravely Nehemiah vanquished this temptation, and came off a conqueror.

1. He immediately resolved not to yield to it, Ne 6:11. See here,

(1.) What his reasonings are: "Should such a man as I flee? Shall I desert God's work, or discourage my own workmen whom I have employed and encouraged? Shall I be over-credulous of report, and over-solicitous about my own life? I that am the governor, on whom so many eyes are, both of friends and foes? Another might flee, but not I. Who is there that being as I am, in my post of honour, and power, and trust, would go into the temple, and lurk there, when business is to be done, yea, though it were to save his life?" Note, When we are tempted to sin we should remember who and what we are, that we may not do any thing unbecoming us, and the profession we make. It is not for kings, O Lemuel! Pr 31:4.

(2.) What was the result of his reasonings. He is at a point: "I will not go in. I will rather die at my work than live in an inglorious retreat from it." Note, Holy courage and magnanimity will engage us, whatever it cost us, never to decline a good work, nor ever to do a bad one.

2. He was immediately aware of what was the rise of it (Ne 6:12): "I perceived that God had not sent him, that he gave this advice, not by any divine direction, ordinary or extraordinary, but with a design against me." The wickedness of such mercenary wretches will sooner or later be brought to light. Two things Nehemiah says he dreaded in that which he was advised to:--

(1.) Offending God: That I should be afraid, and do so, and sin. Note, Sin is that which above any thing we should dread; and a good preservative it is against sin to be afraid of nothing but sin.

(2.) Shaming himself: That they might reproach me. Note, Next to the sinfulness of sin we should dread the scandalousness of it.

3. He humbly begs of God to reckon with them for their base designs upon him (Ne 6:14): My God, think thou upon Tobiah, and the rest of them, according to their works. As, when he had mentioned his own good services, he did not covetously or ambitiously prescribe to God what reward he should give him, but modestly prayed, Think upon me, my God (Ne 5:19), so here he does not revengefully imprecate any particular judgment upon his enemies, but refers the matter to God. "Thou knowest their hearts, and art the avenger of falsehood and wrong; take cognizance of this cause; judge between me and them, and take what way and time thou mayest please to call them to an account for it." Note, Whatever injuries are done us we must not avenge ourselves, but commit our cause to him that judgeth righteously.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there,* that, *being* as I *am,* would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.
12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.
13 Therefore *was* he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.
14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.
15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day* of *the month* Elul, in fifty and two days.

Nehemiah is here finishing the wall of Jerusalem, and yet still has trouble created him by his enemies.

I. Tobiah, and the other adversaries of the Jews, had the mortification to see the wall built up, notwithstanding all their attempts to hinder it. The wall was begun and finished in fifty-two days, and yet we have reason to believe they rested on the sabbaths, Ne 6:15. Many were employed, and there was room for them; what they did they did cheerfully, and minded their business because they loved it. The threats of their enemies, which were intended to weaken them, it is likely, quickened them to go on with their work the more vigorously, that they might get it done before the enemy came.

Thus out of the eater came forth meat. See what a great deal of work may be done in a little time if we would set about it in earnest and keep close to it.When the enemies heard that the wall was finished before they thought it was well begun, and, when they doubted not but to put a stop to it, they were much cast down in their own eyes, Ne 6:16.

1. They were ashamed of their own confidence that they should cause the work to cease; they were crest-fallen upon the disappointment.

2. They envied the prosperity and success of the Jews, grieved to see the walls of Jerusalem built, while, it may be, the kings of Persia had not permitted them thus to fortify the cities of Samaria. When Cain envied his brother his countenance fell, Ge 4:5. 3. They despaired of ever doing them the mischief they designed them, of bringing them down and making a prey of them; and well they might, for they perceived, by the wonderful success, that the work was wrought of God. Even these heathens had so much sense as,

[1.] To see a special providence of God conversant about the affairs of the church when they did remarkably prosper. They said among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them; it is his doing, Ps 126:2. God fighteth for Israel and worketh with them.

[2.] To believe that God's work would be perfect. When the perceived that the work was of God they expected no other than that it would go on and prosper.

[3.] To conclude that, if it were of God, it was to no purpose to think of opposing it; it would certainly prevail and be victorious.

II. Nehemiah had the vexation, notwithstanding this, to see some of his own people treacherously corresponding with Tobiah and serving his interest; and a great grief and discouragement, no doubt, it was to him.

1. Even of the nobles of Judah there were those who had so little sense of honour and their country's good as to communicate with Tobiah by letter, Ne 6:17. They wrote with all the freedom and familiarity of friends to him, and welcomed his letters to them. Could nobles do a thing so mean? Nobles of Judah so wicked a thing? It seems great men are not always wise, not always honest.

2. Many in Judah were in a strict but secret confederacy with him to advance the interest of his country, though it would certainly be the ruin of their own. They were sworn unto him, not as their prince, but as their friend and ally, because both he and his son had married daughters of Israel, Ne 6:18. See the mischief of marrying with strangers; for one heathen that was converted by it ten Jews were perverted. When once they became akin to Tobiah they soon became sworn to him. A sinful love leads to a sinful league.

3. They had the impudence to court Nehemiah himself into a friendship with him: "They reported his good deeds before me, represented him as an intelligent gentleman and well worthy my acquaintance, an honest gentleman and one that I might confide in." We are indeed required to speak ill of no man, but never to speak well of bad men. Those that forsake the law praise the wicked, Pr 28:4.

4. They were so false as to betray Nehemiah's counsels to him; they uttered Nehemiah's words to him, perverting them, no doubt, and putting false constructions upon them, which furnished Tobiah with matter for letters to put him in fear and so drive him from his work and discourage him in it. Thus were all their thoughts against him for evil, yet God thought upon him for good.

16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard *thereof,* and all the heathen that *were* about us saw *these things,* they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

17 Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and *the letters* of Tobiah came unto them.

18 For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he *was* the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. *And* Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

Nehemiah-7

Nehemiah Appoints Rulers for Jerusalem

1 Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed,

God saith concerning his church (Isa 62:6), I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem! This is Nehemiah's care here; for dead walls, without living watchmen, are but a poor defence to a city.

I. He appointed the porters, singers, and Levites, in their places to their work. This is meant of their work in general, which was to attend the temple service; it had been neglected in some degree, but now was revived. God's worship is the defence of a place, and his ministers, when they mind their duty, are watchmen on the walls. Or, in particular, he ordered them to be ready against the wall was to be dedicated, that they might perform that service in an orderly and solemn manner; and the dedication of it was its strength. That is likely to be beneficial to us which is devoted to God.

II. He appointed two governors or consuls, to whom he committed the care of the city, and gave them in charge to provide for the public peace and safety. Hanani, his brother, who came to him with the tidings of the desolations of Jerusalem, was one, a man of approved integrity and affection to his country; the other was Hananiah, who had been ruler of the palace: for he that has approved himself faithful in less shall be entrusted with more. Of this Hananiah it is said that he was a faithful man and one that feared God above many, Ne 7:2.

Note, 1. Among those who fear God truly there are some who fear him greatly, and excel others in the expressions and

instances of that fear; and they are worthy a double portion of that honour which is due to those that fear the Lord, Ps 15:4. There were many in Jerusalem that feared God, but this good man was more eminent for religion and serious godliness than any.

2. Those that fear God must evidence it by their being faithful to all men and universally conscientious. 3. God's Jerusalem is then likely to flourish when those rule in it, and have charge of it, who excel in virtue, and are eminent both for godliness and honesty. It is supposed, by some, that Nehemiah was now about to return to the Persian court to have his commission renewed, and that he left these two worthy men in charge with the affairs of the city in his absence. Good governors, when and where they cannot act themselves, must be very careful whom they depute.

III. He gave orders about the shutting of the gates and the guarding of the walls, Ne 7:3,4. See here,

1. What the present state of Jerusalem was. The city, in compass, was large and great. The walls enclosed the same ground as formerly; but much of it lay waste, for the houses were not built, few at least in comparison with what had been; so that Nehemiah walled the city in faith, and with an eye to that promise of the replenishing of it which God had lately made by the prophet, Zec 8:3-8, &c. Though the people were now few, he believed they would be multiplied, and therefore built the walls so as to make room for them; had he not depended upon this he might have thought walls without a city as great a reproach as a city without walls.

2. What was the care of Nehemiah for it. He ordered the rulers of the city themselves,

(1.) To stand by, and see the city-gates shut up and barred every night; for in vain had they a wall if they were careless of their gates.

(2.) To take care that they should not be opened in the morning till they could see that all was clear and quiet.

(3.) To set sentinels upon the walls, or elsewhere, at convenient distances, who should, in case of the approach of the enemy, give timely notice to the city of the danger; and, as it came to their turn to watch, they must post themselves over against their own houses, because of them, it might be presumed, they would be in a particular manner careful. The public safety depends upon every one's particular care to guard himself and his own family against sin, that common enemy. It is every one's interest to watch, but many understand not their own interest; it is therefore incumbent upon magistrates to appoint watches. And as this people had lately found God with them in their building (else they would have built in vain), so now that the wall was built, no doubt, they were made sensible that except the Lord kept the city the watchman waked but in vain, Ps 127:1.

2 that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace,
charge over Jerusalem: for he *was* a faithful man, and feared God
above many.
3 And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until
the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and
bar *them:* and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
every one in his watch, and every one *to be* over against his house.
4 Now the city *was* large and great: but the people *were* few therein,
and the houses *were* not builded.

The List of Returning Exiles

5 And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and
the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by
genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which
came up at the first, and found written therein,

6 These *are* the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;
7 who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah.
The number, *I say*, of the men of the people of Israel *was this;*
8 The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two.
9 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.
10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two.
11 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred *and* eighteen.

We have here another good project of Nehemiah's; for wise and zealous men will be always contriving something or other for the glory of God and the edification of his church. He knew very well that the safety of a city, under God, depends more upon the number and valour of the inhabitants than upon the height or strength of its walls; and therefore, observing that the people were few that dwelt in it, he thought fit to take an account of the people, that he might find what families had formerly had their settlement in Jerusalem, but were now removed into the country, that he might bring them back, and what families could in any other way be influenced by their religion, or by their business, to come and rebuild the houses in Jerusalem and dwell in them. So little reason have we to wish that we may be placed alone in the earth, or in Jerusalem itself, that much of our safety and comfort depends upon our neighbours and friends; the more the stronger, the more the merrier. It is the wisdom of the governors of a nation to keep the balance even between the city and country, that the metropolis be not so extravagantly large as to drain and impoverish the country, nor yet so weak as not to be able to protect it. Now observe,

I. Whence this good design of Nehemiah's came. He owns, My God put it into my heart, Ne 7:5. Note, Whatever good motion is in our minds, either prudent or pious, we must acknowledge it to come from God. It was he that put it into our hearts; for every good gift and every good work are from above. He gives knowledge; he gives grace; all is of him, and therefore all must be to him. What is done by human prudence must be ascribed to the direction of divine Providence; he that teaches the husbandman his discretion (Isa 28:26) teaches the statesman his.

II. What method he took in prosecution of it.

1. He called the rulers together, and the people, that he might have an account of the present state of their families--their number and strength, and where they were settled. It is probable that when he summoned them to come together he ordered them to bring such an account along with them out of their several districts. And I doubt they were not so many but that it might be soon done.

2. He reviewed the old register of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and compared the present accounts with that; and here we have the repetition of that out of Ezra 2 The title is the same here (Ne 7:6,7) as there (Ne 7:1,2): These are the children of the province, &c. Two things are here repeated and recorded a second time from thence--the names and numbers of their several families, and their oblations to the service of the temple. The repetition of these accounts may intimate to us the delight which the great God is pleased to take in the persons, families, and services of his spiritual Israel, and the particular notice he takes of them. He knows those that are his, knows them all, knows them by name, has his eye on the register of those children of the captivity, and does all according to the ancient counsel of his will concerning them.

(1.) Here is an account of the heads of the several families that first came up, Ne 7:6-69. As to this,

[1.] Though it seem of little use to us now, yet then it was of great use, to compare what they had been with what they now were. We may suppose they were much increased by this time; but it would do well for them to remember their small beginnings, that they might acknowledge God in multiplying their families and building them up. By this means likewise their genealogies would be preserved, and the distinction of their families kept up, till the Messiah should come, and then an end be put to all their genealogies, which were preserved for his sake, but afterwards were endless.

But, [2.] There are many differences in the numbers between this catalogue and that in Ezra. Most of them indeed are exactly the same, and some others within a very few under or over (one or two perhaps); and therefore I cannot think, as some do, that that was the number of these families at their first coming and this as they were now, which was at least forty years after (some make it much more); for we cannot suppose so many families to be not at all, or but little, altered in their numbers in all that time; therefore what differences there are we may suppose to arise either from the mistakes of transcribers, which easily happen in numbers, or from the diversity of the copies from which they were taken. Or perhaps one was the account of them when they set out from Babylon with Zerubbabel, the other when they came to Jerusalem. The sum totals are all just the same there and here, except of the singing-men and singing-women, which there are 200, here 245. These were not of such importance as that they should keep any strict account of them.

(2.) Here is an account of the offerings which were given towards the work of God, Ne 7:70-72, &c. This differs much from that in Ezr 2:68,69, and it may be questioned whether it refers to the same contribution; here the tirshatha, or chief governor, who there was not mentioned, begins the offering;

and the single sum mentioned there exceeds all those here put together; yet it is probable that it was the same, but that followed one copy of the lists, this another; for the Ne 7:73,Ezr 2:70,3:1 is the same here that it was Ne 7:73,Ezr 2:70,3:1. Blessed be God that our faith and hope are not built upon the niceties of names and numbers, genealogy and chronology, but on the great things of the law and gospel. Whatever is given to the work of God, he is not unrighteous to forget it; nor shall even a cup of cold water, wherewith he is honoured, go without its reward.

12 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
13 The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five.
14 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.
15 The children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight.
16 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight.
17 The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and two.
18 The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore and seven.
19 The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore and seven.
20 The children of Adin, six hundred fifty and five.
21 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.
22 The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and eight.
23 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and four.
24 The children of Hariph, a hundred and twelve.
25 The children of Gibeon, ninety and five.
26 The men of Bethlehem and Netophah, a hundred fourscore and eight.
27 The men of Anathoth, a hundred twenty and eight.
28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two.
29 The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and three.
30 The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one.
31 The men of Michmas, a hundred and twenty and two.
32 The men of Beth-el and Ai, a hundred twenty and three.
33 The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two.
34 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
35 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.

36 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five.
37 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and one.
38 The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.
39 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three.
40 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty and two.
41 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven.
42 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.
43 The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, *and* of the children of Hodevah, seventy and four.
44 The singers: the children of Asaph, a hundred forty and eight.
45 The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, a hundred thirty and eight.
46 The Nethinim: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth,
47 the children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon,
48 the children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai,
49 the children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,
50 the children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda,
51 the children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah,
52 the children of Besai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim,
53 the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,
54 the children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,
55 the children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Tamah,
56 the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.
57 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida,
58 the children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of

Giddel,
59 the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of
Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon.
60 All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were*
three hundred ninety and two.
61 And these *were* they which went up *also* from Tel-melah, Tel-
haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could not show
their father's house, nor their seed, whether they *were* of Israel.
62 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of
Nekoda, six hundred forty and two.
63 And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz,
the children of Barzillai, which took *one* of the daughters of
Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name.
64 These sought their register *among* those that were reckoned by
genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted,
put from the priesthood.
65 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the
most holy things, till there stood *up* a priest with Urim and
Thummim.
66 The whole congregation together *was* forty and two thousand
three hundred and threescore,
67 besides their manservants and their maidservants, of whom *there
were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had
two hundred forty and five singing men and singing women.
68 Their horses, seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two
hundred forty and five:
69 *their* camels, four hundred thirty and five: six thousand seven
hundred and twenty asses.
70 And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The
Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty
basins, five hundred and thirty priests' garments.
71 And *some* of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work
twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred
pounds of silver.
72 And *that* which the rest of the people gave *was* twenty thousand
drams of gold, and two thousand pounds of silver, and threescore
and seven priests' garments.

73 So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and *some* of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities.
And when the seventh month came, the children of Israel *were* in their cities.

Nehemiah-8

Ezra Reads the Law to the People

1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

We have here an account of a solemn religious assembly, and the good work that was done in that assembly, to the honour of God and the edification of the church.

I The time of it was the first day of the seventh month, Ne 8:2. That was the day of the feast of trumpets, which is called a sabbath, and on which they were to have a holy convocation, Le 23:24,Nu 29:1. But that was not all: it was one that day that the altar was set up, and they began to offer their burnt-offerings after their return out of captivity, a recent mercy in the memory of many then living; in a thankful remembrance of that, it is likely, they had kept this feast ever since with more than ordinary solemnity. Divine favours which are fresh in mind, and which we ourselves have been witnesses of, should be, and usually are, most affecting.

II The place was in the street that was before the water-gate (Ne 8:1), a spacious broad street, able to contain so great a multitude, which the court of the temple was not; for probably it was not now built nearly so large as it had been in Solomon's time. Sacrifices were to be offered only at the door of the temple, but praying, and praising, and preaching, were, and are, services of

religion as acceptably performed in one place as in another. When this congregation thus met in the street of the city no doubt God was with them.

III. The persons that met were all the people, who were not compelled to come, but voluntarily gathered themselves together by common agreement, as one man: not only men came, but women and children, even as many as were capable of understanding what they heard. Masters of families should bring their families with them to the public worship of God. Women and children have souls to save, and are therefore concerned to acquaint themselves with the word of God and attend on the means of knowledge and grace. Little ones, as they come to the exercise of reason, must be trained up in the exercises of religion.

IV. The master of this assembly was Ezra the priest; he presided in this service. None so fit to expound and preach as he who was such a ready scribe in the law of his God. 1. His call to the service was very clear; for being in office as a priest, and qualified as a scribe, the people spoke to him to bring the book of the law and read it to them, Ne 8:1. God gave him ability and authority, and then the people gave him opportunity and invitation. Knowledge is spiritual alms, which those that are able should give to every one that needs, to every one that asks. 2. His post was very convenient. He stood in a pulpit or tower of wood, which they made for the word (so it is in the original), for the preaching of the word, that what he said might be the more gracefully delivered and the better heard, and that the eyes of the hearers might be upon him, which would engage their attention, as 4:20. 3. He had several assistants. Some of these stood with him (Ne 8:4), six on his right hand and seven on his left: either his pulpit was so contrived as to hold them all in a row, as in a gallery (but then it would scarcely have been called a tower), or they had desks a degree lower.

Some think, that he appointed them to read when he was weary; at least his taking them as assessors with him put an honour upon

them before the people, in order to their being employed in the same service another time. Others who are mentioned (Ne 8:7) seem to have been employed at the same time in other places near at hand, to read and expound to those who could not come within hearing of Ezra. Of these also there were thirteen priests, whose lips were to keep knowledge, Mal 2:7. It is a great mercy to a people thus to be furnished with ministers that are apt to teach. Happy was Ezra in having such assistants as these, and happy were they in having such a guide as Ezra.

V. The religious exercises performed in this assembly were not ceremonial, but moral, praying and preaching. Ezra, as president of the assembly, was, 1 The people's mouth to God, and they affectionately joined with him, Ne 8:6. He blessed the Lord as the great God, gave honour to him by praising his perfections and praying for his favour; and the people, in token of their concurrence with him both in prayers and praises, said, Amen, Amen, lifted up their hands in token of their desire being towards God and all their expectations from him, and bowed their heads in token of their reverence of him and subjection to him. Thus must we adore God, and address ourselves to him, when we are going to read and hear the word of God, as those that see God in his word very great and very good. 2. God's mouth to the people, and they attentively hearkened to him. This was the chief business of the solemnity, and observe,

(1.) Ezra brought the law before the congregation, Ne 8:2. He had taken care to provide himself with the best and most correct copies of the law; and what he had laid up for his own use and satisfaction he here brought forth, as a good householder out of his treasury, for the benefit of the church. Observe,

[1.] The book of the law is not to be confined to the scribes' studies, but to be brought before the congregation and read to them in their own language.

[2.] Ministers, when they go to the pulpit, should take their Bibles with them; Ezra did so; thence they must fetch their knowledge, and according to that rule they must speak and must show that they do so. See 2Ch 17:9.

(2.) He opened the book with great reverence and solemnity, in the sight of all the people, Ne 8:5. He brought it forth with a sense of the great mercy of God to them in giving them that book; he opened it with a sense of his mercy to them in giving them leave to read it, that it was not a spring shut up and a fountain sealed. The taking of the books, and the opening of the seals, we find celebrated with joy and praise, Re 5:9. Let us learn to address ourselves to the services of religion with solemn stops and pauses, and not to go about them rashly; let us consider what we are doing when we take God's book into our hands, and open it, and so also when we bow our knees in prayer; and what we do let us do deliberately, Ec 5:1.

(3.) He and others read in the book of the law, from morning till noon (Ne 8:3), and they read distinctly, Ne 8:8. Reading the scriptures in religious assemblies is an ordinance of God, whereby he is honoured and his church edified. And, upon special occasions, we must be willing to attend for many hours together on the reading and expounding of the word of God: those mentioned here were thus employed for six hours. Let those that read and preach the word learn also to deliver themselves distinctly, as those who understand what they say and are affected with it themselves, and who desire that those they speak to may understand it, retain it, and be affected with it likewise. It is a snare for a man to devour that which is holy.

(4.) What they read they expounded, showed the intent and meaning of it, and what use was to be made of it; they gave the sense in other words, that they might cause the people to understand the reading, Ne 8:7,8.

Note, [1.] It is requisite that those who hear the word should understand it, else it is to them but an empty sound of words, Mt 24:15.

[2.] It is therefore required of those who are teachers by office that they explain the word and give the sense of it. Understandest thou what thou readest? and, Have you understood all these things? are good questions to be put to the hearers; but, How should we except someone guide us? is as proper a question for them to put to their teachers, Ac 8:30,31. Reading is good, and preaching good, but expounding brings the reading and the preaching together, and thus makes the reading the more intelligible and the preaching the more convincing.

(5.) The people conducted themselves very properly when the word was read and opened to them.

[1.] With great reverence. When Ezra opened the book all the people stood up (Ne 8:5), thereby showing respect both to Ezra and to the word he was about to read. It becomes servants to stand when their master speaks to them, in honour to their master and to show a readiness to do as they are bidden.

[2.] With great fixedness and composedness. They stood in their place (Ne 8:7); several ministers were reading and expounding at some distance from each other, and every one of the people kept his post, did not go to hear first one and then another, to make remarks upon them, but stood in his place, that he might neither give disturbance to another nor receive any disturbance himself.

[3.] With great attention and a close application of mind: The ears of all the people were unto the book of the law (Ne 8:3), were even chained to it; they heard readily, and minded every word. The word of God commands attention and deserves it. If through carelessness we let much slip in hearing, there is danger that through forgetfulness we shall let all slip after hearing.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.
3 And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law.
4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, *and* Meshullam.
5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:
6 and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with *their* faces to the ground.
7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place.
8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.
9 And Nehemiah, which *is* the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day *is* holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

We may here observe,

I. How the people were wounded with the words of the law that were read to them. The law works death, and speaks terror, shows men their sins, and their misery and danger because of sin, and thunders a curse against every one that continues not in

every part of his duty. Therefore when they heard it they all wept (Ne 8:9): it was a good sign that their hearts were tender, like Josiah's when he heard the words of the law. They wept to think how they had offended God, and exposed themselves, by their many violations of the law; when some wept all wept, for they all saw themselves guilty before God.

II. How they were healed and comforted with the words of peace that were spoken to them. It was well that they were so much affected with the word of God, and received the impressions of it; but they must not yield unduly to their mourning, especially at this time, because the day was holy to the Lord; it was one of the solemn feasts, on which it was their duty to rejoice; and even sorrow for sin must not hinder our joy in God, but rather lead us to it and prepare us for it.

1 The masters of the assembly endeavoured to pacify them and encourage them. Now Nehemiah is brought in, and not before, in this chapter; he took notice of the people's weeping. Ezra was pleased to see them so affected with the word, but Nehemiah observed to him, and Ezra concurred in the thought, that it was now unseasonable. This day was holy (it is called a sabbath, Le 23:24), and therefore was to be celebrated with joy and praise, not as if it were a day to afflict their souls.

(1.) They forbade the people to mourn and weep (Ne 8:9): Be not sorry (Ne 8:10); hold your peace, neither be you grieved, Ne 8:11. Every thing is beautiful in its season; as we must not be merry when God calls to mourning, so we must not frighten and afflict ourselves when God gives us occasion to rejoice. Even sorrow for sin must not grow so excessive as to hinder our joy in God and our cheerfulness in his service.

(2.) They commanded them to testify their joy, to put on the garments of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness. They allowed them, in token of their joy, to feast themselves, to eat

and drink better than on other days, to eat the fat and drink the sweet; but then it must be,

[1.] With charity to the poor: "Send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared that your abundance may supply their want, that they may rejoice with you and their loins may bless you." Christ directs those that make feasts to invite their poor neighbours, Lu 14:13. But it is especially the duty of a religious feast, as well as of a religious fast, to draw out the soul to the hungry, Isa 58:7,10. God's bounty should make us bountiful. Many will eat the fat and drink the sweet themselves, even to excess, that will never allow portions, nor scarcely crumbs, to the poor, who may read their own doom in the parable of the rich man, Lu 16:19-31, &c. But such know not, or consider not, what God gave them their estates for. Observe, We must not only give to those that offer themselves, but send to those that are out of sight. The liberal devises liberal things, and seeks objects of charity.

[2.] It must be with piety and devotion: The joy of the Lord is your strength. Let it not be a carnal sensual joy, but holy and spiritual, the joy of the Lord, joy in the goodness of God, under the direction and government of the grace of God, joy arising from our interest in the love and favour of God and the tokens of his favour. "This joy will be your strength, therefore encourage it; it will be your strength,

First, For the performance of the other duties of the feast." The more cheerful we are in our religious exercises the more we shall abound in them.

Secondly, "For all that which you have to do in conformity to the law of God which has been read to you." Holy joy will be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

Thirdly, "For the resisting of your enemies that are plotting against you." The joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults

of our spiritual enemies, and put our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.

2 The assembly complied with the directions that were given them. Their weeping was stilled (Ne 8:11) and they made great mirth, Ne 8:12.

Note, We ought always to have such a command of every passion as that, however it may break out, it may soon be restrained and called in again when we are convinced that it is either unreasonable or unseasonable. He that has such a rule as this over his own spirit is better than the mighty. Observe,

(1.) After they had wept they rejoiced. Holy mourning makes way for holy mirth; those that sow in tears shall reap in joy; those that tremble at the convictions of the word may triumph in the consolations of it.

(2.) The ground of their joy was very good. They made mirth, not because they had the fat to eat and the sweet to drink, and a great deal of good company, but because they had understood the words that were declared to them. note,

[1.] To have the holy scriptures with us, and helps to understand them, is a very great mercy, which we have abundant reason to rejoice in. Bibles and ministers are the joy of God's Israel.

[2.] The better we understand the word of God the more comfort we shall find in it; for the darkness of trouble arises from the darkness of ignorance and mistake. When the words were first declared to them they wept; but, when they understood them, they rejoiced, finding at length precious promises made to those who repented and reformed and that therefore there was hope in Israel.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared:

for *this* day *is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of
the Lord is your strength.
11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for
the day *is* holy; neither be ye grieved.
12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send
portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood
the words that were declared unto them.
13 And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the
fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the
scribe, even to understand the words of the law.
14 And they found written in the law which the Lord had
commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in
booths in the feast of the seventh month:
15 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in
Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive
branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm
branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as *it is*
written.
16 So the people went forth, and brought *them*, and made themselves
booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts,
and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water
gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

We have here,

I The people's renewed attendance upon the word. They had spent the greatest part of one day in praying and hearing, and yet were so far from being weary of that new moon and sabbath that the next day after, though it was no festival, the chief of them came together again to hear Ezra expound (Ne 8:13), which they found more delightful and gainful than any worldly pleasure or profit whatsoever. Note, The more we converse with the word of God, if we rightly understand it and be affected with it, the more we shall covet to converse with it, and to increase in our acquaintance with it, saying, How sweet are thy words unto my mouth! Those that understand the scriptures well will still be desirous to understand them better. Now the priests and the Levites themselves came with the chief of the people to Ezra,

that prince of expositors, to understand the words of the law, or, as it is in the margin, that they might instruct in the words of the law; they came to be taught themselves, that they might be qualified to teach others. Observe,

1. Though, on the first day, Ezra's humility had set them on his right hand and on his left, as teachers with him (Ne 8:4,7), yet now, they being by trial made more sensible than ever of their own deficiencies and his excellencies, on the second day their humility set them at Ezra's feet, as learners of him.

2. Those that would teach others must themselves receive instructions. Priests and Levites must be taught first and then teach.

II The people's ready obedience to the word, in one particular instance, as soon as they were made sensible of their duty therein. It is probable that Ezra, after the wisdom of his God that was in his hand (Ezr 7:25), when they applied to him for instruction out of the law on the second day of the seventh month, read to them those laws which concerned the feasts of that month, and, among the rest, that of the feast of tabernacles, Le 23:34,De 16:13. Ministers should preach not only that which is true and good, but that which is seasonable, directing to the work of the day in its day. Here is,

1 The divine appointment of the feast of tabernacles reviewed, Ne 8:14,15. They found written in the law a commandment concerning it. Those that diligently search the scriptures will find those things written there which they had forgotten or not duly considered. This feast of tabernacles was a memorial of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, a representation of our tabernacle state in this world, and a type of the holy joy of the gospel church. The conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ is foretold under the figure of this feast (Zec 14:16); they shall come to keep the feast of tabernacles, as having here no continuing city. This feast was to be proclaimed in all their cities.

The people were themselves to fetch boughs of trees (they of Jerusalem fetched them from the mount of Olives) and to make booths, or arbours, of them, in which they were to lodge (as much as the weather would permit) and to make merry during the feast.

2. This appointment religiously observed, Ne 8:16,17. Then we read and hear the word acceptably and profitably when we do according to what is written therein, when what appears to be our duty is revived after it has been neglected.

(1.) They observed the ceremony: They sat in booths, which the priests and Levites set up in the courts of the temple; those that had houses of their own set up booths on the roofs of them, or in their courts; and those that had not such conveniences set them up in the streets. This feast had usually been observed (2Ch 5:3,Ezr 3:4), but never with such solemnity as now since Joshua's time, when they were newly settled, as they were now newly re-settled in Canaan. That man loves his house too well that cannot find in his heart to quit it, awhile, in compliance either with an ordinance or with a providence of God.

(2.) They minded the substance, else the ceremony, how significant soever, would have been insignificant.

[1.] They did it with gladness, with very great gladness, rejoicing in God and his goodness to them. All their holy feasts, but this especially, were to be celebrated with joy, which would be much for the honour of God, and their own encouragement in his service.

[2.] They attended the reading and expounding of the word of God during all the days of the feast, Ne 8:18. They improved their leisure for this good work. Spare hours cannot be better spent than in studying the scriptures and conversing with them. At this feast of tabernacles God appointed the law to be read once in seven years. Whether this was that year of release in which

that service was to be performed (De 31:10,11) does not appear; however they spent all the days of the feast in that good work, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, as God had appointed, in which they finished the solemnity the twenty-second day of the month, yet did not separate, for the twenty-fourth day was appointed to be spent in fasting and prayer. Holy joy just not indispose us for godly sorrow any more than godly sorrow for holy joy.

17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *was* a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

Nehemiah-9

Ezra's Confession of Israel's Sins

1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

We have here a general account of a public fast which the children of Israel kept, probably by order from Nehemiah, by and with the advice and consent of the chief of the fathers. It was a fast that men appointed, but such a fast as God had chosen; for,

1. It was a day to afflict the soul, Isa 58:5. Probably they assembled in the courts of the temple, and they there appeared in sackcloth and in the posture of mourners, with earth on their heads, Ne 9:1. By these outward expressions of sorrow and humiliation they gave glory to God, took shame to themselves, and stirred up one another to repentance. They were restrained from weeping, Ne 8:9, but now they were directed to weep. The joy of our holy feasts must give way to the sorrow of our solemn fasts when they come. Every thing is beautiful in its season.

2. It was a day to loose the bands of wickedness, and that is the fast that God has chosen, Isa 58:6. Without this, spreading sackcloth and ashes under us is but a jest. The seed of Israel, because they were a holy seed, appropriated to God and more excellent than their neighbours, separated themselves from all strangers with whom they had mingled and joined in affinity, Ne 9:2. Ezra had separated them from their strange wives some years before, but they had relapsed into the same sin, and had either made marriages or at least made friendships with them, and contracted such an intimacy as was a snare to them. But now they separated themselves from the strange children as well as from the strange wives. Those that intend by prayers and covenants to join themselves to God must separate themselves from sin and sinners; for what communion hath light with darkness?

3. It was a day of communion with God. They fasted to him, even to him (Zec 7:5); for,

(1.) They spoke to him in prayer, offered their pious and devout affections to him in the confession of sin and the adoration of him as the Lord and their God. Fasting without prayer is a body without a soul, a worthless carcase.

(2.) They heard him speaking to them by his word; for they read in the book of the law, which is very proper on fasting days, that, in the glass of the law, we may see our deformities and defilements, and know what to acknowledge and what to amend. The word will direct and quicken prayer, for by it the Spirit helps our praying infirmities. Observe how the time was equally divided between these two. Three hours (for that is the fourth part of a day) they spent in reading, expounding, and applying the scriptures, and three hours in confessing sin and praying; so that they staid together six hours, and spent all the time in the solemn acts of religion, without saying, Behold, what a weariness is it! The varying of the exercises made it the less

tedious, and, as the word they read would furnish them with matter for prayer, so prayer would make the word the more profitable. Bishop Patrick thinks that they spent the whole twelve hours of the day in devotion, that from six o'clock in the morning till nine they read, and then from nine to twelve they prayed, from twelve to three they read again, and from three till six at night they prayed again. The word of a fast day is good work, and therefore we should endeavour to make a day's work, a good day's work, of it.

2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God.

4 Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the Lord their God.

5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, *and* Pethahiah, said, Stand up *and* bless the Lord your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

6 Thou, *even* thou, *art* Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

7 Thou *art* the Lord the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

8 and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it, I say,* to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous.

We have here an account how the work of this fast-day was carried on. 1 The names of the ministers that were employed. They are twice named (Ne 9:4,5), only with some variation of the names. Either they prayed successively, according to that

rule which the apostle gives (1Co 14:31, You may all prophesy one by one), or, as some think, there were eight several congregations at some distance from each other, and each had a Levite to preside in it. 2 The work itself in which they employed themselves.

(1.) They prayed to God, cried to him with a loud voice (Ne 9:4), for the pardon of the sins of Israel and God's favour to them. They cried aloud, not that God might the better hear them, as Baal's worshippers, but that the people might, and to excite their fervency.

(2.) They praised God; for the work of praise is not unseasonable on a fast-day; in all acts of devotion we must aim at this, to give unto God the glory due to his name. The summary of their prayers we have here upon record; whether drawn up before, as a directory to the Levites what to enlarge on, or recollected after, as the heads of what they had in prayer enlarged upon, is uncertain. Much more no doubt was said than is here recorded, else confessing and worshipping God would not have taken up a fourth part of the day, much less two-fourths.

In this solemn address to God we have,

I. An awful adoration of God, as a perfect and glorious Being, and the fountain of all beings, Ne 9:5,6. The congregation is called upon to signify their concurrence herewith by standing up; and so the minister directs himself to God, Blessed be thy glorious name. God is here adored,

1. As the only living and true God: Thou art Jehovah alone, self-existent and independent; there is no God besides thee.

2. As the Creator of all things: Thou hast made heaven, earth, and seas, and all that is in them. The first article of our creed is fitly made the first article of our praises. 3. As the great

Protector of the whole creation: "Thou preservest in being all the creatures thou hast given being to." God's providence extends itself to the highest beings, for they need it, and to the meanest, for they are not slighted by it. What God has made he will preserve; what he does is done effectually, Ec 3:14. 4. As the object of the creatures' praises: "The host of heaven, the world of holy angels, worshippeth thee, Ne 9:6.

But thy name is exalted above all blessing and praise; it needs not the praises of the creatures, nor is any addition made to its glory by those praises." The best performances in the praising of God's name, even those of the angels themselves, fall infinitely short of what it deserves. It is not only exalted above our blessing, but above all blessing. Put all the praises of heaven and earth together, and the thousandth part is not said of what might and should be said of the glory of God. Our goodness extendeth not to him.

II. A thankful acknowledgment of God's favours to Israel.

1. Many of these are here reckoned up in order before him, and very much to the purpose, for,

(1.) We must take all occasions to mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and in every prayer give thanks.

(2.) When we are confessing our sins it is good to take notice of the mercies of God as the aggravations of our sins, that we may be the more humbled and ashamed, and call ourselves by the scandalous name of ungrateful.

(3.) When we are seeking to God for mercy and relief in the time of distress it is an encouragement to our faith and hope to look back upon our own and our fathers' experiences: "Lord, thou hast done well for us formerly; shall it be all undone again? Art not thou the same God still?"

2. Let us briefly observe the particular instances of God's goodness to Israel here recounted.

(1.) The call of Abraham, Ne 9:7. God's favour to him was distinguishing: "Thou didst choose him." His grace in him was powerful to bring him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and, in giving him the name of Abraham, he put honour upon him as his own and assured him that he should be the father of many nations. Look unto Abraham your father (Isa 51:2) and see free grace glorified in him.

(2.) The covenant God made with him to give the land of Canaan to him and his seed, a type of the better country, Ne 9:8. And this covenant was sure, for God found Abraham's heart faithful before God, and found it so because he made it so (for faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God), and therefore performed his words; for with the upright he will show himself upright, and wherever he finds a faithful heart he will be found a faithful God.

(3.) The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, Ne 9:9-11. It was seasonable to remember this now that they were interceding for the perfecting of their deliverance out of Babylon. They were then delivered, in compassion to their affliction, in answer to their cry, and in resistance of the pride and insolence of their persecutors. Wherein they dealt proudly, God showed himself above them (Ex 18:11), and so got himself a name; for he said, I will get me honour upon Pharaoh. Even to this day the name of God is glorified for that wonderful work. It was done miraculously: signs and wonders were shown for the effecting of it; their deliverance was the destruction of their enemies; they were thrown into the deeps, as irrecoverably as a stone into the mighty waters.

(4.) The conducting of them through the wilderness, by the pillar of cloud and fire, which showed them which way they should go, when they should remove, and when and where they

should rest, directed all their stages and all their steps, Ne 9:12. It was also a visible token of God's presence with them, to guide and guard them. They mention this again (Ne 9:19), observing that though they had by their sins provoked God to withdraw from them, and leave them to wander and perish in the by-paths of the wilderness, yet in his manifold mercy he continued to lead them, and took not away the pillar of cloud and fire, Ne 9:19. When mercies, though forfeited, are continued, we are bound to be doubly thankful.

(5.) The plentiful provision made for them in the wilderness, that they might not perish for hunger: Thou gavest them bread from heaven, and water out of the rock (Ne 9:15), and, to hold up their hearts, a promise that they should go in and possess the land of Canaan. They had meat and drink, food convenient in the way, and the good land at their journey's end; what would they more? This also is repeated (Ne 9:20) as that which was continued, notwithstanding their provocations: Forty years didst thou sustain them. Never was people so long nursed and so tenderly; they were wonderfully provided for, and, in so long a time, their clothes waxed not old, and, though the way was rough and tedious, their feet swelled not; for they were carried as upon eagles' wings.

(6.) The giving of the law upon Mount Sinai. This was the greatest favour of all that was done them and the greatest honour that was put upon them. The Lawgiver was very glorious, Ne 9:13. "Thou didst not only send, but camest down thyself, and didst speak with them," De 4:33. The law given was very good. No nation under the sun had such right judgments, true laws, and good statutes, De 4:8. The moral and judicial precepts were true and right, founded upon natural equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil; and even the ceremonial institutions were good, tokens of God's goodness to them and types of gospel grace. Particular notice is taken of the law of the fourth commandment as a great favour to them: Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, which was a token of God's

particular favour to them, distinguishing them from the nations who had revolted from God and quite lost that ancient part of revealed religion, and was likewise a means of keeping up their communion with him. And, with the law and the sabbath, he gave his good Spirit to instruct them, Ne 9:20. Besides the law given on Mount Sinai, the five books of Moses, which he wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, were constant instructions to them, particularly the book of Deuteronomy, in which God's Spirit by Moses instructed them fully. Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God (Ex 31:3), so was Joshua (Nu 27:18), and Caleb had another spirit.

(7.) The putting of them in possession of Canaan, that good land, kingdoms and nations, Ne 9:22. They were made so numerous as to replenish it (Ne 9:23) and so victorious as to be masters of it (Ne 9:24); the natives were given into their hands, that they might do with them as they would, set their feet, if they pleased, on the necks of their kings. Thus they gained a happy settlement, Ne 9:25. Look upon their cities, and you see them strong and well fortified. Look into their houses, and you find them fine and well furnished, filled with all sorts of rich goods. Take a view of the country, and you will say that you never saw such a fat land, so well stored with vineyards and oliveyards. All these they found made ready to their hands; so they delighted themselves in the gifts of God's great goodness. They could not wish to be more easy or happy than they were, or might have been, in Canaan, had it not been their own fault.

(8.) God's great readiness to pardon their sins, and work deliverance for them, when they had by their provocations brought his judgments upon themselves. When they were in the wilderness they found him a God ready to pardon (Ne 9:17), a God of pardons (so the margin reads it), who had proclaimed his name as a God forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, who has power to forgive sin, is willing to forgive, and glories in forgiving. Though they forsook him, he did not forsake them, as justly he might have done, but continued his care of them and

favour to them. Afterwards, when they were settled in Canaan and sold themselves by their sins into the hands of their enemies, upon their submission and humble request he gave them saviours (Ne 9:27), the judges, by whom God wrought many a great deliverance for them when they were on the brink of ruin. This he did, not for any merit of theirs, for their deserved nothing but ill, but according to his mercies, his manifold mercies.

(9.) The admonitions and fair warnings he gave them by his servants the prophets. When he delivered them from their troubles he testified against their sins (Ne 9:28,29), that they might not misconstrue their deliverances as connivances at their wickedness. That which was designed in all the testimonies which the prophets bore against them was to bring them again to God's law, to lay their necks under its yoke, and walk by its rule. The end of our ministry is to bring people to God by bringing them to his law, not to bring them to ourselves by bringing them under any law of ours. This we have again (Ne 9:30): Thou testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets. The testimony of the prophets was the testimony of the Spirit in the prophets, and it was the Spirit of Christ in them, 1Pe 1:10,11. They spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and what they said is to be received accordingly. God gave them his Spirit to instruct them (Ne 9:20), but, they not receiving that instruction, he did by his Spirit testify against them. If we will not suffer God's word to teach and rule us, it will accuse and judge us. God sends prophets, in compassion to his people (2Ch 36:15), that he may not send judgments.

(10.) The lengthening out of his patience and the moderating of his rebukes: Many years did he forbear them (Ne 9:30), as loth to punish them, and waiting to see if they would repent; and, when he did punish them, he did not utterly consume them nor forsake them, Ne 9:31. Had he forsaken them they would have been utterly consumed; but he did not stir up all his wrath, for he designed their reformation, not their destruction. Thus do

they multiply, thus do they magnify, the instances of God's goodness to Israel, and we should do in like manner, that the goodness of God, duly considered by us, may lead us to repentance, and overcome our badness. The more thankful we are for God's mercies the more humbled we shall be for our own sins.

III. Here is a penitent confession of sin, their own sins, and the sins of their fathers. The mention of these is interwoven with the memorials of God's favours, that God's goodness, notwithstanding their provocations, might appear the more illustrious, and their sins, notwithstanding his favours, might appear the more heinous. Many passages in this acknowledgment of sins and mercies are taken from Eze 20:5-26,Ne 9:4-38, as will appear by comparing those verses with these; for the word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, and by what he says to us we may learn what to say to him.

1. They begin with the sins of Israel in the wilderness: They, even our fathers (so it might better be read), dealt proudly (though, considering what they were, and how lately they had come out of slavery, they had no reason to be proud), and hardened their necks, Ne 9:16. Pride is at the bottom of men's obstinacy and disobedience; they think it below them to bow their necks to God's yoke, and a piece of state to set up their own will in opposition to the will of God himself.

(1.) There were two things which they did not duly give heed to, else they would not have done as they did:--The word of God they heard, but they did not hearken to God's commandments; and the works of God they saw, but they were not mindful of his wonders: had they duly considered them as miracles, they would have obeyed from a principle of faith and holy fear; had they duly considered them as mercies, they would have obeyed from a principle of gratitude and holy love. But, when men make no right use either of God's ordinances or of his providences, what can be expected from them?

(2.) Two great sins are here specified; which they were guilty of in the wilderness--meditating a return,

[1.] To Egyptian slavery, which, for the sake of the garlick and onions, they preferred before the glorious liberty of the Israel of God attended with some difficulty and inconvenience. In their rebellion they appointed a captain to return to their bondage, in distrust of God's power and contempt of his holy promise, Ne 9:17.

[2.] To Egyptian idolatry: They made a molten calf, and were so sottish as to say, This is thy God.

2. They next bewail the provocations of their fathers after they were put in possession of Canaan. Though they were delighted themselves in God's great goodness, yet that would not prevail to keep them closely to him; for, nevertheless, they were disobedient (Ne 9:26) and wrought great provocations.

For, (1.) They abused God's prophets, slew them because they testified against them to turn them to God (Ne 9:26), so returning the greatest injury for the greatest kindness.

(2.) They abused his favours: After they had rest, they did evil again, Ne 9:28. They were not wrought upon either by their troubles or their deliverances out of trouble. Neither fear nor love would hold them to their duty.

3. They at length come nearer to their own day, and lament the sins which had brought those judgments upon them which they had long been groaning under and were now but in part delivered from: We have done wickedly (Ne 9:33): our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers, have all been guilty, and we in them, Ne 9:34. Two things they charge upon themselves and their fathers, as the cause of their troubles:--

(1.) A contempt of the good law God had given them: They sinned against thy judgments, the dictates of divine wisdom, and the demands of divine sovereignty. Though they were told how much it would be for their own advantage to govern themselves by them, for, if a man do them, he shall live in them (Ne 9:29), yet they would not do them, and so, in effect, said that they would not live. They forsook their own mercies. This abridgment of the covenant, Do this and live, is taken from Eze 20:13, and is quoted, Ga 3:12, to prove that the law is not of faith; it was not them as it is now, Believe and live, yet they gave a withdrawing shoulder, so it is in the margin. They pretended to lay their shoulders under the burden of God's law, and put their shoulders to the work, but they proved withdrawing shoulders; they soon flew off, would not keep to it, would not abide by it. When it came, as we say, to the setting to, they shrunk back, and would not hear. They had a backsliding heart; and, though God by his prophets called them to return, they would not give ear, Ne 9:30. He stretched out his hands, but no man regarded.

(2.) A contempt of the good land god had given them (Ne 9:35): "Our kings have not served thee in their kingdom, have not used their power for the support of religion; our people have not served thee in the use of the gifts of thy great goodness, and in that large and fat land which thou not only gavest them by thy grant, but gavest before them by the expulsion of the natives and the complete victories they obtained over them." Those that would not serve God in their own land were made to serve their enemies in a strange land, as was threatened, De 28:47,48. It is a pity that a good land should have bad inhabitants, but so it was with Sodom. Fatness and fulness often make men proud and sensual.

IV. Here is a humble representation of the judgments of God, which they had been and were now under.

1. Former judgments are remembered as aggravations of their sins, that they had not taken warning. In the days of the judges their enemies vexed them (Ne 9:27); and, when they did evil again, God did again leave them in the hand of their enemies, who could not have touched them if God had not given them up; but, when God left them, they got and kept dominion over them.

2. Their present calamitous state is laid before the Lord (Ne 9:36,37): We are servants this day. Free-born Israelites are enslaved, and the land which they had long held by a much more honourable tenure than grand sergeantry itself, even by immediate grant from the crown of heaven to them as a peculiar people above all people on the earth, they now held by as base a tenure as villenage itself, by, from, and under, the kings of Persia, whose vassals they were. A sad change! But see what work sin makes! They were bound to personal service: They have dominion over our bodies; they held all they had precariously, were tenants at will, and the land-tax that they paid was so great that it amounted even to a rack-rent; so that all the rents, issues, and profits, of their land did in effect accrue to the king, and it was as much as they could do to get a bare subsistence for themselves and their families out of it. This, they honestly own, was for their sins. Poverty and slavery are the fruits of sin; it is sin that brings us into all our distresses.

V. Here is their address to God under these calamities.

1. By way of request, that their trouble might not seem little, Ne 9:32. It is the only petition in all this prayer. The trouble was universal; it had come on their kings, princes, priests, prophets, fathers, and all their people; they had all shared in the sin (Ne 9:34), and now all shared in the judgment. It was of long continuance: From the time of the kings of Assyria, who carried the ten tribes captive, unto this day. "Lord, let it not all seem little and not worthy to be regarded, or not needing to be relieved." They do not prescribe to God what he shall do for

them, but leave it to him, only desiring he would please to take cognizance of it, remembering that when he saw the affliction of his people in Egypt to be great he came down to deliver them, Ex 3:7,8. In this request they have an eye to God as one that is to be feared (for he is the great, the mighty, and the terrible, God), and as one that is to be trusted, for he is our God in covenant, and a God that keeps covenant and mercy.

2. By way of acknowledgment, notwithstanding, that really it was less than they deserved, Ne 9:33. They own the justice of God in all their troubles, that he had done them no wrong. "We have done wickedly in breaking thy laws, and therefore thou hast done right in bringing all these miseries upon us." Note, It becomes us, when we are under the rebukes of divine Providence, though ever so sharp and ever so long, to justify God and to judge ourselves; for he will be clear when he judgeth. Ps 51:4.

VI. Here is the result and conclusion of this whole matter. After this long remonstrance of their case was made they came at last to this resolution, that they would return to God and to their duty, and oblige themselves never to forsake God, but always to continue in their duty. "Because of all this, we make a sure covenant with God; in consideration of our frequent departures from God, we will now more firmly than ever bind ourselves to him. Because we have smarted so much for sin, we will now stedfastly resolve against it, that we may not any more withdraw the shoulder." Observe,

1. This covenant was made with serious consideration. It is the result of a chain of suitable thoughts, and so is a reasonable service.

2. With great solemnity. It was written, in perpetuam rei memoriam--that it might remain a memorial for all ages; it was sealed and left upon record, that it might be a witness against them if they dealt deceitfully.

3. With join consent: "We make it; we are all agreed in making it, and do it unanimously, that we may strengthen the hands one of another."

4. With fixed resolution: "It is a sure covenant, without reserving a power of revocation. It is what we will live and die by, and never go back from." A certain number of the princes, priests, and Levites, were chosen as the representatives of the congregation, to subscribe and seal it for and in the name of the rest. Now was fulfilled that promise concerning the Jews, that, when they returned out of captivity, they should join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant (Jer 50:5), and that in Isa 44:5, that they should subscribe with their hand unto the Lord. He that bears an honest mind will not startle at assurances; nor will those that know the deceitfulness of their own hearts think them needless.

9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;

10 and showedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as *it is* this day.

11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

14 and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

15 and gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst

them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst
sworn to give them.
16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks,
and hearkened not to thy commandments,
17 and refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou
didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion
appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God
ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great
kindness, and forsookest them not.
18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This *is* thy
God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great
provocations;
19 yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the
wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day,
to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show
them light, and the way wherein they should go.
20 Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest
not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their
thirst.
21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, *so that*
they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet
swelled not.
22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide
them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the
land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.
23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and
broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst
promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess *it*.
24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst
before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest
them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land,
that they might do with them as they would.
25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full
of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees
in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and
delighted themselves in thy great goodness.
26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and
cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which

testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;

29 and testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hands of the people of the lands.

31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God.

32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

33 Howbeit thou *art* just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:

34 neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.

35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.

36 Behold, we *are* servants this day, and *for* the land that thou gavest
unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof,
behold, we *are* servants in it:
37 and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set
over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our
bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great
distress.

The People Covenant to Keep the Law

38 And because of all this we make a sure *covenant*, and write *it;* and
our princes, Levites, *and* priests, seal *unto it*.

Nehemiah-10

1 Now those that sealed *were*, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of
Hachaliah, and Zidkijah,

When Israel was first brought into covenant with God it was done by sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood, Ex 24:1-8 But here it was done by the more natural and common way of sealing and subscribing the written articles of the covenant, which bound them to no more than was already their duty. Now here we have,

I The names of those public persons who, as the representatives and heads of the congregation, set their hands and seals to this covenant, because it would have been an endless piece of work for every particular person to do it; and, if these leading men did their part in pursuance of this covenant, their example would have a good influence upon all the people. Now observe,

1. Nehemiah, who was the governor, signed first, to show his forwardness in this work and to set others a good example, Ne 10:1. Those that are above others in dignity and power should go before them in the way of God.

2. Next to him subscribed twenty-two priests, among whom I wonder we do not find Ezra, who was an active man in the solemnity (Ne 8:2) which was but the first day of the same month, and therefore we cannot think he was absent; but he, having before done his part as a scribe, now left it to others to do theirs.

3. Next to the priests, seventeen Levites subscribed this covenant, among whom we find all or most of those who were the mouth of the congregation in prayer, Ne 9:4,5. This showed that they themselves were affected with what they had said, and would not bind those burdens on others which they themselves declined to touch. Those that lead in prayer should lead in every other good work.

4. Next to the Levites, forty-four of the chief of the people gave it under their hands for themselves and all the rest, chiefly those whom they had influence upon, that they would keep God's commandments. Their names are left upon record here, to their honour, as men that were forward and active in reviving and endeavouring to perpetuate religion in their country. The memory of such shall be blessed. It is observable that most of those who were mentioned, Ne 7:8-63, &c., as heads of houses or clans, are here mentioned among the first of the chief of the people that subscribed, whoever was the present head bearing the name of him that was head when they came out of Babylon, and these were fittest to subscribe for all those of their father's house. Here are Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani (Ne 10:14), Azgad, Bebai, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hashum, Bezai, Hariph, Anathoth, and some others in the following verses, that are all found in that catalogue. Those that have interest must use it for God.

II The concurrence of the rest of the people with them, and the rest of the priests and Levites, who signified their consent to what their chiefs did. With them joined,

1. Their wives and children; for they had transgressed, and they must reform. Every one that had knowledge and understanding must covenant with God. As soon as young people grow up to be capable of distinguishing between good and evil, and of acting intelligently, they ought to make it their own act and deed to join themselves to the Lord.

2 The proselytes of other nations, all that had separated themselves from the people of the lands, their gods and their worship, unto the law of God, and the observance of that law. See what conversion it; it is separating ourselves from the course and custom of this world, and devoting ourselves to the conduce of the word of God. And, as there is one law, so there is one covenant, one baptism, for the stranger and for him that is born in the land. Observe how the concurrence of the people is expressed, Ne 10:29.

(1.) They clave to their brethren one and all. Here those whom the court blessed the country blessed too! The commonalty agreed with their nobles in this good work. Great men never look so great as when they encourage religion, and are examples of it; and they would by that, as much as any thing, secure an interest in the most valuable of their inferiors. Let but the nobles cordially espouse religious causes, and perhaps they will find people cleave to them therein closer than they can imagine. Observe, Their nobles are called their brethren; for, in the things of God, rich and poor, high and low, meet together.

(2.) They entered into a curse and an oath. As the nobles confirmed the covenant with their hands and seals, so the people with a curse and an oath, solemnly appealing to God concerning their sincerity, and imprecating his just revenge if they dealt deceitfully. Every oath has in it a conditional curse upon the soul, which makes it a strong bond upon the soul; for our own tongues, if false and lying tongues, will fall, and fall heavily, upon ourselves.

III. The general purport of this covenant. They laid upon themselves no other burden than this necessary thing, which they were already obliged to by all other engagements of duty, interest, and gratitude--to walk in God's law, and to do all his commandments, Ne 10:29. Thus David swore that he would keep God's righteous judgments, Ps 119:106. Our own covenant binds us to this, if not more strongly, yet more sensibly, than we were before bound, and therefore we must not think it needless thus to bind ourselves. Observe, When we bind ourselves to do the commandments of God we bind ourselves to do all his commandments, and therein to have an eye to him as the Lord and our Lord.

IV. Some of the particular articles of this covenant, such as were adapted to their present temptations.

1. That they would not intermarry with the heathen, Ne 10:30. Many of them had been guilty of this, Ezr 9:1. In our covenants with God we should engage particularly against those sins that we have been most frequently overtaken in and damaged by. Those that resolve to keep the commandments of God must say to evil doers, Depart, Ps 119:115.

2. That they would keep no markets on the sabbath day, or any other day of which the law had said, You shall do no work therein. They would not only not sell goods themselves for gain on that day, but they would not encourage the heathen to sell on that day by buying of them, no not victuals, under pretence of necessity; but would buy in their provisions for their families the day before, Ne 10:31. Note, Those that covenant to keep all God's commandments must particularly covenant to keep sabbaths well; for the profanation of them is an inlet to other instances of profaneness. The sabbath is a market day for our souls, but not for our bodies.

3. That they would not be severe in exacting their debts, but would observe the seventh year as a year of release, according to

the law, Ne 10:31. In this matter they had been faulty (Ne 5:1-19), and here therefore they promise to reform. This was the acceptable fast, to undo the heavy burden, and to let the oppressed go free, Isa 58:6. It was in the close of the day of expiation that the jubilee trumpet sounded. It was for the neglect of observing the seventh year as a year of rest for the land that God had made it enjoy its sabbaths seventy years (Le 26:35), and therefore they covenanted to observe that law. Those are stubborn children indeed that will not amend the fault for which they have been particularly corrected.

2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,
3 Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah,
4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,
5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,
6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,
7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,
8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these *were* the priests.
9 And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;
10 and their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan,
11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah,
12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,
13 Hodijah, Bani, Beninu.
14 The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani,
15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,
16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,
17 Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur,
18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai,
19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,
20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,
21 Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua,
22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,
23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub,
24 Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek,
25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,
26 and Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,
27 Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the
singers, the Nethinim, and all they that had separated themselves
from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their
sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having
understanding;
29 they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse,
and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses
the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments
of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes;
30 and that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the
land, nor take their daughters for our sons:
31 and *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the
sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the
sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh
year, and the exaction of every debt.
32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with
the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God;
33 for the showbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the
continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the
set feasts, and for the holy *things*, and for the sin offerings to make
an atonement for Israel, and *for* all the work of the house of our God.
34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people,
for the wood offering, to bring *it* into the house of our God, after
the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn
upon the altar of the Lord our God, as *it is* written in the law:
35 and to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all
fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord:

Having covenanted against the sins they had been guilty of, they proceed in obliging themselves to revive and observe the duties they had neglected. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well.

I. It was resolved, in general, that the temple service should be carefully kept up, that the work of the house of their God should be done in its season, according to the law, Ne 10:33. Let not any people expect the blessing of God unless they make conscience of observing his ordinances and keeping up the public worship

of him. Then it is likely to go well with our houses when care is taken that the work of God's house go on well. It was likewise resolved that they would never forsake the house of their God (Ne 10:39), as they and their fathers had done, would not forsake it for the house of any other god, or for the high places, as idolaters did, nor forsake it for their farms and merchandises, as those did that were atheistical and profane. Those that forsake the worship of God forsake God.

II. It was resolved, in pursuance of this, that they would liberally maintain the temple service, and not starve it. The priests were ready to do their part in all the work of God's house, if the people would do theirs, which was to find them with materials to work upon. Now here it was agreed and concluded,

1. That a stock should be raised for the furnishing of God's table and altar plentifully. Formerly there were treasures in the house of the Lord for this purpose, but these were gone, and there was no settled fund to supply the want of them. It was a constant charge to provide show-bread for the table, two lambs for the daily offerings, four for the sabbaths, and more, and more costly, sacrifices for other festivals, occasional sin-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings for them all. They had no rich king to provide these, as Hezekiah did; the priests could not afford to provide them, their maintenance was so small; the people therefore agreed to contribute yearly, every one of them, the third part of a shekel, about ten pence a-piece for the bearing of this expense. When every one will act, and every one will give, though but little, towards a good work, the whole amount will be considerable. The tirshatha did not impose this tax, but the people made it an ordinance for themselves, and charged themselves with it, Ne 10:32,33.

2. That particular care should be taken to provide wood for the altar, to keep the fire always burning upon it, and wherewith to boil the peace-offerings. All of them, priests and Levites as well as people, agreed to bring in their quota, and cast lots in what

order they should bring it in, which family first and which next, that there might be a constant supply, and not a scarcity at one time and an overplus at another, Ne 10:34. Thus they provided the fire and the wood, as well as the lambs for the burnt-offerings.

3. That all those things which the divine law had appointed for the maintenance of the priests and Levites should be duly paid in, for their encouragement to mind their business, and that they might not be under any temptation to neglect it for the making of necessary provision for their families. Then the work of the house of God is likely to go on when those that serve at the altar live, and live comfortably, upon the altar. First-fruits and tenths were then the principal branches of the ministers' revenues; and they here resolved,

(1.) To bring in the first-fruits justly, the first-fruits of their ground and trees (Ex 23:19,Le 19:23), the first-born of their children (even the money wherewith they were to be redeemed) and of their cattle, Ex 13:2,11,12 (this was given to the priests, Nu 18:15,16), also the first-fruits of their dough (Nu 15:21), concerning which there is a particular order given in the prophecy concerning the second temple, Eze 44:30.

(2.) To bring in their tenths likewise, which were due to the Levites (Ne 10:37), and a tenth out of those tenths to the priest, Ne 10:38. This was the law (Nu 18:21-28); but these dues had been withheld, in consequence of which God, by the prophet, charges them with robbing him (Mal 3:8,9), at the same time encouraging them to be more just to him and his receivers, with a promise that, if they brought the tithes into the store-house, he would pour out blessings upon them, Ne 10:10. This therefore they resolved to do, that there might be meat in God's house, and plenty in the store-chambers of the temple, where the vessels of the sanctuary were, Ne 10:39. "We will do it (say they) in all the cities of our tillage," Ne 10:37.

In all the cities of our servitude, so the LXX., for they were servants in their own land, Ne 9:36. But (as Mr. Poole well observes), though they paid great taxes to the kings of Persia, and had much hardship put upon them, they would not make that an excuse for not paying their tithes, but would render to God the things that were his, as well as to Cæsar the things that were his. We must do what we can in works of piety and charity notwithstanding the taxes we pay to the government, and cheerfully perform our duty to God in our servitude, which will be the surest way to ease and liberty in God's due time.

36 also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as *it is* written in the
law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the
house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our
God:
37 and *that* we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our
offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil,
unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the
tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might
have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.
38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the
Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the
tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure
house.
39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the
offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the
chambers, where *are* the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests
that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not
forsake the house of our God.

Nehemiah-11

The Residents of Jerusalem

1 And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest of the
people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the
holy city, and nine parts *to dwell* in *other* cities.

2 And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

3 Now these *are* the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, *to wit,* Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants.

4 And at Jerusalem dwelt *certain* of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez;

Jerusalem is called here the holy city (Ne 11:1), because there the temple was, and that was the place God had chosen to put his name there; upon this account, one would think, the holy seed should all have chosen to dwell there and have striven for a habitation there; but, on the contrary, it seems they declined dwelling there,

1. Because a greater strictness of conversation was expected from the inhabitants of Jerusalem than from others, which they were not willing to come up to. Those who care not for being holy themselves are shy of dwelling in a holy city; they would not dwell in the New Jerusalem itself for that reason, but would wish to have a continuing city here upon earth. Or,

2. Because Jerusalem, of all places, was most hated by the heathen their neighbours, and against it their malicious designs were levelled, which made that the post of danger (as the post of honour usually is) and therefore they were not willing to expose themselves there. Fear of persecution and reproach, and of running themselves into trouble, keeps many out of the holy city, and makes them backward to appear for God and religion, not considering that, as Jerusalem is with a special malice threatened and insulted by its enemies, so it is with a special care protected by its God and made a quiet habitation, Isa 33:20,Ps 46:4,5. Or,

3. Because it was more for their worldly advantage to dwell in the country. Jerusalem was no trading city, and therefore there

was no money to be got there by merchandise, as there was in the country by corn and cattle. Note, All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's, Php 2:21. It is a general and just complaint that most people prefer their own wealth, credit, pleasure, ease, and safety, before the glory of God and the public good. People being thus backward to dwell at Jerusalem, now that it was poor, we are here told,

I. By what means it was replenished.

1 The rulers dwelt there, Ne 11:1. That was the proper place for them to reside in, because there were set the thrones of judgment (Ps 122:5), and thither, in all difficult matters, the people resorted with their last appeals. And if it were an instance of eminent affection to the house of God, zeal for the public good, and of faith, and holy courage, and self-denial, to dwell there at this time, the rulers would be examples of these to their inferiors. Their dwelling there would invite and encourage others to dwell there too. Magnates magnetes--the mighty are magnetic. When great men choose the holy city for their habitation their example brings holiness into reputation, and their zeal will provoke very many.

2. There were some that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, nobly foregoing their own secular interest for the public welfare, Ne 11:2. It is upon record, to their honour, that when others were shy of venturing upon difficulty, loss, and danger, they sought the good of Jerusalem, because of the house of the Lord their God. Those shall prosper that thus love Zion, Ps 122:6,9. It is said, The people blessed them. They praised them; they prayed for them; they praised God for them. Many that do not appear forward themselves for the public good will yet give a good word to those that do. God and man will bless those that are public blessings, which should encourage us to be zealous in doing good.

3. They, finding that yet there was room, concluded upon a review of their whole body to bring one in ten to dwell in Jerusalem; who they should be was determined by lot, the disposal whereof, all knew, was of the Lord. This would prevent strife, and would be a great satisfaction to those on whom the lot fell to dwell at Jerusalem, that they plainly saw God appointing the bounds of their habitation. They observed the proportion of one in ten, as we may suppose, to bring the balance between the city and country to a just and equal poise; so it seems to refer to the ancient rule of giving the tenth to God; and what is given to the holy city he reckons given to himself.

II. By what persons it was replenished. A general account is here given of the inhabitants of Jerusalem because the governors of Judah looked upon them as their strength in the Lord of hosts their God, and valued them accordingly, Zec 12:5. 1. Many of the children of Judah and Benjamin dwelt there; for, originally, part of the city law in the lot of one of those tribes and part in that of the other; but the greater part was in the lot of Benjamin, and therefore here we find of the children of Judah only 468 families in Jerusalem (Ne 11:6), but of Benjamin 928, Ne 11:7,8. Thus small were its beginnings, but afterwards, before our Saviour's time, it grew much more populous. Those of Judah all descended from Perez, or Pharez, that son of Judah of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. And, though the Benjamites were more in number, yet of the men of Judah it is said (Ne 11:6) that they were valiant men, fit for service, and able to defend the city in case of an attack. Judah has not lost its ancient character of a lion's whelp, bold and daring. Of the Benjamites that dwelt in Jerusalem we are here told who was overseer, and who was second, Ne 11:9. For it is as necessary for a people to have good order kept up among themselves as to be fortified against the attacks of their enemies from abroad, to have good magistrates as to have good soldiers.

2 The priests and Levites did many of them settle at Jerusalem; where else should men that were holy to God dwell, but in the holy city?

(1.) Most of the priests, we may suppose, dwelt there, for their business lay where the temple was. Of those that did the work of the house in their courses here were 822 of one family, 242 of another, and 128 of another, Ne 11:12-14. It was well that those labourers were not few. It is said of some of them that they were mighty men of valour (Ne 11:14); it was necessary that they should be so, for the priesthood was not only a work, which required might, but a warfare, which required valour, especially now. Of one of these priests it is said that he was the son of one of the great men. It was no disparagement to the greatest man they had to have his son in the priesthood; he might magnify his office, for his office did not in the least diminish him.

(2.) Some of the Levites also came and dwelt at Jerusalem, yet but few in comparison, 284 in all (Ne 11:18), with 172 porters (Ne 11:19), for much of their work was to teach the good knowledge of God up and down the country, for which purpose they were to be scattered in Israel. As many as there was occasion for attended at Jerusalem; the rest were doing good elsewhere.

[1.] It is said of one of the Levites that he had the oversight of the outward business of the house of God, Ne 11:16. The priests were chief managers of the business within the temple gates; but this Levite was entrusted with the secular concerns of God's house, that were in ordine ad spiritualia--subservient to its spiritual concerns, the collecting of the contributions, the providing of materials for the temple service, and the like, which it was necessary to oversee, else the inward business would have been starved and have stood still. Those who take care of the ta exo--the outward concerns of the church, the serving of its tables, are as necessary in their place as those who take care of its ta

eso--its inward concerns, who give themselves to the word and prayer.

[2.] It is said of another that he was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer. Probably he had a good ear and a good voice, and was a scientific singer, and therefore was chosen to lead the psalm. He was precentor in the temple. Observe, Thanksgiving is necessary in prayer; they should go together; giving thanks for former mercies is a becoming way of begging further mercies. And care should be taken in public service that every thing be done in the best manner, decently and in good order-- in prayer, that one speak and the rest join--in singing, that one begin and the rest follow.

5 and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni.

6 All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem *were* four hundred threescore and eight valiant men.

7 And these *are* the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah.

8 And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight.

9 And Joel the son of Zichri *was* their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah *was* second over the city.

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin.

11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, *was* the ruler of the house of God.

12 And their brethren that did the work of the house *were* eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah,

13 and his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,

14 and their brethren, mighty men of valor, a hundred twenty and eight: and their overseer *was* Zabdiel, the son of *one of* the great men.

15 Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the son of
Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;
16 and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, *had* the
oversight of the outward business of the house of God.
17 And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of
Asaph, *was* the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and
Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of
Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.
18 All the Levites in the holy city *were* two hundred fourscore and
four.
19 Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that
kept the gates, *were* a hundred seventy and two.
20 And the residue of Israel, of the priests, *and* the Levites, *were* in all
the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance.

Having given an account of the principal persons that dwelt in Jerusalem (a larger account of whom he had before, 1Ch 9:2-34, &c.), Nehemiah, in these verses, gives us some account of the other cities, in which dwelt the residue of Israel, Ne 11:20. It was requisite that Jerusalem should be replenished, yet not so as to drain the country. The king himself is served of the field, which will do little service if there be not hands to manage it. Let there therefore be no strife, no envy, no contempt, no ill will, between the inhabitants of the cities and those of the villages; both are needful, both useful, and neither can be spared.

1 The Nethinims, the posterity of the Gibeonites, dwelt in Ophel, which was upon the wall of Jerusalem (Ne 3:26), because they were to do the servile work of the temple, which therefore they must be posted near to, that they might be ready to attend, Ne 11:21.

2. Though the Levites were dispersed through the cities of Judah, yet they had an overseer who resided in Jerusalem, superior of their order and their provincial, to whom they applied for direction, who took care of their affairs and took cognizance of their conduct, whether they did their duty, Ne 11:22.

3. Some of the singers were appointed to look after the necessary repairs of the temple, being ingenious men, and having leisure between their hours of service; they were over the business of the house of God, Ne 11:22. And, it seems, the king of Persia had such a kindness for their office that he allotted a particular maintenance for them, besides what belonged to them as Levites, Ne 11:23.

4. Here is one that was the king's commissioner at Jerusalem. He was of the posterity of Zerah (Ne 11:24); for of that family of Judah there were some new settled in Jerusalem, and not all of Pharez, as appears by that other catalogue, 1Ch 9:6. He is said to be at the king's hand, or on the king's part, in all matters concerning the people, to determine controversies that arose between the king's officers and his subjects, to see that what was due to the king from the people was duly paid in and what was allowed by the king for the temple service was duly paid out, and happy it was for the Jews that one of themselves was in this post.
5. Here is an account of the villages, or country towns, which were inhabited by the residue of Israel--the towns in which the children of Judah dwelt (Ne 11:25-30), those that were inhabited by the children of Benjamin (Ne 11:31-35), and divisions for the Levites among both, Ne 11:36. We will now suppose them safe and easy, though few and poor, but by the blessing of God they were likely to increase in wealth and power, and they would have been more likely if there had not been that general profaneness among them, and lukewarmness in religion, with which they were charged in God's name by the prophet Malachi, who, it is supposed, prophesied about this time, and in whom prophecy ceased for some ages, till it revived in the great prophet and his forerunner.

21 But the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa *were* over
the Nethinim.

22 The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem *was* Uzzi the son of
Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of
Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers *were* over the business of
the house of God.

23 For *it was* the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain
portion should be for the singers, due for every day.

24 And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, *was* at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

The Settlement outside of Jerusalem

25 And for the villages, with their fields, *some* of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and *in* the villages thereof,
26 and at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-phelet,
27 and at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba, and *in* the villages thereof,
28 and at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof,
29 and at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth,
30 Zanoah, Adullam, and *in* their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and *in* the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom.
31 The children also of Benjamin from Geba *dwelt* at Michmash, and Aija, and Beth-el, and *in* their villages,
32 *and* at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,
33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,
34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,
35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.
36 And of the Levites *were* divisions *in* Judah, *and* in Benjamin.

Nehemiah-12

The Priests and Levites

1 Now these *are* the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

We have here the names, and little more than the names, of a great many priests and Levites, that were eminent in their day among the returned Jews. Why this register should be here inserted by Nehemiah does not appear, perhaps to keep in remembrance those good men, that posterity might know to whom they were beholden, under God, for the happy revival

and re-establishment of their religion among them. Thus must we contribute towards the performance of that promise, Ps 112:6, The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. Let the memory of the just be blessed, be perpetuated. It is a debt we still owe to faithful ministers to remember our guides, who have spoken to us the word of God, Heb 13:7. Perhaps it is intended to stir up their posterity, who succeeded them in the priest's office and inherited their dignities and preferments, to imitate their courage and fidelity. It is good to know what our godly ancestors and predecessors were, that we may learn thereby what we should be. We have here,

1 The names of the priests and Levites that came up with the first out of Babylon, when Jeshua was high priest. Jeremiah and Ezra are mentioned with the first (Ne 12:1), but, it is supposed, not Jeremiah the prophet nor Ezra the scribe; the fame of the one was long before and that of the other some time after, though both of them were priests. Of one of the Levites it is said (Ne 12:8) that he was over the thanksgiving, that is, he was entrusted to see that the psalms, the thanksgiving psalms, were constantly sung in the temple in due time and manner. The Levites kept their turns in their watches, reliving one another as becomes brethren, fellow-labourers, and fellow-soldiers.

2 The succession of high priests during the Persian monarchy, from Jeshua (or Jesus), who was high priest at the time of the restoration, to Jaddua (or Jaddus), who was high priest when Alexander the Great, after the conquest of Tyre, came to Jerusalem, and paid great respect to this Jaddus, who met him in his pontifical habit, and showed him the prophecy of Daniel, which foretold his conquests.

3. The next generation of priests, who were chief men, and active in the days of Joiakim, sons of the first set. Note, We have reason to acknowledge God's favour to his church, and care of it, in that, as one generation of ministers passes away, another comes. All those who are mentioned Ne 12:1-11, &c.,

as eminent in their generation, are again mentioned, though with some variation in several of the names, Ne 12:12-24, &c., except two, as having sons that were likewise eminent in their generation--a rare instance, that twenty good fathers should leave behind them twenty good sons (for so many here are) that filled up their places.

4. The next generation of Levites, or rather a latter generation; for those priests who are mentioned flourished in the days of Joiakim the high priest, these Levites in the days of Eliashib, Ne 12:22. Perhaps then the forementioned families of the priests began to degenerate, and the third generation of them came short of the first two; but the work of God shall never fail for want of instruments. Then a generation of Levites was raised up, who were recorded chief of the fathers (Ne 12:22), and were eminently serviceable to the interests of the church, and their service not the less acceptable either to God or to his people for their being Levites only, of the lower rank of ministers. Eliashib the high priest being allied to Tobiah (Ne 13:4), the other priests grew remiss; but then the Levites appeared the more zealous, as appears by this, that those who were now employed in expounding (Ne Ne 8:7) and in praying (Ne 9:4,5) were all Levites, not priests, regard being had to their personal qualifications more than to their order. These Levites were some of them singers (Ne 12:24), to praise and give thanks, others of them porters (Ne 12:25), keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates, and both according to the command of David.

2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,
3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,
4 Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah,
5 Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,
6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah,
7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These *were* the chief of the priests
and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua.
8 Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah,
and Mattaniah, *which was* over the thanksgiving, he and his
brethren.

9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, *were* over against them
in the watches.
10 And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib
begat Joiada,
11 and Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua.
12 And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers:
of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;
13 of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;
14 of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;
15 of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;
16 of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;
17 of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah, Piltai;
18 of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;
19 and of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;
20 of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;
21 of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.
22 The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and
Jaddua, *were* recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the
reign of Darius the Persian.
23 The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, *were* written in the book
of the Chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of
Eliashib.
24 And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the
son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise *and*
to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of
God, ward over against ward.
25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub,
were porters keeping the ward at the threshholds of the gates.
26 These *were* in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of
Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the
priest, the scribe.

The Dedication of the Wall

27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the
Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep
the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with
singing, *with* cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.

We have read of the building of the wall of Jerusalem with a great deal of fear and trembling; we have here an account of the dedicating of it with a great deal of joy and triumph. Those that sow in tears shall thus reap.

I. We must enquire what was the meaning of this dedication of the wall; we will suppose it to include the dedication of the city too (continens pro contento--the thing containing for the thing contained), and therefore it was not done till the city was pretty well replenished, Ne 11:1. It was a solemn thanksgiving to God for his great mercy to them in the perfecting of this undertaking, of which they were the more sensible because of the difficulty and opposition they had met with in it. 2. They hereby devoted the city in a peculiar manner to God and to his honour, and took possession of it for him and in his name. All our cities, all our houses, must have holiness to the Lord written upon them; but this city was (so as never any other was) a holy city, the city of the great King (Ps 48:2,Mt 5:35): it had been so ever since God chose it to put his name there, and as such, it being now refitted, it was afresh dedicated to God by the builders and inhabitants, in token of their acknowledgment that they were his tenants, and their desire that it might still be is and that the property of it might never be altered.

Whatever is done for their safety, ease, and comfort, must be designed for God's honour and glory. 3. They hereby put the city and its walls under the divine protection, owning that unless the Lord kept the city the walls were built in vain. When this city was in possession of the Jebusites, they committed the guardianship of it to their gods, though they were blind and lame ones, 2Sa 5:6. With much more reason do the people of God commit it to his keeping who is all-wise and almighty. The superstitious founders of cities had an eye to the lucky position of the heavens (see Mr. Gregory's works, p. 29, &c.); but these pious founders had an eye to God only, to his providence, and not to fortune.

II. We must observe with what solemnity it was performed, under the direction of Nehemiah.

1 The Levites from all parts of the country were summoned to attend. The city must be dedicated to God, and therefore his ministers must be employed in the dedicating of it, and the surrender must pass through their hands. When those solemn feasts were over (Ne 8:1-9:38) they went home to their respective posts, to mind their cures in the country; but now their presence and assistance were again called for.

2. Pursuant to this summons, there was a general rendezvous of all the Levites, Ne 12:28,29. Observe in what method they proceeded.

(1.) They purified themselves, Ne 12:30. We are concerned to cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts, when any work for God is to pass through them. They purified themselves and then the people. Those that would be instrumental to sanctify others must sanctify themselves, and set themselves apart for God, with purity of mind and sincerity of intention. Then they purified the gates and the wall. Then may we expect comfort when we are prepared to receive it. To the pure all things are pure (Tit 1:15); and, to those who are sanctified, houses and tables, and all their creature comforts and enjoyments, are sanctified, 1Ti 4:4,5. This purification was performed, it is probable, by sprinkling the water of purifying (or of separation, as it is called, Nu 19:9) on themselves and the people, the walls and the gates--a type of the blood of Christ, with which our consciences being purged from dead works, we become fit to serve the living God (Heb 9:14) and to be his care.

(2.) The princes, priests, and Levites, walked round upon the wall in two companies, with musical instruments, to signify the dedication of it all to God, the whole circuit of it (Ne 12:36); so that it is likely they sung psalms as they went along, to the praise and glory of God. This procession is here largely described. They

had a rendezvous at one certain lace, where they divided themselves into two companies. Half of the princes, with several priests and Levites, went on the right hand, Ezra leading their van, Ne 12:36. The other half of the princes and priests, who gave thanks likewise, went to the left hand, Nehemiah bringing up the rear, Ne 12:38. At length both companies met in the temple, where they joined their thanksgivings, Ne 12:40. The crowd of people, it is likely, walked on the ground, some within the wall and others without, one end of this ceremony being to affect them with the mercy they were giving thanks for, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it among them. Processions, for such purposes, have their use.

(3.) The people greatly rejoiced, Ne 12:43. While the princes, priests, and Levites, testified their joy and thankfulness by great sacrifices, sound of trumpet, musical instruments, and songs of praise, the common people testified theirs by loud shouts, which were heard afar off, further than the more harmonious sound of their songs and music: and these shouts, coming from a sincere and hearty joy, are here taken notice of; for God overlooks not, but graciously accepts, the honest zealous services of mean people, though there is in them little of art and they are far from being fine. It is observed that the women and children rejoiced; and their hosannas were not despised, but recorded to their praise. All that share in public mercies ought to join in public thanksgivings. The reason given is that God had made them rejoice with great joy. He had given them both matter for joy and hearts to rejoice; his providence had made them safe and easy, and then his grace made them cheerful and thankful. The baffled opposition of their enemies, no doubt, added to their joy and mixed triumph with it. Great mercies call for the most solemn returns of praise, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem!

28 And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi;

29 also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and
Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round about
Jerusalem.
30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified
the people, and the gates, and the wall.
31 Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed
two great *companies of them that gave* thanks, *whereof one* went on the
right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate:
32 and after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah,
33 and Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,
34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,
35 and *certain* of the priests' sons with trumpets; *namely,* Zechariah
the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah,
the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph:
36 and his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai,
Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of
David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them.
37 And at the fountain gate, which was over against them, they went
up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall,
above the house of David, even unto the water gate eastward.
38 And the other *company of them that gave* thanks went over against
them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall,
from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall;
39 and from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old gate, and
above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of
Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison
gate.
40 So stood the two *companies of them that gave* thanks in the house of
God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me:
41 and the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai,
Zechariah, *and* Hananiah, with trumpets;
42 and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and
Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers
sang loud, with Jezrahiah *their* overseer.
43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had
made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children
rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

The Provision for the Priests and Levites

44 And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the
treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to
gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the
law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and
for the Levites that waited.

We have here an account of the remaining good effects of the universal joy that was at the dedication of the wall. When the solemnities of a thanksgiving day leave such impressions on ministers and people as that both are more careful and cheerful in doing their duty afterwards, then they are indeed acceptable to God and turn to a good account. So it was here.

1 The ministers were more careful than they had been of their work; the respect the people paid them upon this occasion encouraged them to diligence and watchfulness, Ne 12:45. The singers kept the ward of their God, attending in due time to the duty of their office; the porters, too, kept the ward of the purification, that is, they took care to preserve the purity of the temple by denying admission to those that were ceremonially unclean. When the joy of the Lord thus engages us to our duty, and enlarges us in it, it is then an earnest of that joy which, in concurrence with the perfection of holiness, will be our everlasting bliss.

2 The people were more careful than they had been of the maintenance of their ministers. The people, at the dedication of the wall, among other things which they made matter of their joy, rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited, Ne 12:44. They had a great deal of comfort in their ministers, and were glad of them. When they observed how diligently they waited, and what pains they took in their work, they rejoiced in them.

Note, The surest way for ministers to recommend themselves to their people, and gain an interest in their affections, is to wait on their ministry (Ro 12:7), to be humble and industrious, and to mind their business. When these did so the people thought nothing too much to do for them, to encourage them. The law had provided then their portions (Ne 12:44), but what the better were they for that provision if what the law appointed them either was not duly collected or not justly paid to them? Now,

(1.) Care is here taken for the collecting of their dues. They were modest, and would rather lose their right than call for it themselves. The people were many of them careless and would not bring their dues unless they were called upon; and therefore some were appointed whose office it should be to gather into the treasuries, out of the fields of the cities, the portions of the law for the priests and Levites (Ne 12:44), that their portion might not be lost for want of being demanded. This is a piece of good service both to ministers and people, that the one may not come short of their maintenance nor the other of their duty.

(2.) Care is taken that, being gathered in, they might be duly paid out, Ne 12:47. They gave the singers and porters their daily portion, over and above what was due to them as Levites; for we may suppose that when David and Solomon appointed them their work (Ne 12:45,46), above what was required from them as Levites, they settled a fund for their further encouragement. Let those that labour more abundantly in the word and doctrine be counted worthy of this double honour. As for the other Levites, the tithes, here called the holy things, were duly set apart for them, out of which they paid the priests their tithe according to the law. Both are said to be sanctified; when what is contributed, either voluntarily or by law, for the support of religion and the maintenance of the ministry, is given with an eye to God and his honour, it is sanctified, and

shall be accepted of him accordingly, and it will cause the blessing to rest on the house and all that is in it, Eze 44:30.

45 And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, *and* of Solomon his son.

46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified *them* unto the children of Aaron.

Nehemiah-13

Nehemiah's Reforms

1 On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;

It was the honour of Israel, and the greatest preservation of their holiness, that they were a peculiar people, and were so to keep themselves, and not to mingle with the nations, nor suffer any of them to incorporate with them. Now here we have,

I The law to this purport, which happened to be read on that day, in the audience of the people (Ne 13:1), on the day of the dedication of the wall, as it should seem, for with their prayers and praises they joined the reading of the word; and though it was long after that the other grievances, here mentioned, were redressed by Nehemiah's power, yet this of the mixed multitude might be redressed then by the people's own act, for so it seems to be, Ne 13:3. Or, perhaps, it was on the anniversary commemoration of that day, some years after, and therefore said to be on that day. They found a law, that the Ammonites and Moabites should not be naturalized, should not settle among them, nor unite with them, Ne 13:1 The reason given is

because they had been injurious and ill-natured to the Israel of God (Ne 13:2), had not shown them common civility, but sought their ruin, though they not only did them no harm, but were expressly forbidden to do them any. This law we have, with this reason, De 23:3-5.

II The people's ready compliance with this law, Ne 13:3. See the benefit of the public reading of the word of God; when it is duly attended to it discovers to us sin and duty, good and evil, and shows us wherein we have erred. Then we profit by the discovery when by it we are wrought upon to separate ourselves from all that evil to which we had addicted ourselves. They separated from Israel all the mixed multitude, which had of old been a snare to them, for the mixed multitude fell a lusting, Nu 11:4. These inmates they expelled, as usurpers and dangerous.

III. The particular case of Tobiah, who was an Ammonite, and to whom, it is likely, the historian had an eye in the recital of the law (Ne 13:1), and the reason of it, Ne 13:2. For he had the same enmity to Israel that his ancestors had, the spirit of an Ammonite, witness his indignation at Nehemiah (Ne 2:10) and the opposition he had given to his undertakings, Ne 4:7,8. Observe,

1. How basely Eliashib the chief priest took this Tobiah in to be a lodger even in the courts of the temple.

(1.) He was allied to Tobiah (Ne 13:4), by marriage first and then by friendship. His grandson had married Sanballat's daughter, Ne 13:28. Probably some other of his family had married Tobiah's, and (would you think it?) the high priest thought the alliance an honour to his family, and was very proud of it, though really it was his greatest disgrace, and what he had reason to be ashamed of. It was expressly provided by the law that the high priest should marry one of his own people, else he profanes his seed among his people, Le 21:14,15. And for Eliashib to contract an alliance with an Ammonite, a servant

(for so he is called) and to value himself upon it, probably because he has a wit and a beau, and cried up for a fine gentleman (Ne 6:19), was such a contempt of the crown of his consecration as one would not wish should be told in Gath or published in the streets of Ashkelon.

(2.) Being allied to him, he must be acquainted with him. Tobiah, being a man of business, has often occasion to be at Jerusalem, I doubt upon no good design. Eliashib is fond of his new kinsman, pleased with his company, and must have him as near him as he can. He has not a room for him stately enough in his own apartment, in the courts of the temple; therefore, out of several little chambers which had been used for store-chambers, by taking down the partitions, he contrived to make one great chamber, a state-room for Tobiah, Ne 13:5. A wretched thing it was,

[1.] That Tobiah the Ammonite should be entertained with respect in Israel, and have a magnificent reception.

[2.] That the high priest, who should have taught the people the law and set them a good example, should, contrary to the law, give him entertainment, and make use of the power he had, as overseer of the chambers of the temple, for that purpose.

[3.] That he should lodge him in the courts of God's house, as if to confront God himself; this was next to setting up an idol there, as the wicked kings of old had done. An Ammonite must not come into the congregation; and shall one of the worst and vilest of the Ammonites be courted into the temple itself, and caressed there?

[4.] That he should throw out the stores of the temple, to make room for him, and so expose them to be lost, wasted, and embezzled, though they were the portions of the priests, merely to gratify Tobiah. Thus did he corrupt the covenant of Levi, as Malachi complained at this time, Ne 2:8. Well might Nehemiah

add (Ne 13:6), But all this time was not I at Jerusalem. If he had been there, the high priest durst not have done such a thing. The envious one, who sows tares in God's field, knows how to take an opportunity to do it when the servants sleep or are absent, Mt 13:25. The golden calf was made when Moses was in the mount.

2. How bravely Nehemiah, the chief governor, threw him out, and all that belonged to him, and restored the chambers to their proper use. When he came to Jerusalem, and was informed by the good people who were troubled at it what an intimacy had grown between their chief priest and their chief enemy, it grieve him sorely (Ne 13:7,8) that God's house should be so profaned, his enemies so caressed and trusted, and his cause betrayed by him that should have been its protector and patron. Nothing grieves a good man, a good magistrate, more than to see the ministers of God's house do any wicked thing. Nehemiah has power and he will use it for God.

(1.) Tobiah shall be expelled. He fears not disobliging him, fears not his resentments, or Eliashib's, nor excuses himself from interposing in an affair that lay within the jurisdiction of the high priest; but, like one zealously affected in a good thing, he expels the intruder, by casting forth all his household stuff. He did not seize it for his own use, but cast it out, that Tobiah, who it is probable was now absent, when he came again, might have no conveniences for his reception there. Our Saviour thus cleansed the temple, that the house of prayer might not be a den of thieves. And thus those that would expel sin out of their hearts, those living temples, must throw out its household stuff and all the provision made for it, strip it, starve it, and take away all those things that are the food and fuel of lust; this is, in effect, to mortify it.

(2.) The temple stores shall be brought in again, and the vessels of the house of God put in their places; but the chambers must first be sprinkled with the water of purification, and so cleansed,

because they had been profaned. Thus, when sin is cast out of the heart by repentance, let the blood of Christ be applied to it by faith, and then let it be furnished with the graces of God's Spirit for every good work.

2 because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, *was* allied unto Tobiah:

5 and he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded *to be given* to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

6 But in all this *time* was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king:

7 and I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.

8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.

9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense.

10 And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them:* for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field.

Here is another grievance redressed by Nehemiah.

I The Levites had been wronged. This was the grievance: their portions had not been given them, Ne 13:10. Perhaps Tobiah, when he took possession of the store-chambers, seized the stores too, and, by the connivance of Eliashib, converted them to his own use. The complaint is not that they were not collected

from the people, but that they were not given to the Levites, and the Levites were so modest as not to sue for them; for the Levites and singers fled every one to his field. This comes in as a reason either,

(1.) Why their payments were withheld. The Levites were non-residents: when they should have been doing their work about the temple, they were at their farms in the country; and therefore the people were little inclined to give them their maintenance. If ministers have not the encouragement they should have, let them consider whether they themselves be not accessory to the contempt they are under, by the neglect of their business. Or rather,

(2.) It is the reason why Nehemiah soon perceived that their dues had been denied them, because he missed them from their posts. "Where are the singers" (said Nehemiah); "why do not they attend according to their office, to praise God?" "Why, truly, they have gone every one to his country seat, to get a livelihood for themselves and their families out of their grounds; for their profession would not maintain them." A scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. The work is neglected because the workmen are. It was not long since the payment of the salaries appointed for the singers was put into a very good method (Ne 12:47); and yet how soon did it fail for want of being looked after!

II. Nehemiah laid the fault upon the rulers, who should have taken care that the Levites minded their business and had all due encouragement therein. This is required from Christian magistrates, that they use their power to oblige ministers to do their duty, and people to do theirs. Nehemiah began with the rulers, and called them to an account: "Why is the house of God forsaken? Ne 13:11. Why are the Levites starved out of it? Why did not you take notice of this and prevent it?" The people forsook the Levites, which was expressly forbidden (De 12:19,14:27); and then the Levites forsook their post in the

house of God. Both ministers and people who forsake religion and the services of it, and magistrates too who do not what they can to keep them to it, will have a great deal to answer for.

III. He delayed not to bring the dispersed Levites to their places again, and set them in their stations (as the word is), Ne 13:11. A Levite in his field (clericus in foro--a minister keeping the market) is out of his station. God's house is his place, and there let him be found. Many that are careless would do much better than they do if they were but called upon. Say to Archippus, Take heed to thy ministry.

IV. He obliged the people to bring in their tithes, Ne 13:12. His zeal provoked theirs; and, when they saw the Levites at their work, they could not for shame withhold their wages any longer, but honestly and cheerfully brought them in. The better church-work is done the better will church-dues be paid.

V. He provided that just and prompt payment should be made of the Levites' stipends. Commissioners were appointed to see to this (Ne 13:13), and they were such as were accounted faithful, that is, had approved themselves so in other trusts committed to them, and so had purchased to themselves this good degree, 1Ti 3:13. Let men be tried first and then trusted, tried in the less and then trusted with more. Their office was to receive and pay, to distribute to their brethren in due season and due proportions.

VI. Having no recompence (it is a question whether he had thanks) from those for whom he did these good services, he looks up to God as his paymaster (Ne 13:14): Remember me, O my God! concerning this. Nehemiah was a man much in pious ejaculations; on every occasion he looked up to God, and committed himself and his affairs to him.

1. He here reflects with comfort and much satisfaction upon what he had done for the house of God and the offices thereof;

it pleased him to think that he had been any way instrumental to revive and support religion in his country and to reform what was amiss. What kindness any show to God's ministers, thus shall it be returned into their own bosoms, in the secret joy they shall have there, not only in having done well, but in having done good, good to many, good to souls.

2. He here refers it to God to consider him for it, not in pride, or as boasting of what he had done, much less depending upon it as his righteousness, or as if he thought he had made God a debtor to him, but in a humble appeal to him concerning his integrity and honest intention in what he had done, and a believing expectation that he would not be unrighteous to forget his work and labour of love, Heb 6:10. Observe how modest he is in his requests. He only prays, Remember me, not Reward me--Wipe not out my good deeds, not Publish them, Record them. Yet he was rewarded and his good deeds were recorded; for God does more than we are able to ask. Note, Deeds done for the house of God and the offices of it, for the support of religion and the encouragement of it, are good deeds. There is both righteousness and godliness in them, and God will certainly remember them, and not wipe them out; they shall in no wise lose their reward.

11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God
forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their
place.
12 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and
the oil unto the treasuries.
13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest,
and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them
was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were
counted faithful, and their office *was* to distribute unto their
brethren.
14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my
good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the
offices thereof.
15 In those days saw I in Judah *some* treading winepresses on the
sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine,

grapes, and figs, and all *manner of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified *against them* in the day wherein they sold victuals.

16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing *is* this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

Here is another instance of that blessed reformation in which Nehemiah was so active. He revived sabbath-sanctification, and maintained the authority of the fourth commandment; and a very good deed this was for the house of God and the offices thereof, for, where holy time is over-looked and made nothing of, it is not strange if all holy duties be neglected. Here is,

I. A remonstrance of the abuse. The law of the sabbath was very strict and much insisted one, and with good reason, for religion is never in the throne while sabbaths are trodden under foot. But Nehemiah discovered even in Judah, among those to whom sabbaths were given for a sign, this law wretchedly violated. His own eyes were his informers. Magistrates who are in care to discharge their duty aright will as much as may be see with their own eyes, and accomplish a diligent search to find out that which is evil. To his great grief it appeared that there was a general profanation of the sabbath, that holy day, even in Jerusalem, that holy city, which was so lately dedicated to God.

1 The husbandmen trod their wine-presses and brought home their corn on that day (Ne 13:15), through there was an express

command that in earing-time, and in harvest-time, they should rest on the sabbaths (Ex 34:21), because then they might be tempted to take a greater liberty, and to fancy that God would indulge them in it.

2 The carriers loaded their asses with all manner of burdens, and made no scruple of it, though there was a particular proviso in the law for the cattle resting (De 5:14) and that they should bear no burden on the sabbath day, Jer 17:21. 3. The hawkers, and pedlars, and petty chapmen, that were men of Tyre, that famous trading city, sold all manner of wares on the sabbath day (Ne 13:16); and the children of Judah and Jerusalem had so little grace as to buy of them, and so encourage them in making our Father's day a day of merchandise, contrary to the law of the fourth commandment, which forbids the doing any manner of work. No wonder there was a general decay of religion and corruption of manners among this people when they forsook the sanctuary and profaned the sabbath.

II The reformation of it. Those that are jealous for the honour of God cannot bear to see his sabbath profaned. Observe in what method this good man proceeded in his zeal for the sabbath.

1. He testified against those who profaned it, Ne 13:15, and again Ne 13:21. He not only expressed his own dislike of it, but endeavoured to convince them that it was a great sin, and showed them the testimony of the word of God against it. He would not punish it till he had laid open the evil of it.

2. He reasoned with the rulers concerning it, took the nobles of Judah to task, and contended with them, Ne 13:17. The greatest of men are not too high to be told of their faults by those whose proper office it is to reprove them; nay, great men should be, as here, contended with in the first place, because of the influence they have upon others.

(1.) He charges them with it: You do it. They did not carry corn, nor sell fish, but,

[1.] They connived at those that did, and did not use their power to restrain them, and so made themselves guilty, as those magistrates do who bear the sword in vain.

[2.] They set a bad example in other things. If the nobles allowed themselves in sports and recreations, in idle visits and idle talk, on the sabbath day, the men of business, both in city and country, would profane it by their worldly employments, as more justifiable. We must be responsible for the sins which others are led to commit by our example.

(2.) He charges it upon them as an evil thing, for so it is, proceeding from a great contempt of God and our own souls.

(3.) He reasons the case with them (Ne 13:18), and shows them that sabbath breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgments upon them, and that if they did not take warning, but returned to the same sins again, they had reason to expect further judgments: You bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. Thus Ezra concluded, If we again break thy commandments, wilt not thou be angry with us till thou hast consumed us? Ezr 9:14.

3. He took care to prevent the profanation of the sabbath, as one that aimed only at reformation. If he could reform them, he would not punish them, and, if he should punish them, it was but that he might reform them. This is an example to magistrates to be heirs of restraint, and prudently to use the bit and bridle, that there may be no occasion for the lash.

(1.) He ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be kept shut from the evening before the sabbath to the morning after, and set his own servants (whose care, courage and honesty, he could confide in)

to watch them, that no burdens should be brought in on the sabbath day, nor late the night before, nor early in the morning after, lest sabbath time should be encroached upon, Ne 13:19. Those that came in to worship in the courts of the temple were no doubt admitted to pass and repass, but none that came to sell goods; they were forced to lodge without the city (Ne 13:20), where no doubt they wished the sabbath were gone, that they might sell corn.

(2.) He threatened those who came with goods to the gates, who pressed hard for entrance, telling them that, if they came again, he would certainly lay hands on them (Ne 13:21), and this deterred them from coming any more. Note, If reformers will but put on resolution, more may be done towards the breaking of bad customs than they can imagine. Vice connived at is indeed a daring thing, and will bid defiance to counsel and reproof; but it may be made cowardly, and will be so when magistrates make themselves a terror to it. The king that sits on the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes.

(3.) He charged the Levites to take care about the due sanctifying of the sabbath, that they should cleanse themselves in the first place, and so give a good example to the people, and that they should some of them come and keep the gates, Ne 13:22. Because he and his servants must shortly return to court, he would leave this charge with some that might abide by it, that not only when he was present, but in his absence, the sabbath might be sanctified. Then there is likely to be a reformation, in this and other respects, when magistrates and ministers join their forces. The courage, zeal, and prudence of Nehemiah in this matter, are here recorded for our imitation; and we have reason to think that the cure he wrought was lasting; for, in our Saviour's time, we find the Jews in the other extreme, over-scrupulous in the ceremonial part of sabbath-sanctification.

4. He concludes this passage with a prayer (Ne 13:22), in which observe, (1.) The petitions: Remember me (as the thief on the cross, Lord, remember me); that is enough. God's thoughts to us ward are very precious, Ps 40:5. He adds, Spare me. So far is he from thinking that what he had done did properly merit a reward in strict justice that he cries earnestly to God to spare him, as Jeremiah (Ne 15:15), Take me not away in thy long-suffering (Ne 10:24), Correct me not in anger, and (Ne 17:17), Be not a terror to me.

Note, The best saints, even when they do the best actions, stand in need of sparing mercy; for there is not a just man that doeth good and sinneth not. (2.) The plea: According to the greatness (or multitude) of thy mercies. Note, God's mercy is what we must depend upon, and not any merit of our own, when we appear before God.

20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do *so* again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no *more* on the sabbath.

22 And I commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come *and* keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

23 In those days also saw I Jews *that* had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, *and* of Moab:

24 and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

We have here one instance more of Nehemiah's pious zeal for the purifying of his countrymen as a peculiar people to God; that was the thing he aimed at in the use of his power, not the enriching of himself. See here,

I. How they had corrupted themselves by marrying strange wives. This was complained of in Ezra's time, and much done towards a reformation, Ezr 9:1-10:44 But, when the unclean spirit is cast out, if a watchful eye be not kept upon him, he will re-enter; so he did here. Though in Ezra's time those that had married strange wives were forced to put them away, which could not but occasion trouble and confusion in families, yet others would not take warning. Nitimur in vetitum--we still lean towards what is forbidden. Nehemiah, like a good governor, enquired into the state of the families of those that were under his charge, that he might reform what was amiss in them, and so heal the streams by healing the springs.

1. He enquired whence they had their wives, and found that many of the Jews had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab (Ne 13:23), either because they were fond of what was far-fetched or because they hoped by these alliances to strengthen and enrich themselves. See how God by the prophet reproves this, Mal 2:11. Judah has dealt treacherously, and broken covenant with God, the covenant made in Ezra's time with reference to this very thing; he has profaned the holiness of the Lord by marrying the daughter (that is, the worshipper) of a strange god.

2. He talked with the children, and found they were children of strangers, for their speech betrayed them. The children were bred up with their mothers, and learned of them and their nurses and servants to speak, so that they could not speak the Jews' language, could not speak it at all, or not readily, or not purely, but half in the speech of Ashdod, or Ammon, or Moab,

according as the country was which the mother was a native of. Observe,

(1.) Children, in their childhood, learn much of their mothers. Partus sequitur ventrem--they are prone to imitate their mothers.

(2.) If either side be bad, the corrupt nature will incline the children to take after that, which is a good reason why Christians should not be unequally yoked.

(3.) In the education of children great care should be taken about the government of their tongues, that they learn not the language of Ashdod, any impious or impure talk, any corrupt communication.

II. What course Nehemiah took to purge out this corruption, when he discovered how much it had prevailed.

1. He showed them the evil of it, and the obligation he lay under to witness against it. He did not seek an occasion against them, but this was an iniquity to be punished by the judge, and which he must by no means connive at (Ne 13:27): "Shall we hearken to you, who endeavour to palliate and excuse it? No, it is an evil, a great evil, it is a transgression against our God, to marry strange wives, and we must do our utmost to put a stop to it. You beg that they may not be divorced from you, but we cannot hearken to you, for there is no other remedy to clear us from the guilt and prevent infection."

(1.) He quotes a precept, to prove that it was in itself a great sin; and makes them swear to that precept: You shall not give your daughters unto their sons, &c., which is taken from De 7:3. When we would reclaim people from sin we must show them the sinfulness of it in the glass of the commandment.

(2.) He quotes a precedent, to show the pernicious consequences of it, which made it necessary to be animadverted upon by the government (Ne 13:26): Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? The falls of great and good men are recorded in order that we may take warning by them to shun the temptations which they were overcome by. Solomon was famous for wisdom; there was no king like him for it; yet, when he married strange wives, his wisdom could not secure him from their snares, nay, it departed from him, and he did very foolishly.

He was beloved of God, but his marrying strange wives threw him out of God's favour, and went near to extinguish the holy fire of grace in his soul: he was king over all Israel; but his doing this occasioned the loss of ten of his twelve tribes. You plead that you can marry strange wives and yet retain the purity of Israelites; but Solomon himself could not; even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall when he runs upon such a precipice.

2. He showed himself highly displeased at it, that he might awaken them to a due sense of the evil of it: He contended with them, Ne 13:25. They offered to justify themselves in what they did, but he showed them how frivolous their excuses were, and argued it warmly with them. When he had silenced them he cursed them, that is, he denounced the judgments of God against them, and showed them what their sin deserved. He then picked out some of them that were more obstinate than the rest, and fit to be made examples, and smote them (that is, ordered them to be beaten by the proper officers according to the law, De 25:2,3), to which he added this further mark of infamy that he plucked off their hair, or cut or shaved it off; for it may so be understood. Perhaps they had prided themselves in their hair, and therefore he took it off to deform and humble them, and put them to shame; it was, in effect, to stigmatize them, at least for a time. Ezra, in this case, had plucked off his own hair, in holy sorrow for the sin; Nehemiah plucked off their hair, in a holy

indignation at the sinners. See the different tempers of wise, and good, and useful men, and the divers graces, as well as divers gifts, of the same Spirit.

3. He obliged them not to take any more such wives, and separated those whom they had taken: He cleansed them from all strangers, both men and women (Ne 13:30), and made them promise with an oath that they would never do so again, Ne 13:25. Thus did he try all ways and means to put a stop to this mischief and to prevent another relapse into this disease.

4. He took particular care of the priests' families, that they might not lie under this stain, this guilt. He found, upon enquiry, that a branch of the high priest's own family, one of his grandsons, had married a daughter of Sanballat, that notorious enemy of the Jews (Ne 2:10,4:1), and so had, in effect, twisted interests with the Samaritans, Ne 13:28. How little love had that man either to God or his country who could make himself in duty and interest a friend to him that was a sworn enemy to both. It seems this young priest would not put away his wife, and therefore Nehemiah chased him from him, deprived him, degraded him, and made him for ever incapable of the priesthood. Josephus says that this expelled priest was Manasseh, and that when Nehemiah drove him away he went to his father-in-law Sanballat, who built him a temple upon Mount Gerazim, like that at Jerusalem, and promised him he should be high priest in it, and that then was laid the foundation of the Samaritans' pretensions, which continued warm to our Saviour's time. Joh 4:20, Our fathers worshipped in this mountain. When Nehemiah had thus expelled one that had forfeited the honour of the priesthood he again posted the priests and Levites every one in his business, Ne 13:30. It was no loss to them to part with one that was the scandal of their cloth; the work would be done better without him. When Judas had gone out Christ said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, Joh 13:30,31. Here are Nehemiah's prayers on this occasion.

(1.) He prays, Remember them, O my God! Ne 13:29. "Lord, convince and convert them; put them in mind of what they should be and do, that they may come to themselves." Or, "Remember them to reckon with them for their sin; remember it against them." If we take it so, this prayer is a prophecy that God would remember it against them. Those that defile the priesthood despise God, and shall be lightly esteemed. Perhaps they were too many and too great for him to deal with. "Lord" (says he), "deal thou with them; take the work into thy own hands."

(2.) He prays, Remember me, O my God! Ne 13:31. The best services done to the public have sometimes been forgotten by those for whom they were done (Ec 9:15); therefore Nehemiah refers it to God to recompense him, takes him for his paymaster, and then doubts not but he shall be well paid. This may well be the summary of our petitions; we need no more to make us happy than this: Remember me, O my God! for good.

28 And *one* of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest,
was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him
from me.
29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the
priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.
30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of
the priests and the Levites, everyone in his business;
31 and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the
firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

The Book of Esther
[Esther]

Esther-1

Queen Vashti Defies King Ahasuerus

1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this *is* Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, *over* a hundred and seven and twenty provinces,)

Which of the kings of Persia this Ahasuerus was the learned are not agreed. Mordecai is said to have been one of those that were carried captive from Jerusalem (Es 2:5,6), whence it should seem that this Ahasuerus was one of the first kings of that empire. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that he was that Artaxerxes who hindered the building of the temple, who is called also Ahasuerus (Ezr 4:6,7), after his great-grandfather of the Medes, Da 9:1. We have here an account,

I. Of the vast extent of his dominion. In the time of Darius and Cyrus there were but 120 princes (Da 6:1); now there were 127, from India to Ethiopia, Es 1:1. It had become an over-grown kingdom, which in time would sink with its own weight, and, as usual, would lose its provinces as fast as it got them. If such vast power be put into a bad hand, it is able to do so much the more mischief; but, if into a good hand, it is able to do so much the more good. Christ's kingdom is, or shall be, far larger than this, when the kingdoms of the world shall all become his; and it shall be everlasting.

II. Of the great pomp and magnificence of his court. When he found himself fixed in his throne, the pride of his heart rising with the grandeur of his kingdom, he made a most

extravagant feast, wherein he put himself to vast expense and trouble only to show the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty, Es 1:4. This was vain glory, an affection of pomp to no purpose at all; for none questioned the riches of his kingdom, nor offered to vie with him for honour. If he had shown the riches of his kingdom and the honour of his majesty, as some of his successors did, in contributing largely towards the building of the temple and the maintaining of the temple service (Ezr 6:8,7:22), it would have turned to a much better account. Two feasts Ahasuerus made:--

1. One for his nobles and princes, which lasted a hundred and eighty days, Es 1:3,4. Not that he feasted the same persons every day for all that time, but perhaps the nobles and princes of one province one day, of another province another day, while thus he and his constant attendants fared sumptuously every day. The Chaldee paraphrast (who is very bold in his additions to the story of this book) says that there had been a rebellion among his subjects and that this feast was kept for joy of the quashing of it.

2. Another was made for all the people, both great and small, which lasted seven days, some one day and some another; and, because no house would hold them, they were entertained in the court of the garden, Es 1:5. The hangings with which the several apartments were divided or the tents which were there pitched for the company, were very fine and rich; so were the beds or benches on which they sat, and the pavement under their feet, Es 1:6. Better is a dinner of herbs with quietness, and the enjoyment of one's self and a friend, than this banquet of wine with all the noise and tumult that must needs attend it.

III. Of the good order which in some respects was kept there notwithstanding. We do not find this like Belshazzar's feast, in which dunghill-gods were praised and the vessels of the

sanctuary profaned, Da 5:3,4. Yet the Chaldee paraphrase says that the vessels of the sanctuary were used in this feast, to the great grief of the pious Jews. It was not like Herod's feast, which reserved a prophet's head for the last dish. Two things which are laudable we may gather from the account here given of this feast:--

1. That there was no forcing of healths, nor urging of them: The drinking was according to the law, probably some law lately made; none did compel, no, not by continual proposing of it (as Josephus explains it); they did not send the glass about, but every man drank as he pleased (Es 1:8), so that if there were any that drank to excess it was their own fault, a fault which few would commit when the king's order put an honour upon sobriety. This caution of a heathen prince, even when he would show his generosity, may shame many who are called Christians, who think they do not sufficiently show their good housekeeping, nor bid their friends welcome, unless they make them drunk, and, under pretence of sending the health round, send the sin round, and death with it. There is a woe to those that do so; let them read it and tremble, Hab 2:15,16. It is robbing men of their reason, their richest jewel, and making them fools, the greatest wrong that can be.

2. That there was no mixed dancing; for the gentlemen and ladies were entertained asunder, not as in the feast of Belshazzar, whose wives and concubines drank with him (Da 5:2), or that of Herod, whose daughter danced before him. Vashti feasted the women in her own apartment; not openly in the court of the garden, but in the royal house, Es 1:9. Thus, while the king showed the honour of his majesty, she and her ladies showed the honour of their modesty, which is truly the majesty of the fair sex.

2 *that* in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which *was* in Shushan the palace,

3 in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, *being* before him:
4 when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his excellent majesty many days, *even* a hundred and fourscore days.
5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace;
6 *where were* white, green, and blue *hangings,* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds *were of* gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble.
7 And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.
8 And the drinking *was* according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.
9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahasuerus.
10 On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,
11 to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on.

We have here a damp to all the mirth of Ahasuerus's feast; it ended in heaviness, not as Job's children's feast by a wind from the wilderness, not as Belshazzar's by a hand-writing on the wall, but by is own folly. An unhappy falling out there was, at the end of the feast, between the king and queen, which broke of the feast abruptly, and sent the guests away silent and ashamed.

I. It was certainly the king's weakness to send for Vashti into his presence when he was drunk, and in company with abundance of gentlemen, many of whom, it is likely, were in the same condition. When his heart was merry with wine nothing would serve him but Vashti must come, well dressed as she was, with the crown on her head, that the princes and people might see what a handsome woman she was, Es 1:10,11. Hereby,

1. He dishonoured himself as a husband, who ought to protect, but by no means expose, the modesty of his wife, who ought to be to her a covering of the eyes (Ge 20:16), not to uncover them. 2. He diminished himself as a king, in commanding that from his wife which she might refuse, much to the honour of her virtue. It was against the custom of the Persians for the women to appear in public, and he put a great hardship upon her when he did not court, but command her to do so uncouth a thing, and make her a show. If he had not been put out of the possession of himself by drinking to excess, he would not have done such a thing, but would have been angry at any one that should have mentioned it. When the wine is in the wit is out, and men's reason departs from them.

II. However, perhaps it was not her wisdom to deny him. She refused to come (Es 1:12); though he sent his command by seven honourable messengers, and publicly, and Josephus says sent again and again, yet she persisted in her denial. Had she come, while it was evident that she did it in pure obedience, it would have been no reflection upon her modesty, nor a bad example. The thing was not in itself sinful, and therefore to obey would have been more her honour than to be so precise. Perhaps she refused in a haughty manner, and then it was certainly evil; she scorned to come at the king's commandment. What a mortification was this to him! While he was showing the glory of his kingdom he showed the reproach of his family, that he had

a wife that would do as she pleased. Strifes between yoke-fellows are bad enough at any time, but before company they are very scandalous, and occasion blushing and uneasiness.

III. The king thereupon grew outrageous. He that had rule over 127 provinces had no rule over his own spirit, but his anger burned in him, Es 1:12. He would have consulted his own comfort and credit more if he had stifled his resentment, had passed by the affront his wife gave him, and turned it off with a jest.

IV. Though he was very angry, he would not do any thing in this matter till he advised with his privy-counsellors; as he had seven chamberlains to execute his orders, who are named (Es 1:10), so he had seven counsellors to direct his orders. The greater power a man has the greater need he has of advice, that he may not abuse his power. Of these counsellors it is said that they were learned men, for they knew law and judgment,that they were wise men, for they knew the times,and that the king put great confidence in them and honour upon them, for they saw the king's face and sat first in the kingdom, Es 1:13,14. In the multitude of such counsellors there is safety. Now here is,

1 The question proposed to this cabinet-council (Es 1:15): What shall we do to the queen Vashti according to the law? Observe, (1.) Though it was the queen that was guilty, the law must have its course. (2.) Though the king was very angry, yet he would do nothing but what he was advised was according to law.

2 The proposal which Memucan made, that Vashti should be divorced for her disobedience. Some suggest that he gave this severe advice, and the rest agreed to it, because they knew it would please the king, would gratify both his passion now and his appetite afterwards. But Josephus says that, on the contrary, he had a strong affection for Vashti,

and would not have put her away for this offence if he could legally have passed it by; and then we must suppose Memucan, in his advice, to have had a sincere regard to justice and the public good.

(1.) He shows what would be the bad consequences of the queen's disobedience to her husband, if it were passed by and not animadverted upon, that it would embolden other wives both to disobey their husbands and to domineer over them. Had this unhappy falling out between the king and his wife, wherein she was conqueror, been private, the error would have remained with themselves and the quarrel might have been settled privately between themselves; but it happening to be public, and perhaps the ladies that were now feasting with the queen having shown themselves pleased with her refusal, her bad example would be likely to have a bad influence upon all the families of the kingdom. If the queen must have her humour, and the king must submit to it (since the houses of private persons commonly take their measures from the courts of princes), the wives would be haughty and imperious and would scorn to obey their husbands, and the poor despised husbands might fret at it, but could not help themselves; for the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping, Pr 19:13,27:15; and see Pr 21:9,25:24. When wives despise their husbands, whom they ought to reverence (Eph 5:33), and contend for dominion over those to whom they ought to be in subjection (1Pe 3:1), there cannot but be continual guilt and grief, confusion and every evil work. And great ones must take heed of setting copies of this kind, Es 1:16-18.

(2.) He shows what would be the good consequence of a decree against Vashti that she should be divorced. We may suppose that before they proceeded to this extremity they sent to Vashti to know if she would yet submit, cry Peccavi--I have done wrong, and ask the king's pardon, and that, if she had done so, the mischief of her example would have

been effectually prevented, and process would have been stayed; but it is likely she continued obstinate, and insisted upon it as her prerogative to do as she pleased, whether it pleased the king or no, and therefore they gave this judgment against her, that she come no more before the king, and this judgment so ratified as never to be reversed, Es 1:19. The consequence of this, it was hoped, would be that the wives would give to their husbands honour, even the wives of the great, notwithstanding their own greatness, and the wives of the small, notwithstanding the husband's meanness (Es 1:20); and thus every man would bear rule in his own house, as he ought to do, and, the wives being subject, the children and servants would be so too. It is the interest of states and kingdoms to provide that good order be kept in private families.

3. The edict that passed according to this proposal, signifying that the queen was divorced for contumacy, according to the law, and that, if other wives were in like manner undutiful to their husbands, they must expect to be in like manner disgraced (Es 1:21,22): were they better than the queen? Whether it was the passion or the policy of the king that was served by this edict, God's providence served its own purpose by it, which was to make way for Esther to the crown.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment
by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his
anger burned in him.
13 Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so
was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment:
14 and the next unto him *was* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish,
Meres, Marsena, *and* Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and
Media, which saw the king's face, *and* which sat the first in the
kingdom,)
15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because
she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus
by the chamberlains?

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that *are* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.

17 For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

18 *Likewise* shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath.

19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

20 And when the king's decree, which he shall make, shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honor, both to great and small.

21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

22 for he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

Esther-2

Esther Made Queen

1 After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

How God put down one that was high and mighty from her seat we read in the chapter before, and are now to be told how he exalted one of low degree, as the virgin Mary

observes in her song (Lu 1:52) and Hannah before her, 1Sa 2:4-8. Vashti being humbled for her height, Esther is advanced for her humility. Observe,

I The extravagant course that was taken to please the king with another wife instead of Vashti. Josephus says that when his anger was over he was exceedingly grieved that the matter was carried so far, and would have been reconciled to Vashti but that, by the constitution of the government, the judgment was irrevocable--that therefore, to make him forget her, they contrived how to entertain him first with a great variety of concubines, and then to fix him to the most agreeable of them all for a wife instead of Vashti. The marriages of princes are commonly made by policy and interest, for the enlarging of their dominions and the strengthening of their alliances; but this must be made partly by the agreeableness of the person to the king's fancy, whether she was rich or poor, noble or ignoble. What pains were taken to humour the king! As if his power and wealth were given him for no other end than that he might have all the delights of the sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness, and exquisitely refined, though at the best they are but dross and dregs in comparison with divine and spiritual pleasures.

1. All the provinces of his kingdom must be searched for fair young virgins, and officers appointed to choose them, Es 2:3.

2. A house (a seraglio) was prepared on purpose for them, and a person appointed to have the charge of them, to see that they were well provided for.

3. No less than twelve months was allowed them for their purification, some of them at least who were brought out of the country, that they might be very clean, and perfumed, Es

2:12. Even those who were the masterpieces of nature must yet have all this help from art to recommend them to a vain and carnal mind.

4. After the king had once taken them to his bed, they were made recluses ever after, except the king pleased at any time to send for them (Es 2:14); they were looked upon as secondary wives, were maintained by the king accordingly, and might not marry. We may see, by this instance, to what absurd practices those came who were destitute of divine revelation, and who, as a punishment for their idolatry, were given up to vile affections. Having broken through that law of creation which resulted from God's making man, they broke through another law, which was founded upon his making one man and one woman. See what need there was of the gospel of Christ to purify men from the lusts of the flesh and to reduce them to the original institution. Those that have learned Christ will think it a shame even to speak of such things as these which were done of them, not only in secret, but avowedly, Eph 5:12.

II The overruling providence of God thus bringing Esther to be queen. Had she been recommended to Ahasuerus for a wife, he would have rejected the motion with disdain; but when she came in her turn, after several others, and it was found that though many of them were ingenious and discreet, graceful and agreeable, yet Esther excelled them all, way was made for her, even by her rivals, into the king's affections and the honours consequent thereupon. It is certain, as bishop Patrick says, that those who suggest that she committed a great sin to come at this dignity do not consider the custom of those times and countries. Every one that the king took to his bed was married to him, and was his wife of a lower rank, as Hagar was Abraham's; so that, if Esther had not been made queen, the sons of Jacob need not say that he dealt with their sister as with a harlot. Concerning Esther we must observe,

1. Her original and character.

(1.) She was one of the children of the captivity, a Jewess and a sharer with her people in their bondage. Daniel and his fellows were advanced in the land where they were captives; for they were of those whom God sent thither for their good, Jer 24:5.

(2.) She was an orphan; her father and mother were both dead (Es 2:7), but, when they had forsaken here, then the Lord took her up, Ps 27:10. When those whose unhappiness it is to be thus deprived of their parents in their childhood yet afterwards come to be eminently pious and prosperous, we ought to take notice of it to the glory of that God, and his grace and providence, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a Father of the fatherless.

(3.) She was a beauty, fair of form, good of countenance; so it is in the margin, Es 2:7. Her wisdom and virtue were her greatest beauty, but it is an advantage to be a diamond to be well set.

(4.) Mordecai, her cousin-german, was her guardian, brought her up, and took her for his own daughter. The LXX. says that he designed to make her his wife; if that were so, he was to be praised that he opposed not her better preferment. Let God be acknowledged in raising up friends for the fatherless and motherless; let it be an encouragement to that pious instance of charity that many who have taken care of the education of orphans have lived to see the good fruit of their care and pains, abundantly to their comfort. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that this Mordecai is the same with that mentioned in Ezr 2:2, who went up to Jerusalem with the first, and helped forward the settlement of his people until the building of the temple was stopped, and then went back to the Persian court, to see what service he could do them

there. Mordecai being Esther's guardian or pro-parent, we are told,

[1.] How tender he was of her, as if she had been his own child (Es 2:11): he walked before her door every day, to know how she did, and what interest she had. Let those whose relations are thus cast upon them by divine Providence be thus kindly affectioned to them and solicitous for them.

[2.] How respectful she was to him. Though in relation she was his equal, yet, being in age and dependence his inferior, she honoured him as her father--did his commandment, Es 2:20. This is an example to orphans; if they fall into the hands of those who love them and take care of them, let them make suitable returns of duty and affection. The less obliged their guardians were in duty to provide for them the more obliged they are in gratitude to honour and obey their guardians. Here is an instance of Esther's obsequiousness t Mordecai, that she did not show her people of her kindred, because Mordecai had charged her that she should not, Es 2:10. He did not bid her deny her country, nor tell a lie to conceal her parentage; if he had told her to do so, she must not have done it. But he only told her not to proclaim her country. All truths are not to be spoken at all times, though an untruth is not to be spoken at any time. She being born in Shushan, and her parents being dead, all took her to be of Persian extraction, and she was not bound to undeceive them.

2. Her preferment. Who would have thought that a Jewess, a captive, and orphan, was born to be a queen, an empress! Yet so it proved. Providence sometimes raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, 1Sa 2:8.

(1.) The king's chamberlain honoured her (Es 2:9), and was ready to serve her. Wisdom and virtue will gain respect. Those that make sure of God's favour shall find favour with man too as far as it is good for them. All that looked upon Esther admired her (Es 2:15) and concluded that she was the lady that would win the prize, and she did win it.

(2.) The king himself fell in love with her. She was not solicitous, as the rest of the maidens were, to set herself off with artificial beauty; she required nothing but just what was appointed for her (Es 2:15) and yet she was most acceptable. The more natural beauty is the more agreeable. The king loved Esther above all the women, Es 2:17. Now he needed not to make any further trials, or take time to deliberate; he is soon determined to set the royal crown upon her head, and make her queen, Es 2:17. This was done in his seventh year (Es 2:16) and Vashti was divorced in his third year (Es 1:3); so that he was four years without a queen. Notice is taken,

[1.] Of the honours the king put upon Esther. He graced the solemnity of her coronation with a royal feast (Es 2:18), at which perhaps Esther, in compliance with the king, made a public appearance, which Vashti had refused to do, that she might have the praise of obedience in the same instance in which the other incurred the blot of disobedience. He also granted a release to the provinces, either a remittance of the taxes in arrear or an act of grace for criminals; as Pilate, at the feast, released a prisoner. This was to add t the joy.

[2.] Of the deference Esther continued to pay to her former guardian. She still did the commandment of Mordecai, as when she was brought up with him, Es 2:20. Mordecai say in the king's gate; that was the height of his preferment: he was one of the porters or door-keepers of the court. Whether he had this place before, or whether Esther obtained it for him, we are not told; but there he sat contentedly, and aimed no higher; and yet Esther who was advanced to the throne

was observant of him. This was an evidence of a humble and grateful disposition, that she had a sense of his former kindnesses and his continued wisdom. It is a great ornament to those that are advanced, and much to their praise, to remember their benefactors, to retain the impressions of their good education, to be diffident of themselves, willing to take advice, and thankful for it.

2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there
be fair young virgins sought for the king:
3 and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom,
that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto
Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of
Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their
things for purification be given *them:*
4 and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of
Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.
5 *Now* in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name
was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a
Benjamite;
6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity
which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom
Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.
7 And he brought up Hadassah, that *is,* Esther, his uncle's daughter:
for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid *was* fair and
beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were
dead, took for his own daughter.
8 So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree
was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto
Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought
also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the
women.
9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and
he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as
belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which were* meet to be given her,
out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the
best *place* of the house of the women.
10 Esther had not showed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai
had charged her that she should not show *it.*

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.
12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors, and with *other* things for the purifying of the women,)
13 then thus came *every* maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.
14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.
15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all them that looked upon her.
16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.
17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.
18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

Mordecai Reveals a Conspiracy against the King

19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

20 Esther had not *yet* showed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

This good service which Mordecai did to the government, in discovering a plot against the life of the king, is here recorded, because the mention of it will again occur to his advantage. No step is yet taken towards Haman's design of the Jews' destruction, but several steps are taken towards God's design of their deliverance, and this for one. God now gives Mordecai an opportunity of doing the king a good turn, that he might have the fairer opportunity afterwards of doing the Jews a good turn.

1. A design was laid against the king by two of his own servants, who sought to lay hands on him, not only to make him a prisoner, but to take away his life, Es 2:21. Probably they resented some affront which they thought he had given them, or some injury which he had done them. Who would be great, to be so much the object of envy? Who would be arbitrary, to be so much the object of ill-will? Princes, above any mortals, have their souls continually in their hands, and often go down slain to the pit, especially those who caused terror in the land of the living.

2. Mordecai got notice of their treason, and, by Esther's means, discovered it to the king, hereby confirming her in and recommending himself to the king's favour. How he came to the knowledge of it does not appear. Whether he overheard their discourse, or whether they offered to draw him in with them, so it was that the thing was known to him. This ought to be a warning against all traitorous and seditious practices: though men presume upon secresy, a bird of the air shall carry the voice. Mordecai, as soon as he knew it, caused it to be made known to the king, which ought to be an instruction and example to all that would be found good subjects not to conceal any bad design they know of

against the prince or the public peace, for it is making a confederacy with public enemies.

3. The traitors were hanged, as they deserved, but not till their treason was, upon search, fully proved against them (Es 2:23), and the whole matter was recorded in the king's journals, with a particular remark that Mordecai was the man who discovered the treason. He was not rewarded presently, but a book of remembrance was written. Thus with respect to those who serve Christ, though their recompence is adjourned till the resurrection of the just, yet an account is kept of their work of faith and labour of love, which God is not unrighteous to forget, Heb 6:10.

21 In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the
king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the
door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the
queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name.
23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out;
therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in
the book of the chronicles before the king.

Esther-3

Haman's Plot to Destroy the Jews

1 After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of
Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat
above all the princes that *were* with him.
2 And all the king's servants, that *were* in the king's gate, bowed, and
reverenced Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning
him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence.

Here we have,

I. Haman advanced by the prince, and adored thereupon by the people. Ahasuerus had lately laid Esther in his bosom, but she had no such interest in him as to get her friends

preferred, or to prevent the preferring of one who she knew was an enemy to her people. When those that are good become great they still find that they cannot do good, nor prevent mischief, as they would. This Haman was an Agagite (an Amalekite, says Josephus), probably of the descendants of Agag, a common name of the princes of Amalek, as appears, Nu 24:7. Some think that he was by birth a prince, as Jehoiakim was, whose seat was set above the rest of the captive kings (2Ki 25:28), as Haman's here was, Es 3:1 The king took a fancy to him (princes are not bound to give reasons for their favours), made him his favourite, his confidant, his prime-minister of state. Such a commanding influence the court then had that (contrary to the proverb) those whom it blessed the country blessed too; for all men adored this rising sun, and the king's servants were particularly commanded to bow before him and to do him reverence (Es 3:2), and they did so. I wonder what the king saw in Haman that was commendable or meritorious; it is plain that he was not a man of honour or justice, of any true courage or steady conduct, but proud, and passionate, and revengeful; yet was he promoted, and caressed, and there was none so great as he. Princes' darlings are not always worthies.

II. Mordecai adhering to his principles with a bold and daring resolution, and therefore refusing to reverence Haman as the rest of the king's servants did, Es 3:2. He was urged to it by his friends, who reminded him of the king's commandment, and consequently of the danger he incurred if he refused to comply with it; it was as much as his life was worth, especially considering Haman's insolence, Es 3:3. They spoke daily to him (Es 3:4), to persuade him to conform, but all in vain: he hearkened not to them, but told them plainly that he was a Jew, and could not in conscience do it. Doubtless his refusal, when it came to be taken notice of and made the subject of discourse, was commonly attributed to pride and envy, that he would not pay respect to Haman because, on the score of his alliance to Esther, he

was not himself as much promoted, or to a factious seditious spirit and a disaffection to the king and his government; those that would make the best of it looked upon it as his weakness, or his want of breeding, called it a humour, and a piece of affected singularity. It does not appear that any one scrupled at conforming to it except Mordecai; and yet his refusal was pious, conscientious, and pleasing to God, for the religion of a Jew forbade him,

1. To give such extravagant honours as were required to any mortal man, especially so wicked a man as Haman was. In the apocryphal chapters of this book (Es 13:12-14) Mordecai is brought in thus appealing to God in this matter: Thou knowest, Lord, that it was neither in contempt nor pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Haman, for I could have been content with good will, for the salvation of Israel, to kiss the soles of his feet; but I did this that I might not prefer the glory of man above the glory of God, neither will I worship any but thee.

2. He especially thought it a piece of injustice to his nation to give such honour to an Amalekite, one of that devoted nation with which God had sworn that he would have perpetual war (Ex 17:16) and concerning which he had given that solemn charge (De 25:17), Remember what Amalek did. Though religion does by no means destroy good manners, but teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, yet it is the character of a citizen of Zion that not only in his heart, but in his eyes, such a vile person as Haman was is contemned, Ps 15:4. Let those who are governed by principles of conscience be steady and resolute, however censured or threatened, as Mordecai was.

III. Haman meditating revenge. Some that hoped thereby to curry favour with Haman took notice to him of Mordecai's rudeness, waiting to see whether he would bend or break, Es 3:4. Haman then observed it himself, and was full of wrath,

Es 3:5. A meek and humble man would have slighted the affront, and have said, "Let him have his humour; what am I the worse for it?" But it makes Haman's proud spirit rage, and fret, and boil, within him, so that he becomes uneasy to himself and all about him. It is soon resolved that Mordecai must die. The head must come off that will not bow to Haman; if he cannot have his honours, he will have his blood. It is as penal in this court not to worship Haman as it was in Nebuchadnezzar's not to worship the golden image which he had set up.

Mordecai is a person of quality, in a post of honour, and own cousin to the queen; and yet Haman thinks his life nothing towards a satisfaction for the affront: thousands of innocent and valuable lives must be sacrificed to his indignation; and therefore he vows the destruction of all the people of Mordecai, for his sake, because his being a Jew was the reason he gave why he did not reverence Haman. Herein appear Haman's intolerable pride, insatiable cruelty, and the ancient antipathy of an Amalekite to the Israel of God. Saul the son of Kish, a Benjamite, spared Agag, but Mordecai the son of Kish, a Benjamite (Es 2:5), shall find no mercy with this Agagite, whose design is to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus (Es 3:6), which, I suppose, would include those that had returned to their own land, for that was now a province of his kingdom. Come and let us cut them off from being a nation, Ps 83:4. Nero's barbarous wish is his, that they had all but one neck.

3 Then the king's servants, which *were* in the king's gate, said unto
Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?
4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he
hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether
Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he *was* a
Jew.
5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him
reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.
6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had
showed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to

destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai.

7 In the first month, that *is,* the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that *is,* the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, *to* the twelfth *month,* that *is,* the month Adar.

Haman values himself upon that bold and daring thought, which he fancied well became his great spirit, of destroying all the Jews--an undertaking worthy of its author, and which he promised himself would perpetuate his memory. He doubts not but to find desperate and bloody hands enough to cut all their throats if the king will but give him leave. How he obtained leave, and commission to do it, we are here told. He had the king's ear, let him alone to manage him.

I. He makes a false and malicious representation of Jews, and their character, to the king, Es 3:8. The enemies of God's people could not give them such bad treatment as they do if they did not first give them a bad name. He would have the king believe,

1. That the Jews were a despicable people, and that it was not for his credit to harbour them:"A certain people there is," without name, as if nobody knew whence they came and what they were; "they are not incorporated, but scattered abroad and dispersed in all the provinces as fugitives and vagabonds on the earth, and inmates in all countries, the burden and scandal of the places where they live."

2. That they were a dangerous people, and that it was not safe to harbour them. "They have laws and usages of their own, and conform not to the statutes of the kingdom and the customs of the country; and therefore they may be looked upon as disaffected to the government and likely to infect others with their singularities, which may end in a rebellion." It is no new thing for the best of men to have such

invidious characters as these given of them; if it be no sin to kill them, it is no sin to belie them.

II. He bids high for leave to destroy them all, Es 3:9. He knew there were many that hated the Jews, and would willingly fall upon them if they might but have a commission: Let it be written therefore that they may be destroyed. Give but orders for a general massacre of all the Jews, and Haman will undertake it shall be easily done. If the king will gratify him in this matter, he will make him a present of ten thousand talents, which shall be paid into the king's treasuries. This, he thought, would be a powerful inducement to the king to consent, and would obviate the strongest objection against him, which was that the government must needs sustain loss in its revenues by the destruction of so many of its subjects; so great a sum, he hoped, would be equivalent for that. Proud and malicious men will not stick at the expenses of their revenge, nor spare any cost to gratify it. Yet no doubt Haman knew how to reimburse himself out of the spoil of the Jews, which his janizaries were to seize for him (Es 3:13), and so to make them bear the charges of their own ruin; while he himself hoped to be not only a saver but a gainer by the bargain.

III. He obtains what he desired, a full commission to do what he would with the Jews, Es 3:10,11. The king was so inattentive to business, and so bewitched with Haman, that he took no time to examine the truth of his allegations, but was as willing as Haman could wish to believe the worst concerning the Jews, and therefore he gave them up into his hands, as lambs to the lion: The people are thine, do with them as it seemeth good unto thee. He does not say, "Kill them, slay them" (hoping Haman's own cooler thoughts would abate the rigour of that sentence and induce him to sell them for slaves); but "Do what thou wilt with them." And so little did he consider how much he should lose in his tribute, and how much Haman would gain in the spoil, that

he gave him withal the ten thousand talents: The silver is thine. Such an implicit confidence likewise he had in Haman, and so perfectly had he abandoned all care of his kingdom, that he gave Haman his ring, his privy-seal, or sign-manual, wherewith to confirm whatever edict he pleased to draw up for this purpose. Miserable is the kingdom that is at the disposal of such a head as this, which has one ear only, and a nose to be led by, but neither eyes nor brains, nor scarcely a tongue of its own.

IV. He then consults with his soothsayers to find out a lucky day for the designed massacre, Es 3:7. The resolve was taken up in the first month, in the twelfth year of the king, when Esther had been his wife about five years. Some day or other in that year must be pitched upon; and, as if he doubted not but that Heaven would favour his design and further it, he refers it to the lot, that is, to the divine Providence, to choose the day for him; but that, in the decision, proved a better friend to the Jews than to him, for the lot fell upon the twelfth month, so that Mordecai and Esther had eleven months to turn themselves in for the defeating of the design, or, if they could not defeat it, space would be left for the Jews to make their escape and shift for their safety.

Haman, though eager to have the Jews cut off, yet will submit to the laws of his superstition, and not anticipate the supposed fortunate day, no, not to gratify his impatient revenge. Probably he was in some fear lest the Jews should prove too hard for their enemies, and therefore durst not venture on such a hazardous enterprise but under the smiles of a good omen. This may shame us, who often acquiesce not in the directions and disposals of Providence when they cross our desires and intentions. He that believeth the lot, much more that believeth the promise, will not make haste. But see how God's wisdom serves its own purposes by men's folly. Haman has appealed to the lot, and to the lot he shall

go, which, by adjourning the execution, gives judgment against him and breaks the neck of the plot.

V. The bloody edict is hereupon drawn up, signed, and published, giving orders to the militia of every province to be ready against the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and, on that day, to murder all the Jews, men, women, and children, and seize their effects, Es 3:12-14. Had the decree been to banish all the Jews and expel them out of the king's dominions, it would have been severe enough; but surely never any act of cruelty appeared so barefaced as this, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all the Jews, appointing them as sheep for the slaughter without showing any cause for so doing. No crime is laid to their charge; it is not pretended that they were obnoxious to the public justice, nor is any condition offered, upon performance of which they might have their lives spared; but die they must, without mercy.

Thus have the church's enemies thirsted after blood, the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus, and drunk of it till they have been perfectly intoxicated (Re 17:6); yet still, like the horse-leech, they cry, Give, give. This cruel offer is ratified with the king's seal, directed to the king's lieutenants, and drawn up in the king's name, and yet the king knows not what he does. Posts are sent out, with all expedition, to carry copies of the decree to the respective provinces, Es 3:15. See how restless the malice of the church's enemies is: it will spare no pains; it will lose no time.

VI. The different temper of the court and city hereupon.

1 The court was very merry upon it: The king and Haman sat down to drink, perhaps to drink "Confusion to all the Jews." Haman was afraid lest the king's conscience should smite him for what he had done and he should begin to wish it undone again, to prevent which he engrossed him to

himself, and kept him drinking. This cursed method many take to drown their convictions, and harden their own hearts and the hearts of others in sin.

2 The city was very sad upon it (and the other cities of the kingdom, no doubt, when they had notice of it): The city Shushan was perplexed, not only the Jews themselves, but all their neighbours that had any principles of justice and compassion. It grieved them to see their king so abused, to see wickedness in the place of judgment (Ec 3:16), to see men that lived peaceably treated so barbarously; and what would be the consequences of it to themselves they knew not. But the king and Haman cared for none of these things. Note, It is an absurd and impious thing to indulge ourselves in mirth and pleasure when the church is in distress and the public are perplexed.

8 And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer them.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

11 And the king said unto Haman, The silver *is* given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and *to* every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month Adar, and *to take* the spoil of them for a prey.

14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

Esther-4

Esther Promises to Intercede for Her People

1 When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

Here we have an account of the general sorrow that there was among the Jews upon the publishing of Haman's bloody edict against them. It was a sad time with the church.

1. Mordecai cried bitterly, rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, Es 4:1,2. He not only thus vented his grief, but proclaimed it, that all might take notice of it that he was not ashamed to own himself a friend to the Jews, and a fellow-sufferer with them, their brother and companion in tribulation, how despicable and how odious soever they were now represented by Haman's faction. It was nobly done thus publicly to espouse what he knew to be a righteous cause, and the cause of God, even when it seemed a desperate and a sinking cause. Mordecai laid the danger to heart more than any because he knew that Haman's spite was against him primarily, and that it was for his sake that the rest of the Jews were struck at; and therefore, though he did not repent of what some would call his obstinacy, for he

persisted in it (Es 5:9), yet it troubled him greatly that his people should suffer for his scruples, which perhaps occasioned some of them to reflect upon him as too precise. But, being able to appeal to God that what he did he did from a principle of conscience, he could with comfort commit his own cause and that of his people to him that judgeth righteously. God will keep those that are exposed by the tenderness of their consciences.

Notice is here taken of a law that none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth; though the arbitrary power of their kings often, as now, set many a mourning, yet none must come near the king in a mourning dress, because he was not willing to hear the complaints of such. Nothing but what was gay and pleasant must appear at court, and every thing that was melancholy must be banished thence; all in king's palaces wear soft clothing (Mt 11:8), not sackcloth. But thus to keep out the badges of sorrow, unless they could withal have kept out the causes of sorrow--to forbid sackcloth to enter, unless they could have forbidden sickness, and trouble, and death to enter--was jest. However this obliged Mordecai to keep his distance, and only to come before the gate, not to take his place in the gate.

2. All the Jews in every province laid it much to heart, Es 4:3. They denied themselves the comfort of their tables (for they fasted and mingled tears with their meat and drink), and the comfort of their beds at night, for they lay in sackcloth and ashes. Those who for want of confidence in God, and affection to their own land, has staid in the land of their captivity, when Cyrus gave them liberty to be gone, now perhaps repented of their folly, and wished, when it was too late, that they had complied with the call of God.

3. Esther the queen, upon a general intimation of the trouble Mordecai was in, was exceedingly grieved, Es 4:4. Mordecai's grief was hers, such a respect did she still retain

for him; and the Jews' danger was her distress; for, though a queen, she forgot not her relation to them. Let not the greatest think it below them to grieve for the affliction of Joseph, though they themselves be anointed with the chief ointments, Am 6:6. Esther sent change of raiment to Mordecai, the oil of joy for mourning and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness; but because he would make her sensible of the greatness of his grief, and consequently of the cause of it, he received it not, but was as one that refused to be comforted.

2 and came even before the king's gate: for none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told *it* her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received *it* not.

5 Then called Esther for Hatach, *one* of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it *was*, and why it *was*.

So strictly did the laws of Persia confine the wives, especially the king's wives, that it was not possible for Mordecai to have a conference with Esther about this important affair, but divers messages are here carried between them by Hatach, whom the king had appointed to attend her, and it seems he was one she could confide in.

I. She sent to Mordecai to know more particularly and fully what the trouble was which he was now lamenting (Es 4:5) and why it was that he would not put off his sackcloth. To enquire thus after news, that we may know the better how to direct our griefs and joys, our prayers and praises, well becomes all that love Sion. If we must weep with those that weep, we must know why they weep.

II. Mordecai sent her an authentic account of the whole matter, with a charge to her to intercede with the king in this matter: Mordecai told him all that had happened unto him (Es 4:7), what a pique Haman had against him for now bowing to him, and by what arts he had procured this edict; he sent her also a true copy of the edict, that she might see what imminent danger she and her people were in, and charged her, if she had any respect for him or any kindness for the Jewish nation, that she should appear now on their behalf, rectify the misinformations with which the king was imposed upon, and set the matter in a true light, not doubting but that then he would vacate the decree.

III. She sent her case to Mordecai, that she could not, without peril of her life, address the king, and that therefore he put a great hardship upon her in urging her to it. Gladly would she wait, gladly would she stoop, to do the Jews a kindness; but, if she must run the hazard of being put to death as a malefactor, she might well say, I pray thee have me excused, and find out some other intercessor.

1 The law was express, and all knew it, that whosoever came to the king uncalled should be put to death, unless he was pleased to hold out the golden sceptre to them, and it was extremely doubtful whether she should find him in so good a humour, Es 4:11. This law was made, not so much in prudence, for the greater safety of the king's person, as in pride, that being seldom seen, and not without great difficulty, he might be adored as a little god. A foolish law it was; for,

(1.) It made the kings themselves unhappy, confining them to their retirements for fear they should be seen. This made the royal palace little better than a royal prison, and the kings themselves could not but become morose, and perhaps melancholy, and so a terror to others and a burden to

themselves. Many have their lives made miserable by their own haughtiness and ill nature.

(2.) It was bad for the subjects; for what good had they of a king that they might never have liberty to apply to for the redress of grievances and appeal to from the inferior judges? It is not thus in the court of the King of kings; to the footstool of his throne of grace we may at any time come boldly, and may be sure of an answer of peace to the prayer of faith. We are welcome, not only into the inner court, but even into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus.

(3.) It was particularly very uncomfortable for their wives (for there was not a proviso in the law to except them), who were bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. But perhaps it was wickedly intended as much against them as any other, that the kings might the more freely enjoy their concubines, and Esther knew it. Miserable was the kingdom when the princes framed their laws to serve their lusts.

2. Her case was at present very discouraging. Providence so ordered it that, just at this juncture, she was under a cloud, and the king's affections cooled towards her, for she had been kept from his presence thirty days, that her faith and courage might be the more tried, and that God's goodness in the favour she now found with the king notwithstanding might shine the brighter. It is probable that Haman endeavoured by women, as well as wine, to divert the king from thinking of what he had done, and then Esther was neglected, from whom no doubt he did what he could to alienate the king, knowing her to be averse to him.

IV. Mordecai still insisted upon it that, whatever hazard she might run, she must apply to the king in this great affair, Es 4:13,14. No excuse will serve, but she must appear an advocate in this cause; he suggested to her,

1. That it was her own cause, for that the decree to destroy all the Jews did not except here: "Think not therefore that thou shalt escape in the king's house, that the palace will be thy protection, and the crown save thy head: no, thou art a Jewess, and, if the rest be cut off, thou wilt be cut off too." It was certainly her wisdom rather to expose herself to a conditional death from her husband than to a certain death from her enemy.

2. That it was a cause which, one way or other, would certainly be carried, and which therefore she might safely venture in. "If thou shouldst decline the service, enlargement and deliverance will arise to the Jews from another place." This was the language of a strong faith, which staggered not at the promise when the danger was most threatening, but against hope believed in hope. Instruments may fail, but God's covenant will not.

3. That if she deserted her friends now, through cowardice and unbelief, she would have reason to fear that some judgment from heaven would be the ruin of her and her family: "Thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed, when the rest of the families of the Jews shall be preserved." He that by sinful shifts will save his life, and cannot find in his heart to trust God with it in the way of duty, shall lose it in the way of sin.

4. That divine Providence had an eye to this in bringing her to be queen: "Who knows whether thou hast come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" and therefore,

(1.) "Thou art bound in gratitude to do this service for God and his church, else thou dost not answer the end of thy elevation."

(2.) "Thou needest not fear miscarrying in the enterprise; if God designed thee for it, he will bear thee out and give thee success." Now,

[1.] It appeared, by the event, that she did come to the kingdom that she might be an instrument of the Jews' deliverance, so that Mordecai was right in the conjecture. Because the Lord loved his people, therefore he made Esther queen. There is a wise counsel and design in all the providences of God, which is unknown to us till it is accomplished, but it will prove, in the issue, that they are all intended for, and centre in, the good of the church.

[2.] The probability of this was a good reason why she should now bestir herself, and do her utmost for her people. We should every one of us consider for what end God has put us in the place where we are, and study to answer that end; and, when any particular opportunity of serving God and our generation offers itself, we must take care that we do not let it slip; for we were entrusted with it that we might improve it. These things Mordecai urges to Esther; and some of the Jewish writers, who are fruitful in invention, add another thing which had happened to him (Es 4:7) which he desired she might be told, "that going home, the night before, in great heaviness, upon the notice of Haman's plot, he met three Jewish children coming from school, of whom he enquired what they had learned that day; one of them told him his lesson was, Pr 3:25,26, Be not afraid of sudden fear; the second told him his was, Isa 8:10, Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; the third told him his was Isa 46:4, I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you. 'O the goodness of God,' says Mordecai, 'who out of the mouth of babes and sucklings ordains strength!'"

V. Esther hereupon resolved, whatever it might cost her, to apply to the king, but not till she and her friends had first applied to God. Let them first by fasting and prayer obtain

God's favour, and then she should hope to find favour with the king, Es 4:15,16. She speaks here,

1. With the piety and devotion that became an Israelite. She had here eye up unto God, in whose hands the hearts of kings are, and on whom she depended to incline this king's heart towards her. She went in peril of her life, but would think herself safe, and would be easy, when she had committed the keeping of her soul to God and had put herself under his protection. She believed that God's favour was to be obtained by prayer, that his people are a praying people, and he a prayer-hearing God. She knew it was the practice of good people, in extraordinary cases, to join fasting with prayer, and many of them to join together in both. She therefore,

(1.) Desired that Mordecai would direct the Jews that were in Shushan to sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly, to meet in the respective synagogues to which they belonged, and to pray for her, and to keep a solemn fast, abstaining from all set meals and all pleasant food for three days, and as much as possible from all food, in token of their humiliation for sin and in a sense of their unworthiness of God's mercy. Those know not how to value the divine favours who grudge thus much labour and self-denial in the pursuit of it.

(2.) She promised that she and her family would sanctify this fast in her apartment of the palace, for she might not come to their assemblies; her maids were either Jewesses or so far proselytes that they joined with her in her fasting and praying. Here is a good example of a mistress praying with her maids, and it is worthy to be imitated. Observe also, Those who are confined to privacy may join their prayers with those of the solemn assemblies of God's people; those that are absent in body may be present in spirit. Those who

desire, and have, the prayers of others for them, must not think that this will excuse them from praying for themselves.

2. With the courage and resolution that became a queen. "When we have sought God in this matter, I will go unto the king to intercede for my people. I know it is not according to the king's law, but it is according to God's law; and therefore, whatever comes of it, I will venture, and not count my life dear to me, so that I may serve God and his church, and, if I perish, I perish. I cannot lose my life in a better cause. Better do my duty and die for my people than shrink from my duty and die with them." She reasons as the lepers (2Ki 7:4): "If I sit still, I die; if I venture, I may live, and be the life of my people: if the worst come to the worst," as we say, "I shall but die." Nothing venture, nothing win. She said not this in despair or passion, but in a holy resolution to do her duty and trust God with the issue; welcome his holy will. In the apocryphal part of this book (ch. xiii. and xiv.) we have Mordecai's prayer and Esther's upon this occasion, and both of them very particular and pertinent. In the sequel of the story we shall find that God said not to this seed of Jacob, Seek you me in vain.

6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which
was before the king's gate.
7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of
the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the
king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.
8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was
given at Shushan to destroy them, to show *it* unto Esther, and to
declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the
king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before
him for her people.
9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.
10 Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment
unto Mordecai;
11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do
know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto
the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of

his to put *him* to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out
the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to
come in unto the king these thirty days.
12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.
13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with
thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the
Jews.
14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there
enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place;
but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who
knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as
this?
15 Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer,*
16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and
fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I
also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the
king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.
17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had
commanded him.

Esther-5

Esther Invites the King and Haman to a Banquet

1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on *her* royal
apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over
against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in
the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

Here is, I. Esther's bold approach to the king, Es 5:1. When the time appointed for their fast was finished she lost no time, but on the third day, when the impression of her devotions were fresh upon her spirit, she addressed the king. When the heart is enlarged in communion with God it will be emboldened in doing and suffering for him. Some think that the three days' fast was only one whole day and two whole nights, in all which time they did not take any food at all, and that this is called three days, as Christ's lying in the

grave so long is. This exposition is favoured by the consideration that on the third day the queen made her appearance at court. Resolutions which have difficulties and dangers to break though should be pursued without delay, lest they cool and slacken. What thou doest, which must be done boldly, do it quickly.

Now she put on her royal apparel, that she might the better recommend herself to the king, and laid aside her fast-day clothes. She put on her fine clothes, not to please herself, but her husband; in her prayer, as we find in the Apocrypha (Esther xiv. 16), she thus appeals to God: Thou knowest, Lord, I abhor the sign of my high estate which is upon my head, in the days wherein I show myself, &c. Let hose whose rank obliges them to wear rich clothes learn hence to be dead to them, and not make them their adorning. She stood in the inner court over against the king, expecting her doom, between hope and fear.

II The favourable reception which the king gave her. When he saw her she obtained favour in his sight. The apocryphal author and Josephus say that she took two maids with her, on one of whom she leaned, while the other bore up her train,--that her countenance was cheerful and very amiable, but her heart was in anguish,--that the king, lifting up his countenance that shone with majesty, at first looked very fiercely upon here, whereupon she grew pale, and fainted, and bowed herself on the head of the maid that went by her; but then God changed the spirit of the king, and, in a fear, he leaped from his throne, took her in his arms till she came to herself, and comforted her with loving words. Here we are only told,

1. That he protected her from the law, and assured her of safety, by holding out to her the golden sceptre (Es 5:2), which she thankfully touched the top of, thereby presenting herself to him as a humble petitioner. Thus having had

power with God and prevailed, like Jacob, she had power with men too. He that will lose his life for God shall save it, or find it in a better life.

2. That he encouraged her address (Es 5:3): What wilt thou, queen Esther, and what is thy request? So far was he from counting her an offender that he seemed glad to see her, and desirous to oblige her. He that had divorced one wife for not coming when she was sent for would not be severe to another for coming when she was not sent for. God can turn the hearts of men, of great men, of those that act most arbitrarily, which way he pleases towards us. Esther feared that she should perish, but was promised that she should have what she might ask for, though it were the half of the kingdom. Note, God in his providence often prevents the fears, and outdoes the hopes, of his people, especially when they venture in his cause. Let us from this story infer, as our Saviour does from the parable of the unjust judge, an encouragement to pray always to our God, and not faint, Lu 18:6-8.

Hear what this haughty king says (What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be granted thee), and say shall not God hear and answer the prayers of his own elect, that cry day and night to him? Esther came to a proud imperious man; we come to the God of love and grace. She was not called; we are: the Spirit says, Come, and the bride says, Come. She had a law against her; we have a promise, many a promise, in favour of us: Ask, and it shall be given you. She had no friend to introduce her, or intercede for her, while on the contrary he that was then the king's favourite was her enemy; but we have an advocate with the Father, in whom he is well pleased. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.

3. That all the request she had to make to him, at this time, was that he would please to come to a banquet which she had prepared for him, and bring Haman along with him, Es 5:4,5. Hereby,

(1.) She would intimate to him how much she valued his favour and company. Whatever she had to ask, she desired his favour above any thing, and would purchase it at any rate.

(2.) She would try how he stood affected to her; for, if he should refuse this, it would be to no purpose as yet to present her other request.

(3.) She would endeavour to bring him into a pleasant humour, and soften his spirit, that he might with the more tenderness receive the impressions of the complaint she had to make to him.

(4.) She would please him, by making court to Haman his favourite, and inviting him to come whose company she knew he loved and whom she desired to have present when she made her complaint; for she would say nothing of him but what she durst say to his face.

(5.) She hoped at the banquet of wine to have a fairer and more favourable opportunity of presenting her petition. Wisdom is profitable to direct how to manage some men that are hard to deal with, and to take them by the right handle.

4. That he readily came, and ordered Haman to come along with him (Es 5:5), which was an indication of the kindness he still retained for her; if he really designed the destruction of her and her people, he would not have accepted her banquet. There he renewed his kind enquiry (What is thy petition?) and his generous promise, that it should be

granted, even to the half of the kingdom (Es 5:6), a proverbial expression, by which he assured her that he would deny her nothing in reason. Herod used it, Mk 6:23.

5. That then Esther thought fit to ask no more than a promise that he would please to accept of another treat, the next day, in her apartment, and Haman with him (Es 5:7,8), intimating to him that then she would let him know what her business was. This adjourning of the main petition may be attributed,

(1.) To Esther's prudence; thus she hoped yet further to win upon him and ingratiate herself with him. Perhaps her heart failed her now when she was going to make her request, and she desired to take some further time for prayer, that God would give her a mouth and wisdom. The putting of it off thus, it is likely, she knew would be well taken as an expression of the great reverence she had for the king, and her unwillingness to be too pressing upon him. What is hastily asked is often as hastily denied; but what is asked with a pause deserves to be considered.

(2.) To God's providence putting it into Esther's heart to delay her petition a day longer, she knew not why, but God did, that what was to happen in the night intervening between this and to-morrow might further her design and make way for her success, that Haman might arrive at the highest pitch of malice against Mordecai and might begin to fall before him. The Jews perhaps blamed Ester as dilatory, and some of them began to suspect her sincerity, or at least her zeal; but the event disproved their jealousy, and all was for the best.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained favor in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.
4 And Esther answered, If *it seem* good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.
5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.
6 And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.
7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request *is;*
8 If I have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do tomorrow as the king hath said.
9 Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

This account here given of Haman is a comment upon that of Solomon, Pr 21:24. Proud and haughty scorner is his name that deals in proud wrath. Never did any man more answer that name than Haman, in whom pride and wrath had so much the ascendant. See him,

I. Puffed up with the honour of being invited to Esther's feast. He was joyful and glad of heart at it, Es 5:9. Observe with what a high gust he speaks of it (Es 5:12), how he values himself upon it, and how near he thinks it brings him to the perfection of felicity, that Esther the queen did let no man come with the king to the banquet but his mighty self, and he thought it was because she was exceedingly charmed with his conversation that the next day she had invited him also to come with the king; none so fit as he to bear the king company. Note, Self-admirers and self-flatterers are really

self-deceivers. Haman pleased himself with the fancy that the queen, by this repeated invitation, designed to honour him, whereas really she designed to accuse him, and, in calling him to the banquet, did but call him to the bar. What magnifying glasses do proud men look at their faces in! And how does the pride of their heart deceive them! Ob 1:3.

II. Vexing and fretting at the slight that Mordecai put upon him, and thereby made uneasy to himself and to all about him.

1. Mordecai was as determined as ever: He stood not up, nor moved for him, Es 5:9. What he did was from a principle of conscience, and therefore he persevered in it, and would not cringe to Haman, no, not when he had reason to fear him and Esther herself complimented him. He knew God could and would deliver him and his people from the rage of Haman, without any such mean and sneaking expedients to mollify him. Those that walk in holy sincerity may walk in holy security, and go on in their work, not fearing what man can do unto them. He that walks uprightly walks surely.

2. Haman can as ill bear it as ever; nay, the higher he is lifted up, the more impatient is her of contempt and the more enraged at it.

(1.) It made his own spirit restless, and put him into a grievous agitation. He was full of indignation (Es 5:9) and yet refrained himself, Es 5:10. Gladly would he have drawn his sword and run Mordecai through for affronting him thus; but he hoped shortly to see him fall with all the Jews, and therefore with much ado prevailed with himself to forbear stabbing him. What a struggle had he in his own bosom between his anger, which required Mordecai's death immediately (O that I had of his flesh! I cannot be satisfied! Job 31:31), and his malice, which had determined to wait for

the general massacre! Thus thorns and snares are in the way of the froward.

(2.) It made all his enjoyments sapless. This little affront which he received from Mordecai was the dead fly which spoiled all his pot of precious ointment; he himself owned in the presence of his wife and friends, to the everlasting reproach of a proud and discontented mind, that he had no comfort in his estate, preferment, and family, as long as Mordecai lived and had a place in the king's gate, Es 5:10-13. He took notice of his own riches and honours, the numerousness of his family, and the high posts to which he was advanced, that he was the darling of the prince and the idol of the court; and yet all this avails him nothing as long as Mordecai is unhanged. Those that are disposed to be uneasy will never want something or other to be uneasy at; and proud men, though they have much to their mind, yet, if they have not all to their mind, it is as nothing to them. The thousandth part of what Haman had would serve to make a humble modest man as much of a happiness as he expects from this world; and yet Haman complained as passionately as if he had been sunk into the lowest degree of poverty and disgrace.

III. Meditating revenge, and assisted therein by his wife and his friends, Es 5:14. They saw how gladly he would dispense with his own resolution of deferring the slaughter till the time determined by the lot, and therefore advised him to take an earnest and foretaste of the satisfaction he then expected in the speedy execution of Mordecai; let him have that to please him at the moment; and having, as he thought, made sure the destruction of all the Jews, at the time appointed, he will not think scorn, for the present, to lay hands on Mordecai alone.

1. For the pleasing of his fancy they advise him to get a gallows ready, and have it set up before his own door, that,

as soon as ever he could get the warrant signed, there might be no delay of the execution; he would not need so much as to stay the making of the gallows. This is very agreeable to Haman, who has the gallows made and fixed immediately; it must be fifty cubits high, or as near that as might be, for the greater disgrace of Mordecai and to make him a spectacle to every one that passed by; and it must be before Haman's door, that all men might take notice it was to the idol of his revenge that Mordecai was sacrificed and that he might feed his eyes with the sight.

2. For the gaining of his point they advise him to go early in the morning to the king, and get an order from him for the hanging of Mordecai, which, they doubted not, would be readily granted to one who was so much the king's favourite and who had so easily obtained an edict for the destruction of the whole nation of the Jews. There needed no feigned suggestion; it was enough if he let the king know that Mordecai, in contempt of the king's command, refused to reverence him. And now we leave Haman to go to bed, pleased with the thoughts of seeing Mordecai hanged the next day, and then going merrily to the banquet, and not dreaming of handselling his own gallows.

10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home,
he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.
11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude
of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted
him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants
of the king.
12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come
in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but
myself; and tomorrow am I invited unto her also with the king.
13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew
sitting at the king’s gate.
14 Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows
be made of fifty cubits high, and tomorrow speak thou unto the
king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in

merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

Esther-6

Haman Forced to Honor Mordecai

Now Satan put it into the heart of Haman to contrive Mordecai's death we read in the foregoing chapter; how God put it into the heart of the king to contrive Mordecai's honour we are here told. Now, if the king's word will prevail above Haman's (for, though Haman be a great man, the king in the throne must be above him), much more will the counsel of God stand, whatever devices there are in men's hearts. It is to no purpose therefore for Haman to oppose it, when both God and the king will have Mordecai honoured, and in this juncture too, when his preferment, and Haman's disappointment, would help to ripen the great affair of the Jewish deliverance for the effort that Esther was to make towards it the next day. Sometimes delay may prove to have been good conduct. Stay awhile, and we may have done the sooner. Cunctando restituit rem--He conquered by delay. Let us trace the steps which Providence took towards the advancement of Mordecai.

I. On that night could not the king sleep. His sleep fled away (so the word is); and perhaps, like a shadow, the more carefully he pursued it the further it went from him. Sometimes we cannot sleep because we fain would sleep. Even after a banquet of wine he could not sleep when Providence had a design to serve in keeping him waking. We read of no bodily indisposition he was under, that might break his sleep; but God, whose gift sleep is, withheld it from him. Those that are ever so much resolved to cast away care cannot always do it; they find it in their pillows when they neither expect nor welcome it. He that commanded 127 provinces could not command one hour's sleep. Perhaps the charms of Esther's conversation the day before gave occasion to his heart to reproach him for neglecting her, and

banishing her from his presence, though she was the wife of his bosom, for above thirty days; and that might keep him waking. An offended conscience can find a time to speak when it will be heard.

II. When he could not sleep he called to have the book of records, the Journals of his reign, read to him, Es 6:1. Surely he did not design that that should lull him asleep; it would rather fill his head with cares, and drive away sleep. But God put it into his heart to call for it, rather than for music or songs, which the Persian kings used to be attended with (Da 6:18) and which would have been more likely to compose him to rest. When men do that which is unaccountable we know not what God intends by it. Perhaps he would have this book of business read to him that he might improve time and be forming some useful projects. Had it been king David's case, he would have found some other entertainment for his thoughts; when he could not sleep he would have remembered God and meditated upon him (Ps 64:6), and, if he would have had any book read to him, it would have been his Bible; for in that law did he meditate day and night.

III. The servant that read to him either lighted first on that article which concerned Mordecai, or, reading long, came to it at length. Among other things it was found written that Mordecai had discovered a plot against the life of the king which prevented the execution of it, Es 6:2. Mordecai was not in such favour at court that the reader should designedly pitch upon that place; but Providence directed him to it; nay, if we may believe the Jews' tradition (as bishop Patrick relates it), opening the book at this place he turned over the leaves, and would have read another part of the book, but the leaves flew back again to the same place where he opened it; so that he was forced to read that paragraph. How Mordecai's good service was recorded we read Es 2:23, and here it is found upon record.

IV. The king enquired what honour and dignity had been done to Mordecai for this, suspecting that this good service had gone unrewarded, and, like Pharaoh's butler, remembering it as his fault this day, Ge 41:9. Note, The law of gratitude is a law of nature. We ought particularly to be grateful to our inferiors, and not to think all their services such debts to us but that they make us indebted to them. Two rules of gratitude may be gathered from the king's enquiry here:--

1. Better honour than nothing. If we cannot, or need not, make recompence to those who have been kind to us, yet let us do them honour by acknowledging their kindnesses and owning our obligations to them.

2. Better late than never. If we have long neglected to make grateful returns for good offices done us, let us at length bethink ourselves of our debts.

V. The servants informed him that nothing had been done to Mordecai for that eminent service; in the king's gate he sat before, and there he still sat.

Note, 1. It is common for great men to take little notice of their inferiors. The king knew not whether Mordecai was preferred or no till his servants informed him. High spirits take a pride in being careless and unconcerned about those that are below them and ignorant of their state. The great God takes cognizance of the meanest of his servants, knows what dignity is done them and what disgrace.

2. Humility, modesty, and self-denial, though in God's account of great price, yet commonly hinder men's preferment in the world. Mordecai rises no higher than the king's gate, while proud ambitious Haman gets the king's ear and heart; but, though the aspiring rise fast, the humble stand

fast. Honour makes proud men giddy, but upholds the humble in spirit, Pr 29:23.

3. Honour and dignity are rated high in the king's books. He does not ask, What reward has been given Mordecai? what money? what estate? but only, What honour?--a poor thing, and which, if he had not wherewith to support it, would be but a burden.

4. The greatest merits and the best services are often overlooked and go unrewarded among men. Little honour is done to those who best deserve it, and fittest for it, and would do most good with it. See Ec 9:14-16. The acquisition of wealth and honour is usually a perfect lottery, in which those that venture least commonly carry off the best prize.

Nay, 5. Good services are sometimes so far from being a man's preferment that they will not be his protection. Mordecai is at this time, by the king's edict, doomed to destruction, with all the Jews, though it is owned that he deserved dignity. Those that faithfully serve God need not fear being thus ill paid.

1 On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring
the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the
king.
2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and
Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door,
who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
3 And the king said, What honor and dignity hath been done to
Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered
unto him, There is nothing done for him.
4 And the king said, Who *is* in the court? Now Haman was come into
the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang
Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

It is now morning, and people begin to stir.

I. Haman is so impatient to get Mordecai hanged that he comes early to court, to be ready at the king's levee, before any other business is brought before him, to get a warrant for his execution (Es 6:4), which he makes sure that he shall have at the first word. The king would gratify him in a greater thing than that; and he could tell the king that he was so confident of the justice of his request, and the king's favour to him in it, that he had got the gallows ready: one word from the king would complete his satisfaction.

II The king is so impatient to have Mordecai honoured that he sends to know who is in the court that is fit to be employed in it. Word is brought him that Haman is in the court, Es 6:5. Let him come in, says the king, the fittest man to be made use of both in directing and in dispensing the king's favour; and the king knew nothing of any quarrel he had with Mordecai. Haman is brought in immediately, proud of the honour done him in being admitted into the king's bed-chamber, as it should seem, before he was up; for let the king but give orders for the dignifying of Mordecai, and he will be easy in his mind and try to sleep. Now Haman thinks he has the fairest opportunity he can wish for to solicit against Mordecai; but the king's heart is as full as his, and it is fit he should speak first.

III. The king asks Haman how he should express his favour to one whom he had marked for a favourite: What shall be done to the man whom the king delights to honour? Es 6:6. Note, It is a good property in kings, and other superiors, to delight in bestowing rewards and not to delight in punishing. Parents and masters should take a pleasure in commending and encouraging that which is good in those under their charge.

IV. Haman concludes that he himself is the favourite intended, and therefore prescribes the highest expressions of honour that could, for once, be bestowed upon a subject. His

proud heart presently suggested, "To whom will the king delight to do honour more than to myself? No one deserves it so well as I," thinks Haman, "nor stands so fair for it." See how men's pride deceives them. 1. Haman had a better opinion of his merits than there was cause for: he thought none so worthy of honour as himself. It is a foolish thing for us thus to think ourselves the only deserving persons, or more deserving than any other. The deceitfulness of our own hearts appears in nothing so much as in the good conceit we have of ourselves and our own performances, against which we should therefore constantly watch and pray.

2. He had a better opinion of his interest than there was reason for. He thought the king loved and valued no one but himself, but he was deceived. We should suspect that the esteem which others profess for us is not so great as it seems to be or as we are sometimes willing to believe it is, that we may not think too well of ourselves nor place too much confidence in others. Now Haman thinks he is carving out honour for himself, and therefore does it very liberally, Es 6:8,9. Nay, he does it presumptuously, prescribing honours too great to be conferred upon any subject, that he must be dressed in the royal robes, wear the royal crown, and ride on the king's own horse; in short, he must appear in all the pomp and grandeur of the king himself, only he must not carry the sceptre, the emblem of power.

He must be attended by one of the king's most noble princes, who must be his lacquey, and all the people must be made to take notice of him and do him reverence; for he must ride in state through the streets, and it must be proclaimed before him, for his honour, and the encouragement of all to seek the ruler's favour, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour, which had the same intention with that which was proclaimed before Joseph, Bow the knee; for every good subject will honour those whom the king delights to honour. And shall not every good Christian then honour

those whom the King of kings delights to honour and call the saints that are on the earth the excellent ones?

V. The king confounds him with a positive order that he should immediately go himself and put all this honour upon Mordecai the Jew, Es 6:10. If the king had but said, as Haman expected, Thou art the man, what a fair opportunity would he have had to do the errand he came on, and to desire that, to grace the solemnity of his triumphs, Mordecai, his sworn enemy, might be hanged at the same time! But how is he thunderstruck when the king bids him not to order all this to be done, but to do it himself to Mordecai the Jew, the very man he hated above all men and whose ruin he was now designing! Now, it is to no purpose to think of moving any thing to the king against Mordecai when he is the man whom the king delights to honour. Solomon says, The heart of the king is unsearchable (Pr 25:3), but it is not unchangeable.

VI. Haman dares not dispute nor so much as seem to dislike the king's order, but, with the greatest regret and reluctance imaginable, brings it to Mordecai, who I suppose did no more cringe to Haman now than he had done, valuing his counterfeit respect no more than he had valued his concealed malice. The apparel is brought, Mordecai is dressed up, and rides in state through the city, recognized as the king's favourite, Es 6:11. It is hard to say which of the two put a greater force upon himself, proud Haman in putting this honour upon Mordecai, or humble Mordecai in accepting it: the king would have it so, and both must submit. Upon this account it was agreeable to Mordecai as it was an indication of the king's favour, and gave hope that Esther would prevail for the reversing of the edict against the Jews.

5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor? Now

Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to
do honor more than to myself?
7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king
delighteth to honor,
8 let the royal apparel be brought which the king *useth* to wear, and
the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is
set upon his head:
9 and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the
king's most noble princes, that they may array the man *withal*
whom the king delighteth to honor, and bring him on horseback
through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall
it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor.
10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, *and* take the apparel and
the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew,
that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast
spoken.
11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed
Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the
city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man
whom the king delighteth to honor.

We may here observe,

I. How little Mordecai was puffed up with his advancement. He came again to the king's gate (Es 6:12); he returned to his place and the duty of it immediately, and minded his business as closely as he had done before. Honour is well bestowed on those that are not made proud and idle by it, and will not think themselves above their business.

II. How much Haman was cast down with his disappointment. He could not bear it. To wait upon any man, especially Mordecai, and at this time, when he hoped to have seen him hanged, was enough to break such a proud heart as he had. He hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered, as one that looked upon himself as sunk and in a manner condemned. What harm had it done him to stoop thus to Mordecai? Was he ever the worse for it? Was it not

what he himself proposed to be done by one of the king's most noble princes? Why then should he grudge to do it himself? But that will break a proud man's heart which would not break a humble man's sleep.

III. How his doom was, out of this event, read to him by his wife and his friends: "If Mordecai be, as they say he is, of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, though but in a point of honour, never expect to prevail against him; for thou shalt surely fall before him," Es 6:13. Miserable comforters were they all; they did not advise him to repent, and ask Mordecai's pardon for his bad design against him, but foretold his destiny as fatal and unavoidable. Two things they foresaw:--

1. That Haman would be disappointed in his enterprise against the Jews: "Thou shalt not prevail to root out that people. Heaven plainly fights against thee."

2. That he himself would be destroyed: Thou shalt surely fall before him. The contest between Michael and the dragon will not be a drawn battle; no, Haman must fall before Mordecai. Two things they grounded their prognostications upon:--

(1.) This Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews; feeble Jews their enemies sometimes called them, but formidable Jews they sometimes found them. They are a holy seed, a praying seed, in covenant with God, and a seed that the Lord hath all along blessed, and therefore let not their enemies expect to triumph over them.

(2.) Haman had begun to fall, and therefore he was certainly a gone man. It has been observed of great court-favourites that when once they have been frowned upon they have fallen utterly, as fast as they rose; it is true of the church's

enemies that when God begins with them he will make an end. As for God his work is perfect.

IV. How seasonably he was now sent for to the banquet that Esther had prepared, Es 6:14. He thought it seasonable, in hopes it would revive his drooping spirits and save his sinking honour. But really it was seasonable because, his spirits being broken by this sore disappointment, he might the more easily be run down by Esther's complaint against him. The wisdom of God is seen in timing the means of his church's deliverance so as to manifest his own glory.

12 And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hasted
to his house mourning, and having his head covered.
13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that
had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto
him, If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast
begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely
fall before him.
14 And while they *were* yet talking with him, came the king's
chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that
Esther had prepared.

Esther-7

Haman Hanged

1 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

The king in humour, and Haman out of humour, meet at Esther's table. Now,

I The king urged Esther, a third time, to tell him what her request was, for he longed to know, and repeated his promise that it should be granted, Es 7:2. If the king had now forgotten that Esther had an errand to him, and had not again asked what it was, she could scarcely have known how to renew it herself; but he was mindful of it, and now was

bound with the threefold cord of a promise thrice made to favour her.

II. Esther, at length, surprises the king with a petition, not for wealth or honour, or the preferment of some of her friends to some high post, which the king expected, but for the preservation of herself and her countrymen from death and destruction, Es 7:3,4.

1. Even a stranger, a criminal, shall be permitted to petition for his life; but that a friend, a wife, should have occasion to present such a petition was very affecting: Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. Two things bespeak lives to be very precious, and fit to be saved, if innocent, at any expense:--

(1.) Majesty. If it be a crowned head that is struck at, it is time to stir. Esther's was such: "Let my life be given me. If thou hast any affection for the wife of thy bosom, now is the time to show it; for that is the life that lies at stake."

(2.) Multitude. If they be many lives, very many, and those no way forfeited, that are aimed at, no time should be lost nor pains spared to prevent the mischief. "It is not a friend or two, but my people, a whole nation, and a nation dear to me, for the saving of which I now intercede."

2. To move the king the more she suggests,

(1.) That she and her people were bought and sold. They had not sold themselves by any offence against the government, but were sold to gratify the pride and revenge of one man.

(2.) That it was not their liberty only, but their lives that were sold. "Had we been sold" (she says) "into slavery, I would not have complained; for in time we might have recovered

our liberty, thought eh king would have made but a bad bargain of it, and not have increased his wealth by our price. Whatever had been paid for us, the loss of so many industrious hands out of his kingdom would have been more damage to the treasury than the price would countervail." To persecute good people is as impolitic as it is impious, and a manifest wrong to the interests of princes and states; they are weakened and impoverished by it. But this was not the case. We are sold (says she) to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish; and then it is time to speak. She refers to the words of the decree (Es 3:13), which aimed at nothing short of their destruction; this would touch in a tender part if there were any such in the king's heart, and would bring him to relent.

III. The king stands amazed at the remonstrance, and asks (Es 7:5) "Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? What! contrive the murder of the queen and all her friends? Is there such a man, such a monster rather, in nature? Who is he, and where is he, whose heart has filled him to do so?" Or, Who hath filled his heart. He wonders,

1. That any one should be so bad as to think such a thing; Satan certainly filled his heart.

2. That any one should be so bold as to do such a thing, should have his heart so fully set in him to do wickedly, should be so very daring.

Note, (1.) It is hard to imagine that there should be such horrid wickedness committed in the world as really there is. Who, where is he, that dares, presumes, to question the being of God and his providence, to banter his oracles, profane his name, persecute his people, and yet bid defiance to his wrath? Such there are, to think of whom is enough to make horror take hold of us, Ps 119:53.

(2.) We sometimes startle at the mention of that evil which yet we ourselves are chargeable with. Ahasuerus is amazed at that wickedness which he himself is guilty of; for he consented to that bloody edict against the Jews. Thou art the man, might Esther too truly have said.

IV. Esther plainly charged Haman with it before his face: "Here he is, let him speak for himself, for therefore he is invited: The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman (Es 7:6); it is he that has designed our murder, and, which is worse, has basely drawn the king in to be particeps criminis--a partaker of his crime, ignorantly agreeing to it."

V. Haman is soon apprehensive of his danger: He was afraid before the king and queen; and it was time for him to fear when the queen was his prosecutor, the king his judge, and his own conscience a witness against him; and the surprising operations of Providence against him that same morning could not but increase his fear. Now he has little joy of his being invited to the banquet of wine, but finds himself in straits when he thought himself in the fulness of his sufficiency. He is cast into a net by his own feet.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? and it shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

5 Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman.
Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.
7 And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath *went*
into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for
his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil
determined against him by the king.

Here, I The king retires in anger. He rose from table in a great passion, and went into the palace garden to cool himself and to consider what was to be done, Es 7:7. He sent not for his seven wise counsellors who knew the times, being ashamed to consult them about the undoing of that which he had rashly done without their knowledge or advice; but he went to walk in the garden awhile, to compare in his thoughts what Esther had now informed him of with what had formerly passed between him and Haman. And we may suppose him,

1. Vexed at himself, that he should be such a fool as to doom a guiltless nation to destruction, and his own queen among the rest, upon the base suggestions of a self-seeking man, without examining the truth of his allegations. Those that do things with self-will reflect upon them afterwards with self-reproach.

2. Vexed at Haman whom he had laid in his bosom, that he should be such a villain as to abuse his interest in him to draw him to consent to so wicked a measure. When he saw himself betrayed by one he had caressed he was full of indignation at him; yet he would say nothing till he had taken time for second thoughts, to see whether they would make the matter better or worse than it first appeared, that he might proceed accordingly. When we are angry we should pause awhile before we come to any resolution, as those that have a rule over our own spirits and are governed by reason.

II. Haman becomes a humble petitioner to the queen for his life. He might easily perceived by the king's hastily flying

out of the room that there was evil determined against him. For the wrath of a king, such a king, is as the roaring of a lion and as messengers of death; and now see,

1. How mean Haman looks, when he stands up first and then falls down at Esther's feet, to beg she would save his life and take all he had. Those that are most haughty, insolent, and imperious, when they are in power and prosperity, are commonly the most abject and poor-spirited when the wheel turns upon them. Cowards, they say, are most cruel, and then consciousness of their cruelty makes them the more cowardly.

2. How great Esther looks, who of late had been neglected and doomed to the slaughter tanquam ovis--as a sheep; now her sworn enemy owns that he lies at her mercy, a d begs his life at her hand. Thus did God regard the low estate of his handmaiden and scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts, Lu 1:48,51. Compare with this that promise made to the Philadelphian church (Re 3:9), I will make those of the synagogue of Satan to come and to worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee. The day is coming when those that hate and persecute God's chosen ones would gladly be beholden to them. Give us of your oil. Father Abraham, send Lazarus. The upright shall have dominion in the morning.

III. The king returns yet more exasperated against Haman. The more he thinks of him the worse he thinks of him and of what he had done. It was but lately that every thing Haman said and did, even that which was most criminal, was taken well and construed to his advantage; now, on the contrary, what Haman did that was not only innocent, but a sign of repentance, is ill taken, and, without colour of reason, construed to his disadvantage. He lay in terror at Esther's feet, to beg for his life. What! (says the king) will he force the queen also before me in the house? Not that he thought

he had any such intention, but having been musing on Haman's design to slay the queen, and finding him in this posture, he takes occasion from it thus to vent his passion against Haman, as a man that would not scruple at the greatest and most impudent piece of wickedness. "He designed to slay the queen, and to slay her wish me in the house; will he in like manner force her? What! ravish her first and then murder her? He that had a design upon her life may well be suspected to have a design upon her chastity."

IV. Those about him were ready to be the instruments of his wrath. The courtiers that adored Haman when he was the rising sun set themselves as much against him now that he is a falling star, and are even glad of an occasion to run him down: so little sure can proud men be of the interest they think they have.

1. As soon as the king spoke an angry word they covered Haman's face, as a condemned man, not worthy any more either to see the king or to be seen by him; they marked him for execution. Those that are hanged commonly have their faces covered. See how ready the servants were to take the first hint of the king's mind in this matter. Turba Romae sequitur fortunam, et semper et odit damnatos--The Roman populace change as the aspects of fortune do, and always oppress the fallen. If Haman be going down, they all cry, "Down with him."

2. One of those that had been lately sent to Haman's house, to fetch him to the banquet, informed the king of the gallows which Haman had prepared for Mordecai, Es 7:9. Now that Mordecai is the favourite the chamberlain applauds him--he spoke good for the king; and, Haman being in disgrace, every thing is taken notice of that might make against him, incense the king against him, and fill up the measure of his iniquity.

V. The king gave orders that he should be hanged upon his own gallows, which was done accordingly, nor was he so much as asked what he had to say why this judgment should not be passed upon him and execution awarded. The sentence is short--Hang him thereon; and the execution speedy--So they hanged Haman on the gallows, Es 7:10. See here,

1. Pride brought down. He that expected every one to do him homage is now made an ignominious spectacle to the world, and he himself sacrificed to his revenge. God resists the proud; and those whom he resists will find him irresistible.

2. Persecution punished. Haman was upon many accounts a wicked man, but his enmity to God's church was his most provoking crime, and for that the God to whom vengeance belongs here reckons with him, and, though his plot was defeated, gives him according to the wickedness of his endeavours, Ps 28:4.

3. Mischief returned upon the person himself that contrived it, the wicked snared in the work of his own hands, Ps 7:15,16,9:15,16. Haman was justly hanged on the very gallows he had unjustly prepared for Mordecai. If he had not set up that gallows, perhaps the king would not have thought of ordering him to be hanged; but, if he rear a gallows for the man whom the king delights to honour, the thought is very natural that he should be ordered to try it himself, and see how it fits him, see how he likes it. The enemies of God's church have often been thus taken in their own craftiness. In the morning Haman was designing himself for the robes and Mordecai for the gallows; but the tables are turned: Mordecai has the crown, Haman the cross. The Lord is known by such judgments. See Pr 11:8,21:18.

Lastly, The satisfaction which the king had in this execution. Then was the king's wrath pacified, and not till then. He was

as well pleased in ordering Haman to be hanged as in ordering Mordecai to be honoured. Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to take vengeance on. God saith of wicked men (Eze 5:13), I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther *was*. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

Esther-8

The Jews Authorized to Resist

1 On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he *was* unto her.

It was but lately that we had Esther and Mordecai in tears and in fears, but fasting and praying; now let us see how to them there arose light in darkness. Here is,

1. Esther enriched. Haman was hanged as a traitor, therefore his estate was forfeited to the crown, and the king gave it all to Esther, in recompence for the fright that wicked man had put her into and the vexation he had created her, Es 8:1. His houses and lands, good sand chattels, and all the money he had heaped up which he was prime-minister of state (which, we may suppose, was no little), are given to Esther; they are all her own, added to the allowance she already had. Thus is the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just, and the innocent

divides the silver, Pr 13:22,Job 27:17,18. What Haman would have done mischief with Esther will do good with; and estates are to be valued as they are used.

2. Mordecai advanced. His pompous procession, this morning, through the streets of the city, was but a sudden flash or blaze of honour; but here we have the more durable and gainful preferments to which he was raised, which yet the other happily made way for.

(1.) He is now owned as the queen's cousin, which till now, though Esther had been four years queen, for aught that appears, the king did not know. So humble, so modest, a man was Mordecai, and so far from being ambitious of a place at court, that he concealed his relation to the queen and her obligations to him as her guardian, and never made us of her interest for any advantage of his own. Who but Mordecai could have taken so little notice of so great an honour? But now he was brought before the king, introduced, as we say, to kiss his hand; for now, at length, Esther had told what he was to her, not only near a-kin to her, but the best friend she had in the world, who took care of her when she was an orphan, and one whom she still respected as a father. Now the king finds himself, for his wife's sake, more obliged than he thought he had been to delight in doing honour to Mordecai. How great were the merits of that man to whom both king and queen did in effect owe their lives! Being brought before the king, to him no doubt he bowed, and did reverence, though he would not to Haman an Amalekite.

(2.) The king makes his lord privy-seal in the room of Haman. All the trust he had reposed in Haman, and all the power he had given him, are here transferred to Mordecai; for the ring which he had taken from Haman he gave to Mordecai, and made this trusty humble man as much his favourite, his confidant, and his agent, as ever that proud perfidious wretch was; a happy change he made of his

bosom-friends, and so, no doubt, he and his people soon found it.

(3.) The queen makes him here steward, for the management of Haman's estate, and for getting and keeping possession of it: She set Mordecai over the house of Haman. See the vanity of laying up treasure upon earth; he that heapeth up riches knoweth not who shall gather them (Ps 39:6), not only whether he shall be a wise man or a fool (Ec 2:19), but whether he shall be a friend or an enemy. With what little pleasure, nay, with what constant vexation, would Haman have looked upon his estate if he could have foreseen that Mordecai, the man he hated above all men in the world, should have rule over all that wherein he had laboured, and thought that he showed himself wise! It is our interest, therefore, to make sure those riches which will not be left behind, but will go with us to another world.

2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

Haman, the chief enemy of the Jews, was hanged, Mordecai and Esther, their chief friends, were sufficiently protected; but many others there were in the king's dominions that hated the Jews and desired their ruin, and to their rage and malice all the rest of that people lay exposed; for the edict against them was still in force, and, in pursuance of it, their enemies would on the day appointed fall upon them, and they would be deemed as rebels against the king and his government if they should offer to resist and take up arms in their own defence. For the preventing of this,

I The queen here makes intercession with much affection and importunity. She came, a second time, uncalled into the king's presence (Es 8:3), and was as before encouraged to present her petition, by the king's holding out the golden sceptre to her, Es 8:4. Her petition is that the king, having put away Haman, would put away the mischief of Haman and his device against the Jews, that that might not take place now that he was taken off. Many a man's mischief survives him, and the wickedness he devised operates when he is gone. What men project and write may, after their death, be either very profitable or very pernicious. It was therefore requisite in this case that, for the defeating of Haman's plot, they should apply to the king for a further act of grace, that by another edict he would reverse the letters devised by Haman, and which he wrote (she does not say which the king consented to and confirmed with his own seal; she leaves it to his own conscience to say that), by which he took an effectual course to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces, Es 8:5. If the king were indeed, as he seemed to be, troubled that such a decree was made, he could not do less than revoke it; for what is repentance, but undoing, to the utmost of our power, what we have done amiss?

1. This petition Esther presents with much affection: She fell down at the king's feet and besought him with tears (Es 8:3), every tear as precious as any of the pearls with which she was adorned. It was time to be earnest when the church of God lay at stake. Let none be so great as to be unwilling to stoop, none so merry as to be unwilling to weep, when thereby they may do any service to God's church and people. Esther, though safe herself, fell down, and begged with tears for the deliverance of her people.

2. She expresses it with great submission, and a profound deference to the king and his wisdom and will (Es 8:5): If it please the king and if I have found favour in his sightand

again, "If the thing itself seem right and reasonable before the king, and if I that ask it be pleasing in his eyes, let the decree be reversed." Even when we have the utmost reason and justice on our side, and have the clearest cause to plead, yet it becomes us to speak to our superiors with humility and modesty, and all possible expressions of respect, and not to talk like demandants when we are supplicants. There is nothing lost be decency and good breeding. As soft answers turn away wrath, so soft askings obtain favour.

3. She enforces her petition with a pathetic plea: "For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come upon my people? Little comfort can I have of my own life if I cannot prevail for theirs: as good share in the evil myself as see it come upon them; for how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred, that are dear to me?" Esther, a queen, owns her poor kindred, and speaks of them with a very tender concern. Now it was that she mingled her tears with her words, that she wept and made supplication; we read of no tears when she begged for her own life, but, now that she was sure of that, she wept for her people. Tears of pity and tenderness are the most Christ-like. Those that are truly concerned for the public would rather die in the last ditch than live to see the desolations of the church of God and the ruin of their country. Tender spirits cannot bear to think of the destruction of their people and kindred, and therefore dare not omit any opportunity of giving them relief.

II The king here takes a course for the preventing of the mischief that Haman had designed.

1 The king knew, and informed the queen, that, according to the constitution of the Persian government, the former edict could not be revoked (Es 8:8): What is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may not, under any pretence whatsoever, be reversed. This was a fundamental article of their magna charta, that no law or decree, when

once it had passed the royal assent, could be repealed or recalled, no judgment vacated, no attainder reversed, Da 6:15. This is so far from bespeaking the wisdom and honour of the Medes and Persians that really it bespeaks their pride and folly, and consequently their shame. It is ridiculous in itself for any man, or company of men, to pretend to such an infallibility of wisdom as to foresee all the consequences of what they decree; and therefore it is unjust, and injurious to mankind, to claim such a supremacy of power as to make their decrees irrevocable, whether the consequences prove good or bad. This savours of that old presumption which ruined us all: We will be as gods. Much more prudent is that proviso of our constitution, that no law can, by any words or sanctions whatsoever, be made unrepealable, any more than any estate unalienable. Cujus est instruere, ejus est destruere--the right to enact implies the right to repeal. It is God's prerogative not to repent, and to say what can never be altered or unsaid.

2. Yet he found an expedient to undo the devices of Haman, and defeat his design, by signing and publishing another decree to authorize the Jews to stand upon their defence, vim vi repellere, et invasorem occidere--to oppose force to force, and destroy the assailant. This would be their effectual security. The king shows them that he had done enough already to convince them that he had a concern for the Jewish nation, for he had ordered his favourite to be hanged because he laid his hand upon the Jews (Es 8:7), and he therefore would d the utmost he could to protect them; and he leaves it as fully with Esther and Mordecai to use his name and power for their deliverance as before he had left it with Haman to use his name and power for their destruction: "Write for the Jews as it liketh you (Es 8:8), saving only the honour of our constitution. Let the mischief be put away as effectually as may be without reversing the letters."

The secretaries of state were ordered to attend to draw up this edict on the twenty-third day of the third month (Es 8:9), about two months after the promulgation of the former, but nine months before the time set for its execution: it was to be drawn up and published in the respective languages of all the provinces. Shall the subjects of an earthly prince have his decrees in a language they understand? and shall God's oracles and laws be locked up from his servants in an unknown tongue? It was to be directed to the proper officers of every province, both to the justices of peace and to the deputy-lieutenants. It was to be carefully dispersed throughout all the king's dominions, and true copies sent by expresses to all the provinces. The purport of this decree was to commission the Jews, upon the day which was appointed for their destruction, to draw together in a body for their own defence.

And, (1.) To stand for their life, that, whoever assaulted them, it might be at their peril.

(2.) They might not only act defensively, but might destroy, and slay, and cause to perish, all the power of the people that would assault them, men, women, and children (Es 8:11), and thus to avenge themselves on their enemies (Es 8:13), and, if they pleased, to enrich themselves by their enemies, for they were empowered to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Now, [1.] This showed his kindness to the Jews, and sufficiently provided for their safety; for he latter decree would be looked upon as a tacit revocation of the former, though not in expression.

But, [2.] It shows the absurdity of that branch of their constitution that none of the king's edicts might be repealed; for it laid the king here under a necessity of enacting a civil war in his own dominions, between the Jews and their enemies, so that both sides took up arms by his authority,

and yet against his authority. No better could come of men's pretending to be wise above what is given them. Great expedition was used in dispersing this decree, the king himself being in pain lest it should come too late and any mischief should be done to the Jews by virtue of the former decree before the notice of this arrived. It was therefore by the king's commandment, as well as Mordecai's, that the messengers were hastened and pressed on (Es 8:14), and had swift beasts provided them, Es 8:10. It was not a time to trifle when so many lives were in danger.

5 and said, If it please the king, and if I have found favor in his sight,
and the thing *seem* right before the king, and I *be* pleasing in his
eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the
son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the
Jews which *are* in all the king's provinces:
6 for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my
people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?
7 Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to
Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman,
and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his
hand upon the Jews.
8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and
seal *it* with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the
king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.
9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month,
that *is,* the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth *day* thereof;
and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto
the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the
provinces which *are* from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred twenty
and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing
thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews
according to their writing, and according to their language.
10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed *it* with the
king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, *and* riders on
mules, camels, *and* young dromedaries:
11 wherein the king granted the Jews which *were* in every city to
gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to
slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and

province that would assault them, *both* little ones and women, and
to take the spoil of them for a prey,
12 upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, *namely,* upon
the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month Adar.
13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every
province *was* published unto all people, and that the Jews should be
ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.
14 *So* the posts that rode upon mules *and* camels went out, being
hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the
decree was given at Shushan the palace.

It was but a few days ago that we had Mordecai in sackcloth and all the Jews in sorrow; but here is a blessed change, Mordecai in purple and all the Jews in joy. See Ps 30:5,11,12.

1. Mordecai in purple, Es 8:15. Having obtained an order for the relief of all the Jews, he was easy, he parted with his mourning weeds, and put on the royal apparel, which either belonged to his place or which the king appointed him as a favourite. His robes were rich, blue and white, of fine linen and purple; so was his coronet: it was of gold. These are things not worth taking notice of, but as they were marks of the king's favour, and that the fruit of God's favour to his church. It is well with a land when the ensigns of dignity are made the ornaments of serious piety. The city Shushan was sensible of its advantage in the preferment of Mordecai, and therefore rejoiced and was glad, not only pleased in general with the advancement of virtue, but promising itself, in particular, better times, now that so good a man was entrusted with power. Haman was hanged; and, when the wicked perish, there is shouting, Pr 11:10. Mordecai was preferred; and, when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.

2 The Jews in joy, Es 8:16,17. The Jews, who awhile ago were under a dark cloud, dejected and disgraced, now had light and gladness, joy and honour, a feast and a good lay. If

they had not been threatened and in distress they would not have had occasion for this extraordinary joy. Thus are God's people sometimes made to sow in tears that they may reap in so much the more joy. The suddenness and strangeness of the turn of affairs in their favour added much to their joy. They were like those that dream; then was their mouth filled with laughter, Ps 126:1,2. One good effect of this deliverance was that many of the people of the land, that were considerate, sober, and well inclined, became Jews, were proselyted to the Jewish religion, renounced idolatry, and worshipped the true God only. Haman thought to extirpate the Jews, but it proves, in the issue, that their numbers are greatly increased and many added to the church.

Observe, When the Jews had joy and gladness then many of the people of the land became Jews. The holy cheerfulness of those that profess religion is a great ornament to their profession, and will invite and encourage others to be religious. The reason here given why so many became Jews at this time is because the fear of the Jews fell upon them. When they observed how wonderfully divine Providence had owned them and wrought for them in this critical juncture,

(1.) They thought them great, and considered those happy that were among them; and therefore they came over to them, as was foretold, Zec 8:23. We will go with you, for we have heard, we have seen, that God is with you, the shield of your help, and the sword of your excellency, De 33:29. When the church prospers, and is smiled upon, many will come into it that will be shy of it when it is in trouble.

(2.) They thought them formidable, and considered those miserable that were against them. They plainly saw in Haman's fate that, if any offered injury to the Jews, it was at their peril; and therefore, for their own security, they joined

themselves to them. It is folly to think of contending with the God of Israel, and therefore it is wisdom to think of submitting to him.

15 And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honor.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

Esther-9

The Jews Destroy Their Enemies

1 Now in the twelfth month, that *is,* the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them; (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them,)

We have here a decisive battle fought between the Jews and their enemies, in which the Jews were victorious. Neither side was surprised; for both had notice of it long enough before, so that it was a fair trial of skill between them. Nor could either side call the other rebels, for they were both supported by the royal authority.

I The enemies of the Jews were the aggressors. They hoped, notwithstanding the latter edict, to have power over them, by virtue of the former (Es 9:1), and made assaults upon them accordingly; they formed themselves into bodies, and joined in confederacy against them, to seek their hurt, Es 9:2 The Chaldee paraphrase says that none appeared against the Jews but Amalekites only, who were infatuated, and had their hearts hardened, as Pharaoh's against Israel, to take up arms

to their own destruction. Some had such an inveterate implacable malice against the Jews that Haman's fall and Mordecai's advancement, instead of convincing them, did but exasperate them, and make them the more outrageous and resolute to cut all their throats. The sons of Haman, particularly, vowed to avenge their father's death, and pursue his designs, which they call noble and brave, whatever hazards they run; and a strong party they had formed both in Shushan and in the provinces in order hereunto. Fight they would, though they plainly saw Providence fight against them; and thus they were infatuated to their own destruction. If they would have sat still, and attempted nothing against the people of God, not a hair of their head would have fallen to the ground: but they cannot persuade themselves to do that; they must be meddling, though it prove to their own ruin, and roll a burdensome stone, which will return upon them.

II. But the Jews were the conquerors. That very day when the king's decree for their destruction was to be put in execution, and which the enemies thought would have been their day, proved God's day, Ps 37:13. It was turned to the contrary of what was expected, and the Jews had rule over those that hated them, Es 9:1. We are here told,

1. What the Jews did for themselves (Es 9:2): They gathered themselves together in their cities, embodied, and stood upon their defence, offering violence to none, but bidding defiance to all. If they had not had an edict to warrant them, they durst not have done it, but, being so supported, they strove lawfully. Had they acted separately, each family apart, they would have been an easy prey to their enemies; but acting in concert, and gathering together in their cities, they strengthened one another, and durst face their enemies. Vis unita fortior--forces act most powerfully when combined. Those that write of the state of the Jews at this day give this as a reason why, though they are very

numerous in many parts, and very rich, they are yet so despicable, because they are generally so selfish that they cannot incorporate, and, being under the curse of dispersion, they cannot unite, nor (as here) gather together, for, if they could, they might with their numbers and wealth threaten the most potent states.

2. What the rulers of the provinces did for them, under the influence of Mordecai. All the officers of the king, who, by the bloody edict, were ordered to help forward their destruction (Es 3:12,13), conformed to the latter edict (which, being an estopel against an estopel, had set the matter at large, and left them at liberty to observe which they pleased) and helped the Jews, which turned the scale on their side, Es 9:3. The provinces would generally do as the rulers of the provinces inclined, and therefore their favouring the Jews would greatly further them.

But why did they help them? Not because they had any kindness for them, but because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them, he having manifestly the countenance both of God and the king. They all saw it their interest to help Mordecai's friends because he was not only great in the king's house, and caressed by the courtiers (as many are who have no intrinsic worth to support their reputation), but his fame for wisdom and virtue went out thence throughout all the provinces: in all places he was extolled as a great man. He was looked upon also as a thriving man, and one that waxed greater and greater (Es 9:4), and therefore for fear of him all the king's officers helped the Jews. Great men may, by their influence, do a great deal of good; many that fear not God will stand in awe of them.

3. What God did for them: he struck all people with a fear of them Es 9:2), as the Canaanites were made afraid of Israel (Jos 2:9,5:1), so that, though they had so much hardiness as

to assault them, yet they had not courage to prosecute the assault. Their hearts failed them when they came to engage, and none of the men of might could find their hands.

4. What execution they did hereupon: No man could withstand them (Es 9:2), but they did what they would to those that hated them, Es 9:5. So strangely were the Jews strengthened and animated, and their enemies weakened and dispirited, that none of those who had marked themselves for their destruction escaped, but they smote them with the stroke of the sword. Particularly,

(1.) On the thirteenth day of the month Adar they slew in the city Shushan 500 men (Es 9:6) and the ten sons of Haman, Es 9:10. The Jews, when on the feast of Purim they read this book of Esther, oblige themselves to read the names of Haman's ten sons all in one breath, without any pause, because they say that they were all killed together, and all gave up the ghost just in the same moment.--Buxt. Synag. Jud. c. 24. The Chaldee paraphrase says that, when these ten were slain, Zeresh, with seventy more of his children, escaped, and afterwards begged their bread from door to door.

(2.) On the fourteenth day they slew in Shushan 300 more, who had escaped the sword on the former day of execution, Es 9:15. This Esther obtained leave of the king for them to do, for the greater terror of their enemies, and the utter crushing of that malignant party of men. The king had taken account of the numbers that were put to the sword the first day (Es 9:11), and told Esther (Es 9:12), and asked her what more she desired. "Nothing," says she, "but commission to do such another day's work." Esther surely was none of the blood-thirsty, none of those that delight in slaughter, but she had some very good reasons that moved her to make this request. She also desired that the dead bodies of Haman's ten

sons might be hanged up on the gallows on which their father was hanged, for the greater disgrace of the family and terror of the party (Es 9:13), and it was done accordingly, Es 9:14. It is supposed that they were hanged in chains and left hanging for some time.

(3.) The Jews in the country kept to their orders, and slew no more of their enemies than what were slain the thirteenth day, which were in all, among all the provinces, 75,000, Es 9:16. If all these were Amalekites (as the Jews say), surely now it was that the remembrance of Amalek was utterly put out, Ex 17:14. However, that which justifies them in the execution of so many is that they did it in their own just and necessary defence; they stood for their lives, authorized to do so by the law of self-preservation, as well as by the king's decree.

(4.) In these several executions it is taken notice of that on the prey they laid not their hand, Es 9:10,15,16. The king's commission had warranted them to take the spoil of their enemies for a prey (Es 8:11), and a fair opportunity they had of enriching themselves with it; if Haman's party had prevailed, no doubt, they would have made use of their authority to seize the goods and estates of the Jews, Es 3:13. But the Jews would not do so by them,

[1.] That they might, to the honour of their religion, evidence a holy and generous contempt of worldly wealth, in imitation of their father Abraham, who scorned to enrich himself with the spoils of Sodom.

[2.] That they might make it appear that they aimed at nothing but their own preservation, and used their interest at court for the saving of their lives, not for the raising of their estates.

[3.] Their commission empowered them to destroy the families of their enemies, even the little ones and the women, Es 8:11. But their humanity forbade them to do that, though that was designed against them. They slew none but those they found in arms; and therefore they did not take the spoil, but left it to the women and little ones, whom they spared, for their subsistence; otherwise as good slay them as starve them, take away their lives as take away their livelihoods. Herein they acted with a consideration and compassion well worthy of imitation.

5. What a satisfaction they had in their deliverance. The Jews in the country cleared themselves of their enemies on the thirteenth day of the month, and they rested on the fourteenth day (Es 9:17), and made that a thanksgiving day, Es 9:19. The Jews in Shushan, the royal city, took two days for their military execution, so that they rested on the fifteenth day, and made that their thanksgiving-day, Es 9:18. Both of them celebrated their festival the very day after they had finished their work and gained their point. When we have received signal mercies from God we ought to be quick and speedy in making our thankful returns to him, while the mercy is fresh and the impressions of it are most sensible.

2 the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all
the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought
their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them
fell upon all people.
3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the
deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear
of Mordecai fell upon them.
4 For Mordecai *was* great in the king's house, and his fame went out
throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater
and greater.
5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword,
and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto
those that hated them.

6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five
hundred men.
7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,
8 and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,
9 and Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,
10 the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the
Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.
11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the
palace was brought before the king.
12 And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and
destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten
sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's
provinces? now what *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee:
or what *is* thy request further? and it shall be done.
13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews
which *are* in Shushan to do tomorrow also according unto this day's
decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.
14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was
given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.
15 For the Jews that *were* in Shushan gathered themselves together on
the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred
men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

The Feast of Purim

16 But the other Jews that *were* in the king's provinces gathered
themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their
enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they
laid not their hands on the prey,
17 on the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth
day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and
gladness.
18 But the Jews that *were* at Shushan assembled together on the
thirteenth *day* thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the
fifteenth *day* of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting
and gladness.
19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled
towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar *a day of* gladness

and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

20 And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that *were* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, *both* nigh and far,

21 to establish *this* among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

We may well imagine how much affected Mordecai and Esther were with the triumphs of the Jews over their enemies, and how they saw the issue of that decisive day with a satisfaction proportionable to the care and concern with which they expected it. How were their hearts enlarged with joy in God and his salvation, and what new songs of praise were put into their mouths! But here we are told what course they took to spread the knowledge of it among their people, and to perpetuate the remembrance of it to posterity, for the honour of God and the encouragement of his people to trust in him at all times.

I The history was written, and copies of it were dispersed among all the Jews in all the provinces of the empire, both nigh and far, Es 9:20. They all knew something of the story, being nearly concerned in it--were by the first edict made sensible of their danger and by the second of their deliverance; but how this amazing turn was given they could not tell. Mordecai therefore wrote all these things. And if this book be the same that he wrote, as many think it is, I cannot but observe what a difference there is between Mordecai's style and Nehemiah's. Nehemiah, at every turn, takes notice of divine Providence and the good hand of his God upon him, which is very proper to stir up devout affections in the minds of his readers; but Mordecai never so much as mentions the name of God in the whole story.

Nehemiah wrote his book at Jerusalem, where religion was in fashion and an air of it appeared in men's common conversation; Mordecai wrote his at Shushan the palace,

where policy reigned more then piety, and he wrote according to the genius of the place. Even those that have the root of the matter in them are apt to lose the savour of religion, and let their leaf wither, when they converse wholly with those that have little religion. Commend me to Nehemiah's way of writing; that I would imitate, and yet learn from Mordecai's that men may be truly devout though they do not abound in the shows and expressions of devotion, and therefore that we must not judge nor despise our brethren. But, because there is so little of the language of Canaan in this book, many think it was not written by Mordecai, but was an extract out of the journals of the kings of Persia, giving an account of the matter of fact, which the Jews themselves knew how to comment upon.

II. A festival was instituted, to be observed yearly from generation to generation by the Jews, in remembrance of this wonderful work which God wrought for them, that the children who should be born might know it, and declare it to their children, that they might set their hope in God, Ps 78:6,7. It would be for the honour of God as the protector of his people, and the honour of Israel as the care of Heaven, a confirmation of the fidelity of God's covenant, an invitation to strangers to come into the bonds of it, and an encouragement to God's own people cheerfully to depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, in the greatest straits. Posterity would reap the benefit of this deliverance, and therefore ought to celebrate the memorial of it. Now concerning this festival we are here told,

1. When it was observed--every year on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth month, just a month before the passover, Es 9:21. Thus the first month and the last month of the year kept in remembrance the months that were past, even the days when God preserved them. They kept two days together as thanksgiving days, and did not think them too much to spend in praising God. Let us not be niggardly

in our returns of praise to him who bestows his favours so liberally upon us. Observe, They did not keep the day when they fought, but the days when they rested, and on the fifteenth those in Shushan, and both those days they kept. The sabbath was appointed not on the day that God finished his work, but on the day that he rested from it. The modern Jews observe the thirteenth day, the day appointed for their destruction, as a fasting-day, grounding the practice on Es 9:31, the matters of their fastings and cry. But that refers to what was in the day of their distress (Es 4:3,16), which was not to be continued when God had turned their fasts into joy and gladness, Zec 8:19.

2. How it was called--The feast of Purim Es 9:26), from Pur, a Persian word which signified a lot, because Haman had by lot determined this to be the time of the Jews' destruction, but the Lord, at whose disposal the lot is, had determined it to be the time of their triumph. The name of this festival would remind them of the sovereign dominion of the God of Israel, who served his own purposes by the foolish superstitions of the heathen, and outwitted the monthly prognosticators in their own craft (Isa 47:13), frustrating the tokens of the liars and making the diviners mad, Isa 44:25,26.

3. By whom it was instituted and enacted. It was not a divine institution, and therefore it is not called a holy day, but a human appointment, by which it was made a good day, Es 9:19,22.

(1.) The Jews ordained it, and took it upon themselves (Es 9:27), voluntarily undertook to do as they had begun. Es 9:23. They bound themselves to this by common consent.

(2.) Mordecai and Esther confirmed their resolve, that it might be the more binding on posterity, and might come well recommended by those great names. They wrote,

[1.] With all authority (Es 9:29), as well they might, Esther being queen and Mordecai prime-minister of state. It is well when those who are in authority use their authority to authorize that which is good.

[2.] With words of peace and truth. Though they wrote with authority, they wrote with tenderness, not imperious, not imposing, but in such language as the council at Jerusalem use in their decree (Ac 15:29): "If you do so and so, you shall do well. Fare you well." Such was the style of these letters, or such the salutation or valediction of them: Peace and truth be with you.

4. By whom it was to be observed--by all the Jews, and by their seed, and by all such as joined themselves to them, Es 9:27. The observance of this feast was to be both universal and perpetual; the proselytes must observe it, in token of their sincere affection to the Jewish nation and their having united interests with them. A concurrence in joys and praises is one branch of the communion of saints.

5. Why it was to be observed--that the memorial of the great things God had done for his church might never perish from their seed, Es 9:28. God does not work wonders for a day, but to be had in everlasting remembrance. What he does shall be forever, and therefore should for ever be had in mind, Ec 3:14. In this affair they would remember,

(1.) Haman's bad practices against the church, to his perpetual reproach (Es 9:24): Because he had devised against the Jews to destroy them. Let this be kept in mind, that God's people may never be secure, while they have such malicious enemies, on whom they ought to have a jealous eye. Their enemies aim at no less then their destruction; on God therefore let them depend for salvation.

(2.) Esther's good services to the church, to her immortal honour. When Esther, in peril of her life, came before the king, he repealed the edict, Es 9:25. This also must be remembered, that wherever this feast should be kept, and this history read in explication of it, this which she did might be told for a memorial of her. Good deeds done for the Israel of God ought to be remembered, for the encouragement of others to do the like. God will not forget them, and therefore we must not.

(3.) Their own prayers, and the answers given to them (Es 9:31): The matters of their fastings and their cry. The more cries we have offered up in our trouble, and the more prayers for deliverance, the more we are obliged to be thankful to God for deliverance. Call upon me in the time of trouble, and then offer to God thanksgiving.

6. How it was to be observed. And of this let us see,

(1.) What was here enjoined, which was very good, that they should make it,

[1.] A day of cheerfulness, a day of feasting and joy (Es 9:22), and a feast was made for laughter, Ec 10:19. When God gives us cause to rejoice why should we not express our joy?

[2.] A day of generosity, sending portions one to another, in token of their pleasantness and mutual respect, and their being knit by this and other public common dangers and deliverances so much the closer to each other in love. Friends have their goods in common.

[3.] A day of charity, sending gifts to the poor. It is not to our kinsmen and rich neighbours only that we are to send tokens, but to the poor and the maimed, Lu 14:12,13. Those

that have received mercy must, in token of their gratitude, show mercy; and there never wants occasion, for the poor we have always with us. Thanksgiving and almsgiving should go together, that, when we are rejoicing and blessing God, the heart of the poor may rejoice with us and their loins may bless us.

(2.) What was added to this, which was much better. They always, at the feast, read the whole story over in the synagogue each day, and put up three prayers to God, in the first of which they praise God for counting them worthy to attend this divine service; in the second they thank him for the miraculous preservation of their ancestors; in the third they praise him that they have lived to observe another festival in memory of it. So bishop Patrick.

(3.) What it has since degenerated to, which is much worse. Their own writers acknowledge that this feast is commonly celebrated among them with gluttony, and drunkenness, and excess of riot. Their Talmud says expressly that, in the feast of Purim, a man should drink till he knows not the difference between Cursed be Haman, and Blessed be Mordecai. See what the corrupt and wicked nature of man often brings that to which was at first well intended: here is a religious feast turned into a carnival, a perfect revel, as wakes are among us. Nothing more purifies the heart and adorns religion than holy joy; nothing more pollutes the heart and reproaches religion than carnal mirth and sensual pleasure. Corruptio optimi est pessima--What is best becomes when corrupted the worst.

22 as the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

24 because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of
all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had
cast Pur, that *is,* the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;
25 but when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letters
that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should
return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be
hanged on the gallows.
26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur.
Therefore for all the words of this letter, and *of that* which they had
seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,
27 the Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and
upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not
fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing,
and according to their *appointed* time every year;
28 and *that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout
every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and
that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor
the memorial of them perish from their seed.
29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai
the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of
Purim.
30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and
seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace
and truth,
31 to confirm these days of Purim in their times *appointed,* according as
Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as
they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of
the fastings and their cry.
32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it
was written in the book.

Esther-10

Mordecai's Greatness

1 And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and *upon* the isles of the sea.

We are here told,

I. How great and powerful king Ahasuerus was. He had a vast dominion, both in the continent and among the islands, from which he raised a vast revenue. Besides the usual customs which the kings of Persia exacted (Ezr 4:13), he laid an additional tribute upon his subjects, to serve for some great occasion he had for money (Es 10:1): The king laid a tribute. Happy is our island, that pays no tribute but what is laid upon it by its representatives, and those of its own choosing, and is not squeezed or oppressed by an arbitrary power, as some of the neighbouring nations are. Besides this instance of the grandeur of Ahasuerus, many more might be given, that were acts of his power and of his might. These however are not thought fit to be recorded here in the sacred story, which is confined to the Jews, and relates the affairs of other nations only as they fell in with their affairs; but they are written in the Persian chronicles (Es 10:2), which are long since lost and buried in oblivion, while the sacred writings live, live in honour, and will live till time shall be no more. When the kingdoms of men, monarchs and monarchies, are destroyed, and their memorial has perished with them (Ps 9:6), the kingdom of God among men, and the records of that kingdom, shall remain and be as the days of heaven, Da 2:44.

II. How great and good Mordecai was.

1. He was great; and it does one good to see virtue and piety thus in honour.

(1.) He was great with the king, next to him, as one he most delighted and confided in. Long had Mordecai sat contentedly in the king's gate, and now at length he is advanced to the head of his council-board. Men of merit may for a time seem buried alive; but often, by some means or other, they are discovered and preferred at last. The declaration of the greatness to which the king advanced Mordecai was written in the chronicles of the kingdom, as very memorable, and contributing to the great achievements of the king. He never did such acts of power as he did when Mordecai was his right hand.

(2.) He was great among the Jews (Es 10:3), not only great above them, more honourable than any of them, but great with them, dear to them, familiar with them, and much respected by them. So far were they from envying his preferment that they rejoiced in it, and added to it by giving him a commanding interest among them and submitting all their affairs to his direction.

2. He was good, very good, for he did good. This goodness made him truly great, and then his greatness gave him an opportunity of doing so much the more good. When the king advanced him,

(1.) He did not disown his people the Jews, nor was he ashamed of his relation to them, though they were strangers and captives, dispersed and despised. Still he wrote himself Mordecai the Jew, and therefore no doubt adhered to the Jews' religion, by the observances of which he distinguished himself, and yet it was no hindrance to his preferment, nor looked upon as a blemish to him.

(2.) He did not seek his own wealth, or the raising of an estate for himself and his family, which is the chief thing most aim at when they get into great places at court; but he consulted the welfare of his people, and made it his business to advance that. His power, his wealth, and all his interest in the king and queen, he improved for the public good.

(3.) He not only did good, but he did it in a humble condescending way, was easy of access, courteous and affable in his behaviour, and spoke peace to all that made their application to him. Doing good works is the best and chief thing expected from those that have wealth and power; but giving good words is also commendable, and makes the good deed the more acceptable.

(4.) He did not side with any one party of his people against another, nor make some his favourites, while the rest were neglected and crushed; but, whatever differences there were among them, he was a common father to them all, recommended himself to the multitude of his brethren, not despising the crowd, and spoke peace to all their seed, without distinction. Thus making himself acceptable by humility and beneficence, he was universally accepted, and gained the good word of all his brethren. Thanks be to God, such a government as this we are blessed with, which seeks the welfare of our people, speaking peace to all their seed. God continue it long, very long, and grant us, under the happy protection and influence of it, to live quiet and peaceable lives, in godliness, honesty, and charity!

2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration
of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him,
are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of
Media and Persia?

3 For Mordecai the Jew *was* next unto king Ahasuerus, and great
among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren,
seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

The Book of Job
[Job]

Job-1

Job's Calamities

1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

Concerning Job we are here told,

I. That he was a man; therefore subject to like passions as we are. He was Ish, a worthy man, a man of note and eminency, a magistrate, a man in authority. The country he lived in was the land of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia, which lay towards Chaldea, near Euphrates, probably not far from Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham was called. When God called one good man out of that country, yet he left not himself without witness, but raised up another in it to be a preacher of righteousness. God has his remnant in all places, sealed ones out of every nation, as well as out of every tribe of Israel, Re 7:9. It was the privilege of the land of Uz to have so good a man as Job in it; now it was Arabia the Happy indeed: and it was the praise of Job that he was eminently good in so bad a place; the worse others were round about him the better he was. His name Job, or Jjob, some say, signifies one hated and counted as an enemy. Others make it to signify one that grieves or groans; thus the sorrow he carried in his name might be a check to his joy in his prosperity. Dr. Cave derives it from Jaab--to love, or desire, intimating how welcome his birth was to his parents, and how much he was the desire of their eyes; and yet there was a time when he cursed the day of his birth. Who can tell what the day may prove which yet begins with a bright morning?

II. That he was a very good man, eminently pious, and better than his neighbours: He was perfect and upright. This is intended to show us, not only what reputation he had among men (that he was generally taken for an honest man), but what was really his character; for it is the judgment of God concerning him, and we are sure that is according to truth.

1. Job was a religious man, one that feared God, that is, worshipped him according to his will, and governed himself by the rules of the divine law in every thing.

2. He was sincere in his religion: He was perfect; not sinless, as he himself owns (Job 9:20): If I say I am perfect, I shall be proved perverse. But, having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he was really as good as he seemed to be, and did not dissemble in his profession of piety; his heart was sound and his eye single. Sincerity is gospel perfection. I know no religion without it.

3. He was upright in his dealings both with God and man, was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did. See Isa 33:15. Though he was not of Israel, he was indeed an Israelite without guile.

4. The fear of God reigning in his heart was the principle that governed his whole conversation. This made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; this kept him close and constant to his duty. He feared God, had a reverence for his majesty, a regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath.

5. He dreaded the thought of doing what was wrong; with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and with a constant care and watchfulness, he eschewed evil, avoided all appearances of sin and approaches to it, and this because of the fear of God, Ne 5:15. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil (Pr 8:13) and then by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, Pr 16:6.

III. That he was a man who prospered greatly in this world, and made a considerable figure in his country. He was prosperous and yet pious. Though it is hard and rare, it is not impossible, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. With God even this is possible, and by his grace the temptations of worldly wealth are not insuperable. He was pious, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and gave him who was so good so much greater opportunity of doing good. The acts of his piety were grateful returns to God for the instances of his prosperity; and, in the abundance of the good things God gave him, he served God the more cheerfully.

1. He had a numerous family. He was eminent for religion, and yet not a hermit, not a recluse, but the father and master of a family. It was an instance of his prosperity that his house was filled with children, which are a heritage of the Lord, and his reward, Ps 127:3. He had seven sons and three daughters, Job 1:2. Some of each sex, and more of the more noble sex, in which the family is built up. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people, that will give them good instructions, and set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. Job had many children, and yet he was neither oppressive nor uncharitable, but very liberal to the poor, Job 31:17-21, &c. Those that have great families to provide for ought to

consider that what is prudently given in alms is set out to the best interest and put into the best fund for their children's benefit.

2. He had a good estate for the support of his family; his substance was considerable, Job 1:3. Riches are called substance, in conformity to the common form of speaking; otherwise, to the soul and another world, they are but shadows, things that are not, Pr 23:5. It is only in heavenly wisdom that we inherit substance, Pr 8:21. In those days, when the earth was not fully peopled, it was as now in some of the plantations, men might have land enough upon easy terms if they had but wherewithal to stock it; and therefore Job's substance is described, not by the acres of land he was lord of, but,

(1.) By his cattle--sheep and camels, oxen and asses. The numbers of each are here set down, probably not the exact number, but thereabout, a very few under or over. The sheep are put first, because of most use in the family, as Solomon observes (Pr 27:23,26,27): Lambs for thy clothing, and milk for the food of thy household. Job, it is likely, had silver and gold as well as Abraham (Ge 13:2); but then men valued their own and their neighbours' estates by that which was for service and present use more than by that which was for show and state, and fit only to be hoarded. As soon as God had made man, and provided for his maintenance by the herbs and fruits, he made him rich and great by giving him dominion over the creatures, Ge 1:28. That therefore being still continued to man, notwithstanding his defection (Ge 9:2), is still to be reckoned one of the most considerable instances of men's wealth, honour, and power, Ps 8:6.

(2.) By his servants. He had a very good household or husbandry, many that were employed for him and maintained by him; and thus he both had honour and did good; yet thus he was involved in a great deal of care and put to a great deal of charge. See the vanity of this world; as goods are increased those must be increased that tend them and occupy them, and those will be increased that eat them; and what good has the owner thereof save the beholding of them with his eyes? Ec 5:11. In a word, Job was the greatest of all the men of the east; and they were the richest in the world: those were rich indeed who were replenished more than the east, Isa 2:6. Margin. Job's wealth, with his wisdom, entitled him to the honour and power he had in his country, which he describes (Job 29:1-25), and made him sit chief.

Job was upright and honest, and yet grew rich, nay, therefore grew rich; for honesty is the best policy, and piety and charity are ordinarily the surest ways of thriving. He had a great household and much business, and yet kept up the fear and worship of God; and he and his house served the Lord. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, to show that neither will secure us from the common, no, nor from the uncommon calamities of human life. Piety will not secure us, as Job's mistaken friends thought, for all things come alike to all; prosperity will not, as a careless world thinks, Isa 47:8. I sit as a queen and therefore shall see no sorrow.

2 And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.
3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.
4 And his sons went and feasted *in their* houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

We have here a further account of Job's prosperity and his piety.

I. His great comfort in his children is taken notice of as an instance of his prosperity; for our temporal comforts are borrowed, depend upon others, and are as those about us are. Job himself mentions it as one of the greatest joys of his prosperous estate that his children were about him, Job 29:5. They kept a circular feast at some certain times (Job 1:4); they went and feasted in their houses. It was a comfort to this good man,

1. To see his children grown up and settled in the world. All his sons were in houses of their own, probably married, and to each of them he had given a competent portion to set up with. Those that had been olive-plants round his table were removed to tables of their own.

2. To see them thrive in their affairs, and able to feast one another, as well as to feed themselves. Good parents desire, promote, and rejoice in, their children's wealth and prosperity as their own. 3. To see them in health, no sickness in their houses, for that would have spoiled their feasting and turned it into mourning.

4. Especially to see them live in love, and unity, and mutual good affection, no jars or quarrels among them, no strangeness, no shyness one of another, no strait-handedness, but, though every one knew his own, they lived with as much freedom as if they had had all in common. It is comfortable to the hearts of parents, and comely in the eyes of all, to see brethren thus knit together. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is! Ps 133:1.

5. It added to his comfort to see the brothers so kind to their sisters, that they sent for them to feast with them; for they were so modest that they would not have gone if they had

not been sent for. Those brothers that slight their sisters, care not for their company, and have no concern for their comfort, are ill-bred, ill-natured, and very unlike Job's sons. It seems their feast was so sober and decent that their sisters were good company for them at it.

6. They feasted in their own houses, not in public houses, where they would be more exposed to temptations, and which were not so creditable. We do not find that Job himself feasted with them. Doubtless they invited him, and he would have been the most welcome guest at any of their tables; nor was it from any sourness or moroseness of temper, or for want of natural affection, that he kept away, but he was old and dead to these things, like Barzillai (2Sa 19:35), and considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant if there were none but themselves. Yet he would not restrain his children from that diversion which he denied himself. Young people may be allowed a youthful liberty, provided they flee youthful lusts.

II. His great care about his children is taken notice of as an instance of his piety: for that we are really which we are relatively. Those that are good will be good to their children, and especially do what they can for the good of their souls. Observe (Job 1:5) Job's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his children,

1. He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy; and so we ought to be over ourselves and those that are dearest to us, as far as is necessary to our care and endeavour for their good. Job had given his children a good education, had comfort in them and good hope concerning them; and yet he said, "It may be, my sons have sinned in the days of their feasting more than at other times, have been too merry, have taken too great a liberty in eating and drinking, and have cursed God in their hearts," that is, "have entertained atheistical or profane thoughts in their minds, unworthy

notions of God and his providence, and the exercises of religion." When they were full they were ready to deny God, and to say, Who is the Lord? (Pr 30:9), ready to forget God and to say, The power of our hand has gotten us this wealth, De 8:12-17, &c. Nothing alienates the mind more from God than the indulgence of the flesh.

2. As soon as the days of their feasting were over he called them to the solemn exercises of religion. Not while their feasting lasted (let them take their time for that; there is a time for all things), but when it was over, their good father reminded them that they must know when to desist, and not think to fare sumptuously every day; though they had their days of feasting the week round, they must not think to have them the year round; they had something else to do. Note, Those that are merry must find a time to be serious.

3. He sent to them to prepare for solemn ordinances, sent and sanctified them, ordered them to examine their own consciences and repent of what they had done amiss in their feasting, to lay aside their vanity and compose themselves for religious exercises. Thus he kept his authority over them for their good, and they submitted to it, though they had got into houses of their own. Still he was the priest of the family, and at his altar they all attended, valuing their share in his prayers more than their share in his estate. Parents cannot give grace to their children (it is God that sanctifies), but they ought by seasonable admonitions and counsels to further their sanctification. In their baptism they were sanctified to God; let it be our desire and endeavour that they may be sanctified for him.

4. He offered sacrifice for them, both to atone for the sins he feared they had been guilty of in the days of their feasting and to implore for them mercy to pardon and grace to prevent the debauching of their minds and corrupting of

their manners by the liberty they had taken, and to preserve their piety and purity.

For he with mournful eyes had often spied, Scattered on Pleasure's smooth but treacherous tide, The spoils of virtue overpowered by sense, And floating wrecks of ruined innocence.--Sir R. BLACKMORE.

Job, like Abraham, had an altar for his family, on which, it is likely, he offered sacrifice daily; but, on this extraordinary occasion, he offered more sacrifices than usual, and with more solemnity, according to the number of them all, one for each child. Parents should be particular in their addresses to God for the several branches of their family. "For this child I prayed, according to its particular temper, genius, and condition," to which the prayers, as well as the endeavours, must be accommodated. When these sacrifices were to be offered,

(1.) He rose early, as one in care that his children might not lie long under guilt and as one whose heart was upon his work and his desire towards it.

(2.) He required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in the prayers he offered with the sacrifice, that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them much for their sins, for which they deserved to die, and the sight of the offering of it up might lead them to a Mediator. This serious work would help to make them serious again after the days of their gaiety.

5. Thus he did continually, and not merely whenever an occasion of this kind recurred; for he that is washed needs to wash his feet, Joh 13:10. The acts of repentance and faith must be often renewed, because we often repeat our transgressions. All days, every day, he offered up his sacrifices, was constant to his devotions, and did not omit them any day. The occasional exercises of religion will not

excuse us from those that are stated. He that serves God uprightly will serve him continually.

5 And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings *according* to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

Job was not only so rich and great, but withal so wise and good, and had such an interest both in heaven and earth, that one would think the mountain of his prosperity stood so strong that it could not be moved; but here we have a thick cloud gathering over his head, pregnant with a horrible tempest. We must never think ourselves secure from storms while we are in this lower region. Before we are told how his troubles surprised and seized him here in this visible world, we are here told how they were concerted in the world of spirits, that the devil, having a great enmity to Job for his eminent piety, begged and obtained leave to torment him.

It does not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general to allow that this discourse between God and Satan, in these verses, is parabolical, like that of Micaiah (1Ki 22:19-29, &c.), and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the devil against good men and the divine check and restraint which that malice is under; only thus much further is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it. Now here we have,

I. Satan among the sons of God (Job 1:6), an adversary (so Satan signifies) to God, to men, to all good: he thrust himself into an assembly of the sons of God that came to present themselves before the Lord. This means either,

1. A meeting of the saints on earth. Professors of religion, in the patriarchal age, were called sons of God (Ge 6:2); they had then religious assemblies and stated times for them. The King came in to see his guests; the eye of God was on all present. But there was a serpent in paradise, a Satan among the sons of God; when they come together he is among them, to distract and disturb them, stands at their right hand to resist them. The Lord rebuke thee, Satan! Or,

2. A meeting of the angels in heaven. They are the sons of God, Job 38:7. They came to give an account of their negotiations on earth and to receive new instructions. Satan was one of them originally; but how hast thou fallen, O Lucifer! He shall no more stand in that congregation, yet he is here represented, as coming among them, either summoned to appear as a criminal or connived at, for the present, though an intruder.

II. His examination, how he came thither (Job 1:7): The Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? He knew very well whence he came, and with what design he came thither, that as the good angels came to do good he came for a permission to do hurt; but he would, by calling him to an account, show him that he was under check and control. Whence comest thou? He asks this, 1. As wondering what brought him thither. Is Saul among the prophets? Satan among the sons of God? Yes, for he transforms himself into an angel of light (2Co 11:13,14), and would seem one of them. Note, It is possible that a man may be a child of the devil and yet be found in the assemblies of the sons of God in this world, and there may pass undiscovered by men, and yet be challenged by the all-seeing God. Friend, how

camest thou in hither? Or, 2. As enquiring what he had been doing before he came thither. The same question was perhaps put to the rest of those that presented themselves before the Lord, "Whence came you?" We are accountable to God for all our haunts and all the ways we traverse.

III. The account he gives of himself and of the tour he had made. I come (says he) from going to and fro on the earth.

1. He could not pretend he had been doing any good, could give no such account of himself as the sons of God could, who presented themselves before the Lord, who came from executing his orders, serving the interest of his kingdom, and ministering to the heirs of salvation.

2. He would not own he had been doing any hurt, that he had been drawing men from the allegiance to God, deceiving and destroying souls; no. I have done no wickedness, Pr 30:20. Thy servant went nowhere. In saying that he had walked to and fro through the earth, he intimates that he had kept himself within the bounds allotted him, and had not transgressed his bounds; for the dragon is cast out into the earth (Re 12:9) and not yet confined to his place of torment. While we are on this earth we are within his reach, and with so much subtlety, swiftness, and industry, does he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations. 3. He yet seems to give some representation of his own character.

(1.) Perhaps it is spoken proudly, and with an air of haughtiness, as if he were indeed the prince of this world, as if the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were his (Lu 4:6), and he had now been walking in circuit through his own territories.

(2.) Perhaps it is spoken fretfully, and with discontent. He had been walking to and fro, and could find no rest, but was as much a fugitive and a vagabond as Cain in the land of Nod.

(3.) Perhaps it is spoken carefully: "I have been hard at work, going to and fro," or (as some read it) "searching about in the earth," really in quest of an opportunity to do mischief. He walks abut seeking whom he may devour. It concerns us therefore to be sober and vigilant.

IV. The question God puts to him concerning Job (Job 1:8): Hast thou considered my servant Job? As when we meet with one that has been in a distant place, where we have a friend we dearly love, we are ready to ask, "You have been in such a place; pray did you see my friend there?" Observe,

1. How honourably God speaks of Job: He is my servant. Good men are God's servants, and he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services, and they are to him for a name and a praise (Jer 13:11) and a crown of glory, Isa 62:3. "Yonder is my servant Job; there is none like him, none I value like him, of all the princes and potentates of the earth; one such saint as he is worth them all: none like him for uprightness and serious piety; many do well, but he excelleth them all; there is not to be found such great faith, no, not in Israel." Thus Christ, long after, commended the centurion and the woman of Canaan, who were both of them, like Job, strangers to that commonwealth. The saints glory in God--Who is like thee among the gods? and he is pleased to glory in them--Who is like Israel among the people? So here, none like Job, none in earth, that state of imperfection. Those in heaven do indeed far outshine him; those who are least in that kingdom are greater than he; but on earth there is not his like. There is none like him in that land; so some good men are the glory of their country. 2.

How closely he gives to Satan this good character of Job: Hast thou set thy heart to my servant Job? designing hereby,

(1.) To aggravate the apostasy and misery of that wicked spirit: "How unlike him are thou!" Note, The holiness and happiness of the saints are the shame and torment of the devil and the devil's children.

(2.) To answer the devil's seeming boast of the interest he had in this earth. "I have been walking to and fro in it," says he, "and it is all my own; all flesh have corrupted their way; they all sit still, and are at rest in their sins," Zec 1:10,11. "Nay, hold," saith God, "Job is my faithful servant." Satan may boast, but he shall not triumph.

(3.) To anticipate his accusations, as if he had said, "Satan, I know thy errand; thou hast come to inform against Job; but hast thou considered him? Does not his unquestionable character give thee the lie?" Note, God knows all the malice of the devil and his instruments against his servants; and we have an advocate ready to appear for us, even before we are accused.

V. The devil's base insinuation against Job, in answer to God's encomium of him. He could not deny but that Job feared God, but suggested that he was a mercenary in his religion, and therefore a hypocrite (Job 1:9): Doth Job fear God for nought? Observe,

1. How impatient the devil was of hearing Job praised, though it was God himself that praised him. Those are like the devil who cannot endure that any body should be praised but themselves, but grudge the just share of

reputation others have, as Saul (1Sa 18:5-16, &c.) and the Pharisees, Mt 21:15.

2. How much at a loss he was for something to object against him; he could not accuse him of any thing that was bad, and therefore charged him with by-ends in doing good. Had the one half of that been true which his angry friends, in the heat of dispute, charged him with (Job 15:4,22:5), Satan would no doubt have brought against him now; but no such thing could be alleged, and therefore,

3. See how slyly he censured him as a hypocrite, not asserting that he was so, but only asking, "Is he not so?" This is the common way of slanderers, whisperers, backbiters, to suggest that by way of query which yet they have no reason to think is true.

Note, It is not strange if those that are approved and accepted of God be unjustly censured by the devil and his instruments; if they are otherwise unexceptionable, it is easy to charge them with hypocrisy, as Satan charged Job, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less that being called and counted so without cause.

4. How unjustly he accused him as mercenary, to prove him a hypocrite. It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for nought; he got much by it, for godliness is great gain: but it was a falsehood that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. Job's friends charged him with hypocrisy because he was greatly afflicted, Satan because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompence in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our

religion, and to make it subservient to them, is spiritual idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in a fatal apostasy. Men cannot long serve God and mammon.

VI. The complaint Satan made of Job's prosperity, Job 1:10. Observe,

1. What God had done for Job. He had protected him, made a hedge about him, for the defence of his person, his family, and all his possessions. Note, God's peculiar people are taken under his special protection, they and all that belong to them; divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and divine providence about their natural life, so they are safe and easy. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice (the devil could not accuse him of them), but in the way of honest diligence: Thou hast blessed the work of his hands. Without that blessing, be the hands ever so strong, ever so skilful, the work will not prosper; but, with that, his substance has wonderfully increased in the land. The blessing of the Lord makes rich: Satan himself owns it.

2. What notice the devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The devil speaks of it with vexation. "I see thou hast made a hedge about him, round about;" as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy a single gap in it, for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed: it was a complete hedge. The wicked one saw it and was grieved, and argued against Job that the only reason why he served God was because God prospered him. "No thanks to him to be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a Master that pays him so well."

VII. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenariness of Job's religion, if he might but have leave to strip him of his wealth. "Let it be put to this issue," says he (Job 1:11); "make him poor, frown upon him, turn

thy hand against him, and then see where his religion will be; touch what he has and it will appear what he is. If he curse thee not to thy face, let me never be believed, but posted for a liar and false accuser. Let me perish if he curse thee not;" so some supply the imprecation, which the devil himself modestly concealed, but the profane swearers of our age impudently and daringly speak out. Observe,

1. How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired that Job might be tried with: "Do but touch all that he has, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor; a little cross will change his tone."

2. How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job: "He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance--not only think hardly of thee, but even curse thee to thy face." The word translated curse is barac, the same that ordinarily, and originally, signifies to bless; but cursing God is so impious a thing that the holy language would not admit the name: but that where the sense requires it it must be so understood is plain form 1Ki 21:10-13, where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king.

Now, (1.) It is likely that Satan did think that Job, if impoverished, would renounce his religion and so disprove his profession, and if so (as a learned gentleman has observed in his Mount of Spirits) Satan would have made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living: now, if Satan can prove him a hypocrite, it will follow that God had not one faithful servant among men and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world, but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king de facto--in fact, over all mankind. But it appeared that the Lord knows those that are his and is not deceived in any.

(2.) However, if Job should retain his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted. He hates good men, and delights in their griefs, as God has pleasure in their prosperity.

VIII. The permission God gave to Satan to afflict Job for the trial of his sincerity. Satan desired God to do it: Put forth thy hand now. God allowed him to do it (Job 1:12): "All that he has is in thy hand; make the trial as sharp as thou canst; do thy worst at him."

Now, 1. It is a matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should deliver the soul of his turtle-dove into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion; but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of Providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages, to make a case which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted, but took care that his faith should not fail (Lu 22:32) and then the trial of it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1Pe 1:7. But,

2. It is a matter of comfort that God has the devil in a chain, in a great chain, Re 20:1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained, and then no further than he had leave: "Only upon himself put not forth thy hand; meddle not with his body, but only with his estate." It is a limited power that the devil has; he has no power to debauch men but what they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men but what is given him from above.

IX. Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God. Before they broke up, Satan went forth (as Cain, Ge 4:16) from the presence of the Lord; no longer detained before

him (as Doeg was, 1Sa 21:7) than till he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth,

1. Glad that he had gained his point, proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man; and,

2. Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution. He went forth now, not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but with a direct course, to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on in the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passes between good and bad spirits concerning us we are not aware of.

8 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant
Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright
man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?
9 Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for
nought?
10 Hast not thou made a hedge about him, and about his house,
and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the
work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.
11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and
he will curse thee to thy face.
12 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy
power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan
went forth from the presence of the Lord.
13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating
and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles.

I. Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting, at their eldest brother's house (Job 1:13), where, he having (we may suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the richest and most plentiful. The whole family, no doubt, was in perfect repose, and all were easy and under no apprehension of the trouble, now when they revived this

custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble, coming now, might be the more grievous. The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear, Isa 21:4.

II. They all come upon him at once; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came, and, before he had told his story, a third, and a fourth, followed immediately. Thus Satan, by the divine permission, ordered it,

1. That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against divine Providence, as if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself.

2. That he might not have leisure to consider and recollect himself, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God.

Note, The children of God are often in heaviness through manifold temptations; deep calls to deep; waves and billows come one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quicken and help us to prepare for another; for, how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share and that it will finally pass from us.

III. They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

1. He had 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses, and a competent number of servants to attend them; and all these he lost at once, Job 1:14,15. The account he has of this lets him know,

(1.) That it was not through any carelessness of his servants; for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them: The oxen were ploughing, not playing, and the asses not suffered to stray and so taken up as waifs, but feeding beside them, under the servant's eye, each in their place; and those that passed by, we may suppose, blessed them, and said, God speed the plough. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence, cannot secure us from affliction, no, not from those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman, though ever so wakeful, wakes but in vain. Yet it is some comfort under a trouble if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path.

(2.) That is was through the wickedness of his neighbours the Sabeans, probably a sort of robbers that lived by spoil and plunder. They carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them, and one only escaped, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it by an eye-witness before he heard it by a flying report, which would have brought it upon him gradually. We have no reason to suspect that either Job or his servants had given any provocation to the Sabeans to make this inroad, but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point, for he made both Job to suffer and them to sin.

Note, When Satan has God's permission to do mischief he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it, for he is a spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

2. He had 7000 sheep, and shepherds that kept them; and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, Job 1:16. Job was perhaps, in his own mind, ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upwards: The fire of God has fallen from heaven. As thunder is his voice, so lightning is his fire: but this was such an extraordinary lightning, and levelled so directly against Job, that all his sheep and shepherds were not only killed, but consumed by it at once, and one shepherd only was left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The devil, aiming to make him curse God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully, in order thereto.

(1.) His sheep, with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God were angry at his offerings and would punish him in those very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set Heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresented God to Jacob as a hard Master, who would not protect those flocks out of which he had so many burnt-offerings. This would tempt Job to say, It is in vain to serve God.

(2.) The messenger called the lightning the fire of God (and innocently enough), but perhaps Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God had turned to be his enemy and fought against him, which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owned (Job 31:23) that destruction from God was a terror to him. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven consumed the sheep upon the altar, he might have construed it into a token of God's

favour; but, the fire consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure. There have not been the like since Sodom was burned.

3. He had 3000 camels, and servants tending them; and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans, who came in three bands, and drove them away, and slew the servants, Job 1:17. If the fire of God, which fell upon Job's honest servants, who were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabean and Chaldean robbers who were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but when the way of the wicked prospers, and they carry off their booty, while just and good men are suddenly cut off, God's righteousness is like the great deep, the bottom of which we cannot find, Ps 36:6.

4. His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and, to conclude the tragedy, news if brought him, at the same time, that they were killed and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting, and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, Job 1:18,19. This was the greatest of Job's losses, and which could not but go nearest him; and therefore the devil reserved it for the last, that, if the other provocations failed, this might make him curse God. Our children are pieces of ourselves; it is very hard to part with them, and touches a good man in as tender a part as any. But to part with them all at once, and for them to be all cut off in a moment, who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed.

(1.) They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David, though a wise and good man, was very much discomposed by the death of one son. How hard then did it bear upon poor Job who lost them all, and, in one moment, was written childless!

(2.) They died suddenly. Had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he would have had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning.

(3.) They died when they were feasting and making merry. Had they died suddenly when they were praying, he might the better have borne it. He would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame if their blood had been mingled with their feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them that they had sinned, and cursed God in their hearts--to have that day come upon them unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their heads were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness--this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls, and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer according to the number of them all. See how all things come alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by their father, and lived in love one with another, and yet came to this untimely end.

(4.) They died by a wind of the devil's raising, who is the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2), but it was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath. So Bildad construed it (Job 8:4): Thy children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgression.

(5.) They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures. In God only we have a present help at all times.

14 and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15 and the Sabeans fell *upon them*, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am
escaped alone to tell thee.
16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep,
and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

The devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God. He had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he whom the rising sun saw the richest of all the men in the east was before night poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion now that he had lost his riches he would certainly have lost his religion; but the account we have, in these verses, of his pious deportment under his affliction, sufficiently proved the devil a liar and Job an honest man.

I. He conducted himself like a man under his afflictions, not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone, not unnatural and unaffected at the death of his children and servants; no (Job 1:20), he arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to show that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that had gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover any extravagant passion. He did not faint away, but arose, as a champion to the combat; he did not, in a heat, throw off his clothes, but very gravely, in

conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloak, or outer garment; he did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head.

By all this it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his own soul, in the midst of all these provocations. The time when he began to show his feelings is observable; it was not till he heard of the death of his children, and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, "Now that the meat is gone it is well that the mouths are gone too; now that there are no portions it is well that there are no children:" but Job knew better, and would have been thankful if Providence had spared his children, though he had little of nothing for them, for Jehovah-jireh--the Lord will provide. Some expositors, remembering that it was usual with the Jews to rend their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes in a holy indignation at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind, tempting him to curse God.

II. He conducted himself like a wise and good man under his affliction, like a perfect and upright man, and one that feared God and eschewed the evil of sin more than that of outward trouble.

1. He humbled himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under, as one that knew how to want as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning he wept and mourned, rent his mantle and shaved his head; and, as one that abased himself even to the dust before God, he fell down upon the ground, in a penitent sense of sin and a patient submission to the will of God, accepting the punishment of his iniquity. Hereby he showed his sincerity; for hypocrites cry not when God binds them, Job 36:13. Hereby he prepared himself to

get good by the affliction; for how can we improve the grief which we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with quieting considerations, that he might not be disturbed and put out of the possession of his own soul by these events. He reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself: Naked came I (as others do) out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither, into the lap of our common mother--the earth, as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. Dust we were in our original, and to dust we return in our exit (Ge 3:19), to the earth as we were (Ec 12:7), naked shall we return thither, whence we were taken, namely, to the clay, Job 33:6. St. Paul refers to this of Job, 1Ti 6:7. We brought nothing of this world's goods into the world, but have them from others; and it is certain that we can carry nothing out, but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked, not only unarmed, but unclothed, helpless, shiftless, not so well covered and fenced as other creatures. The sin we are born in makes us naked, to our shame, in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body does, though the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2Co 5:3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses.

(1.) He is but where he was at first. He looks upon himself only as naked, not maimed, not wounded; he was himself still his own man, when nothing else was his own, and therefore but reduced to his first condition. Nemo tam pauper potest esse quam natus est--no one can be so poor as he was when born.--Min. Felix. If we are impoverished, we are not wronged, nor much hurt, for we are but as we were born.

(2.) He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better borne when it is near bed-time.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself upon this occasion with a great veneration for the divine Providence, and a meek submission to its disposals. We may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, though he did not know it. The devil said that he would, under his affliction, curse God; but he blessed him, and so proved himself an honest man.

(1.) He acknowledged the hand of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed and in the afflictions he was now exercised with: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. We must own the divine Providence,

[1.] In all our comforts. God gave us our being, made us, and not we ourselves, gave us our wealth; it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours. He gave us power to get wealth, not only made the creatures for us, but best owed upon us our share.

[2.] In all our crosses. The same that gave hath taken away; and may he not do what he will with his own? See how Job looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the first Cause.

He does not say, "The Lord gave, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans have taken away; God made me rich, and the devil has made me poor;" but, "He that gave has taken;" and for that reason he is dumb, and has nothing to say, because God did it. He that gave all may take what, and when, and

how much he pleases. Seneca could argue thus, Abstulit, sed et dedit--he took away, but he also gave; and Epictetus excellently (cap. 15), "When thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost, say not apolesa auto--I have lost it; but apedoka--I have restored it to the right owner; but thou wilt object (says he), kakos ho aphelomenos--he is a bad man that has robbed me; to which he answers, ti de soi melei--What is it to thee by what hand he that gives remands what he gave?"

(2.) He adored God in both. When all was gone he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to, the exercises of religion. Weeping must not hinder sowing, nor hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God, in his afflictions, and gave glory to that: Blessed be the name of the Lord. He has still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise; he can find in his heart to bless God even when he takes away as well as when he gives. Thus must we sing both of mercy and judgment, Ps 101:1.

[1.] He blesses God for what was given, though now it was taken away. When our comforts are removed from us we must thank God that ever we had them and had them so much longer than we deserved.

Nay, [2.] He adores God even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, for gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last.

Lastly, Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job's constancy and good conduct under his

afflictions. He passed his trials with applause, Job 1:22. In all this Job did not act amiss, for he did not attribute folly to God, nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do in effect charge God with folly. Against the workings of these therefore Job carefully watched; and so must we, acknowledging that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. Those who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God and sweet communion with him, whether their praise be of men or no, it will be of God, as Job's here was.

19 and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

21 and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Job-2

1 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prosecution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him, and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord and make mischief between them, urging God to afflict him and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought that he had enough of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully baffled and disappointed; but malice is restless: the devil and his instruments are so.

Those that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, though the evidence to the contrary be ever so plain and full and they have been cast in the issue which they themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job's cause called over again. The malicious, unreasonable, importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented (Re 12:10) by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered: so did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

I The court set, and the prosecutor, or accuser, making his appearance (Job 2:1,2), as before, Job 1:6,7. The angels attended God's throne and Satan among them. One would have expected him to come and confess his malice against Job and his mistake concerning him, to cry, Pecavi--I have done wrong, for belying one whom God spoke well of, and to beg pardon; but, instead of that, he comes with a further design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, Whence comest thou? and answers as before, From going to and fro in the earth; as if he had been doing no harm, though he had been abusing that good man.

II The judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him (Job 2:3): "Hast thou considered my servant Job better than thou didst, and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man; for thou seest he still holds fast his integrity?" This is now added to his character, as a further achievement; instead of letting go his religion, and cursing God, he holds it faster than ever, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for. He is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken.

See, 1. How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job: "Thou movedst me against him, as an accuser, to destroy him without cause." Or, "Thou in vain movedst me to destroy him, for I will never do that." Good men, when they are cast down, are not destroyed, 2Co 4:9. How well is it for us that neither men nor devils are to be our judges, for perhaps they would destroy us, right or wrong; but our judgment proceeds from the Lord, whose judgment never errs nor is biassed.

2. How Job is commended for his constancy notwithstanding the attacks made upon him: "Still he holds fast his integrity, as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him--as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thy endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster; instead of losing ground by the temptation, he gets ground." God speaks of it with wonder, and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace; Still he holds fast his integrity. Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1Pe 1:7. Constancy crowns integrity.

III. The accusation further prosecuted, Job 2:4. What excuse can Satan make for the failure of his former attempt? What can he say to palliate it, when he had been so very confident that he should gain his point? Why, truly, he has this to say, Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life. Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are parts of themselves, will not only venture, but give, their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious, and, while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose.

We ought to make a good use of this consideration, and, while God continues to us our life and health and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other comforts. See Mt 6:25. But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, slyly representing him, 1. As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, nor cared how many of them had their skins (as I may say) stripped over their ears, so long as he slept in a whole skin himself; as if he that was so tender of his children's souls could be careless of their bodies, and, like the ostrich, hardened against his young ones, as though they were not his. 2. As wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety; as if his religion made him sour, and morose, and ill-natured. Thus are the ways and people of God often misrepresented by the devil and his agents.

IV. A challenge given to make a further trial of Job's integrity (Job 2:5): "Put forth thy hand now (for I find my hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him) and touch his bone and his flesh (that is with him the only tender part, make him sick with smiting him, Mic 6:13), and then, I dare say, he will curse thee to thy face, and let go his integrity." Satan knew it, and we find it by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts and put the mind into disorder than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ, 2Co 12:7,9.

V. A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, Job 2:6. Satan would have had God put forth his hand and do it; but he afflicts not willingly, nor takes any pleasure in grieving the children of men, much less his own children (La 3:33), and therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work: "He is in thy hand, do thy worst with him; but with a proviso and limitation, only save his life, or

his soul. Afflict him, but not to death." Satan hunted for the precious life, would have taken that if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would force Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, and, however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people he will make it turn to his praise and theirs, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Ps 76:10. "Save his soul," that is, "his reason" (so some), "preserve to him the use of that, for otherwise it will be no fair trial; if, in his delirium, he should curse God, that will be no disproof of his integrity.

It would be the language not of his heart, but of his distemper." Job, in being thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was that Satan should bruise his heel (Ge 3:15), and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption (Mt 4:6): If thou be the Son of God. He entered into the heart of Judas who betrayed Christ, and (some think) with his terrors put Christ into his agony in the garden. He had permission to touch his bone and his flesh without exception of his life, because by dying he was to do that which Job could not do--destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

2 And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou?
And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and
fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.
3 And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant
Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an
upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still
he
holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against
him, to destroy him without cause.
4 And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all
that a man hath will he give for his life.

5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his
flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.
6 And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand;
but save his life.
7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote
Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

The devil, having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him, as a tormentor first and then as a tempter. His own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterwards torments, when thereby he has brought them to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with an affliction, and then tempted to make a bad use of his affliction.

That which he aimed at was to make Job curse God; now here we are told what course he took both to move him to it and move it to him, both to give him the provocation, else he would not have thought of it: thus artfully in the temptation managed with all the subtlety of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents (Ge 3:1-24), aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God and to rob him of his integrity.

I. He provokes him to curse God by smiting him with sore boils, and so making him a burden to himself, Job 2:7,8. The former attack was extremely violent, but Job kept his ground, bravely made good the pass and carried the day. Yet he is still but girding on the harness; there is worse behind. The clouds return after the rain. Satan, by the divine permission, follows his blow, and now deep calls unto deep.

1 The disease with which Job was seized was very grievous: Satan smote him with boils, sore boils, all over him, from head to foot, with an evil inflammation (so some render it), an erysipelas, perhaps, in a higher degree. One boil, when it is gathering, is torment enough, and gives a man

abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had boils all over him, and no part free, and those as of raging a heat as the devil could make them, and, as it were, set on fire of hell! The small-pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days; how grievous then was the disease of Job, who was smitten all over with sore boils or grievous ulcers, which made him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture, and so spread themselves over him that he could lie down no way for any ease.

If at any time we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand (by divine permission) in the diseases with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted, what infections that prince of the air may spread, what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many years, Lu 13:16. Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would he soon make us!

2. His management of himself, in this distemper, was very strange, Job 2:8.

(1.) Instead of healing salves, he took a potsherd, a piece of a broken pitcher, to scrape himself withal. A very sad pass this poor man had come to. When a man is sick and sore he may bear it the better if he be well tended and carefully looked after. Many rich people have with a soft and tender hand charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some ease from the tongues of the dogs that came and licked his sores; but poor Job has no help afforded him.

[1.] Nothing is done to his sore but what he does himself, with his own hands. His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, Job 19:17. He has not wherewithal to fee a physician or surgeon; and, which is most sad of all, none of those he had formerly been kind to had so much sense of honour and gratitude as to minister to him in his distress, and lend him a hand to dress or wipe his running sores, either because the disease was loathsome and noisome or because they apprehended it to be infectious. Thus it was in the former days, as it will be in the last days, men were lovers of their own selves, unthankful, and without natural affection.

[2.] All that he does to his sores is to scrape them; they are not bound up with soft rags, not mollified with ointment, not washed or kept clean, no healing plasters laid on them, no opiates, no anodynes, ministered to the poor patient, to alleviate the pain and compose him to rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits; all the operation is the scraping of the ulcers, which, when they had come to a head and began to die, made his body all over like a scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his boils one by one; he therefore resolves thus to do it by wholesale--a remedy which one would think as bad as the disease. [3.] He has nothing to do this with but a potsherd, no surgeon's instrument proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain, than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore have need to be under the discipline and direction of others, for they are often but bad managers of themselves.

(2.) Instead of reposing in a soft and warm bed, he sat down among the ashes. Probably he had a bed left him (for, though his fields were stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt or plundered), but he chose to sit in the ashes, either because he was weary of his bed or because he

would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, Job 42:6,Isa 58:5,Jon 3:6. Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He complains (Job 7:5) that his flesh was clothed with worms and clods of dust; and therefore dust to dust, ashes to ashes. If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down. A low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The LXX. reads it, He sat down upon a dunghill without the city (which is commonly said, in mentioning this story); but the original says no more than that he sat in the midst of the ashes, which he might do in his own house.

II. He urges him, by the persuasions of his own wife, to curse God, Job 2:9. The Jews (who covet much to be wise above what is written) say that Job's wife was Dinah, Jacob's daughter: so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely that she was; but, whoever it was, she was to him like Michal to David, a scoffer at his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is his policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch that we be not drawn to say or do a wrong thing by the influence, interest, or entreaty, of any, no, not those for whose opinion and favour we have ever so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was.

1. She banters Job for his constancy in his religion: "Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion that nothing will cure thee of it? so tame and sheepish as thus to truckle to a God who is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour that he

seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable, strips thee, and scourges thee, without any provocation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served?"

Dost thou not see that thy devotion's vain? What have thy prayers procured but woe and pain? Hast thou not yet thy int'rest understood? Perversely righteous, and absurdly good? Those painful sores, and all thy losses, show How Heaven regards the foolish saint below. Incorrigibly pious! Can't thy God Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?--Sir R. BLACKMORE.

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness and delights in the misery of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice he uses is to drive men from their religion by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it. We have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it. Our Master himself has undergone it, we shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason may we retort it upon the scoffers, "Are you such fools as still to retain your impiety, when you might bless God and live?"

2. She urges him to renounce his religion, to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst: "Curse God and die; live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thy own deliverer by being thy own executioner; end thy troubles by ending thy life; better die once than be always dying thus; thou mayest now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him, and hang thyself." These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with. Nothing is more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder;

therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan. Lord, lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

III. He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, Job 2:10. He soon gave her an answer (for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it), which showed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity. See,

1. How he resented the temptation. He was very indignant at having such a thing mentioned to him: "What! Curse God? I abhor the thought of it. Get thee behind me, Satan." In other cases Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, even when she was unkind to him (Job 19:17): I entreated her for the children's sake of my own body. But, when she persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased: Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. He does not call her a fool and an atheist, nor does he break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who ar sick and sore are apt to do, and think they may be excused; but he shows her the evil of what she said, and she spoke the language of the infidels and idolaters, who, when they are hardly bestead, fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, Isa 8:21. We have reason to suppose that in such a pious household as Job had his wife was one that had been well affected to religion, but that now, when all their estate and comfort were gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had; but that she should go about to infect his mind with her wretched distemper was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus showing his resentment. Note,

(1.) Those are angry and sin not who are angry only at sin and take a temptation as the greatest affront, who cannot bear those that are evil, Re 2:2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ he told him plainly, Thou art an offence to me.

(2.) If those whom we think wise and good at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully for it and show them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them.

(3.) Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not so much as to be parleyed with. Whoever persuades us to that must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom if we yield it is at our peril Job did not curse God and then think to come off with Adam's excuse: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me persuaded me to do it" (Ge 3:12), which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance and providence. No; if thou scornest, if thou cursest, thou alone shalt bear it.

2. How he reasoned against the temptation: Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also? Those whom we reprove we must endeavour to convince; and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers that, though good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God (Isa 45:7,La 3:38), and therefore that in both we must have our eye up unto him, with thankfulness for the good he sends and without fretfulness at the evil. Observe the force of his argument.

(1.) What he argues for, not only the bearing, but the receiving of evil: Shall we not receive evil, that is,

[1.] "Shall we not expect to receive it? If God give us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflict us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other?" 1Pe 4:12. [2.] "Shall we not set ourselves to receive it aright?" The word signifies to receive as a gift, and denotes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts (Php 1:29), accepting them as punishments of our iniquity (Le 26:41), acquiescing in the will of God in them ("Let him do with me as seemeth him good"), and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to want as well as how to abound, Php 4:12. When the heart is humbled and weaned, by humbling weaning providence, then we receive correction (3:2) and take up our cross.

(2.) What he argues from: "Shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God during all those years of peace and prosperity that we have lived, and shall we not now receive evil, when God thinks fit to lay it on us?" Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. If we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet et onus--he who feels the privilege, should prepare for the privation.

If we have so much that pleases us, why should we not be content with that which pleases God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions, which will serve as foils to our comforts, to make them the more valuable (we are taught the worth of mercies by being made to want them sometimes), and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous, to keep the balance even,

and to prevent our being lifted up above measure? 2Co 12:7. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul; that is, some afflictions, by which we partake of God's holiness (Heb 12:10), something which, by saddening the countenance, makes the heart better? Let murmuring therefore, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

IV. Thus, in a good measure, Job still held fast his integrity, and Satan's design against him was defeated: In all this did not Job sin with his lips; he not only said this well, but all he said at this time was under the government of religion and right reason. In the midst of all these grievances he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that, though there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, Heb 12:15. The abundance of his heart was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he laid his hand upon his mouth (Pr 30:32), stifled the evil thought and let it go no further, by which it appeared, not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong and victorious: in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a perfect and upright man; for so he appears to be who, in the midst of such temptations, offends not in word, Jam 3:2,Ps 17:3.

8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

11 Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the

Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him.

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends paid him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts, he being an eminent man both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon. Some, who were his enemies, triumphed in his calamities, Job 16:10,19:18,30:1, &c. Perhaps they made ballads on him. But his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. Three of them are here named (Job 2:11), Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall afterwards meet with a fourth, who it should seem was present at the whole conference, namely, Elihu. Whether he came as a friend of Job or only as an auditor does not appear. These three are said to be his friends, his intimate acquaintance, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court that was called the king's friend. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses. They were old men, very old, had a great reputation for knowledge, and much deference was paid to their judgment, Job 32:6. It is probable that they were men of figure in their country-princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

I. That Job, in his prosperity, had contracted a friendship with them. If they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them--if his inferiors, yet he had not that disdain of them, which was any hindrance to an intimate converse and correspondence with them. to have such friends added more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity than all the head of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous; and he that has a few such friends ought to value them highly.

Job's three friends are supposed to have been all of them of the posterity of Abraham, which, for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the father of the faithful gave to those under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Teman, the grandson of Esau (Ge 36:11), Bildad (it is probable) from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, Ge 25:2. Zophar is thought by some to be the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, Ge 26:11. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety among those that were strangers to the covenants of promise was a happy presage of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition-wall should in the latter days be taken down. Esau was rejected; yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

II. That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, Job 19:14. In two ways they showed their friendship:--

1. By the kind visit they paid him in his affliction, to mourn with him and to comfort him, Job 2:11. Probably they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pious converse; and now that he was in adversity they come to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men, whose heart was in the house of mourning, Ec 7:4. Visiting the afflicted, sick or sore, fatherless or childless, in their sorrow, is made a branch of pure religion and undefiled (Jam 1:27), and, if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, Mt 25:36.

(1.) By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction we may contribute to the improvement,

[1.] Of our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious.

[2.] Of their comforts. By putting a respect upon them we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles and the strangeness of the circumstances of them, much less, as David's false friends, to make invidious remarks upon him (Ps 41:6-8), but to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction to whom comfort belongs than those to whom we must first speak conviction.

(2.) Concerning these visitants observe,

[1.] That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord (Job 6:22), whence Mr. Caryl observes that it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning, and, in comforting our friends, to anticipate their invitations.

[2.] That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, so exciting and binding one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying on of any pious design let hand join in hand.

[3.] That they came with a design (and we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, through their unskilful management of his case. Many that aim well do, by mistake, come short of their aim.

2. By their tender sympathy with him and concern for him in his affliction. When they saw him at some distance he was so disfigured and deformed with his sores that they knew him not, Job 2:12. His face was foul with weeping (Job 16:16), like Jerusalem's Nazarites, which had been ruddy as the rubies, but were now blacker than a coal, La 4:7,8. What a change will a sore disease, or, without that, oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance, in a little time! Is this Naomi? Ru 1:19. So, Is this Job? How hast thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and sullied, and all thy honour laid in the dust! God fits us for such changes! Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him, in a fright or loathing, but expressed so much the more tenderness towards him.

(1.) Coming to mourn with him, they vented their undissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion. They wept aloud; the sight of them (as is usual) revived Job's grief, and set him a weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. They rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, as men that would strip themselves, and abase themselves, with their friend that was stripped and abased.

(2.) Coming to comfort him, they sat down with him upon the ground, for so he received visits; and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely, sat with him on his couches and at his table, in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not a modish short visit that they made him, just to look upon him and be gone; but, as those that could have had no enjoyment of themselves if they had returned to their place while their friend was in so much misery, they resolved to stay with him till they saw him mend or end, and therefore took

lodgings near him, though he was not now able to entertain them as he had done, and they must therefore bear their own charges. Every day, for seven days together, at the house in which he admitted company, they came and sat with him, as his companions in tribulation, and exceptions from that rule, Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes--Those who have lost their wealth are not to expect the visits of their friends. They sat with him, but none spoke a word to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonished and amazed. Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent--Our lighter griefs have a voice; those which are more oppressive are mute.

So long a time they held their peace, to show A reverence due to such prodigious woe.--Sir R. BLACKMORE.

They spoke not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purport to which afterwards they said much--nothing to grieve him (Job 4:2), because they saw his grief was very great already, and they were loth at first to add affliction to the afflicted. There is a time to keep silence, when either the wicked is before us, and by speaking we may harden them (Ps 39:1), or when by speaking we may offend the generation of God's children, Ps 73:15. Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses till the seventh day may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath day, which doubtless was observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because probably then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or, rather, by their silence so long they would intimate that what they afterwards said was well considered and digested and the result of many thoughts. The heart of the wise studies to answer. We should think twice before we speak

once, especially in such a case as this, think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short and to the purpose.

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that *his* grief was very great.

Job-3

Job Bewails His Birth

1 After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.

Long was Job's heart hot within him; and, while he was musing, the fire burned, and the more for being stifled and suppressed. At length he spoke with his tongue, but not such a good word as David spoke after a long pause: Lord, make me to know my end, Ps 39:3,4. Seven days the prophet Ezekiel sat down astonished with the captives, and then (probably on the sabbath day) the word of the Lord came to him, Eze 3:15,16. So long Job and his friends sat thinking, but said nothing; they were afraid of speaking what they thought, lest they should grieve him, and he durst not give vent to his thoughts, lest he should offend them. They came to comfort him, but, finding his afflictions very extraordinary, they began to think comfort did not belong to him, suspecting him to be a hypocrite, and therefore they said nothing.

But losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore Job first gives vent to his thoughts. Unless they had been better, it would however have been well if he had kept them to himself. In short, he cursed his day, the day of his birth, wished he had never been born, could not think or speak of his own birth without regret and vexation. Whereas men usually observe the annual return of their birth-day with

rejoicing, he looked upon it as the unhappiest day of the year, because the unhappiest of his life, being the inlet into all his woe. Now,

I. This was bad enough. The extremity of his trouble and the discomposure of his spirits may excuse it in part, but he can by no means be justified in it. Now he has forgotten the good he was born to, the lean kine have eaten up the fat ones, and he is filled with thoughts of the evil only, and wishes he had never been born. The prophet Jeremiah himself expressed his painful sense of his calamities in language not much unlike this: Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me! Jer 15:10. Cursed be the day wherein I was born, Jer 20:14, &c. We may suppose that Job in his prosperity had many a time blessed God for the day of his birth, and reckoned it a happy day; yet now he brands it with all possible marks of infamy.

When we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born we have reason enough to reflect with sorrow and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are freed from sin (Ro 6:7), is far better. Ec 7:1. But to curse the day of our birth because then we entered upon the calamitous scene of life is to quarrel with the God of nature, to despise the dignity of our being, and to indulge a passion which our own calm and sober thoughts will make us ashamed of. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in in this world but he may in it (if it be not his own fault) so honour God, and work out his own salvation, and make sure a happiness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason at all to wish he had never been born, but a great deal of reason to say that he had his being to good purpose.

Yet it must be owned, if there were not another life after this, and divine consolations to support us in the prospect of it, so many are the sorrows and troubles of this that we

might sometimes be tempted to say that we were made in vain (Ps 89:47), and to wish we had never been. There are those in hell who with good reason wish they had never been born, as Judas, Mt 26:24. But, on this side hell, there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. It was Job's folly and weakness to curse his day. We must say of it, This was his infirmity; but good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of those graces which they have been most eminent for, that we may understand that when they are said to be perfect it is meant that they were upright, not that they were sinless. Lastly, Let us observe it, to the honour of the spiritual life above the natural, that though many have cursed the day of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their new-birth, nor wished they never had had grace, and the Spirit of grace, given them. Those are the most excellent gifts, above life and being itself, and which will never be a burden.

II. Yet it was not so bad as Satan promised himself. Job cursed his day, but he did not curse his God--was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he resolutely cleaves to that, and will never let it go. The dispute between God and Satan concerning Job was not whether Job had his infirmities, and whether he was subject to like passions as we are (that was granted), but whether he was a hypocrite, who secretly hated God, and if he were provoked, would show his hatred; and, upon trial, it proved that he was no such man. Nay, all this may consist with his being a pattern of patience; for, though he did thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet both before and after he expressed great submission and resignation to the holy will of God and repented of his impatience; he condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him, nor must we, but watch the more carefully over ourselves, lest we sin after the similitude of this transgression.

1 The particular expressions which Job used in cursing his day are full of poetical fancy, flame, and rapture, and create as much difficulty to the critics as the thing itself does to the divines: we need not be particular in our observations upon them. When he would express his passionate wish that he had never been, he falls foul upon the day, and wishes,

(1.) That earth might forget it: Let it perish (Job 3:3); let it not be joined to the days of the year, Job 3:6. "Let it be not only not inserted in the calendar in red letters, as the day of the king's nativity useth to be" (and Job was a king, Job 29:25), "but let it be erased and blotted out, and buried in oblivion. Let not the world know that ever such a man as I was born into it, and lived in it, who am made such a spectacle of misery."

(2.) That Heaven might frown upon it: Let not God regard it from above, Job 3:4. "Every thing is indeed as it is with God; that day is honourable on which he puts honour, and which he distinguishes and crowns with his favour and blessing, as he did the seventh day of the week; but let my birthday never be so honoured; let it be nigro carbone notandus--marked as with a black coal for an evil day by him that determines the times before appointed. The father and fountain of light appointed the greater light to rule the day and the less lights to rule the night; but let that want the benefit of both."

[1.] Let that day be darkness (Job 3:4); and, if the light of the day be darkness, how great is that darkness! how terrible! because then we look for light. Let the gloominess of the day represent Job's condition, whose sun went down at noon.

[2.] As for that night too, let it want the benefit of moon and stars, and let darkness seize upon it, thick darkness,

darkness that may be felt, which will not befriend the repose of the night by its silence, but rather disturb it with its terrors.

(3.) That all joy might forsake it: "Let it be a melancholy night, solitary, and not a merry night of music and dancing. Let no joyful voice come therein (Job 3:7); let it be a long night, and not see the eye-lids of the morning (Job 3:9), which bring joy with them."

(4.) That all curses might follow it (Job 3:8): "Let none ever desire to see it, or bid it welcome when it comes, but, on the contrary, let those curse it that curse the day. Whatever day any are tempted to curse, let them at the same time bestow one curse upon my birth-day, particularly those that make it their trade to raise up mourning at funerals with their ditties of lamentation. Let those that curse the day of the death of others in the same breath curse the day of my birth." Or those who are so fierce and daring as to be ready to raise up the Leviathan (for that is the word here), who, being about to strike the whale or crocodile, curse it with the bitterest curse they can invent, hoping by their incantations to weaken it, and so to make themselves master of it.

Probably some such custom might there be used, to which our divine poet alludes. "Let it be as odious as the day wherein men bewail the greatest misfortune, or the time wherein they see the most dreadful apparition;" so bishop Patrick, I suppose taking the Leviathan here to signify the devil, as others do, who understand it of the curses used by conjurors and magicians in raising the devil, or when they have raised a devil that they cannot lay.

2. But what is the ground of Job's quarrel with the day and night of his birth? It is because it shut not up the doors of his mother's womb, Job 3:10. See the folly and madness of

a passionate discontent, and how absurdly and extravagantly it talks when the reins are laid on the neck of it. Is this Job, who was so much admired for his wisdom that unto him men gave ear, and kept silence at his counsel, and after his words they spoke not again? Job 29:21,22. Surely his wisdom failed him,

(1.) When he took so much pains to express his desire that he had never been born, which, at the best was a vain wish, for it is impossible to make that which has been not to have been.

(2.) When he was so liberal of his curses upon a day and a night that could not be hurt, or made any the worse for his curses.

(3.) When he wished a thing so very barbarous to his own mother as that she had not brought him forth when her full time had come, which must inevitably have been her death, and a miserable death.

(4.) When he despised the goodness of God to him in giving him a being (such a being, so noble and excellent a life, such a life, so far above that of any other creature in this lower world), and undervalued the gift, as not worth the acceptance, only because transit cum onere--it was clogged with a proviso of trouble, which now at length came upon him, after many years' enjoyment of its pleasures. What a foolish thing it was to wish that his eyes had never seen the light, that so they might not have seen sorrow, which yet he might hope to see through, and beyond which he might see joy! Did Job believe and hope that he should in his flesh see God at the latter day (Job 19:26), and yet would he wish he had never had a being capable of such a bliss, only because, for the present, he had sorrow in the flesh? God by his grace arm us against this foolish and hurtful lust of impatience.

2 And Job spake, and said,

3 Let the day perish wherein I was born,
and the night *in which* it was said, There is a man child conceived.
4 Let that day be darkness;
let not God regard it from
above, neither let the light
shine upon it.
5 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it;
let a cloud dwell upon it;
let the blackness of the day terrify it.
6 *As for* that night, let darkness seize upon it;
let it not be joined unto the days of the year;
let it not come into the number of the months.
7 Lo, let that night be solitary;
let no joyful voice come therein.
8 Let them curse it that curse the day,
who are ready to raise up their mourning.
9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark;
let it look for light, but *have* none;
neither let it see the dawning of the day:
10 because it shut not up the doors of my *mother's*
womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.
11 Why died I not from the womb?
Why did I *not* give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?
12 Why did the knees prevent me?
Or why the breasts that I should suck?

Job, perhaps reflecting upon himself for his folly in wishing he had never been born, follows it, and thinks to mend it, with another, little better, that he had died as soon as he was born, which he enlarges upon in these verses. When our Saviour would set forth a very calamitous state of things he seems to allow such a saying as this, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck (Lu 23:29); but blessing the barren womb is one thing and cursing the fruitful womb is another!

It is good to make the best of afflictions, but it is not good to make the worst of mercies. Our rule is, Bless, and curse not. Life is often put for all good, and death for all evil; yet Job here very absurdly complains of life and its supports as a curse and plague to him, and covets death and the grave as the greatest and most desirable bliss. Surely Satan was deceived in Job when he applied that maxim to him, All that a man hath will he give for his life; for never any man valued life at a lower rate than he did.

I. He ungratefully quarrels with life, and is angry that it was not taken from him as soon as it was given him (Job 3:11,12): Why died not I from the womb? See here,

1. What a weak and helpless creature man is when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life is when it is first drawn. We are ready to die from the womb, and to breathe our last as soon as we begin to breathe at all. We can do nothing for ourselves, as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave if the knees did not prevent us; and the lamp of life, when first lighted, would go out of itself if the breasts given us, that we should suck, did not supply it with fresh oil.

2. What a merciful and tender care divine Providence took of us at our entrance into the world. It was owing to this that we died not from the womb and did not give up the ghost when we came out of the belly. Why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it. Justly might such weeds have been plucked up as soon as they appeared; justly might such cockatrices have been crushed in the egg. Nor was it because we did, or could, take any care of ourselves and our own safety: no creature comes into the world so shiftless as man. It was not our might, or the power of our hand, that preserved us these beings, but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. It

was owing to this that the knees prevented us. Natural affection is put into parents' he arts by the hand of the God of nature: and hence it was that the blessings of the breast attended those of the womb.

3. What a great deal of vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life. If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another world, considering the faculties we are endued with and the troubles we are surrounded with, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had died from the womb, which would have prevented a great deal both of sin and misery. He that is born to-day, and dies to-morrow, Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.

4. The evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent. When they thus prevail they are unreasonable and absurd, impious and ungrateful. To indulge them is a slighting and undervaluing of God's favour. How much soever life is embittered, we must say, "It was of the Lord's mercies that we died not from the womb, that we were not consumed." Hatred of life is a contradiction to the common sense and sentiments of mankind, and to our own at any other time. Let discontented people declaim ever so much against life, they will be loth to part with it when it comes to the point. When the old man in the fable, being tired with his burden, threw it down with discontent and called for Death, and Death came to him and asked him what he would have with him, he then answered, "Nothing, but to help me up with my burden."

II. He passionately applauds death and the grave, and seems quite in love with them. To desire to die that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, and that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die only that we may be quiet in the grave, and delivered from the

troubles of this life, savours of corruption. Job's considerations here may be of good use to reconcile us to death when it comes, and to make us easy under the arrest of it; but they ought not to be made use of as a pretence to quarrel with life while it is continued, or to make us uneasy under the burdens of it. It is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, be it living or dying, and so to live to the Lord and die to the Lord, and to be his in both, Ro 14:8. Job here frets himself with thinking that if he had but died as soon as he was born, and been carried from the womb to the grave,

1. His condition would have been as good as that of the best: I would have been (says he, Job 3:14) with kings and counsellors of the earth, whose pomp, power, and policy, cannot set them out of the reach of death, nor secure them from the grave, nor distinguish theirs from common dust in the grave. Even princes, who had gold in abundance, could not with it bribe Death to overlook them when he came with commission; and, though they filled their houses with silver, yet they were forced to leave it all behind them, no more to return to it. Some, by the desolate places which the kings and counsellors are here said to build for themselves, understand the sepulchres or monuments they prepared for themselves in their life-time; as Shebna (Isa 22:16) hewed himself out a sepulchre; and by the gold which the princes had, and the silver with which they filled their houses, they understand the treasures which, they say, it was usual to deposit in the graves of great men. Such arts have been used to preserve their dignity, if possible, on the other side death, and to keep themselves from lying even with those of inferior rank; but it will not do: death is, and will be, an irresistible leveller. Mors sceptra ligonibus æquat--Death mingles sceptres with spades. Rich and poor meet together in the grave; and there a hidden untimely birth (Job 3:16), a child that either never saw light or but just opened its eyes and peeped into the world, and, not liking it, closed them again and hastened out of it, lies as soft and easy, lies as

high and safe, as kings and counsellors, and princes, that had gold. "And therefore," says Job, "would I had lain there in the dust, rather than to lie here in the ashes!"

2. His condition would have been much better than now it was (Job 3:13): "Then should I have lain still, and been quiet, which now I cannot do, I cannot be, but am still tossing and unquiet; then I should have slept, whereas now sleep departeth from my eyes; then had I been at rest, whereas now I am restless." Now that life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel than before they were placed in good Christians can give a better account than this of the gain of death: "Then should I have been present with the Lord; then should I have seen his glory face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly." But all that poor Job dreamed of was rest and quietness in the grave out of the fear of evil tidings and out of the feeling of sore boils.

Then should I have been quiet; and had he kept his temper, his even easy temper still, which he was in as recorded in the two foregoing chapters, entirely resigned to the holy will of God and acquiescing in it, he might have been quiet now; his soul, at least, might have dwelt at ease, even when his body lay in pain, Ps 25:13. Observe how finely he describes the repose of the grave, which (provided the soul also be at rest in God) may much assist our triumphs over it.

(1.) Those that now are troubled will there be out of the reach of trouble (Job 3:17): There the wicked cease from troubling. When persecutors die they can no longer persecute; their hatred and envy will then perish. Herod had vexed the church, but, when he became a prey for worms, he ceased from troubling. When the persecuted die they are out of the danger of being any further troubled. Had Job been at rest in his grave, he would have had no disturbance

from the Sabeans and Chaldeans, none of all his enemies would have created him any trouble.

(2.) Those that are now toiled will there see the period of their toils. There the weary are at rest. Heaven is more than a rest to the souls of the saints, but the grave is a rest to their bodies. Their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage; sin and the world they are weary of; their services, sufferings, and expectations, they are wearied with; but in the grave they rest from all their labours, Re 14:13,Isa 57:23. They are easy there, and make no complaints; there believers sleep in Jesus.

(3.) Those that were here enslaved are there at liberty. Death is the prisoner's discharge, the relief of the oppressed, and the servant's manumission (Job 3:18): There the prisoners, though they walk not at large, yet they rest together, and are not put to work, to grind in that prison-house. They are no more insulted and trampled upon, menaced and terrified, by their cruel task-masters: They hear not the voice of the oppressor. Those that were here doomed to perpetual servitude, that could call nothing their own, no, not their own bodies, are there no longer under command or control: There the servant is free from his master, which is a good reason why those that have power should use it moderately, and those that are in subjection should bear it patiently, yet a little while.

(4.) Those that were at a vast distance from others are there upon a level (Job 3:19): The small and great are there, there the same, there all one, all alike free among the dead. The tedious pomp and state which attend the great are at an end there. All the inconveniences of a poor and low condition are likewise over; death and the grave know no difference.

Levelled by death, the conqueror and the slave, The wise and foolish, cowards and the brave, Lie mixed and undistinguished in the grave.--Sir R. BLACKMORE.

13 For now should I have lain still and been quiet,
I should have slept: then had I been at rest,
14 with kings and counselors of the earth,
which built desolate places for themselves;
15 or with princes that had gold,
who filled their houses with silver:
16 or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been;
as infants *which* never saw light.
17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling;
and there the weary be at rest.
18 *There* the prisoners rest together;
they hear not the voice of the oppressor.
19 The small and great are there;
and the servant *is* free from his master.
20 Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,
and life unto the bitter *in* soul;
21 which long for death, but it *cometh* not;
and dig for it more than for hid treasures;

Job, finding it to no purpose to wish either that he had not been born or had died as soon as he was born, here complains that his life was now continued and not cut off. When men are set on quarrelling there is no end of it; the corrupt heart will carry on the humour. Having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. The beginning of this strife and impatience is as the letting forth of water.

I. He thinks it hard, in general, that miserable lives should be prolonged (Job 3:20-22): Wherefore is light in life given to those that are bitter in soul? Bitterness of soul, through spiritual grievances, makes life itself bitter. Why doth he give light? (so it is in the original): he means God, yet does not name him, though the devil had said, "He will curse thee to thy face;" but he tacitly reflects on the divine Providence as unjust and unkind in continuing life when the comforts of life are removed. Life is called light, because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working. It is candle-light;

the longer it burns the shorter it is, and the nearer to the socket.

This light is said to be given us; for, if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift, it would be lost. But Job reckons that to those who are in misery it is doron adoron--gift and no gift, a gift that they had better be without, while the light only serves them to see their own misery by. Such is the vanity of human life that it sometimes becomes a vexation of spirit; and so alterable is the property of death that, though dreadful to nature, it may become desirable even to nature itself. He here speaks of those,

1. Who long for death, when they have out-lived their comforts and usefulness, are burdened with age and infirmities, with pain or sickness, poverty or disgrace, and yet it comes not; while, at the same time, it comes to many who dread it and would put it far from them. The continuance and period of life must be according to God's will, not according to ours. It is not fit that we should be consulted how long we would live and when we would die; our times are in a better hand than our own.

2. Who dig for it as for hidden treasures, that is, would give any thing for a fair dismission out of this world, which supposes that then the thought of men's being their own executioners was not so much as entertained or suggested, else those who longed for it needed not take much pains for it, they might soon come at it (as Seneca tells them) if they are pleased.

3. Who bid it welcome, and are glad when they can find the grave and see themselves stepping into it. If the miseries of this life can prevail, contrary to nature, to make death itself desirable, shall not much more the hopes and prospects of a better life, to which death is our passage, make it so, and

set us quite above the fear of it? It may be a sin to long for death, but I am sure it is no sin to long for heaven.

II. He thinks himself, in particular, hardly dealt with, that he might not be eased of his pain and misery by death when he could not get ease in any other way. To be thus impatient of life for the sake of the troubles we meet with is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit: "Lord, when and how thou pleasest;" and this with such an indifference that, if he should refer it to us, we would refer it to him again. Grace teaches us, in the midst of life's greatest comforts, to be willing to die, and, in the midst of its greatest crosses, to be willing to live. Job, to excuse himself in this earnest desire which he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satisfaction he had in life.

1. In his present afflicted state troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living, for,

(1.) He had no comfort of his life: My sighing comes before I eat, Job 3:24. The sorrows of life prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his appetite for his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and affliction was his daily bread. Nay, so great was the extremity of his pain and anguish that he did not only sigh, but roar, and his roarings were poured out like the waters in a full and constant stream. Our Master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too.

(2.) He had no prospect of bettering his condition: His way was hidden, and God had hedged him in, Job 3:23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course to

take; his way was hedged up with thorns, that he could not find his path. See Job 23:8,La 3:7.

2. Even in his former prosperous state troubles were continually feared; so that then he was never easy, Job 3:25,26. He knew so much of the vanity of the world, and the troubles to which, of course, he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief now the more grievous was that he was not conscious to himself of any great degree either of negligence or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him.

(1.) He had not been negligent and unmindful of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of trouble as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard. He was afraid for his children when they were feasting, lest they should offend God (Job 1:5), afraid for his servants lest they should offend his neighbours; he took all the care he could of his own health, and managed himself and his affairs with all possible precaution; yet all would not do.

(2.) He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth; yet trouble came, to convince and remind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgotten when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hidden, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it. Nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that, in some measure, we did our duty in a day of prosperity; and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise the less it is a terror.

22 which rejoice exceedingly, *and* are glad,
when they can find the grave?

23 *Why is light given* to a man whose way is hid,
and whom God hath hedged in?
24 For my sighing cometh before I eat,
and my roarings are poured out like the waters.
25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me,
and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.
26 I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I
quiet; yet trouble came.

Job-4

Eliphaz Rebukes Job

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

In these verses,

I. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse (Job 4:2): "If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved and take it ill?" We have reason to fear thou wilt; but there is no remedy: "Who can refrain from words?" Observe,

1. With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him: "We will commune with thee." Those that plead God's cause must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult matters it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to try what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of Essays.

2. With what tenderness he speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition: "If we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be

grieved? Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thy own heart as thy affliction or to our charge as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not; we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended."

Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, Ps 69:26. We should show ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though ever so necessary. God himself, though he afflicts justly, does not afflict willingly, La 3:33.

3. With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say: Who can withhold himself from speaking? Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking. "Who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we hear reproved, in love to thy soul, which we see endangered?" Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness do our duty and discharge a good conscience.

II. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job.

1. As to his particular conduct under this affliction. He charges him with weakness and faint-heartedness, and this article of his charge there was too much ground for, Job 4:3-5. And here,

(1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his

neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office, and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those who were poor, but he did himself instruct many.

Though a great man, he did not think it below him (king Solomon was a preacher); though a man of business, he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those who were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them: a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burdens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had, and used, the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to those that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work.

With suitable counsels and comforts he strengthened the weak hands for work and service and the spiritual warfare, and the feeble knees for bearing up the man in his journey and under his load. It is not only our duty to lift up our own hands that hang down, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty (Heb 12:12), but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble knees, by saying to those that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, Isa 35:3,4. The expressions seem to be borrowed thence. Note, Those should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of. But why does Eliphaz mention this here?

[1.] Perhaps he praises him thus for the good he had done that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just

reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will show that the reproof comes not from ill will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chided them, 1Co 11:2.

[2.] He remembers how Job had comforted others as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted; and yet, if conviction was necessary in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first. The Comforter shall reprove, Joh 16:8.

[3.] He speaks this, perhaps, in a way of pity, lamenting that through the extremity of his affliction he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it, to preach meekness and patience than to practise them. Facile omnes, cum valemus, rectum consilium ægrotis damus--We all find it easy, when in health, to give good advice to the sick.--Terent.

[4.] Most think that he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge, and the good offices he had done for others, as if he had said, "Thou that hast taught others, why dost thou not teach thyself? Is not this an evidence of thy hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and actest against thy own know principles? Thou that teachest another to faint, dost thou faint? Ro 2:21. Physician, heal thyself." Those who have rebuked others must expect to hear of it if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

(2.) He upbraids him with his present low-spiritedness, Job 4:5. "Now that it has come upon thee, now that it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup that goes round is put into thy hand, now that it touches thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled." Here,

[1.] He makes too light of Job's afflictions: "It touches thee." The very word that Satan himself had used, Job 1:11,2:5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one-half of Job's affliction, he would have said, "It smites me, it wounds me;" but, speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes a mere trifle of it: "It touches thee and thou canst not bear to be touched." Noli me tangere--Touch me not.

[2.] He makes too much of Job's resentments, and aggravates them: "Thou faintest, or thou art beside thyself; thou ravest, and knowest not what thou sayest." Men in deep distress must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction. He charges him with wickedness and false-heartedness, and this article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly does he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it had all now come to nothing and proved a sham (Job 4:6): "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways? Does it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldst thou have behaved thus under the affliction." This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him. When he could not himself do this to God, but he still saw and said, Job is perfect and upright, then he endeavoured, by his friends, to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself a hypocrite. Could he have gained that point he would have triumphed. Habes confitentem reum--Out of thy own mouth will I condemn thee. But, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable

censures upon their brethren, and condemn them as hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest, more than they are aware of.

I know not how it comes to pass that Job 4:6 is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put thy hope before the uprightness of thy ways. So does the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope? Both the Assembly's Annotations and Mr. Pool's have that reading: and an edition in 1660 reads it, "Is not thy fear thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope? Does it not appear now that all the religion both of thy devotion and of thy conversation was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldst grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary?" The very thing that Satan suggested. Is not thy religion thy hope, and are not thy ways thy confidence? so Mr. Broughton. Or, "Was it not? Didst thou not think that that would be thy protection? But thou art deceived." Or, "Would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair?" It is true, if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small (Pr 24:10); but it does not therefore follow that thou hast no grace, no strength at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

2 *If* we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?
But who can withhold himself from speaking?
3 Behold, thou hast instructed many,
and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.
4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling,
and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.
5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest;
it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.
6 *Is* not *this* thy fear, thy confidence,
thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?
7 Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent?

Or where were the righteous cut off?

Eliphaz here advances another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them. To strengthen his argument he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough:--

I. That good men were never thus ruined. For the proof of this he appeals to Job's own observation (Job 4:7): "Remember, I pray thee; recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read, and give me an instance of any one that was innocent and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art." If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true. None that are innocent and righteous perish for ever: it is only a man of sin that is a son of perdition, 2Th 2:3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. The righteous perish (Isa 57:1): there is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked (Ec 9:2), both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time (as early as it was) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle. Did not righteous Abel perish being innocent? and was he not cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob a Syrian ready to perish? De 26:5. Other such instances, no doubt, there were, which are not on record.

II. That wicked men were often thus ruined. For the proof of this he vouches his own observation (Job 4:8): "Even as I have seen, many a time, those that plough iniquity, and

sow wickedness, reap accordingly; by the blast of God they perish, Job 4:9. We have daily instances of that; and therefore, since thou dost thus perish and art consumed, we have reason to think that, whatever profession of religion thou hast made, thou hast but ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness. Even as I have seen in others, so do I see in thee."

1. He speaks of sinners in general, politic busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plough iniquity; and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness. Those that plough plough in hope, but what is the issue? They reap the same. They shall of the flesh reap corruption and ruin, Ga 6:7,8. The harvest will be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, Isa 17:11. He shall reap the same, that is, the proper product of that seedness. That which the sinner sows, he sows not that body that shall be, but God will give it a body, a body of death, the end of those things, Ro 6:21. Some, by iniquity and wickedness, understand wrong and injury done to others. Those who plough and sow them shall reap the same, that is, they shall be paid in their own coin. Those who are troublesome shall be troubled, 2Th 1:6,Jos 7:25. The spoilers shall be spoiled (Isa 33:1), and those that led captive shall go captive, Re 13:10. He further describes their destruction (Job 4:9): By the blast of God they perish. The projects they take so much pains in are defeated; God cuts asunder the cords of those ploughers, Ps 129:3,4. They themselves are destroyed, which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish, that is, they are destroyed utterly; they are consumed, that is, they are destroyed gradually; and this by the blast and breath of God, that is,

(1.) By his wrath. His anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called vessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle Tophet, Isa 30:33. Who knows the power of his anger? Ps 90:11.

(2.) By his word. He speaks and it is done, easily and effectually. The Spirit of God, in the word, consumes sinners; with that he slays them, Ho 6:5. Saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the breath of Christ's mouth, 2Th 2:8,Isa 11:4,Re 19:21. Some think that in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God, and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore sinners above all men because they suffered such things. Lu 13:2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors, under the similitude of lions, Job 4:10,11. Observe,

(1.) How he describes their cruelty and oppression. The Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors. They roar, and rend, and prey upon all about them, and bring up their young ones to do so too, Eze 19:3. The devil is a roaring lion; and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle (Ps 10:9,17:12); and, as far as they prevail, they lay all desolate about them.

(2.) How he describes their destruction, the destruction both of their power and of their persons. They shall be restrained from doing further hurt and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken,

[1.] That they shall not terrify. The voice of their roaring shall be stopped.

[2.] That they shall not tear. God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt: The teeth of the young lions are broken. See Ps 3:7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained.

[3.] That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is famished, and perishes for lack of prey. Those that have surfeited on spoil and rapine are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die of hunger at last.

[4.] That they shall not, as they promise themselves, leave a succession: The stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, Na 2:12. The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps, but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended, in this, to reflect upon Job, as if he, being the greatest of all the men of the east, had got his estate by spoil and used his power in oppressing his neighbours, but now his power and estate were gone, and his family was scattered: if so, it was a pity that a man whom God praised should be thus abused.

8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity,
and sow wickedness, reap the same.
9 By the blast of God they perish,
and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.
10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion,
and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.
11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey,
and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.
12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
and mine ear received a little thereof.

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job, no doubt, as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it would have been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his

murmuring, but not to condemn him as a hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly; for God did, in this way, often communicate his mind to the children of men in those first ages of the world, Job 33:15. Probably God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted (2Co 1:4), so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us. The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have Bibles have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, 2Pe 1:19. Observe,

I The manner in which this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him.

1. It was brought to him secretly, or by stealth. Some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God is in secret, where no eye sees but that of him who is all eye. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people, unobserved by the world, by private whispers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. His secret is with them, Ps 25:14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart (Mt 13:19), so the good Spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware.

2. He received a little thereof, Job 4:12. And it is but a little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world. We know little in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. How little a portion is heard of God! Job 26:14. We know but in part, 1Co 13:12. See his humility and modesty. He pretends

not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived.

3. It was brought to him in the visions of the night (Ps 4:13), when he had retired from the world and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world and the things of it the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are communing with our own hearts, and are still (Ps 4:4), then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep Eliphaz was ready to receive this visit from Heaven, and probably, like David, was meditating upon God in the night-watches; in the midst of those good thoughts this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, Job 33:14,15.

4. It was prefaced with terrors: Fear came upon him, and trembling, Job 4:14. It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

II The messenger by whom it was sent--a spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition which Eliphaz saw we are here told (Job 4:15,16),

1. That it was real, and not a dream, not a fancy. An image was before his eyes; he plainly saw it; at first it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but at length it stood still to speak to him. If some have been so knavish

as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it does not therefore follow but that there may have been apparitions of spirits, both good and bad.

2. That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits; we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit that we should: all in good time; we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them.

3. That it puts him into a great consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned it has been terrible to him to receive an express from heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well it is for us that God sends us his messages, not by spirits, but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid! See Da 7:28,10:8,9.

III. The message itself. Before it was delivered there was silence, profound silence, Job 4:16. When we are to speak either from God or to him it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it (Job 4:17): "Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? Shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be, more pure than his Maker? Away with such a thought!"

1. Some think that Eliphaz aims hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man. A mortal man would be thought unjust and very impure if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime: "If therefore there were not some great crimes for which God thus punishes thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined."

2. I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent: "Shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? more truly to understand, and more strictly to observe, the rules and laws of equity than God? Shall Enosh, mortal and miserable man, be so insolent; nay, shall Geber, the strongest and most eminent man, man at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him?" Note, It is most impious and absurd to think either others or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the disposals of the divine providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and those who thus reprove God, let them answer it. What! sinful man! (for he would not have been mortal if he had not been sinful) short-sighted man! Shall he pretend to be more just, more pure, than God, who, being his Maker, is his Lord and owner? Shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See Ps 94:9,10.

13 In thoughts from the visions of the night,
when deep sleep falleth on men,
14 fear came upon me, and trembling,
which made all my bones to shake.
15 Then a spirit passed before my face;
the hair of my flesh stood up:
16 it stood still,
but I could not discern the form thereof:

an image *was* before mine eyes,
there was silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*,
17 Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?
18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants;
and his angels he charged with folly:

IV. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the Job 4:18-21 to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one.

1. He shows how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, Job 4:18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants; they are his ministers (Ps 104:4); bright and blessed beings they are, but God neither needs them nor is benefited by them and is himself infinitely above them, and therefore,

(1.) He puts no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them, as we do in those we cannot live without. There is no service in which he employs them but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet-council, Mt 24:36. He does not leave his business wholly to them, but his own eyes run to and fro through the earth, 2Ch 16:9. See this phrase, Job 39:11. Some give this sense of it: "So mutable is even the angelical nature that God would not trust angels with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done as some did, left their first estate; but he saw it necessary to give them supernatural grace to confirm them."

(2.) He charges them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with himself. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and everything would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences, but finite ones. Though not chargeable with iniquity, yet with

imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common: He will put no trust in his saints; nor will he glory in his angels (in angelis suis non ponet gloriationem) or make his boast of them, as if their praises, or services, added any thing to him: it is his glory that he is infinitely happy without them.

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in or gloried in. If there is such a distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness.

(1.) Look upon man in his life, and he is very mean, Job 4:19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels, though honourable if compared with the brutes. It is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but,

[1.] Angels are pure spirits; the souls of men dwell in houses of clay: such the bodies of men are. Angels are free; human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a clog, to it; it is its cage; it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed, according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair.

[2.] Angels are fixed, but the very foundation of that house of clay in which man dwells is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but, if founded in the dust, the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which cometh out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust; some have

a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still it is the earth that stays us up and will shortly swallow us up.

[3.] Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed; the earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved; he dies and wastes away, is crushed like a moth between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly; one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. A little thing will destroy his life. He is crushed before the face of the moth, so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper, which comes roaring upon him like a lion. See Ho 5:12-14. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

(2.) Look upon him in his death, and he appears yet more despicable, and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal and dying, Job 4:20,21.

[1.] In death they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all the employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more.

[2.] They are dying daily, and continually wasting: Destroyed from morning to evening. Death is still working in us, like a mole digging our grave at each remove, and we so continually lie exposed that we are killed all the day long.

[3.] Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off. It lasts perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day (so some understand it); their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day.

[4.] In death all their excellency passes away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death,

but must die with them, nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them.

[5.] Their wisdom cannot save them from death: They die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth.

[6.] It is so common a thing that nobody heeds it, nor takes any notice of it: They perish without any regarding it, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought. Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of, as well as their temporal death: They are destroyed, or broken to pieces, by death, from morning to evening; and, if they repent not, they perish for ever (so some read it), Job 4:20. They perish for ever because they regard not God and their duty; they consider not their latter end, La 1:9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this pretend to be more just than God and more pure than his Maker? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him wonder that he is out of hell.

19 how much less *in* them that dwell in houses of clay,
whose foundation *is* in the dust,
which are crushed before the moth?
20 They are destroyed from morning to evening:
they perish for ever without any regarding *it*.
21 Doth not their excellency *which is* in them go away?
They die, even without wisdom.

Job-5

1 Call now, if there be any that will answer thee;
and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?

A very warm dispute being begun between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference. In all debates perhaps the sooner this is done the better if the contenders cannot end it between themselves. So well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause that he moves Job himself to choose the arbitrators (Job 5:1): Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; that is,

1. "If there be any that suffer as thou sufferest. Canst thou produce an instance of any one that was really a saint that was reduced to such an extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name as he deals with thee, and therefore surely thou art none of them."

2. "If there be any that say as thou sayest. Did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or will any of the saints justify thee in these heats or passions, or say that these are the spots of God's children? Thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thy advocates or my antagonists. To which of the saints wilt thou turn? Turn to which thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind. I have the communis sensus fidelium--the unanimous vote of the faithful on my side; they will all subscribe to what I am going to say." Observe,

(1.) Good people are called saints even in the Old Testament; and therefore I know not why we should, in common speaking (unless because we must loqui cum vulgo--speak as our neighbours), appropriate the title to those of the New Testament, and not say St. Abraham, St.

Moses, and St. Isaiah, as well as St. Matthew and St. Mark; and St. David the psalmist, as well as St. David the British bishop. Aaron is expressly called the saint of the Lord.

(2.) All that are themselves saints will turn to those that are so, will choose them for their friends and converse with them, will choose them for their judges and consult them. See Ps 119:79. The saints shall judge the world, 1Co 6:1,2. Walk in the way of good men (Pr 2:20), the old way, the footsteps of the flock. Every one chooses some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and whose sentiments are to him the test of honour and dishonour. Now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are such, and to stand right in their opinion.

(3.) There are some truths so plain, and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in which they are agreed; as the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Though they do not all live up, as they should, to their belief of these truths, yet they are all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and in which he doubts not but all the saints concur with him:--

I. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin (Job 5:2): Wrath kills the foolish man, his own wrath, and therefore he is foolish for indulging it; it is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to put him into a fever. Envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one that frets himself with it. "So it is with thee," says Eliphaz, "while thou quarrellest with God thou doest thyself the greatest mischief; thy anger at thy own troubles, and thy

envy at our prosperity, do but add to thy pain and misery: turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand their interest better." Job had told his wife she spoke as the foolish women; now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones. Or it may be meant thus: "If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and undoes them.

They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, Job, thou hast done some foolish thing, by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition." Many understand it of God's wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked, for the world's smiles can never shelter them from God's frowns; they are foolish and silly if they think they will. God's anger will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens. What is hell but God's anger without mixture or period?

II. That their prosperity is short and their destruction certain, Job 5:3-5. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people. 1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity; and it is common for foolish wicked men to do so: I have seen them taking root--planted, and, in their own and others' apprehension, fixed, and likely to continue. See Jer 12:2,Ps 37:35,36. We see worldly men taking root in the earth; on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts. The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth. 2. Job's prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly been.

(1.) Eliphaz foresaw their ruin with an eye of faith. Those who looked only at present things blessed their habitation,

and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition. But Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, that is, he plainly foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it (I have not desired the woeful day), but he prognosticated it. He went into the sanctuary, and there understood their end and heard their doom read (Ps 73:17,18), that the prosperity of fools will destroy them, Pr 1:32. Those who believe the word of God can see a curse in the house of the wicked (Pr 3:33), though it be ever so finely and firmly built, and ever so full of all good things; and they can foresee that the curse will, in time, infallibly consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zec 5:4.

(2.) He saw, at length, what he had foreseen. He was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him; the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined. In these particulars he plainly and very invidiously reflects on Job's calamities.

[1.] His children were crushed, Job 5:4. They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother's house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate. Perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell heaviest upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them, to oblige them to restore what they have ill-gotten. They leave it to their children; but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law (and there shall be none to help them), or perhaps by oppression, Ps 109:9,10, &c.

[2.] His estate was plundered, Job 5:5. Job's was so. The hungry robbers, the Sabeans and Chaldeans, ran away with it, and swallowed it; and this, says he, I have often observed

in others. What has been got by spoil and rapine has been lost in the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe; but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers (if hunger will break through the stone walls, much more through thorn hedges), and against the divine curse, which will go through the thorns and briers, and burn them together, Isa 27:4.

2 For wrath killeth the foolish man,
and envy slayeth the silly one.
3 I have seen the foolish taking root:
but suddenly I cursed his habitation.
4 His children are far from safety,
and they are crushed in the gate,
neither *is there* any to deliver *them.*
5 Whose harvest the hungry eateth up,
and taketh it even out of the thorns,
and the robber swalloweth up their substance.
6 Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;

Eliphaz, having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate and the death of his children as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair, here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he very much changes his voice (Ga 4:20), and speaks in the accents of kindness, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given him.

I. He reminds him that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes: It doth not come forth of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, as the grass doth, Job 5:6. It doth not come of course, at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity is not so exactly observed by Providence as that between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and

counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit. Some read it, Sin comes not forth out of the dust, nor iniquity of the ground. If men be bad, they must not lay the blame upon the soil, the climate, or the stars, but on themselves. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God, nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves; so that, whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us and we procure it to ourselves: the former is a reason why we should be very patient, the latter why we should be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

II. He reminds him that trouble and affliction are what we have all reason to expect in this world: Man is brought to trouble (Job 5:7), not as man (had he kept his innocency he would have been born to pleasure), but as sinful man, as born of a woman (Job 14:1), who was in the transgression. Man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate are yet born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state it has become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that is affliction, Ro 5:12.

There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upwards. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and, being called transgressors from the womb, no wonder that we deal very treacherously, Isa 48:8. Such too is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upwards--so many are they, so thick and so fast does one follow another. Why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? Man is born to labour (so it is in the margin), is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which

should inure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

III. He directs him how to behave himself under his affliction (Job 5:8): I would seek unto God; surely I would: so it is in the original.

Here is, 1. A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with him: "Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art. I would have acquiesced in the will of God." It is easy to say what we would do if we were in such a one's case; but when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say.

2. Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure: "For my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply to God." Note, We should give our friends no other counsel than what we would take ourselves if we were in their case, that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them.

(1.) We must by prayer fetch in mercy and grace from God, seek to him as a Father and friend, though he contend with us, as one who is alone able to support and succour us. His favour we must seek when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address ourselves as the fountain and Father of all good, all consolation. Is any afflicted? let him pray. It is heart's-ease, a salve for every sore.

(2.) We must by patience refer ourselves and our cause to him: To God would I commit my cause; having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge it in his hand. "Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good." If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he

is both just and kind. Those that would seek so as to speed must refer themselves to God.

IV. He encourages him thus to seek to God, and commit his cause to him. It will not be in vain to do so, for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help.

1. He recommends to his consideration God's almighty power and sovereign dominion. In general, he doeth great things (Job 5:9), great indeed, for he can do any thing, he doth do every thing, and all according to the counsel of his own will--great indeed, for the operations of his power are,

(1.) Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out from the beginning to the end, Ec 3:11. The works of nature are mysterious; the most curious searches come far short of full discoveries and the wisest philosophers have owned themselves at a loss. The designs of Providence ar much more deep and unaccountable, Ro 11:33.

(2.) Numerous, and such as can never be reckoned up. He doeth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time.

(3.) They are marvellous, and such as never can be sufficiently admired; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now, by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends,

[1.] To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God. We must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his works, for they are unsearchable and above our enquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment.

[2.] To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer his cause to him. What more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought ever so low.

2. He gives some instances of God's dominion and power.

(1.) God doeth great things in the kingdom of nature: He gives rain upon the earth (Job 5:10), put here for all the gifts of common providence, all the fruitful seasons by which he filleth our hearts with food and gladness, Ac 14:17. Observe, When he would show what great things God does he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing, we are apt to look upon as a little thing, but, if we duly consider both how it is produced and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work both of power and goodness.

(2.) He doeth great things in the affairs of the children of men, not only enriches the poor and comforts the needy, by the rain he sends (Job 5:10), but, in order to the advancing of those that are low, he disappoints the devices of the crafty; for Job 5:11 is to be joined to Job 5:12. Compare with Lu 1:51-53. He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and so hath exalted those of low degree, and filled the heart with good things. See,

[1.] How he frustrates the counsels of the proud and politic, Job 5:12-14. There is a supreme power that manages and overrules men who think themselves free and absolute, and fulfils its own purposes in spite of their projects.

Observe, First, The froward, that walk contrary to God and the interests of his kingdom, are often very crafty; for they are the seed of the old serpent that was noted for his

subtlety. They think themselves wise, but, at the end, will be fools.

Secondly, The Froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their enterprises, and their counsels, against it, and against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politics, and fast-linked in their confederacies, Ps 2:1,2.

Thirdly, God easily can, and (as far as is for his glory) certainly will, blast and defeat all the designs of his and his people's enemies. How were the plots of Ahithophel, Sanballat, and Haman baffled! How were the confederacies of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, of Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, against God's Israel, the kings of the earth and the princes against the Lord and against his anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God and his church have not performed their enterprise, nor have the weapons formed against Sion prospered.

Fourthly, That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church has often turned to their own ruin (Job 5:13): He takes the wise in their own craftiness, and snares them in the work of their own hands, Ps 7:15,16,9:15,16. This is quoted by the apostle (1Co 3:19) to show how the learned men of the heathen were befooled by their own vain philosophy.

Fifthly, When God infatuates men they are perplexed, and at a loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy (Job 5:14): They meet with darkness even in the day-time: nay (as in the margin), They run themselves into darkness by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels. See Job 12:20,24,25.

[2.] How he favours the cause of the poor and humble, and espouses that. First, He exalts the humble, Job 5:11. Those whom proud men contrive to crush he raises from under their feet, and sets them in safety, Ps 12:5. The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advances, comforts, and makes to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, Isa 33:16. Sion's mourners are the sealed ones, marked for safety, Eze 9:4. Secondly, He delivers the oppressed, Job 5:15. The designs of the crafty are to ruin the poor. Tongue, and hand, and sword, and all, are at work in order to this; but God takes under his special protection those who, being poor and unable to help themselves, being his poor and devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him. He saves them from the mouth that speaks hard things against them and the hand that does hard things against them; for he can, when he pleases, tie the tongue and wither the hand. The effect of this is (Job 5:16),

1. That weak and timorous saints are comforted: So the poor, who began to despair, has hope. The experiences of some are encouragement to others to hope the best in the worst of times; for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless and hope to the hopeless.

2. That daring threatening sinners are confounded: Iniquity stops her mouth, being surprised at the strangeness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of Heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that domineered over God's poor, that frightened them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will not have a word to say against them when God appears for them. See Ps 76:8,9,Isa 26:11,Mic 7:16.

7 yet man is born unto trouble,
as the sparks fly upward.
8 I would seek unto God,

and unto God would I commit my cause:
9 which doeth great things and unsearchable;
marvelous things without number:
10 who giveth rain upon the earth,
and sendeth waters upon the fields:
11 to set up on high those that be low;
that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.
12 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty,
so that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprise.
13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness:
and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.
14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
and grope in the noonday as in the night.
15 But he saveth the poor from the sword,
from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.
16 So the poor hath hope,
and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.
17 Behold, happy *is* the man whom God correcteth:
therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:

Eliphaz, in this concluding paragraph of his discourse, gives Job (what he himself knew not how to take) a comfortable prospect of the issue of his afflictions, if he did but recover his temper and accommodate himself to them. Observe,

I The seasonable word of caution and exhortation that he gives him (Job 5:17): "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. Call it a chastening, which comes from the father's love and is designed for the child's good. Call it the chastening of the Almighty, with whom it is madness to contend, to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient (for so the word signifies) to all those that trust in him. Do not despise it;" it is a copious word in the original.

1. "Be not averse to it. Let grace conquer the antipathy which nature has to suffering, and reconcile thyself to the

will of God in it." We need the rod and we deserve it; and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Let not the heart rise against a bitter pill or potion, when it is prescribed for our good.

2. "Do not think ill of it; do not put it from thee (as that which is either hurtful or at least not useful, which there is not occasion for nor advantage by) only because for the present it is not joyous, but grievous." We must never scorn to stoop to God, nor think it a thing below us to come under his discipline, but reckon, on the contrary, that God really magnifies man when he thus visits and tries him, Job 7:17,18.

3. "Do not overlook and disregard it, as if it were only a chance, and the production of second causes, but take great notice of it as the voice of God and a messenger from heaven." More is implied than is expressed: "Reverence the chastening of the Lord; have a humble awful regard to this correcting hand, and tremble when the lion roars, Am 3:8. Submit to the chastening, and study to answer the call, to answer the end of it, and then you reverence it." When God by an affliction draws upon us for some of the effects he has entrusted us with we must honour his bill by accepting it, and subscribing it, resigning him his own when he calls for it.

18 for he maketh sore, and bindeth up:
he woundeth, and his hands make whole.
19 He shall deliver thee in six troubles:
yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.
20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death:
and in war from the power of the sword.
21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue:
neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.
22 At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh:
neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.

The comfortable words of encouragement which he gives him thus to accommodate himself to his condition, and (as he himself had expressed it) to receive evil at the hand of God, and not despise it as a gift not worth the accepting.

1. If his affliction was thus borne,

(1.) The nature and property of it would be altered. Though it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss: Happy is the man whom God correcteth if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy though he be afflicted, for, whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God nor his title to heaven. Nay, he is happy because he is afflicted; correction is an evidence of his sonship and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his Bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Happy therefore is the man whom God correcteth, Jam 1:12.

(2.) The issue and consequence of it would be very good, Job 5:18.

[1.] Though he makes sore the body with sore boils, the mind with sad thoughts, yet he binds up at the same time, as the skilful tender surgeon binds up the wounds he had occasion to make with his incision-knife. When God makes sores by the rebukes of his providence he binds up by the consolations of his Spirit, which oftentimes abound most as afflictions do abound, and counterbalance them, to the unspeakable satisfaction of the patient sufferers.

[2.] Though he wounds, yet his hands make whole in due time; as he supports his people, and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time he delivers them, and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and he comforts

them according to the time wherein he afflicted them. God's usual method is first to wound and then to heal, first to convince and then to comfort, first to humble and then to exalt; and (as Mr. Caryl observes) he never makes a wound too great, too deep, for his own cure. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit--The hand that inflicts the wound applies the cure. God tears the wicked and goes away; let those heal that will, if they can (Ho 5:14); but the humble and penitent may say, He has torn and he will heal us, Ho 6:1. This is general, but,

2. In the Job 5:19-27 Eliphaz addresses himself directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of great and kind things which God would do for him if he did but humble himself under his hand. Though then they had no Bibles that we know of, yet Eliphaz had sufficient warrant to give Job these assurances, from the general discoveries God had made of his good will to his people. And, though in every thing which Job's friends said they were not directed by the Spirit of God (for they spoke both of God and Job some things that were not right), yet the general doctrines they laid down expressed the pious sense of the patriarchal age, and as St. Paul quoted Job 5:13,1Co 1:19 for canonical scripture, and as the command Job 5:17,Heb 12:5 is no doubt binding on us, so these promises here may be, and must be, received and applied as divine promises, and we may through patience and comfort of this part of scripture have hope. Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, and then view the particulars of them and take the comfort of them.

(1.) It is here promised that as afflictions and troubles recur supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated, be it ever so often: In six troubles he shall be ready to deliver thee; yea, and in seven, Job 5:19. This intimates that,as long as we are here in this world, we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain. After

six troubles may come a seventh; after many, look for more; but out of them all will God deliver those that are his, 2Ti 3:11,Pa 34:19. Former deliverances are not, as among men, excuses from further deliverances, but earnests of them, Pr 19:19.

(2.) That, whatever troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them; they shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them, the sting, shall be taken out; they may hiss, but they cannot hurt, Ps 91:10. The evil one toucheth not God's children, 1Jo 5:18. Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble.

(3.) That, when desolating judgments are abroad, they shall be taken under special protection, Job 5:20. Do many perish about them for want of the necessary supports of life? They shall be supplied. "In famine he shall redeem thee from death; whatever becomes of others, thou shalt be kept alive, Ps 33:19. Verily, thou shalt be fed, nay, even in the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied, Ps 37:3,19. In time of war, when thousands fall on the right and left hand, he shall redeem thee from the power of the sword. If God please, it shall not touch thee; or if it wound thee, if it kill thee, it shall not hurt thee; it can but kill the body, nor has it power to do that unless it be given from above."

(4.) That, whatever is maliciously said against them, it shall not affect them to do them any hurt, Job 5:21. "Thou shalt not only be protected from the killing sword of war, but shalt be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, which, like a scourge, is vexing and painful, though not mortal." The best men, and the most inoffensive, cannot, even in their innocency, secure themselves from calumny, reproach, and false accusation. From these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall be so little heeded by him as not to disturb his peace, and so little heeded by others as not to blemish his reputation: and

the remainder of wrath God can and does restrain, for it is owing to the hold he has of the consciences of bad men that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good men in this world.

(5.) That they shall have a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from their hope and confidence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; and they shall not be afraid of destruction, no, not when they see it coming (Job 5:21), nor of the beasts of the field when they set upon them, nor of men as cruel as beasts; nay, at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh (Job 5:22), not so as to despise any of God's chastenings or make a jest of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God, in his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances, to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful, in tribulation. Blessed Paul laughed at destruction when he said, O death! where is thy sting? when, in the name of all the saints, he defied all the calamities of this present time to separate us from the love of God, concluding that in all these things we are more than conquerors, Ro 8:35-39, &c. See Isa 37:22.

(6.) That, being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation, Job 5:23. "When thou walkest over thy grounds thou shalt not need to fear stumbling, for thou shalt be at league with the stones of the field, not to dash thy foot against any of them, nor shalt thou be in danger from the beasts of the field, for they shall all be at peace with thee;" compare Ho 2:18, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field. This implies that while man is at enmity with his Maker the inferior creatures are at war with him; but tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia--a reconciled God reconciles all things. Our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures that they shall do us no hurt but be ready to serve us and do us good.

(7.) That their houses and families shall be comfortable to them, Job 5:24. Peace and piety in the family will make it so. "Thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is and shall be in peace; thou mayest be confident both of its present and its future prosperity." That peace is thy tabernacle (so the word is); peace is the house in which those dwell who dwell in God, and are at home in him. "Thou shalt visit" (that is, enquire into the affairs of) "thy habitation, and take a review of them, and shalt not sin."

[1.] God will provide a settlement for his people, mean perhaps and movable, a cottage, a tabernacle, but a fixed and quiet habitation. "Thou shalt not sin," or wander; that is, as some understand it, "thou shalt not be a fugitive and a vagabond" (Cain's curse), "but shalt dwell in the land, and verily, not uncertainly as vagrants, shalt thou be fed."

[2.] Their families shall be taken under the special protection of the divine Providence, and shall prosper as far as is for their good.

[3.] They shall be assured of peace, and of the continuance and entail of it. "Thou shalt know, to thy unspeakable satisfaction, that peace is sure to thee and thine, having the word of God for it." Providence may change, but the promise cannot.

[4.] They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, to order their affairs with discretion, and to look well to the ways of their household, which is here called visiting their habitation. Masters of families must not be strangers at home, but must have a watchful eye over what they have and what their servants do.

[5.] They shall have grace to manage the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management

of them. They shall call their servants to account without passion, pride, covetousness, worldliness, or the like; they shall look into their affairs without discontent at what is or distrust of what shall be. Family piety crowns family peace and prosperity. The greatest blessing, both in our employments and in our enjoyments, is to be kept from sin in them. When we are abroad it is comfortable to hear that our tabernacle is in peace; and when we return home it is comfortable to visit our habitation with satisfaction in our success, that we have not failed in our business, and with a good conscience, that we have not offended God.

(8.) That their posterity shall be numerous and prosperous. Job had lost all his children; "but," says Eliphaz, "if thou return to God, he will again build up thy family, and thy seed shall be many and as great as ever, and thy offspring increasing and flourishing as the grass of the earth (Job 5:25), and thou shalt know it." God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have if they do not stand in their own light and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the spiritual prosperity, of their children; if they are truly good, they are truly great, how small a figure soever they may make in the world.

(9.) That their death shall be seasonable, and they shall finish their course, at length, with joy and honour, Job 5:26. It is a great mercy,

[1.] To live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God do not give us long life, yet, if the grace of God give us to be satisfied with the time allotted us, we may be said to come to a full age. That man lives long enough that has done his work and is fit for another world.

[2.] To be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. [3.] To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is fully ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand; it is well they are so, for he will take care that those who are his shall die in the best time: however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable.

3. In the Job 5:27 he recommends these promises to Job,

(1.) As faithful sayings, which he might be confident of the truth of: "Lo, this we have searched, and so it is. We have indeed received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust; we have carefully searched them, have compared spiritual things with spiritual, have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them from our own observation and experience; and we are all of a mind that so it is." Truth is a treasure that is well worth digging for, diving for; and then we shall know both how to value it ourselves and how to communicate it to others when we have taken pains in searching for it.

(2.) As well worthy of all acceptation, which he might improve to his great advantage: Hear it, and know thou it for thy good. It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the commanding power of it. Know it for thyself (so the word is), with application to thyself, and thy own case; not only "This is true," but "this is true concerning me." That which we thus hear and know for ourselves we hear and know for our good, as we are nourished by the meat which we digest. That is indeed a good sermon to us which does us good.

23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field:
and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

24 And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle *shall be* in peace;
and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.
25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed *shall be* great,
and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.
26 Thou shalt come to *thy* grave in a full age,
like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.
27 Lo this, we have searched it, so it *is;*
hear it, and know thou *it* for thy good.

Job-6

Job Reproaches His Friends

1 But Job answered and said,
2 Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and
my calamity laid in the balances together!

Eliphaz, in the beginning of his discourse, had been very sharp upon Job, and yet it does not appear that Job gave him any interruption, but heard him patiently till he had said all he had to say. Those that would make an impartial judgment of a discourse must hear it out, and take it entire. But, when he had concluded, he makes his reply, in which he speaks very feelingly.

I. He represents his calamity, in general, as much heavier than either he had expressed it or they had apprehended it, Job 6:2,3. He could not fully describe it; they would not fully apprehend it, or at least would not own that they did; and therefore he would gladly appeal to a third person, who had just weights and just balances with which to weigh his grief and calamity, and would do it with an impartial hand. He wished that they would set his grief and all the expressions of it in one scale, his calamity and all the particulars of it in the other, and (though he would not altogether justify himself in his grief) they would find (as he says, Job 23:2) that his stroke was heavier than his groaning; for, whatever his grief was, his calamity was

heavier than the sand of the sea: it was complicated, it was aggravated, every grievance weighty, and all together numerous as the sand. "Therefore (says he) my words are swallowed up;" that is, "Therefore you must excuse both the brokenness and the bitterness of my expressions. Do not think it strange if my speech be not so fine and polite as that of an eloquent orator, or so grave and regular as that of a morose philosopher: no, in these circumstances I can pretend neither to the one nor to the other; my words are, as I am, quite swallowed up."

Now, 1. He hereby complains of it as his unhappiness that his friends undertook to administer spiritual physic to him before they thoroughly understood his case and knew the worst of it. It is seldom that those who are at ease themselves rightly weigh the afflictions of the afflicted. Every one feels most from his own burden; few feel from other people's.

2. He excuses the passionate expressions he had used when he cursed his day. Though he could not himself justify all he had said, yet he thought his friends should not thus violently condemn it, for really the case was extraordinary, and that might be connived at in such a man of sorrows as he now was which in any common grief would by no means be allowed.

3. He bespeaks the charitable and compassionate sympathy of his friends with him, and hopes, by representing the greatness of his calamity, to bring them to a better temper towards him. To those that are pained it is some ease to be pitied.

II. He complains of the trouble and terror of mind he was in as the sorest part of his calamity, Job 6:4. Herein he was a type of Christ, who, in his sufferings, complained most of the sufferings of his soul. Now is my soul troubled, Joh

12:27. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, Mt 26:38. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Mt 27:46. Poor Job sadly complains here,

1. Of what he felt The arrows of the Almighty are within me. It was not so much the troubles themselves he was under that put him into this confusion, his poverty, disgrace, and bodily pain; but that which cut him to the heart and put him into this agitation, was to think that the God he loved and served had brought all this upon him and laid him under these marks of his displeasure. Note, Trouble of mind is the sorest trouble. A wounded spirit who can bear! Whatever burden of affliction, in body or estate, God is pleased to lay upon us, we may well afford to submit to it as long as he continues to the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences; but, if in either of these we be disturbed, our case is sad indeed and very pitiable. The way to prevent God's fiery darts of trouble is with the shield of faith to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Observe, He calls them the arrows of the Almighty; for it is an instance of the power of God above that of any man that he can with his arrows reach the soul. He that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it. The poison or heat of these arrows is said to drink up his spirit, because it disturbed his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life; and therefore his passionate expressions, though they could not be justified, might be excused.

2. Of what he feared. He saw himself charged by the terrors of God, as by an army set in battle-array, and surrounded by them. God, by his terrors, fought against him. As he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward towards Heaven. He that used to be encouraged with the consolations of God not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God.

III. He reflects upon his friends for their severe censures of his complaints and their unskilful management of his case.

1. Their reproofs were causeless. He complained, it is true, now that he was in this affliction, but he never used to complain, as those do who are of a fretful unquiet spirit, when he was in prosperity: he did not bray when he had grass, nor low over his fodder, Job 6:5. But, now that he was utterly deprived of all his comforts, he must be a stock or a stone, and not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give some vent to his grief. He was forced to eat unsavoury meats, and was so poor that he had not a grain of salt wherewith to season them, nor to give a little taste to the white of an egg, which was now the choicest dish he had at his table, Job 6:6. Even that food which once he would have scorned to touch he was now glad of, and it was his sorrowful meat, Job 6:7. Note, It is wisdom not to use ourselves or our children to be nice and dainty about meat and drink, because we know not how we or they may be reduced, nor how that which we now disdain may be made acceptable by necessity.

2. Their comforts were sapless and insipid; so some understand Job 6:6,7. He complains he had nothing now offered to him for his relief that was proper for him, no cordial, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits; what they had afforded was in itself as tasteless as the white of an egg, and, when applied to him, as loathsome and burdensome as the most sorrowful meat. I am sorry he should say thus of what Eliphaz had excellently well said, Job 5:8-13, &c. But peevish spirits are too apt thus to abuse their comforters.

3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea:
therefore my words are swallowed up.
4 For the arrows of the Almighty *are* within me,
the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit:
the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.
5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?

Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
6 Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?
Or is there *any* taste in the white of an egg?
7 The things *that* my soul refused to touch
are as my sorrowful meat.
8 Oh that I might have my request;
and that God would grant *me* the thing that I long for!

Ungoverned passion often grows more violent when it meets with some rebuke and check. The troubled sea rages most when it dashes against a rock. Job had been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries, Job 3:1-26. For this Eliphaz had gravely reproved him, but he, instead of unsaying what he had said, says it here again with more vehemence than before; and it is as ill said as almost any thing we meet with in all his discourses, and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation.

I. He is still most passionately desirous to die, as if it were not possible that he should ever see good days again in this world, or that, by the exercise of grace and devotion, he might make even these days of affliction good days. He could see no end of his trouble but death, and had not patience to wait the time appointed for that. He has a request to make; there is a thing he longs for (Job 6:8); and what is that? One would think it should be, "That it would please God to deliver me, and restore me to my prosperity again;" no, That it would please God to destroy me, Job 6:9. "As once he let loose his hand to make me poor, and then to make me sick, let him loose it once more to put an end to my life. Let him give the fatal stroke; it shall be to me the coup de grace--the stroke of favour," as, in France, they call the last blow which dispatches those that are broken on the wheel.

There was a time when destruction from the Almighty was a terror to Job (Job 31:23), yet now he courts the destruction of the flesh, but in hopes that the spirit should be saved in

the day of the Lord Jesus. Observe, Though Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life, only he begged that it would please God to destroy him. Seneca's morals, which recommend self-murder as the lawful redress of insupportable grievances, were not then known, nor will ever be entertained by any that have the least regard to the law of God and nature. How uneasy soever the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must by no means break prison, but wait for a fair discharge.

II. He puts this desire into a prayer, that God would grant him this request, that it would please God to do this for him. It was his sin so passionately to desire the hastening of his own death, and offering up that desire to God made it no better; nay, what looked ill in his wish looked worse in his prayer, for we ought not to ask any thing of God but what we can ask in faith, and we cannot ask any thing in faith but what is agreeable to the will of God. Passionate prayers are the worst of passionate expressions, for we should lift up pure hands without wrath.

III. He promises himself effectual relief, and the redress of all his grievances, by the stroke of death (Job 6:10): "Then should I yet have comfort, which now I have not, nor ever expect till then."

See, 1 The vanity of human life; so uncertain a good is it that it often proves men's greatest burden and nothing is so desirable as to get clear of it. Let grace make us willing to part with it whenever God calls; for it may so happen that even sense may make us desirous to part with it before he calls.

2 The hope which the righteous have in their death. If Job had not had a good conscience, he could not have spoken with this assurance of comfort on the other side death,

which turns the tables between the rich man and Lazarus. Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

IV. He challenges death to do its worst. If he could not die without the dreadful prefaces of bitter pains and agonies, and strong convulsions, if he must be racked before he be executed, yet, in prospect of dying at last, he would make nothing of dying pangs: "I would harden myself in sorrow, would open my breast to receive death's darts, and not shrink from them. Let him not spare; I desire no mitigation of that pain which will put a happy period to all my pains. Rather than not die, let me die so as to feel myself die."

These are passionate words, which might better have been spared. We should soften ourselves in sorrow, that we may receive the good impressions of it, and by the sadness of the countenance our hearts, being made tender, may be made better; but, if we harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in his controversy; for when he judgeth he will overcome. It is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, Let him not spare; for are we stronger than he? 1Co 10:22. We are much indebted to sparing mercy; it is bad indeed with us when we are weary of that. Let us rather say with David, O spare me a little.

V. He grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience for him that he had been faithful and firm to his profession of religion, and in some degree useful and serviceable to the glory of God in his generation: I have not concealed the words of the Holy One. Observe,

1. Job had the words of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were at that time blessed with divine revelation.

2. It was his comfort that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain.

(1.) He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in every thing to guide and govern him. He had not stifled his convictions, imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, nor done any thing to hinder the digestion of this spiritual food and the operation of this spiritual physic. Let us never conceal God's word from ourselves, but always receive it in the light of it.

(2.) He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready, on all occasions, to communicate his knowledge for the good of others, was never ashamed nor afraid to own the word of God to be his rule, nor remiss in his endeavours to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Note Those, and those only, may promise themselves comfort in death who are good, and do good, while they live.

9 Even that it would please God to destroy me;
that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!
10 Then should I yet have comfort;
yea, I would harden myself in sorrow:
let him not spare;

VI. He justifies himself, in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, Job 6:11,12. Eliphaz, in the close of his discourse, had put him in hopes that he should yet see a good issue of his troubles; but poor Job puts these cordials away from him, refuses to be comforted, abandons himself to despair, and very ingeniously, yet perversely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he here intimates,

1. That he had no reason to expect any such thing: "What is my strength, that I should hope? You see how I am weakened and brought low, how unable I am to grapple

with my distempers, and therefore what reason have I to hope that I should out-live them, and see better days? Is my strength the strength of stones? Are my muscles brass and my sinews steel? No, they are not, and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the load. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper, I might hope to look through it; but, alas! I have not. The weakening of my strength in the way will certainly be the shortening of my days," Ps 102:23. Note, All things considered, we have no reason to reckon upon the long continuance of life in this world. What is our strength? It is depending strength. We have no more strength than God gives us; for in him we live and move. It is decaying strength; we are daily spending the stock, and by degrees it will be exhausted. It is disproportionable to the encounters we may meet with; what is our strength to be depended upon, when two or three days' sickness will make us weak as water? Instead of expecting a long life, we have reason to wonder that we have lived hitherto and to feel that we are hastening off apace.

2. That he had no reason to desire any such thing: "What is my end, that I should desire to prolong my life? What comfort can I promise myself in life, comparable to the comfort I promise myself in death?"

Note, Those who, through grace, are ready for another world, cannot see much to invite their stay in this world, or to make them fond of it. That, if it be God's will, we may do him more service and may get to be fitter and riper for heaven, is an end for which we may wish the prolonging of life, in subservience to our chief end; but, otherwise, what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? The longer life is the more grievous will its burdens be (Ec 12:1), and the longer life is the less pleasant will be its delights, 2Sa 19:34,35. We have already seen the best of

this world, but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it.

VII. He obviates the suspicion of his being delirious (Job 6:13): Is not my help in me? that is, "Have I not the use of my reason, with which, I thank God, I can help myself, though you do not help me? Do you think wisdom is driven quite from me, and that I am gone distracted? No, I am not mad, most noble Eliphaz, but speak the words of truth and soberness." Note, Those who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times. Sat lucis intus--They have light within.

for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.

11 What *is* my strength, that I should hope?
And what *is* mine end, that I should prolong my life?

12 *Is* my strength the strength of stones?
Or *is* my flesh of brass?

13 *Is* not my help in me?
And is wisdom driven quite from me?

14 To him that is afflicted pity *should be showed* from his friend;
but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.

Eliphaz had been very severe in his censures of Job; and his companions, though as yet they had said little, yet had intimated their concurrence with him. Their unkindness therein poor Job here complains of, as an aggravation of his calamity and a further excuse of his desire to die; for what satisfaction could he ever expect in this world when those that should have been his comforters thus proved his tormentors?

I. He shows what reason he had to expect kindness from them. His expectation was grounded upon the common principles of humanity (Job 6:14): "To him that is afflicted, and that is wasting and melting under his affliction, pity should be shown from his friend; and he that does not show that pity forsakes the fear of the Almighty."

Note, 1. Compassion is a debt owing to those that are in affliction. The least which those that are at ease can do for those that are pained and in anguish is to pity them,--to manifest the sincerity of a tender concern for them, and to sympathize with them,--to take cognizance of their case, enquire into their grievances, hear their complaints, and mingle their tears with theirs,--to comfort them, and to do all they can to help and relieve them: this well becomes the members of the same body, who should feel for the grievances of their fellow-members, not knowing how soon the same may be their own.

2. Inhumanity is impiety and irreligion. He that withholds compassion from his friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty. So the Chaldee. How dwells the love of God in that man? 1Jo 3:17. Surely those have no fear of the rod of God upon themselves who have no compassion for those that feel the smart of it. See Jam 1:27. 3. Troubles are the trials of friendship. When a man is afflicted he will see who are his friends indeed and who are but pretenders; for a brother is born for adversity, Pr 17:17,18:24.

II. He shows how wretchedly he was disappointed in his expectations from them (Job 6:15): "My brethren, who should have helped me, have dealt deceitfully as a brook." They came by appointment, with a great deal of ceremony, to mourn with him and to comfort him (Job 2:11); and some extraordinary things were expected from such wise, learned, knowing men, and Job's particular friends. None questioned but that the drift of their discourses would be to comfort Job with the remembrance of his former piety, the assurance of God's favour to him, and the prospect of a glorious issue; but, instead of this, they most barbarously fall upon him with their reproaches and censures, condemn him as a hypocrite, insult over his calamities, and pour

vinegar, instead of oil, into his wounds, and thus they deal deceitfully with him.

Note, It is fraud and deceit not only to violate our engagements to our friends, but to frustrate their just expectations from us, especially the expectations we have raised. Note, further, It is our wisdom to cease from man. We cannot expect too little from the creature nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to deal deceitfully (Jer 9:4,5,Mic 7:5); let us therefore put our confidence in the rock of ages, not in broken reeds-in the fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will out-do our hopes as much as men come short of them. This disappointment which Job met with he here illustrates by the failing of brooks in summer.

1 The similitude is very elegant, Job 6:15-20.

(1.) Their pretensions are fitly compared to the great show which the brooks make when they are swollen with the waters of a land flood, by the melting of the ice and snow, which make them blackish or muddy, Job 6:16.

(2.) His expectations from them, which their coming so solemnly to comfort him had raised, he compares to the expectation which the weary thirsty travellers have of finding water in the summer where they have often seen it in great abundance in the winter, Job 6:19. The troops of Tema and Sheba, the caravans of the merchants of those countries, whose road lay through the deserts of Arabia, looked and waited for supply of water from those brooks. "Hard by here," says one, "A little further," says another, "when I last travelled this way, there was water enough; we shall have that to refresh us." Where we have met with relief or comfort we are apt to expect it again; and yet it does not follow; for,

(3.) The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizes the poor travellers when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough. Every one will applaud and admire those that are full and in prosperity. But in the heat of summer, when they needed water, then it failed them; it was consumed (Job 6:17); it was turned aside, Job 6:18. When those who are rich and high are sunk and impoverished, and stand in need of comfort, then those who before gathered about them stand aloof from them, those who before commended them are forward to run them down. Thus those who raise their expectations high from the creature will find it fail them when it should help them; whereas those who make God their confidence have help in the time of need, Heb 4:16.

Those who make gold their hope will sooner or later be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it (Eze 7:19); and the greater their confidence was the greater their shame will be: They were confounded because they had hoped, Job 6:20. We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes: the reeds break under us because we lean upon them. If we build a house upon the sand, we shall certainly be confounded, for it will fall in the storm, and we must thank ourselves for being such fools as to expect it would stand. We are not deceived unless we deceive ourselves.

2 The application is very close (Job 6:21): For now you are nothing. They seemed to be somewhat, but in conference they added nothing to him. Allude to Ga 2:6. He was never the wiser, never the better, for the visit they made him. Note, Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we may put, in creatures, how great soever they may seem and how dear soever they may be to us, one time or other we shall say of them, Now you are nothing. When Job was in prosperity his friends were something to him, he took complacency in them and their society; but "Now you

are nothing, now I can find no comfort but in God." It were well for us if we had always such convictions of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have sometimes had, or shall have on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience: "Now you are nothing.

You are not what you have been, what you should be, what you pretend to be, what I thought you would have been; for you see my casting down and are afraid. When you saw me in my elevation you caressed me; but now that you see me in my dejection you are shy of me, are afraid of showing yourselves kind, lest I should thereby be emboldened to beg something of you, or to borrow" (compare Job 6:22); "you are afraid lest, if you own me, you should be obliged to keep me." Perhaps they were afraid of catching his distemper or of coming within smell of the noisomeness of it. It is not good, either out of pride or niceness, for love of our purses or of our bodies, to be shy of those who are in distress and afraid of coming near them. Their case may soon be our own.

15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook,
and as the stream of brooks they pass away;
16 which are blackish by reason of the ice,
and wherein the snow is hid:
17 what time they wax warm, they vanish:
when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.
18 The paths of their way are turned aside;
they go to nothing, and perish.
19 The troops of Tema looked,
the companies of Sheba waited for them.
20 They were confounded because they had hoped;
they came thither, and were ashamed.
21 For now ye are nothing;
ye see *my* casting down, and are afraid.
22 Did I say, Bring unto me?
or, Give a reward for me of your substance?

Poor Job goes on here to upbraid his friends with their unkindness and the hard usage they gave him. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him and to condemn them. If they would but think impartially, and speak as they thought, they could not but own,

I. That, though he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burdensome to his friends. Those that are so, whose troubles serve them to beg by, are commonly less pitied than the silent poor. Job would be glad to see his friends, but he did not say, Bring unto me (Job 6:22), or, Deliver me, Job 6:23. He did not desire to put them to any expense, did not urge his friends either,

1. To make a collection for him, to set him up again in the world. Though he could plead that his losses came upon him by the hand of God and not by any fault or folly of his own,--that he was utterly ruined and impoverished,--that he had lived in good condition, and that when he had wherewithal he was charitable and ready to help those that were in distress,--that his friends were rich, and able to help him, yet he did not say, Give me of your substance. Note, A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Or,

2. To raise the country for him, to help him to recover his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to make reprisals upon them: "Did I send for you to deliver me out of the hand of the mighty? No, I never expected you should either expose yourselves to any danger or put yourselves to any charge upon my account. I will rather sit down content under my affliction, and make the best of it, than sponge upon my friends." St. Paul worked with his hands, that he might not be burdensome to any. Job's not asking their help did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it and it was in the power of their hands to give

it; but it much aggravated their unkindness when he desired no more from them than a good look, and a good word, and yet could not obtain them. It often happens that from man, even when we expect little, we have less, but from God, even when we expect much, we have more, Eph 3:20.

II. That, though he differed in opinion from them, yet he was not obstinate, but ready to yield to conviction, and to strike sail to truth as soon as ever it was made to appear to him that he was in an error (Job 6:24,25): "If, instead of invidious reflections and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, which shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge my error and own myself in a fault: Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; for I have often found, with pleasure and wonder, how forcible right words are. But the method you take will never make proselytes: What doth your arguing reprove? Your hypothesis is false, your surmises are groundless, your management is weak, and your application peevish and uncharitable."

Note, 1. Fair reasoning has a commanding power, and it is a wonder if men are not conquered by it; but railing and foul language are impotent and foolish, and it is no wonder if men are exasperated and hardened by them.

2. It is the undoubted character of every honest man that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred; and he will acknowledge that right words, when they appear to him to be so, though contrary to his former sentiments, are both forcible and acceptable.

III. That, though he had been indeed in a fault, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage (Job 6:26,27): "Do you imagine, or contrive with a great deal of art" (for so the word signifies), "to reprove words, some passionate

expressions of mine in this desperate condition, as if they were certain indications of reigning impiety and atheism? A little candour and charity would have served to excuse them, and to put a better construction upon them. Shall a man's spiritual state be judged of by some rash and hasty words, which a surprising trouble extorts from him? Is it fair, is it kind, is it just, to criticize in such a case? Would you yourselves be served thus?" Two things aggravated their unkind treatment of him:--

1. That they took advantage of his weakness and the helpless condition he was in: You overwhelm the fatherless, a proverbial expression, denoting that which is most barbarous and inhuman. "The fatherless cannot secure themselves from insults, which emboldens men of base and sordid spirits to insult them and trample upon them; and you do so by me." Job, being a childless father, thought himself as much exposed to injury as a fatherless child (Ps 127:5) and had reason to be offended with those who therefore triumphed over him. Let those who overwhelm and overpower such as upon any account may be looked upon as fatherless know that therein they not only put off the compassions of man, but fight against the compassions of God, who is, and will be, a Father of the fatherless and a helper of the helpless.

2. That they made a pretence of kindness: "You dig a pit for your friend; not only you are unkind to me, who am your friend, but, under colour of friendship, you ensnare me." When they came to see and sit with him he thought he might speak his mind freely to them, and that the more bitter his complaints to them were the more they would endeavour to comfort him. This made him take a greater liberty than otherwise he would have done. David, though he smothered his resentments when the wicked were before him, would probably have given vent to them if none had been by but friends, Ps 39:1. But this freedom of speech, which their

professions of concern for him made him use, had exposed him to their censures, and so they might be said to dig a pit for him. Thus, when our hearts are hot within us, what is ill done we are apt to misrepresent as if done designedly.

IV. That, though he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet in the main he was in the right, and that his afflictions, though very extraordinary, did not prove him to be a hypocrite or a wicked man. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go. For the evincing of it he here appeals,

1. To what they saw in him (Job 6:28): "Be content, and look upon me; what do you see in me that bespeaks me either a madman or a wicked man? Nay, look in my face, and you may discern there the indications of a patient and submissive spirit, for all this. Let the show of my countenance witness for me that, though I have cursed my day, I do not curse my God." Or rather, "Look upon my ulcers and sore boils, and by them it will be evident to you that I do not lie," that is, "that I do not complain without cause. Let your own eyes convince you that my condition is very sad, and that I do not quarrel with God by making it worse than it is."

2. To what they heard from him, Job 6:30. "You hear what I have to say: Is there iniquity in my tongue? that iniquity that you charge me with? Have I blasphemed God or renounced him? Are not my present arguings right? Do not you perceive, by what I say, that I can discern perverse things? I can discover your fallacies and mistakes, and, if I were myself in an error, I could perceive it. Whatever you think of me, I know what I say."

3. To their own second and sober thoughts (Job 6:29): "Return, I pray you, consider the thing over again without prejudice and partiality, and let not the result be iniquity, let

it not be an unrighteous sentence; and you will find my righteousness is in it," that is, "I am in the right in this matter; and, though I cannot keep my temper as I should, I keep my integrity, and have not said, nor done, nor suffered, any thing which will prove me other than an honest man." A just cause desires nothing more than a just hearing, and if need be a re-hearing.

23 or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand?
or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?
24 Teach me, and I will hold my tongue:
and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.
25 How forcible are right words!
But what doth your arguing reprove?
26 Do ye imagine to reprove words,
and the speeches of one that is desperate, *which are* as wind?
27 Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless,
and ye dig *a pit* for your friend.
28 Now therefore be content, look upon me;
for *it is* evident unto you if I lie.
29 Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity;
yea, return again, my righteousness *is* in it.
30 Is there iniquity in my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern perverse things?

Job-7

Job Remonstrates with God

1 *Is there* not an appointed time to man upon earth?
Are not his days also like the days of a hireling?

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for the termination of life, which would be the termination of his miseries? To enforce this reason he argues,

I. From the general condition of man upon earth (Job 7:1): "He is of few days, and full of trouble. Every man must die

shortly, and every man has some reason (more or less) to desire to die shortly; and therefore why should you impute it to me as so heinous a crime that I wish to die shortly?" Or thus: "Pray mistake not my desires of death, as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated: no, I know very well that that is fixed; only in such language as this I take the liberty to express my present uneasiness: Is there not an appointed time (a warfare, so the word is) to man upon earth? and are not his days here like the days of a hireling?"

Observe, 1. Man's present place. He is upon earth, which God has given to the children of men, Ps 115:16. This bespeaks man's meanness and inferiority. How much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions is he situated! It also bespeaks God's mercy to him. He is yet upon the earth, not under it; on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth; but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbered.

2. His continuance in that place. Is there not a time appointed for his abode here? Yes, certainly there is, and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made, even by him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by him in whose hand our times are. We are not to think that we are governed by the blind fortune of the Epicureans, but by the wise, holy, and sovereign counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance. Man's life is a warfare, and as the days of a hireling. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world,

(1.) As soldiers, exposed to hardship and in the midst of enemies; we must serve and be under command; and, when

our warfare is accomplished, we must be disbanded, dismissed with either shame or honour, according to what we have done in the body.

(2.) As day-labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day and must make up their account at night.

II. From his own condition at this time. He had as much reason, he thought, to wish for death, as a poor servant or hireling that is tired with his work has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny and go to rest, Job 7:2 The darkness of the night is as welcome to the labourer as the light of the morning is to the watchman, Ps 130:6. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder that they desire it. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, Ec 5:12. No pleasure more grateful, more relishing, to the luxurious than rest to the laborious; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rent-days as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the application is concise and somewhat obscure, but we must supply a word or two, and then it is easy: exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition. "As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so and for the same reason I earnestly desire death; for I am made to possess, &c." Hear his complaint.

1. His days were useless, and had been so a great while. He was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burden to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose. Et vitæ partem non attigit ullam--He could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account. This he calls possessing months of vanity, Job 7:3. It very much increases the affliction of sickness and age, to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it that they are days in which he has no

pleasure as that they are days in which he does not good; on that account they are months of vanity. But when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quietly for him, it is all one; we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, Job 7:3,4. The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day, not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers: if a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night, it helps nature, and it is hoped that he will do well, Joh 11:12. However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs, that afflict us; it is the parenthesis of our sorrows. But poor Job could not gain this relief.

(1.) His nights were wearisome, and, instead of taking any rest, he did but tire himself more with tossing to and fro until morning. Those that are in great uneasiness, through pain of body or anguish of mind, think by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease; but, while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose; it is but a resemblance of a fretful discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it, and, when he lay down, to say, When will the night be gone?

(2.) These wearisome nights were appointed to him. God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as these. Whatever is at any time grievous to us, it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in the event, not only as unavoidable because appointed, but as therefore designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights we must see them also appointed to us and be thankful for them; many better than we have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, Job 7:5. His sores bred worms, the scabs were like clods of dust, and his skin was broken; so evil was the disease which cleaved fast to him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them or be proud of them; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption: as fond as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loathe them and long to get rid of them.

4. His life was hastening apace towards a period, Job 7:6. He thought he had no reason to expect a long life, for he found himself declining fast (Job 7:6): My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, that is, "My time is now but short, and there are but a few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out." Natural motions are more swift near the centre. Job thought his days ran swiftly because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end; he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity.

It is applicable to man's life in general. Our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until at length it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried, and then we cut off, like a weaver, our life, Isa 38:12. Time hastens on apace; the motion of it cannot be stopped, and, when it is past, it cannot be recalled. While we are living, as we are sowing (Ga 6:8), so we are weaving. Every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it. Many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, Job 8:14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed and every man shall reap as he sowed and wear as he wove.

2 As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow,
and as a hireling looketh for *the reward of* his work;

3 so am I made to possess months of vanity,
and wearisome nights are appointed to me.
4 When I lie down, I say,
When shall I arise, and the night be gone?
And I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day.
5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust;
my skin is broken, and become loathsome.
6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
and are spent without hope.
7 O remember that my life *is* wind:
mine eye shall no more see good.

Job, observing perhaps that his friends, though they would not interrupt him in his discourse, yet began to grow weary, and not to heed much what he said, here turns to God, and speaks to him. If men will not hear us, God will; if men cannot help us, he can; for his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. Yet we must not go to school to Job here to learn how to speak to God; for, it must be confessed, there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here says. But, if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or to end him. He here represents himself to God,

I. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us, when we are sick, to think and speak of death, for sickness is sent on purpose to put us in mind of it; and, if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may in faith put God in mind of it, as Job does here (Job 7:7): O remember that my life is wind. He recommends himself to God as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak frail creature, his abode in this world short and uncertain, his removal out of it sure and speedy, and his return to it again impossible and never to be expected--that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are, noisy perhaps and blustering, like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and, when gone, past recall. God had compassion on

Israel, remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again, Ps 78:38,39. Observe,

1 The pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as these concerning the shortness and vanity of life, the unavoidableness and irrecoverableness of death, then do us good when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then,

(1.) That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. The eye of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which most men set their hearts upon; for their cry is, Who will make us to see good? Ps 4:6. If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hidden from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us therefore live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen.

(2.) That we must then remove to an invisible world: The eye of him that hath here seen me shall see me no more there. It is hades--an unseen state, Job 7:8. Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness (Ps 88:18), and will shortly remove us out of their sight; when we go hence we shall be seen no more (Ps 39:13), but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

(3.) That God can easily, and in a moment, put an end to our lives, and send us to another world (Job 7:8): "Thy eyes are upon me and I am not; thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou pleasest."
Shouldst thou, displeased, give me a frowning look, I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck.--Sir R. BLACKMORE.

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but looks on the earth and it trembles, Ps 14:29,30.

(4.) That, when we are once removed to another world, we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but vestigia nulla retrorsum--there is no repassing. "Therefore, Lord, kindly ease me by death, for that will be a perpetual ease. I shall return no more to the calamities of this life." When we are dead we are gone, to return no more,

[1.] From our house under ground (Job 7:9): He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more until the general resurrection, shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done: an error there is past retrieve. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud. It is consumed and vanisheth away, is resolved into air and never knits again. Other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns: so a new generation of the children of men is raised up, but the former generation is quite consumed and vanishes away. When we see a cloud which looks great, as if it would eclipse the sun and drawn the earth, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, let us say, "Just such a thing is the life of man; it is a vapour that appears for a little while and then vanishes away."

[2.] To return no more to our house above ground (Job 7:10): He shall return no more to his house, to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it. Others will take possession, and keep it till they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired that Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burdens, and sorrows of their house; nor damned sinners to the gaieties and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more acquaintance with them, nor be any more under their

influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die, for this will no more own us.

2 The passionate inference he draws from it. From these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion that this (Job 7:11): Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak; I will complain. Holy David, when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it (Ps 39:3, I was dumb, and opened not my mouth); but Job, finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint as if he had been to make his last will and testament or as if he could not die in peace until he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw we should spend them in the holy gracious breathings of faith and prayer, not in the noisome noxious breathings of sin and corruption. Better die praying and praising than die complaining and quarrelling.

II. As a distempered man, sorely and grievously distempered both in body and mind. In this part of his representation is he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him and laid upon him more than was meet: "Am I a sea, or a whale (Job 7:12), a raging sea, that must be kept within bounds, to check its proud waves, or an unruly whale, that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong that there needs so much ado to hold me? so boisterous that no less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me and keep me within compass?" We are very apt, when we are in affliction, to complain of God and his providence, as if he laid more restraints upon us that there is occasion for; whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is need, nor more than the necessity demands.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, Job 7:13,14. There we promise ourselves some repose, when we are fatigued with labour, pain, or traveling: "My bed shall

comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint. Sleep will for a time give me some relief;" it usually does so; it is appointed for that end; many a time it has eased us, and we have awaked refreshed, and with new vigour. When it is so we have great reason to be thankful; but it was not so with poor Job: his bed, instead of comforting him, terrified him; and his couch, instead of easing his complaint, added to it; for if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with frightful dreams, and when those awaked him still he was haunted with dreadful apparitions. This was it that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was (Job 7:4): When shall I arise? Note, God can, when he pleases, meet us with terror even where we promise ourselves ease and repose; nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves, and, as we have often contracted guilt by the rovings of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise, by the power of our own imagination, create us much grief, and so make that our punishment which has often been our sin.

In Job's dreams, though they might partly arise from his distemper (in fevers, or small pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet), yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand, for he delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy; but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this (thou scarest me), and mistook Satan's representations for the terror of God setting themselves in array against him. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin nor torment us with fear, that he who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, may keep us when we slumber and sleep, that the devil may not then do us a mischief, either as an insinuating serpent or as a roaring lion, and to bless God if we lie down and our sleep is sweet and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave, that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, Job 7:15,16.

(1.) He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it: "I loathe it; I have had enough of it. I would not live always, not only not live always in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live always in the most easy and prosperous condition, to be continually in danger of being thus reduced. My days are vanity at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs; and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty." Note, A good man would not (if he might) life always in this world, no, not though it smile upon him, because it is a world of sin and temptation and he has a better world in prospect.

(2.) He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it: his soul (his judgment, he thought, but really it was his passion) chose strangling and death rather than life; any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless this was Job's infirmity; for though a good man would not wish to live always in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleases God, not choose death rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God and getting ready for heaven.

8 The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no *more:*
thine eyes *are* upon me, and I *am* not.
9 *As* the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away;
so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no *more.*
10 He shall return no more to his house,
neither shall his place know him any more.
11 Therefore I will not refrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12 *Am* I a sea, or a whale,
that thou settest a watch over me?
13 When I say, My bed shall comfort me,
my couch shall ease my complaint;

14 then thou scarest me with dreams,
and terrifiest me through visions:
15 so that my soul chooseth strangling,
and death rather than my life.
16 I loathe *it;* I would not live alway:
let me alone; for my days *are* vanity.

Job here reasons with God,

I. Concerning his dealings with man in general (Job 7:17,18): What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? This may be looked upon either,

1. As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself in contending with man. "Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors so far as to reprove and correct their follies and indecencies; why then does God magnify man, by visiting him, and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? Why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, return as duly and constantly as the morning light, and try, every moment, what he can bear?" We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. Or,

2. As a pious admiration of the condescensions of divine grace, like that, Ps 8:4,144:3. He owns God's favour to man in general, even when he complains of his own particular troubles. "What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak creature, that thou, the great and glorious God, shouldst deal with him as thou dost? What is man,"

(1.) "That thou shouldst put such honour upon him, shouldst magnify him, by taking him into covenant and communion with thyself?"

(2.) "That thou shouldst concern thyself so much about him, shouldst set thy heart upon him, as dear to thee, and one that thou hast a kindness for?"

(3.) "That thou shouldst visit him with thy compassions every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning to help them?"

(4.) "That thou shouldst try him, shouldst feel his pulse and observe his looks, every moment, as in care about him and jealous over him?" That such a worm of the earth as man is should be the darling and favourite of heaven is what we have reason for ever to admire.

II. Concerning his dealings with him in particular. Observe,

1 The complaint he makes of his afflictions, which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of, in three expressions:--

(1.) That he was the butt to God's arrows: "Thou hast set me as a mark against thee," Job 7:20. "My case is singular, and none is shot at as I am."

(2.) That he was a burden to himself, ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight soever we take in ourselves God can, when he pleases, make us burdens to ourselves. What comfort can we take in ourselves if God appear against us as an enemy and we have not comfort in him.

(3.) That he had no intermission of his griefs (Job 7:19): "How long will it be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least for so long

as that I may swallow down my spittle?" It should seem, Job's distemper lay much in his throat, and almost choked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle. He complains (Job 30:18) that it bound him about like the collar of his coat. "Lord," says he, "wilt not thou give me some respite, some breathing time?" Job 9:18.

2 The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are the more they will complain of it.

(1.) He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God: I have sinned. God had said of him that he was a perfect and an upright man; yet he says of himself, I have sinned. Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent are accepted, through a Mediator, as evangelically perfect. Job maintained, against his friends, that he was not a hypocrite, not a wicked man; and yet he owned to his God that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it does not therefore follow that we are innocent. The best must acknowledge, before God, that they have sinned. His calling God the observer, or preserver, of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin: "Though God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet I have sinned against him." When we are in affliction it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

(2.) He seriously enquires how he may make his peace with God: "What shall I do unto thee, having done so much against thee?" Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? We cannot but conclude that something must be done to prevent the fatal consequences of it. The matter must not rest as it is, but some course must be taken to undo what has been ill done. And, if we are truly

sensible of the danger we have run ourselves into, we shall be willing to do any thing, to take a pardon upon any terms; and therefore shall be inquisitive as to what we shall do (Mic 6:6,7), what we shall do to God, not to satisfy the demands of his justice (that is done only by the Mediator), but to qualify ourselves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenour of the gospel-covenant. In making this enquiry it is good to eye God as the preserver or Saviour of men, not their destroyer. In our repentance we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should return and live. "Thou art the Saviour of men; be my Saviour, for I cast myself upon thy mercy."

(3.) He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, Job 7:21. The heat of his spirit, as, on the one hand, it made his complaints the more bitter, so, on the other hand, it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here: "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression? Art thou not a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness?" Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, Job 6:4. "Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions," Mt 9:2,Isa 33:24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us. Wherever God removes the guilt of sin he breaks the power of sin.

(4.) To enforce his prayer for pardon he pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly: For now shall I sleep in the dust. Death will lay us in the dust, will lay us to sleep there, and perhaps presently, now in a little time. Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from

his eyes (Job 7:3,4,13,14); but those who cannot sleep on a bed of down will shortly sleep in a bed of dust, and not be scared with dreams nor tossed to and fro: "Thou shalt seek me in the morning, to show me favour, but I shall not be; it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever." Note, The consideration of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardoned and our iniquity taken away.

17 What *is* man, that thou shouldest magnify him?
and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?
18 and *that* thou shouldest visit him every morning,
and try him every moment?
19 How long wilt thou not depart from me,
nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?
20 I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee,
O thou preserver of men?
Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee,
so that I am a burden to myself?
21 And why dost thou not pardon my transgression,
and take away mine iniquity?
For now shall I sleep in the dust;
and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I *shall* not *be.*

Job-8

Bildad Affirms God's Justice

1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

Here, I. Bildad reproves Job for what he had said (Job 8:2), checks his passion, but perhaps (as is too common) with greater passion. We thought Job spoke a great deal of good sense and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side; but Bildad, like an eager angry disputant, turns it all off with this, How long wilt thou speak these things? taking it for granted that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertinent.

Thus (as Caryl observes) reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a strong wind. Job had excused himself with this, that his speeches were but as wind (Job 6:26), and therefore they should not make such ado about them: "Yea, but" (says Bildad) "they are as strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them."

II. He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time (for Job did not condemn God, as he would have it thought he did), or he might at least have done it without reflecting upon Job's children, as he does here. Could he not be an advocate for God but he must be an accuser of the brethren?

1. He is right in general, that God doth not pervert judgment, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, Job 8:3. Far be it from him that he should and from us that we should suspect him. He never oppresses the innocent, nor lays a greater load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the Judge; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Ge 18:25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, how should he judge the world? Ro 3:5,6. He is Almighty, Shaddai--all sufficient. Men pervert justice sometimes for fear of the power of others (but God is Almighty, and stands in awe of none), sometimes to obtain the favour of others; but God is all-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man's weakness and impotency that he often is unjust; it is God's omnipotence that he cannot be so.

2. Yet he is not fair and candid in the application. He takes it for granted that Job's children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of

some notorious wickedness, and that the unhappy circumstances of their death were sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the east, Job 8:4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were cast-aways or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and, in our judgment of another's case (unless the contrary appears), we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Saviour directs, Lu 13:2-4. Here Bildad missed it.

III. He put Job in hope that, if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles: "Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression (they have died in their own sin), yet if thou be pure and upright thyself, and as an evidence of that wilt now seek unto God and submit to him, all shall be well yet," Job 8:5-7. This may be taken two ways, either,

1. As designed to prove Job a hypocrite and a wicked man, though not by the greatness, yet the by the continuance, of his afflictions. "When thou wast impoverished, and thy children were killed, if thou hadst been pure and upright, and approved thyself so in the trial, God would before now have returned in mercy to thee and comforted thee according to the time of thy affliction; but, because he does not so, we have reason to conclude thou art not so pure and upright as thou pretendest to be. If thou hadst conducted thyself well under the former affliction, thou wouldst not have been struck with the latter." Herein Bildad was not in the right; for a good man may be afflicted for his trial, not only very sorely, but very long, and yet, if for life, it is in

comparison with eternity but for a moment. But, since Bildad put it to this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and proved his servant Job an honest man by Bildad's own argument; for, soon after, he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

2. As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run himself into despair, and give up all for gone; there might yet be hope if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him.

(1.) He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it, the same that Eliphaz had given him (Job 5:8), to seek unto God, and that betimes (that is, speedily and seriously), and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He advises him not to complain, but to petition, to make his supplication to the Almighty with humility and faith, and to see that there was (what he feared had hitherto been wanting) sincerity in his heart ("thou must be pure and upright") and honesty in his house--"that must be the habitation of thy righteousness, and not filled with ill-gotten goods, else God will not hear thy prayers," Ps 66:18. It is only the prayer of the upright that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, Pr 15:8.

(2.) He gives him good hopes that he shall yet again see good days, secretly suspecting, however, that he was not qualified to see them. He assures him that, if he would be early in seeking God, God would awake for his relief, would remember him and return to him, though now he seemed to forget him and forsake him--that if his habitation were righteous it should be prosperity. When we return to God in a way of duty we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left to being the world with again that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done; no,

"Though thy beginning should be ever so small, a little meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse, God's blessing shall multiply that to a great increase." This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts, not per saltum--as by a bound, but per gradum--step by step. The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noonday, a grain of mustard seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

2 How long wilt thou speak these *things?*
And *how long shall* the words of thy mouth *be like* a strong wind?
3 Doth God pervert judgment?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?
4 If thy children have sinned against him,
and he have cast them away for their transgression;
5 if thou wouldest seek unto God betimes,
and make thy supplication to the Almighty;
6 if thou *wert* pure and upright;
surely now he would awake for thee,
and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.
7 Though thy beginning was small,
yet thy latter end should greatly increase.
8 For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age,
and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers:

Bildad here discourses very well on the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not be so bold as to say with Eliphaz that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus (Job 4:7); yet he takes it for granted that God, in the course of his providence, does ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world, and that, by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove that all who are thus ruined must be concluded to have been hypocrites he will not say, but rather suspect, and thinks the application is easy.

I. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity and the concurring sentiment and observation of all wise and good men; and an undoubted truth it is, if we take in the other world, that, if not in this life, yet in the life to come, hypocrites will be deprived of all their trusts and all their triumphs: whether Bildad so meant or no, we must so take it. Let us observe the method of his proof, Job 8:8-10.

1. He insists not on his own judgment and that of his companions: We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, Job 8:9. He perceived that Job had no opinion of their abilities, but thought they knew little. "We will own," says Bildad, "that we know nothing, are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but of yesterday in comparison, and our days upon earth are short and transient, and hastening away as a shadow. And hence,"

(1.) "We are not so near the fountain-head of divine revelation" (which then for aught that appears, was conveyed by tradition) "as the former age was; and therefore we must enquire what they said and recount what we have been told of their sentiments." Blessed be God, now that we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not enquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers; for, though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as nigh to us as it was to them (Ro 10:8), and it is the more sure word of prophecy, to which we must take heed. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them understand more than the ancients, Ps 119:99,100.

(2.) "We do not live so long as those of the former age did, to make observations upon the methods of divine providence, and therefore cannot be such competent judges as they in a cause of this nature." Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our

knowledge, and so are the frailty and weakness of our bodies. Vita brevis, ars longa--life is short, the progress of art boundless.

2. He refers to the testimony of the ancients and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. "Do thou enquire of the former age, and let them tell thee, not only their own judgment in this matter, but the judgment also of their fathers, Job 8:8. They will teach thee, and inform thee (Job 8:10), that all along, in their time, the judgments of God followed wicked men. This they will utter out of their hearts, that is, as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with and desirous to acquaint and affect others with."

Note, (1.) For the right understanding of divine Providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most ancient, infallibly true, and written designedly for our learning.

(2.) Those that would fetch knowledge from the former ages must search diligently, prepare for the search, and take pains for the search.

(3.) Those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners that come from the hearts of the teachers. Those shall teach thee best that utter words out of their heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and divine things. The learned bishop Patrick suggests that Bildad being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah one of Abraham's sons by Keturah (Ge 25:2), in this appeal which he makes to history he has a particular respect to the rewards which the blessing of God secured to the posterity of faithful

Abraham (who hitherto, and long after, continued in his religion) and to the extirpation of those eastern people, neighbours to Job (in whose country they were settled), for their wickedness, whence he infers that it is God's usual way to prosper the just and root out the wicked, though for a while they may flourish.

II. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes.

1 The hopes and joys of the hypocrite are here compared to a rush or flag, Job 8:11-13.

(1.) It grows up out of the mire and water. The hypocrite cannot gain his hope without some false rotten ground or other out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, any more than the rush can grow without mire. He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his confidence. It is all but mire and water; and the hope that grows out of it is but rush and flag.

(2.) It may look green and gay for a while (the rush outgrows the grass), but it is light and hollow, and empty, and good for nothing. It is green for show, but of no use.

(3.) It withers presently, before any other herb, Job 8:12. Even while it is in its greenness it is dried away and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withering; even when it is green it is going. The grass is cut down and withers (Ps 90:6); but the rush is not cut down and yet withers, withers before it grows up (Ps 129:6): as it has no use, so it has no continuance. So are the paths of all that forget God (Job 8:13); they take the same way that the rush does, for the hypocrite's hope shall perish.

Note, [1.] Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of men's hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do searches the heart and requires truth there, that he is a Spirit and has his eye on our spirits; and hypocrites would have no hope if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torn and the lame.

[2.] The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves, and, though it may flourish for a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

2. They are here compared to a spider's web, or a spider's house (as it is in the margin), a cobweb, Job 8:14,15. The hope of the hypocrite,

(1.) Is woven out of his own bowels; it is the creature of his own fancy, and arises merely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider. A diligent Christian, like the laborious bee, fetches in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false hypothesis of his own concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself.

(2.) He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web; pleases himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, leans upon it, and holds it fast. It is said of the spider that she takes hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces, Pr 30:28. So does a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity; he prides himself in that house as his palace, fortifies himself in it as his castle, and

makes use of it as the spider of her web, to ensnare those he has a mind to prey upon. So does a formal professor; he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure of heaven, and cheats the world with his vain confidences.

(3.) It will easily and certainly be swept away, as the cobweb with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house. The prosperity of worldly people will fail them when they expect to find safety and happiness in it. They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands; and whose shall all those things be, which they have provided? or what the better they will be for them? The confidences of hypocrites will fail them. I tell you, I know you not. The house built on the sand will fall in the storm, when the builder most needs it and promised himself the benefit of it. When a wicked man dies his expectation perishes. The ground of his hopes will prove false; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope with which he buoyed himself up will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it.

3. The hypocrite is here compared to a flourishing and well-rooted tree, which, though it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down and its place no it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag; he thinks he has a better root. "We will allow him his conceit," says Bildad, "and give him all the advantage he can desire, and bring him in suddenly cut off." He is here represented as Nebuchadnezzar was in his own dream (Da 4:10) by a great tree.

(1.) See this tree fair and flourishing (Job 8:16) like a green bay-tree (Ps 37:35), green before the sun, it keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sun-beams, and his

branch shoots forth under the protection of his garden-wall and with the benefit of his garden-soil. See it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, for his roots are interwoven with the stones (Job 8:17); it grows in firm ground, not, as the rush, of mire and water. Thus does a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a high wall in his own conceit.

(2.) See this tree felled and forgotten notwithstanding, destroyed from his place (Job 8:18), and so entirely extirpated that there shall remain no sign or token where it grew. The very place say, I have not seen thee; and the standers by shall say the same. I sought him, but he could not be found, Ps 36:36. He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone of a sudden, and neither root nor branch is left him, Mal 4:1. This is the joy (that is, this is the end and conclusion) of the wicked man's way (Job 8:19); this is that which all his joy comes to. The way of the ungodly shall perish, Ps 1:6. His hope, he thought, would in the issue be turned into joy; but this is the issue, this is the joy. The harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow, Isa 17:11. This is the best of it; and what then is the worst of it? But shall he not leave a family behind him to enjoy what he has? No, out of the earth (not out of his roots) shall others grow, that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he labored. Others (that is, others of the same spirit and disposition) shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fall. The way of worldlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of those that approve their sayings, Ps 49:13.

9 (for we *are but of* yesterday, and know nothing,
because our days upon earth *are* a shadow.)
10 Shall not they teach thee, *and* tell thee,
and utter words out of their heart?
11 Can the rush grow up without mire?
Can the flag grow without water?

12 Whilst it *is* yet in his greenness, *and* not cut down,
it withereth before any *other* herb.
13 So *are* the paths of all that forget God;
and the hypocrite's hope shall perish:
14 whose hope shall be cut off,
and whose trust *shall be* a spider's web.
15 He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand:
he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.
16 He *is* green before the sun,
and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.
17 His roots are wrapped about the heap,
and seeth the place of stones.
18 If he destroy him from his place,
then *it* shall deny him, *saying*, I have not seen thee.
19 Behold, this *is* the joy of his way,
and out of the earth shall others grow.
20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man,
neither will he help the evildoers:

Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he has to say in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse, assuring him that as he was so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude that as he fared so he was.

1. On the one hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not cast him away, Job 8:20. Though now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and by degrees would turn his mourning into dancing (Ps 30:11) and comforts should flow in upon him so plentifully that his mouth should be filled with laughing, Job 8:21. So affecting should the happy change be, Ps 126:2. Those that loved him would rejoice with him; but those that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence, when they should see him restored to his former prosperity. Now it is true that God will not cast away an upright man; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever. It is true that, if not in this world, yet in

another, the mouth of the righteous shall be filled with rejoicing. Though their sun should set under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame when they see them crowned with honour. But it does not therefore follow that, if Job were not perfectly restore to his former prosperity, he would forfeit the character of a perfect man.

2. On the other hand, if he were a wicked man and an evil-doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses (Job 8:20), and his dwelling-place should come to nought, Job 8:22. And here also it is true that God will not help the evil-doers; they throw themselves out of his protection, and forfeit his favour. He will not take the ungodly by the hand (so it is in the margin), will not have fellowship and communion with them; for what communion can there be between light and darkness? He will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries, into which they have plunged themselves; they will then stretch out their hand to him for help, but it will be too late: he will not take them by the hand. Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.

It is true that the dwelling-place of the wicked, sooner or later, will come to nought. Those only who make God their dwelling-place are safe for ever, Ps 90:1,91:1. Those who make other things their refuge will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families. Yet to argue (as Bildad, I doubt, slyly does) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself at present seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and the present difficulties of Providence be

solved to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

21 till he fill thy mouth with laughing,
and thy lips with rejoicing.
22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame;
and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought.

Job-9

Job's Inability to Answer God

1 Then Job answered and said,

Bildad began with a rebuke to Job for talking so much, Job 8:2. Job makes no answer to that, though it would have been easy enough to retort it upon himself; but in what he next lays down as his principle, that God never perverts judgment, Job agrees with him: I know it is so of a truth, Job 9:2. Note, We should be ready to own how far we agree with those with whom we dispute, and should not slight, much less resist, a truth, though produced by an adversary and urged against us, but receive it in the light and love of it, though it may have been misapplied. "It is so of a truth, that wickedness brings men to ruin and the godly are taken under God's special protection.

These are truths which I subscribe to; but how can any man make good his part with God?" In his sight shall no flesh living be justified, Ps 143:2. How should man be just with God? Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's strictness and severity, that he is a God whom there is no dealing with; and it cannot be denied that there are, in this chapter, some peevish expressions, which seem to speak such language as this. But I take this rather as a pious confession of man's sinfulness, and his own in particular, that, if God should deal with any of us according to the desert of our iniquities, we should certainly be undone.

I. He lays this down for a truth, that man is an unequal match for his Maker, either in dispute or combat.

1. In dispute (Job 9:3): If he will contend with him, either at law or at an argument, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

(1.) God can ask a thousand puzzling questions which those that quarrel with him, and arraign his proceedings, cannot give an answer to. When God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind he asked him a great many questions (Dost thou know this? Canst thou do that?) to none of which Job could give an answer, Job 38:1-39:30 God can easily manifest the folly of the greatest pretenders to wisdom.

(2.) God can lay to our charge a thousand offences, can draw up against us a thousand articles of impeachment, and we cannot answer him so as to acquit ourselves from the imputation of any of them, but must, by silence, give consent that they are all true. We cannot set aside one as foreign, another as frivolous, and another as false. We cannot, as to one, deny the fact, and plead not guilty, and, as to another, deny the fault, confess and justify. No, we are not able to answer him, but must lay our hand upon our mouth, as Job did (Job 40:4,5), and cry, Guilty, guilty.

2. In combat (Job 9:4): "Who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered?" The answer is very easy. You cannot produce any instance, from the beginning of the world to this day, of any daring sinner who has hardened himself against God, has obstinately persisted in rebellion against him, who did not find God too hard for him and pay dearly for his folly. Such transgressors have not prospered or had peace; they have had no comfort in their way nor any success. What did ever man get by trials of skill, or trials of titles, with his Maker? All the opposition given to God is but setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire; so

foolish, so fruitless, so destructive, is the attempt, Isa 27:4,Eze 28:24,1Co 10:22. Apostate angels hardened themselves against God, but did not prosper, 2Pe 2:4. The dragon fights, but is cast out, Re 12:9.

Wicked men harden themselves against God, dispute his wisdom, disobey his laws, are impenitent for their sins and incorrigible under their afflictions; they reject the offers of his grace, and resist the strivings of his Spirit; they make nothing of his threatenings, and make head against his interest in the world. But have they prospered? Can they prosper? No; they are but treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Those that roll this will find it return upon them.

II. He proves it by showing what a God he is with whom we have to do: He is wise in heart, and therefore we cannot answer him at law; he is mighty in strength, and therefore we cannot fight it out with him. It is the greatest madness that can be to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing and can do every thing, who can be neither outwitted nor overpowered. The devil promised himself that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God and speak ill of him, but, instead of that, he sets himself to honour God and to speak highly of him. As much pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and expatiates with a flood of eloquence, upon that noble useful subject. Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he fetches,

1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrollable power and does what he pleases; for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him and depend upon him.

(1.) When he pleases he alters the course of nature, and turns back its streams, Job 9:5-7. By the common law of nature the mountains are settled and are therefore called everlasting mountains, the earth is established and cannot be removed (Ps 93:1) and the pillars there of are immovably fixed, the sun rises in its season, and the stars shed their influences on this lower world; but when God pleases he can not only drive out of the common track, but invert the order and change the law of nature.

[1.] Nothing more firm than the mountains. When we speak of removing mountains we mean that which is impossible; yet the divine power can make them change their seat: He removes them and they know not, removes them whether they will or no; he can make them lower their heads; he can level them, and overturn them in his anger; he can spread the mountains as easily as the husbandman spreads the molehills, be they ever so high, and large, and rocky. Men have much ado to pass over them, but God, when he pleases, can make them pass away. He made Sinai shake, Ps 68:8. The hills skipped, Ps 114:4. The everlasting mountains were scattered, Hab 3:6.

[2.] Nothing more fixed than the earth on its axletree; yet God can, when he pleases, shake the earth out of its place, heave it off its centre, and make even its pillars to tremble; what seemed to support it will itself need support when God gives it a shock. See how much we are indebted to God's patience. God has power enough to shake the earth from under that guilty race of mankind which makes it groan under the burden of sin, and so to shake the wicked out of it (Job 38:13); yet he continues the earth, and man upon it, and does not make it, as once, to swallow up the rebels.

[3.] Nothing more constant than the rising sun, it never misses its appointed time; yet God, when he pleases, can suspend it. He that at first commanded it to rise can

countermand it. Once the sun was told to stand, and another time to retreat, to show that it is still under the check of its great Creator. Thus great is God's power; and how great then is his goodness, which causes his sun to shine even upon the evil and unthankful, though he could withhold it! He that made the stars also, can, if he pleases, seal them up, and hide them from our eyes. By earthquakes and subterraneous fires mountains have sometimes been removed and the earth shaken: in very dark and cloudy days and nights it seems to us as if the sun were forbidden to rise and the stars were sealed up, Ac 27:20. It is sufficient to say that Job here speaks of what God can do; but, if we must understand it of what he has done in fact, all these verses may perhaps be applied to Noah's flood, when the mountains of the earth were shaken, and the sun and stars were darkened; and the world that now is we believe to be reserved for that fire which will consume the mountains, and melt the earth, with its fervent heat, and which will turn the sun into darkness.

(2.) As long as he pleases he preserves the settled course and order of nature; and this is a continued creation. He himself alone, by his own power, and without the assistance of any other,

[1.] Spreads out the heaven (Job 9:8), not only did spread them out at first, but still spreads them out (that is, keeps them spread out), for otherwise they would of themselves roll together like a scroll of parchment.

[2.] He treads upon the waves of the sea; that is, he suppresses them and keeps them under, that they return not to deluge the earth (Ps 104:9), which is given as a reason why we should all fear God and stand in awe of him, Jer 5:22. He is mightier than the proud waves Ps 93:4,Ps 65:7.

[3.] He makes the constellations; three are named for all the rest (Job 9:9), Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and in general the chambers of the south. The stars of which these are composed he made at first, and put into that order, and he still makes them, preserves them in being, and guides their motions; he makes them to be what they are to man, and inclines the hearts of man to observe them, which the beasts are not capable of doing. Not only those stars which we see and give names to, but those also in the other hemisphere, about the antarctic pole, which never come in our sight, called here the chambers of the south, are under the divine direction and dominion. How wise is he then, and how mighty!

2. From the kingdom of Providence, that special Providence which is conversant about the affairs of the children of men. Consider what God does in the government of the world, and you will say, He is wise in heart and mighty in strength.

(1.) He does many things and great, many and great to admiration, Job 9:10. Job here says the same that Eliphaz had said (Job 5:9), and in the original in the very same words, not declining to speak after him, though now his antagonist. God is a great God, and doeth great things, a wonder-working God; his works of wonder are so many that we cannot number them and so mysterious that we cannot find them out. O the depth of his counsels!

(2.) He acts invisibly and undiscerned, Job 9:11. "He goes by me in his operations, and I see him not, I perceive him not. His way is in the sea," Ps 77:19. The operations of second causes are commonly obvious to sense, but God does all about us and yet we see him not, Ac 17:23. Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes; we are therefore incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he does or what he

designs. The arcana imperii--secrets of government, are things above us, which therefore we must not pretend to expound or comment upon.

(3.) He acts with an incontestable sovereignty, Job 9:12. He takes away our creature-comforts and confidences when and as he pleases, takes away health, estate, relations, friends, takes away life itself; whatever goes, it is he that takes it; by what hand so ever it is removed, his hand must be acknowledged in its removal. The Lord takes away, and who can hinder him? Who can turn him away? (Margin, Who shall make him restore?) Who can dissuade him or alter his counsels? Who can resist him or oppose his operations? Who can control him or call him to an account? What action can be brought against him? Or who will say unto him, What doest thou? Or, Why doest thou so? Da 4:35. God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he does. The meanings of his proceedings we know no now; it will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that what seemed now to be done by prerogative was done in infinite wisdom and for the best.

(4.) He acts with an irresistible power, which no creature can resist, Job 9:13. If God will not withdraw his anger (which he can do when he pleases, for he is Lord of his anger, lets it out or calls it in according to his will), the proud helpers do stoop under him; that is, He certainly breaks and crushes those that proudly help one another against him. Proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings. In this opposition they join hand in hand. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, to throw off his yoke, to run down his truths, and to persecute his people. Men of Israel, help, Ac 21:28,Ps 83:8. If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help that, and think to deliver that out of his hand: but in vain; unless he pleases to withdraw his anger (which he often does, for it is the day of

his patience) the proud helpers stoop under him, and fall with those whom they designed to help. Who knows the power of God's anger? Those who think they have strength enough to help others will not be able to help themselves against it.

2 I know *it is* so of a truth:
but how should man be just with God?
3 If he will contend with him,
he cannot answer him one of a thousand.
4 *He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength:
who hath hardened *himself* against him, and hath prospered?
5 which removeth the mountains, and they know not;
which overturneth them in his anger;
6 which shaketh the earth out of her place,
and the pillars thereof tremble;
7 which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not;
and sealeth up the stars;
8 which alone spreadeth out the heavens,
and treadeth upon the waves of the sea;
9 which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades,
and the chambers of the south;
10 which doeth great things past finding out;
yea, and wonders without number.
11 Lo, he goeth by me, and I see *him* not:
he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.
12 Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him?
Who will say unto him, What doest thou?
13 *If* God will not withdraw his anger,
the proud helpers do stoop under him.
14 How much less shall I answer him,
and choose out my words *to reason* with him?

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God he here applies to himself, and in effect despairs of gaining his favour, which (some think) arises from the hard thoughts he had of God, as one who, having set himself against him, right or wrong, would be too hard for him. I rather think it arises from the sense he had of the imperfection of his own righteousness, and the dark and

cloudy apprehensions which at present he had of God's displeasure against him.

I. He durst not dispute with God (Job 9:14): "If the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I (a poor weak creature, so far from being a helper that I am very helpless) answer him? What can I say against that which God does? If I go about to reason with him, he will certainly be too hard for me." If the potter make the clay into a vessel of dishonour, or break in pieces the vessel he has made, shall the clay or the broken vessel reason with him? So absurd is the man who replies against God, or thinks to talk the matter out with him. No, let all flesh be silent before him.

II. He durst not insist upon his own justification before God. Though he vindicated his own integrity to his friends, and would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. "I will never venture upon the covenant of innocency, nor think to come off by virtue of that." Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justification before God.

1. He knew so much of God that he durst not stand a trial with him, Job 9:15-19. He knew how to make his part good with his friends, and thought himself able to deal with them; but, though his cause had been better than it was, he knew it was to no purpose to debate it with God.

(1.) God knew him better than he knew himself and therefore (Job 9:15), "Though I were righteous in my own apprehension, and my own heart did not condemn me, yet God is greater than my heart, and knows those secret faults and errors of mine which I do not and cannot understand, and is able to charge me with them, and therefore I would

not answer." St. Paul speaks to the same purport: I know nothing by myself, am not conscious to myself of any reigning wickedness, and yet I am not hereby justified, 1Co 4:4. "I dare not put myself upon that issue, lest God should charge that upon me which I did not discover in myself." Job will therefore wave that plea, and make supplication to his Judge, that is, will cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think come off by his own merit.

(2.) He had no reason to think that there was anything in his prayers to recommend them to the divine acceptance, or to fetch in an answer of peace, no worth or worthiness at all to which to ascribe their success, but it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God, who answers before we call and not because we call, and gives gracious answers to our prayers, but not for our prayers (Job 9:16): "If I had called, and he had answered, had given the thing I called to him for, yet, so weak and defective are my best prayers, that I would not believe he had therein hearkened to my voice; I could not say that he had saved with his right hand and answered me" (Ps 60:5), "but that he did it purely for his own name's sake." Bishop Patrick expounds it thus: "If I had made supplication, and he had granted my desire, I would not think my prayer had done the business." Not for your sakes, be it known to you.

(3.) His present miseries, which God had brought him into notwithstanding his integrity, gave him too sensible a conviction that, in the ordering and disposing of men's outward condition in this world, God acts by sovereignty, and, though he never does wrong to any, yet he does not ever give full right to all (that is, the best do not always fare best, nor the worst fare worst) in this life, because he reserves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state. Job was not conscious to himself of any extraordinary guilt, and yet fell under

extraordinary afflictions, Job 9:17,18. Every man must expect the wind to blow upon him and ruffle him, but Job was broken with a tempest. Every man, in the midst of these thorns and briers, must expect to be scratched; but Job was wounded, and his wounds were multiplied. Every man must expect a cross daily, and to taste sometimes of the bitter cup; but poor Job's troubles came so thickly upon him that he had no breathing time, and he was filled with bitterness.

And he presumes to say that all this was without cause, without any great provocation given. We have made the best of what Job said hitherto, though contrary to the judgment of many good interpreters; but here, no doubt, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; he reflected on God's goodness in saying that he was not suffered to take his breath (while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech as to be able to talk thus) and on his justice in saying that it was without cause. Yet it is true that as, on the one hand, there are many who are chargeable with more sin than the common infirmities of human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calamities of human life, so, on the other hand, there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life and yet are conscious to themselves of no more than the common infirmities of human nature.

(4.) He was in no capacity at all to make his part good with God, Job 9:19.

[1.] Not by force of arms. "I dare not enter the lists with the Almighty; for if I speak of strength, and think to come off by that, lo, he is strong, stronger than I, and will certainly overpower me." There is no disputing (said one once to Cæsar) with him that commands legions. Much less is there any with him that has legions of angels at command. Can thy heart endure (thy courage and presence of mind) or can

thy hands be strong to defend thyself, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Eze 22:14.

[2.] Not by force of arguments. "I dare not try the merits of the cause. If I speak of judgment, and insist upon my right, who will set me a time to plead? There is no higher power to which I may appeal, no superior court to appoint a hearing of the cause; for he is supreme and from him proceeds every man's judgment, which he must abide by."

2. He knew so much of himself the he durst not stand a trial, Job 9:20,21. "If I go about to justify myself, and to plead a righteousness of my own, my defence will be my offence, and my own mouth shall condemn me even when it goes about to acquit me." A good man, who knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous over it with a godly jealousy, and has often discovered that amiss there which had long lain undiscovered, is suspicious of more evil in himself than he is really conscious of, and therefore will by no means think of justifying himself before God. If we say we have no sin, we not only deceive ourselves, but we affront God; for we sin in saying so, and give the lie to the scripture, which has concluded all under sin. "If I say, I am perfect, I am sinless, God has nothing to lay to my charge, my very saying so shall prove me perverse, proud, ignorant, and presumptuous. Nay, though I were perfect, though God should pronounce me just, yet would I not know my soul, I would not be in care about the prolonging of my life while it is loaded with all these miseries." Or, "Though I were free from gross sin, though my conscience should not charge me with any enormous crime, yet would I not believe my own heart so far as to insist upon my innocency nor think my life worth striving for with God." In short, it is folly to contend with God, and our wisdom, as well as duty, to submit to him and throw ourselves at his feet.

15 whom, though I were righteous, *yet* would I not answer,

but I would make supplication to my judge.
16 If I had called, and he had answered me;
yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.
17 For he breaketh me with a tempest,
and multiplieth my wounds without cause.
18 He will not suffer me to take my breath,
but filleth me with bitterness.
19 If *I speak* of strength, lo, *he is* strong:
and if of judgment, who shall set me a time *to plead?*
20 If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me:
if I say, I *am* perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.
21 *Though* I *were* perfect, *yet* would I not know my soul:
I would despise my life.
22 This *is* one *thing*, therefore I said *it*,
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.

Here Job touches briefly upon the main point now in dispute between him and his friends. They maintained that those who are righteous and good always prosper in this world, and none but the wicked are in misery and distress; he asserted, on the contrary, that it is a common thing for the wicked to prosper and the righteous to be greatly afflicted. This is the one thing, the chief thing, wherein he and his friends differed; and they had not proved their assertion, therefore he abides by his: "I said it, and day it again, that all things come alike to all."

Now, 1. It must be owned that there is very much truth in what Job here means, that temporal judgments, when they are sent abroad, fall both upon good and bad, and the destroying angel seldom distinguishes (though once he did) between the houses of Israelites and the houses of Egyptians. In the judgment of Sodom indeed, which is called the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 1:7), far be it from God to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked (Ge 18:25); but, in judgments merely temporal, the righteous have their share, and sometimes the greatest share. The sword devours one

as well as another, Josiah as well as Ahab. Thus God destroys the perfect and the wicked, involves them both in the same common ruin; good and bad were sent together into Babylon, Jer 24:5,9. If the scourge slay suddenly, and sweep down all before it, God will be well pleased to see how the same scourge which is the perdition of the wicked is the trial of the innocent and of their faith, which will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1Pe 1:7,Ps 66:10. Against the just th' Almighty's arrows fly, For he delights the innocent to try, To show their constant and their Godlike mind, Not by afflictions broken, but refined.--Sir R. BLACKMORE.

Let this reconcile God's children to their troubles; they are but trials, designed for their honour and benefit, and, if God be pleased with them, let not them be displeased; if he laugh at the trial of the innocent, knowing how glorious the issue of it will be, at destruction and famine let them also laugh (Job 5:22), and triumph over them, saying, O death! where is thy sting? On the other hand, the wicked are so far from being made the marks of God's judgments that the earth is given into their hand, Job 9:24 (they enjoy large possessions and great power, have what they will and do what they will), into the hand of the wicked one (in the original, the word is singular); the devil, that wicked one, is called the god of this world, and boasts that into his hands it is delivered, Lu 4:6. Or into the hand of a wicked man, meaning (as bishop Patrick and the Assembly's Annotations conjecture) some noted tyrant then living in those parts, whose great wickedness and great prosperity were well known both to Job and his friends.

The wicked have the earth given them, but the righteous have heaven given them, and which is better--heaven without earth or earth without heaven? God, in his providence, advances wicked men, while he covers the faces of those who are fit to be judges, who are wise and

good, and qualified for government, and buries them alive in obscurity, perhaps suffers them to be run down and condemned, and to have their faces covered as criminals by those wicked ones into whose hand the earth is given. We daily see that this is done; if it be not God that does it, where and who is he that does it? To whom can it be ascribed but to him that rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he will? Da 4:32.

Yet, 2. It must be owned that there is too much passion in what Job here says. The manner of expression is peevish. When he meant that God afflicts he ought not to have said, He destroys both the perfect and the wicked; when he meant that God pleases himself with the trial of the innocent he ought not to have said, He laughs at it, for he doth not afflict willingly. When the spirit is heated, either with dispute or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, that we may observe a due decorum in speaking of divine things.

23 If the scourge slay suddenly,
he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.
24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked:
he covereth the faces of the judges thereof;
if not, where, *and* who *is* he?
25 Now my days are swifter than a post:
they flee away, they see no good.

Job here grows more and more querulous, and does not conclude this chapter with such reverent expressions of God's wisdom and justice as he began with. Those that indulge a complaining humour know not to what indecencies, nay, to what impieties, it will hurry them. The beginning of that strife with God is as the letting forth of water; therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. When we are in trouble we are allowed to complain to God, as the Psalmist often, but must by no means complain of God, as Job here.

I. His complaint here of the passing away of the days of his prosperity is proper enough (Job 9:25,26): "My days (that is, all my good days) are gone, never to return, gone of a sudden, gone ere I was aware. Never did any courier that went express" (like Cushi and Ahimaaz) "with good tidings make such haste as all my comforts did from me. Never did ship sail to its port, never did eagle fly upon its prey, with such incredible swiftness; nor does there remain any trace of my prosperity, any more than there does of an eagle in the air or a ship in the sea," Pr 30:19.

See here, 1. How swift the motion of time is. It is always upon the wing, hastening to its period; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs out, runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes!

2. How vain the enjoyments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues. Our day may be longer than the sun-shine of our prosperity; and, when that is gone, it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterwards; so will not the remembrance of our having got a great deal of worldly wealth when it is all lost and gone. "They flee away, past recall; they see no good, and leave none behind them."

II. His complaint of his present uneasiness is excusable, Job 9:27,28.

1. It should seem, he did his endeavour to quiet and compose himself as his friends advised him. That was the good he would do: he would fain forget his complaints and praise God, would leave off his heaviness and comfort himself, that he might be fit for converse both with God and man;

but, 2. He found he could not do it: "I am afraid of all my sorrows. When I strive most against my trouble it prevails most over me and proves too hard for me!" It is easier, in such a case, to know what we should do than to do it, to know what temper we should be in than to get into that temper and keep in it. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints and comfort themselves; but it is not so soon done as said. Fear and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason.

26 They are passed away as the swift ships:
as the eagle *that* hasteth to the prey.
27 If I say, I will forget my complaint,
I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort *myself;*
28 I am afraid of all my sorrows,
I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.
29 *If* I be wicked,
why then labor I in vain?

His complaint of God as implacable and inexorable was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He knew better, and, at another time, would have been far from harbouring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves; but God, who considers their frame and the strength of their temptations, gives them leave afterwards to unsay what was amiss by repentance and will not lay it to their charge.

1. Job seems to speak here,

(1.) As if he despaired of obtaining from God any relief or redress of his grievances, though he should produce ever so good proofs of his integrity: "I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent. My afflictions have continued so long upon me, and increased so fast, that I do not expect thou wilt ever

clear up my innocency by delivering me out of them and restoring me to a prosperous condition. Right or wrong, I must be treated as a wicked man; my friends will continue to think so of me, and God will continue upon me the afflictions which give them occasion to think so. Why then do I labour in vain to clear myself and maintain my own integrity?" Job 9:29. It is to no purpose to speak in a cause that is already prejudged. With men it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves; they must be adjudged guilty, though the evidence be ever so plain for them. But it is not so in our dealings with God, who is the patron of oppressed innocency and to whom it was never in vain to commit a righteous cause. Nay, he not only despairs of relief, but expects that his endeavour to clear himself will render him yet more obnoxious (Job 9:30,31): "If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my integrity ever so evident, it will be all to no purpose; judgment must go against me. Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch" (the pit of destruction, so some, or rather the filthy kennel, or sewer), "which will make me so offensive in the nostrils of all about me that my own clothes shall abhor me and I shall even loathe to touch myself."

He saw his afflictions coming from God. Those were the things that blackened him in the eye of his friends; and, upon that score, he complained of them, and of the continuance of them, as the ruin, not only of his comfort, but of his reputation. Yet these words are capable of a good construction. If we be ever so industrious to justify ourselves before men, and to preserve our credit with them,--if we keep our hands ever so clean from the pollutions of gross sin, which fall under the eye of the world,--yet God, who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will for ever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odious in the sight of the holy God. Paul, while a Pharisee, made his hands very clean; but when the commandment came and discovered to

him his heart-sins, made him know lust, that plunged him in the ditch.

(2.) As if he despaired to have a fair hearing with God, and that were hard indeed.

[1.] He complains that he was not upon even terms with God (Job 9:32): "He is not a man, as I am. I could venture to dispute with a man like myself (the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth), but he is infinitely above me, and therefore I dare not enter the lists with him; I shall certainly be cast if I contend with him." Note, First, God is not a man as we are. Of the greatest princes we may say, "They are men as we are," but not of the great God. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and we must not measure him by ourselves. Man is foolish and weak, frail and fickle, but God is not. We are depending dying creatures; he is the independent an immortal Creator. Secondly, The consideration of this should keep us very humble and very silent before God. Let us not make ourselves equal with God, but always eye him as infinitely above us.

[2.] That there was no arbitrator or umpire to adjust the differences between him and God and to determine the controversy (Job 9:33): Neither is there any days-man between us. This complaint that there was not is in effect a wish that there were, and so the LXX. reads it: O that there were a mediator between us! Job would gladly refer the matter, but no creature was capable of being a referee, and therefore he must even refer it still to God himself and resolve to acquiesce in his judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed days-man, who has mediated between heaven and earth, has laid his hand upon us both; to him the Father has committed all judgment, and we must. But this matter was not then brought to so clear a light as it is now by the gospel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as this.

[3.] That the terrors of God, which set themselves in array against him, put him into such confusion that he knew not how to address God with the confidence with which he was formerly wont to approach him, Job 9:34,35. "Besides the distance which I am kept at by his infinite transcendency, his present dealings with me are very discouraging: Let him take his rod away from me." He means not so much his outward afflictions as the load which lay upon his spirit from the apprehensions of God's wrath; that was his fear which terrified him. "Let that be removed; let me recover the sight of his mercy, and not be amazed with the sight of nothing but his terrors, and then I would speak and order my cause before him. But it is not so with me; the cloud is not at all dissipated; the wrath of God still fastens upon me, and preys on my spirits, as much as ever; and what to do I know not."

2. From all this let us take occasion,

(1.) To stand in awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

(2.) To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves.

(3.) Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God in our minds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief.

(4.) To bless God that we are not in such a disconsolate condition as poor Job was here in, but that we walk in the light of the Lord; let us rejoice therein, but rejoice with trembling.

30 If I wash myself with snow water,
and make my hands never so clean;
31 yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch,
and mine own clothes shall abhor me.
32 For *he is* not a man, as I *am*, *that* I should answer him,
and we should come together in judgment.
33 Neither is there any daysman betwixt us,
that might lay his hand upon us both.
34 Let him take his rod away from me,
and let not his fear terrify me:
35 *then* would I speak, and not fear him;
but *it is* not so with me.

Job-10

Job Bemoans His Condition

1 My soul is weary of my life;
I will leave my complaint upon myself;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

Here is, I. A passionate resolution to persist in his complaint, Job 10:1. Being daunted with the dread of God's majesty, so that he could not plead his cause with him, he resolves to give himself some ease by giving vent to his resentments. He begins with vehement language: "My soul is weary of my life, weary of this body, and impatient to get clear of it, fallen out with life, and displeased at it, sick of it, and longing for death." Through the weakness of grace he went contrary to the dictates even of nature itself.

We should act more like men did we act more like saints. Faith and patience would keep us from being weary of our lives (and cruel to them, as some read it), even when Providence has made them most wearisome to us; for that is to be weary of God's correction. Job, being weary of his life and having ease no other way, resolves to complain, resolves to speak. He will not give vent to his soul by

violent hands, but he will give vent to the bitterness of his soul by violent words. Losers think they may have leave to speak; and unbridled passions, as well as unbridled appetites, are apt to think it an excuse for their excursions that they cannot help them: but what have we wisdom and grace for, but to keep the mouth as with a bridle? Job's corruption speaks here, yet grace puts in a word.

1. He will complain, but he will leave his complaint upon himself. He would not impeach God, nor charge him with unrighteousness or unkindness; but, though he knew not particularly the ground of God's controversy with him and the cause of action, yet, in the general, he would suppose it to be in himself and willingly bear all the blame.

2. He will speak, but it shall be the bitterness of his soul that he will express, not his settled judgment. If I speak amiss, it is not I, but sin that dwells in me, not my soul, but its bitterness.

II. A humble petition to God. He will speak, but the first word shall be a prayer, and, as I am willing to understand it, it is a good prayer, Job 10:2.

1. That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin: "Do not condemn me; do not separate me for ever from thee. Though I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse; though I smart by the rod of a Father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a Judge. Thou dost correct me; I will bear that as well as I can; but O do not condemn me!" It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus that, though they are in affliction, there is no condemnation to them, Ro 8:1. Nay, they are chastened of the Lord that they may not be condemned with the world, 1Co 11:32. This therefore we should deprecate above any thing else, when we are in affliction. "However thou art

pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou."

2. That he might be made acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too: Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me. When God afflicts us he contends with us, and when he contends with us there is always a reason. He is never angry without a cause, though we are; and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, mortify, and forsake the sin for which God has a controversy with us. In enquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office and to deal faithfully with us, as Ge 42:21.

III. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed, not without some ill-natured reflections upon the righteousness of his God.

1. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so hardly with his creature as to lay upon him more than he can bear (Job 10:3): Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress? No, certainly it is not; what he approves no in men (La 3:34-36) he will not do himself. "Lord, in dealing with me, thou seemest to oppress thy subject, to despise thy workmanship, and to countenance thy enemies. Now, Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is thy nature that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name that it cannot be an honour to thee. Why then dealest thou thus with me? What profit is there in my blood?" Far be it from Job to think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a loss how to reconcile his providences with his justice, as good men have often been, and must wait until the day shall declare it. Let us therefore now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we shall then see there was no cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite knowledge of God to put his prisoner thus upon the rack, as it were, by torture, to extort a confession from him, Job 10:4-6.

(1.) He is sure that God does not discover things, nor judge of them, as men do: He has not eyes of flesh (Job 10:4), for he is a Spirit. Eyes of flesh cannot see in the dark, but darkness hides not from God. Eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time, and can see but a little way; but the eyes of the Lord are in every place, and run to and fro through the whole earth. Many things are hidden from eyes of flesh, the most curious and piercing; there is a path which even the vulture's eye has not seen: but nothing is, or can be, hidden from the eye of God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes of flesh see the outward appearance only, and may be imposed upon by a deceptio visus--an illusion of the senses; but God sees every thing truly. His sight cannot be deceived, for he tries the heart, and is a witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes of flesh discover things gradually, and, when we gain the sight of one thing, we lose the sight of another; but God sees every thing at one view.

Eyes of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night but the keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor does his sight ever decay. God sees not as man sees, that is, he does not judge as man judges, at the best secundum allegata et probata--according to what is alleged and proved, as the thing appears rather than as it is, and too often according to the bias of the affections, passions, prejudices, and interest; but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and that he knows truth, not by information, but by his own inspection. Men discover secret things by search, and examination of witnesses, comparing evidence and giving conjectures upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned to confess; but God needs not any of these ways of discovery: he sees not as man sees.

(2.) He is sure that as God is not short-sighted, like man, so he is not short-lived (Job 10:5): "Are thy days as the days of man, few and evil? Do they roll on in succession, or are they subject to change, like the days of man? No, by no means." Men grow wiser by experience and more knowing by daily observation; with them truth is the daughter of time, and therefore they must take time for their searches, and, if one experiment fail, must try another. But it is not so with God; to him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity, in which the life of God is wrapped up.

(3.) He therefore thinks it strange that God should thus prolong his torture, and continue him under the confinement of this affliction, and neither bring him to a trial nor grant him a release, as if he must take time to enquire after his iniquity and use means to search after his sin, Job 10:6. Not as if Job thought that God did thus torment him that he might find occasion against him; but his dealings with him had such an aspect, which was dishonourable to God, and would tempt men to think him a hard master. "Now, Lord, if thou wilt not consult my comfort, consult thy own honour; do something for thy great name, and do not disgrace the throne of thy glory," Jer 14:21.

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omnipotence to keep a poor prisoner in custody, whom he knew to be innocent, only because there was none that could deliver him out of his hand (Job 10:7): Thou knowest that I am not wicked. He had already owned himself a sinner, and guilty before God; but he here stands to it that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his religion, that he had not wickedly departed from his God, Ps 18:21. "But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand, and therefore there is no remedy; I must be content to

lie there, waiting thy time, and throwing myself on thy mercy, in submission to thy sovereign will." Here see,

(1.) What ought to quiet us under our troubles--that it is to no purpose to contend with Omnipotence.

(2.) What will abundantly comfort us--if we are able to appeal to God, as Job here, "Lord, thou knowest that I am not wicked. I cannot say that l am not wanting, or I am not weak; but, through grace, I can say, I am not wicked: thou knowest I am not, for thou knowest I love thee."

2 I will say unto God, Do not condemn me;
show me wherefore thou contendest with me.
3 *Is it* good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress,
that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands,
and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?
4 Hast thou eyes of flesh?
Or seest thou as man seeth?
5 *Are* thy days as the days of man?
Are thy years as man's days,
6 that thou inquirest after mine iniquity,
and searchest after my sin?
7 Thou knowest that I am not wicked;
and *there is* none that can deliver out of thine hand.
8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about;
yet thou dost destroy me.

In these verses we may observe,

I. How Job eyes God as his Creator and preserver, and describes his dependence upon him as the author and upholder of his being. This is one of the first things we are all concerned to know and consider.

1. That God made us, he, and not our parents, who were only the instruments of his power and providence in our production. He made us, and not we ourselves. His hands

have made and fashioned these bodies of ours and every part of them (Job 10:8), and they are fearfully and wonderfully made. The soul also, which animates the body, is his gift. Job takes notice of both here.

(1.) The body is made as the clay (Job 10:9), cast into shape, into this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel, according to the skill and will of the potter. We are earthen vessels, mean in our original, and soon broken in pieces, made as the clay. Let not therefore the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? We must not be proud of our bodies, because the matter is from the earth, yet not dishonour our bodies, because the mould and shape are from the divine wisdom. The formation of human bodies in the womb is described by an elegant similitude (Job 10:10, Thou hast poured me out like milk, which is coagulated into cheese), and by an induction of some particulars, Job 10:11.

Though we come into the world naked, yet the body is itself both clothed and armed. The skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but defensive. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus clothed, not to be seen--thus fenced, not to be hurt. The admirable structure of human bodies is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. What a pity is it that these bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost!

(2.) The soul is the life, the soul is the man, and this is the gift of God: Thou hast granted me life, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcase. God is the Father of spirits: he made us living souls, and endued us with the power of reason; he gave us life and favour, and life is a favour--a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment--a distinguishing

favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favours. Now Job was in a better mind than he was when he quarrelled with life as a burden, and asked, Why died I not from the womb? Or by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, referring to his former prosperity. Time was when he walked in the light of the divine favour, and thought, as David, that through that favour his mountain stood strong.

2. That God maintains us. Having lighted the lamp of life, he does not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil: "Thy visitation has preserved my spirit, kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life, the death we are in the midst of and the dangers we are continually exposed to, and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life and the daily supplies it needs and craves."

II. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He reminds God of it (Job 10:9): Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me. What then? Why,

1. "Thou hast made me, and therefore thou hast a perfect knowledge of me (Ps 139:1-13), and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovery of what is within me."

2. "Thou hast made me, as the clay, by an act of sovereignty; and wilt thou by a like act of sovereignty unmake me again? If so, I must submit." 3. "Wilt thou destroy the work of thy own hands?" It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer, We are the clay and thou our potter, Isa 64:8. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, Ps 119:73. So here, Thou madest me; and wilt thou destroy me (Job 10:8), wilt thou bring me into dust again? Job 10:9. "Wilt thou not pity me? Wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thy own hands? Ps 138:8.

Thou madest me, and knowest my strength; wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure? Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to be reserved for these calamities?" If we plead this with ourselves as an inducement to duty, "God made me and maintains me, and therefore I will serve him and submit to him," we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy: Thou hast made me, new--make me; I am thine, save me. Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns, but concludes (Job 10:13), "These things hast thou hidden in thy heart. Both are according to the counsel of thy own will, and therefore undoubtedly consistent, however they seem." When God thus strangely changes his way, though we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons for it hidden in his heart, which will be manifested shortly. It is not with us, or in our reach, to assign the cause, but I know that this is with thee. Known unto God are all his works.

9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay;
and wilt thou bring me into dust again?
10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk,
and curdled me like cheese?
11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh,
and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.
12 Thou hast granted me life and favor,
and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.
13 And these *things* hast thou hid in thine heart:
I know that this *is* with thee.
14 If I sin, then thou markest me,
and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.

Here we have,

I. Job's passionate complaints. On this harsh and unpleasant string he harps much, in which, though he cannot be justified, he may be excused. He complained not for nothing, as the murmuring Israelites, but had cause to

complain. If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep our temper better.

1. He complains of the strictness of God's judgment and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it summum jus--justice bordering on severity. That he took all advantages against him: "If I sin, then thou markest me, Job 10:14.

(1.) If I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awry, I shall be sure to hear of it. Conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me that this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that." If God should thus mark iniquities, we should be undone; but we must acknowledge the contrary, that, though we sin, God does not deal in extremity with us.

(2.) That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost: Thou wilt not acquit me from my iniquity. While his troubles he could not take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of joy and gladness; so hard is it to see love in God's heart when we see frowns in his face and a rod in his hand.

(3.) That, whatever was his character, his case at present was very uncomfortable, Job 10:15.

[1.] If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world: If I be wicked, woe to me. Note, A sinful state is a woeful state. This we should each of us believe, as Job here, with application to ourselves: "If I be wicked, though prosperous and living in pleasure, yet woe to me." Some especially have reason to dread double woes if they be wicked. "I that have knowledge, that have made a great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises--I that was born of such good parents, blessed with a good

education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace--if I be wicked, woe, and a thousand woes, to me."

[2.] If he be righteous, yet he dares not lift up his head, dares not answer as before, Job 9:15. He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears; so that, between both, he was full of confusion, not only confusion of face for the disgrace he was brought down to and the censures of his friends, but confusion of spirit; his mind was in a constant hurry, and he was almost distracted, Ps 88:15.

2. He complains of the severity of the execution. God (he thought) did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him in a high degree, Job 10:16,17. His affliction was,

(1.) Grievous, very grievous, marvellous, exceedingly marvellous. God hunted him as a lion, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but showed himself marvellous upon him, by bringing him into uncommon troubles and so making him prodigy, a wonder unto many. All wondered that God would inflict and that Job could bear so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous was that he felt God's indignation in them; it was this that made them taste so bitter and lie so heavy. They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit.

(2.) It was growing, still growing worse and worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn, and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher. His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction. He found himself no better, no way better. These witnesses were

renewed against him, that, if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him. If there was any change with him, it was not for the better; still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the sorest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the last. God was at war with him, and it was a great change. He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble and made it truly marvellous. God usually shows himself kind to his people; if at any time he shows himself otherwise, it is his strange work, his strange act, and he does in it show himself marvellous.

3. He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery (Job 10:18,19): "If this was designed for my lot, why was I brought out of the womb, and not smothered there, or stifled in the birth?" This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the same sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour (Job 10:12), yet now he calls it a burden, and quarrels with God for giving it, or rather laying it upon him. Mr. Caryl gives this a good turn in favour of Job. "We may charitably suppose," says he, "that what troubled Job was that he was in a condition of life which (as he conceived) hindered the main end of his life, which was the glorifying of God. His harp was hung on the willow-trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God. Nay, he feared lest his troubles should reflect dishonour upon God and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and therefore he wishes, O that I had given up the ghost!

A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose if he do not live to the praise and glory of God." If that was his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake; for we may glorify the Lord in the fires. But this use we may make of it, not to be over-fond of life, since the case has been such sometimes, even with wise and good men, that they have

complained of it. Why should we dread giving up the ghost, or covet to be seen of men, since the time may come when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost and no eye had seen us? Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy, that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps we ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

II. Job's humble requests. He prays,

1. That God would see his affliction (Job 10:15), take cognizance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays (Ps 25:18), Look upon my affliction and my pain. Thus we should, in our troubles, refer ourselves to God, and may comfort ourselves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his trouble, yet might he not have some intermission? "Lord, let me not be always upon the rack, always in extremity: O let me alone, that I may take comfort a little! Job 10:20. Grant me some respite, some breathing-time, some little enjoyment of myself." This he would reckon a great favour. Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease should think how welcome one hour's ease would be if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads:--

(1.) That life and its light were very short: "Are not my days few? Job 10:20. Yes, certainly they are, very few. Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but a little time to live; let me have some comfort of life while it does last." This plea fastens on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And, if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy ("Are not my days few? Lord,

pity me"), we should use it as a plea with ourselves, to quicken us to duty: "Are not my days few? Then it concerns me to redeem time, to improve opportunities, what my hand finds to do to do it with all my might, that I may be ready for the days of eternity, which shall be many."

(2.) That death and its darkness were very near and would be very long (Job 10:21,22): "Lord, give me some ease before I die," that is, "lest I die of my pain." Thus David pleads (Ps 13:3), "Lest I sleep the sleep of death, and then it will be too late to expect relief; for wilt thou show wonders to the dead?" Ps 88:10. "Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may take leave of this world calmly, and not in such confusion as I am now in." Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus we should plead, "Lord, renew me in the inward man; Lord, sanctify me before I die, for otherwise it will never be done." See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.

[1.] It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return ever again to live such a life as we now live, Job 7:10. At death we must bid a final farewell to this world. The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul adjudged to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done which is to be done but once, and done for eternity.

[2.] It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls, at death, remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies they leave to a land of darkness and the shadow of death. He heaps up expressions here of the same import to show that he has as dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have, so that it was only the extreme misery he was in that made him wish for it. Come and let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find,

First, That there is no order there: it is without any order, perpetual night, and no succession of day. All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant, but the servant is there free from his master, Job 3:19. No order is observed in bringing people to the grave, not the eldest first, not the richest, not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order appointed by the God of life.

Secondly, That there is no light there. In the grave there is thick darkness, darkness that cannot be felt indeed, yet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation, and therefore no light.

Job was so much ashamed that others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave, which would hide them and huddle them up, would upon that account be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us; and therefore let us walk and work while we have the light with us. The grave being a land of darkness, it is well we are carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is a land of darkness to man; our friends that have gone thither we reckon removed into darkness, Ps 88:18. But that it is not so to God will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, though scattered, though mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost, for God's eye is upon every grain of it and it shall be forth-coming in the great day.

15 If I be wicked, woe unto me;
and *if* I be righteous, *yet* will I not lift up my head.
I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction;
16 for it increaseth.
Thou huntest me as a fierce lion:
and again thou showest thyself marvelous upon me.

17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me;
changes and war *are* against me.
18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?
Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!
19 I should have been as though I had not been;
I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.
20 *Are* not my days few? Cease *then*,
and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,
21 before I go *whence* I shall not return,
even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death;
22 a land of darkness, as darkness *itself;*
and of the shadow of death, without any order,
and *where* the light *is* as darkness.

Job-11

Zophar Accuses Job of Iniquity

1 Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,
2 Should not the multitude of words be answered?
And should a man full of talk be justified?
3 Should thy lies make men hold their peace?
And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?
4 For thou hast said, My doctrine *is*
pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation, of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, Job 4:2. Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, Job 8:2. But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very bad language: Should a man full of talk be justified? And should thy lies make men hold their peace? Is this the way to comfort Job? No, nor to convince him neither. Does this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? Tantæne animis coelestibus iræ?--In heavenly breasts can such resentment dwell? Those that engage in controversy will

find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution they have will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as we here find Zophar guilty of.

I. He represents Job otherwise than what he was, Job 11:2,3. He would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; he gives him the lie, and calls him a mocker; and all this that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances, and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense and much to the purpose, that his principles are right, his reasonings strong, many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and that what there is in them of heat and passion a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; and yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

1. As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with the multitude of words, hoping by that means to carry his cause and run down his reprovers: Should not the multitude of words be answered? Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or no; silence perhaps is the best confutation of impertinence and puts the greatest contempt upon it. Answer not a fool according to his folly.

But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. Should a man full of talk (margin, a man of lips, that is all tongue, vox et præterea nihil--mere voice) be justified? Should he be justified in his loquacity, as in effect he is if he be not reproved for it? No, for in the multitude of words there

wanteth not sin. Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise men, for his much speaking, Mt 6:7.

2. As a man that made no conscience of what he said--a liar, and one that hoped by the impudence of lies to silence his adversaries (should thy lies make men hold their peace?)--a mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him: When thou mockest shall no man make thee ashamed? Is it not time to speak, to stem such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet was thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed; it was therefore no instance of Zophar's generosity to set upon a man so violently who was already thus harassed. Here were three matched against one.

II. He charges Job with saying that which he had not said (Job 11:4): Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure. And what if he had said so? It was true that Job was sound in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spoke better of God than his friends did. If he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true. But he charges him with saying, I am clean in thy eyes. Job had not said so: he had indeed said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked (Job 10:7); but he had also said, I have sinned, and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had indeed maintained that he was not a hypocrite as they charged him; but to infer thence that he would not own himself a sinner was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear; but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

III. He appeals to God, and wishes him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong that nothing will serve him but that God must immediately appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready with too much assurance to interest God in our quarrels, and to conclude that, if he would but speak, he would take our part and speak for us, as Zophar here: O that God would speak! for he would certainly open his lips against thee; whereas, when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought indeed to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; but those are not always in the right who are most forward to appeal to that judgment and prejudge it against their antagonists. Zophar despairs to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions cheerfully to confess:--

1 The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it, but he desires that God himself would show Job so much of the secrets of the divine wisdom as might convince him that they are at least double to that which is, Job 11:6. Note,

(1.) There are secrets in the divine wisdom, arcana imperii--state-secrets. God's way is in the sea. Clouds and darkness are round about him. He has reasons of state which we cannot fathom and must not pry into.

(2.) What we know of God is nothing to what we cannot know. What is hidden is more than double to what appears, Eph 3:9.

(3.) By employing ourselves in adoring the depth of those divine counsels of which we cannot find the bottom we

shall very much tranquilize our minds under the afflicting hand of God.

(4.) God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves; so some understand it. When God gave David a sight and sense of sin he said that he had in the hidden part made him to know wisdom, Ps 51:6.

2 The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings. "Know therefore that, how sore soever the correction is that thou art under, God exacteth of thee less than thy iniquity deserves," or (as some read it), "he remits thee part of thy iniquity, and does not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it."

Note, (1.) When the debt of duty is not paid it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment.

(2.) Whatever punishment is inflicted upon us in this world we must own that it is less than our iniquities deserve, and therefore, instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, La 3:39,Ps 103:10.

5 But oh that God would
speak, and open his lips
against thee;
6 and that he would show thee the secrets of
wisdom, that *they are* double to that which is!
Know therefore that God exacteth of thee *less* than thine iniquity
deserveth.
7 Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God and his greatness and glory, concerning man and his vanity and folly: these two compared together, and duly considered, will have a powerful influence upon our submission to all the dispensations of the divine Providence.

I. See here what God is, and let him be adored.

1. He is an incomprehensible Being, infinite and immense, whose nature and perfections our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actings we cannot therefore, without the greatest presumption, pass a judgment upon. We that are so little acquainted with the divine nature are incompetent judges of the divine providence; and, when we censure the dispensations of it, we talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find out God; how dare we then find fault with him? Zophar here shows,

(1.) That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings: "Canst thou find out God, find him out to perfection? No, What canst thou do? What canst thou know?" Job 11:7,8. Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, though ever so inquisitive after him, ever so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet darest thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed in it? We may, by searching find God (Ac 17:27), but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal; we may apprehend him, but we cannot comprehend him; we may know that he is, but cannot know what he is. The eye can see the ocean but not see over it. We may, by a humble, diligent, and believing search, find out something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection; we may know, but cannot know fully, what God is, nor find out his work from the beginning to the end, Ec 3:11.

Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured; the depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded; the brightness of his glory can never be described, nor the treasures of his goodness reckoned up. This is a good reason why we should always

speak of God with humility and caution and never prescribe to him nor quarrel with him, why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself and long to be where we shall see him as he is, 1Co 13:9,10.

(2.) That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation: It is higher than heaven (so some read it), deeper than hell, the great abyss, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, many parts of which are to this day undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, Ps 139:6. We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings. His judgments are a great deep. Paul attributes such immeasurable dimensions to the divine love as Zophar here attributes to the divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance. Eph 3:18,19, That you may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ.

2. God is a sovereign Lord (Job 11:10): If he cut off by death (margin, If he make a change, for death is a change; if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs),--if he shut up in prison, or in the net of affliction (Ps 66:11),-- if he seize any creature as a hunter his prey, he will gather it (so bishop Patrick) and who shall force him to restore? or if he gather together, as tares for the fire, or if he gather to himself man's spirit and breath (Job 34:14), then who can hinder him? Who can either arrest the sentence or oppose the execution? Who can control his power or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he that made all out of nothing think fit to reduce all to nothing, or to their first chaos again,--if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea, at first, please to gather them together again,--if he that made unmakes, who can turn him away, alter his mind or stay his hand, impede or impeach his proceedings?

3. God is a strict and just observer of the children of men (Job 11:11): He knows vain men. We know little of him, but he knows us perfectly: He sees wickedness also, not to approve it (Hab 1:13), but to animadvert upon it.

(1.) He observes vain men. Such all are (every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity), and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them, the workings of their foolish fancies; he sits in heaven, and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men (that is, their little sins; so some) their vain thoughts and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good.

(2.) He observes bad men: He sees gross wickedness also, though committed ever so secretly and ever so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God: Will he not then consider it? Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seem to keep silence.

II. See here what man is, and let him be humbled, Job 11:12. God sees this concerning vain man that he would be wise, would be thought so, though he is born like a wild ass's colt, so sottish and foolish, unteachable and untameable. See what man is.

1. He is a vain creature--empty; so the word is. God made him full, but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is raca, a creature that has nothing in him.

2. He is a foolish creature, has become like the beasts that perish (Ps 49:20,73:22), an idiot, born like an ass, the most stupid animal, an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service. If ever he come to be good for any thing, it is owing to the

grace of Christ, who once, in the day of his triumph, served himself by an ass's colt.

3. He is a wilful ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be made good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver. See Job 39:5-7. Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt does, that is used to the wilderness (Jer 2:24), eager to gratify his own appetites and passions.

4. Yet he is a proud creature and self-conceited. He would be wise, would he thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, that is, he reaches after forbidden wisdom, and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loses the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now is such a creature as this fit to contend with God or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to conduct ourselves towards God.

8 *It is* as high as heaven; what canst thou do?
deeper than hell; what canst thou know?
9 The measure thereof *is* longer than the
earth, and broader than the sea.
10 If he cut off, and shut up,
or gather together, then who can hinder him?
11 For he knoweth vain men:
he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider *it?*
12 For vain man would be wise,
though man be born *like* a wild ass's colt.
13 If thou prepare thine heart,
and stretch out thine hands toward him;

Zophar, as the other two, here encourages Job to hope for better times if he would but come to a better temper.

I. He gives him good counsel (Job 11:13,14), as Eliphaz did (Job 5:8), and Bildad, Job 8:5. He would have him repent and return to God. Observe the steps of that return.

1. He must look within, and get his mind changed and the tree made good. He must prepare his heart; there the work of conversion and reformation must begin. The heart that wandered from God must be reduced--that was defiled with sin and put into disorder must be cleansed and put in order again--that was wavering and unfixed must be settled and established; so the word here signifies. The heart is then prepared to seek God when it is determined and fully resolved to make a business of it and to go through with it.

2. He must look up, and stretch out his hands towards God, that is, must stir up himself to take hold on God, must pray to him with earnestness and importunity, striving in prayer, and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him. To give the hand to the Lord signifies to yield ourselves to him and to covenant with him, 2Ch 30:8. This Job must do, and, for the doing of it, must prepare his heart. Job had prayed, but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner and humble suppliant.

3. He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation, else his prayers would be ineffectual (Job 11:14): "If iniquity be in thy hand (that is, if there be any sin which thou dost yet live in the practice of) put it far away, forsake it with detestation and a holy indignation, stedfastly resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have any thing more to do with it. Eze 18:31,Ho 14:9,Isa 30:22. If any of the gains of iniquity, any goods gotten by fraud or oppression, be in thy hand, make restitution thereof" (as Zaccheus, Lu 19:8), "and shake thy hands from holding them," Isa 33:15. The guilt of sin is not removed if the gain of sin be not restored.

4. He must do his utmost to reform his family too: "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles; let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, any wicked practices, or any wealth gotten by wickedness." He suspected that Job's great household had been ill-governed, and that, where there were many, there were many wicked, and the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it; and therefore, if he expected God should return to him, he must reform what was amiss there, and, though wickedness might come into his tabernacles, he must not suffer it to dwell there, Ps 101:3-8, &c.

II. He assures him of comfort if he took this counsel, Job 11:15-20, &c. If he would repent and reform, he should, without doubt, be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might insinuate that, unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as a hypocrite and a dissembler with God. A great truth, however, is conveyed, That, the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever, Isa 32:17. Those that sincerely turn to God may expect,

1. A holy confidence towards God: "Then shalt thou lift up thy face towards heaven without spot; thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed," Job 9:34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God and expectations from him, 1Jo 3:21. If we are looked upon in the face of the anointed, our faces, that were dejected, may be lifted up--that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near in full assurance of faith when we are sprinkled from an evil conscience, Heb 10:22. Some understand this of the

clearing up of his credit before men, Ps 37:6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

2. A holy composedness in themselves: Thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear, not be afraid of evil tidings, thy heart being fixed, Ps 112:7. Job was now full of confusion (Job 10:15), while he looked upon God as his enemy and quarrelled with him; but Zophar assures him that, if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be composed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such an agitation. The less we are frightened the more we are fixed, and consequently the more fit we are for our services and for our sufferings.

3. A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles (Job 11:16): "Thou shalt forget thy misery, as the mother forgets her travailing pains, for joy that the child is born; thou shalt be perfectly freed from the impressions it makes upon thee, and thou shalt remember it as waters that pass away, or are poured out of a vessel, which leave no taste or tincture behind them, as other liquors do. The wounds of thy present affliction shall be perfectly healed, not only without a remaining scar, but without a remaining pain." Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint (Job 9:27), but found he could not; his soul had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall: but here Zophar puts him in a way to forget it; let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, an leave them with him, and then he shall forget them. Where sin sits heavily affliction sits lightly. If we duly remember our sins, we shall, in comparison with them, forget our misery, much more if we obtain the comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. He whose iniquity is forgiven shall not say, I am sick, but shall forget his sickness, Isa 33:24.

4. A comfortable prospect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were to no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world: "Yea, but thou mayest" (says Zophar) "and good nights too." A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of.

(1.) That though now his light was eclipsed it should shine out again, and more brightly than ever (Job 11:17),-- that even his setting sun should out-shine his noon-day sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure.--that his light should shine out of obscurity (Isa 58:10), and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre,--that it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days to him. Note, Those that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; their path is as the shining light which increases, the period of their day will be the perfection of it, and their evening to this world will be their morning to a better.

(2.) That, though now he was in a continual fear and terror, he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy (Job 11:18): Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope. Note, Those who have a good hope, through grace, in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly may thus walk surely, because, though there are trouble and danger, yet there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is an anchor of the soul, Heb 6:19. "Thou shalt dig about thee," that is, "Thou shalt be as safe as an army in its entrenchments." Those that submit to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night.

[1.] By day, when they employ themselves abroad: "Thou shalt dig in safety, thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the plunderers, who fell upon thy servants at plough," Job 1:14,15. It is no part of the promised prosperity that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling and follow it, and, when he was about the business of it, should be under the divine protection. Thou shalt dig and be safe, not rob and be safe, revel and be safe. The way of duty is the way of safety.

[2.] By night, when they repose themselves at home: Thou shalt take thy rest (and the sleep of the labouring man is sweet) in safety, notwithstanding the dangers of the darkness. The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night: "Thou shalt lie down (Job 11:19), not forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on, nor forced to watch and sit up in expectation of assaults; but thou shalt go to bed at bedtime, and not only shall non hurt thee, but none shall make thee afraid nor so much as give thee an alarm." Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undisturbed sleeps; those say so that are within the hearing of the noise of war. And the way to be quiet is to seek unto God and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing needs make those afraid who return to God as their rest and take him for their habitation.

(3.) That, though now he was slighted, yet he should be courted: "Many shall make suit to thee, and think it their interest to secure thy friendship." Suit is made to those that are eminently wise or reputed to be so, that are very rich or in power. Zophar knew Job so well that he foresaw that, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned, it would flow as high as ever; and he would be again the darling of his country. Those that rightly make suit to God will probably see the day when others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the wise, Give us of your oil.

III. Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people (Job 11:20): But the eyes of the wicked shall fail. It should seem, he suspected that Job would not take his counsel, and here tells him what would then come of it, setting death as well as life before him. See what will become of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed.

1. They shall not reach the good they flatter themselves with the hopes of in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes shall fail with expecting that which will never come. When a wicked man dies his expectation perishes, Pr 11:7. Their hope shall be as a puff of breath (margin), vanished and gone past recall. Or their hope will perish and expire as a man does when he gives up the ghost; it will fail them when they have most need of it and when they expected the accomplishment of it; it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion.

2. They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehensions of. They shall not escape the execution of the sentence passed upon them, can neither out-brave it nor outrun it. Those that will not fly to God will find it in vain to think of flying from him.

14 if iniquity *be* in thine hand, put it far away,
and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.
15 For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot;
yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear:
16 because thou shalt forget *thy* misery,
and remember *it* as waters *that* pass away:
17 and *thine* age shall be clearer than the noonday;
thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.
18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope;
yea, thou shalt dig *about thee, and* thou shalt take thy rest in safety.
19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make *thee* afraid;
yea, many shall make suit unto thee.

20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail,
and they shall not escape,
and their hope *shall be as* the giving up of the ghost.

Job-12

Job Affirms God's Power and Wisdom

1 And Job answered and said,

The reproofs Job here gives to his friends, whether they were just or no, were very sharp, and may serve for a rebuke to all that are proud and scornful, and an exposure of their folly.

I. He upbraids them with their conceitedness of themselves, and the good opinion they seemed to have of their own wisdom in comparison with him, than which nothing is more weak and unbecoming, nor better deserves to be ridiculed, as it is here.

1. He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom, Job 12:2. He speaks ironically: "No doubt you are the people; you think yourselves fit to dictate and give law to all mankind, and your own judgment to be the standard by which every man's opinion must be measured and tried, as if nobody could discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, but you only; and therefore every top-sail must lower to you, and, right or wrong, we must all say as you say, and you three must be the people, the majority, to have the casting vote." Note, It is a very foolish and sinful thing for any to think themselves wiser than all mankind besides, or to speak and act confidently and imperiously, as if they thought so. Nay, he goes further: "You not only think there are none, but that there will be none, as wise as you, and therefore that wisdom must die with you, that all the world must be fools when you are gone, and in the dark when your sun has set."

Note, It is folly for us to think that there will be any great irreparable loss of us when we are gone, or that we can be ill spared, since God has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up others, more fit than we are, to do his work. When wise men and good men die it is a comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them. Some think Job here reflects upon Zophar's comparing him (as he thought) and others to the wild ass's colt, Job 11:12. "Yes," says he, "we must be asses; you are the only men."

2. He does himself the justice to put in his claim as a sharer in the gifts of wisdom (Job 12:3): "But I have understanding (a heart) as well as you; nay, I fall not lower than you;" as it is in the margin. "I am as well able to judge of the methods and meanings of the divine providence, and to construe the hard chapters of it, as you are." He says not this to magnify himself. It was no great applause of himself to say, I have understanding as well as you; no, nor to say, "I understand this matter as well as you;" for what reason had either he or they to be proud of understanding that which was obvious and level to the capacity of the meanest? "Yea, who knows not such things as these? What things you have said that are true are plain truths, and common themes, which there are many that can talk as excellently of as either you or I." But he says it to humble them, and check the value they had for themselves as doctors of the chair.

Note, (1.) It may justly keep us from being proud of our knowledge to consider how many there are that know as much as we do, and perhaps much more and to better purpose.

(2.) When we are tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from and dispute with we ought to consider that they also have understanding as well as we, a capacity of judging, and a right of judging for themselves; nay,

perhaps they are not inferior to us, but superior, and it is possible that they may be in the right and we in the wrong; and therefore we ought not to judge or despise them (Ro 14:3), nor pretend to be masters (Jam 3:1), while all we are brethren, Mt 23:8. It is a very reasonable allowance to be made to all we converse with, all we contend with, that they are rational creatures as well as we.

II. He complains of the great contempt with which they had treated him. Those that are haughty and think too well of themselves are commonly scornful and ready to trample upon all about them. Job found it so, at least he thought he did (Job 12:4): I am as one mocked. I cannot say there was cause for this charge; we will not think Job's friends designed him any abuse, nor aimed at any thing but to convince him, and so, in the right method, to comfort him; yet he cries out, I am as one mocked.

Note, We are apt to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are but advised and admonished; this peevishness is our folly, and a great wrong to ourselves and to our friends. Yet we cannot but say there was colour for this charge; they came to comfort him, but they vexed him, gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion that either the one or the other would take effect; and therefore he thought they mocked him, and this added much to his grief. Nothing is more grievous to those that have fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity than to be trodden on, and insulted over, when they are down; and on this head they are too apt to be suspicious. Observe,

1. What aggravated this grievance to him. Two things:--

(1.) That they were his neighbours, his friends, his companions (so the word signifies), and the scoffs of such are often most spitefully given, and always most

indignantly received. Ps 55:12,13, It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I would have slighted it, and so borne it; but it was thou, a man, my equal.

(2.) That they were professors of religion, such as called upon God, and said that he answered them: for some understand that of the persons mocking. "They are such as have a regard to heaven, and an interest in heaven, whose prayers I would therefore be glad of and thankful for, whose good opinion I cannot but covet, and therefore whose censures are the more grievous." Note, It is sad that any who call upon God should mock their brethren (Jam 3:9,10), and it cannot but lie heavily on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of, yet this is no new thing.

2. What supported him under it.

(1.) That he had a God to go to, with whom he could lodge his appeal; for some understand those words of the person mocked, that he calls upon God and he answers him; and so it agrees with Job 16:20. My friends scorn me, but my eye poureth out tears to God. If our friends be deaf to our complaints, God is not; if they condemn us, God knows our integrity; if they make the worst of us, he will make the best of us; if they give us cross answers, he will give us kind ones.

(2.) That his case was not singular, but very common: The just upright man is laughed to scorn. By many he is laughed at even for his justice and his uprightness, his honesty towards men and his piety towards God; these are derided as foolish things, which silly people needlessly hamper themselves with, as if religion were a jest and therefore to be made a jest of. By most he is laughed at for any little infirmity or weakness, notwithstanding his justice and uprightness, without any consideration had of that which is so much his honour. Note, It was of old the lot of honest

good people to be despised and derided; we are not therefore to think it strange (1Pe 4:12), no, nor to think it hard, if it be our lot; so persecuted they not only the prophets, but even the saints of the patriarchal age (Mt 5:12), and can we expect to fare better than they?

3. What he suspected to be the true cause of it, and that was, in short, this: they were themselves rich and at ease, and therefore they despised him who had fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world; we see instances of it daily. Those that prosper are praised, but of those that are going down it is said, "Down with them." He that is ready to slip with his feet and fall into trouble, though he has formerly shone as a lamp, is then looked upon as a lamp going out like the snuff of a candle, which we throw to the ground and tread upon, and is accordingly despised in the thought of him that is at ease, Job 12:5. Even the just upright man, that is in his generation as a burning and shining light, if he enter into temptation (Ps 73:2) or come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. See here,

(1.) What is the common fault of those that live in prosperity. Being full, and easy, and merry themselves, they look scornfully upon those that are in want, pain, and sorrow; they overlook them, take no notice of them, and study to forget them. See Ps 123:4. The chief butler drinks wine in bowls, but makes nothing of the afflictions of Joseph. Wealth without grace often makes men thus haughty, thus careless of their poor neighbours.

(2.) What is the common fate of those that fall into adversity. Poverty serves to eclipse all their lustre; though they are lamps, yet, if taken out of golden candlesticks, and put, like Gideon's, into earthen pitchers, nobody values them as formerly, but those that live at ease despise them.

2 No doubt but ye *are* the people,
and wisdom shall die with you.

3 But I have understanding as well as you;
I *am* not inferior to you:
yea, who knoweth not such things as these?
4 I am *as* one mocked of his neighbor,
who calleth upon God, and he answereth him:
the just upright *man is* laughed to scorn.
5 He that is ready to slip with *his* feet
is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.
6 The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and
they that provoke God are secure;
into whose hand God bringeth *abundantly*.

Job's friends all of them went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly light on them: Zophar had concluded with it, that the eyes of the wicked shall fail, Job 11:20. This principle Job here opposes, and maintains that God, in disposing men's outward affairs, acts as a sovereign, reserving the exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state.

I. He asserts it as an undoubted truth that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this world, Job 12:6. Even great sinners may enjoy great prosperity. Observe, 1. How he describes the sinners. They are robbers, and such as provoke God, the worst kind of sinners, blasphemers and persecutors. Perhaps he refers to the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who had robbed him, and had always lived by spoil and rapine, and yet they prospered; all the world saw they did, and there is no disputing against sense; one observation built upon matter of fact is worth twenty notions framed by an hypothesis. Or more generally, All proud oppressors are robbers and pirates. It is supposed that what is injurious to men is provoking to God, the patron of right and the protector of mankind. It is not strange if those that violate the bonds of justice break through the obligations of all religion, bid defiance even to God himself, and make nothing of provoking him. 2. How he describes their prosperity. It is very great; for,

(1.) Even their tabernacles prosper, those that live with them and those that come after them and descend from them. It seems as if a blessing were entailed upon their families; and that is sometimes preserved to succeeding generations which was got by fraud.

(2.) They are secure, and not only feel no hurt, but fear none, are under no apprehensions of danger either from threatening providences or an awakened conscience. But those that provoke God are never the more safe for their being secure.

(3.) Into their hand God brings abundantly. They have more than heart could wish (Ps 73:7), not for necessity only, but for delight--not for themselves only, but for others--not for the present only, but for hereafter; and this from the hand of Providence too. God brings plentifully to them. We cannot therefore judge of men's piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand.

II. He appeals even to the inferior creatures for the proof of this--the beasts, and fowls, and trees, and even the earth itself; consult these, and they shall tell thee, Job 12:7,8. Many a good lesson we may learn from them, but what are they here to teach us?

1. We may from them learn that the tabernacles of robbers prosper (so some); for,

(1.) Even among the brute creatures the greater devour the less and the stronger prey upon the weaker, and men are as the fishes of the sea, Hab 1:14. If sin had not entered, we may suppose there would have been no such disorder among the creatures, but the wolf and the lamb would have lain down together.

(2.) These creatures are serviceable to wicked men, and so they declare their prosperity. Ask the herds and the flocks to whom they belong, and they will tell you that such a robber, such an oppressor, is their owner: the fishes and fowls will tell you that they are served up to the tables, and feed the luxury, of proud sinners. The earth brings forth her fruits to them (Job 9:24), and the whole creation groans under the burden of their tyranny, Ro 8:20,22. Note, All the creatures which wicked men abuse, by making them the food and fuel of their lusts, will witness against them another day, Jam 5:3,4.

2. We may from them learn the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, and that sovereign dominion of his into which plain and self-evident truth all these difficult dispensations must be resolved. Zophar had made a vast mystery of it, Job 11:7. "So far from that," says Job, "that what we are concerned to know we may learn even from the inferior creatures; for who knows not from all these? Job 12:9. Any one may easily gather from the book of the creatures that the hand of the Lord has wrought this," that is, "that there is a wise Providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we are neither acquainted with nor are competent judges of." Note, From God's sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures we should learn to acquiesce in all his disposals of the affairs of the children of men, though contrary to our measures.

III. He resolves all into the absolute propriety which God has in all the creatures (Job 12:10): In whose hand is the soul of every living thing. All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for the support of it, lie at his mercy, are under his direction and dominion and entirely at his disposal, and at his summons must resign their lives. All souls are his; and may he not do what he will with his own?

The name Jehovah is used here (Job 12:9), and it is the only time that we meet with it in all the discourses between Job and his friends; for God was, in that age, more known by the name of Shaddai--the Almighty.

IV. Those words-- (Job 12:11), Doth not the ear try words, as the mouth tastes meat? may be taken either as the conclusion to the foregoing discourse or the preface to what follows. The mind of man has as good a faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning between what is sweet and what is bitter. Job therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said, and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any man's impartial judgment in this controversy; let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found that he was in the right. Note, The ear must try words before it receives them so as to subscribe to them. As by the taste we judge what food is wholesome to the body and what not, so by the spirit of discerning we must judge what doctrine is sound, and savoury, and wholesome, and what not, 1Co 10:15,11:13.

7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee;
and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee:
8 or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee;
and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.
9 Who knoweth not in all these
that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?
10 in whose hand *is* the soul of every living thing,
and the breath of all mankind.
11 Doth not the ear try words?
and the mouth taste his meat?
12 With the ancient *is* wisdom;
and in length of days understanding.

This is a noble discourse of Job's concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, in ordering and disposing of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the

counsel of his own will, which none dares gainsay or can resist.

Take both him and them out of the controversy in which they were so warmly engaged, and they all spoke admirably well; but, in that, we sometimes scarcely know what to make of them. It were well if wise and good men, that differ in their apprehensions about minor things, would see it to be for their honour and comfort, and the edification of others, to dwell most upon those great things in which they are agreed. On this subject Job speaks like himself. Here are no passionate complaints, no peevish reflections, but every thing masculine and great.

I. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom and irresistible power of God. It is allowed that among men there is wisdom and understanding, Job 12:12. But it is to be found only with some few, with the ancient, and those who are blessed with length of days, who get it by long experience and constant experience; and, when they have got the wisdom, they have lost their strength and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom. But now with God there are both wisdom and strength, wisdom to design the best and strength to accomplish what is designed. He does not get counsel or understanding, as we do, by observation, but he has it essentially and eternally in himself, Job 12:13.

What is the wisdom of ancient men compared with the wisdom of the ancient of days! It is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and no thought can be withheld from him. Happy are those who have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them. Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him (Job 12:14):

He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again. Note, There is no contending with the divine providence, nor breaking

the measures of it. As he had said before (Job 9:12), He takes away, and who can hinder him? so he says again. What God says cannot be gainsaid, nor what he does undone. There is no rebuilding what God will have to lie in ruins; witness the tower of Babel, which the undertakers could not go on with, and the desolations of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could never be repaired. See Isa 25:2,Eze 26:14,Re 18:21. There is no releasing those whom God has condemned to a perpetual imprisonment; if he shut up a man by sickness, reduce him to straits, and embarrass him in his affairs, there can be no opening. He shuts up in the grave, and none can break open those sealed doors--shuts up in hell, in chains of darkness, and none can pass that great gulf fixed.

II. He gives an instance, for the proof of this doctrine in nature, Job 12:15. God has the command of the waters, binds them as in a garment (Pr 30:4), holds them in the hollow of his hand (Isa 40:12); and he can punish the children of men either by the defect or by the excess of them. As men break the laws of virtue by extremes on each hand, both defects and excesses, while virtue is in the mean, so God corrects them by extremes, and denies them the mercy which is in the mean.

1. Great droughts are sometimes great judgments: He withholds the waters, and they dry up; if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron; if the rain be denied, fountains dry up and their streams are wanted, fields are parched and their fruits are wanted, Am 4:7.

2. Great wet is sometimes a great judgment. He raises the waters, and overturns the earth, the productions of it, the buildings upon it. A sweeping rain is said to leave no food, Pr 28:3. See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people and taking from them abused, forfeited, mercies; and how utterly unable we are to contend with

him. If we might invert the order, Job 12:15 would fitly refer to Noah's flood, that ever memorable instance of the divine power. God then, in wrath, sent the waters out, and they overturned the earth; but in mercy he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep, and then, in a little time, they dried up.

III. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, crossing their purposes and serving his own by them and upon them, overruling all their counsels, overpowering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes does God make with men! what turns does he give them! how easily, how surprisingly!

1. In general (Job 12:16): With him are strength and reason (so some translate it), strength and consistency with himself: it is an elegant word in the original. With him are the very quintessence and extract of wisdom. With him are power and all that is; so some read it. He is what he is of himself, and by him and in him all things subsist. Having this strength and wisdom, he knows how to make use, not only of those who are wise and good, who willingly and designedly serve him, but even of those who are foolish and bad, who, one would think, could be made no way serviceable to the designs of his providence:

The deceived and the deceiver are his; the simplest men that are deceived are not below his notice; the subtlest men that deceive cannot with all their subtlety escape his cognizance. The world is full of deceit; the one half of mankind cheats the other, and God suffers it to be so, and from both will at last bring glory to himself. The deceivers make tools of the deceived, but the great God makes tools of them both,

wherewith he works, and none can hinder him. He has wisdom and might enough to manage all the fools and knaves in the world, and knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one and the wickedness of the other.

When Jacob by a fraud got the blessing the design of God's grace was served; when Ahab was drawn by a false prophecy into an expedition that was his ruin the design of God's justice was served; and in both the deceived and the deceiver were at his disposal. See Eze 14:9. God would not suffer the sin of the deceiver, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both and bring glory to himself out of both. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent thus reigns; and it is well he does, for otherwise there is so little wisdom and so little honesty in the world that it would all have been in confusion and ruin long ago.

2. He next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms; for thence he fetches his proofs, rather than from the like operations of Providence concerning private persons and families, because the more high and public the station is in which men are placed the more the changes that befal them are taken notice of, and consequently the more illustriously does Providence shine forth in them. And it is easy to argue, If God can thus turn and toss the great ones of the earth, like a ball in a large place (as the prophet speaks, Isa 22:18), much more the little ones; and with him to whom states and kingdoms must submit it is surely the greatest madness for us to contend.

Some think that Job here refers to the extirpation of those powerful nations, the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, and the Horites (mentioned Ge 14:5,6,De 2:10,20), in which perhaps it was particularly noticed how strangely they were infatuated and enfeebled: if so, it is designed to show that

whenever the like is done in the affairs of nations it is God that does it, and we must therein observe his sovereign dominion, even over those that think themselves most powerful, politic, and absolute.

Compare this with that of Eliphaz, Job 5:12-14, &c. Let us gather up the particular changes here specified, which God makes upon persons, either for the destruction of nations and the planting of others in their room or for the turning out of a particular government and ministry and the elevation of another in its room, which may be a blessing to the kingdom; witness the glorious Revolution in our own land twenty years ago, in which we saw as happy an exposition as ever was given of this discourse of Job's.

(1.) Those that were wise are sometimes strangely infatuated, and in this the hand of God must be acknowledged (Job 12:17): He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, as trophies of his victory over them, spoiled of all the honour and wealth they have got by their policy, nay, spoiled of the wisdom itself for which they have been celebrated and the success they promised themselves in their projects. His counsel stands, while all their devices are brought to nought and their designs baffled, and so they are spoiled both of the satisfaction and of the reputation of their wisdom. He maketh the judges fools.

By a work on their minds he deprives them of their qualifications for business, and so they become really fools; and by his disposal of their affairs he makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so he makes them look like fools. The counsel of Ahithophel, one in whom this scripture was remarkably fulfilled, became foolishness, and he, according to his name, the brother of a fool. See Isa 19:13, The princes of Zoan have become fools; they have seduced Egypt, even those that are the stay of the tribes thereof. Let not the wise

man therefore glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon God for the continuance of their abilities. Even the aged, who seem to hold their wisdom by prescription, and think they have got it by their own industry and therefore have an indefeasible title to it, may yet be deprived of it, and often are, by the infirmities of age, which make them twice children:

He taketh away the understanding of the aged, Job 12:20. The aged, who were most depended on for advice, fail those that depended on them. We read of an old and yet foolish king, Ec 4:13.

(2.) Those that were high and in authority are strangely brought down, impoverished, and enslaved, and it is God that humbles them (Job 12:18): He looseth the bond of kings, and taketh from them the power wherewith they ruled their subjects, perhaps enslaved them and ruled them with rigour; he strips them of all the ensigns of their honour and authority, and all the supports of their tyranny, unbuckles their belts, so that the sword drops from their side, and then no marvel if the crown quickly drops from their head, on which immediately follows the girding of their loins with a girdle, a badge of servitude, for servants went with their loins girt.

Thus he leads great princes away spoiled of all their power and wealth, and that in which they pleased and prided themselves, Job 12:19. Note, Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction. To us they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more than the common changes of human life.

(3.) Those that were strong are strangely weakened, and it is God that weakens them (Job 12:21) and overthrows the mighty. Job 12:19. Strong bodies are weakened by age and sickness; powerful armies moulder and come to nothing,

and their strength will not secure them from a fatal overthrow. No force can stand before Omnipotence, no, not that of Goliath.

(4.) Those that were famed for eloquence, and entrusted with public business, are strangely silenced, and have nothing to say (Job 12:20): He removeth away the speech of the trusty, so that they cannot speak as they intended and as they used to do, with freedom and clearness, but blunder, and falter, and make nothing of it. Or they cannot speak what they intended, but the contrary, as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Let not the orator therefore be proud of his rhetoric, nor use it to any bad purposes, lest God take it away, who made man's mouth.

(5.) Those that were honoured and admired strangely fall into disgrace (Job 12:21): He poureth contempt upon princes. He leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes themselves dishonour God and despise him, if they offer indignities to the people of God and trample upon them, they shall be lightly esteemed, and God will pour contempt upon them. See Ps 107:40. Commonly none more abject in themselves, nor more abused by others when they are down, than those who were haughty and insolent when they were in power.

(6.) That which was secret, and lay hidden, is strangely brought to light and laid open (Job 12:22): He discovers deep things out of darkness. Plots closely laid are discovered and defeated; wickedness closely committed and artfully concealed is discovered, and the guilty are brought to condign punishment--secret treasons (Ec 10:20), secret murders, secret whoredoms. The cabinet-councils of princes are before God's eye, 2Ki 6:11.

(7.) Kingdoms have their ebbings and flowings, their waxings and wanings; and both are from God (Job 12:23): He sometimes increases their numbers, and enlarges their bounds, so that they make a figure among the nations and become formidable; but after a while, by some undiscerned cause perhaps, they are destroyed and straitened, made few and poor, cut short and many of them cut off, and so they are rendered despicable among their neighbours, and those that were the head become the tail of the nations. See Ps 107:38,39.

(8.) Those that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers, are strangely cowed and dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing (Job 12:24): He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people, that were their leaders and commanders, and were most famed for their martial fire and great achievements; when any thing is to be done they are heartless, and ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf. Ps 76:5.

(9.) Those that were driving on their projects with full speed are strangely bewildered and at a loss; they know not where they are nor what they do, are unsteady in their counsels and uncertain in their motions, off and on, this way and that way, wandering like men in a desert (Job 12:24), groping like men in the dark, and staggering like men in drink, Job 12:25,Isa 59:10. Note, God can soon nonplus the deepest politicians and bring the greatest wits to their wits' end, to show that wherein they deal proudly he is above them.

Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an overruling Providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

13 With him [God] *is* wisdom and strength,
he hath counsel and understanding.

14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again:

he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.
15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up:
also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.
16 With him *is* strength and wisdom:
the deceived and the deceiver *are* his.
17 He leadeth counselors away
spoiled, and maketh the judges
fools.
18 He looseth the bond of kings,
and girdeth their loins with a girdle.
19 He leadeth princes away
spoiled, and overthroweth the
mighty.
20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty,
and taketh away the understanding of the aged.
21 He poureth contempt upon princes,
and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.
22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness,
and bringeth out to light the shadow of
death.
23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them:
he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them *again.*
24 He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth,
and causeth them to wander in a wilderness *where there is* no
way.
25 They grope in the dark without light,
and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

Job-13

Job Defends His Integrity

1 Lo, mine eye hath seen all *this,*
mine ear hath heard and understood it.
2 What ye know, *the same* do I know
also: I *am* not inferior unto you.

3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.

4 But ye *are* forgers of lies,
ye *are* all physicians of no value.

Job here warmly expresses his resentment of the unkindness of his friends.

I. He comes up with them as one that understood the matter in dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, Job 13:1,2. They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself and his own knowledge, yet not in a way of self-applause, but of self-justification. All he had before said his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authorities, and he well understood it and what use to make of it. Happy are those who not only see and hear, but understand, the greatness, glory, and sovereignty of God. This, he thought, would justify what he had said before (Job 12:3), which he repeats here (Job 13:2): "What you know, the same do I know also, so that I need not come to you to be taught; I am not inferior unto you in wisdom." Note, Those who enter into disputation enter into temptation to magnify themselves and vilify their brethren more than is fit, and therefore ought to watch and pray against the workings of pride.

II. He turns from them to God (Job 13:3): Surely I would speak to the Almighty; as if he had said, "I can promise myself no satisfaction in talking to you. O that I might have liberty to reason with God! He would not be so hard upon me as you are." The prince himself will perhaps give audience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his friends. See here,

1. What confidence those have towards God whose hearts condemn them not of reigning hypocrisy: they can, with humble boldness, appear before him and appeal to him.

2. What comfort those have in God whose neighbours unjustly condemn them: if they may not speak to them with any hopes of a fair hearing, yet they may speak to the Almighty; they have easy access to him and shall find acceptance with him.

III. He condemns them for their unjust and uncharitable treatment of him, Job 13:4.

1. They falsely accused him, and that was unjust: You are forgers of lies. They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the divine Providence, and misrepresented it, as if it did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world, and thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly a hypocrite. For this gross mistake, both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. To speak lies is bad enough, though but at second hand, but to forge them with contrivance and deliberation is much worse; yet against this wrong neither innocency nor excellency will be a fence.

2. They basely deceived him, and that was unkind. They undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians; but they were all physicians of no value, "idol-physicians, who can do me no more good than an idol can." They were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case nor knew how to prescribe to him--mere empirics, who pretended to great things, but in conference added nothing to him: he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus to broken hearts and wounded consciences all creatures, without Christ, are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all and be never the better, but rather grow worse, Mk 5:26.

IV. He begs they would be silent and give him a patient hearing, Job 13:5,6.

1. He thinks it would be a credit to them if they would say no more, having said too much already: "Hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom, for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill-nature, which now appear in all you say." They pleaded that they could not forbear speaking (Job 4:2,11:2,3); but he tells them that they would better have consulted their own reputation if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose or that which tends to the dishonour of God and the grief of our brethren. Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is accounted wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, Pr 17:28. And, as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear.

2. He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him to hear what he had to say: Hear now my reasoning. Perhaps, though they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said. He therefore begged that they would not only hear, but hearken. Note, We should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves whom, upon any account, we are tempted to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down.

V. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, Job 13:7,8. They valued themselves upon it that they spoke for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him and his proceedings against Job; and, being (as they thought) of counsel for the sovereign, they expected not

only the ear of the court and the last word, but judgment on their side. But Job tells them plainly,

1. That God and his cause did not need such advocates: "Will you think to contend for God, as if his justice were clouded and wanted to be cleared up, or as if he were at a loss what to say and wanted you to speak for him? Will you, who are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause?" Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. Will you accept his person? If those who have not right on their side carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He is a God, and can plead for himself (Jdg 6:31); and, if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness.

2. That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job they magisterially condemned him as a hypocrite and a bad man. "This" (says he) "is speaking wickedly" (for uncharitableness and censoriousness are wickedness, great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren); "it is talking deceitfully, for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences, at the same time, cannot but acquit. Your principles are false and your arguings fallacious, and will it excuse you to say, It is for God?" No, for a good intention will not justify, much less will it sanctify, a bad word or action. God's truth needs not our lie, nor God's cause either our sinful policies or our sinful passions. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, nor may we do evil that good may come, Ro 3:7,8. Pious frauds (as they call them) are impious cheats; and devout persecutions are horrid profanations of the name of God, as theirs who hated their brethren, and cast them out, saying, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5,Joh 16:2.

VI. He endeavours to possess them with a fear of God's judgment, and so to bring them to a better temper. Let them not think to impose upon God as they might upon a man like themselves, nor expect to gain his countenance in their bad practices by pretending a zeal for him and his honour. "As one man mocks another by flattering him, do you think so to mock him and deceive him?" Assuredly those who think to put a cheat upon God will prove to have put a cheat upon themselves. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. That they might not think thus to jest with God, and affront him, Job would have them to consider both God and themselves, and then they would find themselves unable to enter into judgment with him.

1. Let them consider what a God he is into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much disservice, and enquire whether they could give him a good account of what they did. Consider,

(1.) The strictness of his scrutiny and enquiries concerning them (Job 13:9) "Is it good that he should search you out? Can you bear to have the principles looked into which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom of the matter found out?" Note, It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or no that God searches the heart. It is good to an upright man who means honestly that God should search him; therefore he prays for it: Search me, O God! and know my heart. God's omniscience is a witness of his sincerity. But it is bad to him who looks one way and rows another that God should search him out, and lay him open to his confusion.

(2.) The severity of his rebukes and displeasure against them (Job 13:10): "If you do accept persons, though but secretly and in heart, he will surely reprove you; he will be so far from being pleased with your censures of me, though under colour of vindicating him, that he will resent them as

a great provocation, as any prince or great man would if a base action were done under the sanction of his name and under the colour of advancing his interest." Note, What we do amiss we shall certainly be reproved for, one way or other, one time or other, though it be done ever so secretly.

(3.) The terror of his majesty, which if they would duly stand in awe of they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath (Job 13:11): "Shall not his excellency make you afraid? You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him, how dare you talk at this rate and give yourselves so great a liberty of speech? Ought you not to walk and talk in the fear of God? Ne 5:9. Should not his dread fall upon you, and give a check to your passions?" Methinks Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note,

[1.] There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent Being, has all excellencies in himself and in each infinitely excels any creature. His excellencies in themselves are amiable and lovely. He is the most beautiful Being; but considering man's distance from God by nature, and his defection and degeneracy by sin, his excellencies are dreadful. His power, holiness, justice, yea, and his goodness too, are dreadful excellencies. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.

[2.] A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us and make us afraid. This would awaken impenitent sinners and bring them to repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him and afraid of offending him.

2. Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God (Job 13:12): "Your remembrances (all that in you for which you hope to be

remembered when you are gone) are like unto ashes, worthless and weak, and easily trampled on and blown away. Your bodies are like bodies of clay, mouldering and coming to nothing. Your memories, you think, will survive your bodies, but, alas! they are like ashes which will be shovelled up with your dust." Note, the consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and furnishes a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse: "Your remonstrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate but like so many heaps of dirt."

5 Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace!
And it should be your wisdom.
6 Hear now my reasoning,
and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.
7 Will ye speak wickedly for God?
and talk deceitfully for him?
8 Will ye accept his person?
Will ye contend for God?
9 Is it good that he should search you out?
Or as one man mocketh another, do ye *so* mock him?
10 He will surely reprove you,
if ye do secretly accept persons.
11 Shall not his excellency make you afraid?
and his dread fall upon you?
12 Your remembrances *are* like unto ashes,
your bodies to bodies of clay.
13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak,
and let come on me what *will.*

Job here takes fresh hold, fast hold, of his integrity, as one that was resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him. His firmness in this matter is commendable and his warmth excusable.

I. He entreats his friends and all the company to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say (Job 13:13), but diligently to hearken to it, Job 13:17. He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart. "Be silent therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath for confirmation be an end of the strife."

II. He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and though his friends called it obstinacy that should not shake his constancy: "I will speak in my own defence, and let come on me what will, Job 13:13. Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it; I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do. He will justify me (Job 13:18) and then nothing can come amiss to me." Note, Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event. Come what will, bene præparatum pectus--they are ready for it. He resolves (Job 13:15) that he will maintain his own ways.

He would never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God; for, though he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet, in the general, his ways were good, and he would maintain his uprightness; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises, as it was Hezekiah's, Now, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee? Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause, or give it up, but he would openly avow his sincerity; for (Job 13:19) "If hold my tongue, and do not speak for myself, my silence now will for ever silence me, for I shall certainly give up the ghost," Job 13:19. "If I cannot be cleared, yet let me be eased, by what I say," as Elihu, Job 32:17,20.

III. He complains of the extremity of pain and misery he was in (Job 13:14): Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth? That is,

1. "Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me when he knows I am not a wicked man." He was ready, not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand, yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor could he himself discover any; no marvel then that he was in such confusion.

2. "Why do I stifle and smother the protestations of my innocency?" When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips. "Now," says he, "why may not I take liberty to speak, since I do but vex myself, add to my torment, and endanger my life, by refraining?" Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, to be denied the comfort (if he deserves it) of a good conscience and a good name.

IV. He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here,

1. What he depends upon God for--justification and salvation, the two great things we hope for through Christ.

(1.) Justification (Job 13:18): I have ordered my cause, and, upon the whole matter, I know that I shall be justified. This he knew because he knew that his Redeemer lived, Job 19:25. Those whose hearts are upright with God, in walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit, may be sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them, but that, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified: they may know that they shall.

(2.) Salvation (Job 13:16): He also shall be my salvation. He means it not of temporal salvation (he had little expectation of that); but concerning his eternal salvation he was very confident that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his salvation, in the vision and fruition of whom he should be happy. And the reason why he depended on God for salvation was because a hypocrite shall not come before him. He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and that none but hypocrites are rejected of God, and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection; nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

2. With what constancy he depends upon him: Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, Job 13:15. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to--to trust in God, though he slay us, that is, we must be well pleased with God as a friend even when he seems to come forth against us as an enemy, Job 23:8-10. We must believe that all shall work for good to us even when all seems to make against us, Jer 24:5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it cost us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, Heb 11:35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise when all the ways leading to it are shut up, Ro 4:18. We must rejoice in God when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him, yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him. In a dying hour we must derive from him living comforts; and this is to trust in him though he slay us.

V. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, Job 13:20-22. He had desired (Job 13:3) to reason with God, and is still of the same mind. He will not hide himself, that is, he will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it, but under two provisos:--

1. That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain: "Withdraw thy hand far from me; for, while I am in this extremity, I am fit for nothing. I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address myself to thee." When we are to converse with God we have need to be composed, and as free as possible from every thing that may make us uneasy.

2. That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God: "Let not thy dread make me afraid; either let the manifestations of thy presence be familiar or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance." Moses himself trembled before God, so did Isaiah and Habakkuk. O God! thou art terrible even in thy holy places. "Lord," says Job, "let me not be put into such a consternation of spirit, together with this bodily affliction; for then I must certainly drop the cause, and shall make nothing of it." See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick-bed and a death-bed. How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time it is very bad to have the great work to do, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Job, who, if he might but have a little breathing-time, was ready either,

(1.) To hear God speaking to him by his word, and return an answer: Call thou, and I will answer; or,

(2.) To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer: Let me speak, and answer thou me, Job 13:22. Compare this with Job 9:34,35, where he speaks to the same purport. In short, the badness of his case was at present such a damp upon him as he could not get over; otherwise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it at last, when the present cloud was

over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy there.

14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth,
and put my life in mine hand?
15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:
but I will maintain mine own ways before him.
16 He also *shall be* my salvation:
for a hypocrite shall not come before him.
17 Hear diligently my speech,
and my declaration with your ears.
18 Behold now, I have ordered *my* cause;
I know that I shall be justified.
19 Who *is* he *that* will plead with me?
for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.
20 Only do not two *things* unto me;
then I will not hide myself from thee.
21 Withdraw thine hand far from me:
and let not thy dread make me afraid.
22 Then call thou, and I will answer:
or let me speak, and answer thou me.
23 How many *are* mine iniquities and sins?
Make me to know my transgression and my sin.

Here, I. Job enquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him. He looks up to God, and asks him what was the number of them (How many are my iniquities?) and what were the particulars of them: Make me to know my transgressions, Job 13:23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, Job 22:5. "But, Lord," says he, "let me know them from thee; for thy judgment is according to truth, theirs is not." This may be taken either,

1. As a passionate complaint of hard usage, that he was punished for his faults and yet was not told what his faults were. Or,

2. As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends. He desired that all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear not so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or, 3. As a pious request, to the same purport with that which Elihu directed him to, Job 34:32. That which I see not, teach thou me. Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst of himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them and on our guard against them for the future.

II. He bitterly complains of God's withdrawings from him (Job 13:24): Wherefore hidest thou thy face? This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions; for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love; when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord; but his soul was also sorely vexed, and that is it which he here laments.

1. That the favours of the Almighty were suspended. God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him.

2. That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him. God held him for his enemy, shot his arrows at him (Job 6:4), and set him as a mark, Job 7:20. Note, The Holy Ghost sometimes denies his favours and discovers his terrors to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs, not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress of the divine life. Evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communications interrupted, dread of divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort, for the present, despaired of, Ps 77:7-9,88:7,15,16. These are grievous burdens to a gracious soul, that values God's loving-kindness as better than life, Pr 18:14. A wounded spirit who

can bear? Job, by asking here, Why hidest thou thy face? teaches us that, when at any time we are under the sense of God's withdrawings, we are concerned to enquire into the reason of them--what is the sin for which he corrects us and what the good he designs us. Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces (Isa 53:3), but God hid his, witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross when he cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? They will for ever be forsaken.

III. He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him (Job 13:25): "Wilt thou break a leaf, pursue the dry stubble? Lord, is it for thy honour to trample upon one that is down already, or to crush one that neither has nor pretends to any power to resist thee?" Note, We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God as to believe that he will not break the bruised reed, Mt 12:20.

IV. He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him. He owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard,

1. That his former sins, long since committed, should now be remembered against him, and he should he reckoned with for the old scores (Job 13:26): Thou writest bitter things against me. Afflictions are bitter things. Writing them denotes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution; it denotes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains, and, "Herein thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth," that is, "thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and obligest me to renew my repentance for them."

Note, (1.) God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet; trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them, and prove them, and do them good in their latter end.

(2.) That the sins of youth are often the smart of age both in respect of sorrow within (Jer 31:18,19) and suffering without, Job 20:11. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin.

(3.) That when God writes bitter things against us his design therein is to make us possess our iniquities, to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit, to take away our sin.

2. That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice of, and so severely animadverted upon (Job 13:27): "Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, not only to afflict me and expose me to shame, not only to keep me from escaping the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou mayest critically remark all my motions and look narrowly to all my paths, to correct me for every false step, nay, for but a look awry or a word misapplied; nay, thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet, scorest down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or no sooner have I trodden wrong, though ever so little, than immediately I smart for it; the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin. Guilt, both of the oldest and of the freshest date, is put together to make up the cause of my calamity."

Now, (1.) It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him. He is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, Ps 130:3. But he is so far from this that he deals not with us according to the desert, no, not of our manifest sins, which are not found by secret search, Jer 2:34. This therefore was the

language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard Master.

(2.) But we should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to ponder the path of our feet.

V. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, Job 13:28. He (that is, man) as a rotten thing, the principle of whose putrefaction is in itself, consumes, even like a moth-eaten garment, which becomes continually worse and worse. Or, He (that is, God) like rottenness, and like a moth, consumes me. Compare this with Ho 5:12, I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness; and see Ps 39:11. Note, Man, at the best, wears fast; but, under God's rebukes especially, he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, Ps 38:3.

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
and holdest me for thine enemy?
25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?
And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?
26 For thou writest bitter things against me,
and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.
27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks,
and lookest narrowly unto all my paths;
thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.
28 And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth,
as a garment that is moth-eaten.

Job-14

Job Muses on the Brevity of Life

1 Man *that is* born of a woman
is of few days, and full of trouble.

We are here led to think,

I. Of the original of human life. God is indeed its great original, for he breathed into man the breath of life and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution. 1. Its frailty: Man, that is born of a woman, is therefore of few days, Job 14:1. This may refer to the first woman, who was called Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Of her, who being deceived by the tempter was first in the transgression, we are all born, and consequently derive from her that sin and corruption which both shorten our days and sadden them. Or it may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that partus sequitur ventrem--the child takes after the mother. Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that, when God pleases, the mighty men become as women, Jer 51:30. 2. Its pollution (Job 14:4): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? If man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise than that he should be a sinner? See Job 25:4. How can he be clean that is born of a woman? Clean children cannot come from unclean parents any more than pure streams from an impure spring or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived with our nature from our parents, and is therefore bred in the bone. Our blood is not only attainted by a legal conviction, but tainted with an hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus, being made sin for us, is said to be made of a woman, Ga 4:4.

II. Of the nature of human life: it is a flower, it is a shadow, Job 14:2 The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night. Of neither do we make any account; in neither do we put any confidence.

III. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life: Man is of few days. Life is here computed, not by months or years, but by days, for we cannot be sure of any day but that it may be our last. These days are few, fewer than we think of, few at the most, in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more in comparison with the days of eternity, but much fewer to most, who come short of what we call the age of man. Man sometimes no sooner comes forth than he is cut down--comes forth out of the womb than he dies in the cradle--comes forth into the world and enters into the business of it than he is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately, yet he flees as a shadow, and never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passes away; so does this world, and our life in it, 1Co 7:31.

IV. Of the calamitous state of human life. Man, as he is short-lived, so he is sad-lived. Though he had but a few days to spend here, yet, if he might rejoice in those few, it were well (a short life and a merry one is the boast of some); but it is not so. During these few days he is full of trouble, not only troubled, but full of trouble, either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing. No day passes without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. Those that are fond of the world shall have enough of it. He is satur tremore--full of commotion. The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet, since man's days are so full of trouble,

it is well that they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, are not perpetual, are not long. When we come to heaven our days will be many, and perfectly free from trouble, and in the mean time faith, hope, and love, balance the present grievances.

V. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question (Job 14:4), Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?--a clean performance from an unclean principle? Note, Actual transgressions are the natural product of habitual corruption, which is therefore called original sin, because it is the original of all our sins. This holy Job here laments, as all that are sanctified do, running up the streams to the fountain (Ps 51:5); and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion: "Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness. O remember that I am flesh!" The Chaldee paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse: Who can make a man clean that is polluted with sin? Cannot one? that is, God. Or who but God, who is one, and will spare him? God, by his almighty grace, can change the skin of the Ethiopian, the skin of Job, though clothed with worms.

VI. Of the settled period of human life, Job 14:5.

1. Three things we are here assured of:--

(1.) That our life will come to an end; our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless, no, they are numbered, and will soon be finished, Da 5:26.

(2.) That it is determined, in the counsel and decree of God, how long we shall live and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God, at the disposal of his power, which cannot be controlled, and under the view of his

omniscience, which cannot be deceived. It is certain that God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives; our times are in his hand. The powers of nature depend upon him, and act under him. In him we live and move. Diseases are his servants; he kills and makes alive. Nothing comes to pass by chance, no, not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture. It is therefore certain that God's prescience has determined it before; for known unto God are all his works. Whatever he does he determined, yet with a regard partly to the settled course of nature (the end and the means are determined together) and to the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil and rewarding good in this life. We are no more governed by the Stoic's blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune.

(3.) That the bounds God has fixed we cannot pass; for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

2. These considerations Job here urges as reasons,

(1.) Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him and of his slips and failings (Job 14:3): "Since I have such a corrupt nature within, and am liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, dost thou open thy eyes and fasten them upon such a one, extremely to mark what I do amiss? Job 13:27. And dost thou bring me, such a worthless worm as I am, into judgment with thee who art so quick sighted to discover the least failing, so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it?" The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant.

(2.) Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him: "Lord, I have but a little time to live. I must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here

are, at the best, full of trouble. O let me have a little respite! Job 14:6. Turn from afflicting a poor creature thus, and let him rest awhile; allow him some breathing time, until he shall accomplish as a hireling his day. It is appointed to me once to die; let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus be continually dying, dying a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life, at best, is as the day of a hireling, a day of toil and labour. I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burden and heat of the day; but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution-day." Thus may we find some relief under great troubles by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God who knows our frame and will consider it, and our being out of frame too.

2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down:
he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.
3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one,
and bringest me into judgment with thee?
4 Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean?
Not one.
5 Seeing his days *are* determined,
the number of his months *are* with thee,
thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;
6 turn from him, that he may rest,
till he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day.
7 For there is hope of a tree,
if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life; let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with, now that he was sick and sore. It is not unseasonable, when we are in health, to think of dying; but it is an inexcusable incogitancy if, when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job had already shown that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shows,

I. That death is a removal for ever out of this world. This he had spoken of before (Job 7:9,10), and now he mentions it again; for, though it be a truth that needs not be proved, yet it needs to be much considered, that it may be duly improved.

1. A man cut down by death will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree he shows very elegantly, Job 14:7-9. If the body of the tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, though it seem dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are, as it were, scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it; but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree, his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth with a band of iron and brass to be wet with the dew of heaven, Da 4:15.

But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing: the scent of water will recover it. The animal life, in some insects and fowls, is so: the heat of the sun retrieves it. But the rational soul, when once retired, is too great, too noble, a thing to be recalled by any of the powers of nature; it is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of Omnipotence itself; for (Job 14:10) man dieth and wasteth, away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Two words are here used for man:--Geber, a mighty man, though mighty, dies; Adam, a man of the earth, because earthy, gives up the ghost. Note, Man is a dying creature. He is here described by what occurs,

(1.) Before death: he wastes away; he is continually wasting, dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life. Sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty.

(2.) In death: he gives up the ghost; the soul leaves the body, and returns to God who gave it, the Father of spirits.

(3.) After death: Where is he? He is not where he was; his place knows him no more; but is he nowhere? So some read it. Yes, he is somewhere; and it is a very awful consideration to think where those are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be when we give it up. It has gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

2. A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again, Job 14:11,12. Every night we lie down to sleep, and in the morning we awake and rise again; but at death we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or rise again to such a world, such a state, as we are now in, never to awake or arise until the heavens, the faithful measures of time, shall be no more, and consequently time itself shall come to an end and be swallowed up in eternity; so that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land-flood, which spread far and make a great show, but they are shallow, and when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling and overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and dry up, and their place knows them no more.

The waters of life are soon exhaled and disappear. The body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upwards, to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude. If the waters decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter;

but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in his own words:--

A flowing river, or a standing lake, May their dry banks and naked shores forsake; Their waters may exhale and upward move, Their channel leave to roll in clouds above; But the returning water will restore What in the summer they had lost before: But if, O man! thy vital streams desert Their purple channels and defraud the heart, With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supplied, Nor feel their leaping life's returning tide.

II. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world, at the end of time, when the heavens are no more. Then they shall awake and be raised out of their sleep. The resurrection of the dead was doubtless an article of Job's creed, as appears, Job 19:26, and to that, it should seem, he has an eye here, where, in the belief of that, we have three things:--

1. A humble petition for a hiding-place in the grave, Job 14:13. It was not only a passionate weariness of this life that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which at length he should arise. O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! The grave is not only a resting-place, but a hiding-place, to the people of God. God has the key of the grave, to let in now and to let out at the resurrection. He hides men in the grave, as we hide our treasure in a place of secresy and safety; and he who hides will find, and nothing shall be lost. "O that thou wouldst hide me, not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life! Let me lie in the grave, reserved for immortality, in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth," Ps 139:15,16. There let me lie,

(1.) Until thy wrath be past. As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the grave, so long there are some remains of that wrath which they were by nature children of, so long they are under some of the effects of sin; but, when the body is raised, it is wholly past--death, the last enemy, will then be totally destroyed.

(2.) Until the set time comes for my being remembered, as Noah was remembered in the ark (Ge 8:1), where God not only hid him from the destruction of the old world, but reserved him for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave. There is a time appointed, a time set, for their being enquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles and see good days after them in this world; but, if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days on the other side of it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and his resurrection (Job 14:14): If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come. Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter. His case was now bad, but he pleases himself with the expectation of a change. I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties at best must needs be uncertain comforts; and therefore, no doubt, it is something more sure than that which he here bears up himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must therefore be understood either,

(1.) Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed (Php 3:21), and a great and glorious change it will be; and then that question, If a man die, shall he live again? must be taken by way of admiration. "Strange! Shall these dry bones live! If so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, and my flesh also shall rest in hope." Ps 16:9. Or,

(2.) Of the change at death. "If a man die, shall he live again? No, not such a life as he now lives; and therefore I will patiently wait until that change comes which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it, as I have done." Observe here,

[1.] That it is a serious thing to die; it is a work by itself. It is a change; there is a visible change in the body, its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end, but a greater change with the soul, which quits the body, and removes to the world of spirits, finishes its state of probation and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come, and it will be a final change, not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state. No, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die, and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. An error here is fatal, conclusive, and not again to be rectified.

[2.] That therefore it is the duty of every one of us to wait for that change, and to continue waiting all the days of our appointed time. The time of life is an appointed time; that time is to be reckoned by days; and those days are to be spent in waiting for our change. That is, First, We must expect that it will come, and think much of it. Secondly, We must desire that it would come, as those that long to be with

Christ. Thirdly, We must be willing to tarry until it does come, as those that believe God's time to be the best. Fourthly, We must give diligence to get ready against it comes, that it may be a blessed change to us.

3. A joyful expectation of bliss and satisfaction in this (Job 14:15): Then thou shalt call, and I will answer thee. Now, he was under such a cloud that he could not, he durst not, answer (Job 9:15,35,13:22); but he comforted himself with this, that there would come a time when God would call and he should answer. Then, that is,

(1.) At the resurrection, "Thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer and come at the call." The body is the work of God's hands, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. Or,

(2.) At death: "Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thyself, and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready--Coming, coming; here I am." Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death's summons, and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them (as Lu 12:20), but willingly resigned by them, and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down, with this assurance, "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands. Thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new-made by thy grace;" otherwise he that made them will not save them. Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands, and therefore he will not forsake it in this world (Ps 138:8), but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
and the stock thereof die in the ground;
9 *yet* through the scent of water it will bud,
and bring forth boughs like a plant.

10 But man dieth, and wasteth away:
yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where *is* he?
11 *As* the waters fail from the sea,
and the flood decayeth and drieth up;
12 so man lieth down, and riseth not:
till the heavens *be* no more, they shall not awake,
nor be raised out of their sleep.
13 Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave,
that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that
thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!
14 If a man die, shall he live *again?*
All the days of my appointed time will I wait,
till my change come.
15 Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee:
thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.
16 For now thou numberest my steps:
dost thou not watch over my sin?

Job here returns to his complaints; and, though he is not without hope of future bliss, he finds it very hard to get over his present grievances.

I. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God's justice, Job 14:16,17. Therefore he longed to go hence to that world where God's wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child, under the severe discipline of the rod, longs to be of age. "When shall my change come? For now thou seemest to me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag, as bills of indictment are kept safely, to be produced against the prisoner." See De 32:34. "Thou takest all advantages against me; old scores are called over, every infirmity is animadverted upon, and no sooner is a false step taken than I am beaten for it."

Now, 1. Job does right to the divine justice in owning that he smarted for his sins and transgressions, that he had done

enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly enquired into: he is far from saying that he perishes being innocent.

But, 2. He does wrong to the divine goodness in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss, and made the worst of every thing. He spoke to this purport, Job 13:27. It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. God does indeed see all our sins; he sees sin in his own people; but he is not severe in reckoning with us, nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are punished less than our iniquities deserve. God does indeed seal and sew up, against the day of wrath, the transgression of the impenitent, but the sins of his people he blots out as a cloud.

II. He complains of the wasting condition of mankind in general. We live in a dying world. Who knows the power of God's anger, by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are passed away? See Ps 90:7-9,11. And who can bear up against his rebukes? Ps 39:11.

1. We see the decays of the earth itself.

(1.) Of the strongest parts of it, Job 14:18. Nothing will last always, for we see even mountains moulder and come to nought; they wither and fall as a leaf; rocks wax old and pass away by the continual beating of the sea against them. The waters wear the stones with constant dropping, non vi, sed sæpe cadendo--not by the violence, but by the constancy with which they fall. On this earth every thing is the worse for the wearing. Tempus edax rerum--Time devours all things. It is not so with the heavenly bodies.

(2.) Of the natural products of it. The things which grow out of the earth, and seem to be firmly rooted in it, are sometimes by an excess of rain washed away, Job 14:19. Some think he pleads this for relief: "Lord, my patience will not hold out always; even rocks and mountains will fail at last; therefore cease the controversy."

2. No marvel then if we see the decays of man upon the earth, for he is of the earth, earthy. Job begins to think his case is not singular, and therefore he ought to reconcile himself to the common lot. We perceive by many instances,

(1.) How vain it is to expect much from the enjoyments of life: "Thou destroyest the hope of man," that is, "puttest an end to all the projects he had framed and all the prospects of satisfaction he had flattered himself with." Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences and confined to worldly comforts. Hope in Christ, and hope in heaven, death will consummate and not destroy.

(2.) How vain it is to struggle against the assaults of death (Job 14:20): Thou prevailest for ever against him. Note, Man is an unequal match for God. Whom God contends with he will certainly prevail against, prevail for ever against so that they shall never be able to make head again. Note further, The stroke of death is irresistible; it is to no purpose to dispute its summons. God prevails against man and he passes away, and lo he is not. Look upon a dying man, and see,

[1.] How his looks are altered: Thou changest his countenance, and this in two ways:--First, By the disease of his body. When a man has been a few days sick what a change is there in his countenance! How much more when he has been a few minutes dead! The countenance which was majestic and awful becomes mean and despicable--that

was lovely and amiable becomes ghastly and frightful. Bury my dead out of my sight. Where then is the admired beauty? Death changes the countenance, and then sends us away out of this world, gives us one dismission hence, never to return. Secondly, By the discomposure of his mind. Note, The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; it will make the most merry smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

[2.] How little he is concerned in the affairs of his family, which once lay so near his heart. When he is in the hands of the harbingers of death, suppose struck with a palsy or apoplexy, or delirious in a fever, or in conflict with death, tell him then the most agreeable news, or the most painful, concerning his children, it is all alike, he knows it not, he perceives it not, Job 14:21. He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him. The consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone. To him therefore let us commit them, with him let us leave them, and not burden ourselves with needless fruitless cares concerning them.

[3.] How dreadful the agonies of death are (Job 14:22): While his flesh is upon him (so it may be read), that is, the body he is so loth to lay down,: it shall have pain; and while his soul is within him, that is, the spirit he is so loth to resign, it shall mourn. Note, Dying work is hard work; dying pangs are, commonly, sore pangs. It is folly therefore for men to defer their repentance to a death-bed, and to have that to do which is the one thing needful when they are really unfit to do any thing: but it is true wisdom by making our peace with God in Christ and keeping a good conscience, to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

17 My transgression *is* sealed up in a bag,
and thou sewest up mine iniquity.
18 And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought,
and the rock is removed out of his place.
19 The waters wear the stones:
thou washest away the things which grow *out* of the dust of the earth;
and thou destroyest the hope of man.
20 Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth:
thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.
21 His sons come to honor, and he knoweth *it* not;
and they are brought low, but he perceiveth *it* not of them.
22 But his flesh upon him shall have pain,
and his soul within him shall mourn.

Job-15

Eliphaz Reprimands Job

1 Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,

Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job, because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it and applaud it, as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very much amiss if they may not have leave to dictate and give law to all about them, and to censure those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is naught, who cannot in every thing say as they say. Several great crimes Eliphaz here charges Job with, only because he would not own himself a hypocrite.

I. He charges him with folly and absurdity (Job 15:2,3), that, whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation; any one would say that his wisdom had departed from him, he talked so extravagantly and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus (Job 8:2), and Zophar, Job 11:2,3. It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another's reasonings as impertinent and

ridiculous more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother Raca, and Thou fool. It is true,

1. That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless.

2. That this is the knowledge that puffs up, with which men swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments.

3. That, whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man he must not utter it, but let it die with himself as it deserves.

4. Unprofitable talk is evil talk. We must give an account in the great day not only for wicked words, but for idle words. Speeches therefore which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to ourselves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. Those words which are as wind, light and empty, especially which are as the east wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be pernicious to fill either ourselves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the account. 5. Vain knowledge or unprofitable talk ought to be reproved and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes and who does most hurt by the bad example of it.

II. He charges him with impiety and irreligion (Job 15:4): "Thou castest off fear," that is, "the fear of God, and that regard to him which thou shouldst have; and then thou restrainest prayer." See what religion is summed up in, fearing God and praying to him, the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is no good is to be expected; and those who live without prayer certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer do thereby give evidence that they cast off fear. Surely those have no

reverence of God's majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those who are prayerless are fearless and graceless.

When the fear of God is cast off all sin is let in and a door opened to all manner of profaneness. It is especially bad with those who have had some fear of God, but have now cast it off--have been frequent in prayer, but now restrain it. How have they fallen! How is their first love lost! It denotes a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God would cleave to them, but they throw it off; prayer would be uttered, but they restrain it; and, in both, they baffle their convictions. Those who either omit prayer or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer. This is bad enough, but it is worse to restrain others from prayer, to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, Da 6:7. Now,

1. Eliphaz charges this upon Job, either,

(1.) As that which was his own practice. He thought that Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been his equal, and that he charged him so vehemently with hard usage of him, and challenged him so often to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown off all religious regard to him. This charge was utterly false, and yet wanted not some colour. We ought not only to take care that we keep up prayer and the fear of God, but that we never drop any unwary expressions which may give occasion to those who seek occasion to question our sincerity and constancy in religion. Or,

(2.) As that which others would infer from the doctrine he maintained. "If this be true" (thinks Eliphaz) "which Job says, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted and yet be a

good man, then farewell all religion, farewell prayer and the fear of God. If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it to keep his ordinances? Mal 3:14. Verily I have cleansed my hands in vain, Ps 73:13,14. Who will be honest if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? Job 12:6. If there be no forgiveness with God (Job 7:21), who will fear him? Ps 130:4. If he laugh at the trial of the innocent (Job 9:23), if he be so difficult of access (Job 9:32), who will pray to him?"

Note, It is a piece of injustice which even wise and good men are too often guilty of, in the heat of disputation, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions which are not fairly drawn from them and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

2. Upon this strained innuendo Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety (Job 15:5): Thy mouth utters thy iniquity--teaches it, so the word is. "Thou teachest others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion that thou thyself hast." It is bad to break even the least of the commandments, but worse to teach men so, Mt 5:19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought (Pr 30:32), and let us by no means utter it; that is putting an imprimatur to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God and the damage of others. Observe, When men have cast off fear and prayer their mouths utter iniquity. Those that cease to do good soon learn to do evil. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm not themselves with the grace of God against it? But thou choosest the tongue of the crafty, that is, "Thou utterest thy iniquity with some show and pretence of piety, mixing some good words with the bad, as tradesmen do with their wares to help them off." The

mouth of iniquity could not do so much mischief as it does without the tongue of the crafty.

The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety. See Ro 16:18. The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation; and therefore those that use it may be said to choose it, as that which will serve their purpose better than the tongue of the upright: but it will be found, at last, that honesty is the best policy. Eliphaz, in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon mere surmise (Job 4:6,7), but now he has got proof against him from his own discourses (Job 15:6): Thy own mouth condemns thee, and not I. But he should have considered that he and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of; and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned that are condemned by themselves, Tit 3:11,Lu 19:22. Many a man needs no more to sink him than for his own tongue to fall upon him.

2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge,
and fill his belly with the east wind?
3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk?
or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?
4 Yea, thou castest off fear,
and restrainest prayer before God.
5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity,
and thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.
6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I:
yea, thine own lips testify against thee.
7 *Art* thou the first man *that* was born?
Or wast thou made before the hills?

He charges him with intolerable arrogancy and self-conceitedness. It was a just, and reasonable, and modest demand that Job had made (Job 12:3), Allow that I have understanding as well as you; but see how they seek occasion against him: that is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them the monopoly of wisdom, they will have it

thought that he claims it to himself, Job 15:7-9. As if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind,

1. In length of acquaintance with the world, which furnishes men with so much the more experience: "Art thou the first man that was born; and, consequently, senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest, ages? Art thou prior to Adam?" So it may be read. "Did not he suffer for sin; and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a sufferer, own thyself a sinner? Wast thou made before the hills, as Wisdom herself was? Pr 8:23, &c. Must God's counsels, which are as the great mountains (Ps 36:6), and immovable as the everlasting hills, be subject to thy notions and bow to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday even as we are," Job 8:9. Or,

2. In intimacy of acquaintance with God (Job 15:8): "Hast thou heard the secret of God? Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet-council of heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings?" There are secret things of God, which belong not to us, and which therefore we must not pretend to account for. Those are daringly presumptuous who do. He also represents him,

(1.) As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had: "Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself, as if none were wise besides?" Job had said (Job 13:2), What you know, the same do I know also; and now they return upon him, according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves: What knowest thou that we know not? How natural are such replies as these in the heat of argument! But how simple do they look afterwards, upon the review!

(2.) As opposing the stream of antiquity, a venerable name, under the shade of which all contending parties strive to

shelter themselves: "With us are the gray-headed and very aged men, Job 15:10. We have the fathers on our side; all the ancient doctors of the church are of our opinion." A thing soon said, but not so soon proved; and, when proved, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it as most people imagine. David preferred right scripture-knowledge before that of antiquity (Ps 119:100): I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. Or perhaps one or more, if not all three, of these friends of Job, were older than he (Job 32:6), and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. This also serves contenders to make a noise with to very little purpose. If they are older than their adversaries, and can say they knew such a thing before their opponents were born, this will not serve to justify them in being arrogant and overbearing; for the oldest are not always the wisest, Job 32:9.

IV. He charges him with a contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends (Job 15:11): Are the consolations of God small with thee?

1. Eliphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts which he and his friends administered to him more than it seems he did, and did not welcome every word they said as true and important. It is true they had said some very good things, but, in their application to Job, they were miserable comforters. Note, We are apt to think that great and considerable which we ourselves say, when others perhaps with good reason think it small and trifling. Paul found that those who seemed to be somewhat, yet, in conference, added nothing to him, Ga 2:6.

2. He represents this as a slight put upon divine consolations in general, as if they were of small account with him, whereas really they were not. If he had not highly valued

them, he could not have borne up as he did under his sufferings. Note,

(1.) The consolations of God are not in themselves small. Divine comforts are great things, that is, the comfort which is from God, especially the comfort which is in God.

(2.) The consolations of God not being small in themselves, it is very lamentable if they be small with us. It is a great affront to God, and an evidence of a degenerate depraved mind, to disesteem and undervalue spiritual delights and despise the pleasant land. "What!" (says Eliphaz) "is there any secret thing with thee? Hast thou some cordial to support thyself with, that is a proprium, an arcanum, that nobody else can pretend to, or knows any thing of?" Or, "Is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom, which hinders the operation of divine comforts?" None disesteem divine comforts but those that secretly affect the world and the flesh.

V. He charges him with opposition to God himself and to religion (Job 15:12,13): "Why doth thy heart carry thee away into such indecent irreligious expressions?" Note, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, Jam 1:14. If we fly off from God and our duty, or fly out into anything amiss, it is our own heart that carries us away. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. There is a violence, an ungovernable impetus, in the turnings of the soul; the corrupt heart carries men away, as it were, by force, against their convictions. "What is it that thy eyes wink at? Why so careless and mindless of what is said to thee, hearing it as if thou wert half asleep? Why so scornful, disdaining what we say, as if it were below thee to take notice of it? What have we said that deserves to be thus slighted--nay, that thou turnest thy spirit against God?"

It was bad that his heart was carried away from God, but much worse that it was turned against God. But those that forsake God will soon break out in open enmity to him. But how did this appear? Why, "Thou lettest such words go out of thy mouth, reflecting on God, and his justice and goodness." It is the character of the wicked that they set their mouth against the heavens (Ps 73:9), which is a certain indication that the spirit is turned against God. He thought Job's spirit was soured against God, and so turned from what it had been, and exasperated at his dealings with him. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such a harsh construction upon the speeches of one that had such a settled reputation for piety and was now in temptation. This was, in effect, to give the cause on Satan's side, and to own that Job had done as Satan said he would, had cursed God to his face.

8 Hast thou heard the secret of God?
And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?
9 What knowest thou, that we know not?
What understandest thou, which *is* not in us?
10 With us *are* both the grayheaded and very aged men,
much elder than thy father.

He charges him with justifying himself to such a degree as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature (Job 15:14): What is man, that he should be clean? that is, that he should pretend to be so, or that any should expect to find him so. What is he that is born of a woman, a sinful woman, that he should be righteous? Note,

1. Righteousness is cleanness; it makes us acceptable to God and easy to ourselves, Ps 18:24.

2. Man, in his fallen state, cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice or recommend himself to his favour.

3. He is to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pollution. With these plain truths Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same (Job 14:4): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? But does it therefore follow that Job is a hypocrite, and a wicked man, which is all that he denied? By no means. Though man, as born of a woman, is not clean, yet, as born again of the Spirit, he is clean.

4. Further to evince this he here shows,

(1.) That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God, Job 15:15. God places no confidence in saints and angels; he employs both, but trusts neither with his service, without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens themselves. How pure soever they seem to us, in his eye they have many a speck and many a flaw: The heavens are not clean in his sight. If the stars (says Mr. Caryl) have no light in the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God! See Isa 24:23.

(2.) That man is much more so (Job 15:16): How much more abominable and filthy is man! If saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man, who is degenerated. Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God, and if ever he repent he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful. The body of sin is so, and is therefore called a dead body, a loathsome thing. Is it not a filthy thing, and enough to make any one sick, to see a man eating swine's food or drinking some nauseous and offensive stuff? Such is the filthiness of man that he drinks iniquity (that

abominable thing which the Lord hates) as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink; it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but does not satisfy, the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a dropsy. The more men sin the more they would sin.

11 *Are* the consolations of God small with thee?
Is there any secret thing with thee?
12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away?
And what do thy eyes wink at,
13 that thou turnest thy spirit against God, and
lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth?
14 What *is* man, that he should be clean?
and *he which is* born of a woman, that he should be righteous?
15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints;
yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.
16 How much more abominable and filthy *is* man,
which drinketh iniquity like water?
17 I will show thee, hear me;
and that *which* I have seen I will declare;

Eliphaz, having reproved Job for his answers, here comes to maintain his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is that those who are wicked are certainly miserable, whence he would infer that those who are miserable are certainly wicked, and that therefore Job was so. Observe,

I. His solemn preface to this discourse, in which he bespeaks Job's attention, which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to and put so little value upon what Job had said (Job 15:17): "I will show thee that which is worth hearing, and not reason, as thou dost, with unprofitable talk." Thus apt are men, when they condemn the reasonings of others, to commend their own. He promises to teach him,

1. From his own experience and observation: "That which I have myself seen, in divers instances, I will declare." It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned. What good observations we have made, and have found benefit by ourselves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others; and we may speak boldly when we declare what we have seen.

2. From the wisdom of the ancients (Job 15:18): Which wise men have told from their fathers. Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns are very much derived from those of the ancients. Good children will learn a good deal from their good parents; and what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity and not hide from the generations to come. See Ps 78:3-6. If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to preserve it pure and entire, all that succeed fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz vouched were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure (Job 15:19), unto whom alone the earth was given, and therefore you may suppose them favourites of Heaven and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those who are in places of dignity and power, as Solomon; yet there is a wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, 1Co 2:7,8.

18 which wise men have told from their fathers,
and have not hid *it:*
19 unto whom alone the earth was given,
and no stranger passed among them.
20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all *his* days, and
the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.

The discourse itself. He here aims to show,

1. That those who are wise and good do ordinarily prosper in this world. This he only hints at (Job 15:19), that those

of whose mind he was were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only; they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably, and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them or give disturbance to them. Job had said, The earth is given into the hand of the wicked, Job 9:24. "No," says Eliphaz, "it is given into the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them; and they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them, as thou art by the Sabeans and Chaldeans." But because many of God's people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it does not therefore follow that those who are crossed and impoverished, as Job, are not God's people.

2. That wicked people, and particularly oppressors and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. On this head he enlarges, showing that even those who impiously dare God's judgments yet cannot but dread them and will feel them at last. He speaks in the singular number--the wicked man, meaning (as some think) Nimrod; or perhaps Chedorlaomer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord. I fear he meant Job himself, whom he expressly charges both with the tyranny and with the timorousness here described, Job 22:9,10. Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might, in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

(1.) Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He does not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, Job 15:25-28. It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an oppressor (Job 15:20), a blasphemer, and a persecutor, one that neither fears God nor regards man.

[1.] He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power, Job 15:25. Tell him of the divine law, and its obligations; he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no, not him that made him, to restrain him or rule over him. Tell him of the divine wrath, and its terrors; he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will, he will have his way, in spite of him, and will not be controlled by law, or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretches out his hand against God, in defiance of him and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretches out his hand against him, to show that, if it were in his power, he would ungod him. This applies to the audacious impiety of some sinners who are really haters of God (Ro 1:30), and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity itself, Ro 8:7.

But, alas! the sinner's malice is as impotent as it is impudent; what can he do? He strengthens himself (he would be valiant, so some read it) against the Almighty. He thinks with his exorbitant despotic power to change times and laws (Da 7:25), and, in spite of Providence, to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience.

Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners that they enter the lists with Omnipotence. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker. That is generally taken for a further description of the sinner's daring presumption (Job 15:26): He runs upon him, upon God himself, in a direct opposition to him, to his precepts and providences, even upon his neck, as a desperate combatant, when he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face, though, at the same time, he falls on his sword's point, or the sharp spike of his buckler. Sinners, in general, run from God; but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, fights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretel what will be the issue.

[2.] He wraps himself up in security and sensuality (Job 15:27): He covers his face with his fatness. This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Note, The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but because the belly is made a god of and happiness placed in the delights of sense? Those that fill themselves with wine and strong drink abandon all that is serious and flatter themselves with hopes that tomorrow shall be as this day, Isa 56:12. Woe to those that are thus at ease in Zion, Am 6:1,3,4,Lu 12:19. The fat that covers his face makes him look bold and haughty, and that which covers his flanks makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little; but this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God's wrath.

[3.] He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, Job 15:28. He dwells in cities which he himself has made desolate by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, Isa 5:8. Proud and cruel men take a strange pleasure in ruins, when they are of their own making, in destroying cities (Ps 9:6) and triumphing in the destruction, since they cannot make them their own but by making them ready to become heaps, and frightening the inhabitants out of them.

Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How does this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told (Job 15:35) that he does it by malice and falsehood, the two chief ingredients of his wickedness who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, They conceive mischief, and then they effect it by preparing deceit, pretending to protect those

whom they design to subdue, and making leagues of peace the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men.

(2.) Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and temporal judgments.

[1.] His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, and they therefore envy him and wish themselves in his condition; but he who knows what is in men tells us that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast that he is rather to be pitied than envied.

First, His own conscience accuses him, and with the pangs and throes of that he travaileth in pain all his days, Job 15:20. He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he as been guilty of and the blood in which he has imbrued his hands. His sins stare him in the face at every turn. Diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos--Conscious guilt astonishes and confounds.

Secondly, He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power: The number of years is hidden to the oppressor. He knows, whatever he pretends, that they will not last always, and has reason to fear that they will not last long and this he frets at.

Thirdly, He is under a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation (Heb 10:27), which puts him into, and keeps him in, a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain in the land of Nod, or commotion (Ge 4:16), and is made like, Pashur, Magor-missabib--a terror round about, Jer 20:3,4. A dreadful sound is in his ears, Job 15:21. He knows that both heaven and earth are incensed against him, that God is

angry with him and that all the world hates him; he has done nothing to make his peace with either, and therefore he thinks that every one who meets him will slay him, Ge 4:14. Or he is like a man absconding for debt, who thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in, at first, with sin (Ge 3:10) and still attends it.

Even in prosperity he is apprehensive that the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel or some of his injured subjects who will be their own avengers. Those who are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living usually go down slain to the pit (Eze 32:25), the expectation of which makes them a terror to themselves. This is further set forth (Job 15:22): He is, in his own apprehension, waited for of the sword; for he knows that he who killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword, Re 13:10. A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a flaming sword turning every way (Ge 3:24) and himself inevitably running on it. Again (Job 15:23): He knows that the day of darkness (or the night of darkness rather) is ready at his hand, that it is appointed to him and cannot be put by, that it is hastening on apace and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death; it is that day of the Lord which to all wicked people will be darkness and not light and in which they will be doomed to utter, endless, darkness.

Note, Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death, within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows (Job 15:24), Trouble and anguish (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul spoken of Ro 2:8,9, which are the effect of God's indignation and wrath fastening upon the conscience) shall make him afraid of worse to come. What is the hell before him if this be the hell within him? And though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away, and jest them away, it will not do;

they shall prevail against him, and overpower him, as a king ready to the battle, with forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

Fourthly, If at any time he be in trouble, he despairs of getting out (Job 15:22): He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening time, light out of darkness; but what reason have those to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? Ps 82:5. It is the misery of damned sinners that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulf there fixed.

Fifthly, He perplexes himself with continual care, especially if Providence ever so little frown upon him, Job 15:23. Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste does he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, wandering abroad for bread, going a begging for a meal's meat, and saying, Where is it? The rich man, in his abundance, cried out, What shall I do? Lu 12:17. Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting, as an excuse of his covetous practices; and justly may he be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread (1Sa 2:5), which this sinner will not do.

He cannot dig; he is too fat (Job 15:27): but to beg he may well be ashamed. See Ps 109:10. David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread; for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable unasked, Ps 37:3,25. But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them. How should those find mercy who never showed mercy?

[2.] His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence and all his comfort will come to an end with it. How can he prosper when God runs upon him? so some understand that, Job 15:26. Whom God runs upon he will certainly run down; for when he judges he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man in all his cares, desires, and projects, and so complete his misery.

First, He is in care to get, but he shall not be rich, Job 15:29. His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich. He is not rich that has not enough, and he has not enough that does not think he has. It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind-hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich: it goes as it comes; it is got by one sin and spent upon another.

Secondly, He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain: His substance shall not continue; it will dwindle and come to nothing. God blasts it, and what came up in a night perishes in a night. Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished. Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; but, where this is not the case, that which is left goes with a curse to those who succeed. De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres--Ill-gotten property will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation. He purchases estates to him and his heirs for ever; but to what purpose? He shall not prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth; neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and, when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

Thirdly, He is in care to leave what he has got and kept to his children after him. But in this he is crossed; the branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to live and flourish and to have the reputation of making them all great men. They shall not be green, Job 15:32. The flame shall dry them up, Job 15:30. he shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the unripe grape, Job 15:33. They shall die in the beginning of their days and never come to maturity. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity.

Fourthly, He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed.

1. He may perhaps be taken from it (Job 15:30): By the breath of God's mouth shall he go away, and leave his wealth to others; that is, by God's wrath, which, like a stream of brimstone, kindles the fire that devours him (Isa 30:33), or by his word; he speaks, and it is done immediately. This night thy soul shall be required of thee; and so the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, the worldling in his worldliness.

2. It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven: It shall be accomplished (or cut off) before his time (Job 15:32); that is, he shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

Fifthly, He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it (not how to get good by it); but in this also he is crossed (Job 15:30): He shall not depart out of darkness. When he begins to fall, like Haman, all men say, "Down with him." It was said of him (Job 15:22), He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness. He frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity, and God also shall choose his delusions and bring his fears upon him (Isa 66:4), as he did upon Israel, Nu 14:28. God says Amen to his distrust and despair.

Sixthly, He is in care to secure his partners, and hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them; but that is in vain too, Job 15:34,35. The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; that is, deceitful dealing both with God and man--God affronted under colour of religion, man wronged under colour of justice. It is impossible that these should end well. Though hand join in hand for the support of these perfidious practices, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.

(3.) The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end thus miserably? Then (Job 15:31) let not him that is deceived trust in vanity. Let the mischiefs which befal others be our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed which always failed those who leaned on it.

[1.] Those who trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence, for they shall not get what they expected. Their arts will deceive them and perhaps ruin them in this world.

[2.] Those who trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, trust in vanity; for it will yield them no satisfaction. The guilt that cleaves to it will ruin the joy of it. They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind, and will own at length, with the utmost confusion, that a deceived heart turned them aside, and that they cheated themselves with a lie in their right hand.

21 A dreadful sound *is* in his ears:
in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.
22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness,
and he is waited for of the sword.

23 He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying*, Where *is it?*
He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.
24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid;
they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.
25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God,
and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.
26 He runneth upon him, *even* on *his* neck,
upon the thick bosses of his bucklers:
27 because he covereth his face with his fatness,
and maketh collops of fat on *his* flanks.
28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities,
and in houses which no man inhabiteth,
which are ready to become heaps.
29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither
shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth.
30 He shall not depart out of darkness;
the flame shall dry up his branches,
and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.
31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity:
for vanity shall be his recompense.
32 It shall be accomplished before his
time, and his branch shall not be
green.
33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the
vine, and shall cast off his flower as the
olive.
34 For the congregation of hypocrites *shall be*
desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles
of bribery.
35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth
vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

Job-16

Job Complains of God's Dealings

1 Then Job answered and said,

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The longer the saw of contention is drawn the hotter it grows; and the beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water; therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as idle, and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose; and Job here gives his the same character.

Those who are free in passing such censures must expect to have them retorted; it is easy, it is endless: but cui bono?--what good does it do? It will stir up men's passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light. Job here reproves Eliphaz,

1. For needless repetitions (Job 16:2): "I have heard many such things. You tell me nothing but what I knew before, nothing but what you yourselves have before said; you offer nothing new; it is the same thing over and over again." This Job thinks as great a trial of his patience as almost any of his troubles. The inculcating of the same things thus by an adversary is indeed provoking and nauseous, but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom precept must be upon precept, and line upon line. Many things we have heard which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them and influenced by them.

2. For unskilful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and, when they touched Job's case, quite mistook it: "Miserable comforters are you all, who, instead of offering any thing to alleviate the affliction, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous." The patient's case is sad indeed when his medicines are poisons and his physicians his worst disease. What Job says here of his friends is true of all creatures, in comparison with God, and, one time or other, we shall be made to see it and own it, that miserable comforters are they all. When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually; all others, without him, do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart, to no purpose.

3. For endless impertinence. Job wishes that vain words might have an end, Job 16:3. If vain, it were well that they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those who are so wise as to speak to the purpose will be so wise as to know when they have said enough of a thing and when it is time to break off.

4. For causeless obstinacy. What emboldeneth thee, that thou answerest? It is a great piece of confidence, and unaccountable, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them, to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-advance those objections which have been again and again answered, as Eliphaz did. 5. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship, doing by his brother as he would not have been done by and as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very affecting, Job 16:4,5.

(1.) He desires his friends, in imagination, for a little while, to change conditions with him, to put their souls in his soul's

stead, to suppose themselves in misery like him and him at ease like them. This was no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact. So strange, so sudden, frequently, are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spokes soon change places. Whatever our brethren's sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

(2.) He represents the unkindness of their conduct towards him, by showing what he could do to them if they were in his condition: I could speak as you do. It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with what those say that are in extremity of pain and affliction: "I could heap up words against you, as you do against me; and how would you like it? how would you bear it?"

(3.) He shows them what they should do, by telling them what in that case he would do (Job 16:5): "I would strengthen you, and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it." It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do if the tables were turned. But perhaps our hearts may deceive us; we know not what we should do. We find it easier to discern the reasonableness and importance of a command when we have occasion to claim the benefit of it than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in their affliction.

[1.] We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; whatever helps these graces confirms the feeble knees.

[2.] To assuage their grief--the causes of their grief, if possible, or at least their resentment of those causes. Good words cost nothing; but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but as they may be so reminded of that which, through the prevalency of grief, was forgotten. Though hard words (we say) break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the learned that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.

2 I have heard many such things:
miserable comforters *are* ye all.
3 Shall vain words have an end?
Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?
4 I also could speak as ye *do:*
if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.
5 *But* I would strengthen you with my mouth,
and the moving of my lips should assuage *your grief.*
6 Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged:
and *though* I forbear, what am I eased?

Job's complaint is here as bitter as any where in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent. Sometimes the one and sometimes the other is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are; but Job found help by neither, Job 16:6.

1. Sometimes giving vent to grief gives ease; but, "Though I speak" (says Job), "my grief is not assuaged, my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint; nay, what I speak is so misconstrued as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief."

2. At other times keeping silence makes the trouble the easier and the sooner forgotten; but (says Job) though I forbear I am never the nearer; what am I eased? If he complained he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen. If he maintained his integrity, that was his crime; if he made no answer to their accusations, his silence was taken for a confession of his guilt.

Here is a doleful representation of Job's grievances. O what reason have we to bless God that we are not making such complaints! He complains,

I. That his family was scattered (Job 16:7): "He hath made me weary, weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life itself; my journey through the world proves so very uncomfortable that I am quite tired with it." This made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate, his children and servants being killed and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good people that used to meet at his house for religious worship, was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

7 But now he hath made me weary:
thou hast made desolate all my company.

8 And thou hast filled me with wrinkles, *which* is a witness *against me:*
and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face.

I. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he had become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, Job 16:8. His face was furrowed, not with age, but

sickness: Thou hast filled me with wrinkles. His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore boils, so that his leanness rose up in him, that is, his bones, that before were not seen, stuck out, Job 33:21. These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displeasure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, "They are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless," or "witnesses to me, that I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly."

II. That his enemy was a terror to him, threatened him, frightened him, looked sternly upon him, and gave all the indications of rage against him (Job 16:9): He tears me in his wrath. But who is this enemy?

1. Eliphaz, who showed himself very much exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned: at least, what he said tore Job's good name and thundered nothing but terror to him; his eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both he and the rest of them used him. Or,

2. Satan. He was his enemy that hated him, and perhaps, by the divine permission, terrified him with apparitions, as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable that this is the enemy he means. Or,

(3.) God himself. If we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used. God hates none of his creatures; but Job's melancholy did thus represent to him the terrors of the Almighty: and nothing can be more grievous to a good man than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

9 He teareth *me* in his wrath, who hateth me:
he gnasheth upon me with his teeth;
mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.

I. That all about him were abusive to him, Job 16:10. They came upon him with open mouth to devour him, as if they would swallow him alive, so terrible were their threats and so scornful was their conduct to him. They offered him all the indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek; and herein many were confederate. They gathered themselves together against him, even the abjects, Ps 35:15. Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him: these very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings, Ps 22:13, They gaped upon me with their mouths; and (Mic 5:1), They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek, which was literally fulfilled, Mt 26:67. How were those increased that troubled him!

II. That God, instead of delivering him out of their hands, as he hoped, delivered him into their hands (Job 16:11): He hath turned me over into the hands of the wicked. They could have had no power against him if it had not been given them from above. He therefore looks beyond them to God who gave them their commission, as David did when Shimei cursed him; but he thinks it strange, and almost thinks it hard, that those should have power against him who were God's enemies as much as his. God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another (Ps 17:13) and his rod to his own children, Isa 10:5. Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands, to be crucified and slain, by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, Ac 2:23.

III. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked, but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall (Job 16:12): "I was at ease in the comfortable enjoyment of the gifts of God's bounty, not

fretting and uneasy, as some are in the midst of their prosperity, who thereby provoke God to strip them; yet he has broken me asunder, put me upon the rack of pain, and torn me limb from limb." God, in afflicting him, had seemed,

1. As if he were furious. Though fury is not in God, he thought it was, when he took him by the neck (as a strong man in a passion would take a child) and shook him to pieces, triumphing in the irresistible power he had to do what he would with him.

2. As if he were partial. "He has distinguished me from the rest of mankind by this hard usage of me: He has set me up for his mark, the butt at which he is pleased to let fly all his arrows: at me they are directed, and they come not by chance; against me they are levelled, as if I were the greatest sinner of all the men of the east or were singled out to be made an example." When God set him up for a mark his archers presently compassed him round. God has archers at command, who will be sure to hit the mark that he sets up. Whoever are our enemies, we must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow. It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.

3. As if he were cruel, and his wrath as relentless as his power was resistless. As if he contrived to touch him in the tenderest part, cleaving his reins asunder with acute pains; perhaps they were nephritic pains, those of the stone, which lie in the region of the kidneys. As if he had no mercy in reserve for him, he does not spare nor abate any thing of the extremity. And as if he aimed at nothing but his death, and his death in the midst of the most grievous tortures: He pours out my gall upon the ground, as when men have taken a wild beast, and killed it, they open it, and pour out the gall with a loathing of it. He thought his blood was poured out, as if it were not only not precious, but nauseous.

4. As if he were unreasonable and insatiable in his executions (Job 16:14): "He breaketh me with breach upon breach, follows me with one wound after another." So his troubles came at first; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came: and so it was still; new boils were rising every day, so that he had no prospect of the end of his troubles. Thus he thought that God ran upon him like a giant, whom he could not possibly stand before or confront; as the giants of old ran down all their poor neighbours, and were too hard for them. Note, Even good men, when they are in great and extraordinary troubles, have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

IV. That he had divested himself of all his honour, and all his comfort, in compliance with the afflicting providences that surrounded him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high and putting on as good a face as ever; but Job could not do so: he received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, Job 16:15,16.

1. He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed sackcloth upon his skin; that clothing he thought good enough for such a defiled distempered body as he had. Silks upon sores, such sores, he thought, would be unsuitable; sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and, as Job was (Job 16:8), by wrinkles and leanness. He not only put on sackcloth, but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his humiliation as long as the affliction continued.

2. He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences: He defiled his horn in

the dust, and refused the respect that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and eminency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of Providence and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high and haughty, and unhumbled under his affliction. "No," says Job, "I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me."

3. He banished mirth as utterly unseasonable, and set himself to sow in tears (Job 16:16): "My face is foul with weeping so constantly for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends unkindness: this has brought a shadow of death upon my eyelids." He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth;
they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully;
they have gathered themselves together against me.
11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly,
and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.
12 I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder:
he hath also taken *me* by my neck, and shaken me to pieces,
and set me up for his mark.
13 His archers compass me round about,
he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare;
he poureth out my gall upon the ground.
14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach;
he runneth upon me like a giant.
15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
and defiled my horn in the dust.
16 My face is foul with weeping,
and on my eyelids *is* the shadow of death;
17 not for *any* injustice in mine hands:
also my prayer *is* pure.

Job's condition was very deplorable; but had he nothing to support him, nothing to comfort him? Yes, and he here tells us what it was.

I. He had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but, upon search, he could not charge himself with any enormous crime, for which he should be made more miserable than other men, Job 16:17.

1. He had kept a conscience void of offence,

(1.) Towards men: "Not for any injustice in my hands, any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept." Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor. "No," says he, "I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression."

(2.) Towards God: Also my prayer is pure; but prayer cannot be pure as long as there is injustice in our hands, Isa 1:15. Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion, but he specifies prayer, the great act of religion, and professes that in that he was pure, though not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile: it was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no further than to be seen of men, and to serve a turn.

2. This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself if it were not true, Job 16:18.

(1.) If there were any injustice in his hands, he wished it might not be concealed: O earth! cover thou not my blood, that is, "the innocent blood of others, which I am suspected

to have shed." Murder will out; and "let it," says Job, "if I have ever been guilty if it," Ge 4:10,11. The day is coming when the earth shall disclose her blood (Isa 26:21), and a good man as far from dreading that day.

(2.) If there were any impurity in his prayers, he wished they might not be accepted: Let my cry have no place. He was willing to be judged by that rule, If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, Ps 66:18. There is another probable sense of these words, that he does hereby, as it were, lay his death upon his friends, who broke his heart with their harsh censures, and charges the guilt of his blood upon them, begging of God to avenge it and that the cry of his blood might have no place in which to lie hid, but might come up to heaven and be heard by him that makes inquisition for blood.

II. He could appeal to God's omniscience concerning his integrity, Job 16:19. The witness in our own bosoms for us will stand us in little stead if we have not a witness in heaven for us too; for God is greater than our hearts, and we are not to he our own judges. This therefore is Job's triumph, My witness is in heaven. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when he lies under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven who knows his integrity and will clear it up sooner or later. See Joh 5:31,37. This one witness is instead of a thousand.

III. He had a God to go to before whom he might unbosom himself, Job 16:20,21. See here,

1. How the case stood between him and his friends. He knew not how to be free with them, nor could he expect either a fair hearing with them or fair dealing from them. "My friends (so they call themselves) scorn me; they set themselves not only to resist me, but to expose me; they are of counsel against me, and use all their art and eloquence"

(so the word signifies) "to run me down." The scorns of friends are more cutting than those of enemies; but we must expect them, and provide accordingly.

2. How it stood between him and God. He doubted not but that,

(1.) God did now take cognizance of his sorrows: My eye pours out tears to God. He had said (Job 16:16) that he wept much; here he tells us in what channel his tears ran, and which way they were directed. His sorrow was not that of the world, but he sorrowed after a godly sort, wept before the Lord, and offered to him the sacrifice of a broken heart. Note, Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and, if men slight our grief, this may comfort us, that God regards them.

(2.) That he would in due time clear up his innocency (Job 16:21): O that one might plead for a man with God! If he could but now have the same freedom at God's bar that men commonly have at the bar of the civil magistrate, he doubted not but to carry his cause, for the Judge himself was a witness to his integrity. The language of this wish is like that in Isa 50:7,8, I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies me. Some give a gospel sense of this verse, and the original will very well bear it; and he will plead (that is, there is one that will plead) for man with God, even the Son of man for his friend, or neighbour. Those who pour out tears before God, though they cannot plead for themselves, by reason of their distance and defects, have a friend to plead for them, even the Son of man, and on this we must bottom all our hopes of acceptance with God.

IV. He had a prospect of death which would put a period to all his troubles. Such confidence had he towards God that he could take pleasure in thinking of the approach of death, when he should be determined to his everlasting state, as

one that doubted not but it would be well with him then: When a few years have come (the years of number which are determined and appointed to me) then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Note, 1. To die is to go the way whence we shall not return. It is to go a journey, a long journey, a journey for good and all, to remove from this to another country, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. It is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to out state in this world nor any change of our state in the other world.

2. We must all of us very certainly, and very shortly, go this journey; and it is comfortable to those who keep a good conscience to think of it, for it is the crown of their integrity.

18 O earth, cover not thou my blood,
and let my cry have no place.
19 Also now, behold, my witness *is* in heaven,
and my record *is* on high.
20 My friends scorn me:
but mine eye poureth out *tears* unto God.
21 Oh that one might plead for a man with God,
as a man *pleadeth* for his neighbor!
22 When a few years are come,
then I shall go the way *whence* I shall not return.

Job-17

1 My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct,
the graves *are ready* for me.
2 *Are there* not mockers with me?
And doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?
3 Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee;
who *is* he *that* will strike hands with me?
4 For thou hast hid their heart from understanding:
therefore shalt thou not exalt *them*.

Job's discourse is here somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passes suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble; but we may reduce what is here said to three heads:--

I The deplorable condition which poor Job was now in, which he describes, to aggravate the great unkindness of his friends to him and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was.

1. He was a dying man, Job 17:1. He had said (Job 16:22), "When a few years have come, I shall go that long journey." But here he corrects himself. "Why do I talk of years to come? Alas! I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. My breath is already corrupt, or broken off; my spirits are spent; I am a gone man." It is good for every one of us thus to look upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying, that is,

(1.) Our life is going; for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth; it is in our nostrils (Isa 2:22), the door at which it entered (Ge 2:7); there it is upon the threshold, ready to depart. Perhaps Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and short breath will, after a while, be no breath. Let the Anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us, and that breath will never be corrupted.

(2.) Our time is ending: My days are extinct, are put out, as a candle which, from the first lighting, is continually wasting and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us therefore carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct.

(3.) We are expected in our long home: The graves are ready for me. But would not one grave serve? Yes, but he

speaks of the sepulchres of his fathers, to which he must be gathered: "The graves where they are laid are ready for me also," graves in consort, the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready; it is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves. The graves for me (so it runs), denoting not only his expectation of death, but his desire of it. "I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave."

2. He was a despised man (Job 17:6): "He" (that is, Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledges to be the author of his calamities) "has made me a byword of the people, the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all; and aforetime (or to men's faces, publicly) I was as a tabret, that whoever chose might play upon." They made ballads of him; his name became a proverb; it is so still, As poor as Job. "He has now made me a byword," a reproach of men, whereas, aforetime, in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, deliciæ humani generis--the darling of the human race, whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth to be despised in their poverty.

3. He was a man of sorrows, Job 17:7. He wept so much that he had almost lost his sight: My eye is dim by reason of sorrow, Job 16:16. The sorrow of the world thus works darkness and death. He grieved so much that he had fretted all the flesh away and become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones: "All my members are as a shadow. I have become so poor and thin that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man."

5 He that speaketh flattery to *his* friends,
even the eyes of his children shall fail.

The ill use which his friends made of his miseries. They trampled upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as a hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

1. How Job describes it, and what construction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused by them.

(1.) They abused him with their foul censures, condemning him as a bad man, justly reduced thus and exposed to contempt, Job 17:2. "They are mockers, who deride my calamities, and insult over me, because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but intending mischief. I cannot get clear of them; they are continually tearing me, and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution."

(2.) They abused him too with their fair promises, for in them they did but banter him. He reckons them (Job 17:5) among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him. Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, Job 4:3. They had all promised him that he would be happy if he would take their advice. Now all this he looked upon as flattery, and as designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their provocation, Job 17:2. They did what they could to provoke him and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their provocation: it never ceased, and he never could look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them then, is enough to try, if not to tire, the patience even of Job himself.

2. How he condemns it.

(1.) It was a sign that God had hidden their heart from understanding (Job 17:4), and that in this matter they were infatuated, and their wonted wisdom had departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some and withholds from others, grants at some times and withholds at other times. Those that are void of

compassion are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man one may question whether there be the understanding of a man.

(2.) It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them: Therefore shalt thou not exalt them. Those are certainly kept back from honour whose hearts are hidden from understanding. When God infatuates men he will abase them. Surely those who discover so little acquaintance with the methods of Providence shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense and better temper, such a one as Elihu afterwards appeared to be.

(3.) It would entail a curse upon their families. He that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself, but for his posterity: "Even the eyes of his children shall fail, and, when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their father's friends, they shall look in vain as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you." Note, Those that wrong their neighbours may thereby, in the end, wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

3. How he appeals from them to God (Job 17:3): Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee, that is, "Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some one engage for God to bring on this matter." Thus those whose hearts condemn them not have confidence towards God, and can with humble and believing boldness beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance at the mediation of Christ, for he speaks of a surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for, though his friends' accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a mediator. Our English annotations give this reading of the verse: "Appoint, I pray thee, my surety with thee, namely, Christ who is with thee in heaven, and has undertaken to be my surety let him

plead my cause, and stand up for me; and who is he then that will strike upon my hand?" that is, "Who dares then contend with me? Who shall lay any thing to my charge if Christ be an advocate for me?" Ro 8:32,33. Christ is the surety of the better testament (Heb 7:22), a surety of God's appointing; and, if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.

6 He hath made me also a byword of the people;
and aforetime I was as a tabret.
7 Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow,
and all my members *are* as a shadow.
8 Upright *men* shall be astonished at this,
and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.
9 The righteous also shall hold on his way,
and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

The good use which the righteous should make of Job's afflictions from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, Job 17:8,9. Observe here,

1. How the saints are described.

(1.) They are upright men, honest and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character (Job 1:1), and probably he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates.

(2.) They are the innocent, not perfectly so, but innocence is what they aim at and press towards. Sincerity is evangelical innocency, and those that are upright are said to be innocent from the great transgression, Ps 19:13.

(3.) They are the righteous, who walk in the way of righteousness.

(4.) They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollutions of sin, and, when spotted with infirmities, washed with innocency, Ps 26:6.

2. How they should be affected with the account of Job's troubles. Great enquiry, no doubt, would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case; and what use will good people make of it?

(1.) It will amaze them: Upright men shall be astonished at this; they will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job should be so grievously afflicted in body, name, and estate, that God should lay his hand so heavily upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief, that such a remarkable saint should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness; what shall we say to these things? Upright men, though satisfied in general that God is wise and holy in all he does, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of Providence, paradoxes which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished.

(2.) It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from and discouraged in the service of God, by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be so much the more emboldened to proceed and persevere in it. That which was St. Paul's care (1Th 3:3) was Job's, that no good man should be moved, either from his holiness or his comfort, by these afflictions, that none should, for the sake hereof, think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St. Paul's comfort was his too, that the brethren in the Lord would wax confident by his bonds, Php 1:14. They would hereby be animated,

[1.] To oppose sin and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Job's sufferings, as that God has forsaken the earth, that it is in vain to serve him, and the like: The innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite, will not bear to hear this (Re 2:2), but will withstand him to his face, will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such providences and study these hard chapters, that he may read them

readily, will stir up himself to maintain religion's just but injured cause against all its opposers. Note, The boldness of the attacks which profane people make upon religion should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir when proclamation is made in the gate of the camp, Who is on the Lord's side? When vice is daring it is no time for virtue, through fear, to hide itself.

[2.] To persevere in religion. The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting back, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to deliberate whether he should proceed or no (allude to 2Sa 2:23), shall with so much the more constancy and resolution hold on his way and press forward. "Though in me he foresees that bonds and afflictions abide him, yet none of these things shall move him," Ac 20:24. Those who keep their eye upon heaven as their end will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it

[3.] In order thereunto to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding, but will grow stronger and stronger. By the sight of other good men's trials, and the experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted; the worse others are the better he will be; that which dismays others emboldens him. The blustering wind makes the traveller gather his cloak the closer about him and gird it the faster. Those that are truly wise and good will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion is a good sign of sincerity in it.

10 But as for you all, do ye return, and come now:
for I cannot find *one* wise *man* among you.

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hopes of his return to a prosperous estate again; now he here shows,

I. That it was their folly to talk so (Job 17:10): "Return, and come now, be convinced that you are in an error, and let me persuade you to be of my mind; for I cannot find one wise man among you, that knows how to explain the difficulties of God's providence or how to apply the consolations of his promises." Those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world; though that is not to be despaired of, it is at the best uncertain; and if it should fail, as perhaps it may, the comfort built upon it will fail too. It is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves, and others, in distress, with that which will not fail, the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

II. That it would he much more his folly to heed them; for,

1. All his measures were already broken and he was full of confusion, Job 17:11,12. He owns he had, in his prosperity, often pleased himself both with projects of what he should do and prospects of what he should enjoy; but now he looked upon his days as past, or drawing towards a period; all those purposes were broken off and those expectations dashed. He had had thoughts about enlarging his border, increasing his stock, and settling his children, and many pious thoughts, it is likely, of promoting religion in his country, redressing grievances, reforming the profane, relieving the poor, and raising funds perhaps for charitable uses; but he concluded that all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and that he should never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected.

Note, The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but, if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose. Job, being thus put upon new counsels, was under a constant uneasiness (Job 17:12): The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the

night into day and shortened the light. Some, in their vanity and riot, turn night into day and day into night; but Job did so through trouble and anguish of spirit, which were a hindrance,

(1.) To the repose of the night, keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the tossings of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day.

(2.) To the entertainments of the day. "The light of the morning is welcome, but, by reason of this inward darkness, the comfort of it is soon gone, and the day is to me as dismal as the black and dark night," De 28:67. See what reason we have to be thankful for the health and ease which enable us to welcome both the shadows of the evening and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of, Job 5:19,8:21,11:17. "Alas! you do but make a fool of me."

(1.) He saw himself just dropping into the grave. A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things in which we take satisfaction in this world: Job expected not any of these above ground; all he felt, and all he had in view, was unpleasing and disagreeable, but under ground he expected them.

[1.] He counted upon no house but the grave (Job 17:13): "If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave. I should deceive myself if I should count upon any out-let from my trouble but what death will give me. Nothing is so sure as that." Note, In all our prosperity it is good to keep death in prospect. Whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that; for that may prevent other things which we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours not only to

reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself: "It is my house." The grave is a house; to the wicked it is a prison-house (Job 24:19,20); to the godly it is Bethabara, a passage-house in their way home. "It is my house, mine by descent, I am born to it; it is my father's house. It is mine by purchase. I have made myself obnoxious to it." We must everyone of us shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly; let us think of removing, and send before to our long home.

[2.] He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness: "There," says he, "I have made my bed. It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it." The grave is a bed, for we shall rest in it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, Isa 57:2. Let this make good people willing to die; it is but going to bed; they are weary and sleepy, and it is time that they were in their beds. Why should they not go willingly, when their father calls? "Nay, I have made my bed, by preparation for it, have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed, and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection."

[3.] He counted upon no agreeable relations but what he had in the grave (Job 17:14): I have cried to corruption (that is, to the grave, where the body will corrupt), Thou art my father (for our bodies were formed out of the earth), and to the worms there, You are my mother and my sister, to whom I am allied (for man is a worm) and with whom I must be conversant, for the worms shall cover us, Job 21:26. Job complained that his kindred were estranged from him (Job 19:13); therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations that would cleave to him when those disowned him. Note, First, We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. Secondly, It is therefore good to make ourselves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and

meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life and fear of death.

(2.) He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him (Job 17:15,16): "Seeing I must shortly leave the world, where is now my hope? How can I expect to prosper who do not expect to live?" He is not hopeless, but his hope is not where they would have it be. If in this life only he had hope, he was of all men most miserable. "No, as for my hope, that hope which I comfort and support myself with, who shall see it? It is something out of sight that I hope for, not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal." What is his hope he will tell us (Job 19:25), Non est mortale quod opto, immortale peto--I seek not for that which perishes, but for that which abides for ever. "But, as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit. You are dying men, and cannot make good your promises. I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise. Since, therefore, our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world and set our hearts upon another." We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are, dust and ashes in the pit, under the bars of the pit, held fast there, never to loose the bands of death till the general resurrection. But we shall rest there; we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be quiet in the grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths and put an end to the controversy. Let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders and moderate the disputers of this world.

11 My days are past, my purposes are broken off,
even the thoughts of my heart.
12 They change the night into day:
the light *is* short because of darkness.
13 If I wait, the grave *is* mine house:
I have made my bed in the darkness.
14 I have said to corruption, Thou *art* my father:
to the worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my sister.
15 And where *is* now my hope?

As for my hope, who shall see it?
16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit,
when *our* rest together *is* in the dust.

Job-18

Bildad Describes the Fate of the Wicked

Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking that, though he was a wise and good man, in this instance he was serving Satan's design in adding to Job's affliction.

I. He charges him with idle endless talk, as Eliphaz had done (Job 15:2,3): How long will it be ere you make an end of words? Job 18:2. Here he reflects, not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference (thinking perhaps that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so closely to the purpose as they might have done) or upon some that were present, who possibly took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, though it be not recorded.

Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn, which cannot be observed to any man's praise, for we ought to be swift to hear and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming this conduct is in others every one can see; but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was when Job had the last word in all debates (Job 29:22): After my words they spoke not again.

Then he was in power and prosperity; but now that he was impoverished and brought low he could scarcely be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much vilified as formerly it had been magnified. Wisdom therefore (as the world goes) is good with an inheritance (Ec 7:11); for the poor man's wisdom is despised, and, because he is poor, his words are not heard, Ec 9:16.

II. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimated in that, Mark, and afterwards we will speak. And it is to no purpose to speak, though what is said be ever so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is addressed will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be opened to hear as the learned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service (Isa 50:4) and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things of God to see the hearers attentive.

III. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends and of that which they offered (Job 18:3): Wherefore are we counted as beasts? This was invidious. Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men, but he did not count them beasts; yet Bildad so represents the matter, 1. Because his high spirit resented what Job had said as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. 2. Because his hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those that incline to be severe upon others will have it thought that others have first been so upon them.

IV. With outrageous passion: He teareth himself in his anger, Job 18:4. Herein he seems to reflect upon what Job had said (Job 13:14): Wherefore did I take my flesh in my teeth? "It is thy own fault," says Bildad. Or he reflected upon what he said Job 16:9, where he seemed to charge it upon God, or, as some think, upon Eliphaz: He teareth me in his wrath. "No," says Bildad; "thou alone shalt bear it." He teareth himself in his anger.

Note, Anger is a sin that is its own punishment. Fretful passionate people tear and torment themselves. He teareth his soul (so the word is); every sin wounds the soul, tears that, wrongs that (Pr 8:36), unbridled passion particularly.

V. With a proud and arrogant expectation to give law even to Providence itself: "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? Surely not; there is no reason for that, that the course of nature should be changed and the settled rules of government violated to gratify the humour of one man. Job, dost thou think the world cannot stand without thee; but that, if thou art ruined, all the world is ruined and forsaken with thee?"

Some make it a reproof of Job's justification of himself, falsely insinuating that either Job was a wicked man or we must deny a Providence and suppose that God has forsaken the earth and the rock of ages is removed. It is rather a just reproof of his passionate complaints. When we quarrel with the events of Providence we forget that, whatever befals us, it is,

1. According to the eternal purpose and counsel of God.

2. According to the written word. Thus it is written that in the world we must have tribulation, that, since we sin daily, we must expect to smart for it; and,

3. According to the usual way and custom, the track of Providence, nothing but what is common to men; and to expect that God's counsels should change, his method alter, and his word fail, to please us, is as absurd and unreasonable as to think the earth should be forsaken for us and the rock removed out of its place.

1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2 How long *will it be ere* ye make an end of words?
Mark, and afterward we will speak.
3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts,
and reputed vile in your sight?
4 He teareth himself in his anger:
shall the earth be forsaken for thee?
And shall the rock be removed out of his place?

5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,
and the spark of his fire shall not shine.

The rest of Bildad's discourse is entirely taken up in an elegant description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, in which there is a great deal of certain truth, and which will be of excellent use if duly considered--that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be men's ruin if they do not repent of it. But it is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor is it true that all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world are therefore to be deemed and adjudged wicked men, when no other proof appears against them; and therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe nor just. In these verses we have,

I The destruction of the wicked foreseen and foretold, under the similitude of darkness (Job 18:5,6): Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out. Even his light, the best and brightest part of him, shall be put out; even that which he rejoiced in shall fail him. Or the yea may refer to Job's complaints of the great distress he was in and the darkness he should shortly make his bed in. "Yea," says Bildad, "So it is; thou art clouded, and straitened, and made miserable, and no better could be expected; for the light of the wicked shall be put out, and therefore thine shall." Observe here,

1 The wicked may have some light for a while, some pleasure, some joy, some hope within, as well as wealth, and honour, and power without. But his light is but a spark (Job 18:5), a little thing and soon extinguished. It is but a candle (Job 18:6), wasting, and burning down, and easily blown out. It is not the light of the Lord (that is sun-light), but the light of his own fire and sparks of his own kindling, Isa 50:11.

2. His light will certainly be put out at length, quite put out, so that not the least spark of it shall remain with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in his tabernacle, while he is in the body, which is the tabernacle of the soul

(2Co 5:1), the light shall be dark; he shall have no true solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting. Even the light that is in him is darkness; and how great is that darkness! But, when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, his candle shall be put out with him. The period of his life will be the final period of all his days and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. When a wicked man dies his expectation shall perish, Pr 11:7. He shall lie down in sorrow.

II The preparatives for that destruction represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor arrested and taken into custody in order to his punishment, Job 18:7-10.

1. Satan is preparing for his destruction. He is the robber that shall prevail against him (Job 18:9); for, as he was a murderer, so he was a robber, from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way, wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like himself. He hunts for the precious life.

2. He is himself preparing for his own destruction by going on in sin, and so treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then his own counsels cast him down, Job 18:7. His sinful projects and pursuits bring him into mischief. He is cast into a net by his own feet (Job 18:8), runs upon his own destruction, is snared in the work of his own hands (Ps 9:16); his own tongue falls upon him, Ps 64:8. In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare.

3. God is preparing for his destruction. The sinner by his sin is preparing the fuel and then God by his wrath is preparing the fire. See here,

(1.) How the sinner is infatuated, to run himself into the snare; and whom God will destroy he infatuates.

(2.) How he is embarrassed: The steps of his strength, his mighty designs and efforts, shall be straitened, so that he shall not compass what he intended; and the more he strives to extricate himself the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse.

(3.) How he is secured and kept from escaping the judgments of God that are in pursuit of him. The gin shall take him by the heel. He can no more escape the divine wrath that is in pursuit of him than a man, so held, can flee from the pursuer. God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgment, 2Pe 2:9.

6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle,
and his candle shall be put out with him.
7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened,
and his own counsel shall cast him down.
8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
and he walketh upon a snare.
9 The gin shall take *him* by the heel,
and the robber shall prevail against him.
10 The snare *is* laid for him in the ground,
and a trap for him in the way.
11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,
and shall drive him to his feet.

Bildad here describes the destruction itself which wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which, in some degree, often seizes them in this world. Come, and see what a miserable condition the sinner is in when his day comes to fall.

I. See him disheartened and weakened by continual terrors arising from the sense of his own guilt and the dread of God's wrath (Job 18:11,12): Terror shall make him afraid on every side. The terrors of his own conscience shall haunt him, so that he shall never be easy. Wherever he goes, these shall follow him; which way soever he looks, these shall stare him in the face. It will make him tremble to see himself fought against by the whole creation, to see

Heaven frowning on him, hell gaping for him, and earth sick of him. He that carries his own accuser, and his own tormentor, always in his bosom, cannot but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet, like the malefactor, who, being conscious of his own guilt, takes to his heels and flees when none pursues, Pr 28:1. But his feet will do him no service; they are fast in the snare, Job 18:9. The sinner may as soon overpower the divine omnipotence as flee from the divine omniscience, Am 9:2,3. No marvel that the sinner is dispirited and distracted with fear, for, 1. He sees his ruin approaching: Destruction shall be ready at his side, to seize him whenever justice gives the word, so that he is brought into desolation in a moment, Ps 73:19. 2. He feels himself utterly unable to grapple with it, either to escape it or to bear up under it. That which he relied upon as his strength (his wealth, power, pomp, friends, and the hardiness of his own spirit) shall fail him in the time of need, and be hunger-bitten, that is, it shall do him no more service than a famished man, pining away for hunger, would do in work or war. The case being thus with him, no marvel that he is a terror to himself. Note, The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, of which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnests, as they were to Cain and Judas.

II. See him devoured and swallowed up by a miserable death; and miserable indeed a wicked man's death is, how secure and jovial soever his life was. 1. See him dying, arrested by the first-born of death (some disease, or some stroke that has in it a more than ordinary resemblance of death itself; so great a death, as it is called, 2Co 1:10, a messenger of death that has in it an uncommon strength and terror), weakened by the harbingers of death, which devour the strength of his skin, that is, it shall bring rottenness into his bones and consume them. His confidence shall then be rooted out of his tabernacle (Job 18:14), that is, all that he trusted to for his support shall be taken from him, and he shall have nothing to rely upon, no, not his own tabernacle. His own soul was his

confidence, but that shall be rooted out of the tabernacle of the body, as a tree that cumbered the ground. "Thy soul shall be required of thee." 2. See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. (1.) He is then brought to the king of terrors. He was surrounded with terrors while he lived (Job 18:11), and death was the king of all those terrors; they fought against the sinner in death's name, for it is by reason of death that sinners are all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb 2:15), and at length they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature; our Saviour himself prayed, Father, save me from this hour. But to the wicked it is in a special manner the king of terrors, both as it is a period to that life in which they placed their happiness and a passage to that life where they will find their endless misery. How happy then are the saints, and how much indebted to the Lord Jesus, by whom death is so far abolished, and the property of it altered, that this king of terrors becomes a friend and servant! (2.) He is then driven from the light into darkness (Job 18:18), from the light of this world, and his prosperous condition in it, into darkness, the darkness of the grave, the darkness of hell, into utter darkness, never to see light (Ps 49:19), not the least gleam, nor any hopes of it. (3.) He is then chased out of the world, hurried and dragged away by the messengers of death, sorely against his will, chased as Adam out of paradise, for the world is his paradise. It intimates that he would fain stay here; he is loth to depart, but go he must; all the world is weary of him, and therefore chases him out, as glad to get rid of him. This is death to a wicked man.

III. See his family sunk and cut off, Job 18:15. The wrath and curse of God light and lie, not only upon his head and heart, but upon his house too, to consume it with the timber and stones thereof, Zec 5:4. Death itself shall dwell in his tabernacle, and, having expelled him, shall take possession of his house, to the terror and destruction of all that he leaves behind. Even the dwelling shall be ruined for the sake of its owner: Brimstone shall be scattered

upon his habitation, rained upon it as upon Sodom, to the destruction of which this seems to have reference. Some think he here upbraids Job with the burning of his sheep and servants with fire from heaven. The reason is here given why his tabernacle is thus marked for ruin: Because it is none of his; that is, it was unjustly got, and kept, from the rightful owner, and therefore let him not expect either the comfort or the continuance of it. His children shall perish, either with him or after him, Job 18:16. So that, his roots being in his own person dried up beneath, above his branch (every child of his family) shall be cut off. Thus the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab, were cut off; none that descended from them were left alive. Those who take root in the earth may expect it will thus be dried up; but, if we be rooted in Christ, even our leaf shall not wither, much less shall our branch be cut off. Those who consult the true honour of their family, and the welfare of its branches, will be afraid of withering it by sin. The extirpation of the sinner's family is mentioned again (Job 18:19): He shall neither have son nor nephew, child nor grandchild, to enjoy his estate and bear up his name, nor shall there be any remaining in his dwelling akin to him. Sin entails a curse upon posterity, and the iniquity of the fathers is often visited upon the children. Herein, also, it is probable that Bildad reflects upon the death of Job's children and servants, as a further proof of his being a wicked man; whereas all that are written childless are not thereby written graceless; there is a name better than that of sons and daughters.

IV. See his memory buried with him, or made odious; he shall either be forgotten or spoken of with dishonour (Job 18:17): His remembrance shall perish from the earth; and, if it perish thence, it perishes wholly, for it was never written in heaven, as the names of the saints are, Lu 10:20. All his honour shall be laid and lost in the dust, or stained with perpetual infamy, so that he shall have no name in the street, departing without being desired. Thus the judgments of God follow him, after death, in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and

an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot, Pr 10:7.

V. See a universal amazement at his fall, Job 18:20. Those that see it are affrighted, so sudden is the change, so dreadful the execution, so threatening to all about him: and those that come after, and hear the report of it, are astonished at it; their ears are made to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, and they cry out, Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! A place or person utterly ruined is said to be made an astonishment, De 28:37,2Ch 7:21,Jer 25:9,18. Horrible sins bring strange punishments.

VI. See all this averred as the unanimous sense of the patriarchal age, grounded upon their knowledge of God and their many observations of his providence (Job 18:21): Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place (this the condition) of him that knows not God! See here what is the beginning, and what is the end, of the wickedness of this wicked world. 1 The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a wilful ignorance, for there is that to be known of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever inexcusable. They know not God, and then they commit all iniquity. Pharaoh knows not the Lord, and therefore will not obey his voice. 2 The end of it, and that is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be taken of those that know not God,

2Th 1:8. For those whom he has not honour from he will get himself honour upon. Let us therefore stand in awe and not sin, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

12 His strength shall be hunger-bitten,
and destruction *shall be* ready at his side.
13 It shall devour the strength of his skin:
even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength.

14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle,
and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.
15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because *it is* none of his:
brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.
16 His roots shall be dried up beneath,
and above shall his branch be cut off.
17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth,
and he shall have no name in the street.
18 He shall be driven from light into darkness,
and chased out of the world.
19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people,
nor any remaining in his dwellings.
20 They that come after *him* shall be astonished at his day,
as they that went before were affrighted.
21 Surely such *are* the dwellings of the wicked,
and this *is* the place *of him that* knoweth not God.

Job-19

Job's Faith That God Will Vindicate Him

1 Then Job answered and said,

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man because he was so grievously afflicted; now here he tells them how ill he took it to be so censured. Bildad had twice begun with a How long (Job 8:2,18:2), and therefore Job, being now to answer him particularly, begins with a How long too, Job 19:2. What is not liked is commonly thought long; but Job had more reason to think those long who assaulted him than they had to think him long who only vindicated himself. Better cause may be shown for defending ourselves, if we have right on our side, than for offending our brethren, though we have right on our side. Now observe here,

I. How he describes their unkindness to him and what account he gives of it.

1. They vexed his soul, and that is more grievous than the vexation of the bones, Ps 6:2,3. They were his friends; they came to comfort him, pretended to counsel him for the best; but with a great deal of gravity, and affectation of wisdom and piety, they set themselves to rob him of the only comfort he had now left him in a good God, a good conscience, and a good name; and this vexed him to his heart.

2. They broke him in pieces with words, and those were surely hard and very cruel words that would break a man to pieces: they grieved him, and so broke him; and therefore there will be a reckoning hereafter for all the hard speeches spoken against Christ and his people, Jude 1:15.

3. They reproached him, (Job 19:3), gave him a bad character and laid to his charge things that he knew not. To an ingenuous mind reproach is a cutting thing.

4. They made themselves strange to him, were shy of him now that he was in his troubles, and seemed as if they did not know him (Job 2:12), were not free with him as they used to be when he was in his prosperity. Those are governed by the spirit of the world, and not by any principles of true honour or love, who make themselves strange to their friends, or God's friends, when they are in trouble. A friend loves at all times.

5. They not only estranged themselves from him, but magnified themselves against him (Job 19:5), not only looked shy of him, but looked big upon him, and insulted over him, magnifying themselves to depress him. It is a mean thing, it is a base thing, thus to trample upon those that are down.

6. They pleaded against him his reproach, that is, they made use of his affliction as an argument against him to prove him a wicked man. They should have pleaded for

him his integrity, and helped him to take the comfort of that under his affliction, and so have pleaded that against his reproach (as St. Paul, 2Co 1:12); but, instead of that, they pleaded his reproach against his integrity, which was not only unkind, but very unjust; for where shall we find an honest man if reproach may be admitted for a plea against him?

I. How he aggravates their unkindness.

1. They had thus abused him often (Job 19:3): These ten times you have reproached me, that is, very often, as Ge 31:7,Nu 14:22. Five times they had spoken, and every speech was a double reproach. He spoke as if he had kept a particular account of their reproaches, and could tell just how many they were. It is but a peevish and unfriendly thing to do so, and looks like a design of retaliation and revenge. We better befriend our own peace by forgetting injuries and unkindnesses than by remembering them and scoring them up.

2. They continued still to abuse him, and seemed resolved to persist in it: "How long will you do it?" Job 19:2,5. "I see you will magnify yourselves against me, notwithstanding all I have said in my own justification." Those that speak too much seldom think they have said enough; and, when the mouth is opened in passion, the ear is shut to reason.

3. They were not ashamed of what they did, Job 19:3. They had reason to be ashamed of their hard-heartedness, so ill becoming men, of their uncharitableness, so ill becoming good men, and of their deceitfulness, so ill becoming friends: but were they ashamed? No, though they were told of it again and again, yet they could not blush.

2 How long will ye vex my soul,
and break me in pieces with words?
3 These ten times have ye reproached me:
ye are not ashamed *that* ye make yourselves strange to me.

4 And be it indeed *that* I have erred,
mine error remaineth with myself.

How he answers their harsh censures, by showing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse, which they ought to have considered.

1 The errors of his judgment were excusable (Job 19:4): "Be it indeed that I have erred, that I am in the wrong through ignorance or mistake," which may well be supposed concerning men, concerning good men. Humanum est errare--Error cleaves to humanity; and we must be willing to suppose it concerning ourselves. It is folly to think ourselves infallible. "But be it so," said Job, "my error remaineth with myself," that is, "I speak according to the best of my judgment, with all sincerity, and not from a spirit of contradiction." Or, "If I be in an error, I keep it to myself, and do not impose it upon others as you do. I only prove myself and my own work by it. I meddle not with other people, either to teach them or to judge them." Men's errors are the more excusable if they keep them to themselves, and do not disturb others with them. Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself. Some give this sense of these words: "If I be in an error, it is I that must smart for it; and therefore you need not concern yourselves: nay, it is I that do smart, and smart severely, for it; and therefore you need not add to my misery by your reproaches."

2 The breakings out of his passion, though not justifiable, yet were excusable, considering the vastness of his grief and the extremity of his misery. "If you will go on to cavil at every complaining word I speak, will make the worst of it and improve it against me, yet take the cause of the complaint along with you, and weigh that, before you pass a judgment upon the complaint, and turn it to my reproach: Know then that God has overthrown me," Job 19:6. Three things he would have them consider:--

(1.) That his trouble was very great. He was overthrown, and could not help himself, enclosed as in a net, and could not get out.

(2.) That God was the author of it, and that, in it, he fought against him: "It was his hand that overthrew me; it is in his net that I am enclosed; and therefore you need not appear against me thus. I have enough to do to grapple with God's displeasure; let me not have yours also. Let God's controversy with me be ended before you begin yours." It is barbarous to persecute him whom God hath smitten and to talk to the grief of one whom he hath wounded, Ps 69:26.

(3.) That he could not obtain any hope of the redress of his grievances, Job 19:7. He complained of his pain, but got no ease--begged to know the cause of his affliction, but could not discover it--appealed to God's tribunal for the clearing of his innocency, but could not obtain a hearing, much less a judgment, upon his appeal: I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard. God, for a time, may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers and overlook their appeals to him, and they must be excused if, in that case, they complain bitterly. Woe unto us if God be against us!

5 If indeed ye will magnify *yourselves* against me,
and plead against me my reproach;
6 know now that God hath overthrown me,
and hath compassed me with his net.
7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard:
I cry aloud, but *there is* no judgment.
8 He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass,
and he hath set darkness in my paths.

Bildad had very disingenuously perverted Job's complaints by making them the description of the miserable condition of a wicked man; and yet he repeats them here, to move their pity, and to work upon their good nature, if they had any left in them.

He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure which he was under, and which infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. How doleful are the accents of his complaints! "He hath kindled his wrath against me, which flames and terrifies me, which burns and pains me," Job 19:11. What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Seared consciences will feel it hereafter, but do not fear it now. Enlightened consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it hereafter. Job's present apprehension was that God counted him as one of his enemies; and yet, at the same time, God loved him, and gloried in him, as his faithful friend. It is a gross mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens; it is the discipline of his sons. Which way soever Job looked he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him.

1. Did he look back upon his former prosperity? He saw God's hand putting an end to that (Job 19:9): "He has stripped me of my glory, my wealth, honour, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good. My children were my glory, but I have lost them; and whatever was a crown to my head he has taken it from me, and has laid all my honour in the dust." See the vanity of worldly glory: it is what we may be soon stripped of; and, whatever strips us, we must see and own God's hand in it and comply with his design.

2. Did he look down upon his present troubles? He saw God giving them their commission, and their orders to attack him. They are his troops, that act by his direction, which encamp against me, Job 19:12. It did not so much trouble him that his miseries came upon him in troops as that they were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him and intended his destruction. God's troops encamped around his tabernacle, as soldiers lay siege to a strong city, cutting off all provisions from being brought into it and battering it continually; thus was Job's tabernacle besieged. Time was when God's hosts

encamped round him for safety: Hast thou not made a hedge about him? Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him, to his terror, and destroyed him on every side, Job 19:10.

3. Did he look forward for deliverance? He saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that (Job 19:8): "He hath fenced up my way, that I cannot pass. I have now no way left to help myself, either to extricate myself out of my troubles or to ease myself under them. Would I make any motion, take any steps towards deliverance? I find my way hedged up; I cannot do what I would; nay, if I would please myself with the prospect of a deliverance hereafter, I cannot do it; it is not only out of my reach, but out of my sight: God hath set darkness in my paths, and there is none to tell me how long," Ps 74:9. He concludes (Job 19:10), "I am gone, quite lost and undone for this world; my hope hath he removed like a tree cut down, or plucked up by the roots, which will never grow again." Hope in this life is a perishing thing, but the hope of good men, when it is cut off from this world, is but removed like a tree, transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the rock, from things temporal to things eternal.

9 He hath stripped me of my glory,
and taken the crown *from* my head.
10 He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone:
and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.
11 He hath also kindled his wrath against me,
and he counteth me unto him as *one of* his enemies.
12 His troops come together, and raise up their way against me,
and encamp round about my tabernacle.
13 He hath put my brethren far from me,
and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

He complains of the unkindness of his relations and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God (Job 19:13): He has put my brethren far from me, that is, "He has laid those afflictions upon me which frighten them from me, and make them stand aloof from my

sores." As it was their sin God was not the author of it; it is Satan that alienates men's minds from their brethren in affliction. But, as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial. As we must eye the hand of God in all the injuries we receive from our enemies ("the Lord has bidden Shimei curse David"), so also in all the slights and unkindnesses we receive from our friends, which will help us to bear them the more patiently. Every creature is that to us (kind or unkind, comfortable or uncomfortable) which God makes it to be. Yet this does not excuse Job's relations and friends from the guilt of horrid ingratitude and injustice to him, which he had reason to complain of; few could have borne it so well as he did. He takes notice of the unkindness,

1. Of his kindred and acquaintance, his neighbours, and such as he had formerly been familiar with, who were bound by all the laws of friendship and civility to concern themselves for him, to visit him, to enquire after him, and to be ready to do him all the good offices that lay in their power; yet these were estranged from him, Job 19:13. They took no more care about him than if he had been a stranger whom they never knew. His kinsfolk, who claimed relation to him when he was in prosperity, now failed him; they came short of their former professions of friendship to him and his present expectations of kindness from them.

Even his familiar friends, whom he was mindful of, had now forgotten him, had forgotten both his former friendliness to them and his present miseries: they had heard of his troubles, and designed him a visit; but truly they forgot it, so little affected were they with it. Nay, his inward friends, the men of his secret, whom he was most intimate with and laid in his bosom, not only forgot him, but abhorred him, kept as far off from him as they could, because he was poor and could not entertain them as he used to do, and because he was sore and a loathsome spectacle. Those whom he loved, and who therefore were worse than publicans if they did not love him now that he

was in distress, not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being so strange to him, Job 19:19. So uncertain is the friendship of men; but, if God be our friend, he will not fail us in a time of need. But let none that pretend either to humanity or Christianity ever use their friends as Job's friends used him: adversity is the proof of friendship.

2. Of his domestics and family relations. Sometimes indeed we find that, beyond our expectation, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; but the master of a family ordinarily expects to be attended on and taken care of by those of his family, even when, through weakness of body or mind, he has become despicable to others. But poor Job was misused by his own family, and some of his worst foes were those of his own house. He mentions not his children; they were all dead, and we may suppose that the unkindness of his surviving relations made him lament the death of his children so much the more: "If they had been alive," would he think, "I should have had comfort in them." As for those that were now about him,

(1.) His own servants slighted him. His maids did not attend him in his illness, but counted him for a stranger and an alien, Job 19:15. His other servants never heeded him; if he called to them they would not come at his call, but pretended that they did not hear him. If he asked them a question, they would not vouchsafe to give him an answer, Job 19:16. Job had been a good master to them, and did not despise their cause when they pleaded with him (Job 31:13), and yet they were rude to him now, and despised his cause when he pleaded with them. We must not think it strange if we receive evil at the hand of those from whom we have deserved well. Though he was now sickly, yet he was not cross with his servants, and imperious, as is too common, but he entreated his servants with his mouth, when he had authority to command; and yet they would not be civil to him, neither kind nor just. Note, Those that are sick and in sorrow are apt to take

things ill, and be jealous of a slight, and to lay to heart the least unkindness done to them: when Job was in affliction even his servants' neglect of him troubled him.

(2.) But, one would think, when all forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him: no, because he would not curse God and die, as she persuaded him, his breath was strange to her too; she did not care for coming near him, nor took any notice of what he said, Job 19:17. Though he spoke to her, not with the authority, but with the tenderness of a husband, did not command, but entreated her by that conjugal love which their children were the pledges of, yet she regarded him not. Some read it, "Though I lamented, or bemoaned myself, for the children," that is, "for the death of the children of my own body," an affliction in which she was equally concerned with him. Now, it appeared, the devil spared her to him, not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormentor. By what she said to him at first, Curse God and die, it appeared that she had little religion in her; and what can one expect that is kind and good from those that have not the fear of God before their eyes and are not governed by conscience?

(3.) Even the little children who were born in his house, the children of his own servants, who were his servants by birth, despised him, and spoke against him (Job 19:18); though he arose in civility to speak friendly to them, or with authority to check them, they let him know that they neither feared him nor loved him.

III. He complains of the decay of his body; all the beauty and strength of that were gone. When those about him slighted him, if he had been in health, and at ease, he might have enjoyed himself. But he could take as little pleasure in himself as others took in him (Job 19:20): My bone cleaves now to my skin, as formerly it did to my flesh; it was this that filled him with wrinkles (Job 16:8); he was a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Nay, his skin too was almost gone, little remained unbroken but the skin of his teeth, his gums and perhaps

his lips; all the rest was fetched off by his sore boils. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which, after all our care, may be thus consumed by the diseases which it has in itself the seeds of.

14 My kinsfolk have failed,
and my familiar friends have forgotten me.
15 They that dwell in mine house, and my maids,
count me for a stranger:
I am an alien in their sight.
16 I called my servant, and he gave *me* no answer;
I entreated him with my mouth.
17 My breath is strange to my wife,
though I entreated for the children's *sake* of mine own body.
18 Yea, young children despised me;
I arose, and they spake against me.
19 All my inward friends abhorred me:
and they whom I loved are turned against me.
20 My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh,
and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.
21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends;
for the hand of God hath touched me.

Upon all these accounts he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their harshness with him. From this representation of his deplorable case, it was easy to infer,

1. That they ought to pity him, Job 19:21. This he begs in the most moving melting language that could be, enough (one would think) to break a heart of stone: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O you my friends! if you will do nothing else for me, be sorry for me, and show some concern for me; have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me. My case is sad indeed, for I have fallen into the hands of the living God, my spirit is touched with the sense of his wrath, a calamity of all other the most piteous." Note, It becomes friends to pity one another when they are in trouble, and not to shut up the bowels of compassion.

2. That, however, they ought not to persecute him; if they would not ease his affliction by their pity, yet they must not be so barbarous as to add to it by their censures and reproaches (Job 19:22): "Why do you persecute me as God? Surely his rebukes are enough for one man to bear; you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction he puts into my hand, it is bitter enough without that: God has a sovereign power over me, and may do what he pleases with me; but do you think that you may do so too?" No, we must aim to be like the Most Holy and the Most Merciful, but not like the Most High and Most Mighty.

God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must give account of ours. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone, but let them not, as if that were too little, wound his spirit, and ruin his good name. Great tenderness is due to those that are in affliction, especially to those that are troubled in mind.

22 Why do ye persecute me as God, and
are not satisfied with my flesh?
23 Oh that my words were now written!
Oh that they were printed in a book!

In all the conferences between Job and his friends we do not find any more weighty and considerable lines than these; would one have expected it? Here is much both of Christ and heaven in these verses: and he that said such things as these declared plainly that he sought the better country, that is, the heavenly; as the patriarchs of that age did, Heb 11:14. We have here Job's creed, or confession of faith. His belief in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and the principles of natural religion, he had often professed: but here we find him no stranger to revealed religion; though the revelation of the promised Seed, and the promised inheritance, was then discerned only like the dawning of the day, yet Job was taught of God to believe in a living Redeemer, and to look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, for of these, doubtless, he must be understood to speak.

These were the things he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not a deliverance from his trouble or a revival of his happiness in this world, as some would understand him; for besides that the expressions he here uses, of the Redeemer's standing at the latter day upon the earth, of his seeing God, and seeing him for himself, are wretchedly forced if they be understood of any temporal deliverance, it is very plain that he had no expectation at all of his return to a prosperous condition in this world.

He had just now said that his way was fenced up, (Job 19:8) and his hope removed like a tree, Job 19:10. Nay, and after this he expressed his despair of any comfort in this life, Job 23:8,9,30:23. So that we must necessarily understand him of the redemption of his soul from the power of the grave, and his reception to glory, which is spoken of, Ps 49:15. We have reason to think that Job was just now under an extraordinary impulse of the blessed Spirit, which raised him above himself, gave him light, and gave him utterance, even to his own surprise. And some observe that, after this, we do not find Job's discourses such passionate, peevish, unbecoming, complaints of God and his providence as we have before met with: this hope quieted his spirit, stilled the storm and, having here cast anchor within the veil, his mind was kept steady from this time forward. Let us observe,

I. To what intent Job makes this confession of his faith here. Never did any thing come in more pertinently, or to better purpose.

1. Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. His friends reproached him as a hypocrite and contemned him as a wicked man; but he appeals to his creed, to his faith, to his hope, and to his own conscience, which not only acquitted him from reigning sin, but comforted him with the expectation of a blessed resurrection. These are not the words of him that has a devil. He appeals to the coming of the Redeemer, from this wrangle at the bar to the

judgment of the bench, even to him to whom all judgment is committed, who he knew would right him. The consideration of God's day coming will make it a very small thing with us to be judged of man's judgment, 1Co 4:3,4. How easily may we bear the unjust calumnies and reproaches of men while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer, and his redeemed, at the last day, and that there will then be a resurrection of names, as well as bodies!

2. Job was now afflicted, and this was his cordial; when he was pressed above measure this kept him from fainting--he believed that he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; not in this world, for that is the land of the dying.

24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead
in the rock for ever!
25 For I know *that* my Redeemer liveth,
and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

With what a solemn preface he introduces it, Job 19:23,24. He breaks off his complaints abruptly, to triumph his comforts, which he does, not only for his own satisfaction, but for the edification of others. Those now about him, he feared, would little regard what he said, and so it proved, He therefore wished it might be recorded for the generations to come. O that my words were now written, the words I am now about to say! As if he had said, "I own I have spoken many unadvised words, which I could wish might be forgotten, for they will neither do me credit nor do others good. But I am now going to speak deliberately, and that which I desire may be published to all the world and preserved for the generations to come, in perpetuam rei memoriam--for an abiding memorial, and therefore that it may be written plainly and printed, or drawn out in large and legible characters, so that he that runs may read it; and that it may not be left in loose papers, but put into a book; or, if that should perish, that it may be engraven like an inscription upon a monument, with an iron pen in lead, or in the stone; let the engraver use all his art to make it a durable appeal to posterity." That which

Job here somewhat passionately wished for God graciously granted him. His words are written; they are printed in God's book; so that, wherever that book is read, there shall this be told for a memorial concerning Job. He believed, therefore he spoke.

What his confession itself is; what are the words which he would have to be written; we here have them written, Job 19:25-27. Let us observe them.

1. He believes the glory of the Redeemer and his own interest in him (Job 19:25): I know that my Redeemer liveth, that he is in being and is my life, and that he shall stand at last, or stand the last, or at the latter day, upon (or above) the earth. He shall be raised up, or, He shall be, at the latter day, (that is, in the fulness of time: the gospel day is called the last time because that is the last dispensation) upon the earth: so it points at his incarnation; or, He shall be lifted up from the earth (so it points at his crucifixion), or raised up out of the earth (so it is applicable to his resurrection), or, as we commonly understand it, At the end of time he shall appear over the earth, for he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, so close shall he come to this earth. He shall stand upon the dust (so the word is), upon all his enemies, which shall be put a dust under his feet; and he shall tread upon them and triumph over them. Observe here,

(1.) That there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. The word is Goël which is used for the next of kin, to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redeeming a mortgaged estate did belong, Le 25:25. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin; we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it; Christ is near of kin to us, the next kinsman that is able to redeem; he has paid our debt, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage and made a new settlement of the inheritance. Our persons also want a Redeemer; we are sold for sin, and sold under sin; our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, and proclaims

redemption for us, and proclaims redemption to us, and so he is truly the Redeemer.

(2.) He is a living Redeemer. As we are made by a living God, so we are saved by a living Redeemer, who is both almighty and eternal, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost. Of him it is witnessed that he liveth, Heb 7:8,Re 1:18. We are dying, but he liveth, and hath assured us that because he lives we shall live also, Joh 14:19.

(3.) There are those that through grace have an interest in this Redeemer, and can, upon good grounds, call him theirs. When Job had lost all his wealth and all his friends, yet he was not separated from Christ, nor cut off from his relation to him: "Still he is my Redeemer." That next kinsman adhered to him when all his other kindred forsook him, and he had the comfort of it.

(4.) Our interest in the Redeemer is a thing that may be known; and, where it is known, it may be triumphed in, as sufficient to balance all our griefs: I know (observe with what an air of assurance he speaks it, as one confident of this very thing), I know that my Redeemer lives. His friends have often charged him with ignorance or vain knowledge; but he knows enough, and knows to good purpose, who knows Christ to be his Redeemer.

(5.) There will be a latter day, a last day, a day when time shall be no more, Re 10:6. That is a day we are concerned to think of every day.

(6.) Our Redeemer will at that day stand upon the earth, or over the earth, to summon the dead out of their graves, and determine them to an unchangeable state; for to him all judgment is committed. He shall stand, at the last, on the dust to which this earth will be reduced by the conflagration.

2. He believes the happiness of the redeemed, and his own title to that happiness, that, at Christ's second coming,

believers shall be raised up in glory and so made perfectly blessed in the vision and fruition of God; and this he believes with application to himself.

(1.) He counts upon the corrupting of his body in the grave, and speaks of it with a holy carelessness and unconcernedness: Though, after my skin (which is already wasted and gone, none of it remaining but the skin of my teeth, Job 19:20) they destroy (those that are appointed to destroy it, the grave and the worms in it of which he had spoken, Job 17:14) this body. The word body is added: "Though they destroy this, this skeleton, this shadow (Job 17:7), this that I lay my hand upon," or (pointing perhaps to his weak and withered limbs) "this that you see, call it what you will; I expect that shortly it will be a feast for the worms." Christ's body saw not corruption, but ours must. And Job mentions this, that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more brightly.

Note, It is good for us often to think, not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their destruction and dissolution in the grave; yet let not that discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first, out of common dust, can raise it out of its own dust. This body which we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will in a little time be destroyed. Even my reins (says Job) shall be consumed within me (Job 19:27); the innermost part of the body, which perhaps putrefies first.

(2.) He comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side death and the grave: After I shall awake (so the margin reads it), though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God.

[1.] Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave shall be raised again, a glorious body: Yet in my flesh I shall see God. The separate soul has eyes wherewith to see God, eyes of the

mind; but Job speaks of seeing him with eyes of flesh, in my flesh, with my eyes; the same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world, and therefore a spiritual body, 1Co 15:44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies because there is such a glory designed for them.

[2.] Job and God shall come together again: In my flesh shall I see God, that is, the glorified Redeemer, who is God. I shall see God in my flesh (so some read it), the Son of God clothed with a body which will be visible even to eyes of flesh. Though the body, in the grave, seem despicable and miserable, yet it shall be dignified and made happy in the vision of God. Job now complained that he could not get a sight of God (Job 23:8,9), but hoped to see him shortly, never more to lose the sight of him, and that sight of him will be the more welcome after the present darkness and distance.

Note, It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. See with what pleasure holy Job enlarges upon this (Job 19:27): "Whom I shall see for myself," that is, "see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort and satisfaction. I shall see him as mine, as mine with an appropriating sight," Re 21:3. God himself shall be with them and be their God; they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, that is seeing for themselves, 1Jo 3:2. My eyes shall behold him, and not another.

First, "He, and not another for him, shall be seen, not a type or figure of him, but he himself." Glorified saints are perfectly sure that they are not imposed upon; it is no deceptio visus--illusion of the senses.

Secondly, "I, and not another for me, shall see him. Though my flesh and body be consumed, yet I shall not need a proxy; I shall see him with my own eyes." This was

what Job hoped for, and what he earnestly desired, which, some think, is the meaning of the last clause: My reins are spent in my bosom, that is, "all my desires are summed up and concluded in this; this will crown and complete them all; let me have this, and I shall have nothing more to desire; it is enough; it is all." With this the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

26 and *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*,
yet in my flesh shall I see God:
27 whom I shall see for myself,
and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;
though my reins be consumed within me.
28 But ye should say, Why persecute we him,
seeing the root of the matter is found in me?

The application of this to his friends. His creed spoke comfort to himself, but warning and terror to those that set themselves against him.

1. It was a word of caution to them not to proceed and persist in their unkind usage of him, Job 19:28. He had reproved them for what they had said, and now tells them what they should say for the reducing of themselves and one another to a better temper. "Why persecute we him thus? Why do we grieve him and vex him, by censuring and condemning him, seeing the root of the matter, or the root of the word, is found in him?" Let this direct us,

(1.) In our care concerning ourselves. We are all concerned to see to it that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickening, commanding, principle of grace in the heart, is the root of the matter, as necessary to our religion as the root to the tree, to which it owes both its fixedness and its fruitfulness. Love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sin--these are the root of the matter; other things are but leaves in comparison with these. Serious godliness is the one thing needful.

(2.) In our conduct towards our brethren. We are to believe that many have the root of the matter in them who

are not in every thing of our mind--who have their follies, and weaknesses, and mistakes--and to conclude that it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Woe be to him that offends one of those little ones! God will resent and revenge it. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of Providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences.

2. It was a word of terror to them. Christ's second coming will be very dreadful to those that are found smiting their fellow servants (Mt 24:49), and therefore (Job 19:29), "Be you afraid of the sword, the flaming sword of God's justice, which turns every way; fear, lest you make yourselves obnoxious to it." Good men need to be frightened from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rashly judging their brethren, Mt 7:1,Jam 3:1. Those that are peevish and passionate with their brethren, censorious of them and malicious towards them, should know, not only that their wrath, whatever it pretends, works not the righteousness of God, but that,

(1.) They may expect to smart for it in this world: It brings the punishments of the sword. Wrath leads to such crimes as expose men to the sword of the magistrate. God himself often takes vengeance for it, and those that showed no mercy shall find no mercy.

(2.) If they repent not, that will be an earnest of worse. By these you may know there is a judgment, not only a present government, but a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for.

29 Be ye afraid of the sword:
for wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the sword,
that ye may know *there is* a judgment.

Job-20

Zophar Depicts the Portion of the Wicked

1 Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,

Here, I. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for a bad man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and, as it should seem, broke in upon him, and began abruptly (Job 20:2): Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer. He takes no notice of what Job had said to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproof he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach, and thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bidden them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often ill taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually may be well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than became a wise man; but he excuses his haste with two things:--

1. That Job had given him strong provocation (Job 20:3): "I have heard the check of my reproach, and cannot bear to hear it any longer." Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition; and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, and think themselves affronted if all about them do not say as they say; they cannot bear a check but they call it the check of their reproach, and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it.

2. That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer (Job 20:2), for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; but he fathers the instigation (Job 20:3) upon the spirit of his understanding: that indeed should cause us to answer; we should rightly apprehend a thing and duly consider it before we speak of it; but whether it did so here or no is a

question. Men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

2 Therefore do my thoughts cause me to
answer, and for *this* I make haste.
3 I have heard the check of my reproach,
and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.
4 Knowest thou *not* this of old,
since man was placed upon earth,
5 that the triumphing of the wicked *is* short,
and the joy of the hypocrite *but* for a moment?

Zophar proceeds very plainly to show the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that because Job was destroyed and ruined he was certainly a wicked man and a hypocrite. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is introduced, Job 20:4, where he appeals,

(1.) To Job's own knowledge and conviction: "Knowest thou not this? Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain? Or canst thou doubt of a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrages of all mankind?" Those know little who do not know that the wages of sin is death.

(2.) To the experience of all ages. It was known of old, since man was placed upon the earth; that is, ever since man was made he has had this truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin; and ever since there were instances of wickedness (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth) there were instances of the punishments of it, witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world death entered with it: all the world knows that evil pursues sinners, whom vengeance suffers not to live (Ac 28:4), and subscribes to that (Isa 3:11), Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him, sooner or later.

2. How it is laid down (Job 20:5): The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment. Observe,

(1.) He asserts the misery, not only of those who are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practice wickedness under a show and profession of religion, because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be; and it is true that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloak of maliciousness, does but make bad worse. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, Mt 24:51.

(2.) He grants that wicked men may for a time prosper, may be secure and easy, and very merry. You may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power, their grandeur and success, triumphing and rejoicing over their poor honest neighbours whom they vex and oppress: they feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loth to own, at first, that wicked people might prosper at all (Job 4:9), until Job proved it plainly (Job 9:24,12:6), and now Zophar yields it; but,

(3.) He lays it down for a certain truth that they will not prosper long. Their joy is but for a moment, and will quickly end in endless sorrow. Though he be ever so great, and rich, and jovial, the hypocrite will be humbled, and mortified, and made miserable.

3. How it is illustrated, Job 20:6-9.

(1.) He supposes his prosperity to be very high, as high as you can imagine, Job 20:6. It is not his wisdom and virtue, but his worldly wealth or greatness, that he accounts his excellency, and values himself upon. We will suppose that to mount up to the heavens, and, since his spirit always rises with his condition, you may suppose that with it his head reaches to the clouds. He is every way advanced; the

world has done the utmost it can for him. He looks down upon all about him with disdain, while they look up to him with admiration, envy, or fear. We will suppose him to bid fair for a universal monarchy. And, though he cannot but have made himself many enemies before he arrived to this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in the clouds.

(2.) He is confident that his ruin will accordingly be very great, and his fall the more dreadful for his having risen so high: He shall perish for ever, Job 20:7. His pride and security were the certain presages of his misery. This will certainly be true of all impenitent sinners in the other world; they shall be undone, for ever undone. But Zophar means his ruin in this world; and indeed sometimes notorious sinners are remarkably cut off by present judgments; they have reason enough to fear what Zophar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with.

[1.] A shameful destruction: He shall perish like his own dung or dunghill, so loathsome is he to God and all good men, and so willing will the world be to part with him, Ps 119:119,Isa 66:24.

[2.] A surprising destruction. He will be brought into desolation in a moment (Ps 73:19), so that those about him, that saw him but just now, will ask, "Where is he? Could he that made so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly?"

[3.] A swift destruction, Job 20:8. He shall fly away upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased away by the just imprecations of all about him, who would gladly get rid of him.

[4.] An utter destruction. It will be total; he shall go away like a dream, or vision of the night, which was a mere phantasm, and, whatever in it pleased the fancy, it is quite gone, and nothing of it remains but what serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final (Job 20:9): The eye that saw

him, and was ready to adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he filled shall no more behold him, having given him an eternal farewell when he went to his own place, as Judas, Ac 1:25.

6 Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds;
7 *yet* he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where *is* he?
8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.
9 The eye also *which* saw him shall *see him* no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.
10 His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods.

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world are expressed with great fulness and fluency of language, and the same thing returned to again and repeated in other words. Let us therefore reduce the particulars to their proper heads, and observe,

I. What his wickedness is for which he is punished.

1 The lusts of the flesh, here called the sins of his youth (Job 20:11); for those are the sins which, at that age, people are most tempted to. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth (Job 20:12); he indulges himself in all the gratifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inordinate complacency in them, as yielding the most agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue, and rolls there, as the most dainty delicate thing that can be. He keeps it still within his mouth (Job 20:13); let him have that, and he desires no more; he will never part with that for the spiritual and divine pleasures of religion, which he has no relish or nor affection for.

His keeping it still in his mouth denotes his obstinately persisting in his sin (he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it), and also his re-acting of his sin by revolving it and remembering it with pleasure, as that adulterous woman (Eze 23:19) who multiplied her whoredoms by calling to remembrance the days of her youth; so does this wicked man here. Or his hiding it and keeping it under his tongue denotes his industrious concealment of his beloved lust. Being a hypocrite, his haunts of sin are secret, that he may save the credit of his profession; but he who knows what is in the heart knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it shortly.

2 The love of the world and the wealth of it. It is in worldly wealth that he places his happiness, and therefore he sets his heart upon it. See here,

(1.) How greedy he is of it (Job 20:15): He has swallowed down riches as eagerly as ever a hungry man swallowed down meat; and is still crying, "Give, give." It is that which he desired (Job 20:20); it was, in his eye, the best gift, and that which he coveted earnestly.

(2.) What pains he takes for it: It is that which he laboured for (Job 20:18), not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, per fas, per nefas--right or wrong, to be rich. We must labour, not to be rich (Pr 23:4), but to be charitable, that we may have to give (Eph 4:28), not to spend.

(3.) What great things he promises himself from it, intimated in the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter (Job 20:17); his being disappointed of them supposes that he had flattered himself with the hopes of them: he expected rivers of sensual delights.

3. Violence and oppression, and injustice in his poor neighbours, Job 20:19. This was the sin of the giants of the old world, and a sin that, as much as any, brings God's

judgments upon nations and families. It is charged upon this wicked man,

(1.) That he has forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, shown no kindness to them, nor made any provision for them. At first perhaps, for a pretence, he gave alms like the Pharisees, to gain a reputation; but, when he had served his turn by this practice, he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before he seemed to be concerned for. Those who do good, but not from a good principle, though they may abound in it, will not abide in it.

(2.) That he has oppressed them, crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief. To enrich himself, he has robbed the spital, and made the poor poorer.

(3.) That he has violently taken away their houses, which he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard, not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.

11 His bones are full *of the sin* of his youth,
which shall lie down with him in the
dust.
12 Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,
though he hide it under his tongue;
13 *though* he spare it, and forsake it
not, but keep it still within his
mouth;
14 *yet* his meat in his bowels is turned,
it is the gall of asps within him.

What his punishment is for this wickedness.

1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself (Job 20:17): He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter, with which he hoped to glut himself. The world is not that to

those who love it, and court it, and admire it, which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised expectation.

2. He shall be diseased and distempered in his body; and how little comfort a man has in riches if he has not health! Sickness and pain, especially it they be in extremity, embitter all his enjoyments. This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness; but what real happiness can he enjoy when his bones are full of the sins of his youth (Job 20:11), that is, of the effects of those sins? By his drunkenness and gluttony, his uncleanness and wantonness, when he was young, he contracted those diseases which are painful to him long after, and perhaps make his life very miserable, and, as Solomon speaks, consume his flesh and his body, Pr 5:11.

Perhaps he was given to fight when he was young, and then made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray; but he feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no ease, no relief? No, he is likely to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or rather they are likely to carry him thither, and so the sins of his youth shall lie down with him in the dust; the very putrefying of his body in the grave is to him the effect of sin (Job 24:19), so that his iniquity is upon his bones there, Eze 32:27. The sin of sinners follows them to the other side death.

3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his mind: Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, Job 20:20. He has not that ease in his own mind that people think he has, but is in continual agitation. The ill-gotten wealth which he has swallowed down makes him sick, and, like undigested meat, is always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy that comfortably which they have gotten unjustly. The unquietness of his mind arises,

(1.) From his conscience looking back, and filling him with the fear of the wrath of God against him for his

wickedness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and, when it is reviewed, fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels it is turned (Job 20:14) like John's book, in his mouth as sweet as honey, but, when he had eaten it, his belly was bitter, Re 10:10. Such a thing is sin; it is turned into the gall of asps, than which nothing is more bitter, the poison of asps (Job 20:16), than which nothing more fatal, and so it will be to him; what he sucked so sweetly, and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. The fawning tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All the charming graces that are thought to be in sin will, when conscience is awakened, turn into so many raging furies.

(2.) From his cares, looking forward, Job 20:22. In the fulness of his sufficiency, when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure of the continuance of his happiness, he shall be in straits, that is, he shall think himself so, through the anxieties and perplexities of his own mind, as that rich man who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, cried out, What shall I do? Lu 12:17.

4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate; that shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he shall not rejoice therein, Job 20:18. He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long rejoice at all.

(1.) What he has unjustly swallowed he shall be compelled to disgorge (Job 20:15): He swallowed down riches, and then thought himself sure of them, and that they were as much his own as the meat he had eaten; but he was deceived: he shall vomit them up again; his own conscience perhaps may make him so uneasy in the keeping of what he has gotten that, for the quiet of his own mind, he shall make restitution, and that not with the pleasure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with the utmost reluctancy. Or, if he do not himself refund what he has violently taken away, God will, by his providence,

force him to it, and bring it about, one way or other, that ill-gotten goods shall return to the right owners: God shall cast them out of his belly, while yet the love of the sin is not cast out of his heart.

So loud shall the clamours of the poor, whom he has impoverished, be against him, that he shall be forced to send his children to them to soothe them and beg their pardon (Job 20:10): His children shall seek to please the poor, while his own hands shall restore them their goods with shame (Job 20:18): That which he laboured for, by all the arts of oppression, shall he restore, and shall not so swallow it down as to digest it; it shall not stay with him, but according to his shame shall the restitution be; having gotten a great deal unjustly, he shall restore a great deal, so that when every one has his own he will have but little left for himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zaccheus was, is a great mercy; he voluntarily and cheerfully restored four-fold, and yet had a great deal left to give to the poor, Lu 19:8. But to be forced to restore, as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it, for he threw down the pieces of silver and went and hanged himself.

(2.) He shall be stripped of all he has and become a beggar. He that spoiled others shall himself be spoiled (Isa 33:1); for every hand of the wicked shall be upon him. The innocent, whom he has wronged, sit down by their loss, saying, as David, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon him, 1Sa 24:13. But though they have forgiven him, though they will make no reprisals, divine justice will, and often makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the righteous, and squeezes and crushes one bad man by the hand of another upon him. Thus, when he is plucked on all sides, he shall not save of that which he desired (Job 20:20), not only he shall not save it all, but he shall save nothing of it. There shall none of his meat (which he coveted so much, and fed upon with so much pleasure) be left, Job 20:21. All his

neighbours and relations shall look upon him to be in such bad circumstances that, when he is dead, no man shall look for his goods, none of his kindred shall expect to be a penny the better for him, nor be willing to take out letters of administration for what he leaves behind him. In all this Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all and was reduced to the last extremity.

15 He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up
again: God shall cast them out of his belly.
16 He shall suck the poison of asps:
the viper's tongue shall slay him.
17 He shall not see the rivers,
the floods, the brooks of honey and butter.
18 That which he labored for shall he
restore, and shall not swallow *it*
down:
according to *his* substance *shall* the restitution *be,*
and he shall not rejoice *therein.*
19 Because he hath oppressed *and* hath forsaken the poor;
because he hath violently taken away a house which he builded
not.
20 Surely he shall not feel quietness in his
belly, he shall not save of that which he
desired.
21 There shall none of his meat be left;
therefore shall no man look for his goods.
22 In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits:
every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.
23 *When* he is about to fill his belly,
God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon
him, and shall rain *it* upon him while he
is eating.

Zophar, having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to show their utter ruin at last.

Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, Job 20:23. The hand of the wicked was upon him (Job 20:22), every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him. Yet, in grappling with these, he might go near to make his part good; but his heart cannot endure, nor his hands be strong, when God shall deal with him (Eze 22:14), when God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him and rain it upon him. Every word here speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God that is engaged against him, but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself; it is the fury of his wrath, incensed to the highest degree; it is cast upon him with force and fierceness; it is rained upon him in abundance; it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the psalmist also refers, Ps 11:6.

On the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone. There is no fence against this, but in Christ, who is the only covert from the storm and tempest, Isa 32:2. This wrath shall be cast upon him when he is about to fill his belly, just going to glut himself with what he has gotten and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then, when he is eating, shall this tempest surprise him, when he is secure and easy, and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came when they were in the depth of their security and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, Lu 17:26-31, &c. Perhaps Zophar here reflects on the death of Job's children when they were eating and drinking.

24 He shall flee from the iron weapon,
and the bow of steel shall strike him through.
25 It is drawn, and cometh out of the body;
yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall:
terrors *are* upon him.

I. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it (Job 20:24): He shall flee from the iron weapon. Flight argues guilt. He will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to

make his peace with him. All his care is to escape the vengeance that pursues him, but in vain: if he escape the sword, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through. God has weapons of all sorts; he has both whet his sword and bent his bow (Ps 7:12,13); he can deal with his enemies cominus vel eminus--at hand or afar off. He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft. See Isa 24:17,18,Jer 48:43,44. He that is marked for ruin, though he may escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

II. It will be a total terrible ruin. When the dart that has struck him through (for when God shoots he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes he strikes home) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword (the lightning, so the word is), the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven (Isa 34:5), comes out of his gall, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent are the dying agonies! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

III. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, Job 20:26.

1 The darkness he is wrapped up in is a hidden darkness: it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light, and it is hid in his secret place, whither he has retreated and where he hopes to shelter himself; he never retires into his own conscience but he finds himself in the dark and utterly at a loss.

2 The fire he is consumed by is a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of. It is plain that the gourd is withered, but the worm at the root, that causes it to wither, is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft gentle fire--surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case; he is ripe for ruin. The proud, and those that do

wickedly, shall be stubble, Mal 4:1. An unquenchable fire shall consume him (so some read it), and that is certainly true of hell-fire.

26 All darkness *shall be* hid in his secret places:
a fire not blown shall consume him;
it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.
27 The heaven shall reveal his iniquity;
and the earth shall rise up against him.

I. It is a ruin, not only to himself, but to his family: It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle, for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease. There is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, Job 20:28.

1. His posterity will be rooted out: The increase of his house shall depart, shall either be cut off by untimely deaths or forced to run their country. Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed, and extirpated, by the judgments of God.

2. His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed into it, when the day of God's wrath comes, for which, all the while his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was treasuring up wrath.

II. It is a ruin which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness; for (Job 20:27) the heaven shall reveal his iniquity, that is, the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will, by some means or other, let all the world know what a base man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. The earth also shall rise up against him, both to discover his wickedness and to avenge it. The earth shall disclose her blood, Isa 26:21. The earth will rise up against him (as the stomach rises against that which is loathsome), and will no longer keep him. The heaven reveals his iniquity, and therefore will not receive him.

Whither then must he go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will show him any kindness, but all the hosts of both are and will be at war with him.

III. Zophar concludes like an orator (Job 20:29): This is the portion of a wicked man from God; it is allotted him, it is designed him, as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity; it is what he must abide by: This is the heritage of his decree from God; it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of it. O wicked man! thou shalt surely die, Eze 33:8. Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments as are here described (therein Zophar was mistaken), yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments, which are much worse, their consciences being either, on the one hand, a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or, on the other hand, seared and silenced, and then they are given up to a reprobate sense and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, or worse applied, than this by Zophar, who intended by all this to prove Job a hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves to stand in awe and not to sin.

28 The increase of his house shall depart,
and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.
29 This *is* the portion of a wicked man from
God, and the heritage appointed unto him
by God.

Job-21

Job Asserts the Prosperity of the Wicked

1 But Job answered and said,

Job here recommends himself, both his case and his discourse, both what he suffered and what he said, to the compassionate consideration of his friends.

1. That which he entreats of them is very fair, that they would suffer him to speak (Job 21:3) and not break in upon him, as Zophar had done, in the midst of his discourse. Losers, of all men, may have leave to speak; and, if those that are accused and censured are not allowed to speak for themselves, they are wronged without remedy, and have no way to come at their right. He entreats that they would hear diligently his speech (Job 21:2) as those that were willing to understand him, and, if they were under a mistake, to have it rectified; and that they would mark him (Job 21:5), for we may as well not hear as not heed and observe what we hear.

2. That which he urges for this is very reasonable.

(1.) They came to comfort him. "No," says he, "let this be your consolations (Job 21:2); if you have no other comforts to administer to me, yet deny me not this; be so kind, so just, as to give me a patient hearing, and that shall pass for your consolations of me." Nay, they could not know how to comfort him if they would not give him leave to open his case and tell his own story. Or, "It will be a consolation to yourselves, in reflection, to have dealt tenderly with your afflicted friend, and not harshly."

(2.) He would hear them speak when it came to their turn. "After I have spoken you may go on with what you have to say, and I will not hinder you, no, though you go on to mock me." Those that engage in controversy must reckon

upon having hard words given them, and resolve to bear reproach patiently; for, generally, those that mock will mock on, whatever is said to them.

(3.) He hoped to convince them. "If you will but give me a fair hearing, mock on if you can, but I believe I shall say that which will change your note and make you pity me rather than mock me."

(4.) They were not his judges (Job 21:4): "Is my complaint to man? No, if it were I see it would be to little purpose to complain. But my complaint is to God, and to him do I appeal. Let him be Judge between you and me. Before him we stand upon even terms, and therefore I have the privilege of being heard as well as you. If my complaint were to men, my spirit would be troubled, for they would not regard me, nor rightly understand me; but my complaint is to God, who will suffer me to speak, though you will not." It would be sad if God should deal as unkindly with us as our friends sometimes do.

(5.) There was that in his case which was very surprising and astonishing, and therefore both needed and deserved their most serious consideration. It was not a common case, but a very extraordinary one.

[1.] He himself was amazed at it, at the troubles God had laid upon him and the censures of his friends concerning him (Job 21:6): "When I remember that terrible day in which I was on a sudden stripped of all my comforts, that day in which I was stricken with sore boils,--when I remember all the hard speeches with which you have grieved me,--I confess I am afraid, and trembling takes hold of my flesh, especially when I compare this with the prosperous condition of many wicked people, and the applauses of their neighbours, with which they pass through the world." Note, The providences of God, in the government of the world, are sometimes very astonishing even to wise and good men, and bring them to their wits' end.

[2.] He would have them wonder at it (Job 21:5): "Mark me, and be astonished. Instead of expounding my troubles, you should awfully adore the unsearchable mysteries of Providence in afflicting one thus of whom you know no evil; you should therefore lay your hand upon your mouth, silently wait the issue, and judge nothing before the time. God's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters. When we cannot account for what he does, in suffering the wicked to prosper and the godly to be afflicted, nor fathom the depth of those proceedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire them. Upright men shall be astonished at this, Job 17:8. Be you so."

2 Hear diligently my speech,
and let this be your consolations.
3 Suffer me that I may speak;
and after that I have spoken, mock on.
4 As for me, *is* my complaint to man?
And if *it were so,* why should not my spirit be troubled?
5 Mark me, and be astonished,
and lay *your* hand upon *your* mouth.
6 Even when I remember I am afraid,
and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.
7 Wherefore do the wicked live,
become old, yea, are mighty in power?

All Job's three friends, in their last discourses, had been very copious in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world. "It is true," says Job, "remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long prosperity of those that are openly and avowedly wicked; though they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper."

He here describes their prosperity in the height, and breadth, and length of it. "If this be true, as you say, pray tell me wherefore do the wicked live?" Job 21:7.

1 The matter of fact is taken for granted, for we see instances of it every day.

(1.) They live, and are not suddenly cut off by the strokes of divine vengeance. Those yet speak who have set their mouths against the heavens. Those yet act who have stretched out their hands against God. Not only they live (that is, they are reprieved), but they live in prosperity, 1Sa 25:6. Nay,

(2.) They become old; they have the honour, satisfaction, and advantage of living long, long enough to raise their families and estates. We read of a sinner a hundred years old, Isa 65:20. But this is not all.

(3.) They are mighty in power, are preferred to places of authority and trust, and not only make a great figure, but bear a great sway. Vivit imo, et in senatum venit--He not only lives, but appears in the senate. Now wherefore is it so? Note, It is worth while to enquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has forsaken the earth, because he does not see, or does not hate, or cannot punish their wickedness; but it is because the measure of their iniquities is not full. This is the day of God's patience, and, in some way or other, he makes use of them and their prosperity to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is because he will make it to appear there is another world which is the world of retribution, and not this.

2 The prosperity of the wicked is here described to be,

(1.) Complete and consummate.

[1.] They are multiplied, and their family is built up, and they have the satisfaction of seeing it (Job 21:8): Their seed is established in their sight. This is put first, as that which gives both a pleasant enjoyment and a pleasing prospect.

[2.] They are easy and quiet, Job 21:9. Whereas Zophar had spoken of their continual frights and terrors, Job says, Their houses are safe both from danger and from the fear of it (Job 21:9), and so far are they from the killing wounds of God's sword or arrows that they do not feel the smart of so much as the rod of God upon them.

[3.] They are rich and thrive in their estates. Of this he gives only one instance, Job 21:10. Their cattle increase, and they meet with no disappointment in them; not so much as a cow casts her calf, and then their much must needs grow more. This is promised, Ex 23:26,De 7:14.

[4.] They are merry and live a jovial life (Job 21:11,12): They send forth their little ones abroad among their neighbours, like a flock, in great numbers, to sport themselves. They have their balls and music-meetings, at which their children dance; and dancing is fittest for children, who know not better how to spend their time and whose innocency guards them against the mischiefs that commonly attend it. Though the parents are not so very youthful and frolicsome as to dance themselves, yet they take the timbrel and harp; they pipe, and their children dance after their pipe, and they know no grief to put their instruments out of tune or to withhold their hearts from any joy. Some observe that this is an instance of their vanity, as well as of their prosperity. Here is none of that care taken of their children which Abraham took of his, to teach them the way of the Lord, Ge 18:19. Their children do not pray, or say their catechism, but dance, and sing, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people, and as men are themselves so they breed their children.

(2.) Continuing and constant (Job 21:13): They spend their days, all their days, in wealth, and never know what it is to want--in mirth, and never know what sadness means; and at last, without any previous alarms to frighten them, without any anguish or agony, in a moment they go down to the grave, and there are no bands in their death.

If there were not another life after this, it were most desirable to die by the quickest shortest strokes of death. Since we must go down to the grave, if that were the furthest of our journey, we should wish to go down in a moment, to swallow the bitter pill, and not chew it.

8 Their seed is established in their sight with them,
and their offspring before their eyes.
9 Their houses *are* safe from fear,
neither *is* the rod of God upon them.
10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not;
their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.
11 They send forth their little ones like a flock,
and their children dance.

I. He shows how they abuse their prosperity and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety, Job 21:14,15.

1. Their gold and silver serve to steel them, to make them more insolent, and more impudent, in their wickedness. Now he mentions this either,

(1.) To increase the difficulty. It is strange that any wicked people should prosper thus, but especially that those should prosper who have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as openly to bid defiance to God himself, and tell him to his face that they care not for him; nay, and that their prosperity should be continued, though they bear up themselves upon that, in their opposition to God; with that weapon they fight against him, and yet are not disarmed. Or,

(2.) To lessen the difficulty. God suffers them to prosper; but let us not wonder at it, for the prosperity of fools destroys them, by hardening them in sin, Pr 1:32,Ps 73:7-9.

2. See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion, as if because they have so much of this world they had no need to look after another.

(1.) See how ill affected they are to God and religion; they abandon them, and cast off the thoughts of them.

[1.] They dread the presence of God; they say unto him, "Depart from us; let us never be troubled with the apprehension of our being under God's eye nor be restrained by the fear of him." Or they bid him depart as one they do not need, nor have any occasion to make use of. The world is the portion they have chosen, and take up with, and think themselves happy in; while they have that they can live without God. Justly will God say Depart (Mt 25:41) to those who have bidden him depart; and justly does he now take them at their word.

[2.] They dread the knowledge of God, and of his will, and of their duty to him: We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Those that are resolved not to walk in God's ways desire not to know them, because their knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience, John 3:19.

(2.) See how they argue against God and religion (Job 21:15): What is the Almighty? Strange that ever creatures should speak so insolently, that ever reasonable creatures should speak so absurdly and unreasonably. The two great bonds by which we are drawn and held to religion are those of duty and interest; now they here endeavour to break both these bonds asunder.

[1.] They will not believe it is their duty to be religious: What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? Like Pharaoh (Ex 5:2), Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Observe, First, How slightly they speak of God: What is the Almighty? As if he were a mere name, a mere cipher, or one they have nothing to do with and that has nothing to do with them. Secondly, How hardly they speak of religion. They call it a service, and mean a hard service. Is it not enough, they think, to keep up a fair correspondence with the Almighty, but they must serve him, which they look upon as a task and drudgery.

Thirdly, How highly they speak of themselves: "That we should serve him; we who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him? No, we are lords," Jer 2:31.

[2.] They will not believe it is their interest to be religious: What profit shall we have if we pray unto him? All the world are for what they can get, and therefore wisdom's merchandise is neglected, because they think there is nothing to be got by it. It is vain to serve God, Mal 3:13,14. Praying will not pay debts nor portion children; nay, perhaps serious godliness may hinder a man's preferment and expose him to losses; and what then? Is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. But, if we have not profit by prayer, it is our own fault (Isa 58:3,4), it is because we ask amiss, Jam 4:3. Religion itself is not a vain thing; if it be so to us, we may thank ourselves for resting in the outside of it, Jam 1:26.

II. He shows their folly herein, and utterly disclaims all concurrence with them (Job 21:19): Lo, their good is not in their hand, that is, they did not get it without God, and therefore they are very ungrateful to slight him thus. It was not their might, nor the power of their hand, that got them this wealth, and therefore they ought to remember God who gave it them. Nor can they keep it without God, and therefore they are very unwise to lose their interest in him and bid him to depart from them. Some give this sense of it: "Their good is in their barns and their bags, hoarded up there; it is not in their hand, to do good to others with it; and then what good does it do them?" "Therefore," says Job, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Far be it from me that I should be of their mind, say as they say, do as they do, and take my measures from them. Their posterity approve their sayings, though their way be their folly (Ps 49:13); but I know better things than to walk in their counsel."

12 They take the timbrel and harp,
and rejoice at the sound of the organ.
13 They spend their days in wealth,
and in a moment go down to the grave.
14 Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us;
for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
15 What *is* the Almighty, that we should serve him?
And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?
16 Lo, their good *is* not in their hand:
the counsel of the wicked is far from me.
17 How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!
And *how oft* cometh their destruction upon them!
God distributeth sorrows in his anger.

Job had largely described the prosperity of wicked people; now, in these verses,

I. He opposes this to what his friends had maintained concerning their certain ruin in this life. "Tell me how often do you see the candle of the wicked put out? Do you not as often see it burnt down to the socket, until it goes out of itself? Job 21:17. How often do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in his anger among them? Do you not as often see their mirth and prosperity continuing to the last?" Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp as ending them in misery, which observation is sufficient to invalidate their arguments against Job and to show that no certain judgment can be made of men's character by their outward condition.

II. He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God. Though wicked people prosper thus all their days, yet we are not therefore to think that God will let their wickedness always go unpunished. No,

1. Even while they prosper thus they are as stubble and chaff before the stormy wind, Job 21:18. They are light and worthless, and of no account either with God or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and

continually lie exposed to it, and in the height of their pomp and power there is but a step between them and ruin.

2. Though they spend all their days in wealth God is laying up their iniquity for their children (Job 21:19), and he will visit it upon their posterity when they are gone. The oppressor lays up his goods for his children, to make them gentlemen, but God lays up his iniquity for them, to make them beggars. He keeps an exact account of the fathers' sins, seals them up among his treasures (De 32:34), and will justly punish the children, while the riches, to which the curse cleaves, are found as assets in their hands.

3. Though they prosper in this world, yet they shall be reckoned with in another world. God rewards him according to his deeds at last (Job 21:19), though the sentence passed against his evil works be not executed speedily. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace though he go on; but he shall be made to feel it in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He shall know it (Job 21:20): His eyes shall see his destruction which he would not be persuaded to believe. They will not see, but they shall see, Isa 26:11. The eyes that have been wilfully shut against the grace of God shall be opened to see his destruction. He shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty; that shall be the portion of his cup. Compare Ps 11:6,Re 14:10. The misery of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but very terrible ones.

They lie under the wrath of an Almighty God, who, in their destruction, both shows his wrath and makes known his power; and, if this will be his condition in the other world, what good will his prosperity in this world do him? What pleasure has he in his house after him? Job 21:21. Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance of the good things he had received in his

life-time would not cool his tongue, but added much to his misery, as did also the sorrow he was in lest his five brethren, whom he left in his house after him, should follow him to that place of torment, Lu 16:25-28. So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

18 They are as stubble before the wind,
and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.
19 God layeth up his iniquity for his children:
he rewardeth him, and he shall know *it*.
20 His eyes shall see his destruction,
and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
21 For what pleasure *hath* he in his house after him,
when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?
22 Shall *any* teach God knowledge?
seeing he judgeth those that are high.

He resolves this difference which Providence makes between one wicked man and another into the wisdom and sovereignty of God (Job 21:22): Shall any pretend to teach God knowledge? Dare we arraign God's proceedings or blame his conduct? Shall we take upon us to tell God how he should govern the world, what sinner he should spare and whom he should punish? He has both authority and ability to judge those that are high. Angels in heaven, princes and magistrates on earth, are accountable to God, and must receive their doom from him.

He manages them, and makes what use he pleases of them. Shall he then be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he will do right (Ge 18:25,Ro 3:6), and those proceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another he can make, not only mutually to agree, but jointly to serve his own purposes. The little difference there is between one wicked man's dying so in pain and misery, when both will at last meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man's dying suddenly and another's dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion

between time and eternity that, if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it makes little difference if one goes singing thither and another sighing. See,

1. How various the circumstances of people's dying are. There is one way into the world, we say, but many out; yet, as some are born by quick and easy labour, others by that which is hard and lingering, so dying is to some much more terrible than to others; and, since the death of the body is the birth of the soul into another world, death-bed agonies may not unfitly be compared to child-bed throes. Observe the difference.

(1.) One dies suddenly, in his full strength, not weakened by age or sickness (Job 21:23), being wholly at ease and quiet, under no apprehension at all of the approach of death, nor in any fear of it; but, on the contrary, because his breasts are full of milk and his bones moistened with marrow (Job 21:24), that is, he is healthful and vigorous, and of a good constitution (like a milch cow that is fat and in good liking), he counts upon nothing but to live many years in mirth and pleasure. Thus fair does he bid for life, and yet he is cut off in a moment by the stroke of death. Note, It is a common thing for persons to be taken away by death when they are in their full strength, in the highest degree of health, when they least expect death, and think themselves best armed against it, and are ready not only to set death at a distance, but to set it at defiance. Let us therefore never be secure; for we have known many well and dead in the same week, the same day, the same hour, nay, perhaps, the same minute. Let us therefore be always ready.

(2.) Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery (Job 21:25), in the betterness of his soul, such as poor Job was himself now in, and never eats with pleasure, has no appetite to his food nor any relish of it, through sickness, or age, or sorrow of mind. What great reason have those to be thankful that are in health and always eat with pleasure! And what little reason have

those to complain who sometimes do not eat thus, when they hear of many that never do!

2. How undiscernible this difference is in the grave. As rich and poor, so healthful and unhealthful, meet there (Job 21:26): They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them, and feed sweetly on them. Thus, if one wicked man die in a palace and another in a dungeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned, and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes those differences inconsiderable and not worth perplexing ourselves about.

23 One dieth in his full strength,
being wholly at ease and quiet.
24 His breasts are full of milk,
and his bones are moistened with marrow.
25 And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul,
and never eateth with pleasure.
26 They shall lie down alike in the dust,
and the worms shall cover them.
27 Behold, I know your thoughts,
and the devices *which* ye wrongfully imagine against me.

In these verses,

I. Job opposes the opinion of his friends, which he saw they still adhered to, that the wicked are sure to fall into such visible and remarkable ruin as Job had now fallen into, and none but the wicked, upon which principle they condemned Job as a wicked man. "I know your thoughts," says Job (Job 21:27); "I know you will not agree with me; for your judgments are tinctured and biassed by your piques and prejudices against me, and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against my comfort and honour: and how can such men be convinced?" Job's friends were ready to say, in answer to his discourse concerning the prosperity of the wicked, "Where is the house of the prince? Job 21:28. Where is Job's house, or the house of his eldest son, in which his children were feasting?

Enquire into the circumstances of Job's house and family, and then ask, Where are the dwelling-places of the wicked? and compare them together, and you will soon see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one."

II. He lays down his own judgment to the contrary, and, for proof of it, appeals to the sentiments and observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by (Job 21:29): "Have you not asked those that go by the way--any indifferent person, any that will answer you? I say not, as Eliphaz (Job 5:1), to which of the saints, but to which of the children of men will you turn? Turn to which you will, and you will find them all of my mind, that the punishment of sinners is designed more for the other world than for this, according to the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jude 1:14. Do you not know the tokens of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world can furnish you with?" Now,

1. What is it that Job here asserts? Two things:--

(1.) That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and, usually, their punishment is put off until then. (2.) That therefore we are not to think it strange if they prosper greatly in this world and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. Therefore they are spared now, because they are to be punished then; therefore the workers of iniquity flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever, Ps 92:7. The sinner is here supposed,

[1.] To live in a great deal of power, so as to be not only the terror of the mighty in the land of the living (Eze 32:27), but the terror of the wise and good too, whom he keeps in such awe that none dares declare his way to his face, Job 21:31. None will take the liberty to reprove him, to tell him of the wickedness of his way, and what will be

in the end thereof; so that he sins securely, and is not made to know either shame or fear. The prosperity of fools destroys them, by setting them (in their own conceit) above reproofs, by which they might be brought to that repentance which alone will prevent their ruin. Those are marked for destruction that are let alone in sin, Ho 4:17. And, if none dares declare his way to his face, much less dare any repay him what he has done and make him refund what he has obtained by injustice. He is one of those great flies which break through the cobwebs of the law, that hold only the little ones. This emboldens sinners in their sinful ways that they can brow-beat justice and make it afraid to meddle with them. But there is a day coming when those shall be told of their faults who now would not bear to hear of them, those shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared to their face, to their everlasting confusion, who would not have it done here, to their conviction, and those who would not repay the wrongs they had done shall have them repaid to them.

[2.] To die, and be buried in a great deal of pomp and magnificence, Job 21:32,33. There is no remedy; he must die; that is the lot of all men; but every thing you can think of shall be done to take off the reproach of death.

First, He shall have a splendid funeral--a poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of; yet with some it passes for a mighty thing. Well, he shall be brought to the grave in state, surrounded with all the honours of the heralds' office and all the respect his friends can then pay to his remains. The rich man died, and was buried, but no mention is made of the poor man's burial, Lu 16:22.

Secondly, He shall have a stately monument erected over him. He shall remain in the tomb with a Hic jacet--Here lies, over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body to preserve it, which was a piece of honour anciently done by the Egyptians to their great men. He shall watch in the tomb (so the word is),

shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower.

Thirdly, The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him; there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the darkness of it, which perhaps was referred to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the tomb. But it is all a jest; what is the light, or what the perfume, to a man that is dead?

Fourthly, It shall be alleged, for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot: He has only yielded to fate, and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. Note, Death is the way of all the earth: when we are to cross that darksome valley we must consider,

1. That there are innumerable before us; it is a tracked road, which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is ire ad plures--to go to the great majority.

2. That every man shall draw after us. As there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first nor the last that pass through that dark entry. Every one must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

2. From all this Job infers the impertinency of their discourses, Job 21:34.

(1.) Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis: "In your answers there remains falsehood; what you have said stands not only unproved but disproved, and lies under such an imputation of falsehood as you cannot clear it from."

(2.) Their building was therefore weak and tottering: "You comfort me in vain. All you have said gives me no relief; you tell me that I shall prosper again if I turn to God, but

you go upon this presumption, that piety shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and therefore how can your inference from it yield me any comfort?" Note, Where there is not truth there is little comfort to be expected.

28 For ye say, Where *is* the house of the prince?
And where *are* the dwelling places of the wicked?
29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way?
And do ye not know their tokens,
30 that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction?
They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.
31 Who shall declare his way to his face?
And who shall repay him *what* he hath done?
32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave,
and shall remain in the tomb.
33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him,
and every man shall draw after him,
as *there are* innumerable before him.
34 How then comfort ye me in vain,
seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

Job-22

Eliphaz Accuses Job of Great Wickedness

1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

Eliphaz here insinuates that, because Job complained so much of his afflictions, he thought God was unjust in afflicting him; but it was a strained innuendo. Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz says here is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good,

I. That when God does us good it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, "He does not deal fairly with us." But whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his debtor, let him prove this debt, and he shall be sure not to lose it, Ro 11:35. Who has given to

him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? But Eliphaz here shows that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world are no real benefit or advantage to God, and therefore cannot be thought to merit any thing from him.

1. Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, Job 22:1,2. If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, surely nothing else will. If a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness, and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit, and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks whether any man can possibly be profitable to God. It is certain that he cannot. By no means. He that is wise may be profitable to himself. Note, Our wisdom and piety are that by which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers. Wisdom is profitable to direct, Ec 10:10. Godliness is profitable to all things, 1Ti 4:8. If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, Pr 9:12. The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God? No, for such is the perfection of God that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God.

Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun or the drop of the bucket to the ocean? He that is wise is profitable to himself, for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself and enrich himself; but can he so be profitable to God? No; God needs not us nor our services. We are undone, for ever undone, without him; but he is happy, for ever happy, without us. Is it any gain to him, any real addition to his glory or wealth, if we make our way perfect? Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? Much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

2. It is no pleasure to him. God has indeed expressed himself in his word well pleased with the righteous; his countenance beholds them and his delight is in them and their prayers; but all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the Eternal Mind has in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, though we could have but little enjoyment of ourselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension, in that, though our services be no real profit or pleasure to him, yet he invites, encourages, and accepts them.

II. That when God restrains or rebukes us it is not because he is in danger from us or jealous of us (Job 22:4): "Will he reprove thee for fear of thee, and take thee down from thy prosperity lest thou shouldst grow too great for him, as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable?" Satan indeed suggested to our first parents that God forbade them the tree of knowledge for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good because he loves them, but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He does not enter into judgment with men, that is, pick a quarrel with them and seek occasion against them, through fear lest they should eclipse his honour or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them. Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them. It was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem and that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God does not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any. See Job 35:5-8.

2 Can a man be profitable unto God,
as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?
3 *Is it* any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?
Or *is it* gain *to him,* that thou makest thy ways perfect?
4 Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?
Will he enter with thee into judgment?
5 *Is* not thy wickedness great?

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job, in general, as a wicked man and a hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, until Eliphaz did so here, where he positively and expressly charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanours, which, if he had really been guilty of them, might well have justified them in their harsh censures of him. "Come," says Eliphaz, "we have been too long beating about the bush, too tender of Job and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification. It is high time to deal plainly with him. We have condemned him by parables, but that does not answer the end; he is not prevailed with to condemn himself.

We must therefore plainly tell him, Thou art the man, the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. Is not thy wickedness great? Certainly it is, or else thy troubles would not be so great. I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience; are not thy iniquities infinite, both in number and heinousness?" Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God; but he means this, that his sins were more than could be counted and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin, being committed against Infinite Majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz charges Job thus highly, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion hence,

1. To be angry at those who unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For aught I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely, as he does here, was guilty of as great a sin and as great a wrong to Job as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him; for a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies, and evil surmises, concerning others; and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of

the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the reproach he could on Job, not doubting but that some would cleave to him.

2. To pity those who are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world, is here represented by one of his friends, and he a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did his, to him that judgeth righteously.

Let us see the particular articles of this charge.

I. He charged him with oppression and injustice, that, when he was in prosperity, he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with them. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself (Job 29:12-17, &c.) and the character God gave of him, Job 1:1-3 And yet,

1. Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him,

(1.) That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate he ought to have protected them and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do,--that, for an inconsiderable debt, he demanded, and carried away by violence, a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know (Job 22:6), Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, or, as the LXX. reads it, Thou hast taken thy brethren for pledges, and that for nought, imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay,--that he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, so that he had stripped them

naked, and left them so (the law of Moses forbade this, Ex 22:26,De 24:13),-- he had not been charitable to the poor, no, not to poor travellers, and poor widows: "Thou hast not given so much as a cup of cold water (which would have cost thee nothing) to the weary to drink, when he begged for it (Job 22:7) and was ready to perish for want of it, nay, thou hast withholden bread from the hungry in their extremity, hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it, which is withholding good from those to whom it is really due, Pr 3:27.

Poor widows, who while their husbands were living troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, Job 22:9. Those who came to thee for justice, thou didst send away unheard, unhelped; nay, though they came to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty; and, worst of all, the arms of the fatherless have been broken; those that could help themselves but little thou hast quite disabled to help themselves." This which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated: The arms of the fatherless have been broken. He does not say, "Thou has broken them," but he would have it understood so, and if they be broken, and those who have power do not relieve them, they are chargeable with it. "They have been broken by those under thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt."

(2.) That he had been partial to the rich and great (Job 22:8): "As for the mighty man, if he was guilty of any crime, he was never questioned for it: he had the earth; he dwelt in it. If he brought an action ever so unjustly, or if an action were ever so justly brought against him, yet he was sure to carry his cause in thy courts. The poor were not fed at thy door, while the rich were feasted at thy table." Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality (Lu 14:12-14); and Solomon says, He that gives to the rich shall come to poverty.

2. He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins (Job 22:10,11): "Those that are guilty of such practices as these commonly bring themselves into just such a condition as thou art now in; and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty."

(1.) "The providence of God usually crosses and embarrasses such; and snares are, accordingly, round about thee, so that, which way soever thou steppest or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor."

(2.) "Their consciences may be expected to terrify and accuse them. No sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness; and, accordingly, sudden fear troubles thee; and, though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror." Zophar had insinuated this, Job 20:19,20.

(3.) "They are brought to their wits' end, so amazed and bewildered that they know not what to do, and that also is thy case; for thou art in darkness that thou canst not see wherefore God contends with thee nor what is the best course for thee to take, for abundance of waters cover thee," that is, "thou art in a mist, in the midst of dark waters, in the thick clouds of the sky." Note, Those that have not shown mercy may justly be denied the comfortable hope that they shall find mercy; and then what can they expect but snares, and darkness, and continual fear?

II. He charged him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety, and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness: he that did not fear God did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an Epicurean, who did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz referred to an important truth, which he thought, if Job had duly considered it, would have prevented him from being so passionate in his complaints and bold in justifying himself (Job 22:12): Is not God in the height of heaven? Yes, no doubt he is. No heaven so high but God is there; and in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory, he is present in a special manner. There he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world. There is his throne; there is his court: he is called the Heavens, Da 4:26. Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God (Job 22:2), that he ought not to contend with God (it is his folly if he does), and that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we behold the height of the stars, how high they are, we should, at the same time, also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He charged it upon Job that he made a bad use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of, Job 22:13. "This is holding the truth in unrighteousness, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself: thou art willing to own that God is in the height of heaven but thence thou inferrest, How doth God know?" Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts by banishing the eye of God out of the world (Eze 8:12), and care not what they do if they can but persuade themselves that God does not know. Eliphaz suspected that Job had such a notion of God as this, that, because he is in the height of heaven,

(1.) It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth, especially since there is a dark cloud (Job 22:13), many thick clouds (Job 22:14), that come between him and us, and are a covering to him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of, the affairs of this lower world; as if God had eyes of flesh, Job 10:4. The interposing firmament is to him as

transparent crystal, Eze 1:22. Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who fills immensity, any more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or,

(2.) That it is therefore below him, and a diminution to his glory, to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation: He walks in the circuit of heaven, and has enough to do to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory in that bright and quiet world; why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposes that the administration of government is a burden and disparagement to the supreme governor and that the acts of justice and mercy are a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature, and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it (Ps 19:6), even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit of which he walks, and that through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

and thine iniquities infinite?
6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought,
and stripped the naked of their clothing.
7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,
and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.
8 But *as for* the mighty man, he had the earth;
and the honorable man dwelt in it.
9 Thou hast sent widows away empty,
and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.
10 Therefore snares *are* round about thee,
and sudden fear troubleth thee;
11 or darkness, *that* thou canst not see;
and abundance of waters cover thee.
12 *Is* not God in the height of heaven?
And behold the height of the stars, how high they are!
13 And thou sayest, How doth God know?
Can he judge through the dark cloud?
14 Thick clouds *are* a covering to him, that he seeth not;

and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

15 Hast thou marked the old way
which wicked men have trodden?

Eliphaz, having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger by reason of sin; and this he does by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; as if he had said, "Thy condition is bad now, but, unless thou repent, it will be worse, as theirs was--theirs who were overflown with a flood, as the old world (Job 22:16), and theirs the remnant of whom the fire consumed" (Job 22:20), namely, the Sodomites, who, in comparison of the old world, were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners are more than once put together, for warning to a careless world, as by our Saviour (Lu 17:26-30, &c.) and the apostle, 2Pe 2:5,6.

Eliphaz would have Job to mark the old way which wicked men have trodden (Job 22:15) and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden. Religion had but newly entered when sin immediately followed it. But though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way and it leads to destruction; and it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it. Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; as if he had said, "Thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace; but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men--the drowning of the whole world and the burning of Sodom?" destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face.

Observe, 1 The ruin of those sinners (Job 22:16): They were cut down out of time; that is, they were cut off in the midst of their days, when, as man's time then went, many of them might, in the course of nature, have lived some

hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time, to be hurried into eternity. And their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves and all their hopes, was overflown with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the world of the ungodly, 2Pe 2:5.

Note, Those who build upon the sand choose a foundation which will be overflown when the rains descend and the floods come (Mt 7:27), and then their building must needs fall and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent of their folly when it is too late.

2 The sin of those sinners, which brought that ruin (Job 22:17): They said unto God, Depart from us. Job had spoken of some who said so and yet prospered, Job 21:14. "But these did not (says Eliphaz); they found to their cost what it was to set God at defiance. Those who were resolved to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites and passions began with this; they said unto God, Depart; they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live without God in the world; they shunned his word, and silenced conscience, his deputy. And what can the Almighty do for them?" Some make this to denote the justness of their punishment.

They said to God, Depart from us; and then what could the Almighty do with them but cut them off? Those who will not submit to God's golden sceptre must expect to be broken to pieces with his iron rod. Others make it to denote the injustice of their sin: But what hath the Almighty done against them? What iniquity have they found in him, or wherein has he wearied them? Mic 6:3,Jer 2:5. Others make it to denote the reason of their sin: They say unto God, Depart, asking what the Almighty can do to them. "What has he done to oblige us? What can he do in a way of wrath to make us miserable, or in a way of favour to make us happy?" As they argue, Zep 1:12. The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. Eliphaz shows the absurdity of this in one word, and that is, calling

God the Almighty; for, if he be so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange if those cast off all religion who neither dread God's wrath nor desire his favour.

3. The aggravation of this sin: Yet he had filled their houses with good things, Job 22:18. Both those of the old world and those of Sodom had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, &c. (Lu 17:27), so that they had no reason to ask what the Almighty could do for them, for they lived upon his bounty, no reason to bid him depart from them who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods but their hearts empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

4. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people: But the counsel of the wicked is far from me. Job had said so (Job 21:16) and Eliphaz will not be behind him. If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world.

Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity in that common cause of God, that righteous cause. 5. The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteous shall have in this.

(1.) In seeing the wicked destroyed, Job 22:19. They shall see it, that is, observe it, and take notice of it (Ho 14:9); and they shall be glad, not to see their fellow-creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved--to see sin shamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others

to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall laugh them to scorn, that is, they justly might do it, they shall do it, as God does it, in a holy manner, Ps 2:4,Pr 1:26. They shall take occasion thence to expose the folly of sinners and show how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wits. Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; and see what comes of it, Ps 52:7. Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety. Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, 2Pe 2:7,8.

(2.) In seeing themselves distinguished (Job 22:20): "Whereas our substance is not cut down, as theirs was, and as thine is; we continue to prosper, which is a sign that we are the favourites of Heaven, and in the right." The same rule that served him to condemn Job by served him to magnify himself and his companions by. His substance is cut down; therefore he is a wicked man; ours is not; therefore we are righteous. But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them and lifting up ourselves, as Eliphaz does here, we ought to be thankful to God and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for similar calamities.

16 which were cut down out of time,
whose foundation was overflown with a flood:
17 which said unto God, Depart from us:
and what can the Almighty do for them?
18 Yet he filled their houses with good *things:*
but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.
19 The righteous see *it,* and are glad:
and the innocent laugh them to scorn.
20 Whereas our substance is not cut down,
but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.
21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace:
thereby good shall come unto thee.

Someone can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though

they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses with which he closes his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, nor more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reason to have hopes concerning him, that, for all this, he would be both pious and prosperous. But it is strange that out of the same mouth, and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into a better temper, and, it may be, sooner than another could talk them into it.

Eliphaz had laid before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him into repentance. Here, on the other hand, he shows him the happiness which those may be sure of that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it. Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from Mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from Mount Sion by the comforts of the gospel, must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

I The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though, as to Job, it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. Acquaint now thyself with God. Acquiesce in God; so some. It is our duty at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the disposals of the divine Providence. Join thyself to him (so some); fall in with his interests, and act no longer in opposition to him. Our translators render it well, "Acquaint thyself with him; be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him and restraining prayer before him." It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acquaint himself with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on

him, join ourselves to him in a covenant of friendship, and then set up, and keep up, a constant correspondence with him in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance, our misery that by sin we have lost it, our privilege that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. "Be at peace, at peace with thyself, not fretful, uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled, but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him. Do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complainest that God is thy enemy; be thou his friend." It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for how can two walk together except they be agreed? Am 3:3. This we must do quickly, now, before it be too late. Agree with thy adversary while thou art in the way. This we are earnestly urged to do. Some read it, "Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace." God himself beseeches us; ministers, in Christ's stead, pray us to be reconciled. Can we gainsay such entreaties?

3. Receive the law from his mouth, Job 22:22. "Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayest keep thyself in his love." We receive our being and maintenance from God. From him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Ac 9:6. Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by scripture, ministers, conscience, or Providence, we must take the word as from his mouth and bow our souls to it. Though, in Job's time, we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as a wicked man, and was pressing him to repent and reform. Herein consists the conversion of a sinner--his receiving the law from God's mouth and no longer from the world and the

flesh. Eliphaz, being now in contest with Job, appeals to the word of God for the ending of the controversy. "Receive that, and be determined by it." To the law and to the testimony.

4. Lay up his word in thy heart. It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, Pr 3:18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe; and we must lay it up in our hearts, as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion and we may neither lose it wholly nor be at a loss for it in a time of need.

5. Return to the Almighty, Job 22:23. "Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty. Do not only turn towards the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him; return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty, by a universal reformation, an effectual thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him;" so Mr. Poole.

6. Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle. This was the advice Zophar gave him, Job 11:14. "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle. Put iniquity far off, the further the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thyself, but must reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy charge." Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

II The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he shall be very happy, if he will but take this good counsel. In general, "Thereby good shall come unto thee (Job 22:21); the good that has now departed from thee, all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal good, shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee; and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down, but, if thou return to God, thou shalt be built up again, and thy present ruins shall be repaired. Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth,

and thy soul in holiness and comfort." The promises which Eliphaz here encourages Job with are reducible to three heads:--

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly on him; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. It is promised,

(1.) That he shall be very rich (Job 22:24): "Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, in such great abundance, and shalt have plenty of silver (Job 22:25), whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all." Job had been rich. Eliphaz suspected he got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him: but if he would return to God and his duty,

[1.] He should have more wealth than ever he had, not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, Job 3:15. Abundantly more riches, true riches, are to be got by the service of God than by the service of the world.

[2.] He should have it more sure to him: "Thou shalt lay it up in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety by a surer tenure than that which thou didst get by thy iniquity." Thou shalt have silver of strength (for so the word is), which, being honestly got, will wear well--silver like steel.

[3.] He should, by the grace of God, be kept from setting his heart so much upon it as Eliphaz thought he had done; and then wealth is a blessing indeed when we are not ensnared with the love of it. Thou shalt lay up gold; but how? Not as thy treasure and portion, but as dust, and as the stones of the brooks. So little shalt thou value it or expect from it that thou shalt lay it at thy feet (Ac 4:35), not in thy bosom.

(2.) That yet he shall be very safe. Whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in

his prosperity he was not in safety (Job 3:26), now he might be secure; for the Almighty shall be thy defender; nay, he shall be thy defence, Job 22:25. He shall be thy gold; so it is in the margin, and it is the same word that is used (Job 22:24) for gold, but it signifies also a stronghold, because money is a defence, Ec 7:12. Worldlings make gold their god, saints make God their gold; and those that are enriched with his favour and grace may truly be said to have abundance of the best gold, and best laid up. We read it, "He shall be thy defence against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers: thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans," which, some think, is the meaning of that, Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle, taking it as a promise. "The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off and shall not reach thee."

Note, Those must needs be safe that have Omnipotence itself for their defence, Ps 91:1-3.

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings.

(1.) That he should live a life of complacency in God (Job 22:26): "For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty; and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy wealth, thy defence, thy dignity; for he shall be thy delight." The way to have our heart's desire is to make God our heart's delight, Ps 37:4. If God give us himself to be our joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. "Now, God is a terror to thee; he is so by thy own confession (Job 6:4,16:9,19:11); but, if thou wilt return to him, then, and not till then, he will be thy delight; and it shall be as much a pleasure to thee to think of him as ever it was a pain." No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty; and those that acquaint themselves with him, and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be, not only their strength, but their song.

(2.) That he should have a humble holy confidence towards God, such as those are said to have whose hearts condemn them not, 1 Joh 3:21. "Then shalt thou lift up thy face to God with boldness, and not be afraid, as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected; but, when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, and hang thy head no more, as thou dost now, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, show thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him."

(3.) That he should maintain a constant communion with God, "The correspondence, once settled, shall be kept up to thy unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both statedly and occasionally interchanged between thee and heaven," Job 22:27.

[1.] "Thou shalt by prayer send letters to God: Thou shalt make thy prayer" (the word is, Thou shalt multiply thy prayers) "unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long. The oftener we come to the throne of grace the more welcome. Under all thy burdens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, and comfort, and good success."

[2.] "He shall, by his providence and grace, answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind or kindness: He shall hear thee, and make it to appear he does so by what he does for thee and in thee."

[3.] "Then thou shalt by thy praises reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: Thou shalt pay thy vows, and that shall be acceptable to him and fetch in further mercy." Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for we must make conscience of performing that which we then promised, else we do not deal honestly. If

we promised nothing else we promised to be thankful, and that is enough, for it includes all, Ps 116:14.

(4.) That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs (Job 22:28): "Thou shalt decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee," that is, "Thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom, and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of them shall be to thy heart's content, just as thou wouldst have it to be. Thou shalt commit thy works unto the Lord by faith and prayer, and then thy thoughts shall be established; thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatever occurs, Pr 16:3. This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it thee in thy own way, and manner, and time.

Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." When at any time an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broken, nor are we put upon new counsels, then we must own the performance of this promise, Thou shalt decree a thing and it shall be established unto thee. "Whereas now thou complainest of darkness round about thee, then the light shall shine on thy ways;" that is, "God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow, of course, that he shall prosper and succeed thee in all thy undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy guide, his favour thy comfort, and thy ways shall be so under both those lights that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present and a comfortable prospect of what is future," Ps 90:17.

(5.) That even in times of common calamity and danger he should have abundance of joy and hope (Job 22:29): "When men are cast down round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, then shalt thou say, There is lifting up. Thou shalt find that in thyself which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep

thee from fainting, but lift thee up above thy troubles and enable thee to rejoice evermore." When men's hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples lift up their heads for joy, Lu 21:26-28. Thus are they made to ride upon the high places of the earth (Isa 58:14), and that which will lift them up is the belief of this, that God will save the humble person. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour, but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country and an instrument of good to many (Job 22:30): God shall, in answer to thy prayers, deliver the island of the innocent, and have a regard therein to the pureness of thy hands, which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1Ti 2:8. But, because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance (it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession), I incline to the marginal reading, The innocent shall deliver the island, by their advice (Ec 9:14,15) and by their prayers and their interest in heaven, Ac 27:24. Or, He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands; as it may be read, and most probably.

Note, A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby (as some think he did) to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure (for then he would have relieved others, much more himself), he was afterwards made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who in this matter were not innocent, were delivered by the pureness of Job's hands, Job 42:8.

22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth,
and lay up his words in thine heart.
23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up,
thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles.
24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust,
and the *gold* of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.

25 Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defense,
and thou shalt have plenty of silver.
26 For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty,
and shalt lift up thy face unto God.
27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee,
and thou shalt pay thy vows.
28 Thou shalt also decree a thing,
and it shall be established unto thee:
and the light shall shine upon thy ways.
29 When *men* are cast down,
then thou shalt say, *There is* lifting up;
and he shall save the humble person.
30 He shall deliver the island of the innocent:
and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

Job-23

Job Desires to Plead His Case before God

1 Then Job answered and said,

Job is confident that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here,

I. He justifies his own resentments of his trouble (Job 23:2): Even to day, I own, my complaint is bitter; for the affliction, the cause of the complaint, is so. There are wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery; my soul has them still in remembrance and is embittered by them, La 3:19,20. Even to day is my complaint counted rebellion (so some read it); his friends construed the innocent expressions of his grief into reflections upon God and his providence, and called them rebellion. "But," says he, "I do not complain more than there is cause; for my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Even today, after all you have said to convince and comfort me, still the pains of my body and the wounds of my spirit are such that I have reason enough for my complaints, if they were more bitter than they are." We wrong God if our groaning be heavier

than our stroke, like froward children, who, when they cry for nothing, have justly something given them to cry for; but we do not wrong ourselves though our stroke be heavier than our groaning, for little said is soon amended.

II. He appeals from the censures of his friends to the just judgment of God; and this he thought was an evidence for him that he was not a hypocrite, for then he durst not have made such an appeal as this. St Paul comforted himself in this, that he that judged him was the Lord, and therefore he valued not man's judgment (1Co 4:3,4), but he was willing to wait till the appointed day of decision came; whereas Job is impatient, and passionately wishes to have the judgment-day anticipated, and to have his cause tried quickly, as it were, by a special commission. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering Christians patiently to expect the Judge's coming, Jam 5:7-9.

1. He is so sure of the equity of God's tribunal that he longs to appear before it (Job 23:3): O that I knew where I might find him! This may properly express the pious breathings of a soul convinced that it has by sin lost God and is undone for ever if it recover not its interest in his favour. "O that I knew how I might recover his favour! How I might come into his covenant and communion with him!" Mic 6:6,7. It is the cry of a poor deserted soul. "Saw you him whom my soul loveth? O that I knew where I might find him! O that he who has laid open the way to himself would direct me into it and lead me in it!" But Job here seems to complain too boldly that his friends wronged him and he knew not which way to apply himself to God to have justice done him, else he would go even to his seat, to demand it. A patient waiting for death and judgment is our wisdom and duty, and, if we duly consider things, that cannot be without a holy fear and trembling; but a passionate wishing for death or judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we need not time

to get readier? Woe to those that thus, in a heat, desire the day of the Lord, Am 5:18.

2. He is so sure of the goodness of his own cause that he longs to be opening it at God's bar (Job 23:4): "I would order my cause before him, and set it in a true light. I would produce the evidences of my sincerity in a proper method, and would fill my mouth with arguments to prove it." We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have boldness to enter into the holiest and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace. We have not only liberty of access, but liberty of speech. We have leave,

(1.) To be particular in our requests, to order our cause before God, to speak the whole matter, to lay before him all our grievances, in what method we think most proper; we durst not be so free with earthly princes as a humble holy soul may be with God.

(2.) To be importunate in our requests. We are allowed, not only to pray, but to plead, not only to ask, but to argue; nay, to fill our mouths with arguments, not to move God (he is perfectly apprized of the merits of the cause without our showing), but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency and encourage our faith in prayer.

3. He is so sure of a sentence in favour of him that he even longed to hear it (Job 23:5): "I would know the words which he would answer me," that is, "I would gladly hear what God will say to this matter in dispute between you and me, and will entirely acquiesce in his judgment." This becomes us, in all controversies; let the word of God determine them; let us know what he answers, and understand what he says. Job knew well enough what his friends would answer him; they would condemn him, and run him down. "But" (says he) "I would fain know what God would answer me; for I am sure his judgment is according to truth, which theirs is not. I cannot understand them; they talk so little to the purpose. But what he says I should understand and therefore be fully satisfied in."

III. He comforts himself with the hope that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, Job 23:6,7. Note, It is of great use to us, in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,

1. That God would not overpower him, that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty or in strict justice, not with a high hand, nor with a strong hand: Will he plead against me with his great power? No. Job's friends pleaded against him with all the power they had; but will God do so? No; his power is all just and holy, whatever men's is. Against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency God will plead with his great power; their destruction will come from the glory of his power. But with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

2. That, on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God: "He would put strength in me, to support me and bear me up, in maintaining my integrity." Note, The same power that is engaged against proud sinners is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, Ho 12:3. See Ps 68:35.

3. That the issue would certainly be comfortable, Job 23:7. There, in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, the righteous might dispute with him and come off in his righteousness. Now, even the upright are often chastened of the Lord, and they cannot dispute against it; integrity itself is no fence either against calamity or calumny; but in that day they shall not be condemned with the world, though God may afflict by prerogative. Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked (Mal 3:18), so vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state; whereas now we can scarcely distinguish them, so little is the difference between them as to their outward condition, for all things

come alike to all. Then, when the final doom is given, "I shall be delivered for ever from my Judge," that is, "I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends and from that divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me." Those that are delivered up to God as their owner and ruler shall be for ever delivered from him as their judge and avenger; and there is no flying from his justice but by flying to his mercy.

2 Even today *is* my complaint bitter:
my stroke is heavier than my groaning.
3 Oh that I knew where I might find him!
That I might come *even* to his seat!
4 I would order *my* cause before him,
and fill my mouth with
arguments.
5 I would know the words *which* he would answer me,
and understand what he would say unto me.
6 Will he plead against me with *his* great power?
No; but he would put *strength* in me.
7 There the righteous might dispute with him;
so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.
8 Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there;*
and backward, but I cannot perceive him:

Here, I. Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providences concerning him, but is quite at a loss about them (Job 23:8,9): I go forward, but he is not there, &c. Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God. "So I would, with all my heart," says Job, "If I knew how to get acquainted with him." He had himself a great desire to appear before God, and get a hearing of his case, but the Judge was not to be found. Look which way he would, he could see no sign of God's appearing for him to clear up his innocency. Job, no doubt, believed that God is every where present; but three things he seems to complain of here:--

1. That he could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind. His mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles that he was like

a man in a fright, or at his wits' end, who runs this way and that way, but, being in confusion, brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which, if he could but have mixed faith with it and dwelt upon it in his thoughts, would have been a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy that, when they would think of that which is good, they can make nothing of it.

2. That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him. He took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others, for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. 3. That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof, whether God would deliver him at all, nor, if he did, when or which way. He saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long; as the church complains, Ps 74:9. He was quite at a loss to know what God designed to do with him; and, whatever conjecture he advanced, still something or other appeared against it.

9 on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold *him:*
he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see *him:*
10 but he knoweth the way that I take:
when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a witness to his integrity, and therefore did not doubt but the issue would be good.

1. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the divine counsels, how contentedly does he sit down, at length, with this thought: "Though I know not the way that he takes (for his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters, his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them), yet he knows the way that I take," Job 23:10. That is,

(1.) He is acquainted with it. His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knew every step he had taken, would not do so, Ps 139:3. Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly that God understands their meaning, though men do not, cannot, or will not.

(2.) He approves of it: "He knows that, however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way, have chosen the way of truth, and therefore he knows it," that is, he accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, Ps 1:6. This comforted the prophet, Jer 12:3. Thou hast tried my heart towards thee. From this Job infers, When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold. Those that keep the way of the Lord may comfort themselves, when they are in affliction, with these three things:--

[1.] That they are but tried. It is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; it is the trial of their faith, 1Pe 1:7.

[2.] That, when they are sufficiently tried, they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it as dross or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end. God will not contend for ever.

[3.] That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself and precious to the refiner. They shall come forth as gold approved and improved, found to be good and made to be better. Afflictions are to us as we are; those that go gold into the furnace will come out no worse.

2. Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well was the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had lived a good life in the fear of God.

(1.) That God's way was the way he walked in (Job 23:11): "My foot hath held his steps," that is, "held to them, adhered closely to them; the steps he takes. I have endeavoured to conform myself to his example." Good people are followers of God. Or, "I have accommodated myself to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that, to follow Providence step by step." Or, "His steps are the steps he has appointed me to take; the way of religion and serious godliness--that way I have kept, and have not declined from it, not only not turned back from it by a total apostasy, but not turned aside out of it by any wilful transgression." His holding God's steps, and keeping his way, intimate that the tempter had used all his arts by fraud and force to draw him aside; but, with care and resolution, he had by the grace of God hitherto persevered, and those that will do so must hold and keep, hold with resolution and keep with watchfulness.

(2.) That God's word was the rule he walked by, Job 23:12. He governed himself by the commandment of God's lips, and would not go back from that, but go forward according to it. Whatever difficulties we may meet with in the way of God's commandments, though they lead us through a wilderness, yet we must never think of going back, but must press on towards the mark. Job kept closely to the law of God in his conversation, for both his judgment and his affection led him to it: I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food; that is, he looked upon it as his necessary food; he could as well have lived without his daily bread as without the word of God. I have laid it up (so the word is), as those that lay up provision for a siege, or as Joseph laid up corn before the famine. Eliphaz had told him to lay up God's words in his heart, Job 22:22. "I do," says he, "and always did, that I might not sin against him, and that, like the good householder, I might bring forth for the good of others."

Note, The word of God is to our souls what our necessary food is to our bodies; it sustains the spiritual life and strengthens us for the actions of life; it is that which we

cannot subsist without, and which nothing else can make up the want of: and we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

11 My foot hath held his steps,
his way have I kept, and not declined.
12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips;
I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food.*
13 But he *is* in one *mind,* and who can turn him?
And *what* his soul desireth, even *that* he doeth.

Some make Job to complain here that God dealt unjustly and unfairly with him in proceeding to punish him without the least relenting or relaxation, though he had such incontestable evidences to produce of his innocency. I am loth to think holy Job would charge the holy God with iniquity; but his complaint is indeed bitter and peevish, and he reasons himself into a sort of patience per force, which he cannot do without reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him, but he must bear it because he cannot help it; the worst he says is that God deals unaccountably with him.

I. He lays down good truths, and truths which were capable of a good improvement, Job 23:13,14.

1. That God's counsels are immutable: He is in one mind, and who can turn him? He is one (so some read it) or in one; he has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose: he has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose: he is one with himself, and never alters his mind, never alters his measures. Prayer has prevailed to change God's way and his providence, but never was his will or purpose changed; for known unto God are all his works.

2. That his power is irresistible: What his soul desires or designs even that he does, and nothing can stand in his

way or put him upon new counsels. Men desire many things which they may not do, or cannot do, or dare not do. But God has an incontestable sovereignty; his will is so perfectly pure and right that it is highly fit he should pursue all its determinations. And he has an uncontrollable power. None can stay his hand. Whatever the Lord pleased that did he (Ps 135:6), and always will, for it is always best. 3. That all he does is according to the counsel of his will (Job 23:14): He performs the thing that is appointed for me. Whatever happens to us, it is God that performs it (Ps 57:2), and an admirable performance the whole will appear to be when the mystery of God shall be finished. He performs all that, and that only, which was appointed, and in the appointed time and method.

This may silence us, for what is appointed cannot be altered. But to consider that, when God was appointing us to eternal life and glory as our end, he was appointing to this condition, this affliction, whatever it is, in our way, this may do more than silence us, it may satisfy us that it is all for the best; though what he does we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter. 4. That all he does is according to the custom of his providence: Many such things are with him, that is, He does many things in the course of his providence which we can give no account of, but must resolve into his absolute sovereignty. Whatever trouble we are in others have been in the like. Our case is not singular; the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren, 1Pe 5:9. Are we sick or sore, impoverished and stripped? Are our children removed by death or our friends unkind? This is what God has appointed for us, and many such things are with him. Shall the earth be forsaken for us?

II. He makes but a bad use of these good truths. Had he duly considered them, he might have said, "Therefore am I easy and pleased, and well reconciled to the way of my God concerning me; therefore will I rejoice in hope that my troubles will issue well at last." But he said, Therefore am I troubled at his presence, Job 23:15. Those are indeed

of troubled spirits who are troubled at the presence of God, as the psalmist, who remembered God and was troubled, Ps 77:3. See what confusion poor Job was now in, for he contradicted himself: just now he was troubled for God's absence (Job 23:8,9); now he is troubled at his presence.

When I consider, I am afraid of him. What he now felt made him fear worse. There is indeed that which, if we consider it, will show that we have cause to be afraid of God--his infinite justice and purity, compared with our own sinfulness and vileness; but if, withal, we consider his grace in a Redeemer, and our compliance with that grace, our fears will vanish and we shall see cause to hope in him. See what impressions were made upon him by the wounds of his spirit.

1. He was very fearful (Job 23:16): The Almighty troubled him, and so made his heart soft, that is, utterly unable to bear any thing, and afraid of every thing that stirred. There is a gracious softness, like that of Josiah, whose heart was tender, and trembled at the word of God; but this is meant of a grievous softness which apprehends every thing that is present to be pressing and every thing future to be threatening.

2. He was very fretful, peevish indeed, for he quarrels with God,

(1.) Because he did not die before his troubles, that he might never have seen them (Because I was not cut off before the darkness, Job 23:17), and yet if, in the height of his prosperity, he had received a summons to the grave, he would have thought it hard. This may help to reconcile us to death, whenever it comes, that we do not know what evil we may be taken away from. But when trouble comes it is folly to wish we had not lived to see it and it is better to make the best of it.

(2.) Because he was left to live so long in his troubles, and the darkness was not covered from his face by his being hidden in the grave. We should bear the darkness better than thus if we would but remember that to the upright there sometimes arises a marvellous light in the darkness; however, there is reserved for them a more marvellous light after it.

14 For he performeth *the thing that is* appointed for me:
and many such *things are* with him.
15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence:
when I consider, I am afraid of him.
16 For God maketh my heart soft,
and the Almighty troubleth me:
17 because I was not cut off before the darkness,
neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

Job-24

Job Complains of God's Indifference to Wickedness

1 Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty,
do they that know him not see his days?

Job's friends had been very positive in it that they should soon see the fall of wicked people, how much soever they might prosper for a while. By no means, says Job; though times are not hidden from the Almighty, yet those that know him do not presently see his day, Job 24:1.

1. He takes it for granted that times are not hidden from the Almighty; past times are not hidden from his judgment (Ec 3:15), present times are not hidden from his providence (Mt 10:29), future times are not hidden from his prescience, Ac 15:18. God governs the world, and therefore we may be sure he takes cognizance of it. Bad times are not hidden from him, though the bad men that make the times bad say one to another, He has forsaken the earth, Ps 94:6,7. Every man's times are in his hand, and under his eye, and therefore it is in his power to make the times of wicked men in this world miserable.

He foresees the time of every man's death, and therefore, if wicked men die before they are punished for their wickedness, we cannot say, "They escaped him by surprise;" he foresaw it, nay, he ordered it. Before Job will enquire into the reasons of the prosperity of wicked men he asserts God's omniscience, as one prophet, in a similar case, asserts his righteousness (Jer 12:1), another his holiness (Hab 1:13), another his goodness to his own people, Ps 73:1. General truths must be held fast, though we may find it difficult to reconcile them to particular events.

2. He yet asserts that those who know him (that is, wise and good people who are acquainted with him, and with whom his secret is) do not see his day,--the day of his judging for them; this was the thing he complained of in his own case (Job 23:8), that he could not see God appearing on his behalf to plead his cause,--the day of his judging against open and notorious sinners, that is called his day, Ps 37:13. We believe that day will come, but we do not see it, because it is future, and its presages are secret.

3. Though this is a mystery of Providence, yet there is a reason for it, and we shall shortly know why the judgment is deferred; even the wisest, and those who know God best, do not yet see it. God will exercise their faith and patience, and excite their prayers for the coming of his kingdom, for which they are to cry day and night to him, Lu 18:7.

For the proof of this, that wicked people prosper, Job specifies two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all the world saw thriving in their iniquity:--

I. Tyrants, and those that do wrong under pretence of law and authority. It is a melancholy sight which has often been seen under the sun, wickedness in the place of judgment (Ec 3:16), the unregarded tears of the oppressed,

while on the side of the oppressors there was power (Ec 4:1), the violent perverting of justice and judgment, Ec 5:8.

1. They disseize their neighbours of their real estates, which came to them by descent from their ancestors. They remove the land-marks, under pretence that they were misplaced (Job 24:2), and so they encroach upon their neighbours' rights and think they effectually secure that to their posterity which they have got wrongfully, by making that to be an evidence for them which should have been an evidence for the rightful owner. This was forbidden by the law of Moses (De 19:14), under a curse, De 27:17. Forging or destroying deeds is now a crime equivalent to this.

2. They dispossess them of their personal estates, under colour of justice. They violently take away flocks, pretending they are forfeited, and feed thereof; as the rich man took the poor man's ewe lamb, 2Sa 12:4. If a poor fatherless child has but an ass of his own to get a little money with, they find some colour or other to take it away, because the owner is not able to contest with them. It is all one if a widow has but an ox for what little husbandry she has; under pretence of distraining for some small debt, or arrears of rent, this ox shall be taken for a pledge, though perhaps it is the widow's all. God has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a Father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows; and therefore those will not be reckoned his friends that do not to their utmost protect and help them; but those he will certainly reckon with as his enemies that vex and oppress them.

3. They take all occasions to offer personal abuses to them, Job 24:4. They will mislead them if they can when they meet them on the high-way, so that the poor and needy are forced to hide themselves from them, having no other way to secure themselves from them. They love in their hearts to banter people, and to make fools of them, and do them a mischief if they can, especially to triumph

over poor people, whom they turn out of the way of getting relief, threaten to punish them as vagabonds, and so force them to abscond, and laugh at them when they have done. Some understand those barbarous actions (Job 24:9,10) to be done by those oppressors that pretend law for what they do: They pluck the fatherless from the breast; that is, having made poor infants fatherless, they make them motherless too; having taken away the father's life, they break the mother's heart, and so starve the children and leave them to perish. Pharaoh and Herod plucked children from the breast to the sword; and we read of children brought forth to the murderers, Ho 9:13.

Those are inhuman murderers indeed that can with so much pleasure suck innocent blood. They take a pledge of the poor, and so they rob the spital; nay, they take the poor themselves for a pledge (as some read it), and probably it was under this pretence that they plucked the fatherless from the breast, distraining them for slaves, as Ne 5:5. Cruelty to the poor is great wickedness and cries aloud for vengeance. Those who show no mercy to such as lie at their mercy shall themselves have judgment without mercy. Another instance of their barbarous treatment of those they have advantage against is that they take from them even their necessary food and raiment; they squeeze them so with their extortion that they cause them to go naked without clothing (Job 24:10) and so catch their death. And if a poor hungry family has gleaned a sheaf of corn, to make a little cake of, that they may eat it and die, even that they take away from them, being well pleased to see them perish for want, while they themselves are fed to the full.

4. They are very oppressive to the labourers they employ in their service. They not only give them no wages, though the labourer is worthy of his hire (and this is a crying sin, Jam 5:4), but they will not so much as give them meat and drink: Those that carry their sheaves are hungry; so some read it (Job 24:10), and it agrees with Job 24:11, that those who make oil within their walls, and with a great deal of

toil labour at the wine-presses, yet suffer thirst, which was worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Those masters forget that they have a Master in heaven who will not allow the necessary supports of life to their servants and labourers, not caring whether they can live by their labour or no.

5. It is not only among the poor country people, but in the cities also, that we see the tears of the oppressed (Job 24:12): Men groan from out of the city, where the rich merchants and traders are as cruel with their poor debtors as the landlords in the country are with their poor tenants. In cities such cruel actions as these are more observed than in obscure corners of the country and the wronged have easier access to justice to right themselves; and yet the oppressors there fear neither the restraints of the law nor the just censures of their neighbours, but the oppressed groan and cry out like wounded men, and can no more ease and help themselves, for the oppressors are inexorable and deaf to their groans.

2 *Some* remove the landmarks;
they violently take away flocks, and feed *thereof.*
3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless,
they take the widow's ox for a pledge.
4 They turn the needy out of the way:
the poor of the earth hide themselves together.
5 Behold, *as* wild asses in the desert,
go they forth to their work;
rising betimes for a prey:
the wilderness *yieldeth* food for them *and* for *their* children.

He speaks of robbers, and those that do wrong by downright force, as the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, which had lately plundered him. He does not mention them particularly, lest he should seem partial to his own cause, and to judge of men (as we are apt to do) by what they are to us; but among the Arabians, the children of the east (Job's country), there were those that lived by spoil and rapine, making incursions upon their

neighbours, and robbing travellers. See how they are described here, and what mischief they do, Job 24:5-8.

1. Their character is that they are as wild asses in the desert, untamed, untractable, unreasonable, Ishmael's character (Ge 16:12), fierce and furious, and under no restraint of law or government, Jer 2:23,24. They choose the deserts for their dwelling, that they may be lawless and unsociable, and that they may have opportunity of doing the more mischief. The desert is indeed the fittest place for such wild people, Job 39:6. But no desert can set men out of the reach of God's eye and hand.

2. Their trade is to steal, and to make a prey of all about them. They have chosen it as their trade; it is their work, because there is more to be got by it, and it is got more easily, than by an honest calling. They follow it as their trade; they follow it closely; they go forth to it as their work, as man goes forth to his labour, Ps 104:23. They are diligent and take pains at it: They rise betimes for a prey. If a traveller be out early, they will be out as soon to rob him. They live by it as a man lives by his trade: The wilderness (not the grounds there but the roads there) yieldeth food for them and for their children; they maintain themselves and their families by robbing on the high-way, and bless themselves in it without any remorse of compassion or conscience, and with as much security as if it were honestly got; as Ephraim, Ho 12:7,8.

3. See the mischief they do to the country. They not only rob travellers, but they make incursions upon their neighbours, and reap every one his corn in the field (Job 24:6), that is, they enter upon other people's ground, cut their corn, and carry it away as freely as if it were their own. Even the wicked gather the vintage, and it is their wickedness; or, as we read it, They gather the vintage of the wicked, and so one wicked man is made a scourge to another. What the wicked got by extortion (which is their way of stealing) these robbers get from them in their way

of stealing; thus oftentimes are the spoilers spoiled, Isa 33:1.

4. The misery of those that fall into their hands (Job 24:7,8): They cause the naked, whom they have stripped, not leaving them the clothes to their backs, to lodge, in the cold nights, without clothing, so that they are wet with the showers of the mountains, and, for want of a better shelter, embrace the rock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that Providence would not thus have stripped him if he had not first stripped the naked of their clothing, Job 22:6.

Job here tells him there were those that were really guilty of those crimes with which he was unjustly charged and yet prospered and had success in their villanies, the curse they laid themselves under working invisibly; and Job thinks it more just to argue as he did, from an open notorious course of wickedness inferring a secret and future punishment, than to argue as Eliphaz did, who from nothing but present trouble inferred a course of past secret iniquity. The impunity of these oppressors and spoilers is expressed in one word (Job 24:12): Yet God layeth not folly to them, that is, he does not immediately prosecute them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so evince their folly to all the world. He that gets riches, and not by right, at his end shall be a fool, Jer 17:11. But while he prospers he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him until he saith, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Lu 12:20.

6 They reap *every one* his corn in the field:
and they gather the vintage of the wicked.
7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing,
that *they have* no covering in the cold.
8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains,
and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.
9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast,
and take a pledge of the poor.

10 They cause *him* to go naked without clothing,
and they take away the sheaf *from* the hungry;
11 *which* make oil within their walls,
and tread *their* winepresses, and suffer thirst.
12 Men groan from out of the city,
and the soul of the wounded crieth out:
yet God layeth not folly *to them*.
13 They are of those that rebel against the light;
they know not the ways thereof,
nor abide in the paths thereof.

These verses describe another sort of sinners who therefore go unpunished, because they go undiscovered. They rebel against the light, Job 24:13. Some understand it figuratively: they sin against the light of nature, the light of God's law, and that of their own consciences; they profess to know God, but they rebel against the knowledge they have of him, and will not be guided and governed, commanded and controlled, by it. Others understand it literally: they have the day-light and choose the night as the most advantageous season for their wickedness. Sinful works are therefore called works of darkness, because he that does evil hates the light (Joh 3:20), knows not the ways thereof, that is, keeps out of the way of it, or, if he happen to be seen, abides not where he thinks he is known.

So that he here describes the worst of sinners,--those that sin wilfully, and against the convictions of their own consciences, whereby they add rebellion to their sin,--those that sin deliberately, and with a great deal of plot and contrivance, using a thousand arts to conceal their villanies, fondly imagining that, if they can but hide them from the eye of men, they are safe, but forgetting that there is no darkness or shadow of death in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye, Job 34:22. In this paragraph Job specifies three sorts of sinners that shun the light:--

1. Murderers, Job 24:14. They rise with the light, as soon as ever the day breaks, to kill the poor travellers that are up early and abroad about their business, going to market with a little money or goods; and though it is so little that they are really to be called poor and needy, who with much ado get a sorry livelihood by their marketings, yet, to get it, the murderer will both take his neighbour's life and venture his own, will rather play at such small game than not play at all; nay, he kills for killing sake, thirsting more for blood than for booty. See what care and pains wicked men take to compass their wicked designs, and let the sight shame us out of our negligence and slothfulness in doing good.

> Ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones,
> Tuque ut te serves non expergisceris?--
> Rogues nightly rise to murder men for pelf;
> Will you not rouse you to preserve yourself?

2. Adulterers. The eyes that are full of adultery (2Pe 2:14), the unclean and wanton eyes, wait for the twilight, Job 24:15. The eye of the adulteress did so, Pr 7:9. Adultery hides its head for shame. The sinners themselves, even the most impudent, do what they can to hide their sin: si non caste, tamen caute--if not chastely, yet cautiously; and after all the wretched endeavours of the factors for hell to take away the reproach of it, it is and ever will be a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret, Eph 5:12. It hides its head also for fear, knowing that jealousy is the rage of a husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance, Pr 6:24,25. See what pains those take that make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it, pains to compass, and then to conceal, that provision which, after all, will be death and hell at last. Less pains would serve to mortify and crucify the flesh, which would be life and heaven at last. Let the sinner change his heart, and then he needs not disguise his face, but may lift it up without spot.

3. House-breakers, Job 24:16. These mark houses in the day-time, mark the avenues of a house, and on which side they can most easily force their entrance, and then, in the night, dig through them, either to kill, or steal, or commit adultery. The night favours the assault, and makes the defence the more difficult; for the good man of the house knows not what hour the thief will come and therefore is asleep (Lu 12:39) and he and his lie exposed. For this reason our law makes burglary, which is the breaking and entering of a dwelling-house in the night time with a felonious intent, to be felony without benefit of clergy.

And, lastly, Job observes (and perhaps observes it as part of the present, though secret, punishment of such sinners as these) that they are in a continual terror for fear of being discovered (Job 24:17): The morning is to them even as the shadow of death. The light of the day, which is welcome to honest people, is a terror to bad people. They curse the sun, not as the Moors, because it scorches them, but because it discovers them. If one know them, their consciences fly in their faces, and they are ready to become their own accusers; for they are in the terrors of the shadow of death. Shame came in with sin, and everlasting shame is at the end of it. See the misery of sinners--they are exposed to continual frights; and yet see their folly--they are afraid of coming under the eye of men, but have no dread of God's eye, which is always upon them: they are not afraid of doing that which yet they are so terribly afraid of being known to do.

14 The murderer rising with the light
killeth the poor and needy,
and in the night is as a thief.
15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight,
saying, No eye shall see me:
and disguiseth *his* face.
16 In the dark they dig through houses,
which they had marked for themselves in the daytime:
they know not the light.
17 For the morning *is* to them even as the shadow of death:
if *one* know *them, they are in* the terrors of the shadow of death.

18 He *is* swift as the waters;
their portion is cursed in the earth:
he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards.

Job here, in the conclusion of his discourse,

I. Gives some further instances of the wickedness of these cruel bloody men. 1. Some are pirates and robbers at sea. To this many learned interpreters apply those difficult expressions (Job 24:18), He is swift upon the waters. Privateers choose those ships that are the best sailors. In these swift ships they cruise from one channel to another, to pick up prizes; and this brings them in so much wealth that their portion is cursed in the earth, and they behold not the way of the vineyards, that is (as bishop Patrick explains it), they despise the employment of those who till the ground and plant vineyards as poor and unprofitable. But others make this a further description of the conduct of those sinners that are afraid of the light: if they be discovered, they get away as fast as they can, and choose to lurk, not in the vineyards, for fear of being discovered, but in some cursed portion, a lonely and desolate place, which nobody looks after.

2. Some are abusive to those that are in trouble, and add affliction to the afflicted. Barrenness was looked upon as a great reproach, and those that fall under that affliction they upbraid with it, as Peninnah did Hannah, on purpose to vex them and make them to fret, which is a barbarous thing. This is evil entreating the barren that beareth not (Job 24:21), or those that are childless, and so want the arrows others have in their quiver, which enable them to deal with their enemy in the gate, Ps 127:5. They take that advantage against and are oppressive to them. As the fatherless, so the childless, are in some degree helpless. For the same reason it is a cruel thing to hurt the widow, to whom we ought to do good; and not doing good, when it is in our power, is doing hurt.

3. There are those who, by inuring themselves to cruelty, come at last to be so exceedingly boisterous that they are

the terror of the mighty in the land of the living (Job 24:22): "He draws the mighty into a snare with his power; even the greatest are not able to stand before him when he is in his mad fits: he rises up in his passion, and lays about him with so much fury that no man is sure of his life; nor can he at the same time be sure of his own, for his hand is against every man and every man's hand against him," Ge 16:12. One would wonder how any man can take pleasure in making all about him afraid of him, yet there are those that do.

II. He shows that these daring sinners prosper, and are at ease for a while, nay, and often end their days in peace, as Ishmael, who, though he was a man of such a character as is here given, yet both lived and died in the presence of all his brethren, as we are told, Ge 16:12,25:18: Of these sinners here it is said,

1. That it is given them to be in safety, Job 24:23. They seem to be under the special protection of the divine Providence; and one would wonder how they escape with life through so many dangers as they run themselves into.

2. That they rest upon this, that is, they rely upon this as sufficient to warrant all their violences. Because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily they think that there is no great evil in them, and that God is not displeased with them, nor will ever call them to an account. Their prosperity is their security.

3. That they are exalted for a while. They seem to be the favourites of heaven, and value themselves as making the best figure on earth. They are set up in honour, set up (as they think) out of the reach of danger, and lifted up in the pride of their own spirits.

4. That, at length, they are carried out of the world very silently and gently, and without any remarkable disgrace or terror. "They go down to the grave as easily as snow-water sinks into the dry ground when it is melted by the

sun;" so bishop Patrick explains Job 24:19. To the same purport he paraphrases Job 24:20, The womb shall forget him, &c. "God sets no such mark of his displeasure upon him but that his mother may soon forget him. The hand of justice does not hang him on a gibbet for the birds to feed on; but he is carried to his grave like other men, to be the sweet food of worms.

There he lies quietly, and neither he nor his wickedness is any more remembered than a tree which is broken to shivers." And Job 24:24, They are taken out of the way as all others, that is, "they are shut up in their graves like all other men; nay, they die as easily (without those tedious pains which some endure) as an ear of corn is cropped with your hand." Compare this with Solomon's observation (Ec 8:10), I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten.

19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters:
so doth the grave *those which* have sinned.
20 The womb shall forget him;
the worm shall feed sweetly on him;
he shall be no more remembered;
and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.
21 He evil entreateth the barren *that* beareth not:
and doeth not good to the widow.
22 He draweth also the mighty with his power:
he riseth up, and no *man* is sure of life.
23 *Though* it be given him *to be* in safety, whereon he resteth;
yet his eyes *are* upon their ways.

I. He foresees their fall however, and that their death, though they die in ease and honour, will be their ruin. God's eyes are upon their ways, Job 24:23. Though he keep silence, and seem to connive at them, yet he takes notice, and keeps account of all their wickedness, and will make it to appear shortly that their most secret sins, which they thought no eye should see (Job 24:15), were under his eye and will be called over again. Here is no mention of the punishment of these sinners in the other world, but

it is intimated in the particular notice taken of the consequences of their death.

1 The consumption of the body in the grave, though common to all, yet to them is in the nature of a punishment for their sin. The grave shall consume those that have sinned; that land of darkness will be the lot of those that love darkness rather than light. The bodies they pampered shall be a feast for worms, which shall feed as sweetly on them as ever they fed on the pleasures and gains of their sins.

2. Though they thought to make themselves a great name by their wealth, and power, and mighty achievements, yet their memorial perished with them, Ps 9:6. He that made himself so much talked of shall, when he is dead, be no more remembered with honour; his name shall rot, Pr 10:7. Those that durst not give him his due character while he lived shall not spare him when he is dead; so that the womb that bore him, his own mother, shall forget him, that is, shall avoid making mention of him, and shall think that the greatest kindness she can do him, since no good can be said of him. That honour which is got by sin will soon turn into shame.

3. The wickedness they thought to establish in their families shall be broken as a tree; all their wicked projects shall be blasted, and all their wicked hopes dashed and buried with them.

4. Their pride shall be brought down and laid in the dust (Job 24:24); and, in mercy to the world, they shall be taken out of the way, and all their power and prosperity shall be cut off. You may seek them, and they shall not be found. Job owns that wicked people will be miserable at last, miserable on the other side death, but utterly denies what his friends asserted, that ordinarily they are miserable in this life.

II. He concludes with a bold challenge to all that were present to disprove what he had said if they could (Job 24:25): "If it be not so now, as I have declared, and if it do not thence follow that I am unjustly condemned and censured, let those that can undertake to prove that my discourse is either,

1. False in itself, and then they prove me a liar; or,

2. Foreign, and nothing to the purpose, and then they prove my speech frivolous and nothing worth." That indeed which is false is nothing worth; where there is not truth, how can there be goodness? But those that speak the words of truth and soberness need not fear having what they say brought to the test, but can cheerfully submit it to a fair examination, as Job does here.

24 They are exalted for a little while,
but are gone and brought low;
they are taken out of the way as all *other*,
and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.
25 And if *it be* not *so* now, who will make me a liar,
and make my speech nothing worth?

Job-25

Bildad Denies That Man Can Be Justified with God

1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

Bildad is to be commended here for two things:--

1. For speaking no more on the subject about which Job and he differed. Perhaps he began to think Job was in the right, and then it was justice to say no more concerning it, as one that contended for truth, not for victory, and therefore, for the finding of truth, would be content to lose the victory; or, if he still thought himself in the right, yet he knew when he had said enough, and would not wrangle endlessly for the last word. Perhaps indeed one reason

why he and the rest of them let fall this debate was because they perceived that Job and they did not differ so much in opinion as they thought: they owned that wicked people might prosper a while, and Job owned they would be destroyed at last; how little then was the difference! If disputants would understand one another better, perhaps they would find themselves nearer one another than they imagined.

2. For speaking so well on the matter about which Job and he were agreed. If we would all get our hearts filled with awful thoughts of God and humble thoughts of ourselves, we should not be so apt as we are to fall out about matters of doubtful disputation, which are trifling or intricate.

Two ways Bildad takes here to exalt God and abase man:--

I. He shows how glorious God is, and thence infers how guilty and impure man is before him, Job 25:2-4. Let us see then,

1. What great things are here said of God, designed to possess Job with a reverence of him, and to check his reflections upon him and upon his dealings with him:

(1.) God is the sovereign Lord of all, and with him is terrible majesty. Dominion and fear are with him, Job 25:2. He that gave being has an incontestable authority to give laws, and can enforce the laws he gives. He that made all has a right to dispose of all according to his own will, with an absolute sovereignty. Whatever he will do he does, and may do; and none can say unto him, What doest thou? or Why doest thou so? Da 4:35. His having dominion (or being Dominus--Lord) bespeaks him both owner and ruler of all the creatures. They are all his, and they are all under his direction and at his disposal. Hence it follows that he is to be feared (that is, reverenced and obeyed), that he is feared by all that know him (the seraphim cover their faces before him), and that, first or

last, all will be made to fear him. Men's dominion is often despicable, often despised, but God is always terrible.

(2.) The glorious inhabitants of the upper world are all perfectly observant of him and entirely acquiesce in his will: He maketh peace in his high places. He enjoys himself in a perfect tranquillity. The holy angels never quarrel with him, nor with one another, but entirely acquiesce in his will, and unanimously execute it without murmuring or disputing. Thus the will of God is done in heaven; and thus we pray that it may be done by us and others on earth. The sun, moon, and stars, keep their courses, and never clash with one another: nay, even in this lower region, which is often disturbed with storms and tempests, yet when God pleases he commands peace, by making the storm a calm, Ps 107:29,Ps 65:7. Observe, The high places are his high places; for the heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's (Ps 115:16) in a peculiar manner. Peace is God's work; where it is made it is he that makes it, Isa 57:19. In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love.

(3.) He is a God of irresistible power: Is there any number of his armies? Job 25:3. The greatness and power of princes are judged of by their armies. God is not only himself almighty, but he has numberless numbers of armies at his beck and disposal,--standing armies that are never disbanded,--regular troops, and well disciplined, that are never to seek, never at a loss, that never mutiny,--veteran troops, that have been long in his service,--victorious troops, that never failed of success nor were ever foiled. All the creatures are his hosts, angels especially. He is Lord of all, Lord of hosts. He has numberless armies, and yet makes peace. He could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; and even the heavenly hosts were sent to proclaim peace on earth and good will towards men, Lu 2:14.

(4.) His providence extends itself to all: Upon whom does not his light arise? The light of the sun is communicated

to all parts of the world, and, take the year round, to all equally. See Ps 19:6. That is a faint resemblance of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation, Mt 5:45. All are under the light of his knowledge and are naked and open before him. All partake of the light of his goodness: it seems especially to be meant of that. He is good to all; the earth is full of his goodness. He is Deus optimus--God, the best of beings, as well as maximus--the greatest: he has power to destroy; but his pleasure is to show mercy. All the creatures live upon his bounty.

2. What low things are here said of man, and very truly and justly (Job 25:4): How then can man be justified with God? Or how can he be clean? Man is not only mean, but vile, not only earthly, but filthy; he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean,

(1.) In comparison with God. Man's righteousness and holiness, at the best, are nothing to God's, Ps 89:6.

(2.) In debate with God. He that will quarrel with the word and providence of God must unavoidably go by the worst. God will be justified, and then man will be condemned, Ps 51:4,Ro 3:4. There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it.

(3.) In the sight of God. If God is so great and glorious, how can man, who is guilty and impure, appear before him? Note,

[1.] Man, by reason of his actual transgressions, is obnoxious to God's justice and cannot in himself be justified before him: he can neither plead Not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own to balance or extenuate his guilt. The scripture has concluded all under sin.

[2.] Man, by reason of his original corruption, as he is born of a woman, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot

be clean in his sight. God sees his impurity, and it is certain that by it he is rendered utterly unfit for communion and fellowship with God in grace here and for the vision and fruition of him in glory hereafter. We have need therefore to be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, and to be bathed again and again in the blood of Christ, that fountain opened.

2 Dominion and fear *are* with him;
he maketh peace in his high places.
3 Is there any number of his armies?
And upon whom doth not his light arise?
4 How then can man be justified with God?
Or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman?

He shows how dark and defective even the heavenly bodies are in the sight of God, and in comparison with him, and thence infers how little, and mean, and worthless, man is.

1 The lights of heaven, though beauteous creatures, are before God as clods of earth (Job 25:5): Behold even to the moon, walking in brightness, and the stars, those glorious lamps of heaven, which the heathen were so charmed with the lustre of that they worshipped them--yet, in God's sight, in comparison with him, they shine not, they are not pure; they have no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth, as a candle, though it burn, yet does not shine when it is set in the clear light of the sun. The glory of God, shining in his providences, eclipses the glory of the brightest creatures, Isa 24:23. The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Sion. The heavenly bodies are often clouded; we plainly see spots in the moon, and, with the help of glasses, may sometimes discern spots upon the sun too: but God sees spots in them that we do not see. How durst Job then so confidently appeal to God, who would discover that amiss in him which he was not aware of in himself?

2 The children of men, though noble creatures, are before God but as worms of the earth (Job 25:6): How much less

does man shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness that is a worm, and the son of man, whoever he be, that is a worm!--a vermin (so some), not only mean and despicable, but noxious and detestable; a mite (so others), the smallest animal, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but through a magnifying glass. Such a thing is man.

(1.) So mean, and little, and inconsiderable, in comparison with God and with the holy angels: so worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastening to corruption. What little reason has man to be proud, and what great reason to be humble!

(2.) So weak and impotent, and so easily crushed, and therefore a very unequal match for Almighty God. Shall man be such a fool as to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces more easily than we can a worm?

(3.) So sordid and filthy. Man is not pure for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us therefore wonder at God's condescension in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself, especially at the condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself so far as to say, I am a worm, and no man, Ps 22:6.

5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not;
yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.
6 How much less man, *that is* a worm?
and the son of man, *which is* a worm?

Job-26

Job Declares God's Sovereignty

1 But Job answered and said,
2 How hast thou helped *him that is* without power?
How savest thou the arm *that hath* no strength?

One would not have thought that Job, when he was in so much pain and misery, could banter his friend as he does here and make himself merry with the impertinency of his discourse. Bildad thought that he had made a fine speech, that the matter was so weighty, and the language so fine, that he had gained the reputation both of an oracle and of an orator; but Job peevishly enough shows that his performance was not so valuable as he thought it and ridicules him for it. He shows,

I. That there was no great matter to be found in it (Job 26:3): How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? This is spoken ironically, upbraiding Bildad with the good conceit he himself had of what he had said. 1. He thought he had spoken very clearly, had declared the thing as it is. He was very fond (as we are all apt to be) of his own notions, and thought they only were right, and true, and intelligible, and all other notions of the thing were false, mistaken, and confused; whereas, when we speak of the glory of God, we cannot declare the thing as it is, for we see it through a glass darkly, or but by reflection, and shall not see him as he is till we come to heaven. Here we cannot order our speech concerning him, Job 37:19. 2. He thought he had spoken very fully, though in few words, that he had plentifully declared it, and, alas! it was but poorly and scantily that he declared it, in comparison with the vast compass and copiousness of the subject.

II. That there was no great use to be made of it. Cui bono--What good hast thou done by all that thou hast said? How hast thou, with all this mighty flourish, helped him that is without power? Job 26:2. How hast thou, with thy grave dictates, counselled him that has no wisdom? Job 26:3. Job would convince him,

1. That he had done God no service by it, nor made him in the least beholden to him. It is indeed our duty, and will be our honour, to speak on God's behalf; but we must not think that he needs our service, or is indebted to us for it, nor will he accept it if it come from a spirit of contention

and contradiction, and not from a sincere regard to God's glory.

2. That he had done his cause no service by it. He thought his friends were mightily beholden to him for helping them, at a dead lift, to make their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak disputants, when warm, are apt to think truth more beholden to them than it really is.

3. That he had done him no service by it. He pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort, Job; but, alas! what he had said was so little to the purpose that it would not avail to rectify any mistakes, nor to assist him either in bearing his afflictions or in getting good by them: "To whom has thou uttered words? Job 26:4. Was it to me that thou didst direct thy discourse? And dost thou take me for such a child as to need these instructions? Or dost thou think them proper for one in my condition?" Every thing that is true and good is not suitable and seasonable. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to have preached of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty, to have laid before him the consolations rather than the terrors of the Almighty.

Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the weary (Isa 50:4), and his ministers should learn rightly to divide the word of truth, and not make those sad whom God would not have made sad, as Bildad did; and therefore Job asks him, Whose spirit came from thee? that is, "What troubled soul would ever be revived, and relieved, and brought to itself, by such discourses as these?" Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends who should comfort us, but the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operations nor misses of his end.

3 How hast thou counseled *him that hath* no wisdom?
And *how* hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?
4 To whom hast thou uttered words?

And whose spirit came from thee?

5 Dead *things* are formed from under the waters,
and the inhabitants thereof.

The truth received a great deal of light from the dispute between Job and his friends concerning those points about which they differed; but now they are upon a subject in which they were all agreed, the infinite glory and power of God. How does truth triumph, and how brightly does it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contenders than which shall speak most highly and honourably of God and be most copious in showing forth his praise! It were well if all disputes about matters of religion might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind and one mouth (Ro 15:6); for to that we have all attained, in that we are all agreed.

I. Many illustrious instances are here given of the wisdom and power of God in the creation and preservation of the world.

1. If we look about us, to the earth and waters here below, we shall see striking instances of omnipotence, which we may gather out of these verses.

(1.) He hangs the earth upon nothing, Job 26:7. The vast terraqueous globe neither rests upon any pillars nor hangs upon any axle-tree, and yet, by the almighty power of God, is firmly fixed in its place, poised with its own weight. The art of man could not hang a feather upon nothing, yet the divine wisdom hangs the whole earth so. It is ponderibus librata suis--poised by its own weight, so says the poet; it is upheld by the word of God's power, so says the apostle. What is hung upon nothing may serve us to set our feet on, and bear the weight of our bodies, but it will never serve us to set our hearts on, nor bear the weight of our souls.

(2.) He sets bounds to the waters of the sea, and compasses them in (Job 26:10), that they may not return to cover the earth; and these bounds shall continue unmoved,

unshaken, unworn, till the day and night come to an end, when time shall be no more. Herein appears the dominion which Providence has over the raging waters of the sea, and so it is an instance of his power, Jer 5:22. We see too the care which Providence takes of the poor sinful inhabitants of the earth, who, though obnoxious to his justice and lying at his mercy, are thus preserved from being overwhelmed, as they were once by the waters of a flood, and will continue to be so, because they are reserved unto fire.

(3.) He forms dead things under the waters. Rephaim-giants, are formed under the waters, that is, vast creatures, of prodigious bulk, as whales, giant-like creatures, among the innumerable inhabitants of the water. So bishop Patrick.

(4.) By mighty storms and tempests he shakes the mountains, which are here called the pillars of heaven (Job 26:11), and even divides the sea, and smites through its proud waves, Job 26:12. At the presence of the Lord the sea flies and the mountains skip, Job 26:Ps 114:3,4. See Hab 3:6, &c. A storm furrows the waters, and does, as it were, divide them; and then a calm smites through the waves, and lays them flat again. See Ps 89:9,10. Those who think Job lived at, or after, the time of Moses, apply this to the dividing of the Red Sea before the children of Israel, and the drowning of the Egyptians in it. By his understanding he smiteth through Rahab; so the word is, and Rahab is often put for Egypt; as Ps 87:4,Is 51:9.

2. If we consider hell beneath, though it is out of our sight, yet we may conceive the instances of God's power there. By hell and destruction (Job 26:6) we may understand the grave, and those who are buried in it, that they are under the eye of God, though laid out of our sight, which may strengthen our belief of the resurrection of the dead. God knows where to find, and whence to fetch, all the scattered atoms of the consumed body. We may also consider them as referring to the place of the damned, where the separate

souls of the wicked are in misery and torment. That is hell and destruction, which are said to be before the Lord (Pr 15:11), and here to be naked before him, to which it is probable there is an allusion, Re 14:10, where sinners are to be tormented in the presence of the holy angels (who attended the Shechinah) and in the presence of the Lamb.

And this may give light to Job 26:5, which some ancient versions read thus (and I think more agreeably to the signification of the word Rephaim): Behold, the giants groan under the waters, and those that dwell with them; and then follows, Hell is naked before him, typified by the drowning of the giants of the old world; so the learned Mr. Joseph Mede understands it, and with it illustrates Pr 21:16, where hell is called the congregation of the dead; and it is the same word which is here used, and which he would there have rendered the congregation of the giants, in allusion to the drowning of the sinners of the old world. And is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly and the groans of the inhabitants of the land of darkness? Those that will not with angels fear and worship shall for ever with devils fear and tremble; and God therein will be glorified.

3. If we look up to heaven above, we shall see instances of God's sovereignty and power.

(1.) He stretches out the north over the empty place, Job 26:7. So he did at first, when he stretched out the heavens like a curtain (Ps 104:2); and he still continues to keep them stretched out, and will do so till the general conflagration, when they shall be rolled together as a scroll, Re 6:14. He mentions the north because his country (as ours) lay in the northern hemisphere; and the air is the empty place over which it is stretched out. See Ps 89:12. What an empty place is this world in comparison with the other!

(2.) He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did (Job 26:8): He binds up the waters in his thick clouds, as if they were tied closely in a bag, till there is occasion to use them; and, notwithstanding the vast weight of water so raised and laid up, yet the cloud is not rent under them, for then they would burst and pour out as a spout; but they do, as it were, distil through the cloud, and so come drop by drop, in mercy to the earth, in small rain, or great rain, as he pleases.

(3.) He conceals the glory of the upper world, the dazzling lustre of which we poor mortals could not bear (Job 26:9): He holds back the face of his throne, that light in which he dwells, and spreads a cloud upon it, through which he judges, Job 22:13. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense; for this is agreeable to a state of probation. It were not a fair trial if the face of God's throne were visible now as it will be in the great day.

Lest his high throne, above expression bright, With deadly glory should oppress our sight, To break the dazzling force he draws a screen Of sable shades, and spreads his clouds between.

Sir R. BLACKMORE.

(4.) The bright ornaments of heaven are the work of his hands (Job 26:13): By his Spirit, the eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, the breath of his mouth (Ps 33:6), he has garnished the heavens, not only made them, but beautified them, has curiously bespangled them with stars by night and painted them with the light of the sun by day. God, having made man to look upward (Os homini sublime dedit--To man he gave an erect countenance), has therefore garnished the heavens, to invite him to look upward, that, by pleasing his eye with the dazzling light of the sun and the sparkling light of the stars, their number, order, and various magnitudes, which, as so many golden studs, beautify the canopy drawn over our heads, he may be led to admire the great Creator, the Father and fountain of lights, and to say, "If the pavement

be so richly inlaid, what must the palace be! If the visible heavens be so glorious, what are those that are out of sight!" From the beauteous garniture of the ante-chamber we may infer the precious furniture of the presence-chamber. If stars be so bright, what are angels! What is meant here by the crooked serpent which his hands have formed is not certain. Some make it part of the garnishing of the heavens, the milky-way, say some; some particular constellation, so called, say others. It is the same word that is used for leviathan (Isa 27:1), and probably may be meant of the whale or crocodile, in which appears much of the power of the Creator; and why may not Job conclude with that inference, when God himself does so? Job 41:1-34

II. He concludes, at last, with an awful et cætera (Job 26:14): Lo, these are parts of his ways, the out-goings of his wisdom and power, the ways in which he walks and by which he makes himself known to the children of men. Here,

1. He acknowledges, with adoration, the discoveries that were made of God. These things which he himself had said, and which Bildad had said, are his ways, and this is heard of him; this is something of God. But,

2. He admires the depth of that which is undiscovered. This that we have said is but part of his ways, a small part. What we know of God is nothing in comparison with what is in God and what God is. After all the discoveries which God has made to us, and all the enquiries we have made after God, still we are much in the dark concerning him, and must conclude, Lo, these are but parts of his ways. Something we hear of him by his works and by his word; but, alas! how little a portion is heard of him? heard by us, heard from us! We know but in part; we prophesy but in part. When we have said all we can, concerning God, we must even do as St. Paul does (Ro 11:33); despairing to find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth: O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of

God! It is but a little portion that we hear and know of God in our present state.

He is infinite and incomprehensible; our understandings and capacities are weak and shallow, and the full discoveries of the divine glory are reserved for the future state. Even the thunder of his power (that is, his powerful thunder), one of the lowest of his ways here in our own region, we cannot understand. See Job 37:4,5. Much less can we understand the utmost force and extent of his power, the terrible efforts and operations of it, and particularly the power of his anger, Ps 90:11. God is great, and we know him not.

6 Hell *is* naked before him,
and destruction hath no covering.
7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place,
and hangeth the earth upon nothing.
8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds;
and the cloud is not rent under them.
9 He holdeth back the face of his throne,
and spreadeth his cloud upon it.
10 He hath compassed the waters with bounds,
until the day and night come to an end.
11 The pillars of heaven tremble, and
are astonished at his reproof.
12 He divideth the sea with his power,
and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.
13 By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens;
his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.
14 Lo, these *are* parts of his ways;
but how little a portion is heard of him?
But the thunder of his power who can understand?

Job-27

Job Describes the Portion of the Wicked

1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said,

Job's discourse here is called a parable (mashal), the title of Solomon's proverbs, because it was grave and weighty, and very instructive, and he spoke as one having authority. It comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion; and some think it intimates that Job now triumphed over his opponents, and spoke as one that had baffled them. We say of an excellent preacher that he knows how dominari in concionibus--to command his hearers. Job did so here.

A long strife there had been between Job and his friends; they seemed disposed to have the matter compromised; and therefore, since an oath for confirmation is an end of strife (Heb 6:16), Job here backs all he had said in maintenance of his own integrity with a solemn oath, to silence contradiction, and take the blame entirely upon himself if he prevaricated. Observe,

I The form of his oath (Job 27:2): As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment. Here,

1. He speaks highly of God, in calling him the living God (which means everliving, the eternal God, that has life in himself) and in appealing to him as the sole and sovereign Judge. We can swear by no greater, and it is an affront to him to swear by any other.

2. Yet he speaks hardly of him, and unbecomingly, in saying that he had taken away his judgment (that is, refused to do him justice in this controversy and to appear in defence of him), and that by continuing his troubles, on which his friends grounded their censures of him, he had taken from him the opportunity he hoped ere now to have of clearing himself.

Elihu reproved him for this word (Job 34:5); for God is righteous in all his ways, and takes away no man's judgment. But see how apt we are to despair of favour if it be not shown us immediately, so poor-spirited are we and so soon weary of waiting God's time. He also charges it upon God that he had vexed his soul, had not only not appeared for him, but had appeared against him, and, by laying such grievous afflictions upon him had quite embittered his life to him and all the comforts of it. We, by our impatience, vex our own souls and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness both of his cause and of his God, that though God seemed to be angry with him, and to act against him for the present, yet he could cheerfully commit his cause to him.

II The matter of his oath, Job 27:3,4.

1. That he would not speak wickedness, nor utter deceit--that, in general, he would never allow himself in the way of lying, that, as in this debate he had all along spoken as he thought, so he would never wrong his conscience by speaking otherwise; he would never maintain any doctrine, nor assert any matter of fact, but what he believed to be true; nor would he deny the truth, how much soever it might make against him: and, whereas his friends charged him with being a hypocrite, he was ready to answer, upon oath, to all their interrogatories, if called to do so. On the one hand he would not, for all the world, deny the charge if he knew himself guilty, but would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and take to himself the shame of his hypocrisy. On the other hand, since he was conscious to himself of his integrity, and that he was not such a man as his friends represented him, he would never betray his integrity, nor charge himself with that which he was innocent of. He would not be brought, no, not by the rack of their unjust censures, falsely to accuse himself. If we must not bear false witness against our neighbour, then not against ourselves.

2. That he would adhere to this resolution as long as he lived (Job 27:3): All the while my breath is in me. Our resolutions against sin should be thus constant, resolutions for life. In things doubtful and indifferent, it is not safe to be thus peremptory. We know not what reason we may see to change our mind: God may reveal to us that which we now are not aware of. But in so plain a thing as this we cannot be too positive that we will never speak wickedness. Something of a reason for his resolution is here implied--that our breath will not be always in us. We must shortly breathe our last, and therefore, while our breath is in us, we must never breathe wickedness and deceit, nor allow ourselves to say or do any thing which will make against us when our breath shall depart. The breath in us is called the spirit of God, because he breathed it into us; and this is another reason why we must not speak wickedness. It is God that gives us life and breath, and therefore, while we have breath, we must praise him.

III. The explication of his oath (Job 27:5,6): "God forbid that I should justify you in your uncharitable censures of me, by owning myself a hypocrite: no, until I die I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go."

1. He would always be an honest man, would hold fast his integrity, and not curse God, as Satan, by his wife, urged him to do, Job 2:9. Job here thinks of dying, and of getting ready for death, and therefore resolves never to part with his religion, though he had lost all he had in the world. Note, The best preparative for death is perseverance to death in our integrity. "Until I die," that is, "though I die by this affliction, I will not thereby be put out of conceit with my God and my religion. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

2. He would always stand to it that he was an honest man; he would not remove, he would not part with, the conscience, and comfort, and credit of his integrity; he was resolved to defend it to the last. "God knows, and my own heart knows, that I always meant well, and did not allow

myself in the omission of any known duty or the commission of any known sin. This is my rejoicing, and no man shall rob me of it; I will never lie against my right." It has often been the lot of upright men to be censured and condemned as hypocrites; but it well becomes them to bear up boldly against such censures, and not to be discouraged by them nor think the worse of themselves for them; as the apostle (Heb 13:18): We have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.

Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi.
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

Job complained much of the reproaches of his friends; but (says he) my heart shall not reproach me, that is, "I will never give my heart cause to reproach me, but will keep a conscience void of offence; and, while I do so, I will not give my heart leave to reproach me." Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us when we give them cause to do so is to affront God, whose deputy conscience is, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2Sa 24:10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us while we still hold fast our integrity is to baffle the designs of the evil spirit (who tempts good Christians to question their adoption, If thou be the Son of God) and to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesses to their adoption.

2 *As* God liveth, *who* hath taken away my judgment;
and the Almighty, *who* hath vexed my soul;
3 all the while my breath *is* in me,
and the spirit of God *is* in my nostrils;
4 my lips shall not speak wickedness,
nor my tongue utter deceit.
5 God forbid that I should justify you:
till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.
6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go:
my heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live.
7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked,

and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.

Job having solemnly protested the satisfaction he had in his integrity, for the further clearing of himself, here expresses the dread he had of being found a hypocrite.

I. He tells us how he startled at the thought of it, for he looked upon the condition of a hypocrite and a wicked man to be certainly the most miserable condition that any man could be in (Job 27:7): Let my enemy be as the wicked, a proverbial expression, like that (Da 4:19), The dream be to those that hate thee. Job was so far from indulging himself in any wicked way, and flattering himself in it, that, if he might have leave to wish the greatest evil he could think of to the worst enemy he had in the world, he would wish him the portion of a wicked man, knowing that worse he could not wish him. Not that we may lawfully wish any man to be wicked, or that any man who is not wicked should be treated as wicked; but we should all choose to be in the condition of a beggar, an out-law, a galley-slave, any thing, rather that in the condition of the wicked, though in ever so much pomp and outward prosperity.

II. He gives us the reasons of it.

1. Because the hypocrite's hopes will not be crowned (Job 27:8): For what is the hope of the hypocrite? Bildad had condemned it (Job 8:13,14), and Zophar (Job 11:20), and Job here concurs with them, and reads the death of the hypocrite's hope with as much assurance as they had done; and this fitly comes in as a reason why he would not remove his integrity, but still hold it fast.

Note, The consideration of the miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright (for we are undone, for ever undone, if we be not) and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy if the great concern lie at uncertainties? Job's friends would persuade him that all his hope was but the hope of the hypocrite, Job 4:6. "Nay," says he, "I would not, for all the world, be so foolish as to

build upon such a rotten foundation; for what is the hope of the hypocrite?" See here,

(1.) The hypocrite deceived. He has gained, and he has hope; this is his bright side. It is allowed that he has gained by his hypocrisy, has gained the praise and applause of men and the wealth of this world. Jehu gained a kingdom by his hypocrisy and the Pharisees many a widow's house. Upon this gain he builds his hope, such as it is. He hopes he is in good circumstances for another world, because he finds he is so for this, and he blesses himself in his own way.

(2.) The hypocrite undeceived. He will at last see himself wretchedly cheated; for,

[1.] God shall take away his soul, sorely against his will. Lu 12:20, Thy soul shall be required of thee. God, as the Judge, takes it away to be tried and determined to its everlasting state. He shall then fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with immediately.

[2.] What will his hope be then? It will be vanity and a lie; it will stand him in no stead. The wealth of this world, which he hoped in, he must leave behind him, Ps 49:17. The happiness of the other world, which he hoped for, he will certainly miss of. He hoped to go to heaven, but he will be shamefully disappointed; he will plead his external profession, privileges, and performances, but all his pleas will be overruled as frivolous: Depart from me, I know you not. So that, upon the whole, it is certain that a formal hypocrite, with all his gains and all his hopes, will be miserable in a dying hour.

2. Because the hypocrite's prayer will not be heard (Job 27:9): Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? No, he will not; it cannot be expected he should. If true repentance come upon him, God will hear his cry and accept him (Isa 1:18); but, if he continue impenitent and unchanged, let him not think to find favour with God. Observe,

(1.) Trouble will come upon him, certainly it will. Troubles in the world often surprise those that are most secure of an uninterrupted prosperity. However, death will come, and trouble with it, when he must leave the world and all his delights in it. The judgment of the great day will come; fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites, Isa 33:14.

(2.) Then he will cry to God, will pray, and pray earnestly. Those who in prosperity slighted God, either prayed not at all or were cold and careless in prayer, when trouble comes will make their application to him and cry as men in earnest. But,

(3.) Will God hear him then? In the troubles of this life, God has told us that he will not hear the prayers of those who regard iniquity in their hearts (Ps 66:19) and set up their idols there (Eze 14:4), nor of those who turn away their ear from hearing the law, Pr 28:9. Get you to the gods whom you have served, Jdg 10:14. In the judgment to come, it is certain, God will not hear the cry of those who lived and died in their hypocrisy. Their doleful lamentations will all be unpitied. I will laugh at your calamity. Their importunate petitions will all be thrown out and their pleas rejected. Inflexible justice cannot be biassed, nor the irreversible sentence revoked. See Mt 7:22,23,Lu 13:26, and the case of the foolish virgins, Mt 25:11.

3. Because the hypocrite's religion is neither comfortable nor constant (Job 27:10): Will he delight himself in the Almighty? No, not at any time (for his delight is in the profits of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, more than in God), especially not in the time of trouble. Will he always call upon God? No, in prosperity he will not call upon God, but slight him; in adversity he will not call upon God but curse him; he is weary of his religion when he gets nothing by it, or is in danger of losing. Note,

(1.) Those are hypocrites who, though they profess religion, neither take pleasure in it nor persevere in it, who reckon their religion a task and a drudgery, a weariness, and snuff at it, who make use of it only to serve a turn, and lay it aside

when the turn is served, who will call upon God while it is in fashion, or while the pang of devotion lasts, but leave it off when they fall into other company, or when the hot fit is over.

(2.) The reason why hypocrites do not persevere in religion is because they have no pleasure in it. Those that do not delight in the Almighty will not always call upon him. The more comfort we find in our religion the more closely we shall cleave to it. Those who have no delight in God are easily inveigled by the pleasures of sense, and so drawn away from their religion; and they are easily run down by the crosses of this life, and so driven away from their religion, and will not always call upon God.

8 For what *is* the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained,
when God taketh away his soul?
9 Will God hear his cry
when trouble cometh upon him?
10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty?
Will he always call upon God?
11 I will teach you by the hand of God:
that which *is* with the Almighty will I not conceal.

Job's friends had seen a great deal of the misery and destruction that attend wicked people, especially oppressors; and Job, while the heat of disputation lasted, had said as much, and with as much assurance, of their prosperity; but now that the heat of the battle was nearly over he was willing to own how far he agreed with them, and where the difference between his opinion and theirs lay.

1. He agreed with them that wicked people are miserable people, that God will surely reckon with cruel oppressors, and one time or other, one way or other, his justice will make reprisals upon them for all the affronts they have put upon God and all the wrongs they have done to their neighbours. This truth is abundantly confirmed by the entire concurrence even of these angry disputants in it. But,

2. In this they differed--they held that these deserved judgments are presently and visibly brought upon wicked

oppressors, that they travail with pain all their days, that in prosperity the destroyer comes upon them, that they shall not be rich, nor their branch green, and that their destruction shall be accomplished before their time (so Eliphaz, Job 15:20,21,29,32), that the steps of their strength shall be straitened, that terrors shall make them afraid on every side (so Bildad, Job 18:7,11), that he himself shall vomit up his riches, and that in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits, so Zophar, Job 20:15,22. Now Job held that, in many cases, judgments do not fall upon them quickly, but are deferred for some time. That vengeance strikes slowly he had already shown (Job 21:1-34,24:1-25); now he comes to show that it strikes surely and severely, and that reprieves are no pardons.

I. Job here undertakes to set this matter in a true light (Job 27:11,12): I will teach you. We must not disdain to learn even from those who are sick and poor, yea, and peevish too, if they deliver what is true and good. Observe,

1. What he would teach them: "That which is with the Almighty," that is, "the counsels and purposes of God concerning wicked people, which are hidden with him, and which you cannot hastily judge of; and the usual methods of his providence concerning them." This, says Job, will I not conceal. What God has not concealed from us we must not conceal from those we are concerned to teach. Things revealed belong to us and our children.

2. How he would teach them: By the hand of God, that is, by his strength and assistance. Those who undertake to teach others must look to the hand of God to direct them, to open their ear (Isa 50:4), and to open their lips. Those whom God teaches with a strong hand are best able to teach others, Isa 8:11.

3. What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them (Job 27:12), that it was confirmed by their own observation--You yourselves have seen it (but what we have heard, and seen and known, we have need to be taught, that we may be perfect in our lesson), and that it

would set them to rights in their judgment concerning him--"Why then are you thus altogether vain, to condemn me for a wicked man because I am afflicted?" Truth, rightly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which arises from our mistakes. That particularly which he offers now to lay before them is the portion of a wicked man with God, particularly of oppressors, Job 27:13. Compare Job 20:29. Their portion in the world may be wealth and preferment, but their portion with God is ruin and misery. They are above the control of any earthly power, it may be, but the Almighty can deal with them.

II. He does it, by showing that wicked people may, in some instances, prosper, but that ruin follows them in those very instances; and that is their portion, that is their heritage, that is it which they must abide by.

1. They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. His children perhaps are multiplied (Job 27:14) or magnified (so some); they are very numerous and are raised to honour and great estates. Worldly people are said to be full of children (Ps 17:14), and, as it is in the margin there, their children are full. In them the parents hope to live and in their preferment to be honoured. But the more children they leave, and the greater prosperity they leave them in, the more and the fairer marks do they leave for the arrows of God's judgments to be levelled at, his three sore judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence, 2Sa 24:13.

(1.) Some of them shall die by the sword, the sword of war perhaps (they brought them up to live by their sword, as Esau, Ge 27:40, and those that do so commonly die by the sword, first or last), or by the sword of justice for their crimes, or the sword of the murderer for their estates.

(2.) Others of them shall die by famine (Job 27:14): His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. He thought he had secured to them large estates, but it may happen that they may be reduced to poverty, so as not to have the necessary supports of life, at least not to live comfortably. They shall be so needy that they shall not have a

competency of necessary food, and so greedy, or so discontented, that what they have they shall not be satisfied with, because not so much, or not so dainty, as what they have been used to. You eat, but you have not enough, Hag 1:6.

(3.) Those that remain shall be buried in death, that is, shall die of the plague, which is called death (Re 6:8), and be buried privately and in haste, as soon as they are dead, without any solemnity, buried with the burial of an ass; and even their widows shall not weep; they shall not have wherewithal to put them in mourning. Or it denotes that these wicked men, as they live undesired, so they die unlamented, and even their widows will think themselves happy that they have got rid of them.

2. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too, Job 27:16-18.

(1.) We will suppose them to be rich in money and plate, in clothing and furniture. They heap up silver in abundance as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; they have heaps of clothes about them, as plentiful as heaps of clay. Or it intimates that they have such abundance of clothes that they are even a burden to them. They lade themselves with thick clay, Hab 2:6. See what is the care and business of worldly people--to heap up worldly wealth. Much would have more, until the silver is cankered and the garments are moth-eaten, Jam 5:2,3. But what comes of it? He shall never be the better for it himself; death will strip him, death will rob him, if he be not robbed and stripped sooner, Lu 12:20. Nay, God will so order it that the just shall wear his raiment and the innocent shall divide his silver.

[1.] They shall have it, and divide it among themselves. In some way or other Providence shall so order it that good men shall come honestly by that wealth which the wicked man came dishonestly by. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Pr 13:22. God disposes of men's estates as he pleases, and often makes their wills against their wills. The just, whom he hated and persecuted, shall have rule

over all his labour, and, in due time, recover with interest what was violently taken from him. The Egyptians' jewels were the Israelites' pay. Solomon observes (Ec 2:26) that God makes the sinners drudges to the righteous; for the sinner he gives travail to gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God.

[2.] They shall do good with it. The innocent shall not hoard the silver, as he did that gathered it, but shall divide it to the poor, shall give a portion to seven and also to eight, which is laying up the best securities. Money is like manure, good for nothing if it be not spread. When God enriches good men they must remember they are but stewards and must give an account. What bad men bring a curse upon their families with the ill-getting of good men bring a blessing upon their families with the well-using of. He that by unjust gain increaseth his substance shall gather it for him that will pity the poor, Pr 28:8.

(2.) We will suppose them to have built themselves strong and stately houses; but they are like the house which the moth makes for herself in an old garment, out of which she will soon be shaken, Job 27:18. He is very secure in it, as a moth, and has no apprehension of danger; but it will prove of as short continuance as a booth which the keeper makes, which will quickly be taken down and gone, and his place shall know him no more.

12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen *it;*
why then are ye thus altogether vain?
13 This *is* the portion of a wicked man with God,
and the heritage of oppressors, *which* they shall receive of the Almighty.
14 If his children be multiplied, *it is* for the sword:
and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.
15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death:
and his widows shall not weep.
16 Though he heap up silver as the dust,
and prepare raiment as the clay;
17 he may prepare *it*, but the just shall put *it* on,
and the innocent shall divide the silver.

18 He buildeth his house as a moth,
and as a booth *that* the keeper maketh.
19 The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered:
he openeth his eyes, and he *is* not.
20 Terrors take hold on him as waters,
a tempest stealeth him away in the night.
21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth:
and as a storm hurleth him out of his place.
22 For *God* shall cast upon him, and not spare:
he would fain flee out of his hand.
23 *Men* shall clap their hands at him,
and shall hiss him out of his place.

Job-28

Man's Quest for Wisdom

1 Surely there is a vein for the silver,
and a place for gold *where* they fine *it*.
2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
and brass *is* molten *out of* the stone.

Here Job shows,

1. What a great way the wit of man may go in diving into the depths of nature and seizing the riches of it, what a great deal of knowledge and wealth men may, by their ingenious and industrious searches, make themselves masters of. But does it therefore follow that men may, by their wit, comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper and others are punished, why some good people prosper and others are afflicted? No, by no means. The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of heaven.

2. What a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches. He had observed concerning the wicked man (Job 27:16) that he heaped up silver as the dust; now here he shows whence that silver came which he was so fond of

and how it was obtained, to show what little reason wicked rich men have to be proud of their wealth and pomp. Observe here,

I The wealth of this world is hidden in the earth. Thence the silver and the gold, which afterwards they refine, are fetched, Job 28:1. There they lay mixed with a great deal of dirt and dross, like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth; and abundance of them will so lie neglected, till the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up. Holy Mr. Herbert, in his poem called Avarice, takes notice of this, to shame men out of the love of money:--

Money, thou bane of bliss, thou source of woe, Whence com'st thou, that thou art so fresh and fine? I know thy parentage is base and low; Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine. Surely thou didst so little contribute To this great kingdom which thou now hast got That he was fain, when thou wast destitute, To dig thee out of thy dark cave and grot. Man calleth thee his wealth, who made thee rich, And while he digs out thee falls in the ditch.

Iron and brass, less costly but more serviceable metals, are taken out of the earth (Job 28:2), and are there found in great abundance, which abates their price indeed, but is a great kindness to man, who could much better be without gold than without iron. Nay, out of the earth comes bread, that is, bread-corn, the necessary support of life, Job 28:5. Thence man's maintenance is fetched, to remind him of his own original; he is of the earth, and is hastening to the earth. Under it is turned up as it were fire, precious stones, that sparkle as fire--brimstone, that is apt to take fire--coal, that is proper to feed fire. As we have our food, so we have our fuel, out of the earth. There the sapphires and other gems are, and thence gold-dust is digged up;, Job 28:6. The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things,

1. Out of our sight, to teach us not to set our eyes upon them, Pr 23:5.

2. Under our feet, to teach us not to lay them in our bosoms, nor to set our hearts upon them, but to trample upon them with a holy contempt. See how full the earth is of God's riches (Ps 104:24) and infer thence, not only how great a God he is whose the earth is and the fulness thereof (Ps 24:1), but how full heaven must needs be of God's riches, which is the city of the great King, in comparison with which this earth is a poor country.

II The wealth that is hidden in the earth cannot be obtained but with a great deal of difficulty.

1. It is hard to be found out: there is but here and there a vein for the silver, Job 28:1 The precious stones, though bright themselves, yet, because buried in obscurity and out of sight, are called stones of darkness and the shadow of death. Men may search long before they light on them.

2. When found out it is hard to be fetched out. Men's wits must be set on work to contrive ways and means to get this hidden treasure into their hands. They must with their lamps set an end to darkness; and if one expedient miscarry, one method fail, they must try another, till they have searched out all perfection, and turned every stone to effect it, Job 28:3. They must grapple with subterraneous waters (Job 28:4,10,11), and force their way through rocks which are, as it were, the roots of the mountains, Job 28:9. Now God has made the getting of gold, and silver, and precious stones, so difficult,

(1.) For the exciting and engaging of industry. Dii laboribus omnia vendunt--Labour is the price which the gods affix to all things. If valuable things were too easily obtained men would never learn to take pains. But the difficulty of gaining the riches of this earth may suggest to us what violence the kingdom of heaven suffers.

(2.) For the checking and restraining of pomp and luxury. What is for necessity is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth; but what is for ornament must be dug

with a great deal of pains out of the bowels of it. To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

III. Though the subterraneous wealth is thus hard to obtain, yet men will have it. He that loves silver is not satisfied with silver, and yet is not satisfied without it; but those that have much must needs have more. See here,

1. What inventions men have to get this wealth. They search out all perfection, Job 28:3. They have arts and engines to dry up the waters, and carry them off, when they break in upon them in their mines and threaten to drown the work, Job 28:4. They have pumps, and pipes, and canals, to clear their way, and, obstacles being removed, they tread the path which no fowl knoweth (Job 28:7,8), unseen by the vulture's eye, which is piercing and quick-sighted, and untrodden by the lion's whelps, which traverse all the paths of the wilderness.

2. What pains men take, and what vast charge they are at, to get this wealth. They work their way through the rocks and undermine the mountains, Job 28:10.

3. What hazards they run. Those that dig in the mines have their lives in their hands; for they are obliged to bind the floods from overflowing (Job 28:11), and are continually in danger of being suffocated by damps or crushed or buried alive by the fall of the earth upon them. See how foolish man adds to his own burden. He is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face; but, as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver at the peril of his life, though the more is gotten the less valuable it is. In Solomon's time silver was as stones. But,

4. Observe what it is that carries men through all this toil and peril: Their eye sees every precious thing, Job 28:10. Silver and gold are precious things with them, and they have them in their eye in all these pursuits. They fancy they see them glittering before their faces, and, in the prospect of laying hold of them, they make nothing of all these difficulties; for they make something of their toil at last:

That which is hidden bringeth he forth to light, Job 28:11. What was hidden under ground is laid upon the bank; the metal that was hidden in the ore is refined from its dross and brought forth pure out of the furnace; and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. Go to the miners then, thou sluggard in religion; consider their ways, and be wise.

Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth shame us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in labouring for the true riches. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! How much easier and safer! Yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth (so they call them, though really they are paltry and perishing) be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

3 He setteth an end to darkness, and
searcheth out all perfection:
the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.
4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant;
even the waters forgotten of the foot:
they are dried up, they are gone away from men.
5 *As for* the earth, out of it cometh bread:
and under it is turned up as it were fire.
6 The stones of it *are* the place of sapphires:
and it hath dust of gold.
7 *There is* a path which no fowl knoweth,
and which the vulture's eye hath not seen:
8 the lion's whelps have not trodden it,
nor the fierce lion passed by it.
9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock;
he overturneth the mountains by the roots.
10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks;
and his eye seeth every precious thing.
11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing;
and *the thing that is* hid bringeth he forth to light.
12 But where shall wisdom be found?
And where *is* the place of understanding?
13 Man knoweth not the price thereof;

neither is it found in the land of the living.
14 The depth saith, It *is* not in me:
and the sea saith, *It is* not with me.

Job, having spoken of the wealth of the world, which men put such a value upon and take so much pains for, here comes to speak of another more valuable jewel, and that is, wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and ourselves. Those that found out all those ways and means to enrich themselves thought themselves very wise; but Job will not own theirs to be wisdom. He supposes them to gain their point, and to bring to light what they sought for (Job 28:11), and yet asks, "Where is wisdom? for it is not here."

This their way is their folly. We must therefore seek it somewhere else, and it will be found nowhere but in the principles and practices of religion. There is more true knowledge, satisfaction, and happiness, in sound divinity, which shows us the way to the joys of heaven, than in natural philosophy or mathematics, which help us to find a way into the bowels of the earth. Two things cannot be found out concerning this wisdom:--

I The price of it, for that is inestimable; its worth is infinitely more than all the riches in this world: Man knows not the price thereof (Job 28:13), that is,

1. Few put a due value upon it. Men know not the worth of it, its innate excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them; and therefore, though they have many a price in their hand to get this wisdom, yet they have no heart to it, Pr 17:16. The cock in the fable knew not the value of the precious stone he found in the dunghill, and therefore would rather have lighted on a barley-corn. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it.

2. None can possibly give a valuable consideration for it, with all the wealth this world can furnish them with. This Job enlarges upon Job 28:15-19, &c., where he makes an

inventory of the bona notabilia--the most valuable treasures of this world. Gold is five times mentioned; silver comes in also; and then several precious stones, the onyx and sapphire, pearls and rubies, and the topaz of Ethiopia. These are the things that are highest prized in the world's markets: but if a man would give, not only these, heaps of these, but all the substance of his house, all he is worth in the world, for wisdom, it would utterly be contemned.

These may give a man some advantage in seeking wisdom, as they did to Solomon, but there is no purchasing wisdom with these. It is a gift of the Holy Ghost, which cannot be bought with money, Ac 8:20. As it does not run in the blood, and so come to us by descent, so it cannot be got for money, nor does it come to us by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is likewise a more valuable gift to him that has it, makes him richer and happier, than gold or precious stones. It is better to get wisdom than gold. Gold is another's, wisdom our own; gold is for the body and time, wisdom for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account be so in ours. See Pr 3:14-20, &c.

II The place of it, for that is undiscoverable. Where shall wisdom be found? Job 28:12. He asks this,

1. As one that truly desired to find it. This is a question we should all put. While the most of men are asking, "Where shall money be found?" we should ask, Where may wisdom be found? that we may seek it and find it, not vain philosophy, or carnal policy, but true religion; for that is the only true wisdom, that is it which best improves our faculties and best secures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This is that which we should cry after and dig for, Pr 2:3,4.

2. As one that utterly despaired of finding it any where but in God, and any way but by divine revelation: It is not

found in this land of the living, Job 28:13. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of ourselves and our duty and interest, by reading any books or men, but by reading God's book and the men of God. Such is the degeneracy of human nature that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those who are born again, and who, through grace, partake of the divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenious and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom.

(1.) Ask the miners, and by them the depth will say, It is not in me, Job 28:14. Those who dig into the bowels of the earth, to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses find this rare jewel, nor with all their art make themselves masters of it.

(2.) Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, It is not in me. It can never be got either by trading on the waters or diving into them, can never be sucked from the abundance of the seas or the treasures hidden in the sand. Where there is a vein for the silver there is no vein for wisdom, none for grace. Men can more easily break through the difficulties they meet with in getting worldly wealth than through those they meet with in getting heavenly wisdom, and they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world than how to live for ever in a better world. So blind and foolish has man become that it is in vain to ask him, Where is the place of wisdom, and which is the road that leads to it?

15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
neither shall silver be weighed *for* the price thereof.
16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,
with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.
17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it:
and the exchange of it *shall not be for* jewels of fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls:
for the price of wisdom *is* above rubies.
19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,
neither shall it be valued with pure gold.
20 Whence then cometh wisdom?

And where *is* the place of understanding?

The question which Job had asked (Job 28:12) he asks again here; for it is too worthy, too weighty, to be let fall, until we speed in the enquiry. Concerning this we must seek till we find, till we get some satisfactory account of it. By a diligent prosecution of this enquiry he brings it, at length, to this issue, that there is a twofold wisdom, one hidden in God, which is secret and belongs not to us, the other made known by him and revealed to man, which belongs to us and to our children.

I The knowledge of God's secret will, the will of his providence, is out of our reach, and what God has reserved to himself. It belongs to the Lord our God. To know the particulars of what God will do hereafter, and the reasons of what he is doing now, is the knowledge Job first speaks of.

1. This knowledge is hidden from us. It is high, we cannot attain unto it (Job 28:21,22): It is hid from the eyes of all living, even of philosophers, politicians, and saints; it is kept close from the fowls of the air; though they fly high and in the open firmament of heaven, though they seem somewhat nearer that upper world where the source of this wisdom is, though their eyes behold afar off (Job 39:29), yet they cannot penetrate into the counsels of God. No, man is wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet comes short of this wisdom. Even those who, in their speculations, soar highest, and think themselves, like the fowls of the air, above the heads of other people, yet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Job and his friends had been arguing about the methods and reasons of the dispensations of Providence in the government of the world. "What fools are we" (says Job) "to fight in the dark thus, to dispute about that which we do not understand!" The line and plummet of human reason can never fathom the abyss of the divine counsels.

Who can undertake to give the rationale of Providence, or account for the maxims, measure, and methods of God's government, those arcana imperii--cabinet counsels of

divine wisdom? Let us then be content not to know the future events of the Providence until time discover them (Ac 1:7) and not to know the secret reasons of Providence until eternity discover them. God is now a God that hideth himself (Isa 45:15); clouds and darkness are round about him. Though this wisdom be hidden from all living, yet destruction and death say, We have heard the fame of it. Though they cannot give an account of themselves (for there is no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge at all in the grave, much less this), yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, on which those dark regions border, and to which we must pass through them, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. "Have a little patience," says Death to the inquisitive soul: "I will fetch thee shortly to a place where even this wisdom will be found." When the mystery of God shall be finished it will be laid open, and we shall know as we are known; when the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God does, though we know not now, Joh 13:7.

2. This knowledge is hidden in God, as the apostle speaks, Eph 3:9. Known unto God are all his works, though they are not known to us, Ac 15:18. There are good reasons for what he does, though we cannot assign them (Job 28:23): God understands the way thereof. Men sometimes do they know not what, but God never does. Men do what they did not design to do; new occurrences put them upon new counsels, and oblige them to take new measures. But God does all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself, and which he never alters. Men sometimes do that which they cannot give a good reason for, but in every will of God there is a counsel: he knows both what he does and why he does it, the whole series of events and the order and place of every occurrence. This knowledge he has in perfection, but keeps to himself. Two reasons are here given why God must needs understand his own way, and he only:--

(1.) Because all events are now directed by an all-seeing and almighty Providence, Job 28:24,25. He that governs the world is,

[1.] Omniscient; for he looks to the ends of the earth, both in place and time; distant ages, distant regions, are under his view. We do not understand our own way, much less can we understand God's way, because we are short-sighted. How little do we know of what is doing in the world, much less of what will be done? But the eyes of the Lord are in every place; nay, they run to and fro through the earth. Nothing is, or can be, hidden from him; and therefore the reasons why some wicked people prosper remarkably and others are remarkably punished in this world, which are secret to us, are known to him. One day's events, and one man's affairs, have such a reference to, and such a dependence upon, another's, that he only to whom all events and all affairs are naked and open, and who sees the whole at one entire and certain view, is a competent Judge of every part.

[2.] He is omnipotent. He can do every thing, and is very exact in all he does. For proof of this Job mentions the winds and waters, Job 28:25. What is lighter than the wind? Yet God hath ways of poising it. He knows how to make the weight for the winds, which he brings out of his treasuries (Ps 135:7), keeping a very particular account of what he draws out, as men do of what they pay out of their treasuries, not at random, as men bring out their trash. Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind. We hear the sound of it, yet cannot tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes; but God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow and with what strength.

The waters of the sea, and the rain-waters, he both weighs and measures, allotting the proportion of every tide and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament and those under it. Vapours go up, rains come down, air is condensed into water, water rarefied into air;

but the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this trade is carried on for the public benefit and sees that none of it be lost. Now if, in these things, Providence be so exact, much more in dispensing frowns and favours, rewards and punishments, to the children of men, according to the rules of equity.

(2.) Because all events were from eternity designed and determined by an infallible prescience and immutable decree, Job 28:26,27. When he settled the course of nature he foreordained all the operations of his government.

[1.] He settled the course of nature. Job mentions particularly a decree for the rain and a way for the thunder and lightning. The general manner and method, and the particular uses and tendencies, of these strange performances, both their causes and their effects, were appointed by the divine purpose; hence God is said to prepare lightnings for the rain, Ps 135:7,Jer 10:13.

[2.] When he did that he laid all the measures of his providence, and drew an exact scheme of the whole work from first to last. Then, from eternity, did he see in himself, and declare to himself, the plan of his proceedings. Then he prepared it, fixed it, and established it, set every thing in readiness for all his works, so that, when any thing was to be done, nothing was to seek, nor could any thing unforeseen occur, to put it either out of its method or out of its time; for all was ordered as exactly as if he had studied it and searched it out, so that, whatever he does, nothing can be put to it nor taken from it, and therefore it shall be for ever, Ec 3:14. Some make Job to speak of wisdom here as a person, and translate it, Then he saw her and showed her, &c., and then it is parallel with that of Solomon concerning the essential wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, Pr 8:22-31, &c. Before the earth was, then was I by him, Joh 1:1,2.

21 seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living,
and kept close from the fowls of the air.

22 Destruction and death say,
We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.
23 God understandeth the way thereof,
and he knoweth the place thereof.
24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth,
and seeth under the whole heaven;

The knowledge of God's revealed will, the will of his precept, and this is within our reach; it is level to our capacity, and will do us good (Job 28:28): Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wisdom. Let it not be said that when God concealed his counsels from man, and forbade him that tree of knowledge, it was because he grudged him any thing that would contribute to his real bliss and satisfaction; no, he let him know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness; he shall be entrusted with as much of his sovereign mind as is needful and fit for a subject, but he must not think himself fit to be a privy-counsellor. He said to Adam (so some), to the first man, in the day in which he was created; he told him plainly it was not for him to amuse himself with over-curious searches into the mysteries of creation, nor to pretend to solve all the phenomena of nature; he would find it neither possible nor profitable to do so. No less wisdom (says archbishop Tillotson) than that which made the world can thoroughly understand the philosophy of it. But let him look upon this as his wisdom, to fear the Lord and to depart from evil; let him learn that, and he is learned enough; let this knowledge serve his turn. When God forbade man the tree of knowledge he allowed him the tree of life, and this is that tree, Pr 3:18. We cannot attain true wisdom but by divine revelation. The Lord giveth wisdom, Pr 2:6.

Now the matter of that is not found in the secrets of nature or providence, but in the rules for our own practice. Unto man he said, not, "Go up to heaven, to fetch happiness thence;" or, "Go down to the deep, to draw it up thence." No, the word is nigh thee, De 30:14. He hath shown thee, O man! not what is great, but what is good, not what the Lord thy God designs to do with thee, but what he requires of thee, Mic 6:8. Unto you, O men! I call, Pr 8:4. Lord, what is man that he should be thus minded, thus visited! Behold, mark, take notice of

this; he that has ears let him hear what the God of heaven says to the children of men: The fear of the Lord, that is the wisdom. Here is,

1 The description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled; it is to fear the Lord and depart from evil, which agrees with God's character of Job, Job 1:1 The fear of the Lord is the spring and summary of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, which is contrary to religion, Mt 25:24. There is a selfish fear of God springing from dreadful thoughts of him, which may be a good step towards religion, Ac 9:5. But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And, wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by a constant care to depart from evil, Pr 16:6. This is essential to religion. We must first cease to do evil, or we shall never learn to do well. Virtus est vitium fugere--Even in our flight from vice some virtue lies.

2 The commendation of religion: it is wisdom and understanding. To be truly religious is to be truly wise. As the wisdom of God appears in the institution of religion, so the wisdom of man appears in the institution of religion, so the wisdom of man appears in the practice and observance of it. It is understanding, for it is the best knowledge of truth; it is wisdom, for it is the best management of our affairs. Nothing more surely guides our way and gains our end than being religious.

25 to make the weight for the winds;
and he weigheth the waters by measure.
26 When he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the lightning of the thunder;
27 then did he see it, and declare it;
he prepared it, yea, and searched it out.
28 And unto man he said,
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom;
and to depart from evil *is* understanding.

Job-29

Job Recalls His Former Glory

1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said,

Losers may have leave to speak, and there is nothing they speak of more feelingly than of the comforts they are stripped of. Their former prosperity is one of the most pleasing subjects of their thoughts and talk. It was so to Job, who begins here with a wish (Job 29:2): O that I were as in months past! so he brings in this account of his prosperity. His wish is,

1. "O that I were in as good a state as I was in then, that I had as much wealth, honour, and pleasure, as I had then!" This he wishes, from a concern he had, not so much for his ease, as for his reputation and the glory of his God, which he thought were eclipsed by his present sufferings. "O that I might be restored to my prosperity, and then the censures and reproaches of my friends would be effectually silenced, even upon their own principles, and for ever rolled away!" If this be our end in desiring life, health, and prosperity, that God may be glorified, and the credit of our holy profession rescued, preserved, and advanced, the desire is not only natural, but spiritual.

2. "O that I were in as good a frame of spirit as I was in then!" That which Job complained most of now was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he now had his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God as he had then and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him as then thought himself happy in. This was in the days of his youth (Job 29:4), when he was in the prime of his time for the enjoyment of those things and could relish them with the highest gust. Note, Those that prosper in the days of their youth know not what black and cloudy days they are yet

reserved for. Two things made the months past pleasant to Job:--

I. That he had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in, in his prosperity, as the spring of it and the sweetness of it, that he had the favour of God and the tokens of that favour. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, nor to his own might, nor to the power of his own hand, but makes the same acknowledgment that David does. Ps 30:7, Thou, by thy favour, hast made my mountain stand strong. A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world. Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job:--

1 The confidence he had in the divine protection. They were the days when God preserved me, Job 29:2. Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city nor trust in the abundance of his riches, but the name of the Lord was his strong tower; in that only he thought himself safe, and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe and that his comforts were preserved to him. The devil saw a hedge about him of God's making (Job 1:10), and Job saw it himself, and owned it was God's visitation that preserved his spirit, Job 10:12. Those only whom God protects are safe and may be easy; and therefore those who have ever so much of this world must not think themselves safe unless God preserve them.

2 The complacency he had in the divine favour (Job 29:3): God's candle shone upon his head, that is, God lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, gave him the assurances and sweet relishes of his love. The best of the communications of the divine favour to the saints in this world is but the candle-light, compared with what is reserved for them in the future state. But such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the divine favour that, by the light of that, he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bore him up under his burdens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that have the brightest sun-shine of outward prosperity must yet expect some moments of darkness. They are sometimes crossed,

sometimes at a loss, sometimes melancholy. But those that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can, by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart enough to counterbalance all the grievances of this present time.

3. The communion he had with the divine word (Job 29:4): The secret of God was upon my tabernacle, that is, God conversed freely with him, as one bosom-friend with another. He knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as, of late, he had been. The secret of the Lord is said to be with those that fear him, for he shows them that in his covenant which others see not, Ps 25:14. God communicates his favour and grace to his people, and receives the return of their devotion in a way secret to the world. Some read it, When the society of God was in my tabernacle, which Rabbi Solomon understands of an assembly of God's people that used to meet at Job's house for religious worship, in which he presided; this he took a great deal of pleasure in, and the scattering of it was a trouble to him. Or it may be understood of the angels of God pitching their tents about his habitation.

4. The assurance he had of the divine presence (Job 29:5): The Almighty was yet with me. Now he thought God had departed from him, but in those days he was with him, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, though it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.

II. That he had comfort in his family. Every thing was agreeable there: he had both mouths for his meat and meat for his mouths; the want of either is a great affliction.

1. He had a numerous offspring to enjoy his estate: My children were about me. He had many children, enough to compass him round, and they were observant of him and obsequious to him; they were about him, to know what he would have and wherein they might serve him. It is a comfort to tender parents to see their children about them. Job speaks very feelingly of this comfort now that he was deprived of it.

He thought it an instance of God's being with him that his children were about him; and yet reckon amiss if, when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort ourselves with this, that we have not lost our God.

2. He had a plentiful estate for the support of this numerous family, Job 29:6. His dairy abounded to such a degree that he might, if he pleased, wash his steps with butter; and his olive-yards were so fruitful, beyond expectation, that it seemed as if the rock poured him out rivers of oil. He reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use; for what is an estate good for unless we take the good of it ourselves and do good with it to others?

2 Oh that I were as *in* months past,
as *in* the days *when* God preserved me;
3 when his candle shined upon my head,
and when by his light I walked *through* darkness;
4 as I was in the days of my youth,
when the secret of God *was* upon my tabernacle;
5 when the Almighty *was* yet with me,
when my children *were* about me;
6 when I washed my steps with butter,
and the rock poured me out rivers of oil;
7 when I went out to the gate through the city,
when I prepared my seat in the street!

We have here Job in a post of honour and power. Though he had comfort enough in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that. We are not born for ourselves, but for the public. When any business was to be done in the gate, the place of judgment, Job went out to it through the city (Job 29:7), not in an affectation of pomp, but in an affection to justice. Observe, Judgment was administered in the gate, in the street, in the places of concourse, to which every man might have a free access, that every one who would might be a witness to all that was said and done, and that when judgment was given against the guilty others might hear and fear. Job being a prince, a judge, a magistrate, a man in authority, among the children of the east, we are here told,

I. What a profound respect was paid to him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management.

1 The people honoured him and stood in awe of him, Job 29:8. The gravity and majesty of his looks and mien, and his known strictness in animadverting upon every thing that was evil and indecent, commanded all about him into due decorum. The young men, who could not keep their countenances, or, it may be, were conscious to themselves of something amiss, hid themselves, and got out of his way; and the aged, though they kept their ground, yet would not keep their seats: they arose and stood up to do homage to him; those who expected honour from others gave honour to him. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and usually have it; but those that not only are good, but do good, are worthy of double honour. Modesty becomes those that are young and in subjection as much as majesty becomes those that are aged and in power. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, Ro 13:7. But, if a great and good man was thus reverenced, how is the great and good God to be feared!

2 The princes and nobles paid great deference to him, Job 29:9,10. Some think that these were inferior magistrates under him, and that the respect they paid him was due to his place, as their sovereign and supreme. It should rather seem that they were his equals in place, and joined in commission with him, and that the peculiar honour they gave him was gained by his extraordinary abilities and services. It was agreed that he excelled them all in quickness of apprehension, soundness of judgment, closeness of application, clearness and copiousness of expression; and therefore he was among his fellows an oracle of law, and counsel, and justice, and what he said all attended to and acquiesced in. When he came into court, especially when he stood up to speak to any business, the princes refrained talking, the nobles held their peace, that they might the more diligently hearken to what he said and might be sure to understand his meaning.

Those that had been forward to speak their own thoughts, loved to hear themselves talk, and cared not much what any body else said, yet, when it came to Job's turn to speak, were as desirous to know his thoughts as ever they had been to vent their own. Those that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired with what dexterity he split the hair and untied the knots which puzzled them and which they knew not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job and to abide by his judgment. Happy the men that are blessed with such eminent gifts as these; they have great opportunities of honouring God and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride. Happy the people that are blessed with such eminent men; it is a token for good to them.

8 The young men saw me, and hid themselves:
and the aged arose, *and* stood up.
9 The princes refrained talking,
and laid *their* hand on their mouth.
10 The nobles held their peace,
and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.
11 When the ear heard *me,* then it blessed me;
and when the eye saw *me,* it gave witness to me:

What a great deal of good he did in his place. He was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we shall see what it was which Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity. It is natural to men to have some value for themselves, and we may judge something of our own character by observing what that is upon which we value ourselves. Job valued himself, not by the honour of his family, the great estate he had, his large income, his full table, the many servants he had at his command, the ensigns of his dignity, his equipage and retinue, the splendid entertainments he gave, and the court that was made to him, but by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours; if we are merciful as God is, we are perfect as he is.

1. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections, and prayers, of sober people; not by the studied panegyrics of the wits and poets, but the unconstrained praises of all about him. All that heard what he said, and saw what he did, how he laid out himself for the public good with all the authority and tender affection of a father to his country, blessed him, and gave witness to him, Job 29:11. Many a good word they said of him, and many a good prayer they put up for him. He did not think it an honour to make every body fear him (Oderint dum metuant--Let them hate, provided they also fear) nor to be arbitrary, and to have his own will and way, not caring what people said of him; but, like Mordecai, to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren, Es 10:3.

He did not so much value the applauses of those at a distance as the attestations of those that were the witnesses of his conduct, that constantly attended him, saw him, and heard him, and could speak of their own knowledge, especially theirs who had themselves been the better for him and could speak by their own experience: such was the blessing of him who was ready to perish (Job 29:13) and who by Job's means was rescued from perishing. Let great men, and men of estates, thus do good, and they shall have praise of the same; and let those who have good done to them look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors to bless them and give witness to them, to use their interest on earth for their honour and in heaven for their comfort, to praise them and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed who grudge these small returns.

2. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves, the poor and the needy, the widows and fatherless, the blind and the lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favour or ever to be in a capacity to recompense it.

(1.) If the poor were injured or oppressed, they might cry to Job, and, if he found the allegations of their petitions true, they had not only his ear and his bowels, but his hand too: He delivered the poor that cried (Job 29:12) and would not

suffer them to be trampled upon and run down. Nay (Job 29:16), he was a father to the poor, not only a judge to protect them and to see that they were not wronged, but a father to provide for them and to see that they did not want, to counsel and direct them, and to appear and act for them upon all occasions. It is no disparagement to the son of a prince to be a father to the poor.

(2.) The fatherless that had none to help them found Job ready to help them, and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. He helped them to make the best of what little they had, helped them to pay what they owed and to get in what was owing to them, helped them out into the world, helped them into business, helped them to it, and helped them in it; thus should the fatherless be helped.

(3.) Those that were ready to perish he saved from perishing, relieving those that were hungry and ready to perish for want, taking care of those that were sick, that were outcasts, that were falsely accused, or in danger of being turned out of their estates unjustly, or, upon any other account, were ready to perish. The extremity of the peril, as it quickened Job to appear the more vigorously for them, so it made his seasonable kindness the more affecting and the more obliging, and brought their blessings the more abundantly upon him.

(4.) The widows that were sighing for grief, and trembling for fear, he made to sing for joy, so carefully did he protect them and provide for them, and so heartily did he espouse their interest. It is a pleasure to a good man, and should be so to a great man, to give those occasion to rejoice that are most acquainted with grief.

(5.) Those that were upon any account at a loss Job gave suitable and seasonable relief to (Job 29:15): I was eyes to the blind, counselling and advising those for the best that knew not what to do, and feet to the lame, assisting those with money and friends that knew what they should do, but knew not how to compass it. Those we best help whom we help out in that very thing wherein they are defective and

most need help. We may come to be blind or lame ourselves, and therefore should pity and succour those that are so, Isa 35:3,4,Heb 12:13.

3. He valued himself by the conscience he made of justice and equity in all his proceedings. His friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor. "So far from that," says he, "I always made it my business to maintain and support right."

(1.) He devoted himself to the administration of justice (Job 29:14): I put on righteousness and it clothed me, that is, he had an habitual disposition to execute justice and put on a fixed resolution to do it. It was the girdle of his lions, Isa 11:5. It kept him tight and steady in all his motions. He always appeared in it, as in his clothing, and never without it. Righteousness will clothe those that put it on; it will keep them warm, and be comfortable to them; it will keep them safe, and fence them against the injuries of the season; it will adorn them, and recommend them to the favour both of God and man.

(2.) He took pleasure in it, and, as I may say, a holy delight. He looked upon it as his greatest glory to do justice to all and injury to none: My judgment was as a robe and a diadem. Perhaps he did not himself wear a robe and a diadem; he was very indifferent to those ensigns of honour; those were most fond of them who had least intrinsic worth to recommend them. But the settled principles of justice, by which he was governed and did govern, were to him instead of all those ornaments. If a magistrate do the duty of his place, that is an honour to him far beyond his gold or purple, and should be, accordingly, his delight; and truly if he do not make conscience of his duty, and in some measure answer the end of his elevation, his robe and diadem, his gown and cap, his sword and mace, are but a reproach, like the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Jews studied to ridicule our Saviour; for, as clothes on a dead man will never make him warm, so robes on a base man will never make him honourable.

(3.) He took pains in the business of his place (Job 29:16): The cause which I knew not I searched out. He diligently enquired into the matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, and cleared it from false colours; he laid all circumstances together, that he might find out the truth and the merits of every cause, and then, and not until then, gave judgment upon it. He never answered a matter before he heard it, nor did he judge a man to be righteous, however he seemed, for his being first in his own cause, Pr 18:17.

4. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men (Job 29:17): I broke the jaws of the wicked. He does not say that he broke their necks. He did not take away their lives, but he broke their jaws, he took away their power of doing mischief; he humbled them, mortified them, and curbed their insolence, and so plucked the spoil out of their teeth, delivered the persons and estates of honest men from being made a prey of by them. When they had got the spoil between their teeth, and were greedily swallowing it down, he bravely rescued it, as David did the lamb out of the mouth of the lion, not fearing, though they roared and raged like a lion disappointed of his prey. Good magistrates must thus be a terror and restraint to evil-doers and a protection to the innocent, and, in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal, and resolution, and an undaunted courage. A judge upon the bench has as much need to be bold and brave as a commander in the field.

12 because I delivered the poor that cried,
and the fatherless, and *him that had* none to help him.
13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:
my judgment *was* as a robe and a diadem.
15 I was eyes to the blind, and
feet *was* I to the lame.
16 I *was* a father to the poor:
and the cause *which* I knew not I searched out.

17 And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and
plucked the spoil out of his teeth.
18 Then I said, I shall die in my nest,
and I shall multiply *my* days as the sand.

That which crowned Job's prosperity was the pleasing prospect he had of the continuance of it. Though he knew, in general, that he was liable to trouble, and therefore was not secure (Job 3:26, I was not in safety, neither had I rest), yet he had no particular occasion for fear, but as much reason as ever any man had to count upon the lengthening out of his tranquility.

I. See here what his thoughts were in his prosperity (Job 29:18): Then I said, I shall die in my nest. Having made himself a warm and easy nest, he hoped nothing would disturb him in it, nor remove him out of it, till death removed him. He knew he had never stolen any coal from the altar which might fire his nest; he saw no storm arising to shake down his nest; and therefore concluded, To morrow shall be as this day; as David (Ps 30:6), My mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved. Observe,

1. In the midst of his prosperity he thought of dying, and the thought was not uneasy to him. He knew that, though his nest was high, it did not set him out of the reach of the darts of death.

2. Yet he flattered himself with vain hopes,

(1.) That he should live long, should multiply his days as the sand. He means as the sand on the sea-shore; whereas we should rather reckon our days by the sand in the hourglass, which will have run out in a little time. See how apt even good people are to think of death as a thing at a distance, and to put far from them that evil day, which will really be to them a good day.

(2.) That he should die in the same prosperous state in which he had lived. If such an expectation as this arise from a lively

faith in the providence and promise of God, it is well, but if from a conceit of our own wisdom, and the stability of these earthly things, it is ill-grounded and turns into sin. We hope Job's confidence was like David's (Ps 27:1, Whom shall I fear?), not like the rich fool's (Lu 12:19), Soul, take thy ease.

II. See what was the ground of these thoughts.

1. If he looked at home, he found he had a good foundation. His stock was all his own, and none of all his neighbours had any demand upon him. He found no bodily distemper growing upon him; his estate did not lie under any incumbrance; nor was he sensible of any worm at the root of it. He was getting forward in his affairs, and not going behind-hand; he lost no reputation, but gained rather; he knew no rival that threatened either to eclipse his honour or abridge his power. See how he describes this, Job 29:19,20. He was like a tree whose root is not only spread out, which fixes it and keeps it firm, so that it is in no danger of being overturned, but spread out by the waters, which feed it, and make it fruitful and flourishing, so that it is in no danger of withering. And, as he thought himself blessed with the fatness of the earth, so also with the kind influences of heaven too; for the dew lay all night upon his branch.

Providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their prosperity with what they draw from this earth without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, in the virtue of that his glory was still fresh in him. Those about him had still something new to say in his praise, and needed not to repeat the old stories: and it is only by constant goodness that men's glory is thus preserved fresh and kept from withering and growing stale. His bow also was renewed in his hand, that is, his power to protect himself and annoy those that assailed him still increased, so that he thought he had as little reason as any man to fear the insults of the Sabeans and Chaldeans.

2. If he looked abroad, he found he had a good interest and well confirmed. As he had no reason to dread the power of

his enemies, so neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends. To the last moment of his prosperity they continued their respect to him and their dependence on him. What had he to fear who so gave counsel as in effect to give law to all his neighbours? Nothing surely could be done against him when really nothing was done without him.

(1.) He was the oracle of his country. He was consulted as an oracle, and his dictates were acquiesced in as oracles, Job 29:21. When others could not be heard all men gave ear to him, and kept silence at his counsel, knowing that, as nothing could be said against it, so nothing needed to be added to it. And therefore, after his words, they spoke not again, Job 29:22. Why should men meddle with a subject that has already been exhausted?

(2.) He was the darling of his country. All about him were well pleased with every thing he said and did, as David's people were with him, 2Sa 3:36. He had the hearts and affections of all his neighbours, all his servants, tenants, subjects; never was man so much admired nor so well beloved.

[1.] Those were thought happy to whom he spoke, and they thought themselves so. Never were the dews of heaven so acceptable to the parched ground as his wise discourses were to those that attended on them, especially to those to whom they were particularly accommodated and directed. His speech dropped upon them, and they waited for its as for the rain (Job 29:22,23), wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, catching at them, laying hold on them, and treasuring them up as apophthegms. His servants that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom would not have envied Solomon's. Those are wise, or are likely to be so, that know how to value wise discourse, that wish for it, and wait for it, and drink it in as the earth does the rain that comes often upon it, Heb 6:7. And those who have such an interest as Job had in the esteem of others whose ipse dixit--bare assertion goes so far, as they have a great opportunity of doing good, so they must take great care lest they do hurt, for a bad word out of their mouths is very infectious.

[2.] Much more happy were those thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so, Job 29:24. "If I laughed on them, designing thereby to show myself pleased in them, or pleasant with them, it was such a favour that they believed it not for joy," or because it was so rare a thing to see this grave man smile. Many seek the ruler's favour. Job was a ruler whose favour was courted and valued at a high rate. He to whom a great prince gave a kiss was envied by another to whom he only gave a golden cup. Familiarity often breeds contempt; but if Job at any time saw fit, for his own diversion, to make himself free with those about him, yet it did not in the least diminish the veneration they had for him: The light of his countenance they cast not down. So wisely did he dispense his favours as not to make them cheap, and so wisely did they receive them as not to make themselves unworthy of them another time.

(3.) He was the sovereign of his country, Job 29:25. He chose out their way, sat at the helm, and steered for them, all referring themselves to his conduct and submitting themselves to his command. To this perhaps, in many countries, monarchy owed its rise: such a man as Job, that so far excelled all his neighbours in wisdom and integrity, could not but sit chief, and the fool will, of course, be servant to the wise in heart: and, if the wisdom did but for a while run in the blood, the honour and power would certainly attend it and so by degrees become hereditary. Two things recommended Job to the sovereignty:--

[1.] That he had the authority of a commander or general. He dwelt as a king in the army, giving orders which were not to be disputed. Every one that has the spirit of wisdom has not the spirit of government, but Job had both, and, when there was occasion, could assume state, as the king in the army does, and say, "Go," "Come," and "Do this," Mt 8:9.

[2.] That yet he had the tenderness of a comforter. He was as ready to succour those in distress as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners. Eliphaz himself owned he had been very good in that respect (Job 4:3): Thou hast strengthened

the weak hands. And this he now reflected upon with pleasure, when he was himself a mourner. But we find it easier to comfort others with the comforts wherewith we ourselves have been formerly comforted than to comfort ourselves with those comforts wherewith we have formerly comforted others.

19 My root *was* spread out by the waters,
and the dew lay all night upon my branch.
20 My glory *was* fresh in me,
and my bow was renewed in my hand.
21 Unto me *men* gave ear, and waited,
and kept silence at my counsel.
22 After my words they spake not again;
and my speech dropped upon them.
23 And they waited for me as for the rain;
and they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.
24 *If* I laughed on them, they believed *it* not;
and the light of my countenance they cast not down.
25 I chose out their way, and sat chief,
and dwelt as a king in the army,
as one *that* comforteth the mourners.

Job-30

Job Bewails His Present Affliction

1 But now *they that are* younger than I have me in derision,
whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs
of my flock.

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he had fallen into, from the height of honour and reputation, which was exceedingly grievous and cutting to such an ingenuous spirit as Job's was. Two things he insists upon as greatly aggravating his affliction:--

The meanness of the persons that affronted him. As it added much to his honour, in the day of his prosperity, that princes and nobles showed him respect and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity that he was

spurned by the footmen, and trampled upon by those that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. None can be represented as more base than those are here represented who insulted Job, upon all accounts.

1. They were young, younger than he (Job 30:1), the youth (Job 30:12), who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully towards him for his age and gravity. Even the children, in their play, played upon him, as the children of Bethel upon the prophet, Go up, thou bald-head. Children soon learn to be scornful when they see their parents so.

2. They were of a mean extraction. Their fathers were so very despicable that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending the sheep and attending the shepherds with the dogs of his flock, Job 30:1. They were so shabby that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so silly that they were not fit to be employed, and so false that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks of what he might have done, not of what he did: he was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock; he knew the dignity of human nature better than to do so.

3. They and their families were the unprofitable burdens of the earth, and good for nothing. Job himself, with all his prudence and patience, could make nothing of them, Job 30:2 The young were not fit for labour, they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly: Whereto might the strength of their hands profit me? The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters, for in them was old age indeed, but their old age was perished, they were twice children.

4. They were extremely poor, Job 30:3. They were ready to starve, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have sought them out as proper objects of charity and would have relieved them; but, being

brought into straits by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them. Hence they were forced to flee into the deserts both for shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts indeed, when they cut up mallows by the bushes, and were glad to eat them, for want of food that was fit for them, Job 30:4. See what hunger will bring men to: one half of the world does not know how the other half lives; yet those that have abundance ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse and who are brought to a short allowance of that too. But we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange, if slothfulness clothe men with rags and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the devil's poor.

5. They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burdens, but the plagues, of the places where they lived, arrant scoundrels, the scum of the country: They were driven forth from among men, Job 30:5. They were such lying, thieving, lurking, mischievous people, that the best service the magistrates could do was to rid the country of them, while the very mob cried after them as after a thief. Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit they should live. They were lazy and would not work, and therefore they were exclaimed against as thieves, and justly; for those that do not earn their own bread by honest labour do, in effect, steal the bread out of other people's mouths. An idle fellow is a public nuisance; but it is better to drive such into a workhouse than, as here, into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to dwell in caves of the earth, and they brayed like asses among the bushes, Job 30:6,7. See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them; they cannot but be in a continual terror and confusion. They groan among the trees (so Broughton) and smart among the nettles; they are stung and scratched there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world; yet this is nothing to what is in reserve for them in the other world.

6. They had nothing at all in them to recommend them to any man's esteem. They were a vile kind; yea, a kind without fame, people that nobody could give a good word to nor had a good wish for; they were banished from the earth as being viler than the earth. One would not think it possible that ever the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far, as it did in these people. When we thank God that we are men we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job,

(1.) In revenge, because when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put in execution the laws which were in force against vagabonds, and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him.

(2.) In triumph over him, because they thought he had now become like one of them. Isa 14:10,11. The abjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, Ps 35:15.

2 Yea, whereto *might* the strength of their hands *profit* me,
in whom old age was perished?
3 For want and famine *they were* solitary;
fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste:
4 who cut up mallows by the
bushes, and juniper roots *for* their
meat.
5 They were driven forth from among *men*,
(they cried after them as *after* a thief,)
6 to dwell in the cliffs of the valleys,
in caves of the earth, and *in* the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they brayed;
under the nettles they were gathered together.
8 *They were* children of fools, yea, children of base men:
they were viler than the earth.
9 And now am I their
song, yea, I am their
byword.

I. The greatness of the affronts that were given him. It cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

1. They made ballads on him, with which they made themselves and their companions merry (Job 30:9): I am their song and their byword. Those have a very base spirit that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

2. They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, (Job 30:10), as an ugly monster or as one infected. Those that were themselves driven out from among men would have had him driven out. For,

3. They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him. They spat in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet (Job 30:12), kicked him, either in wrath, because they hated him, or in sport, to make themselves merry with him, as they did with their companions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities from a spiteful, scornful, wicked world, and must not think it strange; our Master himself was thus abused.

4. They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him--not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise: They raise up against me the ways of their destruction; or (as some read it), They cast upon me the cause of their woe; that is, "They lay the blame of their being driven out upon me;" and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But under this pretence,

(1.) They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called marring his path. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him (Job 22:6-10, &c.) upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great weakness and inconsideration, for who can be innocent if the accusations of such persons may be heeded?

(2.) They not only triumphed in his calamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people. In this they have no helper, nobody to set them on or to countenance them in it, nobody to bear them out or to protect them, but they do it of their own accord; they are fools in other things, but wise enough to do mischief, and need no help in inventing that. Some read it thus, They hold my heaviness a profit, though they be never the better. Wicked people, though they get nothing by the calamities of others, yet rejoice in them.

5. Those that did him all this mischief were numerous, unanimous, and violent (Job 30:14): They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters, when the dam is broken; or, "They came as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury;" and in this they took a pride and a pleasure: They rolled themselves in the desolation as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed, and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight of their malice.

II. All this contempt put upon him was caused by the troubles he was in (Job 30:11): "Because he has loosed my cord, has taken away the honour and power with which I was girded (Job 12:18), has scattered what I had got together and untwisted all my affairs--because he has afflicted me, therefore they have let loose the bridle before me," that is, "have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me." Those that by Providence are stripped of their honour may expect to be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. "Because he hath loosed his cord" (the original has that reading also), that is, "because he has taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice, they cast away the bridle from me," that is, "they make no account of my authority, nor stand in any awe of me."

It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, and the restraints he lays upon them, that we are

not continually thus insulted and abused; and, if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints, as David did when Shimei cursed him: So let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. Now in all this,

1. We may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause, how suddenly a man may fail from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause therefore have men to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it! Those that to-day cry Hosannah may to-morrow cry Crucify. But there is an honour which comes from God, which if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable.

2. We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men to be trampled upon and abused. And,

3. That those who look only at the things that are seen despise those whom the world frowns upon, though they are ever so much the favourites of Heaven. Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men contemptible. Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper odit damnatos--The Roman populace, faithful to the turns of fortune, still persecute the fallen.

4. We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a reproach of men and despised of the people (Ps 22:6,Isa:53:3), and who hid not his face from shame and spitting, but bore the indignity better than Job did.

10 They abhor me, they flee far from
me, and spare not to spit in my face.
11 Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me,
they have also let loose the bridle before me.
12 Upon *my* right *hand* rise the youth;
they push away my feet,
and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction.
13 They mar my path,

they set forward my calamity,
they have no helper.
14 They came *upon me* as a wide breaking in *of waters:*
in the desolation they rolled themselves *upon me*.
15 Terrors are turned upon me:
they pursue my soul as the wind:
and my welfare passeth away as a cloud.

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter, and has a great many sorrowful accents in it, we may observe a great deal that he complains of and some little that he comforts himself with.

I. Here is much that he complains of.

1. In general, it was a day of great affliction and sorrow.

(1.) Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him (Job 30:16): The days of affliction have taken hold upon me, have caught me (so some); they have arrested me, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, claps him on the back, and secures him. When trouble comes with commission it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surprised him (Job 30:27): "The days of affliction prevented me," that is, "they came upon me without giving me any previous warning. I did not expect them, nor make any provision for such an evil day." Observe, He reckons his affliction by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, 2Co 4:17.

(2.) He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His bowels boiled with grief, and rested not, Job 30:27. The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits without any intermission. He went mourning from day to day, always sighing, always weeping; and such cloud was constantly upon his mind that he went, in effect, without the sun, Job 30:28. He had nothing that he could take any comfort in. He abandoned himself to perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning. He walked out of the sun (so some) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do.

If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship, instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he stood up and cried aloud, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, like one half distracted. If he appeared in public, to receive visits, when the fit came upon him he could not contain himself, nor preserve due decorum, but stood up and shrieked aloud. Thus he was a brother to dragons and owls (Job 30:29), both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do (Isa 34:13), and in making a fearful hideous noise as they do; his inconsiderate complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2 The terror and trouble that seized his soul were the sorest part of his calamity, Job 30:15,16.

(1.) If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him: if he endeavoured to shake off his terrors, they turned furiously upon him: if he endeavoured to escape from them, they pursued his soul as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained, at first, of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, Job 6:4. And still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. My soul (Heb., my principal one, my princess); the soul is the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and therefore that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded.

(2.) If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed removed from him, and nothing left him but the bitter remembrance of it: My welfare and prosperity pass away, as suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably, as a cloud.

(3.) If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk and unable to bear his infirmity, not only wounded, but poured out upon him, Job 30:16. He was not only weak as water, but, in his own apprehension, lost as water spilt upon the ground. Compare Ps 22:14, My heart is melted like wax.

3. His bodily diseases were very grievous; for,

(1.) He was full of pain, piercing pain, pain that went to the bone, to all his bones, Job 30:17. It was a sword in his bones, which

pierced him in the night season, when he should have been refreshed with sleep. His nerves were affected with strong convulsions; his sinews took no rest. By reason of his pain, he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. His bones were burnt with heat, Job 30:30. He was in a constant fever, which dried up the radical moisture and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death.

(2.) He was full of sores. Some that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but, Satan's commission against Job extending both to his bone and to his flesh, he spared neither. His skin was black upon him, Job 30:30. The blood settled, and the sores suppurated and by degrees scabbed over, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his boils, and the soft clothing he used to wear had now grown so stiff that all his garments were like his collar, Job 30:18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in for want of clean linen and good attendance, and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think that, among other diseases, Job was ill of a quinsy or swelling in his throat, and that it was this which bound him about like a stiff collar.

Thus was he cast into the mire (Job 30:19), compared to mire (so some); his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else. Let none be proud of their clothing nor proud of their cleanness; they know not but some disease or other may change their garments, and even throw them into the mire, and make them noisome both to themselves and others. Instead of sweet smell, there shall be a stench, Isa 3:24. We are but dust and ashes at the best, and our bodies are vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God, by some sore disease, makes us sensibly to feel and own what we are. "I have become already like that dust and ashes into which I must shortly be resolved: wherever I go I carry my grave about with me."

4. That which afflicted him most of all was that God seemed to be his enemy and to fight against him. It was he that cast him into the mire (Job 30:19), and seemed to trample on him when

he had him there. This cut him to the heart more than any thing else,

(1.) That God did not appear for him. He addressed himself to him, but gained no grant--appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain (Job 30:20): "I cry unto thee, as one in earnest, I stand up, and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but thou hearest not, thou regardest not, for any thing I can perceive." If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange. Though the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought that they did and that God has not only been deaf, but angry, at the prayers of his people, Ps 80:4.

(2.) That God did appear against him. That which he here says of God is one of the worst words that ever Job spoke (Job 30:21): Thou hast become cruel to me. Far be it from the God of mercy and grace that he should be cruel to any (his compassions fail not), but especially that he should be so to his own children. Job was unjust and ungrateful when he said so of him: but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did, at this time, most easily beset him. Here,

[1.] He thought God fought against him and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him: With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself, or art an adversary against me. He had better thoughts of God (Job 23:6) when he concluded he would not plead against him with his great power. God has an absolute sovereignty and an irresistible strength, but he never uses either the one or the other for the crushing or oppressing of any.

[2.] He thought he insulted over him (Job 30:22): Thou lifted me up to the wind, as a feather or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for Omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself when he was made to ride, not in triumph, but in terror, upon the wings of the wind, and the judgments of God did even dissolve his substance, as a cloud is dissolved and dispersed by the wind. Man's substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing before the power of God; it is soon dissolved.

5. He expected no other now than that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him: "If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon no other than to break my neck shortly;" and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him than that in all his dealings with him: "I know that thou wilt bring me, with so much the more terror, to death, though I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is the house appointed for all living," Job 30:23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished house, but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe. It is our long home, our own home; for it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us by him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all the living. It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet; it is appointed for the general rendezvous. We must all be brought thither shortly. It is God that brings us to it, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that, sooner or later, he will bring us thither. It would be well for us if we would duly consider it. The living know that they shall die; let us, each of us, know it with application.

6. There were two things that aggravated his trouble, and made it the less tolerable:--

(1.) That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation (Job 30:26): "When I looked for good, for more good, or at least for the continuance of what I had, then evil came"--such uncertain things are all our worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. Those that wait for light from the sparks of their creature comforts will be wretchedly disappointed and will make their bed in the darkness.

(2.) That is was a very great change in his condition (Job 30:31): "My harp is not only laid by, and hung upon the willow-trees, but it is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of those that weep." Job, in his prosperity, had taken the timbrel and harp, and rejoiced at the sound of the organ, Job 21:12. Notwithstanding his gravity and grace, he had found time to be cheerful; but now his tune was altered. Let those therefore that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not, for they know not how

soon their laughter will be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness. Thus we see how much Job complains of; but,

II. Here is something in the midst of all with which he comforts himself, and it is but a little.

1. He foresees, with comfort, that death will be the period of all his calamities (Job 30:24): Though God now, with a strong hand, opposed himself against him, "yet," says he, "he will not stretch out his hand to the grave." The hand of God's wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust. Though men cry in his destruction (though, when they are dying, there is a great deal of agony and out-cry, many a sigh, and groan, and complaint), yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there. "Though in hell, which is called destruction, they cry, yet not in the grave; and, being delivered from the second death, the first to me will be an effectual relief." Therefore he wished he might be hidden in the grave, Job 14:13.

2. He reflects with comfort upon the concern he always had for the calamities of others when he was himself at ease (Job 30:25): Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Some think he herein complains of God, thinking it very hard that he who had shown mercy to others should not himself find mercy. I would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him that he had always sympathized with persons in misery and done what he could to help them, and therefore he had reason to expect that, at length, both God and his friends would pity him. Those who mourn with them that mourn will bear their own sorrows the better when it comes to their turn to drink of the bitter cup. Did not my soul burn for the poor? so some read it, comparing it with that of St. Paul, 2Co 11:29, Who is offended, and I burn not? As those who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble, so those who have considered the poor and succoured them shall have the remembrance thereof to make their bed easy in their sickness, Ps 41:1,3.

16 And now my soul is poured out upon me;
the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.
17 My bones are pierced in me in the night season:
and my sinews take no rest.
18 By the great force *of my disease* is my garment changed:
it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.
19 He hath cast me into the mire,
and I am become like dust and ashes.
20 I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me:
I stand up, and thou regardest me *not*.
21 Thou art become cruel to me:
with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.
22 Thou liftest me up to the wind;
thou causest me to ride *upon it*,
and dissolvest my substance.
23 For I know *that* thou wilt bring me *to* death,
and *to* the house appointed for all living.
24 Howbeit he will not stretch out *his* hand to the grave,
though they cry in his destruction.
25 Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?
Was *not* my soul grieved for the poor?
26 When I looked for good, then evil came *unto me:*
and when I waited for light, there came darkness.
27 My bowels boiled, and rested not:
the days of affliction prevented me.
28 I went mourning without the sun:
I stood up, *and* I cried in the congregation.
29 I am a brother to dragons,
and a companion to owls.
30 My skin is black upon me,
and my bones are burned with heat.
31 My harp also is *turned* to mourning,
and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

Job-31

Job Asserts His Integrity

1 I made a covenant with mine eyes;
why then should I think upon a maid?

The lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world, are the two fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard.

I. Against the lusts of the flesh. He not only kept himself clear from adultery, from defiling his neighbour's wives (Job 31:9), but from all lewdness with any women whatsoever. He kept no concubine, no mistress, but was inviolably faithful to the marriage bed, though his wife was none of the wisest, best, or kindest. From the beginning it was so, that a man should have but one wife and cleave to her only; and Job kept closely to that institution and abhorred the thought of transgressing it; for, though his greatness might tempt him to it, his goodness kept him from it. Job was now in pain and sickness of body, and under that affliction it is in a particular manner comfortable if our consciences can witness for us that we have been careful to preserve our bodies in chastity and to possess those vessels in sanctification and honour, pure from the lusts of uncleanness. Now observe here,

1. What the resolutions were which, in this matter, he kept to (Job 31:1): I made a covenant with my eyes, that is, "I watched against the occasions of the sin; why then should I think upon a maid?" that is, "by that means, through the grace of God, I kept myself from the very first step towards it." So far was he from wanton dalliances, or any act of lasciviousness, that,

(1.) He would not so much as admit a wanton look. He made a covenant with his eyes, made this bargain with them, that he would allow them the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun and the glory of God shining in the visible creation,

provided they would never fasten upon any object that might occasion any impure imaginations, much less any impure desires, in his mind; and under this penalty, that, if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears. Note, Those that would keep their hearts pure must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness. Hence we read of wanton eyes (Isa 3:16) and eyes full of adultery, 2Pe 2:14. The first sin began in the eye, Ge 3:6. What we must not meddle with we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after we must not look at; not the forbidden wealth (Pr 23:5), not the forbidden wine (Pr 23:31), not the forbidden woman, Mt 5:28.

(2.) He would not so much as allow a wanton thought: "Why then should I think upon a maid with any unchaste fancy or desire towards her?" Shame and sense of honour might restrain him from soliciting the chastity of a beautiful virgin, but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from so much as thinking of it. Those are not chaste that are not so in spirit as well as body, 1Co 7:34. See how Christ's exposition of the seventh commandment agrees with the ancient sense of it, and how much better Job understood it than the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses's chair.

2. What the reasons were which, in this matter, he was governed by. It was not for fear of reproach among men, though that is to be considered (Pr 6:33), but for fear of the wrath and curse of God. He knew very well,

(1.) That uncleanness is a sin that forfeits all good, and shuts us out from the hope of it (Job 31:2): What portion of God is there from above? What blessing can such impure sinners expect from the pure and holy God, or what token of his favour? What inheritance of the Almighty can they look for from on high? There is no portion, no inheritance, no true happiness, for a soul, but what is in God, in the Almighty, and what comes from above, from on high. Those that wallow in uncleanness render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him; and then what portion, what

inheritance, can they have with God? No unclean thing shall enter into the New Jerusalem, that holy city.

(2.) It is a sin that incurs divine vengeance, Job 31:3. It will certainly be the sinner's ruin if it be not repented of in time. Is not destruction, a swift and sure destruction, to those wicked people, and a strange punishment to the workers of this iniquity? Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it; it is with them a peccadillo, a trick of youth. But they deceive themselves with vain words, for because of these things, how light soever they make of them, the wrath of God, the unsupportable wrath of the eternal God, comes upon the children of disobedience, Eph 5:6. There are some sinners whom God sometimes out of the common road of Providence to meet with; such are these. The destruction of Sodom is a strange punishment. Is there not alienation (so some read it) to the workers of iniquity? This is the sinfulness of the sin that it alienates the mind from God (Eph 4:18,19), and this is the punishment of the sinners that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, Re 22:15.

(3.) It cannot be hidden from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so close, nor a wanton look so quick, as to escape his cognizance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it, with this pertinent thought (Job 31:4), Doth not he see my ways; as Joseph did (Ge 39:9), How can I do it, and sin against God? Two things Job had an eye to:--

[1.] God's omniscience. It is a great truth that God's eyes are upon all the ways of men (Pr 5:20,21); but Job here mentions it with application to himself and his own actions: Doth not he see my ways? O God! thou hast searched me and known me. God sees what rule we walk by, what company w walk with, what end we walk towards, and therefore what ways we walk in.

[2.] His observance. "He not only sees, but takes notice; he counts all my steps, all my false steps in the way of duty, all my by-steps into the way of sin." He not only sees our ways

in general, but takes cognizance of our particular steps in these ways, every action, every motion. He keeps account of all, because he will call us to account, will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves; for who ever counted his own steps? yet God counts them. Let us therefore walk circumspectly.

2 For what portion of God *is there* from above?
and *what* inheritance of the Almighty from on high?
3 *Is* not destruction to the wicked?
and a strange *punishment* to the workers of iniquity?
4 Doth not he see my ways,
and count all my steps?
5 If I have walked with vanity,
or if my foot hath hasted to deceit;

He stood upon his guard against the love of the world, and carefully avoided all sinful indirect means of getting wealth. He dreaded all forbidden profit as much as all forbidden pleasure. Let us see,

1. What his protestation is. In general, he had been honest and just in all his dealings, and never, to his knowledge, did any body any wrong.

(1.) He never walked with vanity (Job 31:5), that is, he never durst tell a lie to get a good bargain. It was never his way to banter, or equivocate, or make many words in his dealings. Some men's constant walk is a constant cheat. They either make what they have more than it is, that they may be trusted, or less than it is, that nothing may be expected from them. But Job was a different man. His wealth was not acquired by vanity, though now diminished, Pr 13:11.

(2.) He never hasted to deceit. Those that deceive must be quick and sharp, but Job's quickness and sharpness were never turned that way. He never made haste to be rich by deceit, but always acted cautiously, lest, through inconsideration, he should do an unjust thing. Note, What we have in the world may be either used with comfort or lost with comfort if it was honestly obtained.

(3.) His steps never turned out of the way, the way of justice and fair dealing; from that he never deviated, Job 31:7. He not only took care not to walk in a constant course and way of deceit, but he did not so much as take one step out of the way of honesty. In every particular action and affair we must closely tie ourselves up to the rules of righteousness.

(4.) His heart did not walk after his eyes, that is, he did not covet what he saw that was another's, nor wish it his own. Covetousness is called the lust of the eye, 1Jo 2:16. Achan saw, and then took, the accursed thing. That heart must needs wander that walks after the eyes; for then it looks no further than the things that are seen, whereas it ought to be in heaven whither the eyes cannot reach: it should follow the dictates of religion and right reason: if it follow the eye, it will be misled to that for which God will bring men into judgment, Ec 11:9.

(5.) That no blot had cleaved to his hands, that is, he was not chargeable with getting any thing dishonestly, or keeping that which was another's, whenever it appeared to be so. Injustice is a blot, a blot to the estate, a blot to the owner; it spoils the beauty of both, and therefore is to be dreaded. Those that deal much in the world may perhaps have a blot come upon their hands, but they must wash it off again by repentance and restitution, and not let it cleave to their hands. See Isa 33:15.

2. How he ratifies his protestation. So confident is he of his own honesty that,

(1.) He is willing to have his goods searched (Job 31:6): Let me be weighed in an even balance, that is, "Let what I have got be enquired into and it will be found to weigh well"--a sign that it was not obtained by vanity, for then Tekel would have been written on it--weighed in the balance and found too light. An honest man is so far from dreading a trial that he desires it rather, being well assured that God knows his integrity and will approve it, and that the trial of it will be to his praise and honour.

(2.) He is willing to forfeit the whole cargo if there be found any prohibited or contraband goods, any thing but what he came honestly by (Job 31:8): "Let me sow, and let another eat," which was already agreed to be the doom of oppressors (Job 5:5), "and let my offspring, all the trees that I have planted, be rooted out." This intimates that he believed the sin did deserve this punishment, that usually it is thus punished, but that though now his estate was ruined (and at such a time, if ever, his conscience would have brought his sin to his mind), yet he knew himself innocent and would venture all the poor remains of his estate upon the issue of the trial.

6 let me be weighed in an even balance,
that God may know mine integrity.
7 If my step hath turned out of the way,
and mine heart walked after mine eyes,
and if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands;
8 *then* let me sow, and let another eat;
yea, let my offspring be rooted out.

Two more instances we have here of Job's integrity:--

I. That he had a very great abhorrence of the sin of adultery. As he did not wrong his own marriage bed by keeping a concubine (he did not so much as think upon a maid, Job 31:1), so he was careful not to offer any injury to his neighbour's marriage bed. Let us see here,

1. How clear he was from this sin, Job 31:9.

(1.) He did not so much as covet his neighbour's wife; for even his heart was not deceived by a woman. The beauty of another man's wife did not kindle in him any unchaste desires, nor was he ever moved by the allurements of an adulterous woman, such as is described, Pr 7:6-21, &c. See the original of all the defilements of the life; they come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, and none more so than the sin of uncleanness.

(2.) He never compassed or imagined any unchaste design. He never laid wait at his neighbour's door, to get an

opportunity to debauch his wife in his absence, when the good man was not at home, Pr 7:19. See Job 24:15.

2. What a dread he had of this sin, and what frightful apprehensions he had concerning the malignity of it--that it was a heinous crime (Job 31:11), one of the greatest vilest sins a man can be guilty of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul. With respect to the mischievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, he owns that, if he were guilty of that heinous crime,

(1.) His family might justly be made infamous in the highest degree (Job 31:10): Let my wife grind to another. Let her be a slave (so some), a harlot, so others. God often punishes the sins of one with the sin of another, the adultery of the husband with the adultery of the wife, as in David's case (2Sa 12:11), which does not in the least excuse the treachery of the adulterous wife; but, how unrighteous soever she is, God is righteous. See Ho 4:13, Your spouses shall commit adultery. Note, Those who are not just and faithful to their relations must not think it strange if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them.

(2.) He himself might justly be made a public example: For it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges; yea, though those who are guilty of it are themselves judges, as Job was. Note, Adultery is a crime which the civil magistrate ought to take cognizance of and punish: so it was adjudged even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses made it capital. It is an evil work, to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror.

(3.) It might justly become the ruin of his estate; nay, he knew it would be so (Job 31:12): It is a fire. Lust is a fire in the soul: those that indulge it are said to burn. It consumes all that is good there (the convictions, the comforts), and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which, if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell. It will consume even to that eternal destruction. It consumes the body, Pr 5:11. It consumes the substance; it roots out all the increase. Burning lusts bring

burning judgments. Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an example to those who should afterwards, in like manner, live ungodly.

II. That he had a very great tenderness for his servants and ruled them with a gentle hand. He had a great household and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite; and he that in these two things has the rule of his own spirit is better than the mighty, Pr 16:32. Here observe,

1. What were Job's condescensions to his servants (Job 31:13): He did not despise the cause of his man-servant, no, nor of his maid-servant, when they contended with him. If they contradicted him in any thing, he was willing to hear their reasons. If they had offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves, in their own vindication or excuse. Nay, if they complained of any hardship he put upon them, he did not browbeat them, and bid them hold their tongues, but gave them leave to tell their story, and redressed their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side. He was tender of them, not only when they served and pleased him, but even when they contended with him. Herein he was a great example to masters, to give to their servants that which is just and equal; nay, to do the same things to them that they expect from them (Col 4:1,Eph 6:9), and not to rule them with rigour, and carry it with a high hand. Many of Job's servants were slain in his service (Job 1:15-17); the rest were unkind and undutiful to him, and despised his cause, though he never despised theirs (Job 19:15,16); but he had this comfort that in his prosperity he had behaved well towards them. Note, When relations are either removed from us or embittered to us the testimony of our consciences that we have done our duty to them will be a great support and comfort to us.

2. What were the considerations that moved him to treat his servants thus kindly. He had, herein, an eye to God, both as his Judge and their Maker.

(1.) As his Judge. He considered, "If I should be imperious and severe with my servants, what then shall I do when God riseth up?" He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable, who will rise up and will visit; and we are concerned to consider what we shall do in the day of his visitation (Isa 10:3), and, considering that we should be undone if God should then be strict and severe with us, we ought to be very mild and gentle towards all with whom we have to do. Consider what would become of us if God should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, should take all advantages against us and insist upon all his just demands from us--if he should visit every offence, and take every forfeiture--if he should always chide, and keep his anger for ever. And let not us be rigorous with our inferiors. Consider what will become of us if we be cruel and unmerciful to our brethren. The cries of the injured will be heard; the sins of the injurious will be punished. Those that showed no mercy shall find none; and what shall we do then?

(2.) As his and his servants' Creator, Job 31:15. When he was tempted to be harsh with his servants, to deny them their right and turn a deaf ear to their reasonings, this thought came very seasonably into his mind, "Did not he that made me in the womb make him? I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. He partakes of the same nature that I do and is the work of the same hand: Have we not all one Father?"

Note, Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, he that made the one made the other also, which is a good reason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are in any way our inferiors, but, in every thing, do as we would be done by. It is a rule of justice, Parium par sit ratio--Let equals be equally estimated and treated; and therefore since there is so great a parity among men, they being all made of the same mould, by the same power, for the same end, notwithstanding the disparity of our outward condition, we are bound so far to set ourselves upon the level with those

we deal with as to do to them, in all respects, as we would they should do to us.

9 If mine heart have been deceived by a woman,
or *if* I have laid wait at my neighbor's door;
10 *then* let my wife grind unto another,
and let others bow down upon her.
11 For this *is* a heinous crime;
yea, it *is* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judges.
12 For it *is* a fire *that* consumeth to
destruction, and would root out all mine
increase.
13 If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant,
when they contended with me;
14 what then shall I do when God riseth up?
And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?
15 Did not he that made me in the womb make him?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?
16 If I have withheld the poor from *their*
desire, or have caused the eyes of the
widow to fail;

Eliphaz had particularly charged Job with unmercifulness to the poor (Job 22:6-9, &c.): Thou hast withholden bread from the hungry, stripped the naked of their clothing, and sent widows away empty. One would think he could not have been so very positive and express in his charge unless there had been some truth in it, some ground, for it; and yet it appears, by Job's protestation, that it was utterly false and groundless; he was never guilty of any such thing. See here,

I The testimony which Job's conscience gave in concerning his constant behaviour towards the poor. He enlarges most upon this head because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He solemnly protests,

1. That he had never been wanting to do good to them, as there was occasion, to the utmost of his ability. He was always compassionate to the poor, and careful of them,

especially the widows and fatherless, that were destitute of help.

(1.) He was always ready to grant their desires and answer their expectations, Job 31:16. If a poor person begged a kindness of his, he was ready to gratify him; if he could but perceive by the widow's mournful craving look that she expected an alms from him, though she had not confidence enough to ask it, he had compassion enough to give it, and never caused the eyes of the widow to fail.

(2.) He put a respect upon the poor, and did them honour; for he took the fatherless children to eat with him at his own table: they should fare as he fared, and be familiar with him, and he would show himself pleased with their company as if they had been his own, Job 31:17. As it is one of the greatest grievances of poverty that it exposes to contempt, so it is none of the least supports to the poor to be respected.

(3.) He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for them, Job 31:18. He was a father to the fatherless, took care of orphans, brought them up with him under his own eye, and gave them, not only maintenance, but education. He was a guide to the widow, who had lost the guide of her youth; he advised her in her affairs, took cognizance of them, and undertook the management of them. Those that need not our alms may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. This Job says he did from his youth, from his mother's womb. He had something of tenderness and compassion woven in his nature; he began betimes to do good, ever since he could remember; he had always some poor widow or fatherless child under his care. His parents taught him betimes to pity and relieve the poor, and brought up orphans with him.

(4.) He provided food convenient for them; they ate of the same morsels that he did (Job 31:17), did not eat after him, of the crumbs that fell from his table, but with him, of the best dish upon his table. Those that have abundance must not eat their morsels alone, as if they had none but

themselves to take care of, nor indulge their appetite with a dainty bit by themselves, but take others to share with them, as David took Mephibosheth.

(5.) He took particular care to clothe those that were without covering, which would be more expensive to him than feeding them, Job 31:19. Poor people may perish for want of clothing as well as for want of food--for want of clothing to lie in by night or to go abroad in by day. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them, and instead of giving rich and gaudy liveries to his servants, while the poor were turned off with rags that were ready to be thrown to the dunghill, he had good warm strong clothes made on purpose for them of the fleece of his sheep (Job 31:20), so that their loins, whenever they girt those garments about them, blessed him; they commended his charity, blessed God for him, and prayed God to bless him. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort that, when he had them, he came honestly by them, and used them charitably, fed the poor with their flesh and clothed them with their wool.

2. That he had never been accessory to the wronging of any that were poor. It might be said, perhaps, that he was kind here and there to a poor orphan that was a favourite, but to others he was oppressive. No, he was tender to all and injurious to none. He never so much as lifted up his hand against the fatherless (Job 31:21), never threatened or frightened them, or offered to strike them; never used his power to crush those that stood in his way or squeeze what he could out of them, though he saw his help in the gate, that is, though he had interest enough, both in the people and in the judges, both to enable him to do it and to bear him out when he had done it. Those that have it in their power to do a wrong thing and go through with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterwards reflect upon their conduct with much comfort, as Job does here.

II The imprecation with which he confirms this protestation (Job 31:22): "If I have been oppressive to the poor, let my arm fall from my shoulder-blade and my arm be broken from the bone," that is, "let the flesh rot off from the bone and one bone be disjointed and broken off from another." Had he not been perfectly clear in this matter, he durst not thus have challenged the divine vengeance. And he intimates that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless, as he withered Jeroboam's arm that was stretched out against a prophet.

III. The principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor; for though, with his help in the gate, he could overpower them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who is the patron of oppressed poverty and will not let oppressors go unpunished (Job 31:23): "Destruction from God was a terror to me, whenever I was tempted to this sin, and by reason of his highness I could not endure the thought of making him my enemy." He stood in awe,

1. Of the majesty of God, as a God above him. He thought of his highness, the infinite distance between him and God, which possessed him with such a reverence of him as made him very circumspect in his whole conversation. Those who oppress the poor, and pervert judgment and justice, forget that he who is higher than the highest regards, and there is a higher than they, who is able to deal with them (Ec 5:8); but Job considered this.

2. Of the wrath of God, as a God that would certainly be against him if he should wrong the poor. Destruction from God, because it would be a certain and an utter ruin to him if he were guilty of this sin, was a constant terror to him, to restrain him from it. Note, Good men, even the best, have need to restrain themselves from sin with the fear of destruction from God, and all little enough. This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression that God himself is the avenger thereof. Even

when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening.

17 or have eaten my morsel myself alone,
and the fatherless hath not eaten
thereof;
18 (for from my youth he was brought up with me, as *with* a father,
and I have guided her from my mother's womb;)
19 if I have seen any perish for want of
clothing, or any poor without covering;
20 if his loins have not blessed me,
and *if* he were *not* warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
21 if I have lifted up my hand against the
fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate:
22 *then* let mine arm fall from my shoulder
blade, and mine arm be broken from the
bone.
23 For destruction *from* God *was* a terror to me,
and by reason of his highness I could not endure.
24 If I have made gold my hope,
or have said to the fine gold, *Thou art* my confidence;

Four articles more of Job's protestation we have in these verses, which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach us what we should be and do:--

I. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portions and happiness. He had gold; he had fine gold. His wealth was great, and he had gotten much. Our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us according as we stand affected to it. If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant, and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job here tells us how he stood affected to his worldly wealth.

1. He put no great confidence in it: he did not make gold his hope, Job 31:24. Those are very unwise that do, and enemies to themselves, who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy, who think themselves safe and honourable, and sure of comfort, in having abundance of this world's goods. Some make

it their hope and confidence for another world, as if it were a certain token of God's favour; and those who have so much sense as not to think so yet promise themselves that it will be a portion for them in this life, whereas the things themselves are uncertain and our satisfaction in them is much more so. It is hard to have riches and not to trust in riches; and it is this which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, Mt 19:23,Mk 10:23.

2. He took no great complacency in it (Job 31:25): If I rejoiced because my wealth was great and boasted that my hand had gotten much. He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added any thing to his real excellency, nor did he think that his might and the power of his hand obtained it for him, De 8:17. He took no pleasure in it in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul. His joy did not terminate in the gift, but passed through it to the giver. When he was in the midst of his abundance he never said, Soul, take thy ease in these things, eat, drink, and be merry, nor blessed himself in his riches. He did not inordinately rejoice in his wealth, which helped him to bear the loss of it so patiently as he did. The way to weep as though we wept not is to rejoice as though we rejoiced not. The less pleasure the enjoyment is the less pain the disappointment will be.

II. He protests that he never gave the worship and glory to the creature which are due to God only; he was never guilty of idolatry, Job 31:26-28. We do not find that Job's friends charged him with this. But there were those, it seems, at that time, who were so sottish as to worship the sun and moon, else Job would not have mentioned it. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden, and the most ancient idolatry was the worshipping of the sun and moon, to which the temptation was most strong, as appears De 4:19, where Moses speaks of the danger which the people were in of being driven to worship them. But as yet it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as afterwards the most abominable idolatries did. Observe,

1. How far Job kept from this sin. He not only never bowed the knee to Baal (which, some think, was designed to represent the

sun), never fell down and worshipped the sun, but he kept his eye, his heart, and his lips, clean from this sin.

(1.) He never so much as beheld the sun or the moon in their pomp and lustre with any other admiration of them than what led him to give all the glory of their brightness and usefulness to their Creator. Against spiritual as well as corporal adultery he made a covenant with his eyes; and this was his covenant, that, whenever he looked at the lights of heaven, he should by faith look through them, and beyond them, to the Father of lights.

(2.) He kept his heart with all diligence, that that should not be secretly enticed to think that there is a divine glory in their brightness, or a divine power in their influence, and that therefore divine honours are to be paid to them. Here is the source of idolatry; it begins in the heart. Every man is tempted to that, as to other sins, when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.

(3.) He did not so much as put a compliment upon these pretended deities, did not perform the least and lowest act of adoration: His mouth did not kiss his hand, which, it is likely, was a ceremony then commonly used even by some that yet would not be thought idolaters. It is an old-fashioned piece of civil respect among ourselves, in making a bow, to kiss the hand, a form which, it seems, was anciently used in giving divine honours to the sun and moon. They could not reach to kiss them, as the men that sacrificed kissed the calves (Ho 13:2,1Ki 19:18); but, to show their good will, they kissed their hand, reverencing those as their masters which God has made servants to this lower world, to hold the candle for us. Job never did it.

2. How ill Job thought of this sin, Job 31:28.

(1.) He looked upon it as an affront to the civil magistrate: It were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, as a public nuisance, and hurtful to kings and provinces. Idolatry debauches men's minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to give men up to a reprobate sense, and to send judgments upon

a nation; and therefore the conservators of the public peace are concerned to restrain it by punishing it.

(2.) He looked upon it as a much greater affront to the God of heaven, and no less than high treason against his crown and dignity: For I should have denied the God that is above, denied his being as God and his sovereignty as God above. Idolatry is, in effect, atheism; hence the Gentiles are said to be without God (atheists) in the world. Note, We should be afraid of every thing that does but tacitly deny the God above, his providence, or any of his perfections.

III. He protests that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, it seems, was Old-Testament duty, though the Pharisees made the law concerning it of no effect, by teaching, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy, Mt 5:43. Observe here,

1. Job was far from revenge. He did not only not return the injuries that were done him, not only not destroy those who hated him; but,

(1.) He did not so much as rejoice when any mischief befel them, Job 31:29. Many who would not wilfully hurt those who stand in their light, or have done them a diskindness, yet are secretly pleased and laugh in their sleeve (as we say) when hurt is done them. But Job was not of that spirit. Though Job was a very good man, yet, it seems, there were those that hated him; but evil found them. He saw their destruction, and was far from rejoicing in it; for that would justly have brought the destruction upon him, as it is intimated, Pr 24:17,18.

(2.) He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befel them, Job 31:30. He never wished a curse to his soul (curses to the soul are the worst of curses), never desired his death; he knew that, if he did, it would turn into sin to him. He was careful not to offend with his tongue (Ps 39:1), would not suffer his mouth to sin, and therefore durst not imprecate any evil, no, not to his worst enemy. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them.

2. He was violently urged to revenge, and yet he kept himself thus clear from it (Job 31:31): The men of his tabernacle, his domestics, his servants, and those about him, were so enraged at Job's enemy who hated him, that they could have eaten him, if Job would but have set them on or given them leave. "O that we had of his flesh! Our master is satisfied to forgive him, but we cannot be so satisfied." See how much beloved Job was by his family, how heartily they espoused his cause, and what enemies they were to his enemies; but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not avenge himself, though he had those about him that blew the coals of his resentment. Note,

(1.) A good man commonly does not himself lay to heart the affronts that are done him so much as his friends do for him.

(2.) Great men have commonly those about them that stir them up to revenge. David had so, 1Sa 24:4,26:8,2Sa 16:9. But if they keep their temper, notwithstanding the spiteful insinuations of those about them, afterwards it shall be no grief of heart to them, but shall turn very much to their praise.

IV. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers (Job 31:32): The stranger lodged not in the street, as angels might lately have done in the streets of Sodom if Lot alone had not entertained them. Perhaps by that instance Job was taught (as we are, Heb 13:2) not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. He that is at home must consider those that are from home, and put his soul into their soul's stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a Christian duty, 1Pe 4:9. Job, in his prosperity, was noted for good house-keeping: He opened his door to the road (so it may be read); he kept the street-door open, that he might see who passed by and invite them in, as Abraham, Ge 18:1.

25 if I rejoiced because my wealth *was* great,
and because mine hand had gotten
much;
26 if I beheld the sun when it
shined, or the moon walking *in*
brightness;

27 and my heart hath been secretly
enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my
hand:
28 this also *were* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judge:
for I should have denied the God *that is* above.
29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
or lifted up myself when evil found him;
30 (neither have I suffered my mouth to sin
by wishing a curse to his soul.)
31 If the men of my tabernacle said not,
Oh that we had of his flesh! We cannot be satisfied.
32 The stranger did not lodge in the street:
but I opened my doors to the traveler.

We have here Job's protestation against three more sins, together with his general appeal to God's bar and his petition for a hearing there, which, it is likely, was intended to conclude his discourse (and therefore we will consider it last), but that another particular sin occurred, from which he thought it requisite to acquit himself. He clears himself from the charge,

I. Of dissimulation and hypocrisy. The general crime of which his friends accused him was that, under the cloak of a profession of religion, he had kept up secret haunts of sin, and that really he was as bad as other people, but had the art of concealing it. Zophar insinuated (Job 20:12) that he hid his iniquity under his tongue. "No," says Job, "I never did (Job 31:33), I never covered my transgression as Adam, never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor made fig-leaves the shelter of my shame, nor ever hid my iniquity in my bosom, as a fondling, a darling, that I could by no means part with, or as stolen goods which I dreaded the discovery of." It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it from our first parents. We are loth to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them and make the best of ourselves, to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit reflection upon God himself. But he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, Pr 28:13. Job, in this protestation, intimates two things, which were certain evidences of his integrity:--

1. That he was not guilty of any great transgression or iniquity, inconsistent with sincerity, which he had now industriously

concealed. In this protestation he had dealt fairly, and, while he denies some sins, was not conscious to himself that he allowed himself in any.

2. That what transgression and iniquity he had been guilty of (Who is there that lives and sins not?) he had always been ready to own it, and, as soon as ever he perceived he had said or done amiss, he was ready to unsay it and undo it, as far as he could, by repentance, confessing it both to God and man, and forsaking it: this is doing honestly.

II. From the charge of cowardice and base fear. His courage in that which is good he produces as an evidence of his sincerity in it (Job 31:34): Did I fear a great multitude, that I kept silence? No, all that knew Job knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause, that boldly appeared, spoke, and acted, in defence of religion and justice, and did not fear the face of man nor was ever threatened or brow-beaten out of his duty, but set his face as a flint. Observe,

1. What great conscience Job had made of his duty as a magistrate, or a man of reputation, in the place where he lived. He did not, he durst not, keep silence when he had a call to speak in an honest cause, or keep within doors when he had a call to go abroad to do good. The case may be such that it may be our sin to be silent and retired, as when we are called to reprove sin and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do justice to those who are injured or oppressed, or in any way to serve the public or to do honour to our religion.

2. What little account Job made of the discouragements he met with in the way of his duty. He valued not the clamours of the mob, feared not a great multitude, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty: The contempt of families never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scorns or insults, or the injurious from doing justice to the injured; no, he scorned to be swayed and biassed by any such considerations, nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand. He feared the great God, not the multitude, and his curse, not the contempt of families.

III. From the charge of oppression and violence, and doing wrong to his poor neighbours. And here observe,

1. What his protestation is--that the estate he had he both got and used honestly, so that his land could not cry out against him nor the furrows thereof complain (Job 31:38), as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion, Hab 2:9-11. The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man; but that which is unjustly gained and held cries out against a man, and accuses him, condemns him, and demands justice against him for the injury. Rather than his oppression shall go unpunished the very ground and the furrows of it shall witness against him, and be his prosecutors. Two things he could say safely concerning his estate:--

(1.) That he never ate the fruits of it without money, Job 31:39. What he purchased he paid for, as Abraham for the land he bought (Ge 23:16), and David, 2Sa 24:24. The labourers that he employed had their wages duly paid them, and, if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out, he paid his tenants for them, or allowed it in their rent.

(2.) That he never caused the owners thereof to lose their life, never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, by killing the heir and seizing the inheritance, never starved those that held lands of him nor killed them with hard bargains and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant, he had, could complain of him.

2. How he confirms his protestation. He does it, as often before, with a suitable imprecation (Job 31:40): "If I have got my estate unjustly, let thistles grow instead of wheat, the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains." When men get estates unjustly they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them. They sow their land, but they sow not that body that shall be. God will give it a body. It was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by will never do them any good. Job, towards the close of his protestation, appeals to the judgment-seat of God concerning the truth of it (Job 31:35-37): O that he would hear me, even that the Almighty would answer me! This was what he

desired and often complained that he could not obtain; and, now that he had drawn up his own defence so particularly, he leaves it upon record, in expectation of a hearing, files it, as it were, till his cause be called.

(1.) A trial is moved for, and the motion earnestly pressed: "O that one, any one, would hear me; my cause is so good, and my evidence so clear, that I am willing to refer it to any indifferent person whatsoever; but my desire is that the Almighty himself would determine it." An upright heart does not dread a scrutiny. He that means honestly wishes he had a window in his breast, that all men might see the intents of his heart. But an upright heart does particularly desire to be determined in every thing by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to the truth. It was holy David's prayer, Search me, O God! and know my heart; and it was blessed Paul's comfort, He that judgeth me is the Lord.

(2.) The prosecutor is called, the plaintiff summoned, and ordered to bring in his information, to say what he has to say against the prisoner, for he stands upon his deliverance: "O that my adversary had written a book--that my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better join issue upon it." Job would be very glad to see the libel, to have a copy of his indictment. He would not hide it under his arm, but take it upon his shoulder, to be seen and read of all men, nay, he would bind it as a crown to him, would be pleased with it, and look upon it as his ornament; for,

[1.] If it discovered to him any sin he had been guilty of, which he did not yet see, he should be glad to know it, that he might repent of it and get it pardoned. A good man is willing to know the worst of himself and will be thankful to those that will faithfully tell him of his faults.

[2.] If it charged him with what was false, he doubted not but to disprove the allegations, that his innocency would be cleared up as the light, and he should come off with so much the more honour. But,

[3.] He believed that, when his adversaries came to consider the matter so closely as they must do if they put the charge in writing, the accusations would be trivial and minute, and every one that saw them would say, "If this was all they had to say against him, it was a shame they gave him so much trouble."

(3.) The defendant is ready to make his appearance and to give his accusers all the fair play they can desire. He will declare unto them the number of his steps, Job 31:37. He will let them into the history of his own life, will show them all the stages and scenes of it. He will give them a narrative of his conversation, what would make against him as well as what would make for him, and let them make what use they pleased of it; and so confident he is of his integrity that as a prince to be crowned, rather than a prisoner to be tried, he would go near to him, both to his accuser to hear his charge and to his judge to hear his doom. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing.
Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi-- Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence, Still to preserve thy conscience innocence.

Those that have kept their hands without spot from the world, as Job did, may lift up their faces without spot unto God, and may comfort themselves with the prospect of his judgment when they lie under the unjust censures of men. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.

Thus the words of Job are ended; that is, he has now said all he would say in answer to his friends: he afterwards said something in a way of self-reproach and condemnation (Job 40:4,5,42:2-6, &c.), but here ends what he had to say in a way of self-defence and vindication. If this suffice not he will say no more; he knows when he has said enough and will submit to the judgment of the bench. Some think the manner of expression intimates that he concluded with an air of assurance and triumph. He now keeps the field and doubts not but to win the field. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies.

33 If I covered my transgressions as Adam,
by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom:
34 did I fear a great multitude,

or did the contempt of families terrify me,
that I kept silence, *and* went not out of the door?
35 Oh that one would hear me!
Behold, my desire *is, that* the Almighty would answer me,
and *that* mine adversary had written a book.
36 Surely I would take it upon my shoulder,
and bind it *as* a crown to me.
37 I would declare unto him the number of my steps;
as a prince would I go near unto him.
38 If my land cry against me,
or that the furrows likewise thereof complain;
39 if I have eaten the fruits thereof without money,
or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life:
40 let thistles grow instead of wheat,
and cockle instead of barley.
The words of Job are ended.

Job-32

Elihu Justifies His Right to Answer Job

1 So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he *was* righteous
in his own eyes.

Usually young men are the disputants and old men the moderators; but here, when old men were the disputants, as a rebuke to them for their unbecoming heat, a young man is raised up to be the moderator. Divers of Job's friends were present, that came to visit him and to receive instruction. Now here we have,

I The reason why his three friends were now silent. They ceased to answer him, and let him have his saying, because he was righteous in his own eyes. This was the reason they gave why they said no more, because it was to no purpose to argue with a man that was so opinionative, Job 32:1. Those that are self-conceited are indeed hard to be wrought upon; there is more hope of a fool (a fool of God's making) than of those who are fools of their own making, Pr 26:12.

But they did not judge fairly concerning Job: he was really righteous before God, and not righteous in his own eyes only; so that it was only to save their own credit that they made this the reason of their silence, as peevish disputants commonly do when they find themselves run a-ground and are not willing to own themselves unable to make their part good.

II The reasons why Elihu, the fourth, now spoke. His name Elihu signifies My God is he. They had all tried in vain to convince Job, but my God is he that can and will do it, and did it at last: he only can open the understanding. He is said to be a Buzite, from Buz, Nahor's second son (Ge 22:21), and of the kindred of Ram, that is, Aram (so some), whence the Syrians or Aramites descended and were denominated, Ge 22:21. Of the kindred of Abram; so the Chaldee-paraphrase, supposing him to be first called Ram--high, then Abram--a high father, and lastly Abraham--the high father of a multitude. Elihu was not so well known as the rest, and therefore is more particularly described thus.

1. Elihu spoke because he was angry and thought he had good cause to be so. When he had made his observations upon the dispute he did not go away and calumniate the disputants, striking them secretly with a malicious censorious tongue, but what he had to say he would say before their faces, that they might vindicate themselves if they could.

(1.) He was angry at Job, because he thought he did not speak so reverently of God as he ought to have done; and that was too true (Job 32:2): He justified himself more than God, that is, took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in afflicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honour than for God's; whereas he should, in the first place, have justified God and cleared his glory, and then he might well enough have left his own reputation to shift for itself. Note, A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of God, and cannot but be angry when that is neglected or

postponed, or when any injury is done it. Nor is it any breach of the law of meekness to be angry at our friends when they are offensive to God. Get thee behind me, Satan, says Christ to Simon. Elihu owned Job to be a good man, and yet would not say as he said when he thought he said amiss: it is too great a compliment to our friends not to tell them of their faults.

(2.) He was angry at his friends because he thought they had not conducted themselves so charitably towards Job as they ought to have done (Job 32:3): They had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. They had adjudged him to be a hypocrite, a wicked man, and would not recede from that sentence concerning him; and yet they could not prove him so, nor disprove the evidences he produced of his integrity. They could not make good the premises, and yet held fast the conclusion. They had no reply to make to his arguments, and yet they would not yield, but, right or wrong, would run him down; and this was not fair. Seldom is a quarrel begun, and more seldom is a quarrel carried on to the length that this was, in which there is not a fault on both sides. Elihu, as became a moderator, took part with neither, but was equally displeased with the mistakes and mismanagement of both. Those that in good earnest seek for truth must thus be impartial in their judgments concerning the contenders, and not reject what is true and good on either side for the sake of what is amiss, nor approve or defend what is amiss for the sake of what is true and good, but must learn to separate between the precious and the vile.

2. Elihu spoke because he thought that it was time to speak, and that now, at length, it had come to his turn, Job 32:4,5.

(1.) He had waited on Job's speeches, had patiently heard him out, until the words of Job were ended.

(2.) He had waited on his friends' silence, so that, as he would not interrupt him, so he would not prevent them, not because they were wiser than he, but because they were older than he, and therefore it was expected by the

company that they should speak first; and Elihu was very modest, and would by no means offer to abridge them of their privilege. Some certain rules of precedency must be observed, for the keeping of order. Though inward real honour will attend true wisdom and worth, yet, since every man will think himself or his friend the wisest and worthiest, this can afford no certain rule for the outward ceremonial honour, which therefore must attend seniority either of age or office; and this respect the seniors may the better require because they paid it when they were juniors, and the juniors may the better pay because they shall have it when they come to be seniors.

2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the
Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath
kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.
3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because
they had found no answer, and *yet* had condemned Job.
4 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they *were*
elder than he.
5 When Elihu saw that *there was* no answer in the mouth of *these*
three men, then his wrath was kindled.
6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said,
I *am* young,
and ye *are* very old;
wherefore I was afraid,
and durst not show you mine opinion.

Elihu here appears to have been,

A man of great modesty and humility. Though a young man, and a man of abilities, yet not pert, and confident, and assuming: his face shone, and, like Moses, he did not know it, which made it shine so much the brighter. Let it be observed by all, especially by young people, as worthy their imitation,

1. What a diffidence he had of himself and of his own judgment (Job 32:6): "I am young, and therefore I was afraid, and durst not show you my opinion, for fear I should either prove mistaken or do that which was unbecoming

me." He was so observant of all that passed, and applied his mind so closely to what he heard, that he had formed in himself a judgment of it. He neither neglected it as foreign, nor declined it as intricate; but, how clear soever the matter was to himself, he was afraid to deliver his mind upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were older than he.

Note, It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgment in matters of doubtful disputation, to be swift to hear the sentiments of others and slow to speak our own, especially when we go contrary to the judgment of those for whom, upon the score of their learning and piety, we justly have a veneration.

2. What a deference he paid to his seniors, and what great expectations he had from them, (Job 32:7): I said, Days should speak.

Note, Age and experience give a man great advantage in judging of things, both as they furnish a man with so much the more matter for his thoughts to work upon and as they ripen and improve the facilities he is to work with, which is a good reason why old people should take pains both to learn themselves and to teach others (else the advantages of their age are a reproach to them), and why young people should attend on their instructions. It is a good lodging with an old disciple, Ac 21:16,Tit 2:4. Elihu's modesty appeared in the patient attention he gave to what his seniors said, Job 32:11,12. He waited for their words as one that expected much from them, agreeably to the opinion he had of these grave men. He gave ear to their reasons, that he might take their meaning, and fully understand what was the drift of their discourse and what the force of their arguments. He attended to them with diligence and care, and this,

(1.) Though they were slow, and took up a great deal of time in searching out what to say. Though they had often to seek for matter and words, paused and hesitated, and were unready at their work, yet he overlooked that, and gave ear to their reasons, which, if really convincing, he

would not think the less so for the disadvantages of the delivery of them.

(2.) Though they trifled and made nothing of it, though none of them answered Job's words nor said what was proper to convince him, yet he attended to them, in hopes they would bring it to some head at last. We must often be willing to hear what we do not like, else we cannot prove all things. His patient attendance on their discourses he pleads,

[1.] As that which entitled him to a liberty of speech in his turn and empowered him to require their attention. Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim--This liberty we mutually allow and ask. Those that have heard may speak, and those that have learned may teach.

[2.] As that which enabled him to pass a judgment upon what they had said. He had observed what they aimed at, and therefore knew what to say to it. Let us be thoroughly apprized of the sentiments of our brethren before we censure them; for he that answers a matter before he hears it, or when he has heard it only by halves, it is folly and shame to him, and bespeaks him both impertinent and imperious.

7 I said, Days should speak,
and multitude of years should teach wisdom.
8 But *there is* a spirit in man:
and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.
9 Great men are not *always* wise:
neither do the aged understand judgment.
10 Therefore I said, Hearken to
me; I also will show mine
opinion.

A man of great sense and courage, and one that knew as well when and how to speak as when and how to keep silence. Though he had so much respect to his friends as not to interrupt them with his speaking, yet he had so much regard to truth and justice (his better friends) as not to betray them by his silence. He boldly pleads,

1. That man is a rational creature, and therefore that every man has for himself a judgment of discretion and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech in his turn. He means the same that Job did (Job 12:2, But I have understanding as well as you) when he says (Job 32:8), But there is a spirit in man; only he expresses it a little more modestly, that one man has understanding as well as another, and no man can pretend to have the monopoly of reason or to engross all the trade of it. Had he meant I have revelation as well as you (as some understand it), he must have proved it; but, if he meant only I have reason as well as you, they cannot deny it, for it is every man's honour, and it is no presumption to claim it, nor could they gainsay his inference from it (Job 32:10): Therefore hearken to me. Learn here,

(1.) That the soul is a spirit, neither material itself nor dependent upon matter, but capable of conversing with things spiritual, which are not the objects of sense.

(2.) It is an understanding spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to discourse and reason upon it, and to direct and rule accordingly. (3.) This understanding spirit is in every man; it is the light that lighteth every man, Joh 1:9.

(4.) It is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us this understanding spirit; for he is the Father of spirits and fountain of understanding. See Ge 2:7,Ec 12:7,Zec 12:1.

2. That those who are advanced above others in grandeur and gravity do not always proportionably go beyond them in knowledge and wisdom (Job 32:9): Great men are not always wise; it is a pity but they were, for then they would never do hurt with their greatness and would do so much the more good with their wisdom. Men should be preferred for their wisdom, and those that are in honour and power have most need of wisdom and have the greatest opportunity of improving in it; and yet it does not follow that great men are always wise, and therefore it is folly to subscribe to the dictates of any with an implicit faith.

The aged do not always understand judgment; even they may be mistaken, and therefore must not expect to bring every thought into obedience to them: nay, therefore they must not take it as an affront to be contradicted, but rather take it as a kindness to be instructed, by their juniors: Therefore I said, hearken to me, Job 32:10. We must be willing to hear reason from those that are every way inferior to us, and to yield to it. He that has a good eye can see further upon level ground than he that is purblind can from the top of the highest mountain. Better is a poor and wise child then an old and foolish king, Ec 4:13.

3. That it was requisite for something to be said, for the setting of this controversy in a true light, which, by all that had hitherto been said, was but rendered more intricate and perplexed (Job 32:13): "I must speak, lest you should say, We have found out wisdom, lest you should think your argument against Job conclusive and irrefragable, and that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument than this of yours, That God casteth him down and not man, that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions that God is his enemy, and therefore he is certainly a wicked man. I must show you that this is a false hypothesis and that Job may be convinced without maintaining it." Or, "Lest you should think you have found out the wisest way, to reason no more with him, but leave it to God to thrust him down." It is time to speak when we hear errors advanced and disputed for, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God with them. It is time to speak when God's judgments are vouched for the patronizing of men's pride and passion and their unjust uncharitable censures of their brethren; then we must speak on God's behalf.

4. That he had something new to offer, and would endeavour to manage the dispute in a better manner than it had hitherto been managed, Job 32:14. He thinks he may expect a favourable hearing; for,

(1.) He will not reply to Job's protestations of his integrity, but allows the truth of them, and therefore does not interpose as his enemy: "He hath not directed his words against me. I have nothing to say against the main scope of his discourse, nor do I

differ from his principles. I have only a gentle reproof to give him for his passionate expressions."

(2.) He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles: "Neither will I answer him with your speeches--not with the same matter, for should I only say what has been said I might justly be silenced as impertinent,--nor in the same manner; I will not be guilty of that peevishness towards him myself which I dislike in you." The controversy that has already been fully handled a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done; why should he actum agere--do that which has been done already?

11 Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons,
whilst ye searched out what to say.
12 Yea, I attended unto you,
and, behold, *there was* none of you that convinced Job,
or that answered his words:
13 lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom:
God thrusteth him down, not man.
14 Now he hath not directed *his* words against me:
neither will I answer him with your speeches.
15 They were amazed, they answered no more:
they left off speaking.

Three things here apologize for Elihu's interposing as he does in this controversy which had already been canvassed by such acute and learned disputants:--

1. That the stage was clear, and he did not break in upon any of the managers on either side: They were amazed (Job 32:15); they stood still, and answered no more, Job 32:16. They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any of the company would speak their minds, so that (as we say) he had room and fair play given him. They seemed not fully satisfied themselves with what they had said, else they would have adjourned the court, and not have stood still, expecting what might further be offered. And therefore I said (Job 32:17), "I will answer also my part. I cannot pretend to give a definitive sentence; no, the judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right and who is in the wrong; but, since

you have each of you shown your opinion, I also will show mine, and let it take its fate with the rest." When what is offered, even by the meanest, is offered thus modestly, it is a pity but it should be fairly heard and considered.

I see no inconvenience in supposing that Elihu here discovers himself to be the penman of this book, and that he here writes as an historian, relating the matter of fact, that, after he had bespoken their attention in the foregoing verses, they were amazed, they left off whispering among themselves, did not gainsay the liberty of speech he desired, but stood still to hear what he would say, being much surprised at the admirable mixture of boldness and modesty that appeared in his preface.

2. That he was uneasy, and even in pain, to be delivered of his thoughts upon this matter. They must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forbear; while he is musing the fire burns (Ps 39:3), shut up in his bones, as the prophet speaks, Jer 20:9. Never did nurse, when her breasts were gorged, so long to have them drawn as Elihu did to deliver his mind concerning Job's case, Job 32:18-20. If any of the disputants had hit that which he thought was the right joint, he would contentedly have been silent; but, when he thought they all missed it, he was eager to be trying his hand at it. He pleads,

(1.) That he had a great deal to say: "I am full of matter, having carefully attended to all that has hitherto been said, and made my own reflections upon it." When aged men are drawn dry, and have spent their stock, in discoursing of the divine Providence, God can raise up others, even young men, and fill them with matter for the edifying of his church; for it is a subject that can never be exhausted, though those that speak upon it may.

(2.) That he was under a necessity of saying it: "The spirit within me not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it; so that if I have not vent (such a ferment are my thoughts in) I shall burst like bottles of new wine when it is working," Job 32:19. See what a great grief it is to a good minister to be silenced and thrust into a corner; he is full of matter, full of Christ, full of heaven, and would speak of these things for the good of others, but he may not.

(3.) That it would be an ease and satisfaction to himself to deliver his mind (Job 32:20): I will speak, that I may be refreshed, not only that I may be eased of the pain of stifling my thoughts, but that I may have the pleasure of endeavouring, according to my place and capacity, to do good. It is a great refreshment to a good man to have liberty to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others.

3. That he was resolved to speak, with all possible freedom and sincerity, what he thought was true, not what he thought would please (Job 32:21,22): "Let me not accept any man's person, as partial judges do, that aim to enrich themselves, not to do justice. I am resolved to flatter no man." He would not speak otherwise than he thought, either,

(1.) In compassion to Job, because he was poor and in affliction, would not make his case better than he really took it to be, for fear of increasing his grief; "but, let him bear it as he can, he shall be told the truth." Those that are in affliction must not be flattered, but dealt faithfully with. When trouble is upon any it is foolish pity to suffer sin upon them too (Le 19:17), for that is the worst addition that can be to their trouble. Thou shalt not countenance, any more than discountenance, a poor man in his cause (Ex 23:3), nor regard a sad look any more than a big look, so as, for the sake of it, to pervert justice, for that is accepting persons. Or,

(2.) In compliment to Job's friends, because they were in prosperity and reputation. Let them not expect that he should say as they said, any further than he was convinced that they say right, nor applaud their dictates for the sake of their dignities. No, though Elihu is a young man, and upon his preferment, he will not dissemble truth to court the favour of great men. It is a good resolution he has taken up--"I know not to give flattering titles to men; I never used myself to flattering language;" and it is a good reason he gives for that resolution--in so doing my Maker would soon take my away. It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God's judgments. He that made us will take us away in his wrath is we do not conduct ourselves as we should. He hates all dissimulation and flattery, and will soon put

lying lips to silence and cut off flattering lips, Ps 12:3. The more closely we eye the majesty of God as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful fearing or flattering of men.

16 When I had waited, (for they spake not,
but stood still, *and* answered no more,)
17 *I said,* I will answer also my part;
I also will show mine opinion.
18 For I am full of matter;
the spirit within me constraineth me.
19 Behold, my belly *is* as wine *which* hath no vent;
it is ready to burst like new bottles.
20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed:
I will open my lips and answer.
21 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person;
neither let me give flattering titles unto man.
22 For I know not to give flattering titles;
in so doing my Maker would soon take me away.

Job-33

Elihu Reproves Job

1 Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches,
and hearken to all my words.

Several arguments Elihu here uses to persuade Job not only to give him a patient hearing, but to believe that he designed him a good office, and to take it kindly, and be willing to receive the instructions he was now about to give him. Let Job consider,

1. That Elihu does not join with his three friends against him. He has, in the foregoing chapter, declared his dislike of their proceedings, disclaimed their hypothesis, and quite set aside the method they took of healing Job. "Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech, Job 33:1. They were all in the same song, all spoke in the same strain; but I am trying a new say, therefore hearken to all my words, and not to some of them

only;" for we cannot judge of a discourse unless we take it entire and hearken to it all.

2. That he intended to make a solemn business of it, not to put in a word by the by, or give a short repartee, to show his wit: after long silence he opened his mouth (Job 33:2), with deliberation and design. Upon mature consideration he had already begun to speak, and was prepared to go on if Job would encourage him by his attention.

3. That he was resolved to speak as he thought and not otherwise (Job 33:3): "My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart, the genuine product of my convictions and sentiments." There was reason to suspect that Job's three friends did not think, in their consciences, that Job was so bad a man as they had in their discourses, merely for the support of their hypothesis, represented him to be; and that was not fair. It is a base thing to condemn those with our tongues, to serve a turn, whom at the same time we cannot but in our consciences think well of. Elihu is an honest man, and scorns to do so.

4. That what he said should be easy, and not dark and hard to be understood: My lips shall utterly knowledge clearly. Job shall readily comprehend his meaning, and perceive what he aims at. Those that speak of the things of God should carefully avoid all obscurity and perplexedness both of notion and expression, and speak as plainly and clearly as they can; for by that it will appear that they do themselves understand what they speak of, that they mean honestly, and design the edification of those they speak to.

5. That he would, in his discourse, make the best use he could of the reason and understanding God had given him, that life, that rational soul which he received from the Spirit of God and the breath of the Almighty, Job 33:4. He owns himself unfit to enter into the lists with his seniors, yet he desires they will not despise his youth, for that he is God's workmanship as well as they, made by the same hand, endued with the same noble powers and faculties, and designed for the same great end; and therefore why may not the God that made him make use of his

as an instrument of good to Job? With this consideration also we should quicken ourselves (and perhaps Elihu made that use of it) to do good in our places according to our capacity. God has made us, and given us life, and therefore we should study to use our life to some good purpose, to spend it in glorifying God and serving our generation according to his will, that we may answer the end of our creation and it may not be said that we were made in vain.

6. That he would be very willing to hear what Job could object against what he had to say (Job 33:5): "If thou canst, answer me. If thou hast so much strength and spirit left thee, and art not quite spent with the distemper and the dispute, set thy words in order, and they shall have their due consideration." Those that can speak reason will hear reason.

7. That he had often wished for one that would appear for God, with whom he might freely expostulate, and to whom, as arbitrator, he might refer the matter, and such a one Elihu would be (Job 33:6): I am, according to thy wish, in God's stead. How pathetically had Job wished (Job 16:21), O that one might plead for a man with God! and (Job 22:3), O that I knew where I might find him! Only he would make it his bargain that his dread should not make him afraid, Job 13:21. "Now," says Elihu, "look upon me, for this once, as in God's stead. I will undertake to plead his cause with thee and to show thee wherein thou hast affronted him and what he has against thee; and what appeals or complaints thou hast to make to God make them to me."

8. That he was not an unequal match for him: "I also am formed out of the clay. I also, as well as the first man (Ge 2:7), I also as well as thou." Job had urged this with God as a reason why he should not bear hard upon him (Job 10:9), Remember that thou hast made me as the clay. "I," says Elihu, "am formed out of the clay as well as thou," formed of the same clay, so some read it. It is good for us all to consider that we are formed out of the clay; and well for us it is that those who are to us in God's stead are so, that he speaks to us by men like ourselves, according to Israel's wish upon a full trial, De 5:24. God has

wisely deposited the treasure in earthen vessels like ourselves, 2Co 4:7.

9. That he would have no reason to be frightened at the assault he made upon him (Job 33:7): "My terror shall not make thee afraid,"

(1.) "As thy friends have done with their arguings. I will not reproach thee as they have done, nor draw up such a heavy charge against thee, Nor,"

(2.) "As God would do if he should appear to reason with thee. I stand upon the same level with thee, and am made of the same mould, and therefore cannot impose that terror upon thee which thou mayest justly dread from the appearance of the divine Majesty." If we would rightly convince men, it must be by reason, not by terror, by fair arguing, not by a heavy hand.

2 Behold, now I have opened my mouth,
my tongue hath spoken in my mouth.
3 My words *shall be of* the uprightness of my heart:
and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.
4 The Spirit of God hath made me,
and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.
5 If thou canst answer me,
set *thy words* in order before me, stand up.
6 Behold, I *am* according to thy wish in God's stead:
I also am formed out of the clay.
7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid,
neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.
8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing,
and I have heard the voice of *thy* words, *saying*,

In these verses,

I. Elihu particularly charges Job with some indecent expressions that had dropped from him, reflecting upon the justice and goodness of God in his dealings with him. He does not ground the charge upon report, but was himself an ear-witness of what he here reproves him for

(Job 33:8): "Thou hast spoken it in my hearing, and in the hearing of all this company." He had it not at second hand; if so, he would have hoped it was not so bad as it was represented. He did not hear it from Job in private conversation, for then he would not have been so ill-bred as to repeat it thus publicly; but Job had said it openly, and therefore it was fit he should be openly reproved for it. Those that sin before all rebuke before all. When we hear any thing said that tends to God's dishonour we ought publicly to bear our testimony against it. What is said amiss in our hearing we are concerned to reprove; for you are my witnesses, saith the Lord, to confront the accuser.

1. Job had represented himself as innocent (Job 33:9): Thou hast said, I am clean without transgression. Job had not said this totidem verbis--in so many words; nay, he had owned himself to have sinned and to be impure before God; but he had indeed said, Thou knowest that I am not wicked, my righteousness I hold fast, and the like, on which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true that Job was a perfect and an upright man and not such a one as his friends had represented him; but he ought not to have insisted so much upon it, as if God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him. Yet, it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in charging Job with saying that he was clean and innocent from all transgression, when he only pleaded that he was upright and innocent from the great transgression. But those that speak passionately and unwarily must thank themselves if they be misunderstood; they should have taken more care.

2. He had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss and taking all advantages against him (Job 33:10,11), as if he sought opportunity to pick quarrels with him. He findeth occasions against me, which supposes seeking them. To this purport Job had spoken, Job 14:16,17, Dost thou not watch over my sin? He counteth me for his enemy; so he had expressly said, Job 13:24,19:11. "He putteth my feet in the stocks, that, as I

cannot contend with him, so I may not be able to flee from him;" this he had said, Job 13:27. He marketh all my paths; so he had said, Job 13:27.

9 I am clean without transgression,
I *am* innocent; neither *is there* iniquity in me.
10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me,
he counteth me for his enemy;
11 he putteth my feet in the stocks,
he marketh all my paths.
12 Behold, *in* this thou art not just:
I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.

He endeavours to convince him that he had spoken amiss in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unsay it (Job 33:12): Behold, in this thou art not just. Here thou art not in the right, so some read it. See; the difference between the charge which Elihu exhibited against Job and that which was preferred against him by his other friends; they would not own that he was just at all, but Elihu only says, "In this, in saying this, thou art not just."

1. "Thou dost not deal justly with God." To be just is to render to all their due; now we do not render to God his due, nor are we just to him, if we do not acknowledge his equity and kindness in all his dispensations of his providence towards us, that he is righteous in all his ways, and that, however it be, yet he is good.

2. "Thou dost not speak the language of a righteous man. I do not deny but thou art such a one, but in this thou dost not make it to appear." Many that are just yet, in some particular instances, do not speak and act like themselves; and as, on the one hand, we must not fail to tell even a good man wherein he mistakes and does amiss, nor flatter him in his errors and passions, for in that we ar not kind, so on the other hand we must not draw men's characters, nor pass a judgment on them, from one instance, or some few misplaced words, for in that we are not just. In many things we all offend, and therefore must be candid in our

censures. Two things Elihu proposes to Job's consideration, to convince him that he had said amiss:--

(1.) That God is infinitely above us, and therefore it is madness to contend with him; for if he plead against us with his great power we cannot stand before him. I will answer thee, says Elihu, in one word, which carries its own evidence along with it, That God is greater than man; no doubt he is, infinitely greater. Between God and man there is no proportion. Job had himself said a great deal, and admirably well, concerning the greatness of God, his irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty, his terrible majesty and unsearchable immensity. "Now," said Elihu, "do but consider what thou thyself hast said concerning the greatness of God, and apply it to thyself; if he is greater than man, he is greater than thou, and thou wilt see reason enough to repent of these ill-natures, ill-favoured, reflections upon him, and to blush at thy folly, and tremble to think of thy own presumption."

Note, There is enough in this one plain unquestionable truth, That God is greater than man, if duly improved, for ever to put to silence and to shame all our complaints of his providence and our exceptions against his dealings with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just, and good, for these are the transcendent glories and excellencies of the divine nature; in these God is greater than man, and therefore it is absurd and unreasonable to find fault with him, for he is certainly in the right.

(2.) That God is not accountable to us (Job 33:13): Why dost thou strive against him? Those that complain of God strive against him, implead him, impeach him, bring an action against him. And why do they do so? For what cause? To what purpose? Note, It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, sinful, creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. Woe to the clay that strives with the potter; for he gives no account of any of his matters. He is under no obligation to show

us a reason for what he does, neither to tell us what he designs to do (in what method, at what time, by what instruments) nor to tell us why he deals thus with us. He is not bound either to justify his own proceedings or to satisfy our demands and enquiries; his judgments will certainly justify themselves.

If we do not satisfy ourselves in them, it is our own fault. It is therefore daring impiety for us to arraign God at our bar, or challenge him to show cause for what he doeth, to say unto him, What doest thou? or, Why doest thou so? He gives not account of all his matters (so some read it); he reveals as much as it is fit for us to know, as follows here (Job 33:14), but still there are secret things, which belong not to us, which it is not for us to pry into.

13 Why dost thou strive against him?
for he giveth not account of any of his matters.
14 For God speaketh once,
yea twice, *yet man* perceiveth it not.

Job had complained that God kept him wholly in the dark concerning the meaning of his dealings with him, and therefore concluded he dealt with him as his enemy. "No," says Elihu, "he speaks to you, but you do not perceive him; so that the fault is yours, not his; and he is designing your real good even in those dispensations which you put this harsh construction upon." Observe in general,

1. What a friend God is to our welfare: He speaketh to us once, yea, twice, Job 33:14. It is a token of his favour that, notwithstanding the distance and quarrel between us and him, yet he is pleased to speak to us. It is an evidence of his gracious design that he is pleased to speak to us of our own concerns, to show us what is our duty and what our interest, what he requires of us and what we may expect from him, to tell us of our faults and warn us of our danger, to show us the way and to lead us in it. This he does once, yea, twice, that is, again and again; when one warning is neglected he gives another, not willing that any should perish. Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line; it is so, that sinners may be left inexcusable.

2. What enemies we are to our own welfare: Man perceives it not, that is, he does not heed it or regard it, does not discern or understand it, is not aware that it is the voice of God, nor does he receive the things revealed, for they are foolishness to him; he stops his ear, stands in his own light, rejects the counsel of God against himself, and so is never the wiser, no not for the dictates of wisdom itself. God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers, of all which Elihu here discourses at large, to show Job that God was both telling him his mind and doing him a kindness, even now that he seemed to keep him in the dark and so treat him as a stranger, and to keep him in distress and so treat him as an enemy. There was not then, that we know of, any divine revelation in writing, and therefore that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaks to men, though now it is the principal way.

In Job 33:14-18 he shows how God teaches and admonishes the children of men by their own consciences. Observe,

I The proper season and opportunity for these admonitions (Job 33:15): In a dream, in slumberings upon the bed, when men are retired from the world and the business and conversation of it. It is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commune with them, when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, Ps 4:4. It is the time God takes for dealing personally with men.

1. When he sent angels, extraordinary messengers, on his errands, he commonly chose that time for the delivery of their messages, when by deep sleep falling on men the bodily senses were all locked up and the mind more free to receive the immediate communications of divine light. Thus he made his mind known to the prophets by visions and dreams (Nu 12:6); thus he warned Abimelech (Ge 20:3), Laban (Ge 31:24), Joseph (Mt 1:20); thus he made known to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar things that should come to pass hereafter.

2. When he stirred up conscience, that ordinary deputy of his, in the soul, to do its office, he took that opportunity, either when deep sleep fell on men (for, though dreams mostly come from fancy, some may come from conscience) or in slumberings, when men are between sleeping and waking, reflecting at night upon the business of the foregoing day or projecting in the morning the business of the ensuing day; then is a proper time for their hearts to reproach them for what they have done ill and to admonish them what they should do. See Isa 30:21.

II The power and force with which those admonitions come, Job 33:16. When God designs men's good by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, 1. He gives them admission, and makes them to be heeded: Then he opens the ears of men, which were before shut against the voice of this charmer, Ps 58:5. He opens the heart, as he opened Lydia's, and so opens the ears. He takes away that which stopped the ear, so that the conviction finds or forces its way; nay, he works in the soul a submission to the regimen of conscience and a compliance with its rules, for that follows upon God's opening the ear, Isa 50:5.

God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. 2. He gives them a lodgment in the heart and makes them to abide: He sealeth their instruction, that is, the instruction that is designed for them and is suited to them; this he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impression of, as the wax of the seal. When the heart is delivered into divine instructions, as into a mould, then the work is done.

III. The end and design of these admonitions that are sent.

1. To keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride (Job 33:17). That he may withdraw man from his purpose, that is, from his evil purposes, may change the temper of his mind and the course of his life, his disposition and inclination, or prevent some particular sin he is in danger

of falling into, that he may withdraw man from his work, may make him leave off man's work, which is working for the world and the flesh, and may set him to work the work of God. Many a man has been stopped in the full career of a sinful pursuit by the seasonable checks of his own conscience, saying, Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates.

Particularly, God does, by this means, hide pride from man, that is, hide those things from him which are the matter of his pride, and take his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reason he has to be humble. That he may take away pride from man (so some read it), that he may pluck up that root of bitterness which is the cause of so much sin. All those whom God has mercy in store for he will humble and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager and resolute in the prosecution of their purposes; they will have their way, therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.

2. To keep men from ruin, Job 33:18. While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes, and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to the pit, to the sword, to destruction, both in this world and that to come; but when God, by the admonitions of conscience, withdraws them from sin, he thereby keeps back their souls from the pit, from the bottomless pit, and saves them from perishing by the sword of divine vengeance, so iniquity shall not be their ruin. That which turns men from sin saves them from hell, saves a soul from death, Jam 5:20. See what a mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience. Faithful are the wounds, and kind are the bonds, of that friend, for by them the soul is kept from perishing eternally.

15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
when deep sleep falleth upon men,
in slumberings upon the bed;
16 then he openeth the ears of men,
and sealeth their instruction,

17 that he may withdraw man *from his* purpose,
and hide pride from man.
18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and
his life from perishing by the sword.
19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,
and the multitude of his bones with strong *pain:*

God has spoken once to sinners by their own consciences, to keep them from the paths of the destroyer, but they perceive it not; they are not aware that the checks their own hearts give them in a sinful way are from God, but they are imputed to melancholy or the preciseness of their education; and therefore God speaks twice; he speaks a second time, and tries another way to convince and reclaim sinners, and that is by providences, afflictive and merciful (in which he speaks twice), and by the seasonable instructions of good ministers setting in with them. Job complained much of his diseases and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too: but Elihu shows that they were all mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and with gracious designs of good to the soul, as appears in the issue. This part of Elihu's discourse will be of great use to us for the due improvement of sickness, in and by which God speaks to men. Here is,

I The patient described in his extremity. See what work sickness makes (Job 33:19-21, &c.) when God sends it with commission. Do this, and doeth it.

1 The sick man is full of pain all over him (Job 33:19): He is chastened with pain upon his bed, such pain as confines him to his bed, or so extreme the pain is that he can get no ease, no, not on his bed, where he would repose himself. Pain and sickness will turn a bed of down into a bed of thorns, on which he that used to sleep now tosses to and fro till the dawning of the day. The case, as here put, is very bad. Pain is borne with more difficulty than sickness, and with that the patient here is chastened, not a dull heavy pain, but strong and acute; and frequently the stronger the patient the stronger the pain, for the more

sanguine the complexion is the more violent, commonly, the disease is. It is not the smarting of the flesh that is complained of, but the aching of the bones. It is an inward rooted pain; and not only the bones of one limb, but the multitude of the bones, are thus chastened. See what frail, what vile bodies we have, which, though receiving no external hurt, may be thus pained from causes within themselves. See what work sin makes, what mischief it does. Pain is the fruit of sin; yet, by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul.

2. He has quite lost his appetite, the common effect of sickness (Job 33:20): His life abhorreth bread, the most necessary food, and dainty meat, which he most delighted in, and formerly relished with a great deal of pleasure. This is a good reason why we should not be desirous of dainties, because they are deceitful meat, Pr 23:3. We may be soon made as sick of them as we are now fond of them; and those who live in luxury when they are well, if ever they come, by reason of sickness, to loathe dainty meat, may, with grief and shame, read their sin in their punishment. Let us not inordinately love the taste of meat, for the time may come when we may even loathe the sight of meat, Ps 107:18.

3. He has become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, Job 33:21. By sickness, perhaps a few days' sickness, his flesh, which was fat, and fair, is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; it is strangely wasted and gone: and his bones, which were buried in flesh, now stick out; you may count his ribs, may tell all his bones. The soul that is well nourished with the bread of life sickness will not make lean, but it soon makes a change in the body.

"He who, before, had such a beauteous air, And, pampered with the ease, seemed plump and fair Doth all his friends (amazing change!) surprise With pale lean cheeks and ghastly hollow eyes; His bones (a horrid sight)

start through his skin, Which lay before, in flesh and fat, unseen."
Sir R. BLACKMORE.

4. He is given up for gone, and his life despaired of (Job 33:22): His soul draws near to the grave, that is, he has all the symptoms of death upon him, and in the apprehension of all about him, as well as in his own, he is a dying man. The pangs of death, here called the destroyers, are just ready to seize him; they compass him about, Ps 116:3. Perhaps it intimates the very dreadful apprehensions which those have of death as a destroying thing, when it stares them in the face, who, when it was at a distance, made light of it. All agree when it comes to the point, whatever they thought of it before, that it is a serious thing to die.

II The provision made for his instruction, in order to a sanctified use of his affliction, that, when God in that way speaks to man, he may be heard and understood, and not speak in vain, Job 33:23. He is happy if there be a messenger with him to attend him in his sickness, to convince, counsel, and comfort him, an interpreter to expound the providence and give him to understand the meaning of it, a man of wisdom that knows the voice of the rod and its interpretation; for, when God speaks by afflictions, we are frequently so unversed in the language, that we have need of an interpreter, and it is well if we have such a one.

The advice and help of a good minister are as needful and seasonable, and should be as acceptable, in sickness, as of a good physician, especially if he be well skilled in the art of explaining and improving providences; he is then one of a thousand, and to be valued accordingly. His business at such a time is to show unto man his uprightness, that is, God's uprightness, that in faithfulness he afflicts him and does him no wrong, which it is necessary to be convinced of in order to our making a due improvement of the affliction: or, rather, it may mean man's uprightness, or rectitude.

1 The uprightness that is. If it appear that the sick person is truly pious, the interpreter will not do as Job's friends had done, make it his business to prove him a hypocrite because he is afflicted, but on the contrary will show him his uprightness, notwithstanding his afflictions, that he may take the comfort of it, and be easy, whatever the event is.

2 The uprightness, the reformation, that should be, in order to life and peace. When men are made to see the way of uprightness to be the only way, and a sure way to salvation, and to choose it, and walk in it accordingly, the work is done.

III. God's gracious acceptance of him, upon his repentance, Job 33:24. When he sees that the sick person is indeed convinced that sincere repentance, and that uprightness which is gospel perfection, are his interest as well as his duty, then he that waits to be gracious, and shows mercy upon the first indication of true repentance, is gracious unto him, and takes him into his favour and thoughts for good. Wherever God finds a gracious heart he will be found a gracious God; and,

1. He will give a gracious order for his discharge. He says, Deliver him (that is, let him be delivered) from going down to the pit, from that death which is the wages of sin. When afflictions have done their work they shall be removed. When we return to God in a way of duty he will return to us in a way of mercy. Those shall be delivered from going down to the pit who receive God's messengers, and rightly understand his interpreters, so as to subscribe to his uprightness.

2. He will give a gracious reason for this order: I have found a ransom, or propitiation; Jesus Christ is that ransom, so Elihu calls him, as Job had called him his Redeemer, for he is both the purchaser and the price, the priest and the sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls that nothing less would redeem them, and so great

the injury done by sin that nothing less would atone for it than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of Infinite Wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves, and the angels themselves could never have found it. It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, and such an invention as is and will be the everlasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, heureka, heureka--"I have found, I have found, the ransom; I, even I, am he that has done it."

IV. The recovery of the sick man hereupon. Take away the cause and the effect will cease. When the patient becomes a penitent see what a blessed change follows. 1. His body recovers its health, Job 33:25. This is not always the consequence of a sick man's repentance and return to God, but sometimes it is; and recovery from sickness is a mercy indeed when it arises from the remission of sin; then it is in love to the soul that the body is delivered from the pit of corruption when God casts our sins behind his back, Isa 38:17. That is the method of a blessed recovery.

Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; and then, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk, Mt 9:2,6. So here, interest him in the ransom, and then his flesh shall be fresher than a child's and there shall be no remains of his distemper, but he shall return to the days of his youth, to the beauty and strength which he had then. When the distemper that oppressed nature is removed how strangely does nature help itself, in which the power and goodness of the God of nature must be thankfully acknowledged! By such merciful providences as these, which afflictions give occasion for, God speaketh once, yea, twice, to the children of men, letting them know (if they would but perceive it) their dependence upon him and his tender compassion of them.

2. His soul recovers it peace, Job 33:26.

(1.) The patient, being a penitent, is a supplicant, and has learned to pray. He knows God will be sought unto for his favours, and therefore he shall pray unto God, pray for pardon, pray for health. Is any afflicted, and sick? Let him pray. When he finds himself recovering he shall not then think that prayer is no longer necessary, for we need the grace of God as much for the sanctifying of a mercy as for the sanctifying of an affliction.

(2.) His prayers are accepted. God will be favourable to him, and be well pleased with him; his anger shall be turned away from him, and the light of God's countenance shall shine upon his soul; and then it follows,

(3.) That he has the comfort of communion with God. He shall now see the face of God, which before was hid from him, and he shall see it with joy, for what sight can be more reviving? See Ge 33:10, As though I had seen the face of God. All true penitents rejoice more in the returns of God's favour than in any instance whatsoever of prosperity or pleasure, Ps 4:6,7.

(4.) He has a blessed tranquility of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness. He shall receive the atonement, that is, the comfort of it, Ro 5:11. Righteousness shall be imputed to him, and peace thereupon spoken, the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear though he could not hear them in the day of his affliction. God will now deal with him as a righteous man, with whom it shall be well. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness, Ps 24:5. God shall give him grace to go and sin no more. Perhaps this may denote the reformation of his life after his recovery. As he shall pray unto God, whom before he had slighted, so he shall render to man his righteousness, whom before he had wronged, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

V. The general rule which God will go by in dealing with the children of men inferred from this instance, Job

33:27,28. As sick people, upon their submission, are restored, so all others that truly repent of their sins shall find mercy with God. See here,

1. What sin is, and what reason we have not to sin. Would we know the nature of sin and the malignity of it? It is the perverting of that which is right; it is a most unjust unreasonable thing; it is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, the usurped dominion of the flesh over the spirit, and a contradiction to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. It is perverting the right ways of the Lord (Ac 13:10), and therefore the ways of sin are called crooked ways, Ps 125:5. Would we know what is to be got by sin? It profiteth us not. The works of darkness are unfruitful works. When profit and loss come to be balanced all the gains of sin, put them all together, will come far short of countervailing the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this, and it is a mortifying consideration. Ro 6:21, What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?

2. See what repentance is, and what reason we have to repent. Would we approve ourselves true penitents? We must then, with a broken and contrite heart, confess our sins to God, 1Jo 1:9. We must confess the fact of sin (I have sinned) and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justification; we must confess the fault of sin, the iniquity, the dishonesty of it (have perverted that which was right); we must confess the folly of sin--"so foolish have I been and ignorant, for it profited me not; and therefore what have I to do any more with it?" Is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? For,

(1.) God expect it. He looks upon men, when they have sinned, to see what they will do next, whether they will go on in it or whether they will bethink themselves and return. He hearkens and hears whether any say, What have I done? Jer 8:6. He looks upon sinners with an eye of compassion, desiring to hear this from them; for he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon them, and, as

soon as he perceives these workings of repentance in them, he encourages them and is ready to accept them (Ps 32:5,6), as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal.

(2.) It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general. If any humble himself thus, whoever he be,

[1.] He shall not come into condemnation, but be saved from the wrath to come: He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit, the pit of hell; iniquity shall not be his ruin.

[2.] He shall be happy in everlasting life and joy: His life shall see the light, that is, all good, in the vision and fruition of God. To obtain this bliss, if the prophet had bidden us do some great thing, would we not have done it? How much more when he only says unto us, Wash and be clean, confess and be pardoned, repent and be saved?

20 so that his life abhorreth bread,
and his soul dainty meat.
21 His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen;
and his bones *that* were not seen stick out.
22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave,
and his life to the destroyers.
23 If there be a messenger with him,
an interpreter, one among a thousand,
to show unto man his uprightness;
24 then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
Deliver him from going down to the pit:
I have found a ransom.
25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's:
he shall return to the days of his youth:
26 he shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him:
and he shall see his face with joy:
for he will render unto man his righteousness.
27 He looketh upon men, and *if any* say,

I have sinned, and perverted *that which was* right,
and it profited me not;
28 he will deliver his soul from going into the pit,
and his life shall see the light.
29 Lo, all these *things* worketh God oftentimes with man,

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elihu's discourse, in which,

. He briefly sums up what he had said, showing that God's reat and gracious design, in all the dispensations of his rovidence towards the children of men, is to save them om being for ever miserable and bring them to be for ever appy, Job 33:29,30. All these things God is working with e children of men. He deals with them by conscience, by rovidences, by ministers, by mercies, by afflictions. He akes them sick, and makes them well again. All these are is operations; he has set the one over the other (Job 33:Ec :14), but his hand is in all; it is he that performs all the ings for us. All providences are to be looked upon as God's orkings with man, his strivings with him. He uses a variety f methods to do men good; if one affliction do not do the ork, he will try another; if neither do, he will try a mercy; nd he will send a messenger to interpret both. He often orks such things as these twice, thrice; so it is in the riginal, referring to Job 33:14.

He speaks once, yea, twice; if that prevail not, he works twice, yea, thrice; he changes his method (we have piped, we have mourned) returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications. Why does he take all this pains with man? It is to bring back his soul from the pit, Job 33:30. If God did not take more care of us than we do of ourselves, we should be miserable; we would destroy ourselves, but he would have us saved, and devises means, by his grace, to undo that by which we were undoing ourselves. The former method, by dream and vision, was to keep back the soul from the pit (Job 33:18), that is, to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it. This, by sickness and the word, is to bring back the soul, to

recover those that have fallen into sin, that they may not lie still and perish in it.

With respect to all that by repentance are brought back from the pit, it is that they may be enlightened with the light of the living, that they may have present comfort and everlasting happiness. Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven, the inheritance of the saints in light; and this he aims at in all his institutions and all his dispensations. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus visit him! This should engage us to comply with God's designs, to work with him for our own good, and not to counter-work him. This will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them and they would not be healed.

2. He bespeaks Job's acceptance of what he had offered and begs of him to mark it well, Job 33:31. What is intended for our good challenges our regard. If Job will observe what is said,

(1.) He is welcome to make what objections he can against it (Job 33:32): "If thou hast any thing to say for thyself, in thy own vindication, answer me; though I am fresh, and thou art spent, I will not run thee down with words: Speak, for I, desire to justify thee, and am not as thy other friends that desired to condemn thee." Elihu contends for truth, not, as they did, for victory. Note, Those we reprove we should desire to justify, and be glad to see them clear themselves from the imputations they lie under, and therefore give them all possible advantage and encouragement to do so.

(2.) If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu lets him know that he has something more to say, which he desires him patiently to attend to (Job 33:33): Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom. Those that would both show wisdom and learn wisdom must hearken and keep silence, be swift to hear and slow to speak. Job was wise and good; but those that are so may yet be wiser and

better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace.

30 to bring back his soul from the pit,
to be enlightened with the light of the living.
31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me:
hold thy peace, and I will speak.
32 If thou hast any thing to say, answer me:
speak, for I desire to justify thee.
33 If not, hearken unto me:
hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

Job-34

Elihu Justifies God

1 Furthermore Elihu answered and said,

Here, I. Elihu humbly addresses himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good-will and their favourable attention.

1. He calls them wise men, and men that had knowledge, Job 34:2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense. I speak as to wise men, who can judge what I say, 1Co 10:15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing men. Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is a piece of justice which we owe to those who are wise to acknowledge it, though our sentiments do not agree with theirs.

2. He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, Job 34:3. The ear of the judicious tries words, whether what is said be true or false, right or wrong, and he that speaks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing that what we speak should be proved.

3. He takes them into partnership with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, Job 34:4. He does not pretend to be sole dictator, nor undertake to say what is just and good and what is not, but he is willing to join with them in searching it out, and desires a consultation: "Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affectation of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and let us choose to ourselves judgment; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and let us know among ourselves, by comparing notes and communicating our reasons, what is good and what is otherwise." Note, We are then likely to discern what is right when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

II. He warmly accuses Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the divine government, appealing to the house whether he ought not to be called to the bar and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken, as nearly as he can remember.

(1.) He had insisted upon his own innocency. Job hath said, I am righteous (Job 34:5), and, when urged to confess his guilt, had stiffly maintained his plea of, Not guilty: Should I lie against my right? Job 34:6. Job had spoken to this purport, My righteousness I hold fast, Job 27:6.

(2.) He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him and had not righted him: God has taken away my judgment; so Job had said, Job 27:2.

(3.) He had despaired of relief and concluded that God could not, or would not, help him: My wound is incurable, and likely to be mortal, and yet without transgression; not for any injustice in my hand, Job 16:16,17.

(4.) He had, in effect, said that there is nothing to be got in the service of God and that no man will be the better at last for his (Job 34:9): He hath said that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion; for what is it but to delight ourselves with God, in communion with him, in concurrence with him, in walking with him as Enoch did? this is a true notion of religion, and bespeaks its ways to be pleasantness. Yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were vain to serve God, Mal 3:14.

This Elihu gathers as Job's opinion, by an innuendo from what he said (Job 9:22), He destroys the perfect and the wicked, which has a truth in it (for all things come alike to all), but it was ill expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silently under it and attempted not his own vindication, whence Mr. Caryl well observes that good men sometimes speak worse than they mean, and that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves than to stand to excuse himself when he has deserved any blame.

2. He charges Job very high upon it. In general, What man is like Job? Job 34:7. "Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate?" He represents him,

(1.) As sitting in the seat of the scornful: "He drinketh up scorning like water," that is, "he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in so doing, and is very liberal in his reflections." Or, "He is very greedy in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempts which others cast upon their brethren, is well pleased with them and extols them." Or, as some explain it, "By these foolish expressions of his he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by them, and the reputation of

that is wounded through his side." We have need to pray that God will never leave us to ourselves to say or do any thing which may make us a reproach to the foolish, Ps 39:8.

(2.) As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners: He goes in company with the workers of iniquity (Job 34:8), not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hands. If (as it follows, Job 34:9, for the proof of this) it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God, why should he not lay the reins on the neck of his lusts and herd with the workers of iniquity? He that says, I have cleansed my hands in vain, does not only offend against the generation of God's children (Ps 72:13,14), but gratifies his enemies, and says as they say.

2 Hear my words, O ye wise *men;*
and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.
3 For the ear trieth words,
as the mouth tasteth meat.
4 Let us choose to us judgment:
let us know among ourselves what *is* good.
5 For Job hath said, I am righteous:
and God hath taken away my judgment.
6 Should I lie against my right?
My wound *is* incurable without transgression.
7 What man *is* like Job,
who drinketh up scorning like water?
8 which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity,
and walketh with wicked men.
9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing
that he should delight himself with God.
10 Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding:
far be it from God, *that he should do* wickedness;
and *from* the Almighty, *that he should commit* iniquity.

The scope of Elihu's discourse to reconcile Job to his afflictions and to pacify his spirit under them. In order to this he had shown, in the foregoing chapter, that God

meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter he shows that he did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved. If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses he directs his discourse to all the company: "Hearken to me, you men of understanding (Job 34:10), and show yourselves to be intelligent by assenting to this which I say." And this is that which he says, That the righteous God never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures, but his ways are equal, ours are unequal. The truth here maintained respects the justice of equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe in these verses,

I. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively.

1. He does wrong to none: God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty commit iniquity, Job 34:10. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will (Job 34:12): God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment. He neither can nor will do a wrong thing, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue proportion, for that would be to commit iniquity and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive sentence, he will have an eye to the merits of the cause and not respect the person, for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong or deny any man right, but the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness. Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do wrong himself nor countenance it in others, nay more than he can die, or lie, or deny himself. Though he be Almighty, yet he never uses his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is Shaddai--God all-sufficient, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil (Jam 1:13), to do an unrighteous thing.

2. He ministers justice to all (Job 34:11): The work of a man shall he render unto him. Good works shall be rewarded and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that sooner or later, in this world or in that to come, he will cause every man to find according to his ways. This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his work. Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

II. How warmly it is asserted, 1. With an assurance of the truth of it: Yea, surely, Job 34:12. It is a truth which none can deny or call in question; it is what we may take for granted and are all agreed in, That God will not do wickedly. 2. With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary (Job 34:10): Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from us that we should entertain the least suspicion of it or say any thing that looks like charging him with it.

III. How evidently it is proved by two arguments:

1. His independent absolute sovereignty and dominion (Job 34:13): Who has given him a charge over the earth and deputed him to manage the affairs of men upon the earth? Or, Who besides has disposed the whole world of mankind? He has the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he entrusted with it by or for any other.

(1.) It is certain that the government is his, and he does according to his will in all the hosts both of heaven and earth; and therefore he is not to be charged with injustice; for shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Ge 18:25. How shall God either rule or judge the world if there be, or could be, any unrighteousness with him? Ro 3:5,6. He that is entitled to such unlimited power most certainly have in himself unspotted purity. This is also a good

reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us. Shall not he that disposes of the whole world dispose of us and our concerns?

(2.) It is as certain that he does not derive his power from any, nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original, and, like his being, of himself; and therefore, if he were not perfectly just, all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion. The highest powers on earth have a God above them, to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But therefore God has none above him, because it is not possible that he should do any thing (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. And, if he be an absolute sovereign, we are bound to submit to him, for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue is a necessity.

2. His irresistible power (Job 34:14): If he set his heart upon man, to contend with him, much more if (as some read it) he set his heart against man, to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by summa potestas--mere sovereignty, or by summum jus--strict justice, there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would soon be gone and all flesh would perish together, Job 34:15. Many men's honesty is owing purely to their impotency; they do not do wrong because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it. But God is able to crush any man easily and suddenly, and yet does not by arbitrary power crush any man, which therefore must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his nature, and that is immutable. See here,

(1.) What God can do with us. He can soon bring us to dust; there needs not any positive act of his omnipotence to do it; if he do but withdraw that concurrence of his providence by which we live, if he gather unto himself that spirit and breath which was from his hand at first and is still in his hand, we expire immediately, like an animal in an air-pump when the air is exhausted.

(2.) What he may do with us without doing us wrong. He may recall the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited; and therefore, as long as that is continued of his mere favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him,
and cause every man to find according to *his* ways.
12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly,
neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.
13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth?
Or who hath disposed the whole world?
14 If he set his heart upon man,
if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;
15 all flesh shall perish together,
and man shall turn again unto dust.
16 If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this:
hearken to the voice of my words.

Elihu here addresses himself more directly to Job. He had spoken to the rest (Job 34:10) as men of understanding; now, speaking to Job; he puts an if upon his understanding: If thou hast understanding, hear this and observe it, Job 34:16.

I. Hear this, That God is not to be quarrelled with for any thing that he does. It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was,

1. As absurd as it would be to advance one to power that is a professed enemy to justice: Shall even he that hates right govern? Job 34:17. The righteous Lord so loves righteousness that, in comparison with him, even Job himself, though a perfect and upright man, might be said to hate right; and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God or correct what he does? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are give law to the righteous God? or must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but

see it to be an impudent impious thing for us to prescribe to God.

2. It was as absurd as it would be to call a most righteous innocent person to the bar, and to give judgment against him, though it appeared ever so plainly, upon the trial, that he was most just: Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways, and cannot but be so?

3. It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be to say to a sovereign prince, Thou art wicked, and to judges upon the bench, You are ungodly, Job 34:18. This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty and to magistracy; no king, no prince, would bear it. In favour of government, we presume it is a right sentence that is passed, unless the contrary be very evident; but, whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face that he is wicked. Nathan reproved David by a parable. But, whatever a high priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the powers that are. How absurd is then to say so to God--to impute iniquity to him, who, having no respect of persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing! He regardeth not the rich more than the poor, and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him, Job 34:19.

Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God. A great man shall fare never the better, nor find any favour, for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare ever the worse for his poverty, nor an honest cause be starved. Job, now that he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him, as when he was rich; for they are all the work of his hands. Their persons are so: the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould, as the rich. Their conditions are so: the poor were made poor by the divine providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

17 Shall even he that hateth right govern?
And wilt thou condemn him that is most just?
18 *Is it fit* to say to a king, *Thou art* wicked?
and to princes, *Ye are* ungodly?
19 *How much less to him* that accepteth not the persons of princes,
nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?
For they all *are* the work of his hands.

I. Hear this, That God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he does. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to submit and proceed no further in his quarrel with him.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men when he enters into judgment with them (Job 34:20); even the people, the body of a nation, though ever so numerous, shall be troubled, unhinged, and put into disorder, when God pleases; even the mighty man, the prince, though ever so honourable, ever so formidable among men, shall, if God speak the word, be taken away out of his throne, nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die; they shall pass away. What cannot he do that has all the powers of death at his command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction: In a moment shall they die. It is not a work of time, with God, to bring down his proud enemies, but, when he pleases, it is soon done; nor is he bound to give them warning, no, not an hour's warning. This night thy soul shall be required. Observe the season of it: They shall be troubled at midnight, when they are secure and careless, and unable to help themselves; as the Egyptians when their first-born were slain.

This is the immediate work of God: they are taken away, without hand, insensibly, by secret judgments. God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without the assistance or agency of any man. Whatever hand he sometimes uses in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus overpower, but even hosts of them

(Job 34:24): He shall break in pieces mighty men without number; for no combined power can stand it out against Omnipotence. Yet, when God destroys tyranny, he does not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it does not therefore follow that people must have no rulers; for, when he breaks mighty men, he sets others in their stead, that will rule better, or, if they do not, he overturns them also in the night, or in a night, so that they are destroyed, Job 34:25. Witness Belshazzar. Or, if he designs them space to repent, he does not presently destroy them, but he strikes them as wicked men, Job 34:26. Some humbling mortifying judgments are brought upon them; these wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men, as surely, as sorely, stricken in their bodies, estates, or families, and this for warning to their neighbours; the stroke is given in terrorem--as an alarm to others, and therefore is given in the open sight of others, that they also may see and fear, and tremble before the justice of God. If kings stand not before him, how shall we stand!

2. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore, if some are punished either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. For,

(1.) Every thing is open before him (Job 34:21): His eyes are upon the ways of man; not only they are within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them. He sees us all, and sees all our goings; go where we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened.

(2.) Nothing is or can be concealed from him (Job 34:22): There is no darkness nor shadow of death so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight as that in it the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the

discovering eye and avenging hand of the righteous God. Observe here,

[1.] The workers of iniquity would hide themselves if they could from the eye of the world for shame (and that perhaps they may do), and from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden. The day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them.

[2.] They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

(3.) It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or absconding when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God: He knows their works (Job 34:25), both what they do and what they design.

3. God is righteous, and, in all his proceedings, goes according to the rules of equity. Even when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet he will not lay upon man more than right, Job 34:23. As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; and of the proportion between the sin and the punishment Infinite Wisdom shall be the judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall any man enter into judgment with God, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well-advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast or non-suited. It is not for man ever to purpose to enter into judgment with the Omnipotent; so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God.

Elihu asks, "To what purpose? The judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but, after all, it must rest as it is." All is well that God does, and will be found so. To prove that when God destroys the mighty men, and strikes them as wicked men, he does not lay upon them more than right, he shows what their wickedness was (Job 34:27,28); and let any compare that with their punishment, and then judge whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges, whom God will justly judge, neither feared God nor regarded man, Lu 18:2.

(1.) They were rebels to God: They turned back from him, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him; for they would not consider any of his ways, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is because they do not consider, not because they cannot, but because they will not. From inconsideration comes impiety, and thence all immorality.

(2.) They were tyrants to all mankind, Job 34:28. They will not call upon God for themselves; but they cause the cry of the poor to come to him, and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God, make their complaint to him, and he hears them and pleads their cause. Their case is bad who have the prayers and tears of the poor against them; for the cry of the oppressed will, sooner or later, draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is more than right, Ex 22:23.

4. God has an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that,

as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he does cannot be changed, Job 34:29. Observe,

(1.) The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. When he gives quietness who then can make trouble? Job 34:29. This is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God give inward peace to a man only, the quietness and everlasting assurance which are the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself, can give trouble. What can make those uneasy whose souls dwell at ease in God? See Php 4:7.

(2.) The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns; for if he, in displeasure, hide his face, and withhold the comfort of his favour, who then can behold him? that is, Who can behold a displeased God, so as to bear up under his wrath or turn it away? Who can make him show his face when he resolves to hide it, or see through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, Who can behold a disquieted sinner, so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition without God. If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I? 2Ki 6:27. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual. As vinegar upon nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart.

The irresistibleness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings both with communities and with particular persons: what he does cannot be controlled, whether it be done against a nation in its public capacity or against a man only in his private affairs. The

same Providence that governs mighty kingdoms presides in the concerns of the meanest individual; and neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance; but what he does shall be done effectually and victoriously.

5. God is wise, and careful of the public welfare, and therefore provides that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, Job 34:30. See here,

(1.) The pride of hypocrites. They aim to reign; the praise of men, and power in the world, are their reward, what they aim at.

(2.) The policy of tyrants. When they aim to set up themselves they sometimes make use of religion as a cloak and cover for their ambition and by their hypocrisy come to the throne.

(3.) The danger the people are in when hypocrites reign. They are likely to be ensnared in sin, or trouble, or both. Power, in the hands of dissemblers, is often destructive to the rights and liberties of a people, which they are more easily wheedled out of than forced out of. Much mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness under the pretence of a form of godliness.

(4.) The care which divine Providence takes of the people, to prevent this danger, that the hypocrite reign not, either that he do not reign at all or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise or hasten the ruin of hypocritical rulers.

20 In a moment shall they die,
and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away:
and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.
21 For his eyes *are* upon the ways of man,
and he seeth all his goings.
22 *There is* no darkness, nor shadow of death,
where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.
23 For he will not lay upon man more *than right;*

that he should enter into judgment with God.
24 He shall break in pieces mighty men without number,
and set others in their stead.
25 Therefore he knoweth their works,
and he overturneth *them* in the night, so that they are destroyed.
26 He striketh them as wicked men
in the open sight of others;
27 because they turned back from him,
and would not consider any of his ways:
28 so that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him,
and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.
29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?
And when he hideth *his* face, who then can behold him?
whether *it be done* against a nation, or against a man only:
30 that the hypocrite reign
not, lest the people be
ensnared.
31 Surely it is meet to be said unto God,
I have borne *chastisement,* I will not offend *any more:*

In these verses,

I. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, Job 34:31,32. Having reproved him for his peevish passionate words, he here puts better words into his mouth. When we reprove for what is amiss we must direct to what is good, that our reproofs may be the reproofs of instruction, Pr 6:23. He does not impose it upon Job to use these words, but recommends it to him, as that which was meet to be said. In general, he would have him repent of his misconduct, and indecent expressions, under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself a wicked man, and by overdoing they undid. Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had, in the management of this controversy, spoken unadvisedly with his lips. Let us remember this, in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution. Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job,

1. To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them: "I have borne chastisement. What I suffer comes justly upon me, and therefore I will bear it, and not only justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness." Many are chastised that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so, in effect, do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God does, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal operation intended for good.

2. To pray to God to discover his sins to him (Job 34:32): "That which I see not teach thou me. Lord, upon the review, I find much amiss in me and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of, greater abominations, which through ignorance, mistake, and partiality to myself, I do not yet see; Lord, give me to see it, awaken by conscience to do its office faithfully." A good man is willing to know the worst of himself, and particularly, under affliction, desires to be told wherefore God contends with him and what God designs in correcting him.

3. To promise reformation (Job 34:31): I will not offend any more. "If I have done iniquity (or seeing that I have), I will do so no more; whatever thou shalt discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future." This implies a confession that we have offended, true remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and a humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to separate between us and our sins. The penitent here completes his repentance; for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and, as here, bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is meet to be said in a stedfast purpose, and meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and vow.

II. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and uneasiness under his affliction, Job 34:23. We are ready

to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shows,

1. That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect this: "Should it be according to thy mind? No, what reason for that?" Elihu here speaks with a great deference to the divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein: it is highly fit that every thing should be according to God's mind. He speaks also with a just disdain of the pretensions of those that are proud, and would be their own carvers: Should it be according to thy mind? Should we always have the good we have a mind to enjoy? We should then wrongfully encroach upon others and foolishly ensnare ourselves. Must we never be afflicted, because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? Or, if we must be afflicted, is it fit that we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No; it is fit that every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours; for he is the Creator, and we are creatures. He is infinitely wise and knowing; we are foolish and short-sighted. He is in one mind; we are in many.

2. That it is in vain, and to no purpose, to expect it: "He will recompense it whether thou refuse or whether thou choose. God will take his own way, fulfil his own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of his own justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased; he will neither ask thy leave nor ask thy advice, but, what he pleases, that will he do. It is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity; make the best of that which is, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse," that is, "to prescribe to God and except against what he does, so will not I--I will acquiesce in all he does; and therefore speak what thou knowest; say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plainly before thee; be at a point; thou art in God's hand, not in mine."

III. He appeals to all intelligent indifferent persons whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that

which Job said. 1. He would have the matter thoroughly examined, and brought to an issue (Job 34:36): "My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end. If any will undertake to justify what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to bear our testimony against it." Many understand it of his trial by afflictions: "Let his troubles be continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down, till he be made to see his error and to retract what he has so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let the trial be continued till the end be obtained." 2. He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it.

(1.) Some read Job 34:36 as an appeal to God: O, my Father! let Job be tried. So the margin of our Bibles, for the same word signifies my desire and my father; and some suppose that he lifted up his eyes when he said this, meaning, "O my Father who art in heaven! let Job be tried till he be subdued." When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to ourselves or others we must eye God as a Father, because they are fatherly corrections and a part of our filial education, Heb 12:7.

(2.) He appeals to the by-standers (Job 34:34): "Let men of understanding tell me whether they can put any more favourable construction upon Job's words than I have put, and whether he has not spoken very ill and ought not to cry, Peccavi--I have done wrong." In what Job had said he thought it appeared,

[1.] That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, Job 34:35. He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom; but, in this matter, he has spoken without knowledge, and, whatever his heart is, his words were without prudence. What he said to his wife may be retorted upon himself (He speaks as one of the foolish men speak) and for the same reason, Shall we not receive evil as well as good at God's hand? Job 2:10. Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs ourselves which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom really reproach their own.

[2.] That he had not a due regard to God, but had talked wickedly. If what he had said be tried to the end, that is, if one put it to the utmost stretch and make the worst of it, it will be found,

First, That he has taken part with God's enemies: His answers have been for wicked men; that is, what he had said tended to strengthen the hands and harden the hearts of wicked people in their wickedness, he having carried the matter of their prosperity much further than he needed. Let wicked men, like Baal, plead for themselves if they will, but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them.

Secondly, That he has insulted God's friends, and hectored over them: "He clappeth his hands among us; and, if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled, will grow yet more insolent and imperious, as if he had gotten the day and silenced us all." To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse.

Thirdly, That he has spoken against God himself, and, by standing to what he had said, added rebellion to his sin. To speak, though but one word, against God, by whom we speak and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as if we would out-talk him? What is it to repeat them, instead of unsaying them? Those that have sinned, and, when they are called to repent, thus go on frowardly, add rebellion to their sin and make it exceedingly sinful. Errare possum, Hæreticus esse nolo--I may fall into error, but I will not plunge into heresy.

32 *that which* I see not teach thou me:
if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.
33 *Should it be* according to thy mind? He will recompense it,
whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I:
therefore speak what thou knowest.

34 Let men of understanding tell me,
and let a wise man hearken unto me.
35 Job hath spoken without knowledge,
and his words *were* without wisdom.
36 My desire *is that* Job may be tried unto the end,
because of *his* answers for wicked men.
37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth *his hands*
among us, and multiplieth his words against God.

Job-35

1 Elihu spake moreover, and said,

We have here,
I The bad words which Elihu charges upon Job, Job 35:2,3. To evince the badness of them he appeals to Job himself, and his own sober thoughts, in the reflection: Thinkest thou this to be right? This intimates Elihu's confidence that the reproof he now gave was just, for he could refer the judgment of it even to Job himself. Those that have truth and equity on their side sooner or later will have every man's conscience on their side. It also intimates his good opinion of Job, that he thought better than he spoke, and that, though he had spoken amiss, yet, when he perceived his mistake, he would not stand to it. When we have said, in our haste, that which was not right, it becomes us to own that our second thoughts convince us that it was wrong. Two things Elihu here reproves Job for:--

1. For justifying himself more than God, which was the thing that first provoked him, Job 32:2. "Thou hast, in effect, said, My righteousness is more than God's," that is, "I have done more for God than ever he did for me; so that, when the accounts are balanced, he will be brought in debtor to me." As if Job thought his services had been paid less than they deserved and his sins punished more than they deserved, which is a most unjust and wicked thought for any man to harbour and especially to utter.

When Job insisted so much upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealings with him, he did in effect say, My righteousness is more than God's; whereas, though we be ever so good and our afflictions ever so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness and God is not.

2. For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion because he suffered these things: What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin? Job 35:3. This is gathered from Job 9:30,31. Though I make my hands ever so clean, what the nearer am I? Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch. And Job 10:15, If I be wicked, woe to me; but, if I be righteous, it is all the same. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, Ps 73:13. And, if Job said so, he did in effect say, My righteousness is more than God's (Job 35:9); for, if he got nothing by his religion, God was more beholden to him than he was to God.

But, though there might be some colour for it, yet it was not fair to charge these words upon Job, when he himself had made them the wicked words of prospering sinners (Job 21:15, What profit shall we have if we pray to him?) and had immediately disclaimed them. The counsel of the wicked is far from me, Job 21:16. It is not a fair way of disputing to charge men with those consequences of their opinions which they expressly renounce.

II The good answer which Elihu gives to this (Job 35:4): "I will undertake to answer thee, and thy companions with thee," that is, "all those that approve thy sayings and are ready to justify thee in them, and all others that say as thou sayest: "I have that to offer which will silence them all." To do this he has recourse to his old maxim (Job 33:12), that God is greater than man. This is a truth which, if duly improved, will serve many good purposes, and particularly this to prove that God is debtor to no man. The greatest of men may be a debtor to the meanest; but such is the infinite disproportion between God and man

that the great God cannot possibly receive any benefit by man, and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man; for, if he be obliged by his purpose and promise, it is only to himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up (Ro 11:35), Who hath first given to God, let him prove it, and it shall be recompensed to him again. Why should we demand it, as a just debt, to gain by our religion (as Job seemed to do), when the God we serve does not gain by it?

1. Elihu needs not prove that God is above man; it is agreed by all; but he endeavours to affect Job and us with it, by an ocular demonstration of the height of the heavens and the clouds, Job 35:5. They are far above us, and God is far above them; how much then is he set out of the reach either of our sins or of our services! Look unto the heavens, and behold the clouds. God made man erect, coelumque tueri jussit--and bade him look up to heaven. Idolaters looked up, and worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but we must look up to heaven, and worship the Lord of those hosts. They are higher than we, but God is infinitely above them. His glory is above the heavens (Ps 8:1) and the knowledge of him higher than heaven, Job 11:8.

2. But hence he infers that God is not affected, either one way or other, by any thing that we do.

(1.) He owns that men may be either bettered or damaged by what we do (Job 35:8): Thy wickedness, perhaps, may hurt a man as thou art, may occasion him trouble in his outward concerns. A wicked man may wound, or rob, or slander his neighbour, or may draw him into sin and so prejudice his soul. Thy righteousness, thy justice, thy charity, thy wisdom, thy piety, may perhaps profit the son of man. Our goodness extends to the saints that are in the earth, Ps 16:3. To men like ourselves we are in a capacity either of doing injury or of showing kindness; and in both these the sovereign Lord and Judge of all will interest himself, will reward those that do good and punish those

that do hurt to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects. But,

(2.) He utterly denies that God can really be either prejudiced or advantaged by what any, even the greatest men of the earth, do, or can do.

[1.] The sins of the worst sinners are no damage to him (Job 35:6): "If thou sinnest wilfully, and of malice prepense, against him, with a high hand, nay, if thy transgressions be multiplied, and the acts of sin be ever so often repeated, yet what doest thou against him?" This is a challenge to the carnal mind, and defies the most daring sinner to do his worst. It speaks much for the greatness and glory of God that it is not in the power of his worst enemies to do him any real prejudice. Sin is said to be against God because so the sinner intends it and so God takes it, and it is an injury to his honour; yet it cannot do any thing against him. The malice of sinners is impotent malice: it cannot destroy his being or perfections, cannot dethrone him from his power and dominion, cannot disturb his peace and repose, cannot defeat his counsels and designs, nor can it derogate from his essential glory. Job therefore spoke amiss in saying What profit is it that I am cleansed from my sin? God was no gainer by his reformation; and who then would gain if he himself did not?

[2.] The services of the best saints are no profit to him (Job 35:7): If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him? He needs not our service; or, if he did want to have the work done, he has better hands than ours at command. Our religion brings no accession at all to his felicity. He is so far from being beholden to us that we are beholden to him for making us righteous and accepting our righteousness; and therefore we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but to be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

2 Thinkest thou this to be right,

that thou saidst, My righteousness *is* more than God's?
3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee?
and, What profit shall I have, *if I be cleansed* from my sin?
4 I will answer thee,
and thy companions with thee.
5 Look unto the heavens, and see;
and behold the clouds *which* are higher than thou.
6 If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?
Or *if* thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him ?
7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?
Or what receiveth he of thine hand?
8 Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou *art;*
and thy righteousness *may profit* the son of man.

Elihu here returns an answer to another word that Job had said, which, he thought, reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God, and therefore ought not to pass without a remark. Observe,

I. What it was that Job complained of; it was this, That God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors (Job 35:9): "By reason of the multitude of oppressions, the many hardships which proud tyrants put upon poor people and the barbarous usage they give them, they make the oppressed to cry; but it is to no purpose: God does not appear to right them. They cry out, they cry on still, by reason of the arm of the mighty, which lies heavily upon them." This seems to refer to those words of Job (Job 24:12), Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded cries out against the oppressors, yet God lays not folly to them, does not reckon with them for it. This is a thing that Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God and his government. Is there a righteous God, and can it be that he should so slowly hear, so slowly see?

II. How Elihu solves the difficulty. If the cries of the oppressed be not heard, the fault is not in God; he is ready to hear and help them. But the fault is in themselves; they ask and have not, but it is because they ask amiss, Jam

4:3. They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty, but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent praying cry, the cry of nature and passion, not of grace. See Ho 7:14, They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds. How then can we expect that they should be answered and relieved?

1. They do not enquire after God, nor seek to acquaint themselves with him, under their affliction (Job 35:10): But none saith, Where is God my Maker? Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to enquire early after God, Ps 78:34. But many that groan under great oppressions never mind God, nor take notice of his hand in their troubles; if they did, they would bear their troubles more patiently and be more benefited by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed, few get the good they might get by their affliction. It should drive them to God, but how seldom is this the case! It is lamentable to see so little religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind. Every one complains of his troubles; but none saith, Where is God my Maker? that is, none repent of their sins, none return to him that smites them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him which would balance their outward afflictions. They are wholly taken up with the wretchedness of their condition, as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. Observe,

(1.) God is our Maker, the author of our being, and, under that notion, it concerns us to regard and remember him, Ec 12:1. God my makers, in the plural number, which some think is, if not an indication, yet an intimation, of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. Let us make man.

(2.) It is our duty therefore to enquire after him. Where is he, that we may pay our homage to him, may own our dependence upon him and obligations to him? Where is he, that we may apply to him for maintenance and protection, may receive law from him, and may seek our

happiness in his favour, from whose power we received our being?

(3.) It is to be lamented that he is so little enquired after by the children of men. All are asking, Where is mirth? Where is wealth? Where is a good bargain? But none ask, Where is God my Maker?

2. They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their afflictions.

(1.) He provides for our inward comfort and joy under our outward troubles, and we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our troubles: He gives songs in the night, that is, when our condition is ever so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in God, in his providence and promise, which is sufficient, not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us in every thing to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation. When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers.

(2.) He preserves to us the use of our reason and understanding (Job 35:11): Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, that is, who has endued us with more noble powers and faculties than they are endued with and has made us capable of more excellent pleasures and employments here and for ever. Now this comes in here,

[1.] As that which furnishes us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest burden of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels of more worth than all the world, continued to us; even those that kill the body cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of their faculties, but we enjoy the use

of our reason and the peace of our consciences, we have much reason to be thankful, how pressing soever our calamities otherwise are.

[2.] As a reason why we should, under our afflictions, enquire after God our Maker, and seek unto him. This is the greatest excellency of reason, that it makes us capable of religion, and it is in that especially that we are taught more than the beasts and the fowls. They have wonderful instincts and sagacities in seeking out their food, their physic, their shelter; but none of them are capable of enquiring, Where is God my Maker? Something like logic, and philosophy, and politics, has been observed among the brute-creatures, but never any thing of divinity or religion; these are peculiar to man. If therefore the oppressed only cry by reason of the arm of the mighty, and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes (who complain when they are hurt), and they forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them. God relieves the brute-creatures because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity, Job 38:41,Ps 104:21. But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of enquiring after God as their Maker and yet cry to him no otherwise than as brutes do?

3. They are proud and unhumbled under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them and to hide pride from them (Job 35:12): There they cry--there they lie exclaiming against their oppressors, and filling the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself and his providence--but none gives answer. God does not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them; and why so? It is because of the pride of evil men; they are evil men; they regard iniquity in their hearts, and therefore God will not hear their prayers, Ps 66:18,Isa 1:15. God hears not such sinners.

They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness; they are the devil's poor; and then who can pity them? Yet this is not all: they are proud still,

and therefore they do not seek unto God (Ps 10:4), or, if they do cry unto him, therefore he does not give answer, for he hears only the desire of the humble (Ps 10:17) and delivers those by his providence whom he has first by his grace prepared and made fit for deliverance, which we are not if, under humbling afflictions, our hearts remain unhumbled and our pride unmortified. The case is plain then, If we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is not because the Lord's hand is shortened or his ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work; we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued.

4. They are not sincere, and upright, and inward with God, in their supplications to him, and therefore he does not hear and answer them (Job 35:13): God will not hear vanity, that is, the hypocritical prayer, which is a vain prayer, coming out of feigned lips. It is a vanity to think that God should hear it, who searches the heart and requires truth in the inward part.

9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make *the oppressed* to cry:
they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.
10 But none saith, Where *is* God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;
11 who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?
12 There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.
13 Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

Here is, I. Another improper word for which Elihu reproves Job (Job 35:14): Thou sayest thou shalt not see him; that is,

1. "Thou complainest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with thee, nor discern the drift and design of them," Job 23:8,9. And,

2. "Thou despairest of seeing his gracious returns to thee, of seeing better days again, and art ready to give up all for gone;" as Hezekiah (Isa 38:11), I shall not see the Lord. As, when we are in prosperity, we are ready to think our mountain will never be brought low, so when we are in adversity we are ready to think our valley will never be filled, but, in both, to conclude that to morrow must be as this day, which is as absurd as to think, when the weather is either fair or foul, that is will be always so, that the flowing tide will always flow, or the ebbing tide will always ebb.

II The answer which Elihu gives to this despairing word that Job had said, which is this,

1. That, when he looked up to God, he had no just reason to speak thus despairingly: Judgment is before him, that is, "He knows what he has to do, and will do all in infinite wisdom and justice; he has the entire plan and model of providence before him, and knows what he will do, which we do not, and therefore we understand not what he does. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of providence will be set to rights and the dark chapters of it will be expounded. Then thou shalt see the full meaning of these dark events, and the final period of these dismal events; then thou shalt see his face with joy; therefore trust in him, depend upon him, wait for him, and believe that the issue will be good at last." When we consider that God is infinitely wise, and righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment (Isa 30:18), we shall see no reason to despair of relief from him, but all the reason in the world to hope in him, that it will come in due time, in the best time.

2. That if he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was because he did not thus trust in God and wait

for him (Job 35:15): "Because it is not so, because thou dost not thus trust in him, therefore the affliction which came at first from love has now displeasure mixed with it. Now God has visited thee in his anger, taking it very ill that thou canst not find in thy heart to trust him, but harbourest such hard misgiving thoughts of him." If there be any mixtures of divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank ourselves; it is because we do not behave aright under them; we quarrel with God, and are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of the divine Providence. This was Job's case. The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, Pr 19:3.

Yet Elihu thinks that Job, being in great extremity, did not know and consider this as he should, that it was his own fault that he was not yet delivered. He concludes therefore that Job opens his mouth in vain (Job 35:16) in complaining of his grievances and crying for redress, or in justifying himself and clearing up his own innocency; it is all in vain, because he does not trust in God and wait for him, and has not a due regard to him in his afflictions. He had said a great deal, had multiplied words, but all without knowledge, all to no purpose, because he did not encourage himself in God and humble himself before him. It is in vain for us either to appeal to God or to acquit ourselves if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent, and in vain to pray for relief if we do not trust in God; for let not that man who distrusts God think that he shall receive any thing from him, Jam 1:7. Or this may refer to all that Job had said. Having shown the absurdity of some passages in his discourse, he concludes that there were many other passages which were in like manner the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for a hypocrite, but charged him only with Moses's sin, speaking unadvisedly with his lips when his spirit was provoked. When at any time we do so (and who is there that offends not in word?) it is a mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly as Job did, not repeating, but recanting, what we have said amiss.

14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him,

yet judgment *is* before him; therefore trust thou in him.
15 But now, because *it is* not *so,* he hath visited in his anger;
yet he knoweth *it* not in great extremity:
16 therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain;
he multiplieth words without knowledge.

Job-36

Elihu Extols God's Greatness

1 Elihu also proceeded, and said,

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all that he has to say, but he will not detain them long. Stand about me a little (so some read it), Job 36:2. "Let me have your attendance, your attention, awhile longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly and as much to the purpose as I can." To gain this he pleads,

1. That he had a good cause, and a noble and very fruitful subject: I have yet to speak on God's behalf. He spoke as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some indeed pretend to speak on God's behalf who really speak for themselves; but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, shall be sure neither to want instructions (it shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak) nor to lose their cause or their fee. Nor need they fear lest they should exhaust their subject. Those that have spoken ever so much may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

2. That he had something to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation: I will fetch my knowledge from afar (Job 36:3), that is, "we will have recourse to our first principles and the highest notions we can make use of to serve any purpose." It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel

for it; it will recompense our pains, and, though far-fetched, is not dear-bought.

3. That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God, and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is our Maker, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him and the interests of his kingdom the best service we can. If he be our Maker, we have our all from him, must use our all for him, and be very jealous for his honour. That his management should be very just and fair (Job 36:4): "My words shall not be false, neither disagreeable to the thing itself nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth that I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness." He will make use of plain and solid arguments and not the subtleties and niceties of the schools. "He who is perfect or upright in knowledge is now reasoning with thee; and therefore let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he says be taken in good part, as meant well." The perfection of our knowledge in this world is to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

2 Suffer me a little, and I will show thee
that *I have* yet to speak on God's behalf.
3 I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
and will ascribe rightousness to my Maker.
4 For truly my words *shall* not *be* false:
he that is perfect in knowledge *is* with thee.
5 Behold, God *is* mighty, and despiseth not *any:*
he is mighty in strength *and* wisdom.
6 He preserveth not the life of the wicked:
but giveth right to the poor.
7 He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous:
but with kings *are they* on the throne;
yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.

Elihu, being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, here shows that the disposals of divine Providence are all, not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous governor, for,

I. He does not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor does poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction and make no figure; but God is mighty, infinitely so, and yet he despises not any, Job 36:5. He humbles himself to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice and to show them kindness. Job thought himself and his cause slighted because God did not immediately appear for him. "No," says Elihu, God despises not any, which is a good reason why we should honour all men. He is mighty in strength and wisdom, and yet does not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom, if they but mean honestly. Nay, for this reason he despises not any, because his wisdom and strength are incontestably infinite and therefore the condescensions of his grace can be no diminution to him. Those that are wise and good will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

II. He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they be bad (Job 36:6): He preserves not the life of the wicked. Though their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care of the divine Providence, but only its common protection. Job had said that the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power, Job 21:7. "No," says Elihu: "he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserves not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which are indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath," Ro 2:5.

III. He is always ready to right those that are any way injured, and to plead their cause (Job 36:6): He gives right

to the poor, avenges their quarrel upon their persecutors and forces them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.

IV. He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, Job 36:7. He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them: He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous. Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befals them which looks like an oversight of Providence, yet tender careful eye of their heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever towards God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and, when we are at the lowest, will not overlook us.

1. Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trust and honour (Job 36:7): With kings are they on the throne, and every sheaf is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, it is in mercy to them; for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set: When the righteous bear rule the city rejoices. If the righteous be advanced, they are established.

Those that in honour keep a good conscience stand upon sure ground, and high places are not such slippery ground to them as they are to others. But, because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; for then only they shall be exalted for ever, and established for ever; then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

2. If at any time he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, Job 36:8-10. Some good people are

preferred to honour and power, but others are in trouble. Now observe,

(1.) The distress supposed (Job 36:8): If they be bound in fetters, laid in prison as Joseph was, or holden in the cords of any other affliction, confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their counsels, and, notwithstanding all their struggles, held long in this distress. This was Job's case; he was caught, and kept fast, in the cords of anguish (as some read it); but observe,

(2.) The design God has, in bringing his people into such distresses as these; it is for the benefit of their souls, the consideration of which should reconcile us to affliction and make us think well of it. Three things God intends when he afflicts us:--

[1.] To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance. Then he shows them that amiss in them which before they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin: He shows them their work. Sin is our own work. If there be any good in us, it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shows them their transgressions of the law of God, and withal the sinfulness of sin, that they have exceeded, and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay a load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate, their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers to the sin; it serves, however, to awaken the conscience and puts men upon considering.

[2.] To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions: Then he opens their ear to discipline, Job 36:10. Whom God chastens he teaches (Ps 94:12), and the affliction makes people willing to learn, softens the wax, that it may receive the impression of the seal; yet it does not do this of itself, but the grace of God working with and by it; it is he that opens the ear, that opens the heart, who has the key of David.

[3.] To deter and draw us off from iniquity for the future. This is the errand on which the affliction is sent; it is a command to return from iniquity, to have no more to do with sin, to turn from it with an aversion to it and a resolution never to return to it any more, Ho 14:8.

3. If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, he will comfort them again, according to the time that he has afflicted them (Job 36:11): If they obey and serve him,--if they comply with his design and serve his purpose in these dispensations,--if, when the affliction is removed, they continue in the same good mind that they were in when they were under the smart of it and perform the vows they made then,--if they live in obedience to God's commands, particularly those which relate to his service and worship, and in all instances make conscience of their duty to him,--then they shall spend their days in prosperity again and their years in true pleasures. Piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure; this is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God,

(1.) We have the promise of outward prosperity, the promise of the life that now is, and the comforts of it, as far as is for God's glory and our good; and who would desire them any further?

(2.) We have the possession of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God and a good conscience, and that great peace which those have that love God's law. If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault; and what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

4. If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated seven times hotter till they are consumed (Job 36:12): If they obey not, if they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, they shall perish by the sword of God's wrath. Those whom his rod does not cure his sword will kill; and

the consuming fire will prevail if the refining fire do not; for when God judges he will overcome. If Ahaz, in his distress, trespass yet more against the Lord, this is that king Ahaz that is marked for ruin, 2Ch 28:22,Jer 6:29,30. God would have instructed them by their afflictions, but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them; and therefore they shall die without knowledge, ere they are aware, without any further previous notices given them; or they shall die because they were without knowledge notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. Those that die without knowledge die without grace and are undone for ever.

V. He brings ruin upon hypocrites, the secret enemies of his kingdom (such as Elihu described, Job 36:12), who, though they were numbered among the righteous whom Elihu had spoken of before, yet did not obey God, but, being children of disobedience and darkness, become children of wrath and perdition; these are the hypocrites in heart, who heap up wrath, Job 36:13. See the nature of hypocrisy: it lies in the heart, which is for the world and the flesh when the outside seems to be for God and religion. Many that are saints in show and saints in word are hypocrites in heart. That spring is corrupt, and there is an evil treasure there. See the mischievousness of hypocrisy: hypocrites heap up wrath. They are doing that every day which is provoking to God, and will be reckoned with for it all together in the great day.

They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, Ro 2:5. Their sins are laid up in store with God among his treasures, De 32:34,Jam 5:3. As what goes up a vapour comes down a shower, so what goes up sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits, but, when the treasures are opened, it will prove they were heaping up wrath. Observe,

1. What they do to heap up wrath. What is it that is so provoking? It is this, They cry not when he binds them,

that is, when they are in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and unhumbled, and will not cry to God nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord.

2. What are the effects of that wrath? They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean, Job 36:14. This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent,

(1.) They shall die a sudden death, die in youth, when death is most a surprise, and death (that is, the consequence of it) is always such to hypocrites; as those that die in youth die when they hoped to live, so hypocrites, at death, go to hell, when they hoped to go to heaven. When a wicked man dies his expectations shall perish.

(2.) They shall die the second death. Their life, after death (for so it comes in here), is among the unclean, among the fornicators (so some), among the worst and vilest of sinners, notwithstanding their specious and plausible profession. It is among the Sodomites (so the margin), those filthy wretches, who going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 1:7. The souls of the wicked live after death, but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, forever separated from the new Jerusalem, into which no unclean thing shall enter.

8 And if *they be* bound in fetters,
and be holden in cords of affliction;
9 then he showeth them their work,
and their transgressions that they have exceeded.
10 He openeth also their ear to discipline,
and commandeth that they return from iniquity.
11 If they obey and serve *him*,
they shall spend their days in prosperity,
and their years in pleasures.

12 But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword,
and they shall die without knowledge.
13 But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath:
they cry not when he bindeth them.
14 They die in youth,
and their life *is* among the unclean.
15 He delivereth the poor in his
affliction, and openeth their ears in
oppression.

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and,

I. He tells him what God would have done for him before this if he had been duly humbled under his affliction. "We all know how ready God is to deliver the poor in his affliction (Job 36:15); he always was so. The poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and, when they are in affliction, is ready to help them. He opens their ears, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even in their oppressions; while he does not yet deliver them he speaks to them good words and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs; and even so (Job 36:16) would he have done to thee if thou hadst submitted to his providence and conducted thyself well; he would have delivered and comforted thee, and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst accommodated thyself to the will of God, thy liberty and plenty would have been restored to thee with advantage."

1. "Thou wouldst have been enlarged, and not confined thus by thy sickness and disgrace: He would have removed thee into a broad place where is no straitness, and thou wouldst no longer have been cramped thus and have had all thy measures broken."

2. "Thou wouldst have been enriched, and wouldst not have been left in this poor condition; thou wouldst have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient, but with the finest of the wheat" (see De 32:14) "and the

fattest of the flesh." Note, It ought to silence us under our afflictions to consider that, if we were better, it would be every way better with us: if we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us if we had conducted ourselves well; Ps 81:13,14,Isa 48:18.

II. He charges him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble (Job 36:17): "But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked," that is, "Whatever thou art really, in this thing thou hast conducted thyself like a wicked man, hast spoken and done like the wicked, hast gratified them and served their cause; and therefore judgment and justice take hold on thee as a wicked man, because thou goest in company with them, actest as if thou wert in their interest, aiding and abetting. Thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked; and such as a man's cause is such will the judgment of God be upon him;" so bishop Patrick. It is dangerous being on the wrong side: accessaries to treason will be dealt with as principals.

III. He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness. Several good cautions he gives him to this purport.

1. Let him not make light of divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it (Job 36:18): "Because there is wrath" (that is, "because God is a righteous governor, who resents all the affronts given to his government, because he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and because thou hast reason to fear that thou art under God's displeasure) therefore beware lest he take thee away suddenly with his stroke, and be so wise as to make thy peace with him quickly and get his anger turned away from thee." A warning to this purport Job had given his friends (Job 19:29): Be you afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword. Thus contenders are apt, with too much boldness, to bind one another over to the judgment of God and threaten one

another with his wrath; but he that keeps a good conscience needs not fear the impotent menaces of proud men. But his was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath. "Thou art a wise and good man, but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke."

2. Let him not promise himself that, if God's wrath should kindle against him, he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it.

(1.) There is no escaping by money, no purchasing a pardon with silver, or gold, and such corruptible things: "Even a great ransom cannot deliver thee when God enters into judgment with thee. His justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice. Will he esteem thy riches, and take from them a commutation of the punishment? No, not gold, Job 36:19. If thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the strokes of God's wrath, in the day of the revelation of which riches profit not," Pr 11:4. See Ps 49:7,8.

(2.) There is no escaping by rescue: "If all the forces of strength were at thy command, if thou couldst muster ever so many servants and vassals to appear for thee to force thee out of the hands of divine vengeance, it were all in vain; God would not regard it. There is none that can deliver out of his hand."

(3.) There is no escaping by absconding (Job 36:20): "Desire not the night, which often favours the retreat of a conquered army and covers it; think not that thou canst so escape the righteous judgment of God, for the darkness hideth not from him," Ps 139:11,12. See Job 34:22. "Think not, because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and it is then easy to escape being discovered by them, that God also ascends to his place, and cannot see thee. No; he neither slumbers nor sleeps. His eyes are open upon the children of men, not

only in all places, but at all times. No rocks nor mountains can shelter us from his eye." Some understand it of the night of death; that is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed for that night, as the hireling desires the evening, Job 7:2. "But do not do so," says Elihu; "for thou knowest not what the night of death is." Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

3. Let him not continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in when he should have submitted to the affliction (Job 36:21): "Take heed, look well to thy own spirit, and regard not iniquity, return not to it (so some), for it is at thy peril if thou do." Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen iniquity rather than affliction, that is, having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God than to mortify it by a submission to him and accepting the punishment. We may take it more generally, and observe that those who choose iniquity rather than affliction make a very foolish choice. Those that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, make a choice they will repent of; for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, and only evil.

4. Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures (Job 36:22,23): "Behold, God exalteth by his power," that is, "He does, may, and can set up and pull down whom he pleases, and therefore it is not for thee nor me to contend with him." The more we magnify God the more do we humble and abase ourselves. Now consider,

(1.) That God is an absolute sovereign: He exalts by his own power, and not by strength derived from any other.

He exalts whom he pleases, exalts those that were afflicted and cast down, by the strength and power which he gives his people; and therefore who has enjoined him his way? Who presides above him in his way? Is there any superior from whom he has his commission and to whom he is accountable? No; he himself is supreme and independent. Who puts him in mind of his way? so some. Does the eternal Mind need a remembrancer? No; his own way, as well as ours, is ever before him. He has not received orders or instructions from any (Isa 60:13,14), nor is he accountable to any. He enjoins to all the creatures their way; let not us then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to govern the world, who is fit to do it.

(2.) That he is an incomparable teacher: Who teaches like him? It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction. He that teaches man knowledge, and so as none else can, shall not he know? Ps 94:9,10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, When Elihu would give glory to God as a ruler he praises him as a teacher, for rulers must teach. God does so. He binds with the cords of a man. In this, as in other things, he is unequalled. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself is. He knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information nor advice. Solomon himself had a privy-council to advise him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is. None teaches with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy, as God does. He teaches by the Bible, and that is the best book, teaches by his Son, and he is the best Master.

(3.) That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings: Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Not, Who dares say it? (many do iniquity, and those who tell them of it do so at their peril), but Who can say it? Who has any cause to say it? Who can say it and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that the King of kings can do no wrong.

16 Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait
into a broad place, where *there is* no straitness;
and that which should be set on thy table *should be* full of fatness.
17 But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked:
judgment and justice take hold *on thee*.
18 Because *there is* wrath, *beware* lest he take thee away with *his* stroke:
then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.
19 Will he esteem thy riches?
No, not gold,
nor all the forces of strength.
20 Desire not the night,
when people are cut off in their place.
21 Take heed, regard not iniquity:
for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.
22 Behold, God exalteth by his power:
who teacheth like him?
23 Who hath enjoined him his way?
Or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?
24 Remember that thou magnify his
work, which men behold.

Elihu is here endeavouring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

I. He represents the work of God, in general, as illustrious and conspicuous, Job 36:24. His whole work is so. God does nothing mean. This is a good reason why we should acquiesce in all the operations of his providence concerning us in particular. His visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and in which we observe the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness; shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to consider the work of God, Ec 7:13.

1. It is plain before our eyes, nothing more obvious: it is what men behold. Every man that has but half an eye may

see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, we see the productions of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that doing, concerning which we cannot but say, This is the work of God, the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see, afar off, the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence; much more when we behold them nigh at hand. Look at the minutest works of nature through a microscope; do they not appear curious? The eternal power and godhead of the Creator are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, Ro 1:20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of divine revelation, may see this; for there is no speech or language where the voice of these natural constant preachers is not heard, Ps 19:3.

2. It ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, are what we must remember to magnify and highly to extol, not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them (which the beasts are not), and therefore ought to praise them and give him the glory of them.

II. He represents God, the author of them, as infinite and unsearchable, Job 36:26. The streams of being, power, and perfection should lead us to the fountain. God is great, infinitely so,--great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent,--great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient and all-sufficient,--great in himself,--great in all his works,--great, and therefore greatly to be praised,--great, and therefore we know him not. We know that he is, but not what he is. We know what he is not, but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign his proceedings, nor find fault with what he does, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not and answering a matter before we hear if. We know not the duration of his

existence, for it is infinite. The number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal; there is no number of them. He is a Being without beginning, succession, or period, whoever was, and ever will be, and ever the same, the great I AM. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to him, nor quarrel with him, because, as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

III. He gives some instances of God's wisdom, power, and sovereign dominion, in the works of nature and the dispensations of common providence, beginning in this chapter with the clouds and the rain that descends from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase or the philosophy of this noble discourse. The general scope of it is to show that God is infinitely great, and the Lord of all, the first cause and supreme director of all the creatures, and has all power in heaven and earth (whom therefore we ought, with all humility and reverence, to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to), and that it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence towards the children of men, or to expect from him an account of them, when the operations even of common providences about the meteors are so various and so mysterious and unaccountable. Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him (Job 35:5) to look unto the clouds. In Job 36:24-33 he shows us what we may observe in the clouds we see which will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds,

1. As springs to this lower world, the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates--a very necessary provision, for its stagnation would be as hurtful to this lower world as that of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe in this common occurrence,

(1.) That the clouds above distil upon the earth below. If the heavens become brass, the earth becomes iron;

therefore thus the promise of plenty runs, I will hear the heavens and they shall hear the earth. This intimates to us that every good gift is from above, from him who is both Father of lights and Father of the rain, and it instructs us to direct our prayers to him and to look up.

(2.) That they are here said to distil upon man (Job 36:28); for, though indeed God causes it to rain in the wilderness where no man is (Job 38:26,Ps 104:11), yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made serviceable and from whom the actual return of the tribute of praise is required. Among men, he causes his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust, Mt 5:45.

(3.) They are said to distil the water in small drops, not in spouts, as when the windows of heaven were opened, Ge 7:11. God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensing it in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is, in giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the further and the more equally diffused, as by an artificial water-pot.

(4.) Though sometimes the rain comes in very small drops, yet, at other times, it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into the divine Providence which orders it so.

(5.) Though it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man abundantly (Job 36:28), and therefore is called the river of God which is full of water, 65:9.

(6.) The clouds pour down according to the vapour that they draw up, Job 36:27. So just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the return it makes.

(7.) The produce of the clouds is sometimes a great terror, and at other times a great favour, to the earth, Job 36:31. When he pleases by them he judges the people he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains,

destroying the fruits of the earth and causing inundations, come from the clouds; but, on the other hand, from them, usually, he gives meat in abundance; they drop fatness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the valleys that are covered with corn, Ps 65:11-13.

(8.) Notice is sometimes given of the approach of rain, Job 36:33. The noise thereof, among other things, shows concerning it. Hence we read (1Ki 18:41) of the sound of abundance of rain, or (as it is in the margin) a sound of a noise of rain, before it came; and a welcome harbinger it was then. As the noise, so the face of the sky, shows concerning it, Lu 12:56. The cattle also, by a strange instinct, are apprehensive of a change in the weather nigh at hand, and seek for shelter, shaming man, who will not foresee the evil and hide himself.

2. As shadows to the upper world (Job 36:29): Can any understand the spreading of the clouds? They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy; how they come to be so, how stretched out, and how poised, as they are, we cannot understand, though we daily see they are so. Shall we then pretend to understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreadings of the clouds, which cover the light? Job 36:32. It is a cloud coming betwixt, Job 36:32,Job 26:9. And this we are sensible of, that, by the interposition of the clouds between us and the sun, we are,

(1.) Sometimes favoured; for they serve as an umbrella to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would beat upon us. A cloud of dew in the heat of harvest is spoken of as a very great refreshment. Isa 18:4.

(2.) Sometimes we are by them frowned upon; for they darken the earth at noon-day and eclipse the light of the sun. Sin is compared to a cloud (Isa 44:22), because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance and

obstructs the shining of it. But though the clouds darken the sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet (post nubila Phoebus--the sun shines forth after the rain), after he has wearied the cloud, he spreads his light upon it, Job 36:30. There is a clear shining after rain, 2Sa 23:4. The sunbeams are darted forth, and reach to cover even the bottom of the sea, thence to exhale a fresh supply of vapours, and so raise recruits for the clouds, Job 36:30. In all this, we must remember to magnify the work of God.

25 Every man may see it;
man may behold *it* afar off.
26 Behold, God *is* great, and we know *him* not,
neither can the number of his years be searched out.
27 For he maketh small the drops of water:
they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof;
28 which the clouds do drop
and distil upon man abundantly.
29 Also can *any* understand the spreadings of the clouds,
or the noise of his tabernacle?
30 Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it,
and covereth the bottom of the sea.
31 For by them judgeth he the people;
he giveth meat in abundance.
32 With clouds he covereth the light;
and commandeth it *not to shine* by *the cloud* that cometh betwixt.
33 The noise thereof showeth concerning it,
the cattle also concerning the vapor.

Job-37

1 At this also my heart trembleth,
and is moved out of his place.

Thunder and lightning, which usually go together, are sensible indications of the glory and majesty, the power and terror, of Almighty God, one to the ear and the other to the eye; in these God leaves not himself without witness of his greatness, as, in the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, he leaves not himself without witness of his goodness (Ac 14:17), even to the most stupid and

unthinking. Though there are natural causes and useful effects of them, which the philosophers undertake to account for, yet they seem chiefly designed by the Creator to startle and awaken the slumbering world of mankind to the consideration of a God above them.

The eye and the ear are the two learning senses; and therefore, though such a circumstance is possible, they say it was never known in fact that any one was born both blind and deaf. By the word of God divine instructions are conveyed to the mind through the ear, by his works through the eye; but, because those ordinary sights and sounds do not duly affect men, God is pleased sometimes to astonish men by the eye with his lightnings and by the ear with his thunder. It is very probable that at this time, when Elihu was speaking, it thundered and lightened, for he speaks of the phenomena as present; and, God being about to speak (Job 38:1), these were, as afterwards on Mount Sinai, the proper prefaces to command attention and awe. Observe here,

1. How Elihu was himself affected, and desired to affect Job, with the appearance of God's glory in the thunder and lightning (Job 37:1,2): "For my part," says Elihu, "my heart trembles at it; though I have often heard it, often seen it, yet it is still terrible to me, and makes every joint of me tremble, and my heart beat as if it would move out of its place." Thunder and lightning have been dreadful to the wicked: the emperor Caligula would run into a corner, or under a bed, for fear of them. Those who are very much astonished, we say, are thunder-struck. Even good people think thunder and lightning very awful; and that which makes them the more terrible is the hurt often done by lightning, many having been killed by it. Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ruins by it. It is a sensible indication of what God could do to this sinful world, and what he will do, at last, by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, Ps 119:120.

He also calls upon Job to attend to it (Job 37:2): Hear attentively the noise of his voice. Perhaps as yet it thundered at a distance, and could not be heard without listening: or rather, Though the thunder will be heard, and whatever we are doing we cannot help attending to it, yet, to apprehend and understand the instructions God thereby gives us, we have need to hear with great attention and application of mind. Thunder is called the voice of the Lord (Ps 29:3-9, &c.), because by it God speaks to the children of men to fear before him, and it should put us in mind of that mighty word by which the world was at first made, which is called thunder. Ps 104:7, At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away, namely, the waters, when God said, Let them be gathered into one place. Those that are themselves affected with God's greatness should labour to affect others.

2. How he describes them.

(1.) Their original, not their second causes, but the first. God directs the thunder, and the lightning is his, Job 37:3. Their production and motion are not from chance, but from the counsel of God and under the direction and dominion of his providence, though to us they seem accidental and ungovernable.

(2.) Their extent. The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near; so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth; they come out of the one part under heaven and shine to the other, Lu 17:24. Though the same lightning and thunder do not reach to all places, yet they reach to very distant places in a moment, and there is no place but, some time or other, has these alarms from heaven.

(3.) Their order. The lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, Job 37:4. The flash of fire, and the noise it makes in a watery cloud, are really at the same time; but, because the motion of light is much quicker than that of sound, we see the lightning some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a

distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendent power and greatness. He sends forth his voice and that a mighty voice, Ps 68:33.

(4.) Their violence. He will not stay them, that is, he does not need to check them, or hold them back, lest they should grow unruly and out of his power to restrain them, but lets them take their course, says to them, Go, and they go--Come, and they come--Do this, and they do it. He will not stay the rains and showers that usually follow upon the thunder (which he had spoken of, Job 36:27,29), so some, but will pour them out upon the earth when his voice is heard. Thunder-showers are sweeping rains, and for them he makes the lightnings, Ps 135:7.

(5.) The inference he draws from all this, Job 37:5. Does God thunder thus marvellously with his voice? We must then conclude that his other works are great, and such as we cannot comprehend. From this one instance we may argue to all, that, in the dispensations of his providence, there is that which is too great, too strong, for us to oppose or strive against, and too high, too deep, for us to arraign or quarrel with

2 Hear attentively the noise of his voice,
and the sound *that* goeth out of his mouth.
3 He directeth it under the whole heaven,
and his lightning unto the ends of the earth.
4 After it a voice roareth:
he thundereth with the voice of his excellency;
and he will not stay them
when his voice is heard.
5 God thundereth marvelously with his voice;
great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.
6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou *on* the earth;
likewise to the small rain,
and to the great rain of his strength.

The changes and extremities of the weather, wet or dry, hot or cold, are the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation; but how seldom do we think and

speak of these things, as Elihu does here, with an awful regard to God the director of them, who shows his power and serves the purposes of his providence by them! We must take notice of the glory of God, not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common revolutions of the weather, which are not so terrible and which make less noise. As,

I. In the snow and rain, Job 37:6. Thunder and lightning happen usually in the summer, but here he takes notice of the winter-weather. Then he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; he commissions it, he commands it, he appoints it, where it shall light and how long it shall lie. He speaks, and it is done: as in the creation of the world, Let there be light, so in the works of common providence, Snow, be thou on the earth. Saying and doing are not two things with God, though they are with us. When he speaks the word the small rain distils and the great rain pours down as he pleases--the winter-rain (so the LXX.), for in those countries, when the winter was past, the rain was over and gone, So 2:11. The distinction in the Hebrew between the small rain and the great rain is this, that the former is called a shower of rain, the latter of rains, many showers in one; but all are the showers of his strength: the power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that soaks into the earth as in the great rain that batters on the house-top and washes away all before it.

Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged, both by husbandmen in the fields and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it does them a kindness of a diskindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather; if he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? Or shall we be angry at them? It is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of Providence concerning ourselves or ours. The effect of the extremity of the winter-weather is that it obliges both men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad.

1. Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors (Job 37:7): He seals up the hand of every man. In frost and snow, husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extreme. The plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing is to be done, nothing to be got, that men, being taken off from their own work, may know his work, and contemplate that, and give him the glory of that, and, by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are, upon any account, disabled from following our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion (in acquainting ourselves with the works of God and praising him in them) than in foolish idle sports and recreations. When our hands are sealed up our hearts should be thus opened, and the less we have at any time to do in the world the more we should thereby be driven to our Bibles and our knees.

2. The beasts also retire to their dens and remain in their close places, Job 37:8. It is meant of the wild beasts, which, being wild, must seek a shelter for themselves, to which by instinct they are directed, while the tame beasts, which are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as Ex 9:20. The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm; and shall man alone be unprovided with an ark?

II. In the winds, which blow from different quarters and produce different effects (Job 37:9): Out of the hidden place (so it may be read) comes the whirlwind; it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he says here (Job 37:17) that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind that it is a warming, quieting, wind. But at this time, perhaps, Elihu

saw a whirlwind-cloud coming out of the south and making towards them, out of which the Lord spoke soon after, Job 38:1. Or, if turbulent winds which bring showers come out of the south, cold and drying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours and clear the air of them.

III. In the frost, Job 37:10. See the cause of it: It is given by the breath of God, that is, by the word of his power and the command of his will; or, as some understand it, by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice; it is caused by the cold freezing wind out of the north. See the effect of it: The breadth of the waters is straitened, that is, the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with liberty, are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God as, if it were not common, would be next to a miracle.

IV. In the clouds, the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had spoken, Job 36:28. Three sorts of clouds he here speaks of:--

1. Close, black, thick clouds, pregnant with showers; and these with watering he wearies (Job 37:11), that is, they spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water till they are weary and can pour out no more. See what pains, as I may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man: the clouds water the earth till they are weary; they spend and are spent for our benefit, which shames and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, though it would be to our own advantage, for he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

2. Bright thin clouds, clouds without water; and these he scattereth; they are dispersed of themselves, and not dissolved into rain, but what becomes of them we know not. The bright cloud, in the evening, when the sky is red, is scattered, and proves an earnest of a fair day, Mt 16:2.

3. Flying clouds, which do not dissolve, as the thick cloud, into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go; and these are said to be turned round about by his counsels, Job 37:12. The common people say that the rain is determined by the planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy, for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends even to those things that seem most casual and minute, that they may do whatsoever he commands them; for the stormy winds, and the clouds that are driven by them, fulfil his word; and by this means he causes it to rain upon one city and not upon another, Am 4:7,8. Thus his will is done upon the face of the world in the earth, that is, among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said that he made them to dwell on the face of the earth, Ac 17:26. The inferior creatures, being incapable of doing moral actions, are incapable of receiving rewards and punishments: but, among the children of men, God causes the rain to come, either for the correction of his land or for a mercy to it, Job 37:13.

(1.) Rain sometimes turns into a judgment. It is a scourge to a sinful land; as once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seedness and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. Some have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it.

(2.) At other times it is a blessing. It is for his land, that this may be made fruitful; and, besides that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy, to fatten it and make it more fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great judgment or a great mercy, and without God we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

7 He sealeth up the hand of every man;
that all men may know his work.

8 Then the beasts go into dens,
and remain in their places.
9 Out of the south cometh the whirlwind:
and cold out of the north.
10 By the breath of God frost is given:
and the breadth of the waters is straitened.
11 Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud:
he scattereth his bright cloud:
12 and it is turned round about by his counsels:
that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them
upon the face of the world in the earth.
13 He causeth it to come, whether for correction,
or for his land, or for mercy.
14 Hearken unto this, O Job:
stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.

Elihu here addresses himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said to himself. He begs that he would hearken to this discourse (Job 37:14), that he would pause awhile: Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. What we hear is not likely to profit us unless we consider it, and we are not likely to consider things fully unless we stand still and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God, being wondrous, both deserve and need our consideration, and the due consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences. Elihu, for the humbling of Job, shows him,

I. That he had no insight into natural causes, could neither see the springs of them nor foresee the effects of them (Job 37:15-17): Dost thou know this and know that which are the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge? We are here taught,

1 The perfection of God's knowledge. It is one of the most glorious perfections of God that he is perfect in knowledge; he is omniscient. His knowledge is intuitive: he sees, and does not know by report. It is intimate and entire: he knows things truly, and not by their colours--

thoroughly, and not by piecemeal. To his knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near--nothing future, but all present--nothing hid, but all open. We ought to acknowledge this in all his wondrous works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us in those wondrous works which we know not the meaning of that they are the works of one that knows what he does.

2 The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers are much in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts of matter, are most certain, and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance. Some have confessed their ignorance, and those that would not do this have betrayed it. But we must all infer from it what incompetent judges we are of the divine politics, when we understand so little even of the divine mechanics.

(1.) We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, Job 37:15. That all is done by determination and with design we are sure; but what is determined, and what designed, and when the plan was laid, we know not. God often causes the light of his cloud to shine, in the rainbow (so some), in the lightning (so others); but did we foresee, or could we foretel, when he would to it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, by vulgar observation, or when second causes have begun to work by the weather-glass, yet how little do these show us of the purposes of God by these changes!

(2.) We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wondrous works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun (even the cloudy day is day), so balanced that they do not fall at once, nor burst into cataracts or water-spouts. The rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they

balanced that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that, one time or other, every place has its share.

(3.) We know not how the comfortable change comes when the winter is past, Job 37:17.

[1.] How the weather becomes warm after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us, that is, how we come to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we breathe in. Without God's blessing we should clothe ourselves, yet not be warm, Hag 1:6. But, when he so orders it, the clothes are warm upon us, which, in the extremity of cold weather, would not serve to keep us warm.

[2.] How it becomes calm after it has been stormy: He quiets the earth by the south wind, when the spring comes. As he has a blustering freezing north wind, so he has a thawing, composing, south wind; the Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinces and comforts, So 4:16.

II. That he had no share at all in the first making of the world (Job 37:18): "Hast thou with him spread out the sky? Thou canst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, no, nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him; for he was far from needing any help either in contriving or in working." The creation of the vast expanse of the visible heavens (Ge 1:6-8), which we see in being to this day, is a glorious instance of the divine power, considering,

1. That, though it is fluid, yet it is firm. It is strong, and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered till the lease expires with time. 2. That, though it is large, it is bright and most curiously fine: It is a molten looking-glass, smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack. In this, as in a looking-glass, we may behold the glory of God and the wisdom of his handy work, Ps 19:1. When we look up to heaven above we

should remember it is a mirror or looking-glass, not to show us our own faces, but to be a faint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness of the upper world and its glorious inhabitants.

III. That neither he nor they were able to speak of the glory of God in any proportion to the merit of the subject, Job 37:19,20.

1. He challenges Job to be their director, if he durst undertake the task. He speaks it ironically: "Teach us, if thou canst, what we shall say unto him, Job 37:19. Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldst have us to contend with him on thy behalf; teach us then what we shall say. Canst thou see further into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with thy discoveries, furnish us with instructions."

2. He owns his own insufficiency both in speaking to God and in speaking of him: We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.

Note, The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the divine nature and the administrations of the divine government. Those that through grace know much of God, yet know little, yea, nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect shall come and the veil shall be rent. When we would speak of God we speak confusedly and with great uncertainly, and are soon at a loss and run aground, not for want of matter, but for want of words. As we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss (De Deo etiam vera dicere periculosum est--Even while affirming what is true concerning God we incur risk), so we must conclude with shame and blushing, for having spoken no better. Elihu himself had, for his part, spoken well on God's behalf, and yet is so far from expecting a fee, or thinking that God was beholden to him for it, or that he was fit to be standing counsel for him, that

He is even ashamed of what he has said, not of the cause, but of his own management of it: "Shall it be told him that I speak? Job 37:20. Shall it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service, worthy his notice? By no means; let it never be spoken of," for he fears that the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wronged by a bad painter, and his performance is so far from meriting thanks that it needs pardon. When we have done all we can for God we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants and have nothing at all to boast of. He is afraid of saying any more: If a man speak, if he undertake to plead for God, much more if he offer to plead against him, surely he shall be swallowed up. If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume him; but, if ever so well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery and be over powered by the divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

15 Dost thou know when God disposed them,
and caused the light of his cloud to shine?
16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,
the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?
17 how thy garments *are* warm,
when he quieteth the earth by the south *wind?*
18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky,
which is strong, *and* as a molten looking-glass?
19 Teach us what we shall say unto him;
for we cannot order *our speech* by reason of darkness.
20 Shall it be told him that I speak?
If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.
21 And now *men* see not the bright light which *is* in the clouds:
but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short but great sayings concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself impressed, and desired to impress others, with a holy awe of. He speaks concisely, and in haste, because, it should seem, he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands.

1. He observes that God who has said that he will dwell in the thick darkness and make that his pavilion (2Ch 6:1,Ps 18:11) is in that awful chariot advancing towards them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, Ps 97:2,9. He saw the cloud, with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south; but now it hung so thick, so black, over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light which just before was in the clouds. The light of the sun was now eclipsed. This reminded him of the darkness by reason of which he could not speak (Job 37:19), and made him afraid to go on, Job 37:20. Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, Lu 9:34.

Yet he looks to the north, and sees it clear that way, which gives him hope that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge; they are covered, but not surrounded, with them. He expects that the wind will pass (so it may be read) and cleanse them, such a wind as passed over the earth to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood (Ge 8:1), in token of the return of God's favour; and then fair weather will come out of the north (Job 37:22) and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever.

2. He hastens to conclude, now that God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only clench the nail he had been driving, but make way for what God would say. He observes,

(1.) That with God is terrible majesty. He is a God of glory and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike an awe upon all his attendants and a terror upon all his adversaries. With God is terrible praise (so some), for he is fearful in praises, Ex 15:11.

(2.) That when we speak touching the Almighty we must own that we cannot find him out; our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections, Job 37:23. Can we put the sea into an egg-

shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his providence. His way is in the sea.

(3.) That he is excellent in power. It is the excellency of his power that he can do whatever he pleases in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power are the excellency of it; no creature has an arm like him, so long, so strong.

(4.) That he is not less excellent in wisdom and righteousness, in judgment and plenty of justice, else there would be little excellency in his power. We may be sure that he who can do every thing will do every thing for the best, for he is infinitely wise, and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgment upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in the execution, and he inflicts not more than they deserve.

(5.) That he will not afflict, that is, that he will not afflict willingly; it is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children. He never afflicts but when there is cause and when there is need, and he does not overburden us with affliction, but considers our frame. Some read it thus: "The Almighty, whom we cannot find out, is great in power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and with him is plenty of justice, nor is he extreme to mark what we do amiss."

(6.) He values not the censures of those who are wise in their own conceit: He respecteth them not, Job 37:24. He will not alter his counsels to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him prevail with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the policies of the crafty. No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1Co 1:15.

(7.) From all this it is easy to infer that, since God is great, he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious and will not afflict, men do therefore fear him, for there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared, Ps 130:1-8-8 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God. Men

shall fear him (so some); sooner or later they shall fear him. Those that will not fear the Lord and his goodness shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath.

22 Fair weather cometh out of the north:
with God *is* terrible majesty.
23 *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him out:
he is excellent in power, and in judgment,
and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.
24 Men do therefore fear him:
he respecteth not any *that are* wise of heart.

Job-38

The Lord Convinces Job of Ignorance

Let us observe here,

1. Who speaks--The Lord, Jehovah, not a created angel, but the eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity, for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other than the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterwards spoke from Mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, there with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and from both is inferred the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said, God speaks to men and they do not perceive it (Job 33:14); but this they could not but perceive, and yet we have a more sure word of prophecy, 2Pe 1:19.

2. When he spoke--Then. When they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point, then it was time for God to interpose, whose judgment is according to truth. When we know not who is in the right, and perhaps are doubtful whether we ourselves are, this may satisfy us, That God will determine shortly in the valley of decision, Joe 3:14. Job had silenced his three friends, and yet could not convince them of his integrity in the main. Elihu had silenced Job, and yet could not bring him to acknowledge his mismanagement of this dispute. But

now God comes, and does both, convinces Job first of his unadvised speaking and makes him cry, Peccavi--I have done wrong; and, having humbled him, he puts honour upon him, by convincing his three friends that they had done him wrong. These two things God will, sooner or later, do for his people: he will show them their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will show others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their unjust censures of them.

3. How he spoke--Out of the whirlwind, the rolling and involving cloud, which Elihu took notice of, Job 37:1,2,9. A whirlwind prefaced Ezekiel's vision (Eze 1:4), and Elijah's, 1Ki 19:11. God is said to have his way in the whirlwind (Nah 1:3), and, to show that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. This shows what a mighty voice God's is, that is was not lost, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a whirlwind. Thus God designed to startled Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God answers his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness.

4. To whom he spoke: He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin, and those shall so be humbled whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

5. What he said. We may conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down verbatim what was delivered out of the whirlwind, for we find (Re 10:4) that, when the thunders uttered their voices, John was prepared to write. Or, if it was not written then, yet, the penman of the book being inspired by the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said. The Spirit (says Christ) shall bring to your

remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you. The preface is very searching.

(1.) God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said (Job 38:2): "Who is this that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What! a man? That weak, foolish, despicable, creature--shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? What! my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? Who, where, is he that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge? Let him show his face if he dare, and stand to what he has said." Note, Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels we must own that we are without knowledge.

They are a deep which we cannot fathom; we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them. Yet we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness; but, alas! we do but darken them, instead of explaining them. We confound and perplex ourselves and one another when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs, and reasons, and methods, of his operations of providence and grace. A humble faith and sincere obedience shall see further and better into the secret of the Lord than all the philosophy of the schools, and the searches of science, so called. This first word which God spoke is the more observable because Job, in his repentance, fastens upon it as that which silenced and humbled him, Job 42:3. This he repeated and echoed as the arrow that stuck fast in him: "I am the fool that has darkened counsel." There was some colour to have turned it upon Elihu, as if God meant him, for he spoke last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began; but Job applied it to himself, as it becomes us to do when faithful reproofs are given, and not (as most do) to billet them upon other people.

(2.) He challenges him to give such proofs of his knowledge as would serve to justify his enquiries into the divine counsels (Job 38:3): "Gird up now thy loins like a stout man; prepare thyself for the encounter; I will demand of thee, will put some questions to thee, and answer me if thou canst, before I answer thine." Those that go about to call God to an account must expect to be catechised and called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, Job 13:22. Call thou, and I will answer. "Now make thy words good."

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
2 Who *is* this that darkeneth counsel
by words without knowledge?
3 Gird up now thy loins like a man;
for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.
4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.

For the humbling of Job, God here shows him his ignorance even concerning the earth and the sea. Though so near, though so bulky, yet he could give no account of their origination, much less of heaven above or hell beneath, which are at such a distance, or of the several parts of matter which are so minute, and then, least of all, of the divine counsels.

I. Concerning the founding of the earth. "If he have such a mighty insight, as he pretends to have, into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men."

1. Let him tell where he was when this lower world was made, and whether he was advising of assisting in that wonderful work (Job 38:4): "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Thy pretensions are high; canst thou pretend to his? Wast thou present when the world was made?" See here,

(1.) The greatness and glory of God: I laid the foundations of the earth. This proves him to be the only living and true God, and a God of power (Isa 40:21,Jer 10:11,12), and encourages us to trust in him at all times, Isa 51:13,16.

(2.) The meanness and contemptibleness of man: "Where wast thou then? Thou that hast made such a figure among the children of the east, and settest up for an oracle, and a judge of the divine counsels, where was thou when the foundations of the earth were laid?" So far were we from having any hand in the creation of the world, which might entitle us to a dominion in it, or so much as being witnesses of it, by which we might have gained an insight into it, that we were not then in being. The first man was not, much less were we. It is the honour of Christ that he was present when this was done (Pr 8:22-31,Joh 1:1,2); but we are of yesterday and know nothing. Let us not therefore find fault with the works of God, nor prescribe to him. He did not consult us in making the world, and yet it is well made; why should we expect then that he should take his measures from us in governing it?

2. Let him describe how this world was made, and give a particular account of the manner in which this strong and stately edifice was formed and erected: "Declare, if thou hast so much understanding as thou fanciest thyself to have, what were the advances of that work." Those that pretend to have understanding above others ought to give proof of it. Show my thy faith by thy works, thy knowledge by thy words. Let Job declare it if he can,

(1.) How the world came to be so finely framed, with so much exactness, and such an admirable symmetry and proportion of all the parts of it (Job 38:5): "Stand forth, and tell who laid the measures thereof and stretched out the line upon it." Wast thou the architect that formed the model and then drew the dimensions by rule according to it? The vast bulk of the earth is moulded as regularly as if it had been done by line and measure; but who can

describe how it was cast into this figure? Who can determine its circumference and diameter, and all the lines that are drawn on the terrestrial globe? It is to this day a dispute whether the earth stands still or turns round; how then can we determine by what measures it was first formed?

(2.) How it came to be so firmly fixed. Though it is hung upon nothing, yet it is established, that it cannot be moved; but who can tell upon what the foundations of it are fastened, that it may not sink with its own weight, or who laid the corner-stone thereof, that the parts of it may not fall asunder? Job 38:6. What God does, it shall be for ever (Ec 3:14); and therefore, as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it; it will last, and answer the end, the works of his providence as well as the work of creation; the measures of neither can never be broken; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the foundation and the corner-stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

3. Let him repeat, if he can, the songs of praise which were sung at that solemnity (Job 38:7), when the morning-stars sang together, the blessed angels (the first-born of the Father of light), who, in the morning of time, shone as brightly as the morning star, going immediately before the light which God commanded to shine out of darkness upon the seeds of this lower world, the earth, which was without form and void. They were the sons of God, who shouted for joy when they saw the foundations of the earth laid, because, though it was not made for them, but for the children of men, and though it would increase their work and service, yet they knew that the eternal Wisdom and Word, whom they were to worship (Heb 1:6), would rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and that much of his delight would be in the sons of men, Pr 8:31. The angels are called the sons of God because they bear much of his image, are with him in his house above, and serve him as a son does his father. Now observe here,

(1.) The glory of God, as the Creator of the world, is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his reasonable creatures; for they are qualified and appointed to be the collectors of his praises from the inferior creatures, who can praise him merely as objects that exemplify his workmanship.

(2.) The work of angels is to praise God. The more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it; and, whereas we are so barren and defective in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner.

(3.) They were unanimous in singing God's praises; they sang together with one accord, and there was no jar in their harmony. The sweetest concerts are in praising God.

(4.) They all did it, even those who afterwards fell and left their first estate. Even those who have praised God may, by the deceitful power of sin, be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised.

II. Concerning the limiting of the sea to the place appointed for it, Job 38:8, &c. This refers to the third day's work, when God said (Ge 1:9), Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so.

1. Out of the great deep or chaos, in which earth and water were intermixed, in obedience to the divine command the waters broke forth like a child out of the teeming womb, Job 38:8. Then the waters that had covered the deep, and stood above the mountains, retired with precipitation. At God's rebuke they fled, Ps 104:6,7.

2. This newborn babe is clothed and swaddled, Job 38:9. The cloud is made the garment thereof, with which it is covered, and thick darkness (that is, shores vastly remote and distant from one another and quite in the dark one to another) is a swaddling-band for it. See with what ease the great God manages the raging sea; notwithstanding the violence of its tides, and the strength of its billows, he

manages it as the nurse does the child in swaddling clothes. It is not said, He made rocks and mountains its swaddling bands, but clouds and darkness, something that we are not aware of and should think least likely for such a purpose.

3. There is a cradle too provided for this babe: I broke up for it my decreed place, Job 38:10. Valleys were sunk for it in the earth, capacious enough to receive it, and there it is laid to sleep; and, if it be sometimes tossed with winds, that (as bishop Patrick observes) is but the rocking of the cradle, which makes it sleep the faster. As for the sea, so for every one of us, there is a decreed place; for he that determined the times before appointed determined also the bounds of our habitation.

4. This babe being made unruly and dangerous by the sin of man, which was the original of all unquietness and danger in this lower world, there is also a prison provided for it; bars and doors are set, Job 38:10. And it is said to it, by way of check to its insolence, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further. The sea is God's for he made it, he restrains it; he says to it, Here shall thy proud waves be stayed, Job 38:11. This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea. Though it is so vast a body, and though its motion is sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under check. Its waves rise no higher, its tides roll no further, than God permits; and this is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God (Jer 5:22), and yet why we should encourage ourselves in him, for he that stops the noise of the sea, even the noise of her waves, can, when he pleases, still the tumult of the people, Ps 65:7. It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind and an instance of his patience towards that provoking grace. Though he could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea (and, methinks, every flowing tide twice a day threatens us, and shows what the sea could do, and would do, if God would give it leave), yet he restrains them, being not willing that any should perish, and having reserved the world that now is unto fire, 2Pe 3:7.

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who hath stretched the line upon it?
6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
7 when the morning stars sang together,
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors,
when it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb?
9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
and thick darkness a swaddling band for it,
10 and brake up for it my decreed *place*,
and set bars and doors,
11 and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further:
and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?
12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days;
and caused the dayspring to know his place;
13 that it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
that the wicked might be shaken out of it?
14 It is turned as clay *to* the seal;
and they stand as a garment.

The Lord here proceeds to ask Job many puzzling questions, to convince him of his ignorance, and so to shame him for his folly in prescribing to God. If we will but try ourselves with such interrogatories as these, we shall soon be brought to own that what we know is nothing in comparison with what we know not. Job is here challenged to give an account of six things:--

I. Of the springs of the morning, the day-spring from on high, Job 38:12-15. As there is no visible being of which we may be more firmly assured that it is, so there is none which we are more puzzled in describing, nor more doubtful in determining what it is, than the light. We welcome the morning, and are glad of the day-spring; but,

1. It is not commanded since our days, but what it is it was long before we were born, so that it was neither made by us nor designed primarily for us, but we take it as we find it and as the many generations had it that went before us.

The day-spring knew its place before we knew ours, for we are but of yesterday.

2. It was not we, it was not any man that commanded the morning-light at first, or appointed the place of its springing up and shining forth, or the time of it. The constant and regular succession of day and night was no contrivance of ours; it is the glory of God that it shows, and his handy work, not ours, Ps 19:1,2.

3. It is quite out of our power to alter this course: "Hast thou countermanded the morning since thy days? Hast thou at any time raised the morning light sooner than its appointed time, to serve thy purpose when thou hast waited for the morning, or ordered the day-spring for thy convenience to any other place than its own? No, never. Why then wilt thou pretend to direct the divine counsels, or expect to have the methods of Providence altered in favour of thee?" We may as soon break the covenant of the day and of the night as any part of God's covenant with his people, and particularly this, I will chasten them with the rod of men.

4. It is God that has appointed the day-spring to visit the earth, and diffuses the morning light through the air, which receives it as readily as the clay does the seal (Job 38:14), immediately admitting the impressions of it, so as of a sudden to be all over enlightened by it, as the seal stamps its image on the wax; and they stand as a garment, or as if they were clothed with a garment. The earth puts on a new face every morning, and dresses itself as we do, puts on light as a garment, and is then to be seen.

5. This is made a terror to evil-doers. Nothing is more comfortable to mankind than the light of the morning; it is pleasant to the eyes, it is serviceable to life and the business of it, and the favour of it is universally extended, for it takes hold of the ends of the earth (Job 38:13), and we should dwell, in our hymns to the light, on its advantages to the earth. But God here observes how unwelcome it is to those that do evil, and therefore hate

the light. God makes the light a minister of his justice as well as of his mercy. It is designed to shake the wicked out of the earth, and for that purpose it takes hold of the ends of it, as we take hold of the ends of a garment to shake the dust and moths out of it. Job had observed what a terror the morning light is to criminals, because it discovers them (Job 24:13-16, &c.), and

God here seconds the observation, and asks him whether the world was indebted to him for that kindness? No, the great Judge of the world sends forth the beams of the morning light as his messengers to detect criminals, that they may not only be defeated in their purposes and put to shame, but that they may be brought to condign punishment (Job 38:15), that their light may be withholden from them (that is, that they may lose their comfort, their confidence, their liberties, their lives) and that their high arm, which they have lifted up against God and man, may be broken, and they deprived of their power to do mischief. Whether what is here said of the morning light was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the gospel of Christ, and to give a type of it, I will not say; but I am sure it may serve to put us in mind of the encomiums given to the gospel just at the rising of its morning-star by Zecharias in his Benedictus (Lu 1:78, By the tender mercy of our God the day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to those that sit in darkness, whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, 2Co 4:6), and by the virgin Mary in her Magnificat (Lu 1:51), showing that God, in his gospel, has shown strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty, by that light by which he designed to shake the wicked, to shake wickedness itself out of the earth, and break its high arm.

II. Of the springs of the sea (Job 38:16): "Hast thou entered into them, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Knowest thou what lies in the bottom of the sea, the treasures there hidden in the sands? Or canst thou give an account of the rise and original of the waters of the sea? Vapours are continually exhaled out of the sea. Dost thou

know how the recruits are raised by which it is continually supplied? Rivers are constantly poured into the sea. Dost thou know how they are continually discharged, so as not to overflow the earth? Art thou acquainted with the secret subterraneous passages by which the waters circulate?" God's way in the government of the world is said to be in the sea, and in the great waters (Ps 77:19), intimating that it is hidden from us and not to be pried into by us.

III. Of the gates of death: Have these been open to thee? Job 38:16. Death is a grand secret.

1. We know not beforehand when, and how, and by what means, we or others shall be brought to death, by what road we must go the way whence we shall not return, what disease or what disaster will be the door to let us into the house appointed for all living. Man knows not his time.

2. We cannot describe what death is, how the knot is untied between body and soul, nor how the spirit of a man goes upward (Ec 3:21), to be we know not what and live we know not how, as Mr. Norris expresses; with what dreadful curiosity (says he) does the soul launch out into the vast ocean of eternity and resign to an untried abyss! Let us make it sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death, though it is a way we are to go but once.

3. We have no correspondence at all with separate souls, nor any acquaintance with their state. It is an unknown undiscovered region to which they are removed; we can neither hear from them nor send to them. While we are here, in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither we shall be amazed to find how much we are mistaken.

15 And from the wicked their light is withholden,
and the high arm shall be broken.
16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?
Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?

17 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?
Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

I. Of the breadth of the earth (Job 38:18): Hast thou perceived that? The knowledge of this might seem most level to him and within his reach; yet he is challenged to declare this if he can. We have our residence on the earth, God has given it to the children of men. But who ever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe? yet, small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. Job had never sailed round the world, nor any before him; so little did men know the breadth of the earth that it was but a few ages ago that the vast continent of America was discovered, which had, time out of mind, lain hidden. The divine perfection is longer than the earth and broader than the sea; it is therefore presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

II. Of the place and way of light and darkness. Of the day-spring he had spoken before (Job 38:12) and he returns to speak of it again (Job 38:19): Where is the way where light dwells? And again (Job 38:24): By what way is the light parted? He challenges him to describe,

1. How the light and darkness were at first made. When God, in the beginning, first spread darkness upon the face of the deep, and afterwards commanded the light to shine out of darkness, by that mighty word, Let there be light, was Job a witness to the order, to the operation? can he tell where the fountains of light and darkness are, and where those mighty princes keep their courts distance, while in one world they rule alternately? Though we long ever so much either for the shining forth of the morning or the shadows of the evening, we know not whither to send, or go, to fetch them, nor can tell the paths to the house thereof, Job 38:20. We were not then born, nor is the number of our days so great that we can describe the birth of that first-born of the visible creation, Job 38:21. Shall we then undertake to discourse of God's counsels,

which were from eternity, or to find out the paths to the house thereof, to solicit for the alteration of them? God glories in it that he forms the light and creates the darkness; and if we must take those as we find them, take those as they come, and quarrel with neither, but make the best of both, then we must, in like manner, accommodate ourselves to the peace and the evil which God likewise created. Isa 45:7.

2. How they still keep their turns interchangeably. It is God that makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice (Ps 65:8); for it is his order, and no order of ours, that is executed by the outgoings of the morning light and the darkness of the night. We cannot so much as tell whence they come nor whither they go (Job 38:24): By what way is the light parted in the morning, when, in an instant, it shoots itself into all the parts of the air above the horizon, as if the morning light flew upon the wings of an east wind, so swiftly, so strongly, is it carried, scattering the darkness of the night, as the east wind does the clouds? Hence we read of the wings of the morning (Ps 139:9), on which the light is conveyed to the uttermost parts of the sea, and scattered like an east wind upon the earth. It is a marvellous change that passes over us every morning by the return of the light and every evening by the return of the darkness; but we expect them, and so they are no surprise nor uneasiness to us. If we would, in like manner, reckon upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon expect perpetual day nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning. God has set the one over against the other, like the day and night; and so must we, Ec 7:14.

III. Of the treasures of the snow and hail (Job 38:22,23): "Hast thou entered into these and taken a view of them?" In the clouds the snow and hail are generated, and thence they come in such abundance that one would think there were treasures of them laid up in store there, whereas indeed they are produced extempore--suddenly, as I may say, and pro re nata--for the occasion. Sometimes they

come so opportunely, to serve the purposes of Providence, in God's fighting for his people and against his and their enemies, that one would think they were laid up as magazines, or stores of arms, ammunition, and provisions, against the time of trouble, the day of battle and war, when God will either contend with the world in general (as in the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fetched out of these treasures to drown a wicked world, that waged war with Heaven) or with some particular persons or parties, as when God out of these treasures fetched great hail-stones wherewith to fight against the Canaanites, Jos 10:11. See what folly it is to strive against God, who is thus prepared for battle and war, and how much it is our interest to make our peace with him and to keep ourselves in his love. God can fight as effectually with snow and hail, if he please, as with thunder and lightning or the sword of an angel!

18 Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth?
Declare if thou knowest it all.
19 Where *is* the way *where* light dwelleth?
And *as for* darkness, where *is* the place thereof,
20 that thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,
and that thou shouldest know the paths *to* the house thereof?
21 Knowest thou *it*, because thou wast then born?
or *because* the number of thy days *is* great?
22 Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?
Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,
23 which I have reserved against the time of trouble,
against the day of battle and war?
24 By what way is the light parted,
which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?
25 Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters,
or a way for the lightning of thunder;

Hitherto God had put such questions to Job as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and short-sightedness. Now he comes, in the same manner, to show his impotency and weakness. As it is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought not to arraign the divine counsels, so it is but little that he can do, and therefore he ought not to

oppose the proceedings of Providence. Let him consider what great things God does, and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for him.

I. God has thunder, and lightning, and rain, and frost, at command, but Job has not, and therefore let him not dare to compare himself with God, or to contend with him. Nothing is more uncertain than what weather it shall be, nor more out of our reach to appoint; it shall be what weather pleases God, not what pleases us, unless, as becomes us, whatever pleases God pleases us. Concerning this observe here,

1. How great God is.

(1.) He has a sovereign dominion over the waters, has appointed them their course, even then when they seem to overflow and to be from under his check, Job 38:25. He has divided a water-course, directs the rain where to fall, even when the shower is most violent, with as much certainty as if it were conveyed by canals or conduit-pipes. Thus the hearts of kings are said to be in God's hand; and as the rains, those rivers of God, he turns them whithersoever he will. Every drop goes as it is directed. God has sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more return to cover the earth; and we see that he is able to make good what he has promised, for he has the rain in a water-course.

(2.) He has dominion over the lightning and the thunder, which go not at random, but in the way that he directs them. They are mentioned here because he prepares the lightnings for the rain, Ps 135:7. Let not those that fear God be afraid of the lightning or the thunder, for they are not blind bullets, but go the way that God himself, who means no hurt to them, directs.

(3.) In directing the course of the rain he does not neglect the wilderness, the desert land (Job 38:26,27), where no man is.

[1.] Where there is no man to be employed in taking care of the productions. God's providence reaches further than man's industry. If he had not more kindness for many of the inferior creatures than man has, it would go ill with them. God can make the earth fruitful without any art or pains of ours, Ge 2:5,6. When there was not a man to till the ground, yet there went up a mist and watered it. But we cannot make it fruitful without God; it is he that gives the increase.

[2.] Where there is no man to be provided for nor to take the benefit of the fruits that are produced. Though God does with very peculiar favour visit and regard man, yet he does not overlook the inferior creatures, but causes the bud of the tender herb to spring forth for food for all flesh, as well as for the service of man. Even the wild asses shall have their thirst quenched, Ps 104:11. God has enough for all, and wonderfully provides even for those creatures that man neither has service from nor makes provision for.

(4.) He is, in a sense, the Father of the rain, Job 38:28. It has no other father. He produces it by his power; he governs and directs it, and makes what use he pleases of it. Even the small drops of the dew he distils upon the earth, as the God of nature; and, as the God of grace, he rains righteousness upon us and is himself as the dew unto Israel. See Ho 14:5,Mic 5:7.

(5.) The ice and the frost, by which the waters are congealed and the earth incrustrated, are produced by his providence, Job 38:29,30. These are very common things, which lessens the strangeness of them. But, considering what a vast change is made by them in a very little time, how the waters are hid as with a stone, as with a grave-stone, laid upon them (so thick, so strong, is the ice that covers them), and the face even of the deep is sometimes frozen, we may well ask, "Out of whose womb came the ice? What created power could produce such a wonderful work?" No power but that of the Creator himself. Frost and snow come from him, and therefore should lead our thoughts and meditations to him who does such great

things, past finding out. And we shall the more easily bear the inconveniences of winter-weather if we learn to make this good use of it.

2. How weak man is. Can he do such things as these? Could Job? No, Job 38:34,35.

(1.) He cannot command one shower of rain for the relief of himself or his friends: "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, those bottles of heaven, that abundance of waters may cover thee, to water thy fields when they are dry and parched?" If we lift up our voice to God, to pray for rain, we may have it (Zec 10:1); but if we lift up our voice to the clouds, to demand it, they will soon tell us they are not at our beck, and we shall go without it, Jer 14:22. The heavens will not her the earth unless God hear them, Ho 2:21. See what poor, indigent, depending creatures we are; we cannot do without rain, nor can we have it when we will.

(2.) He cannot commission one flash of lightning, if he had a mind to make use of it for the terror of his enemies (Job 38:35): "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go on thy errand, and do the execution thou desirest? Will they come at thy call, and say unto thee, Here we are?" No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be ministers of ours. Why should they, since the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God? See Lu 9:55.

26 to cause it to rain on the earth, *where* no man *is;*
on the wilderness, wherein *there is* no man;
27 to satisfy the desolate and waste *ground;*
and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?
28 Hath the rain a father?
Or who hath begotten the drops of dew?
29 Out of whose womb came the ice?
And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?
30 The waters are hid as *with* a stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.
31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades,
or loose the bands of Orion?

I. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognizance, but we have them not under ours. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. God mentions particularly, not the planets, which move in lower orbs, but the fixed stars, which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding their vast distance, not upon the minds of men or the events of providence (men's fate is not determined by their stars), but upon the ordinary course of nature; they are set for signs and seasons, for days and years, Ge 1:14. And if the stars have such a dominion over this earth (Job 38:33), though they have their place in the heavens and are but mere matter, much more has he who is their Maker and ours, and who is an Eternal Mind. Now see how weak we are.

1. We cannot alter the influences of the stars (Job 38:31), not theirs that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring: Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?--that magnificent constellation which makes so great a figure (none greater), and dispenses rough and unpleasing influences, which we cannot control nor repel. Both summer and winter will have their course. God can change them when he pleases, can make the spring cold, and so bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, and the winter warm, and so loose the bands of Orion; but we cannot.

2. It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars, nor are we entrusted with the guidance of them. God, who calls the stars by their names (Ps 147:4), calls them forth in their respective seasons, appointing them the time of their rising and setting. But this is not our province; we cannot bring forth Mazzaroth--the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus--those in the northern, Job 38:32. God can bring forth the stars to battle (as he did when in their courses they fought against Sisera) and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make; but man cannot do so.

3. We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars (the government they are under, and the government they are entrusted with, for they both rule and are ruled), but

utterly unacquainted with it; we know not the ordinances of heaven, Job 38:33. So far are we from being able to change them that we can give no account of them; they are a secret to us. Shall we then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to set the dominion of the stars upon the earth, we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to govern the world?

II. God is the author and giver, the father and fountain, of all wisdom and understanding, Job 38:36. The souls of men are nobler and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves, and shine more brightly. The powers and faculties of reason with which man is endued, and the wonderful performances of thought, bring him into some alliance to the blessed angels; and whence comes this light, but from the Father of lights? Who else has put wisdom into the inner parts of man, and given understanding to the heart?

1 The rational soul itself, and its capacities, come from him as the God of nature; for he forms the spirit of man within him. We did not make our own souls, nor can we describe how they act, nor how they are united to our bodies. He only that made them knows them, and knows how to manage them. He fashioneth men's hearts alike in some things, and yet unlike in others.

2. True wisdom, with its furniture and improvement, comes from him as the God of grace and the Father of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, when we have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God and do our duty, but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

III. God has the clouds under his cognizance and government, but so have not we, Job 38:37. Can any man, with all his wisdom, undertake to number the clouds, or (as it may be read) to declare and describe the nature of them?

Though they are near us, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance. And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire and the clods cleave fast together (Job 38:38), who can stay the bottles of heaven? Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God are herein to be acknowledged, that he gives the earth rain enough, but does not surfeit it, softens it, but does not drown it, makes it fit for the plough, but not unfit for the seed. As we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day, without God; so necessary, so constant, is our dependence upon him.

IV. God provides food for the inferior creatures, and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals, and therefore some transfer to it the last three verses of this chapter, which speak of the provision made,

1. For the lions, Job 38:39,40. "Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee, for they are above thee; but on the earth thou thinkest thyself paramount; let us try that then: Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? Thou valuest thyself upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels, that were fed at thy crib; but wilt thou undertake the maintenance of the lions, and the young lions, when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, needest not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee: thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them: thou darest not do it; shouldst thou come to feed them, they would seize upon thee.

But I do it." See the all-sufficiency of the divine providence: it has wherewithal to satisfy the desire of every living thing, even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the divine Providence, that, wherever it has given life, it will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable, but dangerous, to man. And see its sovereignty,

that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures. The harmless sheep are torn to pieces, to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

2. For the young ravens, Job 38:41. As ravenous beasts, so ravenous birds, are fed by the divine Providence. Who but God provides for the raven his food? Man does not; he takes care only of those creatures that are, or may be, useful to him. But God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even the meanest and least valuable. The ravens' young ones are in a special manner necessitous, and God supplies them, Ps 147:9. God's feeding the fowls, especially these fowls (Mt 6:26), is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here,

(1.) What distress the young ravens are often in: They wander for lack of meat. The old ones, they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young: and indeed those that are ravenous to others are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural.

(2.) What they are supposed to do in that distress: They cry, for they are noisy clamorous creatures, and this is interpreted as crying to God. It being the cry of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens may encourage us in our prayers, though we can but cry, Abba, Father.

(3.) What God does for them. Some way or other he provides for them, so that they grow up, and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens certainly will not be wanting to his people or theirs. This, being but one instance of many of the divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God does, every day, beyond what we are aware of.

32 Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?
Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?
Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?
34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
that abundance of waters may cover thee?
35 Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go,
and say unto thee, Here we *are?*
36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?
Or who hath given understanding to the heart?
37 Who can number the clouds in wisdom?
Or who can stay the bottles of heaven,
38 when the dust groweth into hardness,
and the clods cleave fast together?
39 Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?
or fill the appetite of the young lions,
40 when they couch in *their* dens,
and abide in the covert to lie in wait?
41 Who provideth for the raven his food?
When his young ones cry unto God,
they wander for lack of meat.

Job-39

1 Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?

God here shows Job what little acquaintance he had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the deserts and live at large, but are the care of the divine Providence. As,

I The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them is the bringing forth and bringing up of their young ones. For, as every individual is fed, so every species of animals is preserved, by the care of the divine Providence, and, for aught we know, none extinct to this day. Observe here,

1. Concerning the production of their young,

(1.) Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, Job 39:1,2. Shall we pretend to tell what is in the

womb of Providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind or a wild goat?

(2.) Though they bring forth their young with a great deal of difficulty and sorrow, and have no assistance from man, yet, by the good providence of God, their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, Job 39:3. Some think it is intimated (Ps 29:9) that God by thunder helps the hinds in calving. Let it be observed, for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young; and shall he not much more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children in covenant with him?

2. Concerning the growth of their young, (Job 39:4): They are in good liking; though they are brought forth in sorrow, after their dams have suckled them awhile they shift for themselves in the corn-fields, and are no more burdensome to them, which is an example to children, when they have grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood and to requite their parents.

II The wild ass, a creature we frequently read of in Scripture, some say untameable. Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be governed. Two things Providence has allotted to the wild ass:--

1. An unbounded liberty (Job 39:5): Who but God has sent out the wild ass free? He has given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispensation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour; the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, Freedom from service, and liberty to range at pleasure, are but the privileges of a wild ass. It is a pity that any of the children of men should covet such a liberty, or value themselves on it. It is better to labour and be good for something than ramble and be good for nothing. But if, among men, Providence sets some at liberty and suffers them to live at ease, while others are doomed to servitude, we must not marvel at the matter: it is so among the brute-creatures.

2. An unenclosed lodging (Job 39:6): Whose house I have made the wilderness, where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and snuff up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do (Jer 2:24), as if he had to live upon the air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The tame ass, that labours, and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land: but the wild ass, that will have his liberty, must have it in a barren land. He that will not labour, let him not eat. He that will shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needs. Jacob, the shepherd, has good red pottage to spare, when Esau, a sportsman, is ready to perish for hunger. A further description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, Job 39:7,8.

(1.) He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection: He scorns the multitude of the city. If they attempt to take him, and in order to that surround him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the driver is nothing to him. He laughs at those that live in the tumult and bustle of cities (so bishop Patrick), thinking himself happier in the wilderness; and opinion is the rate of things.

(2.) Having no owner, he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift for himself: The range of the mountains is his pasture, and a bare pasture it is; there he searches after here and there a green thing, as he can find it and pick it up; whereas the labouring asses have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From the untameableness of this and other creatures we may infer how unfit we are to give law to Providence, who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

III. The unicorn--rhem, a strong creature (Nu 23:22), a stately proud creature, Ps 112:10. He is able to serve, but not willing; and God here challenges Job to force him to it. Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. "Since thou dost pretend" (says God) "to bring every thing beneath thy sway, begin with the unicorn, and try thy

skill upon him. Now that thy oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in their stead (Job 39:9) and whether he will be content with the provision thou usedst to make for them: Will he abide by thy crib? No;"

1. "Thou canst not tame him, nor bind him with his band, nor set him to draw the harrow," Job 39:10. There are creatures that are willing to serve man, that seem to take a pleasure in serving him, and to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to serve him, which is the effect of sin. Man has revolted from his subjection to his Maker, and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good-will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to him. Though the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve him, nor submit to his hand in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not feræ naturæ--of a wild nature, in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him?

2. "Thou darest not trust him; though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him, as thou dost with thy asses or oxen, which a little child may lead or drive, leaving to them all the pains. Thou wilt never depend upon the wild bull, as likely to come to thy harvest-work, much less to go through it, to bring home thy seed and gather it into thy barn," Job 39:11,12. And, because he will not serve about the corn, he is not so well fed as the tame ox, whose mouth was not to be muzzled in treading out the corn; but therefore he will not draw the plough, because he that made him never designed him for it. A disposition to labour is as much the gift of God as an ability for it; and it is a great mercy if, where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart; it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for, as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild

and abandoned to the deserts who have no mind either to take pains or to do good.

Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?
2 Canst thou number the months *that* they fulfil?
Or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?
3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones,
they cast out their sorrows.
4 Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with corn;
they go forth, and return not unto them.
5 Who hath sent out the wild ass free?
Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?
6 whose house I have made the wilderness,
and the barren land his dwellings.
7 He scorneth the multitude of the city,
neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.
8 The range of the mountains *is* his pasture,
and he searcheth after every green thing.
9 Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee,
or abide by thy crib?
10 Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow?
Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?
11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength *is* great?
Or wilt thou leave thy labor to him?
12 Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed,
and gather *it into* thy barn?
13 *Gavest thou* the goodly wings unto the peacocks?
or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but it never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observes,

I. Something that it has in common with the peacock, that is, beautiful feathers Job 39:13): Gavest thou proud wings unto the peacocks? so some read it. Fine feathers make proud birds. The peacock is an emblem of pride; when he struts, and shows his fine feathers, Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet is a foolish bird; for wisdom does not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the

peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them; why then should we repine if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford to wear? God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable that make the finest show. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale than the tail of the peacock, the eye of the eagle and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful wings and feathers of the ostrich, which can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

II. Something that is peculiar to itself,

1. Carelessness of her young. It is well that this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very bad character. Observe,

(1.) How she exposes her eggs; she does not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do (Ps 84:3), and there lay eggs and hatch her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young. But the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good; they may for her, for she will not warm them, Job 39:14. Nay, she takes no care to preserve them: The foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, Job 39:15. But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species has not perished? We must suppose either that God, by a special providence, with the heat of the sun and the sand (so some think), hatches the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the neglected young ones of the raven, or that, though the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, yet not always.

(2.) The reason why she does thus expose her eggs. It is,

[1.] For want of natural affection (Job 39:16): She is hardened against her young ones. To be hardened against any is unamiable, even in a brute-creature, much more in a

rational creature that boasts of humanity, especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves and therefore merit compassion, that give no provocation and therefore merit no hard usage: but it is worst of all for her to be hardened against her own young ones, as though they were not hers, whereas really they are parts of herself. Her labour in laying her eggs is in vain and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour that are least in fear of losing it.

[2.] For want of wisdom (Job 39:17): God has deprived her of wisdom. This intimates that the art which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young is God's gift, and that, where it exists not, God denies it, that by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for,

First, As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs so careless many people are of their own souls; they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe, leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations, which is a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom.

Secondly, So careless are many parents of their children; some of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their children's souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world through lust, which will certainly crush them. Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country that they had never been born.

Thirdly, So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside; but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in danger, but, if she herself be in danger, no creature shall strive more to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, Job 39:18. Then she lifts up her wings on high (the strength of which then stands her in better stead than their beauty), and, with the help of them, runs so fast that a horseman at full speed cannot overtake her: She scorneth the horse and his rider. Those that are least under the law of natural affection often contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse when such an animal as the ostrich shall out-run him.

14 which leaveth her eggs in the earth,
and warmeth them in the dust,
15 and forgetteth that the foot may crush them,
or that the wild beast may break them.
16 She is hardened against her young ones, as though *they were* not hers:
her labor is in vain without fear;
17 because God hath deprived her of wisdom,
neither hath he imparted to her understanding.
18 What time she lifteth up herself on high,
she scorneth the horse and his rider.
19 Hast thou given the horse strength?
Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

God, having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong and despise man, here shows it in one scarcely inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame and serviceable to man, and that is the horse, especially the horse that is prepared against the day of battle and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems, there was, in Job's country, a noble generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept many, though they are not mentioned among his possessions, cattle for use in husbandry being there valued more than those for state and war, which alone horses were then reserved for, and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put

to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

1. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit (Job 39:19): Hast thou given the horse strength? He uses his strength for man, but has it not from him: God gave it to him, who is the fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself delights not in the strength of the horse (Ps 147:10), but has told us that a horse is a vain thing for safety, Ps 33:17. For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man has so much strength as the horse has, nor is of so stout and bold a spirit, not to be made afraid as a grasshopper, but daring and forward to face danger. It is a mercy to man to have such a servant, which, though very strong, submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner. But let not the strength of a horse be trusted to, Ho 14:3,Ps 20:7,Isa 31:1,3.

2. That his neck and nostrils look great. His neck is clothed with thunder, with a large and flowing mane, which makes him formidable and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils, when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about, is terrible, Job 39:20. Perhaps there might be at that time, and in that country, a more stately breed of horses than any we have now. 3. That he is very fierce and furious in battle, and charges with an undaunted courage, though he pushes on in imminent danger of his life.

(1.) See how frolicsome he is (Job 39:21): He paws in the valley, scarcely knowing what ground he stands upon. He is proud of his strength, and he has much more reason to be so as using his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass that uses it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him Job 39:8.

(2.) See how forward he is to engage: He goes on to meet the armed men, animated, not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by the sound of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate

courage, and make him spring forward with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, Ha! ha! Job 39:25. How wonderfully are the brute-creatures fitted for and inclined to the services for which they were designed.

(3.) See how fearless he is, how he despises death and the most threatening dangers, (Job 39:22): He mocks at fear, and makes a jest of it; slash at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear, to drive him back, he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider.

(4.) See how furious he is. He curvets and prances, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy that one would think he even swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, Job 39:24. High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war-horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners, Jer 8:6. Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God and the fatal consequences of sin.

Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death that is the wages of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty in battle-array; he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turns he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believes not that it is the sound of the trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee

20 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?
The glory of his nostrils *is* terrible.
21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in *his* strength:
he goeth on to meet the armed men.
22 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted;

neither turneth he back from the sword.
23 The quiver rattleth against him,
the glittering spear and the shield.
24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage:
neither believeth he that *it is* the sound of the trumpet.
25 He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha!
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.
26 Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom,
and stretch her wings toward the south?

The birds of the air are proofs of the wonderful power and providences of God, as well as the beasts of the earth; God here refers particularly to two stately ones:--

1 The hawk, a noble bird of great strength and sagacity, and yet a bird of prey, Job 39:26. This bird is here taken notice of for her flight, which is swift and strong, and especially for the course she steers towards the south, whither she follows the sun in winter, out of the colder countries in the north, especially when she is to cast her plumes and renew them. This is her wisdom, and it was God that gave her this wisdom, not man. Perhaps the extraordinary wisdom of the hawk's flight after her prey was not used then for men's diversion and recreation, as it has been since. It is a pity that the reclaimed hawk, which is taught to fly at man's command and to make him sport, should at any time be abused to the dishonour of God, since it is from God that she receives that wisdom which makes her flight entertaining and serviceable.

2 The eagle, a royal bird, and yet a bird of prey too, the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of,

(1.) For the height of her flight. No bird soars so high, has so strong a wind, nor can so well bear the light of the sun. Now, "Doth she mount at thy command? Job 39:27. Is it by any strength she has from thee? or dost thou direct her flight? No; it is by the natural power and instinct God has

given her that she will soar out of thy sight, much more out of thy call."

(2.) For the strength of her nest. Her house is her castle and strong-hold; she makes it on high and on the rock, the crag of the rock (Job 39:28), which sets her and her young out of the reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins as the eagle in her nest on high, in the clefts of the rock; but I will bring thee down thence, saith the Lord, Jer 49:16. The higher bad men sit above the resentments of the earth the nearer they ought to think themselves to the vengeance of Heaven.

(3.) For her quicksightedness (Job 39:29): Her eyes behold afar off, not upwards, but downwards, in quest of her prey. In this she is an emblem of a hypocrite, who, while, in the profession of religion, he seems to rise towards heaven, keeps his eye and heart upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, some widow's house or other that he hopes to devour, under pretence of devotion.

(4.) For the way she has of maintaining herself and her young. She preys upon living animals, which she seizes and tears to pieces, and thence carries to her young ones, which are taught to suck up blood; they do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men that have reason and conscience to thirst after blood is what could scarcely be believed if there had not been in every age wretched instances of it. She also preys upon the dead bodies of men: Where the slain are, there is she, These birds of prey (in another sense than the horse, Job 39:25) smell the battle afar off.

Therefore, when a great slaughter is to be made among the enemies of the church, the fowls are invited to the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings and captains, Re 19:17,18. Our Saviour refers to this instinct of the eagle, Mt 24:28. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Every creature will make towards that which is its proper food; for he that provides the creatures their food has implanted in them that inclination.

These and many such instances of natural power and sagacity in the inferior creatures, which we cannot account for, oblige us to confess our own weakness and ignorance and to give glory to God as the fountain of all being, power, wisdom, and perfection.

27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command,
and make her nest on high?
28 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock,
upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.
29 From thence she seeketh the prey,
and her eyes behold afar off.
30 Her young ones also suck up blood:
and where the slain *are*, there *is* she.

Job-40

1 Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said,

Here is, I. A humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, to show him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature, what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of Providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here as the application of the whole. It should seem, God paused awhile, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, Job 40:1,2. This is not said to be spoken out of the whirlwind, as before; and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, 1Ki 19:12,13. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and then it does wonders. Though Job had not spoken any thing, yet God is said to answer him; for he knows men's thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their silence. Here,

1. God puts a convincing question to him: "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom or prescribe to his will? Shall God receive instruction from every peevish complainer, and change the measures he has taken to please him?" It is a question with disdain. Shall any teach God knowledge? Job 21:22. It is intimated that those who quarrel with God do, in effect, go about to teach him how to mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God is justly looked upon as his enemy; and shall he pretend so far to have prevailed in the contest as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open; we are depending creatures, but he is the sovereign Creator; and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty? The answer is easy. No; it is the greatest folly in the world. Is it wisdom to contend with him whom it will certainly be our ruin to oppose and unspeakably our interest to submit to?

2. He demands a speedy reply to it: "He that reproaches God let him answer this question to his own conscience, and answer it thus, Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty or to instruct him. Let him answer all those questions which I have put, if he can. Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar, to his confusion." Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he says or does.

II. Job's humble submission thereupon. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow. When his friends reasoned with him he did not yield; but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Spirit of truth shall come, he shall convince. They had condemned him for a wicked man; Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him (Job 34:7,8,37); but God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better

treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. This the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God.

1. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification (Job 40:4): "Behold, I am vile, not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable, in my own eyes." He is now sensible that he has sinned, and therefore calls himself vile. Sin debases us, and penitents abase themselves, reproach themselves, are ashamed, yea, even confounded. "I have acted undutifully to my Father, ungratefully to my benefactor, unwisely for myself; and therefore I am vile." Job now vilifies himself as much as ever he had justified and magnified himself. Repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him: but now he is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God or to produce any thing worth his notice, the veriest dunghill-worm that ever crawled upon God's ground.

While his friends talked with him, he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but, when God talked with him, he had nothing to say, for, in comparison with him, he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself; and therefore, What shall I answer thee? God demanded an answer, Job 40:2. Here he gives the reason of his silence; it was not because he was sullen, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and, in token of their shame, lay their hand upon their mouth.

2. He promises not to offend any more as he had done; for Elihu had told him that this was meet to be said unto God. When we have spoken amiss we must repent of it and not repeat it nor stand to it. He enjoins himself silence (Job

40:4): "I will lay my hand upon my mouth, will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out in intemperate speeches." It is bad to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought and gives it an imprimatur--a sanction; it is publishing the seditious libel; and therefore, if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth and let it go no further (Pr 30:32) and that will be an evidence for thee that that which thou thoughtest thou allowest not. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves: "Once have I spoken amiss, yea, twice," that is, "divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done: I will not answer; I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again; I will proceed no further." Observe here what true repentance is.

(1.) It is to rectify our errors, and the false principles we went upon in doing as we did. What we have long, and often, and vigorously maintained, once, yea, twice, we must retract as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake, not adhere to it any longer, but take shame to ourselves for holding it so long.

(2.) It is to return from every by-path and to proceed not one step further in it: "I will not add" (so the word is); "I will never indulge my passion so much again, nor give myself such a liberty of speech, will never say as I have said nor do as I have done." Till it comes to this, we come short of repentance. Further observe, Those who dispute with God will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God, and talked very boldly, how plain he would make his case, and how sure he was that he should be justified. As a prince he would go near unto him (Job 31:37); he would come even to his seat (Job 23:3); but he has soon enough of it; he lets fall his plea and will not answer. "Lord, the wisdom and right are all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning them."

2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him?*

He that reproveth God, let him answer it.
3 Then Job answered the Lord, and said,
4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?
I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.
5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer:
yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

The Manifestations of God's Power

6 Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

Job was greatly humbled for what God had already said, but not sufficiently; he was brought low, but not low enough; and therefore God here proceeds to reason with him in the same manner and to the same purport as before, Job 40:6. Observe,

1. Those who duly receive what they have heard from God, and profit by it, shall hear more from him.

2. Those who are truly convinced of sin, and penitent for it, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced and to be made more deeply penitent. Those who are under convictions, who have their sins set in order before their eyes and their hearts broken for them, must learn from this instance not to catch at comfort too soon; it will be everlasting when it comes, and therefore it is necessary that we be prepared for it by deep humiliation, that the wound be searched to the bottom and not skinned over, and that we do not make more haste out of our convictions than good speed. When our hearts begin to melt and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it.

God begins with a challenge (Job 40:7), as before (Job 38:3): "Gird up thy loins now like a man; if thou hast the courage and confidence thou hast pretended to, show them now; but thou wilt soon be made to see and own thyself no match for me." This is that which every proud heart must

be brought to at last, either by its repentance or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be, sooner or later, brought. We must acknowledge,

I. That we cannot vie with God for justice, that the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but that we are unrighteous and unholy in our conduct towards him; we have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for (Job 40:8): "Wilt thou disannul my judgment? Wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error, to reverse the judgment I have given as erroneous and unjust?" Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way: I cry out of wrong, says he, but I am not heard; but such language as this is by no means to be suffered. God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulled, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to call in question. "Wilt thou," says God, "condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation?

Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee because thou canst not otherwise clear thyself from the censures thou liest under?" Our duty is to condemn ourselves, that God may be righteous. David is therefore ready to own the evil he has done in God's sight, that God may be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges, Ps 51:4. See Ne 9:33,Da 9:7. But those are very proud, and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who, to clear themselves, will condemn God; and the day is coming when, if the mistake be not rectified in time by repentance, the eternal judgment will be both the confutation of the plea and the confusion of the prisoner, for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness and all the world shall become guilty before him.

II. That we cannot vie with God for power; and therefore, as it is great impiety, so it is great impudence to contest with him, and is as much against our interest as it is against reason and justice (Job 40:9): "Hast thou an arm like God, equal to his in length and strength? Or canst thou thunder

with a voice like him, as he did (Job 37:1,2), or does now out of the whirlwind?" To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself to contest with God, he shows him,

1. That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Sometimes, among men, controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have justice on his side; but, if the controversy were put upon that issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the forces he could raise against the Almighty would be but like briers and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa 27:4. "Hast thou, a poor weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his who upholds all things?" The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependent on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited. He can do every thing without us; we can do nothing without him; and therefore we have not an arm like God.

2. That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes among men go a great way towards the gaining of a point: "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him? No; his voice will soon drown thine and one of his thunders will overpower and overrule all thy whispers." Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding conquering force as God can, who speaks, and it is done. his creating voice is called his thunder (Ps 104:7), so is that voice of his with which he terrifies and discomfits his enemies, 1Sa 2:10. The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can never pretend to imitate God's thunder.

III. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty, Job 40:10. "If thou wilt enter into a comparison with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best attire: Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency. Appear in all the martial pomp, in all the royal pageantry that thou hast; make the best of every thing that will set thee off: Array

thyself with glory and beauty, such as may awe thy enemies and charm thy friends; but what is it all to the divine majesty and beauty? No more than the light of a glow-worm to that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength." God decks himself with such majesty and glory as are the terror of devils and all the powers of darkness and make them tremble; he arrays himself with such glory and beauty as are the wonder of angels and all the saints in light and make them rejoice.

David could dwell all his days in God's house, to behold the beauty of the Lord. But, in comparison with this, what is all the majesty and excellency by which princes think to make themselves feared, and all the glory and beauty by which lovers think to make themselves beloved? If Job think, in contending with God, to carry the day by looking great and making a figure, he is quite mistaken. The sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, when God shines forth.

IV. That we cannot vie with God for dominion over the proud, Job 40:11-14. here the cause is put upon this short issue: if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compete with God. Observe here,

1 The justice Job is here challenged to do, and that is to bring the proud low with a look. If Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able to do this.

(1.) It is here supposed that God can do it and will do it himself, else he would not have put it thus upon Job. By this God proves himself to be God, that he resists the proud, sits Judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here,

[1.] That proud people are wicked people, and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world both towards God and man.

[2.] Proud people will certainly be abased and brought low; for pride goes before destruction. If they bend not, they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them, to their everlasting confusion. The wicked will be trodden down in their place, that is, Wherever they are found, though they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet even there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth, and power, and interest, to which their place entitles them, will not be their security.

[3.] The wrath of God, scattered among the proud, will humble them, and break them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day and sometimes does in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him. Who knows the power of his anger?

[4.] God can and does easily abase proud tyrants; he can look upon them, and bring them low, can overwhelm them with shame, and fear, and utter ruin, by one angry look, as he can, by a gracious look, revive the hearts of the contrite ones.

[5.] He can and will at last do it effectually (Job 40:13), not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but hide them in the dust, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew and hid in the sand (Ex 2:12), that is, they shall be brought not only to death, but to the grave, that pit out of which there is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion and be no more remembered than those that are hidden in the dust, out of sight and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles. They are hidden together; not their rest, but their shame together is in the dust, Job 17:16.

Nay, they are treated as malefactors (who, when condemned, had their faces covered, as Haman's was: He binds their faces in secret) or as dead men: Lazarus, in the

grave, had his face bound about. Thus complete will be the victory that God will gain, at last, over proud sinners that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Does he thus hate proud men? Then he is holy. Will he thus punish them? Then he is the just Judge of the world. Can he thus humble them? Then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hidden him in the sand of the Red Sea, Jethro thence inferred that doubtless the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly he was above them, he was too hard for them, Ex 18:11. See Re 19:1,2.

(2.) It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarrelling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath towards heaven, as if he thought thereby to bring God himself to his mind. "Come," says God, "try thy hand first upon proud men, and thou wilt soon see how little they value the rage of thy wrath; and shall I then regard it, or be moved by it?" Job had complained of the prosperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with mal-administration for suffering it; but he ought not to find fault, except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, no doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him or to teach him how to prescribe to him or to teach him how to govern the world. Unless we had an arm like God we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2 The justice which is here promised to be done him if he can perform such mighty works as these (Job 40:14): "They will I also confess unto thee that thy right hand is sufficient to save thee, though, after all, it would be too weak to contend with me." It is the innate pride and ambition of man that he would be his own saviour (would have his own hands sufficient for him and be independent), but it is presumption to pretend that he is. Our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice. Unless we could by

our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save ourselves; but, if we could, God himself would confess it. He never did nor ever will defraud any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But, since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit ourselves.

7 Gird up thy loins now like a man:
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment?
Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?
9 Hast thou an arm like God?
Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?
10 Deck thyself now *with* majesty and excellency;
and array thyself with glory and beauty.
11 Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath:
and behold every one *that is* proud, and abase him.
12 Look on every one *that is* proud, *and* bring him low;
and tread down the wicked in their place.
13 Hide them in the dust together;
and bind their faces in secret.
14 Then will I also confess unto thee
that thine own right hand can save thee.
15 Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee;
he eateth grass as an ox.

God, for the further proving of his own power and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of two vast and mighty animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength, one he calls behemoth, the other leviathan. In these verses we have the former described. "Behold now behemoth, and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast and gave him all the power he has, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him and make thy peace with him." Behemoth signifies beasts in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species.

Some understand it of the bull; others of an amphibious animal, well known (they say) in Egypt, called the river-

horse (hippopotamus), living among the fish in the river Nile, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the ancient and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong stately creature, of very large stature above any other, of wonderful sagacity, and of so great a reputation in the animal kingdom that among so many four-footed beasts as we have had the natural history of (Job 38:1-39:30) we can scarcely suppose this should be omitted. Observe,

I The description here given of the behemoth.

1. His body is very strong and well built. His strength is in his loins, Job 40:16. His bones, compared with those of other creatures, are like bars of iron, Job 40:18. His back-bone is so strong that, though his tail be not large, yet he moves it like a cedar, with a commanding force, Job 40:17. Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in that there is indeed a wonderful strength. So strong is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the elephant for strength of body, which is the main thing insisted on in this description.

2. He feeds on the productions of the earth and does not prey upon other animals: He eats grass as an ox (Job 40:15), the mountains bring him forth food (Job 40:20), and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him nor flee from him, as from a lion, but they play about him, knowing they are in no danger from him. This may give us occasion,

(1.) To acknowledge the goodness of God in ordering it so that a creature of such bulk, which requires so much food, should not feed upon flesh (for then multitudes must die to keep him alive), but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have ensued.

(2.) To commend living upon herbs and fruits without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, Ge 1:29. Even the strength of an elephant, as of a horse and an ox, may be supported without flesh; and why not that of a man? Though therefore we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet be not among riotous eaters of flesh, Pr 23:20.

(3.) To commend a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather, like the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant about him, than, like the lion, have them all afraid of him?

3. He lodges under the shady trees (Job 40:21), which cover him with their shadow (Job 40:22), where he has a free and open air to breathe in, while lions, which live by prey, when they would repose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, Job 38:40. Those who are a terror to others cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but those will be easy who will let others be easy about them; and the reed and fens, and the willows of the brook, though a very weak and slender fortification, yet are sufficient for the defence and security of those who therefore dread no harm, because they design none.

4. That he is a very great and greedy drinker, not of wine or strong drink (to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who by his drunkenness makes a beast of himself), but of fair water.

(1.) His size is prodigious, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, Job 40:23. He drinks so much that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time, and not hasten him. Or, when he drinks, he hasteth not, as those do that drink in fear; he is confident of his own strength and safety, and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed.

(2.) His eye anticipates more than he can take; for, when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, he trusts that he can drink up Jordan in his mouth, and even takes it with his eyes, Job 40:24. As a covetous man causes his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river with his eyes.

(3.) His nose has in it strength enough for both; for, when he goes greedily to drink with it, he pierces through snares or nets, which perhaps are laid in the waters to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength and so eager his appetite.

II The use that is to be made of this description. We have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this over-grown animal, which is here set before us, not merely as a show (as sometimes it is in our country) to satisfy our curiosity and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble ourselves before the great God; for,

1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made; it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the production of his power; it is behemoth which I made, Job 40:15. Whatever strength this, or any other creature, has, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is not for us to contest with. This beast is here called the chief, in its kind, of the ways of God (Job 40:19), an eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. Those that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant will find that his capacities approach nearer to those of reason than the capacities of any other brute-creature whatsoever, and therefore he is fitly called the chief of the ways of God, in the inferior part of the creation, no creature below man being preferable to him.

2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts, on the same day with man (Ge 1:25,26), whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before; he made him

to live and move on the same earth, in the same element, and therefore man and beast are said to be jointly preserved by divine Providence as fellow-commoners, Ps 36:6. "It is behemoth, which I made with thee; I made that beast as well as thee, and he does not quarrel with me; why then dost thou? Why shouldst thou demand peculiar favours because I made thee (Job 10:9), when I made the behemoth likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast, and therefore can as easily manage thee at pleasure as that beast, and will do it whether thou refuse or whether thou choose. I made him with thee, that thou mayest look upon him and receive instruction." We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion; they are near us, they are with us, they are under our eye wherever we are.

3. He that made him can make his sword to approach to him (Job 40:19), that is, the same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength, can unmake him again at pleasure and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without the imputation either of waste or wrong. God that gave to all the creatures their being may take away the being he gave; for may he not do what he will with his own? And he can do it; he that has power to create with a word no doubt has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing as at first he spoke it out of nothing.

The behemoth perhaps is here intended (as well as the leviathan afterwards) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors whom God had just now challenged Job to abase and bring down. They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man knows all the avenues to it, and can make the sword of justice, his wrath, to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in pieces. Woe to him therefore that strives with his Maker, for he that made him has therefore power to make him

miserable, and will not make him happy unless he will be ruled by him.

16 Lo now, his strength *is* in his loins,
and his force *is* in the navel of his belly.
17 He moveth his tail like a cedar:
the sinews of his stones are wrapped together.
18 His bones *are* as strong pieces of brass;
his bones *are* like bars of iron.
19 He *is* the chief of the ways of God:
he that made him can make his sword to approach *unto him*.
20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food,
where all the beasts of the field play.
21 He lieth under the shady trees,
in the covert of the reed, and fens.
22 The shady trees cover him *with* their shadow;
the willows of the brook compass him about.
23 Behold, he drinketh up a river, *and* hasteth not:
he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.
24 He taketh it with his eyes:
his nose pierceth through snares.

Job-41

1 Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook?
or his tongue with a cord *which* thou lettest down?

Whether this leviathan be a whale or a crocodile is a great dispute among the learned, which I will not undertake to determine; some of the particulars agree more easily to the one, others to the other; both are very strong and fierce, and the power of the Creator appears in them. The ingenious Sir Richard Blackmore, though he admits the more received opinion concerning the behemoth, that it must be meant of the elephant, yet agrees with the learned Bochart's notion of the leviathan, that it is the crocodile, which was so well known in the river of Egypt.

I confess that that which inclines me rather to understand it of the whale is not only because it is much larger and a

nobler animal, but because, in the history of the Creation, there is such an express notice taken of it as is not of any other species of animals whatsoever (Ge 1:21, God created great whales), by which it appears, not only that whales were well known in those parts in the time of Moses, who lived a little after Job, but that the creation of whales was generally looked upon as a most illustrious proof of the eternal power and godhead of the Creator; and we may conjecture that this was the reason (for otherwise it seems unaccountable) why Moses there so particularly mentions the creation of the whales, because God had so lately insisted upon the bulk and strength of that creature than of any other, as the proof of his power; and the leviathan is here spoken of as an inhabitant of the sea (Job 41:31), which the crocodile is not; and Ps 104:25,26, there in the great and wide sea, is that leviathan. Here in these verses,

I. He shows how unable Job was to master the leviathan.

1. That he could not catch him, as a little fish, with angling, Job 41:1,2. He had no bait wherewith to deceive him, no hook wherewith to catch him, no fish-line wherewith to draw him out of the water, nor a thorn to run through his gills, on which to carry him home.

2. That he could not make him his prisoner, nor force him to cry for quarter, or surrender himself at discretion, Job 41:3,4. "He knows his own strength too well to make many supplications to thee, and to make a covenant with thee to be thy servant on condition thou wilt save his life."

3. That he could not entice him into a cage, and keep him there as a bird for the children to play with, Job 41:5. There are creatures so little, so weak, as to be easily restrained thus, and triumphed over; but the leviathan is not one of these: he is made to be the terror, not the sport and diversion, of mankind.

4. That he could not have him served up to his table; he and his companions could not make a banquet of him; his flesh

is too strong to be fit for food, and, if it were not, he is not easily caught.

5. That they could not enrich themselves with the spoil of him: Shall they part him among the merchants, the bones to one, the oil to another? If they can catch him, they will; but it is probable that the art of fishing for whales was not brought to perfection then, as it has been since.

6. That they could not destroy him, could not fill his head with fish-spears, Job 41:7. He kept out of the reach of their instruments of slaughter, or, if they touched him, they could not touch him to the quick.

7. That it was to no purpose to attempt it: The hope of taking him is in vain, Job 41:9. If men go about to seize him, so formidable is he that the very sight of him will appal them, and make a stout man ready to faint away: Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? and will not that deter the pursuers from their attempt? Job is told, at his peril, to lay his hand upon him, Job 41:8. "Touch him if thou dare; remember the battle, how unable thou art to encounter such a force, and what is therefore likely to be the issue of the battle, and do no more, but desist from the attempt." It is good to remember the battle before we engage in a war, and put off the harness in time if we foresee it will be to no purpose to gird it on. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the battle will certainly end in if he come to an engagement. See Isa 27:4,5.

II. Thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty. None is so fierce, none so fool-hardy, that he dares to stir up the leviathan (Job 41:10), it being known that he will certainly be too hard for them; and who then is able to stand before God, either to impeach and arraign his proceedings or to out-face the power of his wrath? If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion, keep us in awe thus, how terrible must the majesty of our great Lord be, who has a

sovereign dominion over us and against whom man has been so long in rebellion! Who can stand before him when once he is angry?

2 Canst thou put a hook into his nose?
or bore his jaw through with a thorn?
3 Will he make many supplications unto thee?
Will he speak soft *words* unto thee?
4 Will he make a covenant with thee?
Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?
5 Wilt thou play with him as *with* a bird?
Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?
6 Shall the companions make a banquet of him?
Shall they part him among the merchants?
7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons?
or his head with fish spears?
8 Lay thine hand upon him,
remember the battle, do no more.
9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain:
shall not *one* be cast down even at the sight of him?
10 None *is so* fierce that dare stir him up:
who then is able to stand before me?
11 Who hath prevented me, that I should repay *him?*
Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.

God, having in the Job 42:1-6 shown Job how unable he was to deal with the leviathan, here sets forth his own power in that massy mighty creature. Here is,

I. God's sovereign dominion and independency laid down, Job 41:11.

1. That he is indebted to none of his creatures. If any pretend he is indebted to them, let them make their demand and prove their debt, and they shall receive it in full and not by composition: "Who has prevented me?" that is, "who has laid any obligations upon me by any services he has done me? Who can pretend to be before-hand with me? If any were, I would not long be behind-hand with them; I would soon repay them." The apostle quotes this for the silencing of all flesh in God's presence, Ro 11:35. Who

hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? As God does not inflict upon us the evils we have deserved, so he does bestow upon us the favours we have not deserved.

2. That he is the rightful Lord and owner of all the creatures: "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven, animate or inanimate, is mine (and particularly this leviathan), at my command and disposal, what I have an incontestable property in and dominion over." All is his; we are his, all we have and do; and therefore we cannot make God our debtor; but of thy own, Lord, have we given thee. All is his, and therefore, if he were indebted to any, he has wherewithal to repay them; the debt is in good hands. All is his, and therefore he needs not our services, nor can he be benefited by them. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the world is mind and the fulness thereof, Ps 50:12.

II The proof and illustration of it, from the wonderful structure of the leviathan, Job 41:12.

1 The parts of his body, the power he exerts, especially when he is set upon, and the comely proportion of the whole of him, are what God will not conceal, and therefore what we must observe and acknowledge the power of God in. Though he is a creature of monstrous bulk, yet there is in him a comely proportion. In our eye beauty lies in that which is small (inest sua gratia parvis--little things have a gracefulness all their own) because we ourselves are so; but in God's eye even the leviathan is comely; and, if he pronounce even the whale, event he crocodile, so, it is not for us to say of any of the works of his hands that they are ugly of ill-favoured; it is enough to say so, as we have cause, of our own works. God here goes about to give us an anatomical view (as it were) of the leviathan; for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and power appear most in them, when they are taken in pieces and viewed in their several parts and proportions.

(1.) The leviathan, even prima facie--at first sight, appears formidable and inaccessible, Job 41:13,14. Who dares

come so near him while he is alive as to discover or take a distinct view of the face of the garment, the skin with which he is clothed as with a garment, so near him as to bridle him like a horse and so lead him away, so near him as to be within reach of his jaws, which are like a double bridle? Who will venture to look into his mouth, as we do into a horse's mouth? He that opens the doors of his face will see his teeth terrible round about, strong and sharp, and fitted to devour; it would make a man tremble to think of having a leg or an arm between them.

(2.) His scales are his beauty and strength, and therefore his pride, Job 41:15-17. The crocodile is indeed remarkable for his scales; if we understand it of the whale, we must understand by these shields (for so the word is) the several coats of his skin; or there might be whales in that country with scales. That which is remarkable concerning the scales is that they stick so close together, by which he is not only kept warm, for no air can pierce him, but kept safe, for no sword can pierce him through those scales. Fishes, that live in the water, are fortified accordingly by the wisdom of Providence, which gives clothes as it gives cold.

(3.) He scatters terror with his very breath and looks; if he sneeze or spout up water, it is like a light shining, either with the froth or the light of the sun shining through it, Job 41:18. The eyes of the whale are reported to shine in the night-time like a flame, or, as here, like the eye-lids of the morning; the same they say of the crocodile. The breath of this creature is so hot and fiery, from the great natural heat within, that burning lamps and sparks of fire, smoke and a flame, are said to go out of his mouth, even such as one would think sufficient to set coals on fire, Job 41:19-21. Probably these hyperbolical expressions are used concerning the leviathan to intimate the terror of the wrath of God, for that is it which all this is designed to convince us of. Fire out of his mouth devours, Ps 18:7,8. The breath of the Almighty, like a stream of brimstone, kindles Tophet, and will for ever keep it burning, Isa 30:33. The

wicked one shall be consumed with the breath of his mouth, 2Th 2:8.

(4.) He is of invincible strength and most terrible fierceness, so that he frightens all that come in his way, but is not himself frightened by any. Take a view of his neck, and there remains strength, Job 41:22. His head and his body are well set together. Sorrow rejoices (or rides in triumph) before him, for he makes terrible work wherever he comes. Or, Those storms which are the sorrow of others are his joys; what is tossing to others is dancing to him. His flesh is well knit, Job 41:23. The flakes of it are joined so closely together, and are so firm, that it is hard to pierce it; he is as if he were all bone. His flesh is of brass, which Job had complained his was not, Job 6:12. His heart is as firm as a stone, Job 41:24. He has spirit equal to his bodily strength, and, though he is bulky, he is sprightly, and not unwieldy. As his flesh and skin cannot be pierced, so his courage cannot be daunted; but, on the contrary, he daunts all he meets and puts them into a consternation (Job 41:25): When he raises up himself like a moving mountain in the great waters even the mighty are afraid lest he should overturn their ships or do them some other mischief.

By reason of the breakings he makes in the water, which threaten death, they purify themselves, confess their sins, betake themselves to their prayers, and get ready for death. We read (Job 3:8) of those who, when they raise up a leviathan, are in such a fright that they curse the day. It was a fear which, it seems, used to drive some to their curses and others to their prayers; for, as now, so then there were seafaring men of different characters and on whom the terrors of the sea have contrary effects; but all agree there is a great fright among them when the leviathan raises up himself.

(5.) All the instruments of slaughter that are used against him do him no hurt and therefore are not error to him, Job 41:26-29. The sword and the spear, which wound nigh at hand, are nothing to him; the darts, arrows, and sling-stones, which wound at a distance, do him no damage;

nature has so well armed him cap-a-pie--at all points, against them all. The defensive weapons which men use when they engage with the leviathan, as the habergeon, or breast-plate, often serve men no more than their offensive weapons; iron and brass are to him as straw and rotten wood, and he laughs at them. It is the picture of a hard-hearted sinner, that despises the terrors of the Almighty and laughs at all the threatenings of his word. The leviathan so little dreads the weapons that are used against him that, to show how hardy he is, he chooses to lie on the sharp stones, the sharp-pointed things (Job 41:30), and lies as easy there as if he lay on the soft mire. Those that would endure hardness must inure themselves to it.

(6.) His very motion in the water troubles it and puts it into a ferment, Job 41:31,32. When he rolls, and tosses, and makes a stir in the water, or is in pursuit of his prey, he makes the deep to boil like a pot, he raises a great froth and foam upon the water, such as is upon a boiling pot, especially a pot of boiling ointment; and he makes a path to shine after him, which even a ship in the midst of the sea does not, Pr 30:19. One may trace the leviathan under water by the bubbles on the surface; and yet who can take that advantage against him in pursuing him? Men track hares in the snow and kill them, but he that tracks the leviathan dares not come near him.

2. Having given this particular account of his parts, and his power, and his comely proportion, he concludes with four things in general concerning this animal:--

(1.) That he is a non-such among the inferior creatures: Upon earth there is not his like, Job 41:33. No creature in this world is comparable to him for strength and terror. Or the earth is here distinguished from the sea: His dominion is not upon the earth (so some), but in the waters. None of all the savage creatures upon earth come near him for bulk and strength, and it is well for man that he is confined to the waters and there has a watch set upon him (Job 7:12) by the divine Providence, for, if such a terrible creature were allowed to roam and ravage upon this earth, it would

be an unsafe and uncomfortable habitation for the children of men, for whom it is intended.

(2.) That he is more bold and daring than any other creature whatsoever: He is made without fear. The creatures are as they are made; the leviathan has courage in his constitution, nothing can frighten him; other creatures, quite contrary, seem as much designed for flying as this for fighting. So, among men, some are in their natural temper bold, others are timorous.

(3.) That he is himself very proud; though lodged in the deep, yet he beholds all high things, Job 41:34. The rolling waves, the impending rocks, the hovering clouds, and the ships under sail with top and top-gallant, this mighty animal beholds with contempt, for he does not think they either lessen him or threaten him. Those that are great are apt to be scornful.

(4.) That he is a king over all the children of pride, that is, he is the proudest of all proud ones. He has more to be proud of (so Mr. Caryl expounds it) than the proudest people in the world have; and so it is a mortification to the haughtiness and lofty looks of men. Whatever bodily accomplishments men are proud of, and puffed up with, the leviathan excels them and is a king over them. Some read it so as to understand it of God: He that beholds all high things, even he, is King over all the children of pride; he can tame the behemoth (Job 40:19) and the leviathan, big as they are, and stout-hearted as they are.

This discourse concerning those two animals was brought in to prove that it is God only who can look upon proud men and abase them, bring them low and tread them down, and hide them in the dust (Job 40:11-13), and so it concludes with a quod erat demonstrandum--which was to be demonstrated; there is one that beholds all high things, and, wherein men deal proudly, is above them; he is King over all the children of pride, whether brutal or rational, and can make them all either bend or break before him, Isa 2:11. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the

haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and thus the Lord alone shall be exalted.

12 I will not conceal his parts,
nor his power, nor his comely proportion.
13 Who can discover the face of his garment?
Or who can come *to him* with his double bridle?
14 Who can open the doors of his face?
His teeth *are* terrible round about.
15 *His* scales *are his* pride,
shut up together *as with* a close seal.
16 One is so near to another,
that no air can come between them.
17 They are joined one to another,
they stick together, that they cannot be sundered.
18 By his sneezings a light doth shine,
and his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning.
19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps,
and sparks of fire leap out.
20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke,
as *out* of a seething pot or caldron.
21 His breath kindleth coals,
and a flame goeth out of his mouth.
22 In his neck remaineth strength,
and sorrow is turned into joy before him.
23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together:
they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved.
24 His heart is as firm as a stone;
yea, as hard as a piece of the nether *millstone*.
25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid:
by reason of breakings they purify themselves.
26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold:
the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon.
27 He esteemeth iron as straw,
and brass as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make him flee:
sling stones are turned with him into stubble.
29 Darts are counted as stubble:
he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.

30 Sharp stones *are* under him:
he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire.
31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot:
he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.
32 He maketh a path to shine after him;
one would think the deep *to be* hoary.
33 Upon earth there is not his like,
who is made without fear.
34 He beholdeth all high *things:*
he *is* a king over all the children of pride.

Job-42

Job's Confession and Acceptance

The words of Job justifying himself were ended, Job 31:40. After that he said no more to that purport. The words of Job judging and condemning himself began, Job 40:4,5. Here he goes on with words to the same purport. Though his patience had not its perfect work, his repentance for his impatience had. He is here thoroughly humbled for his folly and unadvised speaking, and it was forgiven him. Good men will see and own their faults at last, though it may be some difficulty to bring them to do this. Then, when God had said all that to him concerning his own greatness and power appearing in the creatures, then Job answered the Lord (Job 42:1), not by way of contradiction (he had promised not so to answer again, Job 40:5), but by way of submission; and thus we must all answer the calls of God.

I. He subscribes to the truth of God's unlimited power, knowledge, and dominion, to prove which was the scope of God's discourse out of the whirlwind, Job 42:2. Corrupt passions and practices arise either from some corrupt principles or from the neglect and disbelief of the principles of truth; and therefore true repentance begins in the acknowledgement of the truth, 2Ti 2:25. Job here owns his judgment convinced of the greatness, glory, and perfection of God, from which would follow the

conviction of his conscience concerning his own folly in speaking irreverently to him.

1. He owns that God can do every thing. What can be too hard for him that made behemoth and leviathan, and manages both as he pleases? He knew this before, and had himself discoursed very well upon the subject, but now he knew it with application. God had spoken it once, and then he heard it twice, that power belongs to God; and therefore it is the greatest madness and presumption imaginable to contend with him. "Thou canst do every thing, and therefore canst raise me out of this low condition, which I have so often foolishly despaired of as impossible: I now believe thou art able to do this."

2. That no thought can be withholden from him, that is,

(1.) There is no thought of ours that he can be hindered from the knowledge of. Not a fretful, discontented, unbelieving thought is in our minds at any time but God is a witness to it. It is in vain to contest with him; for we cannot hide our counsels and projects from him, and, if he discover them, he can defeat them.

(2.) There is no thought of his that he can be hindered from the execution of. Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he. Job had said this passionately, complaining of it (Job 23:13), What his soul desireth even that he doeth; now he says, with pleasure and satisfaction, that God's counsels shall stand. If God's thoughts concerning us be thoughts of good, to give us an unexpected end, he cannot be withheld from accomplishing his gracious purposes, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way.

II. He owns himself to be guilty of that which God had charged him with in the beginning of his discourse, Job 42:3. "Lord, the first word thou saidst was, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? There needed no more; that word convinced me. I own I am the man that has been so foolish. That word reached my

conscience, and set my sin in order before me. It is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. I have hidden counsel without knowledge. I have ignorantly overlooked the counsels and designs of God in afflicting me, and therefore have quarrelled with God, and insisted too much upon my own justification: Therefore I uttered that which I understood not," that is, "I have passed a judgment upon the dispensations of Providence, though I was utterly a stranger to the reasons of them." Here,

1. He owns himself ignorant of the divine counsels; and so we are all. God's judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, much less find out the springs of. We see what God does, but we neither know why he does it, what he is aiming at, nor what he will bring it to. These are things too wonderful for us, out of our sight to discover, out of our reach to alter, and out of our jurisdiction to judge of. They are things which we know not; it is quite above our capacity to pass a verdict upon them. The reason why we quarrel with Providence is because we do not understand it; and we must be content to be in the dark about it, until the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. He owns himself imprudent and presumptuous in undertaking to discourse of that which he did not understand and to arraign that which he could not judge of. He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him. We wrong ourselves, as well as the cause which we undertake to determine, while we are no competent judges of it.

III. He will not answer, but he will make supplication to his Judge, as he had said, Job 9:15. "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak (Job 42:4), not speak either as plaintiff or defendant (Job 13:22), but as a humble petitioner, not as one that will undertake to teach and prescribe, but as one that desires to learn and is willing to be prescribed to. Lord, put no more hard questions to me, for I am not able to answer thee one of a thousand of those which thou hast put; but give me leave to ask instruction from thee, and do not deny it me, do not upbraid me with my folly and

self-sufficiency," Jam 1:5. Now he is brought to the prayer Elihu taught him, That which I see not teach thou me.

IV. He puts himself into the posture of a penitent, and therein goes upon a right principle. In true repentance there must be not only conviction of sin, but contrition and godly sorrow for it, sorrow according to God, 2Co 7:9. Such was Job's sorrow for his sins.

1. Job had an eye to God in his repentance, thought highly of him, and went upon that as the principle of it (Job 42:5): "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear many a time from my teachers when I was young, from my friends now of late. I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion; and yet was not brought, by what I heard, to submit myself to thee as I ought. The notions I had of these things served me only to talk of, and had not a due influence upon my mind. But now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thyself to me in thy glorious majesty; now my eyes see thee; now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said." Note,

(1.) It is a great mercy to have a good education, and to know the things of God by the instructions of his word and ministers. Faith comes by hearing, and then it is most likely to come when we hear attentively and with the hearing of the ear.

(2.) When the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of grace our knowledge of divine things as far exceeds what we had before as that by ocular demonstration exceeds that by report and common fame. By the teachings of men God reveals his Son to us; but by the teachings of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us (Ga 1:16), and so changes us into the same image, 2Co 3:18.

(3.) God is pleased sometimes to manifest himself most fully to his people by the rebukes of his word and providence. "Now that I have been afflicted, now that I

have been told of my faults, now my eye sees thee." The rod and reproof give wisdom. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.

2. Job had an eye to himself in his repentance, thought hardly of himself, and thereby expressed his sorrow for his sins (Job 42:6): Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Observe,

(1.) It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we are convinced of, and not to rest in a slight superficial displeasure against ourselves for them. Even good people, that have no gross enormities to repent of, must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breakings out of pride, passion, peevishness, and discontent, and all their hasty unadvised speeches; for these we must be pricked to the heart and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure.

(2.) Outward expressions of godly sorrow well become penitents; Job repented in dust and ashes. These, without an inward change, do but mock God; but, where they come from sincere contrition of soul, the sinner by them gives glory to God, takes shame to himself, and may be instrumental to bring others to repentance. Job's afflictions had brought him to the ashes (Job 2:8, he sat down among the ashes), but now his sins brought him thither. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward afflictions, and are in bitterness as for an only son of a first-born, for they are brought to see more evils in their sins than in their troubles.

(3.) Self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Eze 6:9, They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed. We must no only angry at ourselves for the wrong and damage we have by sin done to our own souls, but must abhor ourselves, as having by sin made ourselves odious to the pure and holy God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. If sin be

truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so; the nearer it is to us the more loathsome it will be.

(4.) The more we see of the glory and majesty of God, and the more we see of the vileness and odiousness of sin and of ourselves because of sin, the more we shall abase and abhor ourselves for it. "Now my eye sees what a God he is whom I have offended, the brightness of that majesty which by wilful sin I have spit in the face of, the tenderness of that mercy which I have spurned at the bowels of; now I see what a just and holy God he is whose wrath I have incurred; wherefore I abhor myself. Woe is me, for I am undone," Isa 6:5. God had challenged Job to look upon proud men and abase them. "I cannot," says Job, "pretend to do it; I have enough to do to get my own proud heart humbled, to abase that and bring that low." Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care, in the strength of his grace, to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

1 Then Job answered the Lord, and said,
2 I know that thou canst do every *thing*,
and *that* no thought can be withholden from thee.
3 Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that I understood not;
things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak:
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
but now mine eye seeth thee:
6 wherefore I abhor *myself*,
and repent in dust and ashes.
7 And it was *so*, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is* right, as my servant Job *hath*.

Job, in his discourses, had complained very much of the censures of his friends and their hard usage of him, and had appealed to God as Judge between him and them, and

thought it hard that judgment was not immediately given upon the appeal. While God was catechising Job out of the whirlwind one would have thought that he only was in the wrong, and that the cause would certainly go against him; but here, to our great surprise, we find it quite otherwise, and the definitive sentence given in Job's favour. Wherefore judge nothing before the time. Those who are truly righteous before God may have their righteousness clouded and eclipsed by great and uncommon afflictions, by the severe censures of men, by their own frailties and foolish passions, by the sharp reproofs of the word and conscience, and the deep humiliation of their own spirits under the sense of God's terrors; and yet, in due time, these clouds shall all blow over, and God will bring forth their righteousness as the light and their judgment as the noon-day, Ps 37:6. He cleared Job's righteousness here, because he, like an honest man, held it fast and would not let it go. We have here,

I. Judgment given against Job's three friends, upon the controversy between them and Job. Elihu is not censured here, for he distinguished himself from the rest in the management of the dispute, and acted, not as a party, but as a moderator; and moderation will have its praise with God, whether it have with men or no. In the judgment here given Job is magnified and his three friends are mortified. While we were examining the discourses on both sides we could not discern, and therefore durst not determine, who was in the right; something of truth we thought they both had on their side, but we could not cleave the hair between them; nor would we, for all the world, have had to give the decisive sentence upon the case, lest we should have determined wrong. But it is well that the judgment is the Lord's, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth; to it we will refer ourselves, and by it we will abide. Now, in the judgment here given,

1. Job is greatly magnified and comes off with honour. He was but one against three, a beggar now against three princes, and yet, having God on his side, he needed not

fear the result, though thousands set themselves against him. Observe here,

(1.) When God appeared for him: After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, Job 42:7. After he had convinced and humbled him, and brought him to repentance for what he had said amiss, then he owned him in what he had said well, comforted him, and put honour upon him; not till then: for we are not ready for God's approbation till we judge and condemn ourselves; but then he thus pleaded his cause, for he that has torn will heal us, he that has smitten will bind us. The Comforter shall convince, John 16:8. See in what method we are to expect divine acceptance; we must first be humbled under divine rebukes. After God, by speaking these words, had caused grief, he returned and had compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies; for he will not contend for ever, but will debate in measure, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind. Now that Job had humbled himself God exalted him. True penitents shall find favour with God, and what they have said and done amiss shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well pleased with us when we are brought to abhor ourselves.

(2.) How he appeared for him. It is taken for granted that all his offences are forgiven; for if he be dignified, as we find he is here, no doubt he is justified. Job had sometimes intimated, with great assurance, that God would clear him at last, and he was not made ashamed of the hope.

[1.] God calls him again and again his servant Job, four times in Job 42:7,8, and he seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as before his troubles (Job 1:8), "Hast thou considered my servant Job? Though he is poor and despised, he is my servant notwithstanding, and as dear to me as when he was in prosperity. Though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others, though he has contended with me, has gone about to disannul my judgment, and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge, yet he sees his error and retracts it, and therefore he is my servant Job still." If

we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God, as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, and his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man; but God will acknowledge those whom he accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the malice of hell or earth. If God says, Well done, good and faithful servant, it is of little consequence who says otherwise.

[2.] He owns that he had spoken of him the thing that was right, beyond what his antagonists had done. He had given a much better and truer account of the divine Providence than they had done. They had wronged God by making prosperity a mark of the true church and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath; but Job had done him right by maintaining that God's love and hatred are to be judged of by what is in men, not by what is before them, Ec 9:1. Observe, First, Those do the most justice to God and his providence who have an eye to the rewards and punishments of another world more than to those of this, and with the prospect of those solve the difficulties of the present administration. Job had referred things to the future judgment, and the future state, more than his friends had done, and therefore he spoke of God that which was right, better than his friends had done. Secondly, Though Job had spoken some things amiss, even concerning God, whom he made too bold with, yet he is commended for what he spoke that was right. We must not only not reject that which is true and good, but must not deny it its due praise, though there appear in it a mixture of human frailty and infirmity. Thirdly, Job was in the right, and his friends were in the wrong, and yet he was in pain and they were at ease--a plain evidence that we cannot judge of men and their sentiments by looking in their faces or purses. He only can do it infallibly who sees men's hearts.

[3.] He will pass his word for Job that, notwithstanding all the wrong his friends had done him, he is so good a

man, and of such a humble, tender, forgiving spirit, that he will very readily pray for them, and use his interest in heaven on their behalf: "My servant Job will pray for you. I know he will. I have pardoned him, and he has the comfort of pardon, and therefore he will pardon you."

[4.] He appoints him to be the priest of this congregation, and promises to accept him and his mediation for his friends. "Take your sacrifices to my servant Job, for him will I accept." Those whom God washes from their sins he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour that God hereby put upon Job, in appointing him to offer sacrifice for his friends, as formerly he used to do for his own children, Job 1:5. And a happy presage it was of his restoration to his prosperity again, and indeed a good step towards it, that he was thus restored to the priesthood. Thus he became a type of Christ, through whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God; see 1Pe 2:5. "Go to my servant Job, to my servant Jesus" (from whom for a time he hid his face), "put your sacrifices into his hand, make use of him as your Advocate, for him will I accept, but, out of him, you must expect to be dealt with according to your folly." And, as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives making intercession for the transgressors.

2. Job's friends are greatly mortified, and come off with disgrace. They were good men and belonged to God, and therefore he would not let them lie still in their mistake any more than Job, but, having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, he takes another course to humble them. Job, who was dearest to him, was first chidden, but the rest in their turn. When they heard Job talked to, it is probable, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they were in the right and Job was in all the fault, but God soon took them to task, and made them know the contrary. In most disputes and controversies

there is something amiss on both sides, either in the merits of the cause or in the management, if not in both; and it is fit that both sides should be told of it, and made to see their errors. God addresses this to Eliphaz, not only as the senior, but as the ringleader in the attack made upon Job. Now,

(1.) God tells them plainly that they had not spoken of him the thing that was right, like Job, that is, they had censured and condemned Job upon a false hypothesis, had represented God fighting against Job as an enemy when really he was only trying him as a friend, and this was not right. Those do not say well of God who represent his fatherly chastisements of his own children as judicial punishments and who cut them off from his favour upon the account of them. Note, It is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual and eternal state of others, for in so doing we may perhaps condemn those whom God has accepted, which is a great provocation to him; it is offending his little ones, and he takes himself to be wronged in all the wrongs that are done to them.

(2.) He assures them he was angry with them: My wrath is kindled against thee and thy two friends. God is very angry with those who despise and reproach their brethren, who triumph over them, and judge hardly of them, either for their calamities or for their infirmities. Though they were wise and good men, yet, when they spoke amiss, God was angry with them and let them know that he was.

(3.) He requires from them a sacrifice, to make atonement for what they had said amiss. They must bring each of them seven bullocks, and each of them seven rams, to be offered up to God for a burnt-offering; for it should seem that, before the law of Moses, all sacrifices, even those of atonement, were wholly burnt, and therefore were so called. They thought they had spoken wonderfully well, and that God was beholden to them for pleading his cause and owed them a good reward for it; but they are told that, on the contrary, he is displeased with them, requires from them a sacrifice, and threatens that, otherwise, he will

deal with them after their folly. God is often angry at that in us which we are ourselves proud of and sees much amiss in that which we think was done well.

(4.) He orders them to go to Job, and beg of him to offer their sacrifices, and pray for them, otherwise they should not be accepted. By this God designed,

[1.] To humble them and lay them low. They thought that they only were the favourites of Heaven, and that Job had no interest there; but God gives them to understand that he had a better interest there than they had, and stood fairer for God's acceptance than they did. The day may come when those who despise and censure God's people will court their favour, and be made to know that God has loved them, Re 3:9. The foolish virgins will beg oil of the wise.

[2.] To oblige them to make their peace with Job, as the condition of their making their peace with God. If thy brother has aught against thee (as Job had a great deal against them), first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift. Satisfaction must first be made for wrong done, according as the nature of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sin. See how thoroughly God espoused the cause of his servant Job and engaged in it. God will not be reconciled to those that have offended Job till they have first begged his pardon and he be reconciled to them. Job and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and had been too keen in their reflections one upon another, but now they were to be made friends; in order to that, they are not to argue the matter over again and try to give it a new turn (that might be endless), but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them: they must unite in affection and devotion when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgments about minor things are yet one in Christ the great sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more, observe, When God was angry with

Job's friends, he did himself put them in a way to make their peace with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

II The acquiescence of Job's friends in this judgment given, Job 42:9. They were good men, and, as soon as they understood what the mind of the Lord was, they did as he commanded them, and that speedily and without gainsaying, though it was against the grain to flesh and blood to court him thus whom they had condemned. Note, Those who would be reconciled to God must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way and upon his own terms, and they will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege, but they will be glad of it upon any terms, though ever so humbling. Job's friends had all joined in accusing Job, and now they join in begging his pardon. Those that have sinned together should repent together.

Those that appeal to God, as both Job and his friends had often done, must resolve to stand by his award, whether pleasing or unpleasing to their own mind. And those that conscientiously observe God's commands need not doubt of his favour: The Lord also accepted Job, and his friends in answer to his prayer. It is not said, He accepted them (though that is implied), but, He accepted Job for them; so he has made us accepted in the beloved, Eph 1:6,Mt 3:17. Job did not insult over his friends upon the testimony God had given concerning him, and the submission they were obliged to make to him; but, God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is that which we should aim at in all our prayers and services, to be accepted of the Lord; this must be the summit of our ambition, not to have praise of men, but to please God.

8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I

accept: lest I deal with you *after your* folly, in that ye have not
spoken of me *the thing which is* right, like my servant Job.
9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar
the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord
commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.

The Restoration of Job's Prosperity

10 And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for
his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had
before.

You have heard of the patience of Job (says the apostle, Jam 5:11) and have seen the end of the Lord, that is, what end the Lord, at length, put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book we had Job's patience under his troubles, for an example; here, in the close, for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles and the prosperous condition to which he was restored after them, which confirms us in counting those happy which endure. Perhaps, too, the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crowned with after his afflictions was intended to be to us Christians a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us, and in which they will issue at last; this will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after-prosperity was to his former, though then he was the greatest of all the men of the east. He that rightly endures temptation, when he is tried, shall receive a crown of life (Jam 1:12), as Job, when he was tried, received all the wealth, and honour, and comfort, which here we have an account of.

I. God returned in ways of mercy to him; and his thoughts concerning him were thoughts of good and not of evil, to give the expected (nay, the unexpected) end, Jer 29:11. His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's sorest complaint, and indeed the sorrowful accent of all his complaints, on

which he laid the greatest emphasis, was that God appeared against him. But now God plainly appeared for him, and watched over him to build and to plant, like as he had (at least in his apprehension) watched over him to pluck up and to throw down, Jer 31:28. This put a new face upon his affairs immediately, and every thing now looked as pleasing and promising as before it had looked gloomy and frightful.

1. God turned his captivity, that is, he redressed his grievances and took away all the causes of his complaints; he loosed him from the bond with which Satan had now, for a great while, bound him, and delivered him out of those cruel hands into which he had delivered him. We may suppose that now all his bodily pains and distempers were healed so suddenly and so thoroughly that the cure was next to miraculous: His flesh became fresher than a child's, and he returned to the days of his youth; and, what was more, he felt a very great alteration in his mind; it was calm and easy, and the tumult was all over, his disquieting thoughts had all vanished, his fears were silenced, and the consolations of God were now as much the delight of his soul as his terrors had been its burden.

The tide thus turned, his troubles began to ebb as fast as they had flowed, just then when he was praying for his friends, praying over his sacrifice which he offered for them. Mercy did not return when he was disputing with his friends, no, not though he had right on his side, but when he was praying for them; for God is better served and pleased with our warm devotions than with our warm disputations. When Job completed his repentance by this instance of his forgiving men their trespasses, then God completed his remission by turning his captivity. Note, We are really doing our business when we are praying for our friends, if we pray in a right manner, for in those prayers there is not only faith, but love. Christ has taught us to pray with and for others in teaching us to say, Our Father; and, in seeking mercy for others, we may find mercy ourselves. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there, where he ever lives making intercession.

Some, by the turning of Job's captivity, understand the restitution which the Sabeans and Chaldeans made of the cattle which they had taken from him, God wonderfully inclining them to do it; and with these he began the world again. Probably it was so; those spoilers had swallowed down his riches, but they were forced to vomit them up again, Job 20:15. But I rather understand this more generally of the turn now given.

2. God doubled his possessions: Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. It is probable that he did at first, in some way or other, intimate to him that it was his gracious purpose, by degrees, in due time to bring him to such a height of prosperity that he should have twice as much as ever he had, for the encouraging of his hope and the quickening of his industry, and that it might appear that this wonderful increase was a special token of God's favour. And it may be considered as intended,

(1.) To balance his losses. He suffered for the glory of God, and therefore God made it up to him with advantage, and allowed him more than interest upon interest. God will take care that none shall lose by him.

(2.) To recompense his patience and his confidence in God, which (notwithstanding the workings of corruption) he did not cast away, but still held fast, and that is it which has a great recompence of reward, Heb 10:35. Job's friends had often put their severe censure of Job upon this issue, If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee, Job 8:6. But he does not awake for thee; therefore thou art not upright. "Well," says God, "though your argument be not conclusive, I will even by that demonstrate the integrity of my servant Job; his latter end shall greatly increase, and by that it shall appear, since you will have it so, that it was not for any injustice in his hands that he suffered the loss of all things." Now it appeared that Job had reason to bless God for taking away (as he did, Job 1:21), since it made so good a return.

11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

I. His old acquaintance, neighbours, and relations, were very kind to him, Job 42:11. They had been estranged from him, and this was not the least of the grievances of his afflicted state; he bitterly complained of their unkindness, Job 19:13-22, &c. But now they visited him with all possible expressions of affection and respect.

1. They put honour upon him, in coming to dine with him as formerly, but (we may suppose) privately bringing their entertainment along with them, so that he had the reputation of feasting them without the expense.

2. They sympathized with him, and showed a tender concern for him, such as becomes brethren. They bemoaned him when they talked over all the calamities of his afflicted state, and comforted him when they took notice of God's gracious returns to him. They wept for his griefs, and rejoiced in his joys, and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends, that, at first, were so forward and officious to attend him. These were not such great men nor such learned and eloquent men as those, but they proved much more skilful and kind in comforting Job. God sometimes chooses the foolish and weak things of the world, as for conviction, so for comfort. 3. They made a collection among them for the repair of his losses and the setting of him up again. They did not think it enough to say, Be warmed, Be filled, but gave him such things as would be of use to him, Jam 2:16. Every one gave him a piece of money (some more, it is likely, and some less, according to their ability) and every one an ear-ring of gold (an ornament much used by the children of the east), which would be as good as money to him: this was a superfluity which they could well spare, and the rule is, That our abundance must be a supply to

our brethren's necessity. But why did Job's relations now, at length, show this kindness to him?

(1.) God put it in their hearts to do so; and every creature is that to us which he makes it to be. Job had acknowledged God in their estrangement from him, for which he now rewarded him in turning them to him again.

(2.) Perhaps some of them withdrew from him because they thought him a hypocrite, but, now that his integrity was made manifest, they returned to him and to communion with him again. When God was friendly to him they were all willing to be friendly too, Ps 119:74,79. Others of them, it may be, withdrew because he was poor, and sore, and a rueful spectacle, but now that he began to recover they were willing to renew their acquaintance with him. Swallow-friends, that are gone in winter, will return in the spring, though their friendship is of little value.

(3.) Perhaps the rebuke which God had given to Eliphaz and the other two for their unkindness to Job awakened the rest of his friends to return to their duty. Reproofs to others we should thus take as admonitions and instructions to us.

4. Job prayed for his friends, and then they flocked about him, overcome by his kindness, and every one desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations the more comfort we may expect in them.

II. His estate strangely increased, by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. He thankfully received their courtesy, and did not think it below him to have his estate repaired by contributions. He did not, on the one hand, urge his friends to raise money for him; he acquits himself from that (Job 6:22), Did I say, Bring unto me or give me a reward of your substance? Yet what they brought he thankfully accepted, and did not upbraid them with their former unkindnesses, nor ask them why they did not do this sooner. He was neither so covetous and

griping as to ask their charity, nor so proud and ill-natured as to refuse it when they offered it; and, being in so good a temper, God gave him that which was far better than their money and ear-rings, and that was his blessing, Job 42:12. The Lord comforted him now according to the days wherein he had afflicted him, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning.

Observe, 1. The blessing of the Lord makes rich; it is he that gives us power to get wealth and gives success in honest endeavours. Those therefore that would thrive must have an eye to God's blessing, and never to out of it, no, not into the warm sun; and those that have thriven must not sacrifice to their own net, but acknowledge their obligations to God for his blessing.

2. That blessing can make very rich and sometimes makes good people so. Those that become rich by getting think they can easily make themselves very rich by saving; but, as those that have little must depend upon God to make it much, so those that have much must depend upon God to make it more and to double it; else you have sown much and bring in little, Hag 1:6.

3. The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best days, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts; for his path, like that of the morning-light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said, His last state is worse than his first (Lu 11:26), but of the upright man, His end is peace; and sometimes the nearer it is the clearer are the views of it. In respect of outward prosperity God is pleased sometimes to make the latter end of a good man's life more comfortable than the former part of it has been, and strangely to outdo the expectations of his afflicted people, who thought they should never live to see better days, that we may not despair even in the depths of adversity. We know not what good times we may yet be reserved for in our latter end.

Non, si male nunc, et olim sic erit--

It may yet be well with us, though now it is otherwise.

Job, in his affliction, had wished to be as in months past, as rich as he had been before, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our own fears, nay, than our own wishes, for Job's possessions were doubled to him; the number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, his oxen and she-asses, is just double here to what it was, Job 1:3. This is a remarkable instance of the extent of the divine providence to things that seem minute, as this of the exact number of a man's cattle, as also of the harmony of providence, and the reference of one event to another; for known unto God are all his works, from the beginning to the end. Job's other possessions, no doubt, were increased in proportion to his cattle, lands, money, servants, &c. So that if, before, he was the greatest of all the men of the east, what was he now?

III. His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children, Job 42:13-15. The last of his afflictions that are recorded (Job 1:13-19), and the most grievous, was the death of all his children at once. His friends upbraided him with it (Job 8:4), but God repaired even that breach in process of time, either by the same wife, or, she being dead, by another.

1 The number of his children was the same as before, seven sons and three daughters. Some give this reason why they were not doubled as his cattle were, because his children that were dead were not lost, but gone before to a better world; and therefore, if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckoned doubled, for he has two fleeces of children (as I may say) mahanaim--two hosts, one in heaven, the other on earth, and in both he is rich.

2 The names of his daughters are here registered (Job 42:14), because, in the significations of them, they seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him in the surprising change of his

condition. He called the first Jemima--The day (whence perhaps Diana had her name), because of the shining forth of his prosperity after a dark night of affliction. The next Kezia, a spice of a very fragrant smell, because (says bishop Patrick) God had healed his ulcers, the smell of which was offensive. The third Keren-happuch (that is Plenty restored, or A horn of paint), because (says he) God had wiped away the tears which fouled his face, Job 16:16. Concerning these daughters we are here told,

(1.) That God adorned them with great beauty, no women so fair as the daughters of Job, Job 42:15. In the Old Testament we often find women praised for their beauty, as Sarah, Rebekah, and many others; but we never find any women in the New Testament whose beauty is in the least taken notice of, no, not the virgin Mary herself, because the beauty of holiness is that which is brought to a much clearer light by the gospel.

(2.) That their father (God enabling him to do it) supplied them with great fortunes: He gave them inheritance among their brethren, and did not turn them off with small portions, as most did. It is probable that they had some extraordinary personal merit, which Job had an eye to in the extraordinary favour he showed them. Perhaps they excelled their brethren in wisdom and piety; and therefore, that they might continue in his family, to be a stay and blessing to it, he made them co-heirs with their brethren.

IV. His life was long. What age he was when his troubles came we are nowhere told, but here we are told he lived 140 years, whence some conjecture that he was 70 when he was in his troubles, and that so his age was doubled, as his other possessions. 1. He lived to have much of the comfort of this life, for he saw his posterity to the fourth generation, Job 42:16. Though his children were not doubled to him, yet in his children's children (and those are the crown of old men) they were more than doubled. As God appointed to Adam another seed instead of that which was slain (Ge 4:25), so he did to Job with

advantage. God has ways to repair the losses and balance the griefs of those who are written childless, as Job was when he had buried all his children. 2. He lived till he was satisfied, for he died full of days, satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it; not peevishly so, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so, and thus, as Eliphaz had encouraged him to hope, he came to his grave like a shock of corn in his season

12 So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

13 He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch.

15 And in all the land were no women found *so* fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, *even* four generations.

17 So Job died, *being* old and full of days.

The Psalms
[Psalms]

Psalms-1

The Righteous and the Ungodly

1 Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners,
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is,

I. A description of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows those that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law which we are bound in duty to obey and the condition of the promise which we are bound in interest to fulfil.

The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice of our standard and leader is original and fatal; but, if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the companionship of evil-doers, and will not be led by them (Ps 1:1): He walks not in the council of the ungodly, &c. This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God must say to evil-doers, Depart from us (Ps 119:115), and departing from evil is that in which wisdom begins.

(1.) He sees evil-doers round about him; the world is full of them; they walk on every side. They are here described by three characters, ungodly, sinners, and scornful. See by what steps men arrive at the height of impiety. Nemo repente fit turpissimus--None reach the height of vice at once. They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God and living in the neglect of their duty to him: but they rest not there.

When the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be sinners, that is, they break out into open rebellion against God and engage in the service of sin and Satan. Omissions make way for commissions, and by these the heart is so hardened that at length they come to be scorners, that is, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin.

Thus is the way of iniquity down-hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate ungodly signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust and at the beck of every temptation. The word for sinners signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin and set it up as their trade. The scornful are those that set their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart; they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But,

(2.) He shuns them wherever he sees them. He does not do as they do; and, that he may not, he does not converse familiarly with them.

[1.] He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He is not present at their councils, nor does he advise with them; though they are ever so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel. He does not consent to them, nor say as they say, Lu 23:51. He does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and

it is managed so artfully that we have reason to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it.

[2.] He stands not in the way of sinners; he avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way; he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner does, who sets himself in a way that is not good, Ps 36:4. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are. That he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He does not stand in their way, to be picked up by them (Pr 7:8), but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, Pr 4:14,15. He that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way.

[3.] He sits not in the seat of the scornful; he does not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness and please themselves with the searedness of their own consciences. He does not associate with those that sit in close cabal to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom, or that sit in open judgment, magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful, Ps 69:12. Happy is the man that never sits in it, Ho 7:5.

2. A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the guidance of the word of God and makes that familiar to him, Ps 1:2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly and fortifies him against their temptations. By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver, Ps 17:4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners, either for pleasure or for improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God and with God himself in and by his word. When thou awakest it shall talk with thee, Pr 6:22. We may judge of our spiritual state by asking, "What is the law of God to us? What account do we make of it? What place has it in us?" See here,

(1.) The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God: His delight is in it. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in, after the inner man, Ro 7:16,22. All who are well pleased that there is a God must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him.

(2.) The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God: In that law doth he meditate day and night; and by this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love we love to think of, Ps 119:97. To meditate in God's word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things and experience the savour and power of them in our hearts.

This we must do day and night; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor is any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night, but these thought should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day and with the repose and slumbers of every night. When I awake I am still with thee.

II. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such.

1. In general, he is blessed, Ps 5:1. God blesses him, and that blessing will make him happy. Blessednesses are to him, blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the

ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When the psalmist undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness than to know wherein that blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness (Re 22:14) but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty.

2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude (Ps 1:3): He shall be like a tree, fruitful and flourishing. This is the effect,

(1.) Of his pious practice; he meditates in the law of God, turns that in succum et sanguinem--into juice and blood, and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God the better furnished we are for every good word and work. Or,

(2.) Of the promised blessing; he is blessed of the Lord, and therefore he shall be like a tree. The divine blessing produces real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man,

[1.] That he is planted by the grace of God. These trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is the planting of the Lord, and therefore he must in it be glorified. Isa 61:3, The trees of the Lord are full of sap.

[2.] That he is placed by the means of grace, here called the rivers of water, those rivers which make glad the city of our God (Ps 46:4); from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret undiscerned ways.

[3.] That his practices shall be fruit, abounding to a good account, Php 4:17. To those whom God first blessed he said, Be fruitful (Ge 1:22), and still the comfort and honour of fruitfulness are a recompense for the labour of it. It is

expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace that, both in the temper of their minds and in the tenour of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And, be it observed to the praise of the great dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit (that which is required of them) in due season, when it is most beautiful and most useful, improving every opportunity of doing good and doing it in its proper time.

[4.] That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay: His leaf also shall not wither. As to those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but, if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels thus won shall never wither.

[5.] That prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes, soul-prosperity. Whatever he does, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing Ps 1:1-3, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, the transcendent excellencies of the divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to watch against sin and all approaches towards it, to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruit of righteousness; and, in praying over them, we must seek to God for his grace both to fortify us against every evil word and work and to furnish us for every good word and work.

2 But his delight *is* in the law of the Lord;
and in his law doth he meditate day and night.
3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
his leaf also shall not wither;
and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
4 The ungodly *are* not so:
but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Here is, I The description of the ungodly given, Ps 1:4.

1. In general, they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition: They are not so. The LXX. emphatically repeats this: Not so the ungodly; they are not so; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground.

2. In particular, whereas the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, they are like the chaff which the wind drives away, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds?

They are light and vain; they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no stedfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered nor looked after more. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat; but he is coming whose fan is in his hand and who will thoroughly purge his floor. Those that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath (Ps 35:5), so unable to stand before it or to escape it, Isa 17:13.

II The doom of the ungodly read, Ps 1:5.

1. They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convicted: They shall not stand in the judgment, that is, they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly

discovered, and appear in their own colours, and accordingly every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity.

The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body. They may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them: They shall not stand in the judgment, so plain will the evidence be against them and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it.

2. They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed. They shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, that is, in the judgment (so some), that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, Jude 1:14,1Co 6:2. Or in heaven.

There will be seen, shortly, a general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, 2Th 2:1 The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean nor unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vexation, thrust out, Lu 13:27. The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and cared not for their company; justly therefore will they be for ever separated from them.

Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat; see Mt 13:41,49. That great day (so the Chaldee here calls it) will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division. Then you shall return and discern between the

righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, Mal 3:18.

III. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, Ps 1:6.

1. God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed because the Lord knows their way; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps.

2. Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends towards ruin and therefore must necessarily end in it.

Or we may take it thus, The Lord approves and is well pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore, under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain that every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, accordingly as we are or are not accepted of God.

Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts (Jer 12:3), knows their secret devotions (Mt 6:6), knows their character, how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing Ps 1:4-6, and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it, and

with a holy care to approve ourselves to God in every thing, entreating his favour with our whole hearts.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Psalms-2

The Reign of the Lord's Anointed

1 Why do the heathen rage,
and the people imagine a vain thing?

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ, hell and heaven contesting it; the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had a usurped kingdom and exercised dominion to such a degree that he has been called the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in and the god of the world we live in. He knows very well that, as the Messiah's kingdom rises and gets ground, his falls and loses ground; and therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here,

I The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion and all the interests of it, Ps 2:1-3. One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world would be universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf would immediately bow to that of the Messiah and all the crowns and sceptres on earth would be laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though ever so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state, though ever so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ--a sign that it was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ and the devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against

Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the heathen, the people, numbers of them, communities of them; though usually fond of liberty, yet they were averse to the liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim.

Not the mob only, but the mighty (among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration) appear violent against Christ. Though his kingdom is not of this world, nor in the least calculated to weaken their interests, but very likely, if they pleased, to strengthen them, yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms immediately. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is.

See how formidable the enemies of the church are; they are numerous; they are potent. The unbelieving Jews are here called heathen, so wretchedly had they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to persecute the Christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his courtiers, the disaffected party and their ringleaders, opposed David's coming to the crown, so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, did their utmost against Christ and his interest in men, Ac 4:27.

2. Who it is that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against; it is against the Lord and against his anointed, that is, against all religion in general and the Christian religion in particular. It is certain that all who are enemies to Christ, whatever they pretend, are enemies to God himself; they have hated both me and my Father, Joh 15:24.

The great author of our holy religion is here called the Lord's anointed, or Messiah, or Christ, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king. He is both authorized and qualified to be the church's head and king, is duly invested in the office and every way fitted for it; yet there are those that are against him; nay, therefore they are against him, because they are

impatient of God's authority, envious at Christ's advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the Spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give is here described.

(1.) It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They rage and fret; they gnash their teeth for vexation at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it creates them the utmost uneasiness, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves; see Lu 13:14,Joh 11:47,Ac 5:17,33,19:28. Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory and the shaking of their usurped dominion. Those that did evil raged at the light.

(2.) It is a deliberate and politic opposition. They imagine or meditate, that is, they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom and are very confident of the success of their contrivances; they promise themselves that they shall run down religion and carry the day.

(3.) It is a resolute and obstinate opposition. They set themselves, set their faces as a flint and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason, and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel-builders, and will persist in their resolution, come what will.

(4.) It is a combined and confederate opposition. They take counsel together, to assist and animate one another in this opposition; they carry their resolutions nemine contradicente--unanimously, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah with the utmost vigour: and thereupon councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, Ps 83:5.

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at and what they aim at in this opposition (Ps 2:3): Let us break their bands asunder. They will not be under any government; they

are children of Belial, that cannot endure the yoke, at least the yoke of the Lord and his anointed. They will be content to entertain such notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah as will serve them to dispute of and to support their own dominion with: if the Lord and his anointed will make them rich and great in the world, they will bid them welcome; but if they will restrain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly then they will not have this man to reign over them, Lu 19:14.

Christ has bands and cords for us; those that will be saved by him must be ruled by him; but they are cords of a man, agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducive to our true interest: and yet against those the quarrel is. Why do men oppose religion but because they are impatient of its restraints and obligations? They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under and the cords of God's commandments by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin and to themselves up to all duty; they will not receive them, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They are here reasoned with concerning it, Ps 2:1. Why do they do this?

(1.) They can show no good cause for opposing so just, holy, and gracious a government, which will not interfere with the secular powers, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or provinces; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth.

(2.) They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a vain thing; when they have done their worst Christ will have a church in the world and that church shall be glorious and triumphant. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The moon walks in brightness, though the dogs bark at it.

II The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretel which will be the conqueror. Those that make this mighty struggle are the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who, being of the earth, are earthy; but he whom they contest with is one that sits in the heavens, Ps 2:4.

He is in the heaven, a place of such a vast prospect that he can oversee them all and all their projects; and such is his power that he can overcome them all and all their attempts. He sits there, as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent menaces and attempts. There he sits as Judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all his own purposes and designs, in spite of all opposition, Ps 29:10. The perfect repose of the Eternal Mind may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth, and in the sea, but he sits in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment; and therefore,

1 The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed. God laughs at them as a company of fools. He has them, and all their attempts, in derision, and therefore the virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised them, Isa 37:22. Sinners' follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan which in our eyes are formidable in his are despicable. Sometimes God is said to awake, and arise, and stir up himself, for the vanquishing of his enemies; here is said to sit still and vanquish them; for the utmost operations of God's omnipotence create no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to his eternal rest.

2. They are justly punished, Ps 2:5. Though God despises them as impotent, yet he does not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so and to tremble before him.

(1.) Their sin is a provocation to him. He is wroth; he is sorely displeased. We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us, or well pleased in us, but in and through the anointed; and therefore, if we affront and reject him, we sin against the remedy and forfeit the benefit of his interposition between us and God.

(2.) His anger will be a vexation to them; if he but speak to them in his wrath, even the breath of his mouth will be their confusion, slaughter, and consumption, Isa 11:4,2Th 2:8. He speaks, and it is done; he speaks in wrath, and sinners are undone. As a word made us, so a word can unmake us again. Who knows the power of his anger? The enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, and yet vexes them, puts them in to a consternation (as the word is), and brings them to their wits' end: his setting up this kingdom of his Son, in spite of them, is the greatest vexation to them that can be. They were vexatious to Christ's good subjects; but the day is coming when vexation shall be recompensed to them.

3. They are certainly defeated, and all their counsels turned headlong (Ps 2:6): Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. David was advanced to the throne, and became master of the strong-hold of Zion, notwithstanding the disturbance given him by the malcontents in his kingdom, and particularly the affronts he received from the garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their blind and their lame, their maimed soldiers, 2Sa 5:6. The Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement.

(1.) Jesus Christ is a King, and is invested by him who is the fountain of power with the dignity and authority of a sovereign prince in the kingdom both of providence and grace.

(2.) God is pleased to call him his King, because he is appointed by him, and entrusted for him with the sole

administration of government and judgment. He is his King, for he is dear to the Father, and one in whom he is well pleased.

(3.) Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called to it, and he that called him owns him: I have set him; his commandment, his commission, he received from the Father.

(4.) Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it; high places (we say) are slippery places, but Christ, being raised, is fixed: "I have set him, I have settled him."

(5.) He is set upon Zion, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel church, for on that the temple was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was called holy. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers and in the societies they form. The evangelical law of Christ is said to go forth from Zion (Isa 2:3,Mic 4:2), and therefore that is spoken of as the head-quarters of this general, the royal seat of this prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing Ps 2:1-6 with a holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom (not doubting but they will all of them be quickly made his footstool), and triumphing in Jesus Christ as the great trustee of power; and we are to pray, in firm belief of the assurance here given, "Father in heaven, Thy kingdom come; let thy Son's kingdom come."

2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord, and against his anointed, *saying*,
3 Let us break their bands asunder,
and cast away their cords from us.
4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
the Lord shall have them in derision.
5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
and vex them in his sore displeasure.
6 Yet have I set my King
upon my holy hill of Zion.

7 I will declare the decree:
the Lord hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son;
this day have I begotten thee.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have to say against Christ's kingdom, and have heard it gainsaid by him that sits in heaven; let us now hear what the Messiah himself has to say for his kingdom, to make good his claims, and it is what all the powers on earth cannot gainsay.

I The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree, of God the Father. It was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an experiment, but the result of the counsels of the divine wisdom and the determinations of the divine will, before all worlds, neither of which can be altered--the precept or statute (so some read it), the covenant or compact (so others), the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, Ps 89:3. This our Lord Jesus often referred to as that which, all along in his undertaking, he governed himself by; This is the will of him that sent me, Joh 6:40. This commandment have I received of my Father, Joh 10:18,14:31.

II. There is a declaration of that decree as far as is necessary for the satisfaction of all those who are called and commanded to yield themselves subjects to this king, and to leave those inexcusable who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret; it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; but it is declared by a faithful witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the prophet of the church, to declare him, Joh 1:18.

The fountain of all being is, without doubt, the fountain of all power; and it is by, from, and under him, that the Messiah claims. He has his right to rule from what Jehovah said to him, by whose word all things were made and are governed. Christ here makes a tow-fold title to his kingdom:--

1. A title by inheritance (Ps 2:7): Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. This scripture the apostle quotes (Heb 1:5) to prove that Christ has a more excellent name than the angels, but that he obtained it by inheritance, Ps 2:4. He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, Joh 1:14.

And the Father owns him, and will have this declared to the world as the reason why he is constituted King upon the holy hill of Zion; he is therefore unquestionably entitled to, and perfectly qualified for, that great trust. He is the Son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father, has in him all the fulness of the godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church is too high an honour and too hard an undertaking for any mere creature; none can be fit for it but he who is one with the Father and was from eternity by him as one brought up with him, thoroughly apprized of all his counsels, Pr 8:30.

He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; and upon this account we are to receive him as a King; for because the Father loveth the Son he hath given all things into his hand, Joh 3:35,5:20. Being a Son, he is heir of all things, and, the Father having made the worlds by him, it is easy to infer thence that by him also he governs them; for he is the eternal Wisdom and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, "Thou art my Son," it becomes each of us to say to him, "Thou art my Lord, my sovereign."

Further, to satisfy us that his kingdom is well-grounded upon his sonship, we are here told what his sonship is grounded on: This day have I begotten thee, which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted (Heb 1:5) to prove that he is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person (Ps 2:3), and to the evidence and demonstration given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle, Ac 13:33.

He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophet Jonas, which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Ro 1:4. Christ is said to be the first-begotten and first-born from the dead, Re 1:5,Col 1:18. Immediately after his resurrection he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom; it was then that he said, All power is given unto me, and to that especially he had an eye when he taught his disciples to pray, Thy kingdom come.

2. A title by agreement, Ps 2:8,9. The agreement is, in short, this: the Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and, upon that condition, he shall have the honour and power of a universal monarch; see Isa 53:12, Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors. He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both, Zec 6:13.

(1.) The Son must ask. This supposes his putting himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father, by taking upon him the human nature; for, as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father and had nothing to ask. It supposes the making of a satisfaction by the virtue of which the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price, on which this large demand was to be grounded; see Joh 17:4,5. The Son, in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims, not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

(2.) The Father will grant more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised him,

[1.] That his government shall be universal: he shall have the heathen for his inheritance, not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also. Those in the uttermost parts of the earth (as this nation

of ours) shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing loyal subjects among them. Baptized Christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus; they are to him for a name and a praise.

God the Father gives them to him when by his Spirit and grave he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is in part fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the gospel when it was first preached, and Christ's throne was set up there where Satan's seat had long been. But it is to be yet further accomplished when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, Re 11:15. Who shall live when God doeth this?

[2.] That it shall be victorious: Thou shalt break them (those of them that oppose thy kingdom) with a rod of iron, Ps 2:9. This was in part fulfilled when the nation of the Jews, those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ's gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented (Da 2:40) by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a further accomplishment in the destruction of the Pagan powers, when the Christian religion came to be established; but it will not be completely fulfilled till all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be finally put down, 1Co 15:24,Ps 110:5,6.

Observe, How powerful Christ is and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him; he has a rod of iron wherewith to crush those that will not submit to his golden sceptre; they are but like a potter's vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably dashed in pieces by him; see Re 2:27. "Thou shalt do it, that is, thou shalt have leave to do it." Nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel church shall not be built and established. I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee, Isa 43:4. "Thou shalt have power to do it; none shall be able to stand before thee; and thou shalt do it effectually." Those that will not bow shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal Son of God and our rightful Lord, and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God, that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established and shall triumph over all opposition.

8 Ask of me,
and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance,
and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:
be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of the earth. They hear that it is in vain to oppose Christ's government; let them therefore be so wise for themselves as to submit to it.

He that has power to destroy them shows that he has no pleasure in their destruction, for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, Ps 2:10. Those that would be wise must be instructed; and those are truly wise that receive instruction from the word of God.

Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others. Those that give law and judgment to others must receive law from Christ, and it will be their wisdom to do so. What is said to them is said to all, and is required of every one of us, only it is directed to kings and judges because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power that opposed the setting up of Christ's kingdom, Ps 2:2. We are exhorted,

I. To reverence God and to stand in awe of him, Ps 2:11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great, and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him; yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve

him, our friend and benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him; and these are very well consistent with each other, for,

1. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God; there is the same indefinite distance between them and God that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him.

2. We must rejoice in God, and, in subordination to him, we may rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those that know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us. Our salvation must be wrought out with fear and trembling, Php 2:12.

We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but to rejoice with trembling, with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves, lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his gospel and kingdom are a savour of death unto death. Whatever we rejoice in, in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in, and because of the uncertainty of them and the damp which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. To rejoice with trembling is to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, 1Co 7:30.

II. To welcome Jesus Christ and to submit to him, Ps 2:12. This is the great duty of the Christian religion; it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1 The command given to this purport: Kiss the Son. Christ is called the Son because so he was declared (Ps 2:7), Thou art my Son. He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and, upon that account, he is to be adored by us. He is the Son of man (that is, the Mediator, Joh 5:27), and, upon that account,

to be received and submitted to. He is called the Son, to include both, as God is often called emphatically the Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father, and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively: Kiss the Son, not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites, who pretend to honour him, but really affront him; but with a believing kiss.

(1.) With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation. Kiss, and be friends, as Jacob and Esau; let the quarrel between us and God terminate; let the acts of hostility cease, and let us be at peace with God in Christ, who is our peace.

(2.) With a kiss of adoration and religious worship. Those that worshipped idols kissed them, 1Ki 19:18,Ho 13:2. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, Ps 45:1. We must worship the Lamb, as well as him that sits on the throne, Re 5:9-13.

(3.) With a kiss of affection and sincere love: "Kiss the Son; enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you; love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did to whom much was forgiven, and, in token of it, kissed his feet," Lu 7:38. (4.) With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, as Samuel kissed Saul, 1Sa 10:1. Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest.

2 The reasons to enforce this command; and they are taken from our own interest, which God, in his gospel, shows a concern for. Consider,

(1.) The certain ruin we run upon if we refuse and reject Christ: "Kiss the Son; for it is at your peril if you do not."

[1.] "It will be a great provocation to him. Do it, lest he be angry." The Father is angry already; the Son is the Mediator that undertakes to make peace; if we slight him, the Father's wrath abides upon us (Joh 3:36), and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son's wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, though a Lamb; he is the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the wrath of this king, this King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men and chief captains to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains, Re 6:16. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name by which we can be saved. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy.

[2.] It will be utter destruction to yourselves: Lest you perish from the way, or in the way so some, in the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes; lest your way perish (as Ps 1:6), lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness. Christ is the way; take heed lest you be cut off from him as your way to God. It intimates that they were, or at least thought themselves, in the way; but, by neglecting Christ, they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven, are not far from the kingdom of God and yet never arrive there.

(2.) The happiness we are sure of if we yield ourselves to Christ. When his wrath is kindled, though but a little, the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinner miserable if it fasten upon his conscience; for it will burn to the lowest hell: one would think it should therefore follow, "When his wrath is kindled, woe be to those that despise him;" but the Psalmist startles at the thought, deprecates that dreadful doom and pronounces those blessed that escape it.

Those that trust in him, and so kiss him, are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will those be in the day of wrath, who, by trusting in Christ, have made him their refuge and patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear they

shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers will be forced to say, to their own greater confusion, "Now we see that blessed are all those, and those only, that trust in him."

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts filled with a holy awe of God, but at the same time borne up with a cheerful confidence in Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another. We are the circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus.

11 Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
and ye perish *from* the way,
when his wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

Psalms-3

A Morning Prayer of Trust in God

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!
Many *are* they that rise up against me.

The title of this psalm and many others is as a key hung ready at the door, to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it; when we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or at least the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thought, and offered up to God, when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him, to take away, not his crown only, but his life; we have the story, 2Sa 15:1-16:14, &c.

1. David was now in great grief; when, in his flight, he went up the Mount of Olives, he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching bare-foot; yet then he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung,

wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. Is any afflicted? Let him pray; nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? David was; and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs.

2. He was now in great danger; the plot against him was laid deep, the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them, so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity; yet then he kept hold of his interest in God and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him.

3. He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things, from his son, whom he had been indulgent of, from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to; this he could not but resent, and it was enough to break in upon any man's temper; yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. The sedateness of his mind was evinced by the Spirit's coming upon him; for the Spirit chooses to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no, not of a child or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to disfit us for communion with God.

4. He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah; this was the evil which, for that sin, God threatened to raise up against him out of his own house (2Sa 12:11), which, no doubt, he observed, and took occasion thence to renew his repentance for it. Yet he did not therefore cast away his confidence in the divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God or our hope in God.

5. He seemed cowardly in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one struggle for it; and yet, by this psalm, it appears he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True Christian fortitude

consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patiently bearing and patiently waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand.

In these Ps 3:1-3 he applies to God. Whither else should we go but to him when any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray; and yet he could find away open heaven-ward. Wherever we are we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him whithersoever we are driven. David, in his flight, attends his God,

I. With a representation of his distress, Ps 3:1,2. He looks round, and as it were takes a view of his enemies' camp, or receives information of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his own council-board. Two things he complains of, concerning his enemies:--

1. That they were very many: Lord, how are they increased! beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snow-ball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed, and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged should almost generally revolt from him, rebel against him, and choose for their head such a foolish and giddy young man as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many!

And how little fidelity and constancy are to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now, of a sudden, he had lost them. As people must not trust too much to princes (Ps 146:3), so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ, the Son of David, had many enemies. When a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, Crucify him, how were those then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange if the stream be against them and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable.

2. That they were very malicious. They rose up against him; they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all: they said of his soul, There is no help for him in God. That is,

(1.) They put a spiteful and invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon him, concluding that, because his servants and subjects forsook him thus and did not help him, God had deserted him and abandoned his cause, and he was therefore to be looked on, or rather to be looked off, as a hypocrite and a wicked man.

(2.) They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him: "His danger is so great that God himself cannot help him." It is strange that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many, in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for Omnipotence to deal with.

(3.) They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God and drive him to despair of relief from him: "They have said it to my soul;" so it may be read; compare Ps 11:1,42:10. This grieved him worst of all, that they had so bad an opinion of him as to think it possible to take him off from that foundation. The mere temptation was a buffeting to him, a thorn in his flesh, nay, a sword in his bones.

Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with any thing so much as if you offer to persuade him that there is no help for him in God. David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord. "They say, There is no help for me in thee; but, Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, There is no salvation" (for so the word is) "for him in God; but, Lord, do thou say unto my soul, I am thy salvation (Ps 35:3) and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them."

To this complaint he adds Selah, which occurs about seventy times in the book of Psalms. Some refer it to the music with

which, in David's time, the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause. Selah--Mark that, or, "Stop there, and consider a little." As here, they say, There is no help for him in God, Selah. "Take time for such a thought as this. Get thee behind me, Satan. The Lord rebuke thee! Away with such a vile suggestion!"

II. With a profession of his dependence upon God, Ps 3:3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of Providence or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, There is no help for him in God, cries out with so much the more assurance, "But thou, O Lord! art a shield for me; let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved I will never distrust thee." See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him.

1. Safety: "Thou art a shield for me, a shield about me" (so some), "to secure me on all sides, since my enemies surrounded me." Not only my shield (Ge 15:1), which denotes an interest in the divine protection, but a shield for me, which denotes the present benefit and advantage of that protection.

2. Honour: Thou art my glory. Those whom God owns for his are not safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace; the crown had fallen from his head; but he will not think the worse of himself while he has God for his glory, Isa 60:19. "Thou art my glory; thy glory I reckon mine" (so some); "this is what I aim at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour--that I may be to my God for a name and a praise."

3. Joy and deliverance: "Thou art the lifter up of my head; thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again, in due time; or, at least, thou wilt lift up

my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail." If, in the worst of times, God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, who seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from our God, and we should concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken again, every where fought against; but, in reference to both, we should encourage ourselves in our God, who owns and protects and will in due time crown his own interest both in the world and in the hearts of his people.

2 Many *there be* which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God.
Selah.
3 But thou, O Lord, *art* a shield for me;
my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice,
and he heard me out of his holy hill.
Selah.

David, having stirred up himself by the irritations of his enemies to take hold on God as his God, and so gained comfort in looking upward when, if he looked round about him, nothing appeared but what was discouraging, here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had derived from trusting in God and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue to which the dark dispensation he was now under would shortly be brought.

I. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former trouble he had been in, and through God's goodness got through, or in this hitherto. David had been exercised with many difficulties, often

oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God all-sufficient. He now remembered with pleasure,

1. That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and that, in all his difficulties and dangers, he had been enabled to acknowledge God and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too (this will be comfortable reflection when we are in trouble): I cried unto God with my voice. Care and grief do us good and no hurt when they set us a praying, and engage us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to him, as those that are in earnest.

And though God understands the language of the heart, when the voice is not heard (1Sa 1:13), and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who cause their voice to be heard on high (Isa 58:4), vox et præterea nihil--mere sound, yet, when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, it shall be taken notice of, in the account, that we cried unto God with our voice.

2. That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers: He heard me out of his holy hill, from heaven, the high and holy place, from the ark on Mount Sion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to carry back the ark into the city when he was flying from Absalom (2Sa 15:25), knowing that God was not tied, no, not to the ark of his presence, and that, notwithstanding the distance of place, he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill. No such things can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us and the operations of his grace in us, between his favour and our faith.

The ark of the covenant was in Mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant. Christ was set King upon the holy hill of Zion (Ps 2:6), and it is through him, whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

3. That he had always been very safe and very easy under the divine protection (Ps 3:5): "I laid myself down and slept, composed and quiet; and awaked refreshed, for the Lord sustained me."

(1.) This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone, and with our families, every morning. Many have not where to lay their head (but wander in deserts), or, if they have, dare not lie down for fear of the enemy; but we have laid ourselves down in peace. Many lie down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation.

Many lie down and sleep, and never awake again, they sleep the sleep of death, as the first-born of the Egyptians; but we lie down and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day; and whence is it, but because the Lord has sustained us with sleep as with food? We have been safe under his protection and easy in the arms of his good providence.

(2.) It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit, in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and the uncertainty of the event, never deprived him of an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose; for the Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him and made him easy. It is a great mercy when we are in trouble to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment.

(3.) Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ. In his sufferings he offered up strong cries, and was

heard; and therefore, though he laid down and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him, that he should not see corruption.

4. That God had often broken the power and restrained the malice of his enemies, had smitten them upon the cheek-bone (Ps 3:7), had silenced them and spoiled their speaking, blemished them and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully, had disabled them to do the mischief they intended; for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, who were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed.

The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people shall be broken. When, at any time, the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it; and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. He can stop their mouths and tie their hands.

II. See with what confidence he looks forward to the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection and often found the benefit of it,

1. His fears were all stilled and silenced, Ps 3:6. With what a holy bravery does he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies! "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that either in a foreign invasion or an intestine rebellion set themselves, or encamp, against me round about." No man seemed less safe (his enemies are numerous, ten thousands; they are spiteful and resolute, "They have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seem to have gained their point; for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one"), and yet no man was more secure:

"I will not be afraid, for all this; they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my own preservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last." When David, in his flight from Absalom, bade Zadok carry

back the ark, he spoke doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded, like a humble penitent, Here I am; let him do to me what seemeth to him good, 2Sa 15:26. But now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

2. His prayers were quickened and encouraged, Ps 3:7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he therefore prays, Arise, O Lord! save me, O my God! Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage, our petitions for it. He will for this be enquired of.

3. His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies, but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him, Ps 3:8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon and fetches comfort from.

(1.) That salvation belongeth unto the Lord; he has power to save, be the danger ever so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail; it is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenour of the new covenant, are sure of salvation; for he that is their God is the God of salvation.

(2.) That his blessing is upon his people; he not only has power to save them, but he has assured them of his kind and gracious intentions towards them. He has, in his word, pronounced a blessing upon his people; and we are bound to believe that that blessing does accordingly rest upon them, though there be not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, are surely blessed of him, who blesses indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God and committing ourselves to him, and encourage ourselves, and one another to continue still hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

5 I laid me down and slept;
I awaked; for the Lord sustained me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,
that have set *themselves* against me round about.
7 Arise, O Lord;
save me, O my God:
for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek bone;
thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.
8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the Lord:
thy blessing *is* upon thy people.
Selah.

Psalms-4

An Evening Prayer of Trust in God

To the chief Musician on Neginoth,
A Psalm of David.

1 Hear me when I call,
O God of my righteousness:
thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress;
have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

The title of the psalm acquaints us that David, having penned it by divine inspiration for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who (according to the divine appointment of psalmody made in his time, which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of) presided in that service. We have a particular account of the constitution, the modelling of the several classes of singers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1Ch 25:1-31 Some prophesied according to the order of the king, Ps 4:2.

Others prophesied with a harp, to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, Ps 4:3. Of others it is said that they were to lift up the horn, Ps 4:5. But of them all, that they were for song in the house of the Lord (Ps 4:6) and were instructed in the songs of the Lord, Ps 4:7.

This psalm was committed to one of the chiefs, to be sung on neginoth--stringed instruments (Hab 3:19), which were played on with the hand; with music of that kind the choristers were to sing this psalm: and it should seem that then they only sung, not the people; but the New-Testament appoints all Christians to sing (Eph 5:19,Col 3:16), from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully; and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then: the melody is to be made in the heart. In Ps 4:1-5

I. David addresses himself to God, Ps 4:1. Whether the sons of men, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will forbear, he hopes and prays that God will give him a generous audience, and an answer of peace: "Hear me when I call, and accept my adorations, grant my petitions, and judge upon my appeals; have mercy upon me, and hear me." All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed, not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. "Hear me for thy mercy-sake" is our best plea. Two things David here pleads further:--

1. "Thou art the God of my righteousness; not only a righteous God thyself, but the author of my righteous dispositions, who hast by the grace wrought that good that is in me, hast made me a righteous man; therefore hear men, and so attest thy own work in me; thou art also the patron of my righteous cause, the protector of my wronged innocency, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to bring forth my righteousness as the light." When men condemn us unjustly, this is our comfort, It is God that justifies; he is the God of a believer's righteousness.

2. "Thou has formerly enlarged me when I was in distress, enlarged my heart in holy joy and comfort under my distresses, enlarged my condition by bringing me out of my distresses; therefore now, Lord, have mercy upon me, and hear me." The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer. "Thou hast; wilt thou not? For thou art God, and changest not; thy work is perfect."

II. He addresses himself to the children of men, for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah, the Son of David, to reign over them.

1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impiety (Ps 4:2). "O you sons of Men" (of great men, so some, men of high degree, understanding it of the partisans of Saul or Absalom), "how long will you oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to it, under the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me?" Or it may be taken more generally. God, by the psalmist, here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. "You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do."

(1.) "You debase yourselves, for you are sons of men" (the word signifies man as a noble creature); "consider the dignity of your nature, and the excellency of those powers of reason with which you are endued, and do not act thus irrationally and unbecoming yourselves." Let the sons of men consider and show themselves men.

(2.) "You dishonour your Maker, and turn his glory into shame." They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour: or, if David's words, the term glory may be understood of God, whom he called his glory, Ps 3:3. Idolaters are charged

with changing the glory of God into shame, Ro 1:23. All wilful sinners do so by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving the affection and service to the creature which are due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and, while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to turn his glory into shame.

(3.) "You put a cheat upon yourselves: You love vanity, and seek after leasing, or lying, or that which is a lie. You are yourselves vain and lying, and you love to be so."

Or, "You set your hearts upon that which will prove, at last, but vanity and a lie." Those that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; as those also do that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world; for these will deceive them, and so ruin them. "How long will you do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest? When shall it once be?" Jer 13:27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist in dishonouring him and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shows them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled, Ps 4:3. This comes in here,

(1.) As a reason why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, nor think to run him down. It is at their peril if they offend one of these little ones, whom God has set apart for himself, Mt 18:6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye; and he will make their persecutors to know it, sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven, God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any injury, for God will hear their cry and plead their cause, Ex 22:23.

It is generally supposed that David speaks of his own designation to the throne; he is the godly man whom the Lord has set apart for that honour, and who does not usurp it or assume it to himself: "The opposition therefore which you give to him and to his advancement is very criminal, for the rein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual." God has, in like manner, set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that merciful One; and those that attempt to hinder his advancement will certainly be baffled, for the Father hears him always. Or,

(2.) As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly: "You have hitherto sought vanity; be truly religious, and you will be truly happy here and for ever; for,"

[1.] "God will secure to himself his interest in you." The Lord has set apart him that is godly, every particular godly man, for himself, in his eternal choice, in his effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence and operations of his grace; his people are purified unto him a peculiar people. Godly men are God's separated, sealed, ones; he knows those that are his, and has set his image and superscription upon them; he distinguishes them with uncommon favours: They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels. Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects.

[2.] "God will secure to you an interest in himself." This David speaks with application: The Lord will hear when I call unto him. We should think ourselves happy if we had the ear of an earthly prince; and is it not worth while upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the ear of the King of kings? Let us know this, and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten and to reason themselves out of it (Ps 4:4): "Stand

in awe and sin not" (be angry and sin not, so the LXX., and some think the apostle takes that exhortation from him, Eph 4:26); "commune with your own hearts; be converted, and, in order thereunto, consider and fear." Note, (1.) We must not sin, must not miss our way and so miss our aim.

(2.) One good remedy against sin is to stand in awe. Be moved (so some), in opposition to carelessness and carnal security. "Always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him."

(3.) One good means of preventing sin, and preserving a holy awe, is to be frequent and serious in communing with our own hearts: "Talk with your hearts; you have a great deal to say to them; they may be spoken with at any time; let it not be unsaid." A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. "Commune with your hearts; examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them and amend what is amiss in them; employ them in solemn pious meditations; let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good and keep closely to it. Consider your ways, and observe the directions here given in order to the doing of this work well and to good purpose."

[1.] "Choose a solitary time; do it when you lie awake upon your beds. Before you turn yourself to go to sleep at night" (as some of the heathen moralists have directed) "examine your consciences with respect to what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace." David himself practised what he here counsels others to do (Ps 63:6), I remember thee on my bed. Upon a sick-bed, particularly, we should consider our ways and commune with our own hearts about them.

[2.] "Compose yourselves into a serious frame: Be still. When you have asked conscience a question be silent, and

wait for an answer; even in unquiet times keep you spirits calm and quiet."

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty (Ps 4:5): Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. Those that were disaffected to David and his government would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright; and those that know the concerns that lie between them and God will be glad of the Mediator, the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us,

(1.) That we serve him: "Offer sacrifices to him, your own selves first, and your best sacrifices." But they must be sacrifices of righteousness, that is, good works, all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. "Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your alms be sacrifices of righteousness." The sacrifices of the unrighteous God will not accept; they are an abomination, Isa 1:11-15, &c.

(2.) That we confide in him. "First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of righteousness and then you are welcome to put your trust in the Lord. Serve God without any diffidence of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him, by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth nor in an arm of flesh; trust in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; trust in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency."

In singing Ps 4:1-4 we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people; and we must press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God, conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; and in praying over Ps 4:1-4 we must beg of God grace thus to think and thus to do.

2 O ye sons of men,

how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame?
How long will ye love vanity,
and seek after leasing?
Selah.
3 But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself:
the Lord will hear when I call unto him.
4 Stand in awe, and sin not:
commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.
Selah.
5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
and put your trust in the Lord.

We have here,

I The foolish wish of worldly people: There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Who will make us to see good? What good they meant is intimated, Ps 4:7. It was the increase of their corn and wine; all they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good and solicitous about it; but there are these things amiss in this wish:--

1. They enquire, in general, "Who will make us happy?" but do not apply themselves to God who alone can; and so they expose themselves to be ill-advised, and show they would rather be beholden to any than to God, for they would willingly live without him.

2. They enquire for good that may be seen, seeming good, sensible good; and they show no concern for the good things that are out of sight and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but, as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2Co 4:18. We look with an eye of faith further than we can see with an eye of sense.

3. They enquire for any good, not for the chief good; all they want is outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, and a good estate; and what are all these worth without a good God and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of most men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish, of carnal worldlings is their folly, yet many there be that join in it; and their doom will be accordingly. "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, the penny thou didst agree for."

II The wise choice which godly people make. David, and the pious few that adhered to him, dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

1. He disagrees from the vote of the many. God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. "They are for any good, for worldly good, but so am not I; I will not say as they say; any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it." 2. He and his friends agree in their choice of God's favour as their felicity; it is this which in their account is better than life and all the comforts of life.

(1.) This is what they most earnestly desire and seek after; this is the breathing of their souls, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Most are for other things, but we are for this." Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them; those whom God has set apart have a prayer by themselves, which, though others may speak the words of it, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say Amen to; "Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more; that is enough to make us happy. Lord, be at peace with us, accept of us, manifest

thyself to us, let us be satisfied of thy loving-kindness and we will be satisfied with it."

Observe, Though David speaks of himself only in the Ps 4:7,8, he speaks, in this prayer, for others also,--"upon us," as Christ taught us to pray, "Our Father." All the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand, and in this they are one, they all desire God's favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others as well as for ourselves, for in God's favour there is enough for us all and we shall have never the less for others sharing in what we have.

(2.) This is what, above any thing, they rejoice in (Ps 4:7): "Thou hast hereby often put gladness into my heart; not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable; and therefore this is what I will still pursue, what I will seek after all the days of my life." When God puts grace in the heart he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increase.

This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy. The mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow; even in laughter their heart is sorrowful, Pr 14:13. "Thou hast given gladness in my heart;" so the word is. True joy is God's gift, not as the world giveth, Joh 14:27. The saints have no reason to envy carnal worldlings their mirth and joy, but should pity them rather, for they may know better and will not.

(3.) This is what they entirely confide in, and in this confidence they are always easy, Ps 4:8. He had laid himself down and slept (Ps 3:5), and so he will still: "I will lay myself down (having the assurance of thy favour) in peace, and with as much pleasure as those whose corn and wine increase, and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor, at the end of the heap of corn, to sleep there when his heart was merry Ru 3:7), for thou only makest me to dwell in safety. Though I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; though I

have no guards to attend me, the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail." If he have the light of God's countenance,

[1.] He can enjoy himself. His soul returns to God, and reposes itself in him as its rest, and so he lays himself down and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him.

[2.] He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quietly, and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, and to make his bed in the darkness, he will then, with good old Simeon, depart in peace (Lu 2:29), being assured that God will receive his soul, to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in safety in the grave.

[3.] He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman that, having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up, he knows not how, Mk 4:26,27. So a good man, having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, sleeps and rests night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him and prepared to welcome his holy will.

In singing Ps 4:6-8, and praying over them, let us, with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world, as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour; and, with a holy indifferency about the issue of all our worldly concerns, let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the guidance and custody of the divine Providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

6 *There be* many that say, Who will show us *any* good?
Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.

Psalms-5

A Prayer for Protection

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth,
A Psalm of David.

1 Give ear to my words, O Lord;
consider my meditation.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar but that it is said to be upon Nehiloth, a word nowhere else used. It is conjectured (and it is but a conjecture) that is signifies wind--instruments, with which this psalm was sung, as Neginoth was supposed to signify the stringed--instruments. In Ps 5:1-6 David had an eye to God,

I. As a prayer-hearing God; such he has always been ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him: O Lord (Ps 5:1,3), Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient, Being, whom we are bound to adore, and, "my King and my God (Ps 5:2), whom I have avouched for my God, to whom I have sworn allegiance, and under whose protection I have put myself as my King." We believe that the God we pray to is a King, and a God. King of kings and God of gods; but that is not enough: the most commanding encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful or prevailing plea in prayer, is to look upon him as our King and our God, to whom we lie under peculiar obligations and from whom we have peculiar expectations. Now observe,

1. What David here prays for, which may encourage our faith and hopes in all our addresses to God. If we pray fervently, and in faith, we have reason to hope,

(1.) That God will take cognizance of our case, the representation we make of it and the requests we make upon it; for so he prays here: Give ear to my words, O Lord! Though God is in heaven, he has an ear open to his people's prayers, and it is not heavy, that he cannot hear. Men perhaps will not or cannot hear us; our enemies are so haughty that they will not, our friends at such a distance that they cannot; but God, though high, though in heaven, can, and will.

(2.) That he will take it into his wise and compassionate consideration, and will not slight it, or turn it off with a cursory answer; for so he prays: Consider my meditation. David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations; as meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together, Ps 19:14. It is when we thus consider our prayers, and then only, that we may expect that God will consider them, and take that to his heart which comes from ours.

(3.) That he will, in due time, return a gracious answer of peace; for so he prays (Ps 5:2): Hearken to the voice of my cry. His prayer was a cry; it was the voice of his cry, which denotes fervency of affection and importunity of expression; and such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much and do wonders.

2. What David here promises, as the condition on his part to be performed, fulfilled, and kept, that he might obtain this gracious acceptance; this may guide and govern us in our addresses to God, that we may present them aright, for we ask, and have not, if we ask amiss. Four things David here promises, and so must we:--

(1.) That he will pray, that he will make conscience of praying, and make a business of it: Unto thee will I pray. "Others live without prayer, but I will pray." Kings on their own thrones (so David was) must be beggars at God's throne. "Others pray to strange gods, and expect relief from them, but to thee, to thee only, will I pray." The assurances God

has given us of his readiness to hear prayer should confirm our resolution to live and die praying.

(2.) That he will pray in the morning. His praying voice shall be heard then, and then shall his prayer be directed; that shall be the date of his letters to heaven, not that only ("Morning, and evening, and at noon, will I pray, nay, seven times a day, will I praise thee"), but that certainly. Morning prayer is our duty; we are the fittest for prayer when we are in the most fresh, and lively, and composed frame, got clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned; by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace.

(3.) That he will have his eye single and his heart intent in the duty: I will direct my prayer, as a marksman directs his arrow to the white; with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. Or as we direct a letter to a friend at such a place so must we direct our prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always send them by the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God; his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end in all our prayers. Let our first petition be, Hallowed, glorified, by thy name, and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it that was given to Christ himself: I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again.

(4.) That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace: "I will look up, will look after my prayers, and hear what God the Lord will speak (Ps 85:8,Hab 2:1), that, if he grant what I asked, I may be thankful--if he deny, I may be patient--if he defer, I may continue to pray and wait and may not faint." We must look up, or look out, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man

looked stedfastly on Peter and John (Ac 3:4), we may expect that God will give ear to our words and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David here, who does not pray, "Lord, do this, or the other, for me;" but, "Hearken to me, consider my case, and do in it as seemeth good unto thee."

II. As a sin-hating God, Ps 5:4-6. David takes notice of this,

1. As a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember that, as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy; though he is ready to hear prayer, yet, if we regard iniquity in our heart, he will not hear our prayers, Ps 66:18.

2. As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had not pleasure in. See here.

(1.) The holiness of God's nature. When he says, Thou art not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, he means, "Thou art a God that hates it, as directly contrary to thy infinite purity and rectitude, and holy will." Though the workers of iniquity prosper, let none thence infer that God has pleasure in wickedness, no, not in that by which men pretend to honour him, as those do that hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, Let the Lord be glorified. God has no pleasure in wickedness, though covered with a cloak of religion. Let those therefore who delight in sin know that God has no delight in them; nor let any say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God is not the author of sin, neither shall evil dwell with him, that is, it shall not always be countenanced and suffered to prosper. Dr. Hammond thinks this refers to that law of Moses which would not permit strangers, who persisted in their idolatry, to dwell in the land of Israel.

(2.) The justice of his government. The foolish shall not stand in his sight, that is, shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted

in the judgment of the great day. The workers of iniquity are very foolish. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest of all fools; not fools of God's making (those are to be pitied), for he hates nothing that he has made, but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God; justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin. "Those whom thou hatest thou shalt destroy;" particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction:--

[1.] Those that are fools, that speak leasing or lying, and that are deceitful. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners (Re 21:8), All liars, and (Ps 22:15), Whosoever loves and makes a lie; nothing is more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful to the God of truth.

[2.] Those that are cruel: Thou wilt abhor the bloody man; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful, to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleases. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the devil and to be his children, and therefore it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies; and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour; and the worse they are the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In singing Ps 5:1-6, and praying them over, we must engage and stir up ourselves to the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

2 Hearken unto the voice of my
cry, my King, and my God:
for unto thee will I pray.
3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord;
in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee,
and will look up.
4 For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:

neither shall evil dwell with thee.
5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:
thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:
the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

In Ps 7-12 David gives three characters--of himself, of his enemies, and of all the people of God, and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

I. He gives an account of himself and prays for himself, Ps 5:7,8.

1. He is stedfastly resolved to keep closely to God and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness and obnoxious to his justice: "But, as for me, that shall not keep me from thee." God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart, to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves,

(1.) To worship God, to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name.

(2.) To worship him publicly: "I will come into thy house, the courts of thy house, to worship there with other faithful worshippers." David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone (Ps 5:2,3), and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not to excuse us from, public ordinances.

(3.) To worship him reverently and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man: "In thy fear will I worship, with a holy awe of God upon my spirit," Heb 12:28. God is greatly to be feared by all his worshippers.

(4.) To take his encouragement, in worship, from God himself only.

[1.] From his infinite mercy. It is in the multitude of God's mercy (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from him) that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be both the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our joy in every thing wherein we have to do with him.

[2.] From the instituted medium of worship, which was then the temple, here called the temple of his holiness, as a type of Christ, the great and only Mediator, who sanctifies the service as the temple sanctified the gold, and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions as the worshippers then had to the temple.

2. He earnestly prays that God, by his grace, would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty (Ps 5:8): Lead me in thy righteousness, because of my enemies--Heb. "Because of those who observe me, who watch for my halting and seek occasion against me." See here,

(1.) The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him. The more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus, by wisdom and grace, good may come out of evil.

(2.) The right course which David took for the baffling of those who sought occasion against him. He committed himself to a divine guidance, begged of God both by his providence and by his grace to direct him in the right way, and keep him from turning aside out of it, at any time, in any instance whatsoever, that the most critical and captious of his enemies, like Daniel's, might find no occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called God's way, and his righteousness, because he prescribes to us by his just and holy laws, which if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we

may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him see 1Sa 18:14,15.

II. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, Ps 5:9,10.

1. If his account of them is true, as no doubt it is, they have a very bad character; and, if they had not been bad men indeed, they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken (Ps 5:6) of God's hating the bloody and deceitful man. "Now, Lord," says he, "that is the character of my enemies: they are deceitful; there is no trusting them, for there is no faithfulness in their mouth." They thought it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but blemish David, and render him odious. "Lord, lead me," says he (Ps 5:8), "for such as these are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocency itself is no security.

Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? They flatter with their tongues; it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more securely. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither: Their inward part is wickedness itself; it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody; for their throat is an open sepulchre, cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up, insatiable as the grave, which never says, It is enough," Pr 30:15,16. This is quoted (Ro 3:13) to show the general corruption of mankind; for they are all naturally prone to malice, Tit 3:3. The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another.

2. If his prayer against them is heard, as no doubt it is, they are in a bad condition. As men are, and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them (according to what he had said Ps 5:6, "Thou shalt destroy men of this character," so let them fall; and sinners would soon throw themselves into ruin if they were let alone), to cast them out of his protection and favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living; and woe to those whom God

casts out. "They have by their sins deserved destruction; there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection: Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, by which they have filled up the measure of their iniquity and have become ripe for ruin." Persecuting God's servants fills the measure as soon as any thing, 1Th 2:15.

Nay, they may be easily made to fall by their own counsels; that which they do to secure themselves, and do mischief to others, by the over-ruling providence of God may be made a means of their destruction, Ps 7:15,9:15.

He pleads, "They have rebelled against thee. Had they been only my enemies, I could safely have forgiven them; but they are rebels against God, his crown and dignity; they oppose his government, and will not repent, to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin." His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy, by which he foretold that all who rebel against God will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels. If it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people, as we are told it is (2Th 1:6), we pray that it may be done whenever we pray, Father, thy will be done.

III. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observe,

1 The description he gives of God's people. They are the righteous (Ps 5:12); for they put their trust in God, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God and dependence on him.

2. His prayer for them: "Let them rejoice; let them have cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice; fill them with joy, with great joy and unspeakable; let them shout for joy, with constant joy and perpetual; let them ever shout for joy, with holy joy, and that which terminates in God; let them be joyful in thee, in thy favour, in thy salvation, not in any creature.

Let them rejoice because thou defendest them, coverest them, or overshadowest them, dwellest among them." Perhaps here is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray, not for ourselves only, but for others, for all good people, for all that trust in God and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind nor in our interest.

Let all that are entitled to God's promises have a share in our prayers; grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity. This is to concur with God. 3. His comfort concerning them, Ps 5:12. He takes them into his prayers because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for,

(1.) They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing: "Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous, wilt command a blessing upon them. Thou hast in thy word pronounced them blessed, and therefore wilt make them truly so. Those whom thou blessest are blessed indeed."

(2.) "They are safe under the protection of thy favour; with that thou wilt crown him" (so some read it); "it is his honour, will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great: with that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him, on every side, as with a shield." A shield, in war, guards only one side, but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side; like the hedge about Job, round about, so that, while they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe and ought to be entirely satisfied.

7 But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy:
and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.
8 Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies;
make thy way straight before my face.
9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;
their inward part *is* very
wickedness; their throat *is* an
open sepulchre; they flatter with
their tongue.
10 Destroy thou them, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions;
for they have rebelled against thee.
11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice:
let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them:
let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
12 For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous;
with favor wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

Psalms-6

A Prayer for Mercy in Time of Trouble

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon
Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

1 O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger,
neither chasten me in thy hot
displeasure.

These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them; but those are getting

ready for mercy who, under God's rebukes, sow in tears, as David does here. Let us observe here,

I The representation he makes to God of his grievances. He pours out his complaint before him. Whither else should a child go with his complaints, but to his father? 1. He complains of bodily pain and sickness (Ps 6:2): My bones are vexed. His bones and his flesh, like Job's, were touched. Though David was a king, yet he was sick and pained; his imperial crown could not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Though David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet this could not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Though David was a good man, yet neither could his goodness keep him in health.

Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged by their example to show before God our trouble in that case, who is for the body, and takes cognizance of its ailments.

2. He complains of inward trouble: My soul is also sorely vexed; and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, if that be in good plight; but, if that be wounded, the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him; that was the vexation of his soul; that made him cry, I am weak, heal me. It is a sad thing for a man to have his bones and his soul vexed at the same time; but this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people:

nay, and this completed his complicated trouble, that it was continued upon him a great while, which is here intimated in that expostulation (Ps 6:3), Thou, O Lord! how long? To the living God we must, at such a time, address ourselves, who

is the only physician both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrians, not to the god of Ekron.

II The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavily; he groaned till he was weary, wept till he made his bed to swim, and watered his couch (Ps 6:6), wept till he had almost wept his eyes out (Ps 6:7): My eye is consumed because of grief. David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction; but, when sin sat heavily upon his conscience and he was made to possess his iniquities, when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath and his withdrawings from him, then he thus grieves and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuses to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note,

1. It has often been the lot of the best of men to be men of sorrows; our Lord Jesus himself was so. Our way lies through a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate.

2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender, and to relent, under the tokens of God's displeasure. David, who could face Goliath himself and many another threatening enemy with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin and under the apprehensions of divine wrath; and it was no diminution at all to his character to do so.

3. True penitents weep in their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces, that they might appear unto men to mourn; but David mourned in the night upon the bed where he lay communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief, but the eye of him who is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept.

4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow; so David's was; he wept so bitterly, so abundantly, that he watered his couch.

5. The triumphs of wicked men in the sorrows of the saints add very much to their grief. David's eye waxed old because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions and put bad constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, Heb 5:7.

III. The petitions which he offers up to God in this sorrowful and distressed state.

1. That which he dreads as the greatest evil is the anger of God. This was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of this that made it indeed a bitter cup; and therefore he prays (Ps 6:1), O Lord! rebuke me not in thy anger, though I have deserved it, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. He does not pray, "Lord, rebuke me not; Lord, chasten me not;" for, as many as God loves he rebukes and chastens, as a father the son in whom he delights.

He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough if God, at the same time, lift up the light of his countenance upon him and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his loving-kindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable if he have but comfort in his soul. No matter though sickness make his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, "Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me." Herein David was a type of Christ, whose sorest complaint, in his sufferings, was of the trouble of his soul and of the suspension of his Father's smiles.

He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies--"Why do they crucify me?" or the unkindness of his friends--"Why do they desert me?" But he cried with a loud voice, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever and always beware of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction.

2. That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is the favour and friendship of God. He prays,

(1.) That God would pity him and look upon him with compassion. He thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy. Hence he prays, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord! in wrath remember mercy, and deal not with me in strict justice."

(2.) That God would pardon his sins; for that is the proper act of mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, Have mercy upon me.

(3.) That God would put forth his power for his relief: "Lord, heal me (Ps 6:2), save me (Ps 6:4), speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well."

(4.) That he would be at peace with him: "Return, O Lord! receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me. Thou hast seemed to depart from me and neglect me, nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return and show thyself nigh to me."

(5.) That he would especially preserve the inward man and the interests of that, whatever might become of the body: "O Lord! deliver my soul from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever." It is an unspeakable privilege that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

IV. The pleas with which he enforces his petitions, not to move God (he knows our cause and the true merits of it better than we can state them), but to move himself.

1. He pleads God's mercy; and thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer: Save me, for thy mercies' sake.

2. He pleads God's glory (Ps 6:5): "For in death there is no remembrance of thee. Lord, if thou deliver me and comfort me, I will not only give thee thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join with me in these thanksgivings, but I will spend the new life thou shalt entrust me with in thy service and to thy glory, and all the remainder of my days I will preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee; but, if I die, I shall be cut short of that opportunity of honouring thee and doing good to others, for in the grave who will give the thanks?" Not but that separate souls live and act, and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God and give thanks to him. But,

(1.) In the second death (which perhaps David, being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of) there is no pleasing remembrance of God; devils and damned spirits blaspheme him and do not praise him. "Lord, let me not lie always under this wrath, for that is sheol, it is hell itself, and lays me under an everlasting disability to praise thee." Those that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire and delight to praise him, may pray in faith, "Lord, send me not to that dreadful place, where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor are any thanks given to thee."

(2.) Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of his kingdom among men by opposing the powers of darkness and bringing many on this earth to know God and devote themselves to him. Some have maintained that the joys of the saints in heaven are more desirable, infinitely more so, than the comforts of saints on earth; yet the services of saints on earth, especially such eminent ones as David was, are more laudable, and redound more to the glory of the divine grace, than the services of the saints in heaven, who are not employed in maintaining the war against sin and Satan, nor in edifying the body of Christ.

Courtiers in the royal presence are most happy, but soldiers in the field are more useful; and therefore we may, with good reason, pray that if it be the will of God, and he has any further work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us, or them, to serve him. To depart and be with Christ is most happy for the saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh is more profitable for the church. This David had an eye to when he pleaded this, In the grave who shall give thee thanks? Ps 30:9,88:10,115:17,Isa 38:18. And this Christ had an eye to when he said, I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world.

We should sing Ps 6:1-7 with a deep sense of the terrors of God's wrath, which we should therefore dread and deprecate above any thing; and with thankfulness if this be not our condition, and compassion to those who are thus afflicted: if we be thus troubled, let it comfort us that our case is not without precedent, nor, if we humble ourselves and pray, as David did, shall it be long without redress.

2 Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I *am*
weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are
vexed.
3 My soul is also sore vexed:
but thou, O Lord, how long?
4 Return, O Lord, deliver my soul:
oh save me for thy mercies' sake.
5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee:
in the grave who shall give thee thanks?
6 I am weary with my groaning;
all the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.
7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

What a sudden change is here for the better! He that was groaning, and weeping, and giving up all for gone (Ps 6:6,7), here looks and speaks very pleasantly. Having made his requests known to God, and lodged his case with him, he is

very confident the issue will be good and his sorrow is turned into joy.

I. He distinguishes himself from the wicked and ungodly, and fortifies himself against their insults (Ps 6:8): Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. When he was in the depth of his distress,

1. He was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now that this cloud of melancholy had blown over he was assured that his soul would not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people. He began to suspect himself to be one of them because of the heavy pressures of God's wrath upon him; but now that all his fears were silenced he bade them depart, knowing that his lot was among the chosen.

2 The workers of iniquity had teased him, and taunted him, and asked him, "Where is thy God?" triumphing in his despondency and despair; but now he had wherewith to answer those that reproached him, for God, who was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit and would shortly complete his deliverance.

3. Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, "depart from me; I will never lend an ear to your counsel; you would have had me to curse God and die, but I will bless him and live." This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolution strengthened never to have any thing more to do with sin and sinners.

David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin and the reformation of manners, Ps 75:4,101:3. When God has done great things for us, this should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when, having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, Depart from me,

all you workers of iniquity (Lu 13:27), and so teaches us to say so now, Ps 119:115.

II. He assures himself that God was, and would be, propitious to him, notwithstanding the present intimations of wrath which he was under.

1. He is confident of a gracious answer to this prayer which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God hears (as Isa 65:24,Da 9:20), and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, "The Lord hath heard" (Ps 6:8), and again (Ps 6:9), "The Lord hath heard." By the workings of God's grace upon his heart he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would in due time be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice, in the ears of the God of mercy:

The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. Silent tears are not speechless ones. His prayers were cries to God: "The Lord has heard the voice of my supplication, has put his Fiat--Let it be done, to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly."

2. Thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers: "He has heard the voice of my supplication, and therefore he will receive my prayer; for he gives, and does not upbraid with former grants."

III. He either prays for the conversion or predicts the destruction of his enemies and persecutors, Ps 6:10.

1. It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion: "Let them all be ashamed of the opposition they have given me and the censures they have passed upon me. Let them be (as all true penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me and take shame to themselves."

2. If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. They shall be ashamed and sorely vexed (so it maybe read), and that justly. They rejoiced that David was vexed (Ps 6:2,3), and therefore, as usually happens, the evil returns upon themselves; they also shall be sorely vexed. Those that will not give glory to God shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him and to trust in him in the greatest straits and difficulties.

9 The Lord hath heard my supplication;
the Lord will receive my prayer.
10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:
let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

Psalms-7

A Prayer for Vindication

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord,
concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

1 O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust:
save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

Shiggaion is a song or psalm (the word is used so only here and Hab 3:1) --a wandering song (so some), the matter and composition of the several parts being different, but artificially put together--a charming song (so others), very delightful. David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, concerning the words or affairs of Cush the Benjamite, that is, of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David bespoke him rather a Cushite, or Ethiopian, than a true-born Israelite.

Or, more likely, it was some kinsman of Saul named Cush, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him

to Saul as a traitor, and (which was very needless) exasperated Saul against him, one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of (1Sa 26:19), that made mischief between him and Saul. David, thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord. The injuries men do us should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause.

Nay, he sings to the Lord; his spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful that he was still in tune for sacred songs and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In Ps 7:1-9,

I. He puts himself under God's protection and flies to him for succour and shelter (Ps 7:1): "Lord, save me, and deliver me from the power and malice of all those that persecute me, that they may not have their will against me." He pleads,

1. His relation to God. "Thou art my God, and therefore whither else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my shield (Ge 15:1), my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants, who may expect to be protected."

2. His confidence in God: "Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee: In thee do I put my trust, and not in any arm of flesh." Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so, which is our case.

3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them: "Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will tear my soul like a lion tearing his prey," with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion (2Ti 4:17), as David here compares Saul.

4. The failure of all other helpers: "Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me, for otherwise there is none to deliver," Ps 7:2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

II. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the searcher of hearts, concerning it, Ps 7:3-5. Observe, in general, 1. When we are falsely accused by men it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us

Hic murus aheneus esto, Nil conscire sibi.
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.--

and not only they cannot prove their calumnies (Ac 24:13), but our hearts can disprove them, to our own satisfaction.

2. God is the patron of wronged innocency. David had no court on earth to appeal to. His prince, who should have righted him, was his sworn enemy. But he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call his God. And here see,

(1.) What the indictment is which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and, in order to that, levied war against him. This he utterly denies. He never did this; there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand (Ps 7:3); he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul when he was at peace with him, nor to any other, Ps 7:4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did those mischief that had injured him.

(2.) What evidence he produces of his innocency. It is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of: I have delivered him that without cause is my enemy, Ps 7:4.

By this it appeared, beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life--that, once and again, Providence so ordered it that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he cut off his skirt (1Sa 24:4) and afterwards when he took away his spear (1Sa 26:12), to attest for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, our so doing may turn to us for a testimony, more than we think of, another day.

(3.) What doom he would submit to if he were guilty (Ps 7:5): Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death, and my good name when I am gone: let him lay my honour in the dust. This intimates,

[1.] That, if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that has his hand against every man must reckon upon it that every man's hand will be against him.

[2.] That, in that case, he could not with any confidence go to God and beg of him to deliver him or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous dangerous thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronise their unrighteousness.

[3.] That he was abundantly satisfied in himself concerning his innocency. It is natural to us to wish well to ourselves; and therefore a curse to ourselves, if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any. With such an oath, or imprecation, David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

III. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and backs every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and pleads their wrath against him: "Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them and let them know that thou art so, Ps 7:6. In thy anger lift up thyself to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, because of the rage, the furies, the outrages (the word is plural) of my enemies." Those need not fear men's wrath against them who have God's wrath for them. Who knows the power of his anger?

2. He prays that God would plead his cause.

(1.) He prays, Awake for me to judgment (that is, let my cause have a hearing), to the judgment which thou hast commanded; this speaks,

[1.] The divine power; as he blesses effectually, and is therefore said to command the blessing, so he judges effectually, and is therefore said to command the judgment, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it.

[2.] The divine purpose and promise: "It is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and judges of the earth to give redress to the injured and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment." He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will no doubt execute it himself. Though he seem to connive at wrong, as one asleep, he will awake in due time (Ps 78:65) and will make it to appear that the delays were no neglects.

(2.) He prays (Ps 7:7), "Return thou on high, maintain thy own authority, resume thy royal throne of which they have despised the sovereignty, and the judgment-seat of which

they have despised the sentence. Return on high, that is, visibly and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged that heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause." Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, when he returned to heaven (returned on high in his exalted state), had all judgment committed to him. Or it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all. This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men.

(3.) He prays again (Ps 7:8), "Judge me, judge for me, give sentence on my side." To enforce this suit,

[1.] He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court: The Lord shall judge the people, Ps 7:8. He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he will do right and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment.

[2.] He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires only to be judged, in this matter, according to his righteousness, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken towards his preferment. [3.] He foretels that it would be much for the glory of God and the edification and comfort of his people if God would appear for him: "So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about; therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their raises and services in the courts of thy house."

First, They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore, when they saw him in a fair way to the throne, they would greatly rejoice and give thanks to

God; crowds of them would attend his footstool with their praises for such a blessing to their land.

Secondly, If David come into power, as God has promised him, he will take care to bring people to church by his influence upon them, and the ark shall not be neglected, as it was in the days of Saul, 1Ch 13:3.

3. He prays, in general, for the conversion of sinners and the establishment of saints (Ps 7:9): "O let the wickedness, not only of my wicked enemies, but of all the wicked, come to an end! but establish the just." Here are two things which everyone of us must desire and may hope for:--

(1.) The destruction of sin, that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought are forsaken, and the stream which ran violently towards the world and the flesh is driven back and runs towards God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. When there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest, when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power is broken, and the man of sin is destroyed, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. And this is that which all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for.

(2.) The perpetuity of righteousness: But establish the just. As we pray that the bad maybe made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked nor shocked by their malice, that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God and in their resolution to persevere therein, may be firm to the interests of God and religion and zealous in their endeavours to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. His plea to enforce this petition is, For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins; and therefore he knows the secret wickedness of the wicked and knows how to bring it

to an end, and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an unbiased conscience for us that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing Ps 7:1-9, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

2 lest he tear my soul like a lion,
rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
3 O Lord my God, if I have done this;
if there be iniquity in my hands;
4 if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;
(yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy;)
5 let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it;*
yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
and lay mine honor in the dust.
Selah.
6 Arise, O Lord, in thine anger,
lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies:
and awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.
7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about:
for their sakes therefore return thou on high.
8 The Lord shall judge the people:
judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness,
and according to mine integrity *that is* in me.
9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end;
but establish the just:
for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
10 My defense *is* of God,
which saveth the upright in heart.

David having lodged his appeal with God by prayer and a solemn profession of his integrity, in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part does, as it were, take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous and the certain destruction of wicked people that continue impenitent.

I. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful protector and Saviour, and the patron of his oppressed innocency (Ps 7:10): "My defence is of God. Not only, God is my defender, and I shall find him so; but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone; if I have defence, it must be of God." My shield is upon God (so some read it); there is that in God which gives an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, Pr 18:10. Two things David builds this confidence upon:--

1 The particular favour God has for all that are sincere: He saves the upright in heart, saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; he saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection.

2 The general respect he has for justice and equity: God judgeth the righteous; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. God is a righteous Judge (so some read it), who not only doeth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

II. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his persecutors, even as many of them as would not repent, to give glory to God. He reads their doom here, for their good, if possible, that they might cease from their enmity, or, however, for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands,

1. That they are children of wrath. They are not to be envied, for God is angry with them, is angry with the wicked every day. They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up against the day of

wrath. As his mercies are new every morning towards his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion; for, if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them (Joh 3:36) and continual additions are made to it.

2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are, sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction.

(1.) God will destroy them. The destruction they are reserved for is destruction from the Almighty, which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the wrath of God, Ps 7:13,14. It is here intimated,

[1.] That the destruction of sinners may be prevented by their conversion, for it is threatened with that proviso: If he turn not from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin; but, if he turn, it is implied that his sin shall be pardoned and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of those that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die and their blood is therefore upon their own heads.

[2.] That, if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general (Ps 7:13), He has prepared for him the instruments of death, of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will slay, he will not want instruments of death for any creature; even the least and weakest may be made so when he pleases.

First, Here is variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter. Here is a sword, which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows, which wound and kill at a distance those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner flees from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through, Job 20:24.

Secondly, These instruments of death are all said to be made ready. God has them not to seek, but always at hand. Judgments are prepared for scorners. Tophet is prepared of old.

Thirdly, While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

Fourthly, The longer the destruction is delayed, to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be and the heavier will it fall and lie for ever if that time be not so improved; while God is waiting the sword is in the whetting and the bow in the drawing.

Fifthly, The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet comes surely; for it is ordained, they are of old ordained to it.

Sixthly, Of all sinners persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath; against them, more than any other, God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

(2.) They will destroy themselves, Ps 7:14-16. The sinner is here described as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. His conduct is described,

[1.] By the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, Ps 7:14. The sinner's head with its politics conceives mischief, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays

the plot deep, and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions travails with iniquity, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what does it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood; it is a cheat upon himself; it is a lie in his right hand. He cannot compass what he intended, nor, if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself. He brings forth wind (Isa 26:18), stubble (Isa 33:11), death (Jam 1:5), that is, falsehood.

[2.] By the pains of a labouring man that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it and perishes in it. First, This is true, in a sense of all sinners. They prepare destruction for themselves by preparing themselves for destruction, loading themselves with guilt and submitting themselves to their corruptions. Secondly, It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God or against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of God it is made to return upon their own heads. What they designed for the shame and destruction of others proves to be their own confusion.

Nec lex est jusitior ulla Quam necis artifices arte perire sua

There is not a juster law than that the author of a murderous contrivance shall perish by it.

Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this psalm we must do as David here does (Ps 7:17), praise the Lord according to his righteousness, that is, give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people and of that just vengeance with which he will pursue those that afflict them. Thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who, when his enemies deal proudly, shows that he is above them.

11 God judgeth the righteous,
and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword;
he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death;

he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.
14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity,
and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
15 He made a pit, and digged it,
and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.
16 His mischief shall return upon his own head,
and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.
17 I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness:
and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.

Psalms-8

God's Glory and Man's Honor

To the chief Musician upon Gittith,
A Psalm of David.

1 O Lord our Lord,
how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!
who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

The psalmist here sets himself to give to God the glory due to his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon Gittith, which is generally taken for the tune, or musical instrument, with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it upon the Gittite, that is, Goliath the Gittite, whom he vanquished and slew (1Sa 17:1-58); that enemy was stilled by him who was, in comparison, but a babe and a suckling.

The conjecture would be probable enough but that we find two other psalms with the same title, Ps 81:1-16,84:1-12. Two things David here admires:--

I. How plainly God displays his glory himself, Ps 8:1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence, as the Lord and his people's Lord: O Lord our Lord! If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours. He is ours, for he made us,

protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him and submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to show us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory: and we shall never think we can do that with affection enough if we consider,

1. How brightly God's glory shines even in this lower world: How excellent is his name in all the earth! The works of creation and Providence evince and proclaim to all the world that there is an infinite Being, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the sovereign ruler, powerful protector, and bountiful benefactor of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent, is his name in all the earth! The light of it shines in men's faces every where (Ro 1:20); if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault.

There is no speech or language but the voice of God's name either is heard in it or may be. But this looks further, to the gospel of Christ, by which the name of God, as it is notified by divine revelation, which before was great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to see God's great salvation, Mk 16:15,16.

2. How much more brightly it shines in the upper world: Thou hast set thy glory above the heavens.

(1.) God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest of creatures and those that shine most brightly.

(2.) Whereas we, on this earth, only hear God's excellent name, and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory, and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise.

(3.) In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

II. How powerfully he proclaims it by the weakest of his creatures (Ps 8:2): Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, Mt 21:16. This intimates the glory of God,

1. In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children (when they first come into the world the most helpless of all animals), the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us, to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness, and the more sensibly because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it that we died not from the womb, that the knees then prevented us, and the breasts, that we should suck. "This is such an instance of thy goodness, as may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say, There is no God."

2. In the kingdom of Providence. In the government of this lower world he makes use of the children of men, some that know him and others that do not (Isa 45:4), and these such as have been babes and sucklings; nay, sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and strength, little better than babes and sucklings.

3. In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah. It is here foretold that by the apostles, who were looked upon but as babes, unlearned and ignorant men (Ac 4:13), mean and despicable, and by the foolishness of their preaching, the devil's kingdom should be thrown down as Jericho's walls were by the sound of rams' horns.

The gospel is called the arm of the Lord and the rod of his strength; this was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages; yea, we hear children crying, Hosanna to the Son of David, when the chief priests and Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him;

to that therefore our Saviour applied this (Mt 21:16) and by it stilled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, and he teaches those knowledge, and makes those to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts, Isa 28:9.

Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the noble, wise, and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish things of the world, that no flesh may glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power may the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, 1Co 1:27,28.

This he does because of his enemies, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers; see Ac 4:14,6:10. The devil is the great enemy and avenger, and by the preaching of the gospel he was in a great measure stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves were not suffered to speak.

In singing this let us give God the glory of his great name, and of the great things he has done by the power of his gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended, not only with our praises, but with our best wishes. Praise is perfected (that is, God is in the highest degree glorified) when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained
strength because of thine enemies,
that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy
fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast
ordained;

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God by recounting the honours he has put upon man, especially the

man Christ Jesus. The condescensions of the divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the divine glory. How God has condescended in favour to man the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

I. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man; it is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense (Ps 8:3): I consider thy heavens, and there, particularly, the moon and the stars.

But why does he not take notice of the sun, which much excels them all? Probably because it was in a night-walk, but moon-light, that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars, which, though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. Observe,

1. It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them. By this, among other things, man is distinguished from the beasts, that, while they are so framed as to look downwards to the earth, man is made erect to look upwards towards heaven. Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri jussit--To man he gave an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the heavens, that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us unless we consider it.

2. We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens, not only as all the world is his, even the earth and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner. The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's (Ps 115:16); they are the place of the residence of his glory and we are taught to call him Our Father in heaven.

3. They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers. He made them; he made them easily. The stretching out of the heavens needed not any outstretched arm; it was done with a word; it was but the work of his fingers. He made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work which the artist makes with his fingers.

4. Even the inferior lights, the moon and stars, show the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise. 5. The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the divine power, but subject to the divine government. God not only made them, but ordained them, and the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how does this come in here to magnify God's favour to man?

(1.) When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world we may well wonder that he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man, that he who resides in that bright and blessed part of the creation, and governs it, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth; see Ps 113:5,6.

(2.) When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heavens are divided unto all nations (De 4:19,Ge 1:15), we may well say, "Lord, what is man that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven with an eye to him and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so consulted in the making of the lights of heaven and directing their motions!"

II. How he expresses this admiration (Ps 8:4): "Lord, what is man (enosh, sinful, weak, miserable man, a creature so forgetful of thee and his duty to thee) that thou art thus mindful of him, that thou takest cognizance of him and of his actions and affairs, that in the making of the world thou hadst a respect to him! What is the son of man, that thou visitest him, that thou not only feedest him and clothest him, protectest him and providest for him, in common with other creatures, but visited him as one friend visits another, art pleased to converse with him and concern thyself for him!

What is man--(so mean a creature), that he should be thus honoured--(so sinful a creature), that he should be thus countenanced and favoured!" Now this refers,

1. To mankind in general. Though man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm (Job 25:6), yet God puts a respect upon him, and shows him abundance of kindness; man is, above all the creatures in this lower world, the favourite and darling of Providence. For,

(1.) He is of a very honourable rank of beings. We may be sure he takes precedence of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but a little lower than the angels (Ps 8:5), lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth and to the beasts that perish, and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near akin to the holy angels that he may be truly said to be but a little lower than they, and is, in order, next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay, but the children of the resurrection shall be isangeloi--angels' peers (Lu 20:36) and no longer lower than they.

(2.) He is endued with noble faculties and capacities: Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. He that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for, having made him wiser than the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven (Job 35:11), he has made him fit to rule them and it is fit that they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

(3.) He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has made man to have dominion over them, Ps 8:6. His charter, by which he holds this royalty, bears equal date with his creation (Ge 1:28) and was renewed after the flood, Ge 9:2. God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself, not only of the labour, but of the productions

and lives of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all put under his feet.

He specifies some of the inferior animals (Ps 8:7,8), not only sheep and oxen, which man takes care of and provides for, but the beasts of the field, as well as those of the flood, yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as the fowl of the air, yea, and the fish of the sea, which live in another element and pass unseen through the paths of the seas.

Man has arts to take these; though many of them are much stronger and many of them much swifter than he, yet, one way or other, he is too hard for them, Jam 3:7. Every kind of beasts, and birds, and things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed. He has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion. Rise, Peter, kill and eat, Ac 10:13. Every time we partake of fish or of fowl we realize this dominion which man has over the works of God's hands; and this is a reason for our subjection to God, our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

2. But this refers, in a particular manner, to Jesus Christ. Of him we are taught to expound it, Heb 2:6-8, where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ both in heaven and in earth, shows that he is that man, that son of man, here spoken of, whom God has crowned with glory and honour and made to have dominion over the works of his hands. And it is certain that the greatest favour that ever was shown to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, were exemplified in the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus; these far exceed the favours and honours done us by creation and providence, though they also are great and far more than we deserve. We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it,

(1.) That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and, in that nature, humbled himself. He became the Son of man, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him, which

some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said (Heb 2:9), For the suffering of death, a visitation in wrath, he was crowned with glory and honour. God visited him; having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was, for a little while (so the apostle interprets it), made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant and made himself of no reputation.

(2.) That, in that nature, he is exalted to be Lord of all. God the Father exalted him, because he had humbled himself, crowned him with glory and honour, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, set not only the head of the church, but head over all things to the church, and gave all things into his hand, entrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence in conjunction with and subserviency to the kingdom of grace.

All the creatures are put under his feet; and, even in the days of his flesh, he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute. With good reason therefore does the psalmist conclude as he began, Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his gospel and governed by his wisdom and power!

In singing this and praying it over, though we must not forget to acknowledge, with suitable affections, God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him and all his enemies made his footstool.

4 what is man, that thou art mindful of him?
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the
angels, and hast crowned him with glory and
honor.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
thou hast put all *things* under his feet:
7 all sheep and oxen,
yea, and the beasts of the field;
8 the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
9 O Lord our Lord,
how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!

Psalms-9

Thanksgiving for God's Justice

To the chief Musician upon
Muthlabben, A Psalm of David.

1 I will praise *thee,* O Lord, with my whole
heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous
works.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon Muth-labben, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others of Nabal, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tone, or some musical instrument, to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies David is here triumphing in the defeat of are the Philistines, and the other neighbouring nations that opposed his settlement in the throne, whom he contested with and subdued in the beginning of his reign, 2Sa 5:8. In these verses,

I. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, Ps 9:1,2. Note,

1. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works.

2. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our whole heart.

3. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy we should take occasion thence to remember former mercies and so to show forth all his marvellous works.

4. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy: I will be glad and rejoice in thee.

5. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only: I will be glad and rejoice in thee, not in the gift so much as in the giver.

6. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms. 7. When God has shown himself to be above the proud enemies of the church we must take occasion thence to give glory to him as the Most High. 8. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed; see Re 12:10,19:5,Re 15:3,4.

II. He acknowledges the almighty power of God as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with or stand before, Ps 9:3. But,

1. They are forced to turn back. Their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation.

2. When once they turn back, they fall and perish; even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mordecai, he is a lost man, and shall prevail no more; see Es 6:13.

3. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, are sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done which a man does with his very presence; with that God confounds his enemies, such a presence has

he. This was fulfilled when our Lord Jesus, with one word, I am he, made his enemies to fall back at his presence (Joh 18:6) and he could, at the same time, have made them perish.

4. When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion we must ascribe their discomfiture to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

III. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf (Ps 9:4): "Thou hast maintained my right and my cause, that is, my righteous cause; when that came on, thou satest in the throne, judging right." Observe,

1. God sits in the throne of judgment. To him it belongs to decide controversies, to determine appeals, to avenge the injured, and to punish the injurious; for he has said, Vengeance is mine.

2. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth and that with him there is no unrighteousness. Far be it from God that he should pervert justice. If there seem to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of Providence, yet these, instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may serve to strengthen our belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to-rights.

3. Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

IV. He records, with joy, the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell and attends those triumphs with his praises, Ps 9:5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen, and wicked people, who were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion.

1. He had checked them: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen, hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them."

This he did before he destroyed them, that they might take warning by the rebukes of Providence and so prevent their own destruction.

2. He had cut them off: Thou hast destroyed the wicked. The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice and destructive power in this world. 3. He had buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy, had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

V. He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against (Ps 9:6): Thou hast destroyed cities. Either, "Thou, O enemy! hast destroyed our cities, at least in intention and imagination," or "Thou, O God! hast destroyed their cities by the desolation brought upon their country." It may be taken either way; for the psalmist will have the enemy to know,

1. That their destruction is just and that God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them (when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles), had destroyed their cities and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them. But now the wheel was turned upon them; their destructions of Israel had come to a perpetual end; they shall now cease to spoil and must themselves be spoiled, Isa 33:1,2.

2. That it is total and final, such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them, So devouring a thing is time, and much more such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins that their very memorial has perished, and those who have sought them could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundations.

VI. He comforts himself and others in God, and pleases himself with the thoughts of him.

1. With the thoughts of his eternity. On this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish and forgotten; but the Lord shall endure for ever, Ps 9:7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, Ps 29:10,93:2.

2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment: He has prepared his throne, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel. It is the great support and comfort of good people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God now rules the world and will shortly judge the world.

3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government. He does all every day, he will do all at the last day, according to the eternal unalterable rules of equity (Ps 9:8): He shall judge the world, all persons and all controversies, shall minister judgment to the people (shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state) in righteousness and in uprightness, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord, who endures for ever, is their everlasting strength and protection; he that judges the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed (Ps 9:9):

He will be a refuge for the oppressed, a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed, in times of trouble. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world and to have

troublous times appointed to them. Perhaps God may not immediately appear for them as their deliverer and avenger; but, in the midst of their distresses, they may by faith flee to him as their refuge and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them. 5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which those have that make God their refuge (Ps 9:10): "Those that know thy name will put their trust in thee, as I have done" (for the grace of God is the same in all the saints), "and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake those that seek thee;" for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note,

(1.) The better God is known the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust him further than they can see him (Job 35:14); those who know him to be a God of almighty power will trust him when creature-confidences fail and they have nothing else to trust to (2Ch 20:12); and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness will trust him though he slay them, Job 13:15. Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care and trust in him at all times, even to the end.

(2.) The more God is trusted the more he is sought unto. If we trust God we shall seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversations. (3.) God never did, nor ever will, disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he will not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee:
I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.

3 When mine enemies are turned back,
they shall fall and perish at thy
presence.
4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;
thou satest in the throne judging right.
5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the
wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end:
and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with
them.
7 But the Lord shall endure for ever:
he hath prepared his throne for judgment.
8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
9 The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
a refuge in times of trouble.
10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:
for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
11 Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion:
declare among the people his doings.

In these verses,

I. David, having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, Ps 9:11. Those who believe God is greatly to be praised not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it: Sing praises to the Lord who dwelleth in Zion. As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type. There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services.

In all our praises we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their protector and patron. He resolved himself to show forth God's marvellous works (Ps 9:1), and here he calls upon others to declare among the people his doings. He

commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it, to sing praises, not, as hitherto, to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen that the Lord has done great things for his people Israel, Ps 126:3,4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines and their other wicked neighbours, who had, in making war upon them, used them barbarously and given them no quarter, Ps 9:12.

When God comes to make inquisition for blood by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, he remembers them, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word (De 32:43), He will avenge the blood of his servants.

Note, There is a day coming when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and avenge what has been shed unjustly; see Isa 26:21,Jer 51:35. In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him (Ps 72:14), when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble, neither the cry of their blood nor the cry of their prayers, but that both are sealed up among his treasures.

II. David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not all things put under him.

1. He prays,

(1.) That God would be compassionate to him (Ps 9:13): "Have mercy upon me, who, having misery only, and no merit, to speak for me, must depend upon mercy for relief."

(2.) That he would be concerned for him. He is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God; but submits himself to the wisdom and will of God in this modest request, "Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit."

2. He pleads,

(1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered from those that hated him, and hatred is a cruel passion.

(2.) The experience he had had of divine succours and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required: "O thou that liftest me up, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death!" We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may thence take encouragement to hope that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us.

(3.) His sincere purpose to praise God when his victories should be completed (Ps 9:14): "Lord, save me, not that I may have the comfort and credit of the deliverance, but that thou mayest have the glory, that I may show forth all thy praise, and that publicly, in the gates of the daughter of Zion;" there God was said to dwell (Ps 9:11) and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

III. David by faith foresees and foretels the certain ruin of all wicked people, both in this world and in that to come.

1. In this world, Ps 9:15,16. God executes judgment upon them when the measure of their iniquities is full, and does it,

(1.) So as to put shame upon them and make their fall inglorious; for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged (Ps 7:15), they are taken in the net which they

themselves laid for the ensnaring of God's people, and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines they were the aggressors, 2Sa 5:17,22.

And other nations were subdued by those ward in which they embroiled themselves. The overruling providence of God frequently so orders it that persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves. Thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently, of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion.

(2.) So as to get honour to himself: The Lord is known, that is, he makes himself known, by these judgments which he executes. It is known that there is a God who judges in the earth, that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin and will punish it. In these judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The psalmist therefore adds here a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, Higgaion; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations.

2. In the other world (Ps 9:17): The wicked shall be turned into hell, as captives into the prison-house, even all the nations that forget God. Note,

(1.) Forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked.

(2.) There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many

mighty nations, that never regard him nor desire the knowledge of his ways.

(3.) Hell will, at last, be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment--Sheol, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried. Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house (Ps 49:14), and their being so numerous will not be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God or the least impeachment of his goodness.

IV. David encourages the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, Ps 9:18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them, forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished and to have been for ever frustrated. But he that believes does not make haste; the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak. We may build upon it as undoubtedly true that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them, at last, but will make it to appear that he never did forget them; it is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.

V. He concludes with prayer that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects, of all the wicked enemies of his church: "Arise, O Lord! (Ps 9:19), stir up thy self, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people."

1. "Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice: Let not man prevail; consult thy own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker?"

2. "Lord, reckon with them: Let the heathen be judges in thy sight, that is, let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee and the mischief done to thy people." Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight; and, when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent towards them, Re 14:10.

3. "Lord, frighten them: Put them in fear, O Lord! (Ps 9:20), strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments." God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble and to flee when none pursues, and thereby he makes them know and own that they are but men; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God--sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences make them subject to alarms. Note, It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men, depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable.

In singing this psalm we must give to God the glory of his justice in pleading his people's cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.

12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them:
he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
13 Have mercy upon me, O Lord;
consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate
me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:
14 that I may show forth all thy praise
in the gates of the daughter of Zion:
I will rejoice in thy salvation.
15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made:
in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
16 The Lord is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth:
the wicked is snared in the work of his own
hands. Higgaion. Selah.
17 The wicked shall be turned into hell,

and all the nations that forget God.
18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten:
the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.
19 Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail:
let the heathen be judged in thy sight.
20 Put them in fear, O Lord:
that the nations may know themselves *to be but*
men. Selah.

Psalms-10

A Prayer for the Overthrow of the Wicked

1 Why standest thou afar off, O Lord?
Why hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?

David, in these verses, discovers,

I. A very great affection to God and his favour; for, in the time of trouble, that which he complains of most feelingly is God's withdrawing his gracious presence (Ps 10:1): "Why standest thou afar off, as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name and the injuries done to the people?"

Note, God's withdrawings are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault; it is because we judge by outward appearance; we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

II. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the times perilous, 2Ti 3:1. he beholds the transgressors and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report, not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as these publicans (Lu 18:11), much less venting any personal resentments, piques, or passions, of his own; but as one that laid to he art that which is offensive to God and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation

of manners. passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better. This long representation of the wickedness of the wicked is here summed up in the first words of it (Ps 10:2), The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor, where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution, the former the cause of the latter.

Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them or will not yield to them they malign and hate with an inveterate hatred. Tyranny, both in state and church, owes its origin to pride. The psalmist, having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage and no prejudice to the sense: Let them be taken, as proud people often are, in the devices that they have imagined, Ps 10:2. Let their counsels be turned headlong, and let them fall headlong by them. These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly therefore did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud.

(1.) The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He boasts of his heart's desire, boasts that he can do what he pleases (as if God himself could not control him) and that he has all he wished for and has carried his point. Ephraim said, I have become rich, I have found me out substance, Hos 12:8. "Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a God?"

(2.) He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth; for he blesses the covetous, whom the Lord abhors. See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons: God abhors covetous worldlings, who

make money their God and idolize is; he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them. The friendship of the world is enmity to God. But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their sayings, Ps 49:13. They applaud those as wise whom God pronounces foolish (Lu 12:20); they justify those as innocent whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire those as happy, in having their portion in this life, whom God declares, upon that account, truly miserable. Thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things.

(3.) He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him and devotion to him (Ps 10:4): The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance (Pr 6:17), will not seek after God, nor entertain the thoughts of him. God is not in all his thoughts, not in any of them. All his thoughts are that there is not God. See here,

[1.] The nature of impiety and irreligion; it is not seeking after God and not having him in our thoughts. There is no enquiry made after him (Job 35:10,Jer 2:6), no desire towards him, no communion with him, but a secret wish to have no dependence upon him and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God (that is, will not call upon him); they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no eye to God in any of them, no submission to his will nor aim at his glory.

[2.] The cause of this impiety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

(4.) He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments (Ps 10:5): His wings are always grievous; he is very daring and resolute in his sinful courses; he will have

his way, though ever so tiresome to himself and vexatious to others; he travails with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments (what he commands and what he threatens for the breach of his commands) are far above out of his sight; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God.

Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, that he never saw God and therefore does not know that there is a God, he is in the height of heaven, and quæ supra nos nihil ad nos--we have nothing to do with things above us. Tell him of God's judgments which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are far above out of his sight, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears.

(5.) He proudly despises all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at those whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But, as it is impolitic to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

(6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity (Ps 10:6): He hath said in his heart, and pleased himself with the thought, I shall not be moved, my goods are laid up for many years, and I shall never be in adversity; like Babylon, that said, I shall be a lady for ever, Isa 47:7,Re 18:7. Those are nearest ruin who thus set it furthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors. For the gratifying of their pride and covetousness, and in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors,

(1.) That they are very bitter and malicious (Ps 10:7): His mouth is full of cursing. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized and cursed, with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

(2.) They are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hidden under the tongue, not to be discerned, for his mouth is full of deceit and vanity. He has learned of the devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, Pr 26:26. He cares not what lies he tells, not what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he uses, to compass his ends.

(3.) That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places, and his eyes are privily set to do mischief (Ps 10:8), not because he is ashamed of what he does (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent), not because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account (Ps 10:11), but because he is afraid lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have.

(4.) That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, who never provoked them--against the poor, who cannot resist them and over whom it will be no glory to triumph. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent and provide for the poor; yet these will be the destroyers of those whose guardians they ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to

catch the poor, and draw them into their net, that is, get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to murder them.

They hunt for the precious life. It is God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred for his sake whose they are and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them: He lies in wait as a lion that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion that seeks not what, but whom, he may devour.

(5.) That they are base and hypocritical (Ps 10:10): He crouches and humbles himself, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though ever so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul when he hunted David. It intimates, likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meekness and humility, and kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to; they seem to humble themselves to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concernments, when it is in order to make them fall, to make a prey of them.

(6.) That they are very impious and atheistical, Ps 10:11. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness towards man if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles: He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten. When his own conscience rebuked him with the consequences of it, and asked how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, he turned it off with this, God has forsaken the earth, Eze 8:12,9:9. This is a blasphemous reproach,

[1.] Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not, see what men do in this lower world.

[2.] Upon his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, as if, though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at, the most unnatural and inhuman villanies.

[3.] Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if, though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not or durst not, or because he was not inclined to do so. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors hope that God will, in due time, appear for them; for those that are abusive to them are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion of the miseries of the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will, in due time, give redress to the injured and reckon with the injurious.

2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor:
let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,
and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the Lord abhorreth.
4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance,
will not seek *after God:*
God *is* not in all his thoughts.
5 His ways are always grievous;
thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight:
as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.
6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved:
for *I shall* never *be* in adversity.
7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud:
under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity.
8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages:
in the secret places doth he murder the innocent:
his eyes are privily set against the poor.
9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den:
he lieth in wait to catch the poor:
he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself,
that the poor may fall by his strong ones.
11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten:
he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.
12 Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand:
forget not the humble.

David here, upon the foregoing representation of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God, wherein observe,

I. What he prays for.

1. That God would himself appear (Ps 10:12): "Arise, O Lord! O God! lift up thy hand, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world. Arise, O Lord! to the confusion of those who say that thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for the maintaining of thy own cause, lift up thy hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thy everlasting arm be made bare." 2. That he would appear for his people: "Forget not the humble, the afflicted, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors, in their presumption, say that thou hast forgotten them; and they, in their despair, are ready to say the same. Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken." 3. That he would appear against their persecutors, Ps 10:15.

(1.) That he would disable them from doing any mischief: Break thou the arm of the wicked, take away his power, that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared, Job 34:30. We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged (Da 7:12), that they might have time to repent.

(2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done: "Seek out his wickedness; let that be all brought to light which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let that be all brought to account which he thought should for

ever go unpunished; bring it out till thou find none, that is, till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs undefeated, and none of his partisans undestroyed."

II. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself: "Lord, it is thy own cause that we beg thou wouldst appear in; the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished" (Ps 10:13): Wherefore do the wicked contemn God? He does so; for he says, "Thou wilt not require it; thou wilt never call us to an account for what we do," than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with astonishment,

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(2.) At the patience and forbearance of God towards them: "Why are they suffered thus to contemn God? Why does he not immediately vindicate himself and take vengeance on them?" It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors (Ps 10:14): "Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou doest behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurk in the hearts, of

these oppressors; it is all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, wilt recompense it into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand."

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him: "The poor commits himself unto thee, each of them does so, I among the rest. They rely on thee as their patron and protector, they refer themselves to thee as their Judge, in whose determination they acquiesce and at whose disposal they are willing to be. They leave themselves with thee" (so some read it), "not prescribing, but subscribing, to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection; therefore protect them."

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us,

(1.) As a great God. He is King for ever and ever, Ps 10:16. And it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil-doers and the protection and praise of those that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal but to the sovereign? Help, my Lord, O King! Avenge me of my adversary. "Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their King have the benefit of thy government and find thee their refuge. Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt, by an eternal judgment, dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves."

(2.) As a good God. He is the helper of the fatherless (Ps 10:14), of those who have no one else to help them and have many to injure them. He has appointed kings to defend the poor and fatherless (Ps 82:3), and therefore much more will he do so himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a Father to the fatherless (Ps 68:5), a helper of the helpless.

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them.

(1.) He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies (Ps 10:16): "The heathen have perished out of his land; the remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes and goads in the sides of Israel, are now, at length, utterly rooted out; and this is an encouragement to us to hope that God will, in like manner, break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, who were, in some respects, worse than heathens."

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6. He pleads their expectations from God pursuant to their experience of him: "Thou hast heard, therefore thou will cause thy ear to hear, as, Ps 6:9. Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation to thy people are the same, and the work and workings of grace are the same in them; why therefore may we not hope that he who has been will still be, will ever be, a God hearing prayers?" But observe,

(1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer, but in this way; so that God's working upon us is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for, makes us fit to receive it and use it well, and then gives it in to us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it (Pr 16:1) and take that as a leading favour.

(2.) What he will do in answer to prayer, Ps 10:18.

[1.] He will plead the cause of the persecuted, will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocency, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained.

[2.] He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no further; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken that the man of the earth may no more oppress. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him now that he had been considering God's sovereignty.

First, He is but a man of the earth, a man out of the earth (so the word is), sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean, and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor when he is but man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass? Isa 51:12. He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth.

Secondly, God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive (Re 20:3), no more oppress.

In singing Ps 10:12-18 we must commit religion's just but injured cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will, in due time, plead it with jealousy.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?
He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it*.
14 Thou hast seen *it;* for thou beholdest mischief and spite,
to requite *it* with thy hand:
the poor committeth himself unto thee;
thou art the helper of the fatherless.
15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man:*

seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.
16 The Lord *is* King for ever and ever:
the heathen are perished out of his land.
17 Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble:
thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:
18 to judge the fatherless and the oppressed,
that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

Psalms-11

The Refuge of the Upright

To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 In the Lord put I my trust:
how say ye to my soul,
Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?

David here, upon the foregoing representation of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God, wherein observe,

I. What he prays for.

1. That God would himself appear (Ps 10:12): "Arise, O Lord! O God! lift up thy hand, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world. Arise, O Lord! to the confusion of those who say that thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for the maintaining of thy own cause, lift up thy hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thy everlasting arm be made bare."

2. That he would appear for his people: "Forget not the humble, the afflicted, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors, in their presumption, say that thou hast forgotten them; and they, in their despair, are ready to say the same. Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken."

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In singing Ps 10:12-18 we must commit religion's just but injured cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will, in due time, plead it with jealousy.

2 For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow,
they make ready their arrow upon the string,
that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations be destroyed,
what can the righteous do?
4 The Lord *is* in his holy temple,
the Lord's throne *is* in heaven:
his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

The shaking of a tree (they say) makes it take the deeper and faster root. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God engages him to cleave so much the more closely to his first principles, and to review them, which he here does, abundantly to his own satisfaction and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity.

That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, was the prosperity of wicked people in their wicked ways, and the straits and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to: hence such an evil thought as this was apt to arise, Surely it is vain to serve God, and we may call the proud happy. But, in order to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

I. That there is a God in heaven: The Lord is in his holy temple above, where, though he is out of our sight, we are not out of his. Let not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss and at their wits' end: no, they have a God, and they know where to find him and how to direct their prayer unto him, as their Father in heaven.

Or, He is in his holy temple, that is, in his church; he is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say,

"Who shall go up to heaven, to fetch us thence a God to trust to?" No, the word is nigh us, and God in the word; his Spirit is in his saints, those living temples, and the Lord is that Spirit.

II. That this God governs the world. The Lord has not only his residence, but his throne, in heaven, and he has set the dominion thereof in the earth (Job 38:33); for, having prepared his throne in the heavens, his kingdom ruleth over all, Ps 103:19. Hence the heavens are said to rule, Da 4:26.

Let us by faith see God on this throne, on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendour and majesty of earthly princes--on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim, to all the creatures--on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works--and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; we shall then see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

III. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character: His eyes behold, his eye-lids try, the children of men; he not only sees them, but he sees through them, not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but he knows what they are, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is when he has tried it.

God is said to try with his eyes, and his eye-lids, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err nor be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men, we are sure, is according to truth.

IV. That, if he afflict good people, it is for their trial and therefore for their good, Ps 11:5. The Lord tries all the

children of men that he may do them good in their latter end, De 8:16. Let not that therefore shake our foundations nor discourage our hope and trust in God.

V. That, however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail awhile, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God.

1. He is a holy God, and therefore hates them, and cannot endure to look upon them: The wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth; for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love that their abuse of it does certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made, yet hates those who have thus ill-made themselves. Dr. Hammond offers another reading of Ps 11:5: The Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked (distinguishes infallibly between them, which is more than we can do), and he that loveth violence hateth his own soul, that is, persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves (Pr 8:36), as follows here.

2. He is a righteous Judge, and therefore he will punish them, Ps 11:6. Their punishment will be,

(1.) Inevitable: Upon the wicked he shall rain snares. Here is a double metaphor, to denote the unavoidableness of the punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven (Job 20:23), against which there is no fence and from which there is no escape; see Jos 10:11,1Sa 2:10. It shall surprise them as a sudden shower sometimes surprises the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast, and keep them prisoners, till the day of reckoning comes.

(2.) Very terrible. It is fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, which plainly alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude

1:7. The fire of God's wrath, fastening upon the brimstone of their own guilt, will burn certainly and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell and the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in at death! What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned! It is this that is here meant; it is this that shall be the portion of their cup, the heritage appointed them by the Almighty and allotted to them, Job 20:29.

This is the cup of trembling which shall be put into their hands, which they must drink the dregs of, Ps 75:8. Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. Those who choose the Lord for the portion of their cup shall have what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice (Ps 16:5); but those who reject his grace shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, Jer 25:15,Isa 51:17,Hab 2:16.

VI. That, though honest good people may be run down and trampled upon, yet God does and will own them, and favour them, and smile upon them, and that is the reason why God will severely reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because those whom they oppress and persecute are dear to him; so that whosoever toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye, Ps 11:7.

He loves them and the work of his own grace in them. He is himself a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness wherever he finds it and pleads the cause of the righteous that are injured and oppressed; he delights to execute judgment for them, Ps 103:6. We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness as he does, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. He looks graciously upon them: His countenance doth behold the upright; he is not only at peace with them, and puts gladness into their hearts, by letting them know that he is so. He, like a tender father, looks upon them with pleasure, and they, like dutiful children, are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

In singing this psalm we must encourage and engage ourselves to trust in God at all times, must depend upon him to protect our innocence and make us happy, must dread his frowns as worse than death and desire his favour as better than life.

5 The Lord trieth the righteous:
but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.
6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone,
and a horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.
7 For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness;
his countenance doth behold the upright.

Psalms-12

A Prayer for Help against the Wicked

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith,
A Psalm of David.

1 Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth;
for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

This psalm furnishes us with good thoughts for bad times, in which, though the prudent will keep silent (Am 5:13) because a man may then be made an offender for a word, yet we may comfort ourselves with such suitable meditations and prayers as are here got ready to our hand.

I. Let us see here what it is that makes the times bad, and when they may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world what it is in their account that makes the times bad, and they will tell you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the desolations of war, make the times bad. But the scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature. 2Ti 3:1, Perilous times shall come, for iniquity shall abound; and that is the thing David here complains of.

1. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men the times are then truly bad (Ps 12:1): When the godly man ceases and the faithful fail. Observe how these two characters are here put together, the godly and the faithful. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety, without honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so they have sometimes been called; their word is as confirming as their oath, as binding as their bond; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to cease and fail, either by death or by desertion, or by both.

Those that were godly and faithful were taken away, and those that were left had sadly degenerated and were not what they had been; so that there were few or no good people that were Israelites indeed to be met with. Perhaps he meant that there were no godly faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he meant there were few or none in Israel, we hope he was under the same mistake that Elijah was, who thought he only was left alone, when God had 7000 who kept their integrity (Ro 11:3); or he meant that there were few in comparison; there was a general decay of religion and virtue (and the times are bad, very bad, when it is so), not a man to be found that executes judgment, Jer 5:1.

2. When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad (Ps 12:2), when men are generally so profligate that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences and professions of friendship. Thus they speak vanity (that is, falsehood and a lie) every one to his neighbour, with flattering lips and a double heart. They will kiss and kill (as Joab did Abner and Amasa in David's own time), will smile in your face and cut your throat. This is the devil's image complete, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed when there is no such thing as sincerity to be met with, when an honest man knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust, nor dares put

confidence in a friend, in a guide, Mic 7:5,6,Jer 9:4,5. Woe to those who help to make the times thus perilous.

3. When the enemies of God, and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad, when proud sinners have arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to say, "With our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue; our lips are our own and we may say what we will; who is lord over us, either to restrain us or to call us to an account?" Ps 12:4. This bespeaks,

(1.) A proud conceit of themselves and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as gods, independent and self-sufficient, infallible in their knowledge of good and evil and therefore fit to be oracles, irresistible in their power and therefore fit to be lawgivers, that could prevail with their tongues, and, like God himself, speak and it is done.

(2.) An insolent contempt of God's dominion as if he had no propriety in them--Our lips are our own (an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth, in whose hand is his breath, and whose is the air he breathes in?) and as if he had no authority either to command them or to judge them: Who is Lord over us? Like Pharaoh, Ex 5:1. This is as absurd and unreasonable as the former; for he in whom we live, and move, and have our being, must needs be, by an indisputable title, Lord over us.

4. When the poor and needy are oppressed, and abused, and puffed at, then the times are very bad. This is implied (Ps 12:5) where God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them merely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh,

secretly bemoaning their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart; see Ps 10:5.

5. When wickedness abounds, and goes barefaced, under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, Ps 12:8. When the vilest men are exalted to places of trust and power (who, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice and punishing the wicked according to their merits, patronise and protect them, give them countenance, and support their reputation by their own example), then the wicked walk on every side; they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive, debauch, and destroy others; they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin as Sodom and there is none to check or control them.

Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so though they are ever so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious the scripture calls a vile person, Da 11:21. But it is bad with a kingdom when such are preferred; no marvel if wickedness then grows impudent and insolent. When the wicked bear rule the people mourn.

II. Let us now see what good thoughts we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may yet be reserved for we cannot tell. When times are thus bad it is comfortable to think,

1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with (Ps 12:1): "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth. All other helps and helpers fail; even the godly and faithful, who should lend a helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, are gone, and therefore whither shall we seek but to thee?"

Note, When godly faithful people cease and fail it is time to cry, Help, Lord! The abounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. "Help, Lord, help the virtuous; few seek to hold fast their integrity, and to stand in the gap; help to save thy own interest in the world from sinking. It is time for thee, Lord, to work."

2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will punish and restrain their insolence. They are above the control of men and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all flattering lips, that give the traitor's kiss and speak words softer then oil when war is in the heart; he will pluck out the tongue that speaks proud things against God and religion, Ps 12:3. Some translate it as a prayer, "May God cut off those false and spiteful lips." Let lying lips be put to silence.

3. That God will, in due time, work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors (Ps 12:5): Now, will I arise, saith the Lord. This promise of God, which David here delivered by the spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the spirit of prayer. "Help, Lord," says he; "I will," says God; "here I am, with seasonable and effectual help."

(1.) It is seasonable, in the fittest time.

[1.] When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence--when they say, Who is lord over us?--then is God's time to let them know, to their cost, that he is above them.

[2.] When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency, when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them, as for Israel when they were most dejected and Pharaoh was most elevated. Now will I arise. Note, There is

a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocency; that time will come, and we may be sure it is the fittest time, Ps 102:13.

(2.) It is effectual: I will set him in safety, or in salvation, not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will bring him out into a wealthy place (Ps 66:12), so that, upon the whole, he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.

4. That, though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery, but the words of the Lord are pure words (Ps 12:6), not only all true, but all pure, like silver tried in a furnace of earth or a crucible. It denotes,

(1.) The sincerity of God's word, every thing is really as it is there represented and not otherwise; it does not jest with us, not impose upon us, nor has it any other design towards us than our own good.

(2.) The preciousness of God's word; it is of great and intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it.

(3.) The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth; it has been often tried, all the saints in all ages have trusted it and so tried it, and it never deceived them nor frustrated their expectation, but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an Experto crede--

Trust one that has made trial; they have found it so. Probably this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and oppressed. Their friends put them in hopes that they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed; but the words of God are what we may rely upon; and the less confidence is to be put in men's words let us with the more assurance trust in God's word.

5. That God will secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are (Ps 12:7): Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. This intimates that, as long as the world stands, there will be a generation of proud and wicked men in it, more or less, who will threaten by their wretched arts to ruin religion, by wearing out the saints of the Most High, Da 7:25. But let God alone to maintain his own interest and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation,

(1.) From being debauched by them and drawn away from God, from mingling with them and learning their works. In times of general apostasy the Lord knows those that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity.

(2.) From being destroyed and rooted out by them. The church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm, and praying it over, we must bewail the general corruption of manners, thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbor:
with flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak.
3 The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips,
and the tongue that speaketh proud things:
4 who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us?
5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,
now will I arise, saith the Lord;
I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.
6 The words of the Lord *are* pure words:
as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord,
thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

8 The wicked walk on every side,
when the vilest men are exalted.

Psalms-13

A Prayer for Help in Trouble

To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

David, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God; his address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

I. His troubles extort complaints (Ps 13:1,2); and the afflicted have liberty to pour out their complaint before the Lord, Ps 102:1 title. It is some ease to a troubled spirit to give vent to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have parresia--freedom of speech. Observe here,

1. What David complains of.

(1.) God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former lovingkindness which he had shown him and which he took to be an earnest of further mercy, had forgotten that there was such a man in the world, who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus Zion said, My God has forgotten me (Isa 49:14), Israel said, My way is hidden from the Lord, Isa 40:27.

Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, goodness, and faithfulness of God; but it is a peevish expression of

prevailing fear, which yet, when it arises from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it and repent of it. God hid his face from him, so that he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross, crying out, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him; and this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever.

(2.) His own uneasiness.

[1.] He was racked with care, which filled his head: I take counsel in my soul; "I am at a loss, and am inops consilii--without a friend to advise with that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself; but none of my projects are likely to take effect, so that I am at my wits' end, and in a continual agitation." Anxious cares are heavy burdens with which good people often load themselves more than they need.

[2.] He was overwhelmed with sorrow, which filled his heart: I have sorrow in my heart daily. He had a constant disposition to sorrow and it preyed upon his spirits, not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business; nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief; the clouds returned after the rain. The bread of sorrow is sometimes the saint's daily bread. Our Master himself was a man of sorrows.

(3.) His enemies' insolence, which added to his grief. Saul his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon: "How long shall it be thus?" And, "Shall it be thus for ever?" Long afflictions try our patience and often tire it. It is a common temptation, when trouble lasts long, to think it will last always; despondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy begin, at last, to be without hope. "Lord, tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever, but that thou wilt return at length in mercy to me, and then I shall the more easily bear my present troubles."

II. His complaints stir up his prayers, Ps 13:3,4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God and what drive us to our knees. Observe here,

1. What his petitions are: Consider my case, hear my complaints, and enlighten my eyes, that is,

(1.) "Strengthen my faith;" for faith is the eye of the soul, with which it sees above, and sees through, the things of sense. "Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles and to foresee a happy issue of them."

(2.) "Guide my way; enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me."

(3.) "Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation." That which revives the drooping spirits is said to enlighten the eyes, 1Sa 14:27,Ezr 9:8. "Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant."

2. What his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God and interest in him (O Lord my God!) and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour. If his eyes were not enlightened quickly,

(1.) He concludes that he must perish: "I shall sleep the sleep of death; I cannot live under the weight of all this care and

grief." Nothing is more killing to a soul then the want of God's favour, nothing more reviving than the return of it.

(2.) That then his enemies would triumph: "Lest my enemy say, So would I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall." It would gratify the pride of his enemy: He will say, "I have prevailed, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God." It would gratify the malice of his enemies: They will rejoice when I am moved. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

III. His prayers are soon turned into praises (Ps 13:5,6): But my heart shall rejoice and I will sing to the Lord. What a surprising change is here in a few lines! In the beginning of the psalm we have him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but, in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our countenance will be no more sad, 1Sa 1:18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. "My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God; but, finding I have that to trust to, I am comforted, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses I have trusted in the mercy of God, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me and my confidence in it has in the mean time supported me.

Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings and within were fears, yet I trusted in the mercy of God and that was as an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset." And still I do trust in thy mercy; so some read it. "I refer myself to that, with an assurance that it will do well for

me at last." This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that hope in his mercy, Ps 147:11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in his salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, Ro 15:13. Believing, you rejoice, 1Pe 1:8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should rejoice in that salvation. Though weeping endure long, joy will return. 3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise (Ps 13:6): "I will sing unto the Lord, sing in remembrance of what he has done formerly; though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it.

He has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last, being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well." But he speaks of it as a thing past (He has dealt bountifully with me), because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his withdrawings, sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
3 Consider *and* hear me, O Lord my God:
lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;
4 lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;
my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
6 I will sing unto the Lord,
because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

Psalms-14

The Folly and Wickedness of Men
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 The fool hath said in his heart,
There is no God.
They are
corrupt,
they have done abominable works,
there is none that doeth good.

If we apply our hearts as Solomon did (Ec 7:25) to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness, these verses will assist us in the search and will show us that sin is exceedingly sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemic.

1. See how malignant it is (Ps 14:1) in two things:--

(1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God: for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. We are sometimes tempted to think, "Surely there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days;" but we see the former days were no better; even in David's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety as to deny the very being of a God and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe,

[1.] The sinner here described. He is one that saith in his heart, There is no God; he is an atheist. "There is no Elohim, no Judge or governor of the world, no providence presiding over the affairs of men." They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He says this in his heart; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but he wishes there were none, and pleases himself with the fancy that it is possible there may be none. He cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is

willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out, lest he be confuted, and so undeceived, but he whispers it secretly in his heart, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways.

[2.] The character of this sinner. He is a fool; he is simple and unwise, and this is an evidence of it; he is wicked and profane, and this is the cause of it.

Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a discerner of these thoughts, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him; for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind. No man will say, There is no God till he is so hardened in sin that it has become his interest that there should be none to call him to an account.

(2.) The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate: They have become filthy (Ps 14:3), putrid. All their faculties are so disordered that they have become odious to their Maker and utterly incapable of answering the ends of their creation. They are corrupt indeed; for,

[1.] They do no good, but are the unprofitable burdens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness.

[2.] They do a great deal of hurt. They have done abominable works, for such all sinful works are. Sin is an abomination to God; it is that abominable thing which he hates (Jer 44:4), and, sooner or later, it will be so to the sinner; it will be found to be hateful (Ps 36:2), an abomination of desolation, that is, making desolate, Mt 24:15. This follows upon their saying, There is no God; for those that profess they know God, but

in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate, Tit 1:16.

2. See how epidemic this disease is; it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a witness, and he is an eye-witness, Ps 14:2,3. Observe,

(1.) His enquiry: The Lord looked down from heaven, a place of prospect, which commands this lower world; thence, with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the children of men, and the question was, Whether there were any among them that did understand themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God and set him before them. He that made this search was not only one that could find out a good man if he was to be found, though ever so obscure, but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him, as of Noah in the old world.

(2.) The result of this enquiry, Ps 14:3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, They have all gone aside, the apostasy is universal, there is none that doeth good, no, not one, till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change. Whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves; it is God's work in them. When God had made the world he looked upon his own work, and all was very good (Ge 1:31); but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and, behold, all was very bad (Ge 6:5), every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They have gone aside from the right of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and have turned into the paths of the destroyer.

In singing this let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and, since that which is born of the flesh is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.

3 They are all gone aside,

they are *all* together become filthy:
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
who eat up my people *as* they eat
bread, and call not upon the Lord.

In these verses the psalmist endeavours,

I. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shows them, which, it may be, they are not very willing to see--their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here,

1. Their wickedness. This is described in four instances:--

(1.) They are themselves workers of iniquity; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business.

(2.) They eat up God's people with as much greediness as they eat bread, such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it or remorse of conscience when they have done it; as Joseph's brethren cast him into a pit and then sat down to eat bread, Ge 37:24,25. See Mic 3:2,3.

(3.) They call not upon the Lord. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him. The reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer?

(4.) They shame the counsel of the poor, and upbraid them with making God their refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, Ps 11:1.

Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it that are well-inclined--with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable, and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy.

Those that banter religion and religious people will find, to their cost, it is ill jesting with edged-tools and dangerous persecuting those that make God their refuge. Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. He shows them,

2. Their folly: They have no knowledge; this is obvious, for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God.

3. Their danger (Ps 14:5): There were they in great fear. There, where they ate up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors; they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors who have been made like Pashur, Magormissabibs--terrors to themselves and all about them. Those that will not fear God perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

II. He endeavours to comfort the people of God,

1. With what they have. They have God's presence (Ps 14:5): He is in the generation of the righteous. They have his protection (Ps 14:6): The Lord is their refuge. This is as much their security as it is the terror of their enemies, who

may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered.

2. With what they hope for; and that is the salvation of Israel, Ps 14:7.

When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance that god would in due time turn again his captivity, to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had, in the beginning of the psalm, lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected co come to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, Ro 11:26.

The world is bad; O that the Messiah would come and change its character! There is a universal corruption; O for the times of reformation! Those will be as joyful times as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God turn again the captivity of his people; for the Redeemer shall ascend on high, and lead captivity captive, and Jacob shall then rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's King will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy, of every Israelite indeed. With the assurance of that we should, in singing this, comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners and sufferings of saints.

5 There were they in great fear:
for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.
6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor,
because the Lord *is* his refuge.
7 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion!
When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

Psalms-15

The Inhabitants of God's Holy Hill

A Psalm of David.

1 Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

Here is, I. A very serious and weighty question concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion (Ps 14:1): "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Let me know who shall go to heaven." Not, who by name (in this way the Lord only knows those that are his), but who by description: "What kind of people are those whom thou wilt own and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours?"

This supposes that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage,--that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only,--and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their birth and blood: all shall not abide in God's tabernacle that have Abraham to their father, but, according as men's hearts and lives are, so will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle? Lu 18:18,Ac 16:30.

1. Observe to whom this enquiry is addressed--to God himself.

Note, Those that would find the way to heaven must look up to God, must take direction from his word and beg direction from his Spirit. It is fit he himself should give laws to his servants, and appoint the conditions of his favours, and tell who are his and who not.

2. How it is expressed in Old-Testament language.

(1.) By the tabernacle we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses's tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness-state, mean and movable. There God manifests

himself, and there he meets his people, as of old in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle? Who shall be accounted a true living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We are concerned to enquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle who really have no part nor lot in the matter.

(2.) By the holy hill we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to Mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints that they dwell in that holy hill; they are at home there: they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we may make it sure to ourselves that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

II. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the scripture a very faithful director and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular characters of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion: He walketh uprightly, according to the condition of the covenant (Ge 17:1), "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (it is the same word that is here used) "and then thou shalt find me a God all-sufficient." He is really what he professes to be, is sound at heart, and can approve himself to God, in his integrity, in all he does; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he does not paint; he is an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile, Joh 1:47,2Co 1:12. I know no religion but sincerity.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do: He worketh righteousness; he walks in all the ordinances and

commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due, is just both to God and man; and, in speaking to both, he speaks that which is the truth in his heart; his prayers, professions, and promises, to God, come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate, in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud. He reckons that that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie, and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though ever so plausibly, will prove, in the end, to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours, but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is, in a particular manner, tender of his neighbour's reputation, Ps 14:3. He does no evil at all to his neighbour willingly or designedly, nothing to offend or grieve his spirit, nothing to prejudice the health or ease of his body, nothing to injure him in his estate or secular interests, in his family or relations; but walks by that golden rule of equity, To do as he would be done by. He is especially careful not to injure his neighbour in his good name, though many, who would not otherwise wrong their neighbours, make nothing of that. If any man, in this matter, bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain.

He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he backbites not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others' faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification. He makes the best of every body, and the worst of nobody. He does not take up a reproach, that is, he neither raises it nor receives it; he gives no credit nor countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silences it, Pr 25:23. If an ill-natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill-natured story be told him, he will disprove it if he can; if not, it shall die with him and go no further. His charity will cover a multitude of sins.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, Ps 14:5.

(1.) He thinks the better of no man's wickedness for his pomp and grandeur: In his eyes a vile person is contemned. Wicked people are vile people, worthless and good for nothing (so the word signifies), as dross, as chaff, and as salt that has lost its savour. They are vile in their choices (Jer 2:13), in their practices, Isa 32:6. For this wise and good men contemn them, not denying them civil honour and respect as men, as men in authority and power perhaps (1Pe 2:17,Ro 13:7), but, in their judgment of them, agreeing with the word of God.

They are so far from envying them that they pity them, despising their gains (Isa 33:15), as turning to no account, their dainties (Ps 141:4), their pleasures (Heb 11:24,25) as sapless and insipid. They despise their society (Ps 119:115,2Ki 3:14); they despise their taunts and threats, and are not moved by them, nor disturbed at them; they despise the feeble efforts of their impotent malice (Ps 2:1,4), and will shortly triumph in their fall, Ps 52:6, 7. God despises them, and they are of his mind.

(2.) He thinks the worse of no man's piety for his poverty and meanness, but he knows those that fear the Lord. He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honour upon a man, and makes his face to shine, more than wealth, or wit, or a great name among men, does or can. He honours such, esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation and an interest in their prayers, is glad of an opportunity to show them respect or do them a good office, pleads their cause and speaks of them with veneration, rejoices when they prosper, grieves when they are removed, and their memory, when they are gone, is precious with him. By this we may judge of ourselves in some measure. What rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any secular interest or advantage whatsoever; for, if he has promised upon oath to do any thing, though afterwards it

appear much to his damage and prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he adheres to it and changes not, Ps 14:4. See how weak-sighted and short-sighted even wise and good men may be; they may swear to their own hurt, which they were not aware of when they took the oath. But see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and his family than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, Ps 14:5.

(1.) Not by extortion: He putteth not out his money to usury, that he may live at ease upon the labours of others, while he is in a capacity for improving it by his own industry. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money, any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being, by art and labour, as improvable as land. But a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right from those that are reduced by Providence.

(2.) Not by bribery: He will not take a reward against the innocent; if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not, for any gain, or hope of it, to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

III. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion. He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abides for ever, Ps 125:1. Every true living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against: He that doeth these things shall never be moved; shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom. Temptations shall not overcome him,

troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace nor his future bliss.

In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive, at last, at that holy hill where we shall be for ever out of the reach of temptation and danger.

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
and speaketh the truth in his heart.
3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue,
nor doeth evil to his neighbor,
nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.
4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;
but he honoreth them that fear the Lord.
He that sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.
5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury,
nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

Psalms-16

A Goodly Heritage
Michtam of David.

1 Preserve me, O God:
for in thee do I put my trust.
2 *O my soul,* thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou *art* my Lord:
my goodness *extendeth* not to thee;
3 *but* to the saints that *are* in the earth,
and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.
4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another *god:*
their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,
nor take up their names into my lips.
5 The Lord *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:
thou maintainest my lot.
6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places;*

yea, I have a goodly heritage.
7 I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel:
my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.
8 I have set the Lord always before me:
because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of pentecost (Ac 2:25-28); and he tells us expressly that David in them speaks concerning Christ and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections towards God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and happy state on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations towards God and heaven he was carried by the spirit of prophecy quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretel the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnishes us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

I. These verses must certainly be applied to Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, as did many of the Old-Testament prophets, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1Pe 1:11), and that is the subject of this prophecy here. It is foretold (as he himself showed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, Lu 24:44,46) that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, 1Co 15:3,4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here when he says (Ps 16:8), I shall not be moved; he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he says, "My flesh shall rest," it is implied that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body, so deserted, would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption-

-that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the divine power in suffering and dying.

(1.) That he should not be moved, should not be driven off from his undertaking nor sink under the weight of it, that he should not fail nor be discouraged (Isa 42:4), but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, It is finished. Though the service was hard and the encounter hot, and he trod the winepress alone, yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, Isa 50:7-9. Here am I, let these go their way. Nay,

(2.) That his heart should rejoice and his glory be glad, that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but cheerfully, and with unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction, witness that saying (Joh 17:11), Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee, and that (Joh 18:11), The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it? and many the like. By his glory is meant his tongue, as appears, Ac 2:26. For our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in glorifying God. Now there were three things which bore him up and carried him on thus cheerfully:--

[1.] The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did: I have set the Lord always before me. He still had an eye to his Father's commandment (Joh 10:18,14:31), the will of him that sent him. He aimed at his Father's honour and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father.

[2.] The assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings: He is at my right hand, a present help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need. He is near that justifieth me (Isa 50:8); he is at my right hand, to direct and strengthen it, and hold it up, Ps 89:21. When he was in his agony an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Lu 22:43. To

this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing; it was the Lord at his right hand that struck through kings, Ps 110:5,Isa 42:1,2.

[3.] The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross, Heb 12:2. He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, Isa 11:10. He knew he should be justified in the Spirit by his resurrection, and straightway glorified. See Joh 13:31,32.

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection.

(1.) That his soul should not be left in hell, that is, his human spirit should not be long left, as other men's spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should, in a little time, return and be re-united to it, never to part again.

(2.) That being God's holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption nor feel it. This implies that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon that his dead body should not so much as being to corrupt, which, in the course of nature, it would have done if it had not been raised the third day. We, who have so much corruption in our souls, must expect that our bodies also will corrupt (Job 24:19); but that holy One of God who knew no sin saw no corruption. Under the law it was strictly ordered that those parts of the sacrifices which were not burnt upon the altar should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrefy (Le 7:15,18), which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption--neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, Ps 16:11. He was well assured,

(1.) That he should not miss of his glory: "Thou wilt show me the path of life, and lead me to that life through this darksome valley." In confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit; and, a little before, Father, glorify me with thy own self. (2.) That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence would be the acceptance of his service and his being set at his right hand the recompence of it.

(3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; not only the glory he had with God, as God, before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, Isa 53:10,11.

II. Christ being the Head of the body, the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good Christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and, in singing them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom, to our everlasting comfort, they have had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our chief good and highest end, our owner, ruler, and judge, our gracious benefactor, our sure guide and strict observer; and, while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bonds and afflictions did await him, he could bravely say, None of these things move me, Ac 20:24.

2. That, if our eyes be ever towards God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak, to his glory, and the edification of others.

3. That dying Christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body, in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection: My flesh also shall rest in hope. Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, Isa 57:2. We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life; we may put off the body in that hope. Death destroys the hope of man (Job 14:19), but not the hope of a good Christian, Pr 14:32. He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments, hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave, but, though it see corruption for a time, it shall, at the end of the time, be raised to immortality; Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours if we be his.

4. That those who live piously with God in their eye may die comfortably with heaven in their eye. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy. All our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy. Our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:
my flesh also shall rest in hope.
10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
11 Thou wilt show me the path of life:
in thy presence *is* fulness of joy;
at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Psalms-17

A Prayer for Protection against Oppressors

A Prayer of David.

1 Hear the right, O Lord,
attend unto my cry;
give ear unto my prayer,
that goeth not out of feigned lips.

This psalm is a prayer. As there is a time to weep and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both urged him as a suppliant to the throne of mercy.

He addresses himself to God in these verses both by way of appeal (Hear the right, O Lord! let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it) and by way of petition (Give ear unto my prayer Ps 17:1, and again Ps 17:6, Incline thy ear unto me and hear my speech); not that God needs to be thus pressed with our importunity, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desire of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God for audience,

1. That he was sincere, and did not dissemble with God in his prayer: It goeth not out of feigned lips. He meant as he spoke, and the feelings of his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless; but, if our hearts lead our prayers, God will meet them with his favour.

2. That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty: "I have called upon thee formerly (Ps 17:6); therefore, Lord, hear me now." It will be a great comfort to us if trouble, when it comes, find the wheels of prayer a-going, for then we may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace.

Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers.

3. That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayers: "I know thou wilt hear me, and therefore, O God, incline thy ear to me." Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires towards him. Let us now see,

I. What his appeal is; and here observe,

1. What the court is to the cognizance and determination of which he makes his appeal; it is the court of heaven. "Lord, do thou hear the right, for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced, that he will not hear it. Lord, let my sentence come forth from thy presence, Ps 17:2. Men sentence me to be pursued and cut off as an evil-doer. Lord, I appeal from them to thee." This he did in a public remonstrance before Saul's face (1Sa 24:12, The Lord judge between me and thee), and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note,

(1.) The equity and extent of God's government and judgment are a very great support to injured innocency. If we are blackened, and abused, and misrepresented, by unrighteous men, it is a comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which every person and every cause will appear in a true light, stripped of all false colours, and by the decisions of which all unrighteous dooms will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work.

(2.) Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no, not that of God himself, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace: Let thy eyes behold the things that are equal. God's omniscience is as much the joy of the upright as it is the terror of hypocrites, and is particularly comfortable to those who are falsely accused and in any wise have wrong done them.

2. What the evidence is by which he hopes to make good his appeal; it is the trial God had made of him (Ps 17:3): Thou hast proved my heart. God's sentence is therefore right, because he always proceeds upon his knowledge, which is more certain and infallible than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest investigations.

(1.) He knew God had tried him,

[1.] By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he communed with his own heart upon his bed. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was amiss, but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with.

[2.] By providence. God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had, once and again, to kill Saul; he had tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him; so that, if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but, upon all these trials, there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accused him.

(2.) God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but, for the further proof of his integrity, he himself takes notice of two things concerning which his conscience bore him record:--

[1.] That he had a fixed resolution against all sins of the tongue: "I have purposed and fully determined, in the strength of God's grace, that my mouth shall not transgress." He does not say, "I hope that it will not," or, "I wish that it may not," but, "I have fully purposed that it shall not:" with this bridle he kept his mouth, Ps 39:1. Note, Constant resolution and watchfulness against sins of the tongue will be a good evidence of our integrity. If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, Jam 3:2. He does not say, "My mouth never shall transgress" (for in many things we all

offend), but, "I have purposed that it shall not;" and he that searches the heart knows whether the purpose be sincere.

[2.] That he had been as careful to refrain from sinful actions as from sinful words (Ps 17:4): "Concerning the common works of men, the actions and affairs of human life, I have, by the direction of thy word, kept myself from the paths of the destroyer." Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so, but said to Abishai, Destroy him not, 1Sa 26:9. But it may be taken more generally; he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured, according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too. Note,

First, The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, of the devil, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, a destroyer, who ruins souls by decoying them into the paths of sin.

Secondly, It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer; for, if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last.

Thirdly, It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing its directions and admonitions, Ps 119:9. Fourthly, If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection, when we are in trouble. If we keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not with his temptations (1Jo 5:18), we may hope he will not be able to touch us with his terrors.

II. What his petition is; it is, in short, this, That he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of and qualification for the good will of God towards him: this is grace and peace from God the Father.

1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him (Ps 17:5): "Hold up my going in thy paths. Lord, I have, by thy grace,

kept myself from the paths of the destroyer; by the same grace let me be kept in thy paths; let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble and fall into sin, that I may not trifle and neglect my duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still." Those that are, through grace, going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray, that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no further than he is pleased to lead us, bear us up, and carry us.

David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he does not think that this would be his security for the future, and therefore prays, "Lord, still hold me up." Those that would proceed and persevere in the way of God must, by faith and prayer, fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be, that there were those who watched for his halting and would improve the least slip against him, and therefore he prays, "Lord, hold me up, that my foot slip not, that I may never say nor do any thing that looks either dishonest or distrustful of thee and thy providence and promise."

2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, Ps 17:7. Observe here,

(1.) How he eyes God as the protector and Saviour of his people, so he calls him, and thence he takes his encouragement in prayer: O thou that savest by thy right hand (by thy own power, and needest not the agency of any other) those who put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. It is the character of God's people that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make him their trust, for to him they commit themselves. Those that trust in God

have many enemies, many that rise up against them and seek their ruin; but they have one friend that is able to deal with them all, and, if he be for them, no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their Saviour.

His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, O thou that savest those who trust in thee from those that rise up against thy right hand. Those that are enemies to the saints are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore, no doubt, he will, in due time, appear against them.

(2.) What he expects and desires from God: Show thy marvellous loving-kindness. The word signifies,

[1.] Distinguishing favours. "Set apart thy loving-kindnesses for me; put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, as thou usest to do to those who love thy name."

[2.] Wonderful favours. "O make thy loving-kindness admirable! Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way that I and others may wonder at it." God's loving-kindness is marvellous for the freeness and the fulness of it; in some instances it appears, in a special manner, marvellous (Ps 118:23), and it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints and to be admired in all those that believe.

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;
let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.
3 Thou hast proved mine heart;
thou hast visited *me* in the night;
thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing:
I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.
4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips
I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.
5 Hold up my goings in thy paths,
that my footsteps slip not.
6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God:
incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.

7 Show thy marvelous loving-kindness,
O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee*
from those that rise up *against them*.
8 Keep me as the apple of the eye;
hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

We may observe, in these verses,

I. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that sought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safely through all their attempts against him, to the crown to which he was anointed. This prayer is both a prediction of the preservation of Christ through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to Christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. He prays,

1. That he himself might be protected (Ps 17:8): "Keep me safe, hide me close, where I may not be found, where I may not be come at. Deliver my soul, not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin." Those who put themselves under God's protection may in faith implore the benefit of it.

(1.) He prays that God would keep him,

[1.] With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye with, which nature has wonderfully fenced and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's law as the apple of our eye (Pr 7:2), we may expect that God will so keep us; for it is said concerning his people that whoso touches them touches the apple of his eye, Zec 2:8.

[2.] With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings with; Christ uses the similitude, Mt 23:37. "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings, where I may be both safe and warm." Or, perhaps, it rather alludes to the wings of the cherubim shadowing the mercy-seat: "Let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is

peculiar to God's Israel." What David here prays for was performed to the Son of David, our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said (Isa 49:2) that God hid him in the shadow of his hand, hid him as a polished shaft in his quiver.

(2.) David further prays, "Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world,"

[1.] "From being, and doing, like them, from walking in their counsel, and standing in their way, and eating of their dainties."

[2.] "From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me; let them not triumph over me."

2. That all the designs of his enemies to bring his either into sin or into trouble might be defeated (Ps 17:13): "Arise, O Lord! appear for me, disappoint him, and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment." While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, when he thought he had him sure! And how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death!

II. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speeding. He pleads,

1 The malice and wickedness of his enemies: "They are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such as, if I be not delivered from them by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men those are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down."

(1.) "They are very spiteful and malicious; they are my deadly enemies, that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood--enemies against the soul," so the word is. David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin and drive him away from God; they bade him go serve other gods (1Sa 26:19), and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note,

Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls.

(2.) "They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty (Ps 17:10): They are enclosed in their own fat, wrap themselves, hug themselves, in their own honour, and power, and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, Ps 73:7,Job 15:27. They wallow in pleasure, and promise themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day. And therefore with their mouth they speak proudly, glorying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and insulting them." See Re 13:5,6. "Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves? Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men and abase them?"

(3.) "They are restless and unwearied in their attempts against me: They compass me about, Ps 17:9. They have now in a manner gained their point; they have surrounded us, they have compassed us in our steps, they track us wherever we go, follow us as close as the hound does the hare, and take all advantages against us, being both too many and too quick for us. And yet they pretend to look another way, and set their eyes bowing down to the earth, as if they were meditating, retired into themselves, and thinking of something else;" or (as some think), "They are watchful and intent upon it, to do us a mischief; they are down-looked, and never let slip any opportunity of compassing their design."

(4.) "The ringleader of them (that was Saul) is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politic and projecting (Ps 17:12), like a lion that lives by prey and is therefore greedy of it." It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief as it is of a good man to do good. He is like a young lion lurking in secret places, disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David on the rocks of the wild goats (1Sa 24:2) and in the wilderness of Ziph (Ps 26:2), where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2 The power God had over them, to control and restrain them. He pleads,

(1.) "Lord, they are thy sword; and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children?" As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of men, that they are but the instruments of the trouble (it comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit), so it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall praise him and that the remainder thereof he will restrain, that they are God's sword, which he can manage as he pleases, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it.

(2.) "They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people and make them feel thy displeasure." He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand because from God's hand the trouble came. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit--The same hand wounds and heals. There is no flying from God's hand but by flying to it. It is very comfortable, when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon and in subjection to the power of God; see Isa 10:6,7,15.

3. Their outward prosperity (Ps 17:14): "Lord, appear against them, for,"

(1.) "They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for thee and thy favour. They are men of the world, actuated by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it (making them their business) and at ease in the enjoyments of it--making them their bliss. They have their portion in this life; they look upon the good things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they choose them accordingly, place their felicity in them, and aim at them as their chief good; they rest satisfied with them, their souls take their ease in them, and they look no further, nor are in any care to provide for another life.

These things are their consolation (Lu 6:24), their good things (Lu 16:25), their reward (Mt 6:5), the penny they agreed for, Mt 20:13. Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those who honour thee by preferring thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion?" Ps 16:5.

(2.) They have abundance of the world.

[1.] They have enlarged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them: Their bellies thou fillest with thy hidden treasures. The things of this world are called treasures, because they are so accounted; otherwise, to a soul, and in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but trash. They are hidden in the several parts of the creation, and hidden in the sovereign disposals of Providence. They are God's hidden treasures, for the earth is his and the fulness thereof, though the men of the world think it is their own and forget God's property in it.

Those that fare deliciously every day have their bellies filled with these hidden treasures; and they will but fill the belly (1Co 6:13); they will not fill the soul; they are not bread for that, nor can they satisfy, Isa 55:2. They are husks, and ashes, and wind; and yet most men, having no care for their souls, but all for their bellies, take up with them.

[2.] They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them: They are full of children, and yet their pasture is not overstocked; they have enough for them all, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes, to their grand-children; and this is their heaven, it is their bliss, it is their all. "Lord," said David, "deliver me from them; let me not have my portion with them. Deliver me from their designs against me; for, they having so much wealth and power, I am not able to deal with them unless the Lord be on my side."

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his portion and happiness. "They have their portion in this life, but as for

me (Ps 17:15) I am none of them, I have but little of the world. Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo--I neither have, nor need, nor care for it. It is the vision and fruition of God that I place my happiness in; that is it I hope for, and comfort myself with the hopes of, and thereby distinguish myself from those who have their portion in this life." Beholding God's face with satisfaction may be considered,

1. As our duty and comfort in this world. We must in righteousness (clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart and a good life) by faith behold God's face and set him always before us, must entertain ourselves from day to day with the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord; and, when we awake every morning, we must be satisfied with his likeness set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our conformity to him, should yield us more satisfaction than those have whose belly is filled with the delights of sense.

2. As our recompence and happiness in the other world. With the prospect of that he concluded the foregoing psalm, and so this. That happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous that are justified and sanctified. They shall be put in possession of it when they awake, when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in three things:--

[1.] The immediate vision of God and his glory: I shall behold thy face, not, as in this world, through a glass darkly. The knowledge of God will there be perfected and the enlarged intellect filled with it.

[2.] The participation of his likeness. Our holiness will there be perfect. This results from the former (1Jo 3:2): When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

[3.] A complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this: I shall be satisfied, abundantly satisfied with it. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good-will towards us and his good work in us; and even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

9 from the wicked that oppress me,
from my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.
10 They are inclosed in their own fat:
with their mouth they speak proudly.
11 They have now compassed us in our steps:
they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
12 like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey,
and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
13 Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down:
deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is* thy sword:
14 from men *which are* thy hand, O Lord,
from men of the world, *which have* their portion in *this*
life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure:*
they are full of children,
and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.
15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Psalms-18

Thanksgiving for Deliverance

To the chief Musician,

A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day *that* the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

1 I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm; we had it before (2Sa 22:1), only here we are told that the psalm was delivered to the chief musician, or precentor, in the temple-songs. Note, The private compositions of good men,

designed by them for their own use, may be serviceable to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire.

Examples sometimes teach better than rules. And David is here called the servant of the Lord, as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because, with his sceptre, with his sword, and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour that he was a servant of the Lord than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it (Ps 116:16): O Lord! truly I am thy servant. In these verses,

I. He triumphs in God and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, I will love thee, O Lord! my strength, are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; and this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. This he requires and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved is the lover's delight; this string therefore he touches, and on this he harps with much pleasure (Ps 18:2):

"The Lord Jehovah is my God; and then he is my rock, my fortress, all that I need and can desire in my present distress." For there is that in God which is suited to all the exigencies and occasions of his people that trust in him. "He is my rock, and strength, and fortress;" that is,

1. "I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties."

2. "I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me." Those that truly love God may thus triumph in him as theirs, and may with confidence call upon him, Ps 18:3. This further use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better--call upon him as long

as we live, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, Ac 2:21.

II. He sets himself to magnify the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us in it.

1 The more imminent and threatening the danger was out of which we were delivered the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David now remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls the floods of Belial, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers. They surrounded him, compassed him about; they surprised him, and by that means were very near seizing him; their snares prevented him, and, when without were fightings, within were fears and sorrows, Ps 18:4,5. His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a lost man; see Ps 116:3.

2 The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, Ps 18:6. David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did. Though distress drive us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance the greater it is: such were the deliverances wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, Ps 18:7-15, &c. Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances.

(1.) He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the foundations of

the hills (Ps 18:7), as of old at Mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to tremble; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved.

(2.) He showed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people: He was wroth, Ps 18:7. His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire (Ps 18:8), and coals were kindled by it. Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals (that is, fuel) to this fire will be consumed by it. He that ordains his arrows against the persecutors sends them forth when he pleases, and they are sure to hit the mark and do execution; for those arrows are lightnings, Ps 18:14.

(3.) He showed his readiness to plead his people's cause and work deliverance for them; for he rode upon a cherub and did fly, for the maintaining of right and the relieving of his distressed servants, Ps 18:10. No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him who rides upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens, for the help of his people, and, in his excellency, on the skies.

(4.) He showed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case: He bowed the heavens and came down (Ps 18:9), did not send an angel, but came himself, as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people.

(5.) He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, Isa 45:15. He is a God that hideth himself; for he made darkness his pavilion, Ps 18:11. his glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable, and so, as to us, clouds and darkness are round about him; we know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but, when his designs are secret, they are kind; for, though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour.

And, at his brightness, the thick clouds pass (Ps 18:12), comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen; the earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, Ps 18:15. There were waters deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn (Ps 18:16), as Moses, who had his name from being drawn out of the water literally, as David was figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they would have been too strong for him, Ps 18:17.

And they were too quick for him; for they prevented him in the day of his calamity, Ps 18:18. But, in the midst of his troubles, the Lord was his stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them and bear them up under their troubles in the mean time.

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance was that his comfort was the fruit of it and God's favour was the root and fountain of it.

(1.) It was an introduction to his preferment, Ps 18:19. "He brought me forth also out of my straits into a large place, where I had room, not only to turn, but to thrive in."

(2.) It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet: "He delivered me because he delighted in me, not for my merit, but for his own grace and good-will." Compare this with 2Sa 15:26, If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am. We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

In singing this we must triumph in God, and trust in him: and we may apply it to Christ the Son of David. The sorrows of death surrounded him; in his distress he prayed (Heb 5:7); God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to cleave, and brought him out, in his resurrection, into a large place, because he delighted in him and in his undertaking.

2 The Lord *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.
3 I will call upon the Lord, *who is worthy* to be praised:
so shall I be saved from mine enemies.
4 The sorrows of death compassed me,
and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:
the snares of death prevented me.
6 In my distress I called upon the
Lord, and cried unto my God:
he heard my voice out of his temple,
and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.
7 Then the earth shook and trembled;
the foundations also of the hills moved
and were shaken, because he was
wroth.
8 There went up a smoke out of his
nostrils, and fire out of his mouth
devoured:
coals were kindled by it.
9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down:
and darkness *was* under his feet.
10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:
yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about
him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.
12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds
passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire.
13 The Lord also thundered in the
heavens, and the Highest gave his
voice;

hail *stones* and coals of fire.
14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
15 Then the channels of waters were seen,
and the foundations of the world were
discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord,
at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
16 He sent from above, he took
me, he drew me out of many
waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong
enemy, and from them which hated
me:
for they were too strong for me.
18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity:
but the Lord was my stay.
19 He brought me forth also into a large place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;
according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed
me.

Here, I. David reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoices in the testimony of his conscience that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity and not with fleshly wisdom, 2Co 1:12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps, when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but, when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness.

1. His deliverances cleared his innocency before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of.

This he calls rewarding him according to his righteousness (Ps 18:20,24), that is, determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause and the cleanness of his hands, from that sedition, treason, and

rebellion, with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocency; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal (as he always will) according to equity.

2. They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, Ps 18:21-23. His own heart knows, and is ready to attest it,

(1.) That he had kept firmly to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully departed, from his God. Those that forsake the ways of the Lord do, in effect, depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed into a departure, for it is not a wicked departure, from our God.

(2.) That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands (Ps 18:22): "All his judgments were before me; and I had a respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard, but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways."

(3.) That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which most easily besets us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be justified in the Spirit, 1Ti 3:16.

II. He takes occasion thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what

God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, Ps 18:25,26.

1. Those that show mercy to others (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no, not of their works of mercy) shall find mercy with God, Mt 5:7.

2. Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man, he will be found an upright God.

3. Those that serve God with a pure conscience shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, very sure to be depended on and very sweet to be delight in.

4. Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, shall find that he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, Le 26:21,24.

III. Hence he speaks comfort to the humble ("Thou wilt save the afflicted people, that are wronged and bear it patiently"), terror to the proud ("Thou wilt bring down high looks, that aim high, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious"), and encouragement to himself--"Thou wilt light my candle, that is, thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee and the interests of thy kingdom among men."

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements in singing these verses, encourage themselves that God himself will be a light to them.

21 For I have kept the ways of the Lord,
and have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all his judgments *were* before me,

and I did not put away his statutes from me.
23 I was also upright before him,
and I kept myself from mine iniquity.
24 Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to
my righteousness,
according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful;
with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;
26 with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure;
and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.
27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people;
but wilt bring down high looks.
28 For thou wilt light my candle:
the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.
29 For by thee I have run through a troop;
and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

In these verses,

I. David looks back, with thankfulness, upon the great things which God had done for him. He had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to triumph over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about, and followed, all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity.

1. God had given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he was not bred up to nor designed for, his genius leading him more to music, and poetry, and a contemplative life: He teaches my hands to war, Ps 18:34.

2. God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war: God girded him with strength (Ps 18:32,39), to such a degree that he could break even a

bow of steel, Ps 18:34. What service God designs men for he will be sure to fit them for.

3. God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies but to fly upon them (Ps 18:33): He makes my feet like hinds' feet, Ps 18:36. "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; but" (whereas those that take large steps are apt to tread awry) "my feet did not slip." He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, Ps 18:37.

4. God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it (Ps 18:29); if ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them, and by divine assistance set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, Ps 18:33.

5. God had protected him, and kept him safe, in the midst of the greatest perils. Many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved: "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation (Ps 18:35), and that has compassed me on every side. By that I have been delivered from the strivings of the people who aimed at my destruction (Ps 18:43), particularly from the violent man" (Ps 18:48), that is, Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him.

6. God had prospered him in his designs; he it was that made his way perfect (Ps 18:32) and it was his right hand that held him up, Ps 18:35.

7. God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel: those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown, and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba, who would have deposed him. He enlarges much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories, not to his own sword or bow, nor to the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God:

I pursued them (Ps 18:37), I wounded them (Ps 18:38); for thou hast girded me with strength (Ps 18:39), else I could not have done it. All the praise is ascribed to God:

Thou hast subdued them under me, Ps 18:39. Thou hast given me their necks (Ps 18:40), not only to trample upon them (as Jos 10:24), but to cut them off. Even those who hated David whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, in their distress cried unto the Lord: but in vain; he answered them not. How could they expect he should when it was he whom they fought against? And, when he disowned them (as he will all those that act against his people), no other succours could stand them in stead: There was none to save them, Ps 18:41. Those whom God has abandoned are easily vanquished: Then did I beat them small as the dust, Ps 18:42.

But those whose cause is just he avenges (Ps 18:47), and those whom he favours will certainly be lifted up above those that rise up against them, Ps 18:48. 8. God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him and made him great (Ps 18:35):

Thy gentleness has increased me--thy discipline and instruction; so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to increase his greatness. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler:

Thou hast made me the head of the heathen (Ps 18:43); all the neighbouring nations were tributaries to him. See 2Sa 8:6,11. In all this David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.

II. David looks up with humble and reverent adorations of the divine glory and perfection. When God had, by his providence, magnified him, he endeavours, with his praises,

to magnify God, to bless him and exalt him, Ps 18:46. He gives honour to him,

1. As a living God: The Lord liveth, Ps 18:46. We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to, that God who has life in himself and is therefore fitly called the living God. The gods of the heathen were dead gods. The best friends we have among men are dying friends. But God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but, because he lives, they shall live also; for he is their life.

2. As a finishing God: As for God, he is not only perfect himself, but his way is perfect, Ps 18:30. He is known by his name Jehovah (Ex 6:3), a God performing and perfecting what he begins in providence as well as creation, Ge 2:1. If it was God that made David's way perfect (Ps 18:32), much more is his own way so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he does, Ec 3:14. And what he undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way; what God begins to build he is able to finish.

3. As a faithful God: The word of the Lord is tried. "I have tried it" (says David), "and it has not failed me." All the saints, in all ages, have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which, as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise.

4. As the protector and defender of his people. David had found him so to him: "He is the God of my salvation (Ps 18:46), by whose power and grace I am and hope to be saved; but not of mine only: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him (Ps 18:30); he shelters and protects them all, is both able and ready to do so."

5. As a non-such in all this, Ps 18:31. There is a God, and who is God save Jehovah? That God is a rock, for the support

and shelter of his faithful worshippers; and who is a rock save our God? Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note,

(1.) Whoever pretends to be deities, it is certain that there is no God, save the Lord; all others are counterfeits, Isa 44:8,Jer 10:10. (2.) Whoever pretends to be our felicities, there is no rock, save our God; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

III. David looks forward, with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promises himself,

1. That his enemies should be completely subdued, and that those of them that yet remained should be made his footstool,--that his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him (Ps 18:43), --that his conquests, and, consequently, his acquests, should be easy (As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me, Ps 18:44), --and that his enemies should be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him; even those that had retired to their fastnesses should not trust to them, but be afraid out of their close places, having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success.

Thus the Son of David, though he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality, and power shall be quite put down.

2. That his seed should be forever continued in the Messiah, who, he foresaw, should come from his loins, Ps 18:50. He shows mercy to his anointed, his Messiah, to David himself, the anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, and to his seed for evermore. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but to his seed, as of one, that is Christ, Ga 3:16.

It is he only that shall reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Christ is called David, Ho 3:5. God has called him his king, Ps 2:6.

Great deliverance God does give, and will give to him, and to his church and people, here called his seed, for evermore.

In singing Ps 18:29-50 we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto and of all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel kingdom, and encourage ourselves and one another with an assurance that the church militant will be shortly triumphant, will be eternally so.

30 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect:
the word of the Lord is tried:
he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.
31 For who *is* God save the Lord?
Or who *is* a rock save our God?
32 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength,
and maketh my way perfect.
33 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*,
and setteth me upon my high places.
34 He teacheth my hands to war,
so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:
and thy right hand hath holden me up,
and thy gentleness hath made me great.
36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,
that my feet did not slip.
37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them:
neither did I turn again till they were consumed.
38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise:
they are fallen under my feet.
39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle:
thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.
40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies;
that I might destroy them that hate me.
41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them:*
even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.
42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people;

and thou hast made me the head of the heathen:
a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.
44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me:
the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
45 The strangers shall fade away,
and be afraid out of their close places.
46 The Lord liveth; and blessed *be* my Rock;
and let the God of my salvation be exalted.
47 *It is* God that avengeth me,
and subdueth the people under me.
48 He delivereth me from mine enemies:
yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me:
thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen,
and sing praises unto thy name.
50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king;
and showeth mercy to his anointed,
to David, and to his seed for evermore.

Psalms-19

The Works and Word of God
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

From the things that are seen every day by all the world the psalmist, in these verses, leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestably evident and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies.

This instance of the divine power serves not only to show the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven and yet say,

"There is no God," who see the effect and yet say, "There is no cause," but to show the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imagination, who, though the heavens declare the glory of God, yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

1. What that is which the creatures notify to us. They are in many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by showing his handy-works, Ps 19:1.

They plainly speak themselves to be God's handy-works; for they could not exist from eternity; all succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with:

therefore they must have a Creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the works of his fingers (Ps 8:3), and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great author.

From the brightness of the heavens we may collect that the Creator is light; their vastness of extent bespeaks his immensity;, their height his transcendency and sovereignty, their influence upon this earth his dominion, and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day according to the ordinances that were then settled.

II. What are some of those things which notify this?

1 The heavens and the firmament--the vast expanse of air and ether, and the spheres of the planets and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts, in the structure of his body, that whereas they are made to look downwards, as their

spirits must go, he is made erect, to look upwards, because upwards his spirit must shortly go and his thoughts should now rise.

2 The constant and regular succession of day and night (Ps 19:2): Day unto day, and night unto night, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has, from the beginning to this day, preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah (Ge 8:22), that, while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease, to which covenant of providence the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, Jer 33:20,Jer 31:35.

The counterchanging of day and night, in so exact a method, is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, he forms the light and creates the darkness (Isa 45:7), and sets the one over-against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man; for he makes the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice, Ps 65:8.

He not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us, by this constant revolution; for as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; every day and every night speak the goodness of God, and, when they have finished their testimony, leave it to the next day, to the next night, to stay the same.

3. The light and influence of the sun do, in a special manner, declare the glory of God; for of all the heavenly bodies that is the most conspicuous in itself and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon, and all desert, without it. It is not an improbable conjecture that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun observe here,

(1.) The place appointed him. In the heavens God has set a tabernacle for the sun. The heavenly bodies are called hosts of heaven, and therefore are fitly said to dwell in tents, as soldiers in their encampments. The sun is said to have a tabernacle set him, no only because he is in continual motion and never has a fixed residence, but because the mansion he has will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll and the sun shall be turned to darkness.

(2.) The course assigned him. That glorious creature was not made to be idle, but his going forth (at least as it appears to our eye) is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit thence to the opposite point, and thence (to complete his diurnal revolution) to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy that we can certainly foretel the hour and the minute at which the sun will rise at such a place, any day to come.

(3.) The brightness wherein he appears. He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, richly dressed and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself and making all about him pleasant; for the friend of the bridegroom rejoices greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice, Joh 3:29.

(4.) The cheerfulness wherewith he makes this tour. Though it seems a vast round which he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet in obedience to the law of this creation, and for the service of man, he not only does it, but does it with a great deal of pleasure and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. With such satisfaction did Christ, the Sun of righteousness, finish the work that was given him to do.

(5.) His universal influence on this earth: There is nothing hidden from the heart thereof, no, not metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

III. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God. It is made to all parts of the world (Ps 19:3,4): There is no

speech nor language (no nation, for the nations were divided after their tongues, Ge 10:31,32) where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone through all the earth (the equinoctial line, suppose) and with it their words to the end of the world, proclaiming the eternal power of God of nature, Ps 19:4.

The apostle uses this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them (Ro 10:18), so that they were without excuse if they were idolaters, Ro 1:20,21. And those were without blame, who, by preaching the gospel to them, endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry.

If God used these means to prevent their apostasy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. They have no speech or language (so some read it) and yet their voice is heard. All people may hear these natural immortal preachers speak to them in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

In singing Ps 19:1-6 we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of the heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of righteousness.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech,
and night unto night showeth knowledge.
3 *There is* no speech nor language,
where their voice is not heard.
4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
5 which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven,
and his circuit unto the ends of it:
and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

7 The law of the Lord *is* perfect,
converting the soul:
the testimony of the Lord *is* sure,
making wise the simple.

God's glory, (that is, his goodness to man) appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by divine revelation. The holy scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expectation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served if man had retained his integrity; but, to recover him out of his fallen state, another course must be taken; that must be done by the word of God. And here,

1 The psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the word of God, in six sentences (Ps 19:7-9), in each of which the name Jehovah is repeated, and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellency from the law-maker. Here are six several titles of the word of God, to take in the whole of divine revelation, precepts and promises, and especially the gospel. Here are several good properties of it, which proves its divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever. Here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which show what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it.

1. The law of the Lord is perfect. It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed; and it will make the man of God perfect, 2Ti 3:17. Nothing is to be added to it nor taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shows us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God and the indispensable necessity of our return to him.

2. The testimony of the Lord (which witnesses for him to us) is sure, incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of the divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure foundation of living comforts and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, 2Ti 3:15.

It will give us an insight into things divine and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work and secure to us our true interests. It will make even the simple (poor contrivers as they may be for the present world) wise for their souls and eternity. Those that are humbly simple, sensible of their own folly and willing to be taught, shall be made wise by the word of God, Ps 25:9.

3. The statutes of the Lord (enacted by his authority, and binding on all wherever they come) are right, exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil, that is, with the right reason of man and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts, concerning all things, are right (Ps 119:128), just as they should be; and they will set us to rights if we receive them and submit to them; and, because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy; and, when it is written in our hearts, it lays a foundation for everlasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

4. The commandment of the Lord is pure; it is clear, without darkness; it is clean, without dross and defilement. It is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it. It is the ordinary means which the Spirit uses in enlightening the eyes; it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

5. The fear of the Lord (true religion and godliness prescribed in the word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life) is clean, clean itself, and will make us clean (Joh 15:3); it will cleanse our way, Ps 119:9. And it endureth for ever; it is of perpetual obligation and can never be repealed.

The ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

6. The judgments of the Lord (all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom) are true; they are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are righteous, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so altogether: there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

II. He expresses the great value he had for the word of God, and the great advantage he had, and hoped to have, from it, Ps 19:10,11.

1. See how highly he prized the commandments of God. It is the character of all good people that they prefer their religion and the word of God,

(1.) Far before all the wealth of the world. It is more desirable than gold, than fine gold, than much fine gold. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul and the concerns of eternity.

(2.) Far before all pleasures and delights of sense. The word of God, received by faith, is sweet to the soul, sweeter than honey and the honey comb. The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

2. See what use he made of the precepts of God's word: By them is thy servant warned. The word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, Eze 3:17,33:7. It warns the wicked not to go

on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. All that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

3. See what advantage he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts: In keeping them there is great reward. Those who make conscience of their duty will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward, not only after keeping, but in keeping, God's commandments, a present great reward of obedience. Religion is health and honour; it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet and our crosses easy, life truly valuable and death itself truly desirable.

III. He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. "Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good? Then who can understand his errors? I cannot, whoever can." From the rectitude of the divine law he learns to call his sins his errors. If the commandment be true and righteous, every transgressions of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle; it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in.

From the extent, the strictness, and spiritual nature, of the divine law he learns that his sins are so many that he cannot understand the number of them, and so exceedingly sinful that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them.

We are guilty of many sins which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of; many we have been guilty of which we have forgotten; so that, when we have been ever so particular in the confession of sin, we

must conclude with an et cetera--and such like; for God knows a great deal more evil of us than we do of ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well that we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion hence to pray against sin. All the discoveries of sin made to us by the law should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David does here,

(1.) For mercy to pardon. Finding himself unable to specify all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults; not secret to God, so none are, nor only such as were secret to the world, but such as were hidden from his own observation of himself.

The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God; but, when they are pardoned, we are cleansed from them, 1Jo 1:7.

(2.) For grace to help in time of need. Having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented, Ps 19:13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers, which concur with David's here, where observe,

[1.] His petition: "Keep me from ever being guilty of a wilful presumptuous sin." We ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God and wound conscience, which wither our comforts and shock our hopes. "However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be enslaved by it."

[2.] His plea: "So shall I be upright; I shall appear upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; and I shall be innocent from the great transgression;" so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, Nu 15:28-30. Note,

First, Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous. those that sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression.

Secondly, Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear.

Thirdly, Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forward towards a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation or by his grace giving us victory over it.

8 The statutes of the Lord *are* right,
rejoicing the heart:
the commandment of the Lord *is* pure,
enlightening the eyes.
9 The fear of the Lord *is* clean,
enduring for ever:
the judgments of the Lord *are* true
and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired *are they* than gold,
yea, than much fine gold:
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
and in keeping of them *there is* great reward.
12 Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse thou me from secret *faults.*
13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins;*

let them not have dominion over me:
then shall I be upright,
and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,
be acceptable in thy sight,
O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

He takes occasion humbly to beg the divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, Ps 19:14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before. He prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances; for, if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us or our services, Ps 66:18. Observe,

(1.) What his services were--the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart, his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory and the edification of others; and the words of our mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, Ps 45:1.

(2.) What was his care concerning these services--that they might be acceptable with God; for, if our services be not acceptable to God, what do they avail us? Gracious souls must have all they aim at if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss.

(3.) What encouragement he had to hope for this, because God was his strength and his redeemer. If we seek assistance from God as our strength in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God in the discharge of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the word of God and delivered into it, we should be much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it and the danger we are in by it, and we should fetch in help from heaven against it.

Psalms-20

A Prayer for Victory
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble;
the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

This prayer for David is entitled a psalm of David; nor was it any absurdity at all for him who was divinely inspired to draw up a directory, or form of prayer, to be used in the congregation for himself and those in authority under him; nay it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know ever so well how to pray for themselves, must not despise, but earnestly desire, the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him.

Magistrates and those in power ought to esteem and encourage praying people, to reckon them their strength (Zec 12:5,10), and to do what they can for them, that they may have an interest in their prayers and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here,

I. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

1. That God would answer his prayers: The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble (Ps 20:1), and the Lord fulfil all thy petitions, Ps 20:5. Note,

(1.) Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself, of disappointment and distress, of treading down and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head nor the grace in his heart would exempt him from the trouble.

(2.) Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, though a man of business, a man of war, was constant to his devotions; though he had prophets, and priests, and many good people among his subjects, to pray for him, he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers or friends for them, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired, not to supersede, but to second, our own for ourselves. Happy the people that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, Amen.

2. That God would protect his person, and preserve his life, in the perils of war: "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee, and set thee out of the reach of thy enemies."

(1.) "Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble." David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the almighty God. (2.) "Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil.-- Pr 18:10, The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous run by faith, and are safe; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time."

3. That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good--that, in the day of battle, he would send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion, not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant and the peculiar favour God bears to his chosen people Israel. That he would help him, in performance of the promises and in answer to the prayers made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God's peculiar love, the blessing of God, even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is what we should most desire both for ourselves and others in services and sufferings.

4. That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on a dangerous expedition: The Lord remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt-sacrifices (Ps 20:3), or turn them to ashes; that is, "The Lord give thee the victory and success which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of him, and thereby give as full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven." By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and divine affection and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

5. That God would crown all his enterprises and noble designs for the public welfare with the desired success (Ps 20:4): The Lord grant thee according to thy own heart. This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was a man after God's own heart, and would design nothing but what was pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God may expect that God will, in one way or other, gratify them: and those who walk in his counsel may promise themselves that he will fulfil theirs. Thou shalt devise a thing and it shall be established unto thee.

II. What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions for themselves and their good king (Ps 20:5): "We will rejoice in thy salvation. We that are subjects will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince;" or, rather, "In thy salvation, O God! in thy power and promise to save, will we rejoice; that is it which we depend upon now, and which, in the issue, we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in." Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation: In the name of our God will we set up our banners.

1. "We will wage war in his name; we will see that our cause be good and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his direction, implore his aid and depend upon

it, and refer the issue to him." David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1Sa 17:45.

2. "We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God; he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him."

In singing this we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes to the good government we are under and to the prosperity of it. But we may look further; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David, and in him they were abundantly answered; he undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness.

In the day of trouble, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, the Lord heard him, heard him in that he feared (Heb 5:7), sent him help out of the sanctuary, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes, the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner fastening upon the sacrifice, with which God was well pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul, to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us; for him the Father heareth always and his intercession is ever prevailing.

2 send thee help from the sanctuary,
and strengthen thee out of Zion;
3 remember all thy offerings,
and accept thy burnt sacrifice.
Selah.
4 Grant thee according to thine own heart,
and fulfil all thy counsel.
5 We will rejoice in thy salvation,
and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners:
the Lord fulfil all thy petitions.

6 Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed;
he will hear him from his holy heaven
with the saving strength of his right hand.

Here is, I. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people (Ps 20:6): "Now know I (I that pen the psalm know it) that the Lord saveth his anointed, because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him."

Note, It bodes well to any prince and people, and may justly be taken as a happy presage, when God pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he see us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish his word to us. Now that so many who have an interest in heaven are praying for him he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace, which will,

1. Take its rise from above: He will hear him from his holy heaven, of which the sanctuary was a type (Heb 9:23), from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy-seat was a type.

2. It shall take its effect here below: He will hear him with the saving strength of his right hand; he will give a real answer to his prayers, and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter, nor by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by the saving strength of his right hand. He will make it to appear that he hears him by what he does for him.

II. His people triumphing in God and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world.

1. See the difference between worldly people and godly people, in their confidences, Ps 20:7. The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well if those do but smile upon them; they trust in chariots and in horses, and the more of them they can bring into the field the more sure

they are of success in their wars; probably David has here an eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horsemen, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, 2Sa 8:4,10:18.

"But," say the Israelites, "we neither have chariots and horses to trust to nor do we want them, nor, if we had them, would we build our hopes of success upon that; but we will remember, and rely upon, the name of the Lord our God, upon the relation we stand in to him as the Lord our God and the knowledge we have of him by his name," that is, all that whereby he makes himself known; this we will remember and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged.

Note, those who make God and his name their praise may make God and his name their trust.

2. See the difference in the issue of their confidences and by that we are to judge of the wisdom of the choice; things are as they prove; see who will be ashamed of their confidence and who not, Ps 20:8. "Those that trusted in their chariots and horses are brought down and fallen, and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and the richer prey to the conqueror, 2Sa 8:4. But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God not only stand upright, and keep our ground, but have risen, and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them."

Note, A believing obedient trust in God and his name is the surest way both to preferment and to establishment, to rise and to stand upright, and this will stand us in stead when creature-confidences fail those that depend upon them.

III. They conclude their prayer for the king with a Hosanna, "Save, now, we beseech thee, O Lord!" Ps 20:9. As we read this verse, it may be taken as a prayer that God would not only bless the king, "Save, Lord, give him success," but that he would make him a blessing to them, "Let the king hear us when we call to him for justice and mercy." Those that would

have good of their magistrates must thus pray for them, for they, as all other creatures, are that to us (and no more) which God makes them to be. Or it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let him hear us when we call; let him come to us according to the promise, in the time appointed; let him, as the great Master of requests, receive all our petitions and present them to the Father.

But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call; and so it is a summary of the whole psalm and is taken into our English Liturgy; O Lord! save the king, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

In singing Ps 20:6-9 we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses:
but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.
8 They are brought down and fallen:
but we are risen, and stand upright.
9 Save, Lord:
let the king hear us when we call.

Psalms-21

Praise for Deliverance from the Enemy
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord;
and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies. He also directs his subjects herein to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained; and all with an eye

to Christ, of whose triumphs over the powers of darkness David's victories were but shadows.

1. They here congratulate the king on his joys and concur with him in them (Ps 21:1): "The king rejoices, he uses to rejoice in thy strength, and so do we; what pleases the king pleases us," 2Sa 3:36. Happy the people the character of whose king it is that he makes God's strength his confidence and God's salvation his joy, that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom and trusts God to bear him out in all he does for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus, in his great undertaking, relied upon help from heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

2. They gave God all the praise of those things which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

(1.) That God had heard his prayers (Ps 21:2): Thou hast given him his heart's desire (and there is no prayer accepted but what is the heart's desire), the very thing they begged of God for him, Ps 20:4. Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do, in a special manner, require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he give him his heart's desire.

(2.) That God had surprised him with favours, and much outdone his expectations (Ps 21:3): Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness. All our blessings are blessings of goodness, and are owing, not at all to any merit of ours, but purely and only to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it in a special manner obliging that these blessings were given in a preventing way; this fixed his eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God, as one expresses it.

When God's blessings come sooner and prove richer than we imagine, when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the

contrary, then it may be truly said that he prevented us with them. Nothing indeed prevented Christ, but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

(3.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and the most extensive power: "Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head and kept it there, when his enemies attempted to throw it off." Note, Crowns are at God's disposal; no head wears them but God sets them there, whether in judgment to his land or for mercy the event will show. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first, and then of glory.

(4.) That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him than he was able either to ask or think (Ps 21:4): "When he went forth upon a perilous expedition he asked his life of thee, which he then put into his hand, and thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever, didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah that should come of his loins." See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer thence how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him.

See also and rejoice in the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead, indeed, that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives we shall thus live also.

(5.) That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity (Ps 21:5): "His glory is great, far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes, in the salvation thou hast wrought for him and by him." The glory which every good man is ambitious of is to see the salvation of the Lord. Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him, as a burden which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for.

Jesus Christ received from God the Father honour and glory (2Pe 1:17), the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, Joh 17:5. And on him is laid the charge of universal government and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

(6.) That God had given him the satisfaction of being the channel of all bliss to mankind (Ps 21:6): "Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever" (so the margin reads it), "thou hast made him to be a universal blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are, and shall be blessed; and so thou hast made him exceedingly glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking and to him in the prosecution of it." See how the spirit of prophecy gradually rises here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none besides is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever to that eminency that the expression denotes: and of him it is said that God made him full of joy with his countenance.

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
and hast not withholden the request of his
lips. Selah.
3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness:
thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.
4 He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him,
even length of days for ever and ever.
5 His glory *is* great in thy salvation:
honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him.
6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever:
thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.
7 For the king trusteth in the Lord,
and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teaches them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer, upon what God would further do for them: The king rejoices in God (Ps 21:1), and therefore we will be thankful; the king trusteth in God (Ps 21:7), therefore will we be

encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ our King is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

I. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom. Through the mercy of the Most High, and not through his own merit or strength, he shall not be moved. His prosperous state shall not be disturbed; his faith and hope in God, which are the stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. The mercy of the Most High (the divine goodness, power, and dominion) is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his sufferings (Ps 16:8) and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot, be moved, but continues ever.

II. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent implacable enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about, and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies who would not have him to reign over them. Observe,

1 The description of his enemies. They are such as hate him, Ps 21:8. They hated David because God had set him apart for himself, hated Christ because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, Joh 15:23,25.

2 The designs of his enemies (Ps 21:11): They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device; they pretended to fight against David only, but their enmity was against God himself. Those that aimed to un-king David aimed, in effect, to un-God Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raises up to support and advance it, is very evil and mischievous, and God takes it as devised and designed against himself and will so reckon for it.

(3.) The disappointment of them: "They devise what they are not able to perform," Ps 21:11. Their malice is impotent, and they imagine a vain thing, Ps 2:1.

(4.) The discovery of them (Ps 21:8): "Thy hand shall find them out. Though ever so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship, though mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom and hardly to be distinguished from them, though flying from justice and absconding in their close places, yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are." There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last than fig-leaves were at first.

(5.) The destruction of them; it will be an utter destruction (Lu 19:27); they shall be swallowed up and devoured, Ps 21:9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul. Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed, Ps 21:10. The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same doom, and the whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them and put them to flight, being levelled at the face of them, Ps 21:12.

That will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them (Ps 21:9); they shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire (Mt 13:42), but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace; they shall be their own tormentors; the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him and fought against him, shall find that even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them, to eternity, a fiery oven to themselves: it is the worm that dies not.

III. In this confidence they beg of God that he would still appear for his anointed (Ps 21:13), that he would act for him in his own strength, by the immediate operations of his

power as Lord of hosts and Father of spirits, making little use of means and instruments. And,

1. Hereby he would exalt himself and glorify his own name. "We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame; Lord, take the work into thy own hands, do it, without us, and it will be thy glory."

2. Hereupon they would exalt him: "So will we sing, and praise thy power, the more triumphantly." The less God has of our service when a deliverance is in the working the more he must have of our praises when it is wrought without us.

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:
thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.
9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery
oven in the time of thine anger:
the Lord shall swallow them up in his
wrath, and the fire shall devour them.
10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,
and their seed from among the children of
men.
11 For they intended evil against thee:
they imagined a mischievous device, *which* they are not able
to perform.
12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back,
when thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings
against the face of them.
13 Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength:
so will we sing and praise thy power.

Psalms-22

A Cry of Anguish and Song of Praise
To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar,
A Psalm of David.

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me, *and from* the words of
my roaring?

Some think they find Christ in the title of this psalm, upon Aijeleth Shahar--The hind of the morning. Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices (So 8:14), as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, to all believers (Pr 5:19); he giveth goodly words like Naphtali, who is compared to a hind let loose, Ge 49:21.

He is the hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, Ps 22:16. But others think it denotes only the tune to which the psalm was set. In these verses we have,

I. A sad complaint of God's withdrawings, Ps 22:1,2.

1. This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, pressed with the burden of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, crying earnestly for relief, and, in this case, apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him, again and again, "My God," and continuing to cry day and night to him and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note,

(1.) Spiritual desertions are the saints' sorest afflictions; when their evidences are clouded, divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the terrors of God set in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts!

(2.) Even their complaint of these burdens is a good sign of spiritual life and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, "My God, why am I sick? Why am I poor?" would give cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, Why has though forsaken me? is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour.

(3.) When we are lamenting God's withdrawings, yet still we must call him our God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance we must live by a faith of adherence. "However it be, yet God is good, and he is

mine; though he slay me, yet I trust in him; though he do not answer me immediately, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent."

2. But is must be applied to Christ: for, in the first words of this complaint, he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross (Mt 27:46); probably he proceeded to the following words, and, some think, repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud (because they cavilled at the first words), yet to himself. Note,

(1.) Christ, in his sufferings, cried earnestly to his Father for his favour and presence with him. He cried in the day-time, upon the cross, and in the night-season, when he was in agony in the garden. He offered up strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him, and with some fear too, Heb 5:7.

(2.) Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and it was this that he complained of more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give in sensible comforts. But, Christ having made himself sin for us, in conformity thereunto the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. It pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief, Isa 53:10. But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was now employed, whom he was now serving, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

II. Encouragement taken, in reference hereunto, Ps 22:3-5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him, yet,

1. He will think well of God: "But thou art holy, not unjust, untrue, nor unkind, in any of thy dispensations. Though thou dost not immediately come in to the relief of thy afflicted people, yet though lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors, Hab 1:13. And, as thou art infinitely pure and

upright thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thy upright people: Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel; thou art pleased to manifest thy glory, and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary, where they attend thee with their praises.

There thou art always ready to receive their homage, and of the tabernacle of meeting thou hast said, This is my rest for ever." This bespeaks God's wonderful condescension to his faithful worshippers--(that, though he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel), and it may comfort us in all our complaints--that, though God seem, for a while, to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so well pleased with his people's praises that he will, in due time, give them cause to change their note: Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things.

2. He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer (Ps 22:4,5): "Our fathers trusted in thee, cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them; therefore thou wilt, in due time, deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope, never any that sought thee sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself and the same to thy people that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sake," Ro 11:28.

The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful. He that was our fathers' God must be ours, and will therefore be ours. Our Lord Jesus, in his sufferings, supported himself with this--that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were in due time delivered and were types of his exaltation too; therefore he knew that he also should not be confounded, Isa 50:7.

III. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is by no means so bitter as that before of God's withdrawings; but, as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, Ps 22:6-8. Our fathers were honoured, the patriarchs in their day, first or last, appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is a worm, and no man.

It was great condescension that he became man, a step downwards, which is, and will be, the wonder of angels; yet, as if it were too much, too great, to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. He was Adam--a mean man, and Enosh--a man of sorrows, but lo Ish--not a considerable man: for he took upon him the form of a servant, and his visage was marred more than any man's, Isa 52:14.

Man, at the best, is a worm; but he became a worm, and no man. If he had not made himself a worm, he could not have been trampled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dyeing scarlet or purple, whence some make it an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him.

1. He was reproached as a bad man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath-breaker, a wine-bibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Cæsar, a confederate with the prince of the devils.

2. He was despised of the people as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of, his country in no repute, his relations poor mechanics, his followers none of the rulers, or the Pharisees, but the mob.

3. He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived others, but himself too. Those that saw him hanging on the cross laughed him to scorn. So far were they from pitying him, or concerning themselves for him, that they added to his afflictions, with all the gestures and expressions of insolence upbraiding him with his fall. They make mouths at him, make merry over him, and make a jest of his

sufferings: They shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, This was he that said he trusted God would deliver him; now let him deliver him. David was sometimes taunted for his confidence in God; but in the sufferings of Christ this was literally and exactly fulfilled.

Those very gestures were used by those that reviled him (Mt 27:39); they wagged their heads, nay, and so far did their malice make them forget themselves that they used the very words (Mt 27:43), He trusted in God; let him deliver him. Our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy for the dishonour we had done to God by our sins, did it by submitting to the lowest possible instance of ignominy and disgrace.

IV. Encouragement taken as to this also (Ps 22:9,10): Men despise me, but thou art he that took me out of the womb. David and other good men have often, for direction to us, encouraged themselves with this, that God was not only the God of their fathers, as before (Ps 22:4), but the God of their infancy, who began by times to take care of them, as soon as they had a being, and therefore, they hope, will never cast them off. He that did so well for us in that helpless useless state will not leave us when he has reared us and nursed us up into some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care for us,

1. In the birth: He took us also out of the womb, else we had died there, or been stifled in the birth. Every man's particular time begins with this pregnant proof of God's providence, as time, in general, began with the creation, that pregnant proof of his being.

2. At the breast: "Then didst thou make me hope;" that is, "thou didst that for me, in providing sustenance for me and protecting me from the dangers to which I was exposed, which encourages me to hope in thee all my days." The blessings of the breasts, as they crown the blessings of the womb, so they are earnests of the blessings of our whole lives; surely he that fed us then will never starve us, Job 3:12.

3. In our early dedication to him: I was cast upon thee from the womb, which perhaps refers to his circumcision on the eighth day; he was then by his parents committed and given up to God as his God in covenant; for circumcision was a seal of the covenant; and this encouraged him to trust in God. Those have reason to think themselves safe who were so soon, so solemnly, gathered under the wings of the divine majesty.

4. In the experience we have had of God's goodness to us all along ever since, drawn out in a constant uninterrupted series of preservations and supplies: Thou art my God, providing me and watching over me for good, from my mother's belly, that is, from my coming into the world unto this day.

And if, as soon as we became capable of exercising reason, we put our confidence in God and committed ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt but he will always remember the kindness of our youth and the love of our espousals, Jer 2:2.

This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the divine Providence watched with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt. When he was a child God loved him and called him thence (Ho 11:1), and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings. Men reproached him, and discouraged his confidence in God; but God had honoured him and encouraged his confidence in him.

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
and in the night season, and am not silent.
3 But thou *art* holy,
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
4 Our fathers trusted in thee:
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
6 But I *am* a worm, and no man;

a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
8 He trusted on the Lord *that* he would deliver him:
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb:
thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
10 I was cast upon thee from the womb:
thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

In these verses we have Christ suffering and Christ praying, by which we are directed to look for crosses and to look up to God under them.

I. Here is Christ suffering. David indeed was often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many of the particulars here specified are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depth of his humiliation.

1. He is here deserted by his friends: Trouble and distress are near, and there is none to help, none to uphold, Ps 22:11. He trod the wine-press alone; for all his disciples forsook him and fled. It is God's honour to help when all other helps and succours fail.

2. He is here insulted and surrounded by his enemies, such as were of a higher rank, who for their strength and fury, are compared to bulls, strong bulls of Bashan (Ps 22:12), fat and fed to the full, haughty and sour; such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to dogs (Ps 22:16), filthy and greedy, and unwearied in running him down.

There was an assembly of the wicked plotting against him (Ps 22:16); for the chief priests sat in council, to consult of ways and means to take Christ. These enemies were numerous and unanimous: "Many, and those of different and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far, and seem to have gained their point, for they have beset me

round, Ps 22:12. They have enclosed me, Ps 22:16. They are formidable and threatening (Ps 22:13): They gaped upon me with their mouths, to show me that they would swallow me up; and this with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey."

3. He is here crucified. The very manner of his death is described, though never in use among the Jews: They pierced my hands and my feet (Ps 22:16), which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left so to hang, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ and was so exactly fulfilled.

4. He is here dying (Ps 22:14,15), dying in pain and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is,

(1.) The dissolution of the whole frame of his body: I am poured out like water, weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of his human nature.

(2.) The dislocation of his bones. Care was taken that not one of them should be broken (Joh 19:36), but they were all out of joint by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross as upon a rack. Or it may denote the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden, when he began to be sore amazed, the effect of which perhaps was (as sometimes it has been of great fear, Da 5:6), that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another. His bones were put out of joint that he might put the whole creation into joint again, which sin had put out of joint, and might make our broken bones to rejoice.

(3.) The colliquation of his spirits: My heart is like wax, melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath against the

sins he undertook to satisfy for, melting away like the vitals of a dying man; and, as this satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. When Job speaks of his inward trouble he says, The Almighty makes my heart soft, Job 23:16, and see Ps 58:2.

(4.) The failing of his natural force: My strength is dried up; so that he became parched and brittle like a potsherd, the radical moisture being wasted by the fire of divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? Or who knows the power of it? If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

(5.) The clamminess of his mouth, a usual symptom of approaching death: My tongue cleaveth to my jaws; this was fulfilled both in his thirst upon the cross (Joh 19:28) and in his silence under his sufferings; for, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, nor objected against any thing done to him.

(6.) His giving up the ghost: "Thou hast brought me to the dust of death; I am just ready to drop into the grave;" for nothing less would satisfy divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was thus expressed: Unto dust thou shalt return. And therefore Christ, having an eye to that sentence in his obedience to death, here uses a similar expression: Thou hast brought me to the dust of death.

5. He was stripped. The shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes, when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness, and that the shame of our nakedness might not appear. Now here we are told,

(1.) How his body looked when it was thus stripped: I may tell all my bones, Ps 22:17. His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labour, grief, and fasting, during the whole

course of his ministry, which made him look as if he was nearly 50 years old when he was yet but 33, as we find, Joh 8:57. His wrinkles now witnessed for him that he was far from being what was called, a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. Or his bones might be numbered, because his body was distended upon the cross, which made it easy to count his ribs.

They look and stare upon me, that is, my bones do, being distorted, and having no flesh to cover them, as Job says (Job 16:8), My leanness, rising up in me, beareth witness to my face. Or "the standers by, the passers by, are amazed to see my bones start out thus; and, instead of pitying me, are pleased even with such a rueful spectacle."

(2.) What they did with his clothes, which they took from him (Ps 22:18): They parted my garments among them, to every soldier a part, and upon my vesture, the seamless coat, do they cast lots. This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, Joh 19:23,24. And though it was no great instance of Christ's suffering, yet it is a great instance of the fulfilling of the scripture in him.

Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Let this therefore confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and inflame our love to him as the best of friends, who loved us and suffered all this for us.

II. Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burden of his sufferings. Christ, in his agony, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him. When the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, gaped upon him as a roaring lion, he fell upon the ground and prayed. And of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his strength, Ps 22:19. When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as out strength, and take the comfort of spiritual supports when we cannot come at spiritual delights. He prays,

1. That God would be with him, and not set himself at a distance from him: Be not thou far from me (Ps 22:11), and again, Ps 22:19. "Whoever stands aloof from my sore, Lord, do not thou." The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God and then we may hope that he will draw near to us.

2. That he would help him and make haste to help him, help him to bear up under his troubles, that he might not fail nor be discouraged, that he might neither shrink from his undertaking no sink under it. And the Father heard him in that he feared (Heb 5:7) and enabled him to go through with his work. 3. That he would deliver him and save him, Ps 22:20,21.

(1.) Observe what the jewel is which he is in care for, "The safety of my soul, my darling; let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, Ps 49:15. Father, into thy hands I commit that, to be conveyed safely to paradise." The psalmist here calls his soul his darling, his only one (so the word is): "My soul is my only one. I have but one soul to take care of, and therefore the greater is my shame if I neglect it and the greater will the loss be if I let it perish. Being my only one, it ought to be my darling, for the eternal welfare of which I ought to be deeply concerned. I do not use my soul as my darling, unless I take care to preserve it from every thing that would hurt it and to provide all necessaries for it, and be entirely tender of its welfare."

(2.) Observe what the danger is from which he prays to be delivered, from the sword, the flaming sword of divine wrath, which turns every way. This he dreaded more than any thing, Ge 3:24. God's anger was the wormwood and the gall in the bitter cup that was put into his hands.

"O deliver my soul from that. Lord, though I lose my life, let me not lose thy love. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth." This seems to be meant of Satan, that old enemy who bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world, with whom he was to

engage in close combat and whom he saw coming, Joh 14:30. "Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors." He pleads, "Thou hast formerly heard me from the horns of the unicorn," that is, "saved me from him in answer to my prayer." This may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan and his temptations (Mt 4:1-11), when the devil left him for a season (Lu 4:13), but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. "Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and cast out the prince of this world."

Has God delivered us from the horns of the unicorn, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered doth and will deliver. This prayer of Christ, no doubt, was answered, for the Father heard him always. And, though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but, the third day, raised him out of the dust of death, which was a greater instance of God's favour to him than if he had helped him down from the cross; for that would have hindered his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near;
for *there is* none to help.
12 Many bulls have compassed me:
strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths,
as a ravening and a roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint:
my heart is like wax;
it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
16 For dogs have compassed me:
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:

they pierced my hands and my feet.
17 I may tell all my bones:
they look *and* stare upon me.
18 They part my garments among them,
and cast lots upon my vesture.
19 But be not thou far from me, O Lord:
O my strength, haste thee to help me.
20 Deliver my soul from the sword;
my darling from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth:
for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.
22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And, as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him (Heb 2:12) and are made his own words: I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before him not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises; he saw of the travail of his soul, and was well satisfied, witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last: It is finished.

Five things are here spoken of, the view of which were the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings:--

I. That he should have a church in the world, and that those that were given him from eternity should, in the fulness of time, be gathered in to him. This is implied here; that he should see his seed, Isa 53:10. It pleased him to think,

1. That by the declaring of God's name, by the preaching of the everlasting gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him and to God by him. And for this end ministers should be employed to publish this

doctrine to the world, and they should be much his messengers and his voice that their doing it should be accounted his doing it; their word is his, and by them he declares God's name.

2. That those who are thus called in should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him as his brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased, to call them so; not the believing Jews only, his countrymen, but those of the Gentiles also who became fellow-heirs and of the same body, Heb 2:11. Christ is our elder brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be towards him and that we should be willing he should rule over us.

3. That these is brethren should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation; such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him, unto which all the children of God that were scattered abroad are collected, and in which they are united (Joh 11:52,Eph 1:10), and that they should also be incorporated into smaller societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for divine worship, on which the face of Christianity should appear and in which the interests of it should be supported and advanced.

4. That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel (Ps 22:23), that on them, though Gentiles, the blessing of Abraham might come (Ga 3:14), and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever they did to Israel according to the flesh, Ro 9:4,Heb 8:10. The gospel church is called the Israel of God, Ga 6:16.

II. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye throughout his whole undertaking (Joh 17:4), particularly in his sufferings, which he entered upon with this

solemn request, Father, glorify thy name, Joh 12:27,28. He foresees with pleasure,

1. That God would be glorified by the church that should be gathered to him, and that for this end they should be called and gathered in that they might be unto God for a name and a praise. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them, and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord will praise him (Ps 22:23), even every Israelite indeed. See Ps 118:2-4,135:19,20. The business of Christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is to praise and glorify God with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty, and therefore those that are here called upon to praise God are called upon to fear him.

2. That God would be glorified in the Redeemer and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to praise God in the church, not only because he is the Master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the Mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the matter of the church's praise. See Eph 3:21. All our praises must centre in the work of redemption and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful,

(1.) That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he was sometimes under that his Father had forsaken him. (Ps 22:24): For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted one (that is, of the suffering Redeemer), but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration on which to ground the grant of eternal life to all believers.

Though it was offered for us poor sinners, he did not despise nor abhor him that offered it for our sakes; no did he turn his face from him that offered it, as Saul was angry with his own son because he interceded for David, whom he looked upon as his enemy. But when he cried unto him, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This, as it is

the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain.

(2.) That he himself will go on with his undertaking and complete it. Christ says, I will pay my vows, Ps 22:25. Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

III. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, Ps 22:26. It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation.

1 The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feast upon the sacrifice, as, under the law, upon the peace-offerings, and so partake of the altar: The meek shall eat and be satisfied, eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation, which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy, and shall not labour, as they have done, for that which satisfies not.

2. Those that are much in praying shall be much in thanksgiving: Those shall praise the Lord that seek him, because through Christ they are sure of finding him, in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him even while they are seeking him, and the more earnest they are in seeking him the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him.

3. The souls that are devoted to him shall be for ever happy with him: "Your heart shall live for ever. Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God; what ever becomes of your bodies, your hearts shall live for ever; the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in

everlasting life. Christ has said, Because I live, you shall live also, (Joh 14:19); and therefore that life shall be as sure and as long as his."

23 Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all
ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and
fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
neither hath he hid his face from him;
but when he cried unto him, he heard.
25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied:
they shall praise the Lord that seek him:
your heart shall live for ever.

That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all the corners of the earth and should take in all sorts of people.

1. That it should reach far (Ps 22:27,28), that, whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now all the ends of the world should come into the church, and, the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied,

(1.) That they should be converted: They shall remember, and turn to the Lord.

Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is towards true conversion. We must consider and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father.

(2.) That then they should be admitted into communion with God and with the assemblies that serve him; They shall worship before thee, for in every place incense shall be offered to God, Mal 1:11,Isa 66:23. Those that turn to God will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is why all the kindreds of nations should do

homage to God, for (Ps 22:28) the kingdom is the Lord's; his, and his only, is the universal monarchy.

[1.] The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound to worship him; so that the design of the Christian religion is to revive natural religion and its principles and laws. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted, and to reduce us to our native allegiance.

[2.] The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as Mediator, is appointed governor among the nations, head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord.

2. That it should include many of different ranks, Ps 22:29. High and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ.

(1.) Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones. Those that are fat upon the earth, that live in pomp and power, shall eat and worship; even those that fare deliciously, when they have eaten and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity.

(2.) The poor also shall receive his gospel: Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust (Ps 113:7), that can scarcely keep life and soul together, shall bow before him, before the Lord Jesus, who reckons it his honour to be the poor man's King (Ps 72:12) and whose protection does, in a special manner, draw their allegiance.

Or this may be understood in general of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition--we are going down to the dust to which we are sentenced and where shortly we must make our bed. Nor can we keep alive our own souls; we cannot secure our own natural life long, nor can we be the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is therefore our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects

and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way, to secure our happiness when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom, by an obedient faith, to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them and keep them alive for ever.

V. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should continue to the end, through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generations; so that there is always a generation passing away and a generation coming up. Now, as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away and leaving the world (Ps 22:29, those that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and it is good to die bowing before Christ; blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord), so he shall have honour from that which is rising up, and setting out, in the world, Ps 22:30. Observe,

1. Their application to Christ: A seed shall serve him, shall keep up the solemn worship of him and profess and practice obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world to the end of time; and, in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing Christians and gospel ministers from generation to generation. A seed shall serve him; there shall be a remnant, more or less, to whom shall pertain the service of God and to whom God will give grace to serve him,--perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace does not run in a blood (he does not say their seed, but a seed),--perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail.

2. Christ's acknowledgment of them: They shall be accounted to him for a generation; he will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them; his kindness to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors, and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be a seed that the Lord hath blessed, Isa 61:9,65:23. The generation of the righteous God will graciously own as his treasure, his children.

3. Their agency for him (Ps 22:31): they shall come, shall rise up in their day, not only to keep up the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation, but to serve the honour of Christ and the welfare of souls in the generations to come; they shall transmit to them the gospel of Christ (that sacred deposit) pure and entire, even to a people that shall be born hereafter; to them they shall declare two things:--

(1.) That there is an everlasting righteousness, which Jesus Christ has brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes and the fountain of all our joys. See Ro 1:16,17.

(2.) That the work of our redemption by Christ is the Lord's own doing (Ps 118:23) and no contrivance of ours. We must declare to our children that God has done this; it is his wisdom in a mystery; it is his arm revealed.

In singing this we must triumph in the name of Christ as above every name, must give him honour ourselves, rejoice in the honours others do him, and in the assurance we have that there shall be a people praising him on earth when we are praising him in heaven.

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord:
and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
28 For the kingdom *is* the Lord's:
and he *is* the governor among the nations.
29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship:
all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:
and none can keep alive his own soul.
30 A seed shall serve him;
it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done
this.

Psalms-23

The Lord Is My Shepherd
A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

From three very comfortable premises David, in this psalm, draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved by hope, and that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well grounded. It is the duty of Christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement both from the relation wherein he stands to us and from the experience we have had of his goodness according to that relation.

I. From God's being his shepherd he infers that he shall not want anything that is good for him, Ps 23:1. See here,

1 The great care that God takes of believers. He is their shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd; he was taken from following the ewes great with young (Ps 78:70,71), and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock. He remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful; he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this therefore he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer when he says, I am the shepherd of the sheep; the good shepherd, Joh 10:11.

He that is the shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general (Ps 80:1), is the shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, Isa 40:11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them, protects them, and provides for them, with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a shepherd to us, we must be as

sheep, inoffensive, meek, and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the shepherd's voice, and follow him.

2 The great confidence which believers have in God: "If the Lord is my shepherd, my feeder, I may conclude I shall not want any thing that is really necessary and good for me." If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men a begging for him to Nabal, and another time went himself a begging to Ahimelech; and yet, when he considers that God is his shepherd, he can boldly say, I shall not want. Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding and have him for their feeder. More is implied than is expressed, not only, I shall not want, but, "I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and, if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me or not good for me or I shall have it in due time."

II. From his performing the office of a good shepherd to him he infers that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, Ps 23:2-4. He experiences the benefit of God's presence with him and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefit of them when he most needs it. See here,

1 The comforts of a living saint. God is his shepherd and his God--a God all-sufficient to all intents and purposes. David found him so, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints as the sheep of God's pasture.

(1.) They are well placed, well laid: He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand, our daily bread from him as our Father. The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relishes that only in it which pleases the senses; but to a godly man, who tastes the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relishes that, though he

has but little of the world, it is a green pasture, Ps 37:16,Pr 15:16,17.

God's ordinances are the green pastures in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for sheep, never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down; he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, what ever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances? Let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them; this is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace that the soul is fed.

(2.) They are well guided, well led. The shepherd of Israel guides Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same guidance: He leadeth me beside the still waters. Those that feed on God's goodness must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his word, by his Spirit, disposes of their affairs for the best, according to his counsel, disposes their affections and actions according to his command, directs their eye, their way, and their heart, into his love. The still waters by which he leads them yield them, not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God provides for his people not only food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure.

The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters, by which the saints are led, streams which flow from the fountain of living waters and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, not to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid rolling floods, but to the silent purling waters; for the still but running waters agree best with those spirits that flow out towards God and yet do it silently. The divine guidance they are under is stripped of its metaphor (Ps 23:3):

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, in the way of my duty; in that he instructs me by his word and directs me by conscience and providence. Theses are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them. And those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way. It is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk unless God both lead us into them and lead us in them.

(3.) They are well helped when any thing ails them: He restoreth my soul.

[1.] "He restores me when I wander." No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt is it to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to go astray like lost sheep (Ps 119:176); they miss their way, and turn aside into by-paths; but when God shows them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restores the soul; and, if he did not do so, they would wander endlessly and be undone. When, after one sin, David's heart smote him, and, after another, Nathan was sent to tell him, Thou art the man, God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it.

[2.] "He recovers me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint, and so restores the soul which was ready to depart." He is the Lord our God that heals us, Ex 15:26. Many a time we should have fainted unless we had believed; and it was the good shepherd that kept us from fainting.

2. See here the courage of a dying saint (Ps 23:4): "Having had such experience of God's goodness to me all my days, in six troubles and in seven, I will never distrust him, no, not in the last extremity; the rather because all he has done for me hitherto was not for any merit or desert of mine, but purely for his name's sake, in pursuance of his word, in performance of his promise, and for the glory of his own attributes and

relations to his people. That name therefore shall still be my strong tower, and shall assure me that he who has led me, and fed me, all my life long, will not leave me at last." Here is,

(1.) Imminent danger supposed: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, that is, though I am in peril of death, though in the midst of dangers, deep as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dreadful as death itself," or rather, "though I am under the arrests of death, have received the sentence of death within myself, and have all the reason in the world to look upon myself as a dying man, yet I am easy." Those that are sick, those that are old, have reason to look upon themselves as in the valley of the shadow of death.

Here is one word indeed which sounds terrible; it is death, which we must all count upon; there is no discharge in that war. But, even in the supposition of the distress, there are four words which lessen the terror:--It is death indeed that is before us; but,

[1.] It is but the shadow of death; there is no substantial evil in it; the shadow of a serpent will not sting nor the shadow of a sword kill.

[2.] It is the valley of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark, and dirty; but the valleys are fruitful, and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people.

[3.] It is but a walk in this valley, a gentle pleasant walk. The wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required; but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this.

[4.] It is a walk through it; they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safely to the mountain of spices on the other side of it.

(2.) This danger made light of, and triumphed over, upon good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep

of Christ; they tremble at it no more than sheep do that are appointed for the slaughter. "Even in the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. None of these things move me." Note, A child of God may meet the messengers of death, and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp; and the weaned child, that, through grace, is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death, as Paul, O death! where is thy sting? And there is ground enough for this confidence,

[1.] Because there is no evil in it to a child of God; death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do us no real harm; it kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. Why should it be dreadful when there is nothing in it hurtful?

[2.] Because the saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments; he is then at their right hand, and therefore why should they be moved? The good shepherd will not only conduct, but convoy, his sheep through the valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the ravening wolves; he will not only convoy them, but comfort then when they most need comfort. His presence shall comfort them:

Thou art with me. His word and Spirit shall comfort them--his rod and staff, alluding to the shepherd's crook, or the rod under which the sheep passed when they were counted (Le 27:32), or the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints, when they come to die, that God takes cognizance of them (he knows those that are his), that he will rebuke the enemy, that he will guide them with his rod and sustain them with his staff. The gospel is called the rod of Christ's strength (Ps 110:2), and there is enough in that to comfort the saints when they come to die, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.
3 He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
enemies: thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.

From the good gifts of God's bounty to him now he infers the constancy and perpetuity of his mercy, Ps 23:5,6. Here we may observe,

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him (Ps 23:5): "Thou preparest a table before me; thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity:" such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledges,

(1.) That he had food convenient, a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst.

(2.) That he had it carefully and readily provided for him. His table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand, but prepared, and prepared before him.

(3.) That he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance: "My cup runs over, enough for myself and my friends too."

(4.) That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight: Thou anointest my head with oil. Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of further favor; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him, or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil, Lu 7:46.

Nay, some think he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the poor man's ewe-lamb (2Sa 12:3), that did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom; not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly, are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls, for the life that now is and for that which is to come. If Providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours, Ps 23:6. He had said (Ps 23:1), I shall not want; but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. His hope rises, and his faith is strengthened, by being exercised. Observe,

(1.) What he promises himself--goodness and mercy, all the streams of mercy flowing from the fountain, pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining mercy, supplying mercy.

(2.) The manner of the conveyance of it: It shall follow me, as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow into all places and all conditions, shall be always ready.

(3.) The continuance of it: It shall follow me all my life long, even to the last; for whom God loves he loves to the end.

(4.) The constancy of it: All the days of my life, as duly as the day comes; it shall be new every morning (La 3:22,23) like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily.

(5.) The certainty of it: Surely it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed.

(6.) Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state. So some take the latter clause: "Goodness and mercy

having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended I shall remove to a better world, to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, in our Father's house above, where there are many mansions. With what I have I am pleased much; with what I hope for I am pleased more." All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good Master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever (as long as I live), and I will praise him while I have any being." We must dwell in his house as servants, that desired to have their ears bored to the door-post, to serve him for ever. If God's goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day, let not ours to him be like the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house must keep close to the duties of it.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalms-24

The King of Glory
A Psalm of David.

1 The earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.

Here is, I. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation where our lot is cast, Ps 24:1. We are not to think that the heavens, even the heavens only, are the Lord's, and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world, and that this earth, being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it.

No, even the earth is his, and this lower world; and, though he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom rules over all, and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

1. When God gave the earth to the children of men he still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants, or usufructuaries: The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. The mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest, the fruits it produces, all the beasts of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills, our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man, are all his. These indeed, in the kingdom of grace, are justly looked upon as emptiness; for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but, in the kingdom of providence, they are fulness. The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also.

All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand: so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions is but lent to us; it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passes through the paths of the sea, or is hidden in the bottom of it, is the Lord's and he knows where to find it.

2 The habitable part of this earth (Pr 8:31) is his in a special manner--the world and those that dwell therein. We ourselves are not our own, our bodies, our souls, are not.
All souls are mine, says God; for he is the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own; they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men that know him not, nor own their relation to him, are his.

Now this comes in here to show that, though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people (Ps 24:3-5), it is not because he needs

them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his and all in it, Ex 19:5,Ps 50:12. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ has, as Mediator, over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession:

the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand, power over all flesh. The apostle quotes this scripture twice together in his discourse about things offered to idols, 1Co 10:26,28. "If it be sold in the shambles, eat it, and ask no questions; for the earth is the Lord's; it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it.

But, if one tell you it was offered to an idol, forbear, for the earth is the Lord's, and there is enough besides." This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others theirs; the earth is the Lord's, and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleases him?

II The ground of this propriety. The earth is his by an indisputable title, for he hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods, Ps 24:2. It is his; for,

1. He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter is his, for he made it out of nothing; the form is his, for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind. He made it himself, he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute owner, and none can let us a title to any part, but by, from, and under him; see Ps 89:11,12.

2. He made it so as no one else could. It is the creature of omnipotence, for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods, a weak and unstable foundation (one would think) to build the earth upon, and yet, if almighty power please, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it; see Ps 104:8,9.

3. He continues it, he has established it, fixed it, so that, though one generation passes and another comes, the earth abides, Ec 1:4. And his providence is a continued creation, Ps 119:90. The founding of the earth upon the floods should remind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are; their foundation is not only sand, but water; it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,
and established it upon the floods.
3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in his holy place?

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise, of a sudden to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God has given to the children of men and we are much indebted to his providence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And therefore,

I. Here is an enquiry after better things, Ps 24:3. This earth is God's footstool; but, if we had ever so much of it, we must be here but a while, must shortly go hence, and Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall go to heaven hereafter, and, as an earnest of that, shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now?

A soul that knows and considers its own nature, origin, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied; there is not found among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending towards God, towards heaven, will ask, "What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill, where the Lord dwells and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him, and to abide in that happy holy place where he meets his people and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people and who are his in another manner than the earth is his and its fulness?"

This question is much the same with that, Ps 15:1 The hill of Zion on which the temple was built typified the church, both

visible and invisible. When the people attended the ark to its holy place David puts them in mind that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore that by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

II. An answer to this enquiry, in which we have,

1 The properties of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

(1.) They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have clean hands; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands, no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man and is offensive to the holy God.

(2.) They are such as make conscience of being really (that is, of being inwardly) as good as they seem to be outwardly. They have pure hearts. We make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not enough that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God.

Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. That is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the uncle an spirit, touch it not, which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God; see Mt 5:8.

(3.) They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world, do not lift up their souls unto vanity, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of this world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense, who do not choose these things for their portion, nor

reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain and unsatisfying.

(4.) They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements, nor taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth or the honour of God's name are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

(5.) They are a praying people (Ps 24:6): This is the generation of those that seek him. In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, who are accounted to the Lord for a generation, Ps 22:30. And they are such as seek God, that seek they face, O Jacob!

[1.] They join themselves to God, to seek him, not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavours to obtain his favour and keep themselves in his love. Having made it the summit of their happiness, they make it the summit of their ambition to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend, and, the way being up-hill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost, as those that seek diligently.

[2.] They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them. Being brought into communion with God, they come into communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that have gone before (so some understand this), they seek God's face, as Jacob (so some), who was therefore surnamed Israel, because he wrestled with God and prevailed, sought him and found him;

and, associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church (Re 3:9), shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people (Zec 8:23), shall incorporate themselves with them, and, when they subscribe with their hands to the Lord, shall call themselves by the name of

Jacob, Isa 44:5. As soon as ever Paul was converted he joined himself to the disciples, Ac 9:26.

They shall seek God's face in Jacob (so some), that is, in the assemblies of his people. Thy face, O God of Jacob! so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob, to whom God never said, Seek you me in vain.

2 The privileges of God's peculiar people, Ps 24:5. They shall be made truly and for ever happy.

(1.) They shall be blessed: they shall receive the blessing from the Lord, all the fruits and gifts of God's favour, according to his promise; and those whom God blesses are blessed indeed, for it is his prerogative to command the blessing.

(2.) They shall be justified and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, Mt 5:5. Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it, for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness (so some), the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give, 2Ti 4:8.

(3.) They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation.

Note, Where God gives righteousness he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven shall be brought safely to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking, to their endless satisfaction.

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,
nor sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him,
that seek thy face, O Jacob.
Selah.
7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.

What is spoken once is spoken a second time in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs, and have much beauty in them. Here is,

1. Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory; the doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open, to give him admission, for behold he stands at the door and knocks, ready to come in.

2. Enquiry once and again made concerning this mighty prince, in whose name entrance is demanded: Who is this King of glory? As, when any knock at our door, it is common to ask, Who is there?

3. Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal person that makes the demand: It is the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, Ps 24:8,10. Now,

I. This splendid entry here described it is probable refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it or the temple Solomon built for it; for, when David prepared materials for the building of it, it was proper for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it.

The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called everlasting doors, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, Who is this King of glory? And those that bore the ark are taught to answer in the language before us, and very fitly, because the ark was a symbol or token of God's presence, Jos 3:11.

Or it may be taken as a poetical figure designed to represent the subject more affectingly. God, in his word and ordinances, is thus to be welcomed by us,

1. With great readiness: the doors and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; and, if we had 600 necks, we should bow them all to the authority of it.

2. With all reverence, remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

II. Doubtless it points at Christ, of whom the ark, with the mercy-seat, was a type. 1. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth he ascended in the clouds of heaven, Da 7:13,14. The gates of heaven must then be opened to him, those doors that may be truly called everlasting, which had been shut against us, to keep the way of the tree of life, Ge 3:24.

Our Redeemer found them shut, but, having by his blood made atonement for sin and gained a title to enter into the holy place (Heb 9:12), as one having authority, he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for, as the forerunner, he has for us entered and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The keys not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, Who is this King of glory?

For angels keep the gates of the New Jerusalem, Re 21:12. When the first-begotten was brought into the upper world the angels were to worship him (Heb 1:6); and accordingly, they here ask with wonder, "Who is he?--this that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah? (Isa 63:1-3), for he appears in that world as a Lamb that had been slain."

It is answered that he is strong and mighty, mighty in battle, to save his people and subdue his and their enemies. 2. We

may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple; it sanctifies them. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks, Re 3:20.

It is required that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him, not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the gospel call and demand, that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, Blessed is he that cometh. That we may do this aright we are concerned to ask, Who is this King of glory?--to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all.

And the answer is ready: He is Jehovah, and will be Jehovah our righteousness, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance; for he is able to avenge the affront; he can force his way, and can break those in pieces with his iron rod that will not submit to his golden sceptre.

In singing this let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul.

8 Who *is* this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he *is* the King of glory.
Selah.

Psalms-25

A Prayer for Guidance, Pardon and Protection
A Psalm of David.

1 Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

Here we have David's professions of desire towards God and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions, not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself to answer those professions.

I. He professes his desire towards God: Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul, Ps 25:1. In the foregoing psalm (Ps 24:4) it was made the character of a good man that he has not lifted up his soul to vanity; and a call was given to the everlasting gates to lift up their heads for the King of glory to come in, Ps 25:1. To this character, to this call, David here answers, "Lord, I lift up my soul, not to vanity, but to thee." Note, In worshipping God we must lift up our souls to him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be eyed and the soul employed. Sursum corda--Up with you hearts, was anciently used as a call to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world and the things of it, by a fixed thought and active faith, we must set God before us, and let out our desires towards him as the fountain of our happiness.

II. He professes his dependence upon God and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence (Ps 25:2): O my God! I trust in thee. His conscience witnessed for him that he had no confidence in himself nor in any creature, and that he had no diffidence of God or of his power or promise. He pleases himself with this profession of faith in God. Having put his trust in God, he is easy, is well satisfied, and quiet from the fear of evil; and he pleads it with God whose honour it is to help those that honour him by trusting in him. What men put a confidence in is either their joy or their shame, according

as it proves. Now David here, under the direction of faith, prays earnestly,

1. That shame might not be his lot: "Let me not be ashamed of my confidence in thee; let me not be shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let me not be, in the issue, disappointed of what I depend upon thee for; but, Lord, keep what I have committed unto thee." Note, If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame; and, if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us, as they would if we should now sink under our fears, or should, in the issue, come short of our hopes.

2. That it might not be the lot of any that trusted in God. All the saints have obtained a like precious faith; and therefore, doubtless, it will be alike successful in the issue. Thus the communion of saints is kept up, even by their praying one for another. True saints will make supplication for all saints. It is certain that none who, by a believing attendance, wait on God, and, by a believing hope, wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. 3. That it might be the lot of the transgressors; Let those be ashamed that transgress without cause, or vainly, as the word is.

(1.) Upon no provocation. They revolt from God and their duty, from David and his government (so some), without any occasion given them, not being able to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or that in any thing he has wearied them. The weaker the temptation is by which men are drawn to sin the stronger the corruption is by which they are driven by it. Those are the worst transgressors that sin for sinning-sake.

(2.) To no purpose. They know their attempts against God are fruitless; they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of it.

III. He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, Ps 25:4,5. Once and again he here prays to God to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, but the most intelligent, the

most observant, both need and desire to be taught of God; from him we must be ever learning. Observe,

1. What he desired to learn: "Teach me, not fine words or fine notions, but thy ways, thy paths, thy truth, the ways in which thou walkest towards men, which are all mercy and truth (Ps 25:10), and the ways in which thou wouldst have me to walk towards thee." Those are best taught who understand their duty, and know the good things they should do, Ec 2:3. God's paths and his truth are the same; divine laws are all founded upon divine truths. The way of God's precepts is the way of truth, Ps 119:30. Christ is both the way and the truth, and therefore we must learn Christ.

2. What he desired of God, in order to this.

(1.) That he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty: "Show me thy way, and so teach me." In doubtful cases we should pray earnestly that God would make it plain to us what he would have us to do.

(2.) That he would incline his will to do it, and strengthen him in it: "Lead me, and so teach me." Not only as we lead one that is dimsighted, to keep him from missing his way, but as we lead one that is sick, and feeble, and faint, to help him forward in the way and to keep him from fainting and falling. We go no further in the way to heaven than God is pleased to lead us and to hold us up.

3. What he pleads,

(1.) His great expectation from God: Thou art the God of my salvation. Note, Those that choose salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end. If God save us, he will teach us and lead us. He that gives salvation will give instruction.

(2.) His constant attendance on God: On thee do I wait all the day. Whence should a servant expect direction what to do

but from his own master, on whom he waits all the day? If we sincerely desire to know our duty, with a resolution to do it, we need not question but that God will direct us in it.

IV. He appeals to God's infinite mercy, and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own (Ps 25:6): "Remember, O Lord! thy tender mercies, and, for the sake of those mercies, lead me, and teach me; for they have been ever of old."

1. "Thou always wast a merciful God; it is thy name, it is thy nature and property, to show mercy."

2. "Thy counsels and designs of mercy were from everlasting; the vessels of mercy were, before all worlds, ordained to glory."

3. "The instances of thy mercy to the church in general, and to me in particular, were early and ancient, and constant hitherto; they began of old, and never ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up, teach me now."

V. He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins (Ps 25:7): "O remember not the sins of my youth. Lord, remember thy mercies (Ps 25:6), which speak for me, and not my sins, which speak against me." Here is,

1. An implicit confession of sin; he specifies particularly the sins of his youth. Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after, because time does not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth and be in pain for the sinful pleasures of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them his transgressions; and the more holy, just, and good the law is, which sin is the transgression of, the more exceedingly sinful it ought to appear to us.

2. An express petition for mercy,

(1.) That he might be acquitted from guilt: "Remember not the sins of my youth; that is, remember them not against me, lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them." When God pardons sin he is said to remember it no more, which denotes a plenary remission; he forgives and forgets.

(2.) That he might be accepted in God's sight: "Remember thou me; think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour." We need desire no more to make us happy than for God to remember us with favour. His plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness-sake."

Note, It is God's goodness and not ours, his mercy and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin and all the good we stand in need of. This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

2 O my God, I trust in thee:
let me not be ashamed,
let not mine enemies triumph over me.
3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:
let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
4 Show me thy ways, O Lord;
teach me thy paths.
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:
for thou *art* the God of my salvation;
on thee do I wait all the day.
6 Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving-kindnesses;
for they *have been* ever of old.
7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:
according to thy mercy remember thou me
for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.
8 Good and upright *is* the Lord:
therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers. Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and

many we shall find in the latter; and here, in the middle of the psalm, he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks and is satisfied from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer, but they are a present answer to prayer.

Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard because the promise will be performed. But, in the midst of the promises, we fine one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon Ps 25:7.

It is that (Ps 25:11), Pardon my iniquity. But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural: "For thy name's sake pardon my iniquity, because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, for thy glory-sake, for thy promise-sake, for thy own sake," Isa 43:25.

But the latter is very surprising: "Pardon my iniquity, for it is great, and the greater it is the more will divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it." It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, 34:7. "It is great, and therefore I an undone, for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great; I see it to be so." The more we see of the heinousness of our sins the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin we must aggravate it.

Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

I. To whom these promises belong and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners; and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes (Ps 25:8), He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save

sinners, and, in order to that, to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance. These promises are sure to those who though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word,

1. To such as keep his covenant and his testimonies (Ps 25:10), such as take his precepts for their rule and his promises for their portion, such as, having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and, having given up themselves to be him a people, live up to that. Though, through the infirmity of the flesh, they sometimes break the command, yet by a sincere repentance when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant and do not break that.

2. To such as fear him (Ps 25:12 and again Ps 25:14), such as stand in awe of his majesty and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath and are afraid of offending him.

II. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are two things which ratify and confirm all the promises:--

1 The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes its. We may therefore depend upon God's promises; for good and upright is the Lord, and therefore he will be as good as his word. He is so kind that he cannot deceive us, so true that he cannot break his promise. Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it. He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

2 The agreeableness of all he says and does with the perfections of his nature (Ps 25:10): All the paths of the Lord (that is, all his promises and all his providences) are mercy and truth; they are, like himself, good and upright.

All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes and the truth of his promises; all he does comes from love, covenant-love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed and his word fulfilled. What a rich satisfaction may this be to good people, that, whatever afflictions they are exercised with, All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

III. What these promises are.

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers (Ps 25:4,5), Show me thy ways and lead me. We should fix our thoughts, and act our faith, most on those promises which suit our present case.

(1.) He will teach sinners in the way, because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching. When they see themselves sinners, and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He does, by his gospel, make this way known to all, and, by his Spirit, open the understanding and guide penitent sinners that enquire after it. The devil leads men blindfold to hell, but God enlightens men's eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so leads them to heaven.

(2.) The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach, that is, those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the divine guidance. Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. These he will guide in judgment, that is, by the rule of the written word; he will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty, so that they may keep conscience void of offence; and he will do it judiciously (so some), that is, he will suit his conduct to their case; he will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good

people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way.

(3.) Him that feareth the Lord he will teach in the way that he shall choose, either in the way that God shall choose or that the good man shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chooses the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy (Ps 25:13): His soul shall dwell at ease, shall lodge in goodness, marg. Those that devote themselves to the fear of God, and give themselves to be taught of God, will be easy, if it be not their own fault. The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and, much more, that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him, and repose in him as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy, but there is enough in the covenant of grace to counterbalance them all and to make us easy.

3. That he will give to them and theirs as much of this world as is good for them: His seed shall inherit the earth. Next to our care concerning our souls is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. Those that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it and the comfort of it, and their children shall fare the better for their prayers when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself (Ps 25:14): The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him. They understand his word; for, if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, Joh 7:17.

Those that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know

the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them, better than others. Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do? Ge 18:17. He call them not servants, but friends, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. This honour have all his saints.

9 The meek will he guide in judgment:
and the meek will he teach his way.
10 All the paths of the Lord *are* mercy and truth
unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
11 For thy name's sake, O Lord,
pardon mine iniquity; for it *is* great.
12 What man *is* he that feareth the Lord?
Him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.
13 His soul shall dwell at ease;
and his seed shall inherit the earth.
14 The secret of the Lord *is* with them that fear him;
and he will show them his covenant.
15 Mine eyes *are* ever toward the Lord;
for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

David, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm, as he began, with professions of dependence upon God and desire towards him.

I. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in. His feet were in the net, held fast and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, Ps 25:15. He was desolate and afflicted, Ps 25:16. It is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate; their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone and keep silence, La 3:28. David calls himself desolate and solitary because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, the troubles of his heart were enlarged (Ps 25:17), he grew more and more melancholy and troubled in mind.

Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: this it was that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward troubles lie heavily upon him. He was in affliction and pain, Ps 25:18. His enemies that persecuted him were many and malicious (they hated him), and very barbarous; it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, Ps 25:19. Such were Christ's enemies and the persecutors of his church.

II. He expresses the dependence he had upon God in these distresses (Ps 25:15): My eyes are ever towards the Lord. Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes, and they had their eyes ever towards their idols, Isa 17:7,8. But it is an eye of faith that we must have towards God, who is a Spirit, Zec 9:1. Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us: in all our ways we must acknowledge him and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation.

David had the comfort of this in his affliction; for, because his eyes were ever towards the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net, that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart (so some), from the designs of his enemies against him, so others. Those that have their eye ever towards God shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God (Ps 25:20) --Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee; and of expectation from him--I wait on thee, Ps 25:21. It is good thus to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

III. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour,

1. For himself.

(1.) See how he begs,

[1.] For the remission of sin (Ps 25:18): Forgive all my sins. Those were his heaviest burdens, and which brought upon him all other burdens. He had begged (Ps 25:7) for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and (Ps 25:11) for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which some think, was his sin in the matter of Uriah. But her he prays, Lord, forgive all, take away all iniquity. It is observable that, as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it:

"Look upon my affliction and my pain, and do with it as thou pleasest." But, as to his sin, he asks for no less than a full pardon: Forgive all my sins. When at any time we are in trouble we should be more concerned about our sins, to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions, to get them removed. Yet he prays,

[2.] For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawings from him and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sins; and therefore he prays (Ps 25:16), Turn thou unto me. And, if God turn to us, no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and, in reference to that, he prays, "O bring thou me out of my distresses. I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one or make one." His enemies were spiteful; and in reference to that, he prays, "O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands."

(2.) Four things he mentions by way of plea to enforce these petitions, and refers himself and them to God's consideration:--

[1.] He pleads God's mercy: Have mercy upon me. Men of the greatest merits would be undone if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies.

[2.] He pleads his own misery, the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart, all which made him the proper object of divine mercy.

[3.] He pleads the iniquity of his enemies: "Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands."

[4.] He pleads his own integrity, Ps 25:12. Though he had owned himself guilty before God, and had confessed his sins against him, yet, as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience that he had done them no wrong, which was his comfort when they hated him with cruel hatred; and he prays that this might preserve him, This intimates that he did not expect to be safe any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness, and that, while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be. These will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We should therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God (Ps 25:22): Redeem Israel, O God! out of all his troubles. David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel. Why should any one member fare better than the whole body? David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for, when we have ever so much business of our own at the throne of grace, we must still remember to pray for the public.

Good men have little comfort in their own safety while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy that God would, at length, give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy of the sending of the Messiah in due time to redeem Israel from his iniquities (Ps 130:8) and so to redeem them from their troubles. It refers also to the happiness of the future state. In heaven, and in heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;
for I *am* desolate and afflicted.

17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:
O bring thou me out of my distresses.
18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain;
and forgive all my sins.
19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many;
and they hate me with cruel hatred.
20 O keep my soul, and deliver me:
let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.
21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;
for I wait on thee.
22 Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all his troubles.

Psalms-26

A Protestation of Integrity
A Psalm of David.

1 Judge me, O Lord;
for I have walked in mine integrity:
I have trusted also in the Lord;
therefore I shall not slide.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who, to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very bad man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanors, dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny.

Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David does in this case.

I. He appeals to God's righteous sentence (Ps 26:1): "Judge me, O God! be thou Judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner; bring me off with honour, and put those to shame that falsely accuse me."

Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary, so that in a controversy with him he could appeal to no other then to God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, Lord, enter not into judgment with me (Ps 143:2), remember not my transgressions (Ps 25:7), in which he appeals to God's mercy; but, as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice and begs of him to judge for him, as Ps 43:1.

Or thus: he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin; he owns his iniquity is great and he is undone if God, in his infinite mercy, do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope that, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused that there is a righteous God, who, sooner or later, will clear up their innocency, and a comfort to all who are sincere in religion that God himself is a witness to their sincerity.

II. He submits to his unerring search (Ps 26:2): Examine me, O Lord! and prove me, as gold is proved, whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, as sees through every disguise. David prays, Lord, examine me, which intimates that he was well pleased that God did know him and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God and his loyalty to his prince (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that whoever would might look into his heart.

III. He solemnly protests his sincerity (Ps 26:1): "I have walked in my integrity; my conversation had agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another." It is vain to boast of our integrity unless we can make it out that by the grace of God we have walked in our

integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity.

He produces here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord as his righteous Judge, who would patronise and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he should come off with reputation (therefore I shall not slide), and that those should not prevail who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, Ps 62:4. Those that are sincere in religion may trust in God that they shall not slide, that is, that they shall not apostasize from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, Ps 26:3.

(1.) He aimed at God's good favour as his end and chief good: Thy loving-kindness is before my eyes. This will be a good evidence of our sincerity, if what we do in religion we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings and the best of friends and benefactors, and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had the experience of all our days.

If we set God's loving-kindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being followers of him that is good, in his goodness (1Pe 3:13), --if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love,--this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it.

(2.) He governed himself by the word of God as his rule: "I have walked in thy truth, that is, according to thy law, for thy law is truth."

Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's loving-kindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming

himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and loving-kindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, Ps 26:4,5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those sons of Belial that despised him, 1Sa 10:27.

He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no, not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those who he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies, or false friends, to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company is both a good evidence of our integrity and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here,

(1.) That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take: "I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them."

Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidence of our integrity when they are accompanied with resolutions, in God's strength, to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto.

(2.) That David shunned the company, not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity as against that of downright wickedness.

(3.) That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any, and as much to be shunned, in prudence as well as piety. Evil-doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares, but they dissemble. When they speak fair, believe them not.

(4.) Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not go in with them, he would not choose such for his companions nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them. He might fall in with them, but he would not, by appointment and assignation, go in with them.

Or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them, he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary: he would not concur with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did, as those that sit in the seat of the scornful, Ps 1:1. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief, nor sit in judgment with them to condemn the generation of the righteous.

(5.) We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here says, not only "I have shunned it," but, "I have hated it," Ps 139:21.

(6.) The congregation of evil-doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. I have hated ecclesiam malignantium--the church of the malignant; so the vulgar Latin reads its. As good men, in concert, make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men, in combination, make one another worse, and do so much the more mischief.

In all this David was a type of Christ, who, though he received sinners and ate with them, to instruct them and do them good, yet, otherwise, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers. He was also an example to Christians,

when they join themselves to Christ, to save themselves from this untoward generation, Ac 2:40.

2 Examine me, O Lord, and prove me;
try my reins and my heart.
3 For thy loving-kindness *is* before mine eyes:
and I have walked in thy truth.
4 I have not sat with vain persons,
neither will I go in with dissemblers.
5 I have hated the congregation of evildoers;
and will not sit with the wicked.
6 I will wash mine hands in innocency:
so will I compass thine altar, O Lord:

In these verses,

I. David mentions, as further evidence of his integrity, the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances, as the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican; but it is a good sign of sincerity if we attend upon them as David here tells us he did, Ps 26:6-8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances: I will wash my hands in innocency. He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. "I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome." This is like that (1Co 11:28), Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat, so prepared. This denotes,

(1.) Habitual preparation: "I will wash my hands in innocency; I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it and forbid my drawing nigh to God." See Ps 24:3,4.

(2.) Actual preparation. It alludes to the ceremony of the priests' washing when they went in to minister, Ex 30:20,21.

Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparation for solemn ordinances we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity or hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that (which was signified by washing the hands, De 21:6), but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity by renewing our repentance, and making fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences for the purifying and pacifying of them.

He that is washed (that is, in a justified state) has need thus to wash his feet (Joh 13:10), to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency; he that is penitent is pene innocens--almost innocent; and he that is pardoned is so far innocent that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them: I will compass thy altar, alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar, and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, denoting a diligent regard to what was done and a dutiful attendance in the service. "I will compass it; I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them." David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars and could find time for that attendance.

Note,

(1.) All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of and live upon, Heb 13:10.

(2.) It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed and to see ourselves among those that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the place of worship as the place where God's honor dwelt (Ps 26:8), and therefore made it his business there to honour God and to give him the glory due to his name, to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works. God's gracious works, which call for thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration.

We ought to publish them, and tell of them, for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible, to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this he appeals to God: "Lord, thou knowest how dearly I have loved the habitation of thy house (Ps 26:8), the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people and receive their homage, the place where thy honour dwells."

David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors, that laid him under that restraint, did themselves upbraid him with as his crime. See 1Sa 20:27. "But, Lord," says he, "though I cannot come to the habitation of thy house, I love it; my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there."

Note, All that truly love God truly love the ordinances of God, and therefore love them because in them he manifests his honour and they have an opportunity of honoring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him; he loved the habitation of his house, his church among men, loved it and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it.

Those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching him, find it to be a constant pleasure, a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

II. David, having given proofs of his integrity, earnestly prays, with a humble confidence towards God (such as those have whose hearts condemn them not), that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked (Ps 26:9,10). Gather not my soul with sinners, Here,

1. David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. "They are bloody men, that thirst after blood and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands. Though they get by their wickedness (for their right hand is full of bribes which they have taken to pervert justice), yet that will make their case never the better; for what is a man profited if he gain the world and lose his soul?"

2. He dread having his lot with them. He never loved them, nor associated with them, in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered, to return to God that gave them and will call for them again. See Job 34:14. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners, whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are (1Sa 25:29), or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, Mt 13:30.

Death gathers us to our people, to those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot, to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous; David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides were of that mind,

which if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

III. David, with a holy humble confidence, commits himself to the grace of God, Ps 26:11,12.

1. He promises that by the grace of God he would persevere in his duty: "As for me, whatever others do, I will walk in my integrity." Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us that we have walked in our integrity is comfortable to us this should confirm our resolutions to continue therein.

2. He prays for the divine grace both to enable him to do so and to give him the comfort of it: "Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies, and be merciful to me, living and dying." Be we ever so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them.

3. He pleases himself with his steadiness: "My foot stands in an even place, where I shall not stumble and whence I shall not fall." This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world, and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world.

4. He promises himself that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord, that he should be furnished with matter for praise, that he should have a heart for praises, and that, though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil-doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous and join with them in praising God; and it is pleasant doing that in good company; the more the better; it is the more like heaven.

7 that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
and tell of all thy wondrous works.
8 Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house,
and the place where thine honor dwelleth.
9 Gather not my soul with sinners,
nor my life with bloody men:
10 in whose hands *is* mischief,
and their right hand is full of bribes.
11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity:
redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
12 My foot standeth in an even place:
in the congregations will I bless the Lord.

Psalms-27

The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation
A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord *is* my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The Lord *is* the strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

We may observe here,

I. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him.

1. The Lord is my light. David's subjects called him the light of Israel, 2Sa 21:17. And he was indeed a burning and a shining light: but he owns that he shone, as the moon does, with a borrows light; what light God darted upon him reflected upon them: The Lord is my light. God is a light to his people, to show them the way when they are in doubt, to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever.

2. "He is my salvation, in whom I am safe and by whom I shall be saved."

3. "He is the strength of my life, not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail weak life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away." God, who is a believer's light, is the strength of his life, not only by whom, but in whom, he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

II. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies; no fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid? If Omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed, Ps 27:2.

His enemies came upon him, to eat up his flesh, aiming at no less and assured of that, but they fell; not, "He smote them and they fell," but, "They stumbled and fell;" they were so confounded and weakened that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus those that came to take Christ with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, Joh 18:6.

The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all. And therefore, these having fallen, he is fearless of the rest: "Though they be numerous, a host of them,--though they be daring and their attempts threatening,--though they encamp against me, an army against one man,--though they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear." Hosts cannot hurt us if the Lord of hosts protect us. Nay, in this assurance that God is for me "I will be confident." Two things he will be confident of:--

1. That he shall be safe. "If God is my salvation, in the time of trouble he shall hide me; he shall set me out of danger and above the fear of it." God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress (as he did Jer 36:26), but he will himself be their hiding-place, Ps 32:7. His providence will, it may

be, keep them safe; at least his grace will make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run, Pr 18:10. "He shall hide me, not in the strongholds of En-gedi (1Sa 23:29), but in the secret of his tabernacle."

The gracious presence of God, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people--these are the secret of his tabernacle, and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them; it is a rock that is higher than we, Ps 61:2.

2. That he shall be victorious (Ps 27:6): "Now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies, not only so as that they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them." David here, by faith in the promise of God, triumphs before the victory, and is as sure, not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

III. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, Ps 27:4. It greatly encouraged his confidence in God that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own.

Or it may be taken thus: He desired to dwell in the house of the Lord that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he does not say, "One thing have I desired, in order to my safety, that I may have my army augmented to such a number," or that I may be master of such a city or such a

castle, but "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, and then I am well." Observe,

1. What it is he desires--to dwell in the house of the Lord. In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. Disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging, among them. Or, rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required.

He longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged, not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for a constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health, not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might go up to the house of the Lord, Isa 38:22.

Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? Not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night, nor to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abides not in the house for ever, but to dwell there all the days of their life; for there the Son abides ever. Do we hope that praising God will be the blessedness of our eternity? Surely them we ought to make it the business of our time.

2. How earnestly he covets this: "This is the one thing I have desired of the Lord and which I will seek after." If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift and a token of his favour. And, having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it; he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, Those that truly desire communion with

God will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, Pr 18:1.

3. What he had in his eye in it. He would dwell in God's house, not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there, in the feasts upon the sacrifices, nor for the music and good singing that were there, but to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in his temple. He desired to attend in God's courts,

(1.) That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord, the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the divine being and perfections; his holiness is his beauty (Ps 110:3), his goodness is his beauty, Zec 9:17. The harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable. When with fixedness of thought, and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellencies, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us, this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets, and it is to be had in his ordinances, for there he manifests himself.

(2.) That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would enquire in God's temple. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? For the sake of these two things he desired that one thing, to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life; for blessed are those that do so; they will be still praising him (Ps 84:4), both in speaking to him and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word Christ calls the one thing needful, and the good part.

4. What advantage he promised himself by it. Could he but have a place in God's house,

(1.) There he should be quiet and easy: there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles

would not reach him, for he should be set on high, Ps 27:5. Joash, one of David's seed, was hidden in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, 2Ki 11:3. The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, Ne 6:10. The safety of believers however is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple and their comfort in communion with him.

(2.) There he should be pleasant and cheerful: there he would offer sacrifices of joy, Ps 27:6. For God's work is its own wages. There he would sing, yea, he would sing praises to the Lord. Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy ought to be the matter of our praise; and, when we attend upon God in holy ordinances, we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God that we should sing in his ways; and, whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises. Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph, 2Co 2:14.

2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes,
came upon me to eat up my flesh,
they stumbled and fell.
3 Though a host should encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear:
though war should rise against me,
in this *will* I *be* confident.
4 One *thing* have I desired of the Lord,
that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.
5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
6 And now shall mine head be lifted up
above mine enemies round about me:
therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.

7 Hear, O Lord, *when* I cry with my voice:
have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

David in these verses expresses,

I. His desire towards God, in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord, yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer.

1. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience: "Hear, O Lord, when I cry, not only with my heart, but, as one in earnest, with my voice too." He bespeaks also an answer of peace, which he expects, not from his own merit, but God's goodness: Have mercy upon me, and answer me, Ps 27:7. If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

2. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty, Ps 27:8. It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance unless he hold forth to us the golden sceptre. David therefore going to pray fastens, in his thoughts, upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and reverently touches, as it were, the top of the golden sceptre which was thereby held out to him.

My heart said unto thee (so it begins in the original) or of thee, Seek you my face; he first revolved that, and preached that over again to himself (and that is the best preaching: it is hearing twice what God speaks once)--Thou saidst (so it may be supplied), Seek you my face; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon, in this pious resolution, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Observe here,

(1.) The true nature of religious worship; it is seeking the face of God. This it is in God's precept: Seek you my face; he would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good; and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire: "Thy face, Lord, will I seek, and nothing less will I take up with." The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other

living things (Ps 145:16), but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, Ps 4:6,7.

(2.) The kind of invitation of a gracious God to this duty: Thou saidst, Seek you my face; it is not only permission, but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, Seek you me in vain. God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him and in our converse with him. He calls us, by the whispers of his Spirit to and with our spirits, to seek his face; he calls us by his word, by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities God is, in love to us, calling us in him to seek our own mercies.

(3.) The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation. The call is immediately returned: My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. The call was general; "Seek you my face;" but, like David, we must apply it to ourselves, "I will seek it." The word does us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, Seek you my face; the answer is express, Thy face, Lord, will I seek; like that (Jer 3:22), Behold, we come unto thee. A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

3. He is very particular in his requests.

(1.) For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that (Ps 27:9): "Thy face, Lord, will I seek, in obedience to thy command; therefore hide not thy face from me; let me never want the reviving sense of the favour; love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; put not thy servant away in anger." He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that, however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell but that?

(2.) For the continuance of his presence with him: "Thou hast been my help formerly, and thou are the God of my salvation; and therefore whither shall I go but to thee? O leave me not, neither forsake me; withdraw not the operations of they power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good-will to me, for then I am comfortless."

(3.) For the benefit of divine guidance (Ps 27:11): "Teach me thy way, O Lord! give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me and make them plain to me; and give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk surely." It is not policy, but plainness (that is, downright honesty) that will direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his enemies, or (as the margin reads it) his observers. His enemies watched for his halting, that they may find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, 1Sa 18:9. This quickened him to pray, "Lord, lead me in a plain path, that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge."

(4.) For the benefit of a divine protection (Ps 27:12): "Deliver me not over to the will of my enemies. Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less, and in such a way as that I have no fence against them, but thy power over their consciences; for false witnesses have risen up against me, that aim further than to take away my reputation or estate, for they breathe out cruelty; it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after." Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

II. He expresses his dependence upon God,

1. That he would help and succour him when all other helps and succours failed him (Ps 27:10): "When my father and my

mother forsake me, the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief and with most reason, when they die, or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in time of need, or are unkind to me or unmindful of me, and will not help me, when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know the Lord will take me up, as a poor wandering sheep is taken up, and saved from perishing." His time to help those that trust in him is when all other helpers fail, when it is most for his honour and their comfort.

With him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the divine Providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them in a way that one would not have expected. God is a surer and better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, Ps 27:13. He believed he should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living; and, if he had not done so, he would have fainted under his afflictions. Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious, their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail. But then faith is a sovereign cordial; it keeps them from desponding under their burden and from despairing of relief, keeps them hoping, and praying, and waiting, and keeps up in them good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves.

But what was it the belief of which kept David from fainting?--that he should see the goodness of the Lord, which now seemed at a distance. Those that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see in the land of the living, that is,

(1.) In this world, that he should outlive his troubles and not perish under them. It is his comfort, not so much that he shall see the land of the living as that he shall see the goodness of

God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature-comforts to a gracious soul.

(2.) In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem where the lively oracles were. In comparison with the heathen, that were dead in sin, the land of Israel might fitly be called the land of the living; there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness; see 2Sa 15:25,26. Or,

(3.), In heaven. It is that alone that may truly be called the land of the living, where there is no more death. This earth is the land of the dying. There is nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the foresights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures, to keep us from fainting under all the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the mean time he should be strengthened to bear up under his burdens (Ps 27:14); whether he says it to himself, or to his friends, it comes all to one; this is that which encourages him: He shall strengthen thy heart, shall sustain thy spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength,

(1.) Keep close to God and to your duty. Wait on the Lord by faith, and prayer, and a humble resignation to his will; wait, I say, on the Lord; whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God.

(2.) Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties: Be of good courage; let your hearts be fixed, trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. Those that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

8 *When thou saidst,* Seek ye my face;
my heart said unto thee,
Thy face, Lord, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face *far* from me;
put not thy servant away in anger:
thou hast been my help;

leave me not, neither forsake me,
O God of my salvation.
10 When my father and my mother forsake me,
then the Lord will take me up.
11 Teach me thy way, O Lord,
and lead me in a plain path,
because of mine enemies.
12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies:
for false witnesses are risen up against me,
and such as breathe out cruelty.
13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed
to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.
14 Wait on the Lord:
be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:
wait, I say, on the Lord.

Psalms-28

A Prayer for Help and Praise for Its Answer
A Psalm of David.

1 Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock;
be not silent to me:
lest, *if* thou be silent to me,
I become like them that go down into the pit.

In these verses David is very earnest in prayer.

I. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him, now that, in his distress, he called upon him, Ps 28:1,2. Observe his faith in prayer: O Lord, my rock, denoting his belief of God's power (he is a rock) and his dependence upon that power--"He is my rock, on whom I build my hope." Observe his fervency in prayer: "To thee will I cry, as one in earnest, being ready to sink, unless thou come in with seasonable succour." And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer:

"Be not silent to me, as one angry at my prayers, Ps 80:4. Lord, speak to me, answer me with good words and comfortable words (Zec 1:13); though the thing I pray for has not been given me, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear them. Lord, speak for me, in answer to my prayers, plead my cause, command deliverances for me, and thus hear and answer the voice of my supplications." Two things he pleads:--

1 The sad despair he should be in if God slighted him: "If thou be silent to me, and I have not the tokens of thy favour, I am like those that go down into the pit (that is, I am a dead man, lost and undone); if God be not my friend, appear not to me and appear not for me, my hope and my help will have perished." Nothing can be so cutting, so killing, to a gracious soul, as the want of God's favour and the sense of his displeasure. I shall be like those that go down to hell (so some understand it); for what is the misery of the damned but this, that God is ever silent to them and deaf to their cry? Those are in some measure qualified for God's favour, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death.

2 The good hopes he had that God would favour him: I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle, which denotes, not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation, thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place within the veil is here, as elsewhere, called the oracle; there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to dwell between the cherubim, and thence he spoke to his people, Nu 7:89. That was a type of Christ, and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us.

It was also a figure of heaven (Heb 9:24); and from God as our Father in heaven we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The scriptures are called the oracles of God, and to them we must have an eye in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God hath caused and encouraged us to hope.

II. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before (Ps 26:9, "Gather not my soul with sinners): Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, draw me not away from that with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity," Ps 28:3.

1. "Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me. They flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me; but they have a design upon me, for mischief is in their heart; they aim to disturb me, nay, to destroy me. Lord, suffer me not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success, against me, except it be given them from above."

2. "Save me from being infected with their sins and from doing as they do. Let me not be drawn away by their fallacious arguments, or their allurements, from the holy oracle (where I desire to dwell all the days of my life), to practise any wicked works;" see Ps 114:4. "Lord, never leave me to myself, to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety as they use to my ruin. Let no event of Providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either into the imitation or into the interest of wicked people." Good men dread the way of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity.

3. "Save me from being involved in their doom; let me not be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am not one of those that speak peace while war is in their hearts." Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, Re 18:4.

III. He imprecates the just judgments of God upon the workers of iniquity (Ps 28:4): Give them according to their deeds. This is not the language of passion or revenge, nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But,

1. Thus he would show how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had begged not to be drawn away with them, because he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable then to be dealt with according to their deeds.

2. Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in the governing world. "Lord, they think all well that they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices. Lord, give them after the work of their hands, and so undeceive those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do because it goes unpunished," Ps 94:1,2.

3. This prayer is a prophecy that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what has been done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers:

"They speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, give them according to their deeds, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let those be treacherously dealt with who have thus dealt treacherously;" see Isa 33:1,Re 18:6,Re 13:10.

Observe, He foretels that God will reward them, not only according to their deed, but according to the wickedness of their endeavours; for sinners shall be reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And, if God go by this rule in dealing with the wicked, surely he will do so in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them, not only for the good they have done, but for the good they have endeavoured to do, though they could not accomplish it.

IV. He foretels their destruction for their contempt of God and his hand (Ps 28:5): "Because they regard not the works

of the Lord and the operations of his hands, by which he manifests himself and speaks to the children of men, he will destroy them in this world and in the other, and not build them up."

Note, A stupid regardlessness of the works of God is the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his handiworks, which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without him, nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of his which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men? Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? See Isa 5:12.

In singing this we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity, and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee,
when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.
3 Draw me not away with the wicked,
and with the workers of iniquity,
which speak peace to their neighbors,
but mischief *is* in their hearts.
4 Give them according to their deeds,
and according to the wickedness of their endeavors:
give them after the work of their hands;
render to them their desert.
5 Because they regard not the works of the Lord,
nor the operation of his hands,
he shall destroy them, and not build them up.
6 Blessed *be* the Lord,
because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

In these verses,

I. David gives God thanks for the audience of his prayers as affectionately as a few verses before he had begged it: Blessed be the Lord, Ps 28:6. How soon are the saints' sorrows turned into songs and their prayers into praises! It was in faith that David prayed (Ps 28:2), Hear the voice of my supplications; and by the same faith he gives thanks (Ps 28:6) that God has heard the voice of his supplications. Note,

1. Those that pray in faith may rejoice in hope. "He hath heard me (graciously accepted me) and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already."

2. What we win by prayer we must wear by praise. Has God heard our supplications? Let us then bless his name.

II. He encourages himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him. Having given to God the glory of his grace (Ps 28:6), he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, Ps 28:7. This is the method of attaining peace: let us begin with praise that is attainable. Let us first bless God and then bless ourselves. Observe,

1. His dependence upon God: "The Lord is my strength, to support me, and carry me on, through all my services and sufferings. He is my shield, to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so."

2. His experience of the benefits of that dependence: "My heart trusted in him, and in his power and promise; and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been often helped; not only God has given to me, in his due time, the help I trusted to him for, but my very trusting in him has helped me, in the mean time, and kept me from fainting." Ps 27:13. The very actings of faith are present aids to a dropping spirit, and often help it at a dead lift. 3. His improvement of this experience.

(1.) He had the pleasure of it: Therefore my heart greatly rejoices. The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while, in the laughter of the fool, the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. The heart that truly believes shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect.

(2.) God shall have the praise of it: when my heart greatly rejoices, with my song will I praise him. This must we express our gratitude; it is the least we can do; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

III. He pleases himself with the interest which all good people, through Christ, have in God (Ps 28:8): "The Lord is their strength; not mine only, but the strength of every believer." Note, The saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for, as we have not the less benefit from the light of the sun, so neither from the light of Gods' countenance, for others' sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours, Christ their Lord and ours, 1Co 1:2. He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because he is the saving strength of his anointed, that is,

1. Of David in the type. God, in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed because it was the unction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the divine protection.

2. Of Christ, his anointed, his Messiah, in the anti-type. God was his saving strength, qualified him for his undertaking and carried him through it; see Ps 89:21,Isa 49:5,50:7,9. And so he becomes their strength, the strength of all the saints; he strengthened him that is the church's head, and from him diffuses strength to all the members, has commanded his strength, and so strengthens what he has wrought for us; Ps 68:28,80,17,18.

IV. He concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer for the church of God, Ps 28:9. He prays for Israel, not as his people ("save my people, and bless my inheritance"), though they were so, but, "thine." God's interest in them lay nearer his heart than his own. We are thy people is a good plea, Isa 64:9,Isa 63:19. I am thine, save me. God's people are his inheritance, dear to him, and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world he has from them. The Lord's portion is his people. That which he begs of God for them is,

1. That he would save them from their enemies and the dangers they were exposed to.

2. That he would bless them with all good, flowing from his favour, in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them.

3. That he would feed them, bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul. Rule them; so the margin. "Direct their counsels and actions aright, and overrule their affairs for good. Feed them, and rule them; sets pastors, set rulers, over them, that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding."

4. That he would lift them up for ever, lift them up out of their troubles and distresses, and do this, not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. "Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven." There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, who are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed, by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

7 The Lord *is* my strength and my shield;
my heart trusted in him, and I am helped:
therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth;
and with my song will I praise him.
8 The Lord *is* their strength,
and he *is* the saving strength of his anointed.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance:
feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

Psalms-29

The Voice of the Lord in the Storm
A Psalm of David.

1 Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty,
give unto the Lord glory and strength.

In this psalm we have,

I. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God. Every clap of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself and other princes to give glory to the great God. Observe,

1. Who they are that are called to this duty: "O you mighty (Ps 29:1), you sons of the mighty, who have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, who have royal blood running in your veins!" It is much for the honour of the great God that the men of this world should pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because, high as they are, he is infinitely above them, and therefore they must bow to him, but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgment they owe to him for it.

2. How often this call is repeated; Give unto the Lord, and again, and a third time, Give unto the Lord. This intimates that the mighty men are backward to this duty and are with difficulty persuaded to it, but that it is of great consequence to the interests of God's kingdom among men that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourishes when the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it, Re 21:24.

3. What they are called to do--to give unto the Lord, not as if he needed any thing, or could be benefited by any gifts of ours, nor as if we had any thing to give him that is not his

own already (Who hath first given to him?), but the recognition of his glory, and of his dominion over us, he is pleased to interpret as a gift to him:

"Give unto the Lord your own selves, in the first place, and then your services. Give unto the Lord glory and strength; acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty and irresistible power; and whatever glory or strength he has by his providence entrusted you with offer it to him, to be used for his honour, in his service. Give him your crowns; let them be laid at his feet; give him your sceptres, your swords, your keys, put all into his hand, that you, in the use of them, may be to him for a name and a praise."

Princes value themselves by their glory and strength; these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they. This demand of homage from the mighty must be looked upon as directed either to the grandees of David's own kingdom, the peers of the realm, the princes of the tribes (and it is to excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss), or to the neighbouring kings whom he by his sword had made tributaries to Israel and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty is said to all: Worship God; it is the sum and substance of the everlasting gospel, Re 14:6,7. Now we have here,

(1.) The nature of religious worship; it is giving to the Lord the glory due to his name, Ps 29:2. God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name. It is impossible that we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done out best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject; but when we answer that revelation which he has made of himself, with suitable affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would, in hearing and

praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God.

(2.) The rule of the performance of religious exercises; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, which denotes,

[1.] The object of our worship; the glorious majesty of God is called the beauty of holiness, 2Ch 20:21. In the worship of God we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him, not only as infinitely awful and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness; this the angels fasten upon in their praises, Re 4:8. Or,

[2.] The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the beauty of holiness, Ps 48:1,2,Jer 17:12. The beauty of the sanctuary was the exact agreement of the worship there performed with the divine appointment--the pattern in the mount. Now, under the gospel, solemn assemblies of Christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or,

[3.] The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances, devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and it is that which puts an acceptable beauty upon all the acts of worship.

II. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God if we consider,

1. His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name Jehovah--I am that I am, which is repeated here no fewer than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I do not recollect that there is the like in all the book of psalms. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name and give him the glory due to it.

2. His sovereignty over all things. Let those that rule over men know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here sets forth God's dominion,

(1.) In the kingdom of nature. In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God's glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him; in the thunder, and lightning, and rain, we may see,

[1.] His glory. It is the God of glory that thunders (thunders is the noise of his voice, Job 37:2), and it declares him a God of glory, so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion, the lightning; to the hearing and to the sight nothing is more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would have such proofs of his glory to the minds of men as should leave the most stupid inexcusable. Some observe that there were then some particular reasons why thunder should be called the voice of the Lord, not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks aloud, and reaches far, but because God often spoke in thunder, particularly at Mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel.

To speak it the voice of the God of glory, it is here said to be upon the water, upon many waters (Ps 29:3); it reaches over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament; it rattles among the thick clouds, the waters above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder (his ear being made to tingle with it) will own that the voice of the Lord is full of majesty (Ps 29:4), enough to make the highest humble (for none can thunder with a voice like him) and the proudest tremble--for, if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time we hear it thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honourable thoughts of God, in the holy adorings and admirings of whom the power of godliness does so much consist. O Lord our God! thou art very great.

[2.] His power (Ps 29:4): The voice of the Lord is powerful, as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders. Those that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be resolved into the omnipotence of the God of nature.

First, Trees have been rent and split by thunderbolts, Ps 29:5,6. The voice of the Lord, in the thunder, often broke the cedars, even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself on which the trees grew, and made Lebanon and Sirion to dance; the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken (Ps 29:8), the trees by winds, the ground by earthquakes, and both by thunders, of which I incline rather to understand it. The learned Dr. Hammond understands it of the consternations and conquest of neighbouring kingdoms that warred with Israel and opposed David, as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites that bordered on Mount Hermon, and the Moabites and Ammonites that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh.

Secondly. Fires have been kindled by lightnings and houses and churches thereby consumed; hence we read of hot thunderbolts (Ps 78:48); accordingly the voice of the Lord, in the thunder, is here said to divide the flames of fire (Ps 29:7), that is, to scatter them upon the earth, as God sees fit to direct them and do execution by them.

Thirdly, The terror of thunder makes the hinds to calve sooner, and some think more easily, than otherwise they would. The hind is a timourous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder; and no marvel, when sometimes proud and stout men have been made to tremble at it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundered. Horace, the poet, owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like this of David, lib. 1, ode 34. The

thunder is said here to discover the forest, that is, it so terrifies the wild beasts of the forest that they quit the dens and thickets in which they hid themselves are so are discovered.

Or it throws down the trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders let us think of this psalm; and, whenever we sing this psalm, let us think of the dreadful thunder-claps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God's words and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his besides this dreadful one, by which God now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his gospel, the terror of which shall not make us afraid.

(2.) In the kingdom of providence, Ps 29:10. God is to be praised as the governor of the world of mankind. He sits upon the flood; he sits King for ever. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as King in the throne which he has prepared in the heavens (Ps 103:19), where he takes cognizance of, and gives orders about, all the affairs of the children of men, and does all according to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe,

[1.] The power of his kingdom: He sits upon the flood. As he has founded the earth, so he has founded his own throne, upon the floods, Ps 24:2 The ebbings and flowings of this lower world, and the agitations and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose nor to the counsels of the Eternal Mind. The opposition of his enemies is compared to the flood (Ps 93:3,4); but the Lord sits upon it; he crushes it, conquers it, and completes his own purposes in despite of all the devices that are in men's hearts.

The word here translated the flood is never used but concerning Noah's flood; and therefore some think it is that which is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood as a Judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly that was swept away by it. And he still sits upon

the flood, restraining the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise never to destroy the earth any more by a flood, Ge 9:11,Isa 54:9.

[2.] The perpetuity of his kingdom; He sits King for ever; no period can, or shall, be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

(3.) In the kingdom of grace. Here his glory shines most brightly,

[1.] In the adorations he receives from the subjects of that kingdom (Ps 29:9). In his temple, where people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind and attend him with their praises, every one speaks of his glory. In the world every man sees it, or at least may behold it afar off (Job 36:25); but it is only in the temple, in the church, that it is spoken of to his honour. All his works do praise him (that is, they minister matter for praise), but his saints only do bless him, and speak of his glory of his works, Ps 145:10.

[2.] In the favours he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, Ps 29:11.

First, He will qualify them for his service: He will give strength to his people, to fortify them against every evil work and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness.

Secondly, He will encourage them in his service: He will bless his people with peace. Peace is a blessing of inestimable value, which God designs for all his people. The work of righteousness is peace (great peace have those that love thy law); but much more the crown of righteousness:

the end of righteousness is peace; it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble the saints shall lift up their heads with joy.

2 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
3 The voice of the Lord *is* upon the waters:
the God of glory thundereth:
the Lord *is* upon many waters.
4 The voice of the Lord *is* powerful;
the voice of the Lord *is* full of majesty.
5 The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars;
yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf;
Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.
7 The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire.
8 The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness;
the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
9 The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve,
and discovereth the forests:
and in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.
10 The Lord sitteth upon the flood;
yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.
11 The Lord will give strength unto his people;
the Lord will bless his people with peace.

Psalms-30

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death
A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David.

1 I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me
up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and, though not expressly appointed, yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to dedicate it to God, De 20:5. David did so when his house was built, and he took possession of it (2Sa 5:11); for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service, as ordinary houses.

Note, The houses we dwell in should, at our first entrance upon them, be dedicated to God, as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves, our families, and all our family affairs, to God's guidance and care, must pray for his presence and blessing, must devote ourselves and all ours to his glory, and must resolve both that we put away iniquity far from our tabernacles and that we and our houses will serve the Lord both in the duties of family worship and in all instances of gospel obedience.

Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the re-dedication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion. In these verses,

I. David does himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him (Ps 30:1): "I will extol thee, O Lord! I will exalt thy name, will praise thee as one high and lifted up, I will do what I can to advance the interest of thy kingdom among men. I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up, not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the throne of Israel." He raiseth up the poor out of the dust. In consideration of the great things God has done to exalt us, both by his providence and by his grace, we are bound, in gratitude, to do all we can to extol his name, though the most we can do is but little. Three thing magnify David's deliverance:--

1. That it was the defeat of his enemies. They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they would have done (though it is a barbarous thing) if he had died of this sickness or perished in this distress: see Ps 41:11.

2. That it was an answer to his prayers (Ps 30:2): I cried unto thee. All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him; and giving way, in this manner, to our grief, will ease a burdened spirit. "I cried to thee, and thou hast not only heard me, but healed me, healed the distempered body, healed the

disturbed and disquieted mind, healed the disordered distracted affairs of the kingdom." This is what God glories in, I am the Lord that healeth thee (Ex 15:26), and we must give him the glory of it.

3. That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to go down into the pit, and yet rescued and kept alive, Ps 30:3. The more imminent our dangers have been, the more eminent our deliverances have been, the more comfortable are they to ourselves and the more illustrious proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

II. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God has bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his good-will to all his saints (Ps 30:4): Sing unto the Lord, O you saints of his! All that are truly saints he owns for his. There is a remnant of such in this world, and from them it is expected that they sing unto him; for they are created and sanctified, made and made saints, that they may be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him; why should not those on earth be doing the same work, as well as they can, in concert with them?

1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him; "Let them give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations." God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels, in their praises, fasten most upon, Isa 6:3,Re 4:8.

We ought to be much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness. It is a matter of joy to the saints that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. None of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, nor more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign that we are in some measure

partakers of his holiness if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it.

2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him.

(1.) We have found his frowns very short. Though we have deserved that they should be everlasting, and that he should be angry with us till he had consumed us, and should never be reconciled, yet his anger endureth but for a moment, Ps 30:5. When we offend him he is angry; but, as he is slow to anger and not soon provoked, so when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation his anger is soon turned away and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment; but he will gather them with everlasting kindness, Isa 54:7,8.

If weeping endureth for a night, and it be a wearisome night, yet as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time, to the people of God; for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter. Weeping has endured for a night, but the grief has been soon over and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues so long the saints' weeping continues; but, if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment, and when the light of God's countenance is restored the affliction is easily pronounced light and momentary.

(2.) We have found his smiles very sweet; In his favour is life, that is, all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul is as life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour; if we have that, we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

2 O Lord my God, I cried unto
thee, and thou hast healed me.
3 O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:

thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
4 Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his,
and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.
5 For his anger *endureth but* a moment;
in his favor *is* life:
weeping may endure for a
night, but joy *cometh* in the
morning.
6 And in my prosperity I
said, I shall never be
moved.

We have, in these verses, an account of three several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart towards God in each of those states--what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected; in the first of these we may see what we are too apt to be, and in the other two what we should be.

I. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure and over-confident of the continuance of it (Ps 30:6,7): "In my prosperity, when I was in health of body and God had given me rest from all my enemies, I said I shall never be moved; I never thought either of having my body distempered or my government disturbed, not had any apprehensions of danger upon any account." Such complete victories had he obtained over those that opposed him, and such a confirmed interest had he in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes, not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the divine goodness. Thou, through thy favour, hast made my mountain to stand strong, Ps 30:7.

He does not look upon it as his heaven (as worldly people do, who make their prosperity their felicity), only his mountain; it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level. This he thought, by the favour of God, would be perpetuated to him, imagining perhaps that, having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share and should have none in his latter end, or that

God, who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note,

1. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise. To-morrow shall be as this day. As if we should think, when the weather is once fair, that it will be even fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change.

2. When we see ourselves deceived in our expectations, it becomes us to reflect, with shame, upon our security, as our folly, as David does here, that we may be wiser another time and may rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passes away.

II. On a sudden he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour.

1. His mountain was shaken and he with it; it proved, when he grew secure, that he was least safe: "Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled, in mind, body, or estate." In every change of his condition he still kept his eye upon God, and, as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so in his adversity he observed the hiding of God's face, to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befal him; when the sun sets night certainly follows, and the moon and all the stars cannot make day.

2. When his mountain was shaken he lifted up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore; he made use of it accordingly. Is any afflicted? Is any troubled? Let him pray. Though God hid his face from him, yet he prayed. If God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable if we turn from him. No; let us learn to pray in the dark (Ps 30:8): I cried to thee, O Lord! It seems God's withdrawings made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told, for it seems he kept account of it,

(1.) What he pleaded, Ps 30:9.

[1.] That God would be no gainer by his death: What profit is there in my blood? implying that he would willingly die if he could thereby do any real service to God or his country (Php 2:17), but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be if he had died in the bed of honour. "Lord," says he, "wilt thou sell one of thy own people for nought and not increase thy wealth by the price?" ps 44:12. Nay

[2.] That, in his honour, God would seem to be a loser by his death: Shall the dust praise thee? The sanctified spirit, which returns to God, shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the dust, which returns to the earth, shall not praise him, nor declare his truth. The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence.

The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed to the dust. "Lord," says David, "if I die now, what will become of the promise made to me? Who shall declare the truth of that?" The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour; and then we ask aright for life when we have that in view, that we may live and praise him.

(2.) What he prayed for, Ps 30:10. He prayed for mercy to pardon (Have mercy upon me), and for grace to help in time of need--Lord, be thou my helper. On these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb 4:16.

III. In due time God delivered him out of his troubles and restored him to his former prosperity. His prayers were answered and his mourning was turned into dancing, Ps 30:11. God's anger now endured but for a moment, and David's weeping but for a night. The sackcloth with which, in a humble compliance with the divine Providence, he had clad himself, was loosed; his griefs were balanced; his fears were silenced; his comforts returned; and he was girded with

gladness: joy was made his ornament, was made his strength, and seemed to cleave to him, as the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man.

As David's plunge into trouble from the height of prosperity, and then when he least expected it, teaches us to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, because we know not how near trouble may be, so his sudden return to a prosperous condition teaches us to weep as though we wept not, because we know not how soon the storm may become a calm and the formidable blast may become a favourable gale. But what temper of mind was he in upon this happy change of the face of his affairs? What does he say now? He tells us, Ps 30:12.

1. His complaints were turned into praises. He looked upon it that God girded him with gladness to the end that he might be the sweet psalmist of Israel (2Sa 23:1), that his glory might sing praise to God, that is, his tongue (for our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God) or his soul, for that is our glory above the beasts, that must be employed in blessing the Lord, and with that we must make melody to him in singing psalms. Those that are kept from being silent in the pit must not be silent in the land of the living, but fervent, and constant, and public, in praising God.

2. These praises were likely to be everlasting: I will give thanks unto thee for ever. This bespeaks a gracious resolution that he would persevere to the end in praising God and a gracious hope that he should never want fresh matter for praise and that he should shortly be where this would be the everlasting work. Blessed are those that dwell in God's house; they will be still praising him. Thus must we learn to accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that concern us, to want and to abound, to sing of mercy and judgment, and to sing unto God for both.

7 Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong:
thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.
8 I cried to thee, O Lord;

and unto the Lord I made supplication.
9 What profit *is there* in my
blood, when I go down to
the pit?
Shall the dust praise
thee? Shall it declare
thy truth?
10 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me:
Lord, be thou my helper.
11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing:
thou hast put off my
sackcloth, and girded me
with gladness;
12 to the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

Psalms-31

A Profession of Trust
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust;
let me never be ashamed:
deliver me in thy righteousness.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes, let his pray--I believe, therefore I have spoken: and he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here.

I. David, in distress, is very earnest with God in prayer for succour and relief. This eases a burdened spirit, fetches in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul in the expectation of them. He prays,

1. That God would deliver him (Ps 31:1), that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their persecutions of him, that God, not only

in his mercy, but in righteousness, would deliver him, as a righteous Judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors, that he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, Ps 31:2. It is condescension in God to take cognizance of the case of the greatest and best of men; he humbles himself to do it. The psalmist prays also that he would deliver him speedily, lest, if the deliverance were long deferred, his faith should fail.

2. That if he did not immediately deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles; "Be thou my strong rock, immovable, impregnable, as a fastness framed by nature, and my house of defence, a fortress framed by art, and all to save me." Thus we may pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts, and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him, Pr 18:10.

3. That his case having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty and in respect of prudence, he might be under the divine guidance: "Lord, lead me and guide me (Ps 31:3), so order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable--against my conscience, nor unwise and indiscreet--against my interest." Those that resolve to follow God's direction may in faith pray for it. 4. That his enemies being very crafty, as well as very spiteful, God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him (Ps 31:4): "Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me, and keep me from the sin, the trouble, the death, they aim to entrap me in."

II. In this prayer he gives glory to God by a repeated profession of his confidence in him and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers and qualified him for the mercies he prayed for (Ps 31:1): "In thee, O Lord! do I put my trust, and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature; let me never be ashamed, let me not be disappointed of any of that good which thou hast promised me and which therefore I have promised myself in thee."

1. He had chosen God for his protector, and God had, by his promise, undertaken to be so (Ps 31:3): "Thou art my rock and my fortress, by thy covenant with me and my believing consent to that covenant; therefore be my strong rock," Ps 31:2. Those that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for theirs may expect the benefit of his being so; for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. Thou art my strength, Ps 31:4. If God be our strength, we may hope that he will both put his strength in us and put forth his strength for us.

2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him (Ps 31:5): Into thy hands I commit my spirit.

(1.) If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God who gave it, and to whom, at death, the spirit returns. "Men can but kill the body, but I trust in God to redeem my soul from the power of the grave," Ps 49:15. He is willing to die if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a free-will offering for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught in, our dying moment, to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. But, 2. David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And,

[1.] His great care is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think that while they are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and Providence multiplies their cares about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls; whereas the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage (2Co 4:16), and that we may keep possession of our souls when we can keep possession of nothing else, Lu 21:19.

[2.] He thinks the best he can do for the soul is to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed (Ps 31:4) to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble, but, as not insisting upon that (God's will be done), he immediately lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit, the inward man, into God's hand. "Lord, however it goes with me, as to my body, let it go well with my soul."

Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encourages us to commit our spirits into the hand of God is that he has not only created, but redeemed, them; the particular redemptions of the Old-Testament church and the Old-Testament saints were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, Ge 48:16.

The redemption of the soul is so precious that it must have ceased for ever if Christ had not undertaken it; but, by redeeming our souls, he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obliges us to commit them to him as his own, but has shown the extraordinary kindness and concern he has for them, which encourages us to commit them to him, to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom (2Ti 1:12): "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth! redeem me according to a promise which thou wilt be true to."

III. He disclaimed all confederacy with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence (Ps 31:6): I have hated those that regard lying vanities--idolaters (to some), who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie--astrologers, and those that give heed to them, so others. David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations; he consulted not, nor even took notice of, the flight of birds or entrails of beasts, good omens or bad omens; they are lying vanities, and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did. He trusted in God only, and not in any creature. His interest in the court or country, his

retreats or strongholds, even Goliath's sword itself--these were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only. See Ps 40:4,Jer 17:5.

IV. He comforted himself with his hope in God, and made himself, not only easy, but cheerful, with it, Ps 31:7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it; and those know not how to value their hope in God who cannot find joy enough in that hope to counterbalance their grievances and silence their griefs.

V. He encouraged himself in this hope with the experiences he had had of late, and formerly, of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God; he that has delivered doth and will.

1. God had taken notice of his afflictions and all the circumstances of them: "Thou hast considered my trouble, with wisdom to suit relief to it, with condescension and compassion regarding the low estate of they servant."

2. He had observed the temper of his spirit and the workings of his heart under his afflictions: "Thou hast known my soul in adversities, with a tender concern and care for it." God's eye is upon our souls when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, submissive to the will of God, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction, has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it.

3. He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul when he had him safe enough in Keilah (1Sa 23:7): "Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but set me at liberty, in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety," Ps 31:8. Christ's using those words (Ps 31:5) upon the cross may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father and was supported and delivered by him, and (because he humbled himself) highly exalted, which it is proper to think of when we sing Ps 31:1-8, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with

us in our troubles and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

2 Bow down thine ear to me;
deliver me speedily:
be thou my strong rock,
for a house of defense to save me.
3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress;
therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me:
for thou *art* my strength.
5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit:
thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.
6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities:
but I trust in the Lord.
7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy:
for thou hast considered my trouble;
thou hast known my soul in adversities;
8 and hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy:
thou hast set my feet in a large room.
9 Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble:
mine eye is consumed with grief,
yea, my soul and my belly.

In the Ps 31:1-8 David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him and dependence on him; here he appeals to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his own misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

I The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress (Ps 31:9): "Have mercy upon me, O Lord! for I am in trouble, and need thy mercy." The remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some even of Job's complaints.

1. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, Ps 31:9,10. Herein he was a type of Christ,--who was intimately acquainted with grief and often in tears. We may guess by David's

complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for music, and by his daring enterprises in his early days, that his natural disposition was both cheerful and firm, that he was apt to be cheerful, and not to lay trouble to his heart; yet here we see what he is brought to:

he has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance; God can find out ways to make them melancholy if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

2. His body was afflicted with the sorrows of his mind (Ps 31:10): My strength fails, my bones are consumed, and all because of my iniquity. As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness; but, as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesses his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick and wasted him more than all his calamities.

3. His friends were unkind and became shy of him. He was a fear to his acquaintance, when they saw him they fled from him, Ps 31:11. They durst not harbour him nor give him any assistance, durst not show him any countenance, nor so much as be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it, now that Saul had proclaimed him a traitor and outlawed him. They saw how dearly Ahimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, though ignorantly; and therefore, though they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear for him. He was forgotten by them, as a dead man out of mind (Ps 31:12), and looked upon with contempt as a broken vessel.

Those that showed him all possible respect when he was in honour at court, now that he had fallen into disgrace, though unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow-friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on

the losing side not think it strange if they be thus deserted, but make sure a friend in heaven, that will not fail them, and make use of him.

4. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him. They would not have persecuted him as they did if they had not first represented him as a bad man; he was a reproach among all his enemies, but especially among his neighbours, Ps 31:11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences that he was an honest man, were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might curry favour with Saul.

Thus he heard the slander of many; every one had a stone to throw at him, because fear was in every side; that is, they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to accuse David was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been represented under the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

5. His life was aimed at and he went in continual peril of it. Fear was on every side, and he knew that, whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life (Ps 31:13), a life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited. Thus, in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life, such are the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

II. His confidence in God in the midst of these troubles. Every thing looked black and dismal round about him, and threatened to drive him to despair: "But I trusted in thee, O Lord! (Ps 31:14) and was thereby kept from sinking." His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he went to God and pleaded them with him:--

1. "Thou art my God; I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine;" and, if he be ours and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. "Thou art my God; and therefore to whom shall I go for relief but to thee?" Those need not be straitened in their prayers who can plead this; for, if God undertake to be our God, he will do that for us which will answer the compass and vast extent of the engagement.

2. My times are in thy hand. Join this with the former and it makes the comfort complete. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us; and, if he be our God, he will help us; and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God that their times are in his hand and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best, to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, Ps 31:5.

The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten, as he pleases, according to the counsel of his will. Our times (all events that concern us, and the timing of them) are at God's disposal; they are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's; every man's judgment proceedeth from him. David does not, in his prayers, prescribe to God, but subscribe to him. "Lord, my times are in thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so; they could not be in a better hand. Thy will be done."

III. His petitions to God, in this faith and confidence,

1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies (Ps 31:15), and save him (Ps 31:16), and this for his mercies' sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand (so some read it), and therefore he knows how to choose the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave those about him said, "This is the time in which God will deliver thee,"

1Sa 24:4. "No," says David, "the time has not come for my deliverance till it can be wrought without sin; and I will wait for that time; for it is God's time, and that is the best time."

2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the mean time (Ps 31:16): "Make they face to shine upon thy servant; let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart in the midst of all my griefs."

3. That his prayers to God might be answered and his hopes in God accomplished (Ps 31:17): "Let me not be ashamed of my hopes and prayers, for I have called upon thee, who never saidst to thy people, Seek in vain, and hope in vain."

4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down and ruin him. "Lord," says he, "let them be made ashamed of that confidence by the disappointment of their expectations," as those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it was finished, were much cast down in their own eye, Ne 6:16. Let them be silent in the grave.

Note, Death will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors, whom reason would not silence. In the grave the wicked cease from troubling. Particularly, he prays for (that is, he prophesies) the silencing of those that reproach and calumniate the people of God (Ps 31:18): Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous. This is a very good prayer which,

(1.) We have often occasion to put up to God; for those that set their mouth against the heavens commonly revile the heirs of heaven. Religion, in the strict and serious professors of it, are every where spoken against,

[1.] With a great deal of malice: They speak grievous things, on purpose to vex them, and hoping, with what they say, to

do them a real mischief. They speak hard things (so the word is), which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them.

[2.] With a great deal of falsehood: They are lying lips, taught by the father of lies and serving his interest.

[3.] With a great deal of scorn and disdain: They speak proudly and contemptuously, as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock. One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. Hear, O our God! for we are despised.

(2.) We may pray in faith; for these lying lips shall be put to silence. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he convinces the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts. Sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falsehood of all the hard speeches that have spoken against his people and will execute judgment upon them, Jude 1:14,15. Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singing of it, engaging ourselves likewise by well-doing, if possible, to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1Pe 2:15.

10 For my life is spent with grief,
and my years with sighing:
my strength faileth because of mine iniquity,
and my bones are consumed.
11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies,
but especially among my neighbors,
and a fear to mine acquaintance:
they that did see me without fled from me.
12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind:
I am like a broken vessel.
13 For I have heard the slander of many:
fear *was* on every side:

while they took counsel together against me,
they devised to take away my life.
14 But I trusted in thee, O Lord:
I said, Thou *art* my God.
15 My times *are* in thy hand:
deliver me from the hand of mine enemies,
and from them that persecute me.
16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:
save me for thy mercies' sake.
17 Let me not be ashamed, O Lord;
for I have called upon thee:
let the wicked be ashamed,
and let them be silent in the grave.
18 Let the lying lips be put to silence;
which speak grievous things
proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.
19 *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness,
which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;
which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee
before the sons of men!

We have three things in these verses:--

I The believing acknowledgment which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, Ps 31:19,20.

1. God is good to all, but he is, in a special manner, good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be, to eternity, matter of admiration: O how great is thy goodness! How profound are the counsels of it! how rich are the treasures of it! how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders God loads with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness are described to be such as fear God and trust in him, as stand in awe of his greatness and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be laid up for them and wrought for them.

(1.) There is a goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance reserved in heaven (1Pe 1:4), and there is a

goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness both for the portion and inheritance of all his children when they come to their full age, and for their maintenance and education during their minority. There is enough in bank and enough in hand.

(2.) This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing. But it is wrought, in the actual performance of the promise, for those that trust in him--that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant be not wrought for us, it is our own fault, because we do not believe.

But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms, so they have the credit of it (and the credit of an estate goes far with some); it is wrought for them before the sons of men. God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them and rolls away their reproach; for all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed, Isa 61:9.

2. God preserves man and beast; but he is, in a special manner, the protector of his own people (Ps 31:20): Thou shalt hide them. As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here,

(1.) The danger they are in, which arises from the pride of man and from the strife of tongues; proud men insult over them and would trample on them and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them; and, when tongues are at strife, good people often go by the worst. The pride of men endangers their liberty; the strife of tongues in perverse disputings endangers truth. But,

(2.) See the defence they are under: Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence, in a pavilion. God's providence shall keep them safe form the malice of their enemies. He

has many ways of sheltering them. When Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for the Lord hid them, Jer 36:36. God's grace shall keep them safe from the evil of the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting; and they shall hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful; his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters then from the fiery darts of terror and temptation; and the mansions in his house above shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding-place from all danger and fear.

II The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, Ps 31:21,22. Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him.

1. Without were fightings; but God had wonderfully preserved his life: "He has shown me his marvellous loving-kindness, he has given me an instance of his care for me and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected." God's loving-kindness to his people, all things considered, is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in this world, are in a special manner marvelous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul, in caves and woods, as safe as if he had been in a strong city.

In Keilah, that strong city, God showed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines and then in rescuing him from the same men who would have ungratefully delivered him up into the hand of Saul, 1Sa 23:5,12. This was marvellous loving-kindness indeed, upon which he writes, with wonder and thankfulness, Blessed be the Lord. Special preservations call for particular thanksgivings.

2. Within were fears; but God was better to him than his fears, Ps 31:22. He here keeps an account,

(1.) Of his own folly, in distrusting God, which he acknowledges, to his shame. Though he had express

promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him in many straits, yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face. "I am cut off before thy eyes; thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul, and so be cut off before thy eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on," 1Sa 27:1.

This he said in his flight (so some read it), which denotes the distress of his affairs. Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong. In my haste (so we read it), which denotes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss when we speak in haste and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God.

(2.) Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding. Though his faith failed, God's promise did not: Thou hearest the voice of my supplication, for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his loving-kindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God he might justly take us at our word, and bring our fears upon us, as he did on Israel, Nu 14:28,Isa 66:4. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of no effect; for he knows our frame.

III. The exhortation and encouragement which he hereupon gives to all the saints, Ps 31:23,24.

1. He would have them set their love on God (Ps 31:23): O love the Lord! all you his saints. Those that have their own hearts full of love to God cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints that they do love God; and yet they must still be called upon to love him, to love him more and love him better, and give proofs of their

love. We must love him, not only for his goodness, because he preserves the faithful, but for his justice, because he plentifully rewards the proud doer (who would ruin those whom he preserves), according to their pride.

Some take it in a good sense; he plentifully rewards the magnificent (or excellent) doer, that is daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat's, is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He rewards him that does well, but plentifully rewards him that does excellently well.

2. He would have them set their hope in God (Ps 31:24): "Be of good courage; have a good heart on it; whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with, the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart." Those that hope in God have reason to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for, as nothing truly evil can befal them, so nothing truly good for them shall be wanting to them.

In singing this we should animate ourselves and one another to proceed and persevere in our Christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence
from the pride of man:
thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion
from the strife of tongues.
21 Blessed *be* the Lord:
for he hath showed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city.
22 For I said in my haste,
I am cut off from before thine eyes:
nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications
when I cried unto thee.
23 O love the Lord, all ye his saints:
for the Lord preserveth the faithful,
and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your
heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

Psalms-32

The Blessedness of Forgiveness
A Psalm of David,
Maschil.

1 Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven,
whose sin *is* covered.

This psalm is entitled Maschil, which some take to be only the name of the tune to which it was set and was to be sung. But others think it is significant; our margin reads it, A psalm of David giving instruction, and there is nothing in which we have more need of instruction than in the nature of true blessedness, wherein it consists and the way that leads to it--what we must do that we may be happy.

There are several things in which these verses instruct us. In general, we are here taught that our happiness consists in the favour of God, and not in the wealth of this world--in spiritual blessings, and not the good things of this world. When David says (Ps 1:1), Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, and (Ps 119:1), Blessed are the undefiled in the way, the meaning is, "This is the character of the blessed man; and he that has not this character cannot expect to be happy:" but when it is here said, Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, the meaning is, "This is the ground of his blessedness: this is that fundamental privilege from which all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow." In particular, we are here instructed,

I. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin. This is that which we all need and are undone without; we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous and inquisitive about it.

1. It is the forgiving of transgression. Sin is the transgression of the law. Upon our repentance, the transgression is forgiven; that is, the obligation to punishment which we lay under, by virtue of the sentence of the law, is vacated and cancelled; it is lifted off (so some read it), that by the pardon

of it we may be eased of a burden, a heavy burden, like a load on the back, that makes us stoop, or a load on the stomach, that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits, that makes us sink. The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were weary and heavily laden, Mt 11:28.

2. It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is covered, that it may not appear to our shame, Re 3:18. One of the first symptoms of guilt in our first parents was blushing at their own nakedness. Sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God and utterly unfit for communion with him, and, when conscience is awakened, it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but, when sin is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the coats of skins wherewith God clothed Adam and Eve (an emblem of the remission of sins), so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled.

They are not covered from us (no; My sin is ever before me) nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his vindictive justice. When he pardons sin he remembers it no more, he casts it behind his back, it shall be sought for and not found, and the sinner, being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself.

3. It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's charge, not proceeding against him for it according to the strictness of the law, not dealing with him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we being made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all and made him sin for us. Observe, Not to impute iniquity is God's act, for he is the Judge. It is God that justifies.

II. Concerning the character of those whose sins are pardoned: in whose spirit there is no guile. He does not say, "There is no guilt" (for who is there that lives and sins not?), but no guile; the pardoned sinner is one that does not dissemble with God in his professions of repentance and

faith, nor in his prayers for peace or pardon, but in all these is sincere and means as he says--that does not repent with a purpose to sin again, and then sin with a purpose to repent again, as a learned interpreter glosses upon it. Those that design honestly, that are really what they profess to be, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

III. Concerning the happiness of a justified state: Blessednesses are to the man whose iniquity is forgiven, all manner of blessings, sufficient to make him completely blessed. That is taken away which incurred the curse and obstructed the blessing; and then God will pour out blessings till there be no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin is that article of the covenant which is the reason and ground of all the rest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb 8:12.

IV. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of an unhumbled sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it. This David describes very pathetically, from his own sad experience (Ps 32:3,4):

While I kept silence my bones waxed old. Those may be said to keep silence who stifle their convictions, who, when they cannot but see the evil of sin and their danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not thinking of it and diverting their minds to something else, as Cain to the building of a city,--who cry not when God binds them,--who will not unburden their consciences by a penitent confession, nor seek for peace, as they ought, by faithful and fervent prayer,--and who choose rather to pine away in their iniquities than to take the method which God has appointed of finding rest for their souls. Let such expect that their smothered convictions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of sin, not opened, will fester, and grow intolerably painful. If conscience be seared, the case is so much the more dangerous; but if it be startled and awake, it will be heard.

The hand of divine wrath will be felt lying heavily upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body; to the

degree David experienced it, so that when he was young his bones waxed old; and even his silence made him roar all the day long, as if he had been under some grievous pain and distemper of body, when really the cause of all his uneasiness was the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his convictions and his corruptions. Note, He that covers his sin shall not prosper; some inward trouble is required in repentance, but there is much worse in impenitency.

V. Concerning the true and only way to peace of conscience. We are here taught to confess our sins, that they may be forgiven, to declare them, that we may be justified. This course David took: I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and no longer hid my iniquity, Ps 32:5. Note, Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be particular in it (Thus and thus have I done), confess the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay a load upon ourselves for it (I have done very wickedly), confess the justice of the punishment we have been under for it (The Lord is just in all that is brought upon us), and that we deserve much worse--I am no more worthy to be called thy son. We must confess sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and holy trembling.

VI. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to those who truly repent of it: "I said, I will confess (I sincerely resolved upon it, hesitated no longer, but came to a point, that I would make a free and ingenuous confession of my sins) and immediately thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin, and gavest me the comfort of the pardon in my own conscience; immediately I found rest to my soul."

Note, God is more ready to pardon sin, upon our repentance, than we are to repent in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado that David was here brought to confess his sins; he was put to the rack before he was brought to do it (Ps 32:3,4), he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but, when he did offer to

surrender, see how quickly, how easily, he obtained good terms: "I did but say, I will confess, and thou forgavest."

Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son when he was yet afar off, and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents, and what an assurance does it give us that, if we confess our sins, we shall find God, not only faithful and just, but gracious and kind, to forgive us our sins!

VII. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had had of God's readiness to forgive his sins (Ps 32:6): For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee. Note,

1. All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, Behold, he prays, Ac 9:11. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living Christian without prayer.

2 The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray, God be merciful to us sinners. For this shall every one that is well inclined be earnest with God in prayer, and come boldly to the throne of grace, with hopes to obtain mercy, Heb 4:16.

3. Those that would speed in prayer must seek the Lord in a time when he will be found. When, by his providence, he calls them to seek him, and by his Spirit stirs them up to seek him, they must go speedily to seek the Lord (Zec 8:21) and lose no time, lest death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, Isa 55:6. Behold, now is the accepted time, 2Co 6:2,4.

Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer will find the benefit of it when they are in trouble: Surely in the floods of great waters, which are very threatening, they shall not come nigh them, to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness,

much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for, as all upright, penitent, praying people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters--no, not great waters--no, not floods of them, can come nigh them, to hurt them. As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not (1Jo 5:18), so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds, drop short of them.

2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not
iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.
3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed
old through my roaring all the day long.
4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
my moisture is turned into the drought of
summer. Selah.
5 I acknowledged my sin unto
thee, and mine iniquity have I
not hid.
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;
and thou forgavest the iniquity of my
sin. Selah.
6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto
thee in a time when thou mayest be found:
surely in the floods of great waters
they shall not come nigh unto
him.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

I. He speaks to God, and professes his confidence in him and expectation from him, Ps 32:7. Having tasted the sweetness of divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint, and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy.

1. Safety: "Thou art my hiding-place; when by faith I have recourse to thee I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think myself out of the reach of any real evil. Thou shalt preserve me from trouble, from the sting of it, and from

the strokes of it as far as is good for me. Thou shalt preserve me from such trouble as I was in while I kept silence," Ps 32:3.

When God has pardoned our sins, if he leaves us to ourselves, we shall soon run as far in debt again as ever and plunge ourselves again into the same gulf; and therefore, when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must fly to the grace of God to be preserved from returning to folly again, and having our hearts again hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. God keeps his people from trouble by keeping them from sin.

2. Joy: "Thou shalt not only deliver me, but compass me about with songs of deliverance; which way soever I look I shall see occasion to rejoice and to praise God; and my friends also shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise: they shall join their songs of deliverance with mine. As every one that is godly shall pray with me, so they shall give thanks with me."

II. He turns his speech to the children of men. Being himself converted, he does what he can to strengthen his brethren (Lu 22:32): I will instruct thee, whoever thou art that desirest instruction, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, Ps 32:8. This, in another of his penitential psalms, he resolves that when God should have restored to him the joy of his salvation he would teach transgressors his ways, and do what he could to convert sinners to God, as well as to comfort those that were converted, Ps 51:12,13. When Solomon became a penitent he immediately became a preacher, Ec 1:1.

Those are best able to teach others the grace of God who have themselves had the experience of it: and those who are themselves taught of God ought to tell others what he has done for their souls (Ps 66:16) and so teach them. I will guide thee with my eye. Some apply this to God's conduct and direction. He teaches us by his word and guides us with his

eye, by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of Providence, which he enables his people to understand and take direction from, as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye. When Christ turned and looked upon Peter he guided him with his eye.

But it is rather to be taken as David's promise to those who sat under his instruction, his own children and family especially: "I will counsel thee; my eye shall be upon thee" (so the margin reads it); "I will give thee the best counsel I can and then observe whether thou takest it or no." Those that are taught in the word should be under the constant inspection of those that teach them; spiritual guides must be overseers. In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned we have a word to sinners and a word to saints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth and giving to each their portion.

1. Here is a word of caution to sinners, and a good reason is given for it.

(1.) The caution is, not to be unruly and ungovernable: Be you not as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, Ps 32:9. When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sins he repented of he compared himself to a beast before God (so foolish have I been and ignorant, Ps 73:22) and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason and of reasoning with ourselves. Let us therefore use the faculties we have, and act rationally.

The horse and mule must be managed with bit and bridle, lest they come near us, to do us a mischief, or (as some read it) that they may come near to us, to do us service, that they may obey us, Jam 3:3. Let us not be like them; let us not be hurried by appetite and passion, at any time, to go contrary to the dictate of right reason and to our true interest. If sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would

soon become saints and would not go a step further in their sinful courses; where there is renewing grace there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace.

(2.) The reason for this caution is because the way of sin which we would persuade you to forsake will certainly end in sorrow (Ps 32:10): Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, which will not only spoil their vain and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dearly for it. Sin will have sorrow, if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, I will greatly multiply thy sorrows. "Be wise for yourselves therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows."

2. Here is a word of comfort to saints, and a good reason is given for that too.

(1.) They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep closely to him, mercy shall compass them about on every side (Ps 32:10), so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out.

(2.) They are therefore commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, to such a degree as even to shout for joy, Ps 32:11. Let them be so transported with this holy joy as not to be able to contain themselves; and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live in this world. This is that present bliss which the upright in heart, and they are only, are entitled to and qualified for.

7 Thou *art* my hiding place;
thou shalt preserve me from trouble;
thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.
Selah.

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt
go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not as the horse, *or* as the mule,
which have no understanding:

whose mouth must be held in with bit and
bridle, lest they come near unto thee.
10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked:
but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him
about.
11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous:
and shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

Psalms-33

Praise to the Creator and Preserver

1 Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous:
for praise is comely for the upright.

Four things the psalmist expresses in these verses:

I The great desire he had that God might be praised. He did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work; the more the better, in this concert: it is the more like heaven.

1. Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people (Ps 33:1): Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous; so the foregoing psalm concluded and so this begins; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best of being and best of friends.

2. Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy; and that also is here required of us (Ps 33:2): "Praise the Lord; speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name."
3. Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise; those are here required (Ps 33:3): "Sing unto him a new song, the best you have, not that which by frequent use is worn, thread-bare, but that which, being new, is most likely to move the affections, a new song for new mercies

and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning."

Music was then used, by the appointment of David, with the temple-songs, that they might be the better sung; and this also is here called for (Ps 33:2): Sing unto him with the psaltery. Here is,

(1.) A good rule for this duty: "Do it skilfully, and with a loud noise; let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently and with a clear head, affectionately and with a warm heart."

(2.) A good reason for this duty: For praise is comely for the upright. It is well pleasing to God (the garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people) and it is an excellent ornament to our profession. It becomes the upright, whom God has put so much honour upon, to give honour to him. The upright praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts, that is praising him with their glory; whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like a parable in the mouth of fools, Pr 26:7.

II The high thoughts he had of God, and of his infinite perfections, Ps 33:4,5. God makes himself known to us,

1. In his word, here put for all divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the children of men, and that is all right, there is nothing amiss in it; his commands exactly agree with the rules of equity and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises are all wise and good and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it.

2. In his works, and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the scriptures of truth, Da 10:21. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the

great original, the plan laid in the Eternal Mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works,

(1.) That he is a God of inflexible justice: He loveth righteousness and judgment. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passes and judgment in the execution of it. He never did nor can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to give redress to those that are wronged, and does it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness.

(2.) That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty: The earth is full of his goodness, that is, of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce, the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly declare that the earth is full of his goodness--the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What a pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises, and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty there are so few that live to his glory!

III. The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We "believe in God," and therefore we praise him as "the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth," so we are here taught to praise him. Observe,

1. How God made the world, and brought all things into being.

(1.) How easily: All things were made by the word of the Lord and by the breath of his mouth. Christ is the Word, the Spirit is the breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it and redeems it, by his Son and Spirit. He spoke, and he commanded (Ps 33:9), and that was enough; there needed no more. With men saying and doing are two things,

but it is not so with God. By the Word and Spirit of God as the world was made, so was man, that little world. God said, Let us make man, and he breathed into him the breath of life. By the Word and Spirit the church is built, that new world, and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation. What cannot that power do which with a word made a world!

(2.) How effectually it was done: And it stood fast. What God does he does to purpose; he does it and it stands fast. Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever, Ec 3:14. It is by virtue of that command to stand fast that things continue to this day according to God's ordinance, Ps 119:91.

2. What he made. He made all things, but notice is here taken,

(1.) of the heavens, and the host of them, Ps 33:6. The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts--

(2.) Of the waters, and the treasures of them, Ps 33:7. The earth was at first covered with the water, and, being heavier, must of course subside and sink under it; but, to show from the very first that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature, and the usual operations of his powers, with a word's speaking he gathered the waters together on a heap, that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but laid up the depth in store-houses, not only in the flats where the seas make their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in storehouses, but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hidden from the eyes of all living, but were reserved as in a store-house for that day when those fountains of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for which use the great Master of the house knows best.

3. What use is to be made of this (Ps 33:8): Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him; that is, let all the children of men worship him and give glory to him, Ps 95:5,6. The everlasting gospel gives this as the reason why

we must worship God, because he made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, Re 14:6,7. Let us all fear him, that is, dread his wrath and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy and of standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him who having this power no doubt has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him who has the host of heaven for his armies and the depths of the sea for his magazines, and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace, see Jer 5:22.

IV. The satisfaction he had of God's sovereignty and dominion, Ps 33:10,11. He over-rules all the counsels of men, and makes them, contrary to their intention, serviceable to his counsels. Come and see with an eye of faith God in the throne, 1. Frustrating the devices of his enemies: He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves a vain thing (Ps 2:1); the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness; Haman's plot is baffled. Though the design be laid ever so deep, and the hopes raised upon it ever so high, yet, if God says it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass; it is all to no purpose. 2. Fulfilling his own decrees:

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever. It is immutable in itself, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled, nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its time. With what pleasure to ourselves may we in singing this give praise to God! How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust!

2 Praise the Lord with harp:
sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten
strings.
3 Sing unto him a new song;
play skilfully with a loud noise.

4 For the word of the Lord *is* right;
and all his works *are done* in truth.
5 He loveth righteousness and judgment:
the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.
6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;
and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap:
he layeth up the depth in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the Lord:
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spake, and it was *done;*
he commanded, and it stood fast.
10 The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought:
he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
11 The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever,
the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

We are here taught to give to God the glory,

I. Of his common providence towards all the children of men. Though he has endued man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

1 The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so; and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, Ps 33:13,14. Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth.

He not only beholds them, but he looks upon them; he looks narrowly upon them (so the word here used is sometimes rendered), so narrowly that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think that, because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot, or will not, take notice of what is done here in this lower world; but thence, high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and thing are naked and open before him.

2. Their hearts, as well as their times, are all in his hand: He fashions their hearts. He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called the Father of spirits: and this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them. The artist that made the clock, can account for the motions of every wheel.

David uses this argument with application to himself, Ps 139:1,14. He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases, to serve his own purposes, darkens or enlightens men's understandings, stiffens or bows their wills, according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions men's hearts fashions them alike.

It is in hearts as in faces, though there is a great difference, and such a variety as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude that, in some things, all faces and all hearts agree, as in water face answers to face, Pr 27:19. He fashions them together (so some read it); as the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, are yet all put together, to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other and seeming to contradict one another, are yet all overruled to serve the divine purpose, which is one.

3. They, and all they do, are obnoxious to his judgment; for he considers all their works, not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may render to every man according to his works, in the day, in the world, of retribution, in the judgment, and to eternity.

4. All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all, without him, Ps 33:16,17. It is much for the honour of God that not only no force can prevail in opposition to him, but that no force can

act but in dependence on him and by a power derived from him.

(1.) The strength of a king is nothing without God. No king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested; for the powers that are, of that kind, are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. David was a king, and a man of war from his youth, and yet acknowledged God to be his only protector and Saviour.

(2.) The strength of an army is nothing without God. The multitude of a host cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory; for, when God pleases, one shall chase a thousand.

(3.) The strength of a giant is nothing without God. A mighty man, such as Goliath was, is not delivered by his much strength, when his day comes to fall. Neither the firmness and activity of his body nor the stoutness and resolution of his mind will stand him in any stead, any further than God is pleased to give him success. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God, go forth, and go on, in his strength.

(4.) The strength of a horse is nothing without God (Ps 33:17): A horse is a vain thing for safety. In war horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the kings of Israel to multiply horses (De 17:16), lest they should be tempted to trust to them and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians (2Sa 8:4); here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle.

If the war-horse be unruly and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be killed under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is therefore our interest to make sure God's favour

towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

II. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence he pronounces those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has wherewithal to help them in every time of need, while those were miserable who had this and the other Baal for their god, which was so far from being able to hear and help them that is was itself senseless and helpless (Ps 33:12): Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham.

1. It is their wisdom that they take the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration there where it is due and where the payment of it will not be in vain.

2. It is their happiness that they are the people whom God has chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes care of, whom he cultivates and improves as a man does his inheritance, De 32:9. Now let us observe here, to the honour of divine grace,

(1.) The regard which God has to his people, Ps 33:18,19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon those that fear him. He looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, Isa 62:5. While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God's people, under his protection, are safe, for he shall deliver their soul from death when there seems to be but a step between them and it. If he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and

eternal death. Their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world or in a better.

From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessaries. he shall keep them alive in famine; when others die for want, they shall live, which shall make it a distinguishing mercy. When visible means fail, God will find out some way or other to supply them. He does not say that he will give them abundance (they have no reason either to desire it or to expect it), but he will keep them alive; they shall not starve; and, when destroying judgments are abroad, it ought to be reckoned a great favour, for it is a very striking one, and lays us under peculiar obligations, to have our lives given us for a prey. Those that have the Lord for their God shall find him their help and their shield, Ps 33:20. In their difficulties he will assist them; they shall be helped over them, helped through them. In their dangers he will secure them; they shall be helped over them, helped through them. In their dangers he will secure them, so that they shall not receive any real damage.

(2.) The regard which God's people have to him and which we ought to have in consideration of this.

[1.] We must wait for God. We must attend the motions of his providence, and accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently expect the issue of them. Our souls must wait for him, Ps 33:20. We must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere, a secret and silent attendance on him.

[2.] We must rely on God, hope in his mercy, in the goodness of his nature, though we have not an express promise to depend upon. Those that fear God and his wrath must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. These pious dispositions will not only consist together, but befriend each other, a holy fear of God and yet at the same time a hope in his mercy. This is trusting

in his holy name (Ps 33:21), in all that whereby he has made known himself to us, for our encouragement to serve him.

[3.] We must rejoice in God, Ps 33:21. Those do not truly rest in God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing, who do not rejoice in him at all times; because those that hope in God hope for an eternal fulness of joy in his presence.

[4.] We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, Ps 33:22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, our applications to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised, and therefore the psalm concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer, "Let thy mercy, O Lord! be upon us; let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but according as we hope in thee, that is, according to the promise which thou hast in thy word given to us and according to the faith which thou hast by thy Spirit and grace wrought in us."

If, in singing Ps 33:12-22, we put forth a dependence upon God, and let out our desires towards him, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the Lord;
and the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
13 The Lord looketh from heaven;
he beholdeth all the sons of men.
14 From the place of his habitation he looketh
upon all the inhabitants of the earth.
15 He fashioneth their hearts alike;
he considereth all their works.
16 There is no king saved by the multitude of a host:
a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.
17 A horse *is* a vain thing for safety:
neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.
18 Behold, the eye of the Lord *is* upon them that fear him,
upon them that hope in his mercy;

19 to deliver their soul from death,
and to keep them alive in famine.
20 Our soul waiteth for the Lord:
he *is* our help and our shield.
21 For our heart shall rejoice in him,
because we have trusted in his holy name.
22 Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us,
according as we hope in thee.

Psalms-34
Praise for Deliverance from Troubles

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it and upon what occasion it was penned. David, being forced to flee from his country, which was made too hot for him by the rage of Saul, sought shelter as near it as he could, in the land of the Philistines. There it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who, in the narrative, is called Achish (his proper name), here Abimelech (his title); and lest he should be treated as a spy, or one that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a madman (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason), that Achish might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now,

1. We cannot justify David in this dissimulation. It ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a mad-man. If, in sport, we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made their case ours.

2. Yet we cannot but wonder at the composure of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that, when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or

rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which has as much in it of the marks of a calm sedate spirit as any psalm in all the book; and there is something curious too in the composition, for it is what is called an alphabetical psalm, that is, a psalm in which every verse begins with each letter in its order as it stands in the Hebrew alphabet. Happy are those who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour. In this former part of the psalm,

I. David engages and excites himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped, and the mercy was so much the greater in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation, and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves,

1. That he will praise God constantly: I will bless the Lord at all times, upon all occasions. He resolves to keep up stated times for this duty, to lay hold of all opportunities for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnished him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit that we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work.

2. That he will praise him openly: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Thus he would show how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. 3. That he will praise him heartily: "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, in my relation to him, my interest in him, and expectations from him." It is not vainglory to glory in the Lord.

II. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will (Ps 34:2): "The humble shall hear thereof, both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, and be glad that a good man has so much favour shown him and a good God so much honour done him." Those have most comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble,

and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite. Three things he would have us all to concur with him in:--

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him and exalting his name, Ps 34:3. We cannot make God greater or higher than he is; but if we adore him as infinitely great, and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises sound best in concert, for so we praise him as the angels do in heaven. Those that share in God's favour, as all the saints do, should concur in his praises; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies as in praying for them. We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God,

(1.) For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of; for he never said to any of them, Seek you me in vain.

[1.] David, for his part, will give it under his hand that he has found him a prayer-hearing God (Ps 34:4): "I sought the Lord, in my distress, entreated his favour, begged his help, and he heard me, answered my request immediately, and delivered me from all my fears, both from the death I feared and from the disquietude and disturbance produced by fear of it."

The former he does by his providence working for us, the latter by his grace working in us, to silence our fears and still the tumult of the spirits; this latter is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only, but our unbelieving distrustful fear of it is our sin; nay, it is often more our torment too than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits and put us out of the possession of our own soul.

David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could wait the event with great composure. "But David was a great and eminent man, we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer?" Yes,

[2.] Many besides him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, Ps 34:5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them; witness Hannah, who, when she had prayed, went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. When we look to the world we are darkened, we are perplexed, and at a loss; but, when we look to God, from him we have the light both of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant.

These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them: Their faces were not ashamed of their confidence. "But perhaps these also were persons of great eminence, like David himself, and upon that account were highly favoured, or their numbers made them considerable;" nay,

[3.] This poor man cried, a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect or looked after with any concern; yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David or any of his worthies: The Lord heard him, took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, and saved him out of all his troubles, Ps 34:6. God will regard the prayer of the destitute, Ps 102:17. See Isa 57:15.

(2.) For the ministration of the good angels about us (Ps 34:7): The angel of the Lord, a guard of angels (so some), but as unanimous in their service as if they were but one, or a guardian angel, encamps round about those that fear God, as the life-guard about the prince, and delivers them. God makes use of the attendance of the good spirits for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits; and the holy angels do us more good offices every day than we are aware of.

Though in dignity and in capacity of nature they are very much superior to us,--though they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost;--though they have constant employment in the upper world, the employment of praising God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there,--yet in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness; they not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good as really, though not as sensibly, as for Jacob's (Ge 32:1), and Elisha's, 2Ki 6:17. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

2. He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God (Ps 34:8): O taste and see that the Lord is good! The goodness of God includes both the beauty and amiableness of his being and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and accordingly,

(1.) We must taste that he is a bountiful benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the savour and sweetness of them. Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.

(2.) We must see that he is a beautiful being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight we both make discoveries and take complacency. Taste and see God's goodness, that is, take notice of it and take the comfort of it, 1Pe 2:3. He is good, for he makes all those that trust in him truly blessed; let us therefore be so convinced of his goodness as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear (Ps 34:9): O fear the Lord! you his saints. When we taste and see that he is good we must not forget that he is great and greatly to be feared; nay, even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe. They shall fear the Lord and his

goodness, Ho 3:5. Fear the Lord; that is, worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing, not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him (Ps 34:10) as a people seek unto their God; address yourselves to him and portion yourselves in him.

To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that those that do so, even in this wanting world, shall want no good thing (Heb. They shall not want all good things); they shall so have all good things that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any.

As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life (2Co 12:9,Ps 84:11); and, as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God: as a Father, he will feed them with food convenient. What further comforts they desire they shall have, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them he will give them grace to be content without and then they do not want it, De 3:26. Paul had all and abounded, because he was content, Php 4:11,18.

Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency want nothing; for in him they have enough. The young lions. often lack and suffer hunger--those that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which those have that live by faith in the promise; those that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want (for bread is not always to the wise)--but verily those shall be fed that trust in God and desire to be at his finding. Those that are ravenous, and prey upon all about them, shall want; but the meek shall inherit the earth. Those shall not want who with quietness work and mind their own business; plain-hearted Jacob has pottage enough, when Esau, the cunning hunter, is ready to perish for hunger.

1 I will bless the Lord at all times:
his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord:

the humble shall hear *thereof,* and be glad.
3 O magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the Lord, and he heard
me, and delivered me from all
my fears.
5 They looked unto him, and were lightened:
and their faces were not ashamed.
6 This poor man cried, and the Lord heard *him,*
and saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear
him, and delivereth them.
8 O taste and see that the Lord *is* good:
blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.
9 O fear the Lord, ye his saints:
for *there is* no want to them that fear him.
10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:
but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good *thing.*

David, in this latter part of the psalm, undertakes to teach children. Though a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him; though now he had his head so full of cares and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people, from his own experience.

It does not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least any that were grown up to a capacity of being taught; but, by divine inspiration, he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, though he had offered them his service (Ps 32:8); but he had hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent and that children and young people will be more tractable, and therefore he calls together a congregation of them (Ps 34:11):

"Come, you children, that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days, you children that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught." Perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct

and catechise them; and it is as great a piece of charity to put those children to school whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe,

1. What he expects from them: "Hearken unto me, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me."

2. What he undertakes to teach them--the fear of the Lord, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier; but he does not say to the children, "I will teach you to play on the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or to draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy;" but I will teach you the fear of the Lord, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves and to teach our children.

I. He supposes that we all aim to be happy (Ps 34:12): What man is he that desireth life? that is, as it follows, not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days. Non est vivere, sed valere, vita--It is not being, but well being, that constitutes life. It is asked, "Who wishes to live a long and pleasant life?" and it is easily answered, Who does not? Surely this must look further than time and this present world; for man's life on earth at best consists but of few days and those full of trouble.

What man is he that would be eternally happy, that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven, that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy? Who would see the good before him now, by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? Alas! very few have that in their thoughts. Most ask, Who will show us any good? But few ask, What shall we do to inherit eternal life? This question implies that there are some such.

II. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness both in this world and that to come, Ps 34:13,14. Would we pass comfortably through this world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience; and, in order to that,

1. We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say, that we never speak amiss, to God's dishonour or our neighbours prejudice: Keep thy tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. So great a way does this go in religion that, if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so little a way does religion go without this that of him who bridles not his tongue it is declared, His religion is vain.

2. We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not double-tongued. Our words must be the indications of our minds; our lips must be kept from speaking guild either to God or man. 3. We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. We must depart from evil, from evil works and evil workers; from the sins others commit and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in.

4. It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good, good for ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. 5. Since nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails (which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory) than strife and contention, which bring confusion and every evil work, we must seek peace and pursue it; we must show a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace and to make mischief.

If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it; follow peace with all men, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace; be willing to deny ourselves a great deal, both in honour and interest, for peace' sake. These excellent

directions in a way to life and good are transcribed into the New Testament and made part of our gospel duty, 1Pe 3:10. And, perhaps David, in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. Those that truly repent of what they have done amiss will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

III. He enforces these directions by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plainly stated before us, that we may choose life and live. See Isa 3:10,11.

1. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, however they may bless themselves in their own way.

(1.) God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable. Sad is the case of that man who by his sin has made his Maker his enemy, his destroyer. The face of the Lord is against those that do evil, Ps 34:16. Sometimes God is said to turn his face from them (Jer 18:17), because they have forsaken him; here he is said to set his face against them, because they have fought against him; and most certainly God is able to out-face the most proud and daring sinners and can frown them into hell.

(2.) Ruin is before them; this will follow of course if God be against them, for he is able both to kill and to cast into hell.

[1.] The land of the living shall be no place for them nor theirs. When God sets his face against them he will not only cut them off, but cut off the remembrance of them; when they are alive he will bury them in obscurity, when they are dead he will bury them in oblivion. He will root out their posterity, by whom they would be remembered. He will pour disgrace upon their achievements, which they gloried in and for which they thought they should be remembered. It is certain that there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God.

[2.] There shall be a sting in their death: Evil shall slay the wicked, Ps 34:21. Their death shall be miserable; and so it will certainly be, though they die on a bed of down or on the bed of honour. Death, to them, has a curse in it, and is the king of terrors; to them it is evil, only evil. It is very well observed by Dr. Hammond that the evil here, which slays the wicked, is the same word, in the singular number, that is used (Ps 34:19) for the afflictions of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles, and yet they do them no hurt, but are made to work for good to them, for God will deliver them out of them all; whereas wicked people have fewer troubles, fewer evils befal them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble with a curse in it kills and slays, and does execution; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, nay, gainful.

[3.] Desolation will be their everlasting portion. Those that are wicked themselves often hate the righteous, name and thing, have an implacable enmity to them and their righteousness; but they shall be desolate, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever, shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God and all good angels and men; and those that are so are desolate indeed.

2. Yet say to the righteous, It shall be well with them. All good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of this under a great variety of instances and expressions.

(1.) God takes special notice of good people, and takes notice who have their eyes ever to him and who make conscience of their duty to him: The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous (Ps 34:15), to direct and guide them, to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

(2.) They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer,

which denotes great importunity; but is it to any purpose? Yes,

[1.] God takes notice of what we say (Ps 34:17): They cry, and the Lord hears them, and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. His ears are open to their prayers, to receive them all, and to receive them readily and with delight. Though he has been a God hearing prayer ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy.

There is no rhetoric, nothing charming, in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of: The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, Ps 34:17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God, and it is their constant comfort that God hears them.

[2.] He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready for us to our relief (Ps 34:18): He is nigh to those that are of a broken heart, and saves them. Note, First, It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (that is, humbled for sin and emptied of self); they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only.

Secondly, Those who are so have God nigh unto them, to comfort and support them, that the spirit may not be broken more than is meet, lest it should fail before him. See Isa 57:15. Though God is high, and dwells on high, yet he is near to those who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burdens; he is near them to good purpose.

(3.) They are taken under the special protection of the divine government (Ps 34:20): He keepeth all his bones; not only his soul, but his body; not only his body in general, but every bone in it: Not one of them is broken. He that has a broken

heart shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found that, when he had a contrite heart, the broken bones were made to rejoice, Ps 51:8,17.

One would not expect to meet with any thing of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him (Joh 19:36) when the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise as well as of the type, even the paschal-lamb (a bone of him shall not be broken); the promises, being made good to Christ, through him are sure to all the seed.

It does not follow but that a good man may have a broken bone; but, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, such a calamity is often wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise; and, if he have a broken bone, sooner or later it shall be made whole, at furthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

(4.) They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles.

[1.] It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God and to the example of Christ (Ps 34:19); Many are the afflictions of the righteous, witness David and his afflictions, Ps 132:1. There are those that hate them (Ps 34:21) and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief; their God loves them, and therefore corrects them; so that, between the mercy of heaven and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many.

[2.] God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation: He delivers them out of all their troubles (Ps 34:17,19); he saves them (Ps 34:18), so that, though they may fall into trouble, it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, Ps 34:22. Whatever troubles befal them,

First, They shall not hurt their better part. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants from the power of the grave (Ps 49:15) and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles, which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls.

Secondly, They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss. None of those that trust in him shall be desolate; that is, they shall not be comfortless, for they shall not be cut off from their communion with God. No man is desolate but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell.

Those that are God's faithful servants, that make it their care to please him and their business to honour him, and in doing so trust him to protect and reward them, and, with good thoughts of him, refer themselves to him, have reason to be easy whatever befals them, for they are safe and shall be happy.

In singing Ps 34:11-22 let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto
me: I will teach you the fear of
the Lord.
12 What man *is he that* desireth life,
and loveth *many* days, that he may see good?
13 Keep thy tongue from evil,
and thy lips from speaking guile.
14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the Lord *are* upon the
righteous, and his ears *are open* unto
their cry.

16 The face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 *The righteous* cry, and the Lord heareth,
and delivereth them out of all their troubles.
18 The Lord *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous:
but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.
20 He keepeth all his bones:
not one of them is broken.
21 Evil shall slay the wicked:
and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.
22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants:
and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

Psalms-35

A Prayer for Rescue from Enemies

A Psalm of David.

1 Plead *my cause,* O Lord, with them that strive with me:
fight against them that fight against me.

In these verses we have,

I. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors. He was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his guidance, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had lived (as St. Paul speaks) in all good conscience before God unto this day; and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him; they fought against him (Ps 35:1), not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, sought after his soul (Ps 35:4), that is, his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit and put that

into disorder. Nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but inveterate malice:

They devised his hurt, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it; they hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey; they digged a pit for him and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, Ps 35:7. They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him, for they digged a pit (Ps 7:15); and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent taught them subtlety:

they hid their net from David and his friends; but in vain, for they could not hide it from God. And, lastly, he found himself an unequal match for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was too strong for him (Ps 35:10), for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws and giving judgment, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a sceptre, but a javelin, in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way; such was the manner of the king, and all about him were compelled to do as he bade them, right or wrong. The king's word is a law, and every thing must be carried with a high hand; he has fields, and vineyards, and preferments, at his disposal, 1Sa 22:7.

But David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part but men (as we say) of broken fortunes (1Sa 22:2); and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, who can contend with them? Note, It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies: Christ himself is striven with and fought against, and war is made upon the holy seed; and we are not to marvel at the matter: it is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman.

II. His appeal to God concerning his integrity and the justice of his cause. If a fellow-subject had wronged him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St. Paul did to Cæsar; but, when his prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is prince and Judge of the kings of the earth: Plead my cause, O Lord! Ps 35:1. Note, A righteous cause may, with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, he laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even, and with him there is no respect of persons. God knew that they were, without cause, his enemies, and that they had, without cause, digged pits for him, Ps 35:7.

Note, It will be a comfort to us, when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us that we have never done them any. It was so to St. Paul. Ac 25:10, To the Jews have I done no wrong. We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us by this, That we never gave them any cause to use us so; whereas this should, more than any thing, make us easy, for then we may the more confidently expect that God will plead our cause.

III. His prayer to God to manifest himself both for him and to him, in this trial.

1. For him. He prays that God would fight against his enemies, so as to disable them to hurt him, and defeat their designs against him (Ps 35:1), that he would take hold of shield and buckler, for the Lord is a man of war (Ex 15:3), and that he would stand up for his help (Ps 35:2), for he had few that would stand up for him, and, if he had ever so many, they would stand him in no stead without God. He prays that God would stop their way (Ps 35:3), that they might not overtake him when he fled from them. This prayer we may put up against our persecutors, that God would restrain them and stop their way.

2. To him: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation; let me have inward comfort under all these outward troubles, to support

my soul which they strike at. Let God be my salvation, not only my Saviour out of my present troubles, but my everlasting bliss. Let me have that salvation not only which he is the author of, but which consists in his favour; and let me know my interest in it; let me have the comfortable assurance of it in my own breast." If God, by his Spirit, witness to our spirits that he is our salvation, we have enough, we need desire no more to make us happy; and this is a powerful support when men persecute us. If God be our friend, no matter who is our enemy.

IV. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, not in malice or revenge. We find how patiently he bore Shimei's curses (so let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him); and we cannot suppose that he who was so meek in his conversation would give vent to any intemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but, by the spirit of prophecy, he foretels the just judgments of God that would come upon them for their great wickedness, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially the enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of.

They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death and are not to be prayed for, Jer 7:16,11:14,14:11,1Jo 5:16. As for Saul himself, David, it is probable, knew that God had rejected him and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, 1Sa 16:1. And these predictions look further, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing Ro 11:9,10. David here prays,

1. Against his many enemies (Ps 35:4-6): Let them be confounded, &c. Or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back. This may be taken as a prayer for their repentance, for all penitents are put to shame for their sins and turned back from them. Or, if they were not brought to repentance, David prays that they might be defeated and disappointed in their designs against him and

so put to shame. Though they should in some degree prevail, yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last: They shall be as chaff before the wind, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God and so certainly will they be driven away by them, Ps 1:4.

Their way shall be dark and slippery, darkness and slipperiness (so the margin reads it); the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness and in continual danger of falling into sin, into hell; and it will prove so at last, for their foot shall slide in due time, De 32:35. But this is not the worst of it. Even chaff before the wind may perhaps be stopped, and find a place of rest, and, though the way be dark and slippery, it is possible that a man may keep his footing; but it is here foretold that the angel of the Lord shall chase them (Ps 35:5) so that they shall find no rest, shall persecute them (Ps 35:6) so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God's angels encamp against those that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice, as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their enemy make all the holy angels their enemies.

2. Against his one mighty enemy (Ps 35:8): Let destruction come upon him. It is probable that he means Saul, who laid snares for him and aimed at his destruction. David vowed that his hand should not be upon him; he would not be judge in his own cause. But, at the same time, he foretold that the Lord would smite him (1Sa 26:10), and here that the net he had hidden should catch himself, and into that very destruction he should fall. This was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul; for he had laid a plot to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines (1Sa 18:25), that was the net which he hid for him under pretence of doing him honour, and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines when his day came to fall.

V. His prospect of his own deliverance, which, having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, Ps 35:9,10.

1. He hoped that he should have the comfort of it: "My soul shall be joyful, not in my own ease and safety, but in the Lord and in his favour, in his promise and in his salvation according to the promise." Joy in God and in his salvation is the only true, solid, satisfying joy. Those whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, who sow in tears and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord; for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last enter into the joy of their Lord.

2. He promised that then God should have the glory of it (Ps 35:10): All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?

(1.) He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body and are the strength of it.

(2.) He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection. We cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him by acknowledging him to be a non-such. Lord, who is like unto thee? No such patron of oppressed innocency, no such punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously (Ec 11:5,Ps 139:16), the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which, at the resurrection, shall be breathed upon the dry bones and make them flourish as a herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak, to say, Lord, who is like unto thee? and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
and stand up for mine help.
3 Draw out also the spear,
and stop *the way* against them that persecute me:
say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.
4 Let them be confounded and put to shame
that seek after my soul:
let them be turned back and brought to confusion
that devise my hurt.

5 Let them be as chaff before the wind:
and let the angel of the Lord chase *them*.
6 Let their way be dark and slippery:
and let the angel of the Lord persecute them.
7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit,
which without cause they have digged for my soul.
8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares;
and let his net that he hath hid catch himself:
into that very destruction let him fall.
9 And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord:
it shall rejoice in his salvation.
10 All my bones shall say,
Lord, who *is* like unto thee,
which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for
him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth
him?
11 False witnesses did rise up;
they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.

Two very wicked things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them--perjury and ingratitude.

I. Perjury, Ps 35:11. When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses who swore some treasonable words or overt acts against him, and he being not present to clear himself (or, if he was, it was all the same), Saul adjudged him a traitor.

This he complains of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable: False witnesses did rise up, who would swear anything; they laid to my charge things that I knew not, nor ever thought of. See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives, even of the best men, lie at the mercy of the worst, against whose false oaths innocency itself is no fence; and what reason we have to acknowledge with thankfulness the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing that there is not more mischief done in that way than is.

This instance of the wrong done to David was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David, against whom false witnesses did arise, Mt 26:60. If we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of let us not think it strange, as though some new thing happened to us; so persecuted they the prophets, even the great prophet.

II. Ingratitude. Call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse. This was the character of David's enemies (Ps 35:12): They rewarded me evil for good. A great deal of good service he had done to his king, witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the foreskins of the Philistines; and yet his king vowed his death, and his country was made too hot for him. This is to the spoiling of his soul; this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart, more than anything else. Nay, he had deserved well not only of the public in general, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him.

Probably it was then well known whom he meant; it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serviceable to drive away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayers; to others of the courtiers, it is likely, he had shown this respect, while he lived at court, who now were, of all others, most abusive to him. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful. Joh 10:32. Many good works have I shown you from my Father; for which of those do you stone me? David here shows,

1. How tenderly, and with what a cordial affection, he had behaved towards them in their afflictions (Ps 35:13,14): They were sick. Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death and the visitation of sickness. Now when these people were sick,

(1.) David mourned for them and sympathized with them in their grief. They were not related to him; he was under no

obligations to them; he would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps be a gainer by it; and yet he behaved himself as though they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity; it was a rare composition of hardiness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast.

Observe, He mourned as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us, to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death of our near relations. Those that do not are justly stigmatized as without natural affection.

(2.) He prayed for them. He discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls, and, since he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven were of more value than perhaps they knew or considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction, both in his diet (he fasted, at least from pleasant bread) and in his dress; he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent.

We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the fervour of it; he was so intent in his devotions that he had no appetite to meat, nor would allow himself time for eating:

"My prayer returned into my own bosom; I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby win upon them nor make them my friends." We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are;

for our rejoicing will be this, the testimony of our conscience.

2. How basely and insolently and with what a brutish enmity, and worse than brutish, they had behaved towards him (Ps 35:15,16); In my adversity they rejoiced. When he fell under the frowns of Saul, was banished the court, and persecuted as a criminal, they were pleased, were glad at his calamities, and got together in their drunken clubs to make themselves and one another merry with the disgrace of this great favourite. Well, might he call them abjects, for nothing could be more vile and sordid than to triumph in the fall of a man of such unstained honour and consummate virtue. But this was not all.

(1.) They tore him, rent his good name without mercy, said all the ill they could of him and fastened upon him all the reproach their cursed wit and malice could reach to.

(2.) They gnashed upon him with their teeth; they never spoke of him but with the greatest indignation imaginable, as those that would have eaten him up if they could. David was the fool in the play, and his disappointment all the table-talk of the hypocritical mockers at feasts; it was the song of the drunkards. The comedians, who may fitly be called hypocritical mockers (for which does a hypocrite signify but a stage-player?) and whose comedies, it is likely, were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and gnashed upon him with their teeth.

Such has often been the hard fate of the best of men. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world. David was looked upon with ill-will for no other reason than because he was caressed by the people. It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a right work that for this a man is envied of his neighbour, Ec 4:4. And who can stand before envy? Pr 27:4.

12 They rewarded me evil for good *to* the spoiling of my soul.

13 But as for me, when they were
sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth:
I humbled my soul with fasting;
and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.
14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or*
brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for*
his mother.
15 But in mine adversity they
rejoiced, and gathered themselves
together:
yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against
me, and I knew *it* not;
they did tear *me,* and ceased not:
16 with hypocritical mockers in feasts,
they gnashed upon me with their teeth.
17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on?
Rescue my soul from their
destructions, my darling from the
lions.

In these verses, as before,

I. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence, of his persecutors, pleading this with God as a reason why he should protect him from them and appear against them.

1. They were very unrighteous; they were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation: They hated him without a cause; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This is quoted, with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him. Joh 15:25, They hated me without cause.

2. They were very rude; they could not find in their hearts to show him common civility: They speak not peace; if they met him, they had not the good manners to give him the time of day; like Joseph's brethren, that could not speak peaceably to him, Ge 37:4.

3. They were very proud and scornful (Ps 35:21): They opened their mouth wide against me; they shouted and huzzaed when they saw his fall; they bawled after him when he was forced to quit the court, "Aha! aha! this is the day we longed to see." 4. They were very barbarous and base, for they trampled upon him when he was down, rejoiced at his hurt, and magnified themselves against him, Ps 35:26. Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odit damnatos--The Roman crowd, varying their opinions with every turn of fortune, are sure to execrate the fallen.

Thus, when the Son of David was run upon by the rulers, the people cried, Crucify him, crucify him. 5. They set themselves against all the sober good people that adhered to David (Ps 35:20): They devised deceitful matters, to trepan and ruin those that were quiet in the land. Note,

(1.) It is the character of the godly in the land that they are the quiet in the land, that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors, in the Lord, and endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men, however they may have been misrepresented as enemies to Cæsar and hurtful to kings and provinces. I am for peace, Ps 120:7.

(2.) Though the people of God are, and study to be, a quiet people, yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them. All the hellish arts of malice and falsehood are made use of to render them odious or despicable; their words and actions are misconstrued, even that which they abhor is fathered upon them, laws are made to ensnare them (Da 6:4, &c.), and all to ruin them and root them out. Those that hated David thought scorn, like Haman, to lay hands on him alone, but contrived to involve all the religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.

II. He appeals to God against them, the God to whom vengeance belongs, appeals to his knowledge (Ps 35:22): This thou hast seen. They had falsely accused him, but God, who knows all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse

them, nor make them worse than really they were. They had carried on their plots against him with a great degree of secresy (Ps 35:15): "I knew it not, till long after, when they themselves gloried in it; but thy eye was upon them in their close cabals and thou art a witness of all they have said and done against me and thy people."

He appeals to God's justice: Awake to my judgment, even to my cause, and let it have a hearing at thy bar, Ps 35:23. "Judge me, O Lord my God! pass sentence upon this appeal, according to the righteousness of thy nature and government," Ps 35:24. See this explained by Solomon, 1Ki 7:31,32. When thou art appealed to, hear in heaven, and judge, by condemning the wicked and justifying the righteous.

III. He prays earnestly to God to appear graciously for him and his friends, against his and their enemies, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David and to the conviction and confusion of his persecutors. 1. He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a spectator (Ps 35:17): "Lord, how long wilt thou look on? How long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one, from the lions.

My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it and the greater the loss if I lose it: it is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger; Lord, rescue it. It does, in a peculiar manner, belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thy own; it is thine, save it. Lord, keep not silence, as if thou didst consent to what is done against me! Lord, be not far from me (Ps 35:22), as if I were a stranger that thou wert not concerned for; let not me beheld afar off, as the proud are."

2. He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice (Ps 35:19): Let them not rejoice over me (and again, Ps

35:24); not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon the abjects, as because it would turn to the dishonour of God and the reproach of his confidence in God. It would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness and confirm them in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause. He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger as that they should say in their hearts, Ah! so would we have it (Ps 35:25), much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity that they should say, We have swallowed him up; for then they will reflect upon God himself.

But, on the contrary, that they might be ashamed and brought to confusion together (Ps 35:26, as before, Ps 35:4); he desires that his innocency might be so cleared that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed that they might be ashamed of their designs against him and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation or that that might be their portion which would be their everlasting misery.

3. He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice and give glory to God, Ps 35:27. Notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David, and make him odious, and to frighten people from owning him, there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged and bore a good affection to him; and he prays for them,

(1.) That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good to see an honest man, and an honest cause, prevail and prosper; and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them even when they are run down and trampled upon, shall in due time shout for joy and be glad, for the righteous cause will at length be a victorious cause.

(2.) That they might join with him in his praises: Let them say continually, The Lord be magnified, by us and others, who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. Note,

[1.] The great God has pleasure in this prosperity of good people, not only of his family, the church in general, but of every particular servant in his family. He has pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he does not afflict willingly; and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it.

[2.] When God in his providence shows his good-will to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness, to his praise, and to say, The Lord be magnified.

IV. The mercy he hoped to win by prayer he promises to wear with praise: "I will give thee thanks, as the author of my deliverance (Ps 35:18), and my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness, the justice of thy judgments and the equity of all thy dispensations;" and this,

1. Publicly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to his God, so far was he from being ashamed of them. He will do it in the great congregation, and among much people, that God might be honoured and many edified.

2. Constantly. He will speak God's praise every day (so it may be read) and all the day long; for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no, not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

18 I will give thee thanks in the great
congregation: I will praise thee among much
people.

19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me:
neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

20 For they speak not peace:
but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in
the land.

21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me,
and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *it*.
22 *This* thou hast seen, O Lord: keep not
silence: O Lord, be not far from me.
23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment,
even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Judge me, O Lord my God, according to thy righteousness;
and let them not rejoice over me.
25 Let them not say in their hearts,
Ah, so would we have it:
let them not say, We have swallowed him up.
26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together
that rejoice at mine hurt:
let them be clothed with shame and dishonor
that magnify *themselves* against me.
27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad,
that favor my righteous cause:
yea, let them say continually,
Let the Lord be magnified,
which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.
28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness
and of thy praise all the day long.

Psalms-36

The Steadfast Love of God
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord.

1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,
that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

David, in the title of this psalm, is styled the servant of the Lord; why in this, and not in any other, except in Ps 18:1 (title), no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men more immediately and more eminently than any

other in his day. He glories in it, Ps 116:16. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world.

David, in these verses, describes the wickedness of the wicked; whether he means his persecutors in particular, or all notorious gross sinners in general, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes and sin in its colours, in its root and in its branches.

I. Here is the root of bitterness, from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise,

1. From their contempt of God and the want of a due regard to him (Ps 36:1): "The transgression of the wicked (as it is described afterwards, Ps 36:3,4) saith within my heart (makes me to conclude within myself) that there is no fear of God before his eyes; for, if there were, he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he does; he would not, he durst not, break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty or dread of his wrath."

Fitly therefore is it brought into the form of indictments by our law that the criminal, not having the fear of God before his eyes, did so and so. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whispered it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety. David concluded concerning those who lived at large that they lived without God in the world.

2. From their conceit of themselves and a cheat they wilfully put upon their own souls (Ps 36:2): He flattereth himself in his own eyes; that is, while he goes on in sin, he thinks he does wisely and well for himself, and either does not see or will not own the evil and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good and good evil; his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty, his fraud passes for his prudence

and policy, and his persecuting the people of God, he suggests to himself, is a piece of necessary justice.

If his own conscience threaten him for what he does, he says, God will not require it; I shall have peace though I go on. Note, Sinners are self-destroyers by being self-flatterers. Satan could not deceive them if they did not deceive themselves. Buy will the cheat last always?

No; the day is coming when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is a hateful thing; it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful to him; but it is not so; he rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, because of the secular profit and sensual pleasure which may attend it; yet the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps, Job 20:13,14.

When their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours and makes them a terror to themselves--when the cup of trembling is put into their hands and they are made to drink the dregs of it--then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

II. Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even deifies himself, and then what can be expected but that he should go all to naught? These two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves, and then,

1. They make no conscience of what they say, true of false, right or wrong (Ps 36:3): The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit, contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences. It is no marvel if those that deceive themselves contrive how to deceive all mankind; for to whom will those be true who are false to their own souls?

2. What little good there has been in them is gone; the sparks of virtue are extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing: They have left off to be wise and to do good. They seemed to be under the direction of wisdom and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds asunder; they have shaken off their religion, and therewith their wisdom. Note, Those that leave off to do good leave off to be wise.

3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt and to be vexatious to those about them that are good and do good (Ps 36:4): He devises mischief upon his bed. Note,

(1.) Omissions make way for commissions. When men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances and their duty to him, the devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn into sin, and, with respect to those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good begin to do evil; the devil, being an apostate from his innocency, soon became a tempter to Eve and a persecutor of righteous Abel.

(2.) It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it, to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits on work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management, with the subtlety, as well as the malice, of the old serpent, to devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, Mic 2:1. This argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil.

4. Having entered into the way of sin, that way that is not good, that has good neither in it nor at the end of it, they persist and resolve to persevere in that way. He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him which he has purposed to do, though it be ever to contrary both to his duty and to his true interest. If sinners did not steel their hearts and brazen their faces with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good.

5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others: He abhors not evil, but on the contrary, takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or this may denote his impenitency in sin. Those that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission. But these hardened sinners have such seared stupefied consciences that they never reflect upon their sings afterwards with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think that David, in all this, particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God and left off all goodness, who pretended kindness to him when he gave him his daughter to wife, but at the same time was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description agrees, which is to be greatly lamented.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,
until his iniquity be found to be hateful.
3 The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit:
he hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good.
4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed;
he setteth himself in a way *that is* not good;
he abhorreth not evil.
5 Thy mercy, O Lord, *is* in the heavens;
and thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.

David, having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God, a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

I. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonoured, by the transgressions of the wicked; but, of a sudden, he turns his eye, and heart, and speech, to God "However it be, yet thou art good." He here acknowledges,

1 The transcendent perfections of the divine nature. Among men we have often reason to complain, There is no truth nor mercy, (Ho 4:1), no judgment nor justice, Isa 5:7. But all these may be found in God without the least alloy. Whatever is missing, or amiss, in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him that governs it.

(1.) He is a God of inexhaustible goodness: Thy mercy, O Lord! is in the heavens. If men shut up the bowels of their compassion, yet with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth we meet with little content and a great deal of disquiet and disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection and to eternity, there is all satisfaction; there therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be.

How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worse of God nor of his government; but, from the abundance of wickedness that is among men, let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's purity, as if he countenanced sin, to admire his patience, that he bears so much with those that so impudently provoke him, nay, and causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens (that is, infinitely above the mercies of any creature), he would, long ere this, have drowned the world again. See Isa 55:8,9,Ho 11:9.

(2.) He is a God of inviolable truth: Thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds. Though God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is and will be faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them; he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, nor one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that, though men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity, but

the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faithfulness reaches so high that it does not change with the weather, as men's does, for it reaches to the skies (so it should be read, as some think), above the clouds, and all the changes of the lower region.

(3.) He is a God of incontestable justice and equity: Thy righteousness is like the great mountains, so immovable and inflexible itself and so conspicuous and evident to all the world; for no truth is more certain nor more plain than this, That the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne, Ps 97:2.

(4.) He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design: "Thy judgments are a great deep, not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding." As his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us: His way is in the sea and his path in the great waters. We know that he does all wisely and well; but what he does we know not now; it will be time enough to know hereafter.

2 The extensive care and beneficence of the divine Providence: "Thou preservest man and beast, not only protectest them from mischief, but suppliest them with that which is needful for the support of life." The beasts, though not capable of knowing and praising God, are yet graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he gives them their meat in due season. Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute-creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men; he that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

3. The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe,

(1.) Their character, Ps 36:7. They are such as are allured by the excellency of God's loving-kindness to put their trust under the shadow of his wings.

[1.] God's loving-kindness is precious to them. They relish it; they taste a transcendent sweetness in it; they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world, nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God that do not admire his loving-kindness; and those know not themselves that do not earnestly covet it.

[2.] They therefore repose an entire confidence in him. They have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think themselves safe and find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, Mt 23:37. It was the character of proselytes that they came to trust under the wings of the God of Israel (Ru 2:12); and what more proper to gather proselytes than the excellency of his loving-kindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love will cleave to him.

(2.) Their privilege. Happy, thrice happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a complete happiness.

[1.] Their desires shall be answered, (Ps 36:8): They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, their wants supplied; their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled. In God all-sufficient they shall have enough, all that which an enlightened enlarged soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world and the delights of sense will surfeit, but never satisfy, Isa 55:2.

But the communications of divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of Providence so far satisfy them that they are content with such things as they have. I have all, and abound, Php 4:18. The benefit of holy ordinances is the fatness of God's house,

sweet to a sanctified soul and strengthening to the spiritual and divine life. With this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more in this world than to live a life of communion with God and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant satisfaction is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there.

[2.] Their joys shall be constant: Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

First, There are pleasures that are truly divine. "They are thy pleasures, not only which come from thee as the giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the matter and centre of them." Being purely spiritual, they are of the same nature with those of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy even to the delights of the Eternal Mind.

Secondly, There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each; see Ps 46:4. The pleasures of sense are putrid puddle-water; those of faith are pure and pleasant, clear as crystal, Re 22:1. Thirdly, God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it, works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven they shall be for ever drinking of those pleasures that are at God's right hand, satiated with a fulness of joy, Ps 16:11.

[3.] Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, Ps 36:9. Having God himself for their felicity, First, In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, Ps 36:8. The God of nature is the fountain of natural life. In him we live, and move, and have our being. The God of grace is the fountain of spiritual life. All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul, all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, are from God.

He is the spring and author of all its sensations of divine things, and all its motions towards them: he quickens whom he will; and whosoever will may come, and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the fountain of eternal life. The happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love, without interruption or fear of cessation. Secondly, In him they have light in perfection, wisdom, knowledge, and joy, all included in this light: In thy light we shall see light, that is,

1. "In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory, we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings." That divine light which shines in the scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face, within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, 1Co 13:12,1Jo 3:2.

2. "In communion with thee now; by the communications of thy grace to us and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a complete felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire." This is a dark world; we see little comfort in it; but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light, light that is lasting and never wastes. In this world we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and means; but in heaven God himself shall be with us (Re 21:3) and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

II. We have here David's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He intercedes for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace, Ps 36:10.

(1.) The persons he prays for are those that know God, that are acquainted with him, acknowledge him, and avouch him for theirs--the upright in heart, that are sincere in their

profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man. Those that are not upright with God do not know him as they should.

(2.) The blessing he begs for them is God's loving-kindness (that is, the tokens of his favour towards them) and his righteousness (that is, the workings of his grace in them); or his loving-kindness and righteousness are his goodness according to promise; they are mercy and truth.

(3.) The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed: O continue it, draw it out, as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself. The happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression (as some thing); for the fountain there will be always full and the streams always flowing. In these is continuance, Isa 64:5.

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort (Ps 36:11): "Let not the foot of pride come against me, to trip up my heels, or trample upon me; and let not the hand of the wicked, which is stretched out against me, prevail to remove me, either from my purity and integrity, by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort, by any trouble." Let not those who fight against God triumph over those who desire to cleave to him. Those that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoices in hope of the downfall of all his enemies in due time (Ps 36:12): "There, where they thought to gain the point against me, they have themselves fallen, been taken in that snare which they laid for me." There, in the other world (so some), where the saints stand in the judgment, and have a place in God's house, the workers of iniquity are cast in the judgment, are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which they shall assuredly never be able to rise from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse. It is true we are not to rejoice when any particular enemy of ours falls;

but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

6 Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains;
thy judgments *are* a great deep:
O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.
7 How excellent *is* thy loving-kindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow
of thy wings.
8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;
and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
9 For with thee *is* the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light.
10 O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee;
and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,
and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.
12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen:
they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

Psalms-37

The Insecurity of the Wicked
A Psalm of David.

1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers,
neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

The instructions here given are very plain; much need not be said for the exposition of them, but there is a great deal to be done for the reducing of them to practice, and there they will look best.

I. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil-doers (Ps 37:1,2): Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious. We may suppose that David speaks this to himself first, and preaches it to his own heart (in his communing with that upon his bed), for the suppressing of those corrupt passions which he found working there, and then leaves it in writing for instruction to others that might

be in similar temptation. That is preached best, and with most probability of success, to others, which is first preached to ourselves. Now,

1. When we look abroad we see the world full of evil-doers and workers of iniquity, that flourish and prosper, that have what they will and do what they will, that live in ease and pomp themselves and have power in their hands to do mischief to those about them. So it was in David's time; and therefore, if it is so still, let us not marvel at the matter, as though it were some new or strange thing.

2. When we look within we find ourselves tempted to fret at this, and to be envious against these scandals and burdens, these blemishes and common nuisances, of this earth. We are apt to fret at God, as if he were unkind to the world and unkind to his church in permitting such men to live, and prosper, and prevail, as they do. We are apt to fret ourselves with vexation at their success in their evil projects. We are apt to envy them the liberty they take in getting wealth, and perhaps by unlawful means, and in the indulgence of their lusts, and to wish that we could shake off the restraints of conscience and do so too.

We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and to incline to imitate them, and to join ourselves with them, that we may share in their gains and eat of their dainties; and this is that which we are warned against: Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious. Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments; they are the uneasiness of the spirit and the rottenness of the bones; it is therefore in kindness to ourselves that we are warned against them. Yet that is not all; for,

3. When we look forward with an eye of faith we shall see no reason to envy wicked people their prosperity, for their ruin is at the door and they are ripening apace for it, Ps 37:2. They flourish, but as the grass, and as the green herb, which nobody envies nor frets at. The flourishing of a godly man is

like that of a fruitful tree (Ps 1:3), but that of the wicked man is like grass and herbs, which are very short-lived.

(1.) They will soon wither of themselves. Outward prosperity is a fading thing, and so is the life itself to which it is confined.

(2.) They will sooner be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping and wailing will be everlasting.

II. We are here counselled to live a life on confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil-doers; if we do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do so ill for theirs. Here are three excellent precepts, which we are to be ruled by, and, to enforce them, three precious promises, which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our hope in the way of duty and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, Ps 37:3.

(1.) It is required that we trust in the Lord and do good, that we confide in God and conform to him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation, according to his will. We must not think to trust in God and then live as we list.

No; it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him. Nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves, and our own righteousness and strength. No; we must both trust in the Lord and do good. And then,

(2.) It is promised that we shall be well provided for in this world: So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. He does not say, "So shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace, and be feasted." This is not necessary; a man's

life consists not in the abundance of these things; but, "Thou shalt have a place to live in, and that in the land, in Canaan, the valley of vision, and thou shalt have food convenient for thee." This is more than we deserve; it is as much as a good man will stipulate for (Ge 28:20) and it is enough for one that is going to heaven. "Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance: Verily thou shalt be fed." Some read it, Thou shalt be fed by faith, as the just are said to live by faith, and it is good living, good feeding, upon the promises. "Verily thou shalt be fed, as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee." God himself is a shepherd, a feeder, to all those that trust in him, Ps 23:1.

2. We must make God our heart's delight and then we shall have our heart's desire, Ps 37:4. We must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be, and that he is our God in covenant. We must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity; our souls must return to him, and repose in him, as their rest, and their portion for ever. Being satisfied of his loving-kindness, we must be satisfied with it, and make that our exceeding joy, Ps 43:4. We were commanded (Ps 37:3) to do good, and then follows this command to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him.

And even this pleasant duty of delighting in God has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services: He shall give thee the desires of thy heart. He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this, to know, and love, and live to God, to please him and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our guide, and submit in every thing to his guidance and disposal; and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well and to our satisfaction, Ps 37:5,6.

(1.) The duty is very easy; and, if we do it aright, it will make us easy: Commit thy way unto the Lord; roll thy way upon the Lord (so the margin reads it), Pr 16:3,Ps 55:22. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, the burden of thy care, 1Pe 5:7. We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events (Mt 6:25), not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with the contrivance of the means or with expectation of the end, but refer it to God, leave it to him by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns as he pleases. Retreat thy way unto the Lord (so the LXX.), that is, "By prayer spread thy case, and all thy cares about it, before the Lord" (as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Jdg 11:11), "and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God does."

We must do our duty (that must be our care) and then leave the event with God. Sit still, and see how the matter will fall, Ru 3:18. We must follow Providence, and not force it, subscribe to Infinite Wisdom and not prescribe.

(2.) The promise is very sweet.

[1.] In general, "He shall bring that to pass, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes, to thy satisfaction."

[2.] In particular, "He will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour: He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noon-day." (Ps 37:6), that is, "he shall make it to appear that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough."

First, It is implied that the righteousness and judgment of good people may, for a time, be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of Providence (Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness) or by the malicious censures and reproaches of men, who give them bad names which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not.

Secondly, It is promised that God will, in due time, roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocency, and bring forth their righteousness, to their honour, perhaps in this world, at furthest in the great day, Mt 13:43. Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the
grass, and wither as the green herb.
3 Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.
4 Delight thyself also in the Lord;
and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5 Commit thy way unto the Lord;
trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.
6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the
light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

In these verses we have,

I The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needless fruitless discontents and distrusts that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them and arm us against them.

1. Let us compose ourselves by believing in God: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him (Ps 37:7), that is, be well reconciled to all he does and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way." Be silent to the

Lord (so the word is), not with a sullen, but a submissive silence. A patient bearing of what is laid upon us, with a patient expectation of what is further appointed for us, is as much our interest as it is our duty, for it will make us always easy; and there is a great deal of reason for it, for it is making a virtue of necessity.

2. Let us not discompose ourselves at what we see in this world: "Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his wicked way, who, though he is a bad man, yet thrives and grows rich and great in the world; no, nor because of him who does mischief with his power and wealth, and brings wicked devices to pass against those that are virtuous and good, who seems to have gained his point and to have run them down.

If thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and cease from anger (Ps 37:8), check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account. Be not angry at any thing that God does, but forsake that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be. Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil; do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves or some desperate course to avoid them and their power."

Note, A fretful discontented spirit lies open to many temptations; and those that indulge it are in danger of doing evil.

II The foregoing reasons, taken from the approaching ruin of the wicked notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon and the same things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression. We were cautioned (Ps 37:7) not to envy the wicked either worldly prosperity or the success of their plots against the righteous, and the reasons here given respect these two temptations severally:--

1. Good people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, nor to grieve or be uneasy at it,

(1.) Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end (Ps 37:9): Evil-doers shall be cut off by some sudden stroke of divine justice in the midst of their prosperity; what they have got by sin will not only flow away from them (Job 20:28), but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men (Ps 73:17), how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and you will be far from envying them or from being willing to espouse their lot, for better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near (Ps 37:10): Yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be what they now are; they are brought into desolation in a moment, Ps 73:19. Have a little patience, for the Judge stands before the door, Jam 5:8,9. Moderate your passion, for the Lord is at hand, Php 4:5. And when their ruin comes it will be an utter ruin; he and his shall be extirpated; the day that comes shall leave him neither root nor branch (Mal 4:1):

Thou shalt diligently consider his place, where but the other day he made a mighty figure, but it shall not be, you will not find it; he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable, behind. him. To the same purport (Ps 37:20), The wicked shall perish; their death is their perdition, because it is the termination of all their joy and a passage to endless misery. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord; such those make themselves who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them: They shall consume as the fat of lambs, they shall consume into smoke. Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is like the fat of lambs, not solid or substantial, but loose and washy; and, when their ruin comes, they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, whence it ascended in smoke.

The day of God's vengeance on the wicked is represented as a sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams (Isa 34:6); for he

will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices. Damned sinners are sacrifices, Mk 9:49. This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity; while they are fed to the full, they are but in the fattening for the day of sacrifice, like a lamb in a large place (Ho 4:16), and the more they prosper the more will God be glorified in their ruin.

(2.) Because the condition of the righteous, even in this life, is every way better and more desirable than that of the wicked, Ps 37:16. In general, a little that a righteous man has of the honour, wealth, and pleasure of this world, is better than the riches of many wicked. Observe,

[1.] The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the divine Providence that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would show us that the things of this world are not the best things, for, if they were, those would have most that are best and dearest to God.

[2.] That a godly man's little is really better than a wicked man's estate, though ever so much; for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love and not merely from a hand of common providence,--it is enjoyed by a better title (God gives it to them by promise, Ga 3:18), --it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things,--and it is put to better use; it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God. Unto the pure all things are pure, Tit 1:15. A little wherewith God is served and honoured is better than a great deal prepared for Baal or for a base lust. The promises here made to the righteous secure them such a happiness that they need not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. Let them know to their comfort,

First, That they shall inherit the earth, as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; they have the promise of the life that now is, 1Ti 4:8. If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as things to come, 1Co

3:21,22. They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only and connivance. When evil-doers are cut off the righteous sometimes inherit what they gathered. The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Job 27:17,Pr 13:22. This promise is here made,

1. To those that live a life of faith (Ps 37:9); Those that wait upon the Lord, as dependents on him, expectants from him, and suppliants to him, shall inherit the earth, as a token of his present favour to them and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good Master, that provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants, but for his waiting servants.

2. To those that live a quiet and peaceable life (Ps 37:11): The meek shall inherit the earth. They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have and they have most satisfaction in themselves and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature-comforts. Our Saviour has made this a gospel promise, and a confirmation of the blessings he pronounced on the meek, Mt 5:5.

Secondly, That they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace, Ps 37:11. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in; but they have that which is better, abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquility of mind, peace with God, and then peace in God, that great peace which those have that love God's law, whom nothing shall offend (Ps 119:165), that abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ (Ps 72:7), that peace which the world cannot give (Joh 14:27), and which the wicked cannot have, Isa 57:21.

This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast; while those that have abundance of wealth do but cumber and perplex themselves with it and have little delight in it.

Thirdly, That God knows their days, Ps 37:18. He takes particular notice of them, of all they do and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded, and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompence. He knows their bright days, and has pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and as the day is so shall the strength be.

Fourthly, That their inheritance shall be for ever; not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible indefeasible one which is laid up for them in heaven. Those that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in the other world have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world. Fifthly, That in the worst of times it shall go well with them (Ps 37:19):

They shall not be ashamed of their hope and confidence in God, nor of the profession they have made of religion; for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them, in evil times. When others droop they shall lift up their heads with joy and confidence: Even in the days of famine, when others are dying for hunger round about them, they shall be satisfied, as Elijah was; in some way or other God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it, so that, if they should be hardly bestead and hungry, they shall not (as the wicked do) fret themselves and curse their king and their God (Isa 7:21), but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation even when the fig-tree does not blossom, Hab 3:17,18.

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the occasional success of the designs of the wicked against the just. Though they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain their point and bring them all to pass, yet let us cease from anger, and not fret ourselves so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

(1.) Their plots will be their shame, Ps 37:12,13. It is true the wicked plotteth against the just; there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed; their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness, or, if that fail, then to destroy them. With this end in view they have acted with a great deal both of cursed policy and contrivance (they plot, they practice, against the just), and of cursed zeal and fury--they gnash upon them with their teeth, so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up, and so full of rage and indignation are they because it is not in their power; but by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous. The Lord shall laugh at them, Ps 2:4,5.

They are proud and insolent, but God shall pour contempt upon them. He is not only displeased with them, but he despises them and all their attempts as vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent and in a chain; for he sees that his day is coming, that is,

[1.] The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now. This is your hour, Lu 22:53. But God will have his day shortly, a day of recompences, a day which will set all to rights, and render that ridiculous which now passes for glorious. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1Co 4:3. God's day will give a decisive judgment.

[2.] The day of their ruin. The wicked man's day, the day set for his fall, that day is coming, which denotes delay; it has not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to despise the rage of her enemies and laugh them to scorn, Isa 37:22.

(2.) Their attempts will be their destruction, Ps 37:14,15. See here,

[1.] How cruel they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, the sword and the bow,

no less will serve; they hunt for the precious life. That which they design is to cast down and slay; it is the blood of the saints they thirst after. They carry on the design very far, and it is near to be put in execution: They have drawn the sword, and bent the bow; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, the poor and needy (which proves them to be very cowardly), and against the guiltless, such as are of upright conversation, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them or any other person, which proves them to be very wicked. Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But,

[2.] How justly their malice recoils upon themselves: Their sword shall turn into their own heart, which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice and the filling up of the measure of their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction which they projected against their harmless neighbours; however, God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against them, will give them their death's wound.

(3.) Those that are not suddenly cut off shall yet be so disabled for doing any further mischief that the interests of the church shall be effectually secured: Their bows shall be broken (Ps 37:15); the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of to serve their bloody purposes with; nay, their arms shall be broken, so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprises, Ps 37:17.

But the Lord upholds the righteous, so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions nor are crushed by the violence of their enemies. He upholds them both in their integrity and in their prosperity; and those that are so upheld by the rock of ages have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him:
fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his
way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to
pass.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath:
fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9 For evildoers shall be cut off:
but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.
10 For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be:*
yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall* not *be.*
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth;
and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12 The wicked plotteth against the just,
and gnasheth upon him with his
teeth.
13 The Lord shall laugh at him:
for he seeth that his day is coming.
14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their
bow, to cast down the poor and needy,
and to slay such as be of upright conversation.
15 Their sword shall enter into their own
heart, and their bows shall be broken.
16 A little that a righteous man hath
is better than the riches of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken:
but the Lord upholdeth the righteous.
18 The Lord knoweth the days of the upright:
and their inheritance shall be for ever.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time:
and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
20 But the wicked shall perish,
and the enemies of the Lord *shall be* as the fat of lambs:
they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

These verses are much to the same purport with the Ps 37:1-20 of this psalm, for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

I. What is required of us as the way to our happiness, which we may learn both from the characters here laid down and from the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God,

1. We must make conscience of giving every body his own; for the wicked borrows and pays not again, Ps 37:21. It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful paltry thing, but a sinful wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance, not so much of the wickedness of the wicked as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God, that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply and then be in no capacity to repay it again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. Whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them.

2. We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence; for, as it is an instance of God's goodness to the righteous that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind and to do good (and so some understand it, God's blessing increases his little to such a degree that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others), so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man that he has a heart proportionable to his estate:

He shows mercy, and gives, Ps 37:21. He is ever merciful, or every day, or all the day, merciful, and lends, and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; and giving and lending are acceptable to God when they proceed from a merciful disposition in the heart, which, if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being weary of well-doing. he that is truly merciful will be ever merciful.

3. We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness (Ps 37:27): Depart from evil and do good. Cease to do evil and abhor it; learn to do well and cleave to it; this is true religion.

4. We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God and edify others. It is part of the character of a righteous man (Ps 37:30) that his mouth speaketh

wisdom; not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him. His tongue talks not of things idle and impertinent, but of judgment, that is, of the word and providence of God and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good and to the use of edifying.

5. We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God (Ps 37:31): The law of God, of his God, is in his heart; and in vain do we pretend that God is our God if we do not receive his law into our hearts and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and a mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment (Ps 37:30), unless we have the law in our hearts, and we think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding ruling principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform: None of his steps will slide; it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

II. What is assured to us, as instances of our happiness and comfort, upon these conditions.

1. That we shall have the blessing of God, and that blessing shall be the spring, and sweetness, and security of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments (Ps 37:22): Such as are blessed of God, as all the righteous are, with a Father's blessing, by virtue of that shall inherit the earth, or the land (for so the same word is translated, Ps 37:29), the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands. Our creature-comforts are comforts indeed to us when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world.

The earth shall yield us her increase if God, as our own God, give us his blessing, Ps 67:6. And as those whom God blesses are thus blessed indeed (for they shall inherit the land), so those whom he curses are cursed indeed; they shall be cut off and rooted out, and their extirpation by the divine curse will

set off the establishment of the righteous by the divine blessing and be a foil to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs so as may be most for his glory (Ps 37:23): The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. By his grace and Holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs of good men. He has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent. By his providence he overrules the events that concern them, so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do and what they may expect.

Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general, by his written word, but his particular steps, by the whispers of conscience, saying, This is the way, walk in it. He does not always show him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his guidance; and this,

(1.) Because he delights in his way, and is well pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. The Lord knows the way of the righteous (Ps 1:6), knows it with favour, and therefore directs it.

(2.) That he may delight in his way. Because God orders his way according to his own will, therefore he delights in it; for, as he loves his own image upon us, so he is well pleased with what we do under his guidance.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls either into sin or into trouble (Ps 37:24): Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.

(1.) A good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover him to repentance, so that he shall not be utterly cast down. Though he may, for a time, lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free Spirit. The root shall be kept alive, though the leaf wither; and there will come a spring after the winter.

(2.) A good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but he shall not be utterly cast down; God will be the strength of his heart when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That we shall not want the necessary supports of this life (Ps 37:25): "I have been young and now am old, and, among all the changes I have seen in men's outward condition and the observations I have made upon them, I never saw the righteous forsaken of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people abandoned both by heaven and earth; nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to such an extremity as to beg their bread."

David had himself begged his bread of Abimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness' sake out of all the temporal promises (Mk 10:30), because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attending it as make it rather a gift (as the apostle reckons it, Php 1:29) than a loss or grievance. But there are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread. Forsaken (so some expound it); if they do want God will raise them up friends to supply them, without a scandalous exposing of themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or, if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man that wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? Job 15:23.

Nor shall he be denied, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him, Lu 15:16. Nor shall he grudge if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies, when they wandered up and down for meat, Ps 59:15. Some make this promise relate especially to those that are charitable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by

their charity. It is withholding more than is meet that tends to poverty, Pr 11:24.

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits (Ps 37:28): The Lord loves judgment; he delights in doing justice himself and he delights in those that do justice; and therefore he forsakes not his saints in affliction when others make themselves strange to them and become shy of them, but he takes care that they be preserved for ever, that is, that the saint in every age be taken under his protection, that the succession be preserved to the end of time, and that particular saints be preserved from all the temptations and through all the trials of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; that is a preservation for ever, Ps 2Ti 4:18,Ps 12:7.

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. That we shall dwell for evermore (Ps 37:27), and not be cut off as the seed of the wicked, Ps 37:28. Those shall not be tossed that make God their rest and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city; it is in heaven only, that city which has foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries, who seek our ruin, Ps 37:32,33. There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief, a wicked one that watches the righteous (as a roaring lion watches his prey) and seeks to slay him. There are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle (they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it), and very spiteful, for they seek to slay him.

But it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the devil, that old serpent, who has his wiles to entrap the righteous, his devices which we should not be ignorant of,--that great red dragon, who seeks to slay them,--that roaring lion, who

goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments.

(1.) He shall not prevail as a field-adversary: The Lord will not leave him in his hand; he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and their faith shall not fail, Lu 22:31,32. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1Co 10:13.

(2.) He shall not prevail as a law-adversary: God will not condemn him when he is judged, though urged to do it by the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before our God day and night. His false accusations will be thrown out, as those exhibited against Joshua (Zec 3:1,2), The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! It is God that justifies, and then who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again:
but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.
22 For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth;
and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.
23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the Lord:
and he delighteth in his way.
24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:
for the Lord upholdeth *him with* his hand.
25 I have been young, and *now* am old;
yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
nor his seed begging bread.
26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth;
and his seed *is* blessed.
27 Depart from evil, and do good;
and dwell for evermore.
28 For the Lord loveth judgment,
and forsaketh not his saints;
they are preserved for ever:
but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
and dwell therein for ever.
30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom,
and his tongue talketh of judgment.
31 The law of his God *is* in his heart;
none of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watcheth the righteous,
and seeketh to slay him.
33 The Lord will not leave him in his hand,
nor condemn him when he is judged.
34 Wait on the Lord, and keep his way,
and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:
when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

The psalmist's conclusion of this sermon (for that is the nature of this poem) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

I The duty here pressed upon us is still the same (Ps 37:34): Wait on the Lord and keep his way. Duty is ours, and we must mind it and make conscience of it, keep God's way and never turn out of it nor loiter in it, keep close, keep going; but events are God's and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of keeping God's way, we may with cheerfulness wait on him and commit to him our way; and we shall find him a good Master both to his working servants and to his waiting servants.

II The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too, taken from the certain destruction of the wicked and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man, being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, goes into the sanctuary of God and leads us thither (Ps 73:17); there he understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and, by comparing that with the end of the righteous, baffles the temptation and puts it to silence. Observe,

1 The misery of the wicked at last, however they may prosper awhile: The end of the wicked shall be cut off (Ps 37:38); and that cannot be well that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked, in their end, will be cut off from all good and all hopes of it; a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be for ever separated from the fountain of life to all evil.

(1.) Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had himself observed in this world--that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God when their day should come to fall (Ps 37:36,35): I have seen a wicked man (the word is singular), suppose Saul or Ahithophel (for David was an old man when he penned this psalm), in great power, formidable (so some render it), the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed and finely flourishing, spreading himself like a green bay-tree, which produces all leaves and no fruit; like a native home-born Israelite (so Dr. Hammond), likely to take root. But what became of him? Eliphaz, long before, had learned, when he saw the foolish taking root, to curse his habitation, Job 5:3.

And David saw cause for it; for this bay-tree withered away as soon as the fig-tree. Christ cursed: He passed away as a dream, as a shadow, such was he and all the pomp and power he was so proud of. He was gone in an instant: He was not; I sought him with wonder, but he could not be found. He had acted his part and then quitted the stage, and there was no miss of him.

(2.) The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the saints as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world (Ps 37:34): When the wicked are cut off (and cut off they certainly will be) thou shalt see it, with awful adorations of the divine justice. The transgressors shall be destroyed together, Ps 37:38. In this world God singles out here one sinner and there another, out of many, to be made an example in terrorem--as

a warning; but in the day of judgment there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. Those that have sinned together shall be damned together. Bind them in bundles, to burn them.

2 The blessedness of the righteous, at last. Let us see what will be the end of God's poor despised people.

(1.) Preferment. There have been times the iniquity of which has been such that men's piety has hindered their preferment in this world, and put them quite out of the way of raising estates; but those that keep God's way may be assured that in due time he will exalt them, to inherit the land (Ps 37:34); he will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to dignity, and honour, and true wealth, in the New Jerusalem, to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type; he will exalt them above all contempt and danger.

(2.) Peace, Ps 37:37. Let all people mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; take notice of him to admire him and imitate him, keep your eye upon him to observe what comes of him, and you will find that the end of that man is peace. Sometimes the latter end of his days proves more comfortable to him than the beginning was; the storms blow over, and he is comforted again, after the time that he was afflicted. However, if all his days continue dark and cloudy, perhaps his dying day may prove comfortable to him and his sun may set in brightness; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, everlasting peace. Those that walk in their uprightness while they live shall enter into peace when they die, Isa 57:2. A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death and his last end might be like that of the righteous Nu 23:10.

(3.) Salvation, Ps 37:39,40. The salvation of the righteous (which may be applied to the great salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, 1Pe 1:10) is of the

Lord; it will be the Lord's doing. The eternal salvation, that salvation of God which those shall see that order their conversation aright (Ps 50:23), is likewise of the Lord. And he that intends Christ and heaven for them will be a God all-sufficient to them: He is their strength in time of trouble, to support them under it and carry them through it. He shall help them and deliver them, help them to do their duties, to bear their burdens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts, help them to bear their troubles well and get good by them, and, in due time, shall deliver them out of their troubles.

He shall deliver them from the wicked that would overwhelm them and swallow them up, shall secure them there, where the wicked cease from troubling. He shall save them, not only keep them safe, but make them happy, because they trust in him, not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

35 I have seen the wicked in great power,
and spreading himself like a green bay tree.
36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not:
yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
37 Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright:
for the end of *that* man *is* peace.
38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together:
the end of the wicked shall be cut off.
39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the Lord:
he is their strength in the time of trouble.
40 And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them:
he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them,
because they trust in him.

Psalms-38

The Prayer of a Suffering Penitent
A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

1 O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath:

neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

The title of this psalm is very observable; it is a psalm to bring to remembrance; the 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so entitled. It is designed, 1. To bring to his own remembrance. We will suppose it penned when he was sick and in pain, and then it teaches us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance, to bring the sin to remembrance, for which God contended with us, to awaken our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us, and set our sins in order before us, for our humiliation. In a day of adversity consider.

Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the convictions he was under and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that upon every review of this psalm he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purport was the writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick. 2. To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think and what to say when they are sick and in affliction; let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

I. He deprecates the wrath of God and his displeasure in his affliction (Ps 38:1): O Lord! rebuke me not in thy wrath. With this same petition he began another prayer for the visitation of the sick, Ps 6:1. This was most upon his heart, and should be most upon ours when we are in affliction, that, however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure, for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God must pray against that more than any outward affliction, and be content to bear any outward affliction while it comes from, and consists with, the love of God.

II. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's displeasure upon his soul (Ps 38:2): Thy arrows stick fast in me. Let Job's complaint (Job 7:4) expound this of David. By the arrows of the Almighty he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very

melancholy frightful apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out and to bind up with his comforts the wound he has made with his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned--the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them and the wound will be incurable.

"Thy hand, thy heavy hand, presses me sore, and I am ready to sink under it; it not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long; and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand?" Sometimes God shot his arrows, and stretched forth his hand, for David (Ps 18:4), but now against him; so uncertain is the continuance of divine comforts, where yet the continuance of divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under (Ps 38:3):

There is no soundness in my flesh because of thy anger. The bitterness of it, infused in his mind, affected his body; but that was not the worst: it caused the disquietude of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness of the sweet psalmist of Israel, and roared terribly, Ps 38:8. Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger, which shows what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet is to keep ourselves in the love of God and to do nothing to offend him.

III. He acknowledges his sin to be the procuring provoking cause of all his troubles, and groans more under the load of guilt than any other load, Ps 38:3. He complains that his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great an agitation he was in. "It is because of thy anger; that kindles the fire which burns so fiercely;" but, in the next words, he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself: "It is because of my sin. I have deserved it, and so have brought it upon myself.

My own iniquities do correct me." If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank ourselves; it is our sin that is the cause of it. Are we restless? It is sin that makes us so. If there were not sin in our souls, there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies. It is sin therefore that this good man complains most of,

1. As a burden, a heavy burden (Ps 38:4): "My iniquities have gone over my head, as proud waters over a man that is sinking and drowning, or as a heavy burden upon my head, pressing me down more than I am able to bear or to bear up under." Note, Sin is a burden. The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight, Heb 12:1. All are clogged with it; it keeps men from soaring upward and pressing forward. All the saints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with, Ro 7:24.

The guilt of sin committed by us is a burden, a heavy burden; it is a burden to God (he is pressed under it, Am 2:13), a burden to the whole creation, which groans under it, Ro 8:21,22. It will, first or last, be a burden to the sinner himself, either a burden of repentance when he is pricked to the heart for it, labours, and is heavy-laden, under it, or a burden of ruin when it sinks him to the lowest hell and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, Zec 5:8. Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatenings are burdens.

2. As wounds, dangerous wounds (Ps 38:5): "My wounds stink and are corrupt (as wounds in the body rankle, and fester, and grow foul, for want of being dressed and looked after), and it is through my own foolishness." Sins are wounds (Ge 4:23), painful mortal wounds. Our wounds by sin are often in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness in not confessing sin, Ps 32:3,4. A slight sore, neglected, may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin slighted and left unrepented of.

IV. He bemoans himself because of his afflictions, and gives ease to his grief by giving vent to it and pouring out his complaint before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled, or distorted, bowed down greatly, and went mourning all the day long, Ps 38:6. He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burden and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sorely broken, and his heart disquieted, Ps 38:8. Herein David, in his sufferings, was a type of Christ, who, being in his agony, cried out, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful. This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his loins were filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling, or ulcer, or inflammation (some think a plague-sore, such as Hezekiah's boil), and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over distempered. See

(1.) What vile bodies these are which we carry about with us, what grievous diseases they are liable to, and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud and clog.

(2.) That the bodies both of the greatest and of the best of men have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. David himself, though so great a prince and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases: there was no soundness even in his flesh. Probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh for his fleshly lusts. When, at any time, we are distempered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in and by our bodies.

He was feeble and sorely broken, Ps 38:8. His heart panted, and was in a continual palpitation, Ps 38:10. His strength and limbs failed him. As for the light of his eyes, that had gone from him, either with much weeping or by a defluxion of rheum upon them, or perhaps through the lowness of his spirits and the frequent returns of fainting.

Note, Sickness will tame the strongest body and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet, when God contended with him by bodily sickness and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he becomes weak as water. Therefore let not the strongman glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance, however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkind to him (Ps 38:11): My lovers (such as had been merry with him in the day of his mirth) now stand aloof from my sore; they would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints, but, like the priest and Levite (Lu 10:31), passed on the other side. Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, stood afar off.

See what little reason we have to trust in man or to wonder if we disappointed in our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore and from whose love no tribulation nor distress shall be able to separate us. David, in his troubles, was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ, on his cross, feeble and sorely broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

V. In the midst of his complaints, he comforts himself with the cognizance God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers (Ps 38:9): "Lord, all my desire is before thee. Thou knowest what I want and what I would have: My groaning is not hidden from thee. Thou knowest the burdens

I groan under and the blessings I groan after." The groanings which cannot be uttered are not hidden from him that searches the heart and knows what is the mind of the Spirit, Ro 8:26,27.

In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burden lies upon our spirits, we would by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me,
and thy hand presseth me sore.
3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger;
neither *is there any* rest in my bones because of my sin.
4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:
as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
5 My wounds stink *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.
6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease:*
and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am feeble and sore broken:
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
9 Lord, all my desire *is* before thee;
and my groaning is not hid from thee.
10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me:
as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore;
and my kinsmen stand afar off.
12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me;*
and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,
and imagine deceits all the day long.

In these verses,

I. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who, it should seem, not only took occasion from the weakness of his body and the trouble of his mind to insult over him, but took advantage thence to do him a mischief. He has a great deal to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as Ps 25:19, Consider my enemies.

1. "They are very spiteful and cruel: They seek my hurt; nay, they seek after my life," Ps 38:12. That life which was so precious in the sight of the Lord and all good men was aimed at, as if it had been forfeited, or a public nuisance. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; it would wound the head, though it can but reach the heel. It is the blood of the saints that is thirsted after.

2. "They are very subtle and politic. They lay snares, they imagine deceits, and herein they are restless and unwearied: they do it all the day long. They speak mischievous things one to another; every one has something or other to propose that may be a mischief to me." Mischief, covered and carried on by deceit, may well be called a snare.

3. "They are very insolent and abusive: When my foot slips, when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word, or take a false step, they magnify themselves against me; they are pleased with it, and promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that if I slip I shall certainly fall and be undone."

4. "They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful: They hate me wrongfully, Ps 38:19. I never did them any ill turn, nor so much as bore them any ill-will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, they render evil for good, Ps 38:20. Many a kindness I have done them, for which I might have expected a return of kindness; but for my love they are my adversaries," Ps 109:4. Such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake that they hate it, even when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer even in those that pray for them, and hate peace even in those that would be at peace with them. Very ill-natured indeed those are whom no courtesy will oblige, but who are rather exasperated by it.

5. "They are very impious and devilish: They are my adversaries merely because I follow the thing that good is." They hated him, not only for his kindness to them, but for his

devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God and all that bear his image. If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so (Cain slew Abel, because his works were righteous); nor must we think it hard, because it will not be always so; for so much the greater will our reward be.

6. "They are many and mighty: They are lively; they are strong; they are multiplied, Ps 38:19. Lord, how are those increased that trouble me?" Ps 3:1. Holy David was weak and faint; his heart panted, and his strength failed; he was melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends; but at the same time his wicked enemies were strong and lively, and their number increased.

Let us not therefore pretend to judge of men's characters by their outward condition; none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. It should seem that David in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described, perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. None hate Christianity but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity and broken through its most sacred bonds.

II. He reflects, with comfort, upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief when they provoke us to sin (Ne 6:13), when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty. If by divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and are saved from harm. If still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? This David did here.

1. He kept his temper, and was not ruffled nor discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him or the mischievous things that were said or done against him (Ps 38:13,14): "I, as a deaf man, heard not; I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put

into disorder by them, much less did I meditate revenge, or study to return the injury."

Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf, he was dumb, as a man in whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for fear of putting himself into a heat and incensing his enemies yet more against him; he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Though they sought after his life, and his silence might be taken for a confession of his guilt, yet he was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth. Note, When our enemies are most clamorous it is generally our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make bad worse.

David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, nor by his soft answers to turn away their wrath; for they were men of such base spirits that they rendered him evil for good; and yet he conducted himself thus meekly towards them, that he might prevent his own sin and might have the comfort of it in the reflection. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was as a sheep dumb before the shearer, and, when he was reviled, reviled not again; and both are examples to us not to render railing for railing.

2. He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries and silenced his own resentments of them.

(1.) He trusted in God (Ps 38:15): "I was as a man that opens not his mouth, for in thee, O Lord! do I hope. I depend upon thee to plead my cause and clear my innocency, and, some way or other, to put my enemies to silence and shame." His lovers and friends, that should have owned him, and stood by him, and appeared as witnesses for him, withdrew from him, Ps 38:10. But God is a friend that will never fail us if we hope in him. "I was as a man that heareth not, for thou wilt hear. Why need I hear, and God hear too?" He careth for

you (1Pe 5:7), and why need you care and God care too? "Thou wilt answer" (so some) "and therefore I will say nothing."

Note, It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is a witness to all the wrong that is done us, and, in due time, will be a witness for us and against those that do us wrong; therefore let us be silent, because, if we be, then we may expect that God will appear for us, for this is an evidence that we trust in him; but, if we undertake to manage for ourselves, we take God's work out of his hands and forfeit the benefit of his appearing for us. Our Lord Jesus, when he suffered, threatened not, because he committed himself to him that judges righteously (1Pe 2:23); and we shall lose nothing, at last, by doing so. Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

(2.) He called upon God (Ps 38:16): For I said, Hear me (that is supplied); "I said so" (as Ps 38:15); "in thee do I hope, for thou wilt hear, lest they should rejoice over me. I comforted myself with that when I was apprehensive that they would overwhelm me." It is a great support to us, when men are false and unkind, that we have a God to go to whom we may be free with and who will be faithful to us.

III. He here bewails his own follies and infirmities.

1. He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, and that he was now ready to repine at the providence of God and to be put into a passion by the injuries men did him: I am ready to halt, Ps 38:17. This will best be explained by a reflection like this which the psalmist made upon himself in a similar case (Ps 73:2): My feet were almost gone, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. So here: I was ready to halt, ready to say, I have cleansed my hands in vain. His sorrow was continual: All the day long have I been plagued. (Ps 73:13,14), and it was continually before him; he could not forbear poring upon it, and that made him almost ready to halt between religion and irreligion.

The fear of this drove him to his God: "In thee do I hope, not only that thou wilt plead my cause, but that thou wilt prevent my falling into sin." Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who, by setting God always before them, have kept their standing.

2. He remembered against himself his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself and forfeited the divine protection. Though before men he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself (Ps 38:18):

"I will declare my iniquity, and not cover it; I will be sorry for my sin, and not make a light matter of it;" and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of Providence and the reproaches of men. Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance:--

(1.) Confession of sin: "I will declare my iniquity; I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss." We must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God and take shame to ourselves.

(2.) Contrition for sin: I will be sorry for it. Sin will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God and the wrong he has done to himself. "I will be in care or fear about my sin" (so some), "in fear lest it ruin me and in care to get it pardoned."

IV. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him and seasonable powerful succour in his distress (Ps 38:21,22): "Forsake me not, O Lord! though my friends forsake me, and though I deserve to be forsaken by thee. Be not far from me, as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art." Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor does any

thing therefore come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer:

"Lord, be not thou far from me; make haste for my help; for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost if relief do not come quickly." God gives us leave, not only to call upon him when we are in trouble, but to hasten him. He pleads, "Thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation." Is any afflicted? let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope, in singing this psalm.

13 But I, as a deaf *man,* heard not;
and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.
14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not,
and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.
15 For in thee, O Lord, do I hope:
thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.
16 For I said, *Hear me,* lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me:
when my foot slippeth,
they magnify *themselves* against me.
17 For I *am* ready to halt,
and my sorrow *is* continually before me.
18 For I will declare mine iniquity;
I will be sorry for my sin.
19 But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong:
and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.
20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries;
because I follow *the thing that* good *is.*
21 Forsake me not, O Lord:
O my God, be not far from me.
22 Make haste to help me,
O Lord my salvation.

Psalms-39

Hope in the Lord

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions; and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss may be amended, and what was well thought of may be improved the next time.

I. He remembered the covenants he had made with God to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did and what he said. When at any time we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against the particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can, and will, remind us of them (Jer 20:20, Thou saidst, I will not transgress), and therefore we ought to remind ourselves of them. So David did here.

1. He remembers that he had resolved, in general, to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking (Ps 39:1): I said, I will take heed to my ways; and it was well said, and what he would never unsay and therefore must never gainsay. Note, (1.) It is the great concern of every one of us to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures.

(2.) We ought stedfastly to resolve that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution. Fast bind, fast find.

(3.) Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must, upon all occasions, remind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

2. He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue-sins--that he would not sin with his tongue, that he

would not speak amiss, either to offend God or offend the generation of the righteous, Ps 73:15. It is not so easy as we could wish not to sin in thought; but, if an evil thought should arise in his mind, he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no further:

and this is so great an attainment that, if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; and so needful a one that of him who seems to be religious, but bridles not his tongue, it is declared His religion is vain. David had resolved,

(1.) That he would at all times watch against tongue-sins: "I will keep a bridle, or muzzle, upon my mouth." He would keep a bridle upon it, as upon the head; watchfulness in the act and exercise is the hand upon the bridle. He would keep a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce and does mischief; by particular stedfast resolution corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled.

(2.) That he would double his guard against them when there was most danger of scandal--when the wicked is before me. When he was in company with the wicked he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men fall into bad company, they must take heed what they say.

Or, when the wicked is before me, in my thoughts. When he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate, of evil-doers, he was tempted to speak amiss; and therefore then he would take special care what he said. Note, The stronger the temptation to a sin is the stronger the resolution must be against it.

II. Pursuant to these covenants he made a shift with much ado to bridle his tongue (Ps 39:2): I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good. His silence was commendable; and the greater the provocation was the more praiseworthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution, in the strength of God's grace, will do more towards the bridling of the tongue than we can imagine, though it be an

unruly evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence even from good?

Was it his wisdom that he refrained from good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say any thing, he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a reproach to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communication requires that which is good and to the use of edifying, Eph 4:29.

III. The less he spoke the more he thought and the more warmly. Binding the distempered part did but draw the humour to it: My sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me, Ps 39:3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under; though he suppressed the smoke, that was as a fire in his bones, and, while he was musing upon his afflictions and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned.

Note, Those that are of a fretful discontented spirit ought not to pore much, for, while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of the calamity, the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effects upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If therefore we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

IV. When he did speak, at last, it was to the purpose: At the last I spoke with my tongue. Some make what he said to be the breach of his good purpose, and conclude that, in what he said, he sinned with his tongue; and so they make what follows to be a passionate wish that he might die, like Elijah (1Ki 19:4) and Job, Job 6:8,9.

But I rather take it to be, not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he

had kept silence from good, but now he would so keep silence no longer. He had nothing to say to the wicked that were before him, for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said was a prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject which it will be good for us all to think much of.

1. He prays to God to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death (Ps 39:4): Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days. He does not mean, "Lord, let me know how long I shall live and when I shall die." We could not, in faith, pray such a prayer; for God has nowhere promised to let us know, but has, in wisdom, locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it.

But, Lord, make me to know my end, means, "Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it (De 32:29) and to improve what I know concerning it." The living know that they shall die (Ec 9:5), but few care for thinking of death; we have therefore need to pray that God by his grace would conquer that aversion which is in our corrupt hearts to the thoughts of death. "Lord, make me to consider,"

(1.) "What death is. It is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life. It is the end of all men," Ec 7:2. It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompence and retribution. To the wicked man it is the end of all joys; to a godly man it is the end of all griefs. "Lord, give me to know my end, to be better acquainted with death, to make it more familiar to me (Job 17:14), and to be more affected with the greatness of the change. Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die."

(2.) "How near it is. Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God" (the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies; my days are

determined, Job 14:5) "and that the measure is but short: My days will soon be numbered and finished."

When we look upon death as a thing at a distance we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but, when we consider how short life is, we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition.

(3.) That it is continually working in us: "Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how faint the spirits which are as the oil to keep that lamp burning." We find by daily experience that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldering and going to decay: "Lord, make us to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands."

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleading them with God for relief under the burdens of life, as Job often, and pleading them with himself for his quickening to the business of life.

(1.) Man's life on earth is short and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit loose to it and prepare for the end of it (Ps 39:5): Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, the breadth of four fingers, a certain dimension, a small one, and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes. We need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimension of our days, nor any skill in arithmetic wherewith to compute the number of them.

No; we have the standard of them at our fingers' end, and there is no multiplication of it; it is but one hand-breadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; for the number of our months is with him. It is short, and he knows it to be so: It is as nothing before thee. he remembers how short our time is, Ps 79:47. It is nothing in comparison with thee; so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time.

(2.) Man's life on earth is vain and of no value, and therefore it is folly to be fond of it and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is Abel--man is vanity, in his present state. He is not what he seems to be, has not what he promised himself. He and all his comforts lie at a continual uncertainty; and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity; he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe,

[1.] How emphatically this truth is expressed here.

First, Every man is vanity, without exception; high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this.

Secondly, He is so at his best estate, when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy, and merry, and secure, and thinks his mountain stands strong.

Thirdly, He is altogether vanity, as vain as you can imagine. All man is all vanity (so it may be read); every thing about him is uncertain; nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man.

Fourthly, Verily he is so. This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe and need to have solemnly attested to us, as indeed it is by frequent instances.

Fifthly, Selah is annexed, as a note commanding observation. "Stop here, and pause awhile, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity." We ourselves are so.

[2.] For the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here mentions three things, and shows the vanity of each of them, Ps 39:6.

First, The vanity of our joys and honours: Surely every man walks (even when he walks in state, when he walks in pleasure) in a shadow, in an image, in a vain show. When he makes a figure his fashion passes away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, Ac 25:23. It is but a show, and therefore a vain show, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish and disappear quickly when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life (Jam 4:14), and therefore such are all the gaieties of it.

Secondly, The vanity of our griefs and fears. Surely they are disquieted in vain. Our disquietudes are often groundless (we vex ourselves without any just cause, and the occasions of our trouble are often the creatures of our own fancy and imagination), and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot, with all our disquietment, alter the nature of things nor the counsel of God; things will be as they are when we have disquieted ourselves ever so much about them.

Thirdly, The vanity of our cares and toils. Man takes a great deal of pains to heap up riches, and they are but like heaps of manure in the furrows of the field, good for nothing unless they be spread. But, when he has filled his treasures with his trash, he knows not who shall gather them, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone; for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, For whom do I labour? and that is his folly, Ec 4:8. But, if he did ask, he could not tell whether he should be a wise man or a fool, a friend or a foe, Ec 2:19. This is vanity.

1 I said, I will take heed to my ways,
that I sin not with my tongue:
I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
while the wicked is before me.
2 I was dumb with silence,
I held my peace, *even* from good;
and my sorrow was stirred.
3 My heart was hot within me;
while I was musing the fire burned:

then spake I with my tongue,
4 Lord, make me to know mine end,
and the measure of my days, what it *is;*
that I may know how frail I *am*.
5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* a handbreadth;
and mine age *is* as nothing before thee:
verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity.
Selah.
6 Surely every man walketh in a vain show:
surely they are disquieted in vain:
he heapeth up *riches,* and knoweth not who shall gather them.
7 And now, Lord, what wait I for?
My hope *is* in thee.

The psalmist, having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all the comforts of life, here, in these verses, turns his eyes and heart heaven-ward. When there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our disappointments in the world. David here expresses,

I. His dependence on God, Ps 39:7. Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so,

1. He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectations from it: "Now, Lord, what wait I for? Even nothing from the things of sense and time; I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for, from this earth."

Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life should deaden our desires to the things of this world and lower our expectations from it. "If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having, or seeking, my portion in it." We cannot reckon upon constant health and prosperity, nor upon comfort in any relation; for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. "Though I have sometimes foolishly promised myself this and the other from the world, I am now of another mind."

2. He takes hold of happiness and satisfaction in God: My hope is in thee. Note, When creature-confidences fail, it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the faster hold of him by faith.

II. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, Ps 39:9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world: "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth in a way of complaint and murmuring." He now again recovered that serenity and sedateness of mind which were disturbed, Ps 39:2. Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burdened with, he will be easy. "Because thou didst it; it did not come to pass by chance, but according to thy appointment." We may here see,

1. A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, "This is the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing," whoever were the instruments.

2. A good man, for that reason, saying nothing against it. He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it. All that God does is well done.

III. His desire towards God, and the prayers he puts up to him. Is any afflicted? let him pray, as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin and the preventing of his shame, Ps 39:8. Before he prays (Ps 39:10), Remove thy stroke from me, he prays (Ps 39:8), "Deliver me from all my offences, from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption by which I have been enslaved." When God forgives our sins he delivers us from them, he delivers us from them all.

He pleads, Make me not a reproach to the foolish. Wicked people are foolish people; and they then show their folly most when they think to show their wit, by scoffing at God's

people. When David prays that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience ("Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will laugh at me for"), and as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself, so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men.

Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burdens (Ps 39:10): Remove thy stroke away from me.

Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other, for relief. He only that inflicts the stroke can remove it; and we may then in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned (Isa 38:17), and when, as here, the affliction is sanctified and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

(1.) He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand. His sickness prevailed to such a degree that his spirits failed, his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. "The blow, or conflict, of thy hand has brought me even to the gates of death."

Note, The strongest, and boldest, and best of men cannot bear up under, much less make head against, the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, Ps 39:11. When God, at any time, contends with us, when with rebukes he corrects us,

[1.] We cannot impeach the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for, whenever he corrects man, it is for iniquity. Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is the yoke of our transgressions, though it be bound with his hand, La 1:14.

[2.] We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes make man's beauty to consume away like a moth; we often see, we sometimes feel, how much the body is weakened and decayed by sickness in a little time; the countenance is changed; where are the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this that presents itself to view.

What a poor thing is beauty; and what fools are those that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly, and may quickly, be consumed thus! Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, Job 4:19. Others make it to represent the divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth does the garment. All this abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless; so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

(2.) He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped that the end was accomplished for which it was sent, and that therefore it would be removed in mercy; and unless an affliction has done its work, though it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy.

[1.] It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that. When the Lord God called to mourning, he answered the call and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could, in faith, pray, Lord, hold not thy peace at my tears, Ps 39:12. He that does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less

his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them (and, if he speak, it is done) or in the mean time speak comfort to them and make them to hear joy and gladness.

[2.] It had set him a praying; and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, and when we are afflicted we pray more, and pray better, than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which by his providence he gives occasion for, and which by his Spirit of grace he indites, shall not return void.

[3.] It had helped to wean him from the world and to take his affections off from it. Now he began, more than ever, to look upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God: "Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wants and burdens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger; and whence should I expect relief but from thee, from that other country to which I belong?"

3. He prays for a reprieve yet a little longer (Ps 39:13): "O spare me, ease me, raise me up from this illness that I may recover strength both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death, and shall be no more in this world." Some make this to be a passionate wish that God would send him help quickly or it would be too late, like that, Job 10:20,21. But I rather take it as a pious prayer that God would continue him here till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life before his life was finished. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions:
make me not the reproach of the foolish.
9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth;
because thou didst *it*.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me:
I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.
11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,
thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:
surely every man *is* vanity.
Selah.
12 Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry;
hold not thy peace at my tears:
for I *am* a stranger with thee,
and a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.
13 O spare me, that I may recover strength,
before I go hence, and be no
more.

Psalms-40

Praise for Deliverance
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
2 He brought me up also out of a horrible
pit, out of the miry clay,
and set my feet upon a rock,
and established my goings.
3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth,
even praise unto our God:
many shall see *it*, and
fear, and shall trust in the
Lord.
4 Blessed *is* that man that maketh the Lord his
trust, and respecteth not the proud,
nor such as turn aside to lies.
5 Many, O Lord my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou
hast done,
and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward:

they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak *of them,*
they are more than can be numbered.
6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;
mine ears hast thou opened:
burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
7 Then said I, Lo, I come:
in the volume of the book *it is* written of me,
8 I delight to do thy will, O my God:
yea, thy law *is* within my heart.
9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:
lo, I have not refrained my
lips, O Lord, thou
knowest.
10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my
heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy
salvation:
I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy
truth from the great congregation.
11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord:
let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.
12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about:
mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able
to look up;
they are more than the hairs of mine head:
therefore my heart faileth me.
13 Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver
me: O Lord, make haste to help
me.
14 Let them be ashamed and confounded
together that seek after my soul to destroy
it;
let them be driven backward and put to
shame that wish me evil.
15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their
shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.
16 Let all those that seek
thee rejoice and be glad

in thee: let such as love
thy salvation
say continually, The Lord be magnified.
17 But I *am* poor and needy;
yet the Lord thinketh upon me:
thou *art* my help and my
deliverer; make no tarrying, O
my God.

Psalms-41

A Prayer for Healing
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor:
the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

In these verses we have,

I. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and,

1. We may suppose that David makes mention of these with application either,

(1.) To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerate of his case, now that he was in affliction: Blessed is he that considers poor David. Here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up his good opinion of him and respect for him, notwithstanding his afflictions, while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him; on these he pronounced this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly when they also came to be in affliction. The provocations which his enemies gave him did but endear his friends so much the more to him.

Or, (2.) To himself. He had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had considered the poor, that when he was in honour and power at court he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would, according to his promise, strengthen and comfort him in his sickness.

2. We must regard them more generally with application to ourselves. Here is a comment upon that promise, Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Observe,

(1.) What the mercy is which is required of us. It is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate. These we are to consider with prudence and tenderness; we must take notice of their affliction and enquire into their state, must sympathize with them and judge charitably concerning them. We must wisely consider the poor; that is, we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others; it must be Maschil to us, that is the word here used.

(2.) What the mercy is that is promised to us if we thus show mercy. He that considers the poor (if he cannot relieve them, yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and in relieving them acts considerately and with discretion) shall be considered by his God: he shall not only be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but he shall be blessed upon the earth This branch of godliness, as much as any, has the promise of the life that now is and is usually recompensed with temporal blessings. Liberality to the poor is the surest and safest way of thriving; such as practise it may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God,

[1.] In all troubles: He will deliver them in the day of evil, so that when the times are at the worst it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved; if any be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, they shall. Those who thus distinguish themselves from those that have hard hearts God will distinguish from

those that have hard usage. Are they in danger? he will preserve and keep them alive; and those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, must acknowledge it as a great favour if they have their lives given them for a prey. He does not say, "They shall be preferred," but, "They shall be preserved and kept alive, when the arrows of death fly thickly round about them."

Do their enemies threaten them? God will not deliver them into the will of their enemies; and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us but what is given him from above. The good-will of a God that loves us is sufficient to secure us from the ill-will of all that hate us, men and devils; and that good-will we may promise ourselves an interest in if we have considered the poor and helped to relieve and rescue them.

[2.] Particularly in sickness (Ps 41:3):

The Lord will strengthen him, both in body and mind, upon the bed of languishing, on which he had long lain sick, and he will make all his bed--a very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them; and that bed must needs be well made which God himself has the making of. He will make all his bed from head to foot, so that no part shall be uneasy; he will turn his bed (so the word is), to shake it up and make it very easy; or he will turn it into a bed of health.

Note, God has promised his people that he will strengthen them, and make them easy, under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue. The soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease when the body lies in pain.

II. David's prayer, directed and encouraged by these promises (Ps 41:4): I said, Heal my soul. It is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay, in our practices, any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is,

1. His humble petition: Lord be merciful to me. He appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor, have not made God their debtor, but must throw themselves on his mercy. When we are under the rod we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God: Lord, heal my soul. Sin is the sickness of the soul; pardoning mercy heals it; renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest for than for bodily health.

2. His penitent confession: "I have sinned against thee, and therefore my soul needs healing. I am a sinner, a miserable sinner; therefore, God be merciful to me," Lu 18:13. It does not appear that this has reference to any particular gross act of sin, but, in general, to his many sins of infirmity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, Heal my soul.

2 The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive;
and he shall be blessed upon the earth:
and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.
3 The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing:
thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.
4 I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul;
for I have sinned against thee.
5 Mine enemies speak evil of me,
When shall he die, and his name perish?

David often complains of the insolent conduct of his enemies towards him when he was sick, which, as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They had not indeed arrived at that modern pitch of wickedness of poisoning his meat and drink, or giving him something to make him sick; but, when he was sick, they insulted over him (Ps 41:5): My enemies speak evil of me,

designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and so to sink his interest. Let us enquire,

I. What was the conduct of his enemies towards him.

1. They longed for his death: When shall he die, and his name perish with him? He had but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that. But it was a useful life; he was, upon all accounts, the greatest ornament and blessing of his country; and yet, it seems, there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, Away with such a fellow from the earth. We ought not to desire the death of any; but to desire the death of useful men, for their usefulness, has much in it of the venom of the old serpent.

They envied him his name, and the honour he had won, and doubted not but, if he were dead, that would be laid in the dust with him; yet see how they were mistaken: when he had served his generation he did die (Ac 13:36), but did his name perish? No; it lives and flourishes to this day in the sacred writings, and will to the end of time; for the memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed.

2. They picked up every thing they could to reproach him with (Ps 41:6): "If he come to see me" (as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick) "he speaks vanity; that is, he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me and to comfort me; he tells me he is very sorry to see me so much indisposed, and wishes me my health; but it is all flattery and falsehood." We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarcely any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems, by this, that the former days were no better than these. David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of.

Nor was that the worst of it; it was upon a mischievous design that they came to see him, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did, and might

represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous: His heart gathereth iniquity to itself, puts ill constructions upon every thing; and the, when he goes among his companions, he tells it to them, that they may tell it to others. Report, say they, and we will report it, Jer 20:10. If he complained much of his illness, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if he scarcely complained at all, they would reproach him for his stupidity. If he prayed, or gave them good counsel, they would banter it, and call it canting; if he kept silence from good, when the wicked were before him, they would say that he had forgotten his religion now that he was sick. There is no fence against those whose malice thus gathers iniquity.

3. They promised themselves that he would never recover from this sickness, nor ever wipe off the odium with which they had loaded him. They whispered together against him (Ps 41:7), speaking that secretly in one another's ears which they could not for shame speak out, and which, if they did, they knew would be confuted. Whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, Ro 1:29,30. They whispered, that their plot against him might not be discovered and so defeated; there is seldom whispering (we say) but there is lying, or some mischief on foot.

Those whisperers devised evil to David. Concluding he would die quickly, they contrived how to break all the measures he had concerted for the public good, to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing. This he calls devising hurt against him; and they doubted not but to gain their point: An evil disease (a thing of Belial), say they, cleaves fast to him. The reproach with which they had loaded his name, they hoped, would cleave so fast to it that it would perish with him, and then they should gain their point.

They went by a modern maxim, Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit--Fling an abundance of calumny, and some will be sure to stick. "The disease he is now under will certainly

make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial."

Or, "It is inflicted by Satan, who is called Belial," the wicked one, 2Co 6:15. "It is" (according to a loose way of speaking some have) "a devilish disease, and therefore it will cleave fast to him; and now that he lieth, now that his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, he shall rise up no more; we shall get rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments." We are not to think it strange if, when good men are sick, there be those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, Re 11:10.

4. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies and was as abusive to him as any of them (Ps 41:9): My own familiar friend; probably he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom-friend and prime-minister of state, in whom he trusted as one inviolably firm to him, whose advice he relied much upon in dealing with his enemies, and who did eat of his bread, that is, with whom he had been very intimate and whom he had taken to sit at the table with hi, nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so obliged, both in gratitude and interest, to adhere to him. Those that had their maintenance from the king's palace did not think it meet for them to see the king's dishonour (Eze 4:14), much less to do him dishonour.

Yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's forgot all the eaten bread, and lifted up his heel against him that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, kicked at him, endeavoured to supplant him. Those are wicked indeed whom no courtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not think it strange if we receive abuses from such: David did, and the Son of David; for of Judas the traitor David here, in the Spirit, spoke; our Saviour himself so expounds this, and therefore gave Judas the sop, that the scripture might be fulfilled, He

that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me, Joh 13:18,26.

Nay, have not we ourselves behaved thus perfidiously and disingenuously towards God? We eat of his bread daily, and yet lift up the heel against him, as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, De 32:15.

II. How did David bear this insolent ill-natured conduct of his enemies towards him?

1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God: O Lord! be thou merciful to me, for they are unmerciful, Ps 41:10. He had prayed in reference to the insults of his enemies, Lord, be merciful to me, for this is a prayer which will suit every case. God's mercy has in it a redress for every grievance, "They endeavour to run me down, but, Lord, do thou raise me up from this bed of languishing, from which they think I shall never arise. Raise me up that I may requite them, that I may render them good for evil" (so some), for that was David's practice, Ps 7:4,35:13.

A good man will even wish for an opportunity of making it to appear that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him, but, on the contrary, that he is ready to do them any good office.

Or, "That, as a king, I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future," which would be a necessary piece of justice, for warning to others. Perhaps in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, whom God raised up, that he might be a just avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed (Ps 41:11): "By this I know that thou favourest me and my interest, because my enemy doth not triumph over me." They

hoped for his death, but he found himself, through mercy, recovering, and this would add to the comfort of his recovery,

(1.) That it would be a disappointment to his adversaries; they would be crest-fallen and wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment; they would fret at it themselves. Note. Though we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating of their designs against us.

(2.) That is would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us in any mercy, personal or public, that doubles it and sweetens it.

3. He depended upon God, who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as blessed Paul, 2Ti 4:18. "As for me, forasmuch as thou favourest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, thou upholdest me in my integrity, and, in order to that, settest me before thy face, hast thy eye always upon me for good;" or, "Because thou dost, by thy grace, uphold me in my integrity, I know that thou wilt, in thy glory, set me for ever before thy face." Note,

(1.) When at any time we suffer in our reputation our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. David knows that, if he can but persevere in his integrity, he needs not fear his enemies' triumphs over him.

(2.) The best man in the world holds his integrity no longer then God upholds him in it; for by his grace we are what we are; if we be left to ourselves, we shall not only fall, but fall away.

(3.) It is a great comfort to us that, however weak we are, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it if we commit the keeping of it to him.

(4.) If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us, we should not be upheld in our integrity; his eye is always upon us, else we should soon start aside from him.

(5.) Those whom God now upholds in their integrity he will set before his face for ever, and make happy in the vision and fruition of himself. He that endures to the end shall be saved.

4. The psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God as the Lord God of Israel, Ps 41:13. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm (if so, it teaches us this, That a believing hope of our preservation through grace to glory is enough to fill our hearts with joy and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits) or whether it was added as the conclusion of the first book of Psalms, which is reckoned to end here (the like being subjoined to Ps :13,72:19,89:52,106:48), and then it teaches us to make God the Omega who is the Alpha, to make him the end who is the beginning of every good work. We are taught,

(1.) To give glory to God as the Lord God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, who has done great and kind things for them and has more and better in reserve.

(2.) To give him glory as an eternal God, that has both his being and his blessedness from everlasting and to everlasting.

(3.) To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit, intimated in the double seal set to it--Amen, and Amen. Be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say Amen to it, and let all others say Amen too.

6 And if he come to see *me,* he speaketh vanity:
his heart gathereth iniquity to itself;

when he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*.
7 All that hate me whisper together against me:
against me do they devise my hurt.
8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him:
and *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,
which did eat of my bread,
hath lifted up *his* heel against me.
10 But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me,
and raise me up, that I may requite them.
11 By this I know that thou favorest me,
because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity,
and settest me before thy face for ever.
13 Blessed *be* the Lord God of
from everlasting, and to
everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

Psalms-42

Thirsting for God

To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

1 As the hart panteth after the water
brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O
God.

Holy love to God as the chief good and our felicity is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religion, without which all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase: now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is,

I. Holy love thirsting, love upon the wing, soaring upwards in holy desires towards the Lord and towards the remembrance of his name (Ps 42:1,2): "My soul panteth, thirsteth, for God, for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him." Now observe,

1. When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire towards God. It was,

(1.) When he was debarred from his outward opportunities of waiting on God, when he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teaches us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and whets our appetite for the means of grace by cutting us short in those means. We are apt to loathe that manna, when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us if ever we come to know the scarcity of it.

(2.) When he was deprived, in a great measure, of the inward comfort he used to have in God. He now went mourning, but he went on panting. Note, If God, by his grace, has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires towards him, we may take comfort from these when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had in God, because lamenting after God is as sure an evidence that we love him as rejoicing in God.

Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs, which had sorely shaken him, he premises this, That he looked upon the living God as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and, casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

2. What is the object of his desire and what it is he thus thirsts after.

(1.) He pants after God, he thirsts for God, not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts if it do not meet with God himself there: "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnests of his glory."

(2.) He has, herein, an eye to God as the living God, that has life in himself, and is the fountain of life and all happiness to those that are his, the living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of men's hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest any where short of a living God.

(3.) He longs to come and appear before God,--to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity,--to attend on him, as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him and receive his commands,--to give an account to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's courts without incurring expense, for so was the law, that none should appear before God empty; yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

3. What is the degree of this desire. It is very importunate; it is his soul that pants, his soul that thirsts, which denotes not only the sincerity, but the strength, of his desire. His longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it to the panting of a hart, or deer, which is naturally hot and dry, especially of a hunted buck, after the water-brooks. Thus earnestly does a gracious soul desire communion with God, thus impatient is it in the want of that communion, so impossible does it find it to be satisfied with any thing short of that communion, and so insatiable is it in taking the pleasures of that communion when the opportunity of it returns, still thirsting after the full enjoyment of him in the heavenly kingdom.

II. Holy love mourning for God's present withdrawings and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances (Ps 42:3): "My tears have been my meat day and night during this forced absence from God's house." His circumstances were sorrowful, and he accommodated himself to them, received the impressions and returned the signs of sorrow. Even the

royal prophet was a weeping prophet when he wanted the comforts of God's house. His tears were mingled with his meat; nay, they were his meat day and night; he fed, he feasted, upon his own tears, when there was such just cause for them; and it was a satisfaction to him that he found his heart so much affected with a grievance of this nature.

Observe, He did not think it enough to shed a tear or two at parting from the sanctuary, to weep a farewell-prayer when he took his leave, but, as long as he continued under a forced absence from that place of his delight, he never looked up, but wept day and night. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want of them, till they are restored to them again. Two things aggravated his grief:--

1 The reproaches with which his enemies teased him: They continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

(1.) Because he was absent from the ark, the token of God's presence. Judging of the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, they concluded he had lost his God. Note, Those are mistaken who think that when they have robbed us of our Bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God; for, though God has tied us to them when they are to be had, he has not tied himself to them. We know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where his ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are there is a way open heaven-ward.

(2.) Because God did not immediately appear for his deliverance they concluded that he had abandoned him; but herein also they were deceived: it does not follow that the saints have lost their God because they have lost all their other friends. However, by this base reflection on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted, and that was what they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than that which is intended to shake its hope and confidence in God.

2 The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments, Ps 42:4. Son, remember thy good things, is a great aggravation of evil things, so much do our powers of reflection and anticipation add to the grievance of this present time. David remembered the days of old, and then his soul was poured out in him; he melted away, and the thought almost broke his heart. He poured out his soul within him in sorrow, and then poured out his soul before God in prayer. But what was it that occasioned this painful melting of spirit? It was not the remembrance of the pleasures at court, or the entertainments of his own house, from which he was now banished, that afflicted him, but the remembrance of the free access he had formerly had to God's house and the pleasure he had in attending the sacred solemnities there.

(1.) He went to the house of God, though in his time it was but a tent; nay, if this psalm was penned, as many think it was, at the time of his being persecuted by Saul, the ark was then in a private house, 2Sa 6:3. But the meanness, obscurity, and inconveniency of the place did not lessen his esteem of that sacred symbol of the divine presence. David was a courtier, a prince, a man of honour, a man of business, and yet very diligent in attending God's house and joining in public ordinances, even in the days of Saul, when he and his great men enquired not at it, 1Ch 13:3. Whatever others did, David and his house would serve the Lord.

(2.) He went with the multitude, and thought it no disparagement to his dignity to be at the head of a crowd in attending upon God. Nay, this added to the pleasure of it, that he was accompanied with a multitude, and therefore it is twice mentioned, as that which he greatly lamented the want of now. The more the better in the service of God; it is the more like heaven, and a sensible help to our comfort in the communion of saints.

(3.) He went with the voice of joy and praise, not only with joy and praise in his heart, but with the outward expressions

of it, proclaiming his joy and speaking forth the high praises of his God. Note, When we wait upon God in public ordinances we have reason to do it both with cheerfulness and thankfulness, to take to ourselves the comfort and give to God the glory of our liberty of access to him. (4.) He went to keep holy-days, not to keep them in vain mirth and recreation, but in religious exercises. Solemn days are spent most comfortably in solemn assemblies.

III. Holy love hoping (Ps 42:5): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? His sorrow was upon a very good account, and yet it must not exceed its due limits, nor prevail to depress his spirits; he therefore communes with his own heart, for his relief. "Come, my soul, I have something to say to thee in thy heaviness." Let us consider,

1 The cause of it. "Thou art cast down, as one stooping and sinking under a burden, Pr 12:25. Thou art disquieted, in confusion and disorder; now why are thou so?" This may be taken as an enquiring question: "Let the cause of this uneasiness be duly weighed, and see whether it be a just cause." Our disquietudes would in many cases vanish before a strict scrutiny into the grounds and reasons of them. "Why am I cast down? Is there a cause, a real cause? Have not others more cause, that do not make so much ado? Have not we, at the same time, cause to be encouraged?"

Or it may be taken as an expostulating question; those that commune much with their own hearts will often have occasion to chide them, as David here. "Why do I thus dishonour God by my melancholy dejections? Why do I discourage others and do so much injury to myself? Can I give a good account of this tumult?"

2 The cure of it: Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him. A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency and disquietude of spirit. And therefore, when we chide ourselves to hope in God; when the soul embraces itself it sinks; if it catch hold on the

power and promise of God, it keeps the head above water. Hope in God,

(1.) That he shall have glory from us: "I shall yet praise him; I shall experience such a change in my state that I shall not want matter for praise, and such a change in my spirit that I shall not want a heart for praise." It is the greatest honour and happiness of a man, and the greatest desire and hope of every good man, to be unto God for a name and a praise. What is the crown of heaven's bliss but this, that there we shall be for ever praising God? And what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God, that they shall not prevent nor abate our endless hallelujahs?

(2.) That we shall have comfort in him. We shall praise him for the help of his countenance, for his favour, the support we have by it and the satisfaction we have in it. Those that know how to value and improve the light of God's countenance will find in that a suitable, seasonable, and sufficient help, in the worst of times, and that which will furnish them with constant matter for praise. David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking, nay, it kept him from drooping; his harp was a palliative cure of Saul's melancholy, but his hope was an effectual cure of his own.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
when shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?
4 When I remember these *things*,
I pour out my soul in me:
for I had gone with the multitude,
I went with them to the house of
God, with the voice of joy and
praise,
with a multitude that kept holyday.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And *why* art thou disquieted in
me? Hope thou in God:

for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.
6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
therefore will I remember thee from the land of
Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

Complaints and comforts here, as before, take their turn, like day and night in the course of nature.

I. He complains of the dejections of his spirit, but comforts himself with the thoughts of God, Ps 42:6.

1. In his troubles. His soul was dejected, and he goes to God and tells him so: O my God! my soul is cast down within me. It is a great support to us, when upon any account we are distressed, that we have liberty of access to God, and liberty of speech before him, and may open to him the causes of our dejection. David had communed with his own heart about its own bitterness, and had not as yet found relief; and therefore he turns to God, and opens before him the trouble. Note, When we cannot get relief for our burdened spirits by pleading with ourselves, we should try what we can do by praying to God and leaving our case with him. We cannot still these winds and waves; but we know who can.

2. In his devotions. His soul was elevated, and, finding the disease very painful, he had recourse to that as a sovereign remedy. "My soul is plunged; therefore, to prevent its sinking, I will remember thee, meditate upon thee, and call upon thee, and try what that will do to keep up my spirit." Note, The way to forget the sense of our miseries is to remember the God of our mercies. It was an uncommon case when the psalmist remembered God and was troubled, Ps 77:3. He had often remembered God and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, to shelter himself there from the rage of his persecutors--sometimes to the country about Jordan, and, when discovered there, to the land of the Hermonites, or to a hill called Mizar, or the little hill; but,

(1.) Wherever he went he took his religion along with him. In all these places, he remembered God, and lifted up his heart to him, and kept his secret communion with him. This is the comfort of the banished, the wanderers, the travellers, of those that are strangers in a strange land, that undique ad cælos tantundem est viæ--wherever they are there is a way open heavenward.

(2.) Wherever he was he retained his affection for the courts of God's house; from the land of Jordan, or from the top of the hills, he used to look a long look, a longing look, towards the place of the sanctuary, and wish himself there. Distance and time could not make him forget that which his heart was so much upon and which lay so near it.

II. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

1. He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him (Ps 42:7): "Deep calls unto deep, one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it; and thy water-spouts give the signal and sound the alarm of war." It may be meant of the terror and disquietude of his mind under the apprehensions of God's anger. One frightful thought summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people. He was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world, when the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up.

Or it is an allusion to a ship at sea in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves, which go over it, Ps 107:25. Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time we must call them God's waves and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope that though we be threatened we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a divine check. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters.

Let not good men think it strange if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thickly upon them; God knows what he does, and so shall they shortly. Jonah, in the whale's belly, made use of these words of David, Jon 2:3 (they are exactly the same in the original), and of him they were literally true, All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me; for the book of psalms is contrived so as to reach every one's case.

2. He expected his deliverance to come from God's favour (Ps 42:8): Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness. Things are bad, but they shall not always be so. Non si male nunc et olim sic erit--Though affairs are now in an evil plight, they may not always be so. After the storm there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him when deep called unto deep. Observe

(1.) What he promised himself from God: The Lord will command his lovingkindness. He eyes the favour of God as the fountain of all the good he looked for. That is life; that is better than life; and with that God will gather those from whom he has, in a little wrath, hid his face, Isa 54:7,8. God's conferring his favour is called his commanding it. This intimates the freeness of it; we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way of sovereignty, he gives like a king. It intimates also the efficacy of it; he speaks his lovingkindness, and makes us to hear it; speaks, and it is done. He commands deliverance (Ps 44:4), commands the blessing (Ps 133:3), as one having authority. By commanding his lovingkindness, he commands down the waves and the billows, and they shall obey him. This he will do in the daytime, for God's lovingkindness will make day in the soul at any time. Though weeping has endured for a night, a long night, yet joy will come in the morning.

(2.) What he promised for himself to God. If God command his lovingkindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome, with his best affections and devotions.

[1.] He will rejoice in God: In the night his song shall be with me. The mercies we receive in the day we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping we should be praising God. See Ps 119:62, At midnight will I rise to give thanks. In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction: "Before the day dawns, in which God commands his lovingkindness, I will sing songs of praise in the prospect of it." Even in tribulation the saints can rejoice in hope of the glory of God, sing in hope, and praise in hope, Ro 5:2,3. It is God's prerogative to give songs in the night, Job 35:10.

[2.] He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him: My prayer shall be to the God of my life. Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede, but quicken, our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the author and giver of all our comforts; and therefore to whom should we apply by prayer, but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It would put life into our prayers in them to eye God as the God of our life; for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

III. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his friend, Ps 42:9-11

1. His complaint is that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him.

(1.) They oppressed him to such a degree that he went mourning from day to day, from place to place, Ps 42:9. He did not break out into indecent passions, though abused as never man was, but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning; and for this we cannot blame him: it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself persecuted and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it. Yet David ought not hence to have concluded that God had forgotten him and cast him off, nor thus to have expostulated with him, as if he did him as much wrong in

suffering him to be trampled upon as those did that trampled upon him: Why go I mourning? and why hast thou forgotten me? We may complain to God, but we are not allowed thus to complain of him.

(2.) They reproached him so cuttingly that it was a sword in his bones, Ps 42:10. He had mentioned before what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it: They say daily unto me, Where is thy God?--a reproach which was very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and which was but too apt to fail of itself.

2. His comfort is that God is his rock (Ps 42:9) --a rock to build upon, a rock to take shelter in. The rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his rock, his strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. To him he had access with confidence. To God his rock he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had before said (Ps 42:5), and concludes with it (Ps 42:11): Why art thou cast down, O my soul? His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome; they were not silenced though they were again and again answered. But here, at length, his faith came off a conqueror and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory,

(1.) By repeating what he had before said, chiding himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietudes, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us to think our good thoughts over again, and, if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time; however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our hearts, and all little enough.

(2.) By adding one word to it; there he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; here, "I will praise him," says he, "as the salvation of my countenance from the present cloud that is upon it; if God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round, with pleasure." He adds, and my God, "related to me, in covenant with me; all that he is, all that he has, is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise." This thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears. God's being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will wipe away all tears from their eyes, Re 21:3,4.

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts:
all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
8 *Yet* the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the
daytime, and in the night his song *shall be* with me,
and my prayer unto the God of my life.
9 I will say unto God my rock,
Why hast thou forgotten me
?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
10 *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
while they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?
11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Psalms-43

A Prayer for Vindication and Deliverance

1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause
against an ungodly nation:
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

David here makes application to God, by faith and prayer, as his judge, his strength, his guide, his joy, his hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

I. As his Judge, his righteous Judge, who he knew would judge him, and who (being conscious of his own integrity) he knew would judge for him (Ps 43:1): Judge me, O God! and plead my cause. There were those that impeached him; against them he is defendant, and from their courts, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature, praying to have their judgment given against him reversed and his innocency cleared.

There were those that had injured him; against them he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the avenger of wrong, praying for justice for himself and upon them. Observe,

1. Who his enemies were with whom he had this struggle. Here was a sinful body of men, whom he calls an ungodly or unmerciful nation. Those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly; for, those that have any fear or love of their master will have compassion on their fellow-servants.

And here was one bad man the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man, most probably Saul, who not only showed no kindness to David, but dealt most perfidiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, and nations of them, it is not strange that good men, who are yet out of heaven, meet with hard and base treatment.

Some think that David, by the spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; to them it was very applicable, but only as other similar scriptures, none of which are of private interpretation. God might design it for their use, whether David did or no.

2. What is his prayer with reference to them: Judge me. As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, "Enter not

into judgment with me, for then I shall be condemned;" but, as to the quarrel his enemies had with him he prays, "Lord, judge me, for I know that I shall be justified; plead my cause against them, take my part, and in thy providence appear on my behalf." He that has an honest cause may expect that God will plead it.

"Plead my cause so as to deliver me from them, that they may not have their will against me." We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded if we be delivered, though our enemies be not destroyed.

II. As his strength, his all-sufficient strength; so he eyes God (Ps 43:2): "Thou art the God of my strength, my God, my strength, from whom all my strength is derived, in whom I strengthen myself, who hast often strengthened me, and without whom I am weak as water and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee." David now went mourning, destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God to be the God of his strength. If we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual delights. David here pleads this with God:

"Thou art the God on whom I depend as my strength; why then dost thou cast me off?" This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have had of their own state. "Thou art the God of my strength; why then is my enemy too strong for me, and why go I mourning because of his oppressive power?" It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church's enemies with the almighty power of the church's God; but the day will reconcile them when all his enemies shall become his footstool.

III. As his guide, his faithful guide (Ps 43:3): Lead me, bring me to thy holy hill. He prays,

1. That God by his providence would bring him back from his banishment, and open a way for him again to the free

enjoyment of the privileges of God's sanctuary. His heart is upon the holy hill and the tabernacles, not upon his family-comforts, his court-preferments, or his diversions; he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again; nothing so amiable in his eyes as those; thither he would gladly be brought back. In order to this he prays, "Send out thy light and thy truth; let me have this as a fruit of thy favour, which is light, and the performance of thy promise, which is truth."

We need desire no more to make us happy than the good that flows from God's favour and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth, is enough, is all; and, when we see these in God's providences, we see ourselves under a very safe conduct.

Note, Those whom God leads he leads to his holy hill, and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves.

2. That God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the vision and fruition of himself in the other world. Some of the Jewish writers by the light and truth here understand Messiah the Prince and Elias his forerunner: these have come, in answer to the prayers of the Old Testament; but we are still to pray for God's light and truth, the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness and to guide us in the way to heaven. When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, these will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions as well as in all our aims and expectations; and, if we conscientiously follow that light and that truth, they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above.

IV. As his joy, his exceeding joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he knows very well what he has to do: Then will I go unto the

altar of God, Ps 43:4. He will get as near as he can unto God, his exceeding joy. Note,

1. Those that come to the tabernacles should come to the altar; those that come to ordinances should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave, to God, the better.

2. Those that come to the altar of God must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him with the heart, with a true heart: we come in vain to holy ordinances if we do not in them come to the holy God.

3. Those that come unto God must come to him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss, but as their present joy, and that not a common, but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time. The phrase, in the original, is very emphatic--unto God the gladness of my joy, or of my triumph. Whatever we rejoice or triumph in God must be the joy of it; all our joy in it must terminate in him, and must pass through the gift to the giver.

4. When we come to God as our exceeding joy our comforts in him must be the matter of our praises to him as God, and our God: Upon the harp will I praise thee, O God! my God. David excelled at the harp (1Sa 16:16,18), and with that in which he excelled he would praise God; for God is to be praised with the best we have; it is fit he should be, for he is the best.

V. As his hope, his never-failing hope, Ps 43:5. Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, and owns he did ill to yield to them, and that he had no reason to do so: Why art thou cast down, O my soul? He then quiets himself in the believing expectation he had of giving glory to God (Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him) and of enjoying glory with God: He is the health of my countenance and my God. That is what we cannot too much insist upon, for it is what we must live and die by.

2 For thou *art* the God of my strength:
why dost thou cast me off?
Why go I mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?
3 O send out thy light and thy truth:
let them lead me;
let them bring me unto thy holy hill,
and to thy tabernacles.
4 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
unto God my exceeding joy:
yea, upon the harp will I praise thee,
O God my God.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him,
who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Psalms-44

Former Deliverances and Present Troubles

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah,
Maschil.

1 We have heard with our ears, O
God, our fathers have told us,
what work thou didst in their
days, in the times of old.

Some observe that most of the psalms that are entitled Maschil--psalms of instruction, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instructions, and sorrow of spirit opens the ear to them. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest.

In these verses the church, though now trampled upon, calls to remembrance the days of her triumph, of her triumph in

God and over her enemies. This is very largely mentioned here,

1. As an aggravation of the present distress. The yoke of servitude cannot but lie very heavily on the necks of those that used to wear the crown of victory; and the tokens of God's displeasure must needs be most grievous to those that have been long accustomed to the tokens of his favour.

2. As an encouragement to hope that God would yet turn again their captivity and return in mercy to them; accordingly he mixes prayers and comfortable expectations with his record of former mercies. Observe,

I. Their commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for them.

1. In general (Ps 44:1): Our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days. Observe,

(1.) The many operations of providence are here spoken of as one work--"They have told us the work which thou didst;" for there is a wonderful harmony and uniformity in all that God does, and the many wheels make but one wheel (Eze 10:13), many works make but one work.

(2.) It is a debt which every age owes to posterity to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and to transmit the knowledge of them to the next generation. Those that went before us told us what God did in their days, we are bound to tell those that come after us what he has done in our days, and let them do the like justice to those that shall succeed them; thus shall one generation praise his works to another (Ps 145:4), the fathers to the children shall make known his truth, Isa 38:19.

(3.) We must not only make mention of the work God has done in our own days, but must also acquaint ourselves and our children with what he did in the times of old, long before

our own days; and of this we have in the scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy.

(4.) Children must diligently attend to what their parents tell them of the wonderful works of God, and keep it in remembrance, as that which will be of great use to them.

(5.) Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith and powerful pleas in prayer under present calamities. See how Gideon insists upon it (Jdg 6:13): Where are all his miracles which our fathers told us of?

2. In particular, their fathers had told them,

(1.) How wonderfully God planted Israel in Canaan at first, Ps 44:2,3. He drove out the natives, to make room for Israel, afflicted them, and cast them out, gave them as dust to Israel's sword and as driven stubble to their bow. The many complete victories which Israel obtained over the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor could they challenge the glory of them.

[1.] They were not owing to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace: It was through the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them. Not for thy righteousness, or the uprightness of thy heart, doth God drive them out from before thee (De 9:5,6), but because God would perform the oath which he swore unto their fathers, De 7:8. The less praise this allows us the more comfort it administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God and the light of his countenance.

[2.] They were not owing to their own might, but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours would have been fruitless. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, though they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm

save them from being driven back by the Canaanites and put to shame; but it was God's right hand and his arm. He fought for Israel, else they would have fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously.

It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promises himself fruit. See Ps 80:8.

This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world, by the preaching of the gospel. Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little, not by any human policy or power (for God chose to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world), but by the wisdom and power of God--Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of antichristian tyranny, for to the state of the church under the power of the New-Testament Babylon, some think (and particularly the learned Amyraldus), the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated.

He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world will certainly support it by the same power and goodness; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(2.) How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land (Ps 44:7): Thou hast, many a time, saved us from our enemies, and hast put to flight, and so put to shame, those that hated us, witness the successes of the judges against the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, Ac 6:10.

II The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old.

1. They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection (Ps 44:4): Thou art my King, O God! He speaks in the name of the church, as (Ps 74:12), Thou art my King of old. God, as a king, has made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it, pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it; it is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him, and to pay him tribute.

Or the psalmist speaks for himself here: "Lord, Thou art my King; whither shall I go with my petitions, but to thee? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church." Note, It is every one's duty to improve his personal interest at the throne of grace for the public welfare and prosperity of the people of God; as Moses, "If I have found grace in thy sight, guide thy people," Ex 33:13.

2. They had always applied to him by prayer for deliverance when at any time they were in distress: Command deliverances for Jacob. Observe,

(1.) The enlargedness of their desire. They pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were, a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger.

(2.) The strength of their faith in the power of God. They do not say, Work deliverances, but Command them, which denotes his doing it easily and instantly--Speak and it is done (such was the faith of the centurion, Mt 8:8, Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed); it denotes also his doing it effectually: "Command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed." Where the word of a king is there is power, much more the word of the King of kings.

3. They had trusted and triumphed in him. As they owned it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them (Ps 44:3), so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future (Ps 44:6): "I will not trust in my

bow, nor in any of my military preparations, as if those would stand me in stead without God. No; through thee will we push down our enemies (Ps 44:5); we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and, having thee on our side, we will not doubt of success in the attempt. Through thy name (by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us) we shall, we will, tread those under that rise up against us."

4. They had made him their joy and praise (Ps 44:8): "In God we have boasted; in him we do and will boast, every day, and all the day long." When their enemies boasted of their strength and successes, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh hectored Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of, in answer thereunto, but their relation to God and their interest in him; and, if he were for them, they could set all the world at defiance.

Let him that glories glory in the Lord, and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God make their boast in him, for they know whom they have trusted; let them boast in him all the day long, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

2 *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy
hand, and plantedst them;
how thou didst afflict the
people, and cast them out.
3 For they got not the land in possession by their own
sword, neither did their own arm save them:
but thy right hand, and thine arm,
and the light of thy countenance,
because thou hadst a favor unto
them.
4 Thou art my King, O God:
command deliverances for Jacob.
5 Through thee will we push down our enemies:

through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

6 For I will not trust in my
bow, neither shall my
sword save me.

7 But thou hast saved us from our
enemies, and hast put them to shame
that hated us.

8 In God we boast all the day
long, and praise thy name
for ever. Selah.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame;
and goest not forth with our armies.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were now in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors, which was the more grievous to them because they were now trampled upon, who had always been used, in their struggles with their neighbours, to win the day and get the upper hand, and because those were now their oppressors whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries, and especially because they had boasted in their God with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

I. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them and presence with them (Ps 44:9): "Thou hast cast off; thou seemest to have cast us off and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us and concern for us, and so hast put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour. Our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight; we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them, for, if thou didst, which way soever they turned they would prosper; but it is quite contrary." Note, God's people, when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off and forsaken of God; but it is a mistake. Hath God cast away his people? God forbid, Ro 11:1.

II. That they were put to the worst before their enemies in the field of battle (Ps 44:10): Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy, as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai (Jos 7:8): "We are dispirited, and have lost the ancient valour of Israelites; we flee, we fall, before those that used to flee and fall before us; and then those that hate us have the plunder of our camp and of our country; they spoil for themselves, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them."

III. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity (Ps 44:11): "Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat. They make no more scruple of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, like the butcher, they make a trade of it, they take a pleasure in it as a hungry man in his meat; and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance, as a lamb to the slaughter; many are slain, and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice or in danger of being infected by their iniquities." They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, Thou sellest thy people, when they should have charged it upon their own sin. For your iniquities have you sold yourselves, Isa 50:1.

However, thus far was right that they looked above the instruments of their trouble and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them but what was given them from above; they own it was God that delivered them into the hand of the ungodly, as that which is sold is delivered to the buyer. Thou sellest them for nought, and dost not increase in their price (so it may be read); "thou dost not sell them by auction, to those that will bid most for them, but in haste, to those that will bid first for them; any one shall have them that will."

Or, as we read it, Thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price, intimating that they could have suffered this contentedly if they had been sure that it would redound to the

glory of God and that his interest might be some way served by their sufferings; but it was quite contrary: Israel's disgrace turned to God's dishonour, so that he was so far from being a gainer in his glory by the sale of them that it should seem he was greatly a loser by it; see Isa Isa 52:5,Eze 36:20.

IV. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy was put upon them. In this also they acknowledge God: "Thou makest us a reproach; thou bringest those calamities upon us which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us." They complain,

1. That they were ridiculed and bantered, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided.

2. That their neighbours, those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, Ps 44:13.

3. That the heathen, the people that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them a by-word, and shook the head at them, as triumphing in their fall, Ps 44:14.

4. That the reproach was constant and incessant (Ps 44:15): My confusion is continually before me. The church in general, the psalmist in particular, were continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy. Concerning those that are going down every one cries, "Down with them."

5. That it was very grievous, and in a manner overwhelmed him: The shame of my face has covered me. He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God, and then it was a holy blushing.

6. That it reflected upon God himself; the reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them was downright blasphemy against God, Ps 44:16, and 2Ki 19:3. There was

therefore strong reason to believe that God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenuous mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy:
and they which hate us spoil for themselves.
11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat;
and hast scattered us among the heathen.
12 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.
13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbors,
a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen,
a shaking of the head among the people.
15 My confusion *is* continually before me,
and the shame of my face hath covered me,
16 for the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God, being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply to him; whither else should they go?

I. By way of appeal, concerning their integrity, which he only is an infallible judge of, and which he will certainly be the rewarder of. Two things they call God to witness to:--

1. That, though they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God and to their duty (Ps 44:17): "All this has come upon us, and it is as bad perhaps as bad can be, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither cast off the thoughts of thee nor deserted the worship of thee; for, though we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not dealt falsely in thy covenant, so as to cast thee off and take to other gods. Though idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; though thou hast seemed to forsake us and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee."

The trouble they had been long in was very great: "We have been sorely broken in the place of dragons, among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel, as dragons. We have been covered with the shadow of death, that is, we have been under deep melancholy and apprehensive of nothing short of death.

We have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us (Ps 44:19), yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service. Though thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee:

Our heart has not turned back; we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, neither have our steps, either in our religious worship or in our conversation, declined from they way (Ps 44:18), the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in." When the heart turns back the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines to depart from God.

Note, We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us if we do not leave him. For the proof of their integrity they take God's omniscience to witness, which is as much the comfort of the upright in heart as it is the terror of hypocrites (Ps 44:20,21):

"If we have forgotten the name of our God, under pretence that he had forgotten us, or in our distress have stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, shall not God search this out? Shall he not know it more fully and distinctly than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out? Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it?" Forgetting God was a heart-sin, and stretching our the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, Eze 8:12. But heart-sins and secret sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; for he knows the secrets

of the heart, and therefore is a infallible judge of the words and actions.

2. That they suffered these hard things because they kept close to God and to their duty (Ps 44:22): "It is for thy sake that we are killed all the day long, because we stand related to thee, are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods." In this the Spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered even unto death for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, Ro 8:36. So many were killed, and put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised that when a man became a Christian he reckoned himself as a sheep appointed for the slaughter.

II. By way of petition, with reference to their present distress, that God would, in his own due time, work deliverance for them.

1. Their request is very importunate: Awake, arise, Ps 44:23. Arise for our help; redeem us (Ps 44:26); come speedily and powerfully to our relief, Ps 80:2. Stir up thy strength, and come and save us. They had complained (Ps 44:12) that God had sold them; here they pray (Ps 44:26) that God would redeem them; for there is no appealing from God, but by appealing to him. If he sell us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up, Ho 6:1. They had complained (Ps 44:9), Thou hast cast us off; but here they pray (Ps 44:23), "Cast us not off forever; let us not be finally forsaken of God."

2 The expostulations are very moving: Why sleepest thou? Ps 44:23. He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but, when he does not immediately appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps. The expression is figurative (as Ps 78:65, Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep); but it was applicable to Christ in the letter (Mt 8:24); he was asleep when his disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, that we may not see

thee and the light of thy countenance?" Or, "that thou mayest not see us and our distresses? Thou forgettest our affliction and our oppression, for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance." And,

3. The pleas are very proper, not their own merit and righteousness, though they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinner's pleas.

(1.) Their own misery, which made them the proper objects of the divine compassion (Ps 44:25): "Our soul is bowed down to the dust under prevailing grief and fear. We have become as creeping things, the most despicable animals: Our belly cleaves unto the earth; we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits nor recover ourselves out of our low and sad condition, and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe."

(2.) God's mercy: "O redeem us for they mercies' sake; we depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name (Ex 34:6), and upon those sure mercies of David which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed."

17 All this is come upon us;
yet have we not forgotten thee,
neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.
18 Our heart is not turned back,
neither have our steps declined from thy way;
19 though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,
and covered us with the shadow of death.
20 If we have forgotten the name of our God,
or stretched out our hands to a strange god;
21 shall not God search this out?
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;
we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?
Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,

and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Arise for our help,
and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

Psalms-45

A Song for the King's Marriage

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim,
for the sons of Korah, Maschil,
A Song of loves.

1 My heart is inditing a good matter:
I speak of the things which I have made touching the King:
my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

Some make Shoshannim, in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take it in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which probably were strewed, with other flowers, at nuptial solemnities; and then it is easily applicable to Christ who calls himself the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys, So 2:1.

It is a song of loves, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a song of the well-beloved, the virgins, the companions of the bride (Ps 45:14), prepared to be sung by them. The virgin-company that attend the Lamb on Mount Zion are said to sing a new song, Re 14:3,4.

I The preface (Ps 45:1) speaks,

1 The dignity of the subject. It is a good matter, and it is a pity that such a moving art as poetry should every be employed about a bad matter. It is touching the King, King Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Note, Those that speak of Christ speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well-becoming

us; it is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse.

2 The excellency of the management. This song was a confession with the mouth of faith in the heart concerning Christ and his church. (1.) The matter was well digested, as it well deserved: My heart is inditing it, which perhaps is meant of that Spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David, that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1Pe 1:11.

But it is applicable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spoke. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought and a fire of holy love, especially when we are to speak of those things. We then speak best of Christ and divine things when we speak from the heart that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well beforehand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss. See Ec 5:2.

(2.) It was well expressed: I will speak of the things which I have made. He would express himself,

[1.] With all possible clearness, as one that did himself understand and was affected with the things he spoke of. Not, "I will speak the things I have heard from others," that is speaking by rote; but, "the things which I have myself studied." Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others, Ps 66:16.

[2.] With all possible cheerfulness, freedom, and fluency: "My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer, guided by my heart in every word as the pen is by the hand." We call the prophets the penmen of scripture, whereas really they were but the pen. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleases. Why should we quarrel with the pen if bitter

things be written against us, or idolize the pen if it write in our favour?

David not only spoke what he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the further and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, that lets nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter it is a pity but the tongue should be as the pen of a ready writer, to leave it upon record.

II. In these verses the Lord Jesus is represented,

1. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage-song; and therefore the transcendent excellencies of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal bridegroom (Ps 45:2): Thou art fairer than the children of men, than any of them. He proposed (Ps 45:1) to speak of the King, but immediately directs his speech to him. Those that have an admiration and affection for Christ love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith, that we see his beauty, and our love, that we are pleased with it: Thou are fair, thou art fairer than the children of men.

Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those of human nature in general and those which the most amiable and excellent of the children of men are endowed with; there is more in Christ to engage our love than there is or can be in any creature. Our beloved is more than another beloved. The beauties of this lower world, and its charms, are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ, and therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excels them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

2. As the great favourite of heaven. He is fairer than the children of men, for God has done more for him than for any of the children of men, and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passes through his hands, through his mouth.

(1.) He has grace, and he has it for us; Grace is poured into thy lips. By his word, his promise, his gospel, the good-will of God is made known to us and the good work of God is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, Joh 1:16.

It was not only poured into his heart, for his own strength and encouragement, but poured into his lips, that by the words of his mouth in general, and the kisses of his mouth to particular believers, he might communicate both holiness and comfort. From this grace poured into his lips proceeded those gracious words which all admired, Lu 4:22. The gospel of grace is poured into his lips; for it began to be spoken by the Lord, and from him we receive it. He has the words of eternal life. The spirit of prophecy is put into thy lips; so the Chaldee.

(2.) He has the blessing, and he has it for us. "Therefore, because thou art the great trustee of divine grace for the use and benefit of the children of men, therefore God has blessed thee for ever, has made thee an everlasting blessing, so as that in thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Where God gives his grace he will give his blessing. We are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, Eph 1:3.

3. As victorious over all his enemies. The royal bridegroom is a man of war, and his nuptials do not excuse him from the field of battle (as was allowed by the law, De 24:5); nay, they bring him to the field of battle, for he is to rescue his spouse by dint of sword out of her captivity, to conquer her, and to conquer for her, and then to marry her. Now we have here,

(1.) His preparations for war (Ps 45:3): Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty! The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. By the promises of that word, and the grace contained in those promises, souls are made willing to submit to Jesus Christ and become his loyal subjects; by the

threatenings of that word, and the judgments executed according to them, those that stand it out against Christ will, in due time, be brought down and ruined. By the gospel of Christ many Jews and Gentiles were converted, and, at length, the Jewish nation was destroyed, according to the predictions of it, for their implacable enmity to it; and paganism was quite abolished.

The sword here girt on Christ's thigh is the same which is said to proceed out of his mouth, Re 19:15. When the gospel was sent fort to be preached to all nations, then our Redeemer girded his sword upon his thigh.

(2.) His expedition to this holy war: He goes forth with his glory and his majesty, as a great king takes the field with abundance of pomp and magnificence--his sword, his glory, and majesty. In his gospel he appears transcendently great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father had laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, nothing to charm men (for he had no form nor comeliness), nothing to awe men, for he took upon him the form of a servant; it was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty.

There is so much grace, and therefore glory, in that word, He that believes shall be saved, so much terror, and therefore majesty, in that word, He that believes shall not be damned, that we may well say, in the chariot of that gospel, which these words are the sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and majesty. In thy majesty ride prosperously, Ps 45:4.

Prosper thou; ride thou. This speaks the promise of his Father, that he should prosper according to the good pleasure of the Lord, that he should divide the spoil with the strong, in recompence of his sufferings. Those cannot but prosper to whom God says, Prosper, Isa 52:10-12. And it denotes the good wishes of his friends, praying that he may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and the destruction of all the powers of darkness that rebel against him. "Thy kingdom come; Go on and prosper."

(3.) The glorious cause in which he is engaged--because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, which were, in a manner, sunk and lost among men, and which Christ came to retrieve and rescue.

[1.] The gospel itself is truth, meekness, and righteousness; it commands by the power of truth and righteousness; for Christianity has these, incontestably, on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by meekness and gentleness, 1Co 4:12,13,2Ti 2:25.

[2.] Christ appears in it in his truth, meekness, and righteousness, and these are his glory and majesty, and because of these he shall prosper. Men are brought to believe on him because he is true, to learn of him because he is meek, Mt 11:29 (the gentleness of Christ is of mighty force, 2Co 10:1), and to submit to him because he is righteous and rules with equity.

[3.] The gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts truth, meekness, and righteousness, rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth, controls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his kingdom among men, to restore those glories to a degenerate world, and to maintain the cause of those just and rightful rulers under him that by error, malice, and iniquity, had been deposed.

(4.) The success of his expedition: "Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things; thou shalt experience a wonderful divine power going along with thy gospel, to make it victorious, and the effects of it will be terrible things."

[1.] In order to the conversion and reduction of souls to him, there are terrible things to be done; the heart must be pricked, conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the Lord must make way for his consolations. This is done by the right hand of Christ. The Comforter shall continue, Joh 16:8.

[2.] In the conquest of the gates of hell and its supporters, in the destruction of Judaism and Paganism, terrible things will be done, which will make men's hearts fail them for fear (Lu 21:26) and great men and chief captains call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, Re 6:15. The next verse describes these terrible things (Ps 45:5): Thy arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.

First, Those that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in order to their being subdued and reconciled. Convictions are like the arrows of the bow, which are sharp in the heart on which they fasten, and bring people to fall under Christ, in subjection to his laws and government. Those that thus fall on this stone shall by broken, Mt 21:44.

Secondly, Those that persist in their enmity are thus wounded, in order to their being ruined. The arrows of God's terrors are sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall under him, so as to be made his footstool, Ps 110:1. Those that would not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him (Lu 19:27); those that would not submit to his golden sceptre shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:
grace is poured into thy lips:
therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
3 Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* Mighty,
with thy glory and thy majesty.
4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously,
because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;
and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
5 Thine arrows *are* sharp
in the heart of the King's enemies;
whereby the people fall under thee.
6 Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever:
the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.

We have here the royal bridegroom filling his throne with judgment and keeping his court with splendour.

I. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father that says to the Son here, Thy throne, O God! is forever and ever, as appears Heb 1:8,9, where this is quoted to prove that he is God and has a more excellent name than the angels. The Mediator is God, else he neither would have been able to do the Mediator's work nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. Concerning his government observe,

1 The eternity of it; it is for ever and ever. It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and in the blessed fruits and consequences of it it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself.

Perhaps even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual infinite progression; for it is promised that not only of his government, but of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end (Isa 9:7); even when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God even the Father (1Co 15:24) the throne of the Redeemer will continue.

2 The equity of it: The sceptre of thy kingdom, the administration of thy government, is right, exactly according to the eternal counsel and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil. Whatever Christ does he does none of his subjects any wrong, but gives redress to those that do suffer wrong: He loves righteousness, and hates wickedness, Ps 45:7.

He himself loves to do righteousness, and hates to do wickedness; and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness. By the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness (for by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness), and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so conspicuously as it did in the sufferings of Christ.

3. The establishment and elevation of it: Therefore God, even thy God (Christ, as Mediator, called God his God, Joh 20:17, as commissioned by him, and the head of those that are taken into covenant with him), has anointed thee with the oil of gladness. Therefore, that is,

(1.) "In order to this righteous government of thine, God has given thee his Spirit, that divine unction, to qualify thee for thy undertaking," Isa 61:1.

1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me. What God called him to he fitted him for, Isa 11:2 The Spirit is called the oil of gladness because of the delight wherewith Christ was filled in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings.

(2.) "In recompence of what thou has done and suffered for the advancement of righteousness and the destruction of sin God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness, has brought thee to all the honours and all the joys of thy exalted state." Because he humbled himself, God has highly exalted him, Php 2:8,9. His anointing him denotes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah.

And his anointing him with the oil of gladness denotes the joy that was set before him (so his exaltation is expressed, Heb 12:2) both in the light of his Father's countenance (Ac 2:28) and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see, and be satisfied, Isa 53:11. This he is anointed with above all his fellows, above all believers, who are his brethren, and who partake of the anointing--they by measure, he without measure. But the apostle brings it to prove his pre-eminence above the angels, Heb:1:4,9. The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels (Lu 15:10), but much more of the Son.

II. He keeps his court with splendour and magnificence.

1. His robes of state, wherein he appears, are taken notice of, not for their pomp, which might strike an awe upon the spectator, but their pleasantness and the gratefulness of the odours with which they were perfumed (Ps 45:8): They smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia (the oil of gladness with which he and his garments were anointed):

these were some of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil which God appointed, the like to which was not to be made up for any common use (Ex 30:23,24), which was typical of the unction of the Spirit which Christ, the great high priest of our profession, received, and to which therefore there seems here to be a reference. It is the savour of these good ointments, his graces and comforts, that draws souls to him (So 1:3,4) and makes him precious to believers, 1Pe 2:7.

2. His royal palaces are said to be ivory ones, such as were then reckoned most magnificent. We read of an ivory house that Ahab made, 1Ki 22:39. The mansions of light above are the ivory palaces, whence all the joys both of Christ and believers come, and where they will be for ever in perfection; for by them he is made glad, and all that are his with him; for they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

3. The beauties of his court shine very brightly. In public appearances at court, when the pomp of it is shown, nothing is supposed to contribute so much to it as the splendour of the ladies, which is alluded to here, Ps 45:9.

(1.) Particular believers are here compared to the ladies at court, richly dressed in honour of the sovereign: Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women, whose looks, and mien, and ornaments, we may suppose, from the height of their extraction, to excel all others. All true believers are born from above; they are the children of the King of kings.

These attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with their prayers and praises, which is really their honour, and he is

pleased to reckon it his. The numbering of kings' daughters among his honourable women, or maids of honour, intimates that the kings whose daughters they were should be tributaries to him and dependents on him, and would therefore think it a preferment to their daughters to attend him.

(2.) The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here compared to the queen herself--the queen-consort, whom, by an everlasting covenant, he hath betrothed to himself. She stands at his right hand, near to him, and receives honour from him, in the richest array, in gold of Ophir, in robes woven with golden thread or with a gold chain and other ornaments of gold.

This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose graces, which are her ornaments, are compared to fine linen, clean and white (Re 19:8), for their purity, here to gold of Ophir, for their costliness; for, as we owe our redemption, so we owe our adorning, not to corruptible things, but to the precious blood of the Son of God.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:
therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
8 All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia,
out of the ivory palaces,
whereby they have made thee glad.
9 Kings' daughters *were* among thy honorable women:
upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right hand of the royal bridegroom. God, who said to the Son, Thy throne is for ever and ever, says this to the church, which, upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his daughter.

I. He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus: "Hearken, therefore, and consider this, and

incline thy ear, that is, submit to those conditions of thy espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them."

This is the method of profiting by the word of God. He that has ears, let him hear, let him hearken diligently; he that hearkens, let him consider and weigh it duly; he that considers, let him incline and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is it that is here required?

1. She must renounce all others.

(1.) Here is the law of her espousals: "Forget thy own people and thy father's house, according to the law of marriage. Retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again; banish all such remembrance (not only of thy people that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that were dearer) as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom." When Abraham, in obedience to God's call, had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as mindful of the country whence he came out. This shows,

[1.] How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or paganism to the faith of Christ wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession either the Jewish ceremonies or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mongrel religion in Christianity as the Samaritans had.

[2.] How necessary it is for us all, when we give up our names to Jesus Christ, to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison, that is, to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, Lu 14:26.

(2.) Here is good encouragement given to the royal bride thus entirely to break off from her former alliances: So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, which intimates that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blemish her beauty and would hazard her interest in the affections of the royal

bridegroom, but that, if she entirely conformed to his will, he would delight in her. The beauty of holiness, both on the church and on particular believers, is in the sight of Christ of great price and very amiable. Where that is he says, This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, Re 2:1.

2. She must reverence him, must love, honour, and obey him: He is thy Lord, and worship thou him. The church is to be subject to Christ as the wife to the husband (Eph 5:24), to call him Lord, as Sarah called Abraham, and to obey him (1Pe 3:6), and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him divine honours. We must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father; nay, in so doing it is reckoned that they honour the Father. If we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, Php 2:11.

II. He tells her of the honours designed for her.

1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her (Ps 45:12): "The daughter of Tyre," a rich and splendid city, "the daughter of the King of Tyre shall be there with a gift; every royal family round about shall send a branch, as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour and to make an interest in thee; even the rich among the people, whose wealth might be thought to exempt them from dependence at court, even they shall entreat thy favour, for his sake to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their friend."

The Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb (as rich as a Jew), shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphian period, and shall know that Christ has loved her, Re 3:9. When the Gentiles, being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they then come with a gift, 2Co 8:5,Ro 15:16. When with themselves

they devote all they have to the honour of Christ, and the service of his kingdom, they then come with a gift.

2. She shall be very splendid, and highly esteemed in the eyes of all,

(1.) For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire (Ps 45:13): The king's daughter is all glorious within. Note, The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the view of a carnal eye.

As their life, so their glory, is hidden with Christ in God, neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do so discern it highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, not that which makes a fair show in the flesh, but which is in the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible (1Pe 3:4), whose praise is not of men, but of God, Ro 2:29.

(2.) For her rich apparel. Though all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet her clothing also is of wrought gold; the conversation of Christians, in which they appear in the world, must be enriched with good works, not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.

3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy (Ps 45:14,15): She shall be brought to the king, as the Lord God brought the woman to the man (Ge 2:22), which was a type of this mystical marriage between Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it; none besides are so brought to the king (Ps 45:14) as to enter into the king's palace, Ps 45:15.

(1.) This intimates a two-fold bringing of the spouse to Christ.

[1.] In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, 2Co 11:2,Ro 7:4.

[2.] In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints, at the end of time; then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made completely ready, when all that belong to the election of grace shall be called in and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2Th 2:1. Then is the marriage of the Lamb come (Re 19:7,21:2), and the virgins go forth to meet the bridegroom, Mt 25:1. Then they shall enter into the king's palaces, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord.

(2.) In both these espousals, observe, to the honour of the royal bride,

[1.] Her wedding clothes--raiment of needle-work, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit; both curiously wrought by divine wisdom.

[2.] Her bride-maids--the virgins her companions, the wise virgins who have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps, those who, being joined to the church, cleave to it and follow it, these shall go in to the marriage.

[3.] The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated: With gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought. When the prodigal is brought home to his father it is meet that we should make merry and be glad (Lu 15:32); and when the marriage of the Lamb has come let us be glad and rejoice (Re 19:7); for the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart, So 3:11.

4. The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious (Ps 45:16): Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children. Instead

of the Old-Testament church, the economy of which had waxed old, and ready to vanish away (Heb 8:13), as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New-Testament church, a Gentile-church, that shall be grafted into the same olive and partake of its root and fatness (Ro 11:17); more and more eminent shall be the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, Isa 54:1.

This promise to Christ is of the same import with that Isa 53:10, He shall see his seed; and these shall be made princes in all the earth; there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, made to our God kings and priests, Re 1:6.

Or it may intimate that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings (those in Canaan only, these in all the earth), nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the church, which shall suck the breasts of kings. They are princes of Christ's making; for by him kings reign and princes decree justice.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual in the praises of the royal bridegroom (Ps 45:18): I will make thy name to be remembered. His Father has given him a name above every name, and here promises to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of ministers and Christians in every age, that shall bear up his name, which shall thus endure for ever (Ps 72:17), by being remembered in all the generations of time; for the entail of Christianity shall not be cut off. "Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever and ever."

Those that help to support the honour of Christ on earth shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever praising him. In the believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only way thither, in our generation; and, in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the

remembrance of him to succeeding generations, that his name may endure for ever and be as the days of heaven.

11 so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty:
for he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.
12 And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift;
even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor.
13 The King's daughter *is* all glorious within:
her clothing *is* of wrought gold.
14 She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework:
the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought
unto thee.
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:
they shall enter into the King's palace.
16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:
therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

Psalms-46

God Is Our Refuge and Strength
To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah,
A Song upon Alamoth.

1 God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in
trouble.

The psalmist here teaches us by his own example.

I. To triumph in God, and his relation to us and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing in our behalf (Ps 46:1): God is our refuge and strength; we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe and think ourselves so; secure upon good grounds, Pr 18:10. Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength, to bear us up under our burdens, to fit us for all our services and sufferings; he will

by his grace put strength into us, and on him we may stay ourselves.

Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, a present help, a help found (so the word is), one whom we have found to be so, a help on which we may write Probatum est--It is tried, as Christ is called a tried stone, Isa 28:16. Or, a help at hand, one that never is to seek for, but that is always near.

Or, a help sufficient, a help accommodated to every case and exigence; whatever it is, he is a very present help; we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

II. To triumph over the greatest dangers: God is our strength and our help, a God all-sufficient to us; therefore will not we fear. Those that with a holy reverence fear God need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth. If God be for us, who can be against us; to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God and his providence and promise:

"We will not fear, though the earth be removed, though all our creature-confidences fail us and sink us; nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah," for whose sons this psalm was penned, and, some think, by them; yet while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear;
----Si fractus illabatur orbis, Impavidum ferient ruinæ.---- Hor. --Let Jove's dread arm With thunder rend the spheres, Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears.

Observe here,

1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed, and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and firmest parts of the earth, to lie buried in

the unfathomed ocean; we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its foaming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to shake the mountains, Ps 46:3.

Though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments incontinual revolution--though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point--yet will not we fear, knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church. See Ps 93:4. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear who have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it; but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who expect to be most happy when the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to the rock that is higher than they, and find firm footing upon that rock.

2. How well-grounded the defiance of this danger is, considering how well guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High; it is the ark of God for which our hearts tremble. But, when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church, we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

(1.) Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times (Ps 46:4): There is a river the streams whereof shall make it glad, even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which went softly by Jerusalem (Isa 8:6,7): though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time, Isa 22:10,11. But this must be understood spiritually; the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the

streams; or the Spirit of grace is the river (Joh 7:38,39), the comforts of which are the streams, that make glad the city of our God.

God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a place of broad rivers and streams, Isa 33:21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to counterbalance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

(2.) Establishment to the church. Though heaven and earth are shaken, yet God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, Ps 46:5. God has assured his church of his special presence with her and concern for her; his honour is embarked in her, he has set up his tabernacle in her and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved, that is,

[1.] Not destroyed, not removed, as the earth may be Ps 46:2 The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[2.] Not disturbed, not much moved, with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

(3.) Deliverance to the church, though her dangers be very great: God shall help her; and who then can hurt her? He shall help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted the more she shall multiply. God shall help her out of her troubles, and that right early--when the morning appears; that is, very speedily, for he is a present help (Ps 46:1), and very seasonably, when things are brought to the last extremity and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers to

themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us, by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well, and will end well.

2 Therefore will not we
fear, though the earth be
removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
3 *though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled,
though the mountains shake with the swelling
thereof. Selah.
4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of
God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.
5 God *is* in the midst of her;
she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, *and that* right early.
6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

These verses give glory to God both as King of nations and as King of saints.

I. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and overruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory; he does according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, What doest thou?

1. He checks the rage and breaks the power of the nations that oppose him and his interests in the world (Ps 46:6): The heathen raged at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David; compare Ps 2:1,2.

The kingdoms were moved with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous furious manner to oppose it; but God uttered his voice, spoke to them in his wrath, and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broken; the earth itself melted under them, so that they found

no firm footing; their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun. Such a melting of the spirits of the enemies is described, Jdg 5:4,5; and see Lu 21:25,26.

2. When he pleases to draw his sword, and give it commission, he can make great havoc among the nations and lay all waste (Ps 46:8): Come, behold the works of the Lord; they are to be observed (Ps 66:5), and to be sought out, Ps 111:2. All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly take notice of the desolations he has made in the earth, among the enemies of his church, who thought to lay the land of Israel desolate.

The destruction they designed to bring upon the church has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemies' country; and O what desolations did it make there! Cities were burnt, countries laid waste, and armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, How terrible art thou in thy works! Ps 66:3. Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him and trust in him see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but they shall be broken to pieces.

3. When he pleases to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations and crowns them with peace, Ps 46:9. War and peace depend on his word and will, as much as storms and calms at sea do, Ps 107:25,29. He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth, sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing-time, when, by long wars with each other, they have run themselves out of breadth. Both sides perhaps are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall; expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peace-makers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut

asunder and turned into a pruning-hook, the sword beaten into a ploughshare, and the chariots of war are burned, there being no more occasion for them; or, rather, it may be meant of what he does, at other times, in favour of his own people.

He makes those wars to cease that were waged against them and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemies' bow that was drawn against them. No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper, Isa 54:17. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war (Eze 39:9,10), which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue is a work of the Lord, which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

II. As King of saints, and as such we must own that great and marvellous are his works, Re 15:3. He does and will do great things,

1. For his own glory (Ps 46:10): Be still, and know that I am God.

(1.) Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it, to their terror, that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them; let them rage no more, for it is all in vain: he that sits in heaven, laughs at them; and, in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour, he will be exalted among the heathen and not merely among his own people, he will be exalted in the earth and not merely in the church. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and wherein they deal proudly he will be above them, and make them know that he is so.

(2.) Let his own people be still; let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know, to their comfort, that the

Lord is God, he is God alone, and will be exalted above the heathen; let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure that God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, Father, glorify thy name, we ought to exercise faith upon the answer given to that prayer when Christ himself prayed it, I have both glorified it and I will glorify it yet again. Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former: I will be exalted; they triumph in this, Ps 46:7 and again Ps 46:11. It is the burden of the song, "The Lord of hosts is with us; he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us and president over us; the God of Jacob is our refuge, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide and be sure of safety." Let all believers triumph in this.

(1.) They have the presence of a God of power, of all power: The Lord of hosts is with us. God is the Lord of hosts, for he has all the creatures which are called the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleases of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us.

(2.) They are under the protection of a God in covenant, who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our refuge, by whom we are sheltered and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare when without are fightings, and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establishes them, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be with us--

has been, is and will be our refuge: the original includes all; and well may Selah be added to it. Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, If God be for us, who can be against us?

7 The Lord of hosts *is* with us;
the God of Jacob *is* our refuge.
Selah.
8 Come, behold the works of the Lord,
what desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
he burneth the chariot in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I *am* God:
I will be exalted among the heathen,
I will be exalted in the earth.
11 The Lord of hosts *is* with us;
the God of Jacob *is* our refuge.
Selah.

Psalms-47

God Is the King of All the Earth
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

1 O clap your hands, all ye people;
shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise, as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to and barrenness in this work. Observe, in these verses,

I. Who are called upon to praise God: "All you people, all you people of Israel;" those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and

his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, "All you people and nations of the earth;" and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles and the bringing of them into the church; see Ro 15:11.

II. What they are called upon to do: "O clap your hands, in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you, of your approbation, nay, your admiration, of what God has done in general, and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, Job 27:23. Clap your hands, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; shout unto God, not to make him hear (his ear is not heavy), but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout with the voice of triumph in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph."

Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections as to some may seem indecent and imprudent ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

III. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise.

1. That the God with whom we have to do is a God of awful majesty (Ps 47:2): The Lord most high is terrible. He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be reverenced by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice, that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.

2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion. He is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power, a King over all the earth; all the creatures, being made by him, are subject to him, and therefore he is a great King, the King of kings.

3. That he takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so and ever will;

(1.) In giving them victory and success (Ps 47:3), subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way (Ps 44:2) and those that made attempts upon them. This God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered which way soever he turned his victorious arms. But this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation.

Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles; he shall bring them in as sheep into the fold (so the word signifies), not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a willing people in the day of his power, shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce those who had gone astray, under the guidance of the great shepherd and bishop of souls, 1Pe 2:25.

(2.) In giving them rest and settlement (Ps 47:4): He shall choose our inheritance for us. He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel; it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them; see De 32:8. This justified their possession of that land, an d gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which Infinite Wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it made it the excellency, the honour, of Jacob (Am 6:8); and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob because he loved him, De 7:8. Apply this spiritually, and it bespeaks,

[1.] The happiness of the saints, that God himself has chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: he has chosen it who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy; and he has chosen so well that he himself has undertaken to be the inheritance of his people (Ps 16:5), and

he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, 1Pe 1:4. This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, for whom, because he loved them, he prepared such a happiness as eye has not seen.

[2.] The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, "God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his."

2 For the Lord most high *is* terrible;
he is a great King over all the earth.
3 He shall subdue the people under us,
and the nations under our feet.
4 He shall choose our inheritance for us,
the excellency of Jacob whom he loved.
Selah.
5 God is gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here (Ps 47:6): Sing praises to God, and again, Sing praises, Sing praises to our King, and again, Sing praises.

This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God? Da 5:4. Should not subjects praise their king?

God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined (Ps 47:7): Sing you praises with understanding, with Maschil.

1. "Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God and what is the meaning of the service." This is the gospel-rule (1Co 14:15), to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, Eph 5:19. It is not an acceptable service if it be not a reasonable service.

2. "Instructively, as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him." Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense:--

I. We must praise God going up (Ps 47:5): God has gone up with a shout, which may refer,

1. To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it, the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him he might be said to go up. The emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in and give thanks for.

2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, Ac 1:9. Then God went up with a shout, the shout of a King, of a conqueror, as one who, having spoiled principalities and powers, then led captivity captive, Ps 68:18. He went up as a Mediator, typified by the ark and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, into heaven itself; see Heb 9:24. We read not of a shout, or of the sound of a trumpet, at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God, that then shouted for joy, Job 38:7. He shall come again in the same manner as he went (Ac 1:11) and we are sure that he shall come again with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

II. We must praise God reigning, Ps 47:7,8. God is not only our King, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is King of all the earth (Ps 47:7), over all the kings of the earth, and therefore in every place the incense of praise is to be offered up to him. Now this may be understood,

1. Of the kingdom of providence. God, as Creator, and the God of nature, reigns over the heathen, disposes of them and all their affairs, as he pleases, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him: He sits upon the throne of his holiness, which he has prepared in the heavens, and there he rules over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government; all are born within his allegiance; even the heathen that serve other gods are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government; it is a throne of holiness, on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, in which we are sure there is no iniquity.

2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose throne is for ever and ever reigns over the heathen; not only he is entrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, Eph 2:12,13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph 3:6. Christ sits upon the throne of his holiness, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are intended to show forth God's holiness and to advance holiness among the children of men.

III. We must praise God as attended and honoured by the princes of the people, Ps 47:9. This may be understood,

1. Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes, at the solemn feasts, or to despatch the public business of the nation. It was the

honour of Israel that they were the people of the God of Abraham, as they were Abraham's seed and taken into his covenant; and, thanks be to God, this blessing of Abraham has come upon the isles of the Gentiles, Ga 3:14. It was their happiness that they had a settled government, princes of their people, who were the shields of their land. Magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield, especially when their princes, their shields, belong unto the Lord, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service, for then he is greatly exalted.

It is likewise the honour of God that, in another sense, the shields of the earth do belong to him; magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace is a very happy omen, which promises abundance of blessings.

2. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem, that they should all become the people of the God of Abraham, to whom it was promised that he should be the father of many nations.

The volunteers of the people (so it may be read); it is the same word that is used in Ps 110:3, Thy people shall be willing; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing, to be his. When the shields of the earth, the ensigns of royal dignity (1Ki 14:27,28), are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises:
sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
7 For God *is* the King of all the earth:
sing ye praises with understanding.
8 God reigneth over the heathen:
God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
9 The princes of the people are gathered together,
even the people of the God of Abraham:
for the shields of the earth *belong* unto God:
he is greatly exalted.

Psalms-48

The Beauty and Glory of Zion
A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah.

1 Great *is* the Lord,
and greatly to be praised
in the city of our God,
in the mountain of his holiness.

The psalmist is designing to praise Jerusalem and to set forth the grandeur of that city; but he begins with the praises of God and his greatness (Ps 48:1), and ends with the praises of God and his goodness, Ps 48:14.

For, whatever is the subject of our praises, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them. And, particularly, whatever is said to the honour of the church must redound to the honour of the church's God.

What is here said to the honour of Jerusalem is,

I. That the King of heaven owns it: it is the city of our God (Ps 48:1), which he chose out of all the cities of Israel to put his name there. Of Zion he said kinder things than ever he said of place upon earth. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it, Ps 132:13,14. It is the city of the great King (Ps 48:2), the King of all the earth, who is pleased

to declare himself in a special manner present there. This our Saviour quotes to prove that to swear by Jerusalem is profanely to swear by God himself (Mt 5:35), for it is the city of the great King, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory.

1. It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. In Judah God is known, and his name is great, but especially in Jerusalem, the head-quarters of the priests, whose lips were to keep this knowledge. In Jerusalem God is great (Ps 48:1) who in other places was made little of, was made nothing of. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart, in which God is great, in which he is uppermost, in which he is all. There God is known (Ps 48:3) and where he is known he will be great; none contemn God but those that are ignorant of him.

2. It is devoted to the honour of God. It is therefore called the mountain of his holiness, for holiness to the Lord is written upon it and all the furniture of it, Zec 14:20. This is the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is a holy nation, a peculiar people; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called the holy city, bad as it was (Mt 27:53), till that was set up, but never after.

3. It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God; there he is greatly praised, and greatly to be praised, Ps 48:1. Note, The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness the more it is expected that we should abound in his praises. Those that from all parts of the country brought their offerings to Jerusalem had reason to be thankful that God would not only permit them thus to attend him, but promise to accept them, and meet them with a blessing, and reckon himself praised and honoured by their services. Herein Jerusalem typified the gospel church; for what little tribute of praise God has from this earth arises from that church upon earth, which is therefore his tabernacle among men.

4. It is taken under his special protection (Ps 48:3): He is known for a refuge; that is, he has approved himself such a

one, and as such a one he is there applied to by his worshippers. Those that know him will trust in him, and seek to him, Ps 9:10. God was known, not only in the streets, but even in the palaces of Jerusalem, for a refuge; the great men had recourse to God and acquaintance with him. And then religion was likely to flourish in the city when it reigned in the palaces. 5. Upon all these accounts, Jerusalem, and especially Mount Zion, on which the temple was built, were universally beloved and admired--beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, Ps 48:2 The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when Infinite Wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful was that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness.

This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground which was thus beautified with holiness he called the joy of the whole earth, that is, what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus in very deed dwell with man upon the earth. Mount Zion was on the north side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or, if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Zion-ward for it.

II. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That God was known in their palaces for a refuge they had had a late instance, and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was,

1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies; for the kings were assembled, Ps 48:4. The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem; their heads and horns, their policies and powers, were combined for its ruin; they were assembled with all their forces; they passed, advanced, and marched on together, not doubting but they should soon make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy of the whole earth.

2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation and gave check to their fury, as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel (Nu 24:2): They saw it and marvelled, and hasted away, Ps 48:5.

Not Veni, vidi, vici--I came, I saw, I conquered; but, on the contrary, Veni vidi victus sum--I came, I saw, I was defeated. Not that there was any thing to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable; but the sight of it brought to mind what they had heard concerning the special presence of God in that city and the divine protection it was under, and God impressed such terrors on their minds thereby as made them retire with precipitation. Though they were kings, though they were many in confederacy, yet they knew themselves an unequal match for Omnipotence, and therefore fear came upon them, and pain, Ps 48:6.

Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put those in pain that live at ease.

The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem is here compared to the throes of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly (1Th 5:3), which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem is compared to the dreadful work made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, all dispersed (Ps 48:7):

Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind; effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east wind (Job 27:20,21); these shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures. Who knows the power of God's anger?

2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth,
is mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north,
the city of the great King.
3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

4 For, lo, the kings were assembled,
they passed by together.
5 They saw *it, and* so they marveled;
they were troubled, *and* hasted away.
6 Fear took hold upon them there,
and pain, as of a woman in travail.
7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish
with an east wind.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

I. Let our faith in the word of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find that, as we have heard, so have we seen (Ps 48:8), and what we have seen obliges us to believe what we have heard.

1. "As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days." Note, God's latter appearances for his people against his and their enemies are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them.

2. "As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care; and now we have seen it; we have seen the power of our God; we have seen his goodness; we have seen his care and concern for us, that he is a wall of fire round about Jerusalem and the glory in the midst of her."

Note, In the great things that God has done, and is doing, for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself and the scripture that is fulfilled in it.

II. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church be hereby encouraged. "From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, in the city of our God, we may conclude that God will establish it for ever." This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem (that city was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust), but has its accomplishment in the gospel church. We are sure that that shall be established for ever; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, Mt 16:18. God himself has undertaken the establishment of it; it is the Lord that has founded Zion, Isa 14:32.

And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God upon which the church is built.

III. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God. "From what we have heard, and seen, and hope for, we may take occasion to think much of God's loving-kindness, whenever we meet in the midst of his temple," Ps 48:9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us must be traced up to the fountain of God's lovingkindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people.

This therefore we must think of with delight, think of frequently and fixedly. What subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable? We must have God's lovingkindness always before our eyes (Ps 26:3), especially when we attend upon him in his temple. When we enjoy the benefit of public ordinances undisturbed, when we meet in his temple and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion thence to think of his lovingkindness.

IV. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour (Ps 48:10): "According to thy name, O God! so is thy praise, not only in Jerusalem, but to the ends of the earth." By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem God had made himself a name; that

is, he had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it; and so was his praise; that is, some in all parts would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes his praise will go, at least it should go, and, at length, it shall go, when all the ends of the world shall praise him, Ps 22:27,Re 11:15.

Some, by his name, understand especially that glorious name of his, the Lord of hosts; according to that name, so is his praise; for all the creatures, even to the ends of the earth, are under his command. But his people must, in a special manner, acknowledge his justice in all he does for them. "Righteousness fills thy right hand;" that is, all the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity.

V. Let all the members of the church in particular take to themselves the comfort of what God does for his church in general (Ps 48:11): "Let Mount Zion rejoice, the priests and Levites that attend the sanctuary, and then let all the daughters of Judah, the country towns, and the inhabitants of them, be glad: let the women in their songs and dances, as usual on occasion of public joys, celebrate with thankfulness the great salvation which God has wrought for us."

Note, When we have given God the praise we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverances of the church, and be glad because of God's judgments (that is, the operations of his providence), all which we may see wrought in wisdom (therefore called judgments) and working for the good of his church.

VI. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength, and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us (Ps 48:12,13): Walk about Zion. Some think this refers to the ceremony of the triumph; let those who are employed in that solemnity walk round the walls (as they did, Ne 12:31), singing and praising God. In doing this let them tell the towers and mark well the bulwarks,

1. That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe, with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are all in their full strength and none of them damaged, the palaces in their beauty and none of them blemished; there is not the least damage done to the city by the kings that were assembled against it (Ps 48:4): Tell this to the generation following, as a wonderful instance of God's care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it.

2. That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger another time. And so,

(1.) We may understand it literally of Jerusalem, and the strong-hold of Zion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Zion, with a pleasure equal to the terror with which the kings their enemies saw them, Ps 48:5. Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, La 4:12.

All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should enter the gates of Jerusalem; nor could they have entered if the inhabitants had not sinned away their defence. Set your heart to her bulwarks. This intimates that the principal bulwarks of Zion were not the objects of sense, which they might set their eye upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon. It was well enough fortified indeed both by nature and art; but its bulwarks that were mostly to be relied upon were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made concerning it. "Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that, if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not tenable." Calvin observes here that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated that in process of time they would all be destroyed and remain no

longer to be seen; for, otherwise, what need was thee to preserve the description and history of them? When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple their Master told them that in a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, Mt 24:1,2. Therefore,

(2.) This must certainly be applied to the gospel church, that Mount Zion, Heb 12:22. "Consider the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of that, that you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it and embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the rock fortified by the divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests and cleave to it."

VII. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting lovingkindness, Ps 48:14. Tell this to the generation following; transmit this truth as a sacred deposit to your posterity, That this God, who has now done such great things for us, is our God for ever and ever; he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us and care for us.

1. If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints that God himself will be with them and will be their God, Re 21:3.

2. If he be our God, he will be our guide, our faithful constant guide, to show us our way and to lead us in it; he will be so, even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us even to the last. He will be our guide above death (so some); he will so guide us as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our guide beyond death (so others); he will conduct us safely to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safely to death, through death, and beyond death--down to death and up again to glory.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the Lord of hosts,
in the city of our God:
God will establish it for ever.
Selah.
9 We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God,
in the midst of thy temple.
10 According to thy name, O God,
so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth:
thy right hand is full of righteousness.
11 Let mount Zion rejoice,
let the daughters of Judah be glad,
because of thy judgments.
12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her:
tell the towers thereof.
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks,
consider her palaces;
that ye may tell *it* to the generation following.
14 For this God *is* our God for ever and ever:
he will be our guide *even* unto death.

Psalms-49

The Folly of Trusting in Riches
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

1 Hear this, all *ye* people;
give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world:

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this is; for there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, nor of greater weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

I. He demands the attention of others to that which he was about to say (Ps 49:1,2): Hear this, all you people; hear it and

heed it, hear it and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice. Hear and give ear, Ps 62:9,11. Not only, "Hear, all you Israelites, and give ear all the inhabitants of Canaan," but, Hear, all you people, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the world; for this doctrine is not peculiar to those that are blessed with divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesses to it. All men may know, and therefore let all men consider, that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. Both low and high, both rich and poor, must come together, to hear the word of God; let both therefore hear this with application.

Let those that are high and rich in the world hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low hear this and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger from an inordinate desire towards the wealth of the world as rich people from an inordinate delight in it. He gives a good reason why his discourse should be regarded (Ps 49:3): My mouth shall speak of wisdom; what he had to say,

1. Was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding; it will make those wise and intelligent that receive it and submit to it. It is not doubtful but certain, not trivial but weighty, not a matter of nice speculation but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end.

2. It was what he had himself well digested. What his mouth spoke was the meditation of his heart (as Ps 19:14,45:1); it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprized of the meaning of and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

II. He engages his own attention (Ps 49:4): I will incline my ear to a parable. It is called a parable, not because it is

figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse and very instructive. It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates,

1. That he was taught it by the Spirit of God and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others must first learn themselves.

2. That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon.

3. That he would not expect others should attend to that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned he first wakens the ear to hear as the learned, Isa 50:4.

III. He promises to make the matter as plain and as affecting as he could: I will open my dark saying upon the harp. What he learned for himself he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate, for the benefit of others.

1. Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them; tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, Ah Lord God! doth he not speak parables? For the sake of such, he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain that he that runs might read it.

2. Others understood it well enough, but they were not moved by it, it never affected them, and for their sake he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. A verse may find him who a sermon flies. Herbert.

IV. He begins with the application of it to himself, and that is the right method in which to treat of divine things. We must first preach to ourselves before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the

folly of carnal security (Ps 49:6), he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which those enjoy who trust in God, and not in their worldly wealth: Wherefore should I fear? he means, Wherefore should I fear their fear (Isa 8:12), the fears of worldly people.

1. "Wherefore should I be afraid of them? Wherefore should I fear in the days of trouble and persecution, when the iniquity of my heels, or of my supplanters that endeavour to trip up my heels, shall compass me about, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those all whose power lies in their wealth, which will not enable them to redeem their friends? I will not fear their power, for it cannot enable them to ruin me." The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand them in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency who cannot support themselves in their own excellency.

2. "Wherefore should I be afraid like them?" The days of old age and death are the days of evil, Ec 12:1. In the day of judgment the iniquity of our heels (or of our steps, our past sins) will compass us about, will be set in order before us. Every work will be brought into judgment, with every secret thing; and every one of us must give account of himself. In these days worldly wicked people will be afraid; nothing more dreadful to those that have set their hearts upon the world than to think of leaving it; death to them is the king of terrors, because, after death, comes the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? Ps 23:4. When his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified, and then even in the judgment-day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, he can lift up his head with joy, Lu 21:26,28.

Note, The children of God, though ever so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this

world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death and the judgment to come.

2 both low and high,
rich and poor, together.
3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom;
and the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding.
4 I will incline mine ear to a parable:
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.
Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?
6 They that trust in their wealth,
and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

In these verses we have,

I. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, Ps 17:14. It is taken for granted that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches (Ps 49:6), houses and lands of inheritance, which they call their own, Ps 49:11. God often gives abundance of the good things of this world to bad men who live in contempt of him and rebellion against him, by which it appears that they are not the best things in themselves (for then God would give most of them to his best friends), and that they are not the best things for us, for then those would not have so much of them who, being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, Pr 1:32. A man may have abundance of the wealth of this world and be made better by it, may thereby have his heart enlarged in love, and thankfulness, and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described.

1. They repose a confidence in their riches: They trust in their wealth (Ps 49:6); they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil and supply them with all good, and that they need nothing else, no, not God himself. Their gold is their hope (Job 31:24), and so it becomes their God. Thus our Saviour

explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people (Mk 10:24): How hard is it for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! See 1Ti 6:17.

2. They take a pride in their riches: They boast themselves in the multitude of them, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry (my might, and the power of my hand, have gotten me this wealth), as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have (Ps 10:3) and can set all the world at defiance (I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever); therefore they call their lands after their own names, hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory; and, if their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but they often change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions (Ps 49:11): Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes; but it intimates,

(1.) That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds, is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world, but they are his outward thoughts; his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things: but a worldly man has only some floating foreign thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there.

(2.) There it is industriously concealed. They cannot, for shame, say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but inwardly they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that they shall continue for ever, yet they are so foolish as to think their houses shall, and their dwelling-places; and suppose they should, what good will that do them when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not; for

the world passes away, and the fashion of it. All things are devoured by the teeth of time.

II. A demonstration of their folly herein. In general (Ps 49:13), This their way is their folly.

Note, The way of worldliness is a very foolish way: those that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, Lu 12:19,20. And yet their posterity approve their sayings, agree with them in the same sentiments, say as t hey say and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood; men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it. To prove the folly of carnal worldlings he shows,

1. That with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death (Ps 49:7-9): None of them can by any means redeem his brother, his brother worldling, who would give counter-security out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him: and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God does not value it; it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent.

The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both if he please, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever, in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we

must needs die, and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war.

What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or friend that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true that the redemption of the soul is precious and ceaseth for ever; that is, life, when it is going, cannot be arrested, and when it is gone it cannot be recalled, by any human art, or worldly price.

But this looks further, to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old-testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Everlasting life is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, 1Pe 1:18,19.

The learned Dr. Hammond applies the Ps 49:8,9 expressly to Christ: "The redemption of the soul shall be precious, shall be high-prized, it shall cost very dear; but, being once wrought, it shall cease for ever, it shall never need to be repeated, Heb 9:25,26,10:12. And he (that is, the Redeemer) shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption; he shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore," Re 1:18.

Christ did that for us which all the riches of the world could not do; well therefore may he be dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend, could not do for us, no, not one of the best estate or interest; and therefore those that love father or brother more than him are not worthy of him. This likewise shows the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That with all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldling sees, and it vexes him to see it, that wise men die, likewise the fool and the

brutish person perish, Ps 49:10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will, at length, come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever, and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that, though he shall not, his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians, but they cannot out-wit death, nor evade his stroke, with all their art and management; others are fools and brutish (Fortuna favet fatuis--Fools are Fortune's favourites); these, though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt in the world: but that shall not excuse them; they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wise that did mischief with their craft.

Or by the wise and the foolish we may understand the godly and the wicked; the godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, and their death is their destruction; but, however, they leave their wealth to others.

(1.) They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, though once it served a turn (Jer 41:8), Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field.

(2.) They cannot carry it away with them, but must leave it behind them.

(3.) They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it; they must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps to a fool (Ec 2:19), perhaps to an enemy.

3. That, as their wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour (Ps 49:12): Man, being in honour, abides not. We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him, man in splendour, man at his best estate, surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire; yet then he abides not. His honour does not continue; that is a fleeting shadow. He himself does not, he tarries not all night; this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short that he can scarcely be said to get a night's lodging

in it; so little rest is there in these things; he has but a baiting time.

He is like the beasts that perish; that is, he must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is; his dead body likewise will putrefy as theirs does; and (as Dr. Hammond observes) frequently the greatest honours and wealth, unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity (as the beasts, when they die, leave nothing behind them to their young ones, but the wide world to feed in), but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

4. That their condition on the other side of death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon will not only not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell (Ps 49:14): Like sheep they are laid in the grave. Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter (Ho 4:16), and then death comes, and shuts them up in the grave like fat sheep in a fold, to be brought forth to the day of wrath, Job 21:30. Multitudes of them, like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them, the second death, the worm that dies not, Job 24:20. Their own guilty consciences, like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them, with, Son, remember, Lu 16:25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon, at which hell from beneath is moved, Isa 14:9-23, &c.

While a saint can ask proud Death, Where is thy sting? Death will ask the proud sinner, Where is thy wealth, thy pomp? and the more he was fattened with prosperity the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake (Da 12:2), the upright shall have dominion over them, shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt, elevated to the highest heavens when they are sunk to the lowest hell,

but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin.

When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue he owned that that upright man had dominion over him, as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wise, and that they lay much at their mercy, when the begged, Give us of your oil. Let this comfort us in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming when the tables will be turned (Est 9:1) and the upright will have the dominion. Let us now judge of things as they will appear at that day.

But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be consumed in the grave from their dwelling; all that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others caressed and admired them, was adventitious and borrowed; it was paint and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. Their beauty shall consume, the grave (or hell) being a habitation to every one of them; and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever?

7 none *of them* can by any means redeem his
brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:
8 (for the redemption of their soul *is*
precious, and it ceaseth for ever:)
9 that he should still live for ever,
and not see corruption.
10 For he seeth *that* wise men die,
likewise the fool and the brutish person
perish, and leave their wealth to others.
11 Their inward thought *is, that* their houses *shall continue* for ever,
and their dwelling places to all generations;
they call *their* lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man *being* in honor abideth not:

he is like the beasts *that* perish.
13 This their way *is* their folly:
yet their posterity approve their
sayings. Selah.
14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
death shall feed on them;
and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their
dwelling.
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:
for he shall receive
me. Selah.

Good reason is here given to good people,

I. Why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear if they have such a comfortable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, Ps 49:15. He had shown (Ps 49:14) how miserable the dead are that die in their sins, where he shows how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of men's outward condition, how great a difference soever it makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave.

But the distinction of men's spiritual state, though, in this life, it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet, at and after death, it makes a very great one. Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. The righteous has hope in his death, so has David here hope in God concerning his soul.

Note, The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope,

I. That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave, which includes,

(1.) The preserving of the soul from going to the grave with the body. The grave has a power over the body, by virtue of the sentence (Ge 3:19), and it is cruel enough in executing

that power (So 8:6); but is has no such power over the soul. It has power to silence, and imprison, and consume the body; but the soul then moves, and acts, and converses, more freely than ever (Re 6:9,10); it is immaterial and immortal. When death breaks the dark lantern, yet it does not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it.

(2.) The reuniting of the soul and body at the resurrection. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but is hall, at length, be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. The God of life, that was its Creator at first, can and will be its Redeemer at last.

(3.) The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin: "God shall redeem my soul from the sheol of hell (Ps 49:15), the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast," Ps 49:14. It is a great comfort to dying saints that they shall not be hurt of the second death (Re 2:11), and therefore the first death has no sting and the grave no victory.

2. That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them. Ps 31:5, Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou has redeemed it. He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions that he prepared for them (Joh 14:2,3), those everlasting habitations, Lu 16:9.

II. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which, as it is their pride and joy, has often been the envy, and grief, and terror of the righteous, which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposes the temptation very strong to envy the prosperity of sinners, and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with a high hand, that with their wealth and interest they will run down religion and religious people, and that they will be found the truly happy people; for he supposes,

(1.) That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them and have every thing at command. Pecuniæ obediunt omnes et omnia--Every person and every thing obey the commanding influence of money.

(2.) That the glory of their house, from very small beginnings, is increased greatly, which naturally makes men haughty, insolent, and imperious, Ps 5:16. Thus they seem to be the favourites of heaven, and therefore formidable.

(3.) That they are very easy and secure in themselves and in their own minds (Ps 49:18): In his life-time he blessed his soul; that is, he thought himself a very happy man, such a one as he would be, and a very good man, such a one as he should be, because he prospered in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool who said to his soul, "Soul, take thy ease, and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world or with the rebukes and admonitions of conscience. All is well, and will be well for ever." Note,

[1.] It is of great consequence to consider what that is in which we bless our souls, upon the score of which we think well of ourselves. Believers bless themselves in the God of truth (Isa 65:16) and think themselves happy if he be theirs; carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that.

[2.] There are many whose precious souls lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves bless them; they applaud that in themselves which God condemns, and speak peace to themselves when God denounces war against them. Yet this is not all.

(4.) They are in good reputation among their neighbours: "Men will praise thee, and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family." This is the sentiment of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves that do most for their bodies, by heaping up riches, though, at the same time, nothing is done for the soul,

nothing for eternity; and accordingly they bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors, Ps 10:3.

If men were to be our judges, it were our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their good opinion: but what will it avail us to be approved of men if God condemn us? Dr. Hammond understands this of the good man here spoken to, for it is the second person, not of the wicked man spoken of: "He, in his life-time, blessed his soul, but thou shalt be praised for doing well unto thyself. The worldling magnified himself; but thou that dost not, like him, speak well of thyself, but do well for thyself, in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will be thy everlasting honour."

2. He suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prosperous sinners (Ps 73:17): "Think what they will be in the other world, and you will see no cause to envy them what they are and have in this world."

(1.) In the other world they will be never the better for all the wealth and prosperity they are now so fond of. It is a miserable portion, which will not last so long as they must (Ps 49:17): When he dies it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but he shall carry nothing away with him of all that which he has been so long heaping up. The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it. But those have something to show in the other world for their living in this world who can say, through grace, that though they came corrupt, and sinful, and spiritually naked, into it, they go renewed, and sanctified, and well clothed with the righteousness of Christ, out of it.

Those that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit have something which, when they die, they shall carry away with them, something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will be the improvement of; but, as for worldly

possessions, as we brought nothing into the world (what we have we had from others), so it is certain that we shall carry nothing out, but leave it to others, 1Ti 6:7. They shall descend, but their glory, that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, shall not descend after them to lessen the disgrace of death and the grave, to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell. Grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us.

(2.) In the other world they will be infinitely the worse for all their abuses of the wealth and prosperity they enjoyed in this world (Ps 49:19): The soul shall go to the generation of his fathers, his worldly wicked fathers, whose sayings he approved and whose steps he trod in, his fathers who would not hearken to the word of God, Zec 1:4. He shall go to be there where they are that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked people; for the end of the man that is in honour, if he be not wise and good, will be miserable; if he understand not, he is to be pitied rather than envied.

A fool, a wicked man, in honour, is really as despicable an animal as any under the sun; he is like the beasts that perish (Ps 49:20); nay, it is better to be a beast than to be a man that makes himself like a beast. Men in honour that understand, that know and do their duty and make conscience of it, are as gods, and children of the Most High. But men in honour that understand not, that are proud, and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and they shall perish, like the beasts, ingloriously as to this world, though not, like the beasts, indemnified as to another world. Let prosperous sinners therefore be afraid for themselves, but let not even suffering saints be afraid of them.

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made
rich, when the glory of his house is
increased;
17 for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away:
his glory shall not descend after him.

18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul,
(and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself,)
19 he shall go to the generation of his fathers;
they shall never see light.
20 Man *that is* in honor, and understandeth not,
is like the beasts *that* perish.

Psalms-50

God Is the Judge
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 The mighty God, *even* the Lord,
hath spoken, and called the earth
from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

It is probable that Asaph was not only the chief musician, who was to put a tune to this psalm, but that he was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time they praised God in the words of David and of Asaph the seer, 2Ch 29:30. Here is,

I The court called, in the name of the King of kings (Ps 50:2): The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken--El, Elohim, Jehovah, the God of infinite power justice and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the Judge, the Son of God came for judgement into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment.

All the earth is called to attend, not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel for their hypocrisy and ingratitude might safely be referred to any man of reason (nay, let the house of Israel itself judge between God and his vineyard, Isa 5:3), but because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God, in spirit and in truth, because when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it (see Mal 1:11,Ac 10:34), and because in the day of final judgment all nations shall be gathered together to receive

their doom, and every man shall give an account of himself unto God.

II The judgment set, and the Judge taking his seat. As, when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness, it is said, He came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and shone forth from Mount Paran, and came with ten thousands of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law (De 33:2), so, with allusion to that, when God comes to reprove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said here,

1. That he shall shine out of Zion, as then from the top of Sinai, Ps 50:2. Because in Zion his oracle was now fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people denounced, and thence the orders issued for the execution of them (Joe 2:1):

Blow you the trumpet in Zion. Sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of men's consciences and the reforming and refining of his church; and then God, who always dwells in Zion, may be said to shine out of Zion.

Moreover, he may be said to shine out of Zion because the gospel, which set up spiritual worship, was to go forth from Mount Zion (Isa 2:3,Mic 4:2), and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem (Lu 24:47), and Christians are said to come unto Mount Zion, to receive their instructions, Heb 12:22,28. Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill; and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty.

2. That he shall come, and not keep silence, shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men, as he had done (Ps 50:21), but shall show his displeasure at them, and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles which had long lain hid, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs (Eph 3:5,6) and that the partition-wall of the ceremonial

law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be concealed. In the great day our God shall come and shall not keep silence, but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law.

3. That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible: A fire shall devour before him. The fire of his judgments shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Zion, being afraid of that devouring fire (Isa 33:14), might be startled out of their sins. When his gospel kingdom was to be set up Christ came to send fire on the earth, Lu 12:49. The Spirit was given in cloven tongues as of fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, Ac 2:2,3.

And in the last judgment Christ shall come in flaming fire, 2Th 1:8. See Da 7:9,Heb 10:27. 4. That as on Mount Sinai he came with ten thousands of his saints, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process (Ps 50:4), as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel (De 4:26,31:28,32:21), and God by his prophets, Isa 1:2,Mic 6:2 The equity of the judgment of the great day will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

III. The parties summoned (Ps 50:5): Gather my saints together unto me. This may be understood either, 1. Of saints indeed: "Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves;" for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong; rebukes to hypocrites ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those who, in sacrificing, make a covenant with him, and so attend to and answer the end of the institution of sacrifices.

The design of the preaching of the gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the

children of God, Joh 11:52. And at the second coming of Jesus Christ all his saints shall be gathered together unto him (2Th 2:1) to be assessors with him in the judgment; for the saints shall judge the world, 1Co 6:2. Now it is here given as a character of the saints that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note,

(1.) Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints who have, in sincerity, covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord.

(2.) It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had), that we poor sinners can covenant with God so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant before we can be admitted again into covenant.

Or, 2. It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who are called a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, Ex 19:6. They were, as a body politic, taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity; and it was done with great solemnity, by sacrifice, Ex 24:8.

"Let them come and hear what God has to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the gospel he will, in due time, send them by his Son, which shall supersede the ceremonial law. If these be slighted, let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word which they will not be ruled by."

IV. The issue of this solemn trial foretold (Ps 50:6): The heavens shall declare his righteousness, those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial (Ps 50:4); the people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah. True and righteous are his judgments, Re 19:1,2 The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his gospel (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and

in which the righteousness of God is revealed), and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare; that is,

1. It will be universally known, and proclaimed to all the world. As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom and power, of God the Creator (Ps 19:1), so they shall no less openly declare the glory, the justice and righteousness, of God the Judge; and so loudly do they proclaim both that there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard, as it follows there, Ps 50:3.

2. It will be incontestably owned and proved; who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners' own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given is, for God is Judge himself, and therefore,

(1.) He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures, he never did, nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him they may do unjustly; but, when he is Judge himself, there can be no injustice done. Is God unrighteous, who takes vengeance?

The apostle, for this reason, startles at the thought of it; God forbid! for then how shall God judge the world? Ro 3:5,6. These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no exception, and from them there will lie no appeal.

(2.) He will be justified; God is Judge, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he will be clear when he judges, Ps 51:4.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of
beauty, God hath shined.
3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:
a fire shall devour before him,
and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
4 He shall call to the heavens from above,
and to the earth, that he may judge his people.
5 Gather my saints together unto me;

those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness:
for God *is* judge himself.
Selah.
7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will testify against thee:
I *am* God, *even* thy God.

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

I. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed (Ps 50:7): Hear, O my people! and I will speak.

Note, It is justly expected that whatever others doe, when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will, if they do not? And then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us when we are ready to hear what he says; even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences we must be forward to hear what he says, to hear even the rod and him that has appointed it.

II. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, Ps 50:8-13, &c. Now,

1. This may be considered as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews; but what was the ground of the controversy? Not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt-offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lusts, as the adulterous woman, Pr 7:14.

Their constant sacrifices, they thought, would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had, in some degree, neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with

them, for it was but a small offence in comparison with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their debtor by them, as if he could not h have maintained his numerous family of priests without their contributions; but God here shows them the contrary,

(1.) That he did not need their sacrifices. What occasion had he for their bullocks and goats who has the command of all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills (Ps 50:9,10), has an incontestable propriety in them and dominion over them, has them all always under his eye and within his reach, and can make what use he pleases of them; they all wait on him, and are all at his disposal? Ps 104:27-29.

Can we add any thing to his store whose all the wild fowl and wild beasts are, the world itself and the fulness thereof? Ps 50:11,12. God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him.

(2.) That he could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness, of this kind, could not possibly extend to him, nor, if they were in this matter righteous, was he the better (Ps 50:13): Will I eat the flesh of bulls? It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could, of themselves, and by virtue of any innate excellency in them, add any pleasure of praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink, as our bodies are.

It is said indeed of the demons whom the Gentiles worshipped that they did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink-offerings (De 32:38): they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of; but will the great Jehovah be thus entertained?

No; to obey is better than sacrifice, and to love God and our neighbour better than all burnt-offerings, so much better that God by his prophets often told them that their sacrifices were

not only not acceptable, but abominable, to him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing him, he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him; see Pr 15:8,Isa 1:11-23,66:3,Jer 6:20,Am 5:21.

They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to conduct themselves, in all other instances, towards God as their God.

2. This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the gospel of Christ. Thus Dr. Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings; he will no more have those to be continually before him (Ps 50:8); he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats, to be burnt upon his altar, Ps 50:9.

For indeed he never appointed this as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in, for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of nor have any property in, than we have in our folds; but he instituted it to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should in the fulness of time offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment with which God, through Christ, will be well pleased.

III. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise as those which, under the law, were preferred before all burn-offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now, under the gospel, come in the room of those carnal ordinances which were imposed until the times of reformation. He shows us here (Ps 50:14,15) what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded.

1. We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins: Offer to God confession, so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God

and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it. A broken and contrite heart is the sacrifice which God will not despise, Ps 51:17. If the sin was not abandoned the sin-offering was not accepted.

2. We must give God thanks for his mercies to us: Offer to God thanksgiving, every day, often every day (seven times a day will I praise thee), and upon special occasions; and this shall please the Lord, if it come from a humble thankful heart, full of love to him and joy in him, better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs, Ps 69:30,31.

3. We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him: Pay thy vows to the Most High, forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou has made him to that purport. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted.

Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come.

4. In the day of distress we must address ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer (Ps 50:15): Call upon me in the day of trouble, and not upon any other god. Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him.

We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier way of seeking his favour than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable.

5. When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God, meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us and with our praises when he delivers us.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices
or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.
9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,
nor he goats out of thy folds:
10 for every beast of the forest *is* mine,
and the cattle upon a thousand hills.
11 I know all the fowls of the mountains:
and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.
12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:
for the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.
13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?
14 Offer unto God thanksgiving;
and pay thy vows unto the Most High:
15 and call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.
16 But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people in the right way of worshipping him and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion: hypocrisy is wickedness for which God will judge. Observe here,

I The charge drawn up against them.

1. They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion (Ps 50:16): What has thou to do, O wicked man! to declare my statutes? This is a challenge to those that rare really profane, but seemingly godly, to show what title they have to the cloak of religion, and by what

authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives.

Let them make out their claim to it if they can. Some think it points prophetically at the scribes and Pharisees that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the Ps 50:7-15, were to be set up.

They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had by sitting in Moses's seat to hinder it; but the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them (Mt 23:1-36.), and St. Paul (Ro 2:21,22), makes this expostulation here agree very well to them.

They took on them to declare God's statues, but they hated Christ's instruction; and therefore what had they to do to expound the law, when they rejected the gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practicers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it.

Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly to declare his statutes and to take his covenant in their mouths. It is very possible, and too common, for those that declare God's statutes to others to live in disobedience to them themselves, and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths yet in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death; but they are guilty of a usurpation, they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to, and there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders. Friend, how camest thou in hither?

2. They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion.

(1.) They are charged with a daring contempt of the word of God (Ps 50:17):

Thou hatest instruction. They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they should do, for this fed their pride and made them look great, and by this craft they got their living; but they hated to receive instruction from God himself, for that would be a check upon them and a mortification to them. "Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of Providence." No wonder that those who hate to be reformed hate the means of reformation. Thou castest my words behind thee.

They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses's seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law (Ro 2:19); but in their conversations they cast God's word behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord.

(2.) A close confederacy with the worst of sinners (Ps 50:18): "When thou sawest a thief, instead of reproving him and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, thou consentedst with him, didst approve of his practices, and desire to be a partner with him and to share in the profits of his cursed trade; and thou hast been partaker with adulterers, hast done as they did, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses, hast done these things and hast had pleasure in those that do them," Ro 1:32.

(3.) A constant persisting in the worst of tongue-sins (Ps 50:19): "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, not only allowest thyself in, but addictest thyself wholly to, all manner of evil-speaking."

[1.] Lying: Thy tongue frames deceit, which denotes contrivance and deliberation in lying. It knits or links deceit, so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it.

[2.] Slandering (Ps 50:20): "Thou sittest, and speakest against thy brother, dost basely abuse and misrepresent him, magisterially judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon

him, as if you wert his master to whom he must stand or fall, whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is thy own mother's son.

He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him; yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover and make the best of; if really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; thou sittest and doest this, as a judge upon the bench, with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to." Those that do ill themselves commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

II The proof of this charge (Ps 50:21): "These things thou hast done; the fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excused; these things God knows, and thy own heart knows, thou hast done."

The sins of sinners will be proved upon them, beyond contradiction, in the judgment of the great day: "I will reprove thee, or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself."

The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths for ever stopped and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes! They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs, covered them, and endeavoured to forget them, nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming when God will make them see their sins to their everlasting shame and terror; he will set them in order, original sin, actual sins, sins against the law, sins against the gospel, against the first table, against the second table, sins of childhood and youth, of riper age, and old age.

He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order, against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

III. The Judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse of that patience: "I kept silence, did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course; sentence against thy evil works was respited, and not executed speedily."

Note, The patience of God is very great towards provoking sinners. He sees their sins and hates them; it would be neither difficulty nor damage to him to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful because the sinner makes such an ill use of it: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself, as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself, nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself."

Sinners take God's silence for consent and his patience for connivance; and therefore the longer they are reprieved the more are their hearts hardened; but, if they turn not, they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

IV. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites (Ps 50:22): "Now consider this, you that forget God, consider that God knows and keeps account of all your sins, that he will call you to an account for them, that patience abused will turn into the greater wrath, that though you forget God and your duty to him he will not forget you and your rebellions against him:

consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver." It is the doom of hypocrites to be cut asunder, Mt 24:51. Note,

1. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. Those that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him.

2. Those that forget God forget themselves; and it will never be right with them till they consider, and so recover themselves. Consideration is the first step towards conversion.

3. Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word will certainly be torn in pieces by the executions of his wrath.

4. When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

V. Full instructions given to us all how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; we have it, Ps 50:23, which directs us what to do that we may attain our chief end.

1. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told that whoso offers praise glorifies him; whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted from him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise, direct it to God, as every sacrifice was directed; put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar; see that it be made by fire, sacred fire, that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord.

This he is pleased, in infinite condescension, to interpret as glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

2. Man's chief end, in conjunction with this, is to enjoy God; and we are here told that those who order their conversation aright shall see his salvation.

(1.) It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better.

(2.) Those that would have their conversation right must take care and pains to order it, to dispose it according to rule, to understand their way and to direct it.

(3.) Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation; them God will make to see his salvation, for it is a salvation ready to be revealed; he will make them to see it and enjoy it, to see it, and to see themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way, to obtain the great salvation.

17 seeing thou hatest instruction,
and castest my words behind thee.
18 When thou sawest a thief,
then thou consentedst with him,
and hast been partaker with adulterers.
19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
and thy tongue frameth deceit.
20 Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother;
thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence;
thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself:
but I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.
22 Now consider this, ye that forget God,
lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.
23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:
and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright*
will I show the salvation of God.

Psalms-51

A Prayer for Cleansing
To the chief Musician,

A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

1 Have mercy upon me, O God,
according to thy loving-kindness:
according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies
blot out my transgressions.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall. But, though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him and raised him up.

1 The sin which, in this psalm, he laments, was the folly and wickedness he committed with his neighbour's wife, a sin not to be spoken of, nor thought of, without detestation. His debauching of Bathsheba was the inlet to all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he who thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall.

2 The repentance which, in this psalm, he expresses, he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued above nine months (for aught that appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it.

But though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will, by some means or other, recover them to repentance, bring them to himself and to their right mind again. Herein, generally, he uses the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to. But those that have been overtaken in any fault ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be don them and a wise

reprover their best friend. Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil.

3. David, being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings?

4. He drew up, by divine inspiration, the workings of his heart towards God, upon this occasion, into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church.

(1.) As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of, his sin having been notorious, that the plaster might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but, having lost the honour of innocents, they will rather covet the honour of penitents.

(2.) As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example and to instruct them in their repentance what to do an what to say. Being converted himself, he thus strengthens his brethren (Lu 22:32), and for this cause he obtained mercy, 1Ti 1:16.

In these words we have,

I. David's humble petition, Ps 51:1,2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable: God be merciful to me a sinner! Lu 18:13. David was, upon many accounts, a man of great merit; he had not only done much, but suffered much, in the cause of God; and yet, when he is convinced of sin, he does not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace:

Have mercy upon me, O God! He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy; and it is certain that the best man in the world will be undone if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

1. What his plea is for this mercy: "have mercy upon me, O God! not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king;" his plea is not, Lord, remember David and all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark (Ps 132:1,2); a true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but "Have mercy upon me for mercy's sake. I have nothing to plead with thee but,"

(1.) "The freeness of thy mercy, according to thy lovingkindness, thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable."

(2.) "The fulness of thy mercy. There are in thee not only lovingkindness and tender mercies, but abundance of them, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins, to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions."

2. What is the particular mercy that he begs--the pardon of sin. Blot out my transgressions, as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it or the creditor has remitted it. "Wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face to my confusion and terror." The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience, to purify and pacify that, blots out the transgression, and, having reconciled us to God, reconciles up to ourselves, Ps 51:2.

"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity; wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace, for it is only from a ceremonial pollution that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiple to wash me; the stain is

deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out. O wash me much, wash me thoroughly. Cleanse me from my sin." Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it unfits us for communion with God in grace or glory.

When God pardons sin he cleanses us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his win was pardoned. The Lord has taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die, 2Sa 12:13.

Yet he prays, Wash me, cleanse, blot out my transgressions; for God will be sought unto even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God had forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself; and therefore he is thus importunate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it and knew how to value it.

II. David's penitential confessions, Ps 51:3-5.

1. He was very free to own his guilt before God: I acknowledge my transgressions; this he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, Ps 32:4,5. Nathan said, Thou art the man. I am, says David; I have sinned.

2. He had such a deep sense of it that the was continually thinking of it with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a slight sudden passion, but an abiding grief: "My sin is ever before me, to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me" (so some); "I see it before me as an enemy, accusing and threatening me." David was, upon all occasions, put in mid of his sin, and was willing to be so, for his further abasement.

He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection on his unhappy walk there when thence he saw Bathsheba; he never lay down to sleep without a sorrowful

thought of the bed of his uncleanness, never sat down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent by him, and the fatal warrant he wrote and signed for his execution.

Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be often repeated. It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation, quickened to duty, and made patient under the cross.

(1.) He confesses his actual transgressions (Ps 51:4): Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. David was a very great man, and yet, having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now.

David was a very good man, and yet, having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

[1.] His confession is particular; "I have done this evil, this that I am now reproved for, this that my own conscience now upbraids me with." Note, It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

[2.] He aggravates the sin which he confesses and lays a load upon himself for it: Against thee, and in thy sight. Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession which he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal: I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, Lu 15:18. Two things David laments in his sin:--

First, That it was committed against God. To him the affront is given, and he is the party wronged. It is his truth that by wilful sin we deny, his conduct that we despise, his command that we disobey, his promise that we distrust, his name that we dishonour, and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and disingenuously. From this topic Joseph fetched the great argument against sin (Ge 39:9), and David here the great aggravation of it:

Against thee only. Some make this to intimate the prerogative of his crown, that, as a king, he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper to suppose that it expresses the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, against his own soul, and body, and family, against his kingdom, and against the church of God, and all this helped to humble him; but none of these were sinned against so as God was, and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon: Against thee only have I sinned.

Secondly, That it was committed in God's sight. "This not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceedingly sinful." This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that they have been committed under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience or a contempt of his justice.

[3.] He justifies God in the sentence passed upon him--that the sword should never depart from his house, 2Sa 12:10. He is very forward to own his sin, and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God. First, That God might be justified in the threatenings he had spoken by Nathan. "Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse."

Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatenings (1Sa 3:18), It is the Lord. And Hezekiah (2Ki 20:19), Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken. Secondly, That God might be

clear when he judged, that is, when he executed those threatenings. David published his confession of sin that when hereafter he should come into trouble none might say God had done him any wrong; for he owns the Lord is righteous: thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves. Thou art just in all that is brought upon us.

(2.) He confesses his original corruption (Ps 51:5): Behold, I was shapen in iniquity. He does not call upon God to behold it, but upon himself. "Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find I was shapen in iniquity. Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart; and so the sin might have been prevented.

Let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin--Lord, I did so; but indeed I could not help it, my inclination led me to it" (for as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it, so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in), "but let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin: Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself."

David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body (Ps 139:14,15); it was curiously wrought; and yet here he says it was shapen in iniquity, sin was twisted in with it; not as it came out of God's hands, but as it comes through our parents' loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her (Ps 116:16,86:16), and yet here he says she conceived him in sin; for though she was, by grace, a child of God, she was, by nature, a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character.

Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly

degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both.

This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness of evil and backwardness to good which is the burden of the regenerate and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

III. David's acknowledgment of the grace of God (Ps 51:6), both his good-will towards us ("thou desirest truth in the inward parts, thou wouldst have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession") and his good work in us--"In the hidden part thou hast made," or shalt make, "me to know wisdom." Note,

1. Truth and wisdom will go very far towards making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart (prudence and sincerity) bespeak the man of God perfect.

2. What God requires of us he himself works in us, and he works it in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how does this come in here?

(1.) God is hereby justified and cleared: "Lord, thou was not the author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou has many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that which, if I had duly considered it, would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I should have kept my integrity."

(2.) The sin is hereby aggravated: "Lord, thou desirest truth; but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? Thou hast made me to know wisdom; but I have not lived up to what I have known."

(3.) He is hereby encouraged, in his repentance, to hope that God would graciously accept him; for,

[1.] God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again: Thou desirest truth in the inward part; this is that which God has an eye to in a returning sinner, that in his spirit there be no guile, Ps 32:2. David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart towards God in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him.

[2.] He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the hidden man of the heart (1Pe 3:4), he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter another time. Some read it as a prayer: "Lord, in this instance, I have done foolishly; for the future make me to know wisdom." Where there is truth God will give wisdom; those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty shall be taught their duty.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions:
and my sin *is* ever before me.
4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
and done *this* evil in thy sight:
that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
and be clear when thou judgest.
5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

I. See here what David prays for. Many excellent petitions he here puts up, to which if we do but add, "for Christ's sake," they are as evangelical as any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins and the defilement he had contracted by them (Ps 51:7): "Purge me with hyssop; that is, pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I have forfeited and lost."

The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body by sprinkling water, or blood, or both upon them with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were, at length, discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution. "Lord, let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their re-admission to their former privileges."

But it is founded upon gospel-grace: Purge me with hyssop, that is, with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ (which is therefore called the blood of sprinkling, Heb 12:24), that purges the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin and dread of God which shut us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body, under the law, shut a man out from the courts of God's house.

If this blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, Heb 10:2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow, not only acquitted but accepted; so those are that are justified. Isa 1:18, Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.

2. He prays that, his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted till first he is cleansed; but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, "Make me to hear joy and gladness (Ps 51:8), that is, let me have a well-grounded peace, of thy creating, thy speaking, so that the bones which thou hast broken by convictions and threatenings may

rejoice, may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as a herb." Note,

(1.) The pain of a heart truly broken for sin may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who as a Spirit of bondage smites and wounds and as a Spirit of adoption heals and binds up.

(2.) The comfort and joy that arise from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner are as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain.

(3.) It is God's work, not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put gladness into his heart, that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a further act of grace, let him know that he was so.

3. He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for as the foundation of his comfort (Ps 51:9): "Hide thy face from my sins, that is, be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back. Blot out all my iniquities out of the book of thy account; blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun," Isa 44:22.

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for as for pardon and peace, Ps 51:10. He does not pray, "Lord, preserve me my reputation," as Saul, I have sinned, yet honour me before this people. No; his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed: the sin he had been guilty of was,

(1.) An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, Create in me a clean heart, O God! He now saw, more than ever, what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his own power to amend it, and therefore begs

of God (whose prerogative it is to create) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart can new-make it; and to his power nothing is impossible. He created the world by the word of his power as the God of nature, and it is by the word of his power as the God of grace that we are clean (Joh 15:3), that we are sanctified, Joh 17:17.

(2.) It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him; and therefore he prays, "Lord, renew a right spirit within me; repair the decays of spiritual strength which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again."

Renew a constant spirit within me, so some. He had, in this matter, discovered much inconstancy and inconsistency with himself, and therefore he prays, "Lord, fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee."

5. He prays for the continuance of God's good-will towards him and the progress of his good work in him, Ps 51:11.

(1.) That he might never be shut out from God's favour: "Cast me not away from thy presence, as one whom thou abhorrest and canst not endure to look upon." He prays that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that wherever he went, he might have the divine presence with him, might be under the guidance of his wisdom and in the custody of his power, and that he might not be forbidden communion with God: "Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee by prayer."

He does not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him. "God's will be done; but, Lord, rebuke me no in thy wrath. If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and all shall be well."

(2.) That he might never be deprived of God's grace: Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. He knew he had by his sin

grieved the Spirit and provoked him to with draw, and that because he also was flesh God might justly have said that his Spirit should no more strive with him nor work upon him, Ge 6:3. This he dreads more than any thing. We are undone if God take his Holy Spirit from us.

Saul was a sad instance of this. How exceedingly sinful, how exceedingly miserable, was he, when the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him! David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly: "Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (see 2Sa 7:15), "but continue thy Holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist."

6. He prays for the restoration of divine comforts and the perpetual communications of divine grace, Ps 51:12. David finds two ill effects of his sin:--

(1.) It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. A child of God knows no true nor solid joy but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded and our hopes shaken.

When we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But, when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. Those that sow in penitential tears shall reap in the joys of God's salvation when the times of refreshing shall come.

(2.) It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, "Uphold me with the free Spirit: I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair; Lord, sustain me; my own spirit" (though the spirit of a man will go far towards the sustaining of his infirmity) "is not sufficient; if I be left to myself, I shall certainly sink; therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him

counterwork the evil spirit that would cast me down from my excellency.

Thy Spirit is a free spirit, a free gent himself, working freely" (and that makes those free whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty)--"thy ingenuous princely Spirit." He was conscious to himself of having acted, in the matter of Uriah, very disingenuously and unlike a prince; his behaviour was base and paltry:

"Lord," says he, "let thy Spirit inspire my soul with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me." A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty the more constant we shall be to it.

II. See what David here promises, Ps 51:13. Observe,

1. What good work he promises to do: I will teach transgressors thy ways. David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others God's ways, that is,

(1.) Our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and,

(2.) God's way towards us in pardoning mercy; how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example, for the direction of sinners in repenting; he taught the latter by his own experience, for their encouragement. By this psalm he is, and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers. Solomon was so, and blessed Paul.

2. What good effect he promises himself from his doing this: "Sinners shall be converted unto thee, and shall neither persist in their wanderings from thee, nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee." The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors is their conversion to God; that is a happy point gained, and happy are those that are instrumental to contribute towards it, Jam 5:20.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness;
that the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
9 Hide thy face from my sins,
and blot out all mine iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
and renew a right spirit within me.
11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
and uphold me *with thy* free Spirit.
13 *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways;
and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
thou God of my salvation:
and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

I. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, enforcing both petitions from a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promises with thankfulness to show forth.

1. He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promises that then he would praise God, Ps 51:14.

The particular sin he prays against is blood-guiltiness, the sin he had now been guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto perhaps he had stopped the mouth of conscience with that frivolous excuse, that he did not kill him himself; but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and, hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance, he cries to God for mercy:

"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness; let me not lie under the guilt of this kind which I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again."

Note, It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood. In this prayer he eyes God as the God of salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of salvation he will deliver from guilt; for the salvation he is the God of is salvation from sin. We may therefore plead this with him, "Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin."

He promises that, if God would deliver him, his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness; God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification.

This he would comfort himself in and therefore sing of; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all those should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it.

2. He prays for the grace of God and promises to improve that grace to his glory (Ps 51:15): "O Lord! open thou my lips, not only that I may teach and instruct sinners" (which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned), "but that my mouth may show forth thy praise, not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but a heart enlarged in praise."

Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer; he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence towards God.

It cast a damp particularly upon his praises; when he had lost the joys of his salvation his harp was hung upon the willow-trees; therefore he prays, "Lord, open my life, put my heart in tune for praise again." To those that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins says effectually, Ephphatha--Be opened; and, when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God, as Zacharias did? Lu 1:64.

II. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent contrite heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased with.

1. He knew well that the sacrificing of beasts was in itself of no account with God (Ps 51:16): Thou desirest not sacrifice (else would I give it with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace); thou delightest not in burnt-offering. Here see how glad David would have been to give thousands of rams to make atonement for sin.

Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by reason of sin would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, Mic 6:6,7.

But see how little God valued this. As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had. Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not.

As they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressive of love and duty to him. 2. He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God (Ps 51:17): The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. See here,

(1.) What the good work is that is wrought in every true penitent--a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart. It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at, and requires, in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp work wrought there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair (as we say,

when a man is undone, His heart is broken), but in necessary humiliation and sorrow for sin.

It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God, a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in us!

(2.) How graciously God is pleased to accept of this. It is the sacrifices of God, not one, but many; it is instead of all burnt-offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin; but the breaking of our hearts for sin is a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it (he provides this lamb for a burnt-offering), and he will accept of it.

That which pleased God was not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it; so it is not the pampering of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy zeal against sin and for God.

The sacrifice was offered upon the altar that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ; there is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart.

He will not overlook it; he will not refuse or reject it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he does not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican, and he thought very meanly of himself; but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to

look with favour upon a broken and contrite heart, Isa 66:1,Isa 57:15.

III. David intercedes for Zion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the honour of God. See what a concern he had,

1. For the good of the church of God (Ps 51:18): Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion, that is,

(1.) "To all the particular worshippers in Zion, to all that love and fear thy name; keep them from falling into such wounding wasting sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name." Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or,

(2.) To the public interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin, how it had weakened the hands and saddened the hearts of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries; he was likewise afraid lest, he being a public person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and advance those public interests which he had damaged and endangered.

He prays that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work, which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays, not only that God would do good to Zion, as he did to other places, by his providence, but that he would do it in his good pleasure, with the peculiar favour he bore to that place which he had chosen to put his name there, that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note,

[1.] When we have most business of our own, and of greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nay, or Master has taught us

in our daily prayers to begin with that, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come.

[2.] The consideration of the prejudice we have done to the public interests by our sins should engage us to do them all the service we can, particularly by our prayers.

2. For the honour of the churches of God, Ps 51:19. If God would show himself reconciled to him and his people, as he had prayed, then they should go on with the public services of his house,

(1.) Cheerfully to themselves. The sense of God's goodness to them would enlarge their hearts in all the instances and expressions of thankfulness and obedience. They will then come to his tabernacle with burnt-offerings, with whole burnt-offerings, which were intended purely for the glory of God, and they shall offer, not lambs and rams only, but bullocks, the costliest sacrifices, upon his altar.

(2.) Acceptably to God: "Thou shalt be pleased with them, that is, we shall have reason to hope so when we perceive the sin taken away which threatened to hinder thy acceptance." Note, It is a great comfort to a good man to think of the communion that is between God and his people in their public assemblies, how he is honoured by their humble attendance on him and they are happy in his gracious acceptance of it.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips;
and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
16 For thou desirest not sacrifice;
else would I give *it:*
thou delightest not in burnt offering.
17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit:
a broken and a contrite heart, O God,
thou wilt not despise.
18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,
with burnt offering and whole burnt offering:

then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

Psalms-52

The Futility of Boastful Wickedness

To the chief Musician, Maschil,
A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul,
and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?
The goodness of God *endureth* continually.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now, at length, saw it necessary to quit the court, and shift for his own safety, for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided wit harms and victuals, he, by a wile, got Ahimelech the priest to furnish him with both.

Doeg an Edomite happened to be there, and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor, upon which accusation Saul grounded a very bloody warrant, to kill all the priests; and Doeg, the prosecutor, was the executioner, 1Sa 22:9, &c. In these verses,

I. David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, Ps 52:1. Doeg, it is probably, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but, if he was, he gained no reputation to it by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord; it is no honour for those that wear a sword to hector those that wear an ephod.

However, he was, by his office, a mighty man, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself, not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to boast of it and glory in it when we have done, not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to

justify it, not only to justify it, but to magnify it and value ourselves upon it.

Those that glory in their sin glory in their shame, and then it becomes yet more shameful; might men are often mischievous men, and boast of their heart's desire, Ps 10:3. It is uncertain how the following words come in: The goodness of God endures continually. Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question.

The patience and forbearance of God (those great proofs of his goodness) are abused by sinners to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, nay, because God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief; as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it. But it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to show,

1 The sinfulness of his sin: "God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so."

2 The folly of it: "Thou thinkest, with the mischief which thou boastest of (so artfully contrived and so successfully carried on), to run down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thyself mistaken: the goodness of God endures continually for their preservation, and then they need not fear what man can do unto them." The enemies in vain boast in their mischief while we have God's mercy to boast in.

II. He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Ahimelech in Saul's court, Ps 52:2-4. He accuses him of the wickedness of his tongue (that unruly evil, full of deadly poison) and the wickedness of his heart, which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with:--

1. Malice. His tongue does mischief, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him; he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord, whom he hated.

2. Falsehood. It was a deceitful tongue that he did this mischief with (Ps 52:4); he loved lying (Ps 52:3), and this sharp razor did work deceitfully (Ps 52:2), that is, before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had acted very plausibly towards them; though he was an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings, and paid his respects to the priests, as decently as any Israelite; therein he put a force upon himself (for he was detained before the Lord), but thus he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mischief.

Or it may refer to the information itself which he gave in against Ahimelech; for the matter of fact was, in substance, true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours were put upon it, and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue.

He told the truth, but not all the truth, as a witness ought to do; had he told that David made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he showed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous against Saul, but respectful to him. It will not save us from the guilt of lying to be able to say, "There was some truth in what we said," if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was.

3. Subtlety in sin: "Thy tongue devises mischiefs; that is, it speaks the mischief which thy heart devises." The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness the more there is of the devil in it.

4. Affection to sin: "Thou lovest evil more than good; that is, thou lovest evil, and hast no love at all to that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of

doing right. Thou wouldst rather please Saul by telling a lie than please God by speaking truth."

Those are of Doeg's spirit who, instead of being pleased (as we ought all to be) with an opportunity of doing a man a kindness in his body, estate, or good name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind; that is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them either in others or in ourselves.

III. He reads his doom and denounces the judgments of God against him for his wickedness (Ps 52:5): "Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord and cut them off, and therefore God shall likewise destroy thee for ever."

Sons of perdition actively shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and the man of sin. Destroyers shall be destroyed; those especially that hate, and persecute, and destroy the priests of the Lord, his ministers and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned,

1. To be driven out of the church: He shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle, not thy dwelling-place, but God's (so it is most probably understood); "thou shalt be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shalt have no benefit either by oracle or offering."

Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house who had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was detained there; he was weary of his service, and sought an opportunity to defame his family; it was very fit therefore that he should be taken away, and plucked out thence; we should forbid any one our house that should serve us so.

Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances if we make an ill use of them.

2. To be driven out of the world; "He shall root thee out of the land of the living, in which thou thoughtest thyself so deeply rooted." When good men die they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but, when wicked men die, they are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish for ever, as fuel to the fire of divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs;
like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
3 Thou lovest evil more than good;
and lying rather than to speak righteousness.
Selah.
4 Thou lovest all devouring words,
O *thou* deceitful tongue.
5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,
he shall take thee away,
and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place,
and root thee out of the land of the living.
Selah.
6 The righteous also shall see, and fear,
and shall laugh at him:

David was at this time in great distress; the mischief Doeg had done him was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him triumphing, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs, 2Co 2:14. David here triumphs,

I. In the fall of Doeg. Yet, lest this should look like personal revenge, he does not speak of it as how own act, but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them,

1. To the glory of God: They shall see and fear (Ps 52:6); that is, they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him, as a God of almighty power, before whom the proudest sinner cannot stand and before whom therefore we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous and make them afraid of offending God and incurring his displeasure, Ps 119:120,Re 15:3,4.

2. To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational serious laughter, as he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him, Ps 2:4. He shall appear ridiculous, and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments on him (Ps 52:7): Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength.

The fall and ruin of a wealthy mighty man cannot but be generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it; now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a newly-erected fabric tumbles down, every one immediately enquires where was the fault in the building of it. Now that which ruined Doeg's prosperity was,

(1.) That he did not build it upon a rock: He made not God his strength, that is, he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him nor sought him in the least. Those wretchedly deceive themselves that think to support themselves in their power and wealth without God and religion.

(2.) That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself: He trusted in the abundance of his riches, which, he imagined, were laid up for many years; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it. He was

resolved to stick at nothing for the securing and advancing of his honour and power.

Right or wrong, he would get what he could and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this, he thought, would strengthen him. Those may have any thing that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untempered mortar he built his house with, now that it has fallen and he is himself buried in the ruins of it.

II. In his own stability, Ps 52:8,9. "This mighty man is plucked up by the roots; but I am like a green olive-tree, planted and rooted, fixed and flourishing; he is turned out of God's dwelling-place, but I am established in it, not detained, as Doeg, by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there."

Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God shall be like green olive-trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a green bay-tree (Ps 37:35), which bears no useful fruit, though it has abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree, which is fat as well as flourishing (Ps 92:14) and with its fatness honours God and man (Jdg 9:9), deriving its root and fatness from the good olive, Ro 11:17. Now what must we do that we may be as green olive-trees?

1. We must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God and his grace? "I see what comes of men's trusting in the abundance of their riches, and therefore I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever--not in the world, but in God, not in my own merit, but in God's mercy, which dispenses its gifts freely, even to the unworthy, and has in it an all-sufficiency to be our portion and happiness."

This mercy is for ever; it is constant and unchangeable, and its gifts will continue to all eternity. We must therefore for ever trust in it, and never come off from that foundation.

2. We must live a life of thankfulness and holy joy in God (Ps 52:9): "I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it, has avenged the blood of thy priests upon their bloody enemy, and given him blood to drink, and hast performed thy promise to me," which he was as sure would be done in due time as if it were done already.

It contributes very much to the beauty of our profession, and to our fruitfulness in every grace, to be much in praising God; and it is certain that we never want matter for praise.

3. We must live a life of expectation and humble dependence upon God: "I will wait on thy name; I will attend upon thee in all those ways wherein thou hast made thyself known, hoping for the discoveries of thy favour to me and willing to tarry till the time appointed for them; for it is good before thy saints," or in the opinion and judgment of thy saints, with whom David heartily concurs. Communis sensus fidelium--All the saints are of this mind,

(1.) That God's name is good in itself, that God's manifestations of himself to his people are gracious and very kind; there is no other name given than his that can be our refuge and strong tower.

(2.) That it is very good for us to wait on that name, that there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits when they are ruffled and disturbed, and to keep us in the way of duty when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord, La 3:26.

All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his guidance but it ended well, nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints let us therefore abide and abound in, and in this particularly: Turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually, Ho 12:6.

7 Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength;

but trusted in the abundance of his riches,
and strengthened himself in his wickedness.
8 But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God:
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
9 I will praise thee for ever,
because thou hast done *it:*
and I will wait on thy name;
for *it is* good before thy saints.

Psalms-53

The Folly and Wickedness of Men
To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil,
A Psalm of David.

1 The fool hath said in his heart,
There is no God.
Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity:
there is none that doeth good.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it and hatred of it.

1 The fact of sin. Is that proved? Can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a witness to it, an unexceptionable witness: from the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, Ps 53:2. All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives in naked and open before him.

2 The fault of sin. Is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity (Ps 53:1,4); it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in (Ps 53:1,3); it is an evil thing; it is the worst of evils; it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, Ps 53:3.

3. The fountain of sin. How comes it that men are so bad? Surely it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes: they say in their hearts, "There is no God at all to call us to

an account, none that we need to stand in awe of." Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.

4. The folly of sin. He is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbours such corrupt thoughts. Atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. Those that do not seek God do not understand; they are like brute-beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason as by a capacity for religion.

The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge; those may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God, Ps 53:4.

5. The filthiness of sin. Sinners are corrupt (Ps 53:1); their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is the more vile it is when it is depraved, as that of the angels. Corruptio optimi est pessima--The best things, when corrupted, become the worst. Their iniquity is abominable; it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he hates nothing that he has made.

It makes men filthy, altogether filthy. Wilful sinners are offensive in the nostrils of the God of heaven and of the holy angels. What decency soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest defilement in the world.

6. The fruit of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone--because they will not run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up as they eat bread; as if they had not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time. They have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

7. The fear and shame that attend sin (Ps 53:5): There were those in great fear who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear. The wicked flees when none pursues. See the ground of this fear; it is because God has formerly scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people, not only broken their power and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth, Ps 141:7.

Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the camp of the saints and the beloved city, Re 20:9. The apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame, and expose them, because God has despised them, to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon those enemies with fear whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despises them, we may.

8. The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, Ps 53:6. There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old-Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption.

(1.) God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which will bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that have long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church.

(2.) He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name--Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, Mt 1:21.

2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men,

to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.
3 Every one of them is gone back:
they are altogether become filthy;
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
who eat up my people *as* they eat bread:
they have not called upon God.
5 There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was:
for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee:
thou hast put *them* to shame,
because God hath despised them.
6 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion!
When God bringeth back the captivity of his
people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

Psalms-54

A Prayer for Protection from Enemies
To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil,
A Psalm of David, when the Ziphim came and said to Saul,
Doth not David hide himself with us?

1 Save me, O God, by thy name,
and judge me by thy strength.

We may observe here,

1 The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphim came of their own accord, and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought that when David had retired into the country he would not be pursued, into a desert country he would not be discovered, and into his own country he would not be betrayed; and yet it seems he was.

Never let a good man expect to be safe an easy till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious, were these

Ziphim! It is well that God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, Mic 7:5.

2. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, Ps 54:1,2. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him, and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him, and begs he would save him from his enemies and judge him, that is, plead his cause and judge for him.

David has no other plea to depend upon than God's name, no other power to depend upon than God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence.

This would be the effectual answer of his prayers (Ps 54:2), which even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven: Hear my prayer, which comes from my heart, and give ear to the words of my mouth.

3. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, Ps 54:3.

(1.) They are strangers; such were the Ziphites, unworthy the name of Israelites. "They have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done." The worst treatment may be expected from those who, having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers.

(2.) They are oppressors; such was Saul, who, as a king, should have used his power for the protection of all his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction. Nothing is so grievous as oppression in the seat of judgment, Ec 3:16. Paul's greatest perils were by his own countrymen and by false brethren (2Co 11:26), and so were David's.

(3.) They were very formidable and threatening; they not only hated him and wished him ill, but they rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief.

(4.) They were very spiteful and malicious: They seek after my soul; they hunt for the precious life; no less will satisfy them. We may, in faith, pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance, to such cruel bloody men.

(5.) They were very profane and atheistical, and, for this reason, he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them: They have not set God before them, that is, they have quite cast off the thoughts of God; they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that, in fighting against his people, they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement.

Note, From those who do not set God before them no good is to be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? Selah--Mark this. Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times; for, if we do not we are in danger of becoming desperate.

2 Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.
3 For strangers are risen up against me,
and oppressors seek after my soul:
they have not set God before them.
Selah.
4 Behold, God *is* mine helper:
the Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.

We have here the lively actings of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured that the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt upon him was formidable.

I. He was sure that he had God on his side, that God took his part (Ps 54:4); he speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, Behold, God is my helper. If we be for him, he is for us; and, if he be for us, we shall have such help in him that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though

men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our helper:

The Lord is with those that uphold my soul. Compare Ps 118:7, "The Lord taketh my part with those that help me. There are some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one; none of them could help me if he did not help them." Every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be.

He means, "The Lord is he that upholds my soul, and keeps me from tiring in my work and sinking under my burdens." He that by his providence upholds all things by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God, who will in due time save his people, does, in the mean time, sustain them and bear them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

II. God taking part with him, he doubted not but his enemies should both flee and fall before him (Ps 54:5): "He shall reward evil unto my enemies that observe me, seeking an opportunity to do me a mischief. The evil they designed against me the righteous God will return upon their own heads." David would not render evil to them, but he knew God would: I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear.

The enemies we forgive, if they repent not, God will judge; and for this reason we must not avenge ourselves, because God has said, Vengeance is mine. But he prays, Cut them off in thy truth. This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of faith; for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God's threatenings as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

III. He promises to give thanks to God for all the experiences he had had of his goodness to him (Ps 54:6): I will sacrifice unto thee. Though sacrifices were expensive, yet, when God required that his worshippers should in that way praise him,

David would not only offer them, but offer them freely and without grudging.

All our spiritual sacrifices must, in this sense, be free-will-offerings; for God loves a cheerful giver. Yet he will not only bring his sacrifice, which was but the shadow, the ceremony; he will mind the substance: I will praise thy name. A thankful heart, and the calves of our lips giving thanks to his name, are the sacrifices God will accept:

"I will praise thy name, for it is good. Thy name is not only great but good, and therefore to be praised. To praise thy name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us (Ps 92:1); therefore I will praise thy name."

IV. He speaks of his deliverance as a thing done (Ps 54:7): I will praise thy name, and say, "He has delivered me; this shall be my song then." That which he rejoices in is a complete deliverance--He has delivered me from all trouble; and a deliverance to his heart's content--My eye has seen its desire upon my enemies, not seen them cut off and ruined, but forced to retreat, tidings being brought to Saul that the Philistines were upon him, 1Sa 23:27,28.

All David desired was to be himself safe; when he saw Saul draw off his forces he saw his desire. He has delivered me from all trouble. Either,

1. With this thought David comforted himself when he was in distress: "He has delivered me from all trouble hitherto, and many a time I have gained my point, and seen my desire on my enemies; therefore he will deliver me out of this trouble." We should thus, in our greatest straits, encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or,

2. With this thought he magnified his present deliverance when the fright was over, that it was an earnest of further deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before

him, because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it had been done already.

"He that has begun to deliver me from all troubles, and will at length give me to see my desire upon my enemies." This may perhaps point at Christ, of whom David was a type; God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and he was perfectly sure of it; and all things are said to be put under his feet; for, though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we are sure he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and he shall see his desire upon them.

However, it is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St. Paul does (like David here), 2Ti 4:17,18, He that delivered me from the mouth of the lion shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.

5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies:
cut them off in thy truth.
6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee:
I will praise thy name, O Lord;
for *it is* good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble:
and mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

Psalms-55

A Prayer for the Destruction of the Deceitful
To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil,
A Psalm of David.

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;
and hide not thyself from my supplication.

In these verses we have,

I. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore and a relief to the spirit under every burden: Give ear to my prayer, O God! Ps 55:1,2. He does not set down the petitions he offered

up to God in his distress, but begs that God would hear the prayers which, at every period, his heart lifted up to God, and grant an answer of peace to them: Attend to me, hear me.

Saul would not hear his petitions; his other enemies regarded not his pleas; but, "Lord, be thou pleased to hearken to me. Hide not thyself from my supplication, either as one unconcerned and not regarding it, nor seeming to take any notice of it, or as one displeased, angry at me, and therefore at my prayer." If we, in our prayers, sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts, to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts, from us.

II. David weeping; for in this he was a type of Christ that he was a man of sorrows and often in tears (Ps 55:2): "I mourn in my complaint" (or in my meditation, my melancholy musings), "and I make a noise; I cannot forbear such sighs and groans, and other expressions of grief, as discover it to those about me." Great griefs are sometimes noisy and clamorous, and thus are, in some measure, lessened, while those increase that are stifled, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? Ps 55:3.

It is because of the voice of the enemy, the menaces and insults of Absalom's party, that swelled, and hectored, and stirred up the people to cry out against David, and shout him out of his palace and capital city, as afterwards the chief priests stirred up the mob to cry out against the Son of David, Away with him--Crucify him. Yet it was not the voice of the enemy only that fetched tears from David's eyes, but their oppression, and the hardship he was thereby reduced to: They cast iniquity upon me.

They could not justly charge David with any mal-administration in his government, could not prove any act of oppression or injustice upon him, but they loaded him with calumnies. Though they found no iniquity in him relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him to the people as a tyrant fit to be

expelled. Innocency itself is no security against violent and lying tongues.

They hated him themselves, nay, in wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the heat and violence of anger, or sudden passion, and the implacableness of hatred and rooted malice; and therefore they studied to make him odious, that others also might hate him. This made him mourn, and the more because he could remember the time when he was the darling of the people, and answered to his name, David--a beloved one.

III. David trembling, and in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy and the general defection of the people, even those that he had little reason to suspect.

1. See what fear seized him. David was a man of great boldness, and in some very eminent instances had signalized his courage, and yet, when the danger was surprising and imminent, his heart failed him. Let not the stout man therefore glory in his courage any more than the strong man in his strength.

Now David's heart is sorely pained within him; the terrors of death have fallen upon him, Ps 55:4. Fearfulness of mind and trembling of body came upon him, and horror covered and overwhelmed him, Ps 55:5.

When without are fightings no marvel that within are fears; and, if it was upon the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added as much more to the fright.

Sometimes David's faith made him, in a manner, fearless, and he could boldly say, when surrounded with enemies, I will not be afraid what man can do unto me. But at other times his fears prevail and tyrannise; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

2. See how desirous he was, in this fright, to retire into a desert, any where to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy and seeing their oppressions. He said (Ps 55:6), said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, O that I had wings like a dove! Much as he had been sometimes in love with Jerusalem, now that it had become a rebellious city he longed to get clear of it, and, like the prophet, wished he had in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, that he might leave his people and go from them; for they were an assembly of treacherous men, Jer 9:2.

This agrees very well with David's resolution upon the breaking out of that plot, Arise, let us flee, and make speed to depart, 2Sa 15:14. Observe,

(1.) How he would make his escape. He was so surrounded with enemies that he saw not how he could escape but upon the wing, and therefore he wishes, O that I had wings! not like a hawk that flies swiftly; he wishes for wings, not to fly upon the prey, but to fly from the birds of prey, for such his enemies were. The wings of a dove were most agreeable to him who was of a dove-like spirit, and therefore the wings of an eagle would not become him. The dove flies low, and takes shelter as soon as she can, and thus would David fly.

(2.) What he would make his escape from--from the wind, storm, and tempest, the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. Herein he was like a dove, that cannot endure noise.

(3.) What he aimed at in making this escape, not victory but rest: "I would fly away and be at rest, Ps 55:6. I would fly any where, if it were to a barren frightful wilderness, ever so far off, so I might be quiet," Ps 55:7.

Note, Peace and quietness in silence and solitude are what the wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted, and

the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noise and clamour of those about them.

Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, that they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves; and, if there be any true peace on this side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world to perfect and everlasting rest.

2 Attend unto me, and hear me:
I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;
3 because of the voice of the enemy,
because of the oppression of the wicked:
for they cast iniquity upon me,
and in wrath they hate me.
4 My heart is sore pained within me:
and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
and horror hath overwhelmed me.
6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove!
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.
7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off,
and remain in the wilderness.
Selah.
8 I would hasten my escape
from the windy storm *and* tempest.
9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues:
for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, though not to his faith's end, yet to his wits' end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy. Observe here,

I The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices.

1. He complains of the city of Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom and fell off from David, so that he had none

there but how own guards and servants that he could repose any confidence in:

How has that faithful city become a harlot! David did not take the representation of it from others; but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart, did himself see nothing but violence and strife in the city (Ps 55:9); for, when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David, they grew mischievous one to another.

If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, Ps 55:10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city were made up on violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation, were in the midst of it:

Wickedness, all manner of wickedness, is in the midst thereof. Jusque datum sceleri--Wickedness was legalized. Deceit and guile, and all manner of treacherous dealing, departed not from her streets, Ps 55:11. It may be meant of their base and barbarous usage of David's friends and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mischief they could, by fraud or force.

Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and, which is more, the holy city, and in David's time too, so soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there? Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty? La 2:15. Is Jerusalem, the head-quarters of God's priests, so ill taught?

Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, and be made too hot for him, so that he cannot reside in it? Let us not be surprised at the corruptions and disorders of this church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem, where there is no violence nor strife, no mischief

nor guilt, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets.

2. He complains of one of the ringleaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him. It was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestion: There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee, 2Sa 15:3. That and similar accusations were industriously spread among the people; and who was most active in it?

"Not a sworn enemy, not Shimei, nor any of the nonjurors; then I could have borne it, for I should not have expected better from them" (and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses); "not one that professed to hate me, then I would have stood upon my guard against him, would have hidden myself and counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me. But it was thou, a man, my equal," Ps 55:13.

The Chaldee-paraphrase names Ahithophel as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom (2Sa 15:31), for he was the king's counsellor, 1Ch 27:33.

"It was thou, a man, my equal, one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as my own soul, whom I had laid in my bosom and made equal with myself, to whom I had communicated all my secrets and who knew my mind as well as I myself did,--my guide, with whom I advised and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council and prime-minister of state,--my intimate acquaintance and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuses me.

I have been kind to him, but I find him thus basely ungrateful. I have put a trust in him, but I find him thus

basely treacherous; nay, and he could not have done me the one-half of the mischief he does if I had not shown him so much respect." All this must needs be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all; this traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom-friend (Ps 55:14):

"We took counsel together, spent many an hour together, with a great deal of pleasure, in religious discourse," or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, "We joined ourselves together to the assembly; I gave him the right hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then we walked to the house of God in company, to attend the public service." Note,

(1.) There always has been, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom, perhaps for a long time, we can discern no difference; but the searcher of hearts does. David, who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithophel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The Pharisee and the publican went together to the temple to pray; but, sooner or later, those that are perfect and those that are not will be made manifest.

(2.) Carnal policy may carry men on very far and very long in a profession of religion while it is in fashion, and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David none was more devout than Ahithophel, and yet his heart was not right in the sight of God.

(3.) We must not wonder if we be sadly deceived in some that have made great pretensions to those two sacred things, religion and friendship; David himself, though a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make similar disappointments the more tolerable to us.

II. His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of and to comfort ourselves in, as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays,

1. That God would disperse them, as he did the Babel-builders (Ps 55:9): "Destroy, O Lord! and divide their tongues; that is, blast their counsels, by making them to disagree among themselves, and clash with one another. Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another, but be envious and jealous one of another."

This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest, divided against itself, cannot long stand.

2. That God would destroy them, as he did Dathan and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederate against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened and swallowed them up. This was then a new thing which God executed, Nu 16:30.

But David prays that it might now be repeated, or something equivalent (Ps 55:15): "Let death seize upon them by divine warrant, and let them go down quickly into hell; let them be dead, and buried, and so utterly destroyed, in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are; it is in the midst of them."

The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell, for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall therefore live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof:
mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.
11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof:
deceit and guile depart not from her streets.
12 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me;
then I could have borne *it:*

neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me;
then I would have hid myself from him:
13 but *it was* thou, a man mine
equal, my guide, and mine
acquaintance.
14 We took sweet counsel together,
and walked unto the house of God in company.
15 Let death seize upon them,
and let them go down quick into hell:
for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.

In these verses,

I. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God, being well assured that he should not seek him in vain (Ps 55:16): "As for me, let them take what course they please to secure themselves, let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mind; this I have found comfort in, and therefore this will I abide by:

I will call upon God, and commit myself to him, and the Lord shall save me;" for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, in a right manner, shall be saved, Ro 10:13. He resolves to be both fervent and frequent in this duty.

1. He will pray fervently: "I will pray and cry aloud. I will meditate" (so the former word signifies); "I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come thence." Then we pray aright when we pray with all that is within us, think first and then pray over our thoughts; for the true nature of prayer is lifting up the heart to God. Having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud; the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed and yet more excited by the intenseness and earnestness of his voice.

2. He will pray frequently, every day, and three times a day--evening, and morning, and at noon. It is probable that this had been his constant practice, and he resolves to continue it now that he is in his distress.

Then we may come the more boldly to the throne of grace in trouble when we do not then first begin to seek acquaintance with God, but it is what we have constantly practised, and the trouble finds the wheels of prayer going. Those that think three meals a day little enough for the body ought much more to think three solemn prayers a day little enough for the soul, and to count it a pleasure, not a task.

As it is fit that in the morning we should begin the day with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit that in the midst of the day we should retire awhile to converse with him. It was Daniel's practice to pray three times a day (Da 6:10), and noon was one of Peter's hours of prayer, Ac 10:9. Let not us be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing. "He shall hear my voice, and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftener the better, the more welcome."

II. He assures himself that God would in due time give an answer of peace to his prayers.

1. That he himself should be delivered and his fears prevented; those fears with which he was much disordered (Ps 55:4,5) by the exercise of faith were now silenced, and he begins to rejoice in hope (Ps 55:18): God has delivered my soul in peace, that is, he will deliver it; David is as sure of the deliverance as if it were already wrought. His enemies were at war with him, and the battle was against him, but God delivered him in peace, that is, brought him off with as much comfort as if he had never been in danger. If he did not deliver him in victory, yet he delivered him in peace, inward peace.

He delivered his soul in peace; by patience and holy joy in God he kept possession of that. Those are safe and easy whose hearts and minds are kept by that peace of God which passes all understanding, Php 4:7. David, in his fright, thought all were against him; but now he sees there were many with him, more than he imagined; his interest proved better than he expected, and this he gives to God the glory

of: for it is he that raises us up friends when we need them, and makes them faithful to us.

There were many with him; for though his subjects deserted him, and went over to Absalom, yet God was with him and the good angels. With an eye of faith he now sees himself surrounded, as Elisha was, with chariots of fire and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, There are many with me, more with me than against me, 2Ki 6:16,17.

2. That his enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down. They had frightened him with their menaces (Ps 55:3), but here he says enough to frighten them and make them tremble with more reason, and no remedy; for they could not ease themselves of their fears as David could, by faith in God.

(1.) David here gives their character as the reason why he expected God would bring them down.

[1.] They are impious and profane, and stand in no awe of God, of his authority or wrath (Ps 55:19): "Because they have no changes (no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel) therefore they fear not God; they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness, and by which they are certainly marked for destruction."

[2.] They are treacherous and false, and will not be held by the most sacred and solemn engagements (Ps 55:20): "He has put forth his hand against such as are at peace with him, that never provoked him, nor gave him any cause to quarrel with them; nay, to whom he had given all possible encouragement to expect kindness from him.

He has put forth his hand against those whom he had given his hand to, and has broken his covenant both with God and man, has perfidiously violated his engagement to both," than which nothing makes men riper for ruin.

[3.] They are base and hypocritical, pretending friendship while they design mischief (Ps 55:21): "The words of his mouth" (probably, he means Ahithophel particularly) "were smoother than butter and softer than oil, so courteous was he and obliging, so free in his professions of respect and kindness and the proffers of his service; yet, at the same time, war was in his heart, and all this courtesy was but a stratagem of war, and those very words had such a mischievous design in them that they were as drawn swords designed to stab." They smile in a man's face, and cut his throat at the same time, as Joab, that kissed and killed. Satan is such an enemy; he flatters men into their ruin. When he speaks fair, believe him not.

(2.) David here foretels their ruin.

[1.] God shall afflict them, and bring them into straits and frights, and recompense tribulation to those that have troubled his people, and this in answer to the prayers of his people: God shall hear and afflict them, hear the cries of the oppressed and speak terror to their oppressors, even he that abides of old, who is God from everlasting, and world without end, and who sits Judge from the beginning of time, and has always presided in the affairs of the children of men.

Mortal men, though ever so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God and are a very unequal match for him. This the saints have comforted themselves with in reference to the threatening power of the church's enemies (Hab 1:12): Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord?

[2.] God shall bring them down, not only to the dust, but to the pit of destruction (Ps 55:23), to the bottomless pit, which is called destruction, Job 26:6. He afflicted them (Ps 55:19) to see if that would humble and reform them; but, they not being wrought upon by that, he shall at last bring them to ruin. Those that are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction.

They are bloody and deceitful men (that is, the worst of men) and therefore shall not live out half their days, not half so long as men ordinarily live, and as they might have lived in a course of nature, and as they themselves expected to live. They shall live as long as the Lord of life, the righteous Judge, has appointed, with whom the number of our months is; but he has determined to cut them off by an untimely death in the midst of their days.

They were bloody men, and cut others off, and therefore God will justly cut them off: they were deceitful men, and defrauded others of the one-half perhaps of what was their due, and now God will cut them short, though not of that which was their due, yet of that which they counted upon.

III. He encourages himself and all good people to commit themselves to God, with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so (Ps 55:23): "I will trust in thee, in thy providence, and power, and mercy, and not in my own prudence, strength, or merit; when bloody and deceitful men are cut off in the midst of their days I shall still live by faith in thee." And this he will have others to do (Ps 55:22):

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord," whoever thou art that art burdened, and whatever the burden is. "Cast thy gift upon the Lord" (so some read it); "whatever blessings God has bestowed upon thee to enjoy commit them all to his custody, and particularly commit the keeping of thy soul to him." Or, "Whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it to thee in his own way and time. Cast thy care upon the Lord," so the LXX., to which the apostle refers, 1Pe 5:7.

Care is a burden; it makes the heart stoop (Pr 12:25); we must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit our way and works to him; let him do as seemeth him good, and we will be satisfied. To cast our burden upon God is to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised,

1. That he will sustain us, both support and supply us, will himself carry us in the arms of his power, as the nurse carries the sucking-child, will strengthen our spirits so by his Spirit as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised to free us immediately from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears; but he will provide that we be not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able according as we are tempted.

2. That he will never suffer the righteous to be moved, to be so shaken by any troubles as to quit either their duty to God or their comfort in him. However, he will not suffer them to be moved for ever (as some read it); though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

16 As for me, I will call upon God;
and the Lord shall save me.
17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud:
and he shall hear my voice.
18 He hath delivered my soul in
peace from the battle *that was*
against me: for there were many
with me.
19 God shall hear, and afflict
them, even he that abideth
of old. Selah.
Because they have no
changes, therefore they
fear not God.
20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him:
he hath broken his covenant.
21 *The words* of his mouth were smoother than
butter, but war *was* in his heart:
his words were softer than
oil, yet *were* they drawn
swords.

22 Cast thy burden upon the
Lord, and he shall sustain
thee:
he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the
pit of destruction:
bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
but I will trust in thee.

Psalms-56

A Prayer of Trust

To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim,
Michtam of David,
when the Philistines took him in Gath.

1 Be merciful unto me, O God:
for man would swallow me up;
he fighting daily oppresseth me.

David, in this psalm, by his faith throws himself into the hands of God, even when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines; it was when they took him in Gath, whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mid of it, 1Sa 21:10,11. Upon that occasion he changed his behaviour, but with so little ruffle to his temper that then he penned both this psalm and Ps 34:1-22.

This is called Michtam--a golden psalm. So some other psalms are entitled, but this has something peculiar in the title; it is upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, which signifies the silent dove afar off. Some apply this to David himself, who wished for the wings of a dove on which to fly away.

He was innocent and inoffensive, mild and patient, as a dove, was at this time driven from his nest, from the sanctuary (Ps 84:3), was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in

distant countries; there he was like the doves of the valleys, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep, dumb before the shearers, and a pattern to Christians, who, wherever they are and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves. In this former part of the psalm,

I. He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to show what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need, there was that God should appear against them (Ps 56:1): Be merciful unto me, O God! That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for; if we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire, and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy, his free rich mercy.

He prays that he might find mercy with God, for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines. "Lord" (says he), "be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone." The mercy of God is what we may flee to and trust to, and in faith pray for, when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers. He complains,

1. That his enemies were very numerous (Ps 56:2): "They are many that fight against me, and think to overpower me with numbers; take notice of this, O thou Most High! and make it to appear that wherein they deal proudly thou art above them." It is a point of honour to come in to the help of one against many. And, if God be on our side, how many soever they are that fight against us, we may, upon good grounds, boast that there are more with us; for (as that great general said) "How many do we reckon him for?"

2. That they were very barbarous: they would swallow him up, Ps 56:1 and again Ps 56:2. They sought to devour him; no less would serve; they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey, to eat up his flesh, Ps 27:2. Man would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom

he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species; yet a bad man would devour a good man if he could. "They are men, weak and frail; make them to know that they are so," Ps 9:20.

3. That they were very unanimous (Ps 56:6): They gather themselves together; though they were many, and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David.

4. That they were very powerful, quite too hard for him if God did not help him: "They fight against me (Ps 56:2); they oppress me, Ps 56:1. I am almost overcome and borne down by them, and reduced to the last extremity."

5. That they were very subtle and crafty (Ps 56:6): "They hide themselves; they industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as a lion in his den, that they may mark my steps;" that is, "they observe every thing I say and do with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse me of" (thus Christ's enemies watched him, Lu 20:20), or "they have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me."

6. That they were very spiteful and malicious. They put invidious constructions upon every thing he said, though ever so honestly meant and prudently expressed (Ps 56:5): "They wrest my words, put them upon the rack, to extort that out of them which was never in them;" and so they made him an offender for a word (Isa 29:21), misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David; all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words.

7. That they were very restless and unwearied. They continually waited for his soul; it was the life, the precious

life, they hunted for; it was his death they longed for, Ps 56:6. They fought daily against him (Ps 56:1), and would daily swallow him up (Ps 56:2), and every day they wrested his words, Ps 56:5. Their malice would not admit the least cessation of arms, or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pushing at him.

Such as this is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the kingdom of Christ and the interests of his holy religion, which if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as though some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used. So persecuted they the prophets.

II. He encourages himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, Ps 56:3,4 In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the divine protection.

1. He resolves to make God his confidence, then when dangers were most threatening and all other confidences failed: "What time I am afraid, in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without and most timorous within, then I will trust in thee, and thereby my fears shall be silenced."

Note, There are some times which are, in a special manner, times of fear with God's people; in these times it is their duty and interest to trust in God as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart and keep it in peace.

2. He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them (Ps 56:4): "In God I will praise, not only his work which he has done, but his word which he has spoken; I will give him thanks for a promise, though not yet performed. In God (in his strength and by his assistance) I will both glory in his word and give him the glory of it." Some understand by his word his providences, every event that he orders and appoints: "When

I speak well of God I will with him speak well of every thing that he does."

3. Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers: "When in God I have put my trust, I am safe, I am easy, and I will not fear what flesh can do unto me; it is but flesh, and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by divine permission." As we must not trust to an arm of flesh when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

III. He foresees and foretels the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by any wicked practices (Ps 56:7): Shall they escape by iniquity? They hope to escape God's judgments, as they escape men's, by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape?

No, certainly they shall not. The sin of sinners will never be their security, nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will in his anger cast down and cast out such people, Ro 2:3. None are raised so high, or settled so firmly, but that the justice of God can bring them down, both from their dignities and from their confidences. Who knows the power of God's anger, how high it can reach, and how forcibly it can strike?

2 Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up:
for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou Most High.
3 What time I am afraid,
I will trust in thee.
4 In God I will praise his
word, in God I have put my
trust;
I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.
5 Every day they wrest my words:
all their thoughts *are* against me for evil.
6 They gather themselves
together, they hide themselves,
they mark my steps,

when they wait for my soul.
7 Shall they escape by iniquity?
In *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.
8 Thou tellest my wanderings:
put thou my tears into thy bottle:
are they not in thy book?

Several things David here comforts himself with in the day of his distress and fear.

I. That God took particular notice of all his grievances and all his griefs, Ps 56:8. 1. Of all the inconveniences of his state: Thou tellest my wanderings, my flittings, so the old translation. David was now but a young (under thirty) and yet he had had many removes, from his father's house to the court, thence to the camp, and now driven out to sojourn where he could find a place, but not allowed to rest any where; he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains; continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbered all the weary steps he took, by night or by day.

Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people; and he does not cast out from his care and love those whom men have cast out from their acquaintance and converse.

2. Of all the impressions thus made upon his spirit. When he was wandering he was often weeping, and therefore prays, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle, to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in thy book, the book of thy remembrance." God has a bottle and a book for his people's tears, both those for their sins and those for their afflictions. This intimates,

(1.) That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints, and their deaths, are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. I have seen thy tears,

2Ki 20:5. I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, Jer 31:18.

(2.) That he will remember them and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy's tears (2Ti 1:4), and God will not forget the sorrows of his people.

The tears of God's persecuted people are bottled up and sealed among God's treasures; and, when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath, which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his people's eyes; and they will be breasts of consolation to God's mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise.

God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to those to reap in joy who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear will come up a pearl.

II. That his prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of his enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement (Ps 56:9): "When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back; I need no other weapons than prayers and tears; this I know, for God is for me, to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me; and, if God be for me, who can be against me so as to prevail?"

The saints have God for them; they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies; and, if they do this in faith, they shall find a divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back, their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, Eph 6:18.

III. That his faith in God would set him above the fear of man, Ps 56:10,11. Here he repeats, with a strong pathos, what he had said (Ps 56:4), "In God will I praise his word; that is, I will firmly depend upon the promise for the sake of him

that made it, who is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power, and goodness enough to make it good."

When we give credit to a man's bill we honour him that drew it; so when we do, and suffer, for God, in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. Having thus put his trust in God, he looks with a holy contempt upon the threatening power of man: "In God have I put my trust, and in him only, and therefore I will not be afraid what man can do unto me (Ps 56:11), though I know very well what he would do if he could," Ps 56:1,2.

This triumphant word, so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true believer, whom he makes a Christian hero, Heb 13:6. We may each of us boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and then I will not fear what man shall do unto me; for he has no power but what he has given him from above.

IV. That he was in bonds to God (Ps 56:12): "Thy vows are upon me, O God!--not upon me as a burden which I am loaded with, but as a badge which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy menial servant--not upon me as fetters that hamper me (such are superstitious vows), but upon me as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful to me, and directs me in the way of my duty.

Thy vows are upon me, the vows I have made to thee, to which thou art not only a witness, but a party, and which thou hast commanded and encouraged me to make." It is probably that he means especially those vows which he had made to God in the day of his trouble and distress, which he would retain the remembrance of, and acknowledge the obligations of, when his fright was over.

Note, It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy that the vows of God are upon us--our baptismal vows renewed at the Lord's table, our occasional vows under

convictions, under corrections, by these we are bound to live to God.

V. That he should still have more and more occasion to praise him: I will render praises unto thee. This is part of the performance of his vows; for vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy, and when the mercy is received must be made good. When we study what we shall render this is the least we can resolve upon, to render praises to God--poor returns for rich receivings! Two things he will praise God for:--

1. For what he had done for him (Ps 56:13): "Thou has delivered my soul, my life, from death, which was just ready to seize me." If God have delivered us from sin, either from the commission of it by preventing grace or from the punishment of it by pardoning mercy, we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin.

If we, who were by nature dead in sin, are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have reason to own that God has delivered our souls from death.

2. For what he would do for him: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and so hast given me a new life, and thereby hast given me an earnest of further mercy, that thou wilt deliver my feet from falling; thou hast done the greater, and therefore thou wilt do the less; thou hast begun a good work, and therefore thou wilt carry it on and perfect it."

This may be taken either as the matter of his prayer, pleading his experience, or as the matter of his praise, raising his expectations; and those that know how to praise in faith will give God thanks for mercies in promise and prospect, as well as in possession. See here,

(1.) What David hopes for, that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin, which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his

enemies would take occasion to wound his good name. Those that think the stand must take heed lest they fall, because the best stand no longer than God is pleased to uphold them. We are weak, our way is slippery, many stumbling-blocks are in it, our spiritual enemies are industrious to thrust us down, and therefore we are concerned by faith and prayer to commit ourselves to his care who keeps the feet of his saints.

(2.) What he builds this hope upon: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therein hast magnified thy power and goodness, and put me into a capacity of receiving further mercy from thee; and now wilt thou not secure and crown thy own work?" God never brought his people out of Egypt to slay them in the wilderness. He that in conversion delivers the soul from so great a death as sin is will not fail to preserve it to his heavenly kingdom.

(3.) What he designs in these hopes: That I may walk before God in the light of the living, that is,

[1.] "That I may get to heaven, the only land of light and life; for in this world darkness and death reign."

[2.] "That I may do my duty while this life lasts." Note, This we should aim at, in all our desires and expectations of deliverance both from sin and trouble, that we may do God so much the better service--that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may serve him without fear.

9 When I cry *unto thee,*
then shall mine enemies turn back:
this I know; for God *is* for me.
10 In God will I praise *his* word:
in the Lord will I praise *his* word.
11 In God have I put my trust:
I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
12 Thy vows *are* upon me, O
God: I will render praises
unto thee.
13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death:

wilt not *thou deliver* my feet from falling,
that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Psalms-57

A Prayer for Rescue from Persecutors
To the chief Musician, Altaschith,
Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

1 Be merciful unto me, O
God, be merciful unto me:
for my soul trusteth in thee:
yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,
until *these* calamities be overpast.

The title of this psalm has one word new in it, Al-taschith--Destroy not. Some make it to be only some known tune to which this psalm was set; others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm. Destroy not; that is, David would not let Saul be destroyed, when now in the cave there was a fair opportunity of killing him, and his servants would fain have done so.

No, says David, destroy him not, 1Sa 24:4,6. Or, rather, God would not let David be destroyed by Saul; he suffered him to persecute David, but still under this limitation, Destroy him hot; as he permitted Satan to afflict Job, Only save his life. David must not be destroyed, for a blessing is in him (Isa 65:8), even Christ, the best of blessings. When David was in the cave, in imminent peril, he here tells us what were the workings of his heart towards God; and happy are those that have such good thoughts as these in their minds when they are in danger!

I. He supports himself with faith and hope in God, and prayer to him, Ps 57:1,2. Seeing himself surrounded with enemies, he looks up to God with that suitable prayer: Be merciful to me, O Lord! which he again repeats, and it is no vain repetition: Be merciful unto me. It was the publican's prayer, Lu 18:13. It is a pity that any should use it slightly and profanely, should cry, God be merciful to us, or, Lord, have

mercy upon us, when they mean only to express their wonder, or surprise, or vexation, but God and his mercy are not in all their thoughts. It is with much devout affection that David here prays, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord! look with compassion upon me, and in thy love and pity redeem me." To recommend himself to God's mercy, he here professes,

1. That all his dependence is upon God: My soul trusteth in thee, Ps 57:1. He did not only profess to trust in God, but his soul did indeed rely on God only, with a sincere devotion and self-dedication, and an entire complacency and satisfaction. He goes to God, and, at the footstool of the throne of his grace, humbly professes his confidence in him: In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, as the chickens take shelter under the wings of the hen when the birds of prey are ready to strike at them, until these calamities be over-past.

(1.) He was confident his troubles would end well, in due time; these calamities will be over-past; the storm will blow over. Non si male nunc et olim sic erit--Though now distressed, I shall not always be so. Our Lord Jesus comforted himself with this in his sufferings, Lu 22:37. The things concerning me have an end.

(2.) He was very easy under the divine protection in the mean time.

[1.] He comforted himself in the goodness of God's nature, by which he is inclined to succour and protect his people, as the hen is by instinct to shelter her young ones. God comes upon the wing to the help of his people, which denotes a speedy deliverance (Ps 18:10); and he takes them under his wing, which denotes warmth and refreshment, even when the calamities are upon them; see Mt 23:37.

[2.] In the promise of his word and the covenant of his grace; for it may refer to the out-stretched wings of the cherubim, between which God is said to dwell (Ps 80:1) and whence he gave his oracles. "To God, as the God of grace, will I fly, and

his promise shall be my refuge, and a sure passport it will be through all these danger." God, by his promise, offers himself to us, to be trusted; we by our faith must accept of him, and put our trust in him.

2. That all his desire is towards God (Ps 57:2): "I will cry unto God most high, for succour and relief; to him that is most high will I lift up my soul, and pray earnestly, even unto God that performs all things for me." Note,

(1.) In every thing that befalls us we ought to see and own the hand of God; whatever is done is of his performing; in it his counsel is accomplished and the scripture is fulfilled.

(2.) Whatever God performs concerning his people, it will appear, in the issue, to have been performed for them and for their benefit. Though God be high, most high, yet he condescends so low as to take care that all things be made to work for good to them.

(3.) This is a good reason why we should, in all our straits and difficulties, cry unto him, not only pray, but pray earnestly.

3. That all his expectation is from God (Ps 57:3): He shall send from heaven, and save me. Those that make God their only refuge, and fly to him by faith and prayer, may be sure of salvation, in his way and time. Observe here,

(1.) Whence he expects the salvation--from heaven. Look which way he will, in this earth, refuge fails, no help appears; but he looks for it from heaven. Those that lift up their hearts to things above may thence expect all good.

(2.) What the salvation is that he expects. He trusts that God will save him from the reproach of those that would swallow him up, that aimed to ruin him, and, in the mean time, did all they could to vex him. Some read it, He shall send from heaven and save me, for he has put to shame him that would

swallow me up; he has disappointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance.

(3.) What he will ascribe his salvation to: God shall send forth his mercy and truth. God is good in himself and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people. We need no more to make us happy than to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, Ps 25:10.

II. He represents the power and malice of his enemies (Ps 57:4): My soul is among lions. So fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him, against David, that he might have been as safe in a den of lions as among such men, who were continually roaring against him and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, inflaming one another against David, and they were themselves set on fire of hell, Jam 3:6.

They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compassion of a man; but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men; their teeth, which they gnashed upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces and to eat him up, were spears and arrows fitted for mischiefs and murders; and their tongue, with which they cursed him and wounded his reputation, was as a sharp sword to cut and kill; see Ps 42:10. A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon, wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him (Ps 57:6) and shows the issue of them:

"They have prepared a net for my steps, in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; they have digged a pit before me, that I might, ere I was aware, run headlong into it." See the policies of the church's enemies; see the pains they take to do mischief. But let us see what comes of it.

1. It is indeed some disturbance to David: My soul is bowed down. It made him droop, and hang the head, to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But,

2. It was destruction to themselves; they dug a pit for David, into the midst whereof they have fallen. The mischief they designed against David returned upon themselves, and they were embarrassed in their counsels; then when Saul was pursuing David the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.

III. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name (Ps 57:5): "Whatever becomes of me and my interest, be thou exalted, O God! above the heavens, be thou praised by the holy angels, those glorious inhabitants of the upper world; and let thy glory be above or over all the earth; let all the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee." Thus God's glory should lie hearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for it, than for any particular interests of our own.

When David was in the greatest distress and disgrace he did not pray, Lord, exalt me, but, Lord, exalt thy own name. Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, Father, save me from this hour, immediately withdrew that petition, and presented this in the room of it, For this cause came I to this hour; Father, glorify thy name, Joh 12:27,28. Or it may be taken as a plea to enforce his petition for deliverance:

"Lord, send from heaven to save me, and thereby thou wilt glorify thyself as the God both of heaven and earth." Our best encouragement in prayer is taken from the glory of God, and to that therefore, more than our own comfort, we should have an eye in all our petitions for particular mercies; for this is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, Father in heaven, hallowed by thy name.

2 I will cry unto God most high;

unto God that performeth *all things* for me.
3 He shall send from heaven, and save me
from the reproach of him that would swallow me
up. Selah.
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
4 My soul *is* among lions:
and I lie *even among* them that are set on fire,
even the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and
arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.
5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let thy glory *be* above all the earth.
6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
my soul is bowed down:
they have digged a pit before me,
into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves.*
Selah.
7 My heart is fixed, O God,
my heart is fixed:
I will sing and give praise.

How strangely is the tune altered here! David's prayers and complaints, by the lively actings of faith, are here, all of a sudden, turned into praises and thanksgivings; his sackcloth is loosed, he is girded with gladness, and his hallelujahs are as fervent as his hosannas. This should make us in love with prayer, that, sooner or later, it will be swallowed up in praise. Observe,

I. How he prepares himself for the duty of praise (Ps 57:7): My heart is fixed, O God! my heart is fixed. My heart is erect, or lifted up (so some), which was bowed down, Ps 57:6. My heart is fixed,

1. With reference to God's providences; it is prepared for every event, being stayed upon God, Ps 112:7,Isa 26:3. My heart is fixed, and then none of these things move me, Ac 20:24 If by the grace of God we be brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful.

2. With reference to the worship of God: My heart is fixed to sing and give praise. It is implied that the heart is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose, in religion, further than it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed, fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it, fixed in the duty by a close application, attending on the Lord without distraction.

II. How he excites himself to the duty of praise (Ps 57:8): Awake up my glory, that is, my tongue (our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God), or my soul, that must be first awakened; dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God. We must stir up ourselves, and all that is within us, to praise God; with a holy fire must that sacrifice be kindled, and ascend in a holy flame. David's tongue will lead, and his psaltery and harp will follow, in these hymns of praise.

I myself will awake, not only, "I will not be dead, and drowsy, and careless, in this work," but, "I will be in the most lively frame, as one newly awakened out of a refreshing sleep." He will awake early to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God, early in the beginnings of a mercy. When God is coming towards us with his favours we must go forth to meet him with our praises.

III. How he pleases himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself, in the work of praise; so far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependence upon him, that he resolves to praise him among the people and to sing unto him among the nations, Ps 57:9. This intimates,

1. That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God; he would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much he thought himself indebted to the goodness of God.

2. That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God. He will publish God's praises among the

people, that the knowledge, and fear, and love of God might be propagated, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savour of it behind him.

David, in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still praising God among the people and singing to him among the nations; for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St. John, in his writings, is said to prophesy again before many peoples and nations, Re 10:11.

IV. How he furnishes himself with matter for praise, Ps 57:10. That which was the matter of his hope and comfort (God shall send forth his mercy and his truth, Ps 57:3) is here the matter of his thanksgiving: Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, great beyond conception and expression; and thy truth unto the clouds, great beyond discovery, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds?

God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will bring all such to heaven as lay up their treasure in them and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, that is, by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of the upper world, who are continually exalting God's praises to the highest, while David, on earth, is endeavouring to spread his praises to the furthest, Ps 57:9.

V. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name (Ps 57:11): Be thou exalted, O God! The same words which he had used (Ps 57:5) to sum up his prayers in he here uses again (and no vain repetition) to sum up his praises in: "Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thy own hands; do it thyself:

Be thou exalted, O God! In the praises of the church triumphant thou art exalted to the heavens, and in the praises of the church militant thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both (Ne 9:5), and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself above the heavens and above all the earth. Father, glorify thy own name. Thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again."

8 Awake up, my glory;
awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:
I will sing unto thee among the nations.
10 For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens,
and thy truth unto the clouds.
11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:
let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

Psalms-58

A Prayer for the Punishment of the Wicked
To the chief Musician, Altaschith,
Michtam of David.

1 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his janizaries against David, because it bears the same inscription (Al-taschith, and Michtam of David) with that which goes before and that which follows, both which appear, by the title, to have been penned with reference to that persecution through which God preserved him (Al-taschith--Destroy not), and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, Michtams--David's jewels, as Dr. Hammond translates it.

In these verses David, not as a king, for he had not yet come to the throne, but as a prophet, in God's name arraigns and

convicts his judges, with more authority and justice than they showed in prosecuting him. Two things he charges them with:

I The corruption of their government. They were a congregation, a bench of justices, nay, perhaps, a congress or convention of the states, from whom one might have expected fair dealing, for they were men learned in the laws, had been brought up in the study of these statutes and judgments, which were so righteous that those of other nations were not to be compared with them.

One would not have thought a congregation of such could be bribed and biassed with pensions, and yet, it seems, they were, because the son of Kish could do that for them which the son of Jesse could not, 1Sa 22:7.

He had vineyards, and fields, and preferments, to give them, and therefore, to please him, they would do any thing, right or wrong. Of all the melancholy views which Solomon took of this earth and its grievances, nothing vexed him so much as to see that in the place of judgment wickedness was there, Ec 3:16. So it was in Saul's time.

1 The judges would not do right, would not protect or vindicate oppressed innocency (Ps 58:1):

"Do you indeed speak righteousness, or judge uprightly? No; you are far from it; your own consciences cannot but tell you that you do not discharge the trust reposed in you as magistrates, by which you are bound to be a terror to evil-doers and a praise to those that do well. Is this the justice you pretend to administer? Is this the patronage, this the countenance, which an honest man and an honest cause may expect from you?

Remember you are sons of men; mortal and dying, and that you stand upon the same level before God with the meanest of those you trample upon, and must yourselves be called to an account and judged. You are sons of men, and therefore

we may appeal to yourselves, and to that law of nature which is written in every man's heart: Do you indeed speak righteousness?

And will not your second thoughts correct what you have done?" Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon what we say with this serious question, Do we indeed speak righteousness? that we may unsay what we have spoken amiss and may proceed no further in it.

2. They did a great deal of wrong; they used their power for the support of injury and oppression (Ps 58:2): In heart you work wickedness (all the wickedness of the life is wrought in the heart). It intimates that they wrought with a great deal of plot and management, not by surprise, but with premeditation and design, and with a strong inclination to it and resolution in it. The moire there is of the heart in any act of wickedness the worse it is, Ec 8:11.

And what was their wickedness? It follows, "You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth" (or in the land), "the peace of which you are appointed to be the conservators of." They did all the violence and injury they could, either to enrich or avenge themselves, and they weighed it; that is,

1. They did it with a great deal of craft and caution: "You frame it by rule and lines" (so the word signifies), "that it may effectually answer your mischievous intentions; such masters are you of the art of oppression."

2. They did it under colour of justice. They held the balances (the emblem of justice) in their hands, as if they designed to do right, and right is expected from them, but the result is violence and oppression, which are practised the more effectually for being practised under the pretext of law and right.

II The corruption of their nature. This was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprang (Ps 58:3): The wicked, who in heart work wickedness, are

estranged from the womb, estranged from God and all good, alienated from the divine life, and its principles, powers, and pleasures, Eph 4:18. A sinful state is a state of estrangement from that acquaintance with God and service of him which we were made for.

Let none wonder that these wicked men dare do such things, for wickedness is bred in the bone with them; they brought it into the world with them; they have in their natures a strong inclination to it; they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education. They are called, and not miscalled, transgressors from the womb; one can therefore expect no other than that they will deal very treacherously; see Isa 48:8.

They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they are born, (that is, as soon as possibly they can); the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it. Three instances are here given of the corruption of nature:--

1. Falsehood. They soon learn to speak lies, and bend their tongues, like their bows, for that purpose, Jer 9:3. How soon will little children tell a lie to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation! No sooner can they speak than they speak to God's dishonour; tongue-sins are some of the first of our actual transgressions.

2. Malice. Their poison (that is, their ill-will, and the spite they bore to goodness and all good men, particularly to David) was like the poison of a serpent, innate, venomous, and very mischievous, and that which they can never be cured of. We pity a dog that is poisoned by accident, but hate a serpent that is poisonous by nature. Such as the cursed enmity in this serpent's brood against the Lord and his anointed.

3. Untractableness. They are malicious, and nothing will work upon them, no reason, no kindness, to mollify them,

and bring them to a better temper. They are like the deaf adder that stops her ear, Ps 58:4,5.

The psalmist, having compared these wicked men, whom he here complains of, to serpents, for their poisonous malice, takes occasion thence, upon another account, to compare them to the deaf adder or viper, concerning which there was then this vulgar tradition, that whereas, by music or some other art, they had a way of charming serpents, so as either to destroy them or at least disable them to do mischief, this deaf adder would lay one ear to the ground and stop the other with her tail, so that she could not hear the voice of the enchantment, and so defeated the intention of it and secured herself.

The using of this comparison neither verifies the story, nor, if it were true, justifies the use of this enchantment; for it is only an allusion to the report of such a thing, to illustrate the obstinacy of sinners in a sinful way.

God's design, in his word and providence, is to cure serpents of their malignity; to this end how wise, how powerful, how well-chosen are the charms! How forcible the right words! But all in vain with most men; and what is the reason? It is because they will not hearken. None so deaf as those that will not hear. We have piped unto men, and they have not danced; how should they, when they have stopped their ears?

2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness;
ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.
3 The wicked are estranged from the womb:
they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent:
they are like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;
5 which will not hearken to the voice of charmers,
charming never so wisely.
6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:
break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord.

In these verses we have,

I. David's prayers against his enemies, and all the enemies of God's church and people; for it is as such that he looks upon them, so that he was actuated by a public spirit in praying against them, and not by any private revenge.

1. He prays that they might be disabled to do any further mischief (Ps 58:6): Break their teeth, O God! Not so much that they might not feed themselves as that they might not be able to make prey of others, Ps 3:7. He does not say, "Break their necks" (no; let them live to repent, slay them not, lest my people forget), but, "Break their teeth, for they are lions, they are young lions, that live by rapine."

2. That they might be disappointed in the plots they had already laid, and might not gain their point: "When he bends his bow, and takes aim to shoot his arrows at the upright in heart, let them be as cut in pieces, Ps 58:7. Let them fall at his feet, and never come near the mark."

3. That they and their interest might waste and come to nothing, that they might melt away as waters that run continually; that is, as the waters of a land-flood, which, though they seem formidable for a while, soon soak into the ground or return to their channels, or, in general, as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, but gradually dries away and disappears.

Such shall the floods of ungodly men be, which sometimes make us afraid (Ps 18:4); so shall the proud waters be reduced, which threaten to go over our soul, Ps 124:4,5. Let us by faith then see what they shall be and then we shall not fear what they are.

He prays (Ps 58:8) that they might melt as a snail, which wastes by its own motion, in every stretch it makes leaving some of its moisture behind, which, by degrees, must needs consume it, though it makes a path to shine after it. He that like a snail in her house is plenus sui--full of himself, that pleases himself and trusts to himself, does but consume himself, and will quickly bring himself to nothing.

And he prays that they might be like the untimely birth of a woman, which dies as soon as it begins to live and never sees the sun. Job, in his passion, wished he himself had been such a one (Job 3:16), but he knew not what he said. We may, in faith, pray against the designs of the church's enemies, as the prophet does (Ho 9:14, Give them, O Lord! what wilt thou give them? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts), which explains this prayer of the psalmist.

II. His prediction of their ruin (Ps 58:9): "Before your pots can feel the heat of a fire of thorns made under them (which they will presently do, for it is a quick fire and violent while it lasts), so speedily, with such a hasty and violent flame, God shall hurry them away, as terribly and as irresistibly as with a whirlwind, as it were alive, as it were in fury."

1 The proverbial expressions are somewhat difficult, but the sense is plain,

(1.) That the judgments of God often surprise wicked people in the midst of their jollity, and hurry them away of a sudden. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to lie down in sorrow (Isa 50:11), and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone, ere they can say, Alas! I am warm, Ec 7:6.

(2.) That there is no standing before the destruction that comes from the Almighty; for who knows the power of God's anger? When God will take sinners away, dead or alive, they cannot contest with him. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness. Now,

2. There are two things which the psalmist promises himself as the good effects of sinners' destruction:--

(1.) That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it (Ps 58:10): The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance. The pomp and power, the prosperity and success,

of the wicked, are a discouragement to the righteous; they sadden their hearts, and weaken their hands, and are sometimes a strong temptation to them to question their foundations, Ps 73:2,13.

But when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God and his justice and righteousness in governing the world; they shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation by seeing their end, Ps 73:17.

He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked; that is, there shall be abundance of bloodshed (Ps 68:23), and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed.

It shall likewise contribute to their sanctification; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God (Ps 119:120) and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God who pleads their cause and will suffer no man to do them wrong and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints in the destruction of the wicked is then a holy joy, and justifiable, when it helps to make them holy and to purify them from sin.

(2.) That sinners would be convinced and converted by it, Ps 58:11. The vengeance God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world will bring men to say, Verily, there is a reward for the righteous. Any man may draw this inference from such providences, and many a man shall, who before denied even these plain truths or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them, others shall have their minds so changed that they shall willingly own it, and thank God who has given them to see it and see it with satisfaction, That God is, and,

[1.] That he is the bountiful rewarder of his saints and servants: Verily (however it be, so it may be read) there is a fruit to the righteous; whatever damage he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser by it, but an unspeakable gainer in the issue. Even in this world there is a reward for the righteous; they shall be recompensed in the earth. Those shall be taken notice of, honoured, and protected, that seemed slighted, despised, and abandoned.

[2.] That he is the righteous governor of the world, and will surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom: Verily, however it be, though wicked people prosper, and bid defiance to divine justice, yet it shall be made to appear, to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; there is a God that judges in the earth, though he has prepared his throne in the heavens.

He presides in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposes them according to the counsel of his will, to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked, not only in the world to come, but in the earth, where they have laid up their treasure and promised themselves a happiness--in the earth, that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executes, and that they may be taken as earnests of a judgment to come.

He is a God (so we read it), not a weak man, not an angel, not a mere name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of men's fear and fancy, not a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined, but a God, a self-existent perfect Being; he it is that judges the earth; his favour therefore let us seek, from whom every man's judgment proceeds, and to him let all judgment be referred.

7 Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually:
when he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his
arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.
8 As a snail *which* melteth,
let *every one of them* pass away:

like the untimely birth of a woman,
that they may not see the sun.
9 Before your pots can feel the thorns,
he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his*
wrath.
10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous:
verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Psalms-59

A Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

1 Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God:
defend me from them that rise up against me.

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned; it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story 1Sa 19:11. It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun, and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin.

These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder and be both grievous and terrifying, and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind as that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises; happy are those whose intercourse with heaven is not intercepted nor broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state. In these verses,

I. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be

defeated (Ps 59:1,2): "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God! thou art God, and cast deliver me, my God, under whose protection I have put myself; and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore, in honour and faithfulness, thou wilt deliver me.

Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of those that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. O deliver me! and save me." He cries out as one ready to perish, and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance.

He prays (Ps 59:4), "Awake to help me, take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief." Thus the disciples, in the storm, awoke Christ, saying, Master, save us, we perish. And thus earnestly should we pray daily to be defended and delivered form our spiritual enemies, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts, which war against our spiritual life.

II. He pleads for deliverance. Our God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him, to order our cause before him and to fill our mouth with arguments, not to move him, but to move ourselves. David does so here.

1. He pleads the bad character of his enemies. They are workers of iniquity, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies; they are bloody men, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind. "Lord, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness, nor bloody men against a merciful man."

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them, Ps 59:3. "Their spite is great; they aim at my soul, my life, my better part. They are subtle and very politic: They lie in wait, taking an opportunity to do me a mischief. They are all mighty, men of honour and estates, and interest in court and country.

They are in a confederacy; they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me, combined both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in the prosecution of them (Ps 59:4): They run and prepare themselves, with the utmost speed and fury, to do me a mischief."

He takes particular notice of the brutish conduct of the messengers that Saul sent to take him (Ps 59:6): "They return at evening from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply themselves to their works of darkness (their night-work, which may well be their day-shame), and then they make a noise like a hound in pursuit of the hare."

Thus did David's enemies, when they came to take him, raise an out cry against him as a rebel, and traitor, a man not fit to live; with this clamour they went round about the city, to bring a bad reputation upon David, if possible to set the mob against him, at least to prevent their being incensed against them, which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling.

Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to dogs (Ps 22:16), ran him down with noise; for else they could not have taken him, at least no on the feast-day, for there would have been an uproar among the people. They belch out with their mouth the malice that boils in their hearts, Ps 59:7.

Swords are in their lips; that is, reproaches that would my heart with grief (Ps 42:10), and slanders that stab and wound my reputation. They were continually suggesting that which drew and whetted Saul's sword against him, and the fault is laid upon the false accusers. The sword perhaps would not have been in Saul's hand if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocency, not as to God (he was never backward to own himself guilty before him), but as to his persecutors; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such

treatment from them (Ps 59:3): "Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord! thou knowest, who knowest all things." And again (Ps 59:4), without my fault. Note,

(1.) The innocency of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet, for Christ's sake, are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly.

(2.) Though our innocency will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us that we have behaved ourselves well towards those that behave themselves ill towards us will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil.

(3.) If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocency, we may with humble confidence appeal to God and beg of him to plead our injured cause, which he will do in due time.

4. He pleads that his enemies were profane and atheistical, and bolstered themselves up in their enmity to David, with the contempt of God: For who, say they, doth hear? Ps 59:7. Not God himself, Ps 10:11,94:7. Note, It is not strange if those regard not what they say who have made themselves believe the God regards not what they say.

III. He refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, Ps 59:5. "The Lord, the Judge, be Judge between me and my persecutors." In this appeal to God he has an eye to him as the Lord of hosts, that has power to execute judgment, having all creatures, even hosts of angels, at his command; he views him also as the God of Israel, to whom he was, in a peculiar manner, King and Judge, not doubting that he would appear on the behalf of those that were upright, that were Israelites indeed.

When Saul's hosts persecuted him, he had recourse to God as the Lord of all hosts; when those maligned him who in spirit were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel he had recourse to God as the God of Israel.

He desires (that is, he is very sure) that God will awake to visit all the nations, will make an early and exact enquiry into the controversies and quarrels that are among the children of men; there will be a day of visitation (Isa 10:3), and to that day David refers himself, with this solemn appeal, Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah--Mark that.

1. If David had been conscious to himself that he was a wicked transgressor, he would not have expected to find mercy; but, as to his enemies, he would say he was no transgressor at all (Ps 59:3,4): "Not for my transgression, and therefore thou wilt appear for me." As to God, he could say he was no wicked transgressor; for, though he had transgressed, he was a penitent transgressor, and did not obstinately persist in what he had done amiss.

2. He knew his enemies were wicked transgressors, wilful, malicious, and hardened in their transgressions both against God and man, and therefore he sues for justice against them, judgment without mercy. Let not those expect to find mercy who never showed mercy, for such are wicked transgressors.

2 Deliver me from the workers of
iniquity, and save me from bloody
men.
3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my
soul: the mighty are gathered
against me; not *for* my
transgression,
nor *for* my sin, O Lord.
4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault.
Awake to help me, and behold.
5 Thou therefore, O Lord God of hosts, the God of
Israel, awake to visit all the heathen:
be not merciful to any wicked
transgressors. Selah.

6 They return at evening:

they make a noise like a dog,
and go round about the city.
7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth:
swords *are* in their lips:
for who, *say they,* doth hear?
8 But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them;
thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

David here encourages himself, in reference to the threatening power of his enemies, with a pious resolution to wait upon God and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him.

I. He resolves to wait upon God (Ps 59:9): "Because of his strength" (either the strength of his enemies, the fear of which drove him to God, or because of God's strength, the hope of which drew him to God) "Will I wait upon thee, with a believing dependence upon thee and confidence in thee." It is our wisdom and duty, in times of danger and difficulty, to wait upon God; for he is our defence, our high place, in whom we shall be safe. He hopes,

1. That God will be to him a God of mercy (Ps 59:10): "The God of my mercy shall prevent me with the blessings of his goodness and the gifts of his mercy, prevent my fears, prevent my prayers, and be better to me than my own expectations." It is very comfortable to us, in prayer, to eye God, not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of our mercy, the author of all good in us and the giver of all good to us.

Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly does the psalmist call God's mercy his mercy, for all the blessings of the new covenant are called the sure mercies of David (Isa 55:3); and they are sure to all the seed.

2. That he will be to his persecutors a God of vengeance. His expectation of this he expresses partly by way of prediction and partly by way of petition, which come all to one; for his prayer that it might be so amounts to a prophecy that it shall

be so. Here are several things which he foretels concerning his enemies, or observers, that sought occasions against him and opportunity to do him a mischief, in all which he should see his desire, not a passionate or revengeful desire, but a believing desire upon them, Ps 59:10.

(1.) He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, as they had indeed made themselves ridiculous, Ps 59:8. "They think God does not hear them, does not heed them; but thou, O Lord! shalt laugh at them for their folly, to think that he who planted the ear shall not hear, and thou shalt have not them only, but all such other heathenish people that live without God in the world, in derision."

Note, Atheists and persecutors are worthy to be laughed at and had in derision. See Ps 2:4,Pr 1:26,Isa 37:22.

(2.) That God would make them standing monuments of his justice (Ps 59:11): Slay them not; let them not be killed outright, lest my people forget. If the execution be soon done, the impressions of it will not be keep, and therefore will not be durable, but will quickly wear off.

Swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten, for which reason he prays that this might be gradual: "Scatter them by thy power, and let them carry about with them, in their wanderings, such tokens of God's displeasure as may spread the notice of their punishment to all parts of the country."

Thus Cain himself, though a murderer, was not slain, lest the vengeance should be forgotten, but was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond. Note, When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners we must conclude that God has wise and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath.

"So scatter them as that they may never again unite to do mischief, bring them down, O Lord, our shield!" If God has

undertaken the protection of his people as their shield, he will doubtless humble and abase all those that fight against them.

(3.) That they might be dealt with according to their deserts (Ps 59:12): For the sin of their mouth, even for the words of their lips (for every word they speak has sin in it), let them for this be taken in their pride, even for their cursing others and themselves (a sin Saul was subject to, 1Sa 14:28), and lying.

Note, There is a great deal of malignity in tongue-sins, more than is commonly thought of. Note, further, Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly, are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue; and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the deserts of these, making his own tongue to fall on him.

(4.) That God would glorify himself, as Israel's God and King, in their destruction (Ps 59:13): "Consume them in wrath, consume them; that is, follow them with one judgment after another, till they be utterly ruined; let them be sensibly, but gradually wasted, that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference form it, That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth."

Saul and his party think to rule and carry all before them, but they shall be made to know that there is a higher than they, that there is one who does and will overrule them. The design of God's judgments is to convince men that the Lord reigns, that he fulfils his own counsels, gives law to all the creatures, and disposes all things to his own glory, so that the greatest of men are under his check, and he makes what use he pleases of them.

He rules in Jacob; for there he keeps his court; there it is known, and his name is great. But he rules to the end of the earth; for all nations are within the territories of his kingdom. He rules to the ends of the earth, even over those that know him not, but he rules for Jacob (so it may be read); he has an

eye to the good of his church in the government of the world; the administrations of that government, even to the ends of the earth, are for Jacob his servant's sake and for Israel's his elect, Isa 45:4.

(5.) That he would make their sin their punishment, Ps 59:14, compare Ps 59:6. Their sin was their hunting for David to make a prey of him; their punishment should be that they should be reduced to such extreme poverty that they should hunt about for meat to satisfy their hunger, and should miss of it as they missed of David.

Thus they should be, not cut off at once, but scattered (Ps 59:11), and gradually consumed (Ps 59:13); those that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die, La 4:9. He foretels that they should be forced to beg their bread from door to door.

[1.] That they should do it with the greatest regret and reluctancy imaginable. To beg they are ashamed (which makes it the greater punishment to them), and therefore they do it at evening, when it begins to be dark, that they may not be seen, at the time when other beasts of prey creep forth, Ps 104:20.

[2.] That yet they should be very clamorous and loud in their complaints, which would proceed from a great indignation at their condition, which they cannot in the least degree reconcile themselves to: They shall make a noise like a dog. When they were in quest of David they made a noise like an angry dog snarling and barking; now, when they are in quest of meat, they shall make a noise like a hungry dog howling and wailing.

Those that repent of their sins mourn, when in trouble, like doves; those whose hearts are hardened make a noise, when in trouble, like dogs, like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord. See Ho 7:14, They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled on their beds for corn and wine.

[3.] That they should meet with little relief, but the hearts of people should be very much hardened towards them, so that they should go round about the city, and wander up and down for meat (Ps 59:15), and should get nothing but by dint of importunity (according to our marginal reading, If they be not satisfied, they will tarry all night), so that what people do give them is not with good-will, but only to get rid of them, lest by their continual coming they weary them.

[4.] That they should be insatiable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition. They are greedy dogs which can never have enough (Isa 56:11), and they grudge if they be not satisfied. A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet does not grudge, does not quarrel with Providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose God is their belly, if that be not filled and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent, that makes a man unhappy.

II. He expects to praise God, that God's providence would find him matter for praise and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, Ps 59:16,17. Observe,

1. What he would praise God for.

(1.) He would praise his power and his mercy; both should be the subject-matter of his song. Power, without mercy, is to be dreaded; mercy, without power, is not what a man can expect much benefit from; but God's power by which he is able to help us, and his mercy by which he is inclined to help us, will justly be the everlasting praise of all the saints.

(2.) He would praise him because he had, many a time, and all along, found him his defence and his refuge in the day of trouble. God brings his people into trouble, that they may experience his power and mercy in protecting and sheltering them, and may have occasion to praise him.

(3.) He would praise him because he had still a dependence upon him and a confidence in him, as his strength to support

him and carry him on in his duty, his defence to keep him safe from evil, and the God of his mercy to make him happy and easy. He that is all this to us is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services.

2. How he would praise God.

(1.) He would sing. As that is a natural expression of joy, so it is an instituted ordinance for the exerting and exciting of holy joy and thankfulness.

(2.) He would sing aloud, as one much affected with the glory of God, that was not ashamed to own it, and that desired to affect others with it. He will sing of God's power, but he will sing aloud of his mercy; the consideration of that raises his affections more than any thing else.

(3.) He would sing aloud in the morning, when his spirits were most fresh and lively. God's compassions are new every morning, and therefore it is fit to begin the day with his praises.

(4.) He would sing unto God (Ps 59:17), to his honour and glory, and with him in his eye. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises, and must look up, making melody to the Lord.

9 *Because of* his strength will I wait upon thee:
for God *is* my defense.
10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me:
God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.
11 Slay them not, lest my people forget:
scatter them by thy power;
and bring them down, O Lord our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips
let them even be taken in their pride:
and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.
13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*,
that they *may* not *be:*

and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob
unto the ends of the earth.
Selah.
14 And at evening let them return;
and let them make a noise like a dog,
and go round about the city.
15 Let them wander up and down for meat,
and grudge if they be not satisfied.
16 But I will sing of thy power;
yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
for thou hast been my defense
and refuge in the day of my trouble.
17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing:
for God *is* my defense,
and the God of my mercy.

Psalms-60

A Prayer for Help against the Foe

To the chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

1 O God, thou hast cast us
off, thou has scattered us,
thou hast been displeased;
O turn thyself to us again.

The title gives us an account,

1. Of the general design of the psalm. It is Michtam--David's jewel, and it is to teach. The Levites must teach it to the people, and by it teach them both to trust in God and to triumph in him; we must, in it, teach ourselves and one another. In a day of public rejoicing we have need to be taught to direct our joy to God and to terminate it in him, to

give none of that praise to the instruments of our deliverance which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys.

2. Of the particular occasion of it. It was at a time,

(1.) When he was at war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia and those of Zobah.

(2.) When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites, by his forces, under the command of Joab, who had left 12,000 of the enemy dead upon the spot. David has an eye to both these concerns in this psalm: he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and in reference to that he prays; he is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and in reference to that he triumphs with a holy confidence in God that he would complete the victory.

We have our cares at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed. They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid before God with suitable affections and emotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving: the Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not; therefore let not him that girds on the harness boast as if he had put it off.

In these verses, which begin the psalm, we have,

I. A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments which God had, for some years past, put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end of it, and during David's struggle with the house of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only, the affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighbouring nations were vexatious to them.

1. He complains of hard things which they had seen (that is, which they had suffered), while the Philistines and other ill-

disposed neighbours took all advantages against them, Ps 60:3. God sometimes shows even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only.

2. He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone: "Thou hast been displeased by us, displeased against us (Ps 60:1), and in thy displeasure hast cast us off and scattered us, hast put us out of thy protection, else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us. They would never have picked us up and made a prey of us if thou hadst not broken the staff of bands (Zec 11:14) by which we were united, and so scattered us." Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand, in it.

3. He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a convulsion: Thou hast made the earth (or the land) to tremble, Ps 60:2 The generality of the people had dreadful apprehensions of the issue of these things. The good people themselves were in a consternation:

"Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment (Ps 60:3); we were like men intoxicated, and at our wits' end, not knowing how to reconcile these dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people; we are amazed, can do nothing, nor know we what to do." Now this is mentioned here to teach, that is, for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favour, it is good to remember our former calamities,

(1.) That we may retain the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be humbled within us, La 3:19,20.

(2.) That God's goodness to us, in relieving us and raising us up, may be more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so

strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys.

(3.) That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again, which we were lately taken out of as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

II. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that, though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend (Ps 60:4): "Thou hast given a banner to those that fear thee (for, as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern), that it may be displayed by thee, because of the truth of thy promise which thou wilt perform, and to be displayed by them, in defense of truth and equity," Ps 45:4.

This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel. The pious Israelites, who feared God and had a regard to the divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them,

1. It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours. Those that were scattered (Ps 60:1), divided among themselves, and so weakened and exposed, coalesced in him when he was fixed upon the throne.

2. It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are animated by the sight of their banner.

3. It struck a terror upon their enemies, to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the Son of David, is given for an ensign of the people (Isa 11:10), for a banner to those that fear God; in him, as the centre of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage. His love is the banner over them; in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of

darkness, and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

III. A humble petition for seasonable mercy.

1. That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin: O turn thyself to us again! (Ps 60:1) smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia--A God at peace with us spreads peace over all the scene.

2. That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves: "Heal the breaches of our land (Ps 60:2), not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions."

Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a shaken shattered kingdom is set to rights and saved from ruin.

3. That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies (Ps 60:5): "That thy beloved may be delivered, and not made a prey of, save with thy right hand, with thy own power and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, and hear me."

Those that fear God are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye. They are often in distress, but they shall be delivered. God's own right hand shall save them; for those that have his heart have his hand. Save them, and hear me.

Note, God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be

bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them we may each of us say, with peculiar satisfaction, "God has therein heard me, and answered me."

2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it:
heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
3 Thou hast showed thy people hard things:
thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.
4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear
thee, that it may be displayed because of the
truth. Selah.
5 That thy beloved may be delivered;
save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.
6 God hath spoken in his holiness;
I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,
and mete out the valley of Succoth.

David is here rejoicing in hope and praying in hope; such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession as of what they have in prospect (Ps 60:6):

"God has spoken in his holiness (that is, he has given me his word of promise, has sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David, Ps 89:35), therefore I will rejoice, and please myself with the hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise,"

Note, God's word of promise, being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

I. David here rejoices; and it is in prospect of two things:--

1 The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God having spoken in his holiness that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand: I will divide Shechem (a pleasant city in Mount Ephraim) and mete out the valley of Succoth, as my own. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine, and both are entirely reduced, Ps 60:7.

Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice; and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head and Judah his lawgiver.

Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all yea and amen in Christ. "God has spoken in his holiness, and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine." All is yours, for you are Christ's, 1Co 3:22,23.

2 The conquering of the neighbouring nations, which had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David, Ps 60:8. Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery. The Moabites became David's servants, 2Sa 8:2. Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon; at least David shall take possession of it as his own, which was signified by drawing off his shoe over it, Ru 4:7.

As for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done; he will soon force them to change their note. Rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them to be brought into subjection to David and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city, Rabbah (perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now,

(1.) David is here enquiring for help to carry on the ark: "Who will bring me into the strong city? What allies, what auxiliaries, can I depend upon, to make me master of the enemies' country and their strongholds?" Those that have begun a good work cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection.

(2.) He is expecting it from God only: "Wilt not thou, O God? For thou hast spoken in thy holiness; and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?" He takes notice of the frowns of Providence they had been under:

Thou hadst, in appearance, cast us off; thou didst not go forth with our armies. When they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted (that is, because they had forfeited) the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him; and the less he has done for them of late the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was past they hope in his mercy for what was to come:

"Though thou hadst cast us off, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; though thou hadst cast us off, yet thou hast begun to show mercy; and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun?"

The Son of David, in his sufferings, seemed to be cast off by his Father when he cried out, Why hast thou forsaken me? and yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he has gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, are likewise, through him, more than conquerors.

Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last. Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello--We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole war. A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly, but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

II. He prays in hope. His prayer is, Give us help from trouble, Ps 60:11. Even in the day of their triumph they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is

troublesome even to the prevailing side. None therefore can delight in war but those that love to fish in troubled waters.

The help from trouble they pray for is preservation from those they were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war), unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might be defeated; therefore, Lord, send us help from the sanctuary. Help from trouble is rest from war, which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory. Sic quærimus pacem--Thus we seek for peace. The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer has two things in it:--

1. A diffidence of themselves and all their creature-confidences: Vain is the help of man. Then only we are qualified to receive help from God when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do.

2. A confidence in God, and in his power and promise (Ps 60:12): "Through God we shall do valiantly, and so we shall do victoriously; for he it is, and he only, that shall tread down our enemies, and shall have the praise of doing it." Note,

(1.) Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though it is God that performs all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us.

(2.) Hope in God is the best principle of true courage. Those that do their duty under his conduct may afford to do it valiantly; for what need those fear who have God on their side?

(3.) It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly; it is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution.

(4.) Though we do ever so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies, and not we ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valour, are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crown must be cast.

7 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine;
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine
head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;
8 Moab *is* my washpot;
over Edom will I cast out my shoe:
Philistia, triumph thou because of
me.
9 Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
10 *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off?
and *thou,* O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?
11 Give us help from trouble:
for vain *is* the help of man.
12 Through God we shall do valiantly:
for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

Psalms-61

Confidence in God's Protection
To the chief Musician upon Neginah,
A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my cry, O God;
attend unto my prayer.

In these verses we may observe,

I. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble: "Whatever comes, I will cry unto thee (Ps 61:2), --not cry unto other gods, but to thee only,--not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee,--not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go except thou bless me." This he will do,

1. Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend as in the court of requests: "From the end of the earth, or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, will I cry unto thee."

Note, Wherever we are we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace. Undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ--Heaven is equally accessible from all places. "Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee."

Note, That which separates us from our other comforts should drive us so much the nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort.

2. Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit: "Though my heart is overwhelmed, it is not so sunk, so burdened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer; if it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down.

Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relived." Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. Is any afflicted? Let him pray, Jam 5:13,Ps 102:1.

II The particular petition he put up to God when his heart was overwhelmed and he was ready to sink: Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; that is,

1. "To the rock which is too high for me to get up to unless thou help me to it. Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety as I can never attain to but by thy special grace working such a faith in me."

2. "To the rock on the top of which I shall be set further out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own." God's power and promise are a rock that is higher than we. This rock is Christ; those are safe that are in him. We cannot get upon this rock unless God by his power lead us. I will put thee in the cleft of the rock, Ex 33:22. We should therefore by faith and prayer put ourselves under the divine management, that we may be taken under the divine protection.

III. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace. He begs in faith (Ps 61:1): "Hear my cry, O God! attend unto my prayer; that is, let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard (Ps 20:6), and in due time let me have that which I pray for."

IV. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he uses to enforce his petition (Ps 61:3): "Thou hast been a shelter for me; I have found in thee a rock higher than I: therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that rock."

Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. "Thou hast been my strong tower from the enemy, and thou art as strong a ever, and thy name is as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was." Pr 18:10.

V. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God and dependence on him, Ps 61:4.

1 The service of God shall be his constant work and business. All those must make it so who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower: none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever. David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance, but he is assured that God by his providence would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had by his grace wrought in him such a kindness for the

tabernacle as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, Ps 27:4.

He speaks of abiding in it for ever because that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, Heb 9:8,9,24. Those that dwell in God's tabernacle, as it is a house of duty, during their short ever on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory during an endless ever.

2 The grace of God and the covenant of grace shall be his constant comfort: I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings, as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage those have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee,
when my heart is overwhelmed.
Lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I;
3 for thou hast been a shelter for me,
and a strong tower from the enemy.
4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever:
I will trust in the covert of thy wings.
Selah.
5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:
thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.

In these verses we may observe,

I. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly (Ps 61:5): Thou, O God! hast heard my vows, that is,

1. "The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul: thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them, because made in sincerity, and been well pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them." God put Jacob in mind of his vows, Ge 31:13,35:1.

Note, God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, Ps 61:8. For he that hears the vows we made will make us hear respecting them if they be not made good.

2. "The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard and answered," which encouraged him now to pray, O God! hear my cry. He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, Seek you me in vain, will not now begin to say so. "Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for thou hast given me a heritage of those that fear thy name." Note,

(1.) There is a peculiar people in the world that fear God name, that with a holy awe and reverence accept of and accommodate themselves to all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men.

(2.) There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people, present comforts, earnests of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. The Levites that had God for their inheritance must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren; so those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world.

(3.) We need desire no better heritage than that of those who fear God. If God deal with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name we need not desire to be any better dealt with.

II. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life (Ps 61:6): Thou shalt prolong the king's life. This may be understood either,

1. Of himself. If it was penned before he came to the crown, yet, being anointed by Samuel, and knowing what God had spoken in his holiness, he could in faith call himself the king,

though now persecuted as an out-law; or perhaps it was penned when Absalom sought to dethrone him, and force him into exile.

There were those that aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he did to the age of man set by Moses (namely, seventy years), which, being spent in serving his generation according to the will of God (Ac 13:36), might be reckoned as many generations, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was to abide in God's tabernacle for ever (Ps 61:4), in a way of duty; and now his hope is that he shall abide before God for ever, in a way of comfort.

Those abide to good purpose in this world that abide before God, that serve him and walk in his fear; and those that do so shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because the psalm was delivered to the chief musician for the use of the church, and he would have the people, in singing it, to be encouraged with an assurance that, notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or,

2. Of the Messiah, the King of whom he was a type. It was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, that the years of the Lord's Anointed would be as many generations, and that of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end. The Mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives, making intercession; and, because he lives, we shall live also.

III. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection: O prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him! God's promises and our faith in them are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer.

David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it, not that he would prepare

him a strong lifeguard, or a well-fortified castle, but that he would prepare mercy and truth for his preservation; that is, that God's goodness would provide for his safety according to the promise. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth.

This may be applied to the Messiah: "Let him be sent in the fulness of time, in performance of the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham." Mic 7:20,Lu 1:72,73.

IV. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God (Ps 61:8): So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever. Note, God's preservation of us calls upon us to praise him; and therefore we should desire to live, that we may praise him: Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last (as long as our lives are prolonged we must continue praising God), and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever. That I may daily perform my vows. His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note,

1 The vows we have made we must conscientiously perform.

2. Praising God and paying our vows to him must be our constant daily work; every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is due, because we daily receive fresh mercies, and because, if we think much to do it daily, we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:
and his years as many generations.
7 He shall abide before God for ever:
O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.
8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever,
that I may daily perform my vows.

Psalms-62

God the Only Refuge
To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun,
A Psalm of David.

1 Truly my soul waiteth upon God:
from him *cometh* my salvation.

In these verses we have,

I. David's profession of dependence upon God, and upon him only, for all good (Ps 62:1): Truly my soul waiteth upon God. Nevertheless (so some) or "However it be, whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, though God frown upon me and I meet with discouragements in my attendance on him, yet still my soul waits upon God" (or is silent to God, as the word is), "Says nothing against what he does, but quietly expects what he will do."

We are in the way both of duty and comfort when our souls wait upon God, when we cheerfully refer ourselves, and the disposal of all our affairs, to his will and wisdom, when we acquiesce in and accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence, and patiently expect a doubtful event, with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, however it be. Is not my soul subject go God? So the LXX.

So it, certainly so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. My soul has respect to God, for from him cometh my salvation. He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger, and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; for in vain is it hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer 3:23,Ps 121:1,2.

"From him I know it will come, and therefore on him will I patiently wait till it does come, for his time is the best time." We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called the salvation of God (Ps 50:23); from him it comes; he prepared

it for us, he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it, and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation, in such way as he thinks fit.

II The ground and reason of this dependence (Ps 62:2): He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence.

1. "He has been so many a time; in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour. He has by his grace supported me and borne me up under my troubles, and by his providence defended me from the insults of my enemies and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged; and therefore I trust he will deliver me," 2Co 1:10.

2. "He only can be my rock and my salvation. Creatures are insufficient; they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him."

3. "He has by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the rock of ages is my rock; he that is the God of salvation is my salvation; he that is the Most High is my high place; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in him."

III. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.

1. Trusting in God, his heart is fixed. "If God is my strength and mighty delivered, I shall not be greatly moved (that is, I shall not be undone and ruined); I may be shocked, but I shall not be sunk."

Or, "I shall not be much disturbed and disquieted in my own breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my own soul. I may be perplexed, but not in despair," 2Co 4:8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast.

2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon by him with contempt, Ps 62:3,4. If God be for

us, we need not fear what man can do against us, though ever so mighty and malicious. He here,

(1.) Gives a character of his enemies: They imagine mischief, design it with a great deal of the serpent's venom and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtlety, and this against a man, one of their own kind, against one single man, that is not an equal match for them, for they are many; they continued their malicious persecution though Providence had often defeated their mischievous designs. "How long will you do it? Will you never be convinced of your error? Will your malice never have spent itself?"

They are unanimous in their consultations to cast an excellent man down from his excellency, to draw an honest man from his integrity, to entangle him in sin, which is the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency, to thrust a man, whom God has exalted, down from his dignity, and so to fight against God.

Envy was at the bottom of their malice; they were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted, by diminishing his character and blackening that (which was casting him down from his excellency) to hinder his preferment. In order to this they calumniate him, and love to hear such bad characters given of him and such bad reports raised and spread concerning him as they themselves know to be false: They delight in lies.

And as they make no conscience of lying concerning him, to do him a mischief, so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually: They bless with their mouth (they compliment David to his face), but they curse inwardly; in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately they are plotting against him and in their cabals carrying on some evil design or other, by which they hope to ruin him. It is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false; but God is faithful.

(2.) He reads their doom, pronounces a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet: You shall be slain all of you, by the righteous judgments of God. Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, according to this prediction.

Those who seek the ruin of God's chosen are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand, but those that fight against it, and its patrons and protectors, shall be as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, which, having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight, falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David, having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance and bids them do their worst.

3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God (Ps 62:5-7): My soul, wait thou only upon God. Note, The good we do we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those that have, through grace, experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls, and even charm them, into such a constant dependence upon him as may make us always easy. He had said (Ps 62:1), From him cometh my salvation; he says (Ps 62:5), My expectation is from him. His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God, and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him. "If God will save my soul, as to every thing else let him do what he pleases with me, and I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation," Php 1:19. He repeats (Ps 62:6) what he had said concerning God (Ps 62:2), as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly pleased with it, and that dwelt much upon it in his thoughts: He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence, I know he is; but there he adds, I shall not be greatly moved, here, I shall not be moved at all. Note, The more faith is acted the more active it is. Crescit eundo--It grows by being exercised. The more we meditate

upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa 26:3. And, as David's faith in God advances to an unshaken stayedness, so his joy in God improves itself into a holy triumph (Ps 62:7): In God is my salvation and my glory. Where our salvation is there our glory is; for what is our salvation but the glory to be revealed, the eternal weight of glory? And there our glorying must be. In God let us boast all the day long. "The rock of my strength (that is, my strong rock, on which I build my hopes and stay myself) and my refuge, to which I flee for shelter when I am pursued, is in God, and in him only. I have no other to flee to, no other to trust to; the more I think of it the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made." Thus does he delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth, Isa 58:14.

2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;
he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.
3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?
Ye shall be slain all of you:
as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence.
4 They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency:
they delight in lies:
they bless with their mouth,
but they curse inwardly.
Selah.
5 My soul, wait thou only upon God;
for my expectation *is* from him.
6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation:
he is my defense; I shall not be moved.
7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory:
the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.
8 Trust in him at all times;
ye people, pour out your heart before him:
God *is* a refuge for us.
Selah.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God and wait upon him, as he had done. Those that have found

the comfort of the ways of God themselves will invite others into those ways; there is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing with us.

I. He counsels all to wait upon God, as he did, Ps 62:8. Observe,

1. To whom he gives this good counsel: You people (that is, all people); all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is the confidence of all the ends of the earth, Ps 65:5. You people of the house of Israel (so the Chaldee); they are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel; and should not a people seek unto their God?

2. What the good counsel is which he gives.

(1.) To confide in God: "Trust in him; deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you, upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this at all times."

We must have an habitual confidence in God always, must live a life of dependence upon him, must so trust in him at all times as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves, or in any creature, which is to be put in him only; and we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions, trust in him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt, to protect us when we are in danger, to supply us when we are in want, to strengthen us for every good word and work.

(2.) To converse with God: Pour out your heart before him. The expression seems to allude to the pouring out of the drink-offerings before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin our hearts are therein poured out before God, 1Sa 7:6. But here it is meant of prayer, which, if it be as it should be, is the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer

ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his: this is pouring out our hearts.

3. What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel: God is a refuge for us, not only my refuge (Ps 62:7), but a refuge for us all, even as many as will flee to him and take shelter in him.

II. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which, as much as in any thing, the heart is deceitful, Jer 17:5-9. Those that trust in God truly (Ps 62:1) will trust in him only, Ps 62:5.

1. Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds (Ps 62:9): Surely men of low degree are vanity, utterly unable to help us, and men of high degree are a lie, that will deceive us if we trust to them. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service, and men of high degree for their wisdom, power, and influence; but neither the one nor the other are to be depended on. Of the two, men of high degree are mentioned as the more deceiving; for they are a lie, which denotes not only vanity, but iniquity.

We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree as upon the king and the captain of the host, who, by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so, when they fail us, prove a lie. But lay them in the balance, the balance of the scripture, or rather make trial of them, see how they will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no, and you will write Tekel upon them; they are alike lighter than vanity; there is no depending upon their wisdom to advise us, their power to act for us, their good-will to us, no, nor upon their promises, in comparison with God, nor otherwise than in subordination to him.

2. Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city (Ps 62:10): Trust not in oppression; that is, in riches got by fraud and violence, because where there is a great deal it is commonly got by indirect scraping or

saving (our Saviour calls it the mammon of unrighteousness, Lu 16:9), or in the arts of getting riches. "Think not, either because you have got abundance or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming vain in robbery, that is, cheating yourselves while you think to cheat others." He that trusted in the abundance of his riches strengthened himself in his wickedness (Ps 52:7); but at his end he will be a fool, Jer 17:11.

Let none be so stupid as to think of supporting themselves in their sin, much less of supporting themselves in this sin. Nay, because it is hard to have riches and not to trust in them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means, we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately towards them:

"Set not your heart upon them; be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, nor put a confidence in them as your portion; be not over-solicitous about them; do not value yourselves and others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end: in short, do not make an idol of it."

This we are most in danger of doing when riches increase. When the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, Take thy ease in these things, Lu 12:19. It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set.

III. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, Ps 62:11,12. This he himself was well assured of and would have us be assured of it: God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that is,

1. "God has spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea, twice. He has spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the nature of the infinitely perfect Being and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it, and I have heard once, yea, twice (that is,

many a time), by the events that have concerned me in particular.

He has spoken it and I have heard it by the light of revelation, by dreams and visions (Job 4:15), by the glorious manifestation of himself upon Mount Sinai" (to which, some think, it does especially refer), "and by the written word." God has often told us what a great and good God he is, and we ought as often to take notice of what he has told us. Or,

2. "Though God spoke it but once, I heard it twice, heard it diligently, not only with my outward ears, but with my soul and mind." To some God speaks twice and they will not hear once; but to others he speaks but once, and they hear twice. Compare Job 33:14. Now what is it which is thus spoken and thus heard?

(1.) That the God with whom we have to do is infinite in power. Power belongs to God; he is almighty, and can do every thing; with him nothing is impossible. All the powers of all the creatures are derived form him, depend upon him, and are used by him as he pleases. His is the power, and to him we must ascribe it. This is a good reason why we should trust in him at all times and live in a constant dependence upon him; for he is able to do all that for us which we trust in him for.

(2.) That he is a God of infinite goodness. Here the psalmist turns his speech to God himself, as being desirous to give him the glory of his goodness, which is his glory: Also unto thee, O Lord! belongeth mercy.

God is not only the greatest, but the best, of beings. Mercy is with him, Ps 130:4,7. He is merciful in a way peculiar to himself; he is the Father of mercies, 2Co 1:3. This is a further reason why we should trust in him, and answers the objections of our sinfulness and unworthiness; though we deserve nothing but his wrath, yet we may hope for all good from his mercy, which is over all his works.

(3.) That he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures: For thou renderest to every man according to his work. Though he does not always do this visibly in this world, yet he will do it in the day of recompence. No service done him shall go unrewarded, nor any affront given him unpunished, unless it be repented of. By this it appears that power and mercy belong to him. If he were not a God of power, there are sinners that would be too great to be punished.

And if he were not a God of mercy there are services that would be too worthless to be rewarded. This seems especially to bespeak the justice of God in judging upon appeals made to him by wronged innocency; he will be sure to judge according to truth, in giving redress to the injured and avenging them on those that have been injurious to them, 1Ki 8:32. Let those therefore that are wronged commit their cause to him and trust to him to plead it.

9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity,
and men of high degree *are* a lie:
to be laid in the balance,
they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.
10 Trust not in oppression,
and become not vain in robbery:
if riches increase,
set not your heart *upon them*.
11 God hath spoken once;
twice have I heard this;
that power *belongeth* unto God.
12 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy:
for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Psalms-63

God Satisfies the Thirsting Soul

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

1 O God, thou *art* my God;
early will I seek thee:

my soul thirsteth for thee,
my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty
land, where no water is;

The title tells us when the psalm was penned, when David was in the wilderness of Judah; that is, in the forest of Hareth (1Sa 22:5) or in the wilderness of Ziph, 1Sa 23:15.

1. Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful and less inhabited than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven; there it is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground; the wilderness there shall blossom as the rose.

2 The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves.

3. All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God that it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin.

David, in these verses, stirs up himself to take hold on God,

I. By a lively active faith: O God! thou art my God. Note, In all our addresses to God we must eye him as God, and our God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness-state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists and is present with us, when we say, O God! which is a serious word; pity it should ever be used as a by-word. And we must own his authority over us and propriety in us, and our relation to him:

"Thou art my God, mine by creation and therefore my rightful owner and ruler, mine by covenant and my own

consent." We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves, and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it: O God! thou art my God.

II. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace: Thou art my God, and therefore I will seek thee; for should not a people seek unto their God? Isa 8:19. We must seek him; we must covet his favour as our chief good and consult his glory as our highest end; we must seek acquaintance with him by his word and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him,

(1.) Early, with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him: Early will I seek thee.

(2.) Earnestly: "My soul thirsteth for thee and my flesh longeth for thee (that is, my whole man is affected with this pursuit) here in a dry and thirsty land." Observe,

[1.] His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was in a dry and thirsty land; so he reckoned it, not so much because it was a wilderness as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is a weary land (so the word is); it is so to the worldly that have their portion in it--it will yield them no true satisfaction; it is so to the godly that have their passage through it--it is a valley of Baca; they can promise themselves little from it.

[2.] His importunity for that presence of God: My soul thirsteth, longeth, for thee. His want quickened his desires, which were very intense; he thirsted as the hunted hart for the water-brooks; he would take up with nothing short of it. His desires were almost impatient; he longed, he languished, till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances.

Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain and look up to God with a holy desire.

2. He longs to enjoy God. What is it that he does so passionately wish for? What is his petition and what is his request? It is this (Ps 63:2), To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. That is,

(1.) "To see it here in this wilderness as I have seen it in the tabernacle, to see it in secret as I have seen it in the solemn assembly." Note, When we are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone we may have the Father with us, and that is enough.

(2.) "To see it again in the sanctuary as I have formerly seen it there." He longs to be brought out of the wilderness, not that he might see his friends again and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary, not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but to see thy power and glory (that is, thy glorious power, or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections), "that I may increase in my acquaintance with them and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart"--so to behold the glory of the Lord as to be changed into the same image, 2Co 3:18.

"That I may see thy power and glory," he does not say, as I have seen them, but "as I have seen thee." We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleases himself with the remembrance of. Those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God; he loved to think them over again; these he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to.

Note, That which has been the delight and is the desire of gracious souls, in their attendance on solemn ordinances, is to see God and his power and glory in them.

2 to see thy power and thy glory,
so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
3 Because thy loving-kindness *is* better than
life, my lips shall praise thee.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! After Ps 63:1,2 that express his desire in seeking God, here are some that express his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may quickly be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault.

Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord (Ps 105:3), and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

I. What David will praise God for (Ps 63:3): Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, than lives, life and all the comforts of life, life in its best estate, long life and prosperity. God's lovingkindness is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, Ps 30:5.

It is better, a thousand times, to die in God's favour than to live under his wrath. David in the wilderness finds, by comfortable experience, that God's lovingkindness is better than life; and therefore (says he) my lips shall praise thee. Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour ought to have them enlarged in his praises.

A great deal of reason we have to bless God that we have better provisions and better possessions than the wealth of this world can afford us, and that in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments and

better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

II. How he will praise God, and how long, Ps 63:4. He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God and dependence on him. Observe, 1. His manner of blessing God: "Thus will I bless thee, thus as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away, like the morning cloud, but shine more and more, like the morning sun."

Or, "I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee." 2. His continuance and perseverance therein: I will bless thee while I live.

Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives; we must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours and repeat our thanksgivings for them. We must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks, and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time.

Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come of which we say, We have no pleasure in them, yet still every day must be a thanksgiving-day, even to our dying-day. In this work we must spend our time because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity.

3. His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him: I will lift up my hands in thy name. We must have an eye to God's name (to all that by which he has made himself known) in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with,--Hallowed be thy name, and to conclude with,--Thine is the glory.

This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty and against our special enemies in God's name, that is, in the strength of his Spirit and grace, Ps 71:16,Zec 10:12.

We must make all our vows in God's name; to him we must engage ourselves and in a dependence upon his grace. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted. In thee do we boast all the day long.

III. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, Ps 63:5.

1. With inward complacency: My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, Isa 25:6. David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's loving kindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied.

Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a gracious soul, Ps 36:8,65:4. And there is that in a gracious soul which takes abundant satisfaction in God and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God; they desire no more than his favour to make them happy: and they have a transcendent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are sapless and without relish, as puddle-water in comparison with the wine of this consolation.

2. With outward expressions of this satisfaction; he will praise God with joyful lips. He will praise him,

(1.) Openly. His mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believes and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God; not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart (Mt 15:8), but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak (Ps 45:1), both for the exciting of our own devout affections and for the edification of others.

(2.) Cheerfully. We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

IV. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God when he was most retired (Ps 63:6): I will praise thee when I remember thee upon my bed. We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now that David was shut out from public ordinances he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something towards making up his loss. Observe here,

1. How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, Ps 10:4. The thoughts of God were ready to him: "I remember thee; that is, when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand, present to my mind."

This subject should first offer itself, as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him: "I meditate on thee." Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

2. When David employed himself thus--upon his bed and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but, wherever he came, he brought his religion along with him. Upon my beds (so some); being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay two nights together in the same bed; but wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground and with a stone for his pillow, good thoughts of God lay down with him.

David was so full of business all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarcely leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore, rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking and gave him

wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God.

Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed (Ps 6:6), but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departs from our eyes (through pain, or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind) our souls, by remembering God, may be at ease, and repose themselves.

Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done. See Ps 16:7,17:3,Ps 4:4,119:62. There were night-watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God (Ps 134:1), in which, probably, David, when he had liberty, joined with the Levites; and now that he could not keep place with them he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live:
I will lift up my hands in thy name.
5 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness;
and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:
6 when I remember thee upon my bed,
and meditate on thee in the *night* watches.
7 Because thou hast been my help,
therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

David, having expressed his desires towards God and his praises of him, here expresses his confidence in him and his joyful expectations from him (Ps 63:7):

In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice, alluding either to the wings of the cherubim stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell ("I will rejoice in thy oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee"), or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagle's young ones (Ex 19:4,De 32:11), which speaks the divine power, and the young ones of the common hen (Mt 23:37), which speaks more of divine tenderness. It is a phrase often used in the psalms (Ps 17:8,36:7,57:1,61:4,91:4), and no where else in this sense, except Ru 2:12, where Ruth, when she became a proselyte, is said to trust under the wings of the God of Israel.

It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow of God's wings, which denotes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens, when they are cold or frightened, run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil. Now let us see further,

I. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope which the word of God was the only foundation of:--

1. His former experiences of God's power in relieving him: "Because thou hast been my help when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy. Thou hast been not only my helper, but my help;" for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto the Lord has helped us, and must therefore resolve that we will never desert him, never distrust him, nor ever droop in our walking with him.

2 The present sense he had of God's grace carrying him on in these pursuits (Ps 63:8): My soul follows hard after thee, which speaks a very earnest desire and a serious vigorous endeavour to keep up communion with God; if we cannot always have God in our embraces, yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth towards him as our prize, Php 3:14.

To press hard after God is to follow him closely, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him swiftly, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and he owns, to the glory of God, Thy right hand upholds me. God upheld him,

(1.) Under his afflictions, that he might not sink under them. Underneath are the everlasting arms.

(2.) In his devotions. God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well-doing. Those that follow hard after God would soon fail and faint if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit of him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of.

It is by the power of God (that is his right hand) that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope that he would, in due time, give him that which he so earnestly desired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires and kept them up.

II. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, Ps 63:9,10. There were those that sought his soul to destroy it, not only his life (which they struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness), but his soul, which they sought to destroy by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul (so doing what they could to starve it), and by sending him to serve other gods, so doing what they could to poison it, 1Sa 26:19. But he foresees and foretels,

(1.) That they shall go into the lower parts of the earth, to the grave, to hell; their enmity to David would be their death and their damnation, their ruin, their eternal ruin.

(2.) That they shall fall by the sword, by the sword of God's wrath and his justice, by the sword of man, Job 19:28,29. They shall die a violent death, Re 13:10. This was fulfilled in Saul, who fell by the sword, his own sword; David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of

his hand, once and again; for precepts, not prophecies, are our rule.

(3.) That they shall be a portion for foxes; either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts (Saul lay a good while unburied) or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, Isa 34:14. Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; Bring them forth and slay them before me, Lu 19:27.

2. That he himself should gain his point at last (Ps 63:11), that he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed: The king shall rejoice in God.

(1.) He calls himself the king, because he knew himself to be so in the divine purpose and designation; thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself more than a conqueror, Ro 8:37. Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection.

(2.) He doubts not but that though he was now sowing in tears he should reap in joy. The king shall rejoice.

(3.) He resolves to make God the Alpha and Omega of all his joys. He shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the Prince shall rejoice in God; he has already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming. Two things would be the good effect of David's advancement:--

[1.] It would be the consolation of his friends. Every one that swears to him (that is, to David), that comes into his interest and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success; or every one that swears by him (that is, by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol, De 6:13), and then it means all good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name; they shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement.

Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me. Those that heartily espouse the cause of Christ shall glory in its victory at last. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.

[2.] It would be the confutation of his enemies: The mouth of those that speak lies, of Saul, and Doeg, and others that misrepresented David and insulted over him, as if his cause was desperate, shall be quite stopped; they shall not have one word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed. Apply this to Christ's enemies, to those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him while their hearts are not with him; their mouth shall be stopped with that word, I know you not whence you are; they shall be for ever speechless, Mt 22:12.

The mouths of those also that speak lies against him, that pervert the right ways of the Lord and speak ill of his holy religion, will be stopped in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

8 My soul followeth hard after thee:
thy right hand upholdeth me.
9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*,
shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
10 They shall fall by the sword:
they shall be a portion for foxes.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
every one that sweareth by him shall glory:
but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

Psalms-64

A Prayer for Protection from Hidden Enemies
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer:
preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

David, in these verses, puts in before God a representation of his own danger and of his enemies' character, to enforce his petition that God would protect him and punish them.

I. He earnestly begs of God to preserve him (Ps 64:1,2): Hear my voice, O God! in my prayer; that is, grant me the thing I pray for, and this is it, Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy, that is, fro the enemy that I am in fear of. He makes request for his life, which is, in a particular manner, dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God and his generation. When his life is struck at it cannot be thought he should altogether hold his peace, Es 7:2,4.

And, if he plead his fear of the enemy, it is no disparagement to his courage; his father Jacob, that prince with God, did so before him. Ge 32:11, Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him. Preserve my life from fear, not only from the thing itself which I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it; this is, in effect, the preservation of the life, for fear has torment, particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are all their life-time subject to bondage.

He prays, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me, and from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who join forces, as they join counsels, to do me a mischief."

Observe, The secret counsel ends in an insurrection; treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. "Hide me from them, that they may not find

me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection."

II. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies: "Lord, hide me from them, for they are the worst of men, not fit to be connived at; they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing; so that I am undone if thou do not take my part."

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches, Ps 64:3,4. They are described as military men, with their sword and bow, archers that take aim exactly, secretly, and suddenly, and shoot at the harmless bird that apprehends not herself in any danger. But,

(1.) Their tongues are their swords, flaming swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut, and wound, and kill, the good name of their neighbours. The tongue is a little member, but, like the sword, it boasts great things, Jam 3:5. It is a dangerous weapon.

(2.) Bitter words are their arrows--scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanders, and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire to hell. For these their malice bends their bows, to send out these arrows with so much the more force.

(3.) The upright man is their mark; against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him.

(4.) They manage it with a great deal of art and subtlety. They shoot in secret, that those they shoot at may not discover them and avoid the danger, for in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. And suddenly do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning or any opportunity to defend himself. Cursed be he that thus smites his neighbour

secretly in his reputation, De 27:24. There is no guard against a pass made by a false tongue.

(5.) Herein they fear not, that is, they are confident of their success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain the point which their malice aims at.

Or, rather, they fear not the wrath of God, which they will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and daring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an account for it.

2. They are very close and very resolute in their malicious projects, Ps 64:5.

(1.) They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and by joining together in it they make one another the more bitter and the more bold. Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit--Lay on an abundance of reproach; part will be sure to stick. It is bad to do a wrong thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in doing it; this is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign that the heart is hardened to the highest degree when it is thus fully set to do evil and fears no colours. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but, when that is baffled, the case is desperate.

(2.) They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief and most effectually: They commune of laying snares privily. All their communion is in sin and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedients to do mischief; every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined.

(3.) They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices: They say, Who shall see them? A practical disbelief of God's

omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution (Ps 64:6): "They search out iniquity; they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge; they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of;" or,

"They are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to me; in this they accomplish a diligent search; they go through with it, and spare neither cost nor labour." Evil men dig up mischief. Half the pains that many take to damn their souls would serve to save them.

They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction, for the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, are keep, deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit and of their will, they show themselves to be, both in subtlety and malignity, the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked;
from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
3 who whet their tongue like a sword,
and bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:
4 that they may shoot in secret at the perfect:
suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
5 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter:
they commune of laying snares privily;
they say, Who shall see them?
6 They search out iniquities;
they accomplish a diligent search:
both the inward *thought* of every one *of them,* and the heart, *is* deep.
7 But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow;
suddenly shall they be wounded.

We may observe here,

I The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that which, if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin.

1. They shot at David secretly and suddenly, to wound him; but God shall shoot at them, for the ordains his arrows against the persecutors (Ps 7:13), against the face of them, Ps 21:12. And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper, than theirs do or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind: the curse causeless shall not come.

But God has one arrow that will be their death, his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come; with it they shall be suddenly wounded, that is, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure and not apprehensive of any danger.

2. Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall make their tongues to fall upon themselves. They do it by the desert of their sin; God does it by the justice of his wrath, Ps 64:8.

When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and many more have damned their own souls, with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation.

O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, art snared in the words of thy mouth. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it. Those that love cursing, it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession, and then their own tongue falls upon them.

II The influence which these judgments should have upon others; for it is done in the open sight of all, Job 34:26.

1. Their neighbours shall shun them and shift for their own safety. They shall flee away, as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Nu 16:27. Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul, when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, 1Sa 31:7.

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, Ps 64:9.

(1.) They shall understand and observe God's hand in all (and, unless we do so, we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of Providence, Ho 14:9): They shall wisely consider his doing. There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to apprehend the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering (Ec 7:13), but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text.

(2.) They shall be affected with a holy awe of God upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear and tremble because of God's judgments, Ps 119:120. They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people. Smite the scorner and the simple shall beware.

(3.) They shall declare the work of God. They shall speak to one another and to all about them of the justice of God in punishing persecutors. What we wisely consider ourselves we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God. This is the finger of God.

3. Good people shall in a special manner take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, Ps 64:10.

(1.) It shall increase their joy: The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocency pleaded effectually.

(2.) It shall encourage their faith. They shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him.

(3.) Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting: All the upright in heart, that keep a good conscience and approve themselves to God, shall glory, not in themselves, but in the favour of God, in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him and interest in him. Let him that glories glory in the Lord.

8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves:
all that see them shall flee away.
9 And all men shall fear,
and shall declare the work of God;
for they shall wisely consider of his doing.
10 The righteous shall be glad in the Lord,
and shall trust in him;
and all the upright in heart shall glory.

Psalms-65

Praise for God's Bounty in Nature
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm and Song of David.

1 Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion:
and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own at the throne of grace, but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

I. How he gives glory to God, Ps 65:1.

1. By humble thankfulness: Praise waiteth for thee, O God! in Zion, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach. When God is coming towards us with his favours we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn.

"Praise waits, with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will and dependence on thy mercy." When we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God.

"Praise waits thy acceptance" the Levites by night stood in the house of the Lord, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed (Ps 134:1,2), and thus their praise waited for him. Praise is silent unto thee (so the word is), as wanting words to express the great goodness of God, and being struck with a silent admiration at it.

As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorings which cannot be uttered, and yet shall be accepted by him that searches the heart and knows what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard. Let it not be told him that I speak, for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise surely he shall be swallowed up, Job 37:20.

Before thee praise is reputed as silence (so the Chaldee), so far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Zion only, in his church, among his people. All his works praise him (they minister matter for praise), but only his saints bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sing their new song upon Mount Zion, Re 14:1,3. In Zion was God's dwelling-place, Ps 76:2. Happy are those who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him.

2. By sincere faithfulness: Unto thee shall the vow be performed, that is, the sacrifice shall be offered up which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay.

II. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer (Ps 65:2): Praise waits for thee; and why is it so ready?

(1.) "Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. O thou that hearest prayer! thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think (Eph 3:20), and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith, either in kind or kindness." It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves if we do not take all occasions to give him his title.

(2.) Because, for that reason, we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits. "Therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come; justly does every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee when he is in want or distress, whatever he does at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to their religion; but, when thy house shall be called a house of prayer to all people, then unto thee shall all flesh come, and be welcome," Ro 10:12,13. To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this who is a God like unto him? Mic 7:18. By this he proclaims his name (Ex 34:7), and therefore, upon this account, praise waits for him, Ps 65:3. "Our sins reach to the heavens, iniquities prevail against us, and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order

before us we are full of confusion and ready to fall into despair.

They prevail so against us that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own, so that when we appear before God our own consciences accuse us and we have no reply to make; and yet, as for our transgressions, thou shalt, of thy own free mercy and for the sake of a righteousness of thy own providing, purge them away, so that we shall not come into condemnation for them."

Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainment he gives to those that attend upon him and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away (Ps 65:3) and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, Ps 65:4. Those that come into communion with God shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

(1.) They are blessed. Not only blessed is the nation (Ps 33:12), but blessed is the man, the particular person, how mean soever, whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; he is a happy man, for he has the surest token of the divine favour and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe here,

[1.] What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. First, It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires towards him; it is to converse with him as one we love and value. Secondly, It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did, that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them as we do to that which is the business of our dwelling-place.

[2.] How we come into communion with God, not recommended by any merit of our own, nor brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and so distinguishest from others who are left to themselves;" and it is by his effectual special grace pursuant to that choice; whom he chooses he causes to approach, not only invites them, but inclines and enables them, to draw nigh to him. He draws them, Joh 6:44.

(2.) They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changes the person, not, He shall be satisfied (the man whom thou choosest), but, We shall, which teaches us to apply the promises to ourselves and by an active faith to put our own names into them: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple. Note,

[1.] God's holy temple is his house; there he dwells, where his ordinances are administered.

[2.] God keeps a good house. There is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness, grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant; there is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready; and all on free cost, without money and without price.

[3.] In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied. Let them have the pleasure of communion with God, and that suffices them; they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf (Ps 65:5): By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation! This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people; he often answers them by terrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness; he neither does them any wrong nor means

them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation. See Isa 45:15.

But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies; God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made, for their sakes, among the heathen, and the recompence he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. By wonderful things (so some read it), things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, Isa 64:3.

Or, "By things which strike an awe upon us thou wilt answer us." The holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is terrible in his holy places.

5. For the care he takes of all his people, however distressed, and whithersoever dispersed. He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth that is, of all the saints all the world over and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel; for he is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, the confidence of those that are afar off from his holy temple and its courts, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles, or that are in distress upon the sea.

They trust in thee, and cry to thee, when they are at their wits' end, Ps 107:27,28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him, wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but also afar off upon the sea.

2 O thou that hearest
prayer, unto thee shall all
flesh come.
3 Iniquities prevail against me:
as for our transgressions,
thou shalt purge them
away.

4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou
choosest, and causest to approach
unto thee,
that he may dwell in thy courts:
we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
even of thy holy temple.
5 *By* terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer
us, O God of our salvation;
who art the confidence of all the ends of the
earth, and of them that are afar off *upon* the
sea:
6 which by his strength setteth fast the mountains;
being girded with power:

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature, the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.

I. He establishes the earth and it abides, Ps 119:90. By his own strength he setteth fast the mountains (Ps 65:6), did set them fast at first and still keeps them firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes.

------Feriuntque summos. Fulmina montes.
------The lightning blasts and loftiest hills.

Hence they are called everlasting mountains, Hab 3:6. Yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firmly than they, Isa 54:10.

II. He stills the sea, and it is quiet, Ps 65:7. The sea in a storm makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but, when God pleases, he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep, turns the storm into a calm quickly, Ps 107:29. And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness of the earth, it appears that he whose the sea and the dry land are is girded with power. And by this our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his divine power, that he commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him.

To this instance of the quieting of the sea he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he stills the tumult of the people, the common people. Nothing is more unruly and disagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify, in secret ways, which they themselves are not aware of.

Or it may be meant of the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, Ps 2:1. God has many ways to still them and will for ever silence their tumults.

III. He renews the morning and evening, and their revolution is constant, Ps 65:8. This regular succession of day and night may be considered,

1. As an instance of God's great power, and so it strikes an awe upon all: Those that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy signs or tokens; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme deity, a sovereign monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen; and therefore they are said to be set for signs, Ge 1:14. Many of those that dwell in the remote and dark corners of the earth were so afraid at these tokens that they were driven to worship them (De 4:19), not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him.

2. As an instance of God's great goodness, and so it brings comfort to all: Thou makest the outgoings of the morning, before the sun rises, and of the evening, before the sun sets, to rejoice. As it is God that scatters the light of the morning and draws the curtains of the evening, so he does both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice, gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them (Ge 1:4), both are equally welcome to the world in their season.

It is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning, which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening, which befriend the repose of the night. Does the watchman wait for the morning? So does the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in and in which God was constantly honoured.

Thou makest them to sing (so the word is); for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites; it was that which the duty of every day required. We are to look upon our daily worship, alone and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily occupations and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and, if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

IV. He waters the earth and makes it fruitful. On this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much, the psalm being probably penned upon occasion either of a more than ordinarily plentiful harvest or of a seasonable rain after long drought.

How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron, which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world that every good and perfect gift is from above, omnia desuper--all from above; we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight, and thither must our praises return, as the first-fruits of the earth were in the heave-offerings lifted up towards heaven by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived.

All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us. Now observe how the

common blessing of rain from heaven and fruitful seasons is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God, which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions.

(1.) God that made the earth hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, Ps 65:9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises.

(2.) God, that made it dry land, hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness. Though the productions of the earth flourished before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and watered the whole face of the ground, Ge 2:5,6. Our hearts are dry and barren unless God himself be as the dew to us and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water and make them to increase.

(3.) Rain is the river of God, which is full of water; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turns which way soever he pleases.

(4.) This river of God enriches the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth, which are produced out of its surface, are abundantly more useful and serviceable to man than those which are hidden in its bowels; we might live well enough without silver and gold, but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit is derived from it to the earth and to man upon it.

(1.) To the earth itself. The rain in season gives it a new face; nothing is more reviving, more refreshing, than the rain upon the new-mown grass, Ps 72:6. Even the ridges of the earth, off which the rain seems to slide, are watered abundantly, for

they drink in the rain which comes often upon them; the furrows of it, which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain and made fit to receive the seed (Ps 65:10); they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender settles it; for the heart is established with that grace.

Thus the springing of the year is blessed; and if the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to crown with his goodness (Ps 65:11), to compass it on every side as the head is compassed with a crown, and to complete the comforts of it as the end of a thing is said to crown it.

And his paths are said to drop fatness; for whatever fatness there is in the earth, which impregnates its productions, it comes from the out-goings of the divine goodness. Wherever God goes he leaves the tokens of his mercy behind him (Joe 2:13,14) and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive and diffusive (Ps 65:12): They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and not merely upon the pastures of the inhabited land.

The deserts, which man takes no care of and receives no profit from, are under the care of the divine Providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator.

The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds do, receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God does good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty that in them the hills, the little hills, rejoice on every side, even the north side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above

the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as, when he pleases, he can make them tremble (Ps 114:6), so when he pleases he can make them rejoice.

(2.) To man upon the earth. God, by providing rain for the earth, prepares corn for man, Ps 65:9. As for the earth, out of it comes bread (Job 28:5), for out of it comes corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it God himself prepared; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures and for whose use he has fitted them.

When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raises the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it (as appears by that of our Saviour, Joh 12:24), and that the constant benefit we have from it is an instance of that goodness which endures for ever, we shall have reason to think that it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us. Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman, who deals immediately in the fruits of the earth, is enriched; and both are owing to the divine goodness in watering the earth, Ps 65:13.

To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks, Ps 65:13. So well stocked are the pastures that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them, and yet the pasture not overcharged; so well fed are the cattle that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed.

The valleys are so fruitful that they seem to be covered over with corn, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble valleys is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering the end of their creation, are said to shout for joy and sin, because they are serviceable to the honour of God and the comfort of man, and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise:

as there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there was none of the feasts of the Lord, among the Jews, solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the feast of in-gathering at the end of the year, Ex 23:16. Let all these common gifts of the divine bounty, which we yearly and daily partake of, increase our love to God as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.

7 which stilleth the noise of the seas,
the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.
8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens:
thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.
9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it:
thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water:
thou preparest them corn,
when thou hast so provided for it.
10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly:
thou settlest the furrows thereof:
thou makest it soft with showers:
thou blessest the springing thereof.
11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
and thy paths drop fatness.
12 They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness:
and the little hills rejoice on every side.
13 The pastures are clothed with flocks;
the valleys also are covered over with corn;
they shout for joy, they also sing.

Psalms-66

Praise for God's Mighty Deeds
To the chief Musician,
A Song or Psalm.

1 Make a joyful noise unto
God, all ye lands:

I. In these verses the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, all lands, all the earth, all the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God, Ps 66:1.

1. This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all and furnishes every nation with matter for praise.

2 The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature.

3. A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ; the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him.

4. A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God. He will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands,

(1.) To make a joyful noise to God. Holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and, though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of (hypocrites are said to cause their voice to be heard on high, Isa 58:4), yet, in praising God,

[1.] We must be hearty and zealous, and must do what we do with all our might, with all that is within us.

[2.] We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master. And both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful noise.

(2.) To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth, for the edification of others, the honour of his name, that is, of all that whereby he has made himself known, Ps 66:2. That which is the honour of God's name ought to be the matter of our praise.

(3.) To make his praise glorious as far as we can. In praising God we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God, so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

II. He had called upon all lands to praise God (Ps 66:1), and he foretels (Ps 66:4) that they shall do so: All the earth shall worship thee; some in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for the everlasting gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred; and this is the purport of it, Worship him that made heaven and earth, Re 14:6,7.

Being thus sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth, more or less, to worship God, and sing unto him. In gospel times God shall be worshipped by the singing of Psalms. They shall sing to God, that is, sing to his name, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

III. That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon to come and see the works of God; for his own works praise him, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better is because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness in them (Ps 66:5), and then speak of them,

and speak of them to him (Ps 66:3): Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works, terrible in thy doings!

1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is terrible (that is, admirable) in his works, through the greatness of his power, which is such, and shines so brightly, so strongly, in all he does, that it may be truly said there are not any works like unto his works. Hence he is said to be fearful in praises, Ex 15:11. In all his doings towards the children of men he is terrible, and to be eyed with a holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the divine Providence.

2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission (Ps 66:3): Through the greatness of thy power, before which none can stand, shall thy enemies submit themselves unto thee; they shall lie unto thee (so the word is), that is, they shall be compelled, sorely against their wills, to make their peace with thee upon any terms.

Subjection extorted by fear is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion, nor can there be much joy of such proselytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it, De 33:29.

3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, Ps 66:6. When Israel came out of Egypt, he turned the sea into dry land before them, which encouraged them to follow God's guidance through the wilderness; and, when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars Jordan was divided before them, and they went through that flood on foot; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry, rather than infantry, in the wars of the Lord.

There did the enemies tremble before them (Ex 15:14,15,Jos 5:1), but there did we rejoice in him, both trust his power (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him) and

sing his praise, Ps 106:12. There did we rejoice; that is, our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world (Ps 66:7): He rules by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations.

(1.) God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. His eyes run to and fro through the earth; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection.

(2.) He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed. Strong is his hand, and high is his right hand. Hence he infers, Let not the rebellious exalt themselves; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, I will be king.

Let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves as if there were any probability that they should gain their point. No; let them be still, for God hath said, I will be exalted, and man cannot gainsay it.

2 sing forth the honor of his name:
make his praise glorious.
3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works!
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies
submit themselves unto thee.
4 All the earth shall worship thee,
and shall sing unto thee;
they shall sing *to* thy
name. Selah.
5 Come and see the works of God:
he is terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.
6 He turned the sea into dry *land:*

they went through the flood on foot:
there did we rejoice in him.
7 He ruleth by his power for ever;
his eyes behold the nations:
let not the rebellious exalt themselves.
Selah.
8 O bless our God, ye people,
and make the voice of his praise to be heard:

In these verses the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him. Let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Bless our God; bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own.

Let them make the voice of his praise to be heard (Ps 66:8); for from whom should it be heard but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants? Two things we have reason to bless God for:--

I. Common protection (Ps 66:9): He holdeth our soul in life, that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together and his visitation that preserves our spirit.

He puts our soul in life, so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish he restores our soul, and so puts it, as it were, into a new life, giving new comforts. Non est vivere, sed valere, vita--It is not existence, but happiness, that deserves the name of life.

But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power. He suffers not our feet to be moved, preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from. To him we owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin. He will keep the feet of his saints.

II. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

1. How grievous the distress and danger were, Ps 66:11,12. What particular trouble of the church this refers to does not appear; it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only. But, whatever it was, they were surprised with it as a bird with a snare, enclosed and entangled in it as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, Ps 66:11.

But they owned the hand of God in it. We are never in the net but God brings us into it, never under affliction but God lays it upon us. Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water?

We went through both, that is, afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee, Isa 43:1.

Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so. Beware of men, Mt 10:17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening (Ps 124:2,3,4), and that was the case here:

"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, to trample upon us and insult over us, to hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us; they have said to our souls, Bow down, that we may go over," Isa 51:23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God:

"Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us;" for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

2. How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is (Ps 66:10): Thou, O God! hast proved us, and tried us. Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire.

(1.) That our graces, by being tried, may be made more evident and so we may be approved, as silver, when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1Pe 1:7) and perhaps in this world. Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions.

(2.) That our graces, by being exercised, may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, Heb 12:10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, Da 11:35,Re 2:10,De 8:2.

3. How glorious the issue was at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so, for

(1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them: "We went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods." Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God, there is a way through them.

(2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy: Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, into a well-watered place (so the word is), like the gardens of the Lord, and therefore fruitful. God brings his people into trouble that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness,

which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

9 which holdeth our soul in life,
and suffereth not our feet to be moved.
10 For thou, O God, hast proved us:
thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net;
thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water:
but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place.*
13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:
I will pay thee my vows,

The psalmist, having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself and engages himself to do it.

I. In his devotions to his God, Ps 66:13-15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises and to make a joyful noise with them; but, for himself, his resolutions go further, and he will praise God,

1. By costly sacrifices, which, under the law, were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal to be at such an expense in praising God; but David, for his part, being able, is as willing, in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God (Ps 66:13): I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings. His sacrifices should be public, in the place which God had chosen: "I will go into thy house with them."

Christ is our temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the king--burnt-sacrifices, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no share; and burnt-sacrifices of fatlings, not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God, who is the best, must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us

is a feast of fat things, full of marrow (Isa 25:6), and such sacrifices should we bring to him.

He will offer bullocks with goats, so liberal will he be in his return of praise, and not strait-handed: he would not offer that which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal. And this with the incense of rams, that is, with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

2. By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverance out of trouble unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution (Ps 66:13,14), I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble. Note,

(1.) It is very common, and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows, and solemnly to speak them before the Lord, to bind ourselves out from sin and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, but a qualification for receiving the tokens of that favour.

(2.) The vows which we made when we were in trouble must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow than to vow and not pay.

II. In his declarations to his friends, Ps 66:16. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him: "Come and hear, all you that fear God, for,

1. You will join with me in my praises and help me in giving thanks." And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God in returning thanks for the mercies we

have received as in praying for those we want. 2. "You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say.

The humble shall hear of it and be glad, Ps 34:2. Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me (Ps 119:74), and therefore let me have their company, and I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people that will banter it and make a jest of it" (pearls are not to be cast before swine); "but to those that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God has done for my soul," not in pride and vain-glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other.

We should take all occasions to tell one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he has blessed us in heavenly things; these we should be most affected with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others. Now what was it that God had done for his soul?

(1.) He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty (Ps 66:17): I cried unto him with my mouth. But if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the Spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry, Abba, Father, we should never have done it.

That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more if, when we cried to him with our mouth, he was extolled with our tongue, that is, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him, and to praise him for mercy in prospect though not yet in possession.

By crying to him we do indeed extol him. He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to unite interests with us that, in seeking our own welfare, we seek his glory.

His exaltation was under my tongue (so it may be read); that is, I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths praises must be in our hearts. (2.) He had wrought in him a dread of sin as an enemy to prayer (Ps 66:18): If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me. The Jewish writers, some of them that have the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words:

If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is (say they), If I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity does not break out in my words and actions, God will not hear me, that is, he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge; as if heart-sins were no sins in God's account. The falsehood of this our Saviour has shown in his spiritual exposition of the law, Mt 5:7-48 But the sense of this place is plain:

If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is, "If I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it, if I treat it as a friend and bid it welcome, make provision for it and am loth to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, nor be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it."

Note, Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Those that continue in love and league with sin have no interest either in the promise or

in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer.

(3.) He had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers (Ps 66:19):

"But verily God has heard me; though, being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would be rejected, yet, to my comfort, I found that God was pleased to regard them." This God did for his soul, by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him. And therefore he concludes (Ps 66:20), Blessed be God. The Ps 66:18,19 are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism:

If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer; that is the proposition: but verily God has heard me; that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred, "Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart;" but, instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God: Blessed be God.

Whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion. God has heard me, and therefore blessed be God. Note, What we win by prayer we must wear with praise. Mercies in answer to prayer do, in a special manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy.

Lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. This he adds by way of correction: "It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it." Therefore God does not turn away our prayer, because he does not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.

14 which my lips have uttered,
and my mouth hath spoken,
when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings,
with the incense of rams:
I will offer bullocks with goats.
Selah.
16 Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God,
and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.
17 I cried unto him with my mouth,
and he was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I regard iniquity in my heart,
the Lord will not hear *me:*
19 *but* verily God hath heard *me;*
he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
20 Blessed *be* God,
which hath not turned away my prayer,
nor his mercy from me.

Psalms-67

The Nations Exhorted to Praise God
To the chief Musician on Neginoth,
A Psalm or Song.

1 God be merciful unto us, and bless us;
and cause his face to shine upon us;
Selah.

The composition of this psalm is such as denotes the penman's affections to have been very warm and lively, by which spirit of devotion he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

I. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy, Ps 67:1. Our Saviour, in teaching us to say, Our Father, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others; so the psalmist here prays not, God be merciful to me, and bless me, but to us, and bless us;

for we must make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught,

1. That all our happiness comes from God's mercy and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for is, God be merciful to us, to us sinners, and pardon our sins (Lu 18:13), to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries.

2. That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that: God bless us; that is, give us an interest in his promises, and confer upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us amounts to his doing well for us. God bless us is a comprehensive prayer; it is a pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly and carelessly, and as a byword.

3. That it is completed in the light of his countenance: God cause his face to shine upon us; that is, God by his grace qualify us for his favour and then give us the tokens of his favour. We need desire no more to make us happy than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that he loves us: To shine with us (so the margin reads it); with us doing our endeavour, and let it crown that endeavour with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

2 that thy way may be known upon earth,
thy saving health among all nations.

He passes from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles (Ps 67:2): That thy way may be known upon earth. "Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus public-spirited must we be in our prayers. Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.

We shall have never the less of God's mercy, and blessing, and favour, for others coming in to share with us. Or it may be taken thus: "God be merciful to us Jews, and bless us, that thereby thy way may be known upon earth, that by the

peculiar distinguishing tokens of thy favour to us others may be allured to come and join themselves to us, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," Zec 8:23.

1. These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken,

(1.) As a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the Old-Testament saints; so far were they from wishing to monopolize the privileges of the church that they desired nothing more than the throwing down of the enclosure and the laying open of the advantages. See then how the spirit of the Jews, in the days of Christ and his apostles, differed from the spirit of their fathers. The Israelites indeed that were of old desired that God's name might be known among the Gentiles; those counterfeit Jews were enraged at the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles; nothing in Christianity exasperated them so much as that did.

(2.) As a prophecy that it shall be as he here prays. Many scripture-prophecies and promises are wrapped up in prayers, to intimate that the answer of the church's prayer is as sure as the performance of God's promises.

2. Three things are here prayed for, with reference to the Gentiles:--

(1.) That divine revelation might be sent among them, Ps 67:2. Two things he desires might be know upon earth, even among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only:--[1.] God's way, the rule of duty: "Let them all know, as well as we do, what is good and what the Lord our God requires of them; let them be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments which are so much the praise of our nation and the envy of all its neighbours," De 4:8.

[2.] His saving health, or his salvation. The former is wrapped up in his law, this in his gospel. If God make known

his way to us, and we walk in it, he will show us his saving health, Ps 50:23. Those that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there is in it enough for all; and therefore we should pray that both the one and the other may be made known to all.

(2.) That divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where divine revelation is received and embraced (Ps 67:3): "Let the people praise thee, O God! let them have matter for praise, let them have hearts for praise; yea, let not only some, but all the people, praise thee," all nations in their national capacity, some of all nations.

It is again repeated (Ps 67:5) as that which the psalmist's heart was very much upon. Those that delight in praising God themselves cannot but desire that others also may be brought to praise him, that he may have the honour of it and they may have the benefit of it. It is a prayer,

[1.] That the gospel might be preached to them, and then they would have cause enough to praise God, as for the day-spring after a long and dark night. Ortus est sol--The sun has risen. Ac 8:8.

[2.] That they might be converted and brought into the church, and then they would have a disposition to praise God, the living and true God, and not the dumb and dunghill deities they had worshipped, Da 5:4. Then their hard thoughts of God would be silenced, and they would see him, in the gospel glass, to be love itself, and the proper object of praise.

[3.] That they might be incorporated into solemn assemblies, and might praise God in a body, that they might all together praise him with one mind and one mouth. Thus a face of religion appears upon a land when God is publicly owned

and the ordinances of religious worship are duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

(3.) That the divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to (Ps 67:4): O let the nations be glad, and sing for joy! Holy joy, joy in God and in his name, is the heart and soul of thankful praise. That all the people may praise thee, let the nations be glad.

Those that rejoice in the Lord always will in every thing give thanks. The joy he wishes to the nations is holy joy; for it is joy in God's dominion, joy that God has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, which the unconverted nations are angry at, Re 11:17,18. Let them be glad,

[1.] That the kingdom is the Lord's (Ps 22:28), that he, as an absolute sovereign, shall govern the nations upon earth, that by the kingdom of his providence he shall overrule the affairs of kingdoms according to the counsel of his will, though they neither know him nor own him, and that in due time he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his gospel (Mt 28:19) and set up the kingdom of his grace among them upon the ruin of the devil's kingdom--that he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.

[2.] That every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. "Let them be glad that thou shalt judge the people righteously, that thou shalt give a law and gospel which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and shalt pass an unerring sentence, according to that rule, upon all the children of men, against which there will lie no exception."

Let us all be glad that we are not to be one another's judges, but that he that judges us is the Lord, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth.

3 Let the people praise thee, O God;
let all the people praise thee.

4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
for thou shalt judge the people righteously,
and govern the nations upon earth.
Selah.
5 Let the people praise thee, O God;
let all the people praise thee.
6 *Then* shall the earth yield her increase;
and God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.

He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good when God shall do this, when the nations shall be converted and brought to praise God.

1 The lower world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the fruits of that (Ps 67:6): Then shall the earth yield her increase. Not but that God gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons to the nations when they sat in darkness (Ac 14:17); but when they were converted the earth yielded its increase to God; the meat and the drink then became a meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God (Joe 2:14); and then it was fruitful to some good purpose.

Then it yielded its increase more than before to the comfort of men, who through Christ acquired a covenant-title to the fruits of it and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The success of the gospel sometimes brings outward mercies along with it; righteousness exalts a nation. See Isa 4:2,62:9.

2 The upper world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the favours of that, which is much better: God, even our own God, shall bless us, Ps 67:6. And again (Ps 67:7), God shall bless us. Note,

(1.) There are a people in the world that can, upon good grounds, call God their God.

(2.) Believers have reason to glory in their relation to God and the interest they have in him. It is here spoken with an air of triumph. God, even our own God.

(3.) Those who through grace call God their own may with a humble confidence expect a blessing from him. If he be our God, he will bless us with special blessings.

(4.) The blessing of God, as ours in covenant, is that which sweetens all our creature-comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed; then we receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

3. All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them: The ends of the earth shall fear him, that is, worship him, which is to be done with a godly fear. The blessings God bestows upon us call upon us not only to love him, but to fear him, to keep up high thoughts of him and to be afraid of offending him. When the gospel begins to spread it shall get ground more and more, till it reach to the ends of the earth.

The leaven hidden in the meal shall diffuse itself, till the whole be leavened. And the many blessings which those will own themselves to have received that are brought into the church invite others to join themselves to them. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are the blessed of the Lord.

7 God shall bless us;
and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Psalms-68

The God of Sinai and of the Sanctuary
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm or Song of David.

1 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered:
let them also that hate him flee before him.

In these verses,

I. David prays that God would appear in his glory,

1. For the confusion of his enemies (Ps 68:1,2): "Let God arise, as a judge to pass sentence upon them, as a general to take the field and do execution upon them; and let them be scattered, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him. Let God arise, as the sun when he goes forth in his strength; and the children of darkness shall be scattered, as the shadows of the evening flee before the rising sun.

Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears to remainder of it.

Let them melt as wax before the fire, which is quickly dissolved." Thus does David comment upon Moses's prayer, and not only repeat it with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of scripture-prayers. Nay, it looks further, to the Redeemer's victory over the enemies of this kingdom, for he was the angel of the covenant, that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note,

(1.) There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God and hate him, that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men and against the seed of the woman.

(2.) They are the wicked, and none but the wicked, that are enemies to God, the children of the wicked one.

(3.) Though we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him and all their attempts upon his kingdom.

(4.) If God but arise, all his impenitent and implacable enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered.

The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final perdition of ungodly men (2Pe 3:7), who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2Th 1:8.

2. For the comfort and joy of his own people (Ps 68:3): "Let the righteous be glad, that are now in sorrow; let them rejoice before God in his favourable presence. God is the joy of his people; let them rejoice whenever they come before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness." Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them. Light is sown for the righteous.

II. He praises God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him,

1. As a great God, infinitely great (Ps 68:4): He rides upon the heavens, by his name JAH. He is the spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manages them, as he that rides in the chariot sets it a-going, has a supreme command of the influences of heaven; he rides upon the heavens for the help of his people (De 33:26), so swiftly, so strongly, and so much above the reach of opposition.

He rules these by his name Jah, or Jehovah, a self-existent self-sufficient being; the fountain of all being, power, motion, and perfection; this is his name for ever. When we thus extol God we must rejoice before him. Holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy and tender compassion. He is great, but he despises not any, no, not the meanest; nay, being a God of great power, he uses his power for the relief of those that are distressed, Ps 68:5,6. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory.

He that rides on the heavens by his name Jah, one would think should immediately have been adored as King of kings and Lord of lords, and the sovereign director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is a Father of the fatherless. Though God be high, yet has he respect unto the lowly. Happy are those that have an interest in such a God as this. He that rides upon the heavens is a Father worth having; thrice happy are the people whose God is the Lord.

(1.) When families are bereaved of their head God takes care of them, and is himself their head; and the widows and the fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a Father of the fatherless, to pity them, to bless them, to teach them, to provide for them, to portion them. He will preserve them alive (Jer 49:11), and with him they shall find mercy, Ho 14:3.

They have liberty to call him Father, and to plead their relation to him as their guardian, Ps 146:9,Ps 10:14,18. He is a judge or patron of the widows, to give them counsel and to redress their grievances, to own them and plead their cause, Pr 22:23.

He has an ear open to all their complaints and a hand open to all their wants. He is so in his holy habitation, which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven (there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widow have free recourse to, and are taken under the protection of, Ps 9:4,7), or of the habitation of his grace on earth; and so it is a direction to the widows and fatherless how to apply to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances; there they may find him and find comfort in him.

(2.) When families are to be built up he is the founder of them: God sets the solitary in families, brings those into comfortable relations that were lonely, gives those a

convenient settlement that were unsettled (Ps 113:9); he makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad (so Dr. Hammond), putting those that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way for man's charity, as it is of God's bounty.

3. As a righteous God,

(1.) In relieving the oppressed. He brings out those that are bound with chains, and sets those at liberty who were unjustly imprisoned and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free.

(2.) In reckoning with the oppressors: The rebellious dwell in a dry land and have no comfort in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The best land will be a dry land to those that by their rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. The Israelites were brought out of Egypt into the wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Nilus failed them, as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

2 As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away:
as wax melteth before the fire,
so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
3 But let the righteous be glad;
let them rejoice before God:
yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.
4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name:
extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name
Jah, and rejoice before him.
5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
is God in his holy habitation.
6 God setteth the solitary in families:
he bringeth out those which are bound with chains:
but the rebellious dwell in a dry *land.*

The psalmist here, having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late,

takes occasion thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old.

Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten,

I. That God himself was the guide of Israel through the wilderness; when he had brought them out of their chains he did not leave them in the dry land, but he himself went before them in a march through the wilderness, Ps 68:7. It was not a journey, but a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners.

The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness had shut them in, but they were deceived; God's Israel, having him for their leader, marched through the wilderness and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it and bring them out of it. So 8:5.

II. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at Mount Sinai, Ps 68:8. Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice, as Israel did, De 4:32,33. Never had any people such an excellent law given them, so expounded, so enforced.

Then the earth shook, and the neighbouring countries, it is likely, felt the shock; terrible thunders there were, accompanied no doubt with thunder-showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the divine doctrine dropped as the rain, Ps 32:2. Sinai itself, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, was moved at the presence of God; see Jdg 5:4,5,De 33:2,Hab 3:3.

This terrible appearance of the Divine Majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, he that could move Sinai itself could remove them, could get over them.

III. That he provided very comfortably for them both in the wilderness and in Canaan (Ps 68:9,10): Thou didst send a plentiful rain and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor. This may refer, 1. To the victualling of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as were also the quails (Ps 78:24,27), and it might be fitly called a rain of liberality or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the divine bounty.

This confirmed the camp of Israel (here called God's inheritance, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself) when it was weary and ready to perish: this confirmed their faith, and was a standing proof of God's power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or,

2. To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land flowing with mild and honey, which is said to drink water of the rain of heaven, De 11:11. When sometimes that fruitful land was ready to be turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein, God, in judgment, remembered mercy, and sent them a plentiful rain, which refreshed it again, so that the congregation of Israel dwelt therein, and there was provision enough, even to satisfy their poor with bread.

This looks further to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the Spirit of grace and the gospel of grace are the plentiful rain with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, Isa 45:8. Christ himself is this rain, Ps 72:6. He shall come as showers that water the earth.

IV. That he often gave them victory over their enemies; armies, and kings of armies, appeared against them, from their first coming into Canaan, and all along in the times of the judges, till David's days, but, first or last, they gained their point against them, Ps 68:11,12,14. Observe here,

1. That God was their commander-in-chief: The Lord gave the word, as general of their armies. He raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success. God spoke in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine.

2. That they had prophets, as God's messengers, to make known his mind to them. God gave them his word (the word of the Lord came unto them) and then great was the company of the preachers--prophets and prophetesses, for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send he will not want messengers. Or perhaps it may allude to the women's joining in the triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual (Ex 15:20,1Sa 18:7), in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works.

3. That their enemies were defeated, and put to confusion: Kings of armies did flee, did flee with the greatest terror and precipitation imaginable, did not fight and flee, but flee and flee, retired without striking a stroke; they fled apace, fled and never rallied again.

4. That they were enriched with the plunder of the field: She that tarried at home divided the spoil. Not only the men, the soldiers that abode by the stuff, who were, by a statute of distributions, to share the prey (1Sa 30:24), but even the women that tarried at home had a share, which intimates the abundance of spoil that should be taken.

5. That these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them and contributed to their reformation (Ps 68:14): When the Almighty scattered kings for her (for the church) she was white as snow in Salmon, purified and refined by the mercies of God; when the host went forth against the enemy they kept themselves from every wicked thing, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel by the victory were confirmed in their purity and piety.

This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people.

This victory was first notified by the women (the she-publishers) to the disciples (Mt 28:7) and by them it was preached to all the world, while believers that tarry at home, that did not themselves contribute any thing towards it, enjoy the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

V. That from a low and despised condition they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterwards when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour and sometimes by another, they did, as it were, lie among the pots or rubbish, as despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure--they were black, and dirty, and discoloured.

But God, at length, delivered them from the pots (Ps 81:6), and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, like the wings of a dove covered with silver, Ps 68:13. "And so," says Dr. Hammond, "under Christ's kingdom, the heathen idolaters that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should from that detestable condition be advanced to the service of Christ, and the practice of all Christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world." It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy
people, when thou didst march through the
wilderness; Selah.
8 The earth shook, the heavens also
dropped at the presence of God:

even Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the God of
Israel.
9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,
whereby thou didst confirm thine
inheritance, when it was weary.
10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein:
thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.
11 The Lord gave the word:
great *was* the company of those that published *it*.
12 Kings of armies did flee apace:
and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.
13 Though ye have lain among the pots,
yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with
silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.
14 When the Almighty scattered kings in
it, it was *white* as snow in Salmon.

David, having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel (Ps 68:8), here comes to give him praise as Zion's God in a special manner; compare Ps 9:11. Sing praises to the Lord who dwelleth in Zion, for which reason Zion is called the hill of God.

I. He compares it with the hill of Bashan and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, Ps 68:15,16. It is true, Zion was but little and low in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet, upon this account, it has the pre-eminence above them all, that it is the hill of God, the hill which he desires to dwell in, and where he chooses to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence, Ps 132:13,14.

Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God than to be high and great in the world. "Why leap you, you high hills? Why do you insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen, and therefore though you exceed it in bulk, and be first-rates, yet, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike sail to it." Zion was especially honourable because it was a type of the gospel church, which is therefore called Mount

Zion (Heb 12:22), and this is intimated here, when he said, The Lord will dwell in it for ever, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel Zion.

There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city comparable to that which is incorporated by the gospel charter, for there God dwells and will dwell for ever.

II. He compares it with Mount Sinai, of which he had spoken (Ps 68:8), and shows that it has the Shechinah or divine presence in it as really, though not as sensibly, as Sinai itself had, Ps 68:17.

Angels are the chariots of God, his chariots of war, which he make use of against his enemies, his chariots of conveyance, which he sends for his friends, as he did for Elijah (and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels), his chariots of state, in the midst of which he shows his glory and power. They are vastly numerous: Twenty thousands, even thousands multiplied. There is an innumerable company of angels in the heavenly Jerusalem, Heb 12:22.

The enemies David fought with had chariots (2Sa 8:4), but what were they, for number or strength, to the chariots of God? While David had these on his side he needed not to fear those that trusted in chariots and horses, Ps 20:7. God appeared on Mount Sinai, attended with myriads of angels, by whose dispensation the law was given, Ac 7:53. He comes with ten thousands of saints, De 33:2.

And still in Zion God manifests his glory, and is really present, with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubim between which God is said to dwell. So that, as some read the last words of the verse, Sinai is in the sanctuary; that is, the sanctuary was to Israel instead of Mount Sinai, whence they received divine oracles.

Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command. When the first-begotten was brought in to the world it was with this

charge, Let all the angels of God worship him (Heb 1:6); they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject to him, 1Pe 3:22. And it is intimated in the New Testament that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of Christians, 1Co 11:10. Let the woman have a veil on her head because of the angels; and see Eph 3:10.

III. The glory of Mount Zion was the King whom God set on that holy hill (Ps 2:6), who came to the daughter of Zion, Mt 21:5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it his language is expressly applied (Eph 4:8): Thou hast ascended on high (Ps 68:18); compare Ps 47:5,6.

Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past, so sure was it; and spoken of to his honour, so great was it. It may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven to the right hand of the Father, which was as much our advantage as his advancement. For,

1. He then triumphed over the gates of hell. He led captivity captive; that is, he led his captives in triumph, as great conquerors used to do, making a show of them openly, Col 2:15. He led those captive who had led us captive, and who, if he had not interposed, would have held us captive for ever. Nay, he led captivity itself captive, having quite broken the power of sin and Satan.

As he was the death of death, so he was the captivity of captivity, Ho 13:14. This intimates the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies; it was such that through him we also are more than conquerors, that is, triumphers, Ro 8:37.

2. He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers: Thou hast received gifts for men. He gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it, Eph 4:8. For he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments. And he gave what he had received; having received power to give

eternal life, he bestows it upon as many as were given him, John 17:2. Thou hast received gifts for men, not for angels; fallen angels were not to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel ministers, Heb 2:5.

Not for Jews only, but for all men; whoever will may reap the benefit of these gifts. The apostle tells us what these gifts were (Eph 4:11), prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors and teachers, the institution of a gospel ministry and the qualification of men for it, both which are to be valued as the gifts of heaven and the fruits of Christ's ascension.

Thou hast received gifts in man (so the margin), that is, in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. In him, as Mediator, all fulness dwells, that from his fulness we might receive. To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes,

(1.) The forfeiture we had made of them. He received them for the rebellious also, for those that had been rebellious; so all the children of men had been in their fallen state. Perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been enemies in their minds by wicked works, Col 1:21. For them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay down their arms, that their enmity might be slain, and that they might return to their allegiance.

This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly that through him rebels are, upon their submission, not only pardoned, but preferred. They have commissions given them under Christ, which some say, in our law, amounts to the reversing of an attainder. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved.

(2.) The favour designed us in them: He received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them, that he might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances, as of old in the

sanctuary, that he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking was to rear up the tabernacle of God among men, that he might dwell with them and they might themselves be living temples to his praise, Eze 37:27.

IV. The glory of Zion's King is that he is a Saviour and benefactor to all his willing people and a consuming fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, Ps 68:19-21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us, like that (Mk 16:16), He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.

1. Those that take God for their God, and so give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits, and to them he will be a God of salvation. If in sincerity we avouch God to be our God, and seek to him as such,

(1.) He will continually do us good and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us (Ps 68:18), fitly does he subjoin, in the next words, Blessed be the Lord; for it is owing to the mediation of Christ that we live, and live comfortably, and are daily loaded with benefits.

So many, so weighty, are the gifts of God's bounty to us that he may be truly said to load us with them; he pours out blessings till there is no room to receive them, Mal 3:10. So constant are they, and so unwearied is he in doing us good, that he daily loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires.

(2.) He will at length be unto us the God of salvation, of everlasting salvation, the salvation of God, which he will show to those that order their conversation aright (Ps 50:23), the salvation of the soul.

He that daily loads us with benefits will not put us off with present things for a portion, but will be the God of our salvation; and what he gives us now he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. He is our God, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us; for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us as our God. But has he power to complete this salvation?

Yes, certainly; for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. The keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, Re 1:18. He, having made an escape from death himself in his resurrection, has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to them when they die and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; for the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely deliverances from temporal death are mercies indeed and come from God as the God of their salvation. 2Co 1:10.

2. Those that persist in their enmity to him will certainly be ruined (Ps 68:21): God shall wound the head of his enemies,--of Satan the old serpent (of whom it was by the first promise foretold that the seed of the woman should break his head, Ge 3:15), --of all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men (Ps 110:6, He shall wound the heads over many countries),--of all those, whoever they are, that will not have him to reign over them, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him, Lu 19:27.

He will wound the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses. Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies and will treat them accordingly.

In calling the head the hairy scalp perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom, whose bushy hair was his halter. Or it denotes either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, who let their hair grow, to make themselves look the more frightful, or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, who are nice about their hair: neither the one nor the other can secure themselves from the fatal wounds which divine justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins.

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan;
a high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.
16 Why leap ye, ye high hills?
This is the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in;
yea, the Lord will dwell *in it* for ever.
17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand,
even thousands of angels:
the Lord *is* among them,
as in Sinai, in the holy *place.*
18 Thou hast ascended on high,
thou hast led captivity
captive: thou hast received
gifts for men; yea, *for* the
rebellious also,
that the Lord God might dwell *among them*.
19 Blessed *be* the Lord,
who daily loadeth us *with*
benefits, even the God of our
salvation. Selah.
20 *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation;
and unto God the Lord *belong* the issues from death.
21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies,
and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

In these verses we have three things:--

I The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies (Ps 68:22,23): The Lord said, in his own gracious purpose and promise, "I will do great things for my people, as the God of

their salvation," Ps 68:20. God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised,

1. That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done formerly: "I will again bring them from the depths of the sea," as he did Israel when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the ease and liberty of the wilderness; "and I will again bring them from Bashan," as he did Israel when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of Bashan was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with Sihon and Og, and whence their next removal was into Canaan.

Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people (Isa 11:11); and we may perhaps see repeated all the wonders which our fathers told us of. But this is not all:

2. That he will make them victorious over their enemies (Ps 68:23): That thy feet may be dipped, as thou passest along, in the blood of thy enemies, shed like water in great abundance, and the tongue of thy dogs may lap in the same. Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and, in the destruction of the anti-christian generation, we read of blood up to the horses' bridles, Re 14:20.

The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of, but as types of Christ's victory over death and the grave for himself and for all believers, in his resurrection (and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth, and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

II The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Has he spoken in his holiness? Has

he said he will bring again from Bashan? What then is required of us in return to this?

1. That we observe his motions (Ps 68:24): "They have seen, thy people have seen, thy goings, O God! While others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, they have seen the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary." See here,

(1.) How an active faith appropriates God; he is God and King; but that is not all, he is my God and my King. Those who thus take him for theirs may see him, in all his outgoings, acting as their God, as their King, for their good, and in answer to their prayers.

(2.) Where God's most remarkable outgoings are, even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances, and among his people in the gospel church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God. These outgoings of his in the sanctuary far outshine the outgoings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and godhead.

(3.) What is our duty in reference to these outgoings, which is to observe them. This is the finger of God. Surely God is with us of a truth.

2. That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see his goings in his sanctuary,

(1.) Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, Ps 68:25. It was expected that the Levites, some of whom were singers and others players on instruments, who had the nearest views of his outgoings in his sanctuary, should lead in his praises. And, it being a day of extraordinary triumph, among them were damsels playing with timbrels, to complete the concert.

"Thus (says Dr. Hammond) when Christ has gone up to heaven the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the

world, and even the women that were witnesses of it shall affectionately join with them in divulging it."

(2.) Let all the people of Israel in their solemn religious assembly give glory to God: Bless God, not only in temples, but in the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, or wherever there is a congregation of those that come forth from the fountain of Israel, that are of the seed of Jacob, let them concur in blessing God. Public mercies, which we jointly share in, call for public thanksgivings, which all should join in.

"Thus (says Dr. Hammond) all Christians shall be obliged solemnly to magnify the name of the Messiah, and, to that end, frequently to assemble together in congregations." And,

(3.) Let those among them who, upon any account, are the most eminent, and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God, Ps 68:27. There was little Benjamin (that was the royal tribe in Saul's time) with their rulers, the princes of Judah (that was the royal tribe in David's time), and their council, their captains or leaders.

In the beginning of David's reign there had been long war between Judah and Benjamin, but now they both join in praises for success against the common enemy.

But why are the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali particularly mentioned? Perhaps because those tribes, lying towards the north, lay most exposed to the incursions of the Syrians, and other neighbours that molested them, and therefore should be in a particular manner thankful for these victories over them.

Dr. Hammond gives another reason, That these were the two learned tribes. Naphtali giveth goodly words (Ge 49:21) and Zebulun had those that handle the pen of the writer, Jdg 5:14. These shall join in praising God, their princes especially. It is much for the honour of God when those that are above others in dignity, power, and reputation, go before them in

the worship of God and are forward in using their influence and interest for the advancing of any service that is to be done to him.

Dr. Hammond notes hence that the kingdom of the Messiah should, at length, be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

3. That we seek unto him, and depend upon him, for the perfecting of what he has begun, Ps 68:28. In the former part of the verse the psalmist speaks to Israel:

"Thy God has commanded thy strength; that is, whatever is done for thee, or whatever strength thou hast to help thyself, it comes from God, his power and grace, and the word which he has commanded; thou hast no reason to fear while thou hast strength of God's commanding, and no reason to boast while thou hast no strength but what is of his commanding."

In the latter part he speaks to God, encouraged by his experiences: "Strengthen, O God! that which thou hast wrought for us. Lord, confirm what thou hast commanded, perform what thou hast promised, and bring to a happy end that good work which thou hast so gloriously begun."

What God has wrought he will strengthen; where he has given true grace he will give more grace. Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls God, as he had done, Ps 45:6,8. "Thy God" (God the Father) "has commanded thy strength, has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand (Ps 80:17), has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray that thou, O God the Son! wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, wilt accomplish thy undertaking for us by finishing thy good work in us."

III. The powerful invitation and inducement which would hereby be given to those that are without to come in and join themselves to the church, Ps 68:29-31. This was in part

fulfilled by the accession of many proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations to the faith of Christ, and the making of them fellow-heirs, and of the same body, with the seed of Israel, Eph 3:6.

1. Some shall submit for fear (Ps 68:30): "The company of spearmen, that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people" (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world), "Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till, conquered by the convictions of their consciences and the many checks of providence, they be every one of them brought, at length, to submit themselves with pieces of silver, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms."

Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver when he returned them with this confession, I have betrayed innocent blood. And see Re 3:9. Many, by being rebuked, have been happily saved from being ruined.

But as for those that will not submit, notwithstanding these rebukes, he prays for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it: Scatter thou the people that delight in war, who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth.

David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he does not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are lost to all the sacred principles of

humanity, as well as Christianity, that can delight in war and take a pleasure in contention let them expect that, sooner or later, they shall have enough of it, Isa 33:1,Re 13:10.

2. Others shall submit willingly (Ps 68:29,31): Because of thy temple at Jerusalem (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared) kings shall bring presents unto thee; rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring; even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, shall court the favour of Christ at a great expense.

There is that in God's temple, that beauty and benefit in the service of God and in communion with him, and in the gospel of Christ which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He mentions Egypt and Ethiopia, two countries out of which subjects and suppliants were least to be expected (Ps 68:31):

Princes shall come out of Egypt as ambassadors to seek God's favour and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for the Lord of hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, Blessed by Egypt my people, Isa 19:25. Even Ethiopia, that had stretched out her hands against God's Israel (2Ch 14:9), should now stretch out her hands unto God, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him, and that soon. Agree with thy adversary quickly. Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ and be owned by him.

22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:
23 that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies,
and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.
24 They have seen thy goings, O God;
even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.
25 The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after;
among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.

26 Bless ye God in the congregations,
even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.
27 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their
ruler, the princes of Judah *and* their
council,
the princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.
28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength:
strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.
29 Because of thy temple at
Jerusalem shall kings bring
presents unto thee.
30 Rebuke the company of spearmen,
the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people,
till every one submit himself with pieces of silver:
scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.
31 Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.
32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the
earth; O sing praises unto the Lord.
Selah.

The psalmist, having prayed for and prophesied of the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise (Ps 68:32):

Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord; they all ought to do it, and, when they become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper object of praise upon several accounts:

I. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion: He rides upon the heavens of heavens which were of old (Ps 68:33); compare Ps 68:4. He has from the beginning, nay from before all time, prepared his throne; he sits on the circuit of heaven, guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies; and from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his

glory, he dispenses the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

II. Because of his awful and terrible majesty: He sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice. This may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord and is said to be powerful and full of majesty (Ps 29:3), or in particular to that thunder in which God spoke to Israel at Mount Sinai.

III. Because of his mighty power: Ascribe you strength unto God (Ps 68:34); acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power that it is folly to contend with him and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects and to destroy his stubborn adversaries; and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. Thine is the kingdom and power, and therefore thine is the glory. We must acknowledge his power,

1. In the kingdom of grace: His excellency is over Israel; he shows his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church; that is the excellency of his power, which is employed for the good of his people.

2. In the kingdom of providence: His strength is in the clouds, whence comes the thunder of his power, the small rain, and the great rain of his strength. Though God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, De 33:26.

IV. Because of the glory of his sanctuary and the wonders wrought there (Ps 68:35): O God! thou art terrible out of thy holy places. God is to be admired and adored with reverence and godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places which declares aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he does, and will, show himself a

terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

V. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people: The God of Israel is he that gives strength and power unto his people, which the gods of the nations, that were vanity and a lie, could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them, when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from God; they owned they had no might of their own, 2Ch 20:12.

And all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise; and therefore he must have the glory of all we do (Ps 115:1) and our humble thanks for enabling us to do it and accepting the work of his own hands in us. If it be the God of Israel that vies strength and power unto his people, they ought to say, Blessed be God. If all be from him, let all be to him.

33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of
heavens, *which were* of old; lo, he doth send
out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.
34 Ascribe ye strength unto God:
his excellency *is* over Israel,
and his strength *is* in the clouds.
35 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places:
the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto *his*
people.
Blessed *be* God.

Psalms-69

A Cry of Distress
To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim,
A Psalm of David.

1 Save me, O God;
for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

In these verses David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

I. His complaints are very sad, and he pours them out before the Lord, as one that hoped thus to ease himself of a burden that lay very heaven upon him.

1. He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit (Ps 69:1,2): "The waters of affliction, those bitter waters, have come unto my soul, not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind; they fill my head with perplexing cares and my heart with oppressive grief, so that I cannot enjoy God and myself as I used to do."

We shall bear up under our troubles if we can but keep them from our hearts; but, when they put us out of the possession of our own souls, our case is bad. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded?

That was David's case here. His thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope, but he found nothing: He sunk in keep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing; the considerations that used to support and encourage him now failed him, or were out of the way, and he was ready to give himself up for gone. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that overflowed him, overwhelmed him; he was like a sinking drowning man, in such confusion and consternation.

This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in when he said, Now is my soul troubled; and, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful; for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us, when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that we may be neither soured with discontent nor sink into despair.

2. He complains of the long continuance of his troubles (Ps 69:3): I am weary of my crying. Though he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God, and the more death was in his view the more life was in his prayers; yet he had not

immediately an answer of peace given in, no, nor so much of that support and comfort in praying which God's people used to have; so that he was almost weary of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried that he could cry no more.

Nor had he his wonted satisfaction in believing, hoping, and expecting relief: My eyes fail while I wait for my God; he had almost looked his eyes out, in expectation of deliverance. Yet his pleading this with God is an indication that he is resolved not to give up believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not; his eyes fail, but his faith does not. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, cried out, Why hast thou forsaken me? yet, at the same time, he kept hold of his relation to him: My God, my God.

3. He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, Ps 69:4. They hated him, they would destroy him, for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated; but what was his iniquity, what was his sin, what provocation had he given them, that they were so spiteful towards him? None at all: "They hate me without a cause; I never did them the least injury, that they should bear me such ill-will." Our Saviour applies this to himself (Joh 15:25):

They hated me without a cause. We are apt to use this in justification of our passion against those that hate us, that we never gave them cause to hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will give us redress.

"They are my enemies wrongfully, for I have been no enemy to them." In a world where unrighteousness reigns so much we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong and then we may the better bear it if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable both for their number--They are more than the hairs of my head (Christ's enemies were numerous; those that came to seize him were a great multitude; how were those increased that troubled

him!) and for their strength--They are mighty in authority and power. We are weak, but our enemies are strong; for we wrestle against principalities and powers.

Then I restored that which I took not away. Applying this to David, it was what his enemies compelled him to (they made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of); and it was what he consented to, that, if possible, he might pacify them and make them to be at peace with him. He might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring and the latter commonly thought to forbid the restoring of that which we took not away, for that is to wrong ourselves both in our wealth and in our reputation.

Yet the case may be such sometimes that it may become our duty. Blessed Paul, though free from all men, yet, for the honour of Christ and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But, applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood:

Then he restored that which he took not away; he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offence. God's glory, in some instances of it, was taken away by the sin of man; man's honour, and peace, and happiness, were taken away; it was not he that took them away, and yet by the merit of his death he restored them.

4. He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations, and this is a grievance which with an ingenuous mind cuts as deeply as any (Ps 69:8): "I have become a stranger to my brethren; they make themselves strange to me and use me as a stranger, are shy of conversing with me and ashamed to own me." This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him (Joh 7:5), who came to his own and his own received him not (Joh 1:11), and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.

5. He complains of the contempt that was put upon him and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this

especially his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace and made himself of no reputation. We having by sin injured God in his honour, Christ made him satisfaction, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him:--

(1.) The ground and matter of the reproach, Ps 69:10,11. They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift up themselves in pride and vain glory they are justly laughed at for their folly; but David chastened his soul, and clothed himself with sackcloth, and from his abasing himself they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dishonour God it is just that their so doing should turn to their dishonour; but when David, purely in devotion to God and to testify his respect to him, wept, and chastened his soul with fasting, and made sackcloth his garment, as humble penitents used to do, instead of commending his devotion and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it and to prevent others from following his good example; for that was to his reproach.

They laughed at him as a fool for mortifying himself thus; and even for this he became a proverb to them; they made him the common subject of their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works (Joh 10:32), and when he cried, Eli, Eli--My God, my God, was bantered, as if he called for Elias.

(2.) The persons that reproached him, Ps 69:12.

[1.] Even the gravest and the most honourable, from whom better was expected: Those that sit in the gate speak against me, and their reproaches pass for the dictates of senators and the decrees of judges, and are credited accordingly.

[2.] The meanest, and the most despicable, the abjects (Ps 35:15), and scum of the country, the children of fools, yea, the children of base men, Job 30:8. Such drunkards as these make themselves vile, and he was the song of the drunkards; they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the bad consequences of the sin of drunkenness; it makes men despisers of those that are good, 2Ti 3:3.

When the king was made sick with bottles of wine he stretched out his hand with scorners, Ho 7:5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful. See what is commonly the lot of the best of men: those that are the praise of the wise are the song of fools. But it is easy to those that rightly judge of things to despise being thus despised.

II. His confessions of sin are very serious (Ps 69:5): "O God! thou knowest my foolishness, what is and what is not; my sins that I am guilty of are not hidden from thee, and therefore thou knowest how innocent I am of those crimes which they charge upon me."

Note, Even when, as to men's unjust accusations, we plead Not guilty, yet, before God, we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that he cannot prosper in covering his sin, and that therefore it is his wisdom to acknowledge it, because it is naked and open before God.

1. He knows the corruption of our nature: Thou knowest the foolishness that is bound up in my heart. All our sins take rise from our foolishness.

2. He knows the transgressions of our lives; they are not hidden from him, no, not our heart-sins, no, not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never cast behind his back till they are repented of and pardoned. This may aptly be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it, nor was it

hidden from him, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief.

III. His supplications are very earnest.

1. For himself (Ps 69:1): "Save me, O God! save me from sinking, from despairing." Thus Christ was heard in that he feared, for he was saved from letting fall his undertaking, Heb 5:7.

2. For his friends (Ps 69:6): Let not those that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts! and that seek thee, O God of Israel! (under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him, as the God of hosts, who has all power to help, and as the God of Israel in covenant with his people, whom therefore he is engaged in honour and truth to help) be ashamed and confounded for my sake.

This intimates his fear that if God did not appear for him it would be a discouragement to all other good people and would give their enemies occasion to triumph over them, and his earnest desire that whatever became of him all that seek God, and wait upon him, might be kept in heart and kept in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves nor exposed to contempt from others.

If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his Father in his sufferings, all that seek God, and wait for him, would have been ashamed and confounded; but they have confidence towards God, and in his name come boldly to the throne of grace.

IV. His plea is very powerful, Ps 69:7,9. Reproach was one of the greatest of his burdens: "Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause, for,

1. It is for thee that I am reproached, for serving thee and trusting in thee: For thy sake I have borne reproach." Those that are evil spoken of for well-doing may with a humble

confidence leave it to God to bring forth their righteousness as the light.

2. "It is with thee that I am reproached: The zeal of thy house has eaten me up, that is, has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. Those that hate thee and thy house for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. It is this that has made them ready to eat me up and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them." Those that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David for believing in his word and walking in his ways.

Or it may be construed as an instance of David's zeal for God's house, that he resented all the indignities done to God's name as if they had been done to his own name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God and the contempt cast upon religion; these he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own. And therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon him, because he had always interested himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of Ps 69:9 are applied to Christ.

(1.) It was an instance of his love to his Father that the zeal of his house did even eat him up when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which reminded his disciples of this text, Joh 2:17.

(2.) It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he pleased not himself, that the reproaches of those that reproached God fell upon him (Ro 15:3), and therein he set us an example.

2 I sink in deep mire,
where *there is* no standing:
I am come into deep
waters, where the floods
overflow me.
3 I am weary of my crying:
my throat is dried:
mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head:
they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:
then I restored *that* which I took not away.
5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness;
and my sins are not hid from thee.
6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake:
let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of
Israel.
7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
shame hath covered my face.
8 I am become a stranger unto my
brethren, and an alien unto my
mother's children.
9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;
and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.
10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
that was to my reproach.
11 I made sackcloth also my garment;
and I became a proverb to them.
12 They that sit in the gate speak against me;
and I *was* the song of the drunkards.
13 But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O Lord,
in an acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me,
in the truth of thy salvation.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him; here he adds, But, as for me, my prayer is unto thee. They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards; but, notwithstanding that, he resolves to continue praying.

Note, Though we may be jeered for well-doing, we must never be jeered out of it. Those can bear but little for God, and their

confessing his name before men, that cannot bear a scoff and a hard word rather than quit their duty.

David's enemies were very abusive to him, but this was his comfort, that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. "They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny; but I use other methods. Whatever they do, As for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord!"

And it was in an acceptable time, not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction. God will not drive us from him, though it is need that drives us to him; nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people make them so much the more the objects of his pity:

it is seasonable for him to help them when all other helps fail, and they are undone, and feel that they are undone, if he do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ. Isa 49:8, In an acceptable time have I heard thee. Now observe,

I. What his requests are.

1. That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. Hear me (Ps 69:13), and again, Hear me, O Lord! (Ps 69:16), Hear me speedily (Ps 69:17), not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that the Father heard him always, Joh 11:42.

2. That he might be rescued out of his troubles, might be saved from sinking under the load of grief (Deliver me out of the mire; let me not stick in it, so some, but help me out, and set my feet on a rock, Ps 40:2), might be saved from his enemies, that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him: "Let me be delivered from those that hate me, as a lamb from the paw of a lion, Ps 69:14.

Though I have come into keep waters (Ps 69:2), where I am ready to conclude that the floods will overflow me, yet let my fears be prevented and silenced; let not the waterflood, though

it flow upon me, overflow me, Ps 69:15. Let me not fall into the gulf of despair; let not that deep swallow me up; let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone." He gave himself up for lost in the beginning of the psalm; yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself.

3. That God would turn to him (Ps 69:16), that he would smile upon him, and not hide his face from him, Ps 69:17. The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, are enough to keep our spirits from sinking in the deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy, Ps 69:18. "Draw nigh to my soul, to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it."

II. What his pleas are to enforce these petitions.

1. He pleads God's mercy and truth (Ps 69:13): In the multitude of thy mercy hear me. There is mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercy, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. The truth also of his salvation (the truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him) is a further encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God: "Hear me, for thy lovingkindness of good. It is so in itself; it is rich and plentiful and abundant. It is so in the account of all the saints; it is very precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all.

O let me have the benefit of it! Turn to me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies," Ps 69:16. See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God: in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy, Ps 147:.

2. He pleads his own distress and affliction: "Hide not thy face from me, for I am in trouble (Ps 69:17), and therefore need thy favour; therefore it will come seasonably, and therefore I shall

know how to value it." He pleads particularly the reproach he was under and the indignities that were done him (Ps 69:19): Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour.

See what a stress is laid upon this; for, in the sufferings of Christ for us, perhaps nothing contributed more to the satisfaction he made for sin, which had been so injurious to God in his honour, than the reproach, and shame, and dishonour he underwent, which God took notice of, and accepted as more than an equivalent for the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, and therefore we must by repentance take shame to ourselves and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach, and shame, and dishonour, for his sake, this may be our comfort, that he knows it, and, as he is before-hand with us, so he will not be behind-hand with us. The Psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature when he says (Ps 69:20):

Reproach has broken my heart; I am full of heaviness; for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name to be put under a bad character; but when we consider what an honour it is to be dishonoured for God, and what a favour to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (as they deemed it, Ac 5:41), we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavily or be any heart-breaking to us.

3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies (Ps 69:18): Deliver me because of my enemies, because they were such as he had before described them, Ps 69:4. "My adversaries are all before thee (Ps 69:19); thou knowest what sort of men they are, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me." One instance of their barbarity is given (Ps 69:21):

They gave me gall for my meat (the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood) and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him that he would not say It is finished

till this was fulfilled; and, in order that his enemies might have occasion to fulfil it, he said, I thirst, Joh 19:28,29.

Some think that the hyssop which they put to his mouth with the vinegar was the bitter herb which they gave him with the vinegar for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the scripture to be the word of God, and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

4. He pleads the unkindness of his friends and his disappointment in them (Ps 69:20): I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; they all failed him like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings all his disciples forsook him and fled. We cannot expect too little from men (miserable comforters are they all); nor can we expect too much from God, for he is the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort and consolation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire,
and let me not sink:
let me be delivered from them that hate me,
and out of the deep waters.
15 Let not the waterflood overflow me,
neither let the deep swallow me up,
and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
16 Hear me, O Lord;
for thy loving-kindness *is* good:
turn unto me
according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.
17 And hide not thy face from thy servant;
for I am in trouble:
hear me speedily.
18 Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it:
deliver me because of mine enemies.
19 Thou hast known my reproach, and
my shame, and my dishonor: mine
adversaries *are* all before thee.
20 Reproach hath broken my heart;

and I am full of heaviness:
and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none;
and for comforters, but I found none.
21 They gave me also gall for my meat;
and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The first two verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews by the apostle (Ps 69:22,23,Ro 11:9,10), and therefore the whole must look that way.

The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was, and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion.

One great objection against it, at first, was, that it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God so remarkably set it aside by the utter destruction of the temple, and the sinking of those, with the Mosaic economy, that obstinately adhered to it in opposition to the gospel of Christ. Let us observe here,

I. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ; not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death and yet repented and found mercy (Ac 2:23,3:14,15), but upon those of them and their successors who justified it by an obstinate infidelity and rejection of his gospel, and by an inveterate enmity to his disciples and followers. See 1Th 2:15,16. It is here foretold,

1. That their sacrifices and offerings should be a mischief and prejudice to them (Ps 69:22): Let their table become a snare. This may be understood of the altar of the Lord, which is called his table and theirs because in feasting upon the

sacrifices they were partakers of the altar. This should have been for their welfare or peace (for they were peace-offerings), but it became a snare and a trap to them; for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that altar which those had no right to eat of who continued to serve the tabernacle, Heb 13:10.

Or it may be understood of their common creature-comforts, even their necessary food; they had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore justly shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life and delights of sense, through the corruption of our nature, become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is a good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, Jude 1:12.

2. That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge or of that peace which believers are blessed with in the gospel of Christ (Ps 69:23), that they should be given up,

(1.) To a judicial blindness: Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not the glory of God in the face of Christ. Their sin was that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was that they should not see, but be given up to their own hearts' lusts, which were hardening, and the god of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2Co 4:4. This was foretold concerning them (Isa 6:10), and Christ ratified it, Mt 13:14,15,Joh 12:40.

(2.) To a judicial terror. There is a gracious terror, which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul (Ac 9:6); he trembled and was astonished. But this is a terror that shall never end in peace, but shall make their loins continually to shake, through horror of conscience, as Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed. "Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion." This was

fulfilled in the desperate counsels of the Jews when the Romans came upon them.

3. That they should fall and lie under God's anger and fiery indignation (Ps 69:24): Pour out thy indignation upon them. Note, Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them may justly fear that his indignation will be poured out upon them; for those that submit not to the Son of his love will certainly be made the generation of his wrath. It is the doom passed on those who believe not in Christ that the wrath of God abideth on them (Joh 3:36); it takes hold of them, and will never let them go. Salvation itself will not save those that are not willing to be ruled by it. Behold the goodness and severity of God!

4. That their place and nation should be utterly taken away, the very thing they were afraid of, and to prevent which, as they pretended, they persecuted Christ (Joh 11:48): Let their habitation be desolate (Ps 69:25), which was fulfilled when their country was laid waste by the Romans, and Zion, for their sakes, was ploughed as a field, Mic 3:12. The temple was the house which they were in a particular manner proud of, but this was left unto them desolate, Mt 23:38.

Yet that is not all; it ought to be some satisfaction to us, if we be cut off from the enjoyment of our possessions, that others will have the benefit of them when we are dislodged: but it is here added, Let none dwell in their tents, which was remarkably fulfilled in Judah and Jerusalem, for after the destruction of the Jews it was long ere the country was inhabited to any purpose.

But this is applied particularly to Judas, by St. Peter, Ac 1:20. For, he being felo de se--a suicide, we may suppose his estate was confiscated, so that his habitation was desolate and no man of his own kindred dwelt therein.

5. That their way to ruin should be downhill, and nothing should stop them, nor interpose to prevent it (Ps 69:27): "Lord, leave them to themselves, to add iniquity to iniquity."

Those that are bad, if they be given up to their own hearts' lusts, will certainly be worse; they will add sin to sin, nay, they will add rebellion to their sin, Job 34:37. It is said of the Jews that they filled up their sin always, 1Th 2:16. Add the punishment of iniquity to their iniquity (so some read it), for the same word signifies both sin and punishment, so close is their connexion. If men will sin, God will reckon for it.

But those that have multiplied to sin may yet find mercy, for God multiplies to pardon, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore, that they might be precluded from all hopes of mercy, he adds, Let them not come into thy righteousness, to receive the benefit of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, Php 3:9.

Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves; but let them be left to take their own course and they will never come into this government; for being ignorant of the demands of God's righteousness, and going about to establish the merit of their own, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, Ro 10:3.

And those that are so proud and self-willed that they will not come into God's righteousness shall have their doom accordingly; they themselves have decided it: they shall not come into his righteousness. Let not those expect any benefit by it that are not willing and glad to be beholden to it.

6. That they should be cut off from all hopes of happiness (Ps 69:28): Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be suffered to live any longer, since, the longer they live, the more mischief they do. Multitudes of the unbelieving Jews fell by sword and famine, and none of those who had embraced the Christian faith perished among them; the nation, as a nation, was blotted out, and became not a people.

Many understand it of their rejection from God's covenant and all the privileges of it; that is the book of the living: "Let

the commonwealth of Israel itself, Israel according to the flesh, now become alienated from that covenant of promise which hitherto it has had the monopoly of.

Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life, but reprobate silver let men call them, because the Lord has rejected them. Let them not be written with the righteous; that is, let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven," Ps 1:5.

II. What the sin is for which these dreadful judgments should be brought upon them (Ps 69:26): They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of thy wounded.

1. Christ was he whom God had smitten, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, and therefore men hid their faces from him, Isa 53:3,4,10. They persecuted him with a rage reaching up to heaven; they cried, Crucify him, crucify him. Compare that of St. Peter with this, Ac 2:23.

Though he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, He trusted in God, let him deliver him, than which nothing could be said more grieving.

2 The suffering saints were God's wounded, wounded in his cause and for his sake, and them they persecuted, and talked to their grief. For these things wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:16; and see Mt 23:34-36, &c.

This may be understood more generally, and it teaches us that nothing is more provoking to God than to insult over those whom he has smitten, and to add affliction to the afflicted, upon which it justly follows here, Add iniquity to iniquity; see Zec 1:15. Those that are of a wounded spirit, under trouble and fear about their spiritual state, ought to be

very tenderly dealt with, and care must be taken not to talk to their grief and not to make the heart of the righteous sad.

III. What the psalmist thinks of himself in the midst of all (Ps 69:29): "But I am poor and sorrowful; that is the worst of my case, under outward afflictions, yet written among the righteous, and not under God's indignation as they are." It is better to be poor and sorrowful, with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial and under his curse.

For those who come into God's righteousness shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and his salvation shall set them up on high, which is the thing that David here prays for, Isa 61:10. This may be applied to Christ. He was, in his humiliation, poor and sorrowful, a man of sorrows, and that had not where to lay his head. But God highly exalted him; the salvation wrought for him, the salvation wrought by him, set him up on high, far above all principalities and powers.

22 Let their table become a snare before them:
and *that which should have been* for *their* welfare, *let it become* a trap.
23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not;
and make their loins continually to shake.
24 Pour out thine indignation upon them,
and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
25 Let their habitation be desolate;
and let none dwell in their tents.
26 For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten;
and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.
27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity:
and let them not come into thy righteousness.
28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the
living, and not be written with the righteous.
29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful:
let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
30 I will praise the name of God with a
song, and will magnify him with
thanksgiving.

The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ and as an example to Christians, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise which he began with complaints and remonstrances of his griefs.

I. He resolves to praise God himself, not doubting but that therein he should be accepted of him (Ps 69:30,31): "I will praise the name of God, not only with my heart, but with my song, and magnify him with thanksgiving;" for he is pleased to reckon himself magnified by the thankful praises of his people. It is intimated that all Christians ought to glorify God with their praises, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs. And this shall please the Lord, through Christ the Mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers, better than the most valuable of the legal sacrifices (Ps 69:31), an ox or bullock.

This is a plain intimation that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put, not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment which were instituted by the ceremonial law; and, instead of them, spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted--the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, Heb 13:15. It is a great comfort to us that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are or ever were.

II. He encourages other good people to rejoice in God and continue seeking him (Ps 69:32,33): The humble shall see this and be glad. They shall observe, to their comfort,

1 The experiences of the saints. They shall see how ready God is to hear the poor when they cry to him, and to give them that which they call upon him for, how far he is from despising his prisoners; though men despise them, he favours them with his gracious visits and will find a time to enlarge them.

The humble shall see this and be glad, not only because when one member is honoured all the members rejoice with it, but because it is an encouragement to them in their straits and

difficulties to trust in God. It shall revive the hearts of those who seek God to see more seals and subscriptions to this truth, that Jacob's God never said to Jacob's seed, Seek you me in vain.

2 The exaltation of the Saviour, for of him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. When his sorrows are over, and he enters into the joy that was set before him, when he is heard and discharged from his imprisonment in the grave, the humble shall look upon it and be glad, and those that seek God through Christ shall live and be comforted, concluding that, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

III. He calls upon all the creatures to praise God, the heaven, and earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, Ps 69:34. Heaven and earth, and the hosts of both, were made by him, and therefore let heaven and earth praise him. Angels in heaven, and saints on earth, may each of them in their respective habitations furnish themselves with matter enough for constant praise. Let the fishes of the sea, though mute to a proverb, praise the Lord, for the sea is his, and he made it.

The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, Ps 69:35,36. For God will save Zion, the holy mountain, where his service was kept up. He will save all that are sanctified and set apart to him, all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns; for he was King upon the holy hill of Zion. He has mercy in store for the cities of Judah, of which tribe Christ was. God will do great things for the gospel church, in which let all that wish well to it rejoice. For,

1. It shall be peopled and inhabited. There shall be added to it such as shall be saved. The cities of Judah shall be built, particular churches shall be formed and incorporated according to the gospel model, that there may be a remnant to dwell there and to have it in possession, to enjoy the privileges conferred upon it and to pay the tributes and

services required from it. Those that love his name, that have a kindness for religion in general, shall embrace the Christian religion, and take their place in the Christian church; they shall dwell therein, as citizens, and of the household of God

2. It shall be perpetuated and inherited. Christianity was not to be res unius ætatis--a transitory thin. No: The seed of his servants shall inherit it. God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him, and they shall inherit the privileges of their fathers; for the promise is to you and your children, as it was of old. I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.

The land of promise shall never be lost for want of heirs, for God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham and will do so rather than the entail shall be cut off. David shall never want a man to stand before him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished and the mystical body completed. And since the holy seed is the substance of the world, and if that were all gathered in the world would be at an end quickly, it is just that for this assurance of the preservation of it heaven and earth should praise him.

31 *This* also shall please the Lord better than an ox
or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
32 The humble shall see *this, and* be glad:
and your heart shall live that seek God.
33 For the Lord heareth the
poor, and despiseth not his
prisoners.
34 Let the heaven and earth praise him,
the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.
35 For God will save Zion,
and will build the cities of Judah:
that they may dwell
there, and have it in
possession.
36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it:
and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

Psalms-70

A Prayer for Deliverance
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

1 *Make haste,* O God, to deliver me;
make haste to help me, O Lord.

The title tells us that this psalm was designed to bring to remembrance; that is, to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promises (for so we are said to do when we pray to him and plead with him. Isa 43:26, Put me in remembrance)--not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrancer, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith.

Or, rather, to put himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles, and of former devotions, that when the clouds return after the rain we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief.

We may in prayer use the words we have often used before: our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here uses the words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to show that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

I. David here prays that God would make haste to relieve and succour him (Ps 70:1,5): I am poor and needy, in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity are very good pleas in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despises not the sighing of a contrite heart, who has pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit, and who fills the hungry with good things. He prays,

1. That God would appear for him to deliver him from his troubles in due time.

2. That in the mean time he would come in to his aid, to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint.

3. That he would do this quickly: Make haste (Ps 70:1), and again (Ps 70:5), Make haste, make no tarrying. Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. He that believes does not make haste, so as to anticipate or outrun the divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape or to take any unlawful methods of relief; but he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer that he would hasten the desired succour.

"Make haste unto me, for the longing desire of my soul is towards thee; I shall perish if I be not speedily helped. I have no other to expect relief from: Thou art my help and my delivered. Thou hast engaged to be so to all that seek thee; I depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so; and thou art sufficient, all-sufficient, to be so; therefore make haste to me."

II. He prays that God would fill the faces of his enemies with shame, Ps 70:2,3. Observe,

1. How he describes them; they sought after his soul--his life, to destroy that--his mind, to disturb that, to draw him from God to sin and to despair. They desired his hurt, his ruin; when any calamity befel him or threatened him they said, "Aha, aha! so would we have it; we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined." Thus spiteful, thus insolent, were they.

2. What his prayer is against them: "Let them be ashamed; let them be brought to repentance, so filled with shame as that they may seek thy name (Ps 83:16); let them see their fault and folly in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be ashamed of their envy, Isa 26:11.

However, let their designs against me be frustrated and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Jews, much cast down in their own eyes," Ge 6:16.

III. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy (Ps 70:4), that all those who seek God and love his salvation, who desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but that he should put in for a share of the blessing he prays for; and so may we if we answer the character.

1. Let us make the service of God our great business and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as cheerfully to quit all rather than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it and title to it.

2. Let us then be assured that, if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him, for their seeking him is an evidence of his good-will to them and an earnest of their finding him, Ps 105:3.

There is pleasure and joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion that God is the rewarder of all those that diligently seek him.

Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure (for praising God, if we make it our continual work, will be our continual feast), Let God be magnified, as he will be, to eternity, in the salvation of his people. All who wish well to the comfort of the saints, and

to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty amen to this prayer, that those who love God's salvation may say continually, Let God be magnified.

2 Let them be ashamed and confounded
that seek after my soul:
let them be turned backward, and put to confusion,
that desire my hurt.
3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame
that say, Aha, aha.
4 Let all those that seek thee
rejoice and be glad in thee:
and let such as love thy salvation
say continually, Let God be magnified.
5 But I *am* poor and needy;
make haste unto me, O God:
thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
O Lord, make no tarrying.

Psalms-71

The Prayer of an Old Man

1 In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust:
let me never be put to confusion.

Two things in general David here prays for--that he might not be confounded and that his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

I. He prays that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. With this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never disappoint the hope that is of his own raising. Now observe here,

1. How David professes his confidence in God, and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his profession of that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God and pleading it with him. We praise

God, and so please him, by telling him (if it be indeed true) what an entire confidence we have in him (Ps 71:1):

"In thee, O Lord! and in thee only, do I put my trust. Whatever others do, I choose the God of Jacob for my help." Those that are entirely satisfied with God's all-sufficiency and the truth of his promise, and in dependence upon that, as sufficient to make them amends, are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture, for him, may truly say, In thee, O Lord! do I put my trust. Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him.

Thou art my rock and my fortress (Ps 71:3); and again, "Thou art my refuge, my strong refuge" (Ps 71:7); that is, "I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection. If thou secure me, none can hurt me. Thou art my hope and my trust" (Ps 71:5); that is, "thou hast proposed thyself to me in thy word as the proper object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it in vain to do so."

2. How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences (Ps 71:5,6): "Thou hast been my trust from my youth; ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left, I stayed myself upon thee, and saw a great deal of reason to do so; for by thee have I been holden up from the womb." Ever since he had the use of his reason he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had had a being he had been a monument of it.

Note, The consideration of the gracious care which the divine Providence took of us in our birth and infancy should engage us to an early piety and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our help from our birth ought to be our hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we were capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable.

This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly, but that he had betimes made him one of his family:

"Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels into the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant; thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thy handmaid, and born in thy house, Ps 116:16. And therefore,"

(1.) "I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou that hast held me up hitherto wilt not let me fall now; thou that madest me wilt not forsake the work of thy own hands; thou that helpedst me when I could not help myself wilt not abandon me now that I am as helpless as I was then."

(2.) "Therefore I have reason to resolve that I will devote myself unto thee: My praise shall therefore be continually of thee;" that is, "I will make it my business every day to praise thee and will take all occasions to do it."

3. What his requests to God are, in this confidence.

(1.) That he might never be put to confusion (Ps 71:1), that he might not be disappointed of the mercy he expected and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that makes not ashamed.

(2.) That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies (Ps 71:2): "Deliver me in thy righteousness. As thou art the righteous Judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured and punishing the injurious, cause me in some way or other to escape" (God will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, 1Co 10:13): "Incline thy ear unto my prayers, and, in answer to them, save me out of my troubles, Ps 71:4. Deliver me, O my God! out of the hands of those that are

ready to pull me in pieces." Three things he pleads for deliverance:--

[1.] The encouragement God had given him to expect it: Thou hast given commandment to save me (Ps 71:3); that is, thou hast promised to do it, and such efficacy is there in God's promises that they are often spoken of as commands, like that, Let there be light, and there was light. He speaks, and it is done.

[2.] The character of his enemies; they are wicked, unrighteous, cruel men, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them (Ps 71:4), for he is a holy, just, and good God.

[3.] The many eyes that were upon him (Ps 71:7): "I am as a wonder unto many; every one waits to see what will be the issue of such extraordinary troubles as I have fallen into and such extraordinary confidence as I profess to have in God." Or, "I am looked upon as a monster, am one whom every body shuns, and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not."

(3.) That he might always find rest and safety in God (Ps 71:3): Be thou my strong habitation; by thou to me a rock of repose, whereto I may continually resort. Those that are at home in God, that live a life of communion with him and confidence in him, that continually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever towards him, may promise themselves a strong habitation in him, such as will never fall of itself nor can ever be broken through by any invading power; and they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

(4.) That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work (Ps 71:8): "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise, as now it is with my complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed

of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence."

Those that love God love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day, not only in their morning and evening devotions, not only seven times a day (Ps 119:164), but all the day, to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live; they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

(5.) That he might not be neglected now in his declining years (Ps 71:9): Cast me not off now in the time of my old gage; forsake me not when my strength fails. Observe here,

[1.] The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age: My strength fails. Where there was strength of body and vigour of mind, strong sight, a strong voice, strong limbs, alas! in old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is gone, or that which is his labour and sorrow, Ps 90:10.

[2.] The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities: Lord, cast me not off; do not then forsake me. This intimates that he should look upon himself as undone if God should abandon him. To be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the strength of our heart.

But it intimates that he had reason to hope God would not desert him; the faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a Master that is not wont to cast off old servants. In this confidence David here prays again (Ps 71:12): "O God! be not far from me; let me not be under the apprehension of thy withdrawings, for then I am miserable. I my God! a God in covenant with me, make haste for my help, lest I perish before help come."

II. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe,

1. What it was which they unjustly said against him, Ps 71:10,11. Their plot was deep and desperate; it was against his life: They lay wait for my soul (Ps 71:10), and are adversaries to that, Ps 71:13. Their powers and policies were combined: They take counsel together. And very insolent they were in their deportment:

They say, God has forsaken him; persecute and take him. Here their premises are utterly false, that because a good man was in great trouble and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, therefore God had forsaken him and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God who think themselves so or whom others think to be so.

And, as their premises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him, and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is talking to the grief of one whom God has smitten, Ps 69:26. But thus they endeavour to discourage David, as Sennacherib endeavoured to intimidate Hezekiah by suggesting that God was his enemy and fought against him. Have I now come up without the Lord against this city, to destroy it? Isa 36:10.

It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve to be for ever forsaken of God. But rejoice not against me, O my enemy! though I fall, I shall rise. He that seems to forsake for a small moment will gather with everlasting kindness.

2. What it was which he justly prayed for, from a spirit of prophecy, not a spirit of passion (Ps 71:13): "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul. If they will not be confounded by repentance, and so saved, let them be confounded with everlasting dishonour, and so

ruined." God will turn into shame the glory of those who turn into shame the glory of God and his people.

2 Deliver me in thy righteousness,
and cause me to escape:
incline thine ear unto me,
and save me.
3 Be thou my strong habitation,
whereunto I may continually resort:
thou hast given commandment to save me;
for thou *art* my rock and my fortress.
4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the
wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and
cruel man.
5 For thou *art* my hope, O Lord God:
thou art my trust from my youth.
6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb:
thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
my praise *shall be* continually of thee.
7 I am as a wonder unto many;
but thou *art* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise
and with thy honor all the day.
9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
forsake me not when my strength faileth.
10 For mine enemies speak against me;
and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
11 saying, God hath forsaken him:
persecute and take him;
for *there is* none to deliver *him*.
12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste for my help.
13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries to
my soul;
let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor that seek my
hurt.
14 But I will hope continually,
and will yet praise thee more and more.

David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God; we have both together Ps 71:14, where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice; his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings. "Let my enemies say what they will, to drive me to despair, I will hope continually, hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day; I will live upon hope and will hope to the end."

Since we hope in one that will never fail us, let not our hope in him fail us, and then we shall praise him yet more and more. "The more they reproach me the more closely will I cleave to thee; I will praise thee more and better than ever I have done yet."

The longer we live the more expert we should grow in praising God and the more we should abound in it. I will add over and above all thy praise, all the praise I have hitherto offered, for it is all too little. When we have said all we can, to the glory of God's grace, there is still more to be said; it is a subject that can never be exhausted, and therefore we should never grow weary of it. Now observe, in these verses,

I. How his heart is established in faith and hope; and it is a good thing that the heart be so established. Observe,

1. What he hopes in, Ps 71:16.

(1.) In the power of God: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, not sit down in despair, but stir up myself to and exert myself in my work and warfare, will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength--disclaiming my own sufficiency and depending on him only as all-sufficient--in the strength of his providence and in the strength of his grace."

We must always go about God's work in his strength, having our eyes up unto him to work in us both to will and to do.

(2.) In the promise of God: "I will make mention of thy righteousness, that is, thy faithfulness to every word which thou hast spoken, the equity of thy disposals, and thy kindness to thy people that trust in thee. This I will make mention of as my plea in prayer for thy mercy."

We may very fitly apply it to the righteousness of Christ, which is called the righteousness of God by faith, and which is witnessed by the law and the prophets; we must depend upon God's strength for assistance and upon Christ's righteousness for acceptance. In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, Isa 45:24.

2. What he hopes for.

(1.) He hopes that God will not leave him in his old age, but will be the same to him to the end that he had been all along, Ps 71:17,18. Observe here,

[1.] What God had done for him when he was young: Thou hast taught me from my youth. The good education and good instructions which his parents gave him when he was young he owns himself obliged to give God thanks for as a great favour. It is a blessed thing to be taught of God from our youth, from our childhood to know the holy scriptures, and it is what we have reason to bless God for.

[2.] What he had done for God when he was middle-aged: He had declared all God's wondrous works. Those that have not good when they are young must be doing good when they are grown up, and must continue to communicate what they have received. We must own that all the works of God's goodness to us are wondrous works, admiring he should do so much for us who are so undeserving, and we must make it our business to declare them, to the glory of God and the good of others.

[3.] What he desired of God now that he was old: Now that I am old and gray-headed, dying to this world and hastening to another, O God! forsake me not. This is what he earnestly

desires and confidently hopes for. Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honour him, may be sure that he will not leave them when they are old and gray-headed, will not leave them helpless and comfortless, but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in.

[4.] What he designed to do for God in his old age: "I will not only show thy strength, by my own experience of it, to this generation, but I will leave my observations upon record for the benefit of posterity, and so who it to every one that is to come."

As long as we live we should be endeavouring to glorify God and edify one another; and those that have had the largest and longest experience of the goodness of God to them should improve their experiences for the good of their friends. It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, pleasure, and advantage of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

(2.) He hopes that God would revive him and raise him up out of his present low and disconsolate condition (Ps 71:20): Thou who hast made me to see and feel great and sore troubles, above most men, shalt quicken me again. Note,

[1.] The best of God's saints and servants are sometimes exercised with great and sore troubles in this world.

[2.] God's hand is to be eyed in all the troubles of the saints, and that will help to extenuate them and make them seem light. He does not say, "Thou hast burdened me with those troubles," but "shown them to me," as the tender father shows the child the rod to keep him in awe.

[3.] Though God's people be brought ever so low he can revive them and raise them up. Are they dead? he can quicken them again. See 2Co 1:9. Are they buried, as dead

men out of mind? he can bring them up again from the depths of the earth, can cheer the most drooping spirit and raise the most sinking interest.

[4.] If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves, in due time, a deliverance out of them. Our present troubles, though great and sore, shall be no hindrance to our joyful resurrection from the depths of the earth, witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference; his Father showed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave.

(3.) He hopes that God would not only deliver him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever (Ps 71:21): "Thou shalt not only restore me to my greatness again, but shalt increase it, and give me a better interest, after this shock, than before; thou shalt not only comfort me, but comfort me on every side, so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side."

Note, Sometimes God makes his people's troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness, and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he make them contribute to the increase of their goodness, that will prove in the end the increase of their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain.

When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him.

(4.) He hopes that all his enemies would be put to confusion, Ps 71:24. He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly: They are confounded, they are brought to shame, that seek my hurt. His honour would be their disgrace and his comfort their vexation.

II. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises, how he rejoices in hope, and sings in hope for we are saved by hope.

1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation, as great things, things which he was well acquainted with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of and others might have the comfortable knowledge of (Ps 71:15): My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation; and again (Ps 71:24), My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness, and this all the day.

God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal: the rectitude of his nature, the equity of his providential disposals, the righteous laws he has given us to be ruled by, the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon, and the everlasting righteousness which his Son has brought in for our justification. God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together; let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, Ps 50:23.

If these two are made the objects of our desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse all the day, for they are subjects that can never be exhausted.

2. He will speak of them with wonder and admiration, as one astonished at the dimensions of divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth, of it: "I know not the numbers thereof, Ps 71:15. Though I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me, they are so many, so great (if I would count them, they are more in number than the sand, Ps 40:5), yet, knowing them to be numberless, I will be still speaking of them, for in them I shall find new matter," Ps 71:19.

The righteousness that is in God is very high; that which is done by him for his people is very great: put both together,

and we shall say, O God! who is like unto thee? This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and performances to be,

(1.) Above our conception; they are very high and great, so high that we cannot apprehend them, so great that we cannot comprehend them.

(2.) Without any parallel; no being like him, no works like his: O God! who is like unto thee? None in heaven, none on earth, no angel, no king. God is a non-such; we do not rightly praise him if we do not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exultation, Ps 71:22,23. Observe,

(1.) How he would eye God in praising him.

[1.] As a faithful God: I will praise thee, even thy truth. God is made known by his word; if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth.

[2.] As a God in covenant with him: "O my God! whom I have consented to and avouched for mine." As in our prayers, so in our praises, we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him and relation to him.

[3.] As the Holy One of Israel, Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour that he is a Holy One; it is his people's honour that he is the Holy One of Israel.

(2.) How he will express his joy and exultation.

[1.] With his hand, in sacred music--with the psaltery, with the harp; at these David excelled, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others.

[2.] With his lips, in sacred songs: "Unto thee will I sing, to thy honour, and with a desire to be accepted of thee. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee, knowing they cannot be better employed."

[3.] In both with his heart: "My soul shall rejoice which thou hast redeemed." Note,

First, Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise.

Secondly, We do not make melody to the Lord, in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. My lips shall rejoice, but that is nothing; lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God; the soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name, else all about us is worth little.

Thirdly, Redeemed souls ought to be joyful thankful souls. The work of redemption ought, above all God's works, to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

15 My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness
and thy salvation all the day;
for I know not the numbers *thereof.*
16 I will go in the strength of the Lord God:
I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.
17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth:
and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
18 Now also when I am old and
grayheaded, O God, forsake me not;
until I have showed thy strength unto *this* generation,
and thy power to every one *that* is to come.
19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very
high, who hast done great things:
O God, who *is* like unto thee!
20 *Thou,* which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt
quicken me again,

and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.
21 Thou shalt increase my
greatness, and comfort me on
every side.
22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
even thy truth, O my God:
unto thee will I sing with the
harp, O thou Holy One of
Israel.
23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee;
and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.
24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long:
for they are confounded,
for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

Psalms-72

The Reign of the Righteous King
A Psalm for Solomon.

1 Give the king thy judgments, O God,
and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king's son.

I. We may apply it to Solomon: Give him thy judgments, O God! and thy righteousness; make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king.

1. It is the prayer of a father for his child, a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children. The best thing we can ask of God for our children is that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty; that is better than gold. Solomon learned to pray for himself as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart.

It was a comfort to David that his own son was to be his successor, but more so that he was likely to be both judicious and righteous. David had given him a good education (Pr 4:3), had taught him good judgment and righteous, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children, but may by prayer bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain, for their prayer shall either be answered or it shall return with comfort into their own bosom.

2. It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone.

3. It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem, David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they, in singing, might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

II. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us needs us to intercede for him; but,

1. It is a prayer of the Old-Testament church for sending the Messiah, as the church's King, King on the holy hill of Zion, of whom the King of kings had said, Thou art my Son, Ps 2:6,7. "Hasten his coming to whom all judgment is committed;" and we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall judge the world in righteousness.

2. It is an expression of the satisfaction which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father: "Let him have all power both in

heaven and earth, and be the Lord our righteousness; let him be the great trustee of divine grace for all that are his; give it to him, that he may give it to us."

2 He shall judge thy people with
righteousness, and thy poor with
judgment.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in,

1. As a plea to enforce the prayer: "Lord, give him thy judgments and thy righteousness, and then he shall judge thy people with righteousness, and so shall answer the end of his elevation, Ps 72:2. Give him thy grace, and then thy people, committed to his charge, will have the benefit of it." Because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice, 2Ch 9:8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church.

2. As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God's promises of mercy, so by the promises of mercy God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah is plain, because there are many passages in it which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon.

There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace, at first, in the administration of his government; but, before the end of his reign, there were both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct. Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full accomplishment only in the kingdom of Christ; and yet some of them were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

I. That it should be a righteous government (Ps 72:2): He shall judge thy people with righteousness. Compare Isa 11:4. All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity; the chancery it erects to relieve against the rigours of the broken law is indeed a court of equity; and against the sentence of his last judgment there will lie no exception.

The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness (Ps 72:3); for then only is the peace like a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. The world will be judged in righteousness, Ac 17:31.

II. That it should be a peaceable government: The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills (Ps 72:3); that is (says Dr. Hammond), both the superior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom.

There shall be abundance of peace, Ps 72:7. Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign; for in it Israel enjoyed the victories of the foregoing reign and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is, in a special manner, the glory of Christ's kingdom; for, as far as it prevails, it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; for he is our peace.

III. That the poor and needy should be, in a particular manner, taken under the protection of this government: He shall judge thy poor, Ps 72:2. Those are God's poor that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. The poor of the people, and the children of the needy, he will be sure so to judge as to save, Ps 72:4.

This is insisted upon again (Ps 72:12,13), intimating that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor also, both because they have no helper and it is for his honour to help them and because they cry unto

him and he has promised, in answer to their prayers, to help them; they by prayer commit themselves unto him, Ps 10:14.

He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy, and will not be rigorous and severe with them; he will save their souls, and that is all they desire. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Christ is the poor man's King.

IV. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with: He shall break them in pieces (Ps 72:4), shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done. This is the office of a good king, Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos--To spare the vanquished and debase the proud. The devil is the great oppressor, whom Christ will break in pieces and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction. With the breath of his mouth shall he slay that wicked one (Isa 11:4), and shall deliver the souls of his people from deceit and violence, Ps 72:14.

He shall save from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent working by deceit to ensnare them and as a roaring lion working by violence to terrify and devour them. So precious shall their blood be unto him that not a drop of it shall be shed, by the deceit or violence of Satan or his instruments, without being reckoned for.

Christ is a King, who, though he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood, nor will ever have it parted with but upon a valuable consideration to his glory and theirs, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' iniquity.

V. That religion shall flourish under Christ's government (Ps 72:5): They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure. Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God were well kept up, for some time, under his government, but it did not last long; this therefore must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to and kept in the fear of God; for the Christian religion has a

direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion.

Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting gospel that is preached, Fear God, and give honour to him, Re 14:7. And, as Christ's government promotes devotion towards God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men (Ps 72:7):

In his days shall the righteous flourish; righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation, shall command and be in power. The law of Christ, written in the heart, disposes men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposes men to live in love, and so it produces abundance of peace and beats swords into ploughshares.

Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall fear God as long as the sun and moon endure; Christianity, in the profession of it, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having, in the power of it, got footing in the heart, it will continue there till, by death, the sun, and the moon, and the stars (that is, the bodily senses) are darkened.

Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and, if the fear of God continue as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

VI. That Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful loving subjects (Ps 72:6): He shall, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, come down like rain upon the mown grass; not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again, though it was beheaded. The gospel of Christ distils as the rain, which softens the

ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, Isa 55:10. Let our hearts drink in the rain, Heb 6:7.

VII. That Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged; considering,

1 The extent of his territories (Ps 72:8): He shall have dominion from sea to sea (from the South Sea to the North, or from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean) and from the river Euphrates, or Nile, to the ends of the earth. Solomon's dominion was very large (1Ki 4:21), according to the promise, Ge 15:18. But no sea, no river, is named, that it might, by these proverbial expressions, intimate the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His gospel has been, or shall be, preached to all nations (Mt 24:14), and the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms (Re 11:15) when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His territories shall be extended to those countries,

(1.) That were strangers to him: Those that dwell in the wilderness, out of all high roads, that seldom hear news, shall hear the glad tidings of the Redeemer and redemption by him, shall bow before him, shall believe in him, accept of him, worship him, and take his yoke upon them. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow or break; if we break, we are ruined--if we bow, we are certainly made for ever.

(2.) That were enemies to him, and had fought against him: They shall lick the dust; they shall be brought down and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten that they shall be glad of dust, the serpent's meat (Ge 3:15), for of his seed they are; and over whom shall not he rule, when his enemies themselves are thus humbled and brought low?

2 The dignity of his tributaries. He shall not only reign over those that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over those that dwell in the palaces (Ps 72:10): The kings

of Tarshish, and of the isles, that lie most remote from Israel and are the isles of the Gentiles (Ge 10:5), shall bring presents to him as their sovereign Lord, by and under whom they hold their crowns and all their crown lands. They shall court his favour, and make an interest in him, that they may hear his wisdom.

This was literally fulfilled in Solomon (for all the kings of the earth sought the wisdom of Solomon, and brought every man his present, 2Ch 9:23,24), and in Christ too, when the wise men of the east, who probably were men of the first rank in their own country, came to worship him and brought him presents, Mt 2:11. They shall present themselves to him; that is the best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, Ro 12:1.

They shall offer gifts, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ as their altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called the offering up, or sacrificing, of the Gentiles, Ro 15:16. Yea, all kings shall, sooner or later, fall down before him, either to do their duty to him or to receive their doom from him, Ps 72:11. They shall fall before him, either as his willing subjects or as his conquered captives, as suppliants for his mercy or expectants of his judgment. And, when the kings submit, the people come in of course:

All nations shall serve him; all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation incense shall be offered to him and a pure offering, Mal 1:11,Re 7:9.

VIII. That he shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects (Ps 72:15): He shall live; his subjects shall desire his life (O king! live for ever) and with good reason; for he has said, Because I live, you shall live also; and of him it is witnessed that he liveth, ever liveth, making intercession, Heb 7:8,25. He shall live, and live prosperously; and,

1. Presents shall be made to him. Though he shall be able to live without them, for he needs neither the gifts nor the services of any, yet to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba--gold, the best of metals, gold of Sheba, which probably was the finest gold; for he that is best must be served with the best. Those that have abundance of the wealth of this world, that have gold at command, must give it to Christ, must serve him with it, do good with it. Honour the Lord with thy substance.

2. Prayers shall be made for him, and that continually. The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing to them. It is the duty of subjects to make prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for kings and all in authority, not in compliment to them, as is too often done, but in concern for the public welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers, nor can have any benefit by them.

But the Old-Testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it; for they called him, He that should come. And now that he has come we must pray for the success of his gospel and the advancement of his kingdom, which he calls praying for him (Hosanna to the Son of David, prosperity to his reign), and we must pray for his second coming. It may be read, Prayer shall be made through him, or for his sake; whatsoever we ask of the Father shall be in his name and in dependence upon his intercession.

3. Praises shall be made of him, and high encomiums given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness: Daily shall he be praised. By praying daily in his name we give him honour. Subjects ought to speak well of the government that is a blessing to them; and much more ought all Christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him; for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

IX. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mouths, both of the fruits of the earth in the country and of the people inhabiting the cities, Ps 72:16. 1 The country shall grow rich. Sow but a handful of

corn on the top of the mountains, whence one would expect but little, and yet the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon; it shall come up like a wood, so thick, and tall, and strong, like the cedars of Lebanon.

Even upon the tops of the mountains the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty (Ge 41:47), as the grass upon the house top is said to be that wherewith the mower fills not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful productions of the seed of the gospel in the days of the Messiah. A handful of that seed, sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest gathered in to Christ, fruit that shook like Lebanon. The fields were white to the harvest, Joh 4:35,Mt 9:37. The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree.

2 The towns shall grow populous: Those of the city shall flourish like grass, for number, for verdure. The gospel church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are shall be happy in it.

X. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that shall be feared throughout all generations (Ps 72:5) and as long as the sun and moon endure, Ps 72:7.

1 The honour of the princes is immortal and shall never be sullied (Ps 72:17): His name shall endure for ever, in spite of all the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it and to cut off the line of it; it shall be preserved; it shall be perpetuated; it shall be propagated.

As the names of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ's in himself. Filiabitur nomen ejus--His name shall descend to posterity. All nations, while the world stands, shall call him blessed, shall bless God for him,

continually speak well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it and every knee shall bow before it.

2 The happiness of the people if universal too; it is complete and everlasting: Men shall be blessed, truly and for ever blessed, in him. This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Ge 12:3.

3 The mountains shall bring peace to the
people, and the little hills, by
righteousness.
4 He shall judge the poor of the people,
he shall save the children of the needy,
and shall break in pieces the oppressor.
5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,
throughout all generations.
6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
as showers *that* water the earth.
7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
and from the river unto the ends of the earth.
9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
and his enemies shall lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents:
the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him:
all nations shall serve him.
12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.
13 He shall spare the poor and needy,
and shall save the souls of the needy.
14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence:
and precious shall their blood be in his sight.
15 And he shall live,

and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
prayer also shall be made for him continually;
and daily shall he be praised.
16 There shall be a handful of corn in the earth
upon the top of the mountains;
the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:
and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
17 His name shall endure for ever:
his name shall be continued as long as the sun:
and *men* shall be blessed in him:
all nations shall call him blessed.

Such an illustrious prophecy as is in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.

I The psalmist is here enlarged in thanksgivings for the prophecy and promise, Ps 72:18,19. So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he has said, though it be not yet done.

We must own that for all the great things he has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace, for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised; we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it.

Blessed be the Lord, that is, blessed be his glorious name; for it is only in his name that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is also exalted above all blessing and praise.

Let it be blessed for ever, it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be forever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ, for all that which he has done for us by him. We must bless him,

1. As the Lord God, as a self-existent self-sufficient Being, and our sovereign Lord.

2. As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people and worshipped by them, and who does this in performance of the truth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham,

3. As the God who only does wondrous things, in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which excels them all. Men's works are little, common, trifling things, and even these they could not do without him. But God does all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he does, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

II. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise: Let the whole earth be filled with his glory, as it will be when the kings of Tarshish, and the isles, shall bring presents to him. It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful benefactor.

All those, therefore, that wish well to the honour of God and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgments of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly, be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe,

1. How he shuts up the prayer with a double seal: "Amen and amen; again and again I say, I say it and let all others say the same, so be it. Amen to my prayer; Amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purport--Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come."

2. How he ever shuts up his life with this prayer, Ps 72:20. This was the last psalm that ever he penned, though not placed last in this collection; he penned it when he lay on his death-

bed, and with this he breathes his last: "Let God be glorified, let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up, in the world, and I have enough, I desire no more. With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

18 Blessed *be* the Lord God, the God of Israel,
who only doeth wondrous things.
19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever:
and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory.
Amen, and Amen.
20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Psalms-73

The Fate of the Wicked
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 Truly God *is* good to Israel,
even to such as are of a clean heart.

This psalm begins somewhat abruptly: Yet God is good to Israel (so the margin reads it); he had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked; while he was thus musing the fire burned, and at last he spoke by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of.

"However it be, yet God is good." Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own that he is, in a peculiar manner, good to Israel; they have favours from him which others have not.

The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with--to envy the prosperity of the wicked, a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now in this account,

I. He lays down, in the first place, that great principle which he is resolved to abide by and not to quit while he was parleying with this temptation, Ps 73:1. Job, when he was

entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle the omniscience of God: Times are not hidden from the Almighty, Job 24:1.

Jeremiah's principle is the justice of God: Righteous art thou, O God! when I plead with thee, Jer 12:1. Habakkuk's principle is the holiness of God: Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, Hab 1:13. The psalmist's, here, is the goodness of God. These are truths which cannot be shaken and which we must resolve to live and die by.

Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of Providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. Truly God is good; he had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providences of God, but this word, at last, settled him: "For all this, God is good, good to Israel, even to those that are of a clean heart." Note,

1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart; cleanness is truth in the inward part.

2. God, who is good to all, is in a special manner good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and in the various providences that related to them; he is, in like manner, good to all those that are of a clean heart, and, whatever happens, we must not think otherwise.

II. He comes now to relate the shock that was given to his faith in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people and that God is no kinder to them than to others.

1. He speaks of it as a very narrow escape that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation (Ps 73:2): "But

as for me, though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet my feet were almost gone (the tempter had almost tripped up my heels), my steps had well-nigh slipped (I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it); for I was envious at the foolish." Note,

1 The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken and ready to fail them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors.

2. Those that shall never be quite undone are sometimes very near it, and, in their own apprehension, as good as gone.

Many a precious soul, that shall live for ever, had once a very narrow turn for its life; almost and well-nigh ruined, but a step between it and fatal apostasy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of divine grace in the nations of those that are saved. Now,

2. Let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation, what he was tempted with and tempted to.

(1.) He observed that foolish wicked people have sometimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He saw, with grief, the prosperity of the wicked, Ps 73:3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every stander-by sees their prosperity.

[1.] They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life (Ps 73:5): They are not in the troubles of other men, even of wise and good men, neither are they plagued like other men, but seem as if by some special privilege they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure that are less sinners and yet greater sufferers.

[2.] They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures,

so that their eyes stand out with fatness, Ps 73:7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlightens the eyes, but those that indulge themselves inordinately in the delights of sense have their eyes ready to start out of their heads.

Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may those feed themselves to the full who have more than heart could wish, more than they themselves ever thought of or expected to be masters of. They have, at least, more than a humble, quiet, contented heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for.

There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and get on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, Ps 73:12. They are looked upon as thriving men; while others have much ado to keep what they have, they are still adding more, more honour, power, pleasure, by increasing in riches. They are the prosperous of the age, so some read it.

[3.] Their end seems to be peace. This is mentioned first, as the most strange of all, for peace in death was every thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly (Ps 37:37), yet, to outward appearance, it is often the lot of the ungodly (Ps 73:4): There are no bands in their death.

They are not taken off by a violent death; they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; for their hands are not bound nor their feet put into fetters, 2Sa 3:33,34. They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on, till, through old age, they gently drop of themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases:

There are no pangs, no agonies, in their death, but their strength is firm to the last, so that they scarcely feel

themselves die. They are of those who die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, not of those that die in the bitterness of their souls and never eat with pleasure, Job 21:23,25.

Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments; they are not frightened either with the remembrance of their sins or the prospect of their misery, but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death either by the manner of their death or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

(2.) He observed that they made a very bad use of their outward prosperity and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to fret at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed him; but it had quite a contrary effect upon them.

[1.] It made them very proud and haughty. Because they live at ease, pride compasses them as a chain, Ps 73:6. They show themselves (to all that see them) to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men show their ornaments. The pride of Israel testifies to his face, Ho 5:5,Isa 3:9.

Pride ties on their chain, or necklace; so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceases to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is (though we have rules for that, 1Ti 2:9) as what principle ties it on and with what spirit it is worn.

And, as the pride of sinners appears in their dress, so it does in their talk: They speak loftily (Ps 73:8); they affect great swelling words of vanity (2Pe 2:18), bragging of themselves and disdaining all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

[1.] It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours (Ps 73:6): Violence covers them as a garment. What they have got by fraud and oppression they keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. They are corrupt, like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when the earth was filled with violence, Ge 6:11,13.

They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief-sake or for their own advantage-sake. They speak wickedly concerning oppression; they oppress, and justify themselves in it. Those that speak well of sin speak wickedly of it.

They are corrupt, that is, dissolved in pleasures and every thing that is luxurious (so some), and then they deride and speak maliciously; they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny; from on high they speak oppression.

[3.] It made them very insolent in their demeanour towards both God and man (Ps 73:9): They set their mouth against the heavens, putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him and his power and justice. They cannot reach the heavens with their hands, to shake God's throne, else they would; but they show their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens.

Their tongue also walks through the earth, and they take liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue. They take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind; they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God nor regard man.

[4.] In all this they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked if they had not learned to say (Ps 73:11), How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had and

would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness or would ever call them to an account. As if, because he is Most High, he could not or would not see them, Job 22:12,13.

Whereas because he is Most High therefore he can, and will, take cognizance of all the children of men and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, Is there knowledge in him? Well may he say (Ps 73:12), Behold, these are the ungodly.

(3.) He observed that while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with Providence.

[1.] He looked abroad and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss (Ps 73:10): "Because the wicked are so very daring therefore his people return hither; they are at the same pause, the same plunge, that I am at; they know not what to say to it any more than I do, and the rather because waters of a full cup are wrung out to them; they are not only made to drink, and to drink deeply, of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all.

Care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant potion; the waters are wrung out unto them, that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God and speak profanely," as David did, Ps 119:136.

These are the waters wrung out to them. [2.] He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of Providence, while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles (Ps 73:14): "For my part," says he, "all the day long have I been plagued with one affliction or another, and chastened every morning, as duly as the morning comes."

His afflictions were great--he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, every morning with the morning, and they continued, without intermission, all the day long. This he thought was very hard, that, when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spoke feelingly when he spoke of his own troubles; there is no disputing against sense, except by faith.

(4.) From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion.

[1.] Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a providence and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take Ps 73:11. There are those, even among God's professing people, that say, "How does God know? Surely all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God." Some of the heathen, upon such a remark as this, have asked, Quis putet esse deos?--Who will believe that there are gods?

[2.] Though the psalmist's feet were not so far gone as to question God's omniscience, yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say (Ps 73:13), Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and have, to no purpose, washed my hands in innocency. See here what it is to be religious; it is to cleanse our hearts, in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency by a universal reformation of our lives.

It is not in vain to do this, not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, "It is in vain," and "Religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by," because they see wicked people in prosperity. But, however the thing may appear now, when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God (Mt 5:8), they will not say that they cleansed their hearts in vain.

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone;
my steps had well-nigh slipped.

3 For I was envious at the foolish,
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
4 For *there are* no bands in their death:
but their strength *is* firm.
5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men;
neither are they plagued like *other* men.
6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain;
violence covereth them *as* a garment.
7 Their eyes stand out with fatness:
they have more than heart could wish.
8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression:
they speak loftily.
9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
and their tongue walketh through the earth.
10 Therefore his people return hither:
and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.
11 And they say, How doth God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?
12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly,
who prosper in the world;
they increase *in* riches.
13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
and washed my hands in innocency.
14 For all the day long have I been plagued,
and chastened every morning.
15 If I say, I will speak thus;
behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy prospering profaneness; now here we are told how he kept his footing and got the victory.

I. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, Ps 73:15. He got the victory by degrees, and this was the first point he gained; he was ready to say, Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and thought he had reason to say it, but he kept his mouth with this consideration, "If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should myself revolt and apostatize from, and

so give the greatest offence imaginable to, the generation of thy children." Observe here,

1. Though he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note, It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an imprimatur--a sanction; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it for the infection of others.

But it is a good sign that we repent of the evil imagination of the heart if we suppress it, and the error remains with ourselves. If therefore thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no further, Pr 30:32. If I say, I will speak thus.

Observe, Though his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those whether it were fit to be mentioned or no. Note, We must think twice before we speak once, both because some things may be thought which yet may not be spoken and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first.

2 The reason why he would not speak it was for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note,

(1.) There are a people in the world that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that hear and love God as their Father.

(2.) We must be very careful not to say or do any thing which may justly offend any of these little ones (Mt 18:6), especially which may offend the generation of them, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest.

(3.) There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children than to say that we have cleansed our heart in vain or that it is vain to serve God; for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience nor any thing that grieves them more than to hear God thus reflected on.

(4.) Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked do in effect quit the tents of God's children.

II. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people. By this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought (Ps 73:16): "I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of Providence; but it was too painful for me.

I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning." It is a problem, not to be solved by the mere light of nature, for, if there were not another life after this, we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God.

But (Ps 73:17) he went into the sanctuary of God; he applied to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and the things revealed, which belong to us and to our children; he consulted the scriptures, and the lips of the priests who attended the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him and to help him over this difficulty; and, at length, he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such that even in the height of their prosperity they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin.

Note, There are many great things, and things needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. The sanctuary must therefore be the resort of a tempted soul.

Note, further, We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end. All is well that ends well, everlastingly well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked

man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

1 The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain. The high places in which Providence sets them are slippery places (Ps 73:18), where they cannot long keep footing; but, when they offer to climb higher, that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground; it is not built upon God's favour or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling that it rests on firm ground.

2. Their destruction is sure, and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction; for they were supposed to spend all their days in wealth and their death itself had no bands in it:

In a moment they go down to the grace, so that even that could scarcely be called their destruction; it must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side death--hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever.

(1.) Their ruin is sure and inevitable. He speaks of it as a thing done--They are cast down; for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted: Thou castest them down. It is destruction from the Almighty (Joe 1:15), from the glory of his power, 2Th 1:9. Who can support those whom God will cast down, on whom God will lay burdens?

(2.) It is swift and sudden; their damnation slumbers not; for how are they brought into desolation as in a moment! Ps 73:19. It is easily effected, and will be a great surprise to themselves and all about them.

(3.) It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total and final ruin: They are utterly consumed with terrors, It is the misery of the damned that the terrors of the Almighty, whom they have made their enemy, fasten upon their guilty consciences, which can neither shelter themselves from them nor

strengthen themselves under them; and therefore not their being, but their bliss, must needs be utterly consumed by them; not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity the sorer will their fall be when they are cast down into destructions (for the word is plural) and suddenly brought into desolation.

3. Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather, quod erat demonstrandum--which was the point to be established, Ps 73:20. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord! when thou awakest, or when they awake (as some read it), thou shalt despise their image, their shadow, and make it to vanish.

In the day of the great judgment (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it), when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt, in wrath, despise their image; for they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt. See here,

(1.) What their prosperity now is; it is but an image, a vain show, a fashion of the world that passes away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow; it is not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is as a dream, which may please us a little, while we are asleep, yet even then it disturbs our repose; but, how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false; when we awake we find it so.

A hungry man dreams that he eats, but he awakes and his soul is empty, Isa 29:8. A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so. Who therefore will envy a man the pleasure of a dream?

(2.) What will be the issue of it; God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause; they shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image; he shall make it appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, Ps 52:6,7.

How did God despise that rich man's image when he said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee! Lu 12:19,20. We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth, and not to admire and envy that which he despises and will despise; for, sooner or later, he will bring all the world to be of his mind.

16 When I thought to know this,
it *was* too painful for me;
17 until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then understood I their end.
18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places:
thou castedst them down into destruction.
19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when *one* awaketh;
so, O Lord, when thou awakest,
thou shalt despise their image.
21 Thus my heart was grieved,
and I was pricked in my reins.

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness; for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that sore temptation with which he had been assaulted and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and does not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forward.

It was so with the psalmist here; many good lessons he learned from his temptation, his struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor would God suffer his people to be tempted if his grace were not sufficient for them, not only to save them from harm, but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

I. He learned to think very humbly of himself and to abase and accuse himself before God (Ps 73:21,22); he reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself by entertaining the temptation and

parleying with it: My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins, as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys.

If evil thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he does not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him; temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, 2Co 12:7.

This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any; where it constantly rests it is the rottenness of the bones (Pr 14:30); where it does but occasionally come it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction. Now in the reflection upon it,

1. He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself: "So foolish was I to be my own tormentor." Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of, their discontents. "What a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause?"

2. He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this: "So ignorant was I of that which I might have known, and which, if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to silence my murmurs. I was as a beast (Behemoth--a great beast) before thee. Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I.

If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to prevail over me so far. What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity! To be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! So foolish was I."

Note, If good men do at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss, when they see their error they will reflect upon it with sorrow, and shame, and self-abhorrence, will call themselves fools for it.

Surely I am more brutish than any man, Pr 30:2,Job 42:5,6. Thus David, 2Sa 24:10.

II. He took occasion hence to own his dependence on and obligations to the grace of God (Ps 73:23): "Nevertheless, foolish as I am, I am continually with thee and in thy favour; thou hast holden me by my right hand." This may refer either,

1. To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had shown him, all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said, in the hour of temptation (Ps 73:14), All the day long have I been plagued; but here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint: "Though God has chastened me, he has not cast me off; notwithstanding all the crosses of my life, I have been continually with thee; I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, though perplexed, yet not in despair.

Though God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still holden me by my right hand, both to keep me, that I should not desert him or fly off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burdens, or losing my way in the wildernesses through which I have walked."

If we have been kept in the way with God, kept closely in our duty and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation: Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto. And, if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or,

2. To the late experience he had had of the power of divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation and bringing him off a conqueror:

"I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me and taught me (Heb 5:2), and kept me under thy protection;" for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free

grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not to our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us and the prevalency of Christ's intercession for us, that our faith may not fail: "My feet were almost gone, and they would have quite gone, past recovery, but that thou hast holden me by my right hand and so kept me from falling."

III. He encouraged himself to hope that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as St. Paul does (2Ti 4:18): "I am now upheld by thee, therefore thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, leading me, as thou hast done hitherto, many a difficult step; and, since I am now continually with thee, thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory" Ps 73:24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note,

1. All those who commit themselves to God shall be guided with his counsel, with the counsel both of his word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dearly for following his own counsels in this temptation and therefore resolves for the future to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it with a resolution to follow it.

2. All those who are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall for ever be happy in. Upon this consideration, let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness.

If God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterwards, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory, the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

IV. He was hereby quickened to cleave the more closely to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him, Ps 73:25,26. His thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater then the happiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world.

He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter, comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to congratulate himself on this account. He had complained of his afflictions (Ps 73:14); but this makes them very light and easy, All is well if God be mine.

We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul towards God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination: Whom have I in heaven but thee?

There is scarcely a verse in all the psalms more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up towards him, follows hard after him, and yet, at the same time, has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

1. It is here supposed that God alone is the felicity and chief good of man. He, and he only, that made the soul, can make it happy; there is none in heaven, none in earth, that can pretend to do it besides.

2. Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul towards God accordingly. If God be our felicity,

(1.) Then we must have him (Whom have I but thee?), we must choose him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the felicity of souls if he be not the felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

(2.) Then our desire must be towards him and our delight in him (the word signifies both); we must delight in what we have of God and desire what we yet further hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all terminate in him, desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him. This includes all our prayers, Lord, give us thyself; as that includes all the promises, I will be to them a God. The desire of our souls is to thy name.

(3.) We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other.

[1.] "There is none in heaven but thee, none to seek to or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with, but thee." God is in himself more glorious than any celestial being (Ps 89:6), and must be, in our eyes, infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God alone can make us happy.

His favour is infinitely more to us than the refreshment of the dews of heaven or the benign influence of the stars of heaven, more than the friendship of the saints in heaven or the good offices of the angels there.

[2.] I desire none on earth besides thee; not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends and where much of our present interest and concern lie. "Earth carries away the desires of most men, and yet I have none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights, that I desire besides thee or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee."

We must desire nothing besides God but what we desire for him (nil præter te nisi propter te--nothing besides thee except for thy sake), nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing besides God as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

(4.) Then we must repose ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, Ps 73:26. Observe here,

[1.] Great distress and trouble supposed: My flesh and my heart fail. Note, Others have experienced and we must expect, the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; and that which touches the bone and the flesh touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of; when the flesh fails the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, courage, and comfort fail.

[2.] Sovereign relief provided in this distress: But God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. Note, Gracious souls, in their greatest distresses, rest upon God as their spiritual strength and their eternal portion.

First, "He is the strength of my heart, the rock of my heart, a firm foundation, which will bear my weight and not sink under it. God is the strength of my heart; I have found him so; I do so still, and hope ever to find him so." In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both flesh and heart fail; but, in the relief, he fastens on a single support:

he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is the strength of his heart. He speaks as one careless of the body (let that fail, there is no remedy), but as one concerned about the soul, to be strengthened in the inner man.

Secondly, "He is my portion for ever; he will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence." The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion, a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

V. He was fully convinced of the miserable condition of all wicked people. This he learned in the sanctuary upon this occasion, and he would never forget it (Ps 73:27): "Lo, those

that are far from thee, in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be; they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever.

Thou wilt justly destroy all those that go a whoring from thee, that is, all apostates, that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger." The doom is sever, no less than perishing and being destroyed. It is universal: "They shall all be destroyed without exception." It is certain:

"Thou hast destroyed; it is as sure to be done as if done already; and the destruction of some ungodly men is an earnest of the perdition of all." God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall: "Thou, though infinite in goodness, wilt reckon for thy injured honour and abused patience, and wilt destroy those that go a whoring from thee."

VI. He was greatly encouraged to cleave to God and to confide in him, Ps 73:28. If those that are far from God shall perish, then,

1. Let this constrain us to live in communion with God; "if it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good, that good for a man, in this life, which he should most carefully pursue and secure, it is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me;" the original may take in both. But for my part (so I would read it) the approach of God is good for me. Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us, and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss.

Here is a great truth laid down, That it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application, "It is good for me." Those are the wise who know what is good for themselves: "It is good, says he (and every good man agrees

with him in it), it is good for me to draw near to God; it is my duty; it is my interest."

2. Let us therefore live in a continual dependence upon him: "I have put my trust in the Lord God, and will never go a whoring from him after any creature confidences." If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God, in him, not in them (see Ps 146:3-5), in him, and not in our worldly prosperity; let us trust in God, and neither fret at them nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is.

3. While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works. Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

22 So foolish *was* I, and ignorant:
I was *as* a beast before thee.
23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee:
thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.
24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
and afterward receive me *to* glory.
25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?*
And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides thee.
26 My flesh and my heart faileth:
but God *is* the strength of my heart,
and my portion for ever.
27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish:
thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.
28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to God:
I have put my trust in the Lord
God, that I may declare all thy
works.

Psalms-74

An Appeal to God against the Enemy
Maschil of Asaph.

1 O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever?
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

This psalm is entitled Maschil--a psalm to give instruction, for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction in general it gives us, That when we are, upon any account, in distress, it is our wisdom and duty to apply to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so. Three things the people of God here complain of:--

I The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who, they knew, could have no power against them unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men.

Observe the liberty they take to expostulate with God (Ps 74:1), we hope not too great a liberty, for Christ himself, upon the cross, cried out, My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me? So the church here, O God! why hast thou forsaken us for ever? Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, Has God cast away his people? God forbid, Ro 11:1

The people of God must not think that because they are cast down they are therefore cast off, that because men cast them off therefore God does, and that because he seems to cast them off for a time therefore they are really cast off for ever: yet this expostulation intimates that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing, that they desired to be

owned of him, whatever they suffered from men, and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them:

Why does thy anger smoke? that is, why does it rise up to such a degree that all about us take notice of it, and ask, What means the heat of this great anger? De 29:24. Compare De 29:20, where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners. Observe what they plead with God, now that they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

1. They plead their relation to him: "We are the sheep of thy pasture, the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock the pasture, thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself and design for thy own glory.

That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange; but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? Remember, we are thy congregation (Ps 74:2), incorporated by thee and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are the rod, or tribe, of thy inheritance, whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in above other people (De 32:9), and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship more than from the neighbouring nations.

Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for Mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion."

2. They plead the great things God had done for them and the vast expense he had been at upon them: "It is thy congregation, which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but purchased of old by many miracles of mercy when they were first formed into a people; it is thy inheritance, which thou hast redeemed when they were sold into servitude." God gave Egypt to ruin for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life, Isa 43:3,4.

"Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee?" And, if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise.

3. They plead the calamitous state that they were in (Ps 74:3): "Lift up thy feet; that is, come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual an irreparable." It has been sometimes said that the divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord, cry, Lord, lift up thy feet; exalt thy steps; magnify thyself in the outgoing of thy providence.

When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long we are tempted to think they will be perpetual; but it isa temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

II. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies, not so much, no, not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests; here are no complaints of the burning of their cities and ravaging of their country, but only what they had done against the sanctuary and the synagogue.

The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts and affect us more than any worldly concern whatsoever. The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses; for the matter is not great what becomes of us and our families in this world provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

1 The psalmist complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, Da 9:17. The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-

place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary, or holy place, Ps 74:7. In this the enemies did wickedly (Ps 74:3), for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God and affront to him.

(1.) They roared in the midst of God's congregations, Ps 74:4. There where God's faithful people attended on him with a humble reverent silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous revelling manner, being elated with having made themselves masters of that sanctuary of which they had sometimes heard formidable things.

(2.) They set up their ensigns for signs. The banners of their army they set up in the temple (Israel's strongest castle, as long as they kept closely to God) as trophies of their victory. There, where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. This daring defiance of God and his power touched his people in a tender part.

(3.) They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as formerly men thought it an honour to lend a hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to fell timber for that work, so much now they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, Ps 74:5,6. Thus, as formerly those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now those are applauded as wits that help to run it down.

Some read it thus: They show themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees, for so do they break down the carved work of the temple they make no more scruple of breaking down the rich wainscot of the temple than woodcutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary that the most curious carving that ever was seen is beaten down by the common soldiers without any regard had to it, either as a dedicated thing or as a piece of exquisite art.

(4.) They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, Ps 74:7. The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that

stately costly fabric, 2Ch 36:19. And the Romans left not there one stone upon another (Mt 24:2), rasing it, rasing it, even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was, by Titus Vespasian, ploughed as a field.

2. He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which, before the captivity, were in use, though much more afterwards. There God's word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices. These also they had a spite to (Ps 74:8): Let us destroy them together; not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship and the worshippers with them. Let us destroy them together; let them be consumed in the same flame.

Pursuant to this impious resolve they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion that the religious houses, because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God, and edify one another, by meeting in solemn assemblies.

III. The great aggravation of all these calamities was that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them (Ps 74:9): "We see our enemy's sign set up in the sanctuary, but we see not our signs, none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance. There is no more any prophet to tell us how long the trouble will last and when things concerning us shall have an end, that the hope of an issue at last may support us under our troubles."

In the captivity in Babylon they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark (Eze 34:12), and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries. God spoke once, yea, twice, good words and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, "We see not our armies; there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts;" but, "no prophets, none to tell

us how long." This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying,

1. To assert his honour (Ps 74:10): How long shall the adversary reproach and blaspheme thy name? In the desolations of the sanctuary our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that it may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our enquiry should be, not "How long shall we be troubled?" but "How long shall God be blasphemed?"

2. To exert his power (Ps 74:11): "Why withdrawest thou thy hand, and dost not stretch it out, to deliver thy people and destroy thy enemies? Pluck it out of thy bosom, and be not as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save, or will not," Jer 14:9. When the power of enemies is most threatening it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

2 Remember thy congregation,
which thou hast purchased of
old; the rod of thine
inheritance, *which* thou hast
redeemed;
this mount Zion,
wherein thou hast dwelt.
3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations;
even all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.
4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations;
they set up their ensigns *for* signs.
5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the
thick trees.
6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once
with axes and hammers.
7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,
they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy
name to the ground.
8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together:
they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.
9 We see not our signs:

there is no more any prophet:
neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.
10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here which she calls to mind, and therefore hath she hope (as La 3:21), with which she encourages herself and silences her own complaints. Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly:--

I. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people (Ps 74:12): God is my King of old. This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God (Ps 44:4, thou art my King, O God!) and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the days of old, Ps 77:5. The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God, "My King, my King of old," or, "from antiquity;" he of old put himself into that relation to them and appeared and acted for them in that relation.

As Israel's King, he wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he did, in the government of the world, tended towards the salvation of his church. Several things are here mentioned which God had done for his people as their King of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him and depend upon him.

1. He had divided the sea before them when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength; and he that could do that could do any thing.

2. He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh was the leviathan; the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe,

(1.) The victory obtained over these enemies. God broke their heads, baffled their politics, as when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, multiplied the more. God crushed their powers, though complicated, ruined their country by ten plagues, and at last drowned them all in the Red Sea.

This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, Eze 31:18. It was the Lord's doing; none besides could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head.

(2.) The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church: Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel, now going to inhabit the wilderness. The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians' arms and weapons, as before they had got their jewels.

Or, rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of.

Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, Job 41:6.

3. God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock and turning streams into rock, Ps 74:15.

(1.) He had dissolved the rock into waters: Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood (so some read it); and every one knows whence it was brought, out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially

be remembered that the rock was Christ, and the waters out of it were spiritual drink.

(2.) He had congealed the waters into rock: Thou driedst up mighty rapid rivers, Jordan particularly at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

II. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, Ps 74:16,17. It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions,

1. Of day and night. He is the Lord of all time. The evening and the morning are of his ordaining. It is he that opens the eyelids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. He has prepared the moon and the sun (so some read it), the two great lights, to rule by day and by night alternately. The preparing of them denotes their constant readiness and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment.

2. Of summer and winter: "Thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for thou hast made summer and winter, the frigid and the torrid zones; or, rather, the constant revolutions of the year and its several seasons." Herein we are to acknowledge God, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; but how does this come in here?

(1.) He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve, this course of nature by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor are any difficulties or oppositions insuperable.

(2.) He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable will certainly make good his promise to his people and never

cast off those whom he has chosen, Jer 31:36,33:20,21. His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, Ge 8:21.

(3.) Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature, throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other than that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity, should be, in like manner, counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have as much reason to expect affliction as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort than we have to despair of day and summer.

12 For God *is* my King of old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:
thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,
and gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the
wilderness.
15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood:
thou driedst up mighty rivers.
16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine:
thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:
thou hast made summer and winter.
18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O
Lord, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed
thy name.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear fro them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles.

To encourage his own faith, he interests God in this matter (Ps 74:22): Arise, O God! plead thy own cause. This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it and with and for those that cordially espouse it.

He will arise and plead it, though for a time he seems to neglect it; he will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time. Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause and he will certainly plead it. Now, to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads,

I. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies: "Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been, and are, abusive to thee; what is done against us, for thy sake, does, by consequence, reflect upon thee. But that is not all; they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and blasphemed thy name," Ps 74:18.

This was that which they roared in the sanctuary; they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God is Israel, of whom they had heard such great things.

As nothing grieves the saints more than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourages them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies than when they have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins apace and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this:

"We dare not answer their reproaches; Lord, do thou answer them. Remember that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name (Ps 74:18) and that still the foolish man reproaches thee daily." Observe the character of those that reproach God; they are foolish. As atheism is folly (Ps 14:1), profaneness and blasphemy are no less so.

Perhaps those are cried up as the wits of the age that ridicule religion and sacred things; but really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet see their malice--They reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him and praise him; see their impudence--

They do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice (forget not the voice of thy enemies, Ps 74:23), and this with a daring defiance of divine justice; they rise up against thee, and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven and take up arms against the Almighty. Their noise and tumult ascend continually (so some), as the cry of Sodom came up before God, calling for vengeance, Ge 18:21.

It increases continually (so we read it); they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now, Lord, remember this; do not forget it. God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do, but thus we must show our concern for his honour and believe that he will vindicate us.

II. That the persecuted are his covenant-people.

1. See what distress they are in. They have fallen into the hands of the multitude of the wicked, Ps 74:19. How are those increased that trouble them! There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially like these, armed with power; and, as they are numerous, so they are barbarous: The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.

The land of the Chaldeans, where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God (though otherwise it was famed for learning and arts), was indeed a dark place; the inhabitants of it were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, and therefore they were cruel: where there was no true divinity there was scarcely to be found common humanity.

They were especially cruel to the people of God; certainly those have no knowledge who eat them up, Ps 14:4. They are oppressed (Ps 74:21) because they are poor and unable to help themselves; they are oppressed, and so impoverished and made poor.

2. See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief and not suffer them to be always thus trampled upon. Observe how the psalmist pleads with God for them.

(1.) "It is thy turtle-dove that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked," Ps 74:19. The church is a dove for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness, a dove for mournfulness in a day of distress, a turtle-dove for fidelity and the constancy of love: turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowls that were offered in sacrifice to God.

"Shall thy turtle-dove, that is true to thee and devoted to thy honour, be delivered, its life and soul and all, into the hand of the multitude of the wicked, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thy honour to help the weak, especially to help thy own."

(2.) "It is the congregation of thy poor, and they are not the less thine for their being poor (for God has chosen the poor of this world, Jam 2:5), but they have the more reason to expect thou wilt appear for them because they are many: it is the congregation of thy poor; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever."

(3.) "They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not have respect unto the covenant? Ps 74:20. Wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast, in thy covenant, made to them? Wilt thou not own those whom thou hast brought into the bond of the covenant?" When God delivers his people it is in remembrance of his covenant, Le 26:42. "Lord, though we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant."

(4.) "They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee and expectations from thee. O let not them return ashamed of their hope (Ps 74:21), as they will be if they be disappointed."

(5.) "If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name and give thee the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it."

19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude
of the wicked:
forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.
20 Have respect unto the covenant:
for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.
21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed:
let the poor and needy praise thy name.
22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.
23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies:
the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

Psalms-75

God Abases the Wicked and Exalts the Righteous
To the chief Musician, Altaschith,
A Psalm or Song of Asaph.

1 Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks,
unto thee do we give thanks:
for *that* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.

In these verses,

I The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power, and the other great things he had done for him and for his people Israel (Ps 75:1): Unto thee, O God! do we give thanks for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again, unto thee do we give thanks; for our thanksgivings must be often repeated. Did not we often pray for mercy when we were in pursuit of it; and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks when we have obtained it?

Not only I do give thanks, but we do, and I and all my friends. If we share with others in their mercies, we must join with them in their praises. "Unto thee, O God! the author of our mercies (and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only), we give thanks; for that thy name is near (that the complete accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off) thy wondrous works, which thou hast already done for him, declare." Note,

1. There are many works which God does for his people that may truly be called wondrous works, out of the common course of providence and quite beyond our expectation.

2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name; they show that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for, and that he is about to do some great things for his people, in pursuance of his purpose and promise.

3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name it is our duty to give him thanks, again and again to give him thanks.

II. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him (Ps 75:2): When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. Here he takes it for granted that God would, in due time, perfect that which concerned him, that though the congregation was very slow in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet, at length, he should receive it; for what God has spoken in his holiness he will perform by his wisdom and power.

Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promises to make conscience of his duty: "When I am a judge I will judge, and judge uprightly; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment or, which was worse, perverted it, either did no good with their power or did hurt." Note,

1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves

with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He does not say, "When I shall receive the congregation I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the public business to others;" but, "I will mind it myself."

2. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity; those that judge must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

III. He promises himself that his government would be a public blessing to Israel, Ps 75:3. The present state of the kingdom was very bad: The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolute that all went to wrack and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners, for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness.

They were divided one from another for want of centering, as they ought to have done, in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin; but I bear up the pillars of it. Even in Saul's time David did what he could for the public welfare; but he hoped that when he had himself received the congregation he should do much more, and should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. Now,

1. See the mischief of parties; they melt and dissolve a land and the inhabitants of it.

2. See how much one head frequently holds up. The fabric would have sunk if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin; man's apostasy threatened the destruction of the whole creation. But Christ bore up the pillars of it; he saved the whole world from utter ruin by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of

Providence is committed, for he upholds all things by the word of his power, Heb 1:3.

IV. He checks those that opposed his government, that were against his accession to it and obstructed the administration of it, striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he had made it his business to suppress (Ps 75:4,5): I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly.

He had said so to them in Saul's time. When he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; though they bore themselves high, upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or, rather, he does now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown he issued out a proclamation against vice and profaneness, and here we have the contents of it.

1. To the simple sneaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, "Deal not foolishly; do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do while you walk contrary to the laws God has given to Israel and the promises he has made to David." Christ, the son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, Deal not foolishly. He who is made of God to us wisdom bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves.

2. To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he says, "Lift not up the horn; boast not of your power and prerogatives; persist not in your contumacy and contempt of the government set over you; lift not up your horn on high, as though you could have what you will and do what you will; speak not with a stiff neck, in which is an iron sinew, that will never bend to the will of God in the government; for those that will not bend shall break; those whose necks are stiffened are so to their own destruction." This is Christ's word of command in his gospel, that every mountain will be brought low before him, Isa 40:4.

Let not the anti-christian power, with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces; what is said with a stiff neck must be unsaid again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, Who is the Lord? But God made him know to his cost.

2 When I shall receive the congregation
I will judge uprightly.
3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are
dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.
Selah.
4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly:
and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:
5 lift not up your horn on high:
speak *not* with a stiff neck.
6 For promotion *cometh* neither from the
east, nor from the west, nor from the
south.

In these verses we have two great doctrines laid down and two good inferences drawn from them, for the confirmation of what he had before said.

I. Here are two great truths laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion:--

1. That from God alone kings receive their power (Ps 75:6,7), and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement; having his power from God he would use it for him, and therefore those were fools that lifted up the horn against him.

We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms, and are surprised at the sudden disgrace of some and elevation of others; we are all full of such changes, when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the author of them, and are taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes.

Whence comes preferment to kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? And whence come preferments in kingdoms, to places of power and trust in them?

The former depends not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look who are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin aright. We are here told,

(1.) Negatively, which way we are not to look for the fountain of power: Promotion comes not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert, that is, neither from the desert on the north of Jerusalem nor from that on the south; so that the fair gale of preferment is not to be expected to blow from any point of the compass, but only from above, directly thence.

Men cannot gain promotion either by the wisdom or wealth of the children of the east, nor by the numerous forces of the isles of the Gentiles, that lay westward, nor those of Egypt or Arabia, that lay south; no concurring smiles of second causes will raise men to preferment without the first cause.

The learned bishop Lloyd (Serm. in loc.) gives this gloss upon it: "All men took the original of power to be from heaven, but from whom there many knew not; the eastern nations, who were generally given to astrology, took it to come from their stars, especially the sun, their god. No, says David, it comes neither from the east nor from the west, neither from the rising nor from the setting of such a planet, or such a constellation, nor from the south, nor from the exaltation of the sun or any star in the mid-heaven."

He mentions not the north, because none supposed it to come thence; or because the same word that signifies the north signifies the secret place, and from the secret of God's counsel it does come, or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north side of Jerusalem. Note, No wind is so good as

to blow promotion, but as he directs who has the winds in his fists.

(2.) Positively: God is the judge, the governor or umpire. When parties contend for the prize, he puts down one and sets up another as he sees fit, so as to serve his own purposes and bring to pass his own counsels. Herein he acts by prerogative, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters; nor is it any damage, danger, or disgrace that he, who is infinitely wise, holy, and good, has an arbitrary and despotic power to set up and put down whom, and when, and how he pleases.

This is a good reason why magistrates should rule for God as those that must give account to him, because it is by him that kings reign.

2. That from God alone all must receive their doom (Ps 75:8): In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, which he puts into the hands of the children of men, a cup of providence, mixed up (as he thinks fit) of many ingredients, a cup of affliction. The sufferings of Christ are called a cup, Mt 20:22,Joh 18:11. The judgments of God upon sinners are the cup of the Lord's right hand, Hab 2:16.

The wine is red, denoting the wrath of God, which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is read as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. It is full of mixture, prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end. There are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction when it is put into the hands of God's own people, mixtures of the curse when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These vials,

(1.) Are poured out upon all; see Re 15:7,16:1; where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities; but,

(2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the infusion; but the sediment is pure wrath, and that shall fall to the share of sinners; they have the dregs of the cup now in the terrors of conscience, and hereafter in the torments of hell.

They shall wring them out, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, and they shall drink them, for the curse shall enter into their bowels like water and like oil into their bones. The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, Re 14:10. The wicked man's cup, while he prospers in the world, is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

II. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. This being so,

1. He will praise God, and give him glory, for the power to which he has advanced him (Ps 75:9): I will declare for ever that which thy wondrous works declare, Ps 75:1. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first, while the mercy was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives.

The exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saints' everlasting praises. He will give glory to God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob, knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them.

2. He will use the power with which he is entrusted for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, Ps 75:10, as before, Ps 75:2,4. According to the duty of the higher powers,

(1.) He resolves to be a terror to evildoers, to humble their pride and break their power: "Though not all the heads, yet

all the horns, of the wicked will I cut off, with which they push their poor neighbours; I will disable them to do mischief." Thus God promises to raise up carpenters who should fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel, Zec 1:18-21.

(2.) He resolves to be a protection and praise to those that do well: The horns of the righteous shall be exalted; they shall be preferred and be put into places of power; and those that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, Ps 101:3, &c. Herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, but shall exalt with honour the horn of the righteous, Ps 112:9.

7 But God *is* the judge:
he putteth down one, and setteth up another.
8 For in the hand of the Lord
there is a cup, and the wine is red;
it is full of mixture;
and he poureth out of the same:
but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them*
out, *and* drink *them*.
9 But I will declare for ever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off;
but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

Psalms-76

The God of Victory and Judgment
To the chief Musician on Neginoth,
A Psalm or Song of Asaph.

1 In Judah *is* God known:
his name *is* great in Israel.

The church is here triumphant even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the centre of all our triumphs.

I. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, Ps 76:1. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel that among them God is known, and where he is known his name will be great. God is known as he is pleased to make himself known; and those are happy to whom he discovers himself--happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God, happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge.

In Judah God was known as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the greater, inasmuch as it was distinguishing, Ps 147:19,20.

II. In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, Ps 76:2. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known and his name was great; but in Salem, in Zion, were his tabernacle and his dwelling-place.

There he kept court; there he received the homage of his people by their sacrifices and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices; thither they came to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name, and of that place he said, Her will I dwell, for I have desired it.

It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a movable dwelling. Yet a little while is that light with us.

III. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies (Ps 76:3): There broke he the arrows of the bow. Observe how threatening the danger was. Though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furbished.

1. Here are bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all are broken and rendered useless. And it was done there,

(1.) In Judah and in Israel, in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations they answered their end, but, when turned against that holy nation, they were immediately broken. The Chaldee paraphrases it thus:

When the house of Israel did his will he placed his majesty among them, and there he broke the arrows of the bow; while they kept closely to his service they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or,

(2.) In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Zion, there he broke the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which God's people there made to him and in the performance of the promises which he there made to them, of both which see that instance, 2Ch 20:5,14. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church as to what is done in the camp. Now,

2. This victory redounded very much,

(1.) To the immortal honour of Israel's God (Ps 76:4): Thou art, and hast manifested thyself to be, more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.

[1.] "Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver."

[2.] "Than our invaders in particular. When they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us than they

are to annoy us." Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly it will appear that God is above them.

(2.) To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, Ps 76:5,6. They were stouthearted, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were men of might, robust and fit for service; they had chariots and horses, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, Ps 20:7. But all this force was of no avail when it was levelled against Jerusalem.

[1.] The stouthearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves (so some read it); when God pleases he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. They have slept, not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but their sleep, the sleep of sinners, that shall awake to everlasting shame and contempt.

[2.] The men of might can no more find their hands than the stout-hearted can their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies.

[3.] The chariots and horses may be truly said to be cast into a dead sleep when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob that commands deliverances for Jacob, and, at his rebuke, the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep. When the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes.

With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed,

spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

2 In Salem also is his tabernacle,
and his dwelling place in Zion.
3 There brake he the arrows of the bow,
the shield, and the sword, and the
battle. Selah.
4 Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey.
5 The stout-hearted are
spoiled, they have slept
their sleep:
and none of the men of might have found their hands.
6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.
7 Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared:
and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church is here made to speak three things:--

I. Terror to God's enemies (Ps 76:7-9): "Thou, even thou, art to be feared; thy majesty is to be reverenced, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee." Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God.

1. Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners: Who may stand in thy sight from the minute that thou art angry? If God be a consuming fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him, though his anger be kindled but a little? Ps 2:12.

2. Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocency and the injured cause of his own people:

"Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven, then when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth (Ps 76:8,9); and then the earth feared and was still, waiting what

would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine." Note,

(1.) God's people are the meek of the earth (Zec 2:3), the quiet in the land (Ps 35:20), that can bear any wrong, but do none.

(2.) Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will, sooner or later, appear for their salvation, and plead their cause.

(3.) When God comes to save all the meek of the earth, he will cause judgment to be heard from heaven; he will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet, sooner or later, he will make judgment to be heard.

(4.) When God is speaking judgment from heaven it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence: The earth feared and was still, as silence is made by proclamation when the court sits. Be still and know that I am God, Ps 46:10. Be silent, O all flesh! before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment, Zec 2:13.

Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army take it for granted that the descent of the destroying angel, who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which God caused judgment to be heard from heaven, and that the earth feared (that is, there was an earthquake), but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

II. Comfort to God's people, Ps 76:10. We live in a very angry provoking world; we often feel much, and are apt to fear more, from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us,

1. That as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself and serve his own purposes by it: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, not only by the checks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the liberty given to it for a time.

The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his anointed the more will God be praised for setting his King upon his holy hill of Zion in spite of them, Ps 2:1,6. When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-song that God has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, though the nations were angry (Re 11:17,18), then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God.

2. That what will not turn to his praise shall not be suffered to break out: The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he does to the raging sea. Hitherto it shall come and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed.

God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his jaws (Isa 37:29); and, though he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

III. Duty to all, Ps 76:11,12. Let all submit themselves to this great God and become his loyal subjects. Observe,

1 The duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are therefore every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings: Vow and pay; that is, take an oath of allegiance to him and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow.

Bind your souls with a bond to him (for that is the nature of a vow), and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay. And, having taken him for our King, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their sovereign, 1Sa 10:27. Send you the lamb to the ruler of the land, Isa 16:1.

Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God.

2 The reasons to enforce this duty: Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due; and is it not due to God? Yes;

(1.) He ought to be feared: He is the fear (so the word is); his name is glorious and fearful,; and he is the proper object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called the fear of Isaac (Ge 31:42), and we are commanded to make him our fear, Isa 8:13. When we bring presents to him we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places.

(2.) He will be feared, even by those who think it their own sole prerogative to be feared (Ps 76:12): He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, terrible to the kings of the earth; and sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his wrath, Re 6:16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to submit to him.

8 Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven;
the earth feared, and was still,
9 when God arose to judgment,

to save all the meek of the
earth. Selah.
10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee:
the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.
11 Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God:
let all that be round about him bring
presents unto him that ought to be feared.
12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes:
he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

Psalms-77

Comfort from Recalling God's Mighty Deeds
To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun,
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 I cried unto God with my voice,
even unto God with my voice;
and he gave ear unto me.

We have here the lively portraiture of a good man under prevailing melancholy, fallen into and sinking in that horrible pit and that miry clay, but struggling to get out. Drooping saints, that are of a sorrowful spirit, may here as in a glass see their own faces. The conflict which the psalmist had with his griefs and fears seems to have been over when he penned this record of it; for he says (Ps 77:1),

I cried unto God, and he gave ear unto me, which, while the struggle lasted, he had not the comfortable sense of, as he had afterwards; but he inserts it in the beginning of his narrative as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair; for God heard him, and, at length, he knew that he heard him. Observe,

I. His melancholy prayers. Being afflicted, he prayed (Jam 5:13), and, being in an agony, he prayed more

earnestly (Ps 77:1): My voice was unto God, and I cried, even with my voice unto God. He was full of complaints, loud complaints, but he directed them to God, and turned them all into prayers, vocal prayers, very earnest and importunate.

Thus he gave vent to his grief and gained some ease; and thus he took the right way in order to relief (Ps 77:2): In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.

Note, Days of trouble must be days of prayer, days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us; we must seek him and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace.

Those that are under trouble of mind must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but must pray it away. My hand was stretched out in the night and ceased not; so Dr. Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers. Compare Ps 143:5,6.

II. His melancholy grief. Grief may then be called melancholy indeed,

1. When it admits of no intermission; such was his: My sore, or wound, ran in the night, and bled inwardly, and it ceased not, no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep.

2. When it admits of no consolation; and that also as his case: My soul refused to be comforted; he had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters. As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart, Pr 25:20. Nor had he any mind to think of those things that would be his comforts; he put them far from him, as one that indulged himself in sorrow.

Those that are in sorrow, upon any account, do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

III. His melancholy musings. He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or public, that, 1 The methods that should have relieved him did but increase his grief, Ps 77:3.

(1.) One would have thought that the remembrance of God would comfort him, but it did not: I remembered God and was troubled, as poor Job (Job 23:15); I am troubled at his presence; when I consider I am afraid of him. When he remembered God his thoughts fastened only upon his justice, and wrath, and dreadful majesty, and thus God himself became a terror to him.

(2.) One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God would give him ease, but it did not; he complained, and yet his spirit was overwhelmed, and sank under the load.

2 The means of his present relief were denied him, Ps 77:4. He could not enjoy sleep, which, if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares: "Thou holdest my eyes waking with thy terrors, which make me full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day." He could not speak, by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, the tumult of his spirits, and the confusion his mind was in:

He kept silence even from good while his heart was hot within him; he was ready to burst like a new bottle (Job 32:19), and yet so troubled that he could not speak and refresh himself. Grief never preys so much upon the spirits as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

IV. His melancholy reflections (Ps 77:5,6): "I have considered the days of old, and compared them with the present days; and our former prosperity does but

aggravate our present calamities: for we see not the wonders that our fathers told us off."

Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them, for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But say not thou that the former days were better than these, because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no, Ec 7:10.

Neither let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost make us unthankful for those that are left, or impatient under our crosses. Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night, the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows and entertained himself in his former solitude. These songs he remembered, and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of them did but pour out his soul in him, Ps 43:4. See Job 35:10.

V. His melancholy fears and apprehensions: "I communed with my own heart, Ps 77:6. Come, my soul, what will be the issue of these things? What can I think of them and what can I expect they will come to at last? I made diligent search into the causes of my trouble, enquiring wherefore God contended with me and what would be the consequences of it. And thus I began to reason, Will the Lord cast off for ever, as he does for the present? He is not now favourable; and will he be favourable no more? His mercy is now gone; and is it clean gone for ever?

His promise now fails; and does it fail for evermore? God is not now gracious; but has he forgotten to be gracious? His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom; but are they shut up, shut up in anger?" Ps 77:7-9. This is the language of a disconsolate deserted soul, walking in darkness and

having no light, a case not uncommon even with those that fear the Lord and obey the voice of his servant, Isa 50:10. He may here be looked upon,

1. As groaning under a sore trouble. God hid his face from him, and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is of all trouble most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierces it like the apprehensions of God's being angry, the suspending of his favour and the superseding of his promise; this wounds the spirit; and who can bear that?

2. As grappling with a strong temptation. Note, God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and, as to both, to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us and cast us off, that the covenant of grace fails us, and that the tender mercy of our God shall be for ever withheld from us.

But we must not give way to such suggestions as these. If fear and melancholy ask such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the Scripture: Will the Lord cast off for ever? God forbid, Ro 11:1. No; the Lord will not cast off his people, Ps 94:14. Will he be favourable no more?

Yes, he will; for, though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion, La 3:32. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? No; his mercy endures for ever; as it is from everlasting, it is to everlasting, Ps 103:17. Doth his promise fail for evermore? No; it is impossible for God to lie, Heb 6:18. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, Ex 34:6. Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?

No; they are new every morning (La 3:23); and therefore, How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Ho 11:8,9. Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions when, on a sudden, he first checked himself with that word, Selah, "Stop there; go no further; let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises;" and he then chid himself (Ps 77:10):

I said, This is my infirmity. He is soon aware that it is not well said, and therefore, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? I said, This is my affliction" (so some understand it); "This is the calamity that falls to my lot and I must make the best of it; every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up." Or, rather, "This is my sin; it is my iniquity, the plague of my own heart."

These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith and the corruption of a distempered mind. note,

(1.) We all know that concerning ourselves of which we must say, "This is our infirmity, a sin that most easily besets us."

(2.) Despondency of spirit, and distrust of God, under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people, and, as such, are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here: This is my infirmity. When at any time it is working in us we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak.

We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here: But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. He had been considering the years of ancient times (Ps 77:5), the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them as the years of the right hand of the Most High, that those

blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand who is over all, God, blessed for ever, and this satisfied him; for may not the Most High with his right hand make what changes he pleases?

2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:
my sore ran in the night, and ceased not:
my soul refused to be comforted.
3 I remembered God, and was troubled:
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.
Selah.
4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking:
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I have considered the days of
old, the years of ancient times.
6 I call to remembrance my song in the night:
I commune with mine own heart:
and my spirit made diligent search.
7 Will the Lord cast off for ever?
And will he be favorable no more?
8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever?
Doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious?
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?
Selah.
10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity:
but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and silences his own fears of God's casting off his people by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which though he had in vain tried to quiet himself with (Ps 77:5,6) yet he tried again, and, upon this second trial, found it not in vain.

It is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, though they do not prove effectual at first: "I will remember, surely I will, what God has done for his people of old, till I can thence

infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensation," Ps 77:11,12. Note,

1 The works of the Lord, for his people, have been wondrous works.

2. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us.

3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them we must meditate upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them, that we may inform ourselves and others further concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God and changes not. If he begin, he will finish his work and bring forth the top-stone.

Two things, in general, satisfied him very much:

I. That God's way is in the sanctuary, Ps 77:13. It is in holiness, so some. When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the divine providence, this we are sure of, in general, that God is holy in all his works, that they are all worthy of himself and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature.

He has holy ends in all he does, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. His way is according to his promise, which he has spoken in his holiness and made known in the sanctuary. What he has done is according to what he has said and may be interpreted by it; and from what he has said we may easily gather that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it. All he does is intended for the good of his church.

II. That God's way is in the sea. Though God is holy, just, and good, in all he does, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs: His path is in the great waters and his footsteps are not known, Ps 77:19.

God's ways are like the deep waters which cannot be fathomed (Ps 36:6), like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked, Pr 30:18,19. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for. He specifies some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers,

1. That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel (Ps 77:13): Who is so great a God as our God? Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him, therein, great above all comparison; and then we may take to ourselves the comfort of what he has done and encourage ourselves with it.

2. That he is a God of almighty power (Ps 77:14): "Thou art the God that alone doest wonders, above the power of any creature; thou hast visibly, and beyond any contradiction, declared thy strength among the people." What God has done for his church has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for therein he has made bare his everlasting arm.

(1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt, Ps 77:15. This was the beginning of mercy to them, and was yearly to be commemorated among them in the passover: "Thou hast with thy arm, stretched out in so many miracles, redeemed thy people out of the hand of the Egyptians." Though they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed, as if it had been done by price, because it was typical of the great redemption, which was to be wrought out, in the fulness of time, both by price and power.

Those that were redeemed are here called not only the sons of Jacob, to whom the promise was made, but of Joseph also, who had a most firm and lively belief of the performance of it; for, when he was dying, he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones.

(2.) He divided the Red Sea before them (Ps 77:16): The waters gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but the depths, were troubled, and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

(3.) He destroyed the Egyptians (Ps 77:17): The clouds poured out water upon them, while the pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament concurred with those that were beneath the firmament to destroy the rebels. Then the skies sent out a sound; thy arrows also went abroad, which is explained (Ps 77:18):

The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven (that was the sound which the skies sent forth); the lightnings lightened the world--those were the arrows which went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited, with so much terror that the earth of the adjacent coast trembled and shook. Thus God's way was in the sea, for the destruction of his enemies, as well as for the salvation of his people; and yet when the waters returned to their place his footsteps were not known (Ps 77:19); there was no mark set upon the place, as there was, afterwards, in Jordan, Jos 4:9.

We do not read in the story of Israel's passing through the Red Sea that there were thunders and lightning, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus says

there were, such displays of the divine terror upon that occasion. But it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earth quakes, that were at Mount Sinai when the law was given.

(4.) He took his people Israel under his own guidance and protection (Ps 77:20): Thou leddest thy people like a clock. They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beasts of prey, God went before them with all the care and tenderness of a shepherd, that they might not fail.

The pillar of cloud and fire led them; yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them; they could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them.

Moses was their governor, Aaron their high priest; they were guides, overseers, and rulers to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry is, though not so great a miracle, yet as great a mercy to any people as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and does not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected. But as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things he found he had gained his point; his very entrance upon this matter gave him light and joy (Ps 119:130); his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no further; he went his way, and did eat, and his countenance was no more sad, like Hannah, 1Sa 1:18.

11 I will remember the works of the Lord:
surely I will remember thy wonders of old.
12 I will meditate also of all thy work,
and talk of thy doings.
13 Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary:

who *is so* great a God as *our* God?
14 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders:
thou hast declared thy strength among the people.
15 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people,
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.
Selah.
16 The waters saw thee, O God,
the waters saw thee;
they were afraid:
the depths also were troubled.
17 The clouds poured out water:
the skies sent out a sound:
thine arrows also went abroad.
18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven:
the lightnings lightened the world:
the earth trembled and shook.
19 Thy way *is* in the sea,
and thy path in the great waters,
and thy footsteps are not known.
20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalms-78

God's Faithfulness to His Unfaithful People
Maschil of Asaph.

1 Give ear, O my people, *to* my law:
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

These verses, which contain the preface to this history, show that the psalm answers the title; it is indeed Maschil--a psalm to give instruction; if we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault. Here,

I The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote (Ps 78:1): Give ear, O my people! to my law. Some make

these the psalmist's words. David, as a king, or Asaph, in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet singer of Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions his law or edict; such was their commanding force in themselves. Every good truth, received in the light and love of it, will have the power of a law upon the conscience; yet that was not all:

David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people. If God, by his grace, make great men good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, because their word will be a law to all about them, who must therefore give ear and hearken; for to what purpose is divine revelation brought our ears if we will not incline our ears to it, both humble ourselves and engage ourselves to hear it and heed it? Or the psalmist, being a prophet, speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them his people, and demands subjection to what was said as to a law. Let him that has an ear thus hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, Re 2:7.

II. Several reasons are given why we should diligently attend to that which is here related.

1 The things here discoursed of are weighty, and deserve consideration, strange, and need it (Ps 78:2): I will open my mouth in a parable, in that which is sublime and uncommon, but very excellent and well worthy your attention; I will utter dark sayings, which challenge your most serious regards as much as the enigmas with which the eastern princes and learned men used to try one another.

These are called dark sayings, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put

forth (Mt 13:35), which were (as this) representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men.

2. They are the monuments of antiquity--dark sayings of old which our fathers have told us, Ps 78:3. They are things of undoubted certainty; we have heard them and known them, and there is no room left to question the truth of them. The gospel of Luke is called a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us (Lu 1:1), so were the things here related.

The honour we owe to our parents and ancestors obliges us to attend to that which our fathers have told us, and, as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard.

3. They are to be transmitted to posterity, and it lies as a charge upon us carefully to hand them down (Ps 78:4); because our fathers told them to us we will not hide them from their children.

Our children are called theirs, for they were in care for their seed's seed, and looked upon them as theirs; and, in teaching our children the knowledge of God, we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay, if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to their children, the children of others.

Our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity; and for the generation to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well as for the generation that is next rising up and the children that are born.

That which we are to transmit to our children is not only the knowledge of languages, arts and sciences, liberty and property, but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in the wonderful works he has done. Our great care must be to lodge our

religion, that great deposit, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us. There are two things the full and clear knowledge of which we must preserve the entail of to our heirs:--

(1.) The law of God; for this was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children (Ps 78:5): He established a testimony or covenant, and enacted a law, in Jacob and Israel, gave them precepts and promises, which he commanded them to make known to their children, De 6:7,20.

The church of God, as the historian says of the Roman commonwealth, was not to be res unius ætatis--a thing of one age but was to be kept up from one generation to another; and therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law: and, when they had grown up, they must arise and declare them to their children (Ps 78:6), that, as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passes away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide for ever; and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven.

(2.) The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment. The former seem to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order that his laws should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient and the threatenings denounced against the disobedient. Let these be told to our children and our children's children,

[1.] That they may take encouragement to conform to the will of God (Ps 78:7): that, not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God and keep his commandments, might make

his command their rule and his covenant their stay. Those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation that make conscience of doing his commandments. The works of God, duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him and to keep his commandments, for he is able to bear us out in both.

[2.] That they may take warning not to conform to the example of their fathers (Ps 78:8): That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation. See here, First, What was the character of their fathers. Though they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for aught we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God, in direct opposition to his will.

They did indeed profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts aright; they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him, and therefore their spirit was not stedfast with him, but upon every occasion they flew off from him.

Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy. Those that do not set their hearts aright will not be stedfast with God, but play fat and loose. Secondly, What was a charge to the children: That they be not as their fathers.

Note, Those that have descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps. It will be no excuse for a vain conversation that it was received by tradition from our fathers (1Pe 1:18); for what we know of them that was evil must be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them as we would shun

those courses which they took that were ruinous to their health or estates.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable:
I will utter dark sayings of old:
3 which we have heard and known,
and our fathers have told us.
4 We will not hide *them* from their children,
showing to the generation to come
the praises of the Lord, and his strength,
and his wonderful works that he hath done.
5 For he established a testimony in Jacob,
and appointed a law in Israel,
which he commanded our fathers,
that they should make them known to their children:
6 that the generation to come might know *them,*
even the children *which* should be born;
who should arise and declare *them* to their children:
7 that they might set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments:
8 and might not be as their fathers,
a stubborn and rebellious generation;
a generation *that* set not their heart aright,
and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.
9 The children of Ephraim,
being armed, *and* carrying bows,
turned back in the day of battle.

In these verses,

I The psalmist observes the late rebukes of Providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God, Ps 78:9-11. The children of Ephraim, in which tribe Shiloh was, though they were well armed and shot with bows, yet turned back in the day of battle.

This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eli's time, when they took the

ark prisoner, 1Sa 4:10,11. Of this the psalmist here begins to speak, and, after a long digression, returns to it again, Ps 78:61. Well might that event be thus fresh in mind in David's time, above forty years after, for the ark, which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, though it was quickly brought out of captivity, was never brought out of obscurity till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe,

1 The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe; the children of that tribe, though as well armed as ever, turned back when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit, and that is gone if God be gone. Sin dispirits men and takes away the heart. 2 The causes of their cowardice, which were no less shameful; and these were,

(1.) A shameful violation of God's law and their covenant with him (Ps 78:10); they were basely treacherous and perfidious, for they kept not the covenant of God, and basely stubborn and rebellious (as they were described, Ps 78:8), for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and, in effect, told him to his face they would not be ruled by him.

(2.) A shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them: They forgot his works and his wonders, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, Ps 78:11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws.

II. He takes occasion hence to consult precedents and to compare this with the case of their fathers, who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies to them and ungrateful to their founder and great benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very remarkable, for it

relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness and man's badness, and mercy, at length, rejoices against judgment.

1. God did great things for his people Israel when he first incorporated them and formed them into a people: Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, and not only in their sight, but in their cause, and for their benefit, so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is only just mentioned here (Ps 78:12), but afterwards resumed, Ps 78:43. He proceeds here to show,

(1.) How he made a lane for them through the Red Sea, and caused them, gave them courage, to pass through, though the waters stood over their heads as a heap, Ps 78:13. See Isa 63:12,13, where God is said to lead them by the hand, as it were, through the deep that they should not stumble.

(2.) How he provided a guide for them through the untrodden paths of the wilderness (Ps 78:14); he led them step by step, in the day time by a cloud, which also sheltered them from the heat, and all the night with a light of fire, which perhaps warmed the air; at least it made the darkness of night less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts, Zec 2:5.

(3.) How he furnished their camp with fresh water in a dry and thirsty land where no water was, not by opening the bottles of heaven (that would have been a common way), but by broaching a rock (Ps 78:15,16): He clave the rocks in the wilderness, which yielded water, though they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembic, drop by drop, but in streams running down like rivers, and as out of the great depths. God gives abundantly, and is rich in

mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes makes us to feel the want of mercies that we may the better know the worth of them. This water which God gave Israel out of the rock was the more valuable because it was spiritual drink. And that rock was Christ.

2. When God began thus to bless them they began to affront him (Ps 78:17): They sinned yet more against him, more than they had done in Egypt, though there they were bad enough, Eze 20:8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance, and never murmured at their taskmasters so much as they did at Moses and Aaron; as if they were delivered to do all these abominations, Jer 7:10.

As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance, to become more exceedingly sinful. They provoked the Most High. Though he is most high, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him and even bade defiance to his justice; and this in the wilderness, where he had them at his mercy and therefore they were bound in interest to please him, and where he showed them so much mercy and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him:

They tempted God in their heart, Ps 78:18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity. They do always err in their heart, Heb 3:10. Thus they tempted God, tried his patience to the utmost, whether he would bear with them or no, and, in effect, bade him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him:--

(1.) By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them: They asked meat for

their lust. God had given them meat for their hunger, in the manna, wholesome pleasant food and in abundance; he had given them meat for their faith out of the heads of leviathan which he broke in pieces, Ps 74:14. But all this would not serve; they must have meat for their lust, dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God than our quarrelling with our allotment and indulging the desires of the flesh.

(2.) By distrusting his power to give them what they desired. This was tempting God indeed. They challenged him to give them flesh; and, if he did not, they would say it was because he could not, not because he did not see it fit for them (Ps 78:19): They spoke against God. Those that set bounds to God's power speak against him. It was as injurious a reflection as could be cat upon God to say, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

They had manna, but the did not think they had a table furnished unless they had boiled and roast, a first, a second, and a third course, as they had in Egypt, where they had both flesh and fish, and sauce too (Ex 16:3,Nu 11:5), dishes of meat and salvers of fruit. What an unreasonable insatiable thin is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness; whereas the beasts of the forest, and all the fowls of the mountains, are his, Ps 50:10,11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse in that they did at the same time own that he had done as much as that came to (Ps 78:20): Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, which they and their cattle drank of.

And which is easier, to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do? Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask

so absurd a question: "Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water give bread also? Or can he that has given bread provide flesh also?" Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? When once the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude that nothing is impossible with him. Be it ever so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.

3. God justly resented the provocation and was much displeased with them (Ps 78:21): The Lord heard this, and was wroth. Note, God is a witness to all our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them and is much displeased with them. A fire was kindled for this against Jacob; the fire of the Lord burnt among them, Nu 11:1.

Or it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming fire. Those that will not believe the power of God's mercy shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Now here we are told,

(1.) Why God thus resented the provocation (Ps 78:22): Because by this it appeared that they believed not in God; they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him: They trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them; for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last who cannot find in their hearts to trust in his providence for food convenient in the way to it. That which aggravated their unbelief was the experience they had had of the power and goodness of God, Ps 78:23-25.

He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; for he

commanded the clouds from above, as one that had created them and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Usually by their showers they contribute to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here the corn of heaven; for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God, who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven, and that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal 3:10.

To all that by faith and prayer ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened; for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill that they should distrust him when he had been so very kind to them that he had rained down manna upon them to eat, substantial food, daily, duly, enough for all, enough for each. Man did eat angels' food, such as angels, if they had occasion for food, would eat and be thankful for; or rather such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the Chaldee reads it) such as descended from the dwelling of angels.

Every one, even the least child in Israel, did eat the bread of the mighty (so the margin reads it); the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing that it was strong meat for strong men. And, though the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor ever reduced to short allowance; for he sent them meat to the full. If they gathered little, it was their own fault; and yet even then they had no lack, Ex 16:18. The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, though it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of mercy, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

(2.) How he expressed his resentment of the provocation, not in denying them what they so inordinately lusted after, but in granting it to them.

[1.] Did they question his power? He soon gave them a sensible conviction that he could furnish a table in the wilderness. Though the winds seem to blow where they list, yet, when he pleased, he could make them his caterers to fetch in provisions, Ps 78:26. He caused an east wind to blow and a south wind, either a south-east wind, or an east wind first to bring in the quails from that quarter and then a south wind to bring in more from that quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most delicate sort, not butchers' meat, but wild-fowl, and abundance of it, as dust, as the sand of the sea (Ps 78:27), so that the meanest Israelite might have sufficient; and it cost them nothing, no, not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, for he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation, Ps 78:28. We have the account Nu 11:31,32.

See how good God is even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness does not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these; dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour. Christ gave dry bread to the disciples that he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him.

[2.] Did they defy his justice and boast that they had gained their point? He made them pay dearly for their quails; for, though he gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lust (Ps 78:29,30); their appetite was insatiable; they were well filled and yet they were not satisfied; for they knew not what they would have. Such is the nature of lust; it is content with nothing, and the more it is humoured the more humoursome it grows. Those that indulge their lust will never be estranged from it. Or it intimates that God's

liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful lustings, as it would have done if they had had any sense of honour.

But what came of it? While the meat was yet in their mouth, rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them (Ps 78:31), those that were most luxurious and most daring. See Nu 11:33,34. They were fed as sheep for the slaughter: the butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites, that did eat moderately of the quails and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom. The end of those who make a god of their belly is destruction, Php 3:19. The prosperity of fools shall destroy them, and their ruin will be the greater.

10 They kept not the covenant of God,
and refused to walk in his law;
11 and forgat his works,
and his wonders that he had showed them.
12 Marvelous things did he in the sight of their fathers,
in the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.
13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through;
and he made the waters to stand as a heap.
14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud,
and all the night with a light of fire.
15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness,
and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.
16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
and caused waters to run down like rivers.
17 And they sinned yet more against him
by provoking the Most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tempted God in their heart
by asking meat for their lust.
19 Yea, they spake against God;
they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
20 Behold, he smote the rock,

that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed;
can he give bread also?
Can he provide flesh for his people?
21 Therefore the Lord heard *this*, and was wroth:
so a fire was kindled against Jacob,
and anger also came up against Israel;
22 because they believed not in God,
and trusted not in his salvation:
23 though he had commanded the clouds from above,
and opened the doors of heaven,
24 and had rained down manna upon them to eat,
and had given them of the corn of heaven.
25 Man did eat angels' food:
he sent them meat to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven:
and by his power he brought in the south wind.
27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust,
and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:
28 and he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp,
round about their habitations.
29 So they did eat, and were well filled:
for he gave them their own desire;
30 they were not estranged from their lust:
but while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,
31 the wrath of God came upon them,
and slew the fattest of them,
and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.
32 For all this they sinned still,
and believed not for his wondrous works.

The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, any more than his mercies (Ps 78:32): For all this, they sinned still; they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though God was wroth and smote them, yet they went on frowardly in the way of their heart (Isa 57:17); they believed not for his wondrous works.

Though his works of justice were as wondrous and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their friend. Those hearts are hard indeed that will neither be melted by the mercies of God nor broken by his judgments.

33 Therefore their days did he consume in
vanity, and their years in trouble.

They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly, but slowly. He punished them not now with such acute diseases as that was which slew the fattest of them, but a lingering chronical distemper (Ps 78:33):

Therefore their days did he consume in vanity in the wilderness and their years in trouble. By an irreversible doom they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which indeed were consumed in vanity; for in all those years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they were turned back again, and wandered to and fro as in a labyrinth, not one stroke struck towards the conquest of it: and not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carcases were condemned to fall in the wilderness and there they all perished but Caleb and Joshua.

Note, Those that sin still must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort and to so little purpose, is because we do not live by faith.

34 When he slew them, then they sought him:
and they returned and inquired early after God.

Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in this profession.

(1.) Their profession was plausible enough (Ps 78:34,35): When he slew them, or condemned them to be slain, then they sought him; they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. When some were slain others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform and be very good; then they returned to God, and enquired early after him. So one would have taken them to be such as desired to find him.

And they pretended to do this because, however they had forgotten it formerly, now they remembered that God was their rock and therefore now that they needed him they would fly to him and take shelter in him, and that the high God was their Redeemer, who brought them out of Egypt and to whom therefore they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our rock and our redeemer; for, in prosperity, we are apt to forget him.

(2.) They were not sincere in this profession (Ps 78:36,37): They did but flatter him with their mouth, as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not return to God with their whole heart, but feignedly, Jer 3:10. All their professions, prayers, and promises, were extorted by the rack. It was plain that they did not mean as they said, for they did not adhere to it. They thawed in the sun, but froze in the shade.

They did but lie to God with their tongues, for their heart was not with him, was not right with him, as appeared by the issue, for they were not stedfast in his covenant. They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant; and, by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God, they really put as great an affront upon him as by any of their reflections.

35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their
mouth, and they lied unto him with their
tongues.
37 For their heart was not right with him,
neither were they steadfast in his
covenant.

God hereupon, in pity to them, put a stop to the judgments which were threatened and in part executed (Ps 78:38,39): But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity. One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to lie thus to the holy God, than thus to keep back part of the price, the chief part? Ac 5:3.

And yet he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity thus far, that he did not destroy them and cut them off from being a people, as he justly might have done, but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, Isa 65:8. Many a time he turned his anger away (for he is Lord of his anger) and did not stir up all his wrath, to deal with them as they deserved: and why did he not? Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but,

(1.) Because he was full of compassion and, when he was going to destroy them, his repentings were kindled together, and he said, How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? Ho 11:8.

(2.) Because, though they did not rightly remember that he was their rock, he remembered that they were but flesh. He considered the corruption of their nature, which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for their sin. See Ge 6:3. He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them:

They are as a wind that passeth away and cometh not again. They may soon be taken off, but, when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind; whence it were easy to argue they may justly, they may immediately, be cut off, and there would be no loss of them: but God argues, on the contrary, therefore he will not destroy them; for the true reason is, He is full of compassion.

38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their*
iniquity, and destroyed *them* not:
yea, many a time turned he his anger
away, and did not stir up all his wrath.
39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh;
a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.
40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness,
and grieve him in the desert!

The matter and scope of this paragraph are the same with the former, showing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how, in judgment, he remembered mercy at last.

Let not those that receive mercy from God be thereby emboldened to sin, for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin and hasten the punishment of it; yet let not those that are under divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance, for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

I The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition (Ps 78:40,41): How often did they provoke him in the wilderness! Note once, nor twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation was a great aggravation of it, as well as

the place, Ps 78:17. God kept an account how often they provoked him, though they did not.

Nu 14:22, They have tempted me these ten times. By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him, for he looked upon them as his children (Israel is my son, my first-born), and the undutiful disrespectful behaviour of children does more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly, Isa 1:2.

They grieved him because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them, which he did not willingly. After they had humbled themselves before him they turned back and tempted God, as before, and limited the Holy One of Israel, prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them and what methods he should take in leading them and providing for them.

They limited him to their way and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to limit the Holy One of Israel; for, being the Holy One, he will do what is most for his own glory; and, being the Holy One of Israel, he will do what is most for their good; and we both impeach his wisdom and betray our own pride and folly if we go about to prescribe to him. That which occasioned their limiting God for the future was their forgetting his former favours (Ps 78:42):

They remembered not his hand, how strong it is and how it had been stretched out for them, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy, Pharaoh, that great enemy who sought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten; for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

II The mercies of God to Israel, which they were unmindful of when they tempted God and limited him; and this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them begins higher, and is carried down further, than that before, Ps 78:12, &c.

1. This begins with their deliverance out of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go: these were the signs God wrought in Egypt (Ps 78:43), the wonders he wrought in the field of Zoan, that is, in the country of Zoan, as we say, in Agro N., meaning in such a country.

(1.) Several of the plagues of Egypt are here specified, which speak aloud the power of God and his favour to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As,

[1.] The turning of the waters into blood; they had made themselves drunk with the bloods of God's people, even the infants, and now God gave them blood to drink, for they were worthy, Ps 78:44.

[2.] The flies and frogs which infested them, mixtures of insects in swarms, in shoals, which devoured them, which destroyed them, Ps 78:45. For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals instruments of his wrath when he pleases; what they want in strength may be made up in number.

[3.] The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had laboured for, Ps 78:46. They are called God's great army, Joe 2:25.

[4.] The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees (Ps 78:47), and their cattle, especially their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunder-bolts (Ps 78:48), and the frost, or congealed rain (as the word signifies), was so violent that it destroyed even the sycamore-trees.

[5.] The death of the first-born was the last and sorest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel; it was first in intention (Ex 4:23), but last in execution; for, if gentler methods would have done the work, this would have been prevented: but it is here largely described, Ps 78:49-51.

First, The anger of God was the cause of it. Wrath had now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost; Pharaoh's heart having been often hardened after less judgments had softened it, God now stirred up all his wrath; for he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, anger in the highest degree, wrath and indignation the cause, and trouble (tribulation and anguish, Ro 2:8,9) the effect.

This from on high he cast upon them and did not spare, and they could not flee out of his hands, Job 27:22. He made a way, or (as the word is) he weighed a path, to his anger. He did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight. His anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for, in his greatest displeasure, he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures: the path of his anger is always weighed.

Secondly, The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution: He sent evil angels among them, not evil in their own nature, but in respect to the errand upon which they were sent; they were destroying angels, or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders, according to the weighed paths of God's anger, not to kill all, but the first-born only.

Good angels become evil angels to sinners. Those that make the holy God their enemy must never expect the holy angels to be their friends.

Thirdly, The execution itself was very severe: He spared not their soul from death, but suffered death to ride in triumph among them and gave their life over to the pestilence, which cut the thread of life off immediately; for he smote all the first-born in Egypt (Ps 78:51), the chief of their strength, the hopes of their respective families; children are the parents' strength, and the first-born the chief of their strength.

Thus, because Israel was precious in God's sight, he gave men for them and people for their life, Isa 43:4.

(2.) By these plagues on the Egyptians God made a way for his own people to go forth like sheep, distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, as the shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, having set his own mark on these sheep by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their door-posts.

He made them go forth like sheep, not knowing whither they went, and guided them in the wilderness, as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness, Ps 78:52.

He led them on safely, though in dangerous paths, so that they feared not, that is, they needed not to fear; they were indeed frightened at the Red Sea (Ex 14:10), but that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears. But the sea overwhelmed their enemies that ventured to pursue them into it, Ps 78:63. It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

2. It is carried down as far as their settlement in Canaan (Ps 78:54): He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, to that land in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was, as it were, the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory, of it.

That is a happy land which is the border of God's sanctuary. It was the happiness of that land that there God was known, and there were his sanctuary and dwelling-place, Ps 76:1,2 The whole land in general, and Zion in particular, was the mountain which his right hand had purchased, which by his own power he had set apart for himself. See Ps 44:3. He made them to ride on the high places of the earth, Isa 58:14,De 32:13.

They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of that land, but God cast out the heathen before them, not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and, as Lord of hosts, turned them out of it, and made his people Israel tread upon their high places, dividing each tribe an inheritance by line, and making them to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed.

God could have turned the uninhabited uncultivated wilderness (which perhaps was nearly of the same extent as Canaan) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed for them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be the glory of all lands; it must likewise be fought for, for the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

III. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan, Ps 78:56-58. The children were like their fathers, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations.

Though God had done so much for them, yet they tempted and provoked the most high God still. He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they began very promisingly, but they turned back, gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully, and were like a deceitful bow, which seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but, when it is drawn, breaks, and drops

the arrow at the archer's foot, or perhaps makes it recoil in his face.

There was no hold of them, nor any confidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and provoked him to anger with their high places and their graven images. Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, though they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into.

It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol, and therefore by it they are said to move him to jealousy, De 32:16,21.

IV. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way than their descent from Israel. You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you, Am 3:2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel,

1. God was displeased with them (Ps 78:59): When God heard this, when he heard the cry of their iniquity, which came up before him, he was wroth, he took it very heinously, as well he might, and he greatly abhorred Israel, whom he had greatly loved and delighted in.

Those that had been the people of his choice became the generation of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice.

2. He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, Ps 78:60. God never leaves us till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us. His name

is Jealous, and he is a jealous God; and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had betrothed to himself be loathed and rejected, and he refuse to cohabit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger.

The tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men, in which God would in very deed dwell with men upon the earth; but, when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory departed. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it.

3. He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people.

(1.) God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to show that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall now be no longer a token of his presence (Ps 78:61): He delivered his strength into captivity, as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemy's hand.

We have the story 1Sa 4:11. When the ark has become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines.

(2.) He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines (Ps 78:62,63): He gave his people over unto the sword, to the sword of his own justice and of the enemy's rage, for he was wroth with his inheritance; and that wrath of his was the fire which consumed their young men, in the prime of their time, by the sword or sickness, and made such a devastation of them that

their maidens were not praised, that is, were not given in marriage (which is honourable in all), because there were no young men for them to be given to, and because the distresses and calamities of Israel were so many and great that the joys of marriage-solemnities were judged unseasonable, and it was said, Blessed is the womb that beareth not.

General destructions produce a scarcity of men. Isa 13:12, I will make a man more precious than fine gold, so that seven women shall take hold of one man, Isa 4:1,Isa 3:25. Yet this was not the worst:

(3.) Even their priests, who attended the ark, fell by the sword, Hophni and Phinehas. Justly they fell, for they made themselves vile, and were sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and their priesthood was so far from being their protection that it aggravated their sin and hastened their fall. Justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle, without call or warrant. We throw ourselves out of God's protection when we go out of our place and out of the way of our duty.

When the priests fell their widows made no lamentation, Ps 78:64. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief; the widow of Phinehas, instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son Ichabod, 1Sa 4:19, &c.

V. God's return, in mercy, to them, and his gracious appearances for them after this. We read not of their repentance and return to God, but God was grieved for the miseries of Israel (Jdg 10:16) and concerned for his own honour, fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely, De 32:27.

And therefore then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep (Ps 78:65), and like a mighty man that shouteth by

reason of wine, not only like one that is raised out of sleep and recovers himself from the slumber which by drinking he was overcome with, who then regards that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad by the sober and moderate use of wine, and is therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business.

When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it, stirred up his strength to do great things for his people.

1. He plagued the Philistines who held the ark in captivity, Ps 78:66. He smote them with emerods in the hinder parts, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even when they thought themselves more than conquerors.

He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach by the golden images of their emerods, which they returned with the ark for a trespass-offering (1Sa 6:5), to remain in perpetuam rei memoriam--as a perpetual memorial. Note, Sooner or later God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, even when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark after it had been some months in captivity and some years in obscurity. He did indeed refuse the tabernacle of Joseph; he never sent it back to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, Ps 78:67. The ruins of that place were standing monuments of divine justice. God, see what I did to Shiloh, Jer 7:12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark is not the removing of it. Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not.

God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion, as, long after, the fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, Ro 11:12. When God chose not the tribe of Ephraim, of which tribe Joshua was, he chose the tribe of Judah (Ps 78:68), because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah.

There it took possession of that tribe; but thence it was removed to Zion, the Mount Zion which he loved (Ps 78:68), which was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; there it was that he built his sanctuary like high palaces and like the earth, Ps 78:69. David indeed erected only a tent for the ark, but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son; and that was,

(1.) A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth, nay, it excelled them all in splendour and magnificence. Solomon built it, and yet here it is said God built its, for his father had taught him, perhaps with reference to this undertaking, that except the Lord build the house those labour in vain that build it, Ps 127:1, which is a psalm for Solomon.

(2.) A very stable place, like the earth, though not to continue as long as the earth, yet while it was to continue it was as firm as the earth, which God upholds by the word of his power, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel temple was erected, which is to continue as long as the sun and moon endure (Ps 89:36,37) and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

3. He set a good government over them, a monarchy, and a monarch after his own heart: He chose David his servant out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, Ps 78:70. Concerning David observe here,

(1.) The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, but his education was poor. He was bred not a scholar, not a soldier, but a shepherd. He was taken from the sheep-folds, as Moses was; for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust and to set them among princes; and sometimes he finds those most fit for public action that have spent the beginning of their time in solitude and contemplation.

The Son of David was upbraided with the obscurity of his original: Is not this the carpenter? David was taken, he does not say from leading the rams, but from following the ewes, especially those great with young, which intimated that of all the good properties of a shepherd he was most remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to those of his flock that most needed his care.

This temper of mind fitted him for government, and made him a type of Christ, who, when he feeds his flock like a shepherd, does with a particular care gently lead those that are with young, Isa 40:11.

(2.) The greatness of his advancement. God preferred him to feed Jacob his people, Ps 78:71. It was a great honour that God put upon him, in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him when he was charged with the government of those that were God's own inheritance.

God advanced him to the throne that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself, that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under-shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they feed the flock of God.

(3.) The happiness of his management. David, having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it (Ps 78:72): So he fed them; he ruled them and taught them, guided and protected them,

[1.] Very honestly; he did it according to the integrity of his heart, aiming at nothing but the glory of God and the good of the people committed to his charge; the principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with godly sincerity, by the grace of God. In every thing he did he meant well and had no by-end in view.

[2.] Very discreetly; he did it by the skilfulness of his hands. He was not only very sincere in what he designed, but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end, for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government! With good reason does the psalmist make this the finishing crowning instance of God's favour to Israel, for David was a type of Christ the great and good Shepherd, who was humbled first and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold that he should be filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding and should judge and reprove with equity, Isa 11:3,4.

On the integrity of his heart and the skilfulness of his hands all his subjects may entirely rely, and of the

increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

41 Yea, they turned back and tempted
God, and limited the Holy One of
Israel.
42 They remembered not his hand,
nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy:
43 how he had wrought his signs in
Egypt, and his wonders in the field of
Zoan:
44 and had turned their rivers into blood;
and their floods, that they could not drink.
45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them;
and frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave also their increase unto the
caterpillar, and their labor unto the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with
hail, and their sycamore trees
with frost.
48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail,
and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
wrath, and indignation, and trouble,
by sending evil angels *among them.*
50 He made a way to his anger;
he spared not their soul from death,
but gave their life over to the pestilence;
51 and smote all the firstborn in Egypt;
the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:
52 but made his own people to go forth like sheep,
and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not:
but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary,
even to this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.
55 He cast out the heathen also before them,
and divided them an inheritance by line,
and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God,
and kept not his testimonies:
57 but turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers:
they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.
59 When God heard *this,* he was wroth,
and greatly abhorred Israel:
60 so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
the tent *which* he placed among men;
61 and delivered his strength into captivity,
and his glory into the enemy's hand.
62 He gave his people over also unto the sword;
and was wroth with his inheritance.
63 The fire consumed their young men;
and their maidens were not given to marriage.
64 Their priests fell by the sword;
and their widows made no lamentation.
65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep,
and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.
66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts:
he put them to a perpetual reproach.
67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of
Joseph, and chose not the tribe of
Ephraim:
68 but chose the tribe of Judah,
the mount Zion which he loved.
69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces,*
like the earth which he hath established for ever.
70 He chose David also his
servant, and took him from
the sheepfolds:
71 from following the ewes great with
young he brought him to feed Jacob
his people, and Israel his
inheritance.
72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart;
and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

Psalms-79

A Lament over the Destruction of Jerusalem
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;
thy holy temple have they defiled;
they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in the court of heaven. The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it suffers, not only with it, but from it, as a lily among thorns. God is complained to; whither should children go with their grievances, but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help? The heathen are complained of, who, being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it.

Though they knew not God, nor owned him, yet, God having them in chain, the church very fitly appeals to him against them; for he is King of nations, to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and King of saints, to favour and protect them.

I. They complain here of the anger of their enemies and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

1. Against places, Ps 79:1. They did all the mischief they could,

(1.) To the holy land; they invaded that, and made inroads into it: "The heathen have come into thy inheritance, to plunder that, and lay it waste." Canaan was dearer to the pious Israelites as it was God's inheritance than as it was their own, as it was the land in which God was known and his name was great rather than as it was the land in which they were bred and born

and which they and their ancestors had been long in possession of.

Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more than even those done to common right, nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm as an instance of God's great favour to Israel that he had cast out the heathen before them, Ps 78:55. But see what a change sin made; now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them.

(2.) To the holy city: They have laid Jerusalem on heaps, heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves, so some. The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwelling places became their sepulchres, their long homes.

(3.) To the holy house. That sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground: They holy temple have they defiled, by entering into it and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

2. Against persons, against the bodies of God's people; and further their malice could not reach.

(1.) They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter (Ps 79:3): Their blood have they shed like water, wherever they met with them, round about Jerusalem, in all the avenues to the city; whoever went out or came in was waited for of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood.

And they shed it with no more reluctancy or regret than if they had spilt so much water, little thinking that every drop of it will be reckoned for in the day when God shall make inquisition for blood.

(2.) They were abusive to their dead bodies. When they had killed them they would let none bury them. Nay, those that were buried, even the dead bodies of God's servants, the flesh of his saints, whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they dug up again, and gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven and to the beasts of the earth; or, at least, they left those so exposed whom they slew; they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, as a barbarous thing, De 21:23.

This inhuman usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold (Re 11:9), and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned (says Austin, De Civitate Dei, lib. 1 cap. 12) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted (for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls), but of the malice of the persecutors.

3. Against their names (Ps 79:4): "We that survive have become a reproach to our neighbours; they all study to abuse us and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous, or odious, or both, upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God and expectations from him; so that we have become a scorn and derision to those that are round about us."

If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel-Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and

derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the offscouring of all things.

II. They wonder more at God's anger, Ps 79:5. This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of: How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry? Shall it be for ever? This intimates that they desired no more than that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turned away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given *to be* meat unto
the fowls of the heaven,
the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;
and *there was* none to bury *them.*
4 We are become a reproach to our neighbors,
a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
5 How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known
thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy
name.

The petitions here put up to God are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them, interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour.

I. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them (Ps 79:6): "Pour out thy wrath, the full vials of it, upon the heathen; let them wring out the dregs of it, and drink them." This prayer is in effect a prophecy, in which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Observe here,

1 The character of those he prays against; they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. The reason why men do not call upon God is because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. Those that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who live without God in the world. There are kingdoms that know not God and obey not the gospel, but neither their multitude nor their force united will secure them from his just judgments.

2. Their crime: They have devoured Jacob, Ps 79:7. That is crime enough in the account of him who reckons that those who touch his people touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed, but devoured, Jacob, not only encroached upon his dwelling place, the land of Canaan, but laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it.

(3.) Their condemnation: "Pour out thy wrath upon them; do not only restrain them from doing further mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done."

II. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray,

1. That God would not remember against them their former iniquities (Ps 79:8), either their own former iniquities, that now, when they were old, they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their youth, or the former iniquities of their people, the sins of their ancestors.

In the captivity of Babylon former iniquities were brought to account; but God promises not again to do so (Jer 31:29,30), and so they pray, "Remember not

against us our first sins," which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because God said, In the day when I visit I will visit for this sin of theirs upon them, Ex 32:34.

If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the entail of the parents' sin, they may in faith pray that God will not remember them against them. When God pardons sin he blots it out and remembers it no more.

2. That he would purge away the sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled: Deliver us, and purge away our sins, Ps 79:9. Then deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed, when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins than for the removal of our afflictions, and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

III. They pray that God would work deliverance for them, and bring their troubles to a good end and that speedily: Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, Ps 79:8. They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of divine compassion, and so near to desperate that, unless divine mercy did speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone.

This whets their importunity: "Lord, help us; Lord, deliver us; help us under our troubles, that we may bear them well; help us out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin, from sinking." Three things they plead:--

1 The great distress they were reduced to: "We are brought very low, and, being low, shall be lost if thou help us not." The lower we are brought the more need

we have of help from heaven and the more will divine power be magnified in raising us up.

2. Their dependence upon him: "Thou art the God of our salvation, who alone canst help. Salvation belongs to the Lord, from whom we expect help; for in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people." Those who make God the God of their salvation shall find him so.

3. The interest of his own honour in their case. They plead no merit of theirs; they pretend to none; but, "Help us for the glory of thy name; pardon us for thy name's sake." The best encouragements in prayer are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea:--

(1.) That God's name and honour would be greatly injured if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or had withdrawn and would not; therefore they plead (Ps 79:10), "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? He has forsaken them, and forgotten them; and this they get by worshipping a God whom they cannot see." (Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorant. Juv.--They adore no other divinity than the clouds and the sky.) That which was their praise (that they served a God that is every where) was now turned to their reproach and his too, as if they served a God that is nowhere.

"Lord," say they, "Make it to appear that thou art by making it to appear that thou art with us and for us, that when we are asked, Where is your God? we may be able to say, He is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for, and you see he is so by what he does for us."

(2.) That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced if he did deliver them; his mercy would be

glorified in delivering those that were so miserable and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf he would make unto himself an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time Messiah the Prince would work out, to the glory of God's name.

IV. They pray that God would avenge them on their adversaries,

1. For their cruelty and barbarity (Ps 79:10): "Let the avenging of our blood" (according to the ancient law, Ge 9:6) "be known among the heathen; let them be made sensible that what judgments are brought upon them are punishments of the wrong they have done to us; let this be in our sight, and by this means let God be known among the heathen as the God to whom vengeance belongs (Ps 94:1) and the God that espouses his people's cause."

Those that have intoxicated themselves with the blood of the saints shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

2. For their insolence and scorn (Ps 79:12): "Render to them their reproach. The indignities which by word and deed they have done to the people of God himself and his name let them be repaid to them with interest."

The reproach wherewith men have reproached us only we must leave it to God whether he will render to them or no, and must pray that he would for give them; but the reproach wherewith they have blasphemed God himself we may in faith pray that God would render seven-fold into their bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them, and bring them to repentance.

This prayer is a prophecy, of the same import with that of Enoch, that God will convince sinners of all their

hard speeches which they have spoken against him (Jude 1:15) and will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting terrors at the remembrance of them.

V. They pray that God would find out a way for the rescue of his poor prisoners, especially the condemned prisoners, Ps 79:11. The case of their brethren who had fallen into the hands of the enemy was very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and, because they durst not be heard to bemoan themselves, they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All their breathing was sighing, and so was their praying. They were appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, and had received the sentence of death within themselves. This deplorable case the psalmist recommends,

1. To the divine pity: "Let their sighs come up before thee, and be thou pleased to take cognizance of their moans."

2. To the divine power: "According to the greatness of thy arm, which no creature can contest with, preserve thou those that are appointed to die from the death to which they are appointed." Man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for his people. See 2Co 1:8-10.

Lastly, They promise the returns of praise for the answers of prayer (Ps 79:13): So we will give thee thanks for ever. Observe, 1. How they please themselves with their relation to God. "Though we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the sheep of thy pasture, not disowned and cast off by thee for all this: We are thine; save us."

2. How they promise themselves an opportunity of praising God for their deliverance, which they therefore desired, and would bid welcome, because it would furnish them with matter for thanksgiving and put their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the work of heaven.

3. How they oblige themselves not only to give God thanks at present, but to show forth his praise unto all generations, that is, to do all they could both to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favours to them and to engage their posterity to keep up the work of praise.

4. How they plead this with God: "Lord, appear for us against our enemies; for, if they get the better, they will blaspheme thee (Ps 79:12); but, if we be delivered, we will praise thee. Lord, we are that people of thine which thou hast formed for thyself, to show forth thy praise; if we be cut off, whence shall that rent, that tribute, be raised?" Note, Those lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise are assuredly taken under his protection.

7 For they have devoured
Jacob, and laid waste his
dwelling place.
8 O remember not against us former iniquities:
let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us;
for we are brought very low.
9 Help us, O God of our
salvation, for the glory of
thy name:
and deliver us, and purge away our
sins, for thy name's sake.
10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God?
Let him be known among the heathen in our sight
by the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is* shed.
11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee;
according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those
that are appointed to die;
12 and render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their
bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached
thee, O Lord.
13 So we thy people and sheep of thy
pasture will give thee thanks for
ever:

we will show forth thy praise to all generations.

Psalms-80

A Prayer for Restoration
To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-eduth,
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
thou that dwellest *between* the cherubim, shine forth.
2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh
stir up thy strength,
and come *and* save us.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, applies to God by prayer, with reference to the present afflicted state of Israel.

I. He entreats God's favour for them (Ps 80:1,2); that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate, and is to be sought in the first place. Observe,

1. How he eyes God in his address as the Shepherd of Israel, whom he had called the sheep of his pasture (Ps 79:13), under whose guidance and care Israel was, as the sheep are under the care and conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and good Shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him. He leads Joseph like a flock, to the best pastures, and out of the way of danger; if Joseph follow him not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it is his own fault.

He dwells between the cherubim, where he is ready to receive petitions and to give directions. The mercy-seat was between the cherubim; and it is very comfortable in prayer to look up to God as sitting on a throne of

grace, and that it is so to us is owning to the great propitiation, for the mercy-seat was the propitiatory.

2. What he expects and desires from God, that he would give ear to the cry of their miseries and of their prayers, that he would shine forth both in his own glory and in favour and kindness to his people, that he would show himself and smile on them, that he would sir up his strength, that he would excite it and exert it. It had seemed to slumber: "Lord, awaken it." His cause met with great opposition and the enemies threatened to overpower it:

"Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more, and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful help and a present help; Lord, do this before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh," that is, "In the sight of all the tribes of Israel; let them see it to their satisfaction."

Perhaps these three tribes are named because they were the tribes which formed that squadron of the camp of Israel that in their march through the wilderness followed next after the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God's strength rose to scatter their enemies.

II. He complains of God's displeasure against them. God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, Ps 80:4.

1. It was great anger. He apprehended that God was angry against the prayer of his people, not only that he was angry notwithstanding their prayers, by which they hoped to turn away his wrath from them, but that he was angry with their prayers, though they were his own people that prayed. That God should be angry at the sins of his people and at the prayers of his enemies is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people is strange indeed.

He not only delayed to answer them (that he often does in love), but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, Jam 4:3. They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer; their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, or they lift them up with wrath and doubting.

But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers when really he is not; for thus he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer, as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs.

2. It was anger that had continued a great while: "How long wilt thou be angry? We have still continued praying and yet are still under thy frowns." Now the tokens of God's displeasure which they had been long under were both their sorrow and shame.

(1.) Their sorrow (Ps 80:5): Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; they eat their meat from day to day in tears; this is the vinegar in which they dipped their morsel, Ps 42:3. They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow who yet shall spend their eternity in joy.

(2.) It was their shame, Ps 80:6. God, by frowning upon them, made them a strife unto their neighbours; each strove which should expose them most, and such a cheap and easy prey were they made to them that all the strife was who should have the stripping and plundering of them.

Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is

displeased with his people we must expect to see them in tears and their enemies in triumph.

III. He prays earnestly for converting grace in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation: Turn us again, O God! Ps 80:3. Turn us again, O God of hosts! (Ps 80:7) and then cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved. It is the burden of the song, for we have it again, Ps 80:19.

They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that it was this that provoked God to hide his face from them and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end: "Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance." Observe,

1. No salvation but from God's favour: "Cause thy face to shine, let us have thy love and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved."

2. No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us.

3. No conversion to God but by his own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to him (Ho 5:4) and then pray earnestly for his grace, Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, pleading that gracious promise (Pr 1:23), Burn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.

The prayer here is for a national conversion; in this method we must pray for national mercies, that what is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would

be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

3 Turn us again, O God,
and cause thy face to shine;
and we shall be saved.
4 O Lord God of hosts,
how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears;
and givest them tears to drink in great measure.
6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbors:
and our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Turn us again, O God of hosts,
and cause thy face to shine;
and we shall be saved.
8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt:
thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine (Ps 80:8,14) and a vineyard, Ps 80:15. The root of this vine is Christ, Ro 11:18. The branches are believers, Joh 15:5.

The church is like a vine, weak and needing support, unsightly and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent. The church is a choice and noble vine; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here,

I. How the vine of the Old-Testament c
hurch was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt with a high hand; the heathen were cast out of Canaan to make room for it, seven nations to make room for that one. Thou didst sweep before it (so some read Ps 80:9), to make clear work; the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God, having made room for it, and planted it, cause it to take deep

root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state, which was so firm that, though their neighbours about them often attempted it, they could not prevail to pluck it up.

II. How it spread and flourished.

1 The land of Canaan itself was fully peopled. At first they were not so numerous as to replenish it, Ex 23:29. But in Solomon's time Judah and Israel were many as the sand of the sea; the land was filled with them, and yet such a fruitful land that it was not over-stocked, Ps 80:10. The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extended themselves far, like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars. Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour.

2. They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries (Ps 80:11): She sent out her boughs to the sea, the great sea westward, and her branches to the river, to the river of Egypt southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather the river Euphrates eastward, Ge 15:18. Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, Da 4:20,21. But it is observable here concerning this vine that it is praised for its shadow, its boughs, and its branches, but not a word of its fruit, for Israel was an empty vine, Ho 10:1. God came looking for grapes, but, behold, wild grapes, Isa 5:2. And, if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, Eze 15:2,6.

III. How it was wasted and ruined: "Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it be all undone again? If it were a plant not of God's planting, it were not strange to see it rooted up; but will God desert and abandon that which he himself gave being to?" Ps 80:12. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges? There was a good reason for this change in

God's way towards them. This noble vine had become the degenerate plant of a strange vine (Jer 2:21), to the reproach of its great owner, and then no marvel if he took away its hedge (Isa 5:5); yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that, notwithstanding all this, God would not wholly cast them off. Observe,

1 The malice and enmity of the Gentile nations against Israel. As soon as ever God broke down their hedges and left them exposed troops of enemies presently broke in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. Those that passed by the way plucked at them; the board out of the wood and the wild beast of the field were ready to ravage it, Ps 80:13. But,

2. See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under; for till God had broken down their hedges they could not pluck a leaf of this vine. The devil could not hurt Job so long as God continued the hedge round about him, Job 1:10. See how much it is the interest of any people to keep themselves in the favour of God and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, Job 5:23.

If we provoke God to withdraw, our defence has departed from us, and we are undone. The deplorable state of Israel is described (Ps 80:16): It is burnt with fire; it is cut down; the people are treated like thorns and briers, that are nigh unto cursing and whose end is to be burned, and no longer like vines that are protected and cherished. They perish not through the rage of the wild beast and the boar, but at the rebuke of thy countenance; that was it which they dreaded and to which they attributed all their calamities. It is well or ill with us according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

IV. What their requests were to God hereupon.

1. That God would help the vine (Ps 80:14,15), that he would graciously take cognizance of its case and do for it as he thought fit: "Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts! for thou hast seemed to go away from us.

Look down from heaven, to which thou hast retired,--from heaven, that place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us, that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief,--from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal, and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed,--thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit, to this vine.

Take our woeful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the particular fruits of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee.

Only behold the vineyard, or rather the root, which thy right hand hath planted, and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect, that branch which thou madest strong for thyself, to show forth thy praise (Isa 43:21), that with the fruit of it thou mightest be honoured. Lord, it is formed by thyself and for thyself, and therefore it may with a humble confidence be committed to thyself and to thy own care."

As for God, his work is perfect. What we read the branch in the Hebrew is the son (Ben), whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel (my servant the branch, Zec 3:8), and therefore, till he should come, Israel in general, and the house of David in particular, must be preserved, and upheld, and kept in being. He is the true vine, Joh 15:1,Isa 11:1. Destroy it not for that blessing is in it, Isa 65:8.

2. That he would help the vine-dresser (Ps 80:17,18): "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand," that king (whoever it was) of the house of David that was now to go in and out before them; "let they hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success."

We have this phrase, Ezr 7:28, And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me. Their king is called the man of God's right hand as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the son of his right hand, as he was president in their affairs and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies and directing them in the right way, and as he was under-shepherd under him who was the great shepherd of Israel.

Princes, who have power, must remember that they are sons of men, of Adam (so the word is), that, if they are strong, it is God that has made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interests of his kingdom among men, and, if they do this in sincerity, his hand shall be upon them; and we should pray in faith that it may be so, adding this promise, that, if God will adhere to our governors, we will adhere to him:

So will not we go back from thee; we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouses and is the patron of. Let God be our leader and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, "Quicken us, put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, and then we will call upon thy name.

We will continue to do so upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so." We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner unless he quicken us; but it is he that puts life into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers. But many interpreters, both Jewish

and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the Son of David, the protector and Saviour of the church and the keeper of the vineyard.

(1.) He is the man of God's right hand, to whom he has sworn by his right hand (so the Chaldee), whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him.

(2.) He is that son of man whom he made strong for himself, for the glorifying of his name and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men.

(3.) God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that the good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand.

(4.) The stability and constancy of believers are entirely owing to the grace and strength which are laid up for us in Jesus Christ, Ps 68:28. In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end. Let thy hand be upon him; on him let our help be laid who is mighty; let him be made able to save to the uttermost and that will be our security; so will not we go back from thee.

Lastly, The psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition (Ps 80:19): Turn us again. The title given to God rises, Ps 80:3, O God! Ps 80:7, O God of hosts! Ps 80:19, O Lord (Jehovah) God of hosts! When we come to God for his grace, his good-will towards us and his good work in us, we should pray earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

9 Thou preparedst *room* before it,
and didst cause it to take deep root,
and it filled the land.
10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it,
and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea,
and her branches unto the river.
12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges,
so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it,
and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.
14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts:
look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;
15 and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted,
and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.
16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down:
they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,
upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.
18 So will not we go back from thee:
quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.
19 Turn us again, O Lord God of
hosts, cause thy face to shine;
and we shall be saved.

Psalms-81

God's Goodness and Israel's Waywardness
To the chief Musician upon Gittith,
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 Sing aloud unto God our strength:
make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep nor to be idle; no, there is that which the duty of every day requires, work of the day, which is to be done in its day. And here,

I The worshippers of God are excited to their work, and are taught, by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves and one another to it, Ps 81:1-3. Our errand

is, to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business.

1. In doing this we must eye God as our strength, and as the God of Jacob, Ps 81:1. He is the strength of Israel, as a people; for he is a God in covenant with them, who will powerfully protect, support, and deliver them, who fights their battles and makes them do valiantly and victoriously.

He is the strength of every Israelite; by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts; and to him, as our strength, we must pray, and we must sing praise to him as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion.

2. We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, the timbrel, harp, and psaltery; and by blowing the trumpet, some think in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder. It was then and is now to be done by singing psalms, singing aloud, and making a joyful noise.

The pleasantness of the harp and the awfulness of the trumpet intimate to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and joy with reverence and godly fear. Singing aloud and making a noise intimate that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God, that we must with a hearty good-will show forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him and obligations to him, and that we should join many together in this work; the more the better; it is the more like heaven.

3. This must be done in the time appointed. No time is amiss for praising God (Seven times a day will I praise

thee; nay, at midnight will I rise and give thanks unto thee); but some are times appointed, not for God to meet us (he is always ready), but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising Do. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise; when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them, then it is proper to sing his praises.

II. They are here directed in their work.

1. They must look up to the divine institution which it is the observation of. In all religious worship we must have an eye to the command (Ps 81:4): This was a statute for Israel, for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was a law of the God of Jacob, which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to.

Note, Praising God is not only a good thing, which we do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obliged to do; it is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all religious exercises we must have an eye to the institution as our warrant and rule: "This I do because God has commanded me; and therefore I hope he will accept me;" then it is done in faith.

2. They must look back upon those operations of divine Providence which it is the memorial of. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony (Ps 81:5), a standing traditional evidence, for the attesting of the matters of fact. It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them if they should be ignorant of them and forget them.

(1.) The psalmist, in the people's name, puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Israel's behalf, which was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, Ps 81:5. When God went out against the

land of Egypt, to lay it waste, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go, then he ordained solemn feast-days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which perhaps is meant by the solemn feast-day (Ps 81:3); that was appointed just then when God went out through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, Ex 12:23,24.

By it that work of wonder was to be kept in perpetual remembrance, that all ages might in it behold the goodness and severity of God. The psalmist, speaking for his people, takes notice of this aggravating circumstance of their slavery in Egypt that there they heard a language that they understood not; there they were strangers in a strange land. The Egyptians and the Hebrews understood not one another's language; for Joseph spoke to his brethren by an interpreter (Ge 42:23), and the Egyptians are said to be to the house of Jacob a people of a strange language, Ps 114:1.

To make a deliverance appear the more gracious, the more glorious, it is good to observe every thing that makes the trouble we are delivered from appear the more grievous. (2.) The psalmist, in God's name, puts the people in mind of some of the particulars of their deliverance. Here he changes the person, Ps 81:6. God speaks by him, saying, I removed the shoulder from the burden. Let him remember this on the feast-day,

[1.] That God had brought them out of the house of bondage, had removed their shoulder from the burden of oppression under which they were ready to sink, had delivered their hands from the pots, or panniers, or baskets, in which they carried clay or bricks. Deliverance out of slavery is a very sensible mercy and one which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But this was not all.

[2.] God had delivered them at the Red Sea; then they called in trouble, and he rescued them and disappointed the designs of their enemies against them, Ex 14:10. Then he answered them with a real answer, out of the secret place of thunder; that is, out of the pillar of fire, through which God looked upon the host of the Egyptians and troubled it, Ex 14:24,25. Or it may be meant of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, which was the secret place, for it was death to gaze (Ex 19:21), and it was in thunder that God then spoke. Even the terrors of Sinai were favours to Israel, De 4:33.

[3.] God had borne their manners in the wilderness: "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah; thou didst there show thy temper, what an unbelieving murmuring people thou wast, and yet I continued my favour to thee." Selah--Mark that; compare God's goodness and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other.

Now if they, on their solemn feast-days, were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we, on the Christian sabbath, to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ from worse than Egyptian bondage, and the many gracious answers he has given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,
the pleasant harp with the psaltery.
3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.
4 For this *was* a statute for Israel,
and a law of the God of Jacob.
5 This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony,
when he went out through the land of Egypt:
where I heard a language *that* I understood not.
6 I removed his shoulder from the burden:
his hands were delivered from the pots.

7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I
answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I
proved thee at the waters of Meribah.
Selah.
8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee:
O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel, and in them to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

I. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say (Ps 81:8): "Hear, O my people! and who should hear me if my people will not? I have heard and answered thee; now wilt thou hear me? Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity and the most unquestionable certainty, for it is what I will testify unto thee.

Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, that is, be advised by me, be ruled by me." Nothing could be more reasonably nor more justly expected, and yet God puts an if upon it: "If thou wilt hearken unto me. It is thy interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no; for thy neck is an iron sinew."

II. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him as the Lord their God and Redeemer (Ps 81:10): I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt; this is the preface to the ten commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, showing that we are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break asunder if we be disobedient.

III. He gives them an abstract both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them, as the Lord and their God, upon their coming out of Egypt.

1 The great command was that they should have no other gods before him (Ps 81:9): There shall no strange

god be in thee, none besides thy own God. Other gods might well be called strange gods, for it was very strange that ever any people who had the true and living God for their God should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect, Ex 23:13.

2 The great promise was that God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for (De 4:7), that, if they would adhere to him as their powerful protector and ruler, they should always find him their bountiful benefactor: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it, as the young ravens that cry open their mouths wide and the old ones fill them." See here,

(1.) What is our duty--to raise our expectations from God and enlarge our desires towards him. We cannot look for too little from the creature nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in him; why therefore should we be straitened in our own bosoms?

(2.) What is God's promise. I will fill thy mouth with good things, Ps 103:5. There is enough in God to fill our treasures (Pr 8:21), to replenish every hungry soul (Jer 31:25), to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit and never satisfy (Isa 55:2); divine pleasures will satisfy and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God if we pray for it in faith.

Ask, and it shall be given you. He gives liberally, and upbraids not. God assured his people Israel that it would be their own fault if he did not do as great and kind things for them as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should be thought too good, too much, to give them, if they would but keep close to God. He would

moreover have given them such and such things, 2Sa 12:8.

IV. He charges them with a high contempt of his authority as their lawgiver and his grace and favour as their benefactor, Ps 81:11. He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain: "My people would not hearken to my voice, but turned a deaf ear to all I said." Two things he complains of:--

1. Their disobedience to his commands. They did hear his voice, so as never any people did; but they would not hearken to it, they would not be ruled by it, neither by the law nor by the reason of it.

2. Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them: They would none of me. They acquiesced not in my word (so the Chaldee); God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people; they did not like his terms. "I would have gathered them, but they would not." They had none of him; and why had they not?

It was not because they might not; they were fairly invited into covenant with God. It was not because they could not; for the word was nigh them, even in their mouth and in their heart. But it was purely because they would not. God calls them hi people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, his by a thousand ties, and yet even they had not hearkened, had not obeyed. "Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, set me at nought, and would have none of me."

Note, All the wickedness of the wicked world is owing to the wilfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious is because they will not be so.

V. He justifies himself with this in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them (Ps 81:12): So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, which would

be more dangerous enemies and more mischievous oppressors to them than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of restraining grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do as they will. Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.

It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them; for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is debtor to no man, and yet, as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it, so he never took it away from any but such as had first forfeited it:

They would none of me, so I gave them up; let them take their course. And see what follows: They walked in their own counsels, in the way of their heart and in the sight of their eye, both in their worships and in their conversations.

"I left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill;" they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God and his advice. God therefore was not the author of their sin; he left them to the lusts of their own hearts and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts and the blood upon their own heads.

VI. He testifies his good-will to them in wishing they had done well for themselves. He saw how sad their case was, and how sure their ruin, when they were delivered up to their own lusts; that is worse than being given up to Satan, which may be in order to reformation (1Ti 1:20) and to salvation (1Co 5:5); but to be delivered up to their own hearts' lusts is to be sealed under condemnation.

He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. What fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to! Now here God looks upon them with pity, and shows that it was with reluctance that he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Ho 11:8,9. So here, O that my people had hearkened! See Isa 48:18. Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem. If thou hadst known, Lu 19:42.

The expressions here are very affecting (Ps 81:13-16), designed to show how unwilling God is that any should perish and desirous that all should come to repentance (he delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations), and also what enemies sinners are to themselves and what an aggravation it will be of their misery that they might have been happy upon such easy terms. Observe here,

1 The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them if they had been obedient.

(1.) He would have given them victory over their enemies and would soon have completed the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point, against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching vexatious neighbours (Ps 81:14): I should have subdued their enemies; and it is God only that is to be depended on for the subduing of our enemies. Not would had have put them to the expense and fatigue of a tedious war:

he would soon have done it; for he would have turned his hand against their adversaries, and then they would not have been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it and without any difficulty. With the turn of a hand, nay, with the breath of his mouth, shall he slay the wicked, Isa 11:4.

If he but turn his hand, the haters of the Lord will submit themselves to him (Ps 81:15); and, though they are not brought to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him and to confess that he is too hard for them and that it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured, and so is his Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, though it be but a forced and feigned submission.

(2.) He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In spite of all the attempts of their enemies against them, their time should have endured for ever, and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less evicted and turned out of possession.

(3.) He would have given them great plenty of all good things (Ps 81:16): He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat, with the best grain and the best of the kind. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, and they exported a great deal of it, Eze 27:17.

He would not only have provided for them the best sort of bread, but with honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them. Besides the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the clefts of the rock should serve for bee-hives and in them they should find honey in abundance. See De 32:13,14. In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

2 The duty God required from them as the condition of all this mercy. He expected no more than that they should hearken to him, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions--as a servant to his master, to receive his commands; and that they should walk in his ways, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe the institutions of his

ordinances and attend the intimations of his providence. There was nothing unreasonable in this.

3. Observe how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty: If they had hearkened to me, I would soon have subdued their enemies. National sin or disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national deliverance. When I would have healed Israel, and set every thing to-rights among them, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and so a stop was put to the cure, Ho 7:1.

We are apt to say, "If such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies:" but we mistake; if we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, the thing would have been done, but it is sin that makes our troubles long and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wishes it had been otherwise.

Note, Therefore God would have us do our duty to him, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall be.

9 there shall no strange god be in thee;
neither shalt thou worship any strange god.
10 I *am* the Lord thy God,
which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:
open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
11 But my people would not hearken to my voice;
and Israel would none of me.
12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust:
and they walked in their own counsels.
13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me,
and Israel had walked in my ways!
14 I should soon have subdued their enemies,
and turned my hand against their adversaries.

15 The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him:
but their time should have endured for ever.
16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat:
and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

Psalms-82

A Rebuke of Unjust Judgments
A Psalm of Asaph.

1 God standeth in the congregation of the mighty;
he judgeth among the gods.

We have here,

I. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils and courts asserted and laid down, as a great truth necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects (Ps 82:1): God stands, as chief director, in the congregation of the mighty, the mighty One, in coetu fortis--in the councils of the prince, the supreme magistrate, and he judges among the gods, the inferior magistrates; both the legislative and the executive power of princes is under his eye and his hand. Observe here,

1 The power and honour of magistrates; they are the mighty. They are so in authority, for the public good (it is a great power that they are entrusted with), and they ought to be so in wisdom and courage. They are, in the Hebrew dialect, called gods; the same word is used for these subordinate governors that is used for the sovereign ruler of the world.

They are elohim. Angels are so called both because they are great in power and might and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the government of this lower world; and magistrates in an inferior capacity are likewise the ministers of his providence in

general, for the keeping up of order and peace in human societies, and particularly of his justice and goodness in punishing evil-doers and protecting those that do well. Good magistrates, who answer the ends of magistracy, are as God; some of his honour is put upon them; they are his vicegerents, and great blessings to any people. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king, Pr 16:10. But, as roaring lions and ranging bears, so are wicked rulers over the poor people, Pr 28:15.

2. A good form and constitution of government intimated, and that is a mixed monarchy like ours; here is the might one, the sovereign, and here is his congregation, his privy-council, his parliament, his bench of judges, who are called the gods.

3. God's incontestable sovereignty maintained in and over all the congregations of the mighty. God stands, he judges among them; they have their power from him and are accountable to him. By him kings reign. He is present at all their debates, and inspects all they say and do, and what is said and done amiss will be called over again, and they reckoned with for their mal-administrations. God has their hearts in his hands, and their tongues too, and he directs them which way soever he will, Pr 21:1.

So that he has a negative voice in all their resolves, and his counsels shall stand, whatever devices are in men's hearts. He makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes and designs by them; though their hearts little think so, Isa 10:7.

Let magistrates consider this and be awed by it; God is with them in the judgment, 2Ch 19:6,De 1:17. Let subjects consider this and be comforted with it; for good princes and good judges, who mean well, are under a divine direction, and bad ones, who mean ever so ill, are under a divine restraint.

II. A charge given to all magistrates to do good with their power, as they will answer it to him by whom they are entrusted with it, Ps 82:3,4.

1. They are to be the protectors of those who lie exposed to injury and the patrons of those who want advice and assistance: Defend the poor, who have no money wherewith to make friends or fee counsel, and the fatherless, who, while they are young and unable to help themselves, have lost those who would have been the guides of their youth. Magistrates, as they must be fathers to their country in general, so particularly to those in it who are fatherless. Are they called gods? Herein they must be followers of him, they must be fathers of the fatherless. Job was so, Job 29:12.

2. They are to administer justice impartially, and do right to the afflicted and needy, who, being weak and helpless, have often wrongs done them; and will be in danger of losing all if magistrates do not, ex officio--officially, interpose for their relief. If a poor man has an honest cause, his poverty must be no prejudice to his cause, how great and powerful soever those are that contend with him.

3. They are to rescue those who have already fallen into the hands of oppressors and deliver them. (Ps 82:4): Rid them out of the hand of the wicked. Avenge them of their adversary, Lu 18:3. These are clients whom there is nothing to be got by, no pay for serving them, no interest by obliging them; yet these are those whom judges and magistrates must concern themselves for, whose comfort they must consult and whose cause they must espouse.

III. A charge drawn up against bad magistrates, who neglect their duty and abuse their power, forgetting that God standeth among them, Ps 82:2,5. Observe,

1. What the sin is they are here charged with; they judge unjustly, contrary to the rules of equity and the dictates of their consciences, giving judgment against those who have right on their side, out of malice and ill-will, or for those who have an unrighteous cause, out of favour and partial affection. To do unjustly is bad, but to judge unjustly is much worse, because it is doing wrong under colour of right; against such acts of injustice there is least fence for the injured and by them encouragement is given to the injurious. It was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun when he observed the place of judgment, that iniquity was there, Ec 3:16,Isa 5:7.

They not only accepted the persons of the rich because they were rich, though that is bad enough, but (which is much worse) they accepted the persons of the wicked because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Woe unto thee, O land! when thy judges are such as these.

2. What was the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the poor; it was many a time given them in charge; yet they judge unjustly, for they know not, neither will they understand. They do not care to hear their duty; they will not take pains to study it; they have no desire to take things right, but are governed by interest, not by reason or justice. A gift in secret blinds their eyes.

They know not because they will not understand. None so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing nor caring what they do nor whither they go. Those that walk on in darkness are walking on to everlasting darkness.

3. What were the consequences of this sin: All the foundations of the earth (or of the land) are out of course. When justice is perverted what good can be expected? The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved, as the psalmist speaks in a like case, Ps 75:3. The miscarriages of public persons are public mischiefs.

2 How long will ye judge unjustly,
and accept the persons of the wicked?
Selah.
3 Defend the poor and fatherless:
do justice to the afflicted and needy.
4 Deliver the poor and needy:
rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.
5 They know not, neither will they understand;
they walk on in darkness:
all the foundations of the earth are out of course.
6 I have said, Ye *are* gods;
and all of you *are* children of the Most High.

We have here,

I. Earthly gods abased and brought down, Ps 82:6,7. The dignity of their character is acknowledged (Ps 82:6): I have said, You are gods. They have been honoured with the name and title of gods. God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words Ex 22:28, Thou shalt not revile the gods. And, if they have this style from the fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified?

He called them gods because unto them the word of God came, so our Saviour expounds it (Joh 10:35); they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shields of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, Ro 13:4.

All of them are in this sense children of the Most High. God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or, "Because I said, You are gods, you have carried the honour further than was intended and have imagined yourselves to be the children of the Most High," as the king of Babylon (Isa 14:14), I will be like the Most High, and the king of Tyre (Eze 28:2), Thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God.

It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it and puffed up with it, and so to think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration: You shall die like men. This may be taken either,

1. As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their misrule put the foundations of the earth out of course. God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes (and their being Israelites shall not secure them anymore than their being judges) or like one of the angels that sinned, or like one of the giants of the old world.

Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time. Job 34:26, He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others. Let those that abuse their power know that God will take both it and their lives from them; for wherein they deal proudly he will show himself above them. Or,

2. As the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world. Let them not be puffed up with their honour nor neglect their work, but let the consideration of their

mortality be both mortifying to their pride and quickening to their duty. "You are called gods, but you have no patent for immortality; you shall die like men, like common men; and like one of them, you, O princes! shall fall."

Note, Kings and princes, all the judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. Mors sceptra ligonibus æquat--Death mingles sceptres with spades.

II The God of heaven exalted and raised high, Ps 82:8. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors; they turned a deaf ear to all he said and walked on in darkness; and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to take unto himself his great power:

Arise, O God! judge the earth; and, when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it: Thou shalt inherit all nations. This has respect,

1. To the kingdom of providence. God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleases; he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man does of his inheritance. This we are to believe and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much into the hands of the wicked, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, Job 9:24.

But God has reserved the power to himself and overrules them. In this faith we must pray, "Arise, O God! judge the earth, appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thy own heart." There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges.

2. To the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth, and that promise is pleaded, that God shall give him the heathen for his inheritance.

Thou, O Christ! shalt inherit all nations, and be the governor over them, Ps 2:8,22:28. Let the second coming of Christ set to-rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another in reference to the mismanagements of power among men: one is Re 19:6, Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; the other is Re 22:20, Surely, I come quickly.

7 But ye shall die like men,
and fall like one of the princes.
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth:
for thou shalt inherit all nations.

Psalms-83

A Prayer for the Destruction of Israel's Enemies
A Song or Psalm of Asaph.

1 Keep not thou silence, O God:
hold not thy peace,
and be not still, O God.

The Israel of God were now in danger, and fear, and great distress, and yet their prayer is called, A song or psalm; for singing psalms is not unseasonable, no, not when the harps are hung upon the willow-trees.

I The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured threatened people (Ps 83:1): "Keep not thou silence, O God! but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong." Thus Jehoshaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion (2Ch 20:11),

Behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession.

Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people; he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutrality, and let them fight it out; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seems to sit by as a man astonished, or as a mighty man that cannot save.

Then he gives us leave to call upon him, as here, "Keep not thou silence, O God! Lord, speak to us by the prophets for our encouragement against our fears" (as he did in reference to that invasion, 2Ch 20:14-17, &c.); "Lord, speak for us by the providence and speak against our enemies; speak deliverance to us and disappointment to them." God's speaking is his acting; for with him saying and doing are the same thing.

II. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbouring nations against Israel, which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of. Now observe here,

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed; it is against the Israel of God, and so, in effect, against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting but that, if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it to appear that he was for them, and then they might set all their enemies at defiance; for whom then could be against them?

"Lord," says he, "they are thy enemies, and they hate thee." All wicked people are God's enemies (the carnal mind is enmity against God), but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of

God, because they hated God's holy religion and the worship of him.

This was that which made God's people so zealous against them--that they fought against God: They are confederate against thee, Ps 83:5. Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it; but, when God himself is struck at, it is time to cry, Help, Lord. Keep not thou silence, O God! He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him, his son, his first-born, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance; he may truly be said to fight against me that endeavours to destroy my children, to root out my family, and to ruin my estate.

"Lord," says the psalmist, "they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones." Note, God's people are his hidden ones, hidden,

(1.) In respect of secresy. Their life is hid with Christ in God; the world knows them not; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do.

(2.) In respect of safety. God takes them under his special protection, hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God and his power and promise to secure his people, they will consult to ruin them and cast them down from their excellency (Ps 62:4), and to make a prey of those whom the Lord has set apart for himself, Ps 4:3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed. The devil is at the bottom of it, and therefore it is carried on,

(1.) With a great deal of heat and violence: Thy enemies make a tumult, Ps 83:2. The heathen rage, Ps 2:1. The nations are angry, Re 11:18. They are noisy in their clamours against the people whom they hope to

run down with their loud calumnies. This comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence: "The enemies talk big and talk much; Lord, let them not talk all, but do thou speak to them in thy wrath," Ps 2:5.

(2.) With a great deal of pride and insolence: They have lifted up the head. In confidence of their success, they are so elevated as if they could over-top the Most High and overpower the Almighty.

(3.) With a great deal of art and policy: They have taken crafty counsel, Ps 83:3. The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive by all possible means, though ever so base, ever so bad, to gain their point. They are profound to make slaughter (Ho 5:2), as if they could outwit Infinite Wisdom.

(4.) With a great deal of unanimity. Whatever separate clashing interest they have among themselves, against the people of God they consult with one consent (Ps 83:5), nor is Satan's kingdom divided against itself. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. Fas est et ab hoste doceri--Even an enemy may instruct. Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast?

And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may join in crucifying Christ, surely Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What it is that is aimed at in this confederacy. They consult not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which would have been their wisdom. They consult, not only to clip the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the

progress of their victorious arms, not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, and to prevent their power from growing exorbitant; this will not serve. It is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that they design (Ps 83:4):

"Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan; let us leave them neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance, no, not in history;" for with them they would destroy their Bibles and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman.

It is the secret wish of many wicked men that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind. Having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see the whole earth as well rid of it, all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it cut off. This they would bring it to if it were in their power; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them.

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy. The nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned (Ps 83:6-8); the Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendants from Abraham, lead the van; for apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood and yet in alliance against Israel. There are no bonds of nature so strong but the spirit of persecution has broken through them. The brother shall betray the brother to death. Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot; but, as an incestuous, so a degenerate race.

The Philistines were long a thorn in Israel's side, and very vexatious. How the inhabitants of Tyre, who in David's time were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not; but that Assur (that is, the Assyrian) also is joined with them is not strange, or that (as the word is) they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been.

Lord, how are those increased that trouble it! God's heritage was as a speckled bird; all the birds round about were against her (Jer 12:9), which highly magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world, in spite of the combined force of earth and hell.

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult:
and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy
people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.
4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation;
that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
5 For they have consulted together with one consent:
they are confederate against thee:
6 the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites;
of Moab, and the Hagarenes;
7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek;
the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assur also is joined with them:
they have helped the children of
Lot. Selah.
9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites;
as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of those confederate forces, and, in God's name, foretels it; for this prayer that it might be so amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so, and this prophecy reaches to all the enemies of the gospel-

church; whoever they be that oppose the kingdom of Christ, here they may read their doom.

The prayer is, in short, that these enemies, who were confederate against Israel, might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and so God's Israel might be preserved and perpetuated. Now this is here illustrated,

I. By some precedents. Let that be their punishment which has been the fate of others who have formerly set themselves against God's Israel. The defeat and discomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope, because God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variableness.

1. He prays that their armies might be destroyed as the armies of former enemies had been (Ps 83:9,10):

Do to them as to the Midianites; let them be routed by their own fears, for so the Midianites were, more than by Gideon's 300 men. Do to them as to the army under the command of Sisera (who was general under Jabin king of Canaan) which God discomfited (Jdg 4:15) at the brook Kishon, near to which was Endor.

They became as dung on the earth; their dead bodies were thrown like dung laid in heaps, or spread, to fatten the ground; they were trodden to dirt by Barak's small but victorious army; and this was fitly made a precedent here, because Deborah made it so to aftertimes when it was fresh. Jdg 5:31, So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord! that is, So they shall perish.

2. He prays that their leaders might be destroyed as they had been formerly. The common people would not

have been so mischievous if their princes had not set them on, and therefore they are particularly prayed against, Ps 83:11,12. Observe,

(1.) What their malice was against the Israel of God. They said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession (Ps 83:12), the pleasant places of God (so the word is), by which we may understand the land of Canaan, which was a pleasant land and was Immanuel's land, or the temple, which was indeed God's pleasant place (Isa 64:11), or (as Dr. Hammond suggests) the pleasant pastures, which these Arabians, who traded in cattle, did in a particular manner seek after.

The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themselves by this war; and their armies must be made as dung for the earth, to serve their covetousness and their ambition.

(2.) What their lot should be. They shall be made like Oreb and Zeeb (two princes of the Midianites, who, when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites and slain, Jdg 7:25), and like Zeba and Zalmunna, whom Gideon himself slew, Jdg 8:21. "Let these enemies of ours be made as easy a prey to us as they were to the conquerors then." We may not prescribe to God, but we may pray to God that he will deal with the enemies of his church in our days as he did with those in the days of our fathers.

II. He illustrates it by some similitudes, and prays, 1. That God would make them like a wheel (Ps 83:13), that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled, and giddy in all their counsels and resolves, that they might roll down easily and speedily to their own ruin.

Or, as some think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the corn is broken, or beaten out, by the wheel which was then used in threshing. Thus,

when a wise king scatters the wicked, he is said to bring the wheel over them, Pr 20:26. Those that trust in God have their hearts fixed; those that fight against him are unfixed, like a wheel.

2. That they might be chased as stubble, or chaff, before the fierce wind. "The wheel, though it continually turn round, is fixed on its own axis; but let them have no more fixation than the light stubble has, which the wind hurries away, and nobody desires to save it, but is willing it should go," Ps 1:4. Thus shall the wicked be driven away in his wickedness, and chased out of the world.

3. That they might be consumed, as wood by the fire, or as briers and thorns, as fern or furze, upon the mountains, by the flames, Ps 83:14. When the stubble is driven by the wind it will rest, at last, under some hedge, in some ditch or other; but he prays that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt up as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men (Heb 6:8) and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The application of these comparisons we have (Ps 83:15):

So persecute them with thy tempest, persecute them to their utter ruin, and make them afraid with thy storm. See how sinners are made miserable; the storm of God's wrath raises terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made completely miserable. God can deal with the proudest and most daring sinner that has bidden defiance to his justice, and can make him afraid as a grasshopper. It is the torment of devils that they tremble.

III. He illustrates it by the good consequences of their confusion, Ps 83:16-18. He prays here that God, having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with shame, that they might be ashamed of their enmity to the people of God (Isa 26:11), ashamed of

their folly in acting both against Omnipotence itself and their own true interest. They did what they could to put God's people to shame, but the shame will at length return upon themselves. Now,

1 The beginning of this shame might be a means of their conversion: "Let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, that they may seek thy name, O Lord! Let them be put to a stand, that they may have both leisure and reason to pause a little, and consider who it is that they are fighting against and what an unequal match they are for him, and may therefore humble and submit themselves and desire conditions of peace. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to seek thy name."

Note, That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors is that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this, no other confusion to them than what may be a step towards their conversion.

2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God. If they will not be ashamed and repent, let them be put to shame and perish; if they will not be troubled and turned, which would soon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, let them be troubled for ever, and never have peace:

this will be for God's glory (Ps 83:18), that other men may know and own, if they themselves will not, that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH (that incommunicable, though not ineffable name) art the Most High over all the earth. God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies will be incontestable proofs,

(1.) That he is, according to his name JEHOVAH, a self-existent self-sufficient Being, that has all power and perfection in himself.

(2.) That he is the most high God, sovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings, above all that exalt themselves and pretend to be high.

(3.) That he is so, not only over the land of Israel, but over all the earth, even those nations of the earth that do not know him or own him; for his kingdom rules over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others.

The final ruin of all God's enemies, in the great day, will be the effectual proof of this, before angels and men, when the everlasting shame and contempt to which sinners shall rise (Da 12:2) shall redound to the everlasting honour and praise of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

10 *which* perished at En-dor:
they became *as* dung for the earth.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb:
yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:
12 who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.
13 O my God, make them like a wheel;
as the stubble before the wind.
14 As the fire burneth a wood,
and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;
15 so persecute them with thy
tempest, and make them afraid
with thy storm.
16 Fill their faces with shame;
that they may seek thy name, O Lord.
17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever;
yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
18 that *men* may know that
thou, whose name alone *is*
Jehovah,

art the Most High over all the earth.

Psalms-84

Longing for God's House
To the chief Musician upon Gittith,
A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

1 How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!
2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord:
my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

The psalmist here, being by force restrained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe,

I The wonderful beauty he saw in holy institutions (Ps 84:1): How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! Some think that he here calls God the Lord of hosts (that is, in a special manner of the angels, the heavenly hosts) because of the presence of the angels in God's sanctuary; they attended the Shechinah, and were (as some think) signified by the cherubim.

God is the Lord of these hosts, and his the tabernacle is: it is spoken of as more than one (thy tabernacles) because there were several courts in which the people attended, and because the tabernacle itself consisted of a holy place and a most holy. How amiable are these!

How lovely is the sanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified! Gracious souls see a wonderful, an inexpressible, beauty in holiness, and in holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the disadvantage of external circumstances makes holy ordinances not at all the less amiable; for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.

II The longing desire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances, or rather of God in them, Ps 84:2. It was an entire desire; body, soul, and spirit concurred in it. He was not conscious to himself of any rising thought to the contrary. It was an intense desire; it was like the desire of the ambitious, or covetous, or voluptuous. He longed, he fainted, he cried out, importunate to be restored to his place in God's courts, and almost impatient of delay.

Yet it was not so much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out, in prayer, for the living God himself. O that I might know him, and be again taken into communion with him! 1Jo 1:3. Ordinances are empty things if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

III. His grudging the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars, Ps 84:3. This is an elegant and surprising expression of his affection to God's altars: The sparrow has found a house and the swallow a nest for herself.

These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose and in which to lay their young; some such David supposes there were in the buildings about the courts of God's house, and wishes himself with them.

He would rather live in a bird's nest nigh God's altars than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wished for the wings of a dove, on which to fly into the wilderness (Ps 55:6); here for the wings of a sparrow, that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts; and, though to watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit (Ps 102:7), yet David would be glad to take it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars. It is better

to be serving God in solitude than serving sin with a multitude.

The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird, and (if I may offer a conjecture) perhaps when, in David's time, music was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to complete the harmony they had singing-birds in cages hung about the courts of the tabernacle (for we find the singing of birds taken notice of to the glory of God, Ps 104:12), and David envies the happiness of these, and would gladly change places with them.

Observe, David envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves there. David will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night; but let this be his rest, his home; here he will dwell.

And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but that there they lay their young; for those who have a place in God's courts themselves cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's house, and within his walls, a place and a name, that they may feed their kids beside the shepherds' tents. Some give another sense of this verse:

"Lord, by thy providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting-places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse; but thy altar, which is my nest, my resting-place, which I am as desirous of as ever the wandering bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes?

As a bird that wanders from her nest so am I, now that I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place (Pr 27:8); I shall never be easy till I return to my

place again." Note, Those whose souls are at home, at rest, in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances.

There were two altars, one for sacrifice, the other for incense, and David, in his desire of a place in God's courts, has an eye to both, as we also must, in all our attendance on God, have an eye both to the satisfaction and to the intercession of Christ.

And, lastly, Observe how he eyes God in this address: Thou art the Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Where should a poor distressed subject seek for protection but with his king? And should not a people seek unto their God? My King, my God, is Lord of hosts; by him and his altars let me live and die.

IV. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars: "Blessed are they. O when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?"

1. Blessed are the ministers, the priests and Levites, who have their residence about the tabernacle and are in their courses employed in the service of it (Ps 84:4): Blessed are those that dwell in thy house, that are at home there, and whose business lies there. He is so far from pitying them, as confined to a constant attendance and obliged to perpetual seriousness, that he would sooner envy them than the greatest princes in the world.

There are those that bless the covetous, but he blesses the religious. Blessed are those that dwell in thy house (not because they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, but because they have good work): They will be still praising thee; and, if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God, in continually praising him.

Apply this to his house above; blessed are those that dwell there, angels and glorified saints, for they rest not day nor night from praising God. Let us therefore spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

2. Blessed are the people, the inhabitants of the country, who, though they do not constantly dwell in God's house as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance, De 16:16.

David was so far from reckoning this an imposition, and a hardship put upon them, that he envies the happiness of those who might thus attend, Ps 84:5-7. Those whom he pronounces blessed are here described.

(1.) They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God and devotedness to him: Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, who makes thee his strength and strongly stays himself upon thee, who makes thy name his strong tower into which he runs for safety, Pr 18:10. Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God, Ps 40:4,146:5.

Those are truly happy who go forth, and go on, in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength (for then the work is sure to miscarry), but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering.

(2.) They are such as have a love for holy ordinances: In whose heart are the ways of them, that is, who, having placed their happiness in God as their end, rejoice in all the ways that lead to him, all those means by which their graces are strengthened and their

communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts; no care or concern, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this.

Note, Those who have the new Jerusalem in their eye must have the ways that lead to it in their heart, must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them, must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, we must make God's word our rule, and walk by it.

(3.) They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, Ps 84:6. When they come up out of the country to worship at the feasts their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley (so some), in which they are ready to perish for thirst; but, to guard against that inconvenience, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain-water, which is ready to them and others for their refreshment.

When they make the pools the ram of heaven fills them. If we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times.

Their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies, that is (as others understand it), many watery valleys, which in wet weather, when the rain filled the pools, either through the rising of the waters or through the dirtiness of the way were impassable; but, by draining and trenching them, they made a road through them for the benefit of those who went up to Jerusalem.

Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church, as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to show,

[1.] That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways, nor make those an excuse for staying at home.

Difficulties in the way of duty are designed to try our resolution; and he that observes the wind shall not sow.

[2.] That they made the best of the way to Zion, contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and bore, as well as they could, the inconveniences that could not be removed. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that may be made a well if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

(4.) They are such as are still pressing forward till they come to their journey's end at length, and do not take up short of it (Ps 84:7): They go from strength to strength; their company increases by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous.

Those that were near staid till those that were further off called on them, saying, Come, and let us go to the house of the Lord (Ps 122:1,2), that they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love.

Or the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem the more lively and cheerful they were, and so went on stronger and stronger, Job 17:9. Thus it is promised that those that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, Isa 40:31. Even where they are weak, there they are strong.

They go from virtue to virtue (so some); it is the same word that is used for the virtuous woman. Those that press forward in their Christian course shall find God adding grace to their graces, Joh 1:16. They shall be

changed from glory to glory (2Co 3:18), from one degree of glorious grace to another, till, at length, every one of them appears before God in Zion, to give glory to him and receive blessings from him.

Note, Those who grow in grace shall, at last, be perfect in glory. The Chaldee reads it, They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Zion.

We must go from one duty to another, from prayer to the word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; and, if we do this, the benefit of it will appear, to God's glory and our own everlasting comfort.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found a
house, and the swallow a nest for
herself, where she may lay her
young,
even thine altars, O Lord of
hosts, my King, and my God.
4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house:
they will be still praising
thee. Selah.
5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee;
in whose heart *are* the ways *of them*.
6 *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well;
the rain also filleth the pools.
7 They go from strength to strength,
every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.
8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer:
give ear, O God of Jacob.
Selah.

Here, I The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him. He needed to say no more when he had professed such an affectionate esteem for the ordinances of God, which now he was restrained and banished from.

All his desire was, in that profession, plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning, was not hidden from him; therefore he prays (Ps 84:8,9) only that God would hear his prayer and give ear, that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had towards God's courts. He calls himself (as many think) God's anointed, for David was anointed by him and anointed for him. In this petition,

1. He has an eye to God under several of his glorious titles--as the Lord God of hosts, who has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth,--as the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with his own people, a God who never said to the praying seed of Jacob, Seek you me in vain,--and as God our shield, who takes his people under his special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham their father.

Ge 15:1, Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield. When David could not be hidden in the secret of God's tabernacle (Ps 27:5), being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his shield ready to him wherever he was.

2. He has an eye to the Mediator; for of him I rather understand those words, Look upon the face of thy Messiah, thy anointed one, for of his anointing David spoke, Ps 45:7.

In all our addresses to God we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well-pleased with us in him. We must look with an eye of faith, and then God will with an eye of favour look upon the face of the anointed, who does show his face when we without him dare not show ours.

II. He pleads his love to God's ordinances and his dependence upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, Ps 84:10. A very great regard he had for holy ordinances: he valued them above any thing else, and he expresses his value for them,

(1.) By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time: A day spent in thy courts, in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, is better than a thousand, not than a thousand in thy courts, but any where else in this world, though in the midst of all the delights of the children of men. Better than a thousand, he does not say days, you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set his hand to it.

"A day in thy courts, a sabbath day, a holy day, a feast-day, though but one day, would be very welcome to me; nay" (as some of the rabbin paraphrase it), "though I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall with its pleasure chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, to shame, as not worthy to be compared."

(2.) By preferring the place of worship before any other place: I would rather be a door-keeper, rather be in the meanest place and office, in the house of my God, than dwell in state, as master, in the tents of wickedness.

Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a house, for the presence of God in it made even those curtains more stately than a palace and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God; the covenant-interest he had in God as his God was the sweet string on which he loved dearly to be harping; those, and those only, who can, upon good ground, call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house.

I would rather be a porter in God's house than a prince in those tents where wickedness reigns, rather lie at the threshold (so the word is); that was the beggar's place (Ac 3:2): "no matter" (says David), "let that be my place rather than none."

The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there (Mt 23:6), that they might make a figure. Holy David is not solicitous about that; if he may but be admitted to the threshold, he will say, Master, it is good to be here.

Some read it, I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God than live at liberty in the tents of wickedness, alluding to the law concerning servants, who, if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, Ex 21:5,6.

David loved his master and loved his work so well that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his hope, and joy, and all. Therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate himself, Ps 84:11. See,

(1.) What God is, and will be, to his people: The Lord God is a sun and shield. We are here in darkness, but, if God be our God, he will be to us a sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us. We are here in danger, but he will be to us a shield to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thickly about us. With his favour he will compass us as with a shield.

Let us therefore always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a sun to supply us with all good and a shield to shelter us from all evil.

(2.) What he does, and will, bestow upon them: The Lord will give grace and glory. Grace signifies both the good-will of God towards us and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he now puts upon us, in giving us the adoption of sons, and that which he has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons.

God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are God's gift, his free gift.

And as, on the one hand, wherever God gives grace he will give glory (for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it), so, on the other hand, he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he does not give grace now, or who receive his grace in vain.

And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that no good thing will be withheld from those that walk uprightly.

It is the character of all good people that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity; and such may be sure that God will withhold no good thing from them, that is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world. Make sure grace and glory, and other things shall be added.

This is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints that, whatever they desire, and think they need, they may be sure that either Infinite Wisdom sees it is not good for them or Infinite Goodness will give it to them in due

time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us every thing that is good for us.

Lastly, He pronounces those blessed who put their confidence in God, as he did, Ps 84:12. Those are blessed who have the liberty of ordinances and the privileges of God's house. But, though we should be debarred from them, yet we are not therefore debarred from blessedness if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy and may be easy.

9 Behold, O God our shield,
and look upon the face of thine anointed.
10 For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
11 For the Lord God *is* a sun and shield:
the Lord will give grace and glory:
no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
12 O Lord of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

Psalms-85

A Prayer for God's Mercy on Israel
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

1 Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land:
thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

The church, in affliction and distress, is here, by direction from God, making her application to God. So ready is God to hear and answer the prayers of his people that by his Spirit in the word, and in the heart, he indites their petitions and puts words into their mouths. The people of God, in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

I. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them (Ps 85:1-3): "Thou has done so and so for us and our fathers."

Note, The sense of present afflictions should not drown the remembrance of former mercies; but, even when we are brought very low, we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of with thankfulness, to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure,

1. That God had shown himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own: "Thou hast been favourable to thy land, as thine, with distinguishing favours."

Note, The favour of God is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness, to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got and kept possession of Canaan (Ps 44:3); and, if he had not continued very favourable to them, they would have been ruined many a time.

2. That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies and restored them to their liberty: "Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob, and settled those in their own land again that had been driven out and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors." The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long, will be brought back in due time.

3. That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocations (Ps 85:2): "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, and not punished them as in justice thou mightest. Thou hast covered all their sin." When God forgives sin he covers it; and, when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity.

4. That he had not continued his anger against them so far, and so long, as they had reason to fear (Ps 85:3): "Having covered all their sin, thou hast taken away all thy wrath;" for when sin is set aside God's anger ceases; God is pacified if we are purified.

See what the pardon of sin is: Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, that is, "Thou hast turned thy anger from waxing hot, so as to consume us in the flame of it. In compassion to us thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath, but, when an intercessor has stood before thee in the gap, thou hast turned away thy anger."

II. They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy, in reference to their present distress; this is inferred from the former: "Thou hast done well for our fathers; do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant."

1. They pray for converting grace: "Turn us, O God of our salvation! in order to the turning of our captivity; turn us from iniquity; turn us to thyself and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned." All those whom God will save sooner or later he will turn. If no conversion, no salvation.

2. They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under: "Cause thine anger towards us to cease, as thou didst many a time cause it to cease in the days of our fathers, when thou didst take away thy wrath from them." Observe the method, "First turn us to thee, and then cause thy anger to turn from us." When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us.

3. They pray for the manifestation of God's good-will to them (Ps 85:7): "Show us thy mercy, O Lord! show thyself merciful to us; not only have mercy on us, but

let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us and mercy in store for us."

4. They pray that God would, graciously to them and gloriously to himself, appear on their behalf: "Grant us thy salvation; grant it by thy promise, and then, no doubt, thou wilt work it by thy providence." Note, The vessels of God's mercy are the heirs of his salvation; he shows mercy to those to whom he grants salvation; for salvation is of mere mercy.

III. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, Ps 85:5,6. Here observe,

1. What they dread and deprecate: "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. Wilt thou draw out thy anger unto all generations? No; thou art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to show mercy, and wilt not contend for ever.

Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thyself from the fierceness of thy wrath; why then wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impenitent sinners God will be angry with for ever; for what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a hell upon earth be the lot of thy people?"

2. What they desire and hope for: "Wilt thou not revive us again (Ps 85:6), revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us? Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again?" God had granted to the children of the captivity some reviving in their bondage, Ezr 9:8.

Their return out of Babylon was as life from the dead, Eze 37:11,12. Now, Lord (say they), wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in? Isa 126:1,4,Ps 126:1,4. Revive thy work in the midst of the years, Hab 3:2. "Revive us again,"

(1.) "That thy people may rejoice; and so we shall have the comfort of it," Ps 14:7. Give them life, that they may have joy.

(2.) "That they may rejoice in thee; and so thou wilt have the glory of it." If God be the fountain of all our mercies, he must be the centre of all our joys.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;
thou hast covered all their sin.
Selah.
3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath:
thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.
4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
and cause thine anger toward us to cease.
5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not revive us again:
that thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Show us thy mercy, O Lord,
and grant us thy salvation.
8 I will hear what God the Lord will speak:
for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:
but let them not turn again to folly.

We have here an answer to the prayers and expostulations in the Ps 85:1-7.

I. In general, it is an answer of peace. This the psalmist is soon aware of (Ps 85:8), for he stands upon his watch-tower to hear what God will say unto him, as the prophet, Hab 2:1,2. I will hear what God the Lord will speak. This intimates,

1 The stilling of his passions--his grief, his fear--and the tumult of his spirit which they occasioned: "Compose thyself, O my soul! in a humble silence to attend upon God and wait his motions. I have spoken enough, or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will. What saith my Lord unto his servant?"

If we would have God to hear what we say to him by prayer, we must be ready to hear what he says to us by his word.

2 The raising of his expectation; now that he has been at prayer he looks for something very great, and very kind, from the God that hears prayer. When we have prayed we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now observe here,

(1.) What it is that he promises himself from God, in answer to his prayers: He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints. There are a people in the world who are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and who shall be saved by him.

All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings and within are fears; but, sooner or later, God will speak peace to them; if he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace, speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit which he has spoken to their ears by his word and ministers and making them to hear joy and gladness.

(2.) What use he makes of this expectation.

[1.] He takes the comfort of it; and so must we: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, hear the assurances he gives of peace, in answer to prayer." When God speaks peace we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it.

[2.] He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for: But let them not turn again to folly; for it is on these terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected.

To those, and those only, peace is spoken, who turn from sin; but, if they return to it again, it is at their peril. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn to it after God has spoken peace. God is for peace, but, when he speaks, such are for war.

II. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace. He doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the Ps 85:9-13 of the psalm, which describe the peace and prosperity that God, at length, blessed the children of the captivity with, when, after a great deal of toil and agitation, at length they gained a settlement in their own land.

But it may be taken both as a promise also to all who fear God and work righteousness, that they shall be easy and happy, and as a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

1. Help at hand (Ps 85:9): "Surely his salvation is nigh, nigh to us, nigher than we think it is: it will soon be effected, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time shall come, and that time is not far off." When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes. It is nigh to all who fear him; when trouble is nigh salvation is nigh, for God is a very present help in time of trouble to all who are his; whereas salvation is far from the wicked, Ps 119:155.

This may fitly be applied to Christ the author of eternal salvation: it was the comfort of the Old-Testament

saints that, though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem which they waited for, yet they were sure it was nigh, and would be welcome, to all that fear God.

2. Honour secured: "That glory may dwell in our land, that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, Ichabod--the glory has departed; when that stays glory dwells." This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the glory of his people Israel, and who came and dwelt among them (Joh 1:4), for which reason their land is called Immanuel's land, Isa 8:8.

3. Graces meeting, and happily embracing (Ps 85:10,11): Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, kiss each other. This may be understood,

(1.) Of the reformation of the people and of the government, in the administration of which all those graces should be conspicuous and commanding. The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable. When there is no truth nor mercy all goes to ruin (Ho 4:1,Isa 59:14,15); but when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when there is such plenty of truth that it sprouts up like the grass of the earth, and of righteousness that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well.

When in every congress mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty is a reproach to any people.

(2.) Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it, thereupon. When a people return to God and adhere to him in a way of duty he will return to them and abide with them in a way of mercy. So some understand this, man's truth and God's mercy, man's

righteousness and God's peace, meet together. If God find us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful. If we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace.

If truth spring out of the earth, that is (as Dr. Hammond expounds it), out of the hearts of men, the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness (that is, God's mercy) shall look down from heaven, as the sun does upon the world when it sheds its influences on the productions of the earth and cherishes them.

(3.) Of the harmony of the divine attributes in the Messiah's undertaking. In him who is both our salvation and our glory mercy and truth have met together; God's mercy and truth, and his righteousness and peace, have kissed each other; that is, the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them, without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners and takes them into covenant with himself.

Christ, as Mediator, brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance; through him truth springs out of the earth, that truth which God desires in the inward part, and then righteousness looks down from heaven; for God is just, and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.

Or it may denote that in the kingdom of the Messiah these graces shall flourish and prevail and have a universal command.

4. Great plenty of every thing desirable (Ps 85:12): The Lord shall give that which is good, every thing that he sees to be good for us. All good comes from God's goodness; and when mercy, truth, and righteousness,

have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives, all good may be expected. If we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, other things shall be added; Mt 6:33. When the glory of the gospel dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase, for soul-prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it or sweeten the want of it. See Ps 67:6.

5. A sure guidance in the good way (Ps 85:13): The righteousness of his promise which he has made to us, assuring us of happiness, and the righteousness of sanctification, that good work which he has wrought in us, these shall go before him to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour and to qualify us for it; and these shall go before us also, and be our guide to set us in the way of his steps, that is, to encourage our hopes and guide our practice, that we may go forth to meet him when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy.

Christ, the sun of righteousness, shall bring us to God, and put us into the way that leads to him. John Baptist, a preacher of righteousness, shall go before Christ to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God and in following him.

9 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him;
that glory may dwell in our land.
10 Mercy and truth are met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.*
11 Truth shall spring out of the earth;
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.
12 Yea, the Lord shall give *that which is* good;
and our land shall yield her increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him;
and shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

Psalms-86

A Prayer for God's Continued Mercy
A Prayer of David.

1 Bow down thine ear, O Lord,
hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.

This psalm was published under the title of a prayer of David; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections.

But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetic flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer. Now here we may observe,

I The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer as it is here described (Ps 86:4): Unto thee, O Lord! do I lift up my soul, as he had said Ps 25:1. In all the parts of prayer the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God, to meet the communications of his grace, and in an expectation raised very high of great things from him.

1. He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers (Ps 86:1): Bow down thy ear, O Lord! hear me. When God hears our prayers it is fitly said that he bows down his ear to them, for it is admirable condescension in God that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are and such defective prayers as ours are. He repeats this again (Ps 86:6):

"Give ear, O Lord! unto my prayer, a favourable ear, though it be whispered, though it be stammered; attend to the voice of my supplications." Not that God needs to have his affection stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The Son of David spoke it with assurance and pleasure (Joh 11:41,42), Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always.

2. He begs that God would take him under his special protection, and so be the author of his salvation (Ps 86:2): Preserve my soul; save thy servant. It was David's soul that was God's servant; for those only serve God acceptably that serve him with their spirits. David's concern is about his soul; if we understand it of his natural life, it teaches us that the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our preserver.

But it may be understood of his spiritual life, the life of the soul as distinct from the body: "Preserve my soul from that one evil and dangerous thing to souls, even from sin; preserve my soul, and so save me." All those whom God will save he preserves, and will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.

3. He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity and compassion (Ps 86:3): Be merciful to me, O Lord! It is mercy in God to pardon our sins and to help us out of our distresses; both these are included in this prayer, God be merciful to me. "Men show no mercy; we ourselves deserve no mercy, but, Lord, for mercy-sake, be merciful unto me."

4. He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort (Ps 86:4): Rejoice the soul of thy servant. It is God only that can put gladness into the heart and make the soul to rejoice, and then, and not till then, the joy is full; and, as it is the duty of those who are God's servants to serve

him with gladness, so it is their privilege to be filled with joy and peace in believing, and they may in faith pray, not only that God will preserve their souls, but that he will rejoice their souls, and the joy of the Lord will be their strength.

Observe, When he prays, Rejoice my soul, he adds, For unto thee do I lift up my soul. Then we may expect comfort from God when we take care to keep up our communion with God: prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

II The pleas with which he enforces these petitions.

1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him: "Thou art my God, to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant (Ps 86:2), in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee."

2. He pleads his distress: "Hear me, for I am poor and needy, therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me." God is the poor man's King, whose glory it is to save the souls of the needy; those who are poor in spirit, who see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace.

3. He pleads God's good will towards all that seek him (Ps 86:5): "To thee do I lift up my soul in desire and expectation; for thou, Lord, art good;" and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house-keeper? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in all our addresses to him. His goodness appears in two things, giving and forgiving.

(1.) He is a sin-pardoning God; not only he can forgive, but he is ready to forgive, more ready to forgive than we are to repent. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest, Ps 32:5.

(2.) He is a prayer-hearing God; he is plenteous in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal unto all those that call upon him; he has wherewithal to supply all their needs and is openhanded in granting that supply.

4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were wrought in him by divine grace, which he looked upon as earnests of all good:--

(1.) A conformity to God (Ps 86:2): I am holy, therefore preserve my soul; for those whom the Spirit sanctifies he will preserve. He does not say this in pride and vain glory, but with humble thankfulness to God. I am one whom thou favourest (so the margin reads it), whom thou hast set apart for thyself. If God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that the time was a time of love. Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour, and whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection. All his saints are in thy hand, De 33:3.

Observe, I am needy (Ps 86:1), yet I am holy (Ps 86:2), holy and yet needy, poor in the world, but rich in faith. Those who preserve their purity in their greatest poverty may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls.

(2.) A confidence in God: Save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Those that are holy must nevertheless not trust in themselves, nor in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. Those that trust in God may expect salvation from him.

(3.) A disposition to communion with God. He hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray.

[1.] To be constant in prayer: I cry unto thee daily, and all the day, Ps 86:3. It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard which we make in the time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer a-going, and that hey are not then to be set a-going.

[2.] To be inward with God in prayer, to lift up his soul to him, Ps 86:4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies, when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him.

[3.] To be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer when he was in affliction (Ps 86:7): "In the day of my trouble, whatever others do, I will call upon thee, and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, O Baal! hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that regarded," 1Ki 18:29.

2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy:
O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord:
for I cry unto thee daily.
4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant:
for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive;
and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
6 Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer;
and attend to the voice of my supplications.
7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee:
for thou wilt answer me.
8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord;
neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.

David is here going on in his prayer.

I. He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory, to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

1. As a being of unparalleled perfection, such a one that there is none like him nor any to be compared with him, Ps 86:8. Among the gods, the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, there is none like unto thee, O Lord! none so wise, so mighty, so good; neither are there any works like unto thy works, which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him; his own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him is by acknowledging that there is none like him.

2. As the fountain of all being and the centre of all praise (Ps 86:9): "Thou hast made all nations, made them all of one blood; they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore they shall come and worship before thee and glorify thy name." This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, Re 7:9.

It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to worship before God, Isa 66:23.

3. As a being infinitely great (Ps 86:10): "Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as King of nations thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and, for the proof of this, thou doest

wondrous things, which all nations admire, and whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone, not only none like thee, but none besides thee."

Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admiration of this God who doeth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts who is God alone.

4. As a being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile (Ps 86:14); no mercy is to be expected from him; but thou, O Lord! art a God full of compassion, and gracious, Ps 86:15. This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, Ex 34:6,7. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort, in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that, however it be, God is good.

Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him mercy rejoiceth against judgment. He is long-suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour and provoke him to anger, and he is plenteous in mercy and truth, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

5. As a kind friend and bountiful benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist dwells upon with most pleasure, Ps 86:12,13.

He had said (Ps 86:9), All nations shall praise thee, O Lord! and glorify thy name. It is some satisfaction to a good man to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. "Whatever others do" (says David), "I will praise thee, O Lord my God! not only as the Lord, but

as my God; and I will do it with all my heart; I will be ready to do it and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for I will glorify thy name, not for a time, but for evermore.

I will do it as long as I live, and hope to be doing it to eternity." With good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shown him particular favours: For great is thy mercy towards me. The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full; the streams of mercy are inestimably rich. When we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us thus to magnify it: Great is thy mercy towards me. Of the greatness of God's mercy he gives this instance, Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell, from death, from so great a death, as St. Paul (2Co 1:10), from eternal death, so even some of the Jewish writers understand it.

David knew he deserved to be cast off for ever into the lowest hell for his sin in the matter of Uriah; but Nathan assured him that the Lord had taken away his sin, and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell, and herein God's mercy was great towards him.

Even the best saints owe it, not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell; and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious; so gracious, a rescue from everlasting misery, justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

II. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him (Ps 86:14): "Lord, be thou for me; for there are many against me." He then takes notice of their character; they were proud men that looked with disdain upon poor David. (Many are made persecutors by their pride.)

They were violent men, that would carry all before them by force, right or wrong. They were terrible formidable men (so some), that did what they could to frighten all about them. He notices their number:

There were assemblies of them; they were men in authority and met in councils and courts, or men for conversation, and met in clubs; but, being assembled, they were the more capable of doing mischief. He notices their enmity to him: "They rise up against me in open rebellion; they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose me, but to destroy me: they seek after my life, to slay me; after my soul, to damn me, if it lay in their power."

And, lastly, He notices their distance and estrangement from God, which were at the bottom of their enmity to David: "They have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thy enemies as well as mine." His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, Ps 86:11. He prays that God would give him,

(1.) An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty: "Teach me thy way, O Lord! the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in; when I am in doubt concerning it, make it plain to me what I should do; let me hear the voice saying, This is the way," Isa 30:21.

David was well taught in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed further instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment: Teach me thy way; I will walk in thy truth. One would think it should be, Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way; but it comes all to one; it is the way of truth that God teaches

and that we must choose to walk in, Ps 119:30. Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth unless he teach us; and, if we expect he should teach us, we must resolve to be governed by his teachings, Isa 2:3.

(2.) An upright heart: "Unite my heart to fear thy name. Make me sincere in religion. A hypocrite has a double heart; let mine be single and entire for God, not divided between him and the world, not straggling from him." Our hearts are apt to wander and hang loose; their powers and faculties wander after a thousand foreign things; we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. "Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him; that is a united heart."

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, Ps 86:16,17. Three things he here prays for:--

(1.) That God would speak peace and comfort to him: "O turn unto me, as to one thou lovest and hast a kind and tender concern for. My enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me; Lord, do thou turn to me and have mercy upon me; it will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me."

(2.) That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety: "Give me thy strength; put strength into me, that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin." He pleads relation: "I am thy servant; I am so by birth, as the son of thy handmaid, born in thy house, and therefore thou art my rightful owner and proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. I am thine; save me." The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may

plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it.

(3.) That God would put a reputation on him: "Show me a token for good; make it to appear to others as well as to myself that thou art doing me good, and designing further good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, that those who hate me may see it, and be ashamed of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be when they perceive that thou, Lord, hast helped me and comforted me, and that therefore they have been striving against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort." The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

9 All nations whom thou hast made
shall come and worship before thee, O Lord;
and shall glorify thy name.
10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things:
thou *art* God alone.
11 Teach me thy way, O Lord;
I will walk in thy truth:
unite my heart to fear thy name.
12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart:
and I will glorify thy name for evermore.
13 For great *is* thy mercy toward me:
and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.
14 O God, the proud are risen against me,
and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul;
and have not set thee before them.
15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious,
long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
give thy strength unto thy servant,
and save the son of thine handmaid.
17 Show me a token for good;
that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed:
because thou, Lord, hast helped me, and comforted me.

Psalms-87

The Privileges of Dwelling in Zion
A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah.

1 His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title; it is a psalm or song whose subject is the holy mountains--the temple built in Zion upon Mount Moriah. This is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm.

Or we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view and was contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of; every one knew what he meant when he said thus abruptly, Its foundation is in the holy mountains. Three things are here observed, in praise of the temple:--

1. That it was founded on the holy mountains, Ps 87:1 The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter; Christ himself is the foundation of it, which God has laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains. It is built high; the mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains, Isa 2:2. It is built firmly; the mountains are rocky, and on a rock the church is built.

The world is founded upon the seas (Ps 24:2), which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten. But the church is built upon the everlasting mountains and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, Isa 54:10.

The foundation is upon the holy mountains. Holiness is the strength and stability of the church: it is this that will support it and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains as that it is built upon holy mountains--upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he has sworn by his holiness, upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

2. That God had expressed a particular affection for it (Ps 87:2): The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, of the temple, of the houses of doctrine (so the Chaldee), more than all the dwellings of Jacob, whether in Jerusalem or any where else in the country.

God had said concerning Zion, This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell. There he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and showed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note,

(1.) God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families and accepts their family-worship.

(2.) Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all, of the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family-worship is family-duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet, when they come in competition, public worship (cæteris paribus--other things being equal) is to be preferred before private.

3. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God (Ps 87:3): Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God! We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make and the estimate put upon them in and by the scripture.

Many base things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious; but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth glorious things are spoken of it. God said of the temple, My eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually; I have sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever, 2Ch 7:16. Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion, Ps 48:2.

These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel-church. It is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood; it is a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned ever so much to our reproach, since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not on iota or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

2 The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of
Jacob.
3 Glorious things are spoken of
thee, O city of God.
Selah.
4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me:
behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
this *man* was born there.

Zion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them; the church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

1. It is owned that other places have their glories (Ps 87:4): "I will make mention of Rahab" (that is, Egypt) "and Babylon, to those that know me and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs; behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia" (or rather Arabia), "we will observe that this man was born there; here and

there one famous man, eminent for knowledge and virtue, may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a proselyte and worshipper of the true God."

But some give another sense of it, supposing that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church and of uniting them in one body with the Jews. God says, "I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with those that know me. I will reckon them my people as much as Israel when they shall receive the gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Zion, born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Zion as freely as a true-born Israelite."

Those that were strangers and foreigners became fellow-citizens with the saints, Eph 2:19. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew; compare Isa 19:23-25. The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.

2. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all, upon many accounts; for,

(1.) Zion shall produce many great and good men that shall be famous in their generation, Ps 87:5. Of Zion it shall be said by all her neighbours that this and that man were born in her, many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty--many prophets and kings, who should be greater favourites of heaven, and greater blessings to the earth, than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceed those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records.

A man, a man was born in her, by which some understand Christ, that man, that son of man, who is fairer than the children of men; he was born at

Bethlehem near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation was, that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, Ro 9:5.

Or this also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles. Of Zion it shall be said that the law which went forth out of Zion, the gospel of Christ, shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

(2.) Zion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. The Highest himself shall undertake to establish her, who can do it effectually; the accession of proselytes out of various nations shall be so far from occasioning discord and division that it shall contribute greatly to Zion's strength; for, God himself having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

(3.) Zion's sons shall be registered with honour (Ps 87:6): "The Lord shall count, when he writes up the people, and takes a catalogue of his subjects, that this man was born there, and so is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house--by the second birth, being born again of his Spirit."

When God comes to reckon with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he will observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, Ro 9:4,Ro 3:1,2.

For to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly; five talents must be improved by those that were entrusted with five. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, and where thou was born. Selah. Let those that dwell in Zion mark this, and live up to their profession.

(4.) Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph: As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there to praise God, Ps 87:7. It was much to the honour of Zion, and is to the honour of the gospel-church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing: his work is done, and done cheerfully; see Ps 68:25.

All my springs are in thee, O Zion! So God says; he has deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances; there are the springs from which those streams take rise which make glad the city of our God, Ps 46:4.

So the psalmist says, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watered to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints. The springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure; but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow. It pleased the Father, and all believers are well pleased with it too, that in him should all fulness dwell.

5 And of Zion it shall be said,
This and that man was born in her:
and the Highest himself shall establish her.
6 The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people,
that this *man* was born
there. Selah.
7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there:*
all my springs *are* in thee.

Psalms-88

A Prayer for Deliverance from Death
A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

1 O Lord God of my salvation,
I have cried day *and* night before thee:

It should seem, by the titles of this and the following psalm, that Heman was the penman of the one and Ethan of the other. There were two, of these names, who were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1Ch 2:4,6.

There were two others famed for wisdom, 1Ki 4:31, where, to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be wiser than Heman and Ethan. Whether the Heman and Ethan who were Levites and precentors in the songs of Zion were the same we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these, were the penmen of these psalms.

There was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called the king's seer, or prophet, in the words of God (1Ch 25:5); it is probable that this also was a seer, and yet could see no comfort for himself, an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him. The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm.

There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but, before he begins his complaint, he calls God the God of his salvation, which intimates both that he looked for salvation, bad as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation and depended upon him to be the author of it. Now here we have the psalmist,

I. A man of prayer, one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now that he was in affliction; for is any afflicted? let him pray. It is his comfort that he had prayed; it is his complaint that, notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. He was,

1. Very earnest in prayer: "I have cried unto thee (Ps 88:1), and have stretched out my hands unto thee (Ps 88:9), as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short and missing of it."

2. He was very frequent and constant in prayer: I have called upon thee daily (Ps 88:9), nay, day and night, Ps 88:1. For thus men ought always to pray, and not to faint; God's own elect cry day and night to him, not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but spending the day and night in prayer.

This is indeed praying always; and then we shall speed in prayer, when we continue instant in prayer. 3. He directed his prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer (Ps 88:2): "Let my prayer come before thee, to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees' prayers." He does not desire that men should hear them, but, "Lord, incline thy ear unto my cry, for to that I refer myself; give what answer to it thou pleasest."

II. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him, in this psalm, a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same purport with this psalm. He cries out (Ps 88:3): My soul is full of troubles; so Christ said, Now is my soul troubled; and, in his agony, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, like the psalmist's here, for he says, My life draws nigh unto the grave.

Heman was a very wise man, and a very good man, a man of God, and a singer too, and one may therefore suppose him to have been a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair.

Inward trouble is the sorest trouble, and that which, sometimes, the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. The spirit of man, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain his infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; who then can bear a wounded spirit?

III. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow (Ps 88:5): "Free among the dead (one of that ghastly corporation), like the slain that lie in the grave, whose rotting and perishing nobody takes notice of or is concerned for, nay, whom thou rememberest no more, to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms; they are cut off from thy hand, which used to be employed in supporting them and reaching out to them; but, now there is no more occasion for this, they are cut off from it and cut off by it" (for God will not stretch out his hand to the grave, Job 30:24); "thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, in darkness, in the deep (Ps 88:6), sinking, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone."

Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, such dismal apprehensions may they have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy and the weakness of faith.

IV. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the

affliction and the misery (Ps 88:7): Thy wrath lies hard upon me. Could he have discerned the favour and love of God in his affliction, it would have lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard, upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it.

The impressions of this wrath upon his spirits were God's waves with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarcely recovered from one dark thought before he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some, but all, of God's waves were made use of in afflicting him and bearing him down.

Even the children of God's love may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

V. It added to his affliction that his friends deserted him and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble it is some comfort to have those about us that love us, and sympathize with us; but this good man had none such, which gives him occasion, not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude, and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of the affliction (Ps 88:8):

Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me. Providence had removed them, or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him; for every creature is that to us (and no more) that God makes it to be. If our old acquaintance be shy of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the divine will that we do other afflictions, Job 19:13.

Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress: "Thou hast made me an abomination to them; they are not only shy of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them, not only with contempt, but with abhorrence." Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman, who was so famed for wisdom, was yet, when the world frowned upon him, neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

VI. He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable: "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth, a close prisoner, under the arrests of divine wrath, and no way open of escape." He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he bemoans himself (Ps 88:9):

My eye mourneth by reason of affliction. Sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping gives some ease to a troubled spirit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: My eye mourns, but I cry unto thee daily. Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together. I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears.

2 let my prayer come before thee:
incline thine ear unto my cry;
3 for my soul is full of troubles:
and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit:
I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
5 free among the dead,
like the slain that lie in the grave,
whom thou rememberest no more:
and they are cut off from thy hand.
6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
in darkness, in the deeps.
7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves.
Selah.

8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me;
thou hast made me an abomination unto them:
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.
9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction:
Lord, I have called daily upon thee,
I have stretched out my hands unto thee.
10 Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise thee?
Selah.

In these verses,

I The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in (Ps 88:10-12): "Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead, and raise them to life again? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee?

No; they leave it to their children to rise up in their room to praise God; none expects that they should do it; and wherefore should they rise, wherefore should they live, but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But shall thy lovingkindness to thy people be declared in the grave, either by those or to those that lie buried there?

And thy faithfulness to thy promise, shall that be told in destruction? shall thy wonders be wrought in the dark, or known there, and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered?

Departed souls may indeed know God's wonders and declare his faithfulness, justice, and lovingkindness; but deceased bodies cannot; they can neither receive God's favours in comfort nor return them in praise." Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him or would not, much less do they imply any

disbelief of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief:

"Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous; these attributes of thine will be made known in my deliverance, but, if it be not hastened, it will come too late; for I shall be dead and past relief, dead and not capable of receiving any comfort, very shortly." Job often pleaded thus, Job 7:8,10:21.

II. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so because the deliverance was deferred (Ps 88:13): "Unto thee have I cried many a time, and found comfort in so doing, and therefore I will continue to do so; in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee."

Note, Though our prayers be not answered immediately, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie. God delays the answer in order that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early, in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in--in the morning, after he had been tossed with cares, and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night; but how could he say, My prayer shall prevent thee? Not as if he could wake sooner to pray than God to hear and answer; for he neither slumbers nor sleeps; but it intimates that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray, would prevent (that is, go before) his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. "My prayer shall present itself before thee, and be betimes with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach towards it with faith and expectation even before the day dawns." God often prevents our prayers and

expectations with his mercies; let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

III. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer.

1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in (Ps 88:14): "Lord, why castest thou off my soul? What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant, should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off:

"No wonder men cast me off; but, Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance? Why hidest thou thy face, as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me or wilt not let me know that thou hast?"

Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him, nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth; but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be!

2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had before made, until God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances:--

(1.) That God was a terror to him: I suffer thy terrors, Ps 88:15. He had continual frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins and the consequences of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, of falling into his hands and appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He perspired and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his majesty.

Note, Even those that are designed for God's favours may yet, for a time, suffer his terrors. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complained of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, Job 6:4. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deeply they wounded him.

[1.] They had almost taken away his life: "I am so afflicted with them that I am ready to die, and" (as the word is) "to give up the ghost. Thy terrors have cut me off," Ps 88:16. What is hell, that eternal excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastening and preying upon their guilty consciences?

[2.] They had almost taken away the use of his reason: When I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. This sad effect the terrors of the Lord have had upon many, and upon some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls, a most piteous case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion.

[3.] This had continued long: From my youth up I suffer thy terrors. He had been from his childhood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience.

It is observable the Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was afflicted and ready to die, and suffered God's terrors, from his youth up.

Thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth, that sorrow has been much better

for them than laughter would have been, and that being much afflicted, and often ready to die, when they were young, they have, by the grace of God, got such an habitual seriousness and weanedness from the world as have been of great use to them all their days. Sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services are prepared for them by exercises of this kind.

[4.] His affliction was now extreme, and worse than ever. God's terrors now came round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with variety of troubles, and he had no comfortable gale from any point of the compass.

They broke in upon him together like an inundation of water; and this daily, and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, not the lest breathing-time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a very wise and good man; he was so surrounded with terrors that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind.

(2.) That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him (Ps 88:18): Lover and friend hast thou put far from me; some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind. Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous.

With this the psalmist here closes his complaint, as if this were that which completed his woe and gave the finishing stroke to the melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

11 Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave?
or thy faithfulness in destruction?

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But unto thee have I cried, O Lord;
and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.
14 Lord, why castest thou off my soul?
Why hidest thou thy face from me?
15 I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up:
while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me;
thy terrors have cut me off.
17 They came round about me daily like water;
they compassed me about together.
18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,
and mine acquaintance into darkness.

Psalms-89

God's Covenant with David
Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

1 I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever:
with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to
all generations.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise; for we must, in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire.

We think, when we are in trouble, that we get ease by complaining; but we do more--we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgivings; and in these verses we find that which will be matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or a public account,

1. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, Ps 89:1. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God, yet we must abide by this principle, That God's mercies are inexhaustible and his truth is inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise:

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, sing a praising song to God's honour, a pleasant song for my own solace, and Maschil, an instructive song, for the edification of others." We may be for ever singing God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry.

We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing them in heaven world without end; and this is singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.

With my mouth, and with my pen (for by that also do we speak), will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations, assuring posterity, from my own observation and experience, that God is true to every word that he has spoken, that they may learn to put their trust in God, Ps 78:6.

2. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, Ps 89:2-4. Here we have,

(1.) The psalmist's faith and hope: "Things now look black, and threaten the utter extirpation of the house of David; but I have said, and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that mercy shall be built up for ever."

As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song (Ps 89:1), so much more the mercy that is built for us in the covenant; it is still increasing, like a house in the building up, and shall still continue our rest for ever, like a house built up.

It shall be built up for ever; for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, shall be raised out of its ruins, and built up as in the days of old, Am 9:11. Therefore mercy shall be built up for ever, because thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

Though our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled; they are established in the very heavens (that is, in his eternal counsels); they are above the changes of this lower region and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth.

The stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be clouded by vapours arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched, they cannot be changed.

(2.) An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope are built: I have said it, says the psalmist, for God hath sworn it, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel. He brings in God speaking (Ps 89:3), owning, to the comfort of his people, "I have made a covenant, and therefore will make it good."

The covenant is made with David; the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed through him and for his sake, representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as head of the church and with all believers as his spiritual seed.

David is here called God's chosen and his servant; and, as God is not changeable to recede from his own choice, so he is not unrighteous to cast off one that

served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant:--

[1.] The ratification of it; it was confirmed with an oath: The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent.

[2.] The perpetuity of it; the blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family; it was promised that his family should continue--Thy seed will I establish for ever, so that David shall not want a son to reign (Jer 33:20,21); and that it should continue a royal family--I will build up thy throne to all generations, to all the generations of time.

This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, Ps 89:19, &c.

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever:
thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.
3 I have made a covenant with my
chosen, I have sworn unto David my
servant,
4 Thy seed will I establish for ever,
and build up thy throne to all
generations. Selah.
5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord:
thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe,

I. Where, and by whom, God is to be praised.

1. God is praised by the angels above: The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord! Ps 89:5; that is, "the glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises." Bless the Lord, you his angels,

Ps 103:20. The works of God are wonders even to those that are best acquainted and most intimately conversant with them; the more God's works are known the more they are admired and praised.

This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do but to praise God and his wonders.

2. God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth (praise waits for him in Zion); and, though their praises fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept of them, and reckon himself honoured by them.

"Thy faithfulness and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is that there is a promise, and that he is faithful who has promised."

It is expected from God's saints on earth that they praise him; who should, if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together, let them join in praising God. The more the better; it is the more like heaven.

Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints he speaks again (Ps 89:7): God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints. Saints should assemble for religious worship, that they may publicly own their relation to God and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and, in keeping up communion with God, may likewise maintain the communion of saints.

In religious assemblies God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also, in them, have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is

terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared.

A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us, in all our approaches to God, even in secret, to which something may very well be added by the solemnity of public assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that are about him, that attend him continually as his servants or approach him upon any particular errand. See Le 10:3. Those only serve God acceptably who serve him with reverence and godly fear, Heb 12:28.

II. What it is to praise God; it is to acknowledge him to be a being of unparalleled perfection, such a one that there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, Ps 89:6. If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, surely they must be found among the angels; but they are all infinitely short of him: Who in the heaven can be compared with the Lord, so as to challenge any share of the reverence and adoration which are due to him only, or to set up in rivalship with him for the homage of the children of men?

They are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are princes' peers; some parity there is between them. But there is none between God and the angels; they are not his peers. To whom will you liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One, Isa 40:25.

This is insisted on again (Ps 89:8): Who is a strong Lord like unto thee? No angel, no earthly potentate, whatsoever, is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. Thy faithfulness is round about thee; that is, "thy angels who are round about thee, attending thee with their praises and ready to go on thy errands, are all faithful."

Or, rather, "In every thing thou doest, on all sides, thou approvest thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever

prince or potentate was." Among men it is too often found that those who are most able to break their word are least careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.

III. What we ought, in our praises, to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned.

1 The command God has of the most ungovernable creatures (Ps 89:9): Thou rulest the raging of the sea, than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, nor more out of the power of man to give check to; it can swell no higher, roll no further, beat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt, than God suffers it.

"When the waves thereof arise thou canst immediately hush them asleep, still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm." This coming in here as an act of omnipotence, what manner of man then was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed?

2 The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church. His ruling the raging of the sea and quelling its billows was an emblem of this (Ps 89:10): Thou hast broken Rahab, many a proud enemy (so it signifies), Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called Rahab, broken it in pieces, as one that is slain and utterly unable to make head again.

"The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength." God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies. We think he should slay them immediately, but sometimes he scatters them, that he may send them abroad to be monuments of his justice, Ps 59:11. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces is a comfort to the church, in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same.

3. The incontestable property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world (Ps 89:11,12): "Men are honoured for their large possessions; but the heavens are thine, O Lord! the earth also is thine; therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. The world and the fulness thereof, all the riches contained in it, all the inhabitants of it, both the tenements and the tenants, are all thine; for thou hast founded them," and the founder may justly claim to be the owner. He specifies,

(1.) The remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited and little known: "Thou hast created them, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them." The north is said to be hung over the empty place; yet what fulness there is there God is the owner of it.

(2.) The highest parts of the world. He mentions the two highest hills in Canaan--"Tabor and Hermon" (one lying to the west, the other to the east); "these shall rejoice in thy name, for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thy altar." The little hills are said to rejoice in their own fruitfulness, Ps 65:12.

Tabor is commonly supposed to be that high mountain in Galilee on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then indeed it might be said to rejoice in that voice which was there heard, This is my beloved Son. 4. The power and justice, the mercy and truth, with which he governs the world and rules in the affairs of the children of men, Ps 89:13,14.

(1.) God is able to do every thing; for his is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, both to save his people and to destroy his and their

enemies; none can either resist the force or bear the weight of his mighty hand.

High is his right hand, to reach the highest, even those that set their nests among the stars (Am 9:2,3,Ob 1:4); his right hand is exalted in what he has done, for in thousands of instances he has signalized his power, Ps 118:16.

(2.) He never did, nor ever will do, any thing that is either unjust or unwise; for righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne (so some), the establishment of it, so others.

The preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment.

(3.) He always does that which is kind to his people and consonant to the word which he has spoken: "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face, to prepare thy way, as harbingers to make room for thee--mercy in promising, truth in performing--truth in being as good as thy word, mercy in being better." How praiseworthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are in perfection!

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the
Lord?
7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the
saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are*
about him.
8 O Lord God of hosts,
who *is* a strong Lord like unto thee?
or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea:
when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain;
thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.
11 The heavens *are*
thine, the earth
also *is* thine:
as for the world and the fulness thereof,
thou hast founded them.
12 The north and the south thou hast created them:
Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.
13 Thou hast a mighty arm:
strong is thy hand,
and high is thy right hand.
14 Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne:
mercy and truth shall go before thy face.
15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound:
they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

The psalmist, having largely shown the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shows the blessedness of the Israel of God. As there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, so, happy art thou, O Israel! there is none like unto thee, O people! especially as a type of the gospel-Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

I. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them; they hear, they know, the joyful sound, Ps 89:15. This may allude,

1. To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, Nu 23:21. Israel have the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars; the sound of the going in the top of the mulberry-trees was indeed a joyful sound (2Sa 5:24); and they often returned making the earth ring with their songs of triumph; these were joyful sounds. Or,

2. To the sound that was made over the sacrifices and on the solemn feast-day, Ps 81:1-3. This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. Or,

3. To the sound of the jubilee-trumpet; a joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The gospel is indeed a joyful sound, a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the sound of abundance of rain; blessed are the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

II. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them: "They shall walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance; they shall govern themselves by thy directions, shall be guided by the eye; and they shall delight themselves in thy consolations. They shall have the favour of God; they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoicing to them.

They shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's lovingkindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them and make them sincere in it, aiming at this, as their end, to be accepted of the Lord." We then walk in the light of the Lord when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

III. They never want matter for joy: Blessed are God's people, for in his name, in all that whereby he has made himself known, if it be not their own fault, they shall rejoice all the day. Those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to counterbalance their grievances and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is full (1Jo 1:4) and constant; it is their duty to rejoice evermore.

IV. Their relation to God is their honour and dignity. They are happy, for they are high. Surely in the Lord, in the Lord Christ, they have righteousness and strength, and so are recommended by him to the divine acceptance; and therefore in him shall all the seed of Israel glory, Isa 45:24,25. So it is here, Ps 89:16,17.

1. "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted, and not in any righteousness of their own." We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which is a clothing both for dignity and for defence.

2. "Thou art the glory of their strength," that is, "thou art their strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in." Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph.

3. "In thy favour, which through Christ we hope for, our horn shall be exalted." The horn denotes beauty, plenty, and power; these those have who are made accepted in the beloved. What greater preferment are men capable of in this world than to be God's favourites?

V. Their relation to God is their protection and safety (Ps 89:18): "For our shield is of the Lord" (so the margin) "and our king is from the Holy One of Israel. If God be our ruler, he will be our defender; and who is he than that can harm us?" It was the happiness of Israel that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks and the nominating of their king (so some take it); or, rather, that he was himself a wall of fire round about them, and, as a Holy One, the author and centre of their holy religion; he was their King, and so their glory in the midst of them.

Christ is the Holy One of Israel, that holy thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that he was born King of the Jews. Now this

account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:
and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.
17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength:
and in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.
18 For the Lord *is* our defense;
and the Holy One of Israel *is* our King.
19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst,
I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty;
I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.

The covenant God made with David and his seed was mentioned before (Ps 89:3,4); but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God, for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishment in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarcely applicable at all to David, but must be understood of Christ only (who is therefore called David our king, Ho 3:5), and very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the Redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon.

The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption; all our springs are in that, Isa 55:3. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David, Ac 13:34. Now here we have an account of those sure mercies. Observe,

I. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, 1. How it was spoken (Ps 89:19): Thou didst speak in vision to thy Holy One. God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, 2Sa 7:12-17. Then, when the Holy One of Israel was their king (Ps 89:18), he appointed David to be his viceroy.

But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he spoke in vision concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly acquainted with the whole design of redemption, Mt 11:27.

2. How it was sworn to and ratified (Ps 89:35): Once have I sworn by my holiness, that darling attribute. In swearing by his holiness, he swore by himself; for he will as soon cease to be as be otherwise than holy. His swearing once is enough; he needs not swear again, as David did (1Sa 20:17); for his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a priest, so he was made a king, by an oath (Heb 7:21); for his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

II The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, Ps 89:19,20. David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ, and therefore both are called God's kings, Ps 2:6. David was mighty, a man of courage and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people, not out of the princes, but the shepherds. God found him out, exalted him, laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ.

1. He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, able to save to the uttermost--mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God--mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is the mighty God, Isa 9:6.

2. He is chosen out of the people, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood. Being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid.

3. God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing; for the salvation, from first to last, is purely the Lord's doing. He has found the ransom, Job 33:24. We could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, Re 5:3,4.

4. God has laid help upon him, not only helped him, but treasured up help in him for us, laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven. In me is thy help, Ho 13:9.

5. He has exalted him, by constituting him the prophet, priest, and king of his church, clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand. Whom God chooses and uses he will exalt.
6. He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called Messiah, or Christ, the Anointed.

7. In all this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men.

III. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type and the Son of David in the antitype, in which not only gracious, but glorious things are spoken of him.

1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant: and what makes for him makes for all his loving subjects. It is here promised,

(1.) That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking (Ps 89:21): With him my hand not only shall be, but shall be established, by promise, shall be so established that he shall by it be established and

confirmed in all his offices, so that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, though by the man of sin they shall all be usurped and fought against.

Christ had a great deal of hard work to do and hard usage to go through; but he that gave him commission gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission: "My arm also shall strengthen him to break through and bear up under all his difficulties." No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen.

(2.) That he should be victorious over his enemies, that they should not encroach upon him (Ps 89:22): The son of wickedness shall not exact upon him, nor afflict him. He that at first broke the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design: but he could only reach to bruise his heel; further he could not exact upon him nor afflict him.

Christ became a surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to gain advantage against him; but he satisfied the demands of God's justice, and then they could not exact upon him. The prince of this world cometh, but he has nothing in me, Joh 14:30. Nay, they not only shall not prevail against him, but they shall fall before him (Ps 89:23):

I will bend down his foes before his face; the prince of this world shall be cast out, principalities and powers spoiled, and he shall be the death of death itself, and the destruction of the grave, Ho 13:14. Some apply this to the ruin which God brought upon the Jewish nation, that persecuted Christ and put him to death. But all Christ's enemies, who hate him and will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, Lu 19:27.

(3.) That he should be the great trustee of the covenant between God and men, that God would be gracious and true to us (Ps 89:24): My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him. They were with David; God continued merciful to him, and so approved himself faithful. They were with Christ; God made good all his promises to him.

But that is not all; God's mercy to us, and his faithfulness to us, are with Christ; he is not only pleased with him, but with us in him; and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen. So that if any poor sinners hope for benefit by the faithfulness and mercy of God, let them know it is with Christ; it is lodged in his hand, and to him they must apply for it (Ps 89:28):

My mercy will I keep for him, to be disposed of by him, for evermore; in the channel of Christ's mediation all the streams of divine goodness will for ever run. Therefore it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ which we look for unto eternal life, Jude 1:21,Joh 17:2.

And, as the mercy of God flows to us through him, so the promise of God is, through him, firm to us: My covenant shall stand fast with him, both the covenant of redemption made with him and the covenant of grace made with us in him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a Mediator, Heb 8:6. The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis.

And this redounds to the everlasting honour of the Lord Jesus, that to him the great cause between God and man is entirely referred and the Father has committed all judgment to him, that all men might honour him (Joh 5:22,23); therefore it is here said, In my name shall his horn be exalted; this shall be his glory, that God's name is in him (Ex 23:21), and that he acts in God's name. As the Father gave me commandment, so I do.

(4.) That his kingdom should be greatly enlarged (Ps 89:25): I will set his hand in the sea (he shall have the dominion of the seas, and the isles of the sea), and his right hand in the rivers, the inland countries that are watered with rivers. David's kingdom extended itself to the Great Sea, and the Red Sea, to the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates.

But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah that this has its full accomplishment, and shall have more and more, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ (Re 11:15), and the isles shall wait for his law.

(5.) That he should own God as his Father, and God would own him as his Son, his firstborn, Ps 89:26,27. This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon (for he also was a type of Christ as well as David), I will be his Father and he shall be my Son (2Sa 7:14), and the relation shall be owned on both sides.

[1.] He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father. It is probable that Solomon did so; but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him holy Father, righteous Father, and taught us to address ourselves to him as our Father in heaven. Christ, in his agony, cried unto God, Thou art my Father (Mt 26:39,42, O my Father), and, upon the cross, Father, forgive them; Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

He looked upon him likewise as his God, and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking (he ismy God and your God, Joh 20:17), and as the rock of his salvation, who would bear him up and bear him out in his undertaking, and make him more than a conqueror, even a complete Saviour; and therefore with an undaunted resolution he endured

the cross, despising the shame, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified.

[2.] I will make him my firstborn. I see not how this can be applied to David; it is Christ's prerogative to be the firstborn of every creature, and, as such, the heir of all things, Col 1:15,Heb 1:2,6.

When all power was given to Christ both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then god made him his firstborn, and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth; for he is the King of kings, angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject to him, 1Pe 3:22.

2. With reference to his seed. God's covenants always took in the seed of the covenanters; this does so (Ps 89:29,36): His seed shall endure for ever, and with it his throne. Now this will be differently understood according as we apply it to Christ or David.

(1.) If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon and the following kings of Judah, who descended from the loins of David. It is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of their father David; in such a case they must expect to come under divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at this time under, Ps 89:38.

But let this encourage them, that, though they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherited. This refers to that part of Nathan's message (2Sa 7:14,15), If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him.

Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever, that, notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued, and continued in the imperial

dignity, a very long time,--that, as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it, and the royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family, as that of the ten tribes was, in Jeroboam's first, then in Baasha's, &c.,--and that the family of David continued a family of distinction till that Son of David came whose throne should endure for ever; see Lu 1:27,32,2:4,11.

If David's posterity, in after-times, should forsake God and their duty and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgments upon them and ruin the family; and yet he would not take away his lovingkindness from David, nor break his covenant with him; for, in the Messiah, who should come out of his loins, all these promises shall have their accomplishment to the full.

Thus, when the Jews were rejected, the apostle shows that God's covenant with Abraham was not broken, because it was fulfilled in his spiritual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, Ro 11:7.

(2.) If we apply it to Christ, by his seed we are to understand his subjects, all believers, his spiritual seed, the children which God has given him, Heb 2:13.

This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church in the heart, as the days of heaven. To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve and honour him. He shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days.

This holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more; and thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated: the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

[1.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects; their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put, that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant and be assured of that notwithstanding.

First, It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. His children may forsake God's law (Ps 89:30) by omissions, and break his statutes (Ps 89:31) by commissions. There are spots which are the spots of God's children, De 32:5. Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those who are the members of it, and these corruptions break out.

Secondly, They are here told that they must smart for it (Ps 89:32): I will visit their transgression with a rod, their transgression sooner than that of others. You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you, Am 3:2. Their being related to Christ shall not excuse them from being called to an account.

But observe what affliction is to God's people.

1. It is but a rod, not an axe, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This denotes gentleness in the affliction; it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children; and it denotes a design of good in and by the affliction, such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

2. It is a rod on the hand of God (I will visit them), he who is wise, and knows what he does, gracious, and will do what is best.

3. It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of but when there is great need: If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, but not else. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

[2.] The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this (Ps 89:33): Nevertheless, my kindness will I not totally and finally take from him.

First, "Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken."

Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant-love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Though David's seed be chastened, it does not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continued to his people,

1. For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God says, I will not take it from him (Ps 89:33), I will not lie unto David, Ps 89:35. We are unworthy, but he is worthy.

2. For the covenant's sake: My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break. It was supposed that they had broken God's statutes, profaned and polluted them (so the word signifies); "But," says God, "I will not break, I will not profane and pollute, my covenant;" it is the same word. That which is said and sworn is that God will have a church in the world as long as sun and moon endure, Ps 89:36,37.

The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which they are the measurers of; but the seed of Christ shall be established for ever, as lights of the world while the world stands,

to shine in it, and, when it is at an end, they shall be established lights shining in the firmament of the Father.

20 I have found David my servant;
with my holy oil have I anointed him:
21 with whom my hand shall be established:
mine arm also shall strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not exact upon him;
nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
23 And I will beat down his foes before his face,
and plague them that hate him.
24 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him:
and in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25 I will set his hand also in the sea,
and his right hand in the rivers.
26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father,
my God, and the rock of my salvation.
27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn,
higher than the kings of the earth.
28 My mercy will I keep for him for
evermore, and my covenant shall stand
fast with him.
29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for
ever, and his throne as the days of
heaven.
30 If his children forsake my
law, and walk not in my
judgments;
31 if they break my statutes,
and keep not my commandments;
32 then will I visit their transgression with the
rod, and their iniquity with stripes.
33 Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from
him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
34 My covenant will I not break,
nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

35 Once have I sworn by my
holiness that I will not lie unto
David.
36 His seed shall endure for ever,
and his throne as the sun before me.
37 It shall be established for ever as the
moon, and *as* a faithful witness in
heaven.
Selah.
38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred,
thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

In these verses we have,

I. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. "Thou saidst thou wouldst not take away thy lovingkindness, but thou hast cast off." Sometimes, it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises, and yet we are sure they are reconcilable; for God's works fulfil his word and never contradict it.

1. David's house seemed to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed, but now he was wroth with him (Ps 89:38), had entered into covenant with the family, but now, for aught he could perceive, he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it, Ps 89:39. We misconstrue the rebukes of Providence if we think they make void the covenant.

When the great anointed one, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, and was wroth with him, and yet did not make void his covenant with him, for that was established for ever.

2 The honour of the house of David was lost and laid in the dust: Thou hast profaned his crown (which was

always looked upon as sacred) by casting it to the ground, to be trampled on, Ps 89:39. Thou hast made his glory to cease (so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon does it wither) and thou hast cast his throne down to the ground, not only dethroned the king, but put a period to the kingdom, Ps 89:44.

If it was penned in Rehoboam's time, it was true as to the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust; but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ's spiritual seed which fadeth not away.

3. It was exposed and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family (Ps 89:40): Thou hast broken down all his hedges (all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them) and thou hast made even his strong-holds a ruin, so that they were rather a reproach to them than any shelter; and then, All that pass by the way spoil him (Ps 89:41) and make an easy prey of him; see Ps 80:12,13.

The enemies talk insolently: He is a reproach to his neighbours, who triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity (Ps 89:42):

"Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries, not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way." If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we must see God setting up their hand; for they could have no power unless it were given them from above. But, when God does permit them to do mischief to his church, it pleases them:

"Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice; and this is for thy glory, that those who hate thee should have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee."

4. It was disabled to help itself (Ps 89:43): "Thou hast turned the edge of his sword, and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and (which is worse) thou hast turned the edge of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand as he used to do in the battle."

The spirit of men is what the Father and former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution further than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand who should stand up for it.

5. It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit (Ps 89:45): The days of his youth hast thou shortened; it is ready to be cut off, like a young man in the flower of his age. This seems to intimate that the psalm was penned in Rehoboam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old and began to decay already.

Thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach that a family which, in the first and second reign, looked so great, and made such a figure, should, in the third, dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time.

But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which, in comparison with what was expected, was but the day of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the days of their youth shortened, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon.

From all this complaint let us learn,

1. What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been uppermost; when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace, and iniquity stains their glory.

2. How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant is made void, if we be disappointed of that, a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master has so expressly told us that his kingdom is not of this world.

II. A very pathetic expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy:--

1 The long continuance of the trouble (Ps 89:46): How long, O Lord! wilt thou hide thyself? For ever? That which grieved them most was that God himself, as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them, and that he had kept them long in the dark; it seemed an eternal night, when God had withdrawn:

Thou hidest thyself for ever. Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them: "Shall thy wrath burn like fire? How long shall it burn? Shall it never be put out? What is hell, but the wrath of God, burning for ever? And is that the lot of thy anointed?"

2 The shortness of life, and the certainty of death: "Lord, let thy anger cease, and return thou, in mercy to us, remembering how short my time is and how sure the period of my time. Lord, since my life is so transitory, and will, ere long, be at an end, let it not be always so miserable that I should rather choose no

being at all than such a being." Job pleads thus, Job 10:20,21. And probably the psalmist here urges it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the days of whose youth were shortened, Ps 89:45.

(1.) He pleads the shortness and vanity of life (Ps 89:47): Remember how short my time is, how transitory I am (say some), therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? or, Unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam! Now, this may be understood either,

[1.] As declaring a great truth. If the ancient lovingkindnesses spoken of (Ps 89:49) be forgotten (those relating to another life), man is indeed made in vain. Considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side of death, we might be ready to think that man was made in vain, and was in vain endued with the noble powers and faculties of reason and filled with such vast designs and desires; but God would not make man in vain; therefore, Lord, remember those lovingkindnesses. Or,

[2.] As implying a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain God has not made all men, nor any man, in vain, Isa 45:18. For,

First, If we think that God has made men in vain because so many have short lives, and long afflictions, in this world, it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true that therefore they are made in vain. For those whose days are few and full of trouble may yet glorify God and do some good, may keep their communion with God and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain.

Secondly, If we think that God has made men in vain because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy

him, it is true that, as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them had they not been born than not to be born again; but it was not owing to God that they were made in vain; it was owing to themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him, for he has made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil, and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.

(2.) He pleads the universality and unavoidableness of death (Ps 89:48): "What man" (what strong man, so the word is) "is he that liveth and shall not see death? The king himself, of the house of David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke. Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable.

Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? No, he shall not when his time has come. Let him not therefore be delivered into the hand of the grave by the miseries of a dying life, till his time shall come."

We must learn here that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor will any bail be taken to save us from the prison of the grave. It concerns us therefore to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave, that, when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for and the covenant he made with his servant David (Ps 89:49): "Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou showedst, nay, which thou swaredst, to David in thy truth? Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised?

Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David?" God's

unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that God will not cast off those whom he has chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insolence of the enemies and the indignity done to God's anointed (Ps 89:50,51): "Remember, Lord, the reproach, and let it be rolled away from us and returned upon our enemies."

(1.) They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them reflected upon their master, especially since it was for serving him that they were reproached.

(2.) The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous burden to all that were concerned for the honour of God: "I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people, and am even overwhelmed with it; it is what I lay much to heart and can scarcely keep up my spirits under the weight of."

(3.) "They are thy enemies who do thus reproach us; and wilt thou not appear against them as such?"

(4.) They have reproached the footsteps of thy anointed. They reflected upon all the steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he had said and done. Or, if we may apply it to Christ, the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. They have reproached the delays of the Messiah; so Dr. Hammond.

They called him, He that should come; but, because he had not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them he would never come, they must give over looking for him. The scoffers of the latter days do, in like manner, reproach

the footsteps of the Messiah when they ask, Where is the promise of his coming? 2Pe 3:3,4.

The reproaching of the footsteps of the anointed some refer to the serpent's bruising the heel of the seed of the woman, or to the sufferings of Christ's followers, who tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

III. The psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint (Ps 89:52): Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen, and amen. Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies. The more others blaspheme God the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarrelling with God's providences and questioning his promises; let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God.

However it be, yet God is good, and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never distrust him. Though the glory of David's house be stained and sullied, this shall be our comfort, that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it; in blessing God, we encourage ourselves. Here is a double Amen, according to the double signification.

Amen--so it is, God is blessed for ever. Amen--be it so, let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint (Ps 89:1); and now he concludes it with a doxology. Those who give God thanks for what he has done may give him thanks also for what he will do; God will follow those with his mercies who, in a right manner, follow him with their praises.

39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant:
thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.
40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges;

thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.
41 All that pass by the way spoil him:
he is a reproach to his neighbors.
42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries;
thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his
sword, and hast not made him to stand in
the battle.
44 Thou hast made his glory to cease,
and cast his throne down to the ground.
45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened:
thou hast covered him with
shame. Selah.
46 How long, Lord?
Wilt thou hide thyself for
ever? Shall thy wrath burn
like fire?
47 Remember how short my time is:
wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?
48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death?
Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the
grave? Selah.
49 Lord, where *are* thy former loving-kindnesses,
which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?
50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
how I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;
51 wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord;
wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine
anointed.
52 Blessed *be* the Lord for evermore.
Amen, and Amen.

Psalms-90

God’s Eternity and Man’s Transitoriness
A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

This psalm is entitled a prayer of Moses. Where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses's time till the collection of psalms was begun to be made, is uncertain; but, being divinely inspired, it was under a special protection: perhaps it was written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord.

Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouths which they might make use of in turning to the Lord. Moses is here called the man of God, because he was a prophet, the father of prophets, and an eminent type of the great prophet. In these verses we are taught,

I. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times, and concerning us in our days (Ps 90:1): Lord, thou hast been to us a habitation, or dwelling-place, a refuge or help, in all generations. Now that they had fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindnesses to their ancestors.

Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to their fathers the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their habitation, and, wherever they went, they were at home, at rest, in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years, but even then God was their refuge; and in him that poor oppressed people lived and were kept in being.

Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort in reference to all the toils and tribulations they meet with in this world. In him we

may repose and shelter ourselves as in our dwelling-place.

II. To give God the glory of his eternity (Ps 90:2): Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world (as it is expressed, Pr 8:26), before the earth fell in travail, or, as we may read it, before thou hadst formed the earth and the world (that is, before the beginning of time) thou hadst a being; even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God, an eternal God, whose existence has neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it, but who art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time.

Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our own mortality, and the mortality of our friends, we may take comfort from God's immortality. We are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts, but God is an everliving God, and those shall find him so who have him for theirs.

III. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, and his irresistible incontestable power to dispose of him as he pleases (Ps 90:3): Thou turnest man to destruction, with a word's speaking, when thou pleasest, to the destruction of the body, of the earthly house; and thou sayest, Return, you children of men.

1. When God is, by sickness or other afflictions, turning men to destruction, he does thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins and live a new life. This God speaketh once, yea, twice. "Return unto me, from whom you have revolted," Jer 4:1.

2. When God is threatening to turn men to destruction, to bring them to death, and they have received a sentence of death within themselves, sometimes he

wonderfully restores them, and says, as the old translation reads it, Again thou sayest, Return to life and health again. For God kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave and brings up.

3. When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is this, "Return, you children of men, one, as well as another, return to your first principles; let the body return to the earth as it was (dust to dust, Ge 3:19) and let the soul return to God who gave it," Ec 12:7.

4. Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, Return, you children of men, at the general resurrection, when, though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and "then shalt thou call and I will answer (Job 14:14,15); thou shalt bid me return, and I shall return." The body, the soul, shall both return and unite again.

IV. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, Ps 90:4. Some of the patriarchs lived nearly a thousand years; Moses knew this very well, and had recorded it: but what is their long life to God's eternal life? "A thousand years, to us, are a long period, which we cannot expect to survive; or, if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of; but it is, in thy sight, as yesterday, as one day, as that which is freshest in mind; nay, it is but as a watch of the night," which was but three hours.

1. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity; they are less than a day, than an hour, to a thousand years. Betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion, but betwixt time and eternity there is none. The long lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child (that is born and dies the same day) is to theirs.

2. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the Eternal Mind as what was

done yesterday, or the last hour, is to us, and more so. God will say, at the great day, to those whom he has turned to destruction, Return--Arise you dead.

But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection that it is a long time since it was expected and it has not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years, in God's sight, are but as one day. Nullum tempus occurrit regi--To the king all periods are alike. To this purport these words are quoted, 2Pe 3:8.

V. To see the frailty of man, and his vanity even at his best estate (Ps 90:5,6): look upon all the children of men, and we shall see,

1. That their life is a dying life: Thou carriest them away as with a flood, that is, they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity. The flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it; as soon as we are born we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death; or we are carried away violently and irresistibly, as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation, which sweeps away all before it; or as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood.

Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge.

2. That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood and yet they are as a sleep; they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity.

Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passes unobserved by us, as it does with men asleep; and, when it is over, it is as nothing.

3. That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass which grows up and flourishes, in the morning looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mower cuts it down, and it immediately withers, changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly; and it is a great change that death will make with us in a little time.

Man, in his prime, does but flourish as the grass, which is weak, and low, and tender, and exposed, and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself: but he may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is, in the midst of summer. All flesh is as grass.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the
world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou
art God.
3 Thou turnest man to destruction;
and sayest, Return, ye children of men.
4 For a thousand years in thy sight
are but as yesterday when it is past,
and *as* a watch in the night.
5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep:
in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.
6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.
7 For we are consumed by thine
anger, and by thy wrath are we
troubled.

Moses had, in the Ps_90:1-6, lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men are as a sleep and as the grass. But here he teaches the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves.

Their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die, under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure. Here they speak of themselves: We Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days have passed away.

I. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries. We are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thy anger, by thy wrath (Ps 90:7); our days have passed away in thy wrath, Ps 90:9.

The afflictions of the saints often come purely from God's love, as Job's; but the rebukes of sinners, and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more than a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity and rectitude, there would have been no such debt owing to it. It is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law.

Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Are we consumed by decays of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronic disease? We must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any sudden or surprising stroke? That also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

II. They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them (Ps 90:8): Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, even our secret sins. It was not without cause that God was angry with them. He had said, Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt; but they had provoked him, and will own that, in passing this severe sentence upon them, he justly punished them,

1. For their open contempts of him and the daring affronts they had given him: Thou hast set our iniquities before thee. God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrusting his power and their despising the pleasant land: these he set before them when he passed that sentence on them; these kindled the fire of God's wrath against them and kept good things from them.

2. For their more secret departures from him: "Thou hast set our secret sins (those which go no further than the heart, and which are at the bottom of all the overt acts) in the light of thy countenance; that is, thou hast discovered these, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before overlooked them."

Secret sins are known to God and shall be reckoned for. Those who in heart return into Egypt, who set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolters or idolaters. See the folly of those who go about to cover their sins, for they cannot cover them.

III. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreversible (Ps 90:9):

All our days are likely to be passed away in thy wrath, under the tokens of thy displeasure; and, though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to spend them as a tale that is told. The thirty-eight years which, after this, they wore away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history; for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth.

After they came out of Egypt their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of a tale that is told; for it was only to

pass away time, like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt there was not one feeble person among their tribes (Ps 105:37); but now they were feeble.

Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan was turned into the melancholy prospect of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness; so that their whole life was now as impertinent a thing as ever any winter-tale was. That is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world:

We spend our years, we bring them to an end, each year, and all at last, as a tale that is told--as the breath of our mouth in winter (so some), which soon disappears--as a thought (so some), than which nothing more quick--as a word, which is soon spoken, and then vanishes into air--or as a tale that is told. The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale.

A year, when it past, is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are a pleasant story, others as a tragical one, most mixed, but all short and transient: that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time. Our years, when they are gone, can no more be recalled than the word that we have spoken can.

The loss and waste of our time, which are our fault and folly, may be thus complained of: we should spend our years like the despatch of business, with care and industry; but, alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale, idle, and to little purpose, carelessly, and without regard. Every year passed as a tale that is told; but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few (Ps 90:10), seventy or eighty at most, which may be understood either,

1. Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness; all those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above twenty years old, were to die within thirty-eight years; they numbered those only that were able to go forth to war, most of whom, we may suppose, were between twenty and forty, who therefore must have all died before eighty years old, and many before sixty, and perhaps much sooner, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers.

And those that lived to seventy or eighty, yet, being under a sentence of consumption and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness-state, their strength, their life, was nothing but labour and sorrow, which otherwise would have been made a new life by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or,

2. Of the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses. Before the time of Moses it was usual for men to live about 100 years, or nearly 150; but, since, seventy or eighty is the common stint, which few exceed and multitudes never come near.

We reckon those to have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who live to be seventy years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed divine revelation to writing, which, before, had been transmitted by tradition; now also both the world and the church were pretty well peopled, and therefore there were not now the same reasons for men's living long that there had been.

If, by reason of a strong constitution, some reach to eighty years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of; it does but serve to prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious; for even their strength then is labour and sorrow, much more their weakness; for the years have come which they have no pleasure in.

Or it may be taken thus: Our years are seventy, and the years of some, by reason of strength, are eighty; but the breadth of our years (for so the latter word signifies, rather than strength), the whole extent of them, from infancy to old age, is but labour and sorrow. In the sweat of our face we must eat bread; our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and perhaps, in the midst of the years we count upon, it is soon cut off, and we fly away, and do not live out half our days.

IV. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God (Ps 90:11): Who knows the power of thy anger?

1. None can perfectly comprehend it. The psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach and how deeply it can wound? The angels that sinned knew experimentally the power of God's anger; damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it?

2. Few do seriously consider it as they ought. Who knows it, so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those who make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger.

For, according to thy fear, so is thy wrath; God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it; let men have ever so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has not in his word represented his wrath as more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world. Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:
we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*
10 The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten;
and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years,
yet *is* their strength labor and sorrow;
for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger?
Even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.
12 So teach *us* to number our days,
that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations and acknowledgments. Is any afflicted? Let him learn thus to pray. Four things they are here directed to pray for:--

I. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, "Lord, teach us to number our days (Ps 90:12); Lord, give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world." Note,

1. It is an excellent art rightly to number our days, so as not to be out in our calculation, as he was who counted upon many years to come when, that night, his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle.

2. Those that would learn this arithmetic must pray for divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of him to teach them by his Spirit, to put them upon considering and to give them a good understanding. 3. We then number our days to good purpose when thereby our hearts are inclined and engaged to true wisdom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness.

To be religious is to be wise; this is a thing to which it is necessary that we apply our hearts, and the matter requires and deserves a close application, to which frequent thoughts of the uncertainty of our continuance here, and the certainty of our removal hence, will very much contribute.

II. For the turning away of God's anger from them, that though the decree had gone forth, and was past revocation, there was no remedy, but they must die in the wilderness: "Yet return, O Lord! be thou reconciled to us, and let it repent thee concerning thy servants (Ps 90:13); send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath, and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? We are thy servants, thy people (Isa 64:9); when wilt thou change thy way toward us?"

In answer to this prayer, and upon their profession of repentance (Nu 14:39,40), God, in the next chapter, proceeding with the laws concerning sacrifices (Nu 15:1-31, &c.), which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants; for, if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shown them such things as these.

III. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, Ps 90:14,15. They pray for the mercy of God; for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own. Have mercy upon us, O God! is a prayer we are all concerned to say Amen to. Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of divine mercy, that God's tender mercies may speedily prevent us, early in the morning of our days, when we are young and flourishing, Ps 90:6.

Let us pray for the true satisfaction and happiness which are to be had only in the favour and mercy of

God, Ps 4:6,7. A gracious soul, if it may but be satisfied of God's lovingkindness, will be satisfied with it, abundantly satisfied, will take up with that, and will take up with nothing short of it. Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy:--

1. That it would be a full fountain of future joys: "O satisfy us with thy mercy, not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be while we lie under thy wrath, but that we may rejoice and be glad, not only for a time, upon the first indications of thy favour, but all our days, though we are to spend them in the wilderness."

With respect to those that make God their chief joy, as their joy may be full (1Jo 1:4), so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears; it is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation and nothing can separate them from it.

2. That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs: "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou has afflicted us; let the days of our joy in thy favour be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. Lord, thou usest to set the one over-against the other (Ec 7:14); do so in our case.

Let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling; now put into our hands the cup of salvation." God's people reckon the returns of God's lovingkindness a sufficient recompence for all their troubles.

IV. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, Ps 90:16,17.

1. That he would manifest himself in carrying it on: "Let thy work appear upon thy servants; let it appear

that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself and to fit us for thyself." God's servants cannot work for him unless he work upon them, and work in them both to will and to do; and then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent for us when the operations of his grace are apparent upon us. "Let thy work appear, and in it thy glory will appear to us and those that shall come after us."

In praying for God's grace God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye to our children as well as to ourselves, that they also may experience God's glory appearing upon them, so as to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Perhaps, in this prayer, they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them (Nu 14:31, Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness, but your little ones I will bring into Canaan):

"Lord," say they, "let thy work appear upon us, to reform us, and bring us to a better temper, and then let thy glory appear to our children, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of."

2. That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on, in doing their part towards it.

(1.) That he would smile upon them in it: Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; let it appear that God favours us. Let us have God's ordinances kept up among us and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinances; so some. We may apply this petition both to our sanctification and to our consolation.

Holiness is the beauty of the Lord our God; let that be upon us in all we say and do; let the grace of God in us, and the light of our good works, make our faces to shine (that is the comeliness God puts upon us, and

those are comely indeed who are so beautified), and then let divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us, as our God.

(2.) That he would prosper them in it: Establish thou the work of our hands upon us. God's working upon us (Ps 90:16) does not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him and working out our salvation. But, when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success, and beg of him to prosper our handy works, to give us to compass what we aim at for his glory.

We are so unworthy of divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient to bring any thing to pass without it, that we have need to be earnest for it and to repeat the request: Yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it, and, in order to that, establish us in it.

13 Return, O Lord, how long?
And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.
14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy;
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us,
and the years *wherein* we have seen evil.
16 Let thy work appear unto thy
servants, and thy glory unto their
children.
17 And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon
us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon
us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Psalms-91

Abiding in the Shadow of the Almighty

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most
High shall abide under the shadow of the
Almighty.

In these verses we have,

I. A great truth laid down in general, That all those who live a life of communion with God are constantly safe under his protection, and may therefore preserve a holy serenity and security of mind at all times (Ps 91:1): He that dwells, that sits down, in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; he that by faith chooses God for his guardian shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note,

1. It is the character of a true believer that he dwells in the secret place of the Most High; he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposes in him as his rest; he acquaints himself with inward religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God, worships within the veil, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with him in solitude.

2. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so that they abide under the shadow of the Almighty; he shelters them, and comes between them and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence, under God's protection; he will be their rest and refuge for ever.

II The psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself (Ps 91:2): I will say of the Lord, whatever

others say of him, "He is my refuge; I choose him as such, and confide in him. Others make idols their refuge, but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, He is my refuge: any other is a refuge of lies. He is a refuge that will not fail me; for he is my fortress and strong-hold." Idolaters called their idols Mahuzzim, their most strong-hold (Da 11:39), but therein they deceived themselves; those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God, their fortress. There being no reason to question his sufficiency, fitly does it follow, In him will I trust.

If Jehovah be our God, our refuge, and our fortress, what can we desire which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle nor false, neither weak nor mortal; he is God and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. We know whom we have trusted.

III. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise, not only from his own experience of the comfort of it (for in that there might possibly be a fallacy), but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is nor can be any deceit (Ps 91:3,4, &c.): Surely he shall deliver thee. Those who have themselves found the comfort of making God their refuge cannot but desire that others may do so. Now here it is promised,

1. That believers shall be kept from those mischiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which would be fatal to them (Ps 91:3), from the snare of the fowler, which is laid unseen and catches the unwary prey on a sudden, and from the noisome pestilence, which seizes men unawares and against which there is no guard. This promise protects,

(1.) The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening and very near, while yet we ourselves are

not apprehensive of them, any more than the bird is of the snare of the fowler. We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the divine Providence that we have been kept from infectious diseases and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable.

(2.) The spiritual life, which is protected by divine grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the snares of the fowler, and from the contagion of sin, which is the noisome pestilence. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul will create a defence upon all that glory.

2. That God himself will be their protector; those must needs be safe who have him for their keeper, and successful for whom he undertakes (Ps 91:4): He shall cover thee, shall keep thee secret (Ps 31:20), and so keep thee safe, Ps 27:5. God protects believers,

(1.) With the greatest tenderness and affection, which is intimated in that, He shall cover thee with his feathers, under his wings, which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under wings, Mt 23:37. By natural instinct she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection when she sees them in danger, not only keeps them safe, but cherishes them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his people, who are helpless as the chickens, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the shadow of the wings of the divine promise and providence, which is the periphrasis of a proselyte to the true religion, that he has come to trust under the wings of the God of Israel, Ru 2:12.

(2.) With the greatest power and efficacy. Wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, are yet weak, and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, His truth shall be thy shield and buckler, a strong defence. God is willing to guard his people as

the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That he will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, Ps 91:5,6. Here is,

(1.) Great danger supposed; the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are apt to be timorous will in neither period think themselves safe. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and have made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, besides those things that are the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all. We read of fear in the night, So 3:8.

There is also a pestilence that walketh in darkness, as that was which slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians. No locks nor bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our bodies the seeds of them.

But surely in the day-time, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger; yes, there is an arrow that flieth by day too, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high-noon, when we are awake and have all our friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can they secure us. It was in the day-time that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But,

(2.) Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger: "Thou shalt not be afraid. God by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear (that fear which hath torment) in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being

causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid.

Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that though it may hit thee it cannot hurt thee; if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life that it shall be its perfection." A believer needs not fear, and therefore should not fear, any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out.

O death! where is thy sting? It is also under divine direction, and will hit where God appoints and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done our heavenly Father's will is done; and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common calamities, in a distinguishing way (Ps 91:7): "When death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that thousands and ten thousands fall, fall by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, fall at thy side, at thy right hand, and the sight of their fall is enough to frighten thee, and if they fall by the pestilence their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee, yet it shall not come nigh thee, the death shall not, the fear of death shall not."

Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be afraid with any amazement, nor make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their life-time, through fear of death, Heb 2:15.

The sprinkling of blood secured the first-born of Israel when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's promises fulfilled to them, but his

threatenings fulfilled upon those that hate them (Ps 91:8):

Only with thy eyes shalt thou behold and see the just reward of the wicked, which perhaps refers to the destruction of the first-born of Egypt by the pestilence, which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous (Lu 13:28), so it will magnify the salvation of the saints that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, Isa 66:24,Ps 58:10.

2 I will say of the Lord,
He is my refuge and my fortress:
my God; in him will I trust.
3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
and from the noisome pestilence.
4 He shall cover thee with his
feathers, and under his wings shalt
thou trust: his truth *shall be thy*
shield and buckler.
5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;
nor for the arrow *that* flieth by day;
6 *nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness;
nor for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.
7 A thousand shall fall at thy side,
and ten thousand at thy right hand;
but it shall not come nigh thee.
8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou
behold and see the reward of the
wicked.
9 Because thou hast made the Lord, *which is* my refuge,
even the Most High, thy habitation;

Here are more promises to the same purport with those in the Ps 91:1-8, and they are exceedingly great and precious, and sure to all the seed.

I The psalmist assures believers of divine protection, from his own experience; and that which he says is the word of God, and what we may rely upon. Observe,

1 The character of those who shall have the benefit and comfort of these promises; it is much the same with that, Ps 91:1. They are such as make the Most High their habitation (Ps 91:9), as are continually with God and rest in him, as make his name both their temple and their strong tower, as dwell in love and so dwell in God.

It is our duty to be at home in God, to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our habitation, to converse with him, and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God; we shall be welcome to him as a man to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance, or molestation, from the arrests of the law or the clamours of conscience; then too we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in perfect peace, Isa 26:3.

To encourage us to make the Lord our habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had had in doing so: "He whom thou makest thy habitation is my refuge; and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough, and shelter enough, both for thee and me." In my father's house there are many mansions, one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another.

2 The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made the Most High their habitation.

(1.) That, whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them (Ps 91:10): "There shall no evil befal thee; though trouble or affliction befal thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God and shall be sanctified; it shall come, not for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though, for the present, it be not

joyous but grievous, yet, in the end, it shall yield so well that thou thyself shalt own no evil befel thee.

It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it and a product of good by it. Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling, shall be taken under the divine protection: There shall no plague come nigh that, nothing to do thee or thine any damage." Nihil accidere bono viro mali potest--No evil can befal a good man. Seneca De Providentia.

(2.) That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, Ps 91:11,12. This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints, nor is it ever the worse for being quoted and abused by the devil in tempting Christ, Mt 4:6. Observe,

[1.] The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being and gives laws to them, whose they are and whom they were made to serve, he shall give his angels a charge over thee, not only over the church in general, but over every particular believer.

The angels keep the charge of the Lord their God; and this is the charge they receive from him. It denotes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them, and employed for them.

The charge is to keep thee in all thy ways; here is a limitation of the promise: They shall keep thee in thy ways, that is, "as long as thou keepest in the way of thy duty;" those that go out of that way put themselves out of God's protection.

This word the devil left out when he quoted the promise to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is

to keep thee in all thy ways: even where there is no apparent danger yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger we shall have it. Wherever the saints go the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children.

[2.] The care which the angels take of the saints, pursuant to this charge: They shall bear thee up in their hands, which denotes both their great ability and their great affection. They are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection wherewith the nurse carries the little child about in her arms; it speaks us helpless and them helpful.

They are condescending in their ministrations; they keep the feet of the saints, lest they dash them against a stone, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble.

[3.] That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them (Ps 91:13): Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder. The devil is called a roaring lion, the old serpent, the red dragon; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that (Ro 16:20), The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet. Christ has broken the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies (Col 2:15), and through him we are more than conquerors; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set our feet on the necks of vanquished enemies.

Some think that this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples' commission that they should take up serpents, Mk 16:18. It may be applied to that care of the divine Providence by which we are preserved from ravenous noxious creatures (the wild beasts of the field

shall be at peace with thee, Job 5:23); nay, and have ways and means of taming them, Jam 3:7.

II. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he had in store for them, Ps 91:14-16. Some make this to be spoken to the angels as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints, as if he had said, "Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them." And now, as before, we must observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters:--

(1.) They are such as know God's name. His nature we cannot fully know; but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint ourselves.

(2.) They are such as have set their love upon him; and those who rightly know him will love him, will place their love upon him as the only adequate object of it, will let out their love towards him with pleasure and enlargement, and will fix their love upon him with a resolution never to remove it to any rival.

(3.) They are such as call upon him, as by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are which God makes to the saints.

(1.) That he will, in due time, deliver them out of trouble: I will deliver him (Ps 91:14 and again Ps 91:15), denoting a double deliverance, living and dying, a deliverance in trouble and a deliverance out of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength, if he keeps us from

offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge, at length, from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled. See Ps 34:19,2Ti 3:11,4:18.

(2.) That he will, in the mean time, be with them in trouble, Ps 91:15. If he does not immediately put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their sorrows, and know their souls in adversity, will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the surest token of his presence with them in their troubles.

(3.) That herein he will answer their prayers: He shall call upon me; I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, and then I will answer, answer by promises (Ps 85:8), answer by providences, bringing in seasonable relief, and answer by graces, strengthening them with strength in their souls (Ps 138:3); thus he answered Paul with grace sufficient, 2Co 12:9.

(4.) That he will exalt and dignify them: I will set him on high, out of the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock above the waves, Isa 33:16. They shall be enabled, by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifference, to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern; and then they are set on high. I will honour him; those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon by taking them into covenant and communion with himself and designing them for his kingdom and glory, Joh 12:26.

(5.) That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world (Ps 91:16): With length of days will I satisfy him; that is,

[1.] They shall live long enough: they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for and are ready for heaven, and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either by him or upon him?

[2.] They shall think it long enough; for God by his grace shall wean them from the world and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days, satur dierum--satisfied with living. A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no, not with long life; he still cries, Give, give. But he that has his treasure and heart in another world has soon enough of this; he would not live always.

(6.) That they shall have an eternal life in the other world. This crowns the blessedness: I will show him my salvation, show him the Messiah (so some); good old Simeon was then satisfied with long life when he could say, My eyes have seen thy salvation, nor was there any greater joy to the Old-Testament saints than to see Christ's day, though at a distance.

It is more probably that the word refers to the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and sought: he will show him that, bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face which we here see through a glass darkly; and, in the mean time, he will give him a prospect of it. All these promises, some think, point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.

10 there shall no evil befall thee,
neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.
11 For he shall give his angels charge over
thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.
12 They shall bear thee up in *their*
hands, lest thou dash thy foot
against a stone.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.
14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver
him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honor him.
16 With long life will I satisfy him,
and show him my salvation.

Psalms-92

Praise for the Lord's Goodness
A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day.

1 *It is* a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,
and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High:

This psalm was appointed to be sung, at least it usually was sung, in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; for the Father worketh hitherto. Note,

1 The sabbath day must be a day, not only of holy rest, but of holy work, and the rest is in order to the work.

2 The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; every sabbath day must be a thanksgiving-day; and the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner.

One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it, A psalm or song for the age to come, which shall be all sabbath. Believers, through Chris
t, enjoy that sabbatism which remains for the people of God (Heb 4:9), the beginning of the everlasting sabbath. In these verses,

I. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God (Ps 92:1-3): It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. Praising God is good work: it is good in itself and good for us. It is our duty, the rent, the tribute, we are to pay to our great Lord; we are unjust if we withhold it. It is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it. It is good, for it is pleasant and profitable, work that is its own wages; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven.

It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in further mercy: it is fit to sing to his name who is Most High, exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here,

1. How we must praise God. We must do it by showing forth his lovingkindness and his faithfulness. Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must show them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them ourselves and desire to affect others with them likewise.

We must show forth, not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him and strike an awe upon us, but his lovingkindness and his faithfulness; for his goodness is his glory (Ex 33:18,19), and by these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope, and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these therefore we must show forth as our pleas in prayer and the matter of our joy.

This was then done, not only by singing, but by music joined with it, upon an instrument of ten strings (Ps 92:3); but then it was to be with a solemn sound, not that which was gay, and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave, and apt to fix them.

2. When we must praise God--in the morning and every night, not only on sabbath days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires. We must praise God, not only in public assemblies, but in secret, and in our families, showing forth, to ourselves and those about us, his lovingkindness and faithfulness.

We must begin and end every day with praising God, must give him thanks every morning, when we are fresh and before the business of the day comes in upon us, and every night, when we are again composed and retired, and are recollecting ourselves; we must give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night and every night for the mercies of the day; going out and coming in we must bless God.

II. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to and to direct us in this work (Ps 92:4): Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work. Note,

1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise who have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. "God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart; and therefore, whatever others may think of them, I must think well and speak well of them."

2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world why we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? Let us then make his praises glorious. Has God made us glad through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption?

(1.) Let us thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope; so the psalmist does: I will triumph in the works of thy hands. From a joyful remembrance of what God has done for us we may raise a joyful prospect of what

he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it, triumph over all opposition, 2Th 2:13,14.

(2.) Let us thence fetch matter for holy adorings and admirings of God (Ps 92:5):

O Lord! how great are thy works--great beyond conception, beyond expression, the products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance! men's works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them.

"Men's works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, thy works are great and such as cannot be measured; for thy thoughts are very deep and such as cannot be fathomed." God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom as his works do the efforts of our power. His thoughts are above our thoughts, as his ways are above our ways, Isa 55:9. O the depth of God's designs! Ro 11:33.

The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will according to which he does all things--what a compass his thoughts fetch and to what a length they reach!

III. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those who do so, Ps 92:6. Those are fools, they are brutish, who do not know, who do not understand, how great God's works are, who will not acquaint themselves with them, nor give him the glory of them; they regard not the work of the Lord nor consider the operation of his hands (Ps 28:5); particularly, they understand not the meaning of their own prosperity (which is spoken of Ps 92:7); they take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin.

If there are so many who know not the designs of Providence, nor care to know them, those who through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

2 to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning,
and thy faithfulness every night,
3 upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery;
upon the harp with a solemn sound.
4 For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work:
I will triumph in the works of thy hands.
5 O Lord, how great are thy works!
And thy thoughts are very deep.
6 A brutish man knoweth not;
neither doth a fool understand this.
7 When the wicked spring as the grass,
and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;
it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:

The psalmist had said (Ps 92:4) that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he does so.

I. He triumphs over God's enemies (Ps 92:7,9,11), triumphs in the foresight of their destruction, not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness. He is confident of the ruin of sinners,

1. Though they are flourishing (Ps 92:7): When the wicked spring as the grass in spring (so numerous, so thickly sown, so green, and growing so fast), and all the workers of iniquity do flourish in pomp, and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises, one would think that all this was in order to their being happy, that it was a certain evidence of God's favour and an earnest of something as good or better in reserve:

but it is quite otherwise; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, Pr 1:32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter are put into the fattest pasture.

2. Though they are daring, Ps 92:9. They are thy enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so. They are contrary to God, and they fight against God. They are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; for who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered? Note,

All the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies, and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them; and they shall be brought forth and slain before him.

The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and religion; but they shall be scattered, and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. In the world to come they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous; so the Chaldee, Ps 1:5.

3. Though they had a particular malice against the psalmist, and, upon that account, he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them (Ps 92:11): "My eye shall see my desire on my enemies that rise up against me; I shall see them not only disabled from doing me any further mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me, and brought either to repentance or ruin:" and this was his desire concerning them.

In the Hebrew it is no more than thus, My eye shall look on my enemies, and my ear shall hear of the wicked. He does not say what he shall see or what he shall hear, but he shall see and hear that in which God

will be glorified and in which he will therefore be satisfied.

This perhaps has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death, and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his gospel, and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. Those that rise up against Christ will fall before him and be made his footstool.

II. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace.

1. In the glory of God (Ps 92:8): "But thou, O Lord! art most high for evermore. The workers of iniquity who fight against us may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but thou art high, most high, for evermore.

Their height will be humbled and brought down, but thine is everlasting." Let us not therefore fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up as a garment, but God's righteousness shall be for ever, Isa 51:7,8.

2. In the grace of God, his favour and the fruits of it,

(1.) To himself (Ps 92:10): "Thou, O Lord! that art thyself most high, shalt exalt my horn." The great God is the fountain of honour, and he, being high for evermore, himself will exalt his people for ever, for he is the praise of all his saints, Ps 148:14. The wicked are forbidden to lift up the horn (Ps 75:4,5), but those that serve God and the interest of his kingdom with their honour or power, and commit it to him to keep it, to raise it, to use it, and to dispose of it, as he pleases, may hope that he will exalt their horn as the horn of a unicorn, to the greatest height, either in this world or the other:

My horn shalt thou exalt, when thy enemies perish; for then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when the wicked shall be doomed to shame and everlasting contempt.

He adds, I shall be anointed with fresh oil, which denotes a fresh confirmation in his office to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as often as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped. Grace is the anointing of the Spirit; when this is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Christ Jesus, we are then anointed with fresh oil.

Some read it, When I grow old thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil. My old age shalt thou exalt with rich mercy; so the LXX. Compare Ps 92:14, They shall bring forth fruit in old age. The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness.

(2.) To all the saints. They are here represented as trees of righteousness, Isa 61:3,Ps 1:3. Observe,

[1.] The good place they are fixed in; they are planted in the house of the Lord, Ps 92:13. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves; they are planted, not in common soil, but in paradise, in the house of the Lord. Trees are not usually planted in a house; but God's trees are said to be planted in his house because it is from his grace, by his word and Spirit, that they receive all the sap and virtue that keep them alive and make them fruitful.

They fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory.

[2.] The good plight they shall be kept in. It is here promised,

First, That they shall grow, Ps 92:12. Where God gives true grace he will give more grace. God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars in Lebanon; they shall grow nearer heaven, and with a holy ambition shall aspire towards the upper world; they shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. He that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Secondly, That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession and in the comfort and joy of their own souls.

They shall be cheerful themselves and respected by all about them. They shall flourish like the palm-tree, which has a stately body (So 7:7), and large boughs, Le 23:40,Jdg 4:5. Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here as being ever green.

The wicked flourish as the grass (Ps 92:7), which is soon withered, but the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long-lived and which the winter does not change. It has been said of the palm-tree, Sub pondere crescit--The more it is pressed down the more it grows; so the righteous flourish under their burdens; the more they are afflicted the more they multiply. Being planted in the house of the Lord (there their root is), they flourish in the courts of our God--there their branches spread.

Their life is hid with Christ in God. But their light also shines before men. It is desirable that those who have a place should have a name in God's house, and within his walls, Isa 56:5. Let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house. And let those who

flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it; it is by virtue of this promise, They shall be fat and flourishing.

Their flourishing without is from a fatness within, from the root and fatness of the good olive, Ro 11:17. Without a living principle of grace in the heart the profession will not be long flourishing; but where that is the leaf also shall not wither, Ps 1:3. The trees of the Lord are full of sap, Ps 104:16. See Ho 14:5,6. Thirdly, That they shall be fruitful. Were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value; but they shall still bring forth fruit.

The products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and a useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified and others are edified, these are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege, as well as the duty, of the righteous to abound; and their abounding in them is the matter of a promise as well as of a command. It is promised that they shall bring forth fruit in old age.

Other trees, when they are old, leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace does not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work is their best work. This indeed shows that they are upright; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. But it is here said to show that the Lord is upright (Ps 92:15), that he is true to his promises and faithful to every word that he has spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun.

As it is by the promises that believers first partake of a divine nature, so it is by the promises that that divine nature is preserved and kept up; and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that the Lord is upright, and so he will show himself with an upright man, Ps Ps 18:25. This the psalmist triumphs in:

"He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in him. I have chosen him for my rock on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which to set my feet. I have found him a rock, strong and stedfast, and his word as firm as a rock. I have found" (and let every one speak as he finds) "that there is no unrighteousness in him." He is as able, and will be as kind, as his word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient, and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

8 but thou, Lord, *art most* high for evermore.
9 For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord,
for, lo, thine enemies shall perish;
all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* a unicorn:
I shall be anointed with fresh oil.
11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies,
and mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.
12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 Those that be planted in the house of the Lord
shall flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;
they shall be fat and flourishing;
15 to show that the Lord *is* upright:
he is my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

Psalms-93

The Majesty of the Lord

1 The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty;
the Lord is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself:
the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.

Next to the being of God there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's

dominion, that Jehovah is God, and that this God reigns (Ps 93:1), not only that he is King of right, and is the owner and proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King in fact, and does direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions according to the counsel of his own will.

This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms: The Lord reigns. It is the song of the gospel church, of the glorified church (Re 19:6), Hallelujah; the Lord God omnipotent reigns. Here we are told how he reigns.

I The Lord reigns gloriously: He is clothed with majesty. The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glow-worm compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? Yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse theirs.

II. He reigns powerfully. He is not only clothed with majesty, as a prince in his court, but he is clothed with strength, as a general in the camp. He has wherewithal to support his greatness and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour. Both strength and honour are his clothing. He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible.

1. With this power he has girded himself; it is not derived from any other, nor does the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself and with it does whatsoever he pleases. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear him who has power to kill and cast into hell.

2. To this power it is owing that the world stands to this day. The world also is established; it was so at first, by the creating power of God, when he founded it upon the seas; it is so still, by that providence which upholds

all things and is a continued creation; it is so established that though he has hanged the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7) yet it cannot be moved; all things continue to this day, according to his ordinance.

Note, The preserving of the powers of nature and the course of nature is what the God of nature must have the glory of; and we who have the benefit thereof daily are very careless and ungrateful if we give him not the glory of it. Though God clothes himself with majesty, yet he condescends to take care of this lower world and to settle its affairs; and, if he established the world, much more will he establish his church, that it cannot be moved.

III. He reigns eternally (Ps 93:2): Thy throne is established of old.

1. God's right to rule the world is founded in his making it; he that gave being to it, no doubt, may give law to it, and so his title to the government is incontestable: Thy throne is established; it is a title without a flaw in it. And it is ancient: it is established of old, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality, or power was erected, as it will continue when all other rule, principality, and power shall be put down, 1Co 15:24.

2 The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels before all worlds; for he does all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself; The chariots of Providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from those decrees which are fixed as the everlasting mountains (Zec 6:1):

Thou art from everlasting, and therefore thy throne is established of old; because God himself was from everlasting, his throne and all the determinations of it

were so too; for in an eternal mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

IV. He reigns triumphantly, Ps 93:3,4. We have here, 1. A threatening storm supposed: The floods have lifted up, O Lord! (to God himself the remonstrance is made) the floods have lifted up their voice, which speaks terror; nay, they have lifted up their waves, which speaks real danger. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, Isa 57:20.

The heathen rage (Ps 2:1) and think to ruin the church, to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be tossed with tempests (Ps Isa 54:11), and the floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid, Ps Ps 18:4. We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts; but, if the Lord reign there, even the winds and seas shall obey him.

2. An immovable anchor cast in this storm (Ps 93:4): The Lord himself is mightier. Let this keep our minds fixed,

(1.) That God is on high, above them, which denotes his safety (they cannot reach him, Ps 29:10) and his sovereignty; they are ruled by him, they are overruled, and, wherein they rebel, overcome, Ex 18:11.

(2.) That he is mightier, does more wondrous things than the noise of many waters; they cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, The power of the church's enemies is but as the noise of many waters; there is more of sound than substance in it. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, Jer 46:17.

The church's friends are commonly more frightened than hurt. God is mightier than this noise; he is mighty to preserve his people's interests from being ruined by these many waters and his people's spirits from being terrified by the noise of them. He can, when he pleases, command peace to the church (Ps 65:7), peace in the soul, Isa 26:3.

Note, The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah are very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the noises and hurries they meet with in this world, Ps 46:1,2.

V. He reigns in truth and holiness, Ps 93:5.

1. All his promises are inviolably faithful: Thy testimonies are very sure. As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to the promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is passed, and all the saints may rely upon it. Whatever was foretold concerning the kingdom of the Messiah would certainly have its accomplishment in due time. Those testimonies upon which the faith and hope of the Old-Testament saints were built were very sure, and would not fail them.

2. All his people ought to be conscientiously pure: Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord! for ever. God's church is his house; it is a holy house, cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service. The holiness of it is its beauty (nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image and an entire devotedness to his honour), and it is its strength and safety; it is the holiness of God's house that secures it against the many waters and their noise.

Where there is purity there shall be peace. Fashions change, and that which is becoming at one time is not so at another; but holiness always becomes God's house and family, and those who belong to it; it is perpetually

decent; and nothing so ill becomes the worshippers of the holy God as unholiness.

2 Thy throne *is* established of old:
thou *art* from everlasting.
3 The floods have lifted up, O
Lord, the floods have lifted up
their voice; the floods lift up
their waves.
4 The Lord on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters,
yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.
5 Thy testimonies are very
sure: holiness becometh
thine house, O Lord, for
ever.

Psalms-94

A Prayer for Vengeance

1 O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth;
O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.

In these verses we have,

I. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, Ps 94:1,2. This speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him to avenge them of their adversaries; and shall he not avenge them speedily? Lu 18:3,7. Observe here,

1 The titles they give to God for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal: O God! to whom vengeance belongeth; and thou Judge of the earth. We may with boldness appeal to him; for,

(1.) He is judge, supreme judge, judge alone, from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law gives sentence upon every man according to his

works, by the rule of that law. He has prepared his throne for judgment.

He has indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him (Ro 13:4), but he is the avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable; his throne is the last refuge (the dernier ressort, as the law speaks) of oppressed innocency.

He is universal judge, not of this city or country only, but judge of the earth, of the whole earth: none are exempt from his jurisdiction; nor can it be alleged against an appeal to him in any court that it is coram non judice--before a person not judicially qualified.

(2.) He is just. As he has authority to avenge wrong, so it is his nature, and property, and honour. This also is implied in the title here given to him and repeated with such an emphasis, O God! to whom vengeance belongs, who wilt not suffer might always to prevail against right.

This is a good reason why we must not avenge ourselves, because God has said, Vengeance is mine; and it is daring presumption to usurp his prerogative and step into his throne, Ro 12:19.

Let this alarm those who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discovered, or with a high hand, so as not to be controlled, There is a God to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account; and let it encourage those who suffer wrong to bear it with silence, committing themselves to him who judges righteously.

2. What it is they ask of God.

(1.) That he would glorify himself, and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God had withdrawn and had forsaken the earth. "Lord," say

they, "show thyself; make them know that thou art and that thou art ready to show thyself strong on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with thee."

The enemies thought God was conquered because his people were. "Lord," say they, "lift up thyself, be thou exalted in thy own strength. Lift up thyself, to be seen, to be feared; and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down."

(2.) That he would mortify the oppressors: Render a reward to the proud; that is, "Reckon with them for all their insolence, and the injuries they have done to thy people." These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence. The righteous God will deal with them according to their merits.

II. A humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an expostulation with him concerning it, Ps 94:3-6. Here observe,

1 The character of the enemies they complain against. They are wicked; they are workers of iniquity; they are bad, very bad, themselves, and therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them.

Those are wicked indeed, and workers of the worst iniquity, lost to all honour and virtue, who are cruel to the innocent and hate the righteous.

2. Their haughty barbarous carriage which they complain of.

(1.) They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high and talk big; they triumph; they speak loud things; they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do, and as if the day were their own, and

they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and religion.

Those that speak highly of themselves, that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, Jude 1:15.

(2.) They are impious, and take a pleasure in running down God's people because they are his (Ps 94:5): "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord! break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons, in pieces, and do all they can to afflict thy heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down, to root them out."

God's people are his heritage; there are those that, for his sake, hate them, and seek their ruin. This is a very good plea with God, in our intercessions for the church: "Lord, it is thine; thou hast a property in it. It is thy heritage; thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issues. And wilt thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus?"

(3.) They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves (Ps 94:6); they not only oppress and impoverish, but they slay the widow and the stranger; not only neglect the fatherless, and make a prey of them, but murder them, because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy.

Those whom they should protect from injury they are most injurious to, perhaps because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous?

3. A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution: "Lord, how long shall they do thus?" And again, How long? When shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

III. A charge of atheism exhibited against the persecutors, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered (Ps 94:7): Yet they say, The Lord shall not see. Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature and the dictates of their own consciences, yet they have the confidence to say, "The Lord shall not see; he will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too."

Or they think they have managed it so artfully, under colour of justice and religion perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder.

"The God of Jacob, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, does not regard it either as against justice or as against his own people; he will never call us to an account for it." Thus they deny God's government of the world, banter his covenant with his people, and set the judgment to come at defiance.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity. He that says either that Jehovah the living God shall not see or that the God of Jacob shall not regard the injuries done to his people, Nabal is his name and folly is with him; and yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversion, to prevent his confusion (Ps 94:8): "Understand, you brutish among the people, and let reason guide you."

Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits, and philosophers, and politicians, yet are really the brutish

among the people; if they would but understand, they would believe.

God, by the prophet, speaks as if he thought the time long till men would be men, and show themselves so by understanding and considering: "You fools, when will you be wise, so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account?"

Note, None are so bad but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them, none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise; while there is life there is hope. To prove the folly of those that question God's omniscience and justice the psalmist argues,

(1.) From the works of creation (Ps 94:9), the formation of human bodies, which as it proves that there is a God, proves also that God has infinitely and transcendently in himself all those perfections that are in any creature. He that planted the ear (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground) shall he not hear? No doubt he shall, more and better than we can.

He that formed the eye (and how curiously it is formed above any part of the body anatomists know and let us know by their dissections) shall he not see? Could he give, would he give, that perfection to a creature which he has not in himself? Note,

[1.] The powers of nature are all derived from the God of nature. See Ex 4:11.

[2.] By the knowledge of ourselves we may be led a great way towards the knowledge of God--if by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude that if we can see and hear much more can God, then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls and their noble faculties.

The gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not; our God has no eyes nor ears, as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears, because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him for our use of them.

(2.) From the works of providence (Ps 94:10): He that chastises the heathen for their polytheism and idolatry, shall not he much more correct his own people for their atheism and profaneness? He that chastises the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so, and yet persecute those that are really so?

Shall not we be under his correction, under whose government the whole world is? Does he regard as King of nations, and shall he not much more regard as the God of Jacob?

Dr. Hammond gives another very probably sense of this: "He that instructs the nations (that is, gives them his law), shall not he correct, that is, shall not he judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it? In vain was the law given if there will not be a judgment upon it." And it is true that the same word signifies to chastise and to instruct, because chastisement is intended for instruction and instruction should go along with chastisement.

(3.) From the works of grace: He that teaches man knowledge, shall he not know? He not only, as the God of nature, has given the light of reason, but, as the God of grace, has given the light of revelation, has shown man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that does this, shall he not know? Job 28:23,28. The flowing of the streams is a certain sign of the fulness of

the fountain. If all knowledge is from God, no doubt all knowledge is in God.

From this general doctrine of God's omniscience, the psalmist not only confutes the atheists, who said, "The Lord shall not see (Ps 94:7), he will not take cognizance of what we do;" but awakens us all to consider that God will take cognizance even of what we think (Ps 94:11): The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

[1.] He knows those thoughts in particular, concerning God's conniving at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain, and laughs at the folly of those who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin.

[2.] He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be, for the most part, vain, that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually.

Even in good thoughts there is a fickleness and inconstancy which may well be called vanity. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth:
render a reward to the proud.
3 Lord, how long shall the wicked,
how long shall the wicked triumph?
4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things?
and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?
5 They break in pieces thy people, O Lord,
and afflict thine heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
and murder the fatherless.
7 Yet they say, The Lord shall not see,
neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.
8 Understand, ye brutish among the people:

and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?
9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see?
10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?
He that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*
11 The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man,
that they *are* vanity.
12 Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord,
and teachest him out of thy law;

The psalmist, having denounced tribulation to those that trouble God's people, here assures those that are troubled of rest. See 2Th 1:6,7. He speaks comfort to suffering saints from God's promises and his own experience.

I. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them (Ps 94:12): Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest. Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God, which gives it another name and puts quite another color upon it.

The enemies break in pieces God's people (Ps 94:5); they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is that God by them chastens his people, as the father the son in whom he delights, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. Howbeit they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa 10:5-7. Now it is here promised,

1. That God's people shall get good by their sufferings. When he chastens them he will teach them, and blessed is the man who is thus taken under a divine discipline, for none teaches like God. Note,

(1.) The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for their instruction, reformation, and improvement.

(2.) When the teachings of the word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence they then both manifest men to be blessed and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption and means of sanctification.

When we are chastened we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of Providence. It is not the chastening itself that does good, but the teaching that goes along with it and is the exposition of it.

2. That they shall see through their sufferings (Ps 94:13): That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity. Note,

(1.) There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which, though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that sends the trouble will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time that he has afflicted them.

(2.) God therefore teaches his people by their troubles, that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles, that, being reformed, they may be relieved, and that the affliction, having done its work, may be removed.

3. That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings, which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God: Until the pit is digged (or rather while the pit is digging) for the wicked, God is ordering peace for them at the same time that he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors.

4. That, though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, Ps 94:14. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that, whatever their

friends do, God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant or out of his care; he will not forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to nor suffer himself to be disseised of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, Ro 11:1.

5. That, bad as things are, they shall mend, and, though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel (Ps 94:15):

Judgment shall return unto righteousness; the seeming disorders of Providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, that is, his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage; but it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world or at the furthest in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to-rights.

Then all the upright in heart shall be after it; they shall follow it with their praises, and with entire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity; they shall accommodate themselves to the dispensations of divine Providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. They shall walk after the Lord, Ho 11:10.

Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, and afterwards of heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ and persecutors of Christians, and the rest which the churches had thereby.

Then judgment returned even to righteousness, to mercy and goodness, and favour to God's people, who then were as much countenanced as before they had been trampled on.

II. From his own experiences and observations.

1. He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and imperious men, that had power in their hands and abused it by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves evil-doers and workers of iniquity (Ps 94:16); they abandoned themselves to all manner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a throne of iniquity, Ps 94:20.

Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it, and to bring about their wicked designs. It is a pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evil-doers and a protection and praise to those that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity which by the policy of its council frames mischief, and by its sovereignty enacts it and turns it into a law.

Iniquity is daring enough even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it; but how insolent, how mischievous, is it when it is backed by a law! Iniquity is not the better, but much the worse, for being enacted by law; nor will it excuse those that practise it to say that they did but do as they were bidden.

These workers of iniquity, having framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for they gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, who dare not keep the statutes of Omri nor the law of the house of Ahab; and they condemn the innocent blood for violating their decrees.

See an instance in Daniel's enemies; they framed mischief by a law when the obtained an impious edict against prayer (Da 6:7), and, when Daniel would not obey it, they assembled together against him (Ps 94:11) and condemned his innocent blood to the lions. The

best benefactors of mankind have often been thus treated, under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

2 The oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though, when they are persecuted, they find themselves perplexed and cast down; it was so with the psalmist here: His soul had almost dwelt in silence (Ps 94:17); he was at his wits' end, and knew not what to say or do; he was, in his own apprehensions, at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave, that land of silence.

St. Paul, in a like case, received a sentence of death within himself, 2Co 1:8,9. He said, "My foot slippeth (Ps 94:18); I am going irretrievably; there is no remedy; I must fall. I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul. My hope fails me; I do not find such firm footing for my faith as I have sometimes found." Ps 73:2.

He had a multitude of perplexed entangled thoughts within him concerning the case he was in and the construction to be made of it, and concerning the course he should take and what was likely to be the issue of it.

3. In this distress they sought for help, and succour, and some relief.

(1.) They looked about for it and were disappointed (Ps 94:16): "Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Have I any friend who, in love to me, will appear for me? Has justice any friend who, in a pious indignation at unrighteousness, will plead my injured cause?" He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold.

Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, Ec 4:1. When St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity no man stood by him, 2Ti 4:16.

(2.) They looked up for it, Ps 94:20. They humbly expostulate with God: "Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee? Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? We know thou wilt not."

A throne has fellowship with God when it is a throne of justice and answers the end of the erecting of it; for by him kings reign, and when they reign for him their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resist them, or rise up against them, shall receive to themselves damnation; but, when it becomes a throne of iniquity, it has no longer fellowship with God.

Far be it from the just and holy God that he should be the patron of unrighteousness, even in princes and those that sit in thrones, yea, though they be the thrones of the house of David.

4. They found succour and relief in God, and in him only. When other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him.

(1.) God helps at a dead lift (Ps 94:17): "When I had almost dwelt in silence, then the Lord was my help, kept me alive, kept me in heart; and unless I had made him my help, by putting my trust in him and expecting relief from him, I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say."

(2.) God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits (Ps 94:18): "When I said, My foot slips into sin, into ruin, into despair, then thy mercy, O Lord! held me up, kept me from falling, and defeated the design of those who consulted to cast me down from my excellency," Ps 62:4.

We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports: Thy mercy, the gifts of thy mercy and my hope in thy mercy, held me up. God's right hand sustains his people when they look on their right hand and on their left and there is none to uphold; and we are then prepared for his gracious supports when we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God, to acknowledge it, and to tell him how our foot slips.

(3.) Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits (Ps 94:19): "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, which are noisy like a multitude, crowding and jostling one another like a multitude, and very unruly and ungovernable, in the multitude of my sorrowful, solicitous, timorous thoughts, thy comforts delight my soul; and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts and keep my mind easy."

The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts; they are songs to a heavy heart. But God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and that pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

5. God is, and will be, as a righteous Judge, the patron and protector of right and the punisher and avenger of

wrong; this the psalmist had both the assurance of and the experience of.

(1.) He will give redress to the injured (Ps 94:22): "When none else will, nor can, nor dare, shelter me, the Lord is my defence, to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them and being ruined by them; and he is the rock of my refuge, in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet, to be out of the reach of danger."

God is his people's refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe and may be secure; he is the rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm, impregnable, immovable, as a rock: natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications.

(2.) He will reckon with the injurious (Ps 94:23): He shall render to them their own iniquity; he shall deal with them according to their deserts, and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people shall be brought upon themselves: it follows, He shall cut them off in their wickedness.

A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him if God visit it upon him: it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompence of it. This the psalm concludes with the triumphant assurance of: Yea, the Lord our God, who takes our part and owns us for his, shall cut them off from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.

13 that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity,
until the pit be digged for the wicked.
14 For the Lord will not cast off his people,
neither will he forsake his inheritance.
15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness:
and all the upright in heart shall follow it.
16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?

Or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?
17 Unless the Lord *had been* my
help, my soul had almost dwelt
in silence.
18 When I said, My foot slippeth;
thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.
19 In the multitude of my thoughts within
me thy comforts delight my soul.
20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with
thee, which frameth mischief by a law?
21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the
righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.
22 But the Lord is my defense;
and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.
23 And he shall bring upon them their own
iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own
wickedness; *yea,* the Lord our God shall cut
them off.

Psalms-95

A Song of Praise and Worship

1 O come, let us sing unto the Lord:
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs up himself and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it and cold in it. Observe,

I. How God is to be praised.

1. With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a joyful noise, Ps 95:1 and again Ps 95:2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is the will of God (such is the condescension of his grace) that when we give glory to him as a being

infinitely perfect and blessed we should, at the same time, rejoice in him as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us.

2. With humble reverence, and a holy awe of him (Ps 95:6): "Let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before him, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath and in need of his mercy."

Though bodily exercise, alone, profits little, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship.

3. We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth, his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness--Sing to the Lord; make a noise, a joyful noise to him, with psalms--as those who are ourselves much affected with his greatness and goodness, are forward to own ourselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affection in others also.

4. We must praise God in concert, in the solemn assemblies: "Come, let us sing; let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone, but others with me. Let us come together before his presence, in the courts of his house, where his people are wont to attend him and to expect his manifestations of himself."

Whenever we come into God's presence we must come with thanksgiving that we are admitted to such a favour; and, whenever we have thanks to give, we must come before God's presence, set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he has appointed.

II. Why God is to be praised and what must be the matter of our praise. We do not want matter; it were well if we did not want a heart. We must praise God,

1. Because he is a great God, and sovereign Lord of all, Ps 95:3. He is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. He is infinite and immense, and has all perfection in himself.

(1.) He has great power: He is a great King above all gods, above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, You are gods (he manages them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable), above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can, and will, famish and vanquish them all.

(2.) He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly specified. We reckon those great men who have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe: how great then is that God whose the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof, not only under whose feet it is, as he has an incontestable dominion over all the creatures and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all (Ps 95:4); even the deep places of the earth, which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, are in his hand; and the height of the hills which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, is his also.

This may be taken figuratively: the meanest of the children of men, who are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest, who are as the strength of the hills, are not above his control. Whatever strength is in any creature it is derived from God and employed for him (Ps 95:5):

The sea is his, and all that is in it (the waves fulfil his word); it is his, for he made it, gathered its waters and fixed its shores; the dry land, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself; it is his, for his hands formed it, when his word made the dry land appear. His being the Creator of all makes him, without dispute, the owner of all.

This being a gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus whom we are here taught to praise. He is a great God; the mighty God is one of his titles, and God over all, blessed for evermore.

As Mediator, he is a great King above all gods; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities, and powers, are subject to him; by him, as the eternal Word, all things were made (Joh 1:3), and it was fit he should be the restorer and reconciler of all who was the Creator of all, Col 1:16,20.

To him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both (Re 10:2), and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise, and before him we must worship and bow down.

2. Because he is our God, not only has a dominion over us, as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us (Ps 95:7): He is our God, and therefore it is expected we should praise him; who will, if we do not? What else did he make us for but that we should be to him for a name and a praise?

(1.) He is our Creator, and the author of our being; we must kneel before the Lord our Maker, Ps 95:6. Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God who made us and all the

world and who is therefore our rightful proprietor; for his we are, and not our own.

(2.) He is our Saviour, and the author of our blessedness. He is here called the rock of our salvation (Ps 95:1), not only the founder, but the very foundation, of that work of wonder, on whom it is built. That rock is Christ; to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, to him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb.

(3.) We are therefore his, under all possible obligations: We are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. All the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his Providence, which cares for them, and conducts them, as the shepherd the sheep. We must praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand.

All the church's children are in a special manner so; Israel are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand; and therefore he demands their homage in a special manner. The gospel church is his flock.

Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it. We, as Christians, are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well provided for, to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be glory in the churches (whether it be in the world or no) throughout all ages, Eph 3:21.

2 Let us come before his presence with
thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him
with psalms.
3 For the Lord *is* a great God,
and a great King above all
gods.
4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth:

the strength of the hills *is* his also.
5 The sea *is* his, and he made it:
and his hands formed the dry *land.*
6 O come, let us worship and bow down:
let us kneel before the Lord our maker.
7 For he *is* our God;
and we *are* the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.
Today if ye will hear his voice,
8 harden not your heart, as in the provocation,
and as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those who sing gospel psalms to live gospel lives, and to hear the voice of God's word; otherwise, how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises? Observe,

I The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he has said, My sheep hear my voice, Joh 10:27. We are his people, say they. Are you so? Then hear his voice. If you call him Master, or Lord, then do the things which he says, and be his willing obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, of his law, and, in both, of his Spirit; hear and heed; hear and yield.

Hear his voice, and not the voice of a stranger. If you will hear his voice; some take it as a wish, O that you would hear his voice! that you would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; like that, If thou hadst known (Lu 19:42), that is, O that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard to-day; this the apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the gospel day.

While he is speaking to you see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always; improve it, therefore, while it is called to-day, Heb

3:13,15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing. To-day, if by faith you accept the gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance nothing is more dangerous than delay.

II The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing obedient ear required, and that is hardness of heart. If you will hear his voice, and profit by what you hear, then do not harden your hearts; for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection.

The Jews therefore believed not the gospel of Christ because their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation; they would not bend to the yoke of Christ, nor yield to his demands; and, if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed (he hardening it himself) and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

III. The example they are warned by, which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness.

1. "Take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest as they were out of Canaan." Be not, as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, Ps 78:8. Thus here, Harden not your heart as you did (that is, your ancestors) in the provocation, or in Meribah, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses (Ex 17:2-7), and in the day of temptation in the wilderness, Ps 95:8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a day of temptation, or Massah, the other name given to that place (Ex 17:7), because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or is he not?

This was in the wilderness, where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy, and where God wonderfully helped them and gave them such sensible proofs of his power and tokens of his favour as never any people had before or since. Note,

(1.) Days of temptation are days of provocation. Nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise and despair of the performance of it because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way.

(2.) The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God the greater is our sin if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable.

(3.) Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrusts of God and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of divine discoveries and conforms not to the intentions of the divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend.

(4.) The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1Co 10:11.

2. Now here observe,

(1.) The charge drawn up, in God's name, against the unbelieving Israelites, Ps 95:9,10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill conduct towards him, with the expressions of high resentment.

[1.] Their sin was unbelief: they tempted God and proved him; they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon further security before they would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; and, when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the divine power and promise, and

would make a captain and return into Egypt, Nu 14:3,4. This is called rebellion, De 1:26,32.

[2.] The aggravation of this sin was that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt, nay, what he was now doing for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from heaven for them and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them. With them even seeing was not believing, because they hardened their hearts, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart.

[3.] The causes of their sin. See what God imputed it to: It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. Men's unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. First, Of their ignorance:

They have not known my ways. They saw his work (Ps 95:9) and he made known his acts to them (Ps 103:7); and yet they did not know his ways, the ways of his providence, in which he walked towards them, or the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk towards him: they did not know, they did not rightly understand and therefore did not approve of these.

Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God is because they do not know them. Secondly, Of their mistake: They do err in their heart; they wander out of the way; in heart they turn back.

Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart; such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart.

[4.] God's resentment of their sin: Forty years long was I grieved with this generation. Not, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him; and God keeps an account how often (Nu 14:22) and how long they grieve him.

See the patience of God towards provoking sinners; he was grieved with them forty years, and yet those years ended in a triumphant entrance into Canaan made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for their sin (Ps 95:11): "Unto whom I swore in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest, then say I am changeable and untrue:" see the sentence at large, Nu 14:21, &c. Observe,

[1.] Whence this sentence came--from the wrath of God. He swore solemnly in his wrath, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry, at sin and sinners, to show the malignity of sin and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing which deserves such a recompence of revenge as may be expected from a provoked Deity.

[2.] What it was: That they should not enter into his rest, the rest which he had prepared and designed for them, a settlement for them and theirs, that none of those who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua.

[3.] How it was ratified: I swore it. It was not only a purpose, but a decree; the oath showed the immutability of his counsel; the Lord swore, and will not repent. It cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy. God's threatenings are as sure as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity that lived in David's time, when this psalm was penned; let them hear God's voice, and not harden their hearts as their fathers did, lest, if they were stiffnecked like them, God should be provoked to forbid them the privileges of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, This is my rest.

But it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it. There is a spiritual and eternal rest set before us, and promised to us, of which Canaan was a type; we are all (in profession, at least) bound for this rest; yet many that seem to be so come short and shall never enter into it. And what is it that puts a bar in their door?

It is sin; it is unbelief, that sin against the remedy, against our appeal. Those that, like Israel, distrust God, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions of Egypt before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from his rest: so shall their doom be; they themselves have decided it. Let us therefore fear, Heb 4:1.

9 when your fathers tempted me,
proved me, and saw my work.
10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation,
and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart,
and they have not known my ways:
11 unto whom I sware in my wrath
that they should not enter into my rest.

Psalms-96

A Song of Praise

1 O sing unto the Lord a new song:
sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections working in our souls towards God, with a high veneration for his majesty and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions are raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns.

I. We are here required to honour God,

1. With songs, Ps 96:1,2. Three times we are here called to sing unto the Lord; sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sang together, is now, in the church militant, and ever shall be, in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often reminded of it, and stirred up to it. Sing unto the Lord, that is, "Bless his name, speak well of him, that you may bring others to think well of him."

(1.) Sing a new song, an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than "an old song," but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprising. A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassions which are new every morning.

A new song is New-Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old nor vanish away; it is an

everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date.

(2.) Let all the earth sing this song, not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not sing the Lord's song in (would not sing it to) a strange land; but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, Re 14:3. This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles; all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both cause and call to sing it.

(3.) Let the subject-matter of this song be his salvation, the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be shown forth as the cause of this joy and praise.

(4.) Let this song be sung constantly, not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day; it is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that, under the influence of gospel devotions, we may daily exemplify a gospel conversation.

2. With sermons (Ps 96:3): Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people.

(1.) Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very brightly; in showing forth that salvation we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ.

(2.) This salvation was, in the Old-Testament times, as heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but in the fulness of time it was declared, and a full discovery made of that, even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see and might not.

(3.) What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people; the nations which long sat in darkness now see this great light. The apostles' commission to preach the gospel to every creature is copied from this: Declare his glory among the heathen.

3. With religious services, Ps 96:7-9. Hitherto, though in every nation those that feared God and wrought righteousness were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion; but, in gospel-times, the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel.

All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, to worship him according to his appointment. In every place incense shall be offered to his name, Mal 1:11,Zec 14:17,Isa 66:23. This indeed spoke mortification to the Jews, but, withal, it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God and to the happiness of mankind. Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described.

(1.) We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing, from us or any creature, which was not his own before, much less be benefited by it; but we must in our best affections, adorations, and services, return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for God loves a cheerful giver. It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and, if not, will be recovered, and yet, if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as a gift.

(2.) We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord and pay homage to him accordingly (Ps 96:7):

Give unto the Lord glory and strength, glory and empire, or dominion, so some. As a king, he is clothed with robes of glory and girt with the girdle of power, and we must subscribe to both. Thine is the kingdom, and therefore thine is the power and the glory. "Give the glory to God; do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature."

(3.) We must give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name, that is, to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship this is that which we must aim at, to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings and the fountain of our being.

(4.) We must bring an offering in to his courts. We must bring ourselves, in the first place, the offering up of the Gentiles, Ro 15:16. We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually (Heb 13:15), must often appear before God in public worship and never appear before him empty.

(5.) We must worship him in the beauty of holiness, in the solemn assembly where divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is, their conformity to the rule. We must worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin.

(6.) We must fear before him; all the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God and with a holy awe and reverence.

II. In the midst of these calls to praise God and give glory to him glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise and matter of praise: The Lord is great, and therefore greatly to be praised (Ps 96:4) and to be feared, great and honourable to his attendants,

great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory; and, when the everlasting gospel is preached, it is this, Fear God, and give glory to him, Re 14:6,7.

1. He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities; none dare vie with him: He is to be feared above all gods--all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods--or rather all idols, the gods of the nations Ps 96:5.

All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the one only living and true God, infinitely above all rivals and pretenders; he is great, and they are little; he is all, and they are nothing; so the word used for idols signifies, for we know that an idol is nothing in the world, 1Co 8:4.

2. He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work and derives its being from him: The Lord made the heavens and all their hosts; they are the work of his fingers (Ps 8:3), so nicely, so curiously, are they made. The gods of the nations were all made--gods, the creatures of men's fancies; but our God is the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, those lights of heaven, which they imagined to be gods and worshipped as such.

3. He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world, among his angels in heaven and his saints on earth (Ps 96:6): Splendour and majesty are before him, in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of his glory.

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary, both that above and this below. In God there is every thing that

is awful and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary, we shall behold his beauty, for God is love, and experience his strength, for he is our rock. Let us therefore go forth in his strength, enamoured with his beauty.

2 Sing unto the Lord, bless his name;
show forth his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the heathen,
his wonders among all people.
4 For the Lord *is* great, and greatly to be praised:
he *is* to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the nations *are* idols:
but the Lord made the heavens.
6 Honor and majesty *are* before him:
strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.
7 Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people,
give unto the Lord glory and strength.
8 Give unto the Lord the glory *due unto* his name:
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
9 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness:
fear before him, all the earth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the gospel to the nations what to preach, or to those who had themselves received the gospel what account to give of it to their neighbours, what to say among the heathen; and it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom, which began immediately after his ascension and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

I. Let it be told that the Lord reigns, the Lord Christ reigns, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said among the heathen by Peter, Ac 10:42. Some of the ancients added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, The Lord reigneth from the tree (so Justin Martyr, Austin, and others, quote it), meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, The King of the Jews.

It was because he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came betimes to enquire after him that was born King of the Jews, Mt 2:2. Now let them know that he has come and his kingdom is set up.

II. Let it be told that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement. The world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved. The natural world shall be established. The standing of the world, and its stability, are owing to the mediation of Christ.

Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as Redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty provoking world.

The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established (so some), that it cannot be moved; for it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

III. Let them be told that Christ's government will be incontestably just and righteous: He shall judge the people righteously (Ps 96:10), judge the world with righteousness, and with his truth, Ps 96:13.

Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last day, which will be in righteousness (Ac 17:31), yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the gospel. He says himself, For judgment have I come into this world (Joh 9:39,12:31), and declares that all

judgment was committed to him, Joh 5:22,27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth signify,

1. That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the divine nature and will.

2. That all his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he has said.

3. That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth and the Spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, Art thou a king? he answered, For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth (Joh 18:37); for he rules by truth, commands men's wills by informing their judgments aright.

IV. Let them be told that his coming draws nigh, that this King, this Judge, standeth before the door; for he cometh, for he cometh. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so. Behold, the Lord cometh, Jude 1:14. Between this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time, and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, Behold, he comes in the clouds (Re 1:7) and he has not yet come. See 2Pe 3:4, &c.

V. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand (Ps 96:11,12): Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood. The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is,

1. That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and, as far as his grace and government are submitted to, will bring joy along with them. We have reason to give that place, that soul, joy into which Christ is admitted.

See an instance of both, Ac 8:4-25,26-40 When Samaria received the gospel there was great joy in that city (Ac 8:8), and, when the eunuch was baptized, he went on his way rejoicing, Ac 8:39.

2. That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for, though he comes conquering and to conquer, yet he comes peaceably. Hosanna, Blessed is he that cometh; and again, Hosanna, Blessed be the kingdom of our father David (Mk 11:9,10); not only let the daughter of Zion rejoice that her King comes (Zec 9:9), but let all rejoice.

3. That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, even the sea and the field; for, as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made subject to vanity, so by the grace of the second Adam it shall, some way or other, first or last, be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Ro 8:20,21.

4. That there will, in the first place, be joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God; for, when the First-begotten was brought into the world, they sang their anthems to his praise, Lu 2:14.

5. That God will graciously accept the holy joy and praises of all the hearty well-wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity ever so mean. The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can show that they rejoice I know not; but he that searches the heart knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and understands the language, the broken language, of the weakest.

10 Say among the heathen *that* the Lord reigneth:
the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved:
he shall judge the people righteously.
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein:

then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice
13 before the Lord: for he cometh,
for he cometh to judge the earth:
he shall judge the world with righteousness,
and the people with his truth.

Psalms-97

The Lord's Dominion and Power

1 The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*

What was to be said among the heathen in the foregoing psalm (Ps 96:10) is here said again (Ps 97:1) and is made the subject of this psalm, and of Ps 99:1-9. The Lord reigns; that is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns, he that made the world governs it; he that gave being gives motion and power, gives law and commission, gives success and event.

Every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel and providence, and in all affairs, both public and private, he performs the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twisted in with the mediatorial and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ, who therefore is both the head of the church and head over all things to the church. The kingdom of Christ is so constituted that,

I. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so if it be not their own fault. Let the earth rejoice, for hereby it is established (Ps 96:10); it is honoured and enriched, and, in part, rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation; for the kingdoms of the world shall, more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdoms: Let the

multitude of isles, the many or great isles, be glad thereof.

This is applicable to our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; at least, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called the isles of the Gentiles, Ge 10:5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for, though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room. All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government.

1. In the equity of it. There is an incontestable justice in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial. Sometimes indeed clouds and darkness are round about him; his dispensations are altogether unaccountable; his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters. We are not aware of what he designs, what he drives at; nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government.

There is a depth in his counsels, which we must not pretend to fathom. But still righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; a golden thread of justice runs through the whole web of his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation. In this he rules, for it is the habitation of his throne.

His commandments are, and will be, all righteous. Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne (so Dr. Hammond); for therefore his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre, Ps 45:6.

The throne is established in righteousness. Even the heavens declare his righteousness (Ps 97:6); it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government and therefore know more of it than any of his creatures. His righteousness is incontestable; for

who can contradict or dispute what the heavens declare? Ps 50:6.

2. In the extent of it in the upper and lower world.

(1.) All the men on earth are under his government; either he is served by them or he serves himself by them. All the people see his glory, or may see it. The glory of God, in the face of Christ, was made to shine in distant countries, among many people, more or less among all people; the gospel was preached, for aught we know, in all languages, Ac 2:5,11. Miracles were wrought in all nations, and so all the people saw his glory. Have they not heard? Ro 10:18.

(2.) All the angels in heaven are so. Perhaps we should not have found this truth in those words (Ps 97:7), Worship him, all you gods, if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who, from the Septuagint version of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world at the ascension with this charge (Heb 1:6), Let all the angels of God worship him, which helps us to a key to this whole psalm, and shows us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who has gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth, angels, authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him, 1Pe 3:22.

This speaks the honour of Christ, that he has such worshippers, and the honour of all good Christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

II. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, will yet be matter of terror to some, and it is their own fault that it is so, Ps 97:3-5,7. Observe,

1. When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world, after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He

that reigns, to the joy of the whole earth, yet, as he has his subjects, so he has his enemies (Ps 97:3), that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all, that not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, Mt 23:13.

This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called hills (Ps 97:5), for their height, and strength, and immovable obstinacy. It was the princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory, 1Co 2:8,Ps 2:2.

2 The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting the apostles, and forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles, filled up their sin, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:15,16. That wrath is here compared,

(1.) To consuming fire, which goes before him, and burns up his enemies, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have set the briers and thorns before him in battle, Isa 27:4. This fire of divine wrath will not only burn the rubbish upon the hills, but will even melt the hills themselves like wax, Ps 97:5. When our God appears as a consuming fire even rocks will be wax before him.

The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled at the presence of the Lord. His very presence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is the Lord of the whole earth, by whom all the children of men are manageable and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent, that the Lord has forsaken the earth; but, when he manifests his presence, they melt.

(2.) To amazing lightnings (Ps 97:4), which strike a terror upon many. The judgments God brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom were such as all the world took notice of with terror: The earth saw and trembled, and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle.

This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection, which, like fire, wholly destroyed that people, and, like lightning, astonished all their neighbours (De 29:24); but the heavens declare God's righteousness in it, and all the people, to this day, see his glory, in those lasting monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

3. Idolaters also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom (Ps 97:7): Confounded be all those who serve graven images, the Gentile world, who did service to those that by nature are no gods (Ga 4:8), who boasted themselves of idols as their protectors and benefactors. Did those that served idols boast of them, and shall the servants of the living God distrust him, or be ashamed of him? Let those be ashamed that serve graven images.

(1.) This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may, by the power of Christ's gospel, be brought to serve the only living and true God, and may be as much ashamed of their idols as ever they were proud of them. See Isa 2:20,21.

(2.) This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of Paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about 300 years after Christ, so much to the terror of idolaters that some think it was the revolution under Constantine that made

even the mighty men say to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us, Re 6:15,16.

This prayer and prophecy are still in force against antichristian idolaters, who may here read their doom: Confounded be all those that worship graven images, Ps 97:7. See Jer 48:13.

2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him:
righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his throne.
3 A fire goeth before him,
and burneth up his enemies round about.
4 His lightnings enlightened the world:
the earth saw, and trembled.
5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
and all the people see his glory.
7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images,
that boast themselves of idols:
worship him, all *ye* gods.
8 Zion heard, and was glad;
and the daughters of Judah rejoiced
because of thy judgments, O Lord.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it has a dark side towards the Egyptians, so it has a bright side towards the Israel of God. It is set up in spite of opposition; and then the earth saw and trembled (Ps 97:4), but Zion heard and was glad, very glad, to hear of the conversion of some and of the confusion of others, that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! for behold thy king comes unto thee, Zec 9:9.

And not Zion only, where the temple was, but even the daughters of Judah, rejoiced; the common people, the inhabitants of the villages, they shall triumph in Christ's victories.

The command (Ps 97:1) is, Let the earth rejoice; but it is only the sons of Zion and the daughters of Judah that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. Now here observe,

I The reasons that are given for Zion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad,

1. Because God is glorified, and whatever redounds to his honour is very much his people's pleasure. They rejoice because of thy judgments, O Lord! which may take in both the judgments of his mouth and the judgments of his hand, the word of his gospel and his works wrought for the propagating of it, miracles and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, "Thou, Lord, art high above all the earth (Ps 97:9); thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers, and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; thou art exalted far above all gods" --all deputed gods, that is, princes--all counterfeit gods, that is, idols.

The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, are the rejoicing of all the saints.

2. Because care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ as a King shall be sure of his protection. Princes are the shields of the earth; Christ is so to his subjects; they may put their trust under his shadow and rejoice in it, for (Ps 97:10) He preserves the souls of the saints; he preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully delivers them many a time out of the hand of the wicked, their persecutors that thirst after their blood; for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

But something more is meant than their lives; for those that will be his disciples must be willing to lay down their lives, and not indent for the securing of them. It is the immortal soul that Christ preserves, the inward man, which may be renewed more and more when the outward man decays.

He will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostasy, and despair, under their greatest trials; he will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one that seeks to devour them; he will preserve them safely to his heavenly kingdom, 2Ti 4:18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe.

3. Because provision is made for their comfort. Those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy treasured up for them, which will be opened sooner or later (Ps 97:11): Light is sown for the righteous, that is, gladness for the upright in heart. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are told to expect tribulation in the world.

They must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know, to their comfort, that light is sown for them; it is designed and prepared for them. What is sown will come up again in due time; though, like a winter seedness, it may lie long under the clods, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a harvest in the appointed weeks. Those that sow in tears shall, without fail, reap in joy, Ps 126:5,6.

Christ told his disciples, at parting (Joh 16:20), You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. Gladness is sure to the upright in heart, to those only that are sincere in religion. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment. There is no serenity without a lasting sincerity,

II The rules that are given for Zion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy. "You that love the Lord Jesus, that love his appearing and kingdom, that love his word and his exaltation, see that you hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offensive to him and will throw you out of his favour." Note, A true love to God will show itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. The joy of the saints should likewise confirm their antipathy to sin and divine comforts should put their mouths out of taste for sensual pleasures.

2. Let the joy terminate in God (Ps 97:12): Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous. Let all the streams of comfort, which flow to us in the channel of Christ's kingdom, lead us to the fountain, and oblige us to rejoice in the Lord. All the lines of joy must meet in him as in the centre. See Php 3:3,4:4.

3. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving: Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving, and particularly the holiness of God. Those that hate sin themselves are glad that God does so, in hopes that therefore he will not suffer it to have dominion over them. Note,

(1.) We ought to be much in the remembrance of God's holiness, the infinite purity, rectitude, and perfection of the divine nature. We must be ever mindful of his holy covenant, which he has confirmed with an oath by his holiness.

(2.) We ought to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, not only give him the glory of it as it is an honour to him, but give him thanks for it as it is a favour to us; and an unspeakable favour it will be if, through grace, we are partakers of his holiness. It is God's holiness which, above all his attributes, the angels celebrate. Isa 6:3, Holy, holy, holy. Sinners tremble,

but saints rejoice, at the remembrance of God's holiness, Ps 30:4.

9 For thou, Lord, *art* high above all the earth:
thou art exalted far above all gods.
10 Ye that love the Lord, hate evil:
he preserveth the souls of his saints;
he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.
11 Light is sown for the righteous,
and gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous;
and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Psalms-98

Praise for God's Righteousness
A Psalm.

1 O sing unto the Lord a new song;
for he hath done marvelous things:
his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

We are here called upon again to sing unto the Lord a new song, as before, Ps 96:1. "Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have." Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject, a song of songs. A song of praise for redeeming love is a new song, such a song as had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hidden from ages and generations.

Converts sing a new song, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung, that will be new to eternity, and never wax old. Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things:--

I The wonders he has wrought: He has done marvellous things, Ps 98:1. Note, The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of it from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it done marvellous things; it is all his doing and it is marvellous in our eyes. The more it is known the more it will be admired.

II The conquests he has won: His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory. Our Redeemer has surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, has broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him.

He has subdued all the enemies that opposed it, has gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strong-holds, has spoiled principalities and powers (Col 2:15), has taken the prey from the mighty (Isa 49:24), and given death his death's wound. He has gotten a clear and complete victory, not only for himself, but for us also, for we through him are more than conquerors.

He got this victory by his own power; there was none to help, none to uphold, none that durst venture into the service; but his right hand and his holy arm, which are always stretched out with good success, because they are never stretched out but in a good cause, these have gotten him the victory, have brought him relief or deliverance. God's power and faithfulness, called here his right hand and his holy arm, brought relief to the Lord Jesus, in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God; so Dr. Hammond.

III. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he has revealed to us, and both by his Son; the gospel-revelation is that on which the gospel-kingdom is founded--the word which God sent, Ac 10:36. The opening of the sealed book is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise (Re 5:8), because by it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe,

1 The subject of this discovery--his salvation and his righteousness, Ps 98:3. Righteousness and salvation are often put together; as Isa 61:10,Isa 46:13,51:5,6,8. Salvation denotes the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought, by the righteousness of Christ.

Or the salvation includes all our gospel-privileges and the righteousness all our gospel-duties; both are made known, for God has joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the gospel to be by faith, Ro 1:17.

2 The plainness of this discovery. He has openly shown it, not in types and figures as under the law, but it is written as with a sunbeam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech.

3. The extent of this discovery. It is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God; for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

IV. The accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament, in this (Ps 98:3): He has remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel. God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great

assurances of the kindness he designed them in the latter days; and it was in pursuance of all those that he raised up his Son Jesus to be not only a light to lighten the Gentiles, but the glory of his people Israel; for he sent him, in the first place, to bless them. God is said, in sending Christ, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant, Lu 1:72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

2 The Lord hath made known his salvation:
his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.

3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth
toward the house of Israel:
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth:
make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

I. Let all the children of men rejoice in it, for they all have, or may have, benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible to express our joy in it and give God praise for it:

Make a joyful noise, as before, Ps 95:1,2. Make a loud noise, as those that are affected with those glad tidings and are desirous to affect others with them. Rejoice and sing praise, sing Hosannas (Mt 21:9), sing Hallelujahs, Re 19:6. Let him be welcomed to the throne, as new kings are, with acclamations of joy and loud shouts, till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, 1Ki 1:40.

And let the shouts of the crowd be accompanied with the singers and players on instruments (Ps 87:7,Ps 68:25), as is usual in such solemnities.

1. Let sacred songs attend the new King: "Sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm. Express your joy; thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others."

2. Let these be assisted with sacred music, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but since it is a victorious King whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet, Ps 98:6. Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn religious manner: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, Ps 98:4.

Sing to the Lord, (Ps 98:5); do it before the Lord, the King, Ps 98:6. Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy. When David danced before the ark he pleaded that it was before the Lord; and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commended it. We must rejoice before the Lord whenever we draw near to him (De 12:12), before the Lord Jesus, and before him, not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

II. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, Ps 98:7-9. This is to the same purport with what we had before (Ps 96:11-13): Let the sea roar, and let that be called, not as it used to be, a dreadful noise, but a joyful noise; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, have quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods lift up their voice, lift up their waves, we must not construe that to be the sea roaring against us, but rather rejoicing with us.

Let the floods express their joy, as men do when they clap their hands; and let the hills, that trembled for fear before God when he came down to give the law at Mount Sinai, dance for joy before him when his gospel

is preached and that word of the Lord goes forth from Zion in a still small voice: Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord.

This intimates that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation; but that, as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator (Ps 19:1), so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things not only subsist in their being, but consist in their order.

It intimates likewise that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and therefore that he must look for his honour from the sea and the floods, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind.

And perhaps respect is here had to the new heavens and the new earth, which we yet, according to his promise, look for (2Pe 3:13), and this second mention of his coming (after the like, Ps 96:1-13) may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as to be refined; then shall he come to judge the world with righteousness. In the prospect of that day all that are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills, would rejoice if they could.

5 Sing unto the Lord with the harp;
with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
6 With trumpets and sound of cornet
make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.
7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
the world, and they that dwell therein.
8 Let the floods clap *their* hands:
let the hills be joyful together
9 before the Lord;
for he cometh to judge the earth:
with righteousness shall he judge the world,
and the people with equity.

Psalms-99

The Lord's Faithfulness to Israel

1 The Lord reigneth;
let the people tremble:
he sitteth *between* the cherubim;
let the earth be moved.

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth, That the Lord reigns. God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that the Lord lives, but that the Lord reigns.

This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church, that Jehovah was their King; and hence it is inferred, Let the people tremble, that is,

1. Let even the subjects of this kingdom tremble; for the Old-Testament dispensation had much of terror in it. At Mount Sinai Israel, and even Moses himself, did exceedingly fear and quake; and then God was terrible in his holy places. Even when he appeared in his people's behalf, he did terrible things.

But we are not now come to that mount that burned with fire, Heb 12:18. Now that the Lord reigns let the earth rejoice. Then he ruled more by the power of holy fear; now he rules by the power of holy love.

2. Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble; for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre or crush them with his iron rod.

The Lord reigns, though the people be stirred with indignation at it; though they fret away all their spirits, their rage is all in vain. He will set his King upon his

holy hill of Zion in spite of them (Ps 2:1-6); first, or last, he will make them tremble, Re 6:15, &c. The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved. Those that submit to him shall be established, and not moved (Ps 96:10); but those that oppose him will be moved.

Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved; the things which cannot be shaken shall remain, Heb 12:27. In these is continuance, Isa 64:5.

God's kingdom, set up in Israel, is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise.

I. Two things the psalmist affirms:--

1. God presided in the affairs of religion: He sitteth between the cherubim (Ps 99:1), as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered--as on the mercy-seat, to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the Shechinah, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels; the temple was the royal palace, and the Holy of holies was the presence-chamber. The Lord is great in Zion (Ps 99:2); there he is known and praised (Ps 76:1,2); there he is served as great, more than any where else.

He is high there above all people; as that which is high is exposed to view, and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the divine nature appear more conspicuous and more illustrious than any where else. Therefore let those that dwell in Zion, and worship there, praise thy great and terrible name, and give thee the glory due unto it, for it is holy. The holiness of God's name makes it truly great to his friends and terrible to his enemies, Ps 99:3. This is that which those above adore--Holy, holy, holy.

2. He was all in all in their civil government, Ps 99:4. As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whither

the tribes went up, so there were set thrones of judgment, Ps 122:4,5. Their government was a theocracy. God raised up David to rule over them (and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne) and he is the king whose strength loves judgment.

He is strong; all his strength he has from God; and his strength is not abused for the support of any wrong, as the power of great princes often is, but it loves judgment. He does justice with his power, and does it with delight; and herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice.

He has power to crush, but his strength loves judgment; he does not rule with rigour, but with moderation, with wisdom, and with tenderness.

The people of Israel had a good king; but they are here taught to look up to God as he by whom their king reigns: Thou dost establish equity (that is, God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed), and thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob; he not only by his immediate providences often executed and enforced his own laws, but took care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reigned by him and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgment was his, 2Ch 19:6.

II. Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses had described it (De 4:7,8), that they had God so night unto them, sitting between the cherubim, and that they had statutes and judgments so righteous, by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob, from which he infers this command to that happy people (Ps 99:5):

"Exalt you the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established, both in church and state." Note,

1 The greater the public mercies are which we have a share in the more we are obliged to bear a part in the public homage paid to God: the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, especially, ought to be the matter of our praise.

2. When we draw night to God, to worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls.

3. The more we abase ourselves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must worship at his footstool, at his ark, which was as the footstool to the mercy-seat between the cherubim; or we must cast ourselves down upon the pavement of his courts; and good reason we have to be thus reverent, for he is holy, and his holiness should strike an awe upon us, as it does on the angels themselves, Isa 6:2,3.

2 The Lord *is* great in Zion;
and he *is* high above all the people.
3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name;
for it *is* holy.
4 The king's strength also loveth judgment;
thou dost establish equity,
thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Exalt ye the Lord our God,
and worship at his footstool;
for he *is* holy.
6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,
and Samuel among them that call upon his name;
they called upon the Lord,
and he answered them.

The happiness of Israel in God's government is here further made out by some particular instances of his

administration, especially with reference to those that were, in their day, the prime leaders and most active useful governors of that people--Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the two former of whom the theocracy or divine government began (for they were employed to form Israel into a people) and in the last of whom that form of government, in a great measure, ended; for when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediately their king as he had been (1Sa 8:7), for now they would have a king, like all the nations.

Moses, as well as Aaron, is said to be among his priests, for he executed the priest's office till Aaron was settled in it and he consecrated Aaron and his sons; therefore the Jews call him the priest of the priests. Now concerning these three chief rulers observe,

I The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these, that had such an intercourse with Heaven, and whom God knew by name, Ex 33:17. Here is,

1. Their gracious observance of God. No kingdom had men that honoured God as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him,

(1.) By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was among those that called on his name; and for this they were all famous, They called upon the Lord; they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God, towards him was their desire, and on him their dependence.

(2.) By their obedience: They kept his testimonies, and the ordinances that he gave them; they made conscience of their duty, and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, as knowing that unless they

did so they could not expect their prayers should be answered, Pr 28:9. Moses did all according to the pattern shown him; it is often repeated, According to all that God commanded Moses, so did he. Aaron and Samuel did likewise. Those were the greatest men and most honourable that were most eminent for keeping God's testimonies and conforming to the rule of his word.

2. God's gracious acceptance of them: He answered them, and granted them the things which they called upon him for. They all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converses with another (Ps 99:7): He spoke unto them in the cloudy pillar.

He often spoke to Samuel; from his childhood the word of the Lord came to him, and, probably, sometimes he spoke to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him: however, to Moses and Aaron he often spoke out of the famous cloudy pillar, Ex 16:10,Nu 12:5.

Israel are now reminded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God's presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to those that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest himself.

II The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. Moses stood in the gap, and Aaron between the living and the dead; and, when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, 1Sa 7:9.

This is here referred to (Ps 99:8): "Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God! and, at their prayer, thou wast a God that forgavest the people they prayed for; and, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions, yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people, as their sin deserved."

"Thou wast a God that wast propitious for them (so Dr. Hammond), for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request, even when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions, that is, when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them that it was just ready to break in upon them, to their utter overthrow."

These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel, more than in any other nation, for which the people are again called upon to praise God (Ps 99:9): "Exalt the Lord our God, on account of what he has done for us formerly, as well as of late, and worship at his holy hill of Zion, on which he has now set his temple and will shortly set his King (Ps 2:6), the former a type of the latter; there, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet, with their adorations, for the Lord our God is holy, and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy gospel."

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:
they kept his testimonies,
and the ordinance *that* he gave them.
8 Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God:
thou wast a God that forgavest them,
though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.
9 Exalt the Lord our God, and
worship at his holy hill; for
the Lord our God *is* holy.

Psalms-100

An Exhortation to Thanksgiving
A Psalm of praise.

1 Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
2 Serve the Lord with gladness:
come before his presence with singing.

Here, I The exhortations to praise are very importunate. The psalm does indeed answer to the title, A psalm of praise; it begins with that call which of late we have several times met with (Ps 100:1), Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all you lands, or all the earth, all the inhabitants of the earth.

When all nations shall be discipled, and the gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But, if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the administration of God's kingdom, which they were under (as the four psalms before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah), this psalm, perhaps, was intended for proselytes, that came over out of all lands to the Jews' religion. However, we have here,

1. A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have or can do, but it is his will that we should serve the Lord, should devote ourselves to his service and employ ourselves in it; and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should come before his presence in the ordinances which he has appointed and in which he has promised to manifest himself (Ps 100:2), that we should enter into his gates and into his courts (Ps 100:4), that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court.

In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates and into his courts. The people were not permitted to enter into the holy place; there the priests only went in to minister.

But let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's house, to which they were admitted and where they gave their attendance.

2. Great encouragement given us, in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully (Ps 100:2):

Serve the Lord with gladness. This intimates a prediction that in gospel-times there should be special occasion for joy; and it prescribes this as a rule of worship: Let God be served with gladness. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice in him; and we ought to serve him with holy joy.

Gospel-worshippers should be joyful worshippers; if we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness. We must be willing and forward to it, glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord (Ps 122:1), looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, It is good to be here, approaching to God, in every duty, as to God our exceeding Joy, Ps 43:4.

We must come before his presence with singing, not only songs of joy, but songs of praise. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, Ps 100:4. We must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God, with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. Be thankful to him and bless his name; that is,

(1.) We must take it as a favour to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted and opportunity continued of waiting upon God in those ordinances.

(2.) We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services. This golden thread must run through every duty (Heb 13:15), for it is the work of angels. In every thing give thanks, in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

II The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important, Ps 100:3,5. Know you what God is in himself and what he is to you. Note, Knowledge is the mother of devotion and of all obedience: blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know it; consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him." Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship:--

1. That the Lord he is God, the only living and true God--that he is a Being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being; he is God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent, the first cause and last end. The heathen worshipped the creature of their own fancy; the workmen made it, therefore it is not God. We worship him that made us and all the world; he is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie, and such as he has triumphed over.

2. That he is our Creator: It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. I find that I am, but cannot say, I am that I am, and therefore must ask, Whence am I? Who made me? Where is God my Maker? And it is the Lord Jehovah. He gave us being, he gave us this being; he is both the former of our bodies and the Father of our

spirits. We did not, we could not, make ourselves. It is God's prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending.

3. That therefore he is our rightful owner. The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, He made us, and his we are, or to him we belong. Put both the readings together, and we learn that because God made us, and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own, but his. He has an incontestable right to, and property in, us and all things. His we are, to be actuated by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory.

4. That he is our sovereign ruler: We are his people or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives law to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. The Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver. We are not at liberty to do what we will, but must always make conscience of doing as we are bidden.

5. That he is our bountiful benefactor. We are not only his sheep, whom he is entitled to, but the sheep of his pasture, whom he takes care of; the flock of his feeding (so it may be read); therefore the sheep of his hand; at his disposal because the sheep of his pasture, Ps 95:7. He that made us maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy.

6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness (Ps 100:5): The Lord is good, and therefore does good; his mercy is everlasting; it is a fountain that can never be drawn dry. The saints, who are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be, to eternity, the glorified monuments of mercy.

7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness: His truth endures to all generations, and no word of his

shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked. The promise is sure to all the seed, from age to age.

3 Know ye that the Lord he *is* God:
it is he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise:
be thankful unto him,*and* bless his name.
5 For the Lord *is* good;
his mercy *is* everlasting;
and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

Psalms-101

A Pledge to Live Righteously
A Psalm of David.

1 I will sing of mercy and judgment:
unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate and a good master of a family; and, if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place, it would contribute very much to a universal reformation. Observe,

I The chosen subject of the psalm (Ps 101:1): I will sing of mercy and judgment, that is,

1. Of God's mercy and judgment, and then it looks back upon the dispensations of Providence concerning David since he was first anointed to be king, during which time he had met with many a rebuke and much hardship on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, had had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him and favours bestowed upon him; of these he will sing unto God. Note,

(1.) God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed--mercy and judgment; God has set the one over-against the other, and appointed them April-days, showers and sunshine. It was so with David and his family; when there was mercy in the return of the ark there was judgment in the death of Uzza.

(2.) When God in his providence exercises us with a mixture of mercy and judgment it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God for both. The Chaldee-paraphrase of this is observable: If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or If thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord! will I sing my hymns for all.

Whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition nor the tears of an afflicted condition must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or,

2. It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would, in this psalm, promise to be merciful, and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly and love mercy is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him and this in consideration of the various providences of God that had occurred to him. Family-mercies and family-afflictions are both of them calls to family-religion.

David put his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others and preserved in his family, for a pattern to his sons and successors.

II The general resolution David took up to conduct himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, Ps 101:2. We have here,

1. A good purpose concerning his conversation--concerning his conversation in general (how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, not walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant bind himself to his good behaviour), and concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in public, when he sat in the throne, but how he would walk within his house, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God.

It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad and appear before men; but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay, rather, they are more concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well, 1Ti 3:4. When David had his hands full of public affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, 2Sa 6:20. He resolves,

(1.) To act conscientiously and with integrity, to walk in a perfect way, in the way of God's commandments; that is a perfect way, for the law of the Lord is perfect. This he will walk in with a perfect heart, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men. When we make the word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk in a perfect way with a perfect heart.

(2.) To act considerately and with discretion: I will behave myself wisely; I will understand or instruct myself in a perfect way, so some. I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of Christian prudence in the ways of Christian

piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way, under pretence of behaving ourselves wisely; but, while we keep to the good way, we must be wise as serpents.

2. A good prayer: O when wilt thou come unto me? Note, It is a desirable thing, when a man has a house of his own, to have God come to him and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence that walk with a perfect heart in a perfect way. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David (1Sa 18:14), we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain. David, as he purposed, behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and, as he prayed, the Lord was with him.

III. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself (Ps 101:3): "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes; I will not design nor aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God and the public welfare." He will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property.

In all our worldly business we must see that what we set our eyes upon be right and good and not any forbidden fruit, and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man that he shuts his eyes from seeing evil, Isa 33:15. "Nay, I hate the work of those that turn aside from the paths of equity (Job 31:7), not only I avoid it, but I abhor it; it shall not cleave to me. If any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly."

IV. His further resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not countenance them, nor show them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse

with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him; for those who hated to be reformed would certainly hinder every thing that is good.

When he comes to mention particulars he does not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house, nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship with them; but he mentions those whose sins were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution and to behave himself wisely. He will have nothing to do,

1. With spiteful malicious people, who are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief they do to those they have a pique against (Ps 101:4): "A froward heart (one that delights to be cross and perverse) shall depart from me, as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. I will not know," that is, "I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a wicked person; for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump."

2. With slanderers, and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbour's reputation secretly (Ps 101:5): "Whoso privily slanders his neighbour, either raises or spreads false stories, to the prejudice of his good name, him will I cut off from my family and court." Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things, which they think will please their prince.

If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, Pr 29:12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but

will prevent the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him: he will punish not only him that falsely accuses another in open court, but him that privily slanders another. I wish David had remembered this vow in the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba.

3. With haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for only by pride comes contention: "Therefore him that has a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer; I will have no patience with those that are still grasping at all preferments, for it is certain that they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families." God resists the proud, and so will David. 4. With false deceitful people, that scruple not to tell lies, or commit frauds (Ps 101:7):

"He that worketh deceit, though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet, as soon as he is discovered, shall not dwell within my house." Some great men know how to serve their own purposes by such as are skilful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by; but David will make use of no such persons as agents for him:

He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight, but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates; and he was also a type of Christ, who will, in the great day, banish from his presence all that love and make a lie, Re 22:15.

V. His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good (Ps 101:6): My eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land. In choosing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land; for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful.

These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out; for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it.

Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them and act under them. He that walks in a perfect way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, shall serve me.

The kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and, if any man is better than another, he must be preferred.

This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it or else his judgment was imposed upon when he made Ahithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God.

The Son of David has his eyes upon the faithful in the land; his secret is with them, and they shall dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodliness (1Sa 8:16), but David for their goodness.

VI. His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country, as well as of the court (Ps 101:8): "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, all that are discovered and convicted; the law shall have its course against them." He would do his utmost to destroy all the wicked, so that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked.

He would do it early; he would lose no time and spare no pains; he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice; and those must rise betimes that will do anything to purpose in the work. That which he aimed at was not only the securing of his own government and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

Not Jerusalem only, but the whole land, was the city of the Lord; so is the gospel-church. It is the interest of the city of the Lord to be purged from wicked doers, who both blemish it and weaken it; and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can, in their places, towards so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the new Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.
O when wilt thou come unto me?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:
I hate the work of them that turn aside;
it shall not cleave to me.
4 A froward heart shall depart from me:
I will not know a wicked *person.*
5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off:
him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.
6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land,
that they may dwell with me:
he that walketh in a perfect way,
he shall serve me.
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:
he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land;
that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.

Psalms-102

A Cry in Distress

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed,
and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord,
and let my cry come unto thee.

The title of this psalm is very observable; it is a prayer of the afflicted. It was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church and for it; and on those that are of a public spirit afflictions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written designedly for our use.

The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths. Ho 14:2, Take with you words. Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted: let them set, not their hands, but their hearts to it, and present it to God. Note,

1. It is often the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely affected.

2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them.

3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits are overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to pour out our complaints before the Lord, which intimates the leave God gives us to be free with him and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it intimates also what an ease it is to an afflicted spirit to unburden itself by a

humble representation of its grievances and griefs. Such a representation we have here, in which,

I The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction, Ps 102:1,2. When we pray in our affliction,

1. It should be our care that God would graciously hear us; for, if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye that our prayer may come unto God, even to his ears (Ps 18:6); and, in order to that, let us lift up the prayer, and our souls with it.

2. It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a prayer in faith, we may in faith say, Hear my prayer, O Lord! "Hear me," that is,

(1.) "Manifest thyself to me, hide not thy face from me in displeasure, when I am in trouble. If thou dost not quickly free me, yet let me know that thou favourest me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me." God's hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man even in his prosperity (Ps 30:7, Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled); but if, when we are in trouble, God hides his face, the case is sad indeed.

(2.) "Manifest thyself for me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of and in pursuit of; answer me speedily, even in the day when I call." When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be thus pressing in prayer, yet with humility and patience.

II. He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition to which he was reduced by his afflictions.

1. His body was macerated and emaciated, and he had become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented by making fat the bones, and the bones flourishing like a herb, so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary: My bones are burnt as a hearth (Ps 102:3); they cleave to my skin (Ps 102:5); nay, my heart is smitten, and withered like grass (Ps 102:4); it touches the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there.

I am withered like grass (Ps 102:11), scorched with the burning heat of my troubles. If we be thus brought low by bodily distempers, let us not think it strange; the body is like grass, weak and of the earth, no wonder then that it withers.

2. He was very melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit. He was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles that he forgot to eat his bread (Ps 102:4); he had no appetite to his necessary food nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul the delights of sense will be sapless things. He was always sighing and groaning, as one pressed above measure (Ps 102:5), and this wasted him and exhausted his spirits. He affected solitude, as melancholy people do.

His friends deserted him and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company (Ps 102:6,7): "I am like a pelican of the wilderness, or a bittern (so some) that make a doleful noise; I am like an owl, that affects to lodge in deserted ruined buildings; I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the house-top. I live in a garret, and there spend my hours in poring on my troubles and bemoaning myself."

Those who do thus, when they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed; but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction we should sit

alone to consider our ways (La 3:28), but not sit alone to indulge an inordinate grief.

3. He was evil-spoken of by his enemies, and all manner of evil was said against him. When his friends went off from him his foes set themselves against him (Ps 102:8):

My enemies reproach me all the day, designing thereby both to create vexation to him (for an ingenuous mind regrets reproach) and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him they shot these arrows at him, even bitter words. In this they were unwearied; they did it all the day; it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very outrageous:

They are mad against me, and very obstinate and implacable. They are sworn against me; as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath that they would kill Paul; or, They have sworn against me as accusers, to take away my life.

4. He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure (Ps 102:9,10): "I have eaten ashes like bread; instead of eating my bread, I have lain down in dust and ashes, and I have mingled my drink with weeping; when I should have refreshed myself with drinking I have only eased myself with weeping." And what is the matter? He tells us (Ps 102:10):

Because of thy wrath. It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him as the wrath of God which he was under the apprehensions of as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery:

Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down, as that which we cast to the ground with a design to dash it to pieces; we lift up first, that we may throw it down with the more violence; or, "Thou hast formerly lifted me up in

honour, and joy, and uncommon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief and makes it the more grievous." We must eye the hand of God both in lifting us up and casting us down, and say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away."

5. He looked upon himself as a dying man: My days are consumed like smoke (Ps 102:3), which vanishes away quickly.

Or, They are consumed in smoke, of which nothing remains; they are like a shadow that declines (Ps 102:11), like the evening-shadow, or a forerunner of approaching night. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist's personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizes, making public grievances his own.

The mystical body of Christ is sometimes, like the psalmist's body here, withered and parched, nay, like dead and dry bones. The church sometimes is forced into the wilderness, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God's displeasure.

2 Hide not thy face from me
in the day *when* I am in trouble;
incline thine ear unto me:
in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.
3 For my days are consumed like smoke,
and my bones are burned as a hearth.
4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;
so that I forget to eat my bread.
5 By reason of the voice of my groaning
my bones cleave to my skin.
6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness:
I am like an owl of the desert.
7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.

8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day;
and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
and mingled my drink with weeping,
10 because of thine indignation and thy wrath:
for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
11 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth;
and I am withered like grass.
12 But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever;
and thy remembrance unto all generations.

Many exceedingly great and precious comforts are here thought of, and mustered up, to balance the foregoing complaints; for unto the upright there arises light in the darkness, so that, though they are cast down, they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God; but he has many considerations to revive himself with.

I. We are dying creatures, and our interests and comforts are dying, but God is an everliving everlasting God (Ps 102:12): "My days are like a shadow; there is no remedy; night is coming upon me; but, thou, O Lord! shalt endure for ever. Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but thou our God diest not; what threatened us cannot touch thee; our names will be written in the dust and buried in oblivion, but thy remembrance shall be unto all generations; to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured."

A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the Eternal Mind. God endures forever, his church's faithful patron and protector; and, his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

II. Poor Zion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour (Ps 102:13): Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion. The hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God--"Thou wilt have mercy upon Zion, for she has become an object of thy pity;" and upon the power of God--"Thou shalt arise and have mercy, shalt stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contempt of all the opposition made by the church's enemies."

The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. That which is very encouraging is that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which Infinite Wisdom has appointed (and therefore it is the best time) and which Eternal Truth has fixed it to, and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten nor further adjourned.

At the end of seventy years, the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come, and at length it did come. Zion was now in ruins, that is, the temple that was built in the city of David: the favouring of Zion is the building of the temple up again, as it is explained, Ps 102:16. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays (Da 9:17), Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate.

The building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire. No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church-privileges. Now this is here wished for and longed for,

1. Because it would be a great rejoicing to Zion's friends (Ps 102:14): Thy servants take pleasure even in the stones of the temple, though they were thrown down and scattered, and favour the dust, the very

rubbish and ruins of it. Observe here, When the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it.

Those who truly love the church of God love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to show that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

2. Because it would have a good influence upon Zion's neighbours, Ps 102:15. It will be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, at least of their conviction; for so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, shall have high thoughts of him and his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory. They shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it; they shall be afraid of doing any thing against it when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, We will go with you, for we have seen that God is with you, Zec 8:23. Thus it is said (Es 8:17) that many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

3. Because it would redound to the honour of Zion's God (Ps 102:16): When the Lord shall build up Zion. They take it for granted it will be done, for God himself has undertaken it, and he shall then appear in his glory; and for that reason all that have made his glory their highest end desire it and pray for it.

Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done

in the set time. Those that pray in faith, Father, glorify thy name, may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it and I will glorify it yet again, though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

III. The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted and no notice taken of them, but they will be reviewed and greatly encouraged (Ps 102:17): He will regard the prayer of the destitute. It was said (Ps 102:16) that God will appear in his glory, such a glory as kings themselves shall stand in awe of, Ps 102:15. When great men appear in their glory they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply to them; but the great God will not do so. Observe,

1 The meanness of the petitioners; they are the destitute. It is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub, or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings, but destitute of temporal good things--the poor, the weak, the desolate, the stripped; thus variously is the word rendered; or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees. Destitute people should be praying people, 1Ti 5:5.

2 The favour of God to them, notwithstanding their meanness: He will regard their prayer, and will look at it, will peruse their petition (2Ch 6:40), and he will not despise their prayer. More is implied than is expressed: he will value it and be well pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it.

But it is thus expressed because others despise their praying, they themselves fear God will despise it, and he was thought to despise it while their affliction was

prolonged and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and the manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with disdain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law. This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer (Ps 102:18):

This shall be written for the generation to come, that none may despair, though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten because they have not an answer to them immediately. The experiences of others should be our encouragements to seek unto God and trust in him. And, if we have the comfort of the experiences of others, it is fit that we should give God the glory of them: The people who shall be created shall praise the Lord for what he has done both for them and for their predecessors.

Many that are now unborn shall, by reading the history of the church, be wrought upon to turn proselytes. The people that shall be created anew by divine grace, that are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

IV. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge (Ps 102:19,20): God has looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven, where he has prepared his throne, that high place, that holy place; thence did the Lord behold the earth, for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is or can be hidden from his all-seeing eye; he looks down, not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, to hear the groaning of the prisoners (which we desire to

be out of the hearing of), and not only to hear them, but to help them, to loose those that are appointed to death, then when there is but a step between them and it.

Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon. God heard their groaning there as he did when they were in Egypt (Ex 3:7,9) and came down to deliver them.

God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. See the divine pity in hearing the prisoner's groans, and the divine power in loosing the prisoner's bonds, even when they are appointed to death and are pinioned and double-shackled. We have an instance in Peter, Ac 12:6. Such instances as these of the divine condescension and compassion will help,

1. To declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and to make it appear that he answers to his name, which he himself proclaimed, The Lord God, gracious and merciful; and this declaration of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, Ps 102:21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name.

God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, that they may declare his name in Zion, the place he has chosen to put his name there, and his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither; in the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion (Ps 137:3,4), and God brought them again to Jerusalem in order that they might sing them there. For this end God gives liberty from bondage (Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name, Ps 142:7), and life from the dead. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, Ps 119:175.

2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God (Ps 102:22): When the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem (as they were after their return out of Babylon) many out of the kingdoms joined with them to serve the Lord. This was fulfilled Ezr 6:21, where we find that not only the children of Israel that had come out of captivity, but many that had separated themselves from them among the heathen, did keep the feast of unleavened bread with joy.

But it may look further, at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the gospel-church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion:
for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come.
14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
and favor the dust thereof.
15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord,
and all the kings of the earth thy glory.
16 When the Lord shall build up Zion,
he shall appear in his glory.
17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and not despise their prayer.
18 This shall be written for the generation to come:
and the people which shall be created shall praise the Lord.
19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
from heaven did the Lord behold the earth;
20 to hear the groaning of the prisoner;
to loose those that are appointed to death;
21 to declare the name of the Lord in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem;
22 when the people are gathered together,
and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.

We may here observe,

I The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon (Ps 102:23): He weakened my strength in the way. They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end.

The legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of that nation was weakened, and, in all appearance, its day shortened; for they said, Our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts, Eze 37:11.

And then what becomes of the promise that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time:--

1. To be sickly. Bodily distempers soon weaken our strength in the way, make the keepers of the house to tremble and the strong men to bow themselves.

2. To be short-lived. Where the former is felt, this is feared; when in the midst of our days, according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect but that the number of our months should be cut off in the midst? and what should we do but provide accordingly?

We must own God's hand in it (for in his hand our strength and time are), and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well to have it weakened, and of those that could very ill be spared to have their days shortened.

II. A prayer for the continuance of it (Ps 102:24): "O my God! take me not away in the midst of my days; let

not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise; let it not be cut off till the Messiah shall come. Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it," Isa 65:8. She is a criminal, but, for the sake of that blessing which is in her, she pleads for a reprieve.

This is a prayer for the afflicted, and which, with submission to the will of God, we may in faith put up, that God would not take us away in the midst of our days, but that, if it be his will, he would spare us to do him further service and to be made riper for heaven.

III. A plea to enforce this prayer taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, Ps 102:25-27. The apostle quotes these verses (Heb 1:10-12) and tells us, He saith this to the Son, and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable, in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Thy years are throughout all generations, and cannot be shortened. It is likewise comfortable in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an everliving God, and that therefore, if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea observe how, to illustrate the eternity of the Creator, he compares it with the mutability of the creature; for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

1. God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity. The Son of God, the eternal Word, made the world. It is expressly said, All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made; and therefore the same was in the beginning from eternity with God, and was God, Joh 1:1-3,Col 1:16,Eph 3:9,Heb 1:2. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both, include the universe and its fulness,

and these derive their being from God by his Son (Ps 102:25):

"Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, which is founded on the seas and on the floods and yet it abides; much more shall the church, which is built upon a rock. The heavens are the work of thy hands, and by thee are all their motions and influences directed;" God is therefore the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be entrusted with all power, both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both and is entitled to both.

2. God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity (Ps 102:26,27): They shall perish, for thou shalt change them by the same almighty power that made them, and therefore, no doubt, thou shalt endure; thou art the same. God and the world, Christ and the creature, are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said, one would think, were enough to decide the controversy immediately and to determine us for God and Christ. For,

(1.) A portion in the creature is fading and dying: They shall perish; they will not last so long as we shall last. The day is coming when the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up; and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it? Heaven and earth shall wax old as a garment, not by a gradual decay, but, when the set time comes, they shall be laid aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for:

As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed, not annihilated, but altered, it may be so that they shall not be at all the same, but new heavens and a new earth. See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth. He can change them as he pleases

and when he pleases; and the constant changes they are subject to, in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnests of their last and final change, when the heavens and time (which is measured by them) shall be no more.

(2.) A portion in God is perpetual and everlasting: Thou art the same, subject to no change; and thy years have no end, Ps 102:27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise, the same to his church in captivity that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength, or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her strength and her life; he is the same, and has said, Because I live you shall live also. Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom in spite of the power of the Old-Testament Babylon, and he will keep it up in spite of the power of the New-Testament Babylon.

IV. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer (Ps 102:28): The children of thy servants shall continue; since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another; from the eternity of the head we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and distempered, and even at death's door. Those that hope to wear out the saints of the Most High will be mistaken.

Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, a succession, of professing people; the church, as well as the world, is under the influence of that blessing, Be fruitful and multiply. These children shall continue, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God (that is, in his service, and by his grace); the entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands, but, as one generation of good people passes away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

23 He weakened my strength in the way;
he shortened my days.
24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:
thy years *are* throughout all generations.
25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:
yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
as a vesture shalt thou change them,
and they shall be changed:
27 but thou *art* the same,
and thy years shall have no end.
28 The children of thy servants shall continue,
and their seed shall be established before thee.

Psalms-103

Praise for the Lord's Benefits
A Psalm of David.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul:
and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

David is here communing with his own heart, and he is no fool that thus talks to himself and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

I. How he stirs up himself to the duty of praise, Ps 103:1,2.

1. It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken well of; for he is the fountain of all good, whatever are the channels or cisterns; it is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise, giving thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

2. It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and all that is within us. We make nothing of our religious performances if we do not make heart-work of them, if that which is within us, nay, if all that is

within us, be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough.

3. In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him: Forget not all his benefits. If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them; and that is unjust as well as unkind, since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable. "O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but surely thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldst not have forgotten any."

II. How he furnishes himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting: "Come, my soul, consider what God has done for thee."

1. "He has pardoned thy sins (Ps 103:3); he has forgiven, and does forgive, all thy iniquities." This is mentioned first because by the pardon of sin that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was; it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned. He has forgiven all our trespasses. It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

2. "He has cured thy sickness." The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul; it is its disorder, and threatens its death. This is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed.

Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together; for, as for God, his work is perfect and not done by halves; if God take away the guilt of sin by pardoning

mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul he is made sanctification, 1Co 1:30.

3. "He has rescued thee from danger." A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes, or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore here also we experience the divine goodness: Who redeemed thy life from destruction (Ps 103:4), from the destroyer, from hell (so the Chaldee), from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious; we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to divine grace that has wrought it out, to him who has obtained eternal redemption for us. See Job 33:24,28.

4. "He has not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life."

(1.) "He has given thee true honour and great honour, no less than a crown: He crowns thee with his lovingkindness and tender mercies;" and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? This honour have all his saints. What is the crown of glory but God's favour?

(2.) "He has given thee true pleasure: He satisfies thy mouth with good things" (Ps 103:5); it is only the favour and grace of God that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply its needs, and answer to its desires. Nothing but divine wisdom can undertake to fill its treasures (Pr 8:21); other things will surfeit, but not satiate, Ec 6:7,Isa 55:2.

(3.) "He has given thee a prospect and pledge of long life: Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The eagle is long-lived, and, as naturalists say, when she is nearly 100 years old, casts all her feathers (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting

time), and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again.

When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, Job 33:23.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits:
3 who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
who healeth all thy diseases;
4 who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
5 who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things;*
so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The Lord executeth righteousness
and judgment for all that are oppressed.

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences and thence fetched matter for praise; here he looks abroad and takes notice of his favour to others also; for in them we should rejoice and give thanks for them, all the saints being fed at a common table and sharing in the same blessings.

I. Truly God is good to all (Ps 103:6): He executes righteousness and judgment, not only for his own people, but for all that are oppressed; for even in common providence he is the patron of wronged innocency, and, one way or other, will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud and help the helpless.

II. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He has revealed himself and his grace to us (Ps 103:7): He made known his ways unto Moses, and by him his acts to the children of Israel, not only by his rod

to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages.

Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of divine favours with which the church is blessed; for God restores us to himself by revealing himself to us, and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He has made known his acts and his ways (that is, his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men), that they may know both what to conceive of him and what to expect from him; so Dr. Hammond.

Or by his ways we may understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs (as the word signifies), his promises and purposes as to what he will do with us. Thus fairly does God deal with us.

2. He has never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive.

(1.) It is in his nature to be so (Ps 103:8): The Lord is merciful and gracious; this was his way which he made known unto Moses at Mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name (Ex 34:6,7), in answer to Moses's request (Ex 33:13), I beseech thee, show me thy way, that I may know thee. It is my way, says God, to pardon sin.

[1.] He is not soon angry, Ps 103:8. He is slow to anger, not extreme to mark what we do amiss nor ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing, that he may give space to repent, and does not speedily execute the sentence of his law; and he could not be thus slow to anger if he were not plenteous in mercy, the very Father of mercies.

[2.] He is not long angry; for (Ps 103:9) he will not always chide, though we always offend and deserve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins by the rebukes of Providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief, yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no, not for our sins, but, after the spirit of bondage, will give the spirit of adoption.

How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease! What would become of us if God should deal so with us? He will not keep his anger for ever against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, Isa 54:8,57:16.

(2.) We have found him so; we, for our parts, must own that he has not dealt with us after our sins, Ps 103:10. The scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal that it is true, that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience, we should have been in hell long ago; but he has not rewarded us after our iniquities; so those will say who know what sin deserves.

He has not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited, which should make us think the worse, and not the better, of sin; for God's patience should lead us to repentance, Ro 2:4.

3. He has pardoned our sins, not only my iniquity (Ps 103:3), but our transgressions, Ps 103:12. Though it is of our own benefit, by the pardoning mercy of God, that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory.

Observe,

(1.) The transcendent riches of God's mercy (Ps 103:11): As the heaven is high above the earth (so high that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse), so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most, so much above and beyond them that there is no proportion at all between them; the greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least tokens of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God's mercies, Ge 32:10.

Observe, God's mercy is thus great towards those that fear him, not towards those that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness.

(2.) The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy (Ps 103:12): As far as the east is from the west (which two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes) so far has he removed our transgressions from us, so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us.

The sins of believers shall be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them; they shall be sought for, and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He has pitied our sorrows, Ps 103:13,14. Observe,

(1.) Whom he pities--those that fear him, that is, all good people, who in this world may become objects of pity on account of the grievances to which they are not only born, but born again. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, but are yet trembling at his word; those he pities, Jer 31:18,20.

(2.) How he pities--as a father pities his children, and does them good as there is occasion. God is a Father to those that fear him and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge and instructs them, pities them when they are froward and bears with them, pities them when they are sick and comforts them (Isa 66:13), pities them when they have fallen and helps them up again, pities them when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them, pities them when they are wronged and gives them redress; thus the Lord pities those that fear him.

(3.) Why he pities--for he knows our frame. He has reason to know our frame, for he framed us; and, having himself made man of the dust, he remembers that he is dust, not only by constitution, but by sentence. Dust thou art. He considers the frailty of our bodies and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, and expects accordingly from us, how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us, in all which appears the tenderness of his compassion.

5. He has perpetuated his covenant-mercy and thereby provided relief for our frailty, Ps 103:15-18. See here,

(1.) How short man's life is and of what uncertain continuance. The lives even of great men and good men are so, and neither their greatness nor their goodness can alter the property of them: As for man, his days are as grass, which grows out of the earth, rises but a little way above it, and soon withers and returns to it again. See Isa 40:6,7.

Man, in his best estate, seems somewhat more than grass; he flourishes and looks gay; yet then he is but like a flower of the field, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it.

The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and, though in its own nature withering, will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden wall and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in itself, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be cropped and trodden on by the beasts of the field. Man's life is not only wasting of itself, but its period may be anticipated by a thousand accidents.

When the flower is in its perfection a blasting wind, unseen, unlooked for, passes over it, and it is gone; it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, and the place thereof, which was proud of it, now knows it no more. Such a thing is man: God considers this, and pities him; let him consider it himself, and be humble, dead to this world and thoughtful of another.

(2.) How long and lasting God's mercy is to his people (Ps 103:17,18): it will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe,

[1.] The description of those to whom this mercy belongs. They are such as fear God, such as are truly religious, from principle.

First, They live a life of faith; for they keep God's covenant; having taken hold of it, they keep hold of it, fast hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treasure, keep it as their portion, and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life.

Secondly, They live a life of obedience; they remember his commandments to do them, else they do not keep his covenant. Those only shall have the benefit of God's promises that make conscience of his precepts. See who those are that have a good memory, as well as a good understanding (Ps 111:10), those that remember

God's commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them, and to be ruled by them.

[2.] The continuance of the mercy which belongs to such as these; it will last them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgment, no infringement, of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life, for it will out-live it.

First, To their souls, which are immortal; to them the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting; from everlasting in the councils of it to everlasting in the consequences of it, in their election before the world was and their glorification when this world shall be no more; for they are predestinated to the inheritance (Eph 1:11) and look for the mercy of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life.

Secondly, To their seed, which shall be kept up to the end of time (Ps 102:28): His righteousness, the truth of his promise, shall be unto children's children; provided they tread in the steps of their predecessors' piety, and keep his covenant, as they did, then shall mercy be preserved to them, even to a thousand generations.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
his acts unto the children of Israel.
8 The Lord *is* merciful and gracious,
slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
9 He will not always chide:
neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,
so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west,
so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children,
so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame;
he remembereth that we *are* dust.
15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass:
as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
and the place thereof shall know it no more.
17 But the mercy of the Lord *is* from everlasting to everlasting
upon them that fear him,
and his righteousness unto children's children;
18 to such as keep his covenant,
and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Here is, I The doctrine of universal providence laid down, Ps 103:19. He has secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant, but the order of mankind, and the world in general, he secures by common providence. The Lord has a throne of his own, a throne of glory, a throne of government. He that made all rules all, and both by a word of power:

He has prepared his throne, has fixed and established it that it cannot be shaken; he has afore-ordained all the measures of his government and does all according to the counsel of his own will. He has prepared it in the heavens, above us, and out of sight; for he holds back the face of his throne, and spreads a cloud upon it (Job 26:9); yet he can himself judge through the dark cloud, Job 22:13.

Hence the heavens are said to rule (Da 4:26), and we are led to consider this by the influence which even the visible heavens have upon this earth, their dominion, Job 38:33,Ge 1:16.

But though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him (Our Father who art in heaven), yet his kingdom rules over all. He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs, of this lower world, and disposes all persons and things according to the counsel of his will, to his

own glory (Da 4:35): His kingdom rules over all kings and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.

II The duty of universal praise inferred from it: if all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage.

1. Let the holy angels praise him (Ps 103:20,21): Bless the Lord, you his angels; and again, Bless the Lord, all you his hosts, you ministers of his. David had been stirring up himself and others to praise God, and here, in the close, he calls upon the angels to do it; not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praise God, they do it continually; but thus he expresses his high thoughts of God as worthy of the adorations of the holy angels, thus he quickens himself and others to the duty with this consideration, That it is the work of angels, and comforts himself in reference to his own weakness and defect in the performance of this duty with this consideration, That there is a world of holy angels who dwell in God's house and are still praising him.

In short, the blessed angels are glorious attendants upon the blessed God. Observe,

(1.) How well qualified they are for the post they are in. They are able; for they excel in strength; they are mighty in strength (so the word is); they are able to bring great things to pass, and to abide in their work without weariness. And they are as willing as they are able; they are willing to know their work; for they hearken to the voice of his word; they stand expecting commission and instructions from their great Lord, and always behold his face (Mt 18:10), that they may take the first intimation of his mind.

They are willing to do their work: They do his commandments (Ps 103:20); they do his pleasure (Ps 103:21); they dispute not any divine commands, but readily address themselves to the execution of them.

Nor do they delay, but fly swiftly: They do his commandments at hearing, or as soon as they hear the voice of his word; so Dr. Hammond. To obey is better than sacrifice; for angels obey, but do not sacrifice.

(2.) What their service is. They are his angels, and ministers of his--his, for he made them, and made them for himself--his, for he employs them, though he does not need them--his, for he is their owner and Lord; they belong to him and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his servants, but not as the angels that attend the presence of his glory. Soldiers, and seamen, and all good subjects, serve the king, but not as the courtiers do, the ministers of state and those of the household.

[1.] The angels occasionally serve God in this lower world; they do his commandments, go on his errands (Da 9:21), fight his battles (2Ki 6:17), and minister for the good of his people, Heb 1:14. [2.] They continually praise him in the upper world; they began betimes to do it (Job 38:7), and it is still their business, from which they rest not day nor night, Re 4:8. It is God's glory that he has such attendants, but more his glory that he neither needs them nor is benefited by them.

2. Let all his works praise him (Ps 103:22), all in all places of his dominion; for, because they are his works, they are under his dominion, and they were made and are ruled that they may be unto him for a name and a praise.

All his works, that is, all the children of men, in all parts of the world, let them all praise God; yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works also; let them praise him objectively, though they cannot praise him actually, Ps 145:10.

Yet all this shall not excuse David from praising God, but rather excite him to do it the more cheerfully, that

he may bear a part in this concert; for he concludes, Bless the Lord, O my soul! as he began, Ps 103:1. Blessing God and giving him glory must be the alpha and the omega of all our services.

He began with Bless the Lord, O my soul! and, when he had penned and sung this excellent hymn to his honour, he does not say, Now, O my soul! thou hast blessed the Lord, sit down, and rest thee, but, Bless the Lord, O my soul! yet more and more. When we have done ever so much in the service of God, yet still we must stir up ourselves to do more.

God's praise is a subject that will never be exhausted, and therefore we must never think this work done till we come to heaven, where it will be for ever in the doing.

19 The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens;
and his kingdom ruleth over all.
20 Bless the Lord, ye his angels,
that excel in strength,
that do his commandments,
hearkening unto the voice of his word.
21 Bless ye the Lord, all *ye* his hosts;
ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
22 Bless the Lord, all his works
in all places of his dominion:
bless the Lord, O my soul.

Psalms-104

The Lord's Care for His Creation

When we are addressing ourselves to any religious service we must stir up ourselves to take hold on God in it (Isa 64:7); so David does here. "Come, my soul, where art thou? What art thou thinking of? Here is work to be done, good work, angels' work; set about it

in good earnest; let all the powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it: Bless the Lord, O my soul!" In these verses,

I The psalmist looks up to the divine glory shining in the upper world, of which, though it is one of the things not seen, faith is the evidence. With what reverence and holy awe does he begin his meditation with that acknowledgment: O Lord my God! thou art very great! It is the joy of the saints that he who is their God is a great God. The grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects.

The majesty of God is here set forth by various instances, alluding to the figure which great princes in their public appearances covet to make. Their equipage, compared with his (even of the eastern kings, who most affected pomp), is but as the light of a glow-worm compared with that of the sun, when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great,

1. In their robes; and what are God's robes? Thou art clothed with honour and majesty, Ps 104:1. God is seen in his works, and these proclaim him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment, Ps 104:2. God is light (1Jo 1:5), the Father of lights (Jam 1:17); he dwells in light (1Ti 6:16); he clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven, that light which was created the first day, Ge 1:3.

Of all visible beings light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit, and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, that is, to reveal himself under that similitude, as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves; and so only, for his face cannot be seen.

2. In their palaces or pavilions, when they take the field; and what is God's palace and his pavilion? He

stretches out the heavens like a curtain, Ps 104:2. So he did at first, when he made the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded, or stretched out, Ge 1:7.

He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments. So he does still: he now stretches out the heavens like a curtain, keeps them upon the stretch, and they continue to this day according to his ordinance. The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world, to break its dazzling light; for, though God covers himself with light, yet, in compassion to us, he makes darkness his pavilion.

Thick clouds are a covering to him. The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great, he is that fills heaven and earth. He has his chambers, his upper rooms (so the word signifies), the beams whereof he lays in the waters, the waters that are above the firmament (Ps 104:3), as he has founded the earth upon the seas and floods, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water are fluid bodies, yet, by the divine power, they are kept as tight and as firm in the place assigned them as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed!

3. In their coaches of state, with their stately horses, which add much to the magnificence of their entries; but God makes the clouds his chariots, in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud, as in a chariot, to Mount Sinai, to give the law, and to Mount Tabor, to proclaim the gospel (Mt 17:5), and he walks (a gentle pace indeed, yet stately) upon the wings of the wind.

See Ps 18:10,11. He commands the winds, directs them as he pleases, and serves his own purposes by them.

4. In their retinue or train of attendants; and here also God is very great, for (Ps 104:4) he makes his angels spirits. This is quoted by the apostle (Heb 1:7) to prove the pre-eminence of Christ above the angels. The angels are here said to be his angels and his ministers, for they are under his dominion and at his disposal; they are winds, and a flame of fire, that is, they appeared in wind and fire (so some), or they are as swift as winds, and pure as flames; or he makes them spirits, so the apostle quotes it.

They are spiritual beings; and, whatever vehicles they may have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies as we have. Being spirits, they are so much the further removed from the encumbrances of the human nature and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the divine nature. And they are bright, and quick, and ascending, as fire, as a flame of fire. In Ezekiel's vision they ran and returned like a flash of lightning, Eze 1:14.

Thence they are called seraphim--burners. Whatever they are, they are what God made them, what he still makes them; they derive their being from him, having the being he gave them, are held in being by him, and he makes what use he pleases of them.

II. He looks down, and looks about, to the power of God shining in this lower world. He is not so taken up with the glories of his court as to neglect even the remotest of his territories; no, not the sea and dry land.

1. He has founded the earth, Ps 104:5. Though he has hung it upon nothing (Job 26:2), ponderibus librata suis--balanced by its own weight, yet it is as immovable as if it had been laid upon the surest foundations. He has built the earth upon her basis, so

that though it has received a dangerous shock by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it, yet it shall not be removed for ever, that is, not till the end of time, when it must give way to the new earth.

Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is worth noting: "God has fixed so strange a place for the earth, that, being a heavy body, one would think it should fall every minute; and yet, which way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin but by tumbling into heaven."

2. He has set bounds to the sea; for that also is his.

(1.) He brought it within bounds in the creation. At first the earth, which, being the more ponderous body, would subside of course, was covered with the deep (Ps 104:6): The waters were above the mountains; and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed, a habitation for man; and therefore, on the third day, God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered to one place, and let the dry land appear, Ge 1:9.

This command of God is here called his rebuke, as if he gave it because he was displeased that the earth was thus covered with water and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went along with this word, and therefore it is also called here the voice of his thunder, which is a mighty voice and produces strange effects, Ps 104:7.

At thy rebuke, as if they were made sensible that they were out of their place, they fled; they hasted away (they called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains to cover them), as it is said on another occasion (Ps 77:16), The waters saw thee, O God! the waters saw thee; they were afraid. Even those fluid bodies received the impression of God's terror.

But was the Lord displeased against the rivers? No; it was for the salvation of his people, Hab 3:8,13. So here; God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to prepare room for him; for men must not be made as the fishes of the sea (Hab 1:14); they must have air to breathe in. Immediately therefore, with all speed, the waters retired, Ps 104:8.

They go over hill and dale (as we say), go up by the mountains and down by the valleys; they will neither stop at the former nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of their way to the place which thou hast founded for them, and there they make their bed.

Let the obsequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us obedience to the word and will of God; for shall man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let their retiring to and resting in the place assigned them teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that wise providence which appoints us the bounds of our habitation.

(2.) He keeps it within bounds, Ps 104:9. The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them; they may not, and therefore they do not, turn again to cover the earth. Once they did, in Noah's flood, because God bade them, but never since, because he forbids them, having promised not to drown the world again. God himself glorifies in this instance of his power (Job 38:8, &c.) and uses it as an argument with us to fear him, Jer 5:22. This, if duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the Lord and his goodness, That the waters of the sea would soon cover the earth if God did not restrain them.

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, thou art very great;
thou art clothed with honor and majesty:
2 who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment:
who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
3 who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:

who maketh the clouds his chariot:
who walketh upon the wings of the wind:
4 who maketh his angels spirits;
his ministers a flaming fire:
5 *who* laid the foundations of the earth,
that it should not be removed for ever.
6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment:
the waters stood above the mountains.
7 At thy rebuke they fled;
at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.
8 They go up by the mountains;
they go down by the valleys
unto the place which thou hast founded for them.
9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;
that they turn not again to cover the earth.
10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys,
which run among the hills.

Having given glory to God as the powerful protector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged, here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the creatures.

I. He provides fresh water for their drink: He sends the springs into the valleys, Ps 104:10. There is water enough indeed in the sea, that is, enough to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, be we ever so thirsty--it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to drink.

Naturalists dispute about the origin of fountains; but, whatever are their second causes, here is their first cause; it is God that sends the springs into the brooks, which walk by easy steps between the hills, and receive increase from the rain-water that descends from them.

These give drink, not only to man, and those creatures that are immediately useful to him, but to every beast of the field (Ps 104:11); for where God has given life he provides a livelihood and takes care of all the

creatures. Even the wild asses, though untameable and therefore of no use to man, are welcome to quench their thirst; and we have no reason to grudge it them, for we are better provided for, though born like the wild ass's colt.

We have reason to thank God for the plenty of fair water with which he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which otherwise would not be habitable.

That ought to be reckoned a great mercy the want of which would be a great affliction; and the more common it is the greater mercy it is. Usus communis aquarum--water is common for all.

II. He provides food convenient for them, both for man and beast: The heavens drop fatness; they hear the earth, but God hears them, Ho 2:21. He waters the hills from his chambers (Ps 104:13), from those chambers spoken of (Ps 104:3), the beams of which he lays in the waters, those store-chambers, the clouds that distil fruitful showers.

The hills that are not watered by the rivers, as Egypt was by the Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called the river of God (Ps 65:9), as Canaan was, De 11:11,12. Thus the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works, either with the rain it drinks in (the earth knows when it has enough; it is a pity that any man should not) or with the products it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the benefit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation.

The food which God brings forth out of the earth (Ps 104:14) is the fruit of his works, which the earth is satisfied with. Observe how various and how valuable its products are.

1. For the cattle there is grass, and the beasts of prey, that live not on grass, feed on those that do; for man there is herb, a better sort of grass (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not to be despised); nay, he is furnished with wine, and oil, and bread, Ps 104:15. We may observe here, concerning our food, that which will help to make us both humble and thankful.

(1.) To make us humble let us consider that we have a necessary dependence upon God for all the supports of this life (we live upon alms; we are at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient for us),--that our food comes all out of the earth, to remind us whence we ourselves were taken and whither we must return,--and that therefore we must not think to live by bread alone, for that will feed the body only, but must look into the word of God for the meat that endures to eternal life. Let us also consider that we are in this respect fellow-commoners with the beasts; the same earth, the same spot of ground, that brings grass for the cattle, brings corn for man.

(2.) To make us thankful let us consider,

[1.] That God not only provides for us, but for our servants. The cattle that are of use to man are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when the young lions, that are not for the service of man, often lack and suffer hunger.

[2.] That our food is nigh us, and ready to us. Having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on the merchant-ships that bring food from afar, Pr 31:14.

[3.] That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight, so good a Master do we serve.

First, Does nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is bread, which strengthens man's heart, and is therefore called the staff of life; let none who have that complain of want.

Secondly, Does nature go further, and covet something pleasant?

Here is wine, that makes glad the heart, refreshes the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used, that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully. It is a pity that that should be abused to overcharge the heart, and unfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart and quicken them in their duty. Thirdly, Is nature yet more humoursome, and does it crave something for ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth--oil to make the face to shine, that the countenance may not only be cheerful but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.

2. Nay, the divine providence not only furnishes animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs (Ps 104:16): The trees of the Lord are full of sap, not only men's trees, which they take care of and have an eye to, in their orchards, and parks, and other enclosures, but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence; they are full of sap and want no nourishment.

Even the cedars of Lebanon, an open forest, though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth; they are trees which he has planted, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his vineyard; these are full of sap, for what God plants he will water, and those that are planted in

the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, Ps 92:13.

III. He takes care that they shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves and for the cattle that are serviceable to them; but there are some creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for.

1 The birds. Some birds, by instinct, make their nests in the bushes near rivers (Ps 104:12): By the springs that run among the hills some of the fowls of heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. They sing, according to their capacity, to the honour of their Creator and benefactor, and their singing may shame our silence. Our heavenly Father feeds them (Mt 6:26), and therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take no thought for the morrow.

The birds being made to fly above the earth (as we find, Ge 1:20), they make their nests on high, in the tops of trees (Ps 104:17); it should seem as if nature had an eye to this in planting the cedars of Lebanon, that they might be receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heavenward shall not want resting-places. The stork is particularly mentioned; the fir-trees, which are very high, are her house, her castle.

2 The smaller sort of beasts (Ps 104:18): The wild goats, having neither strength nor swiftness to secure themselves, are guided by instinct to the high hills, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbits, which are also helpless animals, find shelter in the rocks, where they can set the beasts of prey at defiance. Does God provide thus for the inferior creatures; and will he not himself be a refuge and dwelling-place to his own people?

11 They give drink to every beast of the field:
the wild asses quench their thirst.

12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,
which sing among the branches.
13 He watereth the hills from his chambers:
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
and herb for the service of man:
that he may bring forth food out of the earth;
15 and wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man,
and oil to make *his* face to shine,
and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.
16 The trees of the Lord are full *of sap;*
the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
17 where the birds make their nests:
as for the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.
18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats;
and the rocks for the conies.

e are here taught to praise and magnify God,

I. For the constant revolutions and succession of day and night, and the dominion of sun and moon over them. The heathen were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the scripture takes all occasions to show that the gods they worshipped are the creatures and servants of the true God (Ps 104:19):

He appointed the moon for seasons, for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides. The full and change, the increase and decrease, of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the Creator; so does the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down as if he were an intellectual being and knew what he did. God herein consults the comfort of man.

1 The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night (Ps 104:20): Thou makes darkness and it is

night, which, though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is as a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night all the beasts of the forest creep forth to feed, which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth (Ge 9:2), which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honour.

See how nearly allied those are to the disposition of the wild beasts who wait for the twilight (Job 24:15) and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul; when, in either of those ways, it is night, then all the beasts of the forest creep forth. Satan's temptations then assault us and have advantage against us.

Then the young lions roar after their prey; and, as naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts so that they have not strength nor spirit to escape from them, which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to seek their meat from God, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man, but more immediately by the providence of God.

The roaring of the young lions, like the crying of the young ravens, is interpreted asking their meat of God. Does God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures? and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken, groanings which cannot be uttered?

2 The light of the morning befriends the business of the day (Ps 104:22,23): The sun arises (for, as he knows his going down, so, thanks be to God, he knows his rising again), and then the wild beasts betake themselves to their rest; even they have some society among them, for they gather themselves together and

lay down in their dens, which is a great mercy to the children of men, that while they are abroad, as becomes honest travellers, between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts, for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have no ground to excuse himself from the business of the day with this, That there is a lion in the way. Therefore then man goes forth to his work and to his labour.

The beasts of prey creep forth with fear; man goes forth with boldness, as one that has dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief; man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day, which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning (for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by) and which he must stick to till evening; it will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work.

II. For the replenishing of the ocean (Ps 104:25,26): As the earth is full of God's riches, well stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food, so is this great and wide sea which seems a useless part of the globe, at least not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place and made it serviceable to man both for navigation (there go the ships, in which goods are conveyed, to countries vastly distant, speedily and much more cheaply than by land-carriage) and also to be his storehouse for fish.

God made not the sea in vain, any more than the earth; he made it to be inherited, for there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals, which serve for man's dainty food. The whale is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation (Ge 1:21) and is here called the leviathan, as Job 41:1.

He is made to play in the sea; he has nothing to do, as man has, who goes forth to his work; he has nothing to fear, as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters. It is a pity that any of the children of men, who have nobler powers and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world, like leviathan into the waters, to play therein, spending all their time in pastime. The leviathan is said to play in the waters, because he is so well armed against all assaults that he sets them at defiance and laughs at the shaking of a spear, Job 41:29.

III. For the seasonable and plentiful provision which is made for all the creatures, Ps 104:27,28.

1. God is a bountiful benefactor to them: He gives them their meat; he opens his hand and they are filled with good. He supports the armies both of heaven and earth. Even the meanest creatures are not below his cognizance. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good housekeeper that provides for so large a family.

2. They are patient expectants from him: They all wait upon him. They seek their food, according to the natural instinct God has put into them and in the proper season for it, and affect not any other food, or at any other time, than nature has ordained. They do their part for the obtaining of it: what God gives them they gather, and expect not that Providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with--they are filled with good.

They desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our murmurings, and discontent, and dissatisfaction with our lot.

IV. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all the creatures, by which every

species is still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here,

1. All the creatures perishing (Ps 104:29): Thou hidest thy face, withdrawest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled immediately. Every creature has as necessary a dependence upon God's favours as every saint is sensible he has and therefore says with David (Ps 30:7), Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled. God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man is the cause of all the vanity and burden which the whole creation groans under.

Thou takest away their breath, which is in thy hand, and then, and not till then, they die and return to their dust, to their first principles. The spirit of the beast, which goes downward, is at God's command, as well as the spirit of a man, which goes upward. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world.

2. All preserved notwithstanding, in a succession (Ps 104:30): Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created. The same spirit (that is, the same divine will and power) by which they were all created at first still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that, though one generation of them passes away, another comes, and from time to time they are created; new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation.

Thus the face of the earth is renewed from day to day by the light of the sun (which beautifies it anew every morning), from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This (the Jews say) is to be applied to

the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God (Ps 104:24): O Lord! how manifold are thy works! They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind; and yet in wisdom hast thou made them all. When men undertake many works, and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected and not done with due care; but God's works, though many and of very different kinds, are all made in wisdom and with the greatest exactness; there is not the least flaw nor defect in them.

The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the works of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal Monarch.

19 He appointed the moon for seasons:
the sun knoweth his going down.
20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth.*
21 The young lions roar after their prey,
and seek their meat from God.
22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
and lay them down in their dens.
23 Man goeth forth unto his work
and to his labor until the evening.
24 O Lord, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all:
the earth is full of thy riches.
25 *So is* this great and wide sea,
wherein *are* things creeping innumerable,
both small and great beasts.
26 There go the ships:

there is that leviathan,
whom thou hast made to play therein.
27 These wait all upon thee;
that thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.
28 *That* thou givest them they gather:
thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled:
thou takest away their breath, they die,
and return to their dust.
30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created:
and thou renewest the face of the earth.
31 The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever:
the Lord shall rejoice in his works.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking,

I. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

1. He is to be praised,

(1.) As a great God, and a God of matchless perfection: The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever, Ps 104:31. It shall endure to the end of time in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity in the felicity and adorations of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading; God's glory is everlasting. Creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variableness.

(2.) As a gracious God: The Lord shall rejoice in his works. He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom and goodness which he had when he saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good, and rested the seventh day. We often do that which, upon the review, we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at, and wish undone again, blaming our own management. But God always rejoices in his works, because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence, but God never does; he rejoices in the works of his grace: his gifts and callings are without repentance.

(3.) As a God of almighty power (Ps 104:32): He looks on the earth, and it trembles, as unable to bear his frowns--trembles, as Sinai did, at the presence of the Lord. He touches the hills, and they smoke. The volcanoes, or burning mountains, such as Ætna, are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastening upon proud unhumbled sinners. If an angry look and a touch have such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do and the operations of his outstretched arm?

Who knows the power of his anger? Who then dares set it at defiance? God rejoices in his works because they are all so observant of him; and he will in like manner take pleasure in those that fear him and that tremble at his word.

2 The psalmist will himself be much in praising him (Ps 104:33): "I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God, will praise him as Jehovah, the Creator, and as my God, a God in covenant with me, and this not now only, but as long as I live, and while I have my being." Because we have our being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live and have our being we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being, on earth, we hope to have a better life and better being in a better world and there to be doing this work in a better manner and in better company.

II. Joy to himself (Ps 104:34): My meditation of him shall be sweet; it shall be fixed and close; it shall be affecting and influencing; and therefore it shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing, when they are most powerful. Note, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified: "I will be glad in the Lord; it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will rejoice in the Lord always and in him

only." All my joys shall centre in him, and in him they shall be full.

III. Terror to the wicked (Ps 104:35): Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth; and let the wicked be no more.

1. Those that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed; none can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty.

2. Those that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him whom all the creatures serve, will justly be consumed. Those that make that earth to groan under the burden of their impieties which God thus fills with his riches deserve to be consumed out of it, and that it should spue them out.

3. Those that heartily desire to praise God themselves cannot but have a holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and a holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction and the honour that God will get to himself upon them. Even this ought to be the matter of their praise:

"While sinners are consumed out of the earth, let my soul bless the Lord that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by the special grace of God. When the wicked are no more I hope to be praising God world without end; and therefore, Praise you the Lord; let all about me join with me in praising God. Hallelujah; sing praise to Jehovah." This is the first time that we meet with Hallelujah; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it is upon a similar occasion. When the New-Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burden of the song, Hallelujah, Re 19:1,3,4,6.

32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth:

he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
33 I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
34 My meditation of him shall be sweet:
I will be glad in the Lord.
35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-105

The Lord's Wonders in Behalf of Israel

1 O give thanks unto the Lord;
call upon his name:
make known his deeds among the people.

Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves to praise God. Observe,

I The duties to which we are here called, and they are many, but the tendency of them all is to give unto God the glory due unto his name.

1. We must give thanks to him, as one who has always been our bountiful benefactor and requires only that we give him thanks for his favours--poor returns for rich receivings.

2. Call upon his name, as one whom you depend upon for further favours. Praying for further mercies is accepted as an acknowledgment of former mercies. Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him.

3. Make known his deeds (Ps 105:1), that others may join with you in praising him. Talk of all his wondrous works (Ps 105:2), as we talk of things that we are full

of, and much affected with, and desire to fill others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends, and we should talk of them as we sit in the house and as we go by the way (De 6:7), not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion and the encouraging of our own and others' faith and hope in God. Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence.

4. Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce.

5. Glory in his holy name; let those that are disposed to glory not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God and their relation to him, Jer 9:23,24. Praise you his holy name, so some; but it comes all to one, for in glorying in him we give glory to him.

6. Seek him; place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he has appointed. Seek the Lord and his strength, that is, the ark of his strength; seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. Seek his strength, that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be enquired of. Seek the Lord and be strengthened; so divers ancient versions read it. Those that would be strengthened in the inward man must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. Seek his strength, and then seek his face; for by his strength, we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Ho 12:3.

"Seek his face evermore; seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of

the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it."

7. Let the hearts of those rejoice that do seek him (Ps 105:3); for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure that their labour will not be in vain, for he will not only be found, but he will be found the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. If those have reason to rejoice that seek the Lord, much more those that have found him.

II. Some arguments to quicken us to these duties.

1. "Consider both what he has said and what he has done to engage us for ever to him. You will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him, and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders which should make deep and durable impressions upon you,--the wonders of his providence which he has wrought for you and those who are gone before you, the marvellous works that he has done, which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful and with the grateful,--the wonders of his law, which he has written to you, and entrusted you with, the judgments of his mouth, as well as the judgments of his hand," Ps 105:5.

2. "Consider the relation you stand in to him (Ps 105:6): You are the seed of Abraham his servant; you are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your Master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests.

You are the children of Jacob his chosen, and are chosen and beloved for the fathers' sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of those whose honours you

inherit. You are the children of godly parents; do no degenerate. You are God's church upon earth, and, if you do not praise him, who should?" 3. Consider your interest in him: He is the Lord our God, Ps 105:7.

We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God (Isa 8:19) and praise their God? Da 5:4. He is Jehovah our God. He that is our God is self-existent and self-sufficient, has an irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty: His judgments are in all the earth; he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even to those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him:
talk ye of all his wondrous works.
3 Glory ye in his holy name:
let the heart of them rejoice
that seek the Lord.
4 Seek the Lord, and his strength:
seek his face evermore.
5 Remember his marvelous works that he hath done;
his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,
ye children of Jacob his chosen.
7 He *is* the Lord our God:
his judgments *are* in all the earth.
8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.

We are here taught, in praising God, to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming, which those in its latter ages enjoy the benefit of and therefore should give thanks for.

Doubtless we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the gospels, and the acts of the apostles, which relate the birth of the Christian church,

as the psalmist here does from the histories of Genesis and Exodus, which relate the birth of the Jewish church; and our histories greatly outshine theirs. Two things are here made the subject of praise:--

I. God's promise to the patriarchs, that great promise that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers. In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel he remembered his covenant (Ps 105:8) and he will remember it for ever; it is the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.

See here the power of the promise; it is the word which he commanded and which will take effect. See the perpetuity of the promise; it is commanded to a thousand generations, and the entail of it shall not be cut off.

In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty (1Ch 16:15), Be you mindful always of his covenant. God will not forget it and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a covenant, because there was something required on man's part as the condition of the promise. Observe,

1 The persons with whom this covenant was made--with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, Heb 11:8,9.

2 The ratifications of the covenant; it was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac and to Abraham. See to whom God swore by himself, Heb 6:13,14. Is that sure which has passed into a law? He confirmed the same for a law, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? This is confirmed for an everlasting covenant, inviolable.

3. The covenant itself: Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, Ps 105:11. The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence, but by promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles; God will give it to them himself, as it were with his own hand; it shall be given to them as their lot which God assigns them and measures out to them, as the lot of their inheritance, a sure title, by virtue of their birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase, by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, Eph 1:11. And this is the promise which God has promised us (as Canaan was the promise he promised them), even eternal life, 1Jo 2:25,Tit 1:2.

II. His providences concerning the patriarchs while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise, which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for these things happened unto them for examples and encouragements to all the heirs of promise, that life by faith as they did.

1. They were wonderfully protected and sheltered, and (as the Jewish masters express it) gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty. This is accounted for, Ps 105:12-15. Here we may observe,

(1.) How they were exposed to injuries from men. To the three renowned patriarchs, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich; again and again he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable that, if he had not prepared for them a city in the other world, he would have been ashamed to be called their God (see Heb 11:16), because he was always generous; and yet even in this world he was not wanting to them, but that he might appear, to do

uncommon things for them, he exercised them with uncommon trials.

[1.] They were few, very few. Abraham was called alone (Isa 51:2); he had but two sons, and one of them he cast out; Isaac had but two, and one of them was forced for many years to flee from his country; Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, Ge 34:30) he was but few in number, and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives, he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few, and yet upheld.

[2.] They were strangers, and therefore were the most likely to be abused and to meet with strange usage, and the less able to help themselves. Their religion made them to be looked upon as strangers (1Pe 4:4) and to be hooted at as speckled birds, Jer 12:9. Though the whole land was theirs by promise, yet they were so far from producing and pleading their grant that they confessed themselves strangers in it, Heb 11:13.

[3.] They were unsettled (Ps 105:13): They went from one nation to another, from one part of that land to another (for it was then in the holding and occupation of divers nations, Ge 12:8,13:3,18); nay, from one kingdom to another people, from Canaan to Egypt, from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, which could not but weaken and expose them; yet they were forced to it by famine.

Note, Though frequent removals are neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for them, and they may be the lot of some of the best men.

(2.) How they were guarded by the special providence of God, the wisdom and power of which were the more magnified by their being so many ways exposed, Ps

105:14,15. They were not able to help themselves and yet,

[1.] No men were suffered to wrong them, but even those that hated them, and would gladly have done them a mischief, had their hands tied, and could not do what they would. This may refer to Ge 35:5, where we find that the terror of God (an unaccountable restraint) was upon the cities that were round about them, so that, though provoked, they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

[2.] Even crowned heads, that did offer to wrong them, were not only checked and chidden for it, but controlled and baffled: He reproved kings for their sakes in dreams and visions, saying, "Touch not my anointed; it is at your peril if you do, nay, it shall not be in your power to do it; do my prophets no harm." Pharaoh king of Egypt was plagued (Ge 12:17) and Abimelech king of Gerar was sharply rebuked (Ge 20:6) for doing wrong to Abraham. Note,

First, Even kings themselves are liable to God's rebukes if they do wrong.

Secondly, God's prophets are his anointed, for they have the unction of the Spirit, that oil of gladness, 1Jo 2:27.

Thirdly, Those that offer to touch God's prophets, with design to harm them, may expect to hear of it one way or other. God is jealous for his prophets; whoso touches them touches the apple of his eye. Fourthly, Even those that touch the prophets, nay that kill the prophets (as many did), cannot do them any harm, any real harm. Lastly, God's anointed prophets are dearer to him than anointed kings themselves. Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet.

2. They were wonderfully provided for and supplied. And here also,

(1.) They were reduced to great extremity. Even in Canaan, the land of promise, he called for a famine, Ps 105:16. Note, All judgments are at God's call, and no place is exempt from their visitation and jurisdiction when God sends them forth with commission. To try the faith of the patriarchs, God broke the whole staff of bread, even in that good land, that they might plainly see God designed them a better country than that was.

(2.) God graciously took care for their relief. It was in obedience to his precept, and in dependence upon his promise, that they were now sojourners in Canaan, and therefore he could not in honour suffer any evil to befal them or any good thing to be wanting to them. As he restrained one Pharaoh from doing them wrong, so he raised up another to do them a kindness, by preferring and entrusting Joseph, of whose story we have here an abstract. He was to be the shepherd and stone of Israel and to save that holy seed alive, Ge 49:24,50:20. In order to this,

[1.] He was humbled, greatly humbled (Ps 105:17,18): God sent a man before them, even Joseph. Many years before the famine began, he was sent before them, to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecasts of Providence, and so long its reaches. But in what character did he go to Egypt who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in quality of an ambassador, no, nor so much as a factor or commissary; but he was sold thither for a servant, a slave for term of life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty.

This was low enough, and, one would think, set him far enough from any probability of being great. And yet he was brought lower; he was made a prisoner (Ps 105:18): His feet they hurt with fetters. Being unjustly

charged with a crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress, the iron entered into his soul, that is, was very painful to him; and the false accusation which was the cause of his imprisonment did in a special manner grieve him, and went to his heart; yet all this was the way to his preferment.

[2.] He was exalted, highly exalted. He continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, until the time appointed of God for his release (Ps 105:19), when his word came, that is, his interpretations of the dreams came to pass, and the report thereof came to Pharaoh's ears by the chief butler. And then the word of the Lord cleared him; that is, the power God gave him to foretel things to come rolled away the reproach his mistress had loaded him with; for it could not be thought that God would give such a power to so bad a man as he was represented to be. God's word tried him, tried his faith and patience, and then it came in power to give command for his release. There is a time set when God's word will come for the comfort of all that trust in it, Hab 2:3.

At the end it shall speak, and not lie. God gave the word, and then the king sent and loosed him; for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh, finding him to be a favourite of Heaven, First, Discharged him from his imprisonment (Ps 105:20): He let him go free. God has often, by wonderful turns of providence, pleaded the cause of oppressed innocency. Secondly, He advanced him to the highest posts of honour, Ps 105:21,22.

He made him lord high chamberlain of his household (he made him lord of his house); nay, he put him into the office of lord-treasurer, the ruler of all his substance. He made him prime-minister of state, lord-president of his council, to command his princes at his pleasure and teach them wisdom, and general of his forces. According to thy word shall all my people be

ruled, Ge 41:40,43,44. He made him lord chief justice, to judge even his senators and punish those that were disobedient. In all this Joseph was designed to be,

1. A father to the church that then was, to save the house of Israel from perishing by the famine. He was made great, that he might do good, especially in the household of faith.

2. A figure of Christ that was to come, who, because he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant, was highly exalted, and has all judgment committed to him. Joseph being thus sent before, and put into a capacity of maintaining all his father's house, Israel also came into Egypt (Ps 105:23), where he and all his were very honourably and comfortably provided for many years. Thus the New-Testament church has a place provided for her even in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, Re 12:14. Verily she shall be fed.

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise made to Abraham that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, Ps 105:24. In Egypt he increased his people greatly; they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became stronger than their enemies and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it. Ex 1:9, The children of Israel are more and mightier than we. When God pleases a little one shall become a thousand; and God's promises, though they work slowly, work surely.

9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham,
and his oath unto Isaac;
10 and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law,
and to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:
11 saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
the lot of your inheritance.
12 When they were *but* a few men in number;
yea, very few, and strangers in it;

13 when they went from one nation to another,
from *one* kingdom to another people;
14 he suffered no man to do them wrong:
yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;
15 *saying*, Touch not mine anointed,
and do my prophets no harm.
16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land:
he brake the whole staff of bread.
17 He sent a man before them,
even Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant:
18 whose feet they hurt with fetters:
he was laid in iron:
19 until the time that his word came:
the word of the Lord tried him.
20 The king sent and loosed him;
even the ruler of the people,
and let him go free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
and ruler of all his substance:
22 to bind his princes at his pleasure;
and teach his senators wisdom.
23 Israel also came into Egypt;
and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
24 And he increased his people greatly;
and made them stronger than their enemies.

After the history of the patriarchs follows here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

I. Their affliction in Egypt (Ps 105:25): He turned the heart of the Egyptians, who had protected them, to hate them and deal subtilely with them. God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them; and, though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of Ge 43:32,46:34) was laid asleep for a while, yet now it revived with more violence than ever: formerly they hated them because they despised them, now because they feared them.

They dealt subtilely with them, set all their politics on work to find out ways and means to weaken them, and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burdens heavy and their lives bitter, and slew their male children as soon as they were born. Malice is crafty to destroy: Satan has the serpent's subtlety, with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them; for every creature is that to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy. Though God is not the author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

II. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which, that it might never be forgotten, is put into the preface to the ten commandments. Observe,

1 The instruments employed in that deliverance (Ps 105:26): He sent Moses his servant on this errand and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be their lawgiver and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest; and therefore, that they might respect them the more and submit to them the more cheerfully, God made use of them as their deliverers.

2 The means of accomplishing that deliverance; these were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders, in summoning them just as God appointed them, and they rebelled not against his word (Ps 105:28) as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians, but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed.

Those that are instructed to execute judgment will find their remissness construed as a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's signs, and his wonders (Ps 105:27); they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. They showed the words of his signs (so it is in the original), for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not, as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and they spoke aloud. They are all or most of them here specified, though not in the order in which they were inflicted.

(1.) The plague of darkness, Ps 105:28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first. God sent darkness, and, coming with commission, it came with efficacy; his command made it dark. And then they (that is, the people of Israel) rebelled not against God's word, namely, a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised, in doing which the three days' darkness would be a protection to them.

The old translation follows the LXX., and reads it, They were not obedient to his word, which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding the terror of this plague, would not let the people go; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew.

(2.) The turning of the river Nilus (which they idolized) into blood, and all their other waters, which slew their fish (Ps 105:29), and so they were deprived, not only of their drink, but of the daintiest of their meat, Nu 11:5.

(3.) The frogs, shoals of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the chambers of their kings and great men, whose

hearts had been full of vermin, more nauseous and more noxious-contempt of, and enmity to, both God and his Israel.

(4.) Flies of divers sorts swarmed in their air, and lice in their clothes, Ps 105:31; Ex 8:17,24. Note, God can make use of the meanest, and weakest, and most despicable animals, for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors, to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the divine omnipotence.

(5.) Hail-stones shattered their trees, even the strongest timber-trees in their coasts, and killed their vines, and their other fruit-trees, Ps 105:32,33. Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and with it thunder and lightning, to such a degree that the fire ran along upon the ground, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, Ex 9:23.

(6.) Locusts and caterpillars destroyed all the herbs which were made for the service of man and ate the bread out of their mouths, Ps 105:34,35. See what variety of judgments God has, wherewith to plague proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but, when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillars are God's armies; and, how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, Joe 1:4,6.

(7.) Having mentioned all the plagues but those of the murrain and boils, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of the first-born, Ps 105:36. In the dead of the night the joys and hopes of their families, the chief of their strength and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's first-born, and therefore God seized theirs by way of

reprisal, and thereby forced them to dismiss his too, when it was too late to retrieve their own; for when God judges he will overcome, and those will certainly sit down losers at last that contend with him.

3. The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage,

(1.) They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy. God not only brought them forth, but he brought them forth with silver and gold, Ps 105:37. God empowered them to ask and collect the contributions of their neighbours (which were indeed but part of payment for the service they had done them) and inclined the Egyptians to furnish them with what they asked. Their wealth was his, and therefore he might, their hearts were in his hand, and therefore he could, give it to the Israelites.

(2.) Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage; and yet, when God brought them forth, there was not one feeble person, none sick, none so much as sickly, among their tribes. They went out that very night that the plague swept away all the first-born of Egypt, and yet they went out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like, that among so many thousands there was not one sick! So false was the representation which the enemies of the Jews, in after-ages, gave of this matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and that therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land.

(3.) They had been trampled upon and insulted over; and yet they were brought out with honour (Ps 105:38): Egypt was glad when they departed; for God had so wonderfully owned them, and pleaded their cause, that the fear of Israel fell upon them, and they owned themselves baffled and overcome. God can and will

make his church a burdensome stone to all that heave at it and seek to displace it, so that those shall think themselves happy that get out of its way, Zec 12:3. When God judges, he will overcome.

(4.) They had spent their days in sorrow and in sighing, by reason of their bondage; but now he brought them forth with joy and gladness, Ps 105:43. When Egypt's cry for grief was loud, their first-born being all slain, Israel's shouts for joy were as loud, both when they looked back upon the land of slavery out of which they were rescued and when they looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastening. God now put a new song into their mouth.

4. The special care God took of them in the wilderness.

(1.) For their shelter. Besides the canopy of heaven, he provided them another heavenly canopy: He spread a cloud for a covering (Ps 105:39), which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion (Ps 18:11) and now it was Israel's; for they also were his hidden ones.

(2.) For their guidance and refreshment in the dark. He appointed a pillar of fire to give light in the night, that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnishes them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come to heaven, where it will be all day to eternity.

(3.) He fed them both with necessaries and dainties. Sometimes he furnished their tables with wild fowl (Ps 105:40): The people asked, and he brought quails; and, when they were not thus feasted, yet they were abundantly satisfied with the bread of heaven. Those are curious and covetous indeed who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat angels' food, and that constantly and on free-cost.

And, as every bit they ate had miracle in it, so had every drop they drank: He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out, Ps 105:41. Common providence fetches waters from heaven, and bread out of the earth; but for Israel the divine power brings bread from the clouds and water from the rocks: so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature.

The water did not only gush out once, but it ran like a river, plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the rock follow them (1Co 10:4), and, which increased the miracle, this river of God (so it might be truly called) ran in dry places, and yet was not drunk in and lost, as one would have expected it to be, by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes, I will give rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen, Isa 43:19,20.

5. Their entrance, at length, into Canaan (Ps 105:44): He gave them the lands of the heathen, put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains for God's Israel had the enjoyment of: They inherited the labour of the people; and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's scores.

6. The reasons why God did all this for them.

(1.) Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, Ps 105:42. They were unworthy and unthankful, yet he did those great things in their favour because he remembered the word of his holiness (that is, his covenant) with Abraham his servant, and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground. See De 7:8.

(2.) Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word, to bind them to which was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws,--that, being formed into a people, they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution,--that, having a good land given them, they might out of the profits of it bring sacrifices to God's altar,--and that, God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive his law, concluding that also designed for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him.

We are therefore made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah with which the psalm concludes may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favours and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet does he expect so little from us? Praise you the Lord.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
to deal subtilely with his servants.
26 He sent Moses his servant;
and Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They showed his signs among them,
and wonders in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made it dark;
and they rebelled not against his word.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
and slew their fish.
30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance,
in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies,

and lice in all their coasts.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
and flaming fire in their land.
33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees;
and brake the trees of their coasts.
34 He spake, and the locusts came,
and caterpillars, and that without number,
35 and did eat up all the herbs in their land,
and devoured the fruit of their ground.
36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land,
the chief of all their strength.
37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold:
and *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed:
for the fear of them fell upon them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering;
and fire to give light in the night.
40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails,
and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out;
they ran in the dry places *like* a river.
42 For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham his servant.
43 And he brought forth his people with joy,
and his chosen with gladness:
44 and gave them the lands of the heathen:
and they inherited the labor of the people;
45 that they might observe his statutes,
and keep his laws.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-106

The Rebelliousness of Israel

1 Praise ye the Lord.
O give thanks unto the Lord; for *he is* good:
for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

We are here taught,

I. To bless God (Ps 106:1,2): Praise you the Lord, that is, 1. Give him thanks for his goodness, the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. He is good and his mercy endures for ever; let us therefore own our obligations to him and make him a return of our best affections and services. 2. Give him the glory of his greatness, his mighty acts, proofs of his almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed. Who can utter these? Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it?

They are so many that they cannot be numbered, so mysterious that they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told; still there is more to be said; it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must show forth his praise; we may show forth some of it, but who can show forth all? Not the angels themselves. This will not excuse us in not doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

II. To bless the people of God, to call and account them happy (Ps 106:3): Those that keep judgment are blessed, for they are fit to be employed in praising God. God's people are those whose principles are sound--They keep judgment (they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices are agreeable); they do righteousness, are just to God and to all men, and herein they are steady and constant; they do it at all times, in all manner of conversation, at every turn, in every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

III. To bless ourselves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it, accordingly, with all seriousness, as the psalmist here, Ps 106:4,5.

1. He has an eye to the lovingkindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness: "Remember me, O Lord! to

give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, with the favour which thou bearest to thy people." As there are a people in the world who are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people, which all gracious souls desire an interest in; and we need desire no more to make us happy.

2. He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness: O visit me with thy salvation. "Afford me (says Dr. Hammond) that pardon and that grace which I stand in need of, and can hope for from none but thee." Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort. 3. He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous, as that which includes all good (Ps 106:5):

"That I may see the good of thy chosen and be as happy as the saints are; and happier I do not desire to be." God's people are here called his chosen, his nation, his inheritance; for he has set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them and glorified in them. The chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness and of their glorying, which is their pleasure, and their praise.

God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and those who have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation, and the glory of his inheritance, are enough to satisfy any man; for they have everlasting joy and glory at the end of them.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?
Who can show forth all his praise?
3 Blessed *are* they that keep judgment,
and he that doeth righteousness at all times.
4 Remember me, O Lord,

with the favor *that thou bearest unto* thy people:
O visit me with thy salvation;
5 that I may see the good of thy chosen,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
that I may glory with thine inheritance.
6 We have sinned with our fathers,
we have committed iniquity,
we have done wickedly.

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable now that the church was in distress; for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that therefore he has done right, because we have done wickedly; and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us to hope that, though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

I. God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God (Ps 106:6): "We have sinned with our fathers, that is, like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers' iniquity, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord," Nu 32:14,Mt 23:32.

And see how they lay a load upon themselves, as becomes penitents: "We have committed iniquity, that which is in its own nature sinful, and we have done wickedly; we have sinned with a high hand presumptuously." Or this is a confession, not only of their imitation of, but their interest in, their fathers' sins: We have sinned with our fathers, for we were in their loins and we bear their iniquity, La 5:7.

II. They bewail the sins of their fathers when they were first formed into a people, which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even further than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take occasion from the history of Israel's

rebellions to lament the depravity and perverseness of man's nature and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

1 The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them (Ps 106:7): They understood not thy wonders in Egypt. They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them. Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have understood.

They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction, not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry, by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel, above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them.

And, as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous; though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies in them. Therefore God is distrusted because his favours are not remembered.

2. Their perverseness arising from this stupidity: They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea. The provocation was, despair of deliverance (because the danger was great) and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, Ex 14:11,12. Quarrelling with God's providence, and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever.

The place aggravated the crime; it was at the sea, at the Red Sea, when they had newly come out of Egypt and

the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds; yet they reproach him, as if all that power had no mercy in it, but he had brought them out of Egypt on purpose to kill them in the wilderness. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately as in their passage through the Red Sea, yet there they affront it, and provoke his wrath.

3. The great salvation God wrought for them notwithstanding their provocations, Ps 106:8-11.

(1.) He forced a passage for them through the sea: He rebuked the Red Sea for standing in their way and retarding their march, and it was dried up immediately; as, in the creation, at God's rebuke the waters fled, Ps 104:7. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but, by the pillar of cloud and fire, he led them into the sea, and, by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as through the wilderness. He encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears, when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies. See Isa 63:12-14.

(2.) He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them quickly, but God saved them from the hand of him that hated them, namely, Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more for the plagues he had suffered on their account. From the hand of his enemy, who was just ready to seize them, God redeemed them (Ps 106:10), interposing himself, as it were, in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors.

(3.) To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red Sea, which was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians (Ps 106:11): The waters covered their enemies, so as to slay them, but not so as

to conceal their shame; for, the next tide, they were thrown up dead upon the shore, Ex 14:30. There was not one of them left alive, to bring tidings of what had become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? Nay, why did he not cover them, as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us (Ps 106:8):

it was for his name's sake. Though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it; and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, nor make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, that he might make his mighty power to be known, not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays (Nu 14:17,19), Let the power of my Lord be great and pardon the iniquity of this people. The power of the God of grace in pardoning sin and sparing sinners is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

4. The good impression this made upon them for the present (Ps 106:12): Then believed they his words, and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had, in mercy to them, brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then they feared the Lord and his servant Moses, Ex 14:31. Then they sang his praise, in that song of Moses penned on this great occasion, Ex 15:1. See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silences the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, Those that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and those that murmured shall learn doctrine, Isa 29:24.

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;
they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;
but provoked *him* at the sea,
even at the Red sea.

8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,

that he might make his mighty power to be known.
9 He rebuked the Red sea also,
and it was dried up:
so he led them through the depths,
as through the wilderness.
10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*,
and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
11 And the waters covered their enemies:
there was not one of them left.
12 Then believed they his words;
they sang his praise.
13 They soon forgat his works;
they waited not for his counsel:

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations: and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle, with application to us Christians (1Co 10:5, &c.); for these things were written for our admonition, that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

I The cause of their sin was disregard to the works and word of God, Ps 106:13. 1. They minded not what he had done for them: They soon forgot his works, and lost the impressions they had made upon them. Those that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour in some measure to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgot them (God took notice of this, Ex 32:8, They have turned aside quickly):

They made haste, they forgot his works (so it is in the margin), which some make to be two separate instances of their sin. They made haste; their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan shortly, and because they were not they questioned whether they should ever be there and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way; whereas he that believeth does not make haste, Isa

28:16. And, withal, they forgot his works, which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as if they had never seen the premises proved. This is mentioned again (Ps 106:21,22):

They forgot God their Saviour; that is, they forgot that he had been their Saviour. Those that forget the works of God forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgot what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then, when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it: it was what God did for them in Egypt, in the land of Ham, and by the Red Sea, things which we at this distance cannot, or should not, be unmindful of.

They are called great things (for, though the great God does nothing mean, yet he does some things that are in a special manner great), wondrous works, out of the common road of Providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable, and terrible things, awful to them, and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten. Even miracles that were seen passed away with them as tales that are told.

2. They minded not what God had said to them nor would they depend upon it: They waited not for his counsel, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves about which they did not consult him and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan directly, and had not patience to tarry God's time. The delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained (Ps 106:24):

They believed not his word, his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and (Ps 106:25), They hearkened not to the voice of the Lord, who gave them

counsel which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, Nu 14:6,7, &c. Those that will not wait for God's counsel shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels.

II. Many of their sins are here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it to them (Ps 106:14): They lusted a lust (so the word is) in the wilderness; there, where they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now purely at God's finding, being supported entirely by miracles, so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were also, in all probability, within a step of Canaan, yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither.

They had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them; God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit, or their good word. They did not only wish for flesh, but they lusted exceedingly after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called lusting after evil things (1Co 10:6), though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, Ps 105:40. Yet this was not all: They tempted God in the desert, where they had had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein. See Ps 78:19,20.

Now how did God show his displeasure against them for this. We are told how (Ps 106:15): He gave them their request, but gave it them in anger, and with a curse, for he sent leanness into their soul; he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and

a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them, while the flesh was yet between their teeth, as we read, Nu 11:33. It was the consumption of the life. Note,

(1.) What is asked in passion is often given in wrath.

(2.) Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, have, at the same time, leanness in their souls, no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves that feast their bodies and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them; for then the soul delights itself in fatness, Isa 55:2.

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them both in church and state (Ps 106:16): They envied Moses his authority in the camp, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel and chief justice in all their courts; they envied Aaron his power, as saint of the Lord, consecrated to the office of high priest, and Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, would claim to be chief magistrates, by the so-much-admired right of primogeniture.

Note, Those are preparing ruin for themselves who envy those whom God has put honour upon and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon those who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord. How did God show his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble (Ps 106:17,18); we have the story, Nu 16:32,35.

(1.) Those that flew in the face of the civil authority were punished by the earth, which opened and swallowed them up, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government.

(2.) Those that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority in things pertaining to God suffered the vengeance of heaven, for fire came out from the Lord and consumed them, and the pretending sacrificers were themselves sacrificed to divine justice. The flame burnt up the wicked; for though they vied with Aaron, the saint of the Lord, for holiness (Nu 16:3,5), yet God adjudged them wicked, and as such cut them off, as in due time he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made and worshipped the golden calf, and this in Horeb, where the law was given, and where God had expressly said, Thou shalt neither make any graven image nor bow down to it; they did both: They made a calf and worshipped it, Ps 106:19.

(1.) Herein they bade defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the moral world:--

[1.] That of human reason; for they changed their glory, their God, at least the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud (either a dark cloud or a bright one), without any manner of visible similitude, into the similitude of Apis, one of the Egyptian idols, an ox that eateth grass, than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, Ps 106:20.

Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves, in worshipping it when they have so done. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory is explained

by St. Paul (Ro 1:23) to be the changing of the glory of the incorruptible God.

[2.] That of divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spoke to them, but in the works he wrought for them, wondrous works, which declared aloud that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God and is alone to be worshipped, Ps 106:21,22.

(2.) For this God showed his displeasure by declaring the decree that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he spoke of destroying them (Ps 106:23), and certainly he would have done it if Moses, his chosen, had not stood before him in the breach (Ps 106:23), if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people.

See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's chosen, his elect, in whom his soul delights, who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God (Ps 106:24): They despised the pleasant land. Canaan was a pleasant land, De 8:7. They undervalued it when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the guidance of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain and returning to Egypt again. They believed not God's word concerning it, but murmured in their tents, basely charging God with a design upon them in bringing

them thither that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, Nu 14:2,3.

And, when they were reminded of God's power and promise, they were so far from hearkening to that voice of the Lord that they attempted to stone those who spoke to them, Nu 14:10. The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land. A promise is left us of entering into it; but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that.

This also was so displeasing to God that he lifted up his hand against them, in a way of threatening, to destroy them in the wilderness; nay, in a way of swearing, for he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest (Ps 95:11,Nu 14:28); nay, and he threatened that their children also should be overthrown and scattered (Ps 106:26,27), and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation, when they were within a step of Canaan (Ps 106:28): They joined themselves to Baal-peor, and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporeal and in spiritual whoredom, Nu 25:1-3.

Those that did often partake of the altar of the living God now ate the sacrifices of the dead, of the idols of Moab (that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified), or sacrifices to the infernal deities on the behalf of their dead friends. Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions (Ps 106:29), in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands, and his

threatenings. The iniquity of Peor was so great that, long after, it is said, They were not cleansed from it, Jos 22:17. God testified his displeasure at this,

(1.) By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away 24,000 of those impudent sinners.

(2.) By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate for the suppressing of the sin and checking the contagion of it. He stood up in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God that upon it the plague was stayed, Ps 106:30. By this, and some other similar acts of public justice on that occasion (Nu 25:4,5), the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall. When the proper officers did their duty God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague.

Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But, Phinehas herein signalizing himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was counted to him for righteousness to all generations (Ps 106:31), and, in recompence of it, the priesthood was entailed on his family. He shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices, who had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, Ps 106:30) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year they angered God at the waters of strife (Ps 106:32), which refers to that story, Nu 20:3-5. And that which aggravated it now was that it went ill with Moses for their sakes; for, though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so peevish and provoking that they put him into a passion, and, having

now grown very old and off his guard, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips (Ps 106:33), and not as became him on that occasion; for he said in a heat, Hear now, you rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?

This was Moses's infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn, when we are in the midst of provocation, to keep our mouth as with a bridle (Ps 39:1-3), and to take heed to our spirits, that they admit not resentments too much; for, when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado, even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace, not to speak unadvisedly. But it is charged upon the people as their sin:

They provoked his spirit with that with which they angered God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation which by them we give to the passions of others, especially of those who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet. God shows his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan for their misconduct upon this occasion, by which,

(1.) God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what does their sin deserve who have spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

(2.) God deprived them of the blessing of Moses's guidance and government at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them and grieve their spirits.

14 but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
and tempted God in the desert.
15 And he gave them their request;
but sent leanness into their soul.
16 They envied Moses also in the camp,
and Aaron the saint of the Lord.
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
and covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb,
and worshipped the molten image.
20 Thus they changed their glory
into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.
21 They forgat God their saviour,
which had done great things in Egypt;
22 wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and terrible things by the Red sea.
23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,
to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.
24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land,
they believed not his word:
25 but murmured in their tents,
and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord.
26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them,
to overthrow them in the wilderness:
27 to overthrow their seed also among the nations,
and to scatter them in the lands.
28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-
peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.
29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions:
and the plague brake in upon them.
30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment:
and *so* the plague was stayed.
31 And that was counted unto him for
righteousness unto all generations for
evermore.

32 They angered *him* also at the waters of
strife, so that it went ill with Moses for
their sakes:
33 because they provoked his spirit,
so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Here, I The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's conduct in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

1. They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those which fetched them out of Egypt; for by the time they were just settled in Canaan they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe,

(1.) The steps of their apostasy.

[1.] They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction (Ps 106:34); when they had got the good land God had promised them they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

[2.] When they spared them they promised themselves that, notwithstanding this, they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them. But the way of sin is down-hill; omissions make way for commissions; when they neglect to destroy the heathen the next news we hear is, They were mingled among the heathen, made leagues with them and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they learned their works, Ps 106:35. That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound than be cured or made sound by it.

[3.] When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and

entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too (Ps 106:36): They served their idols in the same manner, and with the same rites, that they served them; and they became a snare to them. That sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

[4.] When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last (Ps 106:37,38), in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter: They sacrificed their sons and daughters, pieces of themselves, to devils, and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry; one cannot think of it without horror.

They shed innocent blood, the most innocent, for it was infant-blood, nay, it was the blood of their sons and their daughters. See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water, and there is no villany which those that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly gives them up to a reprobate mind, Ro 1:28.

(2.) Their sin was, in part, their own punishment; for by it,

[1.] They wronged their country: The land was polluted with blood, Ps 106:38. That pleasant land, that holy land, was rendered uncomfortable to themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it which were designed to be its honour.

[2.] They wronged their consciences (Ps 106:39): They went a whoring with their own inventions, and so debauched their own minds, and were defiled with their own works, and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and perhaps of their own consciences.

2. God brought his judgments upon them; and what else could be expected? For his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God.

(1.) He fell out with them for it, Ps 106:40. He was angry with them: The wrath of God, that consuming fire, was kindled against his people; for from them he took it as more insulting and ungrateful than from the heathen that never knew him. Nay, he was sick of them: He abhorred his own inheritance, which once he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it makes us loathsome to God; and the nearer any are to God in profession the more loathsome are they if they rebel against him, like a dunghill at our door.

(2.) Their enemies then fell upon them, and, their defence having departed, made an easy prey of them (Ps 106:41,42): He gave them into the hands of the heathen. Observe here how the punishment answered to the sin: They mingled with the heathen and learned their works; from them they willingly took the infection of sin, and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan, who is a tempter, will be a tormentor.

The heathen hated them. Apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get none on Satan's; and when those that hated them ruled over them, and they were brought into subjection under them, no marvel that they oppressed them and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between his

service and the service of the kings of the countries, 2Ch 12:8.

(3.) When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, Ps 106:43. This refers to the days of the Judges, when God often raised up deliverers and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed to idolatry and provoked God with their counsel, their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressor, so that at last they were brought very low for their iniquity. Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, are justly debased, and humbled, and brought low, by the judgments of God.

(4.) At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, Ps 106:44-46. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed, cast down, but not cast off. God appeared for them,

[1.] As a God of mercy, who looked upon their grievances, regarded their affliction, beheld when distress was upon them (so some), who looked over their complaints, for he heard their cry with tender compassion (Ex 3:7) and overlooked their provocations; for though he had said, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them, yet he repented, according to the multitude of his mercies, and reversed the sentence. Though he is not a man that he should repent, so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God, who pities us, and changes his way.

[2.] As a God of truth, who remembered for them his covenant, and made good every word that he had spoken; and therefore, bad as they were, he would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise.

[3.] As a God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleases. He made them to be pitied even of those that carried them captives, and hated them, and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies' wrath, that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric.

Note, God can change lions into lambs, and, when a man's ways please the Lord, will make even his enemies to pity him and be at peace with him. When God pities men shall. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia--A God at peace with us makes every thing at peace.

II The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance. Even when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people still there was occasion to pray, Lord, turn again our captivity (Ps 126:1,4); so here (Ps 106:47), Save us, O Lord our God! and gather us from among the heathen. We may suppose that many who were forced into foreign countries, in the times of the Judges (as Naomi was, Ru 1:1), had not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging, and therefore it was seasonable to pray, Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name, not only that they may have cause to give thanks and hearts to give thanks, that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished, and so may triumph in thy praise, over those that had in scorn challenged them to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it (Ps 106:48): Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from

everlasting to everlasting. He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then let all the people say, Amen, Hallelujah, in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises, and confessions.

According to this rubric, or directory, we find that when this psalm (or at least the closing verses of it) was sung all the people said Amen, and praised the Lord by saying, Hallelujah. By these two comprehensive words it is very proper, in religious assemblies, to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises which, as their mouth, they offer up to God, according to his will, saying Amen to the prayers and Hallelujah to the praises.

34 They did not destroy the nations,
concerning whom the Lord commanded them:
35 but were mingled among the
heathen, and learned their works.
36 And they served their idols:
which were a snare unto them.
37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons
and their daughters unto
devils,
38 and shed innocent blood,
even the blood of their sons and of their
daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols
of Canaan: and the land was polluted with
blood.
39 Thus were they defiled with their own works,
and went a whoring with their own
inventions.
40 Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his
people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.
41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen;
and they that hated them ruled over them.
42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

43 Many times did he deliver them;
but they provoked *him* with their
counsel, and were brought low for their
iniquity.
44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction,
when he heard their cry:
45 and he remembered for them his covenant,
and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
46 He made them also to be pitied
of all those that carried them captives.
47 Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from among the heathen,
to give thanks unto thy holy name,
and to triumph in thy praise.
48 Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel
from everlasting to everlasting:
and let all the people say, Amen.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-107

The Lord Delivers from Trouble

1 O give thanks unto the Lord, for *he is* good:
for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

Here is, I. A general call to all to give thanks to God, Ps 107:1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray over it, set themselves herein to give thanks to the Lord; and those that have not any special matter for praise may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness. In the fountain he is good; in the streams his mercy endures for ever and never fails.

II. A particular demand hereof from the redeemed of the Lord, which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great Redeemer and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have, of all people, most reason to say that God is good, and his

mercy everlasting; these are the children of God that were scattered abroad, whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, Joh 11:52,Mt 24:31.

But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance, wrought for them when in their distress they cried unto the Lord, Ps 107:6. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Does any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles become extreme that is man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before then cry aloud, and then it is God's time to succour. In the mount he will be seen.

1. They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue: He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy (Ps 107:2), not by might or power, it may be (Zec 4:6), nor by price or reward (Isa 45:13), but by the Spirit of God working on the spirits of men.

2. They were dispersed as out-casts, but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, Ps 107:3. See De 30:4,Eze 34:12. God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

3. They were bewildered, had no road to travel in, no dwelling place to rest in, Ps 107:4. When they were redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, they were in danger of perishing in their return home through the dry and barren deserts. They wandered in the wilderness, where there was no trodden path, no company, but a solitary way, no lodging, no conveniences, no accommodations, no inhabited city where they might have quarters or refreshment.

But God led them forth by the right way (Ps 107:7), directed them to an inn, nay, directed them to a home, that they might go to a city of habitation, which was

inhabited, nay which them themselves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particularly whose way lay through the wilds of Arabia, where we may suppose they were often at a loss; and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journeys, going out and coming in, directing us in our way, and providing for us places both to bait in and rest in.

Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years; it is said (De 32:10), God led them about, and yet here he led them by the right way. God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear at last to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here no continuing city, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims. But we are under the guidance of his wise and good providence, and, if we commit ourselves to it, we shall be led in the right way to the city that has foundations.

4. They were ready to perish for hunger (Ps 107:5): Their soul even fainted in them. They were spent with the fatigues of their journey and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. Those that have constant plenty, and are every day fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty, and to have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and perhaps of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to satisfy the longing soul and fill the hungry soul with goodness, Ps 107:9.

Israel's wants were seasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish. The same God that has led us has fed us all our life long unto this day, has fed us with food convenient, has provided food for the soul, and filled the hungry soul with goodness. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, after God, the living God, and

communion with him, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, both in grace and glory. Now for all this those who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks (Ps 107:8): Oh that men (it is meant especially of those men whom God has graciously relieved) would praise the Lord for his goodness to them in particular, and for his wonderful works to others of the children of men! Note,

(1.) God's works of mercy are wonderful works, works of wonderful power considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace considering the unworthiness, of those he shows mercy to. (2.) It is expected of those who receive mercy from God that they return praise to him. (3.) We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men as well as to the children of God, to others as well as to ourselves.

2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say *so*,
whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
3 and gathered them out of the lands,
from the east, and from the west,
from the north, and from the south.
4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way;
they found no city to dwell in.
5 Hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted in them.
6 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them out of their distresses.
7 And he led them forth by the right way,
that they might go to a city of habitation.
8 Oh that *men* would praise the Lord *for* his goodness,
and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
9 For he satisfieth the longing soul,
and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.
10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
being bound in affliction and iron;

We are to take notice of the goodness of God towards prisoners and captives. Observe,

1. A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to sit in darkness (Ps 107:10), in dark dungeons, close prisons, which intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate; they sit in the shadow of death, which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are bound in affliction, and many times in iron, as Joseph. Thus sore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

2 The cause of this affliction, Ps 107:11. It is because they rebelled against the words of God. Wilful sin is rebellion against the words of God; it is a contradiction to his truths and a violation of his laws. They contemned the counsel of the Most High, and thought they neither needed it nor could be the better for it; and those that will not be counselled cannot be helped. Those that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences nor the just reproofs of their friends, contemn the counsel of the Most High, and for this they are bound in affliction, both to punish them for and to reclaim them from their rebellions.

3. The design of this affliction, and that is to bring down their heart (Ps 107:12), to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's designs and walk contrary to him in them if our hearts be unhumbled and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour, the honour sunk? Have those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace.

4. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is to pray (Ps 107:13): Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, though before perhaps they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who, when they were at liberty, could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, though formerly they thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes and who alone can remove it.

5. Their deliverance out of the affliction: They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them, Ps 107:13. He brought them out of darkness into light, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant, brought them out of the shadow of death to the comforts of life, and their liberty was to them life from the dead, Ps 107:14. Were they fettered? He broke their bands asunder. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? He broke the gates of brass and the bars of iron wherewith those gates were made fast; he did not put back, but cut in sunder.

Note, When God will work deliverance the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from him people (he was with Joseph in the prison), so they cannot keep them in when the time, the set-time, for their enlargement, comes.

6. The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed (Ps 107:15): Let them praise the Lord for his goodness, and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, the world and those that dwell therein.

11 because they rebelled against the words of God,
and contemned the counsel of the Most High:
12 therefore he brought down their heart with labor;
they fell down, and *there was* none to help.
13 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble,

and he saved them out of their distresses.
14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
and brake their bands in sunder.
15 Oh that *men* would praise the Lord *for* his goodness,
and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
16 For he hath broken the gates of brass,
and cut the bars of iron in sunder.
17 Fools, because of their transgression,
and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us, and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

I. That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon ourselves and then it is our duty to pray, Ps 107:17-18.

1. It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently: Fools, because of their transgression, are thus afflicted; they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, make it necessary.

Sinners are fools; they wrong themselves, and all against their own interest, not only their spiritual, but their secular interest. They prejudice their bodily health by intemperance and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts.

2 The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, Ps 107:18. When people are sick their soul abhors all manner of meat; they not only have no desire to eat nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it. And here they may read

their sin in their punishment: those that doted most on the meat that perishes, when they come to be sick are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed; what they took too much of now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the appetite is gone the life is as good as gone:

They draw near unto the gates of death; they are, in their own apprehension and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, as ready to be turned to destruction.

3. Then is a proper time for prayer: Then they cry unto the Lord, Ps 107:19. Is any sick? Let him pray; let him be prayed for. Prayer is a salve for every sore.

II. That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this Job 33:18,28.

1. When those that are sick call upon God he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him and he saves them out of their distresses (Ps 107:19); he removes their griefs and prevents their fears.

(1.) He does it easily: He sent his word and healed them, Ps 107:20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking; he said, Be clean, Be whole, and the work was done. It may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word, and heals souls, convinces, converts, sanctifies them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness God in his providence does but speak, and it is done.

(2.) He does it effectually: He delivereth them out of their destructions, that they shall neither be destroyed

nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave and raises up, who turneth man almost to destruction, and yet saith, Return.

2. When those that have been sick are restored they must return to God an answer of praise (Ps 107:21,22): Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness, and let those, particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service; let them sacrifice with thanksgiving, not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. And let them declare his works with rejoicing, to his honour and for the encouragement of others. The living, the living, they shall praise him.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;
and they draw near unto the gates of death.
19 Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,
and he saveth them out of their distresses.
20 He sent his word, and healed them,
and delivered *them* from their destructions.
21 Oh that *men* would praise the Lord *for* his goodness,
and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and declare his works with rejoicing.
23 They that go down to the sea in ships,
that do business in great waters;

The psalmist here calls upon those to give glory to God who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise, yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Zidonians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

I. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, Ps 107:23,24. It appears to those that go down to the sea in ships, as mariners, merchants, fishermen, or

passengers, that do business in great waters. And surely none will expose themselves there but those that have business (among all Solomon's pleasant things we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had), but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection.

These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders, which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land, and what passes at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder, its vastness, its saltness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea is wonderful. Let those that go to sea be led, by all the wonders they observe there, to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God whose the sea is, for he made it and manages it.

II. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here,

1. How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. Then wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God commands and raises the strong wind, which fulfils his word, Ps 148:8. He raises the winds, as a prince by his commission raises forces. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air; but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy it lifts up the waves of the sea, Ps 107:25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls on the tops of the waves; they seem to mount up to the heavens, and then they couch again, as if they would go down to the depths, Ps 107:26.

A stranger, who had never seen it, would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea, as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave would bury it and it would never come up again; and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, does by his

special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration.

When the ships are thus tossed the soul of the seaman melts because of trouble; and, when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears, but they reel to and fro, and tossing makes them giddy, and they stagger and are sick, it may be, like a drunken man; the whole ship's crew are in confusion and quite at their wits' end (Ps 107:27), not knowing what to do more for their preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, Jon 1:5-11, &c.

2. How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. Those that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them is to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for then they will cry unto the Lord, Ps 107:28. We have a saying, "Let those that would learn to pray go to sea;" I say, Let those that will go to sea learn to pray, and accustom themselves to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, cried every man to his god; but those that have the Lord for their God have a present and powerful help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wits' end they are not at their faith's end.

3. How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers: He brings them out of the danger; and,

(1.) The sea is still: He makes the storm a calm, Ps 107:29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling. By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man that even the winds and the seas obeyed him.

(2.) The seamen are made easy: They are glad because they are quiet, quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant.

(3.) The voyage becomes prosperous and successful: So he brings them to their desired haven, Ps 107:30. Thus he carries his people safely through all the storms and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heaven-ward, and lands them, at length, in the desired harbour.

4. How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially who have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness, to the glory of God. Let them do it privately in their closets and families.

Let them praise the Lord for his goodness to themselves and others, Ps 107:31. Let them do it publicly (Ps 107:32), in the congregation of the people and in the assembly of the elders; there let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

24 these see the works of the Lord,
and his wonders in the deep.
25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26 They mount up to the heaven, they go
down again to the depths: their soul is
melted because of trouble.
27 They reel to and fro,
and stagger like a drunken man,
and are at their wit's end.
28 Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,
and he bringeth them out of their distresses.
29 He maketh the storm a calm,
so that the waves thereof are still.

30 Then are they glad because they be quiet;
so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.
31 Oh that *men* would praise the Lord *for* his goodness,
and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.
33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness,
and the watersprings into dry ground;

The psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

I. He gives some instances of these revolutions.

1. Fruitful countries are made barren and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now,

(1.) The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil and made it unserviceable, Ps 107:33,34. Land watered with rivers is sometimes turned into a wilderness, and that which had been full of water-springs now has not so much as water-streams; it is turned into dry and sandy ground, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable.

Many a fruitful land is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punished the wickedness of those that dwell therein; as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to those that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine.

(2.) The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a wilderness, a land o drought, into water-springs, Ps 107:35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be, at this day, a fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, De 29:23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this.

2. Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished and go to decay. If we look broad in the world,

(1.) We see many greatly increasing whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean and made no figure, Ps 107:36-38. Those that were hungry are made to dwell in fruitful lands; there they take root, and gain a settlement, and prepare a city for habitation for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families.

But as lands, will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must prepare a city of habitation, so lodgings, though ever so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must sow the fields, and plant vineyards (Ps 107:37), for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though favoured with water-springs, will not yield fruits of increase, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards be had, unless they be planted; man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry.

The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it does encourage, diligence; and, ordinarily, the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God, makes rich, Ps 107:38. He blesses them also, so that they are, in a little time, multiplied greatly, and he diminishes not their cattle. As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures increase and multiply (Ge 1:22), and we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle as well as for the increase of the ground. Cattle would decrease many ways if God should permit it, and men would soon suffer by it.

(2.) We see many that have thus suddenly risen as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing (Ps 107:39): Again they are diminished and brought low by adverse providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast a they got, and scatter what they heaped together.

Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing, and often those that are filled with it, ere they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it that, ere they are aware, they lose it again.

Hence it is called deceitful riches and the mammon of unrighteousness. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by oppression, affliction, and sorrow, as he tempted Job and brought him low.

3. Those that were high and great in the world are abased, and those that were mean and despicable are advanced to honour, Ps 107:40,41. We have seen,

(1.) Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. He pours contempt upon them, even among those that have idolized them. Those that exalt themselves God will abase, and, in order thereunto, will infatuate: He makes them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way. He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp,

and drives them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, nor what measures to take. We met with this before, Job 12:24,25.

(2.) Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour (Ps 107:41): Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust to the throne of glory, 1Sa 2:8,Ps 113:7,8. Those that were afflicted and trampled on are not only delivered, but set on high out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection. That which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is the multitude of their children: He maketh him families like a flock of sheep, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another, and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat sent them mouths.

Happy is the man that has his quiver filled with arrows, for he shall boldly speak with the enemy in the gate, Ps 127:5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up families and in building them up. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

II. He makes some improvement of these remarks; such surprising turns as these are of use,

1. For the solacing of saints. They observe these dispensations with pleasure (Ps 107:42): The righteous shall see it and rejoice in the glorifying of God's attributes and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manages the children of men, as the potter does the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them, to see despised virtue advanced and impious pride brought low to the dust, to see it evinced beyond dispute that verily there is a God that judges in the earth.

2. For the silencing of sinners: All iniquity shall stop her mouth; it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the divine providence; and, forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how their punishment answers to their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

3. For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness (Ps 107:43): Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, these various dispensations of divine providence, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord. Here is,

(1.) A desirable end proposed, and that is, rightly to understand the loving kindness of the Lord. It is of great use to us, in religion, to be fully assured of God's goodness, to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it, that his lovingkindness may be before our eyes, Ps 26:3.

(2.) A proper means prescribed for attaining this end, and that is a due observance of God's providence. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, Lu 2:19.

(3.) A commendation of the use of this means as an instance of true wisdom: Whoso is wise, let him by this both prove his wisdom and improve it. A prudent observance of the providences of God will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.

34 a fruitful land into barrenness,
for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water,
and dry ground into watersprings.
36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,
that they may prepare a city for habitation;

37 and sow the fields, and plant vineyards,
which may yield fruits of increase.
38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly;
and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.
39 Again, they are minished and brought low
through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.
40 He poureth contempt upon princes,
and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.
41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction,
and maketh *him* families like a flock.
42 The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice:
and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
43 Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*,
even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Psalms-108

A Prayer for Help against the Foe
A Song or Psalm of David.

1 O God, my heart is fixed;
I will sing and give praise,
even with my glory.

We may here learn how to praise God from the example of one who was master of the art.

1. We must praise God with fixedness of heart. Our heart must be employed in the duty (else we make nothing of it) and engaged to the duty (Ps 108:1): O God! my heart is fixed, and then I will sing and give praise. Wandering straggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told that here is work enough for them all.

2. We must praise God with freeness of expression: I will praise him with my glory, that is, with my tongue.

Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter our tongue must be as the pen of a ready writer, Ps 45:1. David's skill in music was his glory, it made him famous, and this should be consecrated to the praise of God; and therefore it follows, Awake my psaltery and harp. Whatever gift we excel in we must praise God with.

3. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up ourselves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner and not carelessly (Ps 108:2): Awake, psaltery and harp; let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. I myself will awake early to do it, with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God.

4. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the divine goodness (Ps 108:3): I will praise thee among the people of the Jews; nay, I will sing to thee among the nations of the earth. Whatever company we are in we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us, for it looks like being ashamed of our Master.

5. We must, in our praises, magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner (Ps 108:4), mercy in promising, truth in performing. The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious; the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see further than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen, in the other world. 6. Since we find ourselves so, defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all, to his

own glory, to get himself honour and make himself a name (Ps 108:5): Be thou exalted, O God! above the heavens, higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praises, and let thy glory be spread over all the earth. Father, glorify thy own name. Thou hast glorified it; glorify it again. It is to be our first petition, Hallowed be thy name.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
3 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:
and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.
4 For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens:
and thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds.
5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:
and thy glory above all the earth;
6 that thy beloved may be delivered:
save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.

We may here learn how to pray as well as praise.

1. We must be public-spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts, at the throne of grace, the concerns of the church of God, Ps 108:6. It is God's beloved, and therefore must be ours; and therefore we must pray for its deliverance, and reckon that we are answered if God grant what we ask for his church, though he delay to give us what we ask for ourselves. "Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have." Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended (Ps 72:19,20); he desires no more.

2. We must, in prayer, act faith upon the power and promise of God--upon his power (Save with thy right hand, which is mighty to save), and upon his promise: God has spoken in his holiness, in his holy word, to which he has sworn by his holiness, and therefore I will rejoice, Ps 108:7. What he has promised he will perform, for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God has said,

though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us.

3. We must, in prayer, take the comfort of what God has secured to us and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in possession of it. God had promised David to give him,

(1.) The hearts of his subjects; and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already: "Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah, are all my own," Ps 108:8. With such assurance as this we may speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David; he will, without fail, give him the heathen for his inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession, for so has he spoken in his holiness; nay, of all the particular persons that were given him he will lose none; he also, as David, shall have the hearts of his subjects, Joh 6:37. And,

(2.) The necks of his enemies. These are promised, and therefore David looks upon Moab, and Edom, and Philistia, as his own already (Ps 108:9): Over Philistia will I triumph, which explains Ps 60:8, Philistia, triumph thou because of me, which some think should be read, O my soul! triumph thou over Philistia. Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand, in a full assurance that all his enemies shall in due time be made his footstool, though all things are not yet put under him, Heb 2:8.

4. We must take encouragement from the beginnings of mercy to pray and hope for the perfecting of it (Ps 108:10,11): "Who will bring me into the strong cities that are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued?" The question was probably to be debated in his privy council, or a council of war, what methods they should take to subdue the Edomites and to reduce that country;

but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's hands: Wilt not thou, O God? Certainly thou wilt.

It is probable that he spoke with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that the elder should serve the younger, and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord, Ge 27:37.

5. We must not be discouraged in prayer, nor beaten off from our hold of God, though Providence has in some instances frowned upon us: "Though thou hast cast us off, yet thou wilt now go forth with our hosts, Ps 108:11. Thou wilt comfort us again after the time that thou hast afflicted us." Adverse events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in whatever difficulties we meet with, and not to faint.

6. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature (Ps 108:12): "Lord, give us help from trouble, prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us." It is not unseasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from heaven; and it is a good plea, Vain is the help of man. "It is really so, and therefore we are undone if thou do not help us; we apprehend it to be so, and therefore depend upon thee for help and have the more reason to expect it."

7. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare, Ps 108:13.

(1.) We must do our part, but we can do nothing of ourselves; it is only through God that we shall do valiantly. Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to purpose, but through Christ strengthening him, Php 4:13.

(2.) When we have acquitted ourselves ever so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that treads down our enemies, else we with all our valour cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness;
I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,
and mete out the valley of Succoth.
8 Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine;
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head;
Judah *is* my lawgiver;
9 Moab *is* my washpot;
over Edom will I cast out my shoe;
over Philistia will I triumph.
10 Who will bring me into the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
11 *Wilt* not *thou*, O God, *who* hast cast us off?
And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?
12 Give us help from trouble:
for vain *is* the help of man.
13 Through God we shall do valiantly:
for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

Psalms-109

A Cry for Vengeance
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people that, whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them. Thus David here.

I. He refers himself to God's judgment (Ps 109:1): "Hold not thy peace, but let my sentence come forth

from thy presence, Ps 17:2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee." God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence: "Lord," says he, "do not always do so." The title he gives to God is observable: "O God of my praise! the God in whom I glory, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own, from whom I have every thing that is my praise, or the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising."

He had before called God the God of his mercy (Ps 59:10), here he calls him the God of his praise. Forasmuch as God is the God of our mercies we must make him the God of our praises; if all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

II. He complains of his enemies, showing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against.

1. They were very spiteful and malicious: They are wicked; they delight in doing mischief (Ps 109:2); their words are words of hatred, Ps 109:3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man because of his goodness. "They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and fight against me to cut me off if they could."

2. They were notorious liars; and lying comprehends two of the seven things which the Lord hates. "They are deceitful in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me behind my back, with a lying tongue." They were equally false in their flatteries and in their calumnies.

3. They were both public and restless in their designs; "They compassed me about on all sides, so that, which way soever I looked, I could see nothing but what made against me."

4. They were unjust; their accusations of him, and sentence against him, were all groundless: "They have fought against me without a cause; I never gave them any provocation." Nay, which was worst of all,

5. They were very ungrateful, and rewarded him evil for good, Ps 109:5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him, but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him (Ps 109:4):

For my love they are my adversaries. The more he endeavoured to gratify them the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible that any should be so wicked; and yet, since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

III. He resolves to keep close to his duty and take the comfort of that: But I give myself unto prayer (Ps 109:4), I prayer (so it is in the original); "I am for prayer, I am a man of prayer, I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer."

A good man is made up of prayer, gives himself to prayer, as the apostles, Ac 6:4. When David's enemies falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, he applied to God and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them; if others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them, 1Sa 12:23.

Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his

devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it. "Let them say what they will, I give myself unto prayer." Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with words of hatred and lying words, whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love and his good works (Joh 10:32); and yet he gave himself to prayer, to pray for them. Father, forgive them.

2 for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me:
they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.
3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred;
and fought against me without a cause.
4 For my love they are my adversaries:
but I *give myself unto* prayer.
5 And they have rewarded me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.
6 Set thou a wicked man over him:
and let Satan stand at his right hand.

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God and against sin and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him (Joh 19:11), he imprecates and predicts his destruction, foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, A son of perdition.

Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time among Franciscan friars and other monks, that if any one had malice against a neighbour he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France who, being at variance with her own and only son, hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. Greater impiety can

scarcely be imagined than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ, to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and to call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

I The imprecations here are very terrible--woe, and a thousand woes, to that man against whom God says Amen to them; and they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that will not repent, to give him glory. It is here foretold concerning this bad man,

1. That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction, and condemnation (Ps 109:6,7): Set thou a wicked man over him, to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he has been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. Set the wicked one over him (so some), that is, Satan, as it follows; and then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered, to hurry him into sin first and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him; let that fly in his face.

Let Satan stand on his right hand, and be let loose against him to deceive him, as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that advocate who alone can say, The Lord rebuke thee, Satan (Zec 3:1,2); when he shall be judged at men's bar let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service, but let his sin find him out and let him be condemned; nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompence shall come.

Let his prayer become sin, as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers

of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Let every thing be turned against him and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

2. That, being condemned, he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor.

(1.) That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst, by the sword of justice: Let his days be few, or shortened, as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live (Ps 109:8); such bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.

(2.) That consequently all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments: Let another take his office. This Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's place in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, Ac 1:20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them and given to those that will approve themselves faithful.

(3.) That his family should be beheaded and beggared, that his wife should be made a widow and his children fatherless, by his untimely death, Ps 109:9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for.

Yet his children, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, might still subsist in comfort; but they shall be vagabonds and shall beg; they shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's-meat, but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens, to seek their bread (Ps 109:10), because they are

conscious to themselves that all mankind have reason to hate them for their father's sake.

(4.) That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated (Ps 109:11): Let the extortioner, the officer, seize all that he has and let the stranger, who was nothing akin to his estate, spoil his labour, either for his crimes or for his debts, Job 5:4,5.

(5.) That his posterity should be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man having never shown mercy there shall be none to extend mercy to him, by favouring his fatherless children when he is gone, Ps 109:12.

The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness in this way that the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them, which yet ought not to be, for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infelicity?

(6.) That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace (Ps 109:13): Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction (so Dr. Hammond); and in the next generation let their name be blotted out, or remembered with contempt and indignation, and (Ps 109:15) let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it. See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin, makes them and their despicable and odious, and entails poverty, and shame, and misery, upon their posterity; it is sin, that mischievous destructive thing.

The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ; their princes and people were cut off,

their country was laid waste, and their posterity were made fugitives and vagabonds.

II The ground of these imprecations bespeaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

1. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account (Ps 109:14,15), the iniquity of his fathers and the sin of his mother. These God often visits even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein: when wickedness has long run in the blood justly does the curse run along with it.

Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth, from that of righteous Abel, was required from that persecuting generation, who, by putting Christ to death, filled up the measure of their fathers, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to by saying, His blood be upon us and on our children.

2. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

(1.) He had loved cruelty, and therefore give him blood to drink (Ps 109:16): He remembered not to show mercy, remembered not those considerations which should have induced him to show mercy, remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him, but persecuted the poor, whom he should have protected and relieved, and slew the broken in heart, whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not it to live.

(2.) He had loved cursing, and therefore let the curse come upon his head, Ps 109:17-19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty he let fly at with his curses,

which were impotent and ridiculous; but they shall return upon him. He delighted not in blessing; he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and so let all good be far from him. He clothed himself with cursing; he was proud of it as an ornament that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it.

Was he fond of cursing? Let God's curse come into his bowels like water and swell him as with a dropsy, and let it soak like oil into his bones. The word of the curse is quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow; it works powerfully and effectually; it fastens on the soul; it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let is compass him on every side as a garment, Ps 109:19.

Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecations with a terrible Amen, which signifies not only, "I wish it may be so," but "I know it shall be so." Let this be the reward of my adversaries from the Lord, Ps 109:20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to those that trouble his people.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned:
and let his prayer become sin.
8 Let his days be few;
and let another take his office.

9 Let his children be fatherless,
and his wife a widow.
10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg:
let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.
11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath;
and let the strangers spoil his labor.
12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him:
neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children.
13 Let his posterity be cut off;
and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.
14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord;
and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.
15 Let them be before the Lord continually,
that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.
16 Because that he remembered not to show mercy,
but persecuted the poor and needy man,
that he might even slay the broken in heart.
17 As he loved cursing,
so let it come unto him:
as he delighted not in blessing,
so let it be far from him.
18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment,
so let it come into his bowels like water,
and like oil into his bones.
19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him,
and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.
20 *Let* this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord,
and of them that speak evil against my soul.
21 But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake:
because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.

David, having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

I. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which, probably, gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him: "I am poor

and needy, and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help."

1. He was troubled in mind (Ps 109:22): My heart is wounded within me, not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with a sense of guilt; and a wounded spirit who can bear? who can heal?

2. He apprehended himself drawing near to his end: I am gone like the shadow when it declines, as good as gone already. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow; sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the presage of night approaching, like the shadow when it declines.

3. He was unsettled, tossed up and down like the locust, his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels, his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

4. His body was wasted, and almost worn away (Ps 109:24): My knees are weak through fasting, either forced fasting (for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick) or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or other's, Ps 35:13,69:10. "My flesh fails of fatness; that is, it has lost the fatness it had, so that I have become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones." But it is better to have this leanness in the body, while the soul prospers and is in health, than, like Israel, to have leanness sent into the soul, while the body is feasted.

5. He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies (Ps 109:25); his devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter, and, upon both those accounts, God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that were at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who in his humiliation was thus

wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached; he was also a type of the church, which is often afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted.

II. He prays for mercy for himself. In general (Ps 109:21): "Do thou for me, O God the Lord! appear for me, act for me." If God be for us, he will do for us, will do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom: "Lord, do for me what seems good in thy eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me." More particularly, he prays (Ps 109:26):

"Help me, O Lord my God! O save me! Help me under my trouble, save me out of my trouble; save me from sin, help me to do my duty." He prays (Ps 109:28), Though they curse, bless thou. Here

(1.) He despises the causeless curses of his enemies: Let them curse. He said of Shimei, So let him curse. They can but show their malice; they can do him no more mischief than the bird by wandering or the swallow by flying, Pr 26:2. He values the blessing of God as sufficient to counterbalance their curses: Bless thou, and then it is no matter though they curse. If God bless us, we need not care who curses us; for how can they curse those whom God has not cursed, nay, whom he has blessed? Nu 23:8.

Men's curses are impotent; God's blessings are omnipotent; and those whom we unjustly curse may in faith expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for his confessing Christ, Christ found him, Joh 9:35. When men without cause say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ills they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition: Let

them curse, but bless thou. He prays (Ps 109:28), Let thy servant rejoice. Those that know how to value God's blessing, let them but be sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

III. He prays that his enemies might be ashamed (Ps 109:28), clothed with shame (Ps 109:29), that they might cover themselves with their own confusion, that they might be left to themselves, to do that which would expose them and manifest their folly before all men, or rather that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, Ne 6:16.

Nay, in this he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies. Sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves and cover themselves with their own confusion.

IV. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name:--Do for me, for thy name's sake (Ps 109:21), especially the honour of his goodness, by which he has proclaimed his name: "Deliver me, because thy mercy is good; it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy; let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure, of my salvation."

Lastly, He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith, joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs.

1. He promises God that he will praise him (Ps 109:30): "I will greatly praise the Lord, not only with my heart,

but with my mouth; I will praise him, not in secret only, but among the multitude."

2. He promises himself that he shall have cause to praise God (Ps 109:31): He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, night to him, a present help; he shall stand at his right hand as his patron and advocate to plead his cause against his accusers and to bring him off, to save him from those that condemn his soul and would execute their sentence if they could.

God was David's protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, stood at his right hand, so that he was not moved (Ps 16:8), saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him.

22 For I *am* poor and needy,
and my heart is wounded within me.
23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth:
I am tossed up and down as the locust.
24 My knees are weak through fasting;
and my flesh faileth of fatness.
25 I became also a reproach unto them:
when they looked upon me they shook their heads.
26 Help me, O Lord my God:
O save me according to thy mercy:
27 that they may know that this *is* thy hand;
that thou, Lord, hast done it.
28 Let them curse, but bless thou:
when they arise, let them be ashamed;
but let thy servant rejoice.
29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame;
and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.
30 I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth;
yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the
poor, to save *him* from those that condemn
his soul.

Psalms-110

The Lord Gives Dominion to the King
A Psalm of David.

1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand,
until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Some have called this psalm David's creed, almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it; the title calls it David's psalm, for in the believing foresight of the Messiah he both praised God and solaced himself, much more may we, in singing it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

I. That he is David's Lord. We must take special notice of this because he himself does. Mt 22:43, David, in spirit, calls him Lord. And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was paid him tithes (Heb 7:4), so we may be this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus that David, that great man, called him his Lord; by him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his lord. Some think he calls him his Lord because he was the Lord that was to descend from him, his son and yet his Lord. Thus him immediate mother calls him her Saviour (Lu 1:47); even his parents were his subjects, his saved ones.

II. That he is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself: The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him, Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory (2Pe 1:17), from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestable; for what God has said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God has said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

III. That he was to be advanced to the highest honour, and entrusted with an absolute sovereign power both in heaven and in earth: Sit thou at my right hand. Sitting is a resting posture; after his services and sufferings, he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture; he sits to give law, to give judgment. It is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever. Sitting at the right hand of God denotes both his dignity and his dominion, the honour put upon him and the trusts reposed in him by the Father. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, pass through his hand.

IV. That all his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be, in a manner, at an end. Note,

1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects, his honour and interest, in the world. There are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all.

2. These enemies will be made his footstool; he will subdue them and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place, and such a propriety there will be in it. He will make

himself easy by the doing of it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, Mal 4:3.

3. God the Father has undertaken to do it: I will make them thy footstool, who can do it.

4. It will not be done immediately. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool. This the apostle observes. Heb 2:8, We see not yet all things put under him. Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall wait till it is done; and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet, at last, on the necks of all his enemies.

V. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem (Ps 110:2): "The Lord shall send the rod or sceptre of thy strength out of Zion, by which thy kingdom shall be erected, maintained, and administered." The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is King upon the holy hill of Zion (Ps 2:6), in opposition to Mount Sinai, that frightful mountain, on which the law was given, Heb 12:18,24,Ga 4:24,25.

The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David, for he was the Son of David, and was to have the throne of his father David. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it--the report of the word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it (Isa 53:1,Ro 1:16), --the gospel coming in word, and in power, and in the holy Ghost, 1Th 1:5.

By the word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first, and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God. This strong rod God sent forth; he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to those that preached the word, and ministered the Spirit, Ga 3:5. It was sent out of Zion, for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the gospel among all nations must begin, at Jerusalem. See Lu 24:47,49.

Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, Isa 2:3. Note, The gospel of Christ, being sent of God, is mighty through God to do wonders, 2Co 10:4. It is the rod of Christ's strength. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, denoting the glory of Christ shining in the gospel, but to a shepherd's crook, his rod and staff, denoting the tender care of Christ takes of his church; for he is both the great and the good Shepherd.

VI. That his kingdom, being set up, should be maintained and kept up in the world, in spite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness.

1. Christ shall rule, shall give laws, and govern his subjects by them, shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy, shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits firmly on his head, and there it shall flourish.

2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, Re 5:11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him and fight against him. Christ's church is a lily among thorns, and his disciples are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; he knows where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is (Re 2:13), and this redounds to his honour that he not

only keeps his ground, but gains his point, notwithstanding all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. Great is the truth, and will prevail.

VII. That he should have a great number of subjects, who should be to him for a name and a praise, Ps 110:3.

1. That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestable title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited. Thine they were and thou gavest them me, Joh 17:6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself a peculiar people, Tit 2:14. They are his by right, antecedent to their consent. He had much people in Corinth before they were converted, Ac 18:10.

2. That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness, alluding to servants that choose their service and are not coerced to it (they love their masters and would not go out free), to soldiers that are volunteers and not pressed men ("Here am I, send me"), to sacrifices that are free-will offerings and not offered of necessity; we present ourselves living sacrifices. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke and into his interests, with an entire compliancy and satisfaction.

3. That they should be so in the day of his power, in the day of thy muster (so some); when thou art enlisting soldiers thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be enlisted; let but the standard be set up and the Gentiles will seek to it, Isa 11:10,60:3. Or when thou art drawing them out to battle they shall be willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, Re 14:4.

In the day of thy armies (so some); "when the first preachers of the gospel shall be sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are thy people shall be willing; that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom." In the day of thy strength, so we take it.

There is a general power which goes along with the gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great author and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, besides the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it.

And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the word, to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse; this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

4. That they should be so in the beauty of holiness, that is,

(1.) They shall be allured to him by the beauty of holiness; they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation.

(2.) They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary; for by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

(3.) They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family and that which becomes his house for ever. Christ's soldiers are all thus

clothed; these are the colours they wear. The armies of heaven follow him in fine linen, clean and white, Re 19:14.

5. That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him. The multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince. From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth, that is, abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a summer's morning. In the early days of the gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were multitudes that believed, a remnant of Jacob, that was as dew from the Lord, Mic 5:7,Isa 64:4,8. Or thus?

"From the womb of the morning (from their very childhood) thou hast the dew of thy people's youth, that is, their hearts and affections when they are young; it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee." The dew of the youth is a numerous, illustrious, hopeful show of young people flocking to Christ, which would be to the world as dew to the ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

6. That he should be not only a king, but a priest, Ps 110:4. The same Lord that said, Sit thou at my right hand, swore, and will not repent, Thou art a priest, that is, Be thou a priest; for by the word of his oath he was consecrated. Note,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest. He was appointed to that office and faithfully executes it; he is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin (Heb 5:1), to make atonement for our sins and to recommend our services to God's acceptance. He is God's minister to us, and our advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God.

(2.) He is a priest for ever. He was designed for a priest, in God's eternal counsels; he was a priest to the Old-Testament saints, and will be a priest for all believers to the end of time, Heb 13:8. He is said to be a priest for ever, not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace than this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity.

(3.) He is made a priest with an oath, which the apostle urges to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, Heb 7:20,21. The Lord has sworn, to show that in the commission there was no implied reserve of a power of revocation; for he will not repent, as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1Sa 2:30. This was intended for the honour of Christ and the comfort of Christians. The priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it might be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon.

(4.) He is a priest, not of the order of Aaron, but of that of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was upon many accounts superior, to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood. Melchizedek was a priest upon his throne, so is Christ (Zec 6:13), king of righteousness and king of peace. Melchizedek had no successor, nor has Christ; his is an unchangeable priesthood.

The apostle comments largely upon these words (Heb 7:1-28) and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office, which he shows was no new notion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy. For, as the New Testament explains the Old, so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

2 The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:
rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power,
in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:
thou hast the dew of thy youth.
4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not
repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever
after the order of Melchizedek.
5 The Lord at thy right hand
shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

Here we have our great Redeemer,

I. Conquering his enemies (Ps 110:5,6) in order to the making of them his footstool, Ps 110:1. Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they may be, that fight against him, against his subjects and the interest of his kingdom among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe here,

1 The conqueror: The Lord--Adonai, the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed, he shall make his own part good against his enemies. The Lord at thy right hand, O church! so some; that is, the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and a very present help to them, that is at their right hand, to strengthen and succour them, shall appear for them against his and their enemies. See Ps 109:31. He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, Ps 16:8.

Some observe that when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church it intimates that, if we would have Christ to appear for us, we must bestir ourselves, 2Sa 5:24. Or, rather, At thy right hand, O God! referring to Ps 110:1, in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ's sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies as happiness to his people.

2 The time fixed for this victory: In the day of his wrath, that is, the time appointed for it, when the measure of their iniquities is full and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience has expired, when the day of his wrath comes. Note,

(1.) Christ has wrath of his own, as well as grace. It concerns us to kiss the Son, for he can be angry (Ps 2:12) and we read of the wrath of the Lamb, Re 6:16.

(2.) There is a day of wrath set, a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed. The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time shall come it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time, Re 6:17.

3. The extent of this victory.

(1.) It shall reach very high: He shall strike through kings. The greatest of men, that set themselves against Christ, shall be made to fall before him. Though they be kings of the earth, and rulers, accustomed to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, Ps 2:2-5. Be their power among men ever so despotic, Christ will call them to an account; be their strength ever so great, their policies ever so deep, Christ will be too hard for them, and wherein they deal proudly he will be above them. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken.

(2.) It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up among the heathen, and in many countries, wherever any of his enemies are, not his eye only, but his hand, shall find them out (Ps 21:8) and his

wrath shall follow them. He will plead with all nations, Joe 3:2.

4. The equity of this victory: He shall judge among them. It is not a military execution, which is done in fury, but a judicial one. Before he condemns and slays, he will judge; he will make it appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be justified when he speaks and the heavens may declare his righteousness. See Re 19:1,2.

5. The effect of this victory; it shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies. He shall strike them through, for he strikes home and gives an incurable wound: He shall wound the heads, which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah (Ge 3:15), that he should bruise the serpent's head. He shall wound the head of his enemies, Ps 68:21.

Some read it, He shall wound him that is the head over many countries, either Satan or Antichrist, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth. He shall make such destruction of his enemies that he shall fill the places with the dead bodies. The slain of the Lord shall be many. See Isa 34:3,Eze 39:12,14,Re 14:20,19:17,18. The filling of the valleys (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps denotes the filling of hell (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinnom, Isa 30:33,Jer 7:32) with damned souls, for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

II. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them (Ps 110:7); for their benefit,

1. He shall be humbled: He shall drink of the brook in the way, that bitter cup which the Father put into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and

withal so intent upon his work, that he shall drink puddle-water out of the lakes in the highway; so some.

The wrath of God, running in the channel of the curse of the law, was the brook in the way, in the way of his undertaking, which must go through, or which ran in the way of our salvation and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven. Christ drank of this brook when he was made a curse for us, and therefore, when he entered upon his suffering, he went over the brook Kidron, Joh 18:1. He drank deeply of this black brook (so Kidron signifies), this bloody brook, so drank of the brook in the way as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted: Therefore shall he lift up the head. When he died he bowed the head (Joh 19:30), but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lifted up the head as a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror. This denotes not only his exaltation, but his exultation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it. Col 2:15, Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them. David spoke as a type of him in this (Ps 27:6), Now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies.

His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because he humbled himself, therefore God also highly exalted him, Php 2:9. Because he drank of the brook in the way therefore he lifted up his own head, and so lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who, if they suffer with him, shall also reign with him.

6 He shall judge among the heathen,
he shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies;
he shall wound the heads over many countries.
7 He shall drink of the brook in the way:
therefore shall he lift up the head.

Psalms-111

The Lord's Care for His People

1 Praise ye the Lord.
I will praise the Lord with *my* whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright,
and *in* the congregation.

The title of the psalm being Hallelujah, the psalmist (as every author ought to have) has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

I. He resolves to praise God himself, Ps 111:1. What duty we call others to we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it, we and our hearts; for such is the psalmist's resolution here: I will praise the Lord with my whole heart. My heart, my whole heart, being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this in the assembly, or secret, of the upright, in the cabinet-council, and in the congregation of Israelites.

Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in less and greater assemblies, in our own families and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in concert with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

II. He recommends to us the works of the Lord as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him--the dispensations of his providence towards the world, towards the church, and towards particular persons.

1. God's works are very magnificent, great like himself; there is nothing in them that is mean or trifling: they are the products of infinite wisdom and power, and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to enquire more particularly into them, that the works of the Lord are great, Ps 111:2. There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us.

All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one (Ps 111:3); it is his work, such is the beauty and harmony of Providence and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design; it was cried to the wheels, O wheel! Eze 10:13. Take all together, and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

2. They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive--sought out of all those that have pleasure therein. Note,

(1.) All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he does; nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into the more they give us of a pleasing surprise.

(2.) Those that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into them and observe them. In studying both natural and political history we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works.

(3.) These works of God, that are humbly and diligently sought into, shall be sought out; those that seek shall find (so some read); they are found of all those that have pleasure in them, or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concernments (so Dr. Hammond), for the secret of the Lord is with those that fear him, Ps 25:14.

3. They are all justly and holy; His righteousness endures for ever. Whatever he does, he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever (Ec 3:14) because the righteousness of them endures.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling that it is not fit to be spoken of or told again; the greatest kindness is to forget it. But notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them (Ps 111:4). He has made his wonderful works to be remembered; he has done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered, and he has instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover. He has made himself a memorial by his wonderful works (so some read it); see Isa 63:10. By that which God did with his glorious arm he made himself an everlasting name.

5. They are very kind. In them the Lord shows that he is gracious and full of compassion. As of the works of creation, so of the works of providence, we must say, They are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, The Lord God is gracious and merciful, Ex 24:6. God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of all his works and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a further instance of his grace and compassion that he has given meat to those that fear him, Ps 111:5.

He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them; so he does to others by common providence, but to those that fear him he gives it by covenant and in pursuance of the promise, for it follows, He will be ever mindful of his covenant; so that they can taste

covenant-love even in common mercies. Some refer this to the manna with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness, others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance, according to the promise, Ge 15:14.

When God broke the heads of leviathan he gave him to be meat to his people, Ps 74:14. He has given prey to those that fear him (so the margin has it), not only fed them, but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them. 6. They are earnests of what he will do, according to his promise: He will ever be mindful of his covenant, for he has ever been so; and, as he never did, so he never will, let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

2 The works of the Lord *are* great,
sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.
3 His work *is* honorable and glorious:
and his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered:
the Lord *is* gracious and full of compassion.
5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him:
he will ever be mindful of his covenant.
6 He hath showed his people the power of his works,
that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

We are here taught to give glory to God,

I. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people Israel, of old and of late: He has shown his people the power of his works (Ps 111:6), in what he has wrought for them; many a time he has given proofs of his omnipotence, and shown them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are specified to show the power of his works:--

1 The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan, that he might give them, or in giving them, the

heritage of the heathen. This he did in Joshua's time, when the seven nations were subdued, and in David's time, when the neighbouring nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel and became tributaries to David. Herein God showed his sovereignty, in disposing of kingdoms as he pleases, and his might, in making good his disposals. If God will make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel or stay his hand?

2 The many deliverances which he wrought for his people when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies (Ps 111:9): He sent redemption unto his people, not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards; and these redemptions were typical of the great redemption which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

II. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

1. What God has done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot (Ps 111:7): The works of his hand are verity and judgment (Ps 111:8), that is, they are done in truth and uprightness; all he does is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom and the purpose of his will, all well done and therefore there is nothing to be altered or amended, but his works are firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is done properly will last, will neither go to decay nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

2. What God has said shall never be unsaid: All his commandments are sure, all straight and therefore all

steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment: Has he spoken, and will he not make it good?

No doubt he will; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable and not to be repealed; his promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of no effect.

They are established, and therefore they stand fast for ever and ever, and the scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in his laws or in his providences. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable.

Men's folly and falsehood make them unstable in all their ways, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation: He has commanded his covenant for ever. God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that has an incontestable authority to prescribe both what we must do and what we must expect, and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant and what he has threatened in the curses of it, Ps 105:8.

III. For the setting up and establishing of religion among men. Because holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, therefore his praise endureth for ever, that is, he is to be everlastingly praised.

1. Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see, and say, that God is great and greatly to be feared; for

his name is holy, his infinite purity and rectitude appear in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy therefore it is reverend, and to be thought of and mentioned with a holy awe. Note, What is holy is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, Ps 68:35,Le 10:3.

2. Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God that the matter is so well contrived that our reverence of him and obedience to him are as much our interest as they are our duty.

(1.) Our reverence of him is so: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It is not only reasonable that we should fear God, because his name is reverend and his nature is holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom; it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, that is (as we read it), it is the beginning of wisdom. Men can never begin to be wise till they begin to fear God; all true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it.

Or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom, and the most excellent, the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom, and the principal of wisdom, to worship God and give honour to him as our Father and Master. Those manage well who always act under the government of his holy fear.

(2.) Our obedience to him is so:

A good understanding have all those that do his commandments. Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart there will be a constant conscientious care to keep

his commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them; and such have a good understanding, that is,

[1.] They are well understood; their obedience is graciously accepted as a plain indication of their mind that they do indeed fear God. Compare Pr 3:4, So shalt thou find favour and good understanding. God and man will look upon those as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes. What is honestly intended shall be well taken.

[2.] They understand well. First, It is a sign that they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interest best that make God's law their rule and are in every thing ruled by it.

A great understanding those have that know God's commandments and can discourse learnedly of them, but a good understanding have those that do them and walk according to them. Secondly, It is the way to understand better: A good understanding are they to all that do them; the fear of the Lord and the laws of that give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation. If any man will do his will, he shall know more and more clearly of the doctrine of Christ, Joh 7:17.

Good success have all those that do them (so the margin), according to what was promised to Joshua if he would observe to do according to the law. Jos 1:8, Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and shalt have good success. We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord than to the good God: His praise endures for ever. It is not of men perhaps, but it is of God (Ro 2:29), and that praise which is of God

endures for ever when the praise of men is withered and gone.

7 The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment;
all his commandments *are* sure.
8 They stand fast for ever and ever,
and are done in truth and uprightness.
9 He sent redemption unto his people:
he hath commanded his covenant for ever:
holy and reverend *is* his name.
10 The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom:
a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:*
his praise endureth for ever.

Psalms-112

The Prosperity of Him Who Fears the Lord

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the Lord,
that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God; for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them it comes from God, and must return to him; as he is their praise, so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord that there are a people in the world who fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people, both which are owing entirely to the grace of God. Now here we have,

I. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made.

1. They are well-principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not who cry, Lord, Lord, but who are indeed well affected to his government.

(1.) They are such as stand in awe of God and have a constant reverence for his majesty and deference to his will. The happy man is he that fears the Lord, Ps 112:1.

(2.) They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He that fears the Lord, as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, delights greatly in his commandments, is well pleased with them and with the equity and goodness of them; they are written in his heart; it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant, yoke; it is his delight to be searching into and conversing with God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditation, Ps 1:2.

He delights not only in God's promises, but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he does in religion is done from principle, because he sees amiableness in religion and advantage by it.

2. They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called the upright (Ps 112:2,4), who are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel-perfection.

3. They are both just and kind in all their dealings: He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous (Ps 112:4), dares not do any wrong to any man, but does to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God, in the foregoing psalm (Ps 112:4), He is gracious, and full of compassion; and here it is said of the good man that he is so; for herein we must be followers of God as dear children; be merciful as he is. He is full of compassion,

and yet righteous; what he does good with is what he came honestly by.

God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and so does he. One instance is given of his beneficence (Ps 112:5): He shows favour and lends. Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obliges the borrower both to industry and honesty. He is gracious and lends (Ps 37:26); he does it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity; he does it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

II The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer to these characters. Happiness, all happiness, to the man that feareth the Lord. Whatever men think or say of them, God says that they are blessed; and his saying so makes them so.

1 The posterity of good men shall fare the better for his goodness (Ps 112:2): His seed shall be mighty on earth. Perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure, as his seed after him shall for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to fix it firmly. When good men themselves are happy in heaven their seed perhaps are considerable on earth, and will themselves own that it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them.

The generation of the upright shall be blessed; if they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them, beloved for the Father's sake (Ro 11:28), for so runs the covenant--I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed; while the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

2. They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, Ps 112:3.

(1.) They shall be blessed with outward prosperity as far as is good for them: Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house, not in his heart (for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns), perhaps not so much in his hand (for he only begins to raise the estate), but in his house; his family shall grow rich when he is gone.

But, (2.) That which is much better is that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. His wealth shall be in his house, for he must leave that to others; but his righteousness he himself shall have the comfort of to himself, it endures for ever. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition shall still hold fast his integrity, which many, who kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine.

Then worldly prosperity is a blessing when it does not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family, and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of the father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's righteousness endures for ever in the crown of righteousness which fades not away.

3. They shall have comfort in affliction (Ps 112:4): Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness. It is here implied that good men may be in affliction; the promise does not exempt them from that. They shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but, when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to them, Mic 7:8. They shall be supported and

comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightsome when their outward condition is clouded. Sat lucis intus--There is light enough within. During the Egyptian darkness the Israelites had light in their dwellings. They shall be in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest the day dawns; nay, at evening-time, when night was looked for, it shall be light.

4. They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, Ps 112:5. He that does good with his estate shall, through the providence of God, increase it, not by miracle, but by his prudence: He shall guide his affairs with discretion, and his God instructs him to discretion and teaches him, Isa 28:26. It is part of the character of a good man that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity: He shows favour and lends; but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced, that he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given and in due time and proportion.

And it is part of the promise to him who thus uses discretion that God will give him more. Those who most use their wisdom see most of their need of it, and ask it of God, who has promised to give it liberally, Jam 1:5. He will guide his words with judgment (so it is in the original); and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom than in the government of the tongue; blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth:
the generation of the upright shall be blessed.
3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house:
and his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:
he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
5 A good man showeth favor, and lendeth:

he will guide his affairs with discretion.
6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever:
the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

In these verses we have,

I The satisfaction of saints, and their stability. It is the happiness of a good man that he shall not be moved for ever, Ps 112:6. Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm and he shall never be moved, at least not moved for ever; if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again quickly.

1. A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, a name for good things, with God and good people: The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance (Ps 112:6); in this sense his righteousness (the memorial of it) endures for ever, Ps 112:9.

There are those that do all they can to sully his reputation and to load him with reproach; but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous are had in a lasting remembrance on earth; wherever the scripture is read their good deeds are told for a memorial of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever, with the reward of it, in the crown of glory that fades not away.

Those that are forgotten on earth, and despised, are remembered there, and honoured, and their righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory (1Pe 1:7); then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man be exalted with honour, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men, now in their pride, lift up their horns on high, but they shall all be cut off, Ps

75:5,10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have defiled their horn in the dust (Job 16:15); but the day is coming when it shall be exalted with honour.

That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men is their liberality and bounty to the poor: He has dispersed, he has given to the poor; he has not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for, but he has dispersed it, given a portion to seven and also to eight, has sown beside all waters, and by thus scattering he has increased: and this is his righteousness, which endures for ever.

Alms are called righteousness, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are bound to perform; so that if we are not charitable we are not just; we withhold good from those to whom it is due. The honour of this endures for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day. I was hungry, and you gave me meat. This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2Co 9:9.

2. A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for so shall a man have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Surely he shall not be moved, whatever happens, not moved either from his duty or from his comfort; for he shall not be afraid; his heart is established, Ps 112:7,8. This is a part both of the character and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their minds stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed; and God has promised them both cause to do so and grace to do so. Observe,

(1.) It is the duty and interest of the people of God not to be afraid of evil tidings, not to be afraid of hearing bad news; and, when they do, not to be put into

confusion by it and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse, but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say, with blessed Paul, None of these things move me, neither will I fear, though the earth be removed, Ps 46:2.

(2.) The fixedness of the heart is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed, and ourselves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our temper sedate, and our spirits even, under all the unevenness of Providence, we are well fortified against the agitations of the timorous.

(3.) Trusting in the Lord is the best an surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the word of God, and so return to him and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix any where, to its satisfaction, but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing.

(4.) Those whose hearts are established by faith will patiently wait till they have gained their point: He shall not be afraid, till he see his desire upon his enemies, that is, till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan, and all his spiritual enemies, trodden under his feet, and, as Israel saw the Egyptians, dead on the sea-shore. Till he look upon his oppressors (so Dr. Hammond), till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints, when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured (2Ti 3:11), But out of them all the Lord delivered me.

II The vexation of sinners, Ps 112:10. Two things shall fret them:--

1 The felicity of the righteous: The wicked shall see the righteous in prosperity and honour and shall be grieved. It will vex them to see their innocency cleared and their low estate regarded, and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought and hoped to see, the favourites of Heaven, and advanced to have dominion over them (Ps 49:14); this will make them gnash with their teeth and pine away. This is often fulfilled in this world.

The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the rottenness of their bones. But it will most fully be accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners gnash with their teeth, to see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in him bosom, to see all the prophets in the kingdom of God and themselves thrust out.

2. Their own disappointment: The desire of the wicked shall perish. Their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore, when these perish, their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:
his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.
8 His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid,
until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.
9 He hath dispersed,
he hath given to the poor;
his righteousness endureth for ever;
his horn shall be exalted with honor.
10 The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved;
he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:
the desire of the wicked shall perish.

Psalms-113

Praise for Exalting the Humble

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Praise, O ye servants of the Lord,
praise the name of the Lord.

In this psalm,

I. We are extorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name.

1 The invitation is very pressing: praise you the Lord, and again and again, Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name, for it is to be praised, Ps 113:1-3. This intimates,

(1.) That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion.

(2.) That it is a duty we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed and greatly enlarged.

(3.) That it is work which we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept and line upon line.

(4.) That those who are much in praising God themselves will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in (there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough), and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in.

2 The invitation is very extensive. Observe,

(1.) From whom God has praise--from his own people; they are here called upon to praise God, as those that will answer the call: Praise, O you servants of the Lord! They have most reason to praise him; for those that attend him as his servants know him best and receive most of his favours.

And it is their business to praise him; that is the work required of them as his servants: it is easy pleasant work to speak well of their Master, and do him what honour they can; if they do not, who should? Some understand it of the Levites; but, if so, all Christians are a royal priesthood, to show forth the praises of him that has called them, 1Pe 2:9. The angels are the servants of the Lord; they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do praise him, and that they praise him better than we can.

(2.) From whom he ought to have praise.

[1.] From all ages (Ps 113:2) --from this time forth for evermore. Let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that come after us be doing it in this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying, with the psalmist, Blessed be his name now and always.

[2.] From all places--from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, that is, throughout the habitable world. Let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun rising (and those that do so must count upon it that the sun will set) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. God's name is to be praised; it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from east to west, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is to be

lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone.

But perhaps there is more in it; as the Ps 113:2 gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be blessed for ever (when time shall be no more that praise shall be the work of heaven), so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel-dispensation of it. When the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when in every place spiritual incense shall be offered to our God (Mal 1:11), then from the rising to the setting of the sun the Lord's name shall be praised by some in all countries.

II. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that to his praise, Ps 113:4,5. We are, in our praises, to exalt his name, for he is high, his glory is high.

(1.) High above all nations, their kings though ever so pompous, their people though ever so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no that though he is major singulis--greater than individuals, he is minor universis--less than the whole, we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together, and he is above them all; they are before him as the drop of the bucket and the small dust of the balance, Isa 60:15,17. Let all nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all.

(2.) High above the heavens; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens, which should raise our hearts in praising him, La 3:41. His glory is above the heavens, that is, above the angels; he is above what they are, for their brightness is nothing to his,--above what they do,

for they are under his command and do his pleasure,--and above what even they can speak him to be. He is exalted above all blessing and praise, not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore say, with holy admiration, Who is like unto the Lord our God?

who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him. God is to be praised as transcendently, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he dwells on high, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look around with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise. He is a God who exalts himself to dwell, who humbles himself in heaven, and in earth. Some think there is a transposition, He exalts himself to dwell in heaven, he humbles himself to behold on earth; but the sense is plain enough as we take it, only observe, God is said to exalt himself and to humble himself, both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the fountain of his own honour and the spring of his own grace; God's condescending goodness appears,

(1.) In the cognizance he takes of the world below him. His glory is above the nations and above the heavens, and yet neither is neglected by him. God is great, yet he despises not any, Job 36:5. He humbles himself to behold all his creatures, all his subjects, though he is infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency, and felicity of the divine nature, it must be acknowledged as an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal Providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth (Da 4:35); even in this dominion he humbles himself.

[1.] It is condescension in him to behold the things in heaven, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services, of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them.

[2.] Much more is it condescension in him to behold the things that are in the earth, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of, and concerning ourselves about, our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save those that were lost! Herein indeed he humbled himself.

(2.) In the particular favour he sometimes shows to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this meaner lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest, and those things which great men commonly overlook. Not does he merely behold them, but does wonders for them, and things that are very surprising, out of the common road of providence and chain of causes, which shows that the world is governed, not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

[1.] Those that have been long despicable are sometimes, on a sudden, made honourable (Ps 113:78): He raises up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes. First, Thus God does sometimes magnify himself, and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty. When he has some great work to do he chooses to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour: Gideon is fetched from

threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles are sent from fishing to be fishers of men.

The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world are pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the wise and mighty (1Co 1:27,28), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. Secondly, Thus God does sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people who have long groaned under the burden of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested he was raised from the prison-dust and set with princes.

Those that are wise will observe such returns of Providence, and will understand by them the loving-kindness of the Lord. Some have applied this to the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, and not unfitly; for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust (one of the Jewish rabbies applies it to the resurrection of the dead), nay, out of the dunghill of sin, and set among princes, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purport, 1Sa 2:6-8.

[2.] Those that have been long barren are sometimes, on a sudden, made fruitful, Ps 113:9. This may look back to Sarah and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Samson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been, in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids and taken away their reproach. He makes the barren woman to keep house, not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do.

Note, Those that have the comfort of a family must take the care of it; bearing children and guiding the house are put together, 1Ti 5:14.

When God sets the barren in a family he expects that she should look well to the ways of her household, Pr 31:27. She is said to be a joyful mother of children, not only because, even in common cases, the pain is forgotten, for joy that a man-child is born into the world, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless (as Lu 1:14) and therefore there ought to be particular thanksgiving. Praise you the Lord.

Yet, in this case, rejoice with trembling; for, though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her or embittered to her. This, therefore, may be applied to the gospel-church among the Gentiles (the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, Isa 54:1, Sing, O barren! thou that didst not bear, and Ga 4:27), for which we, who, being sinners of the Gentiles, are children of the desolate, have reason to say, Praise you the Lord.

2 Blessed be the name of the Lord
from this time forth and for evermore.
3 From the rising of the sun
unto the going down of the same
the Lord's name *is* to be praised.
4 The Lord *is* high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.
5 Who *is* like unto the Lord our God,
who dwelleth on high,
6 who humbleth *himself* to behold
the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!
7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;
8 that he may set *him* with princes,
even with the princes of his people.
9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house,
and to be a joyful mother of children.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-114

The Wonders of the Exodus

1 When Israel went out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of (Jdg 6:13), for time, as it does not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy. Let it never be forgotten,

I. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand and a stretched-out arm: Israel went out of Egypt, Ps 114:1. They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out, marched out with all the marks of honour; they went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously, from a people of a strange language, Ps 81:5.

The Israelites, it seems, preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors. By this distinction from them they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

II. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution (Ps 114:2): Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion. When he delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors it was that they might serve him both in holiness and in righteousness, in the duties of religious worship and in obedience to the moral law, in their whole conversation. Let my people go, that they may serve me. In order to this,

1. He set up his sanctuary among them, in which he gave them the special tokens of his presence with them and promised to receive their homage and tribute.

Happy are the people that have God's sanctuary among them (see Ex 25:8,Eze 37:26), much more those that, like Judah here, are his sanctuaries, his living temples, on whom Holiness to the Lord is written.

2. He set up his dominion among them, was himself their lawgiver and their judge, and their government was a theocracy: The Lord was their King. All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion. Those only have the privileges of his house that submit to the laws of it; and for this end Christ has redeemed us that he might bring us into God's service and engage us for ever in it.

III. That the Red Sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue and the ruin of their enemies; and the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan, for their honour, and the confusion and terror of their enemies (Ps 114:3): The sea saw it, saw there that Judah was God's sanctuary, and Israel his dominion, and therefore fled; for nothing could be more awful. It was this that drove Jordan back, and was an invincible dam to his streams; God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them, they must retire, contrary to their nature, when God speaks the word.

To illustrate this the psalmist asks, in a poetical strain (Ps 114:5), What ailed thee, O thou sea! that thou fleddest? And furnishes the sea with an answer (Ps 114:7); it was at the presence of the Lord. This is designed to express,

1 The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was at the presence of the Lord, who gave the word.

2 The mercy of the miracle: What ailed thee? Was it in a frolic? Was it only to amuse men? No; it was at the presence of the God of Jacob; it was in kindness to the Israel of God, for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus displeased against the rivers, and his wrath was against the sea, as the prophet speaks, Hab 3:8-13,Isa 51:10,63:11, &c.

3. The wonder and surprise of the miracle. Who would have thought of such a thing? Shall the course of nature be changed, and its fundamental laws dispensed with, to serve a turn for God's Israel? Well may the dukes of Edom be amazed and the mighty men of Moab tremble, Ex 15:15.

4. The honour hereby put upon Israel, who are taught to triumph over the sea, and Jordan, as unable to stand before them. Note, There is no sea, no Jordan, so deep, so broad, but, when God's time shall come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided and driven back if it stand in their way. Apply this,

(1.) To the planting of the Christian church in the world. What ailed Satan and the powers of darkness, that they trembled and truckled as they did? Mk 1:34. What ailed the heathen oracles, that they were silenced, struck dumb, struck dead? What ailed their idolatries and witchcrafts, that they died away before the gospel, and melted like snow before the sun? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the gospel, that they gave up their cause, hid their guilty heads, and called to rocks and mountains for shelter? Re 6:15. It was at the presence of the Lord, and that power which went along with the gospel.

(2.) To the work of grace in the heart. What turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ails the lusts and corruptions, that they fly back, that the prejudices are removed and the whole man has become new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit that imaginations are cast down, 2Co 10:5.

IV. That the earth shook and trembled when God came down on Mount Sinai to give the law (Ps 114:4): The mountains skipped like rams, and then the little hills might well be excused if they skipped like lambs, either when they are frightened or when they sport themselves. The same power that fixed the fluid waters and made them stand still shook the stable mountains and made them tremble for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. Mountains and hills are, before God, but like rams and lambs; even the bulkiest and the most rocky are as manageable by him as they are by the shepherd.

The trembling of the mountains before the Lord may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. The psalmist asks the mountains and hills what ailed them to skip thus; and he answers for them, as for the seas, it was at the presence of the Lord, before whom, not only those mountains, but the earth itself, may well tremble (Ps 114:7), since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. See Ps 104:32,Isa 64:3,4. He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus can, when he pleases, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies and make them tremble.

V. That God supplied them with water out of the rock, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. Well may the earth and all its inhabitants tremble before that God who turned the rock into a standing water (Ps 114:8), and what cannot he do who did that? The same almighty power that turned waters into a rock to be a wall to Israel (Ex 14:22) turned the

rock into waters to be a well to Israel: as they were protected, so they were provided for, by miracles, standing miracles; for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, and that rock was Christ, 1Co 10:4. For he is a fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

2 Judah was his sanctuary,
and Israel his dominion.
3 The sea saw *it*, and fled:
Jordan was driven back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
and the little hills like lambs.
5 What *ailed* thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?
thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?
6 ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams;
and ye little hills, like lambs?
7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob;
8 which turned the rock *into* a standing water,
the flint into a fountain of waters.

Psalms-115

God and the Idols

1 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
but unto thy name give glory,
for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

Sufficient care is here taken to answer both the pretensions of self and the reproaches of idolaters.

I. Boasting is here for ever excluded, Ps 115:1. Let no opinion of our own merits have any room either in our prayers or in our praises, but let both centre in God's glory.

1. Have we received any mercy, gone through any service, or gained any success? We must not assume the glory of it to ourselves, but ascribe it wholly to God. We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness; but all the good we do is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have is the gift of his mere mercy, and therefore he must have all the praise.

Say not, The power of my hand has gotten me this wealth, De 8:17. Say not, For my righteousness the Lord has done these great and kind things for me, De 9:4. No; all our songs must be sung to this humble tune, Not unto us, O Lord! and again, Not unto us, but to thy name, let all the glory be given; for whatever good is wrought in us, or wrought for us, it is for his mercy and his truth's sake, because he will glorify his mercy and fulfil his promise. All our crowns must be cast at the feet of him that sits upon the throne, for that is the proper place for them.

2. Are we in pursuit of any mercy and wrestling with God for it? We must take our encouragement, in prayer, from God only, and have an eye to his glory more than to our own benefit in it. "Lord, do so and so for us, not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it."

This must be our highest and ultimate end in our prayers, and therefore it is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which guides all the rest, Hallowed be thy name; and, in order to that, Give us our daily bread, &c. This also must satisfy us, if our prayers be not answered in the letter of them. Whatever becomes of us, unto thy name give glory. See Joh 12:27,28.

II The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced and justly retorted.

1 The psalmist complains of the reproach of the heathen (Ps 115:2): Wherefore should they say, Where is now their God?

(1.) "Why do they say so? Do they not know that our God is every where by his providence, and always nigh to us by his promise and grace?"

(2.) "Why does God permit them to say so? Nay, why is Israel brought so low that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayest vindicate thyself, and glorify thy own name."

2. He gives a direct answer to their question, Ps 115:3. "Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is."

(1.) "In the upper world is the presence of his glory: Our God is in the heavens, where the gods of the heathen never were, in the heavens, and therefore out of sight; but, though his majesty be unapproachable, it does not therefore follow that his being is questionable."

(2.) "In the lower world are the products of his power: He has done whatsoever he pleased, according to the counsel of his will; he has a sovereign dominion and a universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, and not far from any of us."

3. He returns their question upon themselves. They asked, Where is the God of Israel? because he is not seen. He does in effect ask, What are the gods of the heathen? because they are seen.

(1.) He shows that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters, at first, worshipped the sun and moon (Job 31:26), which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to (for evil men grow worse and worse), which was the worshipping of images, Ps 115:4. The matter of them was silver and gold, dug out of the earth (man found them poor and dirty in a mine, Herbert), proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of.

The make of them was from the artificer; they are creatures of men's vain imaginations and the works of men's hands, and therefore can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hands (as certainly he is, and it was his honour that he was made in the image of God) it is absurd to think that that can be God which is the work of men's hands, or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God to make him in the image of man. The argument is irrefragable:

The workmen made it, therefore it is not God, Ho 8:6. These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a mere jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing, fitter for a toy shop than a temple, for children to play with than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary, did their part well enough; they made them with mouths and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet, but they could put no life into them and therefore no sense.

They had better have worshipped a dead carcase (for that had life in it once) than a dead image, which neither has life nor can have. They speak not, in answer to those that consult them; the crafty priest must speak for them. In Baal's image there was no voice, neither any that answered. They see not the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burdens and wants.

They hear not their prayers, though ever so loud; they smell not their incense, though ever so strong, ever so sweet; they handle not the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers; they cannot stretch forth their hands to the needy. They walk not, they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as breathe through their throat; they have not the least sign of symptom of life, but are as dead, after the priest has pretended to consecrate them and call a deity into them, as they were before.

(2.) He thence infers the sottishness of their worshippers (Ps 115:8): Those that make them images show their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but those that make them gods show their stupidity and folly, and are like unto them, as senseless blockish things; they see not the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation; they hear not the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare his glory, Ps 19:2,3.

By worshipping these foolish puppets, they make themselves more and more foolish like them, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, sinking themselves deeper into the mire of sense; and withal they provoke God to give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment, Ro 1:28. Those that trust in them act very absurdly and very unreasonably, are senseless, helpless, useless, like them; and they will find it so themselves, to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they, to their cost, when their gods are gone, Jer 10:3-11,Isa 44:9, &c.

2 Wherefore should the heathen say,
Where *is* now their God?
3 But our God *is* in the heavens:
he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
4 Their idols *are* silver and gold,
the work of men's hands.

5 They have mouths, but they speak not:
eyes have they, but they see not:
6 they have ears, but they hear not:
noses have they, but they smell not:
7 they have hands, but they handle not:
feet have they, but they walk not:
neither speak they through their throat.
8 They that make them are like unto them;
so is every one that trusteth in them.
9 O Israel, trust thou in the Lord:
he *is* their help and their shield.

In these verses,

I. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repose our confidence in God, and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathens' insulting over us upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a help and a shield to those that do trust in them, a help to furnish them with and forward them in that which is good, and a shield to fortify them against and protect them from every thing that is evil. Therefore,

1. Let Israel trust in the Lord; the body of the people, as to their public interests, and every particular Israelite, as to his own private concerns, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe it will dispose of all for the best and will be their help and shield.

2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, and all the families of the house of Aaron, trust in the Lord, (Ps 115:10); they are most maligned and struck at by the enemies and therefore of them God takes particular care.

They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him in the worst of times. 3. Let the proselytes, who are not of the seed of Israel, but fear the Lord, who worship him and make conscience of their duty to him, let them trust in him, for he will not fail nor forsake them, Ps 115:11. Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him: those that reverence his word may rely upon it.

II. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God, and good reason is given us why we should stay ourselves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider,

1. What we have experienced (Ps 115:12): The Lord has been mindful of us, and never unmindful, has been so constantly, has been so remarkably upon special occasions. He has been mindful of our case, our wants and burdens, mindful of our prayers to him, his promises to us, and the covenant-relation between him and us. All our comforts are derived from God's thoughts to us-ward; he has been mindful of us, though we have forgotten him. Let this engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful.

2. What we may expect. From what he has done for us we may infer, He will bless us; he that has been our help and our shield will be so; he that has remembered us in our low estate will not forget us; for he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promise inviolable; so that we have reason to hope that he who has delivered, and does, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all: He will bless us; he has promised that he will; he has pronounced a blessing upon all his people. God's blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. It is particularly promised that he will bless the house of Israel, that is, he will bless the commonwealth, will bless his people in their civil interests.

He will bless the house of Aaron, that is, the church, the ministry, will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people; it was their office (Nu 6:23); but God blessed them, and so blessed their blessings. Nay (Ps 115:13), he will bless those that fear the Lord, though they be not of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth, before Peter perceived it, That in every nation he that fears God is accepted or him, and blessed, Ac 10:34,35.

He will bless them both small and great, both young and old. God has blessings in store for those that are good betimes and for those that are old disciples, both those that are poor in the world and those that make a figure. The greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock. It is promised (Ps 115:14), The Lord shall increase you. Whom God blesses he increases; that was one of the earliest and most ancient blessings, Be fruitful and multiply.

God's blessing gives an increase--increase in number, building up the family--increase in wealth, adding to the estate and honour--especially an increase in spiritual blessings, with the increasings of God. He will bless you with the increase of knowledge and wisdom, of grace, holiness, and joy; those are blessed indeed whom God thus increases, who are made wiser and better, and fitter for God and heaven. It is promised that this shall be,

(1.) A constant continual increase: "He shall increase you more and more; so that, as long as you live, you shall be still increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light," Pr 4:18.

(2.) An hereditary increase: "You and your children; you in your children." It is a comfort to parents to see

their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing entailed upon the seed of those that fear God even in their infancy. For (Ps 115:15), You are blessed of the Lord, you and your children are so; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed, Isa 59:9.

Those that are the blessed of the Lord have encouragement enough to trust in the Lord, as their help and shield, for it is he that made heaven and earth; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he has all things at command for us if we fear him and trust in him. He that made heaven and earth can doubtless make those happy that trust in him, and will do it.

III. We are stirred up to praise God by the psalmist's example, who concludes the psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises.

1. God is to be praised, Ps 115:16. He is greatly to be praised; for,

(1.) His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he has prepared in the heavens: The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's; he is the rightful owner of all the treasures of light and bliss in the upper and better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy.

(2.) His goodness is large, for the earth he has given to the children of men, having designed it, when he made it, for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is proprietor in chief; the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; but he has let out that vineyard to these unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services; for, though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to render an account how they use it.

Calvin complains that profane wicked people, in his days, perverted this scripture, and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing, in banter, that God, having given the earth to the children of men, will no more look after it, nor after them upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make the best of it as their portion; it is as it were thrown like a prey among them, Let him seize it that can. It is a pity that such an instance as this gives of God's bounty to man, and such a proof as arises from it of man's obligation to God, should be thus abused. From the highest heavens, it is certain, God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth; but to the children of God heaven is given.

2 The dead are not capable of praising him (Ps 115:17), nor any that go into silence. The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body and is capable of praising God; and the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burdens of the flesh, do praise God, are still praising him; for they go up to the land of perfect light and constant business. But the dead body cannot praise God; death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict, to all our services in the field; the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies, "Lord, if they prevail to cut us off, the idols will carry the day, and there will be none to praise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of idols." The dead praise not the Lord, so as we do in the business and for the comforts of this life. See Ps 30:9,88:10.

3. Therefore it concerns us to praise him (Ps 115:18): "But we, we that are alive, will bless the Lord; we and those that shall come after us, will do it, from this time forth and for evermore, to the end of time; we and those we shall remove to, from this time forth and to eternity.

The dead praise not the Lord, therefore we will do it the more diligently."

(1.) Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will lay out ourselves to do so much the more for God, that we may fill up the gap. Moses my servant is dead, now therefore, Joshua, arise.

(2.) We ourselves must shortly go to the land of silence; but, while we do live, we will bless the Lord, will improve our time and work that work of him that sent us into the world to praise him before the night comes, and because the night comes, wherein no man can work. The Lord will bless us (Ps 115:12); he will do well for us, and therefore we will bless him, we will speak well of him. Poor returns for such receivings! Nay, we will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it. Praise the Lord; praise him with us; praise him in your places, as we in ours; praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. Hallelujah.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord:
he *is* their help and their shield.
11 Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord:
he *is* their help and their shield.
12 The Lord hath been mindful of us:
he will bless *us;*
he will bless the house of Israel;
he will bless the house of Aaron.
13 He will bless them that fear the Lord,
both small and great.
14 The Lord shall increase you more and more,
you and your children.
15 Ye *are* blessed of the Lord
which made heaven and earth.
16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the Lord's:
but the earth hath he given to the children of men.
17 The dead praise not the Lord,
neither any that go down into silence.

18 But we will bless the Lord
from this time forth and for evermore.
Praise the Lord.

Psalms-116

Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death

1 I love the Lord, because he hath heard
my voice *and* my supplications.

In this part of the psalm we have,

I. A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions (Ps 116:1,2), which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it.

1. He had experienced God's goodness to him in answer to prayer: He has heard my voice and my supplications. David, in straits, had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him, that is, had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his case, and granted him an answer of peace. He has inclined his ear to me.

This intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered in groanings that cannot be uttered. He hearkens and hears, Jer 8:6. Yet it implies, also, that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him!--

2. He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God and to his honour.

(1.) He will love God the better. He begins the psalm somewhat abruptly with a profession of that which his heart was full of: I love the Lord (as Ps 18:1); and fitly does he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment and with God's end in all the gifts of his bounty to us. "I love him only, and nothing besides him, but what I love for him." God's love of compassion towards us justly requires our love of complacency in him.

(2.) He will love prayer the better: Therefore I will call upon him. The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness and our infirmities in prayer, and therefore why may we not? God answers prayer, to make us love it, and expects this from us, in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field when we have been so well treated in this? Nay, I will call upon him as long as I live (Heb., In my days), every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living we must continue praying. This breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

II. A more particular narrative of God's gracious dealings with him and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God, in his dealings with him, showed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record (Ps 116:5): "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous. He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me." Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No; our God is merciful, merciful to us, and it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.

(1.) Let us review David's experiences.

[1.] He was in great distress and trouble (Ps 116:3): The sorrows of death compassed me, that is, such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death. Perhaps the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, is called here the pains of hell, terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us therefore give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter.

These compassed him on every side; they arrested him, got hold upon him, so that he could not escape. Without were fightings, within were fears. "I found trouble and sorrow; not only they found me, but I found them." Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, a great deal of trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and passion; this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men. When God's providence makes our condition bad let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

[2.] In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, Ps 116:4. He tells us that he prayed: Then called I upon the name of the Lord; then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose:

"O Lord! I beseech thee, deliver my soul; save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul." Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, O Lord! I beseech thee.

When we come to the throne of grace we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words (Ps 116:5), Gracious is the Lord, may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request and encourage his faith and hope: "Lord deliver my soul, for thou art gracious and merciful, and that only I depend upon for relief."

[3.] God, in answer to his prayer, came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and in his compassion preserves the simple, Ps 116:6. Because they are simple (that is, sincere, and upright, and without guile) therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity. Though they are simple (that is, weak, and helpless, and unable to shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design) yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those who by faith put themselves under God's protection shall be safe.

(2.) Let David speak his own experience.

[1.] God supported him under his troubles: "I was brought low, was plunged into the depth of misery, and then he helped me, helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best, helped me to pray, else desire had failed, helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the simple ones whom God preserved, the poor man who cried and the Lord heard him," Ps 34:6.

Note, God's people are never brought so low but that everlasting arms are under them, and those cannot sink who are thus sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooses to help, De 32:36.

[2.] God saved him out of his troubles (Ps 116:8): Thou hast delivered, which means either the preventing of the distress he was ready to fall into or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered,

First, His soul from death.

Note, It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive; and the mercy is the more sensible if we have been at death's door and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction and yet ordered to return. That a life so often forfeited, and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified and shall be shortly glorified.

Secondly, His eyes from tears, that is, his heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causes grief, or, at least, from being swallowed up with over-much sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looses the mourners' sackcloth and girds them with gladness, then he delivers their eyes from tears, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Thirdly, His feet from falling, from falling into sin and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, to have God hold us by the right hand (Ps 72:2,23), so that though we enter into temptation we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, "Thou hast delivered my feet from falling into the grave, when I had one foot there already."

2. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, showed himself a good man. God had done all this for him, and therefore,

(1.) He will live a life of delight in God (Ps 116:7): Return unto thy rest, O my soul!

[1.] "Repose thyself and be easy, and do not agitate thyself with distrustful disquieting fears as thou hast sometimes done. Quiet thyself, and then enjoy thyself. God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee."

[2.] "Repose thyself in God. Return to him as thy rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature which is to be had in him only." God is the soul's rest; in him only it can dwell at ease; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He has dealt bountifully with us; he has provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it, at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy-laden, Mt 11:28.

Return to thy Noah; his name signifies rest, as the dove, when she found no rest, returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night, when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, Return to thy rest, O my soul!

(2.) He will live a life of devotedness to God (Ps 116:9): I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living, that is, in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note,

[1.] It is our great duty to walk before the Lord, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence and under his eye, to approve ourselves to him as a holy God by conformity to him as our sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will, and,

as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him. I am the almighty God; walk before me, Ge 17:1. We must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing.

[2.] The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living by the power, and patience, and tender mercy of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The land of the living is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for; it is a land of opportunity, which we should improve. Canaan is called the land of the living (Eze 26:20), and those whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision are in a special manner concerned to set the Lord always before them. If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.
3 The sorrows of death compassed me,
and the pains of hell gat hold upon me:
I found trouble and sorrow.
4 Then called I upon the name of the Lord;
O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
5 Gracious *is* the Lord, and righteous;
yea, our God *is* merciful.
6 The Lord preserveth the simple:
I was brought low, and he helped me.
7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.
8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
mine eyes from tears,
and my feet from falling.
9 I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.
10 I believed, therefore have I spoken:
I was greatly afflicted:

The Septuagint and some other ancient versions make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the Martyr's psalm, I suppose for the sake of Ps 116:15. Three things David here makes confession of:--

I. His faith (Ps 116:10): I believed, therefore have I spoken. This is quoted by the apostle (2Co 4:13) with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David believed the being, providence, and promise of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre: a great deal of hardship he went through in the belief of this, and therefore he spoke, spoke to God by prayer (Ps 116:4), by praise, Ps 116:12.

Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He spoke to himself; because he believed, he said to his soul, Return to thy rest. He spoke to others, told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him and he was greatly afflicted for it.

Note, Those that believe with the heart must confess with the mouth, for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, Ro 10:10,Ac 9:19,20. Those that live in hope of the kingdom of glory must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, Mt 10:22.

II. His fear (Ps 116:11): I was greatly afflicted, and then I said in my haste (somewhat rashly and inconsiderately--in my amazement (so some), when I was in a consternation--in my flight (so others), when Saul was in pursuit of me), All men are liars, all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers; his friends, who he thought would stand by him, deserted him and disowned him when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised

him the kingdom, but deceived him; for, says he, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul, 1Sa 27:1. Observe,

1 The faith of the best of saints is not perfect, nor always alike strong and active. David believed and spoke well (Ps 116:10), but now, through unbelief, he spoke amiss.

2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weary, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, Ps 39:1-3.

3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprise of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man, who sits in the seat of the scornful (Ps 1:1), sits and speaks against his brother, Ps 50:19,20.

4. What we speak amiss, in haste, we must by repentance unsay again (as David, Ps 31:22), and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no rash word of David's. He was greatly afflicted and forced to fly, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. No: he said, "All men are liars; as men of low degree are vanity, so men of high degree are a lie, and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed." In this sense the apostle seems to take it. Ro 3:4, Let God be true and every man a liar in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from man and cleave to God.

III. His gratitude, Ps 116:12, &c. God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and, in consideration hereof,

1. He enquires what returns he shall make (Ps 116:12): What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? Here he speaks,

(1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God--all his benefits. This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit (Ps 116:6,7), but in that one he saw many and that one brought many to mind, and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits towards him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies we should magnify them and speak highly of them.

(2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude: What shall I render unto the Lord? Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration for what he had received; we can no more pretend to give a recompense to God than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, What shall I render? Asks the priest, asks his friends, or rather asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to enquire, What shall we render?

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

(1.) He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, Ps 116:13,17.

[1.] "I will take the cup of salvation, that is, I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me;" this is called the cup of deliverance because drunk in memory of his deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a cup of blessing, at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table drank with him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand.

I will receive, First, The cup of affliction. Many good interpreters understand it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation. Php 1:19, This shall turn to my salvation; it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we, in ours, have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a cup of salvation.

"God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it; welcome his holy will." Herein David spoke the language of the Son of David. Joh 18:11, The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not take it and drink it? Secondly, The cup of consolation: "I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of my inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this."

[2.] I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, the thank-offerings which God required, Le 7:11,12, &c. Note, Those whose hearts are truly thankful will express their gratitude in thank-offerings. We must first give our ownselves to God as living sacrifices (Ro 12:1,2Co 8:5), and then lay out of what we have for his honour in works of piety and charity. Doing good and communicating are sacrifices with which God is well pleased (Heb 13:15,16) and this must accompany our giving thanks to his name. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do in return is to be bountiful to the poor, Ps 16:2,3. Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing?

[3.] I will call upon the name of the Lord. This he had promised (Ps 116:2) and here he repeats it, Ps 116:13 and again Ps 116:17. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him that we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and therefore, in gratitude for

former mercies, we must seek to him for further mercies, and continue to call upon him.

(2.) He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people (Ps 116:15): Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, so precious that he will not gratify Saul, nor Absalom, nor any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with in the depth of his distress and danger; and, the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it who might be in like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy, that have received mercy from him and show mercy for his sake.

The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour all they can to hasten it, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them; but it is precious in the sight of the Lord; their life is so (2Ki 1:13); their blood is so, Ps 72:14. God often wonderfully prevents the death of his saints when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dearly for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, Mt 23:35.

Though no man lays it to heart when the righteous perish, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

(3.) He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days. Having asked, What shall I render? here he surrenders himself, which was more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice (Ps 116:16): O Lord! truly I am thy servant. Here is,

[1.] The relation in which David professes to stand to God: "I am thy servant; I choose to be so; I resolve to be so; I will live and die in thy service." He had called God's people, who are dear to him, his saints; but, when he comes to apply it to himself, he does not say, Truly I am thy saint (that looked too high a title for himself), but, I am thy servant. David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant.

It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David does not here compliment God, as it is common among men to say, I am your servant, Sir. No; "Lord, I am truly thy servant; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so." And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of and which he was resolved to abide by: "I am thy servant, I am thy servant. Let others serve what master they will, truly I am they servant."

[2.] The ground of that relation. Two ways men came to be servants:--

First, by birth. "Lord, I was born in thy house; I am the son of thy handmaid, and therefore thine." It, is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obliges us to duty and is pleadable with God for mercy.

Secondly, By redemption. He that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant. "Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds; those sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection as well as obliged to thy work." The very bonds which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee. Patrick.

(4.) He will make conscience of paying his vows and making good what he had promised, not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself

under in the day of his affliction (Ps 116:14): I will pay my vows; and again, (Ps 116:18), now in the presence of all his people. Note, Vows are debts that must be paid, for it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. He will pay his vows,

[1.] Presently; he will not, like sorry debtors, delay the payment of them, or beg a day; but, "I will pay them now," Ec 5:4.

[2.] Publicly; he will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God he will do it in the presence of all his people; nor for ostentation, but to show that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending, in the midst of Jerusalem, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

11 I said in my haste,
All men *are* liars.
12 What shall I render unto the Lord
for all his benefits toward me?
13 I will take the cup of salvation,
and call upon the name of the Lord.
14 I will pay my vows unto the Lord
now in the presence of all his people.
15 Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.
16 O Lord, truly I *am* thy servant;
I *am* thy servant,
and the son of thine handmaid:
thou hast loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and will call upon the name of the Lord.
18 I will pay my vows unto the Lord
now in the presence of all his people,
19 in the courts of the Lord's house,
in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-117

Praise for the Lord's Merciful Kindness

1 O praise the Lord, all ye nations:
praise him, all ye people.

There is a great deal of gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it (Ro 15:11), where he quotes it as a proof that the gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumbling-block to the Jews. Why should that offend them when it is said, and they themselves had often sung it, Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and laud him, all you people.

Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people, by the Jews, according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles, according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here,

I The vast extent of the gospel church, Ps 117:1. For many ages in Judah only was God known and his name praised. The sons of Levi and the seed of Israel praised him, but the rest of the nations praised gods of wood and stone (Da 5:4), while there was no devotion at all paid, at least none openly, that we know of, to the living and true God. But here all nations are called to praise the Lord, which could not be applied to the Old-Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language they understood, and because, unless the people of the land became Jews and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them.

But the gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations, and by him the partition-wall is taken down, and those that were afar off are made nigh. This was the mystery which was hidden in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph 3:3,6. Observe here,

1. Who should be admitted into the church--all nations and all people. The original words are the same that are used for the heathen that rage and the people that imagine against Christ (Ps 2:1); those that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, Mt 24:14,Mk 16:15. All nations shall be called, and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be discipled.

2. How their admission into the church is foretold--by a repeated call to praise him. The tidings of the gospel, being sent to all nations, should give them cause to praise God; the institution of gospel-ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God; and the power of gospel-grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly favoured whom God invites by his word and inclines by his Spirit to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a name and a praise, Jer 13:11. See Re 7:9,10.

II The unsearchable riches of gospel-grace, which are to be the matter or our praise, Ps 117:2. In the gospel, those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most brightly in themselves and most comfortably to us; and the apostle, where he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God (Ro 15:8,9), for the truth of God and for his mercy. We that enjoy the gospel have reason to praise the Lord,

1. For the power of his mercy: His merciful kindness is great towards us; it is strong (so the word signifies); it is mighty for the pardon of mighty sins (Am 5:12) and for the working out of a mighty salvation.

2. For the perpetuity of his truth: The truth of the Lord endures for ever. It was mercy, mere mercy, to the Gentiles, that the gospel was sent among them. It was merciful kindness prevailing towards them above their deserts; and in it the truth of the Lord, of his promise made unto the fathers, endures for ever; for, though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts and his truth the foundation of all our hopes, and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
and the truth of the Lord *endureth* for ever.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-118

Thanksgiving for the Lord's Salvation

1 O give thanks unto the Lord; for *he is* good:
because his mercy *endureth* for ever.

It appears here, as often as elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God. He loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

I. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it (Ps 118:1): O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endures for ever, not only in the everlasting fountain, God

himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy, which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be everlasting monuments of it. Israel, and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God, were called upon to trust in God (Ps 115:9-11); here they are called upon to confess that his mercy endures for ever, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, Ps 118:2-4.

Priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song; if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that his mercy endures for ever, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

II. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might thence fetch both songs of praise and supports of faith, and both ways God would have the glory. David had, in his time, waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness. Let us therefore observe here,

1 The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon for the magnifying of God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions; but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was in distress (Ps 118:5), greatly straitened and at a loss; there were many that hated him (Ps 118:7), and this could not but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strove to gain the good affections of all. All nations compassed me about, Ps 118:10. All the nations adjacent to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David, when he had newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c. We read of his enemies round about;

they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him.

This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated (Ps 118:11): They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and, for a time, prevalent, in their attempts against him, and when put into disorder they rallied again and pushed on their design. They compassed me about like bees, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings; but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loses her life with her sting, Animamque in vulnere ponit--She lays down her life in the wound. Lord, how are those increased that trouble me! Two ways David was brought into trouble:--

(1.) By the injuries that men did him (Ps 118:13): Thou (O enemy!) hast thrust sore at me, with many a desperate push, that I might fall into sin and into ruin. Thrusting thou hast thrust at me (so the word is), so that I was ready to fall. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sorely at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency, that we may fall from our God and from our comfort in him; and, if Go had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts would have been fatal to us.

(2.) By the afflictions which God laid upon him (Ps 118:18): The Lord has chastened me sore. Men thrust at him for his destruction; God chastened him for his instruction. They thrust at him with the malice of enemies; God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a Father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he might partake of his holiness (Heb 12:10); howbeit, men, who were the instruments of it, meant not so, neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy, Isa 10:7.

What men intend for the greatest mischief God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand. God will sanctify the trouble to his people, as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs; and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies' thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus. Many there were that hated him, hated him without a cause. They compassed him about; Jews and Romans surrounded him. They thrust sorely at him; the devil did so when he tempted him; his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sorely, bruised him, and put him to grief, that by his stripes we might be healed.

2 The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress.

(1.) God heart his prayer (Ps 118:5): "He answered me with enlargements; he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer and yet gave more largely than I desired." He answered me, and set me in a large place (so we read it), where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive; and the large place was the more comfortable because he was brought to it out of distress, Ps 4:1.

(2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him: They are quenched as the fire of thorns (Ps 118:12), which burns furiously for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened. Such was the fury of David's enemies; such is the laughter of the fool, like the crackling of thorns under a pot (Ec 7:6), and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, any more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied.

They thrust sorely at him, but the Lord helped him (Ps 118:13), helped him to keep his feet and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies would, long before this, have been our ruin if God had not been our helper. (3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death (Ps 118:18):

"He has chastened me, but he has not given me over unto death, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies." To this St. Paul seems to refer in 2Co 6:9. As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sorely, immediately to despair of life, for God sometimes, in appearance, turns men to destruction, and yet says, Return; says unto them, Live.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ. God answered him, and set him in a large place. He quenched the fire of his enemies; rage, which did but consume themselves; for through death he destroyed him that had the power of death. He helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not give him over unto death that he did not leave him in the grave, nor suffer him to see corruption. Death had no dominion over him.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God; from his own experience he can say, It is better, more wise, more comfortable, and more safe, there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man, yea, though it be in princes, Ps 118:8,9. He that devotes himself to God's guidance and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make him easy than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

[1.] He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him and interest in him (Ps 118:6): "The Lord is on my side. He is a righteous God, and therefore espouses my righteous cause and will plead it." If we are on God's side, he is on ours; if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us (Ps 118:7): "The Lord takes my part, and stands up for me, with those that help me. He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them that he is all in all both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself nor could any friend I have in the world help me."

Thus (Ps 118:14), "The Lord is my strength and my song; that is, I make him so (without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my strength, both for doing and suffering, and in him I solace myself as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief), and, making him so, I find him so: he strengthens my heart with his graces and gladdens my heart with his comforts." If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us.

God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights. But, if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for, he be our strength and our song, he has become not only our Saviour, but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

[2.] He triumphs over his enemies. Now shall his head be lifted up above them; for, First, He is sure they cannot hurt him: "God is for me, and then I will not fear what man can do against me," Ps 118:6. He can set them all at defiance, and is not disturbed at any of their attempts. "They can do nothing to me but what God permits them to do; they can do no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God; they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good.

The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited, and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him." Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa 51:12. The apostle quotes this, with application to all Christians, Heb 13:6. They may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me; let him do his worst. Secondly, He is sure that he shall be too hard for them at last:

"I shall see my desire upon those that hate me (Ps 118:7); I shall see them defeated in their designs against me; nay, In the name of the Lord I will destroy them (Ps 118:10-12); I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them, and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself nor taking vengeance for myself." Thus he went forth against Goliath, in the name of the God of Israel, 1Sa 17:45. David says this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly.

[3.] He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory, and his life. First, Of his comfort (Ps 118:15): The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and movable; here we have no city, no continuing city. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules,

1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnests of eternal salvation, which has come to this house, Lu 19:9.

2. Where there is salvation there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called the joy of salvation, for in that there is abundant matter for joy.

3. Where there is rejoicing there ought to be the voice of rejoicing, that is, praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God and encouragement of others. Secondly, Of his victory:

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly (Ps 118:15) and is exalted; for (as some read it) it has exalted me. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them and therefore victoriously. For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak, and act but cowardly for ourselves; but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us, with jealousy and resolution, Isa 63:5,6. There is spirit, as well as strength, in all God's operations for his people. And, when God's right hand does valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises. Thirdly, Of his life (Ps 118:17):

"I shall not die by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, but live and declare the works of the Lord; I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation." Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to declare the works of God, for his honour and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking and that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand.

2 Let Israel now say,
that his mercy *endureth* for ever.
3 Let the house of Aaron now say,
that his mercy *endureth* for ever.
4 Let them now that fear the Lord say,
that his mercy *endureth* for ever.
5 I called upon the Lord in distress:
the Lord answered me,

and set me in a large place.
6 The Lord *is* on my side;
I will not fear:
what can man do unto me?
7 The Lord taketh my part with them that help me:
therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.
8 *It is* better to trust in the Lord
than to put confidence in man.
9 *It is* better to trust in the Lord
than to put confidence in princes.
10 All nations compassed me about:
but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.
11 They compassed me about;
yea, they compassed me about:
but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.
12 They compassed me about like bees;
they are quenched as the fire of thorns:
for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.
13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall:
but the Lord helped me.
14 The Lord *is* my strength and song,
and is become my salvation.
15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous:
the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.
16 The right hand of the Lord is exalted:
the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.
17 I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the Lord.
18 The Lord hath chastened me sore:
but he hath not given me over unto death.
19 Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go into them,
and I will praise the Lord:

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applies it directly to the chief

priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, Ac 4:11. Now observe here,

I The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, Ps 118:19-21.

1 The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him that cometh in the name of the Lord: Open to me the gates of righteousness. So the temple-gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh, as the sacrifices there offered are called sacrifices of righteousness. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances must become humble suitors to God for admission.

And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us we must go into them, must enter into the holiest, as far as we have leave, and praise the Lord. Our business within God's gates is to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. 2. He sees admission granted him (Ps 118:20):

This is the gate of the Lord, the gate of his appointing, into which the righteous shall enter; as if he had said, "The gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God and our praises are accepted; he is the way; there is no coming to the Father but by him (Joh 14:6), he is the door of the sheep (Joh 10:9); he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and come into God's righteousness, as the expression is, Ps 69:27.

The psalmist triumphs in the discovery that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. 3. He promises to give thanks to God for this favour (Ps 118:21): I will praise

thee. Those that saw Christ's day at so great a distance saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old-Testament saints for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

II The prophecy itself, Ps 118:22,23. This may have some reference to David's preferment; he was the stone which Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the headstone of the building. But its principal reference is to Christ; and here we have,

1. His humiliation. He is the stone which the builders refused; he is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, Da 2:34. He is a stone, not only for strength, and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious stone (1Pe 2:6), for the foundation of the gospel-church must be sapphires, Isa 54:11. This stone was rejected by the builders, by the rulers and people of the Jews (Ac 4:8,10,11); they refused to own him as the stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they denied him in the presence of Pilate (Ac 3:13) when they said, We have no king but Cæsar. They trampled upon this stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

2. His exaltation. He has become the headstone of the corner; he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner-stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence, as the author and finisher of our faith. Thus highly has God exalted him, because he humbled himself;

and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living. To me to live is Christ.

3. The hand of God in all this: This is the Lord's doing; it is from the Lord; it is with the Lord; it is the product of his counsel; it is his contrivance. Both the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus were his work, Ac 2:23,4:27,28.

He sent him, sealed him; his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did his Father's will; and this ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Christ's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.

III. The joy wherewith it is entertained and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

1. Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy (Ps 118:24): This is the day the Lord has made. The whole time of the gospel-dispensation, that accepted time, that day of salvation, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted; and so,

(1.) Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath: It is the day which the Lord has made, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished from other days; he has made it for man: it is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription.

(2.) The duty of the sabbath, the work of the day that is to be done in his day: We will rejoice and be glad in it, not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the

head of the corner. This we ought to rejoice in both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who, having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

2. Let the exalted Redeemer be met, and attended, with joyful hosannas, Ps 118:25,26.

(1.) Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince. Let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy, Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! This is like Vivat rex--Long live the king, and expresses a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. Hosanna signifies, Save now, I beseech thee.

[1.] "Lord, save me, I beseech thee; let this Saviour be my Saviour, and, in order to that, my ruler; let me be taken under his protection and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, Ps 72:3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let divine grace go on in my heart conquering and to conquer."

[2.] "Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done." Thus let prayer be made for him continually, Ps 72:15. On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made

his public entry into Jerusalem he was thus met by his well-wishers (Mt 21:9): Hosanna to the Son of David; long live King Jesus; let him reign for ever.

(2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, Ps 118:26.

[1.] Let them bless the prince with their praises: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Jesus Christ is he that cometh--ho erchomenos, he that was to come and is yet to come again, Re 1:8. He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, Blessed be he that cometh; we must rejoice that he has come; we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to, call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, Ps 45:2.

We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thy own." We must bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, Isa 52:7,Joh 13:20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church, for the ripening of things for his second coming, and then that he who has said, Surely I come quickly, would even so come.

[2.] Let them bless the people with their prayers: We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed to pronounce a blessing, in his name, upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, Eph 6:24. We assure you that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you. "You are blessed out of the house of the Lord, that is, with spiritual blessings in heavenly places (Eph 1:3), and therefore have reason to bless him who has thus blessed you."

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, Ps 118:27. Here is,

(1.) The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ: God is the Lord who has shown us light. God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he has promised and perfecting what he has begun, Ex 6:3. He has shown us light, that is, he has given us the knowledge of himself and his will. He has shined upon us (so some); he has favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he has given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. The day which the Lord has made brings light with it, true light.

(2.) The duty which this privilege calls for: Bind the sacrifice with cords, that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled upon the horns of the altar, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significancy here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices (Ro 12:1), to be bound to the altar, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

4. The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, Ps 118:28,29.

(1.) He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relation to him and interest in him: "Thou art my God, on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me and art owned by me; and therefore I will praise thee."

(2.) He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord. In him it is that God is good to man and that his mercy endures for ever; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it (Ps 118:1), for God's glory must be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. Hallowed by thy name, and thine is the glory. And this fitly closes a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption. Glory to God in the highest (Lu 2:14), for there is on earth peace, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, Lu 19:38. Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore glory in the highest.

20 this gate of the Lord,
into which the righteous shall enter.
21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me,
and art become my salvation.
22 The stone *which* the builders refused
is become the head *stone* of the corner.
23 This is the Lord's doing;
it *is* marvelous in our eyes.
24 This *is* the day *which* the Lord hath made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
25 Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord:
O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.
26 Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the Lord:
we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.
27 God *is* the Lord, which hath showed us light:
bind the sacrifice with cords,
even unto the horns of the altar.
28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee:
thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
29 O give thanks unto the Lord; for *he is* good:
for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

Psalms-119

The Excellencies of God’s Law

ALEPH

1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way,
who walk in the law of the Lord.

The psalmist here shows that godly people are happy people; they are, and shall be, blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue. He does not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be that we may attain to it, and that we are here told.

All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness. Now observe the characters of the happy people. Those are happy,

1. Who make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves, in their whole conversation, by that rule: They walk in the law of the Lord, Ps 119:1. God's word is a law to them, not only in this or that instance, but in the whole course of their conversation; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but press forward in them towards the mark, taking every step by rule and never walking at all adventures.

This is walking in God's ways (Ps 119:3), the ways which he has marked out to us and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our discourse, but we must make it the rule of our walk; we must walk in his

ways, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, Job 23:10,11,31:7.

2. Who are upright and honest in their religion--undefiled in the way, not only who keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, unspotted from the world, but who are habitually sincere in their intentions, in whose spirit there is no guile, who are really as good as they seem to be and row the same way as they look.

3. Who are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews that to them were committed the oracles of God; and blessed are those who preserve pure and entire that sacred deposit, who keep his testimonies as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye, so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those who shall come after them in this world.

Those who would walk in the law of the Lord must keep his testimonies, that is, his truths. Those will not long make conscience of good practices who do not adhere to good principles. Or his testimonies may denote his covenant; the ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony. Those do not keep covenant with God who do not keep the commandments of God.

4. Who have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion (Ps 119:2):

They seek him with their whole heart. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only; this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be, the rewarder, the reward, of all those who thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart, for that is

it that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart, for if the heart be divided between him and the world it is faulty.

5. Who carefully avoid all sin (Ps 119:3): They do no iniquity; they do not allow themselves in any sin; they do not commit it as those do who are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it. They are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways. Blessed and holy are those who thus exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence.

2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies,
and that seek him with the whole heart.
3 They also do no iniquity:
they walk in his ways.
4 Thou hast commanded *us*
to keep thy precepts diligently.

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law. The tempter would possess men with an opinion that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no, that, though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is. He taught our first parents to question the command: Hath God said, You shall not eat? And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this (Ps 119:4): Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts, to make religion our rule; and to keep them diligently, to make religion our business and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so (Ps 119:5): O that my ways were directed accordingly! not

only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather, in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments--not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of a good God:

"Thou wouldest have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them." This is the will of God, even our sanctification; and it should be our will. 3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, Ps 119:6. Note,

(1.) It is the undoubted character of every good man that he has a respect to all God's commandments. He has a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, aims to conform to it, is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he does in religion he does with a conscientious regard to the command, because it is his duty. He has respect to all the commandments, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority (Jam 2:10,11) and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness.

Those who have a sincere respect to any command will have a general respect to every command, to the commands of both testaments and both tables, to the prohibitions and the precepts, to those that concern both the inward and the outward man, both the head and the heart, to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties.

(2.) Those who have a sincere respect to all God's commandments shall not be ashamed, not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence towards God and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, 1Jo 3:21. They shall have credit before men; their honesty will be their honour. And they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself. Those that are upright may take the comfort of their uprightness. "As, if I be wicked, woe to me; so, if I be sincere, it is well with me."

5 O that my ways were directed
to keep thy statutes!
6 Then shall I not be ashamed,
when I have respect unto all thy commandments.
7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart,
when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

Here is, I. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to learn God's righteous judgments. He knew much, but he was still pressing forward and desired to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained; but as far as perfection is attainable in this life he reached towards it, and would not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, mighty in the scriptures.

II The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but,

1. That he might give God the glory of his learning: I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments, intimating that he could not learn unless God taught him, and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. Though Christ keeps a free-school, and teaches without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his word and for his Spirit; surely it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is.

Those have learned a good lesson who have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue; but those only are well learned in this mystery who have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart, that is, are inward with him in praising him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright.

2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning: When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who have come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them.

III. His prayer to God not to leave him: "O forsake me not! that is, leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then I shall not keep thy statutes." Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them; for then the tempter will be too hard for them. "Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost, for a time, withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final; for that is hell. O

forsake me not utterly! for woe unto me if God departs from me."

8 I will keep thy statutes:
O forsake me not utterly.
beth
9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

Here is,

1. A weighty question asked. By what means may the next generation be made better than this? Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day), there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way, youthful lusts (2Ti 2:22); these render their way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves.

Young men are concerned to cleanse their way--to get their hearts renewed and their lives reformed, to make clean, and keep clean, from the corruption that is in the world through lust, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves enquire by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually cleanse their way by taking heed thereto according to the word of God; and it is the honour of the word of God that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth.

(1.) Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it and resolve to conform

themselves to it; that will do more towards the cleansing of young men that the laws of princes or the morals of philosophers.

(2.) They must carefully apply that rule and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard, must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large (or by no rule at all) or choosing to themselves false rules: let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture-rules; so their way shall be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here is,

1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of and pleads with God: "I have sought thee, sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; for should not a people seek unto their God? If I have not yet found thee, I have sought thee, and thou never saidst, Seek in vain, nor wilt say so to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart, sought thee only, sought thee diligently."

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work: "Thou that hast inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffer me to wander from them." The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them and the more earnest

we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.

Here is,

1 The close application which David made of the word of God to himself: He hid it in his heart, laid it up there, that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it; he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a warm regard for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safely but in our hearts; if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us: but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2 The good uses he designed to make of it: That I might not sin against thee. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with, It is written, may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menaces.

12 Blessed *art* thou, O Lord:
teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David gives glory to God: "Blessed art thou, O Lord! Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me." In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

2. He asks grace from God: "Teach me thy statutes; give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness: Teach me thy statutes, that I may know how to bless thee, who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee."

13 With my lips have I declared
all the judgments of thy mouth.

Here, I. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him,

1. That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God (Ps 119:13): With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. This he did, not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment, according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he showed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy delight he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's word from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that good treasure in his heart, brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store things new and old. Those whose hearts are fed with the bread of life should with their lips feed many. He had prayed (Ps 119:12) that God would teach him; and here he pleads, "Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it;" for to him that has shall be given.

2. That he had entertained himself with it: "Lord, teach me thy statutes; for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them (Ps 119:14): I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments, in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that

path of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. I have rejoiced in this as much as in all riches, as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, Soul, take thy ease;" in true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

II. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he does that he will do, 2Co 11:12. Those that have found pleasure in the ways of God are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

1. He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts (Ps 119:15): I will meditate in thy precepts. He not only discoursed of them to others (many do that only to show their knowledge and authority), but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare, to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

2. He will have them always in his eye: I will have respect unto thy ways, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purpose unless we have respect to them as our rule and our good thoughts produce good works and good intentions in them.

3. He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoices in this light, but "I will still, I will for ever, delight myself in thy statutes, not only think of them, but do them with delight," Ps 119:16. David took more delight in God's statutes than in the pleasures of his court or the honours of his camp, more than in his sword or in his harp. When the law is written in the heart duty becomes a delight.

4. He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God: "I will not forget thy word, not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it when I have occasion to use it." Those that meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,
as *much as* in all riches.
15 I will meditate in thy precepts,
and have respect unto thy ways.
16 I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.
gime**l**
17 Deal bountifully with thy servant,
that I may live, and keep thy word.

We are here taught, 1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, Deal bountifully with me, that I may live. It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; if these be withheld, we die, or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered and we become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye: "Not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry, but that I may live and keep thy word, may observe it myself and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live the better I shall do."

18 Open thou mine eyes,
that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Observe here, 1. That there are wondrous things in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to behold, not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long hidden from the wise and prudent, but are now revealed unto babes. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is Wonderful. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach to look into them, 1Pe 1:12. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel must beg of him to open their eyes and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace cause the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God has said, Let there be light, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that those who at first saw men as trees walking may come to see all things clearly; and the more God opens our eyes the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.

19 I *am* a stranger in the earth:
hide not thy commandments from me.

Here we have, 1 The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition: I am a stranger in the earth. We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth and must so account ourselves. 2 The request he makes to God thereupon: Hide not thy commandments from me. He means more: "Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. I am a stranger, and

therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. I am a stranger here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence."

20 My soul breaketh for the longing
that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

David had prayed that God would open his eyes (Ps 119:18) and open the law (Ps 119:19); now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire for knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much. 1. His desire was importunate: My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments, or (as some read it) "It is taken up, and wholly employed, in longing for thy judgments; the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone if I want the word of God, the direction, converse, and comfort of it." 2. It was constant--at all times. It was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God as its necessary food, which there is no living without.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are* cursed,
which do err from thy commandments.

Here is, 1 The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad. They are proud; they magnify themselves above others. And yet that is not all: they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with and opposition to the will of God, as if their hearts, and tongues, and all, were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin, and the tenour of their lives is no better: They do err from thy commandments, as Israel, that did always err in their hearts; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder that they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? As Pharaoh, Who is the Lord? 2 The wretched case of

such. They are certainly cursed, for God resists the proud; and those that throw off the commands of the law lay themselves under its curse (Ga 3:10), and he that now beholds them afar off will shortly say to them, Go, you cursed. The proud sinners bless themselves; God curses them; and, though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world: Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows himself above them; and these rebukes are earnests of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God and pray the more earnestly that he might not err from God's commandments. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt;
for I have kept thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men, that they might be removed, or (as the word is) rolled, from off him. This intimates that they lay upon him, and that neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned. Some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean; others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill-spoken of. It intimates that they lay heavily upon him. Hard and foul words indeed break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, "Lord, remove them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty or discouraged in it."

God has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust. To him we may appeal as the assertor of right and avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise that he will clear up our righteousness as the light, Ps 37:6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God: For I have kept thy testimonies. He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but,

(1.) That he was jeered for well-doing. He was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, will be turned into the greater honour shortly.

(2.) That he was not jeered out of well-doing: "Lord, remove it from me, for I have kept thy testimonies notwithstanding." If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me:
but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

See here, 1. How David was abused even by great men, who should have known better his character and his case, and have been more generous: Princes did sit, sit in council, sit in judgment, and speak against me. What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood, when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and crucified the Lord of glory, 1Co 2:8. 2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses: he meditated in God's statutes, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man, he heard not. When they spoke against him, he found that in the word of God which spoke for him, and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. Those that have pleasure in communion with God may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

24 Thy testimonies also *are* my delight,
and my counselors.

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Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes (Ps 119:23), which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him. 1. Did the affliction make his sad? The word of God comforted him, and was his delight, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul when other comforts are embittered. 2. Did it perplex him? Was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? God's statutes were his counsellors, and they counselled him to bear it patiently and commit his cause to God. God's testimonies will be the best counsellors both to princes and private persons. They are the men of my counsel; so the word is. There will be found more safety and satisfaction in consulting them than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust:
quicken thou me according to thy word.

Here is, I. David's complaint. We should have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he says himself, My soul not only rolls in the dust, but cleaves to the dust, which is a complaint either,

1. Of his corruptions, his inclination to the world and the body (both which are dust), and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties. When he would do good evil was present with him. God intimated that Adam was not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, Dust thou art, Ge 3:19. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's of a body of death that he carried about with him. The remainders of in-dwelling corruption are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul. Or,

2. Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind or outward trouble. Without were fightings, within were fears, and

both together brought him even to the dust of death (Ps 22:15), and his soul clave inseparably to it.

II. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition: "Quicken thou me according to thy word. By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness and make me lively in my devotion." Note, When we find ourselves dull we must go to God and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's word as a means of quickening (for the words which God speaks, they are spirit and they are life to those that receive them), and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me:
teach me thy statutes.

We have here, 1 The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God: "I have declared my ways, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises." Thus Jephthah uttered all his words, and Hezekiah spread his letters, before the Lord. "I have declared my ways, my wants, and burdens, and troubles, that I meet with in my way, or my sins, my by-ways (I have made an ingenuous confession of them), and thou heardest me, heardest patiently all I had to say, and tookedst cognizance of my case." It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1Jo 5:14,15.

2. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy, not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way: Teach me thy statutes, that is, Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways he did not say, "Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be;" but, "Now, Lord, tell

me my duty; let me know what thou wouldst have me to do as the case stands." Note, Those who in all their ways acknowledge God may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God is by learning his statutes and walking intelligently in the way of his precepts. See 1Jo 1:6,7.

3. The good use he would make of this for the honour of God and the edification of others: "Let me have a good understanding of the way of thy precepts; give me a clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge of divine things; so shall I talk with the more assurance, and the more to the purpose, of thy wondrous works." We can talk with a better grace of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts and walk in that way.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:
so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.
28 My soul melteth for heaviness:
strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

Here is, 1. David's representation of his own griefs: My soul melteth for heaviness, which is to the same purport with Ps 119:25, My soul cleaveth to the dust. Heaviness in the heart of man makes it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its supplication before God.

2. His request for God's grace.

(1.) That God would enable him to bear his affliction well and graciously support him under it: "Strengthen thou me with strength in my soul, according to thy word, which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens, of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail.

Strengthen me according to that word (De 33:25), As thy days so shall thy strength be."

(2.) That God would keep him from using any unlawful indirect means for the extricating of himself out of his troubles (Ps 119:29): Remove from me the way of lying. David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin; he had, in a strait, cheated Ahimelech (1Sa 21:2), and Achish, 1Sa 21:13,27:10. Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with the colour of a pious fraud and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

(3.) That he might always be under the guidance and protection of God's government: Grant me thy law graciously; grant me that to keep me from the way of lying. David had the law written with his own hand, for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use (De 17:18); but he prays that he might have it written in his heart; for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. "Grant it me more and more." Those that know and love the law of God cannot but desire to know it more and love it better. "Grant it me graciously;" he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those whom he makes gracious by giving them his law.

29 Remove from me the way of lying:
and grant me thy law graciously.
30 I have chosen the way of truth:
thy judgments have I laid *before me*.

Observe, I. That those who will make anything to purpose of their religion must first make it their serious and

deliberate choice; so David did: I have chosen the way of truth. Note,

1 The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the principles it is founded on are principles of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. 2. We must choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way, which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

II. That those who have chosen the way of truth must have a constant regard to the word of God as the rule of their walking: Thy judgments have I laid before me, as he who learns to write lays his copy before him, that he may write according to it, as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the word in our heart by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

III. That those who make religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully: "I have stuck to thy testimonies with unchanged affection and an unshaken resolution, stuck to them at all times, through all trials. I have chosen them, and therefore I have stuck to them." Note, The choosing Christian is likely to be the steady Christian; while those that are Christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.

IV. That those who stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means this when he begs, "Lord, put me not to shame; that is, never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion."

V. That the more comfort God gives us the more duty he expects from us, Ps 119:32. Here we have,

1. His resolution to go on vigorously in religion: I will run the way of thy commandments. Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither and be still pressing forward. It concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness. We then run the way of our duty, when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and lay aside every weight, Heb 12:1.

2. His dependence upon God for grace to do so: "I shall then abound in thy work, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom (for that is called largeness of heart, 1Ki 4:29), when he sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies:
O Lord, put me not to shame.
32 I will run the way of thy commandments,
when thou shalt enlarge my heart.
he
33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes;
and I shall keep it *unto* the end.

Here, I. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his teacher; he had prophets, and wise men, and priests, about him, and was himself well instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that none teaches like him, Job 36:22. Observe here,

1. What he desires to be taught, not the notions or language of God's statutes, but the way of them--"the way of applying them to myself and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, let me hear the word behind me, saying, This is the way, walk in it" Isa 30:21.

2. How he desires to be taught, in such a way as no man could teach him: Lord, give me understanding. As the

God of nature, he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray that, as the God of grace, he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of nature, we are averse to: Give me understanding, an enlightened understanding; for it is as good to have no understanding at all as not to have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the word answer the end unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, 1Jo 5:20.

II. He promises faithfully that he would be a good scholar. If God would teach him, he was sure he should learn to good purpose: "I shall keep thy law, which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and therefore I earnestly desire that I may be taught." If God, by his Spirit, give us a right and good understanding, we shall be,

1. Constant in our obedience: "I shall keep it to the end, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity." It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey.

2. Cordial in our obedience: I shall observe it with my whole heart, with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way which the whole heart goes the whole man goes; and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law;
yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.
35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;
for therein do I delight.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for it is God that works in us both to

will and to do, as well as to understand, what is good, Php 2:13. Both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

I The grace he prays for.

1. That God would make him able to do his duty: "Make me to go; strengthen me for every good work." Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causes us to walk in his statutes (Eze 36:27), and this is that which David here begs.

2. That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it: "Incline my heart to thy testimonies, to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty as that which is agreeable to the new nature and really advantageous to me." Duty is then done with delight when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it the more earnest we must be for that grace.

II The sin he prays against, and that is covetousness: "Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness." That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin. Those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God. See in what way God deals with men, not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good and an aversion to that which is evil.

III. His plea to enforce this prayer: "Lord, bring me to, and keep me in, the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight; and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments; wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thy own work?"

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,
and not to covetousness.

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;
and quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, 1. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity. The honours, pleasures, and profits of the world are the vanities, the aspect and prospect of which draw multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness. The eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore, as we ought to make a covenant with our eyes, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon, that which is dangerous (Job 31:1), so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

2. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heaven-ward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: "Quicken thou me in thy way; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit." Beholding vanity deadens us and slackens our pace; a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view will not rid ground; but, if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant,
who *is devoted* to thy fear.

Here is 1 The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is God's servant, subject to his law and employed in his work, that is, devoted to his fear, given up to his direction and disposal, and taken up with high thoughts of him and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants who, though they have their infirmities and defects, are sincerely devoted to the fear of God and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear; they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2 The confidence that a good man has towards God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. Those that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would establish his word to them, that is, that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so aspiring as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear:
for thy judgments *are* good.

Here, 1. David prays against reproach, as before, Ps 119:22. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, which would blemish his own reputation and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to deliver him from all his transgressions, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared (Ps 39:8); or he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their lying lips be put to silence.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments: "Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and thy judgments are right and good, just and kind, to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind

censures of men." It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while he that judges us is the Lord. Or thus: "Thy word, and ways, and thy holy religion, are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, Lord, turn them away; let not religion be wounded through my side."

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:
quicken me in thy righteousness.

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Here, 1. David professes the ardent affection he had to the word of God: "I have longed after thy precepts, not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more and do them better, and am still pressing forward towards perfection." Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts: "Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected."

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. "Thou hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me, that I may prosecute it; quicken me in thy righteousness, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise." Where God has wrought to will he will work to do, and where he has wrought to desire he will satisfy the desire.

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord,
even thy salvation, according to thy word.

Here is, 1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. "Lord, thou art my Saviour; I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy; let thy salvation come to me. Hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses, and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it."

2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us:--

(1.) The grace of God: Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation. Our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude 1:21. "Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me."

(2.) The promise of God: "Let it come according to thy word, thy word of promise. I trust in thy word, and therefore may expect the performance of the promise." We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him: "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproaches me for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me." When God saves those out of their troubles who trusted in him he effectually silences those who would have shamed that counsel of the poor (Ps 14:6), and their reproaches will be for ever silenced when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me:
for I trust in thy word.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;
for I have hoped in thy judgments.

Here is, 1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to speak a word in season for the glory of God: Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth. He means, "Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth; let me have the wisdom and courage which are necessary to enable me both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury things new

and old, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it."

We have need to pray to God that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, that the word of truth was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, "Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let my always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty."

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no stead.

(1.) David professes his confidence in God: "Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, for I have hoped in those judgments of thy mouth, and, if they be not at hand, my support and defence have departed from me."

(2.) He professes his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace: "So shall I keep thy law continually. If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will." Thus shall the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work, 2Ti 3:17,Col 3:16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law,

[1.] Continually, without trifling. God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long.

[2.] For ever and ever, without backsliding. We must never be weary of well-doing. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we keep his law for ever and ever. Or thus: "Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred deposit to the rising generation (2Ti 2:2) and by them it may be

transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept for ever and ever," that is, from one generation to another, according to that promise (Isa 59:21), My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed.

44 So shall I keep thy law continually
for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at liberty:
for I seek thy precepts.

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God: "I seek thy precepts, Ps 119:45. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to understand what the will of the Lord is and to discover the intimations of his mind. I seek thy precepts, for I have loved them, Ps 119:47,48. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me." All that love God love his government and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promises himself here in the strength of God's grace:--

(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty: "I will walk at liberty, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly." The service of sin is perfect slavery; the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants; conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, Joh 8:32,36,Lu 1:74,75.

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings. Before David came to the crown kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul, and Achish; but, if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his

hope upon them and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, Da 3:16,Ac 4:20.

After David came to the crown kings were sometimes his companions; they visited him and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of every thing but religion, for fear of affronting them and making his conversation uneasy to them. No; God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of God's testimonies, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty (Ps 119:47): "I will delight myself in thy commandments, in conversing with them, in conforming to them. I will never be so well pleased with myself as when I do that which is pleasing to God." The more delight we take in the service of God the nearer we come to the perfection we aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty: I will lift up my hands to thy commandments, which denotes not only a vehement desire towards them (Ps 143:6) --"I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go;" but a close application of mind to the observance of them--"I will lay my hands to the command, not only to praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, that is, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it." The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be lifted up, Heb 12:12.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty (Ps 119:48): "I will meditate in thy statutes, not only entertain myself with thinking of them as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner." By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,
and will not be ashamed.
47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments,
which I have loved.
48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments,
which I have loved;
and I will meditate in thy statutes.
zain
49 Remember the word unto thy servant,
upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided:-- 1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped: "Lord, I desire no more than that thou wouldst remember thy word unto thy servant, and do as thou hast said;" see 1Ch 17:23. "Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel. Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word." Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea. "Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken; and wilt thou not make it good?" Ge 32:9,Ex 33:12. 2. That God, who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Has God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us will,

according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us.

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction:
for thy word hath quickened me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word. 1. As a means of his sanctification: "Thy word has quickened me. It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me to that which is good when I was backward and averse to it, and it has quickened me in that which is good when I was cold and indifferent." 2. Therefore as a means of his consolation when he was in affliction and needed something to support him: "Because thy word has quickened my at other times, it has comforted me then." The word of God has much in it that speaks comfort in affliction; but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. If through grace it make us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision:
yet have I not declined from thy law.

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it,

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, the proud had him greatly in derision; they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it cant, for his seriousness, and called it mopishness, for his strictness, and called it needless preciseness. They were the proud that sat in the scorner's seat and valued themselves on so doing.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion: "They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me: I have not declined from thy law for all this; but, if this be to be vile"

(as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision), "I will be yet more vile." He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never shrink from any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord;
and have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself. He not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully. It did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, save only in the matter of his God, Da 6:5. Those that are derided for their adherence to God's law may comfort themselves with this, that the reproach of Christ will prove, in the end, greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt.

2. That which he comforted himself with was the remembrance of God's judgments of old, the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me
because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, 1 The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked: They forsake thy law. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is downright forsaking it and throwing it off.

2 The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; it frightened him, it put him into an amazement. He trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it both to the sinners themselves (and cried out, O gather not my soul with sinners! let my enemy be as the wicked) and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was afraid would be thereby sunk and ruined. He does not say, "Horror has taken hold on me because of their cruel designs against me," but "because of the contempt they put on God and his law." Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, Jer 5:30,23:14,Ho 6:10,Jer 2:12.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs
in the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, 1. David's state and condition; he was in the house of his pilgrimage, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble (he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly) or as his lot in common with all. This world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle; it is our inn. We must confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, who are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage.

2. His comfort in this state: "Thy statutes have been my songs, with which I here entertain myself," as travellers are wont to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God. God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man is accustomed to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage-solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and put gladness into his heart more than those have that chant to the sound of the viol, Am 6:5. Is

any afflicted then? Let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow, Ps 138:5.

55 I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night,
and have kept thy law.

Here is, 1 The converse David had with the word of God; he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind. God's name is the discovery he has made of himself to us in and by his word. This is his memorial unto all generations, and therefore we should always keep it in memory--remember it in the night, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping David was remembering God's name, and, by repeating that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind.

2 The conscience be made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law: I remembered thy name in the night, and therefore was careful to keep thy law all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection if our own hearts can witness for us that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law!

3. The advantage he got by it (Ps 119:56): This I had because I kept thy precepts. Some understand this indefinitely: This I had (that is I had that which satisfied me; I had every thing that is comfortable) because I kept thy precepts. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and that they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before: "I had the comfort of keeping thy law because I kept it."

Note, God's work is its own wages. A heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do the more we may do, and shall do, in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit is made more fruitful, Joh 15:2.

56 This I had,
because I kept thy precepts.

CHETH

57 *Thou art* my portion, O Lord:
I have said that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man. 1. He makes the favour of God his felicity: Thou art my portion, O Lord! Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world. Their portion is in this life; they look no further; they desire no more; these are their good things, Lu 16:25. But all that are sanctified take the Lord for the portion of their inheritance and their cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter: "Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy."

2. He makes the law of God his rule: "I have said that I would keep thy words; and what I have said by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end." Note, Those that take God for their portion must take him for their prince, and swear allegiance to him; and, having promised to keep his word, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, Ps 39:1.

58 I entreated thy favor with *my* whole heart:
be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David, having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe, 1. What he prayed for. Having taken God for his portion, he entreated his favour, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble suppliants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us and smile upon us. He prays, "Be merciful to me, in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future."

2. How he prayed--with his whole heart, as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for. The gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it. I will not let thee go except thou bless me. 3. What he pleaded--the promise of God: "Be merciful to me, according to thy word. I desire the mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it." Those that are governed by the precepts of the word and are resolved to keep them (Ps 119:57) may plead the promises of the word and take the comfort of them.

59 I thought on my ways,
and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

David had said he would keep God's word (Ps 119:57), and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

1. He thought on his ways. He thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet (Pr 4:26), that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures. He thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed abiding thought. Some make it an allusion to those who work embroidery, who are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw, or to those who cast up their accounts, who reckon with themselves, What do I owe? What am I worth? "I thought not on my wealth (as the covetous man, Ps 49:11) but on my ways, not on what I have, but what I do:" for what we do will follow us into another world when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways who never think of their own: but let every man prove his own work.

2. He turned his feet to God's testimonies. He determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies. He turned not only his eye to them, but his feet, his affections to the love of God's word and his conversation to the practice of it. The bent

and inclinations of his soul were towards God's testimonies and his conversation was governed by them Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions.

3. He did this immediately and without demur (Ps 119:60): I made haste and delayed not. When we are under convictions of sin we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the prosecution of them, as Felix did, to a more convenient season. When we are called to duty we must lose no time, but set about it to-day, while it is called to-day. Now this account which David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day (he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay), or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator; that blessed change was, by the grace of God, thus wrought. Note,

(1.) Conversion begins in serious consideration, Eze 18:28,Lu 15:17.

(2.) Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?

60 I made haste, and delayed not
to keep thy commandments.
61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me:
but I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, 1 The malice of David's enemies against him. They were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness. There were bands or troops of them confederate against him. They did him all the mischief they could; they robbed him; having endeavoured to take away his good name (Ps 119:51), they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in time of war or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects, Absalom his palace, and the

Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of. David, though a man of war, could not keep his own. Thieves break through and steal.

2 The testimony of David's conscience for him that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him: But I have not forgotten thy law. No care nor grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is, in this psalm, much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See, 1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings. He does not say, "I will give thanks because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of," but, "Because of thy righteous judgments, all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of." We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour and the accomplishing of his word in all he does in the government of the world.

2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings. He would rise at midnight to give thanks to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God that when others were in their beds he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God in the courts of the Lord's house, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to

God, in actual adorations, not deferring, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63 I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee,
and of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love he had to God; here he expresses the great love he had to the people of God; and observe, 1. Why he loved them; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as feared God and kept his precepts, and so did him honour and helped to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is then sincere when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them and the service they do to him. 2. How he showed his love to them: He was a companion of them. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together. He sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows (Heb 10:33); he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his experiences to them, and consulted theirs. He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any, that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, Ps 15:4,Jam 2:1.

64 The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy:
teach me thy statutes.

teth

Here, 1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures according to their necessities and capacities; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which

he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy. Not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures, taste of God's goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works.

2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity: "Teach me thy statutes. Thou feedest the young ravens that cry, with food proper for them; and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without? The earth is full of thy mercy; and is not heaven too? Wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places?" A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Surely he that will not let his birds be unfed will not let his children be untaught.

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord,
according unto thy word.

Here, 1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along: Thou hast dealt well with thy servant. However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt well with us, better than we deserve, and all in love and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations. He has done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. Thou hast dealt well with me, not only according to thy mercy, but according to thy word. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise and are seen flowing from that fountain.

2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge, that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me." Teach me a good taste (so the word signifies), a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; for the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat. We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have spiritual senses exercised, Heb

5:14. Many have knowledge who have little judgment; those who have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan and well furnished for the service of God and their generation.

3. This petition is backed with a plea: "For I have believed thy commandments, received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, teach me." Where God has given a good heart a good head too many in faith be prayed for.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge:
for I have believed thy commandments.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray:
but now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he had experienced,

1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition: "Before I was afflicted, while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, I went astray from God and my duty." Sin is going astray; and we are most apt to wander from God when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity; it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See Ps 30:6. It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how and wherein we went astray before we were afflicted, that we may answer the end of the affliction.

2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state: "Now have I kept thy word, and so have been recovered from my wanderings." God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first and then to his father.

68 Thou *art* good, and doest good:
teach me thy statutes.

Here, 1. David praises God's goodness and gives him the glory of it: Thou art good and doest good. All who have any knowledge of God and dealings with him wilt own that he does good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong, to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God does every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration and with holy love and thankfulness.

2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the guidance and influence of it: Teach me thy statutes. "Lord, thou doest good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me,--Instruct me in my duty, incline me to it, and enable me to do it. Thou art good, and doest good; Lord, teach me thy statutes, that I may be good and do good, may have a good heart and live a good life." It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will teach them his way because he is good and upright, Ps 25:8.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me:
but I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty: They have forged a lie against me. Thus they aimed to take away his good name. Nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. Those that were proud envied David's reputation, because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him. They took a pride in trampling upon him. They therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but expose him to contempt.

Their wicked wit forged lies, invented storied which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs.

And what did David do when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silently. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution: "Let them say what they will, I will keep thy precepts, and not dread their reproach."

2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty. Their heart is as fat as grease. The proud are at ease (Ps 123:4); they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them, (1.) Senseless, secure, and stupid; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used, Isa 6:10. Make the heart of this people fat. They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God or his rod.

(2.) Sensual and voluptuous: "Their eyes stand out with fatness (Ps 73:7); they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them. I would not change conditions with them. I delight in thy law; I build my security upon the promises of God's word and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights." The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease:
but I delight in thy law.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted;
that I might learn thy statutes.

See here, 1. That it has been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked lived in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction. Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people, Ps 73:10. 2. That it has been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally: It was good for me; many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to which otherwise would have been unlearnt and undone. Therefore God visited him

with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered: the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. The rod and reproof give wisdom.

72 The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me
than thousands of gold and silver.

JOD

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, an the profit did so much counterbalance the loss, he was really a gainer by them; for God's law, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was better to him than all the gold and silver which he lost by his affliction.

1. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, Therefore he valued the law, because it is the law of God's mouth, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

2. He had a great deal of gold and silver in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he valued it. His riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read, and believe, David's Psalms and Solomon's Ecclesiastes, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:
give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Here, 1. David adores God as the God of nature and the author of his being: Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, Job 10:8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, Ps 139:15,16. "Thy hands have not only made me, and given me a being, otherwise I should never have been, but fashioned me,

and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties;" and we must own that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

2. He addresses himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, "Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation and live to some purpose: Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men is by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul and gains possession of it.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me;
because I have hoped in thy word.

Here is, 1 The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation: "I have hoped in thy word; and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that maketh not ashamed; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last." 2 The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation: "Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me relieved by my hope in thy word and delivered according to my hope." The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. Paul often expressed the hope that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, 2Co 1:11,4:15. Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75 I know, O Lord, that thy judgments *are* right,
and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Still David is in affliction, and being so he owns, 1. That his sin was justly corrected: I know, O Lord! that thy judgments are right, are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he does us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but most acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his judgments are right, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good: "In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me, pursuant to the great design of my salvation." It is easier to own, in general, that God's judgments are right, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with application, "Even my afflictions are just and kind."

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

Here is, 1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. Those that own the justice of God in their afflictions (as David had done, Ps 119:75) may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's merciful kindness (Ps 119:76), his tender mercies, Ps 119:77. He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. "Let these come to me," that is, "the evidence of them (clear it up to me that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store), and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance."

2 The benefit he promised himself from God's lovingkindness: "Let it come to me for my comfort (Ps 119:76); that will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me whatever grieves me." Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy:

"Let it come to me, that I may live, that is, that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. In his favour is life; in his frowns are death." A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him. 3. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads,

(1.) God's promise: "Let me have thy kindness, according to thy word unto thy servant, the kindness which thou hast promised and because thou hast promised it." Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him.

(2.) His own confidence and complacency in that promise: "Thy law is my delight; I hope in thy word and rejoice in that hope." Note, Those that delight in the law of God may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live:
for thy law *is* my delight.
78 Let the proud be ashamed;
for they dealt perversely with me without a cause:
but I will meditate in thy precepts.

Here David shows,

I. How little he valued the will--will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even those that deal most fairly may meet with those that deal perversely. But David regarded it not, for,

1. He knew it was without cause, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt us, and therefore should not move us.

2. He could pray, in faith, that they might be ashamed of it; God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "Let them be ashamed, that is, let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin."

3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. "However they deal with me, I will meditate in thy precepts, and entertain myself with them."

II. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous he was to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them and communion with them: Let those that fear thee turn to me. He does not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good.

Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, those that feared God grew strange to him and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them turn to me again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, that have known thy testimonies, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me,
and those that have known thy testimonies.
80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes;
that I be not ashamed.

caph

Here is, 1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten and deceitful, that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with the subject to the power of it,--that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health. 2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: That I be not ashamed. Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not: "Let my heart be sound, that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. Let my heart be sound, that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day."

81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation:
but I hope in thy word.

Here we have the psalmist,

I. Longing for help from heaven: My soul faints; my eyes fail. He longs for the salvation of the Lord and for his word, that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but for the objects of faith, salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old-Testament church; the souls of the faithful even fainted to see that salvation of which the prophets testified. (1Pe 1:10); their eyes failed for it.

Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch and they could not stedfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long so, his eyes cried our, "When wilt thou comfort me? Comfort me with thy salvation, comfort me with thy word." Observe,

1 The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season.

2 The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them. 3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon that salvation, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. "Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon."

II. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come, and tarrying till it come: But I hope in thy word; and but for hope the heart would break. When the eyes fail yet the faith must not; for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word,
saying, When wilt thou comfort me?
83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke;
yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him,

1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity: Lord, make haste to help me, for I have become like a bottle in the smoke, a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up. David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus does man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with smoke, is thrown by, and there is no more use of it. Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David, in his low estate, looked upon as a despised broken vessel, and as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. Good men,

when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.

2. Because, though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise: Yet do I not forget thy statutes. Whatever our outward condition is we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some drink and forget the law (Pr 31:5), so others weep and forget the law; but we must in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance; and, if we be mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

84 How many *are* the days of thy servant?
When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Here, I. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself (he bore no malice to any), but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and would repay (Ro 12:19), as the God that sits in the throne judging right. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people, tribulation to those that troubled them; Enoch foretold it (Jude 1:14), whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to; and that day we are to look for and pray for the hastening of. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble: "How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few" (so some); "therefore let them not all be miserable, and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, before I go hence and shall be seen no more." Or rather, "The days of my affliction are many; thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elect's sake, the days of trouble are shortened. O let the days of my trouble be

shortened; I am thy servant; and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until thou have mercy on me."

85 The proud have digged pits for me,
which *are* not after thy law.

David's state was herein a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians that he was grievously persecuted; as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm, which complain of this, as those here. Here observe,

I The account he gives of his persecutors and their malice against him.

1. They were proud, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins.

2. They were unjust: They persecuted him wrongfully; so far was he from giving them any provocation that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries.

3. They were spiteful: They dug pits for him, which intimates that they were deliberate in their designs against him and that what they did was of malice prepense; it intimates likewise that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom, that they were industrious and would refuse no pains to do him a mischief, and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do take wild beasts, Ps 35:7. Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman.

4. They herein showed their enmity to God himself. The pits they dug for him were not after God's law; he means they were very much against his law, which forbids to devise evil to our neighbour, and has particularly said,

Touch not my anointed. The law appointed that, if a man dug a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief (Ex 21:33,34), much more when it was dug with a mischievous design.

5. They carried on their designs against him so far that they had almost consumed him upon earth; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that those who shall shortly be consummate in heaven may be, for the present, almost consumed on earth; and it is of the Lord's mercies (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of mercy) that they are not quite consumed. But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

II. His application to God in his persecuted state.

1. He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered: "However it be, all thy commandments are faithful, and therefore, whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it." True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. "Men are false; I find them do; men of low degree, men of high degree, are so, there is no trusting them. But all thy commandments are faithful; on them I may rely."

2. He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him: "They persecute me; help thou me; help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles." God help me is an excellent comprehensive prayer; it is a pity that it should ever be used lightly and as a by-word.

III. His adherence to his duty notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors (Ps 119:87): But I forsook not thy precepts. That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this

world than forsake the word of God, would sooner lose his life than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

86 All thy commandments *are* faithful:
they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.
87 They had almost consumed me upon earth;
but I forsook not thy precepts.
88 Quicken me after thy loving-kindness;
so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Iamed

Here is, 1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty. His constant desire and design are to keep the testimony of God's mouth, to keep to it as his rule and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. This we must keep, whatever we lose. 2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein: "Quicken me after thy lovingkindness (make me alive and make me lively), so shall I keep thy testimonies," implying that otherwise he should not keep them. We cannot proceed, nor persevere, in the good way, unless God quicken us and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, Quicken me in thy righteousness (Ps 119:40); but here, Quicken me after thy lovingkindness. The surest token of God's good-will toward us is his good work in us.

89 For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.

Here, 1 The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God and of all his counsels: "For ever, O Lord! thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself (so some read it); thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. Thy word, by which the heavens were made, is settled there in the abiding products of it;" or the settling of God's word in heaven is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endures for ever. It is settled in heaven, that is, in the secret counsel of God, which is hidden in himself and is far above out of our sight, and is immovable, as mountains of brass. And his revealed will is as firm as his

secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall fall to the ground; for it follows here, Thy faithfulness is unto all generations, that is, the promise is sure to every age of the church and it cannot be antiquated by lapse of time. The promises that look ever so far forward shall be performed in their season.

2. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature: Thou hast established the earth for ever and it abides; it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the agitations of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, it remains unmoved. "They" (the heavens and the earth and all the hosts of both) "continue to this day according to thy ordinances; they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them; they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended." The stability of the ordinances of the day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, Jer 31:35,36,33:20,21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah (Ge 8:22) that day and night, summer and winter, observe a steady course.

"They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants; they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both are thy servants." All the creatures are, in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burden of the earth?

90 Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations:
thou hast established the earth,
and it abideth.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances:
for all *are* thy servants.

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights,

I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, 1 The great distress that David was in. He was in affliction, and ready to perish in his affliction, not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him, that he had not perished, that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles, but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet, if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, We have cleansed our hands in vain; or, What profit is it that we have served God?

2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight,

(1.) It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity.

(2.) It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time if we please.

93 I will never forget thy precepts:
for with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, 1. A very good resolution: "I will never forget thy precepts, but will always retain a remembrance of and regard to thy word as my rule." It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion, and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it and persevere in it.

2. A very good reason for it: "For by them thou hast quickened me; not only they are quickening, but,"

(1.) "They have been so to me; I have found them so." Those speak best of the things of God who speak by experience, who can say that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them.

(2.) "Thou hast made them so;" the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us. Ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but, ordinarily, the grace of God works by the word and makes use of it as a means of quickening, and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God has put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found and hope still to find such benefit by. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections. If we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that does really quicken us to and in our duty is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain, it is well.

94 I *am* thine, save me;
for I have sought thy precepts.

Here, 1. David claims relation to God: "I am thine, devoted to thee and owned by thee, thine in covenant." He does not say, Thou art mine (as Dr. Manton observes), though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge; but, I am thine, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor does he say, I am thus, but, I am thine, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him: "I am thine, not my own, not the world's." 2. He proves his claim: "I have sought thy precepts; I have carefully enquired concerning my duty and diligently endeavoured to do it." This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it. 3. He improves his claim: "I am thine; save me; save me

from sin, save me from ruin." Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his may be sure that he will protect them and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, Mal 3:18.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:
but I will consider thy testimonies.

Here, 1. David complains of the malice of his enemies: The wicked (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) have waited for me to destroy me. They were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were confident (they expected, so some read it), that they should destroy him; they thought themselves sure of their prey.

2. He comforts himself in the word of God as his protection: "While they are contriving my destruction, I consider thy testimonies, which secure to me my salvation." God's testimonies are then likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection :
but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

MEM

Here we have David's testimony from his own experience,

1. Of the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy: I have seen an end of all perfection. Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome, Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken, Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled, Absalom, the fairest, deformed; and, in short, he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection. He saw it by faith; he saw it by observation; he saw an end of the perfection of the creature both in respect of sufficiency (it was scanty and defective; there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do) and in respect of

continuance; it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction: But thy commandment is broad, exceedingly broad. The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burdens, wants, and grievances, and has that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

97 O how love I thy law !
It is my meditation all the day.

Here is, 1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God: O how love I thy law! He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptations of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

2. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love we love to think of; by this it appeared that David loved the word of God that it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and all the day; some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts, so full was he of the word of God.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me
wiser than mine enemies:

for they are ever with me.

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the Israelites indeed.

I The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp. Which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it; he had it from God as the author: Thou hast made me wise. All true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God as the means, by his commandments and his testimonies. These are able to make us wise to salvation and to furnish the man of God for every good work.

1. These David took for his constant companions: "They are ever with me, ever in my mind, ever in my eye." A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.

2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts; they were his meditation, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner.

3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions: I keep thy precepts, that is, I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for, if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ, shall know more and more of it, Joh 7:17. The love of the truth prepares for the light of it; the pure in heart shall see God here.

II The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learnt to behave himself wisely in all his ways, 1Sa 18:14.

1. He outwitted his enemies; God, by these means, made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at last, against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments we secure God on our side and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve in ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other.

2. He outstripped his teachers, and had more understanding than all of them. He means either those who would have been his teachers, who blamed his conduct and undertook to prescribe to him (by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters so that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures and they had taken the wrong), or those who should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites, who sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but who neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they.

Or he may mean those who had been his teachers when he was young; he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had spiritual senses exercised, Heb 5:14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to understand more than our teachers, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot.

3. He outdid the ancients, either those of his day (he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old, but his keeping God's precepts taught more wisdom than the multitude of their years, Job 32:7,8) or those of former days; he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients (1Sa 24:13), but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers:
for thy testimonies are my meditation.
100 I understand more than the ancients,
because I keep thy precepts.
101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way,
that I might keep thy word.

Here is, 1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin: "I have refrained my feet from the evil ways they were ready to step aside into. I checked myself and drew back as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation." Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. By the words of thy lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer, Ps 17:4.

2. His care to be found in the way of duty; That I might keep thy word, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, (1.) An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word and had made that his rule. (2.) It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt or in any by-way.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments:

for thou hast taught me.

Here is, 1. David's constancy in his religion. He had not departed from God's judgments; he had not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity. 2 The cause of his constancy: "For thou hast taught me; that is, they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it." Or rather, "It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions." All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste!
yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth.

Here is, 1 The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God; it was sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things, such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have heard him ourselves, Joh 4:2.

To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace; no pleasure was comparable to it.

2 The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God.

(1.) It helped him to a good head: "Through thy precepts I get understanding to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life or in advising others."

(2.) It helped him to a good heart: "Therefore, because I have got understanding of the truth, I hate every false way, and am stedfastly resolved not to turn aside into it." Observe here,

[1.] The way of sin is a false way; it deceives, and will ruin, all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, Pr 14:12.

[2.] It is the character of every good man that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way; he not only refrains his feet from it (Ps 119:101), but he hates it, has an antipathy to it and a dread of it.

[3.] Those who hate sin as sin will hate all sin, hate every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And,

[4.] The more understanding we get by the word of God the more rooted will our hatred of sin be (for to depart from evil, that is understanding, Job 28:28), and the more ready we are in the scriptures the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding :
therefore I hate every false way.

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105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

Observe here, 1 The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a lamp and a light. It discovers to us, concerning God and ourselves, that which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, Pr 6:23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit; it is like the lamps in the sanctuary, and the pillar of fire to Israel.

2 The use we should make of it. It must be not only a light to out eyes, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a light to our feet and to our path, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation, both in the choice of our way in general and in the particular steps we take in that way, that we may not take a false way nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

106 I have sworn, and I will perform it,
that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Here is, 1 The notion David had of religion; it is keeping God's righteous judgments. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are righteous judgments, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.

2 The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself, by his own promise, to that which he was already bound to by the divine precept, and all little enough. "I have sworn (I have lifted up my head to the Lord, and I cannot go back) and therefore must go forward: I will perform it." Note,

(1.) It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse of we do not perform it.

(2.) We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn.

(3.) We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths (an honest man will be as good as his word); nor have we sworn to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt if we do not perform.

107 I am afflicted very much:
quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word.

Here is, 1 The representation David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in: I am afflicted very much, afflicted in spirit; he seems to mean that especially. He laboured under many discouragements; without were fightings, within were fears. This is often the lot of the best saints; therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours.

2 The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace: "Quicken me, O Lord! make me lively, make me cheerful; quicken me by afflictions to greater diligence in my work. Quicken me, that is, deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead." He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it: Quicken me according to thy word. David resolved to perform his promises to God (Ps 119:106) and therefore could, with humble boldness, beg of God to make good his word to him.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord,
and teach me thy judgments.

Two things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances:--

1. Acceptance of them. This we must aim at in all we do in religion, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. What David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of are the free-will-offerings, not of his purse, but of his mouth, his prayers and praises. The calves of our lips (Ho 14:2), the fruit of our lips (Heb 1:15), these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be free-will-offerings, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully, and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them: Teach me thy judgments. We cannot offer any thing to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favour of God towards us.

109 My soul is continually in my hand:
yet do I not forget thy law.

Here is, 1. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the wicked have laid a snare for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for it was that they aimed at. What they could not effect by open force they hoped to compass by treachery, which made him say, My soul is continually in my hand.

It was so with him, not only as a man (so it is true of us all; wherever we are we lie exposed to the strokes of death; what we carry in our hands is easily snatched away from us by violence, or if sandy, as our life is, it easily of itself slips through our fingers), but as a man of war, a soldier, who often jeoparded his life in the high places of the field, and especially as a man after God's own heart, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and always delivered to death (2Co 4:11), killed all the day long.

2. David in no danger of losing his religion, notwithstanding this, thus in jeopardy every hour and yet constant to God and his duty. None of these things move him; for,

(1.) He does not forget the law, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever; and where that dwells richly it will be a well of living water.

(2.) He has not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had stood many a shock and kept his ground, and surely that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wanderings.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me:
yet I erred not from thy precepts.
111 Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever
for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

The psalmist here in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God and to live and die by it.

I. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness, nay, there to enjoy it; "Thy testimonies (the truths, the promises, of thy word) have I taken as a heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." The present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were in his account the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon.

1. He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies. The covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as a heritage for ever. If he could not yet say, "They are my heritage," yet he could say, "I have made choice of them for my heritage; and will never take up with a portion in this life," Ps 17:14,15. God's testimonies are a heritage to all that have received the Spirit of adoption; for, if children, then heirs. They are a heritage for ever, and that no earthly heritage is (1Pe 1:4); all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore be content with but little of this world.

2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them: They are the rejoicing of my heart, because they will be my heritage for ever. It requires the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God and not in the possessions of this world.

II. He resolves to govern himself by it and thence to take his measures: I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes. Those that would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done,

1. With full consent and complacency: "I have, by the grace of God, inclined my heart to it, and conquered the aversion I had to it." A good man brings his heart to his work and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience.

2. With constancy and perseverance. He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this to the end, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes
always, even unto the end.

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113 I hate vain thoughts:
but thy law do I love.

Here we have, 1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it: I hate vain thoughts. He does not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God.

Vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they do not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, Jer 4:14. Though David could not say that he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say that he hated them; he did not countenance them, nor give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. The evil I do I allow not.

2. David's delight in the rule of duty: But thy law do I love, which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that which we love.

114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield:
I hope in thy word.

Here is, 1. God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforted himself with when his enemies were very malicious against him: Thou art my hiding-place and my shield. David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter; in war he guarded himself with his shield. Now God was both these to him, a hiding-place to preserve him from danger and a shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection.

He is their strength and their shield, their help and their shield, their sun and their shield, their shield and their great reward, and here their hiding-place and their shield. They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart.

2. David's confidence in God. He is safe, and therefore he is easy, under the divine protection: "I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee and assured me of thy kindness to me." Those who depend on God's promise shall have the benefit of his power and be taken under his special protection.

115 Depart from me, ye evildoers:
for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here is, 1. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life: I will keep the commandments of my God.

Bravely resolved! like a saint, like a soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so: "I will keep them. Whatever others do, this I will do; though I be singular, though all about me be evil-doers, and desert me; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God and may command me, my God and will command me nothing but what is for my good."

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution: Depart from me, you evil-doers. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil-doers, yet there were many such, even about court, intruding near his person; these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, Those that resolve to keep the commandments of God must have no society with evil-doers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them; we must not do as they do nor do as they would have us do, Ps 1:1,Eph 5:11.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live :
and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

Here, 1. David prays for sustaining grace; for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice: Uphold me; and again, Hold thou me up. He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin unless he was prevented by divine grace; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity (Ps 41:12), to keep him from falling and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us and go no further than he carries us.

2. He pleads earnestly for this grace. (1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his

expectation from it: "Uphold me, according to thy word, which word I hope in; and, if it be not performed, I shall be made ashamed of my hope, and be called a fool for my credulity." But those that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed.

(2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace and the great advantage it would be of to him: Uphold me, that I may live, intimating that he could not live without the grace of God; he should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but, supported by his hand, he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained and be an earnest of eternal life. Hold me up, and I shall be safe, out of danger and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on divine supports.

(3.) He pleads his resolution, in the strength of this grace, to proceed in his duty: "Hold me up, and then I will have respect unto thy statutes continually and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them." I will employ myself (so some), I will delight myself (so others) in thy statutes. If God's right hand uphold us, we must, in his strength, go on in our duty both with diligence and pleasure.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe:
and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.
118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes:
for their deceit is falsehood.

Here is, I. God's judgment on wicked people, on those that wander from his statutes, that take their measures from other rules and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are the wicked of the earth; they mind earthly things, lay up their treasures in the earth, live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them nor envy them.

1. He treads them all down. He brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are ever so high, he can bring them low (Am 2:9); he has done it many a time, and he will do it, for he resists the proud and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but, sooner or later, he will trample upon them.

2. He puts them all away like dross. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And in God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous (Mt 13:49), so that they shall have no place in their congregation (Ps 1:5), which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes, in this world, the wicked are, by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, put away as dross, Pr 25:4,5.

II The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off because they err from his statutes (those that will not submit to the commands of the word shall feel the curses of it) and because their deceit is falsehood, that is, because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from, and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good and their crafty projects of mischief. Their cunning is falsehood, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates and will punish.

III. The improvement David made of these judgments. He took notice of them and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase,

1. His love to the word of God. "I see what comes of sin; therefore I love thy testimonies, which warn me to take

heed of those dangerous courses and keep me from the paths of the destroyer." We see the word of Go fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it.

2. His fear of the wrath of God: My flesh trembles for fear of thee. Instead of insulting over those who fell under God's displeasure, he humbled himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people would make us,

(1.) To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him: Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? 1Sa 6:20.

(2.) To fear lest we offend him and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord, especially when judgment begins at the house of God and hypocrites are discovered and put away as dross.

119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross:
therefore I love thy testimonies.

David here appeals to God, 1. As his witness that he had not done wrong; he could truly say, "I have done judgment and justice, that is, I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not by force or fraud hindered any of their right." Take him as a king, he executed judgment and justice to all his people, 2Sa 8:15. Take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to Saul himself that there was no evil or transgression in his hand, 1Sa 24:11.

Note, Honesty is the best policy and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

2. As his Judge, that he might not be wronged. Having done justice for others that were oppressed, he begs that God would do him justice and avenge him of his adversaries: "Be surety for thy servant, for good;

undertake for me against those that would run me down and ruin me." He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our surety with God; and, if he be so, Providence shall be our surety against all the world. Who or what shall harm us if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him; only let it be for good, in such way and manner as Infinite Wisdom sees best; "only let me not be left to my oppressors."

Though David had done judgment and justice, yet he had many enemies; but, having God for his friend, he hoped they should not have their will against him; and in that hope he prayed again, Let not the proud oppress me. David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off; the condition therefore of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee;
and I am afraid of thy judgments.

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121 I have done judgment and justice:
leave me not to mine oppressors.
122 Be surety for thy servant for good:
let not the proud oppress me.
123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,
and for the word of thy righteousness.

David, being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

1. He cannot but think that it comes slowly: My eyes fail for thy salvation. His eyes were towards it and had been long so. He looked for help from heaven (and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way), but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that, because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even

of good men to be weary of waiting God's time when their time has elapsed.

2. Yet he cannot hope that it comes surely; for he expects the word of God's righteousness, and no other salvation than what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word does not, and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,
and teach me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. David's petition for divine instruction: "Teach me thy statutes; give me to know all my duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me; now that I am afflicted, oppressed, and my eyes are ready to fail for thy salvation, let me know what my duty is in this condition."

In difficult times we should desire more to be told what we must do than what we may expect, and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture-precepts than of scripture-prophecies. If God, who gave us his statutes, do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches is implied in the next petition: Give me understanding (a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine light), that I may know thy testimonies. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those who know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

2. His pleas to enforce this petition.

(1.) He pleads God's goodness to him: Deal with me according to thy mercy. The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing, "Let me have it according to thy mercy;" for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are most likely to be easy

when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with.

(2.) He pleads his relation to God: "I am thy servant, and have work to do for thee; therefore teach me to do it and to do it well." The servant has reason to expect that, if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and, if it were in his power, give him an understanding. "Lord," says David, "I desire to serve thee; show me how." If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, Joh 7:17,Ps 25:14.

125 I am thy servant; give me understanding,
that I may know thy testimonies.
126 It is time for thee, Lord, to work:
for they have made void thy law.

Here is, 1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked. David, having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God: "Lord, there are those that have made void thy law, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands." Those that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do in effect make void the law, saying, Who is the Lord? What is the Almighty, that we should fear him? It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment, would repeal God's laws and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin and the malignity of the carnal mind.

2. A desire that God would appear, for the vindication of his own honour: "It is time for thee, Lord, to work, to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens." God's time to work is when vice has become most daring and the measure of iniquity is full. Now will I arise, saith the Lord. Some read it, and the original will bear it, It is time to work for thee, O Lord! it

is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side--against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and, after all, we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold;
yea, above fine gold.

David here, as often in this psalm, professes the great love he had to the word and law of God; and, to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

1 The degree of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money--above gold, yea, above fine gold. Gold, fine gold, is what most men set their hearts upon; nothing charms them and dazzles their eyes so much as gold does. It is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes; they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it.

But David saw that the word of God answers all purposes better than money does, for it enriches the soul towards God; and therefore he loved it better than gold, for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.

2 The ground of his love. He loved all God's commandments because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them; and we must love them because they bear God's image and are the revelations of his will. If we thus consent to the law that it is good, we shall delight in it after the inner man.

3. The fruit and evidence of this love: He hated every false way. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts, which are right, is a false way, and therefore those that have a love and esteem for God's law hate it and will not be reconciled to it.

128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right;
and I hate every false way.
PE
129 Thy testimonies are wonderful:
therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here how David was affected towards the word of God. 1. He admired it, as most excellent in itself: Thy testimonies are wonderful. The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful. Its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign that we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

2. He adhered to it as of constant use to him: "Therefore doth my soul keep them, as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without." We do not keep them to any purpose unless our souls keep them. There they must be deposited, as the tables of testimony in the ark, there they must have the innermost and uppermost place. Those that see God's word to be admirable will prize it highly and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light;
it giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, 1 The great use for which the word of God was intended, to give light, that is, to give understanding, to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understanding of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place. 2. Its efficacy for this purpose. It admirably answers the end; for,

(1.) Even the entrance of God's word gives light. If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find that the very first verses of the Bible give us surprising and yet satisfying discoveries of the origin of the universe, about which, without that, the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plainest truths, the milk appointed for the babes, bring a great light into the soul, much more will the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. "The exposition or explication of thy word gives light;" then it is most profitable when ministers do their part in giving the sense, Ne 8:8. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality.

(2.) It would give understanding even to the simple, to the weakest capacities; for it shows us a way to heaven so plain that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted :
for I longed for thy commandments.

Here is, 1 The desire David had towards the word of God: I longed for thy commandments. When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances he greedily sucked in the word of God, as new-born babes desire the milk. When Christ is formed in the soul there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work. 2 The degree of that desire appearing in the expressions of it: I opened my mouth and panted, as one overcome with hear, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be towards God and the remembrance of his name, Ps 42:1,2 Lu 12:50.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me,
as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is, 1. David's request for God's favour to himself: "Look graciously upon me; let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance. Take cognizance of me and my affairs, and be merciful to me; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy and receive the gifts of thy mercy." See how humble his petition is. He asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he does not plead merit, but implores mercy.

2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people: As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. This is either,

(1.) A plea for mercy: "Lord, I am one of those that love thy name, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that do so; and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people?" Or,

(2.) A description of the favour and mercy he desired--"that which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which thou bearest to thy chosen," Ps 106:4,5. He desires no more, no better, than neighbour's fare, and he will take up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him, which are such as eye has not seen, 1Co 2:9.

Note, The dealings of God with those that love him are such that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than as he uses to deal with those that love him we have no reason to complain, 1Co 10:13.

133 Order my steps in thy word:
and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is, in this verse, as earnest for the good work of God in him as, in the verse before, for the good-will of God towards him. He prays,

1. For direction in the paths of duty: "Order my steps in thy word; having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the guidance of thy grace." We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God that by his good Spirit he would order our steps accordingly.

2. For deliverance from the power of sin: "Let no iniquity have dominion over me, so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it." The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and, if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer (Ro 6:14), Sin shall not have dominion over you.

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man:
so will I keep thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious: "Deliver me from the oppression of man--man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited. Let them know themselves to be but men (Ps 9:20), and let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear; so will I keep thy precepts." Not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression; "but so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed." Then we may expect temporal blessings when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;
and teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often as elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king; now here, as became a good servant, 1. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and

chief good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day. If the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile."

2. He is very solicitous about his Master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern. This he would be instructed in, that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it: Teach me thy statutes. Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore, that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,
because they keep not thy law.

TZADDI

Here we have David in sorrow. 1. It is a great sorrow, to such a degree that he weeps rivers of tears. Commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye, in conformity to Christ, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour (Ps 119:135), now he pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of those that mourned in Zion, and those that do so shall be comforted, Isa 61:3.

2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour done to God: Because they keep not thy law, either because my eyes keep not thy law, so some (the eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye), or, rather, they, that is, those about me, Ps 119:139. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

137 Righteous art thou, O Lord,
and upright are thy judgments.

Here is, 1 The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature. As he is what he is,

so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him; there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss, in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he does all according to it.

2 The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did, nor ever can do, any wrong to any of his creatures: Upright are thy judgments, the promises and threatenings and the executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause and will judge accordingly.

3. The righteousness of his commands, which he has given to be the rule of our obedience: "Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceedingly righteous and faithful, righteousness and faithfulness itself." As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves and like him, that we be just to ourselves and to all we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practise is righteous; that which we are commanded to believe is faithful. It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

138 Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded
are righteous and very faithful.
139 My zeal hath consumed me,
because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Here is, 1 The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion: My enemies have forgotten thy words. They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them that they soon forgot them, they willingly forgot them, not only through carelessness let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God; they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give check to their sinful courses.

2 The great concern which godly men show for religion. David reckoned those his enemies who forgot the words of God because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive. And therefore his zeal even consumed him, when he observed their impieties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness as preyed upon his spirits, even ate them up (as Christ's zeal, Joh 2:17), swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. My zeal has pressed or constrained me (so Dr. Hammond reads it), Ac 18:5. Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are the better we should be.

140 Thy word is very pure:
therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, 1. David's great affection for the word of God: Thy servant loves it. Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace there is a warm attachment to the word of God. 2 The ground and reason of that affection; he saw it to be very pure, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is then an evidence of our love to God when we love it for the sake of its purity, because it bears the image of God's holiness and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness. It commands purity, and, as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so if we receive it in the light and love of it it will refine us from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-mindedness.

141 I am small and despised:
yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here is, 1. David pious and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet small and despised in his own account and in the account of many others. Men's excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it often exposes them to the scorn of others and always makes them low in their own eyes. God has chosen

the foolish things of the world, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

2. David poor and yet pious, small and despised for his strict and serious godliness, yet his conscience can witness for him that he did not forget God's precepts. He would not throw off his religion, though it exposed him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are small and despised we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,
and thy law is the truth.

Observe, 1. That God's word is righteousness, and it is an everlasting righteousness. It is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

2. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God. We are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law.

See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man. Here is truth brought to the understanding, there to sit chief, and direct the motions of the whole man; but, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law (Joh 18:37) and God's law

is the truth; surely we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me:
yet thy commandments are my delights.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvement.

1. David again professes his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said (Ps 119:141), I am small and despised, and yet adhere to my duty. Here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so: Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me--trouble without, anguish within; they surprised him, they seized him, they held him. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears; they are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

There he had said, Yet do I not forget thy precepts; here he carries his constancy much higher: Yet thy commandments are my delights. All this trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste for the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them and find that peace and pleasure in them which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of when they are in trouble and anguish, 2Co 1:5.

2. He again acknowledges the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before (Ps 119:142): The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting and cannot be altered; and, when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, a well of living water, Joh 4:14. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference,

(1.) His prayer for grace: Give me understanding. Those that know much of the word of God should still covet to

know more; for there is more to be known. He does not say, "Give me a further revelation," but, Give me a further understanding; what is revealed we should desire to understand, and what we know to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know.

(2.) His hope of glory: "Give me this renewed understanding, and then I shall live, shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted, for the present, in the prospect of it." This is life eternal, to know God, Joh 17:3.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting:
give me understanding, and I shall live.

KOPH

145 I cried with my whole heart;
hear me, O Lord: I will keep thy statutes.

Here we have, I. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here,

1. That he was inward with God in prayer; he prayed with his heart, and prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour.

2. He was importunate with God in prayer; he cried, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection and a holy vehemence and vigour of desire. He cried with his whole heart; all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost, in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer.

3. That he directed his prayer to God: I cried unto thee. Whither should the child go but to his father when any thing ails him?

4. That the great thing he prayed for was salvation: Save me. A short prayer (for we mistake if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking), but a comprehensive prayer: "Not only rescue me from ruin, but make me happy." We need desire no more than God's salvation (Ps 50:23) and the things that accompany it, Heb 6:9. 5. That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them (Ps 5:3): "Lord, hear me, and let me know that thou hearest me."

II. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty when he was in the pursuit of mercy. "I will keep thy statutes; I am resolved that by thy grace I will;" for, if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, Pr 28:9. This purpose is used as a humble plea (Ps 119:146): "Save me from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may keep thy testimonies." We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

146 I cried unto thee;
save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.
147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:
I hoped in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage: he cried unto God, that is, offered up to him his pious and devout affections with all seriousness. Observe,

I The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, and were helpful to them, were,

1. Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come immediately: "I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it will speak and not lie. I hoped in thy word, which I knew would not fail me."

2. Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

II The hours of his devotion. He anticipated the dawning of the morning, nay, and the night-watches. See here,

1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, Yet a little sleep.

2. That he began the day with God. The first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray, when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God they will help to keep us in his fear all the day long.

3. That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn. Even in the night-watches, when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray than turn himself and go to sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill spare as our food, Job 23:12.

4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises. He was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not to find time for prayer. And this is our comfort, when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches,

that I might meditate in thy word.
149 Hear my voice according unto thy loving-kindness:
O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here, 1. David applies to God for grace and comfort with much solemnity. He begs of God to hear his voice: "Lord, I have something to say to thee; shall I obtain a gracious audience?" Well, what has he to say? What is his petition and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little: "Lord, quicken me; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous, and lively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act."

2. He encourages himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends,

(1.) Upon God's lovingkindness: "He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His lovingkindness manifested to me will help to quicken me, and put life into me."

(2.) Upon God's judgment, that is, his wisdom ("He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me"), or his promise, the word which he has spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant: Quicken me according to the tenour of that covenant.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief:
they are far from thy law.

Here is, I The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies.

1. They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs: They follow after mischief, any mischief they could do to David or his friends; they would let slip no opportunity nor let fall any pursuit that might be to his hurt.

2. They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes: They are far from thy law, setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and

commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself; we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them.

3. They followed him closely and he was just ready to fall into their hands: They draw nigh, nigher than they were; so that they got ground of him. They were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said (1Sa 20:3), There is but a step between them and death. Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, Ps 119:149. God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

II The assurance David had of protection with God: "They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near, O Lord! to save me, not only mightier than they and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they and therefore ready to help." It is the happiness of the saints that, when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, De 4:7. All thy commandments are truth. The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power; they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

151 Thou art near, O Lord;
and all thy commandments are truth.
152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old
that thou hast founded them for ever.

RESH

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, All thy commandments are truth; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For,

1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity. Such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in

all things, that it cannot but be sure. The promises are founded for ever, so that when heaven and earth shall have passed away every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, 2Co 1:20.

2. David had found it so, both by a work of God's grace upon his heart (begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction) and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he knew of old, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look towards God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him will own that they have found him faithful.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me:
for I do not forget thy law.

Here, I. David prays for succour in distress. Is any afflicted? let him pray; let him pray as David does here.

1. He has an eye to God's pity, and prays, "Consider my affliction; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit not by as one unconcerned." God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to put him in remembrance (Isa 43:26), to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way.

2. He has an eye to God's power and prays, Deliver me; and again, "Deliver me; consider my troubles and bring me out of them." God has promised deliverance (Ps 50:15) and we may pray for it, with submission to his will and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better.

3. He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, "Plead my cause; be thou my patron and advocate, and take me

for thy client." David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them; he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually, Isa 51:22,Jer 50:34.

4. He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, "Quicken me. Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink. O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!"

II. He pleads his dependence upon the word oaf God and his obedient regard to its directions: Quicken and deliver me according to thy word of promise, for I do not forget thy precepts. The more closely we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me:
quicken me according to thy word.
155 Salvation is far from the wicked:
for they seek not thy statutes.

Here is, 1 The description of wicked men. They do not only do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, nor in the least endeavour to do it. Those are wicked indeed who do not think the law of God worth enquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large and to walk in the way of their heart.

2. Their doom: Salvation is far from them. They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance. Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. How can those expect to seek God's favour with success, when they are in adversity, who never sought his statutes when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them.

They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and that they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken: it is far from them. They thrust it from them by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin the further it is; nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it slumbers not. Behold, the Judge stands before the door.

156 Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord:
quicken me according to thy judgments.

Here, 1. David admires God's grace: Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord! The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints. His mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, a fountain that can never be exhausted. He is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. David had spoken of the misery of the wicked (Ps 119:155); but God is good notwithstanding; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not "despised the riches of those mercies." Those that are delivered from the sinner's doom are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

2. He begs for God's grace, reviving quickening grace, according to his judgments, that is, according to the tenour of the new covenant (that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace) or according to his manner, his custom or usage, with those that love his name, Ps 119:132.

157 Many are my persecutors and mine enemies;
yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

Here is, 1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers: Many are my persecutors and my enemies. When Saul the king was his persecutor and enemy no marvel that many more were so: multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David, being a public person, had many enemies, but withal he had many friends, who loved him and wished him well; let him set the one over-against the other. In this David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors, of both, are many, very many.

2. David established in the way of his duty, notwithstanding: "Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies, as knowing that while I adhere to them God is for me; and then no matter who is against me." A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved;
because they kept not thy word.

Here is, 1. David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He beheld the transgressors, those whose sins were open before all men, and it grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls, to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those who have any regard to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind.

2 The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God: They kept not thy word. Those that hate sin truly hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God and a violation of his word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts:
quicken me, O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness.

Here is, 1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name." He does not say, "Consider how I fulfil thy precepts;" he was conscious to himself that in many things he came short; but, "Consider how I love them." Our obedience is pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, only when it comes from a principle of love.

2. His petition thereupon: "Quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive, not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, but according to thy lovingkindness;" to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than live itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's lovingkindness will quicken us.

160 Thy word is true from the beginning:
and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it; It is true from the beginning. Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men all he said was true and to be trusted. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by lapse of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage, Quod initio non valet, tractu temporis convalescit--That which, at first, wanted validity, in the progress of time acquired it. But the beginning of God's word was true (so some read it); his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it faithful and well worthy of all acceptation.

2. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous: "Every one of thy judgments remains for ever unalterable and of perpetual obligation, adjusting men's everlasting doom."

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161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause:
but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

David here lets us know, 1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the fear of man: Princes persecuted him. They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and

bade him go serve other gods, 1Sa 26:19. It has been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and a colour of justice. It is sad that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But marvel not at the matter, Ec 5:8. It was a comfort to David that when princes persecuted him he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God: "They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but my heart stands in awe of thy word, and I am resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased and falls out with me." Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, Lu 12:4,5. The heart that stands in awe of God's word is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

162 I rejoice at thy word,
as one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, 1 The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light when other nations sat in darkness, that he was himself let into the understanding of it and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said that his heart stood in awe of his word, and yet here he declares that he rejoiced in it. The more reverence we have for the word of God the more joy we shall find in it.

2 The degree of that pleasure--as one that finds great spoil. This supposes a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to rejoice in God's word. But, besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

163 I hate and abhor lying:
but thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed aright, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed aright in David.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to sin; he could not endure to think of it: I hate and abhor lying, which may be taken for all sin, inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying, in commerce or conversation, is a sin which every good man hates and abhors, hates and doubly hates, because of the seven things which the Lord hates one is a lying tongue and another is a false witness that speaks lies, Pr 6:16. Every man hates to have a lie told him; but we should more hate telling a lie because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God: Thy law do I love. And therefore he abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God was because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee,
because of thy righteous judgments.

David, in this psalm, is full of complaints, yet those did neither jostle out his praises nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in he does not want matter for praise and therefore should not want a

heart. See here, 1. How often David praised God--Seven times a day, that is, very frequently, not only every day, but often every day. Many think that once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God seven times a day at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in. We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God seven times a day, for the subject can never be exhausted and our affections should never be tired. See Ps 119:62.

2. What he praised God for--because of thy righteous judgments. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law:
and nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, who are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, who make it their rule and are ruled by it.

1. They are easy, and have a holy serenity; none enjoy themselves more than they do: Great peace have those that love thy law, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty and pleasure in reflecting upon it. The work of righteousness is peace (Isa 32:17), such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without and yet enjoy great peace within, sat lucis intus--abundance of internal light. Those that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer their expectation; those that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

2. They are safe, and have a holy security: Nothing shall offend them; nothing shall be a scandal, snare, or stumbling-block, to them, to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an

invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God shall enable them both to hold fast their integrity and to preserve their tranquility. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God does. Nothing shall offend or hurt them, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they shall reconcile themselves to it. Those in whom this holy love reigns will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, nor to take offence at their brethren, 1Co 13:6,7.

166 Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation,
and done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught, 1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end: "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, not only temporal but eternal salvation. I have hoped for that as my happiness and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burdens in it."

2. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule: I have done thy commandments, that is, I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot, upon good grounds, hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, Re 22:14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is the more lively the obedience will be.

167 My soul hath kept thy testmonies;
and I love them exceedingly.

David's conscience here witnesses for him,

I. That his practices were good. 1. He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the

word of God must be a superlative love (we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world), and it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts and extirpate carnal affections.

2. He kept them, his soul kept them. Bodily exercise profits little in religion; we must make heart-work of it or we make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them and his promises by our reliance on them.

II. That he was governed herein by a good principle: "Therefore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thy eye always upon me; all my ways are before thee; thou knowest every step I take and strictly observest all I say and do. Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and art displeased with all I say and do amiss." Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments, Ge 17:1.

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies:
for all my ways are before thee.

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169 Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord:
give me understanding according to thy word.

Here we have, I. A general petition for audience repeated: Let my cry come near before thee; and again, Let my supplication come before thee. He calls his prayer his cry, which denotes the fervency and vehemence of it, and his supplication, which denotes the humility of it. We must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms.

He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, that is, that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his

prayers, that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers and to separate between him and God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them. His prayer that his supplication might come before God implied a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of out prayers have had access to God if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an advocate for us.

II. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present:-- 1. That God, by his grace, would give him wisdom to conduct himself well under his troubles: Give me understanding; he means that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; "Give me to know thee and myself, and my duty to thee." 2. That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles: Deliver me, that is, with the temptation make a way to escape, 1Co 10:13.

III. The same general plea to enforce these requests--according to thy word. This directs and limits his desires: "Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised and such a deliverance as thou hast promised; I ask for no other." It also encourages his faith and expectation: "Lord, that which I pray for is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?"

170 Let my supplication come before thee:
deliver me according to thy word.
171 My lips shall utter praise,
when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, 1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him his statutes. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and now that he is drawing towards the close of the psalm he speaks of it as taken for granted.

Those that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob that they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly

confident that they shall at length obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him. 2 The grateful sense he promises to have of that favour: My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me.

(1.) Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the earnest of eternal blessings.

(2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to do it. All that are taught of God are taught this lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may show forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose if we have not learned to praise God. (3.) Therefore he is thus importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. Those that pray for God's grace must aim at God's glory, Eph 1:12.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word:
for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Observe here, 1 The good knowledge David had of the word of God; he knew it so well that he was ready to own, with the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness.

2 The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge: My tongue shall speak of thy word, not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others, as that which he himself was full of (for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak) and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governor of our discourse, so

as never to transgress it by sinful speaking or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject-matter of our discourse, that it may feed many and minister grace to the hearers.

173 Let thine hand help me;
for I have chosen thy precepts.

Here, 1. David prays that divine grace would work for him: Let thy hand help me. He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him would help him; for, if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power and his bounty.

2. He pleads what divine grace had already wrought in him as a pledge of further mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads:--

(1.) That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice: "I have chosen thy precepts. I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because, upon trial, I knew no better." Those are good, and do good indeed, who are good and do good, not by chance, but from choice; and those who have thus chosen God's precepts may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services and under all their sufferings.

(2.) That his heart was upon heaven: I have longed for thy salvation. David, when he had got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, "It is good to be here;" but still he was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forward in their way to it.

(3.) That he took pleasure in doing his duty: "Thy law is my delight. Not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world." Those that are

cheerful in their obedience may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience; and those that expect God's salvation must take delight in his law and their hopes must increase their delight.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord;
and thy law is my delight.
175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;
and let thy judgments help me.

David's heart is still upon praising God; and therefore, 1. He prays that God would give him time to praise him: "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, that is, let my life be prolonged, that I may live to thy glory."

The reason why a good man desires to live is that he may praise God in the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, "Let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family;" but, "Let me live that, in doing this, I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition." When we die we hope to go to a better world to praise him, and that is more agreeable for us, though here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. Let my soul live, that is, let me be sanctified and comforted, for sanctification and comfort are the life of the soul, and then it shall praise thee. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and we must pray for grace and peace that we may be fitted to praise God.

2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him: "Let thy judgments help me; let all ordinances and all providences" (both are God's judgments) "further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise and let them help to fit me for that work."

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep:
seek thy servant;
for I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, 1. A penitent confession: I have gone astray, or wander up and down, like a lost sheep. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep (Lu 15:4), so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, Mt 18:12,13. We are apt to wander like sheep, and very unapt, when we have gone astray, to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs.

2. A believing petition: Seek thy servant, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, Eze 34:12. "Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray;" for David had been himself a tender shepherd. "Lord, own me for one of thine; for, though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thyself for me, send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace." Seek me, that is, find me; for God never seeks in vain. Turn me, and I shall be turned.

3. An obedient plea: "Though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, I do not forget thy commandments." Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin and believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout Christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die repenting and praying. Observe here,

(1.) It is the character of good people that they do not forget God's commandments, being well pleased with their convictions and well settled in their resolutions.

(2.) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, cannot but own that they have in many instances wandered from it.

(3.) Those that have wandered from their duty, if they continue mindful of it, may with a humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

Psalms-120

A Prayer for Deliverance from Deceitfulness

A Song of degrees.

1 In my distress I cried unto the Lord,
and he heard me.

Here is, I. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer. David records his own experience of this.

1. He was brought into distress, into great distress, by lying lips and a deceitful tongue. There were those that sought his ruin, and had almost effected it, by lying.

(1.) By telling lies to him. They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendships, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely and without suspicion carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsels, to do him a mischief.

They smiled in his face and kissed him, even when they were aiming to smite him under the fifth rib. The most dangerous enemies, and those which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under the colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips.

(2.) By telling lies of him. They forged false accusations against him and laid to his charge things that he knew not. This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellent ones, of the earth, who have been greatly distressed by lying lips, and have not only had their names blackened and made odious by calumnies in conversation, but their lives, and all that is dear to them in this world, endangered by false-witness-bearing in judgment. David was herein a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips and deceitful tongues.

2. In this distress he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer: I cried unto the Lord. Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all men's hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can, when he pleases, bridle their tongues. His prayer was, "Deliver my soul, O Lord! from lying lips, that my enemies may not by these cursed methods work my ruin." He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying (Ps 119:29) and hated it so heartily in himself (Ps 119:163) might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied by others, and from the ill consequences of it.

3. He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer. God heard him; so that his enemies, though they carried their designs very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be, the protector of his people from lying lips, Ps 37:6.

II The doom of a false tongue foretold by faith, Ps 120:3,4. As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckon with their enemies, Ps 12:3,7. The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening of his conscience, if he have any left: "Consider what shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done unto thee, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, thou false tongue." Surely sinners durst not do as they do if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof.

Let liars consider what shall be given to them: Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper, that is, they will fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, Ps 64:7.

God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. They set God at a distance from them, but

from afar his arrows can reach them. They are sharp arrows, and arrows of the mighty, the Almighty; for they will pierce through the strongest armour and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows (Job 6:4), and his wrath is compared to burning coals of juniper, which do not flame or crackle, like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long (some say, a year round) even when they seem to be gone out. This is the portion of the false tongue; for all that love and make a lie shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, Re 22:15.

2 Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips,
and from a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given unto thee?
Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue ?
4 Sharp arrows of the mighty,
with coals of juniper.
5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech,
that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul hath long dwelt
with him that hateth peace.
7 I am for peace:
but when I speak, they are for war.

Psalms-121

The Lord Is Thy Keeper

A Song of degrees.

1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
from whence cometh my help.

This psalm teaches us,

I. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power and a God all-sufficient for us. David did so and found the benefit of it.

1. We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm: "Shall I lift up my eyes to the hills?"--so some read it. "Does my help come thence? Shall I depend upon the powers of the earth, upon the strength of the hills, upon princes and great men, who, like hills, fill the earth, and hold up their heads towards heaven? No; in vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains, Jer 3:23. I never expect help to come from them; my confidence is in God only." We must lift up our eyes above the hills (so some read it); we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us which they are.

2. We must see all our help laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace; and from him we must expect it to come: "My help comes from the Lord; the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time. If he do not help, no creature can help; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt."

3. We must fetch in help from God, by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills" (probably he meant the hills on which the temple was built, Mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Zion, where the ark of the covenant, the oracle, and the altars were); "I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church, and with his people (his presence by promise) and not only to his common presence."

When he was at a distance he would look towards the sanctuary (Ps 28:2,42:6); thence comes our help, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. My help cometh from the Lord (so the word is, Ps 121:2), from before the Lord, or from the sight and presence of the Lord. "This (says Dr. Hammond) may

refer to Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the Deity being inseparably united, God is always present with him, and, through him, with us, for whom, sitting at God's right hand, he constantly maketh intercession." Christ is called the angel of his presence, that saved his people, Isa 63:9.

4. We must encourage our confidence in God with this that he made heaven and earth, and he who did that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing, himself alone, by a word's speaking, in a little time, and all very good, very excellent and beautiful; and therefore, how great soever our straits and difficulties are, he has power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleases for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleases from hurting his people.

II. To comfort ourselves in God when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, no mere evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction but what God sees good for us and will do us good by.

1. God himself has undertaken to be our protector: The Lord is thy keeper, Ps 121:5. Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that, whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works, the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection. Those must needs be well kept that have the Lord for their keeper. If, by affliction, they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their keeper.

2 The same that is the protector of the church in general is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer, the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. He that keepeth Israel (Ps 121:4) is thy keeper, Ps 121:5. The shepherd of the flock is the shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish. 3. He is a wakeful watchful keeper: "He that keepeth Israel, that keepeth thee, O Israelite! shall neither slumber nor sleep; he never did, nor ever will, for he is never weary; he not only does not sleep, but he does not so much as slumber; he has not the least inclination to sleep."

4. He not only protects those whom he is the keeper of, but he refreshes them: He is their shade. The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; the eternal Being who is infinite substance is what he is in order that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promises to be their umbra--their shadow, to keep as close to them as the shadow does to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, Isa 32:2. Under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, So 2:3.

5. He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance; he is their keeper and shade on their right hand; so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them and give them success, Ps 16:8.

6. He is not only at their right hand, but he will also keep the feet of his saints, 1Sa 2:9. He will have an eye upon them in their motions: He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. God will provide that his people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into

sin, though they may be very near it (Ps 73:2,23), shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endeavouring to undermine them by fraud or over throw them by force. He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble and are ready to fall.

7. He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies (Ps 121:6): The sun shall not smite thee with his heat by day nor the moon with her cold and moisture by night. The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon, though worshipped by a great part of mankind, are often instruments of hurt and distemper to human bodies; God by them often smites us; but his favour shall interpose so that they shall not damage his people.

He will keep them night and day (Isa 27:3), as he kept Israel in the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and of fire by night, which probably diffused a genial warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night, their father Jacob having complained (Ge 31:40) that by day the drought consumed him and the frost by night. It may be understood figuratively: "Thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults of thy enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun, or by their secret treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night."

8. His protection will make them safe in every respect: "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, the evil of sin and the evil of trouble. He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove, or lighten, the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee from doing evil (2Co 13:7), and so far from suffering evil that whatever

affliction happens to thee there shall be no evil in it. Even that which kills shall not hurt."

9. It is the spiritual life, especially, that God will take under his protection: He shall preserve thy soul. All souls are his; and the soul is the man, and therefore he will with a peculiar care preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them by keeping us in the possession of them; and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

10. He will keep us in all our ways: "He shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward-bound or homeward-bound, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest and thy coming in when thou diest, going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in," Ps 104:23.

11. He will continue his care over us from this time forth and even for evermore. It is a protection for life, never out of date. "He will be thy guide even unto death, and will then hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom." God will protect his church and his saints always, even to the end of the world. The Spirit, who is their preserver and comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

2 My help cometh from the Lord,
which made heaven and earth.
3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved
:
he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel

shall neither slumber nor sleep.
5 The Lord is thy keeper
:
the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,
nor the moon by night.
7 The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil
:
he shall preserve thy soul.
8 The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in
from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Psalms-122

A Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem
A Song of degrees of David.

1 I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord.

Here we have,

I The pleasure which David and other pious Israelites took in approaching to and attending upon God in public ordinances, Ps 122:1,2.

1 The invitation to them was very welcome. David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he was glad, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord. Note,

(1.) It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert, that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses, but that is not enough; we must go into the house of the Lord, to pay our homage to him

there, and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

(2.) We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another, to go to worship God in public. Let us go; not, "Do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home;" but, We will go also, Zec 8:21. Not, "Do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure;" or, "We will go first, and you shall come after us;" but, "Let us go together, for the honour of God and for our mutual edification and encouragement." We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron.

(3.) Those that rejoice in God will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront that he was glad of it as a kindness when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us and take us along with them.

2 The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph (Ps 122:2): Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem! Those that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their journey. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be among those that stand by (Zec 3:7), though it be the door keeper's place, Ps 84:10. We have now got a resting-place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

II The praises of Jerusalem, as Ps 48:12.

1. It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building. It is built into a city, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, compact together, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be compact together. It was a type of the gospel-church, which is compact together in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

2. It is the holy city, Ps 122:4. It is the place where all Israel meet one another: Thither the tribes go up, from all parts of the country, as one man, under the character of the tribes of the Lord, in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for their general rendezvous; and they come together,

(1.) To receive instruction from God; they come to the testimony of Israel, to hear what God has to say to them and to consult his oracle.

(2.) To ascribe the glory to God, to give thanks to the name of the Lord, which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship, to give thanks.

3. It is the royal city (Ps 122:5): There are set thrones of judgment. Therefore the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interests of the people were as well secured as their

ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster Hall. Observe, What a goodly sight it was to see the testimony of Israel and the thrones of judgment such near neighbours, and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let the testimony of Israel direct the thrones of judgment, and the thrones of judgment protect the testimony of Israel.

2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.
3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together
:
4 whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord,
unto the testimony of Israel,
to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
5 For there are set thrones of judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
they shall prosper that love thee.

Here, I. David calls upon others to which well to Jerusalem, Ps 122:6,7. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be enquired of.

Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem can pray for it, which is something more than showing their good-will; it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the gospel church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us. Now,

1. We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace: Those shall prosper that love thee. We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, nor for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man and man's worship of God; and, in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own, for so well does God love the gates of Zion that he will love all those that do love them, and therefore they cannot but prosper; at least their souls shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love.

2. We are here directed in our prayers for it and words are put into our mouths (Ps 122:7): Peace be within thy walls. He teaches us to pray,

(1.) For all the inhabitants in general, all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications; let them never be attacked, or, if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city.

(2.) For the princes and rulers especially: Let prosperity be in the palaces of the great men that sit at the helm and have the direction of public affairs; for, if they prosper, it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

II. He resolves that whatever others do he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem,

1. In his prayers: "I will now say, now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, Peace be within thee." He did not say, "Let others pray for the public peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people, that have nothing

else to do, and I will fight for it and rule for it." No; "I will pray for it too."

2. In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers: "I will, to the utmost of my power, seek thy good." Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it. Now it might be said, No thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem; it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. This is true; yet he professes that this was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem, but it proceeded from the warm regard he had,

(1.) To the communion of saints: It is for my brethren and companions' sakes, that is, for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look upon as my brethren (so he called them, 1Ch 28:2) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which has knit my heart to them.

(2.) To the ordinances of God: He had set his affections to the house of his God (1Ch 29:3); he took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the public welfare is right when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

7 Peace be within thy walls,
and prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions’ sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.
9 Because of the house of the Lord our God
I will seek thy good.

Psalms-123

A Prayer for Mercy
A Song of degrees.

1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes,
O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

We have here,

I The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, Ps 123:1,2. Observe,

1 The title here given to God: O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Our Lord Jesus has taught us, in prayer, to have an eye to God as our Father in heaven; not that he is confined there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the King in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect and a place of power; he that dwells there beholds thence all the calamities of his people and thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, Where is now your God?

But then they can say with comfort, Our God is in the heavens. O thou that sittest in the heavens (so some), sittest as Judge there; for the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and to that throne injured innocency may appeal.

2 The regard here had to God. The psalmist himself lifted up his eyes to him. The eyes of a good man are ever towards the Lord, Ps 25:15. In every prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul, to God, especially in trouble, which was the case here. The eyes of the people waited on the Lord, Ps 123:2. We find mercy coming towards a people when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are towards the Lord, Zec 9:1

The eyes of the body are heaven-ward. Os homini sublime dedit--To man he gave an erect mien, to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. Our eyes wait on the Lord, the eye of desire and prayer, the begging eye, and the eye of dependence, hope, and expectation, the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as the Lord, and our God, until that he have mercy upon us. We desire mercy from him, we hope he will show us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till the mercy come. This is illustrated (Ps 123:2) by a similitude: Our eyes are to God as the eyes of a servant, and handmaid, to the hand of their master and mistress. The eyes of a servant are,

(1.) To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work, and cut it out for him, and show him how he must do it. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

(2.) To his supplying hand. Servants look to their master, or their mistress, for their portion of meat in due season, Pr 31:15. And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully.

(3.) To his assisting hand. If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master? And in the strength of the Lord God we must go forth and go on.

(4.) To his protecting hand. If the servant meet with opposition in his work, if he be questioned for what he does, if he be wronged and injured, who should bear him out and right him, but his master that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master, We are thine; save us.

(5.) To his correcting hand. If the servant has provoked his master to beat him, he does not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, "It is enough; I will not contend for ever." The people of God were now under his rebukes; and whither should they turn but to him that smote them? Isa 9:13. To whom

should they make supplication but to their Judge? They will not do as Hagar did, who ran away from her mistress when she put some hardships upon her (Ge 16:6), but they submit themselves to and humble themselves under God's mighty hand.

(6.) To his rewarding hand. The servant expects his wages, his well-done, from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand; thence they have their reward (Mt 6:2); but true Christians have their eye to God as their rewarder.

II The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition (Ps 123:3,4), wherein,

1. They sue for mercy, not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, nor pleading any merit of their own why he should do it for them, but, Have mercy upon us, O Lord! have mercy upon us. We find little mercy with men; their tender mercies are cruel; there are cruel mockings. But this is our comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, than the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy.

2. They set forth their grievances: We are exceedingly filled with contempt. Reproach is the wound, the burden, they complain of. Observe,

(1.) Who were reproached: "We, who have our eyes up to thee." Those who are owned of God are often despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, those that are at ease, and the proud, so as to signify the persons that are scorned and contemned. "Our soul is troubled to see how those that are at peace, and the excellent ones, are scorned and despised." The saints are a peaceable people and yet are abused (Ps 35:20), the excellent ones of the earth and yet undervalued, La 4:1,2.

(2.) Who did reproach them. Taking the words as we read them, they were the epicures who lived at ease, carnal sensual people, Job 12:5. The scoffers are such as walk after their own lusts and serve their own bellies, and the proud such as set God himself at defiance and had a high opinion of themselves; they trampled on God's people, thinking they magnified themselves by vilifying them.

(3.) To what degree they were reproached: "We are filled, we are surfeited with it. Our soul is exceedingly filled with it." The enemies thought they could never jeer them enough, nor say enough to make them despicable; and they could not but lay it to heart; it was a sword in their bones, Ps 42:10. Note,

[1.] Scorning and contempt have been, and are, and are likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. Ishmael mocked Isaac, which is called persecuting him; and so it is now, Ga 4:29.

[2.] In reference to the scorn and contempt of men it is matter of comfort that there is mercy with God, mercy to our good names when they are barbarously used. Hear, O our God! for we are despised.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,
and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress;
so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God,
until that he have mercy upon us.
3 Have mercy upon us, O Lord,
have mercy upon us:
for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
4 Our soul is exceedingly filled
with the scorning of those that are at ease,
and with the contempt of the proud.

Psalms-124

Praise for Deliverance from Enemies

A Song of degrees of David.

1 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,
now may Israel say;

The people of God, being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice,

I. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say that there was but a step between them and death: the more desperate the disease appears to have been the more does the skill of the Physician appear in the cure. Observe,

1. Whence the threatening danger came: Men rose up against us, creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin. Homo homini lupus--Man is a wolf to man. No marvel that the red dragon, the roaring lion, should seek to swallow us up; but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father, that a woman should be drunk with the blood of saints, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose tender mercies are cruel.

But what was the matter with these men? Why their wrath was kindled against us (Ps 124:3); something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. Wrath is cruel and anger is outrageous. Their wrath was kindled as fire ready to consume us. They were proud; and the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor. They were daring in their attempt; they rose up against us, rose in rebellion, with a resolution to swallow us up alive.

2. How far it went, and how fatal it would have been if it had gone a little further: "We should have been devoured

as a lamb by a lion, not only slain, but swallowed up, so that there would have been no relics of us remaining, swallowed up with so much haste, ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit. We should have been deluged as the low grounds by a land-flood or the sands by a high spring-tide." This similitude he dwells upon, with the ascents which bespeak this a song of degrees, or risings, like the rest.

The waters had overwhelmed us. What of us? Why the stream had gone over our souls, our lives, our comforts, all that is dear to us. What waters? Why the proud waters. God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

II. Of the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin: "The Lord was on our side; and, if he had not been so, we should have been undone."

1. "God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us. He was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us, not only for us, but among us, and commander-in-chief of our forces."

2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. "If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies would have overpowered us." Happy the people, therefore, whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this, to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.

2 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,
when men rose up against us:
3 then they had swallowed us up quick,
when their wrath was kindled against us:
4 then the waters had overwhelmed us,
the stream had gone over our soul:

5 then the proud waters had gone over our soul.
6 Blessed be the Lord,
who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

Here the psalmist further magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

I. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him (Ps 124:6): Blessed be the Lord. God is the author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them. We rob him of his due if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him because we had such a narrow escape. We were delivered,

1. Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey: God has not given us as a prey to their teeth, intimating that they had no power over God's people but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined.

2. Like a bird, a little bird (the word signifies a sparrow), out of the snare of the fowler. The enemies are very subtle and spiteful; they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point. God's people are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail; then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness:

The snare is broken and so we are delivered. Isaac was saved when he lay ready to be sacrificed. Jehovah-jireh--in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

II. That their hearts, and the hearts of others, might be the more encouraged to trust in God in the like dangers (Ps 124:8): Our help is in the name of the Lord. David had directed us (Ps 121:2) to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns--My help is in the name of the

Lord; here as to the concerns of the public--Our help is so. It is a comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts that Israel's God is the same that made the world, and therefore will have a church in the world, and can secure that church in times of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

7 Our soul is escaped as a bird
out of the snare of the fowlers:
the snare is broken, and we are escaped.
8 Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalms-125

The Lord Is Round about His People

A Song of degrees.

1 They that trust in the Lord
shall be as mount Zion,
which cannot be removed,
but abideth for ever.

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may. Here is,

I The character of God's people, to whom these promises belong. Many call themselves God's people who have no part nor lot in this matter. But those shall have the benefit of them and may take the comfort of them,

(1.) Who are righteous (Ps 125:3), righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men, for his sake justified and sanctified.

(2.) Who trust in the Lord, who depend upon his care and devote themselves to his honour. All that deal with God

must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it to appear they do so by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

II The promises themselves.

1. That their hearts shall be established by faith: those minds shall be truly stayed that are stayed on God: They shall be as Mount Zion. The church in general is called Mount Zion (Heb 12:22), and it shall in this respect be like Mount Zion, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The stability of the church is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons, who trust in God, shall be established (Ps 112:7); their faith shall be their fixation, Isa 7:9. They shall be as Mount Zion, which is firm as it is a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise.

(1.) They cannot be removed by the prince of the power of the air, nor by all his subtlety and strength. They cannot be removed from their integrity nor from their confidence in God.

(2.) They abide for ever in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

2. That, committing themselves to God, they shall be safe, under his protection, from all the insults of their enemies, as Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification in the mountains that were round about it, Ps 125:2. Those mountains not only sheltered it from winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also very difficult of access for an enemy; such a defence is God's providence to his people. Observe,

(1.) The compass of it: The Lord is round about his people on every side. There is no gap in the hedge of protection which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy, who goes about them, seeking to do them a mischief, can find entrance, Job 1:10.

(2.) The continuance of it--henceforth even for ever. Mountains may moulder and come to nought, and rocks be removed out of their place (Job 14:18), but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken (Isa 54:10) nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast for ever (Ps 125:1), and here to have God round about them for ever, intimates that the promises of the stability and security of God's people will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast for ever, shall be as pillars in the temple of our God and go no more out (Re 3:12), and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be round about them for ever.

3. That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, Ps 125:3.

(1.) It is supposed that the rod of the wicked may come, may fall, upon the lot of the righteous. The rod of their power may oppress them; the rod of their anger may vex and torment them. It may fall upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot, only it cannot reach their souls.

(2.) It is promised that, though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there; it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear, but God will cut the work short in righteousness, so short that even with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape.

(3.) It is considered as a reason of this promise that if the trouble should continue over-long the righteous themselves would be in temptation to put forth their hands to iniquity, to join with wicked people in their wicked

practices, to say as they say and do as they do. There is danger lest, being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it and willing to give it up, lest, being kept long in expectation of promised mercies, they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off, upon suspicion of his having cast them off. See Ps 73:13,14.

Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength by the care of his providence, as well as their strength to their trials by the power of his grace. Oppression makes a wise man mad, especially if it continue long; therefore for the elect's sake the days shall be shortened, that, whatever becomes of their lot in this world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
so the Lord is round about his people
from henceforth even for ever.
3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous;
lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.
4 Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good,
and to them that are upright in their hearts.

Here is, 1 The prayer the psalmist puts up for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant (Ps 125:4): Do good, O Lord! unto those that are good. This teaches us to pray for all good people, to make supplication for all saints; and we may pray in faith for them, being assured that those who do well shall certainly be well dealt with. Those that are as they should be shall be as they would be, provided they be upright in heart, that they be really as good as they seem to be. With the upright God will show himself upright. He does not say, Do good, O Lord! to those that are perfect, that are sinless and spotless, but to those that are sincere and honest. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

2 The prospect he has of the ruin of hypocrites and deserters; he does not pray for it (I have not desired the woeful day, thou knowest), but he predicts it: As for those, who having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the rod of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways, use indirect ways to prevent trouble or extricate themselves out of it, or those who, instead of reforming, grow worse and worse and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, God shall send them away, cast them out, and lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, that is, he will appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note,

(1.) Sinful ways are crooked ways; sin is the perverting of that which is right.

(2.) The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways out of the right way will be the same with theirs who have all along walked in them, nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than another that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. God shall lead them forth, as prisoners are led forth to execution. Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire; and these shall go away; all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, Place upon Israel, may be taken as a prayer: "God preserve his Israel in peace, when his judgments are abroad reckoning with evil-doers." We read them as a promise: Peace shall be upon Israel; that is,

[1.] When those who have treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction those who faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, shall have peace in the end.

[2.] The destruction of those who walk in crooked ways will contribute to the peace and safety of the church. When Herod was cut off the word of God grew, Ac 12:23,24.

[3.] The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be the vexation, and will add much to the torment, of those who

perish in their wickedness, Lu 13:28,Isa 65:13. My servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed.

5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,
the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity:
but peace shall be upon Israel.

Psalms-126

Thanksgiving for Restoration
A Song of degrees.

1 When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion,
we were like them that dream.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon their harps were hung upon the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them and they lamented; but now that their captivity is turned they resume their harps; Providence pipes to them, and they dance.

Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of Providence and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return. Here is,

1 The deliverance God has wrought for them: He turned again the captivity of Zion. It is possible that Zion may be in captivity for the punishment of her degeneracy, but her captivity shall be turned again when the end is answered and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was the Lord's doing, according to his word many years before. God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe,

The release of Israel is called the turning again of the captivity of Zion, the holy hill, where God's tabernacle and dwelling-place were; for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the public exercise of their religion, were the most valuable advantages of their return out of captivity.

2 The pleasing surprise that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to: "We thought ourselves like men that dream; we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still" (as sometimes it had been to the prophets) "only a representation of it in vision," as St. Peter for a while thought his deliverance was, Ac 12:9.

Sometimes the people of God are thus prevented with the blessings of his goodness before they are aware. We were like those that are recovered to health (so Dr. Hammond reads it); "such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world." And the surprise of it put them into such an ecstasy and transport of joy that they could scarcely contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expressions of it:

Our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Thus they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. Those that were laughed at now laugh and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.

3. The notice which their neighbours took of it: They said among the heathen, Jehovah, the God of Israel, has done great things for that people, such as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity and had triumphed in it, Jer 22:8,9,Ps 137:7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance and admire that. It put a

reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerable; besides, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competition with him an acknowledgment of his wisdom, power, and providence.

4. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, Ps 126:3. The heathen were but spectators, and spoke of it only as matter of news; they had no part nor lot in the matter; but the people of God spoke of it as sharers in it,

(1.) With application: "He has done great things for us, things that we are interested in and have advantage by." Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ has wrought out as wrought out for us. Who loved me, and gave himself for me.

(2.) With affection: "Whereof we are glad. The heathen are amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad." While Israel went a whoring from their God joy was forbidden them (Ho 9:1); but now that the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting reforming people that are, and shall be, the rejoicing people. Observe here,

[1.] God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things.

[2.] God is to be eyed as the author of all the great things done for the church.

[3.] It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with singing:
then said they among the heathen,
The Lord hath done great things for them.
3 The Lord hath done great things for us;

whereof we are glad.
4 Turn again our captivity, O Lord,
as the streams in the south.

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted. Those that had come out of captivity were still in distress, even in their own land (Ne 1:3), and many yet remained in Babylon; and therefore they rejoiced with trembling, and bore upon their hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here,

1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance (Ps 126:4): "Turn again our captivity. Let those that have returned to their own land be eased of the burdens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted."

The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. And while we are here in this world there will still be matter for prayer, even when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And, when we are free and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity to join with their brethren that had returned would be as welcome to both sides as streams of water in those countries, which, lying far south, were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country, Pr 25:25.

2. A promise for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that, though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the saints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that their seedness of tears will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, Ps 126:5,6.

(1.) Suffering saints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often; they share in the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But

they sow in tears; they do the duty of an afflicted state and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing; when we suffer ill we must be doing well. Nay, as the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chooses to sow in the wet, so we must improve times of affliction, as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, there are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow, tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others, tears of sympathy with the afflicted church, and the tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word.

These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when corn is dear and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground, in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus does a good man sow in tears.

(2.) They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but, when they have done their work, shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land, in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness.

Those that sow in the tears of godly sorrow shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon and a settled peace. Those that sow to the spirit, in this vale of tears, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting, and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted.

5 They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
6 He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves with him.

Psalms-127

Prosperity Comes from the Lord
A Song of degrees for Solomon.

1 Except the Lord build the house,
they labor in vain that build it:
except the Lord keep the city,
the watchman waketh but in vain.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the divine Providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teaches him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion. Parents, in teaching their children, should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions. We must have an eye to God,

I. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family, for kings' houses are no longer safe than while God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing and not our own contrivance,

1. For the raising of a family: Except the Lord build the house, by his providence and blessing, those labour in vain, though ever so ingenious, that build it. We may understand it of the material house: except the Lord bless the building it is to no purpose for men to build, any more than for the builders of Babel, who attempted in defiance of heaven, or Hiel, who built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice (Hab 2:11,12), God certainly does not build there; nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing.

Or, rather, it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable that was mean; men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases; but all in vain, unless God build up the family, and raise the poor out of the dust. The best-laid project fails unless God crown it with success. See Mal 1:4.

2. For the securing of a family or a city (for this is what the psalmist particularly mentions): if the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen, who go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain, for a raging fire may break out, the mischief of which the timeliest discoveries may not be able to prevent. The guards may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost, by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel or most cautious governor could not obviate.

3. For the enriching of a family; this is a work of time and thought, but cannot be effected without the favour of Providence any more than that which is the product of one happy turn: "It is vain for you to rise up early and sit up late, and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments, in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world."

Usually, those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares. And they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest; they eat the bread of sorrows. It is part of our sentence that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but those go further: all their days they eat in darkness, Ec 5:17. They are continually fell of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burden to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain except God prosper them,

for riches are not always to men of understanding, Ec 9:11.

Those that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy and live very comfortably without this ado. Solomon was called Jedidiah--Beloved of the Lord (2Sa 12:25); to him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the people, and for Adonijah to make such a stir, and to say, I will be king. Solomon sits still, and, being beloved of the Lord, to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note,

(1.) Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world is a vain a d fruitless thing. We weary ourselves for vanity if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, Hag 1:6,9.

(2.) Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe (Ps 4:8), that it is sweet, Jer 31:25,26. God gives us sleep as he gives it to his beloved when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear (our souls returning to him and reposing in him as our rest), and when we awake to be still with him and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. He gives his beloved sleep, that is, quietness and contentment of mind, and comfortable enjoyment of what is present and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to keep ourselves in the love of God, and then we may be easy whether we have little or much of this world.

II. In the increase of the family. He shows,

1. That children are God's gift, Ps 127:2. If children are withheld it is God that withholds them (Ge 30:2); if they are given, it is God that gives them (Ge 33:5); and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives, contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one son that he had; for those that desire children as a heritage from the Lord must receive them in

the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife.

Mal 2:15, therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God. But they shall commit whoredom and shall not increase. Children are a heritage, and a reward, and are so to be accounted, blessings and not burdens; for he that sends mouths will send meat if we trust in him. Obed-edom had eight sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, 1Ch 26:5. Children are a heritage for the Lord, as well as from him; they are my children (says God) which thou hast borne unto me (Eze 16:20); and they are most our honour and comfort when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family: As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, who knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, so are children of the youth, that is, children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by the time they need their service; or, rather, children who are themselves young; they are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies. The family that has a large stock of children is like a quiver full of arrows, of different sizes we may suppose, but all of use one time or other; children of different capacities and inclinations may be several ways serviceable to the family.

He that has a numerous issue may boldly speak with his enemy in the gate in judgment; in battle he needs not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, 1Sa 2:4,5. Observe here, Children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they have gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these arrows in

the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.

2 It is vain for you to rise up early,
to sit up late,
to eat the bread of sorrows:
for so he giveth his beloved sleep.
3 Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord:
and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man;
so are children of the youth.
5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:
they shall not be ashamed,
but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Psalms-128

The Blessedness of Him Who Fears the Lord
A Song of degrees.

1 Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord;
that walketh in his ways.

It is here shown that godliness has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

I. It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth that those who are truly holy are truly happy. Those whose blessed state we are here assured of are such as fear the Lord and walk in his ways, such as have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart the tenour of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways and not trifling in them or drawing back. Such are blessed (Ps 128:1), and shall be blessed, Ps 128:4.

God blesses them, and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness, arising from this blessing, is here secured,

1. To all the saints universally: Blessed is everyone that fears the Lord, whoever he be; in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him, and therefore is blessed whether he be high or low, rich or poor, in the world; if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him.

2. To such a saint in particular: Thus shall the man be blessed, not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests.

3. We are encouraged to apply it to ourselves (Ps 128:2): "Happy shalt thou be; thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name, if thou fear God and walk in his ways. Happy shalt thou be, that is, It shall be well with thee; whatever befals thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity." It is asserted (Ps 128:4) with a note commanding attention:

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed; behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful, and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing, from him.

II. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good; and that is enough.

1. That, by the blessing of God, they shall get an honest livelihood and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised

that they shall live at ease, without care or pains, but, Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands. Here is a double promise,

(1.) That they shall have something to do (for an idle life is a miserable uncomfortable life) and shall have health, and strength, and capacity of mind to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live, as the disabled poor do, upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as it is a duty with quietness to work and eat our own bread, 2Th 3:12.

(2.) That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get; others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or invading enemies. God will not blast it and blow upon it (as he did, Hag 1:9), and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food, of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family-relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature-comfort.

(1.) The wife shall be as a vine by the sides of the house, not only as a spreading vine which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, Jdg 9:13. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant, and some think (because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites) it was the tree of knowledge itself.

The wife's place is the husband's house; there her business lies, and that is her castle. Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold, in the tent; where should she be else? Her place is by the sides of the house, not under-foot to be trampled

on, nor yet upon the house-top to domineer (if she be so, she is but as the grass upon the house-top, in the next psalm), but on the side of the house, being a rib out of the side of the man.

She shall be a loving wife, as the vine, which cleaves to the house-side, an obedient wife, as the vine, which is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom, and righteousness, and good management, the branches of which run over the wall (Ge 49:22,Ps 80:11), like a fruitful vine, not cumbering the ground, nor bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit.

(2.) The children shall be as olive plants, likely in time to be olive-trees, and, though wild by nature, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its root and fatness, Ro 11:17. It is pleasant to parents who have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it, to have many children, enough to surround it, and those with them, and not scattered, or the parents forced from them. Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity that his children were about him, Job 29:5. Parents love to have their children at table, to keep up the pleasantness of the table-talk, to have them in health, craving food and not physic, to have them like olive-plants, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those things which God has promised and which they pray for: The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. Blessings out of Zion are the best-blessings, which flow, not from common providence, but from special grace, Ps 20:2.

4. That they shall live long, to enjoy the comforts of the rising generations: "Thou shalt see thy children's children, as Joseph, Ge 50:23. Thy family shall be built up and

continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it." Children's children, if they be good children, are the crown of old men (Pr 17:6), who are apt to be fond of their grandchildren.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity, which every man who fears God is no less concerned for than for the prosperity of his own family. "Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so. Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem as long as thou shalt live, though thou shouldest live long, and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and embittered by public troubles." A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless withal he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

2 For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands:
happy shalt thou be,
and it shall be well with thee.
3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine
by the sides of thine house:
thy children like olive plants
round about thy table.
4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.
5 The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion:
and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem
all the days of thy life.
6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children,
and peace upon Israel.

Psalms-129

A Prayer for the Overthrow of Zion’s Enemies
A Song of degrees.

1 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth,
may Israel now say:

The church of God, in its several ages, is here spoken of, or, rather, here speaks, as one single person, now old and gray-headed, but calling to remembrance the former days, and reflecting upon the times of old. And, upon the review, it is found,

1. That the church has been often greatly distressed by its enemies on earth: Israel may now say, "I am the people that has been oppressed more than any people, that has been as a speckled bird, pecked at by all the birds round about," Jer 12:9. It is true, they brought their troubles upon themselves by their sins; it was for them that God punished them; but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant, and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. "For these many a time have they afflicted me from my youth."

Note, God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church, from its infancy, has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges; then they were afflicted, and thenceforward more or less. The gospel-church, ever since it had a being, has been at times afflicted; and it bore this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under.

The ploughers ploughed upon my back, Ps 129:3. We read (Ps 125:3) of the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righteous, where we rather expected the plough, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the plough of the wicked upon the back of the righteous, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphors in these places may be said to be crossed; the sense however of both is the same, and is too plain, that the enemies of God's people have all along used them very barbarously.

They tore them, as the husbandman tears the ground with his plough-share, to pull them to pieces and get all they could out of them, and so to wear out the saints of the Most High, as the ground is worn out that has been long tilled,

tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus he intended it for his people's good, that, their fallow ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them: howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their hearts think so (Isa 10:7); they made long their furrows, never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church.

Many by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people understand the stripes they gave them. The cutters cut upon my back, so they read it. The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings (probably the captives had) and cruel mockings (for we read of the scourge or lash of the tongue, Heb 11:36), and so it was fulfilled in Christ, who gave his back to the smiters, Isa 50:6. Or it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel. Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field, Mic 3:12.

2. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her friend in heaven.

(1.) The enemies' projects have been defeated. They have afflicted the church, in hopes to ruin it, but they have not gained their point. Many a storm it has weathered; many a shock, and many a brunt, it has borne; and yet it is in being: They have not prevailed against me. One would wonder how this ship has lived at sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall.

(2.) The enemies' power has been broken: God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked, has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their ploughing, has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing, has cut the bands of union by which they were combined together, has cut the bands of captivity in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the

mischief they design against his church and shaming their counsels. These words, The Lord is righteous, may refer either to the distresses or to the deliverances of the church.

[1.] The Lord is righteous in suffering Israel to be afflicted. This the people of God were always ready to own, that, how unjust soever their enemies were, God was just in all that was brought upon them, Ne 9:33.

[2.] The Lord is righteous in not suffering Israel to be ruined; for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he will be as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a recompence, 2Th 1:6.

2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth:
yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 The plowers plowed upon my back:
they made long their furrows.
4 The Lord is righteous:
he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.
5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.
6 Let them be as the grass upon the housetops,
which withereth afore it groweth up:

The psalmist, having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that had been laid as deep as hell to ruin the church, here concludes his psalm as Deborah did her song, So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord! Jdg 5:31.

I. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship, and his worshippers, that have an antipathy to religion and religious people, that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can that God may not have a church in the world.

II. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated, that in them they may be confounded and turned back with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprise and

expectation: Let them all be confounded is as much as, They shall be all confounded.

The confusion imprecated and predicted is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the house-top. As men they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, Isa 51:12. But as they are enemies to Zion they are so certainly marked for ruin that they may be looked upon with as much contempt as the grass on the house-tops, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing.

1. It perishes quickly: It withers before it grows up to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner does it wither. It withers before it is plucked up, so some read it. The enemies of God's church wither of themselves, and stay not till they are rooted out by the judgments of God.

2. It is of no use to any body; nor are they any thing but the unprofitable burdens of the earth, nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head, nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them than the husbandman does by the grass on his house-top. Their harvest will be a heap in the day of grief, Isa 17:11.

III. No wise man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, Ps 129:8. Observe,

1. It has been an ancient and laudable custom not only to salute and wish a good day to strangers and travellers, but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest-labourers. Thus Boas prayed for his reapers. Ru 2:4, The Lord be with you. We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify our good-will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God as a pious ejaculation if it come from a devout and upright heart.

2. Religious expressions, being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and ludicrous actions. Mowing the grass on the house-top would be a jest, and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God will not prostitute to it the usual forms of salutation, which savoured of devotion; for holy things must not be jested with.

3. It is a dangerous thing to let the church's enemies have our good wishes in their designs against the church. If we wish them God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds, 2Jo 1:11. When it is said, None will bless them, and show them respect, more is implied, namely, that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and woe to those that have the prayers of the saints against them. I cursed his habitation, Job 5:3.

7 wherewith the mower filleth not his hand;
nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
8 Neither do they which go by say,
The blessing of the Lord be upon you:
we bless you in the name of the Lord.

Psalms-130

Hope in the Lord's Redempt i on
A Song of degrees.

1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.

In these verses we are taught,

I. Whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, Ps 130:1 The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do, in the depths of distress and almost in the depths of despair, the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, it is our privilege that we may cry unto God and be heard.

A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in in this world, Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower and to recover us out of the horrible pit and miry clay, Ps 40:1,2.

II. While we continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for (Ps 130:2): Lord, hear my voice, my complaint and prayer, and let thy ears be attentive to the voice both of my afflictions and of my supplications.

III. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences (Ps 130:3): If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord! who shall stand? His calling God Lord twice, in so few words, Jah and Adonai, is very emphatic, and intimates a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here,

1. To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead Not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities and is liable to be animadverted upon.

2. To own the power and justice of God, which are such that, if he were extreme to mark what we do amiss, there would be no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man to ground a condemnation upon; and, if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast.

If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he make remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be

many and great, greatly aggravated and very provoking; and then, if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? We could not make our escape, nor resist not bear up under his avenging hand.

3. Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we should be undone if he were to mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us. It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

IV. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, Ps 130:4. Here is,

1. God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner: But there is forgiveness with thee. It is our unspeakable comfort, in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him, for that is what we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin; he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, Ex 34:6,7.

He has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him implacable, but easy to be entreated, and swift to show mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. There is a propitiation with thee, so some read it. Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness.

2. Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it: "There is forgiveness with thee, not that thou mayest be made bold with and presumed upon, but that thou mayest be feared--in general, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men, who, being sinners, could

have no dealings with God, if he were not a Master that could pass by a great many faults." But this encourages us to come into his service that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanour; no, nor for any, if we truly repent. This does in a special manner invite those who have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God, that he is gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance, Joe 2:13,Mt 3:2.

And, particularly, we are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy (Ho 3:5, They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness); and then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God when we make it the object of our holy fear.

2 Lord, hear my voice:
let thine ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications.
3 If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with thee,
that thou mayest be feared.
5 I wait for the Lord,
my soul doth wait,
and in his word do I hope.

Here, I The psalmist engages himself to trust in God and to wait for him, Ps 130:5,6. Observe,

1. His dependence upon God, expressed in a climax, it being a a song of degrees, or ascents: "I wait for the Lord; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, longing till it does come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. My soul doth wait; I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is for the Lord that my soul waits, for the gifts of his grace and the operations of his power."

2 The ground of that dependence: In his word do I hope. We must hope for that only which he has promised in his

word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; we must hope for it because he has promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit.

3. The degree of that dependence--"more than those that watch for the morning, who are, (1.) Well-assured that the morning will come; and so am I that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting."

(2.) Very desirous that it would come. Sentinels that keep guard upon the walls, those that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day wish to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly does this good man long for the tokens of God's favour and the visits of his grace, and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances than they are of day.

Dr. Hammond reads it thus, My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning, and gives this sense of it, "To thee I daily betake myself, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my very soul, before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice."

II. He encourages all the people of God in like manner to depend upon him and trust in him: Let Israel hope in the Lord and wait for him; not only the body of the people, but every good man, who surnames himself by the name of Israel, Isa 44:5. Let all that devote themselves to God cheerfully stay themselves upon him (Ps 130:7,8), for two reasons:--

1. Because the light of nature discovers to us that there is mercy with him, that the God of Israel is a merciful God and the Father of mercies. Mercy is with him; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels.

2. Because the light of the gospel discovers to us that there is redemption with him, contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fulness of time; it was in the beginning hidden in God. See here,

(1.) The nature of this redemption; it is redemption from sin, from all sin, and therefore can be no other than that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the author of; for it is he that saves his people from their sins (Mt 1:21), that redeems them from all iniquity (Tit 2:14), and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, Ro 11:26. It is he that redeems us both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin.

(2.) The riches of this redemption; it is plenteous redemption; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, says the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a plenteous redemption.

(3.) The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong: He shall redeem Israel, Israel according to the spirit, all those who are in covenant with God, as Israel was, and who are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

6 My soul waiteth for the Lord
more than they that watch for the morning :
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.
7 Let Israel hope in the Lord :
for with the Lord there is mercy,
and with him is plenteous redemption.
8 And he shall redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.

Psalms-131

Childlike Repose in the Lord
A Song of degrees of David.

1 Lord, my heart is not haughty,
nor mine eyes lofty:
neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
or in things too high for me.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us:--

I. Consciousness of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him that he had walked humbly with his God, notwithstanding the censures he was under and the temptations he was in.

1. He aimed not at a high condition, nor was he desirous of making a figure in the world, but, if God had so ordered, could have been well content to spend all his days, as he did in the beginning of them, in the sheep-folds. His own brother, in a passion, charged him with pride (1Sa 17:28), but the charge was groundless and unjust. God, who searches the heart, knew,

(1.) That he had no conceited opinion of himself, or his own merits: Lord, my heart is not haughty. Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them, are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love of God reigning in the heart will subdue all inordinate self-love.

(2.) That he had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look: "My eyes are not lofty, either to look with envy upon those that are above me or to look with disdain upon those that are below me." Where there is a proud heart there is commonly a proud look (Pr 6:17), but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.

(3.) That he did not employ himself in things above his station, in things too great or too high for him. He did not employ himself in studies too high; he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation, or covet to be wise above what is written.

To know God and our duty is learning sufficiently high for us. He did not employ himself in affairs too great; he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no, nor for a soldier; for, when his brethren went to the wars, he staid at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which does not belong to us. Princes and scholars must not exercise themselves in matters too great, too high, for men: and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. Those will fall under due shame that affect undue honours.

2. He was well reconciled to every condition that God placed him in (Ps 131:2): I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother. As he had not proudly aimed at the kingdom, so, since God had appointed him to it, he had not behaved insolently towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set; but,

(1.) He had been as humble as a little child about the age of a weanling, as manageable and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as entirely at God's disposal as the child at the disposal of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or valuing himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour has taught us humility by this comparison (Mt 18:3); we must become as little children.

(2.) He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world as a child is to the breast when it is thoroughly weaned from it. I have levelled and quieted myself (so Dr. Hammond reads it) as a child that is weaned. This intimates that our hearts are naturally as desirous of worldly things as the babe is of the breast, and in like manner relish them, cry for them, are fond of them, play with them, and cannot live without them. But, by the grace of God, a soul that is sanctified, is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, and that helps to wean us.

The child is perhaps cross and fretful while it is in the weaning and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast. But in a day or two it is forgotten; the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding, cares no longer for milk, but can bear strong meat. Thus does a gracious soul quiet itself under the loss of that which it loved and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy whatever happens, lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace, when creatures prove dry breasts. When our condition is not to our mind we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves and all about us; then our souls are as a weaned child.

II. Confidence in God; and this David recommends to all Israel of God, no doubt from his own experience of the benefit of it (Ps 131:3): Let Israel hope in the Lord, and let them continue to do so henceforth and for ever. Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; and therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them hope in the Lord that they should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. Thus it is good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,
as a child that is weaned of his mother:

my soul is even as a weaned child.
3 Let Israel hope in the Lord
from henceforth and for ever.

Psalms-132

A Prayer for Blessing on the Sanctuary
A Song of degrees.

1 Lord, remember David,
and all his afflictions:

In these verses we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building a house to God's name. Observe,

I. What he pleads--two things:--

1. That what he had done was in pursuance of the pious vow which his father David had made to build a house for God. Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own: "I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldst do this; but, Lord, remember David, with whom thou madest the covenant" (as Moses prayed, Ex 32:13, Remember Abraham, the first trustee of the covenant); "remember all his afflictions, all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of," or his care and concern about the ark, and what an uneasiness it was to him that the ark was in curtains, 2Sa 7:2. Remember all his humility and meekness (so some read it), all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow.

Note, It is not amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession, of their afflictions, their services, and their sufferings, of God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness, the care they took of, and the many prayers they put up for, those that should come after them. We may apply it to Christ, the Son of David, and to all his afflictions: "Lord, remember the covenant made with him and the

satisfaction made by him. Remember all his offerings (Ps 20:3), that is, all his sufferings." He especially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Observe,

(1.) Whom he bound himself to, to the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob. Vows are to be made to God, who is a party as well as a witness. The Lord is the Mighty One of Jacob, Jacob's God, and a mighty one, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty one.

(2.) What he bound himself to do, to find out a place for the Lord, that is, for the ark, the token of his presence. He had observed in the law frequent mention of the place that God would choose to put his name there, to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown there was no such place; Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the feasts of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity. "Well," says David, "I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes, a place of habitation for the Mighty One of Jacob, a place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it."

(3.) How intent he was upon it; he would not settle in his bed, till he had brought this matter to some head, Ps 132:3,4. The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about public business, made a vow that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark, at the beginning of his reign, or rather where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence with which he was punished for numbering the people (1Ch 22:1, Then David said, This is the house of the Lord); and perhaps it was upon occasion of that

judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's controversies with him was for his dilatoriness in this matter.

Note, When needful work is to be done for God it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to Providence; for we know not what a day may bring forth. Especially in the great work of conversion to God we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

2. That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, Ps 132:6,7.

(1.) They were inquisitive after the ark; for they lamented its obscurity, 1Sa 7:2. They heard of it at Ephratah (that is, at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim); there they were told it had been, but it was gone. They found it, at last, in the fields of the wood, that is, in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies the city of woods. Thence all Israel fetched it, with great solemnity, in the beginning of David's reign (1Ch 13:6), so that in building his house for the ark Solomon had gratified all Israel. They needed not to go about to seek the ark anymore; they now knew where to find it.

(2.) They were resolved to attend it: "Let us but have a convenient place, and we will go into his tabernacle, to pay our homage there; we will worship at his footstool as subjects and suppliants, which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, in the days of Saul," 1Ch 13:3.

II. What he prays for, Ps 132:8-10.

1. That God would vouchsafe, not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in, this temple which he had built: Arise, O Lord! into thy rest, and let this be it, thou, even the ark of thy strength, the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence.

2. That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty: Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; let them appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note, Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers of the necessity of which there is no dispute. "They are thy priests, and will therefore discredit their relation to thee if they be not clothed with righteousness."

3. That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them: Let thy saints shout for joy. They did so when the ark was brought into the city of David (2Sa 6:15); they will do so when the priests are clothed with righteousness. A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it; it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are helpers of your joy, 2Co 1:24.

4. That Solomon's own prayer, upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple, might be accepted of God: "Turn not away the face of thy anointed, that is, deny me not the things I have asked of thee, send me not away ashamed." He pleads,

(1.) That he was the anointed of the Lord, and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great anointed, who, in his intercession, urges his designation to his office. He is God's anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always.

(2.) That he was the son of David: "For his sake do not deny me;" and this is the Christian's plea: "For the sake of Christ" (our David), "in whom thou art well pleased,

accept me." He is David, whose name signifies beloved; and we are made accepted in the beloved. He is God's servant, whom he upholds, Isa 42:1. "We have no merit of our own to plead, but for his sake, in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour." When we pray for the prosperity of the church we may pray with great boldness, for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood. "Let both ministers and people do their duty."

2 how he sware unto the Lord,
and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;
3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
nor go up into my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
or slumber to mine eyelids,
5 until I find out a place for the Lord,
a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.
6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah:
we found it in the fields of the wood.
7 We will go into his tabernacles:
we will worship at his footstool.
8 Arise, O Lord, into thy rest;
thou, and the ark of thy strength.
9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;
and let thy saints shout for joy.
10 For thy servant David's sake
turn not away the face of thine anointed.
11 The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David;
he will not turn from it;

These are precious promises, confirmed by an oath, that the heirs of them might have strong consolation, Heb 6:17,18. It is all one whether we take them as pleas urged in the prayer or as answers returned to the prayer; believers know how to make use of the promises both ways, with them to speak to God and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David and to the testimony of Israel fixed on Mount Zion. The promises concerning Zion's hill are as applicable to the gospel-church as these concerning

David's seed are to Christ, and therefore both pleadable by us and very comfortable to us. Here is,

I The choice God made of David's house and Zion hill. Both were of divine appointment.

1. God chose David's family for the royal family and confirmed his choice by an oath, Ps 132:11,12. David, being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath: The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, will not turn from it. Did David swear to the Lord (Ps 132:2) that he would find him a house? The Lord swore to David that he would build him a house; for God will be behind with none of his people in affections or assurances. The promise made to David refers,

(1.) To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne, which was fulfilled in Solomon; David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1Ki 1:48. The crown was also entailed conditionally upon his heirs for ever: If thy children, in following ages, will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them. God himself engaged to teach them, and he did his part; they had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects is that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, and then their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. Kings are before God upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs quamdiu se bene gesserint--during good behaviour. The issue of this was that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees.

(2.) To an everlasting successor, a king that should descend from his loins of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, he tells us that David himself so understood it. Ac 2:30, He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

and in the fulness of time he did so, and gave him the throne of his father David, Lu 1:32.

He did fulfill the condition of the promise; he kept God's covenant and his testimony, did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him; and therefore to him, and his spiritual seed, the promise shall be made good. He, and the children God has given him, all believers, shall sit upon the throne for evermore, Re 3:21.

2. God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, Ps 132:13,14. He chose the Mount Zion which he loved (Ps 76:68); he chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, This is my rest for ever, and not merely my residence for a time, as Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David; he chose it for the royal city because God chose it for the holy city. God said, Here will I dwell, and therefore David said, Here will I dwell, for here he adhered to his principle, It is good for me to be near to God.

Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the gospel-church, which is called Mount Zion (Heb 12:22), and in it what is here said of Zion has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since ploughed as a field, but the church of Christ is the house of the living God (1Ti 3:15), and it is his rest for ever, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, are the comfort and joy of all its members.

II The choice blessings God has in store for David's house and Zion hill. Whom God chooses he will bless.

1. God, having chosen Zion hill, promises to bless that,

(1.) With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness has the promise of them, Ps 132:15. The earth shall yield her increase; where religion is set up there shall be

provision, and in blessing God will bless it (Ps 67:6); he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable, as well as more comfortable, than a great deal without that blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments, and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes further: I will satisfy her poor with bread. Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised that God will take care even of them.

[1.] By his providence they shall be kept from wanting; they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it, so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's poor shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor, according to their ability, and the church must take care that they be not neglected, 6:1.

[2.] By his grace they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have, of all others, reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the provision that is made for the soul in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us we shall and may be satisfied with.

(2.) With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness (Ps 132:16), which is an answer to the prayer, Ps 132:9. [1.] It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness; it is here promised that God will clothe them with salvation, not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people; they shall both save themselves and those that hear them, and add those to the church that shall be saved. Note, Whom God clothes

with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness and then with it God will give salvation.

[2.] It was desired that the saints might shout for joy; it is promised that they shall shout aloud for joy. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

2. God, having chosen David's family, here promises to bless that also with suitable blessings.

(1.) Growing power: There, in Zion, will I make the horn of David to bud, Ps 132:17. The royal dignity shall increase more and more, and constant additions he made to the lustre of it. Christ is the horn of salvation (denoting a plentiful and powerful salvation) which God has raised up, and made to bud, in the house of his servant David. David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous (Ps 75:10); in recompence for it God here promises to make his horn to bud, for to those that have power, and use it well, more shall be given.

(2.) Lasting honour: I have ordained a lamp for my anointed. Thou wilt light my candle, Ps 18:28. That lamp is likely to burn brightly which God ordains. A lamp is a successor, for, when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it; it is a succession, for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world.

(3.) Complete victory: "His enemies, who have formed designs against him, will I clothe with shame, when they shall see their designs baffled." Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise, in the great day, to everlasting shame and contempt.

(4.) Universal prosperity: Upon himself shall his crown flourish, that is, his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crowns of earthly princes endure not to all generations (Pr 27:24), but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as fade not away.

12 Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
If thy children will keep my covenant
and my testimony that I shall teach them,
their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.
13 For the Lord hath chosen Zion;
he hath desired it for his habitation.
14 This is my rest for ever:
here will I dwell ; for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provision:
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation:
and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
17 There will I make the horn of David to bud:
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
18 His enemies will I clothe with shame:
but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

Psalms-133

The Blessings of Brotherly Unity
A Song of degrees of David.

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Here see, I. What it is that is commended--brethren's dwelling together in unity, not only not quarrelling, and devouring one another, but delighting in each other with mutual endearments, and promoting each other's welfare with mutual services. Sometimes it is chosen, as the best

expedient for preserving peace, that brethren should live asunder and at a distance from each other; that indeed may prevent enmity and strife (Ge 13:9), but the goodness and pleasantness are for brethren to dwell together and so to dwell in unity, to dwell even as one (so some read it), as having one heart, one soul, one interest.

David had many sons by many wives; probably he penned this psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love another, and, if they had done this, much of the mischief that arose in his family would have been happily prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had separate interests during the government of the Judges, and it was often of bad consequence; but now that they were united under one common head he would have them sensible how much it was likely to be for their advantage, especially since now the ark was fixed, and with it the place of their rendezvous for public worship and the centre of their unity. Now let them live in love.

II. How commendable it is: Behold, how good and how pleasant it is! It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort. It is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good men; it brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity. Behold, how good! We cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. Behold it is a rare thing, and therefore admirable. Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men, so much of heaven on this earth! Behold it is an amiable thing, which will attract our hearts. Behold it is an exemplary thing, which, where it is, is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.

III. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated.

1. It is fragrant as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours, to the great delight of all the bystanders, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor the high priest, so

plentifully that it ran down the face, even to the collar or binding of the garment, Ps 133:2.

(1.) This ointment was holy. So must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart, devoted to God. We must love those that are begotten for his sake that begat, 1Jo 5:1.

(2.) This ointment was a composition made up by a divine dispensatory; God appointed the ingredients and the quantities. Thus believers are taught of God to love one another; it is a grace of his working in us.

(3.) It was very precious, and the like to it was not to be made for any common use. Thus holy love is, in the sight of God, of great price; and that is precious indeed which is so in God's sight.

(4.) It was grateful both to Aaron himself and to all about him. So is holy love; it is like ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart. Christ's love to mankind was part of that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows. (5.) Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord till they were anointed with this ointment, nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not we are nothing, 1Co 13:1,2.

2. It is fructifying. It is profitable as well as pleasing; it is as the dew; it brings abundance of blessings along with it, as numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of men's passions, as the evening dews cool the air and refresh the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in every thing that is good; it moistens the heart, and makes it tender and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, malice and bitterness unfit us to receive it, 1Pe 2:1.

It is as the dew of Hermon, a common hill (for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies), and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, a holy

hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies. Both Hermon and Zion will wither without this dew. It is said of the dew that it tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men, Mic 5:7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us (that is publican's love), but should go before it--that is divine love.

IV. The proof of the excellency of brotherly love. Loving people are blessed people. For, 1. They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed: There, where brethren dwell together in unity, the Lord commands the blessing, a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessing, man can but beg a blessing. Blessings according to the promise are commanded blessings, for he has commanded his covenant for ever. Blessings that take effect are commanded blessings, for he speaks and it is done.

2. They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands on those that dwell in love is life for evermore; that is the blessing of blessings. Those that dwell in love not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. Those that live in love and peace shall have the God of love and peace with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever, in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is it, and how pleasant!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head,
that ran down upon the beard,
even Aaron’s beard:
that went down to the skirts of his garments;
3 as the dew of Hermon,
and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion:
for there the Lord commanded the blessing,
even life for evermore.

Psalms-134

Exhortation to the Night-watchers
A Song of degrees.

1 Behold, bless ye the Lord,
all ye servants of the Lord,
which by night stand in the house of the Lord.

This psalm instructs us concerning a two-fold blessing:--

I. Our blessing God, that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, Ps 134:1,2.

1. It is a call to the Levites to do it. They were the servants of the Lord by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, Nu 3:6-10, &c. Some of them did by night stand in the house of the Lord, to guard the holy things of the temple, that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple, that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire on the altar nor the lamps in the candlestick went out. Probably it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that departed not from the temple night or day, Lu 2:37. Now these are here called upon to bless the Lord.

Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed. Thus they must redeem time for holy exercises; and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of husbandry to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. Those who stood in the house of the Lord must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house. Let them therefore bless the Lord; let them all do it in concert, or

each by himself; let them lift up their hands in the doing of it, in token of the lifting up of their hearts. Let them lift up their hands in holiness (so Dr. Hammond reads it) or in sanctification, as it is fit when they lift them up in the sanctuary; and let them remember that when they were appointed to wash before they went in to minister they were thereby taught to lift up holy hands in prayer and praise.

2. It is a call to us to do it, who, as Christians, are made priests to our God, and Levites, Isa 66:21. We are the servants of the Lord; we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary; we stand before him to minister to him. Even by night we are under his eye and have access to him. Let us therefore bless the Lord, and again bless him; think and speak of his glory and goodness. Let us lift up our hands in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with Behold! a note commanding attention. Look about you, Sirs, when you are in God's presence, and conduct yourselves accordingly.

II. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, Ps 134:3. Whether it is the watchmen's blessing their captain, or the Levites' blessing the high priest, or whoever was their chief (as many take it, because it is in the singular number, The Lord bless thee), or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many ("The Lord bless thee, each of you in particular, thee and thee; you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you"), is not material. We may learn,

1. That we need desire no more to make us happy than to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blesses are blessed indeed.

2. That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God,

are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for.

3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he who made heaven and earth, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his disposal, the upper and nether springs. 4. We ought to beg these blessings, not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only, The Lord bless me, but, The Lord bless thee, thus testifying our belief of the fulness of divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good-will also to others. We must pray for those that exhort us. Though the less is blessed of the greater (Heb 7:7), yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.

2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary,
and bless the Lord.
3 The Lord that made heaven and earth
bless thee out of Zion.

Psalms-135

The Greatness of the Lord and the Vanity of Idols

Here is,

1 The duty we are called to--to praise the Lord, to praise his name; praise him, and again praise him. We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself and has done for others; take all occasions to speak well of God and to give his truths and ways a good word.

2 The persons that are called upon to do this--the servants of the Lord, the priests and Levites that stand in his house, and all the devout and pious Israelites that stand in the courts of his house to worship there, Ps 135:2. Those that have most reason to praise God who are admitted to the privileges of his house, and those see most reason who there behold his beauty and taste his bounty; from them it

is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places. Who should praise him if they do not?

3. The reasons why we should praise God.

(1.) Because he whom we are to praise is good, and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that. His goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory.

(2.) Because the work is its own wages: Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant. It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God; and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste for the pleasures of sin.

(3.) Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people (Ps 135:4): The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself, and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him; for therefore God chose a people to himself that they might be unto him for a name and a praise (Jer 13:11), and therefore Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. Israel is God's peculiar treasure above all people (Ex 19:5); they are his Segullah, a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, precious in his sight and honourable. For this distinguishing surprising favour, if the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy ungrateful people under the sun.

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the name of the Lord;
praise him, O ye servants of the Lord.
2 Ye that stand in the house of the Lord,
in the courts of the house of our God,
3 praise the Lord;
for the Lord is good:
sing praises unto his name;

for it is pleasant.
4 For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself,
and Israel for his peculiar treasure.
5 For I know that the Lord is great,
and that our Lord is above all gods.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God, as the proper matter of our cheerful praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God as the proper matter of our awful praises; and on this he is most copious, because this we are less forward to consider.

I. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness (Ps 135:5): The Lord is great, great indeed, who knows no limits of time or place. He asserts it with assurance, "I know that he is so; know it not only by observation of the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it; I am sure of it; I know it by my own experience of the divine greatness working on my soul." He asserts it with a holy defiance of all pretenders, though they should join in confederacy against him. He is not only above any god, but above all gods, infinitely above them, between him and them there is no comparison.

II. He proves him to be a great God by the greatness of his power, Ps 135:6.

1. He has an absolute power, and may do what he will: Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he, and none could control him, or say unto him, What doest thou? He does what he pleases, because he pleases, and gives not an account of any of his matters.

2. He has an almighty power and can do what he will; if he will work, none shall hinder.

3. This absolute almighty power is of universal extent; he does what he will in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all the deep places that are in the bottom of the sea or the bowels of the earth. The gods of the heathen can do

nothing; but our God can do any thing and does do every thing.

III. He gives instances of his great power,

1. In the kingdom of nature, Ps 135:7. All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, from whom they are derived and on whom they depend. The chain of natural causes was not only framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him.

(1.) It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terraqueous globe. The heat of the sun raises them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God that nothing is hidden from the heat of the sun, Ps 19:6. He causes the vapours to ascend (not only unhelped, but unseen, by us) from the earth, from the ends of the earth, that is, from the seas, by which the earth is surrounded.

(2.) It is he who, out of those vapours so raised, forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the vapours it sends up, for they are returned with advantage in fruitful showers.

(3.) Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) he makes lightnings or the rain; by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and shakes the clouds, that they may water the earth. Here are fire and water thoroughly reconciled by divine omnipotence. They come together, and yet the water does not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire from heaven did when God pleased, 1Ki 18:38.

(4.) The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point of the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them that we cannot tell whence they come nor whither they go, but God brings them out of his

treasuries with as much exactness and design as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.

2. In the kingdoms of men; and here he mentions the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion and irresistible power,

(1.) In bringing Israel out of Egypt, humbling Pharaoh by many plagues, and so forcing him to let them go. These plagues are called tokens and wonders, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them. They were sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants, his subjects; but the Israelites, whom God claimed for his servants, his son, his first-born, his free-born, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the first-born both of men and cattle was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point.

(2.) In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, Ps 135:10. Those that were in possession of the land designed for Israel had all possible advantages for keeping possession. The people were numerous, and warlike, and confederate against Israel. They were great nations. Yet, if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed; but these great nations had mighty kings, and yet they were all smitten and slain--Sihon and Og, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, Ps 135:10,11. No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God when the time, the set time, for it has come.

(3.) In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleases gave Canaan to be a heritage to Israel his people. It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession; and it descended as an

inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it; and with good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

IV. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace.

1. Of his glory (Ps 135:13): Thy name, O God! endures for ever. God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences. What God doeth it shall be for ever, Ec 3:14. His name endures for ever in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to Ex 3:15, where, when God had called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he adds, This is my name for ever and this is my memorial unto all generations. God is, and will be, always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is, and will be, the same to him, a thankful praising people; and thus his name endures for ever.

2. Of his grace. He will be kind to his people.

(1.) He will plead their cause against others that contend with them. He will judge his people, that is, he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down.
(2.) He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will repent himself concerning his servants, and not proceed in his controversy with them; he will be entreated for them, or he will be comforted concerning them; he will return in ways of mercy to them and will delight to do them good. Ps 135:14,De 32:36 is taken from the song of Moses, De 32:36.

6 Whatsoever the Lord pleased,
that did he in heaven, and in earth,
in the seas, and all deep places.
7 He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;

he maketh lightnings for the rain;
he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.
8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,
both of man and beast.
9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,
upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
10 Who smote great nations,
and slew mighty kings;
11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
and Og king of Bashan,
and all the kingdoms of Canaan:
12 and gave their land for a heritage,
a heritage unto Israel his people.
13 Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever;
and thy memorial, O Lord, throughout all generations.
14 For the Lord will judge his people,
and he will repent himself concerning his servants.
15 The idols of the heathen are silver and gold,
the work of men's hands.

The design of these verses is,

I. To arm the people of God against idolatry and all false worship, by showing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, Ps 115:4-8, &c.

1. They were gods of their own making; being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them, and then what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the work of men's hands, and the deities that were supposed to inform them were as much the creatures of men's fancy and imagination.

2. They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, no, not of the animal life. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, nor so much as breathe; and therefore to make them with eyes, and ears, and mouths, and nostrils, was such a jest that one would wonder how reasonable creatures could suffer themselves to be so

imposed upon as to expect any good from such mock-deities.

3. Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were, both those that made them to be worshipped and those that trusted in them when they were made, Ps 135:18. The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping a God that is a Spirit make us spiritual and wise.

II. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, Ps 135:19-21. The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations that worship idols is the more are we bound to thank God that we know better. Therefore,

1. Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them: Bless the Lord, and again and again, bless the Lord. In the parallel place (Ps 115:9-11), by way of inference from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us is to trust in the Lord; here to bless him; by putting our trust in God we give glory to him, and those that depend upon God shall not want matter of thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him--the house of Israel (the nation in general), the house of Aaron and the house of Levi (the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary), and all others that feared the Lord, though they were not of the house of Israel.

2. Let God have the glory of all: Blessed be the Lord. The tribute of praise arises out of Zion. All God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute, for he dwells in Jerusalem, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage. The condescensions of his grace, in dwelling with men upon the earth, call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated Hallelujahs.

16 They have mouths, but they speak not;
eyes have they, but they see not;
17 they have ears, but they hear not;
neither is there any breath in their mouths.
18 They that make them are like unto them:
so is every one that trusteth in them.
19 Bless the Lord, O house of Israel:
bless the Lord, O house of Aaron:
20 bless the Lord, O house of Levi:
ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.
21 Blessed be the Lord out of Zion,
which dwelleth at Jerusalem.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-136

Praise for the Lord's Everl ast i ng Mercy

1 O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good:
for his mercy endureth for ever.

The duty we are here again and again called to is to give thanks, to offer the sacrifice of praise continually, not the fruits of our ground or cattle, but the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name, Heb 13:15. We are never so earnestly called upon to pray and repent as to give thanks; for it is the will of God that we should abound most in the most pleasant exercises of religion, in that which is the work of heaven. Now here observe,

1. Whom we must give thanks to--to him that we receive all good from, to the Lord, Jehovah, Israel's God (Ps 136:1), the God of gods, the God whom angels adore, from whom magistrates derive their power, and by whom all pretended deities are and shall be conquered (Ps 136:2), to the Lord of lords, the Sovereign of all sovereigns, the stay and supporter of all supports; Ps 136:3. In all our adorations we must have an eye to God's excellency as transcendent, and to his power and dominion as incontestably and uncontrollably supreme.

2. What we must give thanks for, not as the Pharisee that made all his thanksgivings terminate in his own praise (God, I thank thee, that I am so and so), but directing them all to God's glory.

(1.) We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy (Ps 136:1): Give thanks to the Lord, not only because he does good, but because he is good (all the streams must be traced up to the fountain), not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endures for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God, not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven.

(2.) We must give God thanks for the instances of his power and wisdom. In general (Ps 136:4), he along does great wonders. The contrivance is wonderful, the design being laid by infinite wisdom; the performance is wonderful, being put in execution by infinite power. He alone does marvellous things; none besides can do such things, and he does them without the assistance or advice of any other. More particularly,

[1.] He made the heavens, and stretched them out, and in them we not only see his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their benign influences; as long as the heavens endure the mercy of God endures in them, Ps 136:5.

[2.] He raised the earth out of the waters when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man, and therein also his mercy to man still endures (Ps 136:6); for the earth hath he given to the children of men, and all its products.

[3.] Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their

distance, by making the sun, moon, and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, Ps 136:7-9. These are called the great lights because they appear so to us, for otherwise astronomers could tell us that the moon is less than many of the stars, but, being nearer to the earth, it seems much greater.

They are said to rule, not only because they govern the seasons of the year, but because they are useful to the world, and benefactors are the best rulers, Lu 22:25. But the empire is divided, one rules by day, the other by night (at least, the stars), and yet all are subject to God's direction and disposal. Those rulers, therefore, which the Gentiles idolized, are the world's servants and God's subjects. Sun, stand thou still, and thou moon.

2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
4 To him who alone doeth great wonders:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
7 To him that made great lights:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
8 the sun to rule by day:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
9 the moon and stars to rule by night:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:
for his mercy endureth for ever:

The great things God for Israel, when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the psalms, as instances both of the power of God and of the particular kindness he had for Israel. See Ps 135:8, &c.

1. He brought them out of Egypt, Ps 136:10-12. That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, does indeed endure for ever, for it is an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt, none is mentioned but the death of the first-born, because that was the conquering plague; by that God, who in all the plagues distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them at last from among them, not by a wile, but with a strong hand and an arm stretched out to reach far and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses's commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, Ex 20:2.

2. He forced them a way through the Red Sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to control the common course of nature he divided the sea into two parts, between which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now that they were to enter into covenant with him; see Jer 34:18. He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided, which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And, to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red Sea that was a lane to the Israelites was a grave to their pursuers.

There he shook off Pharaoh and his host.

3. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness (Ps 136:16); there he led them and fed them. Their camp was victualled and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there, they were not lost. And in this the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy, were the more observable because they often provoked him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert.

4. He destroyed kings before them, to make room for them (Ps 136:17,18), not deposed and banished them, but smote and slew them, in which appeared his wrath against them, but his mercy, his never-failing mercy, to Israel. And that which magnified it was that they were great kings and famous kings, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least, and weakest, and meanest, of the children of men. They were wicked kings, and then their grandeur and lustre would not secure them from the justice of God. The more great and famous they were the more did God's mercy to Israel appear in giving such kings for them.

Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the first two that were conquered on the other side Jordan, Ps 136:19,20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours and not to view them in the gross, and in each instance to observe, and own, that God's mercy endureth for ever. 5. He put them in possession of a good land, Ps 136:21,22.

He whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world and those that dwell therein, took land from one people and gave it to another, as pleased him. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and therefore it was taken from them. Israel was his servant, and, though they had been provoking in the wilderness, yet he intended to have some service out of them, for to them pertained the service of God. As he said to the Egyptians, Let my people go, so to the Canaanites, Let my people in, that they may serve me. In this God's mercy to them endureth for ever, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

11 and brought out Israel from among them:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
12 with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
14 and made Israel to pass through the midst of it:

for his mercy endureth for ever:
15 but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
16 To him which led his people through the wilderness:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
17 To him which smote great kings:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
18 and slew famous kings:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
19 Sihon king of the Amorites:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
20 and Og the king of Bashan:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
21 and gave their land for a heritage:
for his mercy endureth for ever:
22 even a heritage unto Israel his servant:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
23 Who remembered us in our low estate:
for his mercy endureth for ever:

God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated, 1. In the redemption of his church, Ps 136:23,24. In the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church out of the hands of their oppressors (when, in the years of their servitude, their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up saviours, the judges, and David, at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies), but especially in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, "He remembered us, the children of men, in our low estate, in our lost estate, for his mercy endureth for ever; he sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies, for his mercy endureth for ever; he was sent to redeem us, and not the angels that sinned, for his mercy endureth for ever."

2. In the provision he makes for all the creatures (Ps 136:25): He gives food to all flesh. It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence that wherever he has given life

he gives food agreeable and sufficient; and he is a good housekeeper that provides for so large a family.

3. In all his glories, and all his gifts (Ps 136:26): Give thanks to the God of heaven. This denotes him to be a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises. The riches of his glory are displayed in the vessels of his mercy, Ro 9:23. It also denotes him to be the great benefactor, for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights, the God of heaven; and we should trace every stream to the fountain. This and that particular mercy may perhaps endure but a while, but the mercy that is in God endures for ever; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

24 and hath redeemed us from our enemies:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
25 Who giveth food to all flesh:
for his mercy endureth for ever.
26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven:
for his mercy endureth for ever.

Psalms-137

The Mourning of the Exiles in Babylon

1 By the rivers of Babylon,
there we sat down, yea, we wept,
when we remembered Zion.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter of Babylon; the people of God in tears, but sowing in tears. Observe,

I The mournful posture they were in as to their affairs and as to their spirits.

1. They were posted by the rivers of Babylon, in a strange land, a great way from their own country, whence they were brought as prisoners of war. The land of Babylon was now a house of bondage to that people, as Egypt had

been in their beginning. Their conquerors quartered them by the rivers, with design to employ them there, and keep them to work in their galleys; or perhaps they chose it as the most melancholy place, and therefore most suitable to their sorrowful spirits. If they must build houses there (Jer 29:5), it shall not be in the cities, the places of concourse, but by the rivers, the places of solitude, where they might mingle their tears with the streams. We find some of them by the river Chebar (Eze 1:3), others by the river Ulai, Da 8:2.

2. There they sat down to indulge their grief by poring on their miseries. Jeremiah had taught them under this yoke to sit alone, and keep silence, and put their mouths in the dust, La 3:28,29. "We sat down, as those that expected to stay, and were content, since it was the will of God that it must be so."

3. Thoughts of Zion drew tears from their eyes; and it was not a sudden passion of weeping, such as we are sometimes put into by a trouble that surprises us, but they were deliberate tears (we sat down and wept), tears with consideration--we wept when we remembered Zion, the holy hill on which the temple was built. Their affection to God's house swallowed up their concern for their own houses. They remembered Zion's former glory and the satisfaction they had had in Zion's courts, La 1:7. Jerusalem remembered, in the days of her misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old, Ps 42:4. They remembered Zion's present desolations, and favoured the dust thereof, which was a good sign that the time for God to favour it was not far off, Ps 102:13,14. 4. They laid by their instruments of music (Ps 137:2): We hung our harps upon the willows.

(1.) The harps they used for their own diversion and entertainment. These they laid aside, both because it was their judgment that they ought not to use them now that God called to weeping and mourning (Isa 22:12), and their spirits were so sad that they had no hearts to use them;

they brought their harps with them, designing perhaps to use them for the alleviating of their grief, but it proved so great that it would not admit the experiment. Music makes some people melancholy. As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart.

(2.) The harps they used in God's worship, the Levites' harps. These they did not throw away, hoping they might yet again have occasion to use them, but they laid them aside because they had no present use for them; God had cut them out other work by turning their feasting into mourning and their songs into lamentations, Am 8:10. Every thing is beautiful in its season. They did not hide their harps in the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks; but hung them up in view, that the sight of them might affect them with this deplorable change. Yet perhaps they were faulty in doing this; for praising God is never out of season; it is his will that we should in every thing give thanks, Isa 24:15,16.

II The abuses which their enemies put upon them when they were in this melancholy condition, Ps 137:3. They had carried them away captive from their own land and then wasted them in the land of their captivity, took what little they had from them. But this was not enough; to complete their woes they insulted over them: They required of us mirth and a song. Now,

1. This was very barbarous and inhuman; even an enemy, in misery, is to be pitied and not trampled upon. It argues a base and sordid spirit to upbraid those that are in distress either with their former joys or with their present griefs, or to challenge those to be merry who, we know, are out of tune for it.

This is adding affliction to the afflicted. 2. It was very profane and impious. No songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, with which God had been honoured; so that in this demand they reflected upon God himself as

Belshazzar, when he drank wine in temple-bowls. Their enemies mocked at their sabbaths, La 1:7.

III. The patience wherewith they bore these abuses, Ps 137:4. They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no, not to ingratiate themselves with those at whose mercy they lay; they would not answer those fools according to their folly. Profane scoffers are not to be humoured, nor pearls cast before swine. David prudently kept silence even from good when the wicked were before him, who, he knew, would ridicule what he said and make a jest of it, Ps 39:1,2 The reason they gave is very mild and pious: How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? They do not say, "How shall we sing when we are so much in sorrow?"

If that had been all, they might perhaps have put a force upon themselves so far as to oblige their masters with a song; but "It is the Lord's song; it is a sacred thing; it is peculiar to the temple-service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger, among idolaters." We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured by a religious silence as well as by religious speaking.

IV. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, even now that they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love to it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, Ps 137:5,6. Observe,

1. How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem.

(1.) Their heads were full of it. It was always in their minds; they remembered it; they did not forget it, though they had been long absent from it; many of them had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the scripture, yet it was graven upon the

palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was ann evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers they opened their windows towards Jerusalem; and how then could they forget it?

(2.) Their hearts were full of it. They preferred it above their chief joy, and therefore they remembered it and could not forget it. What we love we love to think of. Those that rejoice in God do, for his sake, make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a public good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever.

2. How stedfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall: "Let me be for ever disabled either to sing or play on the harp if I so far forget the religion of my country as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon's sons or the praising of Babylon's gods. Let my right hand forget her art" (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it be withered), "nay, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I have not a good word to say for Jerusalem wherever I am." Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them, but, as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off, they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;
and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
4 How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?
5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand forget her cunning.
6 If I do not remember thee,

let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
7 Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom
in the day of Jerusalem;
who said, Rase it, rase it,
even to the foundation thereof.

The pious Jews in Babylon, having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, here please themselves with the prospect of the ruin of her impenitent implacable enemies; but this not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the honour of his kingdom.

I The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with, and all others that were accessaries to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that helped forward the affliction (Zec 1:15) and triumphed in it, that said, in the day of Jerusalem, the day of her judgment, "Rase it, rase it to the foundations; down with it, down with it; do not leave one stone upon another." Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already so enraged that they needed no spur. Thus they put shame upon Israel, who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off when their next neighbours had such an ill-will to them.

And all this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent: Lord, remember them, says the psalmist, which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who has said, Vengeance is mine.

Note, Those that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. Those that are confederate with the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to an account for it

against another day, and God will remember it against them.

II. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too to drink of the cup of tremblings, the very dregs of it (Ps 137:8,9): O daughter of Babylon! proud and secure as thou art, we know well, by the scriptures of truth, thou art to be destroyed, or (as Dr. Hammond reads it) who art the destroyer. The destroyers shall be destroyed, Re 13:10. And perhaps it is with reference to this that the man of sin, the head of the New-Testament Babylon, is called a son of perdition, 2Th 2:3. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction (thou art to be destroyed), it is spoken of, 1. As a just destruction. She shall be paid in her own coin:

"Thou shalt be served as thou hast served us, as barbarously used by the destroyers as we have been by thee," See Re 18:6. Let not those expect to find mercy who, when they had power, did not show mercy. 2. As an utter destruction. The very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it are put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape if these little ones perish.

Those are the seed of another generation; so that, if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem's was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. 3. As a destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. Happy shall those be that do it; for they are fulfilling God's counsels; and therefore he calls Cyrus, who did it, his servant, his shepherd, his anointed (Isa 44:28,45:1), and the soldiers that were employed in it his sanctified ones, Isa 13:3. They are making way for the enlargement of God's Israel, and happy are those who are in any way serviceable to that. The fall of the New-Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, Re 19:1.

8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed;

happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.
9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth
thy little ones against the stones.

Psalms-138

Thanksgiving for the Lord's Favor
A Psalm of David.

1 I will praise thee with my whole heart:
before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

I. How he would praise God, compare Ps 111:1.

1. He will praise him with sincerity and zeal--"With my heart, with my whole heart, with that which is within me and with all that is within me, with uprightness of intention and fervency of affection, inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions."

2. With freedom and boldness: Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee, before the princes, and judges, and great men, either those of other nations that visited him or those of his own nation that attended on him, even in their presence. He will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven.

Before the angels (so some understand it), that is, in religious assemblies, where there is a special presence of angels, 1Co 11:10. 3. In the way that God had appointed: I will worship towards thy holy temple. The priests alone went into the temple; the people, at the nearest, did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our temple, and towards him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our

praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherward we must lift up our eyes in all our addresses to God. Our Father in heaven.

II. What he would praise God for.

1. For the fountain of his comforts--for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth, for thy goodness and for thy promise, mercy hidden in thee and mercy revealed by thee, that God is a gracious God in himself and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him. For thou hast magnified thy word (thy promise, which is truth) above all thy name. God has made himself known to us in many ways in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater things are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation is much greater than what is discovered by reason.

In what God had done for David his faithfulness to his work appeared more illustriously, and redounded more to his glory, than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law, and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more.

2. For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, Ps 138:3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers, with thankfulness,

(1.) The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him, gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers.

(2.) The sweet communications he then had from God: Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words, Ps 20:6. Observe,

[1.] It was a speedy answer: In the day when I cried. Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer grow rich by quick returns. While we are yet speaking God hears, Isa 65:24.

[2.] It was a spiritual answer. God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God give us strength in our souls to bear the burdens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state, if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he has answered us, and we are bound to be thankful.

III. What influence he hoped that his praising God would have upon others, Ps 138:4,5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his example, to embrace religion; and, if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now,

1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others. "They shall all praise thee." When they visited David, and, after his death, when they sought the presence of Solomon (as all the kings of the earth are expressly said to have done, 2Ch 9:23), they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel.

2. It may look further, to the calling of the Gentiles and the discipling of all nations by the gospel of Christ, of whom it is said that all kings shall fall down before him, Ps 72:11. Now it is here foretold,

(1.) That the kings of the earth shall hear the words of God. All that came near David should hear them from him, Ps 119:46. In the latter days the preachers of the gospel should be sent into all the world.

(2.) That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, Ac 13:48.

(3.) That they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, in the ways of his providence and grace towards them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, Those that walk in the ways of the Lord have reason to sing in those ways, to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them; and, if we are so, great is the glory of the Lord. It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those who walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good Master and his work its own wages.

2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,
and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth:
for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.
3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,
and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord,
when they hear the words of thy mouth.
5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord:
for great is the glory of the Lord.
6 Though the Lord be high,
yet hath he respect unto the lowly:
but the proud he knoweth afar off.

David here comforts himself with three things:--

I The favour God bears to his humble people (Ps 138:6): Though the Lord be high, and neither needs any of his

creatures nor can be benefited by them, yet has he respect unto the lowly, smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them (Isa 57:15,66:1), and, sooner or later, he will put honour upon them, while he knows the proud afar off, knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and welcome--that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the publican, lu 18:9-14

II The care God takes of his afflicted oppressed people, Ps 138:7. David, though a great and good man, expects to walk in the midst of trouble, but encourages himself with hope,

1. That God would comfort him: "When my spirit is ready to sink and fail, thou shalt revive me, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles." Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles and are ready to die away for fear.

2. That he would protect him, and plead his cause: "Thou shalt stretch forth thy hand, though not against my enemies to destroy them, yet against the wrath of my enemies, to restrain that and set bounds to it." 3. That he would in due time work deliverance for him: Thy right hand shall save me. As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those who serve him.

III. The assurance we have that whatever good work God has begun in and for his people he will perform it (Ps 138:8): The Lord will perfect that which concerns me, 1. That which is most needful for me; and he knows best what is so. We are careful and cumbered about many things that do not concern us, but he knows what are the

things that really are of consequence to us (Mt 6:32) and he will order them for the best. 2. That which we are most concerned about.

Every good man is most concerned about his duty to God and his happiness in God, that the former may be faithfully done and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, Php 1:6. Observe,

(1.) What ground the psalmist builds this confidence upon: Thy mercy, O Lord! endures for ever. This he had made very much the matter of his praise (Ps 13:6), and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope. For, if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, "Lord, thy mercy endures for ever; let me be for ever a monument of it."

(2.) What use he makes of this confidence; it does not supersede, but quicken prayer; he turns his expectation into a petition: "Forsake not, do not let go, the work of thy own hands. Lord, I am the work of thy own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me; my concerns are so, do not lay by thy care of them." Whatever good there is in us it is the work of God's own hands; he works in us both to will and to do; it will fail if he forsake it; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end that we may in faith pray, "Lord, do not forsake it." Whom he loves he loves to the end; and, as for God, his work is perfect.

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me:
thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies,

and thy right hand shall save me.
8 The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me:
thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever:
forsake not the works of thine own hands.

Psalms-139

God's Omnipresence and Omniscience
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.
2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising;
thou understandest my thought afar off.

David here lays down this great doctrine, That the God with whom we have to do has a perfect knowledge of us, and that all the motions and actions both of our inward and of our outward man are naked and open before him.

I. He lays down this doctrine in the way of an address to God; he says it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look fully as well when they are prayed over as when they are preached over, and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions the deeper.

II. He lays it down in a way of application to himself, not, "Thou hast known all," but, "Thou hast known me; that is it which I am most concerned to believe and which it will be most profitable for me to consider." Then we know these things for our good when we know them for ourselves, Job 5:27. When we acknowledge, "Lord, all souls are thine," we must add, "My soul is thine; thou that hatest all sin hatest my sin; thou that art good to all, good to Israel, art good to me."

So here, "Thou hast searched me, and known me; known me as thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into." David was a king, and the hearts of kings are unsearchable to their subjects (Pr 25:3), but they are not so to their Sovereign.

III. He descends to particulars: "Thou knowest me wherever I am and whatever I am doing, me and all that belongs to me."

1. "Thou knowest me and all my motions, my down-sitting to rest, my up-rising to work, with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down and stir up myself when I rise up, what my soul reposes itself in as its stay and support, what it aims at and reaches towards as its felicity and end. Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house, and when I go abroad, on what errands I go."

2. "Thou knowest all my imaginations. Nothing is more close and quick than thought; it is always unknown to others; it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet thou understandest my thought afar off. Though my thoughts be ever so foreign and distant from one another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice that I myself cannot."

Or, "Thou understandest them afar off, even before I think them, and long after I have thought them and have myself forgotten them." Or, "Thou understandest them from afar; from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart," Ps 33:14.

3. "Thou knowest me and all my designs and undertakings; thou compassest every particular path; thou siftest (or winnowest) my path" (so some), "so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do," as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are ventilated by the judgment

of God, Ps 17:3. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step and every by-step. He is acquainted with all our ways, intimately acquainted with them; he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk towards, what company we walk with.

4. "Thou knowest me in all my retirements; thou knowest my lying down; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has passed all day and composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart and with what thought I go to bed."

5. "Thou knowest me, and all I say (Ps 139:4): There is not a word in my tongue, not a vain word, nor a good word, but thou knowest it altogether, knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it." When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord! thou knowest all (so some read it); for thoughts are words to God.

6. "Thou knowest me in every part of me: Thou hast beset me behind and before, so that, go which way I will, I am under thy eye and cannot possibly escape it. Thou hast laid thy hand upon me, and I can not run away from thee." Wherever we are we are under the eye and hand of God. perhaps it is an allusion to the physician's laying his hand upon his patient to feel how his pulse beats or what temper he is in. God knows us as we know not only what we see, but what we feel and have our hands upon. All his saints are in his hand.

IV. He speaks of it with admiration (Ps 139:6): It is too wonderful for me; it is high.

1. "Thou hast such a knowledge of me as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me."

2. "It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell." We cannot by searching find out how God searches and finds out us; nor do we know how we are known.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down,
and art acquainted with all my ways.
4 For there is not a word in my tongue,
but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,
and laid thine hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high, I cannot attain unto it.
7 Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways,

I. Because he is always under his eye. If God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient; but he is omnipresent; this supposes the infinite and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence; heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both (Jer 23:24); he not only knows both, and governs both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknowledges this also with application and sees himself thus open before God.

1. No flight can remove us out of God's presence: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, from thy presence, that is, from thy spiritual presence, from thyself, who art a Spirit?" God is a Spirit, and therefore it is folly to think that because we cannot see him he cannot see us: Whither

shall I flee from thy presence? Not that he desired to go away from God; no, he desired nothing more than to be near him; but he only puts the case, "Suppose I should be so foolish as to think of getting out of thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of thee, suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to thee, or of disowning a dependence on thee and of shifting for myself, alas! whither can I go?" A heathen could say, Quocunque te flexeris, ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi--Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt see God meeting thee. Seneca. He specifies the most remote and distant places, and counts upon meeting God in them.

(1.) In heaven: "If I ascend thither, as I hope to do shortly, thou art there, and it will be my eternal bliss to be with thee there." Heaven is a vast large place, replenished with an innumerable company, and yet there is no escaping God's eye there, in any corner, or in any crowd. The inhabitants of that world have as necessary a dependence upon God, and lie as open to his strict scrutiny, as the inhabitants of this.

(2.) In hell--in Sheol, which may be understood of the depth of the earth, the very centre of it. Should we dig as deep as we can under ground, and think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken; God knows that path which the vulture's eye never saw, and to him the earth is all surface. Or it may be understood of the state of the dead. When we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God; from his eye we cannot hide ourselves in the grave.

Or it maybe understood of the place of the damned: If I make my bed in hell (an uncomfortable place to make a bed in, where there is no rest day or night, yet thousands will make their bed for ever in those flames), behold, thou art there, in thy power and justice. God's wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly, Re 14:10.

(3.) In the remotest corners of this world: "If I take the wings of the morning, the rays of the morning-light (called the wings of the sun, Mal 4:2), than which nothing more swift, and flee upon them to the uttermost parts of the sea, or of the earth (Job 38:12,13), should I flee to the most distant and obscure islands (the ultima Thule, the Terra incognita), I should find thee there; there shall thy hand lead me, as far as I go, and thy right hand hold me, that I can go no further, that I cannot go out of thy reach." God soon arrested Jonah when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

2. No veil can hide us from God's eye, no, not that of the thickest darkness, Ps 139:11,12. "If I say, Yet the darkness shall cover me, when nothing else will, alas! I find myself deceived; the curtains of the evening will stand me in no more stead than the wings of the morning; even the night shall be light about me. That which often favours the escape of a pursued criminal, and the retreat of a beaten army, will do me no kindness in fleeing from them." When God divided between the light and darkness it was with a reservation of this prerogative, that to himself the darkness and the light should still be both alike.

"The darkness darkeneth not from thee, for there is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open and barefaced villanies.

II. Because he is the work of his hands. He that framed the engine knows all the motions of it. God made us, and therefore no doubt he knows us; he saw us when we were in the forming, and can we be hidden from him now that we are formed? This argument he insists upon (Ps 139:13-16):

"Thou hast possessed my reins; thou art Master of my most secret thoughts and intentions, and the innermost recesses of my soul; thou not only knowest, but governest, them, as we do that which we have possession of; and the possession thou hast of my reins is a rightful possession, for thou coveredst me in my mother's womb, that is, thou madest me (Job 10:11), thou madest me in secret. The soul is concealed form all about us. Who knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man?" 1Co 2:11.

Hence we read of the hidden man of the heart. But it was God himself that thus covered us, and therefore he can, when he pleases, discover us; when he hid us from all the world he did not intend to hide us from himself. Concerning the formation of man, of each of us,

1 The glory of it is here given to God, entirely to him; for it is he that has made us and not we ourselves. "I will praise thee, the author of my being; my parents were only the instruments of it." It was done,

(1.) Under the divine inspection: My substance, when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet but in fieri--in the forming, an unshapen embryo, was not hidden from thee; thy eyes did see my substance.

(2.) By the divine operation. As the eye of God saw us then, so his hand wrought us; we were his work.

(3.) According to the divine model: In thy book all my members were written. Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the noble structure.

2. Glorious things are here said concerning it. The generation of man is to be considered with the same pious veneration as his creation at first. Consider it,

(1.) As a great marvel, a great miracle we might call it, but that it is done in the ordinary course of nature. We are

fearfully and wonderfully made; we may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the composition of every part, and the harmony of all together.

(2.) As a great mystery, a mystery of nature: My soul knows right well that it is marvellous, but how to describe it for any one else I know not; for I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the womb as in the lowest parts of the earth, so privately, and so far out of sight.

(3.) As a great mercy, that all our members in continuance were fashioned, according as they were written in the book of God's wise counsel, when as yet there was none of them; or, as some read it, and none of them was left out. If any of our members had been wanting in God's book, they would have been wanting in our bodies, but, through his goodness, we have all our limbs and sense, the want of any of which might have made us burdens to ourselves. See what reason we have then to praise God for our creation, and to conclude that he who saw our substance when it was unfashioned sees it now that it is fashioned.

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning,
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
10 even there shall thy hand lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;
even the night shall be light about me.
12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;
but the night shineth as the day:
the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
13 For thou hast possessed my reins:
thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb.
14 I will praise thee
; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:
marvelous are thy works;
and that my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee
when I was made in secret,
and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect;
and in thy book all my members were written,
which in continuance were fashioned,
when as yet there was none of them.
17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience, divers ways.

I. He acknowledges, with wonder and thankfulness, the care God had taken of him all his days, Ps 139:17,18. God, who knew him, thought of him, and his thoughts towards him were thoughts of love, thought of good, and not of evil, Jer 29:11. God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, Jer 31:28. God's counsels concerning us and our welfare have been,

1. Precious to admiration: How precious are they! They are deep in themselves, such as cannot possibly be fathomed and comprehended. Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about for our good quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us, above any other thoughts.

2. Numerous to admiration: How great is the sum of them! We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us, how many good turns he has done us, and what variety of mercies we have received from him. If we would count them, the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, they are more in number than the sand, and yet every one great and very considerable, Ps

40:5. We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning.

3. Constant at all times: "When I awake, every morning, I am still with thee, under thy eye and care, safe and easy under thy protection." This bespeaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him: When I awake I am with thee, in my thoughts; and it would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long if, when we awake in the morning, our first thoughts were of him and we did then set him before us.

II. He concludes from this doctrine that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it: "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God! for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over, to hide it from the eye of the world. However thou suffer them to prosper for a while, surely thou wilt slay them at last." Now observe,

1 The reason why God will punish them, because they daringly affront him and set him at defiance (Ps 139:20): They speak against thee wickedly; they set their mouth against the heavens (Ps 73:9), and shall be called to account for the hard speeches they have spoken against him, Jude 1:15.

They are his enemies, and declare their enmity by taking his name in vain, as we show our contempt of a man if we make a by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. Those that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying by using them in an impertinent irreverent manner take God's name in vain, and thereby show themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites: "They speak of thee for mischief; they talk of God, pretending to piety, but it is with some ill design, for a cloak of maliciousness; and, being enemies to God, while they pretend friendship, they take his name in vain; they swear falsely."

2 The use David makes of this prospect which he has of the ruin of the wicked.

(1.) He defies them: "Depart from me, you bloody men; you shall not debauch me, for I will not admit your friendship nor have fellowship with you; and you cannot destroy me, for, being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me."

(2.) He detests them (Ps 139:21,22): "Lord, thou knowest the heart, and canst witness for me; do not I hate those that hate thee, and for that reason, because they hate thee? I hate them because I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee, grieved to see their rebellion and to foresee their ruin, which it will certainly end in?"

Note, Sin is hated, and sinners are lamented, by all that fear God. "I hate them" (that is, "I hate the work of them that turn aside," as he explains himself, Ps 101:3) "with a sincere and perfect hatred; I count those that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them," Ps 69:8.

III. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, Ps 139:23,24.

1. He desires that as far as he was in the wrong God would discover it to him. Those that are upright can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with a humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover them to themselves (for a good man desires to know the worst of himself) and to discover them to others. He that means honestly could wish he had a window in his breast that any man may look into his heart: "Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way, but see if there be any wicked way in me, any corrupt inclination remaining; let me see it; and root it out of me, for I do not allow it."

2. He desires that, as far as he was in the right, he might be forwarded in it, which he that knows the heart knows how to do effectually: Lead me in the way everlasting. Note,

(1.) The way of godliness is an everlasting way; it is everlastingly true and good, pleasing to God and profitable to us, and will end in everlasting life. It is the way of antiquity (so some), the good old way.

(2.) All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, nor tire in it.

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:
when I awake, I am still with thee.
19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:
depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
20 For they speak against thee wickedly,
and thine enemies take thy name in vain.
21 Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred:
I count them mine enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:
try me, and know my thoughts:
24 and see if there be any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalms-140

A Prayer for Protection against Persecutors
To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David.

1 Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man:
preserve me from the violent man;
2 which imagine mischiefs in their heart;
continually are they gathered together for war.

3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent;
adders' poison is under their lips.

In this, as in other things, David was a type of Christ, that he suffered before he reigned, was humbled before he was exalted, and that as there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there were many who hated and envied him, and sought to do him mischief, as appears by these verses, where,

I. He gives a character of his enemies, and paints them out in their own colours, as dangerous men, whom he had reason to be afraid of, but wicked men, whom he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance.

There was one that seems to have been the ring-leader of them, whom he calls the evil man and the man of violences (Ps 140:1,4), probably he means Saul. The Chaldee paraphrast (Ps 140:9) names both Doeg and Ahithophel; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. But there were many besides this one who were confederate against David, who are here represented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For,

1. They are very subtle, crafty to do mischief; they have imagined it (Ps 140:2), have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable. They have purposed and plotted to overthrow the goings of a good man (Ps 140:4), to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. For this purpose they have, like mighty hunters, hidden a snare, and spread a net, and set gins (Ps 140:5), that their designs against him, being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable; but the Lord preserves the simple without all those arts.

2. They are very spiteful, as full of malice as Satan himself: They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, that infuses his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say that one would think there was nothing under their lips but adders' poison, Ps 140:3. With their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass. And they endeavoured likewise to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart.

3. They are confederate; they are many of them; but they are all gathered together against me for war, Ps 140:2. Those who can agree in nothing else can agree to persecute a good man. Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself, all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub.

4. They are proud (Ps 140:5), conceited of themselves and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning ruining sin was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement, of the persecuted, for the more haughty they are the faster are they ripening for ruin. Pride goes before destruction.

II. He prays to God to keep him from them and from being swallowed up by them: "Lord, deliver me, preserve me, keep me (Ps 140:1,4); let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. Keep me from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I shall do." Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection. In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and

themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us, who can be against us?

III. He triumphs in God, and thereby, in effect, he triumphs over his persecutors, Ps 140:6,7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; adders' poison was under their lips, but grace was poured into his lips, witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger, through the malice of his enemies: and it is well for us that we have a God to go to. He comforted himself,

1. In his interest in God: "I said, Thou art my God; and, if my God, then my shield and mighty protector." In troublous dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him.

2. In his access to God. This comforted him, that he was not only taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say, with a humble confidence, Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord!

3. In the assurance he had of help from God and happiness in him: "O God the Lord--Jehovah Adonai! as Jehovah thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect being; as Adonai thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor, and therefore the strength of my salvation, my strong Saviour; nay, not only my Saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom, my salvation is; not only a strong Saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all, to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness."

4. In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him: Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle. As he pleaded with Saul, that, for the service of his country,

he many a time jeoparded his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God that, in those services, he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was: "Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites."

God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him and depend upon him in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

SELAH.
4 Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked;
preserve me from the violent man;
who have purposed to overthrow my goings.
5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords;
they have spread a net by the wayside;
they have set gins for me.
SELAH.
6 I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God:
hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord.
7 O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.
8 Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked:
further not his wicked device;
lest they exalt themselves.

Here is the believing foresight David had,

I. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

1. Their disappointment. This he prays for (Ps 140:8), that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy, and revenge: "Grant not, O Lord! the desires of the wicked, but frustrate them; let them not see the ruin of my interest, which they so earnestly wish to see; but hear the voice of my supplications." He prays that their projects might not take effect, but be blasted: "O further not his

wicked device; let not Providence favour any of his designs, but cross them; suffer not his wicked device to proceed, but chain his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits." Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people, that they may not succeed in any of their enterprises. Such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness.

The plea is, lest they exalt themselves, value themselves upon their success as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men, when they prosper, are made prouder, grow more impudent against God and insolent against his people, and therefore, "Lord, do not prosper them."

2. Their destruction. This he prays for (as we read it); but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer, that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one. He foretels the ruin,

(1.) Of his own enemies: "As for those that compass me about, and seek my ruin,"

[1.] "The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads (Ps 140:9); the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves, their curses shall be blown back into their own faces, and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin," Ps 7:15,16. Let those that make mischief, by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves.

[2.] The judgments of God shall fall upon them, compared here to burning coals, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom; nay, as in the deluge the waters from above, and

those from beneath, met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have burning coals cast upon them from above (Job 20:23,27:22), but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the Judge and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a deep pit, out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, Isa 30:33.

(2.) Of all others that are like them, Ps 140:11.

[1.] Evil speakers must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, Ps 2:5. A lying tongue is but for a moment, but the lip of truth shall be established for ever.

[2.] Evil doers must expect to be destroyed: Evil shall hunt the violent man, as the blood-hound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces. Mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin; the destruction appointed shall run them down and overthrow them. Evil pursues sinners.

II. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, Ps 140:12,13.

1. God will do those justice, in delivering them, who, being wronged, commit themselves to him: "I know that the Lord will maintain the just and injured cause of his afflicted people, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but the right of the poor,

who have but little that they can pretend a right to." God is, and will be, the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety; those that know him cannot but know this.

2. They will do him justice (if I may so speak), in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him: "Surely the righteous (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs) shall give thanks unto thy name when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy and prosecuted with effect." The closing words, The upright shall dwell in thy presence, denote both God's favour to them ("Thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness") and their duty to God:

"They shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their masters, both to do them honour and to receive their commands." This is true thanksgiving, even thanksliving; and this use we should make of all our deliverance, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

SELAH.

9 As for the head of those that compass me about,
let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
10 Let burning coals fall upon them:
let them be cast into the fire;
into deep pits,
that they rise not up again.
11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth:
evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.
12 I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
and the right of the poor.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Psalms-141

A Prayer for Preservation from Evil
A Psalm of David.

1 Lord, I cry unto thee:
make haste unto me;
give ear unto my voice,
when I cry unto thee.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

I. David loved prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, Ps 141:1,2. David cried unto God. His crying denotes fervency in prayer; he prayed as one in earnest. His crying to God denotes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer?

1. That God would take cognizance of it: "Give ear to my voice; let me have a gracious audience." Those that cry in prayer may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness, but their liveliness.

2. That he would visit him upon it: Make haste unto me. Those that know how to value God's gracious presence will be importunate for it and humbly impatient of delays. He that believes does not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste.

3. That he would be well pleased with him in it, well pleased with his praying and the lifting up of his hands in prayer, which denotes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire and the out-goings of his hope and expectation, the lifting up of the hand signifying the lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of lifting up the

sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice; it is the offering up of the soul, and its best affections, to God.

Now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God as the incense which was daily burnt upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he mentions rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who, in the evening of the world and in the evening of the day, was to offer up himself a sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgement, having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. Those that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or bullock.

David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet-smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet has no savour without fire; nor has prayer without the fire of holy love and fervour.

II. David was in fear of sin, and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayers would not be accepted unless he took care to watch against sin. We must be as earnest for God's grace in us as for his favour towards us. 1. He prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words (Ps 141:3): "Set a watch, O Lord! before my mouth, and, nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out which may in any way tend to the dishonour of God or the hurt of others."

Good men know the evil of tongue-sins, and how prone they are to them (when enemies are provoking we are in danger of carrying our resentment too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men), and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing that no watchfulness or

resolution of their own is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must keep our mouths as with a bridle; but that will not serve: we must pray to God to keep them. Nehemiah prayed to the Lord when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman walketh but in vain.

2. That he might not be inclined to any sinful practices (Ps 141:4): "Incline not my heart to any evil thing; whatever inclination there is in me to sin, let it be not only restrained, but mortified, by divine grace." The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up and draw out corrupt inclinations. We are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we have received injuries we may return them; and therefore we have need to pray that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with or in opposition to the men that work iniquity. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurement nor driven on by any provocation to do any sinful thing.

3. That he might not be ensnared by any sinful pleasures: "Let me not eat of their dainties. Let me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sins." Better is a dinner of herbs, out of the way of temptation, than a stalled ox in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin. Stolen waters are sweet; forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye. But those that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into wormwood and gall, how certainly it will, at last, bite like a serpent and sting like an adder, will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn them against them. Good men will pray even against the sweets of sin.

2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense;
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.
3 Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth;

keep the door of my lips.
4 Incline not my heart to any evil thing,
to practise wicked works
with men that work iniquity:
and let me not eat of their dainties.
5 Let the righteous smite me;
it shall be a kindness:
and let him reprove me;
it shall be an excellent oil,
which shall not break my head:
for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

Here, I. David desires to be told of his faults. His enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of; yet, at the same time, he desired his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there was any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches (Ps 141:5): let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness. The righteous God (so some); "I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them that I will receive them as tokens of love and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble."

But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men; and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them reproof will be best taken. But if the reproof be just, though the reprover be not so, we must make a good use of it and learn obedience by it. We are here taught how to receive the reproofs of the righteous and wise.

1. We must desire to be reproved for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us: "Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me and reprove me. If my own heart does not smite me, as it ought, let my friend do it; let me never fall under that dreadful judgment of being let alone in sin."

2. We must account it a piece of friendship. We must not only bear it patiently, but take it as a kindness; for reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Pr 6:23), are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Though reproofs cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore they are much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy (Pr 27:6) or the song of fools, Ec 7:5. David blessed God for Abigail's seasonable admonition, 1Sa 25:32.

3. We must reckon ourselves helped and healed by it: It shall be as an excellent oil to a wound, to mollify it and close it up; it shall not break my head, as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broken as to be told of their faults; but, says David, "I am not of that mind; it is my sin that has broken my head, that has broken my bones, Ps 51:8. The reproof is an excellent oil, to cure the bruises sin has given me. It shall not break my head, if it may but help to break my heart."

4. We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities, and hereby we must show that we take it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse: "Reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head (shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended), for yet my prayer shall be in their mischiefs, that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain."

II. David hopes his persecutors will, some time or other, bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his (Ps 141:6): "When their judges" (Saul and his officers who judged and condemned David, and would themselves be sole judges) "are overthrown in stony places, among the rocks in the wilderness, then they shall hear my words, for they are sweet." Some think this refers to the relentings that were in Saul's breast when he said,

with tears, Is this thy voice, my son David? 1Sa 24:16,26:21.

Or we may take it more generally: even judges, great as they are, may come to be overthrown. Those that make the greatest figure in this world do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before will relish it, and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

III. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced (Ps 141:7): Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead, or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit; and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps: As one that cuts and cleaves the earth (so some read it), alluding to the ploughman who tears the earth in pieces with his plough-share, Ps 129:3. Can these dry bones live?

IV. David casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance: "But my eyes are unto thee (Ps 141:8); for, when the case is ever so deplorable, thou canst redress all the grievances. From thee I expect relief, bad as things are, and in thee is my trust." Those that have their eye towards God may have their hopes in him.

V. He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required.

1. That he would comfort him: "Leave not my soul desolate and destitute; still let me see where my help is."

2. That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him (Ps 141:9): "Keep me from being taken in the snare they have laid for me; give me to discover it and to evade it." Be the gin placed with ever so much subtlety, God can and will secure his people from being taken in it.

3. That God would, in justice, turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and, in mercy, deliver him from being ruined by them (Ps 141:10): let the wicked fall into their own net, the net which, intentionally, they procured for me, but which, meritoriously, they prepared for themselves. Nec lex est justioir ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua--No law can be more just than that the architects of destruction should perish by their own contrivances. All that are bound over to God's justice are held in the cords of their own iniquity. But let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes prove the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places,
they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.
7 Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth,
as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.
8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord:
in thee is my trust;
leave not my soul destitute.
9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me,
and the gins of the workers of iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
whilst that I withal escape.

Psalms-142

A Prayer for Help in Trouble
Maschil of David;
A Prayer when he was in the cave.

1 I cried unto the Lord with my voice;

with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.

Whether it was in the cave of Adullam, or that of Engedi, that David prayed this prayer, is not material; it is plain that he was in distress. It was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, so great a courtier, to be put to such shifts for his own safety, and a great terror to be so hotly pursued and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind as to pray this prayer, and, wherever he was, still had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons, and, when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God.

There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our prayers, and our souls in prayer, to God. He calls this prayer Maschil--a psalm of instruction, because of the good lessons he had himself learnt in the cave, learnt on his knees, which he desired to teach others. In these verses observe,

I. How David complained to God, Ps 142:1,2. When the danger was over he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits sometimes are) the fright he had been in and the application he had made to God. Let no men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them, when they are in affliction, to cry to God, and to cry like children to their parents when any thing frightens them. David poured out his complaint, which denotes a free and full complaint; he was copious and particular in it. His heart was as full of his grievances as it could hold, but he made himself easy by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency:

He cried unto the Lord with his voice, with the voice of his mind (so some think), for, being hidden in the cave, he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should betray him; but mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot, or dare not, be uttered, Ro 8:26. Two things David laid open to God, in this complaint:--

1. His distress. He exhibited a remonstrance or memorial of his case: I showed before him my trouble, and all the circumstances of it. He did not prescribe to God, nor show him his trouble, as if God did not know it without his showing; but as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself entirely to him, he unbosomed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him.

We are apt to show our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which does us no service, whereas by showing it to God we might cast the care upon him who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves or others which we cannot with due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

2. His desire. When he made his complaint he made his supplication (Ps 142:1), not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complainants must be suppliants, for God will be sought unto.

II. What he complained of: "In the way wherein I walked, suspecting no danger, have they privily laid a snare for me, to entrap me." Saul gave Michal his daughter to David on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1Sa 18:21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with a design against him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself; but when he met with them in the way of his duty he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

III. What comforted him in the midst of these complaints (Ps 142:3): "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, and ready to sink under the burden of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss and ready to despair, then thou

knewest my path, that is, then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knewest it. Thou knewest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me. Thou knewest my condition in all the particulars of it; when my spirit was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly show it, this comforted me, that thou knewest it, Job 23:10. Thou knewest it, that is, thou didst protect, preserve, and secure it," Ps 31:7,De 2:7.

2 I poured out my complaint before him;
I showed before him my trouble.
3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
then thou knewest my path.
In the way wherein I walked
have they privily laid a snare for me.
4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld,
but there was no man that would know me:
refuge failed me;
no man cared for my soul.

The psalmist here tells us, for our instruction,

1. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, Ps 142:4. When he was in favour at court he seemed to have a great interest, but when he was made an out-law, and it was dangerous for any one to harbour him (witness Ahimelech's fate), then no man would know him, but every body was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate (Ps 109:31), some friend or other to speak a good word for him; but, since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but all were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him; but refuge failed him.

None of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secresy and safety. How many good men have been deceived by such swallow-friends, who are gone when winter comes!

David's life was exceedingly precious, and yet, when he was unjustly proscribed, no man cared for it, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type of Christ, who, in his sufferings for us, was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the wine-press alone, for there was none to help, none to uphold, Isa 63:5.

2. How he then found satisfaction in God, Ps 142:5. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them. "But," said he, "I cried unto thee, O Lord! who knowest me, and carest for me, when none else will, and wilt not fail me nor forsake me when men do;" for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave:

"Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living; I depend upon thee to be so, my refuge to save me from being miserable, my portion to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge. Lord, thy name is the strong tower that I run into. Thou art my refuge, in whom alone I shall think myself safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion; I can never think myself well provided for till I know that the Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup." Those who in sincerity take the Lord for their God shall find him all-sufficient both as a refuge and as a portion, so that, as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them; and they may humbly claim their interest: "Lord, thou art my refuge and my portion; every thing else is a refuge of lies and a portion of no value. Thou art so in the land of the living, that is, while I live and have my being, whether in this world or in a better."

There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time. We live in a world of dangers and wants; but what danger need we fear if God is our refuge, or what wants if he be our portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called the land of the living, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion.

3. How, in this satisfaction, he addressed himself to God (Ps 142:5,6): "Lord, give a gracious ear to my cry, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, for I am brought very low, and, if thou help me not, I shall be quite sunk. Lord, deliver me from my persecutors, either tie their hands or turn their hearts, break their power or blast their projects, restrain them or rescue me, for they are stronger than I, and it will be thy honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them, for I am not yet myself a match for them. Lord, bring my soul out of prison, not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities." We may apply it spiritually: the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, cramped and fettered through the weakness of faith and the prevalency of corruption; and it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty and to enlarge their hearts, that they may run the way of his commandments.

4. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God.

(1.) By his own thanksgivings, into which his present complaints would then be turned: "Bring my soul out of prison, not that I may enjoy myself and my friends and live at ease, no, nor that I may secure my country, but that I may praise thy name." This we should have an eye to, in all our prayers to God for deliverance out of trouble, that we may have occasion to praise God and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity, for the excellent duty of praise.

(2.) By the thanksgivings of many on his behalf (2Co 1:11): "When I am enlarged the righteous shall encompass me about; for my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise, so the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate me on my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Maschil) instructions from

me; they shall encompass me, to join with me in my thanksgivings, because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me." Note, The mercies of others ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and the praises of others, on our behalf, ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

5 I cried unto thee, O Lord:
I said, Thou art my refuge
and my portion in the land of the living.
6 Attend unto my cry;
for I am brought very low:
deliver me from my persecutors;
for they are stronger than I.
7 Bring my soul out of prison,
that I may praise thy name:
the righteous shall compass me about;
for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

Psalms-143

A Prayer for Deliverance and Guidance
A Psalm of David.

1 Hear my prayer, O Lord,
give ear to my supplications:
in thy faithfulness answer me,
and in thy righteousness.

Here, I. David humbly begs to be heard (Ps 143:1), not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for, having desired it, and was in care about it, for having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, Hab 2:1. He is a suppliant to his God, and he begs that his requests may be granted: Hear my prayer; give ear to my supplications. He is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his case may be brought to hearing and that God will give judgment upon it, in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the Judge of right and wrong.

Or, "Answer my petitions in thy faithfulness, according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to." We have no righteousness of our own to plead, and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us and caused us to hope in.

II. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, Ps 143:2. He seems here, if not to correct, yet to explain, his plea (Ps 143:1), Deliver me in thy righteousness; "I mean," says he, "the righteous promises of the gospel, not the righteous threatenings of the law; if I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant of innocency, I am quite undone;" and therefore,

1. His petition is, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with." In this prayer we must own ourselves to be God's servants, bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour, and we must approve ourselves to him. We must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him, that he might justly enquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them according to law, and that, if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us; we have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation of it, but execution would be taken out and awarded and then we should be ruined for ever.

But we must encourage ourselves with a hope that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for thy servant enters into judgment with himself;" and, if we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged.

2. His plea is, "In thy sight shall no man living be justified upon those terms, for no man can plead innocency nor any righteousness of his own, either that he has not sinned or that he does not deserve to die for his sins; nor that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer;" nay, if God contend with us, we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand, Job 9:3,15:20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy for it.

III. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him (Ps 143:3): "Saul, that great enemy, has persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far that he has already smitten it down to the ground. Though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to dwell in darkness, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as those that have been long dead.

Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion, fit to be appeared for; and is not my enemy an object of thy displeasure, fit to be appeared against?"

IV. He bemoans the oppression of his mind, occasioned by his outward troubles (Ps 143:4): Therefore is my spirit overpowered and overwhelmed within me, and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself and not so easily out-run. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken.

V. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to muster up against the oppression of the enemy, but, if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this,

1. He looks back, and remembers the days of old (Ps 143:5), God's former appearances for his afflicted people and for him in particular. It has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, Ps 77:5,11.

2. He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world: I meditate on all thy works. Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in them, and do not receive the benefit they might by them because they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious curious subject, but soon quit it, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarcely touched upon it. I muse on, or (as some read it) I discourse of, the operation of thy hands, how great, how good, it is! The more we consider the power of God the less we shall fear the face or force of man, Isa 51:12,13.

3. He looks up with earnest desires towards God and his favour (Ps 143:6): "I stretch forth my hands unto thee, as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it and bid it welcome. My soul thirsteth after thee; it is to thee (so the word is), entire for thee, intent on thee; it is as a thirsty land, which, being parched with excessive heat, gapes for rain; so do I need, so do I crave, the support and refreshment of divine consolations under my afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me." This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed; and justly do those sink under their load who will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant:

for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.
3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;
he hath smitten my life down to the ground;
he hath made me to dwell in darkness,
as those that have been long dead.
4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me;
my heart within me is desolate.
5 I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all thy works ;
I muse on the work of thy hands.
6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee:
my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.
Selah.
7 Hear me speedily, O Lord;
my spirit faileth:
hide not thy face from me,
lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God; he begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste: "Hear me speedily, and defer no longer, for my spirit faileth. I am just ready to faint; reach the cordial--quickly, quickly, or I am gone." It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love. Make haste, O God! to help me. Three things David here prays for:--

I The manifestations of God's favour towards him, that God would be well pleased with him and let him know that he was so; this he prefers before any good, Ps 4:6. 1. He dreads God's frowns: "Lord, hide not thy face from me; Lord, be not angry with me, do not turn from me, as we do from one we are displeased with; Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thy anger or in doubt concerning thy favour; if I have thy favour, let it not be hidden from me." Those that have the truth of grace cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case if God withdrew from him: "Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath, for then I am like those that go down to the pit, that is, down to the grave (I

am a dead man, weak, and pale, and ghastly; thy frowns are worse than death), or down to hell, the bottomless pit."

Even those who through grace are delivered from going down to the pit may sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those who are going to the pit. Disconsolate saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, Job 6:4,Ps 88:6.

2. He entreats God's favour (Ps 143:8): Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning. He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him, that he has some kind things to say to him, some good words and comfortable words; but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits, drowned those pleasing whispers; and therefore he begs, "Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to hear joy and gladness," Ps 51:8.

God speaks to us by his word and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to hear his lovingkindness (Ps 107:43), that we may set that always before us: "Cause me to hear it in the morning, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's lovingkindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long." His plea is, "For in thee do I trust, and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other." God's goodness is commonly wrought for those who trust in him (Ps 31:8), who by faith draw it out.

II The operations of God's grace in him. Those he is as earnest for as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays,

1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit, in order to his other works, for God deals with men as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this effect:--

(1.) Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk. Sometimes those that are much in care to walk right are in doubt, and in the dark, which is the right way. Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God, by his word, and Spirit, and providence, to show them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man does not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking, but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, "I lift up my soul unto thee, to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will." He did not only importunately, but impartially, desire to know his duty; and those that do so shall be taught.

(2.) "Teach me to do thy will, not only show me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dexterously to my duty." It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and to do his will, and to stand complete in it. He pleads, "Thou art my God, and therefore my oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised--my God, and therefore my ruler, whose will I desire to do." If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master does his servant.

(3.) Lead me into the land of uprightness, into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright, or into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led, and kept safe, to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness; it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land unless God show us, nor go in that way unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak, or lame, or timorous, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us and carry us on in it.

The plea is, "Thy Spirit is good, and able to make me good," good and willing to help those that are at a loss. Those that have the Lord for their God have his Spirit for their guide; and it is both their character and their privilege that they are led by the Spirit.

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will (Ps 143:11): "Quicken me, O Lord!--quicken my devotions, that they may be lively; quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it; and this for thy name's sake." The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

III. The appearance of God's providence for him,

1. That God would, in his own way and time, give him rest from his troubles (Ps 143:9): "Deliver me, O Lord! from my enemies, that they may not have their will against me; for I flee unto thee to hide me; I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it." Preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their hiding-place who by faith make him such. He explains himself (Ps 143:11): "For thy righteousness-sake, bring my soul out of trouble, for thy promise-sake, nay, for thy mercy-sake" (for some by righteousness understand kindness and goodness); "do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, but from the trouble of my soul, the trouble that threatens to overwhelm my spirit. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord, let not my heart be troubled," Joh 14:1.

2. That he would reckon with those that were the instruments of his trouble (Ps 143:12): "Of thy mercy to me cut off my enemies, that I may be no longer in fear of them; and destroy all those, whoever they be, how numerous, how powerful, soever, who afflict my soul, and create vexation to that; for I am thy servant, and am resolved to continue such, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service." This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent

enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, who will not have him to reign over them, who grieve his Spirit, and afflict his soul, by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

8 Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning;
for in thee do I trust:
cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;
for I lift up my soul unto thee.
9 Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies:
I flee unto thee to hide me.
10 Teach me to do thy will;
for thou art my God :
thy Spirit is good;
lead me into the land of uprightness.
11 Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake:
for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.
12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies,
and destroy all them that afflict my soul:
for I am thy servant.

Psalms-144

A Prayer for Rescue and Prosperity
A Psalm of David.

1 Blessed be the Lord my strength,
which teacheth my hands to war,
and my fingers to fight:

Here, I. David acknowledges his dependence upon God and his obligations to him, Ps 144:1,2. A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us we should stir up ourselves to bless him. He gives to God the glory of two things:--

1. What he was to him: Blessed be the Lord my rock (Ps 144:1), my goodness, my fortress, Ps 144:2. He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us, accordingly, to depend upon him; all the saints, who by

faith have made him theirs, have found him not only to answer but to out do their expectations. David speaks of it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy, as the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God and his interest in him.

(1.) "He is my strength, on whom I stay, and from whom I have power both for my work and for my warfare, my rock to build on, to take shelter in." Even when we are weak we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

(2.) "My goodness, not only good to me, but my chief good, in whose favour I place my felicity, and who is the author of all the goodness that is in me, and from whom comes every good and perfect gift."

(3.) "My fortress, and my high tower, in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or strong-hold." David had formerly sheltered himself in strong-holds at En-gedi (1Sa 23:29), which perhaps were natural fastnesses. He had lately made himself master of the strong-hold of Zion, which was fortified by art, and he dwelt in the fort (2Sa 5:7,9), but he depends not on these. "Lord," says he, "thou art my fortress and my high tower." The divine attributes and promises are fortifications to a believer, far exceeding those either of nature or art.

(4.) My deliverer, and, as it is in the original, very emphatically, my deliverer to me, "not only a deliverer I have interest in, but who is always nigh unto me and makes all my deliverances turn to my real benefit."

(5.) "My shield, to guard me against all the malignant darts that my enemies let fly at me, not only my fortress at home, but my shield abroad in the field of battle."

Wherever a believer goes he carries his protection along with him. Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield.

2. What he had done for him. He was bred a shepherd, and seems not to have been designed by his parents, or himself for any thing more. But,

(1.) God had made him a soldier. His hands had been used to the crook and his fingers to the harp, but God taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight, because he designed him for Israel's champion; and what God calls men to he either finds them or makes them fit for. Let the men of war give God the glory of all their military skill; the same that teaches the meanest husbandman his art teaches the greatest general his. It is a pity that any whose fingers God has taught to fight should fight against him or his kingdom among men. Those have special reason to acknowledge God with thankfulness who prove to be qualified for services which they themselves never thought of.

(2.) God had made him a sovereign prince, had taught him to wield the sceptre as well as the sword, to rule as well as fight, the harder and nobler art of the two: He subdueth my people under me. The providence of God is to be acknowledged in making people subject to their prince, and so preserving the order and benefit of societies. There was a special hand of God inclining the people of Israel to be subject to David, pursuant to the promise God had made him; and it was typical of that great act of divine grace, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus and making them willing in the day of his power.

II. He admires God's condescension to man and to himself in particular (Ps 144:3,4): "Lord, what is man, what a poor little thing is he, that thou takest knowledge of him, that thou makest account of him, that he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, and that thou hast such a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race as thou hast had to me!" Considering the many disgraces which the human nature lies under, we have reason to admire the

honours God has put upon mankind in general (the saints especially, some in a particular manner, as David) and upon the Messiah (to whom those words are applied, Heb 2:6), who was highly exalted because he humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man, and has authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man.

A question to this purport David asked (Ps 8:4), and he illustrated the wonder by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed man in (Ps 8:5), Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. Here he illustrates it by the consideration of the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the dignity put upon him (Ps 144:4): Man is like to vanity; so frail is he, so weak, so helpless, compassed about with so many infirmities, and his continuance here so very short and uncertain, that he is as like as may be to vanity itself.

Nay, he is vanity, he is so at his best estate. His days have little substance in them, considering how many of the thoughts and cares of an immortal soul are employed about a poor dying body; they are as a shadow, dark and flitting, transitory and finishing with the sun, and, when that sets, resolving itself into all shadow. They are as a shadow that passeth away, and there is no loss of it. David puts himself into the number of those that are thus mean and despicable.

III. He begs of God to strengthen him and give him success against the enemies that invaded him, Ps 144:5-8. He does not specify who they were that he was in fear of, but says, Scatter them, destroy them. God knew whom he meant, though he did not name them. But afterwards he describes them (Ps 144:7,8): "They are strange children, Philistines, aliens, bad neighbours to Israel, heathens, whom we are bound to be strange to and not to make any leagues with, and who therefore carry it strangely towards us." Notwithstanding the advantages with which God had blessed David's arms against them, they were still

vexatious and treacherous, and men that one could put no confidence in:

"One cannot take their word, for their mouth speaketh vanity; nay, if they give their hand upon it, or offer their hand to help you, there is no trusting them; for their right hand is a right hand of falsehood." Against such as these we cannot defend ourselves, but we may depend on the God of truth and justice, who hates falsehood, to defend us from them.

1. David prays that God would appear, that he would do something extraordinary, for the conviction of those who preferred their dunghill-deities before the God of Israel (Ps 144:5): "Bow thy heavens, O Lord! and make it evident that they are indeed thine, and that thou art the Lord of them, Isa 66:1. Let thy providence threaten my enemies, and look black upon them, as the clouds do on the earth when they are thick, and hang very low, big with a storm. Fight against those that fight against us, so that it may visibly appear that thou art for us. Touch the mountains, our strong and stately enemies, and let them smoke. Show thyself by the ministry of thy angels, as thou didst upon Mount Sinai."

2. That he would appear against his enemies, that he would fight from heaven against them, as sometimes he had done, by lightnings, which are his arrows (his fiery darts, against which the hardest steel is no armour of proof, so penetrating is the force of lightning), that he himself would shoot these arrows, who, we are sure, never misses his mark, but hits where he aims.

3. That he would appear for him, Ps 144:7. He begs for their destruction, in order to his own deliverance and the repose of his people: "Send thy hand, thy power, from above, for that way we look for help; rid me and deliver me out of these great waters that are ready to overflow me." God's time to help his people is when they are sinking and all other helps fail.

2 my goodness, and my fortress;
my high tower, and my deliverer;
my shield, and he in whom I trust;
who subdueth my people under me.
3 Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him !
or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!
4 Man is like to vanity:
his days are as a shadow that passeth away.
5 Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down:
touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them:
shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.
7 Send thine hand from above;
rid me, and deliver me out of great waters,
from the hand of strange children;
8 whose mouth speaketh vanity,
and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.
9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God:
upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings
will I sing praises unto thee.

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm as in the former; David first gives glory to God and then begs mercy from him.

I. He praises God for the experiences he had had of his goodness to him and the encouragements he had to expect further mercy from him, Ps 144:9,10. In the midst of his complaints concerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exultation in his God:

I will sing a new song to thee, O God! a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise as well as those we have received by his providence, 2Ch 20:20,21. He will join music with his songs of praise, to express and excite his holy joy in God; he will praise God upon a psaltery of ten strings, in the best manner, thinking all little enough to set forth the

praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be (Ps 144:10): It is he that giveth salvation unto kings. This intimates,

1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised; but, after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them, Ps 33:16. Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their protector. How much service do they owe him then with their power who gives them all their salvations!

2. That good kings, who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He has engaged to give salvation to those kings that are his subjects and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for David his servant, whom he had many a time delivered from the hurtful sword, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had often exposed him. This may refer to Christ the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New-Testament song. God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a conqueror over all the powers of darkness, Isa 42:1,49:8. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a horn of salvation.

II. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

1. That he might be delivered from the public enemies, Ps 144:11. Here he repeats his prayer and plea, Ps 144:7,8. His persecutors were still of the same character, false and perfidious, and who would certainly over-reach an honest man and be too hard for him: "Therefore, Lord, do thou deliver me from them, for they are a strange sort of people."

2. That he might see the public peace and prosperity: "Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness, which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief." David, as a king, here expresses the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people, wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

(1.) The particular instances of that public prosperity which David desired for his people.

[1.] A hopeful progeny (Ps 144:12): "That our sons and our daughters may be in all respects such as we could wish." He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world to see their children promising and likely to do well.

First, It is pleasant to see our sons as plants grown up in their youth, as olive-plants (Ps 128:1-6), the planting of the Lord (Isa 61:3),-- to see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns,--to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted,--to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day,--to see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit.

Secondly, It is no less desirable to see our daughters as corner-stones, or corner-pillars, polished after the similitude of a palace, or temple. By daughters families are united and connected, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure.

When we see our daughters well-established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building,--when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and become women professing godliness,--when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

[2.] Great plenty. Numerous families increase the care, perhaps more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family.

First, That their store-houses might be well-replenished with the fruits and products of the earth: That our garners may be full, like those of the good householder, who brings out of them things new and old (those things that are best new he has in that state, those that are best when they are kept he has in that state),--that we may have in them all manner of stores, for ourselves and our friends,--that, living plentifully, we may live not luxuriously, for then we abuse our plenty, but cheerfully and usefully,--that, having abundance, we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise, what profit is it to have our garners full? Jam 5:3.

Secondly, That their flocks might greatly increase: That our sheep may bring forth thousands, and ten thousands, in our folds. Much of the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks (Pr 27:26), and this is the case with ours too, else wool would not be, as it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged.

Thirdly, That their beasts designed for service might be fit for it: That our oxen may be strong to labour in the plough, that they may be fat and fleshy (so some), in good working case. We were none of us made to be idle, and therefore

we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be easy and take our pleasures, but that we may be strong to labour, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong it is for labour.

[3.] An uninterrupted peace. First, That there be no war, no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters. "Let not our enemies break in upon us; let us not have occasion to march out against them." War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. Secondly, That there be no oppression nor faction--no complaining in our streets, that the people may have no cause to complain either of their government or of one another, nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

(2.) His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation, which he so much desired (Ps 144:15): Happy are the people that are in such a case (but it is seldom so, and never long so), yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord. The relation of a people to God as theirs is here spoken of either,

[1.] As that which is the fountain whence all those blessings flow. Happy are the Israelites if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for they may expect to be in such a case. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations as such, in their national capacity, are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or,

[2.] As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, Happy are the people that are in such a case; those are blessed that prosper in the world. But he immediately corrects himself: Yea, rather, happy are the people whose God is the Lord, who have his favour, and love, and grace, according to the tenour of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this, and much

more, cannot make us happy, unless the Lord be our God, so, if he be, the want of this, the loss of this, nay, the reverse of this, cannot make us miserable.

10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings:
who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.
11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children,
whose mouth speaketh vanity,
and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:
12 that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth;
that our daughters may be as corner stones,
polished after the similitude of a palace:
13 that our garners may be full,
affording all manner of store;
that our sheep may bring forth thousands
and ten thousands in our streets:
14 that our oxen may be strong to labor;
that there be no breaking in, nor going out;
that there be no complaining in our streets.
15 Happy is that people, that is in such a case:
yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.

Psalms-145

Praise for the Lord's Goodness a nd Power
David's Psalm of praise.

1 I will extol thee, my God, O King;
and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

The entitling of this David's psalm of praise may intimate not only that he was the penman of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In this former part of the psalm God's glorious attributes are praised, as, in the latter part of the psalm, his kingdom and the administration of it. Observe,

I. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God.

1. Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engages himself, and has his heart much enlarged in it. What he does, that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it. It was his duty; it was his delight. Observe,

(1.) How he expresses the work itself: "I will extol thee, and bless thy name (Ps 145:1); I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thyself known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee and endeavour to raise the like in others." When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted and accepted as an extolling of him. Again (Ps 145:2): I will bless thee, I will praise thy name; the repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein.

Again (Ps 145:5): I will speak of thy honour, and (Ps 145:6) I will declare thy greatness. He would give glory to God, not only in his solemn devotions, but in his common conversation. If the heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak with reverence, to his praise, upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God?

(2.) How he expresses his resolution to persevere in it.

[1.] He will be constant to this work: Every day will I bless thee. Praising God must be our daily work. No day must pass, though ever so busy a day, though ever so sorrowful a day, without praising God. We ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily employments, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason that we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him.

[2.] He will continue in it: I will bless thee for ever and ever, Ps 145:1,2. This intimates, First, That he resolved to continue in this work to the end of his life, throughout his ever in this world. Secondly, That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2Ch 29:30. Thirdly, That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world. Those that make praise their constant work on earth shall have it their everlasting bliss in heaven.

2. He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work.

(1.) "They shall concur in it now; they shall join with me in it: When I declare thy greatness men shall speak of it (Ps 145:6); they shall abundantly utter it" (Ps 145:7), or pour it out (as the word is); they shall praise God with a gracious fluency, better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it has done so.

(2.) "They shall keep it up when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession (Ps 145:4): One generation shall praise thy works to another." The generation that is going off shall tell them to that which is rising up, shall tell what they have seen in their days and what they have heard from their fathers; they shall fully and particularly declare thy mighty acts (Ps 78:3); and the generation that is rising up shall follow the example of that which is going off: so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship, for a new generation shall rise up in their room to carry on that good work, more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in which there is no succession of generations.

II. What we must give to God the glory of.

1. Of his greatness and his great works. We must declare, Great is the Lord, his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty

incontestable; and therefore there is no dispute, but great is the Lord, and, if great, then greatly to be praised, with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and with all the circumstances of solemnity imaginable. His greatness indeed cannot be comprehended, for it is unsearchable; who can conceive or express how great God is? But then it is so much the more to be praised. When we cannot, by searching, find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, Ro 11:33. God is great, for,

(1.) His majesty is glorious in the upper world, above the heavens, where he has set his glory; and when we are declaring his greatness we must not fail to speak of the glorious honour of his majesty, the splendour of the glory of his majesty (Ps 145:5), how brightly he shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle the eyes of the angels themselves, and oblige them to cover their faces, as unable to bear the lustre of it.

(2.) His works are wondrous in this lower world. The preservation, maintenance, and government of all the creatures, proclaim the Creator very great. When therefore we declare his greatness we must observe the unquestionable proofs of it, and must declare his mighty acts (Ps 145:4), speak of his wondrous works (Ps 145:5), the might of his terrible acts, Ps 145:6. We must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world. Various instruments are used, but in all events God is the supreme director; it is he that performs all things. Much of his power is seen in the operations of his providence (they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature), and much of his justice--they are terrible acts, awful to saints, dreadful to sinners. These we should take all occasions to speak of, observing the finger of God, his hand, his arm, in all, that we may marvel.

2. Of his goodness; this is his glory, Ex 33:19. It is what he glories in (Ex 34:6,7), and it is what we must give him the glory of: They shall abundantly utter the memory of

thy great goodness, Ps 145:7. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted, nay, they can never be lessened, for he ever will be as rich in mercy as he ever was. It is memorable goodness; it is what we ought always to lay before us, always to have in mind and preserve the memorials of, for it is worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance; and the remembrance we retain of God's goodness we should utter, we should abundantly utter, as those who are full of it, very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it.

But, whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget, at the same time, to sing of his righteousness; for, as he is gracious in rewarding those that serve him faithfully, so he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God as inexhaustible goodness; and we must sing of both together, Ro 11:22.

(1.) There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature (Ps 145:8): The Lord is gracious to those that serve him; he is full of compassion to those that need him, slow to anger to those that have offended him, and of great mercy to all that seek him and sue to him. He is ready to give, and ready to forgive, more ready than we are to ask, than we are to repent.

(2.) There are streams of goodness in all the dispensations of his providence, Ps 145:9. As he is good, so he does good; he is good to all, to all his creatures, from the highest angel to the meanest worm, to all but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from his goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works.

[1.] All his works, all his creatures, receive the fruits of his merciful care and bounty. It is extended to them all; he hates nothing that he has made.

[2.] The works of his mercy out-shine all his other works, and declare him more than any of them. In nothing will the glory of God be for ever so illustrious as in the vessels of mercy ordained to glory. To the divine goodness will the everlasting hallelujahs of all the saints be sung.

2 Every day will I bless thee;
and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
and his greatness is unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise thy works to another,
and shall declare thy mighty acts.
5 I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty,
and of thy wondrous works.
6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts:
and I will declare thy greatness.
7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness,
and shall sing of thy righteousness.
8 The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion;
slow to anger, and of great mercy.
9 The Lord is good to all:
and his tender mercies are over all his works.
10 All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord;
and thy saints shall bless thee.

The greatness and goodness of him who is optimus et maximus--the best and greatest of beings, were celebrated in the former part of the psalm; here, in these verses, we are taught to give him the glory of his kingdom, in the administration of which his greatness and goodness shine so clearly, so very brightly. Observe, as before,

I. From whom the tribute of praise is expected (Ps 145:10): All God's works shall praise him. They all minister to us matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity; even those that refuse to give him honour he will get himself honour upon. But his saints do bless him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him, which other creatures have not, but as they praise him

actively, while his other works praise him only objectively.

They bless him, for they collect the rent or tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. All God's works do praise him, as the beautiful building praises the builder or the well-drawn picture praises the painter; but the saints bless him as the children of prudent tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works, his saints, the workmanship of his grace, the first-fruits of his creatures, have most reason to bless him.

II. For what this praise is to be given: They shall speak of thy kingdom. The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be often thought of and often spoken of. As, before, he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so here he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

1 The greatness of his kingdom. It is great indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his control. To show the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes,

(1.) The pomp of it. Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and, believing, we should speak of the glory of his kingdom (Ps 145:11), the glorious majesty of it (Ps 145:12), for he has prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up, and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God.

(2.) The power of it: When they speak of the glory of God's kingdom they must talk of his power, the extent of it, the efficacy of it--his power, by which he can do any thing and does every thing he pleases (Ps 145:11); and, as a proof of it, let them make known his mighty acts (Ps

145:12), that the sons of men may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty potentate.

(3.) The perpetuity of it, Ps 145:13. The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither, monarchies come to an end; but, Lord, thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. God will govern the world to the end of time, when the Mediator, who is now entrusted with the administration of his kingdom, shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all to eternity. His dominion endures throughout all generations, for he himself is eternal, and his counsels are unchangeable and uniform; and Satan, who has set up a kingdom in opposition to him, is conquered and in a chain.

2 The goodness of his kingdom. His royal style and title are, The Lord God, gracious and merciful; and his government answers to his title. The goodness of God appears in what he does,

(1.) For all the creatures in general (Ps 145:15,16): He provides food for all flesh, and therein appears his everlasting mercy, Ps 136:25. All the creatures live upon God, and, as they had their being from him at first, so from him they have all the supports of their being and on him they depend for the continuance of it.

[1.] The eye of their expectation attends upon him: The eyes of all wait on thee. The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to wait upon God, because they seek their food according to the instinct which the God of nature has put into them (and they sow not, neither do they reap, Mt 6:26), and because they take what the God of nature has provided for them, in the time and way that he has appointed, and are content with it.

[2.] The hand of his bounty is stretched out to them: Thou givest them their meat in due season, the meat proper for them, and in the proper time, when they need it; so that none of the creatures ordinarily perish for want of food, no, not in the winter. Thou openest thy hand freely and liberally, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing, except some of the unreasonable children of men, that will be satisfied with nothing, but are still complaining, still crying, Give, give.

(2.) For the children of men in particular, whom he governs as reasonable creatures.

[1.] He does none of them any wrong, for (Ps 145:17) the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and not unrighteous in any of them; he is holy, and acts like himself, with a perfect rectitude in all his works. In all the acts of government he is just, injurious to none, but administering justice to all. The ways of the lord are equal, though ours are unequal. In giving laws, in deciding controversies, in recompensing services, and punishing offences, he is incontestably just, and we are bound to own that he is so.

[2.] He does all of them good, his own people in a special manner.

First, He supports those that are sinking, and it is his honour to help the weak, Ps 145:14. He upholds all that fall, in that, though they fall, they are not utterly cast down. Many of the children of men are brought very low by sickness and other distresses, and seem ready to drop into the grave, and yet Providence wonderfully upholds them, raises them up, and says, Return, Ps 110:3. If all had died who once seemed dying, the world would have been very thin.

Many of the children of God, who have been ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, have experienced his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts, so that, though they

fell, they were not utterly cast down, Ps 37:24. If those who were bowed down by oppression and affliction are raised up, it was God that raised them. And, with respect to all those that are heavy-laden under the burden of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them.

Secondly, He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people, Ps 145:18,19. In this appears the grace of his kingdom, that his subjects have not only liberty of petitioning, but all the encouragement that can be to petition.

1 The grant is very rich, that God will be nigh to all that call upon him; he will be always within call of their prayers, and they shall always find themselves within reach of his help. If a neighbour that is near is better than a brother afar off (Pr 27:10), much more a God that is near. Nay, he will not only be nigh to them, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but he will fulfil their desires; they shall have what they ask and find that they seek. It was said (Ps 145:16) that he satisfies the desire of every living thing, much more will he fulfil the desire of those that fear him; for he that feeds his birds will not starve his babes. He will hear their call and will save them; that is hearing them to purpose, as he heard David (that is, saved him) from the horn of the unicorn, Ps 22:21.

2 The proviso is very reasonable. He will hear and help us,

(1.) If we fear him, if we worship and serve him with a holy awe of him; for otherwise how can we expect that he should accept us?

(2.) If we call upon him in truth; for he desires truth in the inward part. We must be faithful to God, and sincere in our professions of dependence on him, and devotedness to him. In all devotions inward impressions must be

answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth.

Thirdly, He takes those under his special protection who have a confidence and complacency in him (Ps 145:20): The Lord preserves all those that love him; they lie exposed in this world, but he, by preserving them in their integrity, will effectually secure them, that no real evil shall befal them.

[3.] If any are destroyed they may thank themselves: All the wicked he will destroy, but they have by their wickedness fitted themselves for destruction. This magnifies his goodness in the protection of the righteous, that with their eyes they shall see the reward of the wicked (Ps 91:8); and God will by this means preserve his people, even by destroying the wicked that would do them a mischief.

Lastly, The psalmist concludes,

1. With a resolution to give glory to God himself (Ps 145:21): My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord. When we have said what we can, in praising God, still there is more to be said, and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as he did (Ps 145:1), but conclude them with it, as he does here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of one thanksgiving be. While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises.

2. With a call to others to do so too: Let all flesh, all mankind, bless his holy name for ever and ever. Some of mankind shall be blessing God for ever; it is a pity but that they should be all so engaged.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
and talk of thy power;

12 to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,
and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.
14 The Lord upholdeth all that fall,
and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
15 The eyes of all wait upon thee;
and thou givest them their meat in due season.
16 Thou openest thine hand,
and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways,
and holy in all his works.
18 The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him,
to all that call upon him in truth.
19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him:
he also will hear their cry, and will save them.
20 The Lord preserveth all them that love him:
but all the wicked will he destroy.
21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord:
and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

Psalms-146

Praise for the Lord's Righteous Acts

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Praise the Lord, O my soul.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince; as such, it might be thought,

1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not to do it himself in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him to dance before the ark; but he was so far from being of this mind that he would himself be first and foremost in the work, Ps 146:1,2. He considered his dignity as so far from

excusing him from it that it rather obliged him to lead in it, and he thought it so far from lessening him that it really magnified him; therefore he stirred up himself to it and to make a business of it: Praise the Lord, O my soul! and he resolved to abide by it: "I will praise him with my heart, I will sing praises to him with my mouth.

Herein I will have an eye to him as the Lord, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as my God, in covenant with me." Praise is most pleasant when, in praising God, we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in and stand in relation to. "This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it while I have any being, for when I have no being on earth I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better." That which is the great end of our being ought to be our great employment and delight while we have any being. "In thee must our time and powers be spent."

2. It might be thought that he himself, having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes, that they should all come and trust in his shadow and make him their stay and strong-hold. "No," says David, "Put not your trust in princes (Ps 146:3), not in me, not in any other; do not repose your confidence in them; do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some have thought they knew better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble. Be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity; it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words."

But, though we suppose them very wise and as good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, in whom there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like

the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide.

(1.) We cannot be sure of their ability. Even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect. David himself owned (2Sa 3:39), I am this day weak, though anointed king. So that in the son of man there is often no help, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wits' end, as a man astonished, and then, though a mighty man, he cannot save, Jer 14:9.

(2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we expect most from him (Ps 146:4): His breath goes forth, so it does every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then he returns to his earth. The earth is his, in respect of his original as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence, Ge 3:19.

It is his, if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he has chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he has set his affections. He shall go to his own place. Or, rather, it is his earth because of the property he has in it; and though he has had large possessions on earth a grave is all that will remain to him. The earth God has given to the children of men, and great striving there is about it, and, as a mark of their authority, men call their lands by their own names.

But, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remains. But, when he returns to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish; all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us vanish and are gone, and he cannot take one step further in them; all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, Job 17:11. And then what becomes of our expectations from him?

Princes are mortal, as well as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils and will not be there long.

2 While I live will I praise the Lord:
I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
3 Put not your trust in princes,
nor in the son of man,
in whom there is no help.
4 His breath goeth forth,
he returneth to his earth;
in that very day his thoughts perish.
5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
whose hope is in the Lord his God:

The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes (because, if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed), here encourages us to put our confidence in God, because, if we do so, we shall be happily secured: Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.

I. Let us take a view of the character here given of those whom God will uphold. Those shall have God for their help,

1. Who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly.

2. Who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him, who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope,

(1.) In the providence of God for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is.

(2.) In the grace of Christ for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm to have a most visible remarkable aspect towards the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbies, who says of Ps 146:10 that it belongs to the days of the Messiah.

And that it does so he thinks will appear by comparing Ps 146:7,8, with the characters Christ gives of the Messiah (Mt 11:5,6), The blind receive their sight, the lame walk; and the closing words there, Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to Ps 146:5. Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God, and who is not offended in him.

II. Let us take a view of the great encouragements here given us to hope in the Lord our God.

1. He is the Maker of the world, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which, being derived from him, depend upon him (Ps 146:6): He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and therefore his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and without whom was not any thing made that was made. It is a great support to faith that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good-will to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he keepeth truth for ever, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true from the beginning, and therefore true to the end. Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, the faithful witness, as well as the beginning, the author and principle, of the creation of

God, Re 3:14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for all the promises are in him yea and amen.

3. He is the patron of injured innocency: He pleads the cause of the oppressed, and (as we read it) he executes judgment for them. He often does it in his providence, giving redress to those that suffer wrong and clearing up their integrity. He will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan the great oppressor, and, all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so among the rest, Jude 1:15.

4. He is a bountiful benefactor to the necessitous: He gives food to the hungry; so God does in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once when he fed thousands miraculously with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family. This encourages us to hope in him as the nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

5. He is the author of liberty to those that were bound: The Lord looseth the prisoners. He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt and afterwards in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought, in making the dumb to speak and the deaf to hear with that one word, Ephphatha--Be opened, his cleansing lepers, and so discharging them from their confinements, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of loosing the prisoners; and we may take encouragement from those to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, Isa 61:1,2.

6. He gives sight to those that have been long deprived of it; The Lord can open the eyes of the blind, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which

before they were not aware of; witness Ge 21:19, and the prophet's servant, 2Ki 6:17. But this has special reference to Christ; for since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind till Christ did it (Joh 9:32) and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

7. He sets that straight which was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink: He raises those that are bowed down, by comforting and supporting them under their burdens, and, in due time, removing their burdens. This was literally performed by Christ when he made a poor woman straight that had been bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself (Lu 13:12); and he still does it by his grace, giving rest to those that were weary and heavily laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

8. He has a constant kindness for all good people: The Lord loveth the righteous, and they may with the more confidence depend upon his power when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous by fulfilling all righteousness.

9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care: The Lord preserves the strangers. It ought not to pass without remark that the name of Jehovah is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power (that of Jehovah) that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed, and that it is as much the glory of God to succour those that are in misery as it is to ride on the heavens by his name Jah, Ps 68:4.

(1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but the Lord preserves them, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection and been kept alive by it.

(2.) Widows and fatherless children, that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them justice, nay, that will do them injustice; but the Lord relieveth them, and raiseth up friends for them. See Ex 22:22,23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, may find mercy, Ho 14:3.

10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom and oppress the faithful subjects of it: The way of the wicked he turns upside down, and therefore let us hope in him, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth that militate against his church, so that, having him for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us.

11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, Ps 146:10. Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times that the Lord shall reign for ever, in spite of all the malignity of the powers of darkness, even thy God, O Zion! unto all generations. Christ is set King on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader; it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort that the Lord reigns as Zion's God, as Zion's king, that the Messiah is head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

6 which made heaven, and earth,
the sea, and all that therein is:
which keepeth truth for ever:
7 which executeth judgment for the oppressed:
which giveth food to the hungry.
The Lord looseth the prisoners:
8 the Lord openeth the eyes of the blind:

the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down:
the Lord loveth the righteous:
9 the Lord preserveth the strangers;
he relieveth the fatherless and widow:
but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
10 The Lord shall reign for ever,
even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-147

Praise for the Lord's Favor to Jerusalem

1 Praise ye the Lord:
for it is good to sing praises unto our God;
for it is pleasant;
and praise is comely.

Here, I The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason that we are thus called to it again and again: Praise you the Lord (Ps 147:1), and again (Ps 147:7), Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp to our God (let all our praises be directed to him and centre in him), for it is good to do so; it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us. It is acceptable to our Creator and it answers the end of our creation.

The law for it is holy, just, and good; the practice of it will turn to a good account. It is good, for

1. It is pleasant. Holy joy or delight are required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men; giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us as saints that are devoted to his honour. Praising God is work that is its own wages; it is heaven upon earth; it is what we should be in as in our element.

2. It is comely; it is that which becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. In

giving honour to God we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

II. God is recommended to us as the proper object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts.

1 The care he takes of his chosen people, Ps 147:2. Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins? In both cases, The Lord builds up Jerusalem. The gospel-church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of this building. He framed the model of it in his own counsels; he founded it by the preaching of his gospel; he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increases it. He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven.

Are any of his people outcasts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance and bringing them again into the communion of saints. Have they been forced out by war, famine, or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and those that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day are gathered together again.

2 The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, Ps 147:3. They are broken in heart, and wounded, humbled, and troubled, for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is that is sorely wounded. Their very hearts are not only pricked, but rent, under the sense of the dishonour they have done to God and the injury they have done to themselves by sin.

To those whom God heals with the consolations of his Spirit he speaks peace, assures them that their sins are pardoned and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of Gilead into the bleeding wounds, and then binds them up, and makes them to

rejoice. Those who have had experience of this need not be called upon to praise the Lord; for when he brought them out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, he put a new song into their mouths, Ps 40:2,3. And for this let others praise him also.

3. The sovereign dominion he has over the lights of heaven, Ps 147:4,5. The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarcely discernible with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of his hands and the instruments of his providence. Their bulk and power are very great; but he calleth them all by their names, which shows his dominion over them and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleases. They are his servants, his soldiers; he musters them, he marshals them; they come and go at his bidding, and all their motions are under his direction.

He mentions this as one instance of many, to show that great is our Lord and of great power (he can do what he pleases), and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can contrive every thing for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained, and you have his utmost length; hitherto his wisdom can reach and no further. But God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

4. The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud and exalting those of low degree (Ps 147:6): The Lord lifts up the meek, who abase themselves before him, and whom men trample on; but the wicked, who conduct themselves insolently towards God and scornfully towards all mankind, who lift up themselves in pride and folly, he casteth down to the ground, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, at furthest in the day when their faces shall be filled with everlasting shame. God proves himself to be God by looking on the proud and abasing them, Job 40:12.

5. The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, Ps 147:8,9. Observe in what method he feeds man and beast.

(1.) He covereth the heaven with clouds, which darken the air and intercept the beams of the sun, and yet in them he prepareth that rain for the earth which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions, for the present, look black, and dark, and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them, as sometimes when the sky is overcast it makes us dull; but they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those showers that make the harvest to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness (Heb 12:11), which should help to reconcile us to them.

Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which directs us on earth to depend on God in heaven. All the rain with which the earth is watered is of God's preparing.

(2.) By the rain which distils on the earth he makes grass to grow upon the mountains, even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains, which are not watered with the springs and rivers, as the valleys are, are yet watered so that they are not barren.

(3.) This grass he gives to the beast for his food, the beast of the mountains which runs wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the young ravens, which, being forsaken by their old ones, cry, are heard by him, and ways are found to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

6. The complacency he takes in his people, Ps 147:10,11. In times when great things are doing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know

(since the issue proceeds from the Lord) whom, and what, God will delight to honour and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that God is pleased to own.

(1.) Not the strength of armies--not in the cavalry, for he delighteth not in the strength of the horse, the war-horse, noted for his courage (Job 39:19, &c.)--nor in the infantry, for he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man; he does not mean the swiftness of them for flight, to quit the field, but the steadiness of them for charging, to stand the ground. If one king, making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, "Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order; it is a pity that they should suffer any disgrace;" for that is no argument with God, Ps 20:7. Jehoshaphat's was much better: Lord, we have no might, 2Ch 20:12. But,

(2.) God is pleased to own the strength of grace. A serious and suitable regard to God is that which is, in the sight of God, of great price in such a case. The Lord accepts and takes pleasure in those that fear him and that hope in his mercy. Observe,

[1.] A holy fear of God and hope in God not only may consist, but must concur. In the same heart, at the same time, there must be both a reverence of his majesty and a complacency in his goodness, both a believing dread of his wrath and a believing expectation of his favour; not that we must hang in suspense between hope and fear, but we must act under the gracious influences of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair; thus must we take our work before us.

[2.] We must hope in God's mercy, his general mercy, even when we cannot find a particular promise to stay ourselves upon. A humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature is very pleasing to him, as that which turns

to the glory of that attribute in which he most glories. Every man of honour loves to be trusted.

2 The Lord doth build up Jerusalem:
he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
3 He healeth the broken in heart,
and bindeth up their wounds.
4 He telleth the number of the stars;
he calleth them all by their names.
5 Great is our Lord, and of great power:
his understanding is infinite.
6 The Lord lifteth up the meek:
he casteth the wicked down to the ground.
7 Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving;
sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
8 who covereth the heaven with clouds,
who prepareth rain for the earth,
who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
9 He giveth to the beast his food,
and to the young ravens which cry.
10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse:
he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.
11 The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
in those that hope in his mercy.
12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem;
praise thy God, O Zion.

Jerusalem, and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to praise God, Ps 147:12. For where should praise be offered up to God but where his altar is? Where may we expect that glory should be given to him but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites, who attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner praise the Lord. They have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business, it is their profession. "Praise thy God, O Zion! he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him; his being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise." Jerusalem and Zion must praise God,

I. For the prosperity and flourishing state of their civil interests, Ps 147:13,14.

1. For their common safety. They had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them if God had not strengthened the bars of their gates and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must therefore in the careful and diligent use of those means, depend upon him for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land more to the wall of fire than to the wall of water round about us, Zec 2:5.

2. For the increase of their people. This strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing: He hath blessed thy children within thee, with that first and great blessing, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land. It is a comfort to parents to see their children blessed of the Lord (Isa 61:9), and a comfort to the generation that is going off to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful, for which blessing God must be blessed.

3. For the public tranquillity, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war: He makes peace in thy borders, by putting an end to the wars that were, and preventing the wars that were threatened and feared. He makes peace within thy borders, that is, in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there may be no intestine broils and animosities, and upon thy borders, that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble any where, it is in the borders, the marches of a country; the frontier-towns lie most exposed, so that, if there be peace in the borders, there is a universal peace, a mercy we can never be sufficiently thankful for.

4. For great plenty, the common effect of peace: He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat--wheat, the most valuable grain, the fat, the finest of that, and a fulness thereof. What would they more? Canaan abounded with the best wheat (De 32:14) and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears, Eze 27:17. The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones nor spices, but with the finest of the wheat, with bread, which strengthens man's heart. This made it the glory of all lands, and for this God was praised in Zion.

II. For the wonderful instances of his power in the weather, particularly the winter-weather. He that protects Zion and Jerusalem is that God of power from whom all the powers of nature are derived and on whom they depend, and who produces all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

1. In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes) they are produced by the will, and power, and providence of God (Ps 147:15): He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth, as one that has an incontestable authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders and put them in execution.

As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed, by a word of almighty power. God speaks and it is done, for all are his servants. That word takes effect, not only surely, but speedily. His word runneth very swiftly, for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning, which passes through the air in an instant, such is the word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace, when it is sent forth with commission, Lu 17:24. Angels, who carry his word and fulfil it, fly swiftly, Da 9:21.

2. In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

(1.) Frosts are from God. With him are the treasures of the snow and the hail (Job 38:22,23), and out of these treasures he draws as he pleases.

[1.] He giveth snow like wool. It is compared to wool for its whiteness (Isa 1:18), and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool; it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness. See how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow.

[2.] He scatters the hoar-frost, which is dew congealed, as the snow and hail are rain congealed. This looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, Ps 78:47.

[3.] He casts forth his ice like morsels, which may be understood either of large hail-stones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drops of drink, it is as morsels of meat, or crusts of bread.

[4.] When we see the frost, and snow, and ice, we feel it in the air: Who can stand before his cold? The beasts cannot; they retire into dens (Job 37:8); they are easily conquered then, 2Sa 23:20. Men cannot, but are forced to protect themselves by fires, or furs, or both, and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it his cold; it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses, and clothes, and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season, and must give him the glory of his wisdom and

sovereignty, his power and faithfulness, which shall not cease any more than summer, Ge 8:22. And let us also infer from it, If we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?

(2.) Thaws are from God. When he pleases (Ps 147:18) he sends out his word and melts them; the frost, the snow, the ice, are all dissolved quickly, in order to which he causes the wind, the south wind, to blow, and the waters, which were frozen, flow again as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the First Cause.

And in it we must take notice not only of the power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly, make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air and the face of the earth (what cannot he do that does this every winter, perhaps often every winter?) but also of the goodness of God. Hard weather does not always continue; it would be sad if it should. He does not contend for ever, but renews the face of the earth. As he remembered Noah, and released him (Ge 8:1), so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, So 2:11,12.

This thawing word may represent the gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ (for the Spirit is compared to the wind, Joh 3:8); both are sent for the melting of frozen souls. Converting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens it, and melts it into tears of repentance; it warms good affections, and makes them to flow, which, before, were chilled and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal and yet gradual; it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable: such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul, when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it and restore it to itself.

III. For his distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty (Ps 147:14), as much as the

soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them. They were under his peculiar government; the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing and enacting, and their constitution was a theocracy. They had the benefit of divine revelation; the great things of God's law were written to them. They had a priesthood of divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions. No people besides went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was,

1. A preventing mercy. They did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but God showed his word unto Jacob, and by that word he made known to them his statutes and judgments. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them; for faith comes by hearing and reading that word, that faith without which it is impossible to please God.

2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging: "He hath not dealt so with every nation, not with any nation; and, as for his judgments, they have not known them, nor are likely to know them till the Messiah shall come and take down the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile, that the gospel may be preached to every creature."

Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel were. Let Israel therefore praise the Lord in the observance of these statutes. Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world! Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes.

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates;
he hath blessed thy children within thee.
14 He maketh peace in thy borders,
and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.
15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth:

his word runneth very swiftly.
16 He giveth snow like wool:
he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.
17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels:
who can stand before his cold?
18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:
he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.
19 He showeth his word unto Jacob,
his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
20 He hath not dealt so with any nation:
and as for his judgments, they have not known them.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-148

All Creation Exhorted to Praise the Lord

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
praise him in the heights.

We, in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and, conversing within narrow confines, can scarcely admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

I. That there is above us a world of blessed angels by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them. Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him; and it is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them, nor is, nor can be, any way benefited by them. To that bright and happy world the psalmist has an eye here, Ps 148:1,2.

In general, to the heavens, to the heights. The heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world unto God in the heavens, and on things above we must set our affections. It is his desire that God may be praised from the heavens, that thence a praising frame

may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that while we are so cold, and low, and flat, in praising God, there are those above who are doing it in a better manner, and that while we are so often interrupted in this work they rest not day nor night from it.

In particular, he had an eye to God's angels, to his hosts, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts is plain enough; as soon as they were made they were enlisted, armed, and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is meant by the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for.

I will not say, They do not heed it, because we find that to the principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 3:10); but I will say, They do not need it, for they are continually praising God and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore when, in singing this psalm, we call upon the angels to praise God (as we did, Ps 103:20), we mean that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands and in the best manner,--that we are pleased to think he is so,--that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above and are still praising him,--and that we have come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:22.

II. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those bright ones, in which God is praised, that is, which may give us occasion (as far as we know any thing of them) to give to God the glory not only of their being, but of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

1. What these creatures are that thus show us the way in praising God, and, whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises.

(1.) There are the sun, moon, and stars, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses, in which we may see a faint shadow (for so I must call it, not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is the Father of lights, Ps 148:3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright, to praise him; and the praises of the less lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon, and stars, their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we, who worship the true God only, make them our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us, nay, as Levites to attend us, who, as priests, offer this spiritual sacrifice.

(2.) There are the heavens of heavens above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs abundance of glory redounds to God, for the heavens of heavens are the Lord's (Ps 115:16) and yet they cannot contain him, 1Ki 8:27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands her, by the heavens of heavens, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, as Ps 68:33. We read of the heaven of heavens, whence God sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice, meaning the thunder.

(3.) There are the waters that are above the heavens, the clouds that hang above in the air, where they are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job 38:23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they do water it and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, Praise him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters that depend on the word of him who is above the heavens, for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God has in his hand, wherewith he opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open.

2. Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them: Let them praise the name of the Lord, that is, let us

praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them.

(1.) Because he made them, gave them their powers and assigned them their places: He commanded them (great as they are) out of nothing, and they were created at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spoke with such authority.

(2.) Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posts, their powers and motions (Ps 148:6): He hath established them for ever and ever, that is, to the end of time, a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. He hath made a decree, the law of creation, which shall not pass; it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore needs not be altered, by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered. All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation must praise him still for their continuance. And we have reason to praise him that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels:
praise ye him, all his hosts.
3 Praise ye him, sun and moon:
praise him, all ye stars of light.
4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
and ye waters that be above the heavens.
5 Let them praise the name of the Lord:
for he commanded, and they were created.
6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:
he hath made a decree which shall not pass.
7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
ye dragons, and all deeps:
8 fire, and hail; snow, and vapor;

stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to enquire after those considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it; and I know none more likely than this (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it), that even in this world, dark and as bad as it is, God is praised: Praise you the Lord from the earth, Ps 148:7.

As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth, so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

I. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, Ps 148:7-10. Let the dragons or whales, that sport themselves in the mighty waters (Ps 104:26), dance before the Lord, to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence by his dominion over the leviathan or whale, Ps 41:1, &c.

All deeps, and their inhabitants, praise God--the sea, and the animals there--the bowels of the earth, and the animals there. Out of the depths God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere we meet with a great variety of meteors, which, being a king of new productions (and some of them unaccountable), do in a special manner magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors; lightning is fire, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled which may be so called.

There are watery meteors, hail, and snow, and the vapours of which they are gendered. There are airy meteors, stormy winds; we know not whence they come nor whither they go, whence their mighty force comes nor how it is spent; but this we know, that, be they ever so strong, so stormy, they fulfil God's word, and do that, and no more than that, which he appoints them; and by this

Christ showed himself to have a divine power, that he commanded even the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, show themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it.

Take a view of the surface of the earth (Ps 148:9), and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, mountains and all hills, from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise; there are the exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the fruitful trees of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised, others by their stateliness, as all cedars, those trees of the Lord, Ps 104:16. Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the beasts that run wild, and all cattle that are tame and in the service of man, Ps 148:10.

Nay, even the creeping things have not sunk so low, nor do the flying fowl soar so high, as not to be called upon to praise the Lord. Much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

II. Much more those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason ought to employ them in praising God: Kings of the earth and all people, Ps 148:11,12. 1. God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures, for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord and he makes what use he pleases of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the pars imperans--the part that commands, and the pars subdita--the part that is subject: Kings of the earth and all people. It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to

them; the princes and judges of the earth have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they are blessings, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised.

2. God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God.

(1.) Those of each rank, high and low. The praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded; those on whom God has put honour must honour him with it, and the power they are entrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, put them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God and doing him more service than others. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude.

(2.) Those of each sex, young men and maidens, who are accustomed to make merry together; let them turn their mirth into this channel; let it be sacred, that it may be pure.

(3.) Those of each age. Old men must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; and children too must begin betimes to praise God; even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings this good work is perfected. A good reason is given (Ps 148:13) why all these should praise the name of the Lord, because his name alone is excellent and worthy to be praised; it is a name above every name, no name, no nature, but his, has in it all excellency. His glory is above both the earth and the heaven, and let all inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted far above all blessing and praise.

III. Most of all his own people, who are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, Ps 148:14. Observe,

1 The dignity God has put upon his people, even the children of Israel, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. He exalts their horn, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were, in many respects, honoured above any other nation, for to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, Ro 9:4.

It was their own honour that they were a people near unto God, his Segulla, his peculiar treasure; they were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. This blessing has not come upon the Gentiles, through Christ, for those that were afar off are by his blood made nigh, Eph 2:13. It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man to be brought near to god, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory.

2 The duty God expects from them in consideration of this. Let those whom God honours honour him: Praise you the Lord. Let him be the praise of all his saints, the object of their praise; for he is a praise to them. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, De 10:21. Some by the horn of his people understand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, who is indeed the praise of all his saints and will be so for ever; for it is through him that they are a people near to God.

9 mountains, and all hills;
fruitful trees, and all cedars:
10 beasts, and all cattle;
creeping things, and flying fowl:
11 kings of the earth, and all people;
princes, and all judges of the earth:
12 both young men, and maidens;

old men, and children:
13 let them praise the name of the Lord:
for his name alone is excellent;
his glory is above the earth and heaven.
14 He also exalteth the horn of his people,
the praise of all his saints;
even of the children of Israel,
a people near unto him.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-149

Israel Exhorted to Praise the Lord

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Sing unto the Lord a new song,
and his praise in the congregation of saints.

We have here,

I The calls given to God's Israel to praise. All his works were, in the foregoing psalm, excited to praise him; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then,

1. Who are called upon to praise God. Israel in general, the body of the church (Ps 149:2), the children of Zion particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; those that have the word and ordinances of God near to them, that are not required to travel far to them, are justly expected to do more in praising God than others. All true Christians may call themselves the children of Zion, for in faith and hope we have come unto Mount Zion, Heb 12:22.

The saints must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power, for this is the intention of their sanctification; they are devoted to the glory of God, and renewed by the grace of God, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise.

2. What must be the principle of this praise, and that is holy joy in God: Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory. Our praises of God should flow from a heart filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and our relation to him. Much of the power of godliness in the heart consists in making God our chief joy and solacing ourselves in him; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. We then give honour to God when we take pleasure in him. We must be joyful in glory, that is, in him as our glory, and in the interest we have in him; and let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God.

3. What must be the expressions of this praise. We must by all proper ways show forth the praises of God: Sing to the Lord. We must entertain ourselves, and proclaim his name, by singing praises to him (Ps 149:3), singing aloud (Ps 149:5), for we should sing psalms with all our heart, as those that are not only not ashamed of it, but are enlarged in it. We must sing a new song, newly composed upon every special occasion, sing with new affections, which make the song new, though the words have been used before, and keep them from growing threadbare. Let God be praised in the dance with timbrel and harp, according to the usage of the Old-Testament church very early (Ex 15:20), where we find God praised with timbrels and dances. Those who from this urge the use of music in religious worship must by the same rule introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark, and Jdg 21:21.

But, whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel-ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing; the gospel-canon for psalmody is to sing with the spirit and with the understanding. 4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God, none must be let slip, but particularly,

(1.) We must praise God in public, in the solemn assembly (Ps 149:1), in the congregation of saints. The more the better; it is the more like heaven. Thus God's name must be owned before the world; thus the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principle, end, and design of our coming together in religious assemblies is that we may join together in praising God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this.

(2.) We must praise him in private. Let the saints be so transported with their joy in God as to sing aloud upon their beds, when they awake in the night, full of the praises of God, as David, Ps 119:62. When God's Israel are brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that, with thankfulness to God; much more may true believers, that have entered into God's rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud for joy of that. Upon their sick-beds, their death-beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

II The cause given to God's Israel for praise. Consider,

1. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice inn God, to devote themselves to his honour and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is a noble and excellent being. He gave Israel their being as a people, as a church, made them what they were, so very different from other nations. Let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might show forth his praise, Isa 43:21. Let Israel rejoice in his Makers (so it is in the original); for God said, Let us make man; and in this, some think, is the mystery of the Trinity.

2. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former: if he made them, he is their King; he that gave being no doubt may give law; and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wise and powerful King. Rejoice

greatly, O daughter of Zion! for behold thy king comes, the king Messiah, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion; let all the children of Zion be joyful in him, and go forth to meet him with their hosannas, Zec 9:9.

3. God's delight in them. He is a king that rules by love, and therefore to be praised; for the Lord takes pleasure in his people, in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, and to whose felicity no accession can be made, yet graciously condescends to take pleasure in his people, Ps 147:11.

4. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he has in them, he has prepared for their future glory: He will beautify the meek, the humble, and lowly, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions and show all meekness towards all men. These men vilify and asperse, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach; nay, he will beautify them; they shall appear not only clear, but comely, before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will beautify them with salvation, with temporal salvations (when God works remarkable deliverances for his people those that had been among the pots become as the wings of a dove covered with silver, Ps 68:13), but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day when they shine forth as the sun. In the hopes of this, let them now, in the darkest day, sing a new song.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:
let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
3 Let them praise his name in the dance:
let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.
4 For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people:
he will beautify the meek with salvation.
5 Let the saints be joyful in glory:
let them sing aloud upon their beds.
6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,

and a two-edged sword in their hand;

The Israel of God are here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is both the matter of their praise (let them give to God the glory of those triumphs) and the recompence of their praise; those that are truly thankful to God for their tranquillity shall be blessed with victory.

Or it may be taken as a further expression of their praise (Ps 149:6): let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and then, in a holy zeal for his honour, let them take a two-edged sword in their hand, to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom. Now this may be applied,

1. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who, when they taught Israel the high praises of the Lord, did withal put a two-edged sword in their hand; David did so too, for, as he was the sweet singer of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow (2Sa 1:18), taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord's battles, and avenging Israel's quarrels on those that had oppressed them; then they executed vengeance upon the heathen (the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and others, 2Sa 8:1, &c.) and punishments upon the people, for all the wrong they had done to God's people, Ps 149:7.

Their kings and nobles were taken prisoners (Ps 149:8) and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God; and to him who put it upon them they return it entirely in their hallelujahs. Jehoshaphat's army had at the same time the high praises of God in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand, for they went forth to war singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, 2Ch 20:23. Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews

sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors.

And if it seem strange that the meek should, notwithstanding that character, be thus severe, and upon kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it; it is the judgment written. They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politics that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command; and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying a command of this nature. Thus the kings of the earth that shall be employed in the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon will but execute the judgment written, Re 17:16,17.

But, since now no such special commissions can be produced, this will by no means justify the violence either of subjects against their princes or of princes against their subjects, or both against their neighbours, under pretence of religion; for Christ never intended that his gospel should be propagated by fire and sword or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouth with them we should have an olive-branch of peace in our hands.

2. To Christ's victories by the power of his gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the two-edged sword (Heb 4:12), the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17), which it is not enough to have in our armoury, we must have it in our hand also, as our Master had, when he said, It is written. Now,

(1.) With this two-edged sword the first preachers of the gospel obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness; vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers, and by the consternation and confusion of those that would not repent (Re 6:15);

the strongholds of Satan were cast down (2Ch 10:4,5); great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix; Satan, the god of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him. This is the honour of all Christians, that their holy religion has been so victorious.

(2.) With this two-edged sword believers fight against their own corruptions, and, through the grace of God, subdue and mortify them; the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; self, that once sat king, is bound with chains and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet. This honour have all the saints.

(3.) The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, Jude 1:14,15. Vengeance shall then be executed upon the heathen (Ps 9:17), and punishments, everlasting punishments, upon the people. Kings and nobles, that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government (Ps 2:3), shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall be executed the judgment written, for the secrets of men shall be judged according to the gospel. This honour shall all the saints have, that, as assessors with Christ, they shall judge the world, 1Co 6:2. In the prospect of that let them praise the Lord, and continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to the end of their lives.

7 to execute vengeance upon the heathen,
and punishments upon the people;
8 to bind their kings with chains,
and their nobles with fetters of iron;
9 to execute upon them the judgment written:
this honor have all his saints.
Praise ye the Lord.

Psalms-150

A Call to Praise God with Musical Instruments

1 Praise ye the Lord.
Praise God in his sanctuary:
praise him in the firmament of his power.

We are here, with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, this psalm was primarily intended for the Levites, to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeated inculcating of the call thus intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed and much enlarged in, but which we are naturally backward to and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to, and held to, by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

I. Whence this tribute of praise arises, and out of what part of his dominion it especially issues. It comes,

1. From his sanctuary; praise him there. Let his priests, let his people, that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but there where he does, in a special manner, both manifest his glory and communicate his grace? Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, Eze 37:26. Praise God in his holy ones (so some read it); we must take notice of the image of God as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and when we praise them we must praise God in them.

2. From the firmament of his power. Praise him because of his power and glory which appear in the firmament, its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has upon this earth.

Let those that have their dwelling in the firmament of his power, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some, by the sanctuary, as well as by the firmament of his power, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

II. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due, upon many accounts, particularly, 1 The works of his power (Ps 150:2): Praise him for his mighty acts; for his mightinesses (so the word is), for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace, what he has done in the creation, government, and redemption of the world, for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular.

2 The glory and majesty of his being: Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificence (so Dr. Hammond reads it); not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite, but, since he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men. Deus non patitur hyperbolum--We cannot speak hyperbolically of God; all the danger is of saying too little and therefore, when we have done our utmost, we must own that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to, his excellent greatness.

III. In what manner this tribute must be paid, with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple-service, Ps 150:3-5. It is well that we are not concerned to enquire what sort of instruments these were; it is enough that they were well known then. Our concern is to know,

1. That hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God and how desirous he was that this good work might go on.

2. That in serving God we should spare no cost nor pains.

3. That the best music in God's ears is devout and pious affections, non musica chordula, sed cor--not a melodious string, but a melodious heart. Praise God with a strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by a universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory.

4. That, various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help one another. The New-Testament concert, instead of this, is with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, Ro 15:6.

IV. Who must pay this tribute (Ps 150:6): Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord. He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary and were employed in the temple-service; but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and in every place, as acceptably as at Jerusalem, this incense should be offered, Mal 1:11.

Some think that in every thing that has breath here we must include the inferior creatures (as Ge 7:22), all in whose nostrils was the breath of life. They praise God according to their capacity. The singing of birds is a sort

of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, "We would praise God if we could; do you do it for us." John in vision heard a song of praise from every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, Re 5:13. Others think that only the children of men are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner breathed the breath of life, and they have become living souls, Ge 2:7.

Now that the gospel is ordered to be preached to every creature, to every human creature, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit, for, but to spend it in praising God; and how can we spend it better? Prayers are called our breathings, La 3:56. Let every one that breathes towards God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the air we breathe in, which we could not live without. Having our breath in our nostrils, let us consider that it is still going forth, and will shortly go and not return. Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord, and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and, when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state to breathe God's praises in a freer better air.

The first three of the five books of psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with Amen and Amen, the fourth with Amen, Hallelujah, but the last, and in it the whole book, concludes with only Hallelujah, because the last six psalms are wholly taken up in praising God and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God, and that the musical instruments here said to be used are no more to be understood literally than the gold, and

pearls, and precious stones, which are said to adorn the New Jerusalem, Re 21:18,19.

But, as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate that the praises the saints offer there are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness--hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing whom we have been acquainted with on earth, but who have gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth as those do it that are in heaven. And let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. Hallelujah is the word there (Re 19:1,3); let us echo to it now, as those that hope to join in it shortly. Hallelujah, praise you the Lord.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts:
praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
praise him with the psaltery and harp.
4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord.

The Proverbs
[Proverbs]

Proverbs-1

The Value of Proverbs

1 The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:

We have here an introduction to this book, which some think was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who, in the beginning of his book, proposes his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business, and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

I. Who wrote these wise sayings, Pr 1:1. They are the proverbs of Solomon.

1. His name signifies peaceable, and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered to it; both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion; for is any afflicted? let him pray. Solomon, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction; for when the churches had rest they were edified. In times of peace we should learn ourselves, and teach others, that which in troublous times both they and we must practise.

2. He was the son of David; it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he fared the better for it, 1Ki 11:12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him (Ps 72:1), the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The generation of the upright are sometimes thus blessed, that they are made blessings, eminent blessings, in their day. Christ is often called the Son of David, and Solomon was a type of him in this, as in other things, that he opened his mouth in parables or proverbs.

3. He was king of Israel--a king, and yet it was no disparagement to him to be an instructor of the ignorant, and a teacher of babes--king of Israel, that people among whom God was known and his name was great; among them he learned wisdom, and to them he communicated it. All the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which excelled all men's (1Ki 4:30,10:24); it was an honour to Israel that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle. Solomon was famous for apophthegms; every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying. His servants who attended him, and heard his wisdom, had, among them, collected 3000 proverbs of his which they wrote in their day-books; but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to nearly a thousand.

In these he was divinely inspired. Some think that out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon were compiled, in which are many excellent sayings, and of great use; but, take altogether, they are far short of this book. The Roman emperors had each of them his symbol or motto, as many now have with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the product of that extraordinary wisdom which God had endued him with.

II. For what end they were written (Pr 1:2-4), not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates and study them closely. This book will help us,

1. To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them, that we may know wisdom and instruction, that wisdom which is got by instruction, by divine revelation, may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves and to give instruction to others.

2. To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil--to perceive the words of understanding, to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves and our own use, that we may discern things that differ and not be imposed upon, and may approve things that are excellent and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, Php 1:10.

3. To order our conversation aright in every things, Pr 1:3. This book will give, that we may receive, the instruction of wisdom, that knowledge which will guide our practice in justice, judgment, and equity (Pr 1:3), which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God's, in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them.

Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, who are universally conscientious; and the design of the scripture is to teach us that wisdom, justice in the duties of the first table, judgment in those of the second table, and equity (that is sincerity) in both; so some distinguish them.

2 To know wisdom and instruction;
to perceive the words of understanding;
3 to receive the instruction of wisdom,
justice, and judgment, and equity;
4 to give subtilty to the simple,
to the young man knowledge and discretion.

I. For whose use they were written, Pr 1:4. They are of use to all, but are designed especially,

1. For the simple, to give subtlety to them. The instructions here given are plain and easy, and level to the meanest capacity, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein; and those are likely to receive benefit by them who are sensible of their own ignorance and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive these instructions in their light and power, though

they be simple, will hereby be made subtle, graciously crafty to know the sin they should avoid and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. He that is harmless as the dove by observing Solomon's rules may become wise as the serpent; and he that has been sinfully foolish when he begins to govern himself by the word of God becomes graciously wise.

2. For young people, to give them knowledge and discretion. Youth is the learning age, catches at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received; it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well, nor can it receive a better tincture than from Solomon's proverbs. Youth is rash, and heady, and inconsiderate; man is born like the wild ass's colt, and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints and managed by the rules we find here. And, if young people will but take heed to their ways according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

II. What good use may be made of them, Pr 1:5,6. Those who are young and simple may by them be made wise, and are not excluded from Solomon's school, as they were from Plato's. But is it only for such? No; here is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. This book will not only make the foolish and bad wise and good, but the wise and good wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight those instructions, and not be the better for them, yet the wise man will hear. Wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market-place. Note, Even wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. A wise man is sensible of his own defects (Plurima ignoro, sed ignorantiam meam non ignoro--I am ignorant of many things, but not of my own ignorance), and therefore is still pressing forward, that he may increase in learning, may know more and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use

of it. As long as we live we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbin, Qui non auget scientiam, amittit de ea--If our stock of knowledge by not increasing, it is wasting; and those that would increase in learning must study the scriptures; these perfect the man of God. A wise man, by increasing in learning, is not only profitable to himself, but to others also,

1. As a counsellor. A man of understanding in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another and with his own observations, shall by degrees attain unto wise counsels; he stands fair for preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and entrusted with the management of public affairs; he shall come to sit at the helm, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those whom God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is. It is more dignity indeed to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom. Job 29:15, I was eyes to the blind.

2. As an interpreter (Pr 1:6) --to understand a proverb. Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles and resolving hard questions, which was of old the celebrated entertainment of the eastern princes, witness the solutions he gave to the enquiries with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now here he undertakes to furnish his readers with that talent, as far as would be serviceable to the best purposes. "They shall understand a proverb, even the interpretation, without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wise saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it." The words of the wise are sometimes dark sayings. In St. Paul's epistles there is that which is hard to be understood; but to those who, being well-versed in the scriptures, know how to compare spiritual things with spiritual, they will be easy and safe; so that, if you ask them, Have you understood all these things? they may answer, Yea, Lord. Note, It is a credit to religion when men of honesty are men of sense; all good people therefore should aim to be intelligent, and run to and

fro, take pains in the use of means, that their knowledge may be increased.

5 A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning;
and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:
6 to understand a proverb, and the interpretation;
the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.
7 The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Solomon, having undertaken to teach a young man knowledge and discretion, here lays down two general rules to be observed in order thereunto, and those are, to fear God and honour his parents, which two fundamental laws of morality Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, but the former of them in a wretchedly corrupted state. Primum, deos immortales cole, parentesque honora--First worship the immortal gods, and honour your parents. To make young people such as they should be,

I. Let them have regard to God as their supreme.

1. He lays down this truth, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Pr 1:7); it is the principal part of knowledge (so the margin); it is the head of knowledge; that is,

(1.) Of all things that are to be known this is most evident, that God is to be feared, to be reverenced, served, and worshipped; this is so the beginning of knowledge that those know nothing who do not know this.

(2.) In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. If any man will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, Joh 7:17.

(3.) As all our knowledge must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know

enough who know how to fear God, who are careful in every thing to please him and fearful of offending him in any thing; this is the Alpha and Omega of knowledge.

2. To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes, Fools (atheists, who have no regard to God) despise wisdom and instruction; having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath and obtain his favour. Those who say to the Almighty, Depart from us, who are so far from fearing him that they set him at defiance, can excite no surprise if they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools who do not fear God and value the scriptures; and though they may pretend to be admirers of wit they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

II. Let them have regard to their parents as their superiors (Pr 1:8,9): My son, hear the instruction of thy father. He means, not only that he would have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, nor only that he would have his pupils, and those who came to him to be taught, to look upon him as their father and attend to his precepts with the disposition of children, but that he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

1. He takes it for granted that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and, with all the authority they have, give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; we must draw them with the cords of a man, and when we tell them what they must do we must tell them why. But they are corrupt and wilful, and therefore with the instruction there is need of a law. Abraham will not only catechize, but command, his household. Both the father and the mother must do all they can for the good education of their children, and all little enough.

2. He charges children both to receive and to retain the good lessons and laws their parents give them.

(1.) To receive them with readiness: "Hear the instruction of thy father; hear it and heed it; hear it and bid it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it."

(2.) To retain them with resolution: "Forsake not their law; think not that when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors, thou mayest live at large; no, the law of thy mother was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken; thou wast trained up in the way in which thou shouldst go, and therefore, when thou art old, thou must not depart from it." Some observe that whereas the Gentile ethics, and the laws of the Persians and Romans, provided only that children should pay respect to their father, the divine law secures the honour of the mother also.

3. He recommends this as that which is very graceful and will put an honour upon us: "The instructions and laws of thy parents, carefully observed and lived up to, shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head (Pr 1:9), such an ornament as is, in the sight of God, of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear gold chains about their necks." Let divine truths and commands be to us a coronet, or a collar of SS, which are badges of first-rate honours; let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

Wisdom's Warning

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and
forsake not the law of thy mother:
9 for they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, and
chains about thy neck.

10 My son, if sinners entice thee,
consent thou not.

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out, and keeping in, the paths of wisdom, and that is to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's psalms begin with this caution, and so do Solomon's proverbs; for nothing is more destructive, both to a lively devotion and to a regular conversation (Pr 1:10): "My son, whom I love, and have a tender concern for, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." This is good advice for parents to give their children when they send them abroad into the world; it is the same that St. Peter gave to his new converts, (Ac 2:40), Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Observe,

1. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer: they will entice. Sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech; with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake if they think that by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, and to be bound, as it were, in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves; for they will have so much the more to answer for.

2. How cautious young people should be that they be not seduced by them: "Consent thou not; and then, though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do or would have thee to do; have no fellowship with them." To enforce this caution,

I. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements, and the arts of wheedling which they have for the beguiling of unstable souls. He specifies highwaymen, who do what they can to draw others into their gang, Pr 1:11-14. See here what they would have the young man to do: "Come with us (Pr 1:11); let us have thy company." At first they pretend to ask no more; but the courtship rises higher (Pr 1:14): "Cast in thy lot among us; come in partner with us, join thy force to ours, and let us resolve to live and die together:

thou shalt fare as we fare; and let us all have one purse, that what we get together we may spend merrily together," for that is it they aim at. Two unreasonable insatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith entice their pray into the snare:--

1. Their cruelty. They thirst after blood, and hate those that are innocent and never gave them any provocation, because by their honesty and industry they shame and condemn them: "Let us therefore lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them; they are conscious to themselves of no crime and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed; therefore we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, O how sweet it will be to swallow them up alive!" Pr 1:12. These bloody men would do this as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb. If it be objected, "The remains of the murdered will betray the murderers;" they answer, "No danger of that; we will swallow them whole as those that are buried." Who could imagine that human nature should degenerate so far that it should ever be a pleasure to one man to destroy another!

2. Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it (Pr 1:13): "We shall find all precious substance by following this trade. What though we venture our necks by it? we shall fill our houses with spoil." See here,

(1.) The idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it precious substance; whereas it is neither substance nor precious; it is a shadow; it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, Ps 62:10. It is as that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it is common, yet, in their account, it is precious, and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls, in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands that they over-value the wealth of this world and look on it as precious substance.

(2.) The abundance of it which they promise themselves: We shall fill our houses with it. Those who trade with sin promise themselves mighty bargains, and that it will turn to a vast

account (All this will I give thee, says the tempter); but they only dream that they eat; the housefuls dwindle into scarcely a handful, like the grass on the house-tops.

II. He shows the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them (Pr 1:15): "My son, walk not thou in the way with them; do not associate with them; get, and keep, as far off from them as thou canst; refrain thy foot from their path; do not take example by them, not do as they do." Such is the corruption of our nature that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin, so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider,

1. How pernicious their way is in its own nature (Pr 1:16): Their feet run to evil, to that which is displeasing to God and hurtful to mankind, for they make haste to shed blood. Note, The way of sin is down-hill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but, the longer they continue in it, the faster they run, and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough and were resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely (Let us lay wait for blood, Pr 1:11), but thou wilt find they are all in haste, so much has Satan filled their hearts.

2. How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein,

(1.) They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain; she is decoyed into it by the bait, and will not take the warning which her own eyes gave her, Pr 1:17. But we think ourselves of more value than many sparrows, and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. God has made us wiser than the fowls of heaven (Job 35:11), and shall we then be as stupid as they?

(2.) They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have; for the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare in the sight of the bird, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they may see hell before them; their watchmen tell them they shall surely die, but it is to no purpose; they rush into sin, and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle. For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, Pr 1:18,19. They lay wait, and lurk privily, for the blood and lives of others, but it will prove, contrary to their intention, to be for their own blood, their own lives; they will come, at length, to a shameful end; and, if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a divine Nemesis that pursues them. Vengeance suffers them not to live.

Their greediness of gain hurries them upon those practices which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. They have little reason to be proud of their property in that which takes away the life of the owners and then passes to other masters; and what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life? For then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon specifies only the temptation to rob on the highway, yet he intends hereby to warn us against all other evils which sinners entice men to. Such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean; they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin both here and for ever; and therefore consent not to them.

11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let
us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:
12 let us swallow them up alive as the grave;
and whole, as those that go down into the pit:
13 we shall find all precious substance, we
shall fill our houses with spoil:
14 cast in thy lot among us;

let us all have one purse:
15 my son, walk not thou in the way with them;
refrain thy foot from their path:
16 for their feet run to evil,
and make haste to shed blood.
17 Surely in vain the net is spread
in the sight of any bird.
18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood;
they lurk privily for their *own* lives.
19 So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;
which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.
20 Wisdom crieth without;
she uttereth her voice in the streets:

Solomon, having shown how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here shows how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of. Observe,

I. By whom God calls to us--by wisdom. It is wisdom that crieth without. The word is plural--wisdoms, for, as there is infinite wisdom in God, so there is the manifold wisdom of God, Eph 3:10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and, as in every will, so in every word, of God there is a counsel.

1. Human understanding is wisdom, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, Job 38:36. By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord; and, wherever men go, they may hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way; and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still small voice, but sometimes it cries.

2. Civil government is wisdom; it is God's ordinance; magistrates are his vicegerents. God by David had said to the fools, Deal not foolishly, Ps 75:4. In the opening of the gates, and in the places of concourse, where courts were kept, the

judges, the wisdom of the nation, called to wicked people, in God's name, to repent and reform.

3. Divine revelation is wisdom; all its dictates, all its laws, are wise as wisdom itself. God does, by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priests' lips which keep knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of this word, declare his mind to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judicature by the criers. God, in his word, not only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. Come, now, and let us reason together, Isa 1:18.

4. Christ himself is Wisdom, is Wisdoms, for in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and he is the centre of all divine revelation, not only the essential Wisdom, but the eternal Word, by whom God speaks to us and to whom he has committed all judgment; he it is therefore who here both pleads with sinners and passes sentence on them. He calls himself Wisdom, Lu 7:35.

II. How he calls to us, and in what manner.

1. Very publicly, that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said and all are concerned to heed it. The rules of wisdom are published without in the streets, not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but in the chief places of concourse, among the common people that pass and repass in the opening of the gates and in the city. It is comfortable casting the net of the gospel where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that then some will be enclosed. This was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, who taught openly in the temple, in crowds of people, and in secret said nothing (Joh 18:20), and charged his ministers to proclaim his gospel on the housetop, Mt 10:27. God says (Isa 45:19), I have not spoken in secret. There is no speech or language where Wisdom's voice is not heard. Truth seeks not corners, nor is virtue ashamed of itself.

2. Very pathetically; she cries, and again she cries, as one in earnest. Jesus stood and cried. She utters her voice, she utters her words with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

21 she crieth in the chief place of concourse,
in the openings of the gates:
in the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,
22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?
and the scorners delight in their scorning,
and fools hate knowledge?

What the call of God and Christ is.

1. He reproves sinners for their folly and their obstinately persisting in it, Pr 1:22. Observe,

(1.) Who they are that Wisdom here reproves and expostulates with. In general, they are such as are simple, and therefore might justly be despised, such as love simplicity, and therefore might justly be despaired of; but we must use the means even with those that we have but little hopes of, because we know not what divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to:--

[1.] Simple ones that love simplicity. Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad who love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and are in their element when they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceivings and flattering themselves in their wickedness.

[2.] Scorners that delight in scorning--proud people that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them, jovial people that banter all mankind, and make a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant, the worst of sinners, that scorn to submit to the truths and laws of Christ, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and

take a pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious.

[3.] Fools that hate knowledge. None but fools hate knowledge. Those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And those are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed and reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness.

(2.) How the reproof is expressed: "How long will you do so?" This implies that the God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners and not their ruin, that he is much displeased with their obstinacy and dilatoriness, that he waits to be gracious, and is willing to reason the case with them.

2. He invites them to repent and become wise, Pr 1:23. And here,

(1.) The precept is plain: Turn you at my reproof. We do not make a right use of the reproofs that are given us for that which is evil if we do not turn from it to that which is good; for for this end the reproof was given. Turn, that is, return to your right mind, turn to God, turn to your duty, turn and live.

(2.) The promises are very encouraging. Those that love simplicity find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way; they cannot turn by any power of their own. To this God answers, "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; set yourselves to do what you can, and the grace of God shall set in with you, and work in you both to will and to do that good which, without that grace, you could not do." Help thyself, and God will help thee; stretch forth thy withered hand, and Christ will strengthen and heal it.

[1.] The author of this grace is the Spirit, and that is promised: I will pour out my Spirit unto you, as oil, as water; you shall have the Spirit in abundance, rivers of living water, Joh 7:38.

Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him.

[2.] The means of this grace is the word, which, if we take it aright, will turn us; it is therefore promised, "I will make known my words unto you, not only speak them to you, but make them known, give you to understand them." Note, Special grace is necessary to a sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any that honestly seek it and submit to it.

3. He reads the doom of those that continue obstinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, Pr 1:24-32. Wisdom, having called sinners to return, pauses awhile, to see what effect the call has, hearkens and hears; but they speak not aright (Jer 8:6), and therefore she goes on to tell them what will be in the end hereof.

(1.) The crime is recited and it is highly provoking. See what it is for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is, in short, rejecting Christ and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the law of God and from the dominion of the law of sin. [1.] Christ called to them, to warn them of their danger; he stretched out his hand to offer them mercy, nay, to help them out of their miserable condition, stretched out his hand for them to take hold of, but they refused and no man regarded; some were careless and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to them; others were wilful, and, though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, yet they gave him a flat denial, they refused, Pr 1:24. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God stretched out his hand in mercies bestowed upon them, and, when those would not work upon them, in corrections, but all were in vain; they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth.

[2.] Christ reproved and counselled them, not only reproved them for what they did amiss, but counselled them to do better (those are reproofs of instruction and evidences of love and good-will), but they set at nought all his counsel as not worth heeding, and would none of his reproof, as if it were below them to be reproved by him and as if they had never done any thing that deserved reproof, Pr 1:25. This is repeated (Pr 1:30): "They would none of my counsel, but rejected it with disdain; they called reproofs reproaches, and took them as an insult (Jer 6:10); nay, they despised all my reproof, as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of." Note, Those are marked for ruin that are deaf to reproof and good counsel.

[3.] They were exhorted to submit to the government of right reason and religion, but they rebelled against both. First, Reason should not rule them, for they hated knowledge (Pr 1:29), hated the light of divine truth because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, Joh 3:20. They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. Secondly, Religion could not rule them, for they did not choose the fear of the Lord, but chose to walk in the way of their heart and in the sight of their eyes. They were pressed to set God always before them, but they chose rather to cast him and his fear behind their backs. Note, Those who do not choose the fear of the Lord show that they have no knowledge.

(2.) The sentence is pronounced, and it is certainly ruining. Those that will not submit to God's government will certainly perish under his wrath and curse, and the gospel itself will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God's mercy when it was offered them, and therefore justly fall as victims to his justice, Pr 29:1 The threatenings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day and the eternal misery of the impenitent, of which yet there are some earnests in present judgments.

[1.] Now sinners are in prosperity and secure; they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But, First, Their calamity will come (Pr 1:26); sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall apprehend to be the very arrests and harbingers of

death; other troubles will come, in mind, in estate, which will convince them of their folly in setting God at a distance. Secondly, Their calamity will put them into a great fright. Fear seizes them, and they apprehend that bad will be worse. When public judgments are abroad the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surprises the hypocrites. Death is the king of terrors to them (Job 15:21,18:11, &c.); this fear will be their continual torment. Thirdly, According to their fright will it be to them.

Their fear shall come (the thing they were afraid of shall befal them); it shall come as desolation, as a mighty deluge bearing down all before it; it shall be their destruction, their total and final destruction; and it shall come as a whirlwind, which suddenly and forcibly drives away all the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. Fourthly, Their fright will then be turned into despair: Distress and anguish shall come upon them, for, having fallen into the pit they were afraid of, they shall see no way to escape, Pr 1:27. Saul cries out (2Sa 1:9), Anguish has come upon me; and in hell there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for anguish, tribulation and anguish to the soul of the sinner, the fruit of the indignation and wrath of the righteous God, Ro 2:8,9.

[2.] Now God pities their folly, but he will then laugh at their calamity (Pr 1:26): "I also will laugh at your distress, even as you laughed at my counsel." Those that ridicule religion will thereby but make themselves ridiculous before all the world. The righteous will laugh at them (Ps 52:6), for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be for ever shut out of God's compassions; they have so long sinned against mercy that they have now quite sinned it away. His eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity. Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruin, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should turn and live. Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries.

[3.] Now God is ready to hear their prayers and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it; but then the

door will be shut, and they shall cry in vain (Pr 1:28): "Then shall they call upon me when it is too late, Lord, Lord, open to us. They would then gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject and make light of; but I will not answer, because, when I called, they would not answer;" all the answer then will be, Depart from me, I know you not. This has been the case of some even in this life, as of Saul, whom God answered not by Urim or prophets; but, ordinarily, while there is life there is room for prayer and hope of speeding, and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will seek him early (that is, earnestly), but in vain; they shall not find him, because they sought him not when he might be found, Isa 55:6. The rich man in hell begged, but was denied.

[4.] Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices; but then they will have enough of them (Pr 1:31), according to the proverb, Let men drink as they brew; they shall eat the fruit of their own way; their wages shall be according to their work, and, as was their choice, so shall their doom be, Ga 6:7,8. Note, First, There is a natural tendency in sin to destruction, Jam 1:15. Sinners are certainly miserable if they do but eat the fruit of their own way. Secondly, Those that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is their own device; let them make their boast of it. God chooses their delusions, Isa 66:4.

[5.] Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity; but then that shall help to aggravate their ruin, Pr 1:32. First, They are now proud that they can turn away from God and get clear of the restraints of religion; but that very thing shall slay them, the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. Secondly, They are now proud of their own security and sensuality; but the ease of the simple (so the margin reads it) shall slay them; the more secure they are the more certain and the more dreadful will their destruction be, and the prosperity of fools shall help to destroy them, by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to the world, furnishing them with fuel for their lusts, and hardening their hearts in their evil ways.

4. He concludes with an assurance of safety and happiness to all those that submit to the instructions of wisdom (Pr 1:33): "Whoso hearkeneth unto me, and will be ruled by me, he shall,"

(1.) "Be safe; he shall dwell under the special protection of Heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt."

(2.) "He shall be easy, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of it." Though the earth be removed, yet shall not they fear. Would we be safe from evil, and quiet from the fear of it? Let religion always rule us and the word of God be our counsellor. That is the way to dwell safely in this world, and to be quiet from the fear of evil in the other world.

23 Turn you at my reproof:
behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.
24 Because I have called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
25 but ye have set at nought all my counsel,
and would none of my reproof:
26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your fear cometh;
27 when your fear cometh as desolation,
and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;
when distress and anguish cometh upon you.
28 Then shall they call upon me,
but I will not answer;
they shall seek me early,
but they shall not find me:
29 for that they hated knowledge,
and did not choose the fear of the Lord:
30 they would none of my counsel:
they despised all my reproof.
31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
and be filled with their own devices.

32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them,
and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.
33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely,
and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Proverbs-2

The Reward of Seeking Wisdom

1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words,
and hide my commandments with thee;

Job had asked, long before this, Where shall wisdom be found? Whence cometh wisdom? (Job 28:12,20) and he had given this general answer (Job 28:23), God knoweth the place of it; but Solomon here goes further, and tells us both where we may find it and how we may get it. We are here told,

I. What means we must use that we may obtain wisdom.

1. We must closely attend to the word of God, for that is the word of wisdom, which is able to make us wise unto salvation, Pr 2:1,2.

(1.) We must be convinced that the words of God are the fountain and standard of wisdom and understanding, and that we need not desire to be wiser than they will make us. We must incline our ear and apply our hearts to them, as to wisdom or understanding itself. Many wise things may be found in human compositions, but divine revelation, and true religion built upon it, are all wisdom.

(2.) We must, accordingly, receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and bid it welcome, even the commandments as well as the promises, without murmuring or disputing. Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.

(3.) We must hide them with us, as we do our treasures, which we are afraid of being robbed of. We must not only receive,

but retain, the word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, that it may be always ready to us.

(4.) We must incline our ear to them; we must lay hold on all opportunities of hearing the word of God, and listen to it with attention and seriousness, as those that are afraid of letting it slip. (5.) We must apply our hearts to them, else inclining the ear to them will stand us in no stead.

2. We must be much in prayer, Pr 2:3. We must cry after knowledge, as one that is ready to perish for hunger begs hard for bread. Faint desires will not prevail; we must be importunate, as those that know the worth of knowledge and our own want of it. We must cry, as new-born babes, after the sincere milk of the word. 1Pe 2:2. We must lift our voice for understanding lift it up to heaven; thence these good and perfect gifts must be expected, Jam 1:17,Job 38:34. We must give our voice to understanding (so the word is), speak for it, vote for it, submit the tongue to the command of wisdom. We must consecrate our voice to it; having applied our heart to it, we must employ our voice in seeking for it. Solomon could write probatum est--a tried remedy, upon this method; he prayed for wisdom and so obtained it.

3. We must be willing to take pains (Pr 2:4); we must seek it as silver, preferring it far before all the wealth of this world, and labouring in search of it as those who dig in the mines, who undergo great toil and run great hazards, with indefatigable industry and invincible constancy and resolution, in pursuit of the ore; or as those who will be rich rise up early, and sit up late, and turn every stone to get money and fill their treasures. Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge, following on to know the Lord.

II. What success we may hope for in the use of these means. Our labour shall not be in vain; for,

1. We shall know how to maintain our acquaintance and communion with God: "Thou shalt understand the fear of the

Lord (Pr 2:5), that is, thou shalt know how to worship him aright, shalt be led into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance, and be enabled to answer the end of its institution." Thou shalt find the knowledge of God, which is necessary to our fearing him aright. It concerns us to understand how much it is our interest to know God, and to evidence it by agreeable affections towards him and adorations of him.

2. We shall know how to conduct ourselves aright towards all men (Pr 2:9): "Thou shalt understand, by the word of God, righteousness, and judgment, and equity, shalt learn those principles of justice, and charity, and fair dealing, which shall guide and govern thee in the whole course of thy conversation, shall make thee fit for every relation, every business, and faithful to every trust. It shall give thee not only a right notion of justice, but a disposition to practise it, and to render to all their due; for those that do not do justly do not rightly understand it." This will lead them in every good path, for the scripture will make the man of God perfect. Note, Those have the best knowledge who know their duty, Ps 111:10.

III. What ground we have to hope for this success in our pursuits of wisdom; we must take our encouragement herein from God only, Pr 2:6-8.

1. God has wisdom to bestow, Pr 2:6. The Lord not only is wise himself, but he gives wisdom, and that is more than the wisest men in the world can do, for it is God's prerogative to open the understanding. All the wisdom that is in any creature is his gift, his free gift, and he gives it liberally (Jam 1:5), has given it to many, and is still giving it; to him therefore let us apply for it.

2. He has blessed the world with a revelation of his will. Out of his mouth, by the law and the prophets, by the written word and by his ministers, both which are his mouth to the children of men, come knowledge and understanding, such a discovery of truth and good as, if we admit and receive the impressions of it, will make us truly knowing and intelligent. It is both an engagement and encouragement to search after wisdom that

we have the scriptures to search, in which we may find it if we seek it diligently.

3. He has particularly provided that good men, who are sincerely disposed to do his will, shall have that knowledge and that understanding which are necessary for them, Joh 7:17. Let them seek wisdom, and they shall find it; let them ask, and it shall be given them, Pr 2:7,8. Observe here,

(1.) Who those are that are thus favoured. They are the righteous, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in righteousness, and those who walk uprightly, who are honest in their dealings both with God and man and make conscience of doing their duty as far as they know it. They are his saints, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service.

(2.) What it is that is provided for them.

[1.] Instruction. The means of wisdom are given to all, but wisdom itself, sound wisdom, is laid up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their head, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who is made of God to us wisdom. The same that is the Spirit of revelation in the word is a Spirit of wisdom in the souls of those that are sanctified, that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; and it is sound wisdom, its foundations firm, its principles solid, and its products of lasting advantage.

[2.] Satisfaction. Some read it, He lays up substance for the righteous, not only substantial knowledge, but substantial happiness and comfort, Pr 8:21. Riches are things that are not, and those that have them only fancy themselves happy; but what is laid up in the promises and in heaven for the righteous will make them truly, thoroughly, and eternally happy.

[3.] Protection. Even those who walk uprightly may be brought into danger for the trial of their faith, but God is, and will be, a buckler to them, so that nothing that happens to them shall do them any real hurt, or possess them with any terrific

apprehensions; they are safe, and they shall think themselves so. Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield. It is their way, the paths of judgment in which they walk, that the Lord knows, and owns, and takes care of.

[4.] Grace to persevere to the end. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to keep the paths of judgment, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for he preserves the way of his saints, that it be not perverted, and so preserves them in it safe and blameless to his heavenly kingdom. The assurances God has given us of his grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavours in doing our duty. Work out your salvation, for God works in you.

2 so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,
and apply thine heart to understanding;
3 yea, if thou criest after knowledge,
and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
4 if thou seekest her as silver,
and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures;
5 then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord,
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For the Lord giveth wisdom:
out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding.
7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous:
he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.
8 He keepeth the paths of judgment,
and preserveth the way of his saints.
9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness,
and judgment, and equity;
yea, every good path.
10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart,
and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

The scope of these verses is to show,

1. What great advantage true wisdom will be of to us; it will keep us from the paths of sin, which lead to ruin, and will

therein do us a greater kindness than if it enriched us with all the wealth of the world.

2. What good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us; we must use it for our own guidance in the paths of virtue, and for the arming of us against temptations of every kind. 3. By what rules we may try ourselves whether we have this wisdom or no. This tree will be known by its fruits; if we be truly wise, it will appear by our care to avoid all evil company and evil practices.

This wisdom will be of use to us,

I. For our preservation from evil, from the evil of sin, and, consequently, from the evil of trouble that attends it.

1. In general (Pr 2:10,11), "When wisdom has entire possession of thee, it will keep thee." And when has it an entire possession of us?

(1.) When it has dominion over us. When it not only fills the head with notions, but enters into the heart and has a commanding power and influence upon that,--when it is upon the throne there, and gives law to the affections and passions,--when it enters into the heart as the leaven into the dough, to diffuse its relish there, and to change it into its own image--then it is likely to do us good.

(2.) When we have delight in it, when knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul: "When thou beginnest to relish it as the most agreeable entertainment, and art subject to its rules, of choice, and with satisfaction,--when thou callest the practice of virtue, not a slavery and a task, but liberty and pleasure, and a life of serious godliness the most comfortable life a man can live in this world,--then thou wilt find the benefit of it." Though its restraints should be in some respects unpleasant to the body, yet even those must be pleasant to the soul. When it has come to this, with us, discretion shall preserve us and keep us. God keeps the way of his saints (Pr 2:8), by giving them

discretion to keep out of harm's way, to keep themselves that the wicked one touch them not. Note, A principle of grace reigning in the heart will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions within and temptations without, Ec 9:16,18.

2. More particularly, wisdom will preserve us,

(1.) From men of corrupt principles, atheistical profane men, who make it their business to debauch young men's judgments, and instil into their minds prejudices against religion and arguments for vice: "It will deliver thee from the way of the evil man (Pr 2:12), and a blessed deliverance it will be, as from the very jaws of death, from the way in which he walks, and in which he would persuade thee to walk." The enemy is spoken of as one (Pr 2:12), an evil man, but afterwards as many (Pr 2:13); there is a club, a gang of them, that are in confederacy against religion, and join hand in hand for the support of the devil's kingdom and the interests of it.

[1.] They have a spirit of contradiction to that which is good: They speak froward things; they say all they can against religion, both to show their own enmity to it and to dissuade others from it. They are advocates for Satan; they plead for Baal, and pervert the right ways of the Lord. How peevishly will profane wits argue for sin, and with what frowardness will they carp at the word of God! Wisdom will keep us either from conversing with such men or at least from being ensnared by them.

[2.] They are themselves apostates from that which is good, and such are commonly the most malicious and dangerous enemies religion has, witness Julian (Pr 2:13): They leave the paths of uprightness, which they were trained up in and had set out in, shake off the influences of their education, and break off the thread of their hopeful beginnings, to walk in the ways of darkness, in those wicked ways which hate the light, in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error, and which lead men into utter darkness. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe; what fools are those

that leave the plain, pleasant, lightsome paths of uprightness, to walk in those ways! Ps 82:5,1Jo 2:11.

[3.] They take a pleasure in sin, both in committing it themselves and in seeing others commit it (Pr 2:14): They rejoice in an opportunity to do evil, and in the accomplishment and success of any wicked project. It is sport to fools to do mischief; nor is any sight more grateful to them than to see the frowardness of the wicked, to see those that are hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways. They are pleased if they can discern that the devil's kingdom gets ground (see Ro 1:32), such a height of impiety have they arrived at.

[4.] They are resolute in sin (Pr 2:15): Their ways are crooked, a great many windings and turnings to escape the pursuit of their convictions and break the force of them; some sly excuse, some subtle evasion or other, their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness; and in the crooked mazes of that labyrinth they secure themselves from the arrests of God's word and their own consciences; for they are froward in their paths, that is, they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

(2.) From women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickednesses, the lusts of the unsanctified mind; these lead to fleshly lusts, which defile the body, that living temple, but withal war against the soul. The adulteress is here called the strange woman, because no man that has any wisdom or goodness in him will have any acquaintance with her; she is to be shunned by every Israelite as if she were a heathen, and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth. A strange woman indeed! utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour. It is a great mercy to be delivered from the allurements of the adulteress, considering,

[1.] How false she is. Who will have any dealings with those that are made up of treachery? She is a strange woman; for, First, She is false to him whom she entices. She speaks fair,

tells him how much she admires him above any man, and what a kindness she has for him; but she flatters with her words; she has no true affection for him, nor any desire of his welfare, any more than Delilah had of Samson's. All she designs is to pick his pocket and gratify a base lust of her own. Secondly, She is false to her husband, and violates the sacred obligation she lies under to him. He was the guide of her youth; by marrying him she chose him to be so, and submitted herself to his guidance, with a promise to attend him only, and forsake all others. But she has forsaken him, and therefore it cannot be thought that she should be faithful to any one else; and whoever entertains her is partaker with her in her falsehood. Thirdly, She is false to God himself: She forgets the covenant of her God, the marriage-covenant (Pr 2:17), to which God is not only a witness, but a party, for, he having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to him to be true to each other. It is not her husband only that she sins against, but her God, who will judge whoremongers and adulterers because they despise the oath and break the covenant, Eze 17:18,Mal 2:14.

[2.] How fatal it will prove to those that fall in league with her, Pr 2:18,19. Let the sufferings of others be our warnings. Take heed of the sin of whoredom; for, First, The ruin of those who are guilty of it is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent. It is a sin that has a direct tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and the exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God and the sword of his justice. Those that live in forbidden pleasures are dead while they live. Let discretion preserve every man, not only from the evil woman, but from the evil house, for the house inclines to death; it is in the road that leads directly to eternal death; and her paths unto Rephaim, to the giants (so some read it), the sinners of the old world, who, living in luxury and excess of riot, were cut down out of time, and their foundation was overthrown with a flood. Our Lord Jesus deters us from sinful pleasures with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them.

Where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched. See Mt 5:28,29. Secondly, Their repentance and recovery are

extremely hazardous: None, or next to none, that go unto her, return again. It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin. Having once lost their hold of the paths of life, they know not how to take hold of them again, but are perfectly besotted and bewitched with those base lusts. Many learned interpreters think that this caution against the strange woman, besides the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively, as a caution,

1. Against idolatry, which is spiritual whoredom. Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the worshippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been of such pernicious consequence to Israel and proved so to Solomon himself.

2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, that notorious adulteress which forsakes its guide, violates the covenant of our God, which inclines to death, and which, when it has got an undisturbed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate.

11 discretion shall preserve thee,
understanding shall keep thee:
12 to deliver thee from the way of the evil *man*,
from the man that speaketh froward things;
13 who leave the paths of uprightness,
to walk in the ways of darkness;
14 who rejoice to do evil,
and delight in the frowardness of the wicked;
15 whose ways *are* crooked,
and *they* froward in their paths:
16 to deliver thee from the strange woman,
even from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words;
17 which forsaketh the guide of her youth,
and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

18 For her house inclineth unto death,
and her paths unto the dead.
19 None that go unto her return again,
neither take they hold of the paths of life.
20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men*,
and keep the paths of the righteous.

This wisdom will be of use to guide and direct us in that which is good (Pr 2:20): That thou mayest walk in the way of good men. We must avoid the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, in order that we may walk in good ways; we must cease to do evil, in order that we may learn to do well. Note,

1. There is a way which is peculiarly the way of good men, the way in which good men, as such, and as far as they have really been such, have always walked.

2. It will be our wisdom to walk in that way, to ask for the good old way and walk therein, Jer 6:16,Heb 6:12,12:1. And we must not only walk in that way awhile, but we must keep it, keep in it, and never turn aside out of it: The paths of the righteous are the paths of life, which all that are wise, having taken hold of, will keep their hold of. "That thou mayest imitate those excellent persons, the patriarchs and prophets (so bishop Patrick paraphrases it), and be preserved in the paths of those righteous men who followed after them." We must not only choose our way in general by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths; observe the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock. Two reasons are here given why we should thus choose:--

(1.) Because men's integrity will be their establishment, Pr 2:21. It will be the establishment,

[1.] Of their persons: The upright shall dwell in the land, peaceably and quietly, as long as they live; and their uprightness will contribute to it, as it settles their minds, guides their counsels, gains them the good-will of their neighbours, and entitles them to God's special favour.

[2.] Of their families: The perfect, in their posterity, shall remain in it. They shall dwell and remain for ever in the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a type.

(2.) Because men's iniquity will be their destruction, Pr 2:22. See what becomes of the wicked, who choose the way of the evil man; they shall be cut off, not only from heaven hereafter and all hopes of that, but from the earth now, on which they set their affections, and in which they lay up their treasure. They think to take root in it, but they and their families shall be rooted out of it, in judgment to them, but in mercy to the earth. There is a day coming which shall leave them neither root nor branch, Mal 4:1. Let that wisdom then enter into our hearts, and be pleasant to our souls, which will keep us out of a way that will end thus.

21 For the upright shall dwell in the land,
and the perfect shall remain in it.
22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth,
and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

Proverbs-3

Exhortations to Obedience

1 My son, forget not my law;
but let thine heart keep my commandments:

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and, as is here shown, will be of unspeakable advantage.

I. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts, Pr 3:1,2.

1. We must,

(1.) Fix God's law, and his commandments, as our rule, by which we will in every thing be ruled and to which we will yield obedience.

(2.) We must acquaint ourselves with them; for we cannot be said to forget that which we never knew.

(3.) We must remember them so that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them.

(4.) Our wills and affections must be subject to them and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads, but our hearts, must keep God's commandments; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.

2. To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the divine law, we are assured (Pr 3:2) that it is the certain way to long life and prosperity.

(1.) It is the way to be long-lived. God's commandments shall add to us length of days; to a good useful life on earth, they shall add an eternal life in heaven, length of days for ever and ever, Ps 21:4. God shall be our life and the length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But, because length of days may possibly become a burden and a trouble, it is promised,

(2.) That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have pleasure: Peace shall they be continually adding to thee. As grace increases, peace shall increase; and of the increase of Christ's government and peace, in the heart as well as in the world, there shall be no end. Great and growing peace have those that love the law.

II. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received, and retained, with them (Pr 3:3): "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing.

Do not forfeit these, but live up to them, and preserve thy interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them. Bind them about thy neck, as the most graceful ornament." It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. "Write to them upon the table of thy heart, as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them and thinking them over." Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which are our duty, piety and sincerity, charity towards men, fidelity towards God. Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee. To encourage us to do this we are assured (Pr 3:4) that this is the way to recommend ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding.

1. A good man seeks the favour of God in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding; God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he says and does. He shall be owned as one of Wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God, as one having that good understanding which is ascribed to all those that do his commandments.

2. He wishes to have favour with men also (as Christ had, Lu 2:52), to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren (Es 10:3), and that he shall have; they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent, shall act intelligently and with discretion. He shall have good success (so some translate it), the common effect of good understanding.

III. We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must own and depend upon it in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer.

1. By faith. We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creatures and all their

actions. We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts (Pr 3:5); we must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to his promise, to do what is best for us, if we love him, and serve him. We must, with an entire submission and satisfaction, depend upon him to perform all things for us, and not lean to our own understanding, as if we could, by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which, if they lean to, will certainly fail them. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore must follow Providence and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. By prayer (Pr 3:6): In all thy ways acknowledge God. We must not only in our judgment believe that there is an over-ruling hand of God ordering and disposing of us and all our affairs, but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design any thing but what we are sure is lawful. We must ask his advice and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult (when we know not what to do, no thanks to us that we have our eyes up to him), but in every case, be it ever so plain, We must ask success of him, as those who know the race is not to the swift. We must refer ourselves to him as one from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently, and with a holy indifferency, wait his award.

In all our ways that prove direct, and fair, and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness. In all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God; to him we must, in every thing, make our requests known, as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Jdg 11:11. For our encouragement to do this, it is promised, "He shall direct thy paths, so that thy way shall be safe and good and the issue happy at last." Note, Those that put themselves under a divine guidance shall

always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so that they shall not turn aside into the by-paths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event that it shall be to their mind, or (which is equivalent) for their good. Those that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire shall find that though it may lead them about it leads them the right way and will bring them to Canaan at last.

2 for length of days, and long life,
and peace, shall they add to thee.
3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee:
bind them about thy neck;
write them upon the table of thine heart:
4 so shalt thou find favor and good understanding
in the sight of God and man.
5 Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;
and lean not unto thine own understanding.
6 In all thy ways acknowledge
him, and he shall direct thy
paths.
7 Be not wise in thine own eyes:
fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason:--

I. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government (Pr 3:7): "Fear the Lord, as your sovereign Lord and Master; be ruled in every thing by your religion and subject to the divine will." This must be,

1. A humble subjection: Be not wise in thy own eyes. Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. Those that have an opinion of their own sufficiency think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to hamper themselves with, religion's rules.

2. A dutiful subjection: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil; take heed of doing any thing to offend him and to forfeit his care. To fear the Lord, so as to depart from evil, is true wisdom and understanding (Job 28:28); those that have it are truly wise, but self-denyingly so, and not wise in their own eyes. For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God it is here promised (Pr 3:8) that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food. It will be nourishing: It shall be health to thy navel. It will be strengthening: It shall be marrow to thy bones. The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. Envy is the rottenness of the bones; the sorrow of the world dries them; but hope and joy in God are marrow to them.

II. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, Pr 3:9,10. Here is,

1. A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates: Honour the Lord with thy substance. It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him than in his honour. His honour we must show forth and the honour we have for him. We must honour him, not only with our bodies and spirits which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his: we and all our appurtenances must be devoted to his glory. Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet, such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must honour God,

(1.) With our increase. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves (De 8:17) and to set our hearts upon the world (Ps 62:10); but the more God gives us the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products, to keep us in constant dependence on God.

(2.) With all our increase. As God has prospered us in every thing, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a modus decimandi--a mode of tithing, but none de non decimando--for exemption from paying tithes.

(3.) With the first-fruits of all, as Abel, Ge 4:4. This was the law (Ex 23:19), and the prophets, Mal 3:10. God, who is the first and best, must have the first and best of every thing; his right is prior to all other, and therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, to use them and the interest we have by them for the promoting of religion, to do good to the poor with what we have and abound in all works of piety and charity, devising liberal things.

2. A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates. It is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty. He does not say thy bags, but thy barns, not thy wardrobe replenished, but thy presses: "God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament--for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up." Those that do good with what they have shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is and most of the comfort of it. We mistake if we think that giving will undo us and make us poor. No, giving for God's honour will make us rich, Hag 2:19. What we gave we have.

III. We must conduct ourselves aright under our afflictions, Pr 3:11,12. This the apostle quotes (Heb 12:5), and calls it an exhortation which speaks unto us as unto children, with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of troubles. Now observe,

1. What must be our care when we are in affliction. We must neither despise it nor be weary of it. His exhortation, before, was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity.

(1.) We must not despise an affliction, be it ever so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of, or as if it were not sent on an errand and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks, and stones, and stoics, under our afflictions, insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God.

(2.) We must not be weary of an affliction, be it ever so heavy and long, not faint under it, so the apostle renders it, not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair, or to use any indirect means for our relief and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presses harder or continues longer than is meet, not conclude that deliverance will never come because it does not come so soon as we expect it.

2. What will be our comfort when we are in affliction.

(1.) That it is a divine correction; it is the chastening of the Lord, which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it (for it is folly to contend with a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power), so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure that a God of unspotted purity does us no wrong and that a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger is an affront to him that sends him. It is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need and what we can bear.

(2.) That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a Judge, but his wise affection as a Father. The father corrects the son whom he loves, nay, and because

he loves him and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an alloy to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, Re 3:19. This is a great comfort to God's children, under their afflictions,

[1.] That they not only consist with, but flow from, covenant-love.

[2.] That they are so far from doing them any real hurt that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their satisfaction.

8 It shall be health to thy
navel, and marrow to thy
bones.
9 Honor the Lord with thy substance,
and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:
10 so shall thy barns be filled with plenty,
and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.
11 My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord;
neither be weary of his correction:
12 for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth;
even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.
13 Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom,
and the man *that* getteth
understanding:

Solomon had pressed us earnestly to seek diligently for wisdom (Pr 2:1, &c.), and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What shall we get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shows us how much it will be to our profit, laying this down for an unquestionable truth, Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, that true wisdom which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an entire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

I. What it is to find wisdom so as to be made happy by it.

1. We must get it. He is the happy man who, having found it, makes it his own, gets both an interest in it and the possession of it, who draws out understanding (so the word it), that is,

(1.) Who derives it from God. Having it not in himself, he draws it with the bucket of prayer from the fountain of all wisdom, who gives liberally.

(2.) Who takes pains for it, as he does who draws ore out of the mine. It if do not come easily, we must put the more strength to draw it.

(3.) Who improves in it, who, having some understanding, draws it out by growing in knowledge and making five talents ten. (4.) Who does good with it, who draws out from the stock he has, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others, for their instruction, things new and old. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose.

2. We must trade for it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom, which intimates,

(1.) That we must make it our business, and not a by-business, as the merchant bestows the main of his thoughts and time upon his merchandise.

(2.) That we must venture all in it, as a stock in trade, and be willing to part with all for it. This is that pearl of great price which, when we have found it, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of, Mt 13:45,46. Buy the truth, (Pr 23:23); he does not say at what rate, because we must buy it at any rate rather than miss it.

3. We must lay hold on it as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered to us, which we do the more carefully if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and put forth our utmost vigour

in the pursuit of it, lay hold on all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates.

4. We must retain it. It is not enough to lay hold on wisdom, but we must keep our hold, hold it fast, with a resolution never to let it go, but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must sustain it (so some read it), must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the declining interests of religion in the places where we live.

II. What the happiness of those is who do find it.

1. It is a transcendent happiness, more than can be found in the wealth of this world, if we had ever so much of it, Pr 3:14,15. It is not only a surer, but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver, and gold, and rubies. Suppose a man to have got these in abundance, nay, to have all the things he can desire of this world (and who is it that ever had?), yet,

(1.) All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom; no, it would utterly be contemned; it cannot be gotten for gold, Job 28:15, &c.

(2.) All this would not countervail the want of heavenly wisdom nor be the ransom of a soul lost by its own folly.

(3.) All this would not make a man half so happy, no, not in this world, as those are who have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things.

(4.) Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and secure that to us, which silver, and gold, and rubies, will not be the purchase of.

2. It is a true happiness; for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to, all those things which are supposed to make men happy, Pr 3:16,17. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and

bountiful queen, reaching forth gifts to her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them to all that will submit to her government.

(1.) Is length of days a blessing? Yes, the most valuable; life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in her right hand. Religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, entitles us to the promises of it, and, though our days on earth should be no more than our neighbour's, yet it will secure to us everlasting life in a better world.

(2.) Are riches and honour accounted blessings? They are so, and them she reaches out with her left hand. For, as she is ready to embrace those that submit to her with both arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; while the true riches, by which men are rich towards God, are secured to them. Nor is there any honour, by birth or preferment, comparable to that which attends religion; it makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbour, recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried in obscurity to shine forth as the sun.

(3.) Is pleasure courted as much as any thing? It is so, and it is certain that true piety has in it the greatest true pleasure. Her ways are ways of pleasantness; the ways in which she has directed us to walk are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end we must walk in, fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way; it is smooth and clean, and strewed with roses: All her paths are peace. There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way, in all her paths, all the several acts, instances, and duties of it. One does not

embitter what the other sweetens, as it is with the allays of this world; but they are all peace, not only sweet, but safe. The saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present sabbatism.

3. It is the happiness of paradise (Pr 3:18): She is a tree of life. True grace is that to the soul which the tree of life would have been, from which our first parents were shut out for eating of the forbidden tree. It is a seed of immortality, a well of living waters, springing up to life eternal. It is an earnest of the New Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the tree of life, Re 22:2,Re 2:7. Those that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom shall not only be cured by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death; they shall eat and live for ever.

4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, Pr 3:19,20. This should make us in love with the wisdom and understanding which God gives, that the Lord by wisdom founded the earth, so that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and unexceptionably fitted. By understanding he has likewise established the heavens and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them--numerous, yet no disorder in them--the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear; the depths of the sea are broken up, and thence come the waters beneath the firmament, and the clouds drop down the dews, the waters from above the firmament, and all this by the divine wisdom and knowledge; therefore happy is the man that finds wisdom, for he will thereby be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. Christ is that Wisdom, by whom the worlds were made and still consist; happy therefore are those to whom he is made of God wisdom, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches, and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas, is his.

14 for the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise of silver,
and the gain thereof than fine gold.
15 She *is* more precious than rubies:

and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

16 Length of days *is* in her right hand;
and in her left hand riches and honor.

17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace.

18 She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:
and happy *is every one* that retaineth her.

19 The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth;
by understanding hath he established the heavens.

20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up,
and the clouds drop down the dew.

21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes:
keep sound wisdom and discretion:

Solomon, having pronounced those happy who not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

I The exhortation is, to have religion's rules always in view and always at heart, Pr 3:21.

1. To have them always in view: "My son, let them not depart from thy eyes; let not thy eyes ever depart from them to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough and that it is time now to lay them by; but, as long as thou livest, keep up and cultivate thy acquaintance with them." He who learns to write must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight; and to the words of wisdom must those, in like manner, have a constant respect, who will walk circumspectly.

2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must keep sound wisdom and discretion, keep to the principles of it and keep in the ways of it. It is wealth that is worth keeping.

II The argument to enforce this exhortation is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom, thus kept, will be of to us.

1. In respect of strength and satisfaction: "It will be life to thy soul (Pr 3:22); it will quicken thee to thy duty when thou beginnest to be slothful and remiss; it will revive thee under thy troubles when thou beginnest to droop and despond. It will be thy spiritual life, an earnest of life eternal." Life to the soul is life indeed.

2. In respect of honour and reputation: It shall be grace to thy neck, as a chain of gold, or a jewel. Grace to thy jaws (so the word is), grateful to thy taste and relish (so some); it shall infuse grace into all thou sayest (so others), shall furnish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit.

3. In respect of safety and security. This he insists upon in Pr 3:23-26, the scope of which is to show that the effect of righteousness (which is the same with wisdom here) is quietness and assurance for ever, Isa 32:17. Good people are taken under God's special protection, and therein they may have an entire satisfaction. They are safe and may be easy,

(1.) In their motions by day, Pr 3:23. If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy: "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely. The natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence; the spiritual life, and all its interests, are under the protection of his grace; so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble." Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in, the safe way, as far as may be, from temptation, and will enable us to walk in it with holy security. The way of duty is the way of safety. "We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that thy foot shall not stumble at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know how to get over."

(2.) In their rest by night, Pr 3:24. In our retirements we lie exposed and are most subject to frights. "But keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid of fire, or thieves, or specters, or any of the terrors of darkness, knowing that when we, and all our friends, are asleep, yet he that keeps Israel and every true-born Israelite neither slumbers nor sleeps, and to him thou hast committed thyself and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. Thou shalt lie down, and not need to sit up to keep guard; having lain down, thou shalt sleep, and not have thy eyes held waking by care and fear; and thy sleep shall be sweet and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within," Ps 4:8,116:7. The way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the labouring man, so of the wise and godly man, is sweet.

(3.) In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid of sudden fear, Pr 3:25. The harms that surprise us, unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm ever so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked, when it comes, that is,

[1.] The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious; though it comes, and seems to be just at the door, yet be not afraid of it; for, though God may make use of the wicked as instruments of his people's correction, yet he will never suffer them to be the authors of their desolation. Or rather,

[2.] The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for (Pr 3:26)

"the Lord shall be not only thy protector to keep thee safe, but thy confidence to keep thee secure, so that thy foot shall not be taken by thy enemies nor ensnared by thy own fears." God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

22 so shall they be life unto thy soul,
and grace to thy neck.
23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely,
and thy foot shall not stumble.
24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:
yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
25 Be not afraid of sudden fear,
neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.
26 For the Lord shall be thy confidence,
and shall keep thy foot from being taken.
27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
when it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*.

True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty towards man, as well as towards God, in honesty as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom which relate to our neighbour.

I. We must render to all their due, both in justice and charity, and not delay to do it (Pr 3:27,28): "Withhold not good from those to whom it is due (either for want of love to them or through too much love to thy money) when it is in the power of thy hand to do it, for, if it be not, it cannot be expected; but it was thy great fault if thou didst, by thy extravagances, disable thyself to do justly and show mercy, and it ought to be the greatest of thy griefs if God had disabled thee, not so much that thou art straitened in thy own comforts and conveniences as that thou hast not wherewithal to give to those to whom it is due." Withhold it not; this implies that it is called for and expected, but that the hand is drawn in and the bowels of compassion are shut up. We must not hinder others from doing it, not be ourselves backward to it. "If thou hast it by thee to-day, hast it in the power of thy hand, say not to thy neighbour, Go thy way for this time, and come at a more convenient season, and I will then see what will be done; to-morrow I will give; whereas thou art not sure that thou shalt

live till to-morrow, or that to-morrow thou shalt have it by thee. Be not thus loth to part with thy money upon a good account. Make not excuses to shift off a duty that must be done, nor delight to keep thy neighbour in pain and in suspense, nor to show the authority which the giver has over the beggar; but readily and cheerfully, and from a principle of conscience towards God, give good to those to whom it is due," to the lords and owners of it (so the word is), to those who upon any account are entitled to it. This requires us,

1. To pay our just debts without fraud, covin, or delay.

2. To give wages to those who have earned them.

3. To provide for our relations, and those that have dependence on us, for to them it is due.

4. To render dues both to church and state, magistrates and ministers.

5. To be ready to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in every thing to be neighbourly; for these are things that are due by the law of doing as we would be done by.

6. To be charitable to the poor and necessitous. If others want the necessary supports of life, and we have wherewithal to supply them, we must look upon it as due to them and not withhold it. Alms are called righteousness because they are a debt to the poor, and a debt which we must not defer to pay, Bis dat, qui cito dat--He gives twice who gives speedily.

II. We must never design any hurt or harm to any body (Pr 3:29): "Devise not evil against thy neighbour; do not contrive how to do him an ill-turn undiscovered, to prejudice him in his body, goods, or good name, and the rather because he dwells securely by thee, and, having given thee no provocation, entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee, and therefore is off his guard." It is against the laws both of honour and friendship to do a man an ill-turn and give him no

warning. Cursed be he that smites his neighbour secretly. It is a most base ungrateful thing, if our neighbours have a good opinion of us, that we will do them no harm, and we thence take advantage to cheat and injure them.

III. We must not be quarrelsome and litigious (Pr 3:30): "Do not strive with a man without cause; contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resent not that as a provocation which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious law-suits, when either there is no harm done thee or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way." Law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men. When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little got by striving.

IV. We must not envy the prosperity of evil-doers, Pr 3:31. This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, Ps 37:1,7-9 "Envy not the oppressor; though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thyself in his condition. Choose none of his ways; do not imitate him, nor take the courses he takes to enrich himself. Never think of doing as he does, though thou wert sure to get by it all that he has, for it would be dearly bought." Now, to show what little reason saints have to envy sinners, Solomon here, in the Pr 3:32-35 of the chapter, compares the condition of sinners and saints together (as his father David had done, Ps 37:22), sets the one over against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they be oppressed, and how miserable the wicked are, though they be oppressors. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judges of them, not as they stand in the world's books. Those are in the right who are of God's mind; and, if we be of his mind, we shall see, whatever pretence one sinner may have to envy another, that saints are so happy themselves that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be ever so prosperous. For,

1. Sinners are hated of God, but saints are beloved, Pr 3:32. The froward sinners, who are continually going from-ward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, are abomination to the Lord. He that hates nothing that he has made yet abhors those who have thus marred themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination. The righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites; he has that communion with them which is a secret to the world and in which they have a joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with; he communicates to them the secret tokens of his love; his covenant is with them; they know his mind, and the meanings and intentions of his providence, better than others can. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?

2. Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses; saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation, Pr 3:33. The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling perhaps, but the curse of the Lord is upon it, it is in it, and, though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are curses, Mal 2:2. There is leanness in the soul, when the body is fed to the full, Ps 106:15. The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a fretting leprosy; it will consume the timber thereof and the stones thereof, Zec 5:4,Hab 2:11. The just have a habitation, a poor cottage (the word is used for sheep-cotes), a very mean dwelling; but God blesses it; he is continually blessing it, from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing of God is upon the house according as the inhabitants are wicked or godly; and it is certain that a blessed family, though poor, has no reason to envy a cursed family, though rich. 3. God puts contempt upon sinners, but shows respect to saints, Pr 3:34.

(1.) Those who exalt themselves shall certainly be abased: Surely he scorns the scorners. Those who scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, scorn to be beholden to his grace, who scoff at godliness and godly people, and take a pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before

all the world. He despises their impotent malice, sits in heaven and laughs at them, Ps 2:4. He retaliates upon them (Ps 18:26); he resists the proud.

(2.) Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, for he gives grace to the lowly; he works that in them which puts honour upon them and for which they are accepted of God and approved of men. Those who patiently bear contempt from scornful men shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorners or to choose their ways. 4. The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, Pr 3:35.

(1.) Saints are wise men, and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure. God gives them grace (Pr 3:34), and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, 2Co 3:18. It is glory begun, the earnest of it, Ps 84:11.

(2.) Sinners are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they only took the way to be great. Their end will manifest their folly: Shame shall be their promotion. And it will be so much the more their punishment as it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they must ever expect, that God will be glorified in their everlasting confusion.

28 Say not unto thy neighbor,
Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give;
when thou hast it by thee.
29 Devise not evil against thy neighbor,
seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.
30 Strive not with a man without cause,
if he have done thee no harm.
31 Envy thou not the oppressor,
and choose none of his ways.

32 For the froward *is* abomination to the Lord:
but his secret *is* with the righteous.
33 The curse of the Lord *is* in the house of the wicked:
but he blesseth the habitation of the just.
34 Surely he scorneth the scorners:
but he giveth grace unto the lowly.
35 The wise shall inherit glory:
but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Proverbs-4

The Beneficence of Wisdom

1 Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father,
and attend to know understanding.

Here we have,

I The invitation which Solomon gives to his children to come and receive instruction from him (Pr 4:1,2): Hear, you children, the instruction of a father. That is,

1. "Let my own children, in the first place, receive and give good heed to those instructions which I set down for the use of others also." Note, Magistrates and ministers, who are entrusted with the direction of larger societies, are concerned to take a more than ordinary care for the good instruction of their own families; from this duty their public work will by no means excuse them. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there; for he that has not his children in subjection with all gravity, and does not take pains in their good education, how shall he do his duty as he ought to the church of God? 1Ti 3:4,5.

The children of those that are eminent for wisdom and public usefulness ought to improve in knowledge and grace in proportion to the advantages they derive from their relation to such parents. Yet it may be observed, to save both the credit and the comfort of those parents whose children do not answer the hopes that arose from their education, that Rehoboam, the

son of Solomon, was far from being either one of the wisest or one of the best. We have reason to think that thousands have got more good by Solomon's proverbs than his own son did, to whom they seem to have been dedicated.

2. Let all young people, in the days of their childhood and youth, take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is their learning age, and then their minds are formed and seasoned. He does not say, My children, but You children. We read but of one son that Solomon had of his own; but (would you think it?) he is willing to set up for a schoolmaster, and to teach other people's children! for at that age there is most hope of success; the branch is easily bent when it is young and tender.

3. Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children, though they be grown persons. Let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper. let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident, and take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and with affection. We must see it coming from God as our Father in heaven, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings, the Father of our spirits, to whom we ought to be in subjection, that we may live. We must look upon our teachers as our fathers, who love us and seek our welfare; and therefore though the instruction carry in it reproof and correction, for so the word signifies, yet we must bid it welcome. Now,

(1.) To recommend it to us, we are told, not only that it is the instruction of a father, but that it is understanding, and therefore should be welcome to intelligent creatures. Religion has reason on its side, and we are taught it by fair reasoning. It is a law indeed (Pr 4:2), but that law is founded upon doctrine, upon unquestionable principles of truth, upon good doctrine, which is not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptation. If we admit the doctrine, we cannot but submit to the law.

(2.) To rivet it in us, we are directed to receive it as a gift, to attend to it with all diligence, to attend so as to know it, for

otherwise we cannot do it, and not to forsake it by disowning the doctrine or disobeying the law.

2 For I give you good doctrine,
forsake ye not my law.
3 For I was my father's son,
tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother.
4 He taught me also, and said unto me,
Let thine heart retain my words:

The instructions he gives them. Observe,

1. How he came by these instructions; he had them from his parents, and teaches his children the same that they taught him, Pr 4:3,4. Observe,

(1.) His parents loved him, and therefore taught him: I was my father's son. David had many sons, but Solomon was his son indeed, as Isaac is called (Ge 17:19) and for the same reason, because on him the covenant was entailed. He was his father's darling, above any of his children. God had a special kindness for Solomon (the prophet called him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, 2Sa 12:25), and for that reason David had a special kindness for him, for he was a man after God's own heart. If parents may ever love one child better than another, it must not be till it plainly appears that God does so. He was tender, and only beloved, in the sight of his mother. Surely there was a manifest reason for making such a distinction when both the parents made it. Now we see how they showed their love; they catechised him, kept him to his book, and held him to a strict discipline. Though he was a prince, and heir-apparent to the crown, yet they did not let him live at large; nay, therefore they tutored him thus. And perhaps David was the more strict with Solomon in his education because he had seen the ill effects of an undue indulgence in Adonijah, whom he had not crossed in any thing (1Ki 1:6), as also in Absalom.

(2.) What his parents taught him he teaches others. Observe,

[1.] When Solomon was grown up he not only remembered, but took a pleasure in repeating, the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions they made upon him. He was not ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them, nor did he look upon them as the childish things, the mean things, which, when he became a man, a king, he should put away, as a disparagement to him; much less did he repeat them: as some wicked children have done, to ridicule them, and make his companions merry with them, priding himself that he had got clear from grave lessons and restraints.

[2.] Though Solomon was a wise man himself, and divinely inspired, yet, when he was to teach wisdom, he did not think it below him to quote his father and to make use of his words. Those that would learn well, and teach well, in religion, must not affect new-found notions and new-coined phrases, so as to look with contempt upon the knowledge and language of their predecessors; if we must keep to the good old way, why should we scorn the good old words? Jer 6:16.

[3.] Solomon, having been well educated by his parents, thought himself thereby obliged to give his children a good education, the same that his parents had given him; and this is one way in which we must requite our parents for the pains they took with us, even by showing piety at home, 1Ti 5:4. They taught us, not only that we might learn ourselves, but that we might teach our children, the good knowledge of God, Ps 78:6. And we are false to a trust if we do not; for the sacred deposit of religious doctrine and law was lodged in our hands with a charge to transmit it pure and entire to those that shall come after us, 2Ti 2:2.

[4.] Solomon enforces his exhortations with the authority of his father David, a man famous in his generation upon all accounts. Be it taken notice of, to the honour of religion, that the wisest and best men in every age have been most zealous, not only for the practice of it themselves, but for the propagating of it to others; and we should therefore continue

in the things which we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them, 2Ti 3:14.

2. What these instructions were, Pr 4:4-13.

(1.) By way of precept and exhortation. David, in teaching his son, though he was a child of great capacity and quick apprehension, yet to show that he was in good earnest, and to affect his child the more with what he said, expressed himself with great warmth and importunity, and inculcated the same thing again and again. So children must be taught. De 6:7, Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children. David, though he was a man of public business, and had tutors for his son, took all this pains with him himself.

[1.] He recommends to him his Bible and his catechism, as the means, his father's words (Pr 4:4), the words of his mouth (Pr 4:5), his sayings (Pr 4:10), all the good lessons he had taught him; and perhaps he means particularly the book of Psalms, many of which were Maschils--psalms of instruction, and two of them are expressly said to be for Solomon. These, and all his other words, Solomon must have an eye to.

First, He must hear and receive them (Pr 4:10), diligently attend to them, and imbibe them, as the earth drinks in the rain that comes often upon it, Heb 6:7. God thus bespeaks our attention to his word: Hear, O my son! and receive my sayings.

Secondly, He must hold fast the form of sound words which his father gave him (Pr 4:4): Let thy heart retain my words; and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections, it will not be retained.

Thirdly, He must govern himself by them: Keep my commandments, obey them, and that is the way to increase in the knowledge of them, Joh 7:17.

Fourthly, He must stick to them and abide by them: "Decline not from the words of my mouth (Pr 4:5), as fearing they will be too great a check upon thee, but take fast hold of instruction (Pr 4:13), as being resolved to keep thy hold and never let it go." Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and, if it do not, their case is very sad.

[2.] He recommends to him wisdom and understanding as the end to be aimed at in the use of these means; that wisdom which is the principal wisdom, get that. Quod caput est sapientia eam acquire sapientiam--Be sure to mind that branch of wisdom which is the top branch of it, and that is the fear of God, Pr 1:7. Junius and Tremellius. A principle of religion in the heart is the one thing needful; therefore,

First, Get this wisdom, get this understanding, Pr 4:5. And again, "Get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding, Pr 4:7. Pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it. Wait at wisdom's gate, Pr 8:34. Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are thy follies: get possession of wise principles and the habits of wisdom. Get wisdom by experience, get it above all thy getting; be more in care and take more pains to get this than to get the wealth of this world; whatever thou forgettest, get this, reckon it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly." True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it, because God gives it to those that labour for it; yet, after all, we must not say, Our might and the power of our hand have gotten us this wealth.

Secondly, Forget her not (Pr 4:5), forsake her not (Pr 4:6), let her not go (Pr 4:13), but keep her. Those that have got this wisdom must take heed of losing it again by returning to folly: it is indeed a good part, that shall not be taken from us; but then we must take heed lest we throw it from us, as those do that forget it first, and let it slip out of their minds, and then forsake it and turn out of its good ways. That good thing which is committed to us we must keep, and not let it drop, through

carelessness, nor suffer it to be forced from us, nor suffer ourselves to be wheedled out of it; never let go such a jewel.

Thirdly, Love her (Pr 4:6), and embrace her (Pr 4:8), as worldly men love their wealth and set their hearts upon it. Religion should be very dear to us, dearer than any thing in this world; and, if we cannot reach to be great masters of wisdom, yet let us be true lovers of it; and what grace we have let us embrace it with a sincere affection, as those that admire its beauty.

Fourthly, "Exalt her, Pr 4:8. Always keep up high thoughts of religion, and do all thou canst to bring it into reputation, and maintain the credit of it among men. Concur with God in his purpose, which is to magnify the law and make it honourable, and do what thou canst to serve that purpose." Let Wisdom's children not only justify her, but magnify her, and prefer her before that which is dearest to them in this world. In honouring those that fear the Lord, though they are low in the world, and in regarding a poor wise man, we exalt wisdom.

(2.) By way of motive and inducement thus to labour for wisdom, and submit to the guidance of it, consider,

[1.] It is the main matter, and that which ought to be the chief and continual care of every man in this life (Pr 4:7): Wisdom is the principal thing; other things which we are solicitous to get and keep are nothing to it. It is the whole of man, Ec 12:13. It is that which recommends us to God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the end of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world, and to get to heaven at last; and therefore it is the principal thing.

[2.] It has reason and equity on its side (Pr 4:11): "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, and so it will be found to be at last. I have led thee, not in the crooked ways of carnal policy, which does wrong under colour of wisdom, but in right paths, agreeable to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil." The rectitude of the divine nature appears in the

rectitude of all the divine laws. Observe, David not only taught his son by good instructions, but led him both by a good example and by applying general instructions to particular cases; so that nothing was wanting on his part to make him wise.

[3.] It would be much for his own advantage: "If thou be wise and good, thou shalt be so for thyself."

First, "It will be thy life, thy comfort, thy happiness; it is what thou canst not live without:" Keep my commandments and live, Pr 4:4. That of our Saviour agrees with this, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments, Mt 19:17. It is upon pain of death, eternal death, and in prospect of life, eternal life, that we are required to be religious. "Receive wisdom's sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many (Pr 4:10), as many in this world as Infinite Wisdom sees fit, and in the other world thou shalt live that life the years of which shall never be numbered. Keep her therefore, whatever it cost thee, for she is thy life, Pr 4:13. All thy satisfaction will be found in this;" and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul.

Secondly, "It will be thy guard and guide, thy convoy and conductor, through all the dangers and difficulties of thy journey through this wilderness. Love wisdom, and cleave to her, and she shall preserve thee, she shall keep thee (Pr 4:6) from sin, the worst of evils, the worst of enemies; she shall keep thee from hurting thyself, and then none else can hurt thee." As we say, "Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee;" so, "Keep thy wisdom, and thy wisdom will keep thee." It will keep us from straits and stumbling-blocks in the management of ourselves and our affairs, Pr 4:12.

1. That our steps be not straitened when we go, that we bring not ourselves into such straits as David was in, 2Sa 24:14. Those that make God's word their rule shall walk at liberty, and be at ease in themselves.

2. That our feet do not stumble when we run. If wise and good men be put upon sudden resolves, the certain rule of God's word which they go by will keep them even then from stumbling upon any thing that may be pernicious. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us. Thirdly, "It will be thy honour and reputation (Pr 4:8): Exalt wisdom (do thou but show thy good-will to her advancement) and though she needs not thy service she will abundantly recompense it, she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour." Solomon was to be a king, but his wisdom and virtue would be more his honour than his crown or purple; it was that for which all his neighbours had him so much in veneration; and no doubt, in his reign and David's, wise and good men stood fairest for preferment.

However, religion will, first or last, bring all those to honour that cordially embrace her; they shall be accepted of God, respected by all wise men, owned in the great day, and shall inherit everlasting glory. This he insists on (Pr 4:9): "She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace in this world, shall recommend thee both to God and man, and in the other world a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee, a crown that shall never totter, a crown of glory that shall never wither." That is the true honour which attends religion. Nobilitas sola est atique unica virtus--Virtue is the only nobility! David having thus recommended wisdom to his son, no marvel that when God bade him ask what he would he prayed, Lord, give me a wise and an understanding heart. We should make it appear by our prayers how well we are taught.

keep my commandments, and live.

5 Get wisdom, get understanding:
forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee:
love her, and she shall keep thee.

7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing;
therefore get wisdom:
and with all thy getting get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee:
she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.

9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace:
a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.
10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;
and the years of thy life shall be many.
11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom;
I have led thee in right paths.
12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened;
and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
13 Take fast hold of instruction;
let *her* not go:
keep her; for she *is* thy life.
14 Enter not into the path of the wicked,
and go not in the way of evil *men*.
15 Avoid it, pass not by it,
turn from it, and pass away.

Some make David's instructions to Solomon, which began Pr 4:4, to continue to the end of the chapter; nay, some continue them to the end of the ninth chapter; but it is more probable that Solomon begins here again, if not sooner. In these verses, having exhorted us to walk in the paths of wisdom, he cautions us against the path of the wicked.

1. We must take heed of the ways of sin and avoid them, every thing that looks like sin and leads to it.

2. In order to this we must keep out of the ways of sinners, and have no fellowship with them. For fear of falling into wicked courses, we must shun wicked company. Here is,

I The caution itself, Pr 4:14,15. 1. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners: Enter not into the paths of the wicked. Our teacher, having like a faithful guide shown us the right paths (Pr 4:11), here warns us of the by-paths into which we are in danger of being drawn aside. Those that have been well educated, and trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; let them not so much as enter into it, no, not to make trial of it, lest it prove a dangerous experiment and difficult to retreat with safety. "Venture not into the company of those that are

infected with the plague, no, not though thou think thyself guarded with an antidote."

2. If at any time we are inveigled into an evil way, we must hasten out of it. "If, ere thou wast aware, thou didst enter in at the gate, because it was wide, go not on in the way of evil men. As soon as thou art made sensible of thy mistake, retire immediately, take not a step more, stay not a minute longer, in the way that certainly leads to destruction."

3. We must dread and detest the ways of sin and sinners, and decline them with the utmost care imaginable. "The way of evil men may seem a pleasant way and sociable, and the nearest way to the compassing of some secular end we may have in view; but it is an evil way, and will end ill, and therefore if thou love thy God and thy soul avoid it, pass not by it, that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and, if thou find thyself near it, turn from it and pass away, and get as far off it as thou canst." The manner of expression intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it, and that our watchmen are, or should be, in good earnest, in giving us warning. It intimates likewise at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners; he does not say, Keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the further the better; never think you can get far enough from it. Escape for thy life: look not behind thee.

II The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. "Consider the character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun." They are mischievous men (Pr 4:16,17); they not only care not what hurt they do to those that stand in their way, but it is their business to do mischief, and their delight, purely for mischief-sake. They are continually designing and endeavouring to cause some to fall, to ruin them body and soul. Wickedness and malice are in their nature, and violence is in all their actions. They are spiteful in the highest degree; for,

(1.) Mischief is rest and sleep to them. As much satisfaction as a covetous man has when he has got money, an ambitious man when he has got preferment, and a good man when he has done good, so much have they when they have said or done that which is injurious and ill-natured; and they are extremely uneasy if they cannot get their envy and revenge gratified, as Haman, to whom every thing was unpleasant as long as Mordecai was unhanged. It intimates likewise how restless and unwearied they are in their mischievous pursuits; they will rather be deprived of sleep than of the pleasure of being vexatious.

(2.) Mischief is meat and drink to them; they feed and feast upon it. They eat the bread of the wickedness (they eat up my people as they eat bread, Ps 14:4) and drink the wine of violence (Pr 4:17), drink iniquity like water, Job 15:16. All they eat and drink is got by rapine and oppression. Do wicked men think the time lost in which they are not doing hurt? Let good men make it as much their business and delight to do good. Amici, diem perdidi--Friends, I have lost a day. And let all that are wise, and wish well to themselves, avoid the society of the wicked; for,

[1.] It is very scandalous; for there is no disposition of mind that is a greater reproach to human nature, a greater enemy to human society, a bolder defiance to God and conscience, that has more of the devil's image in it, or is more serviceable to his interests, than a delight to do mischief and to vex, and hurt, and ruin every body.

[2.] It is very dangerous. "Shun those that delight to do mischief as thou tenderest thy own safety; for, whatever friendship they may pretend, one time or other they will do thee mischief; thou wilt ruin thyself if thou dost concur with them (Pr 1:18) and they will ruin thee if thou dost not."

2. "Consider the character of the way itself which thou art warned to shun, compared with the right way which thou art invited to walk in."

(1.) The way of righteousness is light (Pr 4:18): The path of the just, which they have chosen, and in which they walk, is as light; the light shines on their ways (Job 22:28) and makes them both safe and pleasant. Christ is their way and he is the light. They are guided by the word of God and that is a light to their feet; they themselves are light in the Lord and they walk in the light as he is in the light.

[1.] It is a shining light. Their way shines to themselves in the joy and comfort of it; it shines before others in the lustre and honour of it; it shines before men, who see their good works, Mt 5:16. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that walk in the light. It is as the morning-light, which shines out of obscurity (Isa 58:8,10) and puts an end to the works of darkness.

[2.] It is a growing light; it shines more and more, not like the light of a meteor, which soon disappears, or that of a candle, which burns dim and burns down, but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward shining, mounts upward shining. Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. That joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing.

[3.] It will arrive, in the end, at the perfect day. The light of the dayspring will at length be noon-day light, and it is this that the enlightened soul is pressing towards. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves shine as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, Mt 13:43. Their graces and joys shall be all consummate. Therefore it is our wisdom to keep close to the path of the just.

(2.) The way of sin is as darkness, Pr 4:19. The works he had cautioned us not to have fellowship with are works of darkness. What true pleasure and satisfaction can those have who know no pleasure and satisfaction but what they have in

doing mischief? What sure guide have those that cast God's word behind them? The way of the wicked is dark, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble and yet know not at what they stumble. They fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came by which they were overthrown, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never enquire wherefore God contends with them; they consider not that they do evil, nor what will be in the end of it, Ps 82:5,Job 18:5,6. This is the way we are directed to shun.

16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief;
and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* to fall.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
and drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light,
that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
19 The way of the wicked *is* as darkness:
they know not at what they stumble.
20 My son, attend to my words;
incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Solomon, having warned us not to do evil, here teaches us how to do well. It is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, but we must study the methods of duty.

I. We must have a continual regard to the word of God and endeavour that it may be always ready to us.

1 The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore,

(1.) We must receive them readily: "Incline thy ear to them (Pr 4:20); humbly bow to them; diligently listen to them." The attentive hearing of the word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped that those are resolved to do their duty who are inclined to know it.

(2.) We must retain them carefully (Pr 4:21); we must lay them before us as our rule: "Let them not depart from thy eyes; view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them." We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man: "Keep them in the midst of thy heart, as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing." Let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

2 The reason why we must thus make much of the words of wisdom is because they will be both food and physic to us, like the tree of life, Re 22:2,Eze 47:12. Those that seek and find them, find and keep them, shall find in them,

(1.) Food: For they are life unto those that find them, Pr 4:22. As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained. We could not live without it; we may by faith live upon it.

(2.) Physic. They are health to all their flesh, to the whole man, both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight. They are health to all flesh, so the LXX. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are a medicine to all their flesh (so the word is), to all their corruptions, for they are called flesh, to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh. There is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

II. We must keep a watchful eye and a strict hand upon all the motions of our inward man, Pr 4:23. Here is,

1. A great duty required by the laws of wisdom, and in order to our getting and preserving wisdom: Keep thy heart with all diligence. God, who gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them: Man, woman, keep thy heart; take heed to thy spirit, De 4:9. We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard, accordingly, upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt and

getting hurt, from being defiled by sin and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep a conscience void of offence; keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects and in due bounds. Keep them with all keepings (so the word is); there are many ways of keeping things--by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, Jer 17:9. Or above all keepings; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes (Job 31:1), keep our tongues (Ps 34:13), keep our feet (Ec 5:1), but, above all, keep our hearts.

2. A good reason given for this care, because out of it are the issues of life. Out of a heart well kept will flow living issues, good products, to the glory of God and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

III. We must set a watch before the door of our lips, that we offend not with out tongue (Pr 4:24): Put away from thee a froward mouth and perverse lips. Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a great deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must conceive a great dread and detestation of all manner of evil words, cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, brawling, filthiness, and foolish talking, all which come from a froward mouth and perverse lips, that will not be governed either by reason or religion, but contradict both, and which are as unsightly and ill-favoured before God as a crooked distorted mouth drawn awry is before men. All manner of tongue sins, we must, by constant watchfulness and stedfast resolution, put from us, put far from us, abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil and fearing to learn any such words.

IV. We must make a covenant with our eyes: "Let them look right on and straight before thee, Pr 4:24. Let the eye be fixed

and not wandering; let it not rove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted form good and ensnared in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thy eye be single and not divided; let thy intentions be sincere and uniform, and look not asquint at any by-end." We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the prize of the high calling, and direct all towards that. Oculum in metam--The eye upon the goal.

V. We must act considerately in all we do (Pr 4:26): Ponder the path of thy feet, weigh it (so the word is); "put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done, or art about to do, in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord and whether it will end well." We must consider our past ways and examine what we have done, and our present ways, what we are doing, whither we are going, and see that we walk circumspectly. It concerns us to consider what are the duties and what the difficulties, what are the advantages and what the dangers, of our way, that we may act accordingly. "Do nothing rashly."

VI. We must act with steadiness, caution, and consistency: "Let all thy ways be established (Pr 4:26) and be not unstable in them, as the double-minded man is; halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; turn not to the right hand not to the left, for there are errors on both hands, and Satan gains his point if he prevails to draw us aside either way. Be very careful to remove thy foot from evil; take heed of extremes, for in them there is evil, and let thy eyes look right on, that thou mayest keep the golden mean." Those that would approve themselves wise must always be watchful.

21 Let them not depart from thine eyes;
keep them in the midst of thine heart.
22 For they *are* life unto those that find them,
and health to all their flesh.
23 Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it *are* the issues of life.

24 Put away from thee a froward mouth,
and perverse lips put far from thee.
25 Let thine eyes look right on,
and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
26 Ponder the path of thy feet,
and let all thy ways be established.
27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:
remove thy foot from evil.

Proverbs-5

Warning against Unchastity

1 My son, attend unto my wisdom,
and bow thine ear to my understanding:
2 that thou mayest regard discretion,
and *that* thy lips may keep knowledge.
3 For the lips of a strange woman drop *as* a honeycomb,
and her mouth *is* smoother than oil:

Here we have,

I. A solemn preface, to introduce the caution which follows, Pr 5:1,2. Solomon here addresses himself to his son, that is, to all young men, as unto his children, whom he has an affection for and some influence upon. In God's name, he demands attention; for he writes by divine inspiration, and is a prophet, though he begins not with, Thus saith the Lord. "Attend, and bow thy ear; not only hear what is said, and read what is written, but apply thy mind to it and consider it diligently." To gain attention he urges,

1 The excellency of his discourse: "It is my wisdom, my understanding; if I undertake to teach thee wisdom I cannot prescribe any thing to be more properly called so; moral philosophy is my philosophy, and that which is to be learned in my school."

2 The usefulness of it: "Attend to what I say,"

(1.) "That thou mayest act wisely--that thou mayest regard discretion." Solomon's lectures are not designed to fill our heads with notions, with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation, but to guide us in the government of ourselves, that we may act prudently, so as becomes us and so as will be for our true interest.

(2.) "That thou mayest speak wisely--that thy lips may keep knowledge, and thou mayest have it ready at thy tongue's end" (as we say), "for the benefit of those with whom thou dost converse." The priest's lips are said to keep knowledge (Mal 2:7); but those that are ready and mighty in the scriptures may not only in their devotions, but in their discourses, be spiritual priests.

II The caution itself, and that is to abstain from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness. Some apply this figuratively, and by the adulterous woman here understand idolatry, or false doctrine, which tends to debauch men's minds and manners, or the sensual appetite, to which it may as fitly as any thing be applied; but the primary scope of it is plainly to warn us against seventh-commandment sins, which youth is so prone to, the temptations to which are so violent, the examples of which are so many, and which, where admitted, are so destructive to all the seeds of virtue in the soul that it is not strange that Solomon's cautions against it are so very pressing and so often repeated. Solomon here, as a faithful watchman, gives fair warning to all, as they regard their lives and comforts, to dread this sin, for it will certainly be their ruin. Two things we are here warned to take heed of:--

1. That we do not listen to the charms of this sin. It is true the lips of a strange woman drop as a honey-comb (Pr 5:3); the pleasures of fleshly lust are very tempting (like the wine that gives its colour in the cup and moves itself aright); its mouth, the kisses of its mouth, the words of its mouth, are smoother than oil, that the poisonous pill may go down glibly and there may be no suspicion of harm in it. But consider,

(1.) How fatal the consequences will be. What fruit will the sinner have of his honey and oil when the end will be,

[1.] The terrors of conscience: It is bitter as wormwood, Pr 5:4. What was luscious in the mouth rises in the stomach and turns sour there; it cuts, in the reflection, like a two-edged sword; take it which way you will, it wounds. Solomon could speak by experience, Ec 7:26.

[2.] The torments of hell. If some that have been guilty of this sin have repented and been saved, yet the direct tendency of the sin is to destruction of body and soul; the feet of it go down to death, nay, they take hold on hell, to pull it to the sinner, as if the damnations slumbered too long, Pr 5:4. Those that are entangled in this sin should be reminded that there is but a step between them and hell, and that they are ready to drop into it.

(2.) Consider how false the charms are. The adulteress flatters and speaks fair, her words are honey and oil, but she will deceive those that hearken to her: Her ways are movable, that thou canst not know them; she often changes her disguise, and puts on a great variety of false colours, because, if she be rightly known, she is certainly hated. Proteus-like, she puts on many shapes, that she may keep in with those whom she has a design upon. And what does she aim at with all this art and management? Nothing but to keep them from pondering the path of life, for she knows that, if they once come to do that, she shall certainly lose them. Those are ignorant of Satan's devices who do not understand that the great thing he drives at in all his temptations is,

[1.] To keep them from choosing the path of life, to prevent them from being religious and from going to heaven, that, being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it.

[2.] In order hereunto, to keep them from pondering the path of life, from considering how reasonable it is that they should

walk in that path, and how much it will be for their advantage. Be it observed, to the honour of religion, that it certainly gains its point with all those that will but allow themselves the liberty of a serious thought and will weigh things impartially in an even balance, and that the devil has no way of securing men in his interests but by diverting them with continual amusements of one kind or another from the calm and sober consideration of the things that belong to their peace. And uncleanness is a sin that does as much as any thing blind the understanding, sear the conscience, and keep people from pondering the path of life. Whoredom takes away the heart, Ho 4:11.

2. That we do not approach the borders of this sin, Pr 5:7,8.

(1.) This caution is introduced with a solemn preface: "Hear me now therefore, O you children! whoever you are that read or hear these lines, take notice of what I say, and mix faith with it, treasure it up, and depart not from the words of my mouth, as those will do that hearken to the words of the strange woman. Do not only receive what I say, for the present merely, but cleave to it, and let it be ready to thee, and of force with thee, when thou art most violently assaulted by the temptation."

(2.) The caution itself is very pressing: "Remove thy way far from her; if thy way should happen to lie near her, and thou shouldst have a fair pretence of being led by business within the reach of her charms, yet change thy way, and alter the course of it, rather than expose thyself to danger; come not nigh the door of her house; go on the other side of the street, nay, go through some other street, though it be about." This intimates,

[1.] That we ought to have a very great dread and detestation of the sin. We must fear it as we would a place infected with the plague; we must loathe it as the odour of carrion, that we will not come near. Then we are likely to preserve our purity when we conceive a rooted antipathy to all fleshly lusts.

[2.] That we ought industriously to avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin or a step towards it. Those that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. Such tinder there is in the corrupt nature that it is madness, upon any pretence whatsoever, to come near the sparks. If we thrust ourselves into temptation, we mocked God when we prayed, Lead us not into temptation.

[3.] That we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, and not to be so confident of the strength of our own resolutions as to venture upon the brink of sin, with a promise to ourselves that hitherto we will come and no further.

[4.] That whatever has become a snare to us and an occasion of sin, though it be as a right eye and a right hand, we must pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from us, must part with that which is dearest to us rather than hazard our own souls; this is our Saviour's command, Mt 5:28-30.

(3.) The arguments which Solomon here uses to enforce this caution are taken from the same topic with those before, the many mischiefs which attend this sin.

[1.] It blasts the reputation. "Thou wilt give thy honour unto others (Pr 5:9); thou wilt lose it thyself; thou wilt put into the hand of each of thy neighbours a stone to throw at thee, for they will all, with good reason, cry shame on thee, will despise thee, and trample on thee, as a foolish men." Whoredom is a sin that makes men contemptible and base, and no man of sense or virtue will care to keep company with one that keeps company with harlots.

[2.] It wastes the time, gives the years, the years of youth, the flower of men's time, unto the cruel, "that base lust of thine, which with the utmost cruelty wars against the soul, that base harlot which pretends an affection for thee, but really hunts for the precious life." Those years that should be given to the

honour of a gracious God are spent in the service of a cruel sin.

[3.] It ruins the estate (Pr 5:10): "Strangers will be filled with thy wealth, which thou art but entrusted with as a steward for thy family; and the fruit of thy labours, which should be provision for thy own house, will be in the house of a stranger, that neither has right to it nor will ever thank thee for it."

[4.] It is destructive to the health, and shortens men's days: Thy flesh and thy body will be consumed by it, Pr 5:11. The lusts of uncleanness not only war against the soul, which the sinner neglects and is in no care about, but they war against the body too, which he is so indulgent of and is in such care to please and pamper, such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful lusts are they. Those that give themselves to work uncleanness with greediness waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and often have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers, by which the number of their months is cut off in the midst and they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust.

[5.] It will fill the mind with horror, if ever conscience be awakened. "Though thou art merry now, sporting thyself in thy own deceivings, yet thou wilt certainly mourn at the last, Pr 5:11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection, when the sin is set before thee in its own colours." Sooner or later it will bring sorrow, either when the soul is humbled and brought to repentance or when the flesh and body are consumed, either by sickness, when conscience flies in the sinner's face, or by the grave; when the body is rotting there, the soul is racking in the torments of hell, where the worm dies not, and "Son, remember," is the constant peal. Solomon here brings in the convinced sinner reproaching himself, and aggravating his own folly. He will then most bitterly lament it.

First, That because he hated to be reformed he therefore hated to be informed, and could not endure either to be taught his

duty (How have I hated not only the discipline of being instructed, but the instruction itself, though all true and good!) or to be told of his faults--My heart despised reproof, Pr 5:12. He cannot but own that those who had the charge of him, parents, ministers, had done their part; they had been his teachers; they had instructed him, had given him good counsel and fair warning (Pr 5:13); but to his own shame and confusion does he speak it, and therein justifies God in all the miseries that were brought upon him, he had not obeyed their voice, for indeed he never inclined his ear to those that instructed him, never minded what they said nor admitted the impressions of it. Note, Those who have had a good education and do not live up to it will have a great deal to answer for another day; and those who will not now remember what they were taught, to conform themselves to it, will be made to remember it as an aggravation of their sin, and consequently of their ruin.

Secondly, That by the frequent acts of sin the habits of it were so rooted and confirmed that his heart was fully set in him to commit it (Pr 5:14): I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly. When he came into the synagogue, or into the courts of the temple, to worship God with other Israelites, his unclean heart was full of wanton thoughts and desires and his eyes of adultery. Reverence of the place and company, and of the work that was doing, could not restrain him, but he was almost as wicked and vile there as any where. No sin will appear more frightful to an awakened conscience than the profanation of holy things; nor will any aggravation of sin render it more exceedingly sinful than the place we are honoured with in the congregation and assembly, and the advantages we enjoy thereby. Zimri and Cozbi avowed their villany in the sight of Moses and all the congregation (Nu 25:6), and heart-adultery is as open to God, and must needs be most offensive to him, when we draw nigh to him in religious exercises. I was in all evil in defiance of the magistrates and judges, and their assemblies; so some understand it. Others refer it to the evil of punishment, not to the evil of sin: "I was made an example, a spectacle to the world. I was under almost all God's sore judgments in the

midst of the congregation of Israel, set up for a mark. I stood up and cried in the congregation," Job 30:28. Let that be avoided which will be thus rued at last.

4 but her end is bitter as wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death;
her steps take hold on hell.
6 Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life,
her ways are movable, *that* thou canst not know *them*.
7 Hear me now therefore, O ye children,
and depart not from the words of my mouth.
8 Remove thy way far from her,
and come not nigh the door of her house:
9 lest thou give thine honor unto others,
and thy years unto the cruel:
10 lest strangers be filled with thy wealth;
and thy labors *be* in the house of a stranger;
11 and thou mourn at the last,
when thy flesh and thy body are consumed,
12 and say, How have I hated instruction,
and my heart despised reproof;
13 and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers,
nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!
14 I was almost in all evil
in the midst of the congregation and assembly.
15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern,
and running waters out of thine own well.

Solomon, having shown the great evil that there is in adultery and fornication, and all such lewd and filthy courses, here prescribes remedies against them.

I. Enjoy with satisfaction the comforts of lawful marriage, which was ordained for the prevention of uncleanness, and therefore ought to be made use of in time, lest it should not prove effectual for the cure of that which it might have prevented. Let none complain that God has dealt unkindly with them in forbidding them those pleasures which they have a natural desire of, for he has graciously provided for the

regular gratification of them. "Thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree of the garden, but choose thee out one, which thou pleasest, and of that thou mayest freely eat; nature will be content with that, but lust with nothing."

God, in thus confining men to one, has been so far from putting any hardship upon them that he has really consulted their true interest; for, as Mr. Herbert observes, "If God had laid all common, certainly man would have been the encloser."--Church-porch. Solomon here enlarges much upon this, not only prescribing it as an antidote, but urging it as an argument against fornication, that the allowed pleasures of marriage (however wicked wits may ridicule them, who are factors for the unclean spirit) far transcend all the false forbidden pleasures of whoredom.

1. Let young men marry, marry and not burn. Have a cistern, a well of thy own (Pr 5:15), even the wife of thy youth, Pr 5:18. Wholly abstain, or wed.--Herbert. "The world is wide, and there are varieties of accomplishments, among which thou mayest please thyself."

2. Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her, not only because she is the wife that he himself has chosen and he ought to be pleased with his own choice, but because she is the wife that God in his providence appointed for him and he ought much more to be pleased with the divine appointment, pleased with her because she is his own. Let thy fountain be blessed (Pr 5:18); think thyself very happy in her, look upon her as a blessed wife, let her have thy blessing, pray daily for her, and then rejoice with her. Those comforts we are likely to have joy of that are sanctified to us by prayer and the blessing of God. It is not only allowed us, but commanded us, to be pleasant with our relations; and it particularly becomes yoke-fellows to rejoice together and in each other. Mutual delight is the bond of mutual fidelity. It is not only taken for granted that the bridegroom rejoices over his bride (Isa 62:5), but given for law. Ec 9:9, Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life. Those take not their comforts where God has appointed who are

jovial and merry with their companions abroad, but sour and morose with their families at home.

3. Let him be fond of his wife and love her dearly (Pr 5:19): Let her be as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, such as great men sometimes kept tame in their houses and played with. Desire no better diversion from severe study and business than the innocent and pleasant conversation of thy own wife; let her lie in thy bosom, as the poor man's ewe-lamb did in his (2Sa 12:3), and do thou repose thy head in hers, and let that satisfy thee at all times; and seek not for pleasure in any other. "Err thou always in her love. If thou wilt suffer thy love to run into an excess, and wilt be dotingly fond of any body, let it be only of thy own wife, where there is least danger of exceeding." This is drinking waters, to quench the thirst of thy appetite, out of thy own cistern, and running waters, which are clear, and sweet, and wholesome, out of thy own well, Pr 5:15,1Co 7:2,3.

4. Let him take delight in his children and look upon them with pleasure (Pr 5:16,17): "Look upon them as streams from thy own pure fountains" (the Jews are said to come forth out of the waters of Judah, Isa 48:1), "so that they are parts of thyself, as the streams are of the fountain. Keep to thy own wife, and thou shalt have,"

(1.) "A numerous offspring, like rivers of water, which run in abundance, and they shall be dispersed abroad, matched into other families, whereas those that commit whoredom shall not increase," Ho 4:10.

(2.) "A peculiar offspring, which shall be only thy own, whereas the children of whoredom, that are fathered upon thee, are, probably, not so, but, for aught thou knowest, are the offspring of strangers, and yet thou must keep them."

(3.) "A creditable offspring, which are an honour to thee, and which thou mayest send abroad, and appear with, in the streets, whereas a spurious brood is thy disgrace, and that

which thou art ashamed to own." In this matter, virtue has all the pleasure and honour in it; justly therefore it is called wisdom.

5. Let him then scorn the offer of forbidden pleasures when he is always ravished with the love of a faithful virtuous wife; let him consider what an absurdity it will be for him to be ravished with a strange woman (Pr 5:20), to be in love with a filthy harlot, and embrace the bosom of a stranger, which, if he had any sense of honour or virtue, he would loathe the thoughts of. "Why wilt thou be so sottish, such an enemy to thyself, as to prefer puddle-water, and that poisoned too and stolen, before pure living waters out of thy own well?" Note, If the dictates of reason may be heard, the laws of virtue will be obeyed.

II. "See the eye of God always upon thee and let his fear rule in thy heart," Pr 5:21. Those that live in this sin promise themselves secresy (the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Job 24:15); but to what purpose, when it cannot be hidden from God? For,

1. He sees it. The ways of man, all his motions, all his actions, are before the eyes of the Lord, all the workings of the heart and all the outgoings of the life, that which is done ever so secretly and disguised ever so artfully. God sees it in a true light, and knows it with all its causes, circumstances, and consequences. He does not cast an eye upon men's ways now and then, but they are always actually in his view and under his inspection; and darest thou sin against God in his sight, and do that wickedness under his eye which thou durst not do in the presence of a man like thyself?

2. He will call the sinner to an account for it; for he not only sees, but ponders all his goings, judges concerning them, as one that will shortly judge the sinner for them. Every action is weighed, and shall be brought into judgment (Ec 12:14), which is a good reason why we should ponder the path of our feet (Pr 4:26), and so judge ourselves that we may not be judged.

III. "Foresee the certain ruin of those that go on still in their trespasses." Those that live in this sin promise themselves impunity, but they deceive themselves; their sin will find them out, Pr 5:22,23. The apostle gives the sense of these verses in a few words. Heb 13:4, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

1. It is a sin which men with great difficulty shake off the power of. When the sinner is old and weak his lusts are strong and active, in calling to remembrance the days of his youth, Eze 23:19. Thus his own iniquities having seized the wicked himself by his own consent, and he having voluntarily surrendered himself a captive to them, he is held in the cords of his own sins, and such full possession they have gained of him that he cannot extricate himself, but in the greatness of his folly (and what greater folly could there be than to yield himself a servant to such cruel task-masters?) he shall go astray, and wander endlessly. Uncleanness is a sin from which, when once men have plunged themselves into it, they very hardly and very rarely recover themselves.

2. It is a sin which, if it be not forsaken, men cannot possibly escape the punishment of; it will unavoidably be their ruin. As their own iniquities do arrest them in the reproaches of conscience and present rebukes (Jer 7:19), so their own iniquities shall arrest them and bind them over to the judgments of God. There needs no prison, no chains; they shall be holden in the cords of their own sins, as the fallen angels, being incurably wicked, are thereby reserved in chains of darkness. The sinner, who, having been often reproved, hardens his neck, shall die at length without instruction.

Having had general warnings sufficient given him already, he shall have no particular warnings, but he shall die without seeing his danger beforehand, shall die because he would not receive instruction, but in the greatness of his folly would go astray; and so shall his doom be, he shall never find the way home again. Those that are so foolish as to choose the way of sin are justly left of God to themselves to go in it till they come

to that destruction which it leads to, which is a good reason why we should guard with watchfulness and resolution against the allurements of the sensual appetite.

16 Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad,
and rivers of waters in the streets.
17 Let them be only thine own,
and not strangers' with thee.
18 Let thy fountain be blessed:
and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.
19 *Let her be as* the loving hind and pleasant roe;
let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;
and be thou ravished always with her love.
20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman,
and embrace the bosom of a stranger?
21 For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the Lord,
and he pondereth all his goings.
22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself,
and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.
23 He shall die without instruction;
and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Proverbs-6

Warning against Idleness and Falsehood

1 My son, if thou be surety for thy friend,
if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,

It is the excellency of the word of God that it teaches us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion; and this is one good rule, To avoid suretiship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

1. We must look upon suretiship as a snare and decline it accordingly, Ps 6:1,2. "It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though it be one whose circumstances he

is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency, but much more to strike the hands with a stranger, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest." Or the stranger here with whom the hand is stricken is the creditor, "the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, that is, thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time, know that thou art snared with the words of thy mouth; it was easily done, with a word's speaking; it was but setting thy hand to a paper, a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognizance entered into. But it will not be so easily got clear of; thou art in a snare more than thou art aware of." See how little reason we have to make light of tongue-sins; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind: they are often snares.

2. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed, to get out of it, Ps 6:3-5. It sleeps for the present; we hear nothing of it. The debt is not demanded; the principal says, "Never fear, we will take care of it." But still the bond is in force, interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will and perhaps may be hasty and severe, the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family, to pay that which thou didst neither nor drink for.

And therefore deliver thyself; rest not till either the creditor give up the bond or the principal give thee counter-security; when thou art come into the hand of thy friend, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten or give ill language (that will provoke and make ill worse), but humble thyself, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to him, and give him all the fair words thou canst; engage thy friends to speak for thee; leave no stone unturned till thou hast

agreed with thy adversary and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast got through. "Give not sleep to thy eyes till thou hast delivered thyself. Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed, as a roe or a bird delivers herself out of this snare of the fowler or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve." See what care God, in his word, has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them. Godliness has precepts, as well as promises, relating to the life that now is.

But how are we to understand this? We are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety, or bail, for another; it may be a piece of justice or charity; he that has friends may see cause in this instance to show himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence. Paul became bound for Onesimus, Phile 1:19. We may help a young man into business that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our word for him, and so do him a great kindness without any detriment to ourselves. But,

1. It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, for it is an incumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong or suffering wrong. The borrower is servant to the lender, and makes himself very much a slave to this world. Christians therefore, who are bought with a price, should not thus, without need, make themselves the servants of men, 1Co 7:23.

2. It is great folly to entangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts, that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading, as we say, out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but, some time or other, it will come upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon it as his own debt. Ecclesiasticus viii. 13, Be not surety above thy power, for, if thou be surety, thou must take care to pay it.

3. It is a necessary piece of after-wit, if we have foolishly entangled ourselves, to get out of the snare as fast as we can, to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission to make ourselves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better to humble ourselves for an accommodation than to ruin ourselves by our stiffness and haughtiness. Make sure thy friend by getting clear from thy engagements from him; for rash suretiship is as much the bane of friendship as that which is prudent is sometimes the bond of it. Let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God (1Ti 5:22), for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts; and, if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God. "Humble thyself to him; make sure of Christ thy friend, to intercede for thee; pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain. Give not sleep to thy eyes nor slumber to thy eye lids, till this be done."

2 thou art snared with the words of thy mouth,
thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.
3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,
when thou art come into the hand of thy friend;
go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.
4 Give not sleep to thine eyes,
nor slumber to thine eyelids.
5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand *of the hunter,*
and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.
6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard;
consider her ways, and be wise:

Solomon, in these verses, addresses himself to the sluggard who loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash suretiship. He speaks here to the sluggard,

I. By way of instruction, Ps 6:6-8. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is to take him to school himself, for, if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him (dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teachers) and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,

1 The master he is sent to school to: Go to the ant, to the bee, so the LXX. Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser that the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated that he may learn wisdom from the meanest in sects and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instruction to ourselves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

2 The application of mind that is required in order to learn of this master: Consider her ways. The sluggard is so because he does not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or the works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, Php 3:17.

3. The lesson that is to be learned. In general, learn wisdom, consider, and be wise; that is the thing we are to aim at in all our learning, not only to be knowing, but to be wise. In particular, learn to provide meat in summer; that is,

(1.) We must prepare for hereafter, and not mind the present time only, not eat up all, and lay up nothing, but in gathering time treasure up for a spending time. Thus provident we must be in our worldly affairs, not with an anxious care, but with a prudent foresight; lay in for winter, for straits and wants that may happen, and for old age; much more in the affairs of our souls. We must provide meat and food, that which is

substantial and will stand us in stead, and which we shall most need. In the enjoyment of the means of grace provide for the want of them, in life for death, in time for eternity; in the state of probation and preparation we must provide for the state of retribution.

(2.) We must take pains, and labour in our business, yea, though we labour under inconveniences. Even in summer, when the weather is hot, the ant is busy in gathering food and laying it up, and does not indulge her ease, nor take her pleasure, as the grasshopper, that sings and sports in the summer and then perishes in the winter. The ants help one another; if one have a grain of corn too big for her to carry home, her neighbours will come in to her assistance.

(3.) We must improve opportunities, we must gather when it is to be had, as the ant does in summer and harvest, in the proper time. It is our wisdom to improve the season while that favours us, because that may be done then which cannot be done at all, or not so well done, at another time. Walk while you have the light.

4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, which will aggravate our slothfulness and neglect if we idle away our time. She has no guides, overseers, and rulers, but does it of herself, following the instinct of nature; the more shame for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, to direct us in it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.

II. By way of reproof, Ps 6:9-11. In these verses,

1. He expostulates with the sluggard, rebuking him and reasoning with him, calling him to his work, as a master does

his servant that has over-slept himself: "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? How long wouldst thou sleep if one would let thee alone? When wilt thou think it time to arise?" Sluggards should be roused with a How long? This is applicable,

(1.) To those that are slothful in the way of work and duty, in the duties of their particular calling as men or their general calling as Christians. "How long wilt thou waste thy time, and when wilt thou be a better husband of it? How long wilt thou love thy ease, and when wilt thou learn to deny thyself, and to take pains? How long wilt thou bury thy talents, and when wilt thou begin to trade with them? How long wilt thou delay, and put off, and trifle away thy opportunities, as one regardless of hereafter; and when wilt thou stir up thyself to do what thou hast to do, which, if it be not done, will leave thee for ever undone?"

(2.) To those that are secure in the way of sin and danger: "Hast thou not slept enough? Is it not far in the day? Does not thy Master call? Are not the Philistines upon thee? When then wilt thou arise?"

2. He exposes the frivolous excuses he makes for himself, and shows how ridiculous he makes himself. When he is roused he stretched himself, and begs, as for alms, for more sleep, more slumber; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure to think of rising, especially of rising to work. But, observe, he promises himself and his master that he will desire but a little more sleep, a little more slumber, and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he deceives himself; the more a slothful temper is indulged the more it prevails; let him sleep awhile, and slumber awhile, and still he is in the same tune; still he asks for a little more sleep, yet a little more; he never thinks he has enough, and yet, when he is called, pretends he will come presently. Thus men's great work is left undone by being put off yet a little longer, de die in diem--from day to day; and they are cheated of all their time by being cheated of the present moments. A little more sleep proves an everlasting sleep. Sleep on now, and take your rest.

3. He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, Ps 6:11.

(1.) Poverty and want will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business. If men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward. He that leaves his concerns at sixes and sevens will soon see them go to wreck and ruin, and bring his noble to nine-pence. Spiritual poverty comes upon those that are slothful in the service of God; those will want oil, when they should use it, that provide it not in their vessels.

(2.) "It will come silently and insensibly, will grow upon thee, and come step by step, as one that travels, but will without fail come at last." It will leave thee as naked as if thou wert stripped by a highwayman; so bishop Patrick.

(3.) "It will come irresistibly, like an armed man, whom thou canst not oppose nor make thy part good against."

7 which having no guide,
overseer, or ruler,
8 provideth her meat in the summer,
and gathereth her food in the harvest.
9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
10 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to sleep:
11 so shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth,
and thy want as an armed man.
12 A naughty person, a wicked man,
walketh with a froward mouth.

Solomon here gives us,

I The characters of one that is mischievous to man and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned, that do nothing, much more those that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a naughty person that is

here spoken of, Heb. A man of Belial; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe,

1. How a man of Belial is here described. He is a wicked man, that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he walks and works his designs with a froward mouth (Ps 6:12), by lying and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He says and does every thing,

(1.) Very artfully and with design. He has the subtlety of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management (Ps 6:13), with his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers. He expresses his malice when he dares not speak out (so some), or, rather, thus he carries on his plot; those about him, whom he makes use of as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has ways of concealing what he does, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve; those only shall be let into the secret that would do any thing he would have them to do. He is a cunning man, and upon the trick; he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be.

(2.) Very spitefully and with ill design. It is not so much ambition or covetousness that is in his heart, as downright frowardness, malice, and ill nature. He aims not so much to enrich and advance himself as to do an ill turn to those about him. He is continually devising one mischief or other, purely for mischief-sake--a man of Belial indeed, of the devil, resembling him not only in subtlety, but in malice.

2. What his doom is (Ps 6:15): His calamity shall come and he shall be broken; he that devised mischief shall fall into mischief. His ruin shall come,

(1.) Without warning. It shall come suddenly: Suddenly shall he be broken, to punish him for all the wicked arts he had to surprise people into his snares.

(2.) Without relief. He shall be irreparably broken, and never able to piece again: He shall be broken without remedy. What relief can he expect that has disobliged all mankind? He shall come to his end and none shall help him, Da 11:45.

II. A catalogue of those things which are in a special manner odious to God, all which are generally to be found in those men of Belial whom he had described in the foregoing verses; and the last of them (which, being the seventh, seems especially to be intended, because he says they are six, yea, seven) is part of his character, that he sows discord. God hates sin; he hates every sin; he can never be reconciled to it; he hates nothing but sin. But there are some sins which he does in a special manner hate; and all those here mentioned are such as are injurious to our neighbour. It is an evidence of the good-will God bears to mankind that those sins are in a special manner provoking to him which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. Therefore the men of Belial must expect their ruin to come suddenly, and without remedy, because their practices are such as the Lord hates and are an abomination to him, Ps 6:16. Those things which God hates it is no thanks to us to hate in others, but we must hate them in ourselves.

1. Haughtiness, conceitedness of ourselves, and contempt of others--a proud look. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first, because it is at the bottom of much sin and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart and hates it there; but, when it prevails to that degree that the show of men's countenance witnesses against them that they overvalue themselves and undervalue all about them, this is in a special manner hateful to him, for then pride is proud of itself and sets shame at defiance.

2. Falsehood, and fraud, and dissimulation. Next to a proud look nothing is more an abomination to God than a lying tongue; nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth. God and all good men hate and abhor lying.

3. Cruelty and blood-thirstiness. The devil was, from the beginning, a liar and a murderer (Joh 8:44), and therefore, as a lying tongue, so hands that shed innocent blood are hateful to God, because they have in them the devil's image and do him service.

4. Subtlety in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, a heart that designs and a head that devises wicked imaginations, that is acquainted with the depths of Satan and knows how to carry on a covetous, envious, revengeful plot, most effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin the more it is an abomination to God.

5. Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin--feet that are swift in running to mischief, as if they were afraid of losing time or were impatient of delay in a thing they are so greedy of. The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry, of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us who go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly.

6. False-witness bearing, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that the wicked imagination can devise, and against which there is least fence. There cannot be a greater affront to God (to whom in an oath appeal is made) nor a greater injury to our neighbour (all whose interests in this world, even the dearest, lie open to an attack of this kind) than knowingly to give in a false testimony. There are seven things which God hates, and lying involves two of them; he hates it, and doubly hates it.

7. Making mischief between relations and neighbours, and using all wicked means possible, not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one

against another. The God of love and peace hates him that sows discord among brethren, for he delights in concord. Those that by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

13 He winketh with his eyes,
he speaketh with his feet,
he teacheth with his fingers;
14 frowardness *is* in his heart,
he deviseth mischief continually;
he soweth discord.
15 Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly;
suddenly shall he be broken without remedy.
16 These six *things* doth the Lord hate;
yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him:
17 a proud look, a lying tongue,
and hands that shed innocent blood,
18 a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,
feet that be swift in running to mischief,
19 a false witness *that* speaketh lies,
and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Warning against Adultery

20 My son, keep thy father's commandment,
and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Here is, I. A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

1. We must look upon the word of God both as a light (Ps 6:23) and as a law, Ps 6:20,23.

(1.) By its arguments it is a light, which our understandings must subscribe to; it is a lamp to our eyes for discovery, and so to our feet for direction. The word of God reveals to us

truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason. Scripture-light is the sure light.

(2.) By its authority it is a law, which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince, so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

2. We must receive it as our father's commandment and the law of our mother, Ps 6:20. It is God's commandment and his law. But,

(1.) Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it, its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it ourselves and find it to be of God; but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them.

(2.) The cautions, counsels, and commands which our parents gave us agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children, when they are grown up, must remember the law of a good mother, as well as the commandment of a good father, Ecclesiasticus iii.

2. The Lord has given the father honour over the children and has confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons.

3. We must retain the word of God and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it.

(1.) We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement (as some do) to get clear of the restraints of a good education: "Keep thy father's commandment, keep it still, and never forsake it."

(2.) We must never lay them by, no, not for a time (Ps 6:21): Bind them continually, not only upon thy hand (as Moses had directed, De 6:8) but upon thy heart. Phylacteries upon the hand were of no value at all, any further than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections in the heart. There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. Tie them about thy neck, as an ornament, a bracelet, or gold chain,--about thy throat (so the word is); let them be a guard upon that pass; tie them about thy throat, that no forbidden fruit may be suffered to go in nor any evil word suffered to go out through the throat; and thus a great deal of sin would be prevented. Let the word of God be always ready to us, and let us feel the impressions of it, as of that which is bound upon our hearts and about our necks.

4. We must make use of the word of God and of the benefit that is designed us by it. If we bind it continually upon our hearts,

(1.) It will be our guide, and we must follow its direction. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee (Ps 6:22); it shall lead thee into, and lead thee in, the good and right way, shall lead thee from, and lead thee out of, every sinful dangerous path. It will say unto thee, when thou art ready to turn aside, This is the way; walk in it. It will be that to thee that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness. Be led by that, let it be thy rule, and then thou shalt be led by the Spirit; he will be thy monitor and support."

(2.) It will be our guard, and we must put ourselves under the protection of it: "When thou sleepest, and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, it shall keep thee; thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thyself so." If we govern ourselves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty God has commanded to us, we may shelter ourselves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God does and will command for us.

(3.) It will be our companion, and we must converse with it: "When thou awakest in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy waking minutes, if thou pleasest, it shall talk with thee, and entertain thee with pleasant meditations in the night-watch; when thou awakest in the morning, and art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee about it, and help thee to contrive for the best," Ps 1:2 The word of God has something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it, would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day if we would begin with him in the morning and let his word be the subject of our first thoughts. When I awake I am still with thee; we are so if the word be still with us.

(4.) It will be our life; for, as the law is a lamp and a light for the present, so the reproofs of instruction are the way of life. Those reproofs of the word which not only show us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

21 bind them continually upon thine heart,
and tie them about thy neck.
22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee;
when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee;
and *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.
23 For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light;
and reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life:
24 to keep thee from the evil woman,
from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.
25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart;
neither let her take thee with her eyelids.
26 For by means of a whorish woman *a man is brought* to a piece of bread:
and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.

Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness.

1. When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated and so largely inculcated.

(1.) One great kindness God designed men, in giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, Ps 6:24. "The reproofs of instruction are therefore the way of life to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman, who will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, who pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee." Those that will be wrought upon by flattery make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who would avoid that snare must take well-instructed reproofs as great kindnesses and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, Pr 27:5,6.

(2.) The greatest kindness we can do ourselves is to keep at a distance from this sin, and to look upon it with the utmost dread and detestation (Ps 6:25): "Lust not after her beauty, no, not in thy heart, for, if thou dost, thou hast there already committed adultery with her. Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets; let her not take thee with her eye-lids. Her looks are arrows and fiery darts; they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one, it is worse than Egyptian slavery."

2. Divers arguments Solomon here urges to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

(1.) It is a sin that impoverishes men, wastes their estates, and reduces them to beggary (Ps 6:26): By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread; many a man has been so, who has purchased the ruin of his body and soul at the expense of his wealth. The prodigal son spent his living on harlots, so that he brought himself to be fellow-commoner

with the swine. And that poverty must needs lie heavily which men bring themselves into by their own folly, Job 31:12.

(2.) It threatens death; it kills men: The adulteress will hunt for the precious life, perhaps designedly, as Delilah for Samson's, at least, eventually, the sin strikes at the life. Adultery was punished by the law of Moses as a capital crime. The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. Every one knew this. Those therefore who, for the gratifying of a base lust, would lay themselves open to the law, could be reckoned no better than self-murderers.

(3.) It brings guilt upon the conscience and debauches that. He that touches his neighbour's wife, with an immodest touch, cannot be innocent, Ps 6:29. [1.] He is in imminent danger of adultery, as he that takes fire in his bosom, or goes upon hot coals, is in danger of being burnt. The way of this sin is down-hill, and those that venture upon the temptations to it hardly escape the sin itself. The fly fools away her life by playing the wanton with the flames. It is a deep pit, which it is madness to venture upon the brink of. He that keeps company with those of ill fame, that goes in with them, and touches them, cannot long preserve his innocency; he thrusts himself into temptation and so throws himself out of God's protection.

[2.] He that commits adultery is in the high road to destruction. The bold presumptuous sinner says, "I may venture upon the sin and yet escape the punishment; I shall have peace though I go on." He might as well say, I will take fire into my bosom and not burn my clothes, or I will go upon hot coals and not burn my feet. He that goes into his neighbour's wife, however he holds himself, God will not hold him guiltless. The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.

(4.) It ruins the reputation and entails perpetual infamy upon that. It is a much more scandalous sin than stealing is, Ps 6:30-33. Perhaps it is not so in the account of men, at least not in our day. A thief is sent to the stocks, to the gaol, to Bridewell, to the gallows, while the vile adulterer goes unpunished, nay, with many, unblemished; he dares boast of his villanies, and

they are made but a jest of. But, in the account of God and his law, adultery was much the more enormous crime; and, if God is the fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it.

[1.] As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extreme necessity, if he stole meat for the satisfying of his soul when he was hungry, though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime that men do not despise him, do not expose him to ignominy, but pity him. Hunger will break through stone-walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him. Nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, if he be found stealing, and the evidence be ever so plain upon him, yet he shall only make restitution seven-fold. The law of Moses appointed that he who stole a sheep should restore four-fold, and an ox five-fold (Ex 22:1); accordingly David adjudged, 2Sa 12:6. But we may suppose in those cases concerning which the law had not made provision the judges afterwards settled the penalties in proportion to the crimes, according to the equity of the law. Now, if he that stole an ox out of a man's field must restore five-fold, it was reasonable that he that stole a man's goods out of his house should restore seven-fold; for there was no law to put him to death, as with us, for burglary and robbery on the highway, and of this worst kind of theft Solomon here speaks; the greatest punishment was that a man might be forced to give all the substance of his house to satisfy the law and his blood was not attainted. But,

[2.] Committing adultery is a more heinous crime; Job calls it so, and an iniquity to be punished by the judge, Job 31:11. When Nathan would convict David of the evil of his adultery he did it by a parable concerning the most aggravated theft, which, in David's judgment, deserved to be punished with death (2Sa 12:5), and then showed him that his sin was more exceedingly sinful than that.

First, It is a greater reproach to a man's reason, for he cannot excuse it, as a thief may, by saying that it was to satisfy his hunger, but must own that it was to gratify a brutish lust which would break the hedge of God's law, not for want, but for

wantonness. Therefore whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding, and deserves to be stigmatized as an arrant fool.

Secondly, It is more severely punished by the law of God. A thief suffered only a pecuniary mulct, but the adulterer suffered death. The thief steals to satisfy his soul, but the adulterer destroys his own soul, and falls an unpitied sacrifice to the justice both of God and man. "Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself." This may be applied to the spiritual and eternal death which is the consequence of sin; he that does it wounds his conscience, corrupts his rational power, extinguishes all the sparks of the spiritual life, and exposes himself to the wrath of God for ever, and thus destroys his own soul.

Thirdly, The infamy of it is indelible, Ps 6:33. It will be a wound to his good name, a dishonour to his family, and, though the guilt of it may be done away by repentance, the reproach of it never will, but will stick to his memory when he is gone. David's sin in the matter of Uriah was not only a perpetual blemish upon his own character, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme his name too.

(5.) It exposes the adulterer to the rage of the jealous husband, whose honour he puts such an affront upon, Ps 6:34,35. He that touches his neighbour's wife, and is familiar with her, gives him occasion for jealousy, much more he that debauches her, which, if kept ever so secret, might then be discovered by the waters of jealousy, Nu 5:12. "When discovered, thou hadst better meet a bear robbed of her whelps than the injured husband, who, in the case of adultery, will be as severe an avenger of his own honour as, in the case of manslaughter, of his brother's blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the rage of a man. Such jealousy is; it is strong as death and cruel as the grave.

In the day of vengeance, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent towards thee, as he would

perhaps towards one that had robbed him. He will not accept of any commutation, any composition; he will not regard any ransom. Though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him, he will not rest content with any thing less than the execution of the law. Thou must be stoned to death. If a man would give all the substance of his house, it would atone for a theft (Ps 6:31), but not for adultery; in that case it would utterly be contemned. Stand in awe therefore, and sin not; expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment's sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end."

27 Can a man take fire in his bosom,
and his clothes not be burned?
28 Can one go upon hot coals,
and his feet not be burned?
29 So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife;
whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.
30 *Men* do not despise a thief,
if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;
31 but *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold;
he shall give all the substance of his house.
32 *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding:
he *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul.
33 A wound and dishonor shall he get;
and his reproach shall not be wiped away.
34 For jealousy *is* the rage of a man:
therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
35 He will not regard any ransom;
neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

Proverbs-7

The Wiles of a Harlot

1 My son, keep my words,
and lay up my commandments with thee.

These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that, Pr 6:20, &c., and ending (Ps 7:5) as that did (Ps 7:24), To keep thee from the strange woman; that is it he aims at; only there he had said, Keep thy father's commandment, here (which comes all to one), Keep my commandments, for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God's name; for it is God's commandments that we are to keep, his words, his law. The word of God must be to us,

1. As that which we are most careful of. We must keep it as our treasure; we must lay up God's commandments with us, lay them up safely, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one, Ps 7:1. We must keep it as our life: Keep my commandments and live (Ps 7:2), not only, "Keep them, and you shall live;" but, "Keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them." It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for by it he lives, and not by bread alone.

2. As that which we are most tender of: Keep my law as the apple of thy eye. A little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it. We pray, with David, that God would keep us as the apple of his eye (Ps 17:8), that our lives and comforts may be precious in his sight; and they shall be so (Zec 2:8) if we be in like manner tender of his law and afraid of the least violation of it. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking, as needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the apple of our eye; the law is light; the law in the heart is the eye of the soul.

3. As that which we are proud of and would be ever mindful of (Ps 7:3): "Bind them upon thy fingers; let them be precious to thee; look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond-ring, as the signet on thy right hand; wear them continually as thy wedding-ring, the badge of thy espousals to God. Look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. Bind them on thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, as that which is graven upon the palms of thy hands."

4. As that which we are fond of and are ever thinking of: Write them upon the table of thy heart, as the names of the friends we dearly love, we say, are written in our hearts. let the word of God dwell richly in us, and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written (Jer 17:1) let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise (Heb 8:10, I will write my law in their hearts), which makes the precept practicable and easy.

5. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with (Ps 7:4): "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, whom I dearly love and take delight in; and call understanding thy kinswoman, to whom thou art nearly allied, and for whom thou hast a pure affection; call her thy friend, whom thou courtest." We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it.

6. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us from the strange woman, from sin, that flattering but destroying thing, that adulteress; particularly from the sin of uncleanness, Ps 7:5. Let the word of God confirm our dread of that sin and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies and suggest to us answers to all its flatteries.

2 Keep my commandments, and live;
and my law as the apple of thine eye.
3 Bind them upon thy fingers,
write them upon the table of thine heart.

4 Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister;
and call understanding *thy* kinswoman:
5 that they may keep thee from the strange woman,
from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words.
6 For at the window of my house
I looked through my casement,

Solomon here, to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells a story of a young man that was ruined to all intents and purposes by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd profane poets of our age to make a play of, and the harlot with them would be a heroine; nothing would be so entertaining to the audience, nor give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman and drawing in the country squire; her conquests would be celebrated as the triumphs of wit and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly; and every young man that saw it acted would covet to be so picked up. Thus fools make a mock at sin.

But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it, as a very melancholy story. The impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon, by all that have any sparks of virtue in them, with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it afraid of the snares of fleshly lusts and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or imagined case, but I doubt it was too true, and, which is worse, that notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game and with similar success.

Solomon was a magistrate, and, as such, inspected the manners of his subjects, looked often through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give warning of the approach of the

enemies, and especially where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon does here, where we may observe the account he gives,

I. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation, and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction.

1. He was a young man, Ps 7:7. Fleshly lusts are called youthful lusts (2Ti 2:22), not to extenuate them as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but rather to aggravate them, as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and, by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for a bad life ever after, and to intimate that young people ought in a special manner to fortify their resolutions against this sin.

2. He was a young man void of understanding, that went abroad into the world, not principled as he ought to have been with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, Job 28:28. Those become an easy prey to Satan who, when they have arrived to the stature of men, have scarcely the understanding of children.

3. He kept bad company. He was a young man among the youths, a silly young man among the simple ones. If, being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were older and wiser than himself, there would have been hopes of him. Christ, at twelve years old, conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of this. But, if those that are simple choose such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will still be, and hardened in their simplicity.

4. He was sauntering, and had nothing to do, but passed through the street as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom was abundance of

idleness, Eze 16:49. He went in a starched stately manner, so (it is said) the word signifies. He appeared to be a nice formal fop, the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at.

5. He was a night-walker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done by day-light, from which the evening calls men in to their repose; and, having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he begins to move in the twilight in the evening, Ps 7:9. And he chooses the black and dark night as fittest for his purpose, not the moonlight nights, when he might be discovered.

6. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went near her corner, the way to her house (Ps 7:8), contrary to Solomon's advice (Pr 5:8), Come not night the door of her house. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an infamous house, but, however, it was a way that he had no business in; and when we have nothing to do the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets to temptation.

II. Of the person tempting, not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife (Ps 7:19), and, for aught that appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness, and yet, in the twilight of the evening, when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described,

1. By her dress. She had the attire of a harlot (Ps 7:10), gaudy and flaunting, to set her off as a beauty; perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and en deshabille. The purity of the heart will show itself in the modesty of the dress, which becomes women professing godliness.

2. By her craft and management. She is subtle of heart, mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes.

3. By her temper and carriage. She is loud and stubborn, talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wilful and headstrong, all tongue, and will have her saying, right or wrong, impatient of check and control, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reproved, by husband or parents, ministers or friends. She is a daughter of Belial, that will endure no yoke.

4. By her place, not her own house; she hates the confinement and employment of that; her feet abide not there any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company. Now is she without in the country, under pretence of taking the air, now in the streets of the city, under pretence of seeing how the market goes. She is here, and there, and every where but where she should be. She lies in wait at every corner, to pick up such as she can make a prey of. Virtue is a penance to those to whom home is a prison.

III. Of the temptation itself and the management of it. She met the young spark. Perhaps she knew him; however she knew by his fashions that he was such a one as she wished for; so she caught him about the neck and kissed him, contrary to all the rules of modesty (Ps 7:13), and waited not for his compliments or courtship, but with an impudent face invited him not only to her house, but to her bed.

1. She courted him to sup with her (Ps 7:14,15): I have peace-offerings with me. Hereby she gives him to understand,

(1.) Her prosperity, that she was compassed about with so many blessings that she had occasion to offer peace-offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness; she was before-hand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket picked.

(2.) Her profession of piety. She had been to-day at the temple, and was as well respected there as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord. She had paid her vows, and, as she thought, made all even with God Almighty, and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins.

Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes that when they come to count and discount with God he will be found as much in debt to them for their peace-offerings and their vows as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a show of piety should become the shelter of iniquity (which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceedingly sinful) and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisees made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and mischievous provisions. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings was by the law returned back to the offerers, to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace-offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten the same day and none of it left until the morning, Le 7:15. This law of charity and generosity is abused to be a colour for gluttony and excess: "Come," says she, "come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want good company to help me off with it." It was a pity that the peace-offerings should thus become, in a bad sense, sin-offerings, and that what was designed for the honour of God should become the food and fuel of a base lust. But this is not all.

(3.) To strengthen the temptation,

[1.] She pretends to have a very great affection for him above any man: "Therefore, because I have a good supper upon the table, I came forth to meet thee, for no friend in the world shall be so welcome to it as thou shalt, Ps 7:15. Thou art he whom I came on purpose to seek, to seek diligently, came myself, and would not send a servant." Surely he cannot deny her his company when she put such a value upon it, and would take all this pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to

do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself; they go about seeking to devour, and yet pretend they are seeking to oblige.

[2.] She would have it thought that Providence itself countenanced her choice of him for her companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought!

2. She courted him to lie with her. They will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them, where he shall find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him. To please his eye, it is decked with coverings of tapestry and carved works, exquisitely fine; he never saw the like. To please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth; they are far-fetched and dear bought; they are of fine linen of Egypt, Ps 7:16. To gratify his smell, it is perfumed with the sweetest scents, Ps 7:17. Come, therefore, and let us take our fill of love, Ps 7:18. Of love, does she say? Of lust she means, brutish lust; but it is a pity that the name of love should be thus abused. True love is from heaven; this is from hell. How can those pretend to solace themselves and love one another who are really ruining themselves and one another?

3. She anticipated the objection which he might make of the danger of it. Is she not another man's wife, and what if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act? he will make them pay dearly for their sport, and where will the solace of their love be then? "Never fear," says she, "the good man is not at home" (Ps 7:19); she does not call him her husband, for she forsakes the guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; but "the good man of the house, whom I am weary of." Thus Potiphar's wife, when she spoke of her husband, would not call him so, but he, Ge 39:14. It is therefore with good reason taken notice of, to Sarah's praise, that she spoke respectfully of her husband, calling him lord. She pleases herself with this that he is not at home, and therefore she is melancholy if she have not some company, and therefore whatever company she has she may be free with them, for she is from under his eye, and he shall never know. But will he not return quickly? No: "he has gone a long

journey, and cannot return on a sudden; he appointed the day of his return, and he never comes home sooner than he says he will. He has taken a bag of money with him, either,"

(1.) "To trade with, to buy goods with and he will not return till he has laid it all out. It is a pity that an honest industrious man should be thus abused, and advantage taken of his absence, when it is upon business, for the good of his family." Or,

(2.) "To spend and revel with." Whether justly or not, she insinuates that he was a bad husband; so she would represent him, because she was resolved to be a bad wife, and must have that for an excuse; it is often groundlessly suggested, but is never a sufficient excuse. "He follows his pleasures, and wastes his estate abroad" (says she), "and why should not I do the same at home?"

IV. Of the success of the temptation. Promising the young man every thing that was pleasant, and impunity in the enjoyment, she gained her point, Ps 7:21. It should seem, the youth, though very simple, had no ill design, else a word, a beck, a wink, would have served, and there would have been no need of all this harangue; but though he did not intend any such thing, nay, had something in his conscience that opposed it, yet with her much fair speech she caused him to yield. His corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions, and his resolutions were not strong enough to hold out against such artful attacks as these, but with the flattery of her lips she forced him; he could not stop his ear against such a charmer, but surrendered himself her captive. Wisdom's maidens, who plead her cause, and have reason on their side, and true and divine pleasures to invite men to, have a deaf ear turned to them, and with all their rhetoric cannot compel men to come in, but such is the dominion of sin in the hearts of men that its allurements soon prevail by falsehood and flattery. With what pity does Solomon here look upon this foolish young man, when he sees him follow the adulterous woman!

(1.) He gives him up for gone; alas! he is undone. he goes to the slaughter (for houses of uncleanness are slaughter-houses to precious souls); a dart will presently strike through his liver; going without his breast-plate, he will receive his death's wound, Ps 7:23. It is his life, his precious life, that is thus irrecoverably thrown away, he is perfectly lost to all good; his conscience is debauched; a door is opened to all other vices, and this will certainly end in his endless damnation.

(2.) That which makes his case the more piteous is that he is not himself aware of his misery and danger; he goes blindfold, nay, he goes laughing to his ruin. The ox thinks he is led to the pasture when he is led to the slaughter; the fool (that is, the drunkard, for, of all sinners, drunkards are the greatest fools) is led to the correction of the stocks, and is not sensible of the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to a play. The bird that hastes to the snare looks only at the bait, and promises herself a good bit from that, and considers not that it is for her life. Thus this unthinking unwary young man dreams of nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the embraces of the harlot, while really he is running headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon does not here tell us that he put the law in execution against this base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but that he did, he was himself so affected with the mischief she did and had such an indignation at it.

7 and beheld among the simple ones,
I discerned among the youths,
a young man void of understanding,
8 passing through the street near her corner;
and he went the way to her house,
9 in the twilight, in the evening,
in the black and dark night.

10 And, behold, there met him a woman
with the attire of a harlot, and subtile of heart.
11 (She *is* loud and stubborn;
her feet abide not in her house:
12 now *is she* without, now in the streets,
and lieth in wait at every corner.)

13 So she caught him, and kissed him,
and with an impudent face said unto him,
14 *I have* peace offerings with me;
this day have I paid my vows.
15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee,
diligently to seek thy face,
and I have found thee.
16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry,
with carved *works,* with fine linen of Egypt.
17 I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning:
let us solace ourselves with loves.
19 For the goodman *is* not at home,
he is gone a long journey:
20 he hath taken a bag of money with him,
and will come home at the day appointed.
21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield,
with the flattering of her lips she forced him.
22 He goeth after her straightway,
as an ox goeth to the slaughter,
or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;
23 till a dart strike through his liver;
as a bird hasteth to the snare,
and knoweth not that it *is* for his life.
24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children,
and attend to the words of my mouth.

We have here the application of the foregoing story: "Hearken to me therefore, and not to such seducers (Ps 7:24); give ear to a father, and not to an enemy."

1. "Take good counsel when it is given you. Let not thy heart decline to her ways (Ps 7:25); never leave the paths of virtue, though strait and narrow, solitary and up-hill, for the way of the adulteress, though green, and broad, and crowded with company. Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let not so much as thy heart incline to them; never harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise than with abhorrence

of such wicked practices as these. Let reason, and conscience, and the fear of God ruling in the heart, check the inclinations of the sensual appetite. If thou goest in her paths, in any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou goest astray, thou art out of the right way, the safe way; therefore take heed, go not astray, lest thou wander endlessly."

2. "Take fair warning when it is given you."

(1.) "Look back, and see what mischief this sin has done. The adulteress has been the ruin not of here and there one, but she has cast down many wounded." Thousands have been undone, now and for ever, by this sin; and those not only the weak and simple youths, such as he was of whom he had now spoken, but many strong men have been slain by her, Ps 7:26. Herein, perhaps, he has an eye especially to Samson, who was slain by this sin, and perhaps to David too, who by this sin entailed a sword upon his house, though so far the Lord took it away that he himself should not die. These were men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts prevailed over them. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

(2.) "Look forward with an eye of faith, and see what will be in the end of it," Ps 7:27. Her house, though richly decked and furnished, and called a house of pleasure, is the way to hell; and her chambers are the stair-case that goes down to the chambers of death and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore stand in awe and sin not.

25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways,
go not astray in her paths.
26 For she hath cast down many wounded:
yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her.
27 Her house *is* the way to hell,
going down to the chambers of death.

Proverbs-8

The Excellence and Eternity of Wisdom

1 Doth not wisdom cry?
and understanding put forth her voice?

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation is here largely represented to us as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error, and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

I The things revealed are easy to be known, for they belong to us and to our children (De 29:29), and we need not soar up to heaven, or dive into the depths, to get the knowledge of them (De 30:11), for they are published and proclaimed in some measure by the works of the creation (Ps 19:1), more fully by the consciences of men and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil, but most clearly by Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. The precepts of wisdom may easily be known; for,

1. They are proclaimed aloud (Pr 8:1): Does not Wisdom cry? Yes, she cries aloud, and does not spare (Isa 58:1); she puts forth her voice, as one in earnest and desirous to be heard. Jesus stood and cried, Joh 7:37. The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, De 27:14. And men's own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them; there are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers.

2. They are proclaimed from on high (Pr 8:2): She stands in the top of high places; it was from the top of Mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a sermon upon the mount. Nay, if we slight divine revelation, we turn away from him that speaks from heaven, a high place indeed, Heb 12:25. The adulterous woman spoke in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered, but Wisdom speaks openly; truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light.

3. They are proclaimed in the places of concourse, where multitudes are gathered together, the more the better. Jesus spoke in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted, Joh 18:20. Every man that passes by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where Wisdom's voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

4. They are proclaimed where they are most needed. They are intended for the guide of our way, and therefore are published in the places of the paths, where many ways meet, that travellers may be shown, if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; thou shalt then hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way, Isa 30:21. The foolish man known not how to go to the city (Ec 10:15), and therefore Wisdom stands ready to direct him, stands at the gates, at the entry of the city, ready to tell him where the seer's house is, 1Sa 9:18. Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them at the coming in at the doors, saying, Peace be to this house; and, if the son of peace be there, it shall certainly abide upon it. God's ministers are appointed to testify to people both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot be out of the hearing of while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves.

5. They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we should have neglected it; therefore Wisdom speaks to us: "Unto you, O men! I call (Pr 8:4), not to angels (they need not these instructions), not to devils (they are past them), not to the brute-creatures (they are not capable of them), but to you, O men! who are taught more than the beasts of the earth and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation sent. My voice is to the sons of men, who are

concerned to receive instruction, and to whom, one would think, it should be very welcome. It is not, to you, O Jews! only, that Wisdom cries, nor to you, O gentlemen! not to you, O scholars! but to you, O men! O sons of men! even the meanest."

6. They are designed to make them wise (Pr 8:5); they are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are undone without it: "O you simple ones! understand wisdom. Though you are ever so simple, Wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but, if you will be ruled by her, will undertake to give you an understanding heart." When sinners leave their sins, and become truly religious, then the simple understand wisdom.

II The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptation. We are concerned to hear; for,

1. They are of inestimable value. They are excellent things (Pr 8:6), princely things, so the word is. Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are divine and heavenly things, so excellent that, in comparison with them, all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be excellent things.

2. They are of incontestable equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness. They are right things (Pr 8:6), all in righteousness (Pr 8:8), and nothing froward or perverse in them. All the dictates and directions of revealed religion are consonant to, and perfective of, the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in them that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature, nothing that we have reason to complain of. All God's precepts concerning all things are right.

3. They are of unquestionable truth. Wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon: My mouth shall speak truth (Pr 8:7), the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true; there are not so much as pious frauds in it, nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful witness, is the truth itself; wickedness (that is, lying) is an abomination to his lips. Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain from it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say as from what God says to us. His word to us is yea, and amen; never then let ours be yea and nay.

4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those who take them aright, who understand themselves aright, who have not their judgments blinded and biassed by the world and the flesh, are not under the power of prejudice, are taught of God, and whose understanding he has opened, who impartially seek knowledge, take pains for it, and have found it in the enquiries they have hitherto made. To them,

(1.) They are all plain, and not hard to be understood. If the book is sealed, it is to those who are willingly ignorant. If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost; but to those who depart from evil, which is understanding, who have that good understanding which those have who do the commandments, to them they are all plain and there is nothing difficult in them. The way of religion is a highway, and the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein, Isa 35:8. Those therefore do a great wrong to the common people who deny them the use of the scripture under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people.

(2.) They are all right, and not hard to be submitted to. Those who discern things that differ, who know good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all Wisdom's dictates, and therefore, with out murmuring or disputing, govern themselves by them.

III. From all this he infers that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world (Pr 8:10,11): Receive my instruction, and not silver. Instruction must not only be heard, but received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it; and this rather than choice gold, that is,

1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it that, if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy and better provided for every condition of life than if we had ever so much silver and gold. Wisdom is in itself, and therefore must be in our account, better than rubies. It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion; show it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can sit down and wish for of the wealth of this world would, if we had it, be unworthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness.

2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply ourselves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay, we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his life-time received his good things.

2 She standeth in the top of high places,
by the way in the places of the paths.
3 She crieth at the gates,
at the entry of the city,
at the coming in at the doors:
4 Unto you, O men, I call;
and my voice *is* to the sons of man.
5 O ye simple, understand wisdom:
and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.
6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things;
and the opening of my lips *shall be* right things.
7 For my mouth shall speak truth;
and wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips.

8 All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness;
there is nothing froward or perverse in them.
9 They *are* all plain to him that
understandeth, and right to them that find
knowledge.
10 Receive my instruction, and not silver;
and knowledge rather than choice gold.
11 For wisdom *is* better than rubies;
and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to
it.
12 I wisdom dwell with prudence,
and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

Wisdom here is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; it is Christ in the word and Christ in the heart, not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of divine revelation; it is God the Word, in whom all divine revelation centres; it is the soul formed by the word; it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent thing.

I. Divine wisdom gives men good heads (Pr 8:12): I Wisdom dwell with prudence, not with carnal policy (the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, 2Co 1:12), but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering of the conversation, that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way and is in all cases profitable to direct, the wisdom of the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to guide in doing food. Wisdom dwells with prudence; for prudence is the product of religion and an ornament to religion; and there are more witty inventions found out with the help of the scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences and for the effectual countermining of Satan's devices and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers or the politics of statesmen.

We may apply it to Christ himself; he dwells with prudence, for his whole undertaking is the wisdom of God in a mystery, and in it God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Christ found out the knowledge of that great invention, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation, by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient. We had found out many inventions for our ruin; he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things that we must conclude that he who ordered it dwelt with prudence.

II. It gives men good hearts, Pr 8:13. True religion, consisting in the fear of the Lord, which is the wisdom before recommended, teaches men,

1. To hate all sin, as displeasing to God and destructive to the soul: The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, the evil way, to hate sin as sin, and therefore to hate every false way. Wherever there is an awe of God there is a dread of sin, as an evil, as only evil.

2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceitedness of ourselves, pride and arrogancy, are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those who have the Spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them in ourselves. The froward mouth, peevishness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion that, however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and sour that there is nothing more directly contrary to it than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

III. It has a great influence upon public affairs and the well-governing of all societies, Pr 8:14. Christ, as God, has strength and wisdom; wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is the wisdom of God and the power of God. To all that are his he is made of God both strength and wisdom; in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful counsellor and gives that grace which alone is

sound wisdom. He is understanding itself, and has strength for all those that strengthen themselves in him.

True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain. Wherever it is, it is understanding, it has strength; it will be all that to us that we need, both for services and sufferings. Where the word of God dwells richly it makes a man perfect and furnishes him thoroughly for every good word and work. Kings, princes, and judges, have of all men most need of wisdom and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore Wisdom says, By me kings reign (Pr 8:15,16), that is,

1. Civil government is a divine institution, and those that are entrusted with the administration of it have their commission from Christ; it is a branch of his kingly office that by him kings reign; from him to whom all judgment is committed their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him.

2. Whatever qualifications for government any kings or princes have they are indebted to the grace of Christ for them; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; and kings are to their subjects what he makes them.

3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government; it teaches subjects their duty, and so by it kings reign over them the more easily; it teaches kings their duty, and so by it kings reign as they ought; they decree justice, while they rule in the fear of God. Those rule well whom religion rules.

IV. It will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that says, I love those that love me, Pr 8:17. Those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity shall be beloved of him with a peculiar distinguishing love: he will love them and manifest himself to them.

2. They shall be happy in the success of their enquiries after him: "Those that seek me early, seek an acquaintance with me and an interest in me, seek me early, that is, seek me earnestly, seek me first before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek me, they shall find what they seek." Christ shall be theirs, and they shall be his. He never said, Seek in vain.

3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world, or in that which is infinitely better.

(1.) They shall have as much riches and honour as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them (Pr 8:18); they are with Christ, that is, he has them to give, and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in this world, gains them a reputation, and so increases their estates; and the riches which Wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages:--

[1.] That they are riches and righteousness, riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways, and riches charitably used, for alms are called righteousness. Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have riches and righteousness.

[2.] That therefore they are durable riches. Wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got will wear well and will be left to the children's children, and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity is put out to the best interest and so will be durable; for the friends made by the mammon of unrighteousness when we fail will receive us into everlasting habitations, Lu 16:9. It will be found after many days, for the days of eternity.

(2.) They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world (Pr 8:19): "My fruit is better than gold, and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass, and my revenue better than the choicest silver, will serve a better trade." We may assure ourselves that not only Wisdom's products at last, but her income in the mean time, not only her fruit, but her revenue, is more valuable than the best either of the possessions or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, Pr 8:20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is better than gold, than fine gold, it leads us in the way of righteousness, shows us that way and goes before us in it, the way that God would have us walk in and which will certainly bring us to our desired end. It leads in the midst of the paths of judgment, and saves us from deviating on either hand. In medio virtus--Virtue lies in the midst. Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so leads them in the way of righteousness, and they walk after the Spirit.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, Pr 8:21. Therefore Wisdom leads in the paths of righteousness, not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she may cause them to inherit substance and may fill their treasures, which cannot be done with the things of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory.

(1.) It is substantial; it is substance itself. It is a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone, without the accidental supports of outward conveniences. Spiritual and eternal things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well-grounded. The promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. They inherit substance; that is, their inheritance hereafter is substantial; it is a weight of glory; it is substance, Heb 10:34.

All their happiness they have as heirs; it is grounded upon their sonship.

(2.) It is satisfying; it will not only fill their hands, but fill their treasures, not only maintain them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill men's bellies (Ps 17:14), but not their treasures, for they cannot in them secure to themselves goods for many years; perhaps they may be deprived of them this night. But let the treasures of the soul be ever so capacious there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In Wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity; her fruit therefore is better than gold.

13 The fear of the Lord *is* to hate evil:
pride, and arrogancy, and the evil
way, and the froward mouth, do I
hate.
14 Counsel *is* mine, and sound
wisdom: I *am* understanding; I
have strength.
15 By me kings reign,
and princes decree justice.
16 By me princes rule, and nobles,
even all the judges of the earth.
17 I love them that love me;
and those that seek me early shall find me.
18 Riches and honor *are* with me;
yea, durable riches and righteousness.
19 My fruit *is* better than gold, yea, than fine gold;
and my revenue than choice silver.
20 I lead in the way of righteousness,
in the midst of the paths of judgment:
21 that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance;
and I will fill their treasures.
22 The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his
way, before his works of old.

23 I was set up from
everlasting, from the
beginning,
or ever the earth was.
24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth;
when *there were* no fountains abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains were settled,
before the hills was I brought forth:
26 while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields,
nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
27 When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there:
when he set a compass upon the face of the depth:
28 when he established the clouds above:
when he strengthened the fountains of the deep:
29 when he gave to the sea his decree,
that the waters should not pass his commandment:
when he appointed the foundations of the earth:
30 then I was by him,
as one brought up *with him:*
and I was daily *his* delight,
rejoicing always before him;
31 rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth;
and my delights *were* with the sons of men.
32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children:
for blessed *are they that* keep my ways.

We have here the application of Wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it is to bring us all into an entire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good, not to fill our heads with speculations, or our tongues with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this, here is,

I. An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of Wisdom, to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent hearers of the word; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heart? "Hearken unto me, O you children!" Pr 8:32. "Read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God for both, and hear him in both speaking to you." Let children age, and what they hearken to then, it is likely, they will be so seasoned by as to be governed by all their days. Let Wisdom's children justify Wisdom by hearkening to her and show themselves to be indeed her children. We must hear Wisdom's words,

(1.) Submissively, and with a willing heart (Pr 8:33): "Hear instruction, and refuse it not, either as that which you need not or as that which you like not; it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it." Those that reject the counsel of God reject it against themselves, Lu 7:30. "Refuse it not now, lest you should not have another offer."

(2.) Constantly, and with an attentive ear. We must hear Wisdom so as to watch daily at her gates, as beggars to receive an alms, as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants, with humility, and patience, and ready observance, at the posts of her doors. See here what a good house Wisdom keeps, for every day is dole-day; what a good school, for every day is lecture-day. While we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing Wisdom, and learning instruction from her. See here what a dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must watch at the gates.

[1.] We must lay hold on all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into, and keep in, a constant settled course of communion with God.

[2.] We must be very humble in our attendance on divine instructions, and be glad of any place, even the meanest, so we may but be within hearing of them, as David, who would gladly be a door-keeper in the house of God.

[3.] We must raise our expectations of these instructions, and hearken to them with care, and patience, and perseverance, must watch and wait, as Christ's hearers, that hanged on him to hear him, as the word in the original is (Lu 19:48) and (Pr 21:38) came early in the morning to hear him.

2. We must be conscientious doers of the work, for we are blessed only in our deed. It is not enough to hearken unto Wisdom's words, but we must keep her ways (Pr 8:32), do every thing that she prescribes, keep within the hedges of her ways, and not transgress them, keep in the tracks of her ways, proceed and persevere in them. "Hear instruction and be wise; let it be a means to make you wise in ordering your conversation." What we know is known in vain if it do not make us wise, Pr 8:33.

II. An assurance of happiness to all those that do hearken to Wisdom. They are blessed, Pr 8:32, and again Pr 8:34. Those are blessed that watch and wait at Wisdom's gates; even their attendance there is their happiness; it is the best place they can be in. Those are blessed that wait there, for they shall not be put to wait long; let them continue to knock awhile and it shall be opened to them. They are seeking Wisdom, and they shall find what they seek. But will it make them amends if they do find it? Yes (Pr 8:35): Whoso finds me finds life, that is, all happiness, all that good which he needs or can desire. He finds life in that grace which is the principle of spiritual life and the pledge of eternal life.

He finds life, for he shall obtain favour of the Lord, and in his favour is life. If the king's favour is towards a wise son, much more the favour of the King of kings. Christ is Wisdom, and he that finds Christ, that obtains an interest in him, he finds life; for Christ is life to all believers. He that has the Son of God has life, eternal life, and he shall obtain favour of the Lord, who is well-pleased with all those that are in Christ; nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ and be found in him.

III. The doom passed upon all those that reject Wisdom and her proposals, Pr 8:36. They are left to ruin themselves, and Wisdom will not hinder them, because they have set at nought all her counsel.

1. Their crime is very great; they sin against Wisdom, rebel against its light and laws, thwart its designs, and by their folly offend it. They sin against Christ; they act in contempt of his authority, and in contradiction to all the purposes of his life and death. This is construed into hating Wisdom, hating Christ; they are his enemies, who will not have him to reign over them. What can appear worse than hating him who is the centre of all beauty and fountain of all goodness, love itself?

2. Their punishment will be very just, for they wilfully bring it upon themselves.

(1.) Those that offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves; they wrong their own souls; they wound their own consciences, bring a blot and stain upon their souls, which renders them odious in the eyes of God, and unfit for communion with him; they deceive themselves, disturb themselves, destroy themselves. Sin is a wrong to the soul.

(2.) Those that are at variance with Christ are in love with their own ruin: Those that hate me love death; they love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation the more intolerable, and will for ever justify God when he judges. O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.

33 Hear instruction, and be wise,
and refuse it not.
34 Blessed *is* the man that heareth me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting at the posts of my doors.
35 For whoso findeth me findeth life,
and shall obtain favor of the Lord.
36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul:

all they that hate me love death.

Proverbs-9

Wisdom and the Foolish Woman

1 Wisdom hath builded her house,
she hath hewn out her seven pillars:
2 she hath killed her beasts;
she hath mingled her wine;
she hath also furnished her table.

Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent and munificent queen, very great and very generous; that Word of God is this Wisdom in which God makes known his goodwill towards men; God the Word is this Wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He who, in the chapter before, showed his grandeur and glory as the Creator of the world, here shows his grace and goodness as the Redeemer of it. The word is plural, Wisdoms; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery. Now observe here,

I The rich provision which Wisdom has made for the reception of all those that will be her disciples. This is represented under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, whence it is probable, our Saviour borrowed those parables in which he compared the kingdom of heaven to a great supper, Mt 22:2,Lu 14:16. And so it was prophesied of, Isa 25:6. It is such a feast as Ahasuerus made to show the riches of his glorious kingdom. The grace of the gospel is thus set before us in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. To bid her guests welcome,

1. Here is a stately palace provided, Pr 9:1. Wisdom, not finding a house capacious enough for all her guests, has built one on purpose, and, both to strengthen it and to beautify it, she has hewn out her seven pillars, which make it to be very firm, and look very great. Heaven is the house which Wisdom has built to entertain all her guests that are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; that is her Father's house, where

there are many mansions, and whither she has gone to prepare places for us. She has hanged the earth upon nothing, there in it we have no continuing city; but heaven is a city that has foundations, has pillars. The church is Wisdom's house, to which she invites her guests, supported by the power and promise of God, as by seven pillars. Probably, Solomon refers to the temple which he himself had lately built for the service of religion, and to which he would persuade people to resort, both to worship God and to receive the instructions of Wisdom. Some reckon the schools of the prophets to be here intended.

2. Here is a splendid feast got ready (Pr 9:2): She has killed her beasts; she has mingled her wine; plenty of meat and drink are provided, and all of the best. She has killed her sacrifice (so the word is); it is a sumptuous, but a sacred feast, a feast upon a sacrifice. Christ has offered up himself a sacrifice for us, and it is his flesh that is meat indeed and his blood that is drink indeed. The Lord's supper is a feast of reconciliation and joy upon the sacrifice of atonement. The wine is mingled with something richer than itself, to give it a more than ordinary spirit and flavour. She has completely furnished her table with all the satisfactions that a soul can desire-righteousness and grace, peace and joy, the assurances of God's love, the consolations of the Spirit, and all the pledges and earnests of eternal life. Observe, It is all Wisdom's own doing; she has killed the beasts, she has mingled the wine, which denotes both the love of Christ, who makes the provision (he does not leave it to others, but takes the doing of it into his own hands), and the excellency of the preparation. That must needs be exactly fitted to answer the end which Wisdom herself has the fitting up of.

II The gracious invitation she has given, not to some particular friends, but to all in general, to come and take part of these provisions.

1. She employs her servants to carry the invitation round about in the country: She has sent forth her maidens, Pr 9:3. The ministers of the gospel are commissioned and commanded to

give notice of the preparations which God has made, in the everlasting covenant, for all those that are willing to come up to the terms of it; and they, with maiden purity, not corrupting themselves or the word of God, and with an exact observance of their orders, are to call upon all they meet with, even in the highways and hedges, to come and feast with Wisdom, for all things are now ready, Lu 14:23.

2. She herself cries upon the highest places of the city, as one earnestly desirous of the welfare of the children of men, and grieved to see them rejecting their own mercies for lying vanities. Our Lord Jesus was himself the publisher of his own gospel; when he had sent forth his disciples he followed them to confirm what they said; nay, it began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb 2:3. He stood, and cried, Come unto me. We see who invited; now let us observe,

(1.) To whom the invitation is given: Whoso is simple and wants understanding, Pr 9:4. If we were to make an entertainment, of all people we should not care for, much less court, the company of such, but rather of philosophers and learned men, that we might hear their wisdom, and whose table-talk would be improving. "Have I need of madmen?" But Wisdom invites such, because what she has to give is what they most need, and it is their welfare that she consults, and aims at, in the preparation and invitation. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise, and he that wants a heart (so the word is) let him come hither, and he shall have one. Her preparations are rather physic than food, designed for the most valuable and desirable cure, that of the mind. Whosoever he be, the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves; though they be ever so foolish, yet,

[1.] They shall be welcome.

[2.] They may be helped; they shall neither be despised nor despaired of. Our Saviour came, not to call the righteous, but sinners, not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see (Joh 9:41), but the simple, those who are sensible of their

simplicity and ashamed of it, and him that is willing to become a fool, that he may be wise, 1Co 3:18.

(2.) What the invitation is.

[1.] We are invited to Wisdom's house: Turn in hither. I say we are, for which of us is there that must not own the character of the invited, that are simple and want understanding? Wisdom's doors stand open to such, and she is desirous to have some conversation with them, one word for their good, nor has she any other design upon them.

[2.] We are invited to her table (Pr 9:5): Come, eat of my bread, that is, taste of the true pleasures that are to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith acted on the promises of the gospel, applying them to ourselves and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast, upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink we make our own, we are nourished and refreshed by it, and so are our souls by the word of God; it has that in it which is meat and drink to those that have understanding.

(3.) What is required of those that may have the benefit of this invitation, Pr 9:6.

[1.] They must break off from all bad company: "Forsake the foolish, converse not with them, conform not to their ways, have no fellowship with the works of darkness, or with those that deal in such works." The first step towards virtue is to shun vice, and therefore to shun the vicious. Depart from me, you evil-doers.

[2.] They must awake and arise from the dead; they must live, not in pleasure (for those that do so are dead while they live), but in the service of God; for those only that do so live indeed, live to some purpose. "Live not a mere animal-life, as brutes, but now, at length, live the life of men. Live and you shall live; live spiritually, and you shall live eternally," Eph 5:14.

[3.] They must choose the paths of Wisdom, and keep to them: "Go in the way of understanding; govern thyself henceforward by the rules of religion and right reason." It is not enough to forsake the foolish, but we must join ourselves with those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

III. The instructions which Wisdom gives to the maidens she sends to invite, to the ministers and others, who in their places are endeavouring tot serve her interests and designs. She tells them,

1. What their work must be, not only to tell in general what preparation is made for souls, and to give a general offer of it, but they must address themselves to particular persons, must tell them of their faults, reprove, rebuke, Pr 9:7,8. They must instruct them how to amend--teach, Pr 9:9. The word of God is intended, and therefore so is the ministry of that word, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

2. What different sorts of persons they would meet with, and what course they must take with them, and what success they might expect.

(1.) They would meet with some scorners and wicked men who would mock the messengers of the Lord, and misuse them, would laugh those to scorn that invite them to the feast of the Lord, as they did, 2Ch 30:10, would treat them spitefully, Mt 22:6. And, though they are not forbidden to invite those simple ones to Wisdom's house, yet they are advised not to pursue the invitation by reproving and rebuking them. Reprove not a scorner; cast not these pearls before swine, Mt 7:6. Thus Christ said of the Pharisees, Let them alone, Mt 15:14. "Do not reprove them."

[1.] "In justice to them, for those have forfeited the favour of further means who scorn the means they have had. Those that are thus filthy, let them be filthy still; those that are joined to idols, let them alone; lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

[2.] "In prudence to yourselves; because, if you reprove them," First, "You lose your labour, and so get to yourselves shame for the disappointment." Secondly, "You exasperate them; do it ever so wisely and tenderly, if you do it faithfully, they will hate you, they will load you with reproaches, and say all the ill they can of you, and so you will get a blot; therefore you had better not meddle with them, for your reproofs will be likely to do more hurt than good."

(2.) They would meet with others, who are wise, and good, and just; thanks be to God, all are not scorners. We meet with some who are so wise for themselves, to just to themselves, as to be willing and glad to be taught; and when we meet with such,

[1.] If there be occasion, we must reprove them; for wise men are not so perfectly wise but there is that in them which needs a reproof; and we must not connive at any man's faults because we have a veneration for his wisdom, nor must a wise man think that his wisdom exempts him from reproof when he says or does any thing foolishly; but the more wisdom a man has the more desirous he should be to have his weaknesses shown him, because a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

[2.] With our reproofs we must give them instruction, and must teach them, Pr 9:9.

[3.] We may expect that our doing so will be taken as a kindness, Ps 141:5. A wise man will reckon those his friends who deal faithfully with him: "Rebuke such a one, and he will love thee for thy plain dealing, will thank thee, and desire thee to do him the same good turn another time, if there be occasion." It is as great an instance of wisdom to take a reproof well as to give it well,

[4.] Being taken well, it will do good, and answer the intention. A wise man will be made wiser by the reproofs and

instructions that are given him; he will increase in learning, will grow in knowledge, and so grow in grace. None must think themselves too wise to learn, nor so good that they need not be better and therefore need not be taught. We must still press forward, and follow on to know till we come to the perfect man. Give to a wise man (so it is in the original), give him advice, give him reproof, give him comfort, and he will be yet wiser; give him occasion (so the LXX.), occasion to show his wisdom, and he will show it, and the acts of wisdom will strengthen the habits.

IV. The instructions she gives to those that are invited, which her maidens must inculcate upon them.

1. Let them know wherein true wisdom consists, and what will be their entertainment at Wisdom's table, Pr 9:10.

(1.) The heart must be principled with the fear of God; that is the beginning of wisdom. A reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath, are that fear of him which is the beginning, the first step towards true religion, whence all other instances of it take rise. This fear may, at first, have torment, but love will, by degrees, cast out the torment of it.

(2.) The head must be filled with the knowledge of the things of God. The knowledge of holy things (the word is plural) is understanding, the things pertaining to the service of God (those are called holy things), that pertain to our own sanctification; reproof is called that which is holy, Mt 7:6. Or the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets, of those things which holy men spoke as they were moved by the holy Ghost, this is understanding; it is the best and most useful understanding, will stand us in most stead and turn to the best account.

2. Let them know what will be advantages of this wisdom (Pr 9:11): "By me thy days shall be multiplied. It will contribute to the health of thy body, and so the years of thy life on earth shall be increased, while men's folly and intemperance shorten

their days. It will bring thee to heaven, and there thy days shall be multiplied in infinitum--to infinity, and the years of thy life shall be increased without end." There is no true wisdom but in the say of religion and no true life but in the end of that way.

3. Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing or refusing this fair offer, Pr 9:12. Here is,

(1.) The happiness of those that embrace it: "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; thou wilt be the gainer by it, not Wisdom." A man cannot be profitable to God. It is to our own good that we are thus courted. "Thou wilt not leave the gain to others" (as we do our worldly wealth when we die, which is therefore called another man's, Lu 16:12), "but thou shalt carry it with thee into another world." Those that are wise for their souls are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man; nor do any consult their own true interest but those that are truly religious. This recommends us to God, and recovers us from that which is our folly and degeneracy; it employs us in that which is most beneficial in this world, and entitles us to that which is much more so in the world to come.

(2.) The shame and ruin of those that slight it: "If thou scornest Wisdom's proffer, thou alone shalt bar it."

[1.] "Thou shalt bear the blame of it." Those that are good must thank God, but those that are wicked may thank themselves; it is not owing to God (he is not the author of sin); Satan can only tempt, he cannot force; and wicked companions are but his instruments; so that all the fault must lie on the sinner himself.

[2.] "Thou shalt bear the loss of that which thou scornest; it will be to thy own destruction; thy blood will be upon thy own head, and the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation. Son, remember, that thou hadst this fair offer made thee, and thou wouldst not accept it; thou stoodest fair for life, but didst choose death rather."

3 She hath sent forth her maidens:
she crieth upon the highest places of the city,
4 Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither:
as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
5 Come, eat of my bread,
and drink of the wine *which* I have mingled.
6 Forsake the foolish, and live;
and go in the way of understanding.
7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame:
and he that rebuketh a wicked *man getteth* himself a blot.
8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:
rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.
9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser:
teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.
10 The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom:
and the knowledge of the Holy *is* understanding.
11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied,
and the years of thy life shall be increased.
12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself:
but *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*.
13 A foolish woman *is* clamorous:
she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

We have heard what Christ has to say, to engage our affections to God and godliness, and one would think the whole world should go after him; but here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into the paths of sin, and with the most he gains his point, and Wisdom's courtship is not effectual. Now observe,

I. Who is the tempter--a foolish woman, Folly herself, in opposition to Wisdom. Carnal sensual pleasure I take to be especially meant by this foolish woman (Pr 9:13); for that is the great enemy to virtue and inlet to vice; that defiles and debauches the mind, stupefies conscience, and puts out the sparks of conviction, more than any thing else. This tempter is here described to be,

1. Very ignorant: She is simple and knows nothing, that is, she has no sufficient solid reason to offer; where she gets dominion in a soul she works out all the knowledge of holy things; they are lost and forgotten. Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart; they besot men, and make fools of them.

(2.) Very importunate. The less she has to offer that is rational the more violent and pressing she is, and carries the day often by dint of impudence. She is clamorous and noisy (Pr 9:13), continually haunting young people with her enticements. She sits at the door of her house (Pr 9:14), watching for a prey; not as Abraham at his tent-door, seeking an opportunity to do good. She sits on a seat (on a throne, so the word signifies) in the high places of the city, as if she had authority to give law, and we were all debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, and as if she had reputation, and were in honour, and thought worthy of the high places of the city; and perhaps she gains upon many more by pretending to be fashionable than by pretending to be agreeable. "Do not all persons of rank and figure in the world" (says she) "give themselves a greater liberty than the strict laws of virtue allow; and why shouldst thou humble thyself so far as to be cramped by them?" Thus the tempter affects to seem both kind and great.

II. Who are the tempted--young people who have been well educated; these she will triumph most in being the ruin of. Observe,

1. What their real character is; they are passengers that go right on their ways (Pr 9:15), that have been trained up in the paths of religion and virtue and set out very hopefully and well, that seemed determined and designed for good, and are not (as that young man, Pr 7:8) going the way to her house. Such as these she has a design upon, and lays snares for, and uses all her arts, all her charms, to pervert them; if they go right on, and will not look towards her, she will call after them, so urgent are these temptations.

2. How she represents them. She calls them simple and wanting understanding, and therefore courts them to her school, that they may be cured of the restraints and formalities of their religion. This is the method of the stage (which is too close an exposition of this paragraph), where the sober young man, that has been virtuously educated, is the fool in the play, and the plot is to make him seven times more a child of hell than his profane companions, under colour of polishing and refining him, and setting him up for a wit and a beau. What is justly charged upon sin and impiety (Pr 9:4), that it is folly, is here very unjustly retorted upon the ways of virtue; but the day will declare who are the fools.

III. What the temptation is (Pr 9:17): Stolen waters are sweet. It is to water and bread, whereas Wisdom invites to the beasts she has killed and the wine she has mingled; however, bread and water are acceptable enough to those that are hungry and thirsty; and this is pretended to be more sweet and pleasant than common, for it is stolen water and bread eaten in secret, with a fear of being discovered. The pleasures of prohibited lusts are boasted of as more relishing than those of prescribed love; and dishonest gain is preferred to that which is justly gotten. Now this argues, not only a bold contempt, but an impudent defiance,

1. Of God's law, in that the waters are the sweeter for being stolen and come at by breaking through the hedge of the divine command. Nitimur in vetitum--We are prone to what is forbidden. This spirit of contradiction we have from our first parents, who thought the forbidden tree of all others a tree to be desired.

2. Of God's curse. The bread is eaten in secret, for fear of discovery and punishment, and the sinner takes a pride in having so far baffled his convictions, and triumphed over them, that, notwithstanding that fear, he dares commit the sin, and can make himself believe that, being eaten in secret, it shall never be discovered or reckoned for. Sweetness and pleasantness constitute the bait; but, by the tempter's own showing, even that is so absurd, and has such allays, that it is

a wonder how it can have any influence upon men that pretend to reason.

IV. An effectual antidote against the temptation, in a few words, Pr 9:18. He that so far wants understanding as to be drawn aside by these enticements is led on, ignorantly, to his own inevitable ruin: He knows not, will not believe, does not consider, the tempter will not let him know, that the dead are there, that those who live in pleasure are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins. Terrors attend these pleasures like the terrors of death itself. The giants are there--Rephaim. It was this that ruined the sinners of the old world, the giants that were in the earth in those days. Her guests, that are treated with those stolen waters, are not only in the highway to hell and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captive by Satan at his will, and ever and anon lashed by the terrors of their own consciences, which are a hell upon earth The depths of Satan are the depths of hell. Remorseless sin is remediless ruin; it is the bottomless pit already. Thus does Solomon show the hook; those that believe him will not meddle with the bait.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house,
on a seat in the high places of the city,
15 to call passengers
who go right on their ways:
16 Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither:
and *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
17 Stolen waters are sweet,
and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.
18 But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there;
and that her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

Proverbs-10

The Upright and the Wicked Contrasted

1 The Proverbs of Solomon.
A wise son maketh a glad father:
but a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother.

Solomon, speaking to us as unto children, observes here how much the comfort of parents, natural, political, and ecclesiastical, depends upon the good behaviour of those under their charge, as a reason,

1. Why parents should be careful to give their children a good education, and to train them up in the ways of religion, which, if it obtain the desired effect, they themselves will have the comfort of it, or, if not, they will have for their support under their heaviness that they have done their duty, have done their endeavour.

2. Why children should conduct themselves wisely and well, and live up to their good education, that they may gladden the hearts of their parents, and not sadden them. Observe,

(1.) It adds to the comfort of young people that are pious and discreet that thereby they do something towards recompensing their parents for all the care and pains they have taken with them, and occasion pleasure to them in the evil days of old age, when they most need it; and it is the duty of parents to rejoice in their children's wisdom and well-doing, yea, though it arrive at such an eminency as to eclipse them.

(2.) It adds to the guilt of those that conduct themselves ill that thereby they grieve those whom they ought to be a joy to, and are a heaviness particularly to their poor mothers who bore them with sorrow, but with greater sorrow see them wicked and vile.

2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing:
but righteousness delivereth from death.

These two verses speak to the same purport, and the latter may be the reason of the former.

1. That wealth which men get unjustly will do them no good, because God will blast it: Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, Pr 10:2 The treasures of wicked people, much more the treasure which they have made themselves masters of by any wicked people, by oppression of fraud, though it be ever

so much, as a treasure, and laid up ever so safely, though it be hidden treasure, yet it profits nothing; when profit and loss come to be balanced the profit gained by the treasures will by no means countervail the loss sustained by the wickedness, Mt 16:26. They do not profit the soul; they will not purchase any true comfort or happiness. They will stand a man in no stead at death, or in the judgment of the great day; and the reason is because God casts away the substance of the wicked (Pr 10:3); he takes that from them which they have unjustly gotten; he rejects the consideration of it, not regarding the rich more than the poor. We often see that scattered by the justice of God which has been gathered together by the injustice of men. How can the treasures of wickedness profit, when, though it be counted substance, God casts it away and it vanishes as a shadow?

2. That which is honestly got will turn to a good account, for God will bless it. Righteousness delivers from death, that is, wealth gained, and kept, and used, in a right manner (righteousness signifies both honesty and charity); it answers the end of wealth, which is to keep us alive and be a defence to us. It will deliver from those judgments which men bring upon themselves by their wickedness. It will profit to such a degree as to deliver, though not from the stroke of death, yet from the sting of it, and consequently from the terror of it. For the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish (Pr 10:3), and so their righteousness delivers from death, purely by the favour of God to them, which is their life and livelihood, and which will keep them alive in famine. The soul of the righteous shall be kept alive by the word of God, and faith in his promise, when young lions shall lack and suffer hunger.

3 The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish:
but he casteth away the substance of the wicked.
4 He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand:
but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

We are here told,

1. Who those are who, though rich, are in a fair way to become poor--those who deal with a slack hand, who are careless and

remiss in their business, and never mind which end goes foremost, nor ever set their hands vigorously to their work or stick to it; those who deal with a deceitful hand (so it may be read); those who think to enrich themselves by fraud and tricking will, in the end, impoverish themselves, not only by bringing the curse of God on what they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men; none will care to deal with those who deal with sleight of hand and are honest only with good looking to.

2. Who those are who, though poor, are in a fair way to become rich--those who are diligent and honest, who are careful about their affairs, and, what their hands find to do, do it with all their might, in a fair and honourable way, those are likely to increase what they have. The hand of the acute (so some), of those who are sharp, but not sharpers; the hand of the active (so others); the stirring hand gets a penny. This is true in the affairs of our souls as well as in our worldly affairs; slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty, but those who are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are likely to be rich in faith and rich in good works.

5 He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son:
but he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame.

Here is,

1 The just praise of those who improve their opportunities, who take pains to gather and increase what they have, both for soul and body, who provide for hereafter while provision is to be made, who gather in summer, which is gathering time. He who does so is a wise son, and it is his honour; he acts wisely for his parents, whom, if there be occasion, he ought to maintain, and he gives reputation to himself, his family, and his education.

2 The just reproach and blame of those who trifle away these opportunities: He who sleeps, loves his ease, idles away his time, and neglects his work, especially who sleeps in harvest, when he should be laying in for winter, who lets slip the season of furnishing himself with that which he will have

occasion for, is a son that causes shame; for he is a foolish son; he prepares shame for himself when winter comes, and reflects shame upon all his friends. He who gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of his industry; but he who idles away the days of his youth will bear the shame of his indolence when he is old.

6 Blessings *are* upon the head of the just:
but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Here is,

1. The head of the just crowned with blessings, with the blessings both of God and man. Variety of blessings, abundance of blessings, shall descend from above, and visibly abide on the head of good men, real blessings; they shall not only be spoken well of, but done well to. Blessings shall be on their head as a coronet to adorn and dignify them and as a helmet to protect and secure them.

2. The mouth of the wicked covered with violence. Their mouths shall be stopped with shame for the violence which they have done; they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves (Job 5:16); their breath shall be stopped with the violence that shall be done to them, when their violent dealings shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.

7 The memory of the just *is* blessed:
but the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked, when their days are fulfilled, must die. Between their bodies in the grave thee is no visible difference; between the souls of the one and the other, in the world of spirits, thee is a vast difference, and so there is, or ought to be, between their memories, which survive them.

I. Good men are and ought to be well spoken of when they are gone; it is one of the blessings that comes upon the head of the just, even when their head is laid. Blessed men leave behind them blessed memories.

1. It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those who excel in virtue and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead. Their good name, their name with good men, for good things, is then in a special manner as precious ointment, Ec 7:1. Those that honour God he will thus honour, Ps 112:3,6,9. The elders by faith obtained a good report (Heb 11:2), and, being dead, are yet spoken of.

2. It is part of the duty of the survivors: Let the memory of the just be blessed, so the Jews read it, and observe it as a precept, not naming an eminently just man that is dead without adding, Let his memory be blessed. We must delight in making an honourable mention of good men that are gone, bless God for them, and for his gifts and graces that appeared in them, and especially be followers of them in that which is good.

II. Bad men are and shall be forgotten, or spoken of with contempt. When their bodies are putrefying in the grave their names also shall rot. Either they shall not be preserved at all, but buried in oblivion (no good can be said of them, and therefore the greatest kindness that can be done them will be to say nothing of them), or they shall be loathsome, and mentioned with detestation, and that rule of honour, De mortuis nil nisi bonum--Say nothing to the disadvantage of the dead, will not protect them. Where the wickedness has been notorious, and cannot but be mentioned, it ought to be mentioned with abhorrence.

8 The wise in heart will receive commandments:
but a prating fool shall fall.

Here is,

1 The honour and happiness of the obedient. They will receive commandments; they will take it as a privilege, and really an ease to them, to be under government, which saves them the labour of deliberating and choosing for themselves; and they will take it as a favour to be told their duty and admonished concerning it. And this is their wisdom; those are wise in heart

who are tractable, and those who thus bend, thus stoop, shall stand and be established, shall prosper, being well advised.

2 The shame and ruin of the disobedient, that will not be governed, nor endure any yoke, that will not be taught, nor take any advice. They are fools, for they act against themselves and their own interest; they are commonly prating fools, fools of lips, full of talk, but full of nonsense, boasting of themselves, prating spitefully against those that admonish them (3Jo 1:10), and pretending to give counsel and law to others. Of all fools, none more troublesome than the prating fools, nor that more expose themselves; but they shall fall into sin, into hell, because they received not commandments. Those that are full of tongue seldom look well to their feet, and therefore stumble and fall.

9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely:
but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

We are here told, and we may depend upon it,

1. That men's integrity will be their security: He that walks uprightly towards God and man, that is faithful to both, that designs as he ought and means as he says, walks surely; he is safe under a divine protection and easy in a holy security. He goes on his way with a humble boldness, being well armed against the temptations of Satan, the troubles of the world, and the reproaches of men. He knows what ground he stands on, what guide he follows, what guard he is surrounded with, and what glory he is going to, and therefore proceeds with assurance and great peace, Isa 32:17,33:15,16. Some understand it as part of the character of an upright man, that he walks surely, in opposition to walking at all adventures. He will not dare to do that which he is not fully satisfied in his own conscience concerning the lawfulness of, but will see his way clear in every thing.

2. That men's dishonesty will be their shame: He that perverts his way, that turns aside into crooked paths, that dissembles with God and man, looks one way and rows another, though he may for a time disguise himself, and pass current, shall be

known to be what he is. It is a thousand to one but some time or other he betrays himself; at least, God will discover him in the great day. He that perverts his ways documento erit--shall be made an example of, for warning to others; so some.

10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow:
but a prating fool shall fall.

Mischief is here said to attend,

1. Politic, designing, self-disguising sinners: He that winks with the eye, as if he took no notice of you, when at the same time he is watching an opportunity to do you an ill turn, that makes signs to his accomplices when to come into assist him in executing his wicked projects, which are all carried on by trick and artifice, causes sorrow both to others and to himself. Ingenuity will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent or do worse, either rue it or be ruined by it.

2. Public, silly, self-exposing sinners: A prating fool, whose sins go before unto judgment, shall fall, as was said before, Pr 10:8. But his case is less dangerous of the two, and, though he destroys himself, he does not create so much sorrow to others as he that winks with his eyes. The dog that bites is not always the dog that barks.

11 The mouth of a righteous *man is* a well of life:
but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

See here,

1. How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness, to do good with it: His mouth, the outlet of his mind, is a well of life; it is a constant spring, whence issues good discourse for the edification of others, like streams that water the ground and make it fruitful, and for their consolation, like streams that quench the thirst of the weary traveller. It is like a well of life, that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddled, with any corrupt communication.

2. How industrious a bad man is, by concealing his badness, to do hurt with it: The mouth of the wicked covers violence,

disguises the designed mischief with professions of friendship, that it may be carried on the more securely and effectually, as Joab kissed and killed, Judas kissed and betrayed; this is his sin, to which the punishment answers (Pr 10:6): Violence covers the mouth of the wicked; what he got by violence shall by violence be taken from him, Job 5:4,5.

12 Hatred stirreth up strifes:
but love covereth all sins.

Here is, 1 The great mischief-maker, and that is malice. Even where there is no manifest occasion of strife, yet hatred seeks occasion and so stirs it up and does the devil's work. Those are the most spiteful ill-natured people that can be who take a pleasure in setting their neighbours together by the ears, by tale-bearing, evil surmises, and misrepresentations, blowing up the sparks of contention, which had lain buried, into a flame, at which, with an unaccountable pleasure, they warm their hands.

2 The great peace-maker, and that is love, which covers all sins, that is, the offences among relations which occasion discord. Love, instead of proclaiming and aggravating the offence, conceals and extenuates it as far as it is capable of being concealed and extenuated. Love will excuse the offence which we give through mistake and unadvisedly; when we are able to say that there was no ill intended, but it was an oversight, and we love our friend notwithstanding, this covers it. It will also overlook the offence that is given us, and so cover it, and make the best of it: by this means strife is prevented, or, if begun, peace is recovered and restored quickly. The apostle quotes this, 1Pe 4:8. Love will cover a multitude of sins.

13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found:
but a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Observe, 1. Wisdom and grace are the honour of good men: He that has understanding, that good understanding which those have that do the commandments, wisdom is found in his lips, that is, it is discovered to be there, and consequently that he has within a good treasure of it, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others. It is a man's honour to have wisdom, but much more to be instrumental to make others wise.

2. Folly and sin are the shame of bad men: A rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding--of him that wants a heart; he exposes himself to the lashes of his own conscience, to the scourges of the tongue, to the censures of the magistrate, and to the righteous judgments of God. Those that foolishly and wilfully go on in wicked ways are preparing rods for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14 Wise *men* lay up knowledge:
but the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.

Observe, 1. It is the wisdom of the wise that they treasure up a stock of useful knowledge, which will be their preservation: Wisdom is therefore found in their lips (Pr 10:13), because it is laid up in their hearts, out of which store, like the good householder, they bring things new and old. Whatever knowledge may be at any time useful to us we must lay it up, because we know not but some time or other we may have occasion for it. We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure to lay it up safely, that it may not be to seek when we want it.

2. It is the folly of fools that they lay up mischief in their hearts, which is ready to them in all they say, and works terror and destruction both to others and to themselves. They love devouring words (Ps 52:4), and these come uppermost. Their mouth is near destruction, having the sharp arrows of bitter words always at hand to throw about.

15 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city:
the destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.

This may be taken two ways:--

1. As a reason why we should be diligent in our business, that we may avoid that sinking dispiriting uneasiness which attends poverty, and may enjoy the benefit and comfort which those have that are beforehand in the world. Taking pains is really the way to make ourselves and our families easy. Or, rather,

2. As a representation of the common mistakes both of rich and poor, concerning their outward condition.

(1.) Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake: The rich man's wealth is, in his own conceit, his strong city, whereas the worst of evils it is too weak and utterly insufficient to protect them from. It will prove that they are not so safe as they imagine; nay, their wealth may perhaps expose them.

(2.) Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor; but it is their mistake: The destruction of the poor is their poverty; it sinks their spirits, and ruins all their comforts; whereas a man may live very comfortably, though he has but a little to live on, if he be but content, and keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16 The labor of the righteous *tendeth* to life:
the fruit of the wicked to sin.

Solomon here confirms what his father had said (Ps 37:16), A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.

1. Perhaps a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for; he eats only the labour of his hands, but that labour tends to life; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, covets not to be rich and great, but is willing to live and maintain his family. Nor does it tend only to his own life, but he would enable himself to do good to others; he labours that he may have to give (Eph 4:28); all his business turns to some good account or other. Or it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which has a tendency to eternal life; he sows to the Spirit, that he may reap life everlasting.

2. Perhaps a wicked man's wealth is fruit which he did not labour for, but came easily by, but it tends to sin. He makes it the food and fuel of his lusts, his pride and luxury; he gets hurt with it and not good; he gets hurt by it and is hardened by it

in his wicked ways. The things of this world are good or evil, life or death, as they are used, and as those are that have them.

17 He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction:
but he that refuseth reproof erreth.

See here, 1. That those are in the right that do not only receive instruction, but retain it, that do not let it slip through carelessness, as most do, nor let it go to those that would rob them of it, that keep instruction safely, keep it pure and entire, keep it for their own use, that they may govern themselves by it, keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them; those that do so are in the way of life, the way that has true comfort in it and eternal life at the end of it.

2. That those are in the wrong that do not only not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them. They will not be taught their duty because it discovers their faults to them; that instruction which carries reproof in it they have a particular aversion to, and certainly they err; it is a sign that they err in judgment, and have false notions of good and evil; it is a cause of their erring in conversation. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it and shown the right way, must needs err still, err endlessly; he certainly misses the way of life.

18 He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips,
and he that uttereth a slander, *is* a fool.

Observe here, Malice is folly and wickedness. 1. It is so when it is concealed by flattery and dissimulation: He is a fool, though he may think himself a politician, that hides hatred with lying lips, lest, if it break out, he should be ashamed before men and should lose the opportunity of gratifying his malice. Lying lips are bad enough of themselves, but have a peculiar malignity in them when they are made a cloak of maliciousness. But he is a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God.

2. It is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language: He that utters slander is a fool too, for God will sooner or later bring forth that righteousness as the light which

he endeavours to cloud, and will find an expedient to roll the reproach away.

19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin:
but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise.

We are here admonished concerning the government of the tongue, that necessary duty of a Christian.

1. It is good to say little, because in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, or sin doth not cease. Usually, those that speak much speak much amiss, and among many words there cannot but be many idle words, which they must shortly give an account of. Those that love to hear themselves talk do not consider what work they are making for repentance; for that will be wanted, and first or last will be had, where there wanteth not sin.

2. It is therefore good to keep our mouth as with a bridle: He that refrains his lips, that often checks himself, suppresses what he has thought, and holds in that which would transpire, is a wise man; it is an evidence of his wisdom, and he therein consults his own peace. Little said is soon amended, Am 5:13,Jam 1:19.

20 The tongue of the just *is as* choice silver:
the heart of the wicked *is* little worth.

We are here taught how to value men, not by their wealth and preferment in the world, but by their virtue.

I. Good men are good for something. Though they may be poor and low in the world, and may not have power and riches to do good with, yet, as long as they have a mouth to speak, that will make them valuable and useful, and upon that account we must honour those that fear the Lord, because out of the good treasure of their heart they bring forth good things.

1. This makes them valuable: The tongue of the just is as choice silver; they are sincere, freed from the dross of guile and evil design. God's words are compared to silver purified (Ps 12:6), for they may be relied on; and such are the words of just men. They are of weight and worth, and will enrich

those that hear them with wisdom, which is better than choice silver.

2. It makes them useful: The lips of the righteous feed many; for they are full of the word of God, which is the bread of life, and that sound doctrine wherewith souls are nourished up. Pious discourse is spiritual food to the needy, to the hungry.

II. Bad men are good for nothing.

1. One can get no good by them: The heart of the wicked is little worth, and therefore that which comes out of the abundance of his heart cannot be worth much. His principles, his notions, his thoughts, his purposes, and all the things that fill him, and affect him, are worldly and carnal, and therefore of no value. He that is of the earth speaks of the earth, and neither understands nor relishes the things of God, Joh 3:31,1Co 2:14. The wicked man pretends that, though he does not talk of religion as the just do, yet he has it within him, and thanks God that his heart is good; but he that searches the heart here says the contrary: It is nothing worth.

2. One can do no good to them. While many are fed by the lips of the righteous, fools die for want of wisdom; and fools indeed they are to die for want of that which they might so easily come by. Fools die for want of a heart (so the word is); they perish for want of consideration and resolution; they have no heart to do any thing for their own good. While the righteous feed others fools starve themselves.

21 The lips of the righteous feed many:
but fools die for want of wisdom.
22 The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich,
and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Worldly wealth is that which most men have their hearts very much upon, but they generally mistake both in the nature of the thing they desire and in the way by which they hope to obtain it; we are therefore told here,

1. What that wealth is which is indeed desirable, not having abundance only, but having it and no sorrow with it, no disquieting care to get and keep it, no vexation of spirit in the enjoyment of it, no tormenting grief for the loss of it, no guilt contracted by the abuse of it--to have it and to have a heart to take the comfort of it, to do good with it and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it.

2. Whence this desirable wealth is to be expected, not by making ourselves drudges to the world (Ps 127:2), but by the blessing of God. It is this that makes rich and adds no sorrow; what comes from the love of God has the grace of God for its companion, to preserve the soul from those turbulent lusts and passions of which, otherwise, the increase of riches if commonly the incentive. He had said (Pr 10:4), The hand of the diligent makes rich, as a means; but here he ascribes it to the blessing of the Lord; but that blessing is upon the hand of the diligent. It is thus in spiritual riches. Diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired, De 8:17,18.

23 *It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief:
but a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Here is, 1. Sin exceedingly sinful: It is as laughter to a fool to do mischief; it is as natural to him, and as pleasant, as it is to a man to laugh. Wickedness is his Isaac (that is the word here); it is his delight, his darling, and that in which he pleases himself. He makes a laughing matter of sin. When he is warned not to sin, from the consideration of the law of God and the revelation of his wrath against sin, he makes a jest of the admonition, and laughs at the shaking of the spear; when he has sinned, instead of sorrowing for it, he boasts of it, ridicules reproofs, and laughs away the convictions of his own conscience, Pr 14:9.

2. Wisdom exceedingly wise, for it carries along with it the evidence of its own excellency; it may be predicated of itself, and this is encomium enough; you need say no more in praise of a man of understanding than this, "He is an understanding man; he has wisdom; he is so wise as not to do mischief, or if he has, through oversight, offended, he is so wise as not to

make a jest of it." Or, to pronounce wisdom wise indeed, read it thus: As it is a sport to a fool to do mischief, so it is to a man of understanding to have wisdom and to show it. Besides the future recompence, a good man has as much present pleasure in the restraints and exercises of religion as sinners can pretend to in the liberties and enjoyments of sin, and much more, and much better.Here is,

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24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him:
but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.

It is here said, and said again, to the righteous, that it shall be well with them, and to the wicked, Woe to them; and these are set the one over against the other, for their mutual illustration.

I. It shall be as ill with the wicked as they can fear, and as well with the righteous as they can desire.

1 The wicked, it is true, buoy themselves up sometimes in their wickedness with vain hopes which will deceive them, but at other times they cannot but be haunted with just fears, and those fears shall come upon them; the God they provoke will be every whit as terrible as they, when they are under their greatest damps, apprehend him to be. As is thy fear, so is thy wrath, Ps 90:11. Wicked men fear the punishment of sin, but they have not wisdom to improve their fears by making their escape, and so the thing they feared comes upon them, and their present terrors are earnests of their future torments.

2 The righteous, it is true, sometimes have their fears, but their desire is towards the favour of God and a happiness in him, and that desire shall be granted. According to their faith, not according to their fear, it shall be unto them, Ps 37:4.

II The prosperity of the wicked shall quickly end, but the happiness of the righteous shall never end, Pr 10:25. The wicked make a great noise, hurry themselves and others, like a whirlwind, which threatens to bear down all before it; but, like a whirlwind, they are presently gone, and they pass irrecoverably; they are no more; all about them are quiet and glad when the storm is over, Ps 37:10,36,Job 20:5. The righteous, on the contrary, make no show; they lie hid, like a foundation, which is low and out of sight, but they are fixed in their resolution to cleave to God, established in virtue, and they shall be an everlasting foundation, immovably good. He that is holy shall be holy still and immovably happy; his hope is built on a rock, and therefore not shocked by the storm, Mt 7:24. The righteous is the pillar of the world (so some read it); the world stands for their sakes; the holy seed is the substance thereof.

25 As the whirlwind passeth, so *is* the wicked no *more:*
but the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation.

26 As vinegar to the teeth,
and as smoke to the eyes,

so *is* the sluggard to them that send him.

Observe, 1. Those that are of a slothful disposition, that love their ease and cannot apply their minds to any business, are not fit to be employed, no, not so much as to be sent on an errand, for they will neither deliver a message with any care nor make any haste back. Such therefore are very unmeet to be ministers, Christ's messengers; he will not own the sending forth of sluggards into his harvest.

2. Those that are guilty of so great an oversight as to entrust such with any affair, and put confidence in them, will certainly have vexation with them. A slothful servant is to his master as uneasy and troublesome as vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes; he provokes his passion, as vinegar sets the teeth on edge, and occasions him grief to see his business neglected and undone, as smoke sets the eyes a weeping.

27 The fear of the Lord prolongeth days:
but the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

Observe, 1. Religion lengthens men's lives and crowns their hopes. What man is he that loves life? Let him fear God, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life, and secure to him life enough in this world and eternal life in the other; the fear of the Lord will add days more than was expected, will add them endlessly, will prolong them to the days of eternity. What man is he that would see good days? Let him be religious, and then his days shall not only be many, but happy, very happy as well as very many, for the hope of the righteous shall be gladness; they shall have what they hope for, to their unspeakable satisfaction. It is something future and unseen that they place their happiness in (Ro 8:24,25), not what they have in hand, but what they have in hope, and their hope will shortly be swallowed up in fruition, and it will be their everlasting gladness. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

2. Wickedness shortens men's lives, and frustrates their hopes: The years of the wicked, that are spent in the pleasures of sin and the drudgery of the world, shall be shortened. Cut down the trees that cumber the ground. And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promises himself, in this world or the

other, he will be frustrated; for the expectation of the wicked shall perish; his hope shall be turned into endless despair.

28 The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness:
but the expectation of the wicked shall perish.
29 The way of the Lord *is* strength to the upright:
but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

These two verses are to the same purport with those next before, intimating the happiness of the godly and the misery of the wicked; it is necessary that this be inculcated upon us, so loth are we to believe and consider it.

1. Strength and stability are entailed upon integrity: The way of the Lord (the providence of God, the way in which he walks towards us) is strength to the upright, confirms him in his uprightness. All God's dealings with him, merciful and afflictive, serve to quicken him to his duty and animate him against his discouragements. Or the way of the Lord (the way of godliness, in which he appoints us to walk) is strength to the upright; the closer we keep to that way, the more our hearts are enlarged to proceed in it, the better fitted we are both for services and sufferings. A good conscience, kept pure from sin, gives a man boldness in a dangerous time, and constant diligence in duty makes a man's work easy in a busy time. The more we do for God the more we may do, Job 17:9. That joy of the Lord which is to be found only in the way of the Lord will be our strength (Ne 8:10), and therefore the righteous shall never be removed. Those that have an established virtue have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of; they have an everlasting foundation, Pr 10:25.

2. Ruin and destruction are the certain consequences of wickedness. The wicked shall not only not inherit the earth, though they lay up their treasure in it, but they shall not so much as inhabit the earth; God's judgments will root them out. Destruction, swift and sure destruction, shall be to the workers of iniquity, destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Nay, that way of the Lord which is the strength of the upright is consumption and terror to the workers of iniquity; the same gospel which to the one is a savour of life unto life to the other is a savour of death unto

death; the same providence, like the same sun, softens the one and hardens the other, Ho 14:9.

30 The righteous shall never be removed:
but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.
31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom:
but the froward tongue shall be cut out.

Here, as before, men are judged of, and, accordingly, are justified or condemned, by their words, Mt 12:37. 1. It is both the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness that he speaks wisely and well. A good man, in his discourse, brings forth wisdom for the benefit of others. God gives him wisdom as a reward of his righteousness (Ec 2:26), and he, in gratitude for that gift and justice to the giver, does good with it, and with his wise and pious discourses edifies many. He knows what is acceptable, what discourse will be pleasing to God (for that is it that he studies more than to oblige the company), and what will be agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers, what will become him and benefit them, and that he will speak.

2. It is the sin, and will be the ruin, of a wicked man, that he speaks wickedly like himself. The mouth of the wicked speaks frowardness, that which is displeasing to God and provoking to those he converses with; and what is the issue of it? Why, the froward tongue shall be cut out, as surely as the flattering one, Ps 12:3.

32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable:
but the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* frowardness.

Proverbs-11

1 A false balance *is* abomination to the Lord:
but a just weight *is* his delight.

As religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness (he is not an honest man that is not devout), so righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion, for he is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotion should be accepted; for,

1. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce. A false balance is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an abomination to the Lord, and render those abominable to him that allow themselves in the use of such accursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice, which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour, whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by, and, while it passes undiscovered, they cannot blame themselves for it; a blot is no blot till it is hit, Ho 12:7,8. But they are not the less an abomination to God, who will be the avenger of those that are defrauded by their brethren.

2. Nothing is more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him: A just weight is his delight. He himself goes by a just weight, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are herein followers of him. A balance cheats, under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

2 *When* pride cometh, then cometh shame:
but with the lowly *is* wisdom.

Observe, 1. How he that exalts himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him. When pride comes then comes shame. Pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has, to be proud. It is a sin which others cry out shame on and look upon with disdain; he that is haughty makes himself contemptible; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vain-glory; for God resists the proud, contradicts them, and counterworks them, in the thing they are proud of, Isa 2:11, &c.

2. How he that humbles himself is here exalted, and a high character is given him. As with the proud there is folly, and will be shame, so with the lowly there is wisdom, and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect and makes his face to shine before men; or, if any be so base as to trample upon the humble, God will give them grace which will be their glory. Considering how safe, and quiet, and easy, those are that are of a humble spirit, what communion they have with God and comfort in themselves, we will say, With the lowly is wisdom.

3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them:
but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It is not only promised that God will guide the upright, and threatened that he will destroy the transgressors, but, that we may be the more fully assured of both, it is here represented as if the nature of the thing were such on both sides that it would do it itself.

1 The integrity of an honest man will itself be his guide in the way of duty and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain; his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not tack about every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at than to keep a good conscience. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, Ps 25:21.

2 The iniquity of a bad man will itself be his ruin. As the plainness of a good man will be his protection, though he is ever so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction, though they think themselves eve so well fortified. They shall fall into pits of their own digging, Pr 5:22.

4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath:
but righteousness delivereth from death.

Note, 1 The day of death will be a day of wrath. It is a messenger of God's wrath; therefore when Moses had meditated on man's mortality he takes occasion thence to admire the power of God's anger, Ps 110:11. It is a debt

owing, not to nature, but to God's justice. After death the judgment, and that is a day of wrath, Re 6:17.

2. Riches will stand men in no stead that day. They will neither put by the stroke nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting; what profit will this world's birth-rights be of then? In the day of public judgments riches often expose men rather than protect them, Eze 7:19. 3. It is righteousness only that will deliver from the evil of death. A good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it; it is the privilege of the righteous only not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way:
but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

These two verses are, in effect, the same, and both to the same purport with Pr 11:3. For the truths are here of such certainty and weight that they cannot be too often inculcated. Let us govern ourselves by these principles.

That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace will be,

1. Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case to say to us, This is the way, walk in it. He that acts without a guide looks right on and sees his way before him.

2. Our best deliverance from every false way: The righteousness of the upright shall be armour of proof to them, to deliver them from the allurements of the devil and the world, and from their menaces.

The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive: The wicked shall fail into misery and ruin by their own wickedness, and be taken in their own naughtiness as in a snare. O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself. Their sin will

be their punishment; that very thing by which they contrived to shelter themselves will make against them.

6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them:
but transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness.
7 When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish:
and the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.

Note, 1. Even wicked men, while they live, may keep up a confident expectation of a happiness when they die, or at least a happiness in this world. The hypocrite has his hope, in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web. The worldling expects great matters from his wealth; he calls it goods laid up for many years, and hopes to take his ease in it and to be merry; but in death their expectation will be frustrated: the worldling must leave this world which he expected to continue in and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, Job 27:8.

2. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people that their hopes will sink into despair just when they expect them to be crowned with fruition. When a godly man dies his expectations are out-done, and all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces; in that very day his thoughts perish with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble,
and the wicked cometh in his stead.

As always in death, so sometimes in life, the righteous are remarkably favoured and the wicked crossed.

1. Good people are helped out of the distresses which they thought themselves lost in, and their feet are set in a large room, Ps 66:12,34:19. God has found out a way to deliver his people even when they have despaired and their enemies have triumphed, as if the wilderness had shut them in.

2 The wicked have fallen into the distresses which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they had been instrumental to bring the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead, as a ransom for the just. Mordecai is saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lion's den, and Peter from the prison; and their persecutors come in their stead. The Israelites are delivered out of the Red Sea and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the saints in God's eye that he gives men for them, Isa 43:3,4.

9 A hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbor:
but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Here is,

1. Hypocrisy designing ill. It is not only the murderer with his sword, but the hypocrite with his mouth, that destroys his neighbour, decoying him into sin, or into mischief, by the specious pretences of kindness and good-will. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, but no tongue more fatal than the flattering tongue.

2. Honesty defeating the design and escaping the snare: Through knowledge of the devices of Satan shall the just be delivered from the snares which the hypocrite has laid for him; seducers shall not deceive the elect. By the knowledge of God, and the scriptures, and their own hearts, shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, Ro 16:18,19.

10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth:
and when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting.

It is here observed,

I. That good men are generally well-beloved by their neighbours, but nobody cares for wicked people.

1. It is true there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves, have a good

word for a good man; and therefore when it goes well with the righteous, when they are advanced and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and the city rejoices. For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and as it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation.

2. Wicked people may perhaps have here and there a well-wisher among those who are altogether such as themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill-will; they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore when they perish there is shouting; every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chased out of the world, and wishes no greater loss may come to the town, the rather because they hope the righteous may come in their stead, as they into trouble instead of the righteous, Pr 11:8. Let a sense of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, Job 27:23,Ps 52:6.

II. That there is good reason for this, because those that are good do good, but (as saith the proverb of the ancients) wickedness proceeds from the wicked.

1. Good men are public blessings--Vir bonus est commune bonum. By the blessing of the upright, the blessings with which they are blessed, which enlarge their sphere of usefulness,--by the blessings with which they bless their neighbours, their advice, their example, their prayers, and all the instances of their serviceableness to the public interest,--by the blessings with which God blesses others for their sake,--by these the city is exalted and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours.

2. Wicked men are public nuisances, not only the burdens, but the plagues of their generation. The city is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked, whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgments of God upon it.

11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted:
but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.
12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbor:
but a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

I. Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence,

1. Of wisdom: A man of understanding, that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked, holds his peace, that he may neither give vent to his passion nor kindle the passion of others by any opprobrious language or peevish reflections.

2. Of sincerity: He that is of a faithful spirit, that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, conceals every matter which, if divulged, may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour.

II. This prudent friendly concealment is here opposed to two very bad vices of the tongue:--

1. Speaking scornfully of a man to his face: He that is void of wisdom discovers his folly by this; he despises his neighbour, calls him Raca, and Thou fool, upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He undervalues himself who thus undervalues one that is made of the same mould.

2. Speaking spitefully of a man behind his back: A tale-bearer, that carries all the stories he can pick up, true or false, from house to house, to make mischief and sow discord, reveals secrets which he has been entrusted with,

and so breaks the laws, and forfeits all the privileges, of friendship and conversation.

13 A talebearer revealeth secrets:
but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

14 Where no counsel *is,* the people fall:
but in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety.

Here is, 1 The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin: Where no counsel is, no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties and divided interests, the people fall, crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to their common enemies. Councils of war are necessary to the operations of war; two eyes see more than one; and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance.

2 The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity: In the multitude of counsellors, that see their need one of another, and act in concert and with concern for the public welfare, there is safety; for what prudent methods one discerns not another may. In our private affairs we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many; if they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it:*
and he that hateth suretyship is sure.

Here we are taught, 1. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will (he that gave them to us has reserved to himself a power to direct us how we shall use them, for they are not our own; we are but stewards), and further that God in his law consults our interests and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good husbandry which is good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs which is part of the character of a good man, Ps 112:5. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship.

2. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretiship,

(1.) Because there is danger of bringing ourselves into trouble by it, and our families too when we are gone: He that is surety for a stranger, for any one that asks him and promises him to be bound for him another time, for one whose person perhaps he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, he shall smart for it. Contritione conteretur--he shall be certainly and sadly crushed and broken by it, and perhaps become a bankrupt. Our Lord Jesus was surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he smarted for it; it pleased the Lord to bruise him.

(2.) Because he that resolves against all such suretiship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do if he take care not to launch out any further into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.

16 A gracious woman retaineth honor:
and strong *men* retain riches.

Here, 1. It is allowed that strong men retain riches, that those who bustle in the world, who are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all who stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have and to get more, while those who are weak are preyed upon by all about them.

2. It is taken for granted that a gracious woman is as solicitous to preserve her reputation for wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates; and those women who are truly gracious will, in like manner, effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct. A gracious woman is as honourable as a valiant man and her honour is as sure.

17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul:

but *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh.

It is a common principle, Every one for himself. Proximus egomet mihi--None so near to me as myself. Now, if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in ourselves and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to ourselves, even in respect of present comfort, according as we are or are not governed by religious principles.

1. A merciful, tender, good humoured man, does good to his own soul, makes and keeps himself easy. He has the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as his own soul; for we are members one of another. He that waters others with his temporal good things shall find that God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which will do the best good to his own soul. See Isa 58:7, &c. If thou hide not thy eyes from thy own flesh, but do good to others, as to thyself, if thou do good with thy own soul and draw that out to the hungry, thou wilt do good to thy own soul; for the Lord shall satisfy thy soul and make fat thy bones. Some make it part of the character of a merciful man, that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others will oblige him to allow himself also that which is convenient and to enjoy the good of all his labour. We may by the soul understand the inward man, as the apostle calls it, and then it teaches us that the first and great act of mercy is to provide well for our own souls the necessary supports of the spiritual life.

2. A cruel, froward, ill-natured man, troubles his own flesh, and so his sin becomes his punishment; he starves and dies for want of what he has, because he has not a heart to use it either for the good of others of for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are, and should be, to him as his own flesh, Eph 5:29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the rottenness of the bones and the consumption of the flesh.

18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work:
but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward.

Note, 1. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves: The wicked works a deceitful work, builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes, promises himself that by his sin which he will never gain; nay, it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. Sin deceived me, and by it slew me.

2. Saints lay up the best securities for themselves: He that sows righteousness, that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future recompence, he shall have a sure reward; it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seedness fail not, the harvest shall not, Ga 6:8.

19 As righteousness *tendeth* to life;
so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death.

It is here shown that righteousness, not only by the divine judgment, will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness, in its own nature, has a direct tendency to life and wickedness to death. 1. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. Righteousness inclines, disposes, and leads, the soul to life. 2. In like manner, those that indulge themselves in sin are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits the more eagerly bent he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

20 They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the Lord:
but *such as are* upright in *their* way *are* his delight.

It concerns us to know what God hates and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly, may avoid his displeasure and recommend ourselves to his favour. Now here we are told, 1. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, for these are signified by the word which we translate frowardness, pretending justice, but intending wrong, walking in crooked ways, to avoid discovery. Those are of a froward heart who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good, and such are, more than any sinners, an abomination to the Lord, Isa 65:5.

2. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain-dealing: Such as are upright in their way, such as aim and act with integrity, such as have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, these God delights in, these he even boasts of (Hast thou considered my servant Job?) and will have us to admire. Behold an Israelite indeed!

21 *Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished:
but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Observe, 1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners: Though hand join in hand, though there are many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice,--though they are in league for the support and propagation of it,--though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade, in defiance of religion,--yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God; they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say that they did as the most did and as their company did; they shall not be unpunished; witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number, and strength, and unanimity in sin will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes.

2. That entails of religion shall certainly be blessed: The seed of the righteous, that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, shall, in due time, be delivered. Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes the seed of the righteous, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David.

22 *As* a jewel of gold in a swine's snout,
so is a fair woman which is without discretion.

By discretion here we must understand religion and grace, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unspotted virtue; so that a woman without discretion is a woman of a loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe,

1. It is taken for granted here that beauty or comeliness of body is as a jewel of gold, a thing very valuable, and, where there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it, it is a great ornament, (Gratior est pulchro veniens de corpore virtus--Virtue appears peculiarly graceful when associated with beauty); but a foolish wanton woman, of a light carriage, is fitly compared to a swine, though she be ever so handsome, wallowing in the mire of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience are defiled, and, though washed, returning to them.

2. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it. It seems ill-bestowed upon them; it is quite misplaced, as a jewel in a swine's snout, with which he roots in the dunghill. If beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments; it is a pity that those should have them who have not discretion to use them well.

23 The desire of the righteous *is* only good:
but the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

This tells us what the desire and expectation of the righteous and of the wicked are and how they will prove, what they would have and what they shall have. 1. The righteous would have good, only good; all they desire is that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have, that good which they desire, Ps 37:4.

2. The wicked would have wrath; they desire the woeful day, that God's judgments may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and wrath they shall have, so shall their doom be. They expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves; as they loved cursing, they shall have enough of it.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth;
and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

Note, 1. It is possible a man may grow rich by prudently spending what he has, may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generosity, and yet may increase; nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased by being sown. By cheerfully using what we have our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do, by minding which closely what we have is increased; it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God; he blesses the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand, 2Co 9:20. Give, and it shall be given you.

2. It is possible a man may grow poor by meanly sparing what he has, withholding more than is meet, not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expenses for the preservation of the goods; this tends to poverty; it cramps men's ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, destroys their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God: and, let men be ever so saving of what they have, if God blast it and blow upon it, it comes to nothing. A fire not blown shall consume it, Hag 1:6,9.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat:
and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before, Pr 11:17. 1. We

shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms: The liberal soul, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted and provides for them, that scatters blessings with gracious lips and generous hands, that soul shall be made fat with true pleasure and enriched with more grace.

2. We shall have the recompence of it both from God and man: He that waters others with the streams of his bounty shall be also watered himself; God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers, of his blessing, which he will pour out, till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal 3:10. Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion; the merciful shall find mercy and the kind be kindly dealt with. 3. We shall be enabled still to do yet more good: He that waters, even he shall be as rain (so some read it); he shall be recruited as the clouds are which return after the rain, and shall be further useful and acceptable, as the rain to the new-mown grass. he that teaches shall learn (so the Chaldee reads it); he that uses his knowledge in teaching others shall himself be taught of God; to him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.

26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him:
but blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth *it*.

See here, 1. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage, that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them. It is a sin, when corn is dear and scarce, to withhold it, in hopes that it will still grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high that the poor suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market-price, to be content with moderate profit, and not aim to make a gain of God's judgments. It is a noble and extensive piece of charity for those that have stores wherewithal to do it to help to keep the markets low when the price of our commodities grows excessive.

2. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people. We are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding, whether we have the ill will and word, or the good will and word, of our neighbours, their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them; and to court their blessings, and be at some expense to purchase them. Sometimes, vox populi est vox Dei--the voice of the people is the voice of God.

27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favor:
but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

Observe, 1. Those that are industrious to do good in the world get themselves beloved both with God and man: He that rises early to that which is good (so the word is), that seeks opportunities of serving his friends and relieving the poor, and lays out himself therein, procures favour. All about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a kindness; and, which is better than that, better than life, he has God's lovingkindness.

2. Those that are industrious to do mischief are preparing ruin for themselves: It shall come unto them; some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And, observe, seeking mischief is here set in opposition to seeking good; for those that are not doing good are doing hurt.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall:
but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Observe, 1. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need: He that trusts in them, as if they would secure him the favour of God and be his protection and portion, shall fall, as a man who lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand and pierce him. 2. Our righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us: The righteous shall then flourish as a branch, the branch of righteousness, like a tree whose leaf shall not wither, Ps 1:3. Even in death, when riches fail men, the bones of the righteous shall flourish as a herb, Isa 66:14. When those that take root in the world

wither those that are grafted into Christ and partake of his root and fatness shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind:
and the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

Two extremes in the management of family-affairs are here condemned and the ill consequences of them foretold:-- 1. Carefulness and carnal policy, on the one hand. There are those that by their extreme earnestness in pursuit of the world, their anxiety about their business and fretfulness about their losses, their strictness with their servants and their niggardliness towards their families, trouble their own houses and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think, by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either to get or to save by it. But they will both be disappointed; they will inherit the wind. All they will get by these arts will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation.

2. Carelessness and want of common prudence, on the other. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance and consideration, no only loses his reputation and interest, but becomes a servant to the wise in heart. He is impoverished, and forced to work for his living; while those that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him, and others like him. It is rational, and very fit, that the fool should be servant to the wise in heart, and upon that account, among others, we are bound to submit our wills to the will of God, and to be subject to him, because we are fools and he is infinitely wise.

30 The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life;
and he that winneth souls *is* wise.

This shows what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued. 1 The righteous are as trees of life; the fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits

of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands.

2 The wise are something more; they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. He that is wise, by communicating his wisdom, wins souls, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to turn many to righteousness, and that is the same with winning souls here, Da 12:3. Abraham's proselytes are called the souls that he had gotten, Ge 12:5. Those that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and those that do win souls show that they are wise.

31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
much more the wicked and the sinner.

This, I think, is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, Behold! which intimates that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth, which must be considered.

1. Some understand both parts of a recompence in displeasure: The righteous, if they do amiss, shall be punished for their offences in this world; much more shall wicked people be punished for theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly? 1Pe 4:17,18,Lu 23:31.

2. I rather understand it of a recompence of reward to the righteous and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompences in the earth, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that verily there is a God that judges in the earth (Ps 58:11); but they are not universal; many sins go unpunished in the earth, and services unrewarded, which

indicates that there is a judgment to come, and that there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times the righteous are recompensed for their righteousness here in the earth, though that is not the principal, much less the only reward either intended for them or intended by them; but whatever the word of God has promised them, or the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have in the earth.

The wicked also, and the sinner, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life, nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompence here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore stand in awe and sin not. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall those have two hells that merit both.

Proverbs-12

1 Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge:
but he that hateth reproof *is* brutish.

We are here taught to try whether we have grace or no by enquiring how we stand affected to the means of grace. 1. Those that have grace and love it will delight in all the instructions that are given them by way of counsel; admonition, or reproof, by the word or providence of God; they will value a good education, and think it not a hardship, but a happiness, to be under a strict and prudent discipline. Those that love a faithful ministry, that value it, and sit under it with pleasure, make it to appear that they love knowledge.

2. Those show themselves not only void of grace, but void of common sense, that take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and an imposition upon their liberty to be put in mind of their duty: He that hates reproof is not only foolish, but brutish, like the horse and the mule that have no understanding, or the ox that kicks against the goad.

Those that desire to live in loose families and societies, where they may be under no check, that stifle the convictions of their own consciences, and count those their enemies that tell them the truth, are the brutish here meant.

2 A good *man* obtaineth favor of the Lord:
but a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Note, 1. We are really as we are with God. Those are happy, truly happy, for ever happy, that obtain favour of the Lord, though the world frown upon them, and they find little favour with men; for in God's favour is life, and that is the fountain of all good. On the other hand those are miserable whom he condemns, however men may applaud them, and cry them up; whom he condemns he condemns to the second death. 2. We are with God as we are with men, as we have our conversation in this world. Our Father judges of his children very much by their conduct one to another; and therefore a good man, that is merciful, and charitable, and does good, draws out favour from the Lord by his prayers; but a malicious man, that devises wickedness against his neighbours, he will condemn, as unworthy of a place in his kingdom.

3 A man shall not be established by wickedness:
but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Note, 1. Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot by such arts settle and secure themselves; though they may get large estates they cannot get such as will abide: A man shall not be established by wickedness; it may set him in high places, but they are slippery places, Ps 73:18. That prosperity which is raised by sin is built on the sand, and so it will soon appear.

2. Though good men may have but little of the world, yet that little will last, and what is honestly got will wear well: The root of the righteous shall not be moved, though their branches may be shaken. Those that by faith are rooted in Christ are firmly fixed; in him their comfort and happiness are so rooted as never to be rooted up.

4 A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband:
but she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones.

Note, 1. He that is blessed with a good wife is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him. A virtuous woman, that is pious and prudent, ingenious and industrious, that is active for the good of her family and looks well to the ways of her household, that makes conscience of her duty in every relation, a woman of spirit, that can bear crosses without disturbance, such a one owns her husband for her head, and therefore she is a crown to him, not only a credit and honour to him, as a crown is an ornament, but supports and keeps up his authority in his family, as a crown is an ensign of power. She is submissive and faithful to him and by her example teaches his children and servants to be so too.

2. He that is plagued with a bad wife is as miserable as if he were upon the dunghill; for she is no better than rottenness in his bones, an incurable disease, besides that she makes him ashamed. She that is silly and slothful, wasteful and wanton, passionate and ill-tongued, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband. If he go abroad, his head is hung down, for his wife's faults turn to his reproach. If he retire into himself, his heart is sunk; he is continually uneasy; it is an affliction that preys much upon the spirits.

5 The thoughts of the righteous *are* right:
but the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit.

Note, 1 The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and judges them. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are free. No, they are under the divine cognizance, and therefore under the divine command.

2. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them; for they are the first-born of the soul, that have most of its image undisguised. Right thoughts are a righteous man's best evidences, as nothing more certainly proves a man wicked than wicked contrivances and designs. A good man may have in his mind bad suggestions, but he does not indulge them and harbour them till they are ripened into bad projects and resolutions.

3. It is a man's honour to mean honestly, and to have his thoughts right, though a word or action may be misplaced, or mistimed, or at least misinterpreted. But it is a man's shame to lie always at catch, to act with deceit, with trick and design, not only with a long reach, but with an overreach.

6 The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood:
but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

In the foregoing verse the thoughts of the wicked and righteous were compared; here their words, and those are as the abundance of the heart is. 1. Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbours; and wicked indeed those are whose words are to lie in wait for blood; their tongues are swords to those that stand in their way, to good men whom they hate and persecute. See an instance, Lu 20:20,21.

2. Good men speak help to their neighbours: The mouth of the upright is ready to be opened in the cause of those that are oppressed (Pr 31:8), to plead for them, to witness for them, and so to deliver them, particularly those whom the wicked lie in wait for. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7 The wicked are overthrown, and *are* not:
but the house of the righteous shall stand.

We are here taught as before (Pr 12:3,Pr 10:25,30), 1. That the triumphing of the wicked is short. They may be exalted for a while, but in a little time they are overthrown and are not; their trouble proves their overthrow, and those who made a great show disappear, and their place knows them no more. Turn the wicked, and they are not; they stand in such a slippery place that the least touch of trouble brings them down, like the apples of Sodom, which look fair, but touch them and they go to dust. 2. That the prosperity of the righteous has a good bottom and will endure. Death will remove them, but their house shall stand, their families shall be kept up, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom:

but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

We are here told whence to expect a good name. Reputation is what most have a high regard to and stand much upon. Now it is certain,

1 The best reputation is that which attends virtue and serious piety, and the prudent conduct of life: A man shall be commended by all that are wise and good, in conformity to the judgment of God himself, which we are sure is according to truth, not according to his riches or preferments, his craft and subtlety, but according to his wisdom, the honesty of his designs and the prudent choice of means to compass them.

2 The worst reproach is that which follows wickedness and an opposition to that which is good: He that is of a perverse heart, that turns aside to crooked ways, and goes on frowardly in them, shall be despised. Providence will bring him to poverty and contempt, and all that have a true sense of honour will despise him as unworthy to be dealt with and unfit to be trusted, as a blemish and scandal to mankind.

9 *He that is* despised, and hath a servant, *is* better than he that honoreth himself, and lacketh bread.

Note, 1. It is the folly of some that they covet to make a great figure abroad, take place, and take state, as persons of quality, and yet want necessaries at home, and, if their debts were paid, would not be worth a morsel of bread, nay, perhaps, pinch their bellies to put it on their backs, that they may appear very gay, because fine feathers make fine birds.

2 The condition and character of those is every way better who content themselves in a lower sphere, where they are despised for the plainness of their dress and the meanness of their post, that they may be able to afford themselves, not only necessaries, but conveniences, in their own houses, not only bread, but a servant to attend them and take some of their work off their hands. Those that contrive to live plentifully and comfortably at home are to be preferred before those that affect nothing so much as to

appear splendid abroad, though they have not wherewithal to maintain their appearance, whose hearts are unhumbled when their condition is low.

10 A righteous *man* regardeth the life of his beast:
but the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.

See here, 1. To how great a degree a good man will be merciful; he has not only a compassion for the human nature under its greatest abasements, but he regards even the life of his beast, not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to Providence, which preserves man and beast. The beasts that are under our care must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, must in no case be abused or tyrannised over. Balaam was checked for beating his ass. The law took care for oxen. Those therefore are unrighteous men that are not just to the brute-creatures; those that are furious and barbarous to them evidence, and confirm in themselves, a habit of barbarity, and help to make the creation groan, Ro 8:22.

2. To how great a degree a wicked man will be unmerciful; even his tender mercies are cruel; that natural compassion which is in him, as a man, is lost, and, by the power of corruption, is turned into hard-heartedness; even that which they will have to pass for compassion is really cruel, as Pilate's resolution concerning Christ the innocent, I will chastise him and let him go. Their pretended kindnesses are only a cover for purposed cruelties.

11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread:
but he that followeth vain *persons is* void of understanding.

Note, 1. It is men's wisdom to mind their business and follow an honest calling, for that is the way, by the blessing of God, to get a livelihood: He that tills his land, of which he is either the owner or the occupant, that keeps to his word and is willing to take pains, if he do not raise an estate by it (what need is there of that?), yet he shall be satisfied with bread, shall have food convenient for himself and his family, enough to bear his charges comfortably through the world. Even the sentence of wrath has this mercy in it, Thou shalt eat bread, though it be in the sweat of thy face.

Cain was denied this, Ge 4:12. Be busy, and that is the true way to be easy. Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee. Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands.

2. It is men's folly to neglect their business. Those are void of understanding that do so, for then they fall in with idle companions and follow them in their evil courses, and so come to want bread, at least bread of their own, and make themselves burdensome to others, eating the bread out of other people's mouths.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil *men:*
but the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit*.

See here, 1. What is the care and aim of a wicked man; he would do mischief: He desires the net of evil men. "Oh that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with, that I had but his art of over-reaching, that I could but take my revenge on one I have spite to as effectually as he can!" He desires the strong-hold, or fortress, of evil men (so some read it), to act securely in doing mischief, that it may not turn upon him.

2. What is the care and aim of a good man: His root yields fruit, and is his strength and stability, and that is it that he desires, to do good and to be fixed and confirmed in doing good. The wicked desires only a net wherewith to fish for himself; the righteous desires to yield fruit for the benefit of others and God's glory, Ro 14:6.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips:
but the just shall come out of trouble.

See here, 1 The wicked entangling themselves in trouble by their folly, when God in justice leaves them to themselves. They are often snared by the transgression of their lips and their throats are cut with their own tongues. By speaking evil of dignities they expose themselves to public justice; by giving ill language they become obnoxious to private resentments, are sued for defamation, and actions on the case for words are brought against them. Many a man has paid dearly in this world for the

transgression of his lips, and has felt the lash on his back for want of a bridle upon his tongue, Ps 64:8.

2 The righteous extricating themselves out of trouble by their own wisdom, when God in mercy comes in for their succour: The just shall come out of such troubles as the wicked throw themselves headlong into. It is intimated that the just may perhaps come into trouble; but, though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, Ps 34:19.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth:
and the recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

We are here assured, for our quickening to every good word and work, 1. That even good words will turn to a good account (Pr 12:14): A man shall be satisfied with good (that is, he shall gain present comfort, that inward pleasure which is truly satisfying) by the fruit of his mouth, by the good he does with his pious discourse and prudent advice. While we are teaching others we may ourselves learn, and feed on the bread of life we break to others.

2. That good works, much more, will be abundantly rewarded: The recompence of a man's hands for all his work and labour of love, all he has done for the glory of God and the good of his generation, shall be rendered unto him, and he shall reap as he has sown. Or it may be understood of the general rule of justice; God will render to every man according to his work, Ro 2:6.

15 The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes:
but he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

See here, 1. What it is that keeps a fool from being wise: His way is right in his own eyes; he thinks he is in the right in every thing he does, and therefore asks no advice, because he does not apprehend he needs it; he is confident he knows the way, and cannot miss it, and therefore never enquires the way. The rule he goes by is to do that which is right in his own eyes, to walk in the way of his heart. Quicquid libet, licet--He makes his will his law. He is a fool that is governed by his eye, and not by his conscience.

2. What it is that keeps a wise man from being a fool; he is willing to be advised, desires to have counsel given him, and hearkens to counsel, being diffident of his own judgment and having a value for the direction of those that are wise and good. He is wise (it is a sign he is so, and he is likely to continue so) whose ear is always open to good advice.

16 A fool's wrath is presently known:
but a prudent *man* covereth shame.

Note, 1. Passion is folly: A fool is known by his anger (so some read it); not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he has his anger under check and direction, is lord of his anger, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He that, when he is provoked, breaks out into indecent expressions, in words or behaviour, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and leads him to forget himself, Nabal certainly is his name and folly is with him. A fool's indignation is known in the day; he proclaims it openly, whatever company he is in. Or it is known in the day he is provoked; he cannot defer showing his resentments. Those that are soon angry, that are quickly put into a flame by the least spark, have not that rule which they ought to have over their own spirits.

2. Meekness is wisdom: A prudent man covers shame.

(1.) He covers the passion that is in his own breast; when his spirit is stirred, and his heart hot within him, he keeps his mouth as with a bridle, and suppresses his resentments, by smothering and stifling them. Anger is shame, and, though a wise man be not perfectly free from it, yet he is ashamed of it, rebukes it, and suffers not the evil spirit to speak.

(2.) He covers the provocation that is given him, the indignity that is done him, winks at it, covers it as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentments of it too far. It is a kindness to ourselves, and contributes to

the repose of our own minds, to extenuate and excuse the injuries and affronts that we receive, instead of aggravating them and making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

17 *He that* speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness:
but a false witness deceit.

Here is, 1. A faithful witness commended for an honest man. He that makes conscience of speaking truth, and representing every thing fairly, to the best of his knowledge, whether in judgment or in common conversation, whether he be upon his oath or no, he shows forth righteousness; he makes it to appear that he is governed and actuated by the principles and laws of righteousness, and he promotes justice by doing honour to it and serving the administration of it.

2. A false witness condemned for a cheat; he shows forth deceit, not only how little conscience he makes of deceiving those he deals with, but how much pleasure he takes in it, and that he is possessed by a lying spirit, Jer 9:3-5. We are all concerned to possess ourselves with a dread and detestation of the sin of lying (Ps 119:163) and with a reigning principle of honesty.

18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword:
but the tongue of the wise *is* health.

The tongue is death or life, poison or medicine, as it is used. 1. There are words that are cutting and killing, that are like the piercings of a sword. Opprobrious words grieve the spirits of those to whom they are spoken, and cut them to the heart. Slanders, like a sword, wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurably. Whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, divide and cut asunder the bounds of love and friendship, and separate those that have been dearest to each other.

2. There are words that are curing and healing: The tongue of the wise is health, closing up those wounds which the backbiting tongue had given, making all whole again, restoring peace, and accommodating matters in variance and persuading to reconciliation. Wisdom will find out

proper remedies against the mischiefs that are made by detraction and evil-speaking.

19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever:
but a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.

Be it observed, to the honour of truth, that sacred thing,

1. That, if truth be spoken, it will hold good, and, whoever may be disobliged by it and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground. Great is the truth and will prevail. What is true will be always true; we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved and put to shame.

2. That, if truth be denied, yet in time it will transpire. A lying tongue, that puts false colours upon things, is but for a moment. The lie will be disproved. The liar, when he comes to be examined, will be found in several stories, and not consistent with himself as he is that speaks truth; and, when he is found in a lie, he cannot gain his point, nor will he afterwards be credited. Truth may be eclipsed, but it will come to light. Those therefore that make a lie their refuge will find it a refuge of lies.

20 Deceit *is* in the heart of them that imagine evil:
but to the counselors of peace *is* joy.

Note, 1. Those that devise mischief contrive, for the accomplishing of it, how to impose upon others; but it will prove, in the end, that they deceive themselves. Those that imagine evil, under colour of friendship, have their hearts full of this and the other advantage and satisfaction which they shall gain by it, but it is all a cheat. Let them imagine it ever so artfully, deceivers will be deceived.

2. Those that consult the good of their neighbours, that study the things which make for peace and give peaceable advice, promote healing attempts and contrive healing methods, and, according as their sphere is, further the public welfare, will have not only the credit, but the comfort of it. They will have joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. Blessed are the peace-makers.

21 There shall no evil happen to the just:

but the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Note, 1. Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them. He will, by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice, keep them from the evil of sin; so that, though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation, and though they may come into trouble, into many troubles, yet to them those troubles shall have no evil in them, whatever they have to others (Ps 91:10), for they shall be overruled to work for their good.

2. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. Those that live in contempt of God and man, that are set on mischief, with mischief they shall be filled. They shall be more mischievous, shall be filled with all unrighteousness, Ro 1:29. Or they shall be made miserable with the mischiefs that shall come upon them. Those that delight in mischief shall have enough of it. Some read the whole verse thus, There shall no evil happen to the just, though the wicked be filled with mischief and spite against them. They shall be safe under the protection of Heaven, though hell itself break loose upon them.

22 Lying lips *are* abomination to the Lord:
but they that deal truly *are* his delight.

We are here taught, 1. To hate lying, and to keep at the utmost distance from it, because it is an abomination to the Lord, and renders those abominable in his sight that allow themselves in it, not only because it is a breach of his law, but because it is destructive to human society.

2. To make conscience of truth, not only in our words, but in all our actions, because those that deal truly and sincerely in all their dealings are his delight, and he is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with, and make use of, those that are honest and that we may put a confidence in; such therefore let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favour both of God and man.

23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge:
but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Note, 1. He that is wise does not affect to proclaim his wisdom, and it is his honour that he does not. He communicates his knowledge when it may turn to the edification of others, but he conceals it when the showing of it would only tend to his own commendation. Knowing men, if they be prudent men, will carefully avoid every thing that savours of ostentation, and not take all occasions to show their learning and reading, but only to use it for good purposes, and then let their own works praise them. Ars est celare artem--The perfection of art is to conceal it.

2. He that is foolish cannot avoid proclaiming his folly, and it is his shame that he cannot: The heart of fools, by their foolish words and actions, proclaims foolishness; either they do not desire to hide it, so little sense have they of good and evil, honour and dishonour, or they know not how to hide it, so little discretion have they in the management of themselves, Ec 10:3.

24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule:
but the slothful shall be under tribute.

Note, 1. Industry is the way to preferment. Solomon advanced Jeroboam because he saw that he was an industrious young man, and minded his business, 1Ki 11:28. Men that take pains in study and serviceableness will thereby gain such an interest and reputation as will give them a dominion over all about them, by which means many have risen strangely. He that has been faithful in a few things shall be made ruler over many things. The elders, that labour in the word and doctrine, are worthy of double honour; and those that are diligent when they are young will get that which will enable them to rule, and so to rest, when they are old.

2. Knavery is the way to slavery: The slothful and careless, or rather the deceitful (for so the word signifies), shall be under tribute. Those that, because they will not take pains in an honest calling, live by their shifts and arts of dishonesty, are paltry and beggarly, and will be kept under. Those that are diligent and honest when they are apprentices will come to be masters; but those that are

otherwise are the fools who, all their days, must be servants to the wise in heart.

25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop:
but a good word maketh it glad.

Here is, 1 The cause and consequence of melancholy. It is heaviness in the heart; it is a load of care, and fear, and sorrow, upon the spirits, depressing them, and disabling them to exert themselves with any vigour on what is to be done or fortitude in what is to borne; it makes them stoop, prostrates and sinks them. Those that are thus oppressed can neither do the duty nor take the comfort of any relation, condition, or conversation. Those therefore that are inclined to it should watch and pray against it.

2 The cure of it: A good word from God, applied by faith, makes it glad; such a word is that (says one of the rabbin), Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; the good word of God, particularly the gospel, is designed to make the hearts glad that are weary and heavy-laden, Mt 11:28. Ministers are to be helpers of this joy.

26 The righteous *is* more excellent than his neighbor:
but the way of the wicked seduceth them.

See here, 1. That good men do well for themselves; for they have in themselves an excellent character, and they secure to themselves an excellent portion, and in both they excel other people: The righteous is more abundant than his neighbour (so the margin); he is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. There is a true excellency in religion; it ennobles men, inspires them with generous principles, makes them substantial; it is an excellency which is, in the sight of God, of great price, who is the true Judge of excellency. His neighbour may make a greater figure in the world, may be more applauded, but the righteous man has the intrinsic worth.

2. That wicked men do ill for themselves; they walk in a way which seduces them. It seems to them to be not only a pleasant way, but the right way; it is so agreeable to flesh

and blood that they therefore flatter themselves with an opinion that it cannot be amiss, but they will not gain the point they aim at, nor enjoy the good they hope for. It is all a cheat; and therefore the righteous is wiser and happier than his neighbour, that yet despise him and trample upon him.

27 The slothful *man* roasteth not that which he took in hunting:
but the substance of a diligent man *is* precious.

Here is, 1. That which may make us hate slothfulness and deceit, for the word here, as before, signifies both: The slothful deceitful man has roast meat, but that which he roasts is not what he himself took in hunting, no, it is what others took pains for, and he lives upon the fruit of their labours, like the drones in the hive. Or, if slothful deceitful men have taken any thing by hunting (as sportsmen are seldom men of business), yet they do not roast it when they have taken it; they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it; perhaps God in his providence cuts them short of it.

2. That which may make us in love with industry and honesty, that the substance of a diligent man, though it be not great perhaps, is yet precious. It comes from the blessing of God; he has comfort in it; it does him good, and his family. It is his own daily bread, not bread out of other people's mouths, and therefore he sees God gives it to him in answer to his prayer.

28 In the way of righteousness *is* life;
and *in* the pathway *thereof there is* no death.

The way of religion is here recommended to us, 1. As a straight, plain, easy way; it is the way of righteousness. God's commands (the rule we are to walk by) are all holy, just, and good. Religion has right reason and equity on its side; it is a path-way, a way which God has cast up for us (Isa 35:8); it is a highway, the king's highway, the King of kings' highway, a way which is tracked before us by all the saints, the good old way, full of the footsteps of the flock.

2. As a safe, pleasant, comfortable way.

(1.) There is not only life at the end, but there is life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction. The favour of God, which is better than life; the Spirit, who is life.

(2.) There is not only life in it, but so as that in it there is no death, none of that sorrow of the world which works death and is an allay to our present joy and life. There is no end of that life that is in the way of righteousness. Here there is life, but there is death too. In the way of righteousness there is life, and no death, life and immortality.

Proverbs-13

1 A wise son *heareth* his father's instruction:
but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

Among the children of the same parents it is no new thing for some to be hopeful and others the contrary; now here we are taught to distinguish. 1. There is great hope of those that have a reverence for their parents, and are willing to be advised and admonished by them. He is a wise son, and is in a far way to be wiser, that hears his father's instruction, desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it, and does not merely give it the hearing.

2. There is little hope of those that will not so much as hear rebuke with any patience, but scorn to submit to government and scoff at those that deal faithfully with them. How can those mend a fault who will not be told of it, but count those their enemies who do them that kindness?

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth:
but the soul of the transgressors *shall eat* violence.

Note, 1. If that which comes from within, out of the heart, be good, and from a good treasure, it will return with advantage. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread; nay, it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is to the use of edifying.

2. Violence done will recoil in the face of him that does it: The soul of the transgressors that harbours and plots mischief, and vents it by word and deed, shall eat violence; they shall have their belly full of it. Reward her as she has rewarded thee, Re 18:6. Every man shall drink as he brews, eat as he speaks; for by our words we must be justified or condemned, Mt 12:37. As our fruit is, so will our food be, Ro 6:21,22.

3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life:
but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Note, 1. A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul. He that is cautious, that thinks twice before he speaks once, that, if he have thought evil, lays his hand upon his mouth to suppress it, that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue and a strict hand on that bridle, he keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself and reflections of others upon him. 2. There is many a one ruined by an ungoverned tongue: He that opens widely his lips, to let our quod in buccam venerit--whatever comes uppermost, that loves to bawl, and bluster, and make a noise, and affects such a liberty of speech as bids defiance both to God and man, he shall have destruction. it will be the destruction of his reputation, his interest, his comfort, and his soul for ever, Jam 3:6.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing:
but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Here is, 1 The misery and shame of the slothful. See how foolish and absurd they are; they desire the gains which the diligent get, but they hate the pains which the diligent take; they covet every thing that is to be coveted, but will do nothing that is to be done; and therefore it follows, They have nothing; for he that will not labour let him hunger, and let him not eat, 2Th 3:10. The desire of the slothful, which should be his excitement, is his torment, which should make him busy, makes him always uneasy, and is really a greater toil to him than labour would be.

2 The happiness and honour of the diligent: Their soul shall be made fat; they shall have abundance, and shall have the comfortable enjoyment of it, and the more for its being the fruit of their diligence. This is especially true in spiritual affairs. Those that rest in idle wishes know not what the advantages of religion are; whereas those that take pains in the service of God find both the pleasure and profit of it.

The Righteous Exclusively Happy.

5 A righteous *man* hateth lying:
but a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Note, 1. Where grace reigns sin is loathsome. It is the undoubted character of every righteous man that he hates lying (that is, all sin, for every sin is a lie, and particularly all fraud and falsehood in commerce and conversation), not only that he will not tell a lie, but he abhors lying, from a rooted reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God. 2. Where sin reigns the man is loathsome. If his eyes were opened, and his conscience awakened, he would be so to himself, he would abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes; however, he is so to God and all good men; particularly, he makes himself so by lying, than which there is nothing more detestable. And, though he may think to face it out awhile, yet he will come to shame and contempt at last and will blush to show his face, Da 12:2.

6 Righteousness keepeth *him that is* upright in the way:
but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

See here, 1. Saints secured from ruin. Those that are upright in their way, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them from the temptations of Satan, which shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men, which shall not fasten upon them, to do them any real mischief, Ps 25:21.

Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi. Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence, Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.

2. Sinners secured for ruin. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed? It is their own wickedness that corrects them, that destroys them; they alone shall bear it.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing:
there is that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches.

This observation is applicable,

I. To men's worldly estate. The world is a great cheat, not only the things of the world, but the men of the world. All men are liars. Here is an instance in two sore evils under the sun:--

1. Some that are really poor would be thought to be rich and are thought to be so; they trade and spend as if they were rich, make a great bustle and a great show as if they had hidden treasures, when perhaps, if all their debts were paid, they are not worth a groat. This is sin, and will be shame; many a one hereby ruins his family and brings reproach upon his profession of religion. Those that thus live above what they have choose to be subject to their own pride rather than to God's providence, and it will end accordingly.

2. Some that are really rich would be thought to be poor, and are thought to be so, because they sordidly and meanly live below what God has given them, and choose rather to bury it than to use it, Ec 6:1,2. In this there is an ingratitude to God, injustice to the family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor.

II. To their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul; it is true riches; but men commonly misrepresent themselves, either designedly or through mistake and ignorance of themselves.

1. There are many presuming hypocrites, that are really poor and empty of grace and yet either think themselves rich, and will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend themselves rich, and will not own their poverty.

2. There are many timorous trembling Christians, that are spiritually rich, and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich, or, at least, will not own it; by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, they make themselves poor. The former mistake is destroying at last; this is disquieting in the mean time.

8 The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches:
but the poor heareth not rebuke.

We are apt to judge of men's blessedness, at least in this world, by their wealth, and that they are more or less happy accordingly as they have more or less of this world's goods; but Solomon here shows what a gross mistake it is, that we may be reconciled to a poor condition, and may neither covet riches ourselves nor envy those that have abundance.

1. Those that are rich, if by some they are respected for their riches, yet, to balance that, by others they are envied and struck at, and brought in danger of their lives, which therefore they are forced to ransom with their riches. Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field, Jer 41:8. Under some tyrants, it has been crime enough to be rich; and how little is a man beholden to his wealth when it only serves to redeem that life which otherwise would not have been exposed!

2. Those that are poor, if by some, that should be their friends, they are despised and overlooked, yet, to balance that, they are also despised and overlooked by others that would be their enemies if they had any thing to lose: The poor hear not rebuke, are not censured, reproached, accused, nor brought into trouble, as the rich are; for nobody thinks it worth while to take notice of them. When the rich Jews were carried captives to Babylon the poor of

the land were left, 2Ki 25:12. Welcome nothing, once in seven years. Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator--When a traveller is met by a robber he will rejoice at not having much property about him.

9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth:
but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Here is, 1 The comfort of good men flourishing and lasting: The light of the righteous rejoices, that is, it increases, and makes them glad. Even their outward prosperity is their joy, and much more those gifts, graces, and comforts, with which their souls are illuminated; these shine more and more, Pr 4:18. The Spirit is their light, and he gives them a fulness of joy, and rejoices to do them good.

2 The comfort of bad men withering and dying: The lamp of the wicked burns dimly and faint; it looks melancholy, like a taper in an urn, and it will shortly be put out in utter darkness, Isa 50:11. The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which will presently go out and is easily put out.

10 Only by pride cometh contention:
but with the well advised *is* wisdom.

Note, 1. Foolish pride is the great make-bate. Would you know whence come wars and fightings? They come from this root of bitterness. Whatever hand other lusts may have in contention (passion, envy, covetousness), pride has the great hand; it is its pride that it will itself sow discord and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction in either their opinions or their desires, impatient of competition and rivalship, impatient of contempt, or any thing that looks like a slight, and impatient of concession, and receding, from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side; and hence arise quarrels among relations and neighbours, quarrels in states and kingdoms, in churches and Christian societies. Men will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud.

2. Those that are humble and peaceable are wise and well advised. Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own consciences, their Bibles, their ministers, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, are wise, as in other things, so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness and prevent quarrels.

11 Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished:
but he that gathereth by labor shall increase.

This shows that riches wear as they are won and woven. 1. That which is won ill will never wear well, for a curse attends it which will waste it, and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting well incline them to the like sinful ways of spending: Wealth gotten by vanity will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it will be diminished. That which is got by such employments as are not lawful, or not becoming Christians, such as only serve to feed pride and luxury, that which is got by gaming or by the stage, may as truly be said to be gotten by vanity as that which is got by fraud and lying, and will be diminished. De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres--Ill-gotten wealth will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation.

2. That which is got by industry and honesty will grow more, instead of growing less; it will be a maintenance; it will be an inheritance; it will be an abundance. He that labours, working with his hands, shall so increase as that he shall have to give to him that needs (Eph 4:28); and, when it comes to that, it will increase yet more and more.

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick:
but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

Note, 1. Nothing is more grievous than the disappointment of a raised expectation, though not in the thing itself by a denial, yet in the time of it by a delay: Hope deferred makes the heart sick and languishing, fretful and peevish; but hope quite dashed kills the heart, and the more high the expectation was raised the more cutting is the frustration of it. It is therefore our wisdom not to promise ourselves any great matters from the creature, not to feed ourselves with

any vain hopes from this world, lest we lay up matter for our own vexation; and what we do hope for let us prepare to be disappointed in, that, if it should prove so, it may prove the easier; and let us not be hasty.

2. Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that, at last, which we have long wished and waited for: When the desire does come it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for it is a tree of life. It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked that their hopes will be frustrated; and it will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints that it is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes.

13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed:
but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

Here is, 1 The character of one that is marked for ruin: He that despises the word of God, and has no regard to it, no veneration for it, nor will be ruled by it, certainly he shall be destroyed, for he slights that which is the only means of curing a destructive disease and makes himself obnoxious to that divine wrath which will certainly be his destruction. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God's promises and comforts, despise his word, giving the preference to those things that stand in competition with it; and it is to their own just destruction: they would not take warning.

2 The character of one that is sure to be happy: He that fears the commandment, that stands in awe of God, pays a deference to his authority, has a reverence for his word, is afraid of displeasing God and incurring the penalties annexed to the commandment, shall not only escape destruction, but shall be rewarded for his godly fear. In keeping the commandment there is great reward.

14 The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

By the law of the wise and righteous, here, we may understand either the principles and rules by which they

govern themselves or (which comes all to one) the instructions which they give to others, which ought to be as a law to all about them; and if they be so,

1. They will be constant springs of comfort and satisfaction, as a fountain of life, sending forth streams of living water; the closer we keep to those rules the more effectually we secure our own peace.

2. They will be constant preservatives from the temptations of Satan. Those that follow the dictates of this law will keep at a distance from the snares of sin, and so escape the snares of death which those run into that forsake the law of the wise.

15 Good understanding giveth favor:
but the way of transgressors *is* hard.

If we compare not only the end, but the way, we shall find that religion has the advantage; for, 1 The way of saints is pleasant and agreeable: Good understanding gains favour with God and man; our Saviour grew in that favour when he increased in wisdom. Those that conduct themselves prudently, and order their conversation aright in every thing, that serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are accepted of God and approved of men, Ro 14:17,18. And how comfortably will that man pass through the world who is well understood and is therefore well accepted! 2 The way of sinners is rough and uneasy, and, for this reason, unpleasant to themselves, because unacceptable to others. It is hard, hard upon others, who complain of it, hard to the sinner himself, who can have little enjoyment of himself while he is doing that which is disobliging to all mankind. The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewed with the thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Sinners labour in the very fire.

16 Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge:
but a fool layeth open *his* folly.

Note, 1. It is wisdom to be cautious. Every prudent discreet man does all with knowledge (considering with himself and consulting with others), acts with deliberation and is upon

the reserve, is careful not to meddle with that which he has not some knowledge of, not to launch out into business which he has not acquainted himself with, will not deal with those that he has not some knowledge of, whether they may be confided in. He is still dealing in knowledge, that he may increase the stock he has.

2. It is folly to be rash, as the fool is, who is forward to talk of things he knows nothing of and undertake that which he is no way fit for, and so lays open his folly and makes himself ridiculous. He began to build and was not able to finish.

17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief:
but a faithful ambassador *is* health.

Here we have, 1 The ill consequences of betraying a trust. A wicked messenger, who, being sent to negotiate any business, is false to him that employed him, divulges his counsels, and so defeats his designs, cannot expect to prosper, but will certainly fall into some mischief or other, will be discovered and punished, since nothing is more hateful to God and man than the treachery of those that have a confidence reposed in them.

2 The happy effects of fidelity: An ambassador who faithfully discharges his trust, and serves the interests of those who employ him, is health; he is health to those by whom and for whom he is employed, heals differences that are between them, and preserves a good understanding; he is health to himself, for he secures his own interest. This is applicable to ministers, Christ's messengers and ambassadors; those that are wicked and false to Christ and the souls of men do mischief and fall into mischief, but those that are faithful will find sound words to be healing words to others and themselves.

18 Poverty and shame *shall be to* him that refuseth instruction:
but he that regardeth reproof shall be honored.

Note, 1. He that is so proud that he scorns to be taught will certainly be abased. He that refuses the good instruction offered him, as if it were a reflection upon his honour and

an abridgment of his liberty, poverty and shame shall be to him: he will become a beggar and live and die in disgrace; every one will despise him as foolish, and stubborn, and ungovernable.

2. He that is so humble that he takes it well to be told of his faults shall certainly be exalted: He that regards a reproof, whoever gives it to him, and will mend what is amiss when it is shown him, gains respect as wise and candid; he avoids that which would be a disgrace to him and is in a fair way to make himself considerable.

19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul:
but *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

This shows the folly of those that refuse instruction, for they might be happy and will not. 1. They might be happy. There are in man strong desires of happiness; God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be sweet to the soul, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. The desire of good men towards the favour of God and spiritual blessings brings that which is sweet to their souls; we know those that can say so by experience, Ps 4:6,7.

2. Yet they will not be happy; for it is an abomination to them to depart from evil, which is necessary to their being happy. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls that will not be persuaded to leave their sins, but that roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel.

20 He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise:
but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Note, 1. Those that would be good must keep good company, which is an evidence for them that they would be good (men's character is known by the company they choose) and will be a means of making them good, of showing them the way and of quickening and encouraging them in it. He that would be himself wise must walk with those that are so, must choose such for his intimate acquaintance, and converse with them accordingly; must ask and receive instruction from them, and keep up pious

and profitable talk with them. Miss not the discourse of the elders, for they also learned of their fathers, Ecclesiasticus viii. 9. And (Ecclesiasticus vi. 35), Be willing to hear every godly discourse, and let not the parables of understanding escape thee.

2. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company: A companion of fools shall be broken (so some), shall be known (so the LXX.), known to be a fool; noscitur ex socio--he is known by his company. He will be like them (so some), will be made wicked (so others); it comes all to one, for all those, and those only, that make themselves wicked, will be destroyed, and those that associate with evil-doers are debauched, and so undone, and at last ascribe their death to it.

21 Evil pursueth sinners:
but to the righteous good shall be repaid.

Here see, 1. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners is; the wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of that wrath: Evil pursues them closely wherever they go, as the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to; they attempt an escape, but in vain. Whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. They may prosper for a while and grow very secure, but their damnation slumbers not, though they do.

2. How indefeasible the happiness of the saints is; the God that cannot lie has engaged that to the righteous good shall be repaid. They shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered, in this world; so that, though many have been losers for their righteousness, they shall not be losers by it. Though the recompence do not come quickly, it will come in the day of payment, in the world of retribution; and it will be an abundant recompence.

22 A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children:
and the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just.

See here, 1. How a good man's estate lasts: He leaves an inheritance to his children's children. It is part of his praise

that he is thoughtful for posterity, that he does not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him, not by withholding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality. He trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful, both by justice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he has, and to entail that blessing upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain: A good man, by being good and doing good, by honouring the Lord with his substance and spending it in his service, secures it to his posterity; or, if he should not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, will be the best entail, and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his children's children, Ps 103:17.

2. How it increases by the accession of the wealth of the sinner to it, for that is laid up for the just. If it be asked, How should good men grow so rich, who are not so eager upon the world as others are and who commonly suffer for their well-doing? It is here answered, God, in his providence, often brings into their hands that which wicked people had laid up for themselves. The innocent shall divide the silver, Job 27:16,17. The Israelites shall spoil the Egyptians (Ex 12:36) and eat the riches of the Gentiles, Isa 61:6.

23 Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor:
but there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment.

See here, 1. How a small estate may be improved by industry, so that a man, by making the best of every thing, may live comfortably upon it: Much food is in the tillage of the poor, the poor farmers, that have but a little, but take pains with that little and husband it well. Many make it an excuse for their idleness that they have but a little to work on, a very little to be doing with; but the less compass the field is of the more let the skill and labour of the owner be employed about it, and it will turn to a very good account. Let him dig, and he needs not beg.

2. How a great estate may be ruined by indiscretion: There is that has a great deal, but it is destroyed and brought to

nothing for want of judgment, that is, prudence in the management of it. Men over-build themselves or over-buy themselves, keep greater company, or a better table, or more servants, than they can afford, suffer what they have to go to decay and do not make the most of it; by taking up money themselves, or being bound for others, their estates are sunk, their families reduced, and all for want of judgment.

24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son:
but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Note, 1. To the education of children in that which is good there is necessary a due correction of them for what is amiss; every child of ours is a child of Adam, and therefore has that foolishness bound up in its heart which calls for rebuke, more or less, the rod and reproof which give wisdom. Observe, It is his rod that must be used, the rod of a parent, directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good, not the rod of a servant.

2. It is good to begin betimes with the necessary restraints of children from that which is evil, before vicious habits are confirmed. The branch is easily bent when it is tender.

3. Those really hate their children, though they pretend to be fond of them, that do not keep them under a strict discipline, and by all proper methods, severe ones when gentle ones will not serve, make them sensible of their faults and afraid of offending. They abandon them to their worst enemy, to the most dangerous disease, and therefore hate them. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good, Heb 12:7-9.

25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul:
but the belly of the wicked shall want.

Note,

1. It is the happiness of the righteous that they shall have enough and that they know when they have enough. They desire not to be surfeited, but, being moderate in their

desires, they are soon satisfied. Nature is content with a little and grace with less; enough is as good as a feast. Those that feed on the bread of life, that feast on the promises, meet with abundant satisfaction of soul there, eat, and are filled.

2. It is the misery of the wicked that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their belly shall want; their sensual appetite is always craving. In hell they shall be denied a drop of water.

Proverbs-14

1 Every wise woman buildeth her house:
but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a family. By a fruitful wife a family is multiplied and replenished with children, and so built up. But by a prudent wife, one that is pious, industrious, and considerate, the affairs of the family are made to prosper, debts are paid, portions raised, provision made, the children well educated and maintained, and the family has comfort within doors and credit without; thus is the house built. She looks upon it as her own to take care of, though she knows it is her husband's to bear rule in, Es 1:22.

2. Many a family is brought to ruin by ill housewifery, as well as by ill husbandry. A foolish woman, that has no fear of God nor regard to her business, that is wilful, and wasteful, and humoursome, that indulges her ease and appetite, and is all for jaunting and feasting, cards and the play-house, though she come to a plentiful estate, and to a family beforehand, she will impoverish and waste it, and will as certainly be the ruin of her house as if she plucked it down with her hands; and the husband himself, with all his care, can scarcely prevent it.

2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord:

but *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him.

Here are, 1. Grace and sin in their true colours. Grace reigning is a reverence of God, and gives honour to him who is infinitely great and high, and to whom all honour is due, than which what is more becoming or should be more pleasing to the rational creature? Sin reigning is no less than a contempt of God. In this, more than in any thing, sin appears exceedingly sinful, that it despises God, whom angels adore. Those that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them, his promises, and will not accept of them, despise God himself and all his attributes.

2. Grace and sin in their true light. By this we may know a man that has grace, and the fear of God, reigning in him, he walks in his uprightness, he makes conscience of his actions, is faithful both to God and man, and every stop he makes, as well as every step he takes, is by rule; here is one that honours God. But, on the contrary, he that is perverse in his ways, that wilfully follows his own appetites and passions, that is unjust and dishonest and contradicts his profession in his conversation, however he may pretend to devotion, he is a wicked man, and will be reckoned with as a despiser of God himself.

3 In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride:
but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

See here, 1. A proud fool exposing himself. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shows itself in the words: In the mouth there is pride, proud boasting, proud censuring, proud scorning, proud commanding and giving law; this is the rod, or branch, of pride; the word is used only here and Isa 11:1. It grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart; it is a rod from that stem. The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch, or it is meant of a smiting beating rod, a rod of pride which strikes others. The proud man with his tongue lays about him and deals blows at pleasure, but it will in the end be a rod to himself; the proud man shall come under an ignominious correction by the words of his own mouth, not cut as a soldier, but caned as a

servant; and herein he will be beaten with his own rod, Ps 64:8.

2. A humble wise man saving himself and consulting his own good: The lips of the wise shall preserve them from doing that mischief to others which proud men do with their tongues, and from bringing that mischief on themselves which haughty scorners are often involved in.

4 Where no oxen *are,* the crib *is* clean:
but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.

Note, 1 The neglect of husbandry is the way to poverty: Where no oxen are, to till the ground and tread out the corn, the crib is empty, is clean; there is no straw for the cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man. Scarcity is represented by cleanness of teeth, Am 4:6. Where no oxen are there is nothing to be done at the ground, and then nothing to be had out of it; the crib indeed is clean from dung, which pleases the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry because there is so much dirty work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung of the ox is wanted. This shows the folly of those who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it, who (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it.

2. Those who take pains about their ground are likely to reap the profit of it. Those who keep that about them which is for use and service, not for state and show, more husbandmen than footmen, are likely to thrive. Much increase is by the strength of the ox; that is made for our service, and is profitable alive and dead.

5 A faithful witness will not lie:
but a false witness will utter lies.

In the administration of justice much depends upon the witnesses, and therefore it is necessary to the common good that witnesses be principled as they ought to be; for, 1. A witness that is conscientious will not dare to give in a testimony that is in the least untrue, nor, for good-will or ill-

will, represent a thing otherwise than according to the best of his knowledge, whoever is pleased or displeased, and then judgment runs down like a river. 2. But a witness that will be bribed, and biassed, and browbeaten, will utter lies (and not stick nor startle at it), with as much readiness and assurance as if what he said were all true.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it* not:
but knowledge *is* easy unto him that understandeth.

Note, 1 The reason why some people seek wisdom, and do not find it, is because they do not seek it from a right principle and in a right manner. They are scorners, and it is in scorn that they ask instruction, that they may ridicule what is told them and may cavil at it. Many put questions to Christ, tempting him, and that they might have whereof to accuse him, but they were never the wiser. No marvel if those who seek wisdom, as Simon Magus sought the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to serve their pride and covetousness, do not find it, for they seek amiss. Herod desired to see a miracle, but he was a scorner, and therefore it was denied him, Lu 23:8. Scorners speed not in prayer.

2. To those who understand aright, who depart from evil (for that is understanding), the knowledge of God and of his will is easy. The parables which harden scorners in their scorning, and make divine things more difficult to them, enlighten those who are willing to learn, and make the same things more plain, and intelligible, and familiar to them, Mt 13:11,15,16. The same word which to the scornful is a savour of death unto death to the humble and serious is a savour of life unto life. He that understands, so as to depart from evil (for that is understanding), to quit his prejudices, to lay aside all corrupt dispositions and affections, will easily apprehend instruction and receive the impressions of it.

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man,
when thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge.

See here, 1. How we may discern a fool and discover him, a wicked man, for he is a foolish man. If we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge, if we find there is no relish or savour of piety in his discourse, that his communication is

all corrupt and corrupting, and nothing in it good and to the use of edifying, we may conclude the treasure is bad. 2. How we must decline such a one and depart from him: Go from his presence, for thou perceivest there is no good to be gotten by his company, but danger of getting hurt by it. Sometimes the only way we have of reproving wicked discourse and witnessing against it is by leaving the company and going out of the hearing of it.

8 The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way:
but the folly of fools *is* deceit.

See here, 1 The good conduct of a wise and good man; he manages himself well. It is not the wisdom of the learned, which consists only in speculation, that is here recommended, but the wisdom of the prudent, which is practical, and is of use to direct our counsels and actions. Christian prudence consists in a right understanding of our way; for we are travellers, whose concern it is, not to spy wonders, but to get forward towards their journey's end. It is to understand our own way, not to be critics and busybodies in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves and ponder the path of our feet, to understand the directions of our way, that we may observe them, the dangers of our way, that we may avoid them, the difficulties of our way, that we may break through them, and the advantages of our way, that we may improve them--to understand the rules we are to walk by and the ends we are to walk towards, and walk accordingly.

2 The bad conduct of a bad man; he puts a cheat upon himself. He does not rightly understand his way; he thinks he does, and so misses his way, and goes on in his mistake: The folly of fools is deceit; it cheats them into their own ruin. The folly of him that built on the sand was deceit.

9 Fools make a mock at sin:
but among the righteous *there is* favor.

See here,

1. How wicked people are hardened in their wickedness: they make a mock at sin. They make a laughing matter of the sins

of others, making themselves and their companions merry with that for which they should mourn, and they make a light matter of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin and when they have committed it; they call evil good and good evil (Isa 5:20), turn it off with a jest, rush into sin (Jer 8:6) and say they shall have peace though they go on. They care not what mischief they do by their sins, and laugh at those that tell them of it. They are advocates for sin, and are ingenious at framing excuses for it. Fools make a mock at the sin-offering (so some); those that make light of sin make light of Christ. Those are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of (Am 2:13), which lay heavily upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly.

2. How good people are encouraged in their goodness: Among the righteous there is favour; if they in any thing offend, they presently repent and obtain the favour of God. They have a goodwill one to another; and among them, in their societies, there is mutual charity and compassion in cases of offences, and no mocking.

10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness;
and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

This agrees with 1Co 2:11, What man knows the things of a man, and the changes of his temper, save the spirit of a man? 1. Every man feels most from his own burden, especially that which is a burden upon the spirits, for that is commonly concealed and the sufferer keeps it to himself. We must not censure the griefs of others, for we know not what they feel; their stroke perhaps is heavier than their groaning. 2. Many enjoy a secret pleasure, especially in divine consolations, which others are not aware of, much less are sharers in; and, as the sorrows of a penitent, so the joys of a believer are such as a stranger does not intermeddle with and therefore is no competent judge of.

11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown:
but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

Note, 1. Sin is the ruin of great families: The house of the wicked, though built ever so strong and high, shall be overthrown, shall be brought to poverty and disgrace, and at

length be extinct. His hope for heaven, the house on which he leans, shall not stand, but fail in the storm; the deluge that comes will sweep it away. 2. Righteousness is the rise and stability even of mean families: Even the tabernacle of the upright, though movable and despicable as a tent, shall flourish, in outward prosperity if Infinite Wisdom see good, at all events in graces and comfort, which are true riches and honours.

12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man;
but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls.

1. Their way is seemingly fair: It seems right to themselves; they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be, that their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them, much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformations, and blind zeal; this they imagine will bring them to heaven; they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last.

2. Their end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake: It is the ways of death, eternal death; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.

13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful;
and the end of that mirth *is* heaviness.

This shows the vanity of carnal mirth, and proves what Solomon said of laughter, that it is mad; for, 1. There is sadness under it. Sometimes when sinners are under convictions, or some great trouble, they dissemble their grief by a forced mirth, and put a good face on it, because they will not seem to yield: they cry not when he binds them. Nay, when men really are merry, yet at the same time there is some alloy

or other to their mirth, something that casts a damp upon it, which all their gaiety cannot keep from their heart. Their consciences tell them they have no reason to be merry (Ho 9:1); they cannot but see the vanity of it. Spiritual joy is seated in the soul; the joy of the hypocrite is but from the teeth outward. See Joh 16:22,2Co 6:10.

2. There is worse after it: The end of that mirth is heaviness. It is soon over, like the crackling of thorns under a pot; and, if the conscience be awake, all sinful and profane mirth will be reflected upon with bitterness; if not, the heaviness will be so much the greater when for all these things God shall bring the sinner into judgment. The sorrows of the saints will end in everlasting joys (Ps 126:5), but the laughter of fools will end in endless weeping and wailing.

The Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted.

14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:
and a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.

Note, 1 The misery of sinners will be an eternal surfeit upon their sins: The backslider in heart, who for fear of suffering, or in hope of profit or pleasure, forsakes God and his duty, shall be filled with his own ways; God will give him enough of them. They would not leave their brutish lusts and passions, and therefore they shall stick by them, to their everlasting terror and torment. He that is filthy shall be filthy still. "Son, remember," shall fill them with their own ways, and set their sins in order before them. Backsliding begins in the heart; it is the evil heart of unbelief that departs from God; and of all sinners backsliders will have most terror when they reflect on their own ways, Lu 11:26.

2 The happiness of the saints will be an eternal satisfaction in their graces, as tokens of and qualifications for God's peculiar favour: A good man shall be abundantly satisfied from himself, from what God has wrought in him. He has rejoicing in himself alone, Ga 6:3. As sinners never think they have sin enough till it brings them to hell, so saints never think they have grace enough till it brings them to heaven.

15 The simple believeth every word:
but the prudent *man* looketh well to his going.

Note, 1. It is folly to be credulous, to heed every flying report, to give ear to every man's story, though ever so improbable, to take things upon trust from common fame, to depend upon every man's profession of friendship and give credit to every one that will promise payment; those are simple who thus believe every word, forgetting that all men, in some sense, are liars in comparison with God, all whose words we are to believe with an implicit faith, for he cannot lie.

2. It is wisdom to be cautious: The prudent man will try before he trusts, will weigh both the credibility of the witness and the probability of the testimony, and then give judgment as the thing appears or suspend his judgment till it appears. Prove all things, and believe not every spirit.

16 A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil:
but the fool rageth, and is confident.

Note, 1. Holy fear is an excellent guard upon every holy thing, and against every thing that is unholy. It is wisdom to depart from evil, from the evil of sin, and thereby from all other evil; and therefore it is wisdom to fear, that is, to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to keep up a dread of God's wrath, to be afraid of coming near the borders of sin or dallying with the beginnings of it. A wise man, for fear of harm, keeps out of harm's way, and starts back in a fright when he finds himself entering into temptation.

2. Presumption is folly. He who, when he is warned of his danger, rages and is confident, furiously pushes on, cannot bear to be checked, bids defiance to the wrath and curse of God, and, fearless of danger, persists in his rebellion, makes bold with the occasions of sin, and plays upon the precipice, he is a fool, for he acts against his reason and his interest, and his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

17 *He that is* soon angry dealeth foolishly:
and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Note, 1. Passionate men are justly laughed at. Men who are peevish and touchy, and are soon angry upon every the least

provocation, deal foolishly; they say and do that which is ridiculous, and so expose themselves to contempt; they themselves cannot but be ashamed of it when the heat is over. The consideration of this should engage those especially who are in reputation for wisdom and honour with the utmost care to bridle their passion.

2. Malicious men are justly dreaded and detested, for they are much more dangerous and mischievous to all societies: A man of wicked devices, who stifles his resentments till he has an opportunity of being revenged, and is secretly plotting how to wrong his neighbour and to do him an ill turn, as Cain to kill Abel, such a man as this is hated by all mankind. The character of an angry man is pitiable; through the surprise of a temptation he disturbs and disgraces himself, but it is soon over, and he is sorry for it. But that of a spiteful revengeful man is odious; there is no fence against him nor cure for him.

18 The simple inherit folly:
but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Note, 1. Sin is the shame of sinners: The simple, who love simplicity, get nothing by it; they inherit folly. They have it by inheritance, so some. This corruption of nature is derived from our first parents, and all the calamities that attend it we have by kind; it was the inheritance they transmitted to their degenerate race, an hereditary disease. They are as fond of it as a man of his inheritance, hold it as fast, and are as loth to part with it. What they value themselves upon is really foolish; and what will be the issue of their simplicity but folly? They will for ever rue their own foolish choice.

2. Wisdom is the honour of the wise: The prudent crown themselves with knowledge, they look upon it as their brightest ornament, and there is nothing they are so ambitious of; they bind it to their heads as a crown, which they will by no means part with; they press towards the top and perfection of knowledge, which will crown their beginnings and progress. They shall have the praise of it; wise heads shall be respected as if they were crowned heads. They crown knowledge (so some read it); they are a credit to their

profession. Wisdom is not only justified, but glorified, of all her children.

19 The evil bow before the good;
and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

That is, 1 The wicked are oftentimes impoverished and brought low, so that they are forced to beg, their wickedness having reduced them to straits; while good men, by the blessing of God, are enriched, and enabled to give, and do give, even to the evil; for where God grants life we must not deny a livelihood.

2. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgement of the excellency of God's people. The evil ought always to bow before the good, and sometimes they are made to do it and to know that God has loved them, Re 3:9. They desire their favour (Es 7:7), their prayers, 2Ki 3:12.

3. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion (Ps 49:14), when the foolish virgins shall come begging to the wise for oil, and shall knock in vain at that gate of the Lord at which the righteous entered.

20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbor:
but the rich *hath* many friends.

This shows, not what should be, but what is the common way of the world--to be shy of the poor and fond of the rich. 1. Few will give countenance to those whom the world frowns upon, though otherwise worthy of respect: The poor, who should be pitied, and encouraged, and relieved, is hated, looked strange upon, and kept at a distance, even by his own neighbour, who, before he fell into disgrace, was intimate with him and pretended to have a kindness for him. Most are swallow-friends, that are gone in winter. It is good having God our friend, for he will not desert us when we are poor.

2. Every one will make court to those whom the world smiles upon, though otherwise unworthy: The rich have many friends, friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor

what a wise man will either value himself on or put any confidence in. Those that make the world their God idolize those that have most of its good things, and seek their favour as if indeed they were Heaven's favourites.

21 He that despiseth his neighbor sinneth:
but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.

See here how men's character and condition are measured and judged of by their conduct towards their poor neighbours. 1. Those that look upon them with contempt have here assigned them a bad character, and their condition will be accordingly: He that despises his neighbour because he is low in the world, because he is of a mean extraction, rustic education, and makes but a mean figure, that thinks it below him to take notice of him, converse with him, or concern himself about him, and sets him with the dogs of his flock, is a sinner, is guilty of a sin, is in the way to worse, and shall be dealt with as a sinner; unhappy is he.

2. Those that look upon them with compassion are here said to be in a good condition, according to their character: He that has mercy on the poor, is ready to do all the good offices he can to him, and thereby puts an honour upon him, happy is he; he does that which is pleasing to God, which he himself will afterwards reflect upon with great satisfaction, for which the loins of the poor will bless him, and which will be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

22 Do they not err that devise evil?
But mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good.

See here, 1. How miserably mistaken those are that not only do evil, but devise it: Do they not err? Yes, certainly they do; every one knows it. They think that by sinning with craft and contrivance, and carrying on their intrigues with more plot and artifice than others, they shall make a better hand of their sins than others do, and come off better. But they are mistaken. God's justice cannot be out-witted. Those that devise evil against their neighbours greatly err, for it will certainly turn upon themselves and end in their own ruin, a fatal error!

2. How wisely those consult their own interest that not only do good but devise it: Mercy and truth shall be to them, not a reward of debt (they will own that they merit nothing), but a reward of mercy, mere mercy, mercy according to the promise, mercy and truth, to which God is pleased to make himself a debtor. Those that are so liberal as to devise liberal things, that seek opportunities of doing good, and contrive how to make their charity most extensive and most acceptable to those that need it, by liberal things they shall stand, Isa 32:8.

23 In all labor there is profit:
but the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.

Note, 1. Working, without talking, will make men rich: In all labour of the head, or of the hand, there is profit; it will turn to some good account or other. Industrious people are generally thriving people, and where there is something done there is something to be had. The stirring hand gets a penny. It is good therefore to keep in business, and to keep in action, and what our hand finds to do to do it with all our might.

2. Talking, without working, will make men poor. Those that love to boast of their business and make a noise about it, and that waste their time in tittle-tattle, in telling and hearing new things, like the Athenians, and, under pretence of improving themselves by conversation, neglect the work of their place and day, they waste what they have, and the course they take tends to penury, and will end in it. It is true in the affairs of our souls; those that take pains in the service of God, that strive earnestly in prayer, will find profit in it. But if men's religion runs all out in talk and noise, and their praying is only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24 The crown of the wise *is* their riches:
but the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

Observe, 1. If men be wise and good, riches make them so much the more honourable and useful: The crown of the wise is their riches; their riches make them to be so much the more respected, and give them the more authority and influence upon others. Those that have wealth, and wisdom

to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God and doing good in the world. Wisdom is good without an inheritance, but better with it.

2. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them: The foolishness of fools, put them in what condition you will, is folly, and will show itself and shame them; if they have riches, they do mischief with them and are the more hardened in their foolish practices.

25 A true witness delivereth souls:
but a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies.

See here, 1. How much praise is due to a faithful witness: He delivers the souls of the innocent, who are falsely accused, and their good names, which are as dear to them as their lives. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest, to bring truth to light and rescue those who are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister, who truly witnesses for God against sin, is thereby instrumental to deliver souls from eternal death. 2. How little regard is to be had to a false witness. He forges lies, and yet pours them out with the greatest assurance imaginable for the destruction of the innocent. It is therefore the interest of a nation by all means possible to detect and punish false-witness-bearing, yea, and lying in common conversation; for truth is the cement of society.

26 In the fear of the Lord *is* strong confidence:
and his children shall have a place of refuge.

In these two verses we are invited and encouraged to live in the fear of God by the advantages which attend a religious life. The fear of the Lord is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices.

1. Where this reigns it produces a holy security and serenity of mind. There is in it a strong confidence; it enables a man still to hold fast both his purity and his peace, whatever happens, and gives him boldness before God and the world. I know that I shall be justified--None of these things move me; such is the language of this confidence.

2. It entails a blessing upon posterity. The children of those that by faith make God their confidence shall be encouraged by the promise that God will be a God to believers and to their seed to flee to him as their refuge, and they shall find shelter in him. The children of religious parents often do the better for their parents' instructions and example and fare the better for their faith and prayers. "Our fathers trusted in thee, therefore we will."

3. It is an over-flowing ever-flowing spring of comfort and joy; it is a fountain of life, yielding constant pleasure and satisfaction to the soul, joys that are pure and fresh, are life to the soul, and quench its thirst, and can never be drawn dry; it is a well of living water, that is springing up to, and is the earnest of, eternal life.

4. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. Those that have a true relish of the pleasures of serious godliness will not be allured by the baits of sin to swallow its hook; they know where to obtain better things than any it can pretend to offer, and therefore it is easy to them to depart from the snares of death and to keep their foot from being taken in them.

27 The fear of the Lord *is* a fountain of life,
to depart from the snares of death.

28 In the multitude of people *is* the king's honor:
but in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince.

Here are two maxims in politics, which carry their own evidence with them:--

1. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom; it is a sign that he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign that he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying. It is his strength, and makes him considerable and formidable; happy is the king, the father of his country, who has his quiver full of arrows; he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in

the gate, Ps 127:4,5. It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and by making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, and to his honour, do what they can in their places that many may be added to his church.

2. That when the people are lessened the prince is weakened: In the want of people is the leanness of the prince (so some read it); trade lies dead, the ground lies untilled, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find, 2Sa 24:13.

29 *He that is* slow to wrath *is* of great understanding:
but *he that is* hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Note, 1. Meekness is wisdom. He rightly understands himself, and his duty and interest, the infirmities of human nature, and the constitution of human society, who is slow to anger, and knows how to excuse the faults of others as well as his own, how to adjourn his resentments, and moderate them, so as by no provocation to be put out of the possession of his own soul. A mild patient man is really to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is Wisdom itself.

2. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed: He that is hasty of spirit, whose heart is tinder to every spark of provocation, that is all fire and tow, as we say, he thinks hereby to magnify himself and make those about stand in awe of him, whereas really he exalts his own folly; he makes it known, as that which is lifted up is visible to all, and he submits himself to it as to the government of one that is exalted.

30 A sound heart *is* the life of the flesh:
but envy the rottenness of the bones.

The foregoing verse showed how much our reputation, this how much our health, depends on the good government of our passions and the preserving of the temper of the mind.

1. A healing spirit, made up of love and meekness, a hearty, friendly, cheerful disposition, is the life of the flesh; it contributes to a good constitution of body; people grow fat with good humour.

2. A fretful, envious, discontented spirit, is its own punishment; it consumes the flesh, preys upon the animal spirits, makes the countenance pale, and is the rottenness of the bones. Those that see the prosperity of others and are grieved, let them gnash with their teeth and melt away, Ps 112:10.

31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker:
but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor.

God is here pleased to interest himself more than one would imagine in the treatment given to the poor.

1. He reckons himself affronted in the injuries that are done them. Whosoever he be that wrongs a poor man, taking advantage against him because he is poor and cannot help himself, let him know that he puts an affront upon his Maker. God made him, and gave him his being, the same that is the author of our being; we have all one Father, one Maker; see how Job considered this, Job 31:15. God made him poor, and appointed him his lot, so that, if we deal hardly with any because they are poor, we reflect upon God as dealing hardly with them in laying them low, that they might be trampled upon.

2. He reckons himself honoured in the kindnesses that are done them; he takes them as done to himself, and will show himself accordingly pleased with them. I was hungry, and you gave me meat. Those therefore that have any true honour for God will show it by compassion to the poor, whom he has undertaken in a special manner to protect and patronise.

32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness:
but the righteous hath hope in his death.

Here is, 1 The desperate condition of a wicked man when he goes out of the world: He is driven away in his wickedness. He cleaves so closely to the world that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but is driven away out of it; his soul is required, is forced from him, And sin cleaves so closely to him that it is inseparable; it goes with him into another world; he is driven away in his wickedness, dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, unsanctified. His wickedness is the storm in which he is hurried away, as chaff before the wind, chased out of the world.

2 The comfortable condition of a godly man when he finishes his course: He has hope in his death of a happiness on the other side death, of better things in another world than ever he had in this. The righteous then have the grace of hope in them; though they have pain, and some dread of death, yet they have hope. They have before them the good hoped for, even the blessed hope which God, who cannot lie, has promised.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding:
but *that which is* in the midst of fools is made known.

Observe, 1. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure, so as not to boast of it (Mt 13:44), though he does not hide his talent, so as not to trade with it. His wisdom rests in his heart; he digests what he knows, and has it ready to him, but does not unseasonably talk of it and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affections, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim in the head.

2. Openness and ostentation are a mark of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasions, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or the folly that is in the midst of fools is made known by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to show his folly than a wise man thinks it worth his while to take to show his wisdom.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation:
but sin *is* a reproach to any people.

Note, 1. Justice, reigning in a nation, puts an honour upon it. A righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers (alms are sometimes called righteousness), these exalt a nation; they uphold the throne, elevate the people's minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God, which will make them high, as a holy nation, De 26:19.

2. Vice, reigning in a nation, puts disgrace upon it: Sin is a reproach to any city or kingdom, and renders them despicable among their neighbours. The people of Israel were often instances of both parts of this observation; they were great when they were good, but when they forsook God all about them insulted them and trampled on them. It is therefore the interest and duty of princes to use their power for the suppression of vice and support of virtue.

35 The king's favor *is* toward a wise servant:
but his wrath is *against* him that causeth shame.

This shows that in a well-ordered court and government smiles and favours are dispensed among those that are employed in public trusts according to their merits; Solomon lets them know he will go by that rule, 1. That those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have that seek to undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected to please a party or a favourite.

2. That those who are selfish and false, who betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus cause shame, shall be displaced and banished the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.

Proverbs-15

1 A soft answer turneth away wrath:
but grievous words stir up anger.

Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us, 1. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it; it is by soft words. If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud, pregnant with storms and thunder, a soft answer will disperse it and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak gently to them, and give them good words, and they will be pacified, as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness (Jdg 8:1-3); whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness, they were exasperated, and the consequences were bad, Jdg 12:1-3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness then with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words.

2. How the peace will be broken, that we, for our parts, may do nothing towards the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger, and sows discord, like grievous words, calling foul names, as Raca, and Thou fool, upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them and makes them mean; scornful spiteful reflections, by which men affect to show their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which does but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest some will lose a friend and make an enemy.

2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright:
but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Note, 1. A good heart by the tongue becomes very useful. He that has knowledge is not only to enjoy it, for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is the tongue that must make use of it in pious profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instructions, counsels, and comforts, with all possible expressions of humility and love, and then

knowledge is used aright; and to him that has, and thus uses what he has, more shall be given.

2. A wicked heart by the tongue becomes very hurtful; for the mouth of fools belches out foolishness, which is very offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceeds from an evil treasure within (the filthiness, and foolish talking, and jesting) corrupts the good manners of some and debauches them, and grieves the good hearts of others and disturbs them.

3 The eyes of the Lord *are* in every place,
beholding the evil and the good.

The great truths of divinity are of great use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this--That the eye of God is always upon the children of men. 1. An eye to discern all, not only from which nothing can be concealed, but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked or looked slightly upon: The eyes of the Lord are in every place; for he not only sees all from on high (Ps 33:13), but he is every where present. Angels are full of eyes (Re 4:8), but God is all eye. It denotes not only his omniscience, that he sees all, but his universal providence, that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, and sorrows, are under his eye.

2. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions. He beholds the evil and the good, is displeased with the evil and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, Ps 1:6,11:4. The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both and knows their true character; this speaks as much comfort to saints as terror to sinners.

4 A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life:
but perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.

Note, 1. A good tongue is healing, healing to wounded consciences by comforting them, to sin-sick souls by convincing them, to peace and love when it is broken by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the

healing of the tongue, which is a tree of life, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue, Re 22:2. He that knows how to discourse will make the place he lives in a paradise.

2. An evil tongue is wounding (perverseness, passion, falsehood, and filthiness there, are a breach in the spirit); it wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned breaches in the spirit. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broken by them.

5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction:
but he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Hence, 1. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued, though the desired effect be not immediately perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good-humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy; but better so than to suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin.

2. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof (even hardships must be submitted to), but to value them as favours and not despise them, to make use of them for their direction, and always to have a regard to them; this will be an evidence that they are wise and a means of making them so; whereas he that slights his good education is a fool and is likely to live and die one.

6 In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure:
but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Note, 1. Where righteousness is riches are, and the comforts of them: In the house of the righteous is much treasure. Religion teaches men to be diligent, temperate,

and just, and by these means, ordinarily, the estate is increased. But that is not all: God blesses the habitation of the just, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world's goods, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the comfort of that little, it is enough; it is all riches. The righteous perhaps are not themselves enriched, but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store, which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified (Ps 17:14); but a righteous man's first care is for his soul and then for his seed, to have treasure in his heart and then in his house, which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of.

2. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them: In the revenues of the wicked, the great incomes they have, there is trouble; for there is guilt and a curse; there is pride and passion, and envy and contention; and those are troublesome lusts, which rob them of the joy of their revenues and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge:
but the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

This is to the same purport with Pr 15:2, and shows what a blessing a wise man is and what a burden a fool is to those about him. Only here observe further,

1. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it, not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but give a portion of this spiritual alms to seven and also to eight, not only be communicative, but diffusive, of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge, must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed.

2. That it is not only a fault to pour out foolishness, but it is a shame not to disperse knowledge, at least not to drop some wise word or other: The heart of the foolish does not so; it has nothing to disperse that is good, or, if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it and therefore is little worth.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the Lord:
but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.

Note, 1. God so hates wicked people, whose hearts are malicious and their lives mischievous, that even their sacrifices are an abomination to him. God has sacrifices brought him even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience and to keep up their reputation in the world, as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice; but their sacrifices, though ever so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity nor from a good principle; they dissemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and for that reason they are an abomination to him, because they are made a cloak for sin, Pr 7:14. See Isa 1:11.

2. God has such a love for upright good people that, though they are not at the expense of a sacrifice (he himself has provided that), their prayer is a delight to him. Praying graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is well pleased. He not only answers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

9 The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the Lord:
but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse. 1. The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to God, not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because their way, the whole course and tenour of their conversation, is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him. Sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable if intended to obtain a connivance at sin and

a permission to go on in it. 2. Therefore the prayer of the upright is his delight, because he is a friend of God, and he loves him who, though he have not yet attained, is following after righteousness, aiming at it and pressing towards it, as St. Paul, Php 3:13.

10 Correction *is* grievous unto him that forsaketh the way:
and he that hateth reproof shall die.

This shows that those who cannot bear to be corrected must expect to be destroyed. 1. It is common for those who have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it, to reckon it a great affront to be reproved and admonished. They are very uneasy at reproof; they cannot, they will not, bear it; nay, because they hate to be reformed, they hate to be reproved, and hate those who deal faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners, reproofs are worst resented by apostates.

2. It is certain that those who will not be reproved will be ruined: He that hates reproof, and hardens his heart against it, is joined to his idols; let him alone. He shall die, and perish for ever, in his sins, since he would not be parted from his sins. 2Ch 25:15, I know that God has determined to destroy thee, because thou couldst not bear to be reproved; see also Pr 29:1.

11 Hell and destruction *are* before the Lord:
how much more then the hearts of the children of men?

This confirms what was said (Pr 15:3) concerning God's omnipresence, in order to his judging of evil and good.

1. God knows all things, even those things that are hidden from the eyes of all living: Hell and destruction are before the Lord, not only the centre of the earth, and its subterraneous caverns, but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight; they are all before the Lord, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost or be to seek when they are to be raised again. He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity; nor needs he any monument with a Hic jacet--Here he lies, to direct

him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are inexpressible, the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God's eye. The word here used for destruction is Abaddon, which is one of the devil's names, Re 9:11. That destroyer, though he deceives us, cannot evade or elude the divine cognizance. God examines him whence he comes (Job 1:7), and sees through all his disguises though he is sly, and subtle, and swift, Job 26:6.

2. He knows particularly the hearts of the children of men. If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, much more can he search men's hearts, though they be deceitful, since they learned all their fraudulent arts of Satan. God is greater than our hearts, and knows them better than we know them ourselves, and therefore is an infallible Judge of every man's character, Heb 4:13.

12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him:
neither will he go unto the wise.

A scorner is one that not only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods employed for his conviction and reformation, and, as an evidence of that, 1. He cannot endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him: He loves not to reprove him (so some read it); he cannot endure to retire into his own heart and commune seriously with that, will not admit of any free thought or fair reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite him, if he can help it. That man's case is sad who is afraid of being acquainted and of arguing with himself.

2. He cannot endure the advice and admonitions of his friends: He will not go unto the wise, lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to the rich man's door for an alms; but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults and prevailed upon to reform.

13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:
but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Here, 1. Harmless mirth is recommended to us, as that which contributes to the health of the body, making men lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the conversation, making the face to shine and rendering us pleasant one to another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament to religion, puts a further lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.

2. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us, both in our devotion and in our conversation: By sorrow of the heart, when it has got dominion and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do it if be indulged awhile, the spirit is broken and sunk, and becomes unfit for the service of God. The sorrow of the world works death. Let us therefore weep as though we wept not, in justice to ourselves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge:
but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Here are two things to be wondered at:-- 1. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking the increase of it; the more he has the more he would have: The heart of him that has understanding, rejoices so in the knowledge it has attained to that it is still coveting more, and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. Si dixisti, Sufficit, periisti--If you say, I have enough, you are undone.

2. A fool well satisfied with his folly and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy. Vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

15 All the days of the afflicted *are* evil:
but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men. 1. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age, and days of which they say they have no pleasure in them. They eat in darkness (Ec 5:17) and never eat with pleasure, Job 21:25. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, merry as we are at present.

2. Others enjoy great prosperity and are of a cheerful spirit; and they have not only good days, but have a continual feast; and if in the abundance of all things they serve God with gladness of heart, and it is oil to the wheels of their obedience (all this, and heaven too), then they serve a good Master. But let not such feast without fear; a sudden change may come; therefore rejoice with trembling.

16 Better *is* little with the fear of the Lord,
than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse that he who has not a large estate, or a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has a continual feast; Christian contentment, and joy in God, make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tells us what is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit which will furnish a man with a continual feast, though he has but little in the world--holiness and love.

I. Holiness. A little, if we manage it and enjoy it in the fear of the Lord, if we keep a good conscience and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, will be more comfortable, and turn to a better account, than great treasure and trouble therewith. Observe here,

1. It is often the lot of those that fear God to have but a little of this world. The poor receive the gospel, and poor they still are, Jam 2:5.

2. Those that have great treasure have often great trouble therewith; it is so far from making them easy that it increases their care and hurry. The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep.

3. If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God. If those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it. 4. It is therefore far better, and more desirable, to have but a little of the world and to have it with a good conscience, to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty and live without God in the world.

II. Love. Next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life.

1. If brethren dwell together in unity, if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals and in more solemn entertainments, that will make a dinner of herbs a feast sufficient; though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small that they can afford no better, yet love will sweeten it and they may be as merry over it as if they had all dainties.

2. If there be mutual enmity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it; the leaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner and be heartily welcome than a table richly spread with a grudging evil eye.

17 Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is,
than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife:
but *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Here is, 1. Passion the great make-bate. Thence come wars and fightings. Anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame: A wrathful man, with his peevish passionate reflections, stirs up strife, and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though ever so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produces another. 2. Meekness the great peace-maker: He that is slow to anger not only prevents strife, that it be not kindled, but appeases it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, unites those again that have fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

19 The way of the slothful *man is* as a hedge of thorns:
but the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

See here, 1. Whence those difficulties arise which men pretend to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise not from any thing in the nature of the duty, but from the slothfulness of those that have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all (as if God were a hard Master, reaping where he had not sown), at least that their way is strewed with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger; and therefore they go about it with as much reluctance as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.

2. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered. An honest desire and endeavour to do our duty will, by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewed with roses: The way of the righteous is made plain; it is easy to be trodden and not rough, easy to be found, and not intricate.

20 A wise son maketh a glad father:
but a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Observe here, 1. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them. And it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.

2. To the shame of wicked children, that by their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness: A foolish son despises his mother, that had most sorrow with him and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

21 Folly *is* joy to *him that is* destitute of wisdom:
but a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wicked man that he takes pleasure in sin; he has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily, and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he has swallowed it: Folly is joy to him; the folly of others is so, and his own much more. He sins, not only without regret, but with delight, not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it. This is a certain sign of one that is graceless.

2. It is the character of a wise and good man that he makes conscience of his duty. A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, acts with no sincerity or steadiness; but a man of understanding, the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit (and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding), walks uprightly, lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God; and this is a constant pleasure and joy to him. But what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed:
but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

See here, 1. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice: Men's purposes are disappointed, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; circumstances defeat them which, with a little consultation, might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly and of one's own head. Plus vident oculi quam oculus--Many eyes see more than one. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends: In the multitude of counsellors (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction) purposes are established. Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but because he would have a multitude of counsellors, regarding number more than weight, advised with the young men.

23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth:
and a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!*

Note, 1. We speak wisely when we speak seasonably: The answer of the mouth will be our credit and joy when it is pertinent and to the purpose, and is spoken in due season, when it is needed and will be regarded, and, as we say, hits the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done, for want of being well-timed. Nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and it comes in well.

2. If we speak wisely and well, it will redound to our own comfort and to the advantage of others: A man has joy by the answer of his mouth; he may take a pleasure, but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably

and well that the hearers admire him and say, "How good is it, and how much good does it do!"

24 The way of life *is* above to the wise, that
he may depart from hell beneath.

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us, 1. As very safe and comfortable: It is the way of life, the way that leads to eternal life, in which we shall find the joy and satisfaction which will be the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness. Be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves exposed to, and in danger of. It is to depart from hell beneath, from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan, and all his wiles, from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved.

2. As very sublime and honourable: It is above. A good man sets his affections on things above, and deals in those things. His conversation is in heaven; his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is, above, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great; his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men. It is above the capacity and out of the sight of foolish men.

25 The Lord will destroy the house of the proud:
but he will establish the border of the widow.

Note, 1. Those that are elevated God delights to abase, and commonly does it in the course of his providence: The proud, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them and trample on all about them, are such as God resists and will destroy, not them only, but their houses, which they are proud of and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

2. Those that are dejected God delights to support, and often does it remarkably: He will establish the border of the poor widow, which proud injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not herself able to defend and make good.

It is the honour of God to protect the weak and appear for those that are oppressed.

26 The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the Lord:
but *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words.

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words, but they come all to one; for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts from which they proceed, so that, 1. The thoughts and words of the wicked, which are, like themselves, wicked, which aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, are an abomination to the Lord; he is displeased at them and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

2 The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves, clean, honest, and sincere, are pleasant words and pleasant thoughts, well-pleasing to the holy God, who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God (the words of their mouth and the meditations of their heart, in prayer and praise, are acceptable to God, Ps 19:14,69:13) and of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified, heart.

27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house;
but he that hateth gifts shall live.

Note, 1. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families: He that is greedy of gain, and therefore makes himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, in pursuit of it--he that hurries, and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch, in business, frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment, and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit--he troubles his own house, is a burden and vexation to his children and servants. He that, in his greediness of gain, takes bribes, and uses unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house, Hab 2:9,10.

2. Those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families: He that hates gifts, that shakes his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice and abhors all sinful indirect ways of getting money--that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis--he shall live; he shall have the comfort of life, shall live in prosperity and reputation; his name and family shall live and continue.

28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer:
but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Here is, 1. A good man proved to be a wise man by this, that he governs his tongue well; he that does so the same is a perfect man, Jam 3:2. It is part of the character of a righteous man that being convinced of the account he must give of his words, and of the good and bad influence of them upon others, he makes conscience of speaking truly (it is his heart that answers, that is, he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise, he speaks the truth in his heart, Ps 15:2), and of speaking pertinently and profitably, and therefore he studies to answer, that his speech may be with grace, Ne 2:4,5:7.

2. A wicked man is proved to be a fool by this, that he never heeds what he says, but his mouth pours out evil things, to the dishonour of God and religion, his own reproach, and the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an evil heart which thus overflows with evil.

29 The Lord *is* far from the wicked:
but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Note, 1. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance: The wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from us, and he is, accordingly, far from them; he does not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no, not in the time of their need. They shall be for ever banished from his presence and he will behold them afar off. Depart from me, you cursed.

2. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy who draw nigh to him in a way of duty: He hears the prayer of the righteous, accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is the prayer of a righteous man that avails much, Jam 5:16. He is nigh to them, a present help, in all that they call upon him for.

30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart:
and a good report maketh the bones fat.

Two things are here pronounced pleasant:--

1. It is pleasant to have a good prospect to see the light of the sun (Ec 11:7) and by it to see the wonderful works of God, with which this lower world is beautified and enriched. Those that want the mercy know how to value it; how would the light of the eyes rejoice their hearts! The consideration of this should make us thankful for our eyesight.

2. It is more pleasant to have a good name, a name for good things with God and good people; this is as precious ointment, Ec 7:1. It makes the bones fat; it gives a secret pleasure, and that which is strengthening. It is also very comfortable to hear (as some understand it) a good report concerning others; a good man has no greater joy than to hear that his friends walk in the truth.

31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life
abideth among the wise.

Note, 1. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reproved, and therefore chooses to converse with those that, both by their words and example, will show him what is amiss in him: The ear that can take the reproof will love the reprover. Faithful friendly reproofs are here called the reproofs of life, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal (and we must reprove by our lives as well as by our doctrine), but because, where they are well-taken, they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life, and (as some think) to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-

doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard nor be influenced by.

2. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof well will hereby be made wiser (Pr 9:9), and come at length to be numbered among the wise men of the age, and will have both ability and authority to reprove and instruct others. Those that learn well, and obey well, are likely in time to teach well and rule well.

32 He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul:
but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.

See here, 1 The folly of those that will not be taught, that refuse instruction, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it, or will not hear it, but turn their hearts against it. They refuse correction (margin); they will not take it, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. Those that do so despise their own souls; they show that they have a low and mean opinion of them, and are in little care and concern about them, considered as rational and immortal, instruction being designed to cultivate reason and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their own souls; therefore they neglect to provide for them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

2 The wisdom of those that are willing, not only to be taught, but to be reproved: He that hears reproof, and amends the faults he is reproved for, gets understanding, by which his soul is secured from bad ways and directed in good ways, and thereby he both evidences the value he has for his own soul and puts true honour upon it.

33 The fear of the Lord *is* the instruction of wisdom;
and before honor *is* humility.

See here how much it is our interest, as well as duty, 1. To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him: The fear of the Lord, as it is the beginning of wisdom, so it is the instruction and correction of wisdom; the principles of religion, closely adhered to, will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our

way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels and chastise us when we say or do unwisely.

2. To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility there is a happy presage of honour and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.

Proverbs-16

Proverbs concerning Life and Conduct

1 The preparations of the heart in man,
and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the Lord.

As we read this, it teaches us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or speak any thing of ourselves that is wise and good, but that all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do, Php 2:13,Ps 10:17. But most read it otherwise: The preparation of the heart is in man (he may contrive and design this and the other) but the answer of the tongue, not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do, is of the Lord. That is, in short, 1. Man purposes. He has a freedom of thought and a freedom of will permitted him; let him form his projects, and lay his schemes, as he thinks best: but, after all,

2. God disposes. Man cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who made man's mouth and teaches us what we shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often does, cross men's purposes, and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balaam's heart, but the answer of the tongue was a blessing.

2 All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes;
but the Lord weigheth the spirits.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves: All the ways of a man, all his designs, all his doings, are

clean in his own eyes, and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well; and therefore he is confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart; but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways, which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought.

2 The judgment of God concerning us, we are sure, is according to truth: He weighs the spirits in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passes a judgment upon us accordingly, writing Tekel upon that which passed our scale with approbation--weighed in the balance and found wanting; and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees men's ways but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

3 Commit thy works unto the Lord,
and thy thoughts shall be established.

Note, 1. It is a very desirable thing to have our thoughts established, and not tossed, and put into a hurry, by disquieting cares and fears,--to go on in an even steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed, or put out of frame, by any event or change,--to be satisfied that all shall work for good and issue well at last, and therefore to be always easy and sedate.

2 The only way to have our thoughts established is to commit our works to the Lord. The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon and submission to the conduct of that grace (2Ti 1:12); all our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God, and to the sovereign, wise, and gracious disposal of that providence. Roll thy works upon the Lord (so the word is); roll the burden of thy care from thyself upon God. Lay the matter before him by prayer. Make known thy works unto the Lord (so some read it), not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him. The will of

the Lord be done. We may then be easy when we resolve that whatever pleases God shall please us.

4 The Lord hath made all *things* for himself:
yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Note, 1. That God is the first cause. He is the former of all things and all persons, the fountain of being; he gave every creature the being it has and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are his creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them, and therefore, though he made them, he will not save them.

2. That God is the last end. All is of him and from him, and therefore all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his designs; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked: yet he made them (Ge 6:6), because he knew how to get himself honour upon them. See Ro 9:22. Or (as some understand it) he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgments on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand (Ps 17:13,14), flagellum Dei--the scourge of God. The king of Babylon is called his servant.

5 Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the Lord:
though hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Note, 1 The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that, being high in estate is proud in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in his conduct towards God and man, let him know that though he admires himself, and others caress him, yet he is an abomination to the Lord. The great God despises him; the holy God detest him.

2 The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with body hands. Though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker, Pr 11:21,Isa 45:9.

6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged:
and by the fear of the Lord *men* depart from evil.

See here, 1. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us--by the mercy and truth of God, mercy in promising, truth in performing, the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator--by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so brightly--by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon and a necessary qualification for it--by these, and not by the legal sacrifices, Mic 6:7,8.

2. How the power of sin is broken in us. By the principles of mercy and truth commanding in us the corrupt inclinations are purged out (so we may take the former part); however, by the fear of the Lord, and the influence of that fear, men depart from evil; those will not dare to sin against God who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

7 When a man's ways please the Lord,
he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Note, 1. God can turn foes into friends when he pleases. He that has all hearts in his hand has access to men's spirits and power over them, working insensibly, but irresistibly upon them, can make a man's enemies to be at peace with him, can change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enemies, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other.

2. He will do it for us when we please him. If we make it our care to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love, he will incline those that have been envious towards us, and vexatious to us, to entertain a good opinion of us and to become our friends. God made Esau to be at

peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and his particular lovingkindness to them, are enough to recommend them to the respect of all, even of those that have been most prejudiced against them.

8 Better *is* a little with righteousness,
than great revenues without right.

Here, 1. It is supposed that an honest good man may have but a little of the wealth of this world (all the righteous are not rich),--that a man may have but little, and yet may be honest (though poverty is a temptation to dishonesty, Pr 30:9, yet not an invincible one),--and that a man may grow rich, for a while, by fraud and oppression, may have great revenues, and those got and kept without right, may have no good title to them nor make any good use of them.

2. It is maintained that a small estate, honestly come by, which a man is content with, enjoys comfortably, serves God with cheerfully, and puts to a right use, is much better and more valuable than a great estate ill-got, and then ill-kept or ill-spent. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, a better reputation with all that are wise and good; it will last longer, and will turn to a better account in the great day, when men will be judged, not according to what they had, but what they did.

9 A man's heart deviseth his way:
but the Lord directeth his steps.

Man is here represented to us, 1. As a reasonable creature, that has the faculty of contriving for himself: His heart devises his way, designs an end, and projects ways and means leading to that end, which the inferior creatures, who are governed by sense and natural instinct, cannot do. The more shame for him if he do not devise the way how to please God and provide for his everlasting state.

2. But as a depending creature, that is subject to the direction and dominion of his Maker. If men devise their way, so as to make God's glory their end and his will their

rule, they may expect that he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace, so that they shall not miss their way nor come short of their end. But let men devise their worldly affairs ever so politely, and with ever so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes directs their steps to that which they least intended. The design of this is to teach us to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that (Jam 4:14,15), and to have our eye to God, not only in the great turns of our lives, but in every step we take. Lord, direct my way, 1Th 3:11.

The Duties of Kings.

10 A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king:
his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

We wish this were always true as a proposition, and we ought to make it our prayer for kings, and all in authority, that a divine sentence may be in their lips, both in giving orders, that they may do that in wisdom, and in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in judgment, and that in neither their mouth may transgress, 1Ti 2:1. But it is often otherwise; and therefore, 1. It may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth to be wise and instructed. Let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do, and that they are guided by principles supernatural: let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.

2. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others, in proportion to the eminency of their station and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king God gave him another spirit. 3. It was true concerning Solomon who wrote this; he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him, See 1Ki 3:28.

11 A just weight and balance *are* the Lord's:
all the weights of the bag *are* his work.

Note, 1 The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held, and ought to be held by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it, for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, Ro 13:1,1Pe 2:13.

2 The observance of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him. He has also appointed by his law that they be just. It is therefore a great affront to him, and to his government, to falsify, and so to do wrong under colour and pretence of doing right, which is wickedness in the place of judgment.

12 *It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness:
for the throne is established by righteousness.

Here is, 1 The character of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the viceroys under him. A good king not only does justice, but it is an abomination to him to do otherwise. He hates the thought of doing wrong and perverting justice; he not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though, having power, he might easily and safety do it.

2 The comfort of a good king: His throne is established by righteousness. He that makes conscience of using his power aright shall find that to be the best security of his government, both as it will oblige people, make them easy, and keep them in the interest of it, and as it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne and a strong guard about it.

13 Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings;
and they love him that speaketh right.

Here is a further character of good kings, that they love and delight in those that speak right. 1. They hate parasites and

those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light and nothing disguised, Pr 29:12.

2. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too, which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, 1Pe 2:14. A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak aright and to the purpose.

14 The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death:
but a wise man will pacify it.

These two verses show the power of kings, which is every where great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary. Whom they would they slew and whom they would they kept alive. Their will was a law. We have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated,

1. How formidable the wrath of a king is: It is as messengers of death; the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck so great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. He must be a very wise man that knows how to pacify the wrath of a king with a word fitly spoken, as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David, 1Sa 19:6. A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince which will cool his resentments.

2. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is to those that have incurred his displeasure; it is life from the dead if the king be reconciled to them. To others it is as a cloud of

the latter rain, very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour is better than life; and therefore those are fools who to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour, of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God's favour, and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

15 In the light of the king's countenance *is* life;
and his favor *is* as a cloud of the latter rain.

16 How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold!
and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold (Pr 3:14,8:19), but he speaks it with assurance, that it is much better, better beyond expression--with admiration (How much better!) as one amazed at the disproportion--with an appeal to men's consciences ("Judge in yourselves how much better it is")--and with an addition to the same purport, that understanding is rather to be chosen than silver and all the treasures of kings and their favourites. Note,

1. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God's peculiar favour; gold only of common providence. Grace is for ourselves; gold for others. Grace is for the soul and eternity; gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good.

2 The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many take care and pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it; but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom. Great peace have those that love it.

17 The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil:

he that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Note, 1. It is the way of the upright to avoid sin, and every thing that looks like it and leads towards it; and this is a highway marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with us; it is easy to find and safe to be travelled in, like a highway, Isa 35:8. To depart from evil is understanding. 2. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be put out of the possession of them, especially that they may not perish for ever, Mt 16:26. And it is therefore their care to keep their way, and not turn aside out of it, on either hand, but to press towards perfection. Those that adhere to their duty secure their felicity. Keep thy way and God will keep thee.

18 Pride *goeth* before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Note, 1. Pride will have a fall. Those that are of a haughty spirit, that think of themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God and disquiet others, will be brought down, either by repentance or by ruin. It is the honour of God to humble the proud, Job 40:11,12. It is the act of justice that those who have lifted up themselves should be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men cannot punish pride, but either admire it or fear it, and therefore God will take the punishing of it into his own hands. Let him alone to deal with proud men.

2. Proud men are frequently most proud, and insolent, and haughty, just before their destruction, so that it is a certain presage that they are upon the brink of it. When proud men set God's judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, it is a sign that they are at the door; witness the case of Benhadad and Herod. While the word was in the king's mouth, Da 4:31. Therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but greatly fear pride in ourselves.

19 Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly,
than to divide the spoil with the proud.

This is a paradox which the children of this world cannot understand and will not subscribe to, that it is better to be poor and humble than to be rich and proud. 1. Those that divide the spoil are commonly proud; they value themselves and despise others, and their mind rises with their condition; those therefore that are rich in this world have need to be charged that they be not high-minded, 1Ti 6:17. Those that are proud and will put forth themselves, that thrust, and shove, and scramble, for preferment, are the men that commonly divide the spoil and share it among them; they have the world at will and the ball at their foot.

2. It is upon all accounts better to take our lot with those whose condition is low, and their minds brought to it, than to covet and aim to make a figure and a bustle in the world. Humility, though it should expose us to contempt in the world, yet while it recommends us to the favour of God, qualifies us for his gracious visits, prepares us for his glory, secures us from many temptations, and preserves the quiet and repose of our own souls, is much better than that high-spiritedness which, though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God a man's enemy and the devil his master.

20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good:
and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy *is* he.

21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent:

Note, 1. Those that have solid wisdom will have the credit of it; it will gain them reputation, and they shall be called prudent grave men, and a deference will be paid to their judgment. Do that which is wise and good and thou shalt have the praise of the same.

2. Those that with their wisdom have a happy elocution, that deliver their sentiments easily and with a good grace, are communicative of their wisdom and have words at will, and good language as well as good sense, increase learning; they diffuse and propagate knowledge to others, and do good work with it, and by that means increase their own stock. They add doctrine, improve sciences, and do service

to the commonwealth of learning. To him that has, and uses what he has, more shall be given.

and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

22 Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it:
but the instruction of fools *is* folly.

Note, 1. There is always some good to be gotten by a wise and good man: His understanding is a well-spring of life to him, which always flows and can never be drawn dry; he has something to say upon all occasions that is instructive, and of use to those that will make use of it, things new and old to bring out of his treasure; at least, his understanding is a spring of life to himself, yielding him abundant satisfaction; within his own thoughts he entertains and edifies himself, if not others.

2. There is nothing that is good to be gotten by a fool. Even his instruction, his set and solemn discourses, are but folly, like himself, and tending to make others like him. When he does his best it is but folly, in comparison even with the common talk of a wise man, who speaks better at table than a fool in Moses's seat.

23 The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth,
and addeth learning to his lips.

Solomon had commended eloquence, or the sweetness of the lips (Pr 16:21), and seemed to prefer it before wisdom; but here he corrects himself, as it were, and shows that unless there be a good treasure within to support the eloquence it is worth little. Wisdom in the heart is the main matter. 1. It is this that directs us in speaking, that teaches the mouth what to speak, and when, and how, so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable; otherwise, though the language be ever so fine, it had better be unsaid.

2. It is this that gives weight to what we speak and adds learning to it, strength of reason and force of argument, without which, let a thing be ever so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered, as trifling. Quaint expressions please the ear, and humour the fancy, but it is

learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that, to which wisdom in the heart is necessary.

24 Pleasant words *are as* a honeycomb,
sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

The pleasant words here commended must be those which the heart of the wise teaches, and adds learning to (Pr 16:23), words of seasonable advice, instruction, and comfort, words taken from God's word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account sweeter than honey and the honey-comb, Ps 19:10. These words, to those that know how to relish them,

1. Are pleasant. They are like the honey-comb, sweet to the soul, which tastes in them that the Lord is gracious; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, Ps 119:103.

2. They are wholesome. Many things are pleasant that are not profitable, but these pleasant words are health to the bones, to the inward man, as well as sweet to the soul. They make the bones, which sin has broken and put out of joint, to rejoice. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man;
but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.
26 He that laboreth, laboreth for himself;
for his mouth craveth it of him.

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us, what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might, both in our worldly business and in the work of religion; for in the original it is, The soul that labours labours for itself. It is heart-work which is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is here recommended to us,

1. As that which will be absolutely needful. Our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities both of soul and body are pressing, and require constant relief, so that we

must either work or starve. Both call for daily bread, and therefore there must be daily labour; for in the sweat of our face we must eat, 2Th 3:10.

2. As that which will be unspeakably gainful. We know on whose errand we go: He that labours shall reap the fruit of his labour; it shall be for himself; he shall rejoice in his own work and eat the labour of his hands. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

27 An ungodly man diggeth up evil:
and in his lips *there is* as a burning fire.

There are those that are not only vicious themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others, and they are the worst of men; two sorts of such are here described:--

1. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name, and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations: They dig up evil; they take a great deal of pains to find out something or other on which to ground a slander, or which may give some colour to it. If none appear above ground, rather than want it they will dig for it, by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back, or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced innuendos. In the lips of a slanderer and backbiter there is as a fire, not only to brand his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and sully it, but as a burning fire to consume it. And how great a matter does a little of this fire kindle, and how hardly is it extinguished! Jam 3:5,6.

2. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that on both sides which will set those at variance that are most nearly related and have been long intimate, or at least cool and alienate their affections one from another: A froward man, that cannot find in his heart to love any body but himself, is vexed to see others live in love, and therefore makes it is his business to sow strife, by giving men base characters one of another, telling lies, and carrying ill-natured stories between chief friends, so as to separate them one from another, and

make them angry at or at least suspicious of one another. Those are bad men, and bad women too, that do such ill offices; they are doing the devil's work, and his will their wages be.

28 A froward man soweth strife:
and a whisperer separateth chief friends.
29 A violent man enticeth his neighbor,
and leadeth him into the way *that is* not good.
30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things:
moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them, nor have any thing to do with them.

1. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtle serpents: They are violent men, that do all by rapine and oppression, that shut their eyes, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind to devise froward things, to contrive how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually and yet securely to themselves; and then moving their lips, giving the word of command to their agents, they bring the evil to pass, and accomplish the wicked device, biting his lips (so some read it) for vexation. When the wicked plots against the just he gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

2. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to entice and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief, leading them in a way that is not good, that is not honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be in the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some in this world by bringing them into trouble, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31 The hoary head *is* a crown of glory,
if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Note, 1. It ought to be the great care of old people to be found in the way of righteousness, the way of religion and serious godliness. Both God and man will look for them in that way; it will be expected that those that are old should

be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom; let them therefore be found in that way. Death will come; the Judge is coming; the Lord is at hand. That they may be found of him in peace, let them be found in the way of righteousness (2Pe 3:14), found so doing, Mt 24:46. Let old people be old disciples; let them persevere to the end in the way of righteousness, which they long since set out in, that they may then be found in it.

2. If old people be found in the way of righteousness, their age will be their honour. Old age, as such, is honourable, and commands respect (Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, Le 19:32); but, if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown profaned and laid in the dust, Isa 65:20. Old people therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their gray hairs are indeed a crown to them; they are worthy of double honour. Grace is the glory of old age.

32 *He that is* slow to anger *is* better than the mighty;
and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly the hoary head, Pr 16:31. Observe, 1 The nature of it. It is to be slow to anger, not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation, taking time to consider before we suffer our passion to break out, that it may not transgress due bounds, so slow in our motions towards anger that we may be quickly stopped and pacified. It is to have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion and right reason. We must be lords of our anger, as God is, Na 1:3. Æolus sis, affectuum tuorum--Rule your passions, as Æolus rules the winds.

2 The honour of it. He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions is better than the mighty, better than he that by a long siege takes a city or by a long war subdues a country. Behold, a greater than Alexander or Cæsar is here. The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions,

requires more true wisdom, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one. It is a victory that does nobody any harm; no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious, to quash an insurrection at home than to resist an invasion from a broad; nay, such are the gains of meekness that by it we are more than conquerors.

33 The lot is cast into the lap;
but the whole disposing thereof *is* of the Lord.

Note, 1 The divine Providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is an event determined by a blind fortune, but every thing by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in God is intimately concerned in.

2. When solemn appeals are made to Providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment which could not otherwise be at all, or not so well, decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright (Give a perfect lot, 1Sa 14:41,Ac 1:24), and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed, being satisfied that the hand of God is in it and that hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of Providence concerning our affairs we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

Proverbs-17

1 Better *is* a dry morsel, and quietness therewith,
than a house full of sacrifices *with* strife.

These words recommend family-love and peace, as conducing very much to the comfort of human life.

1. Those that live in unity and quietness, not only free from jealousies and animosities, but vying in mutual endearments, and obliging to one another, live very comfortably, though they are low in the world, work hard and fare hard, though they have but each of them a morsel, and that a dry morsel. There may be peace and quietness where there are not three meals a day, provided there by a joint satisfaction in God's providence and a mutual satisfaction in each other's prudence. Holy love may be found in a cottage.

2. Those that live in contention, that are always jarring and brawling, and reflecting upon one another, though they have plenty of dainties, a house full of sacrifices, live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God upon them and what they have, nor can they have any true relish of their enjoyments, much less any peace in their own consciences. Love will sweeten a dry morsel, but strife will sour and embitter a house full of sacrifices. A little of the leaven of malice will leaven all the enjoyments.

2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame,
and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Note, 1. True merit does not go by dignity. All agree that the son in the family is more worthy than the servant (Joh 8:35), and yet sometimes it so happens that the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burden and shame to the family. Eliezer of Damascus, though Abram could not bear to think that he should be his heir, was a stay to the family, when he obtained a wife for Isaac; whereas Ishmael, a son, was a shame to it, when he mocked Isaac.

2. True dignity will go by merit. If a servant be wise, and manage things well, he shall be further trusted, and not only have rule with, but rule over a son that causes shame; for God and nature have designed that the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart. Nay, a prudent servant may perhaps come to have such an interest in his master as to be taken in for a child's share of the estate and to have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

3 The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold:
but the Lord trieth the hearts.

Note, 1 The hearts of the children of men are subject, not only to God's view, but to his judgment: As the fining-pot is for silver, both to prove it and to improve it so the Lord tries the hearts; he searches whether they are standard or no, and those that are he refines and makes purer, Jer 17:10. God tries the heart by affliction (Ps 66:10,11), and often chooses his people in that furnace (Isa 48:10) and makes them choice. 2. It is God only that tries the hearts. Men may try their silver and gold with the fining-pot and the furnace, but they have no such way of trying one another's hearts; God only does that, who is both the searcher and the sovereign of the heart.

4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips;
and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Note, 1. Those that design to do ill support themselves by falsehood and lying: A wicked doer gives ear, with a great deal of pleasure, to false lips, that will justify him in the ill he does, to those that aim to make public disturbances, catch greedily at libels, and false stories, that defame the government and the administration. 2. Those that take the liberty to tell lies take a pleasure in hearing them told: A liar gives heed to a malicious backbiting tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, and with which to give them some colour of truth and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one another's hands; and those show that they are bad themselves who court the acquaintance and need the assistance of those that are bad.

5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker:
and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

See here, 1. What a great sin those are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with their poverty, and take advantage from their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them. They reproach their Maker, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the

poor to the condition they are in, owns them, and takes care of them, and can, when he pleases, reduce us to that condition. Let those that thus reproach their Maker know that they shall be called to an account for it, Mt 25:40,41,Pr 14:31.

2. What great danger those are in of falling into trouble themselves who are pleased to see and hear of the troubles of others: He that is glad at calamities, that he may be built up upon the ruins of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God when they are abroad, let him know that he shall not go unpunished; the cup shall be put into his hand, Eze 25:6,7.

6 Children's children *are* the crown of old men;
and the glory of children *are* their fathers.

They are so, that is, they should be so, and, if they conduct themselves worthily, they are so. 1. It is an honour to parents when they are old to leave children, and children's children, growing up, that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children's children (Ps 128:6,Ge 50:23), to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God. This crowns and completes their comfort in this world.

2. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them even after they have themselves grown up and settled in the world. Those are unnatural children who reckon their aged parents a burden to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be that thereby they are comforts to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.

7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool:
much less do lying lips a prince.

Two things are here represented as very absurd: 1. That men of no repute should be dictators. What can be more unbecoming than for fools, who are known to have little

sense and discretion, to pretend to that which is above them and which they were never cut out for? A fool, in Solomon's proverbs, signifies a wicked man, whom excellent speech does not become, because his conversation gives the lie to his excellent speech. What have those to do to declare God's statutes who hate instruction? Ps 50:16. Christ would not suffer the unclean spirits to say that they knew him to be the Son of God. See Ac 16:17,18.

2. That men of great repute should be deceivers. If it is unbecoming a despicable man to presume to speak as a philosopher or politician, and nobody heeds him, being prejudiced against his character, much more unbecoming is it for a prince, for a man of honour, to take advantage from his character and the confidence that is put in him to lie, and dissemble, and make no conscience of breaking his word. Lying ill becomes any man, but worst a prince, so corrupt is the modern policy, which insinuates that princes ought not to make themselves slaves to their words further than is for their interest, and Qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare--He who knows not how to dissemble knows not how to reign.

8 A gift *is as* a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

The design of this observation is to show, 1. That those who have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a precious stone, and value themselves on it as if it gave them not only ornament, but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond they expect it should dazzle the eyes of all, and make them do just what they would have them do in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause. Fee high, and you may have what you will.

2. That those who have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it: A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it; it has a great influence upon him, and he will be sure to go the way that

it leads him, hither and thither, though contrary to justice and not consistent with himself.

9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love;
but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

Note, 1 The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbours is to make the best of every thing, not to tell others what has been said or done against them when it is not at all necessary to their safety, nor to take notice of what has been said or done against them when it is not at all necessary to their safety, nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both, and put the best construction upon them. "It was an oversight; therefore overlook it. It was done through forgetfulness; therefore forget it. It perhaps made nothing of you; do you make nothing of it."

2 The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love, and nothing tends more to the separating of friends, and setting them at variance, than the repeating of matters that have been in variance; for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition, but the things themselves are aggravated and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.

10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man
than a hundred stripes into a fool.

Note, 1. A word is enough to the wise. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head, but into the heart of a wise man, so as to have a strong influence upon him; for, if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it. 2. Stripes are not enough for a fool, to make him sensible of his errors, that he may repent of them, and be more cautious for the future. He that is sottish and wilful is very rarely benefited by severity. David is softened with, Thou art the man; but Pharaoh remains hard under all the plagues of Egypt.

11 An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion:
therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Here is the sin and punishment of an evil man. 1. His sin. He is an evil man indeed that seeks all occasions to rebel

against God, and the government God has set over him, and to contradict and quarrel with those about him. Quærit jurgia--He picks quarrels; so some. There are some that are actuated by a spirit of opposition, that will contradict for contradiction-sake, that will go on frowardly in their wicked ways in spite of all restraint and check. A rebellious man seeks mischief (so some read it), watches all opportunities to disturb the public peace.

2. His punishment. Because he will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle methods, a cruel messenger shall be sent against him, some dreadful judgment or other, as a messenger from God. Angels, God's messengers, shall be employed as ministers of his justice against him, Ps 78:49. Satan, the angel of death, shall be let loose upon him, and the messengers of Satan. His prince shall send a sergeant to arrest him, an executioner to cut him off. He that kicks against the pricks is waited for of the sword.

Weighty Sayings.

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12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man,
rather than a fool in his folly.

Note, 1. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion ungoverned, and he is a fool in his folly; those are fools in whose bosom anger rests and in whose countenance anger rages. He has put off man, and is become like a bear, a raging bear, a bear robbed of her whelps; he is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps (which, though ugly, are her own), as eager in the pursuit of them as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing, and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit.

2. He is a dangerous man, falls foul of every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as the robber. Ira furor brevis est--Anger is temporary madness. One may more easily stop, escape, or guard against an enraged bear, than an outrageous angry man. Let us therefore watch over our own passions (lest they get head and do mischief) and so consult our own honour; and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. Currenti cede furori--Give place unto wrath.

13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good,
evil shall not depart from his house.

A malicious mischievous man is here represented, 1. As ungrateful to his friends. He oftentimes is so absurd and insensible of kindnesses done him that he renders evil for good. David met with those that were his adversaries for his love, Ps 109:4. To render evil for evil is brutish, but to render evil for good is devilish. He is an ill-natured man who, because he is resolved not to return a kindness, will revenge it.

2. As therein unkind to his family, for he entails a curse upon it. This is a crime so heinous that it shall be punished, not only in his person, but in his posterity, for whom he thus treasures up wrath. The sword shall not depart from David's house because he rewarded Uriah with evil for his good services. The Jews stoned Christ for his good works; therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14 The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water:
therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

Here is, 1 The danger that there is in the beginning of strife. One hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry demand, one spiteful contradiction, begets another, and that a third, and so on, till it proves like the cutting of a dam; when the water has got a little passage it does itself widen the breach, bears down all before it, and there is then no stopping it, no reducing it.

2. A good caution inferred thence, to take heed of the first spark of contention and to put it out as soon as ever it appears. Dread the breaking of the ice, for, if once broken, it will break further; therefore leave it off, not only when you see the worst of it, for then it may be too late, but when you see the first of it. Obsta principiis--Resist its earliest display. Leave it off even before it be meddled with; leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15 He that justifieth the wicked,
and he that condemneth the just,
even they both *are* abomination to the Lord.

This shows what an offence it is to God, 1. When those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, counsel, do either acquit the guilty or condemn those that are not guilty, or in the least contribute to either; this defeats the end of government, which is to protect the good and punish the bad, Ro 13:3,4. It is equally provoking to God to justify the wicked, though it be in pity and in favorem vitæ--to safe life, as to condemn the just.

2. When any private persons plead for sin and sinners, palliate and excuse wickedness, or argue against virtue and piety, and so pervert the right ways of the Lord and confound the eternal distinctions between good and evil.

16 Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom,
seeing *he hath* no heart *to it?*

Two things are here spoken of with astonishment:-- 1. God's great goodness to foolish man, in putting a price into his hand to get wisdom, to get knowledge and grace to fit him for both worlds. We have rational souls, the means of grace, the strivings of the Spirit, access to God by prayer; we have time and opportunity. He that has a good estate (so some understand it) has advantages thereby of getting wisdom by purchasing instruction. Good parents, relations, ministers, friends, are helps to get wisdom. It is a price, therefore of value, a talent. It is a price in the hand, in possession; the word is nigh thee. It is a price for getting; it is for our own advantage; it is for getting wisdom, the very thing which, being fools, we have most need of. We have reason to wonder that God should so consider our necessity, and should entrust us with such advantages, though he foresaw we should not make a right improvement of them.

2. Man's great wickedness, his neglect of God's favour and his own interest, which is very absurd and unaccountable: He has no heart to it, not to the wisdom that is to be got, nor to the price in the use of which it may be got. He has no heart, no skill, nor will, nor courage, to improve his advantages. He has set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to his duty or the great concerns of his soul. Wherefore should a price be thrown away and lost upon one so undeserving of it?

17 A friend loveth at all times,
and a brother is born for adversity.

This intimates the strength of those bonds by which we are bound to each other and which we ought to be sensible of. 1. Friends must be constant to each other at all times. That is not true friendship which is not constant; it will be

so if it be sincere, and actuated by a good principle. Those that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship will love no longer than their humour is pleased and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind and change with the weather. Swallow-friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter; such friends there is no loss of. But if the friendship be prudent, generous, and cordial, if I love my friend because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continues so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I shall love him. Christ is a friend that loves at all times (Joh 13:1) and we must so love him, Ro 8:35.

2. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction: A brother is born to succour a brother or sister in distress, to whom he is joined so closely by nature that he may the more sensibly feel from their burdens, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were by instinct, to help them. We must often consider what we were born for, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation. Who knows but we came into such a family for such a time as this? We do not answer the end of our relations if we do not do the duty of them. Some take it thus: A friend that loves at all times is born (that is, becomes) a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.

18 A man void of understanding striketh hands,
and becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Though Solomon had commended friendship in adversity (Pr 17:17), yet let not any, under pretence of being generous to their friends, be unjust to their families and wrong them; one part of our duty must be made to consist with another. Note,

1. It is a piece of wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, especially to dread suretiship. There may be a just occasion for a man to pass his word for his friend in his absence, till he come to engage himself; but to be surety in the presence of his friend, when he is upon the spot, supposes that his own word will not be taken, he being

deemed insolvent or dishonest, and then who can with safety pass his word for him?

2. Those that are void of understanding are commonly taken in this snare, to the prejudice of their families, and therefore ought not to be trusted too far with their own affairs, but to be under direction.

19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife:
and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

Note, 1. Those that are quarrelsome involve themselves in a great deal of guilt: He that loves strife, that in his worldly business loves to go to law, in religion loves controversies, and in common conversation loves to thwart and fall out, that is never well but when he is in the fire, he loves transgression; for a great deal of sin attends that sin, and the way of it is down-hill. He pretends to stand up for truth, and for his honour and right, but really he loves sin, which God hates.

2. Those that are ambitious and aspiring expose themselves to a great deal of trouble, such as often ends in their ruin: He that exalts his gate, builds a stately house, at least a fine frontispiece, that he may overtop and outshine his neighbours, seeks his own destruction and takes a deal of pains to ruin himself; he makes his gate so large that his house and estate go out at it.

20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no good:
and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Note, 1. Framing ill designs will be of no advantage to us; there is nothing got by them: He that has a froward heart, that sows discord and is full of resentment, cannot promise himself to get by it sufficient to counterbalance the loss of his repose and reputation, nor can he take any rational satisfaction in it; he finds no good.

2. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us: He that has a perverse tongue, spiteful and abusive, scurrilous or backbiting, falls into one mischief or other, loses his friends, provokes his enemies, and pulls trouble

upon his own head. Many a one has paid dearly for an unbridled tongue.

21 He that begetteth a fool *doeth it* to his sorrow:
and the father of a fool hath no joy.

This expresses that very emphatically which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous vexatious thing it is to have a foolish wicked child. See here,

1. How uncertain all our creature-comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that proves the greatest cross in which we promised ourselves most satisfaction. There was joy when a man-child was born into the world, and yet, if he prove vicious, his own father will wish he had never been born. The name of Absalom signifies his father's peace, but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delights of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them; yet it should silence the murmurings of the afflicted father in that case that if his son be a fool he is a fool of his own begetting, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross, the rather because Adam begets a son in his own likeness.

2. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction (and that of an untoward child as likely as any other) to drown the sense of a thousand mercies: The father of a fool lays that so much to heart that he has no joy of any thing else. For this he may thank himself; there are joys sufficient to counterbalance even that sorrow.

22 A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine:
but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Note, 1. It is healthful to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided for it, not only meat, but medicine, and has here told us that the best medicine is a merry heart, not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth; Solomon himself said of that mirth, It is not medicine, but madness; it is not food, but poison; what doth it? But he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments and particularly

that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us leave to be cheerful and cause to be cheerful, especially if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. This does good to a medicine (so some read it); it will make physic more efficient. Or it does good as a medicine to the body, making it easy and fit for business. But, if mirth be a medicine (understand it of diversion and recreation), it must be used sparingly, only when there is occasion, not turned into food, and it must be used medicinally, sub regimine--as a prescribed regimen, and by rule.

2 The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickliness of the body: A broken spirit, sunk by the burden of afflictions, and especially a conscience wounded with the sense of guilt and fear of wrath, dries the bones, wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy dispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation.

23 A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom
to pervert the ways of judgment.

See here, 1. What an evil thing bribery is: He is a wicked man that will take a gift to engage him to give a false testimony, verdict, or judgment; when he does it he is ashamed of it, for he takes it, with all the secresy imaginable, out of the bosom where he knows it is laid ready for him; it is industriously concealed, and so slyly that, if he could, he would hide it from his own conscience. A gift is taken out of the bosom of a wicked man (so some read it); for he is a bad man that gives bribes, as well as he that takes them.

2. What a powerful thing it is. It is of such force that it perverts the ways of judgment. The course of justice is not only obstructed, but turned into injustice; and the greatest wrongs are done under colour of doing right.

24 Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding;
but the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.

Note, 1. He is to be reckoned an intelligent man that not only has wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his wisdom before him, as his card and compass which he steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy; and then he has it before him; it is not to seek, but still at hand.

2. He that has a giddy head, a roving rambling fancy, will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool, and good for nothing, whose eyes are in the ends of the earth, here, and there and every where, any where but where they should be, who cannot fix his thoughts to one subject nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness. When his mind should be applied to his study and business it is filled with a thousand things foreign and impertinent.

25 A foolish son is a grief to his father,
and bitterness to her that bare him.

Observe, 1. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to the father (so the word signifies), because they contemn his authority, but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents, being joint-sufferers, should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear them up under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can, the mother to mollify the father's anger, the father to alleviate the mother's grief.

2. That Solomon often repeats this remark, probably because it was his own case; however, it is a common case.

26 Also to punish the just *is* not good
nor to strike princes for equity.

In differences that happen between magistrates and subjects, and such differences often arise, 1. Let magistrates see to it that they never punish the just, that they be in no case a terror to good works, for that is to abuse their power and betray that great trust which is reposed in them. It is not good, that is, it is a very evil thing, and will end ill, whatever end they may aim at in it. When princes

become tyrants and persecutors their thrones will be neither easy nor firm.

2. Let subjects see to it that they do not find fault with the government for doing its duty, for it is a wicked thing to strike princes for equity, by defaming their administration or by any secret attempts against them to strike at them, as the ten tribes that revolted reflected upon Solomon for imposing necessary taxes. Some read it, Nor to strike the ingenuous for equity. Magistrates must take heed that none suffer under them for well doing; nor must parents provoke their children to wrath by unjust rebukes.

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words:
and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

Two ways a man may show himself to be a wise man:--

1. By the good temper, the sweetness and the sedateness, of his mind: A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit, a precious spirit (so the word is); he is one that looks well to his spirit, that it be as it should be, and so keeps it in an even frame, easy to himself and pleasant to others. A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable and more excellent than his neighbour. He is of a cool spirit (so some read it), not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the impetus of any corrupt affection, but even and stayed. A cool head with a warm heart is an admirable composition.

2. By the good government of his tongue.

(1.) A wise man will be of few words, as being afraid of speaking amiss: He that has knowledge, and aims to do good with it, is careful, when he does speak to speak to the purpose, and says little in order that he may take time to deliberate. He spares his words, because they are better spared than ill-spent.

(2.) This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise

man if he have but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear, and see, and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candour will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, and because it will be thought that he is making observations on what others say, and gaining experience, and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain men's good opinion and to impose upon them. But when a fool holds his peace God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound up there; thoughts are words to him, and therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgment of men.

28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise:
and he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding.

Proverbs-18

1 Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh
and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

The original here is difficult, and differently understood.

1. Some take it as a rebuke to an affected singularity. When men take a pride in separating themselves from the sentiments and society of others, in contradicting all that has been said before them and advancing new notions of their own, which, though ever so absurd, they are wedded to, it is to gratify a desire or lust of vain-glory, and they are seekers and meddlers with that which does not belong to them. He seeks according to his desire, and intermeddles with every business, pretends to pass a judgment upon every man's matter. He is morose and supercilious. Those generally are so that are opinionative and conceited, and they thus make themselves ridiculous, and are vexatious to others.

2. Our translation seems to take it as an excitement to diligence in the pursuit of wisdom. If we would get knowledge or grace, we must desire it, as that which we need and which will be of great advantage to us, 1Co 12:31.

We must separate ourselves from all those things which would divert us from or retard us in the pursuit, retire out of the noise of this world's vanities, and then seek and intermeddle with all the means and instructions of wisdom, be willing to take pains and try all the methods of improving ourselves, be acquainted with a variety of opinions, that we may prove all things and hold fast that which is good.

2 A fool hath no delight in understanding,
but that his heart may discover itself.

A fool may pretend to understanding, and to seek and intermeddle with the means of it, but, 1. He has no true delight in it; it is only to please his friends or save his credit; he does not love his book, nor his business, nor his Bible, nor his prayers; he would rather be playing the fool with his sports. Those who take no pleasure in learning or religion will make nothing to purpose of either. No progress is made in them if they are a task and a drudgery. 2. He has no good design in it, only that his heart may discover itself, that he may have something to make a show with, something wherewith to varnish his folly, that that may pass off the better, because he loves to hear himself talk.

3 When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt,
and with ignominy reproach.

This may include a double sense:-- 1. That wicked people are scornful people, and put contempt upon others. When the wicked comes into any company, comes into the schools of wisdom or into the assemblies for religious worship, then comes contempt of God, of his people and ministers, and of every thing that is said and done. You can expect no other from those that are profane than that they will be scoffers; they will be an ignominy and reproach; they will flout and jeer every thing that is serious and grave. But let not wise and good men regard it, for the proverb of the ancients says, such wickedness proceeds from the wicked.

2. That wicked people are shameful people, and bring contempt upon themselves, for God has said that those who

despise him shall be lightly esteemed. As soon as ever sin entered shame followed it, and sinners make themselves despicable. Nor do they only draw contempt upon themselves, but they bring ignominy and reproach upon their families, their friends, their ministers, and all that are in any way related to them. Those therefore who would secure their honour must retain their virtue.

4 The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters,
and the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook.

The similitudes here seem to be elegantly transposed. 1 The well-spring of wisdom is as deep waters. An intelligent knowing man has in him a good treasure of useful things, which furnishes him with something to say upon all occasions that is pertinent and profitable. This is as deep waters, which make no noise, but never run dry. 2 The words of such a man's mouth are as a flowing brook. What he sees cause to speak flows naturally from him and with a great deal of ease, and freedom, and natural fluency; it is clean and fresh, it is cleansing and refreshing; from his deep waters there flows what there is occasion for, to water those about him, as the brooks do the low grounds.

5 *It is* not good to accept the person of the wicked,
to overthrow the righteous in judgement.

This justly condemns those who, being employed in the administration of justice, pervert judgment, 1. By conniving at men's crimes, and protecting and countenancing them in oppression and violence, because of their dignity, or wealth, or some personal kindness they have for them. Whatever excuses men may make for it, certainly it is not good thus to accept the person of the wicked; it is an offence to God, an affront to justice, a wrong to mankind, and a real service done to the kingdom of sin and Satan. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person.

2. By giving a cause against justice and equity, because the person is poor and low in the world, or not of the same party or persuasion, or a stranger of another country. This is overthrowing the righteous in judgment, who ought to be supported, and whom God will make to stand.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention,
and his mouth calleth for strokes.

Solomon has often shown what mischief bad men do to others with their ungoverned tongues; here he shows what mischief they do to themselves.

1. They embroil themselves in quarrels: A fool's lips, without any cause or call, enter into contention, by advancing foolish notions which others find themselves obliged to oppose, and so a quarrel is begun, or by giving provoking language, which will be resented, and satisfaction demanded, or by setting men at defiance, and bidding them do if they dare. Proud, and passionate men, and drunkards, are fools, whose lips enter into contention. A wise man may, against his will, be drawn into a quarrel, but he is a fool that of choice enters into it when he might avoid it, and he will repent it when it is too late.

2. They expose themselves to correction: The fool's mouth does, in effect, call for strokes; he has said that which deserves to be punished with strokes, and is still saying that which needs to be checked, and restrained with strokes, as Ananias unjustly commanded that Paul should be smitten on the mouth.

3. They involve themselves in ruin: A fool's mouth, which has been, or would have been, the destruction of others, proves at length his own destruction, perhaps from men. Shimei's mouth was his own destruction, and Adonijah's, who spoke against his own head. And when a fool, by his foolish speaking, has run himself into a premunire, and thinks to bring himself off by justifying or excusing what he has said, his defence proves his offence, and his lips are still the snare of his soul, entangling him yet more and more. However, when men by their evil words shall be condemned at God's bar their mouths will be their destruction, and it will be such an aggravation of their ruin as will not admit one drop of water, one drop of comfort, to cool their tongue, which is their snare and will be their tormentor.

7 A fool's mouth *is* his destruction, and
his lips *are* the snare of his soul.
8 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds,
and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Tale-bearers are those who secretly carry stories from house to house, which perhaps have some truth in them, but are secrets not fit to be told, or are basely misrepresented, and false colours put upon them, and are all told with design to blast men's reputation, to break their friendship, to make mischief between relations and neighbours, and set them at variance. Now the words of such are here said to be,

1. Like as when men are wounded (so the margin reads it); they pretend to be very much affected with the miscarriages of such and such, and to be in pain for them, and pretend that it is with the greatest grief and reluctance imaginable that they speak of them. They look as if they themselves were wounded by it, whereas really they rejoice in iniquity, are fond of the story, and tell it with pride and pleasure. Thus their words seem; but they go down as poison into the innermost parts of the belly, the pill being thus gilded, thus sugared.

2. As wounds (so the text reads it), as deep wounds, deadly wounds, wounds in the innermost parts of the belly; the venter medius vel infimus--the middle or lower belly, the thorax or the abdomen, in either of which wounds are mortal. The words of the tale-bearer wound him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest, and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity. They occasion sin to him, which is a wound to the conscience. Perhaps he seems to slight them, but they would insensibly, by alienating his affections from one he ought to love.

Folly and Pride Exposed.

9 He also that is slothful in his work
is brother to him that is a great waster.

Note, 1. Prodigality is very bad husbandry. Those are not only justly branded as fools among men, but will give an uncomfortable account to God of the talents they are

entrusted with, who are wasters of their estates, who live above what they have, spend and give more than they can afford, and so, in effect, throw away what they have, and suffer it to run to waste. 2. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work, whose hands hang down (so the word signifies), that stands, as we may, with his thumbs in his mouth, that neglects his business, does it not at all, or as if he did it not, he is own brother to him that is a prodigal, that is, he is as much a fool and in as sure and ready a way to poverty; one scatters what he has, the other lets it run through his fingers. The observation is too true in the affairs of religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing is brother to him that does not pray or hear at all; and omissions of duty and in duty are as fatal to the soul as commissions of sin.

10 The name of the Lord *is* a strong tower:
the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Here is, 1. God's sufficiency for the saints: His name is a strong tower for them, in which they may take rest when they are weary and take sanctuary when they are pursued, where they may be lifted up above their enemies and fortified against them. There is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times. The wealth laid up in this tower is enough to enrich them, to be a continual feast and a continuing treasure to them. The strength of this tower is enough to protect them; the name of the Lord is all that whereby he has made himself known as God, and our God, not only his titles and attributes, but his covenant and all the promises of it; these make up a tower, a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable, for all God's people.

2 The saints' security in God. It is a strong tower to those who know how to make use of it as such. The righteous, by faith and prayer, devotion towards God and dependence on him, run into it, as their city of refuge. Having made sure their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it; they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above, dwell in God and God in them, and so they are safe, they think themselves so, and they shall find themselves so.

11 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city,
and as a high wall in his own conceit.

Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man (Pr 18:10), Solomon here shows what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them. His wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it, as a godly man from his God. See,

1. How he supports himself. He makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules, with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his strong city, in which he intrenches himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him. His scales are his pride; his wealth is his wall in which he encloses himself, and he thinks it a high wall, which cannot be scaled or got over, Job 31:24,Re 18:7.

2. How herein he cheats himself. It is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only in his own conceit; it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty;
and before honor *is* humility.

Note, 1. Pride is the presage of ruin, and ruin will at last be the punishment of pride; for before destruction men are commonly so infatuated by the just judgment of God that they are more haughty than ever, that their ruin may be the sorer and the more surprising. Of, if that do not always hold, yet after the heart has been lifted up with pride, a fall comes, Pr 16:18.

2. Humility is the presage of honour and prepares men for it, and honour shall at length be the reward of humility, as he had said before, Pr 15:33. That has need to be often said which men are so loth to believe.

13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*,
it *is* folly and shame unto him.

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing by which they hope to gain applause. 1. Some take a pride in being quick. They answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon as they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take up a cause suddenly; and, when they have heard one side, they think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other; they are already apprized of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas, though a ready wit is an agreeable thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound wisdom that do business.

2. Those that take a pride in being quick commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he does not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict enquiry into; and, if it be folly, it is and will be shame.

14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;
but a wounded spirit who can bear?

Note, 1. Outward grievances are tolerable as long as the mind enjoys itself and is at ease. Many infirmities, many calamities, we are liable to in this world, in body, name, and estate, which a man may bear, and bear up under, if he have but good conduct and courage, and be able to act with reason and resolution, especially if he have a good conscience, and the testimony of that be for him; and, if the spirit of a man will sustain the infirmity, much more will the spirit of a Christian, or rather the Spirit of God witnessing and working with our spirits in a day of trouble.

2 The grievances of the spirit are of all others most heavy, and hardly to be borne; these make sore the shoulders which should sustain the other infirmities. If the spirit be wounded by the disturbance of the reason, dejection under the trouble, whatever it is, and despair of relief, if the spirit be wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgment and fiery indignation, who can bear this? Wounded spirits cannot help themselves,

nor do others know how to help them. It is therefore wisdom to keep conscience void of offence.

15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge;
and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Note, 1. Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it, their ear to attend to the means of knowledge and their heart to mix faith with what they hear and make a good improvement of it. Those that are prudent do not think they have prudence enough, but still see they have need of more; and the more prudent a man is the more inquisitive will he be after knowledge, the knowledge of God and his duty, and the way to heaven, for that is the best knowledge.

2. Those that prudently seek knowledge shall certainly get knowledge, for God never said to such, Seek in vain, but, Seek and you shall find. If the ear seeks it, the heart gets it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must get knowledge, not only into our heads, but into our hearts, get the savour and relish of it, apply what we know to ourselves and experience the power and influence of it.

16 A man's gift maketh room for him,
and bringeth him before great men.

Of what great force gifts (that is, bribes) are he had intimated before, Pr 17:8,23. Here he shows the power of gifts, that is, presents made even by inferiors to those that are above them and have much more than they have. A good present will go far, 1. Towards a man's liberty: A man's gift, if he be in prison, may procure his enlargement; there are courtiers, who, if they use their interest even for oppressed innocency, expect to receive a gratuity for it. Or, if a mean man know not how to get access to a great man, he may do it by a fee to his servants or a present to himself; those will make room for him.

2. Towards his preferment. It will bring him to sit among great men, in honour and power. See how corrupt the world is when men's gifts will not do, though ever so great; nay, will gain that for them which they are unworthy of and unfit

for; and no wonder that those take bribes in their offices who gave bribes for them. Vendere jura potest, emerat ille prius--He that bought law can sell it.

17 *He that is* first in his own cause *seemeth* just;
but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him.

This shows that one tale is good till another is told. 1. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no.

2 The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit that the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses and cross-examine them, and show the falsehood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which perhaps may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears, to hear both sides before we give judgment.

18 The lot causeth contentions to cease,
and parteth between the mighty.

Note, 1. Contentions commonly happen among the mighty, that are jealous for their honour and right and stand upon the punctilios of both, that are confident of their being able to make their part good and therefore will hardly condescend to the necessary terms of an accommodation; whereas those that are poor are forced to be peaceable, and sit down losers.

2. Even the contentions of the mighty may be ended by lot if they cannot otherwise be compromised, and sometimes better so than by arguments which are endless, or concessions which they are loth to stoop to, whereas it is no disparagement to a man to acquiesce in the determination of the lot when once it is referred to that. To prevent quarrels Canaan was divided by lot; and, if lusory lots had not profaned this way of appeal to Providence, perhaps it might be very well used now for the deciding of many controversies, both to the honour of God and the satisfaction of the parties, provided it were done with prayer and due solemnity, this and some other scriptures seeming to direct to

it, especially Ac 1:26. If the law be a lottery (as some have called it), it were as well that a lottery were the law.

19 A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong city:
and *their* contentions *are* like the bars of a castle.

Note, 1. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligation to each other, not only because they are most unnatural and unbecoming, but because between such things are commonly taken most unkindly, and resentments are apt to be carried too far. Wisdom and grace would indeed make it most easy to us to forgive our relations and friends if they offend us, but corruption makes it most difficult to forgive them; let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother, or one that has been as a brother; ingratitude is very provoking.

2. Great pains must be taken to compromise matters in variance between relations, with all speed, because it is a work of so much difficulty, and consequently the more honourable if it be done. Esau was a brother offended, and seemed harder to be won than a strong city, yet by a work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer, he was won.

20 A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth;
and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Note, 1. Our comfort depends very much upon the testimony of our own consciences, for us or against us. The belly is here put for the conscience, as Pr 20:27. Now it is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for, accordingly, will our satisfaction be and our inward peace. 2 The testimony of our consciences will be for us, or against us, according as we have or have not governed our tongues well. According as the fruit of the mouth is good or bad, unto iniquity or unto righteousness, so the character of the man is, and consequently the testimony of his conscience concerning him. "We ought to take as great care about the words we speak as we do about the fruit of our trees or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for, according as they are wholesome or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled." So bishop Patrick.

21 Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue:

and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Note, 1. A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or the death of others by a false tongue; and, on the contrary, many a one has saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved the lives of others by a seasonable testimony or intercession for them. And, if by our words we must be justified or condemned, death and life are, no doubt, in the power of the tongue. Tongues were Æsop's best meat, and his worst. 2. Men's words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak; he that not only speaks aright (which a bad man may do to save his credit or please his company), but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and with delight, to him it will be life; and he that not only speaks amiss (which a good man may do through inadvertency), but loves to speak so (Ps 52:4), to him it will be death. As men love it they shall eat the fruit of it.

22 *Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good *thing*,
and obtaineth favor of the Lord.

Note, 1. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife (that is, a wife indeed; a bad wife does not deserve to be called by a name of so much honour), that finds a help meet for him (that is a wife in the original acceptation of the word), that sought such a one with care and prayer and has found what he sought, he has found a good thing, a jewel of great value, a rare jewel; he has found that which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven. 2. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness; it is a token of his favour, and a happy pledge of further favours; it is a sign that God delights in a man to do him good and has mercy in store for him; for this, therefore, God must be sought unto.

23 The poor useth entreaties;
but the rich answereth roughly.

Note, 1. Poverty, though many inconveniences to the body attend it, has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes men humble and submissive, and mortifies their pride. It teaches them to use entreaties. When necessity forces men to

beg it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties, not answer, but make application, must sue sub forma pauperis--as a pauper.

2. A prosperous condition, though it has many advantages, has often this mischief attending it, that it makes men proud, haughty, and imperious: The rich answers the entreaties of the poor roughly, as Nabal answered David's messengers with railing. It is a very foolish humour of some rich men, especially those who have risen from little, that they think their riches will warrant them to give hard words, and, even where they not design any rough dealing, that it becomes them to answer roughly, whereas gentlemen ought to be gentle, Jam 3:17.

24 A man *that hath* friends must show himself friendly:
and there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother.

Solomon here recommends friendship to us, and shows,

1. What we must do that we may contract and cultivate friendship; we must show ourselves friendly. Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only not affront them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so by all expressions that are endearing, by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them and bidding them welcome, and especially by doing all the good offices we can and serving them in every thing that lies in our power; that is showing ourselves friendly.

Si vis amari, ama-- If you wish to gain affection, bestow it.--

Sen. Ut ameris, amabilis esto-- The way to be beloved is to be lovely.--Ovid.

2. That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise ourselves a great deal of comfort in a true friend. A brother indeed is born for adversity, as he had said, Pr 17:17. In our troubles we expect comfort and relief from our relations, but

sometimes there is a friend, that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and, when it comes to the trial, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a friend to all believers that sticks closer than a brother; to him therefore let them show themselves friendly.

Proverbs-19

1 Better *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity,
than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Here see, 1. What will be the credit and comfort of a poor man, and make him more excellent than his neighbour, though his poverty may expose him to contempt and may dispirit him. Let him be honest and walk in integrity, let him keep a good conscience and make it appear that he does so, let him always speak and act with sincerity when he is under the greatest temptations to dissemble and break his word, and then let him value himself upon that, for all wise and good men will value him. He is better, has a better character, is in a better condition, is better beloved, and lives to better purpose, than many a one that looks great and makes a figure.

2. What will be the shame of a rich man, notwithstanding all his pomp. If he have a shallow head and an evil tongue, if he is perverse in his lips and is a fool, if he is a wicked man and gets what he has by fraud and oppression, he is a fool, and an honest poor man is to be preferred far before him.

2 Also, *that* the soul *be* without knowledge, *it is* not good;
and he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth.

Two things are here declared to be of bad consequence:-- 1. Ignorance: To be without the knowledge of the soul is not good, so some read it. Know we not our own selves, our own hearts? A soul without knowledge is not good; it is a great privilege that we have souls, but, if these souls have not knowledge, what the better are we? If man has not understanding, he is as the beasts, Ps 49:20. An ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. That the soul be without knowledge is

not safe, nor pleasant; what good can the soul do, of what is it good for, if it be without knowledge?

2. Rashness. He that hastes with his feet (that does things inconsiderately and with precipitation, and will not take time to ponder the path of his feet) sins; he cannot but often miss the mark and take many a false step, which those prevent that consider their ways. As good not know as not consider.

3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way:
and his heart fretteth against the Lord.

We have here two instances of men's folly:-- 1. That they bring themselves into straits and troubles, and run themselves a-ground, and embarrass themselves: The foolishness of man perverts his way. Men meet with crosses and disappointments in their affairs, and things do not succeed as they expected and wished, and it is owing to themselves and their own folly; it is their own iniquity that corrects them.

2. That when they have done so they lay the blame upon God, and their hearts fret against him, as if he had done them wrong, whereas really they wrong themselves. In fretting, we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors; in fretting against the Lord we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty; and it is very absurd to take occasion from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our wilfulness, or neglect, to quarrel with him, when we ought to blame ourselves, for it is our own doing. See Isa 50:1.

4 Wealth maketh many friends;
but the poor is separated from his neighbor.

Here, 1. We may see how strong men's love of money is, that they will love any man, how undeserving soever he be otherwise, if he has but a deal of money and is free with it, so that they may hope to be the better for it. Wealth enables a man to send many presents, make many entertainments, and do many good offices, and so gains him many friends, who pretend to love him, for they flatter him and make their court to him, but really love what he has, or rather love themselves, hoping to get by him. 2. We may see how weak men's love of one another is. He who, while he prospered, was beloved and

respected, if he fall into poverty is separated from his neighbour, is not owned nor looked upon, not visited nor regarded, is bidden to keep his distance and told he is troublesome. Even one that has been his neighbour and acquaintance will turn his face from him and pass by on the other side. Because men's consciences tell them they ought to relieve and succour such, they are willing to have this excuse, that they did not see them.

5 A false witness shall not be unpunished;
and *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.

Here we have, 1 The sins threatened--bearing false witness in judgment and speaking lies in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impiety as to bear false witness (where to the guilt of a lie is added that of perjury and injury) if they had not advanced to it by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under pretence of doing good. Thus men teach their tongues to speak lies, Jer 9:5. Those that will take a liberty to tell lies in discourse are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false-witness-bearing, whenever they are tempted to it, though they seemed to detest it. Those that can swallow a false word debauch their consciences, so that a false oath will not choke them.

2 The threatening itself: They shall not go unpunished; they shall not escape. This intimates that that which emboldens them in the sin is the hope of impunity, it being a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men, though the law is strict, De 19:18,19. But it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned; we know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6 Many will entreat the favor of the prince:
and every man *is* a friend to him that giveth gifts.

These two verses are a comment upon Pr 18:4, and show,

1. How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have suitors and servants in abundance. The prince that has power in his hand, and preferments at his disposal, has his

gate and his ante-chamber thronged with petitioners, that are ready to adore him for what they can get. Many will entreat his favour, and think themselves happy in it. Even great men are humble suppliants to the prince. How earnest then should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince. But, it should seem, liberality will go further than majesty itself to gain respect, for there are many that court the prince, but every man is a friend to him that gives gifts; not only those that have received, or do expect, gifts from him, will, as friends, be ready to serve him, but others also will, as friends, give him their good word.

Prodigals, who are foolishly free of what they have, will have many hangers-on who will cry them up as long as it lasts, but will leave them when it is done. Those that are prudently generous make an interest by it which may stand them in good stead; those that are accounted benefactors exercise an authority which may give them an opportunity of doing good, Lu 22:25.

2. How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. Men may, if they please, court the prince, and the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor and look at them with disdain. Yet so it often is: All the brethren of the poor do hate him; even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them, and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then no marvel if others of his friends, that were nothing akin to him, go far from him, to get out of his way. He pursues them with words, hoping to prevail with them by his importunity to be kind to him, but all in vain; they have nothing for him.

They pursue him with words (so some understand it), to excuse themselves from giving him any thing; they tell him that he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David's messengers: "There are many servants now a days that run away from their masters; and how do I know but that David may be one of them?" Let poor people therefore make

God their friend, pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them.

7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him:
how much more do his friends go far from him?
He pursueth *them with* words,
yet they *are* wanting *to him*.

8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul:
he that keepeth understanding shall find good.

Those are here encouraged, 1. That take pains to get wisdom, to get knowledge, and grace, and acquaintance with God; those that do so show that they love their own souls, and will be found to have done themselves the greatest kindness imaginable. No man ever hated his own flesh, but loves that, yet many are wanting in love to their own souls, for only those love their souls, and consequently love themselves, aright, that get wisdom, true wisdom.

2. That take care to keep it when they have got it; it is health, and wealth, and honour, and all, to the soul, and therefore he that keeps understanding, as he shows that he loves his own soul, so he shall certainly find good, all good. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, shall find the benefit and comfort of it in his own soul and shall be happy here and for ever.

9 A false witness shall not be unpunished;
and *he that* speaketh lies shall perish.

10 Delight is not seemly for a fool;
much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Note, 1. Pleasure and liberty ill become a fool: Delight is not seemly for such a one. A man that has not wisdom and grace has no right nor title to true joy, and therefore it is unseemly. It ill becomes those that do not delight in God to delight in any thing, nor how to manage themselves, and therefore they do but expose themselves. It becomes ungracious fools to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, not to laugh and be merry; rebukes are more proper for them than delights. Delight is seemly for a man of business, to refresh him when he is fatigued, but not for a fool, that lives an idle life and abuses

his recreations. The prosperity of fools discovers their folly and destroys them.

2. Power and honour ill become a man of a servile spirit. Nothing is more unseemly than for a servant to have rule over princes; it is absurd in itself, and very preposterous, for none are so insolent and intolerable as a beggar on horseback, a servant when he reigns, Pr 30:22. It is very unseemly for one that is a servant to sin and his lusts to rule over and oppress those that are God's freemen and made kings and priests to him.

11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger;
and *it is* his glory to pass over a transgression.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger: 1. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments: Discretion teaches us to defer our anger, to defer the admission of it till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light and weighed them in a just balance; and then to defer the prosecution of it till there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, "I would beat thee, but that I am angry." Give it time, and it will cool.

2. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's glory to pass over a transgression, to appear as if he did not see it (Ps 38:13), or, if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it and meditate no revenge.

12 The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion;
but his favor *is* as dew upon the grass.

This is to the same purport with what we had Pr 16:14,15, and the design of it is, 1. To make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their frowns and smiles. They are not like those of common persons; their frowns are very terrible and their smiles very comfortable, and therefore it concerns them to be very careful that they never frighten a good man from doing well with their frowns, nor ever give countenance to a wicked

man in doing ill with their smiles, for then they abuse their influence, Ro 13:3.

2. To make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes. Let them be restrained from all disloyalty by the consideration of the dreadful consequence of having the government against them; and let them be encouraged in all good services to the public by the hopes of the favour of their prince. Christ is a King whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion (Re 10:3) and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew, Ps 72:6.

13 A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father:
and the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.

It is an instance of the vanity of the world that we are liable to the greatest grief in those things wherein we promise ourselves the greatest comfort. It is as it proves. What greater temporal comfort can a man have than a good wife and good children? Yet, 1. A foolish son is a great affliction, and may make a man wish a thousand times he had been written childless. A son that will apply himself to no study or business, that will take no advice, that lives a lewd, loose, rakish life, and spends what he has extravagantly, games it away and wastes it in the excess of riot, or that is proud, foppish, and conceited, such a one is the grief of his father, because he is the disgrace, and is likely to be the ruin, of his family. He hates all his labour, when he sees to whom he must leave the fruit of it.

2. A cross peevish wife is as great an affliction: Her contentions are continual; every day, and every hour in the day, she finds some occasion to make herself and those about her uneasy. Those that are accustomed to chide never want something or other to chide at; but it is a continual dropping, that is, a continual vexation, as it is to have a house so much out of repair that it rains in and a man cannot lie dry in it. That man has an uncomfortable life, and has need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to enable him to bear his affliction and do his duty, who has a sot for his son and a scold for his wife.

14 House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers:

and a prudent wife *is* from the Lord.

Note, 1. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man--a wife that is prudent, in opposition to one that is contentious, Pr 18:13. For, though a wife that is continually finding fault may think it is her wit and wisdom to be so, it is really her folly; a prudent wife is meek and quiet, and makes the best of every thing. If a man has such a wife, let him not ascribe it to the wisdom of his own choice or his own management (for the wisest have been deceived both in and by a woman), but let him ascribe it to the goodness of God, who made him a help meet for him, and perhaps by some hits and turns of providence that seemed casual brought her to him. Every creature is what he makes it. Happy marriages, we are sure, are made in heaven; Abraham's servant prayed in the belief of this, Ge 24:12.

2. It is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favour, and about which the divine providence is in a more especial manner conversant. A good estate may be the inheritance of fathers, which, by the common direction of Providence, comes in course to a man; but no man has a good wife by descent or entail. Parents that are worldly, in disposing of their children, look no further than to match them to house and riches, but, if withal it be to a prudent wife, let God have the glory.

15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;
and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

See here the evil of a sluggish slothful disposition. 1. It stupefies men, and makes them senseless, and mindless of their own affairs, as they were cast into a deep sleep, dreaming much, but doing nothing. Slothful people doze away their time, bury their talents, live a useless life, and are the unprofitable burdens of the earth; for any service they do when they are awake they might as well be always asleep. Even their souls are idle and lulled asleep, their rational powers chilled and frozen.

2. It impoverishes men and brings them to want. Those that will not labour cannot expect to eat, but must suffer hunger:

An idle soul, one that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes no care or pains to work out his salvation, shall perish for want of that which is necessary to the life and happiness of the soul.

16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul;
but he that despiseth his ways shall die.

Here is, 1 The happiness of those that walk circumspectly. Those that make conscience of keeping the commandment in every thing, that live by rule, as becomes servants and patients, keep their own souls; they secure their present peace and future bliss, and provide every way well for themselves. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful.

2 The misery of those that live at large and never mind what they do: Those that despair their ways shall die, shall perish eternally; they are in the high road to ruin. With respect to those that are careless about the end of their ways, and never consider whither they are going, and about the rule of their ways, that will walk in the way of their hearts and after the course of the world (Ec 11:9), that never consider what they have done nor what they are concerned to do, but walk at all adventures (Le 26:21), right or wrong, it is all one to them--what can come of this but the greatest mischief?

17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord;
and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Here is, I The duty of charity described. It includes two things:-- 1. Compassion, which is the inward principle of charity in the heart; it is to have pity on the poor. Those that have not a penny for the poor, yet may have pity for them, a charitable concern and sympathy; and, if a man give all his goods to feed the poor and have not this charity in his heart, it is nothing, 1Co 13:3. We must draw out our souls to the hungry, Isa 58:10. 2. Bounty and liberality. We must not only pity the poor, but give, according to their necessity and our ability, Jam 2:15,16. That which he has given. Margin, His deed. It is charity to do for the poor, as well as to give; and

thus, if they have their limbs and senses, they may be charitable to one another.

II The encouragement of charity. 1. A very kind construction shall be put upon it. What is given to the poor, or done for them, God will place it to account as lent to him, lent upon interest (so the word signifies); he takes it kindly, as if it were done to himself, and he would have us take the comfort of it and to be as well pleased as ever any usurer was when he had let out a sum of money into good hands. 2. A very rich recompence shall be made for it: He will pay him again, in temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving.

18 Chasten thy son while there is hope, and
let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an ill temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity. 1. Do not say that it is all in good time to correct them; no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them check it immediately, before it gets head, and takes root, and is hardened into a habit: Chasten thy son while there is hope, for perhaps, if he be let alone awhile, he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easiest plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes accustomed to it.

2. Do not say that it is a pity to correct them, and that, because they cry and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find in your heart to do it. If the point can be gained without correction, well and good; but if you find, as it often proves, that your forgiving them once, upon a dissembled repentance and promise of amendment, does but embolden them to offend again, especially if it be a thing that is in itself sinful (as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing, or the like), in such a case put on resolution, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. It is better that he should cry under thy rod than under the sword of the

magistrate, or, which is more fearful, that of divine vengeance.

19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment:
for if thou deliver *him,* yet thou must do it again.

1. As we read this, it intimates, in short, that angry men never want woe. Those that are of strong, or rather headstrong, passions, commonly bring themselves and their families into trouble by vexatious suits and quarrels and the provocations they give; they are still smarting, in one instance or other, for their ungoverned heats; and, if their friends deliver them out of one trouble, they will quickly involve themselves in another, and they must do it again, all which troubles to themselves and others would be prevented if they would mortify their passions and get the rule of their own spirits.

2. It may as well be read, He that is of great wrath (meaning the child that is to be corrected and is impatient of rebuke, cries and makes a noise, even that wrath of his against the rod of correction) deserves to be punished; for, if thou deliver him for the sake of that, thou wilt be forced to punish him so much the more next time. A stomachful high-spirited child must be subdued betimes, or it will be the worse for it.

20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction,
that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Note, 1. It is well with those that are wise in their latter end, wise for their latter end, for their future state, wise for another world, that are found wise when their latter end comes, wise virgins, wise builders, wise stewards, that are wise at length, and understand the things that belong to their peace, before they be hidden from their eyes. A carnal worldling at his end shall be a fool (Jer 17:11), but godliness will prove wisdom at last.

2. Those that would be wise in their latter end must hear counsel and receive instruction, in their beginnings must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reproved, when they are young. Those that would be stored in winter must gather in summer.

21 *There are* many devices in a man's heart;

nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.

Here we have, 1. Men projecting. They keep their designs to themselves, but they cannot hide them from God; he knows the many devices that are in men's hearts,--devices against his counsels (as those, Ps 2:1-3,Mic 4:11),-- devices without his counsel (no regard had to his providence, as those Jam 4:13, this and the other they will do, and not take God along with them),--devices unlike God's counsels; men are wavering in their devices, and often absurd and unjust, but God's counsels are wise and holy, steady and uniform. 2. God overruling. Various men have various designs, according as their inclination or interest leads them, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand, whatever becomes of the devices of men. His counsel often breaks men's measures and baffles their devices; but their devices cannot in the least alter his counsel, not disturb the proceedings of it, nor put him upon new counsels, Isa 14:24,46:11. What a check does this give to politic designing men, who think they can outwit all mankind, that there is a God in heaven that laughs at them! Ps 2:4. What comfort does this speak to all God's people, that all God's purposes, which we are sure are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time!

22 The desire of a man *is* his kindness:
and a poor man *is* better than a liar.

Note, 1 The honour of doing good is what we may laudably be ambitious of. It cannot but be the desire of man, if he have any spark of virtue in him, to be kind; one would not covet an estate for any thing so much as thereby to be put into a capacity of relieving the poor and obliging our friends.

2. It is far better to have a heart to do good and want ability for it than have ability for it and want a heart to it: The desire of a man to be kind, and charitable, and generous, is his kindness, and shall be so construed; both God and man will accept his good-will, according to what he has, and will not expect more. A poor man, who wishes you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing to be kind with, is better than a liar, than a rich man who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but, when it comes to the setting to, will do nothing. The character of the men of low

degree, that they are vanity, from whom nothing is expected, is better than that of men of high degree, that they are a lie, they deceive those whose expectations they raised.

23 The fear of the Lord *tendeth* to life: and
he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he
shall not be visited with evil.

See what those that get by it that live in the fear of God, and always make conscience of their duty to him.

1. Safety: They shall not be visited with evil; they may be visited with sickness or other afflictions, but there shall be no evil in them, nothing to hurt them, because nothing to separate them from the love of God, or hurt to the soul.

2. Satisfaction: They shall abide satisfied; they shall have those comforts which are satisfying, and shall have a constant contentment and complacency in them. It is a satisfaction which will abide, whereas all the satisfactions of sense are transient and soon gone. Satur pernoctabit, non cubabit incoenatus--He shall not go supperless to bed; he shall have that which will make him easy and be an entertainment to him in his silent and solitary hours, Ps 16:6,7.

3. True and complete happiness. Serious godliness has a direct tendency to life; to all good, to eternal life; it is the sure and ready way to it; there is something in the nature of it fitting men for heaven and so leading them to it.

24 A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom,
and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

A sluggard is here exposed as a fool, for, 1. All his care is to save himself from labour and cold. See his posture: He hides his hand in his bosom, pretends he is lame and cannot work; his hands are cold, and he must warm them in his bosom; and, when they are warm there, he must keep them so. He hugs himself in his own ease and is resolved against labour and hardship. Let those work that love it; for his part he thinks there is no such fine life as sitting still and doing nothing.

2. He will not be at the pains to feed himself, an elegant hyperbole; as we say, A man is so lazy that he would not shake fire off him, so here, He cannot find in his heart to take his hand out of his bosom, no, not to put meat into his own mouth. If the law be so that those that will not labour must not eat, he will rather starve than stir. Thus his sin is his punishment, and therefore is egregious folly.

25 Smite a scorner,
and the simple will beware:
and reprove one that hath understanding,
and he will understand knowledge.

Note, 1 The punishment of scorners will be a means of good to others. When men are so hardened in wickedness that they will not themselves be wrought upon by the severe methods that are used to reclaim and reform them, yet such methods must be used for the sake of others, that they may hear and fear, De 19:20. If the scorner will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being inveterate, yet the simple will beware of venturing upon the sin which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection.

2 The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves. They need not be smitten; a word to the wise is enough. Do but reprove one that has understanding and he will so far understand himself and his own interest that he will understand knowledge by it, and not miss it again through ignorance and inadvertency when once he has been told of it; so kindly does he take reproof and so wisely improve it.

26 He that wasteth *his* father, *and* chaseth away *his* mother, *is* a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

Here is, 1 The sin of a prodigal son. Besides the wrong he does to himself, he is injurious to his good parents, and basely ungrateful to those that were instruments of his being and have taken so much care and pains about him,

which is a great aggravation of his sin and renders it exceedingly sinful in the eyes of God and man: He wastes is father, wastes his estate which he should have to support him in his old age, wastes his spirits, and breaks his heart, and brings his gray head with sorrow to the grave. He chases away his mother, alienates her affections from him, which cannot be done without a great deal of regret and uneasiness to her; he makes her weary of the house, with his rudeness and insolence, and glad to retire for a little quietness; and, when he has spent all, he turns her out of doors. 2 The shame of a prodigal son. It is a shame to himself that he should be so brutish and unnatural. He makes himself odious to all mankind. It is a shame to his parents and family, who are reflected upon, though, perhaps, without just cause, for teaching him no better, or being in some way wanting to him.

27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction
that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

This is a good caution to those that have had a good education to take heed of hearkening to those who, under pretence of instructing them, draw them off from those good principles under the influence of which they were trained up. Observe,

1. There is that which seems designed for instruction, but really tends to the destruction of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them free thoughts and a fashionable conversation, how to palliate the sins they have a mind to and stop the mouth of their own consciences, how to get clear of the restraints of their education and to set up for wits and beaux. This is the instruction which causes to err from the forms of sound words, which should be held fast in faith and love.

2. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder does to the charms that are designed to ensnare her. "Dread hearing such talk as tends top instil loose principles into the mind; and, if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard

enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more of the evil communication which corrupts good manners."

28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment:
and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil.

1. They set that at defiance which would deter and detain them from sin: An ungodly witness is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or an ungodly witness is one that profanely and atheistically witnesses against religion and godliness, whose instructions seduce from the words of knowledge (Pr 18:27); such a one scorns judgment, laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, Job 15:26. Tell him of law and equity, that the scriptures and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day; he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it.

2. They are greedy, and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin: The mouth of the wicked eagerly devours iniquity, drinks it in like water, Job 15:16.

29 Judgments are prepared for scorners,
and stripes for the back of fools.

Note, 1. Scorners are fools. Those that ridicule things sacred and serious do but make themselves ridiculous. Their folly shall be manifest unto all men.

2. Those that scorn judgments cannot escape them, Pr 18:28. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect; those that devour iniquity swallow the hook with the bait. The civil magistrate has judgments prepared for scorners, for otherwise he would bear the sword in vain; but if he be remiss, and connive at sin, yet God's judgments slumber not; they are prepared, Mt 25:41.

Proverbs-20

1 Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging:
and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Here is,

1 The mischief of drunkenness: Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging. It is so to the sinner himself; it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promises him that satisfaction which it can never give him. It smiles upon him at first, but at the last it bites. In reflection upon it, it rages in his conscience. It is raging in the body, puts the humours into a ferment. When the wine is in the wit is out, and then the man, according as his natural temper is, either mocks like a fool or rages like a madman. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society, for it makes them abusive with their tongues and outrageous in their passions, Pr 23:29.

2 The folly of drunkards is easily inferred thence. He that is deceived thereby, that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, is not wise; he shows that he has no right sense or consideration of things; and not only so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom; for it is a sin that infatuates and besots men, and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is likely to be.

2 The fear of a king *is* as the roaring of a lion:
whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth *against* his own soul.

See here,

1. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those they are angry with. Their fear, with which (especially when they are absolute and their will is a law) they keep their subjects in awe, is as the roaring of a lion, which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon, and makes them tremble so that they cannot escape from him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love rule like God

himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. Oderint, dum metuant--Let them hate, provided they fear.

2. How unwise therefore those are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and so provoke them to anger. They sin against their own lives. Much more do those do so that provoke the King of kings to anger. Nemo me impune lacesset--No one shall provoke me with impunity.

3 *It is* an honor for a man to cease from strife:
but every fool will be meddling.

This is designed to rectify men's mistakes concerning strife.

1. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels; whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right, and will not abate an ace of either, that prescribes, and imposes, and gives law, to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself.

2. Men think, when they are engaged in quarrels, that it would be a shame to them to go back and let fall the weapon; whereas really it is an honour for a man to cease from strife, an honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and to be friends with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of spirit, to show the command he has of himself by ceasing from strife, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands, for peace-sake, as Abraham, the better man, Ge 13:8.

4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold;
therefore shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing.

See here the evil of slothfulness and the love of ease.

1. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from ploughing and sowing when the season is: The sluggard has ground to occupy, and has ability for it; he can plough, but

he will not; some excuse or other he has to shift it off, but the true reason is that it is cold weather. Though ploughing time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too cold for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggish who, in the way of their business, cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of ploughing and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty; but good soldiers must endure hardness.

2. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports: Those that will not plough in seed-time cannot expect to reap in harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour of ploughing must submit to the shame of begging. They shall beg in harvest, and yet have nothing; no, not then when there is great plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may, in justice, not relieve them; they deserve to be left to starve. Those that would not provide oil in their vessels begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

5 Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water;
but a man of understanding will draw it out.

A man's wisdom is here said to be of use to him for the pumping of other people, and diving into them,

1. To get the knowledge of them. Though men's counsels and designs are ever so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as deep water which one cannot fathom, yet there are those who by sly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get out of them both what they have done and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard.

2. To get knowledge by them. Some are very able and fit to give counsel, having an excellent faculty of cleaving a hair,

hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently, but they are modest, and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loth to come out. In such a case a man of understanding will draw it out, as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the conversation of wise men for want of the art of being inquisitive.

6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness:
but a faithful man who can find?

Note, 1. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal. Many a man will call himself a man of mercy, will boast what good he has done and what good he designs to do, or, at least, what an affection he has to well-doing. Most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it and make a mighty matter of it.

2. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal, that have done and will do more than either they speak of or care to hear spoken of, that will be true friends in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

7 The just *man* walketh in his integrity:
his children *are* blessed after him.

It is here observed to the honour of a good man, 1. That he does well for himself. He has a certain rule, which with an even steady hand he governs himself by: He walks in his integrity; he keeps good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for it is his rejoicing. He is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do or reflecting on what he has done, which those are liable to that walk in deceit. 2. That he does well for his family: His children are blessed after him, and fare the better for his sake. God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment
scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

Here is, 1 The character of a good governor: He is a king that deserves to be called so who sits in the throne, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease, and take state upon him, and

oblige men to keep their distance, but as a throne of judgment, that he may do justice, give redress to the injured and punish the injurious, who makes his business his delight and loves no pleasure comparably to it, who does not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself and sees with his own eyes as much as may be, 1Ki 10:9.

2 The happy effect of a good government. The presence of the prince goes far towards the putting of wickedness out of countenance; if he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe and restrained from doing wrong. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought, what good may they do and what evil may they prevent!

9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin?

This question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas! Who can say, "I am sinless?" Observe, 1. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions--all, one as well as another. Here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin. Adam could say so in innocency, and saints can say so in heaven, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be cannot, nay, and those that are really good will not, dare not, say this.

2. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say, We have made our hearts clean. Though we can say, through grace, "We are cleaner than we have been," yet we cannot say, "We are clean and pure from all remainders of sin." Or, though we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say, "Our hearts are clean." Or, though we are washed and cleansed, yet we cannot say, "We ourselves made our own hearts clean;" it was the work of the Spirit. Or, though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say, "We are pure from our sin, the sin that easily besets us, the body of death which Paul complained of," Ro 7:24.

10 Divers weights, *and* divers measures,
both of them *are* alike abomination to the Lord.

See here, 1 The various arts of deceiving that men have, all which evils the love of money is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had divers weights, an under-weight for what they paid and an over-weight for what they received; in delivering out and taking in goods they had divers measures, a scanty measure to sell by and a large measure to buy by. This was done wrong with plot and contrivance, and under colour of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade.

2 The displeasure of God against them. Whether they be about the money or the goods, in the buyer or in the seller, they are all alike an abomination to the Lord. He will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got. He hates those that thus break the common faith by which justice is maintained, and will be the avenger of all such.

11 Even a child is known by his doings,
whether his work *be* pure,
and whether *it be* right.

The tree is known by its fruits, a man by his doings, even a young tree by its first fruits, a child by his childish things, whether his work be clean only, appearing good (the word is used Pr 16:2), or whether it be right, that is, really good. This intimates, 1. That children will discover themselves. One may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling and concealing their bent as grown people have.

2. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both manage and dispose of them accordingly, drive the nail that will go and draw out that which goes amiss. Wisdom is herein profitable to direct.

12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye,

the Lord hath made even both of them.

Note, 1. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that formed the eye and planted the ear (Ps 94:9), and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both; to his providence we owe it that our eyes are seeing eyes and our ears hearing ears. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and must particularly own God's goodness in them. 2. God is the God of grace. It is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, they eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty:
open thine eyes, *and* thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Note, 1. Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessaries, which should have been gotten by honest labour. "Therefore, though thou must sleep (nature requires it), yet love not sleep, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for further work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise." We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it and otherwise they shall have no good of them. Those that love sleep are likely to come to poverty, not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless careless disposition, and are still half asleep, never well awake.

2. Those that stir up themselves to their business may expect to have conveniences: "Open thy eyes, awake and shake off sleep, see how far in the day it is, how thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee! And, when thou art awake, look up, look to thy advantages, and do not let slip thy opportunities; apply thy mind closely to thy business and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage: Open thy eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread; if thou dost not grow rich, yet though shalt have enough, and that is as good as a feast."

14 *It is* naught, *it is* naught, saith the buyer:

but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

See here 1. What arts men use to get a good bargain and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind for the commodity, when perhaps they cannot go without it (there may be prudence in that), but they vilify and run down that which yet they know to be of value; they cry, "It is naught, it is naught; it has this and the other fault, or perhaps may have; it is not good of the sort; and it is too dear; we can have better and cheaper elsewhere, or have bought better and cheaper." This is the common way of dealing; and after all, it may be, they know the contrary of what they affirm; but the buyer, who may think he has no other way of being even with the seller, does as extravagantly commend his goods and justify the price he sets on them, and so there is a fault on both sides; whereas the bargain would be made every jot as well if both buyer and seller would be modest and speak as they think.

2. What pride and pleasure men take in a good bargain when they have got it, though therein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain. When the buyer has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer (as many poor tradesmen are forced to do--small profit is better than none), then he goes his way, and boasts what excellent goods he has got at his own price, and takes it as an affront and a reflection upon his judgment if any body disparages his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the good better than the seller himself did and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings and proud of their tricks; whereas a fraud and a lie are what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained ever so much by them.

15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies:
but the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.

The lips of knowledge (a good understanding to guide the lips and a good elocution to diffuse the knowledge) are to be preferred far before gold, and pearl, and rubies; for,

1. They are more rare in themselves, more scarce and hard to be got. There is gold in many a man's pocket that has no grace

in his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold (1Ki 10:21) and abundance of rubies; every body wore them; they were to be bought in every town. But wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel; few have it so as to do good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants.

2. They are more enriching to us and more adorning. They make us rich towards God, rich in good works, 1Ti 2:9,10. Most people are fond of gold, and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels; but he that has the lips of knowledge despises these, because he knows and possesses better things.

16 Take his garment that is surety *for* a stranger:
and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of that are ruining their own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted with any good security:--

1. Those that will be bound for any body that will ask them, that entangle themselves in rash suretiship to oblige their idle companions; they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long; these waste by wholesale.

2. Those that are in league with abandoned women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them. They will be beggars in a little time; never give them credit without good pledge. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men to enrich themselves.

17 Bread of deceit *is* sweet to a man;
but afterward his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Note, 1. Sin may possibly be pleasant in the commission: Bread of deceit, wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be sweet to a man, and the more sweet for its being ill-gotten, such pleasure does the carnal mind take in the success of its wicked projects. All the pleasures and profits of sin are bread of deceit. They are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit; and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. For a time, however, they are rolled under

the tongue as a sweet morsel, and the sinner blesses himself in them. But,

2. It will be bitter in reflection. Afterwards the sinner's mouth shall be filled with gravel. When his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself cheated, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for his sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrow. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

18 *Every* purpose is established by counsel:
and with good advice make war.

Note, 1. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with ourselves at least, and, in matters of moment, with our friends, too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe the guidance of this eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas what is done hastily and with precipitation is repented of at leisure. Take time, and you will have done the sooner. Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum est semel--A final decision should be preceded by mature deliberation.

2. It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war. Consider, and take advice, whether the war should be begun or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat (Lu 14:31); and, when it is begun, consider how and by what arts it may be prosecuted, for management is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war, and therefore must be done with good advice, Pr 25:8. The rule among the Romans was nec sequi bellum, nec fugere--neither to urge war nor yet to shun it.Note,

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19 He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets:
therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with:--

1. Tale-bearers, though they are commonly flatterers, and by fair speeches insinuate themselves into men's acquaintance. Those are unprincipled people that go about carrying stories, that make mischief among neighbours and relations, that sow in the minds of people jealousies of their governors, of their ministers, and of one another, that reveal secrets which they are entrusted with or which by unfair means they come to the knowledge of, under pretence of guessing at men's thoughts and intentions, tell that of them which is really false. "Be not familiar with such; do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure that they will betray your secrets too and tell tales of you."

2. Flatterers, for they are commonly tale-bearers. If a man fawn upon you, compliment and commend you, suspect him

to have some design upon you, and stand upon your guard; he would pick that out of you which will serve him to make a story of to somebody else to your prejudice; therefore meddle not with him that flatters with his lips. Those too dearly love, and too dearly buy, their own praise, that will put confidence in a man and trust him with a secret or business because he flatters them.

20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother,
his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Here is, 1. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees. He began with despising his father and mother, slighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and raging at their rebukes, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impudence and impiety as to curse them, to give them scurrilous and opprobrious language, and to wish mischief to those that were instruments of his being and have taken so much care and pains about him, and this in defiance of God and his law, which had made this a capital crime (Ex 21:17,Mt 15:4), and in violation of all the bonds of duty, natural affection, and gratitude.

2. An undutiful child become very miserable at last: His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness; all his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation. Let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind, no, nor to prosper in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise of the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut off and his posterity be a curse to him. And it will be his eternal ruin; the lamp of his happiness shall be put out in the blackness of darkness (so the word is), even that which is for ever, Jude 1:13,Mt 22:13.

21 An inheritance *may be* gotten hastily at the beginning;
but the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Note, 1. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. There are those that will be rich, by right or wrong, who make no conscience of what they say or do if they can but get money by it, who, when it is in their power, will cheat their own father, and who sordidly spare and hoard up what

they get, grudging themselves and their families food convenient and thinking all lost but what they buy land with or put out to interest. By such ways as these a man may grow rich, may grow very rich, in a little time, at his first setting out.

2. An estate that is suddenly raised is often as suddenly ruined. It was raised hastily, but, not being raised honestly, it proves soon ripe and soon rotten: The end thereof shall not be blessed of God, and, if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable nor of any continuance; so that he who got it at the end will be a fool. He had better have taken time and built firmly.

22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil;
but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee.

Those that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them, affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briers. Now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us.

1. We must not avenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of revenge, or design it: "Say not thou, no, not in thy heart, I will recompense evil for evil. Do not please thyself with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge, or hope for it, much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh and the resentment of it most deep. Never say that thou wilt do a think which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in, and that thou canst not do in mediating revenge."

2. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong in such a way and manner as he thinks fit and in his own due time: "Wait on the Lord, and attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he does not say that he will punish him that has injured thee (instead of desiring that thou must forgive him and pray for him), but he will save thee, and that is enough. He will protect thee,

so that thy passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another; nay, he will recompense good to thee, to balance thy trouble and encourage thy patience," as David hoped, when Shimei cursed him, 2Sa 16:12.

23 Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the Lord;
and a false balance *is* not good.

24 Man's goings *are* of the Lord;
how can a man then understand his own way?

We are here taught that in all our affairs,

1. We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God. All our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us which it is the will of God that it should be. Our enterprises succeed, not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a strong man (so the word signifies) are of the Lord, for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong.

2. We have no foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them: How can a man understand his own way? How can he tell what will befal him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret, and therefore how can he of himself contrive what to do without divine direction? We so little understand our own way that we know not what is good for ourselves, and therefore we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the guidance and submit to the disposal of Providence.

25 *It is* a snare to the man *who* devoureth *that which is* holy,
and after vows to make inquiry.

Two things, by which God is greatly affronted, men are here said to be ensnared by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and ruin at length:--

1. Sacrilege, men's alienating holy things and converting them to their own use, which is here called devouring

them. What is devoted in any way to the service and honour of God, for the support of religion and divine worship or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those that directly or indirectly embezzle it, or defeat the purpose for which it was given, will have a great deal to answer for. Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings? Mal 3:8. Those that hurry over religious offices (their praying and preaching) and huddle them up in haste, as being impatient to get done, may be said to devour that which is holy.

2. Covenant-breaking. It is a snare to a man, after he has made vows to God, to enquire how he may evade them or get dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions were ambiguous, that was his fault; he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if it be tender) in great perplexities, if he be to enquire concerning them afterwards (Ec 5:6); for, when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, Ac 5:4.

26 A wise king scattereth the wicked,
and bringeth the wheel over them.

See here, 1. What is the business of magistrates. They are to be a terror to evil-doers. They must scatter the wicked, who are linked in confederacies to assist and embolden one another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this but by bringing the wheel over them, that is, putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debauched and debauching.

2. What is the qualification of magistrates, which is necessary in order to do this. They have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, who is both religious and discreet, that is likely to effect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

27 The spirit of man *is* the candle of the Lord,
searching all the inward parts of the belly.

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man. 1. It is a divine light; it is the candle of the Lord, a candle of his lighting, for it is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us understanding. He forms the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the Father of lights. 2. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness (1Co 2:11); it searches into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praises what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judges of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power, of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed and to keep void of offence.

28 Mercy and truth preserve the king:
and his throne is upholden by mercy.

Here we have, 1 The virtues of a good king. Those are mercy and truth, especially mercy, for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and by all acts of compassion gain the affections of his people. Mercy and truth are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called gods.

2 The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person and support his government, will make him easy and safe, beloved by his own people and feared by his enemies, if it be possible that he should have any.

29 The glory of young men *is* their strength:
and the beauty of old men *is* the gray head.

This shows that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be, according to their capacities, serviceable to the public, and neither of them despise nor envy the other.

1. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. The glory of young men is their strength, provided they use it well (in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts), and that they be not proud of it nor trust to it.

2. Let not young people despise the old, for they are grave, and fit for counsel, and, though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores--Labour is for the young, honour for the aged. God has put honour upon the old man; for his gray head is his beauty. See Da 7:9.

30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil:
so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Note, 1. Many need severe rebukes. Some children are so obstinate that their parents can do no good with them without sharp correction; some criminals must feel the rigour of the law and public justice; gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions.

2. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as corrosives contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The rod drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanses away the evil there. 3. Frequently those that most need severe rebukes can worse bear them. Such is the corruption of nature that men are as loth to be rebuked sharply for their sins as to be beaten till their bones ache. Correction is grievous to him that forsakes the way, and yet it is good for him, Heb 12:11.

Proverbs-21

1 The king's heart *is* in the hand of the Lord,
as the rivers of water:
he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Note, 1. Even the hearts of men are in God's hand, and not only their goings, as he had said, Pr 20:24. God can change men's minds, can, by a powerful insensible operation under their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to, as the husbandman, by canals and gutters, turns the water through his grounds as he pleases, which does not alter the nature of the water, nor put any force upon it, any more than God's providence does upon the native freedom of man's will, but directs the course of it to serve his own purpose.

2. Even kings' hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The hearts of kings are unsearchable to us, much more unmanageable by us; as they have their arcana imperii--state secrets, so that they have great prerogatives of their crown; but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government; he puts things into their hearts, Re 17:17,Ezr 7:27.

2 Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes:
but the Lord pondereth the hearts.

Note, 1. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own character, as if there was nothing amiss in it: Every way of a man, even his by-way, is right in his own eyes. The proud heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter, and in making that appear right to itself which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience.

2. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth. Whatever our judgment is concerning

ourselves, the Lord ponders the heart. God looks at the heart, and judges of men according to that, of their actions according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours is of that which we ponder most, and more so; he weighs it in an unerring balance, Pr 16:2.

3 To do justice and judgment
is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Here, 1. It is implied that many deceive themselves with a conceit that, if they offer sacrifice, that will excuse them from doing justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way seem right, Pr 21:2. We have fasted, Isa 58:3. I have peace-offerings with me, Pr 7:14.

2. It is plainly declared that living a good life (doing justly and loving mercy) is more pleasing to God than the most pompous and expensive instances of devotion. Sacrifices were of divine institution, and were acceptable to God if they were offered in faith and with repentance, otherwise not, Isa 1:11, &c. But even then moral duties were preferred before them (1Sa 15:22), which intimates that their excellency was not innate nor the obligation to them perpetual, Mic 6:6-8. Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbour; and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, Mk 12:33.

4 A high look, and a proud heart,
and the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.

This may be taken as showing us, 1 The marks of a wicked man. He that has a high look and a proud heart, that carries himself insolently and scornfully towards both God and man, and that is always ploughing and plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, is indeed a wicked man. The light of the wicked is sin. Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory and joy, and the business of wicked men.

2 The miseries of wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs, and most elaborate contrivances and projects, are sin to him; he contracts guilt in them and so prepares trouble for himself. The very business of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin; so Bishop Patrick. They do all to serve their lusts, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore their ploughing is sin, and no marvel when their sacrificing is so, Pr 15:8.

5 The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness;
but of every one *that is* hasty only to want.

Here is, 1 The way to be rich. If we would live plentifully and comfortably in the world, we must be diligent in our business, and not shrink from the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely, improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which, we say, goes far in a day. With diligence there must be contrivance. The thoughts of the diligent are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Seest thou a man thus prudent and diligent? He will have enough to live on.

2 The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think, that are greedy of gain, by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices or unwise projects, are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

This shows the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and over-reaching those with whom they deal, by false-witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts, of those that make no scruples of lying when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but, 1. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect. It is a vanity tossed to and fro; it will be

disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be tossed to and fro by their own consciences, and by the censures of men; let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

2. They will meet with destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices they are really seeking death; they lay themselves open to the envy and ill-will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God, by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves and sink them to hell.

7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them;
because they refuse to do judgment.

See here, 1 The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying (Pr 21:6) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you might as well pick a man's pocket as impose upon him by a lie in making a bargain, which he had no fence against but by not believing you; and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say that he might choose whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to all men.

2 The cause of injustice. Men refuse to do judgment; they will not render to all their due, but withhold it, and omissions make way for commissions; they come at length to robbery itself. Those that refuse to do justice will choose to do wrong.

3. The effects of injustice; it will return upon the sinner's own head. The robbery of the wicked will terrify them (so some); their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement, will cut them, will saw them asunder (so others); it will destroy them here and for ever, therefore he had said (Pr 21:6), They seek death.

8 The way of man *is* froward and strange:
but *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

This shows that as men are so is their way.

1. Evil men have evil ways. If the man be froward, his way also is strange; and this is the way of most men, such is the general corruption of mankind. They have all gone aside (Ps 14:2,3); all flesh have perverted their way. But the froward man, the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he does, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty. It is strange, for you know not where to find him nor when you have him; it is strange, for it is alienated from all good and estranges men from God and his favour. It is what he behold afar off, and so do all honest men.

2. Men that are pure are proved to be such by their work, for it is right, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostasy is froward and strange; but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, of which there is here and there one, their work is right, as Noah's was in the old world, Ge 7:1.

9 *It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop,
than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

See here, 1. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling scolding woman for his wife, who upon every occasion, and often upon no occasion, breaks out into a passion, and chides either him or those about her, is fretful to herself and furious to her children and servants, and, in both, vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will embitter the comfort of it to him--a house of society (so the word is), in which a man may be sociable, and entertain his friends; this will make both him and his house unsociable, and unfit for enjoyments of true friendship. It makes a man ashamed of his choice and his management, and disturbs his company.

2. What many a man is forced to do under such an affliction. He cannot keep up his authority. He finds it to no purpose to contradict the most unreasonable passion, for it is unruly and rages so much the more; and his wisdom and grace will not suffer him to render railing for railing, nor his conjugal

affection to use any severity, and therefore he finds it his best way to retire into a corner of the house-top, and sit alone there, out of the hearing of her clamour; and if he employ himself well there, as he may do, it is the wisest course he can take. Better do so than quit the house, and go into bad company, for diversion, as many, who, like Adam, make their wife's sin the excuse of their own.

10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil:
his neighbor findeth no favor in his eyes.

See here the character of a very wicked man.

1 The strong inclination he has to do mischief. His very soul desires evil, desires that evil may be done and that he may have the pleasure, not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it. The root of wickedness lies in the soul; the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives and brings forth sin.

2 The strong aversion he has to do good: His neighbour, his friend, his nearest relation, finds no favour in his eyes, cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And, when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon, he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.

11 When the scorner is punished,
the simple is made wise:
and when the wise is instructed,
he receiveth knowledge.

12 The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked:
but God overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

1. As we read this verse, it shows why good men, when they come to understand things aright, will not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. When they see the house of the wicked, how full it is perhaps of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they wisely consider it, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, when they see God overthrowing the wicked for their wickedness, that there is a curse upon their habitation

which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them, or pity them, than to fear or envy them.

2. Some give another sense of it: The righteous man (the judge or magistrate, that is entrusted with the execution of justice, and the preservation of public peace) examines the house of the wicked, searches it for arms or for stolen goods, makes a diligent enquiry concerning his family and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power overthrow the wicked for their wickedness and prevent their doing any further mischief, that he may fire the nests where the birds of prey are harboured or the unclean birds.

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor,
he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Here we have the description and doom of an uncharitable man. 1. His description: He stops his ears at the cry of the poor, at the cry of their wants and miseries (he resolves to take no cognizance of them), at the cry of their requests and supplications--he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing, turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him, or, if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not need them, nor be moved by their complaints, no be prevailed with by their importunities; he shuts up the bowels of his compassion, and that is equivalent to the stopping of his ears, Ac 7:57.

2. His doom. He shall himself be reduced to straits, which will make him cry, and then he shall not be heard. Men will not hear him, but reward him as he has rewarded others. God will not hear him; for he that showed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy (Jam 2:13), and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to the prayers of those who are deaf to the cries of the poor, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, Ex 22:23.

14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger:
and a reward in the bosom, strong wrath.

Here is, 1 The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing is more violent than anger. O the force of strong wrath! And yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath when it seemed implacable, and disarm the keenest and most passionate resentments. Covetousness is commonly a master-sin and has the command of other lusts. Pecuniæ obediunt omnia--Money commands all things. Thus Jacob pacified Esau and Abigail David.

2 The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be a gift in secret and a reward in the bosom, for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended with; but, if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor boast of the presents he sends; but, if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

15 *It is* joy to the just to do judgment:
but destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

Note, 1. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men both to see justice administered by the government they live under, right taking place and iniquity suppressed, and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is. They no only do justice, but do it with pleasure, not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.

2. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness. It is destruction to them; as it is also a vexation to them to be forced, either for the support of their credit or for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is, There is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding
shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Here is, 1 The sinner upon his ramble: He wanders out of the way of understanding, and when once he has left that good way he wanders endlessly. The way of religion is the way of understanding; those that are not truly pious are not truly intelligent; those that wander out of this way break the hedge which God has set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep.

2 The sinner at his rest, or rather his ruin: He shall remain (quiescet--he shall rest, but not in pace--in peace) in the congregation of the giants, the sinners of the old world, that were swept away by the deluge; to that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or in the congregation of the damned, that are under the power of the second death. There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that those shall remain, remain for ever, who are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

17 He that loveth pleasure *shall be* a poor man:
he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Here is an argument against a voluptuous luxurious life, taken from the ruin it brings upon men's temporal interests. Here is

1 The description of an epicure: He loves pleasure. God allows us to use the delights of sense soberly and temperately, wine to make glad the heart and put vigour into the spirits, and oil to make the face to shine and beautify the countenance; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness, is impatient of every thing that crosses him in his pleasures, relishes these as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste for spiritual delights, he is an epicure, 2Ti 3:4.

2 The punishment of an epicure in this world: He shall be a poor man; for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at great expense, and there are instances of those who want necessaries, and live upon alms, who once could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a beau becomes a beggar.

18 The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous,
and the transgressor for the upright.

This intimates, 1. What should be done by the justice of men: The wicked, that are the troublers of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments which otherwise will be inflicted and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus when Achan was stoned he was a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel; and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David.

2. What is often done by the providence of God: The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead, and so seems as if he were a ransom for him, Pr 11:8. God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off than abandon his own people. I will give men for thee, Isa 43:3,4.

19 *It is* better to dwell in the wilderness,
than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Note, 1. Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness that cannot dwell in peace and love. Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union.

2. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion, and yet, if she be peevish and provoking, it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a

wilderness than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours. See Pr 21:9.

20 *There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise;
but a foolish man spendeth it up.

Note, 1. Those that are wise will increase what they have and live plentifully; their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expenses to their income and to lay up for hereafter; so that there is a treasure of things to be desired, and as much as needs be desired, a good stock of all things convenient, laid up in season, and particularly of oil, one of the staple commodities of Canaan, De 8:8. This is in the habitation, or cottage, of the wise; and it is better to have an old-fashioned house, and have it well furnished, than a fine modern one, with sorry housekeeping. God blesses the endeavors of the wise and then their houses are replenished.

2. Those that are foolish will misspend what they have upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they have to nothing. Those manage wretchedly that are in haste to spend what they had, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend what their wise parents have laid up. One sinner destroys much good, as the prodigal son.

21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy
findeth life, righteousness, and honor.

See here, 1. What it is to make religion our business; it is to follow after righteousness and mercy, not to content ourselves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains, as those that are pressing forward and in fear of coming short. We must both do justly and love mercy, and must proceed and persevere therein; and, though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it and follow after it.

2. What will be the advantage of doing so: Those that do follow after righteousness shall find righteousness; God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of doing it; those that make conscience of being just to others shall have the pleasure and comfort of doing

it; those that make conscience of being just to others shall be justly dealt with by others and others shall be kind to them. The Jews followed after righteousness, and did not find it, because they sought amiss, Ro 9:31. Otherwise, Seek and you shall find, and with it shall find both life and honour, everlasting life and honour, the crown of righteousness.

22 A wise *man* scaleth the city of the mighty,
and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Note, 1. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. The city of the mighty thinks itself impregnable, and therefore its strength is the confidence thereof, what it boasts of and trust in, bidding defiance to danger.

2. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, often perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength, by their wisdom. Good conduct will go far even against great force; and a stratagem, well managed, may effectually scale the city of the mighty and cast down the strength it had such a confidence in. A wise man will gain upon the affections of people and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest than that obtained by strength of arms. Those that understand their interest will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue,
keepeth his soul from troubles.

Note, 1. It is our great concern to keep our souls from straits, being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of ourselves and that our souls may be in frame for the service of God.

2. Those that would keep their souls must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must keep the mouth by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must

keep the tongue also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs men into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin; keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

24 Proud *and* haughty scorner *is* his name,
who dealeth in proud wrath.

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness. 1. It exposes men to sin; it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of proud wrath. They are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men is proud wrath. Men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed or contradicted, but they are out of humour, nay, in a heat, immediately. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent towards those above them and imperious towards all about them. Only by pride comes all this.

2. It exposes men to shame. They get a bad name by it, and every one calls them proud and haughty scorners, and therefore nobody cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little and the credit of their profession, which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

25 The desire of the slothful killeth him;
for his hands refuse to labor.

Here we have, 1 The miseries of the slothful, whose hands refuse to labour in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood. They are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers itself, to which they might lay their hands and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves, see Pr 26:16. Soul, take thy ease. But really they are enemies to themselves; for, besides that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them. Though their hands

refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour. Their desires are impetuous and insatiable; they covet greedily all the day long, and cry, Give, give; they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any body else.

Now these desires kill them; they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to death, and perhaps put them upon such dangerous courses for the satisfying of their craving lusts as hasten them to an untimely end. Many that must have money with which to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires towards that which would be the happiness of their souls, those desires kill them, will aggravate their condemnation and be witnesses against them that were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but refused to be at the pains that were necessary to the obtaining of them.

2 The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the further satisfaction of doing good to others. The slothful are always craving and gaping to receive, but the righteous are always full and contriving to give; and it is more blessed to give than to receive. They give and spare not, give liberally and upbraid not; they give a portion to seven and also to eight, and do not spare for fear of wanting.

26 He coveteth greedily all the day long:
but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination:
how much more, *when* he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Sacrifices were of divine institution; and when they were offered in faith, and with repentance and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them and well-pleased in them. But they were often not only unacceptable, but an abomination, to God, and he declared so, which was an

indication both that they were not required for their own sakes and that there were better things, and for effectual, in reserve, when sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an abomination,

1. When they were brought by wicked men, who did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering. Even wicked men may be found in the external performances of religious worship. Many can freely give God their beasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts; the Pharisees gave alms. But when the person is an abomination, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so; even when he brings it diligently; so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God (Ps 50:8), yet they are an abomination to him.

2. Much more when they were brought with wicked minds, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to, their wickedness, as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees' long prayers. When men make a show of devotion, that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design, when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended, then especially the performance is an abomination, Isa 66:5.

28 A false witness shall perish:
but the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

Here is, 1 The doom of a false witness. He who, for favour to one side or malice to the other, gives in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which he knows to be false, or at least does not know to be true, if it be discovered, his reputation will be ruined. A man may tell a lie perhaps in his haste; but he that gives a false testimony does it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot but be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of man's credit. But, though he should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

2 The praise of him that is conscientious: He who hears (that is, obeys) the command of God, which is to speak every man truth with his neighbour, he who testifies nothing but what he has heard and knows to be true, speaks constantly (that is, consistently with himself); he is always in the same story; he speaks in finem--to the end; people will give credit to him and hear him out; he speaks unto victory; he carries the cause, which the false witness shall lose; he shall speak to eternity. What is true is true eternally. The lip of truth is established for ever.

29 A wicked man hardeneth his face:
but *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

Here is, 1 The presumption and impudence of a wicked man: He hardens his face--brazens it, that he may not blush--steels it, that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of Providence; he will have his way and nothing shall hinder him, Isa 57:17.

2 The caution and circumspection of a good man: As for the upright, he does not say, What would I do? What have I a mind to? and that will I have; but, What should I do? What does God require of me? What is duty? What is prudence? What is for edification? And so he does not force his way, but direct his way by a safe and certain rule.

30 *There is* no wisdom nor understanding
nor counsel against the Lord.

The designing busy part of mankind are directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have their eye to God, and to believe,

1. That there can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have wisdom, and understanding, and counsel, the best politics and politicians, on their side, yet, if it be against the Lord, it cannot prosper long; it shall not

prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at men's projects against him and his anointed, and will carry his point in spite of them, Ps 2:1-6. Those that fight against God are preparing shame and ruin for themselves; whoever make war with the Lamb, he will certainly overcome them, Re 17:14.

2. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause ever so good, and the patrons of it ever so strong, and wise, and faithful, and the means of carrying it on, and gaining the point, ever so probable, still they must acknowledge God and take him along with them. Means indeed are to be used; the horse must be prepared against the day of battle, and the foot too; they must be armed and disciplined. In Solomon's time even Israel's kings used horses in war, though they were forbidden to multiply them. But, after all, safety and salvation are of the Lord; he can save without armies, but armies cannot save without him; and therefore he must be sought to and trusted in for success, and when success is obtained he must have all the glory. When we are preparing for the day of battle our great concern must be to make God our friend and secure his favour.

31 The horse *is* prepared against the day of battle:
but safety *is* of the Lord.

Proverbs-22

1 A *good* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches,
and loving favor rather than silver and gold.

Here are two things which are more valuable and which we should covet more than great riches:-- 1. To be well spoken of: A name (that is, a good name, a name for good things with God and good people) is rather to be chosen than great riches; that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger,

and add no real value to a man. A fool and a knave may have great riches, but a good name makes a man easy and safe, supposes a man wise and honest, redounds to the glory of God, and gives a man a greater opportunity of doing good. By great riches we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a good name we may recommend religion to them.

2. To be well beloved, to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us; this is better than silver and gold. Christ has neither silver nor gold, but he grew in favour with God and man, Lu 2:52. This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world, not to set our hearts upon that, but with all possible care to think of those things that are lovely and of good report, Php 4:8.

2 The rich and poor meet together:
the Lord *is* the maker of them all.

Note, 1. Among the children of men divine Providence has so ordered it that some are rich and others poor, and these are intermixed in societies: The Lord is the Maker of both, both the author of their being and the disposer of their lot. The greatest man in the world must acknowledge God to be his Maker, and is under the same obligations to be subject to him that the meanest is; and the poorest has the honour to be the work of God's hands as much as the greatest. Have they not all one Father? Mal 2:10,Job 31:15. God makes some rich, that they may be charitable to the poor, and others poor, that they may be serviceable to the rich; and they have need of one another, 1Co 12:21. He make some poor, to exercise their patience, and contentment, and dependence upon God, and others rich, to exercise their thankfulness and beneficence. Even the poor we have always with us; they shall never cease out of the land, nor the rich neither.

2. Notwithstanding the distance that is in many respects between rich and poor, yet in most things they meet together, especially before the Lord, who is the Maker of them all, and regards not the rich more than the poor, Job 34:19. Rich and poor meet together at the bar of God's

justice, all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity, the rich as much as the poor; and they meet at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich. There is the same Christ, the same scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises, for them both. There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich: Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham. And there is the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor. All stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave. The small and great are there.

3 A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself:
but the simple pass on, and are punished.

See here, 1 The benefit of wisdom and consideration: A prudent man, by the help of his prudence, will foresee an evil, before it comes, and hide himself; he will be aware when he is entering into a temptation and will put on his armour and stand on his guard. When the clouds are gathering for a storm he takes the warning, and flies to the name of the Lord as his strong tower. Noah foresaw the deluge, Joseph the years of famine, and provided accordingly.

2 The mischief of rashness and inconsideration. The simple, who believe every word that flatters them, will believe none that warns them, and so they pass on and are punished. They venture upon sin, though they are told what will be in the end thereof; they throw themselves into trouble, notwithstanding the fair warning given them, and they repent their presumption when it is too late. See an instance of both these, Ex 9:20,21. Nothing is so fatal to precious souls as this, they will not take warning.

4 By humility *and* the fear of the Lord
are riches, and honor, and life.

See here, 1. Wherein religion does very much consist--in humility and the fear of the Lord; that is, walking humbly with God. We must so reverence God's majesty and authority as to submit with all humility to the commands of his word and the disposals of his providence. We must have such low thoughts of ourselves as to behave humbly

towards God and man. Where the fear of God is there will be humility.

2. What is to be gotten by it--riches, and honour, and comfort, and long life, in this world, as far as God sees good, at least spiritual riches and honour in the favour of God, and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, and eternal life at last.

5 Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the froward:
he that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Note 1 The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous: In the way of the froward, that crooked way, which is contrary to the will and word of God, thorns and snares are found, thorns of grief for past sins and snares entangling them in further sin. He that makes no conscience of what he says and does will find himself hampered by that imaginary liberty, and tormented by his pleasures. Froward people, who are soon angry, expose themselves to trouble at every step. Every thing will fret and vex him that will fret and vex at every thing. 2 The way of duty is safe and easy: He that keeps his soul, that watches carefully over his own heart and ways, is far from those thorns and snares, for his way is both plain and pleasant.

6 Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Here is,

1. A great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may not die with them: Train up children in that age of vanity, to keep them from the sins and snares of it, in that learning age, to prepare them for what they are designed for. Catechise them; initiate them; keep them under discipline. Train them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. Train them up, not in the way they would go (the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside), but in the way they should go, the way in which, if you love them, you would have them go. Train up a child

according as he is capable (as some take it), with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children, little and often, De 6:7.

2. A good reason for it, taken from the great advantage of this care and pains with children: When they grow up, when they grow old, it is to be hoped, they will not depart from it. Good impressions made upon them then will abide upon them all their days. Ordinarily the vessel retains the savour with which it was first seasoned. Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did so. But early training may be a means of their recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did. At least the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty and used the means.

7 The rich ruleth over the poor,
and the borrower *is* servant to the lender.

He had said (Pr 22:2.), Rich and poor meet together; but here he finds, here he shows, that, as to the things of this life, there is a great difference; for, 1. Those that have little will be in subjection to those that have much, because they have dependence upon them, they have received, and expect to receive, support from them: The rich rule over the poor, and too often more than becomes them, with pride and rigour, unlike to God, who, though he be great, yet despises not any. It is part of the affliction of the poor that they must expect to be trampled upon, and part of their duty to be serviceable, as far as they can, to those that are kind to them, and study to be grateful.

2. Those that are but going behindhand find themselves to lie much at the mercy of those that are before hand: The borrower is servant to the lender, is obliged to him, and must sometimes beg, Have patience with me. Therefore it is part of Israel's promised happiness that they should lend and borrow, De 28:12. And it should be our endeavour to keep as much as may be out of debt. Some sell their liberty to gratify their luxury.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity:
and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Note, 1. Ill-gotten gains will not prosper: He that sows iniquity, that does an unjust thing in hopes to get by it, shall reap vanity; what he gets will never do him any good nor give him any satisfaction. He will meet nothing but disappointment. Those that create trouble to others do but prepare trouble for themselves. Men shall reap as they sow.

2. Abused power will not last. If the rod of authority turn into a rod of anger, if men rule by passion instead of prudence, and, instead of the public welfare, aim at nothing so much as the gratifying of their own resentments, it shall fail and be broken, and their power shall not bear them out in their exorbitances, Isa 10:24,25.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed;
for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Here is, 1 The description of a charitable man; he has a bountiful eye, opposed to the evil eye (Pr 23:6) and the same with the single eye (Mt 6:22),-- an eye that seeks out objects of charity, besides those that offer themselves,--an eye that, upon the sight of one in want and misery, affects the heart with compassion,--an eye that with the alms gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He has also a liberal hand: He gives of his bread to those that need--his bread, the bread appointed for his own eating. He will rather abridge himself than see the poor perish for want; yet he does not give all his bread, but of his bread; the poor shall have their share with his own family.

2 The blessedness of such a man. The loins of the poor will bless them, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself will bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he shall be blessed.

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out;
yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, 1. What the scorner does. It is implied that he sows discord and makes mischief wherever he comes. Much of the strife and contention which disturb the peace of all societies is owing to the evil interpreter (as some read it), that construes every thing into the worst, to those that

despise and deride every one that comes in their way and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind.

2. What is to be done with the scorner that will not be reclaimed: Cast him out of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrust out of Abraham's family. Those that would secure the peace must exclude the scorner.

11 He that loveth pureness of heart,
for the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend.

Here is, 1 The qualification of an accomplished, a complete gentleman, that is fit to be employed in public business. He must be an honest man, a man that loves pureness of heart and hates all impurity, not only pure from all fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs, that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair from principle, and delights in nothing more than in keeping his own conscience clean and void of offence. He must also be able to speak with a good grace, not to daub and flatter, but to deliver his sentiments decently and ingeniously, in language clean and smooth as his spirit.

2 The preferment such a man stands fair for: The king, if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his people's interest, will be his friend, will make him of his cabinet-council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's, that was called the king's friend; or, in any business that he has, the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings. A man in whose spirit there is no guile, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah, the Prince, will be his friend. This honour have all the saints.

12 The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge;
and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Here is, 1 The special care God takes to preserve knowledge, that is, to keep up religion in the world by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind,

and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds and keep them in ignorance. It is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of the eyes of the Lord, that is, his watchful providence. He preserves men of knowledge, wise and good men (2Ch 16:9), particularly faithful witnesses, who speak what they know; God protects such, and prospers their counsels. He does by his grace preserve knowledge in such, secures his own work and interest in them. See Pr 2:7,8. 2 The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world: He overthrows the words of the transgressor, and preserves knowledge in spite of him. He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without,
I shall be slain in the streets.

Note, 1. Those that have no love for their business will never want excuses to shake it off. Multitudes are ruined, both for soul and body, by their slothfulness, and yet still they have something or other to say for themselves, so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls. And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous?

2. Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties: The slothful man has work to do without in the fields, but he fancies there is a lion there; nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets for fear somebody or other should meet him and kill him. He does not himself think so; he only says so to those that call him up. He talks of a lion without, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that roaring lion, which is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness, which kills him.

14 The mouth of strange women *is* a deep pit:
he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness. As they regard the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of strange women, lewd women, whom they ought to be strange to, of the mouth of strange women, of

the kisses of their lips (Pr 7:13), of the words of their lips, their charms and enticements. Dread them; have nothing to do with them; for,

1. Those who abandon themselves to that sin give proof that they are abandoned of God: it is a deep pit, which those fall into that are abhorred of the Lord, who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace, to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon thy being in favour with such women, when it proclaims thee under the wrath of God. 2. It is seldom that they recover themselves, for it is a deep pit; it will be hard getting out of it, it so besots the mind and debauches the conscience, by pleasing the flesh.

15 Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child;
but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:-- 1. That corruption is woven into our nature. Sin is foolishness; it is contrary both to our right reason and to our true interest. It is in the heart; there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly. It is in the heart of children; they bring it into the world with them; it is what they were shapen and conceived in. It is not only found there, but it is bound there; it is annexed to the heart (so some); vicious dispositions cleave closely to the soul, are bound to it as the cion to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property. There is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true lover's knot; they two became one flesh. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children, whom we have begotten in our own likeness. O God! thou knowest this foolishness.

2. That correction is necessary to the cure of it. It will not be got out by fair means and gentle methods; there must be strictness and severity, and that which will cause grief. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline, by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father (Heb 12:6,7), and under the correction we must stroke down folly and kiss the rod.

16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches,*
and he that giveth to the rich,
shall surely *come* to want.

This shows what evil courses rich men sometimes take, by which, in the end, they will impoverish themselves and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they oppress the poor and give to the rich.

1. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part of their expenses, they may increase their riches; but they will make presents to the rich, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vain-glory, that they may look great, or in policy, that they may receive it again with advantage. Such shall surely come to want. Many have been beggared by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us to invite the poor, Lu 14:12,13.

2. They not only will not relieve the poor, but they oppress them, rob the spital, extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade the rights of those who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then give bribes to the rich, to protect and countenance them in it. But it is all in vain; they shall come to want. Those that rob God, and so make him the enemy, cannot secure themselves by giving to the rich, to make them their friends.

Precepts and Warnings

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,
and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

Solomon here changes his style and manner of speaking. Hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of Pr 10:1, he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then dropped a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of Pr 22:17-24:34, he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person.

Hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprised in one verse, but here usually it is drawn out further. See how Wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be cloyed with any one. To awaken attention and to assist our application the method of direct address is here adopted. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them, nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should address themselves to particular persons, as here: Do thou do so and so. Here is,

I. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to the words of the wise men, both written and preached, the words of the prophets and priests, and particularly to that knowledge which Solomon in this book gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments. To these words, to this knowledge, the ear must be bowed down in humility and serious attention and the heart applied by faith, and love, and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

II. Arguments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

1 The worth and weight of the things themselves which Solomon in this book gives us the knowledge of. They are not trivial things, for amusements and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be repeated in sport and in order to pass away time. No; they are excellent things, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind and all communities; they are princely things (so the word is), fit for kings to speak and senates to hear; they are things that concern counsels and knowledge, that is, wise counsels, relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing ourselves, but enable us to advise others.

2 The clearness of the discovery of these things and the directing of them to us in particular. "They are made

known, publicly known, that all may read,--plainly known, that he that runs may read,--made known this day more fully than ever before, in this day of light and knowledge,--made known in this thy day. But it is only a little while that this light is with thee; perhaps the things that are this day made known to thee, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may, before to-morrow, be hidden from thy eyes. They are written, for the greater certainty, and that they may be received and the more safely transmitted pure and entire to posterity. But that which the emphasis is here most laid upon is that they are made known to thee, even to thee, and written to thee, as if it were a letter directed to thee by name. It is suited to thee and to thy case; thou mayest in this glass see thy own face; it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged." We cannot say of these things, "They are good things, but they are nothing to us;" no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

3. The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit.

(1.) If we hide them in our hearts, they will be very pleasing and yield us an abundant satisfaction (Pr 22:18): "It is a pleasant thing, and will be thy constant entertainment, if thou keep them within thee; if thou digest them, and be actuated and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mould." The form of godliness, when that is rested in, is but a force put upon a man, and he does but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, Pr 2:10.

(2.) If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation. They shall be fitted in thy lips. "Speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak considering thy character; thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things as well as in thinking of them."

4. The advantage designed us by them. The excellent things which God has written to us are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar, which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are written to us,

(1.) That we may have a confidence in him and communion with him. That thy trust may be in the Lord, Pr 22:19. We cannot trust in God except in the way of duty; we are therefore taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is itself one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God and dependence on him.

(2.) That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment: "That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God." Note,

[1.] It is a desirable thing to know, not only the words of truth, but the certainty of them, that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance.

[2.] The way to know the certainty of the words of truth is to make conscience of our duty; for, if any man do his will, he shall know for certain that the doctrine is of God, Joh 7:17.

(3.) That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction: "That thou mayest give a good account of the words of truth to those that send to thee to consult thee as an oracle," or (as the margin reads it) "to those that send thee, that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any

business." Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God; and those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments will be best able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

18 For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;
they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.
19 That thy trust may be in the Lord,
I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.
20 Have not I written to thee excellent things
in counsels and knowledge,
21 that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth;
that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send
unto thee?
22 Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor:
neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

After this solemn preface, one would have expected something new and surprising; but no; here is a plain and common, but very needful caution against the barbarous and inhuman practices of oppressing poor people. Observe,

I The sin itself, and that is robbing the poor and making them poorer, taking from those that have but little to lose and so leaving them nothing. It is bad to rob any man, but most absurd to rob the poor, whom we should relieve,--to squeeze those with our power whom we should water with our bounty,--to oppress the afflicted, and so to add affliction to them,--to give judgment against them, and so to patronise those that do rob them, which is as bad as if we robbed them ourselves. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged; poor men cannot help themselves, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them.

II The aggravations of the sin. 1. If their inability, by reason of their poverty, to right themselves, embolden us to rob them, it is so much the worse; this is robbing the poor because he is poor; this is not only a base and cowardly

thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless, but it is unnatural, and proves men worse than beasts. 2. Or, if it be done under the colour of law and justice, that is oppressing the afflicted in the gate, where they ought to be protected from wrong and to have justice done them against those that oppress them.

III. The danger that attends this sin. He that robs and oppresses the poor does it at his peril; for,

1 The oppressed will find God their powerful patron. He will plead their cause, and not suffer them to be run down and trampled upon. If men will not appear for them, God will.

2 The oppressors will find him a just avenger. He will make reprisals upon them, will spoil the souls of those that spoil them; he will repay them in spiritual judgments, in curses to their souls. He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.

23 for the Lord will plead their cause,
and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.
24 Make no friendship with an angry man;
and with a furious man thou shalt not go;

Here is,

1. A good caution against being intimate with a passionate man. It is the law of friendship that we accommodate ourselves to our friends and be ready to serve them, and therefore we ought to be wise and wary in the choice of a friend, that we come not under the sacred tie to any one whom it would be our folly to accommodate ourselves to. Thought we must be civil to all, yet we must be careful whom we lay in our bosoms and contract a familiarity with. And, among others, a man who is easily provoked, touchy, and apt to resent affronts, who, when he is in a passion, cares not what he says or does, but grows outrageous, such a one is not fit to be made a friend or companion, for he will be ever and anon angry with us and that will be our

trouble, and he will expect that we should, like him, be angry with others, and that will be our sin.

2. Good cause given for this caution: Lest thou learn his way. Those we go with we are apt to grow like. Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion. We shall thereby get a snare to our souls, for a disposition to anger is a great snare to any man, and an occasion of much sin. He does not say, "Lest thou have ill language given thee or get a broken head," but, which is must worse, "Lest thou imitate him, to humour him, and so contract an ill habit."

25 lest thou learn his ways,
and get a snare to thy
soul.

26 Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands,
or of them that are sureties for debts.

We have here, as often before, a caution against suretiship, as a thing both imprudent and unjust.

1. We must not associate ourselves, nor contract an intimacy, with men of broken fortunes, and reputations, who need and will urge their friends to be bound for them, that they may cheat their neighbours to feed their lusts, and by keeping up a little longer may do the more damage at last to those that give them credit. Have nothing to do with such; be not thou among them.

2. We must not cheat people of their money, by striking hands ourselves, or becoming surety for others, when we have not to pay. If a man by the divine providence is disabled to pay his debts, he ought to be pitied and helped; but he that takes up money or goods himself, or is bound for another, when he knows that he has not wherewithal to pay, or that what he has is so settled that the creditors cannot come at it, does in effect pick his neighbour's pocket, and though, in all cases, compassion is to be used, yet he may thank himself if the law have its course and his

bed be taken from under him, which might be taken for a pledge to secure a debt, Ex 22:26,27. For, if a man appeared to be so poor that he had nothing else to give for security, he ought to be relieved, and it was honestly done to own it; but, for the recovery of a debt, it seems it might be taken by the summum jus--the strict operation of law.

3. We must not ruin our own estates and families. Every man ought to be just to himself and to his wife and children; those are not so who live above what they have, who by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by encumbering themselves with debts of others, waste what they have and bring themselves to poverty. We may take joyfully the spoiling of our goods if it be for the testimony of a good conscience; but, if be for our own rashness and folly, we cannot but take it heavily.

27 If thou hast nothing to pay,
why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

1. We are here taught not to invade another man's right, though we can find ways of doing it ever so secretly and plausibly, clandestinely and by fraud, without any open force. Let not property in general be entrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges, or of any just ways of maintaining them. Let not the property of particular persons be encroached upon. The land-marks, or meer-stones, are standing witnesses to every man's right; let not those be removed quite away, for thence come wars, and fightings, and endless disputes; let them not be removed so as to take from thy neighbour's lot to thy own, for that is downright robbing him and entailing the fraud upon posterity.

2. We may infer hence that a deference is to be paid, in all civil matters, to usages that have prevailed time out of mind and the settled constitutions of government, in which it becomes us to acquiesce, lest an attempt to change it, under pretence of changing it for the better, prove of dangerous consequence.

28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business?
He shall stand before kings;
he shall not stand before mean *men*.

Here is, 1. A plain intimation what a hard thing it is to find a truly ingenious industrious man: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? Thou wilt not see many such, so epidemical are dulness and slothfulness." He is here commended who lays out himself to get business, though it be but in a very low and narrow sphere, and is not easy when he is out of business, who loves business, is quick and active in it, and goes through it, not only with constancy and resolution, but with dexterity and expedition, a man of despatch, who knows how to bring a deal of business into a little compass.

2. A moral prognostication of the preferment of such a man; though now he stands before mean men, is employed by them and attends upon them, yet he will rise, and is likely enough to stand before kings, as an ambassador to foreign kings or prime-minister of state to his own. Seest thou a man diligent in the business of religion? He is likely to excel in virtue, and shall stand before the King of kings.

Proverbs-23

1 When thou sittest to eat with a ruler,
consider diligently what *is* before thee:

The sin we are here warned against is luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking, a sin that most easily besets us.

1. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin: "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler thou has great plenty before thee, varieties and dainties, such a table spread as thou has seldom seen; thou

are ready to think, as Haman did, of nothing but the honour hereby done thee (Es 5:12), and the opportunity thou hast of pleasing thy palate, and forgettest that there is a snare laid for thee." Perhaps the temptation may be stronger, and more dangerous, to one that is not used to such entertainments, than to one that always sits down to a good table.

2. We are here directed to double our guard at such a time. We must,

(1.) Apprehend ourselves to be in danger: "Consider diligently what is before thee, what meat and drink are before thee, that thou mayest choose that which is safest for thee and which thou art least likely to eat and drink of to excess. Consider what company is before thee, the ruler himself, who, if he be wise and good, will take it as an affront for any of his guests to disorder themselves at his table." And, if when we sit to eat with a ruler, much more when we sit to eat with the ruler of rulers at the Lord's table, must we consider diligently what is before us, that we may not in any respect eat and drink unworthily, unbecomingly, lest that table become a snare.

(2.) We must alarm ourselves into temperance and moderation: "Put a knife to thy throat, that is, restrain thyself, as it were with a sword hanging over thy head, from all excess. Let these words, Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares--or those, For all these things, God shall bring thee into judgment--or those, Drunkards, shall not inherit the kingdom of God, be a knife to the throat." The Latins call luxury gula--the throat. "Take up arms against that sin. Rather be so abstemious that thy craving appetite will begin to think thy throat cut than indulge thyself in voluptuousness." We must never feed ourselves without fear (Jude 1:12), but we must in a special manner fear when temptation is before us.

(3.) We must reason ourselves into a holy contempt of the gratifications of sense: "If thou be a man given to appetite,

thou must, by a present solution, and an application of the terrors of the Lord, restrain thyself. When thou art in danger of falling into any excess put a knife to thy throat; that may serve for once. But that is not enough: lay the axe to the root; mortify that appetite which has such a power over thee: Be not desirous of dainties."

Note, We ought to observe what is our own iniquity, and, if we find ourselves addicted to flesh-pleasing, we must not only stand upon our guard against temptations from without, but subdue the corruption within. Nature is desirous of food, and we are taught to pray for it, but it is lust that is desirous of dainties, and we cannot in faith pray for them, for frequently they are not food convenient for mind, body, or estate. They are deceitful meat, and therefore David, instead of praying for them, prays against them, Ps 141:4. They are pleasant to the palate, but perhaps rise in the stomach, turn sour there, upbraid a man, and make him sick. They do not yield men the satisfaction they promised themselves from them; for those that are given to appetite, when they have that which is very dainty, are not pleased; they are soon weary of it; they must have something else more dainty.

The more a luxurious appetite is humoured and indulged the more humour some and troublesome it grows, and the more hard to please; dainties will surfeit, but never satisfy. But especially they are upon this account deceitful meat, that, while they please the body, they prejudice the soul, they overcharge the heart, and unfit it for the service of God, nay, they take away the heart, and alienate the mind from spiritual delights, and spoil its relish of them. Why then should we covet that which will certainly cheat us?

2 and put a knife to thy throat,
if thou *be* a man given to appetite.
3 Be not desirous of his dainties:
for they *are* deceitful meat.
4 Labor not to be rich;
cease from thine own wisdom.

As some are given to appetite (Pr 23:2) so others to covetousness, and those Solomon here takes to task. Men cheat themselves as much by setting their hearts on money (though it seems most substantial) as by setting them on dainties. Observe,

I. How he dissuades the covetous man from toiling and tormenting himself (Pr 23:4). "Do not aim to be rich, to raise an estate, and to make what thou hast in abundance more than it is." We must endeavor to live comfortably, and provide for our children and families, according as our rank and condition are, but we must not seek great things. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good and design it as their highest end, 1Ti 6:9. Covetous men think it is their wisdom, imagining that if they be rich to such a degree they shall be completely happy. Cease from that wisdom, for it is a mistake; a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, Lu 12:15.

1. Those that aim at great things fill their hands with business more than they can grasp, so that their life is both a perfect drudgery and a perpetual hurry; but be not thou such a fool; labour not to be rich. What thou hast, or doest, be master of it, and not a slave to it as those that rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, and all to be rich. Moderate labour, that we may have to give, is our wisdom and duty, Eph 4:28. Immoderate labour, that we may have to hoard, is our sin and folly.

2. They fill their heads with projects more than they understand, so that their life is a constant toss of care and fear; but do not thou thus vex thyself: Cease from thy own wisdom; go on quietly in the way of thy business, not contriving new ways and setting thy wits to work to find out new inventions. Acquiesce in God's wisdom, and cease from thy own, Pr 3:5,6.

II. How he dissuades the covetous man from cheating and deceiving himself by an inordinate love and pursuit of that which is vanity and vexation of spirit; for,

1. It is not substantial and satisfying: "Wilt thou be such a fool as to set thy eyes, to cause thy eyes to fly with eagerness and violence, upon that which is not?" Note, (1.) The things of this world are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature and are the real gifts of Providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul, are not what they promise to be nor what we expect them to be; they are a show, a shadow, a sham upon the soul that trusts to them. They are not, for in a little while they will not be, they will not be ours; they perish in the using; the fashion of them passes away.

(2.) It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them, to admire them as the best things, to appropriate them to ourselves as our good things, and to aim at them as our mark at which all our actions are levelled, to fly upon them as the eagle upon her prey. "Wilt thou do a thing so absurd in itself? What thou, a reasonable creature, wilt thou dote upon shadows? The eyes are put for rational and intellectual powers; wilt thou throw those away upon such undeserving objects? To set the hands and feet upon the world is well enough, but not the eyes, the eyes of the mind; those were made to contemplate better things. Wilt thou, my son, that professest religion, put such an affront upon God (towards whom the eyes should ever be) and such an abuse upon thy soul?"

2. It is not durable and abiding. Riches are very uncertain things; certainly they are so: They make themselves wings, and fly away. The more we cause our eyes to fly upon them the more likely they are to fly away from us.

(1.) Riches will leave us. Those that hold them ever so fast cannot hold them long; either they must be taken from us or

we must be taken from them. The goods are said to flow away as a stream (Job 20:28), here to flee as a bird.

(2.) Perhaps they may leave us suddenly, when we have taken a great deal of pains for them and begin to take a great deal of pride and pleasure in them. The covetous man sits hatching upon his wealth, and brooding over it, till it is fledged, as the young ones under the hen, and then it is gone. Or, as if a man should be fond of a flight of wild-fowl that light in his field, and call them his own because they are upon his ground, whereas, if he offers to come near them, they take wing immediately and are gone to another man's field.

(3.) The wings they fly away upon are of their own making. They have in themselves the principles of their own corruption, their own moth and rust. They are wasting in their own nature, and like a handful of dust, which, if it be grasped, slips through the fingers. Snow will last awhile, and look pretty, if it be left to lie on the ground where it fell, but, if gathered up and laid in the bosom, it is dissolved and gone immediately.

(4.) They go irresistibly and irrecoverably, as an eagle toward heaven, that flies strongly (there is no stopping her), and flies out of sight and out of call (there is no bringing her back); thus do riches leave men, and leave them in grief and vexation if they set their hearts upon them.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
For *riches* certainly make themselves wings;
they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.
6 Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye,
neither desire thou his dainty meats:

Those that are voluptuous and given to appetite (Pr 23:2) are glad to be where there is good cheer stirring, and those that are covetous and saving, that they may spare at home, will be glad to get a dinner at another man's table; and therefore both are here advised not to be forward to accept of every

man's invitation, but especially not to thrust themselves in uninvited. Observe,

1. There are those that pretend to bid their friends welcome that are not hearty and sincere in it. They have a fair tongue, and know what they should say: Eat and drink, saith he, because it is expected that the master of the feast should so compliment his guests; but they have an evil eye, and grudge their guests every bit they eat, especially if the eat freely. They would seem to be liberal in making the entertainment, and would have the credit of it, but they have so great a love to their money, and so little to their friends, that they cannot have the comfort of it, nor any enjoyment of themselves or their friends. The miser's feast is his penance. If a man be so very selfish, and sordid, and mean that he cannot find in his heart to bid his friends welcome to what he has, he ought not to add to that the guilt of dissimulation by inviting them, but let him own himself to be what he is, that the vile person may not be called liberal nor the churl bountiful, Isa 32:5.

2. One can have no comfort in accepting the entertainments that are given grudgingly: "Eat not thou the bread of such a man; let him keep it to himself. Do not sponge upon those that are bountiful, nor make thyself burdensome to any; but especially scorn to be beholden to those that are paltry and not sincere. Better have a dinner of herbs, and true welcome, than dainty meats without it. Therefore,"

(1.) "Judge of the man as his mind is. Thou thinkest to pay thy respect to him as a friend, so thou takest him to be, because he compliments thee, but as he thinks in his heart so is he, not as he speaks with his tongue." We are that really, both to God and man, which we are inwardly; and neither religion nor friendship is worth any thing further than as it is sincere.

(2.) "Judge of the meat as the digestion is and as it agrees with thee. He bids thee eat freely, but, first or last, he will discover his sordid covetous humour, and as he thinks in his heart so will he look, and give thee to understand that thou

art not welcome, and then the morsel thou hast eaten thou shalt vomit up; the very thought of that will make thee even to vomit the meat thou hast eaten, and eat the words thou has spoken in returning his compliments and giving him thanks for his civilities. Thou shalt lose thy sweet words, which he has given thee and thou has given him."

7 for as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he:
Eat and drink, saith he to thee;
but his heart *is* not with thee.

8 The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,
and lose thy sweet words.

9 Speak not in the ears of a fool:
for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

We are here directed not to cast pearls before swine (Mt 7:6) and not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of divine things; but,

1. There are some that will make a jest of every thing, though it be ever so prudently and pertinently spoken, that will not only despise a wise man's words, but despise even the wisdom of them, that in them which is most improvable for their own edification; they will particularly reproach that, as if it had an ill design upon them, which they must guard against.

2. Those that do so forfeit the benefit of good advice and instruction, and a wise man is not only allowed, but advised, not to speak in the ears of such fools; let them be foolish still, and let not precious breath be thrown away upon them. If what a wise man says in his wisdom will not be heard, let him hold his peace, and try whether the wisdom of that will be regarded.

10 Remove not the old landmark;
and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

Note, 1 The fatherless are taken under God's special protection; with him they not only find mercy shown to them (Ho 14:3) but justice done for them. He is their Redeemer, their Goël, their near kinsman, that will take their part and

stand up for them with jealousy, as taking himself affronted in the injuries done to them. As their Redeemer he will plead their cause against those that do them any injury, and, one way or other, will not only defend their right, and recover it for them, but avenge the wrongs done to them. And he is mighty, almighty; his omnipotence is engaged and employed for their protection, and their proudest and most powerful oppressors will not only find themselves an unequal match for this, but will find that it is at their peril to contend with it.

2. Every man therefore must be careful not to injure them in any thing, or to invade their rights, either by a clandestine removal of the old land-marks or by a forcible entry into their fields. Being fatherless, they have none to redress their wrongs, and, being in their childhood, they do not so much as apprehend the wrong that is done them. Sense of honour, and much more the fear of God, would restrain men from offering injury to children, especially fatherless children.

11 for their Redeemer *is* mighty;
he shall plead their cause with thee.
12 Apply thine heart unto instruction,
and thine ears to the words of knowledge.

Here is, 1. A parent instructing his child. He is here brought in persuading him to give his mind to his book, and especially to the scriptures and his catechism, to attend to the words of knowledge, by which he might come to know his duty, and danger, and interest, and not to think it enough to give them the hearing, but to apply his heart to them, to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them. The heart is then applied to the instruction when the instruction is applied to the heart.

2. A parent correcting his child. A tender parent can scarcely find in his heart to do this; it goes much against the grain. But he finds it is necessary; it is his duty, and therefore he dares not withhold correction when there is occasion for it (spare the rod and spoil the child); he beats him with the rod, gives him a gentle correction, the stripes of the sons of men, not such as we give to beasts. Beat him with the rod and he

shall not die. The rod will not kill him; nay, it will prevent his killing himself by those vicious courses which the rod will be necessary to restrain him from. For the present it is not joyous, but grievous, both to the parent and to the child; but when it is given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a happy means of preventing his utter destruction and delivering his soul from hell. Our great care must be about our children's souls; we must not see them in danger of hell without using all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings. Let the body smart, so that the spirit be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

3. A parent encouraging his child, telling him,

(1.) What was all he expected, nothing but what would be for his own good, that his heart be wise and that his lips speak right things, that he be under the government of good principles, and that by those principles he particularly maintain a good environment of his tongue. It is to be hoped that those will do right things when they grow up who learn to speak right things when they are young, and dare not speak any bad words.

(2.) What a comfort it would be to him if herein he answered his expectation: "If thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, shall rejoice in thee, even mine, who have taken so much care and pains about thee, my heart, that has many a time ached for thee, for which thou shouldst study thus to make a grateful requital." Note, The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them walk in the truth, 3Jo 1:4. "Children, if you be wise and good, devout and conscientious, God will be pleased with you, and that will be our joy: we shall think our labour in instructing you well bestowed; it will be a comfortable answer for the many prayers we have put up for you; we shall be eased of a great deal of care, shall not need to be so strict and severe in watching over you, and shall consequently be the easier both to you and to ourselves. We

shall rejoice in hope that you will be a credit and comfort to us, if we should live to be old, that you will bear up the name of Christ in your generation, that you will live comfortably in this world and happily in another."

13 Withhold not correction from the child:
for *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.
14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
and shalt deliver his soul from hell.
15 My son, if thine heart be wise,
my heart shall rejoice, even mine.
16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice,
when thy lips speak right things.
17 Let not thine heart envy sinners;
but *be thou* in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Here is,

1. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering profaneness: "Let not thy heart envy sinners; do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin or the success they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion (Ps 12:14), nay, it is their poison," Pr 1:32. We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, nor wish ourselves in their condition. "Let not thy heart imitate sinners" (so some read it); do not as they do; walk not in the way with them; use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them.

2. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our minds at all times: Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day and all the day long. We must be in the fear of the Lord as in our employment, exercising ourselves in holy adorings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him; we must be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory and complying with his will. We must be devoted to his fear (Ps 119:38); and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of

our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it.

3. A good reason for both of these (Pr 23:18): Surely there is an end, an end and expectation, as Jer 29:11. There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked, therefore do not envy them (Ps 73:17); there will be an end of thy afflictions, therefore be not weary of them, an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, perfect love will shortly cast out fear, and thy expectation of the reward not only will be not cut off, or disappointed, but it will be infinitely outdone. The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.

18 For surely there is an end;
and thine expectation shall not be cut off.
19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise,
and guide thine heart in the way.

Here is good advice for parents to give to their children; words are put into their mouths, that they may train them up in the way they should go. Here we have,

I. An earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents, not only to this that is here given, but to all other profitable instructions: "Here, my son, and be wise, Pr 23:19. This will be an evidence that thou art wise and a means to make thee wiser." Wisdom, as faith, comes by hearing. And again (Pr 23:22): "Hearken unto thy father who begot thee, and who therefore has an authority over thee and an affection for thee, and, thou mayest be sure, can have no other design than thy own good." We ought to give reverence to the fathers of our flesh, who begot us, and were the instruments of our being; much more ought we to obey and be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, who made us and is the author of our being.

And since the mother also, from a sense of duty to God and from love to her child, gives him good instructions, let him not despise her, nor her advice, when she is old. When the mother was grown old we may suppose the children to be grown up; but let them not think themselves past being taught, even by her, but rather respect her the more for the multitude of her years and the wisdom which they teach. Scornful and insolent young men will make a jest, it may be, of the good advice of an aged mother, and think themselves not concerned to heed what an old woman says; but such will have a great deal to answer for another day, not only as having set at nought good counsel, but as having slighted and grieved a good mother, Pr 30:17.

II. An argument to enforce this call, taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, Pr 23:24,25. Note,

1. It is the duty of children to study how they may gladden the hearts of their good parents, and do it yet more and more, so that they may greatly rejoice in them, even when the evil days come and the years of which they say they have no pleasure in them but this, to see their children do well, as Barzillai to see Chimham preferred.

2. Children will be a joy to their parents if they be righteous and wise. Righteousness is true wisdom; those who do good so well for themselves. Those are completely such as they should be who are not only wise (that is, knowing and learned), but righteous (that is, honest and good), and not only righteous (that is, conscientious and well-meaning), but wise (that is, prudent and discreet) in the management of themselves. If such the children be, especially all the children, the father and mother will be glad, and think nothing too much that they have done, or do, for them; they will please themselves in them, and give God thanks for them; particularly she that bore them with pain, and nursed them with pains, will rejoice in them, and reckon herself well requited, and the sorrow more than forgotten, because

a wise and good man is the product of it, who is a blessing to the world he was born into.

20 Be not among winebibbers;
among riotous eaters of flesh:
21 for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty:
and drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags.
22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and
despise not thy mother when she is old.
23 Buy the truth, and sell *it* not;
also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

I. Some general precepts of wisdom and virtue.

1. Guide thy heart in the way, Pr 23:19. It is the heart that must be taken care of and directed aright; the motions and affections of the soul must be towards right objects and under a steady guidance. If the heart be guided in the way, the steps will be guided and the conversation well ordered.

2. Buy the truth and sell it not, Pr 23:23. Truth is that by which the heart must be guided and governed, for without truth there is no goodness; no regular practices without right principles. It is by the power of truth, known and believed, that we must be kept back from sin and constrained to duty. The understanding must be well-informed with wisdom and instruction, and therefore,

(1.) We must buy it, that is, be willing to part with any thing for it. He does not say at what rate we must buy it, because we cannot buy it too dear, but must have it at any rate; whatever it costs us, we shall not repent the bargain. When we are at expense for the means of knowledge, and resolved not to starve so good a cause, then we buy the truth. Riches should be employed for the getting of knowledge, rather than knowledge for the getting of riches. When we are at pains in searching after truth, that we may come to the knowledge of it and may distinguish between it and error, then we buy it. Dii laboribus omnia vendunt--Heaven concedes every thing to the laborious. When we choose rather to suffer loss in our temporal interest than to

deny or neglect the truth they we buy it; and it is a pearl of such great price that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it, must make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience.

(2.) We must not sell it. Do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any things in this world. Do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatsoever. Hold fast the form of sound words, and never let it go upon any terms.

3. Give my thy heart, Pr 23:26. God in this exhortation, speaks to us as unto children: "Son, Daughter, Give my thy heart." The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him. Our thoughts must converse much with him, and on him, as our highest end. The intents of our hearts must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. To this call we must readily answer, "My father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it."

4. Let thy eyes observe my ways; have an eye to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence, and the good examples of his people. Our eyes must observe these, as he that writes observes his copy, that we may keep in the right paths and may proceed and persevere in them.

II. Some particular cautions against those sins which are, of all sins, the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impoverish and ruin it.

1. Gluttony and drunkenness, Pr 23:20,21. The world is full of examples of this sin and temptations to it, which all young people are concerned to stand upon their guard against and keep at a distance from Be not a wine-bibber; we are allowed to drink a little wine (1Ti 5:23), but not much, not to make a trade of it, never to drink to excess. Be not a riotous eater of flesh, as the Israelites were, who lusted exceedingly after it, saying, Who will give us flesh to eat? Whereas Paul, though he is free to eat flesh, yet resolves that he will eat no flesh while the world stands rather than make his brother to offend; so indifferent is he to it, 1Co 8:13. Be not an excessive eater of flesh. Intemperance must be avoided in meat as well as drink.

Be not a luxurious eater of flesh, not pleased with any thing but what is very nice and delicate, savoury dishes, and forced meat. Some take not only a pleasure, but a pride, in being curious about their diet, and, as they call it, eating well; as if that were the ornament of a gentleman, which is really the shame of a Christian, making a God of the belly. "Be not a wine bibber, and be not a riotous eater; and therefore, be not among wine-bibbers nor among riotous eaters; do not give them countenance, lest thou learn their ways and insensibly fall into those sins, or at least lose the dread and detestation of them. They covet to have thee among them; for those that are debauched themselves are very desirous to debauch others; therefore do not gratify them, lest thou endanger thyself." He fetches an argument against this sin from the expensiveness of it and its tendency to impoverish men: and if men will not be deterred from it by the ruin it brings on their secular interests, which lie nearest their hearts, no marvel that they are not frightened from it by what they are told out of the word of God of the mischief it does them in their spiritual and eternal concerns. The drunkard and the glutton hate to be reformed, though they are told they shall come to poverty, nay, though they are told they shall come to hell. Drunkenness is the cause of drowsiness; it stupefies men, and makes them inattentive to business, and then all goes

to wreck and ruin: thus men that have lived creditably come to be clothed with rags.

2. Whoredom. This is another sin which takes away the heart that should be given to God, Ho 4:11. He shows the danger which attends that sin, Pr 23:27,28,

(1.) It is a sin from which few recover themselves when once they are entangled in it. It is like a deep ditch and a narrow pit, which it is almost impossible to get out of; and therefore it is wisdom to keep far enough from the brink of it. Take heed of making any approaches towards this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it, conscience, which should head the retreat, being debauched by it, and divine grace forfeited.

(2.) It is a sin which bewitches men to their ruin: The adulteress lies in wait as a robber, pretending friendship, but designing the greatest mischief, to rob them of all they have that is valuable, to strip them both of their armour and of their ornaments. Even those who, being virtuously educated, endeavour to shun the adulteress, she will lie in wait for, that she may assault them when they are off their guard and she has them at an advantage. Let none therefore be at any time secure.

(3.) It is a sin that contributes more than any other to the spreading of vice and immorality in a kingdom: It increases the transgressors among men. One adulteress may be the ruin of many a precious soul and may help to debauch a whole town. It increases the treacherous or perfidious ones; it not only occasions husbands to be false to their wives and servants to their masters, but many that have professed religion to throw off their profession and break their covenants with God. Houses of uncleanness are therefore such pest-houses as ought to be suppressed by those whose office it is to take care of the public welfare.

24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice:
and he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him.

25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad,
and she that bare thee shall rejoice.
26 My son, give me thine heart,
and let thine eyes observe my ways.
27 For a whore *is* a deep ditch;
and a strange woman *is* a narrow pit.
28 She also lieth in wait as *for* a prey,
and increaseth the transgressors among men.

Solomon here gives fair warning against the sin of drunkenness, to confirm what he had said, Pr 23:20.

I. He cautions all people to keep out of the way of temptations to this sin (Pr 23:31): Look not thou upon the wine when it is red. Red wine was in Canaan looked upon as the best wine, it is therefore called the blood of the grape. Critics judge of wine, among other indications, by the colour of it; some wine, they say, looks charmingly, looks so well that it even says, "Come and drink me;" it moves itself aright, goes down very smoothly, or perhaps the roughness of it is grateful. It is said of generous strong-bodied wine that it even causes the lips of those that are asleep to speak, So 7:9. But look not thou upon it.

1. "Be not ruled by sense, but by reason and religion. Covet not that which pleases the eye, in hopes that it will please the taste; but let thy serious thoughts correct the errors of thy senses and convince thee that that which seems delightful is really hurtful, and resolve against it accordingly. Let not the heart walk after the eye, for it is a deceitful guide."

2. "Be not too bold with the charms of this or any other sin; look not, lest thou lust, lest thou take the forbidden fruit." Note Those that would be kept from any sin must keep themselves from all the occasions and beginnings of it, and be afraid of coming within the reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them.

II. He shows the many pernicious consequences of the sin of drunkenness, for the enforcement of this caution. Take heed of the bait, for fear of the hook: At the last it bites, Pr 23:32. All sin will be bitterness in the end, and this sin particularly. It bites like a serpent, when the drunkard is made sick by his surfeit, thrown by it into a dropsy or some fatal disease, beggared and ruined in his estate, especially when his conscience is awakened and he cannot reflect upon it without horror and indignation at himself, but worst of all, at last, when the cup of drunkenness shall be turned into a cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's wrath, the dregs of which he must be for ever drinking, and shall not have a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue. To take off the force of the temptation that there is in the pleasure of the sin, foresee the punishment of it, and what it will at last end in if repentance prevent not. In its latter end it bites (so the word is); think therefore what will be in the end thereof. But the inspired writer chooses to specify those pernicious consequences of this sin which are present and sensible.

1. It embroils men in quarrels, makes them quarrel with others, and say and do that which gives others occasion to quarrel with them, Pr 23:29. He asks, Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who has not, in this world? Many have woe and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create woe and sorrow to themselves. Those that have contentions have woe and sorrow; and drunkards are the fools whose lips enter into contention. When the wine is in the wit is out and the passions are up; and thence come drunken scuffles, and drunken frays, and drunken disputes over the cups; many a vexatious ruining law-suit has begun thus.

There is babbling, quarrels in word and the exchanging of scurrilous language; yet it rests not there: you shall have wounds without cause, for causes are things which drunkards are in no capacity to judge of, and therefore they deal blows about without the least consideration why or wherefore, and must expect to be in like manner treated

themselves. The wounds which men receive in defence of their country and its just rights are their honour; but wounds without cause, received in the service of their lusts, are marks of their infamy. Nay, drunkards wound themselves in a tender part, for they have redness of eyes, symptoms of an inward inflammation; their sight is weakened by it, and their looks are deformed. This comes,

(1.) Of drinking long, tarrying long at the wine, and spending that time in drunken company which should be spent in useful business, or in sleep, which should fit for business, Pr 23:30. O the precious hours which thousands throw away thus, every one of which will be brought into the account at the great day!

(2.) Of drinking that which is strong and intoxicating. They go up and down to seek wine that will please them; their great enquiry is, "Where is the best liquor?" They seek mixed wine, which is most palatable, but most heady, so willingly do they sacrifice their reason to please their palate!

2. It makes men impure and insolent, Pr 23:33.

(1.) The eyes grow unruly and behold strange women to lust after them, and so let in adultery into the heart. Est Venus in vinis--Wine is oil to the fire of lust. Thy eyes shall behold strange things (so some read it); when men are drunk the house turns round with them, and every thing looks strange to them, so that them they cannot trust their own eyes.

(2.) The tongue also grows unruly and talks extravagantly; by it the heart utters perverse things, things contrary to reason, religion, and common civility, which they would be ashamed to speak if they were sober. What ridiculous incoherent nonsense men will talk when they are drunk who at another time will speak admirably well and to the purpose!

3. It stupefies and besots men, Pr 23:34. When men are drunk they know not where they are nor what they say and do.

(1.) Their heads are giddy, and when they lie down to sleep they are as if they were tossed by the rolling waves of the sea, or upon the top of a mast; hence they complain that their heads swim; their sleep is commonly unquiet and not refreshing, and their dreams are tumultuous.

(2.) Their judgments are clouded, and they have no more steadiness and consistency than he that sleeps upon the top of a mast: they drink and forget the law (Pr 31:5): they err through wine (28:7), and think as extravagantly as they talk.

(3.) They are heedless and fearless of danger, and senseless of the rebukes they are under either from God or man. They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation, lie as much exposed as if they slept upon the top of a mast, and yet are secure and sleep on. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them; they cry not when he binds them. Set a drunkard in the stocks, and he is not sensible of the punishment. "They have stricken me, and I was not sick; I felt it not: it made no impression at all upon me." Drunkenness turns me into stocks and stones; they are scarcely to be reckoned animals; they are dead while they live.

4. Worst of all, the heart is hardened in the sin, and the sinner, notwithstanding all these present mischiefs that attend it, obstinately persist in it, and hates to be reformed: When shall I awake? Much ado he has to shake off the chains of his drunken sleep; he can hardly get clear of the fumes of the wine, though he strives with them, that (being thirsty in the morning) he may return to it again. So perfectly lost is he to all sense of virtue and honour, and so

wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, I will seek it yet again. There is no hope; no, they have loved drunkards, and after them they will go, Jer 2:25. This is adding drunkenness to thirst, and following strong drink; those that do so may read their doom De 29:19,20, their woe Isa 5:11, and, if this be the end of the sin, with good reason were we directed to stop at the beginning of it: Look not upon the wine when it is red.

29 Who hath woe?
Who hath sorrow?
Who hath contentions?
Who hath babbling?
Who hath wounds without cause?
Who hath redness of eyes?
30 They that tarry long at the wine;
they that go to seek mixed wine.
31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,
when it giveth his color in the cup,
when it moveth itself aright.
32 At the last it biteth like a serpent,
and stingeth like an adder.
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women,
and thine heart shall utter perverse things.
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea,
or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick;
they have beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not:
when shall I awake?
I will seek it yet again.

Proverbs-24

1 Be not thou envious against evil men,
neither desire to be with them:

Here, 1 The caution given is much the same with that which we had before (Pr 23:17), not to envy sinners, not to think them happy, nor to wish ourselves in their condition,

though they prosper ever so much in this world, and are ever so marry and ever so secure. "Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind, O that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite, as I see such and such do! No; desire not to be with them, to do as they do and fare as they fare, and to cast in thy lot among them."

2. Here is another reason given for this caution: "Be not envious against them, not only because their end will be had, but because their way is so, Pr 24:2. Do not think with them, for their heart studies destruction to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, for their lips talk of their mischief. All they say has an ill tendency, to dishonour God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them. Nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, or a just indignation at their wicked practices."

2 for their heart studieth destruction,
and their lips talk of mischief.
3 Through wisdom is a house builded;
and by understanding it is established:

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families, by such unjust courses as our consciences will by no means suffer us to use. But, to set aside that temptation, Solomon here shows that a man, with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience, and a good name, and the blessing of God upon his industry; and, if the other be raised a little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer.

1. That which is here recommended to us as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity is wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge; that is, both piety towards God (for that is true wisdom) and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in every thing by the rules of religion first and then

of discretion. Some that are truly pious do not thrive in the world, for want of prudence; and some that are prudent enough, yet do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to complete a wise man.

2. That which is here set before us as the advantage of true wisdom is that it will make men's outward affairs prosperous and successful.

(1.) it will build a house and establish it, Pr 24:3. Men may by unrighteous practices build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten (Hab 2:9,10); whereas what is honestly got will wear like steel and be an inheritance to children's children.

(2.) It will enrich a house and furnish it, Pr 24:4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for increasing what they have that spare from luxury and spend in charity, are in a fair way to have their shops, their warehouses, their chambers, filled with all precious and pleasant riches--precious because got by honest labour, and the substance of a diligent man is precious--pleasant because enjoyed with holy cheerfulness. Some think this is to be understood chiefly of spiritual riches. By knowledge the chambers of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, those precious and pleasant riches; for the Spirit, by enlightening the understanding, performs all his other operations on the soul.

(3.) It will fortify a house and turn it into a castle: Wisdom is better than weapons of war, offensive or defensive. A wise man is in strength, is in a strong-hold, yea, a man of knowledge strengthens might, that is, increases it, Pr 24:5. As we grow in knowledge we grow in all grace, 2Pe 3:18. Those that increase in wisdom are strengthened with all might, Col 1:9,11. A wise man will compass that by his wisdom which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms.

The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work and the spiritual warfare by true wisdom.

(4.) It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, Pr 24:6. Wisdom will erect a college, or council of state. Wisdom will be of use,

[1.] For the managing of the public quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause and with some probability of success, and, when they are engaged in, to manage them well, and so as to make either an advantageous peace or an honourable retreat: By wise counsel thou shalt make war, which is a thing that may prove of ill consequence if not done by wise counsel.

[2.] For the securing of the public peace: In the multitude of counsellors there is safety, for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages, which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtle.

4 and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.
5 A wise man *is* strong;
yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.
6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war:
and in multitude of counselors *there is* safety.
7 Wisdom *is* too high for a fool:
he openeth not his mouth in the gate.

Here is the description,

1. Of a weak man: Wisdom is too high for him; he thinks it so, and therefore, despairing to attain it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it. And really it is so; he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom; those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, that is, if they be slothful and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling, and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined and keep bad company, it is too high for them; they are not likely

to reach it. And, for want of it, they are unfit for the service of their country: They open not their mouth in the gate; they are not admitted into the council or magistracy, or, if they are, they are dumb statues, and stand for cyphers; they say nothing, because they have nothing to say, and they know that if they should offer any thing it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation.

2. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so:--

(1.) Such as are secretly malicious. Though they speak courteously and conduct themselves plausibly, they devise to do evil, are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at. He that does so shall be called a mischievous person, or a master of mischief, which perhaps was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an inventor of evil things (Ro 1:30), or if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or at least accessory to it. This devising evil is the thought of foolishness, Pr 24:9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest, as only a foolish thing, but really it is sin, it is exceedingly sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it sin. It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it; for that has in it the subtlety and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally. We contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no further; the first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean, proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts, are sinful thoughts. If vain thoughts lodge in the heart, they defile it (Jer 4:14), which is a reason why we should keep our hearts with all diligence, and harbour no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, Ge 6:5.

(2.) Such as are openly abusive: The scorner, who gives ill-language to every body, takes a pleasure in affronting people

and reflecting upon them, is an abomination to men; none that have any sense of honour and virtue will care to keep company with him. The seat of the scornful is the pestilential chair (as the LXX. calls it, Ps 1:1), which no wise man will come near, for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious do but make themselves so.

8 He that deviseth to do evil
shall be called a mischievous person.
9 The thought of foolishness *is* sin:
and the scorner *is* an abomination to men.
10 *If* thou faint in the day of
adversity, thy strength *is* small.

Note, 1. In the day of adversity we are apt to faint, to droop and be discouraged, to desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for anything. And often those that are most cheerful when they are well droop most, and are most dejected, when any thing ails them.

2. This is an evidence that our strength is small, and is a means of weakening it more. "It is a sign that thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith (for that is the strength of a soul), if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition." Some are so feeble that they can bear nothing; if a trouble does but touch them (Job 4:5), nay, if it does but threaten them, they faint immediately and are ready to give up all for gone; and by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble and unable to help themselves. Be of good courage therefore, and God shall strengthen thy heart.

11 If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto
death, and *those that are* ready to be slain;

Here is, 1. A great duty required of us, and that is to appear for the relief of oppressed innocency. If we see the lives or livelihoods of any in danger of being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir ourselves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are

condemned and seeking out proofs of their innocency. Though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligation to, we must help them, out of a general zeal for justice. If any be set upon by force and violence, and it be in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it.

Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travellers upon the road, ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to ourselves, to hasten with help to them and not forbear to deliver them, not to be slack, or remiss, or indifferent, in such a case.

2. An answer to the excuse that is commonly make for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, "Behold, we knew it not; we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in; we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove his innocence, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him." Now,

(1.) It is easy to make such an excuse as this, sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for perhaps they cannot disprove us when we say, We knew it not, or, We forgot; and the temptation to tell a lie for the excusing of a fault is very strong when we know that it is impossible to be disproved, the truth lying wholly in our own breast, as when we say, We thought so and so, and really designed it, which no one is conscious of but ourselves.

(2.) It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open and by the determination of that we must abide. Now,

[1.] God ponders the heart and keeps the soul; he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the motions of it; its most secret thoughts and intents are all naked and open before him. It is his prerogative to do so, and that in which he glories. Jer 17:10, I the Lord search the heart. He keeps the soul, holds it

in life. This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others, and do all we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God and he has graciously kept them.

[2.] He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no, whether it was because we did not know it or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish, and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty: Does not he that ponders the heart consider it?

[3.] He will judge us accordingly. As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be biassed, but he will render to every man according to his works, not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

12 if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not;
doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it?*
And he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it?*
And shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?
13 My son, eat thou honey, because *it is* good;
and the honeycomb, *which is* sweet to thy taste:

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom by the consideration both of the pleasure and the profit of it. 1. It will be very pleasant. We eat honey because it is sweet to the taste, and upon that account we call it good, especially that which runs first from the honey-comb. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and honey was the common food of the country (Lu 24:41,42), even for children, Isa 7:15. Thus should we feed upon wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. Those that have tasted honey need no further proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness are abundantly satisfied of the pleasure of both; they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world with their sophistry, and the profane with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments.

2. It will be very profitable. Honey may be sweet to the taste and yet not wholesome, but wisdom has a future recompence attending it, as well as a present sweetness in it. "Thou art permitted to eat honey, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it; but thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts of wisdom, for when thou hast found that, there shall be a reward; thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dearly for their pains. Wisdom does indeed set thee to work, but there shall be a reward; it does indeed raise great expectations in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope, shall not be in vain; thy expectation shall not be cut off (Pr 23:18), nay, it shall be infinitely outdone."

14 so *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul:
when thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a
reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off.

15 Lay not wait, O wicked *man*, against the dwelling of the righteous;
spoil not his resting place:

This is spoken, not so much by way of counsel to wicked men (they will not receive instruction, Pr 23:9), but rather in defiance of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here,

1 The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deeply: They lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous, thinking to charge some iniquity upon it, or compass dome design against it; they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, Ps 59:1 title. The hope is raised high; they doubt not but to spoil his dwelling-place because he is weak and cannot support it, because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. The blood-thirsty hate the upright.

2 The folly and frustration of these designs

(1.) The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, recovers himself. He falls seven times into trouble, but, by the blessing of God upon his wisdom and integrity, he rises again, sees through his troubles and sees better times after them. The just man falls, sometimes falls seven times perhaps, into sin, sins of infirmity, through the surprise of temptation; but he rises again by repentance, finds mercy with God, and regains his peace.

(2.) The wicked man, who expected to see his ruin and to help it forward, is undone. He falls into mischief; his sins and his troubles are his utter destruction.

16 for a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again:
but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:

Here, 1 The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us. If any have done us an ill turn, or if we bear them ill-will only because they stand in our light or in our way, when any damage comes to them (suppose they fall), or any danger (suppose they stumble), our corrupt hearts are too apt to conceive a secret delight and satisfaction in it--Aha! so would we have it; they are entangled; the wilderness has shut them in--or, as Tyrus said concerning Jerusalem (Eze 26:2) I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste. "Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to wreak their revenge or to find their account; but be not thou so inhuman; rejoice not when the worst enemy thou hast falls." There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God and the welfare of the church (Ps 58:10); but in the ruin of our enemies, as such, we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must weep even with them when they weep (as David, Ps 35:13,14), and that in sincerity, not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities.

2 The provocation which that pleasure gives to God is assigned as the reason of that prohibition: The Lord will see it, though it be hidden in the heart only, and it will displease him, as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in

the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at, and take warning by, not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so often deserved it. Solomon adds an argument ad hominem--addressed to the individual: "Thou canst not do a greater kindness to thy enemy, when he has fallen, than to rejoice in it; for them, to cross thee and vex thee, God will turn his wrath from him; for, as the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man, and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that he will adjourn the execution of his wrath: nay, it is implied that when he turns his wrath from him he will turn it against thee and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand."

18 lest the Lord see *it*, and it displease
him, and he turn away his wrath from
him.

19 Fret not thyself because of evil *men*,
neither be thou envious at the wicked;

Here, 1. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasures and successes of wicked man in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father David, Ps 37:1. We must not in any case fret ourselves, or make ourselves uneasy, whatever God does in his providence how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it. Even that which grieves us must not fret us; nor must our eye be evil against any because God is good. Are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do.

2. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked man walk in. Envy not their prosperity; for,

(1.) There is no true happiness in it: Thee shall be no reward to the evil man; his prosperity only serves for his present subsistence; these are all the good things he must ever expect: there is none intended him in the world of retribution. He has his reward, Mt 6:2. He shall have none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life and must out-live it, Ps 17:14.

(2.) There is no continuance in it; their candle shines brightly, but it shall presently be put out, and a final period put to all their comforts, Job 21:14,Ps 37:1,2.

20 for there shall be no reward to the evil *man;*
the candle of the wicked shall be put out.
21 My son, fear thou the Lord and the king:
and meddle not with them that are given to change:

Note, 1. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear; as members of a community, incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God has set over us, Ro 13:1,2. Those that are truly religious will be loyal, in conscience towards God; the godly in the land will be the quite in the land; and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince that is false to his God? And, if they come in competition, it is an adjudged case, we must obey God rather than men.

2. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he does not say, with those that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but those that are given to change, that affect change for change-sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters: Meddle not with those that are given to change either in religion or in a civil government; come not into their secret; join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity.

3. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware: Their calamity shall rise suddenly. Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secresy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment, when they little think of it. Who knows the time and manner of the ruin which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, both on them and those that meddle with them?

22 for their calamity shall rise suddenly;
and who knoweth the ruin of them both?
23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise.
It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

Here are lessons for wise men, that is, judges and princes. As subjects must do their duty, and be obedient to magistrates, so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both in pleas of the crown and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them.

1. They must always weigh the merits of a cause, and not be swayed by any regard, one way or other, to the parties concerned: It is not good in itself, nor can it ever do well, to have respect of persons in judgment; the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice and doing wrong under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend and help him out in a bad cause, or so much as omit any thing that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy.

2. They must never connive at or encourage wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, are to deal faithfully and the wicked man, though he be a great man or a particular friend, to convict him of his wickedness, to show him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others, that they may avoid him. But if those whose office it is thus to show people their transgressions palliate them and connive at them, if they excuse the wicked man, much more if they prefer him and associate with him (which is, in effect, to say, Thou art righteous), they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the public peace and welfare, which they ought to advance, and the people shall curse them and cry out shame on them; and even those of other nations shall abhor them, as base betrayers of their trust.

3. They must discountenance and give check to all fraud, violence, injustice, and immorality; and, though thereby they may disoblige a particular person, yet they will recommend themselves to the favour of God and man. Let magistrates and

ministers, and private persons too that are capable of doing it, rebuke the wicked, that they may bring them to repentance or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms: To them shall be delight, when their consciences witness for them that they have been witnesses for God; and a good blessing shall come upon them, the blessing of God and good men; they shall be deemed religion's patrons and their country's patriots. See Pr 28:23.

4. They must always give judgment according to equity (Pr 24:26); they must give a right answer, that is, give their opinion and pass sentence according to law and them true merits of the cause; and every one shall kiss his lips that does so, that is, shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinently and with sincerity recommends himself to his company and is beloved and respected by all.

24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou *art* righteous;
him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:
25 but to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight,
and a good blessing shall come upon them.
26 *Every man* shall kiss *his*
lips that giveth a right
answer.
27 Prepare thy work without,
and make it fit for thyself in the field;
and afterward build thine house.

This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs; for all good men should be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble, and disgrace to their profession.

1. We must prefer necessaries before conveniences, and not lay that out for show which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be contented with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for, food convenient.

2. We must not think of building till we can afford it: "First apply thyself to thy work without in the field; let thy ground be put into good order; look after thy husbandry, for it is that by which thou must get; and, when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of rebuilding and beautifying thy house, for that is it upon which, and in which, thou wilt have occasion to spend." Many have ruined their estates and families by laying out money on that which brings nothing in, beginning to build when they were not able to finish. Some understand it as advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and not wherewith to maintain a wife and children comfortably. 3. When we have any great design on foot it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations, before we fall to work, that, when it is begun, it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed this rule himself in building the house of God; all was made ready before it was brought to the ground, 1Ki 6:7.

28 Be not a witness against thy neighbor without cause;
and deceive *not* with thy lips.

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly in and by the forms of law, either, 1. As a witness: "Never bear a testimony against any man without cause, unless what thou sayest thou knowest to be punctually true and thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a false testimony against any one;" for it follows, "Deceive not with thy lips; deceive not the judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou conversest with, into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of thy neighbour do not only speak that which is true, but take heed lest, in the manner of thy speaking, thou insinuate any thing that is otherwise and so shouldst deceive by innuendos or hyperboles." Or,

2. As a plaintiff or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring an action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge. "Say not, I am resolved I will be even with him: I will do so to him as he had done to me." Even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous when it is thus prosecuted with malice. Say not, I will render to the man

according to his work, and make him pay dearly for it; for it is God's prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his throne, or take his work out of his hands. If we will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God's tribunal; therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because he has said, Vengeance is mine.

29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me:
I will render to the man according to his work.
30 I went by the field of the slothful,
and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

Here is, 1 The view which Solomon took of the field and vineyard of the slothful man. He did not go on purpose to see it, but, as he passed by, observing the fruitfulness of the ground, as it is very proper for travellers to do, and his subjects' management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a field and a vineyard unlike all the rest; for, though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but thorns and nettles, not here and there one, but they were all overrun with weeds; and, if there had been any fruit, it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence:

The stone-wall was broken down See the effects of that curse upon the ground (Ge 3:18), "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and nothing else unless thou take pains with it." See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan itself, would be without it. The king himself is served of the field, but he would be ill served if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to clear the ground, plant it, sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of their worldly affairs, and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness, in the manifest effects of it, to all that pass by, shamed by their neighbour's diligence.

2 The reflections which he made upon it. He paused a little and considered it, looked again upon it, and received

instruction. He did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner, did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, Those that are to give instruction to others must receive instruction themselves, and instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see, not only from what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of man, not only from men's good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, "That wise men profit more by fools than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men." Solomon reckoned that he received instruction by this sight, though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of an observation he himself had formerly made, both of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard (who, when he has needful work to do, lies dozing in bed and cries, Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and, instead of being fitted by sleep for business, as wise men are, he is dulled, and stupefied, and made good for nothing) and of certain misery that attends him: his poverty comes as one that travels; it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily, and want seizes him as irresistibly as an armed man, a highwayman that will strip him of all he has. Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to show what a scandalous thing slothfulness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note,

(1.) Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of, to dress, and to keep. They are capable of being improved with good husbandry; that may be got out of them which will be fruit abounding to our account. We are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord come; and a great deal of care and pains it is requisite that we should take about them.

(2.) These fields and vineyards are often in a very bad state, not only no fruit brought forth, but all overgrown with thorns

and nettles (scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, malice, those are the thorns and nettles, the wild grapes, which the unsanctified heart produces), no guard kept against the enemy, but the stone-wall broken down, and all lies in common, all exposed.

(3.) Where it is thus it is owing to the sinner's own slothfulness and folly. He is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour; and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest; he is perfectly besotted.

(4.) The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul and all its welfare. It is everlasting want that thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.

31 and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
and nettles had covered the face thereof,
and the stone wall thereof was broken down.
32 Then I saw, *and* considered *it* well:
I looked upon *it*, *and* received instruction.
33 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber,
a little folding of the hands to sleep:
34 so shall thy poverty come *as* one that traveleth;
and thy want as an armed man.

Proverbs-25

Comparisons and Moral Lessons

1 These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah
king of Judah copied out.

This verse is the title of this latter collection of Solomon's proverbs, for he sought out and set in order many proverbs, that by them he might be still teaching the people knowledge, Ec 12:9. Observe,

1 The proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver, for the use of the church, these wise and weighty

sentences; we have had many, but still there are more. Yet herein Christ is greater than Solomon, for if we had all upon record that Christ said, and did, that was instructive, the world could not contain the books that would be written, Joh 21:25.

2 The publishers were Hezekiah's servants, who, it is likely, herein acted as his servants, being appointed by him to do this good service to the church, among other good offices that he did in the law and in the commandments, 2Ch 31:21. Whether he employed the prophets in this work, as Isaiah, Hosea, or Micah, who lived in his time, or some that were trained up in the schools of the prophets, or some of the priests and Levites, to whom we find him giving a charge concerning divine things (2Ch 29:4), or (as the Jews think) his princes and ministers of state, who were more properly called his servants, is not certain; if the work was done by Eliakim, and Joah, and Shebna, it was no diminution to their character. They copied out these proverbs from the records of Solomon's reign, and published them as an appendix to the former edition of this book. It may be a piece of very good service to the church to publish other man's works that have lain hidden in obscurity, perhaps a great while. Some think they culled these out of the 3000 proverbs which Solomon spoke (1Ki 4:32), leaving out those that were physical, and that pertained to natural philosophy, and preserving such only as were divine and moral; and in this collection some observe that special regard was had to those observations which concern kings and their administration.

2 *It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing:
but the honor of kings *is* to search out a matter.

Here is, 1. An instance given of the honour of God: It is his glory to conceal a matter. He needs not search into any thing, for he perfectly knows every thing by a clear and certain view, and nothing can be hidden from him; and yet his own way is in the sea and his path in the great waters. There is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, Ro 11:33. It is but a little portion that is heard of him. Clouds and darkness are round about him. We see what he does, but we know not the reasons. Some refer it to the sins of men; it is

his glory to pardon sin, which is covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it; his forbearance, which he exercises towards sinners, is likewise his honour, in which he seems to keep silence and take no notice of the matter.

2. A double instance of the honour of kings:--

(1.) It is God's glory that he needs not search into a matter, because he knows it without search; but it is the honour of kings, with a close application of mind, and by all the methods of enquiry, to search out the matters that are brought before them, to take pains in examining offenders, that they may discover their designs and bring to light the hidden works of darkness, not to give judgment hastily or till they have weighed things, nor to leave it wholly to others to examine things, but to see with their own eyes.

(2.) It is God's glory that he cannot himself be found out by searching, and some of that honour is devolved upon kings, wise kings, that search out matters; their hearts are unsearchable, like the height of heaven or the depth of the earth, which we may guess at, but cannot measure. Princes have their arcana imperii--state secrets, designs which are kept private, and reasons of state, which private persons are not competent judges of, and therefore ought not to pry into. Wise princes, when they search into a matter, have reaches which one would not think of, as Solomon, when he called of a sword to divide the living child with, designing thereby to discover the true mother.

3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth,
and the heart of kings *is* unsearchable.
4 Take away the dross from the silver,
and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.

This shows that the vigorous endeavour of a prince to suppress vice, and reform the manners of his people, is the most effectual way to support his government. Observe,

1. What the duty of magistrates is: To take away the wicked, to use their power for the terror of evil works and evil workers, not only to banish those that are vicious and profane from their presence, and forbid them the court, but so to frighten them and restrain them that they may not spread the infection of their wickedness among their subjects. This is called taking away the dross from the silver, which is done by the force of fire. Wicked people are the dross of a nation, the scum of the country, and, as such, to be taken away. If men will not take them away, God will, Ps 119:119. If the wicked be taken away from before the king, if he abandon them and show his detestation of their wicked courses, it will go far towards the disabling of them to do mischief. The reformation of the court will promote the reformation of the kingdom, Ps 101:3,8.

2. What the advantage will be of their doing this duty.

(1.) It will be the bettering of the subjects; they shall be made like silver refined, fit to be made vessels of honour.

(2.) It will be the settling of the prince. His throne shall be established in this righteousness, for God will bless his government, the people will be pliable to it, and so it will become durable.

5 Take away the wicked *from* before the king,
and his throne shall be established in righteousness.
6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king,
and stand not in the place of great *men:*

Here we see, 1. That religion is so far from destroying good manners that it reaches us to behave ourselves lowly and reverently towards our superiors, to keep our distance, and give place to those to whom it belongs "Put not forth thyself rudely and carelessly in the king's presence, or in the presence of great men; do not compare with them" (so some understand it); "do not vie with them in apparel, furniture, gardens, house-keeping, or retinue, for that is an affront to them and will waste thy own estate."

2. That religion teaches us humility and self-denial, which is a better lesson than that of good manners: "Deny thyself the place thou art entitled to; covet not to make a fair show, nor air at preferment, nor thrust thyself into the company of those that are above thee; be content in a low sphere if that is it which God has allotted to thee." The reason he gives is because this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shows in a parable that seems to be borrowed from this, Lu 14:9. Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it, for the courting of honour, but therefore we must really be modest and humble, because God will put honour on such and so will men too. It is better, more for a man's satisfaction and reputation, to be advanced above his pretensions and expectations, than to be thrust down below them, in the presence of the prince, whom it was a great piece of honour to be admitted to the sight of and a great piece of presumption to look upon without leave.

7 for better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither;
than that thou shouldest be put lower
in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.
8 Go not forth hastily to strive,
lest *thou know not* what to do in the end thereof,
when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame.

I. Here is good counsel given about going to law:--

1. "Be not hasty in bringing an action, before thou hast thyself considered it, and consulted with thy friends about it: Go not forth hastily to strive; do not send for a writ in a passion, or upon the first appearance of right on thy side, but weigh the matter deliberately, because we are apt to be partial in our own cause; consider the certainty of the expenses and the uncertainty of the success, how much care and vexation it will be the occasion of, and, after all, the cause may go against thee; surely then thou shouldst not go forth hastily to strive."

2. "Bring not an action before thou hast tried to end the matter amicably (Pr 25:9): Debate thy cause with thy neighbour privately, and perhaps you will understand one

another better and see that there is no occasion to go to law." In public quarrels the war that must at length end might better have been prevented by a treaty of peace, and a great deal of blood and treasure spared. It is so in private quarrels: "Sue not thy neighbour as a heathen man and a publican until thou hast told him his fault between thee and him alone, and he has refused to refer the matter, or to come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is a secret, not fit to be divulged to any, much less to be brought upon the stage before the country; and therefore end it privately, that it may not be discovered." Reveal not the secret of another, so some read it. "Do not, in revenge, to disgrace thy adversary, disclose that which should be kept private and which does not at all belong to the cause."

II. Two reasons he gives why we should be thus cautious in going to law:--

1. "Because otherwise the cause will be in danger of going against thee, and thou wilt not know what to do when the defendant has justified himself in what thou didst charge upon him, and made it out that thy complaint was frivolous and vexatious and that thou hadst no just cause of action, and so put thee to shame, non-suit thee, and force thee to pay costs, all which might have been prevented by a little consideration."

2. "Because it will turn very much to thy reproach if thou fall under the character of being litigious. Not only the defendant himself (Pr 25:8), but he that hears the cause tried will put thee to shame, will expose thee as a man of no principle, and thy infamy will not turn away; thou wilt never retrieve thy reputation."

9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbor *himself;*
and discover not a secret to another:
10 lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame,
and thine infamy turn not away.
11 A word fitly spoken

is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Solomon here shows how much it becomes a man,

1. To speak pertinently: A word upon the wheels, that runs well, is well-circumstanced, in proper time and place--instruction, advice, or comfort, given seasonably, and in apt expressions, adapted to the case of the person spoken to and agreeing with the character of the person speaking--is like golden balls resembling apples, or like true apples of a golden colour (golden rennets), or perhaps gilded, as sometimes we have gilded laurels, and those embossed in pictures of silver, or rather brought to table in a silver network basket, or in a silver box of that which we call filigree--work, through which the golden apples might be seen. Doubtless in was some ornament of the table, then well known. As that was very pleasing to the eye, so is a word fitly spoken to the ear.

2. Especially to give a reproof with discretion, and so as to make it acceptable. If it be well given, by a wise reprover, and well taken, by an obedient ear, it is an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold, very graceful and well becoming both the reprover and the reproved; both will have their praise, the reprover for giving it so prudently and the reproved for taking it so patiently and making a good use of it. Others will commend them both, and they will have satisfaction in each other; he who gave the reproof is pleased that it had the desired effect, and he to whom it was given has reason to be thankful for it as a kindness. That is well given, we say, that is well taken; yet it does not always prove that that is well taken which is well given. It were to be wished that a wise reprover should always meet with an obedient ear, but often it is not so.

12 *As* an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold,
so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.
13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest,
so is a faithful messenger to them that send him:
for he refresheth the soul of his masters.

See here, 1. What ought to be the care of a servant, the meanest that is sent on an errand and entrusted with any business, much more the greatest, the agent and ambassador of a prince; he ought to be faithful to him that sends him, and to see to it that he do not, by mistake or with design, falsify his trust, and that he be in nothing that lies in his power wanting to his master's interest. Those that act as factors, by commission, ought to act as carefully as for themselves.

2. How much this will be the satisfaction of the master; it will refresh his soul as much as ever the cold of snow (which is hot countries they preserve by art all the year round) refreshed the labourers in the harvest, that bore the burden and heat of the day. The more important the affair was, and the more fear of its miscarrying, the more acceptable is the messenger, if he have managed it successfully and well. A faithful minister, Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us (Job 33:23); however, he will be a sweet savour to God, 2Co 2:15.

14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift
is like clouds and wind without rain.

He may be said to boast of a false gift,

1. Who pretends to have received or given that which he never had, which he never gave, makes a noise of his great accomplishments and his good services, but it is all false; he is not what he pretends to be. Or,

2. Who promises what he will give and what he will do, but performs nothing, who raises people's expectations of the mighty things he will do for his country, for his friends, what noble legacies he will leave, but either he has not wherewithal to do what he says or he never designs it. Such a one is like the morning-cloud, that passes away, and disappoints those who looked for rain from it to water the parched ground (Jude 1:12), clouds without water.

15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded,
and a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

Two things are here recommended to us, in dealing with others, as likely means to gain our point:--

1. Patience, to bear a present heat without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons and to give persons time to consider them. By this means even a prince may be persuaded to do a thing which he seemed very averse to, much more a common person. That which is justice and reason now will be so another time, and therefore we need not urge them with violence now, but wait for a more convenient season.

2. Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation: A soft tongue breaks the bone; it mollifies the roughest spirits and overcomes those that are most morose, like lightning, which, they say, has sometimes broken the bone, and yet not pierced the flesh. Gideon with a soft tongue pacified the Ephraimites and Abigail turned away David's wrath. Hard words, we say, break no bones, and therefore we should bear them patiently; but, it seems, soft words do, and therefore we should, on all occasions, give them prudently.

16 Hast thou found honey?
Eat so much as is sufficient for thee,
lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Here, 1. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense: Hast thou found honey? It is not forbidden fruit to thee, as it was to Jonathan; thou mayest eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. Eat as much as is sufficient, and no more. Enough is as good as a feast.

2. We are cautioned to take heed of excess. We must use all pleasures as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than does us good and make ourselves sick with it. We are most in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that fare sumptuously every day have need to watch over themselves, lest their hearts be at any time overcharged. The pleasures of sense lose their sweetness

by the excessive use of them and become nauseous, as honey, which turns sour in the stomach; it is therefore our interest, as well as our duty, to use them with sobriety.

17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor's house;
lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee.

Here he mentions another pleasure which we must not take too much of, that of visiting our friends, the former for fear of surfeiting ourselves, this for fear of surfeiting our neighbour.

1. It is a piece of civility to visit our neighbours sometimes, to show our respect to them and concern for them, and to cultivate and improve mutual acquaintance and love, and that we may have both the satisfaction and advantage of their conversation.

2. It is wisdom, as well as good manners, not to be troublesome to our friends in our visiting them, not to visit too often, nor stay too long, nor contrive to come at meal-time, nor make ourselves busy in the affairs of their families; hereby we make ourselves cheap, mean, and burdensome. Thy neighbour, who is thus plagued and haunted with thy visits, will be weary of thee and hate thee, and that will be the destruction of friendship which should have been the improvement of it. Post tres sæpe dies piscis vilescit et hospes--After the third day fish and company become distasteful. Familiarity breeds contempt. Nulli te facias nimis sodalem--Be not too intimate with any. He that sponges upon his friend loses him. How much better a friend then is God than any other friend; for we need not withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace (Pr 8:34); the oftener we come to him the better and the more welcome.

18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor
is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Here, 1 The sin condemned is bearing false witness against our neighbour, either in judgment or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment.

2. That which it is here condemned for is the mischievousness of it; it is in its power to ruin not only men's reputation, but

their lives, estates, families, all that is dear to them. A false testimony is every thing that is dangerous; it is a maul (or club to knock a man's brains out with), a flail, which there is no fence against; it is a sword to wound near at hand and a sharp arrow to wound at a distance; we have therefore need to pray, Deliver my soul, O Lord! from lying lips, Ps 120:2.

19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble
is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

1 The confidence of an unfaithful man (so some read it) will be like a broken tooth; his policy, his power, his interest, all that which he trusted in to support him in his wickedness, will fail him in time of trouble, Ps 52:7.

2. Confidence in an unfaithful man (so we read it), in a man whom we thought trusty and therefore depended on, but who proves otherwise; it proves not only unserviceable, but painful and vexatious, like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, which, when we put any stress upon it, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it, especially in time of trouble, when we most expect help from it; it is like a broken reed, Isa 36:6. Confidence in a faithful God, in time of trouble, will not prove thus; on him we may rest and in him dwell at ease.

20 *As* he that taketh away a garment in cold weather,
and as vinegar upon nitre,
so *is* he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.

1 The absurdity here censured is singing songs to a heavy heart. Those that are in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathizing with them, condoling with them, and concurring in their lamentation. If we take that method, the moving of our lips may assuage their grief (Job 16:5); but we take a wrong course with them if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry; for it adds to their grief to see their friends so little concerned for them; it puts them upon ripping up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth.

2 The absurdities this is compared to are, taking away a garment from a man in cold weather, which makes him colder,

and pouring vinegar upon nitre, which, like water upon lime, puts it into a ferment; so improper, so incongruous, is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some read it in a contrary sense: As he that puts on a garment in cold weather warms the body, or as vinegar upon nitre dissolves it, so he that sings songs of comfort to a person in sorrow refreshes him and dispels his grief.

21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;
and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

By this it appears that, however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving our brethren, but even that of loving our enemies, was not only a new, but also an old commandment, an Old-Testament commandment, though our Saviour has given it to us with the new enforcement of his own great example in loving us when we were enemies. Observe,

1. How we must express our love to our enemies by the real offices of kindness, even those that are expensive to ourselves and most acceptable to them: "If they be hungry and thirsty, instead of pleasing thyself with their distress and contriving how to cut off supplies from them, relieve them, as Elisha did the Syrians that came to apprehend him," 2Ki 6:22.

2. What encouragement we have to do so.

(1.) It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us; we shall mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend is, to act towards him in a friendly manner. If it do not gain him, it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God's wrath upon his head, as rejoicing in his calamity may be an occasion of God's turning his wrath from him, Pr 24:17.

(2.) However, we shall be no losers by our self-denial: "Whether he relent towards thee or no, the Lord shall reward thee; he shall forgive thee who thus showest thyself to be of a

forgiving spirit. He shall provide for thee when thou art in distress (though thou hast been evil and ungrateful), as thou dost for thy enemy; at least it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when kindnesses done to our enemies shall be remembered as well as those shown to God's friends."

22 for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,
and the Lord shall reward thee.

23 The north wind driveth away rain:
so *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Here see, 1. How we must discourage sin and witness against it, and particularly the sin of slandering and backbiting; we must frown upon it, and, by giving it an angry countenance, endeavour to put it out of countenance. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are if they were not readily heard; but good manners would silence the slanderer if he saw that his tales displeased the company. We should show ourselves uneasy if we heard a dear friend, whom we value, evil-spoken of; the same dislike we should show of evil-speaking in general. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do it by our looks.

2 The good effect which this might probably have; who knows but it may silence and drive away a backbiting tongue? Sin, if it be countenanced, becomes daring, but, if it receive any check, it is so conscious of its own shame that it becomes cowardly, and this sin in particular, for many abuse those they speak of only in hopes to curry favour with those they speak to.

24 *It is* better to dwell in the corner of the housetop,
than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

25 *As* cold waters to a thirsty soul,
so *is* good news from a far country.

See here, 1. How natural it is to us to desire to hear good news from our friends, and concerning our affairs at a distance. It is sometimes with impatience that we expect to hear from abroad; our souls thirst after it. But we should check the inordinateness of that desire; if it be bad news, it will come too soon, if good, it will be welcome at any time.

2. How acceptable such good news will be when it does come, as refreshing as cold water to one that is thirsty. Solomon himself had much trading abroad, as well as correspondence by his ambassadors with foreign courts; and how pleasant it was to hear of the good success of his negotiations abroad he well knew by experience. Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is it to hear good news thence, both in the everlasting gospel, which signified glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.

26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked
is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

It is here represented as a very lamentable thing, and a public grievance, and of ill consequence to many, like the troubling of a fountain and the corrupting of a spring, for the righteous to fall down before the wicked, that is,

1. For the righteous to fall into sin in the sight of the wicked--for them to do any thing unbecoming their profession, which is told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon, and in which the daughters of the Philistines rejoice. For those that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour to fall from their excellency, this troubles the fountains by grieving some, and corrupts the springs by infecting others and emboldening them to do likewise.

2. For the righteous to be oppressed, and run down, and trampled upon, by the violence or subtlety of evil men, to be displaced and thrust into obscurity, this is the troubling of the fountains of justice and corrupting the very springs of government, Pr 28:12,28,29:2.

3. For the righteous to be cowardly, to truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness and basely to yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and strengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, and so is like a troubled fountain and a corrupt spring.

27 *It is* not good to eat much honey:
so *for men* to search their own glory *is not* glory.

I. Two things we must be graciously dead to:-- 1. To the pleasures of sense, for it is not good to eat much honey; though it pleases the taste, and, if eaten with moderation, is very wholesome, yet, if eaten to excess, it becomes nauseous, creates bile, and is the occasion of many diseases. It is true of all the delights of the children of men that they will surfeit, but never satisfy, and they are dangerous to those that allow themselves the liberal use of them. 2. To the praise of man. We must not be greedy of that any more than of pleasure, because, for men to search their own glory, to court applause and covet to make themselves popular, is not their glory, but their shame; every one will laugh at them for it; and the glory which is so courted is not glory when it is got, for it is really no true honour to a man.

II. Some give another sense of this verse: To eat much honey is not good, but to search into glorious and excellent things is a great commendation, it is true glory; we cannot therein offend by excess. Others thus: "As honey, though pleasant to the taste, if used immoderately, oppresses the stomach, so an over-curious search into things sublime and glorious, though pleasant to us, if we pry too far, will overwhelm our capacities with a greater glory and lustre than they can bear." Or thus: "You may be surfeited with eating too much honey, but the last of glory, of their glory, the glory of the blessed, is glory; it will be ever fresh, and never pall the appetite."

28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit
is like a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls.

Here is, 1 The good character of a wise and virtuous man implied. He is one that has rule over his own spirit; he maintains the government of himself, and of his own appetites and passions, and does not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order.

2 The bad case of a vicious man, who has not this rule over his own spirit, who, when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has no government of himself, when he is provoked breaks out into exorbitant passions, such a one

is like a city that is broken down and without walls. All that is good goes out, and forsakes him; all that is evil breaks in upon him. He lies exposed to all the temptations of Satan and becomes an easy prey to that enemy; he is also liable to many troubles and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to him as it is to a city to have its walls ruined, Ne 1:3.

Proverbs-26

1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest,
so honor is not seemly for a fool.

Note, 1. It is too common a thing for honour to be given to fools, who are utterly unworthy of it and unfit for it. Bad men, who have neither wit nor grace, are sometimes preferred by princes, and applauded and cried up by the people. Folly is set in great dignity, as Solomon observed, Ec 10:6.

2. It is very absurd and unbecoming when it is so. It is an incongruous as snow in summer, and as great a disorder in the commonwealth as that is in the course of nature and in the seasons of the year; nay, it is as injurious as rain in harvest, which hinders the labourers and spoils the fruits of the earth when they are ready to be gathered. When bad men are in power they commonly abuse their power, in discouraging virtue, and giving countenance to wickedness, for want of wisdom to discern it and grace to detest it.

2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying,
so the curse causeless shall not come.

Here is, 1 The folly of passion. It makes men scatter causeless curses, wishing ill to others upon presumption that they are bad and have done ill, when either they mistake the person or misunderstand the fact, or they call evil good and good evil. Give honour to a fool, and he thunders out his anathemas against all that he is disgusted with, right or wrong. Great men, when wicked, think they have a privilege to keep those about them in awe, by cursing them, and swearing at them, which

yet is an expression of the most impotent malice and shows their weakness as much as their wickedness.

2 The safety of innocency. He that is cursed without cause, whether by furious imprecations or solemn anathemas, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head, than Goliath's curses did to David, 1Sa 17:43. It will fly away like the sparrow or the wild dove, which go nobody knows where, till they return to their proper place, as the curse will at length return upon the head of him that uttered it.

3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,
and a rod for the fool's back.

Here, 1. Wicked men are compared to the horse and the ass, so brutish are they, so unreasonable, so unruly, and not to be governed but by force or fear, so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves. Man indeed is born like the wild ass's colt, but as some by the grace of God are changed, and become rational, so others by custom in sin are hardened, and become more and more sottish, as the horse and the mule, Ps 32:9.

2. Direction is given to use them accordingly. Princes, instead of giving honour to a fool (Pr 26:1), must put disgrace upon him--instead of putting power into his hand, must exercise power over him. A horse unbroken needs a whip for correction, and an ass a bridle for direction and to check him when he would turn out of the way; so a vicious man, who will not be under the guidance and restraint of religion and reason, ought to be whipped and bridled, to be rebuked severely, and made to smart for what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from offending any more.

4 Answer not a fool according to his folly,
lest thou also be like unto him.

See here the noble security of the scripture-style, which seems to contradict itself, but really does not. Wise men have need to be directed how to deal with fools; and they have never more need of wisdom than in dealing with such, to know when to keep silence and when to speak, for there may be a time for both.

1. In some cases a wise man will not set his wit to that of a fool so far as to answer him according to his folly "If he boast of himself, do not answer him by boasting of thyself. If he rail and talk passionately, do not thou rail and talk passionately too. If he tell one great lie, do not thou tell another to match it. If he calumniate thy friends, do not thou calumniate his. If he banter, do not answer him in his own language, lest thou be like him, even thou, who knowest better things, who hast more sense, and hast been better taught."

2. Yet, in other cases, a wise man will use his wisdom for the conviction of a fool, when, by taking notice of what he says, there may be hopes of doing good, or at least preventing further, mischief, either to himself or others. "If thou have reason to think that thy silence will be deemed an evidence of the weakness of thy cause, or of thy own weakness, in such a case answer him, and let it be an answer ad hominem--to the man, beat him at his own weapons, and that will be an answer ad rem--to the point, or as good as one. If he offer any thing that looks like an argument, an answer that, and suit thy answer to his case. If he think, because thou dost not answer him, that what he says is unanswerable, then give him an answer, lest he be wise in his own conceit and boast of a victory." For (Lu 7:35) Wisdom's children must justify her.

5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
lest he be wise in his own conceit.
6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool
cutteth off the feet, *and* drinketh damage.

To recommend wisdom to us, and to quicken us to the diligent use of all the means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shows that fools are fit for nothing; they are either sottish men, who will never think and design at all, or vicious men, who will never think and design well.

1. They are not fit to be entrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand (Pr 26:6): He that does but send a message by the hand of a fool, of a careless heedless person, one who is so full of his jests and so given to his pleasures that he cannot apply his mind to any thing that is serious, will find

his message misunderstood, the one half of it forgotten, the rest awkwardly delivered, and so many blunders made about it that he might as well have cut off his legs, that is, never have sent him. Nay, he will drink damage; it will be very much to his prejudice to have employed such a one, who, instead of bringing him a good account of his affairs, will abuse him and put a trick upon him; for, in Solomon's language, a knave and a fool are of the same signification. It will turn much to a man's disgrace to make use of the service of a fool, for people will be apt to judge of the master by his messenger.

2. They are not fit to have any honour put upon them. He had said (Pr 26:1), Honour is not seemly for a fool; here he shows that it is lost and thrown away upon him, as if a man should throw a precious stone, or a stone fit to be used in weighing, into a heap of common stones, where it would be buried and of no use; it is as absurd as if a man should dress up a stone in purple (so others); nay, it is dangerous, it is like a stone bound in a sling, with which a man will be likely to do hurt. To give honour to a fool is to put a sword in a madman's hand, with which we know not what mischief he may do, even to those that put it into his hand.

3. They are not fit to deliver wise sayings, nor should they undertake to handle any matter of weight, though they should be instructed concerning it, and be able to say something to it. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers them and applies them (in such a manner that one may know he does not rightly understand them), lose their excellency and usefulness: A parable in the mouth of fools ceases to be a parable, and becomes a jest. If a man who lives a wicked life, yet speaks religiously and takes God's covenant into his mouth,

(1.) He does but shame himself and his profession: As the legs of the lame are not equal, by reason of which their going is unseemly, so unseemly is it for a fool to pretend to speak apophthegms, and give advice, and for a man to talk devoutly whose conversation is a constant contradiction to his talk and gives him the lie. His good words raise him up, but then his

bad life takes him down, and so his legs are not equal. "A wise saying," (says bishop Patrick) "doth as ill become a fool as dancing doth a cripple; for, as his lameness never so much appears as when he would seem nimble, so the other's folly is never so ridiculous as when he would seem wise." As therefore it is best for a lame man to keep his seat, so it is best for a silly man, or a bad man, to hold his tongue.

(2.) He does but do mischief with it to himself and others, as a drunkard does with a thorn, or any other sharp thing which he takes in his hand, with which he tears himself and those about him, because he knows not how to manage it. Those that talk well and do not live well, their good words will aggravate their own condemnation and others will be hardened by their inconsistency with themselves. Some give this sense of it: The sharpest saying, by which a sinner, one would think, should be pricked to the heart, makes no more impression upon a fool, no, though it come out of his own mouth, than the scratch of a thorn does upon the hand of a man when he is drunk, who then feels it not nor complains of it, Pr 23:35.

The Conduct of Fools.

7 The legs of the lame are not equal:
so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.
8 As he that bindeth a stone in a
sling, so *is* he that giveth honor to
a fool.
9 *As* a thorn goeth up into the hand of a
drunkard, so *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.
10 The great *God* that formed all *things*
both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text and in the margin; and accordingly it expresses either, 1 The equity of a good God. The Master, or Lord (so Rab signifies), or, as we read it, The great God that formed all things at first, and still governs them in infinite wisdom, renders to every man according to his work. He rewards the fool, who sinned through ignorance, who knew not his Lord's will, with few stripes; and he rewards the transgressor, who sinned

presumptuously and with a high hand, who knew his Lord's will and would not do it, with many stripes. Some understand it of the goodness of God's common providence even to fools and transgressors, on whom he causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall. Or,

2 The iniquity of a bad prince (so the margin reads it): A great man grieves all, and he hires the fool; he hires also the transgressors. When a wicked man gets power in his hand, by himself, and by the fools and knaves whom he employs under him, whom he hires and chooses to make use of, he grieves all who are under him and is vexatious to them. We should therefore pray for kings and all in authority, that, under them, our lives may be quiet and peaceable.

11 As a dog returneth to his vomit,
so a fool returneth to his folly.

See here, 1. What an abominable thing sin is, and how hateful sometimes it is made to appear, even to the sinner himself. When his conscience is convinced, or he feels smart from his sin, he is sick of it, and vomits it up; he seems then to detest it and to be willing to part with it. It is in itself, and, first or last, will be to the sinner, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, Ps 36:2.

2. How apt sinners are to relapse into it notwithstanding. As the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burdened his stomach, yet goes and licks it up again, so sinners, who have been convinced only and not converted, return to sin again, forgetting how sick it made them. The apostle (2Pe 2:22) applies this proverb to those that have known the way of righteousness but are turned from it; but God will spue them out of his mouth, Re 3:16.

12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.

Here is, 1. A spiritual disease supposed, and that is self-conceit: Seest thou a man? Yes, we see many a one, wise in his own conceit, who has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours, have, and enough, so that he needs no more, has

such a conceit of his own abilities as makes him opinionative, dogmatical, and censorious; and all the use he makes of his knowledge is that it puffs him up. Or, if by a wise man we understand a religious man, it describes the character of those who, making some show of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good when really it is very bad, like Laodicea, Re 3:17.

2 The danger of this disease. It is in a manner desperate: There is more hope of a fool, that knows and owns himself to be such, than of such a one. Solomon was not only a wise man himself, but a teacher of wisdom; and this observation he made upon his pupils, that he found his work most difficult and least successful with those that had a good opinion of themselves and were not sensible that they needed instruction. Therefore he that seems to himself to be wise must become a fool, that he may be wise, 1Co 3:18. There is more hope of a publican than of a proud Pharisee, Mt 21:32. Many are hindered from being truly wise and religious by a false and groundless conceit that they are so, Joh 9:40,41.

The Disgrace of Slothfulness.

13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion in the way;
a lion *is* in the streets.

When a man talks foolishly we say, He talks idly; for none betray their folly more than those who are idle and go about to excuse themselves in their idleness. As men's folly makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish. Observe, 1. What the slothful man really dreads. He dreads the way, the streets, the place where work is to be done and a journey to be gone; he hates business, hates every thing that requires care and labour.

2. What he dreams of, and pretends to dread--a lion in the way. When he is pressed to be diligent, either in his worldly affairs or in the business of religion, this is his excuse (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none), There is a lion in the way, some insuperable difficulty or danger which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions frequent woods and deserts; and, in the day-time, when man has business to do, they are in their dens, Ps 104:22,23. But the sluggard fancies, or rather

pretends to fancy, a lion in the streets, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy, nor is he so fierce as he is painted. Note, It is a foolish thing to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties, Ec 11:4.

14 *As* the door turneth upon his hinges, so *doth* the slothful upon his bed.

Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease; he lies in his bed on one side till he is weary of that, and then turns to the other, but still in his bed, when it is far in the day and work is to be done, as the door is moved, but not removed; and so his business is neglected and his opportunities are let slip. See the sluggard's character.

1. He is one that does not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, as the door upon the hinges. Bodily ease, too much consulted, is the sad occasion of many a spiritual disease. Those that love sleep will prove in the end to have loved death.

2. He does not care to get forward with his business; in that he stirs to and fro a little, but to no purpose; he is where he was. Slothful professors turn, in profession, like the door upon the hinges. The world and the flesh are the two hinges on which they are hung, and though they move in a course of external services, have got into road of duties, and tread around in them like the horse in the mill, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven--sinners unchanged, saints unimproved.

15 The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

The sluggard has now, with much ado, got out of his bed, but he might as well have lain there still for any thing he is likely to bring to pass in his work, so awkwardly does he go about it. Observe,

1 The pretence he makes for his slothfulness: He hides his hand in his bosom for fear of cold; next to his warm bed in

his warm bosom. Or he pretends that he is lame, as some do that make a trade of begging; something ails his hand; he would have it thought that it is blistered with yesterday's hard work. Or it intimates, in general, his aversion to business; he has tried, and his hands are not used to labour, and therefore he hugs himself in his own ease and cares for nobody. Note, It is common for those that will not do their duty to pretend they cannot. I cannot dig, Lu 16:3.

2 The prejudice he sustains by his slothfulness. He himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself: It grieves him to bring his hand to his mouth, that is, he cannot find in his heart to feed himself, but dreads, as if it were a mighty toil, to lift his hand to his head. It is an elegant hyperbole, aggravating his sin, that he cannot endure to take the least pains, no, not for the greatest profit, and showing how his sin is his punishment. Those that are slothful in the business of religion will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer, though they might have them for the fetching.

16 The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Observe, 1 The high opinion which the sluggard has of himself, notwithstanding the gross absurdity and folly of his slothfulness: He thinks himself wiser than seven men, than seven wise men, for they are such as can render a reason. It is the wisdom of a man to be able to render a reason, of a good man to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, 1Pe 3:15. What we do we should be able to render a reason for, though perhaps we may not have wit enough to show the fallacy of every objection against it. He that takes pains in religion can render a good reason for it; he knows that he is working for a good Master and that his labour shall not be in vain. But the sluggard thinks himself wiser than seven such; for let seven such persuade him to be diligent, with all the reasons they can render for it, it is to no purpose; his own determination, he thinks, answer enough to them and all their reasons.

2 The reference that this has to his slothfulness. It is the sluggard, above all men, that is thus self-conceited; for,

(1.) His good opinion of himself is the cause of his slothfulness; he will not take pains to get wisdom because he thinks he is wise enough already. A conceit of the sufficiency of our attainments is a great enemy to our improvement.

(2.) His slothfulness is the cause of his good opinion of himself. If he would but take pains to examine himself, and compare himself with the laws of wisdom, he would have other thoughts of himself. Indulged slothfulness is at the bottom of prevailing self-conceitedness.

Nay, (3.) So wretchedly besotted is he that he takes his slothfulness to be his wisdom; he thinks it is his wisdom to make much of himself, and take all the ease he can get, and do no more in religion than he needs must, to avoid suffering, to sit still and see what other people do, that he may have the pleasure of finding fault with them. Of such sluggards, who are proud of that which is their shame, their is little hope, Pr 26:12.

17 He that passeth by, *and* meddleth with strife *belonging* not to him,
is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

1. That which is here condemned is meddling with strife that belongs not to us. If we must not be hasty to strive in our own cause (Pr 25:8), much less in other people's, especially theirs that we are no way related to or concerned in, but light on accidentally as we pass by. If we can be instrumental to make peace between those that are at variance we must do it, though we should thereby get the ill-will of both sides, at least while they are in their heat; but to make ourselves busy in other men's matters, and parties in other men's quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust ourselves into temptation. Who made me a judge? Let them end it, as they began it, between themselves.

2. We are cautioned against it because of the danger it exposes us to; it is like taking a snarling cur by the ears, that will snap at you and bite you; you had better have let him alone, for you cannot get clear of him when you would, and must thank yourselves if you come off with a wound and dishonour. He that has got a dog by the ears, if he lets him go he flies at him, if he keeps his hold, he has his hands full, and can do nothing else. Let every one with quietness work and mind his own business, and not with unquietness quarrel and meddle with other people's business.

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18 As a mad *man* who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,

See here,

1. How mischievous those are that make no scruple of deceiving their neighbours; they are as madmen that cast firebrands, arrows, and death, so much hurt may they do by their deceits. They value themselves upon it as polite cunning men, but really they are as madmen. There is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. It is not only the passionate furious man, but the malicious deceitful man, that is a madman; he does in effect cast fire-brands, arrows, and death; he does more mischief than he can imagine. Fraud and falsehood burn like fire-brands, kill, even at a distance, like arrows.

2. See how frivolous the excuse is which men commonly make for the mischief they do, that they did it in a jest; with this they think to turn it off when they are reproved for it, Am not I in sport? But it will prove dangerous playing with fire and jesting with edge-tools. Not that those are to be commended who are captious, and can take no jest (those that themselves are wise must suffer fools, 2Co 11:19,20), but those are certainly to be condemned who are any way abusive to their neighbours, impose upon their credulity, cheat them in their bargains with them, tell lies to them or tell lies of them, give them ill language, or sully their reputation, and then think to excuse it by saying that they did but jest. Am not I in sport? He that sins in just must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin.

Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest, and so is the reputation of our neighbour. By lying and slandering in jest men learn themselves, and teach others, to lie and slander in earnest; and a false report, raised in mirth, may be spread in malice; besides, if a man may tell a lie to make himself merry, why not to make himself rich, and so truth quite perishes, and men teach their tongues to tell lies, Jer 9:5. If men would consider that a lie comes from the devil, and brings to hell-fire, surely that would spoil the sport of it; it is casting arrows and death to themselves.

19 so *is* the man *that* deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, Am not I in sport?

20 Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out:
so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

Contention is as a fire; it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Now here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace,

1. We must not give ear to talebearers, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel; nay, they spread it with combustible matter; the tales they carry are fireballs. Those who by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresenting words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends, and neighbours, jealous one of another, to alienate them one from another, and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease as the fire will go out when it has no fuel; the contenders will better understand one another and come to a better temper; old stories will soon be forgotten when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them, and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy.

Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered. To illustrate this, he repeats (Pr 26:22) what he had said before (Pr 18:8), that the words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, deep and dangerous wounds, wounds in the vitals. They wound the reputation of him who is belied, and perhaps the wound proves incurable, and even the plaster of a recantation (which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it. They wound the love and charity which he to whom they are spoken ought to have for his neighbour and give a fatal stab to friendship and Christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be tale-bearers ourselves at any time, nor ever do any ill offices, but we should not give the least countenance to those that are.

2. We must not associate with peevish passionate people, that are exceptions, and apt to put the worst constructions upon everything, that pick quarrels upon the least occasion, and are quick, and high, and hot, in resenting affronts. These are contentious men, that kindle strife, Pr 26:21. The less we have to do with such the better, for it will be very difficult to avoid quarrelling with those that are quarrelsome.

21 *As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire;
so *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.
22 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds,
and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.
23 Burning lips and a wicked heart
are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

This may be meant either, 1. Of a wicked heart showing itself in burning lips, furious, passionate, outrageous words, burning in malice, and persecuting those to whom, or of whom, they are spoken; ill words and ill-will agree as well together as a potsherd and the dross of silver, which, now that the pot is broken and the dross separated from the silver, are fit to be thrown together to the dunghill.

2. Or of a wicked heart disguising itself with burning lips, burning with the professions of love and friendship, and even persecuting a man with flatteries; this is like a potsherd covered with the scum or dross of silver, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value, but a wise man is soon aware of the cheat. This sense agrees with the following verses.

24 He that hateth dissembleth with his
lips, and layeth up deceit within him;

There is cause to complain, not only of the want of sincerity in men's profession of friendship, and that they do not love so well as they pretend nor will serve their friends so much as they promise, but, which is much worse, of wicked designs in the profession of friendship, and the making of it subservient to the most malicious intentions. This is here spoken of as a common thing (Pr 26:24):

He that hates his neighbour, and is contriving to do him a mischief, yet dissembles with his lips, professes to have a respect for him and to be ready to serve him, talks kindly with him, as Cain with Abel, asks, Art thou in health, my brother? as Joab to Amasa, that his malice may not be suspected and guarded against, and so he may have the fairer opportunity to execute the purposes of it, this man lays up deceit within him, that is, he keeps in his mind the mischief he intends to do his neighbour till he catches him at an advantage. This is malice which has no less of the subtlety than it has of the venom of the old serpent in it. Now, as to this matter, we are here cautioned,

1. Not to be so foolish as to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust when a man speaks fair; be not too forward to believe him unless you know him well, for it is possible there may be seven abominations in his heart, a great many projects of mischief against you, which he is labouring so industriously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve, but it is madness to give credit to him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; seven other spirits does one unclean spirit bring more wicked than himself.

2. Not to be so wicked as to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for, though the fraud may be carried on plausibly awhile, it will be brought to light, Pr 26:26. He whose hatred is covered by deceit will one time or other be discovered, and his wickedness shown, to his shame and confusion, before the whole congregation; and nothing will do more to make a man odious to all companies. Love (says one) is the best armour, but the worst cloak, and will serve dissemblers as the disguise which Ahab put on and perished in.

25 when he speaketh fair, believe him not:
for *there are* seven abominations in his heart.
26 *Whose* hatred is covered by deceit,

his wickedness shall be showed before the *whole* congregation.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein:
and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

See here, 1. What pains men take to do mischief to others. As they put a force upon themselves by concealing their design with a profession of friendship, so they put themselves to a great deal of labour to bring it about; it is digging a pit, it is rolling a stone, hard work, and yet men will not stick at it to gratify their passion and revenge.

2. What preparation they hereby make of mischief to themselves. Their violent dealing will return upon their own heads; they shall themselves fall into the pit they digged, and the stone they rolled will return upon them, Ps 7:15,16,9:15,16. The righteous God will take the wise, not only in their own craftiness, but in their own cruelty. It is the plotter's doom. Haman is hanged on a gallows of his own preparing.

-- nec lex est justior ulla Quam necis artifices arte perire sua

-- Nor is there any law more just than that the contrivers of destruction should perish by their own arts.

28 A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it;
and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

There are two sorts of lies equally detestable:-- 1. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those it is spoken of: A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it; it afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches because it hates them, and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence; and it hates them because it has afflicted them and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and every body sees it.

2. A flattering lie, which secretly works the ruin of those it is spoken to. In the former the mischief is plain, and men

guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man therefore will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills than of a slanderer that proclaims war.

Proverbs-27

1 Boast not thyself of tomorrow;
for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Here is, 1. A good caution against presuming upon time to come: Boast not thyself, no, not of to-morrow, much less of many days or years to come. This does not forbid preparing for to-morrow, but presuming upon to-morrow. We must not promise ourselves the continuance of our lives and comforts till to-morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of God and as those who with good reason are kept at uncertainty about it. We must not take thought for the morrow (Mt 6:34), but we must cast our care concerning it upon God. See Jam 4:13-15. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to-morrow, as if we were sure of it, but to-day, while it is called to-day, hear God's voice.

2. A good consideration, upon which this caution is grounded: We know not what a day may bring forth, what event may be in the teeming womb, of time; it is a secret till it is born, Ec 11:5. A little time may produce considerable changes, and such as we little think of. We know not what the present day may bring forth; the evening must commend it. Nescis quid serus vesper vehat--Thou knowest not what the close of evening may bring with it. God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events, and reserved to himself the knowledge of them, as a flower of the crown, that he may train us up in a dependence upon himself and a continued readiness for every event, Ac 1:7.

2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;

a stranger, and not thine own lips.

Note, 1. We must do that which is commendable, for which even strangers may praise us. Our light must shine before men, and we must do good works that may be seen, though we must not do them on purpose that they may be seen. Let our own works be such as will praise us, even in the gates, Php 4:8.

2. When we have done it we must not commend ourselves, for that is an evidence of pride, folly, and self-love, and a great lessening to a man's reputation. Every one will be forward to run him down that cries himself up. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate ourselves, but it does not become us to applaud ourselves. Proprio laus sordet in ore--Self-praise defiles the mouth.

3 A stone *is* heavy, and the sand weighty;
but a fool's wrath *is* heavier than them both.

These two verses show the intolerable mischief, 1. Of ungoverned passion. The wrath of a fool, who when he is provoked cares not what he says and does, is more grievous than a great stone or a load of sand. It lies heavily upon himself. Those who have no command of their passions do themselves even sink under the load of them. The wrath of a fool lies heavily upon those he is enraged at, to whom, in his fury, he will be in danger of doing some mischief. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool, but, if he be in a passion, to get out of his way.

2. Of rooted malice, which is as much worse than the former as coals of juniper are worse than a fire of thorns. Wrath (it is true) is cruel, and does many a barbarous thing, and anger is outrageous; but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, are much more mischievous. One may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy, there is no standing before it; it will pursue; it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another will be still contriving to do him hurt, and will keep his anger for ever.

4 Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous;

but who *is* able to stand before envy?
5 Open rebuke *is* better than secret love.

Note, 1. It is good for us to be reproved, and told of our faults, by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to show itself in dealing plainly with our friends, and reproving them for what they say and do amiss, this is really better, not only than secret hatred (as Le 19:17), but than secret love, that love to our neighbours which does not show itself in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls. Faithful are the reproofs of a friend, though for the present they are painful as wounds. It is a sign that our friends are faithful indeed if, in love to our souls, they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it. The physician's care is to cure the patient's disease, not to please his palate.

2. It is dangerous to be caressed and flattered by an enemy, whose kisses are deceitful We can take no pleasure in them because we can put no confidence in them (Joab's kiss and Judas's were deceitful), and therefore we have need to stand upon our guard, that we be not deluded by them; they are to be deprecated. Some read it: The Lord deliver us from an enemy's kisses, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.

6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend;
but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.
7 The full soul loatheth a honeycomb;
but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Solomon here, as often in this book, shows that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for,

1. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich have. Hunger is the best sauce. Coarse fare, with a good appetite to it has a sensible pleasantness in it, which those are strangers to whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting. Those that fare sumptuously every day nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails; whereas those that have no more than their necessary food, though it be such as the full soul would call bitter, to them it is sweet; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it.

2. They are more thankful for their enjoyments: The hungry will bless God for bread and water, while those that are full think the greatest dainties and varieties scarcely worth giving thanks for. The virgin Mary seems to refer to this when she says (Lu 1:53), The hungry, who know how to value God's blessings, are filled with good things, but the rich, who despise them, are justly sent empty away.

8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest,
so *is* a man that wandereth from his place.

Note, 1. There are many that do not know when they are well off, but are uneasy with their present condition, and given to change. God, in his providence, has appointed them a place fit for them and has made it comfortable to them; but they affect unsettledness; they love to wander; they are glad of a pretence to go abroad, and do not care for staying long at a place; they needlessly absent themselves from their own work and care, and meddle with that which belongs not to them.

2. Those that thus desert the post assigned to them are like a bird that wanders from her nest. It is an instance of their folly; they are like a silly bird; they are always wavering, like the wandering bird that hops from bough to bough and rests nowhere. It is unsafe; the bird that wanders is exposed; a man's place is his castle; he that quits it makes himself an easy prey to the fowler. When the bird wanders from her nest the eggs and young ones there are neglected. Those that love to be abroad leave their work at home undone. Let every man therefore, in the calling wherein he is called, therein abide, therein abide with God.

9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart:
so *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

Here is, 1. A charge given to be faithful and constant to our friends, our old friends, to keep up an intimacy with them, and to be ready to do them all the offices that lie in our power. It is good to have a friend, a bosom-friend, whom we can be free with, and with whom we may communicate counsels. It is not necessary that this friend should be a

relation, or any way akin to us, though it is happiest when, among those who are so, we find one fit to make a friend of. Peter and Andrew were brethren, so were James and John; yet Solomon frequently distinguishes between a friend and a brother. But it is advisable to choose a friend among our neighbours who live near us, that acquaintance may be kept up and kindnesses the more frequently interchanged. It is good also to have a special respect to those who have been friends to our family: "Thy own friend, especially if he have been thy father's friend, forsake not; fail not both to serve him and to use him, as there is occasion. He is a tried friend; he knows thy affairs; he has a particular concern for thee; therefore be advised by him." It is a duty we owe to our parents, when they are gone, to love their friends and consult with them. Solomon's son undid himself by forsaking the counsel of his father's friends.

2. A good reason given why we should thus value true friendship and be choice of it.

(1.) Because of the pleasure of it. There is a great deal of sweetness in conversing and consulting with a cordial friend. It is like ointment and perfume, which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirits. It rejoices the heart; the burden of care is made lighter by unbosoming ourselves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. The sweetness of friendship lies not in hearty mirth, and hearty laughter, but in hearty counsel, faithful advice, sincerely given and without flattery, by counsel of the soul (so the word is), counsel which reaches the case, and comes to the heart, counsel about soul-concerns, Ps 66:16. We should reckon that the most pleasant conversation which is about spiritual things, and promotes the prosperity of the soul.

(2.) Because of the profit and advantage of it, especially in a day of calamity. We are here advised not to go into a brother's house, not to expect relief from a kinsman merely for kindred-sake, for the obligation of that commonly goes

little further than calling cousin and fails when it comes to the trial of a real kindness, but rather to apply ourselves to our neighbours, who are at hand, and will be ready to help us at an exigence. It is wisdom to oblige them by being neighbourly, and we shall have the benefit of it in distress, by finding them so to us, Pr 18:24.

10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not;
neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity:
for better *is* a neighbor *that is* near than a brother far off.

11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,
that I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Children are here exhorted to be wise and good, 1. That they may be a comfort to their parents and may make their hearts glad, even when the evil days come, and so recompense them for their care, Pr 23:15.

2. That they may be a credit to them: "That I may answer him that reproaches me with having been over-strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take. My son, be wise, and then it will appear, in the effect, that I went the wisest way to work with my children." Those that have been blessed with a religious education should in every thing conduct themselves so as to be a credit to their education and to silence those who say, A young saint, an old devil; and to prove the contrary, A young saint, an old angel.

12 A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, *and* hideth himself;
but the simple pass on, *and* are punished.

13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger,
and take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud
voice, rising early in the morning,
it shall be counted a curse to him.

Note, 1. It is a great folly to be extravagant in praising even the best of our friends and benefactors. It is our duty to give every one his due praise, to applaud those who excel in knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, and to acknowledge the kindnesses we have received with thankfulness; but to do

this with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, to be always harping on this string, in all companies, even to our friend's face, or so as that he may be sure to hear it, to do it studiously, as we do that which we rise early to, to magnify the merits of our friend above measure and with hyperboles, is fulsome, and nauseous, and savours of hypocrisy and design.

Praising men for what they have done is only to get more out of them; and every body concludes the parasite hopes to be well paid for his panegyric or epistle dedicatory. We must not give that praise to our friend which is due to God only, as some think is intimated in rising early to do it; for in the morning God is to be praised. We must not make too much haste to praise men (so some understand it), not cry up men too soon for their abilities and performances, but let them first be proved; lest they be lifted up with pride, and laid to sleep in idleness.

2. It is a greater folly to be fond of being ourselves extravagantly praised. A wise man rather counts it a curse, and a reflection upon him, not only designed to pick his pocket, but which may really turn to his prejudice. Modest praises (as a great man observes) invite such as are present to add to the commendation, but immodest immoderate praises tempt them to detract rather, and to censure one that they hear over-commended. And, besides, over-praising a man makes him the object of envy; every man puts in for a share of reputation, and therefore reckons himself injured if another monopolize it or have more given him than his share. And the greatest danger of all is that it is a temptation to pride; men are apt to think of themselves above what is meet when others speak of them above what is meet. See how careful blessed Paul was not to be over-valued, 2Co 12:6.

15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

Here, as before, Solomon laments the case of him that has a peevish passionate wife, that is continually chiding, and making herself and all about her uneasy.

1. It is a grievance that there is no avoiding, for it is like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The contentions of a neighbour may be like a sharp shower, troublesome for the time, yet, while it lasts, one may take shelter; but the contentions of a wife are like a constant soaking rain, for which there is no remedy but patience See Pr 19:13.

2. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wise man would hide it if he could, for the sake both of his own and his wife's reputation, but he cannot, any more than he can conceal the noise of the wind when it blows or the smell of a strong perfume. Those that are froward and brawling will proclaim their own shame, even when their friends, in kindness to them, would cover it.

16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind,
and the ointment of his right hand, *which* bewrayeth *itself.*
17 Iron sharpeneth iron;
so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

This intimates both the pleasure and the advantage of conversation. One man is nobody; nor will poring upon a book in a corner accomplish a man as the reading and studying of men will. Wise and profitable discourse sharpens men's wits; and those that have ever so much knowledge may by conference have something added to them. It sharpens men's looks, and, by cheering the spirits, puts a briskness and liveliness into the countenance, and gives a man such an air as shows he is pleased himself and makes him pleasing to those about him. Good men's graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by its like, especially by the file. Men are filed, made smooth, and bright, and fit for business (who were rough, and dull, and inactive), by conversation. This is designed,

1. To recommend to us this expedient for sharpening ourselves, but with a caution to take heed whom we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great either for the better or for the worse.

2. To direct us what we must have in our eye in conversation, namely to improve both others and ourselves, not to pass away time or banter one another, but to provoke one another to love and to good works and so to make one another wiser and better.

18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honored.

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean employments. Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those who keep to it will find there is something to be got by it.

1. Let not a poor gardener, who keeps the fig-tree, be discouraged; though it require constant care and attendance to nurse up fig-trees, and, when they have grown to maturity, to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their season, yet he shall be paid for his pains: He shall eat the fruit of it, 1Co 9:7.

2. Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thriving and being preferred; for if he be diligent in waiting on his master, observant of him and obedient to him, if he keep his master (so the word is), if he do all he can for the securing of his person and reputation and take care that his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one shall be honoured, shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded. God is a Master who has engaged to put an honour on those that serve him faithfully, Joh 12:26.

19 As in water face *answereth* to face, so the heart of man to man.

This shows us that there is a way,

1. Of knowing ourselves. As the water is a looking-glass in which we may see our faces by reflection, so there are mirrors by which the heart of a man is discovered to a man, that is, to himself. Let a man examine his own conscience, his thoughts, affections, and intentions. Let him behold his natural face in the glass of the divine law (Jam 1:23), and he may discern what kind of man he is and what is his true character, which it will be of great use to every man rightly to know.

2. Of knowing one another by ourselves; for, as there is a similitude between the face of a man and the reflection of it in the water, so there is between one man's heart and another's for God has fashioned men's hearts alike; and in many cases we may judge of others by ourselves, which is one of the foundations on which that rule is built of doing to others as we would be done by, Ex 23:9.

-- Nihil est unum uni tam simile, tam par, quam omnes inter nosmet ipsos sumus. Sui nemo ipse tam similis quam omnes sunt omnium

-- No one thing is so like another as man is to man. No person is so like himself as each person is to all besides. Cic. de Legib. lib.

One corrupt heart is like another, and so is one sanctified heart, for the former bears the same image of the earthy, the latter the same image of the heavenly.

20 Hell and destruction are never full;
so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Two things are here said to be insatiable, and they are two things near of kin--death and sin.

1. Death is insatiable. The first death, the second death, both are so. The grave is not clogged with the multitude of dead bodies that are daily thrown into it, but is still an open sepulchre, and cries, Give, give. Hell also has enlarged itself, and still has room for the damned spirits that are

committed to that prison. Tophet is deep and large, Isa 30:33.

2. Sin is insatiable: The eyes of man are never satisfied, nor the appetites of the carnal mind towards profit or pleasure. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is he the loves silver satisfied with silver. Men labour for that which surfeits, but satisfies not; nay, it is dissatisfying; but satisfies not; nay, it is dissatisfying; such a perpetual uneasiness have men justly been doomed to ever since our first parents were not satisfied with all the trees of Eden, but they must meddle with the forbidden tree. Those whose eyes are ever toward the Lord in him are satisfied, and shall for ever be so.

21 *As* the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold;
so *is* a man to his praise.

This gives us a touchstone by which we may try ourselves. Silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot; so is man tried by praising him. Let him be extolled and preferred, and then he will show himself what he is.

1. If a man be made, by the applause that is given him, proud, conceited, and scornful,--if he take the glory to himself which he should transmit to God, as Herod did,--if, the more he is praised, the more careless he is of what he says and does,--if he lie in bed till noon because his name is up, thereby it will appear that he is a vain foolish man, and a man who, though he be praised, has nothing in him truly praise-worthy.

2. If, on the contrary, a man is made by his praise more thankful to God, more respectful to his friends, more watchful against every thing that may blemish his reputation, more diligent to improve himself, and do good to others, that he may answer the expectations of his friends from him, by this it will appear that he is a wise and good man. He has a good temper of mind who knows how to

pass by evil report and good report, and is still the same, 2Co 6:8.

22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle,
yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

Solomon had said (Pr 22:15), The foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child may be driven out by the rod of correction, for then the mind is to be moulded, the vicious habits not having taken root; but here he shows that, if it be not done then, it will be next to impossible to do it afterwards; if the disease be inveterate, there is a danger of its being incurable. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Observe,

1. Some are so bad that rough and severe methods must be used with them, after gentle means have been tried in vain; they must be brayed in a mortar. God will take this way with them by his judgments; the magistrates must take this way with them by the rigour of the law. Force must be used with those that will not be ruled by reason, and love, and their own interest.

2. Some are so incorrigibly bad that even those rough and severe methods do not answer the end, their foolishness will not depart from them, so fully are their hearts set in them to do evil; they are often under the rod and yet not humbled, in the furnace and yet not refined, but, like Ahaz, trespass yet more (2Ch 28:22); and what remains then but that they should be rejected as reprobate silver?

23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
and look well to thy herds:

Here is, I. A command given us to be diligent in our callings. It is directed to husbandmen and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle, but it is to be extended to all other lawful callings; whatever our business is, within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. This command intimates,

1. That we ought to have some business to do in this world and not to live in idleness.

2. We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and not meddle with that which we do not understand.

3. We ought to have an eye to it ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others. We should, with our own eyes, inspect the state of our flocks, it is the master's eye that makes them fat.

4. We must be discreet and considerate in the management of our business, know the state of things, and look well to them, that nothing may be lost, no opportunity let slip, but every thing done in proper time and order, and so as to turn to the best advantage. 5. We must be diligent and take pains; not only sit down and contrive, but be up and doing: "Set thy heart to thy herds, as one in care; lay thy hands, lay thy bones, to thy business."

24 for riches *are* not for ever:
and doth the crown *endure* to every generation?
25 The hay appeareth,
and the tender grass showeth itself,
and herbs of the mountains are gathered.

The reasons to enforce this command. Consider,

1 The uncertainty of worldly wealth (Pr 27:24): Riches are not for ever.

(1.) Other riches are not so durable as these are: "Look well to thy flocks and herds, thy estate in the country and the stock upon that, for these are staple commodities, which, in a succession, will be for ever, whereas riches in trade and merchandise will not be so; the crown itself may perhaps not be so sure to thy family as thy flocks and herds."

(2.) Even these riches will go to decay if they be not well looked after. If a man had an abbey (as we say), and were slothful and wasteful, he might make an end of it. Even the crown and the revenues of it, if care be not taken, will suffer

damage, nor will it continue to every generation without very good management. Though David had the crown entailed on his family, yet he looked well to his flocks, 1Ch 27:29,31.

2 The bounty and liberality of nature, or rather of the God of nature, and his providence (Pr 27:25): The hay appears. In taking care of the flocks and herds,

(1.) "There needs no great labour, no ploughing or sowing; the food for them is the spontaneous product of the ground; thou hast nothing to do but to turn them into it in the summer, when the grass shows itself, and to gather the herbs of the mountains for them against winter. God has done his part; thou art ungrateful to him, and unjustly refusest to serve his providence, if thou dost not do thine."

(2.) "There is an opportunity to be observed and improved, a time when the hay appears; but, if thou let slip that time, thy flocks and herds will fare the worse for it. As for ourselves, so for our cattle, we ought, with the ant, to provide meat in summer."

3. The profit of good husbandry in a family: "Keep thy sheep, and thy sheep will help to keep thee; thou shalt have food for thy children and servants, goats' milk enough (Pr 27:27); and enough is as good as a feast. Thou shalt have raiment likewise: the lambs' wool shall be for thy clothing. Thou shalt have money to pay thy rent; the goats thou shalt have to sell shall be the price of thy field;" nay, as some understand it, "Thou shalt become a purchaser, and buy land to leave to thy children," (Pr 27:26). Note,

(1.) If we have food and raiment, and wherewithal to give every body his own, we have enough, and ought to be not only content, but thankful.

(2.) Masters of families must provide not only for themselves, but for their families, and see that their servants have a fitting maintenance.

(3.) Plain food and plain clothing, if they be but competent, are all we should aim at. "Reckon thyself well done to if thou be clothed with home-spun cloth with the fleece of thy own lambs, and fed with goats' milk; let that serve for thy food which serves for the food of thy household and the maintenance of thy maidens. Be not desirous of dainties, far-fetched and dear-bought."

(4.) This should encourage us to be careful and industrious about our business, that that will bring in a sufficient maintenance for our families; we shall eat the labour of our hands.

26 The lambs *are* for thy clothing,
and the goats *are* the price of the field.
27 And *thou shalt have* goats' milk enough for thy
food, for the food of thy household,
and *for* the maintenance for thy maidens.

Proverbs-28

The Wicked and the Righteous

1 The wicked flee when no man pursueth:
but the righteous are bold as a lion.

See here, 1. What continual frights those are subject to that go on in wicked ways. Guilt in the conscience makes men a terror to themselves, so that they are ready to flee when none pursues; like one that absconds for debt, who thinks every one he meets a bailiff. Though they pretend to be easy, there are secret fears which haunt them wherever they go, so that they fear where no present or imminent danger is, Ps 53:5. Those that have made God their enemy, and know it, cannot but see the whole creation at war with them, and therefore can have no true enjoyment of themselves, no confidence,

no courage, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Sin makes men cowards.

-- Degeneres animos timor arguit

-- Fear argues a degenerate soul. VIRGIL.

-- Quos diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos

-- The consciousness of atrocious crimes astonishes and confounds.

JUVENAL.

If they flee when none pursues, what will they do when they shall see God himself pursuing them with his armies? Job 20:24,Job 15:24. See De 28:25,Le 26:36.

2. What a holy security and serenity of mind those enjoy who keep conscience void of offence and so keep themselves in the love of God: The righteous are bold as a lion, as a young lion; in the greatest dangers they have a God of almighty power to trust to. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed. Whatever difficulties they meet with in the way of their duty, they are not daunted by them. None of those things move me.

-- Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi

-- Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence, Still to preserve thy conscious innocence. HOR.

2 For the transgression of a land
many *are* the princes thereof:
but by a man of understanding *and* knowledge
the state *thereof* shall be prolonged.

Note, 1. National sins bring national disorders and the disturbance of the public repose: For the transgression of a land, and a general defection from God and religion to idolatry, profaneness, or immorality, many are the princes

thereof, many at the same time pretending to the sovereignty and contending for it, by which the people are crumbled into parties and factions, biting and devouring one another, or many successively, in a little time, one cutting off another, as 1Ki 16:8, &c., or soon cut off by the hand of God or of a foreign enemy, as 2Ki 24:5, &c. As the people suffer for the sins of the prince,

-- Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi
-- Kings play the madmen, and their people suffer for it,
so the government sometimes suffers for the sins of the people.

2. Wisdom will prevent or redress these grievances: By a man, that is, by a people, of understanding, that come again to themselves and their right mind, things are kept in a good order, or, if disturbed, brought back to the old channel again. Or, By a prince of understanding and knowledge, a privy-counsellor, or minister of state, that will restrain or suppress the transgression of the land, and take the right methods of healing the state thereof, the good estate of it will be prolonged. We cannot imagine what a great deal of service one wise man may do to a nation in a critical juncture.

3 A poor man that oppresseth the poor
is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

See here, 1. How hard-hearted poor people frequently are to one another, not only not doing such good offices as they might do one to another, but imposing upon and over-reaching one another. Those who know by experience the miseries of poverty should be compassionate to those who suffer the like, but they are inexcusably barbarous if they be injurious to them.

2. How imperious and griping those commonly are who, being indigent and necessitous, get into power. If a prince prefer a poor man, he forgets that ever he was poor, and none shall be so oppressive to the poor as he, nor squeeze them so cruelly. The hungry leech and the dry sponge suck most. Set a beggar on horseback, and he will ride without mercy.

He is like a sweeping rain, which washes away the corn in the ground, and lays and beats out that which has grown, so that it leaves no food. Princes therefore ought not to put those into places of trust who are poor, and in debt, and behind-hand in the world, nor any who make it their main business to enrich themselves.

4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked:
but such as keep the law contend with them.

Note, 1. Those that praise the wicked make it to appear that they do themselves forsake the law, and go contrary to it, for that curses and condemns the wicked. Wicked people will speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another's hands in their wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the clamours of their own consciences and to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, which is not done by any thing so effectually as by keeping vice in reputation.

2. Those that do indeed make conscience of the law of God themselves will, in their places, vigorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony against it, and do what they can to shame and suppress it. They will reprove the works of darkness, and silence the excuses which are made for those works, and do what they can to bring gross offenders to punishment, that others may hear and fear.

5 Evil men understand not judgment:
but they that seek the Lord understand all *things.*

Note, I. As the prevalency of men's lusts is owing to the darkness of their understandings, so the darkness of their understandings is very much owing to the dominion of their lusts: Men understand not judgment, discern not between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; they understand not the law of God as the rule either of their duty or of their doom; and,

1. Therefore it is that they are evil men; their wickedness is the effect of their ignorance and error, Eph 4:18.

2. Therefore they understand not judgment, because they are evil men; their corruptions blind their eyes, and fill them

with prejudices, and because they do evil they hate the light. It is just with God also to give them up to strong delusions.

II. As men's seeking the Lord is a good sign that they do understand much, so it is a good means of their understanding more, even of their understanding all things needful for them. Those that set God's glory before them as their end, his favour as their felicity, and his word as their rule, and apply to him upon all occasions by prayer, they seek the Lord, and he will give them the spirit of wisdom. If a man do his will, he shall know his doctrine, Joh 7:17. A good understanding those have, and a better they shall have, that do his commandments, Ps 111:10,1Co 2:12,15.

6 Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than
he that is perverse *in his* ways, though he *be* rich.

Here, 1. It is supposed that a man may walk in his uprightness and yet be poor in this world, which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation and continue to walk in his uprightness--also that a man may be perverse in his ways, injurious to God and man, and yet be rich, and prosper in the world, for a while, may be rich, and so lie under great obligations and have great opportunities to do good, and yet be perverse in his ways and do a great deal of hurt.

2. It is maintained as a paradox to a blind world that an honest, godly, poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly, rich man, has a better character, is in a better condition, has more comfort in himself, is a greater blessing to the world, and is worthy of much more honour and respect. It is not only certain that his case will be better at death, but it is better in life. When Aristides was by a rich man upbraided with his poverty he answered, Thy riches do thee more hurt than my poverty does me.

7 Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son:
but he that is a companion of riotous *men* shameth his father.

Prov 28:7

7 Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.

Note, 1. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. He that conscientiously keeps the law is wise, and he will be particularly a wise son, that is, will act discreetly towards his parents, for the law of God teaches him to do so. 2. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion. Those that are companions of riotous men, that choose such for their companions and delight in their conversation, will certainly be drawn from keeping the law of God and drawn to transgress it, Ps 119:115. 3. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are akin to him. He that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, not only grieves his parents, but shames them; it turns to their disrepute, as if they had not done their duty to him. They are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Note, 1. That which is ill-got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may perhaps raise a great estate, in a little time, by usury and extortion, fraud, and oppression of the poor, but it will not continue; he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for somebody else that he has no kindness for. His estate shall go to decay, and another man's shall be raised out of the ruins of it.

2. Sometimes God in his providence so orders it that that which one got unjustly another uses charitably; it is strangely turned into the hands of one that will pity the poor and do good with it, and so cut off the entail of the curse which he brought upon it who got it by deceit and violence. Thus the same Providence that punishes the cruel, and disables them to do any more hurt, rewards the merciful, and enables them to do so much the more good. To him that has the ten pounds give the pound which the wicked servant hid in the napkin; for to him that has, and uses it well, more shall

be given, Lu 19:24. Thus the poor are repaid, the charitable are encouraged, and God is glorified.

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law,
even his prayer *shall be* abomination.

Note, 1. It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects we should hear him and heed him; we speak to him by prayer, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be, whenever we are hearing from and speaking to the Lord of glory!

2. If God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only not be accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him, not only our sacrifices, which were ceremonial appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight. See Isa 1:11,15. The sinner whose prayers God is thus angry at is one who wilfully and obstinately refuses to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing, but causes his ear to decline the law, and refuses when God calls; God will therefore justly refuse him when he calls. See Pr 1:24,28.

10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way,
he shall fall himself into his own pit:
but the upright shall have good *things* in possession.

Here is, 1 The doom of seducers, who attempt to draw good people, or those who profess to be such, into sin and mischief, who take pride in causing the righteous to go astray in an evil way, in drawing them into a snare, that they may insult over them. They shall not gain their point; it is impossible to deceive the elect. But they shall fall themselves into their own pit; and having been not only sinners, but tempters, not only unrighteous, but enemies to the righteous, their condemnation will be so much the greater, Mt 23:14,15.

2 The happiness of the sincere. They shall not only be preserved from the evil way which the wicked would decoy them into, but they shall have good things, the best things,

in possession, the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, besides what they have in reversion.

11 The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit;
but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Note, 1. Those that are rich are apt to think themselves wise, because, whatever else they are ignorant of, they know how to get and save; and those that are purse-proud expect that all they say should be regarded as an oracle and a law, and that none should dare to contradict them, but every sheaf bow to theirs; this humour is fed by flatterers, who, because (like Jezebel's prophets) they are fed at their table, cry up their wisdom.

2. Those that are poor often prove themselves wiser than they: A poor man, who has taken pains to get wisdom, having no other way (as the rich man has) to get a reputation, searches him out, and makes it to appear that he is not such a scholar, nor such a politician, as he is taken to be. See how variously God dispenses his gifts; to some he gives wealth, to others wisdom, and it is easy to say which of these is the better gift, which we should covet more earnestly.

12 When righteous *men* do rejoice, *there is* great glory:
but when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Note, 1 The comfort of the people of God is the honour of the nation in which they live. There is a great glory dwelling in the land when the righteous do rejoice, when they have their liberty, the free exercise of their religion, and are not persecuted, when the government countenances them and speaks comfortably to them, when they prosper and grow rich, and, much more, when they are preferred and employed and have power put into their hands.

2 The advancement of the wicked is the eclipsing of the beauty of a nation: When the wicked rise and get head they make head against all that is sacred, and then a man is hidden, a good man is thrust into obscurity, is necessitated to abscond for his own safety; corruptions prevail so

generally that, as in Elijah's time, there seem to be no good men left, the wicked walk so thickly on every side.

13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:
but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.

Here is, 1 The folly of indulging sin, of palliating and excusing it, denying or extenuating it, diminishing it, dissembling it, or throwing the blame of it upon others: He that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, let him never expect it. He shall not succeed in his endeavour to cover his sin, for it will be discovered, sooner or later. There is nothing hid which shall not be revealed. A bird of the air shall carry the voice. Murder will out, and so will other sins. He shall not prosper, that is, he shall not obtain the pardon of his sin, nor can he have any true peace of conscience. David owns himself to have been in a constant agitation while he covered his sins, Ps 32:3,4. While the patient conceals his distemper he cannot expect a cure.

2 The benefit of parting with it, both by a penitent confession and a universal reformation: He that confesses his guilt to God, and is careful not to return to sin again, shall find mercy with God, and shall have the comfort of it in his own bosom. His conscience shall be eased and his ruin prevented. See 1Jo 1:9,Jer 3:12,13. When we set sin before our face (as David, My sin is ever before me) God casts it behind his back.

14 Happy *is* the man that feareth always:
but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Here is, 1 The benefit of a holy caution. It sounds strangely, but it is very true: Happy is the man that feareth always. Most people think that those are happy who never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it that it has in it the greatest satisfaction. Happy is the man who always keeps up in his mind a holy awe and reverence of God, his glory, goodness, and government, who is always afraid of offending God and incurring his displeasure, who keeps conscience tender and has a dread of the appearance of evil, who is always jealous of himself, distrustful of his own sufficiency, and lives in expectation of troubles and changes, so that, whenever they come, they are no surprise

to him. He who keeps up such a fear as this will live a life of faith and watchfulness, and therefore happy is he, blessed and holy.

2 The danger of a sinful presumption: He that hardens his heart, that mocks at fear, and sets God and his judgments at defiance, and receives not the impressions of his word or rod, shall fall into mischief; his presumption will be his ruin, and whatever sin (which is the greatest mischief) he falls into it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15 *As* a roaring lion, and a ranging bear;
so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.

It is written indeed, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people; but if he be a wicked ruler, that oppresses the people, especially the poor people, robbing them of the little they have and making a prey of them, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him a roaring lion and a ranging bear. 1. In respect of his character. He is brutish, barbarous, and blood-thirsty; he is rather to be put among the beasts of prey, the wildest and most savage, than to be reckoned of that noble rank of beings whose glory is reason and humanity. 2. In respect of the mischief he does to his subjects. He is dreadful as the roaring lion, who makes the forest tremble; he is devouring as a hungry bear, and the more necessitous he is the more mischief he does and the more greedy of gain he is.

16 The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor:
but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the mal-administration of princes:-- 1 The love of money, that root of all evil; for hating covetousness here stands opposed to oppression, according to Moses's character of good magistrates, men fearing God and hating covetousness (Ex 18:21), not only not being covetous, but hating it, and shaking the hands from the holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold. 2. Want of consideration: He that hates covetousness shall prolong his government and peace, shall be happy in the affections of his people and the blessing of his God. It is as much the

interest as the duty of princes to reign in righteousness. Oppressors therefore and tyrants are the greatest fools in the world; they want understanding; they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects than in their necks or estates.

17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any* person shall flee
to the pit; let no man stay him.

This agrees with that ancient law, Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed (Ge 9:6), and proclaims, 1 The doom of the shedder of blood. He that has committed murder, though he flees for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors, shall himself flee to the pit, betray himself, and torment himself, like Cain, who, when he had killed his brother, became a fugitive and a vagabond, and trembled continually. 2 The duty of the avenger of blood, whether the magistrate or the next of kin, or whoever are concerned in making inquisition for blood, let them be close and vigorous in the prosecution, and let it not be bought off. Those that acquit the murderer, or do any thing to help him off, come in sharers in the guilt of blood; nor can the land be purged from blood but by the blood of him that shed it, Nu 35:33.

18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved:
but *he that is* perverse *in his* ways shall fall at once.

Note, 1. Those that are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye, in every thing, to the glory of God and the good of his brethren, that would not, for a world, do an unjust thing if he knew it, that in all manner of conversation walks uprightly, he shall be saved hereafter. We find a glorious company of those in whose mouth was found no guile, Re 14:5. They shall be safe now. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times; for it will preserve their comfort, their reputation, and all their interests. They may be injured, but they cannot be hurt.

2. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe: He that is perverse in his ways, that thinks to secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimulation and treachery, or by an estate ill-got, he shall fall, nay, he shall fall at once, not gradually, and with warning given, but suddenly, without previous notice, for he is least safe when he is most secure. He falls at once, and so has neither time to guard against his ruin nor to provide for it; and, being a surprise upon him, it will be so much the greater terror to him.

19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread:
but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.

Note, 1. Those that are diligent in their callings take the way to live comfortably: He that tills his land, and tends his shop, and minds his business, whatever it is, he shall have plenty of bread, of that which is necessary for himself and his family and with which he may be charitable to the poor; he shall eat the labour of his hands.

2. Those that are idle, and careless, and company-keepers, though they indulge themselves in living (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take the way to live miserably. He that has land and values himself upon that, but does not till it, but follows after vain persons, drinks with them, joins with them in their frolics and vain sports, and idles away his time with him, he shall have poverty enough, shall be satiated or replenished with poverty (so the word is); he takes those courses which lead so directly to it that he seems to court it, and he shall have his fill of it.

20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings:
but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Here, 1. We are directed in the true way to be happy, and that is to be holy and honest. He that is faithful to God and man shall be blessed of the Lord, and he shall abound with blessings of the upper and nether springs. Men shall praise him, and pray for him, and be ready to do him any kindness. He shall abound in doing good, and shall himself be a blessing to the place where he lives. Usefulness shall be the reward of faithfulness, and it is a good reward.

2. We are cautioned against a false and deceitful way to happiness, and that is, right or wrong, raising an estate suddenly. Say not, This is the way to abound with blessings, for he that makes haste to be rich, more haste than good speed, shall not be innocent; and, if he be not, he shall not be blessed of God, but rather bring a curse upon what he has; nor, if he be not innocent, can he long be easy to himself; he shall not be accounted innocent by his neighbours, but shall have their ill will and ill word. He does not say that he cannot be innocent, but there is all the probability in the world that he will not prove so: He that hasteth with his feet sinneth, stumbleth, falleth. Sed quæ reverentia legum, quis metus, aut pudor, est unquam properantis avari?--What reverence for law, what fear, what shame, was ever indicated by an avaricious man hasting to be rich?

21 To have respect of persons *is* not good:
for, for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress.

Note, 1. It is a fundamental error in the administration of justice, and that which cannot but lead men to abundance of transgression, to consider the parties concerned more than the merits of the cause, so as to favour one because he is a gentleman, a scholar, my countryman, my old acquaintance, has formerly done me a kindness, or may do me one, or is of my party and persuasion, and to bear hard on the other party because he is a stranger, a poor man, has done me an ill turn, is or has been my rival, or is not of my mind, or has voted against me. Judgment is perverted when any consideration of this kind is admitted into the scale, any thing but pure right.

2. Those that are partial will be paltry. Those that have once broken through the bonds of equity, though, at first, it must be some great bribe, some noble present, that would bias them, yet, when they have debauched their consciences, they will, at length, be so sordid that for a piece of bread they will give judgment against their consciences; they will rather play at small game than sit out.

22 He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye,
and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

Here again Solomon shows the sin and folly of those that will be rich; they are resolved that they will be so, per fas, per nefas--right or wrong; they will be so with all speed; they are getting hastily an estate. 1. They have no comfort in it: They have an evil eye, that is, they are always grieving at those that have more than they, and always grudging their necessary expenses, because they think the former keep them from seeming rich, the latter from being so, and between both they must needs be perpetually uneasy.

2. They have no assurance of the continuance of it, and yet take no thought to provide against the loss of it: Poverty shall come upon them, and the riches which they made wings for, that they might fly to them, will make themselves wings to fly from them; but they are secure and improvident, and do not consider this, that while they are making haste to be rich they are really making haste to be poor, else they would not trust to uncertain riches.

23 He that rebuketh a man, afterward shall find more
favor than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Note, 1. Flatterers may please those for a time who, upon second thoughts, will detest and despise them. If ever they come to be convinced of the evil of those sinful courses they were flattered in, and to be ashamed of the pride and vanity which were humoured and gratified by those flatteries, they will hate the fawning flatterers as having had an ill design upon them, and the fulsome flatteries as having had an ill effect upon them and become nauseous.

2. Reprovers may displease those at first who yet afterwards, when the passion is over and the bitter physic begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and perhaps have hard words, instead of thanks, for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort in his own bosom of having done his duty, but he also whom he

reproved will acknowledge that it was a kindness, will entertain a high opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound will yet pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it.

24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, *It is* no transgression;
the same *is* the companion of a destroyer.

As Christ shows the absurdity and wickedness of those children who think it is no duty, in some cases, to maintain their parents (Mt 15:5), so Solomon here shows the absurdity and wickedness of those who think it is no sin to rob their parents, either by force or secretly, by wheedling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and (which is no better than robbing them) running into debt and leaving them to pay it. Now,

1. This is commonly made light of by untoward children; they say, "It is no transgression, for it will be our own shortly, our parents can well enough spare it, we have occasion for it, we cannot live as gentlemen upon the allowance our parents give us, it is too strait for us." With such excuses as these they endeavour to shift off the conviction. But,

2. How lightly soever an ungoverned youth makes of it, it is really a very great sin; he that does it is the companion of a destroyer, no better than a robber on the highway. What wickedness will he scruple to commit who will rob his own parents?

25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife:
but he that putteth his trust in the Lord shall be made fat.

Note, 1. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome, for they are opposed to those that shall be made fat: He that is of a proud heart, that is conceited of himself and looks with a contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he stirs up strife, makes

mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and every body else.

2. Those make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace: He who puts his trust in the Lord, who, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God, shall be made fat. He saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness; he enjoys himself, and has abundant satisfaction in his God; and thus his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those who live by faith.

26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:
but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Here is, 1 The character of a fool: He trusts to his own heart, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness, and the good opinion he has of himself; he that does so is a fool, for he trusts to that, not only which is deceitful above all things (Jer 17:9), but which has often deceived him. This implies that it is the character of a wise man (as before, Pr 28:25) to put his trust in the Lord, and in his power and promise, and to follow his guidance, Pr 3:5,6.

2 The comfort of a wise man: He that walks wisely, that trusts not to his own heart, but is humble and self-diffident, and goes on in the strength of the Lord God, he shall be delivered; when the fool, that trusts in his own heart, shall be destroyed.

27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack:
but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Here is, 1. A promise to the charitable: He that gives to the poor shall himself be never the poorer for so doing; he shall not lack. If he have but little, and so be in danger of lacking, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing; as the bounty of the widow of Sarepta to Elijah (for whom she made a little cake first) saved what she had, when it was reduced to a handful of meal. If he have

much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its growing less; he and his shall not want what is given in pious charity. What we gave we have.

2. A threatening to the uncharitable: He that hides his eyes, that he may not see the miseries of the poor nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart and extort some relief from him, he shall have many a curse, both from God and man, and neither causeless, and therefore they shall come. Woeful is the condition of that man who has the word of God and the prayers of the poor against him.

28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves:
but when they perish, the righteous increase.

This is to the same purport with what we had, Pr 28:12. 1. When bad men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down. When power is put into the hands of the wicked, men hide themselves; wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them; rich men get out of the way, for fear of being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abscond, despairing to do good and fearing to be persecuted and ill-treated.

2. When bad men are disgraced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives again, then the righteous increase; for, when they perish, good men will be put in their room, who will, by their example and interest, countenance religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increases in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates, to encourage them and to take special care of the good education of youth.

Proverbs-29

1 He, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck,
shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Here, 1 The obstinacy of many wicked people in a wicked way is to be greatly lamented. They are often reproved by parents and friends, by magistrates and ministers, by the providence of God and by their own consciences, have had their sins set in order before them and fair warning given them of the consequences of them, but all in vain; they harden their necks. Perhaps they fling away, and will not so much as give the reproof a patient hearing; or, if they do, yet they go on in the sins for which they are reproved; they will not bow their necks to the yoke, but are children of Belial; they refuse reproof (Pr 10:17), despise it (Pr 5:12), hate it, Pr 12:1.

2 The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded: Those that go on in sin, in spite of admonition, shall be destroyed; those that will not be reformed must expect to be ruined; if the rods answer not the end, expect the axes. They shall be suddenly destroyed, in the midst of their security, and without remedy; they have sinned against the preventing remedy, and therefore let them not expect any recovering remedy. Hell is remediless destruction. They shall be destroyed, and no healing, so the word is. If God wounds, who can heal?

2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice:
but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

This is what was said before, Pr 28:12,28. 1. The people will have cause to rejoice or mourn according as their rulers are righteous or wicked; for, if the righteous be in authority, sin will be punished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported and kept in reputation; but, if the wicked get power in their hands, wickedness will abound, religion and religious people will be persecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted.

2. The people will actually rejoice or mourn according as their rulers are righteous or wicked. Such a conviction are even the common people under of the excellency of virtue and religion that they will rejoice when they see them preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have ever so much honour or power, if they be wicked and vicious, and use it ill, they make themselves contemptible and base before all the people (as those priests, Mal 2:9) and subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.

3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father:
but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.

Both the parts of this verse repeat what has been often said, but, on comparing them together, the sense of them will be enlarged from each other. 1. Be it observed, to the honour of a virtuous young man, that he loves wisdom, he is a philosopher (for that signifies a lover of wisdom), for religion is the best philosophy; he avoids bad company, and especially the company of lewd women. Hereby he rejoices his parents, and has the satisfaction of being a comfort to them, and increases his estate, and is likely to live comfortably.

2. Be it observed, to the reproach of a vicious young man, that he hates wisdom; he keeps company with scandalous women, who will be his ruin, both in soul and body; he grieves his parents, and, like the prodigal son, devours their living with harlots. Nothing will beggar men sooner than the lusts of uncleanness; and the best preservative from those ruinous lusts is wisdom.

4 The king by judgment establisheth the land:
but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

Here is, 1 The happiness of a people under a good government. The care and business of a prince should be to establish the land, to maintain its fundamental laws, to settle the minds of his subjects and make them easy, to secure their liberties and properties from hostilities and for posterity, and to set in order the things that are wanting;

this he must do by judgment, by wise counsels, and by the steady administration of justice, without respect of persons, which will have these good effects.

2 The misery of a people under a bad government: A man of oblations (so it is in the margin) overthrows the land; a man that is either sacrilegious or superstitious, or that invades the priest's office, as Saul and Uzziah--or a man that aims at nothing but getting money, and will, for a good bribe, connive at the most guilty, and, in hope of one, persecute the innocent--such governors as these will ruin a country.

5 A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet.

Those may be said to flatter their neighbours who commend and applaud that good in them (the good they do or the good they have) which really either is not or is not such as they represent it, and who profess that esteem and that affection for them which really they have not; these spread a net for their feet.

1. For their neighbours' feet, whom they flatter. They have an ill design in it; they would not praise them as they do but that they hope to make an advantage of them; and it is therefore wisdom to suspect those who flatter us, that they are secretly laying a snare for us, and to stand on our guard accordingly. Or it has an ill effect on those who are flattered; it puffs them up with pride, and makes them conceited and confident of themselves, and so proves a net that entangles them in sin.

2. For their own feet; so some understand it. He that flatters others, in expectation that they will return his compliments and flatter him, does but make himself ridiculous and odious even to those he flatters.

6 In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare:
but the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

Here is, 1 The peril of a sinful way. There is not only a punishment at the end of it, but a snare in it. One sin is a temptation to another, and there are troubles which, as a snare, come suddenly upon evil men in the midst of their transgressions; nay, their transgression itself often involves them in vexations; their sin is their punishment, and they are holden in the cords of their own iniquity, Pr 5:22.

2 The pleasantness of the way of holiness. The snare that is in the transgression of evil men spoils all their mirth, but righteous men are kept from those snares, or delivered out of them; they walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they sing and rejoice. Those that make God their chief joy have him for their exceeding joy, and it is their own fault if they do not rejoice evermore. If there be any true joy on this side heaven, doubtless those have it whose conversation is in heaven.

7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor:
but the wicked regardeth not to know *it*.

It is a pity but that every one who sues sub formâ pauperis--as a pauper, should have an honest cause (they are of all others inexcusable if they have not), because the scripture has so well provided that it should have a fair hearing, and that the judge himself should be of counsel, as for the prisoner, so for the pauper.

1. It is here made the character of a righteous judge that he considers the cause of the poor. It is every man's duty to consider the poor (Ps 41:1), but the judgment of the poor is to be considered by those that sit in judgment; they must take as much pains to find out the right in a poor man's cause as in a rich man's. Sense of justice must make both judge and advocate as solicitous and industrious in the poor man's cause as if they hoped for the greatest advantage.

2. It is made the character of a wicked man that because it is a poor man's cause, which there is nothing to be got by, he regards not to know it, in the true state of it, for he cares not which way it goes, right or wrong. See Job 29:16.

8 Scornful men bring a city into a snare:
but wise *men* turn away wrath.

See here, 1. Who are the men that are dangerous to the public--scornful men. When such are employed in the business of the state they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and will not take time for consideration and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions; they break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word, and provoke the people, because they scorn to please them. Thus they bring a city into a snare by their ill conduct, or (as the margin reads it) they set a city on fire; they sow discord among the citizens and run them into confusion. Those are scornful men that mock at religion, the obligations of conscience, the fears of another world, and every thing that is sacred and serious. Such men are the plagues of their generation; they bring God's judgments upon a land, set men together by the ears, and so bring all to confusion.

2. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land--the wise men who by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God, and who, by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.

9 *If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish
man, whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no
rest.

A wise man is here advised not to set his wit to a fool's, not to dispute with him, or by contending with him to think either of fastening reason upon him or gaining right from him: If a wise man contend with a wise man, he may hope to be understood, and, as far as he has reason and equity on his side, to carry his point, at least to bring the controversy to a head and make it issue amicably; but, if he contend with a foolish man, there is no rest; he will see no end of it, nor will he have any satisfaction in it, but must expect to be always uneasy.

1. Whether the foolish man he contends with rage or laugh, whether he take angrily or scornfully what is said to him, whether he rail at it or mock at it, one of the two he will do, and so there will be no rest. However it is given, it will be ill-taken, and the wisest man must expect to be either scolded or ridiculed if he contend with a fool. He that fights with a dunghill, whether he be conqueror or conquered, is sure to be defiled.

2. Whether the wise man himself rage or laugh, whether he take the serious or the jocular way of dealing with the fool, whether he be severe or pleasant with him, whether he come with a rod or with the spirit of meekness (1Co 4:21), it is all alike, no good is done. We have piped unto you, and you have not danced, mourned unto you, and you have not lamented.

10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright:
but the just seek his soul.

Note, 1. Bad men hate their best friends: The blood-thirsty, all the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, all that inherit his enmity against the seed of the woman, hate the upright; they seek the ruin of good men because they condemn the wicked world and witness against it. Christ told his disciples that they should be hated of all men. Bloody men do especially hate upright magistrates, who would restrain and reform them, and put the laws in execution against them, and so really do them a kindness.

2. Good men love their worst enemies: The just, whom the bloody men hate, seek their soul, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation. This Christ taught us. Father, forgive them. The just seek his soul, that is, the soul of the upright, whom the bloody hate (so it is commonly understood), seek to protect it from violence, and save it from, or avenge it at, the hands of the blood-thirsty.

11 A fool uttereth all his mind:
but a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterward.

Note, 1. It is a piece of weakness to be very open: He is a fool who utters all his mind,--who tells every thing he knows, and has in his mouth instantly whatever he has in his thoughts, and can keep no counsel,--who, whatever is started in discourse, quickly shoots his bolt,--who, when he is provoked, will say any thing that comes uppermost, whoever is reflected upon by it,--who, when he is to speak of any business, will say all he thinks, and yet never thinks he says enough, whether choice or refuse, corn or chaff, pertinent or impertinent, you shall have it all.

2. It is a piece of wisdom to be upon the reserve: A wise man will not utter all his mind at once, but will take time for a second thought, or reserve the present thought for a fitter time, when it will be more pertinent and likely to answer his intention; he will not deliver himself in a continued speech, or starched discourse, but with pauses, that he may hear what is to be objected and answer it. Non minus interdum oratorium est tacere quam dicere--True oratory requires an occasional pause. Plin. Ep. 7.6.

12 If a ruler hearken to lies,
all his servants *are*
wicked.

Note, 1. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to hearken to lies; for thereby they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give wrong informations. Lies will be told to those that will hearken to them; but the receiver, in this case, is as bad as the thief.

2. Those that do so will have all their servants wicked. All their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, for they will tell lies to them. All that have their ear will fill their ear with slanders and false characters and representations; and so if princes, as well as people, will be deceived, they shall be deceived, and, instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them,

they must share in their servants' guilt, and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformations and giving countenance and ear to them.

13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together:
the Lord lighteneth both their eyes.

This shows how wisely the great God serves the designs of his providence by persons of very different tempers, capacities, and conditions in the world, even,

1. By those that are contrary the one to the other. Some are poor and forced to borrow; others are rich, have a great deal of the mammon of unrighteousness (deceitful riches they are called), and they are creditors, or usurers, as it is in the margin. Some are poor, and honest, and laborious; others are rich, slothful, and deceitful. They meet together in the business of this world, and have dealings with one another, and the Lord enlightens both their eyes; he causes his sun to shine upon both and gives them both the comforts of this life. To some of both sorts he gives his grace. He enlightens the eyes of the poor by giving them patience, and of the deceitful by giving them repentance, as Zaccheus.

2. By those that we think could best be spared. The poor and the deceitful we are ready to look upon as blemishes of Providence, but God makes even them to display the beauty of Providence; he has wise ends not only in leaving the poor always with us, but in permitting the deceived and the deceiver, for both are his (Job 12:16) and turn to his praise.

14 The king that faithfully judgeth the
poor, his throne shall be established for
ever.

Here is, 1 The duty of magistrates, and that is, to judge faithfully between man and man, and to determine all causes brought before them, according to truth and equity, particularly to take care of the poor, not to countenance them in an unjust cause for the sake of their poverty (Ex 23:3), but to see that their poverty do not turn to their prejudice if they have a just cause. The rich will look to

themselves, but the poor and needy the prince must defend (Ps 82:3) and plead for, Pr 31:9.

2 The happiness of those magistrates that do their duty. Their throne of honour, their tribunal of judgment, shall be established for ever. This will secure to them the favour of God and strengthen their interest in the affections of their people, both which will be the establishment of their power, and help to transmit it to posterity and perpetuate it in the family.

15 The rod and reproof give wisdom:
but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents, in educating their children, must consider,

1 The benefit of due correction. They must not only tell their children what is good and evil, but they must chide them, and correct them too, if need be, when they either neglect that which is good or do that which is evil. If a reproof will serve without the rod, it is well, but the rod must never be used without a rational and grave reproof; and then, though it may be a present uneasiness both to the father and to the child, yet it will give wisdom. Vexatio dat intellectum--Vexation sharpens the intellect. The child will take warning, and so will get wisdom.

2 The mischief of undue indulgence: A child that is not restrained or reproved, but is left to himself, as Adonijah was, to follow his own inclinations, may do well if he will, but, if he take to ill courses, nobody will hinder him; it is a thousand to one but he proves a disgrace to his family, and brings his mother, who fondled him and humoured him in his licentiousness, to shame, to poverty, to reproach, and perhaps will himself be abusive to her and give her ill language.

16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth:
but the righteous shall see their fall.

Note, 1 The more sinners there are the more sin there is: When the wicked, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous, and walk on every side, no marvel if

transgression increases, as a plague in the country is said to increase when still more and more are infected with it. Transgression grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when men began to multiply, they began to degenerate and corrupt themselves and one another.

2 The more sin there is the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners. Let them not say that they have cleansed their hands in vain, or that God has forsaken the earth, but wait with patience; the transgressors shall fall, the measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power, and fall into disgrace and destruction, and the righteous shall have the satisfaction of seeing their fall (Ps 37:34), perhaps in this world, certainly in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God's implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints. See Isa 66:24,Ge 19:28.

17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest;
yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Note, 1. It is a very happy thing when children prove the comfort of their parents. Good children are so; they give them rest, make them easy, and free from the many cares they have had concerning them; yea, they give delight unto their souls. It is a pleasure to parents, which none know but those that are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of the good education they have given their children, and to have a prospect of their well-doing for both worlds; it gives delight proportionable to the many thoughts of heart that have been concerning them.

2. In order to this, children must be trained up under a strict discipline, and not suffered to do what they will and to go without rebuke when they do amiss. The foolishness bound up in their hearts must by correction be driven out when they are young, or it will break out, to their own and their parents' shame, when they are grown up.

18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish:

but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

See here, I The misery of the people that want a settled ministry: Where there is no vision, no prophet to expound the law, no priest or Levite to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, the word of the Lord is scarce, there is no open vision (1Sa 3:1), where it is so the people perish; the word has many significations, any of which will apply here.

1. The people are made naked, stripped of their ornaments and so exposed to shame, stripped of their armour and so exposed to danger. How bare does a place look without Bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls!

2. The people rebel, not only against God, but against their prince; good preaching would make people good subjects, but, for want of it, they are turbulent and factious, and despise dominions, because they know no better.

3. The people are idle, or they play, as the scholars are apt to do when the master is absent; they do nothing to any good purpose, but stand all the day idle, and sporting in the market-place, for want of instruction what to do and how to do it.

4. They are scattered as sheep having no shepherd, for want of the masters of assemblies to call them and keep them together, Mk 6:34. They are scattered from God and their duty by apostasies, from one another by divisions; God is provoked to scatter them by his judgments, 2Ch 15:3,5. 5. They perish; they are destroyed for lack of knowledge, Ho 4:6. See what reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of open vision which we enjoy.

II The felicity of a people that have not only a settled, but a successful ministry among them, the people that hear and keep the law, among whom religion is uppermost; happy

are such a people and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it, and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.

19 A servant will not be corrected by words:
for though he understand he will not answer.

Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant, a slave that serves not from conscience, or love, but purely from fear. Let those that have such servants put on patience to bear the vexation and not disturb themselves at it. See their character.

1. No rational words will work upon them; they will not be corrected and reformed, not brought to their business, nor cured of their idleness and laziness, by fair means, no, nor by foul words; even the most gentle master will be forced to use severity with them; no reason will serve their turn, for they are unreasonable.

2. No rational words will be got from them. They are dogged and sullen; and, though they understand the questions you ask them, they will not give you an answer; though you make it ever so plain to them what you expect from them, they will not promise you to mend what is amiss nor to mind their business. See the folly of those servants whose mouth by their silence calls for strokes; they might be corrected by words and save blows, but they will not.

20 Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.

Solomon here shows that there is little hope of bringing a man to wisdom that is hasty either,

1. Through rashness and inconsideration: Seest thou a man that is hasty in his matters, that is of a light desultory wit, that seems to take a thing quickly, but takes it by the halves, gallops over a book or science, but takes no time to digest it, no time to pause or muse upon a business? There is more hope of making a scholar and a wise man of one that is dull

and heavy, and slow in his studies, than of one that has such a mercurial genius and cannot fix.

2. Through pride and conceitedness: Seest thou a man that is forward to speak to every matter that is started, and affects to speak first to it, to open it, and speak last to it, to give judgment upon it, as if he were an oracle? There is more hope of a modest fool, who is sensible of his folly, than of such a self-conceited one.

21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child
shall have him become *his* son at the length.

Note, 1. It is an imprudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant, to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him, to suffer him to be over-nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring him up delicately, because he is a favourite, and an agreeable servant; it should be remembered that he is a servant, and, by being thus indulged, will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness.

2. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to behave insolently because he has been used tenderly. The humble prodigal thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant, and will be a son at the length, will take his ease and liberty, will be on a par with his master, and perhaps pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul; those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over-tender of it, will find that at length it will forget its place, and become a son, a master, a perfect tyrant.

22 An angry man stirreth up strife,
and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition. 1. It makes men provoking to one another: An angry man stirs up strife, is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family and in the neighbourhood,

blows the coals, and even forces those to fall out with him that would live peaceable and quietly by him. 2. It makes men provoking to God: A furious man, who is wedded to his humours and passions, cannot but abound in transgressions. Undue anger is a sin which is the cause of many sins; it not only hinders men from calling upon God's name, but it occasions their swearing, and cursing, and profaning God's name.

23 A man's pride shall bring him low:
but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.

This agrees with what Christ said more than once,

1. That those who exalt themselves shall be abased. Those that think to gain respect by lifting up themselves above their rank, by looking high, talking big, appearing fine, and applauding themselves, will on the contrary expose themselves to contempt, lose their reputation, and provoke God by humbling providences to bring them down and lay them low.

2. That those who humble themselves shall be exalted, and shall be established in their dignity: Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit; their humility is their honour, and that shall make them truly and safely great, and recommend them to the esteem of all that are wise and good.

24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul:
he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth *it* not.

See here what sin and ruin those involve themselves in who are drawn away by the enticement of sinners.

1. They incur a great deal of guilt: He does so that goes partner with such as rob and defraud, and casts in his lot among them, Pr 1:11, &c. The receiver is as bad as the thief; and, being drawn in to join with him in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and execrations. They hear cursing when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess.

2. They hasten to utter ruin: They even hate their own souls, for they wilfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them. See the absurdities sinners are guilty of; they love death, than which nothing is more dreadful, and hate their own souls, than which nothing is more dear.

25 The fear of man bringeth a snare:
but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.

Here, 1. We are cautioned not to dread the power of man, neither the power of a prince nor the power of the multitude; both are formidable enough, but the slavish fear of either brings a snare, that is, exposes men to many insults (some take a pride in terrifying the timorous), or rather exposes men to many temptations. Abraham, for fear of man, denied his wife, and Peter his Master, and many a one his God and religion. We must not shrink from duty, nor commit sin, to avoid the wrath of man, nor, though we see it coming upon us, be disquieted with fear, Da 3:16,Ps 118:6. He must himself die (Isa 51:12) and can but kill our body, Lu 12:5.

2. We are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, which would keep us from all that fear of man which has either torment or temptation in it. Whoso puts his trust in the Lord, for protection and supply in the way of duty, shall be set on high, above the power of man and above the fear of that power. A holy confidence in God makes a man both great and easy, and enables him to look with a gracious contempt upon the most formidable designs of hell and earth against him. If God be my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.

26 Many seek the ruler's favor;
but *every* man's judgment *cometh* from the Lord.

See here, 1. What is the common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, and make themselves great: they seek the ruler's favour, and, as if all their judgment proceeded from him, to him they make all their court. Solomon was himself a ruler, and knew with what sedulity men made their application to him, some on one errand, others on another, but all for his favour. It is the

way of the world to make interest with great men, and expect much from the smiles of second causes, which yet are uncertain, and frequently disappoint them.

Many take a great deal of pains in seeking the ruler's favour and yet cannot have it; many have it for a little while, but they cannot keep themselves in it, by some little turn or other they are brought under his displeasure; many have it, and keep it, and yet it does not answer their expectation, they cannot make that hand of it that they promised themselves they should. Haman had the ruler's favour, and yet it availed him nothing.

2. What is the wisest course men can take to be happy. Let them look up to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. It is not with us as the ruler pleases; his favour cannot make us happy, his frowns cannot make us miserable. But it is as God pleases; every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, no more and no other. He is the first Cause, on which all second causes depend; if he help not, they cannot, 2Ki 6:27,Job 34:29.

27 An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just:
and *he that is* upright in the way *is* abomination to the wicked.

This expresses not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Ge 3:15.

1. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people. They have a good will to the souls of all (God has, and would have none perish); but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious towards God and injurious towards men; they cannot hear of them nor speak of them without a holy indignation; they loathe the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance, but do all they can to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is

one part of his present shame and punishment that good men cannot endure him.

2. All that are unsanctified have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people: He that is upright in the way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, is an abomination to the wicked, whose wickedness is restrained perhaps and suppressed, or, at least, shamed and condemned, by the uprightness of the upright.

Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom them shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, Ps 49:14.

Proverbs-30

The Observations of Agur

1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *even* the prophecy.
The man spake unto Ithiel,
even unto Ithiel and Ucal,

This expresses not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Ge 3:15.

1. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people. They have a good will to the souls of all (God has, and would have none perish); but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious towards God and injurious towards men; they cannot hear of them nor speak of them without a holy indignation; they loathe the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance, but do all they

can to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is one part of his present shame and punishment that good men cannot endure him.

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Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom them shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who shall have dominion over them in the morning, Ps 49:14.

2 Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man,
and have not the understanding of a man.
3 I neither learned wisdom,
nor have the knowledge of the holy.
4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists? Who
hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath
established all the ends of the earth?
What *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?

To advance Jesus Christ, and the Father in him (Pr 30:4): Who ascended up into heaven, &c.

1. Some understand this of God and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challenges all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth: "Who can pretend to have ascended up to heaven, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended, to give us a description of them? Who can pretend to have had the command of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand and managed them, as God does, or to have bound the waves of the sea

with a swaddling band, as God has done? Who has established the ends of the earth, or can describe the strength of its foundations or the extent of its limits? Tell me what is the man's name who can undertake to vie with God or to be of his cabinet-council, or, if he be dead, what is his name to whom he has bequeathed this great secret."

2. Others refer it to Christ, to Ithiel and Ucal, the Son of God, for it is the Son's name, as well as the Father's, that is here enquired after, and a challenge given to any to vie with him. We must now exalt Christ as one revealed; they then magnified him as one concealed, as one they had heard something of but had very dark and defective ideas of. We have heard the fame of him with our ears, but cannot describe him (Job 28:22); certainly it is God that has gathered the wind in his fists and bound the waters as in a garment; but what is his name? It is, I am that I am (Ex 3:14), a name to be adored, not to be understood. What is his Son's name, by whom he does all these things? The Old-Testament saints expected the Messiah to be the Son of the Blessed, and he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer, in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled nor found out to perfection.

(1.) The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparalleled; for who besides has ascended into heaven and descended? Who besides is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them, as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder? He was in heaven in the Father's bosom (Joh 1:1,18); thence he descended to take our nature upon him; and never was there such condescension. In that nature he again ascended (Eph 4:9), to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who besides has done this? Ro 10:6.

(2.) The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparalleled. The same that

reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both and governs and disposes of all. His government of the three lower elements of air, water, and earth, is here particularized.

[1.] The motions of the air are of his directing. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, but even there Christ has all power; he rebuked the winds and they obeyed him.

[2.] The bounds of the water are of his appointing: He binds the waters as in a garment; hitherto they shall come, and no further, Job 38:9-11. [3.] The foundations of the earth are of his establishing. He founded it at first; he upholds it still. If Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth would have sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground, for man's sin. Who and what is the mighty He that does all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God, unto perfection. Oh the depth of that knowledge!

5 Every word of God *is* pure:
he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.
6 Add thou not unto his words,
lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

To assure us of the truth of the word of God, and to recommend it to us, Pr 30:5,6. Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God. "Alas!" says he, "I cannot undertake to instruct you; go to the word of God; see what he has there revealed of himself, and of his mind and will; you need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon as sure and sufficient. Every word of God is pure; there is not the least mixture of falsehood and corruption in it." The words of men are to be heard and read with jealousy and with allowance, but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the word of God; it is as silver purified seven times (Ps 12:6), without the least dross or alloy. Thy word is very pure, Ps 119:140.

1. It is sure, and therefore we must trust to it and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is a shield, a sure protection, to all those that put themselves under his protection and put their trust in him. The word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, Ps 46:1,2.

2. It is sufficient, and therefore we must not add to it (Pr 30:6): Add thou not unto his words, because they are pure and perfect. This forbids the advancing of any thing, not only in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it; though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet, if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is adding to his words, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all manner of errors and corruptions; for, that one absurdity being granted, that the word of any man, or company of men, is to be received with the same faith and veneration as the word of God, a thousand follow. We must be content with what God has thought fit to make known to us of his mind, and not covet to be wise above what is written; for,

(1.) God will resent it as a heinous affront: "He will reprove thee, will reckon with thee as a traitor against his crown and dignity, and lay thee under the heavy doom of those that add to his words, or diminish from them," De 4:2,12:32.

(2.) We shall run ourselves into endless mistakes: "Thou wilt be found a liar, a corrupter of the word of truth, a broacher of heresies, and guilty of the worst of forgeries, counterfeiting the broad seal of heaven, and pretending a divine mission and inspiration, when it is all a cheat. Men may be thus deceived, but God is not mocked."

7 Two *things* have I required of thee;
deny me *them* not before I die:

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows his litany, where we may observe,

The preface to his prayer: Two things have I required (that is, requested) of thee, O God! Before we go to pray it is good to consider what we need, and what the things are which we have to ask of God.--What does our case require? What do our hearts desire? What would we that God should do for us?--that we may not have to seek for our petition and request when we should be presenting it. He begs, Deny me not before I die. In praying, we should think of dying, and pray accordingly. "Lord, give me pardon, and peace, and grace, before I die, before I go hence and be no more; for, if I be not renewed and sanctified before I die, the work will not be done after; if I do not prevail in prayer before I die, prayers afterwards will not prevail, no, not Lord, Lord. There is none of this wisdom or working in the grave. Deny me not thy grace, for, if thou do, I die, I perish; if thou be silent to me, I am like those that go down to the pit, Ps 28:1. Deny me not before I die; as long as I continue in the land of the living, let me continue under the conduct of thy grace and good providence."

8 remove far from me vanity and lies;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with food convenient for me:

The prayer itself. The two things he requires are grace sufficient and food convenient.

1. Grace sufficient for his soul: "Remove from me vanity and lies; deliver me from sin, from all corrupt principles, practices, and affections, from error and mistake, which are at the bottom of all sin, from the love of the world and the things of it, which are all vanity and a lie." Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin, for, when God forgives sin, he removes it, he takes it away. Or, rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that, Lead us not into temptation. Nothing is more mischievous to us than sin, and therefore there is nothing which we should more earnestly pray against than that we may do no evil.

2. Food convenient for his body. Having prayed for the operations of divine grace, he here begs the favours of the divine Providence, but such as may tend to the good and not to the prejudice of the soul.

(1.) He prays that of God's free gift he might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life: "Feed me with the bread of my allowance, such bread as thou thinkest fit to allow me." As to all the gifts of the divine Providence, we must refer ourselves to the divine wisdom. Or, "the bread that is fit for me, as a man, a master of a family, that which is agreeable to my rank and condition in the world." For as is the man so is his competency. Our Saviour seems to refer to this when he teaches us to pray, Give us this day our daily bread, as this seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he wished for no more than bread to eat and raiment to put on. Food convenient for us is what we ought to be content with, though we have not dainties, varieties, and superfluities--what is for necessity, though we have not for delight and ornament; and it is what we may in faith pray for and depend upon God for.

(2.) He prays that he may be kept from every condition of life that would be a temptation to him.

[1.] He prays against the extremes of abundance and want: Give me neither poverty nor riches. He does not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to teach him what condition he shall allot to him, nor does he pray against poverty or riches absolutely, as in themselves evil, for either of them, by the grace of God, may be sanctified and be a means of good to us; but, First, He hereby intends to express the value which wise and good men have for a middle state of life, and, with submission to the will of God, desires that that might be his state, neither great honour nor great contempt. We must learn how to manage both (as St. Paul, Php 4:12), but rather wish to be always between both. Optimus pecuniæ modus qui nec in paupertatem cedit nec procul à paupertate discedit--The best condition is that which neither implies poverty nor yet recedes far from it.

Seneca. Secondly, He hereby intimates a holy jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his ground against the temptations either of an afflicted or a prosperous condition. Others may preserve their integrity in either, but he is afraid of both, and therefore grace teaches him to pray against riches as much as nature against poverty; but the will of the Lord be done.

[2.] He gives a pious reason for his prayer, Pr 30:9. He does not say, "Lest I be rich, and cumbered with care, and envied by my neighbours, and eaten up with a multitude of servants, or, lest I be poor and trampled on, and forced to work hard and fare hard;" but, "Lest I be rich and sin, or poor and sin." Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition and under every event; witness Nehemiah (Pr 6:13), that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin. First, He dreads the temptations of a prosperous condition, and therefore even deprecates that: Lest I be full and deny thee (as Jeshurun, who waxed fat and kicked, and forsook God who made him, De 32:15), and say, as Pharaoh in his pride, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Prosperity makes people proud and forgetful of God, as if they had no need of him and were therefore under no obligation to him. What can the Almighty do for them? Job 22:17.

And therefore they will do nothing for him. Even good men are afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think their own hearts to be; and they know that the greatest gains of the world will not balance the least guilt. Secondly, He dreads the temptations of a poor condition, and for that reason, and no other, deprecates that: Lest I be poor and steal. Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty, and such as many are overcome by, and they are ready to think it will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out at God's bar any more than at men's to say, "I stole because I was poor;" yet, if a man steal for the satisfying of his soul when he is hungry, it is a case of compassion (Pr 6:30) and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may be drawn to. But observe why Agur dreads this, not because he should endanger himself by it, "Lest I steal, and be

hanged for it, whipped or put in the stocks, or sold for a bondman," as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wherewithal to make restitution; but lest he should dishonour God by it: "Lest I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain, that is, discredit my profession of religion by practices disagreeable to it." Or, "Lest I steal, and, when I am charged with it, forswear myself." He therefore dreads one sin, because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is downhill. Observe, He calls God his God, and therefore he is afraid of doing any thing to offend him because of the relation he stands in to him.

9 lest I be full, and deny *thee,*
and say, Who *is* the Lord ?
or lest I be poor, and steal,
and take the name of my God *in vain.*
10 Accuse not a servant unto his master,
lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.

Here is, I. A caution not to abuse other people's servants any more than our own, nor to make mischief between them and their masters, for it is an ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, Pr 30:10. Consider,

1. It is an injury to the servant, whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affliction to him that is afflicted: Hurt not a servant with thy tongue (so the margin reads it); for it argues a sordid disposition to smite any body secretly with the scourge of the tongue, especially a servant, who is not a match for us, and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than exasperate him more.

2. "It will perhaps be an injury to thyself. If a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee, will accuse thee and bring thee into trouble, or give thee an ill word and blemish thy reputation, or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate his wrath upon thee, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocency."

II. An account, upon occasion of this caution, of some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good.

1. Such as are abusive to their parents, give them bad language and wish them ill, call them bad names and actually injure them. There is a generation of such; young men of that black character commonly herd together, and irritate one another against their parents. A generation of vipers those are who curse their natural parents, or their magistrates, or their ministers, because they cannot endure the yoke; and those are near of kin to them who, though they have not yet arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to curse their parents, yet do not bless them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them.

2. Such as are conceited of themselves, and, under a show and pretence of sanctity, hide from others, and perhaps from themselves too, abundance of reigning wickedness in secret (Pr 30:12); they are pure in their own eyes, as if they were in all respects such as they should be. They have a very good opinion of themselves and their own character, that they are not only righteous, but rich and increased with goods (Re 3:17), and yet are not cleansed from their filthiness, the filthiness of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best part of them. They are, it may be, swept and garnished, but they are not washed, nor sanctified; as the Pharisees that within were full of all uncleanness, Mt 23:25,26.

3. Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, Pr 30:13. He speaks of them with amazement at their intolerable pride and insolence: "Oh how lofty are their eyes! With what disdain do they look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock! What a distance do they expect every body should keep; and, when they look upon themselves, how do they strut and vaunt like the peacock, thinking they make themselves illustrious when really they make themselves

ridiculous!" There is a generation of such, on whom he that resists the proud will pour contempt.

4. Such as are cruel to the poor and barbarous to all that lie at their mercy (Pr 30:14); their teeth are iron and steel, swords and knives, instruments of cruelty, with which they devour the poor with the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily as hungry men cut their meat and eat it. God has so ordered it that the poor we shall always have with us, that they shall never cease out of the land; but there are those who, because they hate to relieve them, would, if they could, abolish them from the earth, from among men, especially God's poor. Some understand it of those who wound and ruin others by slanders and false accusations, and severe censures of their everlasting state; their tongues, and their teeth too (which are likewise organs of speech), are as swords and knives, Ps 57:4.

11 *There is* a generation *that* curseth their father,
and doth not bless their mother.
12 *There is* a generation *that are* pure in their own eyes,
and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness.
13 *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes!
And their eyelids are lifted up.
14 *There is* a generation, whose teeth *are as* swords,
and their jaw teeth *as* knives,
to devour the poor from off the earth,
and the needy from *among* men.
15 The horseleech hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give.
There are three *things that* are never satisfied,
yea, four *things* say not, *It is* enough:

He had spoken before of those that devoured the poor (Pr 30:14), and had spoken of them last, as the worst of all the four generations there mentioned; now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. The temper that puts them upon it is made up of cruelty and covetousness. Now those are two daughters of the horse-leech, its genuine offspring, that still cry, "Give, give, give more blood, give more money;" for the bloody are still blood-thirsty; being drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunkenness, and will

seek it yet again. Those also that love silver shall never be satisfied with silver. Thus, while from these two principles they are devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves, as David's enemies, Ps 59:14,15. Now, for the further illustration of this,

I. He specifies four other things which are insatiable, to which those devourers are compared, which say not, It is enough, or It is wealth. Those are never rich that are always coveting. Now these four things that are always craving are,

1 The grave, into which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, and it swallows them all up, and returns none, Hell and destruction are never full, Pr 27:20. When it comes to our turn we shall find the grave ready for us, Job 17:1.

2 The barren womb, which is impatient of its affliction in being barren, and cries, as Rachel did, Give me children. 3. The parched ground in time of drought (especially in those hot countries), which still soaks in the rain that comes in abundance upon it and in a little time wants more. 4. The fire, which, when it has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them.

II. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children (Pr 30:17), for warning to the first of those four wicked generations, that curse their parents (Pr 30:11), and shows here,

1. Who they are that belong to that generation, not only those that curse their parents in heat and passion, but,

(1.) Those that mock at them, though it be but with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them because of their bodily infirmities, or looking sour or dogged at them

when they instruct or command, impatient at their checks and angry at them. God takes notice with what eye children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the leering look and the casts of the evil eye as well as for the bad language given them.

(2.) Those that despise to obey them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially to the mother, they scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bore them in sorrow in greater sorrow bears their manners.

2. What their doom will be. Those that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God's vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains, as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes, those eyes with which they looked so scornfully on their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night, but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children, God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that conduct themselves haughtily towards their parents. Many who have come to an ignominious end have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in a contempt of their parents' authority.

16 the grave; and the barren womb;
the earth *that* is not filled with water;
and the fire *that* saith not, *It is* enough.
17 The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father,
and despiseth to obey *his* mother,
the ravens of the valley shall pick it out,
and the young eagles shall eat it.
18 There be three *things which* are too wonderful for me,
yea, four which I know not:
19 the way of an eagle in the air;
the way of a serpent upon a rock;
the way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
and the way of a man with a maid.

Here is, I. An account of four things that are unsearchable, too wonderful to be fully known. And here,

1 The first three are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last. We cannot trace,

(1.) An eagle in the air. Which way she has flown cannot be discovered either by the footstep or by the scent, as the way of a beast may upon ground; nor can we account for the wonderful swiftness of her flight, how soon she has gone beyond our ken.

(2.) A serpent upon a rock. The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock; nor can we describe how a serpent will, without feet, in a little time creep to the top of a rock.

(3.) A ship in the midst of the sea. The leviathan indeed makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary (Job 41:32), but a ship leaves no mark behind it, and sometimes it is so tossed upon the waves that one would wonder how it lives at sea and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders, marvellous things which the God of nature does, past finding out.

2 The fourth is a mystery of iniquity, more unaccountable than any of these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and that desperate wickedness of the heart which none can know, Jer 17:9. It is twofold:--

(1.) The cursed arts which a vile adulterer has to debauch a maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lust. This is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of, long since, De arte amandi--On the art of love. By what pretensions and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secresy and reward, is many an unwary virgin brought to sell her virtue, and honour, and peace, and soul, and all to a base traitor; for so all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed the more

watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it.

(2.) The cursed arts which a vile adulteress has to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously departs; so close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so craftily disguised, that it is as impossible to discover her as to track an eagle in the air. She eats the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and then wipes her mouth, that it may not betray itself, and with a bold and impudent face says, I have done no wickedness.

[1.] To the world she denies the fact, and is ready to swear it that she is as chaste and modest as any woman, and never did the wickedness she is suspected of. Those are the works of darkness which are industriously kept from coming to the light.

[2.] To her own conscience (if she have any left) she denies the fault, and will not own that that great wickedness is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment. See Ho 12:7,8. Thus multitudes ruin their souls by calling evil good and out-facing their convictions with a self-justification.

II. An account of four things that are intolerable, that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live and the relations and companies they are in; the earth is disquieted for them, and groans under them as a burden it cannot bear, and they are all much alike:--

1. A servant when he is advanced, and entrusted with power, who is, of all others, most insolent and imperious; witness Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, Ne 2:10.

2. A fool, a silly, rude, boisterous, vicious man, who when he has grown rich, and is partaking of the pleasures of the

table, will disturb all the company with his extravagant talk and the affronts he will put upon those about him.

3. An ill-natured, cross-grained, woman, when she gets a husband, one who, having made herself odious by her pride and sourness, so that one would not have thought any body would ever love her, yet, if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is a pity that that which should sweeten the disposition should have a contrary effect. A gracious woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging.

4. An old maid-servant that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her, and, as we say, getting the length of her foot, to leave her what she has, or is as dear to her as if she was to be her heir, such a one likewise will be intolerably proud and malicious, and think all too little that her mistress gives her, and herself wronged if any thing be left from her. Let those therefore whom Providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them, pride and haughtiness, which will in them, of all others, be most insufferable and inexcusable; and let them humble themselves with the remembrance of the rock out of which they were hewn.

20 Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman;
she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and
saith, I have done no wickedness.
21 For three *things* the earth is disquieted,
and for four *which* it cannot bear:
22 for a servant when he reigneth;
and a fool when he is filled with meat;
23 for an odious *woman* when she is married;
and a handmaid that is heir to her mistress.
24 There be four *things which are* little upon the earth,
but they *are* exceeding wise:

I. Agur, having specified four things that seem great and yet are really contemptible, here specifies four things that are little and yet are very admirable, great in miniature, in

which, as bishop Patrick observes, he teaches us several good lessons; as,

1. Not to admire bodily bulk, or beauty, or strength, nor to value persons or think the better of them for such advantages, but to judge of men by their wisdom and conduct, their industry and application to business, which are characters that deserve respect.

2. To admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest and most despicable animals, in an ant as much as in an elephant.

3. To blame ourselves who do not act so much for our own true interest as the meanest creatures do for theirs. 4. Not to despise the weak things of the world; there are those that are little upon the earth, poor in the world and of small account, and yet are exceedingly wise, wise for their souls and another world, and those are exceedingly wise, wiser than their neighbours. Margin, They are wise, made wise by the special instinct of nature. All that are wise to salvation are made wise by the grace of God.

II. Those he specifies are,

1 The ants, minute animals and very weak, and yet they are very industrious in gathering proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer, the proper time. This is so great a piece of wisdom that we may learn of them to be wise for futurity, Pr 6:6. When the ravening lions lack, and suffer hunger, the laborious ants have plenty, and know no want.

2 The conies, or, as some rather understand it, the Arabian mice, field mice, weak creatures, and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to make their houses in the rocks, where they are well guarded, and their feebleness makes them take shelter in those natural fastnesses and fortifications. Sense of our own indigence and weakness

should drive us to him that is a rock higher than we for shelter and support; there let us make our habitation.

3. The locusts; they are little also, and have no king, as the bees have, but they go forth all of them by bands, like an army in battle-array; and, observing such good order among themselves, it is not any inconvenience to them that they have no king. They are called God's great army (Joe 2:25); for, when he pleases, he musters, he marshals them, and wages war by them, as he did upon Egypt. They go forth all of them gathered together (so the margin); sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands of one another.

4. The spider, an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness such as no art can pretend to come near: They take hold with their hands, and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in kings' palaces, notwithstanding all the care that is there taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up those kinds of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against and seeks the destruction of. Those that will mind their business, and take hold of it with their hands, shall be in kings' palaces; sooner or later, they will get preferment, and may go on with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

25 the ants *are* a people not strong,
yet they prepare their meat in the summer;
26 the conies *are but* a feeble folk,
yet make they their houses in the rocks;
27 the locusts have no king,
yet go they forth all of them by bands;
28 the spider taketh hold with her hands,
and is in kings' palaces.

29 There be three *things* which go well,
yea, four are comely in going:

Here is, I. An enumeration of four things which are majestic and stately in their going, which look great:--

1. A lion, the king of beasts, because strongest among beasts. Among beasts it is strength that gives the pre-eminence, but it is a pity that it should do so among men, whose wisdom is their honour, not their strength and force. The lion turns not away, nor alters his pace, for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein the righteous are bold as a lion, that they turn not away from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it.

2. A greyhound that is girt in the loins and fit for running; or (as the margin reads it) a horse, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that are comely in going, for so he is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness or trappings.

3. A he-goat, the comeliness of whose going is when he goes first and leads the flock. It is the comeliness of a Christian's going to go first in a good work and to lead others in the right way.

4. A king, who, when he appears in his majesty, is looked upon with reverence and awe, and all agree that there is no rising up against him; none can vie with him, none can contend with him, whoever does it, it is at his peril. And, if there is no rising up against an earthly prince, woe to him then that strives with his Maker. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions from the lion and not to turn away for any difficulty we meet with; from the greyhound we may learn quickness and despatch, from the he-goat the care of our family and those under our charge, and from a king to have our children in subjection with all gravity, and from them all to

go well, and to order the steps of our conversation so as that we may not only be safe, but comely, in going.

II. A caution to us to keep our temper at all times and under all provocations, and to take heed of carrying our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is a king in the case, against whom there is no rising up, when it is a ruler, or one much our superior, that is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

1. We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and take shame to ourselves, whenever we are justly charged with a fault, and not insist upon our own innocency: If we have lifted up ourselves, either in a proud conceit of ourselves or a peevish opposition to those that are over us, if we have transgressed the laws of our place and station, we have therein done foolishly. Those that magnify themselves over others or against others, that are haughty and insolent, do but shame themselves and betray their own weakness. Nay, if we have but thought evil, if we are conscious to ourselves that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must lay our hand upon our mouth, that is,

(1.) We must humble ourselves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God, in sorrow for it, as Job did, when he repented of what he had said foolishly (Job 40:4, I will lay my hand upon my mouth), and as the convicted leper, who put a covering upon his upper lip. If we have done foolishly, we must not stand to it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appeasing those we have offended.

2. We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches. Do not give the evil thought an imprimatur--a license; allow it not to be published; but lay thy hand upon thy mouth; use a holy violence with thyself, if need be, and enjoin thyself silence; as Christ suffered not the evil spirits to speak. It is bad to think ill, but it is much worse to speak it, for that implies a

consent to the evil thought and a willingness to infect others with it.

2. We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and conduct that they even force wrath, they make those about them angry whether they will or no, and put those into a passion who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this forcing of wrath brings forth strife, and where that is there is confusion and every evil work. As the violent agitation of the cream fetches all the good out of the milk, and the hard wringing of the nose will extort blood from it, so this forcing of wrath wastes both the body and spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in the churning of milk and the wringing of the nose, that is done by force which otherwise would not be done, so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions; one angry word begets another, and that a third; one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds. Let nothing therefore be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.

30 a lion, *which is* strongest among beasts,
and turneth not away for any;
31 a greyhound; a he goat also;
and a king, against whom *there is* no rising up.
32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself,
or if thou hast thought evil,
lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter,
and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood:
so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Proverbs-31

Admonitions to a King

1 The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.

Most interpreters are of opinion that Lemuel is Solomon; the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God; and so it agrees well enough with that honourable name which, by divine appointment, was given to Solomon (2Sa 12:25), Jedediah--beloved of the Lord. Lemuel is supposed to be a pretty, fond, endearing name, by which his mother used to call him; and so much did he value himself upon the interest he had in his mother's affections that he was not ashamed to call himself by it. One would the rather incline to think it is Solomon that here tells us what his mother taught him because he tells us (Pr 4:4) what his father taught him. But some think (and the conjecture is not improbable) that Lemuel was a prince of some neighbouring country, whose mother was a daughter of Israel, perhaps of the house of David, and taught him these good lessons. Note,

1. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children what is good, that they may do it, and what is evil, that they may avoid it; when they are young and tender they are most under the mother's eye, and she has then an opportunity of moulding and fashioning their minds well, which she ought not to let slip.

2. Even kings must be catechised; the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God.

3. Those that have grown up to maturity should often call to mind, and make mention of, the good instructions they received when they were children, for their own

admonition, the edification of others, and the honour of those who were the guides of their youth.

Now, in this mother's (this queen mother's) catechism, observe,

I. Her expostulation with the young prince, by which she lays hold of him, claims an interest in him, and awakens his attention to what she is about to say (Pr 31:2): "What! my son? What shall I say to thee?" She speaks as one considering what advice to give him, and choosing out words to reason with him; so full of concern is she for his welfare! Or, What is it that thou doest? It seems to be a chiding question. She observed, when he was young, that he was too much inclined to women and wine, and therefore she found it necessary to take him to task and deal roundly with him. "What! my son? Is this the course of life thou intendest to lead? Have I taught thee no better than thus? I must reprove thee, and reprove thee sharply, and thou must take it well, for,"

1. "Thou art descended from me; thou art the son of my womb, and therefore what I say comes from the authority and affection of a parent and cannot be suspected to come from any ill-will. Thou art a piece of myself. I bore thee with sorrow, and I expect no other return for all the pains I have taken with thee, and undergone for thee, than this, Be wise and good, and then I am well paid."

2. "Thou art devoted to my God; thou art the son of my vows, the son I prayed to God to give me and promised to give back to God, and did so" (thus Samuel was the son of Hannah's vows); "Thou art the son I have often prayed to God to give his grace to (Ps 72:1), and shall a child of so many prayers miscarry? And shall all my hopes concerning thee be disappointed?" Our children that by baptism are dedicated to God, for whom and in whose name we covenanted with God, may well be called the children of our vows; and, as this may be made a good plea with God in our prayers for them, so it may be made

a good plea with them in the instructions we give them; we may tell them they are baptized, are the children of our vows, and it is at their peril if they break those bonds in sunder which in their infancy they were solemnly brought under.

2 What, my son?
And what, the son of my womb?
And what, the son of my vows?
3 Give not thy strength unto women,
nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

The caution she gives him against those two destroying sins of uncleanness and drunkenness, which, if he allowed himself in them, would certainly be his ruin.

1. Against uncleanness (Pr 31:3): Give not thy strength unto women, unto strange women. He must not be soft and effeminate, nor spend that time in a vain conversation with the ladies which should be spent in getting knowledge and despatching business, nor employ that wit (which is the strength of the soul) in courting and complimenting them which he should employ about the affairs of his government. "Especially shun all adultery, fornication, and lasciviousness, which waste the strength of the body, and bring into it dangerous diseases. Give not thy ways, thy affections, thy conversation, to that which destroys kings, which has destroyed many, which gave such a shock to the kingdom even of David himself, in the matter of Uriah. Let the sufferings of others be thy warnings."

It lessens the honour of kings and makes them mean. Are those fit to govern others that are themselves slaves to their own lusts? It makes them unfit for business, and fills their court with the basest and worst of animals. Kings lie exposed to temptations of this kind, having wherewith both to please the humours and to bear the charges of the sin, and therefore they ought to double their guard; and, if they would preserve their people from the unclean spirit, they must themselves be patterns of purity. Meaner people may also apply it to themselves. Let none give their strength to that which destroys souls.

2. Against drunkenness, Pr 31:4,5. He must not drink wine or strong drink to excess; he must never sit to drink, as they used to do in the day of their king, when the princes made him sick with bottles of wine, Ho 7:7. Whatever temptation he might be in from the excellency of the wine, or the charms of the company, he must deny himself, and be strictly sober, considering,

(1.) The indecency of drunkenness in a king. However some may call it a fashionable accomplishment and entertainment, it is not for kings, O Lemuel! it is not for kings, to allow themselves that liberty; it is a disparagement to their dignity, and profanes their crown, by confusing the head that wears it; that which for the time unmans them does for the time unking them. Shall we say, They are gods? No, they are worse than the beasts that perish. All Christians are made to our God kings and priests, and must apply this to themselves. It is not for Christians, it is not for Christians, to drink to excess; they debase themselves if they do; it ill becomes the heirs of the kingdom and the spiritual priests, Le 10:9.

(2.) The ill consequences of it (Pr 31:5): Lest they drink away their understandings and memories, drink and forget the law by which they are to govern; and so, instead of doing good with their power, do hurt with it, and pervert or alter the judgment of all the sons of affliction, and, when they should right them, wrong them, and add to their affliction. It is a sad complaint which is made of the priests and prophets (Isa 28:7), that they have erred through wine, and through strong drink they are out of the way; and the effect is as bad in kings, who when they are drunk, or intoxicated with the love of wine, cannot but stumble in judgment. Judges must have clear heads, which those cannot have who so often make themselves giddy, and incapacitate themselves to judge of the most common things.

4 *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel,
it is not for kings to drink wine;

nor for princes strong drink:
5 lest they drink, and forget the law,
and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.
6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.

The counsel she gives him to do good.

1. He must do good with his wealth. Great men must not think that they have their abundance only that out of it they may made provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it, and may the more freely indulge their own genius; no, but that with it they may relieve such as are in distress, Pr 31:6,7. "Thou hast wine or strong drink at command; instead of doing thyself hurt with it, do others good with it; let those have it that need it." Those that have wherewithal must not only give bread to the hungry and water to the thirsty, but they must give strong drink to him that is ready to perish through sickness or pain and wine to those that are melancholy and of heavy heart; for it was appointed to cheer and revive the spirits, and make glad the heart (as it does where there is need of it), not to burden and oppress the spirits, as it does where there is no need of it.

We must deny ourselves in the gratifications of sense, that we may have to spare for the relief of the miseries of others, and be glad to see our superfluities and dainties better bestowed upon those whom they will be a real kindness to than upon ourselves whom they will be a real injury to. Let those that are ready to perish drink soberly, and it will be a means so to revive their drooping spirits that they will forget their poverty for the time and remember their misery no more, and so they will be the better able to bear it. The Jews say that upon this was grounded the practice of giving a stupifying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour. But the scope of the place is to show that wine is a cordial, and therefore to be used for want and not for wantonness, by those only that need cordials, as Timothy, who is advised to drink a little wine,

only for his stomach's sake and his often infirmities, 1Ti 5:23.

2. He must do good with his power, his knowledge, and interest, must administer justice with care, courage, and compassion, Pr 31:8,9.

(1.) He must himself take cognizance of the causes his subjects have depending in his courts, and inspect what his judges and officers do, that he may support those that do their duty, and lay those aside that neglect it or are partial.

(2.) He must, in all matters that come before him, judge righteously, and, without fear of the face of man, boldly pass sentence according to equity: Open thy mouth, which denotes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence. Some observe that only wise men open their mouths, for fools have their mouths always open, are full of words.

(3.) He must especially look upon himself as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocency. The inferior magistrates perhaps had not zeal and tenderness enough to plead the cause of the poor and needy; therefore the king himself must interpose, and appear as an advocate,

[1.] For those that were unjustly charged with capital crimes, as Naboth was, that were appointed to destruction, to gratify the malice either of a particular person or of a party. It is a case which it well befits a king to appear in, for the preserving of innocent blood.

[2.] For those that had actions unjustly brought against them, to defraud them of their right, because they were poor and needy, and unable to defend it, not having wherewithal to fee counsel; in such a case also kings must be advocates for the poor. Especially,

[3.] For those that were dumb, and knew not how to speak for themselves, either through weakness or fear, or being over-talked by the prosecutor or over-awed by the court. It is generous to speak for those that cannot speak for themselves, that are absent, or have not words at command, or are timorous. Our law appoints the judge to be of counsel for the prisoner.

7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty,
and remember his misery no more.
8 Open thy mouth for the dumb
in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.
9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously,
and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Praise of a Good Woman

10 Who can find a virtuous woman?
For her price *is* far above rubies.

This description of the virtuous woman is designed to show what wives the women should make and what wives the men should choose; it consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, as some of the Psalms, which makes some think it was no part of the lesson which Lemuel's mother taught him, but a poem by itself, written by some other hand, and perhaps had been commonly repeated among the pious Jews, for the ease of which it was made alphabetical. We have the abridgment of it in the New Testament (1Ti 2:9,10,1Pe 3:1-6), where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife; and with good reason is so much stress laid upon it, since it contributes as much as any one thing to the keeping up of religion in families, and the entail of it upon posterity, that the mothers be wise and good; and of what consequence it is to the wealth and outward prosperity of a house every one is sensible. He that will thrive must ask his wife leave. Here is,

A general enquiry after such a one (Pr 31:10), where observe,

1 The person enquired after, and that is a virtuous woman--a woman of strength (so the word is), though the weaker vessel, yet made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God: it is the same word that is used in the character of good judges (Ex 18:21), that they are able men, men qualified for the business to which they are called, men of truth, fearing God. So it follows, A virtuous woman is a woman of spirit, who has the command of her own spirit and knows how to manage other people's, one that is pious and industrious, and a help meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an imperious whorish woman, Eze 16:30. A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution, who, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty.

2 The difficulty of meeting with such a one: Who can find her? This intimates that good women are very scarce, and many that seem to be so do not prove so; he that thought he had found a virtuous woman was deceived; Behold, it was Leah, and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye, in all his enquiries, and to take heed that he be not biassed by beauty or gaiety, wealth or parentage, dressing well or dancing well; for all these may be and yet the woman not be virtuous, and there is many a woman truly virtuous who yet is not recommended by these advantages.

3. The unspeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that has such a wife ought to put upon her, showing it by his thankfulness to God and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for. Her price is far above rubies, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves. The more rare such good wives are the more they are to be valued.

11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,
so that he shall have no need of spoil.

12 She will do him good and not evil
all the days of her life.
13 She seeketh wool, and flax,
and worketh willingly with her hands.
14 She is like the merchants' ships;
she bringeth her food from afar.
15 She riseth also while it is yet night,
and giveth meat to her household,
and a portion to her maidens.

A particular description of her and of her excellent qualifications.

1. She is very industrious to recommend herself to her husband's esteem and affection. Those that are good really will be good relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the marriage state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to please her husband, 1Co 7:34. Though she is a woman of spirit herself, yet her desire is to her husband, to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and she is willing that he should rule over her.

(1.) She conducts herself so that he may repose an entire confidence in her. He trusts in her chastity, which she never gave him the least occasion to suspect or to entertain any jealousy of; she is not morose and reserved, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and behaviour; her husband knows it, and therefore his heart doth safely trust in her; he is easy, and makes her so. He trusts in her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs, with prudence and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach. He trusts in her fidelity to his interests, and that she will never betray his counsels nor have any interest separate from that of his family. When he goes abroad, to attend the concerns of the public, he can confide in her to order all his affairs at home, as well as if he himself were there. She is a good wife that is fit to be trusted, and he is a good husband that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him.

(2.) She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction that he shall have no need of spoil; he needs not be griping and scraping abroad, as those must be whose wives are proud and wasteful at home. She manages his affairs so that he is always before-hand, has such plenty of his own that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He thinks himself so happy in her that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world; he needs it not, he has enough, having such a wife. Happy the couple that have such a satisfaction as this in each other!

(3.) She makes it her constant business to do him good, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice, Pr 31:12. She shows her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating herself to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words, and not bad ones, no, not when he is out of humour, studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when any thing ails him; nor would she, no, not for the world, wilfully do any thing that might be a damage to his person, family, estate, or reputation. And this is her care all the days of her life; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she does him: She does him good, not only all the days of his life, but of her own too; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him. We read of kindness shown, not only to the living, but to the dead, Ru 2:20.

(4.) She adds to his reputation in the world (Pr 31:23): Her husband is known in the gates, known to have a good wife. By his wise counsels, and prudent management of affairs, it appears that he has a discreet companion in his bosom, by conversation with whom he improves himself. By his cheerful countenance and pleasant humour it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home; for many that have not

have their tempers strangely soured by it. Nay, by his appearing clean and neat in his dress, every thing about him decent and handsome, yet not gaudy, one may know he has a good wife at home, that takes care of his clothes.

2. She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place and takes pleasure in it. This part of her character is much enlarged upon here.

(1.) She hates to sit still and do nothing: She eats not the bread of idleness, Pr 31:27. Though she needs not work for her bread (she has an estate to live upon), yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows that we were none of us sent into this world to be idle, that when we have nothing to do the devil will soon find us something to do, and that it is not fit that those who will not labour should eat. Some eat and drink because they can find themselves nothing else to do, and needless visits must be received with fashionable entertainments; these are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish for, for she neither gives nor receives idle visits nor idle talk.

(2.) She is careful to fill up time, that none of that be lost. When day-light is done, she does not then think it time to lay by her work, as those are forced to do whose business lies abroad in the fields (Ps 104:23), but her business lying within-doors, and her work worth candle-light, with that she lengthens out the day; and her candle goes not out by night, Pr 31:18. It is a mercy to have candle-light to supply the want of day-light, and a duty, having that advantage, to improve it. We say of an elaborate piece, It smells of the lamp.

(3.) She rises early, while it is yet night (Pr 31:15), to give her servants their breakfast, that they may be ready to go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks. She is none of those who sit up playing at cards, or dancing, till midnight, till morning, and then lie in bed till noon. No; the virtuous woman loves her business better than her ease or her pleasure, is in care to be found in the way of her duty

every hour of the day, and has more true satisfaction in having given meat to her household betimes in the morning than those can have in the money they have won, much more in what they have lost, who sat up all night at play. Those that have a family to take care of should not love their bed too well in a morning.

(4.) She applies herself to the business that is proper for her. It is not in a scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business, that she employs herself, but in women's business: She seeks wool and flax, where she may have the best of each at the best hand, and cheapest; she has a stock of both by her, and every thing that is necessary to the carrying on both of the woollen and the linen manufacture (Pr 31:13), and with this she does not only set the poor on work, which is a very good office, but does herself work, and work willingly, with her hands; she works with the counsel or delight of her hands (so the word is); she goes about it cheerfully and dexterously, lays not only her hand, but her mind to it, and goes on in it without weariness in well-doing. She lays her own hands to the spindle, or spinning-wheel, and her hands hold the distaff (Pr 31:19), and she does not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty or a disparagement to her dignity, or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach, Isa 2:18, &c.

(5.) She does what she does with all her might, and does not trifle in it (Pr 31:17); She girds her loins with strength and strengthens her arms; she does not employ herself in sitting work only, or in that which is only the nice performance of the fingers (there are works that are scarcely one remove from doing nothing); but, if there be occasion, she will go through with work that requires all the strength she has, which she will use as one that knows it is the way to have more.

3. She is one that makes what she does to turn to a good account, by her prudent management of it. She does not toil all night and catch nothing; no, she herself perceives that her merchandise is good (Pr 31:18); she is sensible that in all her labour there is profit, and that encourages her to go on in it. She perceives that she can make things herself better and cheaper than she can buy them; she finds by observation what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and to that she applies herself most closely.

(1.) She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family, Pr 31:14. No merchants' ships, no, not Solomon's navy, ever made a more advantageous return than her employments do. Do they bring in foreign commodities with the effects they export? So does she with the fruit of her labours. What her own ground does not produce she can furnish herself with, if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it; and so she brings her food from afar. Not that she values things the more for their being far-fetched, but, if they be ever so far off, if she must have them she knows how to come by them.

(2.) She purchases lands, and enlarges the demesne of the family (Pr 31:16): She considers a field, and buys it. She considers what an advantage it will be to the family and what a good account it will turn to, and therefore she buys it; or, rather, though she have ever so much mind to it she will not buy it till she has first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock as must go to purchase it, whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she has money at command to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering; but those who would make advantageous purchases must consider, and then buy. She also plants a vineyard, but it is with the fruit of her hands; she does not take up money, or run into debt, to do it, but she does it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their

industry, they have got before-hand, and can afford it; and then the fruit of the vineyard is likely to be doubly sweet, when it is the fruit of honest industry.

(3.) She furnishes her house well and has good clothing for herself and her family (Pr 31:22): She makes herself coverings of tapestry to hang her rooms, and she may be allowed to use them when they are of her own making. Her own clothing is rich and fine: it is silk and purple, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to spend much time in dressing herself, nor makes the putting on of apparel her adorning, nor values herself upon it, yet she has rich clothes and puts them on well. The senator's robes which her husband wears are of her own spinning, and they look better and wear better than any that are bought.

She also gets good warm clothing for her children, and her servants' liveries. She needs not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, sufficient to keep out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at in clothing: All her household are clothed in scarlet, strong cloth and fit for winter, and yet rich and making a good appearance. They are all double clothed (so some read it), have change of raiment, a winter suit and a summer suit.

(4.) She trades abroad. She makes more than she and her household have occasion for; and therefore, when she has sufficiently stocked her family, she sells fine linen and girdles to the merchants (Pr 31:24), who carry them to Tyre, the mart of the nations, or some other trading city. Those families are likely to thrive that sell more than they buy; as it is well with the kingdom when abundance of its home manufactures are exported. It is no disgrace to those of the best quality to sell what they can spare, nor to deal in trade and send ventures by sea.

(5.) She lays up for hereafter: She shall rejoice in time to come, having laid in a good stock for her family, and

having good portions for her children. Those that take pains when they are in their prime will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old, both in reflecting upon it and in reaping the benefit of it.

4. She takes care of her family and all the affairs of it, gives meat to her household (Pr 31:15), to every one his portion of meat in due season, so that none of her servants have reason to complain of being kept short or faring hard. She gives also a portion (an allotment of work, as well as meat) to her maidens; they shall all of them know their business and have their task. She looks well to the ways of her household (Pr 31:27); she inspects the manners of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to behave properly and do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her; as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle, and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in his house. She does not intermeddle in the concerns of other people's houses; she thinks it enough for her to look well to her own.

5. She is charitable to the poor, Pr 31:20. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting; she often serves the poor with her own hand, and she does if freely, cheerfully, and very liberally, with an out-stretched hand. Nor does she relieve her poor neighbours only, and those that are nigh at hand, but she reaches forth her hands to the needy that are at a distance, seeking opportunities to do good and to communicate, which is as good housewifery as any thing she does.

6. She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, not talkative, censorious, nor peevish, as some are, that know how to take pains; no, she opens her mouth with wisdom; when she does speak, it is with a great deal of prudence and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she says how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this not as assuming the

authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend and an obliging air: In her tongue is the law of kindness; all she says is under the government of that law.

The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shows itself in the tongue; if we are kindly affectioned one to another, it will appear by affectionate expression. It is called a law of kindness, because it gives law to others, to all she converses with. Her wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she says; they command respect, they command compliance. How forcible are right words! In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy (so some read it), understanding it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. She is full of pious religious discourse, and manages it prudently, which shows how full her heart is of another world even when her hands are most busy about this world.

7. That which completes and crowns her character is that she fears the Lord, Pr 31:30. With all those good qualities she lacks not that one thing needful; she is truly pious, and, in all she does, is guided and governed by principles of conscience and a regard to God; this is that which is here preferred far before beauty; that is vain and deceitful; all that are wise and good account it so, and value neither themselves nor others on it. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but it has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to such temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious souls.

It is a fading thing at the best, and therefore vain and deceitful. A fit of sickness will stain and sully it in a little time; a thousand accidents may blast this flower in its prime; old age will certainly wither it and death and the grave consume it. But the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul; it recommends those that have it

to the favour of God, and is, in his sight, of great price; it will last for ever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.

16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it:
with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
17 She girdeth her loins with strength,
and strengtheneth her arms.
18 She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good:
her candle goeth not out by night.
19 She layeth her hands to the spindle,
and her hands hold the distaff.
20 She stretcheth our her hand to the poor;
yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household:
for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet.
22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry;
her clothing *is* silk and purple.
23 Her husband is known in the gates,
when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it;*
and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
25 Strength and honor *are* her clothing;
and she shall rejoice in time to come.

The happiness of this virtuous woman.

1. She has the comfort and satisfaction of her virtue in her own mind (Pr 31:25): Strength and honour are her clothing, in which she wraps herself, that is, enjoys herself, and in which she appears to the world, and so recommends herself. She enjoys a firmness and constancy of mind, has spirit to bear up under the many crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with in this world; and this is her clothing, for defence as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, and shall rejoice in time to come; she shall reflect upon it with comfort, when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when she was young. In the day of death it will be a

pleasure to her to think that she has lived to some good purpose. Nay, she shall rejoice in an eternity to come; she shall be recompensed for her goodness with fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

2. She is a great blessing to her relations, Pr 31:28.

(1.) Her children grow up in her place, and they call her blessed. They give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bless God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour that is due to a good father and a good mother.

(2.) Her husband thinks himself so happy in her that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best of women. It is no indecency at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises.

3. She gets the good word of all her neighbours, as Ruth did, whom all the city of her people knew to be a virtuous woman, Ru 3:11. Virtue will have its praise, Php 4:8. A woman that fears the Lord, shall have praise of God (Ro 2:29) and of men too. It is here shown,

(1.) That she shall be highly praised (Pr 31:29): Many have done virtuously. Virtuous women, it seems, are precious jewels, but not such rare jewels as was represented Pr 31:10. There have been many, but such a one as this cannot be paralleled. Who can find her equal? She excels them all. Note, Those that are good should aim and covet to excel in virtue. Many daughters, in their father's house, and in the single state, have done virtuously, but a good wife, if she be virtuous, excels them all, and does more good in her place than they can do in theirs. Or, as some explain it, A

man cannot have his house so well kept by good daughters, as by a good wife.

(2.) That she shall be incontestably praised, without contradiction, Pr 31:31. Some are praised above what is their due, but those that praise her do but give her of the fruit of her hands; they give her that which she has dearly earned and which is justly due to her; she is wronged if she have it not. Note, Those ought to be praised the fruit of whose hands is praise-worthy. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore, if the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. If her children be dutiful and respectful to her, and conduct themselves as they ought, they then give her the fruit of her hands; she reaps the benefit of all the care she has taken of them, and thinks herself well paid. Children must thus study to requite their parents, and this is showing piety at home, 1Ti 5:4. But, if men be unjust, the thing will speak itself, her own works will praise her in the gates, openly before all the people.

[1.] She leaves it to her own works to praise her, and does not court the applause of men. Those are none of the truly virtuous women that love to hear themselves commended.

[2.] Her own works will praise her; if her relations and neighbours altogether hold their peace, her good works will proclaim her praise. The widows gave the best encomium of Dorcas when they showed the coats and garments she had made for the poor, Ac 9:39.

[3.] The least that can be expected from her neighbours is that they should let her own works praise her, and do nothing to hinder them. Those that do that which is good, let them have praise of the same (Ro 13:3) and let us not enviously say, or do, any thing to the diminishing of it, but be provoked by it to a holy emulation. Let none have an ill report from us, that have a good report even of the truth itself. Thus is shut up this looking-glass for ladies, which they are desired to open and dress themselves by; and, if

they do so, their adorning will be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom;
and in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.
27 She looketh well to the ways of her household,
and eateth not the bread of idleness.
28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed;
her husband *also,* and he praiseth her.
29 Many daughters have done virtuously,
but thou excellest them all.
30 Favor *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain:
but a woman *that* feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands;
and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Ecclesiastes or, The Preacher

[Ecclesiastes]

Ecclesiastes-1

All Is Vanity

1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Here is, I. An account of the penman of this book; it was Solomon, for no other son of David was king of Jerusalem; but he conceals his name Solomon, peaceable, because by his sin he had brought trouble upon himself and his kingdom, had broken his peace with God and lost the peace of his conscience, and therefore was no more worthy of that name. Call me not Solomon, call me Marah, for, behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But he calls himself,

1. The preacher, which intimates his present character. He is Koheleth, which comes from a word which signifies to gather; but it is of a feminine termination, by which perhaps Solomon intends to upbraid himself with his effeminacy, which contributed more than any thing to his apostasy; for it was to please his wives that he set up idols, Ne 13:26. Or the word soul must be understood, and so Koheleth is,

(1.) A penitent soul, or one gathered, one that had rambled and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was now reduced, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come at length to himself. The spirit that was dissipated after a thousand vanities is now collected and made to centre in God. Divine grace can make great sinners great converts, and renew even those to repentance who, after they had known the way of righteousness, turned aside from it, and heal their backslidings, though it is a difficult case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept, the heart that is broken, not the head that is bowed down like a bulrush only for a day, David's

repentance, not Ahab's. And it is only the gathered soul that is the penitent soul, that comes back from its by-paths, that no longer scatters its way to the strangers (Jer 3:13), but is united to fear God's name. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and therefore we have here the words of the penitent, and those published. If eminent professors of religion fall into gross sin, they are concerned, for the honour of God and the repairing of the damage they have done to his kingdom, openly to testify their repentance, that the antidote may be administered as extensively as the poison.

(2.) A preaching soul, or one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by his sin thrown himself, and being reconciled to the church, he endeavours to gather others to it that had gone astray like him, and perhaps were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother ought to do all he can to restore him. Perhaps Solomon called together a congregation of his people, as he had done at the dedication of the temple (1Ki 8:2), so now at the rededicating of himself. In that assembly he presided as the people's mouth to God in prayer (Ec 1:12); in this as God's mouth to them in preaching. God by his Spirit made him a preacher, in token of his being reconciled to him; a commission is a tacit pardon. Christ sufficiently testifies his forgiving Peter by committing his lambs and sheep to his trust. Observe, Penitents should be preachers; those that have taken warning themselves to turn and live should give warning to others not to go on and die. When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren. Preachers must be preaching souls, for that only is likely to reach to the heart that comes from the heart. Paul served God with his spirit in the gospel of his Son, Ro 1:9.

2. The son of David. His taking this title intimates,

(1.) That he looked upon it as a great honour to be the son of so good a man, and valued himself very much upon it.

(2.) That he also looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin that he had such a father, who had given him a good

education and put up many a good prayer for him; it cuts him to the heart to think that he should be a blemish and disgrace to the name and family of such a one as David. It aggravated the sin of Jehoiakim that he was the son of Josiah, Jer 22:15-17.

(3.) That his being the son of David encouraged him to repent and hope for mercy, for David had fallen into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, but was not; but David repented, and therein he took example from him and found mercy as he did. Yet this was not all; he was that son of David concerning whom God had said that though he would chasten his transgression with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, Ps 89:34. Christ, the great preacher, was the Son of David.

3. King of Jerusalem. This he mentions,

(1.) As that which was a very great aggravation of his sin. He was a king. God had done much for him, in raising him to the throne, and yet he had so ill requited him; his dignity made the bad example and influence of his sin the more dangerous, and many would follow his pernicious ways; especially as he was king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, and of his own building too, where the priests, the Lord's ministers, were, and his prophets who had taught him better things.

(2.) As that which might give some advantage to what he wrote, for where the word of a king is there is power. He thought it no disparagement to him, as a king, to be a preacher; but the people would regard him the more as a preacher because he was a king. If men of honour would lay out themselves to do good, what a great deal of good might they do! Solomon looked as great in the pulpit, preaching the vanity of the world, as in his throne of ivory, judging.

The Chaldee-paraphrase (which, in this book, makes very large additions to the text, or comments upon it, all along) gives this account of Solomon's writing this book, That by the

spirit of prophecy he foresaw the revolt of the ten tribes from his son, and, in process of time, the destruction of Jerusalem and the house of the sanctuary, and the captivity of the people, in the foresight of which he said, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; and to that he applies many passages in this book.

II The general scope and design of the book. What is it that this royal preacher has to say? That which he aims at is, for the making of us truly religious, to take down our esteem of and expectation from the things of this world. In order to this, he shows,

1. That they are all vanity, Ec 1:2. This is the proposition he lays down and undertakes to prove: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. It was no new text; his father David had more than once spoken to the same purport. The truth itself here asserted is, that all is vanity, all besides God and considered as abstract from him, the all of this world, all worldly employments and enjoyments, the all that is in the world (1Jo 2:16), all that which is agreeable to our senses and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves or reputation with others. It is all vanity, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it. Man, considered with reference to these things, is vanity (Ps 39:5,6), and, if there were not another life after this, were made in vain (Ps 89:47); and those things, considered in reference to man (whatever they are in themselves), are vanity. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it; they do not answer the end, nor yield any true satisfaction; they are uncertain in their continuance, are fading, and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us not therefore love vanity (Ps 4:2), nor lift up our souls to it (Ps 24:4), for we shall but weary ourselves for it, Heb 2:13.

It is expressed here very emphatically; not only, All is vain, but in the abstract, All is vanity; as if vanity were the proprium quarto modo--property in the fourth mode, of the things of this world, that which enters into the nature of them. The are not only vanity, but vanity of vanities, the vainest vanity, vanity

in the highest degree, nothing but vanity, such a vanity as is the cause of a great deal of vanity. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain and past dispute, it is vanity of vanities. This intimates that the wise man had his own heart fully convinced of and much affected with this truth, and that he was very desirous that others should be convinced of it and affected with it, as he was, but that he found the generality of men very loth to believe it and consider it (Job 33:14); it intimates likewise that we cannot comprehend and express the vanity of this world. But who is it that speaks thus slightly of the world? Is it one that will stand to what he says? Yes, he puts his name to it--saith the preacher. Is it one that was a competent judge? Yes, as much as ever any man was. Many speak contemptuously of the world because they are hermits, and know it not, or beggars, and have it not; but Solomon knew it. He had dived into nature's depths (1Ki 4:33), and he had it, more of it perhaps than ever any man had, his head filled with its notions and his belly with its hidden treasures (Ps 17:14), and he passes this judgment on it. But did he speak as one having authority? Yes, not only that of a king, but that of a prophet, a preacher; he spoke in God's name, and was divinely inspired to say it. But did he not say it in his haste, or in a passion, upon occasion of some particular disappointment? No; he said it deliberately, said it and proved it, laid it down as a fundamental principle, on which he grounded the necessity of being religious. And, as some think, one main thing he designed was to show that the everlasting throne and kingdom which God had by Nathan promised to David and his seed must be of another world; for all things in this world are subject to vanity, and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon find all to be vanity, then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which we shall inherit substance.

2. That they are insufficient to make us happy. And for this he appeals to men's consciences: What profit has a man of all the pains he takes? Ec 1:3. Observe here,

(1.) The business of this world described. It is labour; the word signifies both care and toil. It is work that wearies men. There

is a constant fatigue in worldly business. It is labour under the sun; that is a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty-eight times. There is a world above the sun, a world which needs not the sun, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labour and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work under the sun, the pains of which are great and the gains little. It is under the sun, under the influence of the sun, by its light and in its heat; as we have the benefit of the light of the day, so we have sometimes the burden and heat of the day (Mt 20:12), and therefore in the sweat of our face we eat bread. In the dark and cold grave the weary are at rest.

(2.) The benefit of that business enquired into: What profit has a man of all that labour? Solomon says (Pr 14:23), In all labour there is profit; and yet here he denies that there is any profit. As to our present condition in the world, it is true that by labour we get that which we call profit; we eat the labour of our hands; but as the wealth of the world is commonly called substance, and yet it is that which is not (Pr 22:5), so it is called profit, but the question is whether it be really so or no. And here he determines that it is not, that it is not a real benefit, that it is not a remaining benefit. In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much of them, are not sufficient to make us happy, nor will they be a portion for us.

[1.] As to the body, and the life that now is, What profit has a man of all his labour? A man's life consists not in an abundance, Lu 12:15. As goods are increased care about them is increased, and those are increased that eat of them, and a little thing will embitter all the comfort of them; and then what profit has a man of all his labour? Early up, and never the nearer.

[2.] As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, What profit has a man of all his labour? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor contervail the loss of it; what profit will they be of to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state?

The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is meat that endures to eternal life, but the fruit of our labour for the world is only meat that perishes.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity.

3 What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?

4 *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

To prove the vanity of all things under the sun, and their insufficiency to make us happy, Solomon here shows,

1. That the time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while we accomplish as a hireling his day. We continue in the world but for one generation, which is continually passing away to make room for another, and we are passing with it. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are vanity; they can be no more substantial than that life which is the substratum of them, and that is but a vapour, which appears for a little while and then vanishes away. While the stream of mankind is continually flowing, how little enjoyment has one drop of that stream of the pleasant banks between which it glides! We may give God the glory of that constant succession of generations, in which the world has hitherto had its existence, and will have to the end of time, admitting his patience in continuing that sinful species and his power in continuing that dying species. We may be also quickened to do the work of our generation diligently, and serve it faithfully, because it will be over shortly; and, in concern for mankind in general, we should consult the welfare of succeeding generations; but as to our own happiness, let us not expect it within such narrow limits, but in an eternal rest and consistency.

2. That when we leave this world we leave the earth behind us, that abides for ever where it is, and therefore the things of the earth can stand us in no stead in the future state. It is well for mankind in general that the earth endures to the end of time,

when it and all the works in it shall be burnt up; but what is that to particular persons, when they remove to the world of spirits? 3. That the condition of man is, in this respect, worse than that even of the inferior creatures: The earth abides for ever, but man abides upon the earth but a little while. The sun sets indeed every night, yet it rises again in the morning, as bright and fresh as ever; the winds, though they shift their point, yet in some point or other still they are; the waters that go to the sea above ground come from it again under ground. But man lies down and rises not, Job 14:7,12.

4. That all things in this world are movable and mutable, and subject to a continual toil and agitation, constant in nothing but inconstancy, still going, never resting; it was but once that the sun stood still; when it is risen it is hastening to set, and, when it is set, hastening to rise again (Ec 1:5); the winds are ever and anon shifting (Ec 1:6), and the waters in a continual circulation (Ec 1:7), it would be of as bad consequence for them to stagnate as for the blood in the body to do so. And can we expect rest in a world where all things are thus full of labour (Ec 1:8), on a sea that is always ebbing and flowing, and her waves continually working and rolling?

5. That though all things are still in motion, yet they are still where they were; The sun parts (as it is in the margin), but it is to the same place; the wind turns till it comes to the same place, and so the waters return to the place whence they came. Thus man, after all the pains he takes to find satisfaction and happiness in the creature, is but where he was, still as far to seek as ever. Man's mind is as restless in its pursuits as the sun, and wind, and rivers, but never satisfied, never contented; the more it has of the world the more it would have; and it would be no sooner filled with the streams of outward prosperity, the brooks of honey and butter (Job 20:17), than the sea is with all the rivers that run into it; it is still as it was, a troubled sea that cannot rest.

6. That all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation, 2Pe 3:4. The earth is where it was; the sun, and winds, and rivers, keep the same course that ever they did; and

therefore, if they have never yet been sufficient to make a happiness for man, they are never likely to be so, for they can but yield the same comfort that they have yielded. We must therefore look above the sun for satisfaction, and for a new world.

7. That this world is, at the best, a weary land: All is vanity, for all is full of labour. The whole creation is made subject to this vanity ever since man was sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his brows. If we survey the whole creation, we shall see all busy; all have enough to do to mind their own business; none will be a portion or happiness for man; all labour to serve him, but none prove a help-meet for him. Man cannot express how full of labour all things are, can neither number the laborious nor measure the labours.

8. That our senses are unsatisfied, and the objects of them unsatisfying. He specifies those senses that perform their office with least toil, and are most capable of being pleased: The eye is not satisfied with seeing, but is weary of seeing always the same sight, and covets novelty and variety. The ear is fond, at first, of a pleasant song or tune, but soon nauseates it, and must have another; both are surfeited, but neither satiated, and what was most grateful becomes ungrateful. Curiosity is still inquisitive, because still unsatisfied, and the more it is humoured the more nice and peevish it grows, crying, Give, give.

5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his
place where he arose.
6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north;
it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again
according to his circuits.
7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full: unto the place
from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.
8 All things *are* full of labor; man cannot utter *it:* the eye is not
satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
9 The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is
done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the
sun.

Two things we are apt to take a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in, and value ourselves upon, with reference to our business and enjoyments in the world, as if they helped to save them from vanity. Solomon shows us our mistake in both.

1 The novelty of the invention, that it is such as was never known before. How grateful is it to think that none ever made such advances in knowledge, and such discoveries by it, as we, that none ever made such improvements of an estate or trade, and had the art of enjoying the gains of it, as we have. Their contrivances and compositions are all despised and run down, and we boast of new fashions, new hypotheses, new methods, new expressions, which jostle out the old, and put them down. But this is all a mistake: The thing that is, and shall be, is the same with that which has been, and that which shall be done will be but the same with that which is done, for there is no new thing under the sun, Ec 1:9. It is repeated (Ec 1:10) by way of question, is there any thing of which it may be said, with wonder, See, this is new; there never was the like? It is an appeal to observing men, and a challenge to those that cry up modern learning above that of the ancients. Let them name any thing which they take to be new, and though perhaps we cannot make it to appear, for want of the records of former times, yet we have reason to conclude that it has been already of old time, which was before us. What is there in the kingdom of nature of which we may say, This is new?

The works were finished from the foundation of the world (Heb 4:3); things which appear new to us, as they do to children, are not so in themselves. The heavens were of old; the earth abides for ever; the powers of nature and the links of natural causes are still the same that ever they were. In the kingdom of Providence, though the course and method of it have not such known and certain rules as that of nature, nor does it go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again. Men's hearts, and the corruptions of them, are still the same; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, are still the same; and what God does in his dealings with men is according to the scripture, according to the manner, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us needs not be so, for there has

been the like, the like strange advancements and disappointments, the like strange revolutions and sudden turns, sudden turns of affairs; the miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind tread a perpetual round, and, as the sun and wind, are but where they were. Now the design of this is,

(1.) To show the folly of the children of men in affecting things that are new, in imagining that they have discovered such things, and in pleasing and priding themselves in them. We are apt to nauseate old things, and to grow weary of what we have been long used to, as Israel of the manna, and covet, with the Athenians, still to tell and hear of some new thing, and admire this and the other as new, whereas it is all what has been. Tatianus the Assyrian, showing the Grecians how all the arts which they valued themselves upon owed their original to those nations which they counted barbarous, thus reasons with them: "For shame, do not call those things eureseis--inventions, which are but mimeseis--imitations."

(2.) To take us off from expecting happiness or satisfaction in the creature. Why should we look for it there, where never any yet have found it? What reason have we to think that the world should be any kinder to us than it has been to those that have gone before us, since there is nothing in it that is new, and our predecessors have made as much of it as could be made? Your fathers did eat manna, and yet they are dead. See Joh 8:8,9,Joh 6:49.

(3.) To quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings. If we would be entertained with new things, we must acquaint ourselves with the things of God, get a new nature; then old things pass away, and all things become new, 2Co 5:17. The gospel puts a new song into our mouths. In heaven all is new (Re 21:5), all new at first, wholly unlike the present state of things, a new world indeed (Lu 20:35), and all new to eternity, always fresh, always flourishing. This consideration should make us willing to die, That in this world there is nothing but the same over and over again, and we can expect nothing from it more or better than we have had.

2 The memorableness of the achievement, that it is such as will be known and talked of hereafter. Many think they have found satisfaction enough in this, that their names shall be perpetuated, that posterity will celebrate the actions they have performed, the honours they have won, and the estates they have raised, that their houses shall continue for ever (Ps 49:11); but herein they deceive themselves. How many former things and persons were there, which in their day looked very great and made a mighty figure, and yet there is no remembrance of them; they are buried in oblivion. Here and there one person or action that was remarkable met with a kind historian, and had the good hap to be recorded, when at the same time there were others, no less remarkable, that were dropped: and therefore we may conclude that neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come, but that which we hope to be remembered by will be either lost or slighted.

10 Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

11 *There is* no remembrance of former *things;* neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after.

The Experience of the Preacher

12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Solomon, having asserted in general that all is vanity, and having given some general proofs of it, now takes the most effectual method to evince the truth of it,

1. By his own experience; he tried them all, and found them vanity.

2. By an induction of particulars; and here he begins with that which bids fairest of all to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, and that is knowledge and learning; if this be vanity, every thing else must needs be so. Now as to this,

I. Solomon tells us here what trial he had made of it, and that with such advantages that, if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he would have found it.

1. His high station gave him an opportunity of improving himself in all parts of learning, and particularly in politics and the conduct of human affairs, Ec 1:12. He that is the preacher of this doctrine was king over Israel, whom all their neighbours admired as a wise and understanding people, De 4:6. He had his royal seat in Jerusalem, which then deserved, better than Athens ever did, to be called the eye of the world. The heart of a king is unsearchable; he has reaches of his own, and a divine sentence is often in his lips. It is his honour, it is his business, to search out every matter. Solomon's great wealth and honour put him into a capacity of making his court the centre of learning and the rendezvous of learned men, of furnishing himself with the best of books, and either conversing or corresponding with all the wise and knowing part of mankind then in being, who made application to him to learn of him, by which he could not but improve himself; for it is in knowledge as it is in trade, all the profit is by barter and exchange; if we have that to say which will instruct others, they will have that to say which will instruct us. Some observe how slightly Solomon speaks of his dignity and honour. He does not say, I the preacher am king, but I was king, no matter what I am. He speaks of it as a thing past, because worldly honours are transitory.

2. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, and the opportunities he had of getting wisdom, which, though ever so great, will not make a man wise unless he give his mind to it. Solomon gave his heart to seek and search out all things to be known by wisdom, Ec 1:13. He made it his business to acquaint himself with all the things that are done under the sun, that are done by the providence of God or by the art and prudence of man. He set himself to get all the insight he could into philosophy and mathematics, into husbandry and trade, merchandise and mechanics, into the history of former ages and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and policies, into men's different tempers, capacities, and projects, and the methods of managing them; he set himself not only to

seek, but to search, to pry into, that which is most intricate, and which requires the closes application of mind and the most vigorous and constant prosecution. Though he was a prince, he made himself a drudge to learning, was not discouraged by its knots, nor took up short of its depths. And this he did, not merely to gratify his own genius, but to qualify himself for the service of God, and his generation, and to make an experiment how far the enlargement of the knowledge would go towards the settlement and repose of the mind.

3. He made a very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much further than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it; no, what he aimed at he compassed; he saw all the works that were done under the sun (Ec 1:14), works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its centre, works of art, the product of men's wit, in a personal or social capacity. He had as much satisfaction in the success of his searches as ever any man had; he communed with his own heart concerning his attainments in knowledge, with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, "Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom, have not only gotten more of it myself, but have done more to propagate it and bring it into reputation, than any, than all that have been before me in Jerusalem."

Note, It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in intellectual pleasures. Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them which meaner persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged as competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full of notions, but his heart had great experience of wisdom and

knowledge, of the power and benefit of knowledge, as well as the amusement and entertainment of it; what he knew he had digested, and knew how to make use of. Wisdom entered into his heart, and so became pleasant to his soul, Pr 2:10,11,22:18.

4. He applied his studies especially to that part of learning which is most serviceable to the conduct of human life, and consequently is the most valuable (Ec 1:17): "I gave my heart to know the rules and dictates of wisdom, and how I might obtain it; and to know madness and folly, how I might prevent and cure it, to know the snares and insinuations of it, that I might avoid them, and guard against them, and discover its fallacies." So industrious was Solomon to improve himself in knowledge that he gained instruction both by the wisdom of prudent men and by the madness of foolish men, by the field of the slothful, as well as of the diligent.

13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning
all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God
given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.
14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold,
all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

He tells us what was the result of this trial, to confirm what he had said, that all is vanity.

1. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, and a weariness not only to the flesh, but to the mind (Ec 1:13): This sore travail, this difficulty that there is in searching after truth and finding it, God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted therewith, as a punishment for our first parents' coveting forbidden knowledge. As bread for the body, so that for the soul, must be got and eaten in the sweat of our face, whereas both would have been had with out labour if Adam had not sinned.

2. He found that the more he saw of the works done under the sun the more he saw of their vanity; nay, and the sight often occasioned him vexation of spirit (Ec 1:14): "I have seen all the works of a world full of business, have observed what the children of men are doing; and behold, whatever men think of

their own works, I see all is vanity and vexation of spirit." He had before pronounced all vanity (Ec 1:2), needless and unprofitable, and that which does us no good; here he adds, It is all vexation of spirit, troublesome and prejudicial, and that which does us hurt. It is feeding upon wind; so some read it, Ho 12:1.

(1.) The works themselves which we see done are vanity and vexation to those that are employed in them. There is so much care in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, It is vexation of spirit.

(2.) The sight of them is vanity and vexation of spirit to the wise observer of them. The more we see of the world the more we see to make us uneasy, and, with Heraclitus, to look upon all with weeping eyes. Solomon especially perceived that the knowledge of wisdom and folly was vexation of spirit, Ec 1:17. It vexed him to see many that had wisdom not use it, and many that had folly not strive against it. It vexed him when he knew wisdom to see how far off it stood from the children of men, and, when he saw folly, to see how fast it was bound in their hearts.

3. He found that when he had got some knowledge he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself nor do that good to others with it which he expected, Ec 1:15. It would not avail,

(1.) To redress the many grievances of human life: "After all, I find that that which is crooked will be crooked still and cannot be made straight." Our knowledge is itself intricate and perplexed; we must go far about and fetch a great compass to come at it. Solomon thought to find out a nearer way to it, but he could not. The paths of learning are as much a labyrinth as ever they were. The minds and manners of men are crooked and perverse. Solomon thought, with his wisdom and power together, thoroughly to reform his kingdom, and make that straight which he found crooked; but he was disappointed. All the philosophy and politics in the world will not restore the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude; we find the insufficiency of them both in others and in ourselves. Learning

will not alter men's natural tempers, nor cure them of their sinful distempers; nor will it change the constitution of things in this world; a vale of tears it is and so it will be when all is done.

(2.) To make up the many deficiencies in the comfort of human life: That which is wanting there cannot be numbered, or counted out to us from the treasures of human learning, but what is wanting will still be so. All our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still lame and defective, and it cannot be helped; as they are, so they are likely to be. That which is wanting in our knowledge is so much that it cannot be numbered. The more we know the more we see of our own ignorance. Who can understand his errors, his defects?

4. Upon the whole, therefore, he concluded that great scholars do but make themselves great mourners; for in much wisdom is much grief, Ec 1:18. There must be a great deal of pains taken to get it, and a great deal of care not to forget it; the more we know the more we see there is to be known, and consequently we perceive with greater clearness that our work is without end, and the more we see of our former mistakes and blunders, which occasions much grief. The more we see of men's different sentiments and opinions (and it is that which a great deal of our learning is conversant about) the more at a loss we are, it may be, which is in the right.

Those that increase knowledge have so much the more quick and sensible perception of the calamities of this world, and for one discovery they make that is pleasing, perhaps, they make ten that are displeasing, and so they increase sorrow. Let us not therefore be driven off from the pursuit of any useful knowledge, but put on patience to break through the sorrow of it; but let us despair of finding true happiness in this knowledge, and expect it only in the knowledge of God and the careful discharge of our duty to him. He that increases in heavenly wisdom, and in an experimental acquaintance with the principles, powers, and pleasures of the spiritual and divine life, increases joy, such as will shortly be consummated in everlasting joy.

15 *That which is* crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great
estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been
before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of
wisdom and knowledge.
17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and
folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.
18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth
knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Ecclesiastes-2

1 I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth;
therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity.

Solomon here, in pursuit of the summum bonum--the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his elaboratory, his council-chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park and the playhouse, his garden and his summer-house; he exchanges the company of the philosophers and grave senators for that of the wits and gallants, and the beaux-esprits, of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them. Here he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of the intellect to the brutal ones of sense; yet, if he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.

I. He resolved to try what mirth would do and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories and jests, banter and drollery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls, and blunders, and foolish things, he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at, so that he might be always in a merry humour.

1. This experiment made (Ec 2:1): "Finding that in much wisdom is much grief, and that those who are serious are apt to be melancholy, I said in my heart" (to my heart), "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; I will try if that will give thee

satisfaction." Neither the temper of his mind nor his outward condition had any thing in them to keep him from being merry, but both agreed, as did all other advantages, to further it; therefore he resolved to take a lease this way, and said, "Enjoy pleasure, and take thy fill of it; cast away care, and resolve to be merry." So a man may be, and yet have none of these fine things which he here got to entertain himself with; many that are poor are very merry; beggars in a barn are so to a proverb.

Mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and, though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual. Some distinguish man from the brutes, not only as animal rationale--a rational animal, but as animal risibile--a laughing animal; therefore he that said to his soul, Take thy ease, eat and drink, added, And be merry, for it was in order to that that he would eat and drink. "Try therefore," says Solomon, "to laugh and be fat, to laugh and be happy."

2 The judgment he passed upon this experiment: Behold, this also is vanity, like all the rest; it yields no true satisfaction, Ec 2:2. I said of laughter, It is mad, or, Thou art mad, and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee; and of mirth (of all sports and recreations, and whatever pretends to be diverting), What doeth it? or, What doest thou? Innocent mirth, soberly, seasonable, and moderately used, is a good thing, fits for business, and helps to soften the toils and chagrins of human life; but, when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless.

(1.) It does no good: What doeth it? Cui bono--of what use is it? It will not avail to quiet a guilty conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing is more ungrateful than singing songs to a heavy heart. It will not satisfy the soul, nor ever yield it true content. It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time. Great laughter commonly ends in a sigh.

(2.) It does a great deal of hurt: It is mad, that is, it makes men mad, it transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge

themselves in it, for it estranges the heart from God and divine things, and insensibly eats out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry forget to be serious, and, while they take the timbrel and harp, they say to the Almighty, Depart from us, Job 21:12,14. We may, as Solomon, prove ourselves, with mirth, and judge of the state of our souls by this: How do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wise? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food? But we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for we may take his word for it, It is mad; and What does it? Laughter and pleasure (says Sir William Temple) come from very different affections of the mind; for, as men have no disposition to laugh at things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at.

2 I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try that which would please the palate, Ec 2:3. Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the liberal use of it would do: I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, that is, to good meat and good drink. Many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, not looking any further than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite; but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man, critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe,

1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tired himself with his severe studies. Till his increase of sorrow, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent ourselves in doing good we may then most comfortably refresh ourselves with the gifts of God's bounty. Then the delights of sense are rightly used when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his health's sake, 1Ti 5:23. I thought to draw my flesh with wine (so the margin reads it) or to wine. Those that have addicted themselves to drinking did at first put a force upon

themselves; they drew their flesh to it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw themselves.

2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctance that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul, when he commended himself, called it a weakness, and desired to be borne with in his foolishness, 2Co 11:1. He sought to lay hold on folly, to see the utmost that that folly would do towards making men happy; but he had like to have carried the jest (as we say) too far. He resolved that the folly should not take hold of him, not get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance; yet he found it too hard for him.

3. He took care at the same time to acquaint himself with wisdom, to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so that they should not do him any prejudice nor disfit him to be a competent judge of them. When he drew his flesh with wine he led his heart with wisdom (so the word is), kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a sot of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures, but his studies and his feasts were foils to each other, and he tried whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it vanity; for those that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, will perhaps deceive themselves as much as those do that think to serve both God and mammon. Wine is a mocker; it is a great cheat; and it will be impossible for any man to say that thus far he will give himself to it and no further.

4. That which he aimed at was not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe the description he gives of man's happiness--it is that good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all their days.

(1.) That which we are to enquire after is not so much the good we must have (we may leave that to God), but the good we must do; that ought to be our care. Good Master, what good thing shall I do? Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing

aright, in being well employed. If we do that which is good, no doubt we shall have comfort and praise of the same.

(2.) It is good to be done under the heaven, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing time lasts. This is our state of work and service; it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution. Thither our works will follow us.

(3.) It is to be done all the days of our life. The good we are to do we must persevere in the doing of to the end, while our doing time lasts, the number of the days of our life (so it is in the margin); the days of our life are numbered to us by him in whose hand our times are and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine, in hopes to find out in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here, in the reflection, condemns himself for. Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No; it is plainly very bad.

4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income; the revenue of his crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country; and, having been at such vast expense in the beginning of his reign to build a house for God, he was the more excusable if afterwards he pleased his own fancy in building for himself; he began his work at the right end (Mt 6:33), not as the people (Hag 1:4), that ceiled their own houses while God's lay waste, and it prospered accordingly. In building, he had the pleasure of employing the poor and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings (1Ki 9:15-19), and they were all great works, such as became his purse, and spirit, and great dignity. See his mistake; he enquired after the good works he should do (Ec 2:3), and, in pursuit of the enquiry, applied himself to great works. Good works indeed are truly great, but many are reputed

great works which are far from being good, wondrous works which are not gracious, Mt 7:22.

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building. He planted himself vineyards, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he made himself fine gardens and orchards (Ec 2:5), and perhaps the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it is now. He had not only forests of timber-trees, but trees of all kinds of fruit, which he himself had planted; and, if any worldly business would yield a man happiness, surely it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocency.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in water-works, ponds, and canals, not for sport and diversion, but for use, to water the wood that brings forth trees (Ec 2:6); he not only planted, but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. Springs of water are great blessings (Jos 15:19); but where nature has provided them art must direct them, to make them serviceable, Pr 21:1.

4. He increased his family. When he proposed to himself to do great works he must employ many hands, and therefore procured servants and maidens, which were bought with his money, and of those he had servants born in his house, Ec 2:7. Thus his retinue was enlarged and his court appeared more magnificent. See Ezr 2:58.

5. He did not neglect country business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it either by his studies or by his pleasures. He had large possessions of great and small cattle, herds and flocks, as his father had before him (1Ch 27:29,31), not forgetting that his father, in the beginning, was a keeper of sheep. Let those that deal in cattle neither despise their employment nor be weary of it, remembering that Solomon puts his having possessions of cattle among his great works and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all impoverished by his building and gardening, as many are, who, for that reason only,

repent it, and call it vanity and vexation. Solomon scattered and yet increased. He filled his exchequer with silver and gold, which yet did not stagnate there, but were made to circulate through his kingdom, so that he made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones (1Ki 10:27); nay, he had the segullah, the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces, which was, for richness and rarity, more accounted of than silver and gold. The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents they had, to obtain his favour and the instructions of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting, all sorts of melody and music, vocal and instrumental, men-singers and women-singers, the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and band-instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for music, but it should seem he employed it more to serve his devotion than the son, who made it more for his diversion. These are called the delights of the sons of men; for the gratifications of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon and take the greatest complacency in. The delights of the children of God are of quite another nature, pure, spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed, more than ever any man did, a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was, in this respect, great, and increased more than all that were before him, that he was wise amidst a thousand earthly enjoyments. It was strange, and the like was never met with,

(1.) That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience. In the midst of these entertainments his wisdom remained with him, Ec 2:9. In the midst of all these childish delights he preserved his spirit manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense; such a vast stock of wisdom had he that it was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been, by this course of life. But let none be emboldened hereby to lay the reins on the neck of their appetites, presuming that they may do that and yet retain their wisdom, for they have not such a

strength of wisdom as Solomon had; nay, and Solomon was deceived; for how did his wisdom remain with him when he lost his religion so far as to build altars to strange gods, for the humouring of his strange wives? But thus far his wisdom remained with him that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them, and kept himself capable of making a judgment of them. He went over into the enemies' country, not as a deserter, but as a spy, to discover the nakedness of their land.

(2.) Yet his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from exacting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, Ec 2:10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter that if his wisdom remained with him he could not take the liberty that was necessary to a full experimental acquaintance with it: "Yea," said he, "I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them, if it could be compassed by lawful means, though ever so difficult or costly; and as I withheld not any joy from my heart that I had a mind to, so I withheld not my heart from any joy, but, with a non-obstante--with the full exercise of my wisdom, I had a high gust of my pleasures, relished and enjoyed them as much as ever any Epicure did;" nor was there any thing either in the circumstances of his condition or in the temper of his spirit to sour or embitter them, or give them any alloy. In short,

[1.] He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had: My heart rejoiced in all my labour; so that the toil and fatigue of that were no damp to his pleasures.

[2.] He had no less profit by his business. He met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance: This was my portion of all my labour; he had this added to all the rest of his pleasures that in them he did not only see, but eat, the labour of his hands; and this was all he had, for indeed it was all he could expect, from his labours. It sweetened his business that he enjoyed the success of it, and it sweetened his enjoyments that they were the product of his business; so that, upon the whole, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him.

9. We have, at length, the judgment he deliberately gave of all this, Ec 2:11. When the Creator had made his great works he reviewed them, and behold, all was very good; every thing pleased him. But when Solomon reviewed all his works that his hands had wrought with the utmost cost and care, and the labour that he had laboured to do in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation; behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit; he had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; there was no profit under the sun, neither by the employments nor by the enjoyments of this world.

5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits:

6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

7 I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor.

11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun.

12 And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done.

Solomon having tried what satisfaction was to be had in learning first, and then in the pleasures of sense, and having also put both together, here compares them one with another and passes a judgment upon them.

I. He sets himself to consider both wisdom and folly. He had considered these before (Ec 1:17); but lest it should be thought he was then too quick in passing a judgment upon them, he here turns himself again to behold them, to see if, upon a second view and second thoughts, he could gain more satisfaction in the search than he had done upon the first. He was sick of his pleasures, and, as nauseating them, he turned from them, that he might again apply himself to speculation; and if, upon this rehearing of the cause, the verdict be still the same, the judgment will surely be decisive; for what can the man do that comes after the king? especially such a king, who had so much of this world to make the experiment upon and so much wisdom to make it with. The baffled trial needs not be repeated. No man can expect to find more satisfaction in the world than Solomon did, nor to gain a greater insight into the principles of morality; when a man has done what he can still it is that which has been already done. Let us learn,

1. Not to indulge ourselves in a fond conceit that we can mend that which has been well done before us. Let us esteem others better than ourselves, and think how unfit we are to attempt the improvement of the performances of better heads and hands than ours, and rather own how much we are beholden to them, Joh 4:37,38.

2. To acquiesce in Solomon's judgment of the things of this world, and not to think of repeating the trial; for we can never think of having such advantages as he had to make the experiment nor of being able to make it with equal application of mind and so little danger to ourselves.

II. He gives the preference to wisdom far before folly. Let none mistake him, as if, when he speaks of the vanity of human literature, he designed only to amuse men with a paradox, or were about to write (as a great wit once did) Encomium moriæ--A panegyric in praise of folly. No, he is maintaining sacred truths, and therefore is careful to guard against being misunderstood. I soon saw (says he) that there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly, as much as there is in light above darkness. The pleasures of wisdom, though they suffice not to

make men happy, yet vastly transcend the pleasures of wine. Wisdom enlightens the soul with surprising discoveries and necessary directions for the right government of itself; but sensuality (for that seems to be especially the folly here meant) clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it; it puts out men's eyes, makes them to stumble in the way and wander out of it.

Or, though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy (St. Paul shows a more excellent way than gifts, and that is grace), yet it is much better to have them than to be without them, in respect of our present safety, comfort, and usefulness; for the wise man's eyes are in his head (Ec 2:14), where they should be, ready to discover both the dangers that are to be avoided and the advantages that are to be improved; a wise man has not his reason to seek when he should use it, but looks about him and is quick-sighted, knows both where to step and where to stop; whereas the fool walks in darkness, and is ever and anon either at a loss, or at a plunge, either bewildered, that he knows not which way to go, or embarrassed, that he cannot go forward. A man that is discreet and considerate has the command of his business, and acts decently and safely, as those that walk in the day; but he that is rash, and ignorant, and sottish, is continually making blunders, running upon one precipice or other; his projects, his bargains, are all foolish, and ruin his affairs. Therefore get wisdom, get understanding.

III. Yet he maintains that, in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage; for,

1. Wise men and fools fare alike. "It is true the wise man has very much the advantage of the fool in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success that I myself perceived, by my own experience, that one event happens to them all (Ec 2:14); those that are most cautious of their health are as so on sick as those that are most careless of it, and the most suspicious are imposed upon." David had observed that wise men die, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, Ps

49:12. See Ec 9:11. Nay, it has of old been observed that Fortune favours fools, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the greatest projectors forecast worst for themselves. The same sickness, the same sword, devours wise men and fools. Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself (Ec 2:15), that though he was a wise man, he might not glory in his wisdom; I said to my heart, when it began to be proud or secure, As it happens to the fool, so it happens to me, even to me; for thus emphatically it is expressed in the original: "So, as for me, it happens to me. Am I rich? So is many a Nabal that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a foolish man sick, does he get a fall? So do I, even I; and neither my wealth nor my wisdom will be my security. And why was I then more wise? Why should I take so much pains to get wisdom, when, as to this life, it will stand me in so little stead? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity." Some make this a correction of what was said before, like that (Ps 77:10), "I said, This is my infirmity; it is my folly to think that wise men and fools are upon a level;" but really they seem to be so, in respect of the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said, That a man may be a profound philosopher and politician and yet not be a happy man.

2. Wise men and fools are forgotten alike (Ec 2:16): There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool. It is promised to the righteous that they shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed, and they shall shortly shine as the stars; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of this world, that that shall perpetuate men's names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven, and otherwise the names of this world's wise men are written with those of its fools in the dust. That which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. What was much talked of in one generation is, in the next, as if it had never been. New persons and new things jostle out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt and at length quite buried in oblivion. Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? 1Co 1:20. And it is upon this account that he asks, How dies the wise man? As the fool. Between the death of a godly and a wicked man there

is a great difference, but not between the death of a wise man and a fool; the fool is buried and forgotten (Ec 8:10), and no one remembered the poor man that by his wisdom delivered the city (Ec 9:15); so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness; and wise and learned men, when they have been awhile there out of sight, grow out of mind, a new generation arises that knew them not.

13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.

14 The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity.

16 For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man?* as the fool.

17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wise men have pleasure in. They are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business. They may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off. Here therefore one would expect to have found the good that men should do, but Solomon tried this too; after a contemplative life and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in it than in the other; still it is all vanity and vexation of spirit, of which he gives an account in these verses, where observe,

I. What the business was which he made trial of; it was business under the sun (Ec 2:17-20), about the things of this world, sublunary things, the riches, honours, and pleasures of this present time; it was the business of a king. There is business above the sun, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness; what we do in conformity to that business (doing God's will as it is done in heaven) and in pursuance of that blessedness, will turn to a good account; we shall have no

reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it. But it is labour under the sun, labour for the meat that perishes (Joh 6:27,Isa 55:2), that Solomon here speaks of with so little satisfaction. It was the better sort of business, not that of the hewers of wood and drawers of water (it is not so strange if men hate all that labour), but it was in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity, Ec 2:21. It was rational business, which related to the government of his kingdom and the advancement of its interests.

It was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural and acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice. It was labour at the council-board and in the courts of justice. It was labour wherein he showed himself wise (Ec 2:19), which as much excels the labour wherein men only show themselves strong as the endowments of the mind, by which we are allied to angels, do those of the body, which we have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye more than any thing else, in the prosecution of their worldly business, is to show themselves wise, to get the reputation of ingenious men and men of sense and application.

II. His falling out with this business. He soon grew weary of it.

1. He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in which he expected. After he had had his fine houses, and gardens, and water-works, awhile, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children, who are eager for a toy and fond of it at first, but, when they have played with it awhile, are weary of it, and throw it away, and must have another. This expresses not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion (Lu 14:26), nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned us and the work of it, but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them and a sense of disappointment in them.

2. He caused his heart to despair of all his labour (Ec 2:20); he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of.

Our hearts are very loth to quit their expectations of great things from the creature; we must go about, must fetch a compass, in arguing with them, to convince them that there is not that in the things of this world which we are apt to promise ourselves from them. Have we so often bored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it, but been always frustrated in the search, and shall we not at length set our hearts at rest and despair of ever finding it?

3. He came to that, at length, that he hated life itself (Ec 2:17), because it is subject to so many toils and troubles, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than other men of the unsatisfying nature of all the things of this life and their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burden to a man of business.

18 Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun:
because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.
19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? yet
shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and
wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also
vanity.

The reasons of this quarrel with his life and labours. Two things made him weary of them:--

1. That his business was so great a toil to himself: The work that he had wrought under the sun was grievous unto him, Ec 2:17. His thoughts and cares about it, and that close and constant application of mind which was requisite to it, were a burden and fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon. Our business is said to be the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord had cursed (Ge 5:29) and of the weakening of the faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence pronounced on us, that in the sweat of our face we must eat bread. Our labour is called the vexation of our heart (Ec 2:22); it is to most a force upon themselves, so natural is it to us to love our ease. A man of

business is described to be uneasy both in his going out and his coming in, Ec 2:23.

(1.) He is deprived of his pleasure by day, for all his days are sorrow, not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself, nay, many sorrows and various; his travail, or labour, all day, is grief. Men of business ever and anon meet with that which vexes them, and is an occasion of anger or sorrow to them. Those that are apt to fret find that the more dealings they have in the world the oftener they are made to fret. The world is a vale of tears, even to those that have much of it. Those that labour are said to be heavy-laden, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, Mt 11:28.

(2.) He is disturbed in his repose by night. When he is overcome with the hurries of the day, and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on his pillow, he is disappointed there; cares hold his eyes waking, or, if he sleep, yet his heart wakes, and that takes no rest in the night. See what fools those are that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their rest; night and day they cannot but be uneasy. So that, upon the whole matter, it is all vanity, Ec 2:17. This is vanity in particular (Ec 2:19,23), nay, it is vanity and a great evil, Ec 2:21. It is a great affront to God and a great injury to themselves, therefore a great evil; it is a vain thing to rise up early and sit up late in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.

2. That the gains of his business must all be left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action and the spur of industry; therefore men labour, because they hope to get by it; if the hope fail, the labour flags; and therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works, he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself.

(1.) He must leave them. He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them (Job 7:10), nor would the remembrance of them do him any good, Lu 16:25. But I must leave all to the man that shall be after me, to the generation that comes up in the room of that

which is passing away. As there were many before us, who built the houses that we live in, and into whose purchases and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us, who shall live in the houses that we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never was land lost for want of an heir. To a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all; why should we grudge others their turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased that, when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved pelf behind, at this uncertainty.

(2.) He must leave them to those that would never have taken so much pains for them, and will there by excuse himself from taking any pains. He that raised the estate did it by labouring in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity; but he that enjoys it and spends it (it may be) has not laboured therein (Ec 2:21), and, more than that, never will. The bee toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a snare to him: it is left him for his portion, which he rests in, and takes up with; and miserable he is in being put off with it for a portion. Whereas, if an estate had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he might have been both industrious and religious? Yet we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since it may prove otherwise, that what is well got may come to one that will use it well and do good with it.

(3.) He knows not whom he must leave it to (for God makes heirs), or at least what he will prove to whom he leaves it, whether a wise man or a fool, a wise man that will make it more or a fool that will bring it to nothing; yet he shall have rule over all my labour, and foolishly undo that which his father wisely did. It is probable that Solomon wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Rehoboam would prove. St Jerome, in his commentary on this passage, applies this to the good books which Solomon wrote, in which he had shown himself wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would fall, perhaps into the hands of a fool, who, according to the perverseness of his heart, makes a bad use of what was well written. So that, upon the whole matter, he asks (Ec 2:22), What has man of all his labour?

What has he to himself and to his own use? What has he that will go with him into another world?

20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I took under the sun.

21 For there is a man whose labor *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil.

22 For what hath man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath labored under the sun?

The best use which is therefore to be made of the wealth of this world, and that is to use it cheerfully, to take the comfort of it, and do good with it. With this he concludes the chapter, Ec 2:24-26. There is no true happiness to be found in these things. They are vanity, and, if happiness be expected from them, the disappointment will be vexation of spirit. But he will put us in a way to make the best of them, and to avoid the inconveniences he had observed. We must neither over-toil ourselves, so as, in pursuit of more, to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have, nor must we over-hoard for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first. Observe,

1. What that good is which is here recommended to us; and which is the utmost pleasure and profit we can expect or extract from the business and profit of this world, and the furthest we can go to rescue it from its vanity and the vexation that is in it.

(1.) We must do our duty with them, and be more in care how to use an estate well, for the ends for which we were entrusted with it, than how to raise or increase an estate. This is intimated Ec 2:26, where those only are said to have the comfort of this life who are good in God's sight, and again, good before God, truly good, as Noah, whom God saw righteous before him. We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee-paraphrase says, A man should make his soul to enjoy good by keeping the commandments of God and walking in the ways that are right before him, and (Ec 2:25) by studying the words of the law, and being in care about the day of the great judgment that is to come.

(2.) We must take the comfort of them. These things will not make a happiness for the soul; all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so that it may be fit to serve the soul and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to a good account. There is therefore nothing better for a man, as to these things, than to allow himself a sober cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition are, to have meat and drink out of them for himself, his family, his friends, and so delight his senses and make his soul enjoy good, all the good that is to be had out of them; do not lose that, in pursuit of that good which is not to be had out of them. But observe, He would not have us to give up business, and take our ease, that we may eat and drink; no, we must enjoy good in our labour; we must use these things, not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in, our worldly business.

(3.) We must herein acknowledge God; we must see that it is from the hand of God, that is,

[1.] The good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we eye his wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish them, and are thankful for them.

[2.] A heart to enjoy them is so; this is the gift of God's grace. Unless he give us wisdom to make a right use of what he has, in his providence, bestowed upon us, and withal peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make our souls enjoy any good in them.

2. Why we should have this in our eye, in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it.

(1.) Because Solomon himself, with all his possessions, could aim at no more and desire no better (Ec 2:25): "Who can hasten to this more than I? This is that which I was ambitious of: I wished for no more; and those that have but little, in comparison with what I have, may attain to this, to be content with what they have and enjoy the good of it." Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, without the special grace of God, and therefore directs us to expect it from the hand of God and pray to him for it.

(2.) Because riches are a blessing or a curse to a man according as he has or has not a heart to make good use of them.

[1.] God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, to enjoy them cheerfully himself and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are good in God's sight, who are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God and have a tender concern for all mankind, God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come; so the Chaldee. Or he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them.

[2.] He makes them a punishment to a bad man if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him: To the sinner God gives by travail, by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, to gather and to heap up that, which, as to himself, will not only burden him like thick clay (Hab 2:6), but be a witness against him and eat his flesh as it were fire (Jam 5:3); while God designs, by an overruling providence, to give it to him that is good before him; for the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and gathered for him that will pity the poor.

Note, First, Godliness, with contentment, is great gain; and those only have true joy that are good in God's sight, and that have it from him and in him.

Secondly, Ungodliness is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment.

Thirdly, When God gives abundance to wicked men it is with design to force them to a resignation in favour of his own children, when they are of age and ready for it, as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it.

[3.] The burden of the song is still the same: This is also vanity and vexation of spirit. It is vanity, at the best, even to the good man; when he has all that the sinner has scraped together it will not make him happy without something else; but it is vexation of spirit to the sinner to see what he had laid up enjoyed by him that is good in God's sight, and therefore evil in his. So that, take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, All is vanity and vexation of spirit.

23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart
taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.
24 *There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and
drink, and *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor.
This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God.
25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto,* more than I?
26 For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight, wisdom, and
knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather
and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is* good before God.
This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Ecclesiastes-3

A Time for Everything

1 To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under
the heaven:

The scope of these verses is to show,

1. That we live in a world of changes, that the several events of time, and conditions of human life, are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously, and we are continually passing and repassing between them, as in the revolutions of every day and every year. In the wheel of nature (Jam 3:6) sometimes one spoke is uppermost and by and by the contrary; there is a constant ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other does the fashion of this world change, ever did, and ever will.

2. That every change concerning us, with the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should by easy, and yet not secure--not to be secure because we live in a world of changes and therefore have no reason to say, To-morrow shall be as this day (the lowest valleys join to the highest mountains), and yet to be easy, and, as he had advised (Ec 2:24), to enjoy the good of our labour, in a humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes, nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here we have,

I. A general proposition laid down: To every thing there is a season, Ec 3:1.

1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other will, in the revolution of affairs, each take their turn and come into play. The day will give place to the night and the night again to the day. Is it summer? It will be winter. Is it winter? Stay a while, and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, Post gaudia luctus--Joy succeeds sorrow; and the most clouded sky will clear up, Post nubila Phoebus--The sun will burst from behind the cloud.

2. Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent are, in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, punctually

determined, and the very hour of them is fixed, and can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

II The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing between its full and change. Some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the divine counsel. Every thing under heaven is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state, and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things.

1. There is a time to be born and a time to die. These are determined by the divine counsel; and, as we were born, so we must die, at the time appointed, Ac 17:26. Some observe that here is a time to be born and a time to die, but no time to live; that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die. But, as there is a time to be born and a time to die, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when those that lie in the grave shall be remembered, Job 14:13.

2. A time for God to plant a nation, as that of Israel in Canaan, and, in order to that, to pluck up the seven nations that were planted there, to make room for them; and at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, to pluck up and to destroy, when the measure of their iniquity was full, Jer 18:7,9. There is a time for men to plant, a time of the year, a time of their lives; but, when that which was planted has grown fruitless and useless, it is time to pluck it up.

3. A time to kill, when the judgments of God are abroad in a land and lay all waste; but, when he returns in ways of mercy, then is a time to heal what he has torn (Ho 6:1,2), to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, Ps 90:15. There is a time when it is the wisdom of rulers to use severe methods, but there is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives.

4. A time to break down a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction; but God will find a time, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is a time, a set time, for the Lord to build up Zion, Ps 102:13,16. There is a time for men to break up house, and break off trade, and so to break down, which those that are busy in building up both must expect and prepare for.

5. A time when God's providence calls to weep and mourn, and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in times of common calamity and danger, and there it is very absurd to laugh, and dance, and make merry (Isa 22:12,13,Eze 21:10); but then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, a time to laugh and dance, and then he expects we should serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first sow in tears and then reap in joy.

6. A time to cast away stones, by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is a time to gather stones together, for the making of strong-holds, Ec 3:5. A time for old towers to fall, as that in Siloam (Lu 12:4), and for the temple itself to be so ruined as that not one stone should be left upon another; but also a time for towers and trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

7. A time to embrace a friend when we find him faithful, but a time to refrain from embracing when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by 1Co 7:3-5,Joe 2:16.

8. A time to get, get money, get preferment, get good bargains and a good interest, when opportunity smiles, a time when a wise man will seek (so the word is); when he is setting out in the world and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he

prospers and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy and make hay when the sun shines. There is a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace, when a man has a price put into his hand; but then let him expect there will come a time to spend, when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn. Nay, there will come a time to lose, when what has been soon got will be soon scattered and cannot be held fast.

9. A time to keep, when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience; but there may come a time to cast away, when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it (Mt 10:37,38), and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away, when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

10. A time to rend the garments, as upon occasion of some great grief, and a time to sew, them again, in token that the grief is over. A time to undo what we have done and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerome applies this to the rending of the Jewish church and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.

11. A time when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty, to keep silence, when it is an evil time (Am 5:13), when our speaking would be the casting of pearl before swine, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss (Ps 39:2); but there is also a time to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation; and it is a great part of Christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

12. A time to love, and to show ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come a time to hate, when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion, which love is loth to admit.

13. A time of war, when God draws the sword for judgment and gives it commission to devour, when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights, when there is in the nations a disposition to war; but we may hope for a time of peace, when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed and he shall make wars to cease (Ps 46:9), when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God has set the one over-against the other, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not and weep as though we wept not.

III. The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance (Ec 3:9): What profit has he that works? What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks is brought to perfection may so soon, and will so surely, be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

2. Then we must look upon ourselves as upon our probation in it. There is indeed no profit in that wherein we labour; the thing itself, when we have it, will do us little good; but, if we make a right use of the disposals of Providence about it, there will be profit in that (Ec 3:10): I have seen the travail which God has given to the sons of men, not to make up a happiness by it, but to be exercised in it, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both how to want and how to abound, Php 4:12. Note,

(1.) There is a great deal of toil and trouble to be seen among the children of men. Labour and sorrow fill the world.

(2.) This toil and this trouble are what God has allotted us. He never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it.

(3.) To many it proves a gift. God gives it to men, as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travail is given to us to make us weary of the world and desirous of the remaining rest. It is given to us that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do; for we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about, than about the event.

2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time
to pluck up *that which is* planted;
3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time
to build up;
4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to
dance;
5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6 a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast
away;
7 a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time
to speak;
8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of
peace.
9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?
10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men
to be exercised in it.
11 He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the
world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God
maketh from the beginning to the end.

Eccl 3:11
Mutability of Human Affairs.

11 He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. 12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. 13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. 14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. 15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here Solomon shows the hand of God in all those changes; it is he that has made every creature to be that to us which it is, and therefore we must have our eye always upon him.

I. We must make the best of that which is, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate ourselves to it: He has made every thing beautiful in his time (Ec 3:11), and therefore, while its time lasts, we must be reconciled to it: nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note, 1. Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he appointed it to be, not as it appears to us. 2. That which to us seems most unpleasant is yet, in its proper time, altogether becoming. Cold is as becoming in winter as heat in summer; and the night, in its turn, is a black beauty, as the day, in its turn, is a bright one. 3. There is a wonderful harmony in the divine Providence and all its disposals, so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful, to the glory of God and the comfort of those that trust in him. Though we see not the complete beauty of Providence, yet we shall see it, and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. Then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time and it will be the wonder of eternity, De 32:4,Eze 1:18.

II. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that we cannot find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God has made all beautiful. Every thing is done well, as in creation, so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either; but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. We see but the middle of God's works, not from the beginning of them (then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the divine counsels), nor to the end of them, which crowns the action (then we should see the product to be glorious), but we must wait till the veil be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings nor pretend to pass judgment on them. Secret things belong not to us. Those words, He has set the world in their hearts, are differently understood.

1. Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do; so Mr. Pemble: "God has not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but has set it forth, to be observed in the book of the world, and this he has set in men's hearts, given man a large desire, and a power, in good measure, to comprehend and understand the history of nature, with the course of human affairs, so that, if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance."

2. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might; so bishop Reynolds: "We have the world so much in our hearts, are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travail concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them." The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

III. We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concerning us, and accommodate ourselves to it. There is no certain, lasting, good in these things; what good there is in them we are here told, Ec 3:12,13. We must make a good use of them,

1. For the benefit of others. All the good there is in them is to do good with them, to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its civil and religious interests. What have we our beings, capacities, and estates for, but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves. No; it is our business to do good; it is in doing good that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid up and will turn to the best account. Observe, It is to do good in this life, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and therefore had need to redeem time. It is in this life, where we are in a state of trial and probation for another life. Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him in eternity.

2. For our own comfort. Let us make ourselves easy, rejoice, and enjoy the good of our labour, as it is the gift of God, and so enjoy God in it, and taste his love, return him thanks, and make him the centre of our joy, eat and drink to his glory, and serve him with joyfulness of heart, in the abundance of all things. If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men sordidly to spare for the present, that they may hoard up all for hereafter; it is better to live cheerfully and usefully upon what we have, and let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Grace and wisdom to do this is the gift of God, and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.

IV. We must be entirely satisfied in all the disposals of the divine Providence, both as to personal and public concerns, and bring our minds to them, because God, in all, performs the thing that is appointed for us, acts according to the counsel of his will; and we are here told,

1. That that counsel cannot be altered, and therefore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, by submitting to it. It must be as God wills: I know (and every one knows it that knows any thing of God) that whatsoever God does it shall be for ever, Ec 3:14. He is in one mind, and who can turn him? His measures are never broken, nor is he ever put upon new counsels, but what he has purposed shall be effected, and all the world cannot defeat nor disannul it. It behoves us therefore to say, "Let it be as God wills," for, how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom.

2. That that counsel needs not to be altered, for there is nothing amiss in it, nothing that can be am ended. If we could see it altogether at one view, we should see it so perfect that nothing can be put to it, for there is no deficiency in it, nor any thing taken from it, for there is nothing in it unnecessary, or that can be spared. As the word of God, so the works of God are every one of them perfect in its kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to them or to diminish from them, De 4:2. It is therefore as much our interest, as our duty, to bring our wills to the will of God.

V. We must study to answer God's end in all his providences, which is in general to make us religious. God does all that men should fear before him, to convince them that there is a God above them that has a sovereign dominion over them, at whose disposal they are and all their ways, and in whose hands their times are and all events concerning them, and that therefore they ought to have their eyes ever towards him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful in every thing to please him, and afraid of offending him in any thing. God thus changes his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels, not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair, but to teach us our duty to him and engage us to do it. That which God designs in the government of the world is the support and advancement of religion among men.

VI. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's government.

The sun rises and sets, the moon increases and decreases, and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning according to the ordinances of heaven; so it is with the events of Providence (Ec 3:15): That which has been is now. God has not of late begun to use this method. No; things were always as mutable and uncertain as they are now, and so they will be: That which is to be has already been; and therefore we speak inconsiderately when we say, "Surely the world was never so bad as it is now," or "None ever met with such disappointments as we meet with," or "The times will never mend;" they may mend with us, and after a time to mourn there may come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to the common character, to the common fate. The world, as it has been, is and will be constant in inconstancy; for God requires that which is past, that is, repeats what he has formerly done and deals with us no otherwise than as he has used to deal with good men; and shall the earth be forsaken for us, or the rock removed out of his place?

There has no change befallen us, nor any temptation by it overtaken us, but such as is common to men. Let us not be proud and secure in prosperity, for God may recall a past trouble, and order that to seize us and spoil our mirth (Ps 30:7); nor let us despond in adversity, for God may call back the comforts that are past, as he did to Job. We may apply this to our past actions, and our behaviour under the changes that have affected us. God will call us to account for that which is past; and therefore, when we enter into a new condition, we should judge ourselves for our sins in our former condition, prosperous or afflicted.

12 I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to
do good in his life.
13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good
of all his labor, it *is* the gift of God.
14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing
can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that
men should fear before him.
15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already
been; and God requireth that which is past.

16 And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there.

Solomon is still showing that every thing in this world, without piety and the fear of God, is vanity. Take away religion, and there is nothing valuable among men, nothing for the sake of which a wise man would think it worth while to live in this world. In these verses he shows that power (than which there is nothing men are more ambitious of) and life itself (than which there is nothing men are more fond, more jealous of) are nothing without the fear of God.

I. Here is the vanity of man as mighty, man in his best estate, man upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to, man upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice are appealed to, and where, if he be governed by the laws of religion, he is God's vicegerent; nay, he is of those to whom it is said, You are gods; but without the fear of God it is vanity, for, set that aside, and,

1 The judge will not judge aright, will not use his power well, but will abuse it; instead of doing good with it he will do hurt with it, and then it is not only vanity, but a lie, a cheat to himself and to all about him, Ec 3:16. Solomon perceived, by what he had read of former times, what he heard of other countries, and what he had seen in some corrupt judges, even in the land of Israel, notwithstanding all his care to prefer good men, that there was wickedness in the place of judgment. It is not so above the sun: far be it from God that he should do iniquity, or pervert justice.

But under the sun it is often found that that which should be the refuge, proves the prison, of oppressed innocency. Man being in honour, and not understanding what he ought to do, becomes like the beasts that perish, like the beasts of prey, even the most ravenous, Ps 49:20. Not only from the persons that sat in judgment, but even in the places where judgment was, in pretence, administered, and righteousness was expected, there

was iniquity; men met with the greatest wrongs in those courts to which they fled for justice. This is vanity and vexation; for,

(1.) It would have been better for the people to have had no judges than to have had such.

(2.) It would have been better for the judges to have had no power than to have had it and used it to such ill purposes; and so they will say another day.

2 The judge will himself be judged for not judging aright. When Solomon saw how judgment was perverted among men he looked up to God the Judge, and looked forward to the day of his judgment (Ec 3:17): "I said in my heart that this unrighteous judgment is not so conclusive as both sides take it to be, for there will be a review of the judgment; God shall judge between the righteous and the wicked, shall judge for the righteous and plead their cause, though now it is run down, and judge against the wicked and reckon with them for all their unrighteous decrees and the grievousness which they have prescribed," Isa 10:1. With an eye of faith we may see, not only the period, but the punishment of the pride and cruelty of oppressors (Ps 92:7), and it is an unspeakable comfort to the oppressed that their cause will be heard over again. Let them therefore wait with patience, for there is another Judge that stands before the door. And, though the day of affliction may last long, yet there is a time, a set time, for the examination of every purpose, and every work done under the sun. Men have their day now, but God's day is coming, Ps 37:13. With God there is a time for the re-hearing of causes, redressing of grievances, and reversing of unjust decrees, though as yet we see it not here, Job 24:1.

II. Here is the vanity of man as mortal. He now comes to speak more generally concerning the estate of the sons of men in this world, their life and being on earth, and shows that their reason, without religion and the fear of God, advances them but little above the beasts. Now observe,

1. What he aims at in this account of man's estate.

(1.) That God may be honoured, may be justified, may be glorified--that they might clear God (so the margin reads it), that if men have an uneasy life in this world, full of vanity and vexation, they may thank themselves and lay no blame on God; let them clear him, and not say that he made this world to be man's prison and life to be his penance; no, God made man, in respect both of honour and comfort, little lower than the angels; if he be mean and miserable, it is his own fault. Or, that God (that is, the world of God) might manifest them, and discover them to themselves, and so appear to be quick and powerful, and a judge of men's characters; and we may be made sensible how open we lie to God's knowledge and judgment.

(2.) That men may be humbled, may be vilified, may be mortified--that they might see that they themselves are beasts. It is no easy matter to convince proud men that they are but men (Ps 9:20), much more to convince bad men that they are beasts, that, being destitute of religion, they are as the beasts that perish, as the horse and the mule that have no understanding. Proud oppressors are as beasts, as roaring lions and ranging bears. Nay, every man that minds his body only, and not his soul, makes himself no better than a brute, and must wish, at least, to die like one.

2 The manner in which he verifies this account. That which he undertakes to prove is that a worldly, carnal, earthly-minded man, has no preeminence above the beast, for all that which he sets his heart upon, places his confidence, and expects a happiness in, is vanity, Ec 3:19. Some make this to be the language of an atheist, who justifies himself in his iniquity (Ec 3:16) and evades the argument taken from the judgment to come (Ec 3:17) by pleading that there is not another life after this, but that when man dies there is an end of him, and therefore while he lives he may live as he lists; but others rather think Solomon here speaks as he himself thinks, and that it is to be understood in the same sense with that of his father (Ps 49:14), Like sheep they are laid in the grave, and that he intends to show the vanity of this world's wealth and honours "By the equal condition in

mere outward respects (as bishop Reynolds expounds it) between men and beasts,"

(1.) The events concerning both seem much alike (Ec 3:19); That which befals the sons of men is no other than that which befals beasts; a great deal of knowledge of human bodies is gained by the anatomy of the bodies of brutes. When the deluge swept away the old world the beasts perished with mankind. Horses and men are killed in battle with the same weapons of war.

(2.) The end of both, to an eye of sense, seems alike too: They have all one breath, and breathe in the same air, and it is the general description of both that in their nostrils is the breath of life (Ge 7:22), and therefore, as the one dies, so dies the other; in their expiring there is no visible difference, but death makes much the same change with a beast that it does with a man.

[1.] As to their bodies, the change is altogether the same, except the different respects that are paid to them by the survivors. Let a man be buried with the burial of an ass (Jer 22:19) and what preëminence then has he above a beast? The touch of the dead body of a man, by the law of Moses, contracted a greater ceremonial pollution than the touch of the carcase even of an unclean beast or fowl. And Solomon here observes that all go unto one place; the dead bodies of men and beasts putrefy alike; all are of the dust, in their original, for we see all turn to dust again in their corruption. What little reason then have we to be proud of our bodies, or any bodily accomplishments, when they must not only be reduced to the earth very shortly, but must be so in common with the beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs!

[2.] As to their spirits there is indeed a vast difference, but not a visible one, Ec 3:21. It is certain that the spirit of the sons of men at death is ascending; it goes upwards to the Father of spirits, who made it, to the world of spirits to which it is allied; it dies not with the body, but is redeemed from the power of the grave, Ps 49:15. It goes upwards to be judged and determined to an unchangeable state. It is certain that the spirit of the beast goes downwards to the earth; it dies with the body; it perishes and is

gone at death. The soul of a beast is, at death, like a candle blown out--there is an end of it; whereas the soul of a man is then like a candle taken out of a dark lantern, which leaves the lantern useless indeed, but does itself shine brighter. This great difference there is between the spirits of men and beasts; and a good reason it is why men should set their affections on things above, and lift up their souls to those things, not suffering them, as if they were the souls of brutes, to cleave to this earth.

But who knows this difference? We cannot see the ascent of the one and the descent of the other with our bodily eyes; and therefore those that live by sense, as all carnal sensualists do, that walk in the sight of their eyes and will not admit any other discoveries, by their own rule of judgment have no preëminence above the beasts. Who knows, that is, who considers this? Isa 53:1. Very few. Were it better considered, the world would be every way better; but most men live as if they were to be here always, or as if when they die there were an end of them; and it is not strange that those live like beasts who think they shall die like beasts, but on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away.

3. An inference drawn from it (Ec 3:22): There is nothing better, as to this world, nothing better to be had out of our wealth and honour, than that a man should rejoice in his own works, that is,

(1.) Keep a clear conscience, and never admit iniquity into the place of righteousness. Let every man prove his own work, and approve himself to God in it, so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, Ga 6:4. Let him not get nor keep any thing but what he can rejoice in. See 2Co 1:12.

(2.) Live a cheerful life. If God have prospered the work of our hands unto us, let us rejoice in it, and take the comfort of it, and not make it a burden to ourselves and leave others the joy of it; for that is our portion, not the portion of our souls (miserable are those that have their portion in this life, Ps 17:14, and fools are those that choose it and take up with it, Lu 12:19), but it is the portion of the body; that only which we enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what is to be had and making the best of it,

and the reason is because none can give us a sight of what shall be after us, either who shall have our estates or what use they will make of them. When we are gone it is likely we shall not see what is after us; there is no correspondence that we know of between the other world and this, Job 14:21. Those in the other world will be wholly taken up with that world, so that they will not care for seeing what is done in this; and while we are here we cannot foresee what shall be after us, either as to our families or the public. It is not for us to know the times and seasons that shall be after us, which, as it should be a restraint to our cares about this world, so it should be a reason for our concern about another. Since death is a final farewell to this life, let us look before us to another life.

17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked:
for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work.
18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that
God might manifest them, and that they might see that they
themselves are beasts.
19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one
thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they
have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a
beast: for all *is* vanity.
20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.
21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit
of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?
22 Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man
should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for who
shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Ecclesiastes-4

1 So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done
under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and
they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was*
power; but they had no comforter.

Solomon had a large soul (1Ki 4:29) and it appeared by this, among other things, that he had a very tender concern for the miserable part of mankind and took cognizance of the afflictions

of the afflicted. He had taken the oppressors to task (Ec 3:16,17) and put them in mind of the judgment to come, to be a curb to their insolence; now here he observes the oppressed. This he did, no doubt, as a prince, to do them justice and avenge them of their adversaries, for he both feared God and regarded men; but here he does it as a preacher, and shows,

I The troubles of their condition (Ec 4:1); of these he speaks very feelingly and with compassion. It grieved him,

1. To see might prevailing against right, to see so much oppression done under the sun, to see servants, and labourers, and poor workmen, oppressed by their masters, who take advantage of their necessity to impose what terms they please upon them, debtors oppressed by cruel creditors and creditors too by fraudulent debtors, tenants oppressed by hard landlords and orphans by treacherous guardians, and, worst of all, subjects oppressed by arbitrary princes and unjust judges. Such oppressions are done under the sun; above the sun righteousness reigns for ever. Wise men will consider these oppressions, and contrive to do something for the relief of those that are oppressed. Blessed is he that considers the poor.

2. To see how those that were wronged laid to heart the wrongs that were done them. He beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and perhaps could not forbear weeping with them. The world is a place of weepers; look which way we will, we have a melancholy scene presented to us, the tears of those that are oppressed with one trouble or other. They find it is to no purpose to complain, and therefore mourn in secret (as Job, Job 16:20,30:28); but Blessed are those that mourn.

3. To see how unable they were to help themselves: On the side of their oppressors there was power, when they had done wrong, to stand to it and make good what they had done, so that the poor were borne down with a strong hand and had no way to obtain redress. It is sad to see power misplaced, and that which was given men to enable them to do good perverted to support them in doing wrong.

4. To see how they and their calamities were slighted by all about them. They wept and needed comfort, but there was none to do that friendly office: They had no comforter; their oppressors were powerful and threatening, and therefore they had no comforter; those that should have comforted them durst not, for fear of displeasing the oppressors and being made their companions for offering to be their comforters. It is sad to see so little humanity among men.

II The temptations of their condition. Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in their graves, and to wish they had never been born (Ec 4:2,3); and Solomon is ready to agree with them, for it serves to prove that all is vanity and vexation, since life itself is often so; and if we disregard it, in comparison with the favour and fruition of God (as St. Paul, Ac 20:24,Php 1:23), it is our praise, but, if (as here) only for the sake of the miseries that attend it, it is our infirmity, and we judge therein after the flesh, as Job and Elijah did.

1. He here thinks those happy who have ended this miserable life, have done their part and quitted the stage; "I praised the dead that are already dead, slain outright, or that had a speedy passage through the world, made a short cut over the ocean of life, dead already, before they had well begun to live; I was pleased with their lot, and, had it been in their own choice, should have praised their wisdom for but looking into the world and then retiring, as not liking it. I concluded that it is better with them than with the living that are yet alive and that is all, dragging the long and heavy chain of life, and wearing out its tedious minutes." This may be compared not with Job 3:20,21, but with Re 14:13, where, in times of persecution (and such Solomon is here describing), it is not the passion of man, but the Spirit of God, that says, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Note, The condition of the saints that are dead, and gone to rest with God, is upon many accounts better and more desirable than the condition of living saints that are yet continued in their work and warfare.

2. He thinks those happy who never began this miserable life; nay, they are happiest of all: He that has not been is happier than both they. Better never to have been born than be born to see the evil work that is done under the sun, to see so much wickedness committed, so much wrong done, and not only to be in no capacity to mend the matter, but to suffer ill for doing well. A good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord even in the fires, and will be happy at last, for ever happy. Nor ought any to wish so while they are alive, for while there is life there is hope; a man is never undone till he is in hell.

2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than
the living which are yet alive.
3 Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath
not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.
4 Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a
man is envied of his neighbor. This *is* also vanity and vexation of
spirit.

Here Solomon returns to the observation and consideration of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend the business of this world, which he had spoken of before, Ec 2:11.

I. If a man be acute, and dexterous, and successful in his business, he gets the ill-will of his neighbours, Ec 4:4. Though he takes a great deal of pains, and goes through all travail, does not get his estate easily, but it costs him a great deal of hard labour, nor does he get it dishonestly, he wrongs no man, defrauds no man, but by every right work, by applying himself to his own proper business, and managing it by all the rules of equity and fair dealing, yet for this he is envied of his neighbour, and the more for the reputation he has got by his honesty. This shows,

1. What little conscience most men have, that they will bear a grudge to a neighbour, give him an ill word and do him an ill turn, only because he is more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and has more of the blessing of heaven. Cain envied

Abel, Esau Jacob, and Saul David, and all for their right works. This is downright diabolism.

2. What little comfort wise and useful men must expect to have in this world. Let them behave themselves ever so cautiously, they cannot escape being envied; and who can stand before envy? Pr 27:4. Those that excel in virtue will always be an eye-sore to those that exceed in vice, which should not discourage us from any right work, but drive us to expect the praise of it, not from men, but from God, and not to count upon satisfaction and happiness in the creature; for, if right works prove vanity and vexation of spirit, no works under the sun can prove otherwise. But for every right work a man shall be accepted of his God, and then he needs not mind though he be envied of his neighbour, only it may make him love the world the less.

II. If a man be stupid, and dull, and blundering in his business, he does ill for himself (Ec 4:5): The fool that goes about his work as if his hands were muffled and folded together, that does every thing awkwardly, the sluggard (for he is a fool) that loves his ease and folds his hands together to keep them warm, because they refuse to labour, he eats his own flesh, is a cannibal to himself, brings himself into such a poor condition that he has nothing to eat but his own flesh, into such a desperate condition that he is ready to eat his own flesh for vexation. He has a dog's life--hunger and ease. Because he sees active men that thrive in the world envied, he runs into the other extreme; and, lest he should be envied for his right works, he does every thing wrong, and does not deserve to be pitied. Note, Idleness is a sin that is its own punishment. The following words (Ec 4:6), Better is a handful with quietness than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit, may be taken either,

1. As the sluggard's argument for the excuse of himself in his idleness. He folds his hands together, and abuses and misapplies a good truth for his justification, as if, because a little with quietness is better than abundance with strife, therefore a little with idleness is better than abundance with honest labour: thus wise in his own conceit is he, Pr 26:16. But,

2. I rather take it as Solomon's advice to keep the mean between that travail which will make a man envied and that slothfulness which will make a man eat his own flesh. Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handful, that we may not want necessaries, but not grasp at both the hands full, which will but create us vexation of spirit. Moderate pains and moderate gains will do best. A man may have but a handful of the world, and yet may enjoy it and himself with a great deal of quietness, with content of mind, peace of conscience, and the love and good-will of his neighbours, while many that have both their hands full, have more than heart could wish, have a great deal of travail and vexation with it. Those that cannot live on a little, it is to be feared, would not live as they should if they had ever so much.

5 The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

6 Better *is* a handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit.

7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

8 There is one *alone,* and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labor; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saith he,* For whom do I labor, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail.

Here Solomon fastens upon another instance of the vanity of this world, that frequently the more men have of it the more they would have; and on this they are so intent that they have no enjoyment of what they have. Now Solomon here shows,

I. That selfishness is the cause of this evil (Ec 4:7,8): There is one alone, that minds none but himself, cares for nobody, but would, if he could, be placed alone in the midst of the earth; there is not a second, nor does he desire there should be: one mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges every thing that goes beside him. See how this covetous muckworm is here described.

1. He makes himself a mere slave to his business. Though he has no charge, neither child nor brother, none to take care of but himself, none to hang upon him, or draw from him, no poor relations, nor dares he marry, for fear of the expense of

a family, yet is there no end of his labour; he is at it night and day, early and late, and will scarcely allow necessary rest to himself and those he employs. He does not confine himself within the bounds of his own calling, but is for having a hand in any thing that he can get by. See Ps 127:2.

2. He never thinks he has enough: His eye is not satisfied with riches. Covetousness is called the lust of the eye (1Jo 2:16) because the beholding of it with his eyes is all that the worldling seems to covet, Ec 5:11. He has enough for his back (as bishop Reynolds observes), for his belly, for his calling, for his family, for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes. Though he can but see it, can but count his money, and not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy because he has not more to regale his eyes with.

3. He denies himself the comfort of what he has: he bereaves his soul of good. If our souls are bereaved of good, it is we ourselves that do bereave them. Others may bereave us of outward good, but cannot rob us of our graces and comforts, our spiritual good things. It is our own fault if we do not enjoy ourselves. Yet many are so set upon the world that, in pursuit of it, they bereave their souls of good here and for ever, make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, bereave themselves not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasures of this world too and this present life. Worldly people, pretending to be wise for themselves, are really enemies to themselves.

4. He has no excuse for doing this: He has neither child nor brother, none that he is bound to, on whom he may lay out what he has to his satisfaction while he lives, none that he has a kindness for, for whom he may lay it up to his satisfaction and to whom he may leave it when he dies, none that are poor or dear to him.

5. He has not consideration enough to show himself the folly of this. He never puts this question to himself, "For whom do I labour thus? Do I labour, as I should, for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need? Do I consider that it is but for the body that I am labouring, a dying body; it is for others, and I know not for whom--perhaps for a fool, that will scatter it as fast as I have gathered it--perhaps for a foe, that will be ungrateful to my memory?" Note, It is wisdom for those that take pains about this world to consider whom they take all this pains for, and whether it be really worth while to bereave themselves of good that they may bestow it on a stranger. If men do not consider this, it is vanity, and a sore travail; they shame and vex themselves to no purpose.

II. That sociableness is the cure of this evil. Men are thus sordid because they are all for themselves. Now Solomon shows here, by divers instances, that it is not good for man to be alone (Ge 2:18); he designs hereby to recommend to us both marriage and friendship, two things which covetous misers decline, because of the charge of them; but such are the comfort and advantage of them both, if prudently contracted, that they will very well quit cost. Man, in paradise itself, could not be happy without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made than matched.

1. Solomon lays this down for a truth, That two are better than one, and more happy jointly than either of them could be separately, more pleased in one another than they could be in themselves only, mutually serviceable to each other's welfare, and by a united strength more likely to do good to others: They have a good reward of their labour; whatever service they do, it is returned to them another way. He that serves himself only has himself only for his paymaster, and commonly proves more unjust and ungrateful to himself than his friend, if he should serve him, would be to him; witness him that labours endlessly and yet bereaves his soul of good;

he has no reward of his labour. But he that is kind to another has a good reward; the pleasure and advantage of holy love will be an abundant recompence for all the work and labour of love. Hence Solomon infers the mischief of solitude: Woe to him that is alone. He lies exposed to many temptations which good company and friendship would prevent and help him to guard against; he wants that advantage which a man has by the countenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpened by iron. A monastic life then was surely never intended for a state of perfection, nor should those be reckoned the greatest lovers of God who cannot find in their hearts to love any one else.

2. He proves it by divers instances of the benefit of friendship and good conversation.

(1.) Occasional succour in an exigency. It is good for two to travel together, for if one happen to fall, he may be lost for want of a little help. If a man fall into sin, his friend will help to restore him with the spirit of meekness; if he fall into trouble, his friend will help to comfort him and assuage his grief.

(2.) Mutual warmth. As a fellow-traveller is of use (amicus pro vehiculo--a friend is a good substitute for a carriage) so is a bedfellow: If two lie together, they have heat. So virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and Christians warm one another by provoking one another to love and to good works.

(3.) United strength. If an enemy find a man alone, he is likely to prevail against him; with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but, if he have a second, he may do well enough: two shall withstand him. "You shall help me against my enemy, and I will help you against yours;" according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai (2Sa 10:11), and so both are conquerors; whereas, acting

separately, both would have been conquered; as was said of the ancient Britons, when the Romans invaded them, Dum singuli pugnant, universi vincuntur--While they fight in detached parties, they sacrifice the general cause.

In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one another as well as in our spiritual work; next to the comfort of communion with God, is that of the communion of saints. He concludes with this proverb, A threefold cord is not easily broken, any more than a bundle of arrows, though each single thread, and each single arrow, is. Two together he compares to a threefold cord; for where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will by his Spirit come to them, and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. They that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them.

9 Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for
their labor.
10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is*
alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up.
11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be
warm *alone?*
12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a
threefold cord is not quickly broken.
13 Better *is* a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king,
who will no more be admonished.

Solomon was himself a king, and therefore may be allowed to speak more freely than another concerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity, which he shows here to be an uncertain thing; he had before said so (Pr 27:24, The crown doth not endure to every generation), and his son found it so. Nothing is more slippery than the highest post of honour without wisdom and the people's love.

I. A king is not happy unless he have wisdom, Ec 4:13,14. He that is truly wise, prudent, and pious, though he be poor in the

world, and very young, and upon both accounts despised and little taken notice of, is better, more truly valuable and worthy of respect, is likely to do better for himself and to be a greater blessing to his generation, than a king, than an old king, and therefore venerable both for his gravity and for his dignity, if he be foolish, and knows not how to manage public affairs himself nor will be admonished and advised by others--who knows not to be admonished, that is, will not suffer any counsel or admonition to be given him (no one about him dares contradict him) or will not hearken to the counsel and admonition that are given him. It is so far from being any part of the honour of kings that it is the greatest dishonour to them that can be not to be admonished. Folly and wilfulness commonly go together, and those that most need admonition can worst bear it; but neither age nor titles will secure men respect if they have not true wisdom and virtue to recommend them; while wisdom and virtue will gain men honour even under the disadvantages of youth and poverty. To prove the wise child better than the foolish king he shows what each of them comes to, Ec 4:14.

1. A poor man by his wisdom comes to be preferred, as Joseph, who, when he was but young, was brought out of prison to be the second man in the kingdom, to which story Solomon seems here to refer. Providence sometimes raises the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, Ps 113:7,8. Wisdom has wrought not only the liberty of men, but their dignity, raised them from the dunghill, from the dungeon, to the throne.

2. A king by his folly and wilfulness comes to be impoverished. Though he was born in his kingdom, came to it by inheritance, though he has lived to be old in it and has had time to fill his treasures, yet if he take ill courses, and will no more be admonished as he has been, thinking, because he is old, he is past it, he becomes poor; his treasure is exhausted, and perhaps he is forced to resign his crown and retire into privacy.

II. A king is not likely to continue if he have not a confirmed interest in the affections of the people; this is intimated, but somewhat obscurely, in the last Ec 4:15,16.

1. He that is king must have a successor, a second, a child that shall stand up in his stead, his own, suppose, or perhaps that poor and wise child spoken of, Ec 4:12. Kings, when they grow old, must have the mortification of seeing those that are to jostle them out and stand up in their stead.

2. It is common with the people to adore the rising sun: All the living who walk under the sun are with the second child, are in his interests, are conversant with him, and make their court to him more than to the father, whom they look upon as going off, and despise because his best days are past. Solomon considered this; he saw this to be the disposition of his own people, which appeared immediately after his death, in their complaints of his government and their affectation of a change.

3. People are never long easy and satisfied: There is no end, no rest, of all the people; they are continually fond of changes, and know not what they would have.

4. This is no new thing, but it has been the way of all that have been before them; there have been instances of this in every age: even Samuel and David could not always please. 5. As it has been, so it is likely to be still: Those that come after will be of the same spirit, and shall not long rejoice in him whom at first they seemed extremely fond of. To-day, Hosanna--tomorrow, Crucify. 6. It cannot but be a great grief to princes to see themselves thus slighted by those they have studied to oblige and have depended upon; there is no faith in man, no stedfastness. This is vanity and vexation of spirit.

14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh poor.

15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

16 *There is* no end of all the people, *even* of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Ecclesiastes-5

The Folly of Rash Vows

1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

Solomon's design, in driving us off from the world, by showing us its vanity, is to drive us to God and to our duty, that we may not walk in the way of the world, but by religious rules, nor depend upon the wealth of the world, but on religious advantages; and therefore,

I. He here sends us to the house of God, to the place of public worship, to the temple, which he himself had built at a vast expense. When he reflected with regret on all his other works (Ec 2:4), he did not repent of that, but reflected on it with pleasure, yet mentions it not, lest he should seem to reflect on it with pride; but he here sends those to it that would know more of the vanity of the world and would find that happiness which is in vain sought for in the creature. David, when he was perplexed, went into the sanctuary of God, Ps 73:17. Let our disappointments in the creature turn our eyes to the Creator; let us have recourse to the word of God's grace and consult that, to the throne of his grace and solicit that. In the word and prayer there is a balm for every wound.

II. He charges us to behave ourselves well there, that we may not miss of our end in coming thither. Religious exercises are not vain things, but, if we mismanage them, they become vain to us. And therefore,

1. We must address ourselves to them with all possible seriousness and care: "Keep thy foot, not keep it back from the house of God (as Ps 25:17), nor go slowly thither, as one unwilling to draw nigh to God, but look well to thy goings, ponder the path of thy feet, lest thou take a false step. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time

to compose thyself for it, not going about it with precipitation, which is called hasting with the feet, Pr 19:2. Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering from the work; keep thy affections from running out towards wrong objects, for in the business of God's house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed." Some think it alludes to the charge given to Moses and Joshua to put off their shoes (Ex 3:5.Jos 5:15) in token of subjection and reverence. Keep thy feet clean, Ex 30:19.

2. We must take heed that the sacrifice we bring be not the sacrifice of fools (of wicked men), for they are fools and their sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord, Pr 15:8), that we bring not the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice, for we are plainly told that it will not be accepted, and therefore it is folly to bring it,--that we rest not in the sign and ceremony, and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it, for that is the sacrifice of fools. Bodily exercise, if that be all, is a jest; none but fools will think thus to please him who is a Spirit and requires the heart, and they will see their folly when they find what a great deal of pains they have taken to no purpose for want of sincerity. They are fools, for they consider not that they do evil; they think they are doing God and themselves good service when really they are putting a great affront upon God and a great cheat upon their own souls by their hypocritical devotions. Men may be doing evil even when they profess to be doing good, and even when they do not know it, when they do not consider it. They know not but to do evil, so some read it. Wicked minds cannot choose but sin, even in the acts of devotion. Or, They consider not that they do evil; they act at a venture, right or wrong, pleasing to God or not, it is all one to them.

3. That we may not bring the sacrifice of fools, we must come to God's house with hearts disposed to know and do our duty. We must be ready to hear, that is,

(1.) We must diligently attend to the word of God read and preached. "Be swift to hear the exposition which the priests give of the sacrifices, declaring the intent and meaning of them, and

do not think it enough to gaze upon what they do, for it must be a reasonable service, otherwise it is the sacrifice of fools."

(2.) We must resolve to comply with the will of God as it is made known to us. Hearing is often put for obeying, and that is it that is better than sacrifice, 1Sa 15:22,Isa 1:15,16. We come in a right frame to holy duties when we come with this upon our heart, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Let the word of the Lord come (said a good man), and if I had 600 necks I would bow them all to the authority of it.

4. We must be very cautious and considerate in all our approaches and addresses to God (Ec 5:2): Be not rash with thy mouth, in making prayers, or protestations, or promises; let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. Note,

(1.) When we are in the house of God, in solemn assemblies for religious worship, we are in a special manner before God and in his presence, there where he has promised to meet his people, where his eye is upon us and ours ought to be unto him.

(2.) We have something to say, something to utter before God, when we draw nigh to him in holy duties; he is one with whom we have to do, with whom we have business of vast importance. If we come without an errand, we shall go away without any advantage.

(3.) What we utter before God must come from the heart, and therefore we must not be rash with our mouth, never let our tongue outrun our thoughts in our devotions; the words of our mouth, must always be the product of the meditation of our hearts. Thoughts are words to God, and words are but wind if they be not copied from the thoughts. Lip-labour, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in religion, Mt 15:8,9.

(4.) It is not enough that what we say comes from the heart, but it must come from a composed heart, and not from a sudden heat or passion. As the mouth must not be rash, so the heart must not

be hasty; we must not only think, but think twice, before we speak, when we are to speak either from God in preaching or to God in prayer, and not utter any thing indecent and undigested, 1Co 14:15.

5. We must be sparing of our words in the presence of God, that is, we must be reverent and deliberate, not talk to God as boldly and carelessly as we do to one another, not speak what comes uppermost, not repeat things over and over, as we do to one another, that what we say may be understood and remembered and may make impression; no, when we speak to God we must consider,

(1.) That between him and us there is an infinite distance: God is in heaven, where he reigns in glory over us and all the children of men, where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels and is far exalted above all our blessing and praise. We are on earth, the footstool of his throne; we are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him or to have any communion with him. Therefore we must be very grave, humble, and serious, and be reverent in speaking to him, as we are when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and, in token of this, let our words be few, that they may be well chosen, Job 9:14. This does not condemn all long prayers; were they not good, the Pharisees would not have used them for a pretence; Christ prayed all night; and we are directed to continue in prayer. But it condemns careless heartless praying, vain repetitions (Mt 6:7), repeating Paternosters by tale. Let us speak to God, and of him, in his own words, words which the scripture teaches; and let our words, words of our own invention, be few, lest, not speaking by rule, we speak amiss.

(2.) That the multiplying of words in our devotions will make them the sacrifices of fools, Ec 5:3. As confused dreams, frightful and perplexed, and such as disturb the sleep, are an evidence of a hurry of business which fills our head, so many words and hasty ones, used in prayer, are an evidence of folly reigning in the heart, ignorance of and unacquaintedness with both God and ourselves, low thoughts of God, and careless

thoughts of our own souls. Even in common conversation a fool is known by the multitude of words; those that know least talk most (Ec 10:11), particularly in devotion; there, no doubt, a prating fool shall fall (Pr 10:8,10), shall fall short of acceptance. Those are fools indeed who think they shall be heard, in prayer, for their much speaking.

2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to
utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon
earth: therefore let thy words be few.
3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a
fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.
4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he*
hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

Four things we are exhorted to in these verses:--

I. To be conscientious in paying our vows.

1. A vow is a bond upon the soul (Nu 30:2), by which we solemnly oblige ourselves, not only, in general, to do that which we are already bound to do, but, in some particular instances, to do that to do which we were not under any antecedent obligation, whether it respects honouring God or serving the interests of his kingdom among men. When, under the sense of some affliction (Ps 66:14), or in the pursuit of some mercy (1Sa 1:11), thou hast vowed such a vow as this unto God, know that thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord and thou canst not go back; therefore,

(1.) Pay it; perform what thou hast promised; bring to God what thou hast dedicated and devoted to him: Pay that which thou hast vowed; pay it in full and keep not back any part of the price; pay it in kind, do not alter it or change it, so the law was, Le 27:10. Have we vowed to give our own selves unto the Lord? Let us then be as good as our word, act in his service, to his glory, and not sacrilegiously alienate ourselves.

(2.) Defer not to pay it. If it be in the power of thy hands to pay it to-day, leave it not till to-morrow; do not beg a day, nor put it off to a more convenient season. By delay the sense of the obligation slackens and cools, and is in danger of wearing off;

we thereby discover a loathness and backwardness to perform our vow; and qui non est hodie cras minus aptus erit--he who is not inclined to-day will be averse to-morrow. The longer it is put off the more difficult it will be to bring ourselves to it; death may not only prevent the payment, but fetch thee to judgment, under the guilt of a broken vow, Ps 76:11.

2. Two reasons are here given why we should speedily and cheerfully pay our vows:--

(1.) Because otherwise we affront God; we play the fool with him, as if we designed to put a trick upon him; and God has no pleasure in fools. More is implied than is expressed; the meaning is, He greatly abhors such fools and such foolish dealings. Has he need of fools? No; Be not deceived, God is not mocked, but will surely and severely reckon with those that thus play fast and loose with him.

(2.) Because otherwise we wrong ourselves, we lose the benefit of the making of the vow, nay, we incur the penalty for the breach of it; so that it would have been better a great deal not to have vowed, more safe and more to our advantage, than to vow and not to pay. Not to have vowed would have been but an omission, but to vow and not pay incurs the guilt of treachery and perjury; it is lying to God, Ac 5:4.

II. To be cautious in making our vows. This is necessary in order to our being conscientious in performing them, Ec 5:6.

1. We must take heed that we never vow anything that is sinful, or that may be an occasion of sin, for such a vow is ill-made and must be broken. Suffer not thy mouth, by such a vow, to cause thy flesh to sin, as Herod's rash promise caused him to cut off the head of John the Baptist.

2. We must not vow that which, through the frailty of the flesh, we have reason to fear we shall not be able to perform, as those that vow a single life and yet know not how to keep their vow. Hereby,

(1.) They shame themselves; for they are forced to say before the angel, It was an error, that either they did not mean or did not consider what they said; and, take it which way you will, it is bad enough. "When thou hast made a vow, do not seek to evade it, nor find excuses to get clear of the obligation of it; say not before the priest, who is called the angel or messenger of the Lord of hosts, that, upon second thoughts, thou hast changed thy mind, and desirest to be absolved from the obligation of thy vow; but stick to it, and do not seek a hole to creep out at." Some by the angel understand the guardian angel which they suppose to attend every man and to inspect what he does. Others understand it of Christ, the Angel of the covenant, who is present with his people in their assemblies, who searches the heart, and cannot be imposed upon; provoke him not, for God's name is in him, and he is represented as strict and jealous, Ex 23:20,21.

(2.) They expose themselves to the wrath of God, for he is angry at the voice of those that thus lie unto him with their mouth and flatter him with their tongue, and is displeased at their dissimulation, and destroys the works of their hands, that is, blasts their enterprises, and defeats those purposes which, when they made these vows, they were seeking to God for the success of. If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouths, and revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects, and walk contrary, and at all adventures, with those that thus walk contrary, and at all adventures with him. It is a snare to a man, after vows, to make enquiry.

III. To keep up the fear of God, Ec 5:7. Many, of old, pretended to know the mind of God by dreams, and were so full of them that they almost made God's people forget his name by their dreams (Jer 23:25,26); and many now perplex themselves with their frightful or odd dreams, or with other people's dreams, as if they foreboded this or the other disaster.

Those that heed dreams shall have a multitude of them to fill their heads with; but in them all there are divers vanities, as there are in many words, and the more if we regard them. "They are but like the idle impertinent chat of children and fools, and

therefore never heed them; forget them; instead of repeating them lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but fear thou God; have an eye to his sovereign dominion, set him before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him, and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams." The way not to be dismayed at the signs of heaven, nor afraid of the idols of the heathen, is to fear God as King of nations, Jer 10:2,5,7.

IV. With that to keep down the fear of man, Ec 5:8. "Set God before thee, and then, if thou seest the oppression of the poor, thou wilt not marvel at the matter, nor find fault with divine Providence, nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted, nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from suffering wrong." Observe here,

1. A melancholy sight on earth, and such as cannot but trouble every good man that has a sense of justice and a concern for mankind, to see the oppression of the poor because they are poor and cannot defend themselves, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, oppression under colour of law and backed with power. The kingdom in general may have a good government, and yet it may so happen that a particular province may be committed to a bad man, by whose mal-administration justice may be perverted; so hard it is for the wisest of kings, in giving preferments, to be sure of their men; they can but redress the grievance when it appears.

2. A comfortable sight in heaven. When things look thus dismal we may satisfy ourselves with this,

(1.) That, though oppressors be high, God is above them, and in that very thing wherein they deal proudly, Ex 18:11. God is higher than the highest of creatures, than the highest of princes, than the king that is higher than Agag (Nu 24:7), than the highest angels, the thrones and dominions of the upper world. God is the Most High over all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens; before him princes are worms, the brightest but glow-worms.

(2.) That, though oppressors be secure, God has his eye upon them, takes notice of, and will reckon for, all their violent perverting of judgment; he regards, not only sees it but observes it, and keeps it on record, to be called over again; his eyes are upon their ways. See Job 23:33.

(3.) That there is a world of angels, for there are higher than they, who are employed by the divine justice for protecting the injured and punishing the injurious. Sennacherib valued himself highly upon his potent army, but one angel proved too hard for him and all his forces. Some, by those that are higher than they understand the great council of the nation, the presidents to whom the princes of the provinces are accountable (Da 6:2), the senate that receive complaints against the proconsuls, the courts above to which appeals are made from the inferior courts, which are necessary to the good government of a kingdom. Let it be a check to oppressors that perhaps their superiors on earth may call them to an account; however, God the Supreme in heaven will.

5 Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are* also *divers* vanities: but fear thou God.

The Vanity of Life

8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for *he that is* higher than the highest regardeth; and *there be* higher than they.

9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himself* is served by the field.

Solomon had shown the vanity of pleasure, gaiety, and fine works, of honour, power, and royal dignity; and there is many a covetous worldling that will agree with him, and speak as slightly as he does of these things; but money, he thinks, is a

substantial thing, and if he can but have enough of that he is happy. This is the mistake which Solomon attacks, and attempts to rectify, in these verses; he shows that there is as much vanity in great riches, and the lust of the eye about them, as there is in the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, and a man can make himself no more happy by hoarding an estate than by spending it.

I. He grants that the products of the earth, for the support and comfort of human life, are valuable things (Ec 5:9): The profit of the earth is for all. Man's body, being made of the earth, thence has its maintenance (Job 28:5); and that it has so, and that a barren land is not made his dwelling (as he has deserved for being rebellious, Ps 68:6), is an instance of God's great bounty to him. There is profit to be got out of the earth, and it is for all; all need it; it is appointed for all; there is enough for all. It is not only for all men, but for all the inferior creatures; the same ground brings grass for the cattle that brings herbs for the service of men. Israel had bread from heaven, angels' food, but (which is a humbling consideration) the earth is our storehouse and the beasts are fellow-commoners with us.

The king himself is served of the field, and would be ill served, would be quite starved, without its products. This puts a great honour upon the husbandman's calling, that it is the most necessary of all to the support of man's life. The many have the benefit of it; the mighty cannot live without it; it is for all; it is for the king himself. Those that have an abundance of the fruits of the earth must remember they are for all, and therefore must look upon themselves but as stewards of their abundance, out of which they must give to those that need. Dainty meats and soft clothing are only for some, but the fruit of the earth is for all. And even those that suck the abundance of the seas (De 33:19) cannot be without the fruit of the earth, while those that have a competency of the fruit of the earth may despise the abundance of the seas.

II. He maintains that the riches that are more than these, that are for hoarding, not for use, are vain things, and will not make a man easy or happy. That which our Saviour has said (Lu 12:15),

that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses, is what Solomon here undertakes to prove by various arguments.

1 The more men have the more they would have, Ec 5:10. A man may have but a little silver and be satisfied with it, may know when he has enough and covet no more. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. I have enough, says Jacob; I have all, and abound, says St. Paul: but,

(1.) He that loves silver, and sets his heart upon it, will never think he has enough, but enlarges his desire as hell (Hab 2:5), lays house to house and field to field (Isa 5:8), and, like the daughters of the horse-leech, still cries, Give, give. Natural desires are at rest when that which is desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing.

(2.) He that has silver in abundance, and has it increasing ever so fast upon him, yet does not find that it yields any solid satisfaction to his soul. There are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy; if a man be hungry, ingots of silver will do no more to satisfy his hunger than clods of clay. Much less will worldly abundance satisfy spiritual desires; he that has ever so much silver covets more, not only of that, but of something else, something of another nature. Those that make themselves drudges to the world are spending their labour for that which satisfies not (Isa 55:2), which fills the belly, but will never fill the soul, Eze 7:19.

2 The more men have the more occasion they have for it, and the more they have to do with it, so that it is as broad as it is long: When goods increase, they are increased that eat them, Ec 5:11. The more meat the more mouths. Does the estate thrive? And does not the family at the same time grow more numerous and the children grow up to need more? The more men have the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them, for where the carcase is the eagles will be. What we have more

than food and raiment we have for others; and then what good is there to the owners themselves, but the pleasure of beholding it with their eyes? And a poor pleasure it is. An empty speculation is all the difference between the owners and the sharers; the owner sees that as his own which those about him enjoy as much of the real benefit of as he; only he has the satisfaction of doing good to others, which indeed is a satisfaction to one who believes what Christ said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

3. The more men have the more care they have about it, which perplexes them and disturbs their repose, Ec 5:12. Refreshing sleep is as much the support and comfort of this life as food is. Now,

(1.) Those commonly sleep best that work hard and have but what they work for: The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, not only because he has tired himself with his labour, which makes his sleep the more welcome to him and makes him sleep soundly, but because he has little to fill his head with care about and so break his sleep. His sleep is sweet, though he eat but little and have but little to eat, for his weariness rocks him asleep; and, though he eat much, yet he can sleep well, for his labour gets him a good digestion. The sleep of the diligent Christian, and his long sleep, is sweet; for, having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God and repose in him as his rest.

(2.) Those that have every thing else often fail to secure a good night's sleep. Either their eyes are held waking or their sleeps are unquiet and do not refresh them; and it is their abundance that breaks their sleep and disturbs it, both the abundance of their care (as the rich man's who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, thought within himself, What shall I do? Lu 12:17) and the abundance of what they eat and drink which overcharges the heart, makes them sick, and so hinders their repose. Ahasuerus, after a banquet of wine, could not sleep; and perhaps consciousness of guilt, both in getting and using what they have,

breaks their sleep as much as any thing. But God gives his beloved sleep.

4. The more men have the more danger they are in both of doing mischief and of having mischief done them (Ec 5:13): There is an evil, a sore evil, which Solomon himself had seen under the sun, in this lower world, this theatre of sin and woe--riches left for the owners thereof (who have been industrious to hoard them and keep them safely) to their hurt; they would have been better without them.

(1.) Their riches do them hurt, make them proud, secure, and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it.

(2.) They do hurt with their riches, which not only put them into a capacity of gratifying their own lusts and living luxuriously, but give them an opportunity of oppressing others and dealing hardly with them.

(3.) Often they sustain hurt by their riches. They would not be envied, would not be robbed, if they were not rich. It is the fat beast that is led first to the slaughter. A very rich man (as one observes) has sometimes been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and estate, merely on account of his vast and overgrown estate; so riches often take away the life of the owners thereof, Pr 1:19.

5. The more men have the more they have to lose, and perhaps they may lose it all, Ec 5:14. Those riches that have been laid up with a great deal of pains, and kept with a great deal of care, perish by evil travail, by the very pains and care which they take to secure and increase them. Many a one has ruined his estate by being over-solicitous to advance it and make it more, and has lost all by catching at all. Riches are perishing things, and all our care about them cannot make them otherwise; they make themselves wings and fly away. He that thought he should have made his son a gentleman leaves him a beggar; he begets a son,

and brings him up in the prospect of an estate, but, when he dies, leaves it under a charge of debt as much as it is worth, so that there is nothing in his hand. This is a common case; estates that made a great show do not prove what they seemed, but cheat the heir.

6. How much soever men have when they die, they must leave it all behind them (Ec 5:15,16): As he came forth of his mother's womb naked, so shall he return; only as his friends, when he came naked into the world, in pity to him, helped him with swaddling-clothes, so, when he goes out, they help him with grave-clothes, and that is all. See Job 1:21,Ps 49:17. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with such things as we have, 1Ti 6:7. In respect of the body we must go as we came; the dust shall return to the earth as it was. But sad is our case if the soul return as it came, for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin, unsanctified, we had better never have been born; and that seems to be the case of the worldling here spoken of, for he is said to return in all points as he came, as sinful, as miserable, and much more so.

This is a sore evil; he thinks it so whose heart is glued to the world, that he shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand; his riches will not go with him into another world nor stand him in any stead there. If we labour in religion, the grace and comfort we get by that labour we may carry away in our hearts, and shall be the better for it to eternity; that is meat that endures. But if we labour only for the world, to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands griping, but we die with them extended, letting go what we held fast. So that, upon the whole matter, he may well ask, What profit has he that has laboured for the wind? Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind, for that which has more sound than substance, which is uncertain, and always shifting its point, unsatisfying, and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which, if we take up with it as our portion, will no more feed us than the wind, Ho 12:1. Men will see that they have laboured for the wind when at death they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

7. Those that have much, if they set their hearts upon it, have not only uncomfortable deaths, but uncomfortable lives too, Ec 5:17. This covetous worldling, that is so bent upon raising an estate, all his days eats in darkness and much sorrow, and it is his sickness and wrath; he has not only no pleasure of his estate, nor any enjoyment of it himself, for he eats the bread of sorrow (Ps 127:2), but a great deal of vexation to see others eat of it. His necessary expenses make him sick, make him fret, and he seems as if he were angry that himself and those about him cannot live without meat. As we read the last clause, it intimates how ill this covetous worldling can bear the common and unavoidable calamities of human life. When he is in health he eats in darkness, always dull with care and fear about what he has; but, if he be sick, he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness; he is vexed that his sickness takes him off from his business and hinders him in his pursuits of the world, vexed that all his wealth will not give him any ease or relief, but especially terrified with the apprehensions of death (which his diseases are the harbingers of), of leaving this world and the things of it behind him, which he has set his affections upon, and removing to a world he has made no preparation for. He has not any sorrow after a godly sort, does not sorrow to repentance, but he has sorrow and wrath, is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, angry at all about him, fretful and peevish, which doubles his affliction, which a good man lessens and lightens by patience and joy in his sickness.

10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that
loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity.
11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what
good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them*
with their eyes?
12 The sleep of a laboring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or
much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.
13 There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely,* riches
kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.
14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and
there is nothing in his hand.

15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go
as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry
away in his hand.
16 And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he
go: and what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?
17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and *he hath* much sorrow
and wrath with his sickness.
18 Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is* good and comely *for one* to eat
and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh
under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it *is*
his portion.

Solomon, from the vanity of riches hoarded up, here infers that the best course we can take is to use well what we have, to serve God with it, to do good with it, and take the comfort of it to ourselves and our families; this he had pressed before, Ec 2:24,3:22. Observe,

1. What it is that is here recommended to us, not to indulge the appetites of the flesh, or to take up with present pleasures or profits for our portion, but soberly and moderately to make use of what Providence has allotted for our comfortable passage through this world. We must not starve ourselves through covetousness, because we cannot afford ourselves food convenient, nor through eagerness in our worldly pursuits, nor through excessive care and grief, but eat and drink what is fit for us to keep our bodies in good plight for the serving of our souls in God's service. We must not kill ourselves with labour, and then leave others to enjoy the good of it, but take the comfort of that which our hands have laboured for, and that not now and then, but all the days of our life which God gives us. Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us the number of the days of our life (Job 14:5); let us therefore spend those days in serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make ourselves slaves to it, but we must rejoice in our labour, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, but take a pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness. This it to rejoice in our

labour, whatever it is, as Zebulun in his going out and Issachar in his tents.

2. What is urged to recommend it to us.

(1.) That it is good and comely to do this. It is well, and it looks well. Those that cheerfully use what God has given them thereby honour the giver, answer the intention of the gift, act rationally and generously, do good in the world, and make what they have turn to the best account, and this is both their credit and their comfort; it is good and comely; there is duty and decency in it.

(2.) That it is all the good we can have out of the things of this world: It is our portion, and in doing thus we take our portion, and make the best of bad. This is our part of our worldly possession. God must have his part, the poor theirs, and our families theirs, but this is ours; it is all that falls to our lot out of them.

(3.) That a heart to do thus is such a gift of God's grace as crowns all the gifts of his providence. If God has given a man riches and wealth, he completes the favour, and makes that a blessing indeed, if withal he gives him power to eat thereof, wisdom and grace to take the good of it and to do good with it. If this is God's gift, we must covet it earnestly as the best gift relating to our enjoyments in this world.

(4.) That this is the way to make our own lives easy and to relieve ourselves against the many toils and troubles which our lives on earth are incident to (Ec 5:20): He shall not much remember the days of his life, the days of his sorrow and sore travail, his working days, his weeping days. He shall either forget them or remember them as waters that pass away; he shall not much lay to heart his crosses, nor long retain the bitter relish of them, because God answers him in the joy of his heart, balances all the grievances of his labour with the joy of it and recompenses him for it by giving him to eat the labour of his hands. If he does not answer all his desires and expectations, in the letter of them, yet he answers them with that which is more than equivalent, in the

joy of his heart. A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes the yoke of our employments easy and the burden of our afflictions light.

19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this *is* the gift of God.

20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

Ecclesiastes-6

1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men:

Solomon had shown, in the close of the foregoing chapter, how good it is to make a comfortable use of the gifts of God's providence; now here he shows the evil of the contrary, having and not using, gathering to lay up for I know not what contingent emergencies to come, not to lay out on the most urgent occasions present. This is an evil which Solomon himself saw under the sun, Ec 6:1. A great deal of evil there is under the sun. There is a world above the sun where there is no evil, yet God causes his sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good, which is an aggravation of the evil. God has lighted up a candle for his servants to work by, but they bury their talent as slothful and unprofitable, and so waste the light and are unworthy of it. Solomon, as a king, inspected the manners of his subjects, and took notice of this evil as a prejudice to the public, who are damaged not only by men's prodigality on the one hand, but by their penuriousness on the other. As it is with the blood in the natural body, so it is with the wealth of the body politic, if, instead of circulating, it stagnates, it will be of ill consequence.

Solomon as a preacher observed the evils that were done that he might reprove them and warn people against them. This evil was, in his days, common, and yet then there was great plenty of silver and gold, which, one would think, should have made people less fond of riches; the times also were peaceable, nor was there any prospect of trouble, which to some is a temptation to hoard. But no providence will of itself, unless the grace of God work with

it, cure the corrupt affection that is in the carnal mind to the world and the things of it; nay, when riches increase we are most apt to set our hearts upon them. Now concerning this miser observe,

I The abundant reason he has to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart; how well God has done for him.

1. He has given him riches, wealth, and honour, Ec 6:2. Note,

(1.) Riches and wealth commonly gain people honour among men. Though it be but an image, if it be a golden image, all people, nations, and languages, will fall down and worship it.

(2.) Riches, wealth, and honour, are God's gifts, the gifts of his providence, and not given, as his rain and sunshine, alike to all, but to some, and not to others, as God sees fit.

(3.) Yet they are given to many that do not make a good use of them, to many to whom God does not give wisdom and grace to take the comfort of them and serve God with them. The gifts of common providence are bestowed on many to whom are denied the gifts of a special grace, without which the gifts of providence often do more hurt than good.

2. He wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires. Providence has been so liberal to him that he has as much as heart could wish, and more, Ps 73:7. He does not desire grace for his soul, the better part; all he desires is enough to gratify the sensual appetite, and that he has; his belly is filled with these hidden treasures, Ps 17:14.

3. He is supposed to have a numerous family, to beget a hundred children, which are the stay and strength of his house and as a quiver full of arrows to him, which are the honour and credit of his house, and in whom he has the prospect of having his name built up and having all the immortality this world can give him. They are full of children (Ps 17:14), while many of God's people are written childless and stripped of all.

4. To complete his happiness, he is supposed to live many years, or rather many days, for our life is to be reckoned rather by days than years: The days of his years are many, and so healthful is his constitution, and so slowly does age creep upon him, that they are likely to be many more. Nay, he is supposed to live a thousand years (which no man, that we know of, ever did), nay, a thousand years twice told, a small part of which time, one would think, were enough to convince men, by their own experience, of the folly both of those that expect to find all good in worldly wealth, and of those that expect to find any good in it but in using it.

II The little heart he has to use this which God gives him, for the ends and purposes for which it was given him. This is his fault and folly that he renders not again according to the benefit done unto him, and serves not the Lord God his benefactor, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things. In the day of prosperity he is not joyful. Tristis es, et felix?--Art thou happy, yet sad? See his folly:

1. He cannot find in his heart to take the comfort of what he has himself. He has meat before him; he has wherewith to maintain himself and his family comfortably, but he has not power to eat thereof. His sordid niggardly temper will not suffer him to lay it out, no, not upon himself, no, not upon that which is most necessary for himself. He has not power to reason himself out of this absurdity, to conquer his covetous humour. He is weak indeed, who has not power to use what God gives him, for God gives him not that power, but withholds it from him, to punish him for his other abuses of his wealth. Because he has not the will to serve God with it, God denies him the power to serve himself with it.

2. He suffers those to prey upon him that he is under no obligation to: A stranger eateth it. This is the common fate of misers; they will not trust their own children perhaps, but retainers and hangers-on, that have the art of wheedling, insinuate themselves into them, and find ways of devouring what they have, or getting it to be left to them by their wills. God

orders it so that a stranger eats it. Strangers devour his strength, Ho 7:9,Pr 5:10. This may be well called vanity, and an evil disease. What we have we have in vain if we do not use it; and that temper of mind is certainly a most wretched distemper which keeps us from using it. Our worst diseases are those that arise from the corruption of our own hearts.

3. He deprives himself of the good that he might have had of his worldly possessions, not only forfeits it, but robs himself of it and throws it from him: His soul is not filled with good, Ec 6:3. He is still unsatisfied and uneasy. His hands are filled with riches, his barns filled, and his bags filled, but his soul is not filled with good, no, not with that good, for it is still craving more. Nay (Ec 6:6), he has not seen good; he cannot so much as please his eye, for that is still looking further and looking with envy on those that have more. He has not even the sensible good of an estate. Though he looks not beyond the things that are seen, yet he looks not with any true pleasure even on them.

4. He has no burial, none agreeable to his rank, no decent burial, but the burial of an ass. Through the sordidness of his temper he will not allow himself a fashionable burial, but forbids it, or the strangers that have eaten him up leave him so poor, at last, that he has not wherewithal, or those to whom he leaves what he has have so little esteem for his memory, and are so greedy of what they are to have from him, that they will not be at the charges of burying him handsomely, which his own children, if he had left it to them, would not have grudged him.

III. The preference which the preacher gives to an untimely birth before him: An untimely birth, a child that is carried from the womb to the grave, is better than he. Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job, in his passion, thinks the condition of an untimely birth better than his when he was in adversity (Job 3:16); but Solomon here pronounces it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him.

1. He grants the condition of an untimely birth, upon many accounts, to be very sad (Ec 6:4,5): He comes in with vanity (for, as to this world, he that is born and dies immediately was born in vain), and he departs in darkness; little or no notice is taken of him; being an abortive, he has no name, or, if he had, it would soon be forgotten and buried in oblivion; it would be covered with darkness, as the body is with the earth. Nay (Ec 6:5), he has not seen the sun, but from the darkness of the womb he is hurried immediately to that of the grave, and, which is worse than not being known to any, he has not known any thing, and therefore has come short of that which is the greatest pleasure and honour of man. Those that live in wilful ignorance, and know nothing to purpose, are no better than an untimely birth that has not seen the sun nor known any thing.

2. Yet he prefers it before that of a covetous miser. This untimely birth has more rest than the other, for this has some rest, but the other has none; this has no trouble and disquiet, but the other is in perpetual agitation, and has nothing but trouble, trouble of his own making. The shorter the life is the longer the rest; and the fewer the days, and the less we have to do with this troublesome world, the less trouble we know.

'Tis better die a child at four, Than live, and die so at fourscore.

The reason he gives why this has more rest is because all go to one place to rest in, and this is sooner at his rest, Ec 6:6. He that lives a thousand years goes to the same place with the child that does not live an hour, Ec 3:20. The grave is the place we shall all meet in. Whatever differences there may be in men's condition in this world, they must all die, are all under the same sentence, and, to outward appearance, their deaths are alike. The grave is to one, as well as another, a land of silence, of darkness, of separation from the living, and a sleeping-place. It is the common rendezvous of rich and poor, honourable and mean, learned and unlearned; the short-lived and long-lived meet in the grave, only one rides post thither, the other goes by a slower conveyance; the dust of both mingles, and lies undistinguished.

2 a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honor, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God

giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil disease.

3 If a man beget a hundred *children,* and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also *that* he have no burial; I say, *that* an untimely birth *is* better than he.

4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.

5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known *any thing:* this hath more rest than the other.

6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice *told,* yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

7 All the labor of man *is* for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

The preacher here further shows the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth and expecting happiness in it.

I. How much soever we toil about the world, and get out of it, we can have for ourselves no more than a maintenance (Ec 6:7): All the labour of man is for his mouth, which craves it of him (Pr 16:26); it is but food and raiment; what is more others have, not we; it is all for the mouth. Meats are but for the belly and the belly for meats; there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul. A little will serve to sustain us comfortably and a great deal can do no more.

II. Those that have ever so much are still craving; let a man labour ever so much for his mouth, yet the appetite is not filled.

1. Natural desires are still returning, still pressing; a man may be feasted to-day and yet hungry to-morrow.

2. Worldly sinful desires are insatiable, Ec 5:10. Wealth to a worldling is like drink to one in a dropsy, which does but increase the thirst. Some read the whole verse thus: Though all a man's labour fall out to his own mind (ori ejus obveniat--so as to correspond with his views, Juv.), just as himself would have it, yet his desire is not satisfied, still he has a mind to something

more. 3. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction. The soul is not filled, so the word is. When God gave Israel their request he sent leanness into their souls, Ps 106:15. He was a fool who, when his barns were full, said, Soul, take thine ease.

III. A fool may have as much worldly wealth, and may enjoy as much of the pleasure of it, as a wise man; nay, and perhaps not be so sensible of the vexation of it: What has the wise more than the fool? Ec 6:8. Perhaps he has not so good an estate, so good a trade, nor such good preferment as the fool has. Nay, suppose them to be equal in their possessions, what can a wise man, a scholar, a wit, a politician, squeeze out of his estate more than needful supplies? and a half-witted man may do this. A fool can fare as well and relish it, can dress as well, and make as good a figure in any public appearance, as a wise man; so that if there were not pleasures and honour peculiar to the mind, which the wise man has more than the fool, as to this world they would be upon a level.

IV. Even a poor man, who has business, and is discreet, diligent, and dexterous, in the management of it, may get as comfortably through this world as he that is loaded with an overgrown estate. Consider what the poor has less than the rich, if he but knows to walk before the living, knows how to conduct himself decently, and do his duty to all, how to get an honest livelihood by his labour, how to spend his time well and improve his opportunities. What has he? Why, he is better beloved and more respected among his neighbours, and has a better interest than many a rich man that is griping and haughty. What has he? Why he has as much of the comfort of this life, has food and raiment, and is therewith content, and so is as truly rich as he that has abundance.

V. The enjoyment of what we have cannot but be acknowledged more rational than a greedy grasping at more (Ec 6:9): Better is the sight of the eyes, making the best of that which is present, than the wandering of the desire, the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance, and the affecting of a variety of imaginary satisfactions. He is much happier that is always

content, though he has ever so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has ever so much. We cannot say, Better is the sight of the eyes than the fixing of the desire upon God, and the resting of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come than to live by sense, which dwells only upon present things; but better is the sight of the eyes than the roving of the desire after the world, and the things of it, than which nothing is more uncertain nor more unsatisfying at the best. This wandering of the desire is vanity and vexation of spirit. It is vanity at the best; if what is desired, be obtained, it proves not what we promised ourselves from it, but commonly the wandering desire is crossed and disappointed, and then it turns to vexation of spirit.

VI. Our lot, whatever it is, is that which is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered, and it is therefore our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to it and cheerfully to acquiesce in it (Ec 6:10): That which has been, or (as some read it) that which is, and so likewise that which shall be, is named already; it is already determined in the divine foreknowledge, and all our care and pains cannot make it otherwise than as it is fixed. Jacta est alea--The die is cast. It is therefore folly to quarrel with that which will be as it is, and wisdom to make a virtue of necessity. We shall have what pleases God, and let that please us.

VII. Whatever we attain to in this world, still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferments cannot set us above the common accidents of human life: That which has been, and is, that busy animal that makes such a stir and such a noise in the world, is named already. He that made him gave him his name, and it is known that it is man; that is his name by which he must know himself, and it is a humbling name, Ge 5:2. He called their name Adam; and all theirs have the same character, red earth. Though a man could make himself master of all the treasures of kings and provinces, yet he is a man still, mean, mutable, and mortal, and may at any time be involved in the calamities that are common to men. It is good for rich and great men to know and consider that they are but men, Ps 9:20. It is known that they are but men; let them put what face they will upon it, and, like the king of Tyre, set their heart as the heart of God, yet the

Egyptians are men, and not gods, and it is known that they are so.

VIII. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever our endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the divine Providence, but must submit to the disposals of it, whether we will or no. If it is man, he may not contend with him that is mightier than he. It is presumption to arraign God's proceedings, and to charge him with folly or iniquity; nor is it to any purpose to complain of him, for he is in one mind and who can turn him? Elihu pacifies Job with this incontest able principle, That God is greater than man (Job 33:12) and therefore man may not contend with him, nor resist his judgments, when they come with commission. A man cannot with the greatest riches make his part good against the arrests of sickness or death, but must yield to his fate.

8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor,
that knoweth to walk before the living?
9 Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this
is also vanity and vexation of spirit.
10 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it *is*
man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.
11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what *is* man the
better?

Here, 1. Solomon lays down his conclusion which he had undertaken to prove, as that which was fully confirmed by the foregoing discourse: There be many things that increase vanity; the life of man is vain, at the best, and there are abundance of accidents that concur to make it more so; even that which pretends to increase the vanity and make it more vexatious.

2. He draws some inferences from it, which serve further to evince the truth of it.

(1.) That a man is never the nearer to true happiness for the abundance that he has in this world: What is man the better for his wealth and pleasure, his honour and preferment? What remains to man? What residuum has he, what overplus, what real

advantage, when he comes to balance his accounts? Nothing that will do him any good or turn to account.

(2.) That we do not know what to wish for, because that which we promise ourselves most satisfaction in often proves most vexatious to us: Who knows what is good for a man in this life, where every thing is vanity, and any thing, even that which we most covet, may prove a calamity to us? Thoughtful people are in care to do every thing for the best, if they knew it; but as it is an instance of the corruption of our hearts that we are apt to desire that as good for us which is really hurtful, as children that cry for knives to cut their fingers with, so is it an instance of the vanity of this world that what, according to all probable conjectures, seems to be for the best, often proves otherwise; such is our shortsightedness concerning the issues and events of things, and such broken reeds are all our creature-confidences. We know not how to advise others for the best, nor how to act ourselves, because that which we apprehend likely to be for our welfare may become a trap.

(3.) That therefore our life upon earth is what we have no reason to take any great complacency in, or to be confident of the continuance of. It is to be reckoned by days; it is but a vain life, and we spend it as a shadow, so little is there in it substantial, so fleeting, so uncertain, so transitory is it, and so little in it to be fond of or to be depended on. If all the comforts of life be vanity, life itself can have no great reality in it to constitute a happiness for us.

(4.) That our expectations from this world are as uncertain and deceitful as our enjoyments are. Since every thing is vanity, Who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? He can no more please himself with the hopes of what shall be after him, to his children and family, than with the relish of what is with him, since he can neither foresee himself, nor can any one else foretel to him, what shall be after him. Nor shall he have any intelligence sent him of it when he is gone. His sons come to honour, and he knows it not. So that, look which way we will, Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.

12 For who knoweth what *is* good for man in *this* life, all the days of

his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Ecclesiastes-7

Wisdom and Folly Compared

1 A good name *is* better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

In these verses Solomon lays down some great truths which seem paradoxes to the unthinking part, that is, the far greatest part, of mankind.

I. That the honour of virtue is really more valuable and desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world (Ec 7:1): A good name is before good ointment (so it may be read); it is preferable to it, and will be rather chosen by all that are wise. Good ointment is here put for all the profits of the earth (among the products of which oil was reckoned one of the most valuable), for all the delights of sense (for ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart, and it is called the oil of gladness), nay, and for the highest titles of honour with which men are dignified, for kings are anointed.

A good name is better than all riches (Pr 21:1), that is, a name for wisdom and goodness with those that are wise and good--the memory of the just; this is a good that will bring a more grateful pleasure to the mind, will give a man a larger opportunity of usefulness, and will go further, and last longer, than the most precious box of ointment; for Christ paid Mary for her ointment with a good name, a name in the gospels (Mt 26:13), and we are sure he always pays with advantage.

II. That, all things considered, our going out of the world is a great kindness to us than our coming into the world was: The day of death is preferable to the birth-day; though, as to others, there was joy when a child was born into the world, and where there is death there is lamentation, yet, as to ourselves, if we have lived so as to merit a good name, the day of our death, which

will put a period to our cares, and toils, and sorrows, and remove us to rest, and joy, and eternal satisfaction, is better than the day of our birth, which ushered us into a world of so much sin and trouble, vanity and vexation. We were born to uncertainty, but a good man does not die at uncertainty. The day of our birth clogged our souls with the burden of the flesh, but the day of our death will set them at liberty from that burden.

III. That it will do us more good to go to a funeral than to go to a festival (Ec 7:2): It is better to go to the house of mourning, and there weep with those that weep, than to go to the house of feasting, to a wedding, or a wake, there to rejoice with those that do rejoice. It will do us more good, and make better impressions upon us. We may lawfully go to both, as there is occasion. Our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly glorify God, and do good, and get good, in the house of feasting; but, considering how apt we are to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning, not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good lessons, both from the dead, who is going thence to his long home, and from the mourners, who go about the streets.

1 The uses to be gathered from the house of mourning are,

(1.) By way of information: That is the end of all men. It is the end of man as to this world, a final period to his state here; he shall return no more to his house. It is the end of all men; all have sinned and therefore death passes upon all. We must thus be left by our friends, as the mourners are, and thus leave, as the dead do. What is the lot of others will be ours; the cup is going round, and it will come to our turn to pledge it shortly.

(2.) By way of admonition: The living will lay it to his heart. Will they? It were well if they would. Those that are spiritually alive will lay it to heart, and, as for all the survivors, one would think they should; it is their own fault if they do not, for nothing is more easy and natural than by the death of others to be put in mind of our own. Some perhaps will lay that to heart, and

consider their latter end, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

2. For the further proof of this (Ec 7:4) he makes it the character,

(1.) Of a wise man that his heart is in the house of mourning; he is much conversant with mournful subjects, and this is both an evidence and a furtherance of his wisdom. The house of mourning is the wise man's school, where he has learned many a good lesson, and there, where he is serious, he is in his element. When he is in the house of mourning his heart is there to improve the spectacles of mortality that are presented to him; nay, when he is in the house of feasting, his heart is in the house of mourning, by way of sympathy with those that are in sorrow.

(2.) It is the character of a fool that his heart is in the house of mirth; his heart is all upon it to be merry and jovial; his whole delight is in sport and gaiety, in merry stories, merry songs, and merry company, merry days and merry nights. If he be at any time in the house of mourning, he is under a restraint; his heart at the same time is in the house of mirth; this is his folly, and helps to make him more and more foolish.

IV. That gravity and seriousness better become us, and are better for us, than mirth and jollity, Ec 7:3. The common proverb says, "An ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow;" but the preacher teaches us a contrary lesson: Sorrow is better than laughter, more agreeable to our present state, where we are daily sinning and suffering ourselves, more or less, and daily seeing the sins and sufferings of others. While we are in a vale of tears, we should conform to the temper of the climate. It is also more for our advantage; for, by the sadness that appears in the countenance, the heart is often made better. Note,

1. That is best for us which is best for our souls, by which the heart is made better, though it be unpleasing to sense.

2. Sadness is often a happy means of seriousness, and that affliction which is impairing to the health, estate, and family,

may be improving to the mind, and make such impressions upon that as may alter its temper very much for the better, may make it humble and meek, loose from the world, penitent for sin, and careful of duty. Vexatio dat intellectum--Vexation sharpens the intellect. Periissem nisi periissem--I should have perished if I had not been made wretched. It will follow, on the contrary, that by the mirth and frolicsomeness of the countenance the heart is made worse, more vain, carnal, sensual, and secure, more in love with the world and more estranged from God and spiritual things (Job 21:12,14), till it become utterly unconcerned in the afflictions of Joseph, as those Am 6:5,6, and the king and Haman, Es 3:15.

V. That it is much better for us to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wise than to have them gratified by the song of fools, Ec 7:5. Many that would be very well pleased to hear the information of the wise, and much more to have their commendations and consolations, yet do not care for hearing their rebukes, that is, care not for being told of their faults, though ever so wisely; but therein they are no friends to themselves, for reproofs of instruction are the way of life (Pr 6:23), and, though they be not so pleasant as the song of fools, they are more wholesome. To hear, not only with patience, but with pleasure, the rebuke of the wise, is a sign and means of wisdom; but to be fond of the song of fools is a sign that the mind is vain and is the way to make it more so. And what an absurd thing is it for a man to dote so much upon such a transient pleasure as the laughter of a fool is, which may fitly be compared to the burning of thorns under a pot, which makes a great noise and a great blaze, for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes scarcely any thing to the production of a boiling heat, for that requires a constant fire! The laughter of a fool is noisy and flashy, and is not an instance of true joy. This is also vanity; it deceives men to their destruction, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. Our blessed Saviour has read us our doom: Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh; woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep, Lu 6:21,25.

2 *It is* better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house

of feasting: for that *is* the end of all men; and the living will lay *it* to his heart.

3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.

5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool: this also *is* vanity.

7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

Solomon had often complained before of the oppressions which he saw under the sun, which gave occasion for many melancholy speculations and were a great discouragement to virtue and piety. Now here,

I. He grants the temptation to be strong (Ec 7:7): Surely it is often too true that oppression makes a wise man mad. If a wise man be much and long oppressed, he is very apt to speak and act unlike himself, to lay the reins on the neck of his passions, and break out into indecent complaints against God and man, or to make use of unlawful dishonourable means of relieving himself. The righteous, when the rod of the wicked rests long on their lot, are in danger of putting forth their hands to iniquity, Ps 125:3. When even wise men have unreasonable hardships put upon them they have much ado to keep their temper and to keep their place. It destroys the heart of a gift (so the latter clause may be read); even the generous heart that is ready to give gifts, and a gracious heart that is endowed with many excellent gifts, is destroyed by being oppressed. We should therefore make great allowances to those that are abused and ill-dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not act so discreetly as they should; we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

II. He argues against it. Let us not fret at the power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them, for,

1 The character of oppressors is very bad, so some understand Ec 7:7. If he that had the reputation of a wise man becomes an oppressor, he becomes a madman; his reason has departed from him; he is no better than a roaring lion and a ranging bear, and the gifts, the bribes, he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but destroy his heart and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him, and therefore he is rather to be pitied than envied; let him alone, and he will act so foolishly, and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself.

2 The issue, at length, will be good: Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof. By faith see what the end will be, and with patience expect it. When proud men begin to oppress their poor honest neighbours they think their power will bear them out in it; they doubt not but to carry the day, and gain the point. But it will prove better in the end than it seemed at the beginning; their power will be broken, their wealth gotten by oppression will be wasted and gone, they will be humbled and brought down, and reckoned with for their injustice, and oppressed innocency will be both relieved and recompensed. Better was the end of Moses's treaty with Pharaoh, that proud oppressor, when Israel was brought forth with triumph, than the beginning of it, when the tale of bricks was doubled, and every thing looked discouraging.

III. He arms us against it with some necessary directions. If we would not be driven mad by oppression, but preserve the possession of our own souls,

1. We must be clothed with humility; for the proud in spirit are those that cannot bear to be trampled upon, but grow outrageous, and fret themselves, when they are hardly bestead. That will break a proud man's heart, which will not break a humble man's sleep. Mortify pride, therefore, and a lowly spirit will easily be reconciled to a low condition.

2. We must put on patience, bearing patience, to submit to the will of God in the affliction, and waiting patience, to expect the

issue in God's due time. The patient in spirit are here opposed to the proud in spirit, for where there is humility there will be patience. Those will be thankful for any thing who own they deserve nothing at God's hand, and the patient are said to be better than the proud; they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to others, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles.

3. We must govern our passion with wisdom and grace (Ec 7:9): Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; those that are hasty in their expectations, and cannot brook delays, are apt to be angry if they be not immediately gratified. "Be not angry at proud oppressors, or any that are the instruments of your trouble."

(1.) "Be not soon angry, not quick in apprehending an affront and resenting it, nor forward to express your resentments of it."

(2.) "Be not long angry;" for though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, and pass through it as a wayfaring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools; there it resides, there it remains, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, there it is hugged as that which is dear, and laid in the bosom, and not easily parted with. He therefore that would approve himself so wise as not to give place to the devil, must not let the sun go down upon his wrath, Eph 4:26,27.

4. We must make the best of that which is (Ec 7:10): "Take it not for granted that the former days were better than these, nor enquire what is the cause that they were so, for therein thou dost not enquire wisely, since thou enquirest into the reason of the thing before thou art sure that the thing itself is true; and, besides, thou art so much a stranger to the times past, and such an incompetent judge even of the present times, that thou canst not expect a satisfactory answer to the enquiry, and therefore thou dost not enquire wisely; nay, the supposition is a foolish reflection upon the providence of God in the government of the world." Note,

(1.) It is folly to complain of the badness of our own times when we have more reason to complain of the badness of our own hearts (if men's hearts were better, the times would mend) and when we have more reason to be thankful that they are not worse, but that even in the worst of times we enjoy many mercies, which help to make them not only tolerable, but comfortable.

(2.) It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us in our own times; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have, or if perhaps, in some respects, they had not, yet as if God had been unjust and unkind to us in casting our lot in an iron age, compared with the golden ages that went before us; this arises from nothing but fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to pick quarrels with God himself. We are not to think there is any universal decay in nature, or degeneracy in morals. God has been always good, and men always bad; and if, in some respects, the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps in other respects they are better.

8 Better *is* the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: *and* the
patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit.
9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the
bosom of fools.
10 Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better
than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.
11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance: and *by it there is* profit to them
that see the sun.

Solomon, in these verses, recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against those distempers of mind which we are liable to, by reason of the vanity and vexation of spirit that there are in the things of this world. Here are some of the praises and the precepts of wisdom.

I The praises of wisdom. Many things are here said in its commendation, to engage us to get and retain wisdom.

1. Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions: Wisdom is good with an inheritance,

that is, an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Though a man have a great estate, though it come easily to him, by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy, but it is good for the rich too, good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good with them. Wisdom is good of itself, and makes a man useful; but, if he have a good estate with it, that will put him into a greater capacity of being useful, and with his wealth he may be more serviceable to his generation than he could have been without it; he will also make friends to himself, Lu 16:9. Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, yea, better too (so the margin reads it); it is more our own, more our honour, will make us greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account.

2. It is of great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world: By it there is real profit to those that see the sun, both to those that have it and to their contemporaries. It is pleasant to see the sun (Ec 11:7), but that pleasure is not comparable to the pleasure of wisdom. The light of this world is an advantage to us in doing the business of this world (Joh 11:9); but to those that have that advantage, unless withal they have wisdom wherewith to manage their business, that advantage is worth little to them. The clearness of the eye of the understanding is of greater use to us than bodily eye-sight.

3. It contributes much more to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble and its scorching heat; it is a shadow (so the word is), as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Wisdom is a defence, and money (that is, as money) is a defence. As a rich man makes his wealth, so a wise man makes his wisdom, a strong city. In the shadow of wisdom (so the words run) and in the shadow of money there is safety. He puts wisdom and money together, to confirm what he had said before, that wisdom is good with an inheritance. Wisdom is as a wall, and money may serve as a thorn hedge, which protects the field.

4. It is joy and true happiness to a man. This is the excellency of knowledge, divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too, human wisdom, the wisdom of this world, that it gives life to those that have it. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and that is life; it prolongs life. Men's wealth exposes their lives, but their wisdom protects them. Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life; so much better is it to get wisdom than gold.

5. It will put strength into a man, and be his stay and support (Ec 7:19): Wisdom strengthens the wise, strengthens their spirits, and makes them bold and resolute, by keeping them always on sure grounds. It strengthens their interest, and gains them friends and reputation. It strengthens them for their services under their sufferings, and against the attacks that are made upon them, more than ten mighty men, great commanders, strengthen the city. Those that are truly wise and good are taken under God's protection, and are safer there than if ten of the mightiest men in the city, men of the greatest power and interest, should undertake to secure them, and become their patrons.

II. Some of the precepts of wisdom, that wisdom which will be of so much advantage to us.

1. We must have an eye to God and to his hand in every thing that befals us (Ec 7:13): Consider the work of God. To silence our complaints concerning cross events, let us consider the hand of God in them and not open our mouths against that which is his doing; let us look upon the disposal of our condition and all the circumstances of it as the work of God, and consider it as the product of his eternal counsel, which is fulfilled in every thing that befals us. Consider that every work of God is wise, just, and good, and there is an admirable beauty and harmony in his works, and all will appear at last to have been for the best. Let us therefore give him the glory of all his works concerning us, and study to answer his designs in them. Consider the work of God as that which we cannot make any alteration of. Who can make that straight which he has made crooked? Who can change the nature of things from what is settled by the God of nature? If

he speak trouble, who can make peace? And, if he hedge up the way with thorns, who can get forward? If desolating judgments go forth with commission, who can put a stop to them? Since therefore we cannot mend God's work, we ought to make the best of it.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the various dispensations of Providence that respect us, and do the work and duty of the day in its day, Ec 7:14. Observe, (1.) How the appointments and events of Providence are counterchanged. In this world, at the same time, some are in prosperity, others are in adversity; the same persons at one time are in great prosperity, at another time in great adversity; nay, one event prosperous, and another grievous, may occur to the same person at the same time. Both come from the hand of God; out of his mouth both evil and good proceed (Isa 14:7), and he has set the one over against the other, so that there is a very short and easy passage between them, and they are a foil to each other. Day and night, summer and winter, are set the one over against the other, that in prosperity we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and in adversity may weep as though we wept not, for we may plainly see the one from the other and quickly exchange the one for the other; and it is to the end that man may find nothing after him, that he may not be at any certainty concerning future events or the continuance of the present scene, but may live in a dependence upon Providence and be ready for whatever happens. Or that man may find nothing in the work of God which he can pretend to amend.

(2.) How we must comply with the will of God in events of both kinds. Our religion, in general, must be the same in all conditions, but the particular instances and exercises of it must vary, as our outward condition does, that we may walk after the Lord.

[1.] In a day of prosperity (and it is but a day), we must be joyful, be in good, be doing good, and getting good, maintain a holy cheerfulness, and serve the Lord with gladness of heart in the abundance of all things. "When the world smiles, rejoice in God, and praise him, and let the joy of the Lord be thy strength."

[2.] In a day of adversity (and that is but a day too) consider. Times of affliction are proper times for consideration, then God calls to consider (Hag 1:5), then, if ever, we are disposed to it, and no good will be gotten by the affliction without it. We cannot answer God's end in afflicting us unless we consider why and wherefore he contends with us. And consideration is necessary also to our comfort and support under our afflictions.

3. We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, nor at the saddest calamities that may befal the godly in this life, Ec 7:15. Wisdom will teach us how to construe those dark chapters of Providence so as to reconcile them with the wisdom, holiness, goodness, and faithfulness of God. We must not think it strange; Solomon tells us there were instances of this kind in his time: "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity; I have taken notice of all that passed, and this has been as surprising and perplexing to me as any thing." Observe, Though Solomon was so wise and great a man, yet he calls the days of his life the days of his vanity, for the best days on earth are so, in comparison with the days of eternity.

Or perhaps he refers to the days of his apostasy from God (those were indeed the days of his vanity) and reflects upon this as one thing that tempted him to infidelity, or at least to indifferency in religion, that he saw just men perishing in their righteousness, that the greatest piety would not secure men from the greatest afflictions by the hand of God, nay, and sometimes did expose men to the greatest injuries from the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Naboth perished in his righteousness, and Abel long before. He had also seen wicked men prolonging their lives in their wickedness; they live, become old, yea, are mighty in power (Job 21:7), yea, and by their fraud and violence they screen themselves from the sword of justice. "Now, in this, consider the work of God, and let it not be a stumbling-block to thee." The calamities of the righteous are preparing them for their future blessedness, and the wicked, while their days are prolonged, are but ripening for ruin. There is a judgment to come, which will rectify this seeming irregularity, to the glory

of God and the full satisfaction of all his people, and we must wait with patience till then.

4. Wisdom will be of use both for caution to saints in their way, and for a check to sinners in their way. (1.) As to saints, it will engage them to proceed and persevere in their righteousness, and yet will be an admonition to them to take heed of running into extremes: A just man may perish in his righteousness, but let him not, by his own imprudence and rash zeal, pull trouble upon his own head, and then reflect upon Providence as dealing hardly with him. "Be not righteous overmuch, Ec 7:16. In the acts of righteousness govern thyself by the rules of prudence, and be not transported, no, not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or passions, or any practices unbecoming thy character or dangerous to thy interests."

Note, There may be over-doing in well-doing. Self-denial and mortification of the flesh are good; but if we prejudice our health by them, and unfit ourselves for the service of God, we are righteous overmuch. To reprove those that offend is good, but to cast that pearl before swine, who will turn again and rend us, is to be righteous overmuch. "Make not thyself over-wise. Be not opinionative, and conceited of thy own abilities. Set not up for a dictator, nor pretend to give law to, and give judgment upon, all about thee. Set not up for a critic, to find fault with every thing that is said and done, nor busy thyself in other men's matters, as if thou knewest every thing and couldst do any thing. Why shouldst thou destroy thyself, as fools often do by meddling with strife that belongs not to them? Why shouldst thou provoke authority, and run thyself into the briers, by needless contradictions, and by going out of thy sphere to correct what is amiss? Be wise as serpents; beware of men."

(2.) As to sinners, if it cannot prevail with them to forsake their sins, yet it may restrain them from growing very exorbitant. It is true there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness (Ec 7:15); but let none say that therefore they may safely be as wicked as they will; no, be not overmuch wicked (Ec 7:17); do not run to an excess of riot. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and a dread of the torments of

hell, to avoid all sin, will yet, if they have ever so little consideration, avoid those sins that ruin their health and estate, and expose them to public justice. And Solomon here makes use of these considerations. "The magistrate bears not the sword in vain, has a quick eye and a heavy hand, and is a terror to evil-doers; therefore be afraid of coming within his reach, be not so foolish as to lay thyself open to the law, why shouldst thou die before thy time?" Solomon, in these two cautions, had probably a special regard to some of his own subjects that were disaffected to his government and were meditating the revolt which they made immediately after his death. Some, it may be, quarrelled with the sins of their governor, and made them their pretence; to them he says, Be not righteous overmuch. Others were weary of the strictness of the government, and the temple-service, and that made them desirous to set up another king; but he frightens both from their seditious practices with the sword of justice, and others likewise from meddling with those that were given to change.

5. Wisdom will direct us in the mean between two extremes, and keep us always in the way of our duty, which we shall find a plain and safe way (Ec 7:18): "It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this, this wisdom, this care, not to run thyself into snares. Yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand; never slacken thy diligence, nor abate thy resolution to maintain a due decorum, and a good government of thyself. Take hold of the bridle by which thy head-strong passions must be held in from hurrying thee into one mischief or other, as the horse and mule that have no understanding; and, having taken hold of it, keep thy hold, and withdraw not thy hand from it, for, it thou do, the liberty that they will take will be as the letting forth of water, and thou wilt not easily recover thy hold again. Be conscientious, and yet be cautious, and to this exercise thyself. Govern thyself steadily by the principles of religion, and thou shalt find that he that fears God shall come forth out of all those straits and difficulties which those run themselves into that cast off that fear." The fear of the Lord is that wisdom which will serve as a clue to extricate us out of the most intricate labyrinths. Honesty is the best policy. Those that truly fear God have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. God has likewise promised to direct those

that fear him, and to order their steps not only in the right way, but out of every dangerous way, Ps 37:23,24.

6. Wisdom will teach us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the sins and offences of others, which commonly contribute more than any thing else to the disturbance of our repose, which contract both guilt and grief.

(1.) Wisdom teaches us not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless; we ourselves are not so, none are so, no, not the best. This wisdom strengthens the wise as much as any thing, and arms them against the danger that arises from provocation (Ec 7:19), so that they are not put into any disorder by it. They consider that those they have dealings and conversation with are not incarnate angels, but sinful sons and daughters of Adam: even the best are so, insomuch that there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not, Ec 7:20. Solomon had this in his prayer (1Ki 8:46), in his proverbs (Pr 20:9), and here in his preaching. Note,

[1.] It is the character of just men that they do good; for the tree is known by its fruits.

[2.] The best men, and those that do most good, yet cannot say that they are perfectly free from sin; even those that are sanctified are not sinless. None that live on this side of heaven live without sin. If we say, We have not sinned, we deceive ourselves.

[3.] We sin even in our doing good; there is something defective, nay, something offensive, in our best performances. That which, for the substance of it, is good, and pleasing to God, is not so well done as it should be, and omissions in duty are sins, as well as omissions of duty.

[4.] It is only just men upon earth that are subject thus to sin and infirmity; the spirits of just men, when they have got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness (Heb 12:23), and in heaven they do good and sin not.

(2.) Wisdom teaches us not to be quicksighted, or quickscented, in apprehending and resenting affronts, but to wink at many of the injuries that are done us, and act as if we did not see them (Ec 7:21): "Take no heed to all words that are spoken; set not thy heart to them. Vex not thyself at men's peevish reflections upon thee, or suspicions of thee, but be as a deaf man that hears not, Ps 38:13,14. Be not solicitous or inquisitive to know what people say of thee; if they speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride, if ill, it will stir up thy passion. See therefore that thou approve thyself to God and thy own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee. Hearkeners, we say, seldom hear good of themselves; if thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps thou wilt hear thy own servant curse thee when he thinks thou dost not hear him; thou wilt be told that he does, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thy ear open to tale-bearers, Pr 29:12. Nay, perhaps it is true, and thou mayest stand behind the curtain and hear it thyself, mayest hear thyself not only blamed and despised, but cursed, the worst evil said of thee and wished to thee, and that by a servant, one of the meanest rank, of the abjects, nay, by thy own servant, who should be an advocate for thee, and protect thy good name as well as thy other interests.

Perhaps it is a servant thou hast been kind to, and yet he requites thee thus ill, and this will vex thee; thou hadst better not have heard it. Perhaps it is a servant thou hast wronged and dealt unjustly with, and, though he dares not tell thee so, he tells others so, and tells God so, and then thy own conscience will join with him in the reproach, which will make it much more uneasy." The good names of the greatest lie much at the mercy even of the meanest. And perhaps there is a great deal more evil said of us than we think there is, and by those from whom we little expected it. But we do not consult our own repose, no, nor our credit, though we pretend to be jealous of it, if we take notice of every word that is spoken diminishingly of us; it is easier to pass by twenty such affronts than to avenge one.

(3.) Wisdom puts us in mind of our own faults (Ec 7:22): "Be not enraged at those that speak ill of thee, or wish ill to thee, for oftentimes, in that case, if thou retire into thyself, thy own

conscience will tell thee that thou thyself hast cursed others, spoken ill of them and wished ill to them, and thou art paid in thy own coin." Note, When any affront or injury is done us it is seasonable to examine our consciences whether we have not done the same, or as bad, to others; and if, upon reflection, we find we have, we must take that occasion to renew our repentance for it, must justify God, and make use of it to qualify our own resentments. If we be truly angry with ourselves, as we ought to be, for backbiting and censuring others, we shall be the less angry with others for backbiting and censuring us. We must show all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, Tit 3:2,3,Mt 7:1,2,Jam 3:1,2.

12 For wisdom *is* a defense, *and* money *is* a defense: but the excellency
of knowledge *is, that* wisdom giveth life to them that have it.
13 Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which
he hath made crooked?
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity
consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the
end that man should find nothing after him.
15 All *things* have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just *man*
that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked *man* that
prolongeth *his life* in his wickedness.
16 Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise: why
shouldest thou destroy thyself?
17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest
thou die before thy time?
18 *It is* good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this
withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth
of them all.
19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty *men*
which are in the city.
20 For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and
sinneth not.
21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear
thy servant curse thee:
22 for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself
likewise hast cursed others.
23 All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it *was*

far from me.

Solomon had hitherto been proving the vanity of the world and its utter insufficiency to make men happy; now here he comes to show the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make men miserable; and this, as the former, he proves from his own experience, and it was a dear-bought experience. He is here, more than any where in all this book, putting on the habit of a penitent. He reviews what he had been discoursing of already, and tells us that what he had said was what he knew and was well assured of, and what he resolved to stand by: All this have I proved by wisdom, Ec 7:23. Now here,

I. He owns and laments the deficiencies of his wisdom. He had wisdom enough to see the vanity of the world and to experience that that would not make a portion for a soul. But, when he came to enquire further, he found himself at a loss; his eye was too dim, his line was too short, and, though he discovered this, there were many other things which he could not prove by wisdom.

1. His searches were industrious. God had given him a capacity for knowledge above any; he set up with a great stock of wisdom; he had the largest opportunities of improving himself that ever any man had; and,

(1.) He resolved, if it were possible, to gain his point: I said, I will be wise. He earnestly desired it as highly valuable; he fully designed it as that which he looked upon to be attainable; he determined not to sit down short of it, Pr 18:1. Many are not wise because they never said they would be so, being indifferent to it; but Solomon set it up for the mark he aimed at. When he made trial of sensual pleasures, he still thought to acquaint his heart with wisdom (Ec 2:3), and not to be diverted from the pursuits of that; but perhaps he did not find it so easy a thing as he imagined to keep up his correspondence with wisdom, while he addicted himself so much to his pleasures. However, his will was good; he said, I will be wise. And that was not all:

(2.) He resolved to spare no pains (Ec 7:25): "I applied my heart; I and my heart turned every way; I left no stone unturned, no

means untried, to compass what I had in view. I set myself to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, to accomplish myself in all useful learning, philosophy, and divinity." If he had not thus closely applied himself to study, it would have been but a jest for him to say, I will be wise, for those that will attain the end must take the right way. Solomon was a man of great quickness, and yet, instead of using that (with many) as an excuse for slothfulness, he pressed it upon himself as an inducement to diligence, and the easier he found it to master a good notion the more intent he would be that he might be master of the more good notions. Those that have the best parts should take the greatest pains, as those that have the largest stock should trade most. He applied himself not only to know what lay on the surface, but to search what lay hidden out of the common view and road; nor did he search a little way, and then give it over because he did not presently find what he searched for, but he sought it out, went to the bottom of it; nor did he aim to know things only, but the reasons of things, that he might give an account of them.

2. Yet his success was not answerable or satisfying: "I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me; I could not compass it. After all, This only I know that I know nothing, and the more I know the more I see there is to be known, and the more sensible I am of my own ignorance. That which is far off, and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?" He means God himself, his counsels and his works; when he searched into these he presently found himself puzzled and run aground. He could not order his speech by reason of darkness. It is higher than heaven, what can he do? Job 11:8. Blessed be God, there is nothing which we have to do which is not plain and easy; the word is nigh us (Pr 8:9); but there is a great deal which we would wish to know which is far off, and exceedingly deep, among the secret things which belong not to us. And probably it is a culpable ignorance and error that Solomon here laments, that his pleasures, and the many amusements of his court, had blinded his eyes and cast a mist before them, so that he could not attain to true wisdom as he designed.

II. He owns and laments the instances of his folly in which he had exceeded, as, in wisdom, he came short. Here is,

1. His enquiry concerning the evil of sin. He applied his heart to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness. Observe,

(1.) The knowledge of sin is a difficult knowledge, and hard to be attained; Solomon took pains for it. Sin has many disguises with which it palliates itself, as being loth to appear sin, and it is very hard to strip it of these and to see it in its true nature and colours.

(2.) It is necessary to our repentance for sin that we be acquainted with the evil of it, as it is necessary to the cure of a disease to know its nature, causes, and malignity. St. Paul therefore valued the divine law, because it discovered sin to him, Ro 7:7. Solomon, who, in the days of his folly, had set his wits on work to invent pleasures and sharpen them, and was ingenious in making provision for the flesh, now that God had opened his eyes is as industrious to find out the aggravations of sin and so to put an edge upon his repentance. Ingenious sinners should be ingenious penitents, and wit and learning, among the other spoils of the strong man armed, should be divided by the Lord Jesus.

(3.) It well becomes penitents to say the worst they can of sin, for the truth is we can never speak ill enough of it. Solomon here, for his further humiliation, desired to see more,

[1.] Of the sinfulness of sin; that is it which he lays the greatest stress upon in this inquiry, to know the wickedness of folly, by which perhaps he means his own iniquity, the sin of uncleanness, for that was commonly called folly in Israel, Ge 34:7,De 22:21,Jdg 20:6,2Sa 13:12. When he indulged himself in it, he made a light matter of it; but now he desires to see the wickedness of it, its great wickedness, so Joseph speaks of it, Ge 39:9. Or it may be taken there generally for all sin. Many extenuate their sins with this, They were folly; but Solomon sees

wickedness in those follies, an offence to God and a wrong to conscience. This is wickedness, Jer 4:18,Zec 5:8.

[2.] Of the folly of sin; as there is a wickedness in folly, so there is a folly in wickedness, even foolishness and madness. Wilful sinners are fools and madmen; they act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest.

2 The result of this enquiry.

(1.) He now discovered more than ever of the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the loving of many strange women, 1Ki 11:1. This is that which he here most feelingly laments, and in very pathetic expressions.

[1.] He found the remembrance of the sin very grievous. O how heavily did it lie upon his conscience! what an agony was he in upon the thought of it--the wickedness, the foolishness, the madness, that he had been guilty of! I find it more bitter than death. As great a terror seized him, in reflection upon it, as if he had been under the arrest of death. Thus do those that have their sins set in order before them by a sound conviction cry out against them; they are bitter as gall, nay, bitter as death, to all true penitents. Uncleanness is a sin that is, in its own nature, more pernicious than death itself. Death may be made honourable and comfortable, but this sin can be no other than shame and pain, Pr 5:9,11.

[2.] He found the temptation to the sin very dangerous, and that it was extremely difficult, and next to impossible, for those that ventured into the temptation to escape the sin, and for those that had fallen into the sin to recover themselves by repentance. The heart of the adulterous woman is snares and nets; she plays her game to ruin souls with as much art and subtlety as ever any fowler used to take a silly bird. The methods such sinners use are both deceiving and destroying, as snares and nets are. The unwary souls are enticed into them by the bait of pleasure, which they greedily catch at and promise themselves satisfaction in; but they are taken before they are aware, and taken irrecoverably.

Her hands are as bands, with which, under colour of fond embraces, she holds those fast that she has seized; they are held in the cords of their own sin, Pr 5:22. Lust gets strength by being gratified and its charms are more prevalent.

[3.] He reckoned it a great instance of God's favour to any man if by his grace he has kept him from this sin: He that pleases God shall escape from her, shall be preserved either from being tempted to this sin or from being overcome by the temptation. Those that are kept from this sin must acknowledge it is God that keeps them, and not any strength or resolution of their own, must acknowledge it a great mercy; and those that would have grace sufficient for them to arm them against this sin must be careful to please God in every thing, by keeping his ordinances, Le 18:30.

[4.] He reckoned it a sin that is as sore a punishment of other sins as a man can fall under in this life: The sinner shall be taken by her. First, Those that allow themselves in other sins, by which their minds are blinded and their consciences debauched, are the more easily drawn to this. Secondly, it is just with God to leave them to themselves to fall into it. See Ro 1:26,28,Eph 4:18,19. Thus does Solomon, as it were, with horror, bless himself from the sin in which he had plunged himself.

(2.) He now discovered more than ever of the general corruption of man's nature. He traces up that stream to the fountain, as his father had done before him, on a like occasion (Ps 51:5): Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.

[1.] He endeavoured to find out the number of his actual transgressions (Ec 7:27): "Behold, this have I found, that is, this I hoped to find; I thought I could have understood my errors and have brought in a complete list, at least of the heads of them; I thought I could have counted them one by one, and have found out the account." He desired to find them out as a penitent, that he might the more particularly acknowledge them; and, generally, the more particular we are in the confession of sin the more comfort we have in the sense of the pardon; he desired it also as a preacher, that he might the more particularly give

warning to others. Note, A sound conviction of one sin will put us upon enquiring into the whole confederacy; and the more we see amiss in ourselves the more diligently we should enquire further into our own faults, that what we see not may be discovered to us, Job 34:32.

[2.] He soon found himself at a loss, and perceived that they were innumerable (Ec 7:28): "Which yet my soul seeks; I am still counting, and still desirous to find out the account, but I find not, I cannot count them all, nor find out the account of them to perfection. I still make new and amazing discoveries of the desperate wickedness that there is in my own heart," Jer 17:9,10. Who can know it? Who can understand his errors? Who can tell how often he offends? Ps 19:12. He finds that if God enters into judgment with him, or he with himself, for all his thoughts, words, and actions, he is not able to answer for one of a thousand, Job 9:3. This he illustrates by comparing the corruption of his own heart and life with the corruption of the world, where he scarcely found one good man among a thousand; nay, among all the thousand wives and concubines which he had, he did not find one good woman. "Even so," says he, "When I come to recollect and review my own thoughts, words, and actions, and all the passages of my life past, perhaps among those that were manly I might find one good among a thousand, and that was all; the rest even of those had some corruption or other in them."

He found (Ec 7:20) that he had sinned even in doing good. But for those that were effeminate, that passed in the indulgence of his pleasures, they were all naught; in that part of his life there did not appear so much as one of a thousand good. In our hearts and lives there appears little good, at the best, but sometimes none at all. Doubtless this is not intended as a censure of the female sex in general; it is probable that there have been and are more good women than good men (Ac 17:4,12); he merely alludes to his own sad experience. And perhaps there may be this further in it: he does, in his proverbs, warn us against the snares both of the evil man and of the strange woman (Pr 2:12,16,4:14,5:3); now he had observed the ways of the evil women to be more deceitful and dangerous than those of the evil

men, that it was more difficult to discover their frauds and elude their snares, and therefore he compares sin to an adulteress (Pr 9:13), and perceives he can no more find out the deceitfulness of his own heart than he can that of a strange woman, whose ways are movable, that thou canst not know them.

[3.] He therefore runs up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain of original corruption. The source of all the folly and madness that are in the world is in man's apostasy from God and his degeneracy from his primitive rectitude (Ec 7:20): "Lo, this only have I found; when I could not find out the particulars, yet the gross account was manifest enough; it is as clear as the sun that man is corrupted and revolted, and is not as he was made."

Observe, First, How man was made by the wisdom and goodness of God: God made man upright; Adam the first man, so the Chaldee. God made him, and he made him upright, such a one as he should be; being made a rational creature, he was, in all respects, such a one as a rational creature should be, upright, without any irregularity; one could find no fault in him; he was upright, that is, determined to God only, in opposition to the many inventions which he afterwards turned aside to. Man, as he came out of God's hands, was (as we may say) a little picture of his Maker, who is good and upright.

Secondly, How he was marred, and in effect unmade, by his own folly and badness: They have sought out many inventions--they, our first parents, or the whole race, all in general and every one in particular. They have sought out great inventions (so some), inventions to become great as gods (Ge 3:5), or the inventions of the great ones (so some), of the angels that fell, the Magnates, or many inventions. Man, instead of resting in what God had found for him, was for seeking to better himself, like the prodigal that left his father's house to seek his fortune. Instead of being for one, he was for many; instead of being for God's institutions, he was for his own inventions. The law of his creation would not hold him, but he would be at his own disposal and follow his own sentiments and inclinations. Vain man would be wise, wiser than his Maker; he is giddy and unsettled in his pursuits, and

therefore has many inventions. Those that forsake God wander endlessly. Men's actual transgressions are multiplied. Solomon could not find out how many they are (Ec 7:28); but he found they were very many. Many kinds of sins, and those often repeated. They are more than the hairs on our heads, Ps 40:12.

24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?
25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason *of things*, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness *and* madness:
26 and I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets, *and* her hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.
27 Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, *counting* one by one, to find out the account;
28 which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.
29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Ecclesiastes-8

1 Who *is* as the wise *man?* and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.

Here is, I. An encomium of wisdom (Ec 8:1), that is, of true piety, guided in all its exercises by prudence and discretion. The wise man is the good man, that knows God and glorifies him, knows himself and does well for himself; his wisdom is a great happiness to him, for,

1. It advances him above his neighbours, and makes him more excellent than they: Who is as the wise man? Note, Heavenly wisdom will make a man an incomparable man. No man without grace, though he be learned, or noble, or rich, is to be compared with a man that has true grace and is therefore accepted of God.

2. It makes him useful among his neighbours and very serviceable to them: Who but the wise man knows the interpretation of a thing, that is, understands the times and the events of them, and their critical junctures, so as to direct what Israel ought to do, 1Ch 12:32.

3. It beautifies a man in the eyes of his friends: It makes his face to shine, as Moses's did when he came down from the mount; it puts honour upon a man and a lustre on his whole conversation, makes him to be regarded and taken notice of, and gains him respect (as Job 29:7, &c.); it makes him lovely and amiable, and the darling and blessing of his country. The strength of his face, the sourness and severity of his countenance (so some understand the last clause), shall be changed by it into that which is sweet and obliging. Even those whose natural temper is rough and morose by wisdom are strangely altered; they become mild and gentle, and learn to look pleasant.

4. It emboldens a man against his adversaries, their attempts and their scorn: The boldness of his face shall be doubled by wisdom; it will add very much to his courage in maintaining his integrity when he not only has an honest cause to plead, but by his wisdom knows how to manage it and where to find the interpretation of a thing. He shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate.

II. A particular instance of wisdom pressed upon us, and that is subjection to authority, and a dutiful and peaceable perseverance in our allegiance to the government which Providence has set over us. Observe,

1. How the duty of subjects is here described.

(1.) We must be observant of the laws. In all those things wherein the civil power is to interpose, whether legislative or judicial, we ought to submit to its order and constitutions: I counsel thee; it may as well be supplied, I charge thee, not only as a prince but as a preacher: he might do both; "I recommend it to thee as a piece of wisdom; I say, whatever those say that are

given to change, keep the king's commandment; wherever the sovereign power is lodged, be subject to it. Observe the mouth of a king" (so the phrase is); "say as he says; do as he bids thee; let his word be a law, or rather let the law be his word." Some understand the following clause as a limitation of this obedience: "Keep the king's commandment, yet so as to have a regard to the oath of God, that is, so as to keep a good conscience and not to violate thy obligations to God, which are prior and superior to thy obligations to the king. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but so as to reserve pure and entire to God the things that are his."

(2.) We must not be forward to find fault with the public administration, or quarrel with every thing that is not just according to our mind, nor quit our post of service under the government, and throw it up, upon every discontent (Ec 8:3): "Be not hasty to go out of his sight, when he is displeased at thee (Ec 10:4), or when thou art displeased at him; fly not off in a passion, nor entertain such jealousies of him as will tempt thee to renounce the court or forsake the kingdom." Solomon's subjects, as soon as his head was laid low, went directly contrary to this rule, when upon the rough answer which Rehoboam gave them, they were hasty to go out of his sight, would not take time for second thoughts nor admit proposals of accommodation, but cried, To your tents, O Israel! "There may perhaps be a just cause to go out of his sight; but be not hasty to do it; act with great deliberation."

(3.) We must not persist in a fault when it is shown us: "Stand not in an evil thing; in any offence thou hast given to thy prince humble thyself, and do not justify thyself, for that will make the offence much more offensive. In any ill design thou hast, upon some discontent, conceived against thy prince, do not proceed in it; but if thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth," Pr 30:32. Note, Though we may by surprise be drawn into an evil thing, yet we must not stand in it, but recede from it as soon as it appears to us to be evil.

(4.) We must prudently accommodate ourselves to our opportunities, both for our own relief, if we think ourselves wronged, and for the redress of public grievances: A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment (Ec 8:5); it is the wisdom of subjects, in applying themselves to their princes, to enquire and consider both at what season and in what manner they may do it best and most effectually, to pacify his anger, obtain his favour, or obtain the revocation of any grievous measure prescribed. Esther, in dealing with Ahasuerus, took a deal of pains to discern both time and judgment, and she sped accordingly. This may be taken as a general rule of wisdom, that every thing should be well timed; and our enterprises are then likely to succeed, when we embrace the exact opportunity for them.

2. What arguments are here used to engage us to be subject to the higher powers; they are much the same with those which St. Paul uses, Ro 13:1, &c.

(1.) We must needs be subject, for conscience-sake, and that is the most powerful principle of subjection. We must be subject because of the oath of God, the oath of allegiance which we have taken to be faithful to the government, the covenant between the king and the people, 2Ch 23:16. David made a covenant, or contract, with the elders of Israel, though he was king by divine designation, 1Ch 11:3. "Keep the king's commandments, for he has sworn to rule thee in the fear of God, and thou hast sworn, in that fear, to be faithful to him." It is called the oath of God because he is a witness to it and will avenge the violation of it.

(2.) For wrath's sake, because of the sword which the prince bears and the power he is entrusted with, which make him formidable: He does whatsoever pleases him; he has a great authority and a great ability to support that authority (Ec 8:4): Where the word of a king is, giving orders to seize a man, there is power; there are many that will execute his orders, which makes the wrath of a king, or supreme government, like the roaring of a lion and like messengers of death. Who may say unto him, What doest thou? He that contradicts him does it at his

peril. Kings will not bear to have their orders disputed, but expect they should be obeyed. In short, it is dangerous contending with sovereignty, and what many have repented. A subject is an unequal match for a prince. He may command me who has legions at command.

(3.) For the sake of our own comfort: Whoso keeps the commandment, and lives a quiet and peaceable life, shall feel no evil thing, to which that of the apostle answers (Ro 13:3), Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power of the king? Do that which is good, as becomes a dutiful and loyal subject, and thou shalt ordinarily have praise of the same. He that does no ill shall feel no ill and needs fear none.

2 I *counsel thee* to keep the king's commandment, and *that* in regard of the oath of God.
3 Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.
4 Where the word of a king *is, there is* power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?
5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.
6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man *is* great upon him.

Solomon had said (Ec 8:5) that a wise man's heart discerns time and judgment, that is, a man's wisdom will go a great way, by the blessing of God, in moral prognostications; but here he shows that few have that wisdom, and that even the wisest may yet be surprised by a calamity which they had not any foresight of, and therefore it is our wisdom to expect and prepare for sudden changes.

Observe, 1. All the events concerning us, with the exact time of them, are determined and appointed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and all in wisdom: To every purpose there is a time prefixed, and it is the best time, for it is time and judgment, time appointed both in wisdom and righteousness; the appointment is not chargeable with folly or iniquity.

2. We are very much in the dark concerning future events and the time and season of them: Man knows not that which shall be himself; and who can tell him when or how it shall be? Ec 8:7. It cannot either be foreseen by him or foretold him; the stars cannot foretel a man what shall be, nor any of the arts of divination. God has, in wisdom, concealed from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes.

3. It is our great unhappiness and misery that, because we cannot foresee an evil, we know not how to avoid it, or guard against it, and, because we are not aware of the proper successful season of actions, therefore we lose our opportunities and miss our way: Because to every purpose there is but one way, one method, one proper opportunity, therefore the misery of man is great upon him; because it is so hard to hit that, and it is a thousand to one but he misses it. Most of the miseries men labour under would have been prevented if they could have been foreseen and the happy time discovered to avoid them. Men are miserable because they are not sufficiently sagacious and attentive.

4. Whatever other evils may be avoided, we are all under a fatal necessity of dying, Ec 8:8.

(1.) When the soul is required it must be resigned, and it is to no purpose to dispute it, either by arms or arguments, by ourselves, or by any friend: There is no man that has power over his own spirit, to retain it, when it is summoned to return to God who gave it. It cannot fly any where out of the jurisdiction of death, nor find any place where its writs do not run. It cannot abscond so as to escape death's eye, though it is hidden from the eyes of all living. A man has no power to adjourn the day of his death, nor can he by prayers or bribes obtain a reprieve; no bail will be taken, no essoine [excuse], protection, or imparlance [conference], allowed. We have not power over the spirit of a friend, to retain that; the prince, with all his authority, cannot prolong the life of the most valuable of his subjects, nor the physician with his medicines and methods, nor the soldier with his force, not the orator with his eloquence, nor the best saint with his intercessions. The stroke of death can by no means be

put by when our days are determined and the hour appointed us has come.

(2.) Death is an enemy that we must all enter the lists with, sooner or later: There is no discharge in that war, no dismission from it, either of the men of business or of the faint-hearted, as there was among the Jews, De 20:5,8. While we live we are struggling with death, and we shall never put off the harness till we put off the body, never obtain a discharge till death has obtained the mastery; the youngest is not released as a fresh-water soldier, nor the oldest as miles emeritus--a soldier whose merits have entitled him to a discharge. Death is a battle that must be fought, There is no sending to that war (so some read it), no substituting another to muster for us, no champion admitted to fight for us; we must ourselves engage, and are concerned to provide accordingly, as for a battle.

(3.) Men's wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the arrest of death, nor can the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors. Though he strengthen himself ever so much in his wickedness (Ps 52:7), death will be too strong for him. The most subtle wickedness cannot outwit death, nor the most impudent wickedness outbrave death. Nay, the wickedness which men give themselves to will be so far from delivering them from death that it will deliver them up to death.

7 For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

8 *There is* no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither *hath he* power in the day of death: and *there is* no discharge in *that* war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

9 All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: *there is* a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.

Solomon, in the beginning of the chapter, had warned us against having any thing to do with seditious subjects; here, in these verses, he encourages us, in reference to the mischief of

tyrannical and oppressive rulers, such as he had complained of before, Ec 3:16,4:1.

1. He had observed many such rulers, Ec 8:9. In the serious views and reviews he had taken of the children of men and their state he had observed that many a time one man rules over another to his hurt; that is,

(1.) To the hurt of the ruled (many understand it so); whereas they ought to be God's ministers unto their subjects for their good (Ro 13:14), to administer justice, and to preserve the public peace and order, they use their power for their hurt, to invade their property, encroach upon their liberty, and patronise the acts of injustice. It is sad with a people when those that should protect their religion and rights aim at the destruction of both.

(2.) To the hurt of the rulers (so we render it), to their own hurt, to the feeling of their pride and covetousness, the gratifying of their passion and revenge, and so to the filling up of the measure of their sins and the hastening and aggravating of their ruin. Agens agendo repatitur--What hurt men do to others will return, in the end, to their own hurt.

2. He had observed them to prosper and flourish in the abuse of their power (Ec 8:10): I saw those wicked rulers come and go from the place of the holy, go in state to and return in pomp from the place of judicature (which is called the place of the Holy One because the judgment is the Lord's, De 1:17, and he judges among the gods, Ps 82:1, and is with them in the judgment, 2Ch 19:6), and they continued all their days in office, were never reckoned with for their mal-administration, but died in honour and were buried magnificently; their commissions were durante vitâ--during life, and not quamdiu se bene gesserint--during good behaviour. And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done; their wicked practices were not remembered against them to their reproach and infamy when they were gone. Or, rather, it denotes the vanity of their dignity and power, for that is his remark upon it in the close of the verse: This is also vanity. They are proud of their wealth, and power, and honour,

because they sit in the place of the holy; but all this cannot secure,

(1.) Their bodies from being buried in the dust; I saw them laid in the grave; and their pomp, though it attended them thither, could not descend after them, Ps 49:17.

(2.) Nor their names from being buried in oblivion; for they were forgotten, as if they had never been.

3. He had observed that their prosperity hardened them in their wickedness, Ec 8:11. It is true of all sinners in general, and particularly of wicked rulers, that, because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, they think it will never be executed, and therefore they set the law at defiance and their hearts are full in them to do evil; they venture to do so much the more mischief, fetch a greater compass in their wicked designs, and are secure and fearless in it, and commit iniquity with a high hand. Observe,

(1.) Sentence is passed against evil works and evil workers by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, even against the evil works of princes and great men, as well as of inferior persons.

(2.) The execution of this sentence is often delayed a great while, and the sinner goes on, not only unpunished, but prosperous and successful.

(3.) Impunity hardens sinners in impiety, and the patience of God is shamefully abused by many who, instead of being led by it to repentance, are confirmed by it in their impenitence.

(4.) Sinners herein deceive themselves, for, though the sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed the more severely at last. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely, and wrath is in the mean time treasured up against the day of wrath.

4. He foresaw such an end of all these things as would be sufficient to keep us from quarrelling with the divine Providence

upon account of them. He supposes a wicked ruler to do an unjust thing a hundred times, and that yet his punishment is deferred, and God's patience towards him is prolonged, much beyond what was expected, and the days of his power are lengthened out, so that he continues to oppress; yet he intimates that we should not be discouraged.

(1.) God's people are certainly a happy people, though they be oppressed: "It shall be well with those that fear God, I say with all those, and those only, who fear before him." Note,

[1.] It is the character of God's people that they fear God, have an awe of him upon their hearts and make conscience of their duty to him, and this because they see his eye always upon them and they know it is their concern to approve themselves to him. When they lie at the mercy of proud oppressors they fear God more then they fear them. They do not quarrel with the providence of God, but submit to it.

[2.] It is the happiness of all that fear God, that in the worst of times it shall be well with them; their happiness in God's favour cannot be prejudiced, nor their communion with God interrupted, by their troubles; they are in a good case, for they are kept in a good frame under their troubles, and in the end they shall have a blessed deliverance from and an abundant recompence for their troubles. And therefore "surely I know, I know it by the promise of God, and the experience of all the saints, that, however it goes with others, it shall go well with them." All is well that ends well.

(2.) Wicked people are certainly a miserable people; though they prosper, and prevail, for a time, the curse is as sure to them as the blessing is to the righteous: It shall not be well with the wicked, as others think it is, who judge by outward appearance, and as they themselves expect it will be; nay, woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with them (Isa 3:10,11); they shall be reckoned with for all the ill they have done; nothing that befals them shall be really well for them. Nihil potest ad malos pervenire quod prosit, imo nihil quod non noceat--No event can occur to the wicked

which will do them good, rather no event which will not do them harm. Seneca.

Note, [1.] The wicked man's days are as a shadow, not only uncertain and declining, as all men's days are, but altogether unprofitable. A good man's days have some substance in them; he lives to a good purpose. A wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless.

[2.] These days shall not be prolonged to what he promised himself; he shall not live out half his days, Ps 55:23. Though they may be prolonged (Ec 8:12) beyond what others expected, yet his day shall come to fall. He shall fall short of everlasting life, and then his long life on earth will be worth little. [3.] God's great quarrel with wicked people is for their not fearing before him; that is at the bottom of their wickedness, and cuts them off from all happiness.

The Inequalities of Life

10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the
place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they
had so done: this *is* also vanity.
11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,
therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.
12 Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his *days* be
prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that
fear God, which fear before him:
13 but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his*
days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.
14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just
men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked;
again, there be wicked *men,* to whom it happeneth according to the
work of the righteous: I said that this also *is* vanity.

Wise and good men have, of old, been perplexed with this difficulty, how the prosperity of the wicked and the troubles of the righteous can be reconciled with the holiness and goodness

of the God that governs the world. Concerning this Solomon here gives us his advice.

I. He would not have us to be surprised at it, as though some strange thing happened, for he himself saw it in his days, Ec 8:14.

1. He saw just men to whom it happened according to the work of the wicked, who, notwithstanding their righteousness, suffered very hard things, and continued long to do so, as if they were to be punished for some great wickedness.

2. He saw wicked men to whom it happened according to the work of the righteous, who prospered as remarkably as if they had been rewarded for some good deed, and that from themselves, from God, from men. We see the just troubled and perplexed in their own minds, the wicked easy, fearless, and secure,--the just crossed and afflicted by the divine Providence, the wicked prosperous, successful, and smiled upon,--the just, censured, reproached, and run down, by the higher powers, the wicked applauded and preferred.

II. He would have us to take occasion hence, not to charge God with iniquity, but to charge the world with vanity. No fault is to be found with God; but, as to the world, This is vanity upon the earth, and again, This is also vanity, that is, it is a certain evidence that the things of this world are not the best things nor were ever designed to make a portion and happiness for us, for, if they had, God would not have allotted so much of this world's wealth to his worst enemies and so much of its troubles to his best friends; there must therefore be another life after this the joys and griefs of which must be real and substantial, and able to make men truly happy or truly miserable, for this world does neither.

III. He would have us not to fret and perplex ourselves about it, or make ourselves uneasy, but cheerfully to enjoy what God has given us in the world, to be content with it and make the best of it, though it be much better with others, and such as we think

very unworthy (Ec 8:15): Then I commended joy, a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from a confidence in God, and his power, providence, and promise, because a man has no better thing under the sun (though a good man has much better things above the sun) than to eat and drink, that is, soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this life according as his rank is, and to be cheerful, whatever happens, for that shall abide with him of his labour.

That is all the fruit he has for himself of the pains that he takes in the business of the world; let him therefore take it, and much good may it do him; and let him not deny himself that, out of a peevish discontent because the world does not go as he would have it. That shall abide with him during the days of his life which God gives him under the sun. Our present life is a life under the sun, but we look for the life of the world to come, which will commence and continue when the sun shall be turned into darkness and shine no more. This present life must be reckoned by days; this life is given us, and the days of it are allotted to us, by the counsel of God, and therefore while it does last we must accommodate ourselves to the will of God and study to answer the ends of life.

IV. He would not have us undertake to give a reason for that which God does, for his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters, past finding out, and therefore we must be contentedly and piously ignorant of the meaning of God's proceedings in the government of the world, Ec 8:16,17. Here he shows,

1. That both he himself and many others had very closely studied the point, and searched far into the reasons of the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous. He, for his part, had applied his heart to know this wisdom, and to see the business that is done, by the divine Providence, upon the earth, to find out if there were any certain scheme, any constant rule or method, by which the affairs of this lower world were administered, any course of government as sure and steady as the course of nature, so that by what is done now we might as certainly foretel what will be done next as by the moon's changing now we can foretel when it will be at the full; this he

would fain have found out. Others had likewise set themselves to make this enquiry with so close an application that they could not find time for sleep, either day or night, nor find in their hearts to sleep, so full of anxiety were they about these things. Some think Solomon speaks of himself, that he was so eager in prosecuting this great enquiry that he could not sleep for thinking of it.

2. That it was all labour in vain, Ec 8:17. When we look upon all the works of God and his providence, and compare one part with another, we cannot find that there is any such certain method by which the work that is done under the sun is directed; we cannot discover any key by which to decipher the character, nor by consulting precedents can we know the practice of this court, nor what the judgment will be.

[1.] Though a man be ever so industrious, thou he labour to seek it out.

[2.] Though he be ever so ingenious, though he be a wise man in other things, and can fathom the counsels of kings themselves and trace them by their footsteps.

Nay, [3.] Though he be very confident of success, though he think to know it, yet he shall not; he cannot find it out. God's ways are above ours, nor is he tied to his own former ways, but his judgments are a great deep.

15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labor the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also *there is that* neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

17 then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labor to seek *it* out, yet he shall not find *it;* yea further; though a wise *man* think to know *it,* yet shall he not be able to find *it*.

Ecclesiastes-9

1 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the
righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God: no
man knoweth either love or hatred *by* all *that is* before them.

It has been observed concerning those who have pretended to search for the philosophers' stone that, though they could never find what they sought for, yet in the search they have hit upon many other useful discoveries and experiments. Thus Solomon, when, in the close of the foregoing chapter, he applied his heart to know the work of God, and took a great deal of pains to search into it, though he despaired of finding it out, yet he found out that which abundantly recompensed him for the search, and gave him some satisfaction, which he here gives us; for therefore he considered all this in his heart, and weighed it deliberately, that he might declare it for the good of others. Note, What we are to declare we should first consider; think twice before we speak once; and what we have considered we should then declare. I believed, therefore have I spoken.

The great difficulty which Solomon met with in studying the book of providence was the little difference that is made between good men and bad in the distribution of comforts and crosses, and the disposal of events. This has perplexed the minds of many wise and contemplative men. Solomon discourses of it in Ec 9:1-3, and, though he does not undertake to find out this work of God, yet he says that which may prevent its being a stumbling-block to us.

I. Before he describes the temptation in its strength he lays down a great and unquestionable truth, which he resolves to adhere to, and which, if firmly believed, will be sufficient to break the force of the temptation. This has been the way of God's people in grappling with this difficulty. Job, before he discourses of this matter, lays down the doctrine of God's omniscience (Job 24:1), Jeremiah the doctrine of his righteousness (Jer 12:1), another prophet that of his holiness (Hab 1:13), the psalmist that of his goodness and peculiar favour to his own people (Ps 73:1), and that is it which Solomon here fastens upon and resolves to abide by, that, though good

and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously, yet God has a particular care of and concern for his own people:

The righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God, under his special protection and guidance; all their affairs are managed by him for their good; all their wise and righteous actions are in his hand, to be recompensed in the other world, though not in this. They seem as if they were given up into the hand of their enemies, but it is not so. Men have no power against them but what is given them from above. The events that affect them do not come to pass by chance, but all according to the will and counsel of God, which will turn that to be for them which seemed to be most against them. Let this make us easy, whatever happens, that all God's saints are in his hand, De 33:3,Joh 10:29,Ps 31:15.

II. He lays this down for a rule, that the love and hatred of God are not to be measured and judged of by men's outward condition. If prosperity were a certain sign of God's love, and affliction of his hatred, then it might justly be an offence to us to see the wicked and godly fare alike. But the matter is not so: No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before him in this world, by those things that are the objects of sense. These we may know by that which is within us; if we love God with all our heart, thereby we may know that he loves us, as we may know likewise that we are under his wrath if we be governed by that carnal mind which is enmity to him.

These will be known by that which shall be hereafter, by men's everlasting state; it is certain that men are happy or miserable according as they are under the love or hatred of God, but not according as they are under the smiles or frowns of the world; and therefore if God loves a righteous man (as certainly he does) he is happy, though the world frown upon him; and if he hates a wicked man (as certainly he does) he is miserable, though the world smile upon him. Then the offence of this promiscuous distribution of events has ceased.

III. Having laid down these principles, he acknowledges that all things come alike to all; so it has been formerly, and therefore

we are not to think it strange if it be so now, if it be so with us and our families. Some make this, and all that follows to Ec 9:13, to be the perverse reasoning of the atheists against the doctrine of God's providence; but I rather take it to be Solomon's concession, which he might the more freely make when he had fixed those truths which are sufficient to guard against any ill use that may be made of what he grants. Observe here (Ec 9:2),

1 The great difference that there is between the characters of the righteous and the wicked, which, in several instances, are set the one over-against the other, to show that, though all things come alike to all, yet that does not in the least confound the eternal distinction between moral good and evil, but that remains immutable.

(1.) The righteous are clean, have clean hands and pure hearts; the wicked are unclean, under the dominion of unclean lusts, pure perhaps in their own eyes, but not cleansed from their filthiness, God will certainly put a difference between the clean and the unclean, the precious and the vile, in the other world, though he does not seem to do so in this.

(2.) The righteous sacrifice, that is, they make conscience of worshipping God according to his will, both with inward and outward worship; the wicked sacrifice not, that is, they live in the neglect of God's worship and grudge to part with any thing for his honour. What is the Almighty, that they should serve him?

(3.) The righteous are good, good in God's sight, they do good in the world; the wicked are sinners, violating the laws of God and man, and provoking to both.

(4.) The wicked man swears, has no veneration for the name of God, but profanes it by swearing rashly and falsely; but the righteous man fears an oath, swears not, but is sworn, and then with great reverence; he fears to take an oath, because it is a

solemn appeal to God as a witness and judge; he fears, when he has taken a oath, to break it, because God is righteous who takes vengeance.

2 The little difference there is between the conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this world: There is one event to both. Is David rich? So is Nabal. Is Joseph favoured by his prince? So is Haman. Is Ahab killed in a battle? So is Josiah. Are the bad figs carried to Babylon? So are the good, Jer 24:1. There is a vast difference between the original, the design, and the nature, of the same event to the one and to the other; the effects and issues of it are likewise vastly different; the same providence to the one is a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death, though, to outward appearance, it is the same.

IV. He owns this to be a very great grievance to those that are wise and good: "This is an evil, the greatest perplexity, among all things that are done under the sun (Ec 9:3); nothing has given me more disturbance than this, that there is one event unto all." It hardens atheists, and strengthens the hands of evil-doers; for therefore it is that the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and fully set in them to do evil, Ec 8:11. When they see that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked they wickedly infer thence that it is all one to God whether they are righteous or wicked, and therefore they stick at nothing to gratify their lusts.

V. For the further clearing of this great difficulty, as he began this discourse with the doctrine of the happiness of the righteous (whatever they may suffer, they and their works are in the hands of God, and therefore in good hands, they could not be in better), so he concludes with the doctrine of the misery of the wicked; however they may prosper, madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Envy not the prosperity of evil-doers, for,

1. They are now madmen, and all the delights they seem to be blessed with are but like the pleasant dreams and fancies of a distracted man. They are mad upon their idols (Jer 50:38), are

mad against God's people, Ac 26:11. When the prodigal repented, it is said, He came to himself (Lu 15:17), which intimates that he had been beside himself before.

2. They will shortly be dead men. They make a mighty noise and bustle while they live, but after awhile, they go to the dead, and there is an end of all their pomp and power; they will then be reckoned with for all their madness and outrage in sin. Though, on this side death, the righteous and the wicked seem alike, on the other side death there will be a vast difference between them.

2 All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to
the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to
him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good,
so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.
3 This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that
there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is
full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after
that *they go* to the dead.
4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living
dog is better than a dead lion.

Solomon, in a fret, had praised the dead more than the living (Ec 4:2); but here, considering the advantages of life to prepare for death and make sure the hope of a better life, he seems to be of another mind.

I. He shows the advantages which the living have above those that are dead, Ec 9:4-6.

1. While there is life there is hope. Dum spiro, spero--While I breathe, I hope. It is the privilege of the living that they are joined to the living, in relation, commerce, and conversation, and, while they are so, there is hope. If a man's condition be, upon any account, bad, there is hope it will be amended. If the heart be full of evil, and madness be in it, yet while there is life there is hope that by the grace of God there may be a blessed change wrought; but after men go to the dead (Ec 9:3) it is too late then; he that is then filthy will be filthy still, for ever filthy. If men be thrown aside as useless, yet, while they are joined to

the living, there is hope that they may yet again take root and bear fruit; he that is alive is, or may be, good for something, but he that is dead, as to this world, is not capable of being any further serviceable. Therefore a living dog is better than a dead lion; the meanest beggar alive has that comfort of this world and does that service to it which the greatest prince, when he is dead, is utterly incapable of.

2. While there is life there is an opportunity of preparing for death: The living know that which the dead have no knowledge of, particularly they know that they shall die, and are, or may be, thereby influenced to prepare for that great change which will come certainly, and may come suddenly. Note, The living cannot but know that they shall die, that they must needs die. They know they are under a sentence of death; they are already taken into custody by its messengers, and feel themselves declining. This is a needful useful knowledge; for what is our business, while we live, but to get ready to die: The living know they shall die; it is a thing yet to come, and therefore provision may be made for it. The dead know they are dead, and it is too late; they are on the other side the great gulf fixed. 3. When life is gone all this world is gone with it, as to us.

(1.) There is an end of all our acquaintance with this world and the things of it: The dead know not any thing of that which, while they lived, they were intimately conversant with. It does not appear that they know any thing of what is done by those they leave behind. Abraham is ignorant of us; they are removed into darkness, Job 10:22.

(2.) There is an end of all our enjoyments in this world: They have no more a reward for their toils about the world, but all they got must be left to others; they have a reward for their holy actions, but not for their worldly ones. The meats and the belly will be destroyed together, Joh 6:27,1Co 6:13. It is explained Ec 9:6. Neither have they any more a portion for ever, none of that which they imagined would be a portion for ever, of that which is done and got under the sun. The things of this world will not be a portion for the soul because they will not be a portion for ever; those that choose them, and have them for their

good things, have only a portion in this life, Ps 17:14. The world can only be an annuity for life, not a portion for ever.

(3.) There is an end of their name. There are but few whose names survive them long; the grave is a land of forgetfulness, for the memory of those that are laid there is soon forgotten; their place knows them no more, nor the lands they called by their own names.

(4.) There is an end of their affections, their friendships and enmities: Their love, and their hatred, and their envy have now perished; the good things they loved, the evil things they hated, the prosperity of others, which they envied, are now all at an end with them. Death parts those that loved one another, and puts an end to their friendship, and those that hated one another too, and puts an end to their quarrels. Actio moritur cum personâ--The person and his actions die together. There we shall be never the better for our friends (their love can do us no kindness), nor ever the worse for our enemies--their hatred and envy can do us no damage. There the wicked cease from troubling. Those things which now so affect us and fill us, which we are so concerned about and so jealous of, will there be at an end.

II. Hence he infers that it is our wisdom to make the best use of life that we can while it does last, and manage wisely what remains of it.

1. Let us relish the comforts of life while we live, and cheerfully take our share of the enjoyments of it. Solomon, having been himself ensnared by the abuse of sensitive delights, warns others of the danger, not by a total prohibition of them, but by directing to the sober and moderate use of them; we may use the world, but must not abuse it, take what is to be had out of it, and expect no more. Here we have,

(1.) The particular instances of this cheerfulness prescribed: "Thou art drooping and melancholy, go thy way, like a fool as thou art, and get into a better temper of mind."

[1.] "Let thy spirit be easy and pleasant; then let there be joy and a merry heart within," a good heart (so the word is), which distinguishes this from carnal mirth and sensual pleasure, which are the evil of the heart, both a symptom and a cause of much evil there. We must enjoy ourselves, enjoy our friends, enjoy our God, and be careful to keep a good conscience, that nothing may disturb us in these enjoyments. We must serve God with gladness, in the use of what he gives us, and be liberal in communicating it to others, and not suffer ourselves to be oppressed with inordinate care and grief about the world. We must eat our bread as Israelites, not in our mourning (De 26:14), as Christians, with gladness and liberality of heart, Ac 2:46. See De 28:47.

[2.] "Make use of the comforts and enjoyments which God has given thee: Eat thy bread, drink thy wine, thine, not another's, not the bread of deceit, nor the wine of violence, but that which is honestly got, else thou canst not eat it with any comfort nor expect a blessing upon it--thy bread and thy wine, such as are agreeable to thy place and station, not extravagantly above it nor sordidly below it; lay out what God has given thee for the ends for which thou art entrusted with it, as being but a steward."

[3.] "Evidence thy cheerfulness (Ec 9:8): Let thy garments be always white. Observe a proportion in thy expenses; reduce not thy food in order to gratify thy pride, nor thy clothing in order to gratify thy voluptuousness. Be neat, wear clean linen, and be not slovenly." Or, "Let thy garments be white in token of joy and cheerfulness," which were expressed by white raiment (Re 3:4); "and as a further token of joy, let thy head lack no ointment that is fit for it." Our Saviour admitted this piece of pleasure at a feast (Mt 26:7), and David observes it among the gifts of God's bounty to him. Ps 23:5, Thou anointest my head with oil. Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense, or set our hearts upon them, but what God has given us we must make as comfortable a use of as we can afford, under the limitations of sobriety and wisdom, and not forgetting the poor.

[4.] "Make thyself agreeable to thy relations: Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest. Do not engross thy delights, making much of thyself only, and not caring what becomes of those about thee, but let them share with thee and make them easy too. Have a wife; for even in paradise it was not good for man to be alone. Keep to thy wife, to one, and do not multiply wives" (Solomon had found the mischief of that); "keep to her only, and have nothing to do with any other." How can a man live joyfully with one with whom he does not live honestly? "Love thy wife; and the wife whom thou lovest thou wilt be likely to live joyfully with." When we do the duty of relations we may expect the comfort of them. See Pr 5:19. "Live with thy wife, and delight in her society. Live joyfully with her, and be most cheerful when thou art with her. Take pleasure in thy family, thy vine and thy olive plants."

(2.) The qualifications necessary to this cheerfulness: "Rejoice and have a merry heart, if God now accepts thy works. If thou art reconciled to God, and recommended to him, then thou has reason to be cheerful, otherwise not." Rejoice not, O Israel! for joy, as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, Ho 9:1. Our first care must be to make our peace with God, and obtain his favour, to do that which he will accept of, and then, Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy.

Note, Those whose works God has accepted have reason to be cheerful and ought to be so. 'Now that thou eatest the bread of thy sacrifices with joy, and partakest of the wine of thy drink-offerings with a merry heart, now God accepts thy works. Thy religious services, when performed with holy joy, are pleasing to God; he loves to have his servants sing at their work, it proclaims him a good Master.

(3.) The reasons for it. "Live joyfully, for,"

[1.] "It is all little enough to make thy passage through this world easy and comfortable: The days of thy life are the days of thy vanity; there is nothing here but trouble, and

disappointment. Thou wilt have time enough for sorrow and grief when thou canst not help it, and therefore live joyfully while thou canst, and perplex not thyself with thoughts and cares about to-morrow; sufficient to the day is the evil thereof. Let a gracious serenity of mind be a powerful antidote against the vanity of the world."

[2.] "It is all thou canst get from this world: That is thy portion in the things of this life. In God, and another life, thou shalt have a better portion, and a better recompence for thy labours in religion; but for thy pains which thou takest about the things under the sun this is all thou canst expect, and therefore do not deny this to thyself."

2. Let us apply ourselves to the business of life while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it as by them to be fitted for the employments: "Therefore eat with joy and a merry heart, not that thy soul may take its ease (as Lu 12:19), but that thy soul may take the more pains and the joy of the Lord may be its strength and oil to its wheels," Ec 9:10. Whatsoever thy hand finds to do do it with thy might. Observe here,

(1.) There is not only something to be had, but something to be done, in this life, and the chief good we are to enquire after is the good we should do, Ec 2:3. This is the world of service; that to come is the world of recompence. This is the world of probation and preparation for eternity; we are here upon business, and upon our good behaviour.

(2.) Opportunity is to direct and quicken duty. That is to be done which our hand finds to do, which occasion calls for; and an active hand will always find something to do that will turn to a good account. What must be done, of necessity, our hand will here find a price in it for the doing of, Pr 17:16.

(3.) What good we have an opportunity of doing we must do while we have the opportunity, and do it with our might, with care, vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest-days are busy

days; and we must make hay while the sun shines. Serving God and working out our salvation must be done with all that is within us, and all little enough.

(4.) There is good reason why we should work the works of him that sent us while it is day, because the night comes, wherein no man can work, Joh 9:4. We must up and be doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly and we know not how soon. But this we know that, if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever: "There is no work to be done, nor device to do it, no knowledge for speculation, nor wisdom for practice, in the grave whither thou goest." We are all going towards the grave; every day brings us a step nearer to it; when we are in the grave it will be too late to mend the errors of life, too late to repent and make our peace with God, too late to lay up any thing in store for eternal life; it must be done now or never. The grave is a land of darkness and silence, and therefore there is no doing any thing for our souls there; it must be done now or never, Joh 12:35.

5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun.

7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labor which thou takest under the sun.

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet

riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

The preacher here, for a further proof of the vanity of the world, and to convince us that all our works are in the hand of God, and not in our own hand, shows the uncertainty and contingency of future events, and how often they contradict the prospects we have of them. He had exhorted us (Ec 9:10) to do what we have to do with all our might; but here he reminds us that, when we have done all, we must leave the issue with God, and not be confident of the success.

I. We are often disappointed of the good we had great hopes of, Ec 9:11. Solomon had himself made the observation, and so has many a one since, that events, both in public and private affairs, do not always agree even with the most rational prospects and probabilities. Nulli fortuna tam dedita est ut multa tentanti ubique respondeat--Fortune surrenders herself to no one so as to ensure him success, however numerous his undertakings. Seneca. The issue of affairs is often unaccountably cross to every one's expectation, that the highest may not presume, nor the lowest despair, but all may live in a humble dependence upon God, from whom every man's judgment proceeds.

1. He gives instances of disappointment, even where means and instruments were most encouraging and promised fair.

(1.) One would think that the lightest of foot should, in running, win the prize; and yet the race is not always to the swift; some accident happens to retard them, or they are too secure, and therefore remiss, and let those that are slower get the start of them.

(2.) One would think that, in fighting, the most numerous and powerful army should be always victorious, and, in single combat, that the bold and mighty champion should win the laurel; but the battle is not always to the strong; a host of Philistines was once put to flight by Jonathan and his man; one of you shall chase a thousand; the goodness of the cause has often carried the day against the most formidable power.

(3.) One would think that men of sense should always be men of substance, and that those who know how to live in the world should not only have a plentiful maintenance, but get great estates; and yet it does not always prove so; even bread is not always to the wise, much less riches always to men of understanding. Many ingenious men, and men of business, who were likely to thrive in the world, have strangely gone backward and come to nothing. (4.) One would think that those who understand men, and have the art of management, should always get preferment and obtain the smiles of great men; but many ingenious men have been disappointed, and have spent their days in obscurity, nay, have fallen into disgrace, and perhaps have ruined themselves by those very methods by which they hoped to raise themselves, for favour is not always to men of skill, but fools are favoured and wise men frowned upon.

2. He resolves all these disappointments into an over-ruling power and providence, the disposals of which to us seem casual, and we call them chance, but really they are according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, here called time, in the language of this book, Ec 3:1,Ps 31:15. Time and chance happen to them all. A sovereign Providence breaks men's measures, and blasts their hopes, and teaches them that the way of man is not in himself, but subject to the divine will. We must use means, but not trust to them; if we succeed, we must give God the praise (Ps 44:3); if we be crossed, we must acquiesce in his will and take our lot.

II. We are often surprised with the evils we were in little fear of (Ec 9:12): Man knows not his time, the time of his calamity, his fall, his death, which, in scripture, is called our day and our hour.

1. We know not what troubles are before us, which will take us off our business, and take us out of the world, what time and chance will happen to us, nor what one day, or a night, may bring forth. It is not for us to know the times, no, not our own

time, when or how we shall die. God has, in wisdom, kept us in the dark, that we may be always ready.

2. Perhaps we may meet with trouble in that very thing wherein we promise ourselves the greatest satisfaction and advantage; as the fishes and the birds are drawn into the snare and net by the bait laid to allure them, which they greedily catch at, so are the sons of men often snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, before they are aware. And these things too come alike to all. Men often find their bane where they sought their bless, and catch their death where they thought to find a prize. Let us therefore never be secure, but always ready for changes, that, though they may be sudden, they may be no surprise or terror to us.

12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in
an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so *are* the
sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon
them.

13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it *seemed* great
unto me:

Solomon still recommends wisdom to us as necessary to the preserving of our peace and the perfecting of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and crosses which human affairs are subject to. He had said (Ec 9:11), Bread is not always to the wise; yet he would not therefore be thought either to disparage, or to discourage, wisdom, no, he still retains his principle, that wisdom excels folly as much as light excels darkness (Ec 2:13), and we ought to love and embrace it, and be governed by it, for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, and the capacity it gives us of being serviceable to others, though we ourselves should not get wealth and preferment by it.

This wisdom, that is, this which he here describes, wisdom which enables a man to serve his country out of pure affection to its interests, when he himself gains no advantage by it, no, not so much as thanks for his pains, or the reputation of it, this is the wisdom which, Solomon says, seemed great unto him, Ec 9:13. A public spirit, in a private sphere, is wisdom which those

who understand things that differ cannot but look upon as very magnificent.

I. Solomon here gives an instance, which probably was a case in fact, in some neighbouring country, of a poor man who with his wisdom did great service in a time of public distress and danger (Ec 9:14): There was a little city (no great prize, whoever was master of it); there were but few men within it, to defend it, and men, if men of fortitude, are the best fortifications of a city; here were few men, and, because few, feeble, fearful, and ready to give up their city as not tenable. Against this little city a great king came with a numerous army, and besieged it, either in pride, or covetousness to possess it, or in revenge for some affront given him, to chastise and destroy it. Thinking it stronger than it was, he built great bulwarks against it, from which to batter it, and doubted not but in a little time to make himself master of it. What a great deal of unjust vexation do ambitious princes give to their harmless neighbours!

This great king needed not fear this little city; why then should he frighten it? It would be little profit to him; why then should he put himself to such a great expense to gain it? But as unreasonable and insatiably greedy as little people sometimes are to lay house to house, and field to field, great kings often are to lay city to city, and province to province, that they may be placed alone in the earth, Isa 5:8. Did victory and success attend the strong? No; there was found in this little city, among the few men that were in it, one poor wise man--a wise man, and yet poor, and not preferred to any place of profit or power in the city; places of trust were not given to men according to their merit, and meetness for them, else such a wise man as this would not have been a poor man.

Now, 1. Being wise, he served the city, though he was poor. In their distress they found him out (Jdg 11:7) and begged his advice and assistance; and he by his wisdom delivered the city, either by prudent instructions given to the besieged, directing them to some unthought-of stratagem for their own security, or by a prudent treaty with the besiegers, as the woman at Abel, 2Sa 20:16. He did not upbraid them with the contempt they had

put upon him, in leaving him out of their council, nor tell them he was poor and had nothing to lose, and therefore cared not what became of the city; but he did his best for it, and was blessed with success. Note, Private interests and personal resentments must always be sacrificed to public good and forgotten when the common welfare is concerned.

2. Being poor, he was slighted by the city, though he was wise and had been an instrument to save them all from ruin: No man remembered that same poor man; his good services were not taken notice of, no recompence was made him, no marks of honour were put upon him, but he lived in as much poverty and obscurity as he had done before. Riches were not to this man of understanding, nor favour to this man of skill. Many who have well-merited of their prince and country have been ill-paid; such an ungrateful world do we live in. It is well that useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful rewarder; for, among men, great services are often envied and rewarded with evil for good.

II. From this instance he draws some useful inferences, looks upon it and receives instruction.

1. Hence he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom, and what a blessing it makes men to their country: Wisdom is better than strength, Ec 9:16. A prudent mind, which is the honour of a man, is to be preferred before a robust body, in which many of the brute creatures excel man. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength, and may overcome those by out-witting them who are able to overpower him. Nay, wisdom is better than weapons of war, offensive or defensive, Ec 9:18. Wisdom, that is, religion and piety (for the wise man is here opposed to a sinner), is better than all military endowments or accoutrements, for it will engage God for us, and then we are safe in the greatest perils and successful in the greatest enterprises. If God be for us, who can be against us or stand before us?

2. Hence he observes the commanding force and power of wisdom, though it labour under external disadvantages (Ec

9:17): The words of wise men are heard in quiet; what they speak, being spoken calmly and with deliberation (though, not being rich and in authority, they dare not speak aloud nor with any great assurance), will be hearkened to and regarded, will gain respect, nay, will gain the point, and sway with men more than the imperious clamour of him that rules among fools, who, like fools, chose him to be their ruler, for his noise and blustering, and, like fools, think he must by those methods carry the day with every body else.

A few close arguments are worth a great many big words; and those will strike sail to fair reasoning who will answer those that hector and insult according to their folly. How forcible are right words! What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it. 3. Hence he observes that wise and good men, notwithstanding this, must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or at least attempted it, and offered at it, when they cannot do the good they would do nor have the praise they should have. Wisdom capacitates a man to serve his neighbours, and he offers his service; but, alas! if he be poor his wisdom is despised and his words are not heard, Ec 9:16. Many a man is buried alive in poverty and obscurity who, if he had but fit encouragement given him, might be a great blessing to the world; many a pearl is lost in its shell. But there is a day coming when wisdom and goodness shall be in honour, and the righteous shall shine forth.

4. From what he had observed of the great good which one wise and virtuous man may do he infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do, and what a great deal of good he may be the hindrance of: One sinner destroyeth much good.

(1.) As to himself, a sinful condition is a wasteful condition. How many of the good gifts both of nature and Providence does one sinner destroy and make waste of--good sense, good parts, good learning, a good disposition, a good estate, good meat, good drink, and abundance of God's good creatures, all made use of in the service of sin, and so destroyed and lost, and the

end of giving them frustrated and perverted! He who destroys his own soul destroys much good.

(2.) As to others, what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! One sinner, who makes it his business to debauch others, may defeat and frustrate the intentions of a great many good laws and a great deal of good preaching, and draw many into his pernicious ways; one sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wise man who delivered the city would have had his due respect and recompence for it but that some one sinner hindered it, and invidiously diminished the service. And many a good project, well laid for the public welfare, had been destroyed by some one subtle adversary to it. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but, through the wickedness of a few, it would not be healed. See who are a kingdom's friends and enemies, if one saint does much good, and one sinner destroys much good.

14 *there was* a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great
king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.
15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom
delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.
16 Then said I, Wisdom *is* better than strength: nevertheless the poor
man's wisdom *is* despised, and his words are not heard.
17 The words of wise *men are* heard in quiet more than the cry of
him that ruleth among fools.
18 Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth
much good.

Ecclesiastes-10

The Excellence of Wisdom

1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth
a stinking savor: *so doth* a little folly him that is in reputation
for wisdom *and* honor.

In these verses Solomon shows,

I. What great need wise men have to take heed of being guilty of any instance of folly; for a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, and is as hurtful to his good name as dead flies are to a sweet perfume, not only spoiling the sweetness of it, but making it to send forth a stinking savour. Note,

1. True wisdom is true honour, and will gain a man a reputation, which is like a box of precious ointment, pleasing and very valuable.

2 The reputation that is got with difficulty, and by a great deal of wisdom, may be easily lost, and by a little folly, because envy fastens upon eminency, and makes the worst of the mistakes and miscarriages of those who are cried up for wisdom, and improves them to their disadvantage; so that the folly which in another would not be taken notice of in them is severely censured. Those who make a great profession of religion have need to walk very circumspectly, to abstain from all appearances of evil, and approaches towards it, because many eyes are upon them, that watch for their halting; their character is soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose.

II. What a deal of advantage a wise man has above a fool in the management of business (Ec 10:2): A wise man's heart is at his right hand, so that he goes about his business with dexterity, turns his hand readily to it, and goes through it with despatch; his counsel and courage are ready to him, whenever he has occasion for them. But a fool's heart is at his left hand; it is always to seek when he has any thing to do that is of importance, and therefore he goes awkwardly about it, like a man that is left-handed; he is soon at a loss and at his wits' end.

III. How apt fools are at every turn to proclaim their own folly, and expose themselves; he that is either witless or graceless, either silly or wicked, if he be ever so little from under the check, and left to himself, if he but walk by the way, soon shows what he is; his wisdom fails him, and, by some

impropriety or other, he says to every one he meets that he is a fool (Ec 10:3), that is, he discovers his folly as plainly as if he had told them so. He cannot conceal it, and he is not ashamed of it. Sin is the reproach of sinners wherever they go.

2 A wise man's heart *is* at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.
3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom
faileth *him,* and he saith to every one *that* he *is* a fool.
4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for
yielding pacifieth great offenses.

The scope of these verses is to keep subjects loyal and dutiful to the government. In Solomon's reign the people were very rich, and lived in prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and petulant, and when the taxes were high, though they had enough to pay them with, it is probable that many conducted themselves insolently towards the government and threatened to rebel. To such Solomon here gives some necessary cautions.

I. Let not subjects carry on a quarrel with their prince upon any private personal disgust (Ec 10:4): "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, if upon some misinformation given him, or some mismanagement of thine, he is displeased at thee, and threaten thee, yet leave not thy place, forget not the duty of a subject, revolt not from thy allegiance, do not, in a passion, quit thy post in his service and throw up thy commission, as despairing ever to regain his favour. No, wait awhile, and thou wilt find he is not implacable, but that yielding pacifies great offences." Solomon speaks for himself, and for every wise and good man that is a master, or a magistrate, that he could easily forgive those, upon their submission, whom yet, upon their provocation, he had been very angry with. It is safer and better to yield to an angry prince than to contend with him.

II. Let not subjects commence a quarrel with their prince, though the public administration be not in every thing as they would have it. He grants there is an evil often seen under the sun, and it is a king's-evil, an evil which the king only can cure, for it is an error which proceeds from the ruler (Ec 10:5); it is a mistake which rulers, consulting their personal affections more than the public interests, are too often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit, but folly is set in great dignity, men of

shattered brains, and broken fortunes, are put in places of power and trust, while the rich men of good sense and good estates, whose interest would oblige them to be true to the public, and whose abundance would be likely to set them above temptations to bribery and extortion, yet sit in low places, and can get no preferment (Ec 10:6), either the ruler knows not how to value them or the terms of preferment are such as they cannot in conscience comply with.

It is ill with a people when vicious men are advanced and men of worth are kept under hatches. This is illustrated Ec 10:7. "I have seen servants upon horses, men not so much of mean extraction and education (if that were all, it were the more excusable, nay, there is many a wise servant who with good reason has rule over a son that causes shame), but of sordid, servile, mercenary dispositions. I have seen these riding in pomp and state as princes, while princes, men of noble birth and qualities, fit to rule a kingdom, have been forced to walk as servants upon the earth, poor and despised."

Thus God, in his providence, punishes a wicked people; but, as far as it is the ruler's act and deed, it is certainly his error, and a great evil, a grievance to the subject and very provoking; but it is an error under the sun, which will certainly be rectified above the sun, and when it shall shine no more, for in heaven it is only wisdom and holiness that are set in great dignity. But, if the prince be guilty of his error, yet let not the subjects leave their place, nor rise up against the government, nor form any project for the alteration of it; nor let the prince carry on the humour too far, nor set such servants, such beggars, on horseback, as will ride furiously over the ancient land-marks of the constitution, and threaten the subversion of it.

1. Let neither prince nor people violently attempt any changes, nor make a forcible entry upon a national settlement, for they will both find it of dangerous consequence, which he shows here by four similitudes, the scope of which is to give us a caution not to meddle to our own hurt. Let not princes invade the rights and liberties of their subjects; let not subjects mutiny and rebel against their princes; for,

(1.) He that digs a pit for another, it is ten to one but he falls into it himself, and his violent dealing returns upon his own head. If princes become tyrants, or subjects become rebels, all histories will tell both what is likely to be their fate and that it is at their utmost peril, and it were better for both to be content within their own bounds.

(2.) Whoso breaks a hedge, an old hedge, that has long been a land-mark, let him expect that a serpent, or adder, such as harbour in rotten hedges, will bite him; some viper or other will fasten upon his hand, Ac 28:3. God, by his ordinance, as by a hedge, has inclosed the prerogatives and powers of princes; their persons are under his special protection; those therefore that form any treasonable designs against their peace, their crown, and dignity, are but twisting halters for themselves.

(3.) Whoso removes stones, to pull down a wall or building, does but pluck them upon himself; he shall be hurt therewith, and will wish that he had let them alone. Those that go about to alter a well-modelled well-settled government, under colour of redressing some grievances and correcting some faults in it, will quickly perceive not only that it is easier to find fault than to mend, to demolish that which is good than to build up that which is better, but that they thrust their own fingers into the fire and overwhelm themselves in the ruin they occasion.

(4.) He that cleaves the wood, especially if, as it follows, he has sorry tools (Ec 10:10), shall be endangered thereby; the chips, or his own axe-head, will fly in his face. If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our own damage.

2. Rather let both prince and people act towards each other with prudence, mildness, and good temper: Wisdom is profitable to direct the ruler how to manage a people that are inclined to be turbulent, so as neither, on the one hand, by a supine negligence to embolden and encourage them, nor, on the other hand, by

rigour and severity to exasperate and provoke them to any seditious practices. It is likewise profitable to direct the subjects how to act towards a prince that is inclined to bear hard upon them, so as not to alienate his affections from them, but to win upon him by humble remonstrances (not insolent demands, such as the people made upon Rehoboam), by patient submissions and peaceable expedients. The same rule is to be observed in all relations, for the preserving of the comfort of them. Let wisdom direct to gentle methods and forbear violent ones.

(1.) Wisdom will teach us to whet the tool we are to make use of, rather than, by leaving it blunt, oblige ourselves to exert so much the more strength, Ec 10:10. We might save ourselves a great deal of labour, and prevent a great deal of danger, if we did whet before we cut, that is, consider and premeditate what is fit to be said and done in every difficult case, that we may accommodate ourselves to it and may do our work smoothly and easily both to others and to ourselves. Wisdom will direct how to sharpen and put an edge upon both ourselves and those we employ, not to work deceitfully (Ps 52:2), but to work cleanly and cleverly. The mower loses no time when he is whetting his scythe.

(2.) Wisdom will teach us to enchant the serpent we are to contend with, rather than think to out-hiss it (Ec 10:11): The serpent will bite if he be not by singing and music charmed and enchanted, against which therefore he stops his ears (Ps 58:4,5); and a babbler is no better to all those who enter the lists with him, who therefore must not think by dint of words to out-talk him, but be prudent management to enchant him. He that is lord of the tongue (so the phrase is), a ruler that has liberty of speech and may say what he will, it is as dangerous dealing with him as with a serpent uncharmed; but, if you use the enchantment of a mild and humble submission, you may be safe and out of danger; herein wisdom, the meekness of wisdom, is profitable to direct. By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, Pr 25:15. Jacob enchanted Esau with a present and Abigail David. To those that may say any thing it is wisdom to say nothing that is provoking.

5 There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler:

6 folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.
7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants
upon the earth.
8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh a hedge,
a serpent shall bite him.
9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he that
cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.
10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put
to more strength: but wisdom *is* profitable to direct.
11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler
is no better.
12 The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious; but the lips of a
fool will swallow up himself.

Solomon, having shown the benefit of wisdom, and of what great advantage it is to us in the management of our affairs, here shows the mischief of folly and how it exposes men, which perhaps comes in as a reflection upon those rulers who set folly in great dignity.

I. Fools talk a great deal to no purpose, and they show their folly as much by the multitude, impertinence, and mischievousness of their words, as by any thing; whereas the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, are grace, manifest grace in his heart and minister grace to the hearers, are good, and such as become him, and do good to all about him, the lips of a fool not only expose him to reproach and make him ridiculous, but will swallow up himself and bring him to ruin, by provoking the government to take cognizance of his seditious talk and call him to an account for it. Adonijah foolishly spoke against his own life, 1Ki 2:23. Many a man has been sunk by having his own tongue fall upon him, Ps 64:8. See what a fool's talk is.

1. It takes rise from his own weakness and wickedness: The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, the foolishness bound up in his heart, that is the corrupt spring out of which all these polluted streams flow, the evil treasure out of which evil things are brought. As soon as he begins to speak you may perceive his folly; at the very first he talks idly, and passionately, and like himself.

2. It rises up to fury, and tends to the hurt and injury of others: The end of his talk, the end it comes to, is madness. He will presently talk himself into an indecent heat, and break out into the wild extravagancies of a distracted man. The end he aims at is mischief; as, at first, he appeared to have little government of himself, so, at last, it appears he has a great deal of malice to his neighbours; that root of bitterness bears gall and wormwood. Note, It is not strange if those that begin foolishly end madly; for an ungoverned tongue, the more liberty is allowed, grows the more violent.

3. It is all the same over and over (Ec 10:14): A fool also is full of words, a passionate fool especially, that runs on endlessly and never knows when to leave off. He will have the last word, though it be but the same with that which was the first. What is wanting in the weight and strength of his words he endeavours in vain to make up in the number of them; and they must be repeated, because otherwise there is nothing in them to make them regarded. Note, Many who are empty of sense are full of words; and the least solid are the most noisy. The following words may be taken either,

(1.) As checking him for his vainglorious boasting in the multitude of his words, what he will do and what he will have, not considering that which every body knows that a man cannot tell what shall be in his own time, while he lives (Pr 27:1), much less can one tell what shall be after him, when he is dead and gone. Would we duly consider our own ignorance of, and uncertainty about, future events, it would cut off a great many of the idle words we foolishly multiply. Or,

(2.) As mocking him for his tautologies. He is full of words, for if he do but speak the most trite and common thing, a man cannot tell what shall be, because he loves to hear himself talk, he will say it again, what shall be after him who can tell him? like Battus in Ovid:

Sub illis Montibus (inquit) erant, et erant sub montibus illis--

Under those mountains were they, They were under those mountains,

I say whence vain repetitions are called Battologies, Mt 6:7.

II. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose (Ec 10:15); The labour of the foolish, to accomplish their designs, wearies every one of them.

1. They weary themselves in that labour which is very foolish and absurd. All their labour is for the world and the body, and the meat that perishes, and in this labour they spend their strength, and exhaust their spirits, and weary themselves for very vanity, Hab 2:13,Isa 55:2. They choose that service which is perfect drudgery rather than that which is perfect liberty.

2. That labour which is necessary, and would be profitable, and might be gone through with ease, wearies them, because they go about it awkwardly and foolishly, and so make their business a toil to them, which, if they applied themselves to it prudently, would be a pleasure to them. Many complain of the labours of religion as grievous, which they would have no reason to complain of if the exercises of Christian piety were always under the direction of Christian prudence. The foolish tire themselves in endless pursuits, and never bring any thing to pass, because they know not how to go to the city, that is, because they have not capacity to apprehend the plainest thing, such as the entrance into a great city is, where one would think it were impossible for a man to miss his road. Men's imprudent management of their business robs them both of the comfort and of the benefit of it. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city that it is a high-way, in which the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err (Isa 35:8); yet sinful folly makes men miss that way.

13 The beginning of the words of his mouth *is* foolishness: and the end
of his talk *is* mischievous madness.
14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and
what shall be after him, who can tell him?
15 The labor of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he
knoweth not how to go to the city.

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king *is* a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!

Solomon here observes,

I. How much the happiness of a land depends upon the character of its rulers; it is well or ill with the people according as the princes are good or bad. 1 The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish and voluptuous (Ec 10:16): Woe unto thee, O land! even the land of Canaan itself, though otherwise the glory of all lands, when thy king is a child, not so much in age (Solomon himself was young when his kingdom was happy in him) as in understanding; when the prince is weak and foolish as a child, fickle and fond of changes, fretful and humoursome, easily imposed upon, and hardly brought to business, it is ill with the people. The body staggers if the head be giddy. Perhaps Solomon wrote this with a foresight of his son Rehoboam's ill conduct (2Ch 13:7); he was a child all the days of his life and his family and kingdom fared the worse for it. Nor is it much better with a people when their princes eat in the morning, that is, make a god of their belly and make themselves slaves to their appetites. If the king himself be a child, yet if the princes and privy-counsellors are wise and faithful, and apply themselves to business, the land may do the better; but if they addict themselves to their pleasures, and prefer the gratifications of the flesh before the despatch of the public business, which they disfit themselves for by eating and drinking in a morning, when judges are epicures, and do not eat to live, but live to eat, what good can a nation expect! 2 The people cannot but be happy when their rulers are generous and active, sober and temperate, and men of business, Ec 10:17. The land is then blessed,

(1.) When the sovereign is governed by principles of honour, when the king is the son of nobles, actuated and animated by a noble spirit, which scorns to do any thing base and unbecoming so high a character, which is solicitous for the public welfare, and prefers that before any private interests. Wisdom, virtue, and the fear of God, beneficence, and a readiness to do good to all mankind, these ennoble the royal blood.

2. When the subordinate magistrates are more in care to discharge their trusts than to gratify their appetites; when they eat in due season (Ps 145:15); let us not take ours unseasonable, lest we lose the comfort of seeing God give it to us. Magistrates should eat for strength, that their bodies may be fitted to serve their souls in the service of God and their country, and not for drunkenness, to make themselves unfit to do any thing either for God or man, and particularly to sit in judgment, for they will err through wine (Isa 28:7), will drink and forget the law, Pr 31:5. It is well with a people when their princes are examples of temperance, when those that have most to spend upon themselves know how to deny themselves.

II. Of what ill consequence slothfulness is both to private and public affairs (Ec 10:18): By much slothfulness and idleness of the hands, the neglect of business, and the love of ease and pleasure, the building decays, drops through first, and by degrees drops down. If it be not kept well covered, and care be not taken to repair the breaches, as any happen, it will rain in, and the timber will rot, and the house will become unfit to dwell in. It is so with the family and the affairs of it; if men cannot find in their hearts to take pains in their callings, to tend their shops and look after their own business, they will soon run in debt and go behind-hand, and, instead of making what they have more for their children, will make it less. It is so with the public; if the king be a child and will take no care, if the princes eat in the morning and will take no pains, the affairs of the nation suffer loss, and its interests are prejudiced, its honour is sullied, its power is weakened, its borders are encroached upon, the course of justice is obstructed, the treasure is exhausted, and all its foundations are out of course, and all this through the slothfulness of self-seeking of those that should be the repairers of its breaches and the restorers of paths to dwell in, Isa 58:12.

III. How industrious generally all are, both princes and people, to get money, because that serves for all purposes, Ec 10:19. He seems to prefer money before mirth: A feast is made for laughter, not merely for eating, but chiefly for pleasant conversation and the society of friends, not the laughter of the fool, which is madness, but that of wise men, by which they fit themselves for

business and severe studies. Spiritual feasts are made for spiritual laughter, holy joy in God. Wine makes merry, makes glad the life, but money is the measure of all things and answers all things. Pecuniæ obediunt omnia--Money commands all things. Though wine make merry, it will not be a house for us, nor a bed, nor clothing, nor provisions and portions for children; but money, if men have enough of it, will be all these.

The feast cannot be made without money, and, though men have wine, they are not so much disposed to be merry unless they have money for the necessary supports of life. Money of itself answers nothing; it will neither feed nor clothe; but, as it is the instrument of commerce, it answers all the occasions of this present life. What is to be had may be had for money. But it answers nothing to the soul; it will not procure the pardon of sin, the favour of God, the peace of conscience; the soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained, with corruptible things as silver and gold. Some refer this to rulers; it is ill with the people when they give up themselves to luxury and riot, feasting and making merry, not only because their business is neglected, but because money must be had to answer all these things, and, in order to that, the people squeezed by heavy taxes.

IV. How cautious subjects have need to be that they harbour not any disloyal purposes in their minds, nor keep up any factious cabals or consultations against the government, because it is ten to one that they are discovered and brought to light, Ec 10:20. "Though rulers should be guilty of some errors, yet be not, upon all occasions, arraigning their administration and running them down, but make the best of them." Here,

1 The command teaches us our duty "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought, do not wish ill to the government in thy mind." All sin begins there, and therefore the first risings of it must be curbed and suppressed, and particularly that of treason and sedition. "Curse not the rich, the princes and governors, in thy bed-chamber, in a conclave or club of persons disaffected to the government; associate not with such; come not into their secret; join not with them in speaking ill of the government or plotting against it."

2 The reason consults our safety. "Though the design be carried on ever so closely, a bird of the air shall carry the voice to the king, who has more spies about than thou art aware of, and that which has wings shall tell the matter, to thy confusion and ruin." God sees what men do, and hears what they say, in secret; and, when he pleases, he can bring it to light by strange and unsuspected ways. Wouldst thou then not be hurt by the powers that be, nor be afraid of them? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same; but, if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, Ro 13:3,4.

17 Blessed *art* thou, O land, when thy king *is* the son of nobles, and
thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for
drunkenness!
18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness
of the hands the house droppeth through.
19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money
answereth all *things.*
20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in
thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that
which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Ecclesiastes-11

1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many
days.

Solomon had often, in this book, pressed it upon rich people to take the comfort of their riches themselves; here he presses it upon them to do good to others with them and to abound in liberality to the poor, which will, another day, abound to their account. Observe,

I. How the duty itself is recommended to us, Ec 11:1. 1. Cast thy bread upon the waters, thy bread-corn upon the low places (so some understand it), alluding to the husbandman, who goes forth, bearing precious seed, sparing bread-corn from his family for the seedness, knowing that without that he can have no harvest another year; thus the charitable man takes from his bread-corn for seed-corn, abridges himself to supply the poor,

that he may sow beside all waters (Isa 32:20), because as he sows so he must reap, Ga 6:7. We read of the harvest of the river, Isa 23:3. Waters, in scripture, are put for multitudes (Re 16:5), and there are multitudes of poor (we do not want objects of charity); waters are put also for mourners: the poor are men of sorrows. Thou must give bread, the necessary supports of life, not only give good words but good things, Isa 58:7. It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got; it is no charity, but injury, to give that which is none of our own to give; first do justly, and then love mercy. "Thy bread, which thou didst design for thyself, let the poor have a share with thee, as they had with Job, Job 31:17. Give freely to the poor, as that which is cast upon the waters. Send it a voyage, send it as a venture, as merchants that trade by sea. Trust it upon the waters; it shall not sink."

2. "Give a portion to seven and also to eight, that is, be free and liberal in works of charity."

(1.) "Give much if thou hast much to give, not a pittance, but a portion, not a bit or two, but a mess, a meal; give a large dole, not a paltry one; give good measure (Lu 6:38); be generous in giving, as those were when, on festival days, they sent portions to those for whom nothing was prepared (Ne 8:10), worthy portions."

(2.) "Give to many, to seven, and also to eight; if thou meet with seven objects of charity, give to them all, and then, if thou meet with an eighth, give to that, and if with eight more, give to them all too. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done from the good thou hast further to do, but hold on, and mend. In hard times, when the number of the poor increases, let thy charity be proportionably enlarged." God is rich in mercy to all, to us, though unworthy; he gives liberally, and upbraids not with former gifts, and we must be merciful as our heavenly Father is.

II The reasons with which it is pressed upon us. Consider,

1. Our reward for well-doing is very certain. "Though thou cast it upon the waters, and it seem lost, thou thinkest thou hast given

thy good word with it and art likely never to hear of it again, yet thou shalt find it after many days, as the husbandman finds his seed again in a plentiful harvest and the merchant his venture in a rich return. It is not lost, but well laid out, and well laid up; it brings in full interest in the present gifts of God's providence, and graces and comforts of his Spirit; and the principal is sure, laid up in heaven, for it is lent to the Lord." Seneca, a heathen, could say, Nihil magis possidere me credam, quam bene donata--I possess nothing so completely as that which I have given away. Hochabeo quodcunque dedi; hæ sunt divitiæ certæ in quacunque sortis humanæ levitate--Whatever I have imparted I still possess; these riches remain with me through all the vicissitudes of life. "Thou shalt find it, perhaps not quickly, but after many days; the return may be slow, but it is sure and will be so much the more plentiful." Wheat, the most valuable grain, lies longest in the ground. Long voyages make the best returns.

2. Our opportunity for well-doing is very uncertain: "Thou knowest not what evil may be upon the earth, which may deprive thee of thy estate, and put thee out of a capacity to do good, and therefore, while thou hast wherewithal, be liberal with it, improve the present season, as the husbandman in sowing his ground, before the frost comes." We have reason to expect evil upon the earth, for we are born to trouble; what the evil may be we know not, but that we may be ready for it, whatever it is, it is our wisdom, in the day of prosperity, to be in good, to be doing good. Many make use of this as an argument against giving to the poor, because they know not what hard times may come when they may want themselves; whereas we should therefore the rather be charitable, that, when evil days come, we may have the comfort of having done good while we were able; we would then hope to find mercy both with God and man, and therefore should now show mercy. If by charity we trust God with what we have, we put it into good hands against bad times.

III. How he obviates the objections which might be made against this duty and the excuses of the uncharitable.

1. Some will say that what they have is their own and they have it for their own use, and will ask, Why should we cast it thus

upon the waters? Why should I take my bread, and my flesh, and give it to I know not whom? So Nabal pleaded, 1Sa 25:11. "Look up, man, and consider how soon thou wouldest be starved in a barren ground, if the clouds over thy head should plead thus, that they have their waters for themselves; but thou seest, when they are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth, to make it fruitful, till they are wearied and spent with watering it, Job 37:11. Are the heavens thus bountiful to the poor earth, that is so far below them, and wilt thou grudge thy bounty to thy poor brother, who is bone of thy bone? Or thus: some will say, Though we give but little to the poor, yet, thank God, we have as charitable a heart as any." Nay, says Solomon, if the clouds be full of rain, they will empty themselves; if there be charity in the heart, it will show itself, Jam 2:15,16. He that draws out his soul to the hungry will reach forth his hand to them, as he has ability.

2. Some will say that their sphere of usefulness is low and narrow; they cannot do the good that they see others can, who are in more public stations, and therefore they will sit still and do nothing. Nay, says he, in the place where the tree falls, or happens to be, there it shall be, for the benefit of those to whom it belongs; every man must labour to be a blessing to that place, whatever it is, where the providence of God casts him; wherever we are we may find good work to do if we have but hearts to do it. Or thus: some will say, "Many present themselves as objects of charity who are unworthy, and I do not know whom it is fit to give it to." "Trouble not thyself about that" (says Solomon); "give as discreetly as thou canst, and then be satisfied that, though the person should prove undeserving of thy charity, yet, if thou give it with an honest heart, thou shalt not lose thy reward; which way soever the charity is directed, north or south, thine shall be the benefit of it." This is commonly applied to death; therefore let us do good, and, as good trees, bring forth the fruits of righteousness, because death will shortly come and cut us down, and we shall then be determined to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery according to what was done in the body. As the tree falls at death, so it is likely to lie to all eternity.

3. Some will object the many discouragements they have met with in their charity. They have been reproached for it as proud and pharisaical; they have but little to give, and they shall be despised if they do not give as others do; they know not but their children may come to want it, and they had better lay it up for them; they have taxes to pay and purchases to make; they know not what use will be made of their charity, nor what construction will be put upon it; these, and a hundred such objections, he answers, in one word (Ec 11:4): He that observes the wind shall not sow, which signifies doing good; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap, which signifies getting good. If we stand thus magnifying every little difficulty and making the worst of it, starting objections and fancying hardship and danger where there is none, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work, nor make any thing of it. If the husbandman should decline, or leave off, sowing for the sake of every flying cloud, and reaping for the sake of every blast of wind, he would make but an ill account of his husbandry at the year's end. The duties of religion are as necessary as sowing and reaping, and will turn as much to our own advantage. The discouragements we meet with in these duties are but as winds and clouds, which will do us no harm, and which those that put on a little courage and resolution will despise and easily break through.

Note, Those that will be deterred and driven off by small and seeming difficulties from great and real duties will never bring any thing to pass in religion, for there will always arise some wind, some cloud or other, at least in our imagination, to discourage us. Winds and clouds are in God's hands, are designed to try us, and our Christianity obliges us to endure hardness.

4. Some will say, "We do not see in which way what we expend in charity should ever be made up to us; we do not find ourselves ever the richer; why should we depend upon the general promise of a blessing on the charitable, unless we saw which way to expect the operation of it?" To this he answers, "Thou knowest not the work of God, nor is it fit thou shouldst. Thou mayest be sure he will make good his word of promise, though he does not tell thee how, or which way, and though he works in a way by

himself, according to the counsels of his unsearchable wisdom. He will work, and none shall hinder; but then he will work and none shall direct or prescribe to him. The blessing shall work insensibly but irresistibly. God's work shall certainly agree with his word, whether we see it or no." Our ignorance of the work of God he shows, in two instances:--

(1.) We know not what is the way of the Spirit, of the wind (so some), we know not whence it comes, or whither it goes, or when it will turn; yet the seamen lie ready waiting for it, till it turns about in favour of them; so we must do our duty, in expectation of the time appointed for the blessing. Or it may be understood of the human soul; we know that God made us, and gave us these souls, but how they entered into these bodies, are united to them, animate them, and operate upon them, we know not; the soul is a mystery to itself, no marvel then that the work of God is so to us.

(2.) We know not how the bones are fashioned in the womb of her that is with child. We cannot describe the manner either of the formation of the body or of its information with a soul; both, we know, are the work of God, and we acquiesce in his work, but cannot, in either, trace the process of the operation. We doubt not of the birth of the child that is conceived, though we know not how it is formed; nor need we doubt of the performance of the promise, though we perceive not how things work towards it. And we may well trust God to provide for us that which is convenient, without our anxious disquieting cares, and therein to recompense us for our charity, since it was without any knowledge or forecast of ours that our bodies were curiously wrought in secret and our souls found the way into them; and so the argument is the same, and urged to the same intent, with that of our Saviour (Mt 6:25), The life, the living soul that God has given us, is more than meat; the body, that God has made us, is more than raiment; let him therefore that has done the greater for us be cheerfully depended upon to do the less.

5. Some say, "We have been charitable, have given a great deal to the poor, and never yet saw any return for it; many days are past, and we have not found it again," to which he answers (Ec

11:6), "Yet go on, proceed and persevere in well-doing; let slip no opportunity. In the morning sow thy seed upon the objects of charity that offer themselves early, and in the evening do not withhold thy hand, under pretence that thou art weary; as thou hast opportunity, be doing good, some way or other, all the day long, as the husbandman follows his seedness from morning till night.

In the morning of youth lay out thyself to do good; give out of the little thou hast to begin the world with; and in the evening of old age yield not to the common temptation old people are in to be penurious; even then withhold not thy hand, and think not to excuse thyself from charitable works by purposing to make a charitable will, but do good to the last, for thou knowest not which work of charity and piety shall prosper, both as to others and as to thyself, this or that, but hast reason to hope that both shall be alike good. Be not weary of well-doing, for in due season, in God's time and that is the best time, you shall reap," Ga 6:9. This is applicable to spiritual charity, our pious endeavours for the good of the souls of others; let us continue them, for, though we have long laboured in vain, we may at length see the success of them. Let ministers, in the days of their seedness, sow both morning and evening; for who can tell which shall prosper?

2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not
what evil shall be upon the earth.
3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty *themselves* upon the earth:
and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the
place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.
4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth
the clouds shall not reap.
5 As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the
bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou
knowest not the works of God who maketh all.
6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not
thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this
or that, or whether they both *shall be* alike good.
7 Truly the light *is* sweet, and a pleasant *thing it is* for the eyes to
behold the sun:

8 but if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all; yet let him
remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that
cometh *is* vanity.

Here is an admonition both to old people and to young people, to think of dying, and get ready for it. Having by many excellent precepts taught us how to live well, the preacher comes now, towards the close of his discourse, to teach us how to die well and to put us in mind of our latter end.

I. He applies himself to the aged, writes to them as fathers, to awaken them to think of death, Ec 11:7,8. Here is,

1. A rational concession of the sweetness of life, which old people find by experience: Truly the light is sweet; the light of the sun is so; it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold it. Light was the first thing made in the formation of the great world, as the eye is one of the first in the formation of the body, the little world. It is pleasant to see the light; the heathen were so charmed with the pleasure of it that they worshipped the sun. It is pleasant by it to see other things, the many agreeable prospects this world gives us. The light of life is so. Light is put for life, Job 3:20,23. It cannot be denied that life is sweet. It is sweet to bad men because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men because they have this life as the time of their preparation for a better life; it is sweet to all men; nature says it is so, and there is no disputing against it; nor can death be desired for its own sake, but dreaded, unless as a period to present evils or a passage to future good. Life is sweet, and therefore we have need to double a guard upon ourselves, lest we love it too well.

2. A caution to think of death, even in the midst of life, and of life when it is most sweet and we are most apt to forget death: If a man live many years, yet let him remember the days of darkness are coming. Here is,

(1.) A summer's day supposed to be enjoyed--that life may continue long, even many years, and that, by the goodness of God, it may be made comfortable and a man may rejoice in them all. There are those that live many years in this world, escape

many dangers, receive many mercies, and therefore are secure that they shall want no good, and that no evil shall befal them, that the pitcher which has come so often from the well safe and sound shall never come home broken. But who are those that live many years and rejoice in them all? Alas! none; we have but hours of joy for months of sorrow. However, some rejoice in their years, their many years, more than others; if these two things meet, a prosperous state and a cheerful spirit, these two indeed may do much towards enabling a man to rejoice in them all, and yet the most prosperous state has its alloys and the most cheerful spirit has its damps; jovial sinners have their melancholy qualms, and cheerful saints have their gracious sorrows; so that it is but a supposition, not a case in fact, that a man should live many years and rejoice in them all. But,

(2.) Here is a winter's night proposed to be expected after this summer's day: Yet let this hearty old man remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. Note,

[1.] There are days of darkness coming, the days of our lying in the grave; there the body will lie in the dark; there the eyes see not, the sun shines not. The darkness of death is opposed to the light of life; the grave is a land of darkness, Job 10:21.

[2.] Those days of darkness will be many; the days of our lying under ground will be more than the days of our living above ground. They are many, but they are not infinite; many as they are, they will be numbered and finished when the heavens are no more, Job 14:12. As the longest day will have its night, so the longest night will have its morning.

[3.] It is good for us often to remember those days of darkness, that we may not be lifted up with pride, nor lulled asleep in carnal security, nor even transported into indecencies by vain mirth.

[4.] Notwithstanding the long continuance of life, and the many comforts of it, yet we must remember the days of darkness,

because those will certainly come, and they will come with much the less terror if we have thought of them before.

Advice to the Young

9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment.

He applies himself to the young, and writes to them as children, to awaken them to think of death (Ec 11:9,10); here we have,

1. An ironical concession to the vanities and pleasures of youth: Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth. Some make this to be the counsel which the atheist and the epicure give to the young man, the poisonous suggestions against which Solomon, in the close of the verse, prescribes a powerful antidote. But it is more emphatic if we take it, as it is commonly understood, by way of irony, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal (Cry aloud, for he is a god), or of Micaiah to Ahab (Go to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper), or of Christ to his disciples, Sleep on now. "Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth, live a merry life, follow thy sports, and take thy pleasures; let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, cheer thee with its fancies and foolish hopes; entertain thyself with thy pleasing dreams; walk in the ways of thy heart; do whatever thou hast a mind to do, and stick at nothing that may gratify the sensual appetite. Quicquid libet, licet--Make thy will thy law. Walk in the ways of thy heart, and let thy heart walk after thy eyes, a rambling heart after a roving eye; what is pleasing in thy own eyes do it, whether it be pleasing in the eyes of God or no." Solomon speaks thus ironically to the young man to intimate,

(1.) That this is that which he would do, and which he would fain have leave to do, in which he places his happiness and on which he sets his heart.

(2.) That he wishes all about him would give him this counsel, would prophesy to him such smooth things as these, and cannot

brook any advice to the contrary, but reckons those his enemies that bid him be sober and serious.

(3.) To expose his folly, and the great absurdity of a voluptuous vicious course of life. The very description of it, if men would see things entirely, and judge of them impartially, is enough to show how contrary to reason those act that live such a life. The very opening of the cause is enough to determine it, without any argument.

(4.) To show that if men give themselves to such a course of life as this it is just with God to give them up to it, to abandon them to their own heart's lusts, that they may walk in their own counsels, Ho 4:7.

2. A powerful check given to these vanities and pleasures: "Know thou that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment, and duly consider that, and then live such a luxurious life if thou canst, if thou darest." This is a kolasterion--a corrective to the foregoing concession, and plucks in the reins he had laid on the neck of the young man's lust. "Know then, for a certainty, that, if thou dost take such a liberty as this, it will be thy everlasting ruin; thou hast to do with a God who will not let it go unpunished."

Note, (1.) There is a judgment to come.

(2.) We must every one of us be brought into judgment, however we may now put far from us that evil day.

(3.) We shall be reckoned with for all our carnal mirth and sensual pleasures in that day.

(4.) It is good for all, but especially for young people, to know and consider this, that they may not, by the indulgence of their youthful lusts, treasure up unto themselves wrath against that day of wrath, the wrath of the Lamb.

3. A word of caution and exhortation inferred from all this, Ec 11:10. Let young people look to themselves and manage well both their souls and their bodies, their heart and their flesh.

(1.) Let them take care that their minds be not lifted up with pride, nor disturbed with anger, or any sinful passion: Remove sorrow, or anger, from thy heart; the word signifies any disorder or perturbation of the mind. Young people are apt to be impatient of check and control, to vex and fret at any thing that is humbling and mortifying to them, and their proud hearts rise against every thing that crosses and contradicts them. They are so set upon that which is pleasing to sense that they cannot bear any thing that is displeasing, but it goes with sorrow to their heart. Their pride often disquiets them, and makes them uneasy. "Put that away, and the love of the world, and lay thy expectations low from the creature, and then disappointments will not be occasions of sorrow and anger to thee." Some by sorrow here understand that carnal mirth described Ec 11:9, the end of which will be bitterness and sorrow. Let them keep at a distance from every thing which will be sorrow in the reflection.

(2.) Let them take care that their bodies be not defiled by intemperance, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts: "Put away evil from the flesh, and let not the members of thy body be instruments of unrighteousness. The evil of sin will be the evil of punishment, and that which thou art fond of, as good for the flesh, because it gratifies the appetites of it, will prove evil, and hurtful to it, and therefore put it far from thee, the further the better."

III. The preacher, to enforce his admonition both to old and young, urges, as an effectual argument, that which is the great argument of his discourse, the vanity of all present things, their uncertainty and insufficiency.

1. He reminds old people of this (Ec 11:8): All that comes is vanity; yea, though a man live many years and rejoice in them all, All that has come already, and all that is yet to come, how

much soever men promise themselves from the concluding scenes, it is all vanity. What will be will do no more to make men happy than what has been. All that come into the world are vanity; they are altogether so, at their best estate.

2. He reminds young people of this: Childhood and youth are vanity. The dispositions and actions of childhood and youth have in them a great deal of impertinence and iniquity, sinful vanity, which young people have need to watch against and get cured. The pleasures and advantages of childhood and youth have in them no certainty, satisfaction, nor continuance. They are passing away; these flowers will soon wither, and these blossoms fall; let them therefore be knit into good fruit, which will continue and abound to a good account.

10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth *are* vanity.

Ecclesiastes-12

1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

Here is, I. A call to young people to think of God, and mind their duty to him, when they are young: Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. This is,

1 The royal preacher's application of his sermon concerning the vanity of the world and every thing in it. "You that are young flatter yourselves with expectations of great things from it, but believe those that have tried it; it yields no solid satisfaction to a soul; therefore, that you may not be deceived by this vanity, nor too much disturbed by it, remember your Creator, and so guard yourselves against the mischiefs that arise from the vanity of the creature."

2. It is the royal physician's antidote against the particular diseases of youth, the love of mirth, and the indulgence of sensual pleasures, the vanity which childhood and youth are

subject to; to prevent and cure this, remember thy Creator. Here is,

(1.) A great duty pressed upon us, to remember God as our creator, not only to remember that God is our Creator, that he made us and not we ourselves, and is therefore our rightful Lord and owner, but we must engage ourselves to him with the considerations which his being our Creator lay us under, and pay him the honour and duty which we owe him as our Creator. Remember thy Creators; the word is plural, as it is Job 35:10, Where is God my Makers? For God said, Let us make man, us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

(2.) The proper season for this duty--in the days of thy youth, the days of thy choice (so some), thy choice days, thy choosing days. "Begin in the beginning of thy days to remember him from whom thou hadst thy being, and go on according to that good beginning. Call him to mind when thou art young, and keep him in mind throughout all the days of thy youth, and never forget him. Guard thus against the temptations of youth, and thus improve the advantages of it."

2 while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not
darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:
3 in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the
strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because
they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

A reason to enforce this command: While the evil days come not, and the years of which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.

1. Do it quickly,

(1.) "Before sickness and death come. Do it while thou livest, for be too late to do it when death has removed thee from this state and probation to that of recompence and retribution." The d sickness and death are the days of evil, terrible to nature, evi indeed to those that have forgotten their Creator. These evil day come sooner or later; as yet they come not, for God is long-suffe us-ward, and gives us space to repent; the continuing of life is

deferring of death, and, while life is continued and death defer concerns us to prepare, and get the property of death altered, t may die comfortably.

(2.) Before old age comes, which, if death prevent not, will come, and they will be years of which we shall say, We have no pleasure in them,--when we shall not relish the delights of sense, as Barzillai (2Sa 19:35), --when we shall be loaded with bodily infirmities, old and blind, or old and lame,--when we shall be taken off from our usefulness, and our strength shall be labour and sorrow,--when we shall either have parted with our relations, and all our old friends, or be afflicted in them and see them weary of us,--when we shall feel ourselves die by inches. These years draw nigh, when all that comes will be vanity, the remaining months all months of vanity, and there will be no pleasure but in the reflection of a good life on earth and the expectation of a better life in heaven.

2. These two arguments he enlarges upon in the following verses, only inverting the order, and shows,

(1.) How many are the calamities of old age, and that if we should live to be old, our days will be such as we shall have no pleasure in, which is a good reason why we should return to God, and make our peace with him, in the days of our youth, and not put it off till we come to be old; for it will be no thanks to us to leave the pleasures of sin when they have left us, nor to return to God when need forces us. It is the greatest absurdity and ingratitude imaginable to give the cream and flower of our days to the devil, and reserve the bran, and refuse, and dregs of them for God; this is offering the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice; and, besides, old age being thus clogged with infirmities, it is the greatest folly imaginable to put off that needful work till then, which requires the best of our strength, when our faculties are in their prime, and especially to make the work more difficult by a longer continuance in sin, and, laying up treasures of guilt in the conscience, to add to the burdens of age and make them much heavier.

If the calamities of age will be such as are here represented, we shall have need of something to support and comfort us then, and nothing will be more effectual to do that than the testimony of our consciences for us that we begin betimes to remember our Creator and have not since laid aside the remembrance of him. How can we expect God should help us when we are old, if we will not serve him when we are young? See Ps 71:17,18.

[1.] The decays and infirmities of old age are here elegantly described in figurative expressions, which have some difficulty in them to us now, who are not acquainted with the common phrases and metaphors used in Solomon's age and language; but the general scope is plain--to show how uncomfortable, generally, the days of old age are.

First, Then the sun and the light of it, the moon and the stars, and the light which they borrow from it, will be darkened. They look dim to old people, in consequence of the decay of their sight; their countenance is clouded, and the beauty and lustre of it are eclipsed; their intellectual powers and faculties, which are as lights in the soul, are weakened; their understanding and memory fail them, and their apprehension is not so quick nor their fancy so lively as it has been; the days of their mirth are over (light is often put for joy and prosperity) and they have not the pleasure either of the converse of the day or the repose of the night, for both the sun and the moon are darkened to them.

Secondly, Then the clouds return after the rain; as, when the weather is disposed to wet, no sooner has one cloud blown over than another succeeds it, so it is with old people, when they have got free from one pain or ailment, they are seized with another, so that their distempers are like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The end of one trouble is, in this world, but the beginning of another, and deep calls unto deep. Old people are often afflicted with defluxions of rheum, like soaking rain, after which still more clouds return, feeding the humour, so that it is continually grievous, and therein the body, as it were, melts away.

Thirdly, Then the keepers of the house tremble. The head, which is as the watch-tower, shakes, and the arms and hands, which are ready for the preservation of the body, shake too, and grow feeble, upon every sudden approach and attack of danger. That vigour of the animal spirits which used to be exerted for self-defence fails and cannot do its office; old people are easily dispirited and discouraged.

Fourthly, Then the strong men shall bow themselves; the legs and thighs, which used to support the body, and bear its weight, bend, and cannot serve for travelling as they have done, but are soon tired. Old men that have been in their time strong men become weak and stoop for age, Zec 8:4. God takes no pleasure in the legs of a man (Ps 147:10), for their strength will soon fail; but in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength; he has everlasting arms.

Fifthly, Then the grinders cease because they are few; the teeth, with which we grind our meat and prepare it for concoction, cease to do their part, because they are few. They are rotted and broken, and perhaps have been drawn because they ached. Some old people have lost all their teeth, and others have but few left; and this infirmity is the more considerable because the meat, not being well chewed, for want of teeth, is not well digested, which has as much influence as any thing upon the other decays of age.

Sixthly, Those that look out of the windows are darkened; the eyes wax dim, as Isaac's (Ge 27:1), and Ahijah's, 1Ki 14:4. Moses was a rare instance of one who, when 120 years old, had good eye-sight, but ordinarily the sight decays in old people as soon as any thing, and it is a mercy to them that art helps nature with spectacles. We have need to improve our sight well while we have it, because the light of the eyes may be gone before the light of life.

Seventhly, The doors are shut in the streets. Old people keep within doors, and care not for going abroad to entertainments. The lips, the doors of the mouth, are shut in eating, because the teeth are gone and the sound of the grinding with them is low, so

that they have not that command of their meat in their mouths which they used to have; they cannot digest their meat, and therefore little grist is brought to the mill.

Eightly, Old people rise up at the voice of the bird. They have no sound sleep as young people have, but a little thing disturbs them, even the chirping of a bird; they cannot rest for coughing, and therefore rise up at cock-crowing, as soon as any body is stirring; or they are apt to be jealous, and timorous, and full of care, which breaks their sleep and makes them rise early; or they are apt to be superstitious, and rise up as in a fright, at those voices of birds, as of ravens, or screech-owls, which soothsayers call ominous.

Ninthly, With them all the daughters of music are brought low. They have neither voice nor ear, can neither sing themselves nor take any pleasure, as Solomon had done in the days of his youth, in singing men, and singing women, and musical instruments, Ec 2:8. Old people grow hard of hearing, and unapt to distinguish sounds and voices.

Tenthly, They are afraid of that which is high, afraid to go to the top of any high place, either because, for want of breath, they cannot reach it, or, their heads being giddy or their legs failing them, they dare not venture to it, or they frighten themselves with fancying that that which is high will fall upon them. Fear is in the way; they can neither ride nor walk with their former boldness, but are afraid of every thing that lies in their way, lest it throw them down.

Eleventhly, The almond-tree flourishes. The old man's hair has grown white, so that his head looks like an almond-tree in the blossom. The almond-tree blossoms before any other tree, and therefore fitly shows what haste old age makes in seizing upon men; it prevents their expectations and comes faster upon them than they thought of. Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not.

Twelfthly, The grasshopper is a burden and desire fails. Old men can bear nothing; the lightest thing sits heavily upon them, both on their bodies and on their minds, a little thing sinks and breaks them. Perhaps the grasshopper was some food that was looked upon to be very light of digestion (John Baptist's meat was locusts), but even that lies heavily upon an old man's stomach, and therefore desire fails, he has no appetite to his meat, neither shall he regard the desire of woman, as that king, Da 11:37. Old men become mindless and listless, and the pleasures of sense are to them tasteless and sapless.

[2.] It is probable that Solomon wrote this when he was himself old, and could speak feelingly of the infirmities of age, which perhaps grew the faster upon him for the indulgence he had given himself in sensual pleasures. Some old people bear up better than others under the decays of age, but, more or less, the days of old age are and will be evil days and of little pleasure. Great care therefore should be taken to pay respect and honour to old people, that they may have something to balance these grievances and nothing may be done to add to them. And all this, put together, makes up a good reason why we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, that he may remember us with favour when these evil days come, and his comforts may delight our souls when the delights of sense are in a manner worn off.

(2.) He shows how great a change death will make with us, which will be either the prevention or the period of the miseries of old age. Nothing else will keep them off, nor any thing else cure them. "Therefore remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, because death is certainly before thee, perhaps it is very near thee, and it is a serious thing to die, and thou shouldst feel concerned with the utmost care and diligence to prepare for it."

[1.] Death will fix us in an unchangeable state: Man shall then go to his long home, and all these infirmities and decays of age are harbingers of and advances towards that awful remove. At death man goes from this world and all the employments and enjoyments of it. He has gone for good and all, as to his present state. He has gone home, for here he was a stranger and pilgrim;

both soul and body go to the place whence they came, Ec 12:7. He has gone to his rest, to the place where he is to fix. He has gone to his home, to the house of his world (so some), for this world is not his. He has gone to his long home, for the days of his lying in the grave will be many. He has gone to his house of eternity, not only to his house whence he shall never return to this world, but to the house where he must be for ever. This should make us willing to die, that, at death, we must go home; and why should we not long to go to our Father's house? And this should quicken us to get ready to die, that we must then go to our long home, to an everlasting habitation.

[2.] Death will be an occasion of sorrow to our friends that love us. When man goes to his long home the mourners go about the streets--the real mourners, and those, as now with us, distinguished by their habits as they go along the streets,--the mourners for ceremony, that were hired to weep for the dead, both to express and to excite the real mourning. When we die we not only remove to a melancholy house before us, but we leave a melancholy house behind us. Tears are a tribute due to the dead, and this, among other circumstances, makes it a serious thing to die. But in vain do we go to the house of mourning, and see the mourners go about the streets, if it do not help to make us serious and pious mourners in the closet.

[3.] Death will dissolve the frame of nature and take down the earthly house of this tabernacle, which is elegantly described, Ec 12:6. Then shall the silver cord, by which soul and body were wonderfully fastened together, be loosed, that sacred knot untied, and those old friends be forced to part; then shall the golden bowl, which held the waters of life for us, be broken; then shall the pitcher with which we used to fetch up water, for the constant support of life and the repair of its decays, be broken, even at the fountain, so that it can fetch up no more; and the wheel (all those organs that serve for the collecting and distributing of nourishment) shall be broken, and disabled to do their office any more. The body shall become like a watch when the spring is broken, the motion of all the wheels is stopped and they all stand still; the machine is taken to pieces; the heart beats no more, nor does the blood circulate. Some apply this to the

ornaments and utensils of life; rich people must, at death, leave behind them their clothing and furniture of silver and gold, and poor people their earthen pitchers, and the drawers of water will have their wheel broken.

[4.] Death will resolve us into our first principles, Ec 12:7. Man is a strange sort of creature, a ray of heaven united to a clod of earth; at death these are separated, and each goes to the place whence it came.

First, The body, that clod of clay, returns to its own earth. It is made of the earth; Adam's body was so, and we are of the same mould; it is a house of clay. At death it is laid in the earth, and in a little time will be resolved into earth, not to be distinguished from common earth, according to the sentence (Ge 3:19), Dust thou art and therefore to dust thou shalt return. Let us not therefore indulge the appetites of the body, nor pamper it (it will be worms' meat shortly), nor let sin reign in our mortal bodies, for they are mortal, Ro 6:12.

Secondly, The soul, that beam of light, returns to that God who, when he made man of the dust of the ground, breathed into him the breath of life, to make him a living soul (Ge 2:7), and forms the spirit of every man within him. When the fire consumes the wood the flame ascends, and the ashes return to the earth out of which the wood grew. The soul does not die with the body; it is redeemed from the power of the grave (Ps 49:15); it can subsist without it and will in a state of separation from it, as the candle burns, and burns brighter, when it is taken out of the dark lantern. It removes to the world of spirits, to which it is allied. It goes to God as a Judge, to give account of itself, and to be lodged either with the spirits in prison (1Pe 3:19) or with the spirits in paradise (Lu 23:43), according to what was done in the body. This makes death terrible to the wicked, whose souls go to God as an avenger, and comfortable to the godly, whose souls go to God as a Father, into whose hands they cheerfully commit them, through a Mediator, out of whom sinners may justly dread to think of going to God.

4 and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;
5 also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:
6 or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.
7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
8 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all *is* vanity.

Solomon is here drawing towards a close, and is loth to part till he has gained his point, and prevailed with his hearers, with his readers, to seek for that satisfaction in God only and in their duty to him which they can never find in the creature.

I. He repeats his text (Ec 12:8), 1. As that which he had fully demonstrated the truth of, and so made good his undertaking in this sermon, wherein he had kept closely to his text, and both his reasons and his application were to the purpose. 2. As that which he desired to inculcate both upon others and upon himself, to have it ready, and to make use of it upon all occasions. We see it daily proved; let it therefore be daily improved: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

II. He recommends what he had written upon this subject by divine direction and inspiration to our serious consideration. The words of this book are faithful, and well worthy our acceptance, for,

1. They are the words of one that was a convert, a penitent, that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world and the folly of expecting great things from it. He was Coheleth, one gathered in from his wanderings and gathered home to that God from whom he had revolted. Vanity of vanities, saith the penitent. All true penitents are convinced of the vanity of the

world, for they find it can do nothing to ease them of the burden of sin, which they complain of.

2. They are the words of one that was wise, wiser than any, endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom, famous for it among his neighbours, who all sought unto him to hear his wisdom, and therefore a competent judge of this matter, not only wise as a prince, but wise as a preacher--and preachers have need of wisdom to win souls.

3. He was one that made it his business to do good, and to use wisdom aright. Because he was himself wise, but knew he had not his wisdom for himself, any more than he had it from himself, he still taught the people that knowledge which he had found useful to himself, and hoped might be so to them too. It is the interest of princes to have their people well taught in religion, and no disparagement to them to teach them themselves the good knowledge of the Lord, but their duty to encourage those whose office it is to teach them and to speak comfortably to them, 2Ch 30:22. Let not the people, the common people, be despised, no, not by the wisest and greatest, as either unworthy or incapable of good knowledge: even those that are well taught have need to be still taught, that they may grow in knowledge.

4. He took a great deal of pains and care to do good, designing to teach the people knowledge. He did not put them off with any thing that came next to hand, because they were inferior people, and he a very wise man, but considering the worth of the souls he preached to and the weight of the subject he preached on, he gave good heed to what he read and heard from others, that, having stocked himself well, he might bring out of his treasury things new and old. He gave good heed to what he spoke and wrote himself, and was choice and exact in it; all he did was elaborate.

(1.) He chose the most profitable way of preaching, by proverbs or short sentences, which would be more easily apprehended and remembered than long and laboured periods.

(2.) He did not content himself with a few parables, or wise sayings, and repeat them again and again, but he furnished himself with many proverbs, a great variety of grave discourses, that he might have something to say on every occasion.

(3.) He did not only give them such observations as were obvious and trite, but he sought out such as were surprising and uncommon; he dug into the mines of knowledge, and did not merely pick up what lay on the surface.

(4.) He did not deliver his heads and observations at random, as they came to mind, but methodized them, and set them in order that they might appear in more strength and lustre.

5. He put what he had to say in such a dress as he thought would be most pleasing: He sought to find out acceptable words, words of delight (Ec 12:10); he took care that good matter might not be spoiled by a bad style, and by the ungratefulness and incongruity of the expression. Ministers should study, not for the big words, nor the fine words, but acceptable words, such as are likely to please men for their good, to edification, 1Co 10:33. Those that would win souls must contrive how to win upon them with words fitly spoken.

6. That which he wrote for our instruction is of unquestionable certainty, and what we may rely upon: That which was written was upright and sincere, according to the real sentiments of the penman, even words of truth, the exact representation of the thing as it is. Those are sure not to miss their way who are guided by these words. What good will acceptable words do us if they be not upright and words of truth? Most are for smooth things, that flatter them, rather than right things, that direct them (Isa 30:10), but to those that understand themselves, and their own interest, words of truth will always be acceptable words.

7. That which he and other holy men wrote will be of great use and advantage to us, especially being inculcated upon us by the exposition of it, Ec 12:11. Here observe,

(1.) A double benefit accruing to us from divine truths if duly applied and improved; they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness. They are of use,

[1.] To excite us to our duty. They are as goads to the ox that draws the plough, putting him forward when he is dull and quickening him, to amend his pace. The truths of God prick men to the heart (Ac 2:37) and put them upon bethinking themselves, when they trifle and grow remiss, and exerting themselves with more vigour in their work. While our good affections are so apt as they are to grow flat and cool, we have need of these goads.

[2.] To engage us to persevere in our duty. They are as nails to those that are wavering and inconstant, to fix them to that which is good. They are as goads to such as are dull and draw back, and nails to such as are desultory and draw aside, means to establish the heart and confirm good resolutions, that we may not sit loose to our duty, nor even be taken off from it, but that what good there is in us may be as a nail fastened in a sure place, Ezr 9:8.

(2.) A double way of communicating divine truths, in order to those benefits:--

[1.] By the scriptures, as the standing rule, the words of the wise, that is, of the prophets, who are called wise men, Mt 23:34. These we have in black and white, and may have recourse to them at any time, and make use of them as goads and as nails. By them we may teach ourselves; let them but come with pungency and power to the soul, let the impressions of them be deep and durable, and the will make us wise to salvation.

[2.] By the ministry. To make the words of the wise more profitable to us, it is appointed that they should be impressed and fastened by the masters of assemblies. Solemn assemblies for religious worship are an ancient divine institution, intended for the honour of God and the edification of his church, and are not only serviceable, but necessary, to those ends. There must be masters of these assemblies, who are Christ's ministers, and as

such are to preside in them, to be God's mouth to the people and theirs to God. Their business is to fasten the words of the wise, and drive them as nails to the head, in order to which the word of God is likewise as a hammer, Jer 23:29.

8. That which is written, and thus recommended to us, is of divine origin. Though it comes to us through various hands (many wise men, and many masters of assemblies), yet it is given by one and the same shepherd, the great shepherd of Israel, that leads Joseph like a flock, Ps 80:1. God is that one Shepherd, whose good Spirit indited the scriptures, and assists the masters of the assemblies in opening and applying the scriptures. These words of the wise are the true sayings of God, on which we may rest our souls. From that one Shepherd all ministers must receive what they deliver, and speak according to the light of the written word.

9. The sacred inspired writings, if we will but make use of them, are sufficient to guide us in the way of true happiness, and we need not, in the pursuit of that, to fatigue ourselves with the search of other writings (Ec 12:12): "And further, nothing now remains but to tell thee that that of making many books there is no end," that is,

(1.) Of writing many books. "If what I have written, serve not to convince thee of the vanity of the world, and the necessity of being religious, neither wouldst thou be convinced if I should write ever so much." If the end be not attained in the use of those books of scripture which God has blessed us with, neither should we obtain the end, if we had twice as many more; nay, if we had so many that the whole world could not contain them (Joh 21:25), and much study of them would but confound us, and would rather be a weariness to the flesh than any advantage to the soul. We have as much as God saw fit to give us, saw fit for us, and saw us fit for. Much less can it be expected that those who will not by these be admonished should be wrought upon by other writings. Let men write ever so many books for the conduct of human life, write till they have tired themselves with much study, they cannot give better instructions than those we have from the word of God. Or,

(2.) Of buying many books, making ourselves master of them, and masters of what is in them, by much study; still the desire of learning would be unsatisfied. It will give a man indeed the best entertainment and the best accomplishment this world can afford him; but if we be not by these admonished of the vanity of the world, and human learning, among other things, and its insufficiency to make us happy without true piety, alas! there is no end of it, nor real benefit by it; it will weary the body, but never give the soul any true satisfaction. The great Mr. Selden subscribed to this when he owned that in all the books he had read he never found that on which he could rest his soul, but in the holy scripture, especially Tit 2:11,12. By these therefore let us be admonished.

The Whole Duty of Man

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.

10 The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was* written *was* upright, *even* words of truth.

11 The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

The great enquiry which Solomon prosecutes in this book is, What is that good which the sons of men should do? Ec 2:3. What is the true way to true happiness, the certain means to attain our great end? He had in vain sought it among those things which most men are eager in pursuit of, but here, at length, he has found it, by the help of that discovery which God anciently made to man (Job 28:28), that serious godliness is the only way to true happiness: Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, the return entered upon the writ of enquiry, the result of this diligent search; you shall have all I have been driving at in two words.

He does not say, Do you hear it, but Let us hear it; for preachers must themselves be hearers of that word which they preach to others, must hear it as from God; those are teachers by the halves who teach others and not themselves, Ro 2:21. Every word of God is pure and precious, but some words are worthy of more special remark, as this; the Masorites begin it with a capital letter, as that De 6:4. Solomon himself puts a nota bene before it, demanding attention in these words, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Observe here,

I The summary of religion. Setting aside all matters of doubtful disputation, to be religious is to fear God and keep his commandments.

1 The root of religion is fear of God reigning in the heart, and a reverence of his majesty, a deference to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. Fear God, that is, worship God, give him the honour due to his name, in all the instances of true devotion, inward and outward. See Re 14:7.

2 The rule of religion is the law of God revealed in the scriptures. Our fear towards God must be taught by his commandments (Isa 29:13), and those we must keep and carefully observe. Wherever the fear of God is uppermost in the heart, there will be a respect to all his commandments and care to keep them. In vain do we pretend to fear God if we do not make conscience of our duty to him.

II The vast importance of it: This is the whole of man; it is all his business and all his blessedness; our whole duty is summed up in this and our whole comfort is bound up in this. It is the concern of every man, and ought to be his chief and continual care; it is the common concern of all men, of their whole time. It is nothing to a man whether he be rich or poor, high or low, but it is the main matter, it is all in all to a man, to fear God and do as he bids him.

III. A powerful inducement to this, Ec 12:14. We shall see of what vast consequence it is to us that we be religious if we consider the account we must every one of us shortly give of himself to God; thence he argued against a voluptuous and vicious life (Ec 11:9), and here for a religious life: God shall bring every work into judgment. Note,

1. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's eternal state will be finally determined.

2. God himself will be the Judge, God-man will, not only because he has a right to judge, but because he is perfectly fit for it, infinitely wise and just.

3. Every work will then be brought into judgment, will be enquired into and called over again. It will be a day to bring to remembrance every thing done in the body.

4. The great thing to be then judged of concerning every work is whether it be good or evil, conformable to the will of God or a violation of it.

5. Even secret things, both good and evil, will be brought to light, and brought to account, in the judgment of the great day (Ro 2:16); there is no good work, no bad work, hid, but shall then be made manifest. 6. In consideration of the judgment to come, and the strictness of that judgment, it highly concerns us now to be very strict in our walking with God, that we may give up our account with joy.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

The Song of Solomon
[Song of Solomon]

Song of Solomon-1

The Bride and the Daughters of Jerusalem

1 The Song of songs, which *is* Solomon's.

We have here the title of this book, showing,

1 The nature of it; it is a song, that it might the better answer the intention, which is to stir up the affections and to heat them, which poetry will be very instrumental to do. The subject is pleasing, and therefore fit to be treated of in a song, in singing which we may make melody with our hearts unto the Lord. It is evangelical; and gospel-times should be times of joy, for gospel-grace puts a new song into our mouths, Ps 98:1.

2 The dignity of it; it is the song of songs, a most excellent song, not only above any human composition, or above all other songs which Solomon penned, but even above any other of the scripture-songs, as having more of Christ in it.

3. The penman of it; it is Solomon's. It is not the song of fools, as many of the songs of love are, but the song of the wisest of men; nor can any man give a better proof of his wisdom than to celebrate the love of God to mankind and to excite his own love to God and that of others with it. Solomon's songs were a thousand and five (1Ki 4:32); those that were of other subjects are lost, but this of seraphic love remains, and will to the end of time. Solomon, like his father, was addicted to poetry, and, which way soever a man's genius lies, he should endeavor to honour God and edify the church with it. One of Solomon's names was Jedidiah--beloved of the Lord (2Sa 12:25); and none so fit to write of the Lord's love as he that had himself so great an interest in it; none of all the apostles wrote so much of love as he that was himself the beloved disciple and lay in Christ's bosom. Solomon, as a king, had great affairs to mind and manage, which took up much

of his thoughts and time, yet he found heart and leisure for this and other religious exercises.

Men of business ought to be devout men, and not to think that business will excuse them from that which is every man's great business--to keep up communion with God. It is not certain when Solomon penned this sacred song. Some think that he penned it after he recovered himself by the grace of God from his backslidings, as a further proof of his repentance, and as if by doing good to many with this song he would atone for the hurt he had perhaps done with loose, vain, amorous songs, when he loved many strange wives; now he turned his wit the right way. It is more probable that he penned it in the beginning of his time, while he kept close to God and kept up his communion with him; and perhaps he put this song, with his father's psalms, into the hands of the chief musician, for the service of the temple, not without a key to it, for the right understanding of it.

Some think that it was penned upon occasion of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, but that is uncertain; the tower of Lebanon, which is mentioned in this book (So 7:4), was not built, as is supposed, till long after the marriage. We may reasonably think that when in the height of his prosperity he loved the Lord (1Ki 3:3) he thus served him with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things. It may be rendered, The song of songs, which is concerning Solomon, who as the son and successor of David, on whom the covenant of royalty was entailed, as the founder of the temple, and as one that excelled in wisdom and wealth, was a type of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and yet is a greater than Solomon; this is therefore a song concerning him. It is here fitly placed after Ecclesiastes; for when by the book we are thoroughly convinced of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to satisfy us and make a happiness for us, we shall be quickened to seek for happiness in the love of Christ, and that true transcendent pleasure which is to be found only in communion with God through him. The voice in the wilderness, that was to prepare Christ's way, cried, All flesh is grass.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:
for thy love *is* better than wine.

3 Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name
is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins
love thee.

The spouse, in this dramatic poem, is here first introduced addressing herself to the bridegroom and then to the daughters of Jerusalem.

I. To the bridegroom, not giving him any name or title, but beginning abruptly: Let him kiss me; like Mary Magdalen to the supposed gardener (Joh 20:15), If thou have borne him hence, meaning Christ, but not naming him. The heart has been before taken up with the thoughts of him, and to this relative those thoughts were the antecedent, that good matter which the heart was inditing, Ps 45:1. Those that are full of Christ themselves are ready to think that others should be so too. Two things the spouse desires, and pleases herself with the thoughts of:--

1 The bridegroom's friendship (So 1:2): "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, that is, be reconciled to me, and let me know that he is so; let me have the token of his favour." Thus the Old-Testament church desired Christ's manifesting himself in the flesh, to be no longer under the law as a schoolmaster, under a dispensation of bondage and terror, but to receive the communications of divine grace in the gospel, in which God is reconciling the world unto himself, binding up and healing what by the law was torn and smitten; as the mother kisses the child that she has chidden. "Let him no longer send to me, but come himself, no longer speak by angels and prophets, but let me have the word of his own mouth, those gracious words (Lu 4:22), which will be to me as the kisses of the mouth, sure tokens of reconciliation, as Esau's kissing Jacob was." All gospel duty is summed up in our kissing the Son (Ps 2:12); so all gospel-grace is summed up in his kissing us, as the father of the prodigal kissed him when he returned a penitent.

It is a kiss of peace. Kisses are opposed to wounds (Pr 27:6), so are the kisses of grace to the wounds of the law. Thus all true believers earnestly desire the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls; they desire no more to make them happy than the assurance of his favour, the lifting up of the light of his

countenance upon them (Ps 4:6,7), and the knowledge of that love of his which surpasses knowledge; this is the one thing they desire, Ps 27:4. They are ready to welcome the manifestation of Christ's love to their souls by his Spirit, and to return them in the humble professions of love to him and complacency in him, above all. The fruit of his lips is peace, Isa 57:19. "Let him give me ten thousand kisses whose very fruition makes me desire him more, and, whereas all other pleasures sour and wither by using, those of the Spirit become more delightful." So bishop Reynolds. She gives several reasons for this desire.

(1.) Because of the great esteem she has for his love: Thy love is better than wine. Wine makes glad the heart, revives the drooping spirits, and exhilarates them, but gracious souls take more pleasure in loving Christ and being beloved of him, in the fruits and gifts of his love and in the pledges and assurances of it, than any man ever took in the most exquisite delights of sense, and it is more reviving to them than ever the richest cordial was to one ready to faint. Note,

[1.] Christ's love is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, more valuable and desirable than the best entertainments this world can give.

[2.] Those only may expect the kisses of Christ's mouth, and the comfortable tokens of his favour, who prefer his love before all delights of the children of men, who would rather forego those delights than forfeit his favour, and take more pleasure in spiritual joys than in any bodily refreshments whatsoever. Observe here the change of the person: Let him kiss me; there she speaks of him as absent, or as if she were afraid to speak to him; but, in the next words, she sees him near at hand, and therefore directs her speech to him: "Thy love, thy loves" (so the word is), "I so earnestly desire, because I highly esteem it."

(2.) Because of the diffuse fragrancy of his love and the fruits of it (So 1:3): "Because of the savour of thy good ointment (the agreeableness and acceptableness of thy graces and comforts to all that rightly understand both them and themselves), thy name is as ointment poured forth, thou art so, and all that whereby thou

hast made thyself known; thy very name is precious to all the saints; it is an ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart." The unfolding of Christ's name is as the opening of a box of precious ointment, which the room is filled with the odour of. The preaching of his gospel was the manifesting the savour of his knowledge in every place, 2Co 2:14.

The Spirit was the oil of gladness wherewith Christ was anointed (Heb 1:9), and all true believers have that unction (1Jo 2:27), so that he is precious to them, and they to him and to one another. A good name is as precious ointment, but Christ's name is more fragrant than any other. Wisdom, like oil, makes the face to shine; but the Redeemer outshines, in beauty, all others. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up, as it had been long (Ask not after my name, for it is secret), but like ointment poured forth, which denotes both the freeness and fulness of the communications of his grace by the gospel.

(3.) Because of the general affection that all holy souls have to him: Therefore do the virgins love thee. It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts that draws them out in love to him; all that are pure from the corruptions of sin, that preserve the chastity of their own spirits, and are true to the vows by which they have devoted themselves to God, that not only suffer not their affections to be violated but cannot bear so much as to be solicited by the world and the flesh, those are the virgins that love Jesus Christ and follow him whithersoever he goes, Re 14:4. And, because Christ is the darling of all the pure in heart, let him be ours, and let our desires be towards him and towards the kisses of his mouth.

2 The bridegroom's fellowship, So 1:4. Observe here,

(1.) Her petition for divine grace: Draw me. This implies sense of distance from him, desire of union with him. "Draw me to thyself, draw me nearer, draw me home to thee." She had prayed that he would draw nigh to her (So 1:2); in order to that, she prays that he would draw her nigh to him. "Draw me, not only with the moral suasion which there is in the fragrancy of the good ointments, not only with the attractives of that name which is as

ointment poured forth, but with supernatural grace, with the cords of a man and the bands of love," Ho 11:4. Christ has told us that none come to him but such as the Father draws, Joh 6:44. We are not only weak, and cannot come of ourselves any further than we are helped, but we are naturally backward and averse to come, and therefore must pray for those influences and operations of the Spirit, by the power of which we are unwilling made willing, Ps 110:3. "Draw me, else I move not; overpower the world and the flesh that would draw me from thee." We are not driven to Christ, but drawn in such a way as is agreeable to rational creatures.

(2.) Her promise to improve that grace: Draw me, and then we will run after thee. See how the doctrine of special and effectual grace consists with our duty, and is a powerful engagement and encouragement to it, and yet reserves all the glory of all the good that is in us to God only. Observe,

[1.] The flowing forth of the soul after Christ, and its ready compliance with him, are the effect of his grace; we could not run after him if he did not draw us, 2Co 3:5,Php 4:13.

[2.] The grace which God gives us we must diligently improve. When Christ by his Spirit draws us we must with our spirits run after him. As God says, I will, and you shall (Eze 36:27), so we must say, "Thou shalt and we will; thou shalt work in us both to will and to do, and therefore we will work out our own salvation" (Php 2:12,13); not only we will walk, but we will run after thee, which denotes eagerness of desire, readiness of affection, vigour of pursuit, and swiftness of motion. When thou shalt enlarge my heart then I will run the way of thy commandments (Ps 119:32); when thy right hand upholds me then my soul follows hard after thee (Ps 63:8); when with lovingkindness to us he draws us (Jer 31:3) we with lovingkindness to him must run after him, Isa 40:31.

Observe the difference between the petition and the promise: "Draw me, and then we will run." When Christ pours out his Spirit upon the church in general, which is his bride, all the members of it do thence receive enlivening quickening influences, and are made to run to him with the more cheerfulness, Isa 55:5. Or,

"Draw me" (says the believing soul) "and then I will not only follow thee myself as fast as I can, but will bring all mine along with me: We will run after thee, I and the virgins that love thee (So 1:3), I and all that I have any interest in or influence upon, I and my house (Jos 24:15), I and the transgressors whom I will teach thy ways," Ps 51:13. Those that put themselves forth, in compliance with divine grace, shall find that their zeal will provoke many, 2Co 9:2. Those that are lively will be active; when Philip was drawn to Christ he drew Nathanael; and they will be exemplary, and so will win those that would not be won by the word.

(3.) The immediate answer that was given to this prayer: The King has drawn me, has brought me into his chambers. It is not so much an answer fetched by faith from the world of Christ's grace as an answer fetched by experience from the workings of his grace. If we observe, as we ought, the returns of prayer, we may find that sometimes, while we are yet speaking, Christ hears, Isa 65:24. The bridegroom is a king; so much the more wonderful is his condescension in the invitations and entertainments that he gives us, and so much the greater reason have we to accept of them and to run after him. God is the King that has made the marriage-supper for his Son (Mt 22:2) and brings in even the poor and the maimed, and even the most shy and bashful are compelled to come in.

Those that are drawn to Christ are brought, not only into his courts, into his palaces (Ps 45:15), but into his presence-chamber, where his secret is with them (Joh 14:21), and where they are safe in his pavilion, Ps 27:5,Isa 26:20. Those that wait at wisdom's gates shall be made to come (so the word is) into her chambers; they shall be led into truth and comfort.

(4.) The wonderful complacency which the spouse takes in the honour which the king put upon her. Being brought into the chamber,

[1.] "We have what we would have. Our desires are crowned with unspeakable delights; all our griefs vanish, and we will be glad and rejoice. If a day in the courts, much more an hour in the

chambers, is better than a thousand, than ten thousand, elsewhere." Those that are, through grace, brought into covenant and communion with God, have reason to go on their way rejoicing, as the eunuch (Ac 8:39), and that joy will enlarge our hearts and be our strength, Ne 8:10.

[2.] All our joy shall centre in God: "We will rejoice, not in the ointments, or the chambers, but in thee. It is God only that is our exceeding joy, Ps 43:4. We have no joy but in Christ, and which we are indebted to him for." Gaudium in Domino--Joy in the Lord, was the ancient salutation, and Salus in Domino sempiterna--Eternal salvation in the Lord.

[3.] "We will retain the relish and savour of this kindness of thine and never forget it: We will remember thy loves more than wine; no only thy love itself (So 1:2), but the very remembrance of it shall be more grateful to us than the strongest cordial to the spirits, or the most palatable liquor to the taste. We will remember to give thanks for thy love, and it shall make more durable impressions upon us than any thing in this world."

(5.) The communion which a gracious soul has with all the saints in this communion with Christ. In the chambers to which we are brought we not only meet with him, but meet with one another (1Jo 1:7); for the upright love thee; the congregation, the generation, of the upright love thee. Whatever others do, all that are Israelites indeed, and faithful to God, will love Jesus Christ. Whatever differences of apprehension and affection there may be among Christians in other things, this they are all agreed in, Jesus Christ is precious to them. The upright here are the same with the virgins, So 1:3. All that remember his love more than wine will love him with a superlative love. Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but the love of the upright, love in sincerity, Eph 6:24.

4 Draw me, we will run after thee:
the King hath brought me into his chambers:
we will be glad and rejoice in thee,
we will remember thy love more than wine:
the upright love thee.

To the daughters of Jerusalem, So 1:5,6. The church in general, being in distress, speaks to particular churches to guard them against the danger they were in of being offended at the church's sufferings, 1Th 3:3. Or the believer speaks to those that were professors at large in the church, but not of it, or to weak Christians, babes in Christ, that labour under much ignorance, infirmity, and mistake, not perfectly instructed, and yet willing to be taught in the things of God.

She observed these by-standers look disdainfully upon her because of her blackness, in respect both of sins and sufferings, upon the account of which they though she had little reason to expect the kisses she wished for (So 1:2) or to expect that they should join with her in her joys, So 1:4. She therefore endeavors to remove this offence; she owns she is black. Guilt blackens; the heresies, scandals, and offences, that happen in the church, make her black; and the best saints have their failings. Sorrow blackens; that seems to be especially meant; the church is often in a low condition, mean, and poor, and in appearance despicable, her beauty sullied and her face foul with weeping; she is in mourning weeds, clothed with sackcloth, as the Nazarites that had become blacker than a coal, La 4:8. Now, to take off this offence,

1. She asserts her own comeliness notwithstanding (So 1:5): I am black, but comely, black as the tents of Kedar, in which the shepherds lived, which were very coarse, and never whitened, weather-beaten and discoloured by long use, but comely as the curtains of Solomon, the furniture of whose rooms, no doubt, was sumptuous and rich, in proportion to the stateliness of his houses. The church is sometimes black with persecution, but comely in patience, constancy, and consolation, and never the less amiable in the eyes of Christ, black in the account of men, but comely in God's esteem, black in some that are a scandal to her, but comely in others that are sincere and are an honour to her.

True believers are black in themselves, but comely in Christ, with the comeliness that he puts upon them, black outwardly, for the world knows them not, but all glorious within, Ps 45:13. St. Paul was weak, and yet strong, 2Co 12:10. And so the church is black and yet comely; a believer is a sinner and yet a saint; his own

righteousnesses are as filthy rags, but he is clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. The Chaldee Paraphrase applies it to the people of Israel's blackness when they made the golden calf and their comeliness when they repented of it.

2. She gives an account how she came to be so black. The blackness was not natural, but contracted, and was owing to the hard usage that had been given her: Look not upon me so scornfully because I am black. We must take heed with what eye we look upon the church, especially when she is in black. Thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother, the day of his affliction, Ob 1:12. Be not offended; for,

(1.) I am black by reason of my sufferings: The sun has looked upon me. She was fair and comely; whiteness was her proper colour; but she got this blackness by the burden and heat of the day, which she was forced to bear. She was sun-burnt, scorched with tribulation and persecution (Mt 13:6,21); and the greatest beauties, if exposed to the weather, are soonest tanned. Observe how she mitigates her troubles; she does not say, as Jacob (Ge 31:40), In the day the drought consumed me, but, The sun has looked upon me; for it becomes not God's suffering people to make the worst of their sufferings. But what was the matter?

[1.] She fell under the displeasure of those of her own house: My mother's children were angry with me. She was in perils by false brethren; her foes were those of her own house (Mt 10:36), brethren by nature as men, by profession as members of the same sacred corporation, the children of the church her mother, but not of God her Father; they were angry with her. The Samaritans, who claimed kindred to the Jews, were vexed at any thing that tended to the prosperity of Jerusalem, Ne 2:10. Note, It is no new thing for the people of God to fall under the anger of their own mother's children. It was thou, a man, my equal, Ps 55:12,13. This makes the trouble the more irksome and grievous; from such it is taken unkindly, and the anger of such is implacable. A brother offended is hard to be won.

[2.] They dealt very hardly with her: They made me the keeper of the vineyards, that is, First, "They seduced me to sin, drew me into false worships, to serve their gods, which was like dressing the vineyards, keeping the vine of Sodom; and they would not let me keep my own vineyard, serve my own God, and observe those pure worships which he gave me in charge, and which I do and ever will own for mine." These are grievances which good people complain most of in a time of persecution, that their consciences are forced, and that those who rule them with rigour say to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over, Isa 51:23. Or, Secondly, "They brought me into trouble, imposed that upon me which was toilsome, and burdensome, and very disgraceful." Keeping the vineyards was base servile work, and very laborious, Isa 61:5. Her mother's children made her the drudge of the family. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. The spouse of Christ has met with a great deal of hard usage.

(2.) "My sufferings are such as I have deserved; for my own vineyard have I not kept. How unrighteous soever my brethren are in persecuting me, God is righteous in permitting them to do so. I am justly made a slavish keeper of men's vineyards, because I have been a careless keeper of the vineyards God has entrusted me with." Slothful servants of God are justly made to serve their enemies, that they may know his service, and the service of the kings of the countries, 2Ch 12:8,De 28:47,48,Eze 20:23,24. "Think not the worse of the ways of God for my sufferings, for I smart for my own folly." Note, When God's people are oppressed and persecuted it becomes them to acknowledge their own sin to be the procuring cause of their troubles, especially their carelessness in keeping their vineyards, so that it has been like the field of the slothful.

5 I *am* black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the
tents of Kedar,
as the curtains of Solomon.
6 Look not upon me, because I *am* black, because
the sun hath looked upon me:

my mother's children were angry with me; they
made me the keeper of the vineyards; *but* mine own
vineyard have I not kept.
7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where
thou makest *thy flock* to rest at noon:
for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the
flocks of thy companions?

Here is, I The humble petition which the spouse presents to her beloved, the shepherdess to the shepherd, the church and every believer to Christ, for a more free and intimate communion with him. She turns from the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she had complained both of her sins and of her troubles, and looks up to heaven for relief and succour against both, So 1:7. Here observe,

1 The title she gives to Christ: O thou whom my soul loveth. Note, It is the undoubted character of all true believers that their souls love Jesus Christ, which intimates both the sincerity and the strength of their love; they love him with all their hearts; and those that do so may come to him boldly and may humbly plead it with him.

2 The opinion she has of him as the good shepherd of the sheep; she doubts not but he feeds his flock and makes them rest at noon. Jesus Christ graciously provides both repast and repose for his sheep; they are not starved, but well fed, not scattered upon the mountains, but fed together, fed in green pastures and in the hot time of the day led by the still waters and made to lie down under a cool refreshing shade. Is it with God's people a noon-time of outward troubles, inward conflicts? Christ has rest for them; he carries them in his arms, Isa 40:11.

3. Her request to him that she might be admitted into his society: Tell me where thou feedest. Those that would be told, that would be taught, what they are concerned to know and do, must apply to Jesus Christ, and beg of him to teach them, to tell them. "Tell me where to find thee, where I may have conversation with thee, where thou feedest and tendest thy flock, that there I may have some of my company." Observe, by the way, We should not, in love to our friends and their company, tempt them or urge them to

neglect their business, but desire such an enjoyment of them as will consist with it, and rather, if we can, to join with them in their business and help to forward it. "Tell me where thou feedest, and there I will sit with thee, walk with thee, feed my flocks with thine, and not hinder thee nor myself, but bring my work with me."

Note, Those whose souls love Jesus Christ earnestly desire to have communion with him, by his word in which he speaks to us and by prayer in which we speak to him, and to share in the privileges of his flock; and we may learn from the care he takes of his church, to provide convenient food and rest for it, how to take care of our own souls, which are our charge.

4. The plea she uses for the enforcing of this request: "For why should I be as one that turns aside by (or after) the flocks of thy companions, that pretend to be so, but are really thy competitors, and rivals with thee." Note, Turning aside from Christ after other lovers is that which gracious souls dread, and deprecate, more than any thing else. "Thou wouldst not have me to turn aside, no, nor to be as one that turns aside; tell me then, O tell me, where I may be near thee, and I will never leave thee."

(1.) "Why should I lie under suspicion, and look as if I belonged to some other and not to thee? Why should I be thought by the flocks of our companions to be a deserter from thee, and a retainer to some other shepherd?" Good Christians will be afraid of giving any occasion to those about them to question their faith in Christ and their love to him; they would not do any thing that looks like unconcernedness about their souls; or uncharitableness towards their brethren, or that savours of indifference and disaffection to holy ordinances; and we should pray to God to direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty, that we may not so much as seem to come short, Heb 4:1.

(2.) "Why should I lie in temptation to turn aside, as I do while I am absent from thee?" We should be earnest with God for a settled peace in communion with God through Christ, that we may not be as waifs and strays, ready to be picked up by him that next passes by.

8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

I. The gracious answer which the bridegroom gives to this request, So 1:8. See how ready God is to answer prayer, especially prayers for instruction; even while she is yet speaking, he hears. Observe,

1. How affectionately he speaks to her: O thou fairest among women! Note, Believing souls are fair, in the eyes of the Lord Jesus, above any other. Christ sees a beauty in holiness, whether we do or no. The spouse has called herself black, but Christ calls her fair. Those that are low in their own eyes are so much the more amiable in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Blushing at their own deformity (says Mr. Durham) is a chief part of their beauty.

2. How mildly he checks her for her ignorance, in these words, If thou know not, intimating that she might have known it if it had not been her own fault. What! dost thou not know where to find me and my flock? Compare Christ's answer to a like address of Philip's (Joh 14:9), Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? But,

3. With what tenderness he acquaints her where she might find him. If men say, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there, believe them not, go not after them, Mt 24:23,26.

But, (1.) Walk in the way of good men (Pr 2:20), follow the track, ask for the good old way, observe the footsteps of the flock, and go forth by them. It will not serve to sit still and cry, "Lord, show me the way," but we must bestir ourselves to enquire out the way; and we may find it by looking which way the footsteps of the flock lead, what has been the practice of godly people all along; let that practice be ours, Heb 6:12,1Co 11:1.

(2.) Sit under the direction of good ministers: "Feed thyself and thy kids besides the tents of the under-shepherds. Bring thy charge with thee" (it is probable that the custom was to commit the lambs and kids to the custody of the women, the shepherdesses); "they shall all be welcome; the shepherds will be no hindrance to thee,

as they were to Reuel's daughters (Ex 2:17), but helpers rather, and therefore abide by their tents." Note, Those that would have acquaintance and communion with Christ must closely and conscientiously adhere to holy ordinances, must join themselves to his people and attend his ministers. Those that have the charge of families must bring them with them to religious assemblies; let their kids, their children, their servants, have the benefit of the shepherds' tents.

II. The high encomiums which the bridegroom gives of his spouse. To be given in marriage, in the Hebrew dialect, is to be praised (Ps 78:63, margin), so this spouse is here; her husband praises this virtuous woman (Pr 31:28); he praises her, as is usual in poems, by similitudes.

1. He calls her his love (So 1:9); it is an endearing compellation often used in this book: "My friend, my companion, my familiar."

2. He compares her to a set of strong and stately horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Egypt was famous for the best horses. Solomon had his thence; and Pharaoh, no doubt, had the choicest the country afforded for his own chariots. The church had complained of her own weakness, and the danger she was in of being made a prey of by her enemies: "Fear not," says Christ; "I have made thee like a company of horses; I have put strength into thee as I have done into the horse (Job 39:19), so that thou shalt with a gracious boldness mock at fear, and not be affrighted, like the lion, Pr 28:1.

The Lord has made thee as his goodly horse in the day of battle, Zec 10:3. I have compared thee to my company of horses which triumphed over Pharaoh's chariots, the holy angels, horses of fire." Hab 3:15, Thou didst walk through the sea with thy horses; and see Isa 63:13. We are weak in ourselves, but if Christ make us as horses, strong and bold, we need not fear what all the powers of darkness can do against us.

3. He admires the beauty and ornaments of her countenance (So 1:10): Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, the attire of the head, curls of hair, or favourites (so some), or knots of ribbons; thy

neck also with chains, such as persons of the first rank wear, chains of gold. The ordinances of Christ are the ornaments of the church. The graces, gifts, and comforts of the Spirit, are the adorning of every believing soul, and beautify it; these render it, in the sight of God, of great price.

The ornaments of the saints are many, but all orderly disposed in rows and chains, in which there is a mutual connexion with and dependence upon each other. The beauty is not from any thing in themselves, from the neck or from the cheeks, but from ornaments with which they are set off. It was comeliness which I put upon thee, said the Lord God; for we were born not only naked, but polluted, Eze 16:14.

III. His gracious purpose to add to her ornaments; for where God has given true grace he will give more grace; to him that has shall be given. Is the church courageous in her resistance of sin, as the horses in Pharaoh's chariots? Is she comely in the exercise of grace, as with rows of jewels and chains of gold? She shall be yet further beautified (So 1:11): We will make thee borders of gold, inlaid, or enamelled, with studs of silver. Whatever is wanting shall be made up, till the church and every true believer come to be perfect in beauty; see Eze 16:14. This is here undertaken to be done by the concurring power of the three persons in the Godhead: We will do it; like that (Ge 1:26), "Let us make man; so let us new-make him, and perfect his beauty." The same that is the author will be the finisher of the good work; and it cannot miscarry.

The Bride and the Bridegroom

9 I have compared thee, O my love,
to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.
10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows *of jewels*,
thy neck with chains *of gold*.
11 We will make thee borders of gold with
studs of silver.
12 While the King *sitteth* at his table,
my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

Believers take a great complacency in Christ, and in communion with him. To you that believe he is precious, above any thing in this world, 1Pe 2:7. Observe,

1 The humble reverence believers have for Christ as their Sovereign, So 1:12. He is a King in respect both of dignity and dominion; he wears the crown of honour, he bears the sceptre of power, both which are the unspeakable satisfaction of all his people. This King has his royal table spread in the gospel, in which is made for all nations a feast of fat things, Isa 25:6. Wisdom has furnished her table, Pr 9:1. He sits at this table to see his guests (Mt 22:11), to see that nothing be wanting that is fit for them; he sups with them and they with him (Re 3:20); he has fellowship with them and rejoices in them; he sits at his table to bid them welcome, and to carve for them, as Christ broke the five loaves and gave to his disciples, that they might distribute to the multitude. He sits there to receive petitions, as Ahasuerus admitted Esther's petition at the banquet of wine.

He has promised to be present with his people in his ordinances always. Then believers do him all the honour they can, and study how to express their esteem of him and gratitude to him, as Mary did when she anointed his head with the ointment of spikenard that was very costly, one pound of it worth three hundred pence, and so fragrant that the house was filled with the pleasing odour of it (Joh 12:3), which story seems as if it were designed to refer to this passage, for Christ was then sitting at table. When good Christians, in any religious duty, especially in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, where the King is pleased, as it were, to sit with us at his own table, have their graces exercised, their hearts broken by repentance, healed by faith, and inflamed with holy love and desires toward Christ, with joyful expectations of the glory to be revealed, then the spikenard sends forth the smell thereof. Christ is pleased to reckon himself honoured by it, and to accept of it as an instance of respect to him, as it was in the wise men of the east, who paid their homage to the new-born King of the Jews by presenting to him frankincense and myrrh.

The graces of God's Spirit in the hearts of believers are exceedingly precious in themselves and pleasing to Christ, and his presence in

ordinances draws them out into act and exercise. If he withdraw, graces wither and languish, as plants in the absence of the sun; if he approach, the face of the soul is renewed, as of the earth in the spring; and then it is time to bestir ourselves, that we may not lose the gleam, not lose the gale; for nothing is done acceptably but what grace does, Heb 12:28.

2 The strong affection they have for Christ as their beloved, their well-beloved, So 1:13. Christ is not only beloved by all believing souls, but is their well-beloved, their best-beloved, their only beloved; he has that place in their hearts which no rival can be admitted to, the innermost and uppermost place. Observe,

(1.) How Christ is accounted of by all believers: He is a bundle of myrrh and a cluster of camphire, something, we may be sure, nay, every thing, that is pleasant and delightful. The doctrine of his gospel, and the comforts of his Spirit, are very refreshing to them, and they rest in his love; none of all the delights of sense are comparable to the spiritual pleasure they have in meditating on Christ and enjoying him. There is a complicated sweetness in Christ and an abundance of it; there is a bundle of myrrh and a cluster of camphire.

We are not straitened in him whom there is all fulness. The word translated camphire is copher, the same word that signifies atonement or propitiation. Christ is a cluster of merit and righteousness to all believers; therefore he is dear to them because he is the propitiation for their sins. Observe what stress the spouse lays upon the application: He is unto me, and again unto me, all that is sweet; whatever he is to others, he is so to me. He loved me, and gave himself for me. He is my Lord, and my God.

(2.) How he is accepted: He shall lie all night between my breasts, near my heart. Christ lays the beloved disciples in his bosom; why then should not they lay their beloved Saviour in their bosoms? Why should not they embrace him with both arms, and hold him fast, with a resolution never to let him go? Christ must dwell in the heart (Eph 3:17), and, in order to that, the adulteries must be put from between the breasts (Ho 2:2), no pretender must have his place in the soul. He shall be as a bundle of myrrh, or perfume bag,

between my breasts, always sweet to me; or his effigies in miniature, his love-tokens, shall be hung between my breasts, according to the custom of those that are dear to each other. He shall not only be laid their for a while, but shall lie there, shall abide there.

13 A bundle of myrrh *is* my well-beloved unto me;
he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.
14 My beloved *is* unto me *as* a cluster of camphire in the
vineyards of Engedi.
15 Behold, thou *art* fair, my love;
behold, thou *art* fair;
thou *hast* doves' eyes.

I. Jesus Christ has a great complacency in his church and in every true believer; they are amiable in his eyes (So 1:15): Behold, thou art fair, my love; and again, Behold, thou art fair. He says this, not to make her proud (humility is one principal ingredient in spiritual beauty), but,

1. To show that there is a real beauty in holiness, that all who are sanctified are thereby beautified; they are truly fair.

2. That he takes great delight in that good work which his grace has wrought on the souls of believers; so that though they have their infirmities, whatever they think of themselves, and the world thinks of them, he thinks them fair. He calls them friends. The hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, is in the sight of God of great price, 1Pe 3:4.

3. To comfort weak believers, who are discouraged by their own blackness; let them be told again and again that they are fair.

4. To engage all who are sanctified to be very thankful for that grace which has made them fair, who by nature were deformed, and changed the Ethiopian's skin. One instance of the beauty of the spouse is here mentioned, that she has doves' eyes, as So 4:1. Those are fair, in Christ's account, who have, not the piercing eye of the eagle, but the pure and chaste eye of the dove, not like the hawk, who, when he soars upwards, still has his eye upon the prey on earth, but a humble modest eye, such an eye as discovers a

simplicity and godly sincerity and a dove-like innocency, eyes enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, that blessed Dove, weeping eyes. I did mourn as a dove, Eze 7:16.

II. The church expresses her value for Christ, and returns esteem (So 1:16): Behold, thou art fair. See how Christ and believers praise one another. Israel saith of God, Who is like thee? Ex 15:11. And God saith of Israel, Who is like thee? De 33:29. Lord, saith the church, "Dost thou call me fair? No; if we speak of strength, thou art strong (Job 9:19), so, if of beauty, thou art fair. I am fair no otherwise than as I have thy image stamped upon me. Thou art the great Original; I am but a faint and imperfect copy, I am but thy umbra--the shadow of thee, Joh 1:16,3:34. Thou art fair in thyself and (which is more) pleasant to all that are thine.

Many are fair enough to look at, and yet the sourness of their temper renders them unpleasant; but thou art fair, yea, pleasant." Christ is pleasant, as he is ours, in covenant with us, in relation to us. "Thou art pleasant now, when the King sits at his table." Christ is always precious to believers, but in a special manner pleasant when they are admitted into communion with him, when they hear his voice, and see his face, and taste his love. It is good to be here. Having expressed her esteem of her husband's person, she next, like a loving spouse, that is transported with joy for having disposed of herself so well, applauds the accommodations he had for her entertainment, his bed, his house, his rafters or galleries (So 1:16), which may be fitly applied to those holy ordinances in which believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ, receive the tokens of his love and return their pious and devout affections to him, increase their acquaintance with him and improve their advantages by him.

Now, 1. These she calls ours, Christ and believers having a joint-interest in them. As husband and wife are heirs together (1Pe 3:7), so believers are joint-heirs with Christ, Ro 8:17. They are his institutions and their privileges; in them Christ and believers meet. She does not call them mine, for a believer will own nothing as his but what Christ shall have an interest in, nor thine, for Christ has said, All that I have is thine, Lu 15:31. All is ours if we are Christ's. Those that can by faith lay claim to Christ may lay claim to all that is his.

2. These are the best of the kind. Does the colour of the bed, and the furniture belonging to it, help to set it off? Our bed is green, a colour which, in a pastoral, is preferred before any other, because it is the colour of the fields and groves where the shepherd's business and delight are. It is a refreshing colour, good for the eyes; and it denotes fruitfulness. I am like a green olive-tree, Ps 52:8. We are married to Christ, that we should bring forth unto God, Ro 7:4. The beams of our house are cedar (So 1:17), which probably refers to the temple Solomon had lately built for communion between God and Israel, which was of cedar, a strong sort of wood, sweet, durable, and which will never rot, typifying the firmness and continuance of the church, the gospel-temple. The galleries for walking are of fir, or cypress, some sort of wood that was pleasing both to the sight and to the smell, intimating the delight which the saints take in walking with Christ and conversing with him. Every thing in the covenant of grace (on which foot all their treaties are carried on) is very firm, very fine, and very fragrant.

16 Behold, thou *art* fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:
also our bed *is* green.
17 The beams of our house *are* cedar,
and our rafters of fir.

Song of Solomon-2

1 I *am* the rose of Sharon,
and the lily of the valleys.

See here, I. What Christ is pleased to compare himself to; and he condescends very much in the comparison. He that is the Son of the Highest, the bright and morning star, calls and owns himself the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, to express his presence with his people in this world, the easiness of their access to him, and the beauty and sweetness which they find in him, and to teach them to adorn themselves with him, as shepherds and shepherdesses, when they appeared gay, were decked with roses and lilies, garlands and chaplets of flowers. The rose, for beauty and fragrance, is the chief of flowers, and our Saviour prefers the clothing of the lily before that of Solomon in all his glory.

Christ is the rose of Sharon, where probably the best roses grew and in most plenty, the rose of the field (so some), denoting that the gospel salvation is a common salvation; it lies open to all; whoever will may come and gather the rose-buds of privileges and comforts that grow in the covenant of grace. He is not a rose locked up in a garden, but all may come and receive benefit by him and comfort in him. He is a lily for whiteness, a lily of the valleys for sweetness, for those which we call so yield a strong perfume. He is a lily of the valleys, or low places, in his humiliation, exposed to injury. Humble souls see most beauty in him. Whatever he is to others, to those that are in the valleys he is a lily. He is the rose, the lily; there is none besides. Whatever excellence is in Christ, it is in him singularly and in the highest degree.

II. What he is pleased to compare his church to, So 2:2.

1. She is as a lily; he himself is the lily (So 2:1), she is as the lily. The beauty of believers consists in their conformity and resemblance to Jesus Christ. They are his love, and so they are as lilies, for those are made like Christ in whose hearts his love is shed abroad.

2. As a lily among thorns, as a lily compared with thorns. The church of Christ as far excels all other societies as a bed of roses excels a bush of thorns. As a lily compassed with thorns. The wicked, the daughters of this world, such as have no love to Christ, are as thorns, worthless and useless, good for nothing but to stop a gap; nay, they are noxious and hurtful; they came in with sin and are a fruit of the curse; they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their end is to be burned.

God's people are as lilies among them, scratched and torn, shaded and obscured, by them; they are dear to Christ, and yet exposed to hardships and troubles in the world; they must expect it, for they are planted among thorns (Eze 2:6), but they are nevertheless dear to him; he does not overlook nor undervalue any of his lilies for their being among thorns, When they are among thorns they must still be as lilies, must maintain their innocency and purity, and, though they are among thorns, must not be turned into thorns, must not render

railing for railing, and, if they thus preserve their character, they shall be still owned as conformable to Christ. Grace in the soul is a lily among thorns; corruptions are thorns in the flesh (2Co 12:7), are as Canaanites to God's Israel (Jos 23:13); but the lily that is now among thorns shall shortly be transplanted out of this wilderness into that paradise where there is no pricking brier nor grieving thorn, Eze 28:24.

2 As the lily among thorns,
so *is* my love among the daughters.
3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so *is*
my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and
his fruit *was* sweet to my taste.

Here, I The spouse commends her beloved and prefers him before all others: As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, which perhaps does not grow so high, nor spread so wide, as some other trees, yet is useful and serviceable to man, yielding pleasant and profitable fruit, while the other trees are of little use, no, not the cedars themselves, till they are cut down, so is my beloved among the sons, so far does he excel them all,--all the sons of God, the angels (that honour was put upon him which was never designed for them, Heb 1:4), --all the sons of men; he is fairer than them all, fairer than the choicest of them, Ps 45:2. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the pre-eminence above them all. The world is a barren tree to a soul; Christ is a fruitful one.

II. She remembers the abundant comfort she has had in communion with him: She sat down by him with great delight, as shepherds sometimes repose themselves, sometimes converse with one another, under a tree. A double advantage she found in sitting down so near the Lord Jesus:--

1. A refreshing shade: I sat down under his shadow, to be sheltered by him from the scorching heat of the sun, to be cooled, and so to take some rest. Christ is to believers as the shadow of a great tree, nay, of a great rock in a weary land, Isa 32:2,Isa 25:4. When a poor soul is parched with convictions of sin and the terrors of the law, as David (Ps 32:4), when fatigued with the troubles of this world, as Elijah when he sat down under a juniper tree (1Ki 19:4), they find

that in Christ, in his name, his graces, his comforts, and his undertaking for poor sinners, which revives them and keeps them from fainting; those that are weary and heavily laden may find rest in Christ. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it (here will I dwell, for I have desired it); and we shall find it not like Jonah's gourd, that soon withered, and left him in a heat, both inward and outward, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter, but for the healing of the nations. We must sit down under this shadow with delight, must put an entire confidence in the protection of it (as Jdg 9:15), and take an entire complacency in the refreshment of it. But that is not all:

2. Here is pleasing nourishing food. This tree drops its fruits to those that sit down under its shadow, and they are welcome to them, and will find them sweet unto their taste, whatever they are to others. Believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious (1Pe 2:3); his fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood and communicated by his Spirit. Promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too. I delight in the law of God after the inward man. Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience is sweet, assurances of God's love, joys of the Holy Ghost, the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnests and foretastes of it are sweet, all sweet to those that have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths be put out of taste for the pleasure of sin, divine consolations will be sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and
his banner over me *was* love.
5 Stay me with flagons,
comfort me with apples:
for I *am* sick of love.

I. She owns herself obliged to Jesus Christ for all the benefit and comfort she had in communion with him (So 2:4): "I sat down under the apple-tree, glad to be there, but he admitted me, nay, he pressed me, to a more intimate communion with him: Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without? He brought me to the house of wine, the place where he entertains his special friends, from lower to higher measures and degrees of comfort, from the fruit of the apple tree to the more generous fruit of the vine." To him that values the divine joys he has more shall be given. One of the rabbin by the banqueting-house understands the tabernacle of the

congregation, where the interpretation of the law was given; surely we may apply it to Christian assemblies, where the gospel is preached and gospel-ordinances are administered, particularly the Lord's supper, that banquet of wine, especially to the inside of those ordinances, communion with God in them.

Observe, 1. How she was introduced: "He brought me, wrought in me an inclination to draw nigh to God, helped me over my discouragements, took me by the hand, guided and led me, and gave me an access with boldness to God as a Father," Eph 2:18. We should never have come into the banqueting-house, never have been acquainted with spiritual pleasures, if Christ had not brought us, by opening for us a new and living way and opening in us a new and living fountain.

2. How she was entertained: His banner over me was love; he brought me in with a banner displayed over my head, not as one he triumphed over, but as one he triumphed in, and whom he always caused to triumph with him and in him, 2Co 2:14. The gospel is compared to a banner or ensign (Isa 11:12), and that which is represented in the banner, written in it in letters of gold, letters of blood, is love, love; and this is the entertainment in the banqueting-house. Christ is the captain of our salvation, and he enlists all his soldiers under the banner of love; in that they centre; to that they must continually have an eye, and be animated by it. The love of Christ must constrain them to fight manfully. When a city was taken the conqueror set up his standard in it. "He has conquered me with his love, overcome me with kindness, and that is the banner over me." This she speaks of as what she had formerly had experience of, and she remembers it with delight. Eaten bread must not be forgotten, but remembered with thankfulness to that God who has fed us with manna in this wilderness.

II. She professes her strong affection and most passionate love to Jesus Christ (So 2:5): I am sick of love, overcome, overpowered, by it. David explains this when he says (Ps 119:20), My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto thy judgments, and (Ps 119:81), My soul faints for thy salvation, languishing with care to make it sure and fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent perhaps from her beloved, waiting for his return, and cannot bear the grief

of distance and delay. Oh how much better it is with the soul when it is sick of love to Christ than when it is surfeited with the love of this world! She cries out for cordials: "Oh stay me with flagons, or ointments, or flowers, any thing that is reviving; comfort me with apples, with the fruits of that apple-tree, Christ (So 2:3), with the merit and meditation of Christ and the sense of his love to my soul." Note, Those that are sick of love to Christ shall not want spiritual supports, while they are yet waiting for spiritual comforts.

III. She experiences the power and tenderness of divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, So 2:6. Though he seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present help, 1. To sustain the love-sick soul, and to keep it from fainting away: "His left hand is under my head, to bear it up, nay, as a pillow to lay it easy." David experienced God's hand upholding him then when his soul was following hard after God (Ps 63:8), and Job in a state of desertion yet found that God put strength into him, Job 23:6. All his saints are in his hand, which tenderly holds their aching heads. 2. To encourage the love-sick soul to continue waiting till he returns: "For, in the mean time, his right hand embraces me, and thereby gives me an unquestionable assurance of his love." Believers owe all their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand and embracing right hand of the Lord Jesus.

IV. Finding her beloved thus nigh unto her she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted (So 2:7): I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the mother of us all, charges all her daughters, the church charges all her members, the believing soul charges all its powers and faculties, the spouse charges herself and all about her, not to stir up, or awake, her love until he please, now that he is asleep in her arms, as she was borne up in his, So 2:6. She gives them this charge by the roes and the hinds of the field, that is, by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, as the loving hind and the pleasant roe. "My love is to me dearer than those can be to you, and will be disturbed, like them, with a very little noise."

Note, 1. Those that experience the sweetness of communion with Christ, and the sensible manifestations of his love, cannot but desire

the continuance of these blessed views, these blessed visits. Pester would make tabernacles upon the holy mount, Mt 17:4.

2. Yet Christ will, when he pleases, withdraw those extraordinary communications of himself, for he is a free-agent, and the Spirit, as the wind, blows where and when it listeth, and in his pleasure it becomes us to acquiesce.

But, 3. Our care must be that we do nothing to provoke him to withdraw and to hide his face, that we carefully watch over our own hearts and suppress every thought that may grieve his good Spirit. Let those that have comfort be afraid of sinning it away.

6 His left hand *is* under my head,
and his right hand doth embrace me.
7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the
roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir
not up, nor awake *my* love,
till he please.
8 The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he cometh
leaping upon the mountains,
skipping upon the hills.

The church is here pleasing herself exceedingly with the thoughts of her further communion with Christ after she has recovered from her fainting fit.

I. She rejoices in his approach, So 2:8.

1. She hears him speak: "It is the voice of my beloved, calling me to tell me he is coming." Like one of his own sheep, she knows his voice before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the voice of a stranger (Joh 10:4,5), and, like a faithful friend of the bridegroom, she rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, Joh 3:29. With what an air of triumph and exultation does she cry out, "It is the voice of my beloved, it can be the voice of no other, for none besides can speak to the heart and make that burn."

2. She sees him come, sees the goings of our God, our King, Ps 48:24. Behold, he comes. This may very well be applied to the prospect with the Old-Testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh. Abraham saw his day at a distance, and was glad. The nearer the time came the clearer discoveries were made of it; and those that waited for the consolation of Israel with an eye of faith saw him come, and triumphed in the sight: Behold, he comes; for they had heard him say (Ps 40:7), Lo, I come, to which their faith here affixes its seal: Behold, he comes as he has promised.

(1.) He comes cheerfully and with great alacrity; he comes leaping and skipping like a roe and like a young hart (So 2:9), as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it and his delights with the sons of men. When he came to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he straitened till it was accomplished! Lu 12:50.

(2.) He comes slighting and surmounting all the difficulties that lay in his way; he comes leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills (so some read it), making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through; the curse of the law, the death of the cross, must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with, but, before the resolutions of his love, these great mountains become plains. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverance of God's church, Christ will break through it, will get over it.

(3.) He comes speedily, like a roe or a young hart; they thought the time long (every day a year), but really he hastened; as now, so then, surely he comes quickly; he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. When he comes for the deliverance of his people he flies upon a cloud, and never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. We may apply it to particular believers, who find that even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return with everlasting loving-kindness.

9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart:

behold, he standeth behind our wall, he
looketh forth at the windows, showing
himself through the lattice.
10 My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

I. She pleases herself with the glimpses she has of him, and the glances she has of his favour: "He stands behind our wall; I know he is there, for sometimes he looks forth at the window, or looks in at it, and displays himself through the lattice." Such was the state of the Old-Testament church while it was in expectation of the coming of the Messiah. The ceremonial law is called a wall of partition (Eph 2:14), a veil (2Co 3:13); but Christ stood behind that wall. They had him near them; they had him with them, though they could not see him clearly. He that was the substance was not far off from the shadows, Col 2:17. The saw him looking through the windows of the ceremonial institutions and smiling through those lattices; in their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnests of his grace, both to engage and to encourage their longings for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ's second coming. We now see him through a glass darkly (the body is a wall between us and him, through the windows of which we now and then get a sight of him), but not face to face, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is behind the wall of external signs, through those lattices he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly see him as he is.

Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud; Christ is out of sight and yet not far off. See Job 34:14, and compare Job 23:8-10. She calls the wall that interposed between her and her beloved our wall, because it is sin, and nothing else, that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting (Isa 59:1); behind that he stands, as waiting to be gracious, and ready to be reconciled, upon our repentance. Then he looks in at the window, observes the frame of our hearts and the working of our souls; he looks forth at the window, and shows himself in giving them some comfort, that they may continue hoping for his return.

II. She repeats the gracious invitation he had given her to come a walking with him, So 2:10-13. She remembers what her beloved

said to her, for it had made a very pleasing and powerful impression upon her, and the word that quickens us we shall never forget. She relates it for the encouragement of others, telling them what he had said to her soul and done for her soul, Ps 66:16.

1. He called her his love and his fair one. Whatever she is to others, to him she is acceptable, and in his eyes she is amiable. Those that take Christ for their beloved, he will own as his; never was any love lost that was bestowed upon Christ. Christ, by expressing his love to believers, invites and encourages them to follow him.

2. He called her to rise and come away, So 2:10, and again So 2:13. The repetition denotes backwardness in her (we have need to be often called to come away with Jesus Christ; precept must be upon precept and line upon line), but it denotes earnestness in him; so much is his heart set upon the welfare of precious souls that he importunes them most pressingly to that which is for their own good.

3. He gave for a reason the return of the spring, and the pleasantness of the weather.

(1.) The season is elegantly described in a great variety of expressions.

[1.] The winter is past, the dark, cold, and barren winter. Long winters and hard ones pass away at last; they do no endure always. And the spring would not be so pleasant as it is if it did not succeed the winter, which is a foil to its beauty, Ec 7:14. Neither the face of the heavens nor that of the earth is always the same, but subject to continual vicissitudes, diurnal and annual. The winter is past, but has not passed away for ever; it will come again, and we must provide for it in summer, Pr 6:6,8. We must weep in winter, and rejoice in summer, as though we wept and rejoiced not, for both are passing.

[2.] The rain is over and gone, the winter-rain, the cold stormy rain; it is over now, and the dew is as the dew of herbs. Even the rain that drowned the world was over and gone at last (Ge 8:1-3), and God

promised to drown the world no more, which was a type and figure of the covenant of grace, Isa 54:9.

[3.] The flowers appear on the earth. All winter they are dead and buried in their roots, and there is no sign of them; but in the spring they revive, and show themselves in a wonderful variety and verdure, and, like the dew that produces them, tarry not for man, Mic 5:7. They appear, but they will soon disappear again, and man in herein like the flower of the field, Job 14:2.

[4.] The time of singing of birds has come. The little birds, which all the winter lie hid in their retirements and scarcely live, when the spring returns forget all the calamities of the winter, and to the best of their capacity chant forth the praises of their Creator. Doubtless he who understands the birds that cry for want (Ps 147:9) takes notice of those that sing for joy Ps 104:12. The singing of the birds may shame our silence in God's praises, who are better fed (Mt 6:26), and better taught (Job 35:11), and are of more value than many sparrows. They live without inordinate care (Mt 6:26) and therefore they sing, while we murmur.

[5.] The voice of the turtle is heard in our land, which is one of the season-birds mentioned Jer 8:7, that observe the time of their coming and the time of their singing, and so shame us who know not the judgment of the Lord, understand not the times, nor do that which is beautiful in its season, do not sing in singing time.

[6.] The fig-tree puts forth her green figs, by which we know that summer is nigh (Mt 24:32), when the green figs will be ripe figs and fit for use; and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. The earth produces not only flowers (So 2:12), but fruits; and the smell of the fruits, which are profitable, is to be preferred far before that of the flowers, which are only for show and pleasure. Serpents, they say, are driven away by the smell of the vines; and who is the old serpent, and who the true vine, we know very well.

(2.) Now this description of the returning spring, as a reason for coming away with Christ, is applicable

[1.] To the introducing of the gospel in the room of the Old-Testament dispensation, during which it had been winter time with the church. Christ's gospel warms that which was cold, makes that fruitful which before was dead and barren; when it comes to any place it puts a beauty and glory upon that place (2Co 3:7,8) and furnishes occasion for joy. Spring-time is pleasant time, and so is gospel-time. Aspice venturo lætentur ut omnia seclo--Behold what joy the dawning age inspires! said Virgil, from the Sibyls, perhaps with more reference to the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom at that time than he himself thought of. See Ps 96:11. Arise then, and improve this spring-time. Come away from the world and the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ, 1Co 1:9.

[2.] To the delivering of the church from the power of persecuting enemies, and the restoring of liberty and peace to it, after a severe winter of suffering and restraint. When the storms of trouble are over and gone, when the voice of the turtle, the joyful sound of the gospel of Christ, is again heard, and ordinances are enjoyed with freedom, then arise and come away to improve the happy juncture. Walk in the light of the Lord; sing in the ways of the Lord. When the churches had rest, then were they edified, Ac 9:31.

[3.] To the conversion of sinners from a state of nature to a state of grace. That blessed change is like the return of the spring, a universal change and a very comfortable one; it is a new creation; it is being born again. The soul that was hard, and cold, and frozen, and unprofitable, like the earth in winter, becomes fruitful, like the earth in spring, and by degrees, like it, brings its fruits to perfection. This blessed change is owing purely to the approaches and influences of the sun of righteousness, who calls to us from heaven to arise and come away; come, gather in summer.

[4.] To the consolations of the saints after a state of inward dejection and despondency. A child of God, under doubts and fears, is like the earth in winter, its nights long, its days dark, good affections chilled, nothing done, nothing got, the hand sealed up. But comfort will return; the birds shall sing again, and the flowers appear. Arise therefore, poor drooping soul, and come away with thy beloved. Arise, and shake thyself from the dust, Isa 52:2. Arise, shine, for thy light has come (Isa 60:1); walk in that light, Isa 2:5.

[5.] To the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. The bones that lay in the grave, as the roots of the plants in the ground during the winter, shall then flourish as a herb, Isa 66:14,Isa 26:19. That will be an eternal farewell to winter and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

11 For, lo, the winter is past, the
rain is over *and* gone;
12 the flowers appear on the earth;
the time of the singing *of birds* is come,
and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
13 the fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
and the vines *with* the tender grape give a *good* smell. Arise,
my love, my fair one, and come away.
14 O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in
the secret *places* of the stairs,
let me see thy countenance, let
me hear thy voice;
for sweet *is* thy voice,
and thy countenance *is* comely.

Here is, I The encouraging invitation which Christ gives to the church, and every believing soul, to come into communion with him, So 2:14.

1. His love is now his dove; David had called the church God's turtle-dove (Ps 84:19), and so she is here called; a dove for beauty, her wings covered with silver (Ps 18:13), for innocence and inoffensiveness; a gracious spirit is a dove-like spirit, harmless, loving quietness and cleanliness, and faithful to Christ, as the turtle to her mate. The Spirit descended like a dove on Christ, and so he does on all Christians, making them of a meek and quiet spirit. She is Christ's dove, for he owns her and delights in her; she can find no rest but in him and his ark, and therefore to him, as her Noah, she returns.

2. This dove is in the clefts of the rock and in the secret places of the stairs. This speaks either,

(1.) Her praise. Christ is the rock, to whom she flies for shelter and in whom alone she can think herself safe and find herself easy, as a dove in the hole of a rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, Jer 48:28. Moses was hid in a cleft of the rock, that he might behold something of God's glory, which otherwise he could not have borne the brightness of. She retires into the secret places of the stairs, where she may be alone, undisturbed, and may the better commune with her own heart. Good Christians will find time to be private. Christ often withdrew to a mountain himself alone, to pray. Or,

(2.) her blame. She crept into the clefts of the rock, and the secret places, for fear and shame, any where to hide her head, being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her beloved. Being conscious to herself of her own unfitness and unworthiness to come into his presence, and speak to him, she drew back, and was like a silly dove without heart, Ho 7:11.

3. Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements: Come, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice. She was mourning like a dove (Isa 38:14), bemoaning herself like the doves of the valleys, where they are near the clefts of the impending rocks, mourning for her iniquities (Eze 7:16) and refusing to be comforted. But Christ calls her to lift up her face without spot, being purged from an evil conscience (Job 11:15,22:26), to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great high priest there (Heb 4:16), to tell what her petition is and what her request: Let me hear thy voice, hear what thou hast to say; what would you that I should do unto you? Speak freely, speak up, and fear not a slight or repulse.

4. For her encouragement, he tells her the good thoughts he had of her, whatever she thought of herself: Sweet is thy voice; thy praying voice, though thou canst but chatter like a crane or a swallow (Isa 38:14); it is music in God's ears. He has assured us that the prayer of the upright is his delight; he smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, and the spiritual sacrifices are no less acceptable, 1Pe 2:5. This does not so much commend our services as God's gracious condescension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the much incense which is offered with the prayers of saints, Re 8:3. "That countenance of thine, which thou art ashamed of, is comely, though now mournful, much more will it be so when it becomes

cheerful." Then the voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God when the countenance, the conversation in which we show ourselves before men, is holy, and so comely, and agreeable to our profession. Those that are sanctified have the best comeliness.

15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines:
for our vines *have* tender grapes.

I The charge which Christ gives to his servants to oppose and suppress that which is a terror to his church and drives her, like a poor frightened dove, into the clefts of the rock, and which is an obstruction and prejudice to the interests of his kingdom in this world and in the heart (So 2:15): Take us the foxes (take them for us, for it is good service both to Christ and the church), the little foxes, that creep in insensibly; for, though they are little, they do great mischief, they spoil the vines, which they must by no means be suffered to do at any time, especially now when our vines have tender grapes that must be preserved, or the vintage will fail. Believers are as vines, weak but useful plants; their fruits are as tender crops at first, which must have time to come to maturity. This charge to take the foxes is,

1. A charge to particular believers to mortify their own corruptions, their sinful appetites and passions, which are as foxes, little foxes, that destroy their graces and comforts, quash good motions, crush good beginnings, and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the little foxes, the first risings of sin, the little ones of Babylon (Ps 137:9), those sins that seem little, for they often prove very dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good we must put away.

2. A charge to all in their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of all such opinions and practices as tend to corrupt men's judgments, debauch their consciences, perplex their minds, and discourage their inclinations to virtue and piety. Persecutors are foxes (Lu 13:32); false prophets are foxes, Eze 13:4. Those that sow the tares of heresy or schism, and, like Diotrephes, trouble the peace of the church and obstruct the progress of the gospel, they are the foxes, the little foxes, which must not be knocked on the head (Christ came not to destroy men's lives), but taken, that they may be tamed, or else restrained from doing mischief.

II. The believing profession which the church makes of her relation to Christ, and the satisfaction she take sin her interest in him and communion with him, So 2:16. He had called her to rise and come away with him, to let him see her face and hear her voice; now this is her answer to that call, in which, though at present in the dark and at a distance,

1. She comforts herself with the thoughts of the mutual interest and relation that were between her and her beloved: My beloved to me and I to him, so the original reads it very emphatically; the conciseness of the language speaks the largeness of her affection: "What he is to me and I to him may better be conceived than expressed." Note,

(1.) It is the unspeakable privilege of true believers that Christ is theirs: My beloved is mine; this denotes not only propriety ("I have a title to him") but possession and tenure--"I receive from his fulness." Believers are partakers of Christ; they have not only an interest in him, but the enjoyment of him, are taken not only in the covenant, but into communion with him. All the benefits of his glorious undertaking, as Mediator, are made over to them. He is that to them which the world neither is nor can be, all that which they need and desire, and which will make a complete happiness for them. All he is is theirs, and all he has, all he has done, and all he is doing; all he has promised in the gospel, all he has prepared in heaven, all is yours.

(2.) It is the undoubted character of all true believers that they are Christ's, and then, and then only, he is theirs. They have given their own selves to him (2Co 8:5); they receive his doctrine and obey his laws; they bear his image and espouse his interest; they belong to Christ. If we be his, his wholly, his only, his for ever, we may take the comfort of his being ours.

2. She comforts herself with the thoughts of the communications of his grace to his people: He feeds among the lilies. When she wants the tokens of his favour to her in particular, she rejoices in the assurance of his presence with all believers in general, who are lilies in his eyes. He feeds among them, that is, he takes as much pleasure

in them and their assemblies as a man does in his table or in his garden, for he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks; he delights to converse with them, and to do them good.

III. The church's hope and expectation of Christ's coming, and her prayer grounded thereupon.

1. She doubts not but that the day will break and the shadows will flee away. The gospel-day will dawn, and the shadows of the ceremonial law will flee away. This was the comfort of the Old-Testament church, that, after the long night of that dark dispensation, the day-spring from on high would at length visit them, to give light to those that sit in darkness. When the sun rises the shades of the night vanish, so do the shadows of the day when the substance comes. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Or it may refer to the second coming of Christ, and the eternal happiness of the saints; the shadows of our present state will flee away, our darkness and doubts, our griefs and all our grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn, a morning when the upright shall have dominion, a day that shall have no night after it.

2. She begs the presence of her beloved, in the mean time, to support and comfort her: "Turn, my beloved, turn to me, come and visit me, come and relieve me, be with me always to the end of the age. In the day of my extremity, make haste to help me, make no long tarrying. Come over even the mountains of division, interposing time and days, with some gracious anticipations of that light and love."

3. She begs that he would not only turn to her for the present, but hasten his coming to fetch her to himself. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Though there be mountains in the way, thou canst, like a roe, or a young hart, step over them with ease. O show thyself to me, or take me up to thee."

16 My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his:
he feedeth among the lilies.
17 Until the day break,
and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved,

and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Song of Solomon-3

The Bride's Reverie

1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

God is not wont to say to the seed of Jacob, Seek you me in vain; and yet here we have the spouse for a great while seeking her beloved in vain, but finding him at last, to her unspeakable satisfaction. It was hard to the Old-Testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law, and the types and figures which then were of good things to come. Long was the consolation of Israel looked for before it came. The watchman of that church gave little assistance to those who enquired after him; but at length Simeon had him in his arms whom his soul loved. It is applicable to the case of particular believers, who often walk in darkness a great while, but at even time it shall be light, and those that seek Christ to the end shall find him at length. Observe,

I. How the spouse sought him in vain upon her bed (So 3:1); when she was up and looking about her, grace in act and exercise, though her beloved was withdrawn, yet she could see him at a distance (So 2:8), but now it was otherwise. She still continued her affection to him, still it was he whom her soul loved, that bond of the covenant still continued firm. "Though he slay me, I will trust in him; though he leave me, I will love him. When I have him not in my arms, I have him in my heart." But she wanted the communion she used to have with him, as David when he thirsted for God, for the living God. She sought him, but,

1. It was by night on her bed; it was late and lazy seeking. Her understanding was clouded; it was by night, in the dark. Her affections were chilled, it was on her bed half asleep. The wise virgins slumbered in the absence of the bridegroom. It was a dark time with the believer; she saw not her signs, and yet she sought them. Those whose souls love Jesus Christ will continue to seek him

even in silence and solitude: their reins instruct them to do so, even in the night season.

2. She failed in her endeavour. Sometimes he is found of those that seek him not (Isa 65:1), but here he is not found of one that sought him, either for punishment of her corruptions, her slothfulness and security (we miss of comfort because we do not seek it aright), or for the exercises of grace, her faith and patience, to try whether she will continue seeking. The woman of Canaan sought Christ, and found him not at first, that she might find him, at length, so much the more to her honour and comfort.

II. How she had sought him in vain abroad, So 3:2. She had made trial of secret worship, and had gone through the duties of the closet, had remembered him on her bed and meditated on him in the night-watches (Ps 63:6), but she did not meet with comfort. My sore ran in the night, and then I remembered God and was troubled, Ps 77:2,3. And yet she is not driven off by the disappointment from the use of further means; she resolves, "I will rise now; I will not lie here if I cannot find my beloved here, nor be content if he be withdrawn. I will rise now without delay, and seek him immediately, lest he withdraw further from me." Those that would seek Christ so as to find him must lose no time. "I will rise out of a warm bed, and go out in a cold dark night, in quest of my beloved." Those that see Christ must not startle at difficulties. "I will rise, and go about the city, the holy city, in the streets, and the broad-ways;" for she knew he was not to be found in any blind by-ways. We must seek in the city, in Jerusalem, which was a type of the gospel-church.

The likeliest place to find Christ is in the temple (Lu 2:46), in the streets of the gospel-church, in holy ordinances, where the children of Zion pass and repass at all hours. She had a good purpose when she said, I will arise now, but the good performance was all in all. She arose, and sought him (those that are in pursuit of Christ, the knowledge of him and communion with him, must turn every stone, seek every where), and yet she found him not; she was still unsatisfied, uneasy, as Job, when he looked on all sides, but could not perceive any tokens of the divine favour (Job 23:8,9), and the Psalmist often, when he complained that God hid his face from him,

Ps 88:14. We may be in the way of our duty and yet may miss the comfort, for the wind bloweth where it listeth. How heavy is the accent on this repeated complaint: I sought him, but I found him not! like that of Mary Magdalen, They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him, Joh 20:13.

III. How she enquired of the watchmen concerning him, So 3:3. In the night the watchmen go about the city, for the preservation of its peace and safety, to guide and assist the honest and quiet, as well as to be a check upon those that are disorderly; these met her in her walks, and she asked them if they could give her any tidings of her beloved. In the streets and broad-ways of Jerusalem she might meet with enough to divert her from her pursuit and to entertain her, though she could not meet her beloved; but she regards none in comparison with him. Gracious souls press through crowds of other delights and contentments in pursuit of Christ, whom they prefer before their chief joy. Mary Magdalen sees angels in the sepulchre, but that will not do unless she see Jesus. Saw you him whom my soul loveth?

Note, We must evince the sincerity of our love to Christ by our solicitous enquiries after him. The children of the bride-chamber will mourn when the bridegroom is taken away (Mt 9:15), especially for the sin which provoked him to withdraw; and, if we do so, we shall be in care to recover the sense of his favour and diligent and constant in the use of proper means in order thereunto. We must search the scriptures, be much in prayer, keep close to ordinances, and all with this upon our heart, Saw you him whom my soul loveth? Those only who have seen Christ themselves are likely to direct others to a sight of him. When the Greeks came to worship at the feast they applied to Philip, with such an address as this of the spouse to the watchmen, Sir, we would see Jesus, Joh 12:21.

2 I will rise now, and go about the city
in the streets, and in the broad ways
I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I
sought him, but I found him not.
3 The watchmen that go about the city found me:
to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

4 *It was* but a little that I passed from them,
but I found him whom my soul loveth:
I held him, and would not let him go,
until I had brought him into my mother's house,
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

I. How she found him at last, So 3:4. She passed from the watchmen as soon as she perceived they could give her no tidings of her beloved; she would not stay with them, because he was not among them, but went on seeking, for (as Ainsworth observes) the society neither of brethren, nor of the church, nor of ministers, can comfort the afflicted conscience unless Christ himself be apprehended by faith. But soon after she parted from the watchmen she found him whom she sought, and then called him him whom my soul loveth, with as much delight as before with desire.

Note, Those that continue seeking Christ shall find him at last, and when perhaps they were almost ready to despair of finding him. See Ps 42:7,8,77:9,10,Isa 54:7,8. Disappointments must not drive us away from gracious pursuits. Hold out, faith and patience; the vision is for an appointed time, and, though the watchman can give us no account of it, at the end it shall itself speak and not lie; and the comfort that comes in after long waiting, in the use of means, will be so much the sweeter at last.

II. How close she kept to him when she had found him. She is now as much in fear of losing him as before she was in care to find him: I held him, held him fast, as the women, when they met with Christ after his resurrection, held him by the feet, and worshipped him, Mt 28:9. "I would not let him go. Not only, I would never do any thing to provoke him to depart, but I would by faith and prayer prevail with him to stay, and by the exercise of grace preserve inward peace." Those that know how hard comfort is come by, and how dearly it is bought, will be afraid of forfeiting it and playing it away, and will think nothing too much to do to keep it safe. Non minor est virtus quam quærere parta tueri--As much is implied in securing our acquisitions as in making them. Those that have laid hold on wisdom must retain her, Pr 3:18. Those that hold Christ fast in the arms of faith and love shall not let him go; he will abide with them.

III. How desirous she was to make others acquainted with him: "I brought him to my mother's house, that all my relations, all who are dear to me, might have the benefit of communion with him." When Zaccheus found Christ, or rather was found of him, salvation came to his house, Lu 19:9. Wherever we find Christ we must take him home with us to our houses, especially to our hearts. The church is our mother, and we should be concerned for her interests, that she may have Christ present with her and be earnest in prayer for his presence with his people and ministers always. Those that enjoy the tokens of Christ's favour to their own souls should desire that the church, and all religious assemblies in their public capacity, might likewise enjoy the tokens of his favour.

IV. What care she was in that no disturbance might be given him (So 3:5); she repeats the charge she had before given (So 2:7) to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stir up or awake her love. When she had brought him into her mother's house, among her sisters, she gives them a strict charge to keep all quiet and in good order, to be very observant of him, careful to please him, and afraid of offending him. The charge given to the church in the wilderness concerning the angel of the covenant, who was among them, explains this. Ex 23:21, Beware of him and obey his voice; provoke him not. See that none of you stir out of your places, lest you disturb him, but with quietness work and mind your own business; make no noise; let all clamour and bitterness be put far from you, for that grieves the Holy Spirit of God, Eph 4:30,31.

Some make this to be Christ's charge to the daughters of Jerusalem not to disturb or disquiet his church, nor trouble the minds of the disciples; for Christ is very tender of the peace of his church, and all the members of it, even the little ones; and those that trouble them shall bear their judgment, Ga 5:10.

5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by
the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that
ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love,
till he please.

The Wedding Procession

6 Who *is* this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke,
perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
with all powders of the merchant?

These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom the charge was given, So 3:5. They had looked shily upon the bride because she was black (So 1:6); but now they admire her, and speak of her with great respect: Who is this? How beautiful she looks! Who would have expected such a comely and magnificent person to come out of the wilderness? As, when Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem, they said, Who is this? And of the accession of strangers to the church she herself says, with wonder (Isa 49:21), Who has begotten me these?

1. This is applicable to the Jewish church, when, after forty years' wandering in the wilderness, they came out of it, to take a glorious possession of the land of promise; and this may very well be illustrated by what Balaam said of them at that time, when they ascended out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, and he stood admiring them: From the top of the rocks I see him. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! Nu 23:9,24:5.

2. It is applicable to any public deliverance of the church of God, as particularly of Babylon, the Old-Testament and the New-Testament Babylon; then the church is like pillars of smoke, ascending upwards in devout affections, the incense of praise, from which, as from Noah's sacrifice, God smells a sweet savour; then she is amiable in the eyes of her friends, and her enemies too cannot but have a veneration for her, and worship at her feet, knowing that God has loved her, Re 3:9. Sometimes the fear of the Jews was upon their neighbours, when they saw that God was with them of a truth, Es 8:17. 3. It is applicable to the recovery of a gracious soul out of a state of desertion and despondency.

(1.) She ascends out of the wilderness, the dry and barren land, where there is no way, where there is no water, where travellers are still in want and ever at a loss; here a poor soul may long be

left to wander, but shall come up, at last, under the conduct of the Comforter.

(2.) She comes up like pillars of smoke, like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar or the smoke of the burnt-offerings. This intimates a fire of pious and devout affections in the soul, whence this smoke arises, and the mounting of the soul heaven-ward in this smoke (as Jdg 13:20), the heart lifted up to God in the heavens, as the sparks fly upward. Christ's return to the soul gives life to its devotion, and its communion with God is most reviving when it ascends out of a wilderness.

(3.) She is perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. She is replenished with the graces of God's Spirit, which are as sweet spices, or as the holy incense, which, being now kindled by his gracious returns, sends forth a very fragrant smell. Her devotions being now peculiarly lively, she is not only acceptable to God, but amiable in the eyes of others also, who are ready to cry out with admiration, Who is this? What a monument of mercy is this! The graces and comforts with which she is perfumed are called the powders of the merchant, for they are far-fetched and dear-bought, by our Lord Jesus, that blessed merchant, who took a long voyage, and was at vast expense, no less than that of his own blood, to purchase them for us. They are not the products of our own soil, nor the growth of our own country; no, they are imported from the heavenly Canaan, the better country.

7 Behold his bed, which *is* Solomon's;
threescore valiant men *are* about it, of
the valiant of Israel.
8 They all hold swords,
being expert in war:
every man *hath* his sword upon his thigh
because of fear in the night.

The daughters of Jerusalem stood admiring the spouse and commending her, but she overlooks their praises, is not puffed up with them, but transfers all the glory to Christ, and directs them to look off from her to him, recommends him to their esteem, and sets herself to applaud him. Here he is three times called Solomon, and

we have that name but three times besides in all this song, So 1:5,8:11,12. It is Christ that is here meant, who is greater than Solomon, and of whom Solomon was an illustrious type for his wisdom and wealth, and especially his building the temple.

Three things she admires him for:--

I The safety of his bed (So 3:7): Behold his bed, even Solomon's, very rich and fine; for such the curtains of Solomon were. His bed, which is above Solomon's, so some read it. Christ's bed, though he had not where to lay his head, is better than Solomon's best bed. The church is his bed, for he has said of it. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell. The hearts of believers are his bed, for he lies all night between their breasts, Eph 3:17. Heaven is his bed, the rest into which he entered when he had done his work. Or it may be meant of the sweet repose and satisfaction which gracious souls enjoy in communion with him; it is called his bed, because, though we are admitted to it, and therefore it is called our bed (So 1:16), yet it is his peace that is our rest, Joh 14:27. I will give you rest, Mt 11:28. It is Solomon's bed, whose name signifies peace, because in his days Judah and Israel dwelt safely under their vines and fig-trees. That which she admires his bed for is the guard that surrounded it. Those that rest in Christ not only dwell at ease (many do so who yet are in the greatest danger) but they dwell in safety. Their holy serenity is under the protection of a holy security. This bed had threescore valiant men about it, as yeomen of the guard, or the band of gentlemen-pensioners; they are of the valiant of Israel, and a great many bold and brave men David's reign had produced. The life-guard men are well armed: They all hold swords, and know how to hold them; they are expert in war, well skilled in all the arts of it. They are posted about the bed at a convenient distance. They are in a posture of defence, every man with his sword upon his thigh and his hand upon his sword, ready to draw upon the first alarm, and this because of fear in the night, because of the danger feared; for the lives of princes, even the wisest and best, as they are more precious, so they are more exposed, and require to be more guarded than the lives of common persons.

Or, because of the fear of it, and the apprehension which the spouse may have of danger, these guards are set for her satisfaction, that she may be quiet from the fear of evil, which believers themselves are subject to, especially in the night, when they are under a cloud as to their spiritual state, or in any outward trouble more than ordinary. Christ himself was under the special protection of his Father in his whole undertaking. In the shadow of his hand he hid me (Isa 49:2); he had legions of angels at his command. The church is well guarded; more are with her than against her. Lest any hurt this vineyard, God himself keeps it night and day (Isa 27:2,3); particular believers, when they repose themselves in Christ and with him, though it may be night-time with them, and they may have their fears in the night, and yet safe, as safe as Solomon himself in the midst of his guards; the angels have a charge concerning them, ministers are appointed to watch for their souls, and they ought to be valiant men, expert in the spiritual warfare, holding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and having that girt upon their thigh, always ready to them for the silencing of the fears of God's people in the night. All the attributes of God are engaged for the safety of believers; they are kept as in a strong-hold by his power (1Pe 1:5), are safe in his name (Pr 18:10), his peace protects those in whom it rules (Php 4:7), and the effect of righteousness in them is quietness and assurance, Isa 32:17. Our danger is from the rulers of the darkness of this world, but we are safe in the armour of light.

II The splendour of his chariot, So 3:9,10. As Christ and believers rest in safety under a sufficient guard, so when they appear publicly, as kings in their coaches of state, they appear in great magnificence. This chariot was of Solomon's own contriving and making, the materials very rich, silver, and gold, and cedar, and purple. He made it for himself, and yet made it for the daughters of Jerusalem, to oblige them. Some by this chariot, or coach, or chaise (the word is nowhere else used in scripture), understand the human nature of Christ, in which the divine nature rode as in an open chariot. It was a divine workmanship (A body hast thou prepared me); the structure was very fine, but that which was at the bottom of it was love, pure love to the children of men. Others make it to represent the everlasting gospel, in which, as in an open chariot, Christ shows himself, and as in a chariot of war rides forth

triumphantly, conquering and to conquer. The pillars, the seven pillars (Pr 9:1), are of silver, for the words of the Lord are as silver tried (Ps 12:6), nay, they are better than thousands of gold and silver.

It is hung with purple, a princely colour; all the adornings of it are dyed in the precious blood of Christ, and that gives them this colour. But that which completes the glory of it is love; it is paved with love, it is lined with love, not love of strangers, as Solomon's was in the days of his defection, but love of the daughters of Jerusalem, a holy love. Silver is better than cedar, gold than silver, but love is better than gold, better than all, and it is put last, for nothing can be better than that. The gospel is all love. Mr. Durham applies it to the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and manifested to us in the scriptures.

This is that work of Christ himself wherein the glory of his grace and love to sinners most eminently appears, and which makes him amiable and admirable in the eyes of believers. In this covenant love is conveyed to them, and they are carried in it to the perfection of love, and, as it were, ride in triumph. It is admirably framed and contrived, both for the glory of Christ and for the comfort of believers. It is well ordered in all things, and sure (2Sa 23:5); it has pillars that cannot be shaken, it is made of the wood of Lebanon, which can never rot; the basis of it is gold, the most lasting metal; the blood of the covenant, that rich purple, is the cover of this chariot, by which believers are sheltered from the wind and storms of divine wrath, and the troubles of this world; but the midst of it, and that which is all in all in it, is love, that love of Christ which surpasses knowledge and the dimensions of which are immeasurable.

III. The lustre of his royal person, when he appears in his greatest pomp, So 3:11. Here observe,

1 The call that is given to the daughters of Zion to acquaint themselves with the glories of king Solomon: Go forth, and behold him. The multitude of the spectators adds to the beauty of a splendid cavalcade. Christ, in his gospel, manifests himself. Let

each of us add to the number of those that give honour to him, by giving themselves the satisfaction of looking upon him. Who should pay respects to Zion's king but Zion's daughters? They have reason to rejoice greatly when he comes, Zec 9:9.

(1.) Behold him then. Look with pleasure upon Christ in his glory. Look upon him with an eye of faith, with a fixed eye. Here is a sight worth seeing; behold, and admire him, behold, and love him; look upon him, and know him again.

(2.) Go forth and behold him; go off from the world, as those that see no beauty and excellency in it in comparison with what is to be seen in the Lord Jesus. Go out of yourselves, and let the light of his transcendent beauty put you out of conceit with yourselves. Go forth to the place where he is to be seen, to the street through which he passes, as Zaccheus.

2 The direction that is given them to take special notice of that which they would not see every day, and that was his crown, either the crown of gold, adorned with jewels, which he wore on his coronation-day (Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, though she did not procure that for him, yet, by her seasonable interposal, she helped to secure it to him when Adonijah was catching at it), or the garland or crown of flowers and green tied with ribbons which his mother made for him, to adorn the solemnity of his nuptials. Perhaps Solomon's coronation day was his marriage-day, the day of his espousals, when the garland his mother crowned him with was added to the crown his people crowned him with. Applying this to Christ, it speaks,

(1.) The many honours put upon him, and the power and dominion he is entrusted with: Go forth, and see king Jesus, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him, when he declared him his beloved Son, in whom he was well-pleased, when he set him as King upon his holy hill of Zion, when he advanced him to his own right hand, and invested him with a sovereign authority, both in heaven and in earth, and put all things under his feet.

(2.) The dishonour put upon him by his persecutors. Some apply it to the crown of thorns with which his mother, the Jewish church, crowned him on the day of his death, which was the day of his espousals to his church, when he loved it, and gave himself for it (Eph 5:25); and it is observable that when he was brought forth wearing the crown of thorns Pilate said, and said it to the daughters of Zion, Behold the man.

(3.) It seems especially to mean the honour done him by his church, as his mother, and by all true believers, in whose hearts he is formed, and of whom he has said, These are my mother, my sister, and brother, Mt 12:50. They give him the glory of his undertaking; to him is glory in the church, Eph 3:21. When believers accept of him as theirs, and join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant,

[1.] It is his coronation-day in their souls. Before conversion they were crowning themselves, but then they begin to crown Christ, and continue to do so from that day forward. They appointed him their head; they bring every thought into obedience to him; they set up his throne in their hearts, and cast all their crowns at his feet.

[2.] It is the day of his espousals, in which he betroths them to him for ever in lovingkindness and in mercies, joins them to himself in faith and love, and gives himself to them in the promises and all he has, to be theirs. Thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee, Ho 3:3. And to him they are presented as chaste virgins.

[3.] It is the day of the gladness of his heart; he is pleased with the honour that his people do him, pleased with the progress of his interest among them. Does Satan fall before them? In that hour Jesus rejoices in spirit, Lu 10:18,21. There is joy in heaven over repenting sinners; the family is glad when the prodigal son returns. Go forth and behold Christ's grace toward sinners, as his crown, his brightest glory.

9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of
the wood of Lebanon.
10 He made the pillars thereof *of* silver, the
bottom thereof *of* gold,

the covering of it *of* purple,
the midst thereof being paved *with* love, for
the daughters of Jerusalem.
11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with
the crown wherewith his mother crowned him
in the day of his espousals,
and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

Song of Solomon-4

The Bridegroom Praises the Bride

1 Behold, thou *art* fair, my love;
behold, thou *art* fair;
thou *hast* doves' eyes within thy locks:
thy hair *is* as a flock of goats,
that appear from mount Gilead.

Here is, I. A large and particular account of the beauties of the church, and of gracious souls on whom the image of God is renewed, consisting in the beauty of holiness. In general, he that is a competent judge of beauty, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth, and what all must subscribe to, he has said, Behold, thou art fair. She had commended him, and called all about her to take notice of his glories; and hereby she recommends herself to him, gains his favour, and, in return for her respects, he calls to all about him to take notice of her graces. Those that honour Christ he will honour, 1Sa 2:30.

1. He does not flatter her, nor design hereby either to make her proud of herself or to court her praises of him; but,

(1.) It is to encourage her under her present dejections. Whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes.

(2.) It is to teach her what to value herself upon, not any external advantages (which would add nothing to her, and the want of which would deprive her of nothing that was really excellent), but upon the comeliness of grace which he had put upon her.

(3.) It is to invite others to think well of her too, and to join themselves to her: "Thou art my love, thou lovest me and art beloved of me, and therefore thou art fair." All the beauty of the saints is derived from him, and they shine by reflecting his light; it is the beauty of the Lord our God that is upon us, Ps 90:17. She was espoused to him, and that made her beautiful. Uxor fulget radiis mariti--The spouse shines in her husband's rays. It it repeated, Thou art fair, and again, Thou art fair, denoting not only the certainty of it, but the pleasure he took in speaking of it.

2. As to the representation here made of the beauty of the church, the images are certainly very bright, the shades are strong, and the comparisons bold, not proper indeed to represent any external beauty, for they were not designed to do so, but the beauty of holiness, the new man, the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible. Seven particulars are specified, a number of perfection, for the church is enriched with manifold graces by the seven spirits that are before the throne, Re 1:4,1Co 1:5,7.

(1.) Her eyes. A good eye contributes much to a beauty: Thou hast doves' eyes, clear and chaste, and often cast up towards heaven. It is not the eagle's eye, that can face the sun, but the dove's eye, a humble, modest, mournful eye, that is the praise of those whom Christ loves. Ministers are the church's eyes (Isa 52:8, thy watchmen shall see eye to eye); they must be like doves' eyes, harmless and inoffensive (Mt 10:16), having their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity. Wisdom and knowledge are the eyes of the new man; they must be clear, but not haughty, not exercised in things too high for us. When our aims and intentions are sincere and honest, then we have doves' eyes, when we look not unto idols (Eze 18:6), but have our eyes ever towards the Lord, Ps 25:15. The doves' eyes are within the locks, which area as a shade upon them, so that,

[1.] They cannot fully see. As long as we are here in this world we know but in part, for a hair hangs in our eyes; we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness; death will shortly cut those locks, and then we shall see all things clearly.

[2.] They cannot be fully seen, but as the stars through the thin clouds. Some make it to intimate the bashfulness of her looks; she suffers not her eyes to wander, but limits them with her locks.

(2.) Her hair; it is compared to a flock of goats, which looked white, and were, on the top of the mountains, like a fine head of hair; and the sight was more pleasant to the spectator because the goats have not only gravity from their beards, but they are comely in going (Pr 30:29), but it was most pleasant of all to the owner, much of whose riches consisted in his flocks. Christ puts a value upon that in the church, and in believers, which others make no more account of than of their hair. He told his disciples that the very hairs of their head were all numbered, as carefully as men number their flocks (Mt 10:30), and that not a hair of their head should perish, Lu 21:18. Some by the hair here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposes good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to the plaiting of the hair, 1Ti 2:9,10. Mary Magdalen's hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it.

(3.) Her teeth, So 4:2. Ministers are the church's teeth; like nurses, they chew the meat for the babes of Christ. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the priests and Levites, who fed upon the sacrifices as the representatives of the people. Faith, by which we feed upon Christ, meditation, by which we ruminate on the word and chew the cud upon what we have heard, in order to the digesting of it, are the teeth of the new man. These are here compared to a flock of sheep. Christ called his disciples and ministers a little flock. It is the praise of teeth to be even, to be white, and kept clean, like sheep from the washing, and to be firm and well fixed in the gums, and not like sheep that cast their young; for so the word signifies which we translate barren. It is the praise of ministers to be even in mutual love and concord, to be pure and clean from all moral pollutions, and to be fruitful, bringing forth souls to Christ, and nursing his lambs.

(4.) Her lips; these are compared to a thread of scarlet, So 4:3. Red lips are comely, and a sign of health, as the paleness of the lips is

a sign of faintness and weakness; her lips were the colour of scarlet, but thin lips, like a thread of scarlet. The next words explain it: Thy speech is comely, always with grace, good, and to the use of edifying, which adds much to the beauty of a Christian. When we praise God with our lips, and with the mouth make confession of him to salvation, then they are as a thread of scarlet. All our good works and good words must be washed in the blood of Christ, dyed like the scarlet thread, and then, and not till then, they are acceptable to God. The Chaldee applies it to the chief priest, and his prayers for Israel on the day of atonement.

(5.) Her temples, or cheeks, which are here compared to a piece of a pomegranate, a fruit which, when cut in two, has rich veins or specks in it, like a blush in the face. Humility and modesty, blushing to lift up our faces before God, blushing at the remembrance of sin and in a sense of our unworthiness of the honour put upon us, will beautify us very much in the eyes of Christ. The blushes of Christ's bride are within her locks, which intimates (says Mr. Durham) that she blushes when no other sees, and for that which none sees but God and conscience; also that she seeks not to proclaim her humility, but modestly covers that too; yet the evidences of all these, in a tender walk, appear and are comely.

(6.) Her neck; this is here compared to the tower of David, So 4:4. This is generally applied to the grace of faith, by which we are united to Christ, as the body is united to the head by the neck; this is like the tower of David, furnishing us with weapons of war, especially bucklers and shields, as the soldiers were supplied with them out of that tower, for faith is our shield (Eph 6:16): those that have it never want a buckler, for God will compass them with his favour as with a shield. When this neck is like a tower, straight, and stately, and strong, a Christian goes on in his way, and works with courage and magnanimity, and does not hang a drooping head, and he does when faith fails. Some make the shields of the mighty men, that are here said to hang up in the tower of David, to be the monuments of the valour of David's worthies. Their shields were preserved, to keep in remembrance them and their heroic acts, intimating that it is a great encouragement to the saints to hold up their heads, to see what great things the saints in all ages have

accomplished and won by faith. In Heb 11:1-40 we have the shields of the mighty men hung up, the exploits of believers and the trophies of their victories.

(7.) Her breasts; these are like two young roes that are twins, So 4:5. The church's breasts are both for ornament (Eze 16:7) and for use; they are the breasts of her consolation (Isa 66:11), as she is said to suck the breasts of kings, Isa 60:16. Some apply these to the two Testaments; others to the two sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace; others to ministers, who are to be spiritual nurses to the children of God and to give out to them the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby, and, in order to that, are themselves to feed among the lilies where Christ feeds (So 2:16), that they may be to the babes of the church as full breasts. Or the breasts of a believer are his love to Christ, which he is pleased with, as a tender husband is with the affections of his wife, who is therefore said to be to him as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, because her breasts satisfy him at all times, Pr 5:19. This includes also his edifying others and communicating grace to them, which adds much to a Christian's beauty.

II The bridegroom's resolution hereupon to retire to the mountain of myrrh (So 4:6) and there to make his residence. This mountain of myrrh is supposed to signify Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, where incense was daily burnt to the honour of God. Christ was so pleased with the beauty of his church that he chose this to be his rest for ever; here he will dwell till the day break and the shadows flee away. Christ's parting promise to his disciples, as the representatives of the church, answer to this: Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Where the ordinances of God are duly administered there Christ will be, and there we must meet him at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Some make these to be the words of the spouse, either modestly ashamed of the praises given her, and willing to get out of the hearing of them, or desirous to be constant to the holy hill, not doubting but there to find suitable and sufficient succour and relief in all her straits, and there to cast anchor, and wish for the day, which, at the time appointed, would break and the shadows flee away. The holy hill (as some observe) is here called both a mountain of myrrh, which is bitter, and a hill of frankincense,

which is sweet, for there we have occasion both to mourn and rejoice; repentance is a bitter sweet. But in heaven it will be all frankincense, and no myrrh. Prayer is compared to incense, and Christ will meet his praying people and will bless them.

III. His repeated commendation of the beauty of the spouse (So 4:7): Thou art all fair, my love. He had said (So 4:1), Thou art fair; but here he goes further, and, in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounces all very good: "Thou art all fair, my love; thou art all over beautiful, and there is nothing amiss in thee, and thou hast all beauties in thee; thou art sanctified wholly in every part; all things have become new (2Co 5:17); there is not only a new face and a new name, but a new man, a new nature; there is no spot in thee, as far as thou art renewed." The spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish. There is no spot but such as is often the spot of God's children, none of the leopard's spots. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church, will be altogether without spot or wrinkle, Eph 5:27.

2 Thy teeth *are* like a flock *of sheep that are even* shorn, which
came up from the washing;
whereof every one bear twins, and
none *is* barren among them.
3 Thy lips *are* like a thread of scarlet, and
thy speech *is* comely:
thy temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.
4 Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded for an armory,
whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all
shields of mighty men.
5 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes that are twins,
which feed among the lilies.
6 Until the day break,
and the shadows flee away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and
to the hill of frankincense.
7 Thou *art* all fair, my love;
there is no spot in thee.
8 Come with me from Lebanon, *my* spouse, with
me from Lebanon:
look from the top of Amana,

from the top of Shenir and Hermon,
from the lions' dens,
from the mountains of the leopards.

These are still the words of Christ to his church, expressing his great esteem of her and affection to her, the opinion he had of her beauty and excellency, the desire he had of, and the delight he had in, her converse and society. And so ought men to love their wives as Christ loves the church, and takes pleasure in it as if it were spotless and had no fault, when yet it is compassed with infirmity. Now, observe here,

I The endearing names and titles by which he calls her, to express his love to her, to assure her of it, and to engage and excite her love to him. Twice here he calls her My spouse (So 4:8,11) and three times My sister, my spouse, So 4:9,10,12. Mention was made (So 3:11) of the day of his espousals, and, after that, she is called his spouse, not before. Note, There is a marriage-covenant between Christ and his church, between Christ and every true believer. Christ calls his church his spouse, and his calling her so makes her so. "I have betrothed thee unto me for ever; and, as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." He is not ashamed to own the relation, but, as becomes a kind and tender husband, he speaks affectionately to her, and calls her his spouse, which cannot but strongly engage her to be faithful to him. Nay, because no one relation among men is sufficient to set forth Christ's love to his church, and to show that all this must be understood spiritually, he owns her in two relations, which among men are incompatible, My sister, my spouse. Abraham's saying of Sarah, She is my sister, was interpreted as a denying of her to be his wife; but Christ's church is to him both a sister and a spouse, as Mt 12:50, a sister and mother. His calling her sister is grounded upon his taking our nature upon him in his incarnation, and his making us partakers of his nature in our sanctification. He clothed himself with a body (Heb 2:14), and he clothes believers with his Spirit (1Co 6:17), and so they become his sisters. They are children of God his Father (2Co 6:18) and so they become his sisters; he that sanctifies, and those that are sanctified, are all of one (Heb 2:11); and he owns them, and loves them, as his sisters.

II The gracious call he gives her to come along with him as a faithful bride, that must forget her own people and her father's house, and leave all to cleave to him. Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia--Where thou Caius art, I Caia will be. Come with me from Lebanon, So 4:8.

1. It is a precept; so we take it, like that (So 2:10,13), Rise up, and come away. All that have by faith come to Christ must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him and compliance with him. Being joined to him, we must walk with him. This is his command to us daily: "Come with me, my spouse; come with me to God as a Father; come with me onward, heavenward; come forward with me; come up with me; come with me from Lebanon, from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens." These mountains are to be considered,

(1.) As seemingly delightful places. Lebanon is called that goodly mountain, De 3:25. We read of the glory of Lebanon (Isa 35:2) and its goodly smell, Ho 14:6. We read of the pleasant dew of Hermon (Ps 133:3) and the joy of Hermon (Ps 89:12); and we may suppose the other mountains here mentioned to be pleasant ones, and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, all its pleasures, to sit loose to all the delights of sense. All those must do so that would come with Christ; they must take their affections off from all present things; yea, though they be placed at the upper end of the world, on the top of Amana and the top of Shenir, though they enjoy the highest satisfactions the creature can propose to give, yet they must come away from them all, and live above the tops of the highest hills on earth, that they may have their conversation in heaven. Come from those mountains, to go along with Christ to the holy mountain, the mountain of myrrh, So 4:6.

Even while we have our residence on these mountains, yet we must look for them, look above them. Shall we lift up our eyes to the hills? No; our help comes from the Lord, Ps 121:1,2. We must look beyond them, to the things that are not seen (as these high hills are), that are eternal. From the tops of Shenir and Hermon, which were on the other side Jordan, as from Pisgah, they could see the

land of Canaan; from this world we must look forward to the better country.

(2.) They are to be considered as really dangerous. These hills indeed are pleasant enough, but there are in them lions' dens; they are mountains of the leopards, mountains of prey, though they seem glorious and excellent, Ps 76:4. Satan, that roaring lion, in the prince of this world; in the things of it he lies in wait to devour. On the tops of these mountains there are many dangerous temptations to those who would take up their residence in them; and therefore come with me from them; let us not set our hearts upon the things of this world, and then they can do us no hurt. Come with me from the temples of idolaters, and the societies of wicked people (so some understand it); come out from among them, and be you separate. Come from under the dominion of your own lusts, which are as lions and leopards, fierce upon us, and making us fierce.

2. It may be taken as a promise: Thou shalt come with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens; that is,

(1.) "Many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point, from Lebanon in the north, Amana in the west, Hermon in the east, Shenir in the south, from all parts, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," Mt 8:11. See Isa 49:11,12. Some from the tops of these mountains, some of the great men of this world, shall give themselves to Christ.

(2.) The church shall be delivered from her persecutors, in due time; though now she dwells among lions (Ps 57:4), Christ will take her with himself from among their dens.

III. The great delight Christ takes in his church and in all believers. He delights in them,

1. As in an agreeable bride, adorned for her husband (Re 21:2), who greatly desires her beauty, Ps 45:11. No expressions of love can be more passionate than these here, in which Christ manifests his affection to his church; and yet that great proof of his love, his

dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes far beyond them all. A spouse so dearly bought and paid for could not but be dearly loved. Such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her accordingly; and both together may well set us a wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, that love in which he gave himself for us and gives himself to us. Observe,

(1.) How he is affected towards his spouse: Thou hast ravished my heart; the word is used only here. Thou hast hearted me, or Thou has unhearted me. New words are coined to express the inexpressibleness of Christ's surprising love to his church; and the strength of that love is set forth by that which is a weakness in men, the being so much in love with one object as to be heartless to every thing else. This may refer to that love which Christ had to the chosen remnant, before the worlds were, when his delights were with the sons of men (Pr 8:31), that first love, which brought him from heaven to earth, to seek and save them at such vast expense, yet including the complacency he takes in them when he has brought them to himself.

Note, Christ's heart is upon his church; so it has appeared all along. His treasure is in it; it is his peculiar treasure (Ex 19:5); and therefore there his heart is also. "Never was love like unto the love of Christ, which made him even mindless of himself, when he emptied himself of his glory, and despised all shame and pain, for our sakes. The wound of love towards us, which he had from eternity in himself, made him neglect all the wounds and reproaches of the cross;" so Bishop Reynolds. Thus let us love him.

(2.) What it is that thus affects him with delight.

[1.] The regard she has to him: Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy eyes, those doves' eyes, clear and chaste (which were commended, So 4:1), with one glance of those eyes. Christ is wonderfully pleased with those that look unto him as their Saviour, and through the eye of faith dart their affections to him, above any rival whatsoever, and whose eyes are ever towards him; he is soon

aware of the first look of a soul towards him and meets it with his favours.

[2.] The ornaments she has from him, that is, the obedience she yields to him, for that is the chain of her neck, the graces that enrich her soul, which are connected as links in chain, the exercise of these graces in a conversation which adorns both herself and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which she professes to believe (as a gold chain is an ornament to persons of quality), and an entire submission to the commanding power of his love. Having shaken off the bands of our neck, by which we were tied to this world (Isa 52:2), and the yoke of our transgressions, we are bound with the cords of love, as chains of gold, to Jesus Christ, and our necks are brought under his sweet and easy yoke, to drawn in it. This recommends us to Jesus Christ, for this is that true wisdom which, in his account, is an ornament of grace unto the head and chains about the neck, Pr 1:9.

[3.] The affection she has for him: How fair is thy love! how beautiful is it! Not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its working in the heart, its works in the life. How well does it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what a pleasure does Christ take in it! Nothing recommends us to Christ as this does. How much better is thy love than wine, than all the wine that was poured out to the Lord in the drink-offerings! Hence the fruit of the vine is said to cheer God and man, Jdg 9:13. She had said of Christ's love, It is better than wine (So 1:2), and now Christ says so of hers; there is nothing lost by praising Christ, nor will he be behindhand with his friends in kindness.

[4.] The ointments, the odours wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, which are an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God, Php 4:18. The smell of thy ointment is better than all spices, such as the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, camel-loads of them (1Ki 10:2), or, rather, than all the spices that were used in compounding the holy incense which was burned daily on the golden altar. Love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. The smell of her garments too, the visible profession she makes of religion, and relation to Christ, before men, and wherein

she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as the smell of Lebanon. Christ having put upon his spouse the white raiment of his own righteousness (Re 3:18), and the righteousness of saints (Re 19:8), and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well pleased with it.

[5.] Her words, both in her devotion to God and her discourses with men (So 4:11): Thy lips O my spouse! drop as the honeycomb, drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully. If what God speaks to us be sweeter to us than the honey and the honeycomb (Ps 19:10), what we say to him in prayer and praise shall also be pleasing to him: Sweet is thy voice. And if out of a good treasure in the heart we bring forth good things, if our speech be always with grace, if our lips use knowledge aright, if they disperse knowledge, they then, in Christ's account, even drop the honeycomb, out-drop it. Honey and milk (the two staple commodities of Canaan) are under thy tongue; that is, in thy heart, not only reserved there for thy own use as a sweet morsel for thyself, but ready there for the use of others. In the word of God there is sweet and wholesome nourishment, milk for babes, honey for those that are grown up. Christ is well-pleased with those that are full of his word.

2. As in a pleasant garden. And well may a very great delight be compared to the delight taken in a garden, when the happiness of Adam in innocency was represented by the putting of him into a garden, a garden of pleasure. This comparison is pursued, So 4:12-14. The church is fitly compared to a garden, to a garden which, as was usual, had a fountain in it. Where Solomon made himself gardens and orchards he made himself pools of water (Ec 2:5,6), not only for curiosity and diversion, in water-works, but for use, to water the gardens. Eden was well watered, Ge 2:10,13:10. Observe,

(1.) The peculiarity of this garden: It is a garden enclosed, a paradise separated from the common earth. It is appropriated to God; he has set it apart for himself; Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance. It is enclosed for secresy; the saints are God's hidden ones, therefore the world knows them not; Christ walks in his garden unseen. It is enclosed for safety; a hedge of protection

is made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot either find or make a gap in. God's vineyard is fenced (Isa 5:2); there is a wall about it, a wall of fire. It has a spring in it, and a fountain, but it is a spring shut up and a fountain sealed, which sends its streams abroad (Pr 5:16), but is itself carefully locked up, that it may not by any injurious hand be muddied or polluted.

The souls of believers are as gardens enclosed; grace in them is as a spring shut up there in the hidden man of the heart, where the water that Christ gives is a well of living water, Joh 4:14,7:38. The Old-Testament church was a garden enclosed by the partition wall of the ceremonial law. The Bible was then a spring shut up and a fountain sealed; it was confined to one nation; but now the wall of separation is removed, the gospel preached to every nation, and in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew.

(2.) The products of this garden. It is as the garden of Eden, where the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, Ge 2:9. Thy plants, or plantations, are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, So 4:13. It is not like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, that was all grown over with thorns and nettles; but here are fruits, pleasant fruits, all trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices, So 4:14. Here is a great plenty of fruits and great variety, nothing wanting which might either beautify or enrich this garden, might make it either delightful or serviceable to its great Lord.

Every thing here is the best of the kind. Their chief spices were much more valuable, because much more durable, than the choicest of our flowers. Solomon was a great master in botany as well as other parts of natural philosophy; he treated largely of trees (1Ki 4:33), and perhaps had reference to some specific qualities of the fruits here specified, which made them very fit for the purpose for which he alludes to them; but we must be content to observe, in general, the saints in the church, and graces in the saints, are very fitly compared to these fruits and spices; for,

[1.] They are planted, and do not grow of themselves; the trees of righteousness are the planting of the Lord (Isa 61:3); grace springs from an incorruptible seed.

[2.] They are precious and of high value; hence we read of the precious sons of Zion and their precious faith; they are plants of renown.

[3.] They are pleasant, and of a sweet savour to God and man, and, as strong aromatics, diffuse their fragrancy.

[4.] They are profitable and of great use. Saints are the blessings of this earth, and their graces are their riches, with which they trade as the merchants of the east with their spices.

[5.] They are permanent, and will be preserved to good purpose, when flowers are withered and good for nothing. Grace, ripened into glory, will last for ever.

9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, *my* spouse; thou
hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one
chain of thy neck.
10 How fair is thy love, my sister, *my* spouse!
How much better is thy love than wine!
and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!
11 Thy lips, O *my* spouse, drop *as* the honeycomb:
honey and milk *are* under thy tongue;
and the smell of thy garments *is* like the smell of Lebanon.
12 A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse;
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
13 Thy plants *are* an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits;
camphire, with spikenard,
14 spikenard and saffron;
calamus and cinnamon,
with all trees of frankincense;
myrrh and aloes,
with all the chief spices:
15 a fountain of gardens,
a well of living waters,
and streams from Lebanon.

These seem to be the words of the spouse, the church, in answer to the commendations which Christ, the bridegroom, had given of her as a pleasant fruitful garden. Is she a garden?

I. She owns her dependence upon Christ himself to make this garden fruitful. To him she has an eye (So 4:15) as the fountain of gardens, not only the founder of them, by whom they are planted and to whom they owe their being, but the fountain of them, by which they are watered and to which they own their continuance and well-being, and without whose constant supplies they would soon become like the dry and barren wilderness. To him she gives all the glory of her fruitfulness, as being nothing with out him: O fountain of gardens! fountain of all good, of all grace, do not thou fail me. Does a believer say to the church, All my springs are in thee, in thee, O Zion? (Ps 87:7), the church transmits the praise to Christ, and says to him, All my springs are in thee; thou art the well of living waters (Jer 2:13), out of which flow the streams of Lebanon, the river Jordan, which had its rise at the foot of Mount Lebanon, and the waters of the sanctuary, which issued out from under the threshold of the house, Eze 47:1.

Those that are gardens to Christ must acknowledge him a fountain to them, from whose fulness they receive and to whom it is owing that their souls are as a watered garden, Jer 31:12. The city of God on earth is made glad with the river that flows from this fountain (Ps 46:4), and the new Jerusalem has its pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, Re 22:1.

II. She implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant (So 4:16): Awake, O north wind! and come, thou south. This is a prayer,

1. For the church in general, that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it, in order to its flourishing estate. Ministers' gifts are the spices; when the Spirit is poured out these flow forth, and then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, Isa 32:15. This prayer was answered in the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of pentecost (Ac 2:1), ushered in by a mighty wind; then the apostles,

who were bound up before, flowed forth, and were a sweet savour to God, 2Co 2:15.

2. For particular believers. Note, (1.) Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, enclosed for him.

(2.) Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful.

(3.) It is very desirable that the spices of grace should flow forth both in pious and devout affections and in holy gracious actions, that with them we may honour God, adorn our profession, and do that which will be grateful to good men.

(4.) The blessed Spirit, in his operations upon the soul, is as the north and the south wind, which blows where it listeth, and from several points, Joh 3:8. There is the north wind of convictions, and the south wind of comforts; but all, like the wind, brought out of God's treasuries and fulfilling his word.

(5.) The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit; he stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good; it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us. (6.) We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be enquired of.

III. She invites Christ to the best entertainment the garden affords: "Let my beloved then come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits; let him have the honour of all the products of the garden (it is fit he should), and let me have the comfort of his acceptance of them, for that is the best account they can be made to turn to." Observe,

1. She calls it his garden; for those that are espoused to Christ call nothing their own, but what they have devoted to him and desire to be used for him. When the spices flow forth then it is fit to be called his garden, and not till then. The fruits of the garden are his

pleasant fruits, for he planted them, watered them, and gave the increase. What can we pretend to merit at Christ's hands when we can invite him to nothing but what is his own already?

2. She begs he would visit it, and accept of what it produced. The believer can take little pleasure in his garden, unless Christ, the beloved of his soul, come to him, nor have any joy of the fruits of it, unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ, and he will think all he has well bestowed upon him.

16 Awake, O north wind; and
come, thou south; blow
upon my garden,
that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my
beloved come into his garden, and eat his
pleasant fruits.

Song of Solomon-5

1 I am come into my garden, my sister, *my* spouse: I have
gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I
have drunk my wine with my milk.
Eat, O friends; drink,
yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

These words are Christ's answer to the church's prayer in the close of the foregoing chapter, Let my beloved come into his garden; here he has come, and lets her know it. See how ready God is to hear prayer, how ready Christ is to accept the invitations that his people give him, though we are backward to hear his calls and accept his invitations. He is free in condescending to us, while we are shy of ascending to him. Observe how the return answered the request, and outdid it.

1. She called him her beloved (and really he was so), and invited him because she loved him; in return to this, he called her his sister and spouse, as several times before, So 4:1-16 Those that make Christ their best beloved shall be owned by him in the nearest and dearest relations.

2. She called the garden his, and the pleasant fruits of it his, and he acknowledges them to be so: It is my garden, it is my spice. When God was displeased with Israel he turned them off to Moses (They are thy people, Ex 32:7); and he called the appointed feasts of the Lord their appointed feasts (Isa 1:14); but now that they are in his favour he owns them for his garden. "Though of small account, yet it is mine." Those that are in sincerity give up themselves and all they have and can do to Jesus Christ, he will do them the honour to stamp them, and what they have and do for him, with his own mark, and say, It is mine.

3. She invited him to come into his garden, and he says, I have come. Isa 58:9, Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. When Solomon prayed that God would come and take possession of the house he had built for him, he did come; his glory filled the house (2Ch 7:2), and (So 5:16) he let him know that he had chosen and sanctified this house, that his name might be there for ever. Those that throw open the door of their souls to Jesus Christ shall find him ready to come in to them; and in every place where he records his name he will meet his people, and bless them, Ex 20:24.

4. She desired him to eat his pleasant fruits, to accept of the sacrifices offered in his temple, which were as the fruits of his garden, and he does so, but finds they are not gathered and ready for eating, therefore he does himself gather them. As the fruits are his, so is the preparation of them; he finds his heart unready for his entertainment, but does himself draw out into exercise those gracious habits which he had planted there. What little good there is in us would be shed and lost if he did not gather it, and preserve it to himself.

5. She only desired him to eat the fruits of the garden, but he brought along with him something more, honey, and wine, and milk, which yield substantial nourishment, and which were the products of Canaan, Immanuel's land. Christ delights himself greatly in that which he has both conferred upon his people and wrought in them. Or we may suppose this to have been prepared by the spouse herself, as Esther prepared for the king her husband a banquet of wine; it is but plain fare, and what is natural, honey

and milk, but, being kindly designed, it is kindly accepted; imperfections are overlooked; the honey-comb is eaten with the honey, and the weakness of the flesh passed by and pardoned, because the spirit is willing. When Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection he did eat with them a piece of a honey-comb (Lu 24:42,43), in which this scripture was fulfilled. He did not drink the wine only, which is liquor for men, for great men, but the milk too, which is liquor for children, little children, for he was to be the holy child Jesus, that had need of milk.

6. She only invited him to come himself, but he, bringing his own entertainment along with him, brings his friends too, and invites them to share in the provisions. The more the merrier, we say; and here, where there was so great a plenty, there was not the worse fare. When our Lord Jesus fed 5000 at once they did all eat and were filled. Christ invites all his friends to the wine and milk which he himself drinks of (Isa 55:1), to the feast of fat things and wines on the lees, Isa 25:6. The great work of man's redemption, and the riches of the covenant of grace, are a feast to the Lord Jesus and they ought to be so to us. The invitation is very free, and hearty, and loving: Eat, O friends! If Christ comes to sup with us, it is we that sup with him, Re 3:20.

Eat, O friends! Those only that are Christ's friends are welcome to his table; his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, have no part nor lot in the matter. Drink, yea, drink abundantly. Christ, in his gospel, has made plentiful provision for poor souls. He fills the hungry with good things; there is enough for all, there is enough for each; we are not straitened in him or in his grace, let us not therefore be straitened in our own bosoms. Open the mouth widely, and Christ will fill it. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, Eph 5:18. Those that entertain Christ must bid his friends welcome with him; Jesus and his disciples were called together to the marriage (Joh 2:2), and Christ will have all his friends to rejoice with him in the day of his espousals to his church, and, in token of that, to feast with him. In spiritual and heavenly joys there is no danger of exceeding; there we may drink abundantly, drink of the river of God's pleasures (Ps 36:8), and be abundantly satisfied, Ps 65:4.

The Distress of Separation

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh:
it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, *saying*,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my
dove, my undefiled:
for my head is filled with dew,
and my locks with the drops of the night.

In this song of loves and joys we have here a very melancholy scene; the spouse here speaks, not to her beloved (as before, for he has withdrawn), but of him, and it is a sad story she tells of her own folly and ill conduct towards him, notwithstanding his kindness, and of the just rebukes she fell under for it. Perhaps it may refer to Solomon's own apostasy from God, and the sad effects of that apostasy after God had come into his garden, had taken possession of the temple he had built, and he had feasted with God upon the sacrifices (So 5:1); however, it is applicable to the too common case both of the churches and particular believers, who by their carelessness and security provoke Christ to withdraw from them. Observe,

I The indisposition that the spouse was under, and the listlessness that had seized her (So 5:2): I sleep, but my heart wakes. Here is,

1. Corruption appearing in the actings of it: I sleep. The wise virgins slumbered. She was on her bed (So 3:1), but now she sleeps. Spiritual distempers, if not striven against at first, are apt to grow upon us and to get ground. She slept, that is, pious affections cooled, she neglected her duty and grew remiss in it, she indulged herself in her ease, was secure and off her watch. This is sometimes the bad effect of more than ordinary enlargements--a good cause. St. Paul himself was in danger of being puffed up with abundant revelations, and of saying, Soul, take thy ease, which made a thorn in the flesh necessary for him, to keep him from sleeping. Christ's disciples, when he had come into his garden, the garden of his agony, were heavy with sleep, and could not watch with him. True Christians are not always alike lively and vigorous in religion. 2. Grace remaining, notwithstanding, in the habit of it: "My heart

wakes; my own conscience reproaches me for it, and ceases not to rouse me out of my sluggishness. The spirit is willing, and, after the inner man, I delight in the law of God, and with my mind I serve that. I am, for the present, overpowered by temptation, but all does not go one way in me. I sleep, but it is not a dead sleep; I strive against it; it is not a sound sleep; I cannot be easy under this indisposition."

Note, (1.) We ought to take notice of our own spiritual slumbers and distempers, and to reflect upon it with sorrow and shame that we have fallen asleep when Christ has been nigh us in his garden.

(2.) When we are lamenting what is amiss in us, we must not overlook the good that is wrought in us, and preserved alive: "My heart wakes in Christ, who is dear to me as my own heart, and is my life; when I sleep, he neither slumbers nor sleeps."

II The call that Christ gave to her, when she was under this indisposition: It is the voice of my beloved; she knew it to be so, and was soon aware of it, which was a sign that her heart was awake. Like the child Samuel, she heard at the first call, but did not, like him, mistake the person; she knew it to be the voice of Christ. He knocks, to awaken us to come and let him in, knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions and by our own consciences; though this is not expressly quoted, yet probably it is referred to (Re 3:20), Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. He calls sinners into covenant with him and saints into communion with him. Those whom he loves he will not let alone in their carelessness, but will find some way or other to awaken them, to rebuke and chasten them. When we are unmindful of Christ he thinks of us, and provides that our faith fail not. Peter denied Christ, but the Lord turned and looked upon him, and so brought him to himself again. Observe how moving the call is: Open to me, my sister, my love.

1. He sues for entrance who may demand it; he knocks who could easily knock the door down.

2. He gives her all the kind and most endearing titles imaginable: My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; he not only gives her no hard names, nor upbraids her with unkindness in not sitting up for him, but, on the contrary, studies how to express his tender affection to her still. His loving-kindness he will not utterly take away. Those that by faith are espoused to Christ he looks upon as his sisters, his loves, his doves, and all that is dear; and, being clothed with his righteousness, they are undefiled. This consideration should induce her to open to him. Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances. Open to me. Can we deny entrance to such a friend, to such a guest? Shall we not converse more with one that is infinitely worthy of our acquaintance, and so affectionately desirous of it, though we only can be gainers by it?

3. He pleads distress, and begs to be admitted sub formâ pauperis--under the character of a poor traveller that wants a lodging: "My head is wet with the dew, with the cold drops of the night; consider what hardships I have undergone, to merit thee, which surely may merit from thee so small a kindness as this." When Christ was crowned with thorns, which no doubt fetched blood from his blessed head, then was his head wet with the dew. "Consider what a grief it is to me to be thus unkindly used, as much as it would be to a tender husband to be kept out of doors by his wife in a rainy stormy night." Do we thus require him for his love? The slights which careless souls put upon Jesus Christ are him as a continual dropping in a very rainy day.

III. The excuse she made to put off her compliance with this call (So 5:3): I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on again? She is half asleep; she knows the voice of her beloved; she knows his knock, but cannot find in her heart to open to him. She was undressed, and would not be at the pains to dress herself again; she had washed her feet, and would not have occasion to wash them again. She could not send another to open the door (it must be our own act and deed to let Christ into our hearts), and yet she was loth to go herself; she did not say, I will not open, but, How shall I? Note, Frivolous excuses are the language of prevailing slothfulness in religion; Christ calls to us to open to him, but we pretend we have no mind, or we have no strength, or we have no time, and

therefore think we may be excused, as the sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold. And those who ought to watch for the Lord's coming with their loins girt, if they ungird themselves and put off their coat, will find it difficult to recover their former resolution and to put it on again; it is best therefore to keep tight. Making excuses (Lu 14:18) is interpreted making light of Christ (Mt 22:5), and so it is. Those put a great contempt upon Christ that cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast for him, or get out of a warm bed.

IV. The powerful influences of divine grace, by which she was made willing to rise and open to her beloved. When he could not prevail with her by persuasion he put in his hand by the hole in the door, to unbolt it, as one weary of waiting, So 5:4. This intimates a work of the Spirit upon her soul, by which she was unwilling made willing, Ps 110:3. The conversion of Lydia is represented by the opening of her heart (Ac 16:14) and Christ is said to open his disciples' understandings, Lu 24:45. He that formed the spirit of man within him knows all the avenues to it, and which way to enter into it; he can find the hole of the door at which to put in his hand for the conquering of prejudices and the introducing of his own doctrine and law. He has the key of David (Re 3:7), with which he opens the door of the heart in such a way as is suited to it, as the key is fitted to the wards of the lock, in such a way as not to put a force upon its nature, but only upon its ill nature.

V. Her compliance with these methods of divine grace at last: My bowels were moved for him. The will was gained by a good work wrought upon the affections: My bowels were moved for him, as those of the two disciples were when Christ made their hearts to burn within them. She was moved with compassion to her beloved, because his head was wet with dew. Note, Tenderness of spirit, and a heart of flesh, prepare the soul for the reception of Christ into it; and therefore his love to us is represented in such a way as is most affecting. Did Christ redeem us in his pity? Let us in pity receive him, and, for his sake, those that are his, when at any time they are in distress. This good work, wrought upon her affections, raised her up, and made her ashamed of her dulness and slothfulness (So 5:5, I rose up, to open to my beloved), his grace inclining her to do it and conquering the opposition of unbelief. It was her own act,

and yet he wrought it in her. And now her hands dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the lock. Either,

1. She found it there when she applied her hand to the lock, to shoot it back; he that put in his hand by the hole of the door left it there as an evidence that he had been there. When Christ has wrought powerfully upon a soul he leaves a blessed sweetness in it, which is very delightful to it. With this he oiled the lock, to make it go easy. Note, When we apply ourselves to our duty, in the lively exercises of faith, under the influence of divine grace, we shall find it will go on much more readily and sweetly than we expected. If we will but rise up, to open to Christ, we shall find the difficulty we apprehended in it strangely overcome, and shall say with Daniel, Now let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me, Da 10:19. Or,

2. She brought it thither. Her bowels being moved for her beloved, who had stood so long in the cold and wet, when she came to open to him she prepared to anoint his head, and so to refresh and comfort him, and perhaps to prevent his catching cold; she was in such haste to meet him that she would not stay to make the usual preparation, but dipped her hand in her box of ointment, that she might readily anoint his head at his first coming in. Those that open the doors of their hearts to Christ, those everlasting doors, must meet him with the lively exercises of faith and other graces, and with these must anoint him.

VI. Her said disappointment when she did open to her beloved. And here is the most melancholy part of the story: I opened to my beloved, as I intended, but, alas! my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. My beloved was gone, was gone, so the word is.

1. She did not open to him at his first knock, and now she came too late, when afterwards she would have inherited this blessing. Christ will be sought while he may be found; if we slip our time, we may lose our passage.

Note, (1.) Christ justly rebukes our delays with his denials, and suspends the communications of comfort from those that are remiss and drowsy in their duty.

(2.) Christ's departures are matter of great grief and lamentation to believers. The royal psalmist never complains of any thing with such sorrowful accents as God's hiding his face from him, and casting him off, and forsaking him. The spouse here is ready to tear her hair, and rend her clothes, and wring her hands, crying, He is gone, he is gone; and that which cuts her to the heart is that she may thank herself, she provoked him to withdraw. If Christ departs, it is because he takes something unkindly.

2. Now observe what she does, in this case, and what befel her.

(1.) She still calls him her beloved, being resolved, how cloudy and dark soever the day be, she will not quit her relation to him and interest in him. It is a weakness, upon every apprehension either of our own failings or of God's withdrawings, to conclude hardly as to our spiritual state. Every desertion is not despair. I will say, Lord, I believe, though I must say, Lord, help my unbelief. Though he leave me, I love him; he is mine.

(2.) She now remembers the words he said to her when he called her, and what impressions they made upon her, reproaching herself for her folly in not complying sooner with her convictions: "My soul failed when he spoke; his words melted me when he said, My head is wet with dew; and yet, wretch that I was, I lay still, and made excuses, and did not open to him." The smothering and stifling of our convictions is a thing that will be very bitter in the reflection, when God opens our eyes. Sometimes the word has not its effect immediately upon the heart, but it melts it afterwards, upon second thoughts. My soul now melted because of his words which he had spoken before.

(3.) She did not go to bed again, but went in pursuit of him: I sought him; I called him. She might have saved herself this labour if she would but have bestirred herself when he first called; but we cut ourselves out a great deal of work, and create ourselves a great deal

of trouble, by our own slothfulness and carelessness in improving our opportunities. Yet it is her praise that, when her beloved has withdrawn, she continues seeking him; her desires toward him are made more strong, and her enquiries after him more solicitous, by his withdrawings. She calls him by prayer, calls after him, and begs of him to return; and she not only prays but uses means, she seeks him in the ways wherein she used to find him.

(4.) Yet still she missed of him: I could not find him; he gave me no answer. She had no evidence of his favour, no sensible comforts, but was altogether in the dark, and in doubt concerning his love towards her. Note, There are those who have a true love for Christ, and yet have not immediate answers to their prayers for his smiles; but he gives them an equivalent if he strengthens them with the strength in their souls to continue seeking him, Ps 138:3. St. Paul could not prevail for the removing of the thorn in the flesh, but was answered with grace sufficient for him.

(5.) She was ill-treated by the watchmen; They found me; they smote me; they wounded me, So 5:7. They took her for a lewd woman (because she went about the streets at that time of night, when they were walking their rounds), and beat her accordingly. Disconsolate saints are taken for sinners, and are censured and reproached as such. Thus Hannah, when she was praying in the bitterness of her soul, was wounded and smitten by Eli, one of the prime watchmen, when he said to her, How long wilt thou be drunken? so counting her a daughter of Belial, 1Sa 1:14,15. It is no new thing for those that are of the loyal loving subjects of Zion's King to be misrepresented by the watchmen of Zion, as enemies or scandals to his kingdom; they could not abuse and persecute them but by putting them into an ill name. Some apply it to those ministers who, though watchmen by office, yet misapply the word to awakened consciences, and through unskillfulness, or contempt of their griefs, add affliction to the afflicted, and make the hearts of the righteous sad whom God would not have made sad (Eze 13:22), discouraging those who ought to be encouraged and talking to the grief of those whom God has wounded, Ps 59:26.

Those watchmen were bad enough that could not, or would not, assist the spouse in her enquiries after her beloved (So 3:3); but

these were much worse, that hindered her with their severe and uncharitable censures, smote her and wounded her with their reproaches, and though they were the keepers of the wall of Jerusalem, as if they had been the breakers of it, took away her veil, from her rudely and barbarously, as if it had been only a pretence of modesty, but a cover of the contrary. Those whose outward appearances are all good, and who yet are invidiously condemned and run down as hypocrites, have reason to complain, as the spouse here, of the taking away of their veil from them.

(6.) When she was disabled by the abuses the watchmen gave her to prosecute her enquiry herself she gave charge to those about her to assist her in the enquiry (So 5:8): I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem! all my friends and acquaintance, if you find my beloved, it may be you may meet with him before I shall, what shall you tell him? so some read. "Speak a good word for me; tell him that I am sick of love." Observe here,

[1.] What her condition was. She loved Jesus Christ to such a degree that his absence made her sick, extremely sick, she could not bear it, and she was in pain for his return as a woman in travail, as Ahab for Naboth's vineyard, which he so passionately coveted. This is a sickness which is a sign of a healthy constitution of soul, and will certainly end well, a sickness that will not be death, but life. It is better to be sick of love to Christ than at ease in love to the world.

(2.) What course she took in this condition. She did not sink into despair, and conclude that she should die of her disease, but she sent after her beloved; she asked the advice of her neighbours, and begged their prayers for her, that they would intercede with him on her behalf. "Tell him, though I was careless, and foolish, and slothful, and rose not up so soon as I should have done to open to him, yet I love him; he knows all things, he knows that I do. Represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me as an object of his pity, that he may have compassion on me and help me." She does not bid them tell him how the watchmen had abused her; how unrighteous soever they were in it, she acknowledges that

the Lord is righteous, and therefore bears it patiently. "But tell him that I am wounded with love to him." Gracious souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawings than of any other trouble whatsoever.

3 I have put off my coat;
how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet;
how shall I defile them?
4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole *of the door,*
and my bowels were moved for him.
5 I rose up to open to my beloved;
and my hands dropped *with* myrrh,
and my fingers *with* sweet smelling myrrh,
upon the handles of the lock.
6 I opened to my beloved;
but my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone:
my soul failed when he spake:
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.
7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they
smote me, they wounded me;
the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.
8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye
find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I *am*
sick of love.

The Bride Praises the Bridegroom

9 What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, O
thou fairest among women?
What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, that
thou dost so charge us?

Here is, I The question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse concerning her beloved, in answer to the charge she had given them, So 5:9.

Observe, 1 The respectful title they give to the spouse: O thou fairest among women! Our Lord Jesus makes his spouse truly

amiable, not only in his eyes, but in the eyes of all the daughters of Jerusalem. The church is the most excellent society in the world, the communion of saints the best communion, and the beauty of the sanctuary a transcendent beauty. The saints are the most excellent people; holiness is the symmetry of the soul; it is its agreement with itself; it recommends itself to all that are competent judges of it. Even those that have little acquaintance with Christ, as those daughters of Jerusalem here, cannot but see an amiable beauty in those that bear his image, which we should love wherever we see it, though in different dresses.

2. Their enquiry concerning her beloved: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved? If thou wilt have us to find him for thee, give us his marks, that we may know him when we see him."

(1.) Some take it for a scornful question, blaming her for making such ado about him: "Why shouldst thou be so passionate in enquiring after thy beloved, more than others are after theirs? Why shouldst thou be so set upon him, more than others that yet have a kindness for him?" Those that are zealous in religion are men wondered at by such as are indifferent to it. The many careless ones laugh at the few that are solicitous and serious. "What is there in him that is so very charming, more than in another person? If he be gone, thou, who art the fairest among women, wilt soon have another with an equal flame." Note, Carnal hearts see nothing excellent or extraordinary in the Lord Jesus, in his person or offices, in his doctrine or in his favours; as if there were no more in the knowledge of Christ, and in communion with him, than in the knowledge of the world and in its conversation.

(2.) Others rather take it for a serious question, and suppose that those who put it intended,

[1.] To comfort the spouse, who, they knew, would recover new spirits if she did but talk awhile of her beloved; nothing would please her better, nor give a more powerful diversion to her grief, than to be put upon the pleasing task of describing the beauties of her beloved.

[2.] To inform themselves; they had heard, in general, that he was excellent and glorious, but they desired to know more particularly. They wondered what moved the spouse to charge them concerning her beloved with so much vehemence and concern, and therefore concluded there must be something more in him than in another beloved, which they are willing to be convinced of. Then there begin to be some hopes of people when they begin to enquire concerning Christ and his transcendent perfections. And sometimes the extraordinary zeal of one, in enquiring after Christ, may be a means to provoke many (2Co 9:2), as the apostle, by the faith of the Gentiles, would stir up the Jews to a holy emulation, Ro 11:14. See Joh 4:10.

10 My beloved *is* white and ruddy, the
chiefest among ten thousand.
11 His head *is as* the most fine gold;
his locks *are* bushy, *and* black as a raven:

The account which the spouse gives of her beloved in answer to this question. We should always be ready to instruct and assist those that are enquiring after Christ. Experienced Christians, who are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to make others acquainted with him.

1. She assures them, in general, that he is one of incomparable perfections and unparalleled worth (So 5:10): "Do not you know my beloved? Can the daughters of Jerusalem be ignorant of him that is Jerusalem's crown and crowned head? Let me tell you then,"

(1.) That he has every thing in him that is lovely and amiable: My beloved is white and ruddy, the colours that make up a complete beauty. This points not at any extraordinary beauty of his body, when he should be incarnate (it was never said of the child Jesus, as of the child Moses, when he was born, that he was exceedingly fair, Ac 7:20; nay, he had no form nor comeliness, Isa 53:2); but his divine glory, and the concurrence of every thing in him as Mediator, to make him truly lovely in the eyes of those that are enlightened to discern spiritual things. In him we may behold the beauty of the Lord; he was the holy child Jesus; that was his fairness. If we look upon him as made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, he appears, in all, very amiable. His love to us renders him lovely. He is white in the spotless

innocency of his life, ruddy in the bloody sufferings he went through at his death,--white in his glory, as God (when he was transfigured his raiment was white as the light), ruddy in his assuming the nature of man, Adam--red earth,--white in his tenderness towards his people, ruddy in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies. His complexion is a very happy composition.

(2.) That he has that loveliness in him which is not to be found in any other: He is the chief among ten thousand, a nonsuch for beauty, fairer than the children of men, than any of them, than all of them; there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; every thing else is to be accounted loss and dung in comparison of him, Php 3:8. He is higher than the kings of the earth (Ps 89:27) and has obtained a more excellent name than any of the principalities and powers of the upper or lower world, Php 2:9,Heb 1:1-14,4:1-16. He is a standard-bearer among ten thousand (so the word is), the tallest and comeliest of the company. He is himself lifted up as an ensign (Isa 11:10), to whom we must be gathered and must always have an eye. And there is all the reason in the world why he should have the innermost and uppermost place in our souls who is the fairest of ten thousands in himself and the fittest of twenty thousands for us.

2. She gives a particular detail of his accomplishments, conceals not his power or comely proportion. Every thing in Christ is amiable. Ten instances she here gives of his beauty, which we need not be nice in the application of, lest the wringing of them bring forth blood and prove the wresting of them. The design, in general, is to show that he is every way qualified for his undertaking, and has all that in him which may recommend him to our esteem, love, and confidence. Christ's appearance to John (Re 1:13, &c.) may be compared with the description which the spouse gives of him here, the scope of both being to represent him transcendently glorious, that is, both great and gracious, made lovely in the eyes of believers and making them happy in himself.

(1.) His head is as the most fine gold. The head of Christ is God (1Co 11:3), and it is promised to the saints that the Almighty shall be their gold (Job 22:25), their defence, their treasure; much more

was he so to Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col 2:9. Christ's head bespeaks his sovereign dominion over all and his vital influence upon his church and all its members. This is as gold, gold; the former word in the original signifies shining gold, the latter strong solid gold; Christ's sovereignty is both beautiful and powerful. Nebuchadnezzar's monarchy is compared to a head of gold (Da 2:38), because it excelled all the other monarchies, and so does Christ's government.

(2.) His locks are bushy and black, not black as the tents of Kedar, whose blackness was their deformity, to which therefore the church compares herself (So 1:5), but black as a raven, whose blackness is his beauty. Sometimes Christ's hair is represented as white (Re 1:14), denoting his eternity, that he is the ancient of days; but here as black and bushy, denoting that he is ever young and that there is in him no decay, nothing that waxes old. Every thing that belongs to Christ is amiable in the eyes of a believer, even his hair is so; it was pity that it should be wet, as it was, with the dew, and these locks with the drops of the night, while he waited to be gracious, So 5:2.

(3.) His eyes are as the eyes of doves, fair and clear, and chaste and kind, by the rivers of waters, which doves delight in, and in which, as in a glass, they see themselves. They are washed, to make them clean, washed with milk, to make them white, and fitly set, neither starting out nor sunk in. Christ is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, for they are doves' eyes, Hab 1:13. All believers speak with pleasure of the omniscience of Christ, as the spouse here of his eyes; for, though it be terrible to his enemies as a flame of fire (Re 1:14), yet it is amiable and comfortable to his friends, as doves' eyes, for it is a witness to their integrity. Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Blessed and holy are those that walk always as under the eye of Christ.

(4.) His cheeks (the rising of the face) are as a bed of spices, raised in the gardens, which are the beauty and wealth of them, and as sweet flowers, or towers of sweetness. There is that in Christ's countenance which is amiable in the eyes of all the saints, in the least glimpse of him, for the cheek is but a part of the face. The

half discoveries Christ makes of himself to the soul are reviving and refreshing, fragrant above the richest flowers and perfumes.

(5.) His lips are like lilies, not white like lilies, but sweet and pleasant. Such are the words of his lips to all that are sanctified, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb; such are the kisses of his lips, all the communications of his grace; grace is poured into his lips, and those that heard him wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. Never any lilies in nature dropped myrrh, but nothing in nature can fully set forth the beauty and excellence of Christ, and therefore, to do it by comparison, there must be a composition of images.

(6.) His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl, a noted precious stone, So 5:14. Great men had their hands adorned with gold rings on their fingers, set with diamonds or other precious stones, but, in her eye, his hands themselves were as gold rings; all the instances of his power, the works of his hands, all the performances of his providence and grace, are all rich, and pure, and precious, as gold, as the precious onyx and the sapphire, all fitted to the purpose for which they were designed as gold rings to the finger, and all beautiful and very becoming, as rings set with beryl. His hands, which are stretched forth both to receive his people and to give to them, are thus rich and comely.

(7.) His bowels are as bright ivory, for so it should be rendered, rather than his belly, for it is the same word that was used for bowels (So 5:4) and is often ascribed to God (as Isa 63:15,Jer 31:20), and so it denotes his tender compassion and affection for his spouse, and the love he has to her even in her desolate and deserted state. This love of his is like bright ivory, finely polished, and richly overlaid with sapphires. The love itself is strong and firm, and the instances and circumstances of it are bright and sparkling, and add much to the inestimable value of it.

(8.) His legs are as pillars of marble, so strong, and stately, and no disgrace, no, not to the sockets of fine gold upon which they are set, So 5:16. This bespeaks his stability and stedfastness; where he sets his foot he will fix it; he is able to bear all the weight of the

government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never fail under him. This sets forth the stateliness and magnificence of the goings of our God, our King, in his sanctuary (Ps 68:24), and the steadiness and evenness of all his dispensations towards his people. The ways of the Lord are equal; they are all mercy and truth; these are the pillars of marble, more lasting than the pillars of heaven.

(9.) His countenance (his port and mien) is as Lebanon, that stately hill; his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest or park, excellent as the cedars, which, in height and strength, excel other trees, and are of excellent use. Christ is a goodly person; the more we look upon him the more beauty we shall see in him.

(10.) His mouth is most sweet; it is sweetness itself; it is sweetnesses (so the word is); it is pure essence, nay, it is the quintessence of all delights, So 5:16. The words of his mouth are all sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes (to whom it is agreeable), as honey to those that are grown up (Ps 119:103), to whom it is delicious. The kisses of his mouth, all the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to those who have their spiritual senses exercised. To you that believe he is precious.

3. She concludes with a full assurance both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble.

(1.) Here is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus: "He is altogether lovely. Why should I stand to mention particulars, when throughout there is nothing amiss?" She is sensible she does him wrong in the particular descriptions of him, and comes far short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with the general encomium: He is truly lovely, he is wholly so; there is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him. He is all desires; he has all in him that one can desire. And therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him thus carefully and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who can but love him who is so lovely?

(2.) Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him: "This is my beloved, and this is my friend; and therefore wonder not that I thus long after him." See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is property that sweetens excellency. To see Christ, and not to see him as ours, would be rather a torture than a happiness; but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is a true believer,

[1.] Giving an entire consent to Christ: "He is mine, my Lord and my God (Joh 20:28), mine according to the tenour of the gospel-covenant, mine in all relations, bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of."

[2.] Taking an entire complacency in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph: "This is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself. None but Christ, none but Christ. This is he on whom my heart is, for he is my best-beloved; this is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, for this is my friend."

Note, Those that make Christ their beloved shall have him their friend; he has been, is, and will be, a special friend to all believers. He loves those that love him; and those that have him their friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. "Let others be governed by the love of the world, and seek their happiness in its friendship and favours, This is my beloved and this is my friend. Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's choice, my soul's rest, my life, my joy, my all; this is he whom I desire to live and die with."

12 his eyes *are* as *the eyes* of doves by the rivers of waters,
washed with milk, *and* fitly set:
13 his cheeks *are* as a bed of spices, *as* sweet flowers:
his lips *like* lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh:
14 his hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl:
his belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid *with* sapphires:
15 his legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:
his countenance *is* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars:

16 his mouth *is* most sweet:
yea, he *is* altogether lovely.
This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O
daughters of Jerusalem.

Song of Solomon-6

The Mutual Delight of the Bride and Bridegroom

1 Whither is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women? Whither is
thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek
him with thee.

Here is, I The enquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ, So 6:1. They still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the fairest among women; for true sanctity is true beauty. And now they raise their thoughts higher concerning Christ: Whither has thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee? This would be but an indecent, unacceptable, compliment, if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival, would monopolize the beloved, and cares not that others should join in seeking him; but those that truly love Christ are desirous that others should love him too, and be joined to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty and respect that the church's children can show to their mother is to join with her in seeking Christ. The daughters of Jerusalem, who had asked (So 5:9), What is thy beloved more than another beloved? wondering that the spouse should be so passionately in love with him, are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for,

1 The spouse had described him, and shown them his excellencies and perfections; and therefore, though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. Those that undervalue Christ do so because they do not know him; when God, by his word and Spirit, discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light the fire of love to him will be kindled.

2 The spouse had expressed her own love to him, her rest in that love, and triumphed in it: This is my beloved; and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs. As sinful lusts, when they break out, defile many, so the pious zeal of some may provoke many, 2Co 9:2. 3. The spouse had bespoken their help in seeking her beloved (So 5:8); but now they beg hers, for they perceive that now the cloud she had been under began to scatter, and the sky to clear up, and, while she was describing her beloved to them, she herself retrieved her comfort in him. Drooping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others. Now here,

(1.) They enquire concerning him, "Wither has thy beloved gone? which may must we steer our course in pursuit of him?" Note, Those that are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him and desirous to know where they may meet with him.

(2.) They offer their service to the spouse to accompany her in quest of him: We will seek him with thee. Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently; and it is best seeking Christ in concert, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek for communion with Christ in communion with saints. We know whither our beloved has gone; he has gone to heaven, to his Father, and our Father. He took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, Joh 20:17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there, with boldness enter into the holiest, and herein must join with the generation of those that seek him (Ps 24:6), even with all that in every place call upon him, 1Co 1:2. We must pray with and for others.

II The answer which the spouse gave to this enquiry, So 6:2,3. Now she complains not any more, as she had done (So 5:6), "He is gone, he is gone," that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no,

1. Now she knows very well where he is (So 6:2): "My beloved is not to be found in the streets of the city, and the crowd and noise

that are there; there I have in vain looked for him" (as his parents sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not); "but he has gone down to his garden, a place of privacy and retirement." The more we withdraw from the hurry of the world the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witnesses of the agonies of his love. Christ's church is a garden enclosed, and separated from the open common of the world; it is his garden, which he has planted as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of, and delights in. Though he had gone up to the paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth; it lies low, but he condescends to visit it, and wonderful condescension it is. Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Those that would find Christ may expect to meet with him in his garden the church, for there he records his name (Ex 20:24); they must attend upon him in the ordinances which he has instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us always, even to the end of the world.

The spouse here refers to what Christ had said (So 5:1), I have come into my garden. It is as if she had said, "What a fool was I to fret and fatigue myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was!" Words of direction and comfort are often out of the way when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance, and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us that he would come into his garden; thither therefore we must go to seek him. The beds, and smaller gardens, in this greater, are the particular churches, the synagogues of God in the land (Ps 84:8); the spices and lilies are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasant in his eyes. When Christ comes down to his church it is,

(1.) To feed among the gardens, to feed his flock, which he feeds not, as other shepherds, in the open fields, but in his garden, so well are they provided for, Ps 23:2. He comes to feed his friends, and entertain them; there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and a hearty welcome to it. He comes to feed himself, that is, to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; for the Lord takes pleasure in those that fear

him. He has many gardens, many particular churches of different sizes and shapes; but, while they are his, he feeds in them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them.

(2.) To gather lilies, wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself. He picks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels, to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

2. She is very confident of her own interest in him (So 6:3): "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; the relation is mutual, and the knot is tied, which cannot be loosed; for he feeds among the lilies, and my communion with him is a certain token of my interest in him." She had said this before (So 2:16); but,

(1.) Here she repeats it as that which she resolved to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in; she liked her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him and rejoicing in it.

(2.) She had occasion to repeat it, for she had acted unkindly to her beloved, and, for her so doing, he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant, which continues firm between Christ and believes, notwithstanding their failings and his frowns, Ps 89:30-35. "I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet I am my beloved's;" for every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant. "He has justly hidden his face from me and denied me his comforts, and yet my beloved is mine;" for rebukes and chastenings are not only consistent with, but they flow from covenant-love.

(3.) When we have not a full assurance of Christ's love we must live by a faithful adherence to him. "Though I have not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will cleave to this, Christ is mine and I am his."

(4.) Though she had said the same before, yet now she inverts the order, and asserts her interest in her first: I am my beloved's, entirely devoted and dedicated to him; and then her interest in him and in his grace: "My beloved is mine, and I am happy, truly happy in him." If our own hearts can but witness for us that we are his, there is no room left to question his being ours; for the covenant never breaks on his side.

(5.) It is now her comfort, as it was then, that he feeds among the lilies, that he takes delight in his people and converses freely with them, as we do with those with whom we feed; and therefore, though at present he be withdrawn, "I shall meet with him again. I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the
beds of spices,
to feed in the gardens, and
to gather lilies.
3 I *am* my beloved's,
and my beloved *is* mine:
he feedeth among the lilies.
4 Thou *art* beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
comely as Jerusalem,
terrible as *an army* with banners.

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse, from whom he had withdrawn himself, returned to converse with her (for he speaks to her and makes her to hear joy and gladness), returned to favour her, having forgiven and forgotten all her unkindness, for he speaks very tenderly and respectfully to her.

He pronounces her truly amiable (So 6:4): Thou art beautiful, O my love! as Tirzah, a city in the tribe of Manasseh, whose name signifies pleasant, or acceptable, the situation, no doubt, being very happy and the building fine and uniform. Thou art comely as Jerusalem, a city compact together (Ps 122:3), and which Solomon had built and beautified, the joy of the whole earth; it was an honour to the world (whether they thought so or no) that there was such a city in it. It was the holy city, and that was the greatest

beauty of it; and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was figured and typified by it. The gospel-church is the Jerusalem that is above (Ga 4:26), the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22); in it God has his sanctuary, and is, in a special manner, present; thence he has the tribute of praise issuing; it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is comely as Jerusalem, and, being so, is terrible as an army with banners. Church-censures, duly administered, strike an awe upon men's consciences; the word (the weapons of her warfare) casts down imaginations (2Co 10:5), and even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, 1Co 14:24,25. The saints by faith overcome the world (1Jo 5:4); nay, like Jacob, they have power with God and prevail, Ge 32:28.

5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for
they have overcome me:
thy hair *is* as a flock of goats that
appear from Gilead:

I. He owns himself in love with her, So 6:5. Though, for a small moment, and in a little wrath, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her with very surprising instances of everlasting lovingkindness, Isa 54:8. Turn thy eyes towards me (so some read it), "turn the eyes of faith and love towards me, for they have lifted me up; look unto me, and be comforted." When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strange expression of love, "Turn away thy eyes from me, for I cannot bear the brightness of them; they have quite overcome me, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past;" as God said to Moses, when he interceded for Israel, "Let me alone, or I must yield," Ex 32:10. Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed and in the workings of his own grace in them.

II. He repeats, almost word for word, part of the description he had given of her beauty (So 4:1-3), her hair, her teeth, her temples (So 6:5-7), not because he could not have described it in other words, and by other similitudes, but to show that he had still the same esteem for her since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawings from her, that he had before. Lest she should think that, though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her

while he knew her, he says the same of her now that he had done; for those to whom much is forgiven will love the more, and, consequently, will be the more loved, for Christ has said, I love those that love me. He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them and return to their duty, and commends them as if they had already arrived at perfection.

III. He prefers her before all competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others meeting and centering in her (So 6:8,9): "There are, it may be, threescore queens, who, like Esther, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, and fourscore concubines, whom kings have preferred before their own queens, as more charming, and these attended by their maids of honour, virgins without number, who, when there is a ball at court, appear in great splendour, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators; but my dove, my undefiled, is but one, a holy one."

1. She excels them all. Go through all the world, and view the societies of men that reckon themselves wise and happy, kingdoms, courts, senates, councils, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and beauties are nothing to hers. Who is like unto thee, O Israel! De 33:29,De 4:6,7. There are particular persons, as virgins without number, who are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performances, but the beauty of holiness is beyond all other beauty: "My dove, my undefiled, is one, has that one beauty that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excel the queens and virgins, though they were ever so many."

2. She included them all. "Other kings have many queens, and concubines, and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but my dove, my undefiled, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs." Or, "Though there are many particular churches, some of greater dignity, others of less, some of longer, others of shorter, standing, and many particular believers, of different gifts and attainments, some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is my dove, my

undefiled." Christ is the centre of the church's unity; all the children of God that are scattered abroad are gathered by him (Joh 11:52), and meet in him (Eph 1:10), and are all his doves.

IV. He shows how much she was esteemed, not by him only, but by all that had acquaintance with her and stood in relation to her. It would add to her praise to say,

1. That she was her mother's darling; she had that in her, from a child, which recommended her to the particular affection of her parents. As Solomon himself is said to have been tender and an only one in the sight of his mother (Pr 4:3), so was she the only one of her mother, as dear as if she had been an only one, and, if there were many more, yet she was the choice one of her that bore her, more excellent than all the societies of men this world ever produced. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are nothing, in Christ's account, compared with the church, which is made up of the excellent ones of the earth, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, and more excellent than their neighbours.

2. That she was admired by all her acquaintance, not only the daughters, who were her juniors, but even the queens and the concubines, who might have reason to be jealous of her as a rival; they all blessed her, and wished well to her, praised her, and spoke well of her. The daughters of Jerusalem called her the fairest among women; all agreed to give her the pre-eminence for beauty, and every sheaf bowed to hers. Note,

(1.) Those that have any correct sense of things cannot but be convinced in their consciences (whatever they say) that godly people are excellent people; many will give them their good word, and more their good-will.

(2.) Jesus Christ takes notice what people think and speak of his church, and is well pleased with those that honour such as fear the Lord, and takes it ill of those that despise them, particularly when they are under a cloud, that offend any of his little ones.

V. He produces the encomium that was given of her, and makes it his own (So 6:10): Who is she that looks forth as the morning? This is applicable both to the church in the world and to grace in the heart.

1. They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things. Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church looked forth as the morning when the promise of the Messiah was first made known, and the day-spring from on high visited this dark world. The Jewish church was fair as the moon; the ceremonial law was an imperfect light; it shone by reflection; it was changing as the moon, did not make day, nor had the sun of righteousness yet risen. But the Christian church is clear as the sun, exhibits a great light to those that sat in darkness. Or we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel-kingdom.

(1.) In its rise, it looks forth as the morning after a dark night; it is discovering (Job 38:12,13), and very acceptable, looks forth pleasantly as a clear morning; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarcely perceptible at first.

(2.) It is, at the best, in this world, but fair as the moon, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and her spots too, and, when at the full, does but rule by night. But,

(3.) When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory then it will be clear as the sun, the church clothed with the sun, with Christ the sun of righteousness, Re 12:1. Those that love God will then be as the sun when he goes forth in his strength (Jdg 5:31,Mt 13:43); they shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, Isa 30:26.

2 The beauty of the church and of believers is not only amiable, but awful as an army with banners. The church, in this world, is as an army, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness; its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them. Believers are soldiers in this army. It has its banners; the gospel of Christ is an ensign (Isa 11:12), the love of Christ, So 2:4. It is marshalled, and kept in order and under discipline. It is

terrible to its enemies as Israel in the wilderness was, Ex 15:14. When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes, by their standards, with colours displayed, he said, How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! Nu 24:5. When the church preserves her purity she secures her honour and victory; when she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is truly great and formidable.

6 thy teeth *are* as a flock of sheep which
go up from the washing, whereof
every one beareth twins,
and *there is* not one barren among them.
7 As a piece of a pomegranate
are thy temples within thy locks.
8 There are threescore queens, and
fourscore concubines, and
virgins without number.
9 My dove, my undefiled is *but* one;
she *is* the *only* one of her mother,
she *is* the choice *one* of her that bare her. The
daughters saw her, and blessed her;
yea, the queens and the concubines, and
they praised her.
10 Who *is* she *that* looketh forth as the morning, fair
as the moon, clear as the sun,
and terrible as *an army* with banners?
11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see
the fruits of the valley,
and to see whether the vine flourished,
and the pomegranates budded.

Christ having now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the falling out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

I. That when he had withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it as his garden, which he took care of (So 6:11): "I went down into the garden of nuts, or nutmegs, to see the fruits of the valley, with complacency and concern, to see them as my own." When he was

out of sight he was no further off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden, in a low and dark valley; but then he was observing how the vine flourished, that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it as a man does in a fruitful garden. He went to see whether the pomegranates budded. Christ observes the first beginnings of the good work of grace in the soul and the early buddings of devout affections and inclinations there, and is well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

II. That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible, inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desire towards him (So 6:12): "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib; I could not any longer keep at a distance; my repentings were kindled together, and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my dove." Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren, for a while, to chastise them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer refrain himself, but, or ever he was aware, burst out into tears, and said, I am Joseph, Ge 45:1,3. And now the spouse perceives, as David did (Ps 31:22), that though she said in her haste, I am cut off from before thy eyes, yet, at the same time, he heard the voice of her supplications, and became like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. My soul put me into the chariots of my willing people (so some read it), "the chariots of their faith, and hope, and love, their desires, and prayers, and expectations, which they sent after me, to fetch me back, as chariots of fire with horses of fire." Note,

1. Christ's people are, and ought to be, a willing people.

2. If they continue seeking Christ and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think and with a pleasing surprise. No chariots sent for Christ shall return empty.

3. All Christ's gracious returns to his people take rise from himself. It is not they, it is his own soul, that puts him into the chariots of

his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them; not for their sakes, be it known to them.

III. That he, having returned to her, kindly courted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let her not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened, but take the comfort of the return of her beloved, So 6:13. Here,

1 The church is called Shulamite, referring either to Solomon, the bridegroom in type, by whose name she is called, in token of her relation to him and union with him (thus believers are called Christians from Christ), or referring to Salem, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of Shunem is called the Shunamite. Heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship; those that belong to Christ, and are bound for heaven, shall be called Shulamites.

2. She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed: Return, return; and again, "Return, return; recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited; come back to thy former composedness and cheerfulness of spirit." Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hard to be pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest. As revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again (Turn you, turn you, why will you die?) so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, Turn you, turn you, why will you droop; Why art thou cast down, O my soul?

3. Having returned, she is desired to show her face: That we may look upon thee. Go no longer with they face covered like a mourner. Let those that have made their peace with God lift up their faces without spot (Job 22:26); let them come boldly to his throne of grace. Christ is pleased with the cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. "Let us look upon thee, not I only, but the holy angels, who rejoice in the consolation of saints as well as in the conversion of sinners; not I only, but all the daughters." Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church.

4. A short account is given of what is to be seen in her. The question is asked, What will you see in the Shulamite? And it is answered, As it were the company of two armies.

(1.) Some think she gives this account of herself; she is shy of appearing, unwilling to be looked upon, having, in her own account, no form or comeliness. Alas! says she, What will you see in the Shulamite? nothing that is worth your looking upon, nothing but as it were the company of two armies actually engaged, where nothing is to be seen but blood and slaughter. The watchmen had smitten her, and wounded her, and she carried in her face the marks of those wounds, looked as if she had been fighting. She had said (So 1:6), Look not upon me because I am black; here she says, "Look not upon me because I am bloody." Or it may denote the constant struggle that is between grace and corruption in the souls of believers; they are in them as two armies continually skirmishing, which makes her ashamed to show her face.

(2.) Others think her beloved gives the account of her. "I will tell you what you shall see in the Shulamite; you shall see as noble a sight as that of two armies, or two parts of the same army, drawn out in rank and file; not only as an army with banners, but as two armies, with a majesty double to what was before spoken; she is as Mahanaim, as the two hosts which Jacob saw (Ge 32:1,2), a host of saints and a host of angels ministering to them; the church militant, the church triumphant." Behold two armies; in both the church appears beautiful.

12 Or ever I was aware,
my soul made me *like* the chariots of Amminadib.
13 Return, return, O Shulamite;
return, return, that we may look upon thee. What
will ye see in the Shulamite?
As it were the company of two armies.

Song of Solomon-7

1 How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! The
joints of thy thighs *are* like jewels,
the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

The title which Jesus Christ here gives to the church is new: O prince's daughter! agreeing with Ps 45:13, where she is called the king's daughter. She is so in respect of her new birth, born from above, begotten of God, and his workmanship, bearing the image of the King of kings, and guided by his Spirit. She is so by marriage; Christ, by betrothing her to himself, though he found her mean and despicable, has made her a prince's daughter. She has a princely disposition, something in her truly noble and generous; she is daughter and heir to the prince of the kings of the earth. If children, then heirs. Now here we have,

I. A copious description of the beauty of the spouse, which, some think, is given by the virgins her companions, and that those were they who called upon her to return; it seems rather to be given by Christ himself, and to be designed to express his love to her and delight in her, as before, So 4:1, &c., and So 6:5,6. The similitudes are here different from what they were before, to show that the beauty of holiness is such as nothing in nature can reach; you may still say more of it, and yet still come short of it. That commendation of the spouse, So 4:1-16, was immediately upon the espousals (So 3:11), this upon her return from a by-path (So 6:13); yet this exceeds that, to show the constancy of Christ's love to his people; he loves them to the end, since he made them precious in his sight and honourable.

The spouse had described the beauty of her beloved in ten particulars (So 5:11, &c.); and now he describes her in as many, for he will not be behindhand with her in respects and endearments. Those that honour Christ he will certainly honour, and make honourable. As the prophet, in describing the corruptions of degenerate Israel, reckons from the sole of the foot even unto the head (Isa 1:6), so here the beauties of the church are reckoned from foot to head, that, as the apostle speaks, when he is

comparing the church, as here, to the natural body (1Co 12:23), more abundant honour might be bestowed on those parts of the body which we think to be less honourable, and which therefore lacked honour, So 7:24.

1. Her feet are here praised; the feet of Christ's ministers are beautiful in the eyes of the church (Isa 52:7), and her feet are here said to be beautiful in the eyes of Christ. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes! When believers, being made free from the captivity of sin (Ac 12:8), stand fast in the liberty with which they are made free, preserve the tokens of their enfranchisement, have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and walk steadily according to the rule of the gospel, then their feet are beautiful with shoes; they tread firmly, being well armed against the troubles they meet with in their way. When we rest not in good affections, but they are accompanied with sincere endeavors and resolutions, then our feet are beautified with shoes. See Eze 16:10.

2. The joint of the thighs are here said to be like jewels, and those curiously wrought by a cunning workman. This is explained by Eph 4:16,Col 2:19, where the mystical body of Christ is said to be held together by joints and bands, as the hips and knees (both which are the joints of the thighs) serve the natural body in its strength and motion. The church is then comely in Christ's eyes when those joints are kept firm by holy love and unity, and the communion of saints. When believers act in religion from good principles, and are steady and regular in their whole conversation, and turn themselves easily to every duty in its time and place, then the joints are like jewels.

3. The navel is here compared to a round cup or goblet, that wants not any of the agreeable liquor that one would wish to find in it, such as David's cup that ran over (Ps 23:5), well shaped, and not as that miserable infant whose navel was not cut, Eze 16:4. The fear of the Lord is said to be health to the navel. See Pr 3:8. When the soul wants not that fear then the navel wants not liquor.

4. The belly is like a heap of wheat in the store-chamber, which perhaps was sometimes, to make show, adorned with flowers. The wheat is useful, the lilies are beautiful; there is every thing in the

church which may be to the members of that body either for use or for ornament. All the body is nourished from the belly; it denotes the spiritual prosperity of a believer and the healthful constitution of the soul all in good plight.

5. The breasts are like two young roes that are twins, So 7:3. By the breasts of the church's consolations those are nourished who are born from its belly (Isa 46:3), and by the navel received nourishment in the womb. This comparison we had before, So 4:5.

6. The neck, which before was compared to the tower of David (So 4:4), is here compared to a tower of ivory, so white, so precious; such is the faith of the saints, by which they are joined to Christ their head. The name of the Lord, improved by faith, is to the saints as a strong and impregnable tower.

7. The eyes are compared to the fish-pools in Heshbon, or the artificial fish-ponds, by a gate, either of Jerusalem or Heshbon, which is called Bath-rabbim, the daughter of a multitude, because a great thoroughfare. The understanding, the intentions of a believer, are clean and clear as these ponds. The eyes, weeping for sin, are as fountains (Jer 9:1), and comely with Christ.

8. The nose is like the tower of Lebanon, the forehead or face set like a flint (Isa 50:7), undaunted as that tower was impregnable. So it denotes the magnanimity and holy bravery of the church, or (as others) a spiritual sagacity to discern things that differ, as animals strangely distinguish by the smell. This tower looks towards Damascus, the head city of Syria, denoting the boldness of the church in facing its enemies and not fearing them.

9. The head like Carmel, a very high hill near the sea, So 7:5. The head of a believer is lifted up above his enemies (Ps 27:6), above the storms of the lower region, as the top of Carmel was, pointing heaven-ward. The more we get above this world, and the nearer to heaven, and the more secure and serene we become by that means, the more amiable we are in the eyes of the Lord Jesus.

10. The hair of the head is said to be like purple. This denotes the universal amiableness of a believer in the eyes of Christ, even to the hair, or (as some understand it) the pins with which the hair is dressed. Some by the head and the hair understand the governors of the church, who, if they be careful to do their duty, add much to her comeliness. The head like crimson (so some read it) and the hair like purple, the two colours worn by great men.

II The complacency which Christ takes in his church thus beautified and adorned. She is lovely indeed if she be so in his eyes; as he puts the comeliness upon her, so it is his love that makes this comeliness truly valuable, for he is an unexceptionable judge.

1. He delighted to look upon his church, and to converse with it, rejoicing in that habitable part of his earth: The king is held in the galleries, and cannot leave them. This is explained by Ps 132:13,14, The Lord has chosen Zion, saying, This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; and Ps 147:11, The Lord takes pleasure in those that fear him. And, if Christ has such delight in the galleries of communion with his people, much more reason have they to delight in them, and to reckon a day there better than a thousand.

2. He was even struck with admiration at the beauty of his church (So 7:6): How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love! How art thou made fair! (so the word is), "not born so, but made so with the comeliness which I have put upon thee." Holiness is a beauty beyond expression; the Lord Jesus is wonderfully pleased with it; the outward aspect of it is fair; the inward disposition of it is pleasant and highly agreeable, and the complacency he has in it is inexpressible. O my dearest for delights! so some read. 3. He determined to keep up communion with his church.

(1.) To take hold of her as of the boughs of a palm-tree. He compares her stature to a palm-tree (So 7:7), so straight, so strong, does she appear, when she is looked upon in her full proportion. The palm-tree is observed to flourish most when it is loaded; so the church, the more it has been afflicted, the more it has multiplied; and the branches of it are emblems of victory. Christ says, "I will go up to the palm-tree, to entertain myself with the

shadow of it (So 7:8) and I will take hold of its boughs and observe the beauty of them." What Christ has said he will do, in favour to his people; we may be sure he will do it, for his kind purposes are never suffered to fall to the ground; and if he take hold of the boughs of his church, take early hold of her branches, when they are young and tender, he will keep his hold and not let them go.

(2.) To refresh himself with her fruits. He compares her breasts (her pious affections towards him) to clusters of grapes, a most pleasant fruit (So 7:7), and he repeats it (So 7:8): They shall be (that is, they shall be to me) as clusters of the vine, which make glad the heart. "Now that I come up to the palm-tree thy graces shall be exerted and excited." Christ's presence with his people kindles the holy heavenly fire in their souls, and then their breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, a cordial to themselves and acceptable to him. And since God, at first, breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and breathes the breath of the new life still, the smell of their nostrils is like the smell of apples, or oranges, which is pleasing and reviving. The Lord smelt a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, Ge 8:21. And, lastly, the roof of her mouth is like the best wine (So 7:9); her spiritual taste and relish, or the words she speaks of God and man, which come not from the teeth outward, but from the roof of the mouth, these are pleasing to God. The prayer of the upright is his delight. And, when those that fear the Lord speak one to another as becomes them, the Lord hearkens, and hears with pleasure, Mal 3:16. It is like that wine which is,

[1.] Very palatable and grateful to the taste. It goes down sweetly; it goes straightly (so the margin reads it); it moves itself aright, Pr 23:31. The pleasures of sense seem right to the carnal appetite, and go down smoothly, but they are often wrong, and, compared with the pleasure of communion with God, they are harsh and rough. Nothing goes down so sweetly with a gracious soul as the wine of God's consolations.

[2.] It is a great cordial. The presence of Christ by his Spirit with him people shall be reviving and refreshing to them, as that strong wine which makes the lips even of those that are asleep (that are ready to faint away in a deliquium), to speak. Unconverted sinners

are asleep; saints are often drowsy, and listless, and half asleep; but the word and Spirit of Christ will put life and vigour into the soul, and out of the abundance of the heart that is thus filledthe mouth will speak. When the apostles were filled with the Spirit they spoke with tongues the wonderful works of God (Ac 2:10,12); and those who in opposition to being drunk with wine, wherein is excess, are filled with the Spirit, speak to themselves in psalms and hymns, Eph 5:18,19. When Christ is thus commending the sweetness of his spouse's love, excited by the manifestation of his, she seems to put in that word, for my beloved, as in a parenthesis. "Is there any thing in me that is pleasant or valuable? As it is from, so it is for my beloved." Then he delights in our good affections and services, when they are all for him and devoted to his glory.

2 Thy navel *is like* a round goblet, *which* wanteth not liquor:
thy belly *is like* a heap of wheat set about with lilies.
3 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes *that are* twins.
4 Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory;
thine eyes *like* the fishpools in Heshbon, by
the gate of Bath-rabbim:
thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon
which looketh toward Damascus.
5 Thine head upon thee *is* like Carmel, and
the hair of thine head like purple; the King
is held in the galleries.
6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!
7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and
thy breasts to clusters *of grapes.*
8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree,
I will take hold of the boughs thereof:
now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and
the smell of thy nose like apples;
9 and the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that
goeth *down* sweetly,
causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.
10 I *am* my beloved's,
and his desire *is* toward me.

These are the words of the spouse, the church, the believing soul, in answer to the kind expressions of Christ's love in the foregoing verses.

She here triumphs in her relation to Christ and her interest in him, and in his name will she boast all the day long. With what a transport of joy and holy exultation does she say (So 7:10), "I am my beloved's, not my own, but entirely devoted to him and owned by him." If we can truly say that Christ is our best beloved, we may be confident that we are his and he will save us, Ps 119:94. The gracious discoveries of Christ's love to us should engage us greatly to rejoice in the hold he has of us, his sovereignty over us and property in us, which is no less a spring of comfort than a bond of duty.

Intimacy of communion with Christ should help clear up our interest in him. Glorying in this, that she is his, to serve him, and reckoning that her honour, she comforts herself with this, that his desire is towards her, that is, he is her husband; it is a periphrasis of the conjugal relation, Ge 3:16. Christ's desire was strongly towards his chosen remnant, when he came from heaven to earth to seek and save them; and when, in pursuance of his undertaking, he was even straitened till the baptism of blood he was to pass through for them was accomplished, Lu 12:50. He desired Zion for a habitation; this is a comfort to believers that, whosoever slights them, Christ has a desire towards them, such a desire as will again bring him from heaven to earth to receive them to himself; for he longs to have them all with him, Joh 17:24,Joh 14:3.

11 Come, my beloved,
let us go forth into the field;
let us lodge in the villages.

12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us
see if the vine flourish, *whether* the
tender grape appear,
and the pomegranates bud forth:
there will I give thee my loves.

I. She humbly and earnestly desires communion with him (So 7:11,12): "Come, my beloved, let us take a walk together, that I may receive counsel, instruction, and comfort from thee, and may

make known my wants and grievances to thee, with freedom, and without interruption." Thus Christ can walk with the two disciples that were going to the village called Emmaus, and talked with them, till he made their hearts burn within them. Observe here,

1. Having received fresh tokens of his love, and full assurances of her interest in him, she presses forward towards further acquaintance with him; as blessed Paul, who desired yet more and more of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, Php 3:8. Christ has made it to appear how much his desire is towards us, and we are very ungrateful if ours be not towards him. Note, Communion with Christ is that which all that are sanctified earnestly breathe after; and the clearer discoveries he makes to them of his love the more earnestly do they desire it. Sensual pleasures pall the carnal appetite, and soon give it surfeit, but spiritual delights whet the desires, the language of which is, Nothing more than God, but still more and more of him. Christ had said, I will go up to the palm-tree. Come, saith she, Let us go. The promises Christ has made us of communion with him are not to supersede, but quicken and encourage, our prayers for that communion.

2. She desires to go forth into the fields and villages to have this communion with him. Those that would converse with Christ must go forth from the world and the amusements of it, must avoid every thing that would divert the mind and be a hindrance to it when it should be wholly taken up with Christ; we must contrive how to attend upon the Lord without distraction (1Co 7:35), for therefore the spouse here covets to get out of the noise of the town. Let us go forth to him without the camp, Heb 14:13. Solitude and retirement befriend communion with God; therefore Isaac went out into the field to meditate and pray. Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door. A believer is never less alone than when alone with Christ, where no eye sees.

3. Having business to go abroad, to look after their grounds, she desires the company of her beloved. Note, Wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God, if it be not our own fault, for he is always at our right hand, his eye always upon us, and both his word and his ear always nigh us. By going about our worldly

affairs with heavenly holy hearts, mixing pious thoughts with common actions, and having our eyes ever towards the Lord, we may take Christ along with us whithersoever we go. Nor should we go any whither where we cannot in faith ask him to go along with us.

4. She is willing to rise betimes, to go along with her beloved: Let us get up early to the vineyards. It intimates her care to improve opportunities of conversing with her beloved; when the time appointed has come, we must lose no time, but, as the woman (Mk 16:2), go very early, though it be to a sepulchre, if we be in hopes to meet him there. Those that will go abroad with Christ must begin betimes with him, early in the morning of their days, must begin every day with him, seek him early, seek him diligently.

5. She will be content to take up her lodging in the villages, the huts or cottages which the country people built for their shelter when they attended their business in the fields; there, in these mean and cold dwellings, she will gladly reside, if she may but have her beloved with her. His presence will make them fine and pleasant, and convert them into palaces. A gracious soul can reconcile itself to the poorest accommodations, if it may have communion with God in them.

6. The most pleasant delightful fields, even in the spring-time, when the country is most pleasant, will not satisfy her, unless she have her beloved with her. No delights on earth can make a believer easy, unless he enjoy God in all.

II. She desires to be better acquainted with the state of her own soul and the present posture of its affairs (So 7:12): Let us see if the vine flourish. Our own souls are our vineyards; they are, or should be, planted with vines and pomegranates, choice and useful trees. We are made keepers of these vineyards, and therefore are concerned often to look into them, to examine the state of our own souls, to seek whether the vine flourishes, whether our graces be in act and exercise, whether we be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, and whether our fruit abound. And especially let us enquire whether the tender grape appear and whether the pomegranates bud forth, what good motions and dispositions there

are in us that are yet but young and tender, that they may be protected and cherished with a particular care, and may not be nipped, or blasted, or rubbed off, but cultivated, that they may bring forth fruit unto perfection. In this enquiry into our own spiritual state, it will be good to take Christ along with us, because his presence will make the vine flourish and the tender grape appear, as the returning sun revives the gardens, and because to him we are concerned to approve ourselves. If he sees the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear--if we can appeal to him, Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee,--if his Spirit witness with our spirit that our souls prosper, it is enough. And, if we would be acquainted with ourselves, we must beg of him to search and try us, to help us in the search, and discover us to ourselves.

III. She promises to her beloved the best entertainment she can give him at her country seat; for he will come in to us, and sup with us, Re 3:20.

1. She promises him her best affections; and, whatever else she had for him, it would utterly be contemned if her heart were not entire for him: "There therefore will I give thee my love; I will repeat the professions of it, honour thee with the tokens of it; and the out-goings of my soul towards thee in adorations and desires shall be quickened and enlarged, and my heart offered up to thee in a holy fire."

2. She promises him her best provision, So 7:13. "There we shall find pleasant odours, for the mandrakes give a smell;" the love-flowers or lovely ones (so the word signifies), or the love-fruits; it was something that was in all respects very grateful, so valuable that Rachel and Leah had like to have fallen out above it, Ge 30:14. "We shall also find that which is good for food, as well as pleasant to the eye, all the rarities that the country affords: At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits." Note,

(1.) The fruits and exercises of grace are pleasant to the Lord Jesus.

(2.) These must be carefully laid up for him, devoted to his service and honour, must be always ready to us when we have occasion for them, as that which is laid up at our gates, that, by our bringing forth much fruit, he may be glorified, Joh 15:18.

(3.) There is a great variety of these pleasant fruits, with which our souls should be well stocked; we must have all sorts of them, grace for all occasions, new and old, as the good householder has in his treasury, not only the products of this year, but remainders of the last, Mt 13:52. We must not only have that ready to us, for the service of Christ, which we have heard, and learned, and experienced lately, but must retain that which we have formerly gathered; nor must we content ourselves only with what we have laid up in store in the days of old, but, as long as we live, must be still adding something new to it, that our stock may increase, and we may be thoroughly furnished for every good work.

(4.) Those that truly love Christ will think all they have, even their most pleasant fruits, and what they have treasured up most carefully, too little to be bestowed upon him, and he is welcome to it all; if it were more and better, it should be at his service. It is all from him, and therefore it is fit it should be all for him.

13 The mandrakes give a smell,
and at our gates *are* all manner of pleasant *fruits*, new and old,
which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

Song of Solomon-8

1 O that thou *wert* as my brother,
that sucked the breasts of my mother!
When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee;
yea, I should not be despised.

Here, I The spouse wishes for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but, the nuptials being yet not solemnized and published (the bride, the Lamb's wife, will not be completely ready till his second coming), she was obliged to be shy and to keep at some distance; she

therefore wishes she may be taken for his sister, he having called her so (So 5:1), and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him that a sister has with a brother, an own brother, that sucked the breasts of the same mother with her, who would therefore be exceedingly tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin.

Some make this to be the prayer of the Old-Testament saints for the hastening of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be the better acquainted with him, when, forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he should also himself likewise take part of the same, and not be ashamed to call them brethren. It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they might receive the Spirit of sanctification, and so Christ must be as their brother, that is, that they might be as his brethren, which then they are when by grace they are made partakers of a divine nature, and he that sanctifies, and those that are sanctified, are both of one, Heb 2:11, &c. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parents, that have been nursed at the same breast, to be very loving to and tender of one another; such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her beloved, that she might call him brother.

2. She promises herself then the satisfaction of making a more open profession of her relation to him than at present she could make: "When I should find thee without, any where, even before company, I would kiss thee, as a sister does her own brother, especially her little brother that is now sucking the breasts of her mother" (for so some understand it); "I would use all the decent freedom with thee that could be, and should not be despised for it, as doing any thing unbecoming the modesty of my sex." The church, since Christ's incarnation, can better own him than she could before, when she would have been laughed at for being so much in love with one that was not yet born. Christ has become as our brother; wherever we find him, therefore, let us be ready to own our relation to him and affection for him, and not fear being despised for it, nor regard that any more than David did when he danced before the ark. If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile. Nay, let us hope that we shall not be despised so much as some imagine. Of the maid-servants of whom thou hast spoken I shall

be had in honour. Wherever we find the image of Christ, though it be without, among those that do not follow him with us, we must love it, and testify that love, and we shall not be despised for it, but catholic charity will gain us respect.

3. She promises to improve the opportunity she should then have for cultivating an acquaintance with him (So 8:2): "I would lead thee, as my brother, by the arm, and hang upon thee; I would show thee all the house of my precious things, would bring thee into my mother's house, into the church, into the solemn assemblies (So 3:4), into my closet" (for there the saints have most familiar communion with Christ), "and there thou wouldst instruct me" (so some read it), as brethren inform their sisters of what they desire to be instructed in. Those that know Christ shall be taught of him; and therefore we should desire communion with Christ that we may receive instruction from him. He has come that he might give us an understanding. Or, "My mother would instruct me when I have thee with me." It is the presence of Christ in and with his church that makes the word and ordinances instructive to her children, who shall all be taught of God.

4. She promises him to bid him welcome to the best she had; she would cause him to drink of her spiced wine and the juice of her pomegranate, and bid him welcome to it, wishing it better for his sake. The exercise of grace and the performance of duty are spiced wine to the Lord Jesus, very acceptable to him, as expressive of a grateful sense of his favours. Those that are pleased with Christ must study to be pleasing to him; and they will not find him hard to be pleased. He reckons hearty welcome his best entertainment; and, if he have that, he will bring his entertainment along with him.

5. She doubts not but to experience his tender care of her and affection to her (So 8:3), that she should be supported by his power and kept from fainting in the hardest services and sufferings (His left hand shall be under my head) and that she should be comforted with his love--His right hand should embrace me. Thus Christ laid his right hand upon John when he was ready to die away, Re 1:17. See also Da 10:10,18. It may be read as it is So 2:6, His left hand is under my head (for the words are the same in the original) and so it expresses an immediate answer to her prayer; she was

answered with strength in her soul, Ps 138:3. While we are following hard after Christ his right hand sustains us, Ps 63:8. Underneath are the everlasting arms.

6. She charges those about her to take heed of doing any thing to interrupt the pleasing communion she now had with her beloved (So 8:4), as she had done before, when he thus strengthened and comforted her with his presence (So 2:7): Let me charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, and reason with you, Why should you stir up, and why should you awake, my love, until he will? The church, our common mother, charges all her children that they never do any thing to provoke Christ to withdraw, which we are very prone to do. Why should you put such an affront upon him? Why should you be such enemies to yourselves? We should thus reason with ourselves when we are tempted to do that which will grieve the Spirit. "What! Am I weary of Christ's presence, that I affront him and provoke him to depart from me? Why should I do that which he will take so unkindly and which I shall certainly repent of?"

2 I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house,
who would instruct me:
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the
juice of my pomegranate.
3 His left hand *should be* under my head, and
his right hand should embrace me.
4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that
ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love,
until he please.

Love Is Strong as Death

5 Who *is* this that cometh up from the wilderness,
leaning upon her beloved?
I raised thee up under the apple tree:
there thy mother brought thee forth;
there she brought thee forth *that* bare thee.

Here, the spouse is much admired by those about her. It comes in in a parenthesis, but in it gospel-grace lies as plain, and as much above ground, as any where in this mystical song: Who is this that

comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Some make these the words of the bridegroom, expressing himself well pleased with her reliance on him and resignation of herself to his guidance. They are rather the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she spoke (So 8:4); they see her, and bless her. The angels in heaven, and all her friends on earth, are the joyful spectators of her bliss. The Jewish church came up from the wilderness supported by the divine power and favour, De 32:10,11. The Christian church was raised up from a low and desolate condition by the grace of Christ relied on, Ga 4:27. Particular believers are amiable, nay, admirable, and divine grace is to be admired in them, when by the power of that grace they are brought up from the wilderness, leaning with a holy confidence and complacency upon Jesus Christ their beloved. This bespeaks the beauty of a soul, and the wonders of divine grace,

1. In the conversion of sinners. A sinful state is a wilderness, remote from communion with God, barren and dry, and in which there is no true comfort; it is a wandering wanting state. Out of this wilderness we are concerned to come up, by true repentance, in the strength of the grace of Christ, supported by our beloved and carried in his arms.

2. In the consolation of saints. A soul convinced of sin, and truly humbled for it, is in a wilderness, quite at a loss; and there is no coming out of this wilderness but leaning on Christ as our beloved, by faith, and not leaning to our own understanding, nor trusting to any righteousness or strength of our own as sufficient for us, but going forth, and going on, in the strength of the Lord God, and making mention of his righteousness, even his only, who is the Lord our righteousness. 3. In the salvation of those that belong to Christ. We must go up from the wilderness of this world having our conversation in heaven; and, at death, we must remove thither, leaning upon Christ, must live and die by faith in him. To me to live is Christ, and it is he that is gain in death.

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a
seal upon thine arm:
for love *is* strong as death;
jealousy *is* cruel as the grave:
the coals thereof *are* coals of fire,

which hath a most vehement flame.
7 Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it:
if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it
would utterly be contemned.
8 We have a little sister, and she
hath no breasts:
what shall we do for our sister
in the day when she shall be spoken for?

Christ and his spouse having sufficiently confirmed their love to each other, and agreed it to be on both sides strong as death and inviolable, they are here, in these verses, like a loving husband and his wife, consulting together about their affairs, and considering what they should do. Yoke-fellows, having laid their hearts together, lay their heads together, to contrive about their relations and about their estates; and, accordingly, this happy pair are here advising with one another about a sister, and a vineyard.

I. They are here consulting about their sister, their little sister, and the disposing of her.

1 The spouse proposes her case with a compassionate concern (So 8:8): We have a little sister and she has no breasts (she has not grown up to maturity); what shall we do for this little sister of ours in the day that she shall be spoken for, so as that we may do well for her?

(1.) This may be understood as spoken by the Jewish church concerning the Gentile world. God has espoused the church of the Jews to himself, and she was richly endowed, but what shall become of the poor Gentiles, the barren that has not borne, and the desolate? Isa 54:1. Their condition (say the pious Jews) is very deplorable and forlorn; they are sisters, children of the same fathers, God and Adam, but they are little, because not dignified with the knowledge of God; they have no breasts, no divine revelation, no scriptures, no ministers, no breasts of consolation drawn out to them, when they might suck, being strangers to the covenants of promise, no breasts of instruction themselves to draw out to their children, to nourish them, 1Pe 2:2. What shall we do

for them? We can but pity them, and pray for them. Lord, what wilt thou do for them?

The saints, in Solomon's time, might know, from David's psalms, that God had mercy in store for them, and they begged it might be hastened to them. Now the tables are turned; the Gentiles are betrothed to Christ, and ought to return the kindness by an equal concern for the bringing in of the Jews again, our eldest sister, that once had breasts, but now has none. If we take it in this sense, the unbelieving posterity of these pious Jews contradicted this prayer of their fathers; for, when the day came that the Gentiles should be spoken for and courted to Christ, instead of considering what to do for them they plotted to do all they could against them, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, 1Th 2:16. Or,

(2.) It may be applied to any other that belong to the election of grace, but are yet uncalled. They are remotely related to Christ and his church, and sisters to them both, other sheep that are not of this fold, Joh 10:16,Ac 18:10. They have no breasts, none yet fashioned (Eze 16:7), no affection to Christ, no principle of grace. The day will come when they shall be spoken for, when the chosen shall be called, shall be courted for Christ, by the ministers, the friends of the bridegroom. A blessed day it will be, a day of visitation. What shall we do, in that day, to promote the match, to conquer their coyness, and persuade them to consent to Christ and present themselves chaste virgins to him? Note, Those that through grace are brought to Christ themselves should contrive what they may do to help others to him, to carry on the great design of his gospel, which is to espouse souls to Christ and convert sinners to him from whom they have departed.

2. Christ soon determines what to do in this case, and his spouse agrees with him in it (So 8:9): "If she be a wall, if the good work be once begun with the Gentiles, with the souls that are to be called in, if the little sister, when she shall be spoken for by the gospel, will but receive the word, and build herself upon Christ the foundation, and frame her doings to turn to the Lord, as the wall is in order to the house, we will build upon her a palace of silver, or build her up into such a palace; we will carry on the good work that is begun, till the wall become a palace, the wall of stone a

palace of silver," which goes beyond the boast of Augustus Cæsar, that what he found brick he left marble.

This little sister, when once she is joined to the Lord, shall be made to grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph 2:21,22. If she be a door, when this palace comes to be finished, and the doors of this wall set up, which was the last thing done (Ne 7:1), then we will enclose here with boards of cedar; we will carefully and effectually protect her, that she shall receive no damage. We will do it; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all concur in contriving, carrying on, and crowning, the blessed work when the time comes. Whatever is wanting shall be set in order, and the work of faith shall be fulfilled with power. Though the beginnings of grace be small, the latter end shall greatly increase. The church is in care concerning those that are yet uncalled. "Let me alone," says Christ; "I will do all that which is necessary to be done for them. Trust me with it."

3. The spouse takes this occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness his kindness to her, So 8:10. She is very willing to trust him with her little sister, for she herself had had great experience of his grace, and, for her part, she owed her all to him: I am a wall, and my breasts like towers. This she speaks, not as upbraiding her little sister that had no breasts, but comforting her concerning her, that he who had made her what she was, who had built her up upon himself and made her to grow up to maturity, could and would do the same kindness for those whose case she bore upon her heart. Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour. See,

(1.) What she values herself upon, her having found favour in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Those are happy, truly happy, and for ever so, that have the favour of God and are accepted of him.

(2.) How she ascribes the good work of God in her to the good-will of God towards her: "He has made me a wall and my breasts as towers, and then, in that instance more than in any thing, I experienced his love to me." Hail, thou that art highly favoured, for in thee Christ is formed.

(3.) What pleasure God takes in the work of his own hands. When we are made as a wall, as a brazen wall (Jer 1:18,15:20), that stands firmly against the blast of the terrible ones (Isa 25:4), then God takes delight in us to do us good.

(4.) With what joy and triumph we ought to speak of God's grace towards us, and with what satisfaction we should look back upon the special times and seasons when we were in his eyes as those that find favour; these were days never to be forgotten.

II. They are here consulting about a vineyard they had in the country, the church of Christ on earth considered under the notion of a vineyard (So 8:11,12): Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon, had a kingdom in the possession of a multitude, a numerous people. As he was a type of Christ, so his vineyard was a type of the church of Christ. Our Saviour has given us a key to these verses in the parable of the vineyard let out to the unthankful husbandmen, Mt 21:33. The bargain was that, every one of the tenants having so much of the vineyard assigned him as would contain 1000 vines, he was to pay the annual rent of 1000 pieces of silver; for we read (Isa 7:23) that in a fruitful soil there were 1000 vines at 1000 silverlings. Observe,

1. Christ's church is his vineyard, a pleasant and peculiar place, privileged with many honours; he delights to walk in it, as a man in his vineyard, and is pleased with its fruits.

2. He has entrusted each of us with his vineyard, as keepers of it. The privileges of the church are that good thing which he has committed to us, to be kept as a sacred trust. The service of the church is to be our business, according as our capacity is. Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. Adam, in innocency, was to dress the garden, and to keep it.

3. He expects rent from those that are employed in his vineyard and entrusted with it. He comes, seeking fruit, and requires gospel-duty of all those that enjoy gospel-privileges. Every one, of what rank or degree soever, must bring glory and honour to Christ, and

do some service to the interest of his kingdom in the world, in consideration of what benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of the privileges of the vineyard.

4. Though Christ has let out his vineyard to keepers, yet still it is his, and he has his eye always upon it for good; for, if he did not watch over it night and day (Isa 27:1,2), the watchmen, to whom he has let it out, would keep it but in vain, Ps 127:1. Some take these for Christ's words (So 8:12): My vineyard, which is mine, is before me; and they observe how he dwells upon his property in it: It is my vineyard, which is mine; so dear is his church to him, it is his own in the world (Joh 13:1), and therefore he will always have it under his protection; it is his own, and he will look after it.

5. The church, that enjoys the privileges of the vineyard, must have them always before her. The keeping of the vineyard requires constant care and diligence. They are rather the words of the spouse: My vineyard, which is mine, is before me. She has lamented her fault and folly in not keeping her own vineyard (So 1:6), but now she resolves to reform. Our hearts are our vineyards, which we must keep with all diligence; and therefore we must have a watchful jealous eye upon them at all times.

6. Our great care must be to pay our rent for what we hold of Christ's vineyard, and to see that we do not go behind-hand, nor disappoint the messengers he sends to receive the fruits (Mt 21:34): Thou, O Solomon! must have 1000, and shalt have. The main of the profits belong to Christ; to him and his praise all our fruits must be dedicated.

7. If we be careful to give Christ the praise of our church-privileges, we may then take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of them. If the owner of the vineyard have had his due, the keepers of it shall be well paid for their cares and pains; they shall have 200, which sum, no doubt, was looked upon as a good profit. Those that work for Christ are working for themselves, and shall be unspeakable gainers by it.

9 If she *be* a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver:
and if she *be* a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

10 I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers:
then was I in his eyes as one that found favor.

She addresses herself to her beloved.

1. She puts him in mind of the former experience which she and others had had of comfort and success in applying to him.

(1.) For her own part: "I raised thee up under the apple tree, that is, I have many a time wrestled with thee by prayer and have prevailed. When I was alone in the acts of devotion, retired in the orchard, under the apple-tree" (which Christ himself was compared to, So 2:3), as Nathanael under the fig-tree (Joh 1:48), "meditating and praying, then I raised thee up, to help me and comfort me," as the disciples raised him up in the storm, saying, Master, carest thou not that we perish? (Mk 4:38), and the church (Ps 44:23), Awake, why sleepest thou? Note, The experience we have had of Christ's readiness to yield to the importunities of our faith and prayer should encourage us to continue instant in our addresses to him, to strive more earnestly, and not to faint. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, Ps 34:4.

(2.) Others also had like experience of comfort in Christ, as it follows there (Ps 34:5), They looked unto him, as well as I, and were lightened. There thy mother brought thee forth, the universal church, or believing souls, in whom Christ was formed, Ga 4:15. They were in pain for the comfort of an interest in thee, and travailed in pain with great sorrow (so the word here signifies); but they brought thee forth; the pangs did not continue always; those that had travailed in convictions at last brought forth in consolations, and the pain was forgotten for joy of the Saviour's birth. By this very similitude our Saviour illustrates the joy which his disciples would have in his return to them, after a mournful separation for a time, Joh 16:21,22. After the bitter pangs of repentance many a one has had the blessed birth of comfort; why then may not I?

2. She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued and made more intimate (So 8:6): Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm.

(1.) "Let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love." This is that which all those desire above any thing that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ.

(2.) "Let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be ensured, as that deed which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communications of it, to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it."

(3.) "Let me be always near and dear to thee, as the signet on thy right hand, not to be parted with (Jer 22:24), engraven upon the palms of thy hands (Isa 49:14), be loved with a peculiar love."

(4.) "Be thou my high priest; let my name be written on thy breast-plate, nearer thy heart, as the names of all the tribes were engraven like the engravings of a signet in twelve precious stones on the breast-plate of Aaron, and also on two precious stones on the two shoulders or arms of the ephod," Ex 28:11,12,21.

(5.) "Let thy power be engaged for me, as an evidence of thy love to me; let me be not only a seal upon thy heart, but a seal upon thy arm; let me be ever borne up in thy arms, and know it to my comfort." Some make these to be the words of Christ to his spouse, commanding her to be ever mindful of him and of his love to her; however, if we desire and expect that Christ should set us as a seal on his heart, surely we cannot do less than set him as a seal on ours.

3. To enforce this petition, she pleads the power of love, of her love to him, which constrained her to be thus pressing for the tokens of his love to her.

(1.) Love is a violent vigorous passion.

[1.] It is strong as death. The pains of a disappointed lover are like the pains of death; nay, the pains of death are slighted, and made nothing of, in pursuit of the beloved object. Christ's love to us was strong as death, for it broke through death itself. He loved us, and

gave himself for us. The love of true believers to Christ is strong as death, for it makes them dead to every thing else; it even parts between soul and body, while the soul, upon the wings of devout affections, soars upward to heaven, an even forgets that it is yet clothed and clogged with flesh. Paul, in a rapture of this love, knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. By it a believer is crucified to the world.

[2.] Jealousy is cruel as the grave, which swallows up and devours all; those that truly love Christ are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him, and especially jealous of themselves, lest they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them, and, rather than do so, would pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand, than which what can be more cruel? Weak and trembling saints, who conceive a jealousy of Christ, doubting of his love to them, find that jealousy to prey upon them like the grave; nothing wastes the spirits more; but it is an evidence of the strength of their love to him.

(3.) The coals thereof, its lamps, and flames, and beams, are very strong, and burn with incredible force, as the coals of fire that have a most vehement flame, a flame of the Lord (so some read it), a powerful piercing flame, as the lightning, Ps 29:7. Holy love is a fire that begets a vehement heat in the soul, and consumes the dross and chaff that are in it, melts it down like wax into a new form, and carries it upwards as the sparks towards God and heaven.

(2.) Love is a valiant victorious passion. Holy love is so; the reigning love of God in the soul is constant and firm, and will not be drawn off from him either by fair means or foul, by life or death, Ro 8:38.

[1.] Death, and all its terrors, will not frighten a believer from loving Christ: Many waters, though they will quench fire, cannot quench this love, no, nor the floods drown it, So 8:7. The noise of these waters will strike no terror upon it; let them do their worst, Christ shall still be the best beloved. The overflowing of these waters will strike no damp upon it, but it will enable a man to rejoice in tribulation. Though he slay me, I will love him and trust in him. No waters could quench Christ's love to us, nor any floods

drown it; he waded through the greatest difficulties, even seas of blood. Love sat king upon the floods; let nothing then abate our love to him.

[2.] Life, and all its comforts, will not entice a believer from loving Christ: If a man could hire him with all the substance of his house, to take his love off from Christ and set it upon the world and the flesh again, he would reject the proposal with the utmost disdain; as Christ, when the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them were offered him, to buy him off from his undertaking, said, Get thee hence, Satan. It would utterly be contemned. Offer those things to those that know no better. Love will enable us to repel and triumph over temptations from the smiles of the world, as much as from its frowns. Some give this sense of it: If a man would give all the substance of his house to Christ, as an equivalent instead of love, to excuse it, it would be contemned. He seeks not ours, but us, the heart, not the wealth. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it is nothing, 1Co 13:1. Thus believers stand affected to Christ: the gifts of his providence cannot satisfy them without the assurances of his love.

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
he let out the vineyard unto keepers;
every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand *pieces* of silver.

12 My vineyard, which *is* mine, *is* before me:
thou, O Solomon, *must have* a thousand,
and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Christ and his spouse are here parting for a while; she must stay below in the gardens on earth, where she has work to do for him; he must remove to the mountains of spices in heaven, where he has business to attend for her, as an advocate with the Father. Now observe with what mutual endearments they part.

I. He desires to hear often from her. She is ready at her pen; she must be sure to write to him; she knows how to direct (So 8:13): "Thou that, for the present, dwellest in the gardens, dressing and keeping them till thou remove from the garden below to the paradise above--thou, O believer! whoever thou art, that dwellest in the gardens of solemn ordinances, in the gardens of church-

fellowship and communion, the companions are so happy as to hear thy voice, cause me to hear it too." Observe,

1. Christ's friends should keep a good correspondence one with another, and, as dear companions, speak often to one another (Mal 3:16) and hearken to one another's voice; they should edify, encourage, and respect one another. They are companions in the kingdom and patience of Christ, and therefore, as fellow-travellers, should keep up mutual freedom, and not be shy of, nor strange to, one another. The communion of saints is an article of our covenant, as well as an article of our creed, to exhort one another daily, and be glad to be exhorted by another. Hearken to the voice of the church, as far as it agrees with the voice of Christ; his companions will do so.

2. In the midst of our communion with one another we must not neglect our communion with Christ, but let him see our countenance and hear our voice; he here bespeaks it: "The companions hearken to thy voice; it is a pleasure to them; cause me to hear it. Thou makest thy complaints to them when any thing grieves thee; why does thou not bring them to me, and let me hear them? Thou art free with them; be as free with me; pour out thy heart to me." Thus Christ, when he left his disciples, ordered them to send to him upon every occasion. Ask, and you shall receive.

Note, Christ not only accepts and answers, but even courts his people's prayers, not reckoning them a trouble to him, but an honour and a delight, Pr 15:8. We cause him to hear our prayers when we not only pray, but wrestle and strive in prayer. He loves to be pressingly importuned, which is not the manner of men. Some read it, "Cause me to be heard; thou hast often an opportunity of speaking to thy companions, and they hearken to what thou sayest; speak of me to them; let my name be heard among them; let me be the subject of thy discourse." "One word of Christ" (as archbishop Usher used to say) "before you part." No subject is more becoming, or should be more pleasing.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
the companions hearken to thy voice:
cause me to hear *it*.

She desires his speedy return to her (So 8:14): Make haste, my beloved, to come again, and receive me to thyself; be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of spices; let no time be lost; it is pleasant dwelling here in the gardens, but to depart, and be with thee, is far better; that therefore is what I wish, and wait, and long for. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Observe,

1. Though Jesus Christ be now retired, he will return. The heavens, those high mountains of sweet spices, must contain him till the times of refreshing shall come; and those times will come, when every eye shall see him, in all the pomp and power of the upper and better world, the mystery of God being finished and the mystical body completed.

2. True believers, as they are looking for, so they are hastening to, the coming of that day of the Lord, not that they would have him make more haste than good speed, but that the intermediate counsels may all be fulfilled, and then that the end may come--the sooner the better. Not that they think him slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but thus they express the strength of their affections to him and the vastness of their expectations from him when he comes again.

3. Those only that can in sincerity call Christ their beloved, their best beloved, can, upon good grounds, desire him to hasten his second coming. As for those whose hearts go a whoring after the world, and who set their affections on the things of the earth, they cannot love his appearing, but dread it rather, because then the earth, and all the things of it which they have chosen for their portion, will be burnt up. But those that truly love Christ long for his second coming, because it will be the crown both of his glory and their bliss.

4. The comfort and satisfaction which we sometimes have in communion with God in grace here should make us breathe the more earnestly after the immediate vision and complete fruition of him in the kingdom of glory. The spouse, after an endearing conference with her beloved, finding it must break off, concludes with this affectionate request for the perfecting and perpetuating

of this happiness in the future state. The clusters of grapes that meet us in this wilderness should make us long for the full vintage in Canaan. If a day in his courts be so sweet, what then will an eternity within the veil be! If this be heaven, O that I were there!

5. It is good to conclude our devotions with a joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed, and holy humble breathings towards it. We should not part but with the prospect of meeting again. It is good to conclude every sabbath with thoughts of the everlasting sabbath, which shall have no night at the end of it, nor any week-day to come after it. It is good to conclude every sacrament with thoughts of the everlasting feast, when we shall sit down with Christ at his table in his kingdom, to rise no more, and drink of the wine new there, and to break up every religious assembly in hopes of the general assembly of the church of the first-born, when time and days shall be no more: Let the blessed Jesus hasten that blessed day. Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

14 Make haste, my beloved,
and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon
the mountains of spices.

The Book of Prophets

Isaiah
[Isaiah]

Isaiah-1

A Sinful Nation

1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning
Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and*
Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Here is, I The name of the prophet, Isaiah, or Jesahiahu (for so it is in the Hebrew), which, in the New Testament is read Esaias. His name signifies the salvation of the Lord--a proper name for a prophet by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour and of the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be the son of Amoz, not Amos the prophet (the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English), but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother, or son, of Amaziah king of Judah, a tradition as uncertain as that rule which they give, that, where a prophet's father is named, he also was himself a prophet. The prophets' pupils and successors are indeed often called their sons, but we have few instances, if any, of their own sons being their successors.

II The nature of the prophecy. It is a vision, being revealed to him in a vision, when he was awake, and heard the words of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty (as Balaam speaks, Nu 24:4), though perhaps it was not so illustrious a vision at first as that afterwards, Isa 6:1 The prophets were called seers, or seeing men, and therefore their prophecies are fitly called visions. It was what

he saw with the eyes of his mind, and foresaw as clearly by divine revelation, was as well assured of it, as fully apprised of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Note 1. God's prophets saw what they spoke of, knew what they said, and require our belief of nothing but what they themselves believed and were sure of, Joh 6:69,1Jo 1:1. 2. They could not but speak what they saw, because they saw how much all about them were concerned in it, Ac 4:20,2Co 4:13.

III. The subject of the prophecy. It was what he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis; and there is little in it relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, of whom there is so much said in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the main substance of it, and is therefore said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the other nations spoken of being such as the people of the Jews had concern with. Isaiah brings to them in a special manner,

1. Instruction; for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem that to them pertain the oracles of God. 2. Reproof and threatening; for if in Judah, where God is known, if in Salem, where his name is great, iniquity be found, they, sooner than any other, shall be reckoned with for it. 3. Comfort and encouragement in evil times; for the children of Zion shall be joyful in their king.

IV. The date of the prophecy. Isaiah prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. By this it appears,

1. That he prophesied long, especially if (as the Jews say) he was at last put to death by Manasseh, to a cruel death, being sawn asunder, to which some suppose the apostle refers, Heb 11:37. From the year that king Uzziah died (Isa 6:1) to Hezekiah's sickness and recovery was forty-seven years; how much before, and after, he prophesied, is not certain; some reckon sixty, others eighty years in all. It was an honour to him, and a happiness to his

country, that he was continued so long in his usefulness; and we must suppose both that he began young and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied, as the priests were, to a certain age, for the beginning or ending of their administration.

2. That he passed through variety of times. Jotham was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, and no doubt gave encouragement to and took advice from this prophet, were patrons to him, and he a privy-counsellor to them; but between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very profane and wicked; then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and, it is likely, forced to abscond. Good men and good ministers must expect bad times in this world, and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to such a degree that the doors of the house of the Lord were shut up and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem; and Isaiah, with all his divine eloquence and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

We will hope to meet with a brighter and more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book; but truly here, in the beginning of it, every thing looks very bad, very black, with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, has such a dismal aspect as this?

I The prophet, though he speaks in God's name, yet, despairing to gain audience with the children of his people, addresses himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention (Isa 1:2): Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid senseless people. Let the lights of the heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to its time their irregularity. Moses begins thus in De 32:1, to which the prophet here refers,

intimating that now those times had come which Moses there foretold, De 31:29. Or this is an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels and then to the inhabitants of the upper and lower world. Let them judge between God and his vineyard; can either produce such an instance of ingratitude? Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare his righteousness, Mic 6:1,2,Ps 50:6.

II. He charges them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. Let heaven and earth hear and wonder at,

1. God's gracious dealings with such a peevish provoking people as they were: "I have nourished and brought them up as children; they have been well fed and well taught" (De 32:6); "I have magnified and exalted them" (so some), "not only made them grow, but made them great--not only maintained them, but preferred them--not only trained them up, but raised them high." Note, We owe the continuance of our lives and comforts, and all our advancements, to God's fatherly care of us and kindness to us.

2. Their ill-natured conduct towards him, who was so tender of them: "They have rebelled against me," or (as some read it) "they have revolted from me; they have been deserters, nay traitors, against my crown and dignity." Note, All the instances of God's favour to us, as the God both of our nature and of our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him and all our presumptuous oppositions to him--children, and yet rebels!

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

He attributes this to their ignorance and inconsideration (Isa 1:3): The ox knows, but Israel does not. Observe,

1 The sagacity of the ox and the ass, which are not only brute creatures, but of the dullest sort; yet the ox has such a sense of duty as to know his owner and to serve him, to submit to his yoke and to draw in it; the ass has such a sense of interest as to know

has master's crib, or manger, where he is fed, and to abide by it; he will go to that of himself if he be turned loose. A fine pass man has come to when he is shamed even in knowledge and understanding by these silly animals, and is not only sent to school to them (Pr 6:6,7), but set in a form below them (Jer 8:7), taught more than the beasts of the earth (Job 35:11) and yet knowing less.

2 The sottishness and stupidity of Israel. God is their owner and proprietor. He made us, and his we are more than our cattle are ours; he has provided well for us; providence is our Master's crib; yet many that are called the people of God do not know and will not consider this, but ask, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? He is not our owner; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? He has no crib for us to feed at." He had complained (Isa 1:2) of the obstinacy of their wills; They have rebelled against me. Here he runs it up to its cause: "Therefore they have rebelled because they do not know, they do not consider." The understanding is darkened, and therefore the whole soul is alienated from the life of God, Eph 4:18. "Israel does not know, though their land is a land of light and knowledge; in Judah is God known, yet, because they do not live up to what they know, it is in effect as if they did not know. They know; but their knowledge does them no good, because they do not consider what they know; they do not apply it to their case, nor their minds to it."

Note, (1.) Even among those that profess themselves God's people, that have the advantages and lie under the engagements of his people, there are many that are very careless in the affairs of their souls.

(2.) Inconsideration of what we do know is as great an enemy to us in religion as ignorance of what we should know.

(3.) Therefore men revolt from God, and rebel against him, because they do not know and consider their obligations to God in duty, gratitude, and interest.

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

He laments the universal pravity and corruption of their church and kingdom. The disease of sin was epidemic, and all orders and degrees of men were infected with it; Ah sinful nation! Isa 1:4. The prophet bemoans those that would not bemoan themselves: Alas for them! Woe to them! He speaks with holy indignation at their degeneracy, and a dread of the consequences of it. See here,

1. How he aggravates their sin, and shows the malignity that there was in it, Isa 1:4.

(1.) The wickedness was universal. They were a sinful nation; the generality of the people were vicious and profane. They were so in their national capacity. In the management of their public treaties abroad, and in the administration of public justice at home, they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national.

(2.) It was very great and heinous in its nature. They were laden with iniquity; the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt, lay very heavily upon them. It was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them, and one which they could never clear themselves from; their wickedness was upon them as a talent of lead, Zec 5:7,8. Their sin, as it did easily beset them and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, Heb 12:1.

(3.) They came of a bad stock, were a seed of evil-doers. Treachery ran in their blood; they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking and less curable. They rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, to fill up the measure of their iniquity, Nu 32:14. They were a race and family of rebels.

(4.) Those that were themselves debauched did what they could to debauch others. They were not only corrupt children, born tainted, but children that were corrupters, that propagated vice, and infected others with it--not only sinners, but tempters--not only actuated by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called children, God's children, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is of the most malignant influence.

(5.) Their sin was a treacherous departure from God. They were deserters from their allegiance: "They have forsaken the Lord, to whom they had joined themselves; they have gone away backward, are alienated or separated from God, have turned their back upon him, deserted their colours, and quitted their service." When they were urged forward, they ran backward, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, as a backsliding heifer, Ho 4:16.

(6.) It was an impudent and daring defiance of him: They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger wilfully and designedly; they knew what would anger him, and that they did. Note, The backslidings of those that have professed religion and relation to God are in a special manner provoking to him.

2. How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body, all overspread with leprosy, or, like Job's, with sore boils, Isa 1:5,6.

(1.) The distemper has seized the vitals, and so threatens to be mortal. Diseases in the head and heart are most dangerous; now the head, the whole head, is sick--the heart, the whole heart, is faint. They had become corrupt in their judgment: the leprosy was in their head. They were utterly unclean; their affection to God and religion was cold and gone; the things which remained were ready to die away, Re 3:2.

(2.) It has overspread the whole body, and so becomes exceedingly noisome; From the sole of the foot even to the head, from the meanest peasant to the greatest peer, there is no soundness, no good principles, no religion (for that is the health of the soul), nothing but wounds and bruises, guilt and corruption, the sad effects of Adam's fall, noisome to the holy God, painful to the sensible soul; they were so to David when he complained (Ps 38:5), My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. See Ps 32:3,4. No attempts were made for reformation, or, if they were, they proved ineffectual: The wounds have not been closed, not bound up, nor mollified with ointment. While sin remains unrepented of the wounds are unsearched, unwashed, the proud flesh in them not cut out, and while, consequently, it remains unpardoned, the wounds are not mollified or closed up, nor any thing done towards the healing of them and the preventing of their fatal consequences.

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more:
the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it;
but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been
closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

7 Your country *is* desolate, your cities *are* burned with fire: your land,
strangers devour it in your presence, and *it is* desolate, as overthrown by
strangers.

He sadly bewails the judgments of God which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and their incorrigibleness under those judgments.

1. Their kingdom was almost ruined, Isa 1:7. So miserable were they that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid that they needed to be told this, to have it shown to them. "Look and see how it is; your country is desolate; the ground is not cultivated, for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted, Jdg 5:7. And thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, all grown over with thorns, Pr 24:31. Your cities are burned with fire, by the enemies that invade you" (fire and sword commonly go together); "as for the fruits of your land, which should be food for

your families, strangers devour them; and, to your greater vexation, it is before your eyes, and you cannot prevent it; you starve while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance. The overthrow of your country is as the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders, as one might expect it should be used by strangers."

Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion (the temple built on Zion was a mother, a nursing mother, to Jerusalem), or Zion itself, the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed as a cottage in a vineyard, which, when the vintage is over, nobody dwells in or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable as a lodge or hut, in a garden of cucumbers; and every person is afraid of coming near it, and solicitous to remove his effects out of it, as if it were a besieged city, Isa 1:8. And some think, it is a calamitous state of the kingdom that is represented by a diseased body, Isa 1:6. Probably this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried many away into captivity, 2Ch 28:5,17,18.

Note, National impiety and immorality bring national desolation. Canaan, the glory of all lands, Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin; and sin made them so, that great mischief-maker.

2. Yet they were not all reformed, and therefore God threatens to take another course with them (Isa 1:5): "Why should you be stricken any more, with any expectation of doing you good by it, when you increase revolts as your rebukes are increased? You will revolt more and more, as you have done," as Ahaz particularly did, who, in his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2Ch 28:22. Thus the physician, when he sees the patient's case desperate, troubles him no more with physic; and the father resolves to correct his child no more when, finding him hardened, he determines to disinherit him.

Note, (1.) There are those who are made worse by the methods God takes to make them better; the more they are stricken the more they revolt; their corruptions, instead of being mortified, are irritated and exasperated by their afflictions, and their hearts more hardened.

(2.) God, sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, ceases to correct those who have been long incorrigible, and whom therefore he designs to destroy. The reprobate silver shall be cast, not into the furnace, but to the dunghill, Jer 6:29,30. See Ezek 24:13,Ho 4:14. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

9 Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, *and* we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

He comforts himself with the consideration of a remnant that should be the monuments of divine grace and mercy, notwithstanding this general corruption and desolation, Isa 1:9. See here,

1. How near they were to an utter extirpation. They were almost like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect both of sin and ruin, had grown almost so bad that there could not have been found ten righteous men among them, and almost as miserable as if none had been left alive, but their country turned into a sulphureous lake. Divine Justice said, Make them as Admah; set them as Zeboim; but Mercy said, How shall I do it? Ho 11:8,9.

2. What it was that saved them from it: The Lord of hosts left unto them a very small remnant, that were kept pure from the common apostasy and kept safe and alive from the common calamity. This is quoted by the apostle (Ro 9:27), and applied to those few of the Jewish nation who in his time embraced Christianity, when the body of the people rejected it, and in whom the promises made to the fathers were accomplished.

Note, (1.) In the worst of times there is a remnant preserved from iniquity and reserved for mercy, as Noah and his family in the deluge, Lot and his in the destruction of Sodom. Divine grace triumphs in distinguishing by an act of sovereignty.

(2.) This remnant is often a very small one in comparison with the vast number of revolting ruined sinners. Multitude is no mark of the true church. Christ's is a little flock.

(3.) It is God's work to sanctify and save some, when others are left to perish in their impurity. It is the work of his power as the Lord of hosts. Except he had left us that remnant, there would have been none left; the corrupters (Isa 1:4) did what they could to debauch all, and the devourers (Isa 1:7) to destroy all, and they would have prevailed of God himself had not interposed to secure to himself a remnant, who are bound to give him all the glory.

(4.) It is good for a people that have been saved from utter ruin to look back and see how near they were to it, just upon the brink of it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap, and that that was owing to a good God, who left them these good men. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

A Call to True Repentance

10 Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

Here, I. God calls to them (but calls in vain) to hear his word, Isa 1:10.

1 The title he gives them is very strange; You rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah. This intimates what a righteous thing it would have been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of ruin (Isa 1:9), because that had made

themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of sin. The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly (Ge 13:13), and so were the men of Judah. When the rulers were bad, no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it had the rulers, the men of figure, on its side; and it out-polled it, for it had the people, the men of number, on its side. The streams being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, Isa 1:9. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet as rulers of Sodom; for he knew not how to give flattering titles. The tradition of the Jews is that for this he was impeached long after, and put to death, as having cursed the gods and spoken evil of the ruler of his people.

2. His demand upon them is very reasonable: "Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God; attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you." The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices would be a kind of new law to them, though really it was but an explication of the old law; but special regard is to be had to it, as is required to the like, Ps 50:7,8. "Hear this, and tremble; hear it, and take warning."

11 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

I. He justly refuses to hear their prayers and accept their services, their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, the fat and blood of them (Isa 1:11), their attendance in his courts (Isa 1:12), their oblations, their incense, and their solemn assemblies (Isa 1:13), their new moons and their appointed feasts (Isa 1:14), their devoutest addresses (Isa 1:15); they are all rejected, because their hands were full of blood. Now observe,

1. There are many who are strangers, nay, enemies, to the power of religion, and yet seem very zealous for the show and shadow and form of it. This sinful nation, this seed of evil-doers, these rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, brought, not to the altars

of false gods (they are not here charged with that), but to the altar of the God of Israel, sacrifices, a multitude of them, as many as the law required and rather more--not only peace-offerings, which they themselves had their share of, but burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God; nor did they bring the torn, and lame, and sick, but fed beasts, and the fat of them, the best of the kind. They did not send others to offer their sacrifices for them, but came themselves to appear before God.

They observed the instituted places (not in high places or groves, but in God's own courts), and the instituted time, the new moons, and sabbaths, and appointed feasts, none of which they omitted. Nay, it should seem, they called extraordinary assemblies, and held solemn meetings for religious worship, besides those that God had appointed. Yet this was not all: they applied to God, not only with their ceremonial observances, but with the exercises of devotion. They prayed, prayed often, made many prayers, thinking they should be heard for their much speaking; nay, they were fervent and importunate in prayer, they spread forth their hands as men in earnest. Now we should have thought these, and, no doubt, they thought themselves, a pious religious people; and yet they were far from being so, for

(1.) Their hearts were empty of true devotion. They came to appear before God (Isa 1:12), to be seen before him (so the margin reads it); they rested in the outside of the duties; they looked no further than to be seen of men, and went no further than that which men see.

(2.) Their hands were full of blood. They were guilty of murder, rapine, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were aiding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart-murder in the account of God; he that hates his brother in his heart has, in effect, his hands full of blood.

2. When sinners are under the judgments of God they will more easily be brought to fly to their devotions than to forsake their sins and reform their lives. Their country was now desolate, and their cities were burnt (Isa 1:7), which awakened them to bring their sacrifices and offerings to God more constantly than they had done, as if they would bribe God Almighty to remove the punishment and give them leave to go on in the sin. When he slew them, then they sought him, Ps 78:34. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, Isa 26:16. Many that will readily part with their sacrifices will not be persuaded to part with their sins.

3. The most pompous and costly devotions of wicked people, without a thorough reformation of the heart and life, are so far from being acceptable to God that really they are an abomination to him. It is here shown in a great variety of expressions that to obey is better than sacrifice; nay, that sacrifice, without obedience, is a jest, an affront and provocation to God. The comparative neglect which God here expresses of ceremonial observance was a tacit intimation of what they would come to at last, when they would all be done away by the death of Christ. What was now made little of would in due time be made nothing of. "Sacrifice and offering, and prayer made in the virtue of them, thou wouldest not; then said I, Lo, I come." Their sacrifices are here represented,

(1.) As fruitless and insignificant; To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? Isa 1:11. They are vain oblations, Isa 1:13. In vain do they worship me, Mt 15:9. Their attention to God's institutions was all lost labour, and served not to answer any good intention; for,

[1.] It was not looked upon as any act of duty or obedience to God: Who has required these things at your hands? Isa 1:12. Not that God disowns his institutions, or refuses to stand by his own warrants; but in what they did they had not an eye to him that required it, nor indeed did he require it of those whose hands were full of blood and who continued impenitent.

[2.] It did not recommend them to God's favour. He delighted not in the blood of their sacrifices, for he did not look upon himself as honoured by it.

[3.] It would not obtain any relief for them. They pray, but God will not hear, because they regard iniquity (Ps 66:18); he will not deliver them, for, though they make many prayers, none of them come from an upright heart. All their religious service turned to no account to them. Nay,

(2.) As odious and offensive. God did not only not accept them, but he did detest and abhor them. "They are your sacrifices, they are none of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them." He needed them not (Ps 50:10), did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls treading them, or trampling upon them; their very attendance on his ordinances was construed into a contempt of them. Their incense, though ever so fragrant, was an abomination to him, for it was burnt in hypocrisy and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not away with, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. The solemn meeting is iniquity; though the thing itself was not, yet, as they managed it, it became so. It is a vexation (so some read it), a provocation, to God, to have ordinances thus prostituted, not only by wicked people, but to wicked purposes: "My soul hates them; they are a trouble to me, a burden, an incumbrance; I am perfectly sick of them, and weary of bearing them." God is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon weary of the costly sacrifices of the wicked. He hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to and is angry at. All this is to show,

[1.] That sin is very hateful to God, so hateful that it makes even men's prayers and their religious services hateful to him.

[2.] That dissembled piety is double iniquity. Hypocrisy in religion is of all things most abominable to the God of heaven.

Jerome applies the passage to the Jews in Christ's time, who pretended a great zeal for the law and the temple, but made themselves and all their services abominable to God by filling their hands with the blood of Christ and his apostles, and so filling up the measure of their iniquities.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

Though God had rejected their services as insufficient to atone for their sins while they persisted in them, yet he does not reject them as in a hopeless condition, but here calls upon them to forsake their sins, which hindered the acceptance of their services, and then all would be well. Let them not say that God picked quarrels with them; no, he proposes a method of reconciliation. Observe here,

A call to repentance and reformation: "If you would have your sacrifices accepted, and your prayers answered, you must begin your work at the right end: Be converted to my law" (so the Chaldee begins this exhortation), "make conscience of second-table duties, else expect not to be accepted in the acts of your devotion." As justice and charity will never atone for atheism and profaneness, so prayers and sacrifices will never atone for fraud and oppression; for righteousness towards men is as much a branch of pure religion as religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. They must cease to do evil, must do no more wrong, shed no more innocent blood. This is the meaning of washing themselves

and making themselves clean, Isa 1:16. It is not only sorrowing for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which inclined them to it. Sin is defiling to the soul. Our business is to wash ourselves from it by repenting of it and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God's eyes, the roots and habits of sin, that are in our hearts; these must be crushed and mortified.

2. They must learn to do well. This was necessary to the completing of their repentance. Note, It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well.

(1.) We must be doing, not cease to do evil and then stand idle.

(2.) We must be doing good, the good which the Lord our God requires and which will turn to a good account.

(3.) We must do it well, in a right manner and for a right end; and,

(4.) We must learn to do well; we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it, and accustom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work and become masters of this holy art of doing well. He urges them particularly to those instances of well-doing wherein they had been defective, to second-table duties: "Seek judgment; enquire what is right, that you may do it; be solicitous to be found in the way of your duty, and do not walk carelessly. Seek opportunities of doing good: Relieve the oppressed, those whom you yourselves have oppressed; ease them of their burdens, Isa 58:6. You, that have power in your hands, use it for the relief of those whom others do oppress, for that is your business. Avenge those that suffer wrong, in a special manner concerning yourselves for the fatherless and the widow, whom, because they are weak and helpless, proud men trample upon and abuse; do you appear

for them at the bar, on the bench, as there is occasion. Speak for those that know not how to speak for themselves and that have not wherewithal to gratify you for your kindness." Note, We are truly honouring God when we are doing good in the world; and acts of justice and charity are more pleasing to him than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

17 learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the
fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your
sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red
like crimson, they shall be as wool.

A demonstration, at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God's proceedings with them: "Come now, and let us reason together (Isa 1:18); while your hands are full of blood I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices; but if you wash, and make yourselves clean, you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over."

Note, Those, and those only, that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome into covenant and communion with God; he says, Come now, who before forbade them his courts. See Jam 4:8. Or rather thus: There were those among them who looked upon themselves as affronted by the slights God put upon the multitude of their sacrifices, as Isa 58:3, Wherefore have we fasted (say they) and thou seest not? They represented God as a hard Master, whom it was impossible to please. "Come," says God, "let us debate the matter fairly, and I doubt not but to make it out that my ways are equal, but yours are unequal," Eze 18:25. Note, Religion has reason on its side; there is all the reason in the world why we should do as God would have us do. The God of heaven condescends to reason the case with those that contradict him and find fault with his proceedings; for he will be justified when he speaks, Ps 51:4. The case needs only to be stated (as it is here very fairly) and it will determine itself. God shows here upon what terms they stood (as he does, Eze 18:21-24,33:18,19) and then leaves it to them to judge whether these terms are not fair and reasonable.

1. They could not in reason expect any more then, if they repented and reformed, they should be restored to God's favour, notwithstanding their former provocations. "This you may expect," says God, and it is very kind; who could have the face to desire it upon any other terms?

(1.) It is very little that is required, "only that you be willing and obedient, that you consent to obey" (so some read it), "that you subject your wills to the will of God, acquiesce in that, and give up yourselves in all things to be ruled by him who is infinitely wise and good" Here is no penance imposed for their former stubbornness, nor the yoke made heavier or bound harder on their necks; only, "Whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable" He does not say, "If you be perfectly obedient," but, "If you be willingly so;" for, if there be a willing mind, it is accepted.

(2.) That is very great which is promised hereupon.

[1.] That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them. "Though they be as red as scarlet and crimson, though you lie under the guilt of blood, yet, upon your repentance, even that shall be forgiven you, and you shall appear in the sight of God as white as snow." Note, The greatest sinners, if they truly repent, shall have their sins forgiven them, and so have their consciences pacified and purified. Though our sins have been as scarlet and crimson, as deep dye, a double dye, first in the wool of original corruption and afterwards in the many threads of actual transgression--though we have been often dipped, by our many backslidings, into sin, and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth does in the scarlet dye, yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and, being by it purged as with hyssop, we shall be clean, Ps 51:7. If we make ourselves clean by repentance and reformation (Isa 1:16), God will make us white by a full remission.

[2.] That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire. "Be but willing and obedient, and you shall eat the good of the land, the land of promise; you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan, all the good of the land." Those that go on in sin, though they may dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it; guilt embitters all; but, if sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed.

2. They could not in reason expect any other than that, if they continued obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin, and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them; what can be more just? (Isa 1:20); "If you refuse and rebel, if you continue to rebel against the divine government and refuse the offers of the divine grace, you shall be devoured with the sword, with the sword of your enemies, which shall be commissioned to destroy you--with the sword of God's justice, his wrath, and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and which he will make good, for the maintaining of his own honour." Note, Those that will not be governed by God's sceptre will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

"And now life and death, good and evil, are thus set before you. Come, and let us reason together. What have you to object against the equity of this, or against complying with God's terms?"

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:
20 but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*.

The Judgment and Redemption of Zion

21 How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.
22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:
23 thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

Here, the woeful degeneracy of Judah and Jerusalem is sadly lamented.

See, 1. What the royal city had been, a faithful city, faithful to God and the interests of his kingdom among men, faithful to the nation and its public interests. It was full of judgment; justice was duly administered upon the thrones of judgment which were set there, the thrones of the house of David, Ps 122:5. Men were generally honest in their dealings, and abhorred to do an unjust thing. Righteousness lodged in it, was constantly resident in their palaces and in all their dwellings, not called in now and then to serve a turn, but at home there. Note, Neither holy cities nor royal ones, neither places where religion is professed nor places where government is administered, are faithful to their trust if religion do not dwell in them.

2. What it had now become. That beauteous virtuous spouse was now debauched, and become an adulteress; righteousness no longer dwelt in Jerusalem (terras Astræa reliquit--Astrea left the earth); even murderers were unpunished and lived undisturbed there; nay, the princes themselves were so cruel and oppressive that they had become no better than murderers; an innocent man might better guard himself against a troop of banditti or assassins than against a bench of such judges. Note, It is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any family or people that their ancestors were famed for virtue and probity; and commonly those that thus degenerate prove the most wicked of all men. Corruptio optimi est pessima--That which was originally the best becomes when corrupted the worst, Lu 11:26,Ec 3:16. See Jer 22:15-17. The degeneracy of Jerusalem is illustrated,

(1.) By similitudes (Isa 1:22): Thy silver has become dross. This degeneracy of the magistrates, whose character is the reverse of that of their predecessors, is a great a reproach and injury to the kingdom as the debasing of their coin would be and the turning of their silver into dross. Righteous princes and righteous cities are as silver for the treasury, but unrighteous ones are as dross for the

dunghill. How has the gold become dim! La 4:1. Thy wine is mixed with water, and so has become flat and sour. Some understand both these literally: the wine they sold was adulterated, it was half water; the money they paid was counterfeit, and so they cheated all they dealt with. But it is rather to be taken figuratively: justice was perverted by their princes, and religion and the word of God were sophisticated by their priests, and made to serve what turn they pleased. Dross may shine like silver, and the wine that is mixed with water may retain the colour of wine, but neither is worth any thing. Thus they retained a show and pretence of virtue and justice, but had no true sense of either.

(2.) By some instances (Isa 1:23): "Thy princes, that should keep others in their allegiance to God and subjection to his law, are themselves rebellious, and set God and his law at defiance." Those that should restrain thieves (proud and rich oppressors, those worst of robbers, and those that designedly cheat their creditors, who are no better), are themselves companions of thieves, connive at them, do as they do, and with greater security and success, because they are princes, and have power in their hands; they share with the thieves they protect in their unlawful gain (Ps 50:18) and cast in their lot among them, Pr 1:13,14.

[1.] The profit of their places is all their aim, to make the best hand they can of them, right or wrong. They love gifts, and follow after rewards; they set their hearts upon their salary, the fees and perquisites of their offices, and are greedy of them, and never think they can get enough; nay, they will do any thing, though ever so contrary to law and justice, for a gift in secret. Presents and gratuities will blind their eyes at any time, and make them pervert judgment. These they love and are eager in the pursuit of, Ho 9:18.

[2.] The duty of their places is none of their care. They ought to protect those that are injured, and take cognizance of the appeals made to them; why else were they preferred? But they judge not the fatherless, take no care to guard the orphans, nor does the cause of the widow come unto them, because the poor widow has no bribe

to give, with which to make way for her and to bring her cause on. Those will have a great deal to answer for who, when they should be the patrons of the oppressed, are their greatest oppressors.

24 Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies.

A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances (Isa 1:24): Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel--who has power to make good what he says, who has hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for his Israel--Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries. Observe,

1. Wicked people, especially wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God's enemies, his adversaries, and shall so be accounted and so dealt with. If the holy seed corrupt themselves, they are the foes of his own house.

2. They are a burden to the God of heaven, which is implied in his easing himself of them. The Mighty One of Israel, that can bear any thing, nay, that upholds all things, complains of his being wearied with men's iniquities, Isa 43:24,Am 2:13.

3. God will find out a time and a way to ease himself of this burden, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks as one triumphing in the foresight of it: Ah. I will ease me. He will ease the earth of the burden under which it groans (Ro 8:21,22), will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded. He will be eased of his adversaries, by taking vengeance on his enemies; he will spue them out of his mouth, and so be eased of them, Re 3:16. He speaks with pleasure of the day of vengeance being in his heart, Isa 63:4. If God's professing people conform not to his image, as the Holy One of Israel (Isa 1:4), they shall feel the weight of his hand as the Mighty One of Israel: his power, which was wont to be engaged for them, shall be armed against them. In two ways God will ease himself of this grievance:--

(1.) By reforming his church, and restoring good judges in the room of those corrupt ones. Though the church has a great deal of dross in it, yet it shall not be thrown away, but refined (Isa 1:25): "I will purely purge away thy dross. I will amend what is amiss. Vice and profaneness shall be suppressed and put out of countenance, oppressors displaced, and deprived of their power to do mischief." When things are ever so bad God can set them to rights, and bring about a complete reformation; when he begins he will make an end, will take away all the tin. Observe,

[1.] The reformation of a people is God's own work, and, if ever it be done, it is he that brings it about: "I will turn my hand upon thee; I will do that for the reviving of religion which I did at first for the planting of it." He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand; but he does it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed?

[2.] He does it by blessing them with good magistrates and good ministers of state (Isa 1:26): "I will restore thy judges as at the first, to put the laws in execution against evil-doers, and thy counsellors, to transact public affairs, as at the beginning," either the same persons that had been turned out or others of the same character.

[3.] He does it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them (Isa 1:27), by planting in men's minds principles of justice and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraints; but God does it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a Spirit of judgment, Isa 4:4,28:6. See Ps 85:10,11.

[4.] The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts, for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery, and the great and eternal redemption is that by which Israel is redeemed from all his iniquities (Ps 130:8), and the blessed Redeemer is he that turns away ungodliness from Jacob (Ro 11:26), and saves his people from their sins, Mt 1:21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converts, and their conversion is their redemption: "Her

converts, or those that return of her (so the margin), shall be redeemed with righteousness." God works deliverance for us by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness.

[5.] The reviving of a people's virtues is the restoring of their honour: Afterwards thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city; that is, First, "Thou shalt be so;" the reforming of the magistracy is a good step towards the reforming of the city and the country too. Secondly, "Thou shalt have the praise of being so;" and a greater praise there cannot be to any city than to be called the city of righteousness, and to retrieve the ancient honour which was lost when the faithful city became a harlot, Isa 1:21.

(2.) By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares or as scandals to the faithful city.

[1.] it is an utter ruin that is here threatened. They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The extirpation of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion.

[2.] It is a universal ruin, which will involve the transgressors and the sinners together, that is, the openly profane that have quite cast of all religion, and the hypocrites that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious profession--they shall both be destroyed together, for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion and those that contradict themselves in their pretensions to it. And those that forsake the Lord, to whom they had formerly joined themselves, shall be consumed, as the water in the conduit-pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain.

[3.] It is an inevitable ruin; there is no escaping it. First, Their idols shall not be able to help them, the oaks which they have desired, and the gardens which they have chosen; that is, the images, the dunghill-gods, which they had worshipped in their groves and under the green trees, which they were fond of and wedded to, for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped

privately in their own garden even when idolatry was publicly discountenanced. "This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair, Isa 1:29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of their idols; for, after all the court they have made to them, they shall find no benefit by them; but the idols themselves shall go into captivity," Isa 46:1,2.

Note, Those that make creatures their confidence are but preparing confusion for themselves. You were fond of the oaks and the gardens, but you yourselves shall be,

1. "Like an oak without leaves, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments." Justly do those wear no leaves that bear no fruit; as the fig-tree that Christ cursed.

2. "Like a garden without water, that is neither rained upon nor watered with the foot (De 11:10), that had no fountain (So 4:15), and consequently is parched, and all the fruits of it gone to decay." Thus shall those be that trust in idols, or in an arm of flesh, Jer 17:5,6. But those that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, Jer 2:31. Secondly, They shall not be able to help themselves (Isa 1:31): "Even the strong man shall be as tow not only soon broken and pulled to pieces, but easily catching fire; and his work (so the margin reads it), that by which he hopes to fortify and secure himself, shall be as a spark to his own tow, shall set him on fire, and he and his work shall burn together. His counsels shall be his ruin; his own skin kindles the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and none shall quench it." When the sinner has made himself as tow and stubble, and God makes himself to him as a consuming fore, what can prevent the utter ruin of the sinner?

Now all this is applicable,

1. To the blessed work of reformation which was wrought in Hezekiah's time after the abominable corruptions of the reign of

Ahaz. Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame.

2. To their return out of their captivity in Babylon, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry.

3. To the gospel-kingdom and the pouring out of the Spirit, by which the New-Testament church should be made a new Jerusalem, a city of righteousness. 4. To the second coming of Christ, when he shall thoroughly purge his floor, his field, shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff, the tares, with unquenchable fire.

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:
26 and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.
27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.
28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.
29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.
30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.
31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench *them*.

Isaiah-2

The Lord's Universal Reign of Peace

1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

The particular title of this sermon (Isa 2:1) is the same with the general title of the book (Isa 1:1), only that what is there called the vision is here called the word which Isaiah saw (or the matter, or

thing, which he saw), the truth of which he had as full an assurance of in his own mind as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Or this word was brought to him in a vision; something he saw when he received this message from God. John turned to see the voice that spoke with him. Re 1:12.

This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world, at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthly Jerusalem, just before the destruction of it, this heavenly Jerusalem should be erected, Heb 12:22,Ga 4:26. Note, Gospel times are the last days. For

1. They were long in coming, were a great while waited for by the Old-Testament saints, and came at last. 2. We are not to look for any dispensation of divine grace but what we have in the gospel, Ga 1:8,9. 3. We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old-Testament saints did for his first coming; this is the last time, 1Jo 2:18.

Now the prophet here foretels,

I The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion, in the world. Christianity shall then be the mountain of the Lord's house; where that is professed God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple of Mount Zion. The gospel church, incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised,

1. That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed; it shall be prepared (so the margin reads it) in the top of the mountains, in the view and hearing of all. Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which cannot be hid, Mt 5:14. They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself spoke openly to the world, Joh 18:20. What the apostles did was not done in a corner, Ac 26:26. It

was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard. Its being every where spoken against supposes that it was every where spoken of.

2. That is shall be firmly fixed and rooted; it shall be established on the top of the everlasting mountains, built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, unless they could pluck up mountains by the roots. He that dwells safely is said to dwell on high, Isa 33:16. The Lord has founded the gospel Zion.

3. That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition; it shall be exalted above the hills. This wisdom of God in a mystery shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy and all its politics. The spiritual worship which it shall introduce shall put down the idolatries of the heathen; and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and despicable in comparison with this. See Ps 68:16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

I The bringing of the Gentiles into it.

1 The nations shall be admitted into it, even the uncircumcised, who were forbidden to come into the courts of the temple at Jerusalem. The partition wall, which kept them out, kept them off, shall be taken down.

2. All nations shall flow into it; having liberty of access, they shall improve their liberty, and multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water, which denotes the abundance of converts that the gospel should make and their speed and cheerfulness in coming into the church. They shall not be forced into it, but shall naturally flow into it. Thy people shall be willing, all volunteers, Ps 110:3. To Christ shall the gathering of the people be, Ge 49:10. See Isa 60:4,5.

II. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another. Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed that they shall come in in one full stream. As, when the Jews from all parts of the country went up thrice a year to worship at Jerusalem, they called on their friends in the road and excited them to go along with them, so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion (Isa 2:3): "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; though it be uphill and against the heart, yet it is the mountain of the Lord, who will assist the assent of our souls towards him."

Note, Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God themselves should bring as many as they can along with them; it becomes Christians to provoke one another to good works, and to further the communion of saints by inviting one another into it: not, "Do you go up to the mountain of the Lord, and pray for us, and we will stay at home;" nor, "We will go, and do you do as you will;" but, "Come, and let us go, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands and support one another's reputation:" not, "We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter;" but, Come, and let us go forthwith. See Ps 122:1. Many shall say this. Those that have had it said to them shall say it to others. The gospel church is here called, not only the mountain of the Lord, but the house of the God of Jacob; for in it God's covenant with Jacob and his praying seed is kept up and has its accomplishment; for to us now, as unto them, he never said, Seek you me in vain, Isa 45:19. Now see here,

1. What they promise themselves in going up to the mountain of the Lord; There he will teach us of his ways. Note, God's ways are to be learned in his church, in communion with his people, and in the use of instituted ordinances--the ways of duty which he requires us to walk in, the ways of grace in which he walks towards us. It is God that teaches his people, by his word and Spirit. It is worth while to take pains to go up to his holy mountain to be taught his

ways, and those who are willing to take that pains shall never find it labour in vain. Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.

2. What they promise for themselves and one another: "If he will teach us his ways, we will walk in his paths; is he will let us know our duty, we will by his grace make conscience of doing it." Those who attend God's word with this humble resolution shall not be sent away without their lesson.

III. The means by which this shall be brought about: Out of Zion shall go forth the law, the New-Testament law, the law of Christ, as of old the law of Moses from Mount Sinai, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is a law, a law of faith; it is the word of the Lord; it went forth from Zion, where the temple was built, and from Jerusalem. Christ himself began in Galilee, Mt 4:23,Lu 23:5. But, when he commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, he appointed them to begin in Jerusalem, Lu 24:47. See Ro 15:19. Though most of them had their homes in Galilee, yet they must stay at Jerusalem, there to receive the promise of the Spirit, Ac 1:4. And in the temple on Mount Zion they preached the gospel, Ac 5:20. This honour was allowed to Jerusalem, even after Christ was crucified there, for the sake of what it had been. And it was by this gospel, which took rise from Jerusalem, that the gospel church was established on the top of the mountains. This was the rod of divine strength, that was sent forth out of Zion, Ps 110:2.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

I. The erecting of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world: He shall judge among the nations. He whose word goes forth out of Zion shall by that word not only subdue souls to himself, but rule in them, Isa 2:4. He shall, in wisdom and justice, order and overrule the affairs of the world for the good of his church, and rebuke and restrain those that oppose his interest. By his Spirit working on men's consciences he shall judge, and rebuke shall try men and check them; his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world.

II. The great peace which should be the effect of the success of the gospel in the world (Isa 2:4): They shall beat their swords into ploughshares; their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as, on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, ploughshares are beaten into swords, Joe 3:10. Nations shall then not lift up sword against nation, as they now do, neither shall they learn war any more, for they shall have no more occasion for it. This does not make all war absolutely unlawful among Christians, nor is it a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars. The Jews urge this against the Christians as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled.

But, 1. It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars had in a great measure ceased, witness the taxing, Lu 2:1.

2 The design and tendency of the gospel are to make peace and to slay all enmities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have this effect, and it would have had it if it had not been for those lusts of men from which come wars and fightings.

3. Jew and Gentiles were reconciled and brought together by the gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as there had been; for they became one sheepfold under one shepherd. See Eph 2:15.

4. The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposes men to be peaceable, softens men's spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ, shed abroad in the heart, constrains men to love one another.

5. The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly love; their very adversaries took notice of it.

6. We have reason to hope that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the Spirit shall be poured out more plentifully from on high. Then there shall be on earth peace. Who shall live when God doeth this? But do it he will in due time, for he is not a man that he should lie.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from all this (Isa 2:5): O house of Jacob! come you, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. By the house of Jacob is meant either,

1. Israel according to the flesh. Let them be provoked by this to a holy emulation, Ro 11:14. "Seeing the Gentiles are thus ready and resolved for God, thus forward to go up to the house of the Lord, let us stir up ourselves to go too. Let is never be said that the sinners of the Gentiles were better friends to the holy mountain than the house of Jacob." Thus the zeal of some should provoke many. Or,

2. Spiritual Israel, all that are brought to the God of Jacob. Shall there be such great knowledge in gospel times (Isa 2:3) and such great peace (Isa 2:4), and shall we share in these privileges? Come then, and let us live accordingly. What ever others do, come, O come! let us walk in the light of the Lord.

(1.) Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this knowledge. Will God teach us his ways? Will he show us his glory in the face of Christ? Let us then walk as children of the light and of the day, Eph 5:8,1Th 5:8,Ro 13:12.

(2.) Let us walk comfortably in the light of this peace. Shall there be no more war? Let us then go on our way rejoicing, and let this joy terminate in God, and be our strength, Ne 8:10. Thus shall we walk in the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

The Lord's Judgment on the Proud

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the
Lord.
6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because
they be replenished from the east, and *are* soothsayers like the
Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

The calling in of the Gentiles was accompanied with the rejection of the Jews; it was their fall, and the diminishing of them, that was the riches of the Gentiles; and the casting off of them was the reconciling of the world (Ro 11:12-15); and it should seem that these verses have reference to that, and are designed to justify God therein, and yet it is probable that they are primarily intended for the convincing and awakening of the men of that generation in which the prophet lived, it being usual with the prophets to speak of the things that then were, both in mercy and judgment, as types of the things that should be hereafter. Here is,

I. Israel's doom. This is set forth in two words, the first and the last of this paragraph; but they are two dreadful words, and which speak,

1. Their case sad, very sad (Isa 2:6): Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people. Miserable is the condition of that people whom God has forsaken, and great certainly must the provocation be if he forsake those that have been his own people. This was the deplorable case of the Jewish church after they had rejected Christ. Migremus hinc--Let us go hence. Your house is left unto you desolate, Mt 23:38. Whenever any sore calamity came upon the Jews thus far the Lord might be said to forsake them that he withdrew his help and succour

from them, else they would not have fallen into the hands of their enemies. But God never leaves any till they first leave him.

2. Their case desperate, wholly desperate (Isa 2:9): Therefore forgive them not. This prophetical prayer amounts to a threatening that they should not be forgiven, and some think it may be read: And thou wilt not forgive them. This refers not to particular persons (many of them repented and were pardoned), but to the body of that nation, against whom an irreversible doom was passed, that they should be wholly cut off and their church quite dismantled, never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have their old charter restored to them.

II. Israel's desert of this doom, and the reasons upon which it is grounded. In general, it is sin that brings destruction upon them; it is this, and nothing but this, that provokes God to forsake his people. The particular sins which the prophet specifies are such as abounded among them at that time, which he makes mention of for the conviction of those to whom he then preached, rather than that which afterwards proved the measure-filling sin, their crucifying Christ and persecuting his followers; for the sins of every age contributed towards the making up of the dreadful account at last. And there was a partial and temporary rejection of them by the captivity in Babylon hastening on, which was a type of their final destruction by the Romans, and which the sins here mentioned brought upon them. Their sins were such as directly contradicted all God's kind and gracious designs concerning them.

1. God set them apart for himself, as a peculiar people, distinguished from, and dignified above, all other people (Nu 23:9); but they were replenished from the east; they naturalized foreigners, not proselyted, and encouraged them to settle among them, and mingled with them, Ho 7:8. Their country was peopled with Syrians and Chaldeans, Moabites and Ammonites, and other eastern nations, and with them they admitted the fashions and customs of those nations, and pleased themselves in the children of strangers, were fond of them, preferred their country before their

own, and thought the more they conformed to them the more polite and refined they were; thus did they profane their crown and their covenant. Note, Those are in danger of being estranged from God who please themselves with those who are strangers to him, for we soon learn the ways of those whose company we love.

2. God gave them his oracles, which they might ask counsel of, not only the scriptures and the seers, but the breast-plate of judgment; but they slighted these, and became soothsayers like the Philistines, introduced their arts of divination, and hearkened to those who by the stars, or the clouds, or the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, or other magic superstitions, pretended to discover things secret or foretel things to come. The Philistines were noted for diviners, 1Sa 6:2. Note, Those who slight true divinity are justly given up to lying divinations; and those will certainly be forsaken of God who thus forsake him and their own mercies for lying vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their wealth and strength; but, distrusting his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, Isa 2:7. God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves and greatly to multiply silver and gold, because he would have them to depend upon himself only; but they did not think their interest in God made them a match for their neighbours unless they had as full treasures of silver and gold, and as formidable hosts of chariots and horses, as they had. It is not having silver and gold, horses and chariots, that is a provocation to God, but,

(1.) Desiring them insatiably, so that there is no end of the treasures, no end of the chariots, no bounds or limits set to the desire of them. Those shall never have enough in God (who alone is all-sufficient) that never know when they have enough of this world, which at the best is insufficient.

(2.) Depending upon them, as if we could not be safe, and easy, and happy, without them, and could not but be so with them.

4. God himself was their God, the sole object of their worship, and he himself instituted ordinances of worship for them; but they slighted both him and his institutions, Isa 2:8. Their land was full of idols; every city had its god (Jer 11:13); and, according to the goodness of their lands, they made goodly images, Ho 10:1. Those that think one God too little will find two too many, and yet hundreds were not sufficient; for those that love idols will multiply them; so sottish were they, and so wretchedly infatuated, that they worshipped the work of their own hands, as if that could be a god to them which was not only a creature, but their creature and that which their own fancies had devised and their own fingers had made. It was an aggravation of their idolatry that God had enriched them with silver and gold, and yet of that silver and gold they made idols; so it was, Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked, see Hos 2:8.

5. God had advanced them, and put honour upon them; but they basely diminished and disparaged themselves (Isa 2:9): The mean man boweth down to his idol, a thing below the meanest that has any spark of reason left. Sin is a disparagement to the poorest and those of the lowest rank. It becomes the mean man to bow down to his superiors, but it ill becomes him to bow down to the stock of a tree, Isa 44:19. Nor is it only the illiterate and poor-spirited that do this, but even the great men forgets his grandeur and humbles himself to worship idols, deifies men no better than himself, and consecrates stones so much baser than himself. Idolaters are said to debase themselves even to hell, Isa 57:9. What a shame it is that great men think the service of the true God below them and will not stoop to it, and yet will humble themselves to bow down to an idol! Some make this a threatening that the mean men shall be brought down, and the great men humbled, by the judgments of God, when they come with commission.

7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither *is there any* end of
their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither *is there any*
end of their chariots:

8 their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own
hands, that which their own fingers have made:
9 and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth
himself: therefore forgive them not.
10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord,
and for the glory of his majesty.

The prophet here goes on to show what a desolation would be brought upon their land when God should have forsaken them. This may refer particularly to their destruction by the Chaldeans first, and afterwards by the Romans, or it may have a general respect to the method God takes to awaken and humble proud sinners, and to put them out of conceit with that which they delighted in and depended on more than God. We are here told that sooner or later God will find out a way,

To startle and awaken secure sinners, who cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments (Isa 2:10): "Enter into the rock; God will attack you with such terrible judgments, and strike you with such terrible apprehensions of them, that you shall be forced to enter into the rock, and hide yourself in the dust, for fear of the Lord. You shall lose all your courage, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf; your heart shall fail you for fear (Lu 21:26), and you shall flee when none pursues," Pr 28:1. To the same purport, Isa 2:19. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, the darkest the deepest places; they shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and rather crush them than not cover them, Ho 10:8. It was so particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (Lu 23:30) and of the persecuting pagan powers, Re 6:16. And all for fear of the Lord, and of the glory of his majesty, looking upon him then to be a consuming fire and themselves as stubble before him, when he arises to shake terribly the earth, to shake the wicked out of it (Job 38:13), and to shake all those earthly props and supports with which they have buoyed themselves up, to shake them from under them.

Note, 1. With God is terrible majesty, and the glory of it is such as sooner or later will oblige us all to flee before him.

2. Those that will not fear God and flee to him will be forced to fear him and flee from him to a refuge of lies.

3. It is folly for those that are pursued by the wrath of God to think to escape it, and to hide or shelter themselves from it.

4. The things of the earth are things that will be shaken; they are subject to concussions, and hastening towards a dissolution.

5. The shaking of the earth is, and will be, a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on things of the earth.

6. It will be in vain to think of finding refuge in the caves of the earth when the earth itself is shaken; there will be no shelter then but in God and in things above.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

To humble and abase proud sinners, that look big, and think highly of themselves, and scornfully of all about them (Isa 2:11): The lofty looks of man shall be humbled. The eyes that aim high, the countenance in which the pride of the heart shows itself, shall be cast down in shame and despair. And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, their spirits shall be broken, and they shall be crest-fallen, and those things which they were proud of they shall be ashamed of. It is repeated (Isa 2:17), The loftiness of man shall be bowed down.

Note, Pride will, one way or other, have a fall. Men's haughtiness will be brought down, either by the grace of God convincing them of the evil of their pride, and clothing them with humility, or by the providence of God depriving them of all those things they were proud of and laying them low. Our Saviour often laid it down for a maxim that he who exalts himself shall be abased; he shall either

abase himself in true repentance or God will abase him and pour contempt upon him. Now here we are told,

1. Why this shall be done: because the Lord alone will be exalted. Note, Proud men shall be vilified because the Lord alone will be magnified. It is for the honour of God's power to humble the proud; by this he proves himself to be God, and disproves Job's pretensions to rival with him, Job 40:11-14. Behold every one that is proud, and abase him; then will I also confess unto thee. It is likewise for the honour of his justice. Proud men stand in competition with God, who is jealous for his own glory, and will not suffer men either to take to themselves or give to another that which is due to him only. They likewise stand in opposition to God; they resist him, and therefore he resists them; for he will be exalted among the heathen (Ps 46:10), and there is a day coming in which he alone will be exalted, when he shall have put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, 1Co 15:24.

2. How this shall be done: by humbling judgments, that shall mortify men, and bring them down (Isa 2:12): The day of the Lord of hosts, the day of his wrath and judgment, shall be upon every one that is proud. He now laughs at their insolence because he sees that his day is coming, this day, which will be upon them ere they are aware, Ps 37:13. This day of the Lord is here said to be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up. Jerome observes that the cedars are said to praise God (Ps 148:9) and are trees of the Lord (Ps 104:16), of his planting (Isa 41:19), and yet here God's wrath fastens upon the cedars, which denotes (says he) that some of every rank of men, some great men, will be saved, and some perish. It is brought in as an instance of the strength of God's voice that it breaks the cedars (Ps 29:5), and here the day of the Lord is said to be upon the cedars, those of Lebanon, they were the straightest and statliest,--upon the oaks, those of Bashan, that were the strongest and sturdiest,--upon the natural elevations and fortresses, the highest mountains and the hills that are lifted up (Isa 2:14), that overtop the valleys and seem to push the skies,--and

upon the artificial fastnesses, every high tower and every fenced wall, Isa 2:15. Understand these,

(1.) As representing the proud people themselves, that are in their own apprehensions like the cedars and the oaks, firmly rooted, and not to be stirred by any storm, and looking on all around them as shrubs; these are the high mountains and the lofty hills that seem to fill the earth, that are gazed on by all, and think themselves immovable, but lie most obnoxious to God's thunderstrokes. Feriuntique summos fulmina montes--The highest hills are most exposed to lightning. And before the power of God's wrath these mountains are scattered and these hills bow and melt like wax, hab 3:6,ps 68:8. These vaunting men, who are as high towers in which the noisy bells are hung, on which the thundering murdering cannon are planted--these fenced walls, that fortify themselves with their native hardiness, and intrench themselves in their fastnesses--shall be brought down.

(2.) As particularizing the things they are proud of,in which they trust, and of which they make their boast. The day of the Lord shall be upon those very things in which they put their confidence as their strength and security; he will take from the all their armour wherein they trusted. Did the inhabitants of Lebanon glory in their cedars, and those of Bashan in their oaks, such as no country could equal? The day of the Lord should rend those cedars, those oaks, and the houses built of them. Did Jerusalem glory in the mountains that were round about it, as its impregnable fortifications, or in its walls and bulwarks? These should be levelled and laid low in the day of the Lord. Besides those things that were for their strength and safety they were proud,

[1.] Of their trade abroad; but the day of the Lord shall be upon all the ships of Tarshish; they shall be broken as Jehoshaphat's were, shall founder at sea or be ship-wrecked in harbour. Zebulun was a haven of ships, but should now no more rejoice in his going out. When God is bringing ruin upon a people he can sink all the branches of their revenue.

[2.] Of their ornaments at home; but the day of the Lord shall be upon all pleasant pictures, the painting of their ships (so some understand it) or the curious pieces of painting they brought home in their ships from other countries, perhaps from Greece, which afterwards was famous for painters. Upon every thing that is beautiful to behold; so some read it. Perhaps they were the pictures of their relations, and for that reason pleasant, or of their gods, which to the idolaters were delectable things; or they admired them for the fineness of their colours or strokes. There is no harm in making pictures, nor in adorning our rooms with them, provided they transgress not either the second or the seventh commandment. But to place our pictures among our pleasant things, to be fond of them and proud of them, to spend that upon them which should be laid out in charity, and to set out hearts upon them, as it ill becomes those who have so many substantial things to take pleasure in, so it tends to provoke God to strip us of all such vain ornaments.

12 For the day of the Lord of hosts *shall be* upon every *one that is* proud
and lofty, and upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be brought
low:
13 and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and lifted up, and
upon all the oaks of Bashan,
14 and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are*
lifted up,
15 and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,
16 and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.
17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness
of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in
that day.
18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

To make idolaters ashamed of their idols, and of all the affection they have had for them and the respect they have paid to them (Isa 2:18): The idols he shall utterly abolish. When the Lord alone shall be exalted (Isa 2:17) he will not only pour contempt upon proud men, who like Pharaoh exalt themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, who are rivals with him for divine honours. They shall be abolished, utterly abolished. Their friends

shall desert them; their enemies shall destroy them; so that, one way or other, an utter riddance shall be made of them. See here,

1 The vanity of false gods; they cannot secure themselves, so far are they from being able to secure their worshippers.

2 The victory of the true God over them; for great is the truth and will prevail. Dagon fell before the ark, and Baal before the Lord God of Elijah. The gods of the heathen shall be famished (Zep 2:11), and by degrees shall perish, Jer 10:11. The rightful Sovereign will triumph over all pretenders. And, as God will abolish idols, so their worshippers shall abandon them, either from a gracious conviction of their vanity and falsehood (as Ephraim when he said, What have I to do any more with idols?) or from a late and sad experience of their inability to help them, and a woeful despair of relief by them, Isa 2:20. When men are themselves frightened by the judgments of God into the holes of the rocks and caves of the earth, and find that they do thus in vain shift for their own safety, they shall cast their idols, which they have made their gods, and hoped to make their friends in the time of need, to the moles and to the bats, any where out of sight, that, being freed from the incumbrance of them, they may go into the clefts of the rocks, for fear of the Lord, Isa 2:21.

Note, (1.) Those that will not be reasoned out of their sins sooner or later shall be frightened out of them.

(2.) God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of, even the idols of silver and the idols of gold, the most precious. Covetous men make silver and gold their idols, money their god; but the time may come when they may feel it as much their burden as ever they made it their confidence, and may find themselves as much exposed by it as ever they hoped they should be guarded by it, when it tempts their enemy, sinks their ship, or retards their flight. There was a time when the mariners threw the wares, and even the wheat into the sea (Jon 1:5,Ac 27:38), and the Syrians cast away their garments for haste, 2Ki 7:15. Or men may

cast it away out of indignation at themselves for leaning upon such a broken reed. See Eze 7:19. The idolaters here throw away their idols because they are ashamed of them and of their own folly in trusting to them, or because they are afraid of having them found in their possession when the judgments of God are abroad; as the thief throws away his stolen goods then he is searched for or pursued.

(3.) The darkest holes, where the moles and the bats lodge, are the fittest places for idols, that have eyes and see not; and God can force men to cast their own idols there (Isa 30:22), when they are ashamed of the oaks which they have desired, Isa 1:29. Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, Jer 48:13.

(4.) It is possible that sin may be both loathed and left and yet not truly repented of--loathed because surfeited on, left because there is no opportunity of committing it, yet not repented of out of any love to God, but only from a slavish fear of his wrath.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of
the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty,
when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.
20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of
gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles
and to the bats;
21 to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged
rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when
he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.
22 Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: for wherein is
he to be accounted of?

To make those that have trusted in an arm of flesh ashamed of their confidence (Isa 2:22): "Cease from man. The providences of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and therefore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the uneasiness and shame of disappointment; and consider,

1. How weak man is: His breath is in his nostrils, puffed out every moment, soon gone for good and all." Man is a dying creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door, ready to depart; nay the doors of the nostrils are always open, the breath in them may slip away ere we are aware, in a moment. Wherein then is man to be accounted of? Alas! no reckoning is to be made of him, for he is not what he seems to be, what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like vanity, nay, he is vanity, he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter, than vanity, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. "

2. How wise therefore those are that cease from man;" it is our duty, it is our interest, to do so. "Put not your trust in man, nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the power of man, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him that your judgment proceeds. Let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your help, and let your hope be in the Lord your God."

Isaiah-3

The Lord's Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem

1 For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a necessary caution to all not to put confidence in man, or any creature; he had also given a general reason for that caution, taken from the frailty of human life and the vanity and weakness of human powers. Here he gives a particular reason for it--God was now about to ruin all their creature-confidences, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointments in all their expectations from them (Isa 3:1): The stay and the staff shall be taken away, all their supports, of

what kind soever, all the things they trusted to and looked for help and relief from.

Their church and kingdom had now grown old and were going to decay, and they were (after the manner of aged men, Zec 8:4) leaning on a staff: now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall of course, to take away the stays of both the city and the country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed stays to one another, and, if one fail, the other feels from it. He that does this is the Lord, the Lord of hosts--Adon, the Lord that is himself the stay or foundation; if that stay depart, all other stays certainly break under us, for he is the strength of them all. He that is the Lord, the ruler, that has authority to do it, and the Lord of hosts, that has the ability to do it, he shall take away the stay and the staff. St. Jerome refers this to the sensible decay of the Jewish nation after they had crucified our Saviour, Ro 11:9,10. I rather take it as a warning to all nations not to provoke God; for if they make him their enemy, he can and will thus make them miserable. Let us view the particulars.

I. Was their plenty a support to them? It is so to any people; bread is the staff of life: but God can take away the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; and it is just with him to do so when fulness of bread becomes an iniquity (Eze 16:49), and that which was given to be provision for the life is made provision for the lusts. He can take away the bread and the water by withholding the rain, De 28:23,24. Or, if he allow them, he can take away the stay of bread and the stay of water by withholding his blessing, by which man lives, and not by bread only, and which is the staff of bread (Mt 4:4), and then the bread is not nourishing nor the water refreshing, Hag 1:6. Christ is the bread of life and the water of life; if he be our stay, we shall find that this is a good part not to be taken away, Joh 4:14,6:27.

II. Was their army a support to them--their generals, and commanders, and military men? These shall be taken away, either cut off by the sword or so discouraged with the defeats they meet with that they shall throw up their commissions and resolve to act

no more; or they shall be disabled by sickness, or dispirited, so as to be unfit for business; The mighty men, and the man of war, and even the inferior officer, the captain of fifty, shall be removed. It bodes ill with a people when their valiant men are lost. Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, nor any people trust too much to their mighty men; but let the strong people glorify God and the city of the terrible nations fear him, who can make them weak and despicable, Isa 25:3.

III. Were their ministers of state a support to them--their learned men, their politicians, their clergy, their wits and virtuoso? These also should be taken away--the judges, who were skilled in the laws, and expert in administering justice,--the prophets, whom they used to consult in difficult cases,--the prudent, who were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above all others and were assistants to the judges, the diviners (so the word is), those who used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stayed on, (but it may be taken, as we read it, in a good sense),--the ancients, elders in age, in office,--the honourable man, the gravity of whose aspect commands reverence and whose age and experience make him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore, when the whole stay is broken, the cunning artificer too shall be taken away; and the last is the eloquent orator, the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting the sense of others in good language. Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can. God threatens to take these away, that is,

1. To disable them for the service of their country, making judges fools, taking away the speech of the trusty and the understanding of the aged, Job 12:17, &c. Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be; and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us shall always be so.

2. To put an end to their days; for the reason why princes are not to be trusted in is because their breath goeth forth, Ps 146:3,4. Note,

The removal of useful men by death, in the midst of their usefulness, is a very threatening symptom to any people.

IV. Was their government a support to them? It ought to have been so; it is the business of the sovereign to bear up the pillars of the land, Ps 75:3. But it is here threatened that this stay should fail them. When the mighty men and the prudent are removed children shall be their princes--children in age, who must be under tutors and governors, who will be clashing with one another and making a prey of the young king and his kingdom-children in understanding and disposition, childish men, such as are babes in knowledge, no more fit to rule than a child in the cradle. These shall rule over them, with all the folly, fickleness, and frowardness, of a child. And woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is such a one! Ec 10:16.

2 the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet,
and the prudent, and the ancient,
3 the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counselor, and
the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.
4 And I will give children *to be* their princes, and babes shall rule over
them.
5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every
one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against
the ancient, and the base against the honorable.

I. Was the union of the subjects among themselves, their good order and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept with one another, a stay to them? Where this is the case a people may do better for it, though their princes be not such as they should be; but it is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them too (as Jdg 9:23), which would make them,

1. Injurious and unneighbourly one towards another (Isa 3:5): "The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour," and their princes, being children, will take no care to restrain the oppressors or relieve the oppressed, nor is it to any purpose to appeal to them (which is a temptation to every man to be his own avenger), and therefore they bite and devour one another and will soon be consumed one of another. Then homo homini lupus--man becomes

a wolf to man; jusque datum sceleri--wickedness receives the stamp of law; nec hospes ab hospite tutus--the guest and the host are in danger from each other.

2. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to a people as can be when the rising generation among them are generally untractable, rude, and ungovernable, when the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient, whereas he should rise up before the hoary head and honour the face of the old man, Le 19:32. When young people are conceited and pert, and behave scornfully towards their superiors, their conduct is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it slackens the reins of government and weakens the hands that hold them. It is likewise ill with a people when persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are affronted by the base and beggarly, when judges are insulted and their powers set at defiance by the mob. Those have a great deal to answer for who do this.

II. It is some stay, some support, to hope that, though matters may be now ill-managed, yet other may be raised up, who may manage better? Yet this expectation also shall be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

1 The government shall go a begging, Isa 3:6. Here,

(1.) It is taken for granted that there is no way of redressing all these grievances, and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, who shall be invested with power by common consent, and shall exert that power for the good of the community. And it is probable that this was, in many places, the true origin of government; men found it necessary to unite in a subjection to one who was thought fit for such a trust, in order to the welfare and safety of them all, being aware that they must either be ruled or ruined. Here therefore is the original contract: "Be thou our ruler, and we will be subject to thee, and let this ruin be under thy hand, to be repaired and restored, and then to be preserved and established, and

the interests of it advanced, Isa 58:12. Take care to protect us by the sword of war from being injured from abroad, and by the sword of justice from being injurious to another, and we will bear faith and true allegiance to thee."

(2.) The case is represented as very deplorable, and things as having come to a sad pass; for,

[1.] Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations; whereas, if the princes were as they should be, it would be left entirely to them to nominate the rulers, as it ought to be.

[2.] Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it: A man shall take hold by violence of one to make him a ruler, perceiving him ready to resist the motion: nay, he shall urge it upon his brother; whereas, commonly, men are not willing that their equals should be their superiors, witness the envy of Joseph's brethren.

[3.] It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring of a man to be a ruler that he has clothing better than his neighbours--a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government. It was a sign that the country was much impoverished when it was a rare thing to find a man that had good clothes, or could afford to buy himself an alderman's gown or a judge's robes; and it was proof enough that the people were very unthinking when they had so much respect to a man in gay clothing, with a gold ring (Jam 2:2,3), that, for the sake thereof, they would make him their ruler. It would have been some sense to have said, "Thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience; be thou our ruler." But it was a jest to say, Thou hast clothing; be thou our ruler. A poor wise man, though in vile raiment, delivered a city, Ec 9:15. We may allude to this to show how desperate the case of fallen man was when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our brother, and, though he

was not courted, offered himself to be our ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand.

2. Those who are thus pressed to come into office will swear themselves off, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office and to answer the expectations of those that choose them (Isa 3:7): He shall swear (shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking the oath) I will not be a healer; make not me a ruler.

Note, Rulers must be healers, and good rulers will be so; they must study to unite their subjects, and not to widen the differences that are among them. Those only are fit for government that are of a meek, quiet, healing, spirit. They must also heal the wounds that are given to any of the interests of their people, by suitable applications. But why will he not be a ruler? Because in my house is neither bread nor clothing.

(1.) If he said true, it was a sign that men's estates were sadly ruined when even those who made the best appearance really wanted necessaries--a common case, and a piteous one. Some who, having lived fashionably, are willing to put the best side outwards, are yet, if the truth were known, in great straits, and go with heavy hearts for want of bread and clothing.

(2.) If he did not speak truth, it was a sign that men's consciences were sadly debauched, when, to avoid the expense of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury, and (which is the greatest madness in the world) would damn their souls to save their money, Mt 16:26.

(3.) However it was, it was a sign that the case of the nation was very bad when nobody was willing to accept a place in the government of it, as despairing to have either credit or profit by it, which are the two things aimed at in men's common ambition of preferment.

3. The reason why God brought things to this sad pass, even among his own people (which is given either by the prophet or by him that refused to be a ruler); it was not for want of good will to his country, but because he saw the case desperate and past relief, and it would be to no purpose to attempt it (Isa 3:8): Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen; and they may thank themselves. They have brought their destruction upon their own heads, for their tongue and their doings are against the Lord; in word and action they broke the law of God and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him, in contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice. Their tongue was against the Lord, for they contradicted his prophets; and their doings were no better, for they acted as they talked. It was an aggravation of their sin that God's eye was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them; but they provoked him to his face, as if the more they knew of his glory the greater pride they took in slighting it, and turning it into shame. And this, this, is it for which Jerusalem is ruined. Note, The ruin both of persons and people is owing to their sins. If they did not provoke God, he would do them no hurt, Jer 25:6.

6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, *saying*, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and *let* this ruin *be* under thy hand:

7 in that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be a healer; for in my house *is* neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people.

8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings *are* against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

9 The show of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide *it* not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

Here God proceeds in his controversy with his people. Observe,

The ground of his controversy. It was for sin that God contended with them; if they vex themselves, let them look a little further and they will see that they must thank themselves: Woe unto their souls! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Alas for their souls!

(so it may be read, in a way of lamentation), for they have procured evil to themselves, Isa 3:9. Note, The condition of sinners is woeful and very deplorable. Note, also, It is the soul that is damaged and endangered by sin. Sinners may prosper in their outward estates, and yet at the same time there may be a woe to their souls. Note, further, Whatever evils befals sinners it is of their own procuring, Jer 2:19. That which is here charged upon then is,

1. That the shame which should have restrained them from their sins was quite thrown off and they had grown impudent, Isa 3:9. This hardens men against repentance, and ripens them for ruin, as much as anything: The show of their countenance doth witness against them that their minds are vain, and lewd, and malicious; their eyes declare plainly that they cannot cease from sin, 2Pe 2:14. One may look them in the face and guess at the desperate wickedness that there is in their hearts: They declare their sin as Sodom, so impetuous, so imperious, are their lusts, and so impatient of the least check, and so perfectly are all the remaining sparks of virtue extinguished in them. The Sodomites declared their sin, not only by the exceeding greatness of it (Ge 13:13), so that it cried to heaven (Ge 18:20), but by their shameless owning of that which was most shameful (Ge 19:5); and thus Judah and Jerusalem did: they were so far from hiding it that they gloried in it, in the bold attempts they made upon virtue, and the victory they gained over their own convictions. They had a whore's forehead (Jer 3:3) and could not blush, Jer 6:15.

Note, Those that have grown impudent in sin are ripe for ruin. Those that are past shame (we say) are past grace, and then past hope.

2. That their guides, who should direct them in the right way, put them out of the way (Isa 3:12): "Those who lead thee (the princes, priests, and prophets) mislead thee; they cause thee to err." Either they preached to them that which was false and corrupt, or, if they preached that which was true and good, they contradicted it by their practices, and the people would soon follow a bad example than a good exhortation. Thus they destroyed the ways of their paths,

pulling down with one hand what they built up with the other. Que te beatificant--Those that call thee blessed cause thee to err; so some read it. Their priests applauded them, as if nothing were amiss among them, cried Peace, peace, to them, as if they were in no danger; and thus they caused them to go on in their errors.

3. That their judges, who should have patronized and protected the oppressed, were themselves the greatest oppressors, Isa 3:14,15. The elders of the people, and the princes, who had learning and could not but know better things, who had great estates and were not under the temptation of necessity to encroach upon those about them, and who were men of honour and should have scorned to do a base thing, yet they have eaten up the vineyard. God's vineyard, which they were appointed to be the dressers and keepers of, they burnt (so the word signifies); they did as ill by it as its worst enemies could do, Ps 80:16. Or the vineyards of the poor they wrested out of their possession, as Jezebel did Naboth's, or devoured the fruits of them, fed their lusts with that which should have been the necessary food of indigent families; the spoil of the poor was hoarded up in their houses; when God came to search for stolen goods there he found it, and it was a witness against them.

It was to be had, and they might have made restitution, but would not. God reasons with these great men (Isa 3:15): "What mean you, that you beat my people into pieces? What cause have you for it? What good does it do you?" Or, "What hurt have they done you? Do you think you had power given you for such a purpose as this?" Note, There is nothing more unaccountable, and yet nothing which must more certainly be accounted for, than the injuries and abuses that are done to God's people by their persecutors and oppressors. "You grind the faces of the poor; you put them to as much pain and terror as if they were ground in a mill, and as certainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another." Or, "Their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but have given them personal abuses." Our Lord Jesus was smitten on the face, Mt 26:67.

10 Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be* well *with him:* for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

The distinction that shall be made between particular persons, in the prosecution of this controversy (Isa 3:10,11): Say to the righteous, It shall be well with thee. Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him. He had said (Isa 3:9), they have rewarded evil to themselves, in proof of which he here shows that God will render to every man according to his works. Had they been righteous, it would have been well with them; but, if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, Ge 4:7. Or it may be taken thus: God is threatening national judgments, which will ruin the public interests.

Now, 1. Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets comfort them against those fears: "Whatever becomes of the unrighteous nation, let the righteous man know that he shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners; the Judge of all the earth will not slay the righteous with the wicked (Ge 18:25); no, assure him, in God's name, that it shall be well with him. The property of the trouble shall be altered to him, and he shall be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. He shall have divine supports and comforts, which shall abound as afflictions abound, and so it shall be well with him." When the whole stay of bread is taken away, yet in the day of famine the righteous shall be satisfied; they shall eat the fruit of their doings--they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them that they kept themselves pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them that it is to others; they brought no fuel to the flame, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it.

2. Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets shake their vain hopes: "Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him, Isa 3:11. To him the judgments shall have sting, and there shall be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery." There is a woe to wicked people, and, though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgments, yet it

shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them if they repent not, and the worst of all will be at last; for the reward of their hands shall be given them, in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.

11 Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be* ill *with him:* for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

12 *As for* my people, children *are* their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause *thee* to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.

13 The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

The management of this controversy.

1. God himself is the prosecutor (Isa 3:13): The Lord stands up to plead, or he sets himself to debate the matter, and he stands to judge the people, to judge for those that were oppressed and abused; and he will enter into judgment with the princes, Isa 3:14. Note, The greatest of men cannot exempt or secure themselves from the scrutiny and sentence of God's judgment, nor demur to the jurisdiction of the court of heaven.

2 The indictment is proved by the notorious evidence of the fact: "Look upon the oppressors, and the show of their countenance witnesses against them (Isa 3:9); look upon the oppressed, and you see how their faces are battered and abused," Isa 3:15.

3. The controversy is already begun in the change of the ministry. To punish those that had abused their power to bad purposes God sets those over them that had not sense to use their power to any good purposes: Children are their oppressors, and women rule over them (Isa 3:12), men that have as weak judgments and strong passions as women and children: this was their sin, that their rulers were such, and it became a judgment upon them.

14 The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor *is* in your houses.

15 What mean ye *that* ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of hosts.

Judgment on the Daughters of Zion

16 Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing *as* they go, and making a tinkling with their feet:

The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt and what share they must expect in the national judgments that were coming. Here he reproves and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults; and Moses, in the law, having denounced God's wrath against the tender and delicate woman (the prophets being a comment upon the law, De 28:56), he here tells them how they shall smart by the calamities that are coming upon them. Observe,

The sin charged upon the daughters of Zion, Isa 3:16. The prophet expressly vouches God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming in him to take notice of such things, and should be resented by the ladies: The Lord saith it. "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the folly and vanity of proud women, and his law takes cognizance even of their dress." Two things that here stand indicted for--haughtiness and wantonness, directly contrary to that modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety, with which women ought to adorn themselves, 1Ti 2:9. They discovered the disposition of their mind by their gait and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage.

They are haughty, for they walk with stretched-forth necks, that they may seem tall, or, as thinking nobody good enough to speak to them or to receive a look or a smile from them. Their eyes are wanton, deceiving (so the word is); with their amorous glances they draw men into their snares. They affect a formal starched way of going, that people may look at them, and admire them, and know they have been at the dancing-school, and have learned the minuet-step. They go mincing, or nicely tripping, not willing to set so much

as the sole of their foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy. They make a tinkling with their feet, having, as some think, chains, or little bells, upon their shoes, that made a noise: they go as if they were fettered (so some read it), like a horse tramelled, that he may learn to pace. Thus Agag came delicately, 1Sa 15:32. Such a nice affected mien is not only a force upon that which is natural, and ridiculous before men, men of sense; but as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here:

1. That these were the daughters of Zion, the holy mountain, who should have behaved with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness.

2. That it should seem, by the connexion, they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor (Isa 3:14,15) that they might maintain the pride and luxury of their families.

17 therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts.

The punishments threatened for this sin; and they answer the sin as face answers to face in a glass, Isa 3:17,18.

1. They walked with stretched-forth necks, but God will smite with a scab the crown of their head, which shall lower their crests, and make them ashamed to show their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsome diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it.

2. They cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves with great variety of fine clothes; but God will reduce them to such poverty and distress that they shall not have clothes sufficient to cover their nakedness, but their uncomeliness shall be exposed through their rags.

3. They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses shall be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. The prophet here specifies many of the ornaments which they used as particularly as if he had been the keeper of their wardrobe or had attended them in their dressing-room. It is not at all material to enquire what sort of ornaments these respectively were and whether the translations rightly express the original words; perhaps 100 years hence the names of some of the ornaments that are now in use in our own land will be as little understood as some of those here mentioned now are. Fashions alter, and so do the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion; for,

(1.) Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and, if they had not been in fashion, would have been hooted at. They were fitter to be toys for children to play with than ornaments for grown people to go to Mount Zion in.

(2.) Those things that were decent and convenient, as the linen, the hoods, and the veils, needed not be provided in such abundance and variety. It is necessary to have apparel and proper that all should have it according to their rank; but what occasion was there for so many changeable suits of apparel (Isa 3:22), that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit? "They must have (as the homily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the night--one long, another short--one for the working day, another for the holy-day--one of this colour, another of that colour--one of cloth, another of silk or damask--one dress afore dinner, another after--one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey--and never content with sufficient." All this, as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs spend a great deal in gratifying a base lust that ought to be laid out in works of piety and charity; and it is well if poor tenants be not racked, or poor creditors defrauded to support it.

(3.) The enumeration of these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, and how much of their comfort was bound up in them. A maid could forget none of these ornaments, though they were ever so many (Jer 2:32), but they would report them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet did not speak of these things as in themselves sinful (they might lawfully be had and used), but as things which they were proud of and should therefore be deprived of.

18 In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet,* and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon,

19 the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

20 the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings,

21 the rings, and nose jewels,

22 the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins,

23 the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.

24 And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty.

I They were very nice and curious about their clothes; but God would make those bodies of theirs, which were at such expense to beautify and make easy, a reproach and burden to them (Isa 3:24): Instead of sweet smell (those tablets, or boxes, of perfume, houses of the soul or breath, as they are called, Isa 3:20, margin) there shall be stink, garments grown filthy with being long worn, or from some loathsome disease or plasters for the cure of it. Instead of a rich embroidered girdle used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a rent, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags. Instead of well-set hair, curiously plaited and powdered, there shall be baldness, the hair being plucked off or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction (Isa 15:2,Jer 16:6), or in great

servitude, Eze 29:18. Instead of a stomacher, or a scarf or sash, there shall be a girding of sackcloth, in token of deep humiliation; and burning instead of beauty. Those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity shall be tanned and sun-burnt; and it is observed that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn,

1. Not to be nice and curious about our apparel, not to affect that which is gay and costly, nor to be proud of it.

2. Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

II. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlemen, and win their affections (Pr 7:16,17), but there shall be none to be charmed by them (Isa 3:25): Thy men shall fall by the sword, and the mighty in the war, The fire shall consume them, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage; as it is, Ps 78:63. When the sword comes with commission the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture. And, when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates lament and mourn (Isa 3:26), the enemies having made themselves masters of them; and the city itself, being desolate, being emptied or swept, shall sit upon the ground like a disconsolate widow. If sin be harboured with in the walls, lamentation and mourning are near the gates.

25 Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.
26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground.

Isaiah-4

1 And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

It was threatened (Isa 3:25) that the mighty men should fall by the sword in war, and it was threatened as a punishment to the women that affected gaiety and a loose sort of conversation. Now here we have the effect and consequence of that great slaughter of men,

1. That though Providence has so wisely ordered that, communibus annis--on an average of years, there is nearly an equal number of males and females born into the world, yet, through the devastations made by war, there should scarcely be one man in seven left alive. As there are deaths attending the bringing forth of children, which are peculiar to the woman, who was first in transgression, so, to balance that, there are deaths peculiar to men, those by the sword in the high places of the field, which perhaps devour more than child-bed does. Here it is foretold that such multitudes of men should be cut off that there should be seven women to one man.

2. That by reason of the scarcity of men, though marriage should be kept up for the raising of recruits and the preserving of the race of mankind upon earth, yet the usual method of it should be quite altered,--that, whereas men ordinarily make their court to the women, the women should now take hold of the men, foolishly fearing (as Lot's daughters did, when they saw the ruin of Sodom and perhaps thought it reached further than it did) that in a little time there would be none left (Ge 19:31),-- that whereas women naturally hate to come in sharers with others, seven should now, by consent, become the wives of one man,--and that whereas by the law the husband was obliged to provide food and raiment for his wife (Ex 21:10), which with many would be the most powerful argument against multiplying wives, these women will be bound to support themselves; they will eat bread of their own earning, and wear apparel of their own working, and the man they court shall be at no expense upon them, only they desire to be called his wives, to take away the reproach of a single life.

They are willing to be wives upon any terms, though ever so unreasonable; and perhaps the rather because in these troublesome

times it would be a kindness to them to have a husband for their protector. Paul, on the contrary, thinks the single state preferable in a time of distress, 1Co 7:26. It were well if this were not introduced here partly as a reflection upon the daughters of Zion, that, notwithstanding the humbling providences they were under (Isa 3:18), they remained unhumbled, and, instead of repenting of their pride and vanity, when God was contending with them for them, all their care was to get husbands--that modesty, which is the greatest beauty of the fair sex, was forgotten, and with them the reproach of vice was nothing to the reproach of virginity, a sad symptom of the irrecoverable desolations of virtue.

Jerusalem's Glorious Future

2 In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

By the foregoing threatenings Jerusalem is brought into a very deplorable condition: every thing looks melancholy. But here the sun breaks out from behind the cloud. Many exceedingly great and precious promises we have in these verses, giving assurance of comfort which may be discerned through the troubles, and of happy days which shall come after them, and these certainly point at the kingdom of the Messiah, and the great redemption to be wrought out by him, under the figure and type of the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem by the reforming reign of Hezekiah after Ahaz and the return out of their captivity in Babylon; to both these events the passage may have some reference, but chiefly to Christ. It is here promised, as the issue of all these troubles,

That God will raise up a righteous branch, which shall produce fruits of righteousness (Isa 4:2): In that day, that same day, at that very time, when Jerusalem shall be destroyed and the Jewish nation extirpated and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up; and then shall be the reviving of the church, when every one shall fear the utter ruin of it.

1. Christ himself shall be exalted. He is the branch of the Lord, the man the branch; it is one of prophetical names, my servant the branch (Zec 3:8,6:12), the branch of righteousness (Jer 23:5,33:15), a rod out of the stem of Jesse and a branch out of his roots (Isa 11:1), and this, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a Nazarene, Mt 2:23. Here he is called the branch of the Lord, because planted by his power and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldee paraphrase here reads it, The Christ, or Messiah, of the Lord. He shall be the beauty, and glory, and joy.

(1.) He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him and the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He that was a reproach of men, whose visage was marred more than any man's, is now, in the upper world, beautiful and glorious, as the sun in his strength, admired and adored by angels.

(2.) He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men above every name. To those that believe he is precious, he is an honour (1Pe 2:7), the fairest of ten thousand (So 5:10), and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.

2. His gospel shall be embraced. The success of the gospel is the fruit of the branch of the Lord; all the graces and comforts of the gospel spring from Christ. But it is called the fruit of the earth because it sprang up in this world and was calculated for the present state. And Christ compares himself to a grain of wheat, that falls into the ground and dies, and so brings forth much fruit, Joh 12:24. The success of the gospel is represented by the earth's yielding her increase (Ps 67:6), and the planting of the Christian church is God's sowing it to himself in the earth, Ho 2:23. We may understand it of both the persons and the things that are the products of the gospel: they shall be excellent and comely, shall appear very agreeable and be very acceptable to those that have escaped of Israel, to that remnant of the Jews which was saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, Ro 11:5.

Note, If Christ be precious to us, his gospel will be so and all its truths and promises--his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called Israel, and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ, and in holiness, and in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion and after the captivity in Babylon, should again flourish as a branch, and be blessed with the fruits of the earth. Compare Isa 37:31,32. The remnant shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. And if by the fruit of the earth here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe that these have peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who, having a covenant--right to them, have the most comfortable use of them. If the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, Ps 37:16,1Ti 4:8.

3 And it shall come to pass, *that he that is* left in Zion, and *he that* remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, *even* every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

That God will reserve to himself a holy seed, Isa 4:3. When the generality of those that have a place and a name in Zion and in Jerusalem shall be cut off as withered branches, by their own unbelief, yet some shall be left. Some shall remain, some shall still cleave to the church, when its property is altered and it has become Christian; for God will not quite cast off his people, Ro 11:1. There is here and there one that is left. Now,

1. This is a remnant according to the election of grace (as the apostle speaks, Ro 11:5), such as are written among the living, marked in the counsel and fore-knowledge of God for life and salvation, written to life (so the word is), designed and determined for it unalterably; for "what I have written I have written." Those that are kept alive in killing dying times were written for life in the book of divine Providence; and shall we not suppose those who are

rescued from a greater death to be such as were written in the Lamb's book of life? Re 13:8. As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed to the salvation of the soul, Act 13:48. Note, All that were written among the living shall be found among the living, every one; for of all that were given to Christ he will lose none.

2. It is a remnant under the dominion of grace; for every one that is written among the living, and is accordingly left, shall be called holy, shall be holy, and shall be accepted of God accordingly. Those only that are holy shall be left when the Son of man shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends; and all that are chosen to salvation are chosen to sanctification. See 2Th 2:13,Eph 1:4.

4 when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

I. That God will reform his church and will rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it, Isa 4:4. Then the remnant shall be called holy, when the Lord shall have washed away their filth, washed it from among them by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the wicked thing. They shall not be called so till they are in some measure made so. Gospel times are times of reformation (Heb 9:10), typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah and that after captivity, to which this promise refers.

Observe, 1 The places and persons to be reformed. Jerusalem, though the holy city, needed reformation; and, being the holy city, the reformation of that would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The daughters of Zion also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved, Isa 3:16. When they were decked in their ornaments they thought themselves wondrously clean; but, being proud of them, the prophet call them their filth, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride. Or by the daughters of Zion may be meant the country towns and villages,

which were related to Jerusalem as the mother-city, and which needed reformation.

2 The reformation itself. The filth shall be washed away; for wickedness is filthiness, particularly blood-shed, for which Jerusalem was infamous (2Ki 21:16), and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reforming of a city is the cleansing of it. When vicious customs and fashions are suppressed, and the open practice of wickedness is restrained, the place is made clean and sweet which before was a dunghill; and this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves.

3. The author of the reformation: The Lord shall do it. Reformation-work is God's work; if any thing be done to purpose in it, it is his doing. But how? By the judgment of his providence the sinners were destroyed and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace that they are reformed and converted. This is the work that is done, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts (Zec 4:6), working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed and upon magistrates, ministers, and others that are to be employed as instruments of reformation. The Spirit herein acts,

(1.) As a spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, convincing the conscience,--as a spirit of wisdom, guiding us to deal prudently, (Isa 52:13),-- as a discerning, distinguishing, Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile.

(2.) As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the afflictions, and making men zealously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, Mt 3:11. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. See Isa 32:15,16.

II. That God will protect his church, and all that belong to it (Isa 4:5,6); when they are purified and reformed they shall no longer lie

exposed, but God will take a particular care of them. Those that are sanctified are well fortified; for God will be to them a guide and a guard.

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended, Isa 4:5.

(1.) This writ of protection refers to,

[1.] Their dwelling places, the tabernacles of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God alone, and with their families. That blessing which is upon the habitation of the just shall be a protection to it, Pr 3:33. In the tabernacles of the righteous shall the voice of rejoicing and salvation be, Ps 118:15. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the statliest palace. When iniquity is put far from the tabernacle the Almighty shall be its defence, Job 23:23,26.

[2.] Their assemblies or tabernacles of meeting for religious worship. No mention is made of the temple, for the promise points at a time when not one stone of that shall be left upon another; but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three met together in Christ's name, shall be taken under the special protection of heaven; they shall be no more scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall any weapon formed against them prosper. Note, we ought to reckon it a great mercy if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war or persecution.

(2.) This writ of protection is drawn up,

[1.] In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible, of his care of them, as he then gave to Israel. The Lord will again create a cloud and smoke by day, to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun,

and the shining of a flaming fire by night, to enlighten and warm the air, which in the night is cold and dark. See Ex 13:21,Ne 9:19. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Ex 14:20. Note, Though miracles have ceased, yet God is the same to the New-Testament church that he was to Israel of old; the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

[2.] In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams' skins and badgers' skins that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as if every dwelling place of Mount Zion and every assembly were as dear to God as that tabernacle was: Upon all the glory shall be a defense, to save it from wind and weather. Note, The church on earth has its glory. Gospel truths and ordinances, the scriptures and the ministry, are the church's glory; and upon all this glory there is a defence, and ever shall be, for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. If God himself be the glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a wall of fire around about it, impenetrable and impregnable. Grace in the soul is the glory of it, and those that have it are kept by the power of God as in a strong-hold, 1Pe 1:5.

2. Their tabernacle shall be a defence to them, Isa 4:6. God's tabernacle was a pavilion to the saints (Ps 27:5); but, when that is taken down, they shall not want a covert: the divine power and goodness shall be a tabernacle to all the saints. God himself will be their hiding-place (Ps 32:7); they shall be at home in him, Ps 91:9. He will himself be to them as the shadow of a great rock (Isa 32:2) and his name a strong tower, Pr 18:10. He will be not only a shadow from the heat in the daytime, but a covert from storm and rain. Note, In this world we must expect change of weather and all the inconveniences that attend it; we shall meet with storm and rain in this lower region, and at other times the heat of the day no less burdensome; but God is a refuge to his people in all weathers.

5 And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount
Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the
shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory *shall be* a
defense.

6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Isaiah-5

The Parable of the Vineyard

1 Now will I sing to my well-beloved
a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.
My well-beloved hath a vineyard
in a very fruitful hill:

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance by convincing them of sin, and showing them their misery and danger by reason of it. To this purport he speaks sometimes in plain terms and sometimes in parables, sometimes in prose and sometimes in verse, as here. "We have tried to reason with you (Isa 1:18); now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my well beloved." God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ his well beloved Son, whom he has constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his well beloved.

The Old-Testament prophets were friends of the bridegroom. Christ is God's beloved Son and our beloved Saviour. Whatever is said or sung of the church must be intended to his praise, even that which (like this) tends to our shame. This parable was put into a song that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity; and it is an exposition of he song of Moses (De 32:1-47), showing that what he then foretold was now fulfilled. Jerome says, Christ the well-beloved did in effect sing this mournful song when he beheld Jerusalem and wept over it (Lu 19:41), and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard (Mt 21:33, &c.), only here the fault was in the vines, there in the husbandmen. Here we have,

I The great things which God had done for the Jewish church and nation. When all the rest of the world lay in common, not cultivated by divine revelation, that was his vineyard, they were his peculiar people. He acknowledged them as his own, set them apart for himself. The soil they were planted in was extraordinary; it was a very fruitful hill, the horn of the son of oil; so it is in the margin. There was plenty, a cornucopia; and there was dainty: they did there eat the fat and drink the sweet, and so were furnished with abundance of good things to honour God with in sacrifices and free-will offerings. The advantages of our situation will be brought into the account another day. Observe further what God did for this vineyard.

1. He fenced it, took it under his special protection, kept it night and day under his own eye, lest any should hurt it, Isa 27:2,3. If they had not themselves thrown down their fence, no inroad could have been made upon them, Ps 125:2,131:4.

2. He gathered the stones out of it, that, as nothing from without might damage it, so nothing within might obstruct its fruitfulness. He proffered his grace to take away the stony heart.

3. He planted it with the choicest vine, set up a pure religion among them, gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances very proper for the keeping up of their acquaintance with God, Jer 2:21.

4. He built a tower in the midst of it, either for defence against violence or for the dressers of the vineyard to lodge in; or rather it was for the owner of the vineyard to sit in, to take a view of the vines (So 7:12)-- a summer-house. The temple was this tower, about which the priests lodged, and where God promised to meet his people, and gave them the tokens of his presence among them and pleasure in them. 5. He made a wine-press therein, set up his altar, to which the sacrifices, as the fruits of the vineyard, should be brought.

II The disappointment of his just expectations from them: He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. Note, God expects vineyard-fruit from those that enjoy vineyard-privileges, not leaves only, as Mk 11:12. A bare profession, though ever so green, will not serve: there must be more than buds and blossoms. Good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough; there must be fruit, a good heart and a good life, vineyard fruit, thoughts and affections, words and actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard (Ga 5:22,23), answerable to the ordinances, which are the dressings of the vineyard, acceptable to God, the Lord of the vineyard, and fruit according to the season. Such fruit as this God expects from us, grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man (Jdg 9:13); and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated: It brought forth wild grapes; not only no fruit at all, but bad fruit, worse than none, grapes of Sodom, De 32:32.

1. Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature, fruit according to the crabstock, not according to the engrafted branch, from the root of bitterness, Heb 12:15. Where grace does not work corruption will.

2. Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, but are sour or bitter, and are so far from being pleasing to God that they are provoking, as theirs mentioned in Isa 1:11. Counterfeit graces are wild grapes.

2 and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
and planted it with the choicest vine,
and built a tower in the midst of it,
and also made a winepress therein:
and he looked that it should bring forth grapes,
and it brought forth wild grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah,
judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

I. An appeal to themselves whether upon the whole matter God must not be justified and they condemned, Isa 5:3,4. And now the case is plainly stated: O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah! judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. This implies that God was blamed about them.

There was a controversy between them and him; but the equity was so plain on his side that he could venture to put the decision of the controversy to their own consciences. "Let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that has but the use of his reason and a common sense of equity and justice, speak his mind impartially in this matter." Here is a challenge to any man to show,

1. Any instance wherein God had been wanting to them: What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? He speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and such as might be expected from the dresser of a vineyard, from whom it is not required that he should change the nature of the vine. What ought to have been done more? so it may be read. They had everything requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for quickening them to it and putting them in mind of it.

No inducements were wanting to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used that were proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new moons, and the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; They had the scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, besides what was extraordinary in the prophets. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous.

2. Nor could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God. "Wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes?"

Note, The wickedness of those that profess religion, and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable unaccountable thing in

the world, and the whole blame of it must lie upon the sinners themselves. "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it, and shalt not have a word to say for thyself in the judgment of the great day." God will prove his own ways equal and the sinner's ways unequal.

II. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their bad conduct towards God (Isa 5:5,6): "And now go to, since nothing can be offered in excuse of the crime or arrest of the judgement, I will tell you what I am now determined to do to my vineyard. I will be vexed and troubled with it no more; since it will be good for nothing, it shall be good for nothing; in short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into a wilderness: the church of the Jews shall be unchurched; their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become lo-ammi--not my people."

1. "They shall no longer be distinguished as a peculiar people, but be laid in common: I will take away the hedge thereof, and then it will soon be eaten up and become as bare as other ground." They mingled with the nations and therefore were justly scattered among them.

2. "They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed. God will not only suffer the wall to go to decay, but he will break it down, will remove all their defences from them, and then they will become an easy prey to their enemies, who have long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now tread them down and trample upon them."

3. "They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, and the form and shape of a church and commonwealth, but shall be levelled and laid waste." This was fulfilled when Jerusalem for their sakes was ploughed as a field, Mic 3:12.

4. "No more pains shall be taken with them by magistrates or ministers, the dressers and keepers of their vineyard; it shall not be pruned nor digged, but every thing shall run wild, and nothing shall come up but briers and thorns, the products of sin and the curse,"

Ge 3:18. When errors and corruptions, vice and immorality, go without check or control, no testimony borne against them, no rebuke given them or restraint put upon them, the vineyard is unpruned, is not dressed, or ridded; and then it will soon be like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, all grown over with thorns.

5. "That which completes its woe is that the dews of heaven shall be withheld; he that has the key of the clouds will command them that they rain no rain upon it, and that alone is sufficient to run it into a desert." Note, God in a way of righteous judgment, denies his grace to those that have long received it in vain. The sum of all is that those who would not bring forth good fruit should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barrenness, as Mk 11:14.

This had its partial accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, its full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews, and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons who have long resisted him and striven against him, and the removal of his gospel from those places that have been long a reproach to it, while it has been an honour to them. It is no loss to God to lay his vineyard waste; for he can, when he please, turn a wilderness into a fruitful field; and when he does thus dismantle a vineyard, it is but as he did by the garden of Eden, which, when man had by sin forfeited his place in it, was soon levelled with common soil.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard,
that I have not done in it?
Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,
brought it forth wild grapes?
5 And now go to;
I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I
will take away the hedge thereof,
and it shall be eaten up;
and break down the wall thereof,
and it shall be trodden down:

6 and I will lay it waste:
it shall not be pruned, nor digged;
but there shall come up briers and thorns:
I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
7 For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts *is* the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah his pleasant plant:
and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression;
for righteousness, but behold a cry.

The explanation of this parable, or a key to it (Isa 5:7), where we are told,

1. What is meant by the vineyard (it is the house of Israel, the body of the people, incorporated in one church and commonwealth), and what by the vines, the pleasant plants, the plants of God's pleasure, which he had been pleased in and delighted in doing good to; they are the men of Judah; these he had dealt graciously with, and from them he expected suitable returns.

2. What is meant by the grapes that were expected and the wild grapes that were produces: He looked for judgment and righteousness, that the people should be honest in all their dealings and the magistrates should strictly administer justice. This might reasonably be expected among a people that had such excellent laws and rules of justice given them (De 4:8); but the fact was quite otherwise; instead of judgment there was the cruelty of the oppressors, and instead of righteousness the cry of the oppressed. Every thing was carried by clamour and noise, and not by equity and according to the merits of the cause.

It is sad with a people when wickedness has usurped the place of judgment, Ec 3:16. It is very sad with a soul when instead of the grapes of humility, meekness, patience, love, and contempt of the world, which God looks for, there are the wild grapes of pride, passion, discontent, malice, and contempt of God--instead of the grapes of praying and praising, the wild grapes of cursing and swearing, which are a great offence to God. Some of the ancients apply this to the Jews in Christ's time, among whom God looked

for righteousness (that is, that they should receive and embrace Christ), but behold a cry, that cry, Crucify him, crucify him.

Woes Pronounced on the Wicked

8 Woe unto them that join house to house, *that* lay field to field, till *there be* no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

The world and the flesh are the two great enemies that we are in danger of being overpowered by; yet we are in no danger if we do not ourselves yield to them. Eagerness of the world, and indulgence of the flesh, are the two sins against which the prophet, in God's name, here denounces woes. These were sins which then abounded among the men of Judah, some of the wild grapes they brought forth (Isa 5:4), and for which God threatens to bring ruin upon them. They are sins which we have all need to stand upon our guard against and dread the consequences of.

I. Here is a woe to those who set their hearts upon the wealth of the world, and place their happiness in that, and increase it to themselves by indirect and unlawful means (Isa 5:8), who join house to house and lay field to field, till there be no place, no room for anybody to live by them. If they could succeed, they would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, would monopolize possessions and preferments, and engross all profits and employments to themselves. Not that it is a sin for those who have a house and a field, of they have wherewithal, to purchase another; but

1. Their fault is,

(1.) That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate, as if they had nothing to mind, nothing to seek, nothing to do, in this world, but that. They never know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have; and, like the daughters of the horseleech, they cry, Give, give. They cannot enjoy what

they have, nor do good with it, but are constantly contriving and studying to make it more. They must have variety of houses, a winter-house, and a summer-house, and if another man's house or field lie convenient to theirs, as Naboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy.

(2.) That they are herein careless of others, nay, and injurious to them. They would live so as to let nobody live but themselves. So that their insatiable covetings may be gratified, they care not what becomes of all about them, what encroachments they make upon their neighbours' rights, what hardships they put upon those that they have power over or advantage against, nor what base and wicked arts they use to heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied (Ec 5:10), as Alexander, who, when he fancied he had conquered the world, wept because he had not another world to conquer. Deficiente terrâ, non impletur avaritia--If the whole earth were monopolized, avarice would thirst for more.

What! will you be placed alone in the midst of the earth? (so some read it); will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need of the service of others and so much comfort in their society? Will you be so foolish as to expect that the earth shall be forsaken for us (Job 18:4), when it is by multitudes that the earth is to be replenished? An propter vos solos tanta terra creata est?--Was the wide world created merely for you? Lyra.

2. That which is threatened as the punishment of this sin is that neither the houses nor the fields they were thus greedy of should turn to any account, Isa 5:9,10. God whispered it to the prophet in his ear, as he speaks in a like case (Isa 22:14): It was revealed in my ears by the Lord of hosts (as God told Samuel a thing in his ear, 1Sa 9:15); he thought he heard it still sounding in his ears; but he proclaimed it, as he ought, upon the house-tops, Mt 10:27.

(1.) That the houses they were so fond of should be untenanted, should stand long empty, and should yield them no rent, and go out

of repair: Many houses shall be desolate, the people that should dwell in them, being cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been housekeepers were forced to become lodgers, or shift for themselves elsewhere.

Even great and fair houses, that would invite tenants, and (there being a scarcity of tenants) might be taken at low rates, shall stand empty without inhabitants. God created not the earth in vain; he formed it to be inhabited, Isa 45:18. But men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame answers not the intention. We have a saying, That fools build houses for wise men to live in; but sometimes, as the event proves, they are built for no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities.

(2.) That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful (Isa 5:10): Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine (which was about eight gallons), and the seed of a homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah, which was the tenth part of a homer; so that through the barrenness of the ground, or the unreasonableness of the weather, they should not have more than a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

9 In mine ears *said* the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, *even* great and fair, without inhabitant.

10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah.

11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that* they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, *till* wine inflame them!

Here is a woe to those that dote upon the pleasures and delights of sense, Isa 5:11,12. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and oppression. As Christ pronounces a woe against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now and are full (Lu 6:24,25), and fare sumptuously, Lu 16:19. Observe,

1. Who the sinners are against whom this woe is denounced.

(1.) They are such as are given to drink; they make their drinking their business, have their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandmen and tradesmen do to follow their employments; as if they were afraid of losing time from that which is the greatest misspending of time. Whereas commonly those that are drunken are drunken in the night, when they have despatched the business of the day, these neglect business, abandon it, and give up themselves to the service of the flesh; for they sit at their cups all day, and continue till night, till wine inflame them--inflame their lusts (chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness)--inflame their passions; for who but such have contentions and wounds without cause? Pr 23:29-35. They make a perfect trade of drinking; nor do they seek the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, as men ashamed of it, but count it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. See 2Pe 2:13.

(2.) They are such as are given to mirth. They have their feasts, and they are so merrily disposed that they cannot dine or sup without music, musical instruments of all sorts,

(3.) They are such as never give their mind to any thing that is serious: They regard not the work of the Lord; they observe not his power, wisdom, and goodness, in those creatures which they abuse and subject to vanity, nor the bounty of his providence in giving them those good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure, but they regard not; they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb themselves in their pleasures nor think what God is doing with them.

2. What the judgments are which are denounced against them, and in part executed. It is here foretold,

(1.) that they should be dislodged; the land should spue out these drunkards (Isa 5:13): My people (so they call themselves, and were proud of it) have therefore gone into captivity, are as sure to go as if they were gone already, because they have no knowledge; how should they have knowledge when by their excessive drinking they make sots and fools of themselves? They set up for wits; but because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care to make their peace with him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge; and the reason is because they will have none; they are inconsiderate and wilful, and are therefore destroyed for lack of knowledge.

(2.) That they should be impoverished, and come to want that which they had wasted and abused to excess: Even their glory are men of famine, subject to it and slain by it; and their multitude are dried up with thirst. Both the great men and the common people are ready to perish for want of bread and water. This is the effect of the failure of the corn (Isa 5:10), for the king himself is served of the field, Ec 5:9. And when the vintage fails the drunkards are called upon to weep, because the new wine is cut off from their mouth (Joe 1:5), and not so much because now they want it as because when they had it they abused it. It is just with God to make men want that for necessity which they have abused to excess.

(3.) What multitudes should be cut off by famine and sword (Isa 5:14): Therefore hell has enlarged herself. Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little; so many are there to be buried that they shall be forced to enlarge it. The grave has opened her mouth without measure, never saying, It is enough, Pr 30:15,16. It may be understood of the place of the damned; luxury and sensuality fill these regions of darkness and horror; there those are tormented who made a god of their belly, Lu 16:25,Php 3:19.

(4.) That they should be humbled and abased, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave: Their glory shall descend, not only to the earth, but into it; it

shall not descend after them (Ps 49:17), to stand them in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them--poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? Their multitude shall go down to the pit, Eze 31:18,32:32. Did they glory in the figure they made? Their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed, and were attended. Did they glory in their mirth? Death will turn it into mourning; he that rejoices and revels, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there are weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be ever so high, death will bring him low--ever so mean, death will bring him lower, in the prospect of which the eyes of the lofty should now be humbled, Isa 5:15. It becomes those to look low that must shortly be laid low.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

(1.) God shall be glorified, Isa 5:16. He that is the Lord of hosts, and the holy God, shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations. His justice must be owned in bringing those low what exalted themselves; and herein he is glorified,

[1.] As a God is irresistible power. He will herein be exalted as the Lord of hosts, that is able to break the strongest, humble the proudest, and tame the most unruly. Power is not exalted but in judgment. It is the honour of God that, though he has a mighty arm, yet judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne, Ps 89:13,14.

[2.] As a God of unspotted purity. He that is holy, infinitely holy, shall be sanctified (that is, shall be owned and declared to be holy) in the righteous punishment of proud men. Note, When proud men are humbled the great God is honoured, and ought to be honoured by us.

(2.) Good people shall be relieved and succoured (Isa 5:17): Then shall the lambs feed after their manner; the meek ones of the earth, who followed the Lamb, who were persecuted, and put into fear by those proud oppressors, shall feed quietly, feed in the green pastures, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Eze 34:14. When the enemies of the church are cut off then have the churches rest. They shall feed at their pleasure; so some read it. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundant peace. They shall feed according to their order or capacity (so others read it), as they are able to hear the word, that bread of life.

(3.) The country shall be laid waste, and become a prey to the neighbours: The waste places of the fats ones, the possessions of those rich men that lived at their ease, shall be eaten by strangers that were nothing akin to them. In the captivity the poor of the land were left for vine-dressers and husbandmen (2Ki 25:12); these were the lambs that fed in the pastures of the fats ones, which were laid in common for strangers to eat. When the church of the Jews, those fat ones, was laid waste, their privileges were transferred to the Gentiles, who had been long strangers, and the lambs of Christ's flock were welcome to them.

12 And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.

13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge: and their honorable men *are* famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

14 Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

15 And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:

16 but the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

17 Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it
were with a cart rope:
19 that say, Let him make speed, *and* hasten his work, that we may see
it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come,
that we may know *it!*

Here are, I. Sins described which will bring judgments upon a people: and this perhaps is not only a charge drawn up against the men of Judah who lived at that time, and the particular articles of that charge, though it may relate primarily to them, but is rather intended for warning to all people, in all ages, to take heed of these sins, as destructive both to particular persons and to communities, and exposing men to God's wrath and his righteous judgments. Those are here said to be in a woeful condition,

1. Who are eagerly set upon sin, and violent in their sinful pursuits (Isa 5:18), who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, who take as much pains to sin as the cattle do that draw a team, who put themselves to the stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate appetites, and, to humour a base lust, offer violence to nature itself. They think themselves as sure of compassing their wicked project as if they were pulling it towards them with strong cart-ropes; but they will find themselves disappointed, for they will prove cords of vanity, which will break when they come to any stress. For the righteous Lord will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked, Ps 129:4,Job 4:8.Pr 22:8.

They are by long custom and confirmed habits so hardened in sin that they cannot get clear of it. Those that sin through infirmity are drawn away by sin; those that sin presumptuously draw iniquity to them, in spite of the oppositions of Providence and the checks of conscience. Some by sin understand the punishment of sin: they pull God's judgments upon their own heads as it were, with cart-ropes.

2. Who set the justice of God at defiance, and challenge the Almighty to do his worst (Isa 5:19): They say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work; this is the same language with that of the scoffers of the last days, who say, Where is the promise of his

coming? and therefore it is that, like them, they draw iniquity with cords of vanity, are violent and daring in sin, and walk after their own lusts, 2Pe 3:3,4.

(1.) They ridicule the prophets, and banter them. It is in scorn that they call God the Holy One of Israel, because the prophets used with great veneration to call him so.

(2.) They will not believe the revelation of God's wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness; unless they see it executed, they will not know it, as if the curse were brutum fulmen--a mere flash, and all the threatenings of the word bugbears to frighten fools and children.

(3.) If God should appear against them, as he has threatened, yet they think themselves able to make their part good with him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he, 1Co 10:22. "We have heard his word, but it is all talk; let him hasten his work, we shall shift for ourselves well enough." Note, Those that wilfully persist in sin consider not the power of God's anger.

3. Who confound and overthrow the distinctions between moral good and evil, who call evil good and moral evil (Isa 5:20), who not only live in the omission of that which is good, but condemn it, argue against it, and, because they will not practise it themselves, run it down in others, and fasten invidious epithets upon it--not only do that which is evil, but justify it, and applaud it, and recommend it to others as safe and good. Note,

(1.) Virtue and piety are good, for they are light and sweet, they are pleasant and right; but sin and wickedness are evil; they are darkness, all the fruit of ignorance and mistake, and will be bitterness in the latter end.

(2.) Those do a great deal of wrong to God, and religion, and conscience, to their own souls, and to the souls of others, who

misrepresent these, and put false colours upon them--who call drunkenness good fellowship, and covetousness good husbandry, and, when they persecute the people of God, think they do him good service--and, on the other hand, who call seriousness ill-nature, and sober singularity ill-breeding, who say all manner of evil falsely concerning the ways of godliness, and do what they can to form in men's minds prejudices against them, and this in defiance of evidence as plain and convincing as that of sense, by which we distinguish, beyond contradiction, between light and darkness, and between that which to the taste is sweet and that which is bitter.

4. Who though they are guilty of such gross mistakes as these have a great opinion of their own judgments, and value themselves mightily upon their understanding (Isa 5:21): They are wise in their own eyes; they think themselves able to disprove and baffle the reproofs and convictions of God's word, and to evade and elude both the searches and the reaches of his judgments; they think they can outwit Infinite Wisdom and countermine Providence itself. Or it may be taken more generally: God resists the proud, those particularly who are conceited of their own wisdom and lean to their own understanding; such must become fools, that they may be truly wise, or else, at their end they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

5. Who glory in it as a great accomplishment that they are able to bear a great deal of strong liquor without being overcome by it (Isa 5:22), who are mighty to drink wine, and use their strength and vigour, not in the service of their country, but in the service of their lusts. Let drunkards know from this scripture that,

(1.) They ungratefully abuse their bodily strength, which God has given them for good purposes, and by degrees cannot but weaken it.

(2.) It will not excuse them from the guilt of drunkenness that they can drink hard and yet keep their feet.

(3.) Those who boast of their drinking down others glory in their shame.

(4.) How light soever men make of their drunkenness, it is a sin which will certainly lay them open to the wrath and curse of God.

6. Who, as judges, pervert justice, and go counter to all rules of equity, Isa 5:23. This follows upon the former; they drink and forget the law (Pr 31:5), and err through wine (Isa 28:7), and take bribes, that they may have wherewithal to maintain their luxury. They justify the wicked for reward, and find some pretence or other to clear him from his guilt and shelter him from punishment; and they condemn the innocent, and take away their righteousness from them, that is, overrule their pleas, deprive them of the means of clearing up their innocency, and give judgment against them.

In causes between man and man, might and money would at any time prevail against right and justice; and he who was ever so plainly in the wrong would with a small bribe carry the cause and recover the costs. In criminal causes, though the prisoner ever so plainly appeared to be guilty, yet for a reward they would acquit him; if he were innocent, yet if he did not fee them well, nay, if they were feed by the malicious prosecutor, or if they themselves had spleen against him, they would condemn him.

20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness
for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet
for bitter!
21 Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their
own sight!
22 Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength
to mingle strong drink:
23 which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the
righteousness of the righteous from him!
24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth
the chaff, *so* their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall
go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of
hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

The judgments described, which these sins would bring upon them. Let not those expect to live easily who live thus wickedly; for the righteous God will take vengeance, Isa 5:24-30. Here we may observe,

1. How complete this ruin will be, and how necessarily and unavoidably it will follow upon their sins. He had compared this people to a vine (Isa 5:7), well fixed, and which, it was hoped, would be flourishing and fruitful; but the grace of God towards it was received in vain, and then the root became rottenness, being dried up from beneath, and the blossom would of course blow off as dust, as a light and worthless thing, Job 18:16. Sin weakens the strength, the root, of a people, so that they are easily rooted up; it defaces the beauty, the blossoms, of a people, and takes away the hopes of fruit. The sin of unfruitfulness is punished with the plague of unfruitfulness. Sinners make themselves as stubble and chaff, combustible matter, proper fuel to the fire of God's wrath, which then of course devours and consumes them, as the fire devours the stubble, and nobody can hinder it, or cares to hinder it. Chaff is consumed, unhelped and unpitied.

2. How just the ruin will be: Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and would not have him to reign over them; and, as the law of Moses was rejected and thrown off, so the word of the Holy One of Israel by his servants the prophets, putting them in mind of his law and calling them to obedience, was despised and disregarded. God does not reject men for every transgression of his law and word; but, when his word is despised and his law cast away, what can they expect but that God should utterly abandon them?

3. Whence this ruin should come (Isa 5:25): it is destruction from the Almighty.

(1.) The justice of God appoints it; for that is the anger of the Lord which is kindled against his people, his necessary vindication of the honour of his holiness and authority.

(2.) The power of God effects it: He has stretched forth his hand against them. That hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies is now stretched out against them at full length and in its full vigour; and who knows the power of his anger? Whether they are sensible of it or no, it is God that has smitten them, has blasted their vine and made it wither.

4. The consequences and continuance of this ruin. When God comes forth in wrath against a people the hills tremble, fear seizes even their great men, who are strong and high, the earth shakes under men and is ready to sink; and as this feels dreadful (what does more so than an earthquake?) so what sight can be more frightful than the carcases of men torn with dogs, or thrown as dung (so the margin reads it) in the midst of the streets? This intimates that great multitudes should be slain, not only soldiers in the field of battle, but the inhabitants of their cities put to the sword in cold blood, and that the survivors should neither have hands nor hearts to bury them. This is very dreadful, and yet such is the merit of sin that, for all this, God's anger is not turned away; that fire will burn as long as there remains any of the stubble and chaff to be fuel for it; and his hand, which he stretched forth against his people to smite them, because they do not by prayer take hold of it, nor by reformation submit themselves to it, is stretched out still.

5. The instruments that should be employed in bringing this ruin upon them: it should be done by the incursions of a foreign enemy, that should lay all waste. No particular enemy is named, and therefore we are to take it as a prediction of all the several judgments of this kind which God brought upon the Jews, Sennacherib's invasion soon after, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans first and at last by the Romans; and I think it is to be looked upon also as a threatening of the like desolation of those countries which harbour and countenance those sins mentioned in the foregoing verses; it is an exposition of those woes. When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

(1.) He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in effecting it; he can raise forces from afar, and summon them from the end of the earth to attend his service, Isa 5:26. Those who know him not are made use of to fulfil his counsel, when, by reason of their distance, they can scarcely be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though perhaps they know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he has a great army in an instant, Joe 2:2,11. He needs not sound a trumpet, nor beat a drum, to give them notice or to animate them; no, he does but hiss to them, or rather whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all the creatures at his beck.

(2.) He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition: Behold, they shall come with speed swiftly. Note,

[1.] Those who will do God's work must not loiter, must not linger, nor shall they when his time has come.

[2.] Those who defy God's judgments will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they said scornfully (Isa 5:19), Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, and they shall find, to their terror and confusion, that he will; in one hour has the judgment come.

(3.) He can carry them on in the service with amazing forwardness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lofty expressions, Isa 5:27-30.

[1.] Though their marches be very long, yet none among them shall be weary; so desirous they be to engage that they shall forget their weariness, and make no complaints of it.

[2.] Though the way be rough, and perhaps embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet none among them shall stumble, but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over.

[3.] Though they be forced to keep constant watch, yet none shall slumber nor sleep, so intent shall they be upon their work, in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains.

[4.] They shall not desire any rest of relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, nor loose the girdle of their loins, but shall always have their belts on and swords by their sides.

[5.] They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march or oblige them to halt; not a latchet of their shoes shall be broken which they must stay to mend, as Jos 9:13.

[6.] Their arms and ammunition shall all be fixed, and in good posture; their arrows sharp, to wound deep, and all their bows bent, none unstrung, for they expect to be soon in action.

[7.] Their horses and chariots of war shall all be fit for service; their horses so strong, so hardy, that their hoofs shall be like flint, far from being beaten, or made tender, by their long march; and the wheels of their chariots not broken, or battered, or out of repair, but swift like a whirlwind, turning round so strongly upon their axle-trees.

[8.] All the soldiers shall be bold and daring (Isa 5:29): Their roaring, or shouting, before a battle, shall be like a lion, who with his roaring animates himself, and terrifies all about him. Those who would not hear the voice of God speaking to them by his prophets, but stopped their ears against their charms, shall be made to hear the voice of their enemies roaring against them and shall not be able to turn a deaf ear to it. They shall roar like the roaring of the sea in a storm; it roars and threatens to swallow up, as the lion roars and threatens to tear in pieces.

[9.] There shall not be the least prospect of relief or succour. The enemy shall come in like a flood, and there shall be none to lift up a standard against him. He shall seize the prey, and none shall deliver it, none shall be able to deliver it, nay, none shall so much as dare to attempt the deliverance of it, but shall give it up for lost. Let the distressed look which way they will, every thing appears dismal; for, if God frowns upon us, how can any creature smile? First, Look round to the earth, to the land, to that land that used to be the land of light and the joy of the whole earth, and behold darkness and sorrow, all frightful, all mournful, nothing hopeful. Secondly, Look up to heaven, and there the light is darkened, where one would expect to have found it. If the light is darkened in the heavens, how great is that darkness! If God hide his face, no marvel the heavens hide theirs and appear gloomy, Job 34:29. It is our wisdom, by keeping a good conscience, to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above even when clouds and darkness are round about us.

25 Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and
he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten
them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses *were* torn in the
midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his
hand *is* stretched out still.
26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss
unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come
with speed swiftly:
27 none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber
nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the
latchet of their shoes be broken:
28 whose arrows *are* sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs
shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind:
29 their roaring *shall be* like a lion, they shall roar like young lions; yea,
they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry *it* away safe,
and none shall deliver *it*.
30 And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the
sea: and if *one* look unto the land, behold darkness *and* sorrow; and
the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Isaiah-6

The Vision and Call of Isaiah

1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

The vision which Isaiah saw when he was, as is said of Samuel, established to be a prophet of the Lord (1Sa 3:20), was intended,

1. To confirm his faith, that he might himself be abundantly satisfied of the truth of those things which should afterwards be made known to him. This God opened the communications of himself to him; but such visions needed not to be afterwards repeated upon every revelation. Thus God appeared at first as a God of glory to Abraham (Ac 7:2), and to Moses, Ex 3:2. Ezekiel's prophecies and St. John's, begin with visions of the divine glory.

2. To work upon his affections, that he might be possessed with such a reverence of God as would both quicken him and fix him to his service. Those who are to teach others the knowledge of God ought to be well acquainted with him themselves.

The vision is dated, for the greater certainty of it. It was in the year that king Uzziah died, who had reigned, for the most part, as prosperously and well as any of the kings of Judah, and reigned very long, above fifty years. About the time that he died, Isaiah saw this vision of God upon a throne; for when the breath of princes goes forth, and they return to their earth, this is our comfort, that the Lord shall reign for ever, Ps 146:3,4,10. Israel's king dies, but Israel's God still lives. From the mortality of great and good men we should take occasion to look up with an eye of faith to the King eternal, immortal. King Uzziah died under a cloud, for he was shut up as a leper till the day of his death. As the lives of princes have their periods, so their glory is often eclipsed; but, as God is everliving, so his glory is

everlasting. King Uzziah dies in an hospital, but the King of kings still sits upon his throne.

What the prophet here saw is revealed to us, that we, mixing faith with that revelation, may in it, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord; let us turn aside therefore, and see this great sight with humble reverence.

I. See God upon his throne, and that throne high and lifted up, not only above other thrones, as it transcends them, but over other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not Jehovah--the essence of God (no man has seen that, or can see it), but Adonai--his dominion. He saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision is explained Joh 12:41, that Isaiah now saw Christ's glory and spoke of him, which is an incontestable proof of the divinity of our Saviour. He it is who when, after his resurrection, he sat down on the right hand of God, did but sit down where he was before, Joh 17:5. See the rest of the Eternal Mind: Isaiah saw the Lord sitting, Ps 29:10. See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch: he sits upon a throne--a throne of glory, before which we must worship,--a throne of government, under which we must be subject,--and a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly. This throne is high, and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

II. See his temple, his church on earth, filled with the manifestations of his glory. His throne being erected at the door of the temple (as princes sat in judgment at the gates), his train, the skirts of his robes, filled the temple, the whole world (for it is all God's temple, and, as the heaven is his throne, so the earth is his footstool), or rather the church, which is filled enriched, and beautified with the tokens of God's special presence.

2 Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

See the bright and blessed attendants on his throne, in and by whom his glory is celebrated and his government served (Isa

6:2): Above the throne, as it were hovering about it, or nigh to the throne, bowing before it, with an eye to it, the seraphim stood, the holy angels, who are called seraphim-burners; for he makes his ministers a flaming fire, Ps 104:4. They burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory and against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath when he is a consuming fire to his enemies. Whether they were only two or four, or (as I rather think) an innumerable company of angels, that Isaiah saw, is uncertain; see Da 7:10.

Note, It is the glory of the angels that they are seraphim, have heat proportionable to their light, have abundance, not only of divine knowledge, but of holy love. Special notice is taken of their wings (and of no other part of their appearance), because of the use they made of them, which is designed for instruction to us. They had each of them six wings, not stretched upwards (as those whom Ezekiel saw, Isa 1:11), but,

1. Four were made use of for a covering, as the wings of a fowl, sitting, are; with the two upper wings, next to the head, they covered their faces, and with the two lowest wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This bespeaks their great humility and reverence in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in the assembly of those saints, Ps 89:7. They not only cover their feet, those members of the body which are less honourable (1Co 12:23), but even their faces. Though angel's faces, doubtless, are much fairer than those of the children of men (Ac 6:15), yet in the presence of God, they cover them, because they cannot bear the dazzling lustre of the divine glory, and because, being conscious of an infinite distance from the divine perfection, they are ashamed to show their faces before the holy God, who charges even his angels with folly if they should offer to vie with him, Job 4:18. If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne! Else we do not the will of God as the angels do it. Yet Moses, when he went into the mount with God, took the veil from off his face. See 2Co 3:18.

2. Two were made use of for flight; when they are sent on God's errands they fly swiftly (Da 9:21), more swiftly with their own wings than if they flew on the wings of the wind. This teaches us to do the work of God with cheerfulness and expedition. Do angels come upon the wing from heaven to earth, to minister for our good, and shall not we soar upon the wing from earth to heaven, to share with them in their glory? Lu 20:36.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the Lord of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

Hear the anthem, or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of him that sits on the throne, Isa 6:3. Observe,

1. How this song was sung. With zeal and fervency--they cried aloud; and with unanimity--they cried to another, or one with another; they sang alternately, but in concert, and without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony.

2. What the song was; it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, Re 4:8. Note, Praising God always was, and will be to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, Ps 84:4. Note further, The church above is the same in its praises; there is no change of times or notes there. Two things the seraphim here give God the praise of:--

(1.) His infinite perfections in himself. Here is one of his most glorious titles praised: he is the Lord of hosts, of their hosts, of all hosts; and one of his most glorious attributes, his holiness, without which his being the Lord of hosts (or, as it is in the parallel place, Re 4:8, the Lord God Almighty) could not be so much as it is the matter of our joy and praise; for power, without purity to guide it, would be a terror to mankind. None of all the divine attributes is so celebrated in scripture as this is. God's power was spoken twice (Ps 62:11), but his holiness thrice, Holy, holy, holy. This bespeaks,

[1.] The zeal and fervency of the angels in praising God; they even want words to express themselves, and therefore repeat the same again.

[2.] The particular pleasure they take in contemplating the holiness of God; this is a subject they love to dwell upon, to harp upon, and are loth to leave.

[3.] The superlative excellency of God's holiness, above that of the purest creatures. He is holy, thrice holy, infinitely holy, originally, perfectly, and eternally so.

[4.] It may refer to the three person in the Godhead, Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit (for it follows, Isa 6:8, Who will go for us?) or perhaps to that which was, and is, and is to come; for that title of God's honour is added to this song, Re 4:8. Some make the angels here to applaud the equity of that sentence which God was now about to pronounce upon the Jewish nation. Herein he was, and is, and will be, holy; his ways are equal.

(2.) The manifestation of these to the children of men: The earth is full of his glory, the glory of his power and purity; for he is holy in all his works, Ps 145:17. The Jews thought the glory of God should be confined to their land; but it is here intimated that in the gospel times (which are pointed to in this chapter) the glory of God should fill all the earth, the glory of his holiness, which is indeed the glory of all his other attributes; this then filled the temple (Isa 6:1), but, in the latter days, the earth shall be full of it.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Observe the marks and tokens of terror with which the temple was filled, upon this vision of the divine glory, Isa 6:4.

1 The house was shaken; not only the door, but even the posts of the door, which were firmly fixed, moved at the voice of him that cried, at the voice of God, who called to judgment (Ps 50:4), at the voice of the angel, who praised him. There are voices in heaven sufficient to drown all the noises of the many waters in this lower world, Ps 93:3,4. This violent concussion of the temple was an indication of God's wrath and displeasure against the people for their sins; it was an earnest of the destruction of it and the city by the Babylonians first, and afterwards by the Romans; and it was designed to strike an awe upon us. Shall walls and posts tremble before God, and shall we not tremble?

2 The house was darkened; it was filled with smoke, which was as a cloud spread upon the face of his throne (Job 26:9); we cannot take a full view of it, nor order our speech concerning it, by reason of darkness. In the temple above there will be no smoke, but everything will be seen clearly. There God dwells in light; here he makes darkness his pavilion, 2Ch 6:1.

5 Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

Our curiosity would lead us to enquire further concerning the seraphim, their songs and their services; but here we leave them, and must attend to what passed between God and his prophet. Secret things belong not to us, the secret things of the world of angels, but things revealed to and by the prophets, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

The consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God (Isa 6:5): Then said I, Woe is me! I should have said, "Blessed art thou, who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified, for a time, with the privilege of those glorious beings that always behold the face of our Father. Blessed were those eyes which saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and those ears which heard the

angels' praises." And, one would think, he should have said, "Happy am I, for ever happy; nothing now shall trouble me, nothing make me blush or tremble;" but, on the contrary, he cries out, "Woe is me! for I am undone. Alas for me! I am a gone man; I shall surely die (Jdg 13:22,Jdg 6:22); I am silenced; I am struck dumb, struck dead." Thus Daniel, when he heard the words of the angel, became dumb, and there was no strength, no breath, left in him, Da 10:15,17. Observe,

1. What the prophet reflected upon in himself which terrified him: "I am undone if God deal with me in strict justice, for I have made myself obnoxious to his displeasure, because I am a man of unclean lips." Some think he refers particularly to some rash word he had spoken, or to his sinful silence in not reproving sin with the boldness and freedom that were necessary--a sin which God's ministers have too much cause to charge themselves with, and to blush at the remembrance of. But it may be taken more generally; I am a sinner; particularly, I have offended in word; and who is there that hath not? Jam 3:2. We all have reason to bewail it before the Lord,

(1.) That we are of unclean lips ourselves; our lips are not consecrated to God; he had not had the first-fruits of our lips (Heb 13:15), and therefore they are counted common and unclean, uncircumcised lips, Ex 6:30. Nay, they have been polluted with sin. We have spoken the language of an unclean heart, that evil communication which corrupts good manners, and whereby many have been defiled. We are unworthy and unmeet to take God's name into our lips. With what a pure lip did the angels praise God! "But," says the prophet, "I cannot praise him so, for I am a man of unclean lips." The best men in the world have reason to be ashamed of themselves, and the best of their services, when they come into comparison with the holy angels. The angels had celebrated the purity and holiness of God; and therefore the prophet, when he reflects upon sin, calls it uncleanness; for the sinfulness of sin is its contrariety to the holy nature of God, and upon that account especially it should

appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned.

(2.) That we dwell among those who are so too. We have reason to lament not only that we ourselves are polluted, but that the nature and race of mankind are so; the disease is hereditary and epidemic, which is so far from lessening our guilt that it should rather increase our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollution of other people's lips; nay, we have rather learned their way and spoken their language, as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, Ge 42:16. "I dwell in the midst of a people who by their impudent sinnings are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I, who am a sinner too, may justly expect to be involved in."

2. What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time: My eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. He saw God's sovereignty to be incontestable--he is the King; and his power irresistible--he is the Lord of hosts. These are comfortable truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note, A believing sight of God's glorious majesty should affect us all with reverence and godly fear. We have reason to be abased in the sense of that infinite distance that there is between us and God, and our own sinfulness and vileness before him, and to be afraid of his displeasure. We are undone if there be not a Mediator between us and this holy God, 1Sa 6:20. Isaiah was thus humbled, to prepare him for the honour he was now to be called to as a prophet. Note, Those are fittest to be employed for God who are low in their own eyes and are made deeply sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

The silencing of the prophet's fears by the good words, and comfortable words, with which the angel answered him, Isa

6:6,7. One of the seraphim immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note, God has strong consolations ready for holy mourners. Those that humble themselves in penitential shame and fear shall soon be encouraged and exalted; those that are struck down with the visions of God's glory shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace; he that tears will heal. Note, further, Angels are ministering spirits for the good of the saints, for their spiritual good. Here was one of the seraphim dismissed, for a time, from attending on the throne of God's glory, to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office that he came flying to him. To our Lord Jesus himself, in his agony, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him, Lu 22:43. Here is,

1. A comfortable sign given to the prophet of the purging away of his sin. The seraph brought a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips with it, not to hurt them, but to heal them--not to cauterize, but to cleanse them; for there were purifications by fire, as well as by water, and the filth of Jerusalem was purged by the spirit of burning, Isa 4:4. The blessed Spirit works as fire, Mt 3:11. The seraph, being himself kindled with a divine fire, put life into the prophet, to make him also zealously affected; for the way to purge the lips from the uncleanness of sin is to fire the soul with the love of God. This live coal was taken from off the altar, either the altar of incense or that of burnt-offerings, for they had both of them fire burning on them continually. Nothing is powerful to cleanse and comfort the soul but what is taken from Christ's satisfaction and the intercession he ever lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction. It must be a coal from his altar that must put life into us and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire.

2. An explication of this sign: "Lo, this has touched thy lips, to assure thee of this, that thy iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged. The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins. Thy corrupt disposition to sin is

removed by renewing grace; and therefore nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipper, in concert with the holy angels, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the children of men." Those only who are thus purged from an evil conscience are prepared to serve the living God, Heb 9:14. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort either to God in prayer or from God in preaching; nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of gospel-grace as those who have themselves tasted the sweetness and felt the influence of that grace; and those shall have their sin taken away who complain of it as a burden and see themselves in danger of being undone by it.

7 and he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy
lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and
who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

The renewing of the prophet's mission, Isa 6:8. Here is a communication between God and Isaiah about this matter. Those that would assist others in their correspondence with God must not themselves be strangers to it; for how can we expect that God should speak by us if we never heard him speaking to us, or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God if we never spoke to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

1 The counsel of God concerning Isaiah's mission. God is here brought in, after the manner of men, deliberating and advising with himself: Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? God needs not either to be counselled by others or to consult with himself; he knows what he will do, but thus he would show us that there is a counsel in his whole will, and teach us to consider our ways, and particularly that the sending forth of ministers is a work not to be done but upon mature deliberation.

Observe, (1.) Who it is that is consulting. It is the Lord God in his glory, whom he saw upon the throne high and lifted up. It puts an honour upon the ministry that, when God would send a

prophet to speak in his name, he appeared in all the glories of the upper world. Ministers are the ambassadors of the King of kings; how mean soever they are, he who sends them is great; it is God in three persons (Who will go for us? as Ge 1:26, Let us make man), Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They all concur, as in the creating, so in the redeeming and governing of man. Ministers are ordained in the same name into which all Christians are baptized.

(2.) What the consultation is: Whom shall I send? And who will go? Some think this refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, Isa 6:9,10. "Who will be willing to go on such a melancholy errand, on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls?" Eze 3:14. But I rather take it more largely for all those messages which the prophet was entrusted to deliver, in God's name, to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but a secondary effect of them, 2Co 2:16. Whom shall I send? intimating that the business was such as required a choice and well-accomplished messenger, Jer 49:19. God now appeared, attended with holy angels, and yet asks, Whom shall I send? For he would send them a prophet from among their brethren, Heb 2:17.

Note, [1.] It is the unspeakable favour of God to us that he is pleased to send us his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who are themselves concerned in the messages they bring. Those who are workers together with God are sinners and sufferers together with us.

[2.] It is a rare thing to find one who is fit to go for God, and carry his messages to the children of men: Whom shall I send? Who is sufficient? Such a degree of courage for God and concern for the souls of men as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as is necessary to make a man skilful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, Job 33:23. [3.] None are allowed to go for

God but those who are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints, Ro 10:15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1Ti 1:12.

2 The consent of Isaiah to it: Then said I, Here am I; send me. He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and every body declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, Jdg 5:7. We must not say, "I would go if I thought I should have success;" but, "I will go, and leave the success to God. Here am I; send me." Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy frame (Isa 6:5), full of doubts and fears; but now that he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service and forward to it. What he says denotes,

(1.) His readiness: "Here am I, a volunteer, not pressed into the service." Behold me; so the word is. God says to us, Behold me (Isa 65:1), and, Here I am (Isa 58:9), even before we call; let us say so to him when he does call.

(2.) His resolution; "Here I am, ready to encounter the greatest difficulties. I have set my face as a flint." Compare this with Isa 50:4-7.

(3.) His referring himself to God: "Send me whither thou wilt; make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me, that is, Lord, give me commission and full instruction; send me, and then, no doubt, thou wilt stand by me." It is a great comfort to those whom God sends that they go for God, and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority, and be assured that he will bear them out.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand--to foretel the ruin of his people and even to ripen them

for that ruin--to preach that which, by their abuse of it, would be to them a savour of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church in the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the gospel, and should thereupon be rejected of God. These verses are quoted in part, or referred to, six times, in the New Testament, which intimates that in gospel time these spiritual judgments would be most frequently inflicted; and though they make the least noise, and come not with observation, yet they are of all judgments the most dreadful. Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:--

1. That the generality of the people to whom he was sent would turn a deaf ear to his preaching, and wilfully shut their eyes against all the discoveries of the mind and will of God which he had to make to them (Isa 6:9): "Go, and tell this people, this foolish wretched people, tell them their own, tell them how stupid and sottish they are." Isaiah must preach to them, and they will hear him indeed, but that is all; they will not heed him; they will no understand him; they will not take any pains, nor use that application of mind which is necessary to the understanding of him; they are prejudiced against that which is the true intent and meaning of what he says, and therefore they will not understand him, or pretend they do not. They see indeed (for the vision is made plain on tables, so that he who runs may read it); but they perceive not their own concern in it; it is to them as a tale that is told. Note, There are many who hear the sound of God's word, but do not feel the power of it.

2. That, forasmuch as they would not be made better by his ministry, they should be made worse by it; those that were wilfully blind should be judicially blinded (Isa 6:10): "They will not understand or perceive thee, and therefore thou shalt be instrumental to make their heart fat, senseless, and sensual, and so to make their ears yet more heavy, and to shut their eyes the closer; so that, at length, their recovery and repentance will become utterly impossible; they shall no more see with their

eyes the danger they are in, the ruin they are upon the brink of, nor the way of escape from it; they shall no more hear with their ears the warnings and instructions that are given them, nor understand with their heart the things that belong to their peace, so as to be converted from the error of their ways, and thus be healed."

Note, (1.) The conversion of sinners is the healing of them.

(2.) A right understanding is necessary to conversion.

(3.) God sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, gives men up to blindness of mind and strong delusions, because they would not receive the truth in the love of it, 2Th 2:10-12. He that is filthy let him be filthy still.

(4.) Even the word of God oftentimes proves a means of hardening sinners. The evangelical prophet himself makes the heart of this people fat, not only as he foretels it, passing this sentence upon them in God's name, and seals them under it, but as his preaching had a tendency to it, rocking some asleep in security (to whom it was a lovely song), and making others more outrageous, to whom it was such a reproach that they were not able to bear it. Some looked upon the word as a privilege, and their convictions were smothered by it (Jer 7:4); others looked upon it as a provocation, and their corruptions were exasperated by it.

3. That the consequence of this would be their utter ruin, Isa 6:11,12. The prophet had nothing to object against the justice of this sentence, nor does he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, "Lord, how long?" (an abrupt question): "Shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets always labour in vain among them, and will things never be better?" Or, (as should seem by the answer) "Lord, what will it come to at last? What will be in the end hereof?" In answer to this he is told that it should issue in the final destruction of the Jewish church and

nation. "When the word of God, especially the word of the gospel, had been thus abused by them, they shall be unchurched, and consequently undone.

Their cities shall be uninhabited, and their country houses too; the land shall be untilled, desolate with desolation (as it is in the margin), the people who should replenish the houses and cultivate the ground being all cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, and those who escape with their lives being removed far away into captivity, so that there shall be a great and general forsaking in the midst of the land; that populous country shall become desert, and that glory of all lands shall be abandoned." Note, Spiritual judgments often bring temporal judgments along with them upon persons and places. This was in part fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when the land, being left desolate, enjoyed her sabbaths seventy years; but, the foregoing predictions being so expressly applied in the New Testament to the Jews in our Saviour's time, doubtless this points at the final destruction of that people by the Romans, in which it had a complete accomplishment, and the effects of it that people and that land remain under to this day.

4. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, Isa 6:13. There was a remnant reserved in the last destruction of the Jewish nation (Ro 11:5, At this present time there is a remnant); for so it was written here: But in it shall be a tenth, a certain number, but a very small number in comparison with the multitude that shall perish in their unbelief. It is that which, under the law, was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told,

(1.) That they shall return (Isa 6:13,10:21), shall return from sin to God and duty, shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them, and they shall be turned.

(2.) That they shall be eaten, that is, shall be accepted of God as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, Mal 3:10. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom.

(3.) That they shall be like a timber-tree in winter, which has life, though it has no leaves: As a teil-tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them even when they cast their leaves, so this remnant, though they may be stripped of their outward prosperity and share with others in common calamities, shall yet recover themselves, as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down. There is hope of a tree, though it be cut down, that it will sprout again, Job 14:7.

(4.) That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests. The holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace reigning in the heart will keep life there; he that is born of God has his seed remaining in him, 1Jo 3:9. So the holy seed in the land is the substance of the land, keeps it from being quite dissolved, and bears up the pillars of it, Ps 75:3. See Isa 1:9.

Some read the foregoing clause with this, thus: As the support at Shallecheth is in the elms and the oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof; as the trees that grow on either side of the causeway (the raised way, or terrace-walk, that leads from the king's palace to the temple, 1Ki 10:5, at the gate of Shallecheth, 1Ch 26:16) support the causeway by keeping up the earth, which would otherwise be crumbling away, so the small residue of religious, serious, praying people, are the support of the state, and help to keep things together and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ. The Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin because out of it, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, Ro 9:5. Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it (Isa 65:8); and when that blessing had

come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the support of the prophet in his work. Though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet to some his word should be a savour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and
shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their
ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.
11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be
wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the
land be utterly desolate,
12 and the Lord have removed men far away, and *there be* a great
forsaking in the midst of the land.
13 But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and *it* shall return, and shall be eaten:
as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them, when they
cast *their leaves: so* the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

Isaiah-7

Isaiah's Message to Ahaz

1 And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son
of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah
the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to
war against it, but could not prevail against it.

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, Isa 6:1. Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well, sixteen years. All that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this, which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached which were not published and left upon record; for, if all that was memorable had been written, the world could not have contained the books, Joh 21:25. Perhaps in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked king, he had not opportunity to

preach so much at court as in Jotham's time, and therefore then he wrote the more, for a testimony against them. Here is,

A very formidable design laid against Jerusalem by Rezin king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel, two neighbouring potentates, who had of late made descents upon Judah severally. At the end of the reign of Jotham, the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin and Pekah, 2Ki 15:37. But now, in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah. Because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry, God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria and of the king of Israel (2Ch 28:5), and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom, Isa 7:6,7. Flushed with this victory, they went up towards Jerusalem, the royal city, to war against it, to besiege it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved in the issue that they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasions upon it and betrays the most advantageous posts and passes to the enemy; and God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment, ordinarily, begins at the house of God.

2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in when they received advice of this design: It was told the house of David that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, Isa 7:2. This degenerate royal family is called the house of David, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David (Ps 89:30-33), If his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take away, which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter. News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined, and had taken the field, the court, the city, and the country, were thrown into consternation; The heart of Ahaz was moved with fear, and then no wonder that the heart of his people was so, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

They were tossed and shaken, and put into a great disorder and confusion, were wavering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution. They yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now that which caused this fright was the sense of guilt and the weakness of their faith. They had made God their enemy, and knew not how to make him their friend, and therefore their fears tyrannised over them; while those whose consciences are kept void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed, trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings; though the earth be removed, yet will not they fear; but the wicked flee at the shaking of a leaf, Le 26:36.

3 Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou,
and Shear-jashub [the remnant shall return] thy son, at the end of
the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field;
4 and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-
hearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce
anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake (he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief), but because he was a son of David and king of Judah. God had kindness for him for his father's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

1. God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to enquire of the Lord for him (Isa 7:3): Go to meet Ahaz. Note, God is often found of those who seek him not, much more will he be found of those who seek him diligently. He speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as enquire after it.

2. He ordered him to take his little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, Shear-jashub--A remnant shall

return. The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached in the significant names of their children (as Ho 1:4,6,9); therefore Isaiah's children are said to be for signs, Isa 8:18. This son was so called for the encouragement of those of God's people who were carried captive, assuring them that they should return, at least a remnant of them, which was more than they could pretend to merit; yet at this time God was better than his word; for he took care not only that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, 2Ch 28:15.

3. He directed him where he should find Ahaz. He was to meet with him not in the temple, or the synagogue, or royal chapel, but at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, where he was, probably with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefits of them (Isa 22:9-11,2Ch 32:3,4), or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying of the city as well as they could; and perhaps finding every thing in a bad posture or defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, Go, meet him there. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and, what time they are most afraid, encourages them to trust in him.

4. He put words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such a bad man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid; but God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites.

(1.) The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them, but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls (Isa 7:4): Take heed, and be quiet. Note, In order to comfort there is need of caution; that we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed and watch against those things that threaten to disquiet us. "Fear not with this amazement,

this fear, that weakens, and has torment; neither let thy heart be tender, so as to melt and fail within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it, and be courageous; let not fear betray the succours which reason and religion offer for thy support." Note, Those who expect God should help them must help themselves, Ps 27:14.

(2.) He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy (nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy), but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of whom he was an unequal match, but, if united, he durst not look them in the face, nor make head against them. "No," says the prophet, "they are two tails of smoking firebrands; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fireballs; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire put together burn the more violently.

But they are only smoking firebrands: and where there is smoke there is some fire, but it may be not so much as was feared. Their threatenings will vanish into smoke. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise (Jer 46:17), and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; and such are all the enemies of God's church, smoking flax, that will soon be quenched. Nay, they are but tails of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent; they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger; you may put your foot on them, and tread them out." The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming fire the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are ever so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

(3.) He must assure them that the present design of these high allies (so they thought themselves) against Jerusalem should certainly be defeated and come to nothing, Isa 7:5-7.

[1.] That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable is made the ground of their defeat--and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes: "Therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, because they have taken evil counsel against thee, which is an offence to God. These firebrands are a smoke in his nose (Isa 65:5), and therefore must be extinguished." First, They are very spiteful and malicious, and, therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong; they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, they said, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it.

Note, Those that are vexatious cannot expect to be prosperous, those that love to do mischief cannot expect to do well. Secondly, They are very secure, and confident of success. They will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all: they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon dissecting or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, who had agreed in one viceroy--a king to be set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal, some obscure person, it is uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite. So sure were they of gaining their point that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful are commonly least successful, for surely God scorns the scorners.

[2.] God himself gives them his word that the attempt should not take effect (Isa 7:7): "Thus saith the Lord God, the sovereign Lord of all, who brings the counsel of the heathen to naught (Ps 33:10), It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass; their measures shall all be broken, and they shall not be able to bring to pass their enterprise." Note, Whatever stands against God, or thinks to stand without him, cannot stand long. Man purposes, but God disposes; and who is he that saith and it cometh to pass if the Lord commands it not or countermands it? La 3:37. See Pr 19:21.

(4.) He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies, at last, that were now such a terror to them.

[1.] They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests any further; The head city of Syria is Damascus, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin; this he glories in, and this let him be content with, Isa 7:8. The head city of Ephraim has long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah. These shall be made to know their own, their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the cities of Judah, much less to make Jerusalem their prey. Note, As God has appointed men the bounds of their habitation (Ac 17:26), so he has appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours' rights.

[2.] Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to compute the sixty-five years within which Ephraim shall cease to be a people; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this: and some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read within six and five years, just eleven.

But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes; and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last desolation of that country by Esarhaddon, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for those to be ruining their neighbours who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were

triumphing over Judah, 2Ch 28:10. Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?

(5.) He must urge them to mix faith with those assurances which he had given them (Isa 7:9): "If you will not believe what is said to you, surely you shall not be established; your shaken and disordered state shall not be established, your unquiet unsettled spirit shall not; though the things told you are very encouraging, yet they will not be so to you, unless you believe them, and be willing to take God's word." Note, The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the quieting and composing of the mind in the midst of all the tosses of this present time, 2Ch 20:20.

5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil
counsel against thee, saying,
6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach
therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of
Tabeal:
7 thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to
pass.
8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, and the head of Damascus *is*
Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be
broken, that it be not a people.
9 And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, and the head of Samaria *is*
Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be
established.
10 Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying,
11 Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or
in the height above.

Here, God, by the prophet, makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them, by such sign or miracle as he should choose (Isa 7:10,11): Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; See here the divine faithfulness and veracity. God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful condescension to the children of men, in that he is so willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, Heb 6:17. He considers our frame, and that, living in a world of sense, we are apt to require sensible

proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. Ahaz was a bad man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See how gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful; Ahaz is bidden to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece (Jdg 6:37); let him ask for a sign in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in all.

12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.

Ahaz rudely refuses this gracious offer, and (which is not mannerly towards any superior) kicks at the courtesy, and puts a slight upon it (Isa 7:12): I will not ask. The true reason why he would not ask for a sign was because, having a dependence upon the Assyrians, their forces, and their gods, for help, he would not thus far be beholden to the God of Israel, or lay himself under obligations to him. He would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts; yet he pretends a pious reason: I will not tempt the Lord; as if it would be a tempting of God to do that which God himself invited and directed him to do. Note, A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those who are resolved that they will not trust God yet pretend that they will not tempt him.

13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

III. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they had for divine revelation (Isa 7:13) "Is it a small thing for you to weary men by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourselves burdensome and odious to all mankind? But will you weary my God also with the affronts you put upon him?" As the unjust judge that neither feared God nor regarded man, Lu 18:2. You have wearied the Lord with your words, Mal 2:17. Nothing is more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distrusted. "Will you weary my God? Will you suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good? Whereas the youths may faint and be

weary, you may have tired all your friends, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary." Isa 40:28-31. Or this: "In affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him, who will resent it accordingly." The prophet here calls God his God with a great deal of pleasure: Ahaz would not say, He is my God, though the prophet had invited him to say so (Isa 7:11): The Lord thy God; but Isaiah will say, "He is mine." Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for ours and abide by him.

IV. The prophet, in God's name, gives them a sign: "You will not ask a sign, but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect: The Lord himself shall give you a sign (Isa 7:14), a double sign."

1. "A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David. You may conclude it that he has mercy in store for you, and that you are not forsaken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger are; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that blessing is in you, which shall be introduced," (1.) "In a glorious manner; for, whereas you have been often told that he should be born among you, I am now further to tell you that he shall be born of a virgin, which will signify both the divine power and the divine purity with which he shall be brought into the world,--that he shall be a extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation,--and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollutions of the human nature, therefore incontestably fit to have the throne of his father David given him." Now this, though it was to be accomplished above 500 years after, was a most encouraging sign to the house of David (and to them, under that title, this prophecy is directed, Isa 7:13) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah (Isa 11:13) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail; for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, Ge 49:10. Those whom God designs for the great salvation may take that for a

sign to them that they shall not be swallowed up by any trouble they meet with in the way. (2.) The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapped up in his glorious name: They shall call his name Immanuel--God with us, God in our nature, God at peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him Jesus--a Saviour (Mt 1:21-25), for, if he had not been Immanuel--God with us, he could not have been Jesus--a Saviour. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. "Here is a sign for you, not in the depth nor in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are no strangers to. The promised seed shall be Immanuel, God with us; let that word comfort you (Isa 8:10), that God is with us, and (Isa 7:8) that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus (Isa 7:2), nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeal (Isa 7:6), for nothing can cut off the entail on the Son of David that shall be Immanuel." Note, The strongest consolations, in time of trouble, are those which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him. Of this child it is further foretold (Isa 7:15) that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children: Butter and honey shall he eat, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which flowed with milk and honey. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angels' food, but, as it becomes him, shall be in all things made like unto his brethren, Heb 2:17. Nor shall he, though born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately, but, as other children, shall advance gradually through the several states of infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood, and growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to maturity, so as to know how to refuse the evil and choose the good. See Lu 2:40,52. Note, Children are fed when they are little that they may be

taught and instructed when they have grown up; they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, Isa 7:16. "Before this child (so it should be read), this child which I have now in my arms" (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, Isa 7:3), "before this child shall know how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness were would easily conjecture how long that would be), "before this child be three or four years older, the land that thou abhorrest, these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians, which thou hast such an enmity to and standest in such dread of, shall be forsaken of both their kings, both Pekah and Rezin," who were in so close an alliance that they seemed as if they were the kings of but one kingdom. This was fully accomplished; for within two or three years after this, Hoshea conspired against Pekah, and slew him (2Ki 15:30), and, before that, the king of Assyria took Damascus, and slew Rezin, 2Ki 16:9. Nay, there was a present event, which happened immediately, and when this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this future event. Shear-jashub signifies The remnant shall return, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those 200,000 captives whom Pekah and Rezin had carried away, who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, 2Ch 28:8-15. The prophetical naming of this child having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this, which was further added concerning him, should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourages us to hope for another, if it engages us to prepare for another.

14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The prophet, in God's name, gives them a sign: "You will not ask a sign, but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God

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15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil,
and choose the good.

16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the
good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her
kings.

17 The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even* the king of Assyria.

After the comfortable promises made to Ahaz as a branch of the house of David, here follow terrible threatenings against him, as a degenerate branch of that house; for though the loving-kindness of God shall not be utterly taken away, for the sake of David and the covenant made with him, yet his iniquity shall be chastened with the rod, and his sin with stripes. Let those that will not mix faith with the promises of God expect to hear the alarms of his threatenings.

I The judgment threatened is very great, Isa 7:17. It is very great, for it is general; it shall be brought upon the prince himself (high as he is, he shall not be out of the reach of it), and upon the people, the whole body of the nation, and upon the royal family, upon all thy father's house; it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the royal blood. It is very great, for it shall be unprecedented--days that have not come; so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin the sorer punishments they have reason to expect. It is the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for our times are in his hand, and who can resist or escape the judgments he brings?

II The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed great confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement because he built much upon his interest in the king of Assyria, and had meanly promised to be his servant if he would send him some succours; he had also, made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, 2Ki 16:7,8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria whom he made his stay instead

of God should become a scourge to him. He was so speedily; for, when he came to him, he distressed him, but strengthened him not (2Ch 28:20), the reed not only broke under him, but ran into his hand, and pierced it, and thenceforward the kings of Assyria were, for a long time, grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble.

Note, The creature that we make our hope commonly proves our hurt. The king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer the prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explication of Isa 7:8, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet (at Isa 7:17) turns his speech to the king of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe,

1. Summons given to the invaders (Isa 7:18): The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee. See Isa 5:26. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and are as easily crushed, shall yet, when God pleases, do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall punctually meet to join in this work when God commands their attendance; for, when God has work to do, he will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with.

2. Possession taken by them, Isa 7:19. It should seem as if the country were in no condition to make resistance. They find no difficulties in forcing their way, but come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys, which the inhabitants had deserted upon the first alarm, and left them a cheap and easy prey to the invaders. They shall come and rest in the low grounds like swarms of flies and bees, and shall render themselves impregnable by taking shelter in the holes of the rocks, as bees often do, and showing

themselves formidable by appearing openly upon all thorns and all bushes; so generally shall the land be overspread with them. These bees shall knit upon the thorns and bushes, and there rest undisturbed.

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated (Isa 7:20): The Lord shall shave the hair of the head, and beard, and feet; he shall sweep all away, as the leper, when he was cleansed, shaved off all his hair, Le 14:8,9. This is done with a razor which is hired, either which God has hired (as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay for. See Eze 29:18,19), or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with that arm of flesh which they trusted to rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon, when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

4. The consequences of this general depopulation.

(1.) The flocks of cattle shall be all destroyed, so that a man who had herds and flocks in abundance shall be stripped of them all by the enemy, and shall with much ado save for his own use a young cow and two sheep--a poor stock (Isa 7:21), yet he shall think himself happy in having any left.

(2.) The few cattle that are left shall have such a large compass of ground to feed in that they shall give abundance of milk, and very good milk, such as shall produce butter enough, Isa 7:22. There shall also be such want of men that the milk of one cow and two sheep shall serve a whole family, which used to keep abundance of servants and consume a great deal, but is now reduced.

(3.) The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that those who used to eat flesh (as the Jews commonly did) shall be necessitated to

confine themselves to butter and honey, for there shall be no flesh for them; and the country shall be so depopulated that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it.

(4.) Good land, that used to be let well, shall be all overrun with briers and thorns (Isa 7:23); where there used to be a thousand vines planted, for which the tenants used to pay a thousand shekels, or pieces of silver, yearly rent, there shall be nothing now but briers and thorns, no profit either for landlord or tenant, all being laid waste by the army of the invaders. Note, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness; and it is just with him to turn vines into briers if we, instead of bringing forth grapes to him, bring forth wild grapes, Isa 5:4.

(5.) The implements of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, Isa 7:24. The whole land having become briers and thorns, the grounds that men used to come to with sickles and pruning-hooks to gather in the fruits they shall now come to with arrows and bows, to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the robbers that lurk in the bushes, seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This denotes a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land. But what melancholy change is there which sin will not make with a people?

(6.) Where briers and thorns were wont to be of use and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briers and thorns in abundance where they should not be, but none where they should be, Isa 7:25. The hills that shall be digged with the mattock, for special use, from which the cattle used to be kept off with the fear of briers and thorns, shall now be thrown open, the hedges broken down for the boar out of the wood to waste it, Ps 80:12,13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in and less cattle. See the effect of sin and the curse; it has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, except as it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man. And see

what folly it is to set our hearts upon possessions of lands, be they every so fruitful, ever so pleasant; if they lie ever so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful careless heir or tenant, or the country be laid waste by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall hiss for
the fly that *is* in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for
the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria.
19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys,
and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all
bushes.
20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired,
namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head,
and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.
21 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a man shall nourish a
young cow and two sheep;
22 and it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk *that* they shall
give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat
that is left in the land.
23 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* every place shall be, where
there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall *even* be
for briers and thorns.
24 With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither; because all the
land shall become briers and thorns.
25 And *on* all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall
not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the
sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

Isaiah-8

Let the Lord Be Your Fear

1 Moreover the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write
in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz [in making
speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey].

In these verses we have a prophecy of the successes of the king of Assyria against Damascus, Samaria, and Judah, that the two

former should be laid waste by him, and the last greatly frightened. Here we have,

I. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the thing came to pass they might know that God had sent him; for that was one end of prophecy, Joh 14:29. He must take a great roll, which would contain those five chapters fairly written in words at length; and he must write in it all that he had foretold concerning the king of Assyria's invading the country; he must write it with a man's pen, in the usual way and style of writing, so as that it might be legible and intelligible by all. See Hab 2:2, Write the vision, and make it plain.

Those that speak and write of the things of God should avoid obscurity, and study to speak and write so as to be understood, 1Co 14:19. Those that write for men should write with a man's pen, and not covet the pen or tongue of angels. And forasmuch as it is usual to put some short, but significant comprehensive title before books that are published, the prophet is directed to call his book Maher-shalal-hash-baz--Make speed to the spoil, hasten to the prey, intimating that the Assyrian army should come upon them with great speed and make great spoil. By this title the substance and meaning of the book would be enquired after by those that heard of it, and remembered by those that had read it or heard it read. It is sometimes a good help to memory to put much matter in few words, which serve as handles by which we take hold of more.

II The care of the prophet to get this record well attested (Isa 8:2): I took unto me faithful witnesses to record; he wrote the prophecy in their sight and presence, and made them subscribe their names to it, that they might be ready, if afterwards there should be occasion, to make oath of it, that the prophet had so long before foretold the descent which the Assyrians made upon

that country. He names his witnesses for the greater certainty, that they might be appealed to by any.

They were two in number (for out of the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established); one was Uriah the priest; he is mentioned in the story of Ahaz, but for none of his good deeds, for he humoured Ahaz with an idolatrous altar (2Ki 16:10,11); however, at this time, no exception lay against him, being a faithful witness. See what full satisfaction the prophets took care to give to all persons concerned of the sincerity of their intentions, that we might know with a full assurance the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, and that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables.

III. The making of the title of his book the name of his child, that it might be the more taken notice of and the more effectually perpetuated, Isa 8:3. His wife (because the wife of a prophet) is called the prophetess; she conceived and bore a son, another son, who must carry a sermon in his name, as the former had done (Isa 7:3), but with this difference, that spoke mercy, Shear-jashub--The remnant shall return; but, that being slighted, this speaks judgment, Maher-shalal-hash-baz--In making speed to the spoil he shall hasten, or he has hastened, to the prey. The prophecy is doubled, even in this one name, for the thing was certain.

I will hasten my word, Jer 1:12. Every time the child was called by his name, or any part of it, it would serve as a memorandum of the judgments approaching. Note, It is good for us often to put ourselves in mind of the changes and troubles we are liable to in this world, and which perhaps are at the door. When we look with pleasure on our children it should be with the allay of this thought, We know not what they are yet reserved for.

2 And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest,
and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.
3 And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son.
Then said the Lord to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

The prophecy itself, which explains this mystical name.

1. That Syria and Israel, who were now in confederacy against Judah, should in a very little time become an easy prey to the king of Assyria and his victorious army (Isa 8:4): "Before the child, now newly born and named, shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother" (which are usually some of the first things that children know and some of the first words that children speak), that is, "in about a year or two, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, those cities that are now so secure themselves and so formidable to their neighbours, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, who shall plunder both city and country, and send the best effects of both into his own land, to enrich that, and as trophies of his victory." Note, Those that spoil others must expect to be themselves spoiled (Isa 33:1); for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That forasmuch as there were many in Judah that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and were disaffected to the house of David, God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, as was foretold, Isa 7:17.

Observe, (1.) What was the sin of the discontented party in Judah (Isa 8:6): This people, whom the prophet here speaks to, refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly, despise their own country and the government of it, and love to run it down, because it does not make so great a figure, and so great a noise, in the world, as some other kings and kingdoms do. They refuse the comforts which God's prophets offer them from the word of God, speaking to them in a still small voice, and make nothing of them; but they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son, who were the enemies of their country, and were now actually invading it;

they cried them up as brave men, magnified their policies and strength, applauded their conduct, were well pleased with their successes, and were hearty well-wishers to their designs, and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers does many a state foster in its bosom, that eat its bread, and yet adhere to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests if they but seem to totter.

(2.) The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria that should lay Ephraim and Syria waste should be a scourge and terror to those of their party in Judah, Isa 8:7,8. Because they refuse the waters of Shiloah, and will not accommodate themselves to the government God has set over them, but are uneasy under it, therefore the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, the river Euphrates. They slighted the land of Judah, because it had no river to boast of comparable to that; the river at Jerusalem was a very inconsiderable one. "Well," says God, "if you be such admirers of Euphrates, you shall have enough of it; the king of Assyria, whose country lies upon that river, shall come with his glory, with his great army, which you cry up as his glory, despising your own king because he cannot bring such an army as that into the field; God shall bring that army upon you." If we value men, if we over-value them, for their worldly wealth and power, it is just with God to make them thereby a scourge to us. It is used as an argument against magnifying rich men that rich men oppress us, Jam 2:3,5.

Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. It is threatened that the Assyrian army should break in upon them like a deluge, or inundation of waters, bearing down all before it, should come up over all his channels, and overflow all his banks. It would be to no purpose to oppose or withstand them. Sennacherib and his army should pass through Judah, and meet with so little resistance that it should look more like a march through the country than a descent upon it. He shall reach even to the neck,

that is, he shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem, the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall be kept out of his hands; for that was the holy city.

Note, In the greatest deluge of trouble God can and will keep the head of his people above water, and so preserve their comforts and spiritual lives; the waters that come into their souls may reach to the neck (Ps 69:1), but there shall their proud waves be stayed. And here is another comfortable intimation that though the stretching out of the wings of the Assyrian, that bird of prey, though the right and left wing of his army, should fill the breadth of the land of Judah, yet still it was Immanuel's land. It is thy land, O Immanuel! It was to be Christ's land; for there he was to be born, and live, and preach, and work miracles. He was Zion's King, and therefore had a peculiar interest in and concern for that land.

Note, The lands that Immanuel owns for his, as he does all those lands that own him, though they may be deluged, shall not be destroyed; for, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, Immanuel shall secure his own, and shall lift up a standard against him, Isa 59:19.

5 The Lord spake also unto me again, saying,
6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;
7 now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, *even* the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:
8 and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach *even* to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.
9 Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

The prophet here returns to speak of the present distress that Ahaz and his court and kingdom were in upon account of the

threatening confederacy of the ten tribes and the Syrians against them. And in these verses,

I. He triumphs over the invading enemies, and, in effect, sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst (Isa 8:9,10): "O you people, you of far countries, give ear to what the prophet says to you in God's name."

1. "We doubt not but you will now make your utmost efforts against Judah and Jerusalem. You associate yourselves in a strict alliance. You gird yourselves, and again you gird yourselves; you prepare for action; you address yourselves to it with resolution; you gird on your swords; you gird up your loins. You animate and encourage yourselves and one another with all the considerations you can think of: you take counsel together, call councils of war, and all heads are at work about the proper methods for making yourselves masters of the land of Judah. You speak the word; you come to resolutions concerning it, and are not always deliberating; you determine what to do, and are very confident of the success of it, that the matter will be accomplished with a word's speaking."

Note, It is with a great deal of policy, resolution, and assurance, that the church's enemies carry on their designs against it; and abundance of pains they take to roll a stone that will certainly return upon them.

2. "This is to let you know that all your efforts will be ineffectual. You cannot, you shall not, gain your point, nor carry the day: You shall be broken in pieces. Though you associate yourselves, though you gird yourselves, though you proceed with all the policy and precaution imaginable, yet, I tell you again and again, all your projects shall be baffled, you shall be broken in pieces. Nay, not only shall your attempts be ruined, but your attempts shall be your ruin; you shall be broken by those designs you have formed against Jerusalem: Your

counsels shall come to nought; for there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord.

Your resolves will not be put in execution; they shall not stand. You speak the word, but who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not? What sets up itself against God, and his cause and counsel, cannot stand, but must inevitably fall. For God is with us" (this refers to the name of Immanuel--God with us); "the Messiah is to be born among us, and a people designed for such an honour cannot be given up to utter ruin. We have now the special presence of God with us in his temple, his oracles, his promises, and these are our defence. God is with us; he is on our side, to take our part and fight for us; and, if God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus does the daughter of Zion despise them.

II. He comforts and encourages the people of God with the same comforts and encouragements which he himself had received. The attempt made upon them was very formidable; the house of David, the court and royal family, were at their wits' end (Isa 7:2), and then no marvel if the people were in a consternation. Now,

1 The prophet tells us how he was himself taught of God not to give way to such amazing fears as the people were disturbed with, nor to run into the same measures with them (Isa 8:11): "The Lord spoke to me with a strong hand not to walk in the way of this people, not to say as they say nor do as they do, not to entertain the same frightful apprehensions of things nor to approve of their projects of making peace upon any terms, or calling in the help of the Assyrians." God instructed the prophet not to go down the stream.

Note, (1.) There is a proneness in the best of men to be frightened at threatening clouds, especially when fears are epidemic. We are all too apt to walk in the way of the people we live among, though it be not a good way.

(2.) Those whom God loves and owns he will instruct and enable to swim against the stream of common corruptions, particularly of common fears. He will find ways to teach his own people not to walk in the way of other people, but in a sober singularity.

(3.) Corruption is sometimes so active in the hearts even of good men that they have need to be taught their duty with a strong hand, and it is God's prerogative to teach so, for he only can give an understanding and overpower the contradiction of unbelief and prejudice. He can teach the heart; and herein none teaches like him.

(4.) Those that are to teach others have need to be themselves well instructed in their duty, and then they teach most powerfully when they teach experimentally. The word that comes from the heart is most likely to reach to the heart; and what we are ourselves by the grace of God instructed in we should, as we are able, teach others also.

2. Now what is it that he says to God's people?

(1.) He cautions them against a sinful fear, Isa 8:12. It seems it was the way of this people at this time, and fear is catching. He whose heart fails him makes his brethren's heart to fail, like his heart (De 20:8); therefore Say you not, A confederacy, to all those to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; that is,

[1.] "Be not associated with them in the confederacies they are projecting and forecasting for. Do not join with those that, for the securing of themselves, are for making a league with the Assyrians, through unbelief, and distrust of God and their cause. Do not come into any such confederacy." Note, It concerns us, in time of trouble, to watch against all such fears as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security.

[2.] "Be not afraid of the confederacies they frighten themselves and one another with. Do not distress yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy upon every thing that stirs, nor, when any little thing is amiss, cry out presently, There is a plot, a plot. When they talk what dismal news there is, Syria is joined with Ephraim, what will become of us? must we fight, or must we flee, or must we yield? do not you fear their fear: Be not afraid of the signs of heaven, as the heathen are, Jer 10:2. Be not afraid of evil tidings on earth, but let your hearts be fixed. Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid as they are. Be not put into such a fright as causes trembling and shaking;" so the word signifies. Note, When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies.

(2.) He advises them to a gracious religious fear: But sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, Isa 8:13. Note, The believing fear of God is a special preservative against the disquieting fear of man; see 1Pe 3:14,15, where this is quoted, and applied to suffering Christians.

[1.] We must look upon God as the Lord of hosts, that has all power in his hand and all creatures at his beck.

[2.] We must sanctify him accordingly, give him the glory due to that name, and behave towards him as those that believe him to be a holy God.

[3.] We must make him our fear, the object of our fear, and make him our dread, keep up a reverence of his providence and stand in awe of his sovereignty, be afraid of his displeasure and silently acquiesce in all his disposals. Were we but duly affected with the greatness and glory of God, we should see the pomp of our enemies eclipsed and clouded, and all their power restrained and under check; see Ne 4:14. Those that are afraid of the

reproach of men forget the Lord their Maker, Isa 51:12,13. Compare Lu 12:4,5.

(3.) He assures them of a holy security and serenity of mind in so doing (Isa 8:14): "He shall be for a sanctuary; make him your fear, and you shall find him your hope, your help, your defence, and your mighty deliverer. He will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a sanctuary,"

[1.] "To make you holy. He will be your sanctification;" so some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace.

[2.] "To make you easy. He will be your sanctuary," to which you may flee for safety, and where you are privileged form all the arrests of fear; you shall find an inviolable refuge and security in him, and see yourselves our of the reach of danger. Those that truly fear God shall not need to fear any evil.

10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God *is* with us.

11 For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them to* whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13 Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and *let* him *be* your fear, and *let* him *be* your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

He threatens the ruin of the ungodly and unbelieving, both in Judah and Israel. They have no part nor lot in the foregoing comforts; that God who will be a sanctuary to those who trust in him will be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to those who leave these waters of Shiloah, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son, (Isa 8:6), who make the creature their fear and their hope, Isa 8:14,15. The prophet foresees that the

greatest part of both the houses of Israel would not sanctify the Lord of hosts, and to them he would be for a gin and a snare; he would be a terror to them, as he would be a support and stay to those that trusted in him. Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it; and the providences of God, instead of leading them to him, would drive them from him. What was a savour of life unto life to others would be a savour of death unto death to them. "So that many among them shall stumble and fall; they shall fall both into sin and into ruin; they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners, and go into captivity."

Note, If the things of God be an offence to us, they will be an undoing to us. Some apply this to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a stone of stumbling; for the apostle quotes this scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the gospel of Christ (1Pe 2:8); to them he is a rock of offence, because, being disobedient to the word, they stumble at it.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and
be snared, and be taken.
16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.
17 And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house
of Jacob, and I will look for him.

In these verses we have,

I The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy in having the oracles of God consigned over to them, and being entrusted with the sacred writings. That they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make him their fear and find him their sanctuary, bind up the testimony, Isa 8:16. Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love to it that he has lodged in it the invaluable treasure of divine revelation.

1. It is a testimony and a law; not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safely for the comfort of God's people in the approaching times of trouble and distress, but the

whole word of God is so; God has attested it, and he has enjoined it. As a testimony it directs our faith; as a law it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it and to submit to the precepts of it.

2. This testimony and this law are bound up and sealed, for we are not to add to them nor diminish from them; they are a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed, a proclamation under the broad seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament signified that the full explication of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New-Testament times. Da 12:4, Seal the book till the time of the end; but what was then bound up and sealed is now open and unsealed, and revealed unto babes, Mt 11:25. Yet with reference to the other world, and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophesy but in part.

3. They are lodged as a sacred deposit in the hands of the disciples of the children of the prophets and the covenant, Ac 3:25. This is the good thing which is committed to them, and which they are charged with the custody of, 2Ti 1:13,14. Those that had prophets for their tutors must still keep close to the written word.

II The good use which we ought to make of this privilege. This we are taught,

1. By the prophet's own practice and resolutions, Isa 8:17,18. He embraced the law ad the testimony, and he had the comfort of them, in the midst of the many discouragements he met with. Note, Those ministers can best recommend the word of God to others that have themselves found the satisfaction of relying upon it. Observe,

(1.) The discouragements which the prophet laboured under. He specifies two:--

[1.] The frowns of God, not so much upon himself, but upon his people, whose interests lay very near his heart: "He hides his face from the house of Jacob, and seems at present to neglect them, and lay them under the tokens of his displeasure." The prophet was himself employed in revealing God's wrath against them, and yet grieved thus for it, as one that did not desire the woeful day. If the house of Jacob forsake the God of Jacob, let it not be thought strange that he hides his face from them.

[2.] The contempt and reproaches of men, not only upon himself, but upon his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed: I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders; we are gazed at as monsters or outlandish people, pointed at as we go along the streets. Probably the prophetical names that were given to his children were ridiculed and bantered by the profane scoffers of the town. I am as a wonder unto many, Ps 71:7. God's people are the world's wonder (Zec 3:8) for their singularity, and because they run not with them to the same excess of riot, 1Pe 4:4.

The prophet was herein a type of Christ; for this is quoted (Heb 2:13) to prove that believers are Christ's children: Behold, I and the children whom God has given me. Parents must look upon their children as God's gifts, his gracious gifts; Jacob did so, Ge 33:5. Ministers must look upon their converts as their children, and be tender of them accordingly (1Th 2:7), and as the children whom God has given them; for, whatever good we are instrumental of to others, it is owing to the grace of God. Christ looks upon believers as his children, whom the Father gave him (Joh 17:6), and both he and they are for signs and wonders, spoken against (Lu 2:34), every where spoken against, Ac 28:22.

(2.) The encouragement he took in reference to these discouragements.

[1.] He saw the hand of God in all that which was discouraging to him, and kept his eye upon that. Whatever trouble the house of Jacob is in, it comes from God's hiding his face; nay, whatever contempt was put upon him or his friends, it is from the Lord of hosts; he has bidden Shimei curse David, Job 19:13,30:11.

[2.] He saw God dwelling in Mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, and ready to hear their prayers and receive their homage. Though, for the present, he hide his face from the house of Jacob, yet they know where to find him and recover the sight of him; he dwells in Mount Zion.

[3.] He therefore resolved to wait upon the Lord and to look for him; to attend his motions even while he hid his face, and to expect with a humble assurance his returns in a way of mercy. Those that wait upon God by faith and prayer may look for him with hope and joy. When we have not sensible comforts we must still keep up our observance of God and obedience to him, and then wait awhile; at evening time it shall be light.

2. By the counsel and advice which he gives to his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed, to whom were committed the lively oracles.

(1.) He supposes they would be tempted, in the day of their distress, to consult those that had familiar spirits, that dealt with the devil, asked his advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when he was in straits, made his application to the witch of Endor (1Sa 28:7,15), and Ahaziah to the god of Ekron, 2Ki 1:2. These conjurors had strange fantastic gestures and tones: They peeped and muttered; they muffled their heads, that they could neither see nor be seen plainly, but peeped and were peeped at. Or both the words here used may refer to their voice and manner of speaking; they delivered what they had to say with a low, hollow, broken sound, scarcely

articulate, and sometimes in a puling or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, Isa 38:14.

They spoke not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the Lord spoke with, but as those who desire to amuse people rather than to instruct them; yet there were those who were so wretchedly sottish as to seek to them and to court others to do so, even the prophet's hearers, who knew better things, whom therefore the prophet warns not to say, A confederacy with such. There were express laws against this wickedness (Lev 19:31,20:27), and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion show it, by startling at the thought of it. Get thee behind me, Satan. Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is a heinous crime, and, in effect, denies the God that is above.

(2.) He furnishes them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths. "If any go about thus to ensnare you, give them this reply: Should not a people seek to their God? What! for the living to the dead!"

[1.] "Tell them it is a principle of religion that a people ought to seek unto their God; now Jehovah is our God, and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him, and not with those that have familiar spirits. All people will thus walk in the name of their God, Mic 4:5. Those that made the hosts of heaven their gods sought unto them, Jer 8:2. Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? Should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply, and protection? Since the Lord is our God, and we are his people, it is certainly our duty to seek him."

[2.] "Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world to seek for living men to dead idols." What can be more absurd

than to seek to lifeless images for life and living comforts, or to expect that our friends that are dead should do that for us, when we deify them and pray to them, which our living friends cannot do? The dead know not any thing, nor is there with them any device or working, Ec 9:5,10. It is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly. We must live by the living, and not by the dead. What life or light can we look for from those that have no light or life themselves?

(3.) He directs them to consult the oracles of God. If the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the written word, and to that they must have recourse. Note, Those will never be drawn to consult wizards that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind? To the law and to the testimony. There you will see what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled aright.

Observe, [1.] What use we must make of the law and the testimony: we must speak according to that word, that is, we must make this our standard, conform to it, take advice from it, make our appeals to it, and in every thing be overruled and determined by it, consent to those wholesome healing words (1Ti 6:3), and speak of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it.

[2.] Why we must make this use of the law and the testimony: because we shall be convicted of the greatest folly imaginable if we do not. Those that concur not with the word of God do thereby evince that there is no light, no morning light (so the word is) in them; they have no right sense of things; they do not

understand themselves, nor the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood.

Note, Those that reject divine revelation have not so much as human understanding; nor do those rightly admit the oracles of reason who will not admit the oracles of God. Some read it as a threatening: "If they speak not according to this word, there shall be no light to them, no good, no comfort or relief; but they shall be driven to darkness and despair;" as it follows here, Isa 8:21,22. What light had Saul when he consulted the witch? 1Sa 28:18,20. Or what light can those expect that turn away from the Father of lights?

(4.) He reads the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits and regard not God's law and testimony; there shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery, Isa 8:21,22.

[1.] The trouble they feared shall come upon them: They shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unfixed, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatening power of an invading enemy; they shall be hardly bestead whither to go for the necessary supports of life, either because the country would be so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had for them; so that those who used to be fed to the full shall be hungry. Note, Those that go away from God go out of the way of all good.

[2.] They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. A good man may be in want, but then he quiets himself, and strives to make himself easy; but these people when they shall be hungry shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits; for fretfulness is a sin that is its own punishment.

[3.] They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them; when they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wits' end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king and blasphemously curse their God, and this more than in their thought and in their bedchamber, Ec 10:20. They begin with cursing their king for managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but, when they have broken the bonds of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long: they next curse their God, curse him, and die; they quarrel with his providence, and reproach that, as if he had done them wrong. The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, Pr 19:3. See what need we have to keep our mouth as with a bridle when our heart is hot within us; for the language of fretfulness is commonly very offensive.

[4.] They shall abandon themselves to despair, and, which way soever they look, shall see no probability of relief. They shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them and look gloomy; and how can it be otherwise when they curse their God? They shall look to the earth, but what comfort can that yield to those with whom God is at war? There is nothing there but trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish, every thing threatening, and not one pleasant gleam, not one hopeful prospect; but they shall be driven to darkness by the violence of their own fears, which represent every thing about them black and frightful. This explains what he had said Isa 8:20, that there shall be no light to them. Those that shut their eyes against the light of God's word will justly be abandoned to darkness, and left to wander endlessly, and the sparks of their own kindling will do them no kindness.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?
20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.
21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.
22 And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and *they shall be* driven to darkness.

Isaiah-9

The Birth and Reign of the Prince of Peace

1 Nevertheless the dimness *shall* not *be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where every thing looked black and melancholy: Behold, trouble, and darkness, and dimness--very bad, yet not so bad but that to the upright there shall arise light in the darkness (Ps 112:4) and at evening time it shall be light, Zec 14:7.

Nevertheless it shall not be such dimness (either not such for kind or not such for degree) as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times God's people have a nevertheless to comfort themselves with, something to allay and balance their troubles; they are persecuted, but not forsaken (2Co 4:9), sorrowful yet always rejoicing, 2Co 6:10. And it is matter of comfort to us, when things are at the darkest, that he who forms the light and creates the darkness (Isa 45:7) has appointed to both their bounds and set the one over against the other, Ge 4:4.

He can say, "Hitherto the dimness shall go, so long it shall last, and no further, no longer."

I. Three things are here promised, and they all point ultimately at the grace of the gospel, which the saints then were to comfort themselves with the hopes of in every cloudy and dark day, as we now are to comfort ourselves in time of trouble with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that be now, as his first coming then was, a thing at a great distance. The mercy likewise which God has in store for his church in the latter days may be a support to those that are mourning with her for her present calamities. We have here the promise,

1. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify, and by degrees dispel, the dimness, that it shall not be as it sometimes has been: Not such as was in her vexation; there shall not be such dark times as were formerly, when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (which lay remote and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies), and afterwards he more grievously afflicted the land by the way of the sea and beyond Jordan (Isa 9:1), referring probably to those days when God began to cut Israel short and to smite them in all their coasts, 2Ki 10:32.

Note, God tries what less judgments will do with a people before he brings greater; but if a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously; for when God judges he will overcome. Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and there was dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles, both in respect of ignorance (they did not speak according to the law and the testimony, and then there was no light in them, Isa 8:20) and in respect of trouble, and the desperate posture of their outward affairs; we have both together, 2Ch 15:3,5. Israel has been without the true God and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace. But the dimness threatened (Isa 8:22) shall not prevail to such a degree;

for (Isa 9:2) the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light.

(1.) At this time when the prophet lived, there were many prophets in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light both for direction and comfort to the people of God, who adhered to the law and the testimony. Besides the written word, they had prophecy; there were those that had shown them how long (Ps 74:9), which was a great satisfaction to them, when in respect of their outward troubles they sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death.

(2.) This was to have its full accomplishment when our Lord Jesus began to appear as a prophet, and to preach the gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles. And the Old-Testament prophets, as they were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, then this prophecy is said to have been fulfilled, Mt 4:13-16.

Note, [1.] Those that want the gospel walk in darkness, and know not what they do nor whither they go; and they dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in thick darkness, and in the utmost danger.

[2.] When the gospel comes to any place, to any soul, light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us, as light is to those that sit in darkness, and we should readily entertain it, both because if is of such sovereign use to us and because it brings its own evidence with it. Truly this light is sweet.

2. Of a glorious increase, and a universal joy arising from it, (Isa 9:3) "Thou, O God! hast multiplied the nation, the Jewish nation which thou hast mercy in store for; though it has been diminished by one sore judgment after another, yet now thou hast begun to multiply it again." The numbers of a nation are its

strength and wealth if the numerous be industrious; and it is God that increases nations, Job 12:23. Yet it follows, "Thou hast not increased the joy--the carnal joy and mirth, and those things that are commonly the matter and occasion thereof. But, notwithstanding that, they joy before thee; there is a great deal of serious spiritual joy among them, joy in the presence of God, with an eye to him." This is very applicable to the times of gospel light, spoken of Isa 9:2.

Then God multiplied the nation, the gospel Israel. "And to him" (so the Masorites read it) "thou hast magnified the joy, to every one that receives the light." The following words favour this reading: "They joy before thee; they come before thee in holy ordinances with great joy'; their mirth is not like that of Israel under their vines and fig-trees (thou hast not increased that joy), but it is in the favour of God and in the tokens of his grace." Note, The gospel, when it comes in its light and power, brings joy along with it, and those who receive it aright do therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; therefore the conversion of the nations is prophesied of by this (Ps 67:4), Let the nations be glad, and sin for joy. See Ps 96:11.

(1.) It is holy joy: They joy before thee; they rejoice in spirit (as Christ did, Lu 10:21), and that is before God. In the eye of the world they are always as sorrowful, and yet, in God's sight, always rejoicing, 2Co 6:10.

(2.) It is great joy; it is according to the joy in harvest, when those who sowed in tears, and have with long patience waited for the precious fruits of the earth, reap in joy; and as in war men rejoice when, after a hazardous battle, they divide the spoil. The gospel brings with it plenty and victory; but those that would have the joy of it must expect to go through a hard work, as the husbandman before he has the joy of harvest, and a hard conflict, as the soldier before he has the joy of dividing the spoil; but the joy, when it comes, will be an abundant recompence for the toil. See Ac 8:8,39.

3. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement (Isa 9:4,5): "They shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and made him easy, for he shall no longer be in servitude; and thou hast broken the staff of his shoulder and the rod of his oppressor, that rod of the wicked which rested long on the lot of the righteous," as the Midianites' yoke was broken from off the neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If God makes former deliverances his patterns in working for us, we ought to make them our encouragements to hope in him and to seek to him, Ps 83:9.

Do unto them as to the Midianites. What temporal deliverance this refers to is not clear, probably the preventing of Sennacherib from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done, as in the day of Midian, by the immediate hand of God; and, whereas other battles were usually won with a great deal of noise and by the expense of much blood, this shall be done silently and without noise. Under his glory God shall kindle a burning (Isa 10:16); a fire not blown shall consume him, Job 20:26. But doubtless it looks further, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit those that sat in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, deliverance to the captives, Lu 4:18.

(1.) The design of the gospel, and the grace of it, is to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burden of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ broke the yoke of the ceremonial law (Ac 15:10,Ga 5:1), and delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, Lu 1:74,75.

(2.) This is done by the Spirit working like fire (Mt 3:11), not as the battle of the warrior is fought, with confused noise; no, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with

the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, Isa 4:4. It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon; it is his sword that doeth wonders.

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and* not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and* as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

5 For every battle of the warrior *is* with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

But who, where, is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? The prophet tells us (Isa 9:6,7) they shall be done by the Messiah, Immanuel, that son of a virgin whose birth he had foretold (Isa 7:14), and now speaks of, in the prophetic style, as a thing already done: the child is born, not only because it was as certain, and he was as certain of it as if it had been done already, but because the church before his incarnation reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking in virtue of that first promise concerning the seed of the woman, Ge 3:15. As he was the Lamb slain, so he was the child born, from the foundation of the world, Re 13:8. All the great things that God did for the Old-Testament church were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator. He was the Anointed, to whom God had respect (Ps 84:9), and it was for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake, that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, Da 9:17.

The Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin only because that

blessing was in them. What greater security therefore could be given to the church of God then that it should be preserved, and be the special care of the divine Providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee paraphrast understands it of the man that shall endure for ever, even Christ. And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless those that waited for the consolation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure.

1. See him in his humiliation. The same that is the mighty God is a child born; the ancient of days becomes an infant of a span long; the everlasting Father is a Son given. Such was his condescension in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself, to exalt and fill us. He is born into our world. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He is given, freely given, to be all that to us which our case, in our fallen state, calls for. God so loved the world that he gave him. He is born to us, he is given to us, us men, and not to the angels that sinned. It is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seems to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's having come (Lu 2:11), Unto you is born, this day, a Saviour. Note, Christ's being born and given to us is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

2. See him in his exaltation. This child, this son, this Son of God, this Son of man, that is given to us, is in a capacity to do us a great deal of kindness; for he is invested with the highest honour and power, so that we cannot but be happy if he be our friend.

(1.) See the dignity he is advanced to, and the name he has above every name. He shall be called (and therefore we are sure he is and shall be) Wonderful, Counsellor, &c. His people shall know him and worship him by these names; and, as one that fully answers them, they shall submit to him and depend upon him.

[1.] He is wonderful, counsellor. Justly is he called wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him, and, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning him. He is the counsellor, for he was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and he gives counsel to the children of men, in which he consults our welfare. It is by him that God has given us counsel, Ps 16:7,Re 3:18. He is the wisdom of the Father, and is made of God to us wisdom. Some join these together: He is the wonderful counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, he has the pre-eminence; none teaches like him.

[2.] He is the mighty God--God, the mighty One. As he has wisdom, so he has strength, to go through with his undertaking: he is able to save to the utmost; and such is the work of the Mediator that no less a power than that of the mighty God could accomplish it.

[3.] He is the everlasting Father, or the Father of eternity; he is God, one with the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the author of everlasting life and happiness to them, and so is the Father of a blessed eternity to them. He is the Father of the world to come (so the LXX. reads it), the father of the gospel-state, which is put in subjection to him, not to the angels, Heb 2:5. He was, from eternity, Father of the great work of redemption: his heart was upon it; it was the product of his wisdom as the counsellor, of his love as the everlasting Father.

[4.] He is the prince of peace. As a King, he preserves the peace, commands peace, nay, he creates peace, in his kingdom. He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people and rules in them. He is not only a peaceable prince, and his reign peaceable, but he is the author and giver of all good,

all that peace which is the present and future bliss of his subjects.

(2.) See the dominion he is advanced to, and the throne he has above every throne (Isa 9:6): The government shall be upon his shoulder--his only. He shall not only wear the badge of it upon his shoulder (the key of the house of David, Isa 22:22), but he shall bear the burden of it. The Father shall devolve it upon him, so that he shall have an incontestable right to govern; and he shall undertake it, so that no doubt can be made of his governing well, for he shall set his shoulder to it, and will never complain, as Moses did, of his being overcharged. I am not able to bear all this people, Nu 11:11,14. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ's government, Isa 9:7.

[1.] That it shall be an increasing government. It shall be multiplied; the bounds of his kingdom shall be more and more enlarged, and many shall be added to it daily. The lustre of it shall increase, and it shall shine more and more brightly in the world. The monarchies of the earth were each less illustrious than the other, so that what began in gold ended in iron and clay, and every monarchy dwindled by degrees; but the kingdom of Christ is a growing kingdom, and will come to perfection at last.

[2.] That it shall be a peaceable government, agreeable to his character as the prince of peace. He shall rule by love, shall rule in men's hearts; so that wherever his government is there shall be peace, and as his government increases the peace shall increase. The more we are subject to Christ the more easy and safe we are.

[3.] That it shall be a rightful government. He that is the Son of David shall reign upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, which he is entitled to. God shall give him the throne of his father David, Lu 1:32,33. The gospel church, in which Jew and Gentile are incorporated, is the holy hill of Zion, on which Christ reigns, Ps 2:6.

[4.] That it shall be administered with prudence and equity, and so as to answer the great end of government, which is the establishment of the kingdom: He shall order it, and settle it, with justice and judgment. Every thing is, and shall be, well managed, in the kingdom of Christ, and none of his subjects shall ever have cause to complain.

[5.] That it shall be an everlasting kingdom: There shall be no end of the increase of his government (it shall be still growing), no end of the increase of the peace of it, for the happiness of the subjects of this kingdom shall last to eternity and perhaps shall be progressive in infinitum--for ever. He shall reign henceforth even for ever; not only throughout all generations of time, but, even when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally.

[6.] That God himself has undertaken to bring all this about: "The Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand and all creatures at his beck, shall perform this, shall preserve the throne of David till this prince of peace is settled in it; his zeal shall do it, his jealousy for his own honour, and the truth of his promise, and the good of his church." Note, The heart of God is much upon the advancement of the kingdom of Christ among men, which is very comfortable to all those that wish well to it; the zeal of the Lord of hosts will overcome all opposition.

7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end,
upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and
to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even
for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The Lord's Anger against Israel

8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.
9 And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitant of
Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart,

Here are terrible threatenings, which are directed primarily against Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Ephraim and Samaria, the ruin of which is here foretold, with all the woeful confusions that were the prefaces to that ruin, all which came to pass within a few years after; but they look further, to all the enemies of the throne and kingdom of Christ the Son of David, and read the doom of all the nations that forget God, and will not have Christ to reign over them. Observe,

I The preface to this prediction (Isa 9:8): The Lord sent a word into Jacob, sent it by his servants the prophets. He warns before he wounds. He sent notice what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments; but they would not take the hint, took no care to turn away his wrath, and so it lighted upon Israel; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of rain and hail from on high, which they could not avoid: It has lighted upon them, that is, it is as sure to come as if come already, and all the people shall know by feeling it what they would not know by hearing of it. Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners shall be made to know it.

II The sins charged upon the people of Israel, which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them.

1. Their insolent defiance of the justice of God, thinking themselves a match for him: "They say, in the pride and stoutness of their heart, Let God himself do his worst; we will hold our own, and make our part good with him. If he ruin our houses, we will repair them, and make them stronger and finer than they were before. Our landlord shall not turn us out of doors, though we pay him no rent, but we will keep in possession. If the houses that were built of bricks be demolished in the war, we will rebuild them with hewn stones, that shall not so easily be thrown down. If the enemy cut down the sycamores, we will plant cedars in the room of them. We will make a hand of God's judgments, gain by them, and so outbrave

them." Note, Those are ripening apace for ruin whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences; for God will walk contrary to those who thus walk contrary to him and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he.

2. Their incorrigibleness under all the rebukes of Providence hitherto (Isa 9:13); The people turn not unto him that smiteth them (they are not wrought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty), neither do they seek the Lord of hosts; either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are the creatures of their own fancy and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs, in smiting us, is to turn us to himself and to set us a seeking him; and, if this point be not gained by less judgments, greater may be expected. God smites that he may not kill. 3. Their general corruption of manners and abounding profaneness.

(1.) Those that should have reformed them helped to debauch them (Isa 9:16): The leaders of this people mislead them, and cause them to err, by conniving at their wickedness and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them bad examples; and then no wonder if those that are led of them be deceived and so destroyed. But it is ill with a people when their physicians are their worst disease. "Those that bless this people, or call them blessed (so the margin reads it), that flatter them, and soothe them in their wickedness, and cry Peace, peace, to them, cause them to err; and those that are called blessed of them are swallowed up ere they are aware." We have reason to be afraid of those that speak well of us when we do ill; see Pr 24:24,29:5.

(2.) Wickedness was universal, and all were infected with it (Isa 9:17): Every one is a hypocrite and an evil doer. If there be any that are good, they do not, they dare not appear, for every mouth speaks folly and villany; every one is profane towards God (so the word properly signifies) and an evil doer towards man.

These two commonly go together: those that fear not God regard not man; and then every mouth speaks folly, falsehood, and reproach, both against God and man; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the
sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them into* cedars.
11 Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against
him, and join his enemies together;
12 the Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall
devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned
away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

The judgments threatened against them for this wickedness of theirs; let them not think to go unpunished.

1. In general, hereby they exposed themselves to the wrath of God, which should both devour as fire and darken as smoke.

(1.) It should devour as fire (Isa 9:18): Wickedness shall burn as the fire; the displeasure of God, incurred by sin, shall consume the sinners, who have made themselves as briers and thorns before it, and as the thickets of the forest, combustible matter, which the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the mighty God, will go through and burn together.

(2.) It should darken as smoke. The briers and thorns, when the fire consumes them, shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke, so that the whole land shall be darkened by it; they shall be in trouble, and see no way out (Isa 9:19): The people shall be as the fuel of the fire. God's wrath fastens upon none but those that make themselves fuel for it, and then they mount up as the smoke of sacrifices, being made victims to divine justice.

2. God would arm the neighbouring powers against them, Isa 9:11,12. At this time the kingdom of Israel was in league with that of Syria against Judah; but the Assyrians, who were adversaries to the Syrians, when they had conquered them should invade Israel, and God would stir them up to do it, and

join the enemies of Israel together in alliance against them, who yet had particular ends of their own to serve and were not aware of God's hand in their alliance. Note, When enemies are set up, and joined in confederacy against a people, God's hand must be acknowledged in it.

Note further, Those that partake with each other in sin, as Syria and Israel in invading Judah, must expect to share in the punishment of sin. Nay, the Syrians themselves, whom they were now in league with, should be a scourge to them (for it is no unusual thing for those to fall out that have been united in sin), one attacking them in the front and the other flanking them or falling upon their rear; so that they should be surrounded with enemies on all sides, who should devour them with open mouth, Isa 9:12. The Philistines were not now looked upon as formidable enemies, and the Syrians were looked upon as firm friends; and yet these shall devour Israel. When men's ways displease the Lord he makes even their friends to be at war with them.

3. God would take from the midst of them those they confided in and promised themselves help from, Isa 9:14,15. Because the people seek not God, those they seek to and depend upon shall stand them in no stead. The Lord will cut off head and tail, branch and rush, which is explained in the Isa 9:15. (1.) Their magistrates, who were honourable by birth and office and were the ancients of the people, these were the head, these were the branch which they promised themselves spirit and fruit from; but because these caused them to err they should be cut off, and their dignity and power should be no protection to them when the abuse of that dignity and power was the great provocation: and it was a judgment upon the people to have their princes cut off, though they were not such as they should have been. (2.) Their prophets, their false prophets, were the tail and the rush, the most despicable of all. A wicked minister is the worst of all. A wicked minister is the worst of men. Corruptio optimi est pessima--The best things become when corrupted the worst.

The blind led the blind, and so both fell into the ditch; and the blind leaders fell first and fell undermost.

4. That the desolation should be as general as the corruption had been, and none should escape it, Isa 9:17.

(1.) Not those that were the objects of complacency. None shall be spared for love: The Lord shall have no joy in their young men, that were in the flower of their youth; nor will he say, Deal gently with the young men for my sake; no, "Let them fall with the rest, and with them let the seed of the next generation perish."

(2.) Not those that were the objects of compassion. None shall be spared for pity: He shall not have mercy on their fatherless and widows, though he is, in a particular manner, the patron and protector of such. They had corrupted their way like all the rest; and, if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments.

5. That they should pull one another to pieces, that every one should help forward the common ruin, and they should be cannibals to themselves and one to another: No man shall spare his brother, if he come in the way of his ambition of covetousness, or if he have any colour to be revenged on him; and how can they expect God should spare them when they show no compassion one to another? Men's passion and cruelty one against another provoke God to be angry with them all and are an evidence that he is so. Civil wars soon bring a kingdom to desolation. Such there were in Israel, when, for the transgression of the land, many were the princes thereof, Pr 28:2.

(1.) In these intestine broils, men snatched on the right hand, and yet were hungry still, and did eat the flesh of their own

arms, preyed upon themselves for hunger or upon their nearest relations that were as their own flesh, Isa 9:20. This bespeaks,

[1.] Great famine and scarcity; when men had pulled all they could to them it was so little that they were still hungry, at least God did not bless it to them, so that they eat and have not enough, Hag 1:6.

[2.] Great rapine and plunder. Jusque datum sceleri--iniquity is established by law. The hedge of property, which is a hedge of protection to men's estates, shall be plucked up, and every man shall think all that his own which he can lay his hands on (vivitur ex rapto, non hospes ab hospite tutus--they live on the spoil, and the rites of hospitality are all violated); and yet, when men thus catch at that which is none of their own, they are not satisfied. Covetous desires are insatiable, and this curse is entailed on that which is ill got, that it will never do well.

(2.) These intestine broils should be not only among particular persons and private families, but among the tribes (Isa 9:21): Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, though they be combined against Judah. Those that could unite against Judah could not unite with one another; but that sinful confederacy of theirs against their neighbour that dwelt securely by them was justly punished by this separation of them one from another. Or Judah, having sinned like Manasseh and Ephraim, shall not only suffer with them, but suffer by them. Note, Mutual enmity and animosity among the tribes of God's Israel is a sin that ripens them for ruin, and a sad symptom of ruin hastening on apace. If Ephraim be against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah, they will all soon become a very easy prey to the common enemy.

6. That, though they should be followed with all these judgments, yet God would not let fall his controversy with them. It is the heavy burden of this song (Isa 9:12,17,21): For

all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still, that is,

(1.) They do nothing to turn away his anger; they do not repent and reform, do not humble themselves and pray, none stand in the gap, none answer God's calls nor comply with the designs of his providences, but they are hardened and secure.

(2.) His anger therefore continues to burn against them and his hand is stretched out still. The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged is because the point is not gained, sinners are not brought to repentance by them. The people turn not to him that smites them, and therefore he continues to smite them; for when God judges he will overcome, and the proudest stoutest sinner shall either bend or break.

13 For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts.

14 Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.

15 The ancient and honorable, he *is* the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he *is* the tail.

16 For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.

17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one *is* a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke.

19 Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:

21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: *and* they together *shall be* against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

Isaiah-10

1 Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed;

Whether they were the princes and judges of Israel of Judah, or both, that the prophet denounced this woe against, is not certain: if those of Israel, these verses are to be joined with the close of the foregoing chapter, which is probable enough, because the burden of that prophecy (for all this his anger is not turned away) is repeated here (Isa 10:4); if those of Judah, they then show what was the particular design with which God brought the Assyrian army upon them--to punish their magistrates for mal-administration, which they could not legally be called to account for. To them he speaks woes before he speaks comfort to God's own people. Here is,

I The indictment drawn up against these oppressors, Isa 10:1,2. They are charged,

1. With making wicked laws and edicts: They decree unrighteous decrees, contrary to natural equity and the law of God: and what mischief they prescribe those under them write it, enrol it, and put it into the formality of a law. "Woe to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees! they are not too high to be under the divine check. And woe to the inferior officers that draw them up, and enter them upon record--the writers that write the grievousness, they are not too mean to be within the divine cognizance. Principal and accessaries shall fall under the same woe."

Note, It is bad to do hurt, but it is worse to do it with design and deliberation, to do wrong to many, and to involve many in the guilt of doing wrong.

2. With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made. No people had statutes and judgments to righteous as they had, and yet corrupt judges found ways to turn aside the needy from judgment, to hinder them from coming at their right and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by nor expect any bribes from.

3. With enriching themselves by oppressing those that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected. They make widows' houses and estates their prey, and they rob the fatherless of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, would have been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressed had no comforter (Ec 4:1), was such apiece of barbarity as one would think none could ever be guilty of that had either the nature of a man or the name of an Israelite.

2 to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right
from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and *that*
they may rob the fatherless!

3 And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation
which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where
will ye leave your glory?

I. A challenge given them with all their pride and power to outface the judgments of God (Isa 10:3): "What will you do? To whom will you flee? You can trample upon the widows and fatherless; but what will you do when God riseth up?" Job 31:14. Great men, who tyrannise over the poor, think they shall never be called to account for their tyranny, shall never hear of it again, or fare the worse for it; but shall not God visit for these things? Jer 5:29. Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming; but it will come at last (reprieves are not pardons), and coming from far, from a quarter

whence it was least expected, it will be the greater surprise and the more terrible. What will then become of these unrighteous judges? Now they see their help in the gate (Job 31:21); but to whom will they then flee for help? Note,

1. There is a day of visitation coming, a day of enquiry and discovery, a searching day, which will bring to light, to a true light, every man, and every man's work.

2 The day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone, and buried in ruin, and themselves left desolate.

3. Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will no know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. They cannot fly and hide themselves, cannot fight it out and defend themselves; they have no refuge in which either to shelter themselves from the present evil (to whom will you flee for help?) or to secure to themselves better times hereafter: "Where will you leave your glory, to find it again when the storm is over?" The wealth they had got was their glory, and they had no place of safety in which to deposit that, but they should certainly see it flee away. If our souls be our glory, as they ought to be, and we make them our chief care, we know where to leave them, and into whose hands to commit them, even those of a faithful Creator.

4. It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation, in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well.

II. Sentence passed upon them, by which they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity (they shall bow down among the prisoners, or under them--those that were most highly elevated in sin shall be most heavily loaded and most deeply sunk in trouble), others to death: they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain. Those that had trampled

upon the widows and fatherless shall themselves be trodden down, Isa 10:4. "This it will come to," says God, "without me, that is, because you have deserted me and driven me away from you." Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world, that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

And yet, for all this, his anger is not turned away, which intimates not only that God will proceed in his controversy with them, but that they shall be in a continual dread of it; they shall, to their unspeakable terror, see his hand still stretched out against them, and there shall remain nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment.

4 Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

The Lord's Use of Assyria

5 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser king of Assyria was foretold in the foregoing chapter, and it had its accomplishment in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 2Ki 18:10. It was total and final, head and tail were all cut off. Now the correction of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib king of Assyria is foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when that potent prince, encouraged by the successes of his predecessor against the ten tribes, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them, and laid siege to Jerusalem (2Ki 18:13,17), in consequence of which we may well suppose Hezekiah and his kingdom were greatly alarmed, though there was a good work of reformation lately begun among them: but it ended well, in the confusion of the Assyrians and the great encouragement of Hezekiah and his people in their return to God. Now let us see here,

How God, in his sovereignty, deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with (Isa 10:5,6): "O Assyrian! know this, that thou art the rod of my anger; and I will send thee to be a scourge to the people of my wrath." Observe here,

1. How bad the character of the Jews was, though they appeared very good. They were a hypocritical nation, that made a profession of religion, and at this time particularly of reformation, but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be now that Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical. They are a profane nation; so some read it. Hezekiah had in a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they ran into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness: none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane hypocritical nation, they are the people of God's wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be consumed by it. Note, Hypocritical nations are the people of God's wrath: nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: those that had been God's chosen and hallowed people, above all people, had now become the people of his wrath. See Am 3:2.

2. How mean the character of the Assyrian was, though he appeared very great. He was but the rod of God's anger, an instrument God was pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that, being thus chastened of the Lord, they might not be condemned with the world. Note, The tyrants of the world are but the tools of Providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay (Ps 17:13,14), at other times his rod to correct. The staff in their hand, wherewith they smite his people, is his indignation; it is his wrath that puts the staff into their hand and enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them.

Sometimes God makes an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to a hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth. The Assyrian is called the rod of God's anger because he is employed by him.

(1.) From him his power is derived: I will send him; I will give him a charge. Note, All the power that wicked men have, though they often use it against God, they always receive from him. Pilate could have no power against Christ unless it were given him from above, Joh 19:11.

(2.) By him the exercise of that power is directed. The Assyrian is to take the spoil and to take the prey, not to shed any blood. We read not of any slain, but he is to plunder the country, rifle the houses, drive away the cattle, strip the people of all their wealth and ornaments, and tread them down like the mire of the streets. When God's professing people wallow in the mire of sin it is just with God to suffer their enemies to tread upon them like mire. But why must the Assyrian prevail thus against them? Not that they might be ruined, but that they might be thoroughly reformed.

6 I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people
of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take
the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.
7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but *it*
is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

See how the king of Assyria, in his pride, magnified himself as his own master, and pretended to be absolute and above all control, to act purely according to his own will and for his own honour. God ordained him for judgment, even the mighty God established him for correction (Hab 1:12), to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance, howbeit he means not so, nor does his heart think so, Isa 10:7.

1. He does not think that he is either God's servant or Israel's friend, either that he can do no more than God will let him or that he shall do no more than God will make to work for the

good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to himself; but was that Sennacherib's design? No, it was the furthest thing from his thoughts--he means not so. Note,

(1.) The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to his own great and holy purposes.

(2.) When God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work it is very common for him to mean one thing and them to mean another, nay, for them to mean quite the contrary to what he intends. What Joseph's brethren designed for hurt God overruled for good, Ge 50:20. See Mic 4:11,12. Men have their ends and God has his, but we are sure the counsel of the Lord shall stand. But what is it the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart.

2. He designs nothing but to destroy and to cut off nations not a few, and to make himself master of them.

[1.] He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy and cut off. He hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter; that of particular persons will not suffice, he must cut off nations. It is below him to deal by retail; he traffics in murders by wholesale. Nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off.

[2.] He designs to gratify his own covetousness and ambition, to set up for a universal monarch, and to gather unto him all nations, Hab 2:5. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

3. The prophet here brings him in vaunting, and hectoring; and by his general's letter to Hezekiah, written in his name, vainglory and arrogance seem to have entered very far into the

spirit and genius of the man. His haughtiness and presumption are here described very largely, and his very language copied out, partly to represent him as ridiculous and partly to assure the people of God that he would be brought down; for that maxim generally holds true, that pride goes before destruction. It also intimates that God takes notice, and keeps an account, of all men's proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. Those that speak great swelling words of vanity shall hear of them again.

(1.) He boasts of the great things he had done to other nations.

[1.] He had made their kings his courtiers (Isa 10:8): "My princes are altogether kings. Those that are now my princes are such as have been kings." Or he means that he had raised his throng to such a degree that his servants, and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the kings of other countries. Or those that were absolute princes in their own dominions held their crowns under him, and did him homage. This was a vainglorious boast; but how great is our God whom we serve, who is indeed King of kings, and whose subjects are made to him kings! Re 1:6.

[2.] He had made himself master of their cities. He names several (Isa 10:9) that were all alike reduced by him. Calno soon yielded as Carchemish did, Hamath could not hold out any more than Arpad, and Samaria had become his as well as Damascus. To support his boasts he is obliged to bring the victories of his predecessor into the account; for it was he that conquered Samaria, not Sennacherib.

[3.] He had been too hard for their idols, their tutelar gods, had found out the kingdoms of the idols and found out ways to make them his own, Isa 10:10. Their kingdoms took denomination from the idols they worshipped; the Moabites are called the people of Chemosh (Jer 48:46), because they imagined their gods were their patrons and protectors; and therefore

Sennacherib vainly imagined that every conquest of a kingdom was the conquest of a god.

[4.] He had enlarged his own dominions, and removed the bounds of the people (Isa 10:13), enclosing many large territories within the limits of his own kingdom and shifting a great way further the ancient land-marks which his fathers had set; he could not bear to be hemmed in so closely, but must have more room to thrive. By his removing the border of the people Mr. White understands his arbitrarily transplanting colonies from place to place, which was the constant practice of the Assyrians in all their conquests; and this is a probable interpretation.

[5.] He had enriched himself with their wealth, and brought it into his own exchequer: I have robbed their treasures. In this he said truly, Great conquerors are often no better than great robbers. [6.] He had mastered all the opposition he met with: "I have put down the inhabitants as a valiant man. Those that sat high, and thought they say firmly, I have humbled and made to come down."

(2.) He boasts of the manner in which he had done them.

[1.] That he had done all this by his own policy and power (Isa 10:13): "By the strength of my hand, for I am valiant; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent;" not by the permission of Providence and the blessing of God. He knows not that it is God that makes him what he is, and puts the staff into his hand, but sacrifices to his own net, Hab 1:16. "This wealth is all gotten by my might and the power of my hand," De 8:17. Downright atheism and profaneness, as well as pride and vanity, are at the bottom of men's attributing their prosperity and success thus to themselves and their own conduct, and raising their own character upon it.

[2.] That he had done all this with a great deal of ease, and had made but a sport and diversion of it, as if he had been taking birds' nests (Isa 10:14): my hand has found as a nest the riches of the people; and when he had found them there was no more difficulty in taking them than in rifling a nest, nor any more reluctance or regret within his own breast in destroying families and cities than in destroying crows'-nests; killing children was no more to him than killing birds. "As one gathers the eggs that are left in the nest by the dam, so easily have I gathered all the earth." Like Alexander, he thought he had conquered the world; and whatever prey he seized there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped, as birds do when their nests are rifled. They durst not make any opposition, no, nor any complaint; such awe did they stand in of this mighty conqueror.

They were so weak that they knew it was to no purpose to resist, and he was so arbitrary that they knew it was to no purpose to complain. Strange that ever men who were made to do good should take a pride and a pleasure in doing wrong, and doing mischief to all about them without control, and should reckon that their glory which is their shame! But their day will come to fall who thus make themselves the terror of thy mighty, and much more of the feeble, in the land of the living.

(3.) He threatens what he will do to Jerusalem, which he was now about to lay siege to, Isa 10:10,11. He would master Jerusalem and her idols, as he had subdued other places and their idols, particularly Samaria.

[1.] He blasphemously calls the God of Israel an idol, and sets him on a level with the false gods of other nations, as if none were the true God but Mithras, the sun, whom he worshipped. See how ignorant he was, and then we shall the less wonder that he was so proud.

[2.] He prefers the graven images of other countries before those of Jerusalem and Samaria, when he might have known that the worshippers of the God of Israel were expressly forbidden to make any graven images, and if any did it must be by stealth, and therefore they could not be so rich and pompous as those of other nations. If he means the ark and the mercy-seat, he speaks like himself, very foolishly, and as one that judged by the sight of the eye, and might therefore be easily deceived in matters of spiritual concern. Those who make external pomp and splendour a mark of the true church go by the same rule.

[3.] Because he had conquered Samaria, he concluded Jerusalem would fall of course: "Shall not I do so to Jerusalem? can I not as easily, and may I not as justly?" But it did not follow; for Jerusalem adhered to her God, whereas Samaria had forsaken him.

8 For he saith, *Are* not my princes altogether kings?
9 *Is* not Calno as Carchemish? *is* not Hamath as Arpad? *is* not
Samaria as Damascus?
10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose
graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;
11 shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to
Jerusalem and her idols?
12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that*, when the Lord hath
performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I
will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and
the glory of his high looks.
13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, and by my
wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the
people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the
inhabitants like a valiant *man:*
14 and my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as
one gathereth eggs *that are* left, have I gathered all the earth; and
there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or
peeped.

15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? *or* shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake *itself* against them that lift it up, *or* as if the staff should lift up *itself, as if it were* no wood.

See how God, in his justice, rebukes his pride and reads his doom. We have heard what the great king, the king of Assyria, says, and how big he talks. Let us now hear what the great God has to say by his servant the prophet, and we shall find that, wherein he deals proudly, God is above him.

1. He shows the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasts (Isa 10:15): Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it? So absurd are the boasts of this proud man. "O what a dust do I make!" said the fly upon the cart-wheel in the fable. "What destruction do I make among the trees!" says the axe. Two ways the axe may be said to boast itself against him that hews with it:--

(1.) By way of resistance and opposition. Sennacherib blasphemed God, insulted him, threatened to serve him as he had served the gods of the nations; now this was as if the axe should fly in the face of him that hews with it. The tool striving with the workman is no less absurd than the clay striving with the potter; and as it is a thing not to be justified that men should fight against God with the wit, and wealth, and power, which he gives them, so it is a thing not to be suffered. But if men will be thus proud and daring, and bid defiances to all that is just and sacred, let them expect that God will reckon with them; the more insolent they are the surer and sorer will their ruin be.

(2.) By way of rivalship and competition. Shall the axe take to itself the praise of the work it is employed in? So senseless, so absurd was it for Sennacherib to say, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, Isa 10:13. It is as if the rod, when it is shaken, should boast that it guides the hand which shakes it; whereas, when the staff is lifted up, is it not wood

still? so the last clause may be read. If it be an ensign of authority (as the nobles of the people carried staves, Nu 21:18), if it be an instrument of service, either to support a weak man or to correct a bad man, still it is wood, and can do nothing but as it is directed by him that uses it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations to know that they were but men (Ps 9:20), the staff to know that it is but wood.

2. He foretels his fall and ruin.

(1.) That when God had done his work by him he would then do his work upon him, Isa 10:12. For the comfort of the people of God in reference to Sennacherib's invasion, though it was a dismal time with them, let them know,

[1.] That God designed to do good to Zion and Jerusalem by this providence. There is a work to be done upon them, which God intends, and which he will perform. Note, When God lets loose the enemies of his church and people, and suffers them for a time to prevail, it is in order to the performing of some great good work upon them; and, when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble it is to try them (Da 11:35), to bring sin to their remembrance and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray and to love and help one another; and this must be the fruit, even the taking away of sin, Isa 27:9. When these points are, in some measure, gained by the affliction, it shall be removed, in mercy (Le 26:41,42), otherwise not; for, as the word, so the rod shall accomplish that for which God sends it.

[2.] That when God had wrought this work of grace for his people he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders: I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria. His big words are here said to come from his stout heart, and they are the fruit of it; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Notice is taken too of the glory

of his high looks, for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit. The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty; but, sooner or later, God will reckon for their haughtiness. He glories in it as an incontestable proof of his power and sovereignty that he looks upon proud men and abases them, Job 40:11, &c.

(2.) That, how threatening soever this attempt was upon Zion and Jerusalem, it should certainly be baffled, and broken, and come to nothing, and he should not be able to bring to pass his enterprise, Isa 10:16,19. Observe,

[1.] Who it is that undertakes his destruction, and will be the author of it; not Hezekiah, or his princes, or the militia of Judah and Jerusalem (what can they do against such a potent force?), but God himself will do it, as the Lord of hosts, and as the light of Israel.

First, We are sure he can do it, for he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth. All the creatures are at his command; he makes what use he pleases on them. He is the Lord of the hosts both of Judah and of Assyria, and can give the victory to which he pleases. Let us not fear the hosts of any enemy if we have the Lord of hosts for us.

Secondly, We have reason to hope he will do it, for he is the light of Israel, and his Holy One. God is light; in him are perfect brightness, purity, and happiness. He is light, for he is the Holy One; his holiness is his glory. He is Israel's light, to direct and counsel his people, to favour and countenance them, and so to gladden and comfort them in the worst of times. He is their Holy One, for he is in covenant with them; his holiness is engaged and employed for them. God's holiness is the saints' comfort; they give thanks at the remembrance of it, and with a great deal of pleasure call him their Holy One, Hab 1:12.

[2.] How this destruction is represented. It shall be, First, As a consumption of the body by a disease: The Lord shall send leanness among his fatnesses, or his fat ones. His numerous army, that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished, and waste away, and become like a skeleton. Secondly, As a consumption of buildings, or trees and bushes, by fire: Under his glory, that very thing which he glories in, he will kindle a burning, as the burning of a fire, which shall lay his army in ruins as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes. Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices; for proud sinners fall as sacrifices to divine justice. Observe,

1. How this fire shall be kindled, Isa 10:17. The same God that is a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully will be a consuming fire to those that trifle with him or rebel against him. The light of Israel shall be for a fire to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites and a terror to the Egyptians in the Red Sea. What can oppose, what can extinguish, such a fire?

2. What desolation it shall make: it shall burn and devour its thorns and briers, his officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexations to God's Israel, as thorns and briers, whose end is to be burned, and which are easily and quickly consumed by a devouring fire. "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? They would be so far from stopping the fire that they would inflame it. I would go through them and burn them together (Isa 27:4); they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant."

When they cried not only Peace and safety, but Victory and triumph, then sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was completed in a little time. "Even the glory of his forest (Isa 10:18), the choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of and depended most upon, that he valued as

men do their timber-trees (the glory of their forest) or their fruit-trees (the glory of the Carmel), shall be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, entirely consumed, not only a limb burned, but life taken away."

Note, God is able to destroy both soul and body, and therefore we should fear him more than man, who can but kill the body. Great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire when he pleases.

[3.] What would be the effect of this great slaughter. The prophet tells us, First, That the army would hereby be reduced to a very small number: The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few; very few shall escape the sword of the destroying angel, so few that there needs no artist, no muster-master or secretary of war, to take an account of them, for even a child may soon reckon the numbers of them, and write the names of them. Secondly, That those few who remained should be quite dispirited: They shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. When he either falls or flees, and his colours are taken by the enemy, this discourages the whole army, and puts them all into confusion. Upon the whole matter we must say, Who is able to stand before this great and holy Lord God?

16 Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day;

18 and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth.

19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

20 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay

upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

The prophet had said (Isa 10:12) that the Lord would perform his whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, by Sennacherib's invading the land. Now here we are told what that work should be, a twofold work:--

I The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not joyous, but grievous; these are but a remnant (Isa 10:22), the remnant of Israel (Isa 10:20), the remnant of Jacob (Isa 10:21), but a very few in comparison with the vast numbers of the people of Israel, who were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of these a remnant only shall be saved, that of the many that are called there are but few chosen, we shall surely strive to enter in at the strait gate and fear lest we seem to come short.

This remnant of Israel are said to be such as had escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostasy; and that was a fair escape. And therefore they escape the desolations of that house, and shall be preserved in safety in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape. Their lives shall be given them for a prey, Jer 45:5. The righteous scarcely are saved.

Now, 1. This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh, this providence shall cure them of that: "They shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, shall never depend upon the Assyrians, as they have done, for help against their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies." Ictus piscator sapit--sufferings teach caution. "They have now learned by dear-bought experience the folly of

leaning upon that staff as a stay to them which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them." It is part of the covenant of a returning people (Ho 14:3), Assyria shall not save us. Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence.

2. They shall come home to God, to the mighty God (one of the names given to the Messiah, Isa 9:6), to the Holy One of Israel: "The remnant shall return (that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, Shear-jashub, Isa 7:3), even the remnant of Jacob. They shall return, after the raising of the siege of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but to God and to their duty; they shall repent, and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives." The remnant that escape are a returning remnant: they shall return to God, and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God that return to him; then may we have a humble confidence in God when we make conscience of our duty to him.

They shall stay upon the Holy One of Israel, in truth, and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel is applied by the apostle (Ro 9:27) to the remnant of the Jews which at the first preaching of the gospel received and entertained it, and sufficiently proves that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham in full force and virtue; for so it was now. The number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea (according to the promise, Ge 22:17), and yet only a remnant shall be saved.

II The consumption of others: The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, Isa 10:23. This is not meant (as that Isa 10:18) of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of to magnify the power and goodness of God in the escape of the distinguished remnant, and to let us know what shall become of those that will not

return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general decay in the midst of the land.

Observe, 1. It is a consumption of God's own making; he is the author of it. The Lord God of hosts, whom none can resist, shall make this consumption.

2. It is decreed. It is not the product of a sudden resolve, but was before ordained. It is determined, not only that there shall be such a consumption, but it is cut out (so the word is); it is particularly appointed how far it shall extend and how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it and who not.

3. It is an overflowing consumption, that shall overspread the land, and, like a mighty torrent or inundation, bear down all before it. 4. Though it overflows, it is not at random, but in righteousness, which signifies both wisdom and equity. God will justly bring this consumption upon a provoking people, but he will wisely and graciously set bounds to it. Hitherto it shall come, and no further.

21 The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *yet* a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

23 For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

The prophet, in his preaching, distinguishes between the precious and the vile; for God in his providence, even in the same providence, does so. He speaks terror, in Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites, who were the people of God's wrath, Isa 10:6. But here he speaks comfort to the sincere, who were the people of God's love. The judgment was sent for the sake of

the former; the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here we have,

I. An exhortation to God's people not to be frightened at this threatening calamity, nor to be put into any confusion or consternation by it. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid (Isa 33:14): but O my people, that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian, Isa 10:24.

Note, It is against the mind and will of God that his people, whatever may happen, should give way to that fear which has torment and amazement. Those that dwell in Zion, where God dwells and where his people attend him, and are employed in his service, that are under the protection of the bulwarks that are round about Zion (Ps 48:13), need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

II. Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear.

1 The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but what God has appointed and determined. They are here told before hand what he shall do, that it may be no surprise to them: "He shall smite thee by the divine permission, but it shall be only with a rod to correct thee, not with a sword to wound and kill; nay, he shall but lift up his staff against thee, threaten thee, and frighten thee, and shake the rod at thee, after the manner of Egypt, as the Egyptians shook their staff against your fathers at the Red Sea, when they said, We will pursue, we will overtake (Ex 15:9), but could not reach to do them any hurt." Note, We should not be frightened at those enemies that can do no more than frighten us.

2 The storm shall soon blow over (Isa 10:25): Yet a very little while--a little, little while (so the word is), and the indignation shall cease, even my anger, which is the staff in their hand (Isa 10:5), so that when that ceases they are disarmed and disabled to do any further mischief.

Note, God's anger against his people is but for a moment (Ps 30:5), and when that ceases, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, for it is impotent passion.

3. The enemy that threatens them shall himself be reckoned with. God's anger against his people shall cease in the destruction of their enemies; when he turns away his wrath from Israel he shall turn it against the Assyrian; and the rod with which he corrected his people shall not only be laid aside, but thrown into the fire. He lifted up his staff against Zion, but God shall stir up a scourge for him (Isa 10:26); he is a terror to God's people, but God will be a terror to him. The destroying angel shall be this scourge, which he can neither flee from nor contend with. The prophet, for the encouragement of God's people, quotes precedents, and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of his church, who were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be,

(1.) According to the slaughter of Midian (which was effected by an invisible power, but effected suddenly, and it was a total rout); and as, at the rock of Oreb, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his god Nisroch, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is past. Compare with this Ps 83:11, Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb; and see how God's promises and his people's prayers agree.

(2.) As his rod was upon the sea, the Red Sea, as Moses' rod was upon that, to divide it first for the escape of Israel and then to close it again for the destruction of their pursuers, so shall his rod now be lifted up, after the manner of Egypt, for the deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Assyrian. Note, It is good to observe a resemblance between God's latter and former appearances for his people, and against his and their enemies.

4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it, Isa 10:27. "They shall not only be eased of the Assyrian army, which is now quartered upon them and which is a grievous yoke and burden to them, but they shall no more pay that tribute to the king of Assyria which before this invasion he exacted from them (2Ki 18:14), shall be no longer at his service, nor lie at his mercy, as they have done; nor shall he ever again put the country under contribution." Some think it looks further, to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; and further yet, to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan. The yoke shall not only be taken away, but it shall be destroyed. The enemy shall no more recover his strength, to do the mischief he has done; and this because of the anointing, for their sakes who were partakers of the anointing.

(1.) For Hezekiah's sake, who was the anointed of the Lord, who had been an active reformer, and was dear to God.

(2.) For David's sake. This is particularly given as the reason why God would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib (Isa 37:35), For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

(3.) For his people Israel's sake, the good people among them that had received the unction of divine grace.

(4.) For the sake of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old-Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all the favours he shows to his people. It is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and
mine anger in their destruction.

26 And the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to
the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and *as* his rod *was* upon
the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

27 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:

A description both of the terror of the enemy and the terror with which many were struck by it, and the folly of both exposed, Isa 10:28-34, to the end. Here observe,

1. How formidable the Assyrians were and how daring and threatening they affected to appear. Here is a particular description of the march of Sennacherib, what course he steered, what swift advances he made: He has come to Aiath, &c. "This and the other place he has made himself master of, and has met with no opposition." At Michmash he has laid up his carriages, as if he had no further occasion for his heavy artillery, so easily was every place he came to reduced; or the store-cities of Judah, which were fortified for that purpose, had now become his magazines. Some remarkable pass, and an important one, he had taken: They have gone over the passage.

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate seed of that lion's whelp. They were afraid; they fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy. Their apostasy from God had dispirited them, so that one chased a thousand of them. Instead of a valiant shout, to animate one another, nothing was heard by lamentation, to discourage and weaken one another. And poor Anathoth, a priests' city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieks louder than any, Isa 10:30. With respect to those that gathered themselves together, it was not to fight, but to flee by consent, Isa 10:31.

This is designed either, (1.) To show how fast the news of the enemy's progress flew through the kingdom: He has come to Aiath, says one; nay, says another, He has passed to Migron, &c. And yet, perhaps, it was not altogether so bad as common fame represented it. But we must watch against the fear, not

only of evil things, but of evil tidings, which often make things worse than really they are, Ps 112:7. Or,

(2.) To show what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it and its friends could not make one bold stand to defend it. Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more dastardly those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when, notwithstanding this, he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem shall be: he shall remain at Nob, whence he may see Mount Zion, and there he shall shake his hand against it, Isa 10:32. He shall threaten it, and that shall be all; it shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance. The daughter of Jerusalem, to be even with him, shall shake her head at him, Isa 37:22.

4. How fatal it would prove, in the issue, to himself. When he shakes his hand at Jerusalem, and is about to lay hands on it, then is God's time to appear against him; for Zion is the place of which God has said, This is my rest for ever; therefore those who threaten it affront God himself. Then the Lord shall lop the bough with terror and cut down the thickets of the forest, Isa 10:33,34.

(1.) The pride of the enemy shall be humbled, the boughs that are lifted up on high shall be lopped off, the high and stately trees shall be hewn down; that is, the haughty shall be humbled. Those that lift up themselves in competition with God or opposition to him shall be abased.

(2.) The power of the enemy shall be broken: The thickets of the forest he shall cut down. When the Assyrian soldiers were under their arms, and their spears erect, they looked like a forest, like Lebanon; but, when in one night they all became as dead corpses, the pikes were laid on the ground, and Lebanon

was of a sudden cut down by a mighty one, by the destroying angel, who in a little time slew so many thousands of them: and, if this shall be the exit of that proud invader, let not God's people be afraid of him. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?

29 they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at
Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.
30 Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto
Laish, O poor Anathoth.
31 Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather
themselves to flee.
32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand
against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.
33 Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with
terror: and the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down, and the
haughty shall be humbled.
34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and
Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

Isaiah-11

The Righteous Reign of the Branch of Jesse

1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a
Branch shall grow out of his roots:

The prophet had before, in this sermon, spoken of a child that should be born, a son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be, intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob, many ages before, had intended the prospect of Shiloh for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had said (Isa 10:27) that the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretels,

That the Messiah should, in due time, arise out of the house of David, as that branch of the Lord which he had said (Isa 4:2)

should be excellent and glorious; the word is Netzer, which some think is referred to in Mt 2:23, where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah that he should be called a Nazarene.

Observe here, 1. Whence this branch should arise-from Jesse. He should be the son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and to whom it was promised with an oath that of the fruit of his loins God would raise of Christ, Ac 2:30. David is often called the son of Jesse, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, Ho 3:5.

2 The meanness of his appearance.

(1.) He is called a rod, and a branch; both the words here used signify a weak, small, tender product, a twig and a sprig (so some render them), such as is easily broken off. The enemies of God's church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs (Isa 10:33), which will not, without great labour, be hewn down, but Christ to a tender branch (Isa 53:2); yet he shall be victorious over them.

(2.) He is said to come out of Jesse rather than David, because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account (1Sa 18:18), and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the son of Jesse, 1Sa 22:7.

(3.) He comes forth out of the stem, or stump, of Jesse. When the royal family, that had been as a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost levelled with the ground and lost in the grass of the field (Da 4:15), yet it shall sprout again (Job 14:7); nay, it shall grow out of his roots, which are quite buried in the earth, and, like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no stem appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth, witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitting to which he

should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice that his kingdom was not of this world. The Chaldee paraphrase reads this, There shall come forth a King from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah (or Christ) shall be anointed out of his sons' sons.

2 and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;

That he should be every way qualified for that great work to which he was designed, that this tender branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven as to become a strong rod for a sceptre to rule, Isa 11:2.

1. In general, the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest and abide upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, Col 1:19,2:9. He began his preaching with this (Lu 4:18), The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

2. In particular, the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father has committed to him and given him authority to execute (Joh 5:22,27), and not only so, but should be made the fountain and treasury of all grace to believers, that from his fulness they might all receive the Spirit of grace, as all the members of the body derive animal spirits from the head.

(1.) He shall have the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and knowledge; he shall thoroughly understand the business he is to be employed in. No man knows the Father but the Son, Mt 11:27. What he is to make known to the children of men concerning God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with and apprised of, Joh 1:18. He shall know how to administer the affairs of his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God and the welfare of the children of men. The terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted,

in wisdom: treasures of wisdom shall be hid in him; he shall be our counsellor, and shall be made of God to us wisdom.

(2.) The spirit of courage, or might, or fortitude. The undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary that he should be so endowed that he might not fail or be discouraged, Isa 42:4. He was famed for courage in his teaching the way of God in truth, and not caring for any man, Mt 22:16.

(3.) The spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord; not only he shall himself have a reverent affection for his Father, as his servant (Isa 42:1), and he was heard in that he feared (Heb 5:7), but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of it in his whole undertaking. Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and jostle out, but to increase and support, our fear of the Lord.

3 and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the
Lord.
And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after
the hearing of his ears:

I. That he should be accurate, and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government and the exercise of the power committed to him (Isa 11:3): The Spirit wherewith he shall be clothed shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord--of an acute smell or scent (so the word is), for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body.

Note, 1. Those are most truly and valuably intelligent that are so in the fear of the Lord, in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and top-stone of wisdom.

2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God, if we have spiritual senses exercised, and are of quick understanding in the fear of the lord. Those have divine illumination that know their duty and know how to go about it. 3. Therefore Jesus Christ had

the spirit without measure, that he might perfectly understand his undertaking; and he did so, as appears not only in the admirable answers he gave to all that questioned with him, which proved him to be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, but in the management of his whole undertaking. He has settled the great affair of religion so unexpectedly well (so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness) that, it must be owned, he thoroughly understood it.

II. That he should be just and righteous in all the acts of his government, and there should appear in it as much equity as wisdom. He shall judge as he expresses it himself, and as he himself would be judged of, Joh 7:24.

1. Not according to outward appearance (Isa 11:3): he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, with respect of persons (Job 34:19) and according to outward shows and appearances, not reprove after the hearing of his ears, by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men commonly do; nor does he judge of men by the fair words they speak, calling him, Lord, Lord, or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the inward principles men are governed by, of which he is an infallible witness. Christ will judge the secrets of men (Ro 2:16), will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances (that were to judge after the sight of the eyes), not according to the opinion others have of them (that were to judge after the hearing of the ears), but we are sure that his judgment is according to truth.

2. He will judge righteous judgment (Isa 11:5): Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins. He shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle; it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall make him

expeditious in his undertakings, as a man with his loins girt. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth (Eph 6:14) and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly,

(1.) He shall in righteousness plead for the people that are poor and oppressed; he will be their protector (Isa 11:4): With righteousness shall he judge the poor; he shall judge in favour and defence of those that have right on their side, though they are poor in the world, and because they are poor in spirit. It is the duty of princes to defend and deliver the poor (Ps 82:3,4), and the honour of Christ that he is the poor man's King, Ps 72:2,4. He shall debate with evenness for the meek of the earth, or of the land; those that bear the injuries done them with meekness and patience are in a special manner entitled to the divine care and protection. I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear, Ps 38:13,14. Some read it, He shall reprove or correct the meek of the earth with equity. If his own people, the meek of the land, do amiss, he will visit their transgression with the rod.

(2.) He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors (Isa 11:4): But he shall smite the earth, the man of the earth, that doth oppress (see Ps 10:18), the men of the world, that mind earthly things only (Ps 17:14); these he shall smite with the rod of his mouth, the word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them; his threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them. With the breath of his lips, by the operation of his Spirit, according to his word, and working with and by it, he shall slay the wicked.

He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him, by saying I am he, Joh 18:6. Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences, killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be recompensed to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the man of sin, whom he calls that wicked one (2Th 2:8) whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth. And the Chaldee

here reads it, He shall slay that wicked Romulus, or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.

III. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government; this is an explication of what was said in Isa 9:6, that he should be the Prince of peace. Peace signifies two things:--

1. Unity or concord, which is intimated in these figurative promises, that even the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb; men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, who used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ that they shall live in love even with the weakest and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of. So far shall the sheep be from hurting one another, as sometimes they have done (Eze 34:20,21), that even the wolves shall agree with them. Christ, who is our peace, came to slay all enmities and to settle lasting friendships among his followers, particularly between Jews and Gentiles: when multitudes of both, being converted to the faith of Christ, united in one sheep-fold, then the wolf and the lamb dwelt together; the wolf did not so much as threaten the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf.

The leopard shall not only not tear the kid, but shall lie down with her: even their young ones shall lie down together, and shall be trained up in a blessed amity, in order to the perpetuating of it. The lion shall cease to be ravenous and shall eat straw like the ox, as some think all the beasts of prey did before the fall. The asp and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents shall let their children play with them and put their hands among them. A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints, and the old complaint of homo homini lupus--man is a wolf to man, shall be at an end. Those that inhabit the holy mountain shall live as amicably as the creatures did that were with Noah in the ark, and it shall be a means of their preservation, for they shall not hurt nor destroy one another as they have done.

Now, (1.) This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature, and makes those that trampled on the meek of the earth, not only meek like them, but affectionate towards them. When Paul, who had persecuted the saints, joined himself to them, then the wolf dwelt with the lamb.

(2.) Some are willing to hope it shall yet have a further accomplishment in the latter days, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares.

2. Safety or security. Christ, the great Shepherd, shall take such care of the flock that those who would hurt them shall not; they shall not only not destroy one another, but no enemy from without shall be permitted to give them any molestation. The property of troubles, and of death itself, shall be so altered that they shall not do any real hurt to, much less shall they be the destruction of, any that have their conversation in the holy mountain, 1Pe 3:13. Who, or what, can harm us, if we be followers of him that is good? God's people shall be delivered, not only from evil, but from the fear of it. Even the sucking child shall without any terror play upon the hole of the asp; blessed Paul does so when he says, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? and, O death! where is thy sting?

Lastly, Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers by the grace of God.

1 The effect of it shall be tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction: A little child shall lead those who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ, who are to instruct with meekness and not to use any coercive power, but to be as little children, Mt 18:3. See 2Co 8:5.

2 The cause of it shall be the knowledge of God. The more there is of that the more there is of a disposition to peace. They shall thus live in love, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, which shall extinguish men's heats and animosities. The better acquainted we are with the God of love the more shall we be changed into the same image and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image. The earth shall be as full of this knowledge as the channels of the sea are of water--so broad and extensive shall this knowledge be and so far shall it spread--so deep and substantial shall this knowledge be, and so long shall it last. There is much more of the knowledge of God to be got by the gospel of Christ than could be got by the law of Moses; and, whereas then in Judah only was God known, now all shall know him, Heb 8:11. But that is knowledge falsely so called which sows discord among men; the right knowledge of God settles peace.

4 but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

We have here a further prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib.

I. This prediction was in part accomplished when the great things God did for Hezekiah and his people proved as an ensign, inviting the neighbouring nations to them to enquire of the wonders done in the land, on which errand the king of Babylon's ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles sought; and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, was then glorious, Isa 11:10. Then many of the Israelites who belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country and put themselves under the protection and government of the king of Judah, the rather because it was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined and that was not routed.

This is said to be a recovery of them the second time (Isa 11:11), such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them, as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the outcasts of Israel should be gathered in, and brought home, and those of Judah too, who, upon the approach of the Assyrian army, shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines and their other common enemies, Isa 11:13,14.

Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, ought in consideration thereof to unite for their joint and mutual safety and protection; and it is likely to be well with the church when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines. Then,

whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them, as when he brought Israel out of Egypt he dried up the Red Sea and Jordan (Isa 11:15) and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, Isa 11:16. The like will he do this second time, or that which shall be equivalent. When God's time has come for the deliverance of his people mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair therefore when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low; God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

II. It had a further reference to the days of the Messiah and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom; for to these the apostle applies Isa 11:10, of which the following verses are a continuation. Ro 15:12, There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust. That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the root of Jesse, or a branch out of his roots (Isa 11:1), a root out of a dry ground, Isa 53:2. He is the root of David (Re 5:5), the root and offspring of David Re 22:16.

1. He shall stand, or be set up, for an ensign of the people. When he was crucified he was lifted up from the earth, that, as an ensign of beacon, he might draw the eyes and the hearts of all men unto him, Joh 12:32. He is set up as an ensign in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him (So 1:4), the banner of his truth, under which we may enlist ourselves, to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to which the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together (Joh 11:51), and in him they meet as the centre of their unity.

2. To him shall the Gentiles seek. We read of Greeks that did so (Joh 12:21, We would see Jesus), and upon that occasion Christ spoke of his being lifted up, to draw all men to him. The apostle,

from the LXX. (or perhaps the LXX. from the apostle, in the editions after Christ) reads it (Ro 15:12), In him shall the Gentiles trust; they shall seek to him with a dependence on him.

3. His rest shall be glorious. Some understand this of the death of Christ (the triumphs of the cross made even that glorious), others of his ascension, when he sat down to rest at the right hand of God. Or rather it is meant of the gospel church, that Mount Zion of which Christ has said, This is my rest, and in which he resides. This, though despised by the world, having upon it the beauty of holiness, is truly glorious, a glorious high throne, Jer 17:12.

4. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him, Isa 11:11. A remnant of both, a little remnant in comparison, which shall be recovered, as it were, with great difficulty and hazard. As formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered (Ps 106:47,Jer 16:15,16), so he will a second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall set his hand to do it; he shall exert his power, the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to do it.

(1.) There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in: The outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah (Isa 11:12), many of whom, at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were Jews of the dispersion, the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad (Jam 1:1,1Pe 1:1), shall flock to Christ; and probably more of those scattered Jews were brought into the church, in proportion, than of those which remained in their own land.

(2.) Many of the nations, the Gentiles, shall be brought in by the lifting up of the ensign. Jacob foretold concerning Shiloh that to him should the gathering of the people be. Those that were strangers and foreigners shall be made nigh. The Jews were jealous of Christ's going to the dispersed among the Gentiles and of his teaching the Gentiles, Joh 7:35.

5. There shall be a happy accommodation between Judah and Ephraim, and both shall be safe from their adversaries and have dominion over them, Isa 11:13,14. The coalescence between Judah and Israel at that time was a type and figure of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, who had been so long at variance in the gospel church. The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel (Jer 3:18) and become one nation (Eze 37:22); so the Jews and Gentiles are made of twain one new man (Eph 2:15), and, being at peace one with another, those that are adversaries to them both shall be cut off; for they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines, as an eagle strikes at her prey, shall spoil those on the west side of them, and then they shall extend their conquests eastward over the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites. The gospel of Christ shall be successful in all parts, and some of all nations shall become obedient to the faith.

6. Every thing that might hinder the progress and success of the gospel shall be taken out of the way. As when God brought Israel out of Egypt he dried up the Red Sea and Jordan before them (Isa 63:11,12), and as afterwards when he brought up the Jews out of Babylon he prepared them their way (Isa 62:10), so when Jews and Gentiles are to be brought together into the gospel church all obstructions shall be removed (Isa 11:15,16), difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be strangely got over, the blind shall be led by a way that they knew not. See Isa 42:15,16,43:19,20. Converts shall be brought in chariots and in litters, Isa 66:20.

Some think it is the further accession of multitudes to the church that is pointed at in that obscure prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared (Re 16:12), which seems to refer to this prophecy. Note, When God's time has come for the bringing of nations, or particular persons, home to himself, divine grace will be victorious over all opposition. At the presence of the Lord the sea shall flee and Jordan be driven back; and those who set their

faces heavenward will find there are not such difficulties in the way as they thought there were, for there is a highway thither, Isa 35:8.

11 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them.

15 And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make *men* go over dry- shod.

16 And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

Isaiah-12

The Lord to Be Praised in That Day

1 And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

This is the former part of the hymn of praise which is prepared for the use of the church, of the Jewish church when God would work great deliverances for them, and of the Christian church when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up in the world

in despite of the opposition of the powers of darkness: In that day thou shalt say, O Lord! I will praise thee. The scattered church, being united into one body, shall, as one man, with one mind and one mouth, thus praise God, who is one and his name one. In that day, when the Lord shall do these great things for thee, thou shalt say, O Lord! I will praise thee. That is,

I. "Thou shalt have cause to say so." The promise is sure, and the blessings contained in it are very rich, and, when they are bestowed, will furnish the church with abundant matter for rejoicing and therefore with abundant matter for thanksgiving. The Old-Testament prophecies of gospel times are often expressed by the joy and praise that shall then be excited; for the inestimable benefits we enjoy by Jesus Christ require the most elevated and enlarged thanksgivings.

II. "Thou shalt have a heart to say so." All God's other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this. He will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions with thankfulness to his praise. Thou shalt say, that is, thou oughtest to say so. In that day, when many are brought home to Jesus Christ and flock to him as doves to their windows, instead of envying the kind reception they find with Christ, as the Jews grudged the favour shown to the Gentiles, thou shalt say, O Lord! I will praise thee. Note, we ought to rejoice in, and give thanks for, the grace of God to others as well as to ourselves.

1. Believers are here taught to give thanks to God for the turning away of his displeasure from them and the return of his favour to them (Isa 12:1): O Lord! I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me. Note, Even God's frowns must not put us out of tune for praising him; though he be angry with us, though he slay us, yet we must put our trust in him and give him thanks. God has often just cause to be angry with us, but we have never any reason to be angry with him, nor to speak otherwise than

well of him; even when he blames us we must praise him. Thou was angry with us, but thy anger is turned away.

Note, (1.) God is sometimes angry with his own people and the fruits of his anger do appear, and they ought to take notice of this, that they may humble themselves under his mighty hand.

(2.) Though God may for a time be angry with his people, yet his anger shall at length be turned away; it endures but for a moment, nor will he contend for ever. By Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, God's anger against mankind was turned away; for he is our peace.

(3.) Those whom God is reconciled to he comforts; even the turning away of his anger is a comfort to them; yet that is not all: those that are at peace with God may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Ro 5:1,2. Nay, God sometimes brings his people into a wilderness that there he may speak comfortably to them, Ho 2:14. (4.) The turning away of God's anger, and the return of his comforts to us, ought to be the matter of our joyful thankful praises.

2. They are taught to triumph in God and their interest in him (Isa 12:2): "Behold, and wonder; God is my salvation; not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved, but my salvation, in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as my salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvations that have been wrought for me, and from him only will I expect the salvations I further need, and not from hills and mountains: and if God be my salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare me for it and preserve me to it. I will trust him with all my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident, that is, I will be always easy in my own mind." Note, Those that have God for their salvation may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind. Let faith in God as our salvation be effectual,

(1.) To silence our fears. We must trust, and not be afraid, not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though ever so formidable and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against disquieting tormenting fears.

(2.) To support our hopes. Is the Lord Jehovah our salvation? Then he will be our strength and song. We have work to do and temptations to resist, and we may depend upon him to enable us for both, to strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man, for he is our strength; his grace is so, and that grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many troubles to undergo, and must expect griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us in all our tribulations, for he is our song; he giveth songs in the night. If we make God our strength, and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength; if we make him our song, and place our comfort in him, he will be our song.

Many good Christians have God for their strength who have him not for their song; they walk in darkness: but light is sown for them. And those that have God for their strength ought to make him their song, that is, to give him the glory of it (see Ps 68:35) and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their salvation. Observe the title here given to God: Jah, Jehovah. Jah is the contraction of Jehovah, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness, which are a great comfort to those that depend upon him as their strength and their song. Some make Jah to signify the Son of God made man; he is Jehovah, and in him we may glory as our strength, and song, and salvation.

3. They are aught to derive comfort to themselves from the love of God and all the tokens of that love (Isa 12:3): "Therefore, because the Lord Jehovah is your strength and song and will be your salvation, you shall draw water with joy."

Note, The assurances God has given us of his love, and the experiences we have had of the benefit and comfort of his grace, should greatly encourage our faith in him and our expectations from him: "Out of the wells of salvation in God, who is the fountain of all good to his people, you shall draw water with joy. God's favour shall flow forth to you, and you shall have the comfort of it and make use of the blessed fruits of it."

Note, (1.) God's promises revealed, ratified, and given out to us, in his ordinances, are wells of salvation; wells of the Saviour (so some read it), for in them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us and made over to us.

(2.) It is our duty by faith to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that are treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there and all our fresh streams to be thence, Ps 87:7.

(3.) Water is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him and rejoice in him (De 26:11), be joyful in his house of prayer (Isa 56:7), and keep his feasts with gladness, Ac 2:46.

2 Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the
Lord Jehovah *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my
salvation.
3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of
salvation.
4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name,
declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name
is exalted.

This is the second part of this evangelical song, and to the same purport with the former; there believers stir up themselves to praise God, here they invite and encourage one another to do it, and are contriving to spread his praise and draw in others to join with them in it. Observe,

I. Who are here called upon to praise God--the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, whom God had in a particular manner protected from Sennacherib's violence, Isa 12:6. Those that have received distinguishing favours from God ought to be most forward and zealous in praising him. The gospel church is Zion. Christ is Zion's King. Those that have a place and a name in the church should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ and to bring many to him. Thou inhabitress of Zion; the word is feminine. Let the weaker sex be strong in the Lord, and out of their mouth praise shall be perfected.

II. How they must praise the Lord.

1. By prayer: Call upon his name. As giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging further mercy, so begging further mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God's name we give unto him some of the glory that is due to his name as our powerful and bountiful benefactor.

2. By preaching and writing. We must not only speak to God, but speak to others concerning him, not only call upon his name, but (as the margin reads it) proclaim his name; let others know something more from us than they did before concerning God, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Declare his doings, his counsels (so some read it); the work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will, and in that and other wonderful works that he has done we must take notice of his thoughts which are to us-ward, Ps 40:5.

Declare these among the people, among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then this scripture was fulfilled, that his doings should be declared among the people and that what he has done should be known in all the earth. 3. By a holy exultation and transport of joy: "Cry out and shout; welcome

the gospel to yourselves and publish it to others with huzzas and loud acclamations, as those that shout for victory (Ex 32:18) or for the coronation of a king," Nu 23:21.

III. For what they must praise the Lord.

1. Because he has glorified himself. Remember it yourselves, and make mention of it to others, that his name is exalted, has become more illustrious and more conspicuous; in this every good man rejoices.

2. Because he has magnified his people: He has done excellent things for them, which make them look great and considerable. 3. Because he is, and will be, great among them: Great is the Holy One, for he is glorious in holiness; therefore great, because holy. True goodness is true greatness. He is great as the Holy One of Israel, and in the midst of them, praised by them (Ps 76:1), manifesting himself among them, and appearing gloriously in their behalf. It is the honour and happiness of Israel that the God who is in covenant with them, and in the midst of them, is infinitely great.

5 Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this *is*
known in all the earth.
6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the Holy
One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Isaiah-13

The Oracle concerning Babylon

1 The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.
2 Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto
them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles.

The general title of this book was, The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, Isa 1:1. Here we have that which Isaiah saw, which was represented to his mind as clearly and fully as if he had seen

it with his bodily eyes; but the particular inscription of this sermon is the burden of Babylon.

1. It is a burden, a lesson they were to learn (so some understand it), but they would be loth to learn it, and it would be a burden to their memories, or a load which should lie heavily upon them and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest (Isa 28:12,Jer 6:16) shall find it made a burden to them.

2. It is the burden of Babylon or Babel, which at this time was a dependent upon the Assyrian monarchy (the metropolis of which was Nineveh), but soon after revolted from it and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one, in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterwards foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, Isa 39:6. Here he foretels the reprisals God would make upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people. In these verses a summons is given to those powerful and warlike nations whom God would make us of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon: he afterwards names them (Isa 13:17) the Medes, who, in conjunction with the Persians, under the command of Darius and Cyrus, were the ruin of the Babylonian monarchy.

I The place doomed to destruction is Babylon; it is here called the gates of the nobles (Isa 13:2), because of the abundance of noblemen's houses that were in it, stately ones and richly furnished, which would invite the enemy to come, in hopes of a rich booty. The gates of nobles were strong and well guarded, and yet they would be no fence against those who came with commission to execute God's judgments. Before his power and wrath palaces are no more than cottages. Nor is it only the gates of the nobles, but the whole land, that is doomed to destruction (Isa 13:5); for, though the nobles were the leaders in persecuting and oppressing God's people, yet the whole land concurred with them in it.

II The persons brought together to lay Babylon waste are here called,

1. God's sanctified ones (Isa 13:3), designed for this service and set apart to it by the purpose and providence of God, disengaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to this, such as were qualified for that to which they were called, for what work God employs men in he does in some measure fit them for. It intimates likewise that in God's intention, though not in theirs, it was a holy war; they designed only the enlargement of their own empire, but God designed the release of his people and a type of the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon. Cyrus, the person principally concerned, was justly called a sanctified one, for he was God's anointed (Isa 45:1) and a figure of him that was to come. It is a pity but all soldiers, especially those that fight the Lord's battles, should be in the strictest sense sanctified ones; and it is a wonder that those dare be profane ones who carry their lives in their hands.

2. They are called God's mighty ones, because they had their might from God and were now to use it for him. It is said of Cyrus that in this expedition God held his right hand, Isa 45:1. God's sanctified ones are his mighty ones. Those whom God calls he qualifies; and those whom he makes holy he makes strong in spirit.

3. They are said to rejoice in his highness, that is, to serve his glory and the purposes of it with great alacrity. Though Cyrus did not know God, nor actually design his honour in what he did, yet God used him as his servant (Isa 45:4, I have surnamed thee as my servant, though thou hast not known me), and he rejoiced in those successes by which God exalted his own name.

4. They are very numerous, a multitude, a great people, kingdoms of nations (Isa 13:4), not rude and barbarous, but modelled and regular troops, such as are furnished out by well-ordered kingdoms. The great God has hosts at his command.

5. They are far-fetched: They come from a far country, from the end of heaven. The vast country of Assyria lay between Babylon and Persia. God can make those a scourge and ruin to his enemies that lie most remote from them and therefore are least dreaded.

III. The summons given them is effectual, their obedience ready, and they make a very formidable appearance: A banner is lifted up upon the high mountain, Isa 13:2. God's standard is set up, a flag of defiance hung out against Babylon. It is erected on high, where all may see it; whoever will may come and enlist themselves under it, and they shall be taken immediately into God's pay.

Those that beat up for volunteers must exalt the voice in making proclamation, to encourage soldiers to come in; they must shake the hand, to beckon those at a distance and to animate those that have enlisted themselves. And they shall not do this in vain; God has commanded and called those whom he designs to make use of (Isa 13:3) and power goes along with his calls and commands, which cannot be resisted. He that makes men able to serve him can, when he pleases, make them willing too. It is the Lord of hosts that musters the host of the battle, Isa 13:4. He raises them, brings them together, puts them in order, reviews them, has an exact account of them in his muster-roll, sees that they be all in their respective posts, and gives them their necessary orders.

Note, All the hosts of war are under the command of the Lord of hosts; and that which makes them truly formidable is that, when they come against Babylon, the Lord comes, and brings them with him as the weapons of his indignation, Isa 13:5. Note, Great princes and armies are but tools in God's hand, weapons that he is pleased to make use of in doing his work, and it is his wrath that arms them and gives them success.

3 I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my

mighty ones for mine anger, *even* them that rejoice in my highness.

4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people;
a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together:
the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.

5 They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, *even* the
Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole
land.

6 Howl ye; for the day of the Lord *is* at hand; it shall come as a
destruction from the Almighty.

We have here a very elegant and lively description of the terrible confusion and desolation which should be made in Babylon by the descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon it. Those that were now secure and easy were bidden to howl and make sad lamentation; for,

God was about to appear in wrath against them, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands: The day of the Lord is at hand (Isa 13:6), a little day of judgment, when God will act as a just avenger of his own and his people's injured cause. And there are those who will have reason to tremble when that day is at hand. The day of the Lord cometh, Isa 13:9. Men have their day now, and they think to carry the day; but God laughs at them, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps 37:13. Fury is not with God, and yet his day of reckoning with the Babylonians is said to be cruel with wrath and fierce anger. God will deal in severity with them for the severities they exercised upon God's people; with the froward, with the cruel, he will show himself froward, will show himself cruel, and give the blood-thirsty blood to drink.

7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt:

8 and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them;
they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed
one at another; their faces *shall be as* flames.

Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left; they shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming or to bear up under it, either to oppose the enemy or to support themselves, Isa 13:7,8. Those that in the

day of their peace were proud, and haughty, and terrible (Isa 13:11), shall, when trouble comes, be quite dispirited and at their wits' end: All hands shall be faint, and unable to hold a weapon, and every man's heart shall melt, so that they shall be ready to die for fear.

The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and they shall be amazed one at another. In frightening themselves, they shall frighten one another; they shall wonder to see those tremble that used to be bold and daring; or they shall be amazed looking one at another, as men at a loss, Ge 42:1. Their faces shall be as flames, pale as flames, through fear (so some), or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice; or their faces shall be as faces scorched with the flame, or as theirs that labour in the fire, their visage blacker than a coal, or like a bottle in the smoke, Ps 119:83.

9 Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

All comfort and hope shall fail them (Isa 13:10): The stars of heaven shall not give their light, but shall be clouded and overcast; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, rising bright, but lost again, a certain sign of foul weather. They shall be as men in distress at sea, when neither sun nor stars appear, Ac 27:20. It shall be as dreadful a time with them as it would be with the earth if all the heavenly luminaries were turned into darkness, a resemblance of the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness. The heavens frowning thus is an indication of the displeasure of the God of heaven. When things look dark on earth, yet it is well enough if all be clear upwards; but, if we have no comfort thence, wherewith shall we be comforted?

11 And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their
iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and
will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

God will visit them for their iniquity; and all this is intended for the punishment of sin, and particularly the sin of pride, Isa 13:11. This puts wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery,

1. That sin must now have its punishment. Though Babylon be a little world, yet, being a wicked world, it shall not go unpunished. Sin brings desolation on the world of the ungodly; and when the kingdoms of the earth are quarrelling with one another it is the fruit of God's controversy with them all.

2. That pride must now have its fall: The haughtiness of the terrible must now be laid low, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who had, in their pride, trampled upon, and made themselves very terrible to, the people of God. A man's pride will bring him low.

12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than
the golden wedge of Ophir.

There shall be so great a slaughter as will produce a scarcity of men (Isa 13:12): I will make a man more precious than fine gold. You could not have a man to be employed in any of the affairs of state, not a man to be enlisted in the army, not a man to match a daughter to, for the building up of a family, if you would give any money for one. The troops of the neighbouring nations would not be hired into the service of the king of Babylon, because they saw every thing go against him. Populous countries are soon depopulated by war. And God can soon make a kingdom that has been courted and admired to be dreaded and shunned by all, as a house that is falling, or a ship that is sinking.

13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out
of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his
fierce anger.

There shall be a universal confusion and consternation, such a confusion of their affairs that it shall be like the shaking of the heavens with dreadful thunders and the removing of the earth

by no less dreadful earthquakes. All shall go to rack and ruin in the day of the wrath of the Lord of hosts, Isa 13:13. And such a consternation shall seize their spirits that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion and a raging bear to all about her, shall become as a chased roe and as a sheep that no man takes up, Isa 13:14. The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations (as great armies usually do), shall be so dispirited by their own apprehensions and so dispersed by their enemies' sword that they shall turn every man to his own people; each man shall shift for his own safety; the men of might shall not find their hands (Ps 76:5), but take to their heels.

14 And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land.

15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined *unto them* shall fall by the sword.

There shall be a general scene of blood and horror, as is usu where the sword devours. No wonder that every one makes the be of his way, since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts all to t sword, and not those only that are found in arms, as is usual wi us even in the most cruel slaughters (Isa 13:15): Every one that found alive shall be run through, as soon as ever it appears that is a Babylonian. Nay, because the sword devours one as well another, every one that is joined to them shall fall by the swor those of other nations that come in to their assistance shall be c off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helpi those whom God is about to destroy.

Those particularly that join themselves to Babylon must expect to share in her plagues, Re 18:4. And, since the most sacred laws of nature, and of humanity itself, are silenced by the fury of war (though they cannot be cancelled), the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous brutish manner, dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives. Jusque datum sceleri--Wickedness shall have free course, Isa 13:16. They had thus dealt with God's people (La 5:11), and now they shall be paid in their own coin,

Re 13:10. It was particularly foretold (Ps 137:9) that the little ones of Babylon should be dashed against the stones. How cruel soever and unjust those were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done, and to be done before their eyes, to their greater terror and vexation. It was just also that the houses which they had filled with the spoil of Israel should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine is often lost in the same manner.

16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and *as for* gold, they shall not delight in it.

The enemy that God will send against them shall be inexorable, probably being by some provocation or other more than ordinarily exasperated against them; or, in whatever way it may be brought about, God himself will stir up the Medes to use this severity with the Babylonians. He will not only serve his own purposes by their dispositions and designs, but will put it into their hearts to make this attempt upon Babylon, and suffer them to prosecute it with all this fury. God is not the author of sin, but he would not permit it if he did not know how to bring glory to himself out of it. These Medes, in conjunction with the Persians, shall make thorough work of it; for,

1. They shall take no bribes, Isa 13:17. All that men have they would give for their lives, but the Medes shall not regard silver; it is blood they thirst for, not gold; no man's riches shall with them be the ransom of his life.

2. They shall show no pity (Isa 13:18), not to the young men that are in the prime of their time--they shall shoot them through with their bows, and then dash them to pieces; not to the age of innocency--they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb, nor spare little children, whose cries and frights one would think should make even marble eyes to weep, and hearts of adamant to relent. Pause a little here and wonder,

(1.) That men should be thus cruel and inhuman, and so utterly divested of all compassion; and in it see how corrupt and degenerate the nature of man has become.

(2.) That the God of infinite mercy should suffer it, nay, and should make it to be the execution of his justice, which shows that, though he is gracious, yet he is the God to whom vengeance belongs.

(3.) That little infants, who have never been guilty of any actual sin, should be thus abused, which shows that there is an original guilt by which life is forfeited as soon as it is had.

18 *Their* bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall
have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare
children.

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees'
excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

The great havoc and destruction which it was foretold should be made by the Medes and Persians in Babylon here end in the final destruction of it.

1. It is allowed that Babylon was a noble city. It was the glory of kingdoms and the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency; it was that head of gold (Da 2:37,38); it was called the lady of kingdoms (Isa 47:5), the praise of the whole earth (Jer 51:41), like a pleasant roe (so the word signifies); but it shall be as a chased roe, Isa 13:14. The Chaldeans gloried in the beauty and wealth of this their metropolis.

2. It is foretold that it should be wholly destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah; not so miraculously, nor so suddenly, but as effectually, though gradually; and the destruction should come upon them as that upon Sodom, when they were secure, eating and drinking, Lu 17:28,29. Babylon was taken when Belshazzar was in his revels; and, though Cyrus and Darius did not demolish it, yet by degrees it wasted away and in process of

time it went all to ruin. It is foretold here (Isa 13:20) that it shall never be inhabited; in Adrian's time nothing remained but the wall. And whereas it is prophesied concerning Nineveh, that great city, that when it should be deserted and left desolate yet flocks should lie down in the midst of it, it is here said concerning Babylon that the Arabians, who were shepherds, should not make their folds there; the country about should be so barren that there would be no grazing there; no, not for sheep. Nay, it shall be the receptacle of wild beasts, that affect solitude; the houses of Babylon, where the sons and daughters of pleasure used to rendezvous, shall be full of doleful creatures, owls and satyrs, that are themselves frightened thither, as to a place proper for them, and by whom all others are frightened thence.

Historians say that this was fulfilled in the letter. Benjamin Bar-Jona, in his Itinerary, speaking of Babel, has these words: "This is that Babel which was of old thirty miles in breadth; it is now laid waste. There are yet to be seen the ruins of a palace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the sons of men dare not enter in, for fear of serpents and scorpions, which possess the place." Let none be proud of their pompous palaces, for they know not but they may become worse than cottages; nor let any think that their houses shall endure for ever (Ps 49:11), when perhaps nothing may remain but the ruins and reproaches of them.

3. It is intimated that this destruction should come shortly (Isa 13:22): Her time is near to come. This prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was intended for the support and comfort of the people of God when they were captives there and grievously oppressed; and the accomplishment of the prophecy was nearly 200 years after the time when it was delivered; yet it followed soon after the time for which it was calculated. When the people of Israel were groaning under the heavy yoke of Babylonish tyranny, sitting down in tears by the rivers of Babylon and upbraided with the songs of Zion, when their insolent oppressors were most haughty and arrogant (Isa 13:11),

then let them know, for their comfort, that Babylon's time, her day to fall, is near to come, and the days of her prosperity shall not be prolonged, as they have been. When God begins with her he will make an end. Thus it is said of the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon, whereof the former was a type, In one hour has her judgment come.

20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in *their* pleasant palaces: and her time *is* near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

Isaiah-14

The Proverb against the King of Babylon

1 For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

This comes in here as the reason why Babylon must be overthrown and ruined, because God has mercy in store for his people, and therefore,

1 The injuries done to them must be reckoned for and revenged upon their persecutors. Mercy to Jacob will be wrath and ruin to Jacob's impenitent implacable adversaries, such as Babylon was. 2 The yoke of oppression which Babylon had long laid on their necks must be broken off, and they must be set at liberty; and, in order to this, the destruction of Babylon is as necessary as the destruction of Egypt and Pharaoh was to their deliverance out of that house of bondage. The same prediction is a promise to God's people and a threatening to their enemies, as the same

providence has a bright side towards Israel and a black or dark side towards the Egyptians. Observe,

I The ground of these favours to Jacob and Israel--the kindness God had for them and the choice he had made of them (Isa 14:1): "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, the seed of Jacob now captives in Babylon; he will make it to appear that he has compassion on them and has mercy in store for them, and that he will not contend for ever with them, but will yet choose them, will yet again return to them; though he has seemed for a time to refuse and reject them, he will show that they are his chosen people and that the election stands sure." However it may seem to us, God's mercy is not gone, nor does his promise fail, Ps 77:8.

II The particular favours he designed them.

1. He would bring them back to their native soil and air again: The Lord will set them in their own land, out of which they were driven. A settlement in the holy land, the land of promise, is a fruit of God's mercy, distinguishing mercy.

2. Many should be proselyted to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so by the manifest tokens of God's favourable presence with them, the operations of God's grace in them, the operations of God's grace in them, and his providence for them: Strangers shall be joined with them, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zec 8:23. It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel when strangers are joined with them and there are added to the church many from without, Ac 2:47. Let not the church's children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and own those who cleave to the house of Jacob.

3. These proselytes should not only be a credit to their cause, but very helpful and serviceable to them in their return home: The people among whom they live shall take them, take care of

them, take pity on them, and shall bring them to their place--as friends, loth to part with such good company--as servants, willing to do them all the good offices they could. God's people, wherever their lot is cast, should endeavour thus, by all the instances of an exemplary and winning conversation, to gain an interest in the affections of those about them, and recommend religion to their good opinion. This was fulfilled in the return of the captives from Babylon, when all that were about them, pursuant to Cyrus's proclamation, contributed to their removal (Ezr 1:4,6), not as the Egyptians, because they were sick of them, but because they loved them.

4. They should have the benefit of their service when they had returned home, for many would of choice go with them in the meanest post, rather than not go with them: They shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids; and as the laws of that land saved it from being the purgatory of servants, providing that they should not be oppressed, so the advantages of that land made it the paradise of those servants that had been strangers to the covenants of promise, for there was one law to the stranger and to those that were born in the land. Those whose lot is cast in the land of the Lord, a land of light, should take care that their servants and handmaids may share in the benefit of it, who will then find it better to be possessed in the Lord's land than possessors in any other.

5. They should triumph over their enemies, and those that would not be reconciled to them should be reduced and humbled by them: They shall take those captives whose captives they were and shall rule over their oppressors, righteously, but not revengefully. The Jews perhaps bought Babylonian prisoners out of the hands of the Medes and Persians and made slaves of them. Or this might have its accomplishment in their victories over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees. It is applicable to the success of the gospel (when those were brought into obedience to it who had made the greatest opposition to it, as Paul) and to the interest

believers have in Christ's victories over their spiritual enemies, when he led captivity captive, to the power they gain over their own corruptions, and to the dominion the upright shall have in the morning, Ps 49:14.

6. They should see a happy termination of all their grievances (Isa 14:3): The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow and thy fear, and from thy hard bondage. God himself undertakes to work a blessed change,

(1.) In their state. They shall have rest from their bondage; the days of their affliction, though many, shall have an end; and the rod of the wicked, though it lie long, shall not always lie on their lot.

(2.) In their spirit. They shall have rest from their sorrow and fear, sense of their present burdens and dread of worse. Sometimes fear puts the soul into a ferment as much as sorrow does, and those must needs feel themselves very easy to whom God has given rest from both. Those who are freed from the bondage of sin have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and
the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for
servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose
captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.
3 And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest
from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage
wherein thou wast made to serve,
4 that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon,
and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!

The kings of Babylon, successively, were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people, and therefore the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king, and the ruin of his family, are here particularly taken notice of and triumphed in. In the day that God has given Israel rest they shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon. We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as

ours; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel, sinks, then rejoice over her, thou heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, Re 18:20.

The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and, in these pretensions, vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly, not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who was slain on that night that Babylon was taken (Da 5:30), who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy, which sunk in him; not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. Now here,

I The fall of the king of Babylon is rejoiced in; and a most curious and elegant composition is here prepared, not to adorn his hearse or monument, but to expose his memory and fix a lasting brand of infamy upon it. It gives us an account of the life and death of this mighty monarch, how he went down slain to the pit, though he had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Eze 32:27. In this parable we may observe,

1 The prodigious height of wealth and power at which this monarch and monarchy arrived. Babylon was a golden city, Isa 14:4 (it is a Chaldee word in the original, which intimates that she used to call herself so), so much did she abound in riches and excel all other cities, as gold does all other metals. She is gold-thirsty, or an exactress of gold (so some read it); for how do men get wealth to themselves but by squeezing it out of others? The New Jerusalem is the only truly golden city, Re 21:18,21.

The king of Babylon, having so much wealth in his dominions and the absolute command of it, by the help of that ruled the nations (Isa 14:6), gave them law, read them their doom, and at his pleasure weakened the nations (Isa 14:12), that they might not be able to make head against him. Such vast and victorious armies did he bring into the field, that, which way soever he

looked, he made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms (Isa 14:16); all his neighbours were afraid of him, and were forced to submit to him. No one man could do this by his own personal strength, but by the numbers he has at his beck. Great tyrants, by making some do what they will, make others suffer what they will. How piteous is the case of mankind, which thus seems to be in a combination against itself, and its own rights and liberties, which could not be ruined but by its own strength!

2 The wretched abuse of all this wealth and power, which the king of Babylon was guilty of, in two instances:--

(1.) Great oppression and cruelty. He is known by the name of the oppressor (Isa 14:4); he has the sceptre of the rulers (Isa 14:5), has the command of all the princes about him; but it is the staff of the wicked, a staff with which he supports himself in his wickedness and wickedly strikes all about him. He smote the people, not in justice, for their correction and reformation, but in wrath (Isa 14:6), to gratify his own peevish resentments, and that with a continual stroke, pursued them with his forces, and gave them no respite, no breathing time, no cessation of arms. He ruled the nations, but he ruled them in anger, every thing he said and did was in a passion; so that he who had the government of all about him had no government of himself. He made the world as a wilderness, as if he had taken a pride in being the plague of his generation and a curse to mankind, Isa 14:17. Great princes usually glory in building cities, but he gloried in destroying them; see Ps 9:6. Two particular instances, worse than all the rest, are here given of his tyranny:--

[1.] That he was severe to his captives (Isa 14:17): He opened not the house of his prisoners; he did not let them loose homeward (so the margin reads it); he kept them in close confinement, and never would suffer any to return to their own land. This refers especially to the people of the Jews, and it is that which fills up the measure of the king of Babylon's iniquity, that he had detained the people of God in captivity and would by

no means release them; nay, and by profaning the vessels of God's temple at Jerusalem, did in effect say that they should never return to their former use, Da 5:3. For this he was quickly and justly turned out by one whose first act was to open the house of God's prisoners and send home the temple vessels.

[2.] That he was oppressive to his own subjects (Isa 14:20): Thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people; and what did he get by that, when the wealth of the land and the multitude of the people are the strength and honour of the prince, who never rules so safely, so gloriously, as in the hearts and affections of the people? But tyrants sacrifice their interests to their lusts and passions; and God will reckon with them for their barbarous usage of those who are under their power, whom they think they may use as they please.

(2.) Great pride and haughtiness. Notice is here taken of his pomp, the extravagancy of his retinue, Isa 14:11. He affected to appear in the utmost magnificence. But that was not the worst: it was the temper of his mind, and the elevation of that, that ripened him for ruin (Isa 14:13,14): Thou has said in thy heart, like Lucifer, I will ascend into heaven. Here is the language of his vainglory, borrowed perhaps from that of the angels who fell, who not content with their first estate, the post assigned them, would vie with God, and become not only independent of him, but equal with him. Or perhaps it refers to the story of Nebuchadnezzar, who, when he would be more than a man, was justly turned into a brute, Da 4:30. The king of Babylon here promises himself,

[1.] That in pomp and power he shall surpass all his neighbours, and shall arrive at the very height of earthly glory and felicity, that he shall be as great and happy as this world can make him; that is the heaven of a carnal heart, and to that he hopes to ascend, and to be as far above those about him as the heaven is above the earth. Princes are the stars of God, which give some light to this

dark world (Mt 24:29); but he will exalt his throne above them all.

[2.] That he shall particularly insult over God's Mount Zion, which Belshazzar, in his last drunken frolic, seems to have had a particular spite against when he called for the vessels of the temple at Jerusalem, to profane them; see Da 5:2. In the same humour he here said, I will sit upon the mount of the congregation (it is the same word that is used for the holy convocations), in the sides of the north; so Mount Zion is said to be situated, Ps 48:2. Perhaps Belshazzar was projecting an expedition to Jerusalem, to triumph in the ruins of it, at the time when God cut him off.

[3.] That he shall vie with the God of Israel, of whom he had indeed heard glorious things, that he had his residence above the heights of the clouds. "But thither," says he, "will I ascend, and be as great as he; I will be like him whom they call the Most High." It is a gracious ambition to covet to be like the Most Holy, for he has said, Be you holy, for I am holy; but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the Most High, for he has said, He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and the devil drew our first parents in to eat forbidden fruit by promising them that they should be as gods.

[4.] That he shall himself be deified after his death, as some of the first founders of the Assyrian monarchy were, and stars had even their names from them. "But," says he, "I will exalt my throne above them all." Such as this was his pride, which was the undoubted omen of his destruction.

3. The utter ruin that should be brought upon him. It is foretold,

(1.) That his wealth and power should be broken, and a final period put to his pomp and pleasure. He has been long an oppressor, but he shall cease to be so, Isa 14:4. Had he ceased to be so by true repentance and reformation, according to the advice

Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, it might have been a lengthening of his life and tranquillity. But those that will not cease to sin God will make to cease. "The golden city, which one would have thought might continue for ever, has ceased; there is an end of that Babylon. The Lord, the righteous God, has broken the staff of that wicked prince, broken it over his head, in token of the divesting him of his office. God has taken his power from him, and rendered him incapable of doing any more mischief: he has broken the sceptres; for even these are brittle things, soon broken and often justly."

(2.) That he himself should be seized: He is persecuted (Isa 14:6); violent hands are laid upon him, and none hinders. It is the common fate of tyrants, when they fall into the power of their enemies, to be deserted by their flatterers, whom they took for their friends. We read of another enemy like this, of whom it is foretold that he shall come to his end and none shall help him, Da 11:45. Tiberius and Nero thus saw themselves abandoned.

(3.) That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, Ps 88:5. He shall be weak as the dead are, and like unto them, Isa 14:10. His pomp is brought down to the grave (Isa 14:11), that is, it perishes with him; the pomp of his life shall not, as usual, end in a funeral pomp. True glory (that is, true grace) will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave: there is an end of it. The noise of his viols is now heard no more. Death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomps, of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, to tread upon rich carpets, and to have coverings and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him and the worms covering him, worms bred out of his own putrefied body, which, though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies it is good to remember they will be worms'-meat shortly.

(4.) That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one and in the sepulchres of his ancestors. The kings of the nations lie in glory (Isa 14:18), either their dead bodies themselves so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians, or their effigies (as with us) erected over their graves. Thus, as if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor faint sort of glory, every one in his own house, that is, his own burying-place (for the grave is the house appointed for all living), a sleeping house, where the busy and troublesome will lie quiet and the troubled and weary lie at rest.

But this king of Babylon is cast out and has no grave (Isa 14:19); his dead body is thrown, like that of a beast, into the next ditch or upon the next dunghill, like an abominable branch of some noxious poisonous plant, which nobody will touch, or as the clothes of malefactors put to death and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are raised, or they are thrown into some deep quarry among the stones of the pit. Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body shall be as the carcases of those who are slain in a battle, which are trodden under feet by the horses and soldiers and crushed to pieces. Thus he shall not be joined with his ancestors in burial, Isa 14:20. To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which, if it be inflicted for righteousness' sake (as Ps 79:2), may, as other similar reproaches, be rejoiced in (Mt 5:12); it is the lot of the two witnesses, Re 11:9. But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impenitent sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. The many triumphs that should be in his fall.

(1.) Those whom he had been a great tyrant and terror to will be glad that they are rid of him, Isa 14:7,8. Now that he is gone the whole earth is at rest and is quiet, for he was the great disturber of the peace; now they all break forth into singing, for when the

wicked perish there is shouting (Pr 11:10); the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon now think themselves safe; there is no danger now of their being cut down, to make way for his vast armies or to furnish him with timber. The neighbouring princes and great men, who are compared to fir-trees and cedars (Zec 11:2), may now be easy, and out of fear of being dispossessed of their rights, for the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken (Jer 50:23), the axe that boasted itself against him that hewed with it, Isa 10:15.

(2.) The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither (Isa 14:9,10): "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming, and to compliment thee upon thy arrival at their dark and dreadful regions." The chief ones of the earth, who when they were alive were kept in awe by him and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones, to resign them to him, shall upbraid him with it when he comes into the state of the dead. They shall go forth to meet him, as they used to do when he made his public entry into cities he had become master of; with such a parade shall he be introduced into those regions of horror, to make his disgrace and torment the more grievous to him.

They shall scoffingly rise from their thrones and seats there, and ask him if he will please to sit down in them, as he used to do in their thrones on earth? The confusion that will then cover him they shall make a jest of: "Hast thou also become weak as we? Who would have thought it? It is what thou thyself didst not expect it would ever come to when thou wast in every thing too hard for us. Thou that didst rank thyself among the immortal gods, art thou come to take thy fate among us poor mortal men? Where is thy pomp now, and where thy mirth? How hast thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer! son of the morning! Isa 14:11,12.

The king of Babylon shone as brightly as the morning star, and fancied that wherever he came he brought day along with him; and has such an illustrious prince as this fallen, such a star

become a clod of clay? Did ever any man fall from such a height of honour and power into such an abyss of shame and misery?" This has been commonly alluded to (and it is a mere allusion) to illustrate the fall of the angels, who were as morning stars (Job 38:7), but how have they fallen! How art thou cut down to the ground, and levelled with it, that didst weaken the nations! God will reckon with those that invade the rights and disturb the peace of mankind, for he is King of nations as well as of saints. Now this reception of the king of Babylon into the regions of the dead, which is here described, surely is something more than a flight of fancy, and is designed to teach these solid truths:--

[1.] That there is an invisible world, a world of spirits, to which the souls of men remove at death and in which they exist and act in a state of separation from the body.

[2.] That separate souls have acquaintance and converse with each other, though we have none with them: the parable of the rich man and Lazarus intimates this.

[3.] That death and hell will be death and hell indeed to those that fall unsanctified from the height of this world's pomps and the fulness of its pleasures. Son, remember, Lu 16:25.

(3.) Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit, and be lodged there, those that see him shall narrowly look upon him, and consider him (Isa 14:15,16); they shall scarcely believe their own eyes. "Never was death so great a change to any man as it is to him. Is it possible that a man, who a few hours ago looked so great, so pleasant, and was so splendidly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly, so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? Is this the man that made the earth to tremble and shook kingdoms? Who could have thought he should ever come to this?" Ps 82:7.

5. Here is an inference drawn from all this (Isa 14:20): The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. The princes of the Babylonian monarchy were all a seed of evil-doers, oppressors of the people of God, and therefore they had this infamy entailed upon them. They shall not be renowned for ever (so some read it); they may look big for a time, but all their pomp will only render their disgrace at last the more shameful. There is no credit in a sinful way.

II The utter ruin of the royal family is here foretold, together with the desolation of The royal city.

1 The royal family is to be wholly extirpated. The Medes and Persians, that are to be employed in this destroying work, are ordered, when they have slain Belshazzar, to prepare slaughter for his children (Isa 14:21) and not to spare them. The little ones of Babylon must be dashed against the stones, Ps 137:9. These orders sound very harshly; but,

(1.) They must suffer for the iniquity of their fathers, which is often visited upon the children, to show how much God hates sin and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's sons (Jer 52:10), and, for that iniquity of his, his seed are paid in the same coin.

(2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs--that they may not be as vexatious to the world by building cities for the support of their tyranny (which was Nimrod's policy, Ge 10:10,11) as their ancestors had been by destroying cities. Pharaoh oppressed Israel in Egypt by setting them to build cities, Ex 1:11. The providence of God consults the welfare of nations more than we are aware of by cutting off some who, if they had lived, would have done mischief. Justly may the enemies cut off the children:

For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts (Isa 14:22), and if God reveal it as his mind that he will have it done, as none can hinder it, so none need scruple to further it. Babylon perhaps was proud of the numbers of her royal family, but God had determined to cut off the name and remnant of it, so that none should be left, to have both the sons and grandsons of the king slain; and yet we are sure he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures.

2 The royal city is to be demolished and deserted, Isa 14:23. It shall be a possession for solitary frightful birds, particularly the bittern, joined with the cormorant and the owl, Isa 24:11. And thus the utter destruction of the New-Testament Babylon is illustrated, Re 18:2. It has become a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Babylon lay low, so that when it was deserted, and no care taken to drain the land, it soon became pools of water, standing noisome puddles, as unhealthful as they were unpleasant: and thus God will sweep it with the besom of destruction. When a people have nothing among them but dirt and filth, and will not be made clean with the besom of reformation, what can they expect but to be swept off the face of the earth with the besom of destruction?

5 The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, *and* the sceptre of
the rulers.
6 He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that
ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, *and* none hindereth.
7 The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet: they break forth into
singing.
8 Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*,
Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.
9 Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet *thee* at thy coming: it
stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it
hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.
10 All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak
as we? art thou become like unto us?
11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols:

the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.
12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the
nations!
13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will
exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the
mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most
High.
15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.
16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider
thee, *saying*, *Is* this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did
shake kingdoms;
17 *that* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities
thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners?
18 All the kings of the nations, *even* all of them, lie in glory, every one
in his own house.
19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, *and as*
the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that
go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet.
20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast
destroyed thy land, *and* slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall
never be renowned.
21 Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers;
that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the
world with cities.
22 For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off
from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith
the Lord.
23 I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water:
and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of
hosts.

Assyria to Be Destroyed

24 The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so
shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand:

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire had not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold: it was almost 200 years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied might ask, "What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it, and what assurance shall we have of it?" To both questions he answers in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemies that infested them, which they should shortly be eye-witnesses of and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them, and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people the same to day that he was yesterday and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he has been and is. Here is,

I. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians (Isa 14:25): I will break the Assyrian in my land. Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, broke all his regiments by the sword of a destroying angel. Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land shall find that it is at their peril: and those who with unhallowed feet trample upon his holy mountains shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do this himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them: "I will break the Assyrian; let me alone to do it who have angels, hosts of angels, at command."

Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people: His burden shall depart from off their shoulders, the burden of quartering that vast army and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burden to God's people see what they are to expect.

Now, 1. This prophecy is here ratified and confirmed by an oath (Isa 14:24): The Lord of hosts hath sworn, that he might show the immutability of his counsel, and that his people may have strong consolation, Heb 6:17,18. What is here said of this particular intention is true of all God's purposes: As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Nor is he ever put upon new counsels, or obliged to take new measures, as men often are when things occur which they did not foresee. Let those who are the called according to God's purpose comfort themselves with this, that, as God has purposed, so shall it stand, and on that their stability depends.

2 The breaking of the Assyrian power is made a specimen of what God would do with all the powers of the nations that were engaged against him and his church (Isa 14:26): This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth (the whole world, so the LXX.), all the inhabitants of the earth (so the Chaldee), not only upon the Assyrian empire (which was then reckoned to be in a manner all the world, as afterwards the Roman empire was, Lu 2:1, and with it many nations fell that had dependence upon it), but upon all those states and potentates that should at any time attack his land, his mountains.

The fate of the Assyrian shall be theirs; they shall soon find that they meddle to their own hurt. Jerusalem, as it was to the Assyrians, will be to all people a burdensome stone; all that burden themselves with it shall infallibly be cut to pieces by it, Zec 12:3,6. The same hand of power and justice that is now to be stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God shall be stretched out upon all the nations that do likewise. It is still true, and will ever be so, Cursed is he that curses God's Israel, Nu 24:9. God will be an enemy to his people's enemies, Ex 23:22.

3. All the powers on earth are defied to change God's counsel (Isa 14:27): "The Lord of hosts has purposed to break the Assyrian's yoke, and every rod of the wicked laid upon the lot of

the righteous; and who shall disannul this purpose? Who can persuade him to recall it, or find out a plea to evade it? His hand is stretched out to execute this purpose; and who has power enough to turn it back or to stay the course of his judgments?"

25 that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains
tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and
his burden depart from off their shoulders.
26 This *is* the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this
is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.
27 For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul *it?*
and his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

The Oracle concerning Philistia

28 In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.

Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines and their power. This burden, this prophecy, that lay as a load upon them, to sink their state, came in the year that king Ahaz died, which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign, Isa 14:28. When a good king came in the room of a bad one then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we may look for good news from heaven. Now here we have,

1. A rebuke to the Philistines for triumphing in the death of king Uzziah. He had been as a serpent to them (Isa 14:29), had bitten them, had smitten them, had brought them very low, 2Ch 26:6. He warred against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them. But when Uzziah died, or rather abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath and published in the streets of Ashkelon. It is inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbour's fall. But let them not be secure; for though when Uzziah was dead they made reprisals upon Ahaz, and took many of the cities of Judah (2Ch 28:18), yet out of the root of Uzziah should come a cockatrice, a more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to

them a fiery flying serpent, for he should fall upon them with incredible swiftness and fury: we find he did so. 2Ki 18:8, He smote the Philistines even to Gaza. Note, If God remove one useful instrument in the midst of his usefulness, he can, and will, raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in and left unfinished.

2. A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war.

(1.) By famine, Isa 14:30. "When the people of God, whom the Philistines has wasted, and distressed, and impoverished, shall enjoy plenty again," and the first-born of their poor shall feed (the poorest among them shall have food convenient), then, as for the Philistines, God will kill their root with famine. That which was their strength, and with which they thought themselves established as the tree is by the root, shall be starved and dried up by degrees, as those die that die by famine; and thus he shall slay the remnant: those that escape from one destruction are but reserved for another; and, when there are but a few left, those few shall at length be cut off, for God will make a full end.

(2.) By war. When the needy of God's people shall lie down in safety, not terrified with the alarms of war, but delighting in the songs of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines shall be howling and crying (Isa 14:31), and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Judea, which lay north of the Philistines, there shall come a smoke (a vast army raising a great dust, a smoke that shall be the indication of a devouring fire at hand), and none of all that army shall be alone in his appointed times; none shall straggle or be missing when they are to engage; but they shall all be vigorous and unanimous in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes. None of them shall decline the public service, as, in Deborah's time, Reuben abode among the sheepfolds and Asher on the sea-shore, Jdg 5:16,17. When God has work to do he will wonderfully endow and dispose men for it.

29 Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote
thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a
cockatrice, and his fruit *shall be* a fiery flying serpent.
30 And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie
down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall
slay thy remnant.
31 Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, *art* dissolved: for
there shall come from the north a smoke, and none *shall be* alone in
his appointed times.
32 What shall *one* then answer the messengers of the nation? That the
Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

The good use that should be made of all these events for the encouragement of the people of God (Isa 14:32): What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations?

1. This implies,

(1.) That the great things God does for his people are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours; those among the heathen make remarks upon them, Ps 126:2.

(2.) That messengers will be sent to enquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel had long been a people distinguished from all others and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some for good-will, others for ill-will, and all for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them.

(3.) That it concerns us always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that we have in the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that asks it, with meekness and fear, 1Pe 3:15. And we need go no further than the sacred truths of God's word for a reason; for God, in all he does, is fulfilling the scripture.

(4.) The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious that any one, every one, shall be

able to give an account of them to those that enquire concerning them. Now,

2 The answer which is to be given to the messengers of the nations is,

(1.) That God is and will be a faithful friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that the Lord has founded Zion. This gives an account both of the work itself that is done and of the reason of it. What is God doing in the world, and what is he designing in all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations and the rise of others? He is, in all this, founding Zion; he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests; and what he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to enquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expected to learn by what politics, counsels, and arts of war he carried his point; but they are told that these successes were not owing to any thing of that nature, but to the care God took of his church and the interest he had in it. The Lord has founded Zion, and therefore the Philistines must fall.

(2.) That his church has and will have a dependence upon him: The poor of his people shall trust in it, his poor people who have lately been brought very low, even the poorest of them; they more than others, for they have nothing else to trust to, Zep 3:12,13. The poor receive the gospel, Mt 11:5. They shall trust to this, to this great truth, that the Lord has founded Zion; on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh. This ought to give us abundant satisfaction as to public affairs, that however it may go with particular persons, parties, and interests, the church, having God himself for its founder and Christ the rock for its foundation, cannot but stand firm. The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it (so some read it), shall join themselves to his church and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same plan, and make all their little concerns

and projects bend to that. Those that take God's people for their people must be willing to take their lot with them and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites, who trust in God, having, like Zion, their foundation in the holy mountains (Ps 87:1), are like Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever (Ps 125:1), and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

Isaiah-15

The Oracle concerning Moab

1 The burden of Moab.
Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence;
because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence:

The country of Moab was of small extent, but very fruitful. It bordered upon the lot of Reuben on the other side Jordan and upon the Dead Sea. Naomi went to sojourn there when there was a famine in Canaan. This is the country which (it is here foretold) should be wasted and grievously harassed, not quite ruined, for we find another prophecy of its ruin (Jer 48:1-47), which was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar.

This prophecy here was to be fulfilled within three years (Isa 16:14), and therefore was fulfilled in the devastations made of that country by the army of the Assyrians, which for many years ravaged those parts, enriching themselves with spoil and plunder. It was done either by the army of Shalmaneser, about the time of the taking of Samaria, in the fourth year of Hezekiah (as is most probable), or by the army of Sennacherib, which, ten years after, invaded Judah. We cannot suppose that the prophet went among the Moabites to preach to them this sermon; but he delivered it to his own people,

1. To show them that, though judgment begins at the house of God, it shall not end there,--that there is a providence which governs the world and all the nations of it,--and that to the God of Israel the worshippers of false gods were accountable, and liable to his judgments.

2. To give them a proof of God's care of them and jealousy for them, and to convince them that God was an enemy to their enemies, for such the Moabites had often been.

3. That the accomplishment of this prophecy now shortly (within three years) might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission and of the truth of all his other prophecies, and might encourage the faithful to depend upon them.

Now concerning Moab it is here foretold, That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by the enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Laish, indulged themselves in ease and luxury, and dwelt securely (Isa 15:1): Therefore there shall be great grief, because in the night Air of Moab is laid waste and Kir of Moab, the two principal cities of that kingdom. In the night that they were taken, or sacked, Moab was cut off. The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army.

Note, 1. Great changes and very dismal ones may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness. Let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth.

2. As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, I have no need of thee.

2 he is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep:
Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads
shall be baldness, *and* every beard cut off.

I. That the Moabites, being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them (Isa 15:2): He (that is, Moab, especially the king of Moab) has gone up to Bajith (or rather to the house or temple of Chemosh), and Dibon, the inhabitants of Dibon, have gone up to the high places, where they worshipped their idols, there to make their complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek to their God; and shall not we then thus walk in the name of the Lord our God, and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless profitless tears as they did before their gods?

II. That there should be the voice of universal grief all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affectingly. Moab shall be a vale of tears--a little map of this world, Isa 15:2 The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nebo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which, it is likely, were plundered and burnt. They shall tear their hair for grief to such a degree that on all their heads shall be baldness, and they shall cut off their beards, according to the customary expressions of mourning in those times and countries. When they go abroad they shall be so far from coveting to appear handsome that in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth (Isa 15:3), and perhaps being forced to use that poor clothing, the enemy having stripped them, and rifled their houses, and left them no other clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up to the tops of their houses which were flat-roofed, and there they shall weep abundantly, nay, they shall howl, in crying to their gods.

Those that cry not to God with their hearts do but howl upon their beds, Ho 7:14,Am 8:3. They shall come down with weeping (so the margin reads it); they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart's ease (1Sa 1:18), but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places

are here named that should be full of lamentation (Isa 15:4), and it is but a poor relief to have so many fellow-sufferers, fellow-mourners; to a public spirit it is rather an aggravation socios habuisse doloris--to have associates in woe.

3 In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.

4 And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh; their voice shall be heard *even* unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him.

That the courage of their militia should fail them. Though they were bred soldiers, and were well armed, yet they shall cry out and shriek for fear, and every one of them shall have his life become grievous to him, though it is characteristic of a military life to delight in danger, Isa 15:4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of benefit by those whom it most depended upon for strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief that life itself shall be a burden to them. God can easily make weary of life those that are fondest of it.

5 My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives *shall flee* unto Zoar, a heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief to all the adjacent parts, Isa 15:5.

1 The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: "My heart shall cry out for Moab; though they are enemies to Israel, they are our fellow-creatures, of the same rank with us, and therefore it should grieve us to see them in such distress, the rather because we know not how soon it may be our own turn to drink of the same cup of trembling." Note, It becomes God's ministers to be of a tender spirit, not to desire the woeful day, but to be like their master, who wept over Jerusalem even when he gave her up to ruin, like their God, who desires not the death of sinners.

2. All the neighbouring cities shall echo to the lamentations of Moab. The fugitives, who are making the best of their way to shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zoar, the city to which their ancestor Lot fled for shelter from Sodom's flames and which was spared for his sake. They shall make as great a noise with their cry as a heifer of three years old does when she goes lowing for her calf, as 1Sa 6:12. They shall go up the hill of Luhith (as David went up the ascent of Mount Olivet, many a weary step and all in tears, 2Sa 15:30), and in the way of Horonaim (a dual termination), the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and the nether, which we read of, Jos 16:3,5. Thither the cry shall be carried, there it shall be raised, even at that great distance: A cry of destruction; that shall be the cry, like, "Fire, fire! we are all undone." Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading and when it begins who knows where it will end?

6 For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing.

Here the prophet further describes the woeful and piteous lamentations that should be heard throughout all the country of Moab when it should become a prey to the Assyrian army. "By this time the cry has gone round about all the borders of Moab," Isa 15:8. Every corner of the country has received the alarm, and is in the utmost confusion upon it. It has reached to Eglaim, a city at one end of the country, and to Beer-elim, a city as far the other way. Where sin has been general, and all flesh have corrupted their way, what can be expected but a general desolation? Two things are here spoken of as causes of this lamentation:--

I. The waters of Nimrim are desolate (Isa 15:6), that is, the country is plundered and impoverished, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine is usually the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows that yielded delightful prospects and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up, or

carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to dirt by their horses. If an army encamp upon green fields, their greenness is soon gone. Look into the houses, and they are stripped too (Isa 15:7): The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry, and that which they had laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. Either the owners shall carry it thither to hide it or the enemies shall carry it thither to pack it up and send it home, by water perhaps, to their own country. Note,

1. Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what may become of it and in how short a time it may be all taken from them. Great abundance, by tempting the robbers, exposes the owners; and those who depend upon it to protect them often find it does but betray them.

2. In times of distress great riches are often great burdens, and do but increase the owner's care or the enemies' strength. Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator--The penniless traveller will exult, when accosted by a robber, in having nothing about him.

II. The waters of Dimon are turned into blood (Isa 15:9), that is, the inhabitants of the country are slain in great numbers, so that the waters adjoining to the cities, whether rivers or pools, are discoloured with human gore, inhumanly shed like water. Dimon signifies bloody; the place shall answer to its name. Perhaps it was that place in the country of Moab where the waters seemed to the Moabites as blood (2Ki 3:22,23), which occasioned their overthrow.

But now, says God, I will bring more upon Dimon, more blood than was shed, or thought to be seen, at that time. I will bring additions upon Dimon (so the word is), additional plagues; I have yet more judgments in reserve for them. For all this, God's

anger is not turned away. When he judges he will overcome; and to the roll of curses shall be added many like words, Jer 36:32. See here what is the yet more evil to be brought upon Dimon, upon Moab, which is now to be made a land of blood. Some flee, and make their escape, others sit still, and are overlooked, and are as a remnant of the land; but upon both God will bring lions, beasts of prey (which are reckoned one of God's four judgments, Eze 14:21), and these shall glean up those that have escaped the sword of the enemy. Those that continue impenitent in sin, when they are preserved from one judgment, are but reserved for another.

7 Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they
have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.
8 For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling
thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim.
9 For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more
upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the
remnant of the land.

Isaiah-16

1 Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the
wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.
2 For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, *so* the
daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon.

God has made it to appear that he delights not in the ruin of sinners by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he does here to Moab.

He advises them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly covenanted to pay to the kings of his line (Isa 16:1): Send you the lamb to the ruler of the land. David made the Moabites tributaries to him, 2Sa 8:2. They became his servants, and brought gifts. Afterwards they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel (2Ki 3:4), and paid it in lambs. Now the prophet requires them to pay it to Hezekiah. Let it be raised and

levied from all parts of the country, from Selah, a frontier city of Moab on the one side, to the wilderness, a boundary of the kingdom on the other side: and let it be sent, where it should be sent, to the mount of the daughter of Zion, the city of David. Some take it as an advice to send a lamb for a sacrifice to God, the ruler of the earth (so it may be read), the Lord of the whole earth, ruler of all lands, the land of Moab as well as the land of Israel, "Send it to the temple built on Mount Zion." And some think it is in this sense spoken ironically, upbraiding the Moabites with their folly in delaying to repent and make their peace with God. "Now you would be glad to send a lamb to Mount Zion, to make the God of Israel your friend; but it is too late: the decree has gone forth, the consumption is determined, and the daughters of Moab shall be cast out as a wandering bird," Isa 16:2. I rather take it as good advice seriously given, like that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar when he was reading him his doom, Da 4:27. Break off thy sins by righteousness, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

And it is applicable to the great gospel duty of submission to Christ, as the ruler of the land, and our ruler: "Send him the lamb, the best you have, yourselves a living sacrifice. When you come to God, the great ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God. For else it shall be" (so we may read it) "that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be. If you will not pay your quit-rent, your just tribute to the king of Judah, you shall be turned out of your houses: The daughters of Moab (the country villages, or the women of your country) shall flutter about the fords of Arnon, attempting that way to make their escape to some other land, like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest half-fledged." Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered under the shadow of his wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest, that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God shall be made to yield to the fear of every thing else.

3 Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth.

He advises them to be kind to the seed of Israel (Isa 16:3): "Take counsel, call a convention, and consult among yourselves what is fit to be done in the present critical juncture; and you will find it your best way to execute judgment, to reverse all the unrighteous decrees you have made, by which you have put hardships upon the people of God, and, in token of your repentance for them, study now how to oblige them, and this shall be accepted of God more than all burnt-offering and sacrifice."

1 The prophet foresaw some storm coming upon the people of God, perhaps the good people of the ten tribes, or of the two and a half on the other side Jordan, whose country joined to that of Moab, and who, by the merciful providence of God, escaped the fury of the Assyrian army, had their lives given them for a prey, and were reserved for better times, but were put to the utmost extremity to shift for their own safety. The danger and trouble they were in were like the scorching heat at noon; the face of the spoiler was very fierce upon them and the oppressor and extortioner were ready to swallow them up after stripping them of what they had.

2. He bespeaks a shelter for them in the land of Moab, when their own land was made too hot for them. This judgment they must execute; thus wisely must they do for themselves, and thus kindly must they deal with the people of God. If they would themselves continue in their habitations, let them now open their doors to the distressed dispersed members of God's church, and be to them like a cool shade to those that bear the burden and heat of the day.

Let them not discover those that absconded among them, nor deliver them up to the pursuers that made search for them: "Betray not him that wandereth, nor deliver him up" (as the

Edomites did, Ob 1:13,14), "but hide the outcasts." This was that good work by which Rahab's faith was justified, and proved to be sincere, Heb 11:31. "Nay, do not only hide them for a time, but, if there be occasion, let them be naturalized: Let my outcasts dwell with thee, Moab (Isa 16:4); find a lodging for them and be thou a covert to them. Let them be taken under the protection of the government, though they are but poor, and likely to be a charge to thee."

Note, (1.) It is often the lot even of those who are Israelites indeed to be outcasts, driven out of house and harbour by persecution or war, Heb 11:37.

(2.) God owns them when men reject and disown them. They are outcasts, but they are my outcasts. The Lord knows those that are his wherever he finds them, even where no one else knows them.

(3.) God will find a rest and shelter for his outcasts; for, though they are persecuted, they are not forsaken. He will himself be their dwelling-place if they have no other, and in him they shall be at home.

(4.) God can, when he pleases, raise up friends for his people even among Moabites, when they can find none in all the land of Israel that can and dare shelter them. The earth often helps the woman, Re 12:16.

(5.) Those that expect to find favour when they are in trouble themselves must show favour to those that are in trouble; and what service is done to God's outcasts shall no doubt be recompensed one way or other.

3. He assures them of the mercy God had in store for his people.

(1.) That they should not long need their kindness, or be troublesome to them: For the extortioner is almost at an end already, and the spoiler ceases. God's people shall not be long outcasts; they shall have tribulation ten days (Re 2:10), and that is all. The spoiler would never cease spoiling if he might have his will; but God has him in a chain. Hitherto he shall go, but no further.

(2.) That they should, ere long, be in a capacity to return their kindness (Isa 16:5): "Though the throne of the ten tribes be sunk and overturned, yet the throne of David shall be established in mercy, by the mercy they receive from God and the mercy they show to others; and by the same methods may your throne be established if you please." It would engage great men to be kind to the people of God if they would but observe, as they easily might, how often such conduct brings the blessing of God upon kingdoms and families. "Make Hezekiah your friend, for you will find it your interest to do so upon the account both of the grace of God in him and the presence of God with him. He shall sit upon the throne in truth, and then he does indeed sit in honour and sit firmly. Then he shall sit judging, and will then be a protector to those that have been a shelter to the people of God." And see in him the character of a good magistrate.

[1.] He shall seek judgment; that is, he shall seek occasions of doing right to those that are wronged, and shall punish the injurious even before they are complained of: or he shall diligently search into every cause brought before him, that he may find where the right lies.

[2.] He shall hasten righteousness, and not delay to do justice, nor keep those long waiting that make application to him for the redress of their grievances. Though he seeks judgment, and deliberates upon it, yet he does not, under pretence of deliberation, stay the progress of the streams of justice. Let the Moabites take example by this, and then assure themselves that their state shall be established.

4 Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.
5 And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.
6 We have heard of the pride of Moab; *he is* very proud: *even* of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: *but* his lies *shall* not *be* so.

Here we have, the sins with which Moab is charged, Isa 16:6. The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty (whether they would hear or whether they would forbear), but despairs of working any good upon them; he would have healed them, but they would not be healed. Those that will not be counselled cannot be helped. Their sins were,

1. Pride. This is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are more precious souls ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. The Moabites were notorious for this: "We have heard in both ears of the pride of Moab; it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon them for. He is very proud; the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their origin and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that law of God which forbade a Moabite to enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever, De 23:3. We have heard of his haughtiness and his pride.

It is not the rash and rigid censure of one of two concerning them, but it is the character which all that know them will give of them. They are a proud people, and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them. They think themselves too wise to be advised; therefore they will not take example by Hezekiah to do justly and love mercy. They scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him. They are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself nor regard the warnings he gives them. The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. They are proud, and

therefore will not entertain and protect God's outcasts; they scorn to have any thing to do with them." But this is not all:--

2. "We have heard of his wrath too (for those that are very proud are commonly very passionate), particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom therefore he will rather persecute than protect.

3. It is with his lies that he gains the gratifications of his pride and his passion; but his lies shall not be so; he shall not compass his proud and angry projects as he hoped he should." Some read it, His haughtiness, his pride, and his wrath, are greater than his strength. "We know that, if we lay at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice. His pride draws down ruin upon him; for it is the preface to destruction, and he has not strength to ward it off."

7 Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn; surely *they are* stricken.

The sorrows with which Moab is threatened (Isa 16:7): Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab. All the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country. They shall complain one to another: Every one shall howl in despair, and not one shall either see any cause or have any heart to encourage his friend. Observe,

1 The causes of this sorrow.

(1.) The destruction of their cities: For the foundations of Kir-haraseth shall you mourn. That great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force (2Ki 3:25), should now be levelled with the ground, either burnt or broken down, and its foundations stricken, bruised and broken (so the word signifies); they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruinous heaps.

(2.) The desolation of their country. Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards; but those shall all be laid waste by the invading army, Isa 16:8,10. See,

[1.] What a fruitful pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord, Ge 13:10. It was planted with choice and noble vines, with principal plants, which reached even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of Gad. The luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wound themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even through the wilderness of Moab. There were vineyards there. Nay, they were stretched out, and went even to the sea, the Dead Sea: the best grapes grew in their hedge-rows.

[2.] How merry and pleasant they had been in it. Many a time they had shouted for their summer fruits, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us when they have cut down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes. Nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance, and giving him the glory of it. If they had made it the matter of their thanksgiving, they might still have had it the food and fuel of their lusts; see therefore,

[3.] How they should be stripped of all. "The fields shall languish, all the fruits of them being carried away or trodden down; they cannot now enrich their owners as they have done, and therefore they languish. The soldiers, called here the lords of the heathen, shall break down all the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got. Now the shouting for the enjoyment of the summer fruits has fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them. The joy of harvest has ceased; there is no more singing, no more shouting, for the treading out of wine. They have not what they have had to rejoice in, nor have they a disposition to rejoice; the ruin of their country has marred their mirth."

Note, First, God can easily change the note of those that are most addicted to mirth and pleasure, can soon turn their laughter into mourning and their joy into heaviness. Secondly, Joy in God is, upon this account, far better than the joy of harvest, that it is what we cannot be robbed of, Ps 4:6,7. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Ho 2:11,12. But a gracious soul can rejoice in the Lord as the God of its salvation even when the fig-tree does not blossom and there is no fruit in the vine, Hab 3:17,18. In God therefore let us always rejoice with a holy triumph, and in other things let us always rejoice with a holy trembling, rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

2 The concurrence of the prophet with them in this sorrow: "I will with weeping bewail Jazer, and the vine of Sibmah, and look with a compassionate concern upon the desolations of such a pleasant country. I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon! and mingle them with thy tears;" nay (Isa 16:11), it appears to be an inward grief: My bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab; it should make such an impression upon him that he should feel an inward trembling, like that of the strings of a harp when it is played upon. It well becomes God's prophets to acquaint themselves with grief; the great prophet did so. The afflictions of the world, as well as those of the church, should be afflictions to us. See Isa 15:5.

8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and* the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.

9 Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen.

10 And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in *their* presses; I have made *their vintage* shouting to cease.

11 Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.
12 And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail.

In the close of the chapter we have,

1 The insufficiency of the gods of Moab, the false gods, to help them, Isa 16:12. "Moab shall be soon weary of the high place. He shall spend his spirits and strength in vain in praying to his idols; they cannot help him, and he shall be convinced that they cannot." It is seen that it is to no purpose to expect any relief from the high places on earth; it must come from above the hills. Men are generally so stupid that they will not believe, till they are made to see, the vanity of idols and of all creature-confidences, nor will come off from them till they are made weary of them.

But, when he is weary of his high places, he will not go, as he should, to God's sanctuary, but to his sanctuary, to the temple of Chemosh, the principal idol of Moab (so it is generally understood); and he shall pray there to as little purpose, and as little to his own case and satisfaction, as he did in his high places; for, whatever honours idolaters give to their idols, they do not thereby make them at all the better able to help them. Whether they are the dii majorum gentium--gods of the higher order, or minorum--of the lower order, they are alike the creatures of men's fancy and the work of men's hands. Perhaps it may be meant of their coming to God's sanctuary. When they found they could have no succours from their own high places some of them would come to the temple of God at Jerusalem, to pray there, but in vain; he will justly send them back to the gods whom they have served, Jdg 10:14.

2 The sufficiency of the God of Israel, the only true God, to make good what he had spoken against them.

(1.) The thing itself was long since determined (Isa 16:13): This is the word, this is the thing, that the Lord has spoken concerning Moab, since the time that he began to be so proud, and insolent, and abusive to God's people. The country was long ago doomed to ruin; this was enough to give an assurance of it that it is the word which the Lord has spoken; and, as he will never unsay what he has spoken, so all the power of hell and earth cannot gainsay it, or obstruct the execution of it.

(2.) Now it was made known when it should be done. The time was before fixed in the counsel of God, but now it was revealed: The Lord has spoken that it shall be within three years, Isa 16:14. It is not for us to know, or covet to know, the times and the seasons, any further than God has thought fit to make them known, and so far we may and must take notice of them. See how God makes known his mind by degrees; the light of divine revelation shone more and more, and so does the light of divine grace in the heart. Observe,

[1.] The sentence passed upon Moab: The glory of Moab shall be contemned, that is, it shall be contemptible, when all those things they have gloried in shall come to nothing. Such is the glory of this world, so fading and uncertain, admired awhile, but soon slighted. Let that therefore which will soon be contemptible in the eyes of others be always contemptible in our eyes in comparison with the far more exceeding weight of glory. It was the glory of Moab that their country was very populous and their forces were courageous; but where is her glory when all that great multitude is in a manner swept away, some by one judgment and some by another, and the little remnant that is left shall be very small and feeble, not able to bear up under their own griefs, much less to make head against their enemies' insults? Let not therefore the strong glory in their strength nor the many in their numbers.

[2.] The time fixed for the execution of this sentence: Within three years, as the years of a hireling, that is, at the three years'

end exactly, for a servant that is hired for a certain term keeps account to a day. Let Moab know that her ruin is very near, and prepare accordingly. Fair warning is given, and with it space to repent, which if they had improved, as Nineveh did, we have reason to think the judgments threatened would have been prevented.

13 This *is* the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab since that time.

14 But now the Lord hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude; and the remnant *shall be* very small *and* feeble.

Isaiah-17

The Oracle concerning Damascus

1 The burden of Damascus.
Behold, Damascus is taken away from *being* a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

We have here the burden of Damascus; the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, The burden of the cup of the curse to drink to Damascus in; and, the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is to go round.

1. Damascus itself, the head city of Syria, must be destroyed; the houses, it is likely, will be burnt, as least the walls, and gates, and fortifications demolished, and the inhabitants carried away captive, so that for the present it is taken away from being a city, and is reduced not only to a village, but to a ruinous heap, Isa 17:1. Such desolating work as this does sin make with cities.

2 The country towns are abandoned by their inhabitants, frightened or forced away by the invaders: The cities of Aroer (a province of Syria so called) are forsaken (Isa 17:2); the conquered dare not dwell in them, and the conquerors have no occasion for them, nor did they seize them for want, but

wantonness; so that the places which should be for men to live in are for flocks to lie down in, which they may do, and none will disturb nor dislodge them. Stately houses are converted into sheep-cotes. It is strange that great conquerors should pride themselves in being common enemies to mankind. But, how unrighteous soever they are, God is righteous in causing those cities to spue out their inhabitants, who by their wickedness had made themselves vile; it is better that flocks should lie down there than that they should harbour such as are in open rebellion against God and virtue.

3. The strongholds of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, will be brought to ruin: The fortress shall cease from Ephraim (Isa 17:3), that in Samaria, and all the rest. They had joined with Syria in invading Judah very unnaturally; and now those that had been partakers in sin should be made partakers in ruin, and justly. When the fortress shall cease from Ephraim, by which Israel will be weakened, the kingdom will cease from Damascus, by which Syria will be ruined.

The Syrians were the ring-leaders in that confederacy against Judah, and therefore they are punished first and sorest; and, because they boasted of their alliance with Israel, now that Israel is weakened they are upbraided with those boasts: "The remnant of Syria shall be as the glory of the children of Israel; those few that remain of the Syrians shall be in as mean and despicable a condition as the children of Israel are, and the glory of Israel shall be no relief or reputation to them." Sinful confederacies will be no strength, no stay, to the confederates, when God's judgments come upon them. See here what the glory of Jacob is when God contends with him, and what little reason Syria will have to be proud of resembling the glory of Jacob.

(1.) It is wasted like a man in a consumption, Isa 17:4. The glory of Jacob was their numbers, that they were as the sand of the sea for multitude; but this glory shall be made thin, when many

are cut off, and few left. Then the fatness of their flesh, which was their pride and security, shall was lean, and the body of the people shall become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Israel died of a lingering disease; the kingdom of the ten tribes wasted gradually; God was to them as a moth, Ho 5:12. Such is all the glory of this world: it soon withers, and is made thin; but thee is a far more exceeding and external weight of glory designed for the spiritual seed of Jacob, which is not subject to any such decay--fatness of God's house, which will not wax lean.

(2.) It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as the corn is carried out of the field by the husbandmen, Isa 17:5. The corn is the glory of the fields (Ps 65:13); but, when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly, cut down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the thrusting in of the sickle when the harvest is ripe, Re 14:15. And the victorious army, like the careful husbandmen in the valley of Rephaim, where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

2 The cities of Aroer *are* forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall
lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.
3 The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from
Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of
the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts.

The Judgment on Israel

4 And in that day it shall come to pass, *that* the glory of Jacob shall be
made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.
5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and
reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth
ears in the valley of Rephaim.

6 Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two *or* three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four *or* five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel.

Mercy is here reserved, in a parenthesis, in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that should escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Though the Assyrians took all the care they could that none should slip out of their net, yet the meek of the earth were hidden in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's courts.

1. They shall be but a small remnant, a very few, who shall be marked for preservation (Isa 17:6): Gleaning grapes shall be left in it. The body of the people were carried into captivity, but here and there one was left behind, perhaps one of two in a bed when the other was taken, Lu 17:34. The most desolating judgments in this world are short of the last judgment, which shall be universal and which none shall escape. In times of the greatest calamity some are kept safe, as in times of the greatest degeneracy some are kept pure. But the fewness of those that escape supposes the captivity of the far greatest part; those that are left are but like the poor remains of an olive tree when it has been carefully shaken by the owner; if there be two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough (out of the reach of those that shook it), that is all. Such is the remnant according to the election of grace, very few in comparison with the multitudes that walk on in the broad way.

2. They shall be a sanctified remnant, Isa 17:7,8. These few that are preserved are such as, in the prospect of the judgment approaching, had repented of their sins and reformed their lives, and therefore were snatched thus as brands out of the burning, or such as having escaped, and becoming refugees in strange countries, were awakened, partly by a sense of the

distinguishing mercy of their deliverance, and partly by the distresses they were still in, to return to God.

(1.) They shall look up to their Creator, shall enquire, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night, in such a night of affliction as this? Job 35:10,11. They shall acknowledge his hand in all the events concerning them, merciful and afflictive, and shall submit to his hand. They shall give him the glory due to his name, and be suitably affected with his providences. They shall expect relief and succour from him and depend upon him to help them. Their eyes shall have respect to him, as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master, Ps 132:2. Observe, It is our duty at all times to have respect to God, to have our eyes ever towards him, both as our Maker (the author of our being and the God of nature) and as the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us and the God of grace; particularly, when we are in affliction, our eyes must be towards the Lord, to pluck our feet out of the net (Ps 25:15); to bring us to this is the design of his providence as he is our Maker and the work of his grace as he is the Holy One of Israel.

(2.) They shall look off from their idols, the creatures of their own fancy, shall no longer worship them, and seek to them, and expect relief from them. For God will be alone regarded, or he does not look upon himself as at all regarded. He that looks to his Maker must not look to the altars, the work of his hands, but disown them and cast them off, must not retain the least respect for that which his fingers have made, but break it to pieces, though it be his own workmanship--the groves and the images; the word signifies images made in honour of the sun and by which he was worshipped, the most ancient and most plausible idolatry, De 4:19,Job 31:26. We have reason to account those happy afflictions which part between us and our sins, and by sensible convictions of the vanity of the world, that great idol, cool our affections to it and lower our expectations from it.

7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect *that* which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.

9 In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

Here the prophet returns to foretel the woeful desolations that should be made in the land of Israel by the army of the Assyrians.

1. That the cities should be deserted. Even the strong cities, which should have protected the country, shall not be able to protect themselves: They shall be as a forsaken bough and an uppermost branch of an old tree, which has gone to decay, is forsaken of its leaves, and appears on the top of the tree, bare, and dry, and dead; so shall their strong cities look when the inhabitants have deserted them and the victorious army of the enemy pillaged and defaced them, Isa 17:9. They shall be as the cities (so it may be supplied) which the Canaanites left, the old inhabitants of the land, because of the children of Israel, when God brought them in with a high hand, to take possession of that good land, cities which they built not.

As the Canaanites then fled before Israel, so Israel should now flee before the Assyrians. And herein the word of God was fulfilled, that, if they committed the same abominations, the land should spue them out, as it spued out the nations that were before them (Le 18:28), and that as, while they had God on their side, one of them chased a thousand, so, when they had made him their enemy, a thousand of them should flee at the rebuke of one; so that in the cities should be desolation, according to the threatenings in the law, Le 26:31,De 28:51.

2. That the country should be laid waste, Isa 17:10,11. Observe here,

(1.) The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that pleasant land. It was for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein. "It is because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation and all the great salvations he has wrought for thee, hast forgotten thy dependence upon him and obligations to him, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, not only who is himself a strong rock, but who has been thy strength many a time, or thou wouldst have been sunk and broken long since." Note, The God of our salvation is the rock of our strength; and our forgetfulness and unmindfulness of him are at the bottom of all sin. Therefore have we perverted our way, because we have forgotten the Lord our God, and so we undo ourselves.

(2.) The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land and to make it yet more pleasant.

[1.] Look upon it at the time of the seedness, and it was all like a garden and a vineyard; that pleasant land was replenished with pleasant plants, the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice and curious were the inhabitants that, not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for strange slips, the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear-bought, though perhaps they had of their own not inferior to them. This was an instance of their pride and vanity, and (that ruining error) their affection to be like the nations. Wheat, and honey, and oil were their staple commodities (Eze 27:17); but, not content with these, they must have flowers and greens with strange names imported from other nations, and a great deal of care and pains must be taken by hot-beds to make these plants to grow; the soil must be forced, and they must be covered with glasses to shelter them, and early in the morning the gardeners must be up to make the seed to flourish, that it may excel those of their neighbours. The ornaments of nature are not to be altogether slighted, but it is a folly to be over-fond of them, and to bestow more time, and cost, and pains about them than they deserve, as many do. But here this instance seems to be put in

general for their great industry in cultivating their ground, and their expectations from it accordingly; they doubt not but their plants will grow and flourish. But,

[2.] Look upon the same ground at the time of harvest, and it is all like a wilderness, a dismal melancholy place, even to the spectators, much more to the owners; for the harvest shall be a heap, all in confusion, in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. The harvest used to be a time of joy, of singing and shouting (Isa 16:10); but this harvest the hungry eat up (Job 5:5), which makes it a day of grief, and the more because the plants were pleasant and costly (Isa 17:10) and their expectations proportionably raised. The harvest had sometimes been a day of grief, if the crop was thin and the weather unseasonable; and yet in that case there was hope that the next would be better. But this shall be desperate sorrow, for they shall see not only this year's products carried off, but the property of the ground altered and their conquerors lords of it. The margin reads it, The harvest shall be removed (into the enemy's country or camp, De 28:33) in the day of inheritance (when thou thoughtest to inherit it), and there shall be deadly sorrow. This is a good reason why we should not lay up our treasure in those things which we may so quickly be despoiled of, but in that good part which shall never be taken away from us.

10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not
been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant
pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips:
11 in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning
shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: *but* the harvest *shall be* a heap
in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.
12 Woe to the multitude of many people, *which* make a noise like the
noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, *that* make a rushing
like the rushing of mighty waters!

These verses read the doom of those that spoil and rob the people of God. If the Assyrians and Israelites invade and plunder Judah, if the Assyrian army take God's people captive

and lay their country waste, let them know that ruin will be their lot and portion. They are here brought in,

1. Triumphing over the people of God. They relied upon their numbers. The Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations: it was the multitude of many people (Isa 17:12), by which weight they hoped to carry the cause. They were very noisy, like the roaring of the seas; they talked big, hectored, and threatened, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them made a rushing like the rushing of many waters, and those mighty ones, that threaten to bear down all before them and carry away every thing that stands in their way. The floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves; such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen, when they rage, Ps 2:1,93:3.

2. Triumphed over by the judgments of God. They thought to carry their point by dint of noise; but woe to them (Isa 17:12), for he shall rebuke them, that is, God shall, one whom they little think of, have no regard to, stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then they shall flee afar off. Sennacherib, and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, shall run away in a fright, and shall be chased by their own terrors, as the chaff of the mountains which stand bleak before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, like thistle-down (so the margin); they make themselves as chaff before the wind (Ps 35:5) and then the angel of the Lord (as it follows there), the same angel that slew many of them, shall chase the rest. God will make them like a wheel, or rolling thing, and then persecute them with his tempest and make them afraid with his storm, Ps 83:13,15.

Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they

seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly (Isa 17:14): At evening-tide they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God; but before the morning they are not. At sleeping time they are cast into a deep sleep, Ps 26:5,6. It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army. God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, even when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves an unequal match for their enemies; for this is the portion of those that spoil us, they shall themselves be spoiled. God will plead his church's cause, and those that meddle do it to their own hurt.

13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but *God* shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

14 And behold at eveningtide trouble; *and* before the morning he *is* not. This *is* the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

Isaiah-18

A Prophecy concerning Ethiopia

1 Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which *is* beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush. Some take it to be Egypt, a maritime country, and full of rivers, and which courted Israel to depend upon them, but proved broken reeds; but against this it is strongly objected that the next chapter is distinguished from this by the title of the burden of Egypt. Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, which lies near, or about, the rivers of Ethiopia, not that in Africa, which lay south of Egypt, but that which we call Arabia, which lay east of Canaan, which Tirhakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews, as it were, under the shadow of his wings, by giving a powerful

diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem, 2Ki 19:9.

But though by his ambassadors he bade defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to depend upon him, God by the prophet slights him, and will not go forth with him; he may take his own course, but God will take another course to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempt of Tirhakah to miscarry and his Arabian army to be ruined; for the Assyrian army shall become a present or sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his name, by the hand of an angel, not by the hand of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Isa 18:7.

This is a very probable exposition of this chapter. But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's, in his Harmony of the Old Testament, I incline to understand this chapter as a prophecy against Assyria, and so a continuation of the prophecy in the Isa 17:12-14 of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this should be joined. That was against the army of the Assyrians which rushed in upon Judah; this is against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond the rivers of Arabia, that is, the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, which bordered on Arabia Deserta. And in calling it the land shadowing with wings he seems to refer to what he himself had said of it (Isa 8:8), that the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel! The prophet might perhaps describe the Assyrians by such dark expressions, not naming them, for the same reason that St. Paul, in his prophecy, speaks of the Roman empire by a periphrasis: He who now letteth, 2Th 2:7. Here is,

I The attempt made by this land (whatever it is) upon a nation scattered and peeled, Isa 18:2. Swift messengers are sent by water to proclaim war against them, as a nation marked by Providence, and meted out, to be trodden under foot. Whether this refer to the Ethiopians waging war with the Assyrians, or the Assyrians with Judah, it teaches us,

1. That a people which have been terrible from their beginning, have made a figure and borne a mighty sway, may yet become scattered and peeled, and may be spoiled even by their own rivers, that should enrich both the husbandman and the merchant. Nations which have been formidable, and have kept all in awe about them, may by a concurrence of accidents become despicable and an easy prey to their insulting neighbours.

2. Princes and states that are ambitious of enlarging their territories will always have some pretence or other to quarrel with those whose countries they have a mind to. "It is a nation that has been terrible, and therefore we must be revenged on it; it is now a nation scattered and peeled, meted out and trodden down, and therefore it will be an easy prey for us." Perhaps it was not brought so low as they represented it. God's people are trampled on as a nation scattered and peeled; but whoever think to swallow them up may find them still as terrible as they have been from their beginning; they are cast down, but not deserted, not destroyed.

II The alarm sounded to the nations about, by which they are summoned to take notice of what God is about to do, Isa 18:3. The Ethiopians and Assyrians have their counsels and designs, which they have laid deep, and promise themselves much from, and, in prosecution of them, send their ambassadors and messengers from place to place; but let us now enquire what the great God says to all this.

1. He lifts up an ensign upon the mountains, and blows a trumpet, by which he proclaims war against the enemies of his church, and calls in all her friends and well-wishers into her service, Isa 18:3. He gives notice that he is about to do some great work, as Lord of hosts.

2. All the world is bidden to take notice of it; all the dwellers on earth must see the ensign and hear the trumpet, must observe the motions of the divine providence and attend the directions of the divine will. Let all enlist under God's banner, and be on his side, and hearken to the trumpet of his word, which gives not an uncertain sound.

2 that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, *saying*, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!

3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

4 For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, *and* like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people, that, though he might seem for a time to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people and the confusion of his and their enemies (Isa 18:4): So the Lord said unto me. Men will have their saying, but God also will have his; and, as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets. When he says, I will take my rest, it is not as if he were weary of governing the world, of as if he either needed or desired to retire from it and repose himself; but it intimates that the great God has a perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of himself, in the midst of all the agitations and changes of this world (the Lord sits even upon the floods unshaken; the Eternal Mind is always easy), and, though he may sometimes seem to his people as if he took not wonted notice of what is done in this lower world (they are tempted to think he is as one asleep, or as one astonished, Ps 44:23,Jer 14:9), yet even then he knows very well what men are doing and what he himself will do.

1. He will take care of his people, and be a shelter to them. He will regard his dwelling-place; his eye and his heart are, and shall be, upon it for good continually. Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell; and he will look after it (so some read it); he will lift up the light of his countenance upon it, will consider over it what is to be done, and will be sure to do all for the best. He will adapt the comforts and refreshments he provides for his people to the exigencies of their case; and they will therefore be acceptable, because seasonable.

(1.) Like a clear heat after rain (so the margin), which is very reviving and pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish.

(2.) Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest, which are very welcome, the dew to the ground and the cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in God which is a shelter and refreshment to his people in all weathers and arms them against the inconveniences of every change. Is the weather cool? There is that in his favour which will warm them. Is it hot? There is that in his favour which will cool them. Great men have their winter-house and their summer-house (Am 3:15); but those that are at home with God have both in him.

2. He will reckon with his and their enemies, Isa 18:5,6. When the Assyrian army promises itself a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem and the plundering of that rich city, when the bud of that project is perfect, before the harvest is gathered in, while the sour grape of their enmity to Hezekiah and his people is ripening in the flower and the design is just ready to be put in execution, God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman cuts off the sprigs of the vine with pruning hooks, or because the grape is sour and good for nothing, and will not be cured, takes away and cuts down the branches.

This seems to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel, when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the

husbandman has cut to pieces. And they shall be left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth, to prey upon, both winter and summer; for as God's people are protected all seasons of the year, both in cold and heat (Isa 18:4), so their enemies are at all seasons exposed; birds and beasts of prey shall both summer and winter upon them, till they are quite ruined.

5 For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away *and* cut down the branches.

6 They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

7 In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.

The tribute of praise which should be brought to God from all this (Isa 18:7): In that time, when this shall be accomplished, shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts.

1. Some understand this of the conversion of the Ethiopians to the faith of Christ in the latter days, of which we have the specimen and beginning in Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, Ac 8:27, &c. Those that were a people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden down (Isa 18:2), shall be a present to the Lord: and, though they seem useless and worthless, they shall be an acceptable present to him who judges of men by the sincerity of their faith and love, not by the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition. Therefore the gospel was ministered to the Gentiles that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, Ro 15:16. It is prophesied (Ps 68:31) that Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

2. Others understand it of the spoil of Sennacherib's army, out of which, as usual, presents were brought to the Lord of hosts, Nu 31:50. It was the present of a people scattered and peeled.

(1.) It was won from the Assyrians, who were now themselves reduced to such a condition as they scornfully described Judah to be in, Isa 18:1. Those that unjustly trample upon others shall themselves be justly trampled upon.

(2.) It was offered by the people of God, who were, in disdain, called a people scattered and peeled. God will put honour upon his people, though men put contempt upon them. Lastly, Observe, The present that is brought to the Lord of hosts must be brought to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts; what is offered to God must be offered in the way that he has appointed; we must be sure to attend him, and expect him to meet us, where he records his name.

Isaiah-19

The Oracle concerning Egypt

1 The burden of Egypt.
Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

Though the land of Egypt had of old been a house of bondage to the people of God, where they had been ruled with rigour, yet among the unbelieving Jews there still remained much of the humour of their fathers, who said, Let us make us a captain and return into Egypt. Upon all occasions they trusted to Egypt for help (Isa 30:2), and thither they fled, in disobedience to God's express command, when things were brought to the last extremity in their own country, Jer 43:7. Rabshakeh upbraided Hezekiah with this, Isa 36:6.

While they kept up an alliance with Egypt, and it was a powerful ally, they stood not in awe of the judgments of God; for against them they depended upon Egypt to protect them. Nor did they depend upon the power of God when at anytime they were in distress; but Egypt was their confidence. To prevent all this mischief, Egypt must be mortified, and many ways God here tells them he will take to mortify them.

I The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them, Isa 19:1. "The Lord rides upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt. As a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactors, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels, so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes he will certainly overcome." In all this burden of Egypt here is no mention of any foreign enemy invading them; but God himself will come against them, and raise up the causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a cloud, above the reach of the opposition or resistance. He comes apace upon a swift cloud; for their judgment lingers not when the time has come. He rides upon the wings of the wind, with a majesty far excelling the greatest pomp and splendour of earthly princes. He makes the clouds his chariots, Ps 18:9,104:3.

When he comes the idols of Egypt shall be moved, shall be removed at his presence, and perhaps be made to fall as Dagon did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers, shall be disowned and rejected by them. Idolatry had got deeper rooting in Egypt than in any land besides, even the most absurd idolatries; and yet now the idols shall be moved and they shall be ashamed of them. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt he executed judgments upon the gods of the Egyptians (Nu 33:4); no marvel then if, when he comes, they begin to tremble. The Egyptians shall seek to the idols, when they are at their wits'

end, and consult the charmers and wizards (Isa 19:3); but all in vain; they see their ruin hastening on them notwithstanding.

II The militia of Egypt, that had been famed for their valour, shall be quite dispirited and disheartened. No kingdom in the world was ever in a better method of keeping up a standing army than the Egyptians were; but now their heroes, that used to be celebrated for courage, shall be posted for cowards: The heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it, like wax before the fire (Isa 19:1); the spirit of Egypt shall fail, Isa 19:3. They shall have no inclination, no resolution, to stand up in defence of their country, their liberty, and property; but shall tamely and ingloriously yield all to the invader and oppressor.

The Egyptians shall be like women (Isa 19:16); they shall be frightened and put into confusion by the least alarm; even those that dwell in the heart of the country, in the midst of it, and therefore furthest from danger, will be as full of frights as those that are situate on the frontiers. Let not the bold and brave be proud or secure, for God can easily cut off the spirit of princes (Ps 76:12) and take away their hearts, Job 12:24.

2 And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, *and* kingdom against kingdom.

The Egyptians shall be embroiled in endless dissensions and quarrels among themselves. There shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them; they shall destroy one another (Isa 19:2): I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians. As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the author of them, they come from men's lusts; but God, as a Judge, permits them for their punishment, and by their destroying differences corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, and acting each in his place for the common good, they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour, whom he ought to love as himself--city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Psammetichus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made himself master of them all. A kingdom thus divided against itself would soon be brought to desolation. En quo discordiâ cives perduxit miseros!--Oh the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves! It is brought to this by a perverse spirit, a spirit of contradiction, which the Lord would mingle, as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians, Isa 19:14. One party shall be for a thing for no other reason than because the other is against it; that is a perverse spirit, which, if it mingle with the public counsels, tends directly to the ruin of the public interests.

3 And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.

Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness. When God will destroy the nation he will destroy the counsel thereof (Isa 19:3), by taking away wisdom from the statesmen (Job 12:20), or setting them one against another (as Hushai and Ahithophel), or by his providence breaking their measures even when they seemed well laid; so that the princes of Zoan are fools: they make fools of one another, every one betrays his own folly, and divine Providence makes fools of them all, Isa 19:11. Pharaoh had his wise counsellors. Egypt was famous for such.

But their counsel has all become brutish; they have lost all their forecast; one would think they had become idiots, and were bereaved of common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, nor depend upon that, nor upon the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding can when he please take it away. And from those it is most likely to be taken away that boast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did, and, to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boast of their great understanding ("I am the son of the wise, of the God of wisdom, of wisdom itself," says one; "my father was an eminent

privy-counsellor of note in his day for wisdom"), or of the antiquity and dignity of their families: "I am," says another, "the son of ancient kings." The nobles of Egypt boasted much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their succession for above 10,000 years.

This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as appears by Herodotus, their common boast being that Egypt was some thousands of years more ancient than any other nation. "But where are thy wise men? Isa 19:12. Let them now show their wisdom by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it, if they can. Let them with all their skill know what the Lord of hosts has purposed upon Egypt, and arm themselves accordingly. Nay, so far are they from doing this that they themselves are, in effect, contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on, Isa 19:13.

The princes of Noph are not only deceived themselves, but they have seduced Egypt, by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings" (by which both themselves and their people were soon undone); "the governors of Egypt, that are the stay and cornerstones of the tribes thereof, are themselves undermining it." It is sad with a people when those that undertake for their safety are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are her worst disease, when the things that belong to the public peace are so far hidden from the eyes of those that are entrusted with the public counsels that in every thing they blunder and take wrong measures; so here (Isa 19:14): They have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof. Every step they took was a false step. They always mistook either the end or the means, and their counsels were all unsteady and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, who knows not what he says nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our privy-counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state if God give them a spirit of wisdom, but quite the contrary if he hide their heart from understanding.

4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.

The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression (Isa 19:4): "The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord, not a foreigner, but one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right, but shall be a fierce king and rule them with rigour," either the twelve tyrants that succeeded Sethon, or rather Psammetichus that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of one cruel lord. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian task masters gave to God's Israel long ago was remembered against them and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is sad with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for destruction, and they are ruined by those by whom they should be ruled, when such as this is the manner of the king, as it is described (in terrorem--in order to impress alarm), 1Sa 8:11.

5 And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up.

Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which was its wealth, and strength, and beauty, and was idolized by them. Now it is here threatened that the waters shall fail from the sea and the river shall be wasted and dried up, Isa 19:5. Nature shall not herein favour them as she has done. Egypt was never watered with the rain of heaven (Zec 14:18), and therefore the fruitfulness of their country depended wholly upon the overflowing of their river; if that therefore be dried up, their fruitful land will soon be turned into barrenness and their harvests cease: Every thing sown by the brooks will wither of course, will be driven away, and be no more, Isa 19:7. If the paper-reeds by the brooks, at the very mouth of them, wither, much more the corn, which lies at a greater distance, but derives its moisture from them. Yet this is not all; the drying up of their rivers is the destruction,

1. Of their fortifications, for they are brooks of defence (Isa 19:6), making the country difficult of access to an enemy. Deep rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly forced. Pharaoh is

said to be a great dragon lying in the midst of his rivers, and guarded by them, bidding defiance to all about him, Eze 29:3. But these shall be emptied and dried up, not by an enemy, as Sennacherib with the sole of his foot dried up mighty rivers (Isa 37:25), and as Cyrus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into many streams, but by the providence of God, which sometimes turns water-springs into dry ground, Ps 107:33.

2. It is the destruction of their fish, which in Egypt was much of their food, witness that base reflection which the children of Israel made (Nu 11:5): We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely. The drying up of the rivers will kill the fish (Ps 105:29), and will thereby ruin those who make it their business,

(1.) To catch fish, whether by angling or nets (Isa 19:8); they shall lament and languish, for their trade is at an end. There is nothing which the children of this world do more heartily lament than the loss of that which they used to get money by. Ploratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris--Those are genuine tears which are shed over lost money.

(2.) To keep fish, that it may be ready when it is called for. There were those that made sluices and ponds for fish (Isa 19:10), but they shall be broken in the purposes thereof; their business will fail, either for want of water to fill their ponds or for want of fish to replenish their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country even of that which is its staple commodity. The Egyptians may themselves remember the fish they have formerly eaten freely, but now cannot have for money. And that which aggravates the loss of these advantages by the river is that it is their own doing (Isa 19:6): They shall turn the rivers far away. Their kings and great men, to gratify their own fancy, will drain water from the main river to their own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring their private convenience before the public good, and so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weakened. Thus many do themselves a greater prejudice at last than they think of,

[1.] Who pretend to be wiser than nature, and to do better for themselves than nature has done.

[2.] Who consult their own particular interest more than the common good. Such may gratify themselves, but surely they can never satisfy themselves, who to serve a turn contribute to a public calamity, which they themselves, in the long run, cannot avoid sharing in. Herodotus tells us that Pharaoh-Necho (who reigned not long after this), projecting to cut a free passage by water from Nilus into the Red Sea, employed a vast number of men to make a ditch or channel for that purpose, in which attempt he impaired the river, lost 120,000 of his people, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

6 And they shall turn the rivers far away; *and* the brooks of defense
shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither.
7 The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and
every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and
be no *more*.
8 The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the
brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters
shall languish.
9 Moreover they that work in fine flax, and they that weave
networks, shall be confounded.

Egypt was famous for the linen manufacture; but that trade shall be ruined. Solomon's merchants traded with Egypt for linen-yarn, 1Ki 10:28. Their country produced the best flax and the best hands to work it; but those that work in fine flax shall be confounded (Isa 19:9), either for want of flax to work on or for want of a demand for that which they have worked or opportunity to export it. The decay of trade weakens and wastes a nation and by degrees brings it to ruin. The trade of Egypt must needs sink, for (Isa 19:15) there shall not be any work for Egypt to be employed in; and where there is nothing to be done there is nothing to be got. There shall be a universal stop put to business, no work which either head or tail, branch or rush, may do; nothing for high or low, weak or strong, to do; no hire, Zec 8:10. Note, The flourishing of a kingdom depends much upon the

industry of the people; and then things are likely to do well when all hands are at work, when the head and top-branch do not disdain to labour, and the labour of the tail and rush is not disdained. But when the learned professions are unemployed, the principal merchants have no stocks, and the handicraft tradesmen nothing to do, poverty comes upon a people as one that travaileth and as an armed man.

10 And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make
sluices *and* ponds for fish.
11 Surely the princes of Zoan *are* fools, the counsel of the wise counselors
of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I *am* the son
of the wise, the son of ancient kings?
12 Where *are* they? where *are* thy wise *men?* and let them tell thee
now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed
upon Egypt.
13 The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are
deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, *even they that are* the stay of
the tribes thereof.
14 The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and
they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken
man staggereth in his vomit.
15 Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt, which the head or tail,
branch or rush, may do.
16 In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid
and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts,
which he shaketh over it.
17 And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that
maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the
counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

A general consternation shall seize the Egyptians; they shall be afraid and fear (Isa 19:16), which will be both an evidence of a universal decay and a means and presage of utter ruin. Two things will put them into this fright:--

1. What they hear from the land of Judah; that shall be a terror to Egypt, Isa 19:17. When they hear of the desolations made in Judah by the army of Sennacherib, considering both the near

neighbourhood and the strict alliance that was between them and Judah, they will conclude it must be their turn next to become a prey to that victorious army. When their neighbour's house was on fire they could not but see their own in danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians that makes mention of Judah shall be afraid of himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into his hands.

2. What they see in their own land. They shall fear (Isa 19:16) because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, and (Isa 19:17) because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which from the shaking of his hand they shall conclude he has determined against Egypt as well as Judah. For, if judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? See here,

(1.) How easily God can make those a terror to themselves that have been, not only secure, but a terror to all about them. It is but shaking his hand over them, or laying it upon some of their neighbours, and the stoutest hearts tremble immediately.

(2.) How well it becomes us to fear before God when he does but shake his hand over us, and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand when it does but threaten us, especially when we see his counsel determined against us; for who can change his counsel?

18 In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of
Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called, The city
of destruction.

19 In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the
land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord.

20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts
in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of
the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one,
and he shall deliver them.

Out of the thick and threatening clouds of the foregoing prophecy the sun of comfort here breaks forth, and it is the sun

of righteousness. Still God has mercy in store for Egypt, and he will show it, not so much by reviving their trade and replenishing their river again as by bringing the true religion among them, calling them to, and accepting them in, the worship of the one only living and true God; and these blessings of grace were much more valuable than all the blessings of nature wherewith Egypt was enriched. We know not of any event in which this prophecy can be thought to have its full accomplishment short of the conversion of Egypt to the faith of Christ, by the preaching (as is supposed) of Mark the Evangelist, and the founding of many Christian churches there, which flourished for many ages.

Many prophecies of this book point to the days of the Messiah; and why not this? It is no unusual thing to speak of gospel graces and ordinances in the language of the Old-Testament institutions. And, in these prophecies, those words, in that day, perhaps have not always a reference to what goes immediately before, but have a peculiar significancy pointing at that day which had been so long fixed, and so often spoken of, when the day-spring from on high should visit this dark world. Yet it is not improbable (which some conjecture) that this prophecy was in part fulfilled when those Jews who fled from their own country to take shelter in Egypt, when Sennacherib invaded their land, brought their religion along with them, and, being awakened to great seriousness by the troubles they were in, made an open and zealous profession of it there, and were instrumental to bring many of the Egyptians to embrace it, which was an earnest and specimen of the more plentiful harvest of souls that should be gathered in to God by the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

Josephus indeed tells us that Onias the son of Onias the high priest, living an outlaw at Alexandria in Egypt, obtained leave of Ptolemy Philometer, then king, and Cleopatra his queen, to build a temple to the God of Israel, like that at Jerusalem, at Bubastis in Egypt, and pretended a warrant for doing it from this prophecy in Isaiah, that there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt; and the service of God, Josephus affirms, continued in it

about 333 years, when it was shut up by Paulinus soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; see Antiq. 13.62-79, and Jewish War 7.426-436. But that temple was all along looked upon by the pious Jews as so great an irregularity, and an affront to the temple at Jerusalem, that we cannot suppose this prophecy to be fulfilled in it.

Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

I. They shall speak the language of Canaan, the holy language, the scripture-language; they shall not only understand it, but use it (Isa 19:18); they shall introduce that language among them, and converse freely with the people of God, and not, as they used to do, by an interpreter, Ge 42:23. Note, Converting grace, by changing the heart, changes the language; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Five cities in Egypt shall speak this language; so many Jews shall come to reside in Egypt, and they shall so multiply there, that they shall soon replenish five cities, one of which shall be the city of Heres, or of the sun, Heliopolis, where the sun was worshipped, the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry; even there shall be a wonderful reformation, they shall speak the language of Canaan. Or it may be taken thus, as we render it--That for every five cities that shall embrace religion there shall be one (a sixth part of the cities of Egypt) that shall reject it, and that shall be called a city of destruction, because it refuses the methods of salvation.

II. They shall swear to the Lord of hosts, not only swear by him, giving him the honour of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped; but they shall by a solemn oath and vow devote themselves to his honour and bind themselves to his service. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and shall worship him, not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their King, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.

III. They shall set up the public worship of God in their land (Isa 19:19): There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, an altar on which they shall do sacrifice and oblation (Isa 19:21); therefore it must be understood spiritually. Christ, the great altar, who sanctifies every gift, shall be owned there, and the gospel sacrifices of prayer and praise shall be offered up; for by the law of Moses there was to be no altar for sacrifice but that at Jerusalem. In Christ Jesus all distinction of nations is taken away; and a spiritual altar, a gospel church, in the midst of the land of Egypt, is as acceptable to God as one in the midst of the land of Israel; and spiritual sacrifices of faith and love, and a contrite heart, please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.

IV. There shall be a face of religion upon the nation, and an open profession made of it, discernible to all who come among them. Not only in the heart of the country, but even in the borders of it, there shall be a pillar, or pillars, inscribed, To Jehovah, to his honour, as before there had been such pillars set up in honour of false gods. As soon as a stranger entered upon the borders of Egypt he might perceive what God they worshipped. Those that serve God must not be ashamed to own him, but be forward to do any thing that may be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts. Even in the land of Egypt he had some faithful worshippers, who boasted of their relation to him and made his name their strong tower, or bulwark, on their borders, with which their coasts were fortified against all assailants.

V. Being in distress, they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and this shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts that he is a God hearing prayer to all flesh that come to him, Isa 19:20. See Ps 65:2. When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them (Isa 19:4) he shall be entreated of them (Isa 19:22); whereas he had told his people Israel, who had made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should cry to him by reason of their king, and he would not hear them, 1Sa 8:18.

VI. They shall have an interest in the great Redeemer. When they were under the oppression of cruel lords perhaps God sometimes raised them up mighty deliverers, as he did for Israel in the days of the judges; and by them, though he had smitten the land, he healed it again; and, upon their return to God in a way of duty, he returned to them in a way of mercy, and repaired the breaches of their tottering state. For repenting Egyptians shall find the same favour with God that repenting Ninevites did. But all these deliverances wrought for them, as those for Israel, were but figures of gospel salvation. Doubtless Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the great one here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings of to the Egyptians, and by whom he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear, Lu 1:74,75. Jesus Christ delivered the Gentile nations from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

21 And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform *it*.

The knowledge of God shall prevail among them, Isa 19:21.

1. They shall have the means of knowledge. For many ages in Judah only was God known, for there only were the lively oracles found; but now the Lord, and his name and will, shall be known to Egypt. Perhaps this may in part refer to the translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek by the LXX., which was done at Alexandria in Egypt, by the command of Ptolemy king of Egypt; and it was the first time that the scriptures were translated into any other language. By the help of this (the Grecian monarchy having introduced their language into that country) the Lord was known to Egypt, and a happy omen and means it was of his being further known.

2. They shall have grace to improve those means. It is promised not only that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, but that the Egyptians shall know the Lord; they shall receive and entertain the light granted to them, and shall submit themselves to the

power of it. The Lord is known to our nation, and yet I fear there are many of our nation that do not know the Lord. But the promise of the new covenant is that all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest, which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is that they shall vow a vow to the Lord and perform it. For those do not know God aright who either are not willing to come under binding obligations to the Lord or do not make good those obligations.

22 And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal *it:* and they shall return *even* to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them.

They shall come into the communion of saints. Being joined to the Lord, they shall be added to the church, and be incorporated with all the saints.

1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there had been between Egypt and Assyria; they often made war upon one another; but now there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria (Isa 19:23), a happy correspondence settled between he two nations; they shall trade with one another, and every thing that passes between them shall be friendly. The Egyptians shall serve (shall worship the true God) with the Assyrians; and therefore the Assyrians shall come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria.

Note, It becomes those who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another. The consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving with each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all heats and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love.

2 The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel fold under Christ the great shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God Israel shall make a third with them (Isa 19:24);

they shall become a three-fold cord, not easily broken. The ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, shall be taken down, and then they shall become one sheep-fold under one shepherd. Thus united, they shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, Isa 19:24,25.

(1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and they were the natural branches of the good olive, to whom did originally pertain its root and fatness, and the Gentiles were but grafted in among them, Ro 11:17. Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel. Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt--Those who meet in a third meet in each other. Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for those are real and great blessings to their generation who are instrumental to unite those that have been at variance.

(2.) They shall all be a blessing to the world: so the Christian church is, made up of Jews and Gentiles; it is the beauty, riches, and support of the world.

(3.) They shall all be blessed of the Lord.

[1.] They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike his people whom he takes under his protection. They are formed by him, for they are the work of his hands; not only as a people, but as his people. They are formed for him; for they are his inheritance, precious in his eyes, and dear to him, and from whom he has his rent of honour out of this lower world.

[2.] They shall be owned together by him as jointly his, his in concert; they shall all share in one and the same blessing. Note, Those that are united in the love and blessing of God ought, for that reason, to be united to each other in charity.

23 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.

24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land:

25 whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

Isaiah-20

Assyria to Conquer Egypt and Ethiopia

1 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it;

God here, as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but, as King of saints, brings good to his people out of it. Observe,

I The date of this prophecy. It was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, 2Ki 18:8), was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians. It is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable that those who lived then could by that token fix the time to a year. He that was now king of Assyria is called Sargon, which some take to be the same with Sennacherib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser. Tartan, who was general, or commander-in-chief, in this expedition, was one of Sennacherib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, 2Ki 18:17.

II The making of Isaiah a sign, by his unusual dress when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that had come and were coming upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made, which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes. Others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to show himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better becomes those that attend in king's palaces (Mt 11:8) than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore hair-cloth (2Ki 1:8), and John Baptist (Mt 3:4) and those that pretended to be prophets supported their pretension by wearing rough garments (Zec 13:4); but Isaiah has orders given him to loose his sackcloth from his loins, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all--no upper garment, no mantle, cloak, or coat, but only that which was next to him, we may suppose his shirt, waistcoat, and drawers; and he must put off his shoes, and go barefoot; so that compared with the dress of others, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked.

This was a great hardship upon the prophet; it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the streets would hoot at him, and those who sought occasion against him would say, The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad, Ho 9:7. It might likewise be a prejudice to his health; he was in danger of catching a cold, which might throw him into a fever, and cost him his life; but God bade him do it, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty we may trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that people were strangely stupid, and would not be affected with what they only heard, but must be taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification. If the dress was

scandalous, yet the design was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not to be ashamed of.

2 at the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

3 And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years *for* a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

The exposition of this sign, Isa 20:3,4. It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captive by the king of Assyria, thus stripped, or in rags, and very shabby clothing, as Isaiah was. God calls him his servant Isaiah, because in this matter particularly he had approved himself God's willing, faithful, obedient servant; and for this very thing, which perhaps others laughed at him for, God gloried in him. To obey is better than sacrifice; it pleases God and praises him more, and shall be more praised by him. Isaiah is said to have walked naked and barefoot three years, whenever in that time he appeared as a prophet. But some refer the three years, not to the sign, but to the thing signified: He has walked naked and barefoot; there is a stop in the original; provided he did so once that was enough to give occasion to all about him to enquire what was the meaning of his doing so; or, as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign and wonder, for a sign of that which should be done three years afterwards or which should be three years in the doing.

Three campaigns successively shall the Assyrian army make, in spoiling the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner, not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants, young and old; and it being a very piteous sight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them to see those who had gone all their days well dressed now stripped, and scarcely having rags to cover their nakedness, that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of, and foretold, the more to affect those to whom this prophecy

was delivered. It is particularly said to be to the shame of Egypt (Isa 20:4), because the Egyptians were a proud people, and therefore when they did fall into disgrace it was the more shameful to them; and the higher they had lifted up themselves the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

4 so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and
the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even
with *their* buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.
5 And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation,
and of Egypt their glory.

The use and application of this, Isa 20:5,6.

1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with, Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being overrun by the Assyrians expected that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, would put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and with yet more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod and retire with precipitation. But, instead of this, by attempting to oppose the king of Assyria they did but expose themselves and make their country a prey to him.

Hereupon all about them were ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage from two such weak and cowardly nations, and were more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as briers and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, which do but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will sooner or later be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear. See Eze 29:6,7.

2 The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and should despair of any relief from them (Isa 20:6): The inhabitants of this isle (the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it), of this country (so the margin); every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, "Behold, such is our expectation, so vain, so foolish, and this is that which it will come to. We have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them to be delivered from the king of Assyria; but, now that they are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did?" Note,

(1.) Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence; for vain is the help of man, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills or the height and multitude of the mountains.

(2.) Disappointment in creature confidences, instead of driving us to despair, as here (how shall we escape?), should drive us to God; for, if we flee to him for help, our expectation shall not be frustrated.

6 And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such *is* our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

Isaiah-21

The Oracle concerning the Desert of the Sea

1 The burden of the desert of the sea.
As whirlwinds in the south pass through; *so* it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.

We had one burden of Babylon before (Isa 13:1-22); here we have another prediction of its fall. God saw fit thus to possess his people with the belief of this event by line upon line, because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them (as Isa 39:1), and God would hereby warn them not to trust to

that friendship, and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that enmity. Babylon is marked for ruin; and all that believe God's prophets can, through that glass, see it tottering, see it tumbling, even when with an eye of sense they see it flourishing and sitting as a queen.

Babylon is here called the desert or plain of the sea; for it was a flat country, and full of lakes, or loughs (as they call them in Ireland), like little seas, and was abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but lately begin to be famous, Nineveh having outshone it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and, before it arrived at that pitch of eminency which it was at in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God by this prophet plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoners, Job 5:3,Ps 37:35,37.

Some think it is here called a desert because, though it was now a populous city, it should in time be made a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New-Testament church, which is foretold in the Revelation in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of that book. Here is,

The powerful irruption and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon (Isa 21:1,2): They will come from the desert, from a terrible land. The northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous, terrible to strangers that were to pass through it and producing soldiers that were very formidable. Elam (that is, Persia) is summoned to go up against Babylon, and, in conjunction with the forces of Media, to besiege it.

When God has work of this kind to do he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come as whirlwinds from the south, so suddenly, so strongly, so terribly, such a mighty noise shall they make, and throw down every thing that stands in their way.

As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them: The treacherous dealers will deal treacherously. Historians tell us of Gadatas and Gobryas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and, being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, led a party directly to the palace, where Belshazzar was slain. Thus with the help of the treacherous dealers the spoilers spoiled. Some read it thus: There shall be a deceiver of that deceiver, Babylon, and a spoiler of that spoiler, or, which comes all to one, The treacherous dealer has found one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils, as it is expounded, Isa 33:1 The Persians shall pay the Babylonians in their own coin; those that by fraud and violence, cheating and plundering, unrighteous wars and deceitful treaties, have made a prey of their neighbours, shall meet with their match, and by the same methods shall themselves be made a prey of.

2 A grievous vision is declared unto me; The treacherous dealer
dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam:
besiege, O Media: all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.
3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold
upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed
down at the hearing *of it;* I was dismayed at the seeing *of it*.

I The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon.

1. To the poor oppressed captives it would be welcome news; for they had been told long ago that Babylon's destroyer would be their deliverer, and therefore, "when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, all their sighing will be made to cease; they shall no longer mingle their tears with Euphrates' streams, but resume their harps, and smile when they

remember Zion, which, before, they wept at the thought of." For the sighing of the needy the God of pity will arise in due time (Ps 12:5); he will break the yoke from all their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and so make their sighing to cease.

2. To the proud oppressors it would be a grievous vision (Isa 21:2), particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is who is here brought in sadly lamenting his inevitable fate (Isa 21:3,4): Therefore are my loins filled with pain; pangs have taken hold upon me, &c., which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which his city was taken, and himself slain, upon the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall his countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another, Da 5:6. And yet that was but the beginning of sorrows.

Daniel's deciphering the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed of the executioners at the door would be the completing of it. And those words, The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear to me, plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him and a thousand of his lords revelling with him; that night of his pleasure, when he promised himself an undisturbed unallayed enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple vessels, was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins on the neck of them--that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, nor how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment; let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

II. A representation of the posture in which Babylon should be found when the enemy should surprise it--all in festival gaiety (Isa 21:5): "Prepare the table with all manner of dainties. Set the guards; let them watch in the watch-tower while we eat and drink securely and make merry; and, if any alarm should be given, the princes shall arise and anoint the shield, and be in readiness to give the enemy a warm reception." Thus secure are they, and thus do they gird on the harness with as much joy as if they were putting it off.

4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.

5 Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink: arise, ye princes, *and* anoint the shield.

6 For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth.

I. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord, in vision, showed the prophet the watchman set in his watch-tower, near the watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and, according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he sees, Isa 21:6. We read of watchmen thus set to receive intelligence in the story of David (2Sa 18:24), and in the story of Jehu, 2Ki 9:17.

This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander-in-chief to ride. He then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two chariots signify the two nations combined against Babylon, or rather these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace; compare Jer 51:31,32. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end while he is revelling at the other end and knows nothing of the matter. The watchman, seeing

these chariots at some distance, hearkened diligently with much heed, to receive the first tidings. And (Isa 21:8) he cried, A lion; this word, coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave them a certain sound, and everybody knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It is likely that it was intended to raise attention: he that has an ear to hear, let him hear, as when a lion roars. Or he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest, the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say?

1. He professes his constancy to the post assigned him: "I stand, my lord, continually upon the watch-tower, and have never discovered any thing material till just now; all seemed safe and quiet." Some make it to be a complaint of the people of God that they had long expected the downfall of Babylon, according to the prophecy, and it had not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting; as Hab 2:1, I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, to see what will be the issue of the present providences.

2. He gives notice of the discoveries he had made (Isa 21:9): Here comes a chariot of men with a couple of horsemen, a vision representing the enemy's entry into the city with all their force or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.

II. A certain account is at length given of the overthrow of Babylon. He in the chariot answered and said (when he heard the watchman speak), Babylon has fallen, has fallen; or God answered thus to the prophet enquiring concerning the issue of these affairs: "It has now come to this, Babylon has surely and irrecoverably fallen. Babylon's business is done now. All the graven images of her gods he has broken unto the ground." Babylon was the mother of harlots (that is, of idolatry), which was one of the grounds of God's quarrel with her; but her idols should now be so far from protecting her that some of them should be broken down to the ground, and others of them, that were worth carrying way, should go into captivity, and be a burden to the beasts that carried them, Isa 46:1,2.

7 And he saw a chariot *with* a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses,
and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much
heed:
8 and he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the
watchtower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights:
9 and, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, *with* a couple of
horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen;
and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the
ground.
10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard
of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

Notice is given to the people of God, who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfall of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and they might depend upon it that it should be accomplished in due season, Isa 21:10. Observe,

1 The title the prophet gives them in God's name: O my threshing, and the corn of my floor! The prophet calls them his, because they were his countrymen, and such as he had a particular interest in and concern for; but he speaks it as from God, and directs his speech to those that were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land. Note,

(1.) The church is God's floor, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are, as it were, gathered together and laid up.

(2.) True believers are the corn of God's floor. Hypocrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a great deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated.

(3.) The corn of God's floor must expect to be threshed by afflictions and persecutions. God's Israel of old was afflicted from her youth, often under the plougher's plough (Ps 129:3)

and the thresher's flail. (4.) Even then God owns it for his threshing; it is his still; nay, the threshing of it is by his appointment, and under his restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it but what was given them from above.

2 The assurance he gives them of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon: That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel--that, and nothing else, that, and no fiction or fancy of my own--have I declared unto you. Note, In all events concerning the church, past, present, and to come, we must have an eye to God both as the Lord of hosts and as the God of Israel, who has power enough to do any thing for his church and grace enough to do every thing that is for her good, and to the words of his prophets, as words received from the Lord. As they dare not smother any thing which he has entrusted them to declare, so they dare not declare any thing as from him which he has not made known to them, 1Co 11:23.

The Oracle concerning Dumah

11 The burden of Dumah.
He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night?
Watchman, what of the night?

This prophecy concerning Dumah is very short, and withal dark and hard to be understood. Some think that Dumah is a part of Arabia, and that the inhabitants descended from Dumah the sixth son of Ishmael, as those of Kedar (Isa 21:16,17) from Ishmael's second son, Ge 25:13,14. Others, because Mount Seir is here mentioned, by Dumah understand Idumea, the country of the Edomites. Some of Israel's neighbours are certainly meant, and their distress is foretold, not only for warning to them to prepare them for it, but for warning to Israel not to depend upon them, or any of the nations about them, for relief in a time of danger, but upon God only. We must see all creature confidences failing us, and feel them breaking under

us, that we may not lay more weight upon them than they will bear. But though the explication of this prophecy be difficult, because we have no history in which we find the accomplishment of it, yet the application will be easy. We have here,

1. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman. Some one or other called out of Seir, somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure. As the man of Macedonia, in a vision, desired Paul to come over and help them (Ac 16:9), so this man of Mount Seir, in a vision, desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. He calls not many; it is well there are any, that all are not alike unconcerned about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious: What of the night? It is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such enquiries. He repeats the question, as one in care, as one in earnest, and desirous to have an answer. Note,

(1.) God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such. They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe, to knock at every door by personal enquiries ("Is it locked? Is the fire safe?"), to direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, So 3:3,5:7. They are as watchmen in the camp in time of war, Eze 33:7. They are to take notice of the motions of the enemy and to give notice of them, to make discoveries and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves.

(2.) It is our duty to enquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, What of the night? for watchmen wake when other sleep.

[1.] What time of the night? After a long sleep in sin and security, is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? Ro 13:11. We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; is it not time to be stirring? "Watchman, what o'clock is it? After a long dark night is there any hope of the day dawning?"

[2.] What tidings of the night? What from the night? (so some); "what vision has the prophet had to-night? We are ready to receive it." Or, rather, "What occurs to night? What weather is it? What news?" We must expect an alarm, and never be secure. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; we must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

2 The watchman's answer to this question. The watchman was neither asleep nor dumb; though it was a man of Mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer: The morning comes. He answers,

(1.) By way of prediction: "There comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity; you will enjoy one day of comfort more; but afterwards comes a night of trouble and calamity." Note, In the course of God's providence it is usual that morning and night are counterchanged and succeed each other. Is it night? Yet the morning comes, and the day-spring knows his place, Ps 30:5. Is it day? Yet the night comes also. If there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must look for changes. But God usually gives a morning of opportunity before he sends a night of calamity, that his own people may be prepared for the storm and others left inexcusable.

(2.) By way of excitement: If you will enquire, enquire. Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation

for the night that is coming after it. "Enquire, return, come. Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient." The manner of expression is very observable, for we are put to our choice what we will do: "If you will enquire, enquire; if not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you." We are also urged to be at a point: "If you will, say so, and do not stand pausing; what you will do do quickly, for it is no time to trifle." Those that return and come to God will find they have a great deal of work to do and but a little time to do it in, and therefore they have need to be busy.

12 The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.

The Oracle concerning Arabia

13 The burden upon Arabia.
In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye traveling companies of

Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan. Much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham. The Dedanim, here mentioned (Isa 21:13), descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Ge 25:3,13,15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the burden of Arabia, and see it sinking under its own burden.

I. A destroying army shall be brought upon them, with a sword, with a drawn sword, with a bow ready bent, and with all the grievousness of war, Isa 21:15. It is probable that the king of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious army, took Arabia in his way, and, meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The consideration of the grievousness of war should make us thankful for the blessings of peace.

II The poor country people will hereby be forced to flee for shelter wherever they can find a place; so that the travelling companies of Dedanium, which used to keep the high roads with their caravans, shall be obliged to quit them and lodge in the forest in Arabia (Isa 21:13), and shall not have the wonted convenience of their own tents, poor and weather-beaten as they are.

III. They shall stand in need of refreshment, being ready to perish for want of it, in their flight from the invading army: "O you inhabitants of the land of Tema!" (who probably were next neighbours to the companies of Dedanim) "bring you water" (so the margin reads it) "to him that is thirsty, and prevent with your bread those that flee, for they are objects of your compassion; they do not wander for wandering sake, nor are they reduced to straits by any extravagance of their own, but they flee from the sword." Tema was a country where water was sometimes a scarce commodity (as we find, Job 6:19), and we may conclude it would be in a particular manner acceptable to these poor distressed refugees. Let us learn hence.

1. To look for distress ourselves. We know not what straits we may be brought into before we die. Those that live in cities may be forced to lodge in forests; and those may know the want of necessary food who now eat bread to the full. Our mountain stands not so strong but that it may be moved, rises not so high but that it may be scaled. These Arabians would the better bear these calamities because in their way of living they had used themselves to hardships.

2. To look with compassion upon those that are in distress, and with all cheerfulness to relieve them, not knowing how soon their case may be ours: "Bring water to those that are thirsty, and not only give bread to those that need and ask it, but prevent those with it that have need; give it to them unasked." Those that do so shall find it remembered to their praise, as (according

to our reading) it is here remembered to the praise of the land of Tema that they did bring water to the thirsty and relieved even those that were on the falling side.

IV. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail. Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks? They shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems they were famous about other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers, instead of foiling the enemy, shall fall themselves; and the residue of their number, when they are reduced to a small number, shall be diminished (Isa 21:17); their mighty able-bodied men, and men of spirit too, shall become very few; for they, being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by the enemies' sword or into the enemies' hand. Note, Neither the skill of archers (though they be ever so good marksmen) nor the courage of mighty men can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; they rather expose the undertakers. That is poor glory which will thus quickly come to nothing.

V. All this shall be done in a little time: "Within one year according to the years of a hireling (within one year precisely reckoned) this judgment shall come upon Kedar." If this fixing of the time be of no great use to us now (because we find not either when the prophecy was delivered or when it was accomplished), yet it might be of great use to the Arabians then, to awaken them to repentance, that, like the men of Nineveh, they might prevent the judgment when they were thus told it was just at the door. Or, when it begins to be fulfilled, the business shall be done, be begun and ended in one year's time. God, when he please, can do a great work in a little time.

VI. It is all ratified by the truth of God (Isa 21:16); "Thus hath the Lord said to me; you may take my word for it that it is his word;" and we may be sure no word of his shall fall to the ground. And again (Isa 21:17): The Lord God of Israel hath

spoken it, as the God of Israel, in pursuance of his gracious designs concerning them; and we may be sure the strength of Israel will not lie.

DEDANIM.

14 The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled.

15 For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.

16 For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of a hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail:

17 and the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken *it*.

Isaiah-22

The Oracle concerning the Valley of Vision

1 The burden of the valley of vision.
What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?

2 Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain *men are* not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle.

The title of this prophecy is very observable. It is the burden of the valley of vision, of Judah and Jerusalem; so all agree. Fitly enough is Jerusalem called a valley, for the mountains were round about it, and the land of Judah abounded with fruitful valleys; and by the judgments of God, though they had been as a towering mountain, they should be brought low, sunk and depressed, and become dark and dirty, as a valley. But most emphatically is it called a valley of vision because there God was known and his name was great, there the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions, and there the people saw the goings of their God and King in his sanctuary. Babylon, being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called the desert of the sea; but Jerusalem, being entrusted with his oracles, is a valley of vision.

Blessed are their eyes, for they see, and they have seers by office among them. Where Bibles and ministers are there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly; but here is a burden of the valley of vision, and a heavy burden it is. Note, Church privileges, if they be not improved, will not secure men from the judgments of God. You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you. The valley of vision has a particular burden. Thou Capernaum, Mt 11:23. The higher any are lifted up in means and mercies the heavier will their doom be if they abuse them.

Now the burden of the valley of vision here is that which will not quite ruin it, but only frighten it; for it refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, Isa 10:1-34, and shall meet with the history of, Isa 36:1-22. It is here again prophesied of, because the desolations of many of the neighbouring countries, which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army. Now let Jerusalem know that when the cup is going round it will be put into her hand; and, although it will not be to her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,

The consternation that the city should be in upon the approach of Sennacherib's army. It used to be full of stirs, a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a tumultuous city, populous and noisy. Where there is great trade there is great tumult. It used to be a joyous revelling city. What with the busy part and what with the merry part of mankind, places of concourse are places of noise. "But what ails thee now, that the shops are quitted, and there is no more walking in the streets and exchange, but thou hast wholly gone up to the house-tops (Isa 22:1), to bemoan thyself in silence and solitude, or to secure thyself from the enemy, or to look abroad and see if any succours come to thy relief, or which way the enemies' motions are." Let both men of business and sportsmen rejoice as though

they rejoiced not, for something may happen quickly, which they little think of, that will be a damp to their mirth and a stop to their business, and send them to watch as a sparrow alone upon the house-top, Ps 102:7. But why is Jerusalem in such a fright? Her slain men are not slain with the sword (Isa 22:2), but,

1. Slain with famine (so some); for Sennacherib's army having laid the country waste, and destroyed the fruits of the earth, provisions must needs be very scarce and dear in the city, which would be the death of many of the poorer sort of people, who would be constrained to feed on that which was unwholesome.

2. Slain with fear. They were put into this fright though they had not a man killed, but so disheartened themselves that they seemed as effectually stabbed with fear as if they had been run through with a sword.

3 All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together, *which* have fled from far.

The inglorious flight of the rulers of Judah, who fled from far, from all parts of the country, to Jerusalem (Isa 22:3), fled together, as it were by consent, and were found in Jerusalem, having left their respective cities, which they should have taken care of, to be a prey to the Assyrian army, which, meeting with no opposition, when it came up against all the defenced cities of Judah easily took them, Isa 36:1. These rulers were bound from the bow (so the word is); they not only quitted their own cities like cowards, but, when they came to Jerusalem, were of no service there, but were as if their hands were tied from the use of the bow, by the extreme distraction and confusion they were in; they trembled, so that they could not draw a bow. See how easily God can dispirit men, and how certainly fear will dispirit them, when the tyranny of it is yielded to.

4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

5 For *it is* a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity
by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the
walls, and of crying to the mountains.

I. The great grief which this should occasion to all serious sensible people among them, which is represented by the prophet's laying the thing to heart himself; he lived to see it, and was resolved to share with the children of his people in their sorrows, Isa 22:4,5. He is not willing to proclaim his sorrow, and therefore bids those about him to look away from him; he will abandon himself to grief, and indulge himself in it, will weep secretly, but weep bitterly, and will have none go about to comfort him, for his grief is obstinate and he is pleased with his pain. But what is the occasion of his grief? A poor prophet had little to lose, and had been inured to hardship, when he walked naked and barefoot; but it is for the spoiling of the daughter of his people.

It is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity. Our enemies trouble us and tread us down, and our friends are perplexed and know not what course to take to do us a kindness. The Lord God of hosts is now contending with the valley of vision; the enemies with their battering rams are breaking down the walls, and we are in vain crying to the mountains (to keep off the enemy, or to fall on us and cover us) or looking for help to come to us over the mountains, or appealing, as God does, to the mountains, to hear our controversy (Mic 6:1) and to judge between us and our injurious neighbours.

II. The great numbers and strength of the enemy, that should invade their country and besiege their city, Isa 22:6,7. Elam (that is, the Persians) come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men, and horsemen. Kir (that is, the Medes) muster up their arms, unsheath the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem. Then the choice valleys about Jerusalem, that used to be clothed with flocks and covered over with corn, shall be full of chariots of war, and at the gate

of the city the horsemen shall set themselves in array, to cut off all provisions from going in, and to force their way in. What a condition must the city be in that was beset on all sides with such an army!

6 And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men *and* horsemen, and
Kir uncovered the shield.
7 And it shall come to pass, *that* thy choicest valleys shall be full of
chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.
8 And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in
that day to the armor of the house of the forest.

What is meant by the covering of Judah, which in the beginning of this paragraph is said to be discovered, is not agreed. The fenced cities of Judah were a covering to the country; but these, being taken by the army of the Assyrians, ceased to be a shelter, so that the whole country lay exposed to be plundered. The weakness of Judah, its nakedness, and inability to keep itself, now appeared more than ever; and thus the covering of Judah was discovered. Its magazines and stores, which had been locked up, were now laid open for the public use.

Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of it, that by this distress into which Judah should be brought God would discover their covering (that is, uncloak their hypocrisy), would show all that was in their heart, as is said of Hezekiah upon another occasion, 2Ch 32:31. Thus, by one means or other, the iniquity of Ephraim will be discovered and the sin of Samaria, Ho 7:1.

They were now in a great fright, and in this fright they manifested two things much amiss:--

I. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of all the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not for doing this that they are blamed, but, in doing this, they did not acknowledge God. Observe,

1. How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them. A council was immediately called, a council of war; and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve, they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God if, in times of danger, we do not the best we can for ourselves.

(1.) They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition: They looked to the armour of the house of the forest, which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armoury (1Ki 10:17), and thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. It is the wisdom of princes, in time of peace, to provide for war, that they may not have arms to seek when they should use them, and perhaps upon a sudden emergency.

(2.) They viewed the fortifications, the breaches of the city of David; they walked round the walls, and observed where they had gone to decay for want of seasonable repairs, or were broken by some former attempts made upon them. These breaches were many; the more shame for the house of David that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. They had probably often seen those breaches; but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This good we should get by public distresses, we should be awakened by them to repair our breaches, and amend what is amiss.

(3.) They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it: You gathered together the water of the lower pool, of which there was probably no great store, and of which therefore they were the more concerned to be good husbands. See what a mercy it is that, as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so

nothing is more cheap and common; but it is bad indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity.

(4.) They numbered the houses of Jerusalem, that every house might send in its quota of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it, which they raised by a poll, so much a head or so much a house.

(5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way, when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down, which, in such a case of necessity, is no more an injury to the owner than blowing up houses in case of fire.

(6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves and might deprive the besiegers of it; for it seems that was the project, lest the Assyrian army should come and find much water (2Ch 32:4) and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the forage of a country, much more to divert the streams of its waters, for the straitening and starving of an enemy.

2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations: But you have not looked unto the Maker thereof (that is, of Jerusalem, the city you are so solicitous for the defence of) and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence--the mountains round about it (Ps 125:2), and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn which way soever they pleased for their convenience. Note,

(1.) It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it long ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers, upon this place, say, There were seven things which God made before the world (meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world): the garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory,

Jerusalem, and Messiah the Prince. The gospel church has God for its Maker.

(2.) Whatever service we do, or endeavour to do, at any time to God's Jerusalem, must be done with an eye to him as the Maker of it; and he takes it ill if it be done otherwise. It is here charged upon them that they did not look to God.

[1.] They did not design his glory in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city and their own houses were in it, not because it was the holy city and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church we must look more at God's interest in it than at our own.

[2.] They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it, but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said that he trusted in God (2Ki 18:5), and particularly upon this occasion (2Ch 32:8); but there were those about him, it seems, who were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them.

[3.] They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had, in fortifying their city, from the waters of the old pool, which were fashioned long ago, as Kishon is called an ancient river, Jdg 5:21. Whatever in nature is at any time serviceable to us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature, who, when he fashioned it long ago, fitted it to be so, and according to whose ordinance it continues to this day. Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be; and therefore, whatever use it is of to us, we must look at him that fashioned it, bless him for it, and use it for him.

9 Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.

10 And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

11 Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

12 And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, Isa 22:12-14. Here observe,

1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them: it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and make them serious. In that day of trouble, and treading down, and perplexity, the Lord did thereby call to weeping and mourning, and all the expressions of sorrow, even to baldness and girding with sackcloth; and all this to lament their sins (by which they had brought those judgments upon their land), to enforce their prayers (by which they might hope to avert the judgments that were breaking in), and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives by a holy seriousness and a tenderness of heart under the word of God. To this God called them by his prophet's explaining his providences, and by his providences awakening them to regard what his prophets said. Note, When God threatens us with his judgments he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that we tremble when the lion roars, and in a day of adversity consider.

2. How contrary they walked to this design of God (Isa 22:13): Behold, joy and gladness, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and all the jollity imaginable. They were as secure and cheerful as they used to be, as if they had had no enemy in their borders or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at defiance, and resolved to be merry, let come on them what would. Those that should have been among the mourners were among the wine-bibbers, the riotous eaters of flesh; and observe what they said, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. This may refer either to the particular danger they were now in, and the fair warning which the

prophet gave them of it, or to the general shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scoffers who mocked the messengers of the Lord and misused his prophets.

(1.) They made a jest of dying. "The prophet tells us we must die shortly, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather let us eat and drink, that we may be fattened for the slaughter, and may be in good heart to meet our doom; if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one."

(2.) They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for, if there were no such state, the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1Co 15:32. If, when we die, there were an end of us, it were good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could while we live; but, if for all these things God shall bring us into judgment, it is at our peril if we walk in the way of our heart and the sight of our eyes, Ec 11:9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this is at the bottom of the carnal security and brutish sensuality which are the sin, and shame, and ruin of so great a part of mankind, as of the old world, who were eating and drinking till the flood came.

3. How much God was displeased at it. He signified his resentment of it to the prophet, revealed it in his ears, to be by him proclaimed upon the house-top: Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die, Isa 22:14. It shall never be expiated with sacrifice and offering, any more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, 1Sa 3:14. It is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it or have it pardoned. The Chaldee reads it, It shall not be forgiven you till you die the second death. Those that walk contrary to them; with the froward he will show himself froward.

13 and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we shall die.

14 And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.

Shebna to Be Replaced by Eliakim

15 Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, *even* unto Shebna, which *is* over the house, *and say*,

We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the preferring of Eliakim to the post of honour and trust that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes; it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here; but by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events; and it is likewise to show that, as God has burdens in store for those nations and kingdoms abroad that are open enemies to his church and people, so he has for those particular persons at home that are false friends to them and betray them.

It is likewise a confirmation in general of the hand of divine Providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes. Promotion comes not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge, Ps 25:6,7. It is probable that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before Sennacherib's invasion; for now Shebna was over the house, but then Eliakim was (Isa 36:3); and Shebna, coming down gradually, was only scribe. Here is,

I The prophecy of Shebna's disgrace. He is called this treasurer, being entrusted with the management of the revenue; and he is likewise said to be over the house, for such was his boundless

ambition and covetousness that less than two places, and those two of the greatest importance at court, would not satisfy him. It is common for self-seeking men thus to grasp at more than they can manage, and so the business of their places is neglected, while the pomp and profit of them wholly engage the mind. It does not appear what were the particular instances of Shebna's mal-administration, for which Isaiah is here sent to prophesy against him; but the Jews say, "He kept up a traitorous correspondence with the king of Assyria, and was in treaty with him to deliver the city into his hands."

However this was, it should seem that he was a foreigner (for we never read of the name of his father) and that he was an enemy to the true interests of Judah and Jerusalem: it is probable that he was first preferred by Ahaz. Hezekiah was himself an excellent prince; but the best masters cannot always be sure of good servants. We have need to pray for princes, that they may be wise and happy in the choice of those they trust. These were times of reformation, yet Shebna, a bad man, complied so far as to keep his places at court; and it is probable that many others did like him, for which reason Sennacherib is said to have been sent against a hypocritical nation, Isa 10:6. In this message to Shebna we have,

1. A reproof of his pride, vanity, and security (Isa 22:16): "What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here? What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make! What estate has thou here, that thou was born to? Whom hast thou here, what relations, that thou art allied to? Art thou not of mean and obscure original, filius populi--a mere plebeian, that comest we know not whence? What is the meaning of this then, that thou hast built thyself a fine house, hast graved thyself a habitation?"

So very nice and curious was it that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver than of a mason or carpenter; and it seemed engraven in a rock, so firmly was it founded and so impregnable was it. "Nay, thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre," as if he

designed that his pomp should survive his funeral. Though Jerusalem was not the place of his father's sepulchres (as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, Ne 2:3), he designed it should be the place of his own, and therefore set up a monument for himself in his life-time, set it up on high. Those that make stately monuments for their pride forget that, how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, within they are full of dead men's bones. But it is a pity that the grave-stone should forget the grave.

2. A prophecy of his fall and the sullying of his glory.

(1.) That he should not quickly be displaced and degraded (Isa 22:19): I will drive thee from thy station. High places are slippery places; and those are justly deprived of their honour that are proud of it and puffed up with it, and deprived of their power that do hurt with it. God will do it, who shows himself to be God by looking upon proud men and abasing them, Job 40:11,12. To this Isa 22:25 refers. "The nail that is now fastened in the sure place (that is, Shebna, who thinks himself immovably fixed in his office) shall be removed, and cut down, and fall." Those are mistaken who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it; for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the nail falls the burden that was upon it is cut off; when Shebna was disgraced all that had a dependence upon him fell into contempt too. Those that are in high places will have many hanging upon them as favourites whom they are proud of and trust to; but they are burdens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail, and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin one another--the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more from each other than either performs.

(2.) That after a while he should not only be driven from his station, but driven from his country: The Lord will carry thee away with the captivity of a mighty man, Isa 22:17,18. Some think the Assyrians seized him, and took him away, because he

had promised to assist them and did not, but appeared against them: or perhaps Hezekiah, finding out his treachery, banished him, and forbade him ever to return; or he himself, finding that he had become obnoxious to the people, withdrew into some other country, and there spent the rest of his days in meanness and obscurity. Grotius thinks he was stricken with a leprosy, which was a disease commonly supposed to come from the immediate hand of God's displeasure, particularly for the punishment of the proud, as in the case of Miriam and Uzziah; and by reason of this disease he was tossed like a ball out of Jerusalem. Those who, when they are in power, turn and toss others, will be justly turned and tossed themselves when their day shall come to fall. Many who have thought themselves fastened like a nail may come to be tossed like a ball; for here have we no continuing city.

Shebna thought his place too strait for him, he had no room to thrive; God will therefore send him into a large country, where he shall have room to wander, but never find the way back again; for there he shall die, and lay his bones there, and not in the sepulchre he had hewn out for himself. And there the chariots which had been the chariots of his glory, in which he had rattled about the streets of Jerusalem, and which he took into banishment with him, should but serve to upbraid him with his former grandeur, to the shame of his lord's house, of the court of Ahaz, who had advanced him.

16 What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast
hewed thee out a sepulchre here, *as* he that heweth him out a
sepulchre on high, *and* that graveth a habitation for himself in a
rock?
17 Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and
will surely cover thee.
18 He will surely violently turn and toss thee *like* a ball into a large
country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory
shall be the shame of thy lord's house.
19 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he
pull thee down.
20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant

Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:

The prophecy of Eliakim's advancement, Isa 22:20, &c. He is God's servant, has approved himself faithfully so in other employments, and therefore God will call him to this high station. Those that are diligent in doing the duty of a low sphere stand fairest for preferment in God's books. Eliakim does not undermine Shebna, nor make an interest against him, nor does he intrude into his office; but God calls him to it: and what God calls us to we may expect he will own us in. It is here foretold,

1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord-chamberlain of the household, lord-treasurer, and prime-minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this, Isa 22:21. "He shall have thy robe, the badge of honour, and thy girdle, the badge of power; for he shall have thy government." To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged guiding the hearts of princes in placing and displacing men (Pr 21:1), but because the powers that are, subordinate as well as supreme, are ordained of God. It is God that clothes princes with their robes, and therefore we must submit ourselves to them for the Lord's sake and with an eye to him, 1Pe 2:13. And, since it is he that commits the government into their hand, they must administer it according to his will, for his glory; they must judge for him by whom they judge and decree justice, Pr 8:15. And they may depend upon him to furnish them for what he calls them to, according to this promise: I will clothe him; and then it follows, I will strengthen him.

Those that are called to places of trust and power should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places; for that ought to be their chief care. Eliakim's advancement is further described by the laying of the key of the house of David upon his shoulders, Isa 22:22. Probably he carried a golden key upon his shoulder as a badge of his office, or had one

embroidered upon his cloak or robe, to which this alludes. Being over the house, and having the key delivered to him, as the seals are to the lord-keeper, he shall open and none shall shut, shut and none shall open. He had access to the house of the precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices; and to the house of the armour and the treasures (Isa 39:2), and disposed of the stores there as he thought fit for the public service. He put whom he pleased into the inferior offices and turned out whom he pleased. Our Lord Jesus describes his own power as Mediator by an allusion to this (Re 3:7), that he has the key of David, wherewith he opens and no man shuts, he shuts and no man opens. His power in the kingdom of heaven, and in the ordering of all the affairs of that kingdom, is absolute, irresistible, and uncontrollable.

2. That he should be fixed and confirmed in that office. He shall have it for life, and not durante bene placito--during pleasure (Isa 22:23): I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, not to be removed or cut down. Thus lasting shall the honour be that comes from God to all those who use it for him. Our Lord Jesus is as a nail in a sure place: his kingdom cannot be shaken, and he himself is still the same.

3. That he should be a great blessing in his office; and it is this that crowns the favours here conferred upon him. God makes his name great, for he shall be a blessing, Ge 12:2.

(1.) He shall be a blessing to his country (Isa 22:21): He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. he shall take care not only of the affairs of the king's household, but of all the public interests in Jerusalem and Judah. Note, Rulers should be fathers to those that are under their government, to teach them with wisdom, rule them with love, and correct what is amiss with tenderness, to protect them and provide for them, and be solicitous about them as a man is for his own children and family. It is happy with a people when the court, the city, and the country, have no separate interests, but all centre in the same, so

that the courtiers are true patriots, and whom the court blesses the country has reason to bless too; and when those who are fathers to Jerusalem, the royal city, are no less so to the house of Judah.

(2.) He shall be a blessing to his family (Isa 22:23,24): He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. The consummate wisdom and virtue which recommended him to this great trust made him the honour of his family, which probably was very considerable before, but now became much more so. Children should aim to be a credit to their parents and relations. The honour men reflect upon their families by their piety and usefulness is more to be valued than that which they derive from their families by their names and titles. Eliakim being preferred, all the glory of his father's house was hung upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves bowed to his. Observe, The glory of this world gives a man no intrinsic worth or excellency; it is but hung upon him as an appurtenance, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to a nail in a sure place, in pursuance of which comparison all the relations of his family (which, it is likely, were numerous, and that was the glory of it) are said to have a dependence upon him, as in a house the vessels that have handles to them are hung up upon nails and pins.

It intimates likewise that he shall generously take care of them all, and bear the weight of that care: All the vessels, not only the flagons, but the cups, the vessels of small quantity, the meanest that belong to his family, shall be provided for by him. See what a burden those bring upon themselves that undertake great trusts; they little think how many and how much will hand upon them if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus, having the key of the house of David, is as a nail in a sure place, and all the glory of his father's house hangs upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him; even the meanest that belong to his church are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perish, nor

that concern fall to the ground, though ever so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

21 and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy
girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall
be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.
22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so
he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none
shall open.
23 And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a
glorious throne to his father's house.
24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house,
the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the
vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.
25 In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in
the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden
that *was* upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken
it.

Isaiah-23

The Oracle concerning Tyre

1 The burden of Tyre.
Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no
house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to
them.

Tyre being a sea-port town, this prophecy of its overthrow fitly begins and ends with, Howl, you ships of Tarshish; for all its business, wealth, and honour, depended upon its shipping; if that be ruined, they will be all undone. Observe,

I. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice of that her fall may appear the more dismal.

1. The merchants of Zidon, who traded at sea, had at first replenished her, Isa 23:2. Zidon was the more ancient city, situated upon the same sea-cost, a few leagues more to the north,

and Tyre was at first only a colony of that; but the daughter had outgrown the mother, and become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities to think how they were at first replenished.

2. Egypt had helped very much to raise her, Isa 23:3. Sihor was the river of Egypt: by that river, and the ocean into which it ran, the Egyptians traded with Tyre; and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, are as much the harvest to trading towns as that of hay and corn is to the country; and sometimes the harvest of the river proves a better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river.

3. She had become the mart of the nations, the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at certain times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, Eze 27:2,3, &c. See how the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God upon it, makes rich. Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going than those that plough the waters.

4. She was a joyous city, noted for mirth and jollity, Isa 23:7. Those that were so disposed might find there all manner of sports and diversions, all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, balls, and plays, and operas, and every thing of that kind that a man had a fancy to. This made them secure and proud, and they despised the country people, who neither knew nor relished any joys of that nature. This also made them very loth to believe and consider what warnings God gave them by his servants; they were too merry to mind them. Her antiquity likewise was of ancient days, and she was proud of that, and that helped to make her secure; as if because she had been a city time out of mind,

and her antiquity had been of ancient days, therefore she must continue a city time without end, and her continuance must be to the days of eternity.

5. She was a crowning city (Isa 23:8), that crowned herself. Such were the power and pomp of her magistrates that they crowned those who had dependence on her and dealings with her. It is explained in the following words: Her merchants are princes, and live like princes for the ease and state they take; and her traffickers, whatever country they go to, are the honourable of the earth, who are respected by all. How slightly soever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems formerly, and among the wisest nations, there were merchants, and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

2 Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of
Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.
3 And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, *is* her
revenue; and she is a mart of nations.
4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, *even* the
strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children,
neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.

Here is Tyre falling. It does not appear that she brought trouble upon herself by provoking her neighbours with her quarrels, but rather by tempting them with her wealth; but, if it was this that induced Nebuchadnezzar to fall upon Tyre, he was disappointed; for after it had stood out a siege of thirteen years, and could hold out no longer, the inhabitants got away by sea, with their families and goods, to other places where they had an interest, and left Nebuchadnezzar nothing but the bare city. See a history of Tyre in Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, lib. 2. cap. 7. sect. 3, 43. page. 283, which will give much light to this prophecy and that in Ezekiel concerning Tyre.

1. See how the destruction of Tyre is here foretold.

(1.) The haven shall be no convenient harbour for the reception of the ships of Tarshish, but all laid waste

(1.), so that there shall be no house, no dock for the ships to ride in, no inns, or public houses for the seamen, no entering into the port. Perhaps it was choked with sand or blocked up by the enemy. Or, Tyre being destroyed and laid waste, the ships that used to come from Tarshish and Chittim into that port shall now no more enter in; for it is revealed or made known to them, they have received the dismal news, that Tyre is destroyed and laid waste; so that there is now no more business for them there. See how it is in this world; those that are spoiled by their enemies are commonly slighted by their old friends.

(2.) The inhabitants are struck with astonishment. Tyre was an island. The inhabitants of it, who had made a mighty noise and bustle in the world, and revelled with loud huzzas, shall now be still and silent (Isa 23:2); they shall sit down as mourners, so overwhelmed with grief that they shall not be able to express it. Their proud boasts of themselves, and defiances of their neighbours, shall be silenced. God can soon quiet those, and strike them dumb, that are the noisy busy people of the world. Be still; for God will do his work (Ps 46:10,Zec 2:13), and you cannot resist him.

(3.) The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them: Zidon is ashamed (Isa 23:4), by whom Tyre was at first replenished; for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there the strength of the sea, a high spring-tide, proclaimed saying, "I travail not, nor bring forth children now, as I have done. I do not now, as I used to do, bring ship-loads of young people to Tyre, to be bred up there in trade and business," which was the thing that had made Tyre so rich and populous. Or the sea, that used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall not be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up.

Egypt indeed was a much larger and more considerable kingdom than Tyre was; and yet Tyre had so large a correspondence, upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain, upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and not long after were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, Isa 23:5. Or, as some read it, When the report shall reach to the Egyptians they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre, both because of the loss of their trade with that city and because it was a threatening step towards their own ruin; when their neighbour's house was on fire their own was in danger.

(4.) The merchants, as many as could, should transmit their effects to other places, and abandon Tyre, where they had raised their estates, and thought they had made them sure (Isa 23:6): "You that have long been inhabitants of this isle" (for it lay off in the sea about half a mile from the continent); "It is time to howl now, for you must pass over to Tarshish. The best course you can take is to make the best of your way to Tarshish, to the sea" (to Taressus, a city in Spain; so some), "or to some other of your plantations." Those that think their mountain stands strong, and cannot be moved, will find that here they have no continuing city. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed.

(5.) Those that could not make their escape must expect no other than to be carried into captivity; for it was the way of conquerors, in those times, to take those they conquered to be bondmen in their own country, and send of their own to be freemen in theirs (Isa 23:7): Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn; they shall be hurried away on foot into captivity, and many a weary step they shall take towards their own misery. Those that have lived in the greatest pomp and splendour know not what hardships they may be reduced to before they die.

(6.) Many of those that attempted to escape should be pursued and fall into the hands of the enemy. Tyre shall pass through

her land as a river (Isa 23:10), running down, one company after another, into the ocean or abyss of misery. Or, though they hasten away as a river, with the greatest swiftness, hoping to outrun the danger, yet there is no more strength; they are quickly tired, and cannot get forward, but fall an easy prey into the hands of the enemy. And, as Tyre has no more strength, so her sister Zidon has no more comfort (Isa 23:12): "Thou shalt no more rejoice, O oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon, that art now ready to be overpowered by the victorious Chaldeans! Thy turn is next; therefore arise; pass over to Chittim; flee to Greece, to Italy, any where to shift for thy own safety; yet there also shalt thou have no rest; thy enemies shall disturb thee, and thy own fears shall disquiet thee, where thou hopedst to find some repose." Note, We deceive ourselves if we promise ourselves rest any where in this world. Those that are uneasy in one place will be so in another; and, when God's judgments pursue sinners, they will overtake them.

2. But whence shall all this trouble come?

(1.) God will be the author of it; it is a destruction from the Almighty. It will be asked (Isa 23:8), "Who has taken this counsel against Tyre? Who has contrived it? Who has resolved it? Who can find in his heart to lay such a stately lovely city in ruins? And how is it possible that its ruin should be effected?" To this it will be answered,

[1.] God has designed it, who is infinitely wise and just, and never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures (Isa 23:9). The Lord of hosts, that has all things at his disposal and gives not account of any of his matters, he has purposed it. It shall be done according to the counsel of his will; and that which he aims at herein is to stain the pride of all glory, to pollute it, profane it, and throw it to be trodden upon; and to bring into contempt and make despicable all the honourable ones of the earth, that they may not admire themselves and be admired by others as usual. God did not bring those calamities

upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to show an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other sins, no doubt, reigned among them--idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride is fastened upon as that which was the particular ground of God's controversy with Tyre; for he resists the proud. All the world observing and being surprised at the desolation of Tyre, we have here an exposition of it. God tells the world what he meant by it.

First, He designed to convince men of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly glory, to show them what a withering, fading, perishing thing it is even when it seems most substantial. It were well if men would be thoroughly taught this lesson, though it were at the expense of so great a destruction. Are men's learning and wealth, their pomp and power, their interest in, and influence upon, all about them, their glory? Are their stately houses, rich furniture, and splendid appearances, their glory? Look up on the ruins of Tyre, and see all this glory stained, and sullied, and buried in the dust. The honourable ones of heaven will be for ever such; but see the grandees of Tyre, some fled into banishment, others forced into captivity, and all impoverished, and you will conclude that the honourable of the earth, even the most honourable, know not how soon they may be brought into contempt.

Secondly, He designed hereby to prevent their being proud of that glory, their being puffed up, and confident of the continuance of it. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride; for it proclaims to all the world that he who exalts himself shall be abased.

[2.] God will do it, who has all power in his hand and can do it effectually (Isa 23:11): He stretched out his hand over the sea. He has done so many a time, witness the dividing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh in it. He has often shaken the kingdoms that were most secure; and he has now given

commandment concerning this merchant-city, to destroy the strongholds thereof. As its beauty shall not intercede for it, but that shall be stained, so its strength shall not protect it, but that shall be broken. If any think it strange that a city so well fortified, and that has so many powerful allies, should be so totally ruined, let them know that it is the Lord of hosts that has given a commandment to destroy the strongholds thereof: and who can gainsay his orders or hinder the execution of them?

(2.) The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of it (Isa 23:13): Behold the land of the Chaldeans; how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians. Though their own hands founded it, set up the towers of Babylon, and raised up its palaces, yet the Assyrians brought it to ruin, whence the Tyrians might infer that as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babel was built by the Assyrians for those that dwelt in the wilderness. It may be rendered for the ships (the Assyrians founded it for ships and shipmen that traffic upon those vast rivers Tigris and Euphrates to the Persian and Indian seas), for men of the desert, for Babylon is called the desert of the sea, Isa 21:1. Thus Tyrus was built upon the sea for the like purpose. But the Assyrians (says Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin, now lately, in Hezekiah's time, and so shall Tyre hereafter be brought to ruin by Nebuchadnezzar. If we looked more upon the falling and withering of others, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.

5 As at the report concerning Egypt, *so* shall they be sorely pained at
the report of Tyre.
6 Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.
7 *Is* this your joyous *city*, whose antiquity *is* of ancient days? her own
feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.
8 Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning *city*, whose
merchants *are* princes, whose traffickers *are* the honorable of the
earth?
9 The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory,
and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.

10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: *there is* no more strength.

11 He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant *city,* to destroy the strongholds thereof.

12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.

13 Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, *till* the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; *and* he brought it to ruin.

14 Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

15 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot.

Here is, the time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Tyre, which were not to be perpetual desolations: Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, Isa 23:15. So long it shall lie neglected and buried in obscurity. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar much about the time that Jerusalem was, and lay as long as it did in its ruins. See the folly of that proud ambitious conqueror. What the richer, what the stronger, was he for making himself master of Tyre, when all the inhabitants were driven out of it and he had none of his own subjects to spare for the replenishing and fortifying of it? It is surprising to see what pleasure men could take in destroying cities and making their memorial perish with them, Ps 9:6. He trampled on the pride of Tyre, and therein served God's purpose; but with greater pride, for which God soon after humbled him.

16 Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.

17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

A prophecy of the restoration of Tyre to its glory again: After the end of seventy years, according to the years of one king, or one dynasty or family of kings, that of Nebuchadnezzar; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end. And we may presume that Cyrus at the same time when he released the Jews, and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre. Thus the prosperity and adversity of places, as well as persons, are set the one over against the other, that the most glorious cities may not be secure nor the most ruinous despair. It is foretold,

1. That God's providence shall gain smile upon this ruined city (Isa 23:17): The Lord will visit Tyre in mercy; for, though he contend, he will not contend for ever. It is not said, Her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with (they have forgotten her); but, The Lord shall visit her by some unthought-of turn; he shall cause his indignation towards her to cease, and then things will run of course in their former channel.

2. That she shall use her best endeavours to recover her trade again. She shall sing as a harlot, that has been some time under correction for her lewdness; but, when she is set at liberty (so violent is the bent of corruption), she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians having returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thereupon, they shall contrive how to force a trade, shall procure the best choice of goods, under-sell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing, takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night, serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs.

These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly, and moderately, and modestly used; but those that value themselves upon their virtue should not be over-fond of them, nor ambitious

to excel in them, because, whatever they are now, anciently they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication (that is, she shall have dealings in trade, for the prophet carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the world that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritual whoredom, and therefore covetous people are called adulterers and adulteresses (Jam 4:4), and covetousness is spiritual idolatry.

3. That, having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly; and this good she should get by her calamities (Isa 23:18): Her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord. The trade of Tyre, and all the gains of her trade, shall be devoted to God and to his honour and employed in his service. It shall not be treasured and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride and the support of their carnal confidence; but it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families shall be for those that dwell before the Lord, for the priests, the Lord's ministers, that attend in his temple at Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur, but that they and theirs may eat sufficiently, may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration, and that they may have, not rich and fine clothing, but durable clothing, that which is strong and lasting, clothing for old men (so some read it), as if the priests, though they were young, must wear such plain grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now,

(1.) This supposes that religion should be set up in New Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God and into communion with the Israel of God. Perhaps their being fellow-captives with the Jews in Babylon (who had prophets with them there) disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry: and

when they were released with them, and as they had reason to believe for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, Ne 13:16. Tyre and Sidon were better disposed to religion in Christ's time than the cities of Israel; for, if Christ had gone among them, they would have repented, Mt 11:21. And we meet with Christians at Tyre (Ac 21:3,4), and, many years after, did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbin refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah.

(2.) It directs those that have estates to make use of them in the service of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesmen and the hire of the day-labourers shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise (the employment we follow) and the hire (the gain of our employments) must be holiness to the Lord, alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the high priest (Ex 39:30), and to the separation of the tithe under the law, Le 27:30. See a promise like this referring to gospel times, Zec 14:20,21. We must first give up ourselves to be holiness to the Lord before what we do, or have, or get, can be so. When we abide with God in our particular callings, and do common actions after a godly sort--when we abound in works of piety and charity, are liberal in relieving the poor, and supporting the ministry, and encouraging the gospel--then our merchandise and our hire are holiness to the Lord, if we sincerely look at his glory in them. And our wealth need not be treasured and laid up on earth; for it is treasured and laid up in heaven, in bags that wax not old, Lu 12:33.

18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Isaiah-24

The Lord's Judgment on the Earth

1 Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste,
and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants
thereof.

It is a very dark and melancholy scene that this prophecy presents to our view; turn our eyes which way we will, every thing looks dismal. The threatened desolations are here described in a great variety of expressions to the same purport, and all aggravating.

I The earth is stripped of all its ornaments and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made empty and waste (Isa 24:1), as if it were reduced to its first chaos, Tohu and Bohu, nothing but confusion and emptiness again (Ge 1:2), without form and void. It is true earth sometimes signifies the land, and so the same word eretz is here translated (Isa 24:3): The land shall be utterly emptied and utterly spoiled; but I see not why it should not there, as well as Isa 24:1, be translated the earth; for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land it has something joined to it, or at least not far from it, which does so appropriate it; as the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan, or this land, or ours, or yours, or the like.

It might indeed refer to some particular country, and an ambiguous word might be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves, and our own hands, what the scripture says in general of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all things here below; but it should seem designed to speak what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how soon, happen to our own, and what is the general character of all earthly things: they are empty of all solid comfort and satisfaction; a little thing makes them waste. We often see numerous families, and plentiful estates, utterly emptied and utterly spoiled, by one

judgment or other, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down; the earth has become quite a different thing to man from what it was when God made it to be his habitation. Sin has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof. The rebellion at Babel was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know nothing of one another! To the same purport is Isa 24:4. The earth mourns, and fades away; it disappoints those that placed their happiness in it and raised their expectations high from it, and proves not what they promised themselves it would be.

The whole world languishes and fades away, as hastening towards a dissolution. It is, at the best, like a flower, which withers in the hands of those that please themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bosoms. And, as the earth itself grows old, so those that dwell therein are desolate; men carry crazy sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confined by affliction, Isa 24:6. When the earth languishes, and is not so fruitful as it used to be, then those that dwell therein, that make it their home, and rest, and portion, are desolate; whereas those that by faith dwell in God can rejoice in him even when the fir-tree does not blossom. If we look abroad, and see in how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarcely suffice to bury the dead, perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means when he says, The inhabitants of the earth are burned, or consumed, some by one disease, others by another, and there are but few men left, in comparison. Note, The world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world; and the children of men in it are but of few days, and full of trouble.

II. It is God that brings all these calamities upon the earth. The Lord that made the earth, and made it fruitful and beautiful, for the service and comfort of man, now makes it empty and waste

(Isa 24:1), for its Creator is and will be its Judge; he has an incontestable right to pass sentence upon it and an irresistible power to execute that sentence. It is the Lord that has spoken this word, and he will do the work (Isa 24:3); it is his curse that has devoured the earth (Isa 24:6), the general curse which sin brought upon the ground for man's sake (Ge 3:17), and all the particular curses which families and countries bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty and lays all waste; those whom he curses are cursed indeed.

2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.

Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities (Isa 24:2): It shall be as with the people, so with the priest, &c. This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like. There is one event to those of very different stations; time and chance happen to them all. It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleases he can make them universal, so that none shall escape them or be exempt from them; whether men have little or much, they shall lose it all. Those of the meaner rank smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It shall be all alike,

1. With high and low: As with the people, so with the priest, or prince. The dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence due to both, shall not secure them. The faces of elders are not honoured, La 5:12. The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people; and, if their character served not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? In both it is like people, like priest, Ho 4:8,9.

2. With bond and free: As with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress. They have all corrupted their way, and therefore will all be made miserable when the earth is made waste. 3. With rich and poor. Those that have money before-hand, that are purchasing, and letting out money to interest, will fare no better than those that are so impoverished that they are forced to sell their estates and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment in which rich and poor meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be set upon a level with them. The rich man's wealth is his strong city in his own conceit; but it does not always prove so.

3 The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the
Lord hath spoken this word.

4 The earth mourneth *and* fadeth away, the world languisheth *and*
fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

These judgments shall humble men's pride and mar their mirth. When the earth is made empty,

1. It is a great mortification to men's pride (Isa 24:4): The haughty people of the earth do languish; for they have lost that which supported their pride, and for which they magnified themselves. As for those that have held their heads highest, God can make them hang the head.

2. It is a great damp to men's jollity. This is enlarged upon much (Isa 24:7-9): All the merry-hearted do sigh. Such is the nature of carnal mirth, it is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, Ec 7:6. Great laughters commonly end in a sigh. Those that make the world their chief joy cannot rejoice ever more. When God sends his judgments into the earth he designs thereby to make those serious that were wholly addicted to their pleasures. Let your laughter be turned into mourning. When the earth is emptied the noise of those that rejoice in it ends. Carnal joy is a noisy thing; but the noise of it will soon be at an end, and the end

of it is heaviness. Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both:--

(1.) Drinking: The new wine mourns; it has grown sour for want of drinking; for, how proper soever it may be for the heavy heart (Pr 31:6), it does not relish to them as it does to the merry-hearted. The vine languishes, and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore the merry-hearted do sigh; for they know no other gladness than that of their corn, and wine, and oil increasing (Ps 4:7), and, if you destroy their vines and their fig-trees, you make all their mirth to cease, Ho 2:11,12. They shall not now drink wine with a song and with huzzas, as they used to, but rather drink it with a sigh; nay, Strong drink shall be bitter to those that drink it, because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or, through sickness, they have lost the relish of it. God has many ways to embitter wine and strong drink to those that love them and have the highest gust of them: distemper of body, anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country, will make the strong drink bitter and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid.

(2.) Music: The mirth of tabrets ceases, and the joy of the harp, which used to be at their feasts, Isa 5:12. The captives in Babylon hang their harps on the willow trees. In short, All joy is darkened; there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor has any one power to force a smile; all the mirth of the land is gone (Isa 24:11); and, if it was that mirth which Solomon calls madness, there is no great loss of it.

5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth. The earth is made empty, and fades away, because it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof (Isa 24:5); it is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God. Such is the filthy nature of sin that it defiles the earth itself under the sinful inhabitants thereof, and it is rendered unpleasant in the

eyes of God and good men. See Le 18:25,27,28. Blood, in particular, defiles the land, Nu 35:33. The earth never spues out its inhabitants till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done?

1. They have transgressed the laws of their creation, not answered the ends of it. The bonds of the law of nature have been broken by them, and they have cast from them the cords of their obligations to the God of nature.

2. They have changed the ordinances of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that. They have neglected the ordinances (so some read it), and have made no conscience of observing them. They have passed over the laws, in the commission of sin, and have passed by the ordinance, in the omission of duty.

3. Herein they have broken the everlasting covenant, which is a perpetual bond and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing. It is God's wonderful condescension that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant-way, to do them good, and thereby oblige them to do him service. Even those that had no benefit by God's covenant with Abraham had benefit by his covenant with Noah and his sons, which is called an everlasting covenant, his covenant with day and night; but they observe not the precepts of the sons of Noah, they acknowledge not God's goodness in the day and night, nor study to make him any grateful returns, and so break the everlasting covenant and defeat the gracious designs and intentions of it.

6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh.

8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.

9 They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter
to them that drink it.
10 The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that
no man may come in.

The cities will in a particular manner feel from these desolations of the country (Isa 24:10): The city of confusion is broken, is broken down (so we read it); it lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but by the confusion that the inhabitants are in. Every house is shut up, perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are few men left, Isa 24:6. Houses infected are usually shut up that no man may come in. Or they are shut up because they are deserted and uninhabited. There is a crying for wine, that is, for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is likely to be no wine. In the city, in Jerusalem itself, that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but desolation; grass shall grow in the streets, and the gate is smitten with destruction (Isa 24:12); all that used to pass and repass through the gate are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation!

11 *There is* a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the
mirth of the land is gone.
12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with
destruction.
13 When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people,
there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, *and* as the gleaning
grapes when the vintage is done.

Here is mercy remembered in the midst of wrath. In Judah and Jerusalem, and the neighbouring countries, when they are overrun by the enemy, Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar, there shall be a remnant preserved from the general ruin, and it shall be a devout and pious remnant. And this method God usually observes when his judgments are abroad; he does not make a full end, Isa 6:13. Or we may take it thus: Though the greatest part of mankind have all their comfort ruined by the emptying of the earth, and the making of that desolate, yet there are some few

who understand their interests better, who have laid up their treasure in heaven and not in things below, and therefore can keep up their comfort and joy in God even when the earth mourns and fades away. Observe,

The small number of this remnant, Isa 24:13. When all goes to ruin there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleaning grapes, here and there one who shall escape the common calamity (as Noah and his family when the old world was drowned), that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of the ruins of all their creature comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord (Hab 3:16-18), who, when all faces gather blackness, can lift up their heads with joy, Lu 21:26,28. These few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleanings of the olive-tree; and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows those that are his; the world does not.

14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea.

The great devotion of this remnant, which is the greater for their having so narrowly escaped this great destruction (Isa 24:14): They shall lift up their voice; they shall sing.

1. They shall sing for joy in their deliverance. When the mirth of carnal worldlings ceases the joy of the saints is as lively as ever; when the merry-hearted do sigh because the vine languishes the upright-hearted do sing because the covenant of grace, the fountain of their comforts and the foundation of their hopes, never fails. Those that rejoice in the Lord can rejoice in tribulation, and by faith may be in triumphs when all about them are in tears.

2. They shall sing to the glory and praise of God, shall sing not only for the mercy but for the majesty of the Lord. Their songs are awful and serious, and in their spiritual joys they have a reverend regard to the greatness of God, and keep at a humble distance when they attend him with their praises. The majesty of the Lord, which is matter of terror to wicked people,

furnishes the saints with songs of praise. They shall sing for the magnificence, or transcendent excellency, of the Lord, shown both in his judgments and in his mercies; for we must sing, and sing unto him, of both, Ps 101:1. Those who have made, or are making, their escape from the land (that being emptied and made desolate) to the sea and the isles of the sea, shall thence cry aloud; their dispersion shall help to spread the knowledge of God, and they shall make even remote shores to ring with his praises. It is much for the honour of God if those who fear him rejoice in him, and praise him, even in the most melancholy times.

15 Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, *even* the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

Their holy zeal to excite others to the same devotion (Isa 24:15); they encourage their fellow-sufferers to do likewise.

1. Those who are in the fires, in the furnace of affliction, those fires by which the inhabitants of the earth are burned, Isa 24:6. Or in the valleys, the low, dark, dirty places.

2. Those who are in the isles of the sea, whither they are banished, or are forced to flee for shelter, and hide themselves remote from all their friends. They went through fire and water (Ps 66:12); yet in both let them glorify the Lord, and glory him as the Lord God of Israel. Those who through grace can glory in tribulation ought to glorify God in tribulation, and give him thanks for their comforts, which abound as their afflictions do abound. We must in every fire, even the hottest, in every isle, even the remotest, keep up our good thoughts of God. When, though he slay us, yet we trust in him--when, though for his sake we are killed all the day long, yet none of these things move us--then we glorify the Lord in the fires. Thus the three children, and the martyrs that sang at the stake.

16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, *even* glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

I. Comfort to saints. They may be driven, by the common calamities of the places where they live, into the uttermost parts of the earth, or perhaps they are forced thither for their religion; but there they are singing, not sighing. Thence have we heard songs, and it is a comfort to us to hear them, to hear that good people carry their religion along with them even to the most distant regions, to hear that God visits them there and gives encouragement to hope that he will gather them thence, De 30:4. And this is their song, even glory to the righteous: the word is singular, and may refer to the righteous God, who is just in all he has brought upon us.

This is glorifying the Lord in the fires. Or the meaning may be, "These songs redound to the glory or beauty of the righteous that sing them." We do the greatest honour imaginable to ourselves when we employ ourselves in honouring and glorifying God. This may have reference to the sending of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, as far as this island of ours, in the days of the Messiah, the glad tidings of which are echoed back in songs heard thence, from churches planted there, even glory to the righteous God, agreeing with the angels' song, Glory be to God in the highest, and glory to all righteous men; for the work of redemption was ordained before the world for our glory.

II. Terror to sinners. The prophet, having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth: "But I said, My leanness! my leanness! woe unto me! The very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean," Isa 24:16. He foresees,

1 The prevalency of sin, that iniquity should abound (Isa 24:16): The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; this is itself a

judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments.

(1.) Men are false to one another; there is no faith in man, but a universal dishonesty. Truth, that sacred bond of society, has departed, and there is nothing but treachery in men's dealings. See Jer 9:1,2.

(2.) They are all false to their God; as to him, and their covenant with him, the children of men are all treacherous dealers, and have dealt very treacherously with their God, in departing from their allegiance to him. This is the original, and this the aggravation, of the sin of the world; and, when men have been false to their God, how should they be true to any other?

2 The prevalency of wrath and judgment for that sin.

(1.) The inhabitants of the earth will be pursued from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other (Isa 24:17,18): Fear, and the pit, and the snare (fear of the pit and the snare) are upon them wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil they may suddenly be snared in, Ec 9:12. These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant paranomasia, or, as we now scornfully call it, a jungle of words: Pachad, and Pachath, and Pach; but the meaning is plain (Isa 24:18), that evil pursues sinners (Pr 13:21), that the curse shall overtake the disobedient (De 28:15), that those who are secure because they have escaped one judgment know not how soon another may arrest them. What this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with another makes part of the judgment of Moab, Jer 48:43. But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life that when we seek to avoid one mischief we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure.

(2.) The earth itself will be shaken to pieces. It will be literally so at last, when all the works therein shall be burnt up; and it is often figuratively so before that period. The windows from on high are open to pour down wrath, as in the universal deluge. Upon the wicked God shall rain snares (Ps 11:6); and, the fountains of the great deep being broken up, the foundations of the earth do shake of course, the frame of nature is unhinged, and all is in confusion. See how elegantly this is expressed (Isa 24:19,20): The earth is utterly broken down; it is clean dissolved; it is moved exceedingly, moved out of its place. God shakes heaven and earth, Hag 2:6. See the misery of those who lay up their treasure in the things of the earth and mind those things; they place their confidence in that which will shortly be utterly broken down and dissolved. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard; so unsteady, so uncertain, are all the motions of these things.

Worldly men dwell in it as in a palace, as in a castle, as in an impregnable tower; but it shall be removed like a cottage, so easily, so suddenly, and with so little loss to the great landlord. The pulling down of the earth will be but like the pulling down of a cottage, which the country is willing to be rid of, because it does but harbour beggars; and therefore no care is taken to rebuild it: It shall fall, and not rise again; but there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which shall dwell nothing but righteousness. But what is it that shakes the earth thus and sinks it? It is the transgression thereof that shall be heavy upon it. Note, Sin is a burden to the whole creation; it is a heavy burden, a burden under which it groans now and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that talent of lead, Zec 5:7,8.

(3.) God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth (Isa 24:21): He will punish the host of the high ones. Hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men; what can a host of high ones do with their combined force when the Most High, the Lord of hosts,

contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederacies? The high ones, that are on high, that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of the reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads.

The kings of the earth shall now be reckoned with upon the earth, to show that verily there is a God that judges in the earth and will render to the proudest of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth comfort themselves with this, that though they cannot, dare not, must not, resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dunghill: for the earth they are kings of is in the eye of God no better. This is general only. It is particularly foretold (Isa 24:22) that they shall be gathered together as prisoners, convicted condemned prisoners, are gathered in the pit, or dungeon, and there they shall be shut up under close confinement. The kings and high ones, who took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the free man glory in his freedom, any more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for. But after many days they shall be visited, either,

[1.] They shall be visited in wrath; it is the same word, in another form, that is used (Isa 24:21), the Lord shall punish them; they shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners are, and as fallen angels are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, Jude 1:6. Let this account for the delays of divine vengeance; sentence is not executed speedily, because execution-day has not yet come, and perhaps will not come till after many days; but it is certain that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but shall be brought forth

to the day of wrath, Job 21:30. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time.

[2.] They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall again obtain, if not their dignity, yet their liberty. Nebuchadnezzar, in his conquests, made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon, and, among the rest, Jehoiachin King of Judah; but after many days, when Nebuchadnezzar's head was laid, his son visited them, and granted (as should seem) some reviving to them all in their bondage; for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachin that he set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him, Jer 52:32. If we apply this to the general state of mankind, it imports a revolution of conditions; those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved, after many days, that none in this world may be secure though their condition be ever so prosperous, nor any despair though their condition be ever so deplorable.

3. Glory to God in all this, Isa 24:23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled and brought down,

(1.) Then it shall appear, beyond contradiction, that the Lord reigns, which is always true, but not always alike evident. When the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression, then it is proclaimed and proved to all the world that God is King of kings--King above them, by whom they are accountable--that he reigns as Lord of hosts, of all hosts, of their hosts,--that he reigns in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, in his church, for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded, reigns in his word and ordinances,--that he reigns before his ancients, before all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eye upon all the out-goings of his power and providence, and, in all these events, observe his hand. God's

ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often, when they have been perplexed, gone into the sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem, and acquainted themselves with his manifestations of himself there, shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence.

(2.) Then it shall appear, beyond comparison, that he reigns gloriously, in such brightness and lustre that the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, as the smaller lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men, who thought themselves to have as bright a lustre and as vast a dominion as the sun and moon, shall be ashamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them. Then shall their faces be filled with shame, that they may seek God's name. The eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but, when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against his and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be ashamed that ever they received the homage of their deluded worshippers. The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, the sun shall by his transcendent lustre be turned into darkness and the moon into blood.

17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *are* upon thee, O inhabitant of
the earth.
18 And it shall come to pass, *that* he who fleeth from the noise of the fear
shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the
pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high
are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.
19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the
earth is moved exceedingly.
20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be
removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy
upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones *that are* on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.
22 And they shall be gathered together, *as* prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.
23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

Isaiah-25

Praise for the Lord's Favor

1 O Lord, thou *art* my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful *things; thy* counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.

It is said in the close of the foregoing chapter that the Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously; now, in compliance with this, the prophet here speaks of the glorious majesty of his kingdom (Ps 145:12), and gives him the glory of it; and, however this prophecy might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look further, to the praises that should be offered up to God by the gospel church for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies and the comforts he has provided for all believers. Here,

I The prophet determines to praise God himself; for those that would stir up others should in the first place stir up themselves to praise God (Isa 25:1): "O Lord! thou art my God, a God in covenant with me." When God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them to tremble before him, a poor prophet can go to him, and, with a humble boldness, say, O Lord! thou art my God, and therefore I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name. Those that have the Lord for their God are bound to praise him; for therefore he took us to be his people

that we might be unto him for a name and for a praise, Jer 13:11. In praising God we exalt him; not that we can make him higher than he is, but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others than he does. See Ex 15:2.

2 For thou hast made of a city a heap; *of* a defensed city a ruin: a
palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built.

3 Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the
terrible nations shall fear thee.

He pleases himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God, Isa 25:3. "Therefore, because of the desolations thou hast made in the earth by thy providence (Ps 46:8) and the just vengeance thou hast taken on thy and thy church's enemies, therefore shall the strong people glorify thee in concert, and the city (the metropolis) of the terrible nations fear thee." This may be understood,

1. Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God. Those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have fought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, shall either be converted, and glorify God by joining with his people in his service, or at least convinced, so as to own themselves conquered. Those that have been the terror of the mighty shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or,

2. Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and by him, though before they were weak and trampled upon. God shall so visibly appear for and with those that fear him and glorify him that all shall acknowledge them a strong people and shall stand in awe of them. There was a time when many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them (Es 8:17), and when those that knew their God were strong and did exploits (Da 11:32), for which they glorified God.

4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in
his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when
the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm *against* the wall.

He observes what is, and ought to be, the matter of this praise. We and others must exalt God and praise him; for,

1. He has done wonders, according to the counsel of his own will, Isa 25:1. We exalt God by admiring what he has done as truly wonderful, wonderful proofs of his power beyond what any creature could perform, and wonderful proofs of his goodness beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These wonderful things, which are new and surprising to us, and altogether unthought of, are according to his counsels of old, devised by his wisdom and designed for his own glory and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence are according to God's eternal counsels (and those faithfulness and truth itself), all consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season.

2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power, of the mighty ones of the earth (Isa 25:2): "Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a heap of rubbish. Of many a defenced city, that thought itself well guarded by nature and art, and the multitude and courage of its militia, thou hast made a ruin." What created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? "Many a city so richly built that it might be called a palace, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts that it might be called a palace of strangers, thou hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again." This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once have gone to decay and are lost, and it is scarcely known (except by urns or coins digged up out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins! God hereby teaches us that here we have no continuing city and must therefore seek one to come which will never be a ruin or go to decay.

3. He has seasonably relieved and succoured his necessitous and distressed people (Isa 25:4): Thou has been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy. As God weakens the strong that are proud and secure, so he strengthens the weak that are humble and serious, and stay themselves upon him. Nay, he not only makes them strong, but he is himself their strength; for in him they strengthen themselves, and it is his favour that is the strength of their hearts. He is a strength to the needy in his distress, when he needs strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And, as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults. He is a refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient protection to his people in all weathers, hot and cold, wet and dry. The armour of righteousness serves both on the right hand and on the left, 2Co 6:7.

Whatever dangers or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most threatening and alarming God will then appear for the safety of his people: When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall. The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones; they do all they can to make themselves so to them. Their rage is like a blast of wind, loud, and blustering, and furious; but, like the wind, it is under a divine check; for God holds the winds in his fist, and God will be such a shelter to his people that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm beating on a ship tosses it, but that which beats on a wall never stirs it, Ps 76:10,138:7.

4. That he does and will shelter those that trust in him from the insolence of their proud oppressors (Isa 25:5): Thou shalt, or thou dost, bring down the noise of strangers; thou shalt abate and still it, as the heat in a dry place is abated and moderated by the shadow of a cloud interposing. The branch, or rather the son

or triumph, of the terrible ones shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note and lower their voice. Observe here,

(1.) The oppressors of God's people are called strangers; for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood, with them. They are called terrible ones; for so they affect to be, rather than amiable ones: they would rather be feared than loved.

(2.) Their insolence towards the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all; it is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by hectoring and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, Jer 46:17. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day; but where is it when the sun has set?

(3.) Their noise, and heat, and all their triumph, will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled and all their honours laid in the dust. The branches, even the top branches, of the terrible ones, will be broken off, and thrown to the dunghill.

(4.) If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to bear the burden and heat of the day, he will find some way or other to refresh them, as with the shadow of a cloud, that they may not be pressed above measure.

5 Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; *even* the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

6 And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things; a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

If we suppose (as many do) that this refers to the great joy which there should be in Zion and Jerusalem when the army of the Assyrians was routed by an angel, or when the Jews were released out of their captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of

some other equally surprising deliverance, yet we cannot avoid making it to look further, to the grace of the gospel and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection through Christ that the saying here written shall be brought to pass; then, and not till then (if we may believe St. Paul), it shall have its full accomplishment: Death is swallowed up in victory, 1Co 15:54. This is a key to the rest of the promises here connected together. And so we have here a prophecy of the salvation and the grace brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, 1Pe 1:10.

That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to show the grandeur of the master of the feast (Es 1:4); for this is intended to gratify the guests, and therefore, whereas all there was for show, all here is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and supplicants with God are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast, as Mt 22:1, &c., which seems to be borrowed from this prophecy.

1. God himself is the Master of the feast, and we may be sure he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. The Lord of hosts makes this feast.

2 The guests invited are all people, Gentiles as well as Jews. Go preach the gospel to every creature. There is enough for all, and whoever will may come, and partake freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges.

3. The place is Mount Zion. Thence the preaching of the gospel takes rise: the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel church is the Jerusalem that is above; there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests must go.

4. The provision is very rich, and every thing is of the best. It is a feast, which supposes abundance and variety; it is a continual

feast to believers, it is their own fault if it be not. It is a feast of fat things and full of marrow; so relishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf; and David has that pleasure in communion with God with which his soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. It is a feast of wines on the lees, the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel which, like wine soberly used, makes glad the heart and raises the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin and mourning for it, that they may drink and forget their misery (for that is the proper use of wine--it is a cordial for those that need it, Pr 31:5,6), may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake in the mists of which it had been so long lost and buried (Isa 25:7): He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering (the covering of the face) with which all people are covered (hood-winked or blind-folded) so that they cannot see their way nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as those of men condemned, or dead men. There is a veil spread over all nations, for they all sit in darkness; and no marvel, when the Jews themselves, among whom God was known, had a veil upon their hearts, 2Co 3:15. But this veil the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shining in the world, and the power of his Spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise those to spiritual life that have long been dead in trespasses and sins.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken *it*.

I. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered: He will swallow up death in victory, Isa 25:8.

1. Christ will himself, in his resurrection, triumph over death, will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up.

2 The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, embitters them, and stains the beauty of them.

3. Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy: O death! where is thy sting? 4. When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory; and it is the last enemy.

II. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy: The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. Those that mourn for sin shall be comforted and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided which is sufficient to counterbalance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and nowhere short of them, will fully be brought to pass this saying, as that before, for there it is that God shall wipe away all tears, Re 7:17,21:4. And there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no more death. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

III. That all the reproach cast upon religion and the serious professors of it shall be for ever rolled away: The rebuke of his

people, which they have long lain under, the calumnies and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them and trodden them down, shall be taken away. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced that they are not such as they have been invidiously characterized; and so their salvation from the injuries done them as such shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God does that for his people which takes away their reproach from among men. However, it will be done effectually at the great day; for the Lord has spoken it, who can, and will, make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both; for shortly both will be done away.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this *is* our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this *is* the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Here is, I The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses (Isa 25:9): It shall be said in that day, with a humble holy triumph and exultation, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him! Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be as life from the dead. With such transports of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer who looked for him, and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; and with such a triumphant song as this will glorified saints enter into the joy of their Lord.

1. God himself must have the glory of all: "Lo, this is our God, this is the Lord. This which is done is his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Herein he has done like himself, has magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness. Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve." Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in what God does for us and gives to us, but must pass through them to himself, who is the author and giver of them: This is our God. Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to

trust to? No, their rock is not as our rock. There is none like unto the God of Jerusalem.

2 The longer it has been expected the more welcome it is. "This is he whom we have waited for, in dependence upon his word of promise, and a full assurance that he would come in the set time, in due time, and therefore we were willing to tarry his time; and now we find it is not in vain to wait for him, for the mercy comes at last, with an abundant recompence for the delay."

3. It is matter of joy unspeakable: "We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. We that share in the benefits of it will concur in the joyful thanksgivings for it."

4. It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation: We have waited for him, and he will save us, will carry on what he has begun; for as for God, our God, his work is perfect.

10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.

11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to swim: and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands.

A prospect of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these.

1 The power of God shall be engaged for them and shall continue to take their part: In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, Isa 25:10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them and residence among them: his hand shall be continually over them, to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them, for their supply. Mount Zion is his rest for ever; here he will dwell.

2 The power of their enemies, which is engaged against them, shall be broken. Moab is here put for all the adversaries of God's people, that are vexatious to them; they shall all be trodden down or threshed (for then they beat out the corn by treading it) and shall be thrown out as straw to the dunghill, being good for nothing else. God having caused his hand to rest upon this mountain, it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and inactive; but he shall spread forth his hands, in the midst of his people, like one that swims, which intimates that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously,--that he will be doing for them on all sides,--that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them,--and that on their behalf he will be continually active, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold, particularly, what he shall do for them.

(1.) He shall bring down the pride of their enemies (and Moab was notoriously guilty of pride, Isa 16:6) by one humbling judgment after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of.

(2.) He shall bring down the spoils of their hands, shall take from them that which they have got by spoil and rapine. He shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God's Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief.

(3.) He shall ruin all their fortifications, Isa 25:12. Moab has his walls, and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust; and so those who trusted to them will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to Omnipotence, no fort so high but the arm of the Lord can overtop it and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death (spoken of Isa 25:8), his spoiling principalities and

powers in his cross (Col 2:15), his pulling down Satan's strong-holds by the preaching of his gospel (2Co 10:4), and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, Ps 110:1

12 And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down,
lay low, *and* bring to the ground, *even* to the dust.

Isaiah-26

A Song of Trust in the Lord's Protection

1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah;
We have a strong city;
salvation will *God* appoint *for* walls and bulwarks.

To the prophecies of gospel grace very fitly is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory and take to ourselves the comfort of that grace: In that day, the gospel day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old-Testament church was typical of (to some of which perhaps this has a primary reference), in that day this song shall be sung; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung in the land of Judah, which was a figure of the gospel church; for the gospel covenant is said to be made with the house of Judah, Heb 8:8. Glorious things are here said of the church of God.

I. That it is strongly fortified against those that are bad (Isa 26:1): We have a strong city. It is a city incorporated by the charter of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment; it is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a wall of fire round about it, so strong that none would have believed that an enemy could ever enter into the gates of Jerusalem, La 4:12. The church is a strong city, for it has walls and bulwarks, or counterscarps, and those of God's own appointing; for he has, in his promise, appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are

designed for salvation will find that to be their protection, 1Pe 1:4.

II. That it is richly replenished with those that are good, and they are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, Zec 12:5. The gates are here ordered to be opened, that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in, Isa 26:2. They had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now the laws that were made against them are repealed, and they have liberty to enter in again. Or, There is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God has done great things for any place or people he expects that thus they should render according to the benefit done unto them; they should be kind to his people, and take them under their protection and into their bosom. Note,

1. It is the character of righteous men that they keep the truths of God, a firm belief of which will have a commanding influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles fixed in the head will produce good resolutions in the heart and good practices in the life.

2. It is the interest of states to countenance such, and court them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

2 Open ye the gates,
that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.
3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace,
whose mind *is* stayed *on thee:*
because he trusteth in thee.

That all who belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour.

1. This is here the matter of a promise (Isa 26:3): Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace, inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times,

under all events; this peace shall he be put into, and kept in the possession of, whose mind is stayed upon God, because it trusts in him. It is the character of every good man that he trusts in God, puts himself under his guidance and government, and depends upon him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. Those that trust in God must have their minds stayed upon him, must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction in him; and such as do so God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad those shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, Ps 112:7.

2. It is the matter of a precept (Isa 26:4): "Let us make ourselves easy by trusting in the Lord for ever; since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise, but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever, at all times, when you have nothing else to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion, which will be for ever." Whatever we trust to the world for, it will be but for a moment: all we expect from it is confined within the limits of time. But what we trust in God for will last as long as we shall last. For in the Lord Jehovah-Jah, Jehovah, in him who was, and is, and is to come, there is a rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon; and the house built on that rock will stand in a storm. Those that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive from him, everlasting strength, strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is for ever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away nor change their confidence.

4 Trust ye in the Lord for ever:
for in the Lord Jehovah
is everlasting strength.
5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high;
the lofty city, he layeth it low;
he layeth it low, *even* to the ground;
he bringeth it *even* to the dust.

6 The foot shall tread it down,
even the feet of the poor,
and the steps of the needy.

Here the prophet further encourages us to trust in the Lord for ever, and to continue waiting on him; for,

I. He will make humble souls that trust in him to triumph over their proud enemies, Isa 26:5,6. Those that exalt themselves shall be abased: For he brings down those that dwell on high; and wherein they deal proudly he is, and will be, above them. Even the lofty city Babylon itself, or Nineveh, he lays it low, Isa 25:12. He can do it, be it ever so well fortified. He has often done it. He will do it, for he resists the proud. It is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by looking on the proud and abasing them, Job 40:12. But, on the contrary, those that humble themselves shall be exalted; for the feet of the poor shall tread upon the lofty cities, Isa 26:6. He does not say, Great armies shall tread them down; but, When God will have it done, even the feet of the poor shall do it, Mal 4:3. You shall tread down the wicked. Come, set your feet on the necks of these kings. See Ps 147:6,Ro 16:20.

II. He takes cognizance of the way of his people and has delight in it (Isa 26:7): The way of the just is evenness (so it may be read): it is their endeavour and constant care to walk with God in an even steady course of obedience and holy conversation. My foot stands in an even place, goes in an even path, Ps 26:12. And it is their happiness that God makes their way plain and easy before them: Thou, most upright, dost level (or make even) the path of the just, by preventing or removing those things that would be stumbling-blocks to them, so that nothing shall offend them, Ps 119:165. God weighs it (so we read it); he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the upright God will show himself upright.

7 The way of the just *is* uprightness:
thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have
we waited for thee;
the desire of *our* soul *is* to thy name, and
to the remembrance of thee.

I. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires towards him in the darkest and most discouraging times, Isa 26:8,9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even when God has frowned upon them,

1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him: "In the way of thy judgments we have still waited for thee; when thou hast corrected us we have looked to no other hand than thine to relieve us," as the servant looks only to the hand of his master, till he have mercy upon him, Ps 123:2. We cannot appeal from God's justice but to his mercy. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a road of judgments (so the word signifies), yet we must not be weary but continue waiting.

2. To send up holy desires towards him. Our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of conceit with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still the desire of our soul must be to his name and to the remembrance of him; and in the night, the darkest longest night of affliction, with our souls must we desire him.

(1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire must be that his name may be glorified, whatever becomes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for. "Father, glorify thy name, and we are satisfied."

(2.) Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure; and, though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be towards the remembrance of him and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind.

(3.) Our desires towards God must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him (Ps 42:1), and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought and the closest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it.

(4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction our desires must be towards God, as our sun and shield; for, however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the worse of him, nor cool in our love to him. (5.) If our desires be indeed towards God, we must give evidence that they are so by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. Those that would seek God and find him must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come ever so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

II. It is God's gracious design, in sending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him: When thy judgments are upon the earth, laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but even the inhabitants of the world, will learn righteousness, will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them, will repent of their own unrighteousness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; that is, judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect, and, though many continue obstinate, yet some even of the inhabitants of the world will profit by this discipline, and will learn righteousness; surely they will; they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of afflictions is to teach us righteousness; and blessed is the man whom God chastens, and thus teaches, Ps 94:12. Discite justitiam, moniti, et non temnere divos--Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from despising the gods.--Virgil.

9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night;

yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early:
for when thy judgments *are* in the earth,
the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
10 Let favor be showed to the wicked,
yet will he not learn righteousness:
in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and
will not behold the majesty of the Lord.

Those are wicked indeed that will not be wrought upon by the favourable methods God takes to subdue and reform them; and it is necessary that God should deal with them in a severe way by his judgments, which shall prevail to humble those that would not otherwise be humbled. Observe,

1. How sinners walk contrary to God, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reformation and to answer the intentions of them, Isa 26:10.

(1.) Favour is shown to them. They receive many mercies from God; he causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon them, nay, he prospers them, and into their hands he brings plentifully; they escape many of the strokes of God's judgments, which others less wicked than they have been cut off by; in some particular instances they seem to be remarkably favoured above their neighbours, and the design of all this is that they may be won upon to love and serve that God who thus favours them; and yet it is all in vain: They will not learn righteousness, will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God, and therefore it is requisite that God should send his judgments into the earth, to reckon with men for abused mercies.

(2.) They live in a land of uprightness, where religion is professed and is in reputation, where the word of God is preached, and where they have many good examples set them,--in a land of evenness, where there are not so many stumbling-blocks as in other places,--in a land of correction, where vice and profaneness are discountenanced and punished; yet there they will deal unjustly, and go on frowardly in their evil ways. Those

that do wickedly deal unjustly both with God and man, as well as with their own souls; and those that will not be reclaimed by the justice of the nation may expect the judgments of God upon them. Nor can those expect a place hereafter in the land of blessedness who now conform not to the laws and usages, nor improve the privileges and advantages, of the land of uprightness; and why do they not?

It is because they will not behold the majesty of the Lord, will not believe, will not consider, what a God of terrible majesty he is whose laws and justice they persist in the contempt of. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of his providence; but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. Even when we receive of the mercy of the Lord we must still behold the majesty of the Lord and his goodness.

(3.) God lifts up his hand to give them warning, that they may, by repentance and prayer, make their peace with him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them: They will not see, and none so blind as those who will not see, who shut their eyes against the clearest conviction of guilt and wrath, who ascribe that to chance, or common fate, which is manifestly a divine rebuke, who regard not the threatening symptoms of their own ruin, but cry Peace to themselves, when the righteous God is waging war with them.

2. How God will at length be too hard for them; for, when he judges, he will overcome: They will not see, but they shall see, shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel what now they will not believe, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it and the deliverances in which God will plead

his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy towards them, and their ill usage of such as deserved better treatment.

Note, Those that bear ill-will to God's people have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable is it; and, sooner or later, they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, They shall see and be confounded for the zeal of the people, by the zeal God will show for his people; when they shall be made to know how jealous God is for the honour and welfare of his people they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people and would not. Their doom therefore is that, since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, the fire of his enemies shall devour them, that is, the fire which is prepared for his enemies and with which they shall be devoured, the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, Those that are enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

11 Lord, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they
will not see:
but they shall see, and be ashamed for
their envy at the people;
yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.
12 Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us:
for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

The prophet in these verses looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both, and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe,

I. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church he finds,

1. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them and had done great things for them.

(1.) In general (Isa 26:12): Thou hast wrought all our works in us, or for us. Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to a good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts if at any time they be there, and that works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Acti, agimus--Being acted upon, we act. And if any kindness be shown us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us. Every creature, every business, that is in any way serviceable to our comfort, is made by him to be so; and sometimes he makes that to work for us which seemed to make against us.

(2.) In particular (Isa 26:15): "Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord! so that a little one has become a thousand (in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterwards in Canaan, so that they filled the land); and in this thou art glorified," for the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is therefore to be rejoiced in because it is the increase of those that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his rebukes.

(1.) The neighbouring nations had sometimes oppressed them and tyrannised over them (Isa 26:13): "O Lord our God! thou who hast the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that other lords besides thee have had dominion over us." Not only in the days of the Judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hand of their enemies, or rather, by their iniquities, they sold themselves, Isa 52:3-5. When they had

been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

It may be understood as a confession of sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitious laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols baals, lords) had dominion over them, besides God. But now they promise that it shall be so no more: "Henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name; we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed." The same may be our penitent reflection: Other lords, besides God, have had dominion over us; every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and it is has been long enough, and too long, that we have thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same therefore must be our pious resolution, that henceforth we will make mention of God's name only and by him only, that we will keep close to God and to our duty and never desert it.

(2.) They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies (Isa 26:15): "The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and removed to all the ends of the earth, driven out to the utmost parts of heaven," as is threatened, De 30:4,De 28:64. But observe, Between the mention of the increasing of them and that of the removing of them it is said, Thou art glorified; for the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

(3.) The prophet remembers that when they were thus oppressed and carried captive they cried unto God, which was a good evidence that they neither had quite forsaken him nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under (Isa 26:16): Lord, in trouble have

they visited thee. This was usual with the people of Israel, as we find frequently in the story of the Judges. When other lords had dominion over them they humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous, 2Ch 12:6. See here,

[1.] The need we have of afflictions. They are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, In trouble have they visited thee, it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him, as if, when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours.

[2.] The benefit we often have by afflictions. They bring us to God, quicken us to our duty, and show us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop, but now they pour out a prayer; it comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out a secret speech; so the margin. Praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him than we can be in public. In affliction those will seek God early who before sought him slowly, Ho 5:15. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer. "They poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out, when thy chastening was upon them." But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

(4.) He complains that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but that they had not been successful, Isa 26:17,18.

[1.] They had the throes and pangs they dreaded: "We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs; we have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves,

and our troubles have been increased by those attempts;" as when Moses came to deliver Israel the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail. So have we been in thy sight, O Lord! It was a comfort and satisfaction to them, in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight; he was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers. Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee, Ps 38:9. Whenever they came to present themselves before the Lord with their complaints and petitions they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail.

[2.] They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for: "We have been with child; we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes, and, when we have been in pain, have comforted ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, Joh 16:21. But, alas! we have as it were brought forth wind; it has proved a false conception; our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travailing ones; we have had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved abortive: We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, for ourselves or for our friends and allies, but rather have made our own case and theirs worse; neither have the inhabitants of the world, whom we have been contesting with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and arrogant as ever."

Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man, and yet for a great while may be left under a cloud, and the point may not be gained.

13 O Lord our God,
other lords besides thee have had dominion over us;
but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.
14 *They are* dead, they shall not live;

they are deceased, they shall not rise:
therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and
made all their memory to perish.

His prospects and hopes are very pleasant. In general, "Thou wilt ordain peace for us (Isa 26:12), that is, all that good which the necessity of our case calls for." What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining; and we may comfort ourselves with this, that, what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the end of those men is peace. And, if God by his Spirit work all our works in us, he will ordain peace for us (for the work of righteousness shall be peace), and that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God ordains; for, to those that have it, it shall be unchangeable as the ordinances of the day and of the night. Moreover, from what God has done for us, we may encourage ourselves to hope that he will yet further do us good. "Thou hast heard the desire of the humble, and therefore wilt (Ps 10:17); and, when this peace is ordained for us, then by thee only will we make mention of thy name (Isa 26:13); we will give the glory of it to thee only, and not to any other, and we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so." We cannot praise God's name but by his strength. Two things in particular the prophet here comforts the church with the prospect of:--

1 The amazing ruin of her enemies (Isa 26:14): They are dead, those other lords that have had dominion over us; their power is irrecoverably broken; they are quite cut off and extinguished: and they shall not live, shall never be able to hold up the head any more. Being deceased, they shall not rise, but, like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews they shall sink like a stone. Because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore, in pursuance of that sentence, God himself has visited them in wrath, as a righteous Judge, and has cut off both the men themselves (he has destroyed them) and the remembrance of them: they and their names are buried together

in the dust. He has made all their memory to perish; they are either forgotten or made mention of with detestation.

Note, The cause that is maintained in opposition to God and his kingdom among men, though it may prosper awhile, will certainly sink at last, and all that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors, comparing this with Isa 26:19, infer that the resurrection of the dead belong to the Jews only, and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better; we know that all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death.

2 The surprising resurrection of her friends, Isa 26:19. Though the church rejoices not in the birth of the man-child, of which she travailed in pain, but has as it were brought forth wind (Isa 26:18), yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equivalent: Thy dead men shall live; those who were thought to be dead, who had received a sentence of death within themselves, who were cast out as if they had been naturally dead, shall appear again in their former vigour.

A spirit of life from God shall enter into the slain witnesses, and they shall prophesy again, Re 11:11. The dry bones shall live, and become an exceedingly great army, Eze 37:10. Together with my dead body shall they arise. If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time shall have come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcase to which the eagles are gathered together. God owns it still for his, so does the prophet; but it shall arise, shall be rebuilt, and flourish again.

And therefore let the poor, desolate, melancholy remains of its inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, awake and sing; for they shall

see Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, a quiet habitation again, Isa 33:20. The dew of God's favour shall be to it as the evening dew to the herbs that were parched with the heat of the sun all day, shall revive and refresh them. And as the spring-dews, that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again, and the earth shall cast out the dead, as it casts the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored neither the dew of heaven nor the fatness of the earth shall be wanting to do their part towards the restoration. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated,

(1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, Hor. Hebr. in Joh. 12.24. "The Gentiles shall live; with my body shall they arise; that is, they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body (says he); they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall arise as part of him."

(2.) To the last resurrection, when dead saints shall live, and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he arose as the first-fruits, and believers shall arise by virtue of their union with him and their communion in his resurrection.

15 Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou
hast increased the nation;
thou art glorified:
thou hadst removed *it* far *unto* all the ends of the earth.
16 Lord, in trouble have they visited thee;
they poured out a prayer
when thy chastening *was* upon them.
17 Like as a woman with child,
that draweth near the time of her delivery,
is in pain, *and* crieth out in her pangs;

so have we been in thy sight, O Lord.
18 We have been with child, we have been in pain,
we have as it were brought forth wind;
we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth;
neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.
19 Thy dead *men* shall live,
together with my dead body shall they arise.
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:
for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and
the earth shall cast out the dead.
20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,
and shut thy doors about thee:
hide thyself as it were for a little moment,
until the indignation be overpast.

These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of this. Of whereas, in the foregoing song, the people of God had spoken to him, complaining of their grievances, here he returns an answer to their complaints, in which,

I. He invites them into their chambers (Isa 26:20): "Come, my people, come to me, come with me" (he calls them nowhere but where he himself will accompany them); "let the storm that disperses others bring you nearer together. Come, and enter into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail," Ex 9:21.

1. "Come into chambers of distinction; come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babylon. Come out from among them, and be you separate," 2Co 6:17,Re 18:4. If God has set apart those that are godly for himself, they ought to set themselves apart.

2. "Into chambers of defence, in which by the secresy or the strength of them you may be safe in the worst of times." The

attributes of God are the secret of his tabernacle, Ps 27:5. His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, Pr 18:10. We must be faith find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves; that is, with a holy security and serenity of mind, we must put ourselves under the divine protection. Come, as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him. When dangers are threatening it is good to retire, and lie hid, as Elijah did by the brook Cherith.

3. Into chambers of devotion. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, Mt 6:6. Be private with God: Enter into thy chamber, to examine thyself, and commune with thy own heart, to pray, and humble thyself before God." This work is to be done in times of distress and danger; and thus we hide ourselves, that is, we recommend ourselves to God to hide us, and he will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, else the blood on the door-posts will not secure them. So must Rahab and her family when Jericho is being destroyed. Those are most safe that are least seen. Qui bene latuit, benevixit--He has lived well who has sought a proper degree of concealment.

II. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time, that they should not long be in any fright or peril: "Hide thyself for a moment, the smallest part of time we can conceive, like an atom of matter; may, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a little moment, and that with a quasi too, as it were for a little moment, less than you think of. When it is over it will seem as nothing to you; you will wonder how soon it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment. The indignation will presently be over-past; that is, the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage, which force you to abscond. When the wicked rise, a man is hid.

This will soon be over; God will cut them off, will break their power, defeat their purposes, and find a way for your

enlargement." When Athanasius was banished from Alexandria by an edict of Julian, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bade them be of good cheer. Nubecula est quæ cito pertransibit--It is a little cloud, that will soon blow over. You shall have tribulation ten days; that is all, Re 2:10. This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

21 For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place
to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity:
the earth also shall disclose her blood,
and shall no more cover her slain.

He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution, Isa 26:21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed. Here is,

1 The judgment set, and process issued out: The Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, in giving such disturbance to all about them. There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but though they all combine in it, though hand join in hand to carry it on, yet it shall not go unpunished. Besides the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men's indignation is over-past, and they have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps 37:13. God comes out of his place to punish.

He shows himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the firmament of his power, from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace. He is raised up out of his holy habitation, where he seemed before to conceal himself; and now he will do something great, the product of his wise, just, and secret counsels, as a prince that goes to take the chair or take the field, Zec 2:13. Some observe that God's place is the mercy-seat; there he delights to be; when he punishes he comes out of his place, for he has no pleasure in the death of sinners.

2 The criminals convicted by the notorious evidence of the face: The earth shall disclose her blood; the innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which has been shed upon the earth like water, and has soaked into it, and been concealed and covered by it, shall not be brought to light, and brought to account; for God will make inquisition for it, and will give those that shed it blood to drink, for they are worthy. Secret murders, and other secret wickednesses, shall be discovered, sooner or later. And the slain which the earth has long covered she shall no longer cover, but they shall be produced as evidence against the murderers. The voice of Abel's blood cries from the earth, Ge 9:10,11,Job 20:27. Those sins which seemed to be buried in oblivion will be called to mind, and called over again, when the day of reckoning comes. Let God's people therefore wait awhile with patience, for behold the Judge stands before the door.

Isaiah-27

The Deliverance and Ingathering of Israel

1 In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that *is* in the sea.

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy,

I. Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church (Isa 27:1), tribulation to those that trouble it, 2Th 1:6. When the Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth (Isa 26:21), he will be sure to punish leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea, every proud oppressing tyrant, that is the terror of the mighty, and, like the leviathan, is so fierce that none dares stir him up, and his heart as hard as a stone, and when he raises up himself the mighty are afraid, Job 41:10,24,25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in

his, and Antiochus in his; so Pharaoh had been formerly, and is called leviathan and the dragon, Isa 51:9,Ps 74:13,14,Eze 29:3. The New-Testament church has had its leviathans; we read of a great red dragon ready to devour it, Re 12:3.

Those malignant persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan for bulk, and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world,--to dragons for their rage and fury,--to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, and which, if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole body,--crossing like a bar (so the margin), standing in the way of all their neighbours and obstructing them,--to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are in God's account as dragons and serpents, the plagues of mankind; and the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with and call to an account, and therefore the great God will take the matter into his own hands. He has a sore, and great, and strong sword, wherewith to do execution upon them when the measure of their iniquity is full and their day has come to fall. It is emphatically expressed in the original:

The Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, this unruly criminal; and it shall be capital punishment: He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea; for the wages of his sin is death. This shall not only be a prevention of his doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God has a strong sword for the doing of this, variety of judgments sufficient to humble the proudest and break the most powerful of his enemies; and he will do it when the day of execution comes: In that day he will punish, his day which is coming, Ps 37:13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out, the prince of this world, but with his strong sword, the virtue of his death and the preaching of his gospel, he does and

will destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, that great leviathan, that old serpent, the dragon. He shall be bound, that he may not deceive the nations, and that is a punishment to him (Re 20:2,3); and at length, for deceiving the nations, he shall be cast into the lake of fire, Re 20:10.

2 In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

3 I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

Of mercy to the church. In that same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful; let those that attend her sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances; let it be sung in her assemblies,

1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, Isa 27:2,3. She is, in God's eye, a vineyard of red wine. The world is as a fruitless worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has great care taken of it and great pains taken with it, and from which precious fruits are gathered, wherewith they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of red wine, yielding the best and choicest grapes, intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, Isa 5:4. Now God takes care,

(1.) Of the safety of this vineyard: I the Lord do keep it. He speaks this as glorying in it that he is, and has undertaken to be, the keeper of Israel. Those that bring forth fruit to God are and shall be always under his protection. He speaks this as assuring us that they shall be so: I the Lord, that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. God's vineyard in this world lies much exposed to injury; there are many that would hurt it, would tread it down and lay it waste (Ps 80:13); but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to be done it, but what he will bring good out of. He will keep it constantly, night and day, and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to do it a mischief. God

will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God's people shall be preserved, not only from the pestilence that walketh in darkness, but from the destruction that wasteth at noon-day, Ps 91:6. This vineyard shall be well fenced.

(2.) Of the fruitfulness of this vineyard: I will water it every moment, and yet it shall not be overwatered. The still and silent dews of God's grace and blessing shall continually descend upon it, that it may bring forth much fruit. We need the constant and continual waterings of the divine grace; for, if that be at any time withdrawn, we wither, and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by the ministry of the word by his servants the prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; for without him the watchman wakes and the husbandman waters in vain.

2. That, though sometimes he contends with his people, yet, upon their submission, he will be reconciled to them, Isa 27:4,5. Fury is not in him towards his vineyard; though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he does not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true if he find in it briers and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him (as indeed that in the vineyard which is not for him is against him), he will tread them down and burn them; but otherwise, "If I am angry with my people, they know what course to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so take hold of my strength with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will soon be reconciled to them, and all shall be well." God sees the sins of his people and is displeased with them; but, upon their repentance, he turns away his wrath. This may very well be construed as a summary of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment.

(1.) Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man; for here is a battle fought, and peace to be made. It is an old quarrel, ever

since sin first entered. It is, on God's part, a righteous quarrel, but, on man's part, most unrighteous.

(2.) Here is a gracious invitation given us to make up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated: "Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God take hold of his strength, of his strong arm, which is lifted up against the sinner to strike him dead; and let him by supplication keep back the stroke. Let him wrestle with me, as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing; and he shall be Israel--a prince with God." Pardoning mercy is called the power of our Lord; let him take hold of that. Christ is the arm of the Lord, Isa 53:1. Christ crucified is the power of God (1Co 1:24); let him by a lively faith take hold of him, as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank, that is within his reach, or as the malefactor took hold of the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled.

(3.) Here is a threefold cord of arguments to persuade us to do this.

[1.] Time and space are given us to do it in; for fury is not in God; he does not carry it towards us as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in a fault and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration; it is, with them, but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon angry, and implacable when they are angry; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them. But it is not so with God; he considers our frame, is slow to anger, does not stir up all his wrath, nor always chide.

[2.] It is in vain to think of contesting with him. If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match

for Omnipotence. Woe unto him therefore that strives with his Maker! He knows not the power of his anger.

[3.] This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation: "Let him take this course to make peace with me, and he shall make peace; and thereby good, all good, shall come unto him." God is willing to be reconciled to us if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

3. That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body (Isa 27:6): In times to come (so some read it), in after-times, when these calamities are overpast, or in the days of the gospel, the latter days, he shall cause Jacob to take root, deeper root than ever yet; for the gospel church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread further. Or, He shall cause those of Jacob that come back out of their captivity, or (as we read it) those that come of Jacob, to take root downward, and bear fruit upward, Isa 37:31. They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they shall blossom and bud, and give hopeful prospects of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for they shall fill the face of the world with fruit. Many shall be brought into the church, proselytes shall be numerous, some out of all the nations about that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise; and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The preaching of the gospel brought forth fruit in all the world (Col 1:6), fruit that remains, Joh 15:16.

4 Fury *is* not in me: who would set the briers *and* thorns against me
in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.
5 Or let him take hold of my strength, *that* he may make peace with
me; *and* he shall make peace with me.
6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall
blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.
7 Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? *or* is he
slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not, as before, judgment to the enemies and mercy to the church, but judgment to the church and mercy mixed with that judgment.

I. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel. They shall blossom and bud (Isa 27:6), but,

1. They shall be smitten and slain (Isa 27:7), some of them shall. If God find any thing amiss among them, he will lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God, and those whom God has known of all the families of the earth he will punish in the first place.

2. Jerusalem, their defenced city, shall be desolate, Isa 27:10,11. "God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which, as to many, have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste," which was accomplished when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that habitation was for a long time forsaken. If less judgments do not do the work, God will send greater; for when he judges he will overcome.

Jerusalem had been a defenced city, not so much by art or nature as by grace and the divine protection; but, when God was provoked to withdraw, her defence departed from her, and then she was left like a wilderness. "And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there, and there shall be none to disturb them or drive them away; there they shall be levant and couchant, and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit-trees," which perhaps further signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies. "When the boughs thereof are withered as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts and not pruned, they shall be broken off for fuel, and the women and children shall come and set them on fire.

There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed." And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard (Isa 27:2) when it brought forth wild grapes (Isa 5:2); and our Saviour seems to refer to this when he says of the branches of the vine which abide not in him that they are cast forth and withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (Joh 15:6), which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews. The similitude is explained in the following words, It is a people of no understanding, brutish and sottish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all those sins for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first and afterwards their infidelity.

Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns are of no understanding; and their ignorance, being wilful, shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation; for therefore he that made them, that gave them their being, will not have mercy on them, nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves; and he that formed them into a people, formed them for himself, to show forth his praise, seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new-formed, will reject them, and show them no favour; and then they are undone: for, if he that made us by his power do not make us happy in his favour, we had better never have been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful and because he is their Maker. But here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be; for, if they be of no understanding, he that made them, though he made them, and hates nothing that he has made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand their interests as to apply to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy, and will show them no favour.

8 In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.

9 By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

10 Yet the defensed city *shall be* desolate, *and* the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.

Here is a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment; for there are good people mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate, a remnant according to the election of grace, on whom God will have mercy and to whom he will show favour: and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, for which God would graciously provide these allays.

1. Though they shall be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree, and in that manner, in which their enemies shall be smitten and slain, Isa 27:7. God has smitten Jacob, and he is slain. Many of those that understand among the people shall fall by the sword and by flame many days, Da 11:33. But it shall not be as those are smitten and slain,

(1.) Who smote him formerly, who were the rod of God's anger and the staff in his hand, which he made us of for the correction of his people, and to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that: the child is spared, but the rod is burnt.

(2.) Who shall afterwards be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion, and repay them in their own coin, or slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented,

[1.] As struggling with each other; so the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be. In this contest there are slain on both sides. God makes use of wicked men, not only to smite, but to slay his people; for they are his sword, Ps

17:13. But, when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits. The seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent has his head crushed and broken. Note, Though God's persecuted people may be great losers, and great sufferers, for a while, yet those that oppress them will prove to be greater losers and greater sufferers at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, Re 18:6.

[2.] As sharing together in the calamities of this present time. They are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. But is Jacob smitten as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

2. Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure, and the affliction shall be mitigated, moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not to their deserts, Isa 27:8. He will deal out afflictions to them as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patients, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when a vein is opened: thus God orders the troubles of his people, not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able, 1Co 10:13. He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure; for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and does not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity.

He considers what we can bear when he begins to correct; and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is the day of his east-wind, which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and noxious, yet he stays his rough wind, checks it, and sets

bounds to it, does not suffer it to blow so hard as was feared; when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God has the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check. Hitherto it shall go, but no further. Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds ever so rough, ever so high, God can say unto them, Peace, be still.

3. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father does the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts (Isa 27:9): By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged. This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means, and, by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect. It shall mortify the habits of sin; by this those defilements of the soul shall be purged away. It shall break them off from the practice of sin: This is all the fruit, this is it that God intends, this is all the harm it will do them, to take away their sin, than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. Therefore, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction; and, because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us.

The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of was the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people and to which they were strangely addicted. Ephraim is joined to idols. But by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it. Ephraim shall say, What have I do to any more with idols? Jacob has his sin taken away, his beloved sin, when he makes all the stones of the altar, of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, as chalk-stones that are beaten asunder; he not only has them in contempt, and values them no more than chalk-stones, but he conceives an indignation at them, and, in a holy

revenge, beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces.

The groves and the images shall not stand before this penitent, but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry (De 7:5); and according to this promise, since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. Note, The design of affliction is to separate between us and sin, especially that which has been our own iniquity; and then it appears that the affliction has done us good when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, Ps 119:67.

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed (Isa 27:12,13); though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again, as the sheep of the flock when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, Eze 34:10-19. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites,

(1.) Whence they shall be fetched: The Lord shall beat them off as fruit from the tree, or beat them out as corn out of the ear. He shall find them out, and separate them from those among whom they dwelt, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east, unto Nile, the stream of Egypt, which lay south-west--those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessaries, and ready to despair of deliverance--and those that were outcasts in the land of Egypt, whither many of those that were left behind, after the captivity in Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command (Jer 43:6,7), and there lived as

outcasts: God has mercy in store for them all, and will make it to appear that, though they are cast out, they are not cast off.

(2.) In what manner they shall be brought back: "You shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in, first one, and then another." This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved consists but of few, and those saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall not come for company, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit.

(3.) By what means they shall be gathered together: The great trumpet shall be blown, and then they shall come. Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their thraldom to bestir themselves; it was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release. This is applicable both to the preaching of the gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God, such as were outcasts and ready to perish (those that were afar off are made nigh; the gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord), and also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that lay as outcasts in their graves.

(4.) For what end they shall be gathered together: To worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was the worship of God. The holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, the place of the altar, Ge 13:4. Liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty; and, after restraints and dispersions, a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. Those that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel trumpet are brought in to worship God and added to the church; and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together, to serve God day and night in his temple.

11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off:
the women come, *and* set them on fire; for it *is* a people of no
understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy
on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor.
12 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the Lord shall beat off from
the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be
gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.
13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great trumpet shall be
blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land
of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship
the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Isaiah-28

Condemnation of Ephraim

1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose
glorious beauty *is* a fading flower, which *are* on the head of the fat
valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

Here, I The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins, which were soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste, and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from fruitfulness, their soil being very fertile and the products of it abundant and the best of the kind; they had a great many fat valleys (Isa 28:1,4), and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was, as it were, on the head of the fat valleys. Their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord: it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands; their harvest and vintage were the glorious beauty on the head of their valleys, which were covered over with corn and vines. Now observe,

1. What an ill use they made of their plenty. What God gave them to serve him with they perverted, and abused, by making it the food and fuel of their lusts.

(1.) They were puffed up with pride by it. The goodness with which God crowned their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a crown of pride. Those that are rich in the world are apt to be high-minded, 1Ti 6:17. Their king, who wore the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country; Samaria, their royal city, was notorious for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals, or revels, to wear garlands made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them, and therefore the prophet, in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a woe to the crown of pride. If those who wear crowns be proud of them, let them not think to escape this woe. What men are proud of, be it ever so mean, is to them as a crown; he that is proud thinks himself as great as a king. But woe to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abased; their pride is the preface to their destruction.

(2.) They indulged themselves in sensuality. Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness, and excess of riot; Samaria, the head of the fat valleys, was full of those that were overcome with wine, were broken with it, so the margin. See how foolishly drunkards act, and no marvel when, in the very commission of the sin, they make fools and brutes of themselves; they yield,

[1.] To be conquered by the sin; it overcomes them, and brings them into bondage (2Pe 2:19); they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and inglorious because it is voluntary. Some of these wretched slaves have themselves owned that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking. They are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it.

[2.] To be ruined by it. They are broken by wine. Their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined. They are broken in the callings and estates, and their souls are in danger of being eternally undone, and all this for the gratification of a base lust. Woe to these drunkards of Ephraim! Ministers must

bring the general woes of the word home to particular places and persons. We must say, Woe to this or that person, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it becomes them worse than any other; they know better, and therefore should give a better example. Some make the crown of pride to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the garlands with which those were crowned that got the victory in their wicked drinking matches and drank down the rest of the company. They were proud of their being mighty to drink wine; but woe to those who thus glory in their shame.

2 The justice of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused. Their glorious beauty, the plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower; it is meat that perishes. The most substantial fruits, if God blast them and blow upon them, are but fading flowers, Isa 28:1. God can easily take away their corn in the season thereof (Ho 2:9), and recover locum vastatum--ground that has been alienated and has run to waste, those goods of his which they prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a seizure for him, has one at his beck, a mighty and strong one, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who shall cast down to the earth with the hand, shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand, destroy all that which they are proud of and pleased with, Isa 28:2. He shall throw it down to the ground, to be broken to pieces with a strong hand, with a hand that they cannot oppose. Then the crown of pride, and the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under foot (Isa 28:3); they shall lie exposed to contempt, and shall not be able to recover themselves. Drunkards, in their folly, are apt to talk proudly, and vaunt themselves most when they most shame themselves; but they thereby render themselves the more ridiculous. The beauty of their valleys, which they gloried in, will be,

(1.) Like a fading flower (as before, Isa 28:1); it will wither of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own corruption; it will perish in time by its own moth and rust.

(2.) Like the hasty fruit, which, as soon as it is discovered, is plucked and eaten up; so the wealth of this world, besides that it is apt to decay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others as greedily as the first-ripe fruit, which is earnestly desired, Mic 7:1. Thieves break through and steal. The harvest which the worldling is proud of the hungry eat up (Job 5:5); no sooner do they see the prey but they catch at it, and swallow up all they can lay their hands on. It is likewise easily devoured, as that fruit which, being ripe before it has grown, is very small, and is soon eaten up; and there being little of it, and that of little worth, it is not reserved, but used immediately.

2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, *which* as a tempest
of hail *and* a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters
overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.
3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden
under feet:
4 and the glorious beauty, which *is* on the head of the fat valley, shall
be a fading flower, *and* as the hasty fruit before the summer; which
when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he
eateth it up.
5 In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for
a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

He next turns to the kingdom of Judah, whom he calls the residue of his people (Isa 28:5), for they were but two tribes to the other ten.

1. He promises them God's favours, and that they shall be taken under his guidance and protection when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left exposed to be trodden down and eaten up, Isa 28:5,6. In that day, when the Assyrian army is laying Israel waste, and Judah might think that their neighbour's house being on fire their own was in danger, in that day of treading down and perplexity, then God will be to the residue of his people all they need and

can desire; not only to the kingdom of Judah, but to those of Israel who had kept their integrity, and, as was probably the case with some, betook themselves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good king Hezekiah. When the Assyrian, that mighty one, was in Israel as a tempest of hail, noisy and battering, as a destroying storm bearing down all before it, especially at sea, and as a flood of mighty waters overflowing the country (Isa 28:2), then in that day will the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, distinguish by peculiar favours his people who have distinguished themselves by a steady and singular adherence to him, and that which they most need he will himself be to them. This very much enhances the worth of the promises that God, covenanting to be to his people a God all-sufficient, undertakes to be himself all that to them which they can desire.

(1.) He will put all the credit and honour upon them which are requisite, not only to rescue them from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputation. He will be to them for a crown of glory and for a diadem of beauty. Those that wore the crown of pride looked upon God's people with disdain, and trampled upon them, for they were the song of the drunkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for them by his providence as to make it evident that they have his favour towards them, and that shall be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory can any people have than for God to acknowledge them as his own? And he will so appear in them, by his grace, as to make it evident that they have his image renewed on them, and that shall be to them a diadem of beauty; for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those that have God for their God have him for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty; for they are made to him kings and priests.

(2.) He will give them all the wisdom and grace necessary to the due discharge of the duty of their place. He will himself be a spirit of judgment to those that sit in judgment; the privy counsellors shall be guided by wisdom and discretion and the judges shall govern by justice and equity. It is a great mercy to

any people when those that are called to places of power and public trust are qualified for their places, when those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judgment, a spirit of government.

(3.) He will give them all the courage and boldness requisite to carry them resolutely through the difficulties and oppositions they are likely to meet with. He will be for strength to those that turn the battle to the gate, to the gates of the enemy whose cities they besiege, or to their own gates, when they sally out upon the enemies that besiege them. The strength of the soldiery depends as much upon God as the wisdom of the magistracy; and where God gives both these he is to that people a crown of glory. This may well be supposed to refer to Christ, and so the Chaldee paraphrast understands it: In that day shall the Messiah be a crown of glory. Simeon calls him the glory of his people Israel; and he is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, and strength.

2. He complains of the corruptions that were found among them, and the many corrupt ones (Isa 28:7): But they also, many of those of Judah, have erred through wine. There are drunkards of Jerusalem, as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and therefore the mercy of God is to be so much the more admired that he has not blasted the glory of Judah as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing mercy lays us under peculiar obligations when it is thus distinguishing. Ephraim's sins are found in Judah, and yet not Ephraim's ruins. They have erred through wine.

Their drinking to excess is itself a practical error; they think to raise their fancy by it, but they ruin their judgment, and so put a cheat upon themselves; they think to preserve their health by it and help digestion, but they spoil their constitution and hasten diseases and deaths. It is also the occasion of a great many errors in principle; their understanding is clouded and their conscience debauched by it; and therefore, to support themselves in it, they espouse corrupt notions, and form their minds in favour of their lusts. Probably some were drawn in to worship idols by their love of the wine and strong drink which there was plenty of at their

idolatrous festivals; and so they erred through wine, as Israel, for love of the daughters of Moab, joined themselves to Baal-peor. Three things are here observed as aggravations of this sin:--

(1.) That those were guilty of it whose business it was to warn others against it and to teach them better, and therefore who ought to have set a better example: The priest and the prophet are swallowed up of wine; their office is quite drowned and lost in it. The priests, as sacrificers, were obliged by a particular law to be temperate (Le 10:9), and, as rulers and magistrates, it was not for them to drink wine, Pr 31:4. The prophets were a kind of Nazarites (as appears by Am 2:11), and, as reprovers by office, were concerned to keep at the utmost distance from the sins they reproved in others; yet there were many of them ensnared in this sin. What! a priest, a prophet, a minister, and yet drunk! Tell it not in Gath. Such a scandal are they to their coat.

(2.) That the consequences of it were very pernicious, not only by the ill influence of their example, but the prophet, when he was drunk, erred in vision; the false prophets plainly discovered themselves to be so when they were in drink. The priest stumbled in judgment and forgot the law (Pr 31:5); he reeled and staggered as much in the operations of his mind as in the motions of his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable to such a base lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land! when thy princes eat and drink for strength, and not for drunkenness, Ec 10:17.

(3.) That the disease was epidemic, and the generality of those that kept any thing of a table were infected with it: All tables are full of vomit, Isa 28:8. See what an odious thing the sin of drunkenness is, what an affront it is to human society; it is rude and ill-mannered enough to sicken the beholders, for the tables where they eat their meat are filthily stained with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom. Their tables are full of vomit, so that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown,

ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people when so sottish a sin as drunkenness has become national.

6 and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.

7 But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.

8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, *so that there is* no place *clean.*

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts.

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable and made no improvement of the means of grace which they possessed; they still continued as they were, their mistakes not rectified, their hearts not renewed, nor their lives reformed. Observe,

I. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at. It was to teach them knowledge, the knowledge of God and his will, and to make them understand doctrine, Isa 28:9. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truth, and thus to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and the robber climb up another way.

II. What method they took, in pursuance of this design. They left no means untried to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book (Isa 28:9), for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them, as they are capable, the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them

even when they are but newly weaned from the milk. The prophets taught them as children are taught; for,

1. They were constant and industrious in teaching them. They took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it and were able to bear it (Isa 28:10): Precept upon precept. It must be so, or (as some read) it has been so. They have been taught, as children are taught to read, by precept upon precept, and taught to write by line upon line, a little here and a little there, a little of one thing and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting,--a little at one time and a little at another, that they might not have their memories overcharged,--a little from one prophet and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend and him whom he admired.

Note, For our instruction in the things of God it is requisite that we have precept upon precept and line upon line, that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced by another; the precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice. Nay, it is necessary that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated and inculcated upon us, that we may the better understand them and the more easily recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need and can best bear, and a little at a time, De 6:6,7.

2. They courted and persuaded them to learn, Isa 28:12. God, by his prophets, said to them, "This way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, is the rest, the only rest, wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; and this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been long harassed."

Note, God by his word calls us to nothing but what is really for our advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for

those that are weary of the service of sin and there is no refreshing but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

III. What little effect all this had upon the people. They were as unapt to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was as impossible to fasten any thing upon them (Isa 28:9): nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them; for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children, they have need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat, Heb 5:12.

1. They would not hear (Isa 28:12), no, not that which would be rest and refreshing to them. They had no mind to hear it. The word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to it, or as it came in at one ear it went out at the other.

2. They would not heed. It was unto them precept upon precept, and line upon line (Isa 28:13); they went on in a road of external performances; they kept up the old custom of attending upon the prophet's preaching and it was continually sounding in their ears, but that was all; it made no impression upon them; they had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay,

3. It should seem, they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it. The word of the Lord was unto them Tsau latsau, kau lakau; in the original it is in rhyme; they made a song of the prophet's words, and sang it when they were merry over their wine. David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impiety, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things, to speak of that vainly which should make us serious.

10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little.

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

12 To whom he said, This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and this *is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

How severely God would reckon with them for this.

1. He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them with stammering lips and another tongue, Isa 28:11. Those that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity, but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly amused with that which is above them. Or God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or these words may be taken as denoting God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he lisped to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, with stammering lips, to humor them; he changed his voice, tried first one way and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour (1Co 14:21), applying it to the gift of tongues, and complaining that yet for all this they would not hear.

2. He would bring utter ruin upon them. By their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it; it is that they may go and fall backward, may grow worse and worse, may depart further and further from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite broken, and snared, and taken, and ruined, Isa 28:13. They have here a little and there a little of the word of God; they think it too much, and say to the seers, See not; but it proves too little to convert them, and will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death.

13 But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The Warning to Jerusalem

14 Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.

The prophet, having reproved those that made a jest of the word of God, here goes on to reprove those that made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at defiance; for he is a jealous God, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his providences to be brought into contempt. He addressed himself to the scornful men who ruled in Jerusalem, who were the magistrates of the city, Isa 28:14. It is bad with a people when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scorners; but that the rulers of Jerusalem should be men of such a character, that they should make light of God's judgments and scorn to take notice of the tokens of his displeasure, is very sad. Who will be mourners in Zion if they are scorners? Observe,

I. How these scornful men lulled themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst (Isa 28:15) You have said, We have made a covenant with death and the grave. They thought themselves as sure of their lives, even when the most destroying judgments were abroad, as if they had made a bargain with death, upon a valuable consideration, not to come till they sent for him or not to take them away by any violence, but by old age. If we be at peace with God, and have made a covenant with him, we have in effect made a covenant with death that it shall come in the fittest time, that whenever it comes, it shall be no terror to us, nor do us any real damage; death is ours if we be Christ's (1Co 3:22,23): but to think of making death our friend, or being in league with it, while by sin we are making God our enemy and are at war with him, is the greatest absurdity that can be.

It was fond conceit which these scorners had, "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through our country, and others shall fall under it, yet it shall not come to us, not reach us, though

it extend far, not bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge." It is the greatest folly imaginable for impenitent sinners to think that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence? Why, truly, We have made lies our refuge. Either,

1. Those things which the prophets told them would be lies and falsehood to them and would deceive, but which they themselves looked upon as substantial fences. The protection of their idols, the promises with which their false prophets soothed them, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in, and not in God; nay, these they confided in against God. Or,

2. Those things which should be lies and falsehood to the enemy, who was flagellum Dei--the scourge of God, the overflowing scourge; they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their feigned submissions in treaties of peace. The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence; but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to succeed better. They think themselves greater politicians than those of the country towns; they will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose at the same time to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be found liars to him, as the expression is, De 33:29. Note, Those put a cheat upon themselves that think to gain their point by putting cheats upon those they deal with. Those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them. Honesty is the best policy. But such refuges as these are those driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone,* a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

How God, by the prophet, awakens them out of this sleep, and shows them the folly of their security.

1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure. He does not disturb their false confidences, till he has first shown them a firm bottom on which they may repose themselves (Isa 28:16): Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone. This foundation is,

(1.) The promises of God in general--his word, upon which he has caused his people to hope--his covenant with Abraham, that he would be a God to him and his; this is a foundation, a foundation of stone, firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have stayed themselves upon it and it never failed them.

(2.) The promise of Christ in particular; for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1Pe 2:6-8. He is that stone which has become the head of the corner. The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem, was sufficient to make God's people easy in the worst of times; for they knew well that till he came the sceptre should not depart from Judah. Zion shall continue while this foundation is yet to be laid there. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, for the comfort of those that dare not make lies their refuge, Behold, and look upon me as one that has undertaken to lay in Zion a Stone," Jesus Christ is a foundation of God's laying. This is the Lord's doing. He is laid in Zion, in the church, in the holy hill. He is a tried stone, a trying stone (so some), a touch-stone, that shall distinguish between true and counterfeit. He is a precious stone, for such are the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Re 21:19), a corner-stone, in whom the sides of the building are united, the head-stone of the corner.

And he that believes these promises, and rests upon them, shall not make haste, shall not run to and fro in a hurry, as men at their wits' end, shall not be shifting hither and thither for his own safety, nor be driven to his feet by any terrors, as the wicked man is said to be (Job 18:11), but with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, Welcome the will of God. He shall not make haste in his expectations, so as to anticipate the time set in the divine counsels, but, though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. He that believes will not make more haste than good speed, but be satisfied that God's time is the best time, and wait with patience for it. The apostle from the LXX. explains this, 1Pe 2:6. He that believes on him shall not be confounded; his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far out-done.

2. He tells them that upon the grounds which they now built on they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them (Isa 28:17): Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. This denotes,

(1.) The building up of his church; having laid the foundation (Isa 28:16), he will raise the structure, as builders do, by line and plummet, Zec 4:10. Righteousness shall be the line and judgment the plummet. The church, being grounded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness. Judgment shall return unto righteousness, Ps 94:15. Or,

(2.) The punishing of the church's enemies, against whom he will proceed in strict justice, according to the threatenings of the law. He will give them their deserts, and bring upon them the judgments they have challenged, but in wisdom too, and by an exact rule, that the tares may not be plucked up with the wheat. And when God comes thus to execute judgment,

[1.] These scornful men will be made ashamed of the vain hopes with which they had deluded themselves. First, They designed to

make lies their refuge; but it will indeed prove a refuge of lies, which the hail shall sweep away, that tempest of hail spoken of Isa 28:2. Those that make lies their refuge build upon the sand, and the building will fall when the storm comes, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Those that make any thing their hiding place but Christ shall find that the waters will overflow it, as every shelter but the ark was over-topped and overthrown by the waters of the deluge. Such is the hope of the hypocrite; this will come of all his confidences. Secondly, They boasted of a covenant with death, and an agreement with the grave; but it shall be disannulled, as made without his consent who has the keys and sovereign command of hell and death.

Those do but delude themselves that think by any wiles to evade the judgments of God. Thirdly, They fancied that when the overflowing scourge should pass through the land it should not come near them; but the prophet tells them that then, when others were falling by the common calamity, they should not only share in it, but should be trodden down by it: "You shall be to it for a treading down; it shall triumph over you as much as over any other, and you shall become its easy prey." They are further told (Isa 28:19),

1. That it shall begin with them; they shall be so far from escaping it that they shall be the first that shall fall by it: "From the time it goes forth it shall take you, as if it came on purpose to seize you."

2. That it shall pursue them closely: "Morning by morning shall it pass over; as duly as the day returns you shall hear of some desolation or other made by it; for divine justice will follow its blow; you shall never be safe nor easy by day nor by night; there shall be a pestilence walking in darkness and a destruction wasting at noonday."

3. That there shall be no avoiding it: "The understanding of the report of its approach shall not give you any opportunity to make

your escape, for there shall be no way of escape open; but it shall be only a vexation, you shall see it coming, and not see how to help yourselves." Or, "The very report of it at a distance will be a terror to you; what then will the thing itself be?" Evil tidings are a terror and vexation to scorners, but he whose heart is fixed, trusting in God, is not afraid of them; whereas, when the overflowing scourge comes, then all the comforts and confidences of scorners fail them, Isa 28:20.

(1.) That in which they thought to repose themselves reaches not to the length of their expectations: The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, so that he is forced to cramp and contract himself.

(2.) That in which they thought to shelter themselves proves insufficient to answer the intention: The covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it. Those that do not build upon Christ as their foundation, but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves; they can never be easy, safe, nor warm; the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow; like our first parents' fig-leaves, the shame of their nakedness will still appear.

[2.] God will be glorified in the accomplishment of his counsels, Isa 28:21. When God comes to contend with these scorners, First, He will do his work, and bring to pass his act, he will work for his own honour and glory, according to his own purpose; the work shall appear to all that see it to be the work of God as the righteous Judge of the earth. Secondly, He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies, by which his justice will appear to be impartial; he will now rise up against Jerusalem as, in David's time, against the Philistines in Mount Perazim (2Sa 5:20), and as, in Joshua's time, against the Canaanites in the valley of Gibeon. If those that profess themselves members of God's church by their pride and scornfulness make themselves like Philistines and Canaanites, they must expect to be dealt with as such. Thirdly, This will be

his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed. It is work that he is backward to: he rather delights in showing mercy, and does not afflict willingly. It is work that he is not used to as to his own people; he protects and favours them. It is a strange work indeed if he turn to be their enemy and fight against them, Isa 63:10. It is a work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at (De 29:24), and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be an astonishment, Jer 25:18.

Lastly, We have the use and application of all this (Isa 28:22): "Therefore be you not mockers; dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word or the approaches of his judgments." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of God that are coming upon hypocritical professors should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious: "Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong, both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin" (for there is little hope of the conversion of mockers) "and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgments of God." God has bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bonds of his law asunder and cast away all his cord from them. Let not these mockers make light of divine threatenings, for the prophet (who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is) assures them that the Lord God of hosts has, in his hearing, determined a consumption upon the whole earth; and can they think to escape? or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening?

17 Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report.

20 For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it:* and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.

21 For the Lord shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim, he shall be wroth
as *in* the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange
work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.
22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong:
for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even
determined upon the whole earth.
23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.

This parable, which (like many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling, is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention, He that has ears to hear, let him hear, hear and understand, Isa 28:23.

I The parable here is plain enough, that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence, secundum artem--according to rule, and, as his judgment directs him, observes a method and order in his work.

1. In his ploughing and sowing: Does the ploughman plough all day to sow? Yes, he does, and he ploughs in hope and sows in hope, 1Co 9:10. Does he open and break the clods? Yes, he does, that the land may be fit to receive the seed. And when he has thus made plain the face thereof does he not sow his seed, seed suitable to the soil? For the husbandman knows what grain is fit for clayey ground and what for sandy ground, and, accordingly, he sows each in its place--wheat in the principal place (so the margin reads it), for it is the principal grain, and was a staple commodity of Canaan (Eze 27:17), and barley in the appointed place. The wisdom and goodness of the God of nature are to be observed in this, that, to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of productions, he has suited to them an agreeable variety of earths.

2. In his threshing, Isa 28:27,28. This also he proportions to the grain that is to be threshed out. The fitches and the cummin, being easily got out of their husk or ear, are only threshed with a staff and a rod; but the bread-corn requires more force, and therefore that must be bruised with a threshing instrument, a

sledge shod with iron, that was drawn to and fro over it, to beat out the corn; and yet he will not be ever threshing it, nor any longer than is necessary to loosen the corn from the chaff; he will not break it, or crush it, into the ground with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it to pieces with his horsemen; the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains are to be taken, not only for the earning, but for the preparing of our necessary food; and yet, after all, it is meat that perishes. Shall we then grudge to labour much more for the meat which endures to everlasting life? Bread-corn is bruised. Christ was so; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that he might be the bread of life to us.

24 Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break
the clods of his ground?
25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad
the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat
and the appointed barley and the rye in their place?
26 For his God doth instruct him to discretion, *and* doth teach him.

The interpretation of the parable is not so plain. Most interpreters make it a further answer to those who set the judgments of God at defiance: "Let them know that as the husbandman will not be always ploughing, but will at length sow his seed, so God will not be always threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings and bring upon sinners the judgments they have deserved; but in wisdom, and in proportion to their strength, not that they may be ruined, but that they may be reformed and brought to repentance by them." But I think we may give this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it.

1. In general, that God who gives the husbandman this wisdom is, doubtless, himself infinitely wise. It is God that instructs the husbandman to discretion, as his God, Isa 28:26. Husbandmen have need of discretion wherewith to order their affairs, and ought not undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; and they should by observation and experience endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since the king himself is served of the field, the advancing

of the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind more than the cultivating of most other arts. The skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift is. This takes off somewhat of the weight and terror of the sentence passed on man for sin, that when God, in execution of it, sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do it most to his advantage, otherwise, in the greatness of his folly, he might have been for ever tilling the sand of the sea, labouring to no purpose. It is he that gives men capacity for this business, an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by Providence cut out for it, and mad to rejoice (as Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen) in their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life.

If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledged in it; and to him husbandmen must seek for direction in their business, for they, above other men, have an immediate dependence upon the divine Providence. As to the other instance of the husbandman's conduct in threshing his corn, it is said, This also comes forth from the Lord of hosts, Isa 28:29. Even the plainest dictate of sense and reason must be acknowledged to come forth from the Lord of hosts. And, if it is from him that men do things wisely and discreetly, we must needs acknowledge him to be wise in counsel and excellent in working. God's working is according to his will; he never acts against his own mind, as men often do, and there is a counsel in his whole will: he is therefore excellent in working, because he is wonderful in counsel.

2. God's church is his husbandry, 1Co 3:9. If Christ is the true vine, his Father is the husbandman (Joh 15:1), and he is continually by his word and ordinances cultivating it. Does the ploughman plough all day, and break the clods of his ground, that it may receive the seed, and does not God by his ministers break up the fallow ground? Does not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He does so, and so the great God sows his word by the hand of

his ministers (Mt 13:19), who are to divide the word of truth and give every one his portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other in the word proper for it. And, as the word of God, so the rod of God is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing-instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to separate between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use.

And, as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength; they shall be no heavier than there is need. If the rod and the staff will answer the end, he will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horsemen. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn (which will not otherwise be got clean from the straw), yet he will not be ever threshing it, will not always chide, but his anger shall endure but for a moment; nor will he crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth. And herein we must acknowledge him wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument,
neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the
fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.
28 Bread *corn* is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor
break *it with* the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it *with* his horsemen.
29 This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, *which* is wonderful
in counsel, *and* excellent in working.

Isaiah-29

Ariel and Her Enemies

1 Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city *where* David dwelt! add ye year to
year; let them kill sacrifices.

That it is Jerusalem which is here called Ariel is agreed, for that was the city where David dwelt; that part of it which was called Zion was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were. But why it is so called is very uncertain: probably the name and the reason were then well

known. Cities, as well as persons, get surnames and nicknames. Ariel signifies the lion of God, or the strong lion: as the lion is king among beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was the city of the great King (Ps 48:1,2); it was the head-city of Judah, who is called a lion's whelp (Ge 49:9) and whose ensign was a lion; and he that is the lion of the tribe of Judah was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a terror sometimes to the neighbouring nations, and, while she was a righteous city, was bold as a lion.

Some make Ariel to signify the altar of burnt-offerings, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice as the lion does his prey. Woe to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as a woe to Jerusalem, Jerusalem; it is repeated here, as it is Mt 23:37, that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

I The distress of Jerusalem foretold. Though Jerusalem be a strong city, as a lion, though a holy city, as a lion of God, yet, if iniquity be found there, woe be to it. It was the city where David dwelt; it was he that brought that to it which was its glory, and which made it a type of the gospel church, and his dwelling in it was typical of Christ's residence in his church. This mentioned as an aggravation of Jerusalem's sin, that in it were set both the testimony of Israel and the thrones of the house of David.

1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God (Isa 29:1): "Add year to year; go on in the road of your annual feasts, let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities: let them kill the sacrifices, as they used to do; but, as long as their lives are unreformed and their hearts unhumbled, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God and to turn away his wrath." Note, Hypocrites may be found in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading around in them, and with these they may

flatter themselves, but can never please God nor make their peace with him.

2. Let her know that God is coming forth against her in displeasure, that she shall be visited of the Lord of hosts (Isa 29:6); her sins shall be enquired into and punished: God will reckon for them with terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and rueful desolations of war, which shall be like thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire, especially upon the account of the great noise. When a foreign enemy was not in the borders, but in the bowels of their country, roaring and ravaging, and laying all waste (especially such an army as that of the Assyrians, whose commanders being so very insolent, as appears by the conduct of Rabshakeh, the common soldiers, no doubt, were much more rude), they might see the Lord of those hosts visiting them with thunder and storm. Yet, this being here said to be a great noise, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly,

(1.) Jerusalem shall be besieged, straitly besieged. He does not say, I will destroy Ariel, but I will distress Ariel; and she is therefore brought into distress, that, being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction. I will Isa 29:3) encamp against thee round about. It was the enemy's army that encamped against it; but God says that he will do it, for they are his hand, he does it by them. God had often and long, by a host of angels, encamped for them round about them for their protection and deliverance; but now he was turned to be their enemy and fought against them. The siege laid against them was of his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us we must, in them, see God contending with us.

(2.) She shall be in grief to see the country laid waste and all the fenced cities of Judah in the enemies' hand: There shall be heaviness and sorrow (Isa 29:2), mourning and lamentation--so these two words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most

merry and jovial are commonly, when they come to be in distress, most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow; their laughter is then turned into mourning. "All Jerusalem shall then be unto me as Ariel, as the altar, with fire upon it and slain victims about it:" so it was when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, no doubt, were slain when it was besieged by the Assyrians. "the whole city shall be an altar, in which sinners, falling by the judgments that are abroad, shall be as victims to divine justice." Or thus:--"There shall be heaviness and sorrow; they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then it shall be to me as Ariel. Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city," Isa 1:26.

(3.) She shall be humbled, and mortified, and made submissive (Isa 29:4): "Thou shalt be brought down from the height of arrogancy and insolence to which thou hast arrived: the proud looks and the proud language shall be brought down by one humbling providence after another." Those that despise God's judgments shall be humbled by them; for the proudest sinners shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had lifted up the horn on high, and had spoken with a stiff neck (Ps 75:5); but now thou shalt speak out of the ground, out of the dust, as one that has a familiar spirit, whispering out of the dust. This intimates,

[1.] That they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up, nor to say all they would say; but as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted.

[2.] That they should be fearful, and in consternation, forced to speak low as being afraid lest their enemies should overhear them and take advantage against them.

[3.] That they should be tame, and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Hezekiah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, I have offended, that which thou puttest on me I will bear (2Ki 18:14), then his speech was low, out of the dust. God can

make those to crouch that have been most daring, and quite dispirit them.

2 Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow:
and it shall be unto me as Ariel.
3 And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against
thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.
4 And thou shalt be brought down, *and* shalt speak out of the ground,
and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be,
as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy
speech shall whisper out of the dust.

The destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress (Isa 29:5,7): "Thou shalt be brought down (Isa 29:4), to speak out of the dust; so low thou shalt be reduced. But" (so it may be rendered) "the multitude of thy strangers and thy terrible ones, the numerous armies of the enemy, shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or as much as whisper, but as chaff that passes away. Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed, smitten and slain after another manner (Isa 27:7); they shall pass away, yea it shall be in an instant, suddenly: the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction, and you with the salvation."

The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot, in an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel Jerusalem. In one hour shall their judgment come, Re 18:10. Again (Isa 29:6), "Thou shalt be visited, or (as it used to be rendered) She shall be visited with thunder and a great noise. Thou shalt be put into a fright which thou shalt soon recover. But (Isa 29:7) the multitude of the nations that fight against her shall be as a dream of a night-vision; they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall." The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion shall be as a hungry man who dreams that he eats, but still is hungry; that is,

1. Whereas they hoped to make a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for a while, but they shall be disappointed. They fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so.

2. They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, and prosperity, shall vanish like a dream when one awakes, shall be of as little value and as short continuance. Ps 73:20. He shall fly away as a dream Job 20:8. The army of Sennacherib vanished and was gone quickly, though it had filled the country as a dream fills a man's head, especially as a dream of meat fills the head of him that went to bed hungry. Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God comes to distress Jerusalem, and lay siege to her.

(1.) The multitude of her friends, whom she relies upon for help shall do her no good; for, though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away.

(2.) The multitude of her enemies shall never think they can do her mischief enough; but, when they have devoured her much, still they shall be but like a man who dreams he eats, hungry, and greedy to devour her more.

5 Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust,
and the multitude of the terrible ones *shall be* as chaff that passeth
away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.
6 Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with
earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame
of devouring fire.
7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even
all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her,
shall be as a dream of a night vision.
8 It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he
eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty
man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and,

behold, *he is* faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

The Blindness and Hypocrisy of Israel

9 Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

Here, I The prophet stands amazed at the stupidity of the greatest part of the Jewish nation. They had Levites, who taught the good knowledge of the Lord and had encouragement from Hezekiah in doing so, 2Ch 30:22. They had prophets, who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes and what would be the effects of God's displeasure against them. Now, one would think, surely this great nation, that has all the advantages of divine revelation, is a wise and understanding people, De 4:6. But, alas! it was quite otherwise, Isa 29:9.

The prophet addresses himself to the sober thinking part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, "They delay, they put off, their repentance, but wonder you that they should be so sottish. They sport themselves with their own deceivings; they riot and revel; but do you cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them. The more insensible they are of the hand of God gone out against them the more do you lay to heart these things." Note, The security of sinners in their sinful way is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? What are we thus to wonder at?

1. We may well wonder that the generality of the people should be so sottish and brutish, and so infatuated, as if they were intoxicated: They are drunken, but not with wine (not with wine

only, though with that they were often drunk), and they erred through wine, Isa 28:7. They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed. Like drunken men, they know not what they do or say, nor whither they go. They are not sensible of the divine rebukes they are under. They have beaten me, and I felt it not, says the drunkard, Pr 23:35. God speaks to them once, yea, twice; but, like men drunk, they perceive it not, they understand it not, but forget the law. They stagger in their counsels, are unstable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness.

2. It is yet more strange that God himself should have poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and closed their eyes (Isa 29:10), that he who bids them awake and open their eyes should yet lay them to sleep and shut their eyes; but it is in away of righteous judgment, to punish them for their loving darkness rather than light, their loving sleep. When God by his prophets called them they said, Yet a little sleep, a little slumber; and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, Sleep on now. This is applied to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected the gospel of Christ, and were justly hardened in their infidelity, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Ro 11:8, God has given them the spirit of slumber. And we have reason to fear it is the woeful case of many who live in the midst of gospel light.

3. It is very sad that this should be the case with those who were their prophets, and rulers, and seers, that those who should have been their guides were themselves blindfolded; and it is easy to tell what the fatal consequences will be when the blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when, in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, were the great opposers of Christ and his gospel, and brought themselves under a judicial infatuation.

4. The sad effect of this was that all the means of conviction, knowledge, and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end (Isa 29:11,12): "The vision of all the prophets, true and false, has become to you as the words of a book, or letter, that is sealed up; you cannot discern the truth of the real visions and the falsehood of the pretended ones." Or, every vision particularly that this prophet had seen for them, and published to them, had become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, any more than a man (though a good scholar) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he must not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all; he knows nothing of what is in it. So they knew that what Isaiah said was a vision and prophecy, but the meaning of it was hidden from them; it was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by, nor affected with; it answered not the intention, for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so.

The ordinary sort of people excused themselves from regarding what the prophets said with their want of learning and a liberal education, as if they were not concerned to know and do the will of God because they were not bred scholars: It is nothing to me, I am not learned. Those of better rank pretended that the prophet had a peculiar way of speaking, which was obscure to them, and which, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi--If you wish not to be understood, you deserve to be neglected. Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors either to the wise or to the unwise, Ro 1:14. Or we may take it thus:--The book of prophecy was given to them sealed, so that they could not read it, as a just judgment upon them; because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and they would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it because they were not learned. But observe, "The vision has become thus to you whose minds the god of this

world has blinded; but it is not so in itself, it is not so to all; the same vision which to you is a savour of death unto death to others is and shall be a savour of life unto life." Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

10 For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep,
and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers
hath he covered.

11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that
is sealed, which *men* deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read
this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed:

12 and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read
this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with
their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed
their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the
precept of men:

The prophet, in God's name, threatens those that were formal and hypocritical in their exercises of devotion, Isa 29:13,14. Observe here,

1 The sin that is here charged upon them--dissembling with God in their religious performances, Isa 29:13. He that knows the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shows and pretences, charges it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them for it or no. He that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, yet they are not sincere worshippers. To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and to present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and our lips, in speaking of him and in speaking to him; we must render to him the calves of our lips, Ho 14:2. And, if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. But there are many whose religion is lip-labour only. They say that which expresses an approach to God and an adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward.

For, (1.) They do not apply their minds to the service. When they pretend to be speaking to God they are thinking of a thousand impertinences: The have removed their hearts far from me, that they might not be employed in prayer, nor come within reach of the word. When work was to be done for God, which required the heart, that was sent out of the way on purpose, with the fool's eyes, into the ends of the earth.

(2.) They do not make the word of God the rule of their worship, nor his will their reason: Their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men. They worshipped the God of Israel, not according to his appointment, but their own inventions, the directions of their false prophets or their idolatrous kings, or the usages of the nations that were round about them. The tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or, if they did worship God in a way conformable to his institution in the days of Hezekiah, a great reformer, they had more an eye to the precept of the king than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in his time, who were formal in their devotions and wedded to their own inventions, and pronounces concerning them that in vain they did worship God, Mt 15:8,9.

2. It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness (Isa 29:14): I will proceed to do a marvellous work. They did one strange thing; they removed all sincerity from their hearts. Now God will go on and do another; he will remove all sagacity from their heads. The wisdom of their wise men shall perish. They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves to play the fool, and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them.

Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and it is just with God to deprive those of their understanding who part with their uprightness. This was

fulfilled in the wretched infatuation which the Jewish nation were manifestly under, after they had rejected the gospel of Christ; they removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvelous work; it is surprising, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most wondered at.

14 therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among
this people, *even* a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom
of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their
prudent *men* shall be hid.

15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the
Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us?
and who knoweth us?

He shows the folly of those that though to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God and which they projected to conceal from his all-seeing eye. Here we have,

1. Their politics described (Isa 29:15): They seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, that he may not know either what they do or what they design; they say, "Who sees us? No man, and therefore not God himself." The consultations they had about their own safety they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them; nay, they knew they were displeasing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and, if he did not know them, he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom both of the carnal worships and of the carnal confidences of hypocrites; Ps 94:7,Eze 8:12,9:9.

2 The absurdity of their politics demonstrated (Isa 29:16): "Surely your turning of things upside down thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way to make them shape as you would have them--or rather your inverting the order of things, and thinking to make God's providence give attendance to your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly turning things upside down and beginning at the wrong end--shall be esteemed as the potter's clay. God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease and as absolute a power as the potter forms and fashions his clay." See how God despises, and therefore what little reason we have to dread, those contrivances of men that are carried on without God, particularly those against him.

(1.) Those that think to hide their counsels from God do in effect deny him to be their Creator. It is as if the work should say of him that made it, "He made me not; I made myself." If God made us, he certainly knows us as the Psalmist shows, (Ps 139:1,13-16); so that those who say that he does not see them might as well say that he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked arises from this, they forget that God formed them, De 32:18. Or,

(2.) Which comes to the same thing, they deny him to be a wise Creator: The thing framed saith of him that framed it, He had no understanding; for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings and to put understanding into the inward part (Job 38:36), no doubt he has understanding to know us and all we say and do. As those that quarrel with God, so those that think to conceal themselves from him, do in effect charge him with folly; but he that formed the eye, shall he not see? Ps 94:9.

16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

17 *Is* it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?

Those that thought to hide their counsels from the Lord were said to turn things upside down (Isa 29:16), and they intended to do it unknown to God; but God here tells them that he will turn things upside down his way; and let us see whose word shall stand, his or theirs. They disbelieve Providence: "Wait awhile," says God, "and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration that there is a God who governs the world, and that he governs it and orders all the changes that are in it for the good of his church." The wonderful revolution here foretold may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem after the defeat of Sennacherib's attempt, and the repose which good people then enjoyed, when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword both of war and persecution. But it may look further, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the gospel (for their hypocrisy and infidelity were here foretold, Isa 29:13) and the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

In general, it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, Isa 29:17. Lebanon, that was a forest, shall be turned into a fruitful field; and Carmel, that was a fruitful field, shall become a forest. It is a counterchange. Note, Great changes, both for the better and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the defeat of Sennacherib that the ground should be more than ordinarily fruitful (Isa 37:30): You shall eat this year such as grows of itself; food for man shall be (as food for beasts is) the spontaneous product of the soil. Then Lebanon became a fruitful field, so fruitful that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field in comparison with it was looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field; and the Jewish church, that had long

been a fruitful field, became a desolate and deserted forest, Isa 54:1.

18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

19 The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

21 that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

In particular,

1. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, Isa 29:18. Those that understood not this prophecy (but it was to them as a sealed book, Isa 29:11) shall, when it is accomplished, understand it, and shall acknowledge, not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it: The deaf shall then hear the words of the book. The fulfilling of prophecy is the best exposition of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have divine revelation brought among them; and those that sat in darkness shall see a great light, those that were blind shall see out of obscurity; for the gospel was sent to them to open their eyes, Ac 26:18. Observe, In order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's grace takes with them is to open their understandings and make them hear the words of God's book.

2. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox (Isa 29:24): Those that erred in spirit, that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book and the meaning of them, shall come to understanding, to a right understanding of things; the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for those that have erred and are deceived, that God can, and often does, bring such to understanding. Those that murmured at the truths of God as hard sayings, and loved to pick

quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of these doctrines, and then they will be better reconciled to them. Those that erred concerning the providence of God as to public affairs, and murmured at the disposals of it, when they shall see the issue of things shall better understand them and be aware of what God was designing in all, Ho 14:9.

3. Those that were melancholy shall become cheerful and pleasant (Isa 29:19): The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord. Those who are poor in the world and poor in spirit, who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction, are purely passive and not passionate, when they see God appearing for them, they shall add, or repeat, joy in the Lord. This intimates that even in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note, Those who, when they are in trouble, can truly rejoice in God, shall soon have cause given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading joy in God is increasing and getting round. This shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at is that this joy may be full. Even the poor among men may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty needs not deprive them of that joy, Hab 3:17,18. And the meek, the humble, the patient, and dispassionate, shall grow in this joy. Note, The grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

4. The enemies, that were formidable, shall become despicable. Sennacherib, that terrible one, and his great army, that put the country into such a consternation, shall be brought to nought (Isa 29:20), shall be quite disabled to do any further mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalency of Christ's gospel; and those that were subject to bondage through fear of him that had the power of death shall be delivered, Heb 2:14,15.

5. The persecutors, that were vexatious, shall be quieted, and so those they were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of

them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible one from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scorners at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who, when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice, and profaneness, and the spirit of persecution, those more dangerous enemies at home. Or,

They shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out to be made examples of. Or, They shall insensibly waste away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they had made a jest of. Observe what had been the wickedness of these scorners, for which they should be cut off. They had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains thus feelingly of them and of their subtle malice. Some as informers and persecutors, others as judges, did all they could to take away his life, or at least his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief priests and Pharisees, who persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation of scorners were cut off and consumed.

(1.) They ridiculed the prophets and the serious professors of religion; they despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt; they were scorners, and sat in the seat of the scornful.

(2.) They lay in wait for an occasion against them. By their spies they watch for iniquity, to see if they can lay hold of any thing that is said or done that may be called an iniquity. Or they themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus.

(3.) They took advantage against them for the least slip of the tongue; and, if a thing were ever so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon. They made a man, though

he were ever so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word mischosen or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant, Isa 29:21. They cavilled at every word that the prophets spoke to them by way of admonition, though ever so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendoes. Those who consider how apt we all are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to make a man an offender for a word.

(4.) They did all they could to bring those into trouble that dealt faithfully with them and told them of their faults. Those that reprove in the gates, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place, as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to show people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them, as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour that they might entangle him in his talk (Mt 22:15), that they might have something to lay to his charge which might render him odious to the people or obnoxious to the government. So persecuted they the prophets; and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who, out of good-will to them, seek to save their souls from death; and see what need reprovers have both of courage to do their duty and of prudence to avoid the snare.

(5.) They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause: They turn aside the just for a thing of nought; they condemn him, or give the cause against him, upon no evidence, no colour or pretence whatsoever. They run a man down, and misrepresent him, by all the little arts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. We must not think it strange if we see the best of men thus treated; the disciple is not greater than his Master. But wait awhile, and God will not only bring forth their righteousness, but cut off and consume these scorners.

6. Jacob, who was made to blush by the reproaches, and made to tremble by the threatenings, of his enemies, shall now be relieved both against his shame and against his fear, by the rolling away of those reproaches and the defeating of those threatenings (Isa 29:22): Thus the Lord saith who redeemed Abraham, that is, called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and so rescued him from the idolatry of his fathers and plucked him as a brand out of the fire. He that redeemed Abraham out of his snares and troubles will redeem all that are by faith his genuine seed out of theirs.

He that began his care of his church in the redemption of Abraham, when it and its Redeemer were in his loins, will not now cast off the care of it. Because the enemies of his people are so industrious both to blacken them and to frighten them, therefore he will appear for the house of Jacob, and they shall not be ashamed as they have been, but shall have wherewith to answer those that reproach them, nor shall their faces now wax pale; but they shall gather courage, and look their enemies in the face without change of countenance, as those have reason to do who have the God of Abraham on their side.

7. Jacob, who thought his family would be extinct and the entail of religion quite cut off, shall have the satisfaction of seeing a numerous progeny devoted to God for a generation, Isa 29:23.

(1.) He shall see his children, multitudes of believers and praying people, the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham and wrestling Jacob. Having his quiver full of these arrows, he shall not be ashamed (Isa 29:22) but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps 127:5. Christ shall not be ashamed (Isa 50:7), for he shall see his seed (Isa 53:10); he sees some, and foresees more, in the midst of him, flocking to the church, and residing there.

(2.) His children are the work of God's hands; being formed by him, they are formed for him, his workmanship, created unto good works. It is some comfort to parents to think that their children are God's creatures, the work of the hands of his grace.

(3.) He and his children shall sanctify the name of God as their God, as the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear and worship the God of Israel. This is opposed to his being ashamed and waxing pale; when he is delivered from his contempts and dangers he shall not magnify himself, but sanctify the Holy One of Jacob. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are ornaments and comforts indeed to each other when they join in sanctifying the name of God. When parents give up their children, and children give up themselves, to God, to be to him for a name and a praise, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

22 Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.

23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

Isaiah-30

The Futility of Reliance on Egypt

1 Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews that, when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God and putting their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they sought to the Syrians, 2Ch 16:2,3. Against the Syrians they sought to the Assyrians, 2Ki 16:7. Against the Assyrians they here sought to the Egyptians, and

Rabshakeh upbraided them with so doing, 2Ki 18:21. Now observe here,

I. How this sin of theirs is described, and what there was in it that was provoking to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress,

1. They would not consult God. They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God, though they had a ready and certain way of doing it by Urim or prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue: "They take counsel among themselves, and one from another; but they do not ask counsel, much less will they take counsel, of me. They cover with a covering" (they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm), "but not of my Spirit" (not such as God by his Spirit, in the mouth of his prophets, directed them to), "and therefore it will prove too short a covering, and a refuge of lies."

2. They could not confide in God. They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their friend, but they strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh; they thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrian while they had him for them. The shadow of Egypt (and it was but a shadow) was the covering in which they wrapped themselves.

II. What was the evil of this sin.

1. It bespoke them rebellious children; and a woe is here denounced against them under that character, Isa 30:1. They were, in profession, God's children; but, not trusting in him, they were justly stigmatized as rebellious; for, if we distrust God's providence, we do in effect withdraw ourselves from our allegiance.

2. They added sin to sin. It was sin that brought them into distress; and then, instead of repenting, they trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2Ch 28:22. And those that had abused God's mercies to them, making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too, making them an excuse for their distrust of God; and so they make bad worse, and add sin to sin; and those that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plagues wonderful. Now that which aggravated their sin was,

(1.) That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for their allies: They walk to go down to Egypt, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither; but they have not asked at my mouth, never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no.

(2.) That they were at such a vast expense to do it, Isa 30:6. They load the beasts of the south (horses fetched from Egypt, which lay south from Judea) with their riches, fancying, as it is common with people in a fright, that they were safer any where than where they were. Or they sent their riches thither as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interests, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them gratis; but, if they will have help from the Egyptians, they must pay dearly for it, and they seem willing to do so. The riches that are so spent will turn to a bad account. They carried their effects to Egypt through a land (so it may be read) of trouble and anguish, that vast howling wilderness which lay between Canaan and Egypt, whence come the lion and fiery serpent, De 8:15. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness, to bring what they had to Egypt. Or it may be meant of Egypt itself, which had been to Israel a house of bondage and therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venomous creatures. See what dangers men run into that forsake God, and what dangers they will run into in pursuance of their carnal confidences and their expectations from the creature.

2 that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth;
to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in
the shadow of Egypt!
3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the
trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.
4 For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.
5 They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them, nor
be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

What would be the consequence of it.

1 The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would address them very respectfully, and be willing to treat with them (Isa 30:4): His princes were at Zoan, at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship and the succours he would send them. But,

2. They would not answer their expectation: They could not profit them, Isa 30:5. For God says, They shall not profit them (Isa 30:6), and every creature is that to us (and no more) which he makes it to be. The forces they were to furnish them with could not be raised in time; or, when they were raised, they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition; or the march was so long that they could not come up when they had occasion for them; or the Egyptians would not be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians, upon some account or other: The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, Isa 30:7. They shall hinder and hurt, instead of helping. And therefore,

3. These people, that were now so fond of the Egyptians, would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them and confidence in them (Isa 30:3): "The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings (Isa 18:1), which was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint

you, and be the matter of your shame, but it will weaken all your other supports, and be an occasion of mischief to you."

God afterwards threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel and been a staff of a reed to them, Eze 29:6,7. The princes and ambassadors of Israel, who were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they come among them shall see so much of their weakness, or rather of their baseness, that they shall all be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them, but a shame and reproach, Isa 30:5. Those that trust in God, in his power, providence, and promise, are never made ashamed of their hope; but those that put confidence in any creature will sooner or later find it a reproach to them. God is true, and may be trusted, but every man a liar, and must be suspected. The Creator is a rock of ages, the creature a broken reed. We cannot expect too little from man nor too much from God.

6 The burden of the beasts of the south.
Into the land of trouble and anguish from whence *come* the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people *that* shall not profit *them*.

7 For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength *is* to sit still.

The use and application of all this (Isa 30:7): "Therefore have I cried concerning this matter, this project of theirs. I have published it, that all might take notice of it. I have pressed it as one in earnest. Their strength is to sit still, in a humble dependence upon God and his goodness and a quiet submission to his will, and not to wander about and put themselves to great trouble to seek help from this and the other creature." If we sit still in a day of distress, hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and using only lawful regular methods for our own preservation, this will be the strength of our souls both for services and sufferings, and it will engage divine strength for us. We weaken ourselves, and provoke God to withdraw from us, when we make flesh our arm, for then our hearts depart from

the Lord. When we have tired ourselves by seeking for help from creatures we shall find it the best way of recruiting ourselves to repose in the Creator. Here I am, let him do with me as he pleases.

8 Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:

Here, I The preface is very awful. The prophet must not only preach this, but he must write it (Isa 30:8), write it in a table, to be hung up and exposed to public view; he must carefully note it, not in loose papers which might be lost or torn, but in a book, to be preserved for posterity, in perpetuam rei memoriam--for a standing testimony against this wicked generation; let it remain not only to the next succeeding ages, but for ever and ever, while the world stands; and so it shall, for the book of the scriptures no doubt, shall continue, and be read, to the end of time. Let it be written,

1. To shame the men of the present age, who would not hear and heed it when it was spoken. Let it be written, that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it, though they will not.

2. To justify God in the judgments he was about to ring upon them; people will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them, and over-severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity.

3. For warning to others not to do as they did, lest they should fare as they fared. It is designed for admonition to those of the remotest place and age, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come, 1Co 10:11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach, but to write; for that which is written remains.

II The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad. He must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write this concerning them (and we are sure he does not bear false

witness against them, nor make them worse than they were, for the judgment of God is according to truth), That this is a rebellious people, Isa 30:9. The Jews were, for aught we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people.

1. They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants: "They are lying children, that will not stand to what they say, that promise fair, but perform nothing;" when he took them into covenant with himself he said of them, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie (Isa 63:8); but they proved otherwise.

2. They rebelled against the divine authority: "They are children that will not hear the law of the Lord, nor heed it, but will do as they have a mind, let God himself say what he will to the contrary."

9 that this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the Lord:

10 which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:

11 get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:

13 therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

14 And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *withal* out of the pit.

The charge drawn up against them is very high and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful. Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is read for both, a fearful doom:--

1. They forbade the prophets to speak to them in God's name, and to deal faithfully with them.

(1.) This their sin is described, Isa 30:10,11. They set themselves so violently against the prophets to hinder them from preaching, or at least from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did so banter them and browbeat them, that they did in effect say to the seers, See not. They had the light, but they loved darkness rather. It was their privilege that they had seers among them, but they did what they could to put out their eyes--that they had prophets among them, but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, Re 11:10. Those that silence good ministers, and discountenance good preaching, are justly counted, and called, rebels against God. See what it was in the prophets' preaching with which they found themselves aggrieved.

[1.] The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things, must flatter them in their sins, and say that they did well, and there was no harm, no peril, in the course of life they lived in. Let a thing be ever so right and true, if it be not smooth, they will not hear it. But if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be ever so false and ever so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived that desire to be so.

[2.] The prophets stopped them in their sinful pursuits, and stood in their way like the angel in Balaam's road, with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand; so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took as a great insult. When they went on frowardly in the way of their hearts they said to the prophets, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the paths. What do you do in our way? Cannot you let us alone to do as we

please?" Those have their hearts fully set in them to do evil that bid their faithful monitors to stand out of their way. Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten? 2Ch 25:16.

[3.] The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel, what an enemy he is to sin ad how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear of. Both the thing itself and the expression of it were too serious for them; and therefore, if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God the Holy One of Israel; for God's holiness is that attribute which wicked people most of all dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state-preface (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear perishing in their sins that cannot bear to be frightened out of them.

(2.) Now what is the doom passed upon them for this? We have it, Isa 30:12,13. Observe,

[1.] Who it is that gives judgment upon them: Thus saith the Holy One of Israel. That title of God which they particularly excepted against the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. We must tell men that God is the Holy One of Israel, and so they shall find him, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear.

[2.] What the ground of the judgment is: Because they despise this word--wither, in general, every word that the prophets said to them, or this word in particular, which declares God to be the Holy One of Israel: "they despise this, and will neither make it their fear, to stand in awe of it, nor make it their hope, to put any confidence in it; but, rather than they will be beholden to the Holy One of Israel, they will trust in oppression and perverseness, in the wealth they have got and the interest they have made by fraud and violence, or in the sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his

will. On these they lean, and therefore it is just that they should fall."

[3.] What the judgment is that is passed upon them: "This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall. This confidence of yours will be like a house built upon the sand, which will fall in the storm and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Your contempt of that word of God which you might build upon will make every thing else you trust like a wall that bulges out, which, if any weight be laid upon it, comes down, nay, which often sinks with its own weight." The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves should be, First, A surprising ruin: The breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it, which will make it the more frightful, and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. Secondly, An utter ruin, universal and irreparable: "Your and all your confidences shall be not only weak as the potter's clay (Isa 29:16), but broken to pieces as the potter's vessel.

He that has the rod of iron shall break it (Ps 2:9) and he shall not spare, shall not have any regard to it, nor be in care to preserve or keep whole any part of it. But, when once it is broken so as to be unfit for use, let it be dashed, let it be crushed, all to pieces, so that there may not remain one sherd big enough to take up a little fire or water"--two things we have daily need of, and which poor people commonly fetch in a piece of a broken pitcher. They shall not only be as a bowing wall (Ps 62:3), but as a broken mug or glass, which is good for nothing, nor can ever be made whole again.

2. They slighted the gracious directions God gave them, not only how to secure themselves and make themselves safe, but how to compose themselves and make themselves easy; they would take their own way, Isa 30:15-17. Observe here,

(1.) The method God put them into for salvation and strength. The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them,

and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription; and it is recommended to us all.

[1.] Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptation of it and secured from the curse of it, which are the only evil things in it? It must be in returning and rest, in returning to God and reposing in him as our rest. Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty, and that is the way to be saved. "Return from this project of going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God, and then you may trust him with your safety. In returning (in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives) and in rest (in an entire submission of your souls to God and a complacency in him) you shall be saved."

[2.] Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us and to bear what is laid upon us? It must be in quietness and in confidence; we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with.

(2.) The contempt they put upon this prescription; they would not take God's counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will those die of their disease that will not take God for their physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves if we will not be subjects to him. They would not so much as try the method prescribed: "But you said, No (Isa 30:16), we will not compose ourselves, for we will flee upon horses and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurry hither and thither to fetch in foreign aids." They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he does.

When Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children would not be persuaded to sit still and patiently to expect God's appearing for them, as he did wonderfully at last; but they would shift for their own safety, and thereby they exposed themselves to so much the more danger.

(3.) The sentence passed upon them for this. Their sin shall be their punishment: "You will flee, and therefore you shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore so shall those be that pursue you." The dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made their escape; and so that very project by which they hoped to save themselves was justly their ruin and the most guilty suffered most. It is foretold, Isa 30:17,

[1.] That they should be easily cut off; they should be so dispirited with their own fears, increased by their flight, that one of the enemy should defeat a thousand of them, and five put an army to flight, which could never be unless their Rock had sold them De 32:30.

[2.] That they should be generally cut off, and only here and there one should escape alone in a solitary place, and be left for a spectacle too, as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, a warning to others to avoid the like sinful courses and carnal confidences.

15 For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

16 But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

17 One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.

The Promise of God's Grace to Israel

18 And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord *is* a God of judgment: blessed *are* all they that wait for him.

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph (You shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain) some understand as a promise that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy; and here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities. Or the first words in this paragraph may be read by way of antithesis, Notwithstanding this, yet will the Lord wait that he may be gracious. The prophet, having shown that those who made Egypt their confidence would be ashamed of it, here shows that those who sat still and made God alone their confidence would have the comfort of it. It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when the times are very bad, that all will be well yet, well with those that fear God, when we say to the wicked, It shall be ill with you.

God will be gracious to them and will have mercy on them. This is the foundation of all good. If we find favour with God, and he have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort according to the time that we have been afflicted.

1 The mercy in store for them is very affectingly expressed.

(1.) "He will wait to be gracious (Isa 30:18); he will wait till you return to him and seek his face, and then he will be ready to meet you with mercy. He will wait, that he may do it in the best and fittest time, when it will be most for his glory, when it will come to you with the most pleasing surprise. He will continually follow you with his favours, and not let slip any opportunity of being gracious to you."

(2.) "He will stir up himself to deliver you, will be exalted, will be raised up out of his holy habitation (Zec 2:13), that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness; and thus he will be exalted, that is, he will glorify his

own name. This is what he aims at in having mercy on his people."

(3.) He will be very gracious (Isa 30:19), and this in answer to prayer, which makes his kindness doubly kind: "He will be gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry, the cry of thy necessity, when that is most urgent--the cry of thy prayer, when that is most fervent. When he shall hear it, there needs no more; at the first word he will answer thee, and say, Here I am." Herein he is very gracious indeed. In particular,

[1.] Those who were disturbed in the possession of their estates shall again enjoy them quietly. When the danger is over the people shall dwell in Zion, at Jerusalem, as they used to do; they shall dwell safely, free from the fear of evil.

[2.] Those who were all in tears shall have cause to rejoice, and shall weep no more; and those who dwell in Zion, the holy city, will find enough there to wipe away tears from their eyes.

2. This is grounded upon two great truths:

(1.) That the Lord is a God of judgment; he is both wise and just in all the disposals of his providence, true to his word and tender of his people. If he correct his children, it is with judgment (Jer 10:24), with moderation and discretion, considering their frame. We think we may safely refer ourselves to a man of judgment; and shall we not commit our way to a God of judgment?

(2.) That therefore all those are blessed who wait for him, who not only wait on him with their prayers, but wait for him with their hopes, who will not take any indirect course to extricate themselves out of their straits, or anticipate their deliverance, but patiently expect God's appearances for them in his own way and time. Because God is infinitely wise, those are truly happy who refer their cause to him.

19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

20 And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers:

They shall not again know the want of the means of grace, Isa 30:20,21. Here,

1. It is supposed that they might be brought into straits and troubles after this deliverance was wrought for them. It was promised (Isa 30:19), that they should weep no more and that God would be gracious to them; and yet here it is taken for granted that God may give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, prisoners' fare (1Ki 22:27), coarse and sorry food, such as the poor use. When one trouble is over we know not how soon another may succeed; and we may have an interest in the favour of God, and such consolations as are sufficient to prohibit weeping, and yet may have bread of adversity given us to eat and water of affliction to drink. Let us therefore not judge of love or hatred by what is before us.

2. It is promised that their eyes should see their teachers, that is, that they should have faithful teachers among them, and should have hearts to regard them and not slight them as they had done; and then they might the better be reconciled to the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. It was a common saying among the old Puritans, Brown bread and the gospel are good fare. A famine of bread is not so great a judgment as a famine of the word of God, Am 8:11,12. It seems that their teachers had been removed into corners (probably being forced to shift for their safety in the reign of Ahaz), but it shall be so no more. Veritas non quærit angulos--Truth seeks no corners for concealment. But the teachers of truth may sometimes be driven into corners for shelter; and it goes ill with the church when it is so, when the woman with her crown of twelve stars is forced to

flee into the wilderness (Re 12:6), when the prophets are hidden by fifty in a cave, 1Ki 18:4.

But God will find a time to call the teachers out of their corners again, and to replace them in their solemn assemblies, which shall see their own teachers, the eyes of all the synagogue being fastened on them, Lu 4:20. And it will be the more pleasing because of the restraint they have been for some time under, as light out of darkness, as life from the dead. To all that love God and their own souls this return of faithful teachers out of their corners, especially with a promise that they shall not be removed into corners any more, is the most acceptable part of any deliverance, and has comfort enough in it to sweeten even the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. But this is not all:

3. It is promised that they shall have the benefit, not only of the public ministry, but of private and particular admonition and advice (Isa 30:21): "Thy ears shall hear a word behind thee, calling after thee as a man calls after a traveller that he sees going out of his road." Observe,

(1.) Whence this word shall come--from behind thee, from some one whom thou dost not see, but who sees thee. "Thy eyes see thy teachers; but this is a teacher out of sight, it is thy own conscience, which shall now by the grace of God be awakened to do its office."

(2.) What the word shall be: "This is the way, walk you in it. When thou art doubting, conscience shall direct thee to the way of duty; when thou art dull and trifling, conscience shall quicken thee in that way." As God has not left himself without witness, so he has not left us without guides to show us our way.

(3.) The seasonableness of this word: It shall come when you turn to the right hand or to the left. We are very apt to miss our way; there are turnings on both hands, and those so tracked and seemingly straight that they may easily be mistaken for the right

way. There are right-hand and left-hand errors, extremes on each side virtue; the tempter is busy courting us into the by-paths. It is happy then if by the particular counsels of a faithful minister or friend, or the checks of conscience and the strivings of God's Spirit, we be set right and prevented from going wrong.

(4.) The success of this word: "It shall not only be spoken, but thy ears shall hear it; whereas God has formerly spoken once, yea, twice, and thou hast not perceived it (Job 33:14), now thou shalt listen attentively to these secret whispers, and hear them with an obedient ear." If God gives us not only the word, but the hearing ear, not only the means of grace, but a heart to make a good use of those means, we have reason to say, He is very gracious to us, and reason to hope he has yet further mercy in store for us.

21 and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

22 Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

They shall be cured of their idolatry, shall fall out with their idols, and never be reconciled to them again, Isa 30:22. The deliverance God shall work for them shall convince them that it is their interest, as well as duty, to serve him only; and they shall own that, as their trouble was brought upon them for their idolatries, so it was removed upon condition that they should not return to them. This is also the good effect of their seeing their teachers and hearing the word behind them; by this it shall appear that they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy--they shall break off from their best-beloved sin. Observe,

1. How foolishly mad they had formerly been upon their idols, in the day of their apostasy. Idolaters are said to be mad upon their idols (Jer 50:38), doatingly fond of them. They had graven images of silver, and molten images of gold, and, though gold

needs no painting, they had coverings and ornaments on these; they spared no cost in doing honour to their idols.

2. How wisely mad (if I may so speak) they now were at their idols, what a holy indignation they conceived against them in the day of their repentance. They not only degraded their images, but defaced them, not only defaced them, but defiled them; they not only spoiled the shape of them, but in a pious fury threw away the gold and silver they were made of, though otherwise valuable and convertible to a good use. They could not find in their hearts to make any vessel of honour of them. The rich clothes wherewith their images were dressed up they cast away as a filthy cloth which rendered those that touched it unclean until the evening, Le 15:23.

Note, To all true penitents sin has become very odious; they loathe it, and loathe themselves because of it; they cast it away to the dunghill, the fittest place for it, nay, to the cross, for they crucify the flesh; their cry against it is, Crucify it, crucify it. They say unto it, Abi hinc in malam rem--Get thee hence. They are resolved never to harbour it any more. They put as far from as they can all the occasions of sin and temptations to it, though they are as a right eye or a right hand, and protest against it as Ephraim did (Ho 14:8), What have I to do any more with idols? Probably this was fulfilled in many particular persons, who, by the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army, were convinced of the folly of their idolatry and forsook it. It was fulfilled in the body of the Jewish nation at their return from their captivity in Babylon, for they abhorred idols ever after; and it is accomplished daily in the conversion of souls, by the power of divine grace, from spiritual idolatry to the fear and love of God. Those that join themselves to the Lord must abandon every sin, and say unto it, Get thee hence.

23 Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground
withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and
plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.

God will then give them plenty of all good things. When he gives them their teachers, and they give him their hearts, so that they begin to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, then all other things shall be added to them Mt 6:33. And when the people are brought to praise God then shall the earth yield her increase, and with it God, even our own God, shall bless us, Ps 67:5,6. So it follows here: "When you shall have abandoned your idols, then shall God give the rain of your seed," Isa 30:23. When we return to God in a way of duty he will meet us with his favours.

1. God will give you rain of your seed, rain to water the seed you sow, just at the time that it calls for it, as much as it needs and no more. Observe, How man's industry and God's blessing concur to the good things we enjoy relating to the life that now is: Thou shalt sow the ground, that is thy part, and then God will give the rain of thy seed, that is his part. It is so in spiritual fruit; we must take pains with our hearts and then wait on God for his grace.

2 The increase of the earth shall be rich and good, and every thing the best of the kind; it shall be fat and fat, very fat and very good, fat and plenteous (so we read it), good and enough of it. Your land shall be Canaan indeed; it was remarkably so after the defeat of Sennacherib, by the special blessing of God, Isa 37:30. God would thus repair the losses they sustained by that devastation.

3. Not only the tillage, but the pasture-ground should be remarkably fruitful: The cattle shall feed in large pastures; those that are at grass shall have room enough, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for use, to ear the ground, which must be the better fed for their being worked, shall eat clean provender. The corn shall not be given them in the chaff as usual, to make it go the further, but they shall have good clean corn fit for man's use, being winnowed with the fan. The brute-creatures shall share in

the abundance; it is fit they should, for they groan under the burden of the curse which man's sin has brought upon the earth.

4. Even the tops of the mountains, that used to be barren, shall be so well watered with the rain of heaven that there shall be rivers and streams there, and running down thence to the valleys (Isa 30:25), and this in the day of the great slaughter that should be made by the angel in the camp of the Assyrians, when the towers and batteries they had erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jerusalem, the army being slain, should fall of course. It is probable that this was fulfilled in the letter of it, and that about the same time that that army was cut off there were extraordinary rains in mercy to the land.

24 The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan.

25 And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers *and* streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

The effect of all this should be extraordinary comfort and joy to the people of God, Isa 30:26. Light shall increase; that is, knowledge shall increase (when the prophecies are accomplished they shall be fully understood) or rather triumph shall: the light of the joy that is sown for the righteous shall now come up with a great increase. The light of the moon shall become as bright and as strong as that of the sun, and that of the sun shall increase proportionably and be as the light of seven days; every one shall be much more cheerful and appear much more pleasant than usual.

There shall be a high spring-tide of joy in Judah and Jerusalem, upon occasion of the ruin of the Assyrian army, when the Lord binds up the breach of his people, not only saves them from

being further wounded, but heals the wounds that have been given them by this invasion and makes up all their losses. The great distress they were reduced to, their despair of relief, and the suddenness of their deliverance, would much augment their joy. This is not unfitly applied by many to the light which the gospel brought into the world to those that sat in darkness, which has far exceeded the Old-Testament light as that of the sun does that of the moon, and which proclaims healing to the broken-hearted, and the binding up of their wounds.

The Lord's Judgment on Assyria

27 Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof is* heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire:

This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assyrian army, though it is a threatening to them, is part of the promise to the Israel of God, that God would not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they had done to the Israel of God, but would disable and deter them from doing the like again; and this prediction, which would now shortly be accomplished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing promises, which should be accomplished in the latter days. Here is,

God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger against the Assyrians. He is here introduced in all the power and all the terror of his wrath, Isa 30:27. The name of Jehovah, which the Assyrians disdain and set at a distance from them, as if they were out of its reach and it could do them no harm, behold, it comes from far. A messenger in the name of the Lord comes from as far off as heaven itself. He is a messenger of wrath, burning with his anger. God's lips are full of indignation at the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who compared the God of Israel with the gods of the heathen; his tongue is as a devouring fire, for he can speak his proud enemies to ruin; his very breath comes with

as much force as an overflowing stream, and with it he shall slay the wicked, Isa 11:4.

He does not stifle or smother his resentments, as men do theirs when they are either causeless or impotent; but he shall cause his glorious voice to be heard when he proclaims war with an enemy that sets him at defiance, Isa 30:30. He shall display the indignation of his anger, anger in the highest degree; it shall be as the flame of a devouring fire, which carries and consumes all before it, with lightning or dissipation, and with tempest and hailstones, all which are the formidable phenomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the terror of the Almighty God of nature.

28 and his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of
the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and *there shall be*
a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing *them* to err.
29 Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when* a holy solemnity is kept;
and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into
the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel.
30 And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall
show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his*
anger, and *with* the flame of a devouring fire, *with* scattering, and
tempest, and hailstones.

The execution done by this anger of the Lord. Men are often angry when they can only threaten and talk big; but when God causes his glorious voice to be heard that shall not be all: he will show the lighting down of his arm too, Isa 30:30. The operations of his providence shall accomplish the menaces of his word. Those that would not see the lifting up of his arm (Isa 26:11) shall feel the lighting down of it, and find, to their cost, that the burden thereof is heavy (Isa 30:27), so heavy that they cannot bear it, nor bear up against it, but must unavoidably sink and be crushed under it. Who knows the power of his anger or imagines what an offended God can do? Five things are here prepared for the execution:--

1. Here is an overflowing stream, that shall reach to the midst of the neck, shall quite overwhelm the whole body of the army, and Sennacherib only, the head of it, shall keep above water and escape this stroke, while yet he is reserved for another in the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian army had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching even to the neck (Isa 8:7,8), and now the breath of God's wrath will be so to it.

2. Here is a sieve of vanity, with which God would sift those nations of which the Assyrian army was composed, Isa 30:28. The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance; he will sift them, not to gather out of them any that should be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another, put them into great consternation, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity (which retains nothing) that they are shaken with, and they are found all chaff.

3. Here is a bridle, which God has in their jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, Isa 10:7. God particularly says of Sennacherib (Isa 37:29) that he will put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips. It is a bridle causing them to err, forcing them to such methods as will certainly be destructive to themselves and their interest and in which they will be infatuated. God with a word guides his people into the right way (Isa 30:21), but with a bridle he turns his enemies headlong upon their own ruin.

4. Here is a rod and a staff, even the voice of the Lord, his word giving orders concerning it, with which the Assyrian shall be beaten down, Isa 30:31. The Assyrian had been himself a rod in God's hand for the chastising of his people, and had smitten them, Isa 10:5. That was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a grounded staff, that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him. It is a staff with a foundation, founded upon the enemies' deserts and God's determinate counsel. It is a

consumption determined (Isa 10:23), and therefore there is no escaping it, no getting out of the reach of it; it shall pass in every place where an Assyrian is found, and the Lord shall lay it upon him, and cause it to rest, Isa 30:32. Such is the woeful case of those that persist in enmity to God: the wrath of God abides on them.

5. Here is Tophet ordained and prepared for them, Isa 30:33. The valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem, was called Tophet. In that valley, it is supposed, many of the Assyrian regiments lay encamped, and were there slain by the destroying angel; or there the bodies of those that were so slain were burned. Hezekiah had lately, and from yesterday (so the word is) ordained it; that is, say some, he had cleared it of the images that were set up in it, to which they there burnt their children, and so prepared it to be a receptacle for the dead bodies of their enemies, for the king of Assyria (that is, for his army) it is prepared, and there is fuel enough ready to burn them all; and they shall be consumed as suddenly and effectually as if the fire were kept burning by a continual stream of brimstone, for such the breath of the Lord, his word and his wrath, will be to it.

Now as the prophet, in the foregoing promises, slides insensibly into the promises of gospel graces and comforts, so here, in the threatening of the ruin of Sennacherib's army, he points at the final and everlasting destruction of all impenitent sinners. Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned Gehenna, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery, as also that in the Apocalypse it is so often called the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. This is said to be prepared of old for the devil and his angels, for the greatest of sinners, the proudest, and that think themselves not accountable to any for what they say and do; even for kings it is prepared. It is deep and large, sufficient to receive the world of the ungodly; the pile thereof is fire and much wood. God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make

themselves fuel to it; and the breath of the Lord (the power of his anger) kindles it, and will keep it ever burning. See Isa 66:24. Wherefore stand in awe and sin not.

31 For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, *which* smote with a rod.

32 And *in* every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, *it* shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it.

The great joy which this should occasion to the people of God. The Assyrian's fall is Jerusalem's triumph (Isa 30:29): You shall have a song as in the night, a psalm of praise such as those sing who by night stand in the house of the Lord, and sing to his glory who gives songs in the night. It shall not be a song of vain mirth, but a sacred song, such as was sung when a holy solemnity was kept in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church's enemies must be a holy joy, gladness of heart, as when one goes, with a pipe (such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied, 1Sa 10:5), to the mountain of the Lord, there to celebrate the praises of the Mighty One of Israel. Nay, in every place where the divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians they shall not only fall unlamented, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall with tabrets and harps, pleased to see how God, in battles of shaking, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them (Isa 30:32); for when the wicked perish there is shouting; and it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians, have insolently bidden defiance to God and trampled upon all mankind.

33 For Tophet *is* ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made *it* deep *and* large: the pile thereof *is* fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Isaiah-31

The Egyptians Are Men, Not God

1 Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses,
and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen,
because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One
of Israel, neither seek the Lord!
2 Yet he also *is* wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words:
but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help
of them that work iniquity.

This is the last of four chapters together that begin with woe; and they are all woes to the sinners that were found among the professing people of God, to the drunkards of Ephraim (Isa 28:1), to Ariel (Isa 29:1), to the rebellious children (Isa 30:1), and here to those that go down to Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from divine woes if they live in contempt of divine laws. Observe,

What the sin was that is here reproved, Isa 31:1.

1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them, as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and allies. They go down to Egypt for help in every exigence, as if the worshippers of false gods had a better interest in heaven and were more likely to have success of earth than the servants of the living and true God. That which invited them to Egypt was that the Egyptians had many chariots to accommodate them with, and horses and horsemen that were strong; and, if they could get a good body of forces thence into their service, they would think themselves able to deal with the king of Assyria and his numerous army. Their kings were forbidden to multiply horses and chariots, and were told of the folly of trusting to them (Ps 20:7); but they think themselves wiser than their Bible.

2. Slighting the God of Israel: They look not to the Holy One of Israel, as if he were not worth taking notice of in this distress. They advise not with him, seek not his favour, nor are in any care to make him their friend.

3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

The gross absurdity and folly of this sin. 1. They neglected one whom, if they would not hope in him, they had reason to fear. They do not seek the Lord, nor make their application to him, yet he also is wise, Isa 31:2. They are solicitous to get the Egyptians into an alliance with them, because they have the reputation of a politic people; and is not God wise too? and would not infinite wisdom, engaged on their side, stand them in more stead than all the policies of Egypt? They are at the pains of going down to Egypt, a tedious journey, when they might have had better advice, and better help, by looking up to heaven, and would not.

But, if they will not court God's wisdom to act for them, they shall find it act against them. He is wise, too wise for them to outwit, and he will bring evil upon those who thus affront him. He will not call back his words as men do (because they are fickle and foolish), but he will arise against the house of the evil-doers, this cabal of them that go down to Egypt; God will appear to their confusion, according to the word that he has spoken, and will oppose the help they think to bring in from the workers of iniquity. Some think the Egyptians made it one condition of their coming into an alliance with him that they should worship the gods of Egypt, and they consented to it, and therefore they are both called evil-doers and workers of iniquity.

2. They trusted to those who were unable to help them and would soon appear to be so, Isa 31:3. Let them know that the Egyptians, whom they depend so much upon, are men and not

God. As it is good for men to know themselves to be but men (Ps 9:20), so it is good for us to consider that those we love and trust to are but men. They therefore can do nothing without God, nothing against him, nothing in comparison with him. They are men, and therefore fickle and foolish, mutable and mortal, here to day and gone to morrow; they are men, and therefore let us not make gods of them, by making them our hope and confidence, and expecting that in them which is to be found in God only; they are not God, they cannot do that for us which God can do, and will, if we trust in him. Let us not then neglect him, to seek to them; let us not forsake the rock of ages for broken reeds, nor the fountain of living waters for broken cisterns.

The Egyptians indeed have horses that are very strong; but they are flesh, and not spirit, and therefore, strong as they are, they may be wearied with a long march, and become unserviceable, or be wounded and slain in battle, and leave their riders to be ridden over. Every one knows this, that the Egyptians are not God and their horses are not spirit; but those that seek to them for help do not consider it, else they would not put such confidence in them. Sinners may be convicted of folly by the plainest and most self-evident truths, which they cannot deny, but will not believe.

3. They would certainly be ruined with the Egyptians they trusted in, Isa 31:3. When the Lord does but stretch out his hand how easily, how effectually, will he make them ashamed of their confidence in Egypt, and the Egyptians ashamed of the encouragement they gave them to trust in them; for he that helps and he that is helped shall fall together, and their mutual alliance shall prove their joint ruin. The Egyptians were shortly to be reckoned with, as appears by the burden of Egypt (Isa 19:1-25), and then those who fled to them for shelter and succour should fall with them; for there is no escaping the judgments of God. Evil pursues sinners, and it is just with God to make that creature a scourge to us which we make an idol of.

4. They took God's work out of his hands. They pretended a great deal of care to preserve Jerusalem, in advising to an alliance with Egypt; and, when others would not fall in with their measures, they pleaded self preservation, and went to Egypt themselves. Now the prophet here tells them that Jerusalem should be preserved without aid from Egypt and that those who tarried there should be safe when those who fled to Egypt should be ruined. Jerusalem was under God's protection, and therefore there was no occasion to put it under the protection of Egypt. But a practical distrust of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from him to the creature. The prophet tells them he had it from God's own mouth: Thus hath the Lord spoken to me. They might depend upon it,

(1.) That God would appear against Jerusalem's enemies with the boldness of a lion over his prey, Isa 31:4. When the lion comes out to seize his prey a multitude of shepherds come out against him; for it becomes neighbours to help one another when persons or goods are in danger. These shepherds dare not come near the lion; all they can do is to make a noise, and with that they think to frighten him off. But does he regard it? No: he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself so far as to be in the least moved by it either to quit his prey or to make any more haste than otherwise he would do in seizing it. Thus will the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion, with such an unshaken undaunted resolution not to be moved by any opposition; and he will as easily and irresistibly destroy the Assyrian army as a lion tears a lamb in pieces. Whoever appear against God, they are but like a multitude of poor simple shepherds shouting at a lion, who scorns to take notice of them or so much as to alter his pace for them. Surely those that have such a protector need not go to Egypt for help.

(2.) That God would appear for Jerusalem's friends with the tenderness of a bird over her young, Isa 31:5. God was ready to

gather Jerusalem, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings (Mt 23:37); but those that trusted to the Egyptians would not be gathered. As birds flying to their nests with all possible speed, when they see them attacked, and fluttering about their nests with all possible concern, hovering over their young ones to protect them and drive away the assailants, with such compassion and affection will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem.

As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, takes them and bears them on her wings, so the Lord led Israel out of Egypt (De 32:11,12); and he has now the same tender concern for them that he had then, so that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter. Defending, he will deliver it; he will so defend it as to secure the continuance of its safety, not defend it for a while and abandon it at last, but defend it so that it shall not fall into the enemies' hand. I will defend this city to save it, Isa 37:35.

Passing over he will preserve it; the word for passing over is used in this sense only here and Ex 12:12,23,27, concerning the destroying angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, to which story this passage refers. The Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword only against the besiegers. They shall be slain by the pestilence, but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people and secure them.

4 For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, *he* will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

5 As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver *it; and* passing over he will preserve *it*.

6 Turn ye unto *him from* whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her; for in that method God delivers.

Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies within her walls, Isa 31:6,7. Here is,

1. A gracious call to repentance. This was the Lord's voice crying in the city, the voice of the rod, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets interpreting the judgment: "Turn you, O turn you now, from your evil ways, unto God, return to your allegiance to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted, from whom you, O children of Israel! have revolted." He reminds them of their birth and parentage, that they were children of Israel, and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel, as an aggravation of their revolt from him and as an encouragement to them to return to him. "They have been backsliding children, yet children; therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed. They have deeply revolted, with great address as they supposed (the revolters are profound, Ho 5:2); but the issue will prove that they have revolted dangerously. The stain of their sins has gone deeply into their nature, not to be easily got out, like the blackness of the Ethiopian. They have deeply corrupted themselves (Ho 9:9); they have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need to hasten your return to God."

2. A gracious promise of the good success of this call (Isa 31:7): In that day every man shall cast away his idols, in obedience to Hezekiah's orders, which, till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion, many refused to do. That is a happy fright which frightens us from our sins.

(1.) It shall be a general reformation: every man shall cast away his own idols, shall begin with them before he undertakes to demolish other people's idols, which there will be no need of when every man reforms himself.

(2.) It shall be a thorough reformation; for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their idols of silver and gold, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that idol are drawn to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast that away out of their hearts and will be ready to part with it when God calls.

(3.) It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics. They shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them for a sin, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away; and those are strangely wedded to it who will not be prevailed upon to cast it away when they see that otherwise they themselves will be castaways. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand them in no stead, will cast them away in indignation. But it agrees so exactly with Isa 30:22 that I rather take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

7 For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his
idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you *for* a sin.
8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man;
and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall
flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited.

Jerusalem's besiegers shall be routed, and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about her walls. The former makes way for this. If a people return to God, they may leave it to him

to plead their cause against their enemies. When they have cast away their idols, then shall the Assyrian fall, Isa 31:8,9.

1 The army of the Assyrians shall be laid dead upon the spot by the sword, not of a mighty man, nor of a mean man, not of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian, not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man nor surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man, but by the sword of an angel, who strikes more strongly than a mighty man and yet more secretly than a mean man, by the sword of the Lord, and his power and wrath in the hand of the angel. Thus the young men of the army shall melt, and be discomfited, and become tributaries to death. When God has work to do against the enemies of his church we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and common soldiers; whereas God can, if he please, do it without either. He needs not armies of men who has legions of angels at command, Mt 26:53.

2 The king of Assyria shall flee for the same, shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of the reach of it; and he shall make the best of his way to his own dominions, shall pass over to some strong-hold of his own, for fear lest the Jews should pursue him now that his army was routed. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God can strike a terror into the proudest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. See Job 18:11,20:24. His princes that accompany him shall be afraid of the ensign, shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal bow. Or they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people (Ps 60:4) will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he cuts off the spirit of princes and is terrible to the kings of the earth.

But who will do this? It is the Lord, whose fire is in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem.

(1.) Whose residence is there, and who there keeps house, as a man does where his fire and his oven are. It is the city of the great King, and let not the Assyrians think to turn him out of the possession of his own house.

(2.) Who is there a consuming fire to all his enemies and will make them as a fiery oven in the day of his wrath, Ps 21:9. He is himself a wall of fire round about Jerusalem, so that whoever assaults her does so at his peril, Zec 2:5,Re 11:5.

(3.) Who has his altar there, on which the holy fire is continually kept burning and sacrifices are daily offered to his honour, and with which he is well pleased; and therefore he will defend this city, especially having an eye to the great sacrifice which was there also to be offered, of which all the sacrifices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy love and devotion in our hearts and houses, we may depend upon God to be a protection to us and them.

9 And he shall pass over to his stronghold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire *is* in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

Isaiah-32

The Righteous King

1 Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

2 And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

We have here the description of a flourishing kingdom. "Blessed art thou, O land! when it is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people, are in their places such as they should be."

It may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and subjects, what both ought to do, or as a panegyric to Hezekiah, who ruled well and saw something of the happy effects of his good government, and it was designed to make the people sensible how happy they were under his administration and how careful they should be to improve the advantages of it, and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ, and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce. It is here promised and prescribed, for the comfort of the church,

That magistrates should do their duty in their places, and the powers answer the great ends for which they were ordained of God, Isa 32:1,2.

1. There shall be a king and princes that shall reign and rule; for it cannot go well when there is no king in Israel. The princes must have a king, a monarch over them as supreme, in whom they may unite; and the king must have princes under him as officers, by whom he may act, 1Pe 2:13,14. They both shall know their place and fill it up. The king shall reign, and yet, without any diminution to his just prerogative, the princes shall rule in a lower sphere, and all for the public good.

2. They shall use their power according to law, and not against it. They shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with wisdom and equity, protecting the good and punishing the bad; and those kings and princes Christ owns as reigning by him who decree justice, Pr 8:15. Such a King, such a Prince, Christ himself is; he reigns by rule, and in righteousness will he judge the world, Isa 9:7,11:4. 3. Thus they shall be great blessings to the people (Isa 32:2): A man, that man, that king that reigns in righteousness, shall be as a hiding-place. When princes are as they should be people are as they would be.

(1.) They are sheltered and protected from many mischiefs. This good magistrate is a covert to the subject from the tempest of injury and violence; he defends the poor and fatherless, that

they be not made a prey of by the mighty. Whither should oppressed innocency flee, when blasted by reproach or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate as its hiding-place? To him it appeals, and by him it is righted.

(2.) They are refreshed and comforted with many blessings. This good magistrate gives such countenance to those that are poor and in distress, and such encouragement to every thing that is praiseworthy, that he is as rivers of water in a dry place, cooling and cherishing the earth and making it fruitful, and as the shadow of a great rock, under which a poor traveller may shelter himself from the scorching heat of the sun in a weary land. It is a great reviving to a good man, who makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed, and favoured, and smiled upon in it by a good magistrate.

All this, and much more, the man Christ Jesus is to all the willing faithful subjects of his kingdom. When the greatest evils befal us, not only the wind, but the tempest, when storms of guilt and wrath beset us and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe, but satisfied that we are so; in him we find rivers of water for those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way for the shelter of the traveller. Some observe here that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the rock, do themselves receive the battering of the wind and storm, to save those from it that take shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself to keep it off from us.

3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them
that hear shall hearken.
4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the
tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.
5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said *to*
be bountiful.

6 For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry; and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

That subjects should do their duty in their places.

1. They shall be willing to be taught, and to understand things aright. They shall lay aside their prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth, Isa 32:3. When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be wanting to do his: Then the eyes of those that see, of the prophets, the seers, shall not be dim; but God will bless them with visions, to be by them communicated to the people; and those that read the word written shall no longer have a veil upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly. Then the ears of those that hear the word preached shall hearken diligently and readily receive what they hear, and not be so dull of hearing as they have been. This shall be done by the grace of God, especially gospel-grace; for the hearing ear, and the seeing eyes, the Lord has made, has new-made, even both of them.

2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them by that which is taught them, Isa 32:4.

(1.) They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The heart of those that were hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge; for the Spirit of God will open their understanding. This blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection (Lu 24:45), as a specimen of what he would do for all his people, in giving them an understanding, 1Jo 5:20. The pious designs of good princes are likely to take effect when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think, so freely as to take things right.

(2.) They shall have a ready utterance: The tongue of the stammerers, that used to blunder whenever they spoke of the things of God, shall now be ready to speak plainly, as those that understand what they speak of, that believe, and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it shall speak intelligently of these things, very much to the honour of God and the edification of others. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, Ps 45:1.

3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be kept up, and no more confounded by those who put darkness for light and light for darkness (Isa 32:5): The vile shall no more be called liberal.

(1.) Bad men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid spirits, and care not what injury or mischief they do so they may but compass their own ends. Such as vile persons (as Antiochus is called, Da 11:21); when they are advanced they are called liberal and bountiful; they are called benefactors (Lu 22:25): but it shall not always be thus; when the world grows wiser men shall be preferred according to their merit, and honour (which was never thought seemly for a fool, Pr 26:1) shall no longer be thrown away upon such.

(2.) Bad men shall be no more had in reputation among the people, nor vice disguised with the colours of virtue. It shall no more be said to Nabal, Thou art Nadib (so the words are); such a covetous muck-worm as Nabal was, a fool but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman or a prince; nor shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself, does no good with what he has, but is an unprofitable burden of the earth, My lord; or, rather, they shall not say of him, He is rich; for so the word signifies. Those only are to be reckoned

rich that are rich in good works; not those that have abundance, but those that use it well. In short, it is well with a people when men are generally valued by their virtue, and usefulness, and beneficence to mankind, and not by their wealth or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ (in which we are sure men are judged of by what they are, not by what they have, nor is any man's character mistaken), we will not say; but it prescribes an excellent rule both to prince and people, to respect men according to their personal merit. To enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and the churl which is due only to the liberal.

[1.] A vile person and a churl will do mischief, and the more if he be preferred and have power in his hand; his honours will make him worse and not better, Isa 32:6,7. See the character of these base ill-conditioned men.

First, They are always plotting some unjust thing or other, designing ill either to particular persons or to the public, and contriving how to bring it about; and so many silly piques they have to gratify, and mean revenges, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity. Their hearts will be still working some iniquity or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart, as well as the work of the hands. As thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. See what pains sinners take in sin. They labour at it; their hearts are intent upon it, and with a great deal of art and application they work iniquity. They devise wicked devices with all the subtlety of the old serpent and a great deal of deliberation, which makes the sin exceedingly sinful; and the more there is of plot and management in a sin the more there is of Satan in it.

Secondly, They carry on their plots by trick and dissimulation. When they are meditating iniquity, they practise hypocrisy,

feign themselves just men, Lu 20:20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. Those are the vilest of men that intend the worst mischiefs when they speak fair.

Thirdly, They speak villainy. When they are in a passion you will see what they are by the base ill language they give to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour; or, in giving verdict or judgment, they villainously put false colours upon things, to pervert justice.

Fourthly, They affront God, who is a righteous God and loves righteousness: They utter error against the Lord, and therein they practise profaneness; for so the word which we translate hypocrisy signifies. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it; as if, because the judgment is God's (De 1:17), therefore their false and unjust judgment was his. This is uttering error against the Lord, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him; and nothing can be more impudently done against God than to use his name to patronise wickedness.

Fifthly, They abuse mankind, those particularly whom they are bound to protect and relieve.

1. Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them, they make empty the souls of the hungry; either taking away the food they have, or, which is almost equivalent, denying the supply which they want and which they have to give. And they cause the drink of the thirsty to fail; they cut off the relief they used to have, though they need it as much as ever. Those are vile persons indeed that rob the spital.

2. Instead of righting the poor, when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to destroy the poor, to ruin them in their courts of judicature with lying words in favour of the rich, to

whom they are plainly partial; yea, though the needy speak right, though the evidence be ever so full for them to make out the equity of their cause, it is the bribe that governs them, not the right. Sixthly, These churls and vile persons have always had instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villainous purposes: All their servants are wicked. There is no design so palpably unjust but there may be found those that would be employed as tools to put it in execution. The instruments of the churl are evil, and one cannot expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischief than God permits them.

[2.] One that is truly liberal, and deserves the honour of being called so, makes it his business to do good to every body according as his sphere is, Isa 32:8. Observe, First, The care he takes, and the contrivances he has, to do good. He devises liberal things. As much as the churl or niggard projects how to save and lay up what he has for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced.

The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his own power, devises liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. Secondly, the comfort he takes, and the advantage he has, in doing good: By liberal things he shall stand, or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom. What disquiets others shall not disturb him; his heart is fixed. This is the recompence of charity, Ps 112:5,6. Some read it, The prince, or honourable man, will take honourable courses; and by such honourable or ingenuous courses he shall stand or be established. It is well with a land

when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour and scorn to do a base thing, when its king is thus the son of nobles.

7 The instruments also of the churl *are* evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.

8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

Women of Jerusalem Warned

9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against the vile persons, to punish them for their villainy; but at length returning in mercy to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected, and here is a warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to the women that were at ease (Isa 32:9) and the careless daughters, to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name: "Rise up, and hear with reverence and attention."

1. Let them know that God was about to bring wasting desolating judgments upon the land in which they lived in pleasure and were wanton. This seems to refer primarily to the desolations made by Sennacherib's army when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah: but then those words, many days and years, must be rendered (as the margin reads them) days above a year, that is, something above a year shall this havock be in the making: so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah to the overthrow of it.

But it is applicable to the wretched disappointment which those will certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world and place their happiness in it: You shall be troubled, you careless women. It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly even little troubles will be great vexations and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease because they had money enough and mirth enough; but the prophet here tells them,

(1.) That the country whence they had their tents and dainties should shortly be laid waste: "The vintage shall fail; and then what will you do for wine to make merry with? The gathering of fruit shall not come, for there shall be none to be gathered, and you will find the want of them, Isa 32:10. You will want the teats, the good milk from the cows, the pleasant fields and their productions:" the useful fields that are serviceable to human life are the pleasant ones. "You will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you." The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and those deserve to be deprived of the supports of life who make them the food and fuel of lust and prepare them for Baal.

(2.) That the cities too, the cities of Judah, where they lived at ease, spent their rents, and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste (Isa 32:13,14): Briers and thorns, the fruits of sin and the curse, shall come up, not only upon the land of my people, which shall lie uncultivated, but upon all the houses of joy--the play-houses, the gaming-houses, the taverns--in the joyous cities. When a foreign army was ravaging the country the houses of joy, no doubt, became houses of mourning; then the palaces, or noblemen's houses, were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves.

Then the stately houses shall be for dens for ever, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence. They shall be abandoned; the owners shall never return to them; every body shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that, even when peace returns, they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown to the waste: A joy of wild asses and a pasture of flocks. Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin. Jam seges est ubi Troja fuit--Corn grows on the site of Troy.

2. In the foresight of this let them tremble and be troubled, strip themselves, and gird sackcloth upon their loins, Isa 32:11. This intimates not only that when the calamity comes they shall thus be made to tremble and be forced to strip themselves, that then God's judgments would strip them and make them bare, but,

(1.) That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be the lengthening out of their tranquillity. This is meeting God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes. Those only shall break that will not bend.

(2.) That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already by a holy contempt of this world stripped themselves can easily bear to be stripped when trouble and death come.

10 Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for
the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.
11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones:
strip you, and make you bare, and gird *sackcloth* upon *your* loins.
12 They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the
fruitful vine.
13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns *and* briers; yea,
upon all the houses of joy *in* the joyous city:

14 because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall
be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild
asses, a pasture of flocks;

15 until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness
be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity they had reason to hope for good times at length and such times the prophet here gives them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look further, to the days of the Messiah, who is King of righteousness and King of peace, and to whom all the prophets bear witness. Now observe,

1. How those blessed times shall be introduced-by the pouring out of the Spirit from on high (Isa 32:15), which speaks not only of the good-will of God towards us, but the good work of God in us; for then, and not till then, there will be good times, when God by his grace gives men good hearts; and therefore God's giving his Holy Spirit to those that ask him is in effect his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing Lu 11:13,Mt 7:11. This is the great thing that God's people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that the Spirit shall be poured out upon them, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace than formerly, according as the necessity of the church, in its desolate estate, calls for. This comes from on high, and therefore they look up to their Father in heaven for it.

When God designs favours for his church he pours out his Spirit, both to prepare his people to receive his favours and to qualify and give success to those whom he designs to employ as instruments of his favour; for their endeavours to repair the desolations of the church are all fruitless until the Spirit be poured out upon them and then the work is done suddenly. The kingdom of the Messiah was brought in, and set up, by the pouring out of the Spirit (Ac 2:1-13), and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end.

2. What a wonderfully happy change shall then be made. That which was a wilderness, dry and barren, shall become a fruitful field, and that which we now reckon a fruitful field, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for a forest. Then shall the earth yield her increase. It is promised that in the days of the Messiah the fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon, Ps 72:16. Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel church (which made the wilderness a fruitful field), and the rejection and exclusion of the Jews, which made that a forest which had been a fruitful field. On the Gentiles was poured out a spirit of life, but on the Jews a spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made fruitful, and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy:--

(1.) Judgment and righteousness, Isa 32:16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness and turn it into a fruitful field, and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field and make it yet more fruitful. Ministers shall expound the law and magistrates execute it, and both so judiciously and faithfully that by both the bad shall be made good and the good made better. Among all sorts of people, the poor and low and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness, and the rich and great and learned, that are valued as the fruitful field, there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, and conscience made of good and evil, sin and duty.

Or in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduces a judgment or rule by which we must be governed, and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved; and, wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

(2.) Peace and quietness, Isa 32:17,18. The peace here promised is of two kinds:--

[1.] Inward peace, Isa 32:17. This follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, Isa 32:16. Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of it is quietness and assurance for ever, that is, a holy serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and enjoys its God, and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in those enjoyments. Note, Peace, and quietness, and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found, in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceable lives that are spent in all godliness and honesty, 1Ti 2:2.

First, Even the work of righteousness shall be peace. In the doing of our duty we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt, yet it is peace, such peace as is sufficient to bear our charges.

Secondly, The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance, not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness now and shall be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever.

[2.] Outward peace, Isa 32:18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceable spirits are by the providence of God made to dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations, not disturbed in their houses or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Sennacherib's invasion was over, the people, no doubt, were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habitation, not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every

family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars within, not two against three and three against two in the house, and then put itself under God's protection to dwell safely, and to be quiet from the fear of evil without.

Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation; compare Isa 33:20. Even when it shall hail, and there shall be a violent battering storm coming down on the forest that lies bleak, then shall Jerusalem be a quiet resting-place, for the city shall be low in a low place, under the wind, not exposed (as those cities are that stand high) to the fury of the storm, but sheltered by the mountains that are round about Jerusalem, Ps 125:2 The high forts and towers are brought down (Isa 32:14), but the city that lies low shall be a quiet resting-place. Those are most safe, and may dwell most at ease, that are humble, and are willing to dwell low, Isa 32:19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation must be willing to dwell low, and in a low place. Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail, which made great destruction in the land of Egypt.

(3.) Plenty and abundance. There shall be such good crops gathered in every where, and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended, and though happy, who sow beside all water (Isa 32:20), who sow all the grounds that are fit for seedness, who cast their bread, or bread-corn, upon the water, Ec 11:1. God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious, and mind his business, and sow beside all waters; and, if he do this, the corn shall come up so thick and rank that he shall turn in his cattle, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it and keep it under. This is applicable,

[1.] To the preaching of the word. Some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who, as husbandmen, went forth to sow their seed (Mt 13:3); they sowed beside all waters; they preached the gospel wherever they came. Waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes. Wherever they found

men's hearts softened, and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas, by the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to plough with an ox and an ass together (De 22:10), which intimated that Jews and Gentiles should not intermix, now that distinction shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of, the gospel husbandry.

[2.] To works of charity. When God sends these happy times blessed are those that improve them in doing good with what they have, that sow beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of relieving the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.
17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.
18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;
19 when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.
20 Blessed *are* ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass.

Isaiah-33

The Lord Will Bring Salvation

1 Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; *and* when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

Here we have,

The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned with for all his fraud and violence, and laid under a woe, Isa 33:1. Observe,

1 The sin which the enemy had been guilty of. He had spoiled the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that those cannot but be under the wrath of God that make conscience of neither, but are perfectly lost to both, that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what dissimulations they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate, to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the worst of men.

2 The aggravation of this sin. He spoiled those that had never done him any injury and that he had no pretence to quarrel with, and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The less provocation we have from men to do a wrong thing the more provocation we give to God by doing it.

3. The punishment he should fall under for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherib's own sons shall deal treacherously with him and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin. He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity, Re 13:10,18:6.

4. The time when he shall be thus dealt with. When he shall make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously, not by repentance and reformation, which might prevent his ruin (Da 4:27), but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tether, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand.

When he shall have arrived at his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again. When he has done God will begin, for his day is coming.

2 O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

The praying people of God earnest at the throne of grace for mercy for the land now in its distress (Isa 33:2): "O Lord! be merciful to us. Men are cruel; be thou gracious. We have deserved thy wrath, but we entreat thy favour; and, if we may find the propitious to us, we are happy; the trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures; we have no confidence in the Egyptians, but we have waited for thee only, resolving to submit to thee, whatever the issue of the trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue." Those that by faith humbly wait for God shall certainly find him gracious to them. They prayed,

1. For those that were employed in military services for them: "Be thou their arm every morning. Hezekiah, and his princes, and all the men of war, need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need therefore, and be to them a God all-sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do and new difficulties to encounter, let them be afresh animated and invigorated, and, as the day, so let the strength be." In our spiritual warfare our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring any thing to pass unless God not only strengthen our arms (Ge 49:24), but be himself our arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassions, which are new every morning, La 3:23. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning, we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of the day in its day.

2. For the body of the people: "Be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble, ours who sit still, and do not venture into the high places of the field." They depend upon God not only as their Saviour, to work deliverance for them, but as their salvation itself; for, whatever becomes of their secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their salvation; for as for God his work is perfect. Some read it thus: "Thou who wast their arm every morning, who wast the continual strength and help of our fathers before us, be thou our salvation also in time of trouble. Help us as thou helpedst them; they looked unto thee and were lightened (Ps 34:5); let us then not walk in darkness."

3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of
thyself the nations were scattered.

The Assyrian army ruined and their camp made a rich but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made (Isa 33:2) than it is answered (Isa 33:3), nay, it is outdone. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he did more than that; he gave them victory over their enemies and abundant cause to triumph; for,

1 The strength of the Assyrian camp was broken (Isa 33:3) when the destroying angel slew so many thousands of them: At the noise of the tumult, of the shrieks of the dying men (who, we may suppose, did not die silently), the rest of the people fled, and shifted every one for his own safety. When God did thus lift up himself the several nations, or clans, of which the army was composed, were scattered. It was time to stir when such an unprecedented plague broke out among them. When God arises his enemies are scattered, Ps 68:1.

2 The spoil of the Assyrian camp is seized, by way of reprisal, for all the desolations of the defenced cities of Judah (Isa 33:4): Your spoil shall be gathered by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the gathering of the caterpillar, and as the running to and fro of locusts, that is, the spoilers shall as easily and as quickly

make themselves masters of the riches of the Assyrians as a host of caterpillars, or locusts, make a field, or a tree, bare. Thus the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just and Israel is enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be the caterpillars and locusts, which, when they are killed, are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon, and trodden to dirt.

4 And your spoil shall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpillar:
as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

5 The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion
with judgment and righteousness.

God and his Israel glorified and exalted hereby. When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered,

1. God will have the praise of it (Isa 33:5): The Lord is exalted. It is his honour thus to abase proud men, and hide them in the dust, together; thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel when the Egyptians were drowned, Ex 15:1,2, &c. He is exalted as one that dwells on high, out of the reach of their blasphemies, and that has an over-ruling power over them, and wherein they deal proudly delights to show himself above them-that does what he will, and they cannot resist him.

2. His people will have the blessing of it. When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem (Isa 33:3) then, as a preparative for that, or as the fruit and product of it, he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness, not only with a sense of justice, but with a zeal for it and a universal care that it be duly administered. It shall again be called, The city of righteousness, Isa 1:26. In this the grace of God is exalted, as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and affairs, are governed by them, and they are so full of them that no other considerations can crowd in to sway them against

these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged (Isa 33:6) with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is,

(1.) A gracious promise of God for them to stay themselves upon: Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation. Here is a desirable end proposed, and that is the stability of our times, that things be not disturbed and unhinged at home, and the strength of salvation, deliverance from, and success against, enemies abroad. The salvation that God ordains for his people has strength in it; it is a horn of salvation. And here are the way and means for obtaining this end--wisdom and knowledge, not only piety, but prudence. That is it which, by the blessing of God, will be the stability of our times and the strength of salvation, that wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrifices private interests to a public good; such prudence as this will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks in defence of them.

(2.) A pious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by: The fear of the Lord is his treasure. It is God's treasure in the world, from which he receives his tribute; or, rather, it is the prince's treasure. A good prince accounts it so (that wisdom is better than gold) and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is the true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. Those places that have plenty of Bibles, and ministers, and serious good people, are really rich; and it contributes to that which makes a nation rich in this world. It is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them and to take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.

6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, *and* strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord *is* his treasure.

7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

The great distress that Jerusalem was brought into described, that those who believed the prophet might know beforehand what troubles were coming and might provide accordingly, and that when the foregoing promise of their deliverance should have its accomplishment the remembrance of the extremity of their case might help to magnify God in it and make them the more thankful, Isa 33:7-9. It is here foretold,

1. That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive and there would be no dealing with him, either by treaties of peace (for he has broken the covenant without any hesitation, as if it were below him to be a servant to his word), or by the preparations of war, for he has despised the cities; he scorns to take notice either of their appeals to justice or of their petitions for mercy. He makes himself master of them so easily (though they are called fenced cities), and meets with so little resistance, that he despises them, and has no relentings when he puts all to the sword; for he regards no man, has no pity or concern, no, not for those that he is under particular obligations to. He neither fears God nor regards man, but is haughty and imperious to every one. There are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable nor compassion for the miserable.

2. That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation: The valiant ones of Jerusalem, being unable to make their parts good with him, must be contentedly run down with noise and insolence, which will make them cry without, because they cannot serve their country as they might have done against a fair adversary. The ambassadors sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace, finding him so haughty and unmanageable, shall weep bitterly for vexation at the disappointment they had met with in their negotiations; they shall weep like children, as despairing to find out any expedient to pacify him.

3. That the country should be made quite desolate for a time by his army.

(1.) No man durst travel the roads; so that a stop was put to trade and commerce, and (which was worse) no man could safely go up to Jerusalem, to keep the solemn feasts: The highways lie waste. While the fields lie waste, trodden like the highways, the highways lie waste, untrodden like the fields, for the traveller ceases.

(2.) No man had any profit from the grounds, Isa 33:9. The earth used to rejoice in its own productions for the service of God's Israel, but now the enemies of Israel eat them up, or tread them down: it mourns and languishes; the country looks melancholy and the country people have misery in their countenances, wanting necessary food for themselves and their families; the wonted joy of harvest is turned into lamentation, so withering and uncertain are all worldly joys. The desolation is universal. That part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes was already laid waste: "Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, have now become like wildernesses, are ashamed to be called by their old names, they are so unlike what they were. They shake off their fruits before their time into the hand of the spoiler, which used to be gathered seasonably by the hand of the owner."

9 The earth mourneth *and* languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed *and*
hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel
shake off *their fruits.*
10 Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I
lift up myself.

God appearing, at length, in his glory against his proud invader, Isa 33:10. When things are brought thus to the last extremity,

1. God will magnify himself. He had seemed to sit by as an unconcerned spectator: "But now will I arise, saith the Lord; now will I appear and act, and therein I will be not only evidenced, but exalted." He will not only demonstrate that there is a God that judges in the earth, but that he is God over all, and higher than the highest. "Now will I lift up myself, will prepare for

action, will act vigorously, and will be glorified in it." God's time to appear for his people is when their affairs are reduced to the lowest ebb, when their strength is gone and there is none shut up nor left, De 32:36. When all other helpers fail, then is God's time to help.

2. He will bring down the Assyrian: "You, O Assyrians! are big with hopes that you shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for your own, and are in pain till it be so; but all your hopes shall come to nothing: You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble, which is not only worthless and good for nothing, but combustible and proper fuel for the fire, which it cannot escape, when your own breath as fire shall devour you, that is, the breath of God's wrath, provoked against you by the breath of your sins--your malignant breath, the threatenings and slaughter you breathe out against the people of God, this shall devour you, and your blasphemous breath against God and his name." God would make their own tongues to fall upon them, and their own breath to blow the fire that should consume them; and then no wonder that the people are as the burnings of lime in a lime-kiln, all on fire together, and as thorns cut up, which are dried and withered, and therefore easily take fire and are soon burnt up. Such was the destruction of the Assyrian army; it was like the burning up of thorns, which can well be spared, or the burning of lime, which makes it good for something. The burning of that army enlightened the world with the knowledge of God's power and made his name shine brightly.

11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you.

12 And the people shall be *as* the burnings of lime: *as* thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

13 Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done; and, ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.

Here is a preface that commands attention; and it is fit that all should attend, both near and afar off, to what God says and does (Isa 33:13): Hear, you that are afar off, whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear what God has done. They

do so; they will do so from the scripture, with as much assurance as those that were near, the neighbouring nations and those that lived at that time. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might, that it is irresistible, and that he can do every thing. Those are very stupid who hear what God has done and yet will not acknowledge his might. Now what is it that God has done which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

I. He has struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion (Isa 33:14): Fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites, that enjoy Zion's privileges and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God; they keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloak of a visible profession, which convicts them of hypocrisy. Sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for above other sinners; and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security that it will aggravate both their sin and their punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation from the convictions of their own consciences.

1. When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it and lay it in ashes, and burn the wasps in the nest. Finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distrusting the promises God had made by his prophets that he would deliver them, they were at their wits' end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Let us therefore abandon the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere; one had as good live in everlasting burnings as live here." Who will stand up for us against this devouring fire? so some read it. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened they slighted them and made nothing of them; but, when they come to be executed, they run into the other extreme, then they magnify them, and make

the worst of them; they call them devouring fire and everlasting burnings, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of the word cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or, rather,

2. When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, Isa 33:11,12. When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secretly worshipping other gods; and therefore they cry out, Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire, before which so vast an army is as thorns? Who among us shall dwell with these everlasting burnings, which have made the Assyrians as the burnings of lime? Isa 33:12. Thus they said, or should have said. Note, God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion, nay, David himself trembles at them, Ps 119:120. God himself is this devouring fire, Heb 12:29.

Who is able to stand before him? 1Sa 6:20. His wrath will burn those everlastingly that have made themselves fuel for it. It is a fire that shall never be quenched, nor will ever go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God preying upon the conscience of an immortal soul. Nor can the most daring sinners bear up against it, so as to bear either the execution of it or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all to flee from the wrath to come, by fleeing to Christ as our refuge.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

He has graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him: Hear this, and acknowledge his power in making

those that walk righteously, and speak uprightly, to dwell on high, Isa 33:15,16. We have here,

1 The good man's character, which he preserves even in times of common iniquity, in divers instances.

(1.) He walks righteously. In the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their due, to God his due, as well as to men theirs. His walk is righteousness itself; he would not for a world wilfully do an unjust thing.

(2.) He speaks uprightly, uprightnesses (so the word is); he speaks what is true and right, and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing and speak another, nor look one way and row another. His word is to him as sacred as his oath, and is not yea and nay.

(3.) He is so far from coveting ill-gotten gain that he despises it. He thinks it a mean and sordid thing, and unbecoming a man of honour, to enrich himself by any hardship put upon his neighbour. He scorns to do a wrong thing, nay, to do a severe thing, though he might get by it. He does not over-value gain itself, and therefore easily abhors the gain that is not honestly come by.

(4.) If he have a bribe at any time thrust into his hand, to pervert justice, he shakes his hands from holding it, with the utmost detestation, taking it as an affront to have it offered him.

(5.) He stops his ears from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty or bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him up to revenge, Job 31:31. He turns a deaf ear to those that delight in war and entice him to cast in his lot among them, Pr 1:14,16.

(6.) He shuts his eyes from seeing evil. He has such an abhorrence of sin that he cannot bear to see others commit it, and does himself watch against all the occasions of it. Those that would preserve the purity of their souls must keep a strict guard upon the senses of their bodies, must stop their ears to temptations, and turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

2 The good man's comfort, which he may preserve even in times of common calamity, Isa 33:16.

(1.) He shall be safe; he shall escape the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings; he shall have access to, and communion with, that God who is a devouring fire, but shall be to him a rejoicing light. And, as to present troubles, he shall dwell on high, out of the reach of them, nay, out of the hearing of the noise of them; he shall not be really harmed by them, nay, he shall not be greatly frightened at them: The floods of great waters shall not come nigh him; or, if they should attack him, his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, strong and impregnable, fortified by nature as well as art. The divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy. God, the rock of ages, will be his high tower.

(2.) He shall be supplied; he shall want nothing that is necessary for him: Bread shall be given him, even when the siege is straitest and provisions are cut off; and his waters shall be sure, that is, he shall be sure of the continuance of them, so that he shall not drink his water by measure and with astonishment. Those that fear the Lord shall not want any thing that is good for them.

16 he shall dwell on high; his place of defense *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure.

17 Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver? where *is* he that counted the towers?

He will protect Jerusalem, and deliver it out of the hands of the invaders. This storm that threatened them should blow over, and

they should enjoy a prosperous state again. Many instances are here given of this prosperity.

1. Hezekiah shall put off his sackcloth and all the sadness of his countenance, and shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his royal robes and with a pleasing aspect (Isa 33:17), to the great joy of all his loving subjects. Those that walk uprightly shall not only have bread given them, and their water sure, but they shall with an eye of faith see the King of kings in his beauty, the beauty of holiness, and that beauty shall be upon them.

2 The siege being raised, by which they were kept close within the walls of Jerusalem, they shall now be at liberty to go abroad upon business or pleasure without danger of falling into the enemies' hand: They shall behold the land that is very far off; they shall visit the utmost corners of the nation, and take a prospect of the adjacent countries, which will be the more pleasant after so long a confinement. Thus believers behold the heavenly Canaan, that land that is very far off, and comfort themselves with the prospect of it in evil times.

3. The remembrance of the fright they were in shall add to the pleasure of their deliverance (Isa 33:18): Thy heart shall meditate terror, meditate it with pleasure when it is over. Thou shalt think thou still hearest the alarm in thy ears, when all the cry was, "Arm, arm, arm! every man to his post. Where is the scribe or secretary of war? Let him appear to draw up the muster-roll. Where is the receiver and pay-master of the army? Let him see what he had in bank, to defray the charge of a defence. Where is he that counted the towers? Let him bring in the account of them, that care may be taken to put a competent number of men in each." Or these words may be taken as Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians, and the rather because the apostle alludes to them in his triumphs over the learning of this world, when it was baffled by the gospel of Christ, 1Co 1:20. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despises all their military preparations. Where is the scribe or muster-master of the

Assyrian army? Where is their weigher (or treasurer), and where are their engineers that counted the towers? They are all either dead or fled. There is an end of them.

4. They shall no more be terrified with the sight of the Assyrians, who were a fierce people naturally, and were particularly fierce against the people of the Jews, and were of a strange language, that could understand neither their petitions nor their complaints, and therefore had a pretence for being deaf to them, nor could themselves be understood: "They are of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive, which will make them the more formidable, Isa 33:19. Thy eyes shall no more see them thus fierce, but their countenances changed when they shall all become dead corpses."

5. They shall no more be under apprehensions of the danger of Jerusalem-Zion, and the temple there (Isa 33:20): "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities, the city where our solemn sacred feasts are kept, where we used to meet to worship God in religious assemblies." The good people among them, in the time of their distress, were most in pain for Zion upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities, that the conquerors would burn their temple and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more. In times of public danger our concern should be most about our religion, and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store-cities. It is with an eye to this that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities: let those be conscientiously kept up, as the glory of a people, and we may depend upon God to create a defence upon that glory. Two things are here promised to Jerusalem:--

(1.) A well-grounded security. It shall be a quiet habitation for the people of God; they shall not be molested and disturbed, as they have been, by the alarms of the sword either of war or persecution, Isa 29:20. It shall be a quiet habitation, as it is the city of our solemnities. It is desirable to be quiet in our own

houses, but much more so to be quiet in God's house and have none to make us afraid there. Thus it shall be with Jerusalem; and the eyes shall see it, which will be a great satisfaction to a good man, Ps 128:5,6. "Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel; thou shalt live to see it and share in it."

(2.) An unmoved stability. Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, is indeed but a tabernacle, in comparison with the New Jerusalem. The present manifestations of the divine glory and grace are nothing in comparison with those that are reserved for the future state. But it is such a tabernacle as shall not be taken down. After this trouble is over Jerusalem shall long enjoy a confirmed peace; and her sacred privileges, which are the stakes and cords of her tabernacle, shall not be removed from her, nor any disturbance given to the course and circle of her religious services. God's church on earth is a tabernacle, which, though it may be shifted from one place to another, shall not be taken down while the world stands; for in every age Christ will have a seed to serve him. The promises of the covenant are its stakes, which shall never be removed, and the ordinances and institutions of the gospel are its cords, which shall never be broken. They are things which cannot be shaken, though heaven and earth be, but shall remain.

6. God himself will be their protector and Saviour, Isa 33:21,22. This the principal ground of their confidence: "He that is himself the glorious Lord will display his glory for us and be a glory to us, such as shall eclipse the rival-glory of the enemy." God, in being a gracious Lord, is a glorious Lord; for his goodness is his glory. God will be the Saviour of Jerusalem and her glorious Lord,

(1.) As a guard against their adversaries abroad. He will be a place of broad rivers and streams. Jerusalem had no considerable river running by it, as most great cities have, nothing but the brook Kidron, and so wanted one of the best natural

fortifications, as well as one of the greatest advantages for trade and commerce, and upon this account their enemies despised them and doubted not but to make an easy prey of them; but the presence and power of God are sufficient at any time to make up to us the deficiencies of the creature and of its strength and beauty. We have all in God, all we need or can desire. Many external advantages Jerusalem has not which other places have, but in God there is more than an equivalent. But, if there be broad rivers and streams about Jerusalem, may not these yield an easy access to the fleet of an invader? No; these are rivers and streams in which shall go no galley with oars, no man of war or gallant ship. If God himself be the river, it must needs be inaccessible to the enemy; they can neither find nor force their way by it.

(2.) As a guide to their affairs at home: "For the Lord is our Judge, to whom we are accountable, to whose judgment we refer ourselves, by whose judgment we abide, and who therefore (we hope) will judge for us. He is our lawgiver; his word is a law to us, and to him every thought within us is brought into obedience. He is our King, to whom we pay homage and tribute, and an inviolable allegiance, and therefore he will save us." For, as protection draws allegiance, so allegiance may expect protection, and shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our prince and Saviour, and as such depend upon him and devote ourselves to him. Observe with what an air of triumph, and with what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God, they comfort themselves with this: Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, who, being self-existent, is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.

7. The enemies shall be quite infatuated, and all their powers and projects broken, like a ship at sea in stress of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but having her tackle torn, her masts split, and nothing wherewith to repair them, is given up for a wreck, Isa 33:23. The tacklings of the Assyrian are loosed; they are like a ship whose tacklings are loose, or forsaken by the ship's crew, when they give it over for lost, finding that they cannot

strengthen the mast, but it will come down. They thought themselves sure of Jerusalem; but when they were just entering the port as it were, and though all was their own, they were quite becalmed, and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged when they think they have almost gained their point.

8. The wealth of their camp shall be a rich booty for the Jews: Then is the prey of a great spoil divided. When the greater part were slain the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation that (like the Syrians) they left their tents as they were, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged; and even the lame take the prey. Those that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so easy to come at that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man, whose hands were lame, that he could not fight, and his feet, that he could not pursue. As the victory shall cost them no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there was such abundance of it that when those who were forward, and came first, had carried off as much as they would, even the lame, who came late, found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil, and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it, and abundantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God often end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and then sickness is taken away in mercy when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin.

(1.) The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. As the lame shall take the prey, so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp and seize something for themselves; or there shall be such a universal transport of joy upon this occasion that even the sick shall, for the present, forget their sickness and the sorrows of it, and join with the public in

its rejoicings; the deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or it intimates that, whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of it with their victory and peace shall have health also, and there shall be no complaining upon the account of sickness within their gates. Or those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgivings for public mercies.

(2.) The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity, not only the body of the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons, that dwell therein, shall repent, and reform, and have their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which is at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them, for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb 8:12. Sin is the sickness of the soul. When God pardons the sin he heals the disease; and, when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy, the sting of bodily sickness is taken out and the cause of it removed; so that either the inhabitant shall not be sick or at least shall not say, I am sick. If iniquity be taken away, we have little reason to complain of outward affliction. Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.

19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not understand.

20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that* shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

21 But there the glorious Lord *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers *and* streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

22 For the Lord *is* our judge, the Lord *is* our lawgiver, the Lord *is* our King; he will save us.

23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast;
they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil
divided; the lame take the prey.
24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell
therein *shall be* forgiven *their* iniquity.

Isaiah-34

The Lord's Wrath upon the Nations

1 Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the
earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that
come forth of it.

Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have a history, of the wars of the Lord, which we are sure are all both righteous and successful. This world, as it is his creature, he does good to; but as it is in the interest of Satan, who is called the god of this world, he fights against it.

Here is the trumpet sounded and the war proclaimed, Isa 34:1. All nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark (as Isa 33:13), but because they are all concerned in it; it is with them that God has a quarrel; it is against them that God is coming forth in wrath. Let them all take notice that the great God is angry with them; his indignation is upon all nations, and therefore let all nations come near to hear. The trumpet is blown in the city (Am 3:6), and the watchmen on the walls cry, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet, Jer 6:17. Let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof, for it is the Lord's (Ps 24:1) and ought to hearken to its Maker and Master. The world must hear, and all things that come forth of it, the children of men, that are of the earth earthy, come out of it, and must return to it; or the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the calls of God. Hear, O you mountains! the Lord's controversy, Mic 6:2. It is so just a controversy that

all the world may be safely appealed to concerning the equity of it.

2 For the indignation of the Lord *is* upon all nations, and *his* fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.

Here is the manifesto published, setting forth,

1. Whom he makes war against (Isa 34:2): The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations; they are all in confederacy against God and religion, all in the interests of the devil, and therefore he is angry with them all, even with all the nations that forget him. He has long suffered all nations to walk in their own ways (Ac 14:16), but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentments. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies,

(1.) Because with them they have done mischief to the people of God; those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink.

(2.) Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them, in the first place, God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though ever so numerous and courageous.

2. Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the war (Isa 34:8): It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance, Ro 3:5. As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for, though he bear long, he will not bear always. It is the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all their treacherous and

barbarous usage of her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces, and slaying her sons.

She has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do so when the time, even the set time, to favour Zion shall have come; then he will recompense to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischiefs they have done her. The controversy will be decided, that Zion has been wronged, and therein Zion's God has been himself abused. Judgment will be given upon this decision, and execution done. Note, There is a time prefixed in the divine counsels for the deliverance of the church and the destruction of her enemies, a year of the redeemed, which will come, a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion; and we must patiently wait till then, and judge nothing before the time.

3 Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling *fig* from the fig tree.

Here are the operations of the war, and the methods of it, settled, with an infallible assurance of success.

1 The sword of the Lord is bathed in heaven; this is all the preparation here made for the war, Isa 34:5. It may probably allude to some custom they had then of bathing their swords in some liquor or other, to harden them or brighten them; it is the same with the furbishing of it, that it may glitter, Eze 21:9-11. God's sword is bathed in heaven, in his counsel and decree, in his justice and power, and then there is not standing before it.

2. It shall come down. What he has determined shall without fail be put in execution. It shall come down from heaven, and the higher the place is, whence it comes, the heavier will it fall. It will come down upon Idumea, the people of God's curse, the people that lie under his curse and are by it doomed to destruction. Miserable, for ever miserable, are those that have by

their sins made themselves the people of God's curse; for the sword of the Lord will infallibly attend the curse of the Lord and execute the sentences of it; and those whom he curses are cursed indeed. It shall come down to judgment, to execute judgment upon sinners.

Note, God's sword of war is always a sword of justice. It is observed of him out of whose mouth goeth the sharp sword that in righteousness he doth judge and make war, Re 19:11,15. 3. The nations and their armies shall be given up to the sword (Isa 34:2): God has delivered them to the slaughter, and then they cannot deliver themselves, nor can all the friends they have deliver them from it. Those only are slain whom God delivers to the slaughter, for the keys of death are in his hand; and, in delivering them to the slaughter, he has utterly destroyed them; their destruction is as sure, when God has doomed them to it, as if they were destroyed already, utterly destroyed. God has, in effect, delivered all the cruel enemies of his church to the slaughter by that word (Re 13:10), He that kills with the sword must be killed by the sword, for the Lord is righteous.

4. Pursuant to the sentence, a terrible slaughter shall be made among them (Isa 34:6): The sword of the Lord, when it comes down with commission, does vast execution; it is filled, satiated, surfeited, with blood, the blood of the slain, and made fat with their fatness. When the day of God's abused mercy and patience is over the sword of his justice gives no quarter, spares none. Men have by sin lost the honour of the human nature and made themselves like the beasts that perish; they are therefore justly denied the compassion and respect that are owing to the human nature and killed as beasts, and no more is made of slaying an army of men than of butchering a flock of lambs or goats and feeding on the fat of the kidneys of rams. Nay, the sword of the Lord shall not only dispatch the lambs and goats, the infantry of their armies, the poor common soldiers, but (Isa 34:7) the unicorns too shall be made to come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls, though they are ever so proud, and

strong, and fierce (the great men, and the mighty men, and the chief captains Re 6:15), the sword of the Lord will make as easy a prey of as of the lambs and the goats.

The greatest of men are nothing before the wrath of the great God. See what bloody work will be made: The land shall be soaked with blood, as with the rain that comes often upon it and in great abundance; and their dust, their dry and barren land, shall be made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength, as with manure. Nay even the mountains, which are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, Isa 34:3. These expressions are hyperbolical (as St. John's vision of blood to the horse-bridles, Re 14:20), and are made use of because they sound very dreadful to sense (it makes us even shiver to think of such abundance of human gore), and are therefore proper to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin and wrath make even in this world, and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit.

5. This great slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God (Isa 34:6): The Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah; there it is that the great Redeemer has his garments dyed with blood, Isa 63:1. Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin and demands satisfaction for it, and that nothing but blood will make atonement; and for these ends the slaughter is made, that in it the wrath of God may be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, especially their ungodly unrighteous enmity to his people, which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of.

In great sacrifices abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in this day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus would the whole earth have been soaked with the blood of sinners if Jesus Christ, the great propitiation, had not shed his blood for us; but

those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to divine wrath. Damned sinners are everlasting sacrifices, Mk 9:48,49. Those that sacrifice not (which is the character of the ungodly, Ec 9:2) must be sacrificed.

6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were their terror (Isa 34:3): They shall be cast out, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but their stink shall come up out of their carcases, that all people by the odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may be made to conceive an indignation against sin and a dread of the wrath of God. They lie unburied, that they may remain monuments of divine justice.

7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be universal confusion and desolation, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down (Isa 34:4): All the host of heaven shall pine and waste away (so the word is); the sun shall be darkened, and the moon look black, or be turned into blood; the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll or parchment when we have done with it, and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire. The stars shall fall as the leaves in autumn; all the beauty, joy, and comfort, of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away, magistracy and government shall be abolished, and all dominion and rule, but that of the sword of war, shall fall.

Conquerors, in those times, affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time, of which last day of judgment the judgments which God does now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations are figures, earnests, and forerunners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here and Re 6:12,13. But they are used without a metaphor, 2Pe 3:10,

where we are told that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the earth shall be burnt up.

5 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

6 The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, *and* with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

7 And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

8 For *it is* the day of the Lord's vengeance, *and* the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

9 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

This prophecy looks very black, but surely it looks so further than upon Edom and Bozrah.

1. It describes the melancholy changes that are often made by the divine Providence, in countries, cities, palaces, and families. Places that have flourished and been much frequented strangely go to decay. We know not where to find the places where many great towns, celebrated in history, once stood. Fruitful countries, in process of time, are turned into barrenness, and pompous populous cities into ruinous heaps. Old decayed castles look frightful, and their ruins are almost as much dreaded as ever their garrisons were.

2. It describes the destroying judgments which are the effects of God's wrath and the just punishment of those that are enemies to his people, which God will inflict when the year of the redeemed has come, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. Those that aim to ruin the church can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. 3. It describes the final desolation of this wicked world, which is reserved unto fire at the day of judgment, 2Pe 3:7. The earth itself, when it, and all the works

that are therein, shall be burnt up, will (for aught I know) be turned into a hell to all those that set their affections on earthly things. However, this prophecy shows us what will be the lot of the generation of God's curse.

I The country shall become like the lake of Sodom, Isa 34:9,10. The streams thereof, that both watered the land and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly, or not at all. Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn; so Sir R. Blackmore. The dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone; so combustible has sin made their land that it shall take fire at the first spark of God's wrath struck upon it; and, when it has taken fire, it shall become burning pitch; the fire shall be universal, not a house, or town, on fire, but a whole country; and it shall not be in the power of any to suppress or extinguish it. It shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall not be quenched night nor day.

The torment of those in hell, or that have a hell within them in their own consciences, is without interruption; the smoke of this fire goes up for ever. As long as there are provoking sinners on earth, from one generation to another, an increase of sinful men, to augment the fierce anger of the Lord (Nu 32:14), there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it. And as long as a people keep up a succession of sinners God will have a succession of plagues for them; nor will any that fall under the wrath of God be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, how light soever men make of it, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within the smell of it.

II The cities shall become like old decayed houses, which, being deserted by the owners, look very frightful, being commonly possessed by beasts of prey or birds of ill omen. See how

dismally the palaces of the enemy look; the description is peculiarly elegant and fine.

1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction. He shall stretch out upon Bozrah the line of confusion with the stones or plummets of emptiness, Isa 34:11. This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it; it is given according to the rules of justice and the exact agreeableness of the execution with the sentence; the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country shall be like that of the whole earth when it was Tohu and Bohu (the very words here used)--without form and void. Ge 1:2. Sin will soon turn a paradise into a chaos, and sully the beauty of the whole creation. When there is confusion there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear (Isa 34:12): They shall call the nobles of the kingdom to take care of the arduous affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand, and all her princes, having the sad tidings brought them, shall be nothing, shall be at their wits' end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.

III. Even the houses of state, and those of strength, shall become as wildernesses (Isa 34:13); not only grass shall grow, but thorns shall come up, in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof, and there shall be none to cut them up or tread them down. We sometimes see ruined buildings thus overgrown with rubbish. It intimates that the place shall not only be uninhabited and unfrequented where a full court used to be kept, but that it shall be under the curse of God; for thorns and thistles were the production of the curse, Ge 3:18.

10 It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go
up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none
shall pass through it for ever and ever.

11 But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.

They shall become the residence and rendezvous of fearful frightful beasts and birds, which usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed, and, when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation, being apt to strike a horror upon the mind, is much enlarged upon here, Isa 34:11. The cormorant shall possess it, or the pelican, which affects to be solitary (Ps 102:6); and the bittern, which makes a hideous noise, the owl, a melancholy bird, the raven, a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcases, shall dwell there (with all the ill-boding monsters of the air, Sir R. B.), all the unclean birds, which were not for the service of man, Isa 34:13. It shall be a habitation for dragons, which are poisonous and hurtful.

And in their lofty rooms of state, Where cringing sycophants did wait, Dragons shall hiss and hungry wolves shall howl; In courts before by mighty lords possess'd The serpent shall erect his speckled crest, Or fold his circling spires to rest.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

That which was a court for princes shall now be a court for owls or ostriches, Isa 34:14. The wild beasts of the desert, the dry and sandy country, shall meet, as it were by appointment, with the wild beasts of the island, the wet marshy country, and shall regale themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

Leopards, and all the rav'ning brotherhoods That range the plains, or lurk in woods, Each other shall invite to come, And make this wilder place their home. Fierce beasts of every frightful shape and size Shall settle here their bloody colonies.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

The satyr shall cry to his fellow to go with him to this desert place, or, being there, they shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the screech-owl rest, a night-bird and an ominous one. The great owl shall there make her nest (Isa 34:15) and lay and hatch; the breed of them shall be kept up to provide heirs for this desolate place. The vultures which feast on carcases, shall be gathered there, every one with his mate. Now observe,

1. How the places which men have deserted, and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect.

2. Whom those resemble that are morose, unsociable, and unconversable, and affect a melancholy retirement; they are like these solitary creatures that take delight in desolations. 3. What a dismal change sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness.

12 They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none *shall be* there, and all her princes shall be nothing.

13 And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be a habitation of dragons, *and* a court for owls.

14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

15 There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.

16 Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

17 And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

Here is an assurance given of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the most minute circumstance of it (Isa

34:16,17): "Seek you out of the book of the Lord and read. When this destruction comes compare the event with the prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly."

Note, The book of the prophets is the book of the Lord, and we ought to consult it and converse with it as of divine origin and authority. We must not only read it, but see out of it, search into it, turn first to one text and then to another and compare them together. Abundance of useful knowledge might thus be extracted, by a diligent search, out of the scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord then observe,

1. That according to what you have read so you see; not one of these shall fail, either beast or fowl: and, it being foretold that they shall possess it from generation to generation, in order to that, that the species may be propagated, none shall want her mate; these marks of desolation shall be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land.

2. That God's mouth having commanded this direful muster his Spirit shall gather them, as the creatures by instinct were gathered to Adam to be named and to Noah to be housed. What God's word has appointed his Spirit will effect and bring about, for no word of God shall fall to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the Spirit.

3. That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening: He has cast the lot for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place as readily as if it were marked by line. See the like, Joe 2:7,8, They shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another. The soothsayers among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them. But here we find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel: he has cast the lot for them.

4. That the desolation shall be perpetual: They shall possess it for ever. God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins; but Jerusalem of old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem. But the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

Isaiah-35

The Glorious Future of Zion

1 The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and
the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

In these verses we have,

I The desert land blooming. In the foregoing chapter we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness; here we have in lieu of that, a wilderness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed began to recover themselves, and to look pleasantly again, and to blossom as the rose. When the Gentile nations, that had been long as a wilderness, bringing forth no fruit to God, received the gospel, joy came with it to them, Ps 67:3,4,96:11,12. When Christ was preached in Samaria there was great joy in that city (Ac 8:8); those that sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light, and then they blossomed, that is, gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was it which the preachers of the gospel aimed at (Joh 15:16), to go and bring forth fruit, Ro 1:13,Col 1:6.

Though blossoms are not fruit, and often miscarry and come to nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Converting grace makes the soul that was a wilderness to rejoice with joy and singing, and to blossom abundantly. This flourishing desert shall have all

the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and stateliness of its cedars, together with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution is brought into the gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shows at large in his epistle to the Hebrews. Whatever was excellent an desirable in the Mosaic economy is translated into the evangelical institutes.

II The glory of God shining forth: They shall see the glory of the Lord. God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind (for that is his glory and excellency), and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be.

III. The feeble and faint-hearted encouraged, Isa 35:3,4. God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged, by virtue of their office, to strengthen the weak hands, to comfort those who could not yet recover the fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the gospel,

1. To strengthen those that are weak and to confirm them--the weak hands, which are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be lifted up in prayer, and the feeble knees, which are unable either to stand or walk and unfit for the race set before us. The gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shows us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians there are many that have weak hands and feeble knees, that are yet but babes in Christ; but it is our duty to strengthen our brethren (Lu 22:32), not only to bear with the weak, but to do what we can to confirm them, Ro 15:1,1Th 5:14. It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to lift up the hands which hang

down (Heb 12:12), improving the strength God has given us, and exerting it.

2. To animate those that are timorous and discouraged: Say to those that are of a fearful heart, because of their own weakness and the strength of their enemies, that are hasty (so the word is), that are for betaking themselves to flight upon the first alarm, and giving up the cause, that say, in their haste, "We are cut off and undone" (Ps 31:22), there is enough in the gospel to silence these fears; it says to them, and let them say it to themselves and one to another, Be strong, fear not. Fear is weakening; the more we strive against it the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and, for our encouragement to strive, he that says to us, Be strong has laid help for us upon one that is mighty.

IV. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour: "Your God will come with vengeance. God will appear for you against your enemies, will recompense both their injuries and your losses." The Messiah will come, in the fulness of time, to take vengeance on the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and make a show of them openly, to recompense those that mourn in Zion with abundant comforts. He will come and save us. With the hopes of this the Old-Testament saints strengthened their weak hands. He will come again at the end of time, will come in flaming fire, to recompense tribulation to those who have troubled his people, and, to those who were troubled, rest, such a rest as will be not only a final period to, but a full reward of, all their troubles, 2Th 1:6,7. Those whose hearts tremble for the ark of God, and who are under a concern for his church in the world, may silence their fears with this, God will take the work into his own hands. Your God will come, who pleads your cause and owns your interest, even God himself, who is God alone.

2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing:
the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel
and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, *and* the excellency
of our God.

3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

4 Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompense; he will come and save you.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

"Then, when your God shall come, even Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bore witness, especially towards the conclusion of their prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially--then look for great things."

I. Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace, wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us.

1. Wonders shall be wrought on men's bodies (Isa 35:5,6): The eyes of the blind shall be opened; this was often done by our Lord Jesus when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking, and one he gave sight to that was born blind, Mt 9:27,12:22,20:30,Joh 9:6. By his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped, with one word. Ephphatha--Be opened, Mk 7:34. Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored so perfectly that they could not only go, but leap, and with so much joy to them that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, Ac 3:8. The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel that they were disposed to sing for joy, Mt 9:32,33. These miracles Christ wrought to prove that he was sent of God (Joh 3:2), nay, working them by his own power and in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove to John's disciples his divine mission he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled.

2. Wonders, greater wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls. By the word and Spirit of Christ those that were spiritually blind were enlightened (Ac 26:18), those that were deaf to the calls of God were made to hear them readily, so Lydia, whose heart the

Lord opened, so that she attended, Ac 16:14. Those that were impotent to every thing that is good by divine grace are made, not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments. Those also that were dumb, and knew not how to speak of God or to God, having their understandings opened to know him, shall thereby have their lips opened to show forth his praise. The tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy, the joy of God's salvation. Praise shall be perfected out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

II The Spirit shall be poured out from on high. There shall be waters and streams, rivers of living water; when our Saviour spoke of these as the fulfilling of the scripture, and most probably of this scripture, the evangelist tells us, He spoke of the Spirit (Joh 7:38,39), as does also this prophet (Isa 32:15); so here (Isa 35:6), in the wilderness, where one would least expect it, shall waters break out. This was fulfilled when the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles that heard the word (Ac 10:44); then were the fountains of life opened, whence streams flowed, that watered the earth abundantly. These waters are said to break out, which denotes a pleasing surprise to the Gentile world, such as brought them, as it were, into a new world. The blessed effect of this shall be that the parched ground shall become a pool, Isa 35:7.

Those that laboured and were heavily laden, under the burden of guilt, and were scorched with the sense of divine wrath, found rest, and refreshment, and abundant comforts in the gospel. In the thirsty land, where no water was, nor ordinances (Ps 63:1), there shall be springs of water, a gospel ministry, and by that the administration of all gospel ordinances in their purity and plenty, which are the river that makes glad the city of our God, Ps 46:4. In the habitation of dragons, who chose to dwell in the parched scorched ground (Isa 34:9,13), these waters shall flow, and dispossess them, so that, where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes, great plenty of useful productions. Thus it was when Christian churches were planted, and flourished greatly, in the

cities of the Gentiles, which, for many ages, had been habitations of dragons, or devils rather, as Babylon (Re 18:2); when the property of the idols' temples was altered, and they were converted to the service of Christianity, then the habitations of dragons became fruitful fields.

6 Then shall the lame *man* leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes.

8 And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.

The way of religion and godliness shall be laid open: it is here called the way of holiness (Isa 35:8) the way both of holy worship and a holy conversation. Holiness is the rectitude of the human nature and will, in conformity to the divine nature and will. The way of holiness is that course of religious duties in which men ought to walk and press forward, with an eye to the glory of God and their own felicity in the enjoyment of him. "When our God shall come to save us he shall chalk out to us this way by his gospel, so as it had never been before described."

1. It shall be an appointed way; not a way of sufferance, but a highway, a way into which we are directed by a divine authority and in which we are protected by a divine warrant. It is the King's highway, the King of Kings' highway, in which, though we may be waylaid, we cannot be stopped. The way of holiness is the way of God's commandments; it is (as highways usually are) the good old way, Jer 6:16.

2. It shall be an appropriated way, the way in which God will bring his own chosen to himself, but the unclean shall not pass over it, either to defile it or to disturb those that walk in it. It is a way by itself, distinguished from the way of the world, for it is a way of separation from, and nonconformity to, this world. It shall

be for those whom the Lord has set apart for himself (Ps 4:3), shall be reserved for them: The redeemed shall walk there, and the satisfaction they take in these ways of pleasantness shall be out of the reach of molestation from an evil world. The unclean shall not pass over it, for it shall be a fair way; those that walk in it are the undefiled in the way, who escape the pollution that is in the world.

3. It shall be a straight way: The wayfaring men, who choose to travel in it, though fools, of weak capacity in other things, shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God in this way that they shall not err therein; not that they shall be infallible even in their own conduct, or that they shall in nothing mistake, but they shall not be guilty of any fatal misconduct, shall not so miss their way but that they shall recover it again, and get well to their journey's end. Those that are in the narrow way, though some may fall into one path and others into another, not all equally right, but all meeting at last in the same end, shall yet never fall into the broad way again; the Spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth that is necessary for them. Note, The way to heaven is a plain way, and easy to hit. God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and made them wise to salvation. Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

4. It shall be a safe way: No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast (Isa 35:9), none to hurt or destroy. Those that keep close to this way keep out of the reach of Satan the roaring lion, that wicked one touches them not. Those that walk in the way of holiness may proceed with a holy security and serenity of mind, knowing that nothing can do them any real hurt; they shall be quiet from the fear of evil. It was in Hezekiah's days, some time after the captivity of the ten tribes, that God, being displeased with the colonies settled there, sent lions among them, 2Ki 17:25. But Judah keeps her integrity, and therefore no lions shall be there. Those that walk in the way of holiness must separate themselves from the unclean and the ravenous, must save themselves from an untoward generation; hoping that they

themselves are of the redeemed, let them walk with the redeemed who shall walk there.

9 No lion shall be there, nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon,
it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there:*
10 and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with
songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and
gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The end of this way shall be everlasting joy, Isa 35:10. This precious promise of peace now will end shortly in endless joys and rest for the soul. Here is good news for the citizens of Zion, rest to the weary: The ransomed of the Lord, who therefore ought to follow him wherever he goes (Re 14:4), shall return and come to Zion,

1. To serve and worship God in the church militant: they shall deliver themselves out of Babylon (Zec 2:7), shall ask the way to Zion (Jer 50:5), and shall find the way Isa 52:12. God will open to them a door of escape out of their captivity, and it shall be an effectual door, though there be many adversaries. They shall join themselves to the gospel church, that Mount Zion, that city of the living God, Heb 12:22. They shall come with songs of joy and praise for their deliverance out of Babylon, where they wept upon every remembrance of Zion, Ps 137:1. Those that by faith are made citizens of the gospel Zion may go on their way rejoicing (Ac 8:39); they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and be still praising him. They rejoice in Christ Jesus, and the sorrows and signs of their convictions are made to flee away by the power of divine consolations. Those that mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted.

2. To see and enjoy God in the church triumphant; those that walk in the way of holiness, under guidance of their Redeemer, shall come to Zion at last, to the heavenly Zion, shall come in a body, shall all be presented together, faultless, at the coming of Christ's glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24,Re 7:17); they shall come with songs. When God's people returned out of Babylon to Zion they came weeping (Jer 50:4); but they shall come to

heaven singing a new song, which no man can learn, Re 14:3. When they shall enter into the joy of their Lord it shall be what the joys of this world never could be everlasting joy, without mixture, interruption, or period. It shall not only fill their hearts, to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads, as an ornament of grace and a crown of glory, as a garland worn in token of victory.

Their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing, as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed, to the glory of God and their mutual encouragement. They shall then obtain the joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever, as the shadows of the night before the rising sun. Thus these prophecies, which relate to the Assyrian invasion, conclude, for the support of the people of God under that calamity, and to direct their joy, in their deliverance from it, to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swallow up both all the sorrows and all the joys of this present time.

Isaiah-36

The Invasion of Sennacherib

1 Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, *that* Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defensed cities of Judah, and took them.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons.

1. A people may be in the way of their duty and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reforming, and his people were in some measure reformed; and yet their country is at that time invaded and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss and cool in the work of reformation, were doing it by halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation; and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them and that good cause. We must not wonder if,

when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forward towards perfection.

2. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved. Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home and in his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria, for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present (2Ki 18:14), and yet that perfidious prince pours an army into his country all of a sudden and lays it waste. It is good for us therefore always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that, when it comes, it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror.

3. God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the defenced cities of Judah, and then the country would of course be an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper awhile, but cannot prosper always.

4. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are, and have, and have done, nay and of what they will do, to insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance, though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resists the proud. But thus they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by great swelling words of vanity, Jude 1:16.

5. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God. Thus Rabshakeh here, with noise and banter, runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us therefore,

that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirits by keeping up our hope in God.

6. It is acknowledged, on all hands, that those who forsake God's service forfeit his protection. If that had been true which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, Isa 36:7, We may say thus to presuming sinners, who say that they trust in the Lord and in his mercy. Is not this he whose commandments they have lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinances they have slighted? How then can they expect to find favour with him?

7. It is an easy thing, and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, Have I now come up without the Lord? when really he had come up against the Lord, Isa 37:28. Those that kill the servants of the Lord think they do him service and say, Let the Lord be glorified. But, sooner or later, they will be made to know their error to their cost, to their confusion.

2 And the king of Assyria sent Rab-shakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem
unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit
of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.
3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over
the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the
recorder.
4 And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus
saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence *is* this
wherein thou trustest?
5 I say, *sayest thou,* (but *they are but* vain words) *I have* counsel and
strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest
against me?
6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon
if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king
of Egypt to all that trust in him.

7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: *is it* not he,
whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and
said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?
8 Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of
Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on
thy part to set riders upon them.
9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of
my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and
for horsemen?
10 And am I now come up without the Lord against this land to
destroy it? the Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and
destroy it.
11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I
pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we
understand *it:* and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears
of the people that *are* on the wall.

We may hence learn these lessons:--

1. That, while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable motion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand (Isa 36:36), because reasons of state are secret things and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them. It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations.

2. Proud and haughty scorners, the fairer they are spoken to, commonly speak the fouler. Nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh. Besides that the thing itself was just which they desired, they called themselves his servants, they petitioned for it: Speak, we pray thee; but this made him the more spiteful and imperious. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are

wicked indeed, and it is to be feared incurable, with whom that which usually turns away wrath does but make bad worse.

3. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God, and cleaving to him, he does so by insinuating that in yielding to him they may better their condition; but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say to us, "Make an agreement with us and come out to us, submit to our dominion and come into our interests, and you shall eat every one of his own vine," they do but deceive us, promising liberty when they would lead us into the basest captivity and slavery. One might as well take Rabshakeh's word as theirs for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore, when they speak fair, believe them not. Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land.

4. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of the heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers than they can for the protection of theirs, and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arphad, whereas they are vanity and a lie. They are nothing; he is the great I AM: they are the creatures of men's fancy and the works of men's hands; he is the Creator of all things.

5. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think that, because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator. This and the other nation they have subdued, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But, though the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, let them not strive with the potter.

6. It is sometimes prudent not to answer a fool according to his folly. Hezekiah's command was, "Answer him not; it will but

provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; leave it to God to stop his mouth, for you cannot." They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and, if they should fall a railing like him, Rabshakeh would be much too hard for them at that weapon.

7. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudent to reply to those blasphemies. Though they answered him not a word, yet they rent their clothes, in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments when God's honour suffered.

12 But Rab-shakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? *hath he* not *sent me* to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

13 Then Rab-shakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me *by* a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

18 *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19 Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20 Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?
21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.
22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.

Isaiah-37

Judah Delivered from Sennacherib

1 And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.

We may observe here,

1. That the best way to baffle the malicious designs of our enemies against us is to be driven by them to God and to our duty and so to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproaches God the more Hezekiah studies to honour him, by rending his clothes for the dishonour done to him and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind.

2. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers, and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah, to desire his prayers, remembering how much his prophecies of late had plainly looked towards the events of the present day, in dependence upon which, it is probable, he doubted not but that the issue would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in

answer to prayer: This is a day of trouble, therefore let it be a day of prayer.

3. When we are most at a plunge we should be most earnest in prayer: Now that the children are brought to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth, now let prayer come, and help at a dead lift. When pains are most strong let prayers be most lively; and, when we meet with the greatest difficulties, then is a time to stir up not ourselves only, but others also, to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth.

4. It is an encouragement to pray though we have but some hopes of mercy (Isa 37:4): It may be the Lord thy God will hear; who knows but he will return and repent? The it may be of the prospect of the haven of blessings should quicken us with double diligence to ply the oar of prayer.

5. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant, it concerns us to lift up a prayer for that remnant, Isa 37:4. The prayer that reaches heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, and a direct intention to the glory of God, all which should be quickened when we come to the last stake.

6. Those that have made God their enemy we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and, though they may hiss, they cannot hurt. Rabshakeh has blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, Isa 37:6. He has made God a party to the cause by his invectives, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him. God will certainly plead his own cause.

7. Sinners' fears are but prefaces to their falls. He shall hear the rumour of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land, and there he shall be slain, Isa 37:7. The terrors that pursue him shall bring him at last to the king of

terrors, Job 18:11,14. The curses that come upon sinners shall overtake them.

2 And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

4 It may be the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left.

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

We may observe here,

1. That, if God give us inward satisfaction in his promise, this may confirm us in our silently bearing reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it does not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but, God having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. So Rabshakeh returned to the king his master for fresh instructions.

2. Those that delight in war shall have enough of it. Sennacherib, without provocation given to him or warning given by him, went forth to war against Judah; and now with as little ceremony the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, Isa 37:9. Those that are quarrelsome may expect to be quarrelled with; and God

sometimes checks the rage of his enemies by giving it a powerful diversion.

3. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it is worse to write so, for this argues more deliberation and design, and what is written spreads further, lasts longer, and does the more mischief. Atheism and irreligion, written, will certainly be reckoned for another day.

4. Great successes often harden sinners' hearts in their sinful ways and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands (though, in fact, they were but a few that fell within their reach), therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the gods of the nations were unable to help they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arphad became an easy prey to them therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arphad became an easy prey to them therefore the religious reforming king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is this proud man ripened for ruin by the sunshine of prosperity.

5. Liberty of access to the throne of grace, and liberty of speech there, are the unspeakable privilege of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter, and spread it before the Lord, not designing to make any complaints against him but those grounded upon his own handwriting. Let the thing speak itself; here it is in black and white: Open thy eyes, O Lord! and see. God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him, to utter all their words, as Jephthah did, before him, to spread the letter, whether of a friend or an enemy, before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him.

6. The great and fundamental principles of our religion, applied by faith and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, whatever they are; to

them therefore we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, of the hosts of Israel, to animate him, of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them,--that he is God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with him,--that he is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth, and disposes of them all as he pleases; for he made heaven and earth, and therefore both can do any thing and does every thing.

7. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations, who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods, but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our King, our lawgiver, and he will save us, who is the Saviour of those that believe.

8. We have enough to take hold of, in our wrestling with God by prayer, if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case, that his name will be profaned if we are run down and glorified if we are relieved. Thence therefore will our most prevailing pleas be drawn: "Do it for thy glory's sake."

9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is
come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard *it*, he sent
messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy
God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall
not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.
11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all
lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?
12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have
destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of
Eden which *were* in Telassar?
13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king
of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers,
and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord,
and spread it before the Lord.
15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying,
16 O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubim,
thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth:
thou hast made heaven and earth.
17 Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and
see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to
reproach the living God.
18 Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the
nations, and their countries,
19 and have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the
work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed
them.
20 Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all
the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the Lord, *even*
thou only.
21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus
saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me
against Sennacherib king of Assyria:
22 this *is* the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The
virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, *and* laughed thee
to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.
23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom
hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even*
against the Holy One of Israel.

We may here observe,

1. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of grace and peace from God for their comfort, even when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah's prayer in God's name, sent it in writing (for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth), and sent it by way of return to his prayer, relation being thereunto had: "Whereas thou hast prayed to me, know, for thy comfort, that thy prayer is heard."

Isaiah might have referred him to the prophecies he had delivered (particularly that Isa 10:1-34) and bid him pick out an answer from thence; but, that he might have abundant consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven is never let fall on God's side.

2. Those who magnify themselves, especially who magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and made themselves contemptible, in the eyes of all wise men: "The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised Sennacherib, and all his impotent malice and menaces; she knows that, while she preserves her integrity, she is sure of the divine protection, and that though the enemy may bark he cannot bite. All his threats are a jest; it is all but brutum fulmen--a mere flash,"

3. Those who abuse the people of God affront God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them as said and done against himself: "Whom hast thou reproached? Even the Holy One of Israel, whom thou hast therefore reproached because he is a Holy One." And it aggravated the indignity Sennacherib did to God that he not only reproached him himself, but set his servants on to do the same: By thy servants, the abjects, thou hast reproached me.

4. Those who boast of themselves and their own achievements reflect upon God and his providence: "Thou hast said, I have digged, and drunk water; I have done mighty feats, and will do more; and wilt not own that I have done it," Isa 37:24-26. The most active men are no more than God makes them, and God makes them no more than of old he designed to make them: "What I have formed of ancient times, in an eternal counsel, now have I brought to pass" (for God does all according to the counsel of his will), "that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities; it is therefore intolerable arrogance to make it thy own doing."

5. All the malice, and all the motions and projects, of the church's enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church's God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here, and there, and every where, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, Isa 37:28. And that was not all; he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand, a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips, with which, though he was very headstrong and unruly, he could and would turn him back by the way which he came, Isa 37:29. Hitherto he shall come and no further. God had signed Sennacherib's commission against Judah (Isa 10:6); here he supersedes it. He has frightened them, but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any further; nay, his commitment is here signed, by which he is clapped up, to answer for what he had done beyond his commission.

6. God is his people's bountiful benefactor, as well as their powerful protector, both a sun and a shield to those that trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended (Isa 37:35), the besiegers shall not come into it, no, nor come before it with any regular attack, but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, Isa 37:33. But this is not all; God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good. Their land shall be more than ordinarily fruitful, so that their losses shall be abundantly repaired; they shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemies' wasting the country or of their own being taken off from husbandry.

But the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live and live plentifully upon its spontaneous productions. The blessing of the Lord can, when he pleases, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, which happened (as it should seem) the year after, and when they were not to plough or sow; no, though they had not now their usual stock beforehand for that year, yet they must religiously observe it, and depend upon God to provide for them. God must be trusted in the way of duty.

7. There is no standing before the judgments of God when they come with commission.

(1.) The greatest numbers cannot stand before them: one angel shall, in one night, lay a vast army of men dead upon the spot, when God commissions him so to do, Isa 37:36. Here are 185,000 brave soldiers in an instant turned into so many dead corpses. Many think the Ps 76:1-12 was penned upon occasion of this defeat, where from the spoiling of the stout-hearted, and sending them to sleep their long sleep (Isa 37:5), it is inferred that God is more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey (Isa 37:4), and that he, even he, is to be feared, Isa 37:7. Angels are employed, more than we are aware of, as ministers of God's justice, to punish the pride and break the power of wicked men.

(2.) The greatest men cannot stand before them: The great king, the king of Assyria, looks very little when he is forced to return, not only with shame, because he cannot accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance, but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look less when his own sons, who should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, Isa 37:37,38.

God can quickly stop their breath who breathe out threatenings and slaughter against his people, and will do it when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this providence, which should encourage us, as far as they look further, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered does and will deliver. Lord, forgive our enemies; but, so let all thy enemies perish, O Lord!

24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the
multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the
mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall
cedars thereof, *and* the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into
the height of his border, *and* the forest of his Carmel.
25 I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I
dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.
26 Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; *and* of ancient
times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou
shouldest be to lay waste defensed cities *into* ruinous heaps.
27 Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power, they were dismayed
and confounded: they were *as* the grass of the field, and *as* the green
herb, *as* the grass on the housetops, and *as corn* blasted before it be
grown up.
28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and
thy rage against me.
29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine
ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy
lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.
30 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat *this* year such as
groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the
same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards,
and eat the fruit thereof.
31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again
take root downward, and bear fruit upward:
32 for out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape
out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.
33 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He
shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come
before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.
34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not
come into this city, saith the Lord.
35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my
servant David's sake.
36 Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of
the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and
when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead
corpses.

37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned,
and dwelt at Nineveh.
38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch
his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with
the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-
haddon his son reigned in his stead.

Isaiah-38

Hezekiah's Sickness

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet
the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the
Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

We may hence observe, among others, these good lessons:--

1. That neither men's greatness nor their goodness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth and a mighty favourite of Heaven, is struck with a disease, which, without a miracle, will certainly be mortal; and this in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness. Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. It should seem, this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling.

2. It concerns us to prepare when we see death approaching: "Set thy house in order, and thy heart especially; put both thy affections and thy affairs into the best posture thou canst, that, when thy Lord comes, thou mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thy own conscience, and with all men, and mayest have nothing else to do but to die." Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the easier: and those that are fit to die are most fit to live.

3. Is any afflicted with sickness? Let him pray, Jam 5:13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public. When Hezekiah

was distressed by his enemies he prayed; now that he was sick he prayed. Whither should the child go, when any thing ails him, but to his Father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health he went up to the house of the Lord to pray, for that was then the house of prayer. When he was sick in bed he turned his face towards the wall, probably towards the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer.

4. The testimony of our consciences for us that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of the Mediator. Hezekiah does not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remembers, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances, but, which was better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, how he had approved himself to God with a single eye and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even regular course of holy living: I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect, that is, an upright, heart; for uprightness is our gospel perfection.

5. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah with warning to prepare for death is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, but be restored to a confirmed state of health and live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God send not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet, if by his Spirit he bids us be of good

cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that, whether we live or die, we shall be his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us if he strengthens us with strength in our souls, though not with bodily strength, Ps 138:3.

6. A good man cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity unless withal he see the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God, knowing what lay near Hezekiah's heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life (Ps 128:5), otherwise he cannot live comfortably. Jerusalem, which is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrians, who perhaps threatened to rally again and renew the attack. Thus does God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy.

7. God is willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they may have an unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation. God had given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favour; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign. None that we know of having had an absolute promise of living a certain number of years to come, as Hezekiah had, God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun-dial. The sun is a faithful measurer of time, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race; but he that set that clock a going can set it back when he pleases, and make it to return; for the Father of all lights is the director of them.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto
the Lord,
3 and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked
before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which*
is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.
4 Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.
6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.
7 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken;
8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.
9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving-song, which he penned, by divine direction, after his recovery. He might have taken some of the psalms of his father David, and made use of them for his purpose; he might have found many very pertinent ones. He appointed the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David, 2Ch 29:30. But the occasion here was extraordinary, and, his heart being full of devout affections, he would not confine himself to the compositions he had, though of divine inspiration, but would offer up his affections in his own words, which is most natural and genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that he might review it himself afterwards, for the reviving of the good impressions made upon him by the providence, and that it might be recommended to others also for their use upon the like occasion. Note, There are writings which it is proper for us to draw up after we have been sick and have recovered.

It is good to write a memorial of the affliction, and of the frame of our hearts under it,--to keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when we were sick, the affections that were then working in us,--to write a memorial of the mercies of a sick bed, and of our release from it, that they may never be forgotten,--to write a thanksgiving to God, write a sure covenant with him, and seal it,--to give it under our hands that we will never return again to folly. It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here

left, upon his recovery; and yet we find (2Ch 32:25) that he rendered not again according to the benefit done to him. The impressions, one would think, should never have worn off, and yet, it seems, they did. Thanksgiving is good, but thanksliving is better. Now in this writing he preserves upon record,

I The deplorable condition he was in when his disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, Isa 38:10-13.

1. He tells us what his thoughts were of himself when he was at the worst; and these he keeps in remembrance,

(1.) As blaming himself for his despondency, and that he gave up himself for gone; whereas while there is life there is hope, and room for our prayer and God's mercy. Though it is good to consider sickness as a summons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened in our preparations for another world, yet we ought not to make the worse of our case, nor to think that every sick man must needs be a dead man presently. He that brings low can raise up. Or,

(2.) As reminding himself of the apprehensions he had of death approaching, that he might always know and consider his own frailty and mortality, and that, though he had a reprieve for fifteen years, it was but a reprieve, and the fatal stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly come at last. Or,

(3.) As magnifying the power of God in restoring him when his case was desperate, and his goodness in being so much better to him than his own fears. Thus David sometimes, when he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon his own case when he was in trouble, and what he had then said in his haste, as Ps 31:22,77:7-9.

2. Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts of himself were.

(1.) He reckoned that the number of his months was cut off in the midst. He was now about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair prospect of many years and happy ones, very happy, very many, before him. This distemper that suddenly seized him he concluded would be the cutting off of his days, that he should now be deprived of the residue of his years, which in a course of nature he might have lived (not which he could command as a debt due to him, but which he had reason to expect, considering the strength of his constitution), and with them he should be deprived not only of the comforts of life, but of all the opportunities he had of serving God and his generation. To the same purport (Isa 38:12), "My age has departed and gone, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent, out of which I am forcibly dislodged by the pulling of it down in an instant." Our present residence is but like that of a shepherd in his tent, a poor, mean, and cold lodging, where we are upon duty, and with a trust committed to our charge, as the shepherd has, of which we must give an account, and which will easily be taken down by the drawing of one pin or two.

But observe, It is not the final period of our age, but only the removal of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar that are taken down, coarse, black, and weather-beaten, shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, comely as the curtains of Solomon. He adds another similitude: I have cut off, like a weaver, my life. Not that he did by any act of his own cut off the thread of his life; but, being told that he must needs die, he was forced to cut off all his designs and projects, his purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of his heart, as Job's were, Job 17:11. Our days are compared to the weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6), passing and repassing very swiftly, every throw leaving a thread behind it; and, when they are finished, the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the loom, and shown to our Master, to be judged of whether it be well woven or no, that we may receive according to the things done in the body. But as the weaver, when he has

cut off his thread, has done his work, and the toil is over, so a good man, when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are cut off with it, and he rests from his labours. "But did I say, I have cut off my life? No, my times are not in my own hand; they are in God's hand, and it is he that will cut me off from the thrum (so the margin reads it); he has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and, when it comes to that length, he will cut it off."

(2.) He reckoned that he should go to the gates of the grave--to the grave, the gates of which are always open; for it is still crying, Give, give. The grave is here put not only for the sepulchre of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with a great deal of pomp and magnificence (for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all Judah did him honour at his death, 2Ch 32:33), which yet he himself took no care of, nor gave any order about, when he was sick; but for the state of the dead, that is, the sheol, the hades, the invisible world, to which he saw his soul going.

(3.) He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God and doing good in the world (Isa 38:1): "I said,"

[1.] "I shall not see the Lord, as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, even the Lord here in the land of the living." He hopes to see him on the other side death, but he despairs of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, Ps 63:2. He shall no more see (that is, serve) the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He dwells much upon this: I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord; for a good man wishes not to live for any other end than that he may serve God and have communion with him.

[2.] "I shall see man no more." He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect and administer justice to, shall see no more objects of charity, whom he may relieve, shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, Ps 88:18.

(4.) He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe: "He will cut me off with pining sickness, which will waste me, and wear me off, quickly." The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would soon come to a crisis and make an end of him--that God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones with grinding pain, Isa 38:13. He thought that next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery; when he had outlived the first day's illness the second day he repeated his fears, and concluded that this must needs be his last night: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. When we are sick we are very apt to be thus calculating our time, and, after all, we are still at uncertainty. It should be more our care how we shall get safely to another world than how long we are likely to live in this world.

10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I
shall go to the gates of the grave:
I am deprived of the residue of my years.
11 I said, I shall not see the Lord,
even the Lord, in the land of the living: I
shall behold man no more
with the inhabitants of the world.
12 Mine age is departed,
and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I
have cut off like a weaver my life:
he will cut me off with pining sickness:
from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.
13 I reckoned till morning, *that*,
as a lion, so will he break all my bones:

from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.
14 Like a crane *or* a swallow, so did I chatter: I
did mourn as a dove:
mine eyes fail *with looking* upward:
O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

The complaints he made in this condition (Isa 38:14): "Like a crane, or swallow, so did I chatter; I made a noise as those birds do when they are frightened." See what a change sickness makes in a little time; he that, but the other day, spoke with so much freedom and majesty, nor, through the extremity of pain or deficiency of spirits, chatters like a crane or a swallow. Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings which could not be uttered that it was more like the chattering of a crane or a swallow than what it used to be. Such mean thoughts had he of his own prayers, which yet were acceptable to God, and successful. He mourned like a dove, sadly, but silently and patiently.

He had found God so ready to answer his prayers at other times that he could not but look upwards, in expectation of some relief now, but in vain: his eyes failed, and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, "I am oppressed, quite overpowered and ready to sink; Lord, undertake for me; bail me out of the hands of the serjeant that has arrested me; be surety for thy servant for good, Ps 119:122. Come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried." When we recover from sickness, the divine pity does, as it were, beg a day for us, and undertakes we shall be forthcoming another time and answer the debt in full.

And, when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves, we are undone if the divine grace do not undertake for us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it--if Christ do not undertake for us, to bring us off in judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us which we need, and cannot do for ourselves. I am oppressed, ease me (so some

read it); for, when we are agitated by a sense of guilt and the fear of wrath, nothing will make us easy but Christ's undertaking for us.

15 What shall I say?
He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it:*
I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God's goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of the writing as one at a stand how to express himself (Isa 38:15): "What shall I say? Why should I say so much by way of complaint when this is enough to silence all my complaints--He has spoken unto me; he has sent his prophet to tell me that I shall recover and live fifteen years yet; and he himself has done it: it is as sure to be done as if it were done already. What God has spoken he will himself do, for no word of his shall fall to the ground." God having spoken it, he is sure of it (Isa 38:16): "Thou wilt restore me, and make me to live; not only restore me from this illness, but make me to live through the years assigned me." And, having this hope,

1. He promises himself always to retain the impressions of his affliction (Isa 38:15): "I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul, as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmurings under my affliction, as one in care to make suitable returns for God's favour to me and to make it appear that I have got good by the providences I have been under. I will go softly, gravely and considerately, and with thought and deliberation, not as many, who, when they have recovered, live as carelessly and as much at large as ever." Or, "I will go pleasantly" (so some understand it); "when God has delivered me I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious." Or, "I will go softly, even after the bitterness of my soul" (so it may be read); "when the trouble is over I will endeavour to retain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things that I had then."

2. He will encourage himself and others with the experiences he had had of the goodness of God (Isa 38:16): "By these things which thou hast done for me they live, the kingdom lives" (for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom); "all that hear of it shall live and be comforted; by the same power and goodness that have restored me all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. In all these things is the life of my spirit, my spiritual life, that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of my natural life." The more we taste of the loving-kindness of God in every providence the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him and live to him, and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him.

3. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery, on several accounts.

(1.) That he was raised up from great extremity (Isa 38:17): Behold, for peace I had great bitterness. When, upon the defeat of Sennacherib, he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness, which embittered all his comforts to him, and went to such a height that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself--bitterness, bitterness, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition when God sent him seasonable relief.

(2.) That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared and reprieved in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but temporal mercies are sweet indeed to us when we can taste the love of God in them. He delivered me because he delighted in me (Ps 18:19); and the word here signifies a very affectionate love: Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption; so it runs in the original. God's love is sufficient to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor perishing souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, snatched them as brands out of everlasting

burnings. In his love and in his pity he redeemed us. And the preservation of our bodies, as well as the provision made for them, is doubly comfortable when it is in love to our souls--when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

(3.) That it was the effect of the pardon of sin: "For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, and thereby hast delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, in love to it." Note,

[1.] When God pardons sin he casts it behind his back, as not designing to look upon it with an eye of justice and jealousy. He remembers it no more, to visit for it. The pardon does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but not to be punished as it deserves. When we cast our sins behind our back, and take no care to repent of them, God sets them before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back.

[2.] When God pardons sins he pardons all, casts them all behind his back, though they have been as scarlet and crimson.

[3.] The pardoning of the sin is the delivering of the soul from the pit of corruption.

[4.] It is pleasant indeed to think of our recoveries from sickness when we see them flowing from the remission of sin; then the cause is removed, and then it is in love to the soul.

(4.) That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world, which he made the business, and pleasure, and end of life.

[1.] If this sickness had been his death, it would have put a period to that course of service for the glory of God and the

good of the church which he was now pursuing, Isa 38:18. Heaven indeed praises God, and the souls of the faithful, when at death they remove thither, do that work of heaven as the angels, and with the angels, there; but what is this world the better for that? What does that contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men in this state of struggle? The grave cannot praise God, nor the dead bodies that lie there. Death cannot celebrate him, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours, to invite others into his service. Those who go down to the pit, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. Those that lie rotting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any further mercy from God, so neither are they capable of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory.

[2.] Having recovered from it, he resolves not only to proceed, but to abound, in praising and serving God (Isa 38:19): The living, the living, he shall praise thee. They may do it; they have an opportunity of praising God, and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was therefore glad to live, not that he might continue to enjoy his royal dignity and the honour and pleasure of his late successes, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God; they live in vain if they do not.

Those that have been dying and yet are living, whose life is from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, as being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah, for his part, having recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God: "I do it this day; let others do it in like manner." Those that give good exhortations should set good examples, and do themselves what they expect from others. "For my part," says Hezekiah, "the Lord was ready to save me; he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it just then when I was in the greatest extremity; his help came in seasonably; he

showed himself willing and forward to save me. The Lord was to save me, was at hand to do it, saved me a the first word; and therefore,"

First, "I will publish and proclaim his praises. I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory: We will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, that others may attend to them, and be affected with them, when they are in the most devout and serious frame in the house of the Lord." It is for the honour of God, and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public praises, especially mercies to public persons, Ps 116:18,19.

Secondly, "I will proceed and persevere in his praises." We should do so all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and, as renewed mercies call for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore, as long as we live, we must continue to praise him, while we have breath, nay, while we have being.

Thirdly, "I will propagate and perpetuate his praises." We should not only praise him all the days of our life, but the father to the children should make known his truth, that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far towards keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah, doubtless, did this himself, and yet Manasseh his son walked not in his steps. Parents may give their children many good things, good instructions, good examples, good books, but they cannot give them grace.

16 O Lord, by these *things men* live,
and in all these *things is* the life of my spirit:
so wilt thou recover me,
and make me to live.
17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness;

but thou hast in love to my soul
delivered it from the pit of corruption:
for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
18 For the grave cannot praise thee,
death cannot celebrate thee:
they that go down into the pit
cannot hope for thy truth.
19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee,
as I *do* this day:
the father to the children
shall make known thy truth.
20 The Lord *was ready* to save me:
therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments
all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.

In the Isa 38:21,22 of this chapter we have two passages relating to this story which were omitted in the narrative of it here, but which we had 2Ki 20:1-21, and therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them:--

1. That God's promises are intended not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, the use of means. Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must take a lump of figs and lay it on the boil, Isa 38:21. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if, when we pray to him for help, we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians, or physic, in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence; help thyself and God will help thee.

2. That the chief end we should aim at, in desiring life and health, is that we may glorify God, and do good, and improve ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meetness for heaven. Hezekiah, when he meant, What is the sign that I shall recover? asked, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord, there to honour God, to keep up acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him? Isa 38:22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health he would immediately go up to the temple with his thank-offerings. There

Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, Joh 5:14. The exercises of religion are so much the business and delight of a good man that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions, and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.

22 Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?

Isaiah-39

Hezekiah Receives Envoys from Babylon

1 At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

Hence we may learn these lessons:--

1. That humanity and common civility teach us to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate them on their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon, having heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and had recovered, sent to compliment him upon the occasion. If Christians be unneighbourly, heathens will shame them.

2. It becomes us to give honour to those whom our God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonians' god; and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun, to their great surprise, went back ten degrees, on such a day, they thought themselves obliged to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their God, and shall not we?

3. Those that do not value good men for their goodness may yet be brought to pay them great respect by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous, as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac because they saw the Lord was with him, Ge 26:28. The king of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God.

4. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it: he was a wise and good man, but, when one miracle after another was wrought in his favour, he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay, a little thing then drew him into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of revelations.

5. We have need to watch over our own spirits when we are showing our friends our possessions, what we have done and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our might or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments, and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our own unworthiness and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for the achievements of others and with an expectation of losses and changes, not dreaming that our mountain stands so strong but that it may soon be moved.

6. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God has so dignified, to be thus over proud of the respect paid him by a heathen prince as if that added any thing to him! We ought to return the courtesies of such with interest, but not to be proud of them.

7. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they are secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no harm in; and therefore we ought to call ourselves to an account for them; and when we have had company with us that have paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy lest our hearts have been lifted up. As far as we see cause to suspect that this sly and subtle sin of pride has insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingled itself with our conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and, as Hezekiah here, ingenuously confess it and take shame to ourselves for it.

2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon.

4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that *is* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts:

Hence let us observe,

1. That, if God love us, he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the pride of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to prove him, that he might know all that was in his heart, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it.

2. It is just with God to take that from us which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people God took a course to make them fewer; and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told that he acts like the foolish traveller who shows his money and gold to one that proves a thief and is thereby tempted to rob him.

3. If we could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that the seed and successors of this king of Babylon would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did; and, when the prophet told him that it would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foresee what will be, but are told, in general, All is vanity, and therefore it is vanity for us to take complacency and put confidence in any thing that goes under that character.

4. Those that are fond of an acquaintance or alliance with irreligious men will first or last have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself very happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of harlots and idolatries; but Babylon, who now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her and carried her captive. Leagues with sinners, and leagues with sin too, will end thus; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them.

5. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them and will be willing to be told of their faults. Hezekiah reckoned that word of the Lord good which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and the law is

therefore good, because, being spiritual, in it sin appears sin, and exceedingly sinful.

6. True penitents will quietly submit, not only to the reproofs of the word, but to the rebukes of Providence for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity he said, Good is the word of the Lord, not only the mitigation of the sentence, but the sentence itself; he has nothing to object against the equity of it, but says Amen to the threatening. Those that see the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punishes them less than their iniquities deserve.

7. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well done by if there be peace and truth in our days, and better than we had reason to expect. If a storm be coming, we must reckon it a favour to get into the harbour before it comes, and be gathered to the grave in peace; yet we can never be secure of this, but must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome whatever it is.

6 Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thine house, and *that*
which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be
carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.
7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget,
shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the
king of Babylon.
8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good *is* the word of the Lord which
thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and
truth in my days.

Isaiah-40

The Lord's Comforting Words to Zion

1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

We have here the commission and instructions given, not to this prophet only, but, with him, to all the Lord's prophets, nay, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people.

1. This did not only warrant, but enjoin, this prophet himself to encourage the good people who lived in his own time, who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their daring impieties ripening apace for ruin, and God in his providence hastening ruin upon them. Let them be sure that, notwithstanding all this, God had mercy in store for them.

2. It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the time of captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins; they must encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time.

3. Gospel ministers, being employed by the blessed Spirit as comforters, and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here we have,

I. Comfortable words directed to God's people in general, Isa 40:1 The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the Lord God of the holy prophets, Re 22:6) to comfort the people of God; and the charge is doubled, Comfort you, comfort you--not because the prophets are unwilling to do it (no, it is the most pleasant part of their work), but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and their comforters must repeat things again and again, ere they can fasten any thing upon them. Observe here, 1. There are a people in the world that are God's people. 2. It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times. 3. It is the work

and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people. 4. Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here; for he that has torn will heal us.

II. Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular: "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem (Isa 40:2); speak that which will revive her heart, and be a cordial to her and to all that belong to her and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but cry unto her: cry aloud, to show saints their comforts as well as to show sinners their transgressions; make her hear it:"

1. "That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished: Her warfare is accomplished, the set time of her servitude; the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment." Human life is a warfare (Job 7:1); the Christian life much more. But the struggle will not last always; the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall not only enter into rest, but be sure of their pay.

2. "That the cause of her trouble is removed, and, when that is taken away, the effect will cease. Tell her that her iniquity is pardoned, God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him." Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. Troubles are then removed in love when sin is pardoned.

3. "That the end of her trouble is answered: She has received of the Lord double for the cure of all her sins, sufficient, and more than sufficient, to separate between her and her idols," the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon: and it had that effect upon them; it begat in them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physic doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or it may be taken as the language of the divine compassion: His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Jdg 10:16), and, like a

tender father, since he spoke against them he earnestly remembered them (Jer 31:20), and was ready to say that he had given them too much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God has punished them less than their iniquities deserved; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God spared not his own Son.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare
is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received
of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of
the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, having come, the people of God must be prepared, by repentance and faith, for the favours designed them; and, in order to call them to both these, we have here the voice of one crying in the wilderness, which may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state, and who, when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them that all the difficulties which stood in the way of their deliverance should be got over. It is a good sign that mercy is preparing for us if we find God's grace preparing us for it, Ps 10:17. But it must be applied to John the Baptist; for, though God was the speaker, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and his business was to prepare the way of the Lord, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the gospel of Christ. The way of the Lord is prepared,

I. By repentance for sin; that was it which John Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem (Mt 3:2,5), and thereby made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Lu 1:17.

1 The alarm is given; let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, Isa 40:3-5. If we apply it to their captivity, it may be taken as a promise that, whatever difficulties lie in their way, when they return they shall be removed. This voice in the wilderness (divine power going along with it) sets pioneers on work to level the roads. But it may be taken as a call to duty, and it is the same duty that we are called to, in preparation for Christ's entrance into our souls.

(1.) We must get into such a frame of spirit as will dispose us to receive Christ and his gospel: "Prepare you the way of the Lord; prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance. Make room for Christ: Make straight a highway for him." If he prepare the end for us, we ought surely to prepare the way for him. Prepare for the Saviour; lift up your heads, O you gates! Ps 24:7,9. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other minor deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but find, or make, a highway for him, even in that which was desert ground. This is that for which he waits to be gracious.

(2.) We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despondencies are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are untractable, and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the gospel of Christ have a fair hearing, and it cannot fail of acceptance. This prepares the way of the Lord; and thus God will by his grace prepare his own way

in all the vessels of mercy, whose hearts he opens as he did Lydia's.

2. When this is done the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, Isa 40:5.

(1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance Cyrus shall proclaim it, and those shall have the benefit of it, and those only, whose hearts the Lord shall stir up with courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills, and valleys, and all the rough places.

(2.) When John Baptist has for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lu 1:17), then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not, and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory shall be a light to lighten the Gentiles. All flesh shall see it together, and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by the neighbouring nations, Ps 126:2. And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground: The mouth of the Lord has spoken it, and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

II. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature. The mouth of the Lord having spoken it, the voice has this further to cry (he that has ears to hear let him hear it), The word of our God shall stand for ever, Isa 40:8.

1. By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure and what may be safely relied on. Then we are prepared for deliverance when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that,

with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed: in a dependence upon this word we must be brought to own that all flesh is grass, withering and fading.

(1.) The power of man, when it does appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord: it shall wither and be trodden down. The insulting Babylonians, who promise themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it.

(2.) The power of man, when it would appear for the deliverance, is not to be trusted to; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains. They shall fail them, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated: The Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and, as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

2 The word of our God, that glory of the Lord which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature-comforts withering and fading like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to the word which by the gospel is preached unto us, and which lives and abides for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, 1Pe 1:23-25. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced,

(1.) Of the vanity of the creature, that all flesh is grass, weak and withering. We ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but as the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures; all our comforts in this word are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls. We must look further for a salvation, look further for a portion.

(2.) Of the validity of the promise of God. We must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us which all flesh cannot--that, forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, which must live for ever; for the things that are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be
made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough
places plain:
5 and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it*
together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*.
6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is*
grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field:
7 the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the
Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass.
8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God
shall stand for ever.
9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high
mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice
with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah,
Behold your God!

It was promised (Isa 40:5) that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed; that is it with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

I. How it shall be revealed, Isa 40:9.

1. It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, who were vine-dressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them. This shall be told also to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them. Zion is said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon (Zec 2:7); and there she receives notice of Cyrus's gracious proclamation; and so the margin reads it, O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, &c., meaning the persons who were employed in publishing that proclamation; let them do it with a good will, let them make the country ring of it, and let them tell it to the sons of Zion in their own language, saying to them, Behold your God.

2. It shall be published by Zion and Jerusalem (so the text reads it); those that remain there, or that have already returned, when they find the deliverance proceeding towards perfection, let them proclaim it in the most public places, whence they may be best heard by all the cities of Judah; let them proclaim it as loudly as they can: let them lift up their voice with strength, and not be afraid of overstraining themselves; let them not be afraid lest the enemy should hear it and quarrel with them, or lest it should not prove true, or not such good tidings as at first it appeared; let them say to the cities of Judah, and all the inhabitants of the country, Behold your God. When God is going on with the salvation of his people, let them industriously spread the news among their friends, let them tell them that it is God that has done it; whoever were the instruments, God was the author; it is their God, a God in covenant with them, and he does it as theirs, and they will reap the benefit and comfort of it. "Behold him, take notice of his hand in it, and look above second causes; behold, the God you have long looked for has come at last (Isa 25:9):

This is our God, we have waited for him." This may refer to the invitation which was sent forth from Jerusalem to the cities of

Judah, as soon as they had set up an altar, immediately upon their return out of captivity, to come and join with them in their sacrifices, Ezr 3:2-4. "When the worship of God is set up again, send notice of it to all your brethren, that they may share with you in the comfort of it." But this was to have its full accomplishment in the apostles' public and undaunted preaching of the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The voice crying in the wilderness gave notice that he was coming; but now notice is given that he has come. Behold the Lamb of God; take a full view of your Redeemer. Behold your King, behold your God.

10 Behold, the Lord God will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

What that glory is which shall be revealed. "Your God will come, will show himself,"

1. "With the power and greatness of a prince (Isa 40:10): He will come with strong hand, too strong to be obstructed, though it may be opposed. His strong hand shall subdue his people to himself, and shall restrain and conquer his and their enemies. He will come who is strong enough to break through all the difficulties that lie in his way." Our Lord Jesus was full of power, a mighty Saviour. Some read, it, He will come against the mighty one, and overpower him, overcome him. Satan is the strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, and he shall make it to appear that he is so, for,

(1.) He shall reign in defiance of all opposition: His arm shall rule, shall overrule for him, for the fulfilling of his counsels, to his own glory; for he is his own end.

(2.) He shall recompense to all according to their works, as a righteous Judge: His reward is with him; he brings along with him, as a returning prince, punishments for the rebels and preferments for his loyal subjects.

(3.) He shall proceed and accomplish his purpose: His work is before him, that is, he knows perfectly well what he has to do, which way to go about it, and how to compass it. He himself knows what he will do.

2. "With the pity and tenderness of a shepherd," Isa 40:11. God is the Shepherd of Israel (Ps 80:1); Christ is the good Shepherd, Joh 10:11. The same that rules with the strong hand of a prince leads and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd.

(1.) He takes care of all his flock, the little flock: He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. His word is food for his flock to feed on; his ordinances are fields for them to feed in; his ministers are under-shepherds that are appointed to attend them.

(2.) He takes particular care of those that most need his care, the lambs that are weak, and cannot help themselves, and are unaccustomed to hardship, and those that are with young, that are therefore heavy, and, if any harm be done them, are in danger of casting their young. He particularly takes care for a succession, that it may not fail or be cut off. The good Shepherd has tender care for children that are towardly and hopeful, for young converts, that are setting out in the way to heaven, for weak believers, and those that are of a sorrowful spirit. These are the lambs of his flock, that shall be sure to want nothing that their case requires.

[1.] He will gather them in the arms of his power; his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness, 2Co 12:9. He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last; and all this with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them, Joh 10:28.

[2.] He will carry them in the bosom of his love and cherish them there. When they tire or are weary, are sick and faint,

when they meet with foul ways, he will carry them on, and take care they are not left behind.

[3.] He will gently lead them. By his word he requires no more service, and by his providence he inflicts no more trouble, than he will fit them for; for he considers their frame.

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

Israel's Incomparable God

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

The scope of these verses is to show what a great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here,

1. To encourage his people that were captives in Babylon to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were ever so weak and their oppressors ever so strong.

2. To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him. 3. To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said (Isa 40:9), Behold your God, and (Isa 40:11) He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution to the transcendencies of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, and fear before him; for,

I. His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, Isa 40:12.

1. He has a vast reach. View the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it; but the great God metes the heavens with a span; to him they are but a hand-breadth, so large-handed is he. View the terraqueous globe, and he has the command of that too. All the waters in the world he can measure in the hollow of his hand, where we can hold but a little water; and the dry land he easily manages, for he comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, or with his three fingers; it is no more to him than a pugil, or that which we take up between our thumb and two fingers.

2. He has a vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales and out of them again; he poises them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out as exactly as that which is spanned, and the earth and waters were put together in just proportions, as if they had been measured, and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for ballast to the globe, and no more. Or it may refer to the work of providence (which is a continued creation) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other.

II. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, Isa 40:13,14. As none can do what God has done and does, so none can assist him in the doing of it or suggest any thing to him which he thought not of. When the Lord by his Spirit made the world (Job 26:13) there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do or how to do it. Nor does he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world, nor is there any with whom he consults, as the wisest kings do with those that know law and judgment, Es 1:13. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly; nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end and the proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their

concerns at court or to put them in a way of gaining their liberty. "No matter," says the prophet, "you have a God to act for you, who needs not the assistance of statesmen." In the great work of our redemption by Christ matters were concerted before the world was, when there was one to teach God in the path of judgment, 1Co 2:7.

III. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, Isa 40:15,17. Take them all together, all the great and mighty nations of the earth, kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles: Before him, when they stand in competition with him or in opposition to him, they are as a drop of the bucket compared with the vast ocean, or the small dust of the balance (which does not serve to turn it, and therefore is not regarded, it is so small) in comparison with all the dust of the earth. He takes them up, and throws them away from him, as a very little thing, not worth speaking of.

They are all in his eye as nothing, as if they had no being at all; for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency. They are counted by him, and are to be counted by us in comparison of him, less than nothing, and vanity. When he pleases, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature. They are all vanity; the word that is used for the chaos (Ge 1:2), to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our fear and our hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet, for the redemption of it, he gave his only-begotten Son, Joh 3:16.

IV. The services of the church can make no addition to him nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections (Isa 40:16): Lebanon is not sufficient to burn; not the wood of it, to

be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; not the beasts of it, to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, Isa 40:16. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfection; for he is exalted far above all blessing and praise, all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or *being* his counselor
hath taught him?
14 With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught
him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and
showed to him the way of understanding?
15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the
small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little
thing.
16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof
sufficient for a burnt offering.
17 All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him
less than nothing, and vanity.
18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye
compare unto him?

The prophet here reproves those,

1. Who represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie and his glory into shame, who made images and then said that they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly.

2. Who put creatures in the place of God, who feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him, or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made, To whom will you liken God? Isa 40:18, and again Isa 40:25. The Holy One himself says, To whom will you liken me? This shows the folly and absurdity,

(1.) Of corporal idolatry, making visible images of him who is invisible, imagining the image to be animated by the deity, and the deity to be presentiated by the image, which, as it was an

instance of the corruption of the human nature, so it was an intolerable injury to the honour of the divine nature.

(2.) Of spiritual idolatry, making creatures equal with God in our affections. Proud people make themselves equal with God; covetous people make their money equal with God; and whatever we esteem or love, fear or hope in, more than God, that creature we equal with God, which is the highest affront imaginable to him who is God over all. Now, to show the absurdity of this,

I The prophet describes idols as despicable things and worthy of the greatest contempt (Isa 40:19,20): "Look upon the better sort of them, which rich people set up, and worship; they are made of some base metal, cast into what shape the founder pleases, and that is gilded, or overlaid with plates of gold, that it may pass for a golden image. It is a creature; for the workman made it; therefore it is not God, Ho 8:6. It depended upon his will whether it should be a god at all, and of what shape it should be. It is a cheat; for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper, in this indeed representing the deities, that they were not what they seemed to be, and deceived their admirers. How despicable then are the worst sort of them--the poor men's gods! He that is so impoverished that he has scarcely a sacrifice to offer to his god when he has made him will yet not be without an enshrined deity of his own; and, though he cannot procure one of brass or stone, he will have a wooden one rather than none, and for that purpose chooses a tree that will not soon rot, and of that he will have his graven image made. Both agree to have their image well fastened, that they may not be robbed of it. The better sort have silver chains to fix theirs with; and, though it be but a wooden image, care is taken that it shall not be moved." Let us pause a little and see, 1. How these idolaters shame themselves, and what a reproach they put upon their own reason, in dreaming that gods of their own making (Nehushtans, pieces of brass or logs of wood) should be able to do them any kindness. Thus vain were they in their imaginations; and how

was their foolish heart darkened! 2. See how these idolaters shame us, who worship the only living and true God. They spared no cost upon their idols; we grudge that as waste which is spent in the service of our God. They took care that their idols should not be moved; we wilfully provoke our God to depart from us.

II. He describes God as infinitely great, and worthy of the highest veneration; so that between him and idols, whatever competition there may be, there is no comparison. To prove the greatness of God he appeals,

1. To what they had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, and the consent of all ages and nations concerning him (Isa 40:21): "Have you not known by the very light of nature? Has it not been told you by your fathers and teachers, according to the constant tradition received from their ancestors and predecessors, even from the beginning?" (Those notices of God are as ancient as the world.) "Have you not understood it as always acknowledged from the foundation of the earth, that God is a great God, and a great King above all gods?"

It has been a truth universally admitted that there is an infinite Being who is the fountain of all being. This is understood not only ever since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe. It is founded upon the foundation of the earth. The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, Ro 1:20. Thou mayest not only ask thy father, and he shall tell thee this, and thy elders (De 32:7); but ask those that go by the way (Job 21:29), ask the first man you meet, and he will say the same. Some read it, Will you not know? Will you not hear it? For those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant; the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it. Now that which is here said of God is,

(1.) That he has the command of all the creatures. The heaven and the earth themselves are under his management: He sits upon the circle, or globe, of the earth, Isa 40:22. He that has the

special residence of his glory in the upper world maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory. He sits undisturbed upon the earth, and so establishes it. He is still stretching out the heavens, his power and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening these curtains in the morning and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is to this earth as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads, et quod tegit omnia cœlum--and it encircles all.--Ovid. See Ps 104:2.

(2.) That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are in his eye as grasshoppers in ours, so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, of such little use, and so easily crushed. Proud men's lifting up themselves is but like the grasshopper's leap; in an instant they must stoop down to the earth again. If the spies thought themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak (Nu 13:33), what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but awhile, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

(3.) That those who appear and act against him, how formidable soever they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humble and brought down by the mighty hand of God, Isa 40:23,24. Princes and judges, who have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, make nothing of those about them; as for all their enemies they puff at them (Ps 10:5,12:5); but, when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity, little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments, which shall either,

[1.] Prevent their settlement in their authority: They shall not be planted; they shall not be sown; and those are the two ways of

propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little interest, and so be planted or sown, yet their stock shall not take root in the earth, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but suddenly cursed their habitation. And then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or,

[2.] He will blast them when they think they are settled. He does but blow upon them, and then they shall wither, and come to nothing, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. For God's wrath, though it seem at first to blow slightly upon them, will soon become a mighty whirlwind. When God judges he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

2. He appeals to what their eyes saw of him (Isa 40:26): "Lift up your eyes on high; be not always poring on this earth" (O curvæ in terras animæ et cœlestium inanes!--Degenerate minds, that can bend so towards the earth, having nothing celestial in them!), "but sometimes look up" (Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri jussit--Heaven gave to man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the stars); "behold the glorious lights of heaven, consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves; doubtless, therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power, and motion." What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters, when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immerged in sense, looked no further, but worshipped them, De 4:19,Job 31:26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them--He brings out their host by number, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he has of them--He calls them all by names, proper names, according as their place and influence are (Ps 147:4); and of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so

obsequious are they that, by the greatness of his might, not one of them fails, but, as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera, every one does that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with God, which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them as well as an affront to him.

19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith
spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.
20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree
that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare
a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.
21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you
from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations
of the earth?
22 *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants
thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a
curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:
23 that bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the
earth as vanity.
24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea,
their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow
upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take
them away as stubble.
25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the
Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*,
that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names
by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one
faileth.
27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid
from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

Here, the prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their affliction (Isa 40:27): "Why sayest thou, O Jacob! to thyself and to those about thee, My way is hidden from the Lord? Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions

concerning thyself and thy present case as if the latter were desperate?"

1 The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts: O Jacob! O Israel! Let them remember whence they took these names--from one who had found God faithful to him and kind in all his straits; and why they bore these names--as God's professing people, a people in covenant with him.

2 The way of reproving them is by reasoning with them: "Why? Consider whether thou hast any ground to say so." Many of our foolish frets and foolish fears would vanish before a strict enquiry into the causes of them.

3. That which they are reproved for is an ill-natured, ill-favoured, word they spoke of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it: Why sayest thou and speakest thou? It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an imprimatur--a sanction to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, when he was in distress.

4. The ill word they said was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude,

(1.) That God would not heed them: "My way is hidden from the Lord; he takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself any more in our concernments. There are such difficulties in our case that even divine wisdom and power will be nonplussed." A man whose way is hidden is one whom God has hedged in, Job 3:23.

(2.) That God could not help them: "My judgment is passed over from my God; my case is past relief, so far past it that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it. Our bones are dried." Eze 37:11.

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding.
29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

He reminds them of that which, if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all those fears and distrust. For their conviction, as before for the conviction of idolaters (Isa 40:21), he appeals to what they had known and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been, and their knowledge came by hearing; for Wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things, they had heard that God had spoken once, twice, yea, many a time they had heard it, That power belongs unto God (Ps 62:11), That is,

1. He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is the everlasting God, even Jehovah. He was from eternity; he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He has his being of himself, and therefore all his perfections must needs be boundless. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also the Creator of the ends of the earth, that is, of the whole earth and all that is in it from end to end. He therefore is the rightful owner and ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their greatest straits. Doubtless he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world.

(1.) He has wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss: There is no searching of his understanding, so as to countermine the counsels of it and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he has ways by himself, ways in the sea. None can say, "Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no further;" for, when we know not what to do, he knows.

(2.) He has power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted: He faints not, nor is weary; he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore, no doubt, he has power to relieve his church, when it is brought ever so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He gives strength and power to his people, and helps them by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God is the strength of Israel.

(1.) He can help the weak, Isa 40:29. Many a time he gives power to the faint, to those that are ready to faint away; and to those that have no might he not only gives, but increases strength, as there is more and more occasion for it. Many out of bodily weakness are wonderfully recovered, and made strong, by the providence of God: and many that are feeble in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unfit for services and sufferings, are yet strengthened by the grace of God with all might in the inward man. To those who are sensible of their weakness, and ready to acknowledge they have no might, God does in a special manner increase strength; for, when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord.

(2.) He will help the willing, will help those who, in a humble dependence upon him, help themselves, and will do well for those who do their best, Isa 40:30,31. Those who trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of it that they neither exert themselves to the utmost nor seek unto God for his grace, are the youth and the young men, who are strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they shall faint and be weary, yea, they shall utterly fail in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burdens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But those that wait on the Lord, who make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him and commit themselves to his guidance, shall find that God will not fail them.

[1.] They shall have grace sufficient for them: They shall renew their strength as their work is renewed, as there is new occasion; they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied, with fresh oil. God will be their arm every morning, Isa 33:2. If at any time they have been foiled and weakened they shall recover themselves, and so renew their strength. Heb. They shall change their strength, as their work is changed--doing work, suffering work; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day so shall the strength be.

[2.] They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, First, They shall soar upward, upward towards God: They shall mount up with wings like eagles, so strongly, so swiftly, so high and heaven-ward. In the strength of divine grace, their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections are the eagles' wings on which gracious souls mount up, Ps 25:1. Secondly, They shall press forward, forward towards heaven. They shall walk, they shall run, the way of God's commandments, cheerfully and with alacrity (they shall not be weary), constantly and with perseverance (they shall not faint); and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel therefore, in their greatest distresses, continue waiting upon God, and not despair of timely and effectual relief and succour from him.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah-41

God’s Assurance to Israel

1 Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew *their* strength: let them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

That particular instance of God's care for his people Israel in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

A general challenge to the worshippers and admirers of idols to make good their pretensions, in competition with God and opposition to him, Isa 41:1. Is is renewed (Isa 41:21): Produce your cause. The court is set, summonses are sent to the islands that lay most remote, but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the Creator and possessor of the ends of the earth, to make their appearance and give their attendance. Silence (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying: "Keep silence before me, and judge nothing before the time" ; while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan it becomes all people silently to expect the issue, not to object against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defenders of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it: "Let them renew their strength, in opposition to God, and see whether it be equal to the strength which those renew that wait upon him (Isa 40:31); let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms or force of argument. Let them come near; they shall not complain that God's dread makes them afraid (Job 13:21), so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, let them speak freely: Let us come near together to judgment."

Note.

1 The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion.

2 The enemies of God's church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unrighteous cause. He that sits in heaven laughs at them, and the daughter of Zion despises them; for great is the truth and will prevail.

2 Who raised up the righteous *man* from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made *him* rule over kings? he gave *them* as the dust to his sword, *and* as driven stubble to his bow.

3 He pursued them, *and* passed safely; *even* by the way *that* he had not gone with his feet.

He particularly challenges the idols to do that for their worshippers, and against his, which he had done and would do for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of Isa 41:2, concerning the righteous man raised up from the east; and, since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good.

1. That which is to be proved is,

(1.) That the Lord is God alone, the first and with the last (Isa 41:4), that he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity.

(2.) That Israel is his servant (Isa 41:8), whom he owns, and protects, and employs, and in whom he is and will be glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth that is his particular care. Elijah prays (1Ki 18:36), Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant. Now,

2. To prove this he shows,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham, the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour made his name great, Ge 12:2. He is the righteous man whom God raised up from the east. Of him the Chaldee paraphrast expressly understands it: Who brought Abraham publicly from the east? To maintain the honour of the people of Israel, it was very proper to show what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day; and Isa 41:8 seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel the seed of Abraham my friend; and (Isa 41:4) he calls the generations (namely, the generations of Israel) from the beginning.

Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry, it was proper to show how Abraham was called from serving other gods (Jos 24:2,3, &c.), so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to remind them how at first he brought their father Abraham out of the same country into this land, to give it to him for an inheritance, Ge 15:7. Now observe what is here said concerning him.

[1.] That he was a righteous man, or righteousness, a man of righteousness, that believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and so he became the father of all those who by faith in Christ are made the righteousness of God through him, Ro 4:3,11,2Co 5:21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and taught his household to do judgment and justice, Ge 18:19.

[2.] That God raised him up from the east, from Ur first and afterwards from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the

eagle by her young, when she stirs up her nest: he raised him out of iniquity and made him pious, out of obscurity and made him famous.

[3.] He called him to his foot, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he went out, not knowing whither he went, but whom he followed, Heb 11:8. Those whom God effectually calls he calls to his foot, to be subject to him, to attend him, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; and we must all either come to his foot or be made his footstool.

[4.] He gave nations before him, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of, and thus far gave him an interest in that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, Ge 23:6. He made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, Ge 14:1-24. And when God gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow (that is, made them an easy prey to his catechised servants), he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory that Melchizedec himself appeared to celebrate it. Now who did this but the great Jehovah? Can any of the gods of the heathen do so?

(2.) That it is he who will, ere long, raise up Cyrus from the east. It is spoken of according to the language of prophecy as a thing past, because as sure to be done in its season as if it were already done. God will raise him up in righteousness (so it may be read, Isa 45:13), will call him to his foot, make what use of him he pleases, and make him victorious over the nations that oppose his coming to the crown, and give him success in all his wars; and he shall be a type of Christ, who is righteousness itself, the Lord our righteousness, whom God will, in the fulness of time, raise up and make victorious over the powers of darkness; so that he shall spoil them and make a show of them openly.

4 Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I *am* he.
5 The isles saw *it*, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

He exposes the folly of idolaters, who, notwithstanding the convincing proofs which the God of Israel had given of his being God alone, obstinately persisted in their idolatry, nay, were so much the more hardened in it (Isa 41:5): The isles of the Gentiles saw this, not only what God did for Abraham himself, but what he did for his seed, for his sake, how he brought them out of Egypt, and made them rule over kings, and they feared, Ex 15:14-16. They were afraid, and, according to the summons (Isa 41:1), they drew near, and came; they could not avoid taking notice of what God did for Abraham and his seed; but, instead of helping to reason one another out of their sottish idolatries, they helped to confirm one another in them, Isa 41:6,7.

1. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon their religion, which they were jealous for the honour of, and were resolved, right or wrong, to adhere to, and therefore were alarmed to appear vigorously for the support of it, as the Ephesians for their Diana. When God, by his wonderful appearances on the behalf of his people, went about to wrest their idols from them, they held them so much the faster, and said one to another, "Be of good courage; let us unanimously agree to keep up the reputation of our gods. Though Dagon fall before the ark, he shall be set up again in his place." One tradesman encourages another to come into a confederacy for the keeping up of the noble craft of god-making. Thus men's convictions often exasperate their corruptions, and they are made worse both by the word and the works of God, which should make them better.

2. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon themselves. They thought themselves in danger from the growing greatness both of Abraham that was a convert from idolatry, and of the people of Israel that were separatists from it; and therefore they not only had recourse to their old gods for protection, but made

new ones, De 32:17. So the carpenter, having done his part to the timberwork, encouraged the goldsmith to do his part in gilding or overlaying it; and, when it came into the goldsmith's hand, he that smooths with the hammer that polishes it, or beats it thin, quickened him that smote the anvil, bade him be expeditious, and told him it was ready for the soldering, which perhaps was the last operation about it, and then it is fastened with nails, and you have a god of it presently. Do sinners thus animate and quicken one another in the ways of sin? And shall not the servants of the living God both stir up one another to, and strengthen one another in, his service? Some read all this ironically, and by way of permission: Let them help every one his neighbour; let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith; but all in vain; idols shall fall for all this.

6 They helped every one his neighbor; and *every one* said to his brother, Be of good courage.

7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, *and* he that smootheth *with* the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It *is* ready for the soldering: and he fastened it with nails, *that* it should not be moved.

8 But thou, Israel, *art* my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

He encourages his own people to trust in him (Isa 41:8,9): "But thou, Israel, art my servant. They know me not, but thou knowest me, and knowest better than to join with such ignorant besotted people as these" (for it is intended for a warning to the people of God not to walk in the way of the heathen); "they put themselves under the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection. Those that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them; but thou, O Israel! art the servant of a better Master." Observe what is suggested here for the encouragement of God's people when they are threatened and insulted over.

1. They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service: Thou art my servant (Isa 41:8), and (Isa 41:9) "I have said unto thee, Thou art my servant; and I will not go back from my word."

2. He has chosen them to be a peculiar people to himself. They were not forced upon him, but of his own good-will he set them apart.

3. They were the seed of Abraham his friend. It was the honour of Abraham that he was called the friend of God (Jam 2:23), whom God covenanted and conversed with as a friend, and the man of his counsel; and this honour have all the saints, Joh 15:15. And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them; for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed.

4. He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen, fetched them from the ends of the earth and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins; and those who had been thus far-fetched and dear-bought he could not easily part with. 5. He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has further engaged to do, should encourage them to trust in him at all times.

9 *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee
from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou *art* my
servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.
10 Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God:
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee
with the right hand of my righteousness.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears, and encourage the faith, of the servants of God in their distresses. Perhaps it is intended, in the first place, for the support of God's Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God through patience and comfort of this scripture may have hope. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to

himself. That is a word of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, Fear thou not; and again (Isa 41:13), Fear not; and (Isa 41:14), "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promise of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thy affliction or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail." It is against the mind of God that his people should be a timorous people. For the suppressing of fear he assures them,

I. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel, and how desirous to make them easy: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those that are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will help thee in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments," Ps 48:10. And again (Isa 41:13) it is promised,

1. That God will strengthen their hands, that is, will help them: "I will hold thy right hand, go hand in hand with thee" (so some): he will take us by the hand as our guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen or prevent our falls; when we are weak he will hold us up-wavering, he will fix us-trembling, he will encourage us, and so hold us by the right hand, Ps 73:23.

2. That he will silence their fears: Saying unto thee, Fear not. He has said it again and again in his word, and has there provided sovereign antidotes against fear: but he will go further; he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

II. That though their enemies be now very formidable, insolent, and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, that strive with them (Isa 41:11), that war against them (Isa 41:12), that hate them, that seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them. But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor render evil for evil; but wait God's time, and believe,

1. That they shall be convinced of the folly, at least, if not of the sin of striving with God's people; and, finding it to no purpose, they shall be ashamed and confounded, which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage.

2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone (Isa 41:11): They shall be as nothing before the justice and power of God. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies he makes nothing of them. Or they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had never been. This is repeated (Isa 41:12): They shall be as nothing and as a thing of nought, or as that which is gone and has failed. Those that were formidable shall become despicable; those that fancied they could do any thing shall be able to bring nothing to pass; those that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers and be buried in silence. They shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable: Thou shalt seek them, shalt enquire what has become of them, that they do not appear as usual, but thou shalt not find them as David, Ps 37:36. I sought him, but he could not be found.

11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

13 For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and victory should turn on their side, Isa 41:14-16. See here,

1. How Jacob and Israel are reduced and brought very low. It is the worm Jacob, so little, so weak, and so defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob has become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself a worm and no man, Ps 22:6. God's people are sometimes as worms, in their humble thoughts of themselves and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them--worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are, not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and says, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not that thou shalt be crushed; and you men of Israel" (you few men, so some read it, you dead men, so others) "do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding." Note, The grace of God will silence fears even when there seems to be the greatest cause for them. Perplexed but not in despair.

2. How Jacob and Israel are advanced from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they have been despicable. But by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? We are here told: I will help thee, saith the Lord; and it is the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, who is wont to redeem them, who has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found. He will help them, for he is the Holy One of Israel, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them by enabling them to help themselves and making Jacob to become a threshing instrument. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making and is no more than God makes him.

But, if God make him a threshing instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, new and sharp, and having teeth, or sharp spikes; and then, by divine direction and strength, thou shalt thresh the mountains, the highest, and strongest, and most stubborn of thy enemies: thou shalt not only be at them, but beat them small; they shall not be a corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved (such God's people are when they are under the flail, Isa 21:10: O my threshing! yet the corn of my floor, that shall not be lost); but these are made as chaff, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of.

He pursues the metaphor, Isa 41:16. Having threshed them, thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them. This perhaps had its accomplishment, in part, in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all the implacable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment like wise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and he that overcomes shall have power over the nations, Re 2:26.

15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat *them* small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

That, hereupon, they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and God shall have abundance of honour from them: Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, Isa 41:16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and are blessed with that which is the matter of it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding joy and in him all our joys must terminate. When we rejoice over our enemies we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone

we owe our liberties and victories. "Thou shalt also glory in the Holy One of Israel, in thy interest in him and relation to him, and what he has done for thee." And, if thus we make God our praise and glory, we become to him for a praise and a glory.

17 *When* the poor and needy seek water, and *there is* none, *and* their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, *I* the God of Israel will not forsake them.

That they shall have seasonable and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and, if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, Isa 41:17-19. When the captives, either in Babylon or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and, one way or other, make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But doubtless this promise has more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises,

1. Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who hear this joyful sound that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers.

2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers, that they may have strong consolation in their way and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world. Now,

(1.) It is here supposed that the people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits: The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness. The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere, but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that has nothing in it to make

it easy: creatures are broken cisterns, that can hold no water; so that their tongue fails for thirst, they are weary of seeking that satisfaction in the world which is not to be had in it. Their sorrow makes them thirsty; so does their toil.

(2.) It is here promised that, one way or other, all their grievances shall be redressed and they shall be made easy.

[1.] God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he has said, "I the Lord will hear them, will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them; I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses." While we are in the wilderness of this world this promise is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence.

[2.] They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even where one would least expect it (Isa 41:18): I will open rivers in high places, rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, rivers of living water, which he spoke of the Spirit (Joh 7:38,39), that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up on their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be fountains in the midst of the valleys, the valleys of Baca (Ps 84:6), that are sandy and wearisome; or among the Jews, who had been as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water, yielding fruit to the owner of it and relief to the travellers through it.

[3.] They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees (Ex 15:27): "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, Isa 41:19. I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass

through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat." Christ and his grace are so to believers, as the shadow of a great rock, Isa 32:2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters as if thorns and briers were turned into cedars, and fir-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, Isa 55:13.

[4.] They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour, in this, Isa 41:20. God will do these strange and surprising things on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all: That they may see this wonderful change, and knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power, and, comparing notes upon it, may understand together, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, that the hand of the Lord, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people and stretched out to them, has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God does great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the
valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land
springs of water.
19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the
myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, *and* the
pine, and the box tree together:
20 that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand
together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy
One of Israel hath created it.

The Lord's Challenge to False Gods

21 Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong
reasons, saith the King of Jacob.

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters to make out the pretentions of their idols: "Produce your cause (Isa 41:21) and make your best of it; bring forth the strongest reasons you have to prove that your idols are gods, and worthy of your adoration." Note, There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

I The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do. Understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man. Whoever pretends to be a god must have these in perfection; and have the idols made it to appear that they have? No;

1. "They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us,"

(1.) "What has been formerly: Let them show the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried" (God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts); or "let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of it; and if, in the issue, it prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it."

(2.) "We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us things to come (Isa 41:22), and again (Isa 41:23), show the things that are to come hereafter. Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hidden from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion. Make it to appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you deign to do. Do this kindness to the world; let them know what is to come,

that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adoration." No creature can foretel things to come, otherwise than by divine information, with any certainty.

2. "They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they." He challenges them to do either good or evil, good to their friends or evil to their enemies: "Let them do, if they can, any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse, with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues such as God brought on Egypt or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God." That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is that they are of nothing, Isa 41:24.

Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason in the least for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. "They are less than nothing, worse than nothing;" so some read it. "The work they do is of nought, and so is the ado that is made about them. There is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest; it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore he that chooses you, and so give you your deity, and" (as some read it) "that delights in you, is an abomination;" so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his God. He that chooses any other than the true God chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

II. God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and that there is none besides him. Let him produce his strong reasons.

1. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus and making him a type of Christ (Isa 41:25): He will raise him up from the north and from the

rising of the sun. Cyrus by his father was a Mede, by his mother a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon with ends of his own to serve. But,

(1.) He shall proclaim God's name; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and the God: and he might be said to call on his name when he encouraged the building of his temple, and very probably did himself call upon him and pray to him, Ezr 1:2,3.

(2.) All opposition shall fall before him: He shall come upon the princes of Babylon, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them as the potter treads clay, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ, as man, was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven (he shall call upon my name), and broke the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar and trod him down.

2. He has an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now, by his prophet, foretel it. Now the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it.

(1.) He challenges them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could (Isa 41:26): "Who has declared from the beginning any thing of this kind, or has told it before-time? Tell us if there be any that you know of, for we know not any; if there be any, we will say, He is righteous, he is true, his cause is just, his claims are proved, and he is in the right in demanding to be worshipped." This agrees with Isa 41:22,23.

(2.) He challenges to himself the sole honour of doing it and foretelling it (Isa 41:27): I am the first (so it may be read) that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them, that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand (for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, Da 9:2), and I am he that will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon: he it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

22 Let them bring *them* forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they *be,* that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together.

Judgment is here given upon this trial.

1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations besides the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or at least were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy and there transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had any intelligence given them of it beforehand, by any of their gods or prophets: "There is none that shows (Isa 41:26), none that declares, none that gives the least intimation of it; there is none of the nations that hears your words, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O Israelites! have heard from your God, by your prophets," Ps 147:20. None of all the gods of the nations have shown their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel is a mystery hidden from ages and generations, Ro 16:25,26.

2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any instance of their knowledge or power that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods. All their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge (Isa 41:28): "I beheld, and there was no man that could give evidence for them, even among those that were their most zealous admirers; and there was no counsellor, none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there was none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves they stood mute; the case was so plain against them that there was none who could answer a word." Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon Nihil dicit--He is mute. He has nothing to say for himself. He was speechless, Mt 22:12.

3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them (Isa 41:24): "Behold, they are all vanity (Isa 41:29); they are a lie and a cheat; they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. Their works are nothing, of no force, of no worth; their enemies need fear no hurt from them; their worshippers can hope for no good from them. Their molten images, and indeed all their images, are wind and confusion, vanity and vexation; those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness.The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters to make out the pretentions of their idols: "Produce your cause (Isa 41:21) and make your best of it; bring forth the strongest reasons you have to prove that your idols are gods, and worthy of your adoration." Note, There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do. Understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man. Whoever pretends to be a god must have these in perfection; and have the idols made it to appear that they have? No;

1. "They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us,"

(1.) "What has been formerly: Let them show the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried" (God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts); or "let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of it; and if, in the issue, it prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it."

(2.) "We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare to us things to come (Isa 41:22), and again (Isa 41:23), show the things that are to come hereafter. Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hidden from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion. Make it to appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you deign to do. Do this kindness to the world; let them know what is to come, that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adoration." No creature can foretel things to come, otherwise than by divine information, with any certainty.

2. "They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they." He challenges them to do either good or evil, good to their friends or evil to their enemies: "Let them do,

if they can, any thing extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse, with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues such as God brought on Egypt or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God." That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is that they are of nothing, Isa 41:24.

Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason in the least for men's paying them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. "They are less than nothing, worse than nothing;" so some read it. "The work they do is of nought, and so is the ado that is made about them. There is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest; it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore he that chooses you, and so give you your deity, and" (as some read it) "that delights in you, is an abomination;" so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his God. He that chooses any other than the true God chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.

24 Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that* chooseth you.

25 I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as *upon* mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and that there is none besides him. Let him produce his strong reasons.

1. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus and making him a type of Christ (Isa 41:25): He will raise him up from the north and from the rising of the sun. Cyrus by his father was a Mede, by his mother a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from

Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon with ends of his own to serve. But,

(1.) He shall proclaim God's name; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and the God: and he might be said to call on his name when he encouraged the building of his temple, and very probably did himself call upon him and pray to him, Ezr 1:2,3.

(2.) All opposition shall fall before him: He shall come upon the princes of Babylon, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them as the potter treads clay, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ, as man, was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven (he shall call upon my name), and broke the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar and trod him down.

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will say to Zion, Behold, behold them, that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand (for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, Da 9:2), and I am he that will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon: he it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, *He is* righteous? yea, *there is* none that showeth, yea, *there is* none that declareth, yea, *there is* none that heareth your words.

Judgment is here given upon this trial.

1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations besides the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus, or at least were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy and there transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had any intelligence given them of it beforehand, by any of their gods or prophets: "There is none that shows (Isa 41:26), none that declares, none that gives the least intimation of it; there is none of the nations that hears your words, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O Israelites! have heard from your God, by your prophets," Ps 147:20. None of all the gods of the nations have shown their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel is a mystery hidden from ages and generations, Ro 16:25,26.

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that were their most zealous admirers; and there was no counsellor, none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there was none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves they stood mute; the case was so plain against them that there was none who could answer a word." Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon Nihil dicit--He is mute. He has nothing to say for himself. He was speechless, Mt 22:12.

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27 The first *shall say* to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to
Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.
28 For I beheld, and *there was* no man; even among them, and *there*
was no counselor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.
29 Behold, they *are* all vanity; their works *are* nothing: their molten
images *are* wind and confusion.

Isaiah-42

The Lord's Servant

1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, Mt 12:17-21. Behold with an eye of faith, behold and observe, behold and admire, my servant, whom I uphold. Let the Old-Testament saints behold and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him?

I The Father's concern for him and relation to him, the confidence he put and the complacency he took in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable, above any other circumstance, Isa 42:1.

1. God owns him as one employed for him: He is my servant. Though he was a Son, yet, as a Mediator, he took upon him the form of a servant, learned obedience to the will of God and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant.

2. As one chosen by him: He is my elect. He did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice and then avowed it.

3. As one he put a confidence in: He is my servant on whom I lean; so some read it. The Father put a confidence in him that he would go through with his undertaking, and, in that confidence, brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be par negotio--equal to it, both able and faithful.

4. As one he took care of: He is my servant whom I uphold; so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out, in his upholding him; he stood by him and strengthened him. 5. As one whom he took an entire complacency in: My elect, in whom my soul delights. His delight was in him from eternity, when he was by him as one brought up with him, Pr 8:30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking: he declared himself well pleased in him (Mt 3:17,17:5), and therefore loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then, for his sake, the Father will be well pleased with us.

II The qualification of him for his office: I have put my Spirit upon him, to enable him to go through his undertaking, Isa 61:1 The Spirit did not only come, but rest, upon him (Isa 11:2), not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. Those whom God employs as his servants; as he will uphold them and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

III. The work to which he is appointed; it is to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religion in the world under the bonds of which the Gentiles should come and the blessings of which they should enjoy. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hidden from the Gentiles (Ps 147:20), he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a light to lighten them.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, Isa 42:2,3. He shall carry it on,

1. In silence, and without noise: He shall not strive nor cry. It shall not be proclaimed, Lo, here, is Christ or Lo, he is there; as when great princes ride in progress or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with he shall not strive against, but patiently endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. His kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor is its appearance pompous; it comes not with observation.

2. Gently, and without rigour. Those that are wicked he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will give them space to repent and not immediately break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax (Isa 65:5), yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little heat, that are weak as a reed, oppressed with doubts and fears, as a bruised reed, that are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work or more suffering than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed. He will not break the bruised reed, but will strengthen it, that it may become a cedar in the courts of our God. He will not quench the smoking flax, but blow it up into a flame.

Note, Jesus Christ is very tender toward those that have true grace, though they are but weak in it, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pardoning and passing by the weakness of the flesh.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last (Isa 42:4): He shall not fail nor be discouraged. Though he meets with hard

service and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, Is is finished; and he enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs too, and not to fail nor be discouraged, till they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplishes what he undertook.

1. He brings forth judgment unto truth. By a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine and the divine origin and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish.

2. He sets judgment in the earth. He erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men, reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixes such principles in the minds of men as tend to make them wise and just.

3. The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law, wait for his gospel, that is, bid it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. What wilt thou have us to do?

5 Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

Here is I The covenant God made with and the commission he gave to the Messiah, Isa 42:5-7, which are an exposition of Isa 42:1, Behold my servant, whom I uphold.

1 The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguishes himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory (Isa 42:5): Thus saith God the Lord. And who are thou, Lord? Why, he is the fountain of all being and therefore the fountain of all power. He is the fountain of being,

1. In the upper world; for he created the heavens and stretched them out (Isa 40:22), and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch.

2. In the lower world: for he spread forth the earth, and made it a capacious habitation, and that which comes out of it is produced by his power.

3. In the world of mankind: He gives breath to the people upon it, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives spirit, the powers and faculties of a rational soul, to those that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to show that he has authority to make such a covenant and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out, but that the design of the work of redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to restore man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2 The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking speak much encouragement to him, Isa 42:6.

(1.) God owns that the Messiah did not take the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God, that he was no intruder, no usurper, but was fairly brought to it (Heb 5:4): I have called thee in righteousness. God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it, but did himself right in providing for his own honour and performing the word which he had spoken.

(2.) He promises to stand by him and strengthen him in it, to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it, to hold his hand, that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise

was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men. He was given for a covenant of the people, for a mediator, or guarantee, of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, has with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings Christ, in his gospel, brings with him to the Gentile world--light and liberty.

(1.) He is given for a light to the Gentiles, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known, but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it. By his Spirit in the word he presents the object; by his Spirit in the heart he prepared the organ. When the gospel came light came, a great light, to those that sat in darkness, Mt 4:16,Joh 3:19. And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles to open their eyes, Ac 26:18. Christ is the light of the world.

(2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did, to bring out the prisoners; not only to open the prison-doors, and give them leave to go out, which was all that Cyrus could do, but to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ does by his grace.

II The ratification and confirmation of this grant. That we may be assured of the validity of it consider,

1 The authority of him that makes the promise (Isa 42:8): I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name, and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas, before, he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, Ex 6:3. If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name be Jehovah, which speaks him

God alone, we may be sure his name is jealous, and he will not give his glory to another, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to graven images. He will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God, because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his prerogative, and will not give his glory to graven images. He will perform his word because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. He will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images.

2 The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word and the kindness he bears to his people (Isa 42:9): "Behold, the former things have come to pass; hitherto the Lord has helped his church, has supported her under former burdens, relieved her in former straits; and this in performance of the promises made to the fathers. There has not failed one word, 1Ki 8:56. And now new things do I declare. Now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old-Testament blessings you have had abundantly; now I declare New-Testament blessings, not a fruitful country and dominion over your neighbours, but spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Before they spring forth in the preaching of the gospel I tell you of them, under the type and figure of the former things." Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for further mercies; for God is constant in his care for his people, and his compassions are still new.

6 I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine
hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the
people, for a light of the Gentiles;
7 to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison,
and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

8 I *am* the Lord; that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.
9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Praise for the Lord's Mighty Deliverance

10 Sing unto the Lord a new song, *and* his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon to the glory of God (Isa 42:10): Sing unto the Lord a new song, a New-Testament song. The giving of Christ for a light to the Gentiles (Isa 42:6) was a new thing, and very surprising. The apostle speaks of it as a mystery which, in other ages, was not made known, as it is now revealed, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph 3:5,6. Now, this being the new thing which God declares, the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this, that whereas, before, the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them in their own country only; for, when they were in a strange land, they hung their harps on the willow-trees and could not sing the Lord's song, as we find, Ps 137:2-4), now the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the world over.

The Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New-Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New-Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, Ro 15:9-11. It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness,

1. By those that live in the end of the earth, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem. From the uttermost parts of the

earth have we heard songs, Isa 24:16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was planted in our land.

2. By mariners and merchants, and those that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, Ps 24:1,95:5. The Jews traded little at sea; if therefore God's praises be sung by those that go down to the sea, it must be by Gentiles. Sea-faring men are called upon to praise God, Ps 107:23.

3. By the islands and the inhabitants thereof, Isa 42:10, and again, Isa 42:12. Let them declare his praise in the islands, the isles of the Gentiles, probably referring to the islands of Greece.

4. By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness, uncultivated and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God.

5. By the inhabitants of the rock, and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains, not only the Gentiles, but the poorest and meanest and most despicable, those that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called Petræa--the rocky. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon and some of them came and joined with them in their praises; but we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches further,

and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New-Testament to be fulfilled in, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. When they are brought into the church they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a name and a praise, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them and by them.

11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice,* the villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12 Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands.

13 The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

It comes all to one whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical new song.

I. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever. So he did in the preaching of his gospel, in the divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success it had in the pulling down of Satan's stronghold, Isa 42:13,14. He had long held his peace, and been still, and refrained himself, while he winked at the times of the ignorance of the Gentile world (Ac 17:30), and suffered all nations to walk in their own ways (Ac 14:16); but now he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war, to attack the devil's kingdom and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, Re 6:2. Christ, in it, went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their warfare; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He shall stir up jealousy, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name and against idolatry.

1. He shall cry, in the preaching of his word, cry like a travailing woman; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travailed in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, Ga 4:19. He shall cry, yea, roar, in the gospel woes, which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel blessings to awaken a sleeping world.

2. He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit: He shall prevail against his enemies, shall prevail to make them friends, Col 1:21. Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of darkness. Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven, and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. As a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power, of their oppressors, and will at once destroy and devour the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian army under the command of Cyrus, he will make waste mountains and hills, level the country, and dry up all their herbs. The army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it, and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the pools shall be dried up. Thus, when the gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

II. He will manifest his favour and grace towards those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him, as Ezr 1:5. Those who ask the way to Zion he will show the way, and lead in it, Isa 42:16. Those who by nature were blind, and those who, being under convictions of sin and wrath are quite at a loss and know not what to do with themselves, God will lead by a way that they knew not, will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the way, and will conduct and carry them

on in that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus, in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will make darkness light before them, and knowledge shall be easy to them.

They are weak in duty, the commands of God seem impracticable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make crooked things straight; their way shall be plain, and the yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way he will guide in it. As a type of this, he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or embarrass them in their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, "They are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles," he adds, These things will I do unto them, take my word for it I will, and I will not forsake them; he that begins to show this great mercy will go on to do them good.

III. He will particularly put those to confusion who adhere to idols notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols (Isa 42:17): They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images. The Babylonians shall when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images, and the Gentiles when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat. They shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, You are our gods; for how can those help their worshippers who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes

unfashionable, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, *and* refrained myself: *now* will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.

15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

16 And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye *are* our gods.

Israel's Failure to Profit from Discipline

18 Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

The prophet, having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns to those among them who were unbelieving, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those who were in captivity in Babylon there were some who were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither for their hurt, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb, Jer 24:9. In them there was a type of the Jews who rejected Christ and were rejected by him, and then fell more than ever under the curse, when those who believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken, and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

I The call that is given to this people (Isa 42:18): "Hear, you deaf, and attend to the joyful sound, and look you blind, that you may see the joyful light." There is no absurdity in this command, nor is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for; for those have natural powers which they may

employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the deaf to hear and the blind to see is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth; though he could not do this, because it was withered, yet, if he had not attempted to do it, he would not have been healed, and his being healed thereupon was owing, not to his act, but to the divine power.

II The character that is given of them (Isa 42:19,20): Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf as my messenger? The people of the Jews were in profession God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers (Mal 2:7); but they were deaf and blind. The Isa 42:18 may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls deaf and blind, because they worshipped gods that were so. "But," says he, "no wonder you are deaf and blind when my own people are as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry."

1. He complains of their sottishness--they are blind; and of their stubbornness--they are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves. Corruptio optimi est pessima--What is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst. "Who is so wilfully, so scandalously, blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger, as Jacob who is my servant (Isa 41:8), and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers? Who is blind as he that in profession and pretension is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as those that will not see when they have the light shining in their faces?" Note,

(1.) It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that in profession are God's servants and messengers to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things, ignorant, erroneous, and very careless.

(2.) Blindness and deafness in spiritual things are worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

2 The prophet goes on (Isa 42:20) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time (Mt 13:14,15): Seeing many things, but thou observest not. Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish, not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews in our Saviour's time saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, that is, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe, or obey, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

19 Who *is* blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger *that* I sent?
who *is* blind as *he that is* perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?
20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but
he heareth not.
21 The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will
magnify the law, and make *it* honorable.

The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of no effect? God forbid, Ro 3:3,4. No, though they are blind and deaf, God will be no loser in his glory (Isa 42:21): The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased, Isa 1:24: Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries; and Eze 5:13, I will be comforted.

The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off of the Jews as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased. He will magnify the law (divine revelation in all

the parts of it) and will make it honourable. The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things; and, if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its equity. He will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty, Jam 2:12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law and making it honourable?

22 But this *is* a people robbed and spoiled; *they are* all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.

The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, Isa 42:22. They are robbed and spoiled. Those that were impenitent and unreformed in Babylon were sentenced to perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were spoiled of all their possessions, not only in their own land, but in the land of their enemies. They were some of them snared in holes, and others hidden in prison-houses. They cannot help themselves, for they are snared. Their friends cannot help them, for they are hidden; and their enemies have forgotten them in their prisons. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivers either by force or ransom, nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, Restore. There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the gospel of Christ.

23 Who among you will give ear to this? *who* will hearken and hear for the time to come?

The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not desperate.

1 The generality of them are deaf; they will not hearken to the voice of God's word. He will therefore try his rod, and see who among them will give ear to that, Isa 42:23. We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoned with in vain;

some of them may, at length, give ear and hearken. If one method not take effect, another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusable. Observe,

(1.) We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and we are called and invited to hear it.

(2.) It is worth while to enquire who they are that perceive God speaking to them and are willing to hear him.

(3.) Of the many that hear the voice of God there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention and application.

(4.) In hearing the word we must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur between us and the grave; we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye.

2 The counsel is,

(1.) To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and, whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to him as the principal agent (Isa 42:24): "Who gave Jacob and Israel, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians and to the Romans? Did not the Lord? You know he did; consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments."

(2.) To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to abandon them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves.

[1.] These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God: It is he against whom we have

sinned; the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, As Da 9:7,8. "We have sinned; we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully refused to walk in his ways." Jacob and Israel would never have been given up to the robbers if they had not by their iniquities sold themselves. Therefore it is, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he has not dropped, but poured upon him the fury of his anger and the strength of battle, all the desolations of war, which have set him on fire round about; for God surrounds the wicked with his favours. See the power of God's anger; there is no resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that sin makes; it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles a universal conflagration, sets all on fire.

[2.] These judgments were continued upon them for their senselessness and incorrigibleness under the rod of God. The fire of God's wrath kindled upon him, and he knew it not, was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, it burned him, and, though he could not then but know it and feel it, yet he laid it not to heart, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under nor at all affected with them. Those who are not humbled by less judgments must expect greater; for when God judges he will overcome.

24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the
Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk
in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the
strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he
knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid *it* not to heart.

Isaiah-43

The Lord the Only Redeemer

1 But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.

This chapter has a plain connexion with the close of the foregoing chapter, but a very surprising one. It was there said that Jacob and Israel would not walk in God's ways, and that when he corrected them for their disobedience they were stubborn and laid it not to heart; and now one would think it should have followed that God would utterly abandon and destroy them; but no, the next words are, But now, fear not, O Jacob! O Israel! I have redeemed thee, and thou art mine.

Though many among them were untractable and incorrigible, yet God would continue his love and care for his people, and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Ro 5:20), and mercy rejoices against judgment, as having prevailed and carried the day, Jam 2:13. Now the sun, breaking out thus of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud, shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise. The expressions of God's favour and good-will to his people here are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel; for to us is this gospel preached as well as unto those that were captives in Babylon, Heb 4:2. Here we have,

I The grounds of God's care and concern for his people and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful miserable condition, shall be looked after; for,

1. They are God's workmanship, created by him unto good works, Eph 2:10. He has created them and formed them, not only given them a being, but this being, formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands.

2. They are the people of his purchase: he has redeemed them. Out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many another bondage, in his love, and in his pity (Isa 63:9); much more will he take care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son.

3. They are his peculiar people, whom he has distinguished from others, and set apart for himself: he has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with and concern for, and they are his, are appropriated to him and he has a special interest in them.

4. He is their God in covenant (Isa 43:3): I am the Lord thy God, worshipped by thee and engaged by promise to thee, the Holy One of Israel, the God of Israel; for the true God is a holy one, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, Fear not (Isa 43:1), and again Isa 43:5, Fear not. Those that have God for them need not fear who or what can be against them.

II The former instances of this care.

1. God has purchased them dearly: I gave Egypt for thy ransom; for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their first-born were slain and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed rather than Israel shall continue in slavery, when the time has come for their release. The Ethiopians had

invaded them in Asa's time; but they shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give Egypt for their ransom, what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a ransom for us! 1Jo 4:10. What are Ethiopia and Seba, all their lives and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ?

2. He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him (Isa 43:4): Since thou hast been precious in my sight thou hast been honourable. Note, True believers are precious in God's sight; they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure (Ex 19:5); he loves them, his delight is in them, above any people. His church is his vineyard. And this makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great; for men are really what they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by Providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave those countries for Israel, and showed how precious his people were in his sight. So so me understand it.

2 When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

3 For I *am* the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

The further instances God would yet give them of his care and kindness.

1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers (Isa 43:2): "When thou passest through the waters and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, I will be with thee, and that shall be thy security; when dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them." Did they, in their journey, pass through deep water? They should not perish in them: "The rivers shall not overflow thee." Should they by their persecutors be cast into a fiery furnace, for their constant adherence to their God, yet then the flame should not

kindle upon them, which was fulfilled in the letter in the wonderful preservation of the three children, Da 3:1-30 Though they went through fire and water, which would be to them as the valley of the shadow of death, yet, while they had God with them, they need fear no evil, they should be borne up, and brought out into a wealthy place, Ps 66:12.

2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interests of the children of men give way to the interests of his own children: "I will give men for thee, great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people (men by wholesale) for thy life. Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare." All shall be cut off rather than God's Israel shall, so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, 2Ch 16:9.

3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations should all be gathered in and share in the blessings of the public, Isa 43:5-7. Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north, and south, or into all the parts of the country of Babylon; but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem should be fetched in from all parts; divine grace should reach those that lay most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other; and, when the time should come, nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body, in answer to that prayer (Ps 106:47), Gather us from among the heathen, and in performance of that promise (De 30:4), If any of thine be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, which we find pleaded on behalf of the children of the captivity, Ne 1:9. But who are the seed of Israel that shall be thus carefully gathered in? He tells us (Isa 43:7) they are such as God has marked for mercy; for,

(1.) They are called by his name; they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant-relation to God and denomination from him.

(2.) They are created for his glory; the spirit of Israelites is created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God, and these shall be gathered in. Note, Those only are fit to be called by the name of God that are created by his grace for his glory; and those whom God has created and called shall be gathered in now to Christ as their head and hereafter to heaven as their home. He shall gather in his elect from the four winds. This promise points at the gathering in of the dispersed of the Gentiles, and the strangers scattered, by the gospel of Christ, who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad; for the promise was to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not fear; none that belong to her shall be lost.

4 Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable,
and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and
people for thy life.
5 Fear not; for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and
gather thee from the west:
6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back:
bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the
earth;
7 *even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for
my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.
8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that
have ears.

God here challenges the worshippers of idols to produce such proofs of the divinity of their false gods as even this very instance (to go no further) of the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon furnished the people of Israel with, to prove that their God is the true and living God, and he only.

The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear, and say what they have to say in defence of their idols, Isa 43:8,9. Their gods have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, and those that make them and trust in them are like unto them; so David had said (Ps

115:8), to which the prophet seems here to refer when he calls idolaters blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. They have the shape, capacities, and faculties, of men; but they are, in effect, destitute of reason and common sense, or they would never worship gods of their own making. "Let all the nations therefore be gathered together, let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods; and, if they have nothing to say in their own justification, let them hear what the God of Israel has to say for their conviction and confutation."

9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is* truth.

10 Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

God's witnesses are subpoenaed, or summoned to appear, and give in evidence for him (Isa 43:10): "You, O Israelites! all you that are called by my name, you are all my witnesses, and so is my servant whom I have chosen." It was Christ himself that was so described (Isa 42:1), My servant and my elect. Observe,

1. All the prophets that testified to Christ, and Christ himself, the great prophet, are here appealed to as God's witnesses.

(1.) God's people are witnesses for him, and can attest, upon their own knowledge and experience, concerning the power of his grace, the sweetness of his comforts, the tenderness of his providence, and the truth of his promise. They will be forward to witness for him that he is gracious and that no word of his has fallen to the ground.

(2.) His prophets are in a particular manner witnesses for him, with whom his secret is, and who know more of him than others do. But the Messiah especially is given to be a witness for him

to the people; having lain in his bosom from eternity, he has declared him. Now,

2. Let us see what the point is which these witnesses are called to prove (Isa 43:12): You are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Note, Those who do themselves acknowledge that the Lord is God should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgement of it.

I believed, therefore have I spoken. Particularly, "Since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record,

(1.) That I am he, the only true God, that I am a being self-existent and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, and trust in. Nay (Isa 43:13), before the day was (before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and, consequently, from eternity) I am he." The idols were but of yesterday, new gods that came newly up (De 32:17); but the God of Israel was from everlasting.

(2.) That there was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me. The idols were gods formed (dii facti--made gods, or rather fictitii--fictitious); by nature they were no gods, Ga 4:8. But God has a being from eternity, yea, and a religion in this world before there were either idols or idolaters (truth is more ancient than error); and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are famished and abolished and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and competition. Great is the truth, and will prevail.

(3.) That I, even I, am the Lord, the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and besides me there is no Saviour, Isa

43:11. See what it is that the great God glories in, not so much that he is the only ruler as that he is the only Saviour; for he delights to do good: he is the Saviour of all men, 1Ti 4:10.

3. Let us see what the proofs are which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears,

(1.) That the Lord is God, by two proofs:

[1.] He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the predictions of his word (Isa 43:12): "I have declared and I have shown that which has without fail come to pass; nay, I never declared nor showed any thing but it has been accomplished. I showed when there was no strange god among you, that is, when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, nor to have any prophets but mine." It is said, when they came out of Egypt, that the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

[2.] He has an infinite and irresistible power, as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only, I have shown, but, I have saved, not only foretold what none else could foresee, but done what none else could do; for (Isa 43:13), "None can deliver out of my hand those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect." It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, because there is no getting out of them again. "I will work what I have designed, both in mercy and judgment, and who shall either oppose or retard it?"

(2.) That the gods of the heathen, who are rivals with him, are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all, which is proved (Isa 43:9) by a challenge: Who among them can declare this that I now declare? Who can foretel things to come? Nay, which of them can show us former things? Isa 41:22. They cannot so much as inspire an historian, much less a prophet. They are

challenged to join issue upon this: Let them bring forth their witnesses, to prove their omniscience and omnipotence. And,

[1.] If they do prove them, they shall be justified, the idols in demanding homage and the idolaters in paying it.

[2.] If they do not prove them, let them say, It is truth; let them own the true God, and receive the truth concerning him, that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that those who cannot justify themselves in their irreligion should submit to the power of the truth and true religion.

11 I, *even* I, *am* the Lord; and beside me *there is* no saviour.
12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when *there was* no strange *god* among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I *am* God.
13 Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?
14 Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry *is* in the ships.

To so low an ebb were the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought that there needed line upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore, that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very expressly and encouragingly.

I. God here takes to himself such titles of his honour as were very encouraging to them. He is the Lord their Redeemer, not only he will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office and make it his business to do so. If he be their God, he will be all that to them which they need, and therefore, when they are in bondage, he will be their Redeemer. He is the Holy One of Israel (Isa 43:14), and again (Isa 43:15), their Holy One, and therefore will make good every word he has spoken to them. He is the Creator of Israel, that made them a people out of nothing

(for that is creation), nay, worse than nothing; and he is their King, that owns them as his people and presides among them.

II. He assures them he will find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captives and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go, Isa 14:17. God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon, that shall bring down all their nobles, and lay their honour in the dust, and all their people too, even the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships (for seamen are apt to be noisy), or whose cry is to the ships, as their refuge when the city is taken, that they may escape by the benefit of their great river.

Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people. And in the prediction of the fall of the New-Testament Babylon we meet with the cries and lamentations of the sailors, Re 18:17,18. And observe, It is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance.

III. He reminds them of the great things he did for their fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read (Isa 43:16,17): "Thus saith the Lord, who did make a way in the sea, the Red Sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse, that they might lie down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise, but be extinct. He that did this can, if he please, make a way for you in the sea when you return out of Babylon, and will do so rather than leave you there."

Note, For the encouragement of our faith and hope, it is good for us often to remember what God has done formerly for his people against his and their enemies. Think particularly what he did at the Red Sea, how he made it,

1. A road to his people, a straight way, a near way, nay, a refuge to them, into which they fled and were safe the waters being a wall unto them.

2. A grave to his enemies. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of all hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, they meant not so, Mic 4:11,12.

IV. He promises to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so that they should not have reason to ask, in a way of complaint, as Gideon did, Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? for they should see them repeated, nay, they should see them outdone (Isa 43:18): "Remember not the former things, from them to take occasion, as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if the former days were better than these; no, you may, if you will, comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, behold, the Lord will do a new thing, no way inferior, both for the wonder and the worth of the mercy, to the things of old." The best exposition of this is, Jer 16:14,15,23:7,8. It shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a manner lost in the new thing, in the new proof that the Lord liveth, for he brought up the children of Israel out of the land of the north. Though former mercies must not be forgotten, fresh mercies must in a special manner be improved. Now it springs forth, as it were a surprise upon you; you are like those that dream. Shall you now know it? And will you not own God's hand in it?

15 I *am* the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

16 Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;

17 which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert.

He promises not only to deliver them out of Babylon, but to conduct them safely and comfortably to their own land (Isa 43:19,20): I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert; for, it seems, the way from Babylon to Canaan, as well as from Egypt, lay through a desert land, which, while the returning captives passed through, God would provide for them, that their camp should be both well victualled and under a good conduct. The same power that made a way in the sea (Isa 43:16) can make a way in the wilderness, and will force its passage through the greatest difficulties. And he that made dry land in the waters can produce waters in the dryest land, in such abundance as not only to give drink to his people, his chosen, but to the beasts of the field, also the dragons and the ostriches, who are therefore said to honour God for it; it is such a sensible refreshment, and yields them so much satisfaction, that, if they were capable of doing it, they would praise God for it, and shame man, who is made capable of praising his benefactor and does not. Now,

1. This looks back to what God did for Israel when he led them through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, and fetched water out of a rock to follow them; what God did for them formerly he would do again, for he is still the same. And, though we do not find that the miracle was repeated in their return out of Babylon, yet the mercy was, in the common course of Providence, for which it became them to be no less thankful to God.

2. It looks forward, not only to all the instances of God's care of the Jewish church in the latter ages of it, between their return from Babylon and the coming of Christ, but to the grace of the gospel, especially as it is manifested to the Gentile world, by

which a way is opened in the wilderness and rivers in the desert; the world, which lay like a desert, in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with divine direction and divine comforts, and, in order to both, with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The sinners of the Gentiles, who had been as the beasts of the field, running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be brought to honour God for the extent of his grace to his chosen among them.

20 The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls:
because I give waters in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert, to
give drink to my people, my chosen.

21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my
praise.

He traces up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory (Isa 43:21): This people have I formed for myself, and therefore I do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise. Note,

1 The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heaven, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will.

2. He forms it for himself. He that is the first cause is the highest end both of the first and of the new creation. The Lord has made all things for himself, his Israel especially, to be to him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no otherwise can they be for him, or serviceable to him, than as his grace is glorified in them, Jer 13:11,Eph 1:6,12,14.

3. It is therefore our duty to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service. As he formed us, so he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself; for every instance therefore of his goodness we must praise him, else we answer not the end of the beings and blessings we have.

22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

This charge (and a high charge it is which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel, God's professing people) comes in here,

1. To clear God's justice in bringing them into captivity, and to vindicate that. Were they not in covenant with him? Had they not his sanctuary among them? Why then did the Lord deal thus with his land? De 29:24. Here is a good reason given: they had neglected God and had cast him off, and therefore he justly rejected them and gave them to the curse (Isa 43:28); and they must be brought to own this before they are prepared for deliverance; and they did so, Da 9:5,Ne 9:33.

2. To advance God's mercy in their deliverance and to make that appear more glorious. Many things are before observed to magnify the power of God in it; but this magnifies his goodness, that he should do such great and kind things for a people that had been so very provoking to him and were now suffering the just punishment of their iniquity. The pardoning of their sin was as great an instance of God's power (for so Moses reckons it, Nu 14:17, &c.) as the breaking of the yoke of their captivity. Now observe here,

I. What the sins are which they are here charged with.

1. Omissions of the good which God had commanded; and this part of the charge is here much insisted upon. Observe how it comes in with a but; compare Isa 43:21, where God tells them what favours he had bestowed upon them and what his just expectations were from them. He had formed them for himself, intending they should show forth his praise. But they had not done so; they had frustrated God's expectations from them, and made very ill returns to him for his favours. For,

(1.) They had cast off prayer: Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob! Jacob was a man famous for prayer (Ho 12:4); his seed

bore his name, but did not tread in his steps, and therefore are justly upbraided with it. God takes it ill when children degenerate from the virtue and devotion of their pious ancestors. To boast of the name of Jacob, and yet live without prayer, is to mock God and deceive ourselves. If Jacob does not call upon God, who will?

(2.) They had grown weary of their religion: "Thou art Israel, the seed not only of a praying but of a prevailing father, that was a prince with God; and yet, not valuing his experiences any more than his example, thou hast been weary of me." They had been in relation to God, employed in his service and in communion with him; but they began to snuff at it, and to say, Behold, what a weariness is it! Note, Those who neglect to call upon God do in effect tell him they are weary of him and have a mind to change their Master.

(3.) They grudged the expense of their devotion, and were niggardly and penurious in it. They were for a cheap religion; and in those acts of devotion that were costly they desired to be excused. They had not brought, no, not their small cattle, the lambs and kids, which God required for burnt-offerings (Isa 43:23), much less did they bring their greater cattle, pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little sense had they of the greatness of God and their obligations to him that they could not find in their hearts to part with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it and would graciously have accepted it. Sweet cane, or calamus, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume; but they were not willing to be at the charge of that, Isa 43:24. What they had must serve, though it was old and good for nothing; they would not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for devout pious persons to bring free-will incense as well as other free-will offerings; but they were not so generous, nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly, as they should have done, with the fat of their sacrifices; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and

refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with.

(4.) What sacrifices they did offer they did not honour God with them, and so they were, in effect, as no sacrifices (Isa 43:23): Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others, who offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of offering them or hypocritical in their intentions, so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him.

(5.) That which aggravated their neglect of sacrificing was that, as God had appointed it, it was no burdensome thing; it was not a service that they had any reason at all to complain of: "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it yourselves. I have not wearied thee with incense."

None of God's commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by those that lived in such a plentiful country, nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare. But that which especially forbade them to call it a wearisome service was that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, De 12:12. They had many feasts and good days, but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though, in comparison with Christ's easy yoke, they are spoken of as heavy (Ac 15:10), yet, in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light, and not to be called services nor found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children, as Moloch did.

2. Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and omissions commonly make way for commissions: Thou hast

made me to serve with thy sins. When we make God's gifts the food and fuel for our lusts, and his providence the patron of our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin because grace has abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins.

Or it may denote what a grief and burden sin is to God; it not only wearies men and makes the creation groan, but it wearies my God also (Isa 7:13) and makes the Creator complain that he is grieved (Ps 95:10), that he is broken (Eze 6:9), that he is pressed with sinners as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves (Am 2:13), and to cry out, Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries, Isa 1:24. The antithesis is observable: God had not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The master had not tired the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those are wicked servants indeed that behave so ill to so good a Master. God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that it is easy and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

23 Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.

What were the tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins, Isa 43:23. He brought ruin both upon church and state.

1 The honour of their church was laid in the dust and trampled on: I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, that is, the priests and Levites who presided with great dignity and power in the temple-service; they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile, by their enormities, and then God profaned them and made them vile, by their calamities and the contempt they fell into, Mal 2:9.

2 The honour of their state was ruined likewise: "I have given Jacob to the curse, that is, to be cursed, and hated, and abused

by all their neighbours, and Israel to reproach, to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over by their enemies." They reproached them perhaps for that in them that was good; they mocked at their sabbaths (La 1:7); but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and we must bear it patiently because we suffer it justly, and must acknowledge that to us belongs confusion.

24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

What were the riches of God's mercy towards them notwithstanding (Isa 43:25): I even I, am he who notwithstanding all this blotteth out thy transgressions.

1. This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely. The charge ran very high: Thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities, Isa 43:24. Now one would think it would follow: "I, even I, am he that will destroy thee, and burden myself no longer with care about thee." No, I, even I, am he that will forgive thee; as if the great God would teach us that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to show the freeness of divine mercy; where sin has been exceedingly sinful grace appears exceedingly gracious. Apply this,

(1.) To the forgiving of the sins of Israel as a people, in their national capacity. When God stopped the course of threatening judgments, and saved them from utter ruin, even then when he had them under severe rebukes, then he might be said to blot out their transgressions. Though he corrected them, he was reconciled to them again, and did not cut them off from being a

people. This he did many a time, till they rejected Christ and his gospel, which was a sin against the remedy, and then he would forgive them no more as a nation, but utterly destroyed them.

(2.) To the forgiving of the sins of every particular believing penitent--transgressions and sins, infirmities though ever so numerous, backslidings though ever so heinous. Observe here,

[1.] How the pardon is expressed; he will blot them out, as a cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun (Isa 44:22), as a debt is blotted out not to appear against the debtor (the book is crossed as if the debt were paid, because it is pardoned upon the payment which the surety has made), or as a sentence is blotted out when it is reversed, as the curse was blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made it of no effect to the innocent, Nu 5:23. He will not remember the sin, which intimates not only that he will remit the punishment of what is past, but that it shall be no diminution to his love for the future. When God forgives he forgets.

[2.] What is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not for the sake of any thing in us, but for his own sake, for his mercies'-sake, his promise-sake, and especially for his Son's sake, and that he may himself be glorified in it.

[3.] How God glories in it: I, even I, am he. He glories in it as his prerogative. None can forgive sin but God only, and he will do it; it is his settled resolution. He will do it willingly and with delight; it is his pleasure; it is his honour; so he is pleased to reckon it.

2. Those words (Isa 43:26), Put me in remembrance, may be understood either

(1.) As a rebuke to a proud Pharisee, that stands upon his own justification before God, and expects to find favour for his merits

and not to be beholden to free grace: "If you have any thing to say in your own justification, any thing to offer for the sake of which you should be pardoned, and not for my sake, put me in remembrance of it. I will give you leave to plead your own cause with me; declare what your merits are, that you may be justified by them:" but those who are thus challenged will be speechless. Or,

(2.) As a publican. Is God thus ready to pardon sin, and, when he pardons it, will he remember it no more? Let us then put him in remembrance, mention before him those sins which he has forgiven; for they must be ever before us, to humble us, though they are pardoned, Ps 51:3. Put him in remembrance of the promises he has made to penitents, and the satisfaction his Son has made for them. Plead these with him in wrestling for pardon, and declare these things, in order that thou mayest be justified freely by his grace. This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to peace. Only acknowledge thy transgression.

26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

What were the aggravations of their sin, Isa 43:27.

1. That they were children of disobedience; for their first father (that is, their forefathers) had sinned; and they had not only sinned in their loins, but sinned like them. Ezra confesses this: Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass, Ezr 9:7. But their forefathers are called their first father to put us in mind of the apostasy and rebellion of our first father Adam, to which corrupt fountain we must trace up the streams of all our transgressions.

2. That they were scholars of disobedience too: for their teachers had transgressed against God, were guilty of gross scandalous sins, and the people, no doubt, would learn to do as they did. It

is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers, who should reform them, corrupt them.

28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

Isaiah-44

The Lord the Only God

1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:
2 thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in these verses:--

That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon accou of the covenant that is between them and God. The people of Isr were so as a figure of the gospel Israel. Three things complete th happiness:--

1 The covenant-relations wherein they stand to God, Isa 44:1,2. Israel is here called Jeshurun--the upright one; for those only, like Nathanael, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile, and those only shall have the everlasting benefit of these promises. Jacob and Israel had been represented, in the close of the foregoing chapter, as very provoking and obnoxious to God's wrath, and already given to the curse and to reproaches; but, as if God's bowels yearned towards him and his repentings were kindled together, mercy steps in with a non-obstante--notwithstanding, to all these quarrels: "Yet now, hear, O Jacob my servant! thou and I will be friends again for all this." God had said (Isa 43:25), I am he that blotteth out thy transgression, which is the only thing that creates this distance; and when that is taken away the streams of mercy run again in their former channel. The pardon of sin is the inlet of all the other blessings of the covenant. So and so I will do for them, says God (Heb 8:12), for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness. Therefore hear, O Jacob! hear

these comfortable words; therefore fear not, O Jacob! fear not thy troubles, for by the pardon of sin the property of them too is altered. Now the relations wherein they stand to him are very encouraging.

(1.) They are his servants; and those that serve him he will own and stand by and see that they be not wronged.

(2.) They are his chosen, and he will abide by his choice; he knows those that are his, and those whom he has chosen he takes under special protection.

(3.) They are his creatures. He made them, and brought them into being; he formed them, and cast them into shape; he began betimes with them, for he formed them from the womb; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties and help them in their services.

2 The covenant-blessings which he has secured to them and theirs, Isa 44:3,4.

(1.) Those that are sensible of their spiritual wants, and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God: I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, that thirsts after righteousness; he shall be filled. Water shall be poured out to those who truly desire spiritual blessings above all the delights of sense.

(2.) Those that are barren as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be ever so dry, God has floods of grace to water it with.

(3.) The water God will pour out is his Spirit (Joh 7:39), which God will pour out without measure upon the seed, that is, Christ (Ga 3:16), and by measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon

all the praying wrestling seed of Jacob, Lu 11:13. This is the great New-Testament promise, that God, having sent his servant Christ, and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us.

(4.) This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God had reserved the plentiful effusion of for the latter days: I will pour my Spirit, that is, my blessing; for where God gives his Spirit he will give all other blessings.

(5.) This is reserved for the seed and offspring of the church; for so the covenant of grace runs: I will be a God to thee and to thy seed. To all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption God will give the spirit of adoption.

(6.) Hereby there shall be a great increase of the church. Thus it shall be spread to distant places. Thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after-times: They shall spring up and grow as fast as willows by the watercourses, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent and excel all about them, as the willows overtop the grass among which they grow, Isa 44:4. Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising. And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

3. The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, Isa 44:5. When the Jews returned out of captivity they renewed their covenant with God (Jer 50:5), particularly that they would have no more to do with idols, Ho 14:2,3,8. Backsliders must thus repent and do their first works. Many of those that were without did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, Zec 8:23,Es 8:17. And they say, We are the Lord's and call themselves by the name of Jacob; for there was one law, one covenant, for the stranger and for those that were born in the land. And doubtless it looks further yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them who, upon the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension,

should be joined to the Lord and added to the church. These converts are one and another, very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, Col 3:11. When one does it another shall by his example be invited to do it, and then another; thus the zeal of one may provoke many.

(1.) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, "I am the Lord's; he has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his disposal. I am, and will be, his only, his wholly, his for ever, will be for his interests, will be for his praise; living and dying I will be his."

(2.) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, call themselves by the name of Jacob, forgetting their own people and their fathers' house, and desirous to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions.

(3.) They shall do this very solemnly. Some of them shall subscribe with their hand unto the Lord, as, for the confirming of a bargain, a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God the better, Ex 24:7,Jos 24:26,27,Ne 9:38. Fast bind, fast find.

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the
dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing
upon thine offspring:
4 and they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the
watercourses.
5 One shall say, I *am* the Lord's; and another shall call *himself* by the
name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the
Lord, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel.
6 Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the

Lord of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and besides me *there is* no God.

7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.

That, as the Israel of God are a happy people, so the God of Israel is a great God, and he is God alone. This also, as the former, speaks abundant satisfaction to all that trust in him, Isa 44:6-8. Observe here, to God's glory and our comfort,

1. That the God we trust in is a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power. He is the Lord, Jehovah, self-existent and self-sufficient; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men.

2. That he stands in relation to, and has a particular concern for, his church. He is the King of Israel and his Redeemer; therefore his Redeemer because his King; and those that take God for their King shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone he proclaims himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and to triumph in him.

3. That he is eternal--the first and the last. He is God from everlasting, before the worlds were, and will be so to everlasting, when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create, nothing would ever have been; and, if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again. He is all in all, is the first cause, from whom are all things, and the last end, to and for whom are all things (Ro 11:36), the Alpha and the Omega, Re 1:11.

4. That he is God alone (Isa 44:6): Besides me there is no God. Is there a God besides me? Isa 44:8. We will appeal to the greatest scholars. Did they ever in all their reading meet with any other? To those that have had the largest acquaintance with the world. Did they ever meet with any other? There are gods many

(1Co 8:5,6), called gods, and counterfeit gods: but is there any besides our God that is infinite and eternal, any besides him that is the creator of the world and the protector and benefactor of the whole creation, any besides him that can do that for their worshippers which he can and will do for his? "You are my witnesses. I have been a nonsuch to you. You have tried other gods; have you found any of them all-sufficient to you, or any of them like me? Yea, there is no god," no rock (so the word is), none besides Jehovah that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is the rock, and their rock is not as ours, De 32:4,31.

I know not any; as if he had said, "I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, or that durst bring their pretensions to a fair trial; if I did know of any that could befriend you better than I can, I would recommend you to them; but I know not any." There is no God besides Jehovah. He is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore there needs no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and, in order to that, for the curing of them of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work it should be removed. They are reminded of the first and great article of their creed, that the Lord their God is one Lord, De 6:4. And therefore,

(1.) They needed not to hope in any other god. Those on whom the sun shines need neither moon nor stars, nor the light of their own fire.

(2.) They needed not to fear any other god. Their own God was more able to do them good than all the false and counterfeit gods of their enemies were to do them hurt.

5. That none besides could foretel these things to come, which God now by his prophet gave notice of to the world, above 200 years before they came to pass (Isa 44:7): "Who, as I, shall call,

shall call Cyrus to Babylon? Is there any but God that can call effectually, and has every creature, every heart, at his beck? Who shall declare it, how it shall be, and by whom, as I do?" Nay, God goes further; he not only sees it in order, as having the foreknowledge of it, but sets it in order, as having the sole management and direction of it. Can any other pretend to this? He has always set things in order according to the counsel of his own will, ever since he appointed the ancient people, the people of Israel, who could give a truer and fuller account of the antiquities of their own nation than any other kingdom in the world could give of theirs. Ever since he appointed that people to be his peculiar people his providence was particularly conversant about them, and he told them beforehand the events that should occur respecting them--their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance from it, and their settlement in Canaan.

All was set in order in the divine predictions as well as in the divine purposes. Could any other have done so? Would any other have been so far concerned for them? He challenges the pretenders to show the things that shall come hereafter: "Let them, if they can, tell us the name of the man that shall destroy Babylon ad deliver Israel? Nay, if they cannot pretend to tell us the things that shall come hereafter, let them tell us the things that are coming, that are nigh at hand and at the door. Let them tell us what shall come to pass to-morrow; but they cannot do that; fear them not therefore, nor be afraid of them. What harm can they do you? What hindrance can they give to your deliverance, when I have told thee it shall be accomplished in its season, and I have solemnly declared it?" Note, Those who have the word of God's promise to depend upon need not be afraid of any adverse powers or policies whatsoever.

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it?* ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

The Folly of Idolatry

9 They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

Often before, God, by the prophet, had mentioned the folly and strange sottishness of idolaters; but here he enlarges upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposes them to contempt and ridicule. This discourse is intended,

1. To arm the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country (they being far from the city of their own solemnities) and to humour those who were now their lords and masters.

2. To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod of God is of use to enforce the word, so the word of God is of use to explain the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered.

3. To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean task-masters. When they insulted over them, when they asked, Where is your God? they might hence ask them, What are your gods? 4. To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne.

Now here, for the conviction of idolaters, we have,

I. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shameful folly and senselessness imaginable, Isa 44:9-11. They set their wits on work to contrive,

and their hands on work to frame, graven images, and they call them their delectable things; extremely fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things that should be detestable to them are desirable and delectable; but those are far gone in a distemper to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now,

1. We tell them that those that do so are all vanity; they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images.

2. We tell them that their delectable things shall not profit them, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good nor protect them from evil. The graven images are profitable for nothing at all, nor will they ever get any thing by the devoirs they pay to them.

3. We appeal to themselves whether it be not a silly sottish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making: They are their own witnesses, witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant in doing thus. They see not nor know, and let them own it, that they may be ashamed. If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; for who has formed a god? Who but a mad-man, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god, of making that which, if he make it a god, he must suppose to be his maker?

4. We challenge them to plead their own cause with any confidence or assurance. If any one has the front to say that he has formed a god, when all his fellows come together to declare what each of them has done towards the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whom they have imposed upon; for the workmen that formed this god are of men, weak

and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make a being that shall be omnipotent, nor can they without blushing pretend to do so. Let them all be gathered together, as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their sinking trade; let them stand up to plead their own cause, and make the best they can of it, with hand joined in hand; yet they shall fear to undertake it when it comes to the setting to, as conscious to themselves of the weakness and badness of their cause, and they shall be ashamed of it, not only when they appear singly, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another in countenance. Note, Idolatry and impiety are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in the defence of.

10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?

11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; *yet* they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together.

12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god; and there needs no more to expose it than to describe it and tell the story of it.

1 The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of them, the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your husbandry, a cart or a plough. You must have a smith, a blacksmith, who with the tongs works in the coals; and it is hard work, for he works with the strength of his arms, till he is hungry and his strength fails, so eager is he, and so hasty are those who set him at the work to get it despatched. He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, for

he drinks no water, and therefore is faint, Isa 44:12. Perhaps it was a piece of superstition among them for the workman not to eat or drink while he was making a god. The plates with which the smith was to cover the image, or whatever iron-work was to be done about it, he fashioned with hammers, and made it all very exact, according to the model given him. Then comes the carpenter, and he takes as much care and pains about the timber-work, Isa 44:13. He brings his box of tools, for he has occasion for them all: He stretches out his rule upon the piece of wood, marks it with a line, where it must be sawed or cut of; he fits it, or polishes it, with planes, the greater first and then the less; he marks out with the compasses what must be the size and shape of it; and it is just what he pleases.

2 The form in which it is made is that of a man, a poor, weak, dying creature; but it is the noblest form and figure that he is acquainted with, and, being his own, he has a peculiar fondness for it and is willing to put all the reputation he can upon it. He makes it according to the beauty of a man, in comely proportion, with those limbs and lineaments that are the beauty of a man, but are altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord. God put a great honour upon man when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his souls, he made him after the image of God; but man does a great dishonour to God when he makes him, in respect of bodily parts and members, after the image of man. Nor will it at all atone for the affront so far to compliment his god as to take the fairest of the children of men for his original whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the beauty of the body of a man, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And, when the goodly piece is finished, it must remain in the house, in the temple or shrine prepared for it, or perhaps in the dwelling house if it be one of the lares or penates--the household gods.

3. The matter of which it is mostly made is sorry stuff to make a god of; it is the stock of a tree.

(1.) The tree itself was fetched out of the forest, where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar, it may be, or a cypress, or an oak, Isa 44:14. Perhaps he had an eye upon it some time before for this use, and strengthened it for himself, used some art or other to make it stronger and better-grown than other trees were. Or, as some read it, which hath strengthened or lifted up itself among the trees of the forest, the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or, it may be, it pleases his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from heaven. See what a fallacy he puts upon himself, in making that his refuge which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for; and what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven in setting up that a rival with him which was nourished by his rain, that rain which falls upon the just and unjust.

(2.) The boughs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel; to that use were they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it; they are for a man to burn, Isa 44:15,16. To show that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree; and, to show that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience' sake.

[1.] It serves him for his parlour-fire: He will take thereof and warm himself (Isa 44:15), and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regret in his mind for it that he saith, Aha! I am warm; I have seen the fire; and certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, does him a much greater kindness and yields him more satisfaction than ever that will which he makes a god of.

[2.] It serves him for his kitchen-fire: He eats flesh with it, that is, he dresses the flesh with it which he is to eat; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay,

[3.] It serves him to heat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value: He kindles it and bakes bread with the heat of it, and none charges him with doing wrong.

(3.) Yet, after all, the stock or body of the tree shall serve to make a god of, when it might as well have served to make a bench, as one of themselves, even a poet of their own, upbraids them, Horat. Sat. 1.8:
Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum, Quum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum, Maluit esse deum; deus inde ego--

In days of yore our godship stood A very worthless log of wood, The joiner, doubting or to shape us Into a stool or a Priapus, At length resolved, for reasons wise, Into a god to bid me rise.--FRANCIS.

And another of them threatens the idol to whom he had committed the custody of his woods that, if he did not preserve them to be fuel for his fire, he should himself be made use of for that purpose:
Furaces moneo manus repellas, Et silvam domini focis reserves, Si defecerit hæc, et ipse lignum es.

Drive the plunderers away, and preserve the wood for thy master's hearth, or thou thyself shalt be converted into fuel.--MARTIAL.

When the besotted idolater has thus served the meanest purposes with part of his tree, and the rest has had time to season (he makes that a god in his imagination while that is in the doing,

and worships it): He makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto (Isa 44:15), that is (Isa 44:17), The residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image, according to his fancy and intention; he falls down to it, and worships it, gives divine honours to it, prostrates himself before it in the most humble reverent posture, as a servant, as a suppliant; he prays to it, as having a dependence upon it, and great expectations from it; he saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god.

There where he pays his homage and allegiance he justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange infatuation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them gods, not what the smith or the carpenter did to them. What we place our confidence in for deliverance that we make a god of.

Qui fingit sacros, auro vel marmore, vultus Non facit ille deos; qui rogat, ille facit.
He who supplicates the figure, whether it be of gold or of marble, makes it a god, and not he who merely constructs it.--MARTIAL.

14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*.
15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it;* he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.
16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself,* and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:
17 and the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.
18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *and* their hearts, that they cannot understand.

Here is judgment given upon this whole matter, Isa 44:18-20. In short, it is the effect and evidence of the greatest stupidity and sottishness that one could ever imagine rational beings to be guilty of, and shows that man has become worse than the beasts that perish; for they act according to the dictates of sense, but man acts not according to the dictates of reason (Isa 44:18): They have not known nor understood common sense; men that act rationally in other things in this act most absurdly. Though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, nay, they are rebels against the great law of consideration (Isa 44:12):

None considers in his heart, nor has so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were none to reason with him: "I have burnt part of this tree in the fire, for baking and roasting; and now shall I make the residue thereof an abomination?" (that is, an idol, for that is an abomination to God and all wise and good men); "shall I ungratefully choose to do, or presumptuously dare to do, what the Lord hates? shall I be such a fool as to fall down to the stock of a tree--a senseless, lifeless, helpless thing? shall I so far disparage myself, and make myself like that I bow down to?" A growing tree may be a beautiful stately thing, but the stock of a tree has lost its glory, and he has lost his that gives glory to it. Upon the whole, the sad character given of these idolaters is,

1. That they put a cheat upon themselves (Isa 44:20): They feed on ashes; they feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols, but they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite and a distempered body; and it is a sign that the soul is overpowered by very bad habits when men, in their worship, go no further than the sight of their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault: A deceived heart of their own,

more than the deceiving tongue of others, has turned them aside from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols. They are drawn away of their own lusts and enticed. The apostasy of sinners from God is owing entirely to themselves and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is a deceived heart.

2. That they wilfully persist in their self-delusion and will not be undeceived. There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? and so to think of delivering his soul. Note,

(1.) Idolaters have a lie in their right hand; for an idol is a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promises, and it is a teacher of lies, Hab 2:18.

(2.) It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in their right hand. Is not that a lie which with complacency we hold fast as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense? They will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes for heaven? If we trust to our external professions and performances, as if those would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand.

(3.) Self-suspicion is the first step towards self-deliverance. We cannot be faithful to ourselves unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that would deliver his soul must begin with putting this question to his own conscience. Is there not a lie in my right hand?

(4.) Those that are given up to believe in a lie are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, 2Th 2:11.

19 And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it:* and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

The Lord the Redeemer of Israel

In these verses we have,

I The duty which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, were called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words: Remember and return, as in the counsel to Ephesus, Re 2:4,5.

1. "Remember these, O Jacob! Remember what thou hast been told of the folly of idolatry, and let the convictions thou art now under be ready to thee whenever thou art tempted to that sin. Remember that thou art my servant, and therefore must not serve other masters."

2. Return unto me, Isa 44:22. It is the great concern of those who have backslidden from God to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to when they are in affliction, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

II The favours which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, were assured of; and what is here promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God is in a spiritual sense promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed (Isa 44:21): "O Israel! thou shalt not be forgotten of me, though for the present thou seemest to be so." When we begin to

remember God he will begin to remember us; nay, it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1 The grounds upon which God's favourable intentions to his people were built and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them out of captivity; for,

(1.) They are his servants, and therefore he has a just quarrel with those that detain them. Let my people go, that they may serve me. The servants of the King of kings are under special protection.

(2.) He formed them into a people, formed them from the womb, Isa 44:24. From the first beginning of their increase into a nation they were under his particular care and government, more than any other people; their national constitution was of his framing, and his covenant with them was the charter by which they were incorporated. They are his, and he will save them.

(3.) He has redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress, and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, has the same concern for them. "Therefore return unto me, for I have redeemed thee, Isa 44:22. Whither wilt thou go, but to me?" Having redeemed them, as well as formed them, he has acquired a further title to them and propriety in them, which is a good reason why they should dutifully return to him and why he will graciously return to them. The Lord has redeemed Jacob; he is about to do it (Isa 44:23); he has determined to do it; for he is the Lord their Redeemer, Isa 44:24. Note, The work of redemption which God has by his Son wrought for us encourages us to hope for all promised blessings from him. He that has redeemed us at so vast an expense will not lose his purchase.

(4.) He has glorified himself in them (Isa 44:23), and therefore will do so still, Joh 12:28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interested in the deliverances of the church; for therefore he will certainly redeem Jacob, because thus he will glorify himself. And this assures us that he will perfect the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set when he will be glorified and admired in them all.

(5.) He has pardoned their sins, which were the cause of their calamity and the only obstruction to their deliverance, Isa 44:22. Therefore he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he has blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions. Note,

[1.] Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between the upper and lower world (sin separates between us and God, Isa 59:2); they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners. Ps 11:6.

[2.] When God pardons sin he blots out this cloud, this thick cloud, so that the intercourse with heaven is laid open again. God looks down upon the soul with favour; the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The cloud is scattered by the influence of the Sun of righteousness. It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned, like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone. The iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and not found, Jer 50:20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned are like the clear shining after clouds and rain.

2 The universal joy which the deliverance of God's people should bring along with it (Isa 44:23): Sing, O you heavens! This intimates,

(1.) That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people; to that it is owing that it subsists (that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground) and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being, and is assured that though now it groans, being burdened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, Ps 96:11-13,98:7-9.

(2.) That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it. And there is joy in heaven when God and man are reconciled (Lu 15:7), joy when Babylon falls, Re 18:20.

(3.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The lower parts of the earth, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope that though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet, when the time for it shall come, they shall all be got over with ease; for thus saith Israel's Redeemer, I am the Lord that maketh all things, did make them at first and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation. All being, power, life, emotion, and perfection, are from God. He stretches forth the heavens alone, has no help nor needs any; and the earth too he spreads abroad by himself, and by his own power. Man was not by him when he did it (Job 38:4), nor did any creature advise or assist; only his own eternal wisdom and Word was by him then as one brought up with him, Pr 8:30. His stretching out the heavens by himself denotes the boundless extent of his power. The strongest man, if he has to stretch a thing out, must get somebody or other to lend a hand; but God stretched out the

vast expanse and keeps it still upon the stretch, himself, by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then; nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, Ps 124:8. And, having made all things, he can make what use he pleases of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purposes by them.

4. The confusion which this would put upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confutation it would give them, Isa 44:25. God, by delivering his people out of Babylon, would frustrate the tokens of the liars, of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy had many ages yet to live, and pretended to ground their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which, according to the rules of their arts, foreboded its prosperity. How mad will these conjurors grow with vexation when they see that their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted and were so confident of. Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophets, but their celebrated politicians too: He turns the wise men backward. Finding they cannot go on with their projects, they are forced to quit them; and so he makes the judges fools, and makes their knowledge foolish. Those that are made acquainted with Christ see all the knowledge they had before to be foolishness in comparison with the knowledge of him. And those that are adversaries to him will find all their counsels, like Ahitophel's, turned into foolishness, and themselves taken in their own craftiness, 1Co 3:19.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had distrusted and their enemies despised: God confirms the word of his servant (Isa 44:26); he confirms it by accomplishing it in its season; and performs the counsel of the messengers whom he hath many a time sent to his people, to tell them what great blessings he had in store for them. Note, The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture is a confirmation of the truth of the whole book and an incontestable evidence of its divine origin and authority.

6. The particular favours God designed for his people, that were now in captivity, Isa 44:26-28. These were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might see reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction.

(1.) It is here supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, should for a time lie in ruins, dispeopled and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt and repeopled. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed. It was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities. But the justice of God will do that; and, when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do that to. God has said to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; for, while the world stands, God will have a church in it, and therefore he will raise up those who shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; for, if it be not built, it cannot be inhabited, Ps 69:35,36. When God's time shall have come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses for his people (for they shall not lie exposed) and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built.

The Assyrian army under Sennacherib only took them, and then, upon the defeat of that army, they returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army demolished them, and by carrying away the inhabitants left them to go to decay of themselves; for, if less judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater. Yet these desolations shall not be perpetual. God will raise up the wastes and decayed places thereof; for he will not contend for ever. The city of strangers, when it is ruined, shall never be built (Isa 25:2), but the city of God's own children is but discontinued for a time.

(2.) It is here supposed that the temple too should be destroyed, and lie for a time rased to the foundations; but it is promised

that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and no doubt built upon. As the desolation of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most joyful part of the deliverance. What joy can they have in the rebuilding of Jerusalem if the temple there be not rebuilt? for it is that which makes it a holy city and truly beautiful. This therefore was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart and had in view in their return; therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to build the house of the Lord God of Israel there, Ezr 1:3.

(3.) It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through; but it is promised that by a divine power they shall all be removed (Isa 44:27): God saith to the deep, Be dry; so he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt, and so he will again when he brings them out of Babylon, if there be occasion. Who art thou, O great mountain? Dost thou stand in the way? Before Zerubbabel, the commander-in-chief of the returning captives, thou shalt become a plain, Zec 4:7. So, Who art thou, O great deep? Dost thou retard their passage and think to block it up? Thou shalt be dry, and thy rivers that supply thee shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon by draining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it passable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note, Whatever obstructions lie in the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word's speaking.

(4.) It is here supposed that none of the Jews themselves would be able by might and power to force their way out of Babylon but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off, that shall fairly open the way for them, and now at length he names the very man, many scores of years before he was born or thought of (Isa 44:28): That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd. Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture. These sheep are now in the midst of wolves, in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass. Now Cyrus

shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pasture again. "In this he shall perform all my pleasure, shall bring about what is purposed by me and will be highly pleasing to me." Note,

[1.] The most contingent things are certain to the divine prescience. He knew who was the person, and what was his name, that should be the deliverer of his people, and, when he pleased, he could let his church know it, that, when they heard of such a name beginning to be talked of in the world, they might lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh.

[2.] It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd than to be emperor of Persia.

[3.] God makes what use he pleases of men, of mighty men, of those that act with the greatest freedom; and, when they think to do as they please, he can overrule them, and make them do as he pleases. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no further than that, God is serving his own purposes by them and making them to perform all his pleasure. Rich princes shall do what poor prophets have foretold.

21 Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done *it:* shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

24 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the Lord that maketh all *things;* that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;
25 that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise *men* backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;
26 that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:
27 that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:
28 that saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Isaiah-45

The Commission to Cyrus

1 Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Astyages king of Media. The pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his origin. Some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved from perishing by a herdsman's wife. However, it is agreed that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable, especially when Crœsus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Crœsus with such vigour that in a little time he took Sardis and made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia and the many provinces that then belonged to it. This made him very great (for Crœsus was rich to a proverb) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was nearly ten years afterwards that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius and with the forces of Persia,

he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have the history of Dan. 5. Babylon had now grown exorbitantly rich and strong.

It was forty-five miles in compass (some say more): the walls were thirty-two feet thick and 100 cubits high. Some say, They were so thick that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; others say, They were fifty cubits thick and 200 high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it. Now here, 210 years before it came to pass, we are told,

I. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people. In order to this he shall be a mighty conqueror and a wealthy monarch and nations shall become tributaries to him and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this world God has seldom seen fit to entrust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend them; but if here has been occasion, for the god of the church, to make use of them, God has been pleased rather to put them into the hands of others, to be employed for them, than to venture them in their own hands. Cyrus is here called God's anointed, because he was both designed and qualified for this great service by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engages to hold his right hand, not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2Ki 13:16. Being under such direction,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far and shall make nothing of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with; and therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests.

(1.) Populous kingdoms shall yield to him. God will subdue nations before him; when he is in the full career of his successes he shall make nothing of a nation's being born to him at once: yet it is not he that subdues them; it is God that subdues them for him; the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory.

(2.) Potent kings shall fall before him: I will loose the loins of kings, either the girdle of their loins (divesting them of their power and dignity) or the strength of their loins, and then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for, when he was terrified by the handwriting on the wall, the joints of his loins were loosed, Da 5:6.

(3.) Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keepers of the city to open before him the two-leaved gates, not treacherously nor timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut to keep him out as an enemy, but thrown open to admit him as a friend.

(4.) The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him: I will go before thee, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and then the crooked places, shall be made straight; or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. Those will find a ready road that have God going before them. (5.) No opposition shall stand before him. He that gives him his commission will break in pieces the gates of brass that are shut against him, and cut asunder the bars of iron wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if that be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had 100 gates all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

2. He shall replenish his coffers very much (Isa 45:3): I will give thee the treasures of darkness, treasures of gold and silver,

that have been long kept close under lock and key and had not seen the light of many years, or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. The hidden riches of secret places, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all be a prey to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it beforehand; and Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him, and, in consideration of that, released the captives. Ezr 1:2, God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and thereby has obliged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will
break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:
3 and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of
secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call
thee by thy name, *am* the God of Israel.
4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even
called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast
not known me.

We are here told what God designed in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars we may easily guess; but what God aimed at in giving him such wonderful success in his wars we are here told.

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified: "That thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name long before thou wast born." When Cyrus should have this prophecy of Isaiah shown to him, and should there find his own name and his own achievements particularly described so long before, he should thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel was the Lord, Jehovah, the only living and true God, and that he continued to own his Israel though now in captivity. It is well when thus men's prosperity brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the Israel of God might be released, Isa 45:4. Cyrus knew not God as the God of Israel. Having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God. But, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd. He called him by his name, Cyrus, nay, which was yet great honour, he surnamed him and called him his anointed. And why did God do all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no is questioned. Xenophon indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his Cyropædia; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and bloodthirsty. The reason why God preferred him was for Jacob his servant's sake. Note,

(1.) In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church.

(2.) It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power to use them for his glory, by showing kindness to his people. Cyrus is preferred that Israel may be released. He shall have a kingdom, only that God's people may have their liberty; for their kingdom is not of this world, it is yet to come. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and entrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. When he ascended on high he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captives, and opened the prison to those that were bound.

5 I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me;

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world in all the great things he did for Cyrus and by him. Observe,

I. How this doctrine is here laid down concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things:--

1. That he is God alone, and there is no God besides him. This is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding, air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, does the great God here proclaim it to the world: I am the Lord, I the Lord, Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God besides me, no other self-existent, self-sufficient, being, none infinite and eternal. And again (Isa 45:6), There is none besides me; all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits; they are all vanity and a lie, for I am the Lord, and there is none else.

This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of his ancestors, which was the worshipping of idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was the setting up of themselves for gods and being idolized, to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he becomes thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one.

2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him (Isa 45:7): I form the light, which is grateful and pleasing, and I create darkness, which is grievous and unpleasing. I make peace (put here for all good) and I create evil, not the evil of sin (God is not the author of that), but the evil of punishment. I the Lord order, and direct, and do all these things. Observe,

(1.) The very different events that befal the children of men. Light and darkness are opposite to each other, and yet, in the course of providence, they are sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, neither day nor night, Zec 14:6. There is a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to

each other. Sometimes they are counterchanged, as noonday light and midnight darkness. In the revolution of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other, witness Job's case.

(2.) The self-same cause of both, and that is he that is the first Cause of all: I the Lord, the fountain of all being, am the fountain of all power. He who formed the natural light (Ge 1:3) still forms the providential light. He who at first made peace among the jarring seeds and principles of nature makes peace in the affairs of men. He who allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness; for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts, and all our crosses, in this world.

II. How this doctrine is here proved and published.

1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus: "There is no God besides me, for (Isa 45:5) I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. It was not thy own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No, it was I that girded thee, I whom thou didst not know, nor seek to." By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manages and makes what use he pleases even of those that are strangers to him and pay their homage to other gods.

2. It is published to all the world by the word of God, by his providence, and by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, sunrise and sun-set, that the Lord is God and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens for their help.

6 that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west,
that *there is* none besides me. I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:
I the Lord do all these *things.*

The Lord the Creator

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down
righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation,
and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created
it.

How this doctrine is here improved and applied.

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited, for the redemption of Israel (Isa 45:8): Drop down, you heavens, from above. Some take this as the saints' prayer for the deliverance. I rather take it as God's precept concerning it; for he is said to command deliverances, Ps 44:4. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run--To all officers, civil and military. All the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he does the dews of heaven and the grass of the earth, which tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men, Mic 5:7. Observe,

(1.) The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel. Righteousness must first be wrought in them; they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives, and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, for they spring up together and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together, let not us therefore put asunder. See Ps 85:9-11. Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins, and is made redemption to us by being made to us righteousness and sanctification.

(2.) The means of this great deliverance. Rather than it shall fail, when the set time for it shall come, the heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation, and both concur to the reformation, and so to the restoration, of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down, for every grace and good gift is from above; nay, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit it is now poured down, and, if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends that despaired of it (Isa 45:9): Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! God is the Maker of all things, and therefore our Maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him and never contend with him.

(1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer when the time shall come for their release. Woe to the insulting Babylonians that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go!

(2.) Let not the poor oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way out before God's time shall come. Note, Those will find themselves in a woeful condition that strive with their Maker; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quarrelsome creature; but let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsherds, and are made so very much by their mutual contentions. They are dashed in pieces one against another; and, if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as,

[1.] For the clay to find fault with the potter: Shall the clay say to him that forms it, "What makest thou? Why dost thou make me of this shape and not that?" Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such a heat and passion with the potter as to tell him that he has no hands, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. "Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter and therefore to advise him, or mightier than the potter and therefore to control him?" He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us, as he pleases; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him. Shall we impeach God's wisdom, or question his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully, made? Shall we say, He has no hands, whose hands made us and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, Ro 9:20,21.

[2.] It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents, to say to the father, What begettest thou? or to the mother, "What hast thou brought forth? Why was I not begotten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature and the calamities of human life?" Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot and to fare as others fare? If God is our Father, where is the honour we owe to him by submitting to his will?

9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

10 Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

11 Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

The people of God in captivity, who reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction and were content to wait his

time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

I. They are invited to enquire concerning the issue of their troubles, Isa 45:11. The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, though he does not allow them to strive with him, yet encourages them,

1. To consult his word: "Ask of me things to come; have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long?" Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them.

2. To seek unto him by prayer: "Concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands, which as becomes them submit to the will of their Father, the will of their potter, command you me, not by way of prescription, but by way of petition. Be earnest in your requests, and confident in your expectations, as far as both are guided by and grounded upon the promise." We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer. My sons, and the work of my hands, commend to me (so some read it), bring them to me and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalency with God: Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what would you that I should do unto you? Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof (Isa 45:9,10): Do you question me concerning things to come? and am I bound to give you an account? And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me, or prescribe to me? Dare you do so? Shall any teach God knowledge, or give law to him? Those that complain of God do in effect assume an authority over him.

II. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God when they are brought very low and are utterly incapable of helping themselves, Isa 45:12. Their help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth, which he mentions here, not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he please, to the deliverance of the church (Isa 45:8), for he created both, and therefore has both at command.

1. He made the earth, and created man upon it, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, Ps 115:16. He has therefore not only authority, but wisdom and power sufficient to govern man here on this earth and to make what use he pleases of him.

2. His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences. It is good news to God's Israel that their God is the creator and governor of the world.

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands,
have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I
commanded.

13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways:
he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price
nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts.

They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus and their deliverance by him were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, Isa 45:13. Cyrus is the man that shall proclaim it; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands: I have raised him up in righteousness, that is, in pursuance and performance of my promises and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon: I will direct all his ways; and then it follows that he will prosper him,

for those must needs speed well that are under a divine direction. God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God:--

(1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, that is, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it.

(2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously, not demanding any ransom, nor compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is anointed to do that for poor captive souls which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the opening of the prison to those that were bound (Isa 61:1), enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over to them and be theirs, Isa 45:14. Cyrus, having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries (Ezr 1:4), so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them: Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee. This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews (Es 8:17), and said, We will go with you, humbly begging leave to do so, for we have heard that God is with you, Zec 8:23. The restoration would be a means of the conviction of many and the conversion of some.

Perhaps many of the Chaldeans who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had given them, owned that God was among them and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church,--when the Gentiles shall become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ (Ro 15:18), as willing captives to the church (Ps 110:3), glad to wear her chains,--when an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that God is with them of a truth (1Co 14:24,25) and shall assay to join himself to them,--and when those that had been of the synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that God has loved her (Re 3:9), and the kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel Jerusalem, Re 21:24. Note, It is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus and their deliverance by him were types and figures.

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them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church,--when the Gentiles shall become obedient by word and deed to the faith of Christ (Ro 15:18), as willing captives to the church (Ps 110:3), glad to wear her chains,--when an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that God is with them of a truth (1Co 14:24,25) and shall assay to join himself to them,--and when those that had been of the synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that God has loved her (Re 3:9), and the kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel Jerusalem, Re 21:24. Note, It is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus and their deliverance by him were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, Isa 45:13. Cyrus is the man that shall proclaim it; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands: I have raised him up in righteousness, that is, in pursuance and performance of my promises and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon: I will direct all his ways; and then it follows that he will prosper him, for those must needs speed well that are under a divine direction. God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God:--

(1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, that is, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it.

(2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously, not demanding any ransom, nor compounding with them for price or reward. And

Christ is anointed to do that for poor captive souls which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the opening of the prison to those that were bound (Isa 61:1), enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over to them and be theirs, Isa 45:14. Cyrus, having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries (Ezr 1:4), so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

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when those that had been of the synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that God has loved her (Re 3:9), and the kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel Jerusalem, Re 21:24. Note, It is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

14 Thus saith the Lord, The labor of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God *is* in thee; and *there is* none else, *there is* no God.

15 Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

They are taught to trust God further than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into their mouths, and goes before them in saying it (Isa 45:15): Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself.

1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble, hid himself and was wroth, Isa 57:17. Note, Though God be his people's God and Saviour, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suspends his favours, and lays them under his frowns: but let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, Isa 8:17.

2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour commonly his way is in the sea, Ps 77:19. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits (Zec 4:6), by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide himself, we are sure he is the God of Israel, the Saviour. See Job 35:14.

16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols.

They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods (Isa 45:16): Those who are makers of idols, not only who frame them, but who make gods of them by praying to them, shall be ashamed and confounded, when they shall be convinced of their mistakes and shall be forced to acknowledged that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from their idols, under whose protection they had put themselves. They shall go to confusion when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin nor escape the punishment of it, Ps 97:7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus shrink, and give up the cause, but all of them; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another in countenance, yet they shall go to confusion together. Bind them in bundles, to burn them.

17 *But* Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

They are assured that those who trust in God shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, Isa 45:17. Now that God was about to deliver them out of Babylon he directed them by his prophet,

1. To look up to him as the author of their salvation: Israel shall be saved in the Lord. Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them. They shall be saved in him; for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe.

2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance to that which is spiritual and has reference to another world, to think of that salvation by the Messiah which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery and a restoration to everlasting bliss. "Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure that you shall not be

ashamed nor confounded world with out end. You shall not only be delivered from the everlasting shame and contempt which will be the portion of idolaters (Da 12:2), but you shall have everlasting honour and glory."

[1.] There is a world without end; and it will be well or ill with us according as it will be with us in that world.

[2.] Those who are saved with the everlasting salvation shall never be ashamed of what they did or suffered in the hopes of it; for it will so far outdo their expectations as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives owned that to them did belong confusion of face (Da 9:7,8); yet God tells them that they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. Those who are confounded as penitents for their own sin shall not be confounded as believers in God's promise and power.

18 For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the Lord, and *there is* none else.

They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them: I am the Lord, and there is none else. That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone appears by the two great lights, that of nature and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage (Isa 45:18): "Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens and formed the earth, I am the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else." The gods of the heathen did not do this, nay, they did not pretend to do it. He here mentions the creation of the heavens, but enlarges more upon that of the earth, because that is the part

of the creation which we have the nearest view of and are most conversant with. It is here observed,

(1.) That he formed it. It is not a rude and indigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by Infinite Wisdom.

(2.) That he fixed it. When he had made it he established it, founded it on the seas, (Ps 24:2), hung it on nothing (Job 26:7) as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial an hung it fast, ponderibus librata suis--poised by its own weight.

(3.) That he fitted it for use, and for the service of man, to whom he designed to give it. He created it not in vain, merely to be a proof of his power; but he formed it to be inhabited by the children of men, and for that end he drew the waters off from it, with which it was at first covered, and made the dry land appear, Ps 104:6,7. Be it observed here, to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain, but intended every thing for some end and fitted it to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault. It should also be observed, to the honour of God's goodness and his favour to man, that he reckoned that not made in vain which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation. As the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so does his word, and the discovery he has made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles far exceed those of the Pagan deities, as well as his operations, Isa 45:19. The preference is here placed in three things:--All that God has said is plain, satisfactory, and just.

(1.) In the manner of the delivery of it it is plain and open: I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions;

those that had familiar spirits whispered and muttered (Isa 8:19); but God delivered his law from the top of Mount Sinai before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds. Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse, Pr 1:20,21,8:1-3. The vision is written, and made plain, so that he who runs may read it; if he be obscure to any, they may thank themselves. Christ pleaded in his own defence what God says here, In secret have I said nothing, Joh 18:20.

(2.) In the use and benefit of it it was highly satisfactory: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, Seek you me in vain, as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought for the living to the dead, Isa 8:19. This includes all the gracious answers that God gave both to those who consulted him (his word is to them a faithful guide) and to those that prayed to him. The seed of Jacob are a praying people; it is the generation of those that seek him, Ps 24:6. And, as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not to them, to any of them, Seek you me in vain; for, if he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them such a sufficiency of grace and such comfort and satisfaction of soul as were equivalent. What we say of winter is true of prayer, It never rots in the skies. God not only gives a gracious answer to those that diligently seek him, but will be their bountiful rewarder.

(3.) In the matter of it it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right, and consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The heathen deities dictated those things to their worshippers which were the reproach of human nature and tended to the extirpation of virtue; but God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Babylon's Idols and the Lord

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save.

What here is said is intended, as before,

For the conviction of idolators, to show them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all that have escaped of the nations, not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come, and hear what is to be said against the worshipping of idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the Jews, that Babylon, which had of old been the womb of idolatry, might now become the grave of it. Let the refugees assemble themselves and come together; God has something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is a foolish sottish thing, upon two accounts:--

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves: They set up the wood of their graven image; for that is the substratum. Though they overlay it with gold, deck it with ornaments, and make a god of it, yet still it is but wood. They pray to a god that cannot save; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing. How do those disparage themselves who give honour to that as a god which cannot, as a god, give good to them! How do those deceive themselves who pray for relief to that which is in no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly those have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains, and do so much penance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no power.

2. It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God (Isa 45:21): "Summon them all; tell them that the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged, between God and Baal. Bring them near, and let them take counsel together what to say in defence of themselves and their idols. It shall, as before, be put upon this issue: let them show when any of their gods did with any certainty foretel future events, as the God of Israel has done, and it shall be acknowledged that they have some colour for their pretensions. But None of them ever did; their prophets were lying prophets; but I the Lord have told it from that time, long before it came to pass; therefore you must own thee is no other God besides me."

(1.) None besides is fit to rule. He is a just God, and rules in justice, and will execute justice for those that are oppressed.

(2.) None besides is able to help. As he is a just God, so he is the Saviour, who can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the Lord? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.

For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, Isa 45:22. Those that worship idols pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel says it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion, "Let them but look to me by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes, look off from all pretenders, and look up to me, and they shall

be saved." It seems to refer further to the conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of the earth, the most distant nations, when the standard of the gospel is set up. To it shall the Gentiles seek. When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him. They shall all be invited to look unto him, as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent; and so strong is the eye of faith that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of the earth; for he is God, and the is none else. Two things are here promised, for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour:--

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly advanced; and this will be good news to all the Lord's people, that, how much soever they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, Isa 45:23. This is confirmed by an oath, that we might have strong consolation: I have sworn by myself (and God can swear by no greater, Heb 6:13); the word has gone out of my mouth, and shall neither be recalled nor return empty; it has gone forth in righteousness, for it is the most reasonable equitable thing in the world that he who made all should be Lord of all, that, since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He has said it, and it shall be made good, I will be exalted, Ps 46:10. He has assured us,

(1.) That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom. They shall do him homage--Unto me every knee shall bow; and they shall bind themselves by an oath of allegiance to him--Unto me every tongue shall swear. This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus, Ro 14:10,11. We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ and give account to him, for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God; and it seems to be referred to, Ps 2:9,10. If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow to him in humble adorations and addresses, and in cheerful obedience to

his commands, submission to his disposals, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he that bears an honest mind never startles at assurances.

(2.) That he will be universally sought unto, and application shall be made to him from all parts of the world: Unto him shall men of distant countries come, to implore his favour. Unto thee shall all flesh come with their request, Ps 65:2. And, when Christ was lifted up from the earth, he drew all men to him.

(3.) That it will be to no purpose to make opposition to him. All that are incensed against him, that rage at his bonds and cords--the nations that are angry because he has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom--they shall be ashamed; some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to a remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us that, whatever becomes of us and our interests, the Lord will reign for ever!

2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for shall be effectually secured: Surely shall one say, and another shall learn by his example to say the same, so that all the seed of Israel, according to the Spirit, shall say, and stand to it,

(1.) That God has a sufficiency for them and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs: In the Lord is all righteousness and strength (so the margin reads it); he is himself righteous and strong. He can do every thing, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionably just and equitable. He has also wherewithal to supply the needs of those that seek to him and depend upon him, upon the equity of his providence and the treasures of his grace; nay, we may say, not only "He has it,"

but, "In him we have it," because he has said that he will be to us a God. In the Lord the captive Jews had righteousness (that is, grace both to sanctify their afflictions to them and to qualify them for deliverance) and strength for their support and escape. In the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good-will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us. He is the fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, must go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness, Ps 71:16.

(2.) That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this. [1.] The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned by their God; but, when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard censures, and therefore they shall glory in it.

[2.] All true Christians, that depend upon Christ for strength and righteousness, in him shall be justified and shall glory in that. Observe, First, All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright praying seed. Secondly, The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ is that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them righteousness. All that are justified will own it is in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified shall be glorified. And therefore, Thirdly, The great duty believers owe to Christ is to glory in him, and to make their boast of him. Therefore he is made all in all to us, that whose glories may glory in the Lord; and let us comply with this intention.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

24 Surely shall *one* say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength:
even to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him
shall be ashamed.
25 In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Isaiah-46

1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts,
and upon the cattle: your carriages *were* heavy laden; *they are* a burden
to the weary *beast*.

We are here told,

I. That the false gods will certainly fail their worshippers when they have most need of them, Isa 46:1,2. Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon. Some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal; others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who after his death was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifies; so that Bel and Nebo were their Jupiter and their Mercury or Apollo. Barnabas and Paul passed at Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes, Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's and Nebuzaradan's, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes (as appears, Da 5:4); and they insulted over Israel as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jehovah and could detain them in captivity in defiance of their God.

Now, that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what shall become of these idols, which they threaten them with. When Cyrus takes Babylon, down go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the places and people they conquered, and to put the gods of

their own nation in the room of them, Isa 37:19. Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that were set up on high, and looked great, bold, and erect, shall stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldiers that plunder their temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but serves to expose them, they carry them away with the rest of the spoil. The carriers' horses, or mules, are laden with them and their other idols, to be sent among other lumber (for so it seems they accounted them rather than treasure) into Persia. So far are they from being able to support their worshippers that they are themselves a heavy load in the wagons, and a burden to the weary beast. The idols cannot help one another (Isa 46:2):

They stoop, they bow down together. They are all alike, tottering things, and their day has come to fall. Their worshippers cannot help them: They could not deliver the burden out of the enemy's hand, but themselves (both the idols and the idolaters) have gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the Philistines it proved a burden, not to the beasts, but to the conquerors, who were forced to return it; but, when Bel and Nebo have gone into captivity, their worshippers may even give their good word with them: they will never recover themselves.

2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb:

That the true God will never fail his worshippers: "You hear what has become of Bel and Nebo, now hearken to me, O house of Jacob! Isa 46:3,4. Am I such a god as these? No; though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant, your God has been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful protector."

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he has hitherto been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and has all along done well for them. Let them own,

(1.) That he bore them at first: I have made. Out of what womb came they, but that of his mercy, and grace, and promise? He formed them into a people and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him.

(2.) That he bore them up all along: You have been borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb. God began betimes to do them good, as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few, and strangers. God took them under a special protection, and suffered no man to do them wrong, Ps 105:12-14. In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless, as children, but forward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bore them as upon eagles' wings, Ex 19:4,De 32:11. Moses had not patience to carry them as the nursing father does the sucking child (Nu 11:12), but God bore them, and bore their manners, Ac 13:18. And as God began early to do them good (when Israel was a child, then I loved him), so he had constantly continued to do them good: he had carried them from the womb to this day.

And we may all witness for God that he has been thus gracious to us. We have been borne by him from the belly, from the womb, else we should have died from the womb and given up the ghost when we came out of the belly. We have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us which is born of God is borne up by him, else it would soon fail. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the womb, and have encouraged themselves with the consideration of it in their greatest straits, Ps 22:9,10,71:5,6,17.

2. He will then do them the kindness to promise that he will never leave them. He that was their first will be their last; he that was the author will be the finisher of their well-being (Isa 46:4): "You have been borne by me from the belly, nursed when you were children; and even to your old age I am he, when, by reason of your decays and infirmities, you will need help as much as in your infancy." Israel were now growing old, so was their covenant by which they were incorporated, Heb 8:13. Gray hairs were here and there upon them, Ho 7:9. And they had hastened their old age, and the calamities of it, by their irregularities. But God will not cast them off now, will not fail them when their strength fails; he is still their God, will still carry them in the same everlasting arms that were laid under them in Moses's time, De 33:27.

He has made them and owns his interest in them, and therefore he will bear them, will bear with their infirmities, and bear them up under their afflictions: "Even I will carry and will deliver them; I will now bear them upon eagles' wings out of Babylon, as in their infancy I bore them out of Egypt." This promise to aged Israel is applicable to every aged Israelite. God has graciously engaged to support and comfort his faithful servants, even in their old age: "Even to your old age, when you grow unfit for business, when you are compassed with infirmities, and perhaps your relations begin to grow weary of you, yet I am he--he that I am, he that I have been--the very same by whom you have been borne from the belly and carried from the womb. You change, but I am the same. I am he that I have promised to be, he that you have found me, and he that you would have me to be. I will carry you, I will bear, will bear you up and bear you out, and will carry you on in your way and carry you home at last."

4 and *even* to *your* old age I *am* he; and *even* to hoar hairs will I carry *you:* I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you.*

5 To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like?

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon (the general subject of all these chapters) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters who set up as rivals with God, and of oppressors who were enemies to the people of God.

I. For the conviction of those who made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel who did so, who would have images of their God, as the Babylonians had of theirs,

1. He challenges them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him or to set up any being that should stand in competition with him (Isa 46:5): To whom will you liken me? It is absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever. It is to change his truth into a lie and to turn his glory into shame. None ever saw any similitude of him, nor can see his face and live. To whom then can we liken God? Isa 40:18,25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures, yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since between infinite and finite there is no proportion.

2. He exposes the folly of those who made idols and then prayed to them, Isa 46:6,7.

(1.) They were at great charge upon their idols and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose: They lavish gold out of the bag; no little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families and weaken their estates by it. How does the profuseness of idolaters shame the niggardliness of many who call themselves God's servants but are for a religion that will cost them nothing! Some lavish gold out of the bag to make an idol of it in the house, while others hoard up gold in the bag to make an idol of it in the heart; for

covetousness is idolatry, as dangerous, though not as scandalous, as the other. They weigh silver in the balance, either to be the matter of their idol (for even those that were most sottish had so much sense as to think that God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford; those that represented him by a calf made it a golden one) or to pay the workmen's wages. The service of sin often proves very expensive.

(2.) They were in great care about their idols and took no little pains about them (Isa 46:7): They bear him upon their own shoulders, and do not hire porters to do it; they carry him, and set him in his place, more like a dead corpse than a living God. They set him on a pedestal, and he stands. They take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and from his place he shall not remove, that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand nor stir a step to do them any kindness.

(3.) After all, they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the works of their own hands and the creatures of their own fancies. When the goldsmith has made it that which they please to call a god they fall down, yea, they worship it. If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would atone for that, they vilified themselves as much in prostrating themselves to a god that they knew the original of. And, if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as these, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them, though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply Yea, or No, much less could they save them out of their trouble. Now shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in, the true and living God, thus make fools of themselves?

3. He puts it to themselves, and their own reason, let that judge in the case (Isa 46:8): "Remember this, that has been often told

you, what senseless helpless things idols are, and show yourselves men--men and not brutes, men and not babes. Act with reason; act with resolution; act for your own interest. Do a wise thing; do a brave thing; and scorn to disparage your own judgment as you do when you worship idols."

Note, Sinners would become saints if they would but show themselves men, if they would but support the dignity of their nature and use aright its powers and capacities. "Many things you have been reminded of; bring them again to mind, recall them into you memories, and revolve them there. O! you transgressors, consider your ways; remember whence you have fallen, and repent, and so recover yourselves."

4. He again produces incontestable proofs that he is God, that he and none besides is so (Isa 46:9): I am God, and there is none like me. This is that which we have need to be reminded of again and again; for proof of it he refers,

(1.) To the sacred history: "Remember the former things of old, what the God of Israel did for his people in their beginnings, whether he did not that for them which no one else could, and which the false gods did not, nor could do, for their worshippers. Remember those things, and you will own that I am God and there is none else." This is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a nonsuch, and why we should not give that glory to any other which is due to him alone, Ex 15:11.

(2.) To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone, for it is he only that declares the end from the beginning, Isa 46:10. From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, and end of all things. Enoch prophesied, Behold, the Lord comes. From the beginning of a nation he declares what the end of it will be. He told Israel what should befal them in the latter days, what their end should be, and wished they were so wise as to consider it, De 32:20,29. From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be. Known unto God are all his works, and,

when he pleases, he makes them known. Further than prophecy guides us it is impossible for us to find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, Ec 3:11.

He declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Many scripture prophecies which were delivered long ago are not yet accomplished; but the accomplishment of some in the mean time is an earnest of the accomplishment of the rest in due time. By this it appears that he is God, and none else; it is he, and none besides, that can say, and make his words good, "My counsel shall stand, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or disannul it nor all their policies correct or countermine it." As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations, and none of his measures shall be broken, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those who have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and, if we are brought to this, that whatever pleases God pleases us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured of this, that God will do all his pleasure, Ps 135:6.

The accomplishment of this particular prophecy, which relates to the elevation of Cyrus and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity, is mentioned for the confirmation of this truth, that the Lord is God and there is none else; and this is a thing which shall shortly come to pass, Isa 46:11. God by his counsel calls a ravenous bird from the east, a bird of prey, Cyrus, who (they say) had a nose like the beak of a hawk or eagle, to which some think this alludes, or (as others say) to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterwards that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, Mt 24:28. Cyrus came from the east at God's call: for God is Lord of hosts and of those that have hosts at command. And, if God give him a call, he will give him success. He is the man that shall execute God's counsel, though he comes from a far country and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that

know not, and mind not, God's revealed will, are made use of to fulfil the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by what hand he pleases.

That which is here added, to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel: "I have spoken of it by my servants the prophets, and what I have spoken is just the same with what I have purposed." For, though God has many things in his purposes which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes. And he will do it, for he will never change his mind; he will bring it to pass, for it is not in the power of any creature to control him. Observe with what majesty he says it, as one having authority: I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass. Dictum, factum--no sooner said than done. I have purposed it, and he does not say, "I will take care it shall be done," but, "I will do it." Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one tittle of the word of God.

6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship.

7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

8 Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.

9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; *I am* God, and *there is* none like me,

10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

11 calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.

12 Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from
righteousness:
13 I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation
shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

For the conviction of those that daringly opposed the counsels of God assurance is here given not only that they shall be accomplished, but that they shall be accomplished very shortly, Isa 46:12,13.

1. This is addressed to the stout-hearted, that is, either,

(1.) The proud and obstinate Babylonians, that are far from righteousness, far from doing justice or showing mercy to those they have power over, that say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petitions or God's predictions, that are far from any thing of clemency or compassion to the miserable. Or,

(2.) The unhumbled Jews, that have been long under the hammer, long in the furnace, but are not broken are not melted, that, like the unbelieving murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think themselves far from God's righteousness (that is, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them), and by their distrusts set themselves at a yet further distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. This is applicable to the Jewish nation when they rejected the gospel of Christ; though they followed after the law of righteousness, they attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, Ro 9:31,32. They perished far from righteousness; and it was because they were stout-hearted, Ro 10:3.

2. Now to them God says that, whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair,

(1.) Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God's people. If men will not do them justice, God will, and his righteousness shall effect that for them which men's righteousness would not reach to. He will place salvation in Zion, that is, he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those who will plant themselves there; thence shall salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel; and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them; it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion; for thence the gospel shall take rise (Isa 2:3), thither the Redeemer comes (Isa 59:20,Ro 11:26), and it is Zion's King that has salvation, Zec 9:9.

(2.) It shall be very shortly wrought. This is especially insisted on with those who thought it at a distance: "I bring near my righteousness, nearer than you think of; perhaps it is nearest of all when your straits are greatest and your enemies most injurious; it shall not be far off when there is occasion for it, Ps 85:9. Behold, the Judge stands before the door. My salvation shall not tarry any longer than till it is ripe and you are ready for it; and therefore, though it tarry, wait for it; wait patiently, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Isaiah-47

Judgment on Babylon

1 Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: *there is* no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.

In these verses God by the prophet sends a messenger even to Babylon, like that of Jonah to Nineveh: "The time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed." Fair warning is thus given her, that she may by repentance prevent the ruin and there may be a lengthening of her tranquility. We may observe here,

I. God's controversy with Babylon. We will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins; she has made God her enemy, and then who can befriend her: Let her know that the righteous Judge, to whom vengeance belongs, has said (Isa 47:3), I will take vengeance. She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it when the measure of her iniquities is full. Woe to those on whom God comes to take vengeance; for who knows the power of his anger and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves who would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him or to make our part good with him. But he says, "I will not meet thee as a man, not with the compassions of a man, but I will be to the as a lion, and a young lion" (Ho 5:14); or, rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God, which cannot be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed, or biassed, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is God and not man, Ho 11:9.

II The particular ground of this controversy. We are sure that there is cause for it, and it is a just cause; it is the vengeance of his temple (Jer 50:28); it is for violence done to Zion, Jer 51:35. God will plead his people's cause against them. It is acknowledged (Isa 47:6) that God had, in wrath, delivered his people into the hands of the Babylonians, had made use of them for the correction of his children, and had by their means polluted his inheritance, had left his peculiar people exposed to suffer in common with the rest of the nations, had suffered the heathen, who should have been kept at a distance, to come into his sanctuary and defile his temple, Ps 79:1. Herein God was righteous; but the Babylonians carried the matter too far, and, when they had them in their hands (triumphing to see a people that had been so much in reputation for wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low), with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon them, and showed them no mercy, no, not the

common instances of humanity which the miserable are entitled to purely by their misery.

They used them barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay, and of complacency in their calamities. They were brought under the yoke; but, as if that were not enough, they laid the yoke on very heavily, adding affliction to the afflicted. Nay, they laid it on the ancient--the elders in years, who were past their labour, and must sink under a yoke which those in their youthful strength would easily bear--the elders in office, those that had been judges and magistrates, and persons of the first rank. They took a pride in putting these to the meanest hardest drudgery. Jeremiah laments this, that the faces of elders were not honoured, La 5:12. Nothing brings a surer or a sorer ruin upon any people than cruelty, especially to God's Israel.

2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare
the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.
3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I
will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as* a man.
4 *As for* our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts *is* his name, the Holy One
of Israel.

The terror of this controversy. She has reason to tremble when she is told who it is that has this quarrel with her (Isa 47:4): "As for our Redeemer, our Goël, that undertakes to plead our cause as the avenger of our blood, he has two names which speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries."

1. "He is the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth." Woe to those against whom the Lord fights, for the whole creation is at war with them.

2. "He is the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, who has his residence among us, and will faithfully perform all the promises he has made to us." God's power and holiness are engaged against Babylon and for Zion. This may fitly be

applied to Christ, our great Redeemer. He is both Lord of hosts and the Holy One of Israel.

5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

The consequences of it to Babylon. She is called a virgin, because so she thought herself, though she was the mother of harlots. She was beautiful as a virgin, and courted by all about her; she had been called tender and delicate (Isa 47:1), and the lady of kingdoms (Isa 47:5); but now the case is altered. 1. Her honour is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dignity. She that had sat at the upper end of the world, sat in state and sat at ease, must now come down and sit in the dust, as very mean and a deep mourner, must sit on the ground, for she shall be so emptied and impoverished that she shall not have a seat left her to sit upon.

2. Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dominion. She shall rule no more as she has done, nor give law as she has done to her neighbours: There is no throne, none for thee, O daughter of the Chaldeans! Note, Those that abuse their honour or power provoke God to deprive them of it, and to make them come down and sit in the dust.

3. Her ease and pleasure are gone: "She shall no more be called tender and delicate as she has been, for she shall not only be deprived of all those things with which she pampered herself, but shall be put to hard service and made to feel both want and pain, which will be more than doubly grievous to her who formerly would not venture to set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and for delicacy," De 28:56. It is our wisdom not to use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we know not how hardly others may use us before we die not what straits we may be reduced to.

4. Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into a state of servitude and as sore a bondage as she in her prosperity had brought others to. Even the great men of Babylon must now receive the

same law from the conquerors that they used to give to the conquered: "Take the mill-stones and grind meal (Isa 47:2), set to work, to hard labour" (like beating hemp in Bridewell), "which will make thee sweat so that thou must throw off all thy head-dresses, and uncover thy locks." When they were driven from one place to another, at the capricious humours of their masters, they must be forced to wade up to the middle through the waters, to make bare the leg and uncover the thigh, that they might pass over the rivers, which would be a great mortification to those that used to ride in state. But let them not complain, for just thus they had formerly used their captives; and with what measure they then meted it is now measured to them again. Let those that have power use it with temper and moderation, considering that the spoke which is uppermost will be under.

5. All her glory, and all her glorying, are gone. Instead of glory, she has ignominy (Isa 47:3): Thy nakedness shall be uncovered and thy shame shall be seen, according to the base and barbarous usage they commonly gave their captives, to whom, for covetousness of their clothes, they did not leave rags sufficient to cover their nakedness, so void were they of the modesty as well as of the pity due to the human nature. Instead of glorying she sits silently, and gets into darkness (Isa 47:5), ashamed to show her face, for she has quite lost her credit and shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms. Note, God can make those sit silently that used to make the greatest noise in the world, and send those into darkness that used to make the greatest figure. Let him that glories, therefore, glory in a God that changes not, and not in any worldly wealth, pleasure, or honour, which are subject to change.

6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

7 And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: *so* that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security, in the day of her prosperity, and the

confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of the astrologers. These things are mentioned both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her and to mortify her, and put her to so much the greater shame, under these judgments; for, when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

I The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the great conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the vast extent of their dominion; it was the language both of the government and of the body of the people: Thou sayest in thy heart (and God, who searches all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out) I am, and none else besides me, Isa 47:8,10. The repetition of this part of the charge intimates that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God.

It is the very word that God has often said concerning himself, I am, and none else besides me, denoting his self-existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy. All this Babylon pretends to; and no wonder if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased for the people to worship made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature, "It is, and there is not its like, there is none besides it" (for creatures stand very nearly upon a level with one another); but it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance.

II. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease (Isa 47:8): "Thou that art given to pleasures, art a slave to them, art in them as in thy element, and, that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption, dwellest carelessly and layest nothing to heart." Great wealth and plenty are great temptations to sensuality, and, where there is fulness of bread, there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are

given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that for all these things God will bring them into judgment, it would be a damp to their mirth, an allay to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about.

8 Therefore hear now this, *thou that art* given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I *am*, and none else besides me; I shall not sit *as* a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

They are upbraided with their carnal security and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomps and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe,

1 The cause of their security. They thought themselves safe and out of danger, not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms as well as particular persons, but because they did not lay this to heart, did not apply it to themselves, nor give it a due consideration. They lulled themselves asleep in ease and pleasure, and dreamt of nothing else but that to-morrow should be as this day, and much more abundant. They did not remember the latter end of it--the latter end of their prosperity, that it is a fading flower, and will wither--the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness, that they day will come when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. She did not remember her latter end (so some read it); she forgot that her day would come to fall and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem (La 1:9) that she remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully; and it was Babylon's ruin too. The children of men are easy, and think themselves safe, in their sinful ways, only because they never think of death, and judgment, and their future state.

2 The ground of their security. They trusted in their wickedness and in their wisdom, Isa 47:10.

(1.) Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, were their confidence: Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, As Doeg. Ps 52:7. Many have so debauched their own consciences, and have got to such a pitch of daring wickedness, that they stick at nothing; and this they trust to carry them through those difficulties which embarrass men who make conscience of what they say and do. They doubt not but they shall be too hard for all their enemies, because they dare lie, and kill, and forswear themselves, and do any thing for their interest. Thus they trust in their wickedness to secure them, which is the only thing that will ruin them.

(2.) Their policy and craft, which they called their wisdom, were their confidence. They thought they could outwit all mankind, and therefore might set all their enemies at defiance. But their wisdom and knowledge perverted them, and turned them out of the way, made them forget themselves, and the preparation necessary to be made for hereafter.

3. The expressions of their security. Three things this proud and haughty monarchy said, in her security:--

(1.) "I shall be a lady for ever," Isa 47:7. She looked upon the patent of her honour to be not merely during the pleasure of the sovereign Lord, the fountain of honour, or during her own good behaviour, but to be perpetual to the present generation and their heirs and successors for ever. She was not only proud that she was a lady, but confident that she should be a lady for ever. Thus the New-Testament Babylon says, I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow, Re 18:7. Those ladies mistake themselves, and consider not their latter end, who think they shall be ladies for ever; for death will shortly lay their honour with them in the dust. Saints will be saints for ever, but lords and ladies will not be so for ever.

(2.) "I shall not sit as a widow, in solitude and sorrow, shall never lose the power and wealth I am thus wedded to; the

monarchy shall never want a monarch to espouse and protect it, and be a husband to the state; nor shall I know the loss of children," Isa 47:8. She was as confident of the continuance of the numbers of her people as of the dignity of her prince, and had no fear of being either deposed or depopulated. Those that are in the height of prosperity are apt to fancy themselves out of the reach of adverse fate.

(3.) "No one sees me when I do amiss, and therefore there will be none to call me to an account," Isa 47:10. It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy, in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead, because they think they have carried them on so plausibly that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

4. The punishment of their security. It shall be their ruin; and it will be, (1.) A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences: "These two things shall come upon thee (the very two things that thou didst set at defiance), loss of children and widowhood, Isa 47:9. Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation." Note, God often brings upon secure sinners those very mischiefs which they least feared and thought themselves in least danger of. "They shall come upon thee in their perfection, with all their aggravating circumstances and without any thing to allay or mitigate them." Afflictions to God's children are not afflictions in perfection. Widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort themselves with, that their Maker is their husband; loss of children is not, for he is better to them than ten sons. But on his enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called Marah when she is left both of her sons and of her husband (Ru 1:5); and yet on her these evils did not come in perfection, for she had two daughters-in-law left, that were

comforts to her. But on Babylon they come in perfection; she has no comfort remaining.

(2.) It will be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come in one day, nay, in a moment, which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. "Evil shall come upon thee (Isa 47:11) and thou shalt have neither time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it; for thou shalt not know whence it rises, and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard." Thou shalt not know the morning thereof; so the Hebrew phrase is. We know just when and where the day will break and the sun rise, but we know not what the day, when it comes, will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise; perhaps the storm may come from that point of the compass which we little thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge (Isa 47:10), but with all her knowledge she cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened: "Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, as a thief in the night, which thou shalt not know, that is, which thou little thoughtest of." Fair warning was indeed given them, by Isaiah and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation; but they slighted that notice, and would give no credit to it, and therefore justly is it so ordered that they should have no other notice of it, but that partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtlety of the enemy, when it came it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word, let them not expect any other premonitions.

(3.) It will be an irresistible ruin, and such as they will have no fence against: "Mischief shall come upon thee so suddenly that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in, so strongly that thou shalt not be able to make head against it and to put it off and save thyself." There is no opposing the judgments of God when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth, and power, and multitude, is not able to put off the mischief that comes.

9 but these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, *and* for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

They are upbraided with their divinations, their magical and astrological arts and sciences, which the Chaldeans, above any other nation, were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

1. This is here spoken of as one of their provoking sins, which would bring the judgments of God upon them, Isa 47:9. "These evils shall come upon thee to punish thee for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thy enchantments." Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature exceedingly heinous; it is giving that honour to the devil which is due to God only, making God's enemy our guide and the father of lies our oracle. In Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government; conjurors, for aught that appears, were their privy counsellors and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance, of sorceries and enchantments there were among them. Such a bewitching sin this was that when it was once admitted it spread like wildfire, and they never knew any end of it; the deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

2. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to give them notice of the judgments coming, much less to guard against them.

(1.) They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments: Thou hast laboured in them from thy youth, Isa 47:12. They trained up their young men in these studies, and those that applied themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them--reading books, making observations, trying experiments.

Well, let them stand up now with their enchantments, and try their skill in the critical moment. Let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy; let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels of this kind (Isa 47:13); thou hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them; the different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity and tired thee out." In the multitude of such counsellors there is no safety.

(2.) They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kinds of people among them, Isa 47:13. They had their astrologers, or viewers of the heavens, that did not consider them, as David, to behold the wisdom and power of God in them; but, under pretence of foretelling future events by them, they viewed the heavens and forgot him that made them and set their dominion on the earth (Job 38:33), and has himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their star-gazers, who by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, read the doom of states and kingdoms. They had their monthly prognosticators, their almanac-makers, that told what weather it should be or what news they should have each month. The great stock they had of these was what they valued themselves much upon; but they were all cheats, and their art was a sham. I confess I see not how the judicial astrology which some now pretend to, by the rules of which they undertake to prophecy concerning things to come, can be distinguished from that of the Chaldeans, nor therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text lays that under; yet I fear there are some who study their almanacs, and regard them and their prognostications, more than their Bibles and the prophecies there.

(3.) They are upbraided with the utter inability and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether with the help of

their enchantments they can prevail against their enemies, or profit themselves, inspirit their own forces or dispirit those that come against them, Isa 47:12. Let them see what service those can do them who make a trade of divination: "Let them stand up, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are coming upon thee or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand that thou mayest by needful precautions save thyself;" as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to save himself, not once nor twice, 2Ki 6:10. This baffling of the diviners was literally fulfilled when, the night that Babylon was taken and Belshazzar slain, all his astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men, were quite nonplussed with the handwriting on the wall that pronounced the fatal sentence, Da 5:8.

(4.) They are upbraided with the fall of the wise men themselves in the common ruin, Isa 47:14. Those are unlikely to stand their friends in any stead who cannot secure themselves; they are as stubble at the best, worthless and useless, and they shall be as stubble before a consuming fire. The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon; that fire shall burn them, and they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. Those can expect no other than to be devoured by their sins make themselves fuel to a devouring fire. When God kindles a fire among them it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or, rather, it denotes that they shall be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service; for when God judges he will overcome.

(5.) They are upbraided with their merchants, and those they dealt with (Isa 47:15), such as they dealt with from their youth, either,

[1.] In a way of consultation. These astrologers, that dealt in the black art, they always loved to be dealing with, and they were

in effect their merchants; fortune-telling was one of the best trades in Babylon, and those that followed that trade probably lived as splendidly and got as much money as the richest merchants; yet, when some of them were devoured, others fled their country, every one to his quarter, and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all. Or,

[2.] In a way of commerce. As their astrologers, with whom they had laboured, failed them, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. They wandered every one to his own quarter; each man shifted for his own safety, but none would offer to lend a helping hand, no, not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one was for himself, but few for his friends. The New-Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her, but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her (Re 18:15), not willing to attempt any thing for her succour. Happy are those who by faith and prayer deal with one that will be a very present help in time of trouble!

10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I *am,* and none else besides me.

11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast labored from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.

14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall* not *be* a coal to warm at, *nor* fire to sit before it.

15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast labored, *even* thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Isaiah-48

Israel's Unfaithfulness Rebuked

1 Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but* not in truth, nor in righteousness.

We may observe here,

The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion and relation to God. To those who made such a profession the prophet is here ordered to address himself, for their conviction and humiliation, that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them. Now observe here,

1. How high their profession of religion soared, what a fair show they made in the flesh and how far they went towards heaven, what a good livery they wore and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart.

(1.) They were the house of Jacob; they had a place and a name in the visible church. Jacob have I loved. Jacob is God's chosen; and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him.

(2.) They were called by the name of Israel, an honourable name; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law and the promises. Israel signifies a prince with God; and they prided themselves in being of that princely race.

(3.) They came forth out of the waters of Judah, and thence were called Jews; they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted.

(4.) They swore by the name of the Lord, and thereby owned him to be the true God, and their God, and gave glory to him as the righteous Judge of all. They swore to the name of the Lord (so it may be read); they took an oath of allegiance to him as their King and joined themselves to him in covenant.

(5.) They made mention of the God of Israel in their prayers and praises; they often spoke of him, observed his memorials, and pretended to be very mindful of him.

(6.) They called themselves of the holy city, and, when they were captives in Babylon, purely from a principle of honour, and jealousy for their native country, they valued themselves upon their interest in it. Many, who are themselves unholy, are proud of their relation to the church, the holy city.

(7.) They stayed themselves upon the God of Israel, and boasted of his promises and his covenant with them; they leaned on the Lord, Mic 3:11. And, if they were asked concerning their God, they could say, "The Lord of hosts is his name, the Lord of all;" happy are we therefore, and very great, who have relation to him!

2. How low their profession of religion sunk, notwithstanding all this. It was all in vain; for it was all a jest; it was not in truth and righteousness. Their hearts were not true nor right in these professions. Note, All our religious professions avail nothing further than they are made in truth and righteousness. If we be not sincere in them, we do but take the name of the Lord our God in vain.

2 For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon
the God of Israel: The Lord of hosts *is* his name.

3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they
went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did *them*
suddenly, and they came to pass.
4 Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron
sinew, and thy brow brass;
5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to
pass I showed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done
them; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath
commanded them.

The reasons why God would take this method with them.

1. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols.

(1.) God by his prophets told them beforehand of their deliverance, lest they should attribute the accomplishment of it to their idols. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of it to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images: "I spoke of it," says God, "lest thou shouldst say, My idol has done it or has commanded it to be done," Isa 48:5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be for ever precluded from saying this; for, if the idols had done it, the prophets of the idols would have foretold it; but, the prophets of the Lord having foretold it, it was no doubt the power of the Lord that effected it.

(2.) God foretold it by his prophets, lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves. Those that were not so profane as to have ascribed the thing itself to an idol were yet so proud as to have pretended that by their own sagacity they foresaw it, if God had not been beforehand with them and spoken first: Lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them, Isa 48:7. Thus vain men, who would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising with this suggestion, that it was no more than they expected and they knew it would come

to this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might for ever be excluded, God told them of it before the day, when as yet they dreamed not of it. God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that no flesh may glory in his presence, and, if it have not the intended effect, it will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud; and, sooner, or later, every mouth shall be stopped, and all flesh shall become silent before God.

2. Because he would leave them inexcusable in their obstinacy. Therefore he took this pains with them, because he knew they were obstinate, Isa 48:4. He knew they were so obstinate and perverse that, if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophecy, they would have had the impudence to deny it, and would have said that their idol had done that which God did. He knew very well,

(1.) How wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil: I knew that thou wast hard; so the word is. There were prophecies as well as precepts which God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts: "Thy neck is an iron sinew, unapt to yield and submit to the yoke of God' commandments, unapt to turn and look back upon his dealings with thee or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, nor pliable to his intentions, nor manageable by his word or providence. Thy brow is brass; thou art impudent and canst not blush, insolent and wilt not fear or give back, but wilt thrust on in the way of thy heart." God uses means to bring sinners to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate.

(2.) How deceitful they would be and how insincere in that which is good, Isa 48:8. God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know, and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been. Thou wast called, and not miscalled, a transgressor from the womb. Ever since they were first formed into a people they were prone to idolatry;

they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin; and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan. They were justly upbraided with it then, De 9:7,24. Therefore I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously. God foresaw their apostasy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, De 31:16,27,29. This is applicable to particular persons. We are all born children of disobedience; we were called transgressors from the womb, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we shall deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin is actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

6 Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it?* I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

7 They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.

The means God used, and the method he took, to keep them close to himself, and to prevent their turning aside to idolatry. The many excellent laws he gave them, with their sanctions, and the hedges about them, it seems, would not serve to restrain them from that sin which did most easily beset them, and therefore to those God added remarkable prophecies, and remarkable providences in pursuance of those prophecies, which were all designed to convince them that their God was the only true God and that it was therefore both their duty and interest to adhere to him.

1. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies (Isa 48:3): I have declared the former things from the beginning. Nothing material happened to their nation from its original which was not prophesied of before--their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance thence, the situation of their tribes in Canaan, &c. All these things went forth out of God's mouth and he showed them. Herein they were honoured above any nation, and even their curiosity was gratified. Their prophecies were

such as they could rely upon, and such as concerned themselves and their own nation; and they were all verified by the accomplishment of them. I did them suddenly, when they were least expected by themselves or others, and therefore could not be foreseen by any but a divine prescience. I did them and they came to pass; for what God does he does effectually.

The very calamities they were now groaning under in Babylon God did from the beginning declare to them by Moses, as the certain consequences of their apostasy from God, Le 26:31,De 28:36,29:28. He also declared to them their return to God, and to their own land again, De 30:4,Le 26:44,45. Thus he showed them how he would deal with them long before it came to pass. Let them compare their present state together with the deliverance they had now in prospect with what was written in the law, and they would find the scripture exactly fulfilled.

2. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable providence (Isa 48:6): I have shown thee new things from this time. Besides the general view given from the beginning of God's proceedings with them, he showed them new things by the prophets of their own day, and created them. They were hidden things, which they could not otherwise know, as the prophecy concerning Cyrus and the exact time of their release out of Babylon.

These things God created now, Isa 48:7. Their restoration was in effect their creation, and they had a promise of it not from the beginning, but of late; for to prevent their apostasy from God, or to recover them, prophecy was kept up among them. Yet it was told them when they could not come to the knowledge of it in any other way than by divine revelation. "Consider," says God, "how much soever it is talked of now among you and expected, it was told you by the prophets, when it was the furthest thing from your thoughts, when you had not heard it, when you had not known it, nor had any reason to expect it, and when your ear was not opened concerning it (Isa 48:7,8), when

the thing seemed utterly impossible, and you would scarcely have given any one the hearing who should have told you of it." God had shown them hidden things which were out of the reach of their knowledge, and done for them great things, out of the reach of their power: "Now," says he (Isa 48:6), "thou hast heard; see all this. Thou hast heard the prophecy; see the accomplishment of it, and observe whether the word and works of God do not exactly agree; and will you not declare it, that as you have heard so you have seen? Will you not own that the Lord is the true God, the only true God, that he has the knowledge and power which no creature has and which none of the gods of the nations can pretend to? Will you not own that your God has been a good God to you? Declare this to his honour, and your own shame, who have dealt so deceitfully with him and preferred others before him."

8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time
that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal
very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.
9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will
I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.
10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee
in the furnace of affliction.

The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them--their own unworthiness that God should do it for them and the many difficulties in the thing itself; now, in these verses, both these discouragements are removed, for here is,

I. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake, be it known to them, but for his name's sake, for his own sake, Isa 48:9-11.

1. It is true they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them. Their captivity was the punishment of

their iniquity; and if, when he had them in Babylon, he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he would only have dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God. "But," says God, "I will defer my anger" (or, rather, stifle and suppress it); "I will make it appear that I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people." And why will God thus stay his hand? For my name's sake; because this people was called by his name, and made profession of his name, and, if they were cut off, the enemies would blaspheme his name. It is for my praise; because it would redound to the honour of his mercy to spare and reprieve them, and, if he continued them to be to him a people, they might be to him for a name and a praise.

2. It is true they were very corrupt and ill-disposed, but God would himself refine them, and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them: "I have refined thee, that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour." Though he does not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as he did. It was not to cut them off, but to do them good. It was to refine them, but not as silver, or with silver, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they would be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and, as such, might justly be put away (Ps 119:119) as reprobate silver, Jer 6:30. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction, that is, I have made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things." Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels and a good work of grace has been begun in them in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purpose.

3. It is true they could not pretend to merit at God's hand so great a favour as their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them and bring them so much joy; therefore, says God, For my own sake, even for my own sake, will I do it, Isa 48:11. See how the emphasis is laid upon that; for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fall to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour, but to save the honour of his own name, that that may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the heathen, who, in triumphing over Israel, thought they triumphed over the God of Israel and imagined their gods too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar's revels, when he profaned the holy vessels of God's temple at the same time that he praised his idols (Da 5:2,4), and of the Babylonians' demand (Ps 137:3), Sing us one of the songs of Zion. God will therefore deliver his people, because he will not suffer his glory to be thus given to another. Moses pleaded this often with God: Lord, what will the Egyptians say? Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any further than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people that, whatever becomes of them, God will secure his own honour; and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.

11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it:* for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

Here is a proof that God could do it for them, though they were unable to help themselves and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's called, called according to his purpose, called by him out of Egypt (Ho 11:1) and now out of Babylon, a people whom with a distinguishing favour he calls by name, and to whom he calls. They are his called, for they are called to him, called by his name, and called

his; and therefore he will look after them, and they may be assured that, as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength. They need not fear them, for, 1. He is God alone, and the eternal God (Isa 48:12): "I am he who can do what I will and will do what is best, he whom none can compare with, much less contend with. I am the first; I also am the last." Who can be too quick for him that is the first, or anticipate him? Who can be too hard for him that is the last, and will keep the field against all opposers, and will reign till they are all made his footstool? What room then is left to doubt of their deliverance when he undertakes it whose designs cannot but be well laid, for he is the first, and well executed, for he is the last. As for this God, his work is perfect.

2. He is the God that made the world, and he that did that can do any thing, Isa 48:13. Look we down? We see the earth firm under us, and feel it so; it was his hand that laid the foundation of it. Look we up? We see the heavens spread out as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand that spread them, that spanned them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometimes metes out his work by spans. This intimates that God has a vast reach and can compass designs of the greatest extent. If the palm of his right hand (so the margin reads it) has gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do with his outstretched arm? Yet this is not all: he has not only made the heavens and the earth, and therefore he in whom our hope and help is omnipotent (Ps 124:8), but he has the command of all the hosts of both; when he calls them into his service, to go on his errands, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names: "Here we are; what wilt thou have us to do?" They stand up, not only in reverence to their Creator, but in a readiness to execute his orders: They stand up together, unanimously concurring, and helping one another in the service of their Maker. If God therefore will deliver his people, he cannot be at a loss for instruments to be employed in effecting their deliverance.

3. He has already foretold it, and, having infinite knowledge, so that he foresaw it, no doubt he has almighty power to effect it: "All you of the house of Jacob, assemble yourselves, and hear this for your comfort, Which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wise men, has declared these things, or could declare them?" Isa 48:14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be a lady for ever and Israel perpetual slave; and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary, to undeceive them; whereas God by his prophets had given notice to the Jews, long before, of their captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, as he had now likewise given them notice of their release (Isa 48:15): I, even I, have spoken; and he would not have spoken it if he could not have made it good: none could out-see him, and therefore we may be sure that none could outdo him.

4. The person is pitched upon who is to be employed in this service, and the measures are concerted in the divine counsels, which are unalterable. Cyrus is the man who must do it; and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done when we are particularly informed how and by whom. It is not left at uncertainty who shall do it, but the matter is fixed.

(1.) It is one whom God is well pleased in, upon this account, because he is designed for this service: The Lord has loved him (Isa 48:14); he has done him this favour, this honour, to make him an instrument in the redemption of his people and therein a type of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. Those God does a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church.

(2.) It is one to whom God will give authority and commission: I have called him, have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out.

(3.) It is one whom God will by a series of providences lead to this service: "I have brought him from a far country, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step, quite beyond his own intentions." Whom God calls he will bring, will cause them to come (so the word is), to come at the call.

(4.) It is one whom God will own and give success to. Cyrus will do God's pleasure on Babylon, that which it is his pleasure should be done and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve and has no regard either to the will of God or to his favour in the doing of it. His arm (Cyrus's army, and in it God's arm) shall come, and be upon the Chaldeans, to bring them down (Isa 48:14); for, if God call him and bring him, he will certainly make his way prosperous, Isa 48:15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way when we follow a divine call and guidance.

13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together.

14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things?* The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be on* the Chaldeans.

15 I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

Here, as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophet speaking in God's name, or rather to God speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great prophet by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us, and that is sufficient: Come near therefore, and hear this. Note, Those that would hear and understand what God says must come near, and approach to him; let them come as near as they can. Let those

that have hearkened to the tempter now come near, and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them. Here,

I. God refers them to what he hath both said to them and done for them formerly, which if they would reflect upon, they might thence fetch great encouragement to trust in God at this time. 1. He had always spoken plainly to them from the beginning, by Moses and all the prophets: I have not spoken in secret, but publicly, from the top of Mount Sinai, and in the chief places of concourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes; he did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so that they might be understood, Hab 2:2. 2. He had always acted wonderfully for them: "From the time that they were first formed into a people there I am, there have I been resident among them and presiding in their affairs (he sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them), and therefore there I will be still." He that has been with his people hitherto will be to the end.

II The prophet himself, as a type of the great prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message: Now the Lord God (the same that spoke from the beginning and did not speak in secret) has by his Spirit sent me, Isa 48:16. The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father and the Son, and having a divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it; and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet says to the same purport with this (Isa 61:1) is applied to Christ (Lu 4:21), so may this be; the Lord God sent him, and he had the Spirit without measure.

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

19 thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

20 Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging (Isa 48:17): Thus saith Jehovah, the eternal God, thy Redeemer, that has often been so, that has engaged to be so, and will be faithful to the engagement, for he is the Holy One, that cannot deceive, the Holy One of Israel, that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law, and give authority to that, introduce the promise, and give validity to that: "I am the Lord thy God, whom thou mayest depend upon as in relation to thee and in covenant with thee."

1. Here is the good work which God undertakes to fulfil in them. He that is their Redeemer, in order to that, will be,

(1.) Their instructor: "I am thy God that teaches thee to profit, that is, teaches thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace." By this God shows himself to be a God in covenant with us, by his teaching us (Heb 8:10,11); and none teaches like him, for he gives an understanding. Whom God redeems he teaches; whom he designs to deliver out of their afflictions he first teaches to profit by their afflictions, makes them partakers of his holiness, for that is the profit for which he chastens us, Heb 12:10.

(2.) Their guide: He leads them to the way and in the way by which they should go. He not only enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps. By his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads them in the way of deliverance. Happy are those that are under such a guidance!

2. Here is the good-will which God declares he had for them by his good wishes concerning them, Isa 48:18,19. He had indeed brought them into captivity, but it was owing to themselves, nor did he afflict them willingly.

(1.) As when he gave them his law he earnestly wished they might be obedient (O that there were such a heart in them! De 5:29. O that they were wise! De 32:29), so, when he had punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient: O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Isa 48:18. O that my people had hearkened unto me! Ps 81:13. This confirms what God had said and sworn, that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners.

(2.) He assures them that, if they had been obedient, that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them if their sins had not turned them away, Isa 59:1,2.

[1.] They should have been carried on in a constant uninterrupted stream of prosperity: "Thy peace should have been as a river; thou shouldst have enjoyed a series of mercies, one continually following another, as the waters of a river, which always last." Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum--It flows, and will for ever flow; not like the waters of a land-flood, which are soon gone.

[2.] Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength, as the waves of the sea. Such should their righteousness have been that nothing should have stood before it; whereas, now they had been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was interrupted, and their righteousness overpowered.

[3.] The rising generation should have been very numerous and very prosperous; whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives (Ezr 2:64), not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt. They should have been numberless as the sand, according to the promise (Ge 22:17), which they had forfeited the benefit of: "The offspring of thy bowels would have been innumerable, like the gravel of the sea, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea."

[4.] The honour of Israel should still have been unstained, untouched: His name should not have been cut off, as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been destroyed from before God. We cannot reckon the name either of a family or of a kingdom destroyed till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceases to be a name in his holy place. Now God tells them thus what he would have done for them if they had persevered in their obedience, First, That they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich mercies. Note, This should engage us (I might say, enrage us) against sin, that it has not only deprived us of the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable to think how happy they might have been. Secondly, That his mercy might appear the more illustrious in working deliverance for them, though they had forfeited it and rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

3. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them.

(1.) Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon. God proclaimed, long before Cyrus did, that whoever would might return to his own land (Isa 48:20): "You have a full discharge

sent you: Go you forth out of Babylon; the prison-doors are thrown open, and the trumpet sounds, proclaiming a release." Perhaps with this word, as a means, the Spirit of the Lord stirred up the spirits of those that did take the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation (Ezr 1:5): Flee you from the Chaldeans, not with an ignominious stolen flight, as Jacob fled from Laban, but with a holy disdain, as scorning to stay any longer among them; flee you, not silently and sorrowfully, but with a voice, with a voice of singing, as they fled of old out of Egypt, Ex 15:1.

(2.) Here is the news of this sent to all parts: "Let it be declared; let it be told; let it be uttered; make it to be heard by the most remote, by the most remiss; send the tidings of it by word of mouth; send it by writing, from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, even to the utmost regions, to the ends of the earth." This was a figure of the publishing of the gospel to all the world; but that brings glad tidings which all the world is concerned in, this only that which it is fit all should take notice of, that they may be invited by it to forsake their idols and come into the service of the God of Israel. Let them all know then,

[1.] That those whom God owns for his are such as he has dearly bought and paid for: The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob; he has done it formerly, when he brought them out of Egypt, and now he is about to do it again. Jacob was God's servant, and therefore he redeemed him; for what had other masters to do with God's servants? Israel is God's son, therefore Pharaoh must let him go. God redeemed Jacob, and therefore it was fit that he should be his servant (Ps 116:16); the bonds God had loosed tied them the faster to him. He that redeemed us has an unquestionable right to us.

[2.] That those whom God designs to bring home to himself he will take care of, that they want not for the necessary expenses of their journey. When he brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the deserts, they thirsted not (Isa 48:21), for in all their removals the water out of the rock followed them; thence

he caused the waters to flow, and, since rock-water is the clearest and finest, God clave the rock, and the waters gushed out; for he can fetch in necessary supplies for his people in a way that they think the least likely. This refers to what he did for them when he brought them out of Egypt; when all this was literally true. But it should now be in effect done again, in their return out of Babylon, so well provided for should they and theirs be in their return. God does his work as effectually by marvellous providences as by miracles, though perhaps they are not so much taken notice of. This is applicable to those treasures of grace laid up for us in Jesus Christ, from which all good flows to us as the water did to Israel out of the rock, for that rock is Christ.

(3.) Here is a caveat put in against the wicked who go on still in their trespasses. Let not them think to have any benefit among God's people. Though in show and profession they herd themselves among them, let them not expect to come in sharers; no (Isa 48:22), though God's thoughts concerning the body of that people were thoughts of peace, yet to those among them that were wicked and hated to be reformed there is no peace, no peace with God or their own consciences, no real good, whatever is pretended to. What have those to do with peace who are enemies to God? Their false prophets cried Peace to those to whom it did not belong; but God tells them that there shall be no peace, nor any think like it, to the wicked. The quarrel sinners have commenced with God, if not taken up in time by repentance, will be an everlasting quarrel.

21 And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

22 *There is* no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

Isaiah-49

Israel the Lord's Servant

1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

Here, an auditory is summoned together and attention demanded. The sermon in the foregoing chapter was directed to the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, Isa 49:1,12. But this is directed to the isles (that is, the Gentiles, for they are called the isles of the Gentiles, Ge 10:5) and to the people from far, that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and afar off. Let these listen (Isa 49:1) as to a thing at a distance, which yet they are to hear with desire and attention. Note,

1 The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lie most remote; and they are concerned to listen to them.

2 The Gentiles listened to the gospel when the Jews were deaf to it.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

The great author and publisher of the redemption produces his authority from heaven for the work he had undertaken.

1. God had appointed him and set him apart for it: The Lord has called me from the womb to this office and made mention of my name, nominated me to be the Saviour. By an angel he called him Jesus--a Saviour, who should save his people from their sins, Mt 1:21. Nay, from the womb of the divine counsels, before all worlds, he was called to this service, and help was laid upon him; and he came at the call, for he said, Lo, I come, with an eye to what was written of him in the volume of the

book. This was said of some of the prophets, as types of him, Jer 1:5. Paul was separated to the apostleship from his mother's womb, Ga 1:15.

2. God had fitted and qualified him for the service to which he designed him. He made his mouth like a sharp sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a bright arrow, furnished him with every thing necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and bring back God's revolted subjects to their allegiance, by his word: that is the two-edged sword (Heb 4:12) which comes out of his mouth, Re 19:15. The convictions of the word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, Ps 45:5.

3. God had preferred him to the service for which he had reserved him: He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand and in his quiver, which denotes,

(1.) Concealment. The gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles by it, were long hidden from ages and generations, hidden in God (Eph 3:5,Ro 16:25), hidden in the shadow of the ceremonial law and the Old-Testament types.

(2.) Protection. The house of David was the particular care of the divine Providence, because that blessing was in it. Christ in his infancy was sheltered from the rage of Herod.

4. God had owned him, had said unto him, "Thou art my servant, whom I have employed and will prosper; thou art Israel, in effect, the prince with God, that hast wrestled and prevailed; and in thee I will be glorified." The people of God are Israel, and they are all gathered together, summed up, as it were, in Christ, the great representative of all Israel, as the high priest who had the names of all the tribes on his breastplate; and in him God is and will be glorified; so he said by a voice from heaven, Joh 12:27,28. Some read the words in two clauses: Thou art my servant (so Christ is, Isa 42:1); it is Israel in whom

I will be glorified by thee; it is the spiritual Israel, the elect, in the salvation of whom by Jesus Christ God will be glorified, and his free grace for ever admired.

3 and said unto me, Thou *art* my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

He is assured of the good success of his undertaking; for whom God calls he will prosper. And as to this,

1. He objects the discouragement he had met with at his first setting out (Isa 49:4): "Then I said, with a sad heart, I have laboured in vain; those that were ignorant, and careless, and strangers to God, are so still: I have called, and they have refused; I have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people." This was Isaiah's complaint, but it was no more than he was told to expect, Isa 6:9. The same was a temptation to Jeremiah to resolve he would labour no more, Jer 20:9. It is the complaint of many a faithful minister, that has not loitered, but laboured, not spared, but spent, his strength, and himself with it, and yet, as to many, it is all in vain and for nought; they will not be prevailed with to repent and believe. But here it seems to point at the obstinacy of the Jews, among whom Christ went in person preaching the gospel of the kingdom, laboured and spent his strength, and yet the rulers and the body of the nation rejected him and his doctrine; so very few were brought in, when one would think none should have stood out, that he might well say, "I have laboured in vain, preached so many sermons, wrought so many miracles, in vain." Let not the ministers think it strange that they are slighted when the Master himself was.

2. He comforts himself under this discouragement with this consideration, that it was the cause of God in which he was engaged and the call of God that engaged him in it: Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, who is the Judge of all, and my work with my God, whose servant I am. His comfort is, and it may be the comfort of all faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours,

(1.) That, however it be, it is a righteous cause that they are pleading. They are with God, and for God; they are on his side, and workers together with him. They like not their judgment, the rule they go by, nor their work, the business they are employed in, ever the worse for this. The unbelief of men gives them no cause to suspect the truth of their doctrine, Ro 3:3.

(2.) That their management of this cause, and their prosecution of this work, were known to God, and they could appeal to him concerning their sincerity, and that it was not through any neglect of theirs that they laboured in vain. "He knows the way that I take; my judgment is with the Lord, to determine whether I have not delivered my soul and left the blood of those that perish on their own heads."

(3.) Though the labour be in vain as to those that are laboured with, yet not as to the labourer himself, if he be faithful: his judgment is with the Lord, who will justify him and bear him out, though men condemn him and run him down; and his work (the reward of his work) is with his God, who will take care he shall be no loser, no, not by his lost labour.

(4.) Though the judgment be not yet brought forth unto victory, nor the work to perfection, yet both are with the Lord, to carry them on and give them success, according to his purpose, in his own way and time.

3. He receives from God a further answer to this objection, Isa 49:5,6. He knew very well that God had set him on work, had formed him from the womb to be his servant, had not only called him so early to it (Isa 49:1), but begun so early to fit him for it and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to employ as his servants he is fashioning and preparing to be so long before, when perhaps neither themselves nor others are aware of it. It is he that forms the spirit of man within him. Christ was to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that had treacherously departed from him. The seed of Jacob therefore,

according to the flesh, must first be dealt with, and means used to bring them back. Christ, and the word of salvation by him, are sent to them first; nay, Christ comes in person to them only, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But what if Jacob will not be brought back to God and Israel will not be gathered? So it proved; but this is a satisfaction in that case,

(1.) Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; and those are truly glorious that are so in God's eyes. Though few of the Jewish nation were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles, and many of them loaded him with ignominy and disgrace, yet God put honour upon him, and made him glorious, at his baptism, and in his transfiguration, spoke to him from heaven, sent angels to minister to him, made even his shameful death glorious by the many prodigies that attended it, much more his resurrection. In his sufferings God was his strength, so that though he met with all the discouragement imaginable, by the contempts of a people whom he had done so much to oblige, yet he did not fail nor was discouraged. An angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Lu 22:43. Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of their labours, shall yet be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their strength.

(2.) The gospel shall be glorious in the eyes of the world; though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, Isa 49:6. The Messiah seemed as if he had been primarily designed to bring Jacob back, Isa 49:5. But he is here told that it is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness, are designed him: "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob to the dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, and to restore the preserved of Israel, and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly" (nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be

but a small matter, in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only); "and therefore I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles (many great and mighty nations by the gospel of Christ shall be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God), that thou mayest be my salvation, the author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this to the end of the earth, to nations at the greatest distance." Hence Simeon learned to call Christ a light to lighten the Gentiles (Lu 2:32), and St. Paul's exposition of this text is what we ought to abide by, and it serves for a key to the context, Ac 13:47.

Therefore, says he, we turn to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel to them, because so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles. In this the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more his honour than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a further accomplishment, if that time be yet to come which the apostle speaks of, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Observe, God calls it his salvation, which some think intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his heart was upon it. They further observe that Christ is given for a light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish. Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy

4 Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: *yet* surely my judgment *is* with the Lord, and my work with my God.

5 And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

In these verses we have,

The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah (Isa 49:7): The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and Israel's Holy One, who had always taken care of the Jewish church and wrought out for them those deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here to him, who was the undertaker of that salvation. And,

1. He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon, nay, unparalleled. He was one whom man despised. He is despised and rejected of men, Isa 53:3. To be despised by so mean a creature (man, who is himself a worm) bespeaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save and to put honour upon, yet despised him and put contempt upon him; so wretchedly ungrateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings. They not only made him despicable, but odious. He was one whom the nation abhorred; they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews herein worse than Gentiles; for his cross was to the one a stumbling-block and to the other foolishness. He was a servant of rulers; he was trampled upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, Joh 19:10. This he submitted to for our salvation.

2. He promises him his exaltation. Honour was done him even in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, I it John the Baptist; noblemen, rulers, centurions came and kneeled to him. But this was more fully accomplished when kings received his gospel, and submitted to his yoke, and

joined in the worship of him, and called themselves the vassals of Christ. Not that Christ values the rich more than the poor (they stand upon a level with him), but it is for the honour of his kingdom among men when the great ones of the earth appear for him and do homage to him. This shall be the accomplishment of God's promise, and he will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and therefore it shall be done, because of the Lord who is faithful and true to his promise; and this shall be an evidence that Christ had a commission for what he did, and that God had chosen him, and would own the choice he had made.

The Restoration of Zion Promised

8 Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee,
and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve
thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the
earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;
9 that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in
darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their
pastures *shall be* in all high places.

The blessings he has in store for all those to whom he is made salvation.

1. God will own and stand by him in his undertaking (Isa 49:8): In an acceptable time have I heard thee, that is, I will hear thee. Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up strong cries, and was heard, Heb 5:7. He knew that the Father heard him always (Joh 11:42), heard him for himself (for, though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it), heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority. Father, I will, Joh 17:24. All our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father and the prevalency of his intercession, that he always heard him; and this makes the gospel time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that

God hears the Redeemer for us, Heb 7:25. Nor will he hear him only, but help him to go through with his undertaking. The Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour, to drive him off from his undertakings, but God promises to preserve him and enable him to persevere in it; on that one stone were seven eyes, Zec 3:9. God would preserve him, would preserve his interest, his kingdom among men, though fought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out. God's preserving and helping him was to make the day of his gospel a day of salvation. And so the apostle understands it: Behold, now is the day of salvation, now the word of reconciliation by Christ is preached, 2Co 6:2.

(1.) He shall be guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man: I will give thee for a covenant of the people. This we had before (Isa 42:6), and it is here repeated as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation and observation. He is given for a covenant, that is, for a pledge of all the blessings of the covenant. It was in him that God was reconciling the world to himself; and he that spared not his own Son will deny us nothing. He is given for a covenant, not only as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed days-man who has laid his hand upon us both, but as he is all in all in the covenant. All the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his; and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant are summed up in his being ours.

(2.) He shall repair the decays of the church and build it upon a rock. He shall establish the earth, or rather the land, the land of Judea, a type of the church. He shall cause the desolate heritages to be inherited; so the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity, and so the church, which in the last and degenerate

ages of the Jewish nation had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the gospel.

(3.) He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall say to the prisoners that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, Go forth, Isa 49:9. Pardoning mercy is a release from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin. Both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation. It is he that says, Go forth; it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to those that are in darkness, Show yourselves; "not only see, but be seen, to the glory of God and your own comfort." When he discharged the lepers from their confinement, he said, Go show yourselves to the priest. When we see the light, let our light shine.

(4.) He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty to the place of their rest and happy settlement, Isa 49:9-11. These verses refer to the provision made for the Jews' return out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the divine Providence, as favourites of Heaven, and now so in a special manner; but they are applicable to that guidance of divine grace which all God's spiritual Israel are under, from their release out of bondage to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan.

[1.] They shall have their charges borne and shall be fed at free cost with food convenient: They shall feed in the ways, as sheep; for now, as formerly, God leads Joseph like a flock. When God pleases even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall be not only in the valleys, but in all high places, which are commonly dry and barren. Wherever God brings his people he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them, Ps 34:10. And so well shall they be provided for that they shall not

hunger nor thirst, for what they need they shall have seasonably, before their need of it comes to an extremity.

[2.] They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would incommode them: Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them, or God causes his flock to rest at noon, So 1:7. No evil thing shall befal those that put themselves under a divine protection; they shall be enabled to bear the burden and heat of the day.

[3.] They shall be under God's gracious guidance: He that has mercy on them, in bringing them out of their captivity, shall lead them, as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire. Even by springs of water, which will be ready to them in their march, shall he guide them. God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts, not like the pools of rainwater in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel. Those who are under a divine guidance, and follow that closely, while they do so, may, upon good grounds, hope for divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or brooks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides shall find a ready road and all obstacles removed (Isa 49:11): I will make all my mountains a way. He that in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway, or causeway, shall be raised, to make it both the plainer and the fairer.

Note, The ways in which God leads his people he himself will be the overseer of, and will take care that they be well mended and kept in repair, as of old the ways that led to the cities of refuge. The levelling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold (Isa 40:2,3), was applied to gospel work, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven, which we cannot by our own strength get over, yet the grace of God

shall be sufficient to help us over them and to make even the mountains a way, Isa 35:8.

(5.) He shall bring them all together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased, to prevent any combination among themselves. But, when God's time shall come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them all, all that lie at the greatest distance from each other, and those also that had taken shelter in other countries shall meet them in the land of Judah, Isa 49:12. Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim, which probably is some province of Babylon not elsewhere named in scripture, but some make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt, called Sin, of which we read, Eze 30:15,16. Now this promise was to have a further accomplishment in the great confluence of converts to the gospel church, and its full accomplishment when God's chosen shall come from the east and from the west to sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, Mt 8:11.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun
smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even
by the springs of water shall he guide them.
11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be
exalted.
12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north
and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.
13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into
singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people,
and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

The scope of these verses is to show that the return of the people of God out of their captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ (of which that was a type), would be great occasions of joy to the church and great proofs of the tender care God has of the church.

Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, Isa 49:13. Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us in the benefits of the redemption, and all they can contribute to this sacred melody is little enough in return for such inestimable favours, Ps 96:11. Let there be joy in heaven, and let the angels of God celebrate the praises of the great Redeemer; let the earth and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, be joyful, and break forth into singing, for the earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God (Ro 8:19,21) shall now be abundantly answered. God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be universal joy, for God has comforted his people that were in sorrow and he will have mercy upon the afflicted because of his compassion, upon his afflicted because of his covenant.

14 But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments to prove the most tender and affectionate concern God has for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1 The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and concern for it, Isa 49:14. Zion, in distress, said, The Lord has forsaken me, and looks after me no more; my Lord has forgotten me, and will look after me no more. See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such a time their temptations may be alarmingly violent. Infidels, in their presumption, say God has forsaken the earth (Eze 8:12), and has forgotten their sins, Ps 10:11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, "God has forsaken his church and forgotten the sorrows of his people." But we have no more reason to question his promise and grace than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a rewarder as he is a revenger. Away

therefore with these distrusts and jealousies, which are the bane of friendship.

2 The triumphs of the church, after her troubles, will in due time put the matter out of question.

(1.) What God will do for Zion we are told, Isa 49:17.

[1.] Her friends, who had deserted her, shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her assistance and comfort: Thy children shall make haste. Converts to the faith of Christ are the children of the church; they shall join themselves to her with great readiness and cheerfulness, and flock into the communion of saints, as doves to their windows. "Thy builders shall make haste" (so some read it), "who shall build up thy houses, thy walls, especially thy temple; they shall do it with expedition." Church work is usually slow work; but, when God's time shall come, it shall be done suddenly.

[2.] Her enemies, who had threatened and assaulted her, shall be forced to withdraw from her: Thy destroyers, and those who made thee waste, who had made themselves masters of the country and ravaged it, shall go forth of thee. By Christ the prince of this world, the great destroyer, is cast out, is dispossessed, has his power broken and his attempts quite baffled.

(2.) Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless, that God has not forsaken her, nor forgotten her, nor ever will. Be assured, [1.] That God has a tender affection for his church and people, Isa 49:15. In answer to Zion's fears, God speaks as one concerned for his own glory (he takes himself to be reflected upon if Zion say, The Lord has forsaken me, and he will clear himself), as one concerned also for his people's comfort; he would not have them droop, and be discouraged, and give way to any uneasy thoughts. "You think

that I have forgotten you. Can a woman forget her sucking child?"

First, It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be of the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, which, being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion. A mother, especially, cannot but be concerned for her own child; for it is her own, a piece of herself, and very lately one with her. A nursing mother, most of all, cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own breasts will soon put her in mind of it if she should forget it.

But, Secondly, It is possible that she may forget. A woman may perhaps be so unhappy as not to be able to remember her sucking child (she may be sick, and dying, and going to the land of forgetfulness), or she may be so unnatural as not to have compassion on the son of her womb, as those who, to conceal their shame, are the death of their children as soon as they are their life, La 4:10,De 28:57. But, says God, I will not forget thee. Note, God's compassions to his people infinitely exceed those of the tenderest parents towards their children. What are the affections of nature to those of the God of nature!

[2.] That he has a constant care of his church and people (Isa 49:16): I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands. This does not allude to the foolish art of palmistry, which imagines every man's fate to be engraved in the palms of his hands and to be legible in the lines there, but to the custom of those who tie a string upon their hands or fingers to put them in mind of things which they are afraid they shall forget, or to the wearing of signet or locket-rings in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm denotes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interests, So 8:6. If we bind God's law as a sign upon our hand (De 6:8,11,18), he will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will look upon that and remember the covenant. He adds, "Thy walls shall be continually before me;

thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion." Do Zions' friends favour her dust? Ps 102:14.

So does her God. Or, "The plan and model of thy walls, that are to be rebuilt, is before me, and they shall certainly be built according to it." Or, "Thy walls (that is, thy safety) are my continual care; so are the watchmen on thy walls." Some apply his engraving his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

17 Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, *and* come to thee. *As* I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them *on thee,* as a bride *doeth.*

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church by the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

I. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised (Isa 49:17) that her children should make haste; that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts. Look round, and see how they gather themselves to thee (Isa 49:18),

by a local accession to the Jewish church. They come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the centre of their unity; but, under the gospel, it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ in faith and love. Those that come to Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant do thereby come to the Mount Zion, the church of the first-born, Heb 12:22,23. Lift up thy eyes, and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest, Joh 4:35. Note, It is matter of joy to the church to see a multitude of converts to Christ.

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burden and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part of the promise is confirmed with an oath: As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thyself with them all. The addition of such numbers to the church shall complete her clothing; and, when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, Re 19:7. They shall make her to appear comely and considerable; and she shall therefore bind them on with as much care and complacency as a bride does her ornaments. When those that are added to the church are serious, and holy, and exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.

3. That thus the country which was waste and desolate, and without inhabitant (Isa 5:9,6:11), shall be again peopled, nay, it shall be over-peopled (Isa 49:19): "Thy waste and thy desolate places, that have long lain so, and the land of thy destruction, that land of thine which was destroyed with thee and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be so full of people that there shall be no room for the inhabitants." Here is blessing poured out till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal 3:10. Not that they shall be crowded by their enemies, or straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were, because of the Canaanite in the land. "No, those that swallow thee up, and took possession of thy land when thy possession of it was

discontinued, shall be far away. Thy people shall be numerous, and there shall be no stranger, no enemy, among them." Thus the kingdom of God among men, which had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and by its graces and glories.

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply. Jerusalem, after she has lost abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new family growing up instead of them, children which she shall have after she has lost the other (Isa 49:20), as Seth, who was appointed another seed instead of Abel, and Job's children, which God blessed him with instead of those that were killed in the ruins of the house. God will repair his church's losses and secure to himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews, after their return, that Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets, Zec 8:5. The church, after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own infidelity, shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her. See Ga 4:27. They shall be so numerous that,

(1.) The Children shall complain for want of room; they shall say (and it is a good hearing), "Our numbers increase so fast that the place is too strait for us;" as the sons of the prophets complained, 2Ki 6:1. But, strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them, and the inconvenient straitness of the place shall be no hindrance to either; for it will be found, whatever we think, that even when the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are brought in, yet still there is room, room enough for those that are in and room for more, Lu 14:21,22.

(2.) The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, Isa 49:21. She shall say, Who has begotten me these? and, Who

has brought up these? They come to her with all the duty, affection, and submission of children; and yet she never bore any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but has them ready reared to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise, and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her condition had been very lately and very long. The Jewish nation had left her children; they were cut off. She had been desolate, without ark, and altar, and temple-service, those tokens of God's espousals to them; nay, she had been a captive, and continually removing to and fro, in an unsettled condition, and not likely to bring up children either for God or herself. She was left alone in obscurity (this is Zion whom no man seeks after), left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here,

[1.] That the church is not perpetually visible, but there are times when it is desolate, and left alone, and made few in number.

[2.] That yet on the other hand its desolations shall not be perpetual, nor will it be found too hard for God to repair them, and out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

[3.] That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, Isa 66:8.

5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, Isa 49:22. The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up; but God will sow it to himself in the earth, and will thence reap a plentiful crop, Ho 2:23. Observe,

(1.) How the Gentiles shall be called in. God will lift up his hand to them, to invite or beckon them, having all the day stretched it out in vain to the Jews, Isa 65:2. Or it denotes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, to make them willing. And he will set up his

standard to them, the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall enlist themselves.

(2.) How they shall come: They shall bring thy sons in their arms. They shall assist the sons of Zion, which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever any parent carried a child that was weak and helpless. God can raise up friends for returning Israelites even among Gentiles. The earth helped the woman, Re 12:16.

Or, "When they come themselves, they shall bring their children, and make them thy children;" compare Isa 60:4. "Dost thou ask, Who has begotten and brought up these? Know that they were begotten and brought up among the Gentiles, but they are now brought into thy family." Let all that are concerned about young converts, and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ does with the lambs which he gathers with his arms and carries in his bosom.

II. That the church shall have a great and prevailing interest in the nations, Isa 49:22,23.

1. Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church: King shall be thy nursing fathers, to carry thy sons in their arms (as Moses, Nu 11:12); and, because women are the most proper nurses, their queens shall be thy nursing mothers. This promise was in part fulfilled to the Jews, after their return out of captivity. Several of the kings of Persia were very tender of their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; Esther the queen was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his

mother Helena, and afterwards Theodosius, and others, who nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church in this world is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to those that do well.

2. Others of them, who stand it out against the church's interests, will be forced to yield and to repent of their opposition: They shall bow down to thee and lick the dust. The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this (Re 3:9): I will make those of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thy feet. Or it may be meant of the willing subjection which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ the church's King, as he manifests himself in the church (Ps 72:11): All kings shall fall down before him. And by all this it shall be made to appear,

(1.) That God is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out nor rising up.

(2.) That those who wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.

19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place *is* too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had* they *been?*

22 Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

Here is, I. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected; for (Isa 49:24) they were a prey in the hand of the mighty, of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force. Yet that was not all: they were lawful captives; by the law of God, having offended, they were justly delivered into captivity; and by the law of nations, being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken either,

1. By the enemies, as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go. They plead both might and right. Proud men think all their own that they can lay their hands on and their title good if they have but the longest sword. Or,

2. By their friends, either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance ("for who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms or a treaty of peace?"), or in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance. "Who would have thought that ever the prey should be taken from the mighty? Yet it is done." This is applicable to our redemption by Christ. As to Satan, we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives, and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value.

II. This objection answered by an express promise, and a further promise; for God's promises being all yea, and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another.

1. Here is an express promise with a non-obstante--notwithstanding to the strength of the enemy (Isa 49:25): "Even the captives of the mighty, though they are mighty, shall be taken away, and it is to no purpose for them to oppose it; and the prey of the terrible, though they are terrible, shall be delivered; and, as they cannot with all their strength outforce, so they cannot with all their impudence outface, the deliverance, and the counsels of God concerning it." The Lord saith thus, who, having all power and all hearts in his hands is able to make his words good.

2. Here is a further promise, showing how, and in what way, God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will work salvation for the oppressed: "I will contend with him that contends with thee, will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in oppressing thee; whoever it be, though but a single person, that contends with thee, he shall know that it is at his peril, and thus I will save thy children." The captives shall be delivered by leading captivity captive, that is, sending those into captivity that had held God's people captive, Re 13:10. Nay, they shall have blood for blood (Isa 49:26): "I will feed those that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood. The proud Babylonians shall become not only an easy, but an acceptable, prey to one another. God will send a dividing spirit among them, and their ruin, which was begun by a foreign invasion, shall be completed by their intestine divisions. They shall bite and devour one another, till they are consumed one of another. They shall greedily and with delight prey upon those that are their own flesh and blood." God can make the oppressors of his church to be their own tormentors and their own destroyers.

The New-Testament Babylon, having made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy. See how cruel men sometimes are to themselves and to one another: indeed those who are so to others are so to themselves, for God's justice and men's revenge will mete to them what they have measured to others. They not only thirst after blood, but drink it so greedily that they are drunken with it, and with as much pleasure as if it were sweet wine. If God had not more mercy on sinners than they would have one upon another were their passions let loose, the world would be soon an Aceldama, nay, a desolation.

III. See what will be the effect of Babylon's ruin: All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour. God will make it to appear, to the conviction of all the world, that, though Israel seem lost and cast off, they have a Redeemer, and, though they are made a prey to the mighty, Jacob has a mighty One, who is able to deal with all his enemies. God intends, by the deliverances of his church, both to notify and to magnify his own name.

25 But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Isaiah-50

The Lord Helps Those Who Trust in Him

1 Thus saith the Lord, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have

sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But, in answer to their murmurings, we have here,

I. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence, that the quarrel began on God's side, Isa 50:1. They could not say that he had done them any wrong or had acted arbitrarily.

1. He had been a husband to them; and husbands were then allowed a power to put away their wives upon any little disgust: if their wives found not favour in their eyes, they made nothing of giving them a bill of divorce, De 24:1,Mt 19:7. But they could not say that God had dealt so with them. It is true they were now separated from him, and had abode many days without ephod, altar, or sacrifice; but whose fault was that? They could not say that God had given their mother a bill of divorce; let them produce it if they can, for a bill of divorce was given into the hand of her that was divorced.

2. He had been a father to them; and fathers had then a power to sell their children for slaves to their creditors, in satisfaction for the debts they were not otherwise able to pay. Now it is true the Jews were sold to the Babylonians then, and afterwards to the Romans; but did God sell them for payment of his debts? No, he was not indebted to any of those to whom they were sold, or, if he had sold them, he did not increase his wealth by their price, Ps 44:12. When God chastens his children, it is neither for his pleasure (Heb 12:10) nor for his profit. All that are saved are saved by a prerogative of grace, but those that perish are cut off by an act of divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty.

II. A charge exhibited against them, showing them that they were themselves the authors of their own ruin: "Behold, for

your iniquities, for the pleasure of them and the gratification of your own base lusts, you have sold yourselves, for your iniquities you are sold; not as children are sold by their parents, to pay their debts, but as malefactors are sold by the judges, to punish them for their crimes. You sold yourselves to work wickedness, and therefore God justly sold you into the hands of your enemies, 2Ch 12:5,8. It is for your transgressions that your mother is put away, for her whoredoms and adulteries," which were always allowed to be a just cause of divorce. The Jews were sent into Babylon for their idolatry, a sin which broke the marriage covenant, and were at last rejected for crucifying the Lord of glory; these were the iniquities for which they were sold and put away.

III. The confirmation of this challenge and this charge.

1. It is plain that it was owing to themselves that they were cast off; for God came and offered them his favour, offered them his helping hand, either to prevent their trouble or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted him and all the tenders of his grace. "Do you lay it upon me?" (says God); "tell me, then, wherefore, when I came, was there no man to meet me, when I called, was there none to answer me?" Isa 50:2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard (Mt 21:34); he sent them his messengers, rising up betimes and sending them (Jer 35:15); he called to them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin: but was there no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the calls of God, or complied with the messages he sent them; and this was it for which they were sold and put away.

Because they mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore, God brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, 2Ch 36:16,17. Last of all he sent unto them his Son. He came to his own, but his own received him not; he called them to himself, but there were none that answered; he would have gathered

Jerusalem's children together, but they would not; they knew not, because they would not know, the things that belonged to their peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away and their house was left desolate, Mt 21:41,23:37,38,Lu 19:41,42. When God calls men to happiness, and they will not answer, they are justly left to be miserable.

2. It is plain that it was not owing to a want of power in God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death; nor was it owing to a want of power in Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not delivered because their God was not able to deliver them; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask, in scorn, Can this man save us? For himself he cannot save. "But" (says God) "is my hand shortened at all, or is it weakened?" Can any limits be set to Omnipotence? Cannot he redeem who is the great Redeemer? Has he no power to deliver whose all power is? To put to silence, and for ever to put to shame, their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it.

(1.) He can, when he pleases, dry up the seas, and make the rivers a wilderness. He did so for Israel when he redeemed them out of Egypt, and he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his rebuke, as easily as with a word's speaking. He can so dry up the rivers as to leave the fish to die for want of water, and to putrefy. When God turned the waters of Egypt into blood he slew the fish, Ps 105:29. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it will remove mountains and plant sycamores in the sea, is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in unbelief.

(2.) He can, when he pleases, eclipse the lights of heaven, clothe then with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering (Isa

50:3) by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balances, Job 36:32,37:16.

2 Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man? when I called, *was there* none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem ? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because *there is* no water, and dieth for thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

4 The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is* weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

Our Lord Jesus, having proved himself able to save, here shows himself as willing as he is able to save, here shows himself as willing as he is able. We suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself in these verses, engaging and encouraging himself to go on in his work as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him and strengthen him; but, like David, he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of and promised to be the Saviour.

I. As an acceptable preacher. Isaiah, a a prophet, was qualified for the work to which he was called, so were the rest of God's prophets, and others whom he employed as his messengers; but Christ was anointed with the Spirit above his fellows. To make the man of God perfect, he has,

1. The tongue of the learned, to know how to give instruction, how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, Isa 50:4. God, who made man's mouth, gave Moses the tongue of the learned, to speak for the terror and conviction of Pharaoh, Ex 4:11,12. He gave to Christ the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season for the comfort of those that are weary and heavily laden under the burden of sin, Mt 11:28. Grace was poured into his lips, and they are said to drop sweet-smelling myrrh. See what is the best learning of a minister, to know how

to comfort troubled consciences, and to speak pertinently, properly, and plainly, to the various cases of poor souls. An ability to do this is God's gift, and it is one of the best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. Let us repose ourselves in the many comfortable words which Christ has spoken to the weary.

2 The ear of the learned, to receive instruction. Prophets have as much need of this as of the tongue of the learned; for they must deliver what they are taught and no other, must hear the word from God's mouth diligently and attentively, that they may speak it exactly, Eze 3:17. Christ himself received that he might give. None must undertake to be teachers who have not first been learners. Christ's apostles were first disciples, scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, Mt 13:52. Nor is it enough to hear, but we must hear as the learned, hear and understand, hear and remember, hear as those that would learn by what we hear.

Those that would hear as the learned must be awake, and wakeful; for we are naturally drowsy and sleepy, and unapt to hear at all, or we hear by the halves, hear and do not heed. Our ears need to be wakened; we need to have something said to rouse us, to awaken us out of our spiritual slumbers, that we may hear as for our lives. We need to be awakened morning by morning, as duly as the day returns, to be awakened to do the work of the day in its day. Our case calls for continual fresh supplies of divine grace, to free us from the dulness we contract daily. The morning, when our spirits are most lively, is a proper time for communion with God; then we are in the best frame both to speak to him (my voice shalt thou hear in the morning) and to hear from him. The people came early in the morning to hear Christ in the temple (Lu 21:38), for, it seems, his were morning lectures. And it is God that wakens us morning by morning. If we do any thing to purpose in his service, it is he who, as our Master, calls us up; and we should doze perpetually if he did not waken us morning by morning.

5 The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious,
neither turned away back.
6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked
off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

As a patient sufferer, Isa 50:5,6. One would think that he who was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the weary should meet with no difficulty in his work, but universal acceptance. It is however quite otherwise; he has both hard work to do and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what undaunted constancy he went through with it. We have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went on resolutely in the work to which God had called him, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed; but we are sure that the prediction was abundantly verified in Jesus Christ: and here we have,

1. His patient obedience in his doing work. "The Lord God has not only wakened my ear to hear what he says, but has opened my ear to receive it, and comply with it" (Ps 40:6,7, My ear hast thou opened; then said I, Lo, I come); for when he adds, I was not rebellious, neither turned away back, more is implied than expressed--that he was willing, that though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains and give constant attendance as a servant, though he was to empty himself of that which was very great and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free and forward to his work even when he came to the hardest part of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good will to the work and service of God, is from the grace of God.

2. His obedient patience in his suffering work. I call it obedient patience because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will, thus pleading with himself, This commandment have I received of my Father, and thus submitting to God, Not as I will, but as thou wilt. In this submission he resigned himself,

(1.) To be scourged: I gave my back to the smiters; and that not only by submitting to the indignity when he was smitten, but by permitting it (or admitting it rather) among the other instances of pain and shame which he would voluntarily undergo for us.

(2.) To be buffeted: I gave my cheeks to those that not only smote them, but plucked off the hair of the beard, which was a greater degree both of pain and of ignominy.

(3.) To be spit upon: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. He could have hidden his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not, because he was made a reproach of men, and thus he would answer to the type of Job, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said that they smote him on the cheek reproachfully (Job 16:10), which was an expression not only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us, and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

7 For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

8 *He is* near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who *is* mine adversary? let him come near to me.

As a courageous champion, Isa 50:7-9. The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience, and, though he yields, yet he is more than a conqueror. Observe,

1 The dependence he has upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support was the support of Christ himself (Isa 50:7): The Lord God will help me; and again, Isa 50:9. Those whom God employs he will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having laid help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was all along with the man of his right hand. Nor will he only assist him in his work, but accept of him (Isa 50:8): He is near that justifieth. Isaiah, no doubt, was falsely accused and loaded with reproach and calumny, as other prophets were; but he despised the

reproach, knowing that God would roll it away and bring forth his righteousness as the light, perhaps in this world (Ps 37:6), at furthest in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun.

And so it was verified in Christ; by his resurrection he was proved to be not the man that he was represented, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Cæsar. The judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man: so near was he that justified him. But it was true of him in a further and more peculiar sense: the Father justified him when he accepted the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, and constituted him the Lord our righteousness, who was made sin for us. He was justified in the Spirit, 1Ti 3:16. He was near who did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justified, soon followed his condemnation and crucifixion. He was straightway glorified, Joh 13:32.

2 The confidence he thereupon has of success in his undertaking: "If God will help me, if he will justify me, will stand by me and bear me out, I shall not be confounded, as those are that come short of the end they aimed at and the satisfaction they promised themselves: I know that I shall not be ashamed." Though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had undertaken. Note, Work for God is work that we should not be ashamed of; and hope in God is hope that we shall not be ashamed of. Those that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed; they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed. 3. The defiance which in this confidence he bids to all opposers and opposition: "God will help me, and therefore have I set my face like a flint." The prophet did so; he was bold in reproving sin, in warning sinners (Eze 3:8,9), and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work, as Mediator, with

unshaken constancy and undaunted resolution; he did not fail nor was discouraged; and here he challenges all his opposers,

(1.) To enter the lists with him: Who will contend with me, either in law or by the sword? Let us stand together as combatants, or as the plaintiff and defendant. Who is my adversary? Who is the master of my cause? so the word is, "Who will pretend to enter an action against me? Let him appear, and come near to me, for I will not abscond." Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers; those who keep close to the pure word of God, in delivering their message, need not fear contradiction; the scriptures will bear them out, whoever contends with them. Great is the truth and will prevail. Christ speaks this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their champion. Who dares be an enemy to those whom he is a friend to, or contend with those for whom he is an advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it (Ro 8:33): Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?

(2.) He challenges them to prove any crime upon him (Isa 50:9): Who is he that shall condemn me? The prophet perhaps was condemned to die; Christ we are sure was; and yet both could say, Who is he that shall condemn? For there is no condemnation to those whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what became of them? They all shall wax old as a garment. The righteous cause of Christ and his prophets shall outlive all opposition. The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly; a little thing will serve to destroy them. But the roaring lion himself shall not prevail against God's witnesses. All believers are enabled to make this challenge, Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died.

9 Behold, the Lord God will help me; who *is* he *that* shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

10 Who *is* among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

The prophet, having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give to every one his portion, here makes use of it, rightly dividing the word of truth. It is the summary of the gospel. He that believes shall be saved (he that trusts in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for a while he walk in darkness and have no light), but he that believes not shall be damned; though for a while he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

I. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, Isa 50:10. Here observe,

1. What is always the character of a child of God. He is one that fears the Lord with a filial fear, that stands in awe of his majesty and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then tremble at his word (Isa 66:2) and are afraid of his judgments, Ps 119:120. He is one that obeys the voice of God's servant, is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant in the great work of man's redemption, one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ.

2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed that though he has in his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness and has no light, is disquieted and has little or no comfort. Who is there that does so? This intimates that it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but, whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. This is not meant so much of the comforts of this life

(those that fear God, when they have ever so great an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light) as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed. Pensive Christians are apt to be melancholy, and those who fear always are apt to fear too much. 3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark,

(1.) Let him trust in the name of the Lord, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, his wisdom, power, and goodness. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, let his run into that. Let him depend upon it that if he walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him.

(2.) Let him stay himself upon his God, his in covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God, as Christ on the cross, My God, My God. Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink he will find enough in God to stay himself upon. Let him trust in Christ, for God's name is in him (Ex 23:21), trust in that name of his, The Lord our righteousness, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

II. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves, Isa 50:11. Observe,

1 The description given of them. They kindle a fire, and walk in the light of that fire. They depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire (as Nadab and Abihu) and not with the fire from heaven. In their hope of acceptance with God they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ. They refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and

sufficiency, and warm themselves with that. It is both light and heat to them. They compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature-comforts are as sparks, short-lived and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them.

2 The doom passed upon them. They are ironically told to walk in the light of their own fire. "Make your best of it, while it lasts. But what will be in the end thereof, what will it come to at last? This shall you have of my hand (says Christ, for to him the judgment is committed), you shall lie down in sorrow, shall go to bed in the dark." See Job 18:5,6. His candle shall be put out with him. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.

11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass *yourselves* about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks *that* ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

Isaiah-51

Words of Comfort to Zion

1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord : look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.

Observe, 1. How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent and who are called upon to hearken to it, Isa 51:1. They are such as follow after

righteousness, such as are very desirous and solicitous both to be justified and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them and the image of God renewed on them. These are those that seek the Lord, for it is only in the say of righteousness that we can seek him with any hope of finding him.

2. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning: "Look unto the rock whence you were hewn" (the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt); "look unto the hole of the pit out of which you were digged, as clay, when God formed you into a people." Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth to consider what they were by their first birth, how they were conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. How hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions, and how miserable the hole of that pit out of which we were digged! The consideration of this should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves and high thoughts of divine grace.

Those that are now advanced would do well to remember how low they began (Isa 51:2): "Look unto Abraham your father, the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did (Ro 4:11), and unto Sarah that bore you, and whose daughters you all are as long as you do well. Think how Abraham was called alone, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage you to depend upon the promise of God even when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that lead to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number, and few of them left, to hope that yet they shall increase so as to replenish their own land again." When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. "Look unto Abraham, and see

what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith."

3. How they are here assured that their present seedness of tears should at length end in a harvest of joys, Isa 51:3. The church of God on earth, even the gospel Zion, has sometimes had her deserts and waste places, many parts of the church, through either corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a time and way to comfort Zion, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforts in store even for the waste places of his church, for those parts of it that seem not regarded or valued.

(1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wildernesses shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits, as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights.

(2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice. With the fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein; for the more holiness men have, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is gladness, to their satisfaction, it is fit that there should be thanksgiving, to God's honour; for whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated with the voice of melody, which will be the more melodious when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord ; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, end alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness and his salvation; and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people. Observe,

I. Who they are to whom this comfort belongs: "My people, and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me and are owned by me." Those are God's people and his nation who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people who know righteousness, who not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but who improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And, as they have good heads, so they have good hearts, for they have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people in whose hearts his law is. Even those who know righteousness, and have the law of God in their hearts, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt; but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know and the law they have in their hearts.

II. What the comfort is that belongs to God's people.

1. That the gospel of Christ shall be preached and published to the world: A law shall proceed from me, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, Isa 2:3. This law is his judgment; for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged. This shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world. It shall rest, not only for the benefit of the Jews, who had the first notice of it, but for a light of the people of other nations. It is this law, this judgment, that we are required to hearken and give ear to, at

our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it and turn a deaf ear to it? When a law proceeds from God, he that has ears to hear, let him hear.

2. That this law and judgment shall bring with them righteousness and salvation, shall open a ready way to the children of men, that they may be justified and saved, Isa 51:5. These are called God's righteousness and his salvation, because of his contriving and bringing them about. The former is a righteousness which he will accept for us and accept us for, and a righteousness which he will work in us and graciously accept of. The latter is the salvation of the Lord, for it arises from him and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and, wherever there is the righteousness of God, there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified shall be glorified.

3. That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear: My righteousness is near. It is near in time; behold, all things are now ready. It is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, Ro 10:8. My salvation has gone forth. The decree has gone forth concerning it; it shall as certainly be introduced as if it had gone forth already, and the time for it is at hand.

4. That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles; My arms shall judge the people. Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, for for judgment Christ came into this world; but others, and those of the isles, shall wait upon him, and bid his gospel, and the commands as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nation, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and beauty. It is added, And on my arm shall they trust, that arm of the Lord which is revealed in Christ,

Isa 53:1. Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on his arm shall others trust and be saved by it; for it is to us as we make it, a savour of life or of death.

5. That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, Isa 51:8. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in (Da 9:24), an eternal redemption that he is the author of, Heb 5:9. As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace or rule of righteousness, than what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, Mt 28:20. It is for ever; for the consequences of it shall be to eternity, and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the gospel and the blessed things it brings in is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but they shall vanish like smoke that soon spends itself and disappears; they shall be rolled like a scroll, and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn.

Look down to the earth beneath; that abides too for a short ever (Ec 1:4), but it shall wax old like a garment that will be the worse for wearing; and those that dwell therein, all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, shall die in like manner: the soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old. They shall be easily crushed (Job 4:19), and no loss of them. But when heaven and earth pass away, when all flesh and the glory of it wither as grass, the word of the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or tittle of that shall fall to the ground. Those whose happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation will have the comfort of it when time and days shall be no more.

III. What use they are to make of this comfort. If God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not

fear the reproach of men, of mortal miserable men, nor be afraid of their revilings or spiteful taunts, theirs who bid you sing them the songs of Zion, or who ask you, in scorn, Where is now your God? Let not those who embrace the gospel righteousness be afraid of those who will call them Beelzebub, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely. Let them not be afraid of them; let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, nor be deterred thereby from their duty, nor frightened into any sinful compliances, nor driven to take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for,

1. They will be quickly silenced (Isa 51:8): The moth shall eat them up like a garment, Isa 50:9. The worm shall eat them like wool, or woollen cloth. If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure of dying men; the matter is not great what those say of us who must shortly be food for worms. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently, but effectually destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them for all their hard speeches, Jude 1:14,15.

2 The cause we suffer for cannot be run down. The falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph, and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

5 My righteousness *is* near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like

manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, *and* wounded the dragon?

In these verses we have,

I. A prayer that God would, in his providence, appear and act for the deliverance of his people and the mortification of his and their enemies. Awake, awake! put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Isa 51:9. The arm of the Lord is Christ, or it is put for God himself, as Ps 44:23. Awake! why sleepest thou? He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but, when we pray that he would awake, we mean that he would make it to appear that he watches over his people and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary vigour on his people's behalf. When a hand or arm is benumbed we say, It is asleep; when it is stretched forth for action, It awakes. God needs not to be reminded nor excited by us, but he gives us leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise. "Put on strength," that is, "put forth strength: appear in thy strength, as we appear in the clothes we put on," Ps 21:13. The church sees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble; and therefore she depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief. "Awake, as in the ancient days," that is, "do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of," Jdg 6:13.

II The pleas to enforce this prayer.

1. They plead precedents, the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them. "Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf; for it has done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened. It did wonders against the Egyptians, who enslaved and oppressed God's son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another, and wounded Pharaoh, the dragon, the Leviathan (as he is called, Ps 74:13,14); it gave him his death's wound. It did wonders for Israel. It dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over," Isa 51:10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one or make one. Past experiences, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleas in prayer. Thou hast; wilt thou not? Ps 85:1-6.

2. They plead promises (Isa 51:11): And the redeemed of the Lord shall return, that is (as it may be supplied), thou hast said, They shall, referring to Isa 35:10, where we find this promise, that the redeemed of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall come with singing unto Zion. Sinners, when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers, when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. Then this promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may plead it in the mean time. He that designs such joy for us at last will he not work such deliverances for us in the mean time as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven they enter into the joy of their Lord; it crowns their heads with immortal honour; it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction. They shall obtain that joy and gladness which they could never obtain in this vale of tears. In this world of changes it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world sorrow and mourning shall flee away, never to return or come in view again.

10 *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

11 Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

12 I, *even* I, *am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made *as* grass;

The answer immediately given to this prayer (Isa 51:12): I, even, I, am he that comforteth you. They prayed for the operations of his power; he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon, and dry the sea, as formerly, yet, if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer immediately with the saving strength of his right hand, we must be thankful if he answer us, as an angel himself was answered (Zec 1:13), with good words and comfortable words. See how God resolves to comfort his people: I, even I, will do it. He had ordered his ministers to do it (Isa 40:1); but, because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands: I, even I, will do it. See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforts those that are cast down; he delights in being so. Those whom God comforts are comforted indeed; nay, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them.

1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment, which calls for comfort. The fear of man has a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves: Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted? Isa 51:12,13. God, who comforts his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing perplexing fears of the reproach of men (Isa 51:7), or of their

growing threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe,

(1.) The absurdity of those fears. It is a disparagement to us to give way to them: Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid? In the original, the pronoun is feminine, Who art thou, O woman! unworthy the name of a man? Such a weak and womanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears.

[1.] It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man. What! afraid of a man that shall die, shall certainly and shortly die, of the son of man who shall be made as grass, shall wither and be trodden down or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, are but men (Ps 9:20) and shall die like men (Ps 81:7), are but grass sprung out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again into it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire, and love, and trust to, are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day and gone tomorrow.

[2.] It is absurd to fear continually every day (Isa 51:13), to put ourselves upon a constant rack, so as never to be easy, nor to have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudent to fear it; but to be always in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our lifetime subject to bondage (Heb 2:15), and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened, De 28:66,67. Thou shalt fear, day and night.

[3.] It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause: "Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor. It is true, there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs, it may be, when he has an

opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and it will be thy wisdom therefore to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were ready to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it." A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. Sometimes God is pleased at once to show us the folly of so doing: "Where is the fury of the oppressor? It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware." His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, and the king of Babylon no more. What has become of all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that hectored them, and threatened them, and were a terror to them? they passed away, and, lo, they were not; and so shall these.

(2.) The impiety of those fears: "Thou art afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who is also the Maker of all the world, who has stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore has all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and disposal." Note, Our inordinate fear of man is a tacit forgetfulness of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his seasonable interposition for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jirehs, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, Isa 8:12,13. Happy is the man that fears God always, Pr 28:14,Lu 12:4,5.

2. He comforts those that were in bonds, Isa 51:14,15. See here,

(1.) What they do for themselves: The captives exile hastens that he may be loosed and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is that he may not die in the pit (not die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement), and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hastens to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault. He is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone and must die in the pit if he be not released immediately. Others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are thrown open he does not linger, but applies himself with all diligence to procure his discharge. And then it follows, But I am the Lord thy God, which intimates,

(2.) What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God has all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he has divided the sea, when the roaring of its waves was more frightful than any of the impotent menaces of proud oppressors. He has stilled or quieted the sea, so some think it should be read, Ps 65:7,89:9. This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done, and will do, for his people; he will find out a way to still the threatening storm, and bring them safely into the harbour. The Lord of hosts is his name, his name for ever, the name by which his people have long known him. And, as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, O captive-exile! thine in covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives. Let them not conclude that they must either be loosed immediately or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought ever so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and, while they thus strive to help themselves, they may be sure he will help them.

3. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spoke of either did not come so soon as they looked for them or did not come up to the height of their expectation they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but, as to this, they are encouraged (Isa 51:16) by what God says to his prophet, not to this only, but to all his prophets, nor to this, or them, principally, but to Christ, the great prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he does here, I have put my words in thy mouth, that by them I may plant the heavens. God undertook to comfort his people (Isa 51:12); but still he does it by his prophets, by his gospel; and, that he may do it by these, he here tells us,

(1.) That his word in them is very true. He owns what they have said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say: "I have put my words in thy mouth, and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me." This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him, and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's own words, which he put into their mouths. God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak (2Pe 1:21,1Co 2:13); so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie.

(2.) That it is very safe: I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand (as before, Isa 49:2), which speaks the special protection not only of the prophets, but of their prophecies, not only of Christ, but of Christianity, of the gospel of Christ; it is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall prophesy again (Re 10:11), though not in their persons, yet in their writings, which God has always covered in the shadow of

his hand, preserved by a special providence, else they would have been lost ere this.

(3.) That this word, when it comes to be accomplished, will be very great and will not fall short of the pomp and grandeur of the prophecy: "I have put my words in thy mouth, not that by the performance of them I may plant a nation, or found a city, but that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, may do that for my people which will be a new creation." This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the gospel of Christ and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first (Heb 1:2), and by him formed the Old-Testament church (Zec 6:12), so by him, and the words put into his mouth, he will set up,

[1.] A new world, will again plant the heavens and found the earth. Sin having put the whole creation into disorder, Christ's taking away the sin of the world put all into order again. Old things have passed away, all things have become new; things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and so put into a new posture, Col 1:20. Through him, according to the promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth (2Pe 3:13), and to this the prophets bear witness.

[2.] He will set up a new church, a New-Testament church: He will say unto Zion, Thou art my people. The gospel church is called Zion (Heb 12:22) and Jerusalem (Ga 4:26); and, when the Gentiles are brought into it, it shall be said unto them, You are my people. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor despised handful to be his people, whom he has chosen and loved.

13 and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where *is* the fury of the oppressor?

14 The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he
should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.
15 But I *am* the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves
roared: The Lord of hosts *is* his name.
16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in
the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the
foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou *art* my people.
17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand
of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the
cup of trembling, *and* wrung *them* out.

God, having awoke for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterwards, Isa 52:1. It is a call to awake not so much out of the sleep of sin (though that also is necessary in order to their being ready for deliverance) as out of the stupor of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity they, as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overwhelmed with the sense of their troubles that they had no heart or spirit to mind any thing that tended to their comfort or relief; they were as the disciples in the garden, sleeping for sorrow (Lu 22:45), and therefore, when the deliverance came, they are said to have been like those that dream, Ps 136:1. Nay, it is a call to awake, not only from sleep, but from death, like that to the dry bones to live, Eze 37:9. "Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of thy deliverance dawn, and mayest be ready to bid it welcome.

Recover thy senses; sink not under thy load, but stand up, and bestir thyself for thy own help." This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was in the apostle's time, which is said to have been in bondage with her children (Ga 4:25), and to have been under the power of a spirit of slumber (Ro 11:8); they are called to awake, and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, peace should be spoken to them, and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes and lulled them asleep. Now,

It is owned that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

1. She had lain under the tokens of God's displeasure. He had put into her hand the cup of his fury, that is, her share of his displeasure. The dispensations of his providence concerning her had been such that she had reason to think he was angry with her. She had provoked him to anger most bitterly, and was made to taste the bitter fruits of it. The cup of God's fury is, and will be, a cup of trembling to all those that have it put into their hands: damned sinners will find it so to eternity. It is said (Ps 75:8) that the dregs of the cup, the loathsome sediments in the bottom of it, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them; but here Jerusalem, having made herself as the wicked of the earth, is compelled to wring them out and drink them; for wherever there has been a cup of fornication, as there had been in Jerusalem's hand when she was idolatrous, sooner or later there will be a cup of fury, a cup of trembling. Therefore stand in awe and sin not.

2. Those that should have helped her in her distress failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, Isa 51:18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts. She knows not what she says or does, much less knows she what to say or do; and, in this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she has brought forth and brought up, that she was borne and educated (and there were many famous ones, for of Zion it was said that this and that man were born there, Ps 87:5), there is none to guide her, none to take her by the hand to keep her either from falling or from shaming herself, to lend either a hand to help her out of her trouble or a tongue to comfort her under it. Think it not strange if wise and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected, but those that were arrows in their hand prove arrows in their heart, when Jerusalem herself has none of all her sons, prince, priest, nor prophet, that

has such a sense either of duty or gratitude as to help her when she has most need of help. Thus they complain, Ps 74:9. There is none to tell us how long. Now that which aggravated this disappointment was,

(1.) That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her: These two things have come unto thee (Isa 51:19), to complete thy desolation and destruction, even the famine and the sword, two sore judgments, and very terrible. Or the two things were the desolation and destruction by which the city was wasted and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished. Or the two things were the trouble itself (made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword) and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless, under it. "Two sad things indeed, to be in this woeful case, and to have none to pity thee, to sympathize with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burden of thy cares, to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances." Or these two things that had come upon Jerusalem are the same with the two things that were afterwards to come upon Babylon (Isa 47:9), loss of children and widowhood--piteous case, and yet, "when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thy own sin and folly, who shall be sorry for thee?--a case that calls for comfort, and yet, when thou art froward under thy trouble, frettest, and makest thyself uneasy, by whom shall I comfort thee?" Those that will not be counselled cannot be helped.

(2.) That those who should have been her comforters were their own tormentors (Isa 51:20): They have fainted, as quite dispirited and driven to despair; they have no patience in which to keep possession of their own souls and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that. They throw themselves upon the ground, in vexation at their troubles, and there they lie at the head of all the streets, complaining to all that pass by (La 1:12), pining away for want of necessary food; there they lie

like a wild bull in a net, fretting and raging, struggling and pulling, to help themselves, but entangling themselves so much the more, and making their condition the worse by their own passions and discontents. Those that are of a meek and quiet spirit are, under affliction, like a dove in a net, mourning indeed, but silent and patient.

Those that are of a froward peevish spirit are like a wild bull in a net, uneasy to themselves, vexatious to their friends, and provoking to their God: They are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of our God. God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wise and gracious designs in afflicting them, never enquire wherefore he contends with them, and therefore nothing appears in them but anger at God and quarrelling with him. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make bad worse. This had long been Jerusalem's woeful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

18 *There is* none to guide her among all the sons *whom* she hath brought forth; neither *is there any* that taketh her by the hand of all the sons *that* she hath brought up.

19 These two *things* are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?

20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God.

21 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:

It is promised that Jerusalem's troubles shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors (Isa 51:21): Nevertheless hear this, thou afflicted. It is often the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God has always something to say to her then which she will do well to hearken to. "Thou art drunken, not as formerly with wine, not with the intoxicating

cup of Babylon's whoredoms and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know then, for thy comfort,"

1. "That the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God, for all this." It is expressed emphatically (Isa 51:22): "Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God--the Lord, who is able to help thee, and has wherewithal to relieve thee,--thy Lord, who has an incontestable right to thee, and will not alienate it,--thy God, in covenant with thee, and who has undertaken to make thee happy." Whatever the distresses of God's people may be, he will not disown his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise.

2. "That he is the God who pleads the cause of his people, as their patron and protector, who takes what is done against them a done against himself." The cause of God's people, and of that holy religion which they profess, is a righteous cause, otherwise the righteous God would not appear for it; yet it may for a time be run down, and seem as if it were lost. But God will plead it, either by convincing the consciences or confounding the mischievous projects of those that fight against it. He will plead it by clearing up the equity and excellency of it to the world and by giving success to those that act in defence of it. It is his own cause; he has espoused it, and therefore will plead it with jealousy.

3. That they should shortly take leave of their troubles and bid a final farewell to them: "I will take out of thy hand the cup of trembling, that bitter cup; it shall pass from thee." Throwing away the cup of trembling will not do, nor saying, "We will not, we cannot, drink it;" but, if we patiently submit, he that put it into out hands will himself take it out of our hands. Nay, it is promised, "Thou shalt no more drink it again. God has let fall his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment." 4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink of the same bitter cup of which they had drunk so deeply, Isa 51:23. See here,

(1.) How insolently they had abused and trampled upon the people of God: They have said to thy soul, to thee, to thy life, Bow down, that we may go over. Nay, they have said it to thy conscience, taking a pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. Herein the New-Testament Babylon treads in the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. Those that set up an infallible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates and obedience to his commands, do in effect say to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over, and they say it with delight.

(2.) How meanly the people of God (having by their sin lost much of their courage and sense of honour) truckled to them: Thou hast laid thy body as the ground. Observe, The oppressors required souls to be subjected to them, that every man should believe and worship just as they would have them. But all they could gain by their threats and violence was that people laid their bodies on the ground; they brought them to an external and hypocritical conformity, but conscience cannot be forced, nor is it mentioned to their praise that they yielded thus far. But observe,

(3.) How justly God will reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously towards his people: The cup of trembling shall be put into their hand. Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den; let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes.

22 thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause
of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of
trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more
drink it again:

23 but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have
said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid
thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

Isaiah-52

God Will Deliver Zion from Captivity

1 Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Here, God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, Isa 52:1,2. They had desired that God would awake and put on his strength, Isa 51:9. Here he calls upon them to awake and put on their strength, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with the hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burden. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dullness, sluggishness, and incogitancy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror and make an interest with him. God here gives them an assurance,

1. That they should be reformed by their captivity: There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean (Isa 52:1); their idolatrous customs should be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again, and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city.

2. That they should be relieved and rescued out of their captivity, that the bands of their necks should be loosed, that they should

not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded, as they had been: There shall no more come against thee (so it may be read) the uncircumcised and the clean. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary and profane his temple, Ps 79:1. This must be understood with a condition. If they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out of the enemy; but, if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple and the Romans will destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace. And to this happy change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves.

(1.) Let them prepare for joy: "Put on thy beautiful garments, no longer to appear in mourning weeds and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open." The beautiful garments were laid up then, when the harps were hung on the willow trees; but, now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. "Put on thy strength, and, in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing." Note, The joy of the Lord will be our strength (Ne 8:10), and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe, Jerusalem must put on her beautiful garments when she becomes a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more holy we are the more cause we have to rejoice.

(2.) Let them prepare for liberty: "Shake thyself from the dust in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee (Isa 51:23), or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself." Arise, and set up; so it may be read. "O Jerusalem! prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under and to shift thy quarters: Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck; be inspired with generous principles and resolutions to assert thy own liberty." The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary

and heavily laden under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears and loose themselves from those bands; for, if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, *and* sit down, O Jerusalem: loose
thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.
3 For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye
shall be redeemed without money.
4 For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into
Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without
cause.

God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Several things he here considers.

1. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people, any more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, Isa 10:6,7. "You have sold yourselves for nought; you got nothing by it, nor did I," Isa 52:3. (God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves he himself, who had the prior, nay, the sole, title to them, did not increase his wealth by their price, Ps 44:12. They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) "And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing: You shall be redeemed without price," as was promised, Isa 45:13. Those that give nothing must expect to get nothing; however, God is a debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in similar distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their task-masters, and therefore it was a pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors (Isa 52:4): "My people went down into Egypt, in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them,

and ruled them with rigour." And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; soon afterwards Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army oppressed and made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah.

The Babylonians might not unfitly be called Assyrians, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrians; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did, and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men it is some comfort to be able to say that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, Ps 7:3-5, &c.

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that were done to his people (Isa 52:5): What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people are taken away for nought? God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives or by the natives, it were another matter--God might be looked upon as in some respects a gainer in his honour by it; but, alas! it is not so.

(1.) The captives are so dispirited that they cannot praise him; instead of this they are continually howling, which grieves him and moves his pity; Those that rule over them make them to howl, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, Ex 2:23. So the Babylonians now, using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have

been, but brutish rather; they howled, Ho 7:14. However God heard them, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Ex 3:7,8.

(2.) The natives are so insolent that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God because they were too hard for his people, and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them, and thus his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols they lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven, Da 5:23. "Now," says God, "this is not to be suffered. I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise have I from the world, when my people, who should be to me for a name and praise, are to me for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves nor let them do it." The apostle quotes this with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Ro 2:23,24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance (Isa 52:6): "Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name Jehovah." By this name he had made himself known in delivering them out of Egypt, Ex 6:3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name; and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he who speaks deliverance for them by the word of his power, that it is he only, who at first spoke and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishment in due season, that it is he who speaks by the

prophet; it is he, and they do not speak of themselves; for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fall to the ground.

5 Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day *is* blasphemed.

6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, *it is* I.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again is here spoken of both as a mercy and as a duty; and the application of Isa 52:7 to the preaching of the gospel (by the apostle, Ro 10:15) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

I. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness. 1. Those that bring the tidings of their release shall be very acceptable (Isa 52:7): "How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!" It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there that their brethren would be with them shortly; for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published: they say unto Zion, Thy God reigns.

Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by those that waited for the consolation of Israel, those good tidings (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, good tidings of good), put this construction upon it, O Zion! thy God reigns. Note, When bad news is abroad this is good news, and when good news is abroad this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns, that God is Zion's God, in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps 146:10,Zec 9:9. The Lord has founded Zion, Isa 14:32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace.

This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is that the Lord Jesus reigns and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first (Lu 4:18,Heb 2:3), and of him the text speaks: How beautiful are his feet! his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon Mount Calvary! his feet when he came leaping upon the mountains (So 2:8), how beautiful were they to those who knew his voice and knew it to be the voice of their beloved! His ministers proclaim these good tidings; they ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be esteemed in love for their work's sake (1Th 5:13), for their message sake, which is well worthy of all acceptation.

2. Those to whom the tidings are brought shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

(1.) Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice because they are surprisingly illuminated, Isa 52:8. The watchmen on

Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph. Who they were we are told, Isa 62:6.

They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again made Jerusalem a praise in the earth. These watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to their prayers (Hab 2:1); and therefore when the good news comes they have it first, and the longer they have continued and the more importunate they have been in praying for it the more will they be elevated when it comes: They shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure is that they shall see eye to eye, that is, face to face. Whereas God had been a God hiding himself, and they could scarcely discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now that the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see Zion's king eye to eye; so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and there were those that saw his glory (Joh 1:14) and looked upon it, 1Jo 1:1.

They shall see an exact agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spoke the one and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity the prophets shall thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. Applying this also, as the Isa 52:8, to gospel times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye, shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old-Testament saints could see it: and they shall herein be unanimous; in these great things concerning the common salvation they shall concur in their sentiments as well as their

songs. Nay, St. Paul seems to allude to this when he makes it the privilege of our future state that we shall see face to face.

(2.) Zion's waste places shall then rejoice because they shall be surprisingly comforted (Isa 52:9): Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, Ps 126:1,2. Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise.

[1.] God's people will have the comfort of this salvation; and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. He has redeemed Jerusalem (the inhabitants of Jerusalem that were sold into the hands of their enemies) and thereby he has comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is that they look for that redemption, Lu 2:38.

[2.] God will have the glory of it, Isa 52:10. He has made bare his holy arm (manifested and displayed his power) in the eyes of all the nations. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness and in pursuance of his promise.

[3.] All the world will have the benefit of it. In the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus the arm of the Lord was revealed and all the ends of the earth were made to see the great salvation, not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefits of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation by Christ. Lu 3:6, All flesh shall see the salvation of God, that great salvation.

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean *thing;* go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.

It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumcision. When the liberty is proclaimed,

1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are ever so well settled there, let them not think of taking root in Babylon, but Depart, depart (Isa 52:11), go out from the midst of her; not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them be gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites. As soon as they have leave to let go, let them lose no time. With this word God stirred up the spirits of those that were moved to go up, Ezr 1:5. And it is a call to all those who are yet in the bondage of sin and Satan to make use of the liberty which Christ has proclaimed to them. And, if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon: Touch no unclean thing. Now that God makes bare his holy arm for you, be you holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every wicked thing. When they came out of Egypt they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt (Eze 23:3), which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so now that they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let those

be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord, that is, the priests, who had the charge of the vessels of the sanctuary (when they were restored by a particular grant) to carry them to Jerusalem, Ezr 1:7,8:23, &c. Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary. Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, Re 1:6. They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are entrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire; it is a good thing that is committed to them, and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency and so to compass God's altars and carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them and his protection in their removal (Isa 52:12): You shall not go out with haste. They were to go with a diligent haste, not to lose time nor linger as Lot in Sodom, but they were not to go with a diffident distrustful haste, as if they were afraid of being pursued (as when they came out of Egypt) or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded: no, they shall find that, as for God, his work is perfect, and therefore they need not make more haste than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honourable discharge, and they shall have an honourable return, and not steal away; for the Lord will go before them as their general and commander-in-chief, and the God of Israel will be their rearward, or he that will gather up those that are left behind. God will both lead their van and bring up their rear; he will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, for with his favour will he compass them. The pillar of cloud and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them, to secure their rear (Ex 14:19), and God's presence with them would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. Those that are in the way of their duty are under God's special protection; and he that believes this will not make haste.

12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel *will be* your rearward.

The Suffering of the Lord's Servant

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people and the encouraging of their hope in the promises of temporal deliverances, the prophet passes from them to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon; for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption and the prophecies of them had a reference to that. This prophecy, which begins here and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it, and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has put it past dispute that of him speaks the prophet this, of him and of no other man, Ac 8:34,35. Here,

I. God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. 1. He is appointed to it. "He is my servant, whom I employ and therefore will uphold." In his undertaking he does his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves the interests of his Father's kingdom. 2. He is qualified for it. He shall deal prudently, for the spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him, Isa 11:2 The word is used concerning David when he behaved himself wisely, 1Sa 18:14. Christ is wisdom itself, and, in the contriving and carrying on the work of our redemption, there appeared much of the wisdom of God in a mystery, 1Co 2:7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

II. He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation and his exaltation. See here, 1. How he humbled himself: Many were astonished at him, as they were at David when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became a wonder unto many, Ps 71:7. Many wondered to see what base usage he met with, how inveterate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him: His visage was marred more than any man's when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. His face was foul with weeping, for he was a man of sorrows; he that really was fairer than the children of men had his face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. Those that saw him said, "Surely never man looked so miserably, a worm and no man," Ps 22:6. The nation abhorred him (Isa 49:7), treated him as the off-scouring of all things. Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow.

2. How highly God exalted him, and exalted him because he humbled himself. Three words are used for this (Isa 52:13): He shalt be exalted and extolled and be very high. God shall exalt him, men shall extol him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high.

(1.) Many nations shall be the better for him, for he shall sprinkle them, and not the Jews only; the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their consciences, to purify them. He suffered, and died, and so sprinkled many nations; for in his death there was a fountain opened, Zec 13:1. He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain and distil as the dew. Moses's did so only on one nation (De 32:2), but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, Heb 10:22. So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent

his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them.

(2.) The great ones of the nation shall show him respect: Kings shall shut their mouths at him, that is, they shall not open their mouths against him, as they have done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in, and be well pleased with, the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard Job's wisdom, after his speech spoke not again, Job 29:9,22. Kings shall see and arise, Isa 49:7.

(3.) The mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world shall by him be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, as the apostle speaks, Ro 16:25,26. That which had not been told them shall they see; the gospel brings to light things new and unheard of, which will awaken the attention and engage the reverence of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, Ro 15:21. These words are there quoted according to the Septuagint translation: To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and those that have not heard shall understand. As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told of--they had not heard.

That shall be discovered to them by the gospel of Christ which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah; much had been told them, and they had heard it. But, as the queen of Sheba found concerning Solomon, what they shall see in him, when he comes, shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those

who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:
15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

Isaiah-53

1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?
2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is* no beauty that we should desire him.

The prophet, in the close of the former chapter, had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles, that nations and their kings should bid it welcome, that those who had not seen him should believe in him; and though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it, yet upon the first notice of it they should give it its due weight and consideration. Now here he foretels, with wonder, the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with him. Observe here,

I The contempt they put upon the gospel of Christ, Isa 53:1 The unbelief of the Jews in our Saviour's time is expressly said to be the fulfilling of this word, Joh 12:38. And it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostles' preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, Ro 10:16. Note,

1. Of the many that hear the report of the gospel there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy of all acceptation, that one would think it should be universally received and believed. But it is quite otherwise; few believed the prophets who spoke before of Christ; when he came himself none of the rulers nor of the Pharisees followed him, and but here and there one of the common people; and, when the apostles carried this report all the world over, some in every place believed, but comparatively very few. To this day, of the many that profess to believe this report, there are few that cordially embrace it and submit to the power of it.

2. Therefore people believe not the report of the gospel, because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge, that divine power which goes along with the word. The arm of the Lord is made bare (as was said, Isa 52:10) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine, in the wonderful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience; though it is a still voice, it is a strong one; but they do not perceive this, nor do they experience in themselves that working of the Spirit which makes the word effectual. They believe not the gospel because, by rebelling against the light they had, they had forfeited the grace of God, which therefore he justly denied them and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not.

3. This is a thing we ought to be much affected with; it is to be wondered at, and greatly lamented, and ministers may go to God and complain of it to him, as the prophet here. What a pity is it that such rich grace should be received in vain, that precious souls should perish at the pool's side, because they will not step in and be healed!

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The contempt they put upon the person of Christ because of the meanness of his appearance, Isa 53:2,3. This seems to come in as a reason why they rejected his doctrine, because they were prejudiced against his person. When he was on earth many that heard him preach, and could not but approve of what they heard, would not give it any regard or entertainment, because it came from one that made so small a figure and had no external advantages to recommend him. Observe here,

1 The low condition he submitted to, and how he abased and emptied himself. The entry he made into the world, and the character he wore in it, were no way agreeable to the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah and their expectations concerning him, but quite the reverse.

(1.) It was expected that his extraction would be very great and noble. He was to be the Son of David, of a family that had a name like to the names of the great men that were in the earth, 2Sa 7:9. But he sprang out of this royal and illustrious family when it was reduced and sunk, and Joseph, that son of David, who was his supposed father, was but a poor carpenter, perhaps a ship-carpenter, for most of his relations were fishermen. This is here meant by his being a root out of a dry ground, his being born of a mean and despicable family, in the north, in Galilee, of a family out of which, like a dry and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great, was expected, in a country of such small repute that it was thought no good thing could come out of it. His mother, being a virgin, was as dry ground, yet from her he sprang who is not only fruit, but root. The seed on the stony ground had no root; but, though Christ grew out of a dry ground, he is both the root and the offspring of David, the root of the good olive.

(2.) It was expected that he should make a public entry, and come in pomp and with observation; but, instead of that, he grew up

before God, not before men. God had his eye upon him, but men regarded him not: He grew up as a tender plant, silently and insensibly, and without any noise, as the corn, that tender plant, grows up, we know not how, Mk 4:27. Christ rose as a tender plant, which, one would have thought, might easily be crushed, or might be nipped in one frosty night. The gospel of Christ, in its beginning, was as a grain of mustard-seed, so inconsiderable did it seem, Mt 13:31,32.

(3.) It was expected that he should have some uncommon beauty in his face and person, which should charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations of all that saw him. But there was nothing of this kind in him; not that he was in the least deformed or misshapen, but he had no form nor comeliness, nothing extraordinary, which one might have thought to meet with in the countenance of an incarnate deity. Those who saw him could not see that there was any beauty in him that they should desire him, nothing in him more than in another beloved, So 5:9. Moses, when he was born, was exceedingly fair, to such a degree that it was looked upon as a happy presage, Ac 7:20,Heb 11:23. David, when he was anointed, was of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, 1Sa 16:12. But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or it may refer not so much to his person as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensible glory. His gospel is preached, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but with all plainness, agreeable to the subject.

(4.) It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but, on the contrary, he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was not only his last scene that was tragical, but his whole life was so, not only mean, but miserable,

-------- but one continued chain Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.

SIR R. BLACKMORE.

Thus, being made sin for us, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected us to, that we should eat in sorrow all the days of our life (Ge 3:17), and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was, upon many accounts, sorrowful. He was unsettled, had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. His spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow. We never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lentulus, in his epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, says, "he was never seen to laugh;" and so worn and macerated was he with continual grief that when he was but a little above thirty years of age he was taken to be nearly fifty, Joh 8:57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with the grievances of others, and sympathized with them, and he never set his own at a distance; for in his transfiguration he talked of his own decease, and in his triumph he wept over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him and mourn.

2 The low opinion that men had of him, upon this account. Being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance, they saw no beauty in him that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of holiness and the beauty of goodness, enough to render him the desire of all nations; but the far greater part of those among whom he lived, and conversed, saw none of this beauty, for it was spiritually discerned. Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus, nothing that should induce them to desire an acquaintance with him or interest in him. Nay, he is not only not desired, but he is despised and rejected, abandoned and abhorred, a reproach of men, an abject, one that men were shy of keeping company with and had not any esteem for, a worm and no man. He was despised as a mean man, rejected as a bad man.

He was the stone which the builders refused; they would not have him to reign over them. Men, who should have had so much reason as to understand things better, so much tenderness as not to trample upon a man in misery--men whom he came to seek and save rejected him: "We hid as it were our faces from him, looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us; though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Nay, we not only behaved as having no concern for him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation." It may be read, He hid as it were his face from us, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil over it, and therefore he was despised and we esteemed him not, because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin (and God cannot be injured except in his honour), he did it not only by divesting himself of the glories due to an incarnate deity, but by submitting himself to the disgraces due to the worst of men and malefactors; and thus by vilifying himself he glorified his Father: but this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour; let him be received by us whom men rejected.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

In these verses we have,

A further account of the sufferings of Christ. Much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he abased and humbled himself, to which he became obedient even to the death of the cross.

1. He had griefs and sorrows; being acquainted with them, he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance. Were griefs and sorrows allotted him? He bore them, and blamed not his lot; he carried them, and did neither shrink from them, nor sink under them. The load was heavy and the way long, and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, It is finished.

2. He had blows and bruises; he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. His sorrows bruised him; he felt pain and smart from them; they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along he was smitten with the tongue, when he was cavilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil said against him. At last he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow.

3. He had wounds and stripes. He was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of male factors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands, and feet, and side. Though it was so ordered that not a bone of him should be broken, yet he had scarcely in any part a whole skin (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer for him), but from the crown of his head, which was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises.

4. He was wronged and abused (Isa 53:7): He was oppressed, injuriously treated and hardly dealt with. That was laid to his charge which he was perfectly innocent of, that laid upon him which he did not deserve, and in both he was oppressed and injured. He was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed, he laid it to heart, and, though, he was patient, was not stupid under it, but mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because on the side of the oppressors there is power, Ec 4:1. Oppression is a sore affliction; it has made many a wise man mad (Ec 7:7); but our Lord Jesus, though, when he was oppressed, he was afflicted, kept possession of his own soul.

5. He was judged and imprisoned, as is implied in his being taken from prison and judgment, Isa 53:8. God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor; he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a prisoner; he was judge, accused, tried, and condemned, according to the usual forms of law: God filed a process against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and confined him in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed.

6. He was cut off by an untimely death from the land of the living, though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works, and they were all such that one would be apt to think it was for some of them that they stoned him. He was stricken to death, to the grave which he made with the wicked (for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three) and yet with the rich, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and according to the common course of dealing with criminals should have been buried with them in the place where he was crucified, yet God here foretold, and Providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserved to die, even in his sufferings.

5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our
iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with
his stripes we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his
own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his
mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep
before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

A full account of the meaning of his sufferings. It was a very great mystery that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things; and it is natural to ask with amazement, "How came it about? What evil had he done?" His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and, though they could lay nothing to his charge, they esteemed him stricken, smitten of

God, and afflicted, Isa 53:4. Because they hated him, and persecuted him, they thought that God did, that he was his enemy and fought against him; and therefore they were the more enraged against him, saying, God has forsaken him; persecute and take him, Ps 71:11.

Those that are justly smitten are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice; and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Cæsar. Those that saw him hanging on the cross enquired not into the merits of his cause, but took it for granted that he was guilty of every thing laid to his charge and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus Job's friends esteemed him smitten of God, because there was something uncommon in his sufferings. It is true he was smitten of God, Isa 53:10 (or, as some read it, he was God's smitten and afflicted, the Son of God, though smitten and afflicted), but not in the sense in which they meant it; for, though he suffered all these things,

1. He never did any thing in the least to deserve this hard usage. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false; he had done no violence, but went about doing good. And, whereas he was called that deceiver, he never deserved that character; for there was no deceit in his mouth (Isa 53:9), to which the apostle refers, 1Pe 2:22. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. He never offended either in word or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, Which of you convinceth me of sin? The judge that condemned owned he found no fault in him, and the centurion that executed him professed that certainly he was a righteous man.

2. He conducted himself under his sufferings so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evil-doer; for, though he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth (Isa 53:7), no, not so much as to plead his own innocency, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it.

This takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it, for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but thus it was written, and thus it behoved him to suffer. This commandment he received from his Father, and therefore he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without any difficulty or reluctance (he is the Lamb of God); and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, nay, before the butchers, so he opened not his mouth, which denotes not only his exemplary patience under affliction (Ps 39:9), and his meekness under reproach (Ps 38:13), but his cheerful compliance with his Father's will. Not my will, but thine be done. Lo, I come. By this will we are sanctified, his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Jesus Christ suffered. This is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions.

(1.) It is certain that we are all guilty before God. We have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God (Isa 53:6): All we like sheep have gone astray, one as well as another. The whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions. We have all gone astray from God our rightful owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wander, and are unapt, when they have gone astray, to find the way home again. That is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable of ourselves to return to him.

This is mentioned not only as our infelicity (that we go astray from the green pastures and expose ourselves to the beasts of prey), but as our iniquity. We affront God in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves, and our own will, in competition with God and his

will, which is the malignity of sin. Instead of walking obediently in God's way, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the way of our own heart, the way that our own corrupt appetites and passions lead us to. We have set up for ourselves, to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will and have what we will. Some think it intimates our own evil way, in distinction from the evil way of others. Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which does most easily beset them, their own evil way, that they are particularly fond of and bless themselves in.

(2.) Our sins are our sorrows and our griefs (Isa 53:4), or, as it may be read, our sicknesses and our wounds: the LXX. reads it, our sins; and so the apostle, 1Pe 2:24. Our original corruptions are the sickness and disease of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain, if it be not seared and senseless. Or our sins are called our griefs and sorrows because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins and our sins deserve all our griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extreme and everlasting.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus was appointed and did undertake to make satisfaction for our sins and so to save us from the penal consequences of them.

[1.] He was appointed to do it, by the will of his Father; for the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins and the punishment of them; not the idem--the same that we should have suffered, but the tantundem--that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here,

First, In what way we are saved from the ruin to which by sin we had become liable--by laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the offerer were laid upon the sacrifice and those of all Israel

upon the head of the scape-goat. Our sins were made to meet upon him (so the margin reads it); the sins of all that he was to save, from every place and every age, met upon him, and he was met with for them. They were made to fall upon him (so some read it) as those rushed upon him that came with swords and staves to take him. The laying of our sins upon Christ implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law if we submit to the grace of the gospel. They were laid upon Christ when he was made sin (that is, a sin-offering) for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us; thus he put himself into a capacity to make those easy that come to him heavily laden under the burden of sin. See Ps 40:6-12.

Secondly, By whom this was appointed. It was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ; he contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own Son, the Son of his love, and his holy child Jesus, who himself knew no sin.

Thirdly, For whom this atonement was to be made. It was the iniquity of us all that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the salvation of all, and a serious offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates that this is the one only way of salvation. All that are justified are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ, and, though they were ever so many, he is able to bear the weight of them all.

[2.] He undertook to do it. God laid upon him our iniquity; but did he consent to it? Yes, he did; for some think that the true reading of the next words (Isa 53:7) is, It was exacted, and he

answered; divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our surety, not as originally bound with us, but as bail to the action: "Upon me be the curse, my Father." And therefore, when he was seized, he stipulated with those into whose hands he surrendered himself that that should be his disciples' discharge: If you seek me, let these go their way, Joh 18:8. By his own voluntary undertaking he made himself responsible for our debt, and it is well for us that he was responsible. Thus he restored that which he took not away.

(4.) Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon says: He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it. Christ, being surety for us, did smart for it.

[1.] He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, Isa 53:4. He not only submitted to the common infirmities of human nature, and the common calamities of human life, which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief, when he said, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful. He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the fall in the affliction and the misery. Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bore them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure. This is quoted (Mt 8:17) with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured and the power he put forth to cure them.

[2.] He did this by suffering for our sins (Isa 53:5): He was wounded for our transgressions, to make atonement for them and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in his head, the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved and what we had brought upon ourselves, Isa 1:6. That these wounds and bruises, though they are painful, may not be mortal, Christ was wounded for our transgressions, was tormented or pained (the word is used for the pains of a woman

in travail) for our revolts and rebellions. He was bruised, or crushed, for our iniquities; they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purport is Isa 53:8, for the transgression of my people was he smitten, the stroke was upon him that should have been upon us; and so some read it, He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due. He was delivered to death for our offences, Ro 4:25.

Hence it is said to be according to the scriptures, according to this scripture, that Christ died for our sins, 1Co 15:3. Some read this, by the transgressions of my people; that is, by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were, in profession, God's people, he was stricken, was crucified and slain, Ac 2:23. But, doubtless, we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, Da 9:24.

(5.) The consequence of this to us is our peace and healing, Isa 53:5.

[1.] Hereby we have peace: The chastisement of our peace was upon him; he, by submitting to these chastisements, slew the enmity, and settled an amity, between God and man; he made peace by the blood of his cross. Whereas by sin we had become odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby peace (that is, all good) comes unto us, Col 1:20. He is our peace, Eph 2:14. Christ was in pain that we might be at ease; he gave satisfaction to the justice of God that we might have satisfaction in our own minds, might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us.

[2.] Hereby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease,

which tends directly to the death of our souls and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes (that is, the sufferings he underwent) he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

(6.) The consequence of this to Christ was his resurrection and advancement to perpetual honour. This makes the offence of the cross perfectly to cease; he yielded himself to die as a sacrifice, as a lamb, and, to make it evident that the sacrifice he offered of himself was accepted, we are told here, Isa 53:8,

[1.] That he was discharged: He was taken from prison and from judgment; whereas he was imprisoned in the grave under a judicial process, lay there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him, he was by an express order from heaven taken out of the prison of the grave, an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone and set him at liberty, by which the judgment given against him was reversed and taken off; this redounds not only to his honour, but to our comfort; for, being delivered for our offences, he was raised again for our justification. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt.

[2.] That he was preferred: Who shall declare his generation? his age, or continuance (so the word signifies), the time of his life? He rose to die no more; death had no more dominion over him. He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore; and who can describe that immortality to which he rose, or number the years and ages of it? And he is advanced to this eternal life because for the transgression of his people he became obedient to death. We may take it as denoting the time of his usefulness, as David is said to serve his generation, and so to answer the end of living.

Who can declare how great a blessing Christ by his death and resurrection will be to the world? Some by his generation understand his spiritual seed: Who can count the vast numbers of converts that shall by the gospel be begotten to him, like the dew of the morning?

When thus exalted he shall live to see A numberless believing progeny Of his adopted sons; the godlike race Exceed the stars that heav'n's high arches grace.
SIR R. BLACKMORE.

Of this generation of his let us pray, as Moses did for Israel, The Lord God of our fathers make them a thousand times so many more as they are, and bless them as he has promised them, De 1:11.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall
declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the
living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.
9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his
death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in
his mouth.
10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when
thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he
shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper
in his hand.

In the Isa 53:19 the prophet had testified very particularly of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them; here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretels the glory that should follow. We may observe, in these verses,

The services and sufferings of Christ's state of humiliation. Come, and see how he loved us, see what he did for us.

1. He submitted to the frowns of Heaven (Isa 53:10): Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to pain, or torment, or grief. The scripture nowhere says that Christ is his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it says here,

(1.) That the Lord bruised him, not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, Zec 13:7. They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own (Isa 53:4); now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin; the Lord bruised him, for he did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all, Ro 8:32. He it was that put the bitter cup into his hand, and obliged him to drink it (Joh 18:11), having laid upon him our iniquity. He it was that made him sin and a curse for us, and turned to ashes all his burnt-offering, in token of the acceptance of it, Ps 20:3.

(2.) That he bruised him so as to put him to grief. Christ accommodated himself to this dispensation, and received the impressions of grief from his Father's delivering him up; and he was troubled to such a degree that it put him into an agony, and he began to be amazed and very heavy.

(3.) It pleased the Lord to do this. He determined to do it; it was the result of an eternal counsel; and he delighted in it, as it was an effectual method for the salvation of man and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

2. He substituted himself in the room of sinners, as a sacrifice. He made his soul an offering for sin; he himself explains this (Mt 20:28), that he came to give his life a ransom for many. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin they made them offerings, for they had an interest in them, God having put them under the feet of man. But Christ made himself an offering; it was his own act and deed. We could not put him in our stead, but he put himself, and said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, in a higher sense than David said, or could say it. "Father, I commit my soul to thee, I deposit it in thy hands, as the life of a sacrifice and the price of pardons." Thus he shall bear the iniquities of the many that he designed to justify (Isa 53:11), shall take away the sin of the world by taking it upon himself, Joh 1:29. This mentioned again (Isa 53:12): He bore the sin of

many, who, if they had borne it themselves, would have been sunk by it to the lowest hell. See how this dwelt upon; for, whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must see him in them bearing our sin.

3. He subjected himself to that which to us is the wages of sin (Isa 53:12): He has poured out his soul unto death, poured it out as water, so little account did he make of it, when the laying of it down was the appointed means of our redemption and salvation. He loved not his life unto the death, and his followers, the martyrs, did likewise, Re 12:11. Or, rather, he poured it out as a drink-offering, to make his sacrifice complete, poured it out as wine, that his blood might be drink indeed, as his flesh is meat indeed to all believers. There was not only a colliquation of his body in his sufferings (Ps 22:14, I am poured out like water), but a surrender of his spirit; he poured out that, even unto death, though he is the Lord of life.

4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners, Isa 53:12.

(1.) It was a great aggravation of his sufferings that he was numbered with transgressors, that he was not only condemned as a malefactor, but executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three, in which circumstance of his suffering, the evangelist tells us, this prophecy was fulfilled, Mk 15:27,28. Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, who was a traitor, a thief, and a murderer, was put in election with him for the favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus released, but Barabbas. In his whole life he was numbered among the transgressors; for he was called and accounted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners.

(2.) It was a great commendation of his sufferings, and redounded very much to his honour, that in his sufferings he made intercession for the transgressors, for those that reviled and

crucified him; for he prayed, Father, forgive them, thereby showing, not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors, were to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying, not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein it speaks better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The grace and glories of his state of exaltation; and the graces he confers on us are not the least of the glories conferred on him. These are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which Isa 53:10-12 give us some idea of. He promises to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to bear the sin of many, in consideration of which the Father promises to glorify him, not only with the glory he had, as God, before the world was (Joh 17:5), but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father. Under this title he was brought into the world (Isa 9:6), and he shall not fail to answer the title when he goes out of the world. This was the promise made to Abraham (who herein was a type of Christ), that he should be the father of many nations and so be the heir of the world, Ro 4:13,17. As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church and with him and his spiritual seed is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon and grafted in the covenant of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

(1.) That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him and to bear up his name, Ps 22:30. True believers are the seed of Christ; the Father gave them to him to be so, Joh 17:6. He died to purchase and purify them to himself, fell to the ground as a corn of wheat, that he might bring forth much fruit, Joh 12:24. The word, that incorruptible see, of which they are born again, is his word; the Spirit, the great author of their regeneration, is his Spirit; and it is his image that is impressed upon them.

(2.) That he shall live to see his seed. Christ's children have a living Father, and because he lives they shall live also, for he is their life. Though he died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure to them the spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them; the word is plural, He shall see his seeds, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

(3.) That he shall himself continue to take care of the affairs of this numerous family: He shall prolong his days. Many, when they see their seed, their seed's seed, wish to depart in peace; but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other, no, he shall himself live long, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, for he ever lives. Some refer it to believers: He shall see a seed that shall prolong its days, agreeing with Ps 89:29,36, His seed shall endure for ever. While the world stands Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the life of.

(4.) That his great undertaking shall be successful and shall answer expectation: The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. God's purposes shall take effect, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail. Note,

[1.] The work of man's redemption is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and it is in good hands. It is well for us that it is in his, for

our own hands are not sufficient for us, but he is able to save to the uttermost. It is in his hands who upholds all things.

[2.] It is the good pleasure of the Lord, which denotes not only his counsel concerning it, but his complacency in it; and therefore God loved him, and was well pleased in him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep.

[3.] It has prospered hitherto, and shall prosper, whatever obstructions or difficulties have been, or may be, in the way of it. Whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper, Isa 46:10. Cyrus, a type of Christ, shall perform all God's pleasure (Isa 44:28), and therefore, no doubt, Christ shall. Christ was so perfectly well qualified for his undertaking, and prosecuted it with so much vigour, and it was from first to last so well devised, that it could not fail to prosper, to the honour of his Father and the salvation of all his seed.

(5.) That he shall himself have abundant satisfaction in it (Isa 53:11): He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. He shall see it beforehand (so it may be understood); he shall with the prospect of his sufferings have a prospect of the fruit, and he shall be satisfied with the bargain. He shall see it when it is accomplished in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus was in travail of soul for our redemption and salvation, in great pain, but with longing desire to be delivered, and all the pains and throes he underwent were in order to it and hastened it on.

[2.] Christ does and will see the blessed fruit of the travail of his soul in the founding and building up of his church and the eternal salvation of all that were given him. He will not come short of

his end in any part of his work, but will himself see that he has not laboured in vain.

[3.] The salvation of souls is a great satisfaction to the Lord Jesus. He will reckon all his pains well bestowed, and himself abundantly recompensed, if the many sons be by him brought through grace to glory. Let him have this, and he has enough. God will be glorified, penitent believers will be justified, and then Christ will be satisfied. Thus, in conformity to Christ, it should be a satisfaction to us if we can do any thing to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world. Let it always be our meat and drink, as it was Christ's, to do God's will.

2. He shall have the glory of bringing in an everlasting righteousness; for so it was foretold concerning him, Da 9:24. And here, to the same purport, By his knowledge (the knowledge of him, and faith in him) shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear the sins of many, and so lay a foundation for our justification from sin. Note, (1.) The great privilege that flows to us from the death of Christ is justification from sin, our being acquitted from that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into God's favour, which alone can make us happy.

(2.) Christ, who purchased our justification for us, applies it to us, by his intercession made for us, his gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power even on earth to forgive sin.

(3.) There are many whom Christ justifies, not all (multitudes perish in their sins), yet many, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for, as many as the Lord our God shall call. He shall justify not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude.

(4.) It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace; in this way we are saved, because thus

God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abased, and our happiness most effectually secured.

(5.) Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith. Christ's way of gaining the will and affections is by enlightening the understanding and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to divine truths.

(6.) That knowledge of Christ, and that faith in him, by which we are justified, have reference to him both as a servant to God and as a surety for us.

[1.] As one that is employed for God to pursue his designs and secure and advance the interests of his glory. "He is my righteous servant, and as such justifies men." God has authorized and appointed him to do it; it is according to God's will and for his honour that he does it. He is himself righteous, and of his righteousness have all we received. He that is himself righteous (for he could not have made atonement for our sin if he had had any sin of his own to answer for) is made of God to us righteousness, the Lord our righteousness.

[2.] As one that has undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our iniquities--saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an incontestable victory and universal dominion, Isa 53:12. Because he has done all these good services, therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and, according to the will of the Father, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, as a great general, when he has driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army, which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory and a recompense for all the toils and perils of the battle. Note,

(1.) God the Father has engaged to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory: "I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name." Great riches are also assigned to him: He shall divide the spoil, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers.

(2.) Christ comes at his glory by conquest. He has set upon the strong man armed, dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He has vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh; these are the strong that he has disarmed and taken the spoil of.

(3.) Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he has divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects, that shall be brought in to him; for so some read it: I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil. God will give him the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps 2:8. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. Many shall be wrought upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, and hereby he shall reckon himself honoured, and enriched, and abundantly recompensed for all he did and all he suffered.

(4.) What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of: "I will divide it to him," and immediately it follows, He shall divide it, notwithstanding the opposition that is given to him; for, as Christ finished the work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompence that was promised him for it; for he is both able and faithful.

(5.) The spoil which God divided to Christ he divides (it is the same word), he distributes, among his followers; for, when he led captivity captive, he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men; for as he has told us (Ac 20:35) he did himself reckon it more blessed and honourable to give than to receive.

Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors. He has divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest, to all that are his: let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

Isaiah-54

The Lord's Everlasting Love for Israel

1 Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife written childless, or a desolate solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished and the country peopled again, that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations,--that those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten.

And it is to be observed that, by virtue of the ancient promise made to Abraham of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came out of Babylon were but 42,000 (Ezr 2:64), about a fifteenth part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterwards, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule (allowing only

ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty) made the nation to be nearly three millions. Josephus says, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd, Jewish War 6.425. But we must apply it to the church of God in general; I mean the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

The low and languishing state of religion in the world for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost husband and children; the church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them, the rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the children of God, like the children of a broken, reduced family, were scattered abroad (Joh 11:52), did not appear nor make any figure.

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains
of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen
thy stakes;

3 for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy
seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be
inhabited.

Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the gospel and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God. Those were the church's children that were born again, were partakers of a new and divine nature, by the word. More were the children of the desolate than of the married wife; there were more good people found in the Gentile church (when that was set up) that had long been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered (Re 7:4), and they were but a remnant compared with the thousands of Israel; but those of

other nations were so many, and crowded in so thickly, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, Isa 54:9.

Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in those places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession; and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first. Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has lain desolate the greater will the transports of joy be when it begins to recover the ground it has lost and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repents, much more for a nation that does so. If the barren fig-tree at length bring forth fruit, it is well; it shall rejoice, and others with it.

2 The bounds of the church were extended much further than ever before, Isa 54:2,3.

(1.) It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old (Heb 11:9); its dwelling is mean and movable, and of no strength against a storm. The city, the continuing city, is reserved for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church privileges is soon removed out of its place (Re 2:5), and, when God pleases, it is as soon fixed elsewhere.

(2.) Though it be a tabernacle state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and, if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it was the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to

preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named (Ro 15:20), to leaven with the gospel those towns and countries that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed, which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions, and to support her seven pillars, Pr 9:1.

(3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel that in all places it grew and prevailed mightily, Ac 19:20. It broke forth, as the breaking forth of waters--on the right hand and on the left, that is, on all hands. The gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate (that is, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God) came to be inhabited, that is, to have religion set up in them and the name of Christ professed.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church (Isa 54:4): "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, as formerly, of the straitness of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thy enemies upbraided thee with, but shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, because there shall be no more ground for that reproach." It was the reproach of the Christian religion, in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but, after awhile, nations were discipled, the empire became Christian, and then this reproach of its youth was forgotten.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to his church, as her husband (Isa 54:5): Thy maker is thy husband. Believers are said to be married to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God (Ro 7:4); so the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be

accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people--her Redeemer, by whom she is brought out of captivity, the bondage of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and,

(1.) He is the Lord of hosts, who has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and a universal dominion! Kings who are lords of some hosts, find there are others who are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as theirs; but God is the Lord of all hosts.

(2.) He is the Holy One of Israel, the same that presided in the affairs of the Old-Testament church and was the Mediator of the covenant made with it. The promises made to the New-Testament Israel are as rich and sure as those made to the Old-Testament Israel; for he that is our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

(3.) He is and shall be called the Lord of the whole earth, as God, and as Mediator, for he is the heir of all things; but then he shall be called so, when the ends of the earth shall be made to see his salvation, when all the earth shall call him their God and have an interest in him. Long he had been called, in a peculiar manner, the God of Israel; but now, the partition wall between Jew and Gentile being taken down, he shall be called the God of the whole earth even where he has been, as at Athens itself, an unknown God.

4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

5 For thy Maker *is* thine husband; The Lord of hosts *is* his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

6 For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, are here foretold, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

Look back to former troubles, and in comparison with them God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, Isa 54:6-8. Observe,

1. How sorrowful the church's condition had been. She had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was a wife of youth, upon which account she is grieved in spirit, takes it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or she had been as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of being so. Those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is explained (Isa 54:7,8): For a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee. When God continues his people long in trouble he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it (Ps 71:11); so they themselves misinterpret it, Isa 49:14.

When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not nor designed them any kindness. God owns that he had done this; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people, and, though he never turned his face against them (as against the wicked, Ps 34:16), he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure. It was in wrath that he forsook them and hid his face from them (Isa 57:17); yet it was but in a little wrath: not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of (Who knows the power of his anger?), but little in

comparison with what they had deserved, and what others justly suffer, on whom the full vials of his wrath are poured out. He did not stir up all his wrath.

But God's people, though they be sensible of ever so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. As for the continuance of it, it was but for a moment, a small moment; for God does not keep his anger against his people for ever; no, it is soon over. As he is slow to anger, so he is swift to show mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over.

2. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them when God should come and comfort them according to the time that he had afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself when they were forsaken and grieved; he called them out of their afflictions when they were most pressing, Isa 54:6. God's anger endures for a moment, but he will gather his people when they think themselves neglected, will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land,--will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up,--and will gather them at last to himself, will gather the wheat into the barn. He will have mercy on them. This supposes the turning away of his anger and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of others; and it is with great mercies (Isa 54:7), with everlasting kindness, Isa 54:8. The wrath is little, but the mercies are great; the wrath is for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions nor despair of relief.

7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

9 For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a covenant of peace, because it is founded in reconciliation and is inclusive of all good. Now,

1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence. It is as the waters of Noah, that is, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, Isa 54:9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was as inviolable as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see Ge 8:21,22,9:11. And God has ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace: I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, as I have been, and rebuke thee, as I have done. He will not be so angry with them as to cast them off and break his covenant with them (Ps 89:34), nor rebuke them as he has rebuked the heathen, to destroy them, and put out their name for ever and ever, Ps 9:5.

2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation (Isa 54:10): The mountains shall depart, which are called everlasting mountains, and the hills be removed, though they are called perpetual hills, Hab 3:6. Sooner shall they remove than God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; but the promises of God were never broken by the shock of any event. The day will come when all the mountains shall depart and all the hills be removed, not only the tops of them covered, as they

were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up; for the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall continue in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies (as Atlas) and bear them up? They shall depart and be removed. Creature-confidences shall fail us.

In vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains. But the firmament is firm, and answers to its name, when those who seem to prop it are gone. When our friends fail us our God does not, nor does his kindness depart? Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth, and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed. Great mountains, that stand in the way of the salvation of the church, shall be made plain (Zec 4:7); but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that has mercy on his people. Therefore the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable uncertain thing, but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than any they had yet enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ; here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the

church; for, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe,

I The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God (Isa 54:11): "O thou afflicted, poor, and indigent society, that art tossed with tempests, like a ship driven from her anchors by a storm and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition not comforted by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations (Ec 4:1), not comforted by any allay to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it." This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterwards, for a time, under Antiochus. It is often the condition of Christian churches and of particular believers; without are fightings, within are fears; they are like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish; and where is their faith?

II The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the promise of God. God takes notice of the afflicted distressed state of his church, and comforts her, when she is most disconsolate and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what distresses they are in, and what comforts their case calls for. When they bemoan themselves, God bemoans them, and speaks to them with pity: O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourages her with the assurance of the great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity and for the securing of that prosperity to her.

1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promises that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself and amiable in the eyes of others.

(1.) This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude, for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Whereas now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall be not only rebuilt, but beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall be laid not only firm, but fine, laid with fair colours; they shall be glistering stones, 1Ch 29:2 The foundations shall be laid or garnished with sapphires, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ (the church's foundation), and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, are precious above any thing else. The windows of this house, city, or temple, shall be made of agates, the gates of carbuncles, and all the borders (the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the mere-stones) shall be of pleasant stones, Isa 54:12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates,

[1.] That, God having graciously undertaken to build his church, we may expect that to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon.

[2.] That the glory of the New-Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church, not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable, that wisdom which is more precious than rubies (3:15), than the precious onyx and the sapphire, and which the topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal, Job 28:16,19.

[3.] That the wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted most precious, shall be despised by all the true living members of the church, as having no value, no glory, in comparison with that which far excels. That which the children of this world lay up among their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of, and put under their feet, the fittest place of it.

(2.) It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God, in which man was created, renewed, and restored. And these are the sapphires and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, with which the gospel temple shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apostle compares to gold or silver, and precious stones, that are to be built upon the foundation, 1Co 3:12. Then the church is all glorious,

[1.] When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here (Isa 54:13): All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. The church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised (Isa 54:1) that the church's children should be many; but lest we should think that being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as if they were but few, God here takes that work into his own hand: They shall all be taught of the Lord; and none teaches like him.

First, It is a promise of the means of instruction and those means authorized by a divine institution: They shall all be taught of God, that is, they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint and whose labours shall be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the methods of instruction, and by his word and ordinances will diffuse a much greater light than the Old-Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched with it, from the least even to the greatest.

Secondly, It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to gospel grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to

believe in him (Joh 6:45): It is written in the prophets, They shall be all taught of God, whence he infers that those, and those only, come to him by faith that have heard and learned of the Father, that are taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, Eph 4:21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, to teach them all things, Joh 14:26.

[2.] When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves: Great shall be the peace of thy children. Peace may be taken here for all good. As where no knowledge of God is no good can be expected, so those that are taught of God to know him are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds. Great peace have those that know and love God's law, Ps 119:165. But it is often put for love and unity; and so we may take it. All that are taught of God are taught to love one another (1Th 4:9) and that will keep peace among the church's children and prevent their falling out by the way.

[3.] When holiness reigns; for that above any thing is the beauty of the church (Isa 54:14): In righteousness shall thou be established. The reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the gospel of Christ, is not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promises that which would be her protection and security.

(1.) God engages here that though, in the day of her distress, without were fightings and within were fears, now she shall be safe from both.

[1.] There shall be no fears within (Isa 54:14): "Thou shalt be far from oppression. Those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and

therefore thou shalt not fear, but mayest look upon it as a thing at a great distance, that thou art now in no danger of. Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee so as to do thee any hurt or to put thee in any fright."

Note, Those are far from terror that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as can fall on a people to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression, because against this there is no fence, nor is there any flight from it.

[2.] There shall be no fightings without. Though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, Isa 54:15. It is granted, "They shall surely gather together against thee; thou must expect it." The confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults. As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor out of it, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but,

First, God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is not by me. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, Isa 10:6.

And therefore, Secondly, Their attempt will end in their own ruin: "Whosoever shall gather together against thee, be they ever so many and ever so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee." God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church and the care he has of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them. "They shall fall, that thou mayest stand," Ps 27:2.

(2.) That we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

[1.] The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, Isa 54:16. The truth is they have no power but what is given them from above, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them. Hitherto they shall go, and no further. First, They cannot carry on their design without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave him his skill to work in iron and brass (Ex 31:3,4) and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if men did not die fast enough of themselves, how ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death and to find out ways and means to kill one another. The smith blows the coals in the fire, to make his iron malleable, to soften it first, that it may be hardened into steel, and so he may bring forth an instrument proper for the work of those that seek to destroy. It is the iron age that is the age of war. But God has created the smith, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry (as many a project has done) for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of the war; these can do no more than God will let them. Secondly, They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is God that created the waster to destroy. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves gentlemen; but God calls them wasters made to destroy, for wasting and destruction are their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience, made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

[2.] The promise of God concerning the church's safety solemnly laid down, as the heritage of the servants of the Lord (Isa 54:17), as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, that God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts.

First, From their field-adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword: "No weapon that is formed against thee (though ever so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, Isa 54:16, though ever so skilfully managed by the waster that seeks to destroy) shall prosper; it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand or perhaps recoil in the face of him that uses it against thee." It is the happiness of the church that no weapons formed against it shall prosper long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves.

Secondly, From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper there are tongues that rise in judgment. Both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church; for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church are as such as either demand a dominion over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences, or they are such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did, to incense the kings of Persia against them, Ezr 4:12,Es 3:8. "But these insulting threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. Thou shalt do it by well-doing (1Pe 2:15), by doing that which will make thee manifest in the consciences even of thy adversaries,

that thou art not what thou art represented to be. Thou shalt condemn them, that is, God shall condemn them for thee. He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, Ps 37:6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the old world that reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house, in contempt of their contempts." The day is coming when God will reckon with the wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, Jude 1:15.

The last words refer not only to this promise, but to all that go before: This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. God's servants are his sons, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible. God's promises are their heritage for ever (Ps 119:111); and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men. It is with him, for he knows it; it is with him, for he will plead it. Or their reward for their righteousness, and for all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judges in the earth, and with whom verily there is a reward for the righteous. Or their righteousness itself, all that in them which is good and right, is of God, who works it in them; it is of Christ who is made righteousness to them. In those for whom God designs a heritage hereafter he will work righteousness now.

12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.
13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the Lord; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.
14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.
15 Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but* not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.
16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.
17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.

This *is* the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the Lord.

Isaiah-55

A Free Offer of Mercy to All

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Here, I. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant, of that which is the heritage of the servants of the Lord (Isa 54:17), and not only their heritage hereafter, but their cup now, Isa 55:1. Observe,

1. Who are invited: Ho, every one. Not the Jews only, to whom first the word of salvation was sent, but the Gentiles, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are called to this marriage supper, whoever can be picked up out of the highways and the hedges. It intimates that in Christ there is enough for all and enough for each, that ministers are to make a general offer of life and salvation to all, that in gospel times the invitation should be more largely made than it had been and should be sent to the Gentiles, and that the gospel covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an Oyez-Ho, take notice of it. He that has ears to hear let him hear.

2. What is the qualification required in those that shall be welcome--they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel grace upon those terms only that gospel grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for a happiness in the favour of God,--those that depend upon the merit of their own works for a righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness,--these do not thirst; they have no sense of their

need, are in no pain or uneasiness about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ. But those that thirst are invited to the waters, as those that labour, and are heavy-laden, are invited to Christ for rest. Note, Where God gives grace he first gives a thirsting after it; and, where he has given a thirsting after it, he will give it, Ps 81:10.

3. Whither they are invited: Come you to the waters. Come to the water-side, to the ports, and quays, and wharfs, on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported; thither come and buy, for that is the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ; for he is the fountain opened; he is the rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, to those streams that make glad the city of our God; come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ the things signified will be as wine and mile, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters; come to the living waters. Whoever will, let him come, and partake of the waters of life, Re 22:17. Our Saviour referred to it, Joh 7:37. If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.

4. What they are invited to do.

(1.) Come, and buy. Never did any tradesman court customers that he hoped to get by as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be gainers by. "Come and buy, and we can assure you you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of nor lose by. Come and buy; make it your own by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ's terms, nay, your own upon any terms, nor deliberating whether you shall agree to them."

(2.) "Come, and eat; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy." We must buy the truth, not that we may lay it by to be looked at, but that

we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provisions for our souls, be willing to part with any thing, though ever so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ and his graces and comforts. We must part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ, part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ, and part with life itself, and its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And, when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands: Buy, and eat.

5. What is the provision they are invited to: "Come, and buy wine and milk, which will not only quench the thirst" (fair water would do that), "but nourish the body, and revive the spirits." The world comes short of our expectations. We promise ourselves, at least, water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as the troops of Tema, Job 6:19. But Christ outdoes our expectations. We come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him, Ge 49:10,12. His eyes shall be red with wine and his teeth white with milk. We must come to Christ, to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish those that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them: they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our puddle-water, nay, with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

6. The free communication of this provision: Buy it without money, and without price. A strange way of buying, not only without ready money (that is common enough), but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to those who have observed Christ's counsel to Laodicea, that was wretchedly poor, to come and buy, Re 3:17,18. Our buying without money intimates,

(1.) That the gifts offered us are invaluable and such as no price can be set upon. Wisdom is that which cannot be gotten for gold.

(2.) That he who offers them has no need of us, nor of any returns we can make him. He makes us these proposals, not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give.

(3.) That the things offered are already bought and paid for. Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money, but with his own blood, 1Pe 1:19.

(4.) That we shall be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are not of any value, nor is any thing we have or can do, and we must own it, that, if Christ and heaven be ours, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread? and your
labor for *that which* satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and
eat ye *that which is* good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.
3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live;
and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even* the sure
mercies of David.

We are earnestly pressed and persuaded (and O that we would be prevailed with!) to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to is to hearken to God and to his proposals: "Hearken diligently unto me, Isa 55:2. Not only give me the hearing, but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves (Isa 55:3): Incline your ear, as you do to that which you find yourselves concerned in and pleased with; bow the ear, and let the proud heart stoop to the humbling methods of the

gospel; bend the ear this way, that you may hear with attention and remark; hear, and come unto me; not only come and treat with me, but comply with me, come up to my terms;" accept God's offers as very advantageous; answer his demands as very fit and reasonable.

2 The arguments used to persuade us to this are taken,

(1.) From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation: "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, which will not yield you, no, not beggar's food, dry bread, when with me you may have wine and milk without money? Wherefore do you spend your labour and toil for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it satisfies not?" See here,

[1.] The vanity of the things of this world. They are not bread, not proper food for a soul; they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment. Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for a rational and immortal soul, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all befriend. They satisfy not; they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, "Now I have what I would have." Nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body. The more men have the more they would have, Ec 1:8. Haman was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for a while, like the dream of a hungry man, who awakes and his soul is empty. They soon surfeit, but they never satisfy; they cloy a man, but do not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation.

[2.] The folly of the children of this world. They spend their money and labour for these uncertain unsatisfying things. Rich

people live by their money, poor people by their labour; but both mistake their truest interest, while the one is trading, the other toiling, for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed. God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them: "Wherefore do you thus act against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon?" Let us reason with ourselves, and let the result of these reasonings be a holy resolution not to labour for the meat that perishes, but for that which endures to everlasting life, Joh 6:27. Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world help to drive us to Christ, and lead us to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make sure which will be made sure.

(2.) From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves if we accept this invitation and comply with it.

[1.] hereby we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction: "If you hearken to Christ, you eat that which is good, which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself and good for you." God's good word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. Their souls shall delight themselves in fatness, that is, in the riches and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, "Come, and buy," lest that should discourage, but, "Come, and eat; come and entertain yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasing; eat, O friends!" It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own bliss.

[2.] Hereby we secure to ourselves lasting happiness: "Hear, and your soul shall live; you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed:" for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, life to spirits (Joh 6:33,63), the words

of this life, Ac 5:20. On what easy terms is happiness offered to us! It is but "Hear, and you shall live."

[3.] The great God graciously secures all this to us: "Come to me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, will put myself into covenant-relations and under covenant-engagements to you, and thereby settle upon you the sure mercies of David." Note, First, If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us to do us good and make us happy; such are his condescension to us and concern for us. Secondly, God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant--its contrivance from everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. Thirdly, The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who, being miserable, are the proper objects of mercy. They come from God's mercy, and are ordered every way in kindness to us. Fourthly, They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David (Ps 89:28,29, &c.), which are called the mercies of David his servant, and are appealed to by Solomon, 2Ch 6:42. It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, Jer 33:25,26. The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, 2Sa 23:5.

Or, rather, by David here we are to understand the Messiah. Covenant-mercies are all his mercies; they are purchased by him; they are promised in him; they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us. He is the Mediator and trustee of the covenant; to him this is applied, Ac 13:34. They are the ta hosia (the word used there, and by the Septuagint here)--the holy things of David, for they are confirmed by the holiness of God (Ps 89:35) and are intended to advance holiness among men. Fifthly, They are sure mercies. The covenant, being well-ordered in all things, is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and in earnest, in the offer of these mercies. It is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance. They are the mercies of David, and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all yea and amen.

4 Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are here invited to accept of, Isa 55:4. He is that David whose sure mercies all the blessings and benefits of the covenant are. "And God has given him in his purpose and promise, has constituted and appointed him, and in the fulness of time will as surely send him as if he had already come, to be all that to us which is necessary to our having the benefit of these preparations." He has given him freely; for what more free than a gift? There was nothing in us to merit such a favour, but Christ is the gift of God. We want one,

1. To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a witness that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon those promises with entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful witness, we may take his word--a competent witness, for he lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter. Christ, as a prophet, testifies the will of God to the world; and to believe is to receive his testimony.

2. To assist us in closing with the invitation, and coming up to the terms of it. We know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ is given to be a leader. We know not what to do that we may be qualified or it, and become sharers in it, but he is given for a commander, to show us what to do and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lie in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but, to animate us for the conflict, we have a good captain, like Joshua, a leader and commander to tread our enemies under our feet and to put us in possession of the land of promise. Christ is a commander by his precept and a leader by his example; our business is to obey him and follow him.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not, and nations
that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God,
and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

The Master of the feast being fixed, it is next to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost, nor made in vain, Isa 55:5. 1 The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited out of the highways and the hedges: "Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, that is, that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation, that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, the people whom God knew above all the families of the earth." The Gentiles shall now be favoured as they never were before; their knowing God is said to be rather their being known of God, Ga 4:9. 2. They shall come at the call: Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee; those that had long been afar off from Christ shall be made nigh; those that had been running from him shall run to him, with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable. There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who, being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to him. Now see the reason,

(1.) Why the Gentiles will thus flock to Christ; it is because of the Lord his God, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power, because they now see his God is one with whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the concern lies between them and him, cannot but run to Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, and there is no coming to God but by him.

(2.) Why God will bring them to him; it is because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises, and he has promised to glorify him by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When Greeks began to enquire after Christ he said, The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified, Joh 12:22,23. And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension was the great

argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required and what is promised in the covenant, and of those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with and reliance on that covenant. This gracious discovery of God's good-will to the children of men is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises are here given to all, to every one that thirsts after happiness, Isa 55:1. And who does not? Hear this, and live.

I. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon, and peace, and all happiness, to poor sinners, upon gospel terms, Isa 55:6,7.

1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered (Isa 55:6): "Seek the Lord while he may be found. Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you. Call upon him now while he is near, and within call." Observe here,

(1.) The duties required.

[1.] "Seek the Lord. Seek to him, and enquire of him, as your oracle. Ask the law at his mouth. What wilt thou have me to do? Seek for him, and enquire after him, as your portion and happiness; seek to be reconciled to him and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him; be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your way, the Spirit as your guide, and the word as your rule."

[2.] "Call upon him. Pray to him, to be reconciled, and, being reconciled, pray to him for every thing else you have need of."

(2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us: While he may be found--while he is near.

[1.] It is implied that now God is near and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him and to call upon him. Now his patience is waiting on us, his word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us. Let us now improve our advantages and opportunities; for now is the accepted time. But,

[2.] There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found, when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; it is certain that at death and judgment the door will be shut, Lu 16:26,13:25,26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy will take place.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, Isa 55:7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked and the unrighteous--to the wicked, who live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous, who live in the neglect of plain duties: to them is the word of this salvation sent, and all possible assurance given that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here,

(1.) What it is to repent. There are two things involved in repentance:--

[1.] It is to turn from sin; it is to forsake it. It is to leave it, and to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, his evil way, as we would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at, and a dangerous way, that leads to

destruction. Let him not take one step more in that way. Nay, there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must forsake his thoughts. Repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root, and washes the heart from wickedness. We must alter our judgments concerning persons and things, dislodge the corrupt imaginations and quit the vain pretences under which an unsanctified heart shelters itself. Note, It is not enough to break off from evil practices, but we must enter a caveat against evil thoughts. Yet this is not all:

[2.] To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God, our sovereign Lord, against whom we have rebelled, and to whom we are concerned to reconcile ourselves; it is to return to the Lord as the fountain of life and living waters, which we had forsaken for broken cisterns.

(2.) What encouragement we have thus to repent. If we do so,

[1.] God will have mercy. He will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us. Misery is the object of mercy. Now both the consequences of sin, by which we have become truly miserable (Eze 16:5,6), and the nature of repentance, by which we are made sensible of our misery and are brought to bemoan ourselves (Jer 31:18), both these make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies.

[2.] He will abundantly pardon. He will multiply to pardon (so the word is), as we have multiplied to offend. Though our sins have been very great and very many, and though we have often backslidden and are still prone to offend, yet God will repeat his pardon, and welcome even backsliding children that return to him in sincerity.

7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

Here are encouragements given us to accept this offer and to venture our souls upon it. For, look which way we will, we find enough to confirm us in our belief of its validity and value.

1. If we look up to heaven, we find God's counsels there high and transcendent, his thoughts and ways infinitely above ours, Isa 55:8,9. The wicked are urged to forsake their evil ways and thoughts (Isa 55:7) and to return to God, that is, to bring their ways and thoughts to concur and comply with his; "for" (says he) "my thoughts and ways are not as yours. Yours are conversant only about things beneath; they are of the earth earthy: but mine are above, as the heaven is high above the earth; and, if you would approve yourselves true penitents, yours must be so too, and your affections must be set on things above." Or, rather, it is to be understood as an encouragement to us to depend upon God's promise to pardon sin, upon repentance. Sinners may be ready to fear that God will not be reconciled to them, because they could not find in their hearts to be reconciled to one who should have so basely and so frequently offended them. "But" (says God) "my thoughts in this matter are not as yours, but as far above them as the heaven is above the earth." They are so in other things. Men's sentiments concerning sin, and Christ, and holiness, concerning this world and the other, are vastly different from God's; but in nothing more than in the matter of reconciliation. We think God apt to take offence and backward to forgive--that, if he forgives once, he will not forgive a second time. Peter thought it a great deal to forgive seven times (Mt 18:21), and a hundred pence go far with us; but God meets returning sinners with pardoning mercy; he forgives freely, and as he gives: it is without upbraiding. We forgive and cannot forget; but, when God

forgives sin, he remembers it no more. Thus God invites sinners to return to him, by possessing them with good thoughts of him, as Jer 31:20.

2. If we look down to this earth, we find God's word there powerful and effectual, and answering all its great intentions, Isa 55:10,11. Observe here,

(1.) The efficacy of God's word in the kingdom of nature. He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; he appoints when it shall come, to what degree, and how long it shall lie there; he saith so to the small rain and the great rain of his strength, Job 37:6. And according to his order they come down from heaven, and do whatsoever he commands them upon the face of the world, whether it be for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, Isa 55:12,13. It returns not re infectâ--without having accomplished its end, but waters the earth, which he is therefore said to do from his chambers, Ps 104:13. And the watering of the earth is in order to its fruitfulness. Thus he makes it to bring forth and bud, for the products of the earth depend upon the dews of heaven; and thus it gives not only bread to the eater, present maintenance to the owner and his family, but seed likewise to the sower, that he may have food for another year. The husbandman must be a sower as well as an eater, else he will soon see the end of what he has.

(2.) The efficacy of his word in the kingdom of providence and grace, which is as certain as the former: "So shall my word be, as powerful in the mouth of prophets as it is in the hand of providence; it shall not return unto me void, as unable to effect what it was sent for, or meeting with an insuperable opposition; no, it shall accomplish that which I please" (for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he works all things) "and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." This assures us,

[1.] That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail, 1Ki 8:56. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as ever the rain had upon the earth, to make it fruitful.

[2.] That according to the different errands on which the word is sent it will have its different effects. If it be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death; if it do not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will sear the conscience and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell. See Isa 6:9. One way or other, it will take effect.

[3.] That Christ's coming into the world, as the dew from heaven (Ho 14:5), will not be in vain. For, if Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore the tenders of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests and the gospel not return void.

3. If we take a special view of the church, we shall find what great things God has done, and will do, for it (Isa 55:12,13): You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace. This refers,

(1.) To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon. They shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth towards their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as sensibly, as before their fathers in the pillar of cloud and fire. They shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph, not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being fetched back, but with joy and peace. Their journey home over the mountains shall be pleasant, and they shall have the good-will and good wishes of all the countries they pass through.

The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and, if the people should altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field would attend them with their applauses and acclamations. And, when they come to their own land, it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for, whereas they expected to find it all overgrown with briers and thorns, it shall be set with fir-trees and myrtle-trees: for, though it lay desolate, yet it enjoyed its sabbaths (Le 26:34), which, when they were over, like the land after the sabbatical year, it was the better for. And this shall redound much to the honour of God and be to him for a name. But,

(2.) Without doubt it looks further. This shall be for an everlasting sign, that it,

[1.] The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to gospel times. The accomplishment of the predictions relating to that great deliverance would be a pledge and earnest of the performance of all the other promises; for thereby it shall appear that he is faithful who has promised.

[2.] It shall be a representation of the blessings promised and a type and figure of them.

First, Gospel grace will set those at liberty that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall go out and be led forth. Christ shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed.

Secondly, It will fill those with joy that were melancholy. Ps 14:7, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. The earth and the inferior part of the creation shall share in the joy of this salvation, Ps 94:11,12.

Thirdly, It will make a great change in men's characters. Those that were as thorns and briers, good for nothing but the fire, nay,

hurtful and vexatious, shall become graceful and useful as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briers came in with sin and were the fruits of the curse, Ge 3:18. The raising of pleasant trees in the room of them signifies the removal of the curse of the law and the introduction of gospel blessings. The church's enemies were as thorns and briers; but, instead of them, God will raise up friends to be her protection and ornament. Or it may denote the world's growing better; instead of a generation of thorns and briers, there shall come up a generation of fir-trees and myrtles; the children shall be wiser and better than the parents. And, fourthly, in all this God shall be glorified. It shall be to him for a name, by which he will be made known and praised, and by it the people of God shall be encouraged. It shall be for an everlasting sign of God's favour to them, assuring them that, though it may for a time be clouded, it shall never be cut off. The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant; for the present blessings of it are signs of everlasting ones.

11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not
return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please,
and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.
12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the
mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the
brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for
a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

Isaiah-56

The Rewards of Keeping God's Covenant

The scope of these verses is to show that when God is coming towards us in a way of mercy we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty.

I. God here tells us what are his intentions of mercy to us (Isa 56:1): My salvation is near to come--the great salvation wrought

out by Jesus Christ (for that was the salvation of which the prophets enquired and searched diligently, 1Pe 1:10), typified by the salvation of the Jews from Sennacherib or out of Babylon. Observe,

1 The gospel salvation is the salvation of the Lord. It was contrived and brought about by him; he glories in it as his.

2. In that salvation God's righteousness is revealed, which is so much the beauty of the gospel that St. Paul makes this the ground of his glorying in it. (Ro 1:17), because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. The law revealed that righteousness of God by which all sinners stand condemned, but the gospel reveals that by which all believers stand acquitted.

3. The Old-Testament saints saw this salvation coming, and drawing near to them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon, at the end of seventy years, so others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ at the end of seventy weeks of years.

II. He tells us what are his expectations of duty from us, in consideration thereof. Say not, "We see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it or coming short of it;" that is turning the grace of God into wantonness. But, on the contrary, when the salvation is near double your guard against sin.

Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises the stronger obligations he lays us under to obedience. The salvation here spoken of has now come; yet, there being still a further salvation in view, the apostle presses duty upon us Christians with the same argument. Ro 3:11, Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. That which is here

required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings: Keep you judgment and do justice. Walk by rule, and make conscience of what you say and do, that you do no wrong to any. Render to all their dues exactly, and, in exacting what is due to you, keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigours of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule, "Do as you would be done by." Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully. This is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God is true to us; let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the sabbath day, Isa 56:2. We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath-sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruits of our love to God, as justice and judgment are put for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbour. Observe,

(1.) The duty required, which is to keep the sabbath, to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are entrusted with. "Keep it holy; keep it safe; keep it with care and caution; keep it from polluting it. Allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest or omit the holy work of that day." If this be intended primarily for the Jews in Babylon, it was fit that they should be particularly put in mind of this, because when, by reason of their distance from the temple, they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might distinguish themselves from the heathen by putting a difference between God's day and other days.

But it being required more generally of man, and the son of man, it intimates that sabbath-sanctification should be a duty in gospel times, when the bounds of the church should be enlarged and other rites and ceremonies abolished. Observe, Those that would

keep the sabbath from polluting it must put on resolution, must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for sabbath time is precious, but is very apt to slip away if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it and keep our hold, must do it and persevere in it.

(2.) The encouragement we have to do this duty: Blessed is he that doeth it. The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience, and make a business, of sabbath-sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness the more honesty, 1Ti 2:2.

3. That we have nothing to do with sin: Blessed is the man that keeps his hand from doing evil, any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name--or, more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God and hurtful to his own soul. Note, The best evidence of our having kept the sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear that we have been in the mount with God if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

1 Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation *is* near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.
2 Blessed *is* the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.
3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree.

The prophet is here, in God's name, encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God and yet laboured under great discouragements.

1. Some were discouraged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had joined themselves to the Lord, and bound

their souls with a bond to be his for ever (this is the root and life of religion, to break off from the world and the flesh, and devote ourselves entirely to the service and honour of God); but they questioned whether God would accept them, because they were of the sons of the stranger, Isa 56:3. They were Gentiles, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens from the covenants of promise, and therefore feared they had no part nor lot in the matter. They said, "The Lord has utterly separated me from his people, and will not own me as one of them, nor admit me to their privileges." It was often said that there should be one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land (Ex 12:49), and yet they came to this melancholy conclusion.

Note, Unbelief often suggests things to the discouragement of good people which are directly contrary to what God himself has said, things which he has expressly guarded against. Let not the sons of the stranger therefore say thus, for they have no reason to say it. Note, Ministers must have answers ready for the disquieting fears and jealousies of weak Christians, which, how unreasonable soever, they must take notice of.

2. Others were discouraged because they were not fathers in Israel. The eunuch said, Behold, I am a dry tree. So he looked upon himself, and it was his grief; so others looked upon him, and it was his reproach. He was thought to be of no use because he had no children, nor was ever likely to have any. This was then the more grievous because eunuchs were not admitted to be priests (Le 21:20), nor to enter into the congregation (De 23:1), and because the promise of a numerous posterity was the particular blessing of Israel and the more valuable because from among them the Messiah was to come. Yet God would not have the eunuchs to make the worst of their case, nor to think that they should be excluded from the gospel church, and from being spiritual priests, because they were shut out from the congregation of Israel and the Levitical priesthood; no, as the taking down of the partition wall, contained in ordinances, admitted the Gentiles, so it let in likewise those that had been

kept out by ceremonial pollutions. Yet, by the reply here given to this suggestion, it should seem the chief thing which the eunuch laments in his case is his being written childless.

Now suitable encouragements are given to each of these.

I. To those who have no children of their own, who, though they had the honour to be the children of the church and the covenant themselves, yet had none to whom they might transmit that honour, none to receive the sign of circumcision and the privileges secured by that sign. Now observe,

1. What a good character they have, though they lie under this ignominy and affliction; and those only are entitled to the following comforts who in some measure answer to these characters.

(1.) They keep God's sabbaths as he has appointed them to be kept. In the primitive times, if a Christian were asked, "Hast thou kept holy the Lord's day?" He would readily answer, "I am a Christian, and dare not do otherwise."

(2.) In their whole conversation they choose those things that please God. They do that which is good; they do it with a sincere design to please God in it; they do it of choice, and with delight. If sometimes, through infirmity, they come short in doing that which pleases God, yet they choose it, they endeavour after it, and aim at it. Note, Whatever is God's pleasure should without dispute be our choice.

(3.) They take hold of his covenant, and that is a thing that pleases God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the gospel; to take hold of it is to consent to it, to accept the offer and come up to the terms, deliberately and sincerely to take God to be to us a God and to give up ourselves to him to be to him a people. Taking hold of

the covenant denotes an entire and resolute consent to it, taking hold as those that are afraid of coming short, catching at it as a good bargain, and as those that are resolved never to let it go, for it is our life: and we take hold of it as a criminal took hold of the horns of the altar to which he fled for refuge.

2. What a great deal of comfort they may have if they answer to this character, though they are not built up into families (Isa 56:5): Unto them will I give a better place and name. It is supposed that there is a place and a name, which we have from sons and daughters, that is valuable and desirable. It is a pleasing notion we have that we live in our children when we are dead. But there is a better place, and a better name, which those have that are in covenant with God, and it is sufficient to counterbalance the want of the former. A place and a name denote rest and reputation; a place to live comfortably in themselves, and a name to live creditably with among their neighbours; they shall be happy, and may be easy both at home and abroad. Though they have not children to be the music of their house, or arrows in their quiver, to keep them in countenance when they speak with their enemies in the gate, yet they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For,

(1.) God will give it to them, will give it to them by promise; he will himself be both their habitation and their glory, their place and their name.

(2.) He will give it to them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted so as to take root (Ps 92:13), shall dwell all the days of their life, Ps 27:4. They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna, that departed not from the temple night nor day. There they shall have a name. A name for the good things with God and good people is a name better than that of sons and daughters. Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name.

(3.) It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who therefore marry not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are unspeakably better than those of sons and daughters; for children are a certain care and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be embittered.

4 For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths,
and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant;
5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a
place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give
them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.
6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to
serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants,
every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold
of my covenant;

To those that are themselves the children of strangers.

1. It is here promised that they shall now be welcome to the church, Isa 56:6,7. When God's Israel come out of Babylon, let them bring as many of their neighbours along with them as they can persuade to come, and God will find room enough for them all in his house. And here, (as before) we may observe,

(1.) Upon what terms they shall be welcome. Let them know that God's Israel, when they come out of Babylon, will not be plagued, as they were when they came out of Egypt, with a mixed multitude, that went with them, but were not cordially for them; no, the sons of the strangers shall have a place and a name in God's house provided,

[1.] That they forsake other gods, all rivals and pretenders whatsoever, and join themselves to the Lord, so as to become one spirit, 1Co 6:17.

[2.] That they join themselves to him as subjects to their prince and soldiers to their general, by an oath of fidelity and obedience, to serve him, not occasionally, as one would serve a turn, but to be constantly his servants, entirely subject to his command, and devoted to his interest.

[3.] That they join themselves to him as friends to his honour and the interests of his kingdom in the world, to love the name of the Lord, to be well pleased with all the discoveries he has made of himself and all the memorials they make of him. Observe, Serving him and loving him go together; for those that love him truly will serve him faithfully, and that obedience is most acceptable to him, as well as most pleasant to us, which flows from a principle of love, for then his commandments are not grievous, 1Jo 5:3.

[4.] That they keep the sabbath from polluting it; for the stranger that is within thy gates is particularly required to do that. [5.] That they take hold of the covenant, that is, that they come under the bonds of it, and put in for the benefits of it.

(2.) To what privileges they shall be welcome, Isa 56:7. Three things are here promised them, in their coming to God:--

[1.] Assistance: "I will bring them to my holy mountain, not only bid them welcome when they come, but incline them to come, will show them the way, and lead them in it." David himself prays that God by his light and truth would bring them to his holy hill, Ps 43:3. And the sons of the stranger shall be under the same guidance. The church is God's holy hill, on which he hath set his King, and, in bringing them to Zion Hill, he brings them to be subjects to Zion's King, as well as worshippers in Zion's holy temple.

[2.] Acceptance: "Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on my altar, and be never the less acceptable

for being theirs, though they are sons of the stranger." The prayers and praises (those spiritual sacrifices) of devout Gentiles shall be as pleasing to God as those of the pious Jews, and no difference shall be made between them; for, though they are Gentiles by birth, yet through grace they shall be looked upon as the believing seed of faithful Abraham and the praying seed of wrestling Jacob, for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision.

[3.] Comfort. They shall not only be accepted, but they themselves shall have the pleasure of it: I will make them joyful in my house of prayer. They shall have grace, not only to serve God, but to serve him cheerfully and with gladness, and that shall make the service the more acceptable to him; for, when we sing in the ways of the Lord, then great is the glory of our God. They shall go away and eat their bread with joy, because God now accepts their works, Ec 9:7. Nay, though they came mourning to the house of prayer, they shall go away rejoicing, for they shall there find such ease, by casting their cares and burdens upon God, and referring themselves to him, that, like Hannah, they shall go away and their countenance shall be no more sad. Many a sorrowful spirit has been made joyful in the house of prayer.

2. It is here promised that multitudes of the Gentiles shall come to the church, not only that the few who come dropping in shall be made welcome, but that great numbers shall come in, and the door be thrown open to them: My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The temple was then God's house, and to that Christ applies these words (Mt 21:13), but with an eye to it as a type of the gospel church, Heb 9:8,9. For Christ calls it his house, Heb 3:6. Now concerning this house it is promised,

(1.) That it shall not be a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer. The religious meetings of God's people shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall join together, as a token of their united faith and mutual love.

(2.) That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it to the world, that in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him, Ac 10:35. It had been declared again and again that the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph 2:19. And it appears by Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer and that strangers should be welcome to it, 1Ki 8:30,41,43. And it is intimated here (Isa 56:8) that when the Gentiles are called in they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that (as Christ says, Joh 10:16) there may be one fold and one Shepherd; for,

[1.] God will gather the outcasts of Israel. Many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out shall by faith be brought in again, a remnant according to the election of grace, Ro 11:5. Christ came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 15:24), to gather their outcasts (Ps 147:2), to restore their preserved (Isa 49:6), and to be their glory, Lu 2:32.

[2.] He will gather others also to him, besides his own outcasts that are gathered to him. Or, though some of the Gentiles have come over now and then into the church, that shall not serve (as some may think) to answer the extent of these promises; no, there are still more and more to be brought in: "I will gather others to him besides these; these are but the first-fruits in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in." Note, The church is a growing body: when some are gathered to it we may still hope there shall be more, till the mystical body be completed. Other sheep I have.

7 even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful
in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall*

be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

8 The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, besides those that are gathered unto him.

9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, *yea*, all ye beasts in the forest.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, passes to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain, for the most part, in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this. Now here he shows what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, nearly a hundred years before the captivity, who were now filling up the measure of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the falseness of their friends.

Desolating judgments are here summoned, Isa 56:9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sheep of his slaughter, to fall as victims to his justice, and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition; but God permits them to do it, nay, he employs them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither does their heart think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by the Babylonians, and their devouring them, yet it may look further, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them (mentioned Isa 56:8) were gathered in to the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, When God has

bloody work to do he has beasts of prey within call, to be employed in doing it.

10 His watchmen *are* blind: they are all ignorant, they *are* all dumb
dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.
11 Yea, *they are* greedy dogs *which* can never have enough, and they *are*
shepherds *that* cannot understand: they all look to their own way,
every one for his gain, from his quarter.

The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds, who should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them, and so the sheep became an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time (who flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace though they went on) and to the priests that bore rule by their means. Or it may refer to the wicked princes, the sons of Josiah, that did evil in the sight of the Lord, and other wicked magistrates under them, who betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane, and, instead of making up the breach at which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, made it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord instead of doing any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice (Isa 56:1), but they abandoned both, Jer 5:1.

Or it may refer to those who were the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and the scribes, who should have discerned the signs of the times and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah, but who, instead of that, opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him and to prejudice them against him. It is a very sad character that is here given of these watchmen. Woe unto thee, O land! when thy guides are such.

1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business. They were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach, being

so ill-taught themselves: His watchmen are blind, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If the seers see not, who shall see for us? If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! Christ describes the Pharisees to be blind leaders of the blind, Mt 15:14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are all ignorant (Isa 56:10), shepherds that cannot understand (Isa 56:11), that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, Jer 3:15.

2. What little knowledge they had they made no use of it; no one was the better for it. As they were blind watchmen, that could not discern the danger, so they were dumb dogs, that would not give warning of it. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep if they cannot bark to waken the shepherd and frighten the wolf? Such were these; those that had the charge of souls never reproved men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof, never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. They barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and worried the sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy, and would take no pains. They loved their ease, and hated business, were always sleeping, lying down and loving to slumber. They were not overcome and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep, and said, Soul, take thy ease. Yet a little sleep. It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber (Na 3:18), and it is well for God's people that their shepherd, the keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world--greedy dogs that can never have enough. If they had ever so much, they would think it too little. They so love silver as never to be satisfied with silver, Ec 5:10. All their enquiry is what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they

care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare. It was St. Paul's complaint of the watchmen in his time (Php 2:21), All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's. Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look every one to his gain from his quarter, from his end or part of the work. They are for fain from every quarter (Rem rem quocunque modo rem--Money, money, by fair means or by foul we must have money), but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. If any one put not into their mouths they not only will do him no service, but they prepare war against him, Mic 3:5.

5. They were perfect epicures, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels (Isa 56:12): Come (say they), I will fetch wine (they have that at command; their cellars are better furnished than their closets) and we will fill ourselves, or be drunk, with strong drink. They were often drunk, not overseen (as we say) or overtaken in drink, but designedly. The watchmen did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they courted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed those in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reproved. How could they think it any harm to be drunk when the watchmen themselves joined with them and led them to it!

6. They were very secure and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease; they said, "To-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant; we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow as we have to-day." They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days and hastening their deaths by their

excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. But boast not thyself of to-morrow when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

12 Come ye, *say they,* I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, *and* much more abundant.

Isaiah-57

Condemnation of Israel's Idolatry

1 The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart: and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come.*

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness; here he shows the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise. No wonder they were inconsiderate when their watchmen were so, who should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

I The providence of God removing good men apace out of this world. The righteous, as to this world, perish; they are gone and their place knows them no more. Piety exempts none from the arrests of death, nay, in persecuting times, the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men. The first that died died a martyr. Righteousness delivers from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to perish because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them, not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing

to the places where they lived and were useful. Nay, even merciful men are taken away, those good men that are distinguished from the righteous, for whom some would even dare to die, Ro 5:7. Those are often removed that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death and the barren left still to cumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away by the hands of men's malice. Many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarcely any left, Jer 5:1 The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, Ps 12:1.

II The careless world slighting these providences, and disregarding them: No man lays it to heart, none considers it. There are very few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart and considered more than common deaths. Serious enquiries ought to be made, wherefore God contends with us, what good lessons are to be learned by such providences, what we may do to help to make up the breach and to fill up the room of those that are removed. God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart, when the voice of the rod is not heard nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, Re 11:10. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind, being thus easily parted with, are really undervalued; and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy. Little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

III. The happiness of the righteous in their removal.

1. They are taken away from the evil to come, then when it is just coming, (1.) In compassion to them, that they may not see the evil (2Ki 22:20), nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven when there was none for them

under heaven. (2.) In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; those are taken away that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God, and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign that God intends war when he calls home his ambassadors.

2. They go to be easy out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, who while he lived walked in his uprightness, when he dies enters into peace and rests in his bed. Note,

(1.) Death is gain, and rest, and bliss, to those only who walked in their uprightness, and who, when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah (2Ki 20:3). Now, Lord, remember it.

(2.) Those that practised uprightness, and persevered in it to the end, shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where peace is in perfection and where there is no trouble. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord. Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, Re 14:13. And the more weary they were the more welcome will that rest be to them, Job 3:17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet; it is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

2 He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one*
walking *in* his uprightness.

3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the
adulterer and the whore.

We have here a high charge, but a just one no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation out of which God's righteous ones were removed, because the world was not worthy of them. Observe,

I The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicted, Isa 57:3. They are told to draw

near and hear the charge, are set to the bar, and arraigned there as sons of the sorceress, or of a witch, the seed of an adulterer and a whore, that is, they were such themselves, they were strongly inclined to be such, and their ancestors were such before them. Sin is sorcery and adultery, for it is departing from God and dealing with the devil. They were children of disobedience. "Come," says the prophet, "draw near hither, and I will read you your doom; to the righteous death will bring peace and rest, but not to you; you are children of transgression and a seed of falsehood (Isa 57:4), that have it by kind, and have it woven into your very nature, to backslide from God and to deal treacherously with him," Isa 48:8.

II The particular crimes laid to their charge.

1. Scoffing at God and his word. They were a generation of scorners (Isa 57:4): "Against whom do you sport yourselves? You think it is only against the poor prophets whom you trample upon as contemptible men, but really it is against God himself, who sends them, and whose message they deliver." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, for what was done to them God took as done to himself. When they were reproved for their sins, and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the word of God with the rudest and most indecent gestures and expressions of disdain. They sported themselves, and made themselves merry, with that which should have made them serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made wry mouths at the prophets, and drew out the tongue, contrary to all the laws of good breeding; nor did they treat God's prophets with the common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman's servant that had been sent to them on an errand. Note, Those who mock at God, and bid defiance to his judgments, had best consider who it is towards whom they conduct themselves so insolently.

2. Idolatry. This was that sin which the people of the Jews were most notoriously guilty of before the captivity; but that affliction cured them of it. In Isaiah's time it abounded, witness the abominable idolatries of Ahaz (which some think are particularly referred to here) and of Manasseh.

(1.) They were dotingly fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful unnatural lusts, Ro 1:27. They were mad upon their idols, Jer 50:38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets that leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves, 1Ki 18:26,28. Note, Vile corruptions, the more they are gratified the more they are inflamed. They worshipped their idols under every green tree, in the open air, and in the shade; yet that did not cool the heat of their impetuous lusts, but rather the charming beauty of the green trees made them the more fond of their idols which they worshipped there. Thus that in nature which is pleasing, instead of drawing them to the God of nature, drew them from him. The flame of their zeal in the worship of false gods may shame us for our coldness and indifference in the worship of the true God. They strove to inflame themselves, but we distract and deaden ourselves. (2.) They were barbarous and unnaturally cruel in the worship of their idols. They slew their children, and offered them in sacrifice to their idols, not only in the valley of the son of Hinnom, the headquarters of that monstrous idolatry, but in other valleys, in imitation of that, and under the cliffs of the rock, in dark and solitary places, the fittest for such works of darkness.

(3.) They were abundant and insatiable in their idolatries. They never thought they could have idols enough, nor could spend enough upon them and do enough in their service. The Syrians had once a notion of the God of Israel that he was a God of the hills, but not a God of the valleys (1Ki 20:28); but these idolaters, to make sure work, had both.

[1.] They had gods of the valleys, which they worshipped in the low places by the water side (Isa 57:6): Among the smooth stones of the valley, or brook, is thy portion. If they saw a smooth carved stone, though set up but for a way-mark or a mere-stone, they were ready to worship it, as the papists do crosses. Or in stony valleys they set up their gods, which they called their portion, and took for their lot, as God's people take him for their lot and portion. But these gods of stone would really be no better a portion for them, no better a lot, than the smooth stones of the stream near which they were set up, for sometimes they worshipped their rivers. "They, they, are the lot which thou trustest to and art pleased with, but thou shalt be put off with it for thy lot, and miserable will thy case be." See the folly of sinners, who take the smooth stones of the stream for their portion, when they might have the precious stones of God's Jerusalem, and the high priest's ephod, to portion themselves with. Having taken these idols for their lot and portion, they stick at no charge in doing honour to them: "To them hast thou poured a drink-offering, and offered a meat-offering, as if they had given thee thy meat and drink." They loved their idols better than their children, for their own tables must be robbed to replenish the altars of their idols. Have we taken the true God for our portion? Is he, even he, our lot? Let us then serve him with our meat and drink, not, as they did, by depriving ourselves of the use of them, but by eating and drinking to his glory. Here, in a parenthesis, comes in an expression of God's just resentment of this wickedness of theirs: Should I receive comfort in these--in such a people as this? Can those expect that God will take any pleasure in them, or accept their devotions at his altar, who thus serve Baal with the gifts of his providence? God takes comfort in his people, while they are faithful to him; but what comfort can he take in them when those that should be his witnesses against the idolatries of the world do themselves fall in with them? Should I have compassion on these? (so some), or should I repent me concerning these? so others. "How can they expect that I should spare them, and either adjourn or abate their punishment, when they are so very provoking? Shall I not visit for these things?" Jer 5:7,9.

[2.] They had gods of the hills too (Isa 57:7): "Upon a lofty and high mountain (as if thou wouldst vie with the high and lofty One himself, Isa 57:15) hast thou set thy bed, thy idol, thy idol's temple and altar, the bed of thy uncleanness, where thou committest spiritual whoredom, with all the wantonness of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. Thither wentest thou up readily enough, though it was up-hill, to offer sacrifice." Some think this bespeaks the impudence they arrived at in their idolatries; at first they had some sense of shame, when they worshipped their idols in the valleys, in obscure places; but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty high mountains. They were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

[3.] As if these were not enough, they had household-gods too, their lares and penates. Behind the doors and the posts (Isa 57:8), where the law of God should be written for a memorandum to them of their duty, they set up the remembrance of their idols, not so much to keep up their own remembrance of them (they were so fond of them that they could not forget them), but to show to others how mindful they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and possess them betimes with a veneration for these dunghill deities.

[4.] As they were insatiable in their idolatries, so they were inseparable from them. They were hardened in their wickedness; they worshipped their idols openly and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment; they went as publicly, and in as great crowds, to the idol-temples, as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot, discovering themselves to another than God, making profession of another than the true religion. They took a pride in making proselytes to their idolatries, and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, that is, their idol-temples, and (as the margin reads

the following words) thou hewedst it for thyself larger than theirs, than theirs from whom thou copiedst it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar from that which he saw at Damascus, 2Ki 16:10. And being thus involved over head and ears, as it were, in their idolatries, there is no parting them from them. Ephraim is now joined to idols both in love and league. First, In league: "Thou hast made a covenant with them, with the idols, with the idol-worshippers, to live and die together." This was a complete renunciation of their covenant with God and an avowed resolution to persist in their apostasy from him. Secondly, In love: "Thou lovedst their bed, that is, the temple of an idol, wherever thou sawest it." Justly therefore were they given up to their own hearts' lusts.

3. Another sin charged upon them is their trusting in and seeking to foreign aids and succours, and contracting a communion with the Gentile powers (Isa 57:9): Thou wentest to the king, which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly Moloch, which signifies a king. "Thou didst every thing to ingratiate thyself with those idols, didst offer incense and sweet ointments at their altars." Or it may be meant of the king of Assyria, whom Ahaz made his court to, or of the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed, or of other kings of the nations whose idolatrous usages they admired and were desirous to learn and imitate, and for that end went and sent to cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be like them and strengthen themselves by an alliance with them. See here,

(1.) What an expense they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance. They went with ointments and perfumes, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces and so make themselves considerable and worthy the friendship of the greatest king, or to be presented to those whose favour they were ambitious of, because a man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men. "When the first present of rich perfumes was thought too little, thou didst increase them;" and

thus many seek the ruler's favour, forgetting that, after all, every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord. So fond were they of those heathen princes that they not only went themselves, in all their airs, to those that were near them, but sent messengers to those that were afar off, Isa 18:2.

(2.) How much they hereby disparaged themselves and laid the honour of their crown and nation in the dust: Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell. They did so by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, who are endued with the powers of reason, to worship that as their god which is the creature of their own fancy and the work of their own hands, to bow down to the stock of a tree. It is much more a dishonour to the children of God, who are blessed with the privilege of divine revelation, to forsake such a God as they know theirs to be for a thing of nought, their own mercies for lying vanities. They likewise debased themselves by truckling to their heathen neighbours, and depending upon them, when they had a God to go to who is all-sufficient and in covenant with them. How did those shame themselves to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the fountain of life for broken cisterns and the rock of ages for broken reeds! Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and those who thus debase themselves to hell will justly have their portion there.

The aggravations of their sin.

1. They had been tired with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them (Isa 57:10): "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie." Those that set up idols, instead of God, for the object of their worship, and princes, instead of God, for the object of their hope and confidence, and think thus to better themselves and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end: Thou art wearied in the multitude, or

multiplicity, of thy ways (so some read it): those that forsake the only right way wander endlessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have sought out.

They weary themselves with fresh chases and fierce ones, but never gain their point, like the Sodomites, that wearied themselves to find the door (Ge 19:11) and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon surfeit, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience. The idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness; the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; and yet they were so wretchedly besotted that they could not say, "There is no hope; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with." Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a well-grounded hope of happiness in God and a well-fixed resolution to keep to his service; and those are inexcusable who have had sensible convictions of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, "There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator."

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet, because they had found some present sensual pleasure and worldly profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it: "Thou hast found the life of thy hand" (or the living of it); thou boastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, any more than Ephraim when he said (Ho 12:8), "I have become rich; I have found out substance." Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question: "Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast

found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt thou hast; hast thou not? And therefore thou art so far from being grieved that thou blessest thyself in thy own evil way; but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hast thou of those things whereof thou art ashamed and for which God shall bring thee into judgment?" Ro 6:21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for,

(1.) It should seem they pretended that the reason why they left God was because he was too terrible a majesty for them to deal with; they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with. "But," says God, "of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenants with me and prayers to me? What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given thee to think hardly of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder master?"

(2.) However, it is certain that they had no true reverence of God nor any serious regard to him. So that question is commonly understood, "Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared? Of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldst fear; for thou hast lied to me." Those that dissemble with God make it to appear they stand in no awe of him. "Thou hast not remembered me, neither what I have said nor what I have done, neither the promises nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldst have done if thou hadst feared me." Note, Those who lay not the word of God and his providences to their hearts do thereby show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aright nor to good purpose fear any thing, remember any thing, nor lay any thing to heart. Nay,

(3.) They were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God. "Have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time? These things thou hast done and I kept silence. And therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not;" as if because God had spared long he would never punish, Ec 8:11. Because he kept silence the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, *and* draw out the tongue? *are* ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood,

5 inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks?

6 Among the smooth *stones* of the stream *is* thy portion; they, they *are* thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

7 Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

8 Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered *thyself to another* than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee *a covenant* with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest *it*.

9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase *thyself even* unto hell.

10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; *yet* saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

11 And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid *it* to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?

12 I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long borne with them (Isa 57:12): "I will declare (like that, Ps 50:21, But I will reprove thee), I will declare thy righteousness, which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a

cheat, it is not what it pretends to be. When thy righteousness comes to be examined it will be found that it was unrighteousness, and that there was no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at long-run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account." Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason nor righteousness in them, so they are unfruitful works and there is nothing got by them; and, however they look now, it will be made to appear so another day. Sin profits not, nay, it ruins and destroys.

13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take *them:* but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.

Here, I. God shows how insufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them and confided in them (Isa 57:13): "When thou criest in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy misery and callest for help, let thy companies deliver thee, thy idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself companies of, the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief than what they can give." Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon him (Jdg 10:14), Go, and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you. But in vain is salvation hoped for from them: The wind shall carry them all away, the wind of God's wrath, that breath of his mouth which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away. Vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away, to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recompence. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

II. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency, in him for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him and made their application to him. Their safety and satisfaction appear the more comfortable because their hopes

are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated: "He that puts his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this world and the other."

1. Observe, in general,

(1.) Those that trust in God's providence take the best course to secure their secular interests. They shall possess the land, as much of it as is good for them, and what they have they shall have it from a good hand and hold it by a good title. Ps 37:3, They shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed.

(2.) Those that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their sacred interests. They shall inherit my holy mountain. They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven; and no wind shall carry them away.

2. More particularly,

(1.) The captives, that trust in God, shall be released (Isa 57:14): They shall say (that is, the messengers of his providence, in that great event shall say), Cast you up, cast you up, prepare the way. When God's time shall have come for their deliverance the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy, obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be speedily got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and facilitate their return. See Isa 40:3,4. This refers to the provision which the gospel, and the grace of it, have made for our ready passage through this world to a better. The way of religion is now cast up; it is a highway; ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them.

(2.) The contrite, that trust in God, shall be revived, Isa 57:15. Those that trusted to idols and creatures for help went with their ointments and perfumes (Isa 57:9); but here God shows that those who may expect help from him are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from, the gaieties of the world and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright, [1.] In his greatness and majesty: He is the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity. Let this inspire us with very high and honourable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do, First, That his being and perfections are exalted infinitely above every creature, not only above what they have themselves, but above what they can conceive concerning him, far above all their blessing and praise, Ne 9:5. He is the high and lofty One, and there is no creature like him, nor any to be compared with him. The language likewise intimates his sovereign dominion over all and the incontestable right he has to give both law and judgment to all. He is higher than the highest (Ec 5:8), than the highest heavens, Ps 113:4. Secondly, That with him there is neither beginning of days nor end of life, nor change of time; he is both immortal and immutable. He only has immortality, 1Ti 6:16. He has it of himself, and he has it constantly; he inhabits it, and cannot be dispossessed of it. We must shortly remove into eternity, but God always inhabits it. Thirdly, That there is an infinite rectitude in his nature, and an exact conformity with himself and a steady design of his own glory in all that he does; and this appears in every thing by which he has made himself known, for his name is holy, and all that desire to be acquainted with him must know him as a holy God. Fourthly, That the peculiar residence and manifestation of his glory are in the mansions of light and bliss above: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and will have all the world to know it." Whoever have any business with God must direct to him as their Father in heaven, for there he dwells. These great things are here said of God to inspire us with a holy reverence of him, to encourage our confidence in him, and to magnify his compassion and condescension to us, that though he is thus high yet he has respect unto the lowly; he that rides on the heavens by his name

JAH stoops to concern himself for poor widows and fatherless, Ps 68:4,5.

[2.] In his grace and mercy. He has a tender pity for the humble and contrite, for those that are so in respect of their state. If they be his people, he will not overlook them though they are poor and low in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men; but he here refers to the temper of their mind; he will have a tender regard to those who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction, and bring their mind to their condition, be it ever so low and ever so sad and sorely broken--those that are truly penitent for sin, who mourn in secret for it, and have a dread of the wrath of God, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are submissive under all his rebukes. Now, First, With these God will dwell. He will visit them graciously, will converse familiarly with them by his word and Spirit, as a man does with those of his own family; he will be always nigh to them and present with them. He that dwells in the highest heavens dwells in the lowest hearts and inhabits sincerity as surely as he inhabits eternity. In these he delights. Secondly, He will revive their heart and spirit, will speak that to them, and work that in them by the word and Spirit of his grace, which will be reviving to them, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will give them reviving joys and hopes sufficient to counterbalance all the griefs and fears that break their spirits. He dwells with them, and his presence is reviving.

(3.) Those with whom he contends, if they trust in him, shall be relieved, and received into favour, Isa 57:16. He will revive the heart of the contrite ones, for he will not contend for ever. Nothing makes a soul contrite so much as God's contending, and therefore nothing revives it so much as his ceasing his controversy. Here is,

[1.] A gracious promise. It is not promised that he will never be angry with his people, for their sins are displeasing to him, or

that he will never contend with them, for they must expect the rod; but he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. As he is not soon angry, so he is not long angry. He will not always chide. Though he contend with them by convictions of sin, he will not contend for ever; but, instead of the spirit of bondage, they shall receive the Spirit of adoption. He has torn, but he will heal. Though eh contend with them by the rebukes of providence, yet the correction shall not last always, shall not last long, shall last no longer than there is need (1Pe 1:6), no longer than they can bear, no longer than till it has done its work. Though their whole life be calamitous, yet their end will be peace, and so will their eternity be.

[2.] A very compassionate consideration, upon which this promise is grounded: "If I should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before me, ever the souls which I have made."

Note, First, God is the Father of spirits, Heb 12:9. Those with whom he will not always contend are the souls that he has made, that he gave being to by creation and a new being to by regeneration.

Secondly, Though the Lord is for the body, yet he concerns himself chiefly for the souls of his people, that the spirit do not fail, and its graces and comforts. Thirdly, When troubles last long, the spirit even of good men is apt to fail. They are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, to think it in vain to serve him; they are ready to put comfort away from them, and to despair of relief, and then the spirit fails. Fourthly, It is in consideration of this that God will not contend for ever; for he will not forsake the work of his own hands nor defeat the purchase of his Son's blood. The reason is taken not from our merit, but from our weakness and infirmity; for he remembers that we are flesh (Ps 78:39) and that flesh is weak.

14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place,* with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

The body of the people of Israel, in this account of God's dealings with them, is spoken of as a particular person (Isa 57:17,18), but divided into two sorts, differently dealt with--some who were sons of peace, to whom peace is spoken (Isa 57:19), and others who were not, who have nothing to do with peace, Isa 57:20,21. Observe here,

I The just rebukes which that people were brought under for their sin: For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him. Covetousness was a sin that abounded very much among that people. Jer 6:13, From the least to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness. Those that did not worship images were yet carried away by this spiritual idolatry: for such is covetousness; it is making money the god, Col 3:5. No marvel that the people were covetous when their watchmen themselves were notoriously so, Isa 56:11, Yet, covetous as they were, in the service of their idols they were prodigal, Isa 57:6. And it is hard to say whether their profuseness in that or their covetousness in every thing else was more provoking. But for this iniquity, among others, God was angry with them, and brought one judgment after another upon them, and their destruction at last by the Chaldeans.

1. God was wroth. He resented it, took it very ill that a people who were devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should be so entirely given up to the world and choose that for their portion. Note, Covetousness is an iniquity that is very displeasing to the God of heaven. It is a heart-sin, but he sees it,

and therefore hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy, because it sets up a rival with him in the soul. It is a sin which men bless themselves in (Ps 49:18) and in which their neighbours bless them (Ps 10:3); but God abhors it.

2. He motes him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, punished him in those very things he so doted upon and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel from the anger of God. Those whom he is wroth with he smites; and covetousness particularly lays men under the tokens of God's displeasure. Those that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world are disappointed of it or it is embittered to them; it is either clogged with a cross or turned into a curse.

3. God hid himself from him when he was under these rebukes, and continued wroth with him. When we are under the rod, if God manifest himself to us, we may bear it the better; but if he both smite us and hide himself from us, send us no prophets, speak to us no comfortable word, show us no token for good, if he tear and go away (Ho 5:14), we are very miserable.

II. Their obstinacy and incorrigibleness under these rebukes: He went on frowardly in the way of his heart, in his evil way. He was not sensible of the displeasure of God that he was under. He felt the smart of the rod, but had no regard at all to the hand; the more he was crossed in his worldly pursuits the more eager he was in them. He either would not see his error or if he saw it would not amend it. Covetousness was the way of his heart; it was what he was inclined to and intent upon, and he would not be reclaimed, but in his distress he trespassed yet more, 2Ch 28:22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin, which will take its course in despite of God himself and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient afflictions of themselves are to reform men, unless God's grace work with them.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that is* far off, and to *him that is* near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.

God's wonderful return in mercy to them, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them.

1 The greater part of them went on frowardly, but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest; and with an eye to them, or rather for his own name's sake, God determines not to contend for ever with them. With the froward God may justly show himself froward (Ps 18:26), and walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Le 26:24. When this sinner here went on frowardly in the way of his heart, one would think it should have followed, "I have seen his ways and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have any thing more to do with him." But such are the riches of divine mercy and grace, and so do they rejoice against judgment, that it follows, I have seen his ways and will heal him. See how God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; and where sin has abounded grace much more abounds. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, for in us there appears nothing but what is provoking: "I have seen his ways, and yet I will heal him for my own name's sake." God knew how bad the people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method. God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace: "I have seen his way, that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him." Those whom God has mercy in store for he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for that mercy which they were running from as fast as they could.

(1.) God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be ever so deeply rooted in him and his heart have been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inveterate, but almighty grace can conquer it.

(2.) God will lead him also; not only amend what was amiss in him, that he may cease to do evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And them,

(3.) He will restore those comforts to him which he had forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon captives in Babylon, and then a wonderful redemption wrought for them, which brought comfort to them, to their mourners, to those among them that mourned for their own sins, the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to them God had an eye in working it out. Blessed are those that mourn, for to them comfort belongs, and they shall have it.

2. Now, as when that people went into captivity some of them were good figs, very good, others of them bad figs, very bad, and accordingly their captivity was to them for their good or for their hurt (Jer 24:8,9), so, when they came out of captivity, still some of them were good, others bad, and the deliverance was to them accordingly.

(1.) To those among them that were good their return out of captivity was peace, such peace as was a type and earnest of the peace which should be preached by Jesus Christ (Isa 57:19): I create the fruit of the lips, peace.

[1.] God designed to give them matter for praise and thanksgiving, for that is the fruit of the lips (Heb 13:15), the calves of the lips, Ho 14:2. I create this. Creation is out of nothing, and this is surely out of worse than nothing, when God creates matter of praise for those that went on frowardly in the way of their heart.

[2.] In order to this, peace shall be published: Peace, peace (perfect peace, all kinds of peace) to him that is afar off from the general rendezvous, or from the head-quarters, as well as to him that is near. Peace with God; though he has contended with them, he will be reconciled and will let fall his controversy. Peace of conscience, a holy security and serenity of mind, after the many reproaches of conscience and agitations of spirit they had been under their captivity. Thus God creates the fruit of the lips, fresh matter for thanksgiving; for, when he speaks peace to us, we must speak praises to him. This peace is itself of God's creating. He, and he only, can work it; it is the fruit of the lips, of his lips--he commands it, of the minister's lips--he speaks it by them, Isa 40:1. It is the fruit of preaching lips and praying lips; it is the fruit of Christ's lips, whose lips drop as a honeycomb; for to him this is applied, Eph 2:17: He came and preached peace to you who were afar off, you Gentiles as well as to the Jews, who were nigh-to after-ages, who were afar off in time, as well as to those of the present age.

(2.) To those among them that were wicked, though they might return with the rest, their return was no peace, Isa 57:20. The wicked, wherever he is, in Babylon or in Jerusalem, carries about with him the principle of his own uneasiness, and is like the troubled sea. God healed those to whom he spoke peace (Isa 57:19): I will heal them; all shall be well again and set to rights; but the wicked would not be healed by the grace of God and therefore shall not be healed by his comforts. They are always like the sea in a storm, for they carry about with them,

[1.] Unmortified corruptions. They are not cured and conquered, and their ungoverned lusts and passions make them like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, vexatious to all about them and therefore uneasy to themselves, noisy and dangerous. When the intemperate heats of the spirit break out in scurrilous and abusive language, then the troubled sea casts forth mire and dirt.

[2.] Unpacified consciences. They are under a frightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled they are in disquietude, when they seem merry they are in heaviness; like Cain, who always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience disturb all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mire and dirt as make them a burden to themselves. Though this does not appear (it may be) at present, yet it is a certain truth, what this prophet had said before (Isa 48:22), and here repeats (Isa 57:21), There is no peace to the wicked, no reconciliation to God (nor can they be upon good terms with him, while they go on still in their trespasses), no quietness or satisfaction in their own mind, no real good, no peace in death, because no hope. My God hath said it, and all the world cannot unsay it, That there is no peace to those that allow themselves in any sin. What have they to do with peace?

20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose
waters cast up mire and dirt.
21 *There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Isaiah-58

The Right Observance of Fasts

When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter he added, When he shall come he shall convince (Joh 16:7,8); for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out those to whom comfort does not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort his people (Isa 40:1); here he appoints him to convince them, and show them their sins.

I. He must tell them how very bad they really were, Isa 58:1.

1. He must deal faithfully and plainly with them. "Though they are called the people of God and the house of Jacob, though they wear an honourable title and character, by which they are

interested in many glorious privileges, yet do not flatter them, but show them their transgressions and their sins, be particular in telling them their faults, what sins are committed among them, which they do not know of, nay, what sins are committed by them which they do not acknowledge to be sins; though in some things they are reformed, let them know that in other things they are still as bad as ever. Show them their transgressions and their sins, that is, all their transgressions in their sins, their sins and all the aggravations of them," Le 16:21. Note,

(1.) God sees sin in his people, in the house of Jacob, and is displeased with it.

(2.) They are often unapt and unwilling to see their own sins, and need to have them shown them, and to be told, Thus and thus thou hast done.

2. He must be vehement and in good earnest herein, must cry aloud, and not spare, not spare them (not touch them with his reproofs as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound to the bottom, lay it bare to the bone), not spare himself or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can; though he spend his strength and waste his spirits, though he get their ill-will by it and get himself into an ill name, yet he must not spare. He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults that were apt to be deaf when admonition was addressed to them. He must give his reproofs in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet does not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible; so must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, Eze 33:3.

II. He must acknowledge how very good they seemed to be, notwithstanding (Isa 58:2): Yet they seek me daily. When the prophet went about to show them their transgressions they pleaded that they could see no transgressions which they were

guilty of; for they were diligent and constant in attending on God's worship--and what more would he have of them? Now,

1. He owns the matter of fact to be true. As far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it; let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have a form of godliness.

(1.) They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer: They seek me daily; they are very constant in their devotions and never omit them nor suffer any thing to put them by.

(2.) They love to hear good preaching; They delight to know my ways, as Herod, who heard John gladly, and the stony ground, that received the seed of the word with joy; it is to them as a lovely song, Eze 33:32.

(3.) They seem to take great pleasure in the exercises of religion and to be in their element when they are at their devotions: They delight in approaching to God, not for his sake to whom they approach, but for the sake of some pleasing circumstance, the company, or the festival.

(4.) They are inquisitive concerning their duty and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it: They ask of me the ordinances of justice, the rules of piety in the worship of God, the rules of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of justice.

(5.) They appear to the eye of the world as if they made conscience of doing their duty: They are as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of their God; others took them for such, and they themselves pretended to be such. Nothing lay open to view that was a contradiction to their profession, but they seemed to be such as they should be. Note,

Men may go a great way towards heaven and yet come short; nay, may go to hell with a good reputation. But,

2. He intimates that this was so far from being a cover or excuse for their sin that really it was an aggravation of it: "Show them their sins which they go on in notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning them."

1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my
people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.
2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that
did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they
ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching
to God.
3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore*
have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold,
in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors.

Here we have, I The displeasure which these hypocrites conceived against God for not accepting the services which they themselves had a mighty opinion of (Isa 58:3): Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Thus they went in the way of Cain, who was angry at God, and resented it as a gross affront that his offering was not accepted. Having gone about to put a cheat upon God by their external services, here they go about to pick a quarrel with God for not being pleased with their services, as if he had not done fairly or justly by them. Observe,

1. How they boast of themselves, and magnify their own performances: "We have fasted, and afflicted our souls; we have not only sought God daily (Isa 58:2), but have kept some certain times of more solemn devotion." Some think this refers to the yearly fast (which was called the day of atonement), others to their arbitrary occasional fasts. Note, It is common for unhumbled hearts to be proud of their professions of humiliation, as the Pharisee (Lu 18:12), I fast twice in the week.

2. What they expected from their performances. They thought God should take great notice of them, and own himself a debtor to them for their services. Note, It is a common thing for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment.

3. How heinously they take it that God had not put some particular marks of his favour

upon them, that he had not immediately delivered them out of their troubles and advanced them to honour and prosperity. They charge God with injustice and partiality, and seem resolved to throw up their religion, and justify themselves in doing so with this, that they had found no profit in praying to God, Job 21:14,15,Mal 3:14. Note, Reigning hypocrisy often breaks out in daring impiety and an open contempt and reproach of God and religion for that which the hypocrisy itself must bear all the blame of. Sinners reflect upon religion as a hard and melancholy service, and on which there is nothing to be got by, when really it is owing to themselves that it seems so to them, because they are not sincere in it.

II The true reason assigned why God did not accept their fastings, nor answer the prayers they made on their fast-days; it was because they did not fast aright--to God, even to him, Zec 7:5. They fasted indeed, but they persisted in their sins, and did not, as the Ninevites, turn every one from his evil way; but in the day of their fast, notwithstanding the professed humiliations and covenants of that day, they went on to find pleasure, that is, to do whatsoever seemed right in their own eyes, lawful or unlawful, quicquid libet, licet--making their inclinations their law; though they seemed to afflict their souls, they still gratified their lusts as much as ever.

1. They were as covetous and unmerciful as ever: "You exact all your labours from your servants, and will neither release them according to the law nor relax the rigour of their servitude." This was their fault before the captivity, Jer 34:8,9. It was no less their fault after their captivity, notwithstanding all their solemn fasts, Ne 5:5. "You exact all your dues, your debts" (so some read it); "you are as rigorous and severe in extorting what you demand from those that are poor as ever you were, though it was at the close of the yearly fast that the release was proclaimed."

2. They were contentious and spiteful (Isa 58:4): Behold, you fast for strife and debate. When they proclaimed a fast to deprecate God's judgments, they pretended to search for those sins which provoked God to threaten them with his judgments, and under that pretence perhaps particular persons were falsely accused, as Naboth in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1Ki 21:12. Or the contending parties among them upon those occasions were bitter and severe in their reflections one upon another, one side crying out, "It is owing to you," and the other, "It is owing to you, that our deliverance is not wrought." Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another. They fasted for strife, with emulation which should make the most plausible appearance on a fast-day and humour the matter best. Nor was it only tongue-quarrels that were fomented in the times of their fasting, but they came to blows too: You smite with the fist of wickedness. The cruel task-masters beat their servants, and the creditors their insolvent debtors, whom they delivered to the tormentors; they abused poor innocents with wicked hands. Now while they thus continued in sin, in those very sins which were directly contrary to the intention of a fasting day,

(1.) God would not allow them the use of such solemnities: "You shall not fast at all if you fast as you do this day, causing your voice to be heard on high, in the heat of your clamours one against another, or in your devotions, which you perform so as

to make them to be taken notice of for ostentation. Bring me no more of these empty, noisy, vain oblations," Isa 1:13. Note, Those are justly forbidden the honour of a profession of religion that will not submit to the power of it.

(2.) He would not accept of them in the use of them: "You shall not fast, that is, it shall not be looked upon as a fast, nor shall the voice of your prayers on those days be heard on high in heaven." Note, Those that fast and pray, and yet go on in their wicked ways, do but mock God and deceive themselves.

4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him?* wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Plain instructions given concerning the true nature of a religious fast.

1. In general, a fast is intended,

(1.) For the honouring and pleasing of God. It must be such a performance as he has chosen (Isa 58:5); it must be an acceptable day to the Lord, in the duties of which we must study to approve ourselves to him and obtain his favour, else it is not a fast, else there is nothing done to any purpose.

(2.) For the humbling and abasing of ourselves. A fast is a day to afflict the soul; if it do not express a genuine sorrow for sin, and do not promote a real mortification of sin, it is not a fast; the law of the day of atonement was that on that day they should afflict their souls, Le 16:29. That must be done on a fast-day which is a real affliction to the soul, as far as it is yet unregenerate and unsanctified, though a real pleasure and advantage to the soul as far as it is itself.

2. It concerns us therefore to enquire, on a fast-day, what it is that will be acceptable to God, and afflictive to our corrupt nature, and tending to its mortification.

(1.) We are here told negatively what is not the fast that God has chosen, and which does not amount to the afflicting of the soul.

[1.] It is not enough to look demure, to put on a grave and melancholy aspect, to bow down the head like a bulrush that is withered and broken: as the hypocrites, that were of a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast, Mt 6:16. Hanging down the head did indeed well enough become the publican, whose heart was truly humbled and broken for sin, and who therefore, in token of that, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven (Lu 18:13); but when it was only mimicked, as here, it was justly ridiculed: it is but hanging down the head like a bulrush, which nobody regards or takes any notice of. As the hypocrite's humiliations are but like the hanging down of a bulrush, so his elevations in his hopes are but like the flourishing of a bulrush (Job 8:11,12), which, while it is yet in its greenness, withers before any other herb.

[2.] It is not enough to do penance, to mortify the body a little, while the body of sin is untouched. It is not enough for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him, which may indeed give him some uneasiness for the present, but will soon be forgotten when he returns to stretch himself upon his beds of ivory, Am 6:4. Wilt thou call this a fast? No, it is but the shadow and carcase of a fast. Wilt thou call this an acceptable day to the Lord? No, it is so far from being so that the hypocrisy of it is an abomination to him. Note, The shows of religion, though they show ever so fair in the eye of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

(2.) We are here told positively what is the fast that God has chosen, what that is which will recommend a fast-day to the divine acceptance, and what is indeed afflicting the soul, that is, crushing and subduing the corrupt nature. It is not afflicting the soul for a day (as some read it, Isa 58:5) that will serve; no, it must be the business of our whole lives. It is here required,

[1.] That we be just to those with whom we have dealt hardly. The fast that God has chosen consists in reforming our lives and undoing what we have done amiss (Isa 58:6): To loose the bands of wickedness, the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right or bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, become, when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom Providence has reduced and emptied, bands of wickedness, and they must be loosed, or they will bring us into bonds of guilt much more terrible. It is to undo the heavy burden laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink. It is to let the oppressed go free from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him. "Let the prisoner for debt that has nothing to pay be discharged, let the vexatious action be quashed, let the servant that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude be released, and thus break every yoke; not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself, that it may not serve again another time nor any by made again to serve under it."

[2.] That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, Isa 58:7. The particulars in the Isa 58:6 may be taken as acts of charity, that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed--that is justice, but that we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives and the payment of the debts of the poor; but those in this verse are plainly acts of charity. This then is the fast that God has chosen.

First, To provide food for those that want it. This is put first, as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without. It is to break thy bread to the hungry. Observe, "It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got (not that which thou hast robbed others of), the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for, the bread of thy allowance." We must deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needeth. "Thy bread which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family, on the fast-day, if that, or the value of it, be not given to the poor, it is the miser's fast, which he makes a hand of; it is fasting for the world, not for God. This is the true fast, to break thy bread to the hungry, not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but to break bread on purpose for them, to give them loaves and not to put them off with scraps."

Secondly, To provide lodging for those that want it: It is to take care of the poor that are cast out, that are forced from their dwelling, turned out of house and harbour, are cast out as rebels (so some critics render it), that are attainted, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect. "If they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them to thy own house, make them thy own guests. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for though thou mayest not, as some have done, thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just. I was a stranger and you took me in."

Thirdly, To provide clothing for those that want it: "When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, both to shelter him from the injuries of the weather and to enable him to appear decently among his neighbours; give him clothes to come to church in, and in these and other instances hide not thyself from thy own flesh." Some understand it more strictly of a man's own kindred and relations: "If those of thy own house and family fall into decay, thou art worse than an infidel if thou dost not provide for

them." 1Ti 5:8. Others understand it more generally; all that partake of the human nature are to be looked upon as our own flesh, for have we not all one Father? And for this reason we must not hide ourselves from them, not contrive to be out of the way when a poor petitioner enquires for us, not look another way when a moving object of charity and compassion presents itself; let us remember that they are flesh of our flesh and therefore we ought to sympathize with them, and in doing good to them we really do good to our own flesh and spirit too in the issue; for thus we lay up for ourselves a good foundation, a good bond, for the time to come.

6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon by faith who keep the fast that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,

A further account of the duty to be done in order to our interest in these promises (Isa 58:9,10); and here, as before, it is required that we both do justly and love mercy, that we cease to do evil and learn to do well.

1. We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud. "Those must be taken away from the midst of thee, from the midst of thy person, out of thy heart" (so some); "thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury, but mortify in thee all inclination and disposition towards it." Or from the midst of thy people. Those in authority must not only not be oppressive themselves, but must do all they can to prevent and restrain

oppression in all within their jurisdiction. They must not only break the yoke (Isa 58:6), but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be re-enslaved (as they were Jer 34:10,11); they must likewise forbear threatening (Eph 6:9) and take away the putting forth of the finger, which seems to have been then, as sometimes with us, a sign of displeasure and the indication of a purpose to correct. Let not the finger be put forth to point at those that are poor and in misery, and so to expose them to contempt; such expressions of contumely as are provoking, and the products of ill-nature, ought to be banished from all societies. And let them not speak vanity, flattery or fraud, to one another, but let all conversation be governed by sincerity. Perhaps that dissimulation which is the bane of friendship is meant by the putting forth of the finger (as Pr 6:13 by teaching with the finger), or it is putting forth the finger with the ring on it, which was the badge of authority, and which therefore they produced when they spoke iniquity, that is, gave unrighteous sentences.

2. We must abound in all acts of charity and beneficence. We must not only give alms according as the necessities of the poor require, but,

(1.) We must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity. We must draw out our soul to the hungry (Isa 58:10), not only draw out the money and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging, from a principle of compassion and with a tender affection to such as we see to be in misery. Let the heart go along with the gift; for God loves a cheerful giver, and so does a poor man too. When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude it was as having compassion on them.

(2.) We must give plentifully and largely, so as not to tantalize, but to satisfy, the afflicted soul: "Do not only feed the hungry, but gratify the desire of the afflicted, and, if it lies in your power, make them easy." What are we born for, and what have

we our abilities of body, mind, and estate for, but to do all the good we can in this world with them? And the poor we have always with us.

9 Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry,
and he shall say, Here I *am*.
If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting
forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;
10 and *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted
soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the
noonday:
11 and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in
drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered
garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Here is a full account of the blessings and benefits which attend the performance of this duty. If a person, a family, a people, be thus disposed to every thing that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful rewarder and what they lay out in works of charity shall be abundantly made up to them.

1. God will surprise them with the return of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long and dark night (Isa 58:8): "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning and (Isa 58:10) thy light shall rise in obscurity. Though thou hast been long buried alive thou shalt recover thy eminency; though long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day." Those that are cheerful in doing good God will make cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special gift of God, Ec 2:24. Those that have shown mercy shall find mercy. Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, had friends raised up for him by the Lord when he was reduced, who helped him with their substance, so that his light rose in obscurity. "Not only thy light, which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall spring forth speedily; all thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth

and recover thy vigour." Those that have helped others out of trouble will obtain help of God when it is their turn.

2. God will put honour upon them. Good works shall be recompensed with a good name; this is included in that light which rises out of obscurity. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet, if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become as the noon-day, that is, he shall become very eminent and shine brightly in his generation. See here what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious; let him study to do good. He that would be the greatest of all, and best-loved, let him by humility and industry make himself a servant of all. "Thy righteousness shall answer for thee (as Jacob says, Ge 30:33), that is, it shall silence reproaches, nay, it shall bespeak thee more praises than thy humility can be pleased with." He that has given to the poor, his righteousness (that is, the honour of it) endures for ever, Ps 112:9.

3. They shall always be safe under the divine protection: "Thy righteousness shall go before thee as thy vanguard, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward, the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies, that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear." Observe, How good people are safe on all sides. Let them look which way they will, behind them or before them; let them look backward or forward; they see themselves safe, and find themselves easy and quiet from the fear of evil. And observe what it is that is their defence; it is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord, that is, as some suppose, Christ; for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified. He it is that goes before us, and is the captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our righteousness; he it is that is our rearward, on whom alone we can depend for safety when our sins pursue us and are ready to take hold on us. Or, "God himself in his providence and grace

shall both go before thee as thy guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the rewarder of it."

4. God will be always nigh unto them, to hear their prayers, Isa 58:9. As, on the one hand, he that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor shall himself cry and God will not hear him; so, on the other hand, he that is liberal to the poor, his prayers shall come up with his alms for a memorial before God, as Cornelius's did (Ac 10:4): "Then shalt thou call, on thy fast-days, which ought to be days of prayer, and the Lord shall answer, shall give thee the things thou callest to him for; thou shalt cry when thou art in any distress or sudden fright, and he shall say, Here I am." This is a very condescending expression of God's readiness to hear prayer. When God calls to us by his word it becomes us to say, Here we are; what saith our Lord unto his servants? But that God should say to us, Behold me, here I am, is strange. When we cry to him, as if he were at a distance, he will let us know that he is near, even at our right hand, nearer than we thought he was. It is I, be not afraid. When danger is near our protector is nearer, a very present help. "Here I am, ready to give you what you want, and do for you what you desire; what have you to say to me?" God is attentive to the prayers of the upright, Ps 130:2. No sooner do they call to him than he answers, Ready, ready. Wherever they are praying, God says, "Here I am hearing; I am in the midst of you." He is nigh unto them in all things, De 4:7.

5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases (Isa 58:11): The Lord shall guide thee continually. While we are here, in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from heaven; for, if at any time we be left to ourselves, we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight that he gives the wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and he will be to them instead of eyes, Ec 2:26. His providence will make their way plain to

them, both what is their duty and what will be most for their comfort.

6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. As the world is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also is it in respect of wants, which makes it necessary that they should have continual supplies, as Israel in the wilderness had not only the pillar of cloud to guide them continually, but manna and water out of the rock to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, Ps 63:1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience and the assurances of God's favour. "These will satisfy thy soul, will put gladness into thy heart, even in the drought of affliction; these will make fat thy bones, and fill them with marrow, will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. He shall give thy bones rest" (so some read it), "rest from the pain and sickness which they have laboured under and been chastened with;" so it agrees with that promise made to the merciful. The Lord will make all his bed in his sickness, Ps 41:3. "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts, and like a spring of water, like a garden that has a spring of water in it, whose waters fail not either in droughts or in frosts." The principle of holy love in those that are good shall be a well of living water, Joh 4:14. As a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, is yet always full, so the charitable man abounds in good as he abounds in doing good and is never the poorer for his liberality. He that waters shall himself be watered.

7. They and their families shall be public blessings. It is a good reward to those that are fruitful and useful to be rendered more so, and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised (Isa 58:12): "Those that now are of thee, thy princes, and nobles, and great men, shall have such

authority and influence as they never had;" or, "Those that hereafter shall be of thee, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, as thou art to thine." It completes the satisfaction of a good man, as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone.

1. They shall re-edify cities that have been long in ruins, shall build the old waste places, which had lain so long desolate that the rebuilding of them was quite despaired of. This was fulfilled when the captives, after their return, repaired the cities of Judah, and dwelt in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had lain waste ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes.

2. They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions which had retarded the progress of it: They shall raise up to the top that building the foundation of which was laid long since and has been for many generations in the rearing. This was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived after it had stood still for many years, Ezr 5:2. Or, "They shall raise up foundations which shall continue for many generations yet to come;" they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence.

3. They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them: "Thou shalt be called (and it shall be to thy honour) the repairer of the breach, the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whoso has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great applause." Happy are those who make up the breach at which virtue is running out and judgments are breaking in. "Thou shalt be the restorer of paths, safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in, but to dwell in, so safe and quiet that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the road-side." The sum is that, if they keep such fasts as God has chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Zec 7:5,9,8:3-5. It teaches us that those who do

justly and love mercy shall have the comfort thereof in this world.

12 And *they that shall be* of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

The Observance of the Sabbath

13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words:

Great stress was always laid upon the due observance of the sabbath day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping that day, in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth. See Isa 56:1,2, where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with keeping judgment and doing justice. Some, indeed, understand this of the day of atonement, which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a sabbath of rest, Le 23:32. But, as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people--his appointing it a sign of his favour to them and their observing it a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here,

I. How the sabbath is to be sanctified (Isa 58:13); and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

1. Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the sabbath day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must turn away our foot from the sabbath, from trampling upon it, as profane atheistical people

do, from travelling on that day (so some); we must turn away our foot from doing out pleasure on that holy day, that is, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath days, without the control and restraint of conscience, or from indulging ourselves in the pleasures of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sanctification of the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath days we must not walk in our own ways (that is, not follow our callings), not find our own pleasure (that is, not follow our sports and recreations); nay, we must not speak our own words, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of the day; we must choose the things that please him; and speak his words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house and walk by the way. In all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

2. Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day and is expressive of our high thoughts of it. We must call it a delight, not a task and a burden; we must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us and the services it obliges us to. We must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! We must not only count it a delight, but call it so, must openly profess the complacency we take in the day and the duties of it. We must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it and earnest desire of his grace to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it.

We must call it so to others, to invite them to come and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thought of wishing the sabbath gone that we may sell corn. We must call it the Lord's holy day, and honourable. We must call it holy, separated from common use and devoted to God and to his service, must call it the holy of the Lord, the day which he has sanctified to himself. Even in

Old-Testament times the sabbath was called the Lord's day, and therefore it is fitly called so still, and for a further reason, because it is the Lord Christ's day, Re 1:10. It is holy because it is the Lord's day, and upon both accounts it is honourable. It is a beauty of holiness that is upon it; it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring God on that day. We put honour upon the day when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

II. What the reward is of the sabbath--sanctification, Isa 58:14. If we thus remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,

1. We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. If we call the sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord; he will more and more manifest himself to us as the delightful subject of our thoughts and meditations and the delightful object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God."

2. We shall have the honour of it: I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, which denotes not only a great security (as that, Isa 32:16, He shall dwell on high), but great dignity and advancement. "Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours shall be upon thee." It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that he made them to ride on the high places of the earth, De 32:12,13. Those that honour God and his sabbath he will thus honour. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey towards heaven, then he makes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

3. We shall have the profit of it: I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, that is, with all the blessings of the covenant and all the precious products of Canaan (which was a type of heaven), for these were the heritage of Jacob. Observe, The heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now, fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered, fed with the earnests and foretastes of it; and those that are so fed have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it; you may take God's word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive; what his mouth has spoken his hand will give, his hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fall to the ground." Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.

14 then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*.

Isaiah-59

A Confession of National Wickedness

1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God because they had not the deliverances wrought for them which they had been often fasting and praying for, Isa 58:3. Now here he shows,

I. That it was not owing to God. They had no reason to lay the fault upon him that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies; for, 1. He was still as able to help as ever: His hand is not shortened, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged. Whether we consider the extent of his power or the

efficacy of it, God can reach as far as ever and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that has not waxed weak nor is it at all shortened. Has the Lord's hand waxed short? (says God to Moses, Nu 11:23). No, it has not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time nor strength of enemies, no, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten or straiten the power of God, with which it is all one to save by many or by few.

2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever in answer to prayer: His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear. Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. The prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded and put in suit in prayer are still yea and amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing. Even before they call he answers, Isa 65:24. If your prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying, not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

2 but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

4 None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

5 They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works *are* works of iniquity, and the act of violence *is* in their hands.

That it was owing to themselves; they stood in their own light and put a bar in their own door. God was coming towards them in ways of mercy and they hindered him. Your iniquities have kept good things from you, Jer 5:25.

1. See what mischief sin does.

(1.) It hinders God's mercies from coming down upon us; it is a partition wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it separates between them and God. "He is your God, yours in profession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between you and him." Sin hides his face from us (which denotes great displeasure, De 31:17); it provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with. See here sin in its colours, sin exceedingly sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequences, sin exceedingly hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil (De 29:21), which is the very quintessence of the curse.

(2.) It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he has said, Isa 1:15. If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it and allow ourselves in it, God will not hear our prayers, Ps 66:18. We cannot expect that he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

2. Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shows very largely, in the Isa 59:9-15, how many and great their

iniquities were, according to the charge given him (Isa 58:1), to show God's people their transgressions; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

(1.) We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise: Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, Isa 59:7. Their imaginations are so, only evil continually. Their projects and designs are so; they are continually contriving some mischief or other, and how to compass the gratification of some base lust (Isa 59:4): They conceive mischief in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution (thus the embryo receives its shape and life), and then they bring forth iniquity, put it in execution when it is ripened for it. Though it is in pain perhaps that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of Providences and the checks of their own consciences, yet, when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they look upon it with as much pride and pleasure as if it were a man-child born into the world; thus, when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin, Jam 1:15. This is called (Isa 59:5) hatching the cockatrice' egg and weaving the spider's web. See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work.

[1.] At the best it is about that which is foolish and frivolous. Their thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and, when all is done, it is a weak insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant: such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and pleasing themselves with imaginary satisfaction, like the spider, which takes hold with her hands very finely (Pr 30:28), but cannot keep her hold.

[2.] Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful. They hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous and produce venomous creatures; such are the thoughts of the wicked who delight in doing mischief. He that eats of their eggs (that is, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him), and that which is crushed in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, breaks out into a viper, which you meddle with at your peril. Happy are those that have least to do with such men. Even the spider's web which they wove was woven with a spiteful design to catch flies in and make a prey of them; for, rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

(2.) Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks, and yet it does not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectually compassing the mischievous design, it is dissembled and covered with much fair speech (Isa 59:3): Your lips have spoken lies; and again (Isa 59:4), They speak lies, pretending kindness where they intend the greatest mischief; or by slanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows, and coals of juniper, and every thing that is mischievous. Your tongue has muttered perverseness. When they could not, for shame, speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called whisperers.

(3.) Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature: Your hands are defiled with blood (Isa 59:3); for blood is defiling; it leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from. Now was this a case of surprise, or one that

occurred when there was something of a force put upon them; but (Isa 59:7) their feet ran to this evil, naturally and eagerly, and, hurried on by the impetus of their malice and revenge, they made haste to shed innocent blood, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, Pr 1:16,Jer 22:17. Wasting and destruction are in their paths. Wherever they go they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what havoc they make. Nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquities are their fingers defiled (Isa 59:3); they wrong people in their estates and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They trust in vanity (Isa 59:4); they depend upon their arts of cozenage to enrich themselves with, which will prove vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves. Their works, which they take so much pains about and have their hearts so much upon, are all works of iniquity; their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

(4.) No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses (Isa 59:4): None calls for justice, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those lewd practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the bane, of the nation. Note, When justice is not done there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it. Private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it that have the power of doing so in their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that pleads for it, not any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. The

way of peace is as little regarded as the way of truth; they know it not, that is, they never study the things that make for peace, no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of the peace and to accommodate matters in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. There is no judgment in their goings; they have not any sense of justice in their dealings; it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can easily break through all its fences if they stand in the way of their malicious covetous designs.

(5.) In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. Those that practise iniquity trust in vanity, which will certainly deceive them, Isa 59:4. Their webs, which they weave with so much art and industry, shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves, either for shelter or for ornament, with their works, Isa 59:6. They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them. There is nothing to be got by sin, and so it will appear when profit and loss come to be compared. Those paths of iniquity are crooked paths (Isa 59:8), which will perplex them, but will never bring them to their journey's end; whoever go therein, though they say that they shall have peace notwithstanding they go on, deceive themselves; for they shall not know peace, as appears by the following verses.

7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.

8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

9 Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to show that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that which

keeps good things from us, so it is that which brings evil things upon us. But as there it is spoken by the prophet, in God's name, to the people, for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges, so here it seems to be spoken by the people to God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure, and they are brought to confess (the confession is at least extorted from them), that God had justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him.

I. They acknowledge that God had contended with them and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, Isa 59:9-11.

1. They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour; and God did not appear for them, to plead their just and injured cause: "Judgment is far from us, neither does justice overtake us, Isa 59:9. Though, as to our persecutors, we are sure that we have right on our side; and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted. We have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our right and recovering our property again. Oppression is near us, and judgment is far from us. Our enemies are far from giving our case its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and justice does not overtake us, to rescue us out of their hands."

2. Herein their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad: "We wait for light as those that wait for the morning, but behold obscurity; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance. We look for judgment, but there is none (Isa 59:11); neither God nor man

appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has promised it, and we have prayed for it with fasting; we look for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever for aught we can perceive, and still we walk in darkness; and the higher our expectations have been raised the sorer is the disappointment."

3. They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves and were at their wits' end (Isa 59:10): "We grope for the wall like the blind; we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way to expect it, or what to do in order to it." If we shut our eyes against the light of divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and, if we use not our eyes as we should, it is just with him to let us be as if we had no eyes. Those that will not see their duty shall not see their interest. Those whom God has given up to a judicial blindness are strangely infatuated; they stumble at noon-day as in the night; they see not either those dangers, or those advantages, which all about them see. Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat--God infatuates those whom he means to destroy. Those that love darkness rather than light shall have their doom accordingly.

4. They sunk into despair and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the marks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, shunned conversation, and affected solitude: We are in desolate places as dead men. The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by dead and dry bones (Eze 37:12) and the explanation of the comparison there (Isa 59:11) explains this text: Our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. In this despair the sorrow and anguish of some were loud and noisy: We roar like bears; the sorrow of others was silent, and preyed more upon their spirits: "We mourn sore like doves, like doves of the valleys; we mourn both for our iniquities (Eze 7:16) and for our calamities." Thus they owned that the hand of the Lord had gone out against them.

10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no
eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; *we are* in desolate
places as dead *men*.
11 We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for
judgment, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far off from us.
12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins
testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our
iniquities, we know them;
13 in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away
from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and
uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them, that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, Isa 59:12-15.

1. They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in a great trespass, as Ezra speaks (Ezr 10:10): "Our transgressions are with us; the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us, we are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins, though they have done so much mischief. Nay, our transgressions are multiplied; they are more numerous and more heinous than they have been formerly. Look which way we will, we cannot look off them; all places, all orders and degrees of men, are infected. The sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, My sin is ever before me; it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated. God is a witness to them: They are multiplied before thee, in thy sight, under thy eye. We are witnesses against ourselves: As for our iniquities, we know them, though we may have foolishly endeavoured to cover them. Nay, they themselves are witnesses: Our sins stare us in the face and testify against us, so many have they been and so deeply aggravated."

2. They owned the great evil and malignity of sin, of their sin; it is transgressing and lying against the Lord, Isa 59:13. The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his

name, are upon this account worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they lie against the Lord, they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or they perfidiously break covenant with him and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, which is lying against him: it is departing away from our God, to whom we are bound as our God and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellious subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth and the covenant of her God.

3. They owned that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that those who were false to their God were unfaithful to one another. They spoke oppression, declared openly for that, though it was a revolt from their God and a revolt from the truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied and held fast. They conceived and uttered words of falsehood. Many ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet is prudently stifled there, and not suffered to go any further; but these sinners were so impudent, so daring, that whatever wickedness they conceived, they gave it an imprimatur--a sanction, and made no difficulty of publishing it. To think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste, for want of consideration; but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered--deliberately and of malice prepense. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered from the heart, because, though they differed from the real sentiments of the heart and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that; it was a double heart, Ps 12:2. Those who by the grace of God kept themselves free from these enormous crimes yet put themselves into the confession of sin, because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted.

4. They owned that that was not done which might have been done to reform the land and to amend what was amiss, Isa 59:14. "Judgment, that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run in its course like a river, like a mighty stream, is turned away backward, a contrary course. The administration of justice has become but a cover to the greatest injustice. Judgment, that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, is driven back, and so they go on triumphantly. Justice stands afar off, even from our courts of judicature, which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression that equity cannot enter, cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least will not be heeded. Equity enters not into the unrighteous decrees which they decree, Isa 10:1. Truth is fallen in the street, and there she may lie to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; yea, truth fails in common conversation, and in dealings between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust."

5. They owned that there was a prevailing enmity in men's minds to those that were good: He that does evil goes unpunished, but he that departs from evil makes himself a prey to those beasts of prey that were before described. It is crime enough with them for a man not to do as they do, and they treat him as an enemy who will not partake with them in their wickedness. He that departs from evil is accounted mad; so the margin reads. Sober singularity is branded as folly, and he is thought next door to a madman who swims against the stream that runs so strongly.

6. They owned that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight. They knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it; though it was done secretly, and gilded over with specious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye. All the wickedness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God; and, as he is of quicker eyes

than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with the least approbation or allowance. He saw it, and it displeased him, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it. It was evil in his eyes; he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was that there was no judgment, no reformation; had he seen any signs of repentance, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have been reconciled to the sinners upon their returning from their evil way. Then the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgments, when it is not restrained by public justice.

14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar
off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.
15 Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a
prey.
And the Lord saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no
judgment.
16 And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no
intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his
righteousness, it sustained him.
17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of
salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance
for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.
18 According to *their* deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his
adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay
recompense.
19 So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his
glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in
like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against
him.

How sin abounded we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace does much more abound we read in these verses. And, as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceedingly sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceedingly gracious. Observe,

I. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people, notwithstanding their provocations. It was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them, no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory.

1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness: He saw that there was no man that would do any thing for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among them, not a man that would execute judgment (Jer 5:1), that would bestir himself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the badness of the times had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal corruption of manners, and nothing done to stem the tide; most were wicked, and those that were not so were yet weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked.

There was no intercessor, either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap by prayer to turn away his wrath (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he was not), or, rather, none to interpose for the support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon and run down (Isa 59:14), no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, Isa 59:15. They complained that God did not appear for them (Isa 58:3); but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation.

2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them. They shall be saved, notwithstanding all this; and,

(1.) Because they have no strength of their own, nor any active men that will set to it in good earnest to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore his own arm shall bring salvation to him, to his people, or to him whom

he would raise up to be the deliverer, Christ, the power of God and arm of the Lord, that man of his right hand whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation (that is the first and principal article of the salvation) shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates and societies for reformation fail of doing their part, one will not do justice nor the other call for it, God will let them know that he can do it without them when his time shall come thus to prepare his people for mercy, and then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the divine Providence on men's affections and affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, then his own arm, which is never shortened, brought salvation.

(2.) Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore his own righteousness sustained him and bore him out in it. Divine justice, which by their sins they had armed against them, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose and promise, and covenant with his people: he will, in righteousness, punish the enemies of his people; see De 9:5. Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations they are driven out.

In our redemption by Christ, since we had no righteousness of our own to produce, on which God might proceed in favour to us, he brought in a righteousness by the merit and meditation of his own Son (it is called the righteousness which is of God by faith, Php 3:9), and this righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in all his favours to us, notwithstanding our provocations. He put on righteousness as a breast-plate, securing his own honour, as a breast-plate does the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put a helmet of salvation upon his head; so sure is he to effect

the salvation he intends that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs be impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious, formidable in the eyes of his enemies and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find the breast-plate of righteousness, and for a helmet the hope of salvation (Eph 6:14-17,1Th 5:8), and it is called the armour of God, because he wore it first and so fitted it for us.

(3.) Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak; he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for his own glory and the honour of religion and virtue among men, to appear evident and conspicuous in the eye of the world; and in these he will show himself great, as a man shows himself in his rich attire or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour and his people's welfare; and this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin and be revenged on it.

20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn
from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.
21 As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit
that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth,
shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed,
nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from
henceforth and for ever.

What the salvation is that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere in distress and captivity. This is promised (Isa 59:18,19) as a type of something further. When God's time shall come he will do his own work, though those fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

(1.) That God will reckon with his enemies and will render to them according to their deeds, to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them, to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them, for they also are God's enemies; and, when the day of vengeance shall have come, he will deal with both as they have deserved, according to retribution (so the word is), the law of retributions (Re 13:10), or according to former retributions; as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; his fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly does. Even to the islands, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, he will repay recompence; for his hand shall find out all his enemies (Ps 21:8), and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have behaved so ill that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies behave so much worse that they do deserve to be destroyed.

(2.) That, whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterwards make upon them to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled and brought to nought: When the enemy shall come in like a flood, like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threaten to bear down all before them without control, then the Spirit of the Lord by some secret undiscerned power shall lift up a standard against him, and so (as the margin reads it) put him to flight. He that has delivered will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will give a banner to those that fear him (Ps 60:4), will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, He shall come (the name of the Lord, and his glory, before foreseen of the Messiah promised) like a straight river, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an ensign. Christ by the preaching of his gospel shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the Spirit

of the Lord setting up Christ as a standard to the Gentiles, Isa 11:10.

(3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God and the advancement of religion in the world (Isa 59:19): So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory in all nations that lie eastward or westward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to enquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's appearances for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel times, when many came from the east and west, to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that were cast out, when there were set up eastern and western churches, Mt 8:11.

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which salvation all the prophets, upon all occasions, had in view. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation:--

(1.) That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer (Isa 59:20): Thy Redeemer shall come; it is applied to Christ, Ro 9:26. There shall come the deliverer. The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, Lu 2:38. Christ is our Goël, our next kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe,

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which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances: The Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion; so the LXX. reads it.

[2.] The persons that shall have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall then lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh. He shall come to those that turn from the ungodliness in Jacob, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgression, that repent, and reform, and forsake those sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to Zion if they go on still in their trespasses.

(2.) That the Spirit of God shall come to us to be our sanctifier, Isa 59:21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the Spirit to those that ask him includes the giving of them all good things, Lu 11:13,Mt 7:11. This covenant is here said to be made with them, that is, with those that turn from transgression; for those that cease to do evil shall be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person--My Spirit that is upon thee, being directed either,

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to those promises that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, Ps 89:29,36,Ps 22:30. Observe, First, How the church shall be kept up, in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed's seed. As one generation passes away another generation shall come. Instead of the fathers shall be the children. Secondly, How long it shall be kept up--henceforth and for ever, always, even unto the end of the world; for, the world being left to stand for the sake of the church, we may be sure that as long as it does stand Christ will have a church in it, though no always visible. Thirdly, By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the word and Spirit in it.

1 The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall work, and in whom he shall dwell, and thus the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, Joh 14:16.

2 The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age who, believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church; for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firmly, and shall stand for ever, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. What the salvation is that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

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Isaiah-60

The Future Glory of Zion

1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is
risen upon thee.

It is here promised that the gospel temple shall be very lightsome and very large.

I. It shall be very lightsome: Thy light has come. When the Jews returned out of captivity they had light and gladness, and joy and honour; they then were made to know the Lord and to rejoice in his great goodness; and upon both accounts their light came. When the Redeemer came to Zion he brought light with him, he himself came to be a light. Now observe,

1. What this light is, and whence it springs: The Lord shall arise upon thee (Isa 60:2), the glory of the Lord (Isa 60:1) shall be seen upon thee. God is the father and fountain of lights, and it is in his light that we shall see light. As far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favour of God towards us, our light has come. When God appears to us, and we have the comfort of his favour, then the glory of the Lord rises upon us as the morning light; when he appears for us, and we have the credit of his favour, when he shows us some token for good and proclaims his favour to us, then his glory is seen upon us, as it was upon Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire. When Christ arose as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high visited us, then the glory of the Lord was seen upon us, the glory as of the first-begotten of the Father.

2. What a foil there shall be to this light: Darkness shall cover the earth; but, though it be gross darkness, darkness that might be felt, like that of Egypt, that shall overspread the people, yet the church, like Goshen, shall have light at the same time. When the case of the nations that have not the gospel shall be very melancholy, those dark corners of the earth being full of the

habitations of cruelty to poor souls, the state of the church shall be very pleasant.

3. What is the duty which the rising of this light calls for: "Arise, shine; not only receive this light, and" (as the margin reads it) "be enlightened by it, but reflect this light; arise and shine with rays borrowed from it." The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world. If God's glory be seen upon us to our honour, we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, to return the praise of it to his honour, Mt 5:16,Php 2:15.

II. It shall be very large. When the Jews were settled again in their own land, after their captivity, many of the people of the land joined themselves to them; but it does not appear that there ever was any such numerous accession to them as would answer the fulness of this prophecy; and therefore we must conclude that this looks further, to the bringing of the Gentiles into the gospel church, not their flocking to one particular place, though under that type it is here described. There is no place now that is the centre of the church's unity; but the promise respects their flocking to Christ, and coming by faith, and hope, and holy love, into that society which is incorporated by the charter of his gospel, and of the unity of which he only is the centre--that family which is named from him, Eph 3:15. The gospel church is expressly called Zion and Jerusalem, and under that notion all believers are said to come to it (Heb 12:22. You have come unto Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem), which serves for a key to this prophecy, Eph 2:19. Observe,

1. What shall invite such multitudes to the church: "They shall come to thy light and to the brightness of thy rising, Isa 60:3. They shall be allured to join themselves to thee,"

(1.) "By the light that shines upon thee," the light of the glorious gospel, which the churches hold forth, in consequence of which they are called golden candlesticks. This light which discovers

so much of God and his good will to man, by which life and immortality are brought to light, this shall invite all the serious well-affected part of mankind to come and join themselves to the church, that they may have the benefit of this light to inform them concerning truth and duty.

(2.) "By the light with which thou shinest." The purity and love of the primitive Christians, their heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, and patient sufferings, were the brightness of the church's rising, which drew many into it. The beauty of holiness was the powerful attractive by which Christ had a willing people brought to him in the day of his power, Ps 110:3.

2. What multitudes shall come to the church. Great numbers shall come, Gentiles (or nations) of those that are saved, as it is expressed with allusion to this, Re 21:24. Nations shall be discipled (Mt 28:19), and even kings, men of figure, power, and influence, shall be added to the church. They come from all parts (Isa 60:4): Lift up thy eyes round about, and see them coming, devout men out of every nation under heaven, Ac 2:5. See how white the fields are already to the harvest, Joh 4:35. See them coming in a body, as one man, and with one consent:

They gather themselves together, that they may strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another. Come, and let us go, Isa 2:3. "They come from the remotest parts: They come to thee from far, having heard the report of thee, as the queen of Sheba, or seen thy star in the east, as the wise men, and they will not be discouraged by the length of the journey from coming to thee. There shall come some of both sexes. Sons and daughters shall come in the most dutiful manner, as thy sons and thy daughters, resolved to be of thy family, to submit to the laws of thy family and put themselves under the tuition of it. They shall come to be nursed at thy side, to have their education with thee from their cradle." The church's children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers; there, where alone the unadulterated milk of the word is to be had, must the church's

new-born babes be nursed, that they may grow thereby, 1Pe 2:1,2. Those that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family must submit to the discipline of it.

3. What they shall bring with them and what advantage shall accrue to the church by their accession to it. Those that are brought into the church by the grace of God will be sure to bring all they are worth in with them, which with themselves they will devote to the honour and service of God and do good with in their places.

(1.) The merchants shall write holiness to the Lord upon their merchandise and their hire, as Isa 23:18. "The abundance of the sea, either the wealth that is fetched out of the sea (the fish, the pearls) or that which is imported by sea, shall all be converted to thee and to thy use." The wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity.

(2.) The mighty men of the nations shall employ their might in the service of the church: "The forces, or troops, of the Gentiles shall come unto thee, to guard thy coasts, strengthen thy interests, and, if occasion be, to fight thy battles." The forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be for it; for as God, when he pleases, can, and, when we please him, will, make even our enemies to be at peace with us (Pr 16:7), so, when Christ overcomes the strong man armed, he divides his spoils, and makes that to serve his interests which had been used against them, Lu 11:22.

(3.) The wealth imported by land-carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church (Isa 60:6): The camels and dromedaries that bring gold and incense (gold to make the golden altar of and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it), those of Midian and Sheba, shall bring the richest commodities of their country, not to trade with, but to honour God with, and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. This was in part fulfilled when the wise men of the east

(perhaps some of the countries here mentioned), drawn by the brightness of the star, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, Mt 2:11.

(4.) Great numbers of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices, and, though brought by Gentiles, they shall find acceptance, Isa 60:7. Kedar was famous for flocks, and probably the fattest rams were those of Nebaioth; these shall come up with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he has blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when by the decree of Darius the governors beyond the rivers (perhaps of some of these countries) were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem with bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offering of the God of heaven, Ezr 6:9. It had a further accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the church, which is called the sacrificing or offering up of the Gentiles unto God, Ro 15:16. The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are said to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a reasonable service on his altar, Ro 12:1.

4. How God shall be honoured by the increase of the church and the accession of such numbers to it.

(1.) They shall intend the honour of God's name in it. When they bring their gold and incense it shall not be to show the riches of their country, nor to gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to show forth the praises of the Lord, Isa 60:6. Our greatest services and gifts to the church are not acceptable further than we have an eye to the glory of God in them. And this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; for therefore, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light, that we should show forth the praises of him that called us, 1Pe 2:9.

(2.) God will advance the honour of his own name by it; so he has said (Isa 60:7): I will glorify the house of my glory. The church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people and receives that homage by which they do honour to him. And it is for the glory of this house, and of him that keeps house there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it and that they shall be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, Isa 60:5.

(1.) She shall be in a transport of joy upon this account: "Thou shalt see and flow together" (or flow to and fro), "as in a pleasing agitation about it, surprised at it, but extremely glad of it."

(2.) There shall be a mixture of fear with this joy: "Thy heart shall fear, doubting whether it be lawful to go in to the uncircumcised and eat with them." Peter was so impressed with this fear that he needed a vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, Ac 10:28. But,

(3.) "When this fear is conquered thy heart shall be enlarged in holy love, so enlarged that thou shalt have room in it for all the Gentile converts; thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale." When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church he gives this largeness of heart and an extensive charity. (4.) These converts flocking to the church shall be greatly admired (Isa 60:8): Who are these that fly as a cloud? Observe,

[1.] How the conversion of souls is here described. It is flying to Christ and to his church, for thither we are directed; it is flying like a cloud, though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, all as one cloud. They shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind, and come openly, and in the view of all, their very enemies beholding

them (Re 11:12), and yet not able to hinder them. They shall fly as doves to their windows, in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, which flies low, denoting their innocency and humility. They fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly for refuge and shelter when they are pursued by the birds of prey, and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark.

[2.] How the conversion of souls is here admired. It is spoken of with wonder and pleasure: Who are these? We have reason to wonder that so many flock to Christ: when we see them all together we shall wonder whence they all came. And we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that do flock to him: Who are these? How excellent, how amiable are they! What a pleasant sight is it to see poor souls hastening to Christ, with a full resolution to abide with him!

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness
the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall
be seen upon thee.
3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the
brightness of thy rising.
4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves
together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy
daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side.
5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear,
and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be
converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto
thee.
6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of
Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring
gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the
Lord.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams
of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with
acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

8 Who *are* these *that* fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

The promises made to the church in the Isa 60:1-8 are here repeated, ratified, and enlarged upon, designed still for the comfort and encouragement of the Jews after their return out of captivity, but certainly looking further, to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel church and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

I. God will be very gracious and propitious to them. We must begin with that promise, because thence all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate begins to be repaired when God causes his face to shine upon it, Da 9:17. All the favour that the people of God find with men is owing to the light of God's countenance and his favour to them (Isa 60:10): "All shall now make court to thee, for in my wrath I smote thee, while thou wast in captivity" (and the sufferings of the church, especially by its corruptions, decays, and divisions, against which these promises will be its relief, are sad tokens of God's displeasure), "But now in my favour have I had mercy on thee, and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee."

II. Many shall be brought into the church, even from far countries (Isa 60:9): Surely the isles shall wait for me, shall welcome the gospel, and shall attend God with their praises for it and their ready subjection to it. The ships of Tarshish, transport-ships, shall lie ready to carry members from far distant regions to the church, or (which is equivalent) to carry the ministers of the church to remote parts, to preach the gospel and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord.

Observe, 1. Who are brought--thy sons, that is, such as are designed to be so, those children of God that are scattered abroad, Joh 11:52.

2. What they shall bring with them. They live at such a distance that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but, like those who lived remote from Jerusalem (who, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithes in kind, turned them into money), they shall bring their silver and gold with them. Note, When we give up ourselves to God we must with ourselves give up all we have to him. If we honour him with our spirits, we shall honour him with our substance.

3. To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves and all they are worth--to the name of the Lord thy God, to God as the Lord of all and the church's God and King, even to the Holy One of Israel (whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness), because he has glorified thee. Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them. We will go with you, for God is with you, Zec 8:23.

III. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city that though, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, yet still there is room. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually (Isa 60:11), not only because thou hast no reason to fear thy enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends." It is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some one ready to open them, all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late.

Note, Christ is always ready to entertain those that come to him, is never out of the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably; the gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened to those that knock. Ministers, the door-keepers, must be always ready to admit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps

open house, that at any time, by the preaching of the word, in season and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles, and the kings or commanders of those forces, may be brought into the church. Lift up your heads, O you gates! and let such welcome guests as these come in.

10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee.

All that are about the church shall be made in some way or other serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being founded in men's grace, it is founded in God's; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man will make the nations of men useful to the church. The earth helped the woman. All things are for your sakes. So here (Isa 60:10), "Even the sons of strangers, that have neither knowledge of thee nor kindness for thee, that have always been aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, even they shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things ministers unto thee and not think it any disparagement to them to do so." This was fulfilled when the king of Persia, and the governors of the provinces by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jerusalem's walls shall lie still in ruins, the sons of the stranger shall be raised up to build them. Even those that do not belong to the church may be a protection to it.

And the greatest of men should not think it below them to minister to the church, but rejoice that they are in a capacity, and have a heart, to do it any service. Nay, it is the duty of all to do what they can in their places to advance the interests of God's kingdom among men; it is at their peril if they do not; for (Isa 60:12), The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; not that they must perish by the sword or by human anathemas, or as if this gave any countenance to the using of external force for the propagating of the gospel, or as if men might be compelled by penalties and punishments to come into the church; by no means. But those who will not by faith submit to Jesus Christ, the King of the church, and serve him, shall

perish eternally, Ps 2:12. Those that will not be subject to Christ's golden sceptre, to the government of his word and Spirit, that will not be brought under, or kept in, by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod. Bring them forth and slay them before me, Lu 19:27. Nations of such shall be utterly and eternally wasted, when Christ shall come to take vengeance on those that obey not his gospel, 2Th 1:8.

11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut
day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the
Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought.

12 For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish;
yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine
tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary;
and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

There shall be abundance of beauty added to the ordinances of divine worship (Isa 60:13): The glory of Lebanon, the strong and stately cedars that grow there, shall come unto thee, as of old to Solomon, when he built the temple (2Ch 2:16), and with them shall be brought other timber, proper for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, Ps 74:5,6. The temple, the place of God's sanctuary, shall be not only rebuilt, but beautified.

It is the place of his feet, where he rests and resides, Eze 43:7. The ark is called his footstool, because it was under the mercy-seat, Ps 132:7. This he will make glorious in the eyes of his people and of all their neighbours. The glory of the latter house, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, was yet really greater than the glory of the former, because Christ came to that temple, Mal 3:1. It was likewise adorned with goodly stones and gifts (Lu 21:5), to which this promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of holiness, and the graces and comforts of the Spirit, with which gospel ordinances are adorned and enriched.

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto
thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at

the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The church shall appear truly great and honourable, Isa 60:14. The people of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, by degrees became more considerable, and made a better figure than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable that many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for shelter and supply and were willing to scrape acquaintance with them. This prophecy is further fulfilled when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come, and join themselves to it: "The sons of those that afflicted thee, if not they themselves, yet their children, shall crouch to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly and beg an interest in thy favour and admission into thy family," 1Sa 2:36. A promise like this is made to the church of Philadelphia, Re 3:9. And it is intended to be,

1. A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her, and despised her, and taken a pleasure in doing so; they shall be brought down; their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so mean and miserable that they shall be glad to be obliged to those whom they have most studied to disoblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people.

2. An exaltation to the poor oppressed ones of the church; and this is the honour that shall be done to them, they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them and saving those alive who have afflicted and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to show mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all. "They shall not only become suppliants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee: They

shall call thee, The city of the Lord; they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite of heaven, and the particular care of the divine providence." That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is the city of the Lord, which he owns, in which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost. Such a one is Zion; it is the place which God has chosen to put his name there; it is the Zion of the Holy One of Israel; therefore, we may be sure, it is a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the patron of it.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee,* I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here further foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church and the spiritual peace of that, but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity. This is here spoken of,

As compared with what it had been. This made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

1. She had been despised, but now she should be honoured, Isa 60:15,16. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies; no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a rueful spectacle; it was an astonishment and a hissing. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being reformed from idolatry and having recovered the tokens of God's favour, and it shall be the joy of good people for many generations. Yet considering how short Jerusalem's excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the gospel church, far exceeding those of the Old-Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the

joy of many generations. Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated:--

(1.) She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations, and their kings, that are brought to embrace Christianity, shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shows to the child at her breasts (Isa 60:16): "Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, not suck their blood (that is not the spirit of the gospel); thou shalt suck the breast of kings, who shall be to thee as nursing fathers."

(2.) She shall find herself countenanced by her God: "Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, shalt know it by experience; for such a salvation, such a redemption, shall be wrought out for thee as plainly discovers itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a mighty one, for it is a great salvation, of the Mighty One of Jacob, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed." They before knew the Lord to be their God; now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished, but now she shall be enriched, and every thing shall be changed for the better with her, Isa 60:17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass money in their purses they have bold, and instead of iron vessels in their houses they have silver ones, and other improvements agreeable: so much shall the spiritual glory of the New-Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendour of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite excels it, 2Co 3:10. When we had baptism in the room of circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, and a gospel ministry in the room of a Levitical priesthood, we had gold instead of brass. Sin turned gold into brass when Rehoboam made brazen

shields instead of the golden ones he had pawned; but God's favour, when that returns, will turn brass again into gold.

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but as her misery (Isa 59:14); but now all the grievances of that kind shall be redressed (Isa 60:17): "I will make thy officers peace; men of peace shall be made officers, and shall be indeed justices, not patrons of injustice, and justices of peace, not instruments of trouble and vexation. They shall be peace, that is, they shall sincerely seek thy welfare and by their means thou shalt enjoy good." They shall be peace, for they shall be righteousness; and then the peace is as a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Even exactors, whose business it is to demand the public tribute, though they be exact, must not be exacting, but must be just to the subject as well as to the prince, and, according to the instructions John Baptist gave to the publicans must exact no more than is appointed them, Lu 3:13.

4. She had been insulted by her neighbours, invaded, spoiled, and plundered; but now it shall be so no more (Isa 60:18): "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land; neither the threats and triumphs of those that do violence nor the outcries and complaints of those that suffer violence shall again be heard, but every man shall peaceably enjoy his own. There shall be no wasting nor destruction, either of persons of possessions, any where within thy borders; but thy walls shall be called salvation (they shall be safe, and means of safety to thee) and thy gates shall be praise, praise to thee (every one shall commend thee for the good condition they are kept in), and praise to thy God, who strengthens the bars of thy gates," Ps 147:13. When God's salvation is upon the walls it is fit that his praises should be in the gates, the places of concourse.

16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the
breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord *am* thy
Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

As compared with what it had been. This made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

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work of the Lord, the work of a mighty one, for it is a great salvation, of the Mighty One of Jacob, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed." They before knew the Lord to be their God; now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

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18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

As completed in what it shall be. It should seem that in the close of this chapter we are directed to look further yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come any thing near to what is here foretold; and several of the images and expressions here made use of we find in the description of the new Jerusalem, Re 21:23,22:5. As the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal, so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the promised peace, and joy, and honour will be in perfection.

1. God shall be all in all in the happiness here promised; so he is always to true believers (Isa 60:19): The sun and the moon

shall be no more thy light. God's people, when they enjoy his favour, and walk in the light of his countenance, make little account of sun and moon, and the other lights of this world, but could walk comfortably in the light of the Lord though they should withdraw their shining. In heaven there shall be no occasion for sun or moon, for it is the inheritance of the saints in light, such light as will swallow up the light of the sun as easily as the sun does that of a candle. "Idolaters worshipped the sun and moon (which some have thought the most ancient and plausible idolatry); but these shall be no more thy light, shall no more be idolized, but the Lord shall be to thee a constant light, both day and night, in the night of adversity as well as in the day of prosperity." Those that make God their only light shall have him their all-sufficient light, their sun and shield. Thy God shall be thy glory. Note, God is the glory of those whose God he is and will be so to eternity. It is their glory that they have him for their God, and they glory in it; it is to them instead of beauty. God's people are, upon this account, an honourable people, that they have an interest in God as their sin covenant.

2 The happiness here promised shall know no change, period, or allay (Isa 60:20): "Thy sun shall no more go down, but it shall be eternal day, eternal sunshine, with thee; that shall not be thy sun which is sometimes eclipsed, often clouded, and, though it shine ever so bright, ever so warm, will certainly set and leave thee in the dark, in the cold, in a few hours; but he shall be a sun, a fountain of light to thee, who is himself the Father of all lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning," Jam 1:17. We read of the sun's standing still once, and not hasting to go down for the space of a day, and it was a glorious day, never was the like; but what was that to the day that shall never have a night? Or, if it had, it should be a light night; for neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; it shall never wane, shall never change, but be always at the full. The comforts and joys that are in heaven, the glories provided for the soul, as the light of the sun, and those prepared for the

glorified body too, as the light of the moon, shall never know the least cessation or interruption; how should they when the Lord shall himself be thy everlasting light--a light which never wastes nor can ever be extinguished? And the days of thy mourning shall be ended, so as never to return; for all tears shall be wiped away, and the fountains of them, sin and affliction, dried up, so that sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.

3. Those that are entitled to this happiness, being duly prepared and qualified for it, shall never be put out of the possession of it (Isa 60:21): Thy people, that shall inhabit this New Jerusalem, shall all be righteous, all justified by the righteousness of the Messiah, all sanctified by his Spirit; all that people, that Jerusalem, must be righteous, must have that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. They are all righteous, for we know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. There are no people on earth that are all righteous; there is a mixture of some bad in the best societies on this side heaven; but there are no mixtures there. They shall be all righteous, that is, they shall be entirely righteous; as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the spirits of just men shall there be made perfect. And they shall be all the righteous together who shall replenish the New Jerusalem; it is called the congregation of the righteous, Ps 1:5. And, because they are all righteous, therefore they shall inherit the land for ever, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness.

4. The glory of the church shall redound to the honour of the church's God: "They shall appear to be the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, and I will own them as such." It was by the grace of God that they were designed to this happiness; they are the branch of his planting, or of his plantations; he broke them off from the wild olive and grafted them into the good olive, transplanted them out of the field, when they were as tender branches, into his nursery, that, being

now planted in his garden on earth, they might shortly be removed to his paradise in heaven. It was by his grace likewise that they were prepared and fitted for this happiness; they are the work of his hands (Eph 2:10), are wrought to the self-same thing, 2Co 5:5. It is a work of time, and, when it shall be finished, will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who began it, and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be admired in all those that believe. God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen.

5. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are with what they were, the happiness they have arrived at with the smallness of their beginnings (Isa 60:22): "A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation." The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied, and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first--the number of their names was once but 120; yet it became a thousand. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint, will be a thousand out of a little one, a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saints were at first like a grain of mustard-seed, but they increase and multiply, and make a little one to become a thousand, the weak to be as David. When they come to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither. And so wonderful is all this promise that it needed the ratification with which it is closed: I the Lord will hasten it in his time--all that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer.

(1.) It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despaired of; but the God of almighty power has undertaken it: "I the Lord will do it, who can do it, and who have determined to do it." It will be done by him whose power is irresistible and his purposes unalterable.

(2.) It may seem to be delayed and put off so long that we are out of hopes of it; but, as the Lord will do it, so he will hasten it, will do it with all convenient speed; though much time may pass before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for, though it seem to tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God's time, for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

As completed in what it shall be. It should seem that in the close of this chapter we are directed to look further yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come any thing near to what is here foretold; and several of the images and expressions here made use of we find in the description of the new Jerusalem, Re 21:23,22:5. As the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal, so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the promised peace, and joy, and honour will be in perfection.

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pass before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for, though it seem to tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God's time, for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for. The happy and glorious state of the church is here further foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church and the spiritual peace of that, but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity.

21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

22 A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

Isaiah-61

Good Tidings of Salvation to Zion

1 The Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;

He that is the best expositor of scripture has no doubt given us the best exposition of these verses, even our Lord Jesus himself, who read this in the synagogue at Nazareth (perhaps it was the lesson for the day) and applied it entirely to himself, saying, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears (Lu 4:17,18,21); and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, in the opening of this text, were admired by all that heard them. As Isaiah was authorized and directed to proclaim liberty to the Jews in Babylon, so was Christ, God's

messenger, to publish a more joyful jubilee to a lost world. And here we are told,

I. How he was fitted and qualified for this work: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Isa 61:1 The prophets had the Spirit of God moving them at times, both instructing them what to say and exciting them to say it. Christ had the Spirit always resting on him without measure; but to the same intent that the prophets had, as a Spirit of counsel and a Spirit of courage, Isa 11:1-3. When he entered upon the execution of his prophetical office the Spirit, as a dove, descended upon him, Mt 3:16. This Spirit which was upon him he communicated to those whom he sent to proclaim the same glad tidings, saying to them, when he gave them their commission, Receive you the Holy Ghost, thereby ratifying it.

II. How he was appointed and ordained to it: The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me. What service God called him to he furnished him for; therefore he gave him his Spirit, because he had by a sacred and solemn unction set him apart to this great office, as kings and priests were of old destined to their offices by anointing. Hence the Redeemer was called the Messiah, the Christ, because he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. He has sent me; our Lord Jesus did not go unsent; he had a commission from him that is the fountain of power; the Father sent him and gave him commandment. This is a great satisfaction to us, that, whatever Christ said, he had a warrant from heaven for; his doctrine was not his, but his that sent him.

2 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of
vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;
3 to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty
for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the
spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

What the work was to which he was appointed and ordained.

1. He was to be a preacher, was to execute the office of a prophet. So well pleased was he with the good-will God showed towards men through him that he would himself be the preacher of it, that an honour might thereby be put upon the ministry of the gospel and the faith of the saints might be confirmed and encouraged. He must preach good tidings (so gospel signified) to the meek, to the penitent, and humble, and poor in spirit; to them the tidings of a Redeemer will be indeed good tidings, pure gospel, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation. The poor are commonly best disposed to receive the gospel (Jam 2:5), and it is likely to profit us when it is received with meekness, as it ought to be; to such Christ preached good tidings when he said, Blessed are the meek.

2. He was to be a healer. He was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, who are truly humbled under the sense of guilt and dread of wrath, are furnished in the gospel of Christ with that which will make them easy and silence their fears. Those only who have experienced the pains of a penitential contrition may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a deliverer. He was sent as a prophet to preach, as a priest to heal, and as a king to issue out proclamations and those of two kinds:--

(1.) Proclamations of peace to his friends: He shall proclaim liberty to the captives (as Cyrus did to the Jews in captivity) and the opening of the prison to those that were bound. Whereas, by the guilt of sin, we are bound over to the justice of God, are his lawful captives, sold for sin till payment be made of that great debt, Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted, and if we

will plead that, and depend upon it, and make over ourselves and all we have to him, in a grateful sense of the kindness he has done us, we may be faith sue out our pardon and take the comfort of it; there is, and shall be, no condemnation to us. And whereas, by the dominion of sin in us, we are bound under the power of Satan, sold under sin, Christ lets us know that he has conquered Satan, has destroyed him that had the power of death and his works, and provided for us grace sufficient to enable us to shake off the yoke of sin and to loose ourselves from those bands of our neck. The Son is ready by his Spirit to make us free; and then we shall be free indeed, not only discharged from the miseries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens.

This is the gospel proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee-trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release (Le 25:9,40), in allusion to which it is here called the acceptable year of the Lord, the time of our acceptance with God, which is the origin of our liberties; or it is called the year of the Lord because it publishes his free grace, to his own glory, and an acceptable year because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the capacities and necessities of their own souls.

(2.) Proclamations of war against his enemies. Christ proclaims the day of vengeance of our God, the vengeance he takes,

[1.] On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed in order to our deliverances; these Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and made a show of them openly, therein taking vengeance on them for all the injury they had done both to God and man, Col 2:15.

[2.] On those of the children of men that stand it out against those fair offers. They shall not only be left, as they deserve, in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies; we have the gospel

summed up, Mk 16:16, where that part of it, He that believes shall be saved, proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord to those that will accept of it; but the other part, He that believes not shall be damned, proclaims the day of vengeance of our God, that vengeance which he will take on those that obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, 2Th 1:8.

4. He was to be a comforter, and so he is as preacher, healer, and deliverer; he is sent to comfort all who mourn, and who, mourning, seek to him, and not to the world, for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but he applies it to them; he does by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to comfort all who mourn, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to those who mourn in Zion, who sorrow after a godly sort, according to God, for his residence is in Zion,--who mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in trouble; such tears God has a bottle for (Ps 56:8), such mourners he has comfort in store for. As blessings out of Zion are spiritual blessings, so mourners in Zion are holy mourners, such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace (for in Zion was the mercy-seat) and pour them out as Hannah did before the Lord. To such as these Christ has appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit (Isa 61:3), those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them,

(1.) Beauty for ashes. Whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty and a great ornament to their profession. Here is an elegant paronomasia in the original: He will give them pheer--beauty, for epher--ashes; he will turn their sorrow into joy as quickly and as easily as you can transpose a letter; for he speaks, and it is done.

(2.) The oil of joy, which make the face to shine, instead of mourning, which disfigures the countenance and makes it unlovely. this oil of joy the saints have from that oil of gladness with which Christ himself was anointed above his fellows, Heb 1:9.

(3.) The garments of praise, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving-days, instead of the spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contraction--open joys for secret mournings. The spirit of heaviness they keep to themselves (Zion's mourners weep in secret); but the joy they are recompensed with they are clothed with as with a garment in the eye of others. Observe, Where God gives the oil of joy he gives the garment of praise. Those comforts which come from God dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of God must have the praise and glory of.

5. He was to be a planter; for the church is God's husbandry. Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them out of bondage, and comfort them in their sorrows, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that they may be such and be acknowledged to be such, that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, Isa 60:21. All that Christ does for us is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him as living trees, planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God; and all this that he may be glorified--that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion and an exemplary conversation (for herein is our Father glorified, that we bring broth much fruit), that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in them, to praise him, and that he may be for ever glorified in his saints.

4 And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which are to be extended to the gospel church, and all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thraldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

I. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt (Isa 61:4), that their cities shall be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and be fitted up for their use again: They shall build the old wastes; the old wastes shall be built, the waste cities shall be repaired, the former desolations, even the desolations of many generations, which it was feared would never be repaired, shall be raised up. The setting up of Christianity in the world repaired the decays of natural religion and raised up those desolations both of piety and honesty which had been for many generations the reproach of mankind. An unsanctified soul is like a city that is broken down and has no walls, like a house in ruins; but by the power of Christ's gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. And they shall do this, those that are released out of captivity; for we are brought out of the house of bondage that we may serve God, both in building up ourselves to his glory and in helping to build up his church on earth.

II. Those that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them and be at their command, not of their brethren (they are all the Lord's freemen), but of the strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their sheep, till their ground, and dress their gardens, the ancient employments of Abel, Cain, and Adam: Strangers shall feed your flocks, Isa 61:5. When, by the grace of God, we attain to a holy indifference as to all the affairs of this world, buying as though we possessed not--when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service--then the sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vine-dressers.

III. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred and honourably employed (Isa 61:6): "While the strangers are keeping your flocks, you shall be keeping the charge of the sanctuary; instead of being slaves to your task-masters, you shall be named the priests of the Lord, a high and holy calling." Priests were princes' peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name. You shall be the ministers of our God, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty he sets to work; he delivers them out of the hands of their enemies that they may serve him, Lu 1:74,75,Ps 116:16. But his service is perfect freedom, nay, it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt he took them to be to him a kingdom of priests, Ex 19:6. And the gospel church is a royal priesthood, 1Pe 2:9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to conduct themselves as such in their devotions and in their whole conversation, with holiness to the Lord written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the priests of the Lord.

IV. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit of the church, Isa 61:6. The Gentiles shall be brought into the church. Those that were strangers shall become fellow-citizens with the saints; and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement, to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interests of God's kingdom.

1. They shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, not which they have themselves seized by violence, but which are fairly and honourably presented to them, as gifts brought to the altar, which the priests and their families lived comfortably upon. It is not said, "You shall hoard the riches of the Gentiles, and

treasure them," but, "You shall eat them;" for there is nothing better in riches than to use them and to do good with them.

2. They shall boast themselves in their glory. Whatever was the honour of the Gentiles converts before their conversion--their nobility, estates, learning, virtue, or places of trust and power--it shall all turn to the reputation of the church to which they have joined themselves; and whatever is their glory after their conversion--their holy zeal and strictness of conversation, their usefulness, their patient suffering, and all the displays of that blessed change which divine grace has made in them--shall be very much for the glory of God and therefore all good men shall glory in it.

5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the
alien *shall be* your plowmen and your vinedressers.
6 But ye shall be named The priests of the Lord : *men* shall call you
The ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles,
and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

God will be their faithful guide and a God in covenant with them (Isa 61:8): I will direct their work in truth. God by his providence will order their affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth. He will guide them in the ways of true prosperity, by the rules of true policy. He will by his grace direct the works of good people in the right way, the true way that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity and then they are pleasing to him. God desires truth in the inward parts; and, if we do our works in truth, he will make an everlasting covenant with us; for to those that walk before him and are upright he will certainly be a God all-sufficient.

Now, as a reason both of this and of the foregoing promise, that God will recompense to them double for their shame, those words come in, in the former part of the verse, I the Lord love judgment. He loves that judgment should be done among men, both between magistrates and subjects and between neighbour and neighbour, and therefore he hates all injustice; and, when wrongs are done to his people by their oppressors and

persecutors, he is displeased with them, not only because they are done to his people, but because they are wrongs, and against the eternal rules of equity. If men do not do justice, he loves to do judgment himself in giving redress to those that suffer wrong and punishing those that do wrong. God pleads his people's injured cause, not only because he is jealous for them, but because he is jealous for justice.

To illustrate this, it is added that he hates robbery for burnt-offering. He hates injustice even in his own people, who honour him with what they have in their burnt-offerings, much more does he hate it when it is against his own people; if he hates robbery when it is for burnt-offerings to himself, much more when it is for burnt-offerings to idols, and when not only his people are robbed of their estates, but he is robbed of his offerings. It is a truth much to the honour of God that ritual services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, "It was for burnt-offerings," or Corban--It is a gift.

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams; nay, that robbery is most of all hateful to God which is covered with this pretence, for it makes the righteous God to be the patron of unrighteousness. Some make this a reason of the rejection of the Jews upon the bringing in of the Gentiles (Isa 61:6), because they were so corrupt in their morals, and, while they tithed mint and cummin, made nothing of judgment and mercy (Mt 23:23), whereas God loves judgment and insists upon that, and he hates both robbery for burnt offerings and burnt-offerings for robbery too, as that of the Pharisees, who made long prayers that they might the more plausibly devour widows' houses. Others read these words thus: I hate rapine by iniquity, that is, the spoil which the enemies of God's people had unjustly made of them; God hated this, and therefore would reckon with them for it.

7 For your shame *ye shall have* double; and *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms, Isa 61:7. The Jews no doubt were thus privileged after their return; they were in a new world, and now knew how to value their liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continually fresh and blooming. Much more do all those rejoice whom Christ has brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the body.

1. They shall rejoice in their portion; they shall not only have their own again, but (which is a further gift of God) they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, Ec 3:13. Though the houses of the returned Jews, as well as their temple, be much inferior to what they were before the captivity, yet they shall be well pleased with them and thankful for them. It is a portion in their land, their own land, the holy land, Immanuel's land, and therefore they shall rejoice in it, having so lately known what it was to be strangers in a strange land. Those that have God and heaven for their portion have reason to say that they have a worthy portion and to rejoice in it.

2. Everlasting joy shall be unto them, that is, a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted. Yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much allayed, so often interrupted, and so soon brought to an end, that we must look for the accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven.

3. This shall be a double recompence to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in the land of their captivity: "For your shame you shall have double honour, and in your land you shall possess double wealth, to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the

comfort you shall have in it, shall make an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received. You shall be owned not only as God's sons, but as his first-born (Ex 4:22), and therefore entitled to a double portion." As the miseries of their captivity were so great that in them they are said to have received double for all their sins (Isa 40:2), so the joys of their return shall be so great that in them they shall receive double for all their shame. The former is applicable to the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received double for all our sins; the latter to the fulness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than double for all our services and sufferings. Job's case illustrates this: when God turned again his captivity, he gave him twice as much as he had before.

8 For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they *are* the seed *which* the Lord hath blessed.

God will entail a blessing upon their posterity after them (Isa 61:9): Their seed (the children of those persons themselves that are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in profession, the church's seed) shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation, Ps 22:30.

1. They shall signalize themselves and make their neighbours to take notice of them: They shall be known among the Gentiles, shall distinguish themselves by the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples. And, they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall dignify them, by making them the blessings of their age and instruments of his glory, and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents love in such a manner that they may be known to be such, that all who observe them may see in them

the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then they may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, that the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

2. God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God; all that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favour towards them, that they shall acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord has blessed and doth bless, for it includes both. See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any it must be taken notice of as the fruit of God's blessing and he must be glorified in it.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating her on the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises; others make it to be spoken by Christ in the name of the New-Testament church triumphing in gospel grace. We may take in both, the former as a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy, to God's honour,

1. In the beginning of this good work, the clothing of the church with righteousness and salvation, Isa 61:10. Upon this account I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. Those that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy when we make God the gladness of our joy. The first gospel song begins like this, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, Lu 1:46,47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world why it should terminate in God; for salvation and righteousness are wrought out and brought in, and the church is clothed with them. The salvation God wrought for

the Jews, and that righteousness of his in which he appeared for them, and that reformation which appeared among them, made them look as glorious in the eyes of all wise men as if they had been clothed in robes of state or nuptial garments. Christ has clothed his church with an eternal salvation (and that is truly great) by clothing it with the righteousness both of justification and sanctification.

The clean linen is the righteousness of saints, Re 19:8. Observe how these tow are put together; those, and those only, shall be clothed with the garments of salvation hereafter that are covered with the robe of righteousness now: and those garments are rich and splendid clothing, like the priestly garments (for so the word signifies) with which the bridegroom decks himself. The brightness of the sun itself is compared to them. Ps 19:5, He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, completely dressed. Such is the beauty of God's grace in those that are clothed with the robe of righteousness, that by the righteousness of Christ are recommended to God's favour and by the sanctification of the Spirit have God's image renewed upon them; they are decked as a bride to be espoused to God, and taken into covenant with him; they are decked as a priest to be employed for God, and taken into communion with him.

2. In the progress and continuance of this good work, Isa 61:11. It is not like a day of triumph, which is glorious for the present, but is soon over. No; the righteousness and salvation with which the church is clothed are durable clothing; so they are said to be, Isa 23:18. The church, when she is pleasing herself with the righteousness and salvation that Jesus Christ has clothed her with, rejoices to think that these inestimable blessings shall both spring for future ages and spread to distant regions.

(1.) They shall spring forth for ages to come, as the fruits of the earth which are produced very year, from generation to generation. As the earth, even that which lies common, brings forth her bud, the tender grass at the return of the year, and as

the garden enclosed causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth in their season, so duly, so constantly, so powerfully, and with such advantage to mankind will the Lord God cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, by virtue of the covenant of grace, as, in the former case, by virtue of the covenant of providence. See what the promised blessings are--righteousness and praise (for those that are clothed with righteousness show forth the praises of him that clothed them); these shall spring forth under the influence of the dew of divine grace. Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again.

(2.) They shall spread far, and spring forth before all the nations; the great salvation shall be published and proclaimed to all the world and the ends of the earth shall see it.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Isaiah-62

1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp *that* burneth.

The prophet here tells us,

What he will do for the church. A prophet, as he is a seer, so he is a spokesman. This prophet resolves to perform that office faithfully, Isa 62:1. He will not hold his peace; he will not rest; he will mind his business, will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here,

1. What the prophet's resolution is: He will not hold his peace. He will continue instant in preaching, will not only faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat, the messages he has received from the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them and give them line upon line. And he will continue instant in prayer; he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised; he will give himself to prayer and to the ministry of the word, as Christ's ministers must (Ac 6:4), who must labour frequently in both and never be weary of this well-doing. The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people and to God for his people; and in neither of these must they be silent.

2. What is the principle of this resolution--for Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem's, not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart. Whatever becomes of his own house and family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, Ps 122:8,Ps 118:5. It is God's Zion and his Jerusalem, and it is therefore dear to him, because it is so to God and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity.

3. How long he resolves to continue this importunity--till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation, given in the foregoing chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the gospel, in which grace reigns through righteousness unto life and salvation; yet he will not hold his peace till these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things, and there shall in every age be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as successors to him, till the promises be performed, and so the prayers answered that were grounded upon them. Then the church's righteousness

and salvation will go forth as brightness, and as a lamp that burns, so plainly that it will carry its own evidence along with it. It will bring honour and comfort to the church, which will hereupon both look pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring instruction and direction to the world, a light not only to the eyes but to the feet, and to the paths of those who before sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

What God will do for the church. The prophet can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the word and answer the prayers.

1 The church shall be greatly admired. When that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise, and her glory, shall be brought forth, the Gentiles shall see it. The tidings of it shall be carried to the Gentiles, and a tender of it made to them; they may so see this righteousness as to share in it if it be not their own fault. "Even kings shall see and be in love with the glory of thy righteousness" (Isa 62:2), shall overlook the glory of their own courts and kingdoms, and look at, and look after, the spiritual glory of the church as that which excels.

2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names make men considerable in the world, and great respect is paid them thereupon; now it is agreed that honor est in honorante--honour derives its value from the dignity of him who confers it. God is the fountain of honour and from him the church's honour comes: "Thou shalt be called by a new name, a pleasant name, such as thou wast never called by before, no, not in the day of thy greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which thou wast called by in the day of thy affliction; thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a new dignity,

and those about thee shall have new thoughts of thee." This seems to be alluded to in that promise (Re 2:17) of the white stone and in the stone a new name, and that (Re 3:12) of the name of the city of my God and my new name. It is a name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, who, we are sure, miscalls nothing, and who will oblige others to call her by the name he has given her; for his judgment is according to truth and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two names God shall give her:--

(1.) He shall call her his crown (Isa 62:3): Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, not on his head (as adding any real honour or power to him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with them), but in his hand. He is pleased to account them, and show them forth, as a glory and beauty to him. When he took them to be his people it was that they might be unto him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory (Jer 13:11): "Thou shalt be a crown of glory and a royal diadem, through the hand, the good hand, of thy God upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be to thee a crown of glory, Isa 28:5. Thou shalt be so in his hand, that is, under his protection; he that shall put glory upon thee shall create a defence upon all that glory, so that the flowers of thy crown shall never wither nor shall its jewels be lost."

(2.) He shall call her his spouse, Isa 62:4,5. This is a yet greater honour, especially considering what a forlorn condition she had been in.

[1.] Her case had been very melancholy. She was called forsaken and her land desolate during the captivity, like a woman reproachfully divorced or left a disconsolate widow. Such as the state of religion in the world before the preaching of the gospel--it was in a manner forsaken and desolate, a thing that no man looked after nor had any real concern for.

[2.] It should now be very pleasant, for God would return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable names. First, She shall be called Hephzi-bah, which signifies, My delight is in her; it was the name of Hezekiah's queen, Manasseh's mother (2Ki 21:1), a proper name for a wife, who ought to be her husband's delight, Pr 5:19. And here it is the church's Maker that is her husband: The Lord delights in thee. God by his grace has wrought that in his church which makes her his delight, she being refined, and reformed, and brought home to him; and then by his providence he does that for her which makes it appear that she is his delight and that he delights to do her good. Secondly, She shall be called Beulah, which signifies married, whereas she had been desolate, a condition opposed to that of the married wife, Isa 54:1. "Thy land shall be married, that is, it shall become fruitful again, and be replenished." Though she has long been barren, she shall again be peopled, shall again be made to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children, Ps 113:9. She shall be married, for,

1. Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity and its interests, which they had for a long time neglected, as despairing ever to have any comfortable enjoyment of it: Thy sons shall marry thee, that is, they shall live with thee and take delight in thee. When they were in Babylon, they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle, and to seek the peace of it, Jer 29:5-7. But now they shall again marry their own land, as a young man marries a virgin that he takes great delight in, is extremely fond of, and is likely to have many children by. It bodes well to a land when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, prefer it before other lands, when its princes marry their country and resolve to take their lot with it.

2. Her God (which is much better) shall betroth her to himself in righteousness, Ho 2:19,20. He will take pleasure in his

church: As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, is pleased with his relation to her and her affection to him, so shall thy God rejoice over thee: he shall rest in his love to thee (Zep 3:17); he shall take pleasure in thee (Ps 147:11), and shall delight to do thee good with his whole heart and his whole soul, Jer 32:41. This is very applicable to the love Christ has for his church and the complacency he takes in it, which appears so brightly in Solomon's Song, and which will be complete in heaven.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah [my delight *is* in her], and thy land Beulah [married]: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

5 For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *so* shall thy sons marry thee: and *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *so* shall thy God rejoice over thee.

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which* shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence,

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem:--

I. Plenty of the means of grace--abundance of good preaching and good praying (Isa 62:6,7), and this shows the method God takes when he designs mercy for a people; he first brings them to their duty and pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is made,

1. That ministers may do their duty as watchmen. It is here spoken of as a token for good, as a step towards further mercy and an earnest of it, that, in order to what he designed for them, he would set watchmen on their walls who should never hold their peace.

Note,

(1.) Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, for it is as a city besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on the

walls, to take notice and give notice of the motions of the enemy. It is necessary that, as watchmen, they be wakeful, and faithful, and willing to endure hardness.

(2.) They are concerned to stand upon their guard day and night; they must never be off their watch as long as those for whose souls they watch are not out of danger.

(3.) They must never hold their peace; they must take all opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season, out of season, and must never betray the cause of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence. They must never hold their peace at the throne of grace; they must pray, and not faint, as Moses lifted up his hands and kept them steady, till Israel had obtained the victory over Amalek, Ex 17:10,12.

2. That people may do their duty. As those that make mention of the Lord, let not them keep silence neither, let not them think it enough that their watchmen pray for them, but let them pray for themselves; all will be little enough to meet the approaching mercy with due solemnity. Note,

(1.) It is the character of God's professing people that they make mention of the Lord, and continue to do so even in bad times, when the land is termed forsaken and desolate. They are the Lord's remembrancers (so the margin reads it); they remember the Lord themselves and put one another in mind of him.

(2.) God's professing people must be a praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, must wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so: "Keep not silence; never grow remiss in the duty nor weary of it." Give him no rest--alluding to an importunate beggar, to the widow that with her continual coming wearied the judge into a compliance. God said to Moses, Let me alone (Ex 32:10), and Jacob to Christ, I will not let thee go except thou bless me, Ge 32:26.

(3.) God is so far from being displeased with our pressing importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and encourages it; he bids us to cry after him; he is not like those disciples who discouraged a petitioner, Mt 15:23. He bids us make pressing applications at the throne of grace, and give him no rest, Lu 11:5,8. He suffers himself not only to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with.

(4.) The public welfare or prosperity of God's Jerusalem is that which we should be most importunate for at the throne of grace; we should pray for the good of the church.

[1.] That it may be safe, that he would establish it, that the interests of the church may be firm, may be settled for the present and secured to posterity.

[2.] That it may be great, may be a praise in the earth, that it may be praised, and God may be praised for it. When gospel truths are cleared and vindicated, when gospel ordinances are duly administered in their purity and power, when the church becomes eminent for holiness and love, then Jerusalem is a praise in the earth, then it is in reputation.

(5.) We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the church till the mercy come; we must do as the prophet's servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising cloud appear, 1Ki 18:44.

(6.) It is a good sign that God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon them and stirs them up to be fervent and constant in their intercessions.

7 and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a
praise in the earth.
8 The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his
strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn *to be* meat for thine

enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast labored:

Plenty of all other good things, Isa 62:8. This follows upon the former; when the people praise God, when all the people praise him, then shall the earth yield her increase (Ps 67:5,6), and outward prosperity, crowning its piety, shall help to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe,

1 The great distress they had been in, and the losses they had sustained. Their corn had been meat for their enemies, which they hoped would be meat for themselves and their families. Here was a double grievance, that they themselves wanted that which was necessary to the support of life and were in danger of perishing for want of it, and that their enemies were strengthened by it, had their camp victualled with it, and so were the better able to do them a mischief. God is said to give their corn to their enemies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered it, to be the just punishment both of their abuse of plenty and of their symbolizing with strangers, Isa 1:7. The wine which they had laboured for, and which in their affliction they needed for the relief of those among them that were of a heavy heart, strangers drank it, to gratify their lusts with; this sore judgment was threatened for their sins, Le 26:16,De 28:33. See how uncertain our creature-comforts are, and how much it is our wisdom to labour for that meat which we can never be robbed of.

2 The great fulness and satisfaction they should now be restored to (Isa 62:9): Those that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord. See here,

(1.) God's mercy in giving plenty, and peace to enjoy it,--that the earth yields her increase, that there are hands to be employed in gathering it in, and that they are not taken off by plague and sickness, or otherwise employed in war,--that strangers and enemies do not come and gather it for themselves, or take it from us when we have gathered it,--that

we eat the labour of our hands and the bread is not eaten out of our mouths,--and especially that we have opportunity and a heart to honour God with it, and that his courts are open to us and we are not restrained from attending on him in them.

(2.) Our duty in the enjoyment of this mercy. We must gather what God gives, with care and industry; we must eat it freely and cheerfully, not bury the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of them. We must, when we have eaten and are full, bless the Lord, and give him thanks for his bounty to us; and we must serve him with our abundance, use it in works of piety and charity, eat it and drink it in the courts of his holiness, where the altar, the priest, and the poor must all have their share. The greatest comfort that a good man has in his meat and drink is that it furnishes him with a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord his God (Joe 2:14); the greatest comfort that he has in an estate is that it gives him an opportunity of honouring God and doing good. This wine is to be drunk in the courts of God's holiness, and therefore moderately and with sobriety, as before the Lord.

3. The solemn ratification of this promise: The Lord has sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, that he will do this for his people. God confirms it by an oath, that his people, who trust in him and his word, may have strong consolation, Heb 6:17,18. And, since he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself, sometimes by his being (As I live, Eze 33:11), sometimes by his holiness (Ps 89:35), here by his power, his right hand (which was lifted up in swearing, De 32:40), and his arm of power; for it is a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on God's promise to be sure that what he has promised he is able to perform, Ro 4:21. To assure us of this he has sworn by his strength, pawning the reputation of his omnipotence upon it; if he do not do it, let it be said, It was because he could not, which the Egyptians shall never say (Nu 14:16) nor any other. It is the comfort of

God's people that his power is engaged for them, his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

9 but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord ; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

This, as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and, under the type and figure of that, to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of gospel grace and liberty through him.

1. Way shall be made for this salvation; all difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, Isa 62:10. The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them; the way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared; causeways shall be made and cast up through wet and miry places, and the stones gathered out from places rough and rocky; in the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, Mt 3:3. And, before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance, which is called the preparation of the gospel of peace, Eph 6:15. Here the way is levelled by it, there the feet are shod with it, which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey.

2. Notice shall be given of this salvation, Isa 62:11,12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives that they are set at liberty and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, to the end of the world, that God has pleaded Zion's just, injured, and despised cause. Let is be said to Zion, for her comfort, Behold, thy salvation

comes (that is, thy Saviour, who brings salvation); he will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation, as shall be admired by all, a reward of comfort and peace with him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people for that recompence of their sufferings; and then, with reference to each, it follows, they shall be called, The holy people, and the redeemed of the Lord. The work before him, which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry and consecrated to God only; and the reward with him, the deliverance wrought for them, shall denominate them the redeemed of the Lord, so redeemed as none but God could redeem them, and redeemed to be his, their bonds loosed, that they might be his servants.

Jerusalem shall then be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken. She had been forsaken for many years; there were neither traders nor worshippers that enquired the way to Jerusalem as formerly, when it was frequented by both. But now God will again make her considerable. She shall be sought out, visited, resorted to, and court made to her, as much as ever. When Jerusalem is called a holy city, then it is called sought out; for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws respect, and makes them to be admired, beloved, and enquired after. But this being proclaimed to the end of the world must have a reference to the gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it intimates,

(1.) The glory of Christ. It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation: Behold, thy salvation cometh. Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, Isa 12:2. His salvation consists both in the work and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle nor lose their labour.

(2.) The beauty of the church. Christians shall be called saints (1Co 1:2), the holy people, for they are chosen and called to salvation through sanctification. They shall be called the redeemed of the Lord; to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called the redeemed of the Lord but those that are the holy people; the people of God's purchase are a holy nation. And they shall be called, Sought out. God shall seek them out, and find them, wherever they are dispersed, eclipsed, or lost in a crowd; men shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the holy people, that we may learn their ways, and with the redeemed of the Lord, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

11 Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

Isaiah-63

The Day of the Lord's Vengeance

1 Who *is* this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

2 Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat?

3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people *there was* none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

4 For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

5 And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

6 And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

The Lord's Goodness to Israel

7 I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, *and* the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

The prophet is here, in the name of the church, taking a review, and making a thankful recognition, of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes, in the latter end of this chapter and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray to God for his compassion towards her in her present deplorable state; and it was usual for God's people, in their prayers, thus to look back.

I. Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, Isa 63:7. It was said, in general, of God's prophets and people (Isa 62:6) that they made mention of the Lord; now here we are told what it is in God that they do especially delight to make mention of, and that is his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of as if he thought he could never say enough of it. He mentions the kindness of God (which never appeared so evident, so eminent, as in his love to mankind in sending his Son to save us, Tit 3:4), his loving-kindness, kindness that shows itself in every thing that is endearing; nay, so plenteous are the springs, and so various the streams, of divine mercy, that he speaks of it in the plural number--his loving-kindnesses; for, if we would count the fruits of his loving-kindness, they are more in number than the sand. With his loving-kindnesses he mentions his praises, that is, the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his loving-kindness, and the angels too. It must be mentioned, to God's honour, what a tribute of

praise is paid to him by all his creatures in consideration of his loving-kindness. See how copiously he speaks,

1. Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his loving-kindness--all that the Lord has bestowed on us in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity. Let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must own that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church, his great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them. Note, We must bless God for the mercies enjoyed by others as well as for those enjoyed by ourselves, and reckon that bestowed on ourselves which is bestowed on the house of Israel.

2. Of the goodness that is in God. God does good because he is good; what he bestowed upon us must be traced up to the original; it is according to his mercies (not according to our merits) and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it (as David, Ps 51:1), but when we praise it.

8 For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so
he was their Saviour.
9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence
saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he
bare them, and carried them all the days of old.
10 But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was
turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them.

Here is particular notice taken of the steps of God's mercy to Israel ever since it was formed into a nation.

1 The expectations God had concerning them that they would conduct themselves well, Isa 63:8. When he brought them out of Egypt and took them into covenant with himself he said, "Surely they are my people, I take them as such, and am willing

to hope they will approve themselves so, children that will not lie," that will not dissemble with God in their covenantings with him, nor treacherously depart from him by breaking their covenant and starting aside like a broken bow. They said, more than once, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do and will be obedient; and thereupon he took them to be his peculiar people, saying, Surely they will not lie. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are children of the covenant (Ac 3:25), children of those that clave unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped that they will tread in the steps of their fathers' constancy. Note, God's people are children that will not lie; for those that will are not his children but the devil's.

2 The favour he showed them with an eye to these expectations: So he was their Saviour out of the bondage of Egypt and all the calamities of their wilderness-state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour. See particularly (Isa 63:9) what he did for them as their Saviour.

(1.) The principle that moved him to work salvation for them; it was in his love and in his pity, out of mere compassion to them and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them or could be benefited by them. This is strangely expressed here: In all their affliction he was afflicted; not that the Eternal Mind is capable of grieving or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution (God cannot be afflicted); but thus he is pleased to show forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathizes with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself and will reckon for it accordingly. Their cries move him (Ex 3:7), and he appears for them as vigorously as if he were pained in their pain. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

This is matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction that God is so far from afflicting willingly (La 3:33) that, if they

humble themselves under his hand, he is afflicted in their affliction, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. There is another reading of these words in the original: In all their affliction there was no affliction; though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good, the rigour of it was so mitigated and it was so allayed and balanced with mercies, they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them which they are to others; they are not afflictions, but medicines; saints are enabled to call them light, and but for a moment, and, with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them.

(2.) The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but he bore them and carried them all the days of old; they were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty; when they were burdened, and ready to sink, he bore them up; in the wars they made upon the nations he stood by them and bore them out; though they were peevish, he bore with them and suffered their manners, Ac 13:18. He carried them as the nursing father does the child, though they would have tired any arms but his; he carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, De 32:11. And it was a long time that he was troubled with them (if we may so speak): it was all the days of old; his care of them was not at an end even when they had grown up and were settled in Canaan. All this was in his love and pity, ex mero motu--of his mere good-will; he loved them because he would love them, as he says, De 7:7,8.

3. Their disingenuous conduct towards him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves (Isa 63:10): But they rebelled. Things looked very hopeful and promising; one would

have thought that they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then there was no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and on them be the breach.

(1.) They revolted from their allegiance to God and took up arms against him: They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit with their unbelief and murmuring, besides the iniquity of the golden calf; and this had been their way and manner ever since. Though he was ready to say of them, They will not lie, though he had done so much for them, borne them and carried them, yet they thus ill requited him, like foolish people and unwise, De 32:6. This grieved him, Ps 95:10. The ungrateful rebellions of God's children against him are a vexation to his Holy Spirit.

(2.) Thereupon he justly withdrew his protection, and not only so, but made war upon them, as a prince justly does upon the rebels. He who had been so much their friend was turned to be their enemy and fought against them, by one judgment after another, both in the wilderness and after their settlement in Canaan. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin; it makes God an enemy even to those for whom he has done the part of a good friend, and makes him angry who was all love and pity. See the folly of sinners; they wilfully lose him for a friend who is the most desirable friend, and make him their enemy who is the most formidable enemy. This refers especially to those calamities that were of late brought upon them by their captivity in Babylon for their idolatries and other sins. That which is both the original and the great aggravation of their troubles was that God was turned to be their enemy.

4. A particular reflection made, on this occasion, upon what God did for them when he first formed them into a people: Then he remembered the days of old, Isa 63:11.

(1.) This may be understood either of the people or of God.

[1.] We may understand it of the people. Israel then (spoken of as a single person) remembered the days of old, looked into their Bibles, read the story of God's bringing their fathers out of Egypt, considered it more closely than ever they did before, and reasoned upon it, as Gideon did (Jdg 6:13), Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? "Where is he that brought them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us up out of Babylon? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers?" This they consider as an inducement and an encouragement to them to repent and return to him; their fathers were a provoking people and yet found him a pardoning God; and why may not they find him so if they return to him? They also use it as a plea with God in prayer for the turning again of their captivity, like that Isa 51:9,10. Note, When the present days are dark and cloudy it is good to remember the days of old, to recollect our own and others' experiences of the divine power and goodness and make use of them, to look back upon the years of the right hand of the Most High (Ps 77:5,10), and remember that he is God, and changes not.

[2.] We may understand it of God; he put himself in mind of the days of old, of his covenant with Abraham (Le 26:42); he said, Where is he that brought Israel up out of the sea? stirring up himself to come and save them with this consideration, "Why should not I appear for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as undeserving, as ill-deserving, as they are?" See how far off divine mercy will go, how far back it will look, to find out a reason for doing good to his people, when ho present considerations appear but what make against them. Nay, it makes that a reason for relieving them which might have been used as a reason for abandoning them. He might have said, "I have delivered them formerly, but they have again brought trouble upon themselves (Pr 19:19); there I will deliver them no more," Jdg 10:13. But no; mercy rejoices against judgment, and turns the argument the other way: "I have formerly delivered them and therefore will now."

(2.) Which way soever we take it, whether the people plead it with God or God with himself, let us view the particulars, and they agree very much with the confession and prayer which the children of the captivity made upon a solemn fast-day (Ne 9:5, &c.), which may serve as a comment on these verses which call to mind Moses and his people, that is, what God did by Moses for his people, especially in bringing them through the Red Sea, for that is it that is here most insisted on; for it was a work which he much gloried in and which his people therefore may in a particular manner encourage themselves with the remembrance of.

[1.] God led them by the right hand of Moses (Isa 63:12) and the wonder-working rod in his hand. Ps 77:20, Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses. It was not Moses that led them, any more than it was Moses that fed them (Joh 6:32), but God by Moses; for it was he that qualified Moses for, called him to, assisted and prospered him in that great undertaking. Moses is here called the shepherd of his flock; God was the owner of the flock and the chief shepherd of Israel (Ps 80:1); but Moses was a shepherd under him, and he was inured to labour and patience, and so fitted for this pastoral care, by his being trained up to keep the flock of his father Jethro. Herein he was a type of Christ the good shepherd, that lays down his life for the sheep, which was more than Moses did for Israel, though he did a great deal for them.

[2.] He put his holy Spirit within him; the Spirit of God was among them, and not only his providence, but his grace, did work for them. Ne 9:20, Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them. The spirit of wisdom and courage, as well as the Spirit of prophecy, was put into Moses, to qualify him for that service among them to which he was called; and some of his spirit was put upon the seventy elders, Nu 11:17. This was a great blessing to Israel, that they had among them not only inspired writings, but inspired men.

[3.] He carried them safely through the Red Sea, and thereby saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh. First, He divided the water before them (Isa 63:12), so that it gave them not only passage, but protection, not only opened them a lane, but erected them a wall on either side. Secondly, He led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness, or in the plain (Isa 63:13); they and their wives and children, with all their baggage, went as easily and readily through the bottom of the sea (though we may suppose it muddy or stony, or both) as a horse goes along upon even ground; so that they did not stumble, though it was an untrodden path, which neither they nor any one else ever went before. If God make us a way, he will make it plain and level; the road he opens to his people he will lead them in. Thirdly, To complete the mercy, he brought them up out of the sea, Isa 63:11. Though the ascent, it is likely, was very steep, dirty, slippery, and unconquerable (at least by the women and children, and the men, considering how they were loaded, Ex 12:34, and how fatigued), yet God by his power brought them up from the depths of the earth; and it was a kind of resurrection to them; it was as life from the dead.

[4.] He brought them safely to a place of rest: As a beast goes down into the valley, carefully and gradually, so the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest. Many a time in their march through the wilderness they had resting-places provided for them by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord in Moses, Isa 63:11. And at length they were made to rest finally in Canaan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that rest according to the promise. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that God's Israel are caused to return to God and repose in him as their rest.

[5.] All this he did for them by his own power, for his own praise. First, It was by his own power, as the God of nature, that has all the powers of nature at his command; he did it with his glorious arm, the arm of his gallantry, or bravery; so the word signifies. It was not Moses's rod, but God's glorious arm, that did it. Secondly, It was for his own praise, to make himself an

everlasting name (Isa 63:12), a glorious name (Isa 63:14), that he might be glorified, everlastingly glorified, upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm, he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.

11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, *and* his people, *saying*,
Where *is* he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd
of his flock? where *is* he that put his Holy Spirit within him?
12 that led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm,
dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting
name?
13 that led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, *that*
they should not stumble?
14 As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused
him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious
name.

Prayer for Mercy and Help

15 Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy
holiness and of thy glory: where *is* thy zeal and thy strength, the
sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they
restrained?

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter, and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer. It is calculated for the time of the captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers, prepared for them against that time of need, that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own inditing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks further, and that it expresses the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God and destruction by the Romans; for there is one passage in it (Isa 64:4) which is applied to the grace of the gospel by the apostle

(1Co 2:9), that grace for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses we may observe,

The petitions they put up to God.

1. That he would take cognizance of their case and of the desires of their souls towards him: Look down from heaven, and behold, Isa 63:15. They knew very well that God sees all, but they prayed that he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern, as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt when he was about to appear for their deliverance.

In begging that he would only look down upon them and behold them they did in effect appeal to his justice against their enemies, and pray for judgment against them (as Jehoshaphat, 2Ch 20:11,12, Behold, how they reward us. Wilt thou not judge them?), implicitly confiding in his mercy and wisdom as to the way in which he will relieve them (Ps 25:18, Look upon my affliction and my pain): Look down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory. God's holiness is his glory. Heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he most manifests his glory, and whence he is said to look down upon the earth, Ps 33:14. His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels (Isa 6:3,Re 4:8); there his holy ones attend him, and are continually about him; so that it is the habitation of his holiness. It is an encouragement to all his praying people, who desire to be holy as he is holy, that he dwells in a holy place.

2. That he would take a course for their relief (Isa 63:17): "Return; change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us; return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look towards us, but thy gracious presence with

us." God's people dread nothing more than his departures from them and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

16 Doubtless thou *art* our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, *art* our Father, our Redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting.

The complaints they made to God. Two things they complained of:--

1. That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, Isa 63:17. It is a strange expostulation, "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, that is, many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make that thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear." Some make it to be the language of those among them that were impious and profane; when the prophets reproved them for the error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, they with a daring impudence charged their sin upon God, made him the author of it, and asked why doth he then find fault?

Note, Those are wicked indeed that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them that lamented the unbelief and impenitence of their people, not accusing God of being the author of their wickedness, but complaining of it to him. They owned that they had erred from God's ways, that their hearts had been hardened from his fear, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them and this was the cause of all their errors from his ways; or from his fear may mean from the true worship of God, and that is a hard heart indeed which is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good.

Now this they complain of, as their great misery and burden, that God had for their sins left them to this, had permitted

them to err from his ways and had justly withheld his grace, so that their hearts were hardened from his fear. When they ask, Why hast thou done this? it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a sore judgment. God had caused them to err and hardened their hearts, not only by withdrawing his Spirit from them, because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him (Isa 63:10), but by a judicial sentence upon them (Go, make the heart of this people fat, Isa 6:9,10) and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions for their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, because in it he was in effect bidden to go and serve other gods, 1Sa 26:19. Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service; and, because the rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot, they were ready to put forth their hand unto iniquity (Ps 125:3), and this was the thing they complained most of; their afflictions were their temptations, and to many of them invincible ones.

Note, Convinced consciences complain most of spiritual judgments and dread that most in an affliction which draws them from God and duty.

2. That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them (Isa 63:18): Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. As it was a grief to them that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their affection to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their affliction, so it was a further grief that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complained not so much of the adversaries treading down their houses and cities as of their treading down God's sanctuary, because thereby God was immediately affronted, and they were robbed of the comforts they valued most and took most pleasure in.

17 O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, *and* hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

18 The people of thy holiness have possessed *it* but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

The pleas they urged with God for mercy and deliverance.

1. They pleaded the tender compassion God used to show to his people and his ability and readiness to appear for them, Isa 63:15. The most prevailing arguments in prayer are those that are taken from God himself; such these are. Where is thy zeal and thy strength? God has a zeal for his own glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name is Jealous; and he is a jealous God; and he has strength proportionable to secure his own glory and the interest of his people, in despite of all opposition. Now where are these? Have they not formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now? It cannot be that divine zeal, which is infinitely wise and just, should be cooled, that divine strength, which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his people had experienced not only his zeal and his strength, but the sounding of his bowels, or rather the yearning of them, such a degree of compassion to them as in men causes a commotion and agitation within them, as Ho 11:8, My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together; and Jer 31:20, My bowels are troubled (or sound) for him. "Thus God used to be affected towards his people, and to express a multitude of mercies towards them; but where are they now? Are they restrained? Ps 77:9. Has God, who so often remembered to be gracious, now forgotten to be so? Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? It can never be."

Note, We may ground good expectations of further mercy upon our experiences of former mercy.

2. They pleaded God's relation to them as their Father (Isa 63:16): "Thy tender mercies are not restrained, for they are the tender mercies of a father, who, though he may be for a time

displeased with his child, will yet, through the force of natural affection, soon be reconciled. Doubtless thou art our Father, and therefore thy bowels will years towards us." Such good thoughts of God as these we should always keep up in our hearts. However it be, yet God is good; for he is our Father. They own themselves fatherless if he be not their Father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom the fatherless findeth mercy, Ho 14:3.

It was the honour of their nation that they had Abraham to their father (Mt 3:9), who was the friend of God, and Israel, who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that unless they had God himself for their Father? "Abraham and Israel cannot help us; they have not the power that God has; they are dead long since, and are ignorant of us, and acknowledge us not; they know not what our case is, nor what our wants are, and therefore know not which way to do us a kindness. If Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would intercede for us and advise us; but they have gone to the other world, and we know not that they have any communication at all with this world, and therefore they are not capable of doing us any kindness any further than that we have the honour of being called their children." When the father is dead his sons come to honour and he knows it not, Job 14:21. "But thou, O Lord! art our Father still (the fathers of our flesh may call themselves ever-loving; but they are not ever-living; it is God only that is the immortal Father, that always knows us, and is never at a distance from us), and therefore our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name, the name by which we will know and own thee.

It is the name by which from of old thou hast been known; thy people have always looked upon thee as the God to whom they might appeal to redress their grievances and plead their cause. Nay" (according to the sense some give of this place), "though Abraham and Israel not only cannot, but would not, help us, thou wilt. They have not the pity thou hast. We are so degenerate and corrupt that Abraham and Israel would not own

us for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father. Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disinherited his son Reuben and cursed Simeon and Levi; but our heavenly Father, in pardoning sin, is God, and not man," Ho 11:9.

3. They pleaded God's interest in them, that he was their Lord, their owner and proprietor: "We are thy servants; what service we can do thou art entitled to, and therefore we ought not to serve strange kings and strange gods: Return for thy servants' sake." As a father finds himself obliged by natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so a master thinks himself obliged in honour to rescue and protect his servant: "We are thine by the strongest engagements, as well as the highest endearments. Thou hast borne rule over us; therefore, Lord, assert thy own interest, maintain thy own right; for we are called by thy name, and therefore whither shall we go but to thee, to be righted and protected? We are thine, save us (Ps 119:94), thy own, acknowledge us. We are the tribes of thy inheritance, not only thy servants, but thy tenants; we are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheritance, whence issue the little praise and worship that he receives from this lower world; and wilt thou suffer thy own servants and tenants to be thus abused?"

4. They pleaded that they had had but a short enjoyment of the land of promise and the privileges of the sanctuary (Isa 63:18): The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while. From Abraham to David were but fourteen generations, and from David to the captivity but fourteen more (Mt 1:17), and that was but a little while in comparison with what might have been expected from the promise of the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession (Ge 17:8) and from the power that was put forth to bring them into that land and settle them in it. "Though we are the people of thy holiness, distinguished from other people and consecrated to thee, yet we are soon dislodged." But this they might thank themselves for; they were, in profession, the people of God's holiness, but it was

their wickedness that turned them out of the possession of that land.

5. They pleaded that those who had and kept possession of their land were such as were strangers to God, such as he had no service or honour from: "Thou never didst bear rule over them, nor did they ever yield thee any obedience; they were not called by thy name, but professed relation to other gods and were the worshippers of them. Will God suffer those that do not stand in any relation to him to trample upon those that do?" Some give another reading of this: "We have become as those over whom thou didst never bear rule and who were never called by thy name; we are rejected and abandoned, despised and trampled upon, as if we never had been in thy service nor had thy name called upon us." Thus the shield of Saul was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. But the covenant that seems to be forgotten shall be remembered again.

19 We are *thine:* thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

Isaiah-64

1 Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

Here, I The petition is that God would appear wonderfully for them now, Isa 63:1,2. Their case was represented in the close of the foregoing chapter as very sad and very hard, and in this case it was time to cry, "Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength!" They had prayed (Isa 63:15) that God would look down from heaven; here they pray that he would come down to deliver them, as he had said, Ex 3:8.

1. They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them. When God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people he is said to shine forth, to show himself strong; so, here, they pray that he

would rend the heavens and come down, as when he delivered David he is said to bow the heavens, and come down (Ps 18:9), to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary manner, so that all may take notice of them and acknowledge them. This God's people desire and pray for, that they themselves having the satisfaction of seeing him though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him when his way is in the clouds. This is applicable to the second coming of Christ, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

2. They desire that he would vanquish all opposition and that it might be made to give way before him: That the mountains might flow down at thy presence, that the fire of thy wrath may burn so fiercely against thy enemies as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid and cast into what shape the operator pleases; so the melting fire burns, Isa 63:2. Let things be put into a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church: As the fire causes the waters to boil. There is an allusion here, some think, to the volcanoes, or burning mountains, which sometimes send forth such sulphureous streams as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil, which, perhaps, are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath and warning--pieces of the final conflagration.

3. They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God, may make his name known, not only to his friends (they knew it before, and trusted in his power), but to his adversaries likewise, that they may know it and tremble at his presence, and may say, with the men of Bethshemesh, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger?

Note, Sooner or later God will make his name known to his adversaries and force those to tremble at his presence that

would not come and worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a stronghold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a strong-hold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day will come when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they be ever so numerous and strong.

2 as *when* the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil,
to make thy name known to thine adversaries, *that* the nations may
tremble at thy presence!
3 When thou didst terrible things *which* we looked not for, thou
camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.
4 For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor
perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides
thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

The plea is that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and thou hast, therefore thou wilt, is good arguing at the throne of grace, Ps 10:17.

1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular when he brought them out of Egypt, Isa 63:3. He then did terrible things in the plagues of Egypt, which they looked not for; they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and outstretched arm. Then he came down upon Mount Sinai in such terror as made that and the adjacent mountains to flow down at his presence, to skip like rams (Ps 114:4), to tremble, so that they were scattered and the perpetual hills were made to bow, Hab 3:6. In the many great salvations God wrought for that people he did terrible things which they looked not for, made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way. See Jdg 5:4,5,Ps 68:7,8. Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the divine power as the melting down of rocks and mountains would be.

2. They plead what God had been used to do, and had declared his gracious purpose to do, for his people in general. The provision he has made for the safety and happiness of his people, even of all those that seek him, and serve him, and trust in him, is very rich and very ready, so that they need not fear being either disappointed of it, for it is sure, or disappointed in it, for it is sufficient.

(1.) It is very rich, Isa 63:4. Men have not heard nor seen what God has prepared for those that wait for him. Observe the character of God's people; they are such as wait for him in the way of duty, wait for the salvation he has promised and designed for them. Observe where the happiness of this people is bound up; it is what God has prepared for them, what he has designed for them in his counsel and is in his providence and grace preparing for them and preparing them for, what he has done or will do, so it may be read. Some of the Jewish doctors have understood this of the blessings reserved for the days of the Messiah, and to them the apostle applies these words; and others extend them to the glories of the world to come. It is all that goodness which God has laid up for those that fear him, and wrought for those that trust in him, Ps 31:19. Of this it is here said that since the beginning of the world, in the most prying and inquisitive ages of it, men have not, either by hearing or seeing, the two learning senses, come to the full knowledge of it. None have seen, nor heard, nor can understand, but God himself, what the provision is that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls.

For, [1.] Much of it was concealed in former ages; they knew it not, because the unsearchable riches of Christ were hidden in God, were hidden from the wise and prudent; but in latter ages they were revealed by the gospel; so the apostle applies this (1Co 2:9), for it follows (Isa 63:10), But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit; compare Ro 16:25,Eph 3:9. That which men had not heard since the beginning of

the world they should hear before the end of it, and at the end of it should see, when the veil shall be rent to introduce the glory that is yet to be revealed. God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew besides him.

[2.] It cannot be fully comprehended by the human understanding, no, not when it is revealed; it is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense; it is very great, and will far outdo the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of believers, much more their future bliss, is such as surpasses all conception and expression, Php 4:7. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reading of these words, referring the transcendency, not so much to the work itself as to the author of it: Neither has the eye seen a god besides thee, who doth so (or has done or can do so) for him that waits for him. We must infer from God's works of wonderous grace, as well as from his works of wondrous power, from the kind things, as well as from the great things, he does, that there is no god like him, nor any among the sons of the mighty to be compared with him.

(2.) It is very ready (Isa 63:5): "Thou meetest him that rejoices and works righteousness, meetest him with that good which thou hast prepared for him (Isa 63:4), and dost not forget those that remember thee in thy ways." See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul.

[1.] What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him. First, We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing, we must work righteousness, must do that which is good and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. Secondly, We must be cheerful in doing our duty, we must rejoice and work righteousness, must delight ourselves in God and in his law,

must be cheerful in his service and sing at our work. God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper. We must serve the Lord with gladness. Thirdly, We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us and be suitably affected with them, must remember him in his ways, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us or walks contrary to us. We must mind him and make mention of him with thanksgiving when his ways are ways of mercy (in a day of prosperity be joyful), with patience and submission when he contends with us. In the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee; for in a day of adversity we must consider.

[2.] We are here told what we may expect from God if we thus attend him in the way of duty: Thou meetest him. This intimates the friendship, fellowship, and familiarity to which God admits his people; he meets them, to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, Ex 20:24.29:43. It likewise intimates his freeness and forwardness in doing them good; he will anticipate them with the blessings of his goodness, will rejoice to do good to those that rejoice in working righteousness, and wait to be gracious to those that wait for him. He meets his penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son, Lu 15:20. He meets his praying people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking, Isa 65:24.

3. They plead the unchangeableness of God's favour and the stability of his promise, notwithstanding the sins of his people and his displeasure against them for their sins: "Behold, thou hast many a time been wroth with us because we have sinned, and we have been under the tokens of thy wrath; but in those, those ways of thine, the ways of mercy in which we have remembered thee, in those is continuance," or "in those thou art ever" (his mercy endures for ever), "and therefore we shall at last be saved, though thou art wroth, and we have sinned." This agrees with the

tenour of God's covenant, that, if we forsake the law, he will visit our transgression with a rod, but his loving kindness he will not utterly take away, his covenant he will not break (Ps 89:30, &c.), and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin when they were just upon the brink of it; see Ps 78:38.

And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved, for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins, and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment and has been soon over; but in his favour is life, because in it is continuance; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for our salvation, see Isa 54:7,8. It is well for us that our hopes of salvation are built not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own (for in that there is no certainty, even Adam in innocency did not abide), but upon God's mercies and promises, for in those, we are sure, is continuance.

5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, *those that* remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

As we have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the Lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both is the same--the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction--only with this difference, Isaiah sees it at a distance and laments it by the Spirit of prophecy, Jeremiah saw it accomplished. In these verses,

I The people of God in their affliction confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles and preparing for deliverance. Now

that they were under divine rebukes for sin they had nothing to trust to but the mere mercy of God and the continuance of that; for among themselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap and make intercession, for they are all polluted with sin and therefore unworthy to intercede, all careless and remiss in duty and therefore unable and unfit to intercede.

1. There was a general corruption of manners among them (Isa 63:6): We are all as an unclean thing, or as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, who was to be shut out of the camp. The body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, who was not admitted into the courts of the tabernacle, or like one labouring under some loathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot nothing but wounds and bruises, Isa 1:6. We have all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon. Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

(1.) "The best of our persons are so; we are all so corrupt and polluted that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were who rejoiced and wrought righteousness (Isa 63:5), are but as filthy rags, fit to be case to the dunghill. The best of them is as a brier."

(2.) "The best of our performances are so. There is not only a general corruption of manners, but a general defection in the exercises of devotion too; those which pass for the sacrifices of righteousness, when they come to be enquired into, are the torn, and the lame, and the sick, and therefore are provoking to God, as nauseous as filthy rags." Our performances, though they be ever so plausible, if we depend upon them as our righteousness and think to merit by them at God's hand, are as filthy rags--rags, and will not cover us--filthy rags, and will but defile us. True penitents

cast away their idols as filthy rags (Isa 30:22), odious in their sight; here they acknowledge even their righteousness to be so in God's sight if he should deal with them in strict justice. Our best duties are so defective, and so far short of the rule, that they are as rags, and so full of sin and corruption cleaving to them that they are as filthy rags. When we would do good evil is present with us; and the iniquity of our holy things would be our ruin if we were under the law.

2. There was a general coldness of devotion among them, Isa 63:7. The measure was filled by the abounding iniquity of the people, and nothing was done to empty it.

(1.) Prayer was in a manner neglected: "There is none that calls on thy name, none that seeks to thee for grace to reform us and take away sin, or for mercy to relieve us and take away the judgments which our sins have brought upon us." Therefore people are so bad, because they do not pray; compare Ps 14:3,4, They have altogether become filthy, for they call not upon the Lord. It bodes ill to a people when prayer is restrained among them.

(2.) It was very negligently performed. If there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifferency: There is none that stirs up himself to take hold of God. Note,

[1.] To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us and to plead them with him,--to take hold of him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us, or of one that has departed, soliciting his return,--to take hold of him as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with him and so prevail. But when we take hold of God it is as the boatman with his hook takes hold on the shore, as if he

would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to him.

[2.] Those that would take hold of God in prayer so as to prevail with him must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty (and all little enough), our thoughts fixed and our affections flaming. In order hereunto all that is within us must be engaged and summoned into the service; we must stir up the gift that is in us by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us and a close application of mind to it; but how can we expect that God should come to us in ways of mercy when there are none that do this, when those that profess to be intercessors are mere triflers?

II. They acknowledge their afflictions to be the fruit and product of their own sins and God's wrath.

1. They brought their troubles upon themselves by their own folly: "We are all as an unclean thing, and therefore we do all fade away as a leaf (Isa 63:6), we not only wither and lose our beauty, but we fall and drop off" (so the word signifies) "as leaves in autumn; our profession of religion withers, and we grow dry and sapless; our prosperity withers and comes to nothing; we fall to the ground, as despicable and contemptible; and then our iniquities like the wind have taken us away and hurried us into captivity, as the winds in autumn blow off, and then blow away, the faded withered leaves," Ps 1:3,4. Sinners are blasted, and then carried away, by the malignant and violent wind of their own iniquity; it withers them and then ruins them.

2. God brought their troubles upon them by his wrath (Isa 63:7): Thou hast hidden thy face from us; hast been displeased with us and refused to afford us any succour. When they made themselves as an unclean thing no wonder

that God turned his face away from them, as loathing them. Yet this was not all: Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities. This is the same complaint with that (Ps 90:7,8), We are consumed by thy anger; thou hast melted us, so the word is. God had put them in the furnace, not to consume them as dross, but to melt them as gold, that they might be refined and new-cast.

7 And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

8 But now, O Lord, thou *art* our Father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter; and we all *are* the work of thy hand.

They claim relation to God as their God, and humbly plead it with him, and in consideration of it cheerfully refer themselves to him (Isa 63:8): "But now, O Lord! thou art our Father: though we have conducted ourselves very undutifully and ungratefully towards thee, yet still we have owned thee as our Father; and, though thou hast corrected us, yet thou hast not cast us off. Foolish and careless as we are, poor and despised and trampled upon as we are by our enemies, yet still thou art our Father; to thee therefore we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose and came to his father; to thee we address ourselves by prayer; from whom should we expect relief and succour but from our Father? It is the wrath of a Father that we are under, who will be reconciled and not keep his anger for ever." God is their Father,

1. By creation; he gave them their being, formed them into a people, shaped them as he pleased: "We are the clay and thou our potter, therefore we will not quarrel with thee, however thou art pleased to deal with us, Jer 18:6. Nay, therefore we will hope that thou wilt deal well with us, that thou who madest us wilt new-make us, new-form us, though we have unmade and deformed ourselves: We are all as an unclean thing, but we are all the work of thy hands, therefore do away our uncleanness, that we may be fit for thy use, the

use we were made for. We are the work of thy hands, therefore forsake us not," Ps 138:8.

2. By covenant; this is pleaded (Isa 63:9): "Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people, all the people thou hast in the world, that make open profession of thy name. We are called thy people, our neighbours look upon us as such, and therefore what we suffer reflects upon thee, and the relief that our case requires is expected from thee. We are thy people; and should not a people seek unto their God? Isa 8:19. We are thine; save us," Ps 119:94. Note, When we are under providential rebukes from God it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant-relation to him.

9 Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we *are* all thy people.

They are importunate with God for the turning away of his anger and the pardoning of their sins (Isa 63:9): "Be not wroth very sore, O Lord! though we have deserved that thou shouldst, neither remember iniquity for ever against us." They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under; as to that, they refer themselves to God. But,

1. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy whether the affliction be continued or removed: "Be not wroth to extremity, but let thy anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father." They do not say, Lord, rebuke us not, for that may be necessary, but Not in thy anger, not in thy hot displeasure. It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face.

2. They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin: Neither remember iniquity for ever. Such is the evil of sin that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin, which is for ever. Those make it to appear that they are truly humbled under the hand of God who are more afraid of

the terror of God's wrath, and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of any judgment whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death.

10 Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

They lodge in the court of heaven a very melancholy representation, or memorial, of the lamentable condition they were in and the ruins they were groaning under.

1. Their own houses were in ruins, Isa 63:10. The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldeans and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them or take any notice of them, which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts: Thy holy cities are a wilderness. The cities of Judah are called holy cities, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests. The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served; and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them, not so much that they were stately cities, rich or ancient ones, but that they were holy cities, cities in which God's name was known, professed, and called upon. "These cities are a wilderness; the beauty of them is sullied; they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly. They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land," Ps 74:8. Nor was it only the smaller cities that were thus left as a wilderness unfrequented, but even "Zion is a wilderness; the city of David itself lies in ruins; Jerusalem, that was beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth, is now deformed, and has become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish." See what devastations sin brings upon a people; and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them; holy cities, if they become wicked cities, will be soonest of all turned into a wilderness, Am 3:2.

2. God's house was in ruins, Isa 63:11. This they lament most of all, that the temple was burnt with fire; but, as soon as it was built, they were told what their sin would bring it to. 2Ch 7:21, This house, which is high, shall be an astonishment. Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple.

(1.) It was their holy and beautiful house; it was a most sumptuous building, but the holiness of it was in their eye the greatest beauty of it, and consequently the profanation of it was the saddest part of its desolation and that which grieved them most, that the sacred services which used to be performed there were discontinued.

(2.) It was the place where their fathers praised God with their sacrifices and songs; what a pity is it that that should lie in ashes which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated their present disuse of the songs of Zion that their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause when they plead that it was the house where he had been praised, and put him in mind too of his covenant with their fathers by taking notice of their fathers' praising him.

(3.) With it all their pleasant things were laid waste, all their desires and delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, which they had a great delight in; not only the furniture of the temple, the altars and table, but especially the sabbaths and new moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness, their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation.

Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you lay waste all their pleasant things. What have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interest twisted and interchanged; when

they speak of the cities for their own habitation they call them thy holy cities, for to God they were dedicated; when they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt they call it our beautiful house and its furniture our pleasant things, for they had heartily espoused it and all the interests of it. If thus we interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest ourselves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these *things,* O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing with God concerning their present desolations (Isa 64:12): "Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Canst thou see thy temple ruined and not resent it, not revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous? Ps 74:22, Arise, O God! plead thy own cause. Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed; and wilt thou hold thy peace and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to Heaven pass unrebuked?" When we are abused we hold our peace, because vengeance does not belong to us, and because we have a God to refer our cause to. When God is injured in his honour it may justly be expected that he should speak in the vindication of it; his people prescribe not to him what he shall say, but their prayer is (as here) Ps 83:1, Keep not thou silence, O God! and Ps 109:1, "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise! Speak for the conviction of thy enemies, speak for the comfort and relief of thy people; for wilt thou afflict us very grievously, or afflict us for ever?" It is a sore affliction to good people to see God's sanctuary laid waste and nothing done towards the raising of it out of its ruins. But God has said that he will not contend for ever, and therefore his people may depend upon it that their afflictions shall be neither to extremity nor to eternity, but light and for a moment.

Isaiah-65

Punishment of the Rebellious

1 I am sought of *them that* asked not *for me;* I am found of *them that* sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that* was not called by my name.

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, Ro 10:20,21. And he observes that herein Esaias is very bold, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good (De 32:21), I will provoke you to jealousy by those that are no people.

I. It is here foretold that the Gentiles, who had been afar off, should be made nigh, Isa 65:1. Paul reads it thus: I was found of those that sought me not; I was made manifest to those that asked not for me. Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them and how they were surprised into it.

1. Those who had long been without God in the world shall now be set a seeking him; those who had not said, Where is God my maker? shall now begin to enquire after him. Neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall be baptized and call on the name of the Lord, Ac 2:21. With what pleasure does the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how does he glory in it, especially by those who in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over great sinners who repent.

2. God shall anticipate their prayers with his blessings: I am found of those that sought me not. This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they were known of him (Ga 4:9), to seek God and find him because they were first sought and found of him. Though in after-communion God is found of those that seek him (Pr 8:17), yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; for therefore we love him because he first loved us. The design of the bounty of common providence to them was that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, Ac 17:27. But they sought him not; still he was to them an unknown God, and yet God was found of them.

3. God gave the advantages of a divine revelation to those who had never made a profession of religion: I said, Behold me, behold me (gave them a sight of me and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it) to those who were not called by my name, as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostles went about from place to place, preaching the gospel, this was the substance of what they preached: "Behold God, behold him, turn towards him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off from your idols that you have made, and look upon the living God who made you." Christ in them said, Behold me, behold me with an eye of faith; look unto me, and be you saved. And this was said to those that had long been lo-ammi, and lo-ruhamah (Ho 1:8,9), not a people, and that had not obtained mercy, Ro 9:25,26.

2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people,
which walketh in a way *that was* not good, after their own
thoughts;
3 a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that
sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

4 which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable *things is in* their vessels;

It is here foretold that the Jews, who had long been a people near to God, should be cast off and set at a distance Isa 65:2 The apostle applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers. Ro 10:21, But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Here observe,

1. How the Jews were courted to the divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, stretched forth his hands to them, as Wisdom did, Pr 1:24. God spread out his hands to them, as one reasoning and expostulating with them, not only beckoned to them with the finger, but spread out his hands, as being ready to embrace and entertain them, reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importuning them to accept them. When Christ was crucified his hands were spread out and stretched forth, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom; and this all the day, all the gospel-day. He waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected.

2. How they contemned the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were invited to the wedding-supper, and would not come, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Now here we have,

(1.) The bad character of this people. The world shall see that it was not for nothing that they were rejected of God; no, it was for their whoredoms that they were put away.

[1.] Their character in general was such as one would not expect of those who had been so much the favourites of Heaven. First, They were very wilful. Right or wrong they

would do as they had a mind. "They generally walk on in a way that is not good, not the right way, not a safe way, for they walk after their own thought, their own devices and desires." If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will were, but they would walk after their own thoughts, would do what they thought best. Secondly, They were very provoking. This was God's complaint of them all along--they grieved him, they vexed his Holy Spirit, as if they would contrive how to make him their enemy: They provoke me to anger continually to my face. They cared not what affront they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice; and this continually; it had been their way and manner ever since they were a people, witness the day of temptation in the wilderness.

[2.] The prophet speaks more particularly of their iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers, as the ground of God's casting them off, Isa 65:7. Now he gives instances of both.

First, The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was idolatry; this, the prophet tells them, was provoking God to his face; and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God often visits upon the children. This was the sin that brought them into captivity, and, though the captivity pretty well cured them of it, yet, when the final ruin of that nation came, that was again brought into the account against them; for in the day when God visits he will visit that, Ex 32:34. Perhaps there were many, long after the captivity, who, though they did not worship other gods, were yet guilty of the disorders here mentioned; for they married strange wives.

1. They forsook God's temple, and sacrificed in gardens or groves, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions.

2. They forsook God's altar, and burnt incense upon bricks, altars of their own contriving (they burnt incense according to their own inventions, which were of no more value, in comparison with God's institution, than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar which God appointed them to burn incense on), or upon tiles (so some read it), such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burnt incense to their idols, as appears, 2Ki 23:12, where we read of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, and Jer 19:13, of their burning incense to the host of heaven upon the roofs of their houses.

3. "They used necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and, in order to that, they remained among the graves, and lodged in the monuments," to seek for the living to the dead (Isa 8:19), as the witch of Endor. Or they used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres.

4. They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean before it was taken away by the gospel. They ate swine's flesh. Some indeed chose rather to die than to eat swine's flesh, as Eleazar and the seven brethren in the story of the Maccabees; but it is probable that many ate of it, especially when it came to be a condition of life. In our Saviour's time we read of a vast herd of swine among them, which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who made so little conscience of the law as to eat swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. And the broth, or pieces, of other forbidden meats, called here abominable things, was in their vessels, and was made use of for food. The forbidden meat is called an abomination, and those that meddle with it are said to make themselves abominable, Le

11:42,43. Those that durst not eat the meat yet made bold with the broth, because they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to show how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that abominable thing which the Lord hates; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But,

Secondly, The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees against which Christ denounced so many woes, Isa 65:5. They say, "Stand by thyself, keep off" (get thee to thine, so the original is); "keep to thy own companions, but come not near to me, lest thou pollute me; touch me not; I will not allow thee any familiarity with me, for I am holier than thou, and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican." This they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that, in saying, I am holier than thou, they thought themselves holier than any, not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. These are a smoke in my nose (says God), such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, which burns all the day, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves and contempt of others; for commonly those are most unholy of all that think themselves holier than any.

(2.) The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain: Behold, it is written before me, Isa 65:6. It is written, to be remembered against them in time to come; for they may not perhaps be immediately reckoned with. The sins of sinners, and particularly the vainglorious boasts and

scorns of hypocrites, are laid up in store with God, De 32:34. And what is written shall be read and proceeded upon: "I will not keep silence always, though I may keep silence long." They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. Those basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, who make their profession of it the matter of their pride, and the jealous God will reckon with them for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation.

[1.] The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them; not but that their own sin deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier; and this they owned, Ezr 9:13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them if he had not therein had an eye to the sins of their fathers. Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old-Testament martyrs, even that of Abel, Mt 23:35. God will reckon with them, not only for their fathers' idols, but for their high places, their burning incense upon the mountains and the hills, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or reproaching God; it was a reflection upon the choice he had made of the place where he would record his name, and the promise he had made that there he would meet them and bless them.

[2.] Their own with that shall bring ruin upon them: Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, the one aggravating the other, constitute the former work, which, though it may seem to be overlooked and forgotten, shall be measured into their bosom. God will render into the bosom, not only of his open enemies (Ps 79:12), but of his false and treacherous friends, the reproach wherewith they have reproached him.

5 which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

6 Behold, *it is* written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom,

7 your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

8 Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all.

This is expounded by St. Paul, Ro 11:1-5, where, when, upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, Hath God then cast away his people? he answers, No; for at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has told us that for the sake of these elect the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to such a degree that no flesh should be saved, Mt 24:22. Now,

I. This is illustrated here by a comparison, Isa 65:8. When a vine is so blasted and withered that there seems to be no sap nor life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up or cut it down, yet, if ever so little of the juice of the grape, fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposes, and says, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; there is life in the root, and hope that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake

of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honor, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others!

II. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved saving remnant. 1. They are such as serve God. It is for my servants' sake (Isa 65:8), and they are my servants that shall dwell there, Isa 65:9. God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country has; and those who serve him do therein serve their generation. 2. They are such as seek God, make it the end of their lives to glorify God and the business of their lives to call upon him. It is for my people that have sought me. Those that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder.

III. Here is an account of the mercy God has in store for them. The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as a seed out of Jacob, in whom the family is kept up and the entail preserved, and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel church by faith.

1. They shall have a good portion for themselves. They shall inherit my mountains, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built, or the mountains of Canaan, the land of promise, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible. God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safely to them through the vale of tears.

2. They shall have a green pasture for their flocks, Isa 65:10. Sharon and the valley of Achor shall again be as well replenished as ever they were with cattle. Sharon lay westward, near Joppa; Achor lay eastward, near Jordan. It is therefore intimated that they shall recover the possession of the whole land, that they shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it and there shall be none to disturb them nor make them afraid. Gospel-ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ shall go in and out and find pasture (Joh 10:9), and where they are made to lie down (Ps 23:2), as Israel's herds in the valley of Achor, Ho 2:15.

9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

10 And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

11 But ye *are* they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

Here the different states of the godly and wicked, of the Jews that believed and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over--against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in their idolatry after the deliverance out of Babylon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Observe,

1. What the doom is that is here threatened: "I will number you to the sword as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out; you shall all bow down to it," Isa 65:12. God's judgments come,

(1.) Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword that are numbered or

counted out to it, and none besides. Though the sword seems to devour promiscuously one as well as another, yet it is made to know its number and shall not exceed.

(2.) Irresistibly. The strongest and most stout-hearted sinners shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God and prospered.

2. What the sins are that number them to the sword.

(1.) Idolatry was the ancient sin (Isa 65:11): "You are those who, instead of seeking me and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord, disown him, and cast him off to embrace other gods, who forget my holy mountain (the privileges it confers and the obligations it lays you under) to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols (Isa 65:7), and have deserted the one only living and true God." They prepared a table for that troop of deities which the heathen worship and poured out drink-offerings to that numberless number of them; for those that thought one God too little never thought scores and hundreds sufficient, but were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities and their altars were as thick as heaps in the furrows of the field, Ho 12:11. Some take Gad and Meni, which we translate a troop and a number, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury. Whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; they would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

(2.) Infidelity was the sin of the later Jews (Isa 65:12): When I called, you did not answer, which refers to the same that Isa 65:2 did (I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people), and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called (he stood and cried, Joh 7:37),

but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced by his reasonings nor moved by his expostulations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness were slighted and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all: You did evil before my eyes, not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation: You did choose that wherein I delighted not; he means that which he utterly detested and abhorred. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin; it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him; it is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that, of choice, which we know will displease him.

12 Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow
down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer;
when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and
did choose *that* wherein I delighted not.
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat,
but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall
be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be
ashamed:
14 behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for
sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith.

1 The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woeful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the one over--against the other, that they may serve as a foil to each other, Isa 65:13-16.

(1.) God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace which made them so, when

they see how miserable some of their neighbours are for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See Isa 66:24.

(2.) It will add to the grief of those that perish to see the happiness of God's servants (whom they had hated, and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain), and especially to think that they might have shared in their bliss if it had not been their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous that he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom, Lu 16:23. See Lu 13:28. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eye-sore and vexation of heart to the wicked (Ps 112:10), and it will certainly be so in the great day. We fools counted his life madness and his end without honour; but now how is he numbered with the saints and his lot is among the chosen. Now,

2 The difference of their states lies in two things:--

(1.) In point of comfort and satisfaction.

[1.] God's servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon, continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast; they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread; it surfeits, but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction; but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment.

[2.] God's servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart. They have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them but they have an allay sufficient for it; and, as far as faith is in act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears.

But, on the other hand, those that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss wherewith they had flattered themselves are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then shall they cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit, perhaps in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness, and certainly in that world where the torment will be endless, easeless, and remediless--nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to eternity. Let these two be compared, Now he is comforted and thou art tormented, and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

(2.) In point of honour and reputation, Isa 65:15,16. The memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

[1.] The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving bad characters--Thou art as cruel as a Jew; and in imprecation--God make thee as miserable as a Jew. It shall be for a curse to God's chosen, that is, for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation, of perishing after the same example of unbelief. The curse of those whom God rejects should make his chosen stand in awe. The Lord God

shall slay thee; he shall quite extirpate the Jews and cut them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again.

[2.] The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing: He shall call his servants by another name. The children of the covenant shall no longer be called Jews, but Christians; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall bless themselves in the earth, all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations who shall all be dignified with this new name. They shall bless themselves in the God of truth.

First, They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths, in their addresses for his favour as their felicity and their appeals to his justice as their Judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must bless ourselves in him, that is, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence what we bless ourselves in, what we most please ourselves with and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods (Ps 49:18,Lu 12:19); but God's servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their crown of glory and diadem of beauty, their strength and portion. By him also they shall swear, and not by any creature or any false god. To his judgment they shall refer their cause, from whom every man's judgment doth proceed.

Secondly, They shall give honour to him as the God of truth, the God of the Amen (so the word is); some understand it of Christ who is himself the Amen, the faithful witness (Re 3:14), and in whom all the promises are yea and amen, 2Co 1:20. In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must

swear unto the Lord and covenant with him. He that is blessed in the earth (so some read it) shall be blessed in the true God, for Christ is the true God and eternal life, 1Jo 5:20. And it was promised of old that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, Ge 12:3. Some read it, He shall bless himself in the God of the faithful people, in God as the God of all believers, desiring no more than to share in the blessings wherewith they are blessed, to be dealt with as he deals with them.

Thirdly, They shall give him honour as the author of this blessed change which they have the experience of; they shall think themselves happy in having him for their God who has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts: Because they are hidden from God's eyes, that is, they are quite taken away; for, if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them; for God will no longer see them. He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the
Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name:
16 that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the
God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the
God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and
because they are hid from mine eyes.

New Heavens and a New Earth

17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the
former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

If these promises were in part fulfilled when the Jews, after their return out of captivity, were settled in peace in their own land and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to

have their full accomplishment in the gospel church, militant first and at length triumphant. The Jerusalem that is from above is free and is the mother of us all. In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that old things have passed away and all things have become new, and by it that those who are in Christ are new creatures, 2Co 5:17. It was a mighty and happy change that was described Isa 65:16, that the former troubles were forgotten; but here it rises much higher: even the former world shall be forgotten and shall no more come into mind.

Those that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comforts of it that all the comforts they were before acquainted with became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregoing joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will therefore have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other: For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is; it shall be all of a piece; with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too. The world is yours if you be Christ's, 1Co 3:22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before that it may well be called new heavens and a new earth, 2Pe 3:13. Behold, I make all things new, Re 21:5.

There shall be new joys. For,

1. All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice (Isa 65:18): You shall be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel are and shall be matter of everlasting joy to all

believers. My servants shall rejoice (Isa 65:13), at last they shall, though now they mourn. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

2 The church shall be the matter of their joy, so pleasant, so prosperous, shall her condition be: I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. The church shall not only rejoice but be rejoiced in. Those that have sorrowed with the church shall rejoice with her.

3. The prosperity of the church shall be a rejoicing to God himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants (Isa 65:19): I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself rejoice to do her good and rest in his love to her, Zep 3:17. What God rejoices in it becomes us to rejoice in.

4. There shall be no allay of this joy, nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church: The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her. If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means no more than that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquillity. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment, in respect both of the perfection and the perpetuity of the promised joy; there all tears shall be wiped away.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for,
behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.
19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice
of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.
20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that
hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old;
but the sinner *being* a hundred years old shall be accursed.

There shall be new life, Isa 65:20. Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be no more the voice of crying,

Isa 65:19. When there shall be no more death there shall be no more sorrow, Re 21:4. As death has reigned by sin, so life shall reign by righteousness, Ro 5:14,21.

1. Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be ever so short on earth. If an infant end its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely; for the shorter its life is the longer will its rest be. Though death reign over those that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, are not to be called infants of days, but even the child shall be reckoned to die a hundred years old, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children who in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipped in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old.

And, as for old men, it is promised that they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness, which they shall still bring forth in old age, to show that the Lord is upright, and then it is a good old age. An old man who is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have filled his days. Old men who have their hearts upon the world have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would still continue longer in it. But that man dies old, and satur dierum--full of days, who, with Simeon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace.

2. Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be ever so long. The sinner, though he live to a hundred years old, shall be accursed. His living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse. The sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprieve; nay, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath

and the more sins he will have to answer for. So that the matter is not great whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints or the lives of sinners.

21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them;* and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life. Whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies inhabited the houses which they built and ate the fruit of the trees which they planted, now it shall be otherwise; they shall build houses and inhabit them, shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them, Isa 65:21,22. Their intimates that the labour of their hands shall be blessed and be made to prosper; they shall gain what they aimed at, and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall embitter it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done:

My elect shall wear out, or long enjoy, the work of their hands; it is honestly got, and it will wear well; it is the work of their hands, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the bread of idleness, or bread of deceit. If we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace (Ec 3:13); and, if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised: As the days of a tree are the days of my people; as the days of an oak (Isa 6:13), whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves; though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages; as the days of the tree of life; so the LXX. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead to inherit and enjoy these blessings (Isa 65:23): They shall not labour in vain, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did, Ec 2:18,19. They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble; for they are themselves the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, the seed of the blessed of the Lord. They shall not bring forth for trouble; for,

1. God will make their children that rise up comforts to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them walk in the truth.

2. He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children. As they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, Blessed is the womb that bore not. In the gospel church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession. A seed shall serve him (Ps 22:30), the seed of the blessed of the Lord.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God (Isa 65:24): Even before they call, I will answer. God will anticipate their prayers with the blessings of his goodness. David did but say, I will confess, and God forgave, Ps 32:5. The father of the prodigal met him in his return. While they are yet speaking, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and

earnests of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our advocate with the Father and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours (Isa 65:25): The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power and tie the hands of their enemies as formerly, but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace.

When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples (and who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened as a wolf, Ge 49:27) joined himself to them and became one of them, then the wolf and the lamb fed together. So also when the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great Shepherd, Joh 10:16. The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with and injurious to one another as they had been, so that there was none either from without or from within to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, in all the holy mountain; as was promised, Isa 11:8. For,

1. Men shall be changed: The lion shall no more be a beast of prey, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but shall eat straw like the bullock, shall know his owner, and his master's crib, as the ox does. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest

labour, and to be content with such things as they have--when those that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good--then this is fulfilled, that the lion shall eat straw like the bullock.

2. Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; for dust shall be the serpent's meat again. That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has glutted and regaled himself with the precious blood of saints, who by his instigation have been persecuted, and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have become persecutors and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence, On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, Ge 3:14. All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust, Christ shall reign as Zion's King till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt nor destroy.

Isaiah-66

The Lord's Judgments and Zion's Future Hope

1 Thus saith the Lord, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?

Here, the temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, Isa 66:1,2 The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterwards in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans it soon recovered itself and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a

perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

1. That he did not need it. Heaven is the throne of his glory and government; there he sits, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, over-ruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, where then is the house they can build unto God, that can be the residence of his glory, or where is the place of his rest? What satisfaction can the Eternal Mind take in a house made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who faints not neither is weary, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion, he would not tell us (Ps 50:12), for all these things hath his hand made, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both.

All these things have been, have had their beginning, by the power of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. All these things are (so some read it); they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that our goodness extends not to him. If he required a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and, if he had made one, it would have continued to this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinance; so that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

2. That he would not heed it as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart. He has a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, and in pain to get it pardoned,

and who trembles at God's word, not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath. Such a heart is a living temple for God; he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

2 For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the Lord : but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

3 He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as if he offered* swine's blood; he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands. The sacrifice of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an abomination to the Lord (Pr 15:8); this is largely shown here, Isa 66:3,4. Observe,

1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice (Mal 1:8,13), and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God would have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached and in it notice given of the offering up of the great sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force and could make the comers thereunto perfect: this was an abomination. He that kills an ox for his own table is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, that thus kills it, for God's altar, is as if he slew a man; it is as great an offence to God as murder itself; he that does it does in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, treads under foot the blood of the covenant, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord, setting

up what Christ died to abolish. He that sacrifices a lamb, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put God off with any thing, he affronts him, instead of pleasing him; it is as if he cut off a dog's neck, a creature in the eye of the law so vile that, whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury, De 23:18. He that offers an oblation, a meat offering or drink-offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with swine's blood, a creature that must not be eaten nor touched, the broth of it was abominable (Isa 65:4), much more the blood of it. He that burns incense to God, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, is as if he blessed an idol; it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

2. What their wickedness was which made their sacrifices thus detestable. It was because they had chosen their own ways, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands did but their souls delighted in their abominations. They were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, Isa 1:11-15. Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness was that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice and all the offers of divine grace: When I called, none did answer, as before, Isa 65:12. And the same follows here that did there: They did evil before my eyes. Being deaf to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but chose that in which they knew he delighted not. How could those expect to please him in their devotions who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him?

3. The doom passed upon them for this. Theychose their own ways, therefore, says God, I also will choose their delusions. They have made their choice (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it), and now I will make mine; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions, or mockeries (so some); as they have mocked God and dishonoured him by their wickedness, so God will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or they shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will bring their fears upon them, that is, will bring upon them that which shall be a great terror to them, or that which they themselves have been afraid of and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable than to have their own fears brought upon them.

4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

5 Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against a hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that, when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not make the hearts of the righteous sad. Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te--Good Christian, this is nothing to thee. The prophet, having assured those that tremble at God's

word of a gracious look from him (Isa 66:2), here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by true humiliation for sin are prepared to receive them. There were those (Isa 66:4) who, when God spoke, would not hear; but, if some will not, others sill. If the heart tremble at the word, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors (Isa 66:5): Your brethren that hated you said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy. This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but nothing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the gospel among the Jews, to whose case it is very applicable. Observe,

1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted: Their brethren hated them. The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies and stirred up the Gentiles against them. The spouse complains (So 1:6) that her mother's children were angry with her. Pilate upbraided our Lord Jesus with this, Thy own nation have delivered thee unto me, Joh 18:35. Their brethren, who should have loved them and encouraged them for their work's sake hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated them as if they had been the greatest blemishes, when they were really the greatest blessings, of their church and nation.

This was a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. Those that hated Christ hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest (Joh 15:18), and they cast them out for his name's sake, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church censures to be misapplied, and for her

artillery, which was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of her governors. And those that did this said, Let the Lord be glorified; they pretended conscience and a zeal for the honour of God and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion.

Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, Joh 16:2. They shall put you out of their synagogues, and whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. In nomine Domini incipit omne malum--In the name of the Lord commences evil of every kind. Or we may understand it as spoken in defiance of God: "You say God will be glorified in your deliverance; let him be glorified then; let him make speed and hasten his work (Isa 5:19); let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bantering their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to shame the counsel of the poor, Ps 14:6.

2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions: "Let your faith and patience hold out yet a little while; your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you when no one else will or dare. His providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you; he shall appear for your joy and for the confusion of those that abuse you and trample on you; they shall be ashamed of their enmity to you." This was fulfilled when, upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the Jews' hearts failed them for fear; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh, Lu 21:26,28. Though God seem to hide himself, he will in due time show himself.

6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies.

Let them know that God's appearances for them will be such as will make a great noise in the world (Isa 66:6): There shall be a voice of noise from the city, from the temple. Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends, others the frightful lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for shelter. These voices do but echo to the voice of the Lord, who is now rendering a recompence to his enemies; and those that will not hear him speaking this terror shall hear them returning the alarms of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what a confused noise there was in the city and temple when Jerusalem, after a long siege, was at last taken by the Romans. Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the prodigies that went before that destruction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his History of the Wars of the Jews (4.388 and 6.311), that the temple-doors flew open suddenly of their own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion or shifting in the most holy place, and presently a voice, saying, Let us depart hence. And, some time after, one Jesus Bar-Annas went up and down the city, at the feast of tabernacles, continually crying, A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against all this people.

7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

Let them know that God will set up a church for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly replenished in a little time (Isa 66:7): Before she travailed she brought forth. This is to be applied in the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very easily and silently, without any pain or struggle, such as was when they were brought out of Egypt; that was done by might and power (De 4:34), but this by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zec 4:6. The man-child of the deliverance is rejoiced in, and yet the mother was never in labour for it; before her pain came she was delivered. This is altogether surprising, uncommon, and without precedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian

midwives told of the Hebrew women (Ex 1:19), that they were lively and were delivered ere the midwives came in unto them.

But shall the earth be made to bring forth her fruits in one day? No, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to renew the face of the earth and cover it with its products. Some read this to the same purport with the next clause, Shall a land be brought forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once? Is it to be imagined that a woman at one birth should bring children sufficient to people a country and that they should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; something like this was done in the creation; but God has since rested from all such works, and leaves second causes to produce their effects gradually. Nihil facit per saltum--He does nothing abruptly. Yet, in this case, as soon as Zion travailed she brought forth. Cyrus's proclamation was no sooner issued out than the captives were formed into a body and were ready to make the best of their way to their own land.

And the reason is given (Isa 66:9), because it is the Lord's doing; he undertakes it whose work is perfect. If he bring to the birth in preparing his people for deliverance, he will cause to bring forth in the accomplishment of the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and ready for their release, and the number of their months is accomplished, so that the children are brought to the birth, shall not I then give strength to bring forth, but leave mother and babe to perish together in the most miserable case? How will this agree with the divine pity? Shall I begin a work and not go through with it? How will that agree with the divine power and perfection? Am I he that causes to bring forth (so the following clause may be read) and shall I restrain her? Does God cause mankind, and all the species of living creatures, to propagate, and replenish the earth, and will he restrain Zion? Will he not make her fruitful in a blessed offspring to replenish the church?

Or, Am I he that begat, and should I restrain from bringing forth? Did God beget the deliverance in his purpose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in the accomplishment and performance of it? But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that family with children which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time and with little pains compared with the vast product. The apostles, even before they travailed, brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb, Ps 110:3. The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of the ends of the earth. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out there were 3000 souls added to the church. And, when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined, so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? *or* shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb?* saith thy God.

10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

Let them know that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, Isa 66:10,11. Observe,

1. How the church's friends are described; they are such as love her, and mourn with her and for her. Note, All that love God love Jerusalem; they love the church of God, and lay its

interest very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and heartily espouse its cause. And those that have a sincere affection for the church have a cordial sympathy with her in all the cares and sorrows of her militant state. They mourn for her; all her grievances are their griefs; if Jerusalem be in distress, their harps are hung on the willow-trees.

2. How they are encouraged: Rejoice with her, and again and again I say, Rejoice. This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice; the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she has been afflicted. It is the will of God that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in those blessings that will be the matter of her joy. If we suffer with Christ and sorrow with his church, we shall reign with him and rejoice with her. We are here called,

(1.) To bear our part in the church's praises: "Come, rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her, rejoice greatly, rejoice and know why you rejoice, rejoice on the days appointed for public thanksgiving. You that mourned for her in her sorrows cannot but from the same principle rejoice with her in her joys."

(2.) To take our part in the church's comforts. We must suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolation. The word of God, the covenant of grace (especially the promises of that covenant), the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him and conversing with him, are the breasts, which the church calls and counts the breasts of her consolations, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn. With her therefore we must suck from these breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn hence we must be satisfied, and not be dissatisfied though we have ever so little of earthly comforts. It is the glory of the church that she has

the Lord for her God, that to her pertain the adoption and the service of God; and with the abundance of this glory we must be delighted. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God and communion with him than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church must be our glory and joy, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

11 that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

12 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon *her* sides, and be dandled upon *her* knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice will give them cause to do so and hearts to do so, Isa 66:12-14.

1. He will give them cause to do so. For,

(1.) They shall enjoy a long uninterrupted course of prosperity: I will extend, or am extending, peace to her (that is, all good to her) like a river that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up in the ocean. The gospel brings with it, wherever it is received in its power, such peace as this, which shall go on like a river, supplying souls with all good and making them fruitful, as a river does the lands it passes through, such a river of peace as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop nor drive back nor its sand rack up, such a river of peace as will carry us to the ocean of boundless and endless bliss.

(2.) There shall be large and advantageous additions made to them: The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing stream. Gentiles converts shall come pouring into the

church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall bring their glory with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest, shall all be devoted to the service of God and employed for the good of the church: "Then shall you suck from the breasts of her consolations. When you see such crowding for a share in those comforts you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share, not for fear of having the less for others coming in to partake of Christ" (there is no danger of that; he has enough for all and enough for each), "but their zeal shall provoke you to a holy jealousy." It is well when it does so, Ro 11:14,2Co 9:2.

(3.) God shall be glorified in all, and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else (Isa 66:14): The hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, the protecting supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness; the benefit which his servants have by both these shall be known to his glory as well as theirs. And, to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known his indignation towards his enemies. God's mercy and justice shall both be manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but will speak comfort to them, will speak it to their hearts; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of all the sons of Zion.

(1.) Their country shall be their tender nurse: You shall be carried on her sides, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be dangled upon her knees, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church must be treated thus affectionately. The great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom, and so must the under-shepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites.

(2.) God will himself be their powerful comforter: As one whom his mother comforts, when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, so will I comfort you; not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father uses, but with the tender affections and compassions of a loving mother, that bemoans her afflicted child when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy, or endeavours to pacify it after she has chidden it and fallen out with it (Jer 31:20): Since I spoke against him, my bowels are troubled for him; he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. Thus the mother comforts. Thus you shall be comforted in Jerusalem, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with.

(3.) They shall feel the blessed effects of this comfort in their own souls (Isa 66:13): When you see this, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but your hearts shall rejoice. This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry. Christ, with an eye to that, tells them (Joh 16:22), Your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you. Then your bones, that were dried and withered (the marrow of them quite exhausted), shall recover a youthful strength and vigour and shall flourish like a herb. Divine comforts reach the inward man; they are marrow and moistening to the bones, Pr 3:8. The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts. The joy of the Lord will be your strength, Ne 8:10.

14 And when ye see *this*, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall
flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Lord shall be known
toward his servants, and *his* indignation toward his enemies.
15 For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like
a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with
flames of fire.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful loyal subjects. Probably they refer to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt, and with them God here threatens to proceed in his controversy; they hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity (Jer 24:9); others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble sanctified to them, should in due time get well through it and see many a good day after it. Many of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation; but doubtless the prophecy looks further, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world, and to the distinction which his word in both makes between the precious and the vile.

Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it out against him. Sometimes he will appear in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off by fire and by his sword. The ruin was very extensive; the Lord then pleaded with all flesh; and, it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called his slain, sacrificed to his justice, and they shall be many. In the great day the wrath of God will be his fire and sword, with which he will cut off and consume all the impenitent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper than any two-edged sword. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, Isa 66:17.

Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned, had their idols in their gardens (not daring to set them up publicly in the high places) and there purified themselves (as the worshippers of the true God used to do) when they went about their idolatrous rites, one after another, or, as we read it, behind one tree in the midst, behind Ahad or

Ehad, some idol that they worshipped by that name and in honour of which they ate swine's flesh (which was expressly forbidden by the law of God), and other abominations, as the mouse, or some other like animal. But the prophecy may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God and are devoted to the world and the flesh: They shall be consumed together. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all idolaters, and whosoever worketh abomination, Re 21:27,22:15. In the day of vengeance secret wickedness will be brought to light and brought to the account; for (Isa 66:18), I know their works and their thoughts. God knows both what men do and from what principle and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can judge the secrets of men, Ro 2:16.

16 For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many.

17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one *tree* in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.

18 For I *know* their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will gather all nations and tongues to himself, that they may come and see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, Isa 66:18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be discipled and the gift of tongues was bestowed in order thereunto. The church had hitherto been confined to one nation and in one tongue only God was worshipped; but in the days of the Messiah the partition-wall should be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God should be brought acquainted with him and should see his

glory in the gospel, as the Jews had seen it in the sanctuary. As to this, it is here promised,

1. That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished form the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a gathering ensign among them, to which the Gentiles shall seek (as is promised, Isa 11:12), but there shall be those among them on whom I will set a differencing sign; for so the word signifies. Though they are a corrupt degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, Eze 9:4. The servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads, Re 7:3. The Lord knows those that are his. Christ's sheep are marked.

2. That those who are themselves distinguished thus by the grace of God shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace. Those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief shall be sent to the nations to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger.

(1.) They shall be sent to the nations, several of which are here named, Tarshish, and Pul, and Lud, &c. It is uncertain, nor are interpreters agreed, what countries are here intended. Tarshish signifies in general the sea, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia. Pul is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria; perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name. Lud is supposed to be Lydia, a warlike nation, famed for archers: the Lydians are said to handle and bend the bow, Jer 46:9. Tubal, some think, is Italy

or Spain; and Javan most agree to be Greece, the Iones; and the isles of the Gentiles, that were peopled by the posterity of Japhet (Ge 10:5), probably are here meant by the isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory. In Judah only was God known, and there only his name was great for many ages. Other countries sat in darkness, heard no the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is a pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name and see his glory. In consideration of this,

(2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to declare his glory among the Gentiles. The Jews that shall be dispersed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances. Some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreating him to take notice of them, to admit them into his company, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready, "for we will go with you, having heard that God is with you," Zec 8:23. Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and early preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, Mk 16:20.

3. That many converts shall hereby be made, Isa 66:20.

(1.) They shall bring all your brethren (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) for an offering unto the Lord. God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but they shall be both invited and directed to join themselves to the Lord. Those that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation that thereupon there shall be as great flocking

to Jerusalem as used to be at the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and not to appear empty. Observe,

[1.] The conveniences that they shall be furnished with for their coming. Some shall come upon horses, because they came from far and the journey was too long to travel on foot, as the Jews usually did to their feasts. Persons of quality shall come in chariots, and the aged, and sickly, and little children, shall be brought in litters or covered wagons, and the young men on mules and swift beasts. This intimates their zeal and forwardness to come. They shall spare no trouble nor charge to get to Jerusalem. Those that cannot ride on horseback shall come in litters; and in such haste shall they be, and so impatient of delay, that those that can shall ride upon mules and swift beasts. These expressions are figurative, and these various means of conveyance are heaped up to intimate (says the learned Mr. Gataker) the abundant provision of all those gracious helps requisite for the bringing of God's elect home to Christ. All shall be welcome, and nothing shall be wanting for their assistance and encouragement.

[2.] The character under which they shall be brought. They shall come, not as formerly they used to come to Jerusalem, to be offerers, but to be themselves an offering unto the Lord, which must be understood spiritually, of their being presented to God as living sacrifices, Ro 12:1 The apostle explains this, and perhaps refers to it, Ro 15:16, where he speaks of his ministering the gospel to the Gentiles, that the offering up, or sacrificing, of the Gentiles might be acceptable. They shall offer themselves, and those who are the instruments of their conversion shall offer them, as the spoils which they have taken for Christ and which are devoted to his service and honour. They shall be brought as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel, with great care that they be holy, purified from sin, and sanctified to God.

It is said of the converted Gentiles (Ac 15:9) that their hearts were purified by faith. Whatever was brought to God was brought in a clean vessel, a vessel appropriated to religious uses. God will be served and honoured in the way that he has appointed, in the ordinances of his own institution, which are the proper vehicles for these spiritual offerings. When the soul is offered up to God the body must be a clean vessel for it, possessed in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness (1Th 4:4,5); and converts to Christ are not only purged from an evil conscience, but have their bodies also washed with pure water, Heb 10:22. Now,

(2.) This may refer,

[1.] To the Jews, devout men, and proselytes out of every nation under heaven, that flocked together to Jerusalem, expecting the kingdom of the Messiah to appear, Ac 2:5,6,10. They came from all parts to the holy mountain of Jerusalem, as an offering to the Lord, and there many of them were brought to the faith of Christ by the gift of tongues poured out on the apostles. Methinks there is some correspondence between that history and this prophecy. The eunuch some time after came to worship at Jerusalem in his chariot and took home with him the knowledge of Christ and his holy religion.

[2.] To the Gentiles, some of all nations, that should be converted to Christ, and so added to his church, which, though a spiritual accession, is often in prophecy represented by a local motion. The apostle says of all true Christians that they have come to Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22), which explains this passage, and shows that the meaning of all this parade is only that they shall be brought into the church by the grace of God, and in the use of the means of that grace, as carefully, safely, and comfortably, as if they were carried in chariots and litters. Thus God shall persuade Japhet and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, Ge 9:27.

4. That a gospel ministry shall be set up in the church, it being thus enlarged by the addition of such a multitude of members to it (Isa 66:21): I will take of them (of the proselytes, of the Gentile converts) for priests and for Levites, to minister in holy things and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline. Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews and were all of one tribe; but in gospel times God will take of the converted Gentiles to minister to him in holy things, to teach the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord, to be the stewards of the mysteries of God as the priests and Levites were under the law, to be pastors and teachers (or bishops), to give themselves to the word and prayer, and deacons to serve tables, and, as the Levites, to take care of the outward business of the house of God, Php 1:1,Ac 6:2-4.

The apostles were all Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews; but, when churches were planted among the Gentiles, they had ministers settled who were of themselves, elders in every church (Ac 14:23,Tit 1:5), which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar, and, if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable; gospel grace, it might be hoped, would cure people of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God says, I will take, not all of them, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but of them, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for and inclining them to the service, as well as to make ministers by giving them their commission. I will take them, that is, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church that God raised up of their sons for prophets and their young men for Nazarites, Am 2:11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, Isa 66:22. The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah is here described to be,

(1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new world, the new heavens and the new earth promised before, Isa 65:17. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new (2Co 5:17), the old covenant of peculiarity is set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, Heb 8:13. We are now to serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, Ro 7:6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and a new earth that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and new earth designed at the end of time, 2Pe 3:13.

(2.) A change of God's own making; he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds.

(3.) It will be an abiding lasting change, a change never to be changed, a new world that will be always new, and never wax old, as that does which is ready to vanish away: It shall remain before me unalterable; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and privileges of it are things that cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain, Heb 12:27,28. It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection.

(4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ: Your seed, and in them your name, shall remain--a seed of ministers,

a seed of Christians; as one generation of both passes away, another generation shall come; and thus the name of Christ, with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not prevail, nor wear out the saints of the Most High.

6. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, Isa 66:23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple service should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore only Jews went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God, in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name, and, though but two or three come together, he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon and every sabbath, not, as formerly, at the three annual feasts only.

There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and now that the church is so far extended it is impossible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit that there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly and frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other by faith, hope, and holy love. The new moons and the sabbaths are mentioned because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the

new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the schools of the prophets first and afterwards in the synagogues (2Ki 4:23,Am 8:5,Ac 15:21), according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be formed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both are duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See, here,

(1.) That God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies, and that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies: All flesh must come; though flesh, weak, corrupt, and sinful, let them come that the flesh may be mortified.

(2.) In worshipping God we present ourselves before him, and are in a special manner in his presence.

(3.) For doing this there ought to be stated times, and are so; and we must see that it is our interest as well as our duty constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.

7. That their thankful sense of God's distinguishing favour to them should be very much increased by the consideration of the fearful doom and destruction of those that persist and perish in their infidelity and impiety, Isa 66:24. Those that have been worshipping the Lord of hosts, and rejoicing before him in the goodness of his house, shall, in order to affect themselves the more with their own happiness, take a view of the misery of the wicked. Observe,

(1.) Who they are whose misery is here described. They are men that have transgressed against God, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ.

(2.) What their misery is. It is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the carcases of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of worms crawling about them and feeding on them; and, if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the fire would never be quenched; so that they are an abhorring to all flesh, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, besides what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shows us, Ro 11:8, &c. They became dead in sins, twice dead.

The church of the Jews was a carcase of a church; all its members were putrid carcases; their worm died not, their own consciences made them continually uneasy, and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, an abhorring to all flesh. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched (Mk 9:44); for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal, and God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal.

(3.) What notice shall be taken of it. Those that worship God shall go forth and look upon them, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned to see others in the kingdom of heaven and themselves thrust out (Lu 13:28), so it will illustrate the joys

and glories of the blessed to see what becomes of those that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.

19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

20 And they shall bring all your brethren *for* an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.

21 And I will also take of them for priests *and* for Levites, saith the Lord.

22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.

23 And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.

24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

[Jeremiah]

Jeremiah-1

Jeremiah's Call and Commission

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin:

We have here as much as it was thought fit we should know of the genealogy of this prophet and the chronology of this prophecy.

1. We are told what family the prophet was of. He was the son of Hilkiah, not that Hilkiah, it is supposed, who was high priest in Josiah's time (for then he would have been called so, and not, as here, one of the priests that were in Anathoth), but another of the same name. Jeremiah signifies one raised up by the Lord. It is said of Christ that he is a prophet whom the Lord our God raised up unto us, De 18:15. He was of the priests, and, as a priest, was authorized and appointed to teach the people; but to that authority and appointment God added the extraordinary commission of a prophet. Ezekiel also was a priest. Thus God would support the honour of the priesthood at a time when, by their sins and God's judgments upon them, it was sadly eclipsed. He was of the priests in Anathoth, a city of priests, which lay about three miles from Jerusalem. Abiathar had his country house there, 1Ki 2:26. 2. We have the general date of his prophecies, the knowledge of which is requisite to the understanding of them.

(1.) He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, Jer 1:2. Josiah, in the twelfth year of his reign, began a work of reformation, applied himself with all sincerity to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, 2Ch 34:3. And very seasonably then was this young prophet raised up to assist and encourage the young king in that

good work. Then the word of the Lord came to him, not only a charge and commission to him to prophesy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be countenanced and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates, in any good work of reformation, to be advised and animated, and to have a great deal of their work done for them, by such faithful zealous ministers as Jeremiah was. Now, one would have expected when these two joined forces, such a prince, and such a prophet (as in a like case, Ezr 5:1,2), and both young, such a complete reformation would be brought about and settled as would prevent the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise.

In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there were a great many of the relics of idolatry that were not purged out; for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretel the destroying judgments that were coming upon them; for there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation. Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed.

(2.) He continued to prophesy through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, each of whom reigned eleven years. He prophesied to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive (Jer 1:3), that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophesy after that, Jer 40:1. But the computation here is made to end with that because it was the accomplishment of many of his predictions; and from the thirteenth of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes that as Moses was so long with the people, a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land, Jeremiah was so long in their own land a teacher, before they went into the wilderness of the heathen: and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years of the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel bore forty days, a day for a year, because during all that time they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency. God, in this prophet, suffered

their manners, their ill manners, forty years, and at length swore in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

4 Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Here is, Jeremiah's early designation to the work and office of a prophet, which God gives him notice of as a reason for his early application to that business (Jer 1:4,5): The word of the Lord came to him, with a satisfying assurance to himself that it was the word of the Lord and not a delusion; and God told him,

1. That he had ordained him a prophet to the nations, or against the nations, the nation of the Jews in the first place, who are now reckoned among the nations because they had learned their works and mingled with them in their idolatries, for otherwise they would not have been numbered with them, Nu 23:9. Yet he was given to be a prophet, not to the Jews only, but to the neighbouring nations, to whom he was to send yokes (Jer 27:2,3) and whom he must make to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger, Jer 25:17. He is still in his writings a prophet to the nations (to our nation among the rest), to tell them what the national judgments are which may be expected for national sins. It would be well for the nations would they take Jeremiah for their prophet and attend to the warnings he gives them.

2. That before he was born, even in his eternal counsel, he had designed him to be so. Let him know that he who gave him his commission is the same that gave him his being, that formed him in the belly and brought him forth out of the womb, that therefore he was his rightful owner and might employ him and make use of him as he pleased, and that this commission was given him in pursuance of the purpose God had purposed in himself concerning him, before he was born: "I knew thee, and I

sanctified thee," that is, "I determined that thou shouldst be a prophet and set thee apart for the office." Thus St. Paul says of himself that God had separated him from his mother's womb to be a Christian and an apostle, Ga 1:15. Observe,

(1.) The great Creator knows what use to make of every man before he makes him. He has made all for himself, and of the same lumps of clay designs a vessel of honour or dishonour, as he pleases, Ro 9:21.

(2.) What God has designed men for he will call them to; for his purposes cannot be frustrated. Known unto God are all his own works beforehand, and his knowledge is infallible and his purpose unchangeable.

(3.) There is a particular purpose and providence of God conversant about his prophets and ministers; they are by special counsel designed for their work, and what they are designed for they are fitted for: I that knew thee, sanctified thee. God destines them to it, and forms them for it, when he first forms the spirit of man within him. Propheta nascitur, non fit--Original endowment, not education, makes a prophet.

6 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child.

His modestly declining this honourable employment, Jer 1:6. Though God had predestinated him to it, yet it was news to him, and a mighty surprise, to hear that he should be a prophet to the nations. We know not what God intends us for, but he knows. One would have thought he would catch at it as a piece of preferment, for so it was; but he objects against it, as a work for which he is unqualified: "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak to great men and multitudes, as prophets must; I cannot speak finely nor fluently, cannot word things well, as a message from God should be worded; I cannot speak with any authority, nor can expect to be heeded, for I am a child and my youth will be despised." Note, It becomes us, when we have any service to do for God, to be afraid lest we mismanage it, and lest it suffer through our weakness and unfitness for it; it becomes us likewise to have low thoughts of ourselves and to be diffident of our own sufficiency. Those that are young should consider that they are

so, should be afraid, as Elihu was, and not venture beyond their length.

7 But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

The assurance God graciously gave him that he would stand by him and carry him on in his work.

1. Let him not object that he is a child; he shall be a prophet for all that (Jer 1:7): "Say no any more, I am a child. It is true thou art; but,"

(1.) "Thou hast God's precept, and let not thy being young hinder thee from obeying it. Go to all to whom I shall send thee and speak whatsoever I command thee." Note, Though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work, yet it should not make us draw back from it when God calls us to it. God was angry with Moses even for his modest excuses, Ex 4:14.

(2.) "Thou hast God's presence, and let not thy being young discourage thee from depending upon it. Though thou art a child, thou shalt be enabled to go to all to whom I shall send thee, though they are ever so great and ever so many. And whatsoever I command thee thou shalt have judgment, memory, and language, wherewith to speak it as it should be spoken." Samuel delivered a message from God to Eli, when he was a little child. Note, God can, when he pleases, make children prophets, and ordain strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

2. Let him not object that he shall meet with many enemies and much opposition; God will be his protector (Jer 1:8): "Be not afraid of their races; though they look big, and so think to outface thee and put thee out of countenance, yet be not afraid to speak to them; no, not to speak that to them which is most unpleasing. Thou speakest in the name of the King of kings, and

by authority from him, and with that thou mayest face them down. Though they look angry, be not afraid of their displeasure nor disturbed with apprehensions of the consequences of it." Those that have messages to deliver from God must not be afraid of the face of man, Eze 3:9. "And thou hast cause both to be bold and easy; for I am with thee, not only to assist thee in thy work, but to deliver thee out of the hands of the persecutors; and, if God be for thee, who can be against thee?" If God do not deliver his ministers from trouble, it is to the same effect if he support them under their trouble. Mr. Gataker well observes here, That earthly princes are not wont to go along with their ambassadors; but God goes along with those whom he sends, and is, by his powerful protection, at all times and in all places present with them; and with this they ought to animate themselves, Ac 18:10.

3. Let him not object that he cannot speak as becomes him--God will enable him to speak.

(1.) To speak intelligently, and as one that had acquaintance with God, Jer 1:9. He having now a vision of the divine glory, the Lord put forth his hand, and by a sensible sign conferred upon him so much of the gift of the tongue as was necessary for him: He touched his mouth, and with that touch opened his lips, that his mouth should show forth God's praise, with that touch sweetly conveyed his words into his mouth, to be ready to him upon all occasions, so that he could never want words who was thus furnished by him that made man's mouth. God not only put knowledge into his head, but words into his mouth; for there are words which the Holy Ghost teaches, 1Co 2:13. It is fit God's message should be delivered in his own words, that it may be delivered accurately. Eze 3:4, Speak with my words. And those that faithfully do so shall not want instructions as the case requires; God will give them a mouth and wisdom in that same hour, Mt 10:19.

(2.) To speak powerfully, and as one that had authority from God, Jer 1:10. It is a strange commission that is here given him: See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms. This sounds very great, and yet Jeremiah is a poor

despicable priest still; he is not set over the kingdoms as a prince to rule them by the sword, but as a prophet by the power of the word of God. Those that would hence prove the pope's supremacy over kings, and his authority to depose them and dispose of their kingdoms at his pleasure, must prove that he has the same extraordinary spirit of prophecy that Jeremiah had, else how can be have the power that Jeremiah had by virtue of that spirit? And yet the power that Jeremiah had (who, notwithstanding his power, lived in meanness and contempt, and under oppression) would not content these proud men. Jeremiah was set over the nations, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations, some great ones besides, against whom he prophesied; he was set over them, not to demand tribute from them nor to enrich himself with their spoils, but to root out, and pull down, and destroy, and yet withal to build and plant.

[1.] He must attempt to reform the nations, to root out, and pull down, and destroy idolatry and other wickednesses among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to throw down the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be planted and built among them. And, to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that that which is evil be removed.

[2.] He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them according as they were, or were not, reformed. He must set before them life and death, good and evil, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, Jer 18:9-10. He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness that they should be rooted out and destroyed, and those who repented that they should be built and planted. He was authorized to read the doom of nations, and God would ratify it and fulfil it (Isa 44:26), would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed partly to show how sure the word of prophecy is--it will as certainly be accomplished as if it were done already, and partly to put an honour upon the prophetic office and make it look truly great, that others may not despise the prophets nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourable does the gospel ministry look, in that declarative power Christ gave his

apostles to remit and retain sin (Joh 20:23), to bind and loose, Mt 18:18.

9 Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And
the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.
10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms,
to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down,
to build, and to plant.
11 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what
seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.
12 Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten
my word to perform it.

Here, I. God gives Jeremiah, in vision, a view of the principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretel the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their sins, especially their idolatry. This was at first represented to him in away proper to make an impression upon him, that he might have it upon his heart in all his dealings with this people.

1. He intimates to him that the people were ripening apace for ruin and that ruin was hastening apace towards them. God, having answered his objection, that he was a child, goes on to initiate him in the prophetical learning and language; and, having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God says to him; for prophets must have eyes in their heads as well as tongues, must be seers as well as speakers. He therefore asks him, "Jeremiah, what seest thou? Look about thee, and observe now." And he was soon aware of what was presented to him: "I see a rod, denoting affliction and chastisement, a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is a rod of an almond-tree, which is one of the forwardest trees in the spring, is in the bud and blossom quickly, when other trees are scarcely broken out;" it flourishes, says Pliny, in the month of January, and by March has ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew, Shakedh, the hasty tree.

Whether this rod that Jeremiah saw had already budded, as some think, or whether it was stripped and dry, as others think, and yet Jeremiah knew it to be of an almond-tree, as Aaron's rod was, is uncertain; but God explained it in the next words (Jer

1:12): Thou hast well seen. God commended him that he was so observant, and so quick of apprehension, as to be aware, though it was the first vision he ever saw, that it was a rod of an almond-tree, that his mind was so composed as to be able to distinguish. Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that see well shall be commended, and not those only that speak well. "Thou hast seen a hasty tree, which signifies that I will hasten my word to perform it." Jeremiah shall prophesy that which he himself shall live to see accomplished. We have the explication of this, Eze 7:10,11, "The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded, violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness. The measure of Jerusalem's iniquity fills very fast; and, as if their destruction slumbered too long, they waken it, they hasten it, and I will hasten to perform what I have spoken against them."

2. He intimates to him whence the intended ruin should arise. Jeremiah is a second time asked: What seest thou? and he sees a seething-pot upon the fire (Jer 1:13), representing Jerusalem and Judah in great commotion, like boiling water, by reason of the descent which the Chaldean army made upon them; made like a fiery oven (Ps 21:9), all in a heat, wasting away as boiling water does and sensibly evaporating and growing less and less, ready to boil over, to be thrown out of their own city and land, as out of the pan into the fire, from bad to worse.

Some think that those scoffers referred to this who said (Eze 11:3), This city is the cauldron, and we are the flesh. Now the mouth or face of the furnace or hearth, over which this pot boiled, was towards the north, for thence the fire and the fuel were to come that must make the pot boil thus. So the vision is explained (Jer 1:14): Out of the north an evil shall break forth, or shall be opened. It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long deserved by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the divine patience had restrained it, and held it in, as it were; the enemies had intended it, and God had checked them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and the evil shall break forth; the direful scene shall open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood. It shall be a universal calamity; it shall come upon all the inhabitants of the land, from the highest to the lowest, for they have all corrupted their way. Look for this storm to arise

out of the north, whence fair weather usually comes, Job 37:22. When there was friendship between Hezekiah and the king of Babylon they promised themselves many advantages out of the north; but it proved quite otherwise: out of the north their trouble arose. Thence sometimes the fiercest tempests come whence we expected fair weather. This is further explained Jer 1:15, where we may observe,

(1.) The raising of the army that shall invade Judah and lay it waste: I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord. All the northern crowns shall unite under Nebuchadnezzar, and join with him in this expedition. They lie dispersed, but God, who has all men's hearts in his hand, will bring them together; they lie at a distance from Judah, but God, who directs all men's steps, will call them, and they shall come, though they be ever so far off. God's summons shall be obeyed; those whom he calls shall come. When he has work to do of any kind he will find instruments to do it, though he send to the utmost parts of the earth for them. And, that the armies brought into the field may be sufficiently numerous and strong, he will call not only the kingdoms of the north, but all the families of those kingdoms, into the service; not one able-bodied man shall be left behind.

(2.) The advance of this army. The commanders of the troops of the several nations shall take their post in carrying on the siege of Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah. They shall set every one his throne, or seat. When a city is besieged we say, The enemy sits down before it. They shall encamp some at the entering of the gates, others against the walls round about, to cut off both the going out of the mouths and the coming in of the meat, and so to starve them.

3. He tells him plainly what was the procuring cause of all these judgments; it was the sin of Jerusalem and of the cities of Judah (Jer 1:16): I will pass sentence upon them (so it may be read) or give judgment against them (this sentence, this judgment) because of all their wickedness; it is this that plucks up the flood-gates and lets in this inundation of calamities. They have forsaken God and revolted from their allegiance to him, and

have burnt incense to other gods, new gods, strange gods, and all false gods, pretenders, usurpers, the creatures of their own fancy, and they have worshipped the works of their own hands. Jeremiah was young, had looked but little abroad into the world, and perhaps did not know, nor could have believed, what abominable idolatries the children of his people were guilty of; but God tells him, that he might know what to level his reproofs against and what to ground his threatenings upon, and that he might himself be satisfied in the equity of the sentence which in God's name he was to pass upon them.

13 And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof *is* toward the north.

14 Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

15 For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord ; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

16 And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.

God excites and encourages Jeremiah to apply himself with all diligence and seriousness to his business. A great trust is committed to him. He is sent in God's name as a herald at arms, to proclaim war against his rebellious subjects; for God is pleased to give warning of his judgments beforehand, that sinners may be awakened to meet him by repentance, and so turn away his wrath, and that, if they do not, they may be left inexcusable. With this trust Jeremiah has a charge given him (Jer 1:17): "Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins; free thyself from all those things that would unfit thee for or hinder thee in this service; buckle to it with readiness and resolution, and be not entangled with doubts about it." He must be quick: Arise, and lose no time. He must be busy: Arise, and speak unto them in season, out of season. He must be bold: Be not dismayed at their

faces, as before, Jer 1:8. In a word, he must be faithful; it is required of ambassadors that they be so.

1. In two things he must be faithful:--

(1.) He must speak all that he is charged with: Speak all that I command thee. He must forget nothing as minute, or foreign, or not worth mentioning; every word of God is weighty. He must conceal nothing for fear of offending; he must alter nothing under pretence of making it more fashionable or more palatable, but, without addition or diminution, declare the whole counsel of God.

(2.) He must speak to all that he is charged against; he must not whisper it in a corner to a few particular friends that will take it well, but he must appear against the kings of Judah, if they be wicked kings, and bear his testimony against the sins even of the princes thereof; for the greatest of men are not exempt from the judgments either of God's hand or of his mouth. Nay, he must not spare the priests thereof; though he himself was a priest, and was concerned to maintain the dignity of his order, yet he must not therefore flatter them in their sins. He must appear against the people of the land, though they were his own people, as far as they were against the Lord.

2. Two reasons are here given why he should do thus:--

(1.) Because he had reason to fear the wrath of God if he should be false: "Be not dismayed at their faces, so as to desert thy office, or shrink from the duty of it, lest I confound and dismay thee before them, lest I give thee up to thy faintheartedness." Those that consult their own credit, ease, and safety, more than their work and duty, are justly left of God to themselves, and to bring upon themselves the shame of their own cowardliness. Nay, lest I reckon with thee for thy faintheartedness, and break thee to pieces; so some read it. Therefore this prophet says (Jer 17:17), Lord, be not thou a terror to me.

Note, The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of man. Let us always be afraid of offending God, who after he has

killed has power to cast into hell, and then we shall be in little danger of fearing the faces of men that can but kill the body, Lu 12:4,5. See Ne 4:14. It is better to have all the men in the world our enemies than God our enemy.

(2.) Because he had no reason to fear the wrath of men if he were faithful; for the God whom he served would protect him, and bear him out, so that they should neither sink his spirits nor drive him off from his work, should neither stop his mouth nor take away his life, till he had finished his testimony, Jer 1:18. This young stripling of a prophet is made by the power of God as an impregnable city, fortified with iron pillars and surrounded with walls of brass; he sallies out upon the enemy in reproofs and threatenings, and keeps them in awe.

They set upon him on every side; the kings and princes batter him with their power, the priests thunder against him with their church-censures, and the people of the land shoot their arrows at him, even slanderous and bitter words; but he shall keep his ground and make his part good with them; he shall still be a curb upon them (Jer 1:19): They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail to destroy thee, for I am with thee to deliver thee out of their hands; nor shall they prevail to defeat the word that God sends them by Jeremiah, nor to deliver themselves; it shall take hold of them, for God is against them to destroy them. Note, Those who are sure that they have God with them (as he is if they be with him) need not, ought not, to be afraid, whoever is against them.

18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defensed city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

19 And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I *am* with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee

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Jeremiah-2

The Lord Pleads with Backsliding Israel

I Here is, a command given to Jeremiah to go and carry a message from God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was charged in general (Jer 1:17) to go and speak to them; here he is particularly charged to go and speak this to them. Note, It is good for ministers by faith and prayer to take out a fresh commission when they address themselves solemnly to any part of their work. Let a minister carefully compare what he has to deliver with the word of God, and see that it agrees with it, that he may be able to say, not only, The Lord sent me, but, He sent me to speak this. He must go from Anathoth, where he lived in a pleasant retirement, spending his time (it is likely) among a few friends and in the study of the law, and must make his appearance at Jerusalem, that noisy tumultuous city, and cry in their ears, as a man in earnest and that would be heard: "Cry aloud, that all may hear, and none may plead ignorance. Go close to them, and cry in the ears of those that have stopped their ears."

II The message he was commanded to deliver. He must upbraid them with their horrid ingratitude in forsaking a God who had been of old so kind to them, that this might either make them ashamed and bring them to repentance, or might justify God in turning his hand against them.

1. God here puts them in mind of the favours he had of old bestowed upon them, when they were first formed into a people (Jer 2:2): "I remember for thy sake, and I would have thee to remember it, and improve the remembrance of it for thy good; I cannot forget the kindness of thy youth and the love of thy espousals."

(1.) This may be understood of the kindness they had for God; it was not such indeed as they had any reason to boast of, or to plead with God for favour to be shown them (for many of them

were very unkind and provoking, and, when they did return and enquire early after God, they did but flatter him), yet God is pleased to mention it, and plead it with them; for, though it was but little love that they showed him, he took it kindly. When they believed the Lord and his servant Moses, when they sang God's praise at the Red Sea, when at the foot of Mount Sinai they promised, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do and will be obedient, then was the kindness of their youth and the love of their espousals. When they seemed so forward for God he said, Surely they are my people, and will be faithful to me, children that will not lie.

Note, Those that begin well and promise fair, but do not perform and persevere, will justly be upbraided with their hopeful and promising beginnings. God remembers the kindness of our youth and the love of our espousals, the zeal we then seemed to have for him and the affection wherewith we made our covenants with him, the buds and blossoms that never came to perfection; and it is good for us to remember them, that we may remember whence we have fallen, and return to our first love, Re 2:4,5,Ga 4:15. In two things appeared the kindness of their youth:--

[1.] That they followed the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; and though sometimes they spoke of returning into Egypt, or pushing forward into Canaan, yet they did neither, but for forty years together went after God in the wilderness, and trusted him to provide for them, though it was a land that was not sown. This God took kindly, and took notice of it to their praise long after, that, though much was amiss among them, yet they never forsook the guidance they were under. Thus, though Christ often chid his disciples, yet he commended them, at parting, for continuing with him, Lu 22:28. It must be the strong affection of the youth, and the espousals, that will carry us on to follow God in a wilderness, with an implicit faith and an entire resignation; and it is a pity that those who have so followed him should ever leave him.

[2.] That they entertained divine institutions, set up the tabernacle among them, and attended the service of it. Israel was then holiness to the Lord; they joined themselves to him in

covenant as a peculiar people. Thus they began in the spirit, and God puts them in mind of it, that they might be ashamed of ending in the flesh.

(2.) Or it may be understood of God's kindness to them; of that he afterwards speaks largely. When Israel was a child, then I loved him, Ho 11:1. He then espoused that people to himself with all the affection with which a young man marries a virgin (Isa 62:5), for the time was a time of love, Eze 16:8.

[1.] God appropriated them to himself. Though they were a sinful people, yet, by virtue of the covenant made with them and the church set up among them, they were holiness to the Lord, dedicated to his honour and taken under his special tuition; they were the first fruits of his increase, the first constituted church he had in the world; they were the first-fruits, but the full harvest was to be gathered from among the Gentiles. The first-fruits of the increase were God's part of it, were offered to him, and he was honoured with them; so were the people of the Jews; what little tribute, rent, and homage, God had from the world, he had it chiefly from them; and it was their honour to be thus set apart for God. This honour have all the saints; they are the first-fruits of his creatures, Jam 1:18.

[2.] Having espoused them, he espoused their cause, and became an enemy to their enemies, Ex 23:22. Being the first-fruits of his increase, all that devoured him (so it should be read) did offend; they trespassed, they contracted guilt, and evil befel them, as those were reckoned offenders that devoured the first-fruits, or any thing else that was holy to the Lord, that embezzled them, or converted them to their own use, Le 5:15. Whoever offered any injury to the people of God did so at their peril; their God was ready to avenge their quarrel, and said to the proudest of kings, Touch not my anointed, Ps 105:14,15,Ex 17:14. He had in a special manner a controversy with those that attempted to debauch them and draw them off from being holiness to the Lord; witness his quarrel with the Midianites about the matter of Peor, Nu 25:17,18.

[3.] He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and great terror (De 4:34), and yet with a kind hand and great tenderness led them through a vast howling wilderness (Jer 2:6), a land of deserts and pits, or of graves, terram sepulchralem--a sepulchral land, where there was ground, not to feed them, but to bury them, where there was no good to be expected, for it was a land of drought, but all manner of evil to be feared, for it was the shadow of death. In that darksome valley they walked forty years; but God was with them; his rod, in Moses's hand, and his staff, comforted them, and even there God prepared a table for them (Ps 23:4,5), gave them bread out of the clouds and drink out of the rocks. It was a land abandoned by all mankind, as yielding neither road nor rest. It was no thoroughfare, for no man passed through it--no settlement, for no man dwelt there. For God will teach his people to tread untrodden paths, to dwell alone, and to be singular. The difficulties of the journey are thus insisted on, to magnify the power and goodness of God in bringing them, through all, safely to their journey's end at last. All God's spiritual Israel must own their obligations to him for a safe conduct through the wilderness of this world, no less dangerous to the soul than that was to the body.

[4.] At length he settled them in Canaan (Jer 2:7): I brought you into a plentiful country, which would be the more acceptable after they had been for so many years in a land of drought. They did eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof, and were allowed so to do. I brought you into a land of Carmel (so the word is); Carmel was a place of extraordinary fruitfulness, and Canaan was as one great fruitful field, De 8:7.

[5.] God gave them the means of knowledge and grace, and communion with him; this is implied, Jer 2:8. They had priests that handled the law, read it, and expounded it to them; that was part of their business, De 33:8. They had pastors, to guide them and take care of their affairs, magistrates and judges; they had prophets to consult God for them and to make known his mind to them.

2. He upbraids them with their horrid ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for these favours; let them all come

and answer to this charge (Jer 2:4); it is exhibited in the name of God against all the families of the house of Israel, for they can none of them plead, Not guilty.

(1.) He challenges them to produce any instance of his being unjust and unkind to them. Though he had conferred favours upon them in some things, yet, if in other things he had dealt hardly with them, they would not have been altogether without excuse. He therefore puts it fairly to them to show cause for their deserting him (Jer 2:5): "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, or you either? Have you, upon trial, found God a hard master? Have his commands put any hardship upon you or obliged you to any thing unfit, unfair, or unbecoming you? Have his promises put any cheats upon you, or raised your expectations of things which you were afterwards disappointed of? You that have renounced your covenant with God, can you say that it was a hard bargain and that which you could not live upon? You that have forsaken the ordinances of God, can you say that it was because they were a wearisome service, or work that there was nothing to be got by? No; the disappointments you have met with were owing to yourselves, not to God. The yoke of his commandments if easy, and in the keeping of them there is great reward."

Note, Those that forsake God cannot say that he has ever given them any provocation to do so: for this we may safely appeal to the consciences of sinners; the slothful servant that offered such a plea as this had it overruled out of his own mouth, Lu 19:22. Though he afflicts us, we cannot say that there is iniquity in him; he does us no wrong. The ways of the Lord are undoubtedly equal; all the iniquity is in our ways.

(2.) He charges them with being very unjust and unkind to him notwithstanding.

[1.] They had quitted his service: "They have gone from me, nay, they have gone far from me." They studied how to estrange themselves from God and their duty, and got as far as they could out of the reach of his commandments and their own convictions. Those that have deserted religion commonly set themselves at a

greater distance from it, and in a greater opposition to it, than those that never knew it.

[2.] They had quitted it for the service of idols, which was so much the greater reproach to God and his service; they went from him, not to better themselves, but to cheat themselves: They have walked after vanity, that is, idolatry; for an idol is a vain thing; it is nothing in the world, 1Co 8:4,De 32:21,Jer 14:22. Idolatrous worships are vanities, Ac 14:15. Idolaters are vain, for those that make idols are like unto them (Ps 115:8), as much stocks and stones as the images they worship, and good for as little.

[3.] They had with idolatry introduced all manner of wickedness. When they entered into the good land which God gave them they defiled it (Jer 2:7), by defiling themselves and disfitting themselves for the service of God. It was God's land; they were but tenants to him, sojourners in it, Le 25:23. It was his heritage, for it was a holy land, Immanuel's land; but they made it an abomination, even to God himself, who was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.

[4.] Having forsaken God, though they soon found that they had changed for the worse, yet they had no thoughts of returning to him again, nor took any steps towards it. Neither the people nor the priests made any enquiry after him, took any thought about their duty to him, nor expressed any desire to recover his favour. First, The people said not, Where is the Lord? Jer 2:6. Though they were trained up in an observance of him as their God, and had been often told that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, to be a people peculiar to himself, yet they never asked after him nor desired the knowledge of his ways. Secondly, The priests said not, Where is the Lord? Jer 2:8.

Those whose office it was to attend immediately upon him were in no concern to acquaint themselves with him, or approve themselves to him. Those who should have instructed the people in the knowledge of God took no care to get the knowledge of him themselves. The scribes, who handled the law, did not know God nor his will, could not expound the scriptures at all, or not aright. The pastors, who should have kept the flock from

transgressing, were themselves ringleaders in transgression: They have transgressed against me. The pretenders to prophecy prophesied by Baal, in his name, to his honour, being backed and supported by the wicked kings to confront the Lord's prophets. Baal's prophets joined with Baal's priests, and walked after the things which do not profit, that is, after the idols which can be no way helpful to their worshippers. See how the best characters are usurped, and the best offices liable to corruption; and wonder not at the sin and ruin of a people when the blind are leaders of the blind.

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,
2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land *that was* not sown.
3 Israel *was* holiness unto the Lord, *and* the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.
4 Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:
5 thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?
6 Neither said they, Where *is* the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?
7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.
8 The priests said not, Where *is* the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after *things that* do not profit.
9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead.

The prophet, having shown their base ingratitude in forsaking God, here shows their unparalleled fickleness and folly (Jer 2:9): I will yet plead with you. Note, Before God punishes sinners he pleads with them, to bring them to repentance. Note, further, When much has been said of the evil of sin, still there is more to be said; when one article of the charge is made good, there is another to be urged; when we have said a great deal, still we have yet to speak on God's behalf, Job 36:2. Those that deal with sinners, for their conviction, must urge a variety of arguments and follow their blow. God had before pleaded with their fathers, and asked why they walked after vanity and became vain, Jer 2:5. Now he pleads with those who persisted in that vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, and with their children's children, that is, with all that in every age tread in their steps. Let those that forsake God know that he is willing to argue the case fairly with them, that he may be justified when he speaks. He pleads that with us which we should plead with ourselves.

He shows that they acted contrary to the usage of all nations. Their neighbours were more firm and faithful to their false gods than they were to the true God. They were ambitious of being like the nations, and yet in this they were unlike them. He challenges them to produce an instance of any nation that had changed their gods (Jer 2:10,11) or were apt to change them. Let them survey either the old records or the present state of the isles of Chittim, Greece, and the European islands, the countries that were more polite and learned, and of Kedar, that lay south-east (as the other north-west from them), which were more rude and barbarous; and they should not find an instance of a nation that had changed their gods, though they had never done them any kindness, nor could do, for they were no gods. Such a veneration had they for their gods, so good an opinion of them, and such a respect for the choice their fathers had made, that though they were gods of wood and stone they would not change them for gods of silver and gold, no, not for the living and true God. Shall we praise them for this? We praise them not. But it may well be urged, to the reproach of Israel, that they, who were the only people that had no cause to change their God, were yet the only people that had changed him.

Note, Men are with difficulty brought off from that religion which they have been brought up in, though ever so absurd and grossly false. The zeal and constancy of idolaters should shame Christians out of their coldness and inconstancy.

10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

11 Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit.

12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord.

13 For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

He shows that they acted contrary to the dictates of common sense, in that they not only changed (it may sometimes be our duty and wisdom to do so), but that they changed for the worse, and made a bad bargain for themselves.

1. They parted from a God who was their glory, who made them truly glorious and every way put honour upon them, one whom they might with a humble confidence glory in as theirs, who is himself a glorious God and the glory of those whose God he is; he was particularly the glory of his people Israel, for his glory had often appeared on their tabernacle.

2. They closed with gods that could do them no good, gods that do not profit their worshippers. Idolaters change God's glory into shame (Ro 1:23) and so they do their own; in dishonouring him, they disgrace and disparage themselves, and are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever those turn to who forsake God, it will never do them any good; it will flatter them and please them, but it cannot profit them. Heaven itself is here called upon to stand amazed at the sin and folly of these apostates from God (Jer 2:12,13): Be astonished, O you heavens! at this.

The earth is so universally corrupt that it will take no notice of it; but let the heavens and heavenly bodies be astonished at it. Let the sun blush to see such ingratitude and be afraid to shine upon such ungrateful wretches. Those that forsook God worshipped

the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but these, instead of being pleased with the adorations that were paid to them, were astonished and horribly afraid; and would rather have been very desolate, utterly exhausted (as the word is) and deprived of their light, than that it should have given occasion to any to worship them. Some refer it to the angels of heaven; if they rejoice at the return of souls to God, we may suppose that they are astonished and horribly afraid at the revolt of souls from him. The meaning is that the conduct of this people towards God was,

(1.) Such as we may well be astonished and wonder at, that ever men, who pretend to reason, should do a thing so very absurd.

(2.) Such as we ought to have a holy indignation at as impious, and a high affront to our Maker, whose honour every good man is jealous for.

(3.) Such as we may tremble to think of the consequences of. What will be in the end hereof? Be horribly afraid to think of the wrath and curse which will be the portion of those who thus throw themselves out of God's grace and favour. Now what is it that is to be thought of with all this horror? It is this: "My people, whom I have taught and should have ruled, have committed two great evils, ingratitude and folly; they have acted contrary both to their duty and to their interest."

[1.] They have affronted their God, by turning their back upon him, as if he were not worthy their notice: "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, in whom they have an abundant and constant supply of all the comfort and relief they stand in need of, and have it freely." God is their fountain of life, Ps 36:9. There is in him an all-sufficiency of grace and strength; all our springs are in him and our streams from him; to forsake him is, in effect, to deny this. He has been to us a bountiful benefactor, a fountain of living waters, over-flowing, ever-flowing, in the gifts of his favour; to forsake him is to refuse to acknowledge his kindness and to withhold that tribute of love and praise which his kindness calls for.

[2.] They have cheated themselves, they forsook their own mercies, but it was for lying vanities. They took a great deal of pains to hew themselves out cisterns, to dig pits or pools in the earth or rock which they would carry water to, or which should receive the rain; but they proved broken cisterns, false at the bottom, so that they could hold no water. When they came to quench their thirst there they found nothing but mud and mire, and the filthy sediments of a standing lake. Such idols were to their worshippers, and such a change did those experience who turned from God to them. If we make an idol of any creature-wealth, or pleasure, or honour,--if we place our happiness in it, and promise ourselves the comfort and satisfaction in it which are to be had in God only,--if we make it our joy and love, our hope and confidence, we shall find it a cistern, which we take a great deal of pains to hew out and fill, and at the best it will hold but a little water, and that dead and flat, and soon corrupting and becoming nauseous. Nay, it is a broken cistern, that cracks and cleaves in hot weather, so that the water is lost when we have most need of it, Job 6:15. Let us therefore with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord only, for whither else shall we go? He has the words of eternal life.

14 *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a homeborn *slave?* why is he spoiled?

15 The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

The prophet, further to evince the folly of their forsaking God, shows them what mischiefs they had already brought upon themselves by so doing; it had already cost them dear, for to this were owing all the calamities their country was now groaning under, which were but an earnest of more and greater if they repented not. See how they smarted for their folly.

Their neighbours, who were their professed enemies, prevailed against them, and this was owing to their sin.

1. They were enslaved and lost their liberty (Jer 2:14): Is Israel a servant? No; Israel is my son, my first-born, Ex 4:22. They are children; they are heirs. Nay, their extraction is noble; they are the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen. Is he a home-born slave? No; he is not the son of the bond-woman, but of the free. They were designed for dominion, not for

servitude. Every thing in their constitution carried about it the marks of freedom and honour. Why then is he spoiled of his liberty? Why is he used as a servant, as a home-born slave? Why does he make himself a slave to his lusts, to his idols, to that which does not profit? Jer 2:11.

What a thing is this, that such a birthright should be sold for a mess of pottage, such a crown profaned and laid in the dust! Why is he made a slave to the oppressor? God provided that a Hebrew servant should be free the seventh year, and that their slaves should be of the heathen, not of their brethren, Le 25:44,46. But, notwithstanding this, the princes made slaves of their subjects, and masters made slaves of their servants (Jer 34:11), and so made their country mean and miserable, which God had made happy and honourable. The neighbouring princes and powers broke in upon them, and made some of them slaves even in their own country, and perhaps sold others for slaves into foreign countries. And how came they thus to lose their liberties? For their iniquities they sold themselves, Isa 50:1. We may apply this spiritually. Is the soul of man a servant? Is it a home-born slave? No, it is not. Why then is it spoiled? It is because it has sold its own liberty and enslaved itself to divers lusts and passions, which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

2. They were impoverished and had lost their wealth. God brought them into a plentiful country (Jer 2:7), but all their neighbours made a prey of it (Jer 2:15): Young lions roar aloud over him and yell; they are a continual terror to him. Sometimes one potent enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes many in confederacy, fall upon him, and triumph over him. They carry off the fruits of his land, and make that waste, and burn his cities, when first they have plundered them, so that they remain without inhabitant, either because there are no houses to dwell in or because those that should dwell in them are carried into captivity.

3. They were abused, and insulted over, and beaten by every body (Jer 2:16): "Even the children of Noph and Tahapanes, despicable people, not famed for military courage nor strength,

have broken the crown of thy head, or fed upon it. In all their struggles with thee they have been too hard for thee, and thou hast always come off with a broken head. The principal part of thy country, that which lay next Jerusalem, has been and is a prey to them." How calamitous the condition of Judah had been of late in the reign of Manasseh we find, 2Ch 33:11, and perhaps it had not now much recovered itself.

4. All this was owing to their sin (Jer 2:17): Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? By their sinful confederacies with the nations, and especially their conformity to them in their idolatrous customs and usages, they had made themselves very mean and contemptible, as all those do that have made a profession of religion and afterwards throw it off. Nothing now appeared of that which, by their constitution, made them both honourable and formidable, and therefore nobody either respected them or feared them. But this was not all; they had provoked God to give them up into the hands of their enemies, and to make them a scourge to them and give them success against them; and "thus thou hast procured it to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, revolted from thy allegiance to him and so thrown thyself out of his protection; for protection and allegiance go together." Whatever trouble we are in at any time we may thank ourselves for it; for we bring it upon our own head by our forsaking God: "Thou hast forsaken thy God at the time that he was leading thee by the way" (so it should be read); "Then when he was leading thee on to a happy peace and settlement, and thou wast within a step of it, then thou forsookest him, and so didst put a bar in thy own door."

16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?

18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

Their neighbours, that were their pretended friends, deceived them, distressed them, and helped them not, and this also was owing to their sin.

1. They did in vain seek to Egypt and Assyria for help (Jer 2:18): "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt? When thou art under apprehensions of danger thou art running to Egypt for help, Isa 30:1,2,31:1. Thou art for drinking the waters of Sihor," that is, Nilus. "Thou reliest upon their multitude, and refreshest thy self with the fair promises they make thee. At other times thou art in the way of Assyria, sending or going with all speed to fetch recruits thence, and thinkest to satisfy thyself with the waters of the river Euphrates; what hast thou to do there? What wilt thou get by applying to them? They shall help in vain, shall be broken reeds to thee, and what thou thoughtest would be to thee as a river will be but a broken cistern."

2. This also was because of their sin. The judgment shall unavoidably come upon them which their sin has deserved; and then to what purpose is it to call in help against it? Jer 2:19. "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and then it is impossible for them to save thee; know and see therefore, upon the whole matter, that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken God, for it is that which makes thy enemies enemies indeed, and thy friends friends in vain." Observe here,

(1.) The nature of sin; it is forsaking the Lord as our God; it is the soul's alienation from him and aversion to him. Cleaving to sin is leaving God.

(2.) The cause of sin; it is because his fear is not in us. It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of the fear of God; this is at the bottom of our apostasy from him; men forsake their duty to God because they stand in no awe of him nor have any dread of his displeasure.

(3.) The malignity of sin; it is an evil thing and a bitter. Sin is an evil thing, only evil, an evil that has no good in it, an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil; it is evil indeed, for it is not only the greatest contrariety to the divine nature, but the greatest corruption of the human nature. It is bitter; a state of sin is the gall of bitterness, and every sinful way will be bitterness in the latter end; the wages of it is death, and death is bitter.

(4.) The fatal consequences of sin; as it is in itself evil and bitter, so it has a direct tendency to make us miserable: "Thy own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee, not only destroy and ruin thee hereafter, but correct and reprove thee now; they will certainly bring trouble upon thee; and punishment will so inevitably follow the sin that the sin shall itself be said to punish thee. Nay, the punishment, in its kind and circumstances, shall so directly answer to the sin, that thou mayest read the sin in the punishment; and the justice of the punishment shall be so plain that thou shalt not have a word to say for thyself; thy own wickedness shall convince thee and stop thy mouth for ever and thou shalt be forced to own that the Lord is righteous."

(5.) The use and application of all this: "Know therefore, and see it, and repent of thy sin, that so the iniquity which is thy correction may not be thy ruin."

19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall
reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter,
that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear *is* not in
thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.

20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke, *and* burst thy bands; and
thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and
under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.

In these verses the prophet goes on with his charge against this backsliding people. Observe here,

The sin itself that he charges them with--idolatry, that great provocation which they were so notoriously guilty of.

1. They frequented the places of idol-worship (Jer 2:20): "Upon every high hill and under every green tree, in the high places and the groves, such as the heathen had a foolish fondness and veneration for, thou wanderest, first to one and then to another, like one unsettled, and still uneasy and unsatisfied; but in all playing the harlot," worshipping false gods, which is spiritual whoredom, and was commonly accompanied with corporal whoredom too. Note, Those that leave God wander endlessly, and a vagrant lust is insatiable.

2. They made images for themselves, and gave divine honour to them (Jer 2:26,27); not only the common people, but even the kings and princes, who should have restrained the people from doing ill, and the priests and prophets, who should have taught them to do well, were themselves so wretchedly sottish and stupid, and under the power of such a strong delusion, as to say to a stock, "Thou art my father (that is, Thou art my god, the author of my being, to whom I owe duty and on whom I have a dependence)," and to a stone, to an idol made of stone, "Thou hast begotten me, or brought me forth; therefore protect me, provide for me, and bring me up." What greater affront could men put upon God, who is our Father that has made us? It was a downright disowning of their obligations to him. What greater affront could men put upon themselves and their own reason than to acknowledge that which is in itself absurd and impossible, and, by making stocks and stones their parents, to make themselves no better than stocks and stones? When these were first made the objects of worship they were supposed to be animated by some celestial power or spirit; but by degrees the thought of this was lost, and so vain did idolaters become in their imagination, even the princes and priests themselves, that the very idol, though made of wood and stone, was supposed to be their father, and adored accordingly.

3. They multiplied these dunghill deities endlessly (Jer 2:28): According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah! When they had forsaken that God who is one, and all-sufficient for all,

(1.) They were not satisfied with any gods they had, but still desired more, that idolatry being in this respect of the same nature with covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry (for the more men have the more they would have), which is a plain evidence that what men make an idol of they find to be insufficient and unsatisfying, and that it cannot make the comers thereunto perfect.

(2.) They could not agree in the same god. Having left the centre of unity, they fell into endless discord; one city fancied one deity

and another another, and each was anxious to have one of its own to be near them and to take special care of them. Thus did they in vain seek that in many gods which is to be found in one God only.

21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

22 For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, *yet* thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God.

23 How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: *thou art* a swift dromedary traversing her ways;

The proof of this. No witnesses need be called; it is proved by the notorious evidence of the facts.

1. They went about to deny it, and were ready to plead, Not guilty. They pretended that they would acquit themselves from this guilt, they washed themselves with nitre, and took much soap, offered many things in excuse and extenuation of it, Jer 2:22. They pretended that they did not worship these as gods, but as demons, and mediators between the immortal God and mortal men, or that it was not divine honour that they gave them, but civil respect; thus they sought to evade the convictions of God's word and to screen themselves from the dread of his wrath. Nay, some of them had the impudence to deny the thing itself; they said, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim, Jer 2:23. Because it was done secretly, and industriously concealed (Eze 8:12), they thought it could never be proved upon them, and they had impudence enough to deny it. In this, as in other things, their way was like that of the adulterous woman, that says, I have done no wickedness, Pr 30:20.

2. Notwithstanding all their evasions, they are convicted of it and found guilty: "How canst thou deny the fact, and say, I have not gone after Baalim? How canst thou deny the fault, and say, I am not polluted?" The prophet speaks with wonder at their impudence: "How canst thou put on a face to say so, when it is certain?"

(1.) "God's omniscience is a witness against thee: Thy iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God; it is laid up and hidden, to be produced against thee in the day of judgment, sealed up among his treasures," De 32:34,Job 21:19,Ho 13:12. "It is imprinted deeply and stained before me;" so some read it. "Though thou endeavour to wash it out, as murderers to get the stain of the blood of the person slain out of their clothes, yet it will never be got out." God's eye is upon it, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth.

(2.) "Thy own conscience is a witness against thee. See thy way in the valley" (they had worshipped idols, not only on the high hills, but in the valleys, Isa 57:5,6), in the valley over-against Beth-peor (so some), where they worshipped Baal-peor (De 34:6,Nu 25:3), as if the prophet looked as far back as the iniquity of Peor; but, if it mean any particular valley, surely it is the valley of the son of Hinnom, for that was the place where they sacrificed their children to Moloch and which therefore witnessed against them more than any other: "look into that valley, and thou canst not but know what thou hast done."

The aggravations of this sin with which they are charged, which made it exceedingly sinful.

1. God had done great things for them, and yet they revolted from him and rebelled against him (Jer 2:20): Of old time I have broken thy yoke and burst thy bonds; this refers to the bringing of them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, which they would not remember (Jer 2:6), but God did; for, when he told them that they should have no other gods before him, he prefixed this as a reason: I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt! These bonds of theirs which God had loosed should have bound them for ever to him; but they had ungratefully broken the bonds of duty to that God who had broken the bonds of their slavery.

2. They had promised fair, but had not made good their promise: "Thou saidst, I will not transgress; then, when the mercy of thy deliverance was fresh, thou wast so sensible of it that thou wast willing to lay thyself under the most sacred ties to continue

faithful to thy God and never to forsake him." Then they said, Nay, but we will serve the Lord, Jos 24:21. How often have we said that we would not transgress, we would not offend any more, and yet we have started aside, like a deceitful bow, and repeated and multiplied our transgressions!

3. They had wretchedly degenerated from what they were when God first formed them into a people (Jer 2:21). I had planted thee a noble vine. The constitution of their government both in church and state was excellent, their laws were righteous, and all the ordinances instructive and very significant; and a generation of good men there was among them when they first settled in Canaan. Israel served the Lord, and kept close to him all the days of Joshua, and the elders that out-lived Joshua, Jos 24:31. They were then wholly a right seed, likely to replenish the vineyard they were planted in with choice vines.

But it proved otherwise; they very next generation knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done (Jdg 2:10), and so they were worse and worse till they became the degenerate plants of a strange vine. They were now the reverse of what they were at first. Their constitution was quite broken, and there was nothing in them of that good which one might have expected from a people so happily formed, nothing of the purity and piety of their ancestors. Their vine is as the vine of Sodom, De 32:32. This may fitly be applied to the nature of man; it was planted by its great author a noble vine, a right seed (God made man upright); but it is so universally corrupt that it has become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, that bears gall and wormwood, and it is so to God, it is highly distasteful and offensive to him.

4. They were violent and eager in the pursuit of their idolatries, doted on their idols, and were fond of new ones, and they would not be restrained form them either by the word of God or by his providence, so strong was the impetus with which they were carried out after this sin. They are here compared to a swift dromedary traversing her ways, a female of that species of creatures hunting about for a male (Jer 2:23), and, to the same purport, a wild ass used to the wilderness (Jer 2:24), not tamed by labour, and therefore very wanton, snuffing up the wind at her

pleasure when she comes near the he-ass, and on such an occasion who can turn her away? Who can hinder her from that which she lusts after? Those that seek her then will not weary themselves for her, for they know it is to no purpose; but will have a little patience till she is big with young, till that month comes which is the last of the months that she fulfils (Job 39:2), when she is heavy and unwieldy, and then they shall find her, and she cannot out-run them. Note,

(1.) Eager lust is a brutish thing, and those that will not be turned away from the gratifying and indulging of it by reason, and conscience, and honour, are to be reckoned as brute-beasts and no better, such as were born, and still are, like the wild ass's colt; let them not be looked upon as rational creatures.

(2.) Idolatry is strangely intoxicating, and those that are addicted to it will with great difficulty be cured of it. That lust is as headstrong as any.

(3.) There are some so violently set upon the prosecution of their lusts that it is to no purpose to attempt to give check to them: those that do so weary themselves in vain. Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone.

(4.) The time will come when the most fierce will be tamed and the most wanton will be manageable; when distress and anguish come upon them, then their ears will be open to discipline, that is the month in which you may find them, Ps 141:5,6.

5. They were obstinate in their sin, and, as they could not be restrained, so they would not be reformed, Jer 2:25. Here is,

(1.) Fair warning given them of the ruin that this wicked course of life would certainly bring them to at last, with a caution therefore not to persist in it, but to break off from it. He would certainly bring them into a miserable captivity, when their feet should be unshod, and they should be forced to travel barefoot, and when they would be denied fair water by their oppressors, so that their throat should be dried with thirst; this will be in the end hereof. Those that affect strange gods, and strange ways of

worship, will justly be made prisoners to a strange king in a strange land. "Take up in time therefore; thy running after thy idols will run the shoes off thy feet, and thy panting after them will bring thy throat to thirst; withhold therefore thy foot from these violent pursuits, and thy throat from these violent desires." One would think that it should effectually check us in the career of sin to consider what it will bring us to at last.

(2.) Their rejecting this fair warning. They said to those that would have persuaded them to repent and reform, "There is no hope; no, never expect to work upon us, or prevail with us to cast away our idols, for we have loved strangers, and after them we will go; we are resolved we will, and therefore trouble not yourselves nor us any more with your admonitions; it is to no purpose. There is no hope that we should ever break the corrupt habit and disposition we have got, and therefore we may as well yield to it as go about to get the mastery of it."

Note, Their case is very miserable who have brought themselves to such a pass that their corruptions triumph over their convictions; they know they should reform, but own they cannot, and therefore resolve they will not. But, as we must not despair of the mercy of God, but believe that sufficient for the pardon of our sins, though ever so heinous, if we repent and sue for that mercy, so neither must we despair of the grace of God, but believe that able to subdue our corruptions, though ever so strong, if we pray for and improve that grace. A man must never say There is no hope, as long as he is on this side hell.

6. They had shamed themselves by their sin, in putting confidence in that which would certainly deceive them in the day of their distress, and putting him away that would have helped them, Jer 2:26-28. As the thief is ashamed when, notwithstanding all his arts and tricks to conceal his theft, he is found, and brought to punishment, so are the house of Israel ashamed, not with a penitent shame for the sin they had been guilty of, but with a penal shame for the disappointment they met with in that sin. They will be ashamed when they find,

(1.) That they are forced to cry to the God whom they had put contempt upon. In their prosperity they had turned the back to God and not the face; they had slighted him, acted as if they had forgotten him, or did what they could to forget him, would not look towards him, but looked another way; they went from him as fast and as far as they could; but in the time of their trouble they will find no satisfaction but in applying to him; then they will say, Arise, and save us. Their fathers had many a time taken this shame to themselves (Jdg 3:9,4:3,10:10), yet they would not be persuaded to cleave to God, that they might come to him in their trouble with the more confidence.

(2.) That they have no relief from the gods they have made their court to. They will be ashamed when they perceive that the gods they have made cannot serve them, and that the God who made them will not serve them. To bring them to this shame, if so be they might hereby be brought to repentance, they are here sent to the gods whom they served, Jdg 10:14. They cried to God, Arise, and save us. God says of the idols, "Let them arise, and save thee, for thou hast no reason to expect that I should Let them arise, if they can, from the places where they are fixed; let them try whether they can save thee: but thou wilt be ashamed when thou findest that they can do thee no good, for, though thou hadst a god for every city, yet thy cities are burnt without inhabitant," Jer 2:15. Thus it is the folly of sinners to please themselves with that which will certainly be their grief, and pride themselves in that which will certainly be their shame.

24 a wild ass used to the wilderness, *that* snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her.

25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets,

27 saying to a stock, Thou *art* my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned *their* back unto me, and not

their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

28 But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for *according to* the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

29 Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the Lord.

The prophet here goes on in the same strain, aiming to bring a sinful people to repentance, that their destruction might be prevented.

He avers the truth of the charge. It was evident beyond contradiction; it was the greatest absurdity imaginable in them to think of denying it (Jer 2:29): "Wherefore will you plead with me, and put me upon the proof of it, or wherefore will you go about to plead any thing in excuse of the crime or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? Your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you: you know you have all transgressed, one as well as another; why then to you quarrel with me for contending with you?"

30 In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

He heightens it from the consideration both of their incorrigibleness and of their ingratitude.

1. They had not been wrought upon by the judgments of God which they had been under (Jer 2:30): In vain have I smitten your children, that is, the children or people of Judah. They had been under divine rebukes of many kinds. God therein designed to bring them to repentance; but it was in vain. They did not answer God's end in afflicting them; their consciences were not awakened, nor their hearts softened and humbled, nor were they driven to seek unto God; they received no instruction by the correction, were not made the better by it; and it is a great loss thus to lose an affliction. They did not receive, they did not submit to, or comply with, the correction, but their hearts fretted against the Lord, and so they were smitten in vain. Even the children, the young people, among them (so it may be taken),

were smitten in vain; they were so soon prejudiced against repentance that they were as untractable as the old ones that had been long accustomed to do evil.

2. They had not been wrought upon by the word of God which he had sent them in the mouth of his servants the prophets; nay, they had killed the messengers for the sake of the message: "Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion; you have put them to death for their faithfulness with as much rage and fury, and with as much greediness and pleasure, as a lion devours his prey." Their prophets, who were their greatest blessings, were treated by them as if they had been the plagues of their generation, and this was their measure-filling sin, 2Ch 36:16. They killed their own prophets, 1Th 2:15.

3. They had not been wrought upon by the favours God had bestowed upon them (Jer 2:31): "O generation!" (he does not call them, as he might, O faithless and perverse generation! O generation of vipers! but speaks gently, O you men of this generation!) "see the word of the Lord, do not only hear it, but consider it diligently, apply your minds closely to it." As we are bidden to hear the rod (Mic 6:9), for that has its voice, so we are bidden to see the word, for that has its visions, its views. It intimates that what is here said is plain and undeniable; you may see it to be very evident; it is written as with a sun-beam, so that he that runs may read it: Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness.

Note, None of those who have had any dealings with God ever had reason to complain of him as a wilderness or a land of darkness. He has blessed us with the fruits of the earth, and therefore we cannot say that he has been a wilderness to us, a dry and barren land, that (as Mr. Gataker expresses it) he has held us to hard meat, as cattle fed upon the common. No; his sheep have been led into green pastures. He has also blessed us with the lights of heaven, and has not withheld them, so that we cannot say, He has been to us a land of darkness. He has caused his sun to shine, as well as his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful. Or the meaning is, in general, that the service of God has not been to any either an unpleasant or an unprofitable service. God

sometimes has led his people through a wilderness and a land of darkness, but he himself was then to them all that which they needed; he so fed them with manna, and led them by a pillar of fire, that it was to them a fruitful field and a land of light. The world is, to those who make it their home and their portion, a wilderness and a land of darkness, vanity and vexation of spirit; but those that dwell in God have the lines fallen to them in pleasant places.

4. Instead of being wrought upon by these, they had grown intolerably insolent and imperious. They say, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee. Now that they had become a potent kingdom, or thought themselves such, they set up for themselves, and shook off their dependence upon God. This is the language of presumptuous sinners, and it is not only very impious and profane, but very unreasonable and foolish.

(1.) It is absurd for us who are subjects to say, We are lords (that is, rulers) and we will come no more to God to receive commands form him; for, as he is King of old, so he is King for ever, and we can never pretend to be from under his authority.

(2.) It is absurd for us who are beggars to say, We are lords, that is, We are rich, and we will come no more to God, to receive favours from him, as if we could live without him and need not be beholden to him. God justly takes it ill when those to whom he has been a bountiful benefactor care not either for hearing from him or speaking to him.

31 O generation, see ye the word of the Lord. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, *or* a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

He lays the blame of all their wickedness upon their forgetting God (Jer 2:32): They have forgotten me; they have industriously banished the thoughts of God out of their minds, jostled those thoughts out with thoughts of their idols, and avoided all those things that would put them in mind of God.

1. Though they were his own people, in covenant with him and professing relation to him, and had the tokens of his presence in the midst of them and of his favour to them, yet they forgot him.

2. They had long neglected him, days without number, time out of mind, as we say. They had not for a great while entertained any serious thoughts of him; so that they seem quite to have forgotten him, and resolved never to remember him again. How many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrance of God! Who can number those empty days?

3. They had not had such a regard and affection to him as young ladies generally have to their fine clothes: Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire? No; their hearts are upon them; they value them so much, and themselves upon them, that they are ever and anon thinking and speaking of them. When they are to appear in public they do not forget any of their ornaments, but put every one in its place, as they are described, Isa 3:18, &c. And yet my people have forgotten me. It is sad that any should be more in love with their fine clothes than with their God, and should rather leave their religion behind them, or part with that, than leave any of their ornaments behind them, or part with them. Is not God our ornament? Is he not a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to his people? Did we look upon him to be so, and upon our religion as an ornament of grace to our head and chains about our neck (Pr 1:9), we should be as mindful of them as ever any maid was of her ornaments, or a bride of her attire, we should be as careful to preserve them and as fond to appear in them.

33 Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.

He shows them what a bad influence their sins had had upon others. The sins of God's professing people harden and encourage those about them in their evil ways, especially when they appear forward and ringleaders in sin (Jer 2:33): Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? There is an allusion here to the practice of lewd women who strive to recommend themselves by their ogling looks and gay dress, as Jezebel, who painted her face and tired her head. Thus had they courted their neighbours into sinful confederacies with them and communion in their idolatries, and had taught the wicked ones their ways, their ways

of mixing God's institutions with their idolatrous customs and usages, which was a great profanation of that which was sacred and made the ways of their idolatry worse than that of others. Those have a great deal to answer for who, by their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, make wicked ones more wicked than otherwise they would be.

34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

He charges them with the guilt of murder added to the guilt of their idolatry (Jer 2:34): Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls, the life-blood of the poor innocents, which cried to heaven, and for which God was now making inquisition. The reference is to the children that were offered in sacrifice to Moloch; or it may be taken more generally for all the innocent blood which Manasseh shed, and with which he had filled Jerusalem (2Ki 21:16), the righteous blood, especially the blood of the prophets and others that witnessed against their impieties. This blood was found not by secret search, not by diggings (so the word is), but upon all these; it was above ground. This intimates that the guilt of this kind which they had contracted was certain and evident, not doubtful or which would bear a dispute; and that it was avowed and barefaced, and which they had not so much sense either of shame or fear as to endeavour to conceal, which was a great aggravation of it.

35 Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned.

He overrules their plea of, Not guilty. Though this matter be so plain, yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me; and again, Thou sayest, I have not sinned (Jer 2:35); therefore I will plead with thee, and will convince thee of thy mistake. Because they deny the charge, and stand upon their own justification, therefore God will join issue with them and plead with them, both by his word and by his rod. Those shall be made to know how much they deceive themselves,

1. Who say that they have not offended God, that they are innocent, though they have been guilty of the grossest enormities.

2. Who expect that God will be reconciled to them though they do not repent and reform. They own that they had been under the tokens of God's anger, but they think that it was causeless, and that they by pleading innocency had proved it to be so, and therefore they conclude that God will immediately let fall his action and his anger shall be turned from them. This is very provoking, and God will plead with them, and convince them that his anger is just, for they have sinned, and he will never cease his controversy till they, instead of justifying themselves thus, humble, and judge, and condemn themselves.

36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

He upbraids them with the shameful disappointments they met with, in making creatures their confidence, while they made God their enemy, Jer 2:36,37. It was a piece of spiritual idolatry they were often guilty of that they trusted in an arm of flesh and their hearts therein departed from the Lord. Now here he shows them the folly of it.

1. They were restless, and unsatisfied in the choice of their confidences: "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? Doubtless it is because thou meetest not with that in those thou didst confide in which thou promisedst thyself." Those that make God their hope, and walk in a continual dependence upon him, need not gad about to change their way; for their souls may return to him, and repose in him, as their rest: but those that trust in creatures will be perpetually uneasy, like Noah's dove, that found no rest for the sole of her foot. Every thing they trust to fails them, and then they think to change for the better, but they will be still disappointed. They first trusted to Assyria, and, when that proved a broken reed, they depended upon Egypt, and that proved no better. Creatures being vanity, they will be vexation of spirit to all those that put their confidence in them; they gad about, seeking rest and finding none.

2. They were quite disappointed in the confidences they made choice of; so the prophet tells them they should be: Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt, which thou now trustest in, as formerly thou wast of Assyria, who distressed them and helped them not, 2Ch

28:20. The Jews were a peculiar people in their profession of religion, and for that reason none of the neighbouring nations cared for them, nor could heartily love them; and yet the Jews were still courting them, and confiding in them, and were well enough served when deceived by them. See what will come of it (Jer 2:37): Thou shalt go forth from him, thy ambassadors or envoys shall return from Egypt re infectâ--disappointed, and therefore with their hands upon their heads, lamenting the desperate condition of their people.

Or, Thou shalt go forth hence, that is, into captivity in a strange land, with thy hands upon thy head, holding it because it aches (ubi dolor ibi digitus--where the pain is the finger will be applied), or as people ashamed, for Tamar, in the height of her confusion, laid her hand on her head, 2Sa 13:19. "And Egypt, that thou reliest on, shall not be able to prevent it nor to rescue thee out of captivity." Those that will not lay their hand on their heart in godly sorrow, which works life, shall be made to lay their hand on their head in the sorrow of the world, which works death. And no wonder that Egypt cannot help them, when God will not, If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I?

The Egyptians are broken reeds, for the Lord has rejected thy confidences; he will not make use of them for thy relief, will neither so far honour them, nor so far give countenance to thy confidence in them, as to appoint them to be the instruments of any good to thee, and therefore thou shalt not prosper in them; they shall not stand thee in any stead nor give thee any satisfaction. As there is no counsel or wisdom that can prevail against the Lord, so there is none that can prevail without him. Some read it, The Lord has rejected thee for thy confidences; because thou hast dealt so unfaithfully with him as to trust in his creatures, nay, in his enemies when thou shouldst have trusted in him only, he has abandoned thee to that destruction from which thou thoughtest thus to shelter thyself; and then thou canst not prosper, for none ever either hardened himself against God or estranged himself from God and prospered.

37 Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

Jeremiah-3

1 They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.

These verses some make to belong to the sermon in the foregoing chapter, and they open a door of hope to those who receive the conviction of the reproofs we had there; God wounds that he may heal. Now observe here,

I. How basely this people had forsaken God and gone a whoring from him. The charge runs very high here.

1. They had multiplied their idols and their idolatries. To have admitted one strange God among them would have been bad enough, but they were insatiable in their lustings after false worships: Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, Jer 3:1. She had become a common prostitute to idols; not a foolish deity was set up in all the neighbourhood but the Jews would have it quickly. Where was a high place in the country but they had had an idol in it? Jer 3:2. Note, In repentance it is good to make sorrowful reflections upon the particular acts of sin we have been guilty of, and the several places and companies where it has been committed, that we may give glory to God and take shame to ourselves by a particular confession of it.

2. They had sought opportunity for their idolatries, and had sent about to enquire for new gods: In the high--ways hast thou sat for them, as Tamar when she put on the disguise of a harlot (Ge 38:14), and as the foolish woman, that sits to call passengers, who go right on their way, Pr 9:14,15. As the Arabian in the wilderness--the Arabian huckster (so some), that courts customers, or waits for the merchants to get a good bargain and forestal the market--or the Arabian thief (so others), that watches for his prey; so had they waited either to court new gods to come among them (the newer the better, and the more fond they were of them) or to court others to join with them in their idolatries.

They were not only sinners, but Satans, not only traitors themselves, but tempters to others.

3. They had grown very impudent in sin. They not only polluted themselves, but their land, with their whoredoms and with their wickedness (Jer 3:2); for it was universal and unpunished, and so became a national sin. And yet (Jer 3:3), "Thou hadst a whore's forehead, a brazen face of thy own. Thou refusedst to be ashamed; thou didst enough to shame thee for ever, and yet wouldst not take shame to thyself." Blushing is the colour of virtue, or at least a relic of it; but those that are past shame (we say) are past hope. Those that have an adulterer's heart, if they indulge that, will come at length to have a whore's forehead, void of all shame and modesty.

4. They abounded in all manner of sin. They polluted the land not only with their whoredoms (that is, their idolatries), but with their wickedness, or malice (Jer 3:2), sins against the second table: for how can we think that those will be true to their neighbour that are false to their God? "Nay (Jer 3:5), thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst, and wouldst have spoken and done worse if thou hadst known how; thy will was to do it, but thou lackedst opportunity." Note, Those are wicked indeed that sin to the utmost of their power, that never refuse to comply with a temptation because they should not, but because they cannot.

II. How gently God had corrected them for their sins. Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon them, because, like Sodom, they had avowed their sin and had gone after strange gods as Sodom after strange flesh, he only withheld the showers from them, and that only one part of the year: There has been no latter rain, which might serve as an intimation to them of their continual dependence upon God; when they had the former rain, that was no security to them for the latter, but they must still look up to God. But it had not this effect.

III. How justly God might have abandoned them utterly, and refused ever to receive them again, though they should return; this would have been but according to the known rule of

divorces, Jer 3:1. They say (it is an adjudged case, nay, it is a case in which the law is very express, and it is what every body knows and speaks of, De 24:4), that if a woman be once put away for whoredom, and be joined to another man, her first husband shall never, upon any pretence whatsoever, take her again to be his wife; such playing fast and loose with the marriage-bond would be a horrid profanation of that ordinance and would greatly pollute that land. Observe, What the law says in this case--They say, that is, every one will say, and subscribe to the equity of the law in it; for every man finds something in himself that forbids him to entertain one that is another man's. And in like manner they had reason to expect that God would refuse ever to take them to be his people again, who had not only been joined to one strange god, but had played the harlot with many lovers. If we had to do with a man like ourselves, after such provocations as we have been guilty of, he would be implacable, and we might have despaired of his being reconciled to us.

2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lain with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

3 Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

How graciously he not only invites them, but directs them, to return to him.

1. He encourages them to hope that they shall find favour with him, upon their repentance: "Thou thou hast been bad, yet return again to me," Jer 3:1. This implies a promise that he will receive them: "Return, and thou shalt be welcome." God has not tied himself by the laws which he made for us, nor has he the peevish resentment that men have; he will be more kind to Israel, for the sake of his covenant with them, than ever any injured husband was to an adulterous wife; for in receiving penitents, as much as in any thing, he is God and not man.

2. He therefore kindly expects that they will repent and return to him, and he directs them what to say to him (Jer 3:4): "Wilt thou

not from this time cry unto me? Wilt not thou, who hast been in such relation to me, and on whom I have laid such obligations, wilt not thou cry to me? Though thou hast gone a whoring from me, yet, when thou findest the folly of it, surely thou wilt think of returning to me, now at least, now at last, in this thy day. Wilt thou not at this time, nay, wilt thou not from this time and forward, cry unto me? Whatever thou hast said or done hitherto, wilt thou not from this time apply to me? From this time of conviction and correction, now that thou hast been made to see thy sins (Jer 3:2) and to smart for them (Jer 3:3), wilt thou not now forsake them and return to me, saying, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now?" Ho 2:7. Or "from this time that thou hast had so kind an invitation to return, and assurance that thou shalt be well received: will not this grace of God overcome thee? Now that pardon is proclaimed wilt thou not come in and take the benefit of it? Surely thou wilt."

(1.) He expects that they will claim relation to God, as theirs: Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?

[1.] They will surely come towards him as a father, to beg his pardon for their undutiful behaviour to him (Father, I have sinned) and will hope to find in him the tender compassions of a father towards a returning prodigal. They will come to him as a father, to whom they will make their complaints, and in whom they will put their confidence for relief and succour. They will now own him as their father, and themselves fatherless without him; and therefore, hoping to find mercy with him (as those penitents, Ho 14:3),

[2.] They will come to him as the guide of their youth, that is, as their husband, for so that relation is described, Mal 2:14. "Though thou hast gone after many lovers, surely thou wilt at length remember the love of thy espousals, and return to the husband of thy youth." Or it may be taken more generally: "As my Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Youth needs a guide. In our return to God we must thankfully remember that he was the guide of our youth in the way of comfort; and we must faithfully covenant that he shall be our guide henceforward in the

way of duty, and that we will follow his guidance, and give up ourselves entirely to it, that in all doubtful cases we will be determined by our religion.

(2.) He expects that they will appeal to the mercy of God and crave the benefit of that mercy (Jer 3:5), that they will reason thus with themselves for their encouragement to return to him: "Will he reserve his anger for ever? Surely he will not, for he has proclaimed his name gracious and merciful." Repenting sinners may encourage themselves with this, that, though God chide, he will not always chide, though he be angry, he will not keep his anger to the end, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion, and may thus plead for reconciliation. Some understand this as describing their hypocrisy, and the impudence of it: "Though thou hast a whore's forehead (Jer 3:3) and art still doing evil as thou canst (Jer 3:5), yet art thou not ever and anon crying to me, My Father?" Even when they were most addicted to idols they pretended a regard to God and his service and kept up the forms of godliness and devotion. It is a shameful thing for men thus to call God father, and yet to do the works of the devil (as the Jews, Joh 8:44), to call him the guide of their youth, and yet give up themselves to walk after the flesh, and to flatter themselves with the expectation that his anger shall have an end, while they are continually treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou *art* the
guide of my youth?
5 Will he reserve *his anger* for ever? will he keep *it* to the end?
Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

Israel and Judah Entreated to Repent

6 The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast
thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up
upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there
hath played the harlot.

The date of this sermon must be observed, in order to the right understanding of it; it was in the days of Josiah, who set on foot

a blessed work of reformation, in which he was hearty, but the people were not sincere in their compliance with it; to reprove them for that, and warn them of the consequences of their hypocrisy, is the scope of that which God here said to the prophet, and which he delivered to them. The case of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is here compared, the ten tribes that revolted from the throne of David and the temple of Jerusalem and the two tribes that adhered to both. The distinct history of those two kingdoms we have in the two books of the Kings, and here we have an abstract of both, as far as relates to this matter.

Here is a short account of Israel, the ten tribes. Perhaps the prophet had been just reading the history of that kingdom when God came to him, and said, Hast thou seen what backsliding Israel has done? Jer 3:6. For he could not see it otherwise than in history, they having been carried into captivity long before he was born. But what we read in the histories of scripture should instruct us and affect us, as if we ourselves had been eye-witnesses of it. She is called backsliding Israel because that kingdom was first founded in an apostasy from the divine institutions, both in church and state. Now he had seen concerning them,

1. That they were wretchedly addicted to idolatry. They had played the harlot upon every high mountain and under every green tree (Jer 3:6), that is, they had worshipped other gods in their high places and groves; and no marvel, when from the first they had worshipped God by the images of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. The way of idolatry is down-hill: those that are in love with images, and will have them, soon become in love with other gods, and will have them too; for how should those stick at the breach of the first commandment who make no conscience of the second?

2. That God by his prophets had invited and encouraged them to repent and reform (Jer 3:7): "After she had done all these things, for which she might justly have been abandoned, yet I said unto her, Turn thou unto me and I will receive thee." Though they had forsaken both the house of David and the house of Aaron, who both had their authority jure divino--from God, without dispute,

yet God sent his prophets among them, to call them to return to him, to the worship of him only, not insisting so much as one would have expected upon their return to the house of David, but pressing their return to the house of Aaron. We read not that Elijah, that great reformer, ever mentioned their return to the house of David, while he was anxious for their return to the faithful service of the true God according as they had it among them. It is serious piety that God stands upon more than even his own rituals.

3. That, notwithstanding this, they had persisted in their idolatries: But she returned not, and God saw it; he took notice of it, and was much displeased with it, Jer 3:7,8. Note, God keeps account, whether we do or no, how often he has called to us to turn to him and we have refused.

4. That he had therefore cast them off, and given them up into the hands of their enemies (Jer 3:8): When I saw (so it may be read) that for all the actions wherein she had committed adultery I must dismiss her, I gave her a bill of divorce. God divorced them when he threw them out of his protection and left them an easy prey to any that would lay hands on them, when he scattered all their synagogues and the schools of the prophets and excluded them from laying any further claim to the covenant made with their fathers.

Note, Those will justly be divorced from God that join themselves to such as are rivals with him. For proof of this go and see what God did to Israel.

7 And I said after she had done all these *things,* Turn thou unto me.
But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*.
8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel
committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of
divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and
played the harlot also.
9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she
defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with
stocks.

10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.

Let us now see what was the case of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. She is called treacherous sister Judah, a sister because descended from the same common stock, Abraham and Jacob; but, as Israel had the character of a backslider, So Judah is called treacherous, because, though she professed to keep close to God when Israel had backslidden (she adhered to the kings and priests that were of God's own appointing, and did not withdraw from her allegiance, so that it was expected she should deal faithfully), yet she proved treacherous, and false, and unfaithful to her professions and promises.

Note, The treachery of those who pretend to cleave to God will be reckoned for, as well as the apostasy of those who openly revolt from him. Judah saw what Israel did, and what came of it, and should have taken warning. Israel's captivity was intended for Judah's admonition; but it had not the designed effect. Judah feared not, but thought herself safe because she had Levites to be her priests and sons of David to be her kings. Note, It is an evidence of great stupidity and security when we are not awakened to a holy fear by the judgments of God upon others. It is here charged on Judah,

1. That when they had a wicked king that debauched them they heartily concurred with him in his debaucheries. Judah was forward enough to play the harlot, to worship any idol that was introduced among them and to join in any idolatrous usage; so that through the lightness (or, as some read it, the vileness and baseness) of her whoredom, or (as the margin reads it) by the fame and report of her whoredom, her notorious whoredom, for which she had become infamous, she defiled the land, and made it an abomination to God; for she committed adultery with stones and stocks, with the basest idols, those made of wood and stone. In the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, when they were disposed to idolatry, the people were so too, and all the country was corrupted with it, and none feared the ruin which Israel by this means had brought upon themselves.

2. That when they had a good king, that reformed them, they did not heartily concur with him in the reformation. This was the present case. God tried whether they would be good in a good reign, but the evil disposition was still the same: They returned not to me with their whole heart, but feignedly, Jer 3:10. Josiah went further in destroying idolatry than the best of his predecessors had done, and for his own part he turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul; so it is said of him, 2Ki 23:25. The people were forced to an external compliance with him, and joined with him in keeping a very solemn passover and in renewing their covenants with God (2Ch 34:32,35:17); but they were not sincere in it, nor were their hearts right with God. For this reason God at that very time said, I will remove Judah out of my sight, as I removed Israel (2Ki 23:27), because Judah was not removed from their sin by the sight of Israel's removal from their land. Hypocritical and ineffectual reformations bode ill to a people. We deceive ourselves if we think to deceive God by a feigned return to him. I know no religion without sincerity.

III. The case of these sister kingdoms is compared, and judgment given upon the comparison, that of the two Judah was the worse (Jer 3:11): Israel has justified herself more than Judah, that is, she is not so bad as Judah is. This comparative justification will stand Israel in little stead; what will it avail us to say, We are not so bad as others, when yet we are not really good ourselves? But it will serve as an aggravation of the sin of Judah, which was in two respects worse than that of Israel:--

1. More was expected from Judah than from Israel; so that Judah dealt treacherously, they vilified a more sacred profession, and falsified a more solemn promise, than Israel did.

2. Judah might have taken warning by the ruin of Israel for their idolatry, and would not. God's judgments upon others, if they be not means of our reformation, will help to aggravate our destruction. The prophet Ezekiel (Jer 23:11) makes the same comparison between Jerusalem and Samaria that this prophet here makes between Judah and Israel, nay, and (Eze 16:48) between Jerusalem and Sodom, and Jerusalem is made the worst of the three.

11 And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; *and* I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I *am* merciful, saith the Lord, *and* I will not keep *anger* for ever.

Here is a great deal of gospel in these verses, both that which was always gospel, God's readiness to pardon sin and to receive and entertain returning repenting sinners, and those blessings which were in a special manner reserved for gospel times, the forming and founding of the gospel church by bringing into it the children of God that were scattered abroad, the superseding of the ceremonial law, and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, typified by the uniting of Israel and Judah in their return out of captivity. The prophet is directed to proclaim these words towards the north, for they are a call to backsliding Israel, the ten tribes that were carried captive into Assyria, which lay north from Jerusalem.

That way he must look, to show that God had not forgotten them, though their brethren had, and to upbraid the men of Judah with their obstinacy in refusing to answer the calls given them. One might as well call to those who lay many hundred miles off in the land of the north; they would as soon hear as these unbelieving and disobedient people; backsliding Israel will sooner accept of mercy, and have the benefit of it, than treacherous Judah. And perhaps the proclaiming of these words towards the north looks as far forward as the preaching of repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Lu 24:47. A call to Israel in the land of the north is a call to others in that land, even as many as belong to the election of grace. When it was suspected that Christ would go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, it was concluded that he would teach the Gentiles, Joh 7:35. So here.

Here is an invitation given to backsliding Israel, and in them to the backsliding Gentiles, to return unto God, the God from whom they had revolted (Jer 3:12): Return, thou backsliding Israel. And again (Jer 3:14): "Turn, O backsliding children! repent of your backslidings, return to your allegiance, come

back to that good way which you have missed and out of which you have turned aside." Pursuant to this invitation,

1. They are encouraged to return. "Repent, and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out, Ac 3:19. You have incurred God's displeasure, but return to me, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you." God's anger is ready to fall upon sinners, as a lion falls on his prey, and there is none to deliver, as a mountain of lead falling on them, to sink them past recovery into the lowest hell. But if they repent it shall be turned away, Isa 12:1. I will not keep my anger for ever, but will be reconciled, for I am merciful. We that are sinful were for ever undone if God were not merciful; but the goodness of his nature encourages us to hope that, if we by repentance undo what we have done against him, he will by a pardon unsay what he has said against us.

2. They are directed how to return (Jer 3:13): "Only acknowledge thy iniquity, own thyself in a fault and thereby take shame to thyself and give glory to God." I will not keep my anger for ever (that is a previous promise); you shall be delivered form that anger of God which is everlasting, from the wrath to come; but upon what terms? Very easy and reasonable ones. Only acknowledge thy sins. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, that the terms of pardon and peace were brought so low, and yet they would not come up to them. If the prophet had told thee to do some great thing wouldst thou not have done it? How much more when he says, Only acknowledge thy iniquity? 2Ki 5:13. In confessing sin,

(1.) We must own the corruption of our nature: Acknowledge thy iniquity, the perverseness and irregularity of thy nature. (2.) We must own our actual sins: "That thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, hast affronted him and offended him."

(3.) We must own the multitude of our transgressions: "That thou hast scattered thy ways to the strangers, run hither and thither in pursuit of thy idols, under every green tree. Wherever

thou hast rambled thou hast left behind thee the marks of thy folly."

(4.) We must aggravate our sin from the disobedience that there is in it to the divine law. The sinfulness of sin is the worst thing in it: "You have not obeyed my voice; acknowledge that, and let that humble you more than any thing else."

13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord.

Here is some difficulty started, that lies in the way of all this mercy; but an expedient is found to get over it.

1. God asks, How shall I do this for thee? Not as if God showed favour with reluctancy, as he punishes with a How shall I give thee up? Ho 11:8,9. No, though he is slow to anger, he is swift to show mercy. But it intimates that we are utterly unworthy of his favours, that we have no reason to expect them, that there is nothing in us to deserve them, that we can lay no claim to them, and that he contrives how to do it in such a way as may save the honour of his justice and holiness in the government of the world. Means must be devised that his banished be not for ever expelled from him, 2Sa 14:14. How shall I do it?

(1.) Even backsliders, if they return and repent, shall be put among the children; and who could ever have expected that? Behold what manner of love is this! 1Jo 3:1. How should we who are so mean and weak, so worthless and unworthy, and so provoking, ever be put among the children.

(2.) To those whom God puts among the children he will give the pleasant land, the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands, that goodly heritage of the hosts of nations, which nations and their hosts wish for and prefer to their own country, or which the hosts of the nations have now got possession of. It was a type of heaven, where there are pleasures for evermore. Now who could expect a place in that pleasant land that has so often despised it

(Ps 106:24) and is so unworthy of it and unfit for it? Is this the manner of men?

2. He does himself return answer to this question: But I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father. God does himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over.

(1.) That he may put returning penitents among the children, he will give them the Spirit of adoption, teaching them to cry, Abba, Father, Ga 4:6. "Thou shalt call me, My Father; thou shalt return to me, and resign thyself to me as a father, and that shall recommend thee to my favour,"

(2.) That he may give them the pleasant land, he will put his fear in their hearts, that they may never turn from him, but may persevere to the end.

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Here are precious promises made to these backsliding children, if they do return, which were in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, many that belonged to the ten tribes having perhaps joined themselves to those of the two tribes, in the prospect of their deliverance, and returning with them; but the prophecy is to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, and the gathering together of the children of God that were scattered abroad to that: "Return, for, though you are backsliders, yet you are children; nay, though a treacherous wife, yet a wife, for I am married to you (Jer 3:14) and will not disown the relation." Thus God remembers his covenant with their fathers, that marriage covenant, and in consideration of that he remembers their land, Le 26:42.

1. He promises to gather them together from all places whither they are dispersed and scattered abroad, Joh 11:52, I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, or clan; and I will bring you to Zion, Jer 3:14. All those that by repentance return to their duty shall return to their former comfort. Observe,

(1.) God will graciously receive those that return to him, nay, it is he that by his distinguishing grace takes them out from among the rest that persist in their backslidings; if he had left them, they would have been undone.

(2.) Of the many that have backslidden from God there are but few, very few in comparison, that return to him, like the gleanings of the vintage--one of a city and two of a country; Christ's flock is a little flock, and few there are that find the strait gate.

(3.) Of those few, though dispersed, yet not one shall be lost. Though there be but one in a city, God will find out that one; he shall not be overlooked in a crowd, but shall be brought safely to Zion, safely to heaven. The scattered Jews shall be brought to Jerusalem, and those of the ten tribes shall be as welcome there as those of the two. God's chosen, scattered all the world over, shall be brought to the gospel church, that Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, that holy hill on which Christ reigns.

2. He promises to set those over them that shall be every way blessings to them (Jer 3:15): I will give you pastors after my heart, alluding to the character given of David when God pitched upon him to be king. 1Sa 13:14, The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart. Observe,

(1.) When a church is gathered it must be governed. "I will bring them to Zion, not to live as they list, but to be under discipline, not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd." I will give them pastors, that is, both magistrates and ministers; both are God's ordinance for the support of his kingdom.

(2.) It is well with a people when their pastors are after God's own heart, such as they should be, such as we would have them be, who shall make his will their rule in all their administrations, and such as endeavour in some measure to conform to his example, who rule for him, and, as they are capable, rule like him.

(3.) Those are pastors after God's own heart who make it their business to feed the flock, not to feed themselves and fleece the flocks, but to do all they can for the good of those that are under their charge, who feed them with wisdom and understanding (that is, wisely and understandingly), as David fed them, in the integrity of his heart and by the skilfulness of his hand, Ps 78:72. Those who are not only pastors, but teachers, must feed them with the word of God, which is wisdom and understanding, which is able to make us wise to salvation.

3. He promises that there shall be no more occasion for the ark of the covenant, which had been so much the glory of the tabernacle first and afterwards of the temple, and was the token of God's presence with them; that shall be set aside, and there shall be no more enquiry after, nor enquiring of, it (Jer 3:16): When you shall be multiplied and increased in the land, when the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, which by the accession of the Gentiles will bring in to the church a vast increase (and the days of the Messiah the Jewish masters themselves acknowledge to be here intended), then they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord, they shall have it no more among them to value, or value themselves upon, because they shall have a pure spiritual way of worship set up, in which there shall be no occasion for any of those external ordinances; with the ark of the covenant the whole ceremonial law shall be set aside, and all the institutions of it, for Christ, the truth of all those types, exhibited to us in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, will be to us instead of all. It is very likely (whatever the Jews suggest to the contrary) that the ark of the covenant was in the second temple, being restored by Cyrus with the other vessels of the house of the Lord, Ezr 1:7.

But in the gospel temple Christ is the ark; he is the propitiatory, or mercy-seat; and it is the spiritual presence of God in his ordinances that we are now to expect. Many expressions are here used concerning the setting aside of the ark, that it shall not come to mind, that they shall not remember it, that they shall not visit it, that none of these things shall be any more done; for the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in

truth, Joh 4:24. But this variety of expressions is used to show that the ceremonies of the law of Moses should be totally and finally abolished, never to be used any more, but that it would be with difficulty that those who had been so long wedded to them should be weaned from them; and that they would not quite let them go till their holy city and holy house should both be levelled with the ground.

4. He promises that the gospel church, here called Jerusalem, shall become eminent and conspicuous, Jer 3:17. Two things shall make it famous:--

(1.) God's special residence and dominion in it. It shall be called, The throne of the Lord--the throne of his glory, for that shines forth in the church--the throne of his government, for that also is erected there; there he rules his willing people by his word and Spirit, and brings every thought into obedience to himself. As the gospel got ground this throne of the Lord was set up even where Satan's seat had been. It is especially the throne of his grace; for those that by faith come to this Jerusalem come to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, Heb 12:22-24.

(2.) The accession of the Gentiles to it. All the nations shall be discipled, and so gathered to the church, and shall become subjects to that throne of the Lord which is there set up, and devoted to the honour of that name of the Lord which is there both manifested and called upon.

5. He promises that there shall be a wonderful reformation wrought in those that are gathered to the church: They shall not walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts. They shall not live as they list, but live by rules, not do according to their own corrupt appetites, but according to the will of God. See what leads in sin--the imagination of our own evil hearts; and what sin is--it is walking after that imagination, being governed by fancy and humour; and what converting grace does--it takes us off from walking after our own inventions and brings us to be governed by religion and right reason.

6. That Judah and Israel shall be happily united in one body, Jer 3:18. They were so in their return out of captivity and their settlement again in Canaan: The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, as being perfectly agreed, and become one stick in the hand of the Lord, as Ezekiel also foretold, Jer 37:16,17. Both Assyria and Chaldea fell into the hands of Cyrus, and his proclamation extended to all the Jews in all his dominions. And therefore we have reason to think that many of the house of Israel came with those of Judah out of the land of the north; though at first there returned but 42,000 (whom we have an account of, Ezr 2:1-70) yet Josephus says (Antiq. 11.68) that some few years after, under Darius, Zerubbabel went and fetched up above 4,000,000 of souls, to the land that was given for an inheritance to their fathers. And we never read of such animosities and enmities between Israel and Judah as had been formerly. This happy coalescence between Israel and Judah in Canaan was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, when, all enmities being slain, they should become one sheepfold under one shepherd.

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit *it;* neither shall *that* be done any more.

17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

20 Surely *as* a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

Here is, I The charge God exhibits against Israel for their treacherous departures from him, Jer 3:20. As an adulterous wife elopes from her husband, so have they gone a whoring from God. They were joined to God by a marriage-covenant, but they broke that covenant, they dealt treacherously with God, who had always dealt kindly and faithfully with them. Treacherous dealing with men like ourselves is bad enough, but to deal treacherously with God is to deal treasonably.

II. Their conviction and confession of the truth of this charge, Jer 3:21. When God reproved them for their apostasy, there were some among them, even such as God would take and bring to Zion, whose voice was heard upon the high places weeping and praying, humbling themselves before the God of their fathers, lamenting their calamities, and their sins, the procuring cause of them; for this is that which they lament, for this they bemoan themselves, that they have perverted their way and forgotten the Lord their God. Note,

1. Sin is the perverting of our way, it is turning aside to crooked ways and perverting that which is right.

2. Forgetting the Lord our God is at the bottom of all sin. If men would remember God, his eye upon them and their obligation to him, they would not transgress as they do.

3. By sin we embarrass ourselves, and bring ourselves into trouble, for that also is the perverting of our way, La 3:9. 4. Prayers and tears well become those whose consciences tell them that they have perverted their way and forgotten their God. When the foolishness of man perverts his way his heart is apt to fret against the Lord (Pr 19:3), whereas it should be melted and poured out before him.

III. The invitation God gives them to return to him (Jer 3:22): Return, you backsliding children. He calls them children in tenderness and compassion to them, foolish and froward as children, yet his sons, whom though he corrects he will not disinherit; for, though they are refractory children (so some render it), yet they are children. God bears with such children,

and so much parents. When they are convinced of sin (Jer 3:21), and humbled for that, then they are prepared and then they are invited to return, as Christ invites those to him that are weary and heavy-laden. The promise to those that return is, "I will heal your backslidings; I will comfort you under the grief you are in for your backslidings, deliver you out of the troubles you have brought yourselves into by your backslidings, and cure you of your refractoriness and tendency to backslide." God will heal our backslidings by his pardoning mercy, his quieting peace, and his renewing grace.

21 A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, *and* they have forgotten the Lord their God.

22 Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou *art* the Lord our God.

23 Truly in vain *is salvation hoped for* from the hills, *and from* the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God *is* the salvation of Israel.

The ready consent they give to this invitation, and their cheerful compliance with it: Behold, we come unto thee. This is an echo to God's call; as a voice returned from broken walls, so this from broken hearts. God says, Return; they answer, Behold, we come. It is an immediate speedy answer, without delay, not, "We will come hereafter," but, "We do come now; we need not take time to consider of it;" not, "We come towards thee," but, "We come to thee, we will make a thorough turn of it." Observe how unanimous they are: We come, one and all.

1. They come devoting themselves to God as theirs: "Thou art the Lord our God; we take thee to be ours, we give up ourselves to thee to be thine; whither shall we go but to thee? It is our sin and folly that we have gone from thee." It is very comfortable, in our returns to God after our backslidings, to look up to him as ours in covenant.

2. They come disclaiming all expectations of relief and succour but from God only: "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of the mountains; we now see our folly in relying upon creature-confidences, and will never so deceive ourselves any more." They worshipped their idols upon hills and

mountains (Jer 3:6), and they had a multitude of idols upon their mountains, which they had sought unto and put a confidence in; but now they will have no more to do with them. In vain do we look for any thing that is good from them, while from God we may look for every thing that is good, even salvation itself. Therefore,

3. They come depending upon God only as their God: In the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. He is the Lord, and he only can save; he can save when all other succours and saviours fail; and he is our God, and will in his own way and time work salvation for us. It is very applicable to the great salvation from sin, which Jesus Christ wrought out for us; that is the salvation of the Lord, his great salvation.

4. They come justifying God in their troubles and judging themselves for their sins, Jer 3:24,25.

(1.) They impute all the calamities they had been under to their idols, which had not only done them no good, but had done them abundance of mischief, all the mischief that had been done them: Shame (the idol, that shameful thing) has devoured the labour of our fathers. Note,

[1.] True penitents have learned to call sin shame; even the beloved sin which has been as an idol to them, which they have been most pleased with and proud of, even that they shall call a scandalous thing, shall put contempt upon it and be ashamed of it.

[2.] True penitents have learned to call sin death and ruin, and to charge upon it all the mischiefs they suffer: "It has devoured all those good things which our fathers laboured for and left to us; we have found from our youth that our idolatry has been the destruction of our prosperity." Children often throw away upon their lusts that which their fathers took a great deal of pains for; and it is well if at length they are brought (as these here) to see the folly of it, and to call those vices their shame which have wasted their estates and devoured the labour of their fathers. Of the labour of their fathers, which their idols had devoured, they mention particularly their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. First, their idolatries had provoked God to bring these

desolating judgments upon them, which had ruined their country and families, and made their estates a prey and their children captives to the conquering enemy. They had procured these things to themselves. Or, rather, Secondly, These had been sacrificed to their idols, had been separated unto that shame (Ho 9:10), and they had devoured them without mercy; they did eat the fat of their sacrifices (De 32:38), even their human sacrifices.

(2.) They take to themselves the shame of their sin and folly (Jer 3:25): "We lie down in our shame, being unable to bear up under it; our confusion covers us, that is, both our penal and our penitential shame. Sin has laid us under such rebukes of God's providence, and such reproaches of our own consciences, as surround us and fill us with shame. For we have sinned, and shame came in with sin and still attends upon it. We are sinners by descent; guilt and corruption are entailed upon us: We and our fathers have sinned. We were sinners betimes; we began early in a course of sin: We have sinned from our youth; we have continued in sin, have sinned even unto this day, though often called to repent and forsake our sins.

That which is the malignity of sin, the worst thing in it, is the affront we have put upon God by it: We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, forbidding us to sin and commanding us, when we have sinned, to repent." Now all this seems to be the language of the penitents of the house of Israel (Jer 3:20), of the ten tribes, either of those that were in captivity or those of them that remained in their own land. And the prophet takes notice of their repentance to provoke the men of Judah to a holy emulation. David used it as an argument with the elders of Judah that it would be a shame for those that were his bone and his flesh to be the last in bringing the king back, when the men of Israel appeared forward in it, 2Sa 19:11,12. So the prophet excites Judah to repent because Israel did: and well it were if the zeal of others less likely would provoke us to strive to get before them and go beyond them in that which is good.

24 For shame hath devoured the labor of our fathers from our youth;
their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

25 We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we
have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from

our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.

Jeremiah-4

1 If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

When God called to backsliding Israel to return (Jer 3:22) they immediately answered, Lord, we return; now God here takes notice of their answer, and, by way of reply to it,

I. He directs them how to pursue their good resolutions: "Dost thou say, I will return?"

1. "Then thou must return unto me; make a thorough work of it. Do not only turn from thy idolatries, but return to the instituted worship of the God of Israel." Or, "Thou must return speedily and not delay (as Isa 21:12, If you will enquire, enquire you); if you will return unto me, return you: do not talk of it, but do it."

2. "Thou must utterly abandon all sin, and not retain any of the relics of idolatry: Put away thy abominations out of my sight," that is, out of all places (for every place is under the eye of God), especially out of the temple, the house which he had in a particular manner his eye upon, to see that it was kept clean. It intimates that their idolatries were not only obvious, but offensive, to the eye of God. They were abominations which he could not endure the sight of; therefore they must be put away out of his sight, because they were a provocation to the pure eyes of God's glory. Sin must be put away out of the heart, else it is not put away out of God's sight, for the heart and all that is in it lie open before his eye.

3. They must not return to sin again; so some understand that, Thou shalt not remove, reading it, Thou shalt not, or must not, wander. "If thou wilt put away thy abominations, and wilt not wander after them again, as thou hast done, all shall be well."

4. They must give unto God the glory due unto his name (Jer 4:2): "Thou shalt sear, The Lord liveth. His existence shall be with thee the most sacred fact, than which nothing can be more sure, and his judgment the supreme court to which thou shalt appeal, than which nothing can be more awful." Swearing is an act of religious worship, in which we are to give honour to God three ways:--

(1.) We must swear by the true God only, and not by creatures, or any false gods,--by the God that liveth, not by the gods that are deaf and dumb and dead,--by him only, and not by the Lord and by Malcham, as Zec 1:5.

(2.) We must swear that only which is true, in truth and in righteousness, not daring to assert that which is false, or which we do not know to be true, nor to assert that as certain which is doubtful, nor to promise that which we mean not to perform, nor to violate the promise we have made. To say that which is untrue, or to do that which is unrighteous, is bad, but to back either with an oath is much worse.

(3.) We must do it solemnly, swear in judgment, that is, when judicially called to it, and not in common conversation. Rash swearing is as great a profanation of God's name as solemn swearing is an honour to it. See De 10:20,Mt 5:34,37.

II. He encourages them to keep in this good mind and adhere to their resolutions. If the scattered Israelites will thus return to God,

1. They shall be blessed themselves; for to that sense the first words may be read: "If thou wilt return to me, then thou shalt return, that is, thou shalt be brought back out of thy captivity into thy own land again, as was of old promised," De 4:29,30:2. Or, "Then thou shalt rest in me, shalt return to me as they rest, even while thou art in the land of thy captivity."

2. They shall be blessings to others; for their returning to God again will be a means of others turning to him who never new him. If thou wilt own the living Lord, thou wilt thereby influence

the nations among whom thou art to bless themselves in him, to place their happiness in his favour and to think themselves happy in being brought to the fear of him. See Isa 65:16. They shall bless themselves in the God of truth, and not in false gods, shall do themselves the honour, and give themselves the satisfaction, to join themselves to him; and then in him shall they glory; they shall make him their glory, and shall please, nay, shall pride, themselves in the blessed change they have made. Those that part with their sins to return to God, however they scrupled at the bargain at first, when they go away, then they boast.

2 And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

3 For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

The prophet here turns his speech, in God's name, to the men of the place where he lived. We have heard what words he proclaimed towards the north (Jer 3:12), for the comfort of those that were now in captivity and were humbled under the hand of God; let us now see what he says to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, who were now in prosperity, for their conviction and awakening. In these two verses he exhorts them to repentance and reformation, as the only way left them to prevent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. Observe,

I The duties required of them, which they are concerned to do.

1. They must do by their hearts as they do by their ground that they expect any good of; they must plough it up (Jer 4:3): "Break up your fallow-ground. Plough to yourselves a ploughing (or plough up your plough land), that you sow not among thorns, that you may not labour in vain, for your own safety and welfare, as those do that sow good seed among thorns and as you have been doing a great while. Put yourselves into a frame fit to receive mercy from God, and put away all that which keeps it from you, and then you may expect to receive mercy and to prosper in your endeavours to help yourselves." Note,

(1.) An unconvinced unhumbled heart is like fallow-ground, ground untilled, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improvement; it is our ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is fallow; it is unfenced and lies common; it is unfruitful and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds, which are the natural product of the corrupt heart; and, if it be not renewed with grace, rain and sunshine are lost upon it, Heb 6:7,8.

(2.) We are concerned to get this fallow-ground ploughed up. We must search into our own hearts, let the word of God divide (as the plough does) between the joints and the marrow, Heb 4:12. We must rend our hearts, Joe 2:13. We must pluck up by the roots those corruptions which, as thorns, choke both our endeavours and our expectations, Ho 10:12.

2. They must do that to their souls which was done to their bodies when they were taken into covenant with God (Jer 4:4): "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart. Mortify the flesh and the lusts of it. Pare off that superfluity of naughtiness which hinders your receiving with meekness the engrafted word, Jam 1:21. Boast not of, and rest not in, the circumcision of the body, for that is but a sign, and will not serve without the thing signified. It is a dedicating sign. Do that in sincerity which was done in profession by your circumcision; devote and consecrate yourselves unto the Lord, to be to him a peculiar people. Circumcision is an obligation to keep the law; lay yourselves afresh under that obligation. It is a seal of the righteousness of faith; lay hold then of that righteousness, and so circumcise yourselves to the Lord."

II The danger they are threatened with, which they are concerned to avoid. Repent and reform, lest my fury come forth like fire, which it is now ready to do, as that fire which came forth from the Lord and consumed the sacrifices, and which was always kept burning upon the altar and none might quench it; such is God's wrath against impenitent sinners, because of the evil of their doings. Note, 1. That which is to be dreaded by us more than any thing else is the wrath of God; for that is the spring and

bitterness of all present miseries and will be the quintessence and perfection of everlasting misery.

2. It is the evil of our doings that kindles the fire of God's wrath against us.

3. The consideration of the imminent danger we are in of falling and perishing under this wrath should awaken us with all possible care to sanctify ourselves to God's glory and to see to it that we be sanctified by his grace.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

Judah Threatened with Invasion

5 Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defensed cities.

God's usual method is to warn before he wounds. In these verses, accordingly, God gives notice to the Jews of the general desolation that would shortly be brought upon them by a foreign invasion. This must be declared and published in all the cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem, that all might hear and fear, and by this loud alarm be either brought to repentance or left inexcusable. The prediction of this calamity is here given very largely, and in lively expressions, which one would think should have awakened and affected the most stupid. Observe,

I The war proclaimed, and general notice given of the advance of the enemy. It is published now, some years before, by the prophet; but, since this will be slighted, it shall be published after another manner when the judgment is actually breaking in, Jer 4:5,6. The trumpet must be blown, the standard must be set up, a summons must be issued out to the people to gather together and to draw towards Zion, either to guard it or expecting to be guarded by it. There must be a general rendezvous. The militia must be raised and all the forces mustered. Those that are able

men, and fit for service, must go into the defenced cities, to garrison them; those that are weak, and would lessen their provisions, but not increase their strength, must retire, and not stay.

II. An express arrived with intelligence of the approach of the king of Babylon and his army. It is an evil that God will bring from the north (as he had said, Jer 1:15), even a great destruction, beyond all that had yet come upon the nation of the Jews. The enemy is here compared,

1. To a lion that comes up from his thicket, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, Jer 4:7. The helpless beasts are so terrified with his roaring (as some report) that they cannot flee from him, and so become an easy prey to him. Nebuchadnezzar is this roaring tearing lion, the destroyer of the nations, that has laid many countries waste, and now is on his way in full speed towards the land of Judah. The destroyer of the Gentiles shall be the destroyer of the Jews too, when they have by their idolatry made themselves like the Gentiles. "He has gone forth from his place, from Babylon, or the place of the rendezvous of his army, on purpose against this land; that is the prey he has now his eye upon, not to plunder it only, but to make it desolate, and herein he shall succeed to such a degree that the cities shall be laid waste, without inhabitants, shall be overgrown with grass as a field;" so some read it.

2. To a drying blasting wind (Jer 4:11), a parching scorching wind, which spoils the fruits of the earth and withers them, not a wind which brings rain, but such as comes out of the north, which drives away rain (Pr 25:23), but brings something worse instead of it; such shall this evil out of the north be to this people, a black freezing wind, which they can neither fence against nor flee from, but, wherever they go, it shall surround and pursue them; and they cannot see it before it comes, but, when it comes, they shall feel it. It is a wind of the high places in the wilderness, or plain, that beats upon the tops of the hills or that carries all before it in the plain, where there is no shelter, but the ground is all champaign. It shall come in its full force towards the daughters of my people, that have been brought up so tenderly and

delicately that they could not endure to have the wind blow upon them. Now this fierce wind shall come against them, not to fan, nor cleanse them, not such a gentle wind as is used in winnowing corn, but a full wind (Jer 4:12), a strong and violent wind, blowing full upon them. This shall come to me, or rather for me; it shall come with commission from God and shall accomplish that for which he sends it; for this, as other stormy winds, fulfills his word.

3. To clouds and whirlwinds for swiftness, Jer 4:13. The Chaldean army shall come up as clouds driven with the wind, so thick shall they stand, so fast shall they march, and it shall be to no purpose to offer to stop them or make head against them, any more than to arrest a cloud or give check to a whirlwind. The horses are swifter than eagles when they fly upon their prey; it is in vain to think either of opposing them or of outrunning them.

4. To watchers and the keepers of a field, Jer 4:15-17. The voice declares from Dan, a city which lay furthest north of all the cities of Canaan, and therefore received the first tidings of this evil from the north and hastened it to Mount Ephraim, that part of the land of Israel which lay next to Judea; they received the news of the affliction and transmitted it to Jerusalem. Ill news flies apace; and an impenitent people, that hates to be reformed, can expect no other that ill news. Now, what is the news? "Tell the nations, those mixed nations that now inhabit the cities of the ten tribes, mention it to them, that they may provide for their own safety; but publish it against Jerusalem, that is the place aimed at, the game shot at, let them know that watchers have come from a far country, that is, soldiers, that will watch all opportunities to do mischief." Private soldiers we call private sentinels, or watchmen. "They are coming in full career, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah; they design to invest them, to make themselves masters of them, and to attack them with loud shouts, as sure of victory. As keepers of a field surround it, to keep all out from it, so shall they surround the cities of Judah, to keep all in them, till they be constrained to surrender at discretion; they are against her round about, compassing her in on every side." See Lu 19:43. As formerly the good angels, those watchers, and holy ones, were like keepers of a field to

Jerusalem, watching about it, that nothing might go in to its prejudice, so now their enemies were as watchers and keepers of a field, surrounding it that nothing might go in to its relief and succour.

III. The lamentable cause of this judgment. How is it that Judah and Jerusalem come to be thus abandoned to ruin? See how it came to this.

1. They sinned against God; it was all owing to themselves: She has been rebellious against me, saith the Lord, Jer 4:17. Their enemies surrounded them as keepers of a field, because they had taken up arms against their rightful Lord and sovereign, and were to be seized as rebels. The Chaldeans were breaking in upon them, and it was sin that opened the gap at which they entered: Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee (Jer 4:18), thy evil way and thy doings that have not been good. It was not a false step or two that did them this mischief, but their way and course of living were bad. Note, Sin is the procuring cause of all our troubles. Those that go on in sin while they are endeavouring to ward off mischiefs with one hand are at the same time pulling them upon their own heads with the other.

2. God was angry with them for their sin. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that makes the army of the Chaldeans thus fierce, thus furious; that is kindled against us, and is not turned back from us, Jer 4:8.

Note, In men's anger against us, and the violence of that, we must see and own God's anger and the power of that. If that were turned back from us, our enemies could not come forward against us. 3. In his just and holy anger he condemned them to this dreadful punishment: Now also will I give sentence against them, Jer 4:12. The execution was done, not in a heat, but in pursuance of a sentence solemnly passed, according to equity, and upon mature deliberation. Some read it, Now will I do execution upon them, according to the doom formerly passed; and we are sure that the judgment of God is according to the truth, and the execution of that judgment.

6 Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not; for I will bring
evil from the north, and a great destruction.
7 The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the
Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy
land desolate; *and* thy cities shall be laid waste, without an
inhabitant.
8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce
anger of the Lord is not turned back from us.
9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, *that* the heart
of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests
shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

The lamentable effects of this judgment, upon the first alarm given of it.

1 The people that should fight shall quite despair and shall not have a heart to make the least stand against the enemy (Jer 4:8): "For this gird yourself with sackcloth, lament and howl," that is, "you will do so. When the cry is made through the kingdom, Arm, arm! all will be seized with a consternation, and all put into confusion. Instead of girding on the sword, they will gird on the sackcloth; instead of animating one another to a vigorous resistance, they will lament and howl, and so dishearten one another. While the enemy is yet at a distance they will give up all for gone, and cry, Woe unto us! for we are spoiled, Jer 4:13. We are all undone, the spoilers will certainly carry the day, and it is in vain to make head against them." Judah and Jerusalem had been famed for valiant men; but see what is the effect of sin: by depriving men of their confidence towards God, it deprives them of their courage towards men.

2. Their great men, who should contrive for the public safety, shall be at their wits' end (Jer 4:9): At that day the heart of the king shall perish, both his wisdom and his courage. Despairing of success, he shall have no spirit to do any thing, and, if he had, he will not know what to do. His princes and privy-counselors, who should animate and advise him, shall be as much at a loss and as much in despair as he. See how easily, how effectually, God can bring ruin upon a people that are doomed to it, merely by dispiriting them, taking away the heart of the chief of them

(Job 12:20,24), cutting off the spirit of princes, Ps 76:12. The business of the priests was to encourage the people in the time of war; they were to say to the people, Fear not, and let not your hearts faint, De 20:2,3. They were to blow the trumpets, for an assurance to them that in the day of battle they should be remembered before the Lord their God, Nu 10:9.

But now the priests themselves shall be astonished, and shall have no heart themselves to do their office, and therefore shall not be likely to put spirit into the people. The prophets too, the false prophets, who had cried peace to them, shall be put into the greatest amazement imaginable, seeing their own guilty blood ready to be shed by that sword which they had often told the people there was no danger of. Note, God's judgments come with the greatest terror upon those that have been most secure. Our Saviour foretels that at the last destruction of Jerusalem men's hearts should fail them for fear, Lu 21:26. And it is common for those who have cheated and flattered people into a carnal security not only to fail them, but to discourage them, when the trouble comes.

10 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

The prophet's complaint of the people's being deceived, Jer 4:10. It is expressed strangely, as we read it: Ah! Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, You shall have peace. We are sure that God deceives none. Let no man say, when he is tempted or deluded, that God has tempted or deluded him. But,

1 The people deceived themselves with the promises that God had made in general of his favour to that nation, and the many peculiar privileges with which they were dignified, building upon them, though they took no care to perform the conditions on which the accomplishment of those promises and the continuance of those privileges did depend; and they had no regard to the threatenings which in the law were set over-against those promises. Thus they cheated themselves and then wickedly complained that God had cheated them.

2 The false prophets deceived them with promises of peace, which they made them in God's name. Jer 23:17,27:9. If God had sent them, he had indeed greatly deceived the people, but he had not. It was the people's fault that they gave them credit; and here also they deceived themselves.

3. God had permitted the false prophets to deceive, and the people to be deceived by them, giving both up to strong delusions, to punish them for not receiving the truth in the love of it. Herein the Lord was righteous; but the prophet complains of it as the sorest judgment of all, for by this means they had been hardened in their sins.

4. It may be read with an interrogation, "Hast thou indeed thus deceived this people? It is plain that they are greatly deceived, for they expect peace, whereas the sword reaches unto the soul; that is, it is a killing sword, abundance of lives are lost, and more likely to be." Now, was it God that deceived them? No, he had often given them warning of judgments in general and of this in particular; but their own prophets deceive them, and cry peace to those to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace. It is a pitiable thing, and that which every good man greatly laments, to see people flattered into their own ruin, and promising themselves peace when war is at the door; and this we should complain of to God, who alone can prevent such a fatal delusion.

11 At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,

12 *even* a full wind from those *places* shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.

13 Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots *shall be* as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

The prophet's endeavour to undeceive them. When the prophets they loved and caressed dealt falsely with them, he whom they hated and persecuted dealt faithfully.

1. He shows them their wound. They were loth to see it, very loth to have it searched into; but, if they will allow themselves the liberty of a free thought, they might discover their punishment in their sin (Jer 4:18): "This is thy wickedness because it is bitter. Now thou seest that it is a bitter thing to depart from God, and will certainly be bitterness in the latter end, Jer 2:19. It produces bitter effects, and grief that reaches unto the heart, touches to the quick, and in the most tender part; the sword reaches to the soul," Jer 4:10. God can make trouble reach the heart even of those that would lay nothing to heart. "And by this thou mayest see what is thy wickedness, that it is a bitter thing, a root of bitterness, that bears gall and wormwood, and that it has reached to the heart; it is the corruption of the soul, of the imagination of the thought of the heart." If the heart were not polluted with sin, it would not be disturbed and disquieted as it is with trouble.

2. He shows them the cure, Jer 4:14. "Since thy wickedness reaches to the heart, there the application must be made. O Jerusalem! wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved." By Jerusalem he means each one of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for every man has a heart of his own to take care of, and it is personal reformation that must help the public. Every one must return from his own evil way, and, in order to that, cleanse his own evil heart. "And let the heart of the city too be purified, not the suburbs only, the outskirts of it." The vitals of a state must be amended by the reformation of those that have the commanding influence upon it. Note,

(1.) Reformation is absolutely necessary to salvation. There is no other way of preventing judgments, or turning them away when we are threatened with them, but taking away the sin by which we have procured them to ourselves.

(2.) No reformation is saving but that which reaches the heart. There is heart-wickedness that is defiling to the soul, from which we must wash ourselves. By repentance and faith we must wash our hearts from the guilt we have contracted by spiritual wickedness, by those sins which begin and end in the heart and go no further; and by mortification and watchfulness we must suppress and prevent this heart-wickedness for the future. The

tree must be made good, else the fruit will not. Jerusalem was all overspread with the leprosy of sin. Now as the physicians agree with respect to the body when afflicted with leprosy that external applications will do no good, unless physic be taken inwardly to carry off the humours that lurk there and to change the mass of the blood, so it is with the soul, so it is with the state: there will be no effectual reformation of the manners without a reformation of the mind; the mistakes there must be rectified, the corruptions there must be mortified, and the evil dispositions there changed. "Though thou art Jerusalem, called a holy city, that will not save thee, unless thou wash thy heart from wickedness." In the latter part of the verse he reasons with them: How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? He complains here

[1.] Of the delays of their reformation: "How long shall that filthy heart of thine continue unwashed? When shall it once be?" Note, The God of heaven thinks the time long that his room is usurped, and his interest opposed, in our souls, Jer 13:27.

[2.] Of the root of their corruption, the vain thoughts that lodged within them and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. Thoughts of iniquity or mischief, these are the evil thoughts that are the spawn of the evil heart, from which all other wickedness is produced, Mt 15:19. These are our own, the conceptions of our own lusts (Jam 1:15), and they are the most dangerous when they lodge within us, when they are admitted and entertained as guests, and are suffered to continue. Some read it thoughts of affliction, such thoughts as will bring nothing but affliction and misery. Some by the vain thoughts here understand all those frivolous pleas and excuses with which they turned off the reproofs and calls of the word and rendered them ineffectual, and bolstered themselves up in their wickedness. Wash thy heart from wickedness, and think not to say, We are not polluted (Jer 2:23), or, "We are Jerusalem; we have Abraham to our father," Mt 3:8,9.

15 For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

16 Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, *that* watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

17 As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the Lord.
18 Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto thee; this *is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.
19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

The prophet is here in an agony, and cries out like one upon the rack of pain with some acute distemper, or as a woman in travail. The expressions are very pathetic and moving, enough to melt a heart of stone into compassion: My bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; and yet well, and in health himself, and nothing ails him. Note, A good man, in such a bad world as this is, cannot but be a man of sorrows. My heart makes a noise in me, through the tumult of my spirits, and I cannot hold my peace. Note, The grievance and the grief sometimes may be such that the most prudent patient man cannot forbear complaining.

Now, what is the matter? What is it that puts the good man into such agitation? It is not for himself, or any affliction in his family that he grieves thus; but it is purely upon the public account, it is his people's case that he lays to heart thus.

They are very sinful and will not be reformed, Jer 4:22. These are the words of God himself, for so the prophet chose to give this character of the people, rather than in his own words, or as from himself: My people are foolish. God calls them his people, though they are foolish. They have cast him off, but he has not cast them off, Ro 11:1. "They are my people, whom I have been in covenant with, and still have mercy in store for. They are foolish, for they have not known me."

Note, Those are foolish indeed that have not known God, especially that call themselves his people, and have the advantages of coming into acquaintance with him, and yet have not known him. They are sottish children, stupid and senseless, and have no understanding. They cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; they cannot discern the mind

of God either in his word or in his providence; they do not understand what their true interest is, nor on which side it lies. They are wise to do evil, to plot mischief against the quiet in the land, wise to contrive the gratification of their lusts, and then to conceal and palliate them. But to do good they have no knowledge, no contrivance, no application of mind; they know not how to make a good use either of the ordinances or of the providences of God, nor how to bring about any design for the good of their country. Contrary to this should be our character. Ro 16:19, I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

20 Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, *and* my curtains in a moment.

21 How long shall I see the standard, *and* hear the sound of the trumpet?

22 For my people *is* foolish, they have not known me; they *are* sottish children, and they have none understanding: they *are* wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form, and void; and the heavens, and they *had* no light.

They are miserable, and cannot be relieved.

1. He cries out, Because thou hast heard, O my soul! the sound of the trumpet, and seen the standard, both giving the alarm of war, Jer 4:19,21. He does not say, Thou hast heard, O my ear! but, O my soul! because the event was yet future, and it is by the spirit of prophecy that he see it and receives the impression of it. His soul heard it from the words of God, and therefore he was as well assured of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had heard it with his bodily ears. He expresses this deep concern,

(1.) To show that, though he foretold this calamity, yet he was far from desiring the woeful day; for a woeful day it would be to him. It becomes us to tremble at the thought of the misery that sinners are running themselves into, though we have good hopes, through grace, that we ourselves are delivered from the wrath to come.

(2.) To awaken them to a holy fear, and so to a care to prevent so great a judgment by a true and timely repentance. Note, Those that would affect other with the word of God should evidence that they are themselves affected with it. Now,

2. Let us see what there is in the destruction here foreseen and foretold that is so very affecting.

(1.) It is a swift and sudden destruction; it comes upon Judah and Jerusalem ere they are aware, and pours in so fast upon them that they have not the east breathing time. They have no time to recollect their thoughts, much less to recruit or recover their strength: Destruction upon destruction is cried (Jer 4:20), breach upon breach, one sad calamity, like Job's messengers, treading upon the heels of another. The death of Josiah breaks the ice, and plucks up the flood-gates; within three months after that his son and successor Jehoahaz is deposed by the king of Egypt; within two or three years after Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took it, and thenceforward he was continually making descents upon the land of Judah with his armies during the reigns of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, till about nineteen years after he completed their ruin in the destruction of Jerusalem: but suddenly were their tents spoiled and their curtains in a moment. Though the cities held out for some time, the country was laid waste at the very first. The shepherds and all that lived in tents were plundered immediately; they and their effects fell into the enemies' hands; therefore we find the Rechabites, who dwelt in tents, upon the first coming of the army of the Chaldees into the land retiring to Jerusalem, Jer 35:11. The inhabitants of the villages soon ceased: Suddenly were the tents spoiled. The plain men that dwelt in tents were first made a prey of.

(2.) This dreadful war continued a great while, not in the borders, but in the bowels of the country; for the people were very obstinate, and would not submit to the king of Babylon, but took all opportunities to rebel against him, which did but lengthen out the calamity; they might as well have yielded at first as at last. This is complained of (Jer 4:21): How long shall I see the standard? Shall the sword devour for ever? Good men are none of those that delight in war, for they know not how to fish in

troubled waters; they are for peace (Ps 120:7), and will heartily say Amen to that prayer, "Give peace in out time, O Lord!" O thou sword of the Lord! when wilt thou be quiet?

(3.) The desolations made by it in the land were general and universal: The whole land is spoiled, or plundered (Jer 4:20); so it was at first, and at length it became a perfect chaos. It was such a desolation as amounted in a manner to a dissolution; not only the superstructure, but even the foundations, were all out of course. The prophet in vision saw the extent and extremity of this destruction, and he here gives a most lively description of it, which one would think might have made those uneasy in their sins who dwelt in a land doomed to such a ruin, which might yet have been prevented by their repentance.

[1.] The earth is without form, and void (Jer 4:23), as it was Ge 1:2. It is Tohu and Bohu, the words there used, as far as the land of Judea goes. It is confusion and emptiness, stripped of all its beauty, void of all its wealth, and, compared with what it was, every thing out of place and out of shape. To a worse chaos than this will the earth be reduced at the end of time, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

[2.] The heavens too are without light, as the earth is without fruits. This alludes to the darkness that was upon the face of the deep (Ge 1:2), and represents God's displeasure against them, as the eclipse of the sun did at our Saviour's death. It was not only the earth that failed them, but heaven also frowned upon them; and with their trouble they had darkness, for they could not see through their troubles. The smoke of their houses and cities which the enemy burnt, and the dust which their army raised in its march, even darkened the sun, so that the heavens had no light. Or it may be taken figuratively: The earth (that is, the common people) was impoverished and in confusion; and the heavens (that is, the princes and rulers) had no light, no wisdom in themselves, nor were any comfort to the people, nor a guide to them. Comp. Mt 24:29.

[3.] The mountains trembled, and the hills moved lightly, Jer 4:24. So formidable were the appearances of God against his people, as in the days of old they had been for them, that the mountains skipped like rams and the little hills like lambs, Ps 114:4. The everlasting mountains seemed to be scattered, Hab 3:6. The mountains on which they had worshipped their idols, the mountains over which they had looked for succours, all trembled, as if they had been conscious of the people's guilt. The mountains, those among them that seemed to the highest and strongest, and of the firmest resolution, trembled at the approach of the Chaldean army. The hills moved lightly, as being eased of the burden of a sinful nation, Isa 1:24.

[4.] Not the earth only, but the air, was dispeopled, and left uninhabited (Jer 4:25): I beheld the cities, the countries that used to be populous, and, lo, there was no man to be seen; all the inhabitants were either killed, or fled, or taken captives, such a ruining depopulating thing is sin: nay, even the birds of the heavens, that used to fly about and sing among the branches, had now fled away, and were no more to be seen or heard. The land of Judah had now become like the lake of Sodom, over which (they say) no bird flies; see De 29:23. The enemies shall make such havoc of the country that they shall not so much as leave a bird alive in it.

[5.] Both the ground and the houses shall be laid waste (Jer 4:26): Lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, being deserted by the inhabitants that should cultivate it, and then soon overgrown with thorns and briers, or being trodden down by the destroying army of the enemy. The cities also and their gates and walls are broken down and levelled with the ground. Those that look no further than second causes impute it to the policy and fury of the invaders; but the prophet, who looks to the first cause, says that it is at the presence of the Lord, at his face (that is, the anger of his countenance), even by his fierce anger, that this was done. Even angry men cannot do us any real hurt, unless God be angry with us. If our ways please him, all is well.

[6.] The meaning of all this is that the nation shall be entirely ruined, and every part of it shall share in the destruction; neither

town nor country shall escape. First, Not the country, for the whole land shall be desolate, corn land and pasture land, both common and enclosed, it shall be laid waste (Jer 4:27); the conquerors will have occasion for it all. Secondly, Not the men, for (Jer 4:29) the whole city shall flee, all the inhabitants of the town shall quit their habitations by consent, for fear of the horsemen and bowmen. Rather than lie exposed to their fury, they shall go into the thickets, where they are in danger of being torn by briers, nay, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts; and they shall climb up upon the rocks, where their lodging will be hard and cold, and the precipice dangerous. Let us not be over-fond of our houses and cities; for the time may come when rocks and thickets may be preferable, and chosen rather. This shall be the common case, for every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall be left that dares dwell therein.

Both government and trade shall be at an end, and all civil societies and incorporations dissolved. It is a very dismal idea which this gives of the approaching desolation; but in the midst of all these threatenings comes in one comfortable word (Jer 4:27): Yet will not I make a full end--not a total consumption, for God will reserve a remnant to himself, that shall be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger--not a final consumption, for Jerusalem shall again be built and the land inhabited. This comes in here, in the midst of the threatenings, for the comfort of those that trembled at God's word; and it intimates to us the changeableness of God's providence; as it breaks down, so it raises up again; every end of our comforts is not a full end, however we may be ready to think it so. It also intimates the unchangeableness of God's covenant, which stands so firmly, that, though he may correct his people severely, yet he will not cast them off, Jer 30:11.

(4.) Their case was helpless and without remedy.

[1.] God would not help them; so he tells them plainly, Jer 4:28. And, if the Lord do not help them, who can? This is that which makes their case deplorable. "For this the earth mourns and the heavens above are black (there are no prospects but what are very dismal), because I have spoken it; I have given the word which

shall not be called back; I have purposed it (it is a consumption decreed, determined) and I will not repent, not change this way, but proceed in it, and will not turn back from it." They would not repent and turn back from the way of their sins (Jer 2:25), and therefore God will not repent and turn back from the way of his judgments.

[2.] They could not help themselves, Jer 4:30,31. When the thing appeared at a distance they flattered themselves with hopes that, though God should not appear for them as he had done for Hezekiah against the Assyrian army, yet they should find some means or other to secure themselves and give check to the forces of the enemy. But the prophet tells them that, when it comes to the setting to, they will be quite at a loss: "When thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? What course wilt thou take? Sit down now, and consider this in time." He assures them that, whatever were now their contrivances and confidences,

First, They will then be despised by their allies whom they depended upon for assistance. He had often compared the sin of Jerusalem to whoredom, not only her idolatry, but her trust in creatures, in the neighbouring powers. Now here he compares her to a harlot abandoned by all the lewd ones that used to make court to her. She is supposed to do all she can to keep up her interest in their affections. She does what she can to make herself appear considerable among the nations, and a valuable ally. She compliments them by her ambassadors to the highest degree, to engage them to stand by her now in her distress. She clothes herself with crimson, as if she were rich, and decks herself with ornaments of gold, as if her treasuries were still as full as ever they had been. She rents her face with painting, puts the best colours she can upon her present distresses and does her utmost to palliate and extenuate her losses, sets a good face upon them.

But this painting, though it beautifies the face for the present, really rends it; the frequent use of paint spoils the skin, cracks it, and makes it rough; so the case which by false colours has been made to appear better than really it was, when truth comes to light, will look so much the worse. "And, after all, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; all thy neighbours are sensible how low

thou art brought; the Chaldeans will strip thee of thy crimson and ornaments, and then thy confederates will not only slight thee and refuse to give thee any succour, but they will join with those that seek thy life, that they may come in for a share in the prey of so rich a country." Here seems to be an allusion to the story of Jezebel, who thought, by making herself look fair and fine, to outface her doom, but in vain, 2Ki 9:30,33. See what creatures prove when we confide in them, how treacherous they are; instead of saving the life, they seek the life; they often change, so that they will sooner do us an ill turn than any service. And see to how little purpose it is for those that have by sin deformed themselves in God's eyes to think by any arts they can use to beautify themselves in the eye of the world.

Secondly, They will then be themselves in despair; they will find their troubles to be like the pains of a woman in travail, which she cannot escape: I have heard the voice of the daughter of Zion, her groans echoing to the triumphal shouts of the Chaldean army, which he heard, Jer 4:15. It is like the voice of a woman in travail, whose pain is exquisite, and the fruit of sin and the curse too (Ge 3:16), and exhorts lamentable outcries, especially of a woman in travail of her first child, who, having never known before what that pain is, is the more terrified by it. Troubles are most grievous to those that have not been used to them. Zion, in this distress, since her neighbours refuse to pity her, bewails herself, fetching deep sighs (so the word signifies), and she spreads her hands, either wringing them for grief or reaching them forth for succour. All the cry is, Woe is me now! (now that the decree has gone forth against her and is past recall), for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

The Chaldean soldiers put all to the sword that gave them any opposition, so that the land was full of murders. Zion was weary of hearing tragical stories from all parts of the country, and cried out, Woe is me! It was well if their sufferings put them in mind of their sins, the murders committed upon them of the murders committed by them; for God was now making inquisition for the innocent blood shed in Jerusalem, which the Lord would not pardon, 2Ki 24:4. Note, As sin will find out the sinner, so sorrow will, sooner or later, find out the secure.

24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills
moved lightly.
25 I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man, and all the birds of the heavens
were fled.
26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place *was* a wilderness, and all the
cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, *and*
by his fierce anger.
27 For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate;
yet will I not make a full end.
28 For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black:
because I have spoken *it*, I have purposed *it*, and will not repent,
neither will I turn back from it.
29 The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen;
they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city
shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.
30 And *when* thou *art* spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest
thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of
gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou
make thyself fair; *thy* lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.
31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, *and* the anguish as
of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter
of Zion, *that* bewaileth herself, *that* spreadeth her hands, *saying*,
Woe *is* me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

Jeremiah-5

The Sins of Jerusalem and Judah

1 Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now,
and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a
man, if there be *any* that executeth judgment, that seeketh the
truth; and I will pardon it.

Here is, I. A challenge to produce any one right honest man, or at least any considerable number of such, in Jerusalem, Jer 5:1. Jerusalem had become like the old world, in which all flesh had corrupted their way. There were some perhaps who flattered themselves with hopes that there were yet many good men in Jerusalem, who would stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of

God; and there might be others who boasted of its being the holy city and thought that this would save it. But God bids them search the town, and intimates that they should scarcely find a man in it who executed judgment and made conscience of what he said and did: "Look in the streets, where they make their appearance and converse together, and in the broad places, where they keep their markets; see if you can find a man, a magistrate (so some), that executes judgment, and administers justice impartially, that will put the laws in execution against vice and profaneness." When the faithful thus cease and fail it is time to cry Woe is me! (Mic 7:1,2), high time to cry, Help Lord, Ps 12:1. "If there be here and there a man that is truly conscientious, and does at least speak the truth, yet you shall not find him in the streets and broad places; he dares not appear publicly, lest he should be abused and run down.

Truth has fallen in the street (Isa 59:14), and is forced to seek for corners." So pleasing would it be to God to find any such that for their sake he would pardon the city; if there were but ten righteous men in Sodom, if but one of a thousand, of ten thousand, in Jerusalem, it should be spared. See how ready God is to forgive, how swift to show mercy. But it might be said, "What do you make of those in Jerusalem that continue to make profession of religion and relation to God? Are not they men for whose sakes Jerusalem may be spared?" No, for they are not sincere in their profession (Jer 5:2): They say, The Lord liveth, and will swear by his name only, but they swear falsely, that is,

1. They are not sincere in the profession they make of respect to God, but are false to him; they honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.

2. Though they appeal to God only, they make no conscience of calling him to witness to a lie. Though they do not swear by idols, they forswear themselves, which is no less an affront to God, as the God of truth, than the other is as the only true God.

II. A complaint which the prophet makes to God of the obstinacy and wilfulness of these people. God had appealed to their eyes (Jer 5:1); but here the prophet appeals to his eyes (Jer 5:3): "Are

not thy eyes upon the truth? Dost thou not see every man's true character? And is not this the truth of their character, that they have made their faces harder than a rock?" Or, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part; but where is it to be found among the men of this generation? For though they say, The Lord liveth, yet they never regard him; thou hast stricken them with one affliction after another, but they have not grieved for the affliction, they have been as stocks and stones under it, much less have they grieved for the sin by which they have brought it upon themselves.

Thou hast gone further yet, hast consumed them, hast corrected them yet more severely; but they have refused to receive correction, to accommodate themselves to thy design in correcting them and to answer to it. They would not receive instruction by the correction. The have set themselves to outface the divine sentence and to outbrave the execution of it, for they have made their faces harder than a rock; they cannot change countenance, neither blush for shame nor look pale for fear, cannot be beaten back from the pursuit of their lusts, whatever check is given them; for, though often called to it, they have refused to return, and would go forward, right or wrong, as the horse into the battle."

III. The trial made both of rich and poor, and the bad character given of both.

1 The poor were ignorant, and therefore they were wicked. He found many that refused to return, for whom he was willing to make the best excuse their case would bear, and it was this (Jer 5:4): "Surely, these are poor, they are foolish. They never had the advantage of a good education, nor have they wherewithal to help themselves now with the means of instruction. They are forced to work hard for their living, and have no time nor capacity for reading or hearing, so that they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgments of their God; they understand neither the way in which God by his precepts will have them to walk towards him nor the way in which he by his providence is walking towards them." Note,

(1.) Prevailing ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impiety and iniquity. What can one expect but works of darkness from brutish sottish people that know nothing of God and religion, but choose to sit in darkness?

(2.) This is commonly a reigning sin among poor people. There are the devil's poor as well as God's, who, notwithstanding their poverty, might know the way of the Lord, so as to walk in it and do their duty, without being book-learned; but they are willingly ignorant, and therefore their ignorance will not be their excuse.

2 The rich were insolent and haughty, and therefore they were wicked (Jer 5:5): "I will get me to the great men, and see if I can find them more pliable to the word and providence of God. I will speak to them, preach at court, in hopes to make some impression upon men of polite literature. But all in vain; for, though they know the way of the Lord and the judgment of their God, yet they are too stiff to stoop to his government: These have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds. They know their Master's will, but are resolved to have their own will, to walk in the way of their heart and in the sight of their eyes. They think themselves too goodly to be controlled, too big to be corrected, even by the sovereign Lord of all himself. They are for breaking even his bands asunder, Ps 2:3. The poor are weak, the rich are wilful, and so neither do their duty."

2 And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely.

3 O Lord, *are* not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

4 Therefore I said, Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, *nor* the judgment of their God.

5 I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the Lord, *and* the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, *and* burst the bonds.

6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, *and* a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities:

every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, *and* their backslidings are increased.

A threatening of God's wrath against them for their wickedness and the universal debauchery of their land.

1 The particular judgment that is threatened, Jer 5:6. A foreign enemy shall break in upon them, get dominion over them, and shall lay waste: their country shall be as if it were overrun and perfectly mastered by wild beasts. This enemy shall be,

(1.) Like a lion of the forest; so strong, so furious, so irresistible; and he shall slay them.

(2.) Like a wolf of the evening, which comes out at night, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, and is very fierce and ravenous; and the noise both of the lions' roaring and of the wolves' howling is very hideous.

(3.) Like a leopard, which is very swift and very cruel, and withal careful not to miss his prey. The army of the enemy shall watch over their cities so strictly as to put the inhabitants to this sad dilemma--if they stay in, they are starved; if they stir out, they are stabbed; Every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces, which intimates that in many places the enemy gave no quarter. And all this bloody work is owing to the multitude of their transgressions. It is sin that makes the great slaughter.

2. An appeal to themselves concerning the equity of it (Jer 5:9); "Shall I not visit for these things? Can you yourselves think that the God whose name is Jealous will let such idolatries go unpunished, or that a God of infinite purity will connive at such abominable uncleanness?" These are things that must be reckoned for, else the honour of God's government cannot be maintained, nor his laws saved from contempt; but sinners will be tempted to think him altogether such a one as themselves, contrary to that conviction of their own consciences concerning the judgment of God which is necessary to be supported, That those who do such things are worthy of death, Ro 1:32. Observe, when God punishes sin, he is said to visit for it, or enquire into it; for he weighs the cause before he passes sentence. Sinners

have reason to expect punishment upon the account of God's holiness, to which sin is highly offensive, as well as upon the account of his justice, to which it renders us obnoxious; this is intimated in that, Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? It is not only the word of God, but his soul, that takes vengeance.

And he has national judgments wherewith to take vengeance for national sins. Such nations as this was cannot long go unpunished. How shall I pardon thee for this? Jer 5:7. Not but that those who have been guilty of these sins have found mercy with God, as to their eternal state (Manasseh himself did, though so much accessory to the iniquity of these times); but nations, as such, being rewardable and punishable only in this life, it would not be for the glory of God to let a nation so very wicked as this pass without some manifest tokens of his displeasure.

7 How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by *them that are* no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

Some particular sins specified, which they were notoriously guilty of, and which cried most loudly to heaven for vengeance. Their transgressions indeed were many, of many kinds and often repeated, and their backslidings were increased; they added to the number of them and grew more and more impudent in them, Jer 5:6. But two sins especially were justly to be looked upon as unpardonable crimes:--

1. Their spiritual whoredom, giving that honour to idols which is due to God only. "Thy children have forsaken me, to whom they were born and dedicated and under whom they have been brought up, and they have sworn by those that are no gods, have made their appeal to them as if they had been omniscient and their proper judges." This is here put for all acts of religious worship due to God only, but with which they had honoured their idols. They have sworn to them (so it may be read), have joined themselves to them and covenanted with them. Those that forsake God make a bad change for those that are no gods.

2. Their corporal whoredom. Because they had forsaken God and served idols, he gave them up to vile affections; and those that dishonoured him were left to dishonour themselves and their own families. They committed adultery most scandalously, without sense of shame or fear of punishment, for they assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses and did not blush to be seen by one another in the most scandalous places. So impudent and violent was their lust, so impatient of check, and so eager to be gratified, that they became perfect beasts (Jer 5:8); like high-fed horses, they neighed every one after his neighbour's wife, Jer 5:8. Unbridled lusts make men like natural brute beasts, such monstrous odious things are they. And that which aggravated their sin was that it was the abuse of God's favours to them: When they were fed to the full, then their lusts grew thus furious. Fulness of bread was fuel to the fire of Sodom's lusts. Sine Cerere et Bacchio friget Venu--Luxurious living feeds the flames of lust. Fasting would help to tame the unruly evil that is so full of deadly poison, and bring the body into subjection.

8 They were *as* fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.

9 Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

10 Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they *are* not the Lord's.

We may observe in these verses, as before,

I The sin of this people, upon which the commission signed against them is grounded. God disowns them and dooms them to destruction, Jer 5:10. But is there not a cause? Yes; for,

1. They have deserted the law of God (Jer 5:11): The house of Israel and the house of Judah, though at variance with one another, yet both agreed to deal very treacherously against God. They forsook the worship of him, and therein violated their covenants with him; they revolted from him, and played the hypocrite with him.

2. They have defied the judgments of God and given the lie to his threatenings in the mouth of his prophets, Jer 5:12,13. They were often told that evil would certainly come upon them; they

must expect some desolating judgment, sword or famine; but they were secure and said, We shall have peace, though we go on. For,

(1.) They did not fear what God is. They belied him, and confronted the dictates even of natural light concerning him; for they said, "It is not he, that is, he is not such a one as we have been made to believe he is; he does not see, or not regard, or will not require it; and therefore no evil shall come upon us." Multitudes are ruined by being made to believe that God will not be so strict with them as his word says he will; nay, by this artifice Satan undid us all: You shall not surely die. So here: Neither shall we see sword nor famine. Vain hopes of impunity are the deceitful support of all impiety.

(2.) They did not fear what God said. The prophets gave them fair warning, but they turned it off with a jest: "They do but talk so, because it is their trade; they are words of course, and words are but wind. It is not the word of the Lord that is in them; it is only the language of their melancholy fancy or their ill-will to their country, because they are not preferred." Note, Impenitent sinners are not willing to own any thing to be the word of God that makes against them, that tends either to part them from, or disquiet them in, their sins. They threaten the prophets: "They shall become wind, shall pass away unregarded, and thus shall it be done unto them; what they threaten against us we will inflict upon them. Do they frighten us with famine? Let them be fed with the bread of affliction." So Micaiah was, 1Ki 22:27. "Do they tell us of the sword? Let them perish by the sword," Jer 2:30. Thus their mocking and misusing God's messengers filled the measure of their iniquity.

II The punishment of this people for their sin.

1 The threatenings they laughed at shall be executed (Jer 5:14): Because you speak this word of contempt concerning the prophets, and the word in their mouths, therefore God will put honour upon them and their words, for not one iota or tittle of them shall fall to the ground, 1Sa 3:19. Here God turns to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been thus bantered, and perhaps had

been a little uneasy at it: Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire. God owns them for his words, though men denied them, and will as surely make them to take effect as the fire consumes combustible material that is in its way. The word shall be fire and the people wood. Sinners by sin make themselves fuel to that wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men in the scripture. The word of God will certainly be too hard for those that contend with it. Those shall break who will not bow before it.

2 The enemy they thought themselves in no danger of shall be brought upon them. God gives them their commission (Jer 5:10): "Go you up upon her walls, mount them, trample upon them, tread them down. Walls of stone, before the divine commission, shall be but mud walls. Having made yourselves masters of the walls, you may destroy at pleasure. You may take away her battlements, and leave the fenced fortified cities to lie open; for her battlements are not the Lord's he does not own them and therefore will not protect and fortify them." They were not erected in his fear, nor with a dependence upon him; the people have trusted to them more than to God, and therefore they are not his. When the city is filled with sin God will not patronise the fortifications of it, and then they are paper walls. What can defend us when he who is our defence, and the defender of all our defences, has departed from us? Nu 14:9. What is not of God cannot stand, not stand long, nor stand us in any stead. What dreadful work these invaders should make is here described (Jer 5:15): Lo, I will bring a nation upon you, O house of Israel!

Note, God has all nations at his command, does what he pleases with them and makes what use he pleases of them. And sometimes he is pleased to make the nations of the earth, the heathen nations, a scourge to the house of Israel, when that has become a hypocritical nation. This nation of the Chaldeans is here said to be a remote nation; it is brought upon them from afar, and therefore will make the greater spoil and the longer stay, that the soldiers may pay themselves well for so long a march. "It is a nation that thou hast had no commerce with, by reason of their distance, and therefore canst not expect to find favour with." God can bring trouble upon us from places and causes very remote. It

is a mighty nation, that there is no making head against, an ancient nation, that value themselves upon their antiquity and will therefore be the more haughty and imperious. It is a nation whose language thou knowest not; they spoke the Syriac tongue, which the Jews at that time were not acquainted with, as appears, 2Ki 18:26.

The difference of language would make it the more difficult to treat with them of peace. Compare this with the threatening, De 28:49, which it seems to have a reference to, for the law and the prophets exactly agree. They are well armed: Their quiver is as an open sepulchre; their arrows shall fly so thick, hit so sure, and wound so deep, that they shall be reckoned to breathe nothing but death and slaughter: they are able-bodied, all effective, mighty men, Jer 5:16. And, when they have made themselves masters of the country, they shall devour all before them, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on, Jer 5:17.

(1.) They shall strip the country, shall not only sustain, but surfeit, their soldiers with the rich products of this fruitful land. "They shall not store up (then it might possibly by retrieved), but eat up thy harvest in the field and thy bread in the house, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat." Note, What we have we have for our families, and it is a comfort to see our sons and daughters eating that which we have taken care and pains for. But it is a grievous vexation to see it devoured by strangers and enemies, to see their camps victualled with our stores, while those that are dear to us are perishing for want of it: this also is according to the curse of the law, De 28:33. "They shall eat up thy flocks and herds, out of which thou hast taken sacrifices for thy idols; they shall not leave thee the fruit of thy vines and fig-trees."

(2.) They shall starve the towns: "They shall impoverish thy fenced cities" (and what fence is there against poverty, when it comes like an armed man?), "those cities wherein thou trustedst to be a protection to the country." Note, It is just with God to impoverish that which we make our confidence. They shall impoverish them with the sword, cutting off all provisions from

coming to them and intercepting trade and commerce, which will impoverish even fenced cities.

III. An intimation of the tender compassion God has yet for them. The enemy is commissioned to destroy and lay waste, but must not make a full end, Jer 5:10. Though they make a great slaughter, yet some must be left to live; though they make a great spoil, yet something must be left to live upon, for God has said it (Jer 5:18) with a non obstante--a nevertheless to the present desolation: "Even in those days, dismal as they are, I will not make a full end with you;" and, if God will not, the enemy shall not. God has mercy in store for his people, and therefore will set bounds to this desolating judgment. Hitherto it shall come, and no further.

11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very
treacherously against me, saith the Lord.
12 They have belied the Lord, and said, *It is* not he; neither shall evil
come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine:
13 and the prophets shall become wind, and the word *is* not in them:
thus shall it be done unto them.
14 Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this
word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this
people wood, and it shall devour them.
15 Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith
the Lord : it *is* a mighty nation, it *is* an ancient nation, a nation
whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they
say.
16 Their quiver *is* as an open sepulchre, they *are* all mighty men.
17 And they shall eat up thine harvest and thy bread, *which* thy sons and
thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds:
they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish
thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.
18 Nevertheless in those days, saith the Lord, I will not make a full
end with you.
19 And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doeth the
Lord our God all these *things* unto us? then shalt thou answer them,
Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land,
so shall ye serve strangers in a land *that is* not yours.

The justification of God in these proceedings against them. As he will appear to be gracious in not making a full end with them, so he will appear to be righteous in coming so near it, and will have it acknowledged that he has done them no wrong, Jer 5:19. Observe,

1. A reason demanded, insolently demanded, by the people for these judgments. They will say "Wherefore doth the Lord our God do all this unto us? What provocation have we given him, or what quarrel has he with us?" As if against such a sinful nation there did not appear cause enough of action. Note, Unhumbled hearts are ready to charge God with injustice in their afflictions, and pretend they have to seek for the cause of them when it is written in the forehead of them. But,

2. Here is a reason immediately assigned. The prophet is instructed what answer to give them; for God will be justified when he speaks, though he speaks with ever so much terror. He must tell them that God does this against them for what they have done against him, and that they may, if they please, read their sin in their punishment. Do not they know very well that they have forsaken God, and therefore can they think it strange if he has forsaken them? Have they forgotten how often they served gods in their own land, that good land, in the abundance of the fruits of which they ought to have served God with gladness of heart? and therefore is it not just with God to make them serve strangers in a strange land, where they can call nothing their own, as he has threatened to do? De 28:47,48. Those that are fond of strangers, to strangers let them go.

20 Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying,
21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding;
which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:

The prophet, having reproved them for sin and threatened the judgments of God against them, is here sent to them again upon another errand, which he must publish in Judah; the purport of it is to persuade them to fear God, which would be an effectual principle of their reformation, as the want of that fear had been at the bottom of their apostasy.

He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people, and their bent to backslide from God, speaking as if he knew not what course to take with them. For,

1. Their understandings were darkened and unapt to admit the rays of the divine light: They are a foolish people and without understanding; they apprehend not the mind of God, though ever so plainly declared to them by the written word, by his prophets, and by his providence (Jer 5:21): They have eyes, but they see not, ears, but they hear not, like the idols which they made and worshipped, Ps 115:5,6,8. One would have thought that they took notice of things, but really they did not; they had intellectual faculties and capacities, but they did not employ and improve them as they ought. Herein they disappointed the expectations of all their neighbours, who, observing what excellent means of knowledge they had, concluded, Surely they are a wise and an understanding people (De 4:6), and yet really they are a foolish people and without understanding. Note, We cannot judge of men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy: there are those that sit in darkness in a land of light, that live in sin even in a holy land, that are bad in the best places.

2. Their wills were stubborn and unapt to submit to the rules of the divine law (Jer 5:23): This people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; and no wonder when they were foolish and without understanding, Ps 82:5. Nay, it is the corrupt bias of the will that bribes and besots the understanding: none so blind as those that will not see. The character of this people is the true character of all people by nature, till the grace of God has wrought a change. We are foolish, slow of understanding, and apt to mistake and forget; yet that is not the worst. We have a revolting and a rebellious heart, a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to his law, not only revolting from him by a rooted aversion to that which is good, but rebellious against him by a strong inclination to that which is evil. Observe, The revolting heart is a rebellious one: those that withdraw from their allegiance to God do not stop there, but by siding in with sin and Satan take up arms against him. They have revolted and gone. The revolting heart will produce a

revolting life. They are gone, and they will go (so it may be read); now nothing will be restrained from them, Ge 11:6.

II. He ascribed this to the want of the fear of God. When he observes them to be without understanding he asks, "Fear you not me, saith the Lord, and will you not tremble at my presence? Jer 5:22. If you would but keep up an awe of God, you would be more observant of what he says to you: and, did you but understand your own interest better, you would be more under the commanding rule of God's fear." When he observes that they have revolted and gone he adds this, as the root and cause of their apostasy (Jer 5:24), Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God. Therefore so many bad thoughts come into their mind, and hurry them to that which is evil, because they will not admit and entertain good thoughts, and particularly not this good thought, Let us now fear the Lord our God. It is true it is God's work to put his fear into our hearts; but it is our work to stir up ourselves to fear him, and to fasten upon those considerations which are proper to affect us with a holy awe of him; and it is because we do not do this that our hearts are so destitute of his fear as they are, and so apt to revolt and rebel.

22 Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand *for* the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

He suggests some of those things which are proper to possess us with a holy fear of God.

1. We must fear the Lord and his greatness, Jer 5:22. Upon this account he demands our fear: Shall we not tremble at his presence, and not be afraid of affronting him, or trifling with him, who in the kingdom of nature and providence gives such incontestable proofs of his almighty power and sovereign dominion? Here is one instance given of very many that might be given: he keeps the sea within compass. Though the tides flow with a mighty strength twice every day, and if they should flow on awhile would drown the world, though in a storm the billows rise high and dash to the shore with incredible force and

fury, yet they are under check, they return, they retire, and no harm is done.

This is the Lord's doing, and, if it were not common, it would be marvellous in our eyes. He has placed the sand for the bound of the sea, not only for a meer-stone, to mark out how far it may come and where it must stop, but as a mound, or fence, to put a stop to it. A wall of sand shall be as effectual as a wall of brass to check the flowing waves, when God is pleased to make it so; nay, that is chosen rather, to teach us that a soft answer, like the soft sand, turns away wrath, and quiets a foaming rage, when grievous words, like hard rocks, do but exasperate, and make the waters cast forth so much the more mire and dirt. This bound is placed by a perpetual decree, by an ordinance of antiquity (so some read it), and then it sends us as far back as to the creation of the world, when God divided between the sea and dry land, and fixed marches between them, Ge 1:9,10 (which is elegantly described, Ps 104:6-26, &c., and Job 38:8-41, &c.), or to the period of Noah's flood, when God promised that he would never drown the world again, Ge 9:11. An ordinance of perpetuity--so our translation takes it. It is a perpetual decree; it has had its effect all along to this day and shall still continue till day and night come to an end. This perpetual decree the waters of the sea cannot pass over nor break through. Though the waves thereof toss themselves, as the troubled sea does when it cannot rest, yet can they not prevail; though they roar and rage as if they were vexed at the check given them, yet can they not pass over. Now this is a good reason why we should fear God; for,

(1.) By this we see that he is a God of almighty power and universal sovereignty, and therefore to be feared and had in reverence.

(2.) This shows us how easily he could drown the world again and how much we continually lie at his mercy, and therefore we should be afraid of making him our enemy.

(3.) Even the unruly waves of the sea observe his decree and retreat at his check, and shall not we then? Why are our hearts revolting and rebellious, when the sea neither revolts nor rebels?

2. We must fear the Lord and his goodness, Ho 3:5. The instances of this, as of the former, are fetched from God's common providence, Jer 5:24. We must fear the Lord our God, that is, we must worship him, and give him glory, and be always in care to keep ourselves in his love, because he is continually doing us good: he gives us both the former and the latter rain, the former a little after seed-time, the latter a little before harvest, and both in their season; and by this means he reserves to us the appointed weeks of harvest. Harvest is reckoned by weeks, because in a few weeks enough is gathered to serve for sustenance the year round.

The weeks of the harvest are appointed us by the promise of God, that seed-time and harvest shall not fail. And in performance of that promise they are reserved to us by the divine providence, otherwise we should come short of them. In harvest mercies therefore God is to be acknowledged, his power, and goodness, and faithfulness, for they all come from him. And it is good reason why we should fear him, that we may keep ourselves in his love, because we have such a necessary dependence upon him. The fruitful seasons were witnesses for God, even to the heathen world, sufficient to leave them inexcusable in their contempt of him (Ac 14:17); and yet the Jews, who had the written word to explain their testimony by, were not wrought upon to fear the Lord, though it appears how much it is our interest to do so.

23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

25 Your iniquities have turned away these *things*, and your sins have withholden good *things* from you.

Here, I The prophet shows them what mischief their sins had done them: They have turned away these things (Jer 5:25), the former and the latter rain, which they used to have in due season (Jer 5:24), but which had of late been withheld (Jer 3:3), by reason of which the appointed weeks of harvest had sometimes

disappointed them. "It is your sin that has withholden good from you, when God was ready to bestow it upon you." Note, It is sin that stops the current of God's favour to us, and deprives us of the blessings we used to receive. It is that which makes the heavens as brass and the earth as iron.

II. He shows them how great their sins were, how heinous and provoking. When they had forsaken the worship of the true God, even moral honesty was lost among them: Among my people are found wicked men (Jer 5:26), some of the worst of men, and so much the worse they were for being found among God's people.

1. They were spiteful and malicious. Such are properly wicked men, men that delight in doing mischief. They were found (that is, caught) in the very act of their wickedness. As hunters or fowlers lay snares for their game, so did they lie in wait to catch men, and made a sport of it, and took as much pleasure in it as if they had been entrapping beasts or birds. They contrives ways of doing mischief to good people (whom they hated for their goodness), especially to those that faithfully reproved them (Isa 29:21), or to those that stood in the way of their preferment or whom they supposed to have affronted them or done them a diskindness, or to those whose estates they coveted; so Jezebel ensnared Naboth for his vineyard. Nay, they did mischief for mischief's sake.

2. They were false and treacherous (Jer 5:27): "As a cage, or coop, is full of birds, and of food for them to fatten them for the table, so are their houses full of deceit, of wealth obtained by fraudulent practices or of arts and methods of defrauding. All the business of their families is done with deceit; whoever deals with them, they will cheat him if they can, which is easily done by those who make no conscience of what they say and do. Herein they overpass the deed of the wicked, Jer 5:28. Those that act by deceit, with a colour of law and justice, do more mischief perhaps than those wicked men (Jer 5:26) that carry all before them by open force and violence; or they are worse than the heathen themselves, yea, the worst of them. And (would you think it?) they prosper in these wicked courses and therefore their hearts are hardened in them.

They are greedy of the world, because they find it flows in upon them, and they stick not at any wickedness in pursuit of it, because they find that it is so far from hindering their prosperity that it furthers it: They have become great in the world; they have waxen rich, and thrive upon it. They have wherewithal to make provision for the flesh to fulfill all the lusts of it, to which they are very indulgent, so that they have waxen fat with living at ease and bathing themselves in all the delights of sense. They are sleek and smooth: The shine; they look fair and gay; every body admires them. And they pass by matters of evil (so some read the following words); they escape the evils which one would expect their sins should bring upon them; they are not in trouble as other men, much less as we might expect bad men," Ps 73:5, &c.

3. When they had grown great, and had got power in their hands, they did not do that good with it which they ought to have done: They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and the right of the needy. The fatherless are often needy, always need assistance and advice, and advantage is taken of their helpless condition to do them an injury. Who should succour them then but the great and rich? What have men wealth for but to do good with it? But these would take no cognizance of any such distressed cases: they had not so much sense of justice, or compassion for the injured; or, if they did concern themselves in the cause, it was not to do right, but to protect those that did wrong. And yet they prosper still; God layeth not folly to them. Certainly then the things of this world are not the best things, for often-times the worst men have the most of them; yet we are not to think that, because they prosper, God allows of their practices. No; though sentence against their evil works be not executed speedily, it will be executed.

4. There was a general corruption of all orders and degrees of men among them (Jer 5:30,31); A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The degeneracy of such a people, so privileged and advanced, was a wonderful thing, and to be viewed with amazement. How could they ever break through so many obligations? It was a horrible thing, a thing to be detested and the consequences of it dreaded. To frighten ourselves from

sin, let us call it a horrible thing. What was the matter? In short, this:

(1.) The leaders misled the people: The prophets prophesy falsely, counterfeit a commission from heaven when they are factors for hell. Religion is never more dangerously attacked than under colour and pretence of divine revelation. But why did not the priests, who had power in their hands for that purpose, restrain these false prophets? Alas! instead of doing that they made use of them as the tools of their ambition and tyranny: The priests bear rule by their means; they supported themselves in their grandeur and wealth, their laziness and luxury, their impositions and oppressions, by the help of the false prophets and their interest in the people. Thus they were in a combination against every thing that was good, and strengthened one another's hands in evil.

(2.) The people were well enough pleased to be so misled: "They are my people," says God, "and should have stood up for me, and borne their testimony against the wickedness of their priests and prophets; but they love to have it so." If the priests and prophets will let them alone in their sins, they will give them no disturbance in theirs. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and like those rulers very well that will not restrain their lusts and those teachers that will not reprove them.

26 For among my people are found wicked *men:* they lay wait, as he
that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.
27 As a cage is full of birds, so *are* their houses full of deceit: therefore
they are become great, and waxen rich.
28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the
wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they
prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.
29 Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the Lord : shall not my soul
be avenged on such a nation as this?

He shows them how fatal the consequences of this would certainly be. Let them consider,

1. What the reckoning would be for their wickedness (Jer 5:29): Shall not I visit for these things? as before, Jer 5:9. Sometimes

mercy rejoices against judgment: How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Here, judgment is reasoning against mercy: Shall I not visit? We are sure that Infinite Wisdom knows how to accommodate the matter between them. The manner of expression is very emphatic, and denotes,

(1.) The certainty and necessity of God's judgments: Shall not my soul be avenged? Yes, without doubt, vengeance will come, it must come, if the sinner repent not.

(2.) The justice and equity of God's judgments; he appeals to the sinner's own conscience, Do not those deserve to be punished that have been guilty of such abominations? Shall he not be avenged on such a nation, such a wicked provoking nation as this?

2. What the direct tendency of their wickedness was: What will you do in the end thereof? That is,

(1.) "What a pitch of wickedness will you come to at last! What will you do? What will you not do that is base and wicked. What will this grow to? You will certainly grow worse and worse, till you have filled up the measure of your iniquity."

(2.) "What a pit of destruction will you come to at last! When things are brought to such a pass as this, nothing can be expected from you but a deluge of sin, so nothing can be expected from God but a deluge of wrath; and what will you do when that shall come?" Note, Those that walk in bad ways would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin. An end will come; the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be all called over again, and without doubt will be bitterness in the latter end.

30 A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

31 the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love *to have it* so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Jeremiah-6

The Doom of Jerusalem and Judah

1 O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst
of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of
fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great
destruction.

Here is; judgment threatened against Judah and Jerusalem. The city and the country were at this time secure and under no apprehension of danger; they saw no cloud gathering, but every thing looked safe and serene: but the prophet tells them that they shall shortly be invaded by a foreign power, an army shall be brought against them from the north, which shall lay all waste, and shall cause not only a general consternation, but a general desolation. It is here foretold,

1. That the alarm of this should be loud and terrible. This is represented, Jer 6:1 The children of Benjamin, in which tribe part of Jerusalem lay, are here called to shift for their own safety in the country; for the city (to which it was first thought advisable for them to flee, Jer 4:5,6) would soon be made too hot for them, and they would find it the wisest course to flee out of the midst of it. It is common, in public frights, for the people to think any place safer than that in which they are; and therefore those in the city are for shifting into the country, in hopes there to escape out of danger, and those in the country are for shifting into the city, in hopes there to make head against the danger; but it is all in vain when evil pursues sinners with commission. They are told to send the alarm into the country, and to do what they can for their own safety: Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, a city which lay twelve miles north from Jerusalem. Let them be stirred up to stand upon their guard: Set up a sign of fire (that is, kindle the beacons) in Beth-haccerem, the house of the vineyard, which lay on a hill between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Prepare to make a vigorous resistance, for the evil appears out of the north. This may be taken ironically: "Betake yourselves to the best methods you can think of for your own preservation, but all shall be in vain; for, when you have done

your best, it will be a great destruction, for it is in vain to contend with God's judgments."

2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable and such as they should be a very unequal match for.

(1.) See what the daughter of Zion is, on whom the assault is made. She is compared to a comely and delicate woman (Jer 6:2), bred up in every thing that is nice and soft, that will not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy (De 28:56), nor suffer the wind to blow upon her; and, not being accustomed to hardship, she will be the less able either to resist the enemy (for those that make war must endure hardness) or to bear the destruction with that patience which is necessary to make it tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this life the more we disfit ourselves for the troubles of this life.

(2.) See what the daughter of Babylon is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to shepherds and their flocks (Jer 6:3), in such numbers and in such order did they come, the soldiers following their leaders as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of Zion dwelt at home (so some read it), expecting to be courted with love, but was invaded with fury. This comparing of the enemies to shepherds inclines me to embrace another reading, which some give of Jer 6:2, The daughter of Zion is like a comely pasture-ground and a delicate land, which invite the shepherds to bring their flocks thither to graze; and as the shepherds easily make themselves masters of an open field, which (as was then usual in some parts) lies common, owned by none, pitch their tents in it, and their flocks quickly eat it bare, so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all. For the further illustration of this he shows,

[1.] How God shall commission them to make this destruction even of the holy land and the holy city, which were his own possession. It is he that says (Jer 6:4), Prepare you war against her; for he is the Lord of hosts, that has all hosts at his command,

and he has said (Jer 6:6), Hew you down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem, in order to the attacking of it. The Chaldeans have great power against Judah and Jerusalem, and yet they have no power but what is given them from above. God has marked out Jerusalem for destruction. He has said, "This is the city to be visited, visited in wrath, visited by the divine justice, and this is the time of her visitation." The day is coming when those that are careless and secure in sinful ways will certainly be visited.

[2.] How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or disannulled, the councils of war which the enemies held are made to agree with his counsels. God having said, Prepare war against her, their determinations are made subservient to his; and, notwithstanding the distance of place and the many difficulties that lay in the way, it is soon resolved, nemine contradicente--unanimously. Arise, and let us go. Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God are pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, Isa 10:6,7. In this campaign,

First, They resolve to be very expeditious. They have no sooner resolved upon it than they address themselves to it; it shall never be said that they left any thing to be done towards it to-morrow which they could do to-day: Arise, let us go up at noon, though it be in the heat of the day; nay, (Jer 6:5), Arise, let us go up at night, though it be in the dark. Nothing shall hinder them; they are resolved to lose no time. They are described as men in care to make despatch (Jer 6:4): "Woe unto us, for the day goes away, and we are not going on with our work; the shadows of the evening are stretched out, and we sit still, and let slip the opportunity." O that we were thus eager in our spiritual work and warfare, thus afraid of losing time, or any opportunity, in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence! It is folly to trifle when we have an eternal salvation to work out, and the enemies of that salvation to fight against.

Secondly, They confidently expect to be very successful: "Let us go up, and let us destroy her palaces and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them." It was not that they might fulfill God's counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager; yet God thereby served his own purposes.

2 I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate
woman.
3 The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch
their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his
place.
4 Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Woe unto
us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are
stretched out.
5 Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces.
6 For thus hath the Lord of hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast
a mount against Jerusalem: this *is* the city to be visited; she *is*
wholly oppression in the midst of her.

The cause of this judgment assigned. It is all for their wickedness; they have brought it upon themselves; they must bear it, for they must bear the blame of it. They are thus oppressed because they have been oppressors; they have dealt hardly with one another, each in his turn, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enemy shall come and deal hardly with them all. This sin of oppression, and violence, and wrong-doing, is here charged upon them,

1. As a national sin (Jer 6:6): Therefore this city is to be visited, it is time to make inquisition, for she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you might, there were causes for complaints of this kind.

2. As a sin that had become in a manner natural to them (Jer 6:7): She casts out wickedness, in all the instances of malice and mischievousness, as a fountain casts out her waters, so plentifully and constantly, the streams bitter and poisonous, like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will find

or force their way, nor will they be checked by laws or conscience in their violent proceedings. This is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in his natural state; it casts out wickedness, one evil imagination or other, as a fountain casts out her waters, naturally and easily; it is always flowing, and yet always full.

3. As that which had become a constant practice with them; Violence and spoil are heard in her. The cry of it had come up before God as that of Sodom: Before me continually are grief and wounds--the complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common Parent of mankind regards and resents, and sooner or later will revenge, the mischiefs and wrongs that men do to one another.

7 As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her
wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me
continually *is* grief and wounds.

8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest
I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

The counsel given them how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given now upon the whole matter: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem! Jer 6:8. Receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by the prophets; be wise at length for thyself." They knew very well what they had been instructed to do; nothing remained but to do it, for till then they could not be said to be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they ran upon if they refused to comply with the instructions given them: Lest my soul depart, or be disjoined, from thee. This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it.

Note, 1 The God of mercy is loth to depart even from a provoking people, and is earnest with them by true repentance and reformation to prevent things coming to that extremity.

2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined; it intimates the loss not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. Compare this with that

dreadful word (Heb 10:38), If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 3. Those whom God forsakes are certainly undone; when God's soul departs from Jerusalem she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited, Mt 23:38.

9 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grape gatherer into the baskets.

The heads of this paragraph are the very same with those of the last; for precept must be upon precept and line upon line.

The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here threatened. We had before the haste which the Chaldea army made to the war (Jer 6:4,5); now here we have the havoc made by the war. How lamentable are the desolations here described! The enemy shall so long quarter among them, and be so insatiable in their thirst after blood and treasure, that they shall seize all they can meet with, and what escapes them at one time shall fall into their hands another (Jer 6:9): They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine; as the grape-gatherer, who is resolved to leave none behind, still turns back his hand into the baskets, to put more in, till he has gathered all, so that they be picked up by the enemy, though dispersed, though hid, and none of them shall escape their eye and hand. Perhaps the people, being given to covetousness (Jer 6:13), had not observed that law of God which forbade them to glean all their grapes (Le 19:10), and now they themselves shall be in like manner thoroughly gleaned and shall either fall by the sword or go into captivity. This is explained Jer 6:11,12, where God's fury and his hand are said to be poured out and stretched out, in the fury and by the hand of the Chaldeans; for even wicked men are often made use of as God's hand (Ps 17:14), and in their anger we may see God angry. Now see on whom the fury is poured out in full vials--upon the children abroad, or in the streets, where they are playing (Zec 8:5) or whither they run out innocently to look about them: the sword of the merciless Chaldeans shall not spare them, Jer 9:21.

The children perish in the calamity which the fathers' sins have procured. The execution shall likewise reach the assembly of young men, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness; they shall be cut

off together. Nor shall those only fall into the enemies' hands who meet for lewdness (Jer 5:7), but even the husband with the wife shall be taken, these two in bed together, and neither left, but both taken prisoners. And, as they have no compassion for the weak but fair sex, so they have none for the decrepit but venerable age: The old with the full of days, whose deaths can contribute no more to their safety than their lives to their service, who are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, shall be either cut off or carried off. Their houses shall then be turned to others (Jer 6:12); the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their stores; their fields and vines shall fall together into their hands, as was threatened, De 28:30, &c. For God stretches out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land, and none can go out of the reach of it. Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath,

1 The prophet justifies himself in preaching thus terribly, for herein he dealt faithfully (Jer 6:11): "I am full of the fury of the Lord, full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently." He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him uneasy; but he could not contain himself; he was weary with holding in; he suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he durst, but he was so full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that he must speak, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the scripture we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their message, pleasing or unpleasing.

2. He condemns the false prophets who preached plausibly, for therein they flattered people and dealt unfaithfully (Jer 6:13,14): The priest and the prophet, who should be their watchmen and monitors, have dealt falsely, have not been true to their trust not told the people their faults and the danger they were in; they should have been their physicians, but they murdered their patients by letting them have their will, by giving them every thing that had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger (Jer 6:14): They have healed the hurt of the

daughter of my people slightly, or according to the cure of some slight hurt, skinning over the wound and never searching it to the bottom, applying lenitives only, when there was need of corrosives, soothing people in their sins, and giving them opiates to make them easy for the present, while the disease was preying upon the vitals. They said, "Peace peace--all shall be well." (if there were some thinking people among them, who were awake, and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetical authority, boldly averring that neither church nor state was in any danger), when there is no peace, because they went on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends (that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies) who flatter us in a sinful way.

10 To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear?
Behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken:
behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have
no delight in it.

11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding
in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the
assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife
shall be taken, the aged with *him that is* full of days.

12 And their houses shall be turned unto others, *with their* fields and
wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants
of the land, saith the Lord.

The sin of Judah and Jerusalem, which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them and justified him in it, is here declared.

1. They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming (Jer 6:9), "but," says he, "to whom shall I speak and give warning? I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a patient hearing. I may give warning long enough, but these is nobody that will take warning. I cannot speak that they may hear, cannot speak to any purpose, or with any hope of success; for their ear is uncircumcised, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that they cannot hearken. They have, as it were, a thick skin grown over the organs of hearing, so that divine things might to as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to

them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved that they will not: The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; both the reproofs and the threatenings of the word are so;" they reckoned themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resented the prophet's plain-dealing with them as they would the most causeless slander and calumny.

This was kicking against the pricks (Ac 9:5), as the lawyers against the word of Christ, Lu 11:45, Thus saying, thou repoachest us also. Note, Those reproofs that are counted reproaches, and hated as such, will certainly be turned into the heaviest woes. When it is here said, They have no delight in the word, more is implied than is expressed; "they have an antipathy to it; their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them, and enrages their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face and pull out the eyes of their reprovers." And how can those expect that the word of the Lord should speak any comfort to them who have no delight in it, but would rather be any where than within hearing of it?

2. They were inordinately set upon the world, and wholly carried away by the love of it (Jer 6:13): "From the least of them even to the greatest, old and young, rich and poor, high and low, those of all ranks, professions, and employments, every one is given to covetousness, greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, per fas per nefas--right or wrong;" and this made them oppressive and violent (Jer 6:6,7), for of those evils, as well as others, the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets. It was the covetous Pharisees that derided Christ, Lu 16:14.

3. They had become impudent in sin and were past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask (Jer 6:15), Were they ashamed when they had committed all these abominations, which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? Did they blush at the conviction, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is some hope of them yet. But, alas! there did not appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened that they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, they

had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions which should have humbled them and brought them to repentance.

They resolved to face it out against God himself and not to own their guilt. Some refer this to the priests and prophets, who had healed the people slightly and told them that they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them and gave them the lie. Those that are shameless are graceless and their case is hopeless. But those that will not submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows: Therefore they shall fall among those that fall; they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and, when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be cast down and be made to tremble, because they would not blush.

Note, Those that sin and cannot blush for it are in an evil case now, and it will be worse with them shortly. At first they hardened themselves and would not blush, afterwards they were so hardened that they could not. Quod unum habebant in malis bonum perdunt, peccandi verecundiam--they have lost the only good property which once blended itself with many bad ones, that is, shame for having done amiss.--Senec. De Vit. Beat.

13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one
is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest
every one dealeth falsely.

14 They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people
slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose,

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, Jer 6:16. God had been used to say to them, Stand in the ways and see. That is,

(1.) He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but to do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause

and enquire for it. If they have any reason to think that they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have obtained satisfaction. O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe lawful and unlawful are of no less consequence to us than the right way and the wrong are to a traveller!

(2.) He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them: "Ask for the old paths, enquire of the former age (Job 8:8), ask thy father, thy elders (De 32:7), and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness has always been the way which God has owned and blessed and in which men have prospered. Ask for the old paths, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and, as you hope to inherit the promises made to them, tread in their steps. Ask for the old paths, Where is the good way?" We must not be guided merely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path. No; there is an old way which wicked men have trodden, Job 22:15. But, when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the good way, the highway of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a good old way, the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in.

(3.) He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these enquiries: "When you have found out which is the good way, walk therein, practise accordingly, keep closely to that way, proceed, and persevere in it." Some make this counsel to be given them with reference to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets, between those that said they should have peace and those that told them trouble was at the door; they pretended they knew not which to believe: "Stand in the way," says God, "and see, and enquire, which of these two agrees with the written word and the usual methods of God's providence, which of these directs you to the good way, and do accordingly."

(4.) He assures them that, if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls: "Walk in the good old way and you will find your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant;

you will enjoy both your God and yourselves, and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk in that way, you will find an abundant recompence at your journey's end."

(5.) He laments that this good counsel, which was so rational in itself and so proper for them, could not find acceptance: "But they said, We will not walk therein, not only we will not be at the pains to enquire which is the good way, the good old way; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourselves and our humours so far as to walk in it." Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger. Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by less judgments he threatens greater, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in (Jer 6:17); Also I set watchmen over you. God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them set over us in the Lord. Now observe here,

(1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen. This was the burden of their song; they cried again and again, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. God, in his providence, sounds the trumpet (Zec 9:14); the watchmen hear it themselves and are affected with it (Jer 4:19), and they are to call upon others to hearken to it too, to hear the Lord's controversy, to observe the voice of Providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it.

(2.) This fair warning slighted: "But they said, We will not hearken; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble." The reason why sinners perish is because they do not hearken to the sound of the trumpet; and the reason why they do not is because they will not; and they have no reason to give why they will not but because they will not, that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may more easily deal with ten men's reasons than one man's will.

15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore

they shall fall among them that fall: at the time *that* I visit them
they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.
16 Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the
old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find
rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein.*
17 Also I set watchmen over you, *saying,* Hearken to the sound of the
trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.
18 Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what *is*
among them.

Here, I. God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem (Jer 6:18,19): "Hear, you nations, and know particularly, O congregation of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of states about you and make remarks upon them. Observe now what is doing among those of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them, the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should bring evil upon this people, that are in covenant with me, that profess relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land? De 29:24. Know then,"

1. "That it is the natural product of their devices. The evil brought upon them is the fruit of their thought. They thought to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves, they betrayed and exposed themselves."

2. "That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion. God does but execute upon them the curse of the law for their violation of its commands. It is because they have not hearkened to my words nor to my law, nor regarded a word I have said to them, but rejected it all. They would never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's hand if they had not refused to be ruled by the judgments of his mouth: therefore you cannot say that they have any wrong done them."

II. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas! it is a frivolous plea (Jer 6:20): "To what purpose come there to me incense and sweet cane, to be burnt for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices?" They not only cannot profit God (no sacrifice does, Ps 50:9), but they do not please him, for none does this but the sacrifice of the upright; that of the wicked is an abomination to him. Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a Mediator, and assist their faith in him. Where this good use was made of them they were acceptable, God had respect to them and to those that offered them. But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their debtor, and purchased a license to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God that they were a provocation to him.

III. He foretels the desolation that was now coming upon them.

1. God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed (Jer 6:21): I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, occasions of falling not into sin, but into trouble. Those whom God has marked for destruction he perplexes and embarrasses in their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy, which they met with wherever they went, were stumbling-blocks to them; in ever corner they stumbled upon them and were dashed to pieces by them: The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them, or get over them. The sons that sinned with their fathers fall with them. Even the neighbour and his friend shall perish and not be able to help either themselves or one another.

2. He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do he will find out proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched from the north, from the sides of the earth. Babylon itself lay a great way off northward; and some of the countries that were subject to the

king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much further. These must be employed in this service, Jer 6:22,23.

For, (1.) It is a people very numerous, a great nation, which will make their invasion the more formidable.

(2.) It is a warlike people. They lay hold on bow and spear, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them. They ride upon horses, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry that the Chaldeans.

(3.) It is a barbarous people. They are cruel and have no mercy, being greedy of prey and flushed with victory. They take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice roars like the sea. And,

(4.) They have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country. They are set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion! The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

20 To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

21 Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbor and his friend shall perish.

22 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.

23 They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they *are* cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

24 We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

25 Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy *and* fear *is* on every side.

He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in upon the approach of this formidable enemy, Jer 6:24-26.

1. They own themselves in a fright, upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy: "When we have but heard the fame thereof our hands wax feeble, and we have no heart to make any resistance; anguish has taken hold of us, and we are immediately in an extremity of pain, like that of a woman in travail." Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men, upon the approach of any threatening trouble. What can those hope to do for themselves who have made God their enemy?

2. They confine themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad; for, though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meanly there than run any venture, either by fight or flight, to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, "Go not forth into the field, no not to fetch in your provision thence, nor walk by the way; dare not to go to church or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the sword of the enemy, and the fear of it, are on every side; the highways are unoccupied, as in Jael's time," Jdg 5:6. Let this remind us, when we travel the roads in safety and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the public tranquillity.

3. The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations: "O daughter of my people, hear they God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call: do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but gird it on for thy constant wear; do not only put ashes on thy head, but wallow thyself in ashes; put thyself into close mourning, and use all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and for show only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents mourn for an only son, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us. Though he has not come

yet, he is coming, the decree has gone forth: let us therefore meet the execution of it with a suitable sadness." As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatenings.

26 O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, *as for* an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

27 I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way.

28 They *are* all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: *they are* brass and iron; they *are* all corrupters.

He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial: as Jer 1:10, I have set thee over the nations; so here, I have set thee for a tower, or as a sentinel, or a watchman, upon a tower, among my people, as an inspector of their actions, that thou mayest know, and try their way, Jer 6:27. Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison but by the spirit of prophecy. But thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower, conspicuous to all and attacked by many, but made him a fortress, a strong tower, gave him courage to stem the tide and bear the shock of their displeasure. Those that will be faithful reprovers have need to be firm as fortresses. Now in trying their way he will find two things:--

1. That they are wretchedly debauched (Jer 6:28): They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters (so the word is), the worst of revolters, as a servant of servants is the meanest servant. They have a revolting heart, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They seemed to start fair, but they revolt and start back. They walk with slanders; they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another, nay, they make a perfect trade of it; it is their constant course, and they govern themselves by the slanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill-spoken of, though ever so unjustly. They are brass and iron, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable. They were as silver and gold, but they

have degenerated. Nay, as they are all revolters, so they are all corrupters, not only debauched themselves, but industrious to debauch others, to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. It is often so; sinners soon become tempters.

2. That they would never be reclaimed and reformed; it was in vain to think of reforming them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, Jer 6:29,30. He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains, about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people and to purify them from their wickedness; but it was all in vain. By the continual preaching of the word, and in a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose.

The bellows have been still kept so near the fire, to blow it, that they are burnt with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The lead, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, is consumed of the fire, and has not done its work. The founder melts in vain; his labour is lost, for the wicked are not plucked away, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the old leaven, to cast out of communion those who, being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others.

Or, Their wickednesses are not removed (so some read it); they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins. They will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have heard, and all they have felt, of the wrath of God against them; and therefore that doom is passed upon them (Jer 6:30): Reprobate silver shall they be called, useless and worthless; they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason the Lord has rejected them.

He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will take them away like dross (Ps 119:119), and prepare a consuming fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire. By this it appears,

(1.) That God has no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction and qualify them for salvation. Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins; and yet with many it is all lost labour. We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept.

Therefore, (2.) God will be justified in the death of sinners and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reform them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hope of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared that they were reprobate silver.

29 The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the
founder melteth in vain: for the wicked are not plucked away.
30 Reprobate silver shall *men* call them, because the Lord hath
rejected them.

Jeremiah-7

Amend Your Ways and Your Doings

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters, much to the same effect with those before, to reason them to repentance. Observe,

I The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions for every message he delivered. This was a word that came to him from the Lord, Jer 7:1. We are not told when this sermon was to be preached; but are told,

1. Where it must be preached--in the gate of the Lord's house, through which they entered into the outer court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do.

2. To whom it must be preached--to the men of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord; probably it was at one of three feasts, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to appear empty: then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most seasonable time to admonish them not to trust to their privileges. Note,

(1.) Even those that profess religion have need to be preached to as well as those that are without.

(2.) It is desirable to have opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom chooses to cry in the chief place of concourse, and, as Jeremiah here, in the opening of the gates, the temple-gates.

(3.) When we are going to worship God we have need to be admonished to worship him in the spirit, and to have no confidence in the flesh, Php 3:3.

II The contents and scope of the sermon itself. It is delivered in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who commands the world, but covenants with his people. As creatures we are bound to regard the Lord of hosts, as Christians the God of Israel; what he said to them he says to us, and it is much the same with that which John Baptist said to those whom he baptized (Mt 3:8,9), Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. The prophet here tells them,

1. What were the true words of God, which they might trust to. In short, they might depend upon it that if they would repent and

reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore and confirm their peace, would redress their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy (Jer 7:3): Amend your ways and your doings. This implies that there had been much amiss in their ways and doings, many faults and errors. But it is a great instance of the favour of God to them that he gives them liberty to amend, shows them where and how they must amend, and promises to accept them upon their amendment: "I will cause you to dwell quietly and peaceably in this place, and a stop shall be put to that which threatens your expulsion." Reformation is the only way, and a sure way to ruin. He explains himself (Jer 7:5-7), and tells them particularly,

(1.) What the amendment was which he expected from them. They must thoroughly amend; in making good, they must make good their ways and doings; they must reform with resolution, and it must be a universal, constant, preserving reformation--not partial, but entire--not hypocritical, but sincere--not wavering, but constant. They must make the tree good, and so make the fruit good, must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend their ways and doings. In particular,

[1.] They must be honest and just in all their dealings. Those that had power in their hands must thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, without partiality, and according as the merits of the cause appeared. They must not either in judgment or in contract oppress the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor countenance or protect those that did oppress, nor refuse to do them justice when they sought for it. They must not shed innocent blood, and with it defile this place and the land wherein they dwelt.

[2.] They must keep closely to the worship of the true God only: "Neither walk after other gods; do not hanker after them, nor hearken to those that would draw you into communion with idolaters; for it is, and will be, to your own hurt. Be not only so just to your God, but so wise for yourselves, as not to throw away your adorations upon those who are not able to help you, and thereby provoke him who is able to destroy you." Well, this is all that God insists upon.

(2.) He tells them what the establishment is which, upon this amendment, they may expect from him (Jer 7:7): "Set about such a work of reformation as this with all speed, go through with it, and abide by it; and I will cause you to dwell in this place, this temple; it shall continue your place of resort and refuge, the place of your comfortable meeting with God and one another; and you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever, and it shall never be turned out either from God's house or from your own." It is promised that they shall still enjoy their civil and sacred privileges, that they shall have a comfortable enjoyment of them: I will cause you to dwell here; and those dwell at ease to whom God gives a settlement. They shall enjoy it by covenant, by virtue of the grant made of it to their fathers, not by providence, but by promise. They shall continue in the enjoyment of it without eviction or molestation; they shall not be disturbed, much less dispossessed, for ever and ever; nothing but sin could throw them out. An everlasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby secured to all that live in godliness and honesty. And the vulgar Latin reads a further privilege here, Jer 7:3,7. Habitabo vobiscum--I will dwell with you in this place; and we should find Canaan itself but an uncomfortable place to dwell in if God did not dwell with us there.

2. What were the lying words of their own hearts, which they must not trust to. He cautions them against this self-deceit (Jer 7:4): "Trust no in lying words. You are told in what way, and upon what terms, you may be easy safe, and happy; now do not flatter yourselves with an opinion that you may be so on any other terms, or in any other way." Yet he charges them with this self-deceit arising from vanity (Jer 7:8): "Behold, it is plain that you do trust in lying words, notwithstanding what is said to you; you trust in words that cannot profit; you rely upon a plea that will stand you in no stead." Those that slight the words of truth, which would profit them, take shelter in words of falsehood, which cannot profit them. Now these lying words were, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. These buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are the temple of the Lord, built by his appointment, to his glory; here he resides, here he is worshipped, here we meet three times a

year to pay our homage to him as our King in his palace." This they thought was security enough to them to keep God and his favours from leaving them, God and his judgments from breaking in upon them. When the prophets told them how sinful they were, and how miserable they were likely to be, still they appealed to the temple: "How can we be either so or so, as long as we have that holy happy place among us?" The prophet repeats it because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times; it was in their mouths upon all occasions. If they heard an awakening sermon, if any startling piece of news was brought to them, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, "We cannot but do well, for we have the temple of the Lord among us."

Note, The privileges of a form of godliness are often the pride and confidence of those that are strangers and enemies to the power of it. It is common for those that are furthest from God to boast themselves most of their being near to the church. They are haughty because of the holy mountain (Zep 3:11), as if God's mercy were so tied to them that they might defy his justice. Now to convince them what a frivolous plea this was, and what little stead it would stand them in,

(1.) He shows them the gross absurdity of it in itself. If they knew any thing either of the temple of the Lord or of the Lord of the temple, they must think that to plead that, either in excuse of their sin against God or in arrest of God's judgment against them, was the most ridiculous unreasonable thing that could be.

[1.] God is a holy God; but this plea made him the patron of sin, of the worst of sins, which even the light of nature condemns, Jer 7:9,10. "What," says he, "will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, be guilty of the vilest immoralities, and which the common interest, as well as the common sense, of mankind witness against? Will you swear falsely, a crime which all nations (who with the belief of a God have had a veneration for an oath) have always had a horror of? Will you burn incense to Baal, a dunghill-deity, that sets up as a rival with the great Jehovah, and, not content with that, will you walk after other gods too, whom you know not, and by all these crimes put a daring affront upon God, both as the Lord of hosts and as the God of Israel? Will you

exchange a God of whose power and goodness you have had such a long experience for gods of whose ability and willingness to help you you know nothing? And, when you have thus done the worst you can against God, will you brazen your faces so far as to come and stand before him in this house which is called by his name and in which his name is called upon--stand before him as servants waiting his commands, as supplicants expecting his favour? Will you act in open rebellion against him, and yet herd among his subjects, among the best of them? By this, it should seem, you think that either he does not discover or does not dislike your wicked practices, to imagine either of which is to put the highest indignity possible upon him. It is as if you should say, We are delivered to do all these abominations." If they had not the front to say this, totidem verbis--in so many words, yet their actions spoke it aloud. They could not but own that God, even their own God, had many a time delivered them, and been a present help to them, when otherwise they must have perished. He, in delivering them, designed to reduce them to himself, and by his goodness to lead them to repentance; but they resolved to persist in their abominations notwithstanding. As soon as they were delivered (as of old in the days of the Judges) they did evil again in the sight of the Lord, which was in effect to say, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences which had affected them, that God had delivered them in order to put them again into a capacity of rebelling against him, by sacrificing the more profusely to their idols. Note, Those who continue in sin because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do in effect their idols.

Note, Those who continue in sin because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do in effect make Christ the minister of sin. Some take it thus: "You present yourselves before God with your sacrifices and sin-offerings, and then say, We are delivered, we are discharged from our guilt, now it shall do us no hurt; when all this is but to blind the world, and stop the mouth of conscience, that you may, the more easily to yourselves and the more plausibly before others, do all these abominations."

[2.] His temple was a holy place; but this plea made it a protection to the most unholy persons: "Has this house, which is called by

my name and is a standing sign of God's kingdom of sin and Satan--has this become a den of robbers in your eyes? Do you think it was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and shelter to, the vilest of malefactors?" No; though the horns of the altar were a sanctuary to him that slew a man unawares, yet they were not so to a wilful murderer, nor to one that did aught presumptuously, Ex 21:14,1Ki 2:29. Those that think to excuse themselves in unchristian practices with the Christian name, and sin the more boldly and securely because there is a sin-offering provided, do, in effect, make God's house of prayer a den of thieves, as the priests in Christ's time, Mt 21:13. But could they thus impose upon God? No: Behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord, have seen the real iniquity through the counterfeit and dissembled piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the appearances of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God.

(2.) He shows them the insufficiency of this plea adjudged long since in the case of Shiloh.

[1.] It is certain that Shiloh was ruined, though it had God's sanctuary in it, when by its wickedness it profaned that sanctuary (Jer 7:12): Go you now to my place which was in Shiloh. It is probable that the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining; they might, at least, read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place. There God set his name at the first, there the tabernacle was set up when Israel first took possession of Canaan (Joh 18:1), and thither the tribes went up; but those that attended the service of the tabernacle there corrupted both themselves and others, and from them arose the wickedness of his people Israel; that fountain was poisoned, and sent forth malignant streams; and what came of it? No; God forsook it (Ps 78:60), sent his ark into captivity, cut off the house of Eli that presided there; and it is very probable that the city was quite destroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of divine vengeance upon holy places when they harbour wicked people.

Note, God's judgments upon others, who have really revolted from God while they have kept up a profession of nearness to him, should be a warning to us not to trust in lying words. It is good to

consult precedents, and make use of them. Remember Lot's wife; remember Shiloh and the seven churches of Asia; and know that the ark and candlestick are moveable things, Re 2:5,Mt 21:43.

[2.] It is as certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jerusalem's doom if a speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not.

First, Jerusalem was now as sinful as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring testimony of God himself against them (Jer 7:13): "You have done all these works, you cannot deny it:" and they continued obstinate in their sin; that is proved by the testimony of God's return and repent, rising up early and speaking, as one in care, as one in earnest, as one who would lose no time in dealing with them, nay, who would take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them early in the morning, when, if ever, they were sober, and had their thoughts free and clear; but it was all in vain. God spoke, but they heard not, they heeded not, they never minded; he called them, but they answered not; they would not come at his call. Note, What God has spoken to us greatly aggravates what we have done against him.

Secondly, Jerusalem shall shortly be as miserable as ever Shiloh was: Therefore I will do unto this house as I did to Shiloh, ruin it, and lay it waste, Jer 7:14. Those that tread in the steps of the wickedness of those that went before them must expect to fall by the like judgments, for all these things happened to them for ensamples. The temple at Jerusalem, though ever so strongly built, if wickedness was found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground and as easily conquered as even the tabernacle in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance had come. "This house" (says God) "is called by my name, and therefore you may think that I should protect it; it is the house in which you trust, and you think that it will protect you; this land is the place, this city the place, which I gave to you and your fathers, and therefore you are secure of the continuance of it, and think that nothing can turn you out of it; but the men of Shiloh thus flattered themselves and did but deceive themselves." He quotes another precedent (Jer 7:15), the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the seed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumcision, and possessed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet the

idolatries threw them out and extirpated them: "And can you think but that the same evil courses will be as fatal to you?"

Doubtless they will be so; for God is uniform and of a piece with himself in his judicial proceedings. It is a rule of justice, ut parium par sit ratio--that in similar cases the same judgment should proceed. "You have corrupted yourselves as your brethren the seed of Ephraim did, and have become their brethren in iniquity, and therefore I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast them." The interpretation here given of the judgment makes it a terrible one indeed; the casting of them out of their land signified God's casting them out of his sight, as if he would never look upon them, never look after them, more. Whenever we are cast, it is well enough, if we be kept in the love of God; but, if we are thrown out of his favour, our case is miserable though we dwell in our own land. This threatening, that God would make this house like Shiloh, we shall meet with again, and find Jeremiah indicted for it, Jer 26:6.

2 Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this
word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all *ye of* Judah, that
enter in at these gates to worship the Lord.
3 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways
and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.
4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The
temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, *are* these.
5 For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye
thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor;
6 *if* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed
not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to
your hurt;
7 then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to
your fathers, for ever and ever.
8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.
9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and
burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know
not;
10 and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my
name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers
in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the Lord.
12 But go ye now unto my place which *was* in Shiloh, where I set my
name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my
people Israel.
13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord,
and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard
not; and I called you, but ye answered not;
14 therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my name,
wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to
your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.
15 And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your
brethren, *even* the whole seed of Ephraim.
16 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor
prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not
hear thee.

God had shown them, in the foregoing verses, that the temple and the service of it, of which they boasted and in which they trusted, should not avail to prevent the judgment threatened. But there was another thing which might stand them in some stead, and which yet they had no value for, and that was the prophet's intercession for them; his prayers would do them more good than their own pleas: now here that support is taken from them; and their case is said indeed who have lost their interest in the prayers of God's ministers and people.

I. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them (Jer 7:16): "The decree has gone forth, their ruin is resolved on, therefore pray not thou for this people, that is, pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatened; they have sinned unto death, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their souls," 1Jo 5:16. See here,

1. That God's prophets are praying men; Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, and yet prayed for their preservation, not knowing that the decree was absolute; and it is the will of God that we pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Even when we threaten sinners with damnation we must pray for their salvation, that they may turn and live. Jeremiah was hated, and

persecuted, and reproached, by the children of his people, and yet he prayed for them; for it becomes us to render good for evil.

2. That God's praying prophets have a great interest in heaven, how little soever they have on earth. When God has determined to destroy this people, he bespeaks the prophet not to pray for them, because he would not have his prayers to lie (as prophets' prayers seldom did) unanswered. God said to Moses, Let me alone, Ex 22:10.

3. It is an ill omen to a people when God restrains the spirits of his ministers and people from praying for them, and gives them to see their case so desperate that they have no heart to speak a good word for them.

4. Those that will not regard good ministers' preaching cannot expect any benefit by their praying. If you will not hear us when we speak from God to you, God will not hear us when we speak to him for you.

II. He gives him a reason for this prohibition. Praying breath is too precious a thing to be lost and thrown away upon a people hardened in sin and marked for ruin.

1. They are resolved to persist in their rebellion against God, and will not be turned back by the prophet's preaching. For this he appeals to the prophet himself, and his own inspection and observation (Jer 7:17): Seest thou not what they do openly and publicly, without either shame or fear, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? This intimates both that the sin was evident and could not be denied and that the sinners were impudent and would not be reclaimed; they committed their wickedness even in the prophet's presence and under his eye; he saw what they did, and yet they did it, which was an affront to his office, and to him whose officer he was, and bade defiance to both. Now observe,

(1.) What the sin is with which they are here charged--it is idolatry, Jer 7:18. Their idolatrous respects are paid to the queen of heaven, the moon, either in an image or in the original, or

both. They worshipped it probably under the name of Ashtaroth, or some other of their goddesses, being in love with the brightness in which they saw the moon walk, and thinking themselves indebted to her for her benign influences or fearing her malignant ones, Job 31:26. The worshipping of the moon was much in use among the heathen nations, Jer 44:17,19. Some read it the frame or workmanship of heaven. The whole celestial globe with all its ornaments and powers was the object of their adoration. They worshipped the host of heaven, Ac 7:42.

The homage they should have paid to their Prince they paid to the statues that beautified the frontispiece of his palace; they worshipped the creatures instead of him that made them, the servants instead of him that commands them, and the gifts instead of him that gave them. With the queen of heaven they worshipped other gods, images of things not only in heaven above, but in earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; for those that forsake the true God wander endlessly after false ones. To these deities of their own making they offer cakes for meat-offerings, and pour out drink-offerings, as if they had their meat and drink from them and were obliged to make to them their acknowledgments: and see how busy they are, and how every hand is employed in the service of these idols, according as they used to be employed in their domestic services. The children were sent to gather wood; the fathers kindled the fire to heat the oven, being of the poorer sort that could not afford to keep servants to do it, yet they would rather do it themselves than it should be undone; the women kneaded the dough with their own hands, for perhaps, though they had servants to do it, they took a pride in showing their zeal for their idols by doing it themselves. Let us be instructed, even by this bad example, in the service of our God.

[1.] Let us honour him with our substance, as those that have our subsistence from him, and eat and drink to the glory of him from whom we have our meat and drink.

[2.] Let us not decline the hardest services, nor disdain to stoop to the meanest, by which God may be honoured; for none shall kindle a fire on God's altar for nought. Let us think it an honour

to be employed in any work for God. [3.] Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion; let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing something towards the keeping up of religious exercises.

(2.) What is the direct tendency of this sin: "It is that they may provoke me to anger; they cannot design any thing else in it. But (Jer 7:19) do they provoke me to anger? Is it because I am hard to be pleased, or easily provoked? Or am I to bear the blame of the resentment? No; it is their own doing; they may thank themselves, and they alone shall bear it." Is it against God that they provoke him to wrath? Is he the worse for it? Does it do him any real damage? No; is it not against themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? It is malice against God, but it is impotent malice; it cannot hurt him: nay, it is foolish malice; it will hurt themselves. They show their spite against God, but they do the spite to themselves. Canst thou think any other than that a people, thus desperately set upon their own ruin, should be abandoned?

2. God is resolved to proceed in his judgments against them, and will not be turned back by the prophet's prayers (Jer 7:20): Thus saith the Lord God, and what he saith he will not unsay, nor can all the world gainsay it; hear it therefore, and tremble. "Behold, my anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, as the flood of waters was upon the old world or the shower of fire and brimstone upon Sodom; since they will anger me, let them see what will come of it." They shall soon find,

(1.) That there is no escaping this deluge of fire, either by flying from it or fencing against it; it shall be poured out on this place, though it be a holy place, the Lord's house. It shall reach both man and beast, like the plagues of Egypt, and, like some of them, shall destroy the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground, which they had designed and prepared for Baal, and of which they had made cakes to the queen of heaven.

(2.) There is no extinguishing it: It shall burn and shall not be quenched; prayers and tears shall then avail nothing. When his

wrath is kindled but a little, much more when it is kindled to such a degree, there shall be no quenching it. God's wrath is that fire unquenchable which eternity itself will not see the period of. Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire.

17 Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

19 Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: *do they* not *provoke* themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

20 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

The Punishment for Judah's Rebellion

21 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

God, having shown the people that the temple would not protect them while they polluted it with their wickedness, here shows them that their sacrifices would not atone for them, nor be accepted, while they went on in disobedience. See with what contempt he here speaks of their ceremonial service (Jer 7:21). "Put your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices; go on in them as long as you please; add one sort of sacrifice to another; turn your burnt-offerings (which were to be wholly burnt to the honour of God) into peace-offerings" (which the offerer himself had a considerable share of), "that you may eat flesh, for that is all the good you are likely to have from your sacrifices, a good meal's meat or two; but expect not any other benefit by them while you live at this loose rate. Keep your sacrifices to yourselves" (so some understand it); "let them be served up at your own table, for they are no way acceptable at God's altars." For the opening of this,

I. He shows them that obedience was the only thing he required of them, Jer 7:22,23. He appeals to the original contract, by which they were first formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt. God made them a kingdom of priests to himself, not that he might be regaled with their sacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worshipped, which are represented as eating with pleasure the fat of their sacrifices and drinking the wine of their drink-offerings, De 32:38. No: Will God eat the flesh of bulls? Ps 50:13. I spoke not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices, not of them at first. The precepts of the moral law were given before the ceremonial institutions; and those came afterwards, as trials of their obedience and assistances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus: If any man of you will bring an offering, he must do so and so (Le 1:2,2:1), as if it were intended rather to regulate sacrifice than to require it. But that which God commanded, which he bound them to by his supreme authority and which he insisted upon as the condition of the covenant, was, Obey my voice; see Ex 15:26, where this was the statute and the ordinance by which God proved them: Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God.

The condition of their being God's peculiar people was this (Ex 19:5), If you will obey my voice indeed. "Make conscience of the duties of natural religion, observe positive institutions from a principle of obedience, and then I will be your God and you shall be my people," which is the greatest honour, happiness, and satisfaction, that any of the children of men are capable of. "Let your conversation be regular, and in every thing study to comply with the will and word of God; walk within the bounds that I have set you, and in all the ways that I have commanded you, and then you may assure yourselves that it shall be well with you." The demand here is very reasonable, that we should be directed by Infinite Wisdom to that which is fit, that he that made us should command us, and that he should give us law who gives us our being and all the supports of it; and the promise is very encouraging: Let God's will be your rule and his favour shall be your felicity.

II. He shows them that disobedience was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them. He would not reprove them for their sacrifices, for the omission of them; they had been continually before him (Ps 50:8); with them they hoped to bribe God, and purchase a license to go on in sin. That therefore which God had all along laid to their charge was breaking his commandments in the course of their conversation, while they observed them, in some instances, in the course of their devotion, Jer 7:24,25, &c.

1. They set up their own will in competition with the will of God: They hearkened not to God and to his law; they never heeded that; it was to them as if it had never been given or were of no force; they inclined not their ear to attend to it, much less their hearts to comply with it. But they would have their own way, would do as they chose, and not as they were bidden. Their own counsels were their guide, and not the dictates of divine wisdom; that shall be lawful and good with them which they think so, though the word of God says quite contrary. The imagination of their evil heart, the appetites and passions of it, shall be a law to them, and they will walk in the way of it, and in the sight of their eyes.

2. If they began well, yet they did not proceed, but soon flew off. They went backward, when they talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt again, and would not go forward under God's conduct. They promised fair: All that the Lord shall say unto us we well do; and, if they would but have kept in that good mind, all would have been well; but, instead of going on in the way of duty, they drew back into the way of sin, and were worse than ever.

3. When God sent to them by word of mouth to put them in mind of the written word, which was the business of the prophets, it was all one; still they were disobedient. God had servants of his among them in every age, since they came out of Egypt unto this day, some or other to tell them of their faults and put them in mind of their duty, whom he rose up early to send (as before, Jer 7:13), as men rise up early to call servants to their work; but they were as deaf to the prophets as they were to the law (Jer 7:26): Yet they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear. This had been their

way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn refractory disposition with those that went before them; it had all along been the genius of the nation, and an evil genius it was, that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

4. Their practice and character were still the same. They are worse, and not better, than their fathers.

(1.) Jeremiah can himself witness against them that they were disobedient, or he shall soon find it so (Jer 7:27): "Thou shalt speak all these words to them, shalt particularly charge them with disobedience and obstinacy. But even that will not work upon them: They will not hearken to thee, nor heed thee. Thou shalt go, and call to them with all the plainness and earnestness imaginable, but they will not answer thee; they will either give thee no answer at all or not an obedient answer; they will not come at thy call."

(2.) He must therefore own that they deserved the character of a disobedient people, that were ripe for destruction, and must go to them and tell them so to their faces (Jer 7:28): "Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God. They are notorious for their obstinacy; they sacrifice to the Lord as their God, but they will not be ruled by him as their God; they will not receive either the instruction of his word or the correction of his rod; they will not be reclaimed or reformed by either. Truth has perished among them; they cannot receive it; they will not submit to it nor be governed by it. They will not speak truth; there is no believing a word they say, for it is cut off from their mouth, and lying comes in the room of it. They are false both to God and man."

22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:

23 but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them:*

26 yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

27 Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee.

28 But thou shalt say unto them, This *is* a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

29 Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem,* and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

Here is, I. A loud call to weeping and mourning. Jerusalem, that had been a joyous city, the joy of the whole earth, must now take up a lamentation on high places (Jer 7:29), the high places where they had served their idols; there must they now bemoan their misery. In token both of sorrow and slavery, Jerusalem must now cut off her hair and cast it away; the word is peculiar to the hair of the Nazarites, which was the badge and token of their dedication to God, and it is called their crown. Jerusalem had been a city which was a Nazarite to God, but now must cut off her hair, must be profaned, degraded, and separated from God, as she had been separated to him. It is time for those that have lost their holiness to lay aside their joy.

II. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

1 The sin of Jerusalem appears here very heinous, nowhere worse, or more exceedingly sinful (Jer 7:30): "The children of Judah" (God's profession people, that came forth out of the waters of Judah, Isa 48:1) "have done evil in my sight, under my eye, in my presence; they have affronted me to my face, which very much aggravates the affront:" or, "They have done that which they know to be evil in my sight, and in the highest degree offensive to me." Idolatry was the sin which was above all other sins evil in God's sight. Now here are two things charged upon them in their idolatry, which were very provoking:

(1.) That they were very impudent in it towards God and set him at defiance: They have set their abominations (their abominable idols and the altars erected to them) in the house that is called by my name, in the very courts of the temple, to pollute it (Manasseh did so, 2Ki 21:7,23:12), as if they thought God would connive at it, or cared not though he was ever so much displeased with it, or as if they would reconcile heaven and hell, God and Baal. The heart is the place which God has chosen to put his name there; if sin have the innermost and uppermost place there, we pollute the temple of the Lord, and therefore he resents nothing more than setting up idols in the heart, Eze 14:4.

(2.) That they were very barbarous in it towards their own children, Jer 7:31. They have particularly built the high places of Tophet, where the image of Moloch was set up, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem; and there they burnt their sons and their daughters in the fire, burnt them alive, killed them, and killed them in the most cruel manner imaginable, to honour or appease those idols that were devils and not gods. This was surely the greatest instance that ever was of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and of the degeneracy and corruption of the human nature. One would willingly hope that there were not many instances of such a barbarous idolatry; but it is amazing that there should be any, that men could be so perfectly void of natural affection as to do a thing so inhuman as to burn little innocent children, and their own too, that they should be so perfectly void of natural religion as to think it lawful to do this, nay, to think it acceptable.

Surely it was in a way of righteous judgment, because they had changed the glory of God into the similitude of a beast, that God gave them up to such vile affections that changed them into worse than beasts. God says of this that it was what he commanded them not, neither cam it into his heart, which is not meant of his not commanding them thus to worship Moloch (this he had expressly forbidden them), but he had never commanded that his worshippers should be at such an expense, nor put such a force upon their natural affection, in honouring him; it never came into his heart to have children offered to him, yet they had

forsaken his service for the service of such gods as, by commanding this, showed themselves to be indeed enemies to mankind.

2 The destruction of Jerusalem appears here very terrible. That speaks misery enough in general (Jer 7:29), The Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. Sin makes those the generation of God's wrath that had ben the generation of his love. And God will reject and quite forsake those who have thus made themselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. He will disown them for his. "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." And he will give them up to the terrors of their own guilt, and leave them in those hands.

(1.) Death shall triumph over them, Jer 7:32,33. Sin reigns unto death; for that is the wages of it, the end of those things. Tophet, the valley adjoining to Jerusalem, shall be called the valley of slaughter, for there multitudes shall be slain, when, in their sallies out of the city and their attempts to escape, they fall into the hands of the besiegers. Or it shall be called the valley of slaughtered ones, because thither the corpses of those that are slain shall be brought to be buried, all other burying places being full; and there they shall bury until there be no more place to make a grave. This intimates the multitude of those that shall die by the sword, pestilence, and famine. Death shall ride on prosperously, with dreadful pomp and power, conquering and to conquer.

The slain of the Lord shall be many. This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be so full of graves that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they should fall as victims to divine justice. Tophet had formerly been the burying place, or burning place, of the dead bodies of the besiegers, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was ordained of old, Isa 30:33. But they having forgotten this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a burying place for

the besieged. In allusion to this valley, hell is in the New Testament called Gehenna--the valley of Hinnom, for there were buried both the invading Assyrians and the revolting Jews; so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church and its treacherous friends; it is the congregation of the dead; it is prepared for the generation of God's wrath.

But so great shall that slaughter be that even the spacious valley of Tophet shall not be able to contain the slain; and at length there shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that the carcases of the people shall be meat for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion, and none shall have the concern or courage to frighten them away, as Rizpah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, 2Sa 28:26, Thy carcase shall be meat to the fowls and beasts, and no man shall drive them away. Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of humanity, in remembrance of what the dead body has been--the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of divinity, in expectation of what the dead body shall be at the resurrection. The want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, Re 11:9. Here it is threatened as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and is an intimation that evil pursues sinners even after death.

(2.) Joy shall depart from them (Jer 7:34): Then will I cause to cease the voice of mirth. God had called by his prophets, and by less judgments, to weeping and mourning; but they walked contrary to him, and would hear of nothing but joy and gladness, Isa 22:12,13. And what came of it? Now God called to lamentation (Jer 7:29), and he made his call effectual, leaving them neither cause nor heart for joy and gladness. Those that will not weep shall weep; those that will not by the grace of God be cured of their vain mirth shall by the justice of God be deprived of all mirth; for when God judges he will overcome. It is threatened here that there shall be nothing to rejoice in. There shall be none of the joy of weddings; no mirth, for there shall be no marriages. The comforts of life shall be abandoned, and all care to keep up mankind upon earth cast off; there shall be none

of the voice of the bridegroom and the bride, no music, no nuptial songs. Nor shall there be any more of the joy of the harvest, for the land shall be desolate, uncultivated and unimproved. Both the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem shall look thus melancholy; and when they thus look about them, and see no cause to rejoice, no marvel if they retire into themselves and find no heart to rejoice. Note, God can soon mar the mirth of the most jovial, and make it to cease, which is a reason why we should always rejoice with trembling, be merry and wise.

30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord : they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart.

32 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

33 And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray *them* away.

34 Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

Jeremiah-8

1 At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:

These verses might fitly have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, as giving a further description of the dreadful desolation which the army of the Chaldeans should make in the land. It shall strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too.

I. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be--the repose of the dead. When Job makes his court to the grave it is in hope of this, that there he shall rest with kings and counsellors of the earth; but now the ashes of the dead, even of kings and princes, shall be disturbed, and their bones scattered at the grave's mouth, Ps 141:7. It was threatened in the close of the former chapter that the slain should be unburied; that might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried industriously and maliciously opened by the victorious enemy, who either for covetousness, hoping to find treasure in the graves, or for spite to the nation and in a rage against it, brought out the bones of the kings of Judah and the princes. The dignity of their sepulchres could not secure them, nay, did the more expose them to be rifled; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope that the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of the man of God when he burnt the bones of the idolatrous priests, 2Ki 23:18.

The bones of the priests and prophets too were digged up and thrown about. Some think the false prophets and the idol-priests, God putting this mark of ignominy upon them: but, if they were God's prophets and his priests, it is what the Psalmist complains of as the fruit of the outrage of the enemies, Ps 79:1,2. Nay, those of the spiteful Chaldeans that could not reach to violate the sepulchres of princes and priests would rather play at small game than sit out, and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. The barbarous nations were sometimes guilty of these absurd and inhuman triumphs over those they had conquered, and God permitted it here, for a mark of his displeasure against the generation of his wrath, and for terror to those that survived. The bones, being dug out of the graves, were spread abroad upon the face of the earth in contempt, and to make the reproach the more spreading and lasting. They spread them to be dried that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make some superstitious use of them.

They shall be spread before the sun (for they shall not be ashamed openly to avow the fact at noon day) and before the moon and stars, even all the host of heaven, whom they have made idols of, Jer 8:2. From the mention of the sun, moon, and stars, which should be the unconcerned spectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occasion to show how they had idolized them, and paid those respects to them which they should have paid to God only, that it might be observed how little they got by worshipping the creature, for the creatures they worshipped when they were in distress saw it, but regarded it not, nor gave them any relief, but were rather pleased to see those abused in being vilified by whom they had been abused in being deified. See how their respects to their idols are enumerated, to show how we ought to behave towards our God.

1. They loved them. As amiable being and bountiful benefactors they esteemed them and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows.

2. They served them, did all they could in honour of them, and thought nothing too much; they conformed to all the laws of their superstition, without disputing.

3. They walked after them, strove to imitate and resemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received, which gave rise and countenance to much of the abominable wickedness of the heathen.

4. They sought them, consulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implored their favour, and prayed to them as their benefactors. 5. They worshipped them, gave them divine honour, as having a sovereign dominion over them. Before these light of heaven, which they had courted, shall their dead bodies be cast, and left to putrefy, and to be as dung upon the face of the earth; and the sun's shining upon them will but make them the more noisome and offensive. Whatever we make a god of but the true God only, it will stand us in no stead on the other side death and the grave, nor for the body, much less for the soul.

II. Death shall now be what it never used to be--the choice of the living, not because there appears in it any thing delightsome; on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid frightful shapes than now, when they cannot promise themselves either a comfortable death or a human burial; and yet every thing in this world shall become so irksome, and all the prospects so black and dismal, that death shall be chosen rather than life (Jer 8:3), not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in an utter despair of any ease in this life.

The nation is now reduced to a family, so small is the residue of those that remain in it; and it is an evil family, still as bad as ever, their hearts unhumbled and their lusts unmortified. These remain alive (and that is all) in the many places whither they were driven by the judgments of God, some prisoners in the country of their enemies, others beggars in their neighbour's country, and others fugitives and vagabonds there and in their own country. And, though those that died died very miserably, yet those that survived and were thus driven out should live yet more miserably, so that they should choose death rather than life, and wish a thousand times that they had fallen with those that fell by the sword. Let this cure us of the inordinate love of life, that the case may be such that it may become a burden and terror, and we may be strongly tempted to choose strangling and death rather.

2 and they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

3 And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts.

4 Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

The prophet here is instructed to set before this people the folly of their impenitence, which was it that brought this ruin upon them. They are here represented as the most stupid senseless people in the world, that would not be made wise by all the

methods that Infinite Wisdom took to bring them to themselves and their right mind, and so to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them.

I. They would not attend to the dictates of reason. They would not act in the affairs of their souls with the same common prudence with which they acted in other things. Sinners would become saints if they would but show themselves men, and religion would soon rule them if right reason might. Observe it here. Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord (Jer 8:4,5): Shall men fall and not arise? If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as fast as they can? They are not such fools as to lie still when they are down. Shall a man turn aside out of the right way? Yes, the most careful traveller may miss his way; but then, as soon as he is aware of it, will he not return? Yes, certainly he will, with all speed, and will thank him that showed him his mistake. Thus men do in other things. Why then has this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? Why do not they, when they have fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error and reform? No man in his wits will go on in a way that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end; why then has this people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? See the nature of sin--it is a backsliding it is going back from the right way, not only into a by-path, but into a contrary path, back from the way that leads to life to that which leads to utter destruction. And this backsliding, if almighty grace do not interpose to prevent it, will be a perpetual backsliding.

The sinner not only wanders endlessly, but proceeds end-ways towards ruin. The same subtlety of the tempter that brings men to sin holds them fast in it, and they contribute to their own captivity: They hold fast deceit. Sin is a great cheat, and they hold it fast; they love it dearly, and resolve to stick to it, and baffle all the methods God takes to separate between them and their sins. The excuses they make for their sins are deceits, and so are all their hopes of impunity; yet they hold fast these, and will not be undeceived, and therefore they refuse to return. Note, There is some deceit or other which those hold fast that go on

wilfully in sinful ways, some lie in their right hand, by which they keep hold of their sins.

II. They would not attend to the dictates of conscience, which is our reason reflecting upon ourselves and our own actions, Jer 8:6. Observe,

1. What expectations there were from them, that they would bethink themselves: I hearkened and heard. The prophet listened to see what effect his preaching had upon them; God himself listened, as one that desires not the death of sinners, that would have been glad to hear any thing that promised repentance, that would certainly have heard it if there had been any thing said of that tendency, and would soon have answered it with comfort, as he did David when he said, I will confess, Ps 32:5. God looks upon men when they have done amiss (Job 33:27), to see what they will do next; he hearkens and hears.

2. How these expectations were disappointed: They spoke not aright, as I thought they would have done. They did not only not do right, but not so much as speak right; God could not get a good word from them, nothing on which to ground any favour to them or hopes concerning them. There was none of them that spoke aright, none that repented him of his wickedness. those that have sinned then, and then only, speak aright when they speak of repenting; and it is sad when those that have made so much work for repentance do not say a word of repenting. Not only did God not find any repenting of the national wickedness, which might have helped to empty the measure of public guilt, but none repented of that particular wickedness which he knew himself guilty of.

(1.) They did not so much as take the first step towards repentance; they did not so much as say, What have I done? There was no motion towards it, not the least sign or token of it. Note, True repentance beings in a serious and impartial inquiry into ourselves, what have we done, arising from a conviction that we have done amiss.

(2.) They were so far from repenting of their sins that they went on resolutely in their sins: Every one turned to his course, his wicked course, that course of sin which he had chosen and accustomed himself to, as the horse rushes into the battle, eager upon action, and scorning to be curbed. How the horse rushes into the battle is elegantly described, Job 39:21, &c. He mocks at fear and is not affrighted. Thus the daring sinner laughs at the threatenings of the word as bugbears, and runs violently upon the instruments of death and slaughter, and nothing will be restrained from him.

III. They would not attend to the dictates of providence, nor understand the voice of God in them, Jer 8:7. It is an instance of their sottishness that, though they are God's people, and therefore should readily understand his mind upon every intimation of it, yet they know not the judgment of the Lord; they apprehend not the meaning either of a mercy or an affliction, not how to accommodate themselves to either, nor to answer God's intention in either. They know not how to improve the seasons of grave that God affords them when he sends them his prophets, nor how to make use of the rebukes they are under when his voice cries in the city. They discern not the signs of the times (Mt 16:3), nor are aware how God is dealing with them. They know not that way of duty which God had prescribed them, though it be written both in their hearts and in their books.

It is an aggravation of their sottishness that there is so much sagacity in the inferior creatures. The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times of coming and continuing; so do other season-birds, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow. These by a natural instinct change their quarters, as the temper of the air alters; they come when the spring comes, and go, we know not whither, when the winter approaches, probably into warmer climates, as some birds come with winter and go when that is over.

5 Why *then* is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

6 I hearkened and heard, *but* they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

7 Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.

8 How do ye say, We *are* wise, and the law of the Lord *is* with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he *it;* the pen of the scribes *is* in vain.

9 The wise *men* are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom *is* in them?

10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others, *and* their fields to them that shall inherit *them:* for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

They would not attend to the dictates of the written word. They say, We are wise; but how can they say so? Jer 8:8. With what face can they pretend to any thing of wisdom, when they do not understand themselves so well as the brute-creatures? Why, truly, they think they are wise because the law of the Lord is with them, the book of the law and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours, for the same reason, conclude they are wise, De 4:6. But their pretensions are groundless for all this: Lo, certainly in vain made he it; surely never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They might as well have been without the law, unless they had made a better use of it. God has indeed made it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is made so in vain, for they are never the wiser for it: The pen of the scribes, of those that first wrote the law and of those that now write expositions of it, is in vain. Both the favour of their God and the labour of their scribes are lost upon them; they receive the grace of God therein in vain.

Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of Bibles and ministers, but they have them in vain; they do not answer the end of their having them. But it might be said, They have some wise men among them, to whom the law and the pen of the scribes are not in vain. To this it is answered (Jer 8:9): The wise men are ashamed, that is, they have reasons to be so, that they have not made a better use of their wisdom, and lived more up to it. They are confounded and taken; all their wisdom has not served to keep them from those courses that tend to their ruin. They are taken in

the same snares that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to so much wisdom, are taken in, and filled with the same confusion.

Those that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own souls, have reason to be ashamed. They talk of their wisdom, but, Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; they would not be governed by it, would not follow its direction, would not do what they knew; and then what wisdom is in them? None to any purpose; none that will be found to their praise at the great day, how much soever it is found to their pride now. The pretenders to wisdom, who said, "We are wise and the law of the Lord is with us," were the priests and the false prophets; with them the prophet here deals plainly.

1. He threatens the judgments of God against them. Their families and estates shall be ruined (Jer 8:10): Their wives shall be given to others, when they are taken captives, and their fields. shall be taken from them by their victorious enemy and shall be given to those that shall inherit them, not only strip them for once, but take possession of them as their own and acquire a property in them as their own and acquire a property in them, which they shall transmit to their posterity. And (Jer 8:12), notwithstanding all their pretensions to wisdom and sanctity, they shall fall among those that fall; for, if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall together into the ditch. In the time of their visitation, when the wickedness of the land comes to be enquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they shall be sure to be cast down and cast out.

2. He gives a reason for these judgments (Jer 8:10-12), even the same account of their badness which we meet with before (Jer 6:13-15), where it was opened at large.

(1.) They were greedy of the wealth of this world, which is bad enough in any, but worst in prophets and priests, who should be best acquainted with another world and therefore should be most dead to this. But these, from the least to the greatest, were given to covetousness. The priests teach for hire and the prophets divine for money, Mic 3:11.

(2.) They made no conscience of speaking truth, no, not when they spoke as priests and prophets: Every one deals falsely, looks one way and rows another. There is no such thing as sincerity among them.

(3.) They flattered people in their sins, and so flattered them into destruction. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they healed them slightly, killed the patient with palliative cures, silencing their fears and complaints with, "Peace, peace, all is well, and there is no danger," when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them, so that there could be no peace to them.

(4.) When it was made to appear how basely they prevaricated they were not at all ashamed of it, but rather gloried in it, (Jer 8:12): They could not blush, so perfectly lost were they to all sense of virtue and honour. When they were convicted of the grossest forgeries they would justify what they had done, and laugh at those whom they had imposed upon. Such as these were ripe for ruin.

11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly,
saying, Peace, peace; when *there is* no peace.

12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay,
they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore
shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation
they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.

13 I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: *there shall be* no grapes
on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and *the*
things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

In these verses we have,

God threatening the destruction of a sinful people. He has borne long with them, but they are still more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is resolved on: I will surely consume them (Jer 8:13), consuming I will consume them, not only surely, but utterly, consume them, will follow them with one judgment

after another, till they are quite consumed; it is a consumption determined, Isa 10:23.

1. They shall be quite stripped of all their comforts (Jer 8:13): There shall be no grapes on the vine. Some understand this as intimating their sin; God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, seeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he found none (as Isa 5:2,Lu 13:6); nay, they had not so much as leaves, Mt 21:19. But it is rather to be understood of God's judgments upon them, and may be meant literally--The enemy shall seize the fruits of the earth, shall pluck the grapes and figs for themselves and beat down the very leaves with them; or, rather, figuratively--They shall be deprived of all their comforts and shall have nothing left them wherewith to make glad their hearts. It is expounded in the last clause: The things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Note, God's gifts are upon condition, and revocable upon non-performance of the condition. Mercies abused are forfeited, and it is just with God to take the forfeiture.

2. They shall be set upon by all manner of grievances, and surrounded with calamities (Jer 8:17): I will send serpents among you, the Chaldean army, fiery serpents, flying serpents, cockatrices; these shall bite them with their venomous teeth, give them wounds that shall be mortal; and they shall not be charmed, as some serpents used to be, with music. These are serpents of another nature, that are not so wrought upon, or they are as the deaf adder, that stops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer. The enemies are so intent upon making slaughter that it will be to no purpose to accost them gently, or offer any thing to pacify them, or mollify them, or to bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.

14 Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defensed cities, and let us be silent there: for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us water of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord.

15 We looked for peace, but no good *came; and* for a time of health, and behold trouble!

The people sinking into despair under the pressure of those calamities. Those that were void of fear (when the trouble was at a distance) and set it at defiance, are void of hope now that it

breaks in upon them, and have no heart either to make head against it or to bear up under it, Jer 8:14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages: Why do we sit still here? Let us assemble, and go into a body into the defenced cities. Though they could expect no other than to be surely cut off there at last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore, "Let us go, and be silent there; let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint; for to what purpose?" It is not a submissive, but a sullen silence, that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity commonly despond most, and are most melancholy, in trouble. Now observe what it is that sinks them.

1. They are sensible that God is angry with them: "The Lord our God has put us to silence, has struck us with astonishment, and given us water of gall to drink, which is both bitter and stupifying, or intoxicating. Ps 60:3, Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. We had better sit still than rise up and fall; better say nothing than say nothing to the purpose. To what purpose is it to contend with our fate when God himself has become our enemy and fights against us? Because we have sinned against the Lord, therefore we are brought to the plunge." This may be taken as the language,

(1.) Of their indignation. They seem to quarrel with God as if he had dealt hardly with them in putting them to silence, not permitting them to speak for themselves, and then telling them that it was because they had sinned against him. Thus men's foolishness perverts their way, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Or rather,

(2.) Of their convictions. At length they begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them, and stretched out in the calamities under which they are now groaning, and to own that they have provoked him to contend with them. Note, Sooner or later God will bring the most obstinate to acknowledge both his providence and his justice in all the troubles they are brought into, to see and say both that it is his hand and that he is righteous.

2. They are sensible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, Jer 8:16. They are soon apprehensive that it is to no purpose to make head against such a mighty force; they and their people are quite dispirited; and, when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will stand them in little stead. The snorting of the horses was heard from Dan, that is, the report of the formidable strength of their cavalry was soon carried all the nation over and every body trembled at the sound of the neighing of his steeds; for they have devoured the land and all that is in the city; both town and country are laid waste before them, not only the wealth, but the inhabitants, of both, those that dwell therein. Note, When God appears against us, every thing else that is against us appears very formidable; whereas, if he be for us, every thing appears very despicable, Ro 8:3.

3. They are disappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as they had been surprised when their troubles came upon them; and this double disappointment very much aggravated their calamity.

(1.) The trouble came when they little expected it (Jer 8:15): We looked for peace, the continuance of our peace, but no good came, no good news from abroad; we looked for a time of health and prosperity to our nation, but, behold, trouble, the alarms of war; for, as it follows (Jer 8:16), the noise of the enemies' horses was heard from Dan. Their false prophets had cried Peace, peace, to them, which made it the more terrible when the scene of war opened on a sudden. This complaint will occur again, Jer 14:19.

(2.) The deliverance did not come when they had long expected it (Jer 8:20): The harvest is past, the summer is ended; that is, there is a great deal of time gone. Harvest and summer are parts of the year, and when they are gone the year draws towards a conclusion; so the meaning is, "One year passes after another, one campaign after another, and yet our affairs are in as bad a posture as ever they were; no relief comes, nor is any thing done towards it: We are not saved." Nay, there is a great deal of opportunity lost, the season of action is over and slipped, the summer and harvest are gone, and a cold and melancholy winter succeeds. Note, The salvation of God's church and people often

goes on very slowly, and God keeps his people long in the expectation of it, for wise and holy ends. Nay, they stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, and are not saved because they are not ready for salvation.

4. They are deceived in those things which were their confidence and which they thought would have secured their peace to them (Jer 8:19): The daughter of my people cries, cries aloud, because of those that dwell in a far country, because of the foreign enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take possession of ours; this occasions the cry; and what is the cry? It is this: Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her? These were the two things that they had all along buoyed up themselves with and depended upon,

(1.) That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his special presence with them. The common cant was, "Is not the Lord in Zion? What danger then need we fear?" And they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them. "Surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us?" But, when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves.

(2.) That they had the throne of the house of David. As they had a temple, so they had a monarchy, jure divino--by divine right: Is not Zion's king in her? And will not Zion's God protect Zion's king and his kingdom? Surely he will; but why does he not? "What" (say they) "has Zion neither a God nor a king to stand by her and help her, that she is thus run down and likely to be ruined?" This outcry of theirs reflects upon God, as if his power and promise were broken or weakened; and therefore he returns an answer to it immediately: Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images? They quarrel with God as if he had dealt unkindly by them in forsaking them, whereas they by their idolatry had driven him from them; they have withdrawn from their allegiance to him, and so have thrown themselves out of this protection. They fret themselves, and curse their king and their God (Isa 8:21), when it is their own sin that separates between them and God (Isa 59:2); they feared not the Lord, and then what can a king do for them? Ho 10:3.

16 The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land
trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they
are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city,
and those that dwell therein.
17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which
will not *be* charmed, and they shall bite you, saith the Lord.

A Lament for Judah and Jerusalem

18 *When* I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart *is* faint in
me.

We have here the prophet himself bewailing the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were more of the lamentations of Jeremiah than those we find in the book that bears that title. Observe here,

1. How great his griefs were. He was an eyewitness of the desolations of his country, and saw those things which by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen. In the foresight, much more in the sight, of them, he cries out, "My heart is faint in me, I sink, I die away at the consideration of it, Jer 8:18. When I would comfort myself against my sorrow, I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief does but aggravate it." It is our wisdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to comfort ourselves against our sorrow, by suggesting to ourselves such considerations as are proper to allay the grief and balance the grievance. But sometimes the sorrow is such that the more it is repressed the more strongly it recoils. This may sometimes be the case of very good men, as of the prophet here, whose soul refused to be comforted and fainted at the cordial, Ps 77:2,3. He tells us (Jer 8:21) what was the matter: "It is for the hurt of the daughter of my people that I am thus hurt; it is for their sin, and the miseries they have brought upon themselves by it; it is for this that I am black, that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do, and that astonishment has taken hold on me, so that I know not what to do nor which way to turn."

Note, The miseries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A gracious spirit will be a public spirit, a tender

spirit, a mourning spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to grieve for the affliction of Joseph. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and, though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated, and reproached, and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought upon them God reckoned with them for it and pleaded his prophet's cause; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies and desire that God would forgive them.

2. How small his hopes were (Jer 8:22): "Is there no balm in Gilead--no medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom? Is there no physician there--no skilful faithful hand to apply the medicine?" He looks upon the case to be deplorable and past relief. There is no balm in Gilead that can cure the disease of sin, no physician there that can restore the health of a nation quite overrun by such a foreign army as that of the Chaldeans. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease has presently come to such a height that there is no checking it. Or Jer 8:22 may be understood as laying all the blame of the incurableness of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively: Is there no balm in Gilead--no physician there? Yes, certainly there is; God is able to help and heal them, there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off.

They had among themselves God's law and his prophets, with the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented. They had princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than had been done for their recovery? Why then was not their health restored? Certainly it was not owing to God, but to themselves; it was not

for want of balm and a physician, but because they would not admit the application nor submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physic were both ready, but the patient was wilful and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humoured. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, his Spirit is the physician there, both sufficient, all-sufficient, so that they might have been healed, but would not.

19 Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: *Is* not the Lord in Zion? *is* not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, *and* with strange vanities?

20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.

22 *Is there* no balm in Gilead? *is there* no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Jeremiah-9

1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

The prophet, being commissioned both to foretel the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly: what he said of both came from the heart, and therefore one would have thought it would reach to the heart.

He abandons himself to sorrow in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people, which he sadly laments, a one that preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy and her grievances before his chief sorrows.

1. He laments the slaughter of the persons, the blood shed and the lives lost (Jer 9:1): "O that my head were waters, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so my eyes might be fountains of

tears, weeping abundantly, continually, and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears as there still occur fresh occasions for them!" The same word in Hebrew signifies both the eye and a fountain, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah wept much, and yet wished he could weep more, that he might affect a stupid people and rouse them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us, while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate and to sow in tears.

Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted hereafter; but let them expect that while they are here the clouds will still return after the rain. While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit that our eyes should be fountains of tears. But Jeremiah's grief here is upon the public account: he would weep day and night, not so much for the death of his own near relations, but for the slain of the daughter of his people, the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the numbers of the slain in great battles and sieges we ought to be much affected with the intelligence, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, though they be not of the daughter of our people, for, whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us, and there are so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as ours to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity.

2. He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in (Jer 9:10), for impassioned mourners are not often very methodical in their discourses: "Not only for the towns and cities, but for the mountains, will I take up a weeping and wailing" (not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judea abounded), and for the habitations of the wilderness, or rather the pastures of the plain, that used to be clothed with flocks or covered over with corn, and a goodly sight it was; but now they are burnt up by the Chaldean army (which, according to the custom of war, destroyed to the custom of war, destroyed the forage and carried off all the cattle), so that no one dares to pass through them, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy, no one cares to pass through them, every thing looks so

melancholy and frightful, no one has any business to pass through them, for they hear not the voice of the cattle there as usual, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners; nay, both the fowl of the heavens and the beasts have fled. either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them.

Note, God has many ways of turning a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of those that dwell therein; and the havoc war makes in a country cannot but be for a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men;
that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they *be* all
adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.
3 And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies: but they are not
valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to
evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord.
4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbor, and trust ye not in any
brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every
neighbor will walk with slanders.
5 And they will deceive every one his neighbor, and will not speak
the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary
themselves to commit iniquity.

He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and conduct of his people. Though he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where his tabernacle is, yet he is ready to cry out, Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech! Ps 120:5. While all his neighbours are fleeing to the defenced cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies' rage (Jer 4:5,6) he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his people's sin (Jer 9:2): "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for travellers to repose themselves in, that I might leave my people and go from them!" Not only because of the ill usage they gave him (he would rather venture himself among the wild beasts of the desert than among such treacherous

barbarous people), but principally because his righteous soul was vexed from day to day, as Lot's was in Sodom, with the wickedness of their conversation, 2Pe 2:7,8.

This does not imply any intention or resolution that he had thus to retire. God had cut him out work among them, which he must not quit for his own ease. We must not go out of the world, bad as it is, before our time. If he could not reform them, he could bear a testimony against them; if he could not do good to many, yet he might to some. but it intimates the temptation he was in to leave them, involves a threatening that they should be deprived of his ministry, and especially expresses the holy indignation he had against their abominable wickedness, which continued notwithstanding all the pains he had taken with them to reclaim them. It made him even weary of his life to see them dishonouring God as they did and destroying themselves. Time was when the place which God had chosen to put his name there was the desire and delight of good men. David, in a wilderness, longed to be again in the courts of God's house; but now Jeremiah, in the courts of God's house (for there he was when he said this), wishes himself in a wilderness. Those have made themselves very miserable that have made God's people and ministers weary of them and willing to get from them. Now, to justify his willingness to leave them, he shows,

1. What he himself had observed among them.

(1.) He would not think of leaving them because they were poor and in distress, but because they were wicked.

[1.] They were filthy: They are all adulterers, that is, the generality of them are, Jer 5:8. They all either practised this sin or connived at those that did. Lewdness and uncleanness constituted that crying sin of Sodom at which righteous Lot was vexed in soul, and it is a sin that renders men loathsome in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes men an abomination.

[2.] They were false. This is the sin that is most enlarged upon here. Those that had been unfaithful to their God were so to one

another, and it was a part of their punishment as well as their sin, for even those that love to cheat, yet hate to be cheated.

First, Go into their solemn meetings for the exercises of religion, for the administration of justice, or for commerce--to church, to court, or to the exchange--and they are an assembly of treacherous men; they are so by consent, they strengthen one another's hands in doing any thing that is perfidious. There they will cheat deliberately and industriously, with design, with a malicious design, for (Jer 9:3) they bend their tongues, like their bow, for lies, with a great deal of craft; their tongues are fitted for lying, as a bow that is bent is for shooting, and are as constantly used for that purpose. Their tongue turns as naturally to a lie as the bow to the strong. But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth. Their tongues are like a bow strung, with which they might do good service if they would use the art and resolution which they are so much masters of in the cause of truth; but they will not do so. They appear not in defence of the truths of God, which were delivered to them by the prophets; but even those that could not deny them to be truths were content to see them run down. In the administration of justice they have not courage to stand by an honest cause that has truth on its side, if greatness and power be on the other side. Those that will be faithful to the truth must be valiant for it, and not be daunted by the opposition given to it, nor fear the face of man. They are not valiant for the truth in the land, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth has fallen in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, Isa 59:14,15. We must answer, another day, not only for our enmity in opposing truth, but for our cowardice in defending it.

Secondly, Go into their families, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren (every brother will utterly supplant); they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they lie at the catch to seek all advantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his name from supplanting; it is the word here used; they followed him in his name, but not in his true character, without guile. So very false are they that you cannot trust in a brother, but must stand as much upon your guard as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite that has balances of

deceit in his hand. Things have come to an ill pass indeed when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother.

Thirdly, Go into company and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them. Nec hospes ab hospite tutus--The host and the guest are in danger from each other. The best advice a wise man can give you is to take heed every one of his neighbour, nay, of his friend (so some read it), of him whom he has befriended and who pretends friendship to him. No man thinks himself bound to be either grateful or sincere. Take them in their conversation and every neighbour will walk with slander; they care not what ill they say one of another, though ever so false; that way that the slander goes they will go; they will walk with it. They will walk about from house to house too, carrying slanders along with them, all the ill-natured stories they can pick up or invent to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining, and they will deceive every one his neighbour, will say any thing, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for they will not speak the truth, but will tell a deliberate lie and laugh at it when they have done.

(2.) That which aggravates the sin on this false and lying generation is,

[1.] That they are ingenious to sin: They have taught their tongue to speak lies, implying that through the reluctances of natural conscience they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongue would have spoken truth, but they taught it to speak lies, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it that use has made it a second nature to them. They learnt it when they were young (for the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies, Ps 58:3), and now they have grown dexterous at it.

[2.] That they are industrious to sin: They weary themselves to commit iniquity; they put a force upon their consciences to bring themselves to it; they tire out their convictions by offering them continual violence, and they take a great deal of pains, till they

have even spent themselves in bringing about their malicious designs. They are wearied with their sinful pursuits and yet not weary of them. The service of sin is a perfect drudgery; men run themselves out of breath in it, and put themselves to a great deal of toil to damn their own souls.

[3.] That they grow worse and worse (Jer 9:3): They proceed from evil to evil, from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with less sins. Nemo repente fit turpissimus--No one reaches the height of vice at once. They began with equivocating and bantering, but at last came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, for they know not me, saith the Lord; and where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill conduct one towards another.

2 The prophet shows what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined against them.

(1.) God had marked their sin. He could tell the prophet (and he speaks of it with compassion) what sort of people they were that he had to deal with. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, Re 2:13. So here (Jer 9:6): "Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit, all about thee are addicted to it; therefore stand upon thy guard." If all men are liars, it concerns us to beware of men,. and to be wise as serpents. They are deceitful men; therefore there is little hope of thy doing any good among them; for, make things ever so plain, they have some trick or other wherewith to shuffle off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, Jer 9:8. Their tongue was a bow bent (Jer 9:3), plotting and preparing mischief; here it is an arrow shot out, putting in execution what they had projected. It is as a slaying arrow (so some readings of the original have it); their tongue has been to many an instrument of death. They speak peaceably to their neighbours, against whom they are at the same time lying in wait; as Joab kissed Abner when he was about to kill him, and Cain, that he might not be suspected of any ill design, talked with his brother, freely and familiarly.

Note, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are despicable, but, when they are intended as a cloak and cover for wicked intentions they are abominable. While they did all this injury to one another they put a great contempt upon God: "Not only they know not me, but (Jer 9:6) through deceit, through the delusions of the false prophets, they refuse to know me; they are so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they desire not the knowledge of my ways." Or, "They are so wedded to this sinful course which they are in, and so bewitched with that, and its gains, that they will by no means admit the knowledge of God, because that would be a check upon them in their sins." This is the ruin of sinners: they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord and they will not learn it; and where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected? Ho 4:1.

(2.) He had marked them for ruin, Jer 9:7,9,11. Those that will not know God as their lawgiver shall be made to know him as their judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of some and the ruining of the rest.

[1.] Some shall be refined (Jer 9:7): "Because they are thus corrupt, behold I will melt them and try them, will bring them into trouble and see what that will do towards bringing them to repentance, whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross, and whether, when they are melted, they will be new-cast in a better mould." He will make trial of less afflictions before he brings upon them utter destruction; for he desires not the death of sinners. They shall not be rejected as reprobate silver till the founder has melted in vain, Jer 6:29,30. For how shall I do for the daughter of my people? He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them that might be for the best, and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off and give them up to ruin till he had first tried all means likely to bring them to repentance.

Or, "How else shall I do for them? They have grown so very corrupt that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other course can I take with them? Isa 5:4,5. It is the daughter of my people, and I must do something to

vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedness. I must do something to reduce and reform them." A parent corrects his own children because they are his own. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to mollify and reform them; it is but when need is and when he knows it is the best method he can use.

[2.] The rest shall be ruined (Jer 9:9): Shall I not visit for these things? Fraud and falsehood are sins which God hates and which he will reckon for. "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this, that is so universally corrupt, and, by its impudence in sin, even dares and defies divine vengeance? The sentence is passed, the decree has gone forth (Jer 9:11): I will make Jerusalem heaps of rubbish, and lay it in such ruins that it shall be fit for nothing but to be a den of dragons; and the cities of Judah shall be a desolation." God makes them so, for he gives the enemy warrant and power to do it: but why is the holy city made a heap? The answer is ready, Because it has become an unholy one?

6 Thine habitation *is* in the midst of deceit; through deceit they
refuse to know me, saith the Lord.
7 Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them,
and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?
8 Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: *one* speaketh
peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his
wait.
9 Shall I not visit them for these *things?* saith the Lord: shall not my
soul be avenged on such a nation as this?
10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for
the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are
burned up, so that none can pass through *them;* neither can *men*
hear the voice of the cattle: both the fowl of the heavens and the
beast are fled; they are gone.
11 And I will make Jerusalem heaps, *and* a den of dragons; and I will
make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

Ruin and Exile Threatened

12 Who *is* the wise man, that may understand this? and *who is he* to
whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it,

for what the land perisheth *and* is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

Two things the prophet designs, in these verses, with reference to the approaching destruction of Judah and Jerusalem:--

1. To convince people of the justice of God in it, that they had by sin brought it upon themselves and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who did them no wrong at all, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which did them all this mischief.

2. To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it, that by a terrible prospect of it they might be awakened to repentance and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or, at least, mitigate their own share in it. This being designed,

He calls for the thinking men, by them to show people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe (Jer 9:12): "Who, where, is the wise man, or the prophet, to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken? You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you; produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will soon understand this himself, and it will be so clear to him that he will be ready to declare it to others, that there is a just ground of God's controversy with this people." Do these wise men enquire, For what does the land perish? What is the matter, that such a change is made with this land? It used to be a land that God cared for, and he had his eyes upon it for good (De 11:12), but it is now a land that he has forsaken and that his face is against. It used to flourish as the garden of the Lord and to be replenished with inhabitants; but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through it, much less cares to settle in it. It was supposed, long ago, that it would be asked, when it came to this, Wherefore has the Lord done thus unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger? (De 29:24), to which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produces out of the record,

1 The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, Jer 9:13,14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied,

(1.) That they have revolted from their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign. Therefore. God has forsaken their land, and justly, because they have forsaken his law, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently set before them, and had not observed his orders, not obeyed his voice, nor walked in the ways that he had appointed. Here their wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them,

(2.) That they have entered themselves into the service of pretenders and usurpers, have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their prince, but have taken up arms against him. For,

[1.] They have acted according to the dictates of their own lusts, have set up their own will, the wills of the flesh, and the carnal mind, in competition with, and contradiction to the will of God: They have walked after the imagination of their own hearts; they would do as they pleased, whatever God and conscience said to the contrary.

[2.] They have worshipped the creatures of their own fancy, the work of their own hands, according to the tradition received from their fathers: They have walked after Baalim: the word is plural; they had many Baals, Baal-peor and Baal-berith, the Baal of this place and the Baal of the other place; for they had lords many, which their fathers taught them to worship, but which the God of their fathers had again and again forbidden. This was it for which the land perished. The King of kings never makes war thus upon his own subjects but when they treacherously depart from him and rebel against him, and it has become necessary by this means to chastise their rebellion and reduce them to their allegiance; and they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them.

2 The judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed, for it was righteous and nothing could be moved in arrest of it: The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said it (Jer 9:15,16), and who can reverse it?

(1.) That all their comforts at home shall be poisoned and embittered to them: I will feed this people with wormwood (or rather with wolf's-bane, for it signifies a herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is though it be bitter, but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious), and I will give them water of gall (or juice of hemlock or some other herb that is poisonous) to drink. Every thing about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and torment to them. God will curse their blessings, Mal 2:2.

(2.) That their dispersion abroad shall be their destruction (Jer 9:16): I will scatter them among the heathen. They were corrupted and debauched by their intimacy with the heathen, with whom they mingled and learned their works; and now they shall lose themselves, where they lost their virtue, among the heathen. They set up gods which neither they nor their fathers had known, strange gods, new gods (De 32:17); and now God will put them among neighbours whom neither they nor their fathers have known, whom they can claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet, though they are scattered so as that they will not know where to find one another. God will know where to find them all out (Ps 21:8) with that evil which still pursues impenitent sinners: I will send a sword after them, some killing judgment or other, till I have consumed them; for when God judges he will overcome, when he pursues he will overtake. And now we see for what the land perishes; all this desolation is the desert of their deeds and the performance of God's words.

13 And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;

14 but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:

15 therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I
will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them
water of gall to drink.
16 I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor
their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I
have consumed them.
17 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the
mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning
women, that they may come:
18 and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes
may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.

He calls for the mourning women, and engages them, with the arts they practise to affect people and move their passions, to lament these sad calamities that had come or were coming upon them, that the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them: The Lord of hosts himself says, Call for the mourning women, that they may come, Jer 9:17. the scope of this is to show how very woeful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

1. Here is work for the counterfeit mourners: Send for cunning women, that know how to compose mournful ditties, or at least to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals to supply the want of true mourners. Let these take up a wailing for us, Jer 9:18. The deaths and funerals were so many that people wept for them till they had no power to weep, as those, 1Sa 30:4. Let those therefore do it now whose trade it is. Or, rather, it intimates the extreme sottishness and stupidity of the people, that laid not to heart the judgments they were under, nor, even when there was so much blood shed, could find in their hearts to shed a tear. They cry not when God binds them, Job 36:13. God sent his mourning prophets to them, to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their faith; rather therefore than they shall go laughing to their ruin, let the mourning women come, and try to work upon their fancy, that their eyes may at length run down with tears, and their eyelids gush out with waters. First or last, sinners must be weepers.

2. Here is work for the real mourners.

(1.) There is that which is a lamentation. The present scene is very tragical (Jer 9:19): A voice of wailing is heard out of Zion. Some make this to be the song of the mourning women: it is rather an echo to it, returned by those whose affections were moved by their wailings. In Zion the voice of joy and praise used to be heard, while the people kept closely to God. But sin has altered the note; it is now the voice of lamentation. It should seem to be the voice of those who fled from all parts of the country to the castle of Zion for protection. Instead of rejoicing that they had got safely thither, they lamented that they were forced to seek for shelter there: "How are we spoiled! How are we stripped of all our possessions! We are greatly confounded, ashamed of ourselves and our poverty;" for that is it that they complain of, that is it that they blush at the thoughts of, rather than of their sin: We are confounded because we have forsaken the land (forced so to do by the enemy), not because we have forsaken the Lord, being drawn aside of our own lust and enticed--because our dwellings have cast us out, not because our God has cast us off. Thus unhumbled hearts lament their calamity, but not their iniquity, the procuring cause of it.

(2.) There is more still to come which shall be for a lamentation. Things are bad, but they are likely to be worse. Those whose land has spued them out (as it did their predecessors the Canaanites, and justly, because they trod in their steps, Le 18:28) complain that they are driven into the city, but, after a while, those of the city, and they with them, shall be forced thence too: Yet hear the word of the Lord; he has something more to say to you (Jer 9:20); let the women hear it, whose tender spirits are apt to receive the impressions of grief and fear, for the men will not heed it, will not give it a patient hearing.

The prophets will be glad to preach to a congregation of women that tremble at God's word. Let your ear receive the word of God's mouth, and bid it welcome, though it be a word of terror. Let the women teach their daughters wailing; this intimates that the trouble shall last long, grief shall be entailed upon the generation to come. Young people are apt to love mirth, and

expect mirth, and are disposed to be gay and airy; but let the elder women teach the younger to be serious, tell them what a vale of tears they must expect to find this world, and train them up among the mourners in Zion, Tit 2:4,5. Let every one teach her neighbour lamentation; this intimates that the trouble shall spread far, shall go from house to house. People shall not need to sympathize with their friends; they shall all have cause enough to mourn for themselves. Note, Those that are themselves affected with the terrors of the Lord should endeavour to affect others with them. The judgment here threatened is made to look terrible.

[1.] Multitudes shall be slain, Jer 9:21. Death shall ride in triumph, and there shall be no escaping his arrests when he comes with commission, neither within doors nor without. Not within doors, for let the doors be shut ever so fast, let them be ever so firmly locked and bolted, death comes up into our windows, like a thief in the night; it steals upon us ere we are aware. Nor does it thus boldly attack the cottages only, but it has entered into our palaces, the palaces of our princes and great men, though ever so stately, ever so strongly built and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are those more safe that are abroad; death cuts off even the children from without and the young men from the streets.

The children who might have been spared by the enemy in pity, because they had never been hurtful to them, and the young men who might have been spared in policy, because capable of being serviceable to them, shall fall together by the sword. It is usual now, even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword. It is usual now, even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

[2.] Those that are slain shall be left unburied (Jer 9:22): Speak, Thus saith the Lord (for the confirmation and aggravation of what was before said), Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung, neglected, and left to be offensive to the smell, as dung is. Common humanity obliges the survivors to bury the dead, even

for their own sake; but here such numbers shall be slain, and those so dispersed all the country over, that it shall be an endless thing to bury them all, nor shall there be hands enough to do it, nor shall the conquerors permit it, and those that should do it shall be overwhelmed with grief, so that they shall have no heart to do it.

The dead bodies even of the fairest and strongest, when they have lain awhile, become dung, such vile bodies have we. And here such multitudes shall fall that their bodies shall lie as thick as heaps of dung in the furrows of the field, and no more notice shall be taken of them than of the handfuls which the harvestman drops for the gleaners, for none shall gather them, but they shall remain in sight, monuments of divine vengeance, that the eye of the impenitent survivors may affect their heart. Slay them not, bury them not, lest my people forget, Ps 59:11.

19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we
are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because
our dwellings have cast *us* out.

20 Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear
receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing,
and every one her neighbor lamentation.

21 For death is come up into our windows, *and* is entered into our
palaces, to cut off the children from without, *and* the young men
from the streets.

22 Speak, Thus saith the Lord, Even the carcasses of men shall fall as
dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvestman,
and none shall gather *them*.

The Knowledge of God Is Man's Glory

23 Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom,
neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man*
glory in his riches:

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and his judgments, to convince them both of sin and wrath; but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge or other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction and with which to excuse themselves in the obstinacy and carelessness. He therefore sets himself here to

drive them from these refuges of lies and to show them the insufficiency of them.

When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be they pleaded the defence of their politics and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treasure, they thought made their city impregnable. In answer to this he shows them the folly of trusting to and boasting of all these stays, while they have not a God in covenant to stay themselves upon, Jer 9:23,24. Here he shows,

1. What we may not depend upon in a day of distress: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, as if with the help of that he could outwit or countermine the enemy, or in the greatest extremity find out some evasion or other; for a man's wisdom may fail him when he needs it most, and he may fail him when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness. Ahithophel was befooled, and counsellors are often led away spoiled. But, if a man's policies fail him, yet surely he may gain his point by might and dint of courage. No: Let not the strong man glory in his strength, for the battle is not always to the strong. David the stripling proves too hard for Goliath the giant. All human force is nothing without God, worse than nothing against him. But may not the rich man's wealth be his strong city? (money answers all things) No: Let not the rich man glory in his riches, for they may prove so far from sheltering him that they may expose him and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the wise men, and mighty men, and rich men that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans because they have wise men to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of the war. Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money; for all these will prove but vain things for safety.

2. He shows what we may depend upon in a day of distress.

(1.) Our only comfort in trouble will be that we have done our duty. Those that refused to know God (Jer 9:6) will boast in vain of their wisdom and wealth; but those that know God,

intelligently, that understand aright that he is the Lord, that have not only right apprehensions concerning his nature, and attributes, and relations to man, but receive and retain the impressions of them, may glory in this it will be their rejoicing in the day of evil.

(2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be that, having through grace in some measure done our duty, we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may glory in this, that, wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with an interest in a God that exercises lovingkindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth, that is not only just to all his creatures and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children and will protect them and provide for them. For in these things I delight. God delights to show kindness and to execute judgment himself, and is pleased with those who herein are followers of him as dear children. Those that have such knowledge of the glory of God as to be changed into the same image, and to partake of his holiness, find it to be their perfection and glory; and the God they thus faithfully conform to they may cheerfully confide in, in their greatest straits. But the prophet intimates that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their wisdom, and might, and riches, were their joy and hope, which would end in grief and despair. But those few among them that had the knowledge of God might please themselves with it, and boast themselves of it; it would stand them in better stead than thousands of gold and silver.

II. When they were told how provoking their sins were to God they vainly pleaded the covenant of their circumcision. They were undoubtedly the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his children in their flesh. "It is true that Chaldean army has laid such and such nations waste, because they were uncircumcised, and therefore not under the protection of the divine providence, as we are." To this the prophet answers, That the days of visitation were now at hand, in which God would punish all wicked people, without making any distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised, Jer 9:25,26. They had by sin profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and lived in common with the

uncircumcised nations, and so had forfeited the benefit of that peculiarity and must expect to fare never the better for it. God will punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised. As the ignorance of the uncircumcised shall not excuse their wickedness, so neither shall the privileges of the circumcised excuse theirs, but they shall be punished together.

Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none shall fare the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, circumcised or uncircumcised, according to his works. The condemnation of impenitent sinners that are baptized will be as sure as, nay, and more severe than, that of impenitent sinners that are unbaptized. It would affect one to find here Judah industriously put between Egypt and Edom, as standing upon a level with them and under the same doom, Jer 9:26. These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews' privileges (De 23:3); but the Jews are here told that they shall share in their punishments. Those in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness, are supposed to be the Kedarenes and those of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears by comparing Jer 49:28-32. Some think they are so called because they dwelt as it were in a corner of the world, others because they had the hair of their head polled into corners.

However that was, they were of those nations that were uncircumcised in flesh, and the Jews are ranked with them and are as near to ruin for their sins as they; for all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart: they have the sign, but not the thing signified, Jer 4:4. They are heathens in their hearts, strangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Their hearts are disposed to idols, as the hearts of the uncircumcised Gentiles are. Note, The seals of the covenant, though they dignify us, and lay us under obligations, will not save us, unless the temper of our minds and the tenour of our lives agree with the covenant. That only is circumcision, and that baptism, which is of the heart, Ro 2:28,29.

24 but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the Lord.

25 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all *them*
which are circumcised with the uncircumcised;
26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and
Moab, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, that dwell in the
wilderness: for all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised, and all the
house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

Jeremiah-10

The False Gods and the True God

1 Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of
Israel:

The prophet Isaiah, when he prophesied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings against idolatry and largely exposed the sottishness of idolaters, not only because the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but because the afflictions in Babylon were designed to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people against the idolatrous usages and customs of the heathen, not only for the use of those that had gone to Babylon, but of those also that staid behind, that being convinced and reclaimed, by the word of God, the rod might be prevented; and it is written for our learning. Observe here,

I. A solemn charge given to the people of God not to conform themselves to the ways and customs of the heathen. Let the house of Israel hear and receive this word from the God of Israel: "Learn not the way of the heathen, do not approve of it, no, nor think indifferently concerning it, much less imitate it or accustom yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs steal in among you (as they are apt to do insensibly) nor mingle themselves with your religion."

Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God to learn the way of the heathen, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they used in the worship of their false gods. See De 12:29-31. It was the way of the heathen to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to them

they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours, and therefore, according as the signs of heaven were, whether they were auspicious or ominous, they thought themselves countenanced or discountenanced by their deities, which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling. Business was stopped if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but thunder on their left hand, they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be dismayed at the signs of heaven, to reverence the stars as deities, nor to frighten themselves with any prognostications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the stars in their courses fight not against any that are at peace with God. The heathen are dismayed at these signs, for they know no better; but let not the house of Israel, that are taught of God, be so.

II. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge.

1 The way of the heathen is very ridiculous and absurd, and is condemned even by the dictates of right reason, Jer 10:3. The statutes and ordinances of the heathen are vanity itself; they cannot stand the test of a rational disquisition. This is again and again insisted upon here, as it was by Isaiah. The Chaldeans valued themselves upon their wisdom, in which they thought that they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here shows that they, and all others that worshipped idols and expected help and relief from them, were brutish and sottish, and had not common sense.

(1.) Consider what the idol is that is worshipped. It was a tree cut out of the forest originally. It was fitted up by the hands of the workman, squared, and sawed, and worked into shape; see Isa 44:12, &c. But, after all, it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But, to hide the wood, they deck it with silver and gold, they gild or lacquer it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. They fasten

it to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, with nails and hammers, that it fall not, nor be thrown down, nor stolen away, Jer 10:4. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it is upright as the palm-tree (Jer 10:5); it looks stately, and stands up as if it were going to speak to you, but it cannot speak; it is a poor dumb creature; nor can it take one step towards your relief. If there be any occasion for it to shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it cannot go. Very fitly does the admonition come in here, "Be not afraid of them, any more than of the signs of heaven; be not afraid of incurring their displeasure, for they can do no evil; be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, for neither is it in them to do good. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you deceive yourselves. Idols of gold and silver are an unworthy to be worshipped as wooden gods.

The stock is a doctrine of vanities, Jer 10:8. It teaches lies, teaches lies concerning God. It is an instruction of vanities; it is wood." It is probable that the idols of gold and silver had wood underneath for the substratum, and then silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, imported from beyond sea, and gold from Uphaz, or Phaz, which is sometimes rendered the fine or pure gold, Ps 21:3. A great deal of art is used, and pains taken, about it. They are not such ordinary mechanics that are employed about these as about the wooden gods, Jer 10:3. These are cunning men; it is the work of the workman; the graver must do his part when it has passed through the hands of the founder. Those were but decked here and there with silver and gold; these are silver and gold all over. And, that these gods might be reverenced as kings, blue and purple are their clothing, the colour of royal robes (Jer 10:9), which amuses ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter no better.

For what is the idol when it is made and when they have made the best they can of it? He tells us (Jer 10:14): They are falsehood; they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world. They are worshipped as the gods that give us breath and life and sense, whereas they are lifeless senseless things themselves, and there is no breath in them; there is no

spirit in them (so the word is); they are not animated, or inhabited, as they are supposed to be, by any divine spirit or numen--divinity. They are so far from being gods that they have not so much as the spirit of a beast that goes downward. They are vanity, and the work of errors, Jer 10:15. Enquire into the use of them and you will find they are vanity; they are good for nothing; no help is to be expected from them nor any confidence put in them. They are a deceitful work, works of illusions, or mere mockeries; so some read the following clause. They delude those that put their trust in them, make fools of them, or, rather, they make fools of themselves. Enquire into the use of them and you will find they are the work of errors, grounded upon the grossest mistakes that ever men who pretended to reason were guilty of. They are the creatures of a deluded fancy; and the errors by which they were produced they propagate among their worshippers.

(2.) Infer hence what the idolaters are that worship these idols. (Jer 10:8): They are altogether brutish and foolish. Those that make them are like unto them, senseless and stupid, and there is no spirit in them--no use of reason, else they would never stoop to them, Jer 10:14. Every man that makes or worships idols has become brutish in his knowledge, that is, brutish for want of knowledge, or brutish in that very thing which one would think they should be fully acquainted with; compare Jude 1:10, What they know naturally, what they cannot but know by the light of nature, in those things as brute beasts they corrupt themselves. Though in the works of creation they cannot but see the eternal power and godhead of the Creator, yet they have become vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge. See Ro 1:21,28. Nay, whereas they thought it a piece of wisdom thus to multiply gods, it really was the greatest folly they could be guilty of. The world by wisdom knew not God, 1Co 1:21,Ro 1:22. Every founder is himself confounded by the graven image; when he has made it by a mistake he is more and more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot disentangle himself from the snare; or it is what he will one time or other be ashamed of.

2 The God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and those that have him for their God need not make their application to any other; nay, to set up any other in competition with him is the greatest affront and injury that can be done him. Let the house of Israel cleave to the God of Israel and serve and worship him only, for,

(1.) He is a non-such. Whatever men may set in competition with him, there is none to be compared with him. The prophet turns from speaking with the utmost disdain of the idols of the heathen (as well he might) to speak with the most profound and awful reverence of the God of Israel (Jer 10:6,7): "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord! none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified and make such ado about," the dead men of whom they made dead images, and whom they worshipped. "Some were deified and adored for their wisdom; but, among all the wise men of the nations, the greatest philosophers or statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like thee. Others were deified and adored for their dominion; but, in all their royalty" (so it may be read), "among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, there is none like unto thee." What is the glory of a man that invented a useful art or founded a flourishing kingdom (and these were grounds sufficient among the heathen to entitle a man to an apotheosis) compared with the glory of him that is the Creator of the world and that forms the spirit of man within him? What is the glory of the greatest prince or potentate, compared with the glory of him whose kingdom rules over all?

He acknowledges (Jer 10:6), O Lord! thou art great, infinite and immense, and thy name is great in might; thou hast all power, and art known to have it. Men's name is often beyond their might; they are thought to be greater than they are; but God's name is great, and no greater than he really is. And therefore who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Who would not choose to worship such a God as this, that can do every thing, rather than such dead idols as the heathen worship, that can do nothing? Who would not be afraid of offending or forsaking a God whose name is so great in might? Which of all the nations,

if they understood their interests aright, would not fear him who is the King of nations?

Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity in the worshipping of God only. It is fit that he who is God alone should alone be served, that he who is Lord of all should be served by all, that he who is great should be greatly feared and greatly praised.

(2.) His verity is as evident as the idol's vanity, Jer 10:10. They are the work of men's hands, and therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jest to worship them, if that may be called a jest which is so great an indignity to him that made us: But the Lord is the true God, the God of truth; he is God in truth. God Jehovah is truth; he is not a counterfeit and pretender, as they are, but is really what he has revealed himself to be; he is one we may depend upon, in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived.

[1.] Look upon him as he is in himself, and he is the living God. He is life itself, has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless, but ours is a living God, and hath immortality.

[2.] Look upon him with relation to his creatures, he is a King, and absolute monarch, over them all, is their owner and ruler, has an incontestable right both to command them and dispose of them. As a king, he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preserves peace among them. He is an everlasting king. The counsels of his kingdom were from everlasting and the continuance of it will be to everlasting. He is a King of eternity. The idols whom they call their kings are but of yesterday, and will soon be abolished; and the kings of the earth, that set them up to be worshipped, will themselves be in the dust shortly; but the Lord shall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion! unto all generations.

(3.) None knows the power of his anger. Let us stand in awe, and not dare to provoke him by giving that glory to another which is due to him alone; for at his wrath the earth shall

tremble, even the strongest and stoutest of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, firmly as it is fixed, when he pleases is made to quake and the rocks to tremble, Ps 104:32,Hab 3:6,10. Though the nations should join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to resist, but even to abide his indignation. Not only can they not make head against it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overload them, Ps 76:7,8,Na 1:6.

(4.) He is the God of nature, the fountain of all being; and all the powers of nature are at his command and disposal, Jer 10:12,13. The God we worship is he that made the heavens and the earth, and has a sovereign dominion over both; so that his invisible things are manifested and proved in the things that are seen.

[1.] If we look back, we find that the whole world owed its origin to him as its first cause. It was a common saying even among the Greeks--He that sets up to be another god ought first to make another world. While the heathen worship gods that they made, we worship the God that made us and all things.

First, The earth is a body of vast bulk, has valuable treasures in its bowels and more valuable fruit on its surface. It and them he has made by his power; and it is by no less than an infinite power that it hangs upon nothing, as it does (Job 26:7)--ponderibus librata suis--poised by its own weight.

Secondly, The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and he hath established it so by his wisdom, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both the earth and the world are his, Ps 24:1.

Thirdly, The heavens are wonderfully stretched out to an incredible extent, and it is by his discretion that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These declare his glory (Ps 19:1),

and oblige us to declare it, and not give that glory to the heavens which is due to him that made them.

[2.] If we look up, we see his providence to be a continued creation (Jer 10:13): When he uttereth his voice (gives the word of command) there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When he utters his voice in the thunder, immediately there follow thunder-showers, in which there are a multitude of waters; and those come with a noise, as the margin reads it; and we read of the noise of abundance of rain, 1Ki 18:41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise: He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the moisture in the universe, like the money in a kingdom and the blood in the body, is continually circulating for the good of the whole.

Those vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed lightnings for the rain, and the winds which God from time to time brings forth out of his treasures, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure and for such use as he thinks fit, as payments are made out of the treasury. All the meteors are so ready to serve God's purposes that he seems to have treasures of them, that cannot be exhausted and may at any time be drawn from, Ps 135:7. God glories in the treasures he has of these, Job 38:22,23. This God can do; but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but what furnishes us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

(5.) This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the felicity of every Israelite indeed. Therefore let the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for, if they do, they certainly change for the worse, for (Jer 10:16) the portion of Jacob is not like them; their rock is not as our rock (De 32:31), nor ours like their mole-hills. Note,

[1.] Those that have the Lord for their God have a full and complete happiness in him. The God of Jacob is the portion of Jacob; he is his all, and in him he has enough and needs no more in this world nor the other. In him we have a worthy portion, Ps 16:5.

[2.] If we have entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as the rod of his inheritance, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells and by whom he is served and honoured.

[3.] It is the unspeakable comfort of all the Lord's people that he who is their God is the former of all things, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of. Their help stands in his name who made heaven and earth. And he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts in heaven and earth, has them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people when there is occasion. This is the name by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of and then take to themselves the comfort of.

[4.] Herein God's people are happy above all other people, happy indeed, bona si sua norint--did they but know their blessedness. The gods which the heathen pride, and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but the portion of Jacob is not like them.

3. The prophet, having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel (between whom there is no comparison), reads the doom, the certain doom, of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews, in God's name, to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters (Jer 10:11): Thus shall you say unto them (and the God you serve will bear you out in saying it), The gods which have not made the heavens and the earth (and therefore are no gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only who did make heaven and earth) shall perish, perish of course, because they are vanity--perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him. As gods

they shall perish from off the earth (even all those things on earth beneath which they make gods of) and from under these heavens, even all those things in the firmament of heaven, under the highest heavens, which are deified, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldee dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language when they tempted them to idolatry: "Do you press us to worship your gods? We will never do that; for,"

(1.) "They are counterfeit deities; they are no gods, for they have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are not entitled to our homage, nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel." The primitive Christians would say, when they were urged to worship such a god, Let him make a world and he shall be my god. While we have him to worship who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other.

(2.) "They are condemned deities. They shall perish; the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together. The earth shall no longer bear them; the heavens shall no longer cover them; but both shall abandon them." It is repeated (Jer 10:15), In the time of their visitation they shall perish. When God comes to reckon with idolaters he will make them weary of their idols, and glad to be rid of them. They shall cast them to the moles and to the bats, Isa 2:20. Whatever runs against God and religion will be run down at last.

2 thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.

3 For the customs of the people *are* vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe.

4 They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.

5 They *are* upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs
be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they
cannot do evil, neither also *is it* in them to do good.
6 Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord; thou *art* great,
and thy name *is* great in might.
7 Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it
appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations, and
in all their kingdoms, *there is* none like unto thee.
8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the stock *is* a doctrine
of vanities.
9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from
Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder:
blue and purple *is* their clothing: they *are* all the work of cunning
men.
10 But the Lord *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an
everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the
nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.
11 Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the
heavens and the earth, *even* they shall perish from the earth, and
from under these heavens.
12 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the
world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his
discretion.
13 When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the
heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the
earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind
out of his treasures.
14 Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge: every founder is
confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood,
and *there is* no breath in them.
15 They *are* vanity, *and* the work of errors: in the time of their
visitation they shall perish.
16 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them: for he *is* the former of all
things; and Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance: The Lord of hosts *is*
his name.

The Desolation of Judah

In these verses,

The prophet threatens, in God's name, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, Jer 10:17,18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves inhabitants of a fortress; their country was their strong hold, and, in their own conceit, impregnable; but they are here told to think of leaving it: they must prepare to go after their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it: "Gather up thy wares out of the land; contract your affairs, and bring them into as small a compass as you can. Arise, depart, this is not your rest," Mic 2:10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of the sentence God has passed upon you (Jer 10:18): "Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once; they have hitherto dropped out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be slung out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain. They shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off, in a little time." See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1Sa 25:29. Yet once more God will shake their land, and shake the wicked out of it, Heb 12:26. He adds, And I will distress them, that they may find it so.

He will not only throw them out hence (that he may do and yet they may be easy elsewhere); but, whithersoever they go, trouble shall follow them; they shall be continually perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves: and who or what can make those easy whom God will distress, whom he will distress that they may find it so, that they may feel that which they would not believe? They were often told of the weight of God's wrath and their utter inability to make head against it, or bear up under it. They were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard nor credit what was told them; but now they shall find it so; and therefore God will pursue them with his judgments, that they may find it so, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, sooner or later sinners will find it just as the word of God has represented things to them, and no better, and that the threatenings were not bugbears.

17 Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress.
18 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find *it so.*

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19 Woe is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this *is* a grief, and I must bear it.

20 My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they *are* not: *there is* none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.

He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities (Jer 10:19): Woe is me for my hurt! Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country. He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and, since there were none that had so much sense as to join with them, he weeps in secret, and cries out, Woe is me! In mournful times it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. The prophet puts into their mouths the words they should say; whether they would say them or no, they should have cause to say them. Some among them would thus bemoan themselves, and all of them, at last, would be forced to do it.

1. They lament that the affliction is very great, and it is very hard to them to bear it, the more hard because they had not been used to trouble and now did not expect it: "Woe is me for my hurt, not for what I fear, but for what I feel;" for they are not, as some are, worse frightened than hurt. Nor is it a slight hurt, but a wound, a wound that is grievous, very painful, and very threatening.

2. That there is no remedy but patience. They cannot help themselves, but must sit still, and abide it: But I said, when I was about to complain of my wound, To what purpose is it to complain? This is a grief, and I must bear it as well as I can. This is the language rather of a sullen than of a gracious submission, of a patience per force, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction I should say, "This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God that I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me and his grace will make it work for good

to me." This is receiving evil at the hand of God, Job 2:10. But to say, "This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it," is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God which we should always have, even under our afflictions, saying, not only, God can and will do what he pleases, but, Let him do what he pleases.

3. That the country was quite ruined and wasted (Jer 10:20): My tabernacle is spoiled. Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle or tent, when it is taken down, and all its cords, that should keep it together, are broken. Or by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary, which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country, and there were none to repair these desolations. "My children have gone forth of me; some have fled, others are slain, others carried into captivity, so that as to me, they are not; I am likely to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, none of my children that used to do it for me, none to set up my curtains, none to do me any service." Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons, Isa 51:18.

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures, for the redress of their grievances and the re-establishing of heir ruined state (Jer 10:21): The pastors have become brutish. When the tents, the shepherds' tents, were spoiled (Jer 10:20), it concerned the shepherds to look after them; but they were foolish shepherds. Their kings and princes had no regard at all for the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite besotted and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing towards the repair of it. They are brutish indeed, for they have not sought the Lord; they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence, in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment, nor expected the deliverance, to come from his hand.

Note, Those are brutish people that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world. Every man is either a saint or a brute. But it is sad indeed with a people when their pastors, that should feed them with knowledge and understanding, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? Therefore they shall not prosper; none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And, when the pastors are brutish, what else can be expected but that all their flocks should be scattered? For, if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. The ruin of a people is often owing to the brutishness of their pastors.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful (Jer 10:22): The noise of the bruit has come, of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation. It now proves too true: A great commotion arises out of the north country, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah desolate and a den of dragons; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect but to be made a den of dragons which has by sin made itself a den of thieves?

21 For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

He turns to God, and addresses himself to him, finding it to little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers that, if men will not hear them, God will; and to him they have liberty of access at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say that they have laboured in vain.

1 The prophet here acknowledges the sovereignty and dominion of the divine Providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and determined, Jer 10:23. This is an article of our faith which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace when we are complaining of an affliction or suing for a mercy: "O Lord,

I know, and believe, that the way of man is not in himself; Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine Providence." We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us and command deliverance for us; for it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, though he seem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty and to choose his own way. Those that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions were made to know, by sad experience, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans, that the way of man is not in himself; he designs which men lay deep, and think well-formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We must all apply this to ourselves, and mix faith with it, that we are not at our own disposal, but under a divine direction; the event is often overruled so as to be quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be according to our mind; we must therefore refer ourselves to God and acquiesce in his will.

Some think that the prophet here mentions this with a design to make this comfortable use of it, that, the way of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to thee proud waves, and say, Hitherto they shall come, and no further. And a quieting consideration it is that the most formidable enemies have no power against us but what is given them from above.

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, Jer 10:24. He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his people: O Lord, correct me, but with judgment (in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts), not in thy anger (how severe soever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good and made to work for good), not to bring us to nothing, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not

be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the design of thy grace. Note,

(1.) We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need correction and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves he chastens.

(2.) The great thing we should dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, Lord, do not correct me, but, Lord, do not correct me in anger; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery that will bring us to nothing. We may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel (Jer 10:25): Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not. This prayer does not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order; but,

(1.) It is an appeal to his justice. As if he had said, "Lord, we are a provoking people; but are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thy enemies, and against them we have reason to think thy indignation should be, not against us." This is God's usual method. The cup put into the hands of God's people is full of mixtures, mixtures of mercy; but the dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth, let them wring them out, Ps 75:8.

(2.) It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of those that obey not his gospel? 1Pe 4:17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be poured out.

[1.] They are strangers to God, and are content to be so. They know him not, nor desire to know him. They are families that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they call not on God's name. Those that restrain prayer prove that they know not God; for those that know him will seek to him and entreat his favour.

[2.] They are persecutors of the people of God and are resolved to be so. They have eaten up Jacob with as much greediness as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; nay, with more, they have devoured him, and consumed him, and made his habitation desolate, that is, the land in which he lives, or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will, for that, make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from Ps 79:6,7.

22 Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out
of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, *and* a den
of dragons.

23 O Lord, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in
man that walketh to direct his steps.

24 O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest
thou bring me to nothing.

25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon
the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob,
and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation
desolate.

Jeremiah-11

The Broken Covenant

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

The prophet here, as prosecutor in God's name, draws up an indictment against the Jews for wilful disobedience to the commands of their rightful Sovereign. For the more solemn management of this charge,

He produces the commission he had to draw up the charge against them. He did not take pleasure in accusing the children of his people, but God commanded him to speak it to the men of Judah, Jer 11:1,2. In the original it is plural: Speak you this. For what he said to Jeremiah was the same that he gave in charge to all his servants the prophets. They none of them said any other than what Moses, in the law, had said; to that therefore they must refer themselves, and direct the people: "Hear the words of this covenant; turn to your Bibles, be judged by them." Jeremiah must now proclaim this in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, that all may hear, for all are concerned. All the words of reproof and conviction which the prophets spoke were grounded upon the words of the covenant, and agreed with that; and therefore "hear these words, and understand by them upon what terms you stood with God at first; and then, by comparing yourselves with the covenant, you will soon be aware upon what terms you now stand with him."

2 Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of
Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
3 and say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Cursed
be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant,
4 which I commanded your fathers in the day *that* I brought them
forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey
my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so
shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:
5 that I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers,
to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as *it is* this day.
Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord.

He opens the charter upon which their state was founded and by which they held their privileges. They had forgotten the tenour of it, and lived as if they thought that the grant was absolute and that they might do what they pleased and yet have what God had promised, or as if they thought that the keeping up of the ceremonial observances was all that God required of them. He therefore shows them, with all possible plainness, that the thing God insisted upon was obedience, which was better than sacrifice. He said, Obey my voice, Jer 11:4 and again Jer 11:7. "Own God for your Master; give up yourselves to him as his subjects and servants; attend to all the declarations of his mind and will, and make conscience of complying with them. Do my commandments, not only in some things, but according to all which I command you; make conscience of moral duties especially, and rest not in those that are merely ritual; hear the words of the covenant, and do them."

1. This was the original contract between God and them, when he first formed them into a people. It was what he commanded their fathers when he first brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, Jer 11:4,7. He never intended to take them under his guidance and protection upon any other terms. This was what he required from them in gratitude for the great things he did for them when he brought them from the iron furnace. He redeemed them out of the service of the Egyptians, which was perfect slavery, that he might take them into his own service, which is perfect freedom, Lu 1:74,75.

2. This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest importunity imaginable pressed upon them, Jer 11:7. God not only commanded it, but earnestly protested it to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept and line upon line.

3. This was made the condition of the relation between and God, which was so much their honour and privilege: "So shall you be my people and I will be your God; I will own you for mine, and you may call upon me as yours;" this intimates that, if they refused to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

4. It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession: Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, Jer 11:5. God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition; if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of possession. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. Obedience was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-enter for non-payment.

5. This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessing, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first here (Jer 11:3), that they might, if possible, be awakened by the terrors of the Lord: Cursed be the man, though it were but a single person, that obeys not the words of this covenant, much more when it is the body of the nation that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings: and Moses set before them not only life and good, but death and evil (De 30:15), so that they had fair warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

6. Lest this covenant should be forgotten, and, because out of mind, should be thought out of date, God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his servants the prophets had made a continual claim of this rent, so that they could not plead, in excuse of their non-payment, that it had never been demanded; from the day when he brought them out of Egypt to this day (and that was nearly 1000 years) he had been, in one way or other, at sundry times and in divers manners, protesting to them the necessity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace and how powerful those means have been, how often we have been not only spoken to, but protested to, concerning our duty.

7. This covenant was consented to (Jer 11:5): Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord! These are the words of the prophet, expressing either,

(1.) His own consent to the covenant for himself, and his desire to have the benefit of it. God promised Canaan to the obedient: "Lord," says he, "I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient; let me have my inheritance in the land of promise, of which Canaan is a type." Or,

(2.) His good will, and good wish, that his people might have the benefit of it. "Amen; Lord, let them still be kept in possession of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promise to them." Or,

(3.) His people's consent to the covenant: "Then answered I, in the name of the people, So be it." Taking it in this sense, it refers to the declared consent which the people gave to the covenant, not only to the precepts of it when they said, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do and will be obedient, but to the penalties when they said Amen to all the curses upon Mount Ebal. The more solemnly we have engaged ourselves to God the more reason we have to hope that the engagement will be perpetual; and yet here it did not prove so.

6 Then the Lord said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them.

7 For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day *that* I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice.

8 Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do; but they did *them* not.

He charges them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, Jer 11:8. God had said again and again, by his law and by his prophets, "Obey my voice, do as you are bidden, and all shall be well;" yet they obeyed not; and, because they were resolved not to submit their souls to God's commandments, they would not so much as incline their ears to them, but got as far as they could out of call: They walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart, followed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right

or wrong, lawful or unlawful, both in their devotions and in their conversations; see Jer 7:24. What then could they expect, but to fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it?

Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, that is, all the threatenings contained in it, because they did not what they were commanded. Note, The words of the covenant shall not fall to the ground. If we do not by our obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it. That which aggravated their defection from God, and rebellion against him, was that it was general, and as it were by consent, Jer 11:9,10. Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God, but the Lord told him that the matter was worse than he thought of: A conspiracy is found among them, by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness.

There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates that they were wilful and deliberate in wickedness (they rebelled against God, not through incogitancy, but presumptuously, and with a high hand),--that they were subtle and ingenious in wickedness, and carried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and contrivance,--that they were linked together in the design, and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe,

1. What the conspiracy was. They designed to overthrow divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to hear, not to heed, the words of God. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the scriptures and to lessen the value of them; they designed to draw people after other gods to serve them, to consult them as their oracles and make court to them as their benefactors. Human reason shall be their god, a light within their god, an infallible judge their god, saints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation shall be theirs; thus, under

several disguises, they are in the same confederacy against the Lord and against his anointed.

2. Who were in conspiracy. One would have expected find some foreigners ring-leaders in it; but no,

(1.) The inhabitants of Jerusalem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things.

(2.) Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age against religion: They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, and have risen up in their stead, a seed of evil-doers, and increase of sinful men, Nu 32:14. In Josiah's time there had been a reformation, but after this death the people returned to the idolatries which then they had renounced.

(3.) Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and that of the two, that were often at daggers--drawing one with another, were yet in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The house of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could be expected but that god should take severe methods, both for the chastising of the conspirators and the crushing of this conspiracy; for none ever hardened his heart thus against God and prospered? He that rolls this stone will find it return upon him.

9 And the Lord said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

10 They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

11 Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them.

This paragraph, which contains so much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next

before, which contained so much of his people's sin. When God found so much evil among them we cannot think it strange if it follows, Therefore I will bring evil upon them (Jer 11:11), the evil of punishment for the evil of sin; and there is no remedy, no relief: the decree has gone forth and the sentence will be executed.

I. They cannot help themselves, but will be found too weak to contest with God's judgments: it is evil which they shall not be able to escape, or to go forth out of, by any evasion whatsoever. Note, Those that will not submit to God's government shall not be able to escape his wrath. There is no fleeing from his justice, no avoiding his cognizance. Evil pursues sinners and entangles them in snares out of which they cannot extricate themselves.

II. Their God will not help them; his providence shall no way favour them: Though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken to them. In their affliction they will seek the God whom before they slighted, and cry to him whom before they would not vouchsafe to speak to. But how can they expect to speed? For he has plainly told us that he that turns away his ears from hearing the law, as they did, for they inclined not their ear (Jer 11:8), even his prayer shall be an abomination to him, as the word of the Lord was now to them a reproach.

III. Their idols shall not help them, Jer 11:12. They shall go, and cry to the gods to whom they now offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain. They shall be sent to the gods whom they served (Jdg 10:14,De 32:37,38), and what the better? They shall not save them at all, shall do nothing towards their salvation, nor give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them the least comfort, nor relief, nor mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a friend at need, a present powerful help in time of trouble. The idols cannot help themselves; how then should they help their worshippers?

Those that make idols of the world and the flesh will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress. If the idols could have

done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them according to the number of their cities (Jer 11:13), nay, in Jerusalem, according to the number of their streets. Suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would not serve; they must have them dispersed in every corner, lest they should be out of the way when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put his name there, publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, in every street, they had altars to that shameful thing, that shame, even to Baal, which they ought to have been ashamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord and bring confusion upon themselves. But now in their distress their many gods, and many altars, should stand them in stead. Note, Those that will not be ashamed of their commission of sin as a wicked thing will be ashamed of their expectations from sin as a fruitless thing.

IV. Jeremiah's prayers shall not help them, Jer 11:14. What God had said to him before (Jer 7:16) he here says again, Pray not thou for this people. This is not designed for a command to the prophet, so much as for a threatening to the people, that they should have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. God would give no encouragement to the prophets to pray for them, would not stir up the spirit of prayer, but cast a damp upon it, would put it into their hearts to pray, not for the body of the people, but for the remnant among them, to pray for their eternal salvation, not for their deliverance from the temporal judgments that were coming upon them; and what other prayers were put up for them should not be heard. Those are in a sad case indeed that are cut off from the benefit of prayer. "I will not hear them when they cry, and therefore to not thou pray for them." Note, Those that have so far thrown themselves out of God's favour that he will not hear their prayers cannot expect benefit by the prayers of others for them.

V. The profession they make of religion shall stand them in no stead, Jer 11:15. They were originally God's beloved, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity; even the unbelieving Jews are said to be beloved for the fathers'

sake, Ro 11:28. As such they had a place in God's house; they were admitted to worship in the courts of his temple; they partook of God's altar; they ate of the flesh of their peace-offerings here called the holy flesh, which God had the honour of and they had the comfort of.

This they gloried in, and trusted to. What harm could come to those who were God's beloved, who were under the protection of his house? Even when they did evil yet they rejoiced and gloried in this, made a mighty noise of this. And when their evil was (so the margin reads it), when trouble came upon them, they rejoiced in this, and made this their confidence; but their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it, they themselves having forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of. They have wrought lewdness with many, have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols; and therefore,

1. God's temple will yield them no protection; it is fit that the adulteress, especially when she has so often repeated her whoredoms and has grown so impudent in them and irreclaimable, should be put away, and turned out of doors: "What has my beloved to do in my house? She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall no longer be a shelter to her."

2. God's altar will yield them no satisfaction, nor can they expect any comfort from that: "The holy flesh has passed from thee, that is, an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be, that thou art so proud of?" A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the holy flesh has passed from us; an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace. But woe unto us if the departure of the holy flesh be accompanied with the departure of the Holy Spirit.

VI. God's former favours to them shall stand them in no stead, Jer 11:16,17. Their remembrance of them shall be no comfort to them under their troubles, and God's remembrance of them shall be no argument for their relief.

1. It is true God had done great things for them; that people had been favourites above any people under the sun; they had been the darlings of heaven. God had called Israel's name a green olive-tree, and had made them so, for he miscalls nothing; he had planted them (Jer 11:17), had formed them into a people, with all the advantages they could have to make them a fruitful and flourishing people, so good was their law and so good was their land. One would think no other than that a people so planted, so watered, so cultivated, should be, as the olive-tree is, ever green, in respect both of piety and prosperity, Ps 52:8. God called them fair and of goodly fruit, both good for food and pleasant to the eye, both amiable and serviceable to God and man, for which the greenness and fatness of the olive both are honoured, Jdg 9:9.

2. It is as true that they have done evil things against God. He had planted them a green olive, a good olive, but they had degenerated into a wild olive, Ro 11:17. Both the house of Israel. and the house of Judah had done evil, had provoked God to anger in burning incense unto Baal, setting up other mediators between them and the supreme God besides the promised Messiah; nay, setting up other gods in competition with the true and living God, for they had gods many, as well as lords many.

3. When they have conducted themselves so ill they can expect no other than that, notwithstanding what good he has done to them and designed for them, he should now bring upon them the evil he has pronounced against them. He that planted this green olive-tree, and expected fruit from it, finding it barren and grown wild, has kindled fire upon it, to burn it as it stands; for, being without fruit, it is twice dead, plucked up by the roots (Jude 1:12), it is cut down and cast into the fire, the fittest place for trees that cumber the ground, Mt 3:10. The branches of it, the high and lofty boughs (so the word signifies), are broken are broken down, both princes and priests cut off. And thus it proves that the evil done against God, to provoke him to anger, is really done against themselves; they wrong their own souls; God is out of their reach, but they ruin themselves. See Jer 7:19. Note, Every sin against God is a sin against ourselves, and so it will be found sooner or later.

12 Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem go, and
cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not
save them at all in the time of their trouble.
13 For *according to* the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and
according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up
altars to *that* shameful thing, *even* altars to burn incense unto Baal.
14 Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or
prayer for them: for I will not hear *them* in the time that they cry
unto me for their trouble.
15 What hath my beloved to do in mine house, *seeing* she hath
wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from
thee? when thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.
16 The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, *and* of goodly
fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it,
and the branches of it are broken.
17 For the Lord of hosts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil
against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of
Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to
anger in offering incense unto Baal.

The Plot against Jeremiah

18 And the Lord hath given me knowledge *of it,* and I know *it:* then
thou showedest me their doings.

The prophet Jeremiah has much in his writings concerning himself, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome. Here we have (as it should seem) the beginning of his sorrows, which arose from the people of his own city, Anathoth, a priest's city, and yet a malignant one. Observe here,

I. Their plot against him, Jer 11:19. They devised devices against him, laid their heads together to contrive how they might be in the most plausible and effectual manner the death of him. Malice is ingenious in its devices, as well as industrious in its prosecutions. They said concerning Jeremiah, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof--a proverbial expression, meaning, "Let us utterly destroy him root and branch. Let us destroy both

the father and the family" (as, when Naboth was put to death for treason, his sons were put to death with him), or rather "both the prophet and the prophecy; let us kill the one and defeat the other. Let us cut him off from the land of the living, as a false prophet, and load him with ignominy and disgrace, that his name may be no more remembered with respect. Let us sink his reputation, and so spoil the credit of his predictions." This was their plot; and

1. It was a cruel one; but so cruel have the persecutors of God's prophets been. They hunt for no less than the precious life, and very precious the lives are that they hunt for. But,

(2.) It was a baffled one. They thought to put an end to his days, but he survived most of his enemies; they thought to blast his memory, but it lives to this day, and will be blessed while time lasts.

II The information which God gave him of this conspiracy against him. He knew nothing of it himself, so artfully had they concealed it; he came to Anathoth, meaning no harm to them and therefore fearing no harm from them, like a lamb or an ox, that thinks he is driven as usual to the field, when he is brought to the slaughter; so little did poor Jeremiah dream of the design his citizens that hated him had upon him. None of his friends could, and none of his enemies would, give him any notice of his danger, that he might shift for his own safety, as Paul's sister's son gave him intelligence of the Jews that were lying in wait for him. There is but a step between Jeremiah and death; but then the Lord gave him knowledge of it, by dream or vision, or impression upon his spirit, that he might save himself, as the king of Israel did upon the notice Elisha gave him, 2Ki 6:10. Thus he came to know it. God showed him their doings; and such were their devices that the discovering of them was the defeating of them. If God had not let him know his own danger, it would have been improved by unreasonable men against the reputation of his predictions, that he who foretold the ruin of his country could not foresee his own peril and avoid it. See what care God takes of his prophets: He suffers no man to do them wrong; all the rage of their enemies cannot prevail to take them off till they have finished their testimony. God knows all the secret designs of his

and his people's enemies, and can, when he pleases, make them know. A bird of the air shall carry the voice.

III. His appeal to God hereupon, Jer 11:20. His eye is to God as the Lord of hosts, that judges righteously. It is a matter of comfort to us, when men deal unjustly with us, that we have a God to go to who does and will plead the cause of injured innocency and appear against the injurious. God's justice, which is a terror to the wicked, is a comfort to the godly. His eye is towards him as the God that tries the reins and the heart, that perfectly sees what is in man, what are his thoughts and intents. He knew the integrity that was in Jeremiah's heart, and that he was not the man they represented him to be. He knew the wickedness that was in their hearts, though ever so cunningly concealed and disguised. Now,

1. Jeremiah prays judgment against them: "Let me see thy vengeance on them, that is, do justice between me and them in such a way as thou pleasest." Some think there was something of human frailty in this prayer; at least Christ has taught us another lesson, both by precept and by pattern, which is to pray for our persecutors. Others think it comes from a pure zeal for the glory of God and a pious and prophetic indignation against men that were by profession priests, the Lord's ministers, and yet were so desperately wicked as to fly out against one that did them no harm, merely for the service he did to God. This petition was a prediction that he should see God's vengeance on them.

2. He refers his cause entirely to the judgment of God: "Unto thee have I revealed my cause; to thee I have committed it, not desiring nor expecting to interest any other in it." Note, It is our comfort, when we are wronged, that we have a God to commit our cause to, and our duty to commit it to him, with a resolution to acquiesce in his definitive sentence, to subscribe, and not prescribe, to him.

IV. Judgment given against his persecutors, the men of Anathoth. It was to no purpose for him to appeal to the courts at Jerusalem, he could not have justice done him there: the priests there would stand by the priests at Anathoth, and rather second them than discountenance them; but God will therefore take cognizance of

the cause himself, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. Here is,

1. Their crime recited, on which the sentence is grounded, Jer 11:21. They sought the prophet's life, for they forbad him to prophesy upon pain of death; they were resolved either to silence him or to slay him. The provocation he gave them was his prophesying in the name of the Lord without license from those that were the governors of the city which he was a member of, and not prophesying such smooth things as they always bespoke. Their forbidding him to prophesy was in effect seeking his life, for it was seeking to defeat the end and business of his life and to rob him of the comfort of it. It is as bad to God's faithful ministers to have their mouth stopped as to have their breath stopped. But especially when it was resolved that if he did prophesy, as certainly he would notwithstanding their inhibition, he should die by their hand; they would be accusers, judges, executioners, and all. It used to be said that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, for there the great council sat; but so bitter were the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah that they would undertake to be the death of him themselves. A prophet then shall find not only no honour, but no favour, in his own country.

2 The sentence passed upon them for this crime, Jer 11:22,23. God says, I will punish them; let me alone to deal with them. I will visit this upon them; so the word is. God will enquire into it and reckon for it. Two of God's four sore judgments shall serve to ruin their town:--The sword shall devour their young men, though they were young priests, not men of war (their character shall not be their protection), and famine shall destroy the children, sons and daughters, that tarry at home, which is a more grievous death than that by the sword, La 4:9. The destruction shall be final (Jer 11:23): There shall be no remnant of them left, none to be the seed of another generation. They sought Jeremiah's life, and therefore they shall die; they would destroy him root and branch, that his name might be no more remembered, and therefore there shall be no remnant of them; and herein the Lord is righteous. Thus evil is brought upon them, even the year of their visitation, and that is evil enough, a recompence according to their deserts. Then shall Jeremiah see

his desire upon his enemies. Note, Their condition is sad who have the prayers of good ministers and good people against them.

19 But I *was* like a lamb *or* an ox *that* is brought to the slaughter; and I
knew not that they had devised devices against me, *saying*, Let us
destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from
the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.
20 But, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins
and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have
I revealed my cause.
21 Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy
life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not
by our hand:
22 therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will punish them:
the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters
shall die by famine:
23 and there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon
the men of Anathoth, *even* the year of their visitation.

Jeremiah-12

Jeremiah's Complaint and God's Answer

The prophet doubts not but it would be of use to others to know what had passed between God and his soul, what temptations he had been assaulted with and how he had got over them; and therefore he here tells us,

I. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciously allowed him, to reason with God concerning his judgments, Jer 12:1. He is about to plead with God, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his proceedings, but to enquire into the meaning of them, that he might more and more see reason to be satisfied in them, and might have wherewith to answer both his own and others' objections against them. The works of the Lord, and the reasons of them, are sought out even of those that have pleasure therein. Ps 111:2. We may not strive with our Maker, but we may reason with him. The prophet lays down a truth of unquestionable certainty, which he resolves to abide by in managing this argument: Righteous art thou, O Lord! when I plead with thee. Thus he arms himself against the

temptation wherewith he was assaulted, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, before he entered into a parley with it.

Note, When we are most in the dark concerning the meaning of God's dispensations we must still resolve to keep up right thoughts of God, and must be confident of this, that he never did, nor ever will do, the least wrong to any of his creatures; even when his judgments are unsearchable as a great deep, and altogether unaccountable, yet his righteousness is as conspicuous and immovable as the great mountains, Ps 36:6. Though sometimes clouds and darkness are round about him, yet justice and judgment are always the habitation of his throne, Ps 97:2.

When we find it hard to understand particular providences we must have recourse to general truths as our first principles, and abide by them; however dark the providence may be, the Lord is righteous; see Ps 73:1. And we must acknowledge it to him, as the prophet here, even when we plead with him, as those that have no thoughts of contending but of learning, being fully assured that he will be justified when he speaks. Note, However we may see cause for our own information to plead with God, yet it becomes us to own that, whatever he says or does, he is in the right.

II. What it was in the dispensations of divine Providence that he stumbled at and that he thought would bear a debate. It was that which has been a temptation to many wise and good men, and such a one as they have with difficulty got over. They see the designs and projects of wicked people successful: The way of the wicked prospers; they compass their malicious designs and gain their point. They see their affairs and concerns in a good posture: They are happy, happy as the world can make them, though they deal treacherously, very treacherously, both with God and man. Hypocrites are chiefly meant (as appears, Jer 12:2), who dissemble in their good professions, and depart from their good beginnings and good promises, and in both they deal treacherously, very treacherously. It has been said that men cannot expect to prosper who are unjust and dishonest in their dealings; but these deal treacherously, and yet they are happy. The prophet shows (Jer 12:2) both their prosperity and their abuse of their prosperity.

1. God had been very indulgent to them and they were got beforehand in the world: "They are planted in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and thou hast planted them! nay, thou didst cast out the heathen to plant them," Ps 44:2,80:8. Many a tree is planted that yet never grows nor comes to any thing; but they have taken root; their prosperity seems to be confirmed and settled. They take root in the earth, for there they fix themselves, and thence they draw the sap of all their satisfaction. Many trees however take root which yet never come on; but these grow, yea they bring forth fruit; their families are built up, they live high, and spend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the divine Providence, which smiled upon them, Ps 73:7.

2. Thus God had favoured them, though they had dealt treacherously with him: Thou art near in their mouth and far from their reins. This was no uncharitable censure, for he spoke by the Spirit of prophecy, without which it is not safe to charge men with hypocrisy whose appearances are plausible. Observe,

(1.) Thought they cared not for thinking of God, nor had any sincere affection to him, yet they could easily persuade themselves to speak of him frequently and with an air of seriousness. Piety from the teeth outward is no difficult thing. Many speak the language of Israel that are not Israelites indeed.

(2.) Though they had on all occasions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accustomed themselves to those forms of speech that savoured of piety, yet they could not persuade themselves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godliness should engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not do so.

III. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity (Jer 12:3): But thou, O Lord! knowest me. Probably the wicked men he complains of were forward to reproach and censure him (Jer 18:18), in reference to which this was his comfort, that God was a witness of his integrity. God knew he was not such a one as they were (who had God near in their mouths, but far from their reins), nor such a one as they took him to be, and represented him, a deceiver and a false prophet; those that thus abused him did

not know him, 1Co 2:8. "But thou, O Lord! knowest me, though they think me not worth their notice."

1. Observe what the matter is concerning which he appeals to God: Thou knowest my heart towards thee. Note, We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad according as they are, or are not, towards God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God.

2 The cognizance to which he appeals: "Thou knowest me better than I know myself, not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me, not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried my heart." God's knowledge of us is as clear and exact and certain as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do perfectly knows how our hearts are towards him. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite and the sincerity of the upright.

1 Righteous *art* thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me
talk with thee of *thy* judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the
wicked prosper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very
treacherously?
2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea,
they bring forth fruit: thou *art* near in their mouth, and far from
their reins.
3 But thou, O Lord, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine
heart toward thee: pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and
prepare them for the day of slaughter.
4 How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field
wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts
are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our
last end.

He prays that God would turn his hand against these wicked people, and not suffer them to prosper always, though they had prospered long: "Let some judgment come to pull them out of this fat pasture as sheep for the slaughter, that it may appear their long prosperity was but like the feeding of lambs in a large place, to prepare them for the day of slaughter," Ho 4:16. God suffered them to prosper that by their pride and luxury they might fill up the measure of their iniquity and so be ripened for destruction; and

therefore he thinks it a piece of necessary justice that they should fall into mischief themselves, because they had done so much mischief to others, that they should be pulled out of their land, because they had brought ruin upon the land, and the longer they continued in it the more hurt they did, as the plagues of their generation (Jer 12:4): "How long shall the land mourn. (as it does under the judgments of God inflicted upon it) for the wickedness of those that dwell therein? Lord, shall those prosper themselves that ruin all about them?"

1. See here what the judgment was which the land was now groaning under: The herbs of every field wither (the grass is burnt up and all the products of the earth fail), and then it follows of course, the beasts are consumed, and the birds, 1Ki 18:5. This was the effect of a long drought, or want of rain, which happened, as it should seem, at the latter end of Josiah's reign and the beginning of Jehoiakim's; it is mentioned Jer 3:3,8:13,9:10,12, and more fully afterwards, Jer 14:1-22 If they would have been brought to repentance by this less judgment, the greater would have been prevented. Now why was it that this fruitful land was turned into barrenness, but for the wickedness of those that dwelt therein? Ps 17:34. Therefore the prophet prays that these wicked people might die for their own sin, and that the whole nation might not suffer for it.

2. See here what was the language of their wickedness: They said, He shall not see our last end, either,

(1.) God himself shall not. Atheism is the root of hypocrisy. God is far from their reins, though near in their mouth, because they say, How doth God know? Ps 73:11,Job 22:13. He knows not what way we take nor what it will end in. Or,

(2.) Jeremiah shall not see our last end; whatever he pretends, when he asks us what shall be in the end hereof he cannot himself foresee it. They look upon him as a false prophet. Or, "whatever it is, he shall not live to see it, for we will be the death of him," Jer 11:21. Note,

[1.] Men's setting their latter end at a great distance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedness, La 1:9.

[2.] The whole creation groans under the burden of the sin of man, Ro 8:22. It is for this that the earth mourns (so it may be read); cursed is the ground for thy sake.

5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee,* then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

6 For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

He acquaints us with the answer God gave to those complaints of his, Jer 12:5,6. We often find the prophets admonished, whose business it was to admonish others, as Isa 8:11. Ministers have lessons to learn as well as lessons to teach, and must themselves hear God's voice and preach to themselves. Jeremiah complained much of the wickedness of the men of Anathoth, and that, notwithstanding that, they prospered. Now, this seems to be an answer to that complaint.

1. It is allowed that he had cause to complain (Jer 12:6): "Thy brethren, the priests of Anathoth, who are of the house of thy father, who ought to have protected thee and pretended to do so, even they have dealt treacherously with thee, have been false to thee, and, under colour of friendship, have designedly done thee all the mischief they could; they have called a multitude after thee, raised the mob upon thee, to whom they have endeavoured, by all arts possible, to render thee despicable or odious, while at the same time they pretended that they had no design to persecute thee nor to deprive thee of thy liberty. They are indeed such as thou canst not believe, though they speak fair words to thee. They seem to be thy friends, but are really thy enemies." Note, God's faithful servants must not think it at all strange if their foes be those of their own house (Mt 10:36), and if those they expect kindness

from prove such as they can put no confidence in, Mic 7:5. 2. Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far.

(1.) He laid the unkindness of his countrymen too much to heart. They wearied him, because it was in a land of peace wherein he trusted, Jer 12:5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abused by his own kindred. He was disturbed in his mind by it; his spirit was sunk and overwhelmed with it, so that he was in great agitation and distress about it. Nay, he was discouraged in his work by it, began to be weary of prophesying, and to think of giving it up.

(2.) He did not consider that this was but the beginning of his sorrow, and that he had sorer trials yet before him; and, whereas he should endeavour by a patient bearing of this trouble to prepare himself for greater, by his uneasiness under this he did but unfit himself for what further lay before him: If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, and run thee quite out of breath,then how wilt thou contend with horses? If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him with their power, as they did afterwards? Jer 20:2,32:2. If he was so soon tired in a land of peace, where there was little noise or peril, what would he do in the swellings of Jordan, when that overflows all its banks and frightens even lions out of their thickets? Jer 49:19. Note,

[1.] While we are in this world we must expect troubles, and difficulties. Our life is a race, a warfare; we are in danger of being run down.

[2.] God's usual method being to begin with smaller trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to contend with horsemen, and the sons of Anak may perhaps be reserved for the last encounter.

[3.] It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials and to consider what we should do in them. How shall we preserve our integrity and peace when we come to the swellings of Jordan?

[4.] In order to our preparation for further and greater trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present smaller trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize, so run that we may obtain it. Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure and fearless of the threatened judgments. If they have been so humbled and impoverished by smaller calamities, so wasted by the Assyrians,--if the Ammonites and Moabites, who were their brethren, and with whom they were in league, proved false to them (as undoubtedly they would),--then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldeans would be? How would they bear up their head against that invasion which should come like the swelling of Jordan?

7 I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin.

I. God is here brought in falling out with them and leaving them desolate; and they could never have been undone if they had not provoked God to desert them. It is a terrible word that God here says (Jer 12:7): I have forsaken my house--the temple, which had been his palace; they had polluted it, and so forced him out of it: I have left my heritage, and will look after it no more. His people that he has taken such delight in, and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been the dearly beloved of his soul, precious in his sight and honorable above any people, which is mentioned to aggravate their sin in returning him hatred for his love and their misery in throwing themselves out of the favour of one that had such a kindness for them, and to justify God in his dealings with them. He sought not occasion against them, but, if they would have conducted themselves with any tolerable propriety, he would have made the best of them, for they were the beloved of his soul; but they had conducted themselves so that they had provoked him to give them into the hand of their enemies, to leave them unguarded, an easy prey to those that bore them ill-will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been so long dear to him? Why, truly, they had degenerated. 1. They had become like beasts of prey, which nobody loves, but every body avoids and gets as far off from as he can (Jer 12:8): My heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest. Their sins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they cry out

against God in the threatenings and slaughter which they breathe against his prophets that speak to them in his name; and what is said and done against them God takes as said and done against himself. They blaspheme his name, oppose his authority, and bid defiance to his justice, and so cry out against him as a lion in the forest. Those that were the sheep of God's pasture had become barbarous and ravenous, and as ungovernable as lions in the forest; therefore he hated them; for what delight could the God of love take in a people that had now become as roaring lions and raging beasts, fit to be taken and shot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? 2. They had become like birds of prey, and therefore also unworthy a place in God's house, where neither beasts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in sacrifice (Jer 12:9): My heritage is unto me as a bird with talons (so some read it, and so the margin); they are continually pulling and pecking at one another; they have by their unnatural contentions made their country a cock-pit. Or as a speckled bird, dyed, or sprinkled, or bedewed with the blood of her prey. The shedding of innocent blood was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, and hastened their ruin, not only as it provoked their neighbours likewise; for those that have their hand against every man shall have every man's hand against them (Ge 16:12), and so it follows here: The birds round about are against her. Some make her a speckled, pied, or motley bird, upon the account of their mixing the superstitious customs and usages of the heathen with divine institutions in the worship of God; they were fond of a party-coloured religion, and thought it made them fine, when really it made them odious. God's turtle-dove is no speckled bird.

8 Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it.

9 Mine heritage *is* unto me *as* a speckled bird, the birds round about *are* against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.

10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.

11 They have made it desolate, *and being* desolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth *it* to heart.

The enemies are here brought in falling upon them and laying them desolate. And some think it is upon this account that they are compared to a speckled bird, because fowls usually make a noise about a bird of an odd unusual colour. God's people are, among the children of this world, as men wondered at, as a speckled bird; but this people had by their own folly made themselves so; and the beasts and birds are called and commissioned to prey upon them. Let all the birds round be against her, for God has forsaken her, and with them let all the beasts of the field come to devour. Those that have made a prey of others shall themselves be preyed upon. It did not lessen the sin of the nations, but very much increased the misery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The birds and beasts are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, Re 19:17,18. The utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army is here spoken of as a thing done, so sure, so near, was it. God speaks of it as a thing which he had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleasure in, any more than in the death of other sinners.

1. See with what a tender affection he speaks of this land, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it: It is my vineyard, my portion, my pleasant portion, Jer 12:10. Note, God has a kindness and concern for his church, though there be much amiss in it; and his correcting it will every way consist with his complacency in it.

2. See with what a tender compassion he speaks of the desolations of this land: Many pastors (the Chaldean generals that made themselves masters of the country and ate it up with their armies as easily as the Arabian shepherds with their flocks eat up the fruits of a piece of ground that lies common) have destroyed my vineyard, without any consideration had either of the value of it or of my interest in it; they have with the greatest insolence and indignation trodden it under foot, and that which was a pleasant land they have made a desolate wilderness. The destruction was universal: The whole land is made desolate, Jer 12:11. It is made so by the sword of war: The spoilers, the Chaldean soldiers,have

come through the plain upon all high places; they have made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses and artificial fortresses, Jer 12:12. The sword devours from one end of the land to the other; all places lie exposed, and the numerous army of the invaders disperse themselves into every corner of that fruitful country, so that no flesh shall have peace, none shall be exempt from the calamity nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. When all flesh have corrupted their way, no flesh shall have peace; those only have peace that walk after the Spirit.

3. See whence all this misery comes.

(1.) It comes from the displeasure of God. It is the sword of the Lord that devours, Jer 12:12. While God's people keep close to him the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon; but when they have forsaken him, so that he has become their enemy and fights against them, then the sword of their invaders and destroyers becomes the sword of the Lord; witness this of the Chaldeans. It is because of the fierce anger of the Lord (Jer 12:13); it was this that kindled this fire among them and made their enemies so furious. And who may stand before him when he is angry?

(2.) It is their sin that has made God their enemy, particularly their incorrigibleness under former rebukes (Jer 12:11): The land mourns unto me; the country that lies desolate does, as it were, pour out its complaint before God and humble itself under his hand; but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid that none of them lays it to heart; they do not mourn to God, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while the very ground they go upon shames them. Note, When God's hand is lifted up, and men will not see, it shall be laid on, and they shall be made to feel, Isa 26:11.

4. See how unable they should be to guard against it (Jer 12:13): "They have sown wheat, that is, they have taken a great deal of pains for their own security and promised themselves great matters from their endeavors, but it is all in vain; they shall reap thorns, that is, that which shall prove very grievous and vexatious to them. Instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy. They have put themselves to pain, both

with their labour and with their expectations, but it shall not profit; they shall not prevail to extricate themselves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themselves. They shall be ashamed of your revenues, ashamed that they have depended so much upon their preparations for war and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it." Money constitutes the sinews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but shall be ashamed of it; for their silver and gold shall not profit them in the day of the Lord's anger.

12 The spoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderness: for the sword of the Lord shall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no flesh shall have peace.

13 They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns: they have put themselves to pain, *but* shall not profit: and they shall be ashamed of your revenues because of the fierce anger of the Lord.

14 Thus saith the Lord against all mine evil neighbors, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

The prophets sometimes, in God's name, delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel: but here is a message to all those in general who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppressed them or triumphed in their being oppressed. Observe,

I. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were his evil neighbours (Jer 12:14), evil neighbours to his church, and what they did against it he took as done against himself, and therefore called them his evil neighbours, that should have been neighbourly to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are all so. These evil neighbours were the Moabites, Ammonites Syrians, Edomites, Egyptians, that had been evil neighbours to Israel in helping to debauch them and draw them from God (therefore God calls them his evil neighbours), and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of

trouble to us whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge is: They have meddled with the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; they unjustly seized that which was none of their own: nay, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use which was given to God's peculiar people. He that said, Touch not my anointed, said also, "Touch not their inheritance; it is at your peril if you do." Not only the persons but the estates of God's people are under his protection.

II. What course he would take with them.

1. He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution: I will pluck out the house of Judah from among them. This would be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or, when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners; but it would be a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot or will not make any bold struggles towards their own liberty; but God will with a gracious violence pluck them out, will by his Spirit compel them to come out and by his power compel their task-masters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt.

2. He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people: I will pluck them out of their land. Judgment began at the house of God, but it did not end there. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours and was a scourge to them.

15 And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

16 And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.

What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him and become his people, Jer 12:15,16. They had

drawn in God's backsliding people to join with them in the service of idols. If now they would be drawn by a returning people to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God. This had its accomplishment in part when, after the return out of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been evil neighbours to Israel became Jews; and it was to have its accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, though injured by them, be implacable towards them, for God is not: After that I have plucked them out, in justice for their sins and in jealousy for the honour of Israel, I will return, will change my way, and have compassion on them. Though, being heathen, they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will notwithstanding look upon them as the work of his hands. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, though they cannot be disputed, may be accommodated. Those who (as these) have been not only strangers, but enemies in their minds by wicked works, may be reconciled, Col 1:21. Observe here,

1. What were the terms on which God would show favour to them. It is always provided that they will diligently learn the ways of my people, that is, in general, the ways that they walk in when they conduct themselves as my people (not the crooked ways into which they have turned aside), the ways which my people are directed to take. Note,

(1.) There are good ways that are peculiarly the ways of God's people, which however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness, the ways of prayer and sabbath-sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances--these, and the like, are the ways of God's people.

(2.) Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end like theirs, must learn their ways and walk in them, must observe the rule they walk by and conform to that rule they walk

by and conform to that rule and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people they must learn to do as they do.

(3.) It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learnt, without a great deal of care and pains. We must diligently observe these ways and diligently obliges ourselves to walk in them, must look diligently (Heb 12:15), and work diligently, Lu 13:24. In particular, they must learn to give honour to God's name by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must learn to say, The Lord liveth (to own him, to adore him, and to abide by his judgment), as they taught my people to swear by Baal. It was bad enough that they did themselves swear by Baal, worse that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught; and yet, if they will at length reform, they shall be accepted. Observe,

[1.] We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no, not of those who have been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and, if they be, shall find mercy.

[2.] Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and ours, we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty to whom we have been tutors in the was of sin.

[3.] The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion even of the deceivers. Thus those who fall together into the ditch are sometimes plucked together out of it.

2. What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour when they return to God and God to them.

(1.) They shall be restored to and re-established in their own land (Jer 12:15): I will bring them again every man to his heritage. The same hand that plucked them up shall plant them again.

(2.) They shall become entitled to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel: "If they will be towardly, and learn the ways of my people, will conform to the rules and confine themselves to the restraints of my family, then shall they be built in the midst of my people. They shall not only be brought among them, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for the Gentiles, but they shall be built among them; they shall unite with them; the former enmities shall be slain; they shall be both edified and settled among them." See Isa 56:5-7. Note, Those that diligently learn the ways of God's people shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

What should become of those that were still wedded to their own evil ways, yea, though many of those about them turned to the Lord (Jer 12:17): If there will not obey, if any of them continue to stand it out, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, that family, that particular person, saith the Lord. Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God shall be ruined by the justice of God. And, if disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches from whom better things are expected

17 But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah-13

The Lesson from the Marred Girdle

1 Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water.

Here is, I. A sign, the marring of a girdle, which the prophet had worn for some time, by hiding it in a hole of a rock near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid unthinking people might be brought to consider, and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them.

1. He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, Jer 13:1,2. Some think he wore it under his clothes, because it was linen, and it is

said to cleave to his loins, Jer 13:11. It should rather seem to be worn upon his clothes, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine sash, such as officers wear and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not put it in water, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot: linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being not wet, it was the more stiff and less apt to bend, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably it was very fine linen which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that wore soft clothing, and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leathern one.

2. After he had worn this linen girdle for some time, he must go, and hide it in a hole of a rock (Jer 13:4) by the water's side, where, when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell would grow dry again, and by that means would soon rot, sooner than if it were always wet or always dry.

3. After many days, he must look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags and good for nothing, Jer 13:7. It has been of old a question among interpreters whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people, or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no further than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that the prophet should be sent on two such long journeys as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some week's time, when he could so ill be spared at home. For this reason most incline to think the journey, at least, was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem (Eze 8:3) and thence back to Chaldea (Jer 11:24); and the explanation of this sign is given only to the prophet himself (Jer 13:8), not to the people, the sign not being public.

But there being, it is probable, at that time, great conveniences of travelling between Jerusalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off but that it was made the utmost border of the land of promise (Jos 1:4), I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made two journeys thither; for it is expressly said, He did as the Lord commanded him; and thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the

stubbornness of a disobedient people: the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries and the sad fatigue of their captivity; and Euphrates being the river of Babylon, which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign.

2 So I got a girdle according to the word of the Lord, and put *it* on
my loins.
3 And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying,
4 Take the girdle that thou hast got, which *is* upon thy loins, and
arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock.
5 So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me.
6 And it came to pass after many days, that the Lord said unto me,
Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I
commanded thee to hide there.
7 Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the
place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was
profitable for nothing.
8 Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
9 Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of
Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.
10 This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the
imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them,
and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for
nothing.

The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any cost and pains to affect this people with the word of the Lord. Ministers must spend, and be spent, for the good of souls. We have the explanation of this sign, Jer 13:9-11.

1 The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle in two respects:--

(1.) He had taken them into covenant and communion with himself: As the girdle cleaves very closely to the loins of a man and surrounds him, so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah. They were a people near to God (Ps 148:14); they were his own, a peculiar people to him, a kingdom of priests that had access to him above other nations. He caused them to cleave to him

by the law he gave them, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he showed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices. Thus they were made so as to cleave to him that one would think they could never have been parted.

(2.) He had herein designed his own honour. When he took them to be to him for a people, it was that they might be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory, as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the curious girdle of the ephod was to the high-priest for glory and for beauty.

Note, Those whom God takes to be to him for a people he intends to be to him for a praise.

[1.] It is their duty to honour him, by observing his institutions and aiming therein at his glory, and thus adorning their profession.

[2.] It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behave themselves as become his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, 1Ch 17:24. In vain do we pretend to be to God for a people if we be not to him for a praise.

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities loosed themselves from him, thrown themselves at a distance, robbed him of the honour they owed him, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingled among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted that they were good for nothing: they could no more be to God, as they were designed, for a name and a praise, for they would not hear either their duty to do it or their privilege to value it: They refused to hear the words of God, by which they might have been kept still cleaving closely to him. They walked in the imagination of their heart, wherever their fancy led them; and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship. They would not cleave to God, but walked after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them; they doted upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that

they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were as this girdle, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession and not an ornament. A thousand pities it was that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would by his judgments separate them from him, send them into captivity, deface all their beauty and ruin their excellency, so that they should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed, like this linen girdle.

Observe, He speaks of the pride of Judah (the country people were proud of their holy land, their good land), but of the great pride of Jerusalem; there the temple was, and the royal palace, and therefore those citizens were more proud than the inhabitants of other cities. God takes notice of the degrees of men's pride, the pride of some and the great pride of others; and he will mar it, he will stain it. Pride will have a fall, for God resists the proud. He will either mar the pride that is in us (that is, mortify it by his grace, make us ashamed of it, and, like Hezekiah, humble us for the pride of our hearts, the great pride, and cure us of it, great as it is; and this marring of the pride will be making of the soul; happy for us if the humbling providences our hearts be humbled) or else he will mar the thing we are proud of. Parts, gifts, learning, power, external privileges, if we are proud of these, it is just with God to blast them; even the temple, when it became Jerusalem's pride, was marred and laid in ashes. It is the honour of God to took upon every one that is proud and abase him.

11 For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

The Lesson from the Filled Bottles

12 Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word; Thus saith the

Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?

Here is, a judgment threatened against this people that would quite intoxicate them. This doom is pronounced against them in a figure, to make it the more taken notice of and the more affecting (Jer 13:12): Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, every bottle shall be filled with wine; that is, those that by their sins have made themselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction shall be filled with the wrath of God as a bottle is with wine; and, as every vessel of mercy prepared for glory shall be filled with mercy and glory, so they shall be full of the fury of the Lord (Isa 51:20); and they shall be brittle as bottles; and, like old bottles into which new wine is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces, Mt 9:17. Or, They shall have their heads as full of wine as bottle are; for so it is explained, Jer 13:13, They shall be filled with drunkenness; compare Isa 51:17.

It is probable that this was a common proverb among them, applied in various ways; but they, not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it: "Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before." Perhaps they were thus touchy with the prophet because they apprehended this to be a reflection upon them for their drunkenness, and probably it was in part so intended. They loved flagons of wine, Ho 3:1. Their watchmen were all for wine, Isa 56:12. They loved their false prophets that prophesied to them of wine (Mic 2:11), that bade them be merry, for that they should never want their bottle to make them so. "Well," says the prophet, "you shall have your bottles full of wine, but not such wine as you desire." They suspected that he had some mystical meaning in it which prophesied no good concerning them, but evil; and he owns that so he had. What he meant was this,

1. That they should be a giddy as men in drink. A drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine; for, when the wine is in, the wit, and wisdom, and virtue, and all that is good for any thing, are out. Now God threatens (Jer 13:13) that shall they shall all be filled with drunkenness; they shall be full of confusion in

their counsels, shall falter in all their talk and stagger in all their motions; they shall not know what they say or do, much less what they should say or do. They shall be sick of all their enjoyments and throw them up as drunken men do, Job 20:15.

They shall fall into a slumber, and be utterly unable to help themselves, and, like men that have drunk away their reason, shall lie at the mercy and expose themselves to the contempt of all about them. And this shall be the condition not of some among them (if any had been sober, they might have helped the rest), but even the kings that sit upon the throne of David, that should have been like their father David, who was wise as an angel of God, shall be thus intoxicated. Their priests and prophets too, their false prophets, that pretended to guide them, were as indulgent of their lusts, and therefore were justly as much deprived of their senses, as any other. Nay, all the inhabitants, both of the land and of Jerusalem were as far gone as they. Whom God will destroy he infatuates.

2. That, being giddy, they should run upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury shall throw them not only into a lethargy, so that they shall not be able to help themselves or one another, but into a perfect frenzy, so that they shall do mischief to themselves and one another (Jer 13:14): I will dash a man against his brother. Not only their drunken follies, but their drunken frays, shall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrelsome, and upon that account they have woe and sorrow (Pr 23:29,30); so their sin is their punishment; it was so here. God sent an evil spirit into families and neighbourhoods (as Jdg 9:23), which made them jealous of, and spiteful towards, one another; so that the fathers and sons went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an easy prey to the common enemy. This decree against them having gone forth, God says, I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them; for they will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy one another; see Hab 2:15,16.

13 Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.

14 And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord : I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.

Captivity Threatened for Judah's Impenitence

15 Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken.
16 Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, *and* make *it* gross darkness.
17 But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.

Here is good counsel given, which, if taken, would prevent this desolation. It is, in short, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. If they will hearken and give ear, this is that which God has to say to them, Be not proud, Jer 13:15. This was one of the sins for which God had a controversy with them (Jer 13:9); let them mortify and forsake this sin, and God will let fall his controversy. "Be not proud.; when God speaks to you by his prophets do not think yourselves too good to be taught; be not scornful, be not wilful, let not your hearts rise against the word, nor slight the messengers that bring it to you. When God is coming forth against you in his providence (and by them he speaks) be not secure when he threatens, be not impatient when he strikes, for pride is at the bottom of both." It is the great God that has spoken, whose authority is incontestable, whose power is irresistible; therefore bow to what he says, and be not proud, as you have been. They must not be proud, for,

1. They must advance God, and study how to do him honour: "Give glory to the Lord your God, and not to your idols, not to other gods. Give him glory by confessing your sins, owning yourselves guilty before him, and accepting the punishment of your iniquity, Jer 13:16. Give him glory by a sincere repentance and reformation." The and not till then, we begin to live as we should, and to some good purpose, when we begin to give glory to the Lord our God, to make his honour our chief end and to seek it accordingly. "Do this

quickly, while your space to repent is continued to you; before he cause darkness, before you will see no way of escaping."

Note, Darkness will be the portion of those that will not repent to give glory to God. When those that by the fourth vial were scorched with heat repented not, to give glory to God. When those that by the fourth vial were scorched with heat repented not, to give glory to God, the next vial filled them with darkness, Re 16:9,10. The aggravation of the darkness here threatened is,

(1.) That their attempts to escape shall hasten their ruin: Their feet shall stumble when they are making all the haste they can over the dark mountains, and they shall fall, and be unable to get up again. Note, Those that think to out-run the judgments of God will find their road impassable; let them make the best of their way, they can make nothing of it, the judgments that pursue them will overtake them; their way is dark and slippery, Ps 35:6. And therefore, before it comes to that extremity, it is our wisdom to give glory to him, and so make our peace with him, to fly to his mercy, and then there will be no occasion to fly from his justice.

(2.) That their hopes of a better state of things will be disappointed: While you look for light, for comfort and relief, he will turn it into the shadow of death, which is very dismal and terrible, and make it gross darkness, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, which was darkness that might be felt. The expectation of impenitent sinners perishes when they die and think to have it satisfied.

2. They must abase themselves, and take shame to themselves; the prerogative of the king and queen will not exempt them from this (Jer 13:18): "Say to the king and queen, that, great as they are, they must humble themselves by true repentance, and so give both glory to God and a good example to their subjects." Note, Those that are exalted above others in the world must humble themselves before God, who is higher than the highest, and to whom kings and queens are accountable. They must humble themselves, and sit down--sit down, and consider what is coming--sit down in the dust, and lament themselves. Let them humble themselves, for God will otherwise take an effectual course to humble them: "Your

principalities shall come down, the honour and power on which you value yourselves and in which you confide, even the crown of your glory, your goodly or glorious crown: when you are led away captives, where will your principality and all the badges of it be then?" Blessed be God there is a crown of glory, which those shall inherit who do humble themselves, that shall never come down.

III. This counsel is enforced by some arguments if they continue proud and unhumbled.

1. It will be the prophet's unspeakable grief (Jer 13:17): "If you will not hear it, will not submit to the word, but continue refractory, not only my eye, but my soul shall weep in secret places." Note, The obstinacy of people, in refusing to hear the word of God, will be heart-breaking to the poor ministers, who know something of the terrors of the Lord and the worth of souls, and are so far from desiring that they tremble at the thoughts of the death of sinners. His grief for it was undissembled (his soul wept) and void of affectation, for he chose to weep in secret places, where no eye saw him but his who is all eye. He would mingle his tears not only with his public preaching, but with his private devotions. Nay, thoughts of their case would make him melancholy, and he would become a perfect recluse. It would grieve him,

(1.) To see their sins unrepented of: "My soul shall weep for your pride, your haughtiness, and stubbornness, and vain confidence." Note, The sins of others should be matter of sorrow to us. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend, and mourn the more for it because we cannot mend it.

(2.) To see their calamity past redress and remedy: "My eyes shall weep sorely, not so much because my relations, friends, and neighbours are in distress, but because the Lord's flock, his people and the sheep of his pasture, are carried away captive." That should always grieve us most by which God's honour suffers and the interest of his kingdom is weakened.

2. It will be their own inevitable ruin, Jer 13:19-21.

(1.) The land shall be laid waste: The cities of the south shall be shut up. The cities of Judah lay in the southern part of the land of Canaan; these shall be straitly besieged by the enemy, so that there shall be no going in or out, or they shall be deserted by the inhabitants, that there shall be none to go in and out. Some understand it of the cities of Egypt, which was south from Judah; the places there whence they expected succours shall fail them, and they shall find no access to them.

(2.) The inhabitants shall be hurried away into a foreign country, there to live in slavery: Judah shall be carried away captive. Some were already carried off, which they hoped might serve to answer the prediction, and that the residue should still be left; but no: It shall be carried away all of it. God will make a full end with them: It shall be wholly carried away. So it was in the last captivity under Zedekiah, because they repented not.

(3.) The enemy was now at hand that should do this (Jer 13:20): "Lift up your eyes. I see upon their march, and you may if you will behold, those that come from the north, from the land of the Chaldeans; see how fast they advance, how fierce they appear." Upon this he addresses himself to the king, or rather (because the pronouns are feminine) to the city or state.

[1.] "What will you do now with the people who are committed to your charge, and whom you ought to protect? Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? Whither canst thou take them now for shelter? How can they escape these ravening wolves?" Magistrates must look upon themselves as shepherds, and those that are under their charge as their flock, which they are entrusted with the care of and must give an account of; they must take delight in them as their beautiful flock, and consider what to do for their safety in times of public danger. Masters of families, who neglect their children and suffer them to perish for want of a good education, and ministers who neglect their people, should think they hear God putting this question to them: Where is the flock that was given thee to feed, that beauteous flock? It is starved; it is left exposed to the beasts of prey. What account wilt thou give of them when the chief shepherd shall appear?

[2.] "What have you to object against the equity of God's proceedings? What will thou say when he shall visit upon thee the former days? Jer 13:21. Thou canst say nothing, but that God is just in all that is brought upon thee." Those that flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, what will they say? What confusion will cover their faces when they shall find themselves deceived and that God punishes them!

[3.] "What thoughts will you now have of your own folly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over you, by seeking to them for assistance, and joining in league with them? Thus thou hast taught them against thyself to be captains and to become the head." Hezekiah began when he showed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, tempting him thereby to come and plunder him. Those who, having a God to trust to, court foreign alliances and confide in them, do but make rods for themselves and teach their neighbours how to become their masters.

[4.] "How will you bear the trouble that is at the door? Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail? Sorrows which thou canst not escape nor put off, extremity of sorrows; and in these respects more grievous than those of a woman in travail that they were not expected before, and that there is no manchild to be born, the joy of which shall make them afterwards to be forgotten."

18 Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down:
for your principalities shall come down, *even* the crown of your
glory.
19 The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open *them:*
Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly
carried away captive.
20 Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north:
where *is* the flock *that* was given thee, thy beautiful flock?
21 What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught
them *to be* captains, *and* as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take
thee, as a woman in travail?
22 And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon
me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered,
and thy heels made bare.

Here is, I. Ruin threatened as before, that the Jews shall go into captivity, and fall under all the miseries of beggary and bondage, shall be stripped of their clothes, their skirts discovered for want of upper garments to cover them, and their heels made bare for want of shoes, Jer 13:22. Thus they used to deal with prisoners taken in war, when they drove them into captivity, naked and barefoot, Isa 20:4. Being thus carried off into a strange country, they shall be scattered there, as the stubble that is blown away by the wind of the wilderness, and nobody is concerned to bring it together again, Jer 13:24. If the stubble escape the fire, it shall be carried away by the wind. If one judgment do not do the work, another shall, with those that by sin have made themselves as stubble. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments and exposed to shame, as harlots that are carted, Jer 13:26. They made their pride appear, but God will make their shame appear; so that those who have doted on them shall be ashamed of them.

II. An enquiry made by the people into the cause of this ruin, Jer 13:22. Thou wilt say in thy heart (and God knows how to give a proper answer to what men say in their hearts, though they do not speak it out; Jesus, knowing their thoughts, replied to them, Mt 9:4), Wherefore came these things upon me? The question is supposed to come into the heart,

1. Of a sinner quarrelling with God and refusing to receive correction. They could not see that they had done any thing which might justly provoke God to be thus angry with them. They durst not speak it out; but in their hearts they thus charged God with unrighteousness, if he had laid upon them more than was meet. They seek for the cause of their calamities, when, if they had not been willfully blind, they might easily have seen it. Or,

2. Of a sinner returning to God. If there come but a penitent thought into the heart at any time (saying, What have I done? Jer 8:6, wherefore am I in affliction? why doth God contend with me?) God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that, sin being discovered, it may be repented of.

III. An answer to this enquiry. God will be justified when he speaks and will oblige us to justify him, and therefore will set the sin of

sinners in order before them. Do they ask, Wherefore come these things upon us? Let them know it is all owing to themselves.

1. It is for the greatness of their iniquities, Jer 13:22. God does not take advantage against them for small faults; no, the sins for which he now punishes them are of the first rate, very heinous in their own nature and highly aggravated--for the multitude of thy iniquity (so it may be read), sins of every kind and often repeated and relapsed into. Some think we are more in danger from the multitude of our smaller sins than from the heinousness of our greater sins; of both we may say, Who can understand his errors?

2. It is for their obstinacy in sin, their being so long accustomed to it that there was little hope left of their being reclaimed from it (Jer 13:23): Can the Ethiopian change his skin, that is by nature black, or the leopard his spots, that are even woven into the skin? Dirt contracted may be washed off, but we cannot alter the natural colour of a hair (Mt 5:36), much less of the skin; and so impossible is it, morally impossible, to reclaim and reform these people.

(1.) They had been long accustomed to do evil. They were taught to do evil; they had been educated and brought up in sin; they had served an apprenticeship to it, and had all their days made a trade of it. It was so much their constant practice that it had become a second nature to them.

(2.) Their prophets therefore despaired of ever bring them to do good. This was what they aimed at; they persuaded them to cease to do evil and learn to do well, but could not prevail. They had so long been used to do evil that it was next to impossible for them to repent, and amend, and begin to do good.

Note, Custom in sin is a very great hindrance to conversion from sin. The disease that is inveterate is generally thought incurable. Those that have been long accustomed to sin have shaken off the restraint of fear and shame; their consciences are seared; the habits of sin are confirmed; it pleads prescription; and it is just with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that have long refused to give themselves up to his grace. Sin is the blackness of the soul, the deformity of it; it is its spot, the discolouring of it; it is natural to

us, we were shapen in it, so that we cannot get clear of it by any power of our own. But there is an almighty grace that is able to change the Ethiopian's skin, and that grace shall not be wanting to those who in a sense of their need of it seek it earnestly and improve it faithfully.

3. It is for their treacherous departures from the God of truth and dependence on lying vanities (Jer 13:25): "This is thy lot, to be scattered and driven away; this is the portion of thy measures from me, the punishment assigned thee as by line and measure; this shall be thy share of the miseries of this world; expect it, and think not to escape it: it is because thou hast forgotten me, the favours I have bestowed upon thee and the obligations thou art under to me; thou hast no sense, no remembrance, of these." Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all sin, as the remembrance of our Creator betimes is the happy and hopeful beginning of a holy life. "Having forgotten me, thou hast trusted in falsehood, in idols, in an arm of flesh in Egypt and Assyria, in the self-flatteries of a deceitful heart." Whatever those trust to that forsake God, they will find it a broken reed, a broken cistern.

4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, that sin which is of all sins most provoking to the jealous God. They are exposed to a shameful calamity (Jer 13:26) because they have been guilty of a shameful iniquity and yet are shameless in it (Jer 13:27): "I have seen thy adulteries (thy inordinate fancy for strange gods, which thou hast been impatient for the gratification of, and hast even neighed after it), even the lewdness of thy whoredoms, thy impudence and insatiableness in them, thy eager worshipping of idols on the hills in the fields, upon the high places. This is that for which a woe is denounced against thee, O Jerusalem! nay, and many woes."

IV. Here is an affectionate expostulation with them, in the close, upon the whole matter. Though it was adjudged next to impossible for them to be brought to do good (Jer 13:23), yet while there is life there is hope, and therefore still he reasons with them to bring them to repentance, Jer 13:27.

1. He reasons with them concerning the thing itself: Wilt thou not be made clean? Note, It is the great concern of those who are polluted by sin to be made clean by repentance, and faith, and a universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean is because they will not be made clean; and herein they act most unreasonably: "Wilt thou not be made clean? Surely thou will at length be persuaded to wash thee, and make thee clean, and so be wise for thyself."

2. Concerning the time of it: When shall it once be? Note, It is an instance of the wonderful grace of God that he desires the repentance and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time long till they are brought to relent; but it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners that they put that off from time to time which is of such absolute necessity that, if it be not done some time, they are certainly undone for ever. They do not say that they will never be cleansed, but not yet; they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us when it shall once be.

23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then*
may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.
24 Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the
wind of the wilderness.
25 This *is* thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the
Lord; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood.
26 Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame
may appear.
27 I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy
whoredom, *and* thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Woe
unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when *shall it*
once *be?*

Jeremiah-14

The Message about the Drought

1 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the
dearth.

The first verse is the title of the whole chapter: it does indeed all concern the dearth, but much of it consists of the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet these are not unfitly said to be, The word of the Lord which came to him concerning it, for every acceptable prayer is that which God puts into our hearts; nothing is our word that comes to him but what is first his word that comes from him. In these verses we have,

The language of nature lamenting the calamity. When the heavens were as brass, and distilled no dews, the earth was as iron, and produced no fruits; and then the grief and confusion were universal.

1 The people of the land were all in tears. Destroy their vines and their fig-trees and you cause all their mirth to cease, Ho 2:11,12. All their joy fails with the joy of harvest, with that of their corn and wine. Judah mourns (Jer 14:2), not for the sin, but for the trouble--for the withholding of the rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. The gates thereof, all that go in and out at their gates, languish, look pale, and grow feeble, for want of the necessary supports of life and for fear of the further fatal consequences of this judgment. The gates, through which supplies of corn formerly used to be brought into their cities, now look melancholy, when, instead of that, the inhabitants are departing through them to seek for bread in other countries. Even those that sit in the gates languish; they are black unto the ground, they go in black as mourners and sit on the ground, a the poor beggars at the gates are black in the face for want of food, blacker than a coal, La 4:8. Famine is represented by a black horse, Re 6:5. They fall to the ground through weakness, not being able to go along the streets. The cry of Jerusalem has gone up; that is, of the citizens (for the city is served by the field), or of people from all parts of the country met at Jerusalem to pray for rain; so some. But I fear it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the cry of their prayer.

2 The great men of the land felt from this judgment (Jer 14:3): The nobles sent their little ones to the water, perhaps their own children, having been forced to part with their servants because they had not wherewithal to keep them, and being willing to train up their children, when they were little, to labour, especially in a

case of necessity, as this was. We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his household, in their own persons, seeking for water in such a time of distress as this was, 1Ki 18:5,6. Or, rather, their meaner ones, their servants and inferior officers; these they sent to seek for water, which there is no living without; but there was none to be found: They returned with their vessels empty; the springs were dried up when there was no rain to feed them; and then they (their masters that sent them) were ashamed and confounded at the disappointment. They would not be ashamed of their sins, nor confounded at the sense of them, but were unhumbled under the reproofs of the word, thinking their wealth and dignity set them above repentance; but God took a course to make them ashamed of that which they were so proud of, when they found that even on this side hell their nobility would not purchase them a drop of water to cool their tongue. Let our reading the account of this calamity make us thankful for the mercy of water, that we may not by the feeling of the calamity be taught to value it. What is most needful is most plentiful.

3. The husbandmen felt most sensibly and immediately from it (Jer 14:4): The ploughmen were ashamed, for the ground was so parched and hard that it would not admit the plough even when it was so chapt and cleft that it seemed as if it did not need the plough. They were ashamed to be idle, for there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be expected. The sluggard, that will not plough by reason of cold, is not ashamed of his own folly; but the diligent husbandman, that cannot plough by reason of heat, is ashamed of his own affliction. See what an immediate dependence husbandmen have upon the divine Providence, which therefore they should always have an eye to, for they cannot plough nor sow in hope unless God water their furrows, Ps 65:10.

4. The case even of the wild beasts was very pitiable, Jer 14:5,6. Man's sin brings those judgments upon the earth which make even the inferior creatures groan: and the prophet takes notice of this as a plea with God for mercy. Judah and Jerusalem have sinned, but the hinds and the wild asses, what have they done? The hinds are pleasant creatures, lovely and loving, and particularly tender of their young; and yet such is the extremity of the case that, contrary to the instinct of their nature, they leave their young, even when

they are newly calved and most need them, to seek for grass elsewhere; and, if they can find none, they abandon them, because not able to suckle them. It grieved not the hind so much that she had no grass herself as that she had none for her young, which will shame those who spend that upon their lusts which they should preserve for their families. The hind, when she has brought forth her young, is said to have cast forth her sorrows (Job 39:3), and yet she continues her cares; but, as it follows there, she soon sees the good effect of them, for her young ones in a little while grow up, and trouble her no more, Jer 14:4. But here the great trouble of all is that she has nothing for them. Nay, one would be sorry even for the wild asses (though they are creatures that none have any great affection for); for, though the barren land is made their dwelling at the best (Job 39:5,6), yet even that is now made too hot for them, so hot that they cannot breathe in it, but they get to the highest places they can reach, where the air is coolest, and snuff up the wind like dragons, like those creatures which, being very hot, are continually panting for breath. Their eyes fail, and so does their strength, because there is no grass to support them. The tame ass, that serves her owner, is welcome to his crib (Isa 1:3) and has her keeping for her labour, when the wild ass, that scorns the crying of the driver, is forced to live upon air, and is well enough served for not serving. He that will not labour, let him not eat.

2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black
unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.
3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came
to the pits, *and* found no water; they returned with their vessels
empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their
heads.
4 Because the ground is chapped, for there was no rain in the earth,
the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads.
5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook *it*, because there
was no grass.
6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the
wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because *there was* no grass.
7 O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou *it* for
thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned
against thee.

8 O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man *that* turneth aside to tarry for a night?

Here is the language of grace, lamenting the iniquity, and complaining to God of the calamity. The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet here prays for them, and so excites them to pray for themselves, and puts words into their mouths, which they may make use of, in hopes to speed, Jer 14:7-9. In this prayer,

1. Sin is humbly confessed. When we come to pray for the preventing or removing of any judgment we must always acknowledge that our iniquities testify against us. Our sins are witnesses against us, and true penitents see them to be such. They testify, for they are plain and evident; we cannot deny the charge. They testify against us, for our conviction, which tends to our present shame and confusion, and our future condemnation. They disprove and overthrow all our pleas for ourselves; and so not only accuse us, but answer against us. If we boast of our own excellencies, and trust to our own righteousness, our iniquities testify against us, and prove us perverse. If we quarrel with God as dealing unjustly or unkindly with us in afflicting us, our iniquities testify against us that we do him wrong; "for our backslidings are many and our revolts are great, whereby we have sinned against thee--too numerous to be concealed, for they are many, too heinous to be excused, for they are against thee."

2. Mercy is earnestly begged: "Though our iniquities testify against us, and against the granting of the favour which the necessity of our case calls for, yet do thou it." They do not say particularly what they would have done; but, as becomes penitents and beggars, they refer the matter to God: "Do with us as thou thinkest fit," Jdg 10:15. Not, Do thou it in this way or at this time, but "Do thou it for thy name's sake; do that which will be most for the glory of thy name." Note, Our best pleas in prayer are those that are fetched from the glory of God's own name. "Lord, do it, that they mercy may be magnified, thy promise fulfilled, and thy interest in the world kept up; we have nothing to plead in ourselves, but every thing in thee." There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a very modest one (Jer 14:9): "Leave us not, withdraw not thy favour and presence." Note, We should dread

and deprecate God's departure from us more than the removal of any or all our creature-comforts. 3. Their relation to God, their interest in him, and their expectations from him grounded thereupon, are most pathetically pleaded with him, Jer 14:8,9.

(1.) They look upon him as one they have reason to think should deliver them when they are in distress, yea, though their iniquities testify against them; for in him mercy has often rejoiced against judgment. The prophet, like Moses of old, is willing to make the best he can of the case of his people, and therefore, though he must own that they have sinned many a great sin (Ex 32:31), yet he pleads, Thou art the hope of Israel. God has encouraged his people to hope in him; in calling himself so often the God of Israel, the rock of Israel, and the Holy One of Israel, he has made himself the hope of Israel. He has given Israel his word to hope in, and caused them to hope in it; and there are those yet in Israel that make God alone their hope, and expect he will be their Saviour in time of trouble, and they look not for salvation in any other; "Thou hast many a time been such, in the time of their extremity."

Note, Since God is his people's all-sufficient Saviour, they ought to hope in him in their greatest straits; and, since he is their only Saviour, they ought to hope in him alone. They plead likewise, "Thou art in the midst of us; we have the special tokens of thy presence with us, thy temple, thy ark, thy oracles, and we are called by the name, the Israel of God; and therefore we have reason to hope thou wilt not leave us; we are thine, save us. Thy name is called upon us, and therefore what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon thee, as if thou wert not able to relieve thy own." The prophet had often told the people that their profession of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moses, Ex 32:11. Even this may go far as to temporal punishments with a God of mercy. Valeat quantum valere potest--Let the plea avail as far as is proper.

(2.) It therefore grieves them to think that he does not appear for their deliverance; and, though they do not charge it upon him as unrighteous, they humbly plead it with him why he should be gracious, for the glory of his own name. For otherwise he will seem,

[1.] Unconcerned for his own people: What will the Egyptians say? they will say, "Israel's hope and Saviour does not mind them; he has become as a stranger in the land, that does not at all interest himself in its interests; his temple, which he called his rest for ever, is no more so, but he is in it as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night in an inn, which he never enquires into the affairs of, nor is in any care about." Though God never is, yet he sometimes seems to be, as if he cared not what became of his church: Christ slept when his disciples were in storm.

[2.] Incapable of giving them any relief. The enemies once said, Because the Lord was not able to bring his people to Canaan, he let them perish in the wilderness (Nu 14:16); so now they will say, "Either his wisdom or his power fails him; either he is as a man astonished (who, though he has the reason of a man, yet, being astonished, is quite at a loss and at his wits' end) or as a mighty man who is overpowered by such as are more mighty, and therefore cannot save; though mighty, yet a man, and therefore having his power limited." Either of these would be a most insufferable reproach to the divine perfections; and therefore, why has the God that we are sure is in the midst of us become as a stranger? Why does the almighty God seem as if he were no more than a mighty man, who, when he is astonished, though he would, yet cannot save? It becomes us in prayer to show ourselves concerned more for God's glory than for our own comfort. Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man *that* cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, *art* in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

10 Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins.

The dispute between God and his prophet, in this chapter, seems to be like that between the owner and the dresser of the vineyard concerning the barren fig-tree, Lu 13:7. The justice of the owner condemns it to be cut down; the clemency of the dresser intercedes for a reprieve. Jeremiah had been earnest with God, in prayer, to return in mercy to this people. Now here,

God overrules the plea which he had offered in their favour, and shows him that it would not hold. In answer to it thus he says concerning this people, Jer 14:10. He does not say, concerning my people, for he disowns them, because they had broken covenant with him. It is true they were called by his name, and had the tokens of his presence among them; but they had sinned, and provoked God to withdraw. This the prophet had owned, and had hoped to obtain mercy for them, notwithstanding this, through intercession and sacrifice; therefore God here tells him,

1. That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned that their backslidings were many; and, though they were so, yet there was hope for them if they returned. But this people show no disposition at all to return; they have wandered, and they have loved to wander; their backslidings have been their choice and their pleasure, which should have been their shame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God should take up his rest with them when they take such delight in going astray from him after their idols. It is not through necessity or inadvertency that they wander, but they love to wander. Sinners are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour, but it is their loving to wander that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wanderings would come to that one sin would hurry them on to another, and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning and refrained their feet. So far were they from returning to their God that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail upon them to give themselves the least check in a sinful pursuit. This is that for which God is now reckoning with them. When he denies them rain from heaven he is remembering their iniquity and visiting their sin; that is it for which their fruitful land is thus turned into barrenness.

2. That they had no reason to expect that the God they had rejected should accept them; no, not though they betook themselves to fasting and prayer and put themselves to the expense of burnt-offerings and sacrifice: The Lord doth not accept them, Jer 14:10. He takes no pleasure in them (so the word is); for what pleasure can the holy God take in those that take pleasure in his rivals, in any service, in any society, rather than his? "When they fast (Jer

14:12), which is a proper expression of repentance and reformation,--when they offer a burnt offering and an oblation, which was designed to be an expression of faith in a Mediator,--though their prayers be thus enforced, and offered up in those vehicles that used to be acceptable, yet, because they do not proceed from humble, penitent, and renewed hearts, but still they love to wander, therefore I will not hear their cry, be it ever so loud; nor will I accept them, neither their persons nor their performances." It had been long since declared, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; and those only are accepted that do well, Ge 4:7.

3. That they had forfeited all benefit by the prophet's prayers for them because they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet (Jer 14:11): Pray not thou for this people for their good, as before, Jer 7:15,11:14. This did not forbid him thus to express his good-will to them (Moses continued to intercede for Israel after God had said, Let me alone, Ex 32:10), but it forbade them to expect any good effect from it as long as they turned away their ear from hearing the law. Thus was the doom of the impenitent ratified, as that of Saul's rejection was by that word to Samuel, When wilt thou cease to mourn for Saul? It therefore follows (Jer 14:12), I will consume them, not only by this famine, but by the further sore judgments of sword and pestilence; for God has many arrows in his quiver, and those that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one shall be consumed by another.

II The prophet offers another plea in excuse for the people's obstinacy, and it is but an excuse, but he was willing to say whatever their case would bear; it is this, That the prophets, who pretended a commission from heaven, imposed upon them, and flattered them with assurances of peace though they went on in their sinful way, Jer 14:13. He speaks of it with lamentation: "Ah! Lord God, the poor people seem willing to take notice of what comes in thy name, and there are those who in thy name tell them that they shall not see the sword nor famine; and they say it as from thee, with all the gravity and confidence of prophets: I will continue you in this place, and will give you assured peace here, peace of truth. I tell them the contrary; but I am one against many,

and every one is apt to credit that which makes for them; therefore, Lord, pity and spare them, for their leaders cause them to err." This excuse would have been of some weight if they had not had warning given them, before, of false prophets, and rules by which to distinguish them; so that if they were deceived it was entirely their own fault. But this teaches us, as far as we can with truth, to make the best of bad, and judge as charitably of others as their case will bear.

11 Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for *their* good.

12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.

13 Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

God not only overrules this plea, but condemns both the blind leaders and the blind followers to fall together into the ditch.

1. God disowns the flatteries (Jer 14:14): They prophesy lies in my name. They had no commission from God to prophesy at all: I neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spoke unto them. They never were employed to go on any errand at all from God; he never made himself known to them, much less by them to the people; never any word of the Lord came to them, no call, no warrant, no instruction, much less did he send them on this errand, to rock them asleep in security. No; men may flatter themselves, and Satan may flatter them, but God never does. It is a false vision, and a thing of nought. Note, What is false and groundless in vain and worthless. The vision that is not true, be it ever so pleasing, is good for nothing; it is the deceit of their heart, a spider's web spun out of their own bowels, and in it they think to shelter themselves, but it will be swept away in a moment and prove a great cheat. Those that oppose their own thoughts of God's word (God indeed says so, but they think otherwise) walk in the deceit of their heart, and it will be their ruin.

2. He passes sentence upon the flatterers, Jer 14:15. As for the prophets, who put this abuse upon the people by telling them they shall have peace, and this affront upon God by telling them so in God's name, let them know that they shall have no peace themselves. They shall fall first by those very judgments which they have flattered others with the hopes of an exemption from. They undertook to warrant people that sword and famine should not be in the land; but it shall soon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themselves shall be cut off by sword and famine. How should they secure others or foretel peace to them when they cannot secure themselves, nor have such a foresight of their own calamities as to get out of the way of them? Note, The sorest punishment await those who promise sinners impunity in their sinful ways.

3. He lays the flattered under the same doom: The people to whom they prophesy lies, and who willingly suffer themselves to be thus imposed upon, shall die by sword and famine, Jer 14:16. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falsehood of the deceivers, shall not make the divine threatenings of no effect; sword and famine will come, whatever they say to the contrary; and those will be least safe that are most secure. Impenitent sinners will not escape the damnation of hell by saying that they can never believe there is such a thing, but will feel what they will not fear. It is threatened that this people shall not only fall by sword and famine, but that they shall be as it were hanged up in chains, as monuments of that divine justice which they set at defiance; their bodies shall be cast out, even in the streets of Jerusalem, which of all places, one would think, should be kept clear from such nuisances: there they shall lie unburied; their nearest relations, who should do them that last office of love, being so poor that they cannot afford it, or so weakened with hunger that they are not able to attend it, or so overwhelmed with grief that they have no heart to it, or so destitute of natural affection that they will not pay them so much respect.

Thus will God pour their wickedness upon them, that is, the punishment of their wickedness; the full vials of God's wrath shall be poured upon them, to which they have made themselves obnoxious. Note, When sinners are overwhelmed with trouble

they must in it see their own wickedness poured upon them. This refers to the wickedness both of the false prophets and of the people; the blind lead the blind, and both fall together into the ditch, where they will be miserable comforters one to another.

14 Then the Lord said unto me, the prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

15 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

16 And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

The present deplorable state of Judah and Jerusalem is here made the matter of the prophet's lamentation (Jer 14:17,18) and the occasion of his prayer and intercession for them (Jer 14:19), and I am willing to hope that the latter, as well as the former, was by divine direction, and that these words (Jer 14:17), Thus shalt thou say unto them (or concerning them, or in their hearing), refer to the intercession, as well as to the lamentation, and then it amounts to a revocation of the directions given to the prophet not to pray for them, Jer 14:11. However, it is plain, by the prayers we find in these verses, that the prophet did not understand it as a prohibition, but only as a discouragement, like that 1Jo 5:16, I do not say he shall pray for that. Here,

I The prophet stands weeping over the ruins of his country; God directs him to do so, that, showing himself affected, he might, if possible, affect them with the foresight of the calamities that were coming upon them. Jeremiah must say it not only to himself, but to them too: Let my eyes run down with tears, Jer 14:17. Thus he must signify to them that he certainly foresaw the sword coming, and another sort of famine, more grievous even than this which they were now groaning under; this was in the country for want of rain, that would be in the city through the straitness of the siege.

The prophet speaks as if he already saw the miseries attending the descent which the Chaldeans made upon them:

The virgin daughter of my people, that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow, much greater and more grievous than any she has yet sustained; for (Jer 14:18) in the field multitudes lie dead that were slain by the sword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food. Doleful spectacles! "The prophets and the priests, the false prophets that flattered them with their lies and the wicked priests that persecuted the true prophets, are now expelled their country, and go about either as prisoners and captives, whithersoever their conquerors lead them, or as fugitives and vagabonds, wherever they can find shelter and relief, in a land that they know not." Some understand this of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the rest. The prophet's eyes must run down with tears day and night, in prospect of this, that the people might be convinced, not only that this woeful day would infallibly come, and would be a very woeful day indeed, but that he was far from desiring it, and would as gladly have brought them messages of peace as their false prophets, if he might have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note, Because God, though he inflicts death on sinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his ministers, though in his name they pronounce the death of sinners, yet sadly to lament it.

II. He stands up to make intercession for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life there is hope, and room for prayer. And, though there were many among them who neither prayed themselves nor valued the prophet's prayers, yet there were some who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and set the seal of their Amen to them.

1. He humbly expostulates with God concerning the present deplorableness of their case, Jer 14:19. It was very sad, for,

(1.) Their expectations from their God failed them; they thought he had avouched Judah to be his, but now, it seems, he has utterly rejected it, and cast it off, will not own any relation to it nor concern for it. They thought Zion was the beloved of his soul, was

his rest for ever; but now his soul even loathes Zion, loathes even the services there performed, for the sake of the sins there committed.

(2.) Then no marvel that all their other expectations failed them: They were smitten, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was no healing for them; they looked for peace, because after a storm there usually comes a calm and fair weather, after a long fit of wet; but there was no good, things went still worse and worse. They looked for a healing time, but could not gain so much as a breathing time. "Behold, trouble at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it so then? Hast thou indeed rejected Judah? Justly thou mightest. Hath thy soul loathed Zion? We deserve it should. But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?"

2. He makes a penitent confession of sin, speaking that language which they all should have spoken, though but few did (Jer 14:20): "We acknowledge our wickedness, the abounding wickedness of our land and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins."

3. He deprecates God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his honour and promise, Jer 14:21. His petition is, "Do not abhor us; though thou afflict us, do not abhor us; though thy hand by turned against us, let not thy heart be so, nor let thy mind be alienated from us." They own God might justly abhor them, they had rendered themselves odious in his eyes; yet, when they pray, Do not abhor us, they mean, "Receive us into favour again. Let not thy soul loathe Zion, Jer 14:19. Let not our incense be an abomination." They appeal,

(1.) To the honour of God, the honour of his scriptures, by which he has made himself known--his word, which he has magnified above all his name: "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, that the name of thine by which we are called and which we call upon." The honour of his sanctuary is pleaded: "Lord, do not abhor us,

for that will disgrace the throne of thy glory" (the temple, which is called a glorious high throne from the beginning, Jer 17:12); let not that which has been the joy of the whole earth be made a hissing and an astonishment. We deserve to have disgrace put upon us, but let it not be so as to reflect upon thyself; let not the desolations of the temple give occasion to the heathen to reproach him that used to be worshipped there, as if he could not, or would not, protect it, or as if the gods of the Chaldeans had been too hard for him. Note, Good men lay the credit of religion, and its profession in the world, nearer their hearts than any private interest or concern of their own; and those are powerful pleas in prayer which are fetched thence and great supports to faith. We may be sure that God will not disgrace the throne of his glory on earth; nor will he eclipse the glory of his throne by one providence without soon making it shine forth, and more brightly than before, by another. God will be no loser in his honour at the long-run.

(2.) To the promise of God; of this they are humbly bold to put him in mind: Remember thy covenant with us, and break not that covenant. Not that they had any distrust of his fidelity, or that they thought he needed to be put in mind of his promise to them, but what he had said he would plead with himself they take the liberty to plead with him. Then will I remember my covenant, Le 26:42.

4. He professes a dependence upon God for the mercy of rain, which they were now in want of, Jer 14:22. If they have forfeited their interest in him as their God in covenant, yet they will not let go their hold on him as the God of nature.

(1.) They will never make application to the idols of the heathen, for that would be foolish and fruitless: Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? No; in a time of great drought in Israel, Baal, though all Israel presented their prayers to him in the days of Ahab, could not relieve them; it was that God only who answered by fire that could answer by water too.

(2.) They will not terminate their regards in second causes, nor expect supply from nature only: Can the heavens give showers? No, not without orders from the God of heaven; for it is he that

has the key of the clouds, that opens the bottles of heaven and waters the earth from his chambers. But,

(3.) All their expectation therefore is from him and their confidence in him: "Art not thou he, O Lord our God! from whom we may expect succour and to whom we must apply? Art thou not he that causest rain and givest showers?

For thou hast made all these things; thou gavest them being, and therefore thou givest them law and hast them all at thy command; thou madest that moisture in nature which is in a constant circulation to serve the intentions of Providence, and thou directest it, and makest what use thou pleasest of it; therefore we will wait upon thee, and upon thee only; we will ask of the Lord rain, Zec 10:1. We will trust in him to give it to us in due time, and be willing to tarry his time; it is fit that we should, and it will not be in vain to do so." Note, The sovereignty of God should engage, and his all-sufficiency encourage, our attendance on him and our expectations from him at all times.

17 Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them; Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow.

18 If I go forth into the field, then behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not.

19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and *there is* no healing for us? we looked for peace, and *there is* no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!

20 We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, *and* the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee.

21 Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us.

22 Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? *Art* not thou he, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these *things.*

Jeremiah-15

The Lord's Unrepenting Anger with Judah

1 Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, *yet* my mind *could* not *be* toward this people: cast *them* out of my sight, and let them go forth.

We scarcely find any where more pathetic expressions of divine wrath against a provoking people than we have here in these verses. The prophet had prayed earnestly for them, and found some among them to join with him; and yet not so much as a reprieve was gained, nor the least mitigation of the judgment; but this answer is given to the prophet's prayers, that the decree had gone forth, was irreversible, and would shortly be executed. Observe here,

I. What the sin was upon which this severe sentence was grounded.

1. It is in remembrance of a former iniquity; it is because of Manasseh, for that which he did in Jerusalem, Jer 15:4. What that was we are told, and that it was for it that Jerusalem was destroyed, 2Ki 24:3,4. It was for his idolatry, and the innocent blood which he shed, which the Lord would not pardon. He is called the son of Hezekiah because his relation to so good a father was a great aggravation of his sin, so far was it from being an excuse of it. The greatest part of a generation was worn off since Manasseh's time, yet his sin is brought into the account; as in Jerusalem's last ruin God brought upon it all the righteous blood shed on the earth, to show how heavy the guilt of blood will light and lie somewhere, sooner or later, and that reprieves are not pardons.

2. It is in consideration of their present impenitence. See how their sin is described (Jer 15:6): "Thou hast forsaken me, my service and thy duty to me; thou hast gone backward into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverse of what thou shouldst have

been and of what God by his law would have led thee forward to." See how the impenitence is described (Jer 15:7): They return not from their ways, the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for those who have turned aside if they will return; but what favour can those expect that persist in their apostasy?

II. What the sentence is. It is such as denotes no less than an utter ruin.

1. God himself abandons and abhors them: My mind cannot be towards them. How can it be thought that the holy God should have any remaining complacency in those that have such a rooted antipathy to him? It is not in a passion, but with a just and holy indignation, that he says, "Cast them out of my sight, as that which is in the highest degree odious and offensive, and let them go forth, for I will be troubled with them no more."

2. He will not admit any intercession to be made for them (Jer 15:1): "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, by prayer or sacrifice to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour." Moses and Samuel were two as great favourites of Heaven as ever were the blessings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the success of their mediation between God and his offending people; many a time they would have been destroyed if Moses had not stood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owed their lives (1Sa 12:19); yet even their intercessions should not prevail, no, not though they were now in a state of perfection, much less Jeremiah's who was now a man subject to like passions as others. The putting of this as a case, Though they should stand before me, supposes that they do not, and is an intimation that saints in heaven are not intercessors for saints on earth. It is the prerogative of the Eternal Word to be the only Mediator in the other world, whatever Moses, and Samuel, and others were in this.

3. He condemns them all to one destroying judgment or other. When God casts them out of his presence, whither shall they go forth? Jer 15:2. Certainly nowhere to be safe or easy, but to be met by one judgment while they are pursued by another, till they find

themselves surrounded with mischiefs on all hands, so that they cannot escape; Such as are for death to death. By death here is meant the pestilence (Re 6:8), for it is death without visible means. Such as are for death to death, or for the sword to the sword; every man shall perish in that way that God has appointed: the law that appoints the malefactor's death determines what death he shall die.

Or, He that is by his own choice for this judgment, let him take it, or for that, let him take it, but by the one or the other they shall all fall and none shall escape. It is a choice like that which David was put to, and was thereby put into a great strait, 2Sa 24:14. Captivity is mentioned last, some think, because the sorest judgment of all, it being both a complication and continuance of miseries. That of the sword is again repeated (Jer 15:3), and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will appoint over them, as officers over the soldiers, to do what they please with them. As those that escape the sword shall be cut off by pestilence, famine, or captivity, so those that fall by the sword shall be cut off by divine vengeance, which pursues sinners on the other side death; there shall be dogs to tear in the field to devour. And, if there be any that think to outrun justice, they shall be made the most public monuments of it: They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth (Jer 15:4), like Cain, who, that he might be made a spectacle of horror to all, became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved. Who can do any thing to help them? for

(1.) God, even their own God (so he had been) appears against them: I will stretch out my hand against thee, which denotes a deliberate determined stroke, which will reach far and wound deeply. I am weary with repenting (Jer 15:6); it is a strange expression; they had behaved so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had put even infinite patience itself to the stretch. God had often turned away his wrath when it was ready to break forth against them; but now he will grant no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those who have sinned so long against God's mercy that at length they have sinned it away.

(2.) Their own country expels them, and is ready to spue them out, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them; for so it was threatened (Le 18:28): I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land, in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered, or into the gates of the earth, into the cities of all the nations about them, Jer 15:7.

(3.) Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them: I will bereave them of children, so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will retrieve their affairs, for I will destroy my people; and, when the inhabitants are slain, the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, Jer 15:8,9, where we have,

[1.] The destroyer brought upon them. When God has bloody work to do he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called a spoiler at noon-day, not a thief in the night, that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun and in defiance of its light: I have brought against the mother a young man, a spoiler (so some read it); for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a young man, in the first year of his reign. We read it, I have brought upon them, even against the mother of the young men, a spoiler, that is, against Jerusalem, a mother city, that had a very numerous family of young men: or that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers who had many sons fit for war, who must now hazard their lives in the high places of the field, and, being an unequal match for the enemy, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers, who had nursed them up with a great deal of tenderness.

The same God that brought the spoiler upon them caused him to fall upon it, that is, upon the spoil delivered to him, suddenly and by surprise; and then terrors came upon the city. the original is very abrupt--the city and terrors. O the city! what a consternation will it then be in! O the terrors that shall then seize it! Then the city and terrors shall be brought together, that seemed at a distance

from each other. I will cause to fall suddenly upon her (upon Jerusalem) a watcher and terrors; so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher (Da 4:13,23), and the Chaldean soldiers were called watchers, Jer 4:16.

[2.] The destruction made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described.

First, The wives are deprived of their husbands: Their widows are increased above the sand of the seas, so numerous have they now grown. It was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be as the sand of the sea for multitude; but now they shall be all cut off, and their widows shall be so. But observe, God says, They are increased to me. Though the husbands were cut off by the sword of his justice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be the God of the widows. Widows are said to be taken into the number, the number of those whom God has a particular compassion and concern for.

Secondly, The parents are deprived of their children: She that has borne seven sons, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now languishes, when she has seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burden and care. She that had many children has waxed feeble, 1Sa 2:5. See what uncertain comforts children are; and let us therefore rejoice in them as though we rejoiced not. When the children are slain the mother gives up the ghost, for her life was bound up in theirs: Her sun has gone down while it was yet day; she is bereaved of all her comforts just when she thought herself in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now ashamed and confounded to think how proud she was of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised herself from them. Some understand, by this languishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, and the residue of them, who have yet escaped, and, as was hoped, were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even these will I deliver to the sword before their enemies (as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed), saith the Lord, the Judge of heaven and

earth, who, we are sure, herein judges according to truth, though the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied (Jer 15:5): "For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? When thy God has cast thee out of his sight, and his compassions fail and are shut up from thee, neither thy enemies nor thy friends shall have any compassion for thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee; they shall not bemoan thee nor be sorry for thee; they shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to ask how thou dost." For,

(1.) Their friends, who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves.

(2.) It was plain to all their neighbours that they had brought all this misery upon themselves by their obstinacy in sin, and that they might easily have prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to; and therefore who can pity them? O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself. Those will perish for ever unpitied that might have been saved upon such easy terms and would not. (3.) God will thus complete their misery. He will set their acquaintance, as he did Job's at a distance from them; and his hand, his righteous hand, is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

2 And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord; Such as *are* for death, to death; and such as *are* for the sword, to the sword; and such as *are* for the famine, to the famine; and such as *are* for the captivity, to the captivity.

3 And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.

4 And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for *that* which he did in Jerusalem.

5 For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall
bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?
6 Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward:
therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee;
I am weary with repenting.
7 And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave
them of children, I will destroy my people, *since* they return not from
their ways.
8 Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have
brought upon them against the mother of the young men a spoiler
at noonday: I have caused *him* to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors
upon the city.
9 She that hath borne seven languisheth: she hath given up the
ghost; her sun is gone down while *it was* yet day: she hath been
ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to
the sword before their enemies, saith the Lord.
10 Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and
a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on
usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; *yet* every one of them doth
curse me.

Jeremiah has now returned from his public work and retired into his closet; what passed between him and his God there we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterwards, to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

I The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements he met with in his work, Jer 15:10.

1. He met with a great deal of contradiction and opposition. He was a man of strife and contention to the whole land (so it might be read, rather than to the whole earth, for his business lay only in that land); both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a peaceable man, gave no provocation to any, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet a man of strife, not a man striving, but a man striven with; he was for peace, but, when he spoke, they were for war. And, whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him

was his faithfulness to God and to their souls. He showed them their sins that were working their ruin, and put them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them; and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the prince of peace himself was thus a man of strife, a sign spoken against, continually enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself.

And the gospel of peace brings division, even to fire and sword, Mt 10:34,35,Lu 12:49,51. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience. He cried out, Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, as if it were his mother's fault that she bore him, and he had better never have been born than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had borne him a man of strife, as if he had been fatally determined to this by the stars that were in the ascendant at his birth. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity; we rather hope it was intended for no more than a pathetic lamentation of his own case. Note,

(1.) Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, if they serve God faithfully, are often made men of strife. We can but follow peace; we have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, as much as in us lies, live peaceably.

(2.) It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition to live among those who are continually picking quarrels with them.

(3.) Yet, if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds and put ourselves upon the fret.

2. He met with a great deal of contempt, contumely, and reproach. They every one of them cursed him; they branded him as a turbulent factious man, as an incendiary and a sower of discord and sedition. They ought to have blessed him, and to have blessed God for him; but they had arrived at such a pitch of enmity against God and his word that for his sake they cursed his messenger, spoke ill of him, wished ill to him, did all they could to make him

odious. They all did so; he had scarcely one friend in Judah or Jerusalem that would give him a good word. Note, It is often the lot of the best of men to have the worst of characters ascribed to them. So persecuted they the prophets. But one would be apt to suspect that surely Jeremiah had given them some provocation, else he could not have lost himself thus: no, not the least: I have neither lent money nor borrowed money, have been neither creditor nor debtor; for so general is the signification of the words here.

(1.) It is implied here that those who deal much in the business of this world are often involved thereby in strife and contention; meum et tuum--mine and thine are the great make-bates; lenders and borrowers sue and are sued, and great dealers often get a great deal of ill-will.

(2.) it was an instance of Jeremiah's great prudence, and it is written for our learning, that, being called to be a prophet, he entangled not himself in the affairs of this life, but kept clear from them, that he might apply the more closely to the business of his profession and might not give the least shadow of suspicion that he aimed at secular advantages in it nor any occasion to his neighbours to contend with him. He put out no money, for he was no usurer, nor indeed had he any money to lend: he took up no money, for he was no purchaser, no merchant, no spendthrift. He was perfectly dead to this world and the things of it: a very little served to keep him, and we find (Jer 16:2) that he had neither wife nor children to keep. And yet,

(3.) Though he behaved thus discreetly, and so as one would think should have gained him universal esteem, yet he lay under a general odium, through the iniquity of the times. Blessed be God, bad as things are with us, they are not so bad but that there are those with whom virtue has its praise; yet let not those who behave most prudently think it strange if they have not the respect and esteem they deserve. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

11 The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well* in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

12 Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?
13 Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and *that* for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.

The answer which God gave to this complaint. Though there was in it a mixture of passion and infirmity, yet God graciously took cognizance of it, because it was for his sake that the prophet suffered reproach. In this answer,

1. God assures him that he should weather the storm and be made easy at last, Jer 15:11. Though his neighbours quarrelled with him for what he did in the discharge of his office, yet God accepted him and promised to stand by him. It is in the original expressed in the form of an oath: "If I take not care of thee, let me never be counted faithful; verily it shall go well with thy remnant, with the remainder of thy life" (for so the word signifies); "the residue of thy days shall be more comfortable to thee than those hitherto have been." Thy end shall be good; so the Chaldee reads it. Note, It is a great and sufficient support to the people of God that, how troublesome soever their way may be, it shall be well with them in their latter end, Ps 37:37. They have still a remnant, a residue, something behind and left in reserve, which will be sufficient to counterbalance all their grievances, and the hope of it may serve to make them easy. It should seem that Jeremiah, besides the vexation that his people gave him, was uneasy at the apprehension he had of sharing largely in the public judgments which he foresaw coming; and, though he mentioned not this, God replied to his thought of it, as to Moses, Ex 4:19. Jeremiah thought, "If my friends are thus abusive to me, what will my enemies be?" And God had thought fit to awaken in him an expectation of this kind, Jer 12:5. But here he quiets his mind with this promise: "Verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, when all about thee shall be laid waste."

Note, God has all men's hearts in his hand, and can turn those to favour his servants whom they were most afraid of. And the prophets of the Lord have often met with fairer and better treatment among open enemies than among those that call themselves his people. When we see trouble coming, and it looks very threatening, let us not despair, but hope in God, because it may prove better than we expect. This promise was accomplished

when Nebuchadnezzar, having taken the city, charged the captain of the guard to be kind to Jeremiah, and let him have every thing he had a mind to, Jer 39:11,12. The following words, Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel, or brass? (Jer 15:12), being compared with the promise of God made to Jeremiah (Jer 1:18), that he would make him an iron pillar and brazen walls, seem intended for his comfort. They were continually clashing with him, and were rough and hard as iron; but Jeremiah, being armed with power and courage from on high, is as northern iron, which is naturally stronger, and as steel, which is hardened by art; and therefore they shall not prevail against him; compare this with Eze 2:6,3:8,9. He might the better bear their quarrelling with him when he was sure of the victory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecutors should be lost in the storm, should be ruined at last, and that therein the word of God in his mouth should be accomplished and he proved a true prophet, Jer 15:13,14. God here turns his speech from the prophet to the people. To them also Jer 15:12 may be applied: Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel? Shall their courage and strength, and the most hardly and vigorous of their efforts, be able to contest either with the counsel of God or with the army of the Chaldeans, which are as inflexible, as invincible, as the northern iron and steel. Let them therefore hear their doom: Thy substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil, and that without price; the spoilers shall have it gratis; it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey.

Observe, The prophet was poor; he neither lent nor borrowed; he had nothing to lose, neither substance. nor treasure, and therefore the enemy will treat him well, Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator--The traveller that has no property about him will congratulate himself when accosted by a robber. But the people that had great estates in money and land would be slain for what they had, or the enemy, finding they had much, would use them hardly, to make them confess more. And it is their own iniquity that herein corrects them: It is for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. All parts of the country, even those which lay most remote, had contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the blame upon another,

but each take shame to itself: It is for all thy sins in all thy borders. Thus shall they stay at home till they see their estates ruined, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to spend the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery: "I will make thee to pass with thy enemies, who shall lead thee in triumph into a land that thou knowest not, and therefore canst expect to find no comfort in it." All this is the fruit of God's wrath: "It is a fire kindled in my anger, which shall burn upon you, and, if not extinguished in time, will burn eternally."

14 And I will make *thee* to pass with thine enemies into a land *which* thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, *which* shall burn upon you.

The Lord's Assurance to Jeremiah

15 O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.

Here, as before, we have,

I The prophet's humble address to God, containing a representation both of his integrity and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is a matter of comfort to us that, whatever ails us, we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, "O Lord! thou knowest; thou knowest my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; thou knowest my distress, which men disdain to take notice of." Observe here,

1. What it is that the prophet prays for, Jer 15:15.

(1.) That God would consider his case and be mindful of him: "O Lord! remember me; think upon me for good."

(2.) That God would communicate strength and comfort to him: "Visit me; not only remember me, but let me know that thou rememberest me, that thou art nigh unto me."

(3.) That he would appear for him against those that did him wrong: Revenge me of my persecutors, or rather, Vindicate me from my persecutors; give judgment against them, and let that judgment be executed so far as is necessary for my vindication and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong. Further than this a good man will not desire that God should avenge him. Let something be done to convince the world that (whatever blasphemers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a righteous man and the God whom he serves is a righteous God.

(4.) That he would yet spare him and continue him in the land of the living: "Take me not away by a sudden stroke, but in thy long-suffering lengthen out my days." The best men will own themselves so obnoxious to God's wrath that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, "While thou exercisest long-suffering towards my persecutors, let not them prevail to take me away." Though in a passion he complained of his birth (Jer 15:10), yet he desires here that his death might not be hastened; for life is sweet to nature, and the life of a useful man is so to grace. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world.

2. What it is that he pleads with God for mercy and relief against his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.

(1.) That God's honour was interested in this case: Know, and make it known, that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Those that lay themselves open to reproach by their own fault and folly have great reason to bear it patiently, but no reason to expect that God should appear for them. But if it is for doing well that we suffer ill, and for righteousness' sake that we have all manner of evil said against us, we may hope that God will vindicate our honour with his own. To the same purport (Jer 15:16), I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts! It was for that reason that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reason he promised himself that God would own him and stand by him.

(2.) That the word of God, which he was employed to preach to others, he had experienced the power and pleasure of in his own soul, and therefore had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for

the divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find some rejected of God who yet could say, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name. But Jeremiah could say more (Jer 15:16): "Thy words were found, found by me" (he searched the scripture, diligently studied the law, and found that in it which was reviving to him: if we seek we shall find), "found for me" (the words which he was to deliver to others were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inspiration), "and I did not only taste them, but eat them, received them entirely, conversed with them intimately; they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry; I entertained them, digested them, turned them in succum et sanguinem--into blood and spirits, and was myself delivered into the mould of those truths which I was to deliver to others." The prophet was told to eat the roll, Eze 2:8,Re 10:9. I did eat it--that is, as it follows, it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, nothing could be more agreeable. Understand it,

[1.] Of the message itself which he was to deliver. Though he was to foretel the ruin of his country, which was dear to him, and in the ruin of which he could not but have a deep share, yet all natural affections were swallowed up in zeal for God's glory, and even these messages of wrath, being divine messages, were a satisfaction to him. He also rejoiced, at first, in hope that the people would take warning and prevent the judgment. Or,

[2.] Of the commission he received to deliver this message. Though the work he was called to was not attended with any secular advantages, but, on the contrary, exposed him to contempt and persecution, yet, because it put him in a way to serve God and do good, he took pleasure in it, was glad to be so employed, and it was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, Joh 4:34. Or, [3.] Of the promise God gave him that he would assist and own him in his work (Jer 1:18); he was satisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it should not fail him.

(3.) That he had applied himself to the duty of his office with all possible gravity, seriousness, and self-denial, though he had had of late but little satisfaction in it, Jer 15:17.

[1.] It was his comfort that he had given up himself wholly to the business of his office and had done nothing either to divert himself from it or disfit himself for it. He kept no unsuitable company, denied himself the use even of lawful recreations, abstained from every thing that looked like levity, lest thereby he should make himself mean and less regarded. He sat alone, spent a great deal of time in his closet, because of the hand of the Lord that was strong upon him to carry him on his work, Eze 3:14. "For thou hast filled me with indignation, with such messages of wrath against this people as have made me always pensive." Note, It will be a comfort to God's ministers, when men despise them, if they have the testimony of their consciences for them that they have not by any vain foolish behaviour made themselves despicable, that they have been dead not only to the wealth of the world, as this prophet was (Jer 15:10), but to the pleasures of it too, as here. But,

[2.] It is his complaint that he had had but little pleasure in his work. It was at first the rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy, so that he had no heart to sit in the meeting of those that make merry. He cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him. He sat alone, fretting at the people's obstinacy and the little success of his labours among them. This filled him with a holy indignation. Note, It is the folly and infirmity of some good people that they lose much of the pleasantness of their religion by the fretfulness and uneasiness of their natural temper, which they humour and indulge, instead of mortifying it.

(4.) He throws himself upon God's pity and promise in a very passionate expostulation (Jer 15:18): "Why is my pain perpetual, and nothing done to ease it? Why are the wounds which my enemies are continually giving both to my peace and to my reputation incurable, and nothing done to retrieve either my comfort or my credit? I once little thought that I should be thus neglected; will the God that has promised me his presence be to me as a liar, the God on whom I depend to be me as waters that fail?" We are willing to make the best we can of it, and to take it as an appeal,

[1.] To the mercy of God: "I know he will not let the pain of his servant be perpetual, but he will ease it, will not let his wound be incurable, but he will heal it; and therefore I will not despair."

[2.] To his faithfulness: "Wilt thou be to me as a liar? No; I know thou wilt not. God is not a man that he should lie. The fountain of life will never be to his people as waters that fail."

16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

17 I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation.

18 Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, *which* refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, *and as* waters *that* fail?

God's gracious answer to this address, Jer 15:19-21. Though the prophet betrayed much human frailty in his address, yet God vouchsafed to answer him with good words and comfortable words; for he knows our frame. Observe,

1. What God here requires of him as the condition of the further favours he designed him. Jeremiah had done and suffered much for God, yet God is no debtor to him, but he is still upon his good behaviour. God will own him. But,

(1.) He must recover his temper, and be reconciled to his work, and friends with it again, and not quarrel with it any more as he had done. He must return, must shake off these distrustful discontented thoughts and passions, and not give way to them, must regain the peaceable possession and enjoyment of himself, and resolve to be easy. Note, When we have stepped aside into any disagreeable frame or way our care must be to return and compose ourselves into a right temper of mind again; and then we may expect God will help us, if thus we endeavour to help ourselves.

(2.) He must resolve to be faithful in his work, for he could not expect the divine protection any longer than he did approve

himself so. Though there was no cause at all to charge Jeremiah with unfaithfulness, and God knew his heart to be sincere, yet God saw fit to give him this caution. Those that do their duty must not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things he must be faithful:--

[1.] He must distinguish between some and others of those he preached to: Thou must take forth the precious from the vile. The righteous are the precious be they ever so mean and poor; the wicked are the vile be they ever so rich and great. In our congregations these are mixed, wheat and chaff in the same floor; we cannot distinguish them by name, but we must by character, and must give to each a portion, speaking comfort to precious saints and terror to vile sinners, neither making the heart of the righteous sad nor strengthening the hands of the wicked (Eze 13:22), but rightly dividing the word of truth. Ministers must take those whom they see to be precious into their bosoms, and not sit alone as Jeremiah did, but keep up conversation with those they may do good to and get good by.

[2.] He must closely adhere to his instructions, and not in the least vary from them: Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them, that is, he must do the utmost he can, in his preaching, to bring people up to the mind of God; he must tell them they must, at their peril, comply with that. Those that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, "Let them return to thee, and, upon second thoughts, come up to the terms and strike the bargain; but do not thou return to them, do not compliment them, nor comply with them, nor think to make the matter easier to them than the word of God has made it." Men's hearts and lives must come up to God's law and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them nor comply with them.

2. What God here promises to him upon the performance of these conditions. If he approve himself well,

(1.) God will tranquilize his mind and pacify the present tumult of his spirits: If thou return, I will bring thee again, will restore thy soul, as Ps 23:3. The best and strongest saints, if at any time

they have gone aside out of the right way, and are determined to return, need the grace of God to bring them again.

(2.) God will employ him in his service as a prophet, whose work, even in those bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages: "Thou shalt stand before me, to receive instructions from me, as a servant from his master; and thou shalt be as my mouth to deliver my messages to the people, as an ambassador is the mouth of the prince that sends him." Note, Faithful ministers are God's mouth to us; they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind and as becomes the oracles of God; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, If thou keep close to thy instructions, thou shalt be as my mouth, not otherwise; so far, and no further, God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word. "Thou shalt be as my mouth, that is, what thou sayest shall be made good, as if I myself had said it." See Isa 44:26,1Sa 3:19.

(3.) He shall have strength and courage to face the many difficulties he meets with in his work, and his spirit shall not fail again as now it does (Jer 15:20): "I will make thee unto this people as a fenced brazen wall, which the storm batters and beats violently upon, but cannot shake. Return not thou to them by any sinful compliances, and then trust thy God to arm thee by his grace with holy resolutions. Be not cowardly, and God will make thee daring." He had complained that he was made a man of strife. "Expect to be so (says God); they will fight against thee, they will still continue their opposition, but they shall not prevail against thee to drive thee off from thy work nor to cut thee off from the land of the living."

(4.) He shall have God for his protector and mighty deliverer: I am with thee to save thee. Those that have God with them have a Saviour with them who has wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and those that are with God, and faithful to him, he will deliver (Jer 15:21) either from trouble or through it. They may perhaps fall into the hand of the wicked, and they may appear terrible to them, but God will rescue them out of their hands. They shall not be able to kill them till they

have finished their testimony; they shall not prevent their happiness. God will so deliver them as to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom (2Ti 4:18), and that is deliverance enough. There are many things that appear very frightful that yet do not prove at all hurtful to a good man.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring
thee again, *and* thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth
the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them
return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

20 And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they
shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I
am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord.

21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will
redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Jeremiah-16

The Lord's Judgment on the People

1 The word of the Lord came also unto me, saying,

2 Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor
daughters in this place.

The prophet is here for a sign to the people. They would not regard what he said; let it be tried whether they will regard what he does. In general, he must conduct himself so, in every thing, as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very shortly. This he foretold, but few regarded the prediction; therefore he is to show that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it. Others go on in their usual course, but he, in the prospect of these sad times, is forbidden and therefore forbears marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of and affect them with the word of God must make it appear, even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves and are affected with it. If we would rouse others out of their security, and persuade them to sit loose to the world, we must ourselves be mortified to present things and show that we expect the dissolution of them.

Jeremiah must not marry, nor think of having a family and being a housekeeper (Jer 16:2): Thou shalt not take thee a wife, nor think of having sons and daughters in this place, not in the land of Judah, not in Jerusalem, not in Anathoth. The Jews, more than any people, valued themselves on their early marriages and their numerous offspring. But Jeremiah must live a bachelor, not so much in honour of virginity as in diminution of it. By this it appears that it was advisable and seasonable only in calamitous times, and times of present distress, 1Co 7:26. That it is so is a part of the calamity.

There may be a time when it will be said, Blessed is the womb that bears not, Lu 23:29. When we see such times at hand it is wisdom for all, especially for prophets, to keep themselves as much as may be from being entangled with the affairs of this life and encumbered with that which, the dearer it is to them, the more it will be the matter of their care, and fear, and grief, at such a time. The reason here given is because the fathers and mothers, the sons and the daughters, shall die of grievous deaths, Jer 16:3,4. As for those that have wives and children,

1. They will have such a clog upon them that they cannot flee from those deaths. A single man may make his escape and shift for his own safety, when he that has a wife and children can neither find means to convey with them nor find in his heart to go and leave them behind him.

2. They will be in continual terror for fear of those deaths; and the more they have to lose by them the greater will the terror and consternation be when death appears every where in its triumphant pomp and power.

3. The death of every child, and the aggravating circumstances of it, will be a new death to the parent. Better have no children than have them brought forth and bred up for the murderer (Ho 9:13,14), than see them live and die in misery. Death is grievous, but some deaths are more grievous than others, both to those that die and to their relations that survive them; hence we read of so great a death, 2Co 1:10. Two things are used a little to palliate and alleviate the terror of death as to this world, and to sugar the bitter pill--bewailing the dead and burying them; but, to make those deaths

grievous indeed, these are denied: They shall not be lamented, but shall be carried off, as if all the world were weary of them; nay, they shall not be buried, but left exposed, as if they were designed to be monuments of justice. They shall be a dung upon the face of the earth, not only despicable, but detestable, as if they were good for nothing but to manure the ground; being consumed, some by the sword and some by famine, their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven and the beasts of the earth. Will not any one say, "Better be without children than live to see them come to this?" What reason have we to say,All is vanity and vexation of spirit, when those creatures that we expect to be our greatest comforts may prove not only our heaviest cares, but our sorest crosses!

3 For thus saith the Lord concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;

4 They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; *but* they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

5 For thus saith the Lord, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, *even* loving-kindness and mercies.

Jeremiah must not go to the house of mourning upon occasion of the death of any of his neighbours or relations (Jer 16:5): Enter thou not into the house of mourning. It was usual to condole with those whose relations were dead, to bemoan them, to cut themselves, and make themselves bald, which, it seems, was commonly practised as an expression of mourning, though forbidden by the law, De 14:1. Nay, sometimes, in a passion of grief, they did tear themselves for them (Jer 16:6,7), partly in honour of the deceased, thus signifying that they thought there was a great loss of them, and partly in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burden will be made the lighter by their having sharers with them in their grief.

They used to mourn with them, and so to comfort them for the dead, as Job's friends with him and the Jews with Martha and Mary; and it was a friendly office to give them a cup of consolation to drink, to provide cordials for them and press them earnestly to drink of them for the support of their spirits, give wine to those that are of heavy heart for their father or mother, that it may be some comfort to them to find that, though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood, and it was a laudable usage. It is a good work to others, as well as of good use to ourselves, to go to the house of mourning. It seems, the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character both as a pious man and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people than it should seem he was. But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends as usual, for

1. His sorrow for the destruction of his country in general must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths. His tears must now be turned into another channel; and there is occasion enough for them all.

2. He had little reason to lament those who died now just before the judgments entered which he saw at the door, but rather to think those happy who were seasonable taken away from the evil to come.

3. This was to be a type of what was coming, when there should be such universal confusion that all neighbourly friendly offices should be neglected. Men shall be in deaths so often, and even dying daily, that they shall have no time, no room, no heart, for the ceremonies that used to attend death. The sorrows shall be so ponderous as not to admit relief, and every one so full of grief for his own troubles that he shall have no thought of his neighbours. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; every one will find it enough to bear his own burden; for (Jer 16:5), "I have taken away my peace from this people, put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing wherewith they might comfort themselves and one another." Whatever peace we enjoy, it is God's peace; it is his gift, and, if he

give quietness, who then can make trouble? But, if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will take it away; and where are we then? Job 34:29. "I will take away my peace, even my loving-kindness and mercies;" these shall be shut up and restrained, which are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewell all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God. All is gone when God takes away from us his lovingkindness and his mercies. Then it follows (Jer 16:6), Both the great and the small shall die, even in this land, the land of Canaan, that used to be called the land of the living. God's favour is our life; take away that, and we die, we perish, we all perish.

6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:

7 neither shall *men* tear *themselves* for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother.

8 Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink.

Jeremiah must not go to the house of mirth, any more than to the house of mourning, Jer 16:8. It had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses and invited him to them, to go and sit with them, not merely to drink, but to eat and to drink, soberly and cheerfully. But now he must not take that liberty,

1. Because it was unseasonable, and inconsistent with the providences of God in reference to that land and nation. God called aloud to weeping, and mourning, and fasting; he was coming forth against them in his judgments; and it was time for them to humble themselves; and it well became the prophet who gave them the warning to give them an example of taking the warning, and complying with it, and so to make it appear that he did himself believe it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial and mortification, and to show themselves affected with those terrors of the Lord with which they desire to affect others. And it becomes all the sons of Zion to sympathize with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry when she is perplexed, Am 6:6.

2. Because he must thus show the people what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered that he would not meet them, as he used to do, in the house of feasting. But he lets them know it was to intimate to them that all their feasting would be at an end shortly (Jer 16:9): "I will cause to cease the voice of mirth. You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth and cast a damp upon it." God can find ways to tame the most jovial. "This shall be done in this place, in Jerusalem, that used to be the joyous city and thought her joys were all secure to her. It shall be done in your eyes, in your sight, to be a vexation to you, who now look so haughty and so merry. It shall be done in your days; you yourselves shall live to see it." The voice of praise they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them the voice of mirth and gladness. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded, among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials, be heard among them. See Jer 7:34.

9 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

10 And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or what *is* our iniquity? or what *is* our sin that we have committed against the Lord our God?

Here is, 1. An enquiry made into the reasons why God would bring those judgments upon them (Jer 16:10): When thou shalt show this people all these words, the words of this curse, they will say unto thee, Wherefore has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? One would hope that there were some among them that asked this question with a humble penitent heart, desiring to know what was the sin for which God contended with them, that they might cast it away and prevent the judgment: "Show us the Jonah that raises the storm and we will throw it overboard." But it seems here to be the language of those who quarrelled at the word of God, and challenged him to show what they had done which might deserve so severe a

punishment: "What is our iniquity? Or what is our sin? What crime have we even been guilty of, proportionable to such a sentence?"

Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification and insinuate that God did them wrong in pronouncing this evil against them, that he laid upon them more than was right, and that they had reason to enter into judgment with God, Job 34:23. Note, It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God and judge themselves when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that have procured them the trouble.

2. A plain and full answer given to this enquiry. Do they ask the prophet why, and for what reason, God is thus angry with them? He shall not stop their mouths by telling them that they may be sure there is a sufficient reason, the righteous God is never angry without cause, without good cause; but he must tell them particularly what is the cause, that they may be convinced and humbled, or at least that God may be justified. Let them know then,

(1.) That God visited upon them the iniquities of their fathers (Jer 16:11): Your fathers have forsaken me, and have not kept my law. They shook off divine institutions and grew weary of them (they thought them too plain, too mean), and then they walked after other gods, whose worship was more gay and pompous; and, being fond of variety and novelty, they served them and worshipped them; and this was the sin which God had said, in the second commandment, he would visit upon their children, who kept up these idolatrous usages, because they received them by tradition from their fathers, 1Pe 1:18.

(2.) That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities (Jer 16:12): "You have made your fathers' sin your own, and have become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for you have done worse than your fathers." If they had made a good use of their fathers' reprieve, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they would have fared the better for it and the judgment would have been prevented, the

reprieve turned into a national pardon; but, making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they fared the worse for it, and, the reprieve having expired, an addition was made to the sentence and it was executed with the more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, walked every one after the imagination of his own heart, made that their guide and rule and were resolved to follow that, on purpose that they might not hearken to God and his prophets.

They designedly suffered their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder then that God has taken up this resolution concerning them (Jer 16:13): "I will cast you out of this land, this land of light, this valley of vision. Since you will not hearken to me, you shall not hear me; you shall be hurried away, not into a neighbouring country which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, a land that you know not, neither you nor your fathers, in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society, to be an allay to your misery." Justly were those banished into a strange land who doted upon strange gods, which neither they nor their fathers knew, De 32:17. Two things would make their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that and debarred that from its bliss.

[1.] "It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the service of God; but there shall you serve other gods day and night; that is, you shall be in continual temptation to serve them and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel task-masters; and, when you are forced to worship idols, you will be as sick of such worship as ever you were fond of it when it was forbidden you by your godly kings." See how God often makes men's sin their punishment, and fills the backslider in heart with his own ways. "You shall have no public worship at all but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God."

[2.] "It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the lovingkindness of God, but you shall go to a strange land, where I will not show you favour." If they had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land; but, if they lie under his wrath, the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

11 Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;

12 and ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

13 therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, *neither* ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor.

14 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

There is a mixture of mercy and judgment in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here--they are so interwoven, and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the gospel.

I. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries. Let them expect it, for the decree has gone forth.

1. God sees all their sins, though they commit them ever so secretly and palliate them ever so artfully (Jer 16:17): My eyes are upon all their ways. They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him; but he has his eye upon them; neither they nor their sins are hidden from his face, from his eyes. Note, None of the sins of sinners either can be concealed from God or shall be overlooked by him, Pr 5:21,Job 34:21,Ps 90:8.

2. God is highly displeased, particularly at their idolatries, Jer 16:18. As his omniscience convicts them, so his justice condemns them: I will recompense their iniquity and their sin

double, not double to what it deserves, but double to what they expect and to what I have done formerly. Or I will recompense it abundantly; they shall now pay for their long reprieve and the divine patience they have abused. The sin for which God has a controversy with them is their having defiled God's land with their idolatries, and not only alienated that which he was entitled to as his inheritance, but polluted that which he dwelt in with delight as his inheritance, and made it offensive to him with the carcases of their detestable things, the gods themselves which they worshipped, the images of which, though they were of gold and silver, were as loathsome to God as the putrid carcases of men or beasts are to us. Idols are carcases of detestable things. God hates them, and so should we. Or he might refer to the sacrifices which they offered to these idols, with which the land was filled; for they had high places in all the coasts and corners of it. This was the sin which, above any other, incensed God against them.

3. He will find out and raise up instruments of his wrath, that shall cast them out of their land, according to the sentence passed upon them (Jer 16:16): I will send for many fishers and many hunters--the Chaldean army, that shall have many ways of ensnaring and destroying them, by fraud as fishers, by force as hunters. They shall find them out wherever they are, and shall chase and closely pursue them, to their ruin. They shall discover them wherever they are hid, in hills or mountains, or holes of the rocks, and shall drive them out. God has various ways of prosecuting a people with his judgments that avoid the convictions of his word. He has men at command fit for his purpose; he has them within call, and can send for them when he pleases.

4. Their bondage in Babylon shall be sorer and much more grievous than that in Egypt, their task-masters more cruel, and their lives made more bitter. This is implied in the promise (Jer 16:14,15), that their deliverance out of Babylon shall be more illustrious in itself, and more welcome to them, than that out of Egypt. Their slavery in Egypt came upon them gradually and almost insensibly; that in Babylon came upon them at once and with all the aggravating circumstances of terror. In Egypt they

had a Goshen of their own, but none such in Babylon. In Egypt they were used as servants that were useful, in Babylon as captives that had been hateful. 5. They shall be warned, and God shall be glorified, by these judgments brought upon them. These judgments have a voice, and speak aloud,

(1.) Instruction to them. When God chastens them he teaches them. By this rod God expostulates with them (Jer 16:20): "Shall a man make gods to himself? Will any man be so perfectly void of all reason and consideration as to think that a god of his own making can stand him in any stead? Will you ever again be such fools as you have been, to make to yourselves gods which are no gods, when you have a God whom you may call your own, who made you, and is himself the true and living God?"

(2.) Honour to God; for he will be known by the judgments which he executes. He will first recompense their iniquity (Jer 16:18), and then he will this once (Jer 16:21)-- this once for all, not by many interruptions of their peace, but this one desolation and destruction of it. "For this once, and no more, I will cause them to know my hand, the length and weight of my punishing hand, how far it can reach and how deeply it can wound. And they shall know that my name is Jehovah, a God with whom there is no contending, who gives being to threatenings and puts life into them as well as promises."

15 but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

16 Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

Yet he has mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in here for the encouragement of the prophet himself and of those few among them that tremble at God's word. It was said, with an air of severity (Jer 16:13), that God would banish them into a strange land; but, that thereby they might not be driven to despair, there follow immediately words of comfort.

1. The days will come, the joyful days, when the same hand that dispersed them shall gather them again, Jer 16:14,15. They are cast out, but they are not cast off, they are not cast away. They shall be brought up from the land of the north, the land of their captivity, where they are held with a strong hand, and from all the lands whither they are driven, and where they seemed to be lost and buried in the crowd; nay, I will bring them again into their own land, and settle them there. As he foregoing threatenings agreed with what was written in this law, so does this promise. Yet will I not cast them away, Le 26:44. Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, De 30:4. And the following words (Jer 16:16) may be understood as a promise; God will send for fishers and hunters, the Medes and Persians, that shall find them out in the countries where they are scattered, and send them back to their own land; or Zerubbabel, and others of their own nation, who should fish them out and hunt after them, to persuade them to return; or whatever instruments the Spirit of God made use of to stir up their spirits to go up, which at first they were backward to do. They began to nestle in Babylon; but, as an eagle stirs up her nest and flutters over her young, so God did by them, Zec 2:7.

2. Their deliverance out of Babylon should, upon some accounts, be more illustrious and memorable than their deliverance out of Egypt was. Both were the Lord's doing and marvellous in their eyes; both were proofs that the Lord liveth and were to be kept in everlasting remembrance, to his honour, as the living God; but the fresh mercy shall be so surprising, so welcome, that it shall even abolish the memory of the former. Not but that new mercies should put us in mind of old ones, and give us occasion to renew our thanksgivings for them; yet because we are tempted to think that the former days were better than these, and to ask, Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? as if God's arm had waxed short, and to cry up the age of miracles above the later ages, when mercies are wrought in a way of common providence, therefore we are allowed here comparatively to forget the bringing of Israel out of Egypt as a deliverance outdone by that out of Babylon. That was done by might and power, this by the

Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zec 4:6. In this there was more of pardoning mercy (the most glorious branch of divine mercy) than in that; for their captivity in Babylon had more in it of the punishment of sin than their bondage in Egypt; and therefore that which comforts Zion in her deliverance out of Babylon is this, that her iniquity is pardoned, Isa 40:2.

Note, God glorifies himself, and we must glorify him, in those mercies that have no miracles in them, as well as in those that have. And, though the favours of God to our fathers must not be forgotten, yet those to ourselves in our own day we must especially give thanks for.

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with a blessed reformation, and they shall return effectually cured of their inclination to idolatry, which will complete their deliverance and make it a mercy indeed. They had defiled their own land with their detestable things, Jer 16:18. But, when they have smarted for so doing, they shall come and humble themselves before God, Jer 16:19-21.

(1.) They shall be brought to acknowledge that their God only is God indeed, for he is a God in need--"My strength to support and comfort me, my fortress to protect and shelter me, and my refuge to whom I may flee in the day of affliction."

Note, Need drives many to God who had set themselves at a distance from him. Those that slighted him in the day of their prosperity will be glad to flee to him in the day of their affliction.

(2.) They shall be quickened to return to him by the conversion of the Gentiles: The Gentiles shall come to thee from the ends of the earth; and therefore shall not we come? Or, "The Jews, who had by their idolatries made themselves as Gentiles (so I rather understand it), shall come to thee by repentance and reformation, shall return to their duty and allegiance, even from the ends of the earth, from all the countries whither they were driven." The prophet comforts himself with the hope of this, and in a transport of joy returns to God the notice he had given him of it: "O Lord! my strength and my fortress, I am now easy, since thou hast given

me a prospect of multitudes that shall come to thee from the ends of the earth, both of Jewish converts and of Gentile proselytes." Note, Those that are brought to God themselves cannot but rejoice greatly to see others coming to him, coming back to him.

(3.) They shall acknowledge the folly of their ancestors, which it becomes them to do, when they were smarting for the sins of their ancestors: "Surely our fathers have inherited, not the satisfaction they promised themselves and their children, but lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. We are now sensible that our fathers were cheated in their idolatrous worship; it did not prove what it promised, and therefore what have we to do any more with it?" Note, It were well if the disappointment which some have met with in the service of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it to them, might prevail to deter others from treading in their steps.

(4.) They shall reason themselves out of their idolatry; and that reformation is likely to be sincere and durable which results from a rational conviction of the gross absurdity there is in sin. They shall argue thus with themselves (and it is well argued), Should a man be such a fool, so perfectly void of the reason of a man, as to make gods to himself, the creatures of his own fancy, the work of his own hands, when they are really no gods? Jer 16:20. Can a man be so besotted, so perfectly lost to human understanding, as to expect any divine blessing or favour from that which pretends to no divinity but what it first received from him?

(5.) They shall herein give honour to God, and make it to appear that they know both his hand in his providence and his name in his word, and that they are brought to know his name by what they are made to know of his hand, Jer 16:21. This once, now at length, they shall be made to know that which they would not be brought to know by all the pains the prophets took with them. Note, So stupid are we that nothing less than the mighty hand of divine grace, known experimentally, can make us know rightly the name of God as it is revealed to us.

4. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be a type and figure of this great salvation to be wrought out by the Messiah, who shall gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. And this is that which so far outshines the deliverance out of Egypt as even to eclipse the lustre of it, and make it even to be forgotten. To this some apply that of the many fishers and hunters, the preachers of the gospel, who were fishers of men, to enclose souls with the gospel net, to find them out in every mountain and hill, and secure them for Christ. Then the Gentiles came to God, some from the ends of the earth, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

17 For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

18 And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things.

19 O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and *things* wherein *there is* no profit.

20 Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they *are* no gods?

21 Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name *is* The Lord.

Jeremiah-17

Judah's Heart Engraved with Sin

1 The sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond: *it is* graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars;

The people had asked (Jer 16:10), What is our iniquity, and what is our sin? as if they could not be charged with any thing worth speaking of, for which God should enter into judgment with them; their challenge was answered there, but here we have a further reply to it, in which,

I The indictment is fully proved upon the prisoners, both the fact and the fault; their sin is too plain to be denied and too bad to be excused, and they have nothing to plead either in extenuation of the crime or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment.

1. They cannot plead, Not guilty, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience and their own conscience; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, Jer 17:1,2. They are written before God in the most legible and indelible characters, and sealed among his treasures, never to be forgotten, De 32:34. They are written there with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond; what is so written will not be worn out by time, but is, as Job speaks, graven in the rock for ever. Note, The sin of sinners is never forgotten till it is forgiven. It is ever before God, till by repentance it comes to be ever before us. It is graven upon the table of their heart; their own consciences witness against them, and are instead of a thousand witnesses. What is graven on the heart, though it may be covered and closed up for a time, yet, being graven, it cannot be erased, but will be produced in evidence when the books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to the tables of the heart, perhaps they will not own the convictions of their consciences. We need go no further, for proof of the charge, than the horns of their altars, on which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices was sprinkled, and perhaps the names of the idols to whose honour they were erected were inscribed. Their neighbours will witness against them, and all the creatures they have abused by using them in the service of their lusts. To complete the evidence, their own children shall be witnesses against them; they will tell truth when their fathers dissemble and prevaricate; they remember the altars and the groves to which their parents took them when they were little, Jer 17:2. It appears that they were full of them, and acquainted with them betimes, they talked of them so frequently, so familiarly, and with so much delight.

2. They cannot plead that they repent, or are brought to a better mind. No, as the guilt of their sin is undeniable, so their inclination to sin is invincible and incurable. In this sense many understand Jer 17:1,2. Their sin is deeply engraven as with a pen of iron in the tables of their hearts. They have a rooted affection

to it; it is woven into their very nature; their sin is dear to them, as that is dear to us of which we say, It is engraven on our hearts. The bias of their minds is still as strong as ever towards their idols, and they are not wrought upon either by the word or rod of God to forget them and abate their affection to them. It is written upon the horns of their altars, for they have given up their names to their idols and resolve to abide by what they have done; they have bound themselves, as with cords, to the horns of their altars. And Jer 17:2 may be read fully to this sense: As they remember their children, so remember they their altars and their groves; they are as fond of them and take as much pleasure in them as men do in their own children, and are as loth to part with them; they will live and die with their idols, and can no more forget them than a woman can forget her sucking child.

II The indictment being thus fully proved, the judgment is affirmed and the sentence ratified, Jer 17:3,4. Forasmuch as they are thus wedded to their sins, and will not part with them,

1. They shall be made to part with their treasures, and those shall be given into the hands of strangers. Jerusalem is God's mountain in the field; it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain. All the treasures of that wealthy city will God give to the spoil. Or, My mountains with the fields, thy wealth and all thy treasures will I expose to spoil; both the products of the country and the stores of the city shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are men stripped of that which they have served their idols with and have made the food and the fuel of their lusts. My mountain (so the whole land was, Ps 78:54,De 11:11) you have turned into your high places for sin, have worshipped your idols upon the high hills (Jer 17:2), and now they shall be give for a spoil in all your borders. What we make for a sin God will make for a spoil; for what comfort can we expect in that wherewith God is dishonoured?

2. They shall be made to part with their inheritance, and shall be carried captives into a strange land (Jer 17:4): Thou, even thyself (or thou thyself and those that are in thee, all the inhabitants), shall discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee. God owns that it was their heritage, and that he gave it to them; they had an

unquestionable title to it, which was an aggravation of their folly in throwing themselves out of the possession of it. It is through thyself (so some read it), through thy own default, that thou art disseised. Thou shalt discontinue, or intermit, the occupation of thy land. The law appointed them to let their land rest (it is the word here used) one year in seven, Ex 23:11. They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to let it rest (the land shall enjoy her sabbaths, Le 26:34); and yet it shall be not rest to them; they shall serve their enemies in a land they know not. Observe,

(1.) Sin works a discontinuance of our comforts and deprives us of the enjoyment of that which God has given us. Yet,

(2.) A discontinuance of the possession is not a defeasance of the right, but it is intimated that upon their repentance they shall recover possession again. For the present, you have kindled a fire in my anger, which burns so fiercely that it seems as if it would burn for ever; and so it will unless you repent, for it is the anger of an everlasting God fastening upon the immortal souls, and who knows the power of that anger?

2 whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the
green trees upon the high hills.
3 O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance *and* all thy
treasures to the spoil, *and* thy high places for sin, throughout all thy
borders.
4 And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I
gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land
which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger,
which shall burn for ever.
5 Thus saith the Lord ; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man,
and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the
Lord.

It is excellent doctrine that is preached in these verses, and of general concern and use to us all, and it does not appear to have any particular reference to the present state of Judah and Jerusalem. The prophet's sermons were not all prophetical, but some of them practical; yet this discourse, which probably we have here only the heads of, would be of singular use to them by

way of caution not to misplace their confidence in the day of their distress. Let us all learn what we are taught here,

I. Concerning the disappointment and vexation those will certainly meet with who depend upon creatures for success and relief when they are in trouble (Jer 17:5,6): Cursed be the man that trusts in man. God pronounces him cursed for the affront he thereby puts upon him. Or, Cursed (that is, miserable) is the man that does so, for he leans upon a broken reed, which will not only fail him, but will run into his hand and pierce it. Observe,

1 The sin here condemned; it is trusting in man, putting that confidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and faithfulness, of men, which should be placed in those attributes of God only, making our applications to men and raising our expectations from them as principal agents, whereas they are but instruments in the hand of Providence. It is making flesh the arm we stay upon, the arm we work with and with which we hope to work our point, the arm under which we shelter ourselves and on which we depend for protection. God is his people's arm, Isa 32:2. We must not think to make any creature to be that to us which God has undertaken to be. Man is called flesh, to show the folly of those that make him their confidence; he is flesh, weak and feeble as flesh without bones or sinews, that has no strength at all in it; he is inactive as flesh without spirit, which is a dead thing; he is mortal and dying as flesh, which soon putrefies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity; so his being flesh signifies, Ge 6:3. The great malignity there is in this sin; it is the departure of the evil heart of unbelief from the living God. Those that trust in man perhaps draw nigh to God with their mouth and honour him with their lips, they call him their hope and say that they trust in him, but really their heart departs from him; they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Cleaving to the cistern is leaving the fountain, and is resented accordingly.

2. The fatal consequences of this sin. He that puts a confidence in man puts a cheat upon himself; for (Jer 17:6) he shall be like the heath in the desert, a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, sapless, useless, and worthless; his comforts shall all fail

him and his hopes be blasted; he shall wither, be dejected in himself and trampled on by all about him. When good comes he shall not see it, he shall not share in it; when the times mend they shall not mend with him, but he shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness; his expectation shall be continually frustrated; when others have a harvest he shall have none. Those that trust to their own righteousness and strength, and think they can do well enough without the merit and grace of Christ, thus make flesh their arm, and their souls cannot prosper in graces or comforts; they can neither produce the fruits of acceptable services to God nor reap the fruits of saving blessings from him; they dwell in a dry land.

II. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which those have, and will have, who make God their confidence, who live by faith in his providence and promise, who refer themselves to him and his guidance at all times and repose themselves in him and his love in the most unquiet times, Jer 17:7,8. Observe,

1 The duty required of us--to trust in the Lord, to do our duty to him and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it--when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient both to fill up the place of those who fail us and to protect us from those who set upon us. It is to make the Lord our hope, his favour the good we hope for and his power the strength we hope in.

2 The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that does so shall be as a tree planted by the waters, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like the heath in the wilderness; he shall be like a tree that spreads out its roots, and thereby is firmly fixed, spreads them out by the rivers, whence it draws abundance of sap, which denotes both the establishment and the comfort which those have who make God their hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind. A tree thus planted, thus watered, shall not see when heat comes, shall not sustain any damage from the most scorching heats of summer; it

is so well moistened from its roots that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their hope,

(1.) They shall flourish in credit and comfort, like a tree that is always green, whose leaf does not wither; they shall be cheerful to themselves and beautiful in the eyes of others. Those who thus give honour to God by giving him credit God will put honour upon, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are.

(2.) They shall be fixed in an inward peace and satisfaction: They shall not be careful in a year of drought, when there is want of rain; for, as the tree has seed in itself, so it has its moisture. Those who make God their hope have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. We need not be solicitous about the breaking of a cistern as long as we have the fountain.

(3.) They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. Those who trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, shall not cease from yielding fruit; they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land and not inhabited.

7 Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the divine inspection it is always under, Jer 17:9,10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think that we trust in God, and are entitled to the blessings here promised to those who do so. But this is a thing about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing. We think that we

trust in God when really we do not, as appears by this, that our hopes and fears rise or fall according as second causes smile or frown.

1. It is true in general.

(1.) There is that wickedness in our hearts which we ourselves are not aware of and do not suspect to be there; nay, it is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than they really are. The heart, the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is deceitful above all things. It is subtle and false; it is apt to supplant (so the word properly signifies); it is that from which Jacob had his name, a supplanter. It calls evil good and good evil, puts false colours upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace does not belong. When men say in their hearts (that is, suffer their hearts to whisper to them) that there is no God, or he does not see, or he will not require, or they shall have peace though they go on; in these, and a thousand similar suggestions the heart is deceitful. It cheats men into their own ruin; and this will be the aggravation of it, that they are self-deceivers, self-destroyers.

Herein the heart is desperately wicked; it is deadly, it is desperate. The case is bad indeed, and in a manner deplorable and past relief, if the conscience which should rectify the errors of the other faculties is itself a mother of falsehood and a ring-leader in the delusion. What will become of a man if that in him which should be the candle of the Lord give a false light, if God's deputy in the soul, that is entrusted to support his interests, betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart that we may truly say, Who can know it? Who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, not what they will do in an hour of temptation (Hezekiah did not, Peter did not), not what corrupt dispositions there are in them, nor in how many things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependence upon them. But,

(2.) Whatever wickedness there is in the heart God sees it, and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it and apprised of it: I the Lord search the heart. This is true of all that is in the heart, all the thoughts of it, the quickest, and those that are most carelessly overlooked by ourselves--all the intents of it, the closest, and those that are most artfully disguised, and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God cannot. He not only searches the heart with a piercing eye, but he tries the reins, to pass a judgment upon what he discovers, to give every thing its true character and due weight. He tries it, as the gold is tried whether it be standard or no, as the prisoner is tried whether he be guilty or no.

And this judgment which he makes of the heart is in order to his passing judgment upon the man; it is to give to every man according to his ways (according to the desert and the tendency of them, life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that persisted in the paths of the destroyer) and according to the fruit of his doings, the effect and influence his doings have had upon others, or according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of men's doings, blessings to the obedient and curses to the disobedient. Note, Therefore God is Judge himself, and he alone, because he, and none besides, knows the hearts of the children of men.

2. It is true especially of all the deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, all its corrupt devices, desires, and designs. God observes and discerns them; and (which is more than any man can do) he judges of the overt act by the heart. Note, God knows more evil of us than we do of ourselves, which is a good reason why we should not flatter ourselves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God.

10 I the Lord search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

11 *As* the partridge sitteth *on eggs,* and hatcheth *them* not; *so* he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

Concerning the curse that attends wealth unjustly gotten. Fraud and violence had been reigning crying sins in Judah and Jerusalem; now the prophet would have those who had been

guilty of these sins, and were now stripped of all they had, to read their sin in their punishment (Jer 17:11): He that gets riches and not by right, though he may make them his hope, shall never have joy of them. Observe, It is possible that those who use unlawful means to get wealth may succeed therein and prosper for a time; and it is a temptation to many to defraud and oppress their neighbours when there is money to be got by it. He who has got treasures by vanity and a lying tongue may hug himself in his success, and say, I am rich; nay, and I am innocent too (Ho 12:8), but he shall leave them in the midst of his days; they shall be taken from him, or he from them; God shall cut him off with some surprising stroke then when he says, Soul, take thy ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years, Lu 12:19,20. He shall leave them to he knows not whom, and shall not be able to take any of his riches away with him. It intimates what a great vexation it is to a worldly man at death that he must leave his riches behind him; and justly may it be a terror to those who got them unjustly, for, though the wealth will not follow them to another world, the guilt will, and the torment of an everlasting, Son, remember, Lu 16:25.

Thus, at his end, he shall be a fool, a Nabal, whose wealth did him no good, which he had so sordidly hoarded, when his heart became dead as a stone. He was a fool all along; sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but at his end he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed who are fools in their latter end; and such multitudes will prove who were applauded as wise men, that did well for themselves, Ps 49:13,18. Those that get grace will be wise in the latter end, will have the comfort of it in death and the benefit of it to eternity (Pr 19:20); but those that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and, right or wrong, will be rich, will rue the folly of it when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like the partridge that sits on eggs and hatches them not, but they are broken (as Job 39:15), or stolen (as Isa 10:14), or they become addle: some sort of fowl there was, well known among the Jews, whose case this commonly was. The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and sits brooding upon it, but never has any comfort nor satisfaction in it; his projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry and come to nothing. Let us therefore be

wise in time--what we get to get it honestly, and what we have to use it charitably, that we may lay up in store a good foundation and be wise for eternity.

12 A glorious high throne from the beginning *is* the place of our sanctuary.

Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and alone with God. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work must be much so. In his converse here with God and his own heart he takes the liberty which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence.

I. He acknowledges the great favour of God to his people in setting up a revealed religion among them, and dignifying them with divine institutions (Jer 17:12): A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. The temple at Jerusalem, where God manifested his special presence, where the lively oracles were lodged, where the people paid their homage to their Sovereign, and whither they fled for refuge in distress, was the place of their sanctuary. That was a glorious high throne. It was a throne of holiness, which made it truly glorious; it was God's throne, which made it truly high. Jerusalem is called the city of the great King, not only Israel's King, but the King of the whole earth, so that it might justly be deemed the metropolis, or royal city, of the world.

It was from the beginning, so, from the first projecting of it by David and building of it by Solomon, 2Ch 2:9. It was the honour of Israel that God set up such a glorious throne among them. As the glorious and high throne (that is, heaven) is the place of our sanctuary; so some read it. Note, All good men have a high value and veneration for the ordinances of God, and reckon the place of the sanctuary a glorious high throne. Jeremiah here mentions this either as a plea with God for mercy to their land, in honour of the throne of his glory (Jer 14:21), or as an aggravation of the sin of his people in forsaking God though his throne was among them, and so profaning his crown and the place of his sanctuary.

II. He acknowledges the righteousness of God in abandoning those to ruin that forsook him and revolted from their allegiance to him, Jer 17:13. He speaks it to God, as subscribing both to the certainty and to the equity of it: O Lord! the hope of those in Israel that adhere to thee, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed. They must of necessity be so, for they forsake thee for lying vanities, which will deceive them and make them ashamed. They will be ashamed, for they shame themselves. They will justly be put to shame, for they have forsaken him who alone can keep them in countenance when troubles come. Let them be ashamed (so some read it); and so it is a pious imprecation of the wrath of God upon them, or a petition for his grace, to make them penitently ashamed. "Those that depart from me, from the word of God which I have preached, do in effect depart from God;" as those that return to God are said to return to the prophet, Jer 15:19. Those that depart from thee (so some read it) shall be written in the earth. They shall soon be blotted out, as that is which is written in the dust. They shall be trampled upon and exposed to contempt. They belong to the earth, and shall be numbered among earthly people, who lay up their treasure on earth and whose names are not written in heaven.

And they deserve to be thus written with the fools in Israel, that their folly may be made manifest unto all, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters (that is, spring waters), and that for broken cisterns. Note, God is to all that are his a fountain of living waters. There is a fulness of comfort in him, an over-flowing ever-flowing fulness, like that of a fountain; it is always fresh, and clear, and clean, like spring water, while the pleasures of sin are puddle-waters. They are free to it; it is not a fountain sealed. They deserve therefore to be condemned, as Adam, to red earth, to which by the corruption of their nature they are allied, because they have forsaken the garden of the Lord, which is so well-watered. Those that depart from God are written in the earth.

13 O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed,
and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because
they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.

14 Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise.

He prays to God for healing saving mercy for himself. "If the case of those that depart from God be so miserable, let me always draw nigh to him (Ps 73:27,28), and, in order to do that, Lord, heal me, and save me, Jer 17:14. Heal my backslidings, my bent to backslide, and save me from being carried away by the strength of the stream to forsake thee." He was wounded in spirit with grief upon many accounts. "Lord, heal me with thy comforts, and make me easy." He was continually exposed to the malice of unreasonable men. "Lord, save me from them, and let me not fall into their wicked hands. Heal me, that is, sanctify me by thy grace; save me, that is, bring me to thy glory." All that shall be saved hereafter are sanctified now; unless the disease of sin be purged out the soul cannot live. To enforce this petition he pleads,

1 The firm belief he had of God's power: Heal thou me, and then I shall be healed; the cure will certainly be wrought if thou undertake it; it will be a thorough cure and not a palliative one. Those that come to God to be healed ought to be abundantly satisfied in the all-sufficiency of their physician. Save me, and then I shall certainly be saved, be my dangers and enemies ever so threatening. If God hold us up, we shall live; if he protect us, we shall be safe.

2 The sincere regard he had to God's glory: "For thou art my praise, and for that reason I desire to be healed and saved, that I may live and praise thee, Ps 119:175. Thou art he whom I praise, and the praise due to thee I never gave to another. Thou art he whom I glory in, and boast of, for on thee do I depend. Thou art he that furnishes me with continual matter for praise, and I have given thee the praise of the favours already bestowed upon me. Thou shalt be my praise" (so some read it); "heal me, and save me, and thou shalt have the glory of it. My praise shall be continually of thee," Ps 71:6,79:13.

IV. He complains of the infidelity and daring impiety of the people to whom he preached. It greatly troubled him, and he shows before God this trouble, as the servant that had slights

put upon him by the guests he was sent to invite came and showed his Lord these things. He had faithfully delivered God's message to them; and what answer has he to return to him that sent him? Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now, Jer 17:15,Isa 5:19. They bantered the prophet, and made a jest of that which he delivered with the greatest seriousness.

1. They denied the truth of what he said: "If that be the word of the Lord which thou speakest to us, where is it? Why is it not fulfilled?" Thus the patience of God was impudently abused as a ground to question his veracity.

2. They defied the terror of what he said. "Let God Almighty do his worst; let all he has said come to pass; we shall do well enough; the lion is not so fierce as he is painted," Am 5:18. "Lord, to what purpose is it to speak to men that will neither believe nor fear?"

15 Behold, they say unto me, Where *is* the word of the Lord? let it
come now.

16 As for me, I have not hastened from *being* a pastor to follow thee:
neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which
came out of my lips was *right* before thee.

He appeals to God concerning his faithful discharge of the duty to which he was called, Jer 17:16. The people did all they could to make him weary of his work, to exasperate him and make him uneasy, and to tempt him to prevaricate and alter his message for fear of displeasing them; but, "Lord," says he, "thou knowest I have not yielded to them."

1. He continued constant to his work. His office, instead of being his credit and protection, exposed him to reproach, contempt, and injury. "Yet," says he, "I have not hastened from being a pastor after thee; I have not left my work, nor sued for a discharge or a quietus." Prophets were pastors to the people, to feed them with the good word of God; but they were to be pastors after God, and all ministers must be so, according to his heart (Jer 3:15), to follow him and the directions and instructions he gives. Such a pastor Jeremiah was; and, though he met with as much difficulty and discouragement as ever any man did, yet he did not fly off as

Jonah did, nor desire to be excused from going any more on God's errands. Note, Those that are employed for God, though their success answer nor their expectations, must not therefore throw up their commission. but continue to follow God, though the storm be in their faces.

2. He kept up his affection to the people. Though they were very abusive to him, he was compassionate to them: I have not desired the woeful day. The day of the accomplishment of his prophecies would be a woeful day indeed to Jerusalem, and therefore he deprecated it, and wished it might never come, though, as to himself, it would be the avenging of him upon his persecutors and the proving of him a true prophet (which they had questioned, Jer 17:15), and upon those accounts he might be tempted to desire it. Note, God does not, and therefore ministers must not, desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn and live. Though we warn of the woeful day, we must not wish for it, but rather weep because of it, as Jeremiah did.

3. He kept closely to his instructions. Though he might have curried favour with the people, or at least have avoided their displeasure, if he had not been so sharp in his reproofs and severe in his threatenings, yet he would deliver his message faithfully; and that he had done so was a comfort to him. "Lord, thou knowest that that which came out of my lips was right before thee; it exactly agreed with what I received from thee, and therefore thou art reflected upon in their quarrelling with me." Note, If what we say and do be right before God, we may easily despise the reproaches and censures of men. It is a small thing to be judged of their judgment.

17 Be not a terror unto me: thou *art* my hope in the day of evil.

18 Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

He humbly begs of God that he would own him, and protect him, and carry him on cheerfully in that work to which God had so plainly called him and to which he had so sincerely devoted himself. Two things he here desires:--

1. That he might have comfort in serving the God that sent him (Jer 17:17): Be not thou a terror to me. Surely more is implied than is expressed. "Be thou a comfort to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart and encourage me, when my enemies do all they can to terrify me and either to drive me from my work or to make me drive on heavily in it." Note, The best have that in them which might justly make God a terror to them, as he was for some time to Job (Job 6:4), to Asaph (Ps 77:3), to Heman, Ps 88:15. And this is that which good men, knowing the terrors of the Lord, dread and deprecate more than any thing; nay, whatever frightful accidents may befal them, or how formidable soever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough so long as God is not a terror to them. He pleads, "Thou art my hope; and then nothing else is my fear, no, not in the day of evil, when it is most threatening, most pressing. My dependence is upon thee; and therefore be not a terror to me." Note, Those that by faith make God their confidence shall have him for their comfort in the worst of times, if it be not their own fault: if we make him our trust, we shall not find him our terror.

2. That he might have courage in dealing with the people to whom he was sent, Jer 17:18. Those persecuted him who should have entertained and encouraged him. "Lord," says he, "let them be confounded (let them be overpowered by the convictions of the word and made ashamed of their obstinacy, or else let the judgments threatened be at length executed upon them), but let not me confounded, let not me be terrified by their menaces, so as to betray my trust." Note, God's ministers have work to do which they need not be either ashamed or afraid to go on in, but they do need to be helped by the divine grace to go on in it without shame or fear. Jeremiah had not desired the woeful day upon his country in general; but as to his persecutors, in a just and holy indignation at their malice, he prays, Bring upon them the day of evil, in hope that the bringing of it upon them might prevent the bringing of it upon the country; if they were taken away, the people would be better; "therefore destroy them with a double destruction; let them be utterly destroyed, root and branch, and let the prospect of that destruction be their present confusion." This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be avenged, nor so much that he might be

eased, but that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executes.

The Sabbath Must Be Hallowed

19 Thus said the Lord unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

These verses are a sermon concerning sabbath-sanctification. It is a word which the prophet received from the Lord, and was ordered to deliver in the most solemn and public manner to the people; for they were sent not only to reprove sin, and to press obedience, in general, but they must descend to particulars. This message concerning the sabbath was probably sent in the days of Josiah, for the furtherance of that work of reformation which he set on foot; for the promises here (Jer 17:25,26) are such as I think we scarcely find when things come nearer to the extremity. This message must be proclaimed in all the places of concourse, and therefore inthe gates, not only because through them people were continually passing and repassing, but because in them they kept their courts and laid up their stores. It must be proclaimed (as the king or queen is usually proclaimed) at the court-gate first, the gate by which the kings of Judah come in and go out, Jer 17:19. Let them be told their duty first, particularly this duty; for, if sabbaths be not sanctified as they should be, the rulers of Judah are to be contended with (so they were, Ne 13:17), for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He must also preach it in all the gates of Jerusalem. It is a matter of great and general concern; therefore let all take notice of it. Let the kings of Judah hear the word of the Lord (for, high as they are, he is above them), and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for, mean as they are, he takes notice of them, and of what they say and do on sabbath days. Observe,

I. How the sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, Jer 17:21,22.

1. They must rest from their worldly employment on the sabbath day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burden into the city nor out of it, into their houses nor out of them; husbandmen's

burdens of corn must not be carried in, nor manure carried out; nor must tradesmen's burdens of wares or merchandises be imported or exported. There must not a loaded horse, or cart, or wagon, be seen on the sabbath day either in the streets or in the roads; the porters must not ply on that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provisions or fuel. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labour, unless in case of necessity.

2. They must apply themselves to that which is the proper work and business of the day: "Hallow you the sabbath, that is, consecrate it to the honour of God and spend it in his service and worship." It is in order to this that worldly business must be laid aside, that we may be entire for, and intent upon, that work, which requires and deserves the whole man.

3. They must herein be very circumspect: "Take heed to yourselves, watch against every thing that borders upon the profanation of the sabbath." Where God is jealous we must be cautious. "Take heed to yourselves, for it is at your peril if you rob God of that part of your time which he has reserved to himself." Take heed to your souls (so the word is); in order to the right sanctifying of sabbaths, we must look well to the frame of our spirits and have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward man. Let not the soul be burdened with the cares of this world on sabbath days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day. And,

4. He refers them to the law, the statute in this case made and provided: "This is no new imposition upon you, but is what I commanded your fathers; it is an ancient law; it was an article of the original contract; nay, it was a command to the patriarchs."

II. How the sabbath had been profaned (Jer 17:23): "Your fathers were required to keep holy the sabbath day, but they obeyed not; they hardened their necks against this as well as other commands that were given them." This is mentioned to show that there needed a reformation in this matter, and that God had a just controversy with them for the long transgression of this law which they had been guilty of. They hardened their necks against this command, that they might not hear and receive instruction

concerning other commands. Where sabbaths are neglected all religion sensibly goes to decay.

20 and say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of
Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that
enter in by these gates:
21 thus saith the Lord; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden
on the sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem;
22 neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day,
neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I
commanded your fathers.
23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their
neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.
24 And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the
Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the
sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;
25 then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes
sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses,
they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

What blessings God had in store for them if they would make conscience of sabbath-sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the sabbath they should not only not smart for it, but their city and nation should recover its ancient glory, if they would keep sabbaths better, Jer 17:24-26. Let them take care to hallow the sabbath and do no work therein; and then,

1 The court shall flourish. Kings in succession, or the many branches of the royal family at the same time, all as great as kings, with the other princes that sit upon the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David (Ps 122:5), shall ride in great pomp through the gates of Jerusalem, some in chariots and some on horses, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note, The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom; and the support of religion would contribute greatly to both.

2 The city shall flourish. Let there be a face of religion kept up in Jerusalem, by sabbath-sanctification, that it may answer to its

title, the holy city, and then it shall remain for ever, shall for ever be inhabited (so the word may be rendered); it shall not be destroyed and dispeopled, as it is threatened to be. Whatever supports religion tends to establish the civil interests of a land.

3. The country shall flourish: The cities of Judah and the land of Benjamin shall be replenished with vast numbers of inhabitants, and those abounding in plenty and living in peace, which will appear by the multitude and value of their offerings, which they shall present to God. By this the flourishing of a country may be judged of, What does it do for the honour of God? Those that starve their religion either are poor or are in a fair way to be so.

4. The church shall flourish: Meat-offerings, and incense, and sacrifices of praise, shall be brought to the house of the Lord, for the maintenance of the service of that house and the servants that attend it. God's institutions shall be conscientiously observed; no sacrifice nor incense shall be offered to idols, nor alienated from God, but every thing shall go in the right channel. They shall have both occasion and hearts to bring sacrifices of praise to God. This is made an instance of their prosperity. Then a people truly flourish when religion flourishes among them. And this is the effect of sabbath-sanctification; when that branch of religion is kept up other instances of it are kept up likewise; but, when that is lost, devotion is lost either in superstition or in profaneness. It is a true observation, which some have made, that the streams of all religion run either deep or shallow according as the banks of the sabbath are kept up or neglected.

26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord.

27 But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

What judgments they must expect would come upon them if they persisted in the profanation of the sabbath (Jer 17:27): "If you

will not hearken to me in this matter, to keep the gates shut on sabbath days, so that there may be no unnecessary entering in, or going out, on that day--if you will break through the enclosure of the divine law, and lay that day in common with other days--know that God will kindle a fire in the gates of your city," intimating that it shall be kindled by an enemy besieging the city and assaulting the gates, who shall take this course to force an entrance. Justly shall those gates be fired that are not used as they ought to be to shut out sin and to keep people in to an attendance on their duty. This fire shall devour even the palaces of Jerusalem, where the princes and nobles dwelt, who did not use their power and interest as they ought to have done to keep up the honour of God's sabbaths; but it shall not be quenched until it has laid the whole city in ruins. This was fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans, Jer 52:13. The profanation of the sabbath is a sin for which God has often contended with a people by fire.

Jeremiah-18

The Lesson from the Potter Working the Clay

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,
2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.
3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.

The prophet is here sent to the potter's house (he knew where to find it), not to preach a sermon as before to the gates of Jerusalem, but to prepare a sermon, or rather to receive it ready prepared. Those needed not to study their sermons that had them, as he had this, by immediate inspiration. "Go to the potter's house, and observe how he manages his work, and there I will cause thee, by silent whispers, to hear my words. There thou shalt receive a message, to be delivered to the people."

Note, Those that would know God's mind must observe his appointments, and attend where they may hear his words. The prophet was never disobedient to the heavenly vision, and

therefore went to the potter's house (Jer 18:3) and took notice how he wrought his work upon the wheels, just as he pleased, with a great deal of ease, and in a little time.

And (Jer 18:4) when a lump of clay that he designed to form into one shape either proved too stiff, or had a stone in it, or some way or other came to be marred in his hand, he presently turned it into another shape; if it will not serve for a vessel of honour, it will serve for a vessel of dishonour, just as seems good to the potter. It is probable that Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work, and how easily he threw it into what form he pleased; but he must go and observe it now, that, having the idea of it fresh in his mind, he might the more readily and distinctly apprehend that truth which God designed thereby to represent to him, and might the more intelligently explain it to the people. God used similitudes by his servants the prophets (Ho 12:10), and it was requisite that they should themselves understand the similitudes they used. Ministers will make a good use of their converse with the business and affairs of this life if they learn thereby to speak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expound scripture comparisons. For they ought to make all their knowledge some way or other serviceable to their profession.

Now let us see what the message is which Jeremiah receives, and is entrusted with the delivery of, at the potter's house. While he looks carefully upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind these two great truths, which he must preach to the house of Israel:--

I. That God has both an incontestable authority and an irresistible ability to form and fashion kingdoms and nations as he pleases, so as to serve his own purposes: "Cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord? Jer 18:6. Have not I as absolute a power over you in respect both of might and of right?" Nay, God has a clearer title to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay; for the potter only gives it its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. As the clay is in the potter's hand to be moulded and shaped as he pleases, so are you in my hand. This intimates,

1. That God has an incontestable sovereignty over us, is not debtor to us, may dispose of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us, and that it would be as absurd for us to dispute this as for the clay to quarrel with the potter.

2. That it is a very easy thing with God to make what use he pleases of us and what changes he pleases with us, and that we cannot resist him. One turn of the hand, one turn of the wheel, quite alters the shape of the clay, makes it a vessel, unmakes it, new-makes it. Thus are our times in God's hand, and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to strive with him. It is spoken here of nations; the most politic, the most potent, are what God is pleased to make them, and no other. See this explained by Job (Job 12:23), He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them again. See Ps 107:33, &c., and compare Job 34:29. All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket, soon wiped away, or the small dust of the balance, soon blown away (Isa 40:15), and therefore, no doubt, as easily managed as the clay by the potter.

3. That God will not be a loser by any in his glory, at long run, but, if he be not glorified by them, he will be glorified upon them. If the potter's vessel be marred for one use, it shall serve for another; those that will not be monuments of mercy shall be monuments of justice. The Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil, Pr 16:4. God formed us out of the clay (Job 33:6), nay, and we are still as clay in his hands (Isa 64:8); and has not he the same power over us that the potter has over the clay? (Ro 9:21), and are not we bound to submit, as the clay to the potter's wisdom and will? Isa 29:15,16,45:9.

II. That, in the exercise of this authority and ability, he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodness. He dispenses favours indeed in a way of sovereignty, but never punishes by arbitrary power. High is his right hand, yet he rules not with a high hand, but, as it follows there, Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, Ps 89:13,14. God asserts his despotic power, and

tells us what he might do, but at the same time assures us that he will act as a righteous and merciful Judge.

1. When God is coming against us in ways of judgment we may be sure that it is for our sins, which shall appear by this, that national repentance will stop the progress of the judgments (Jer 18:7,8): If God speak concerning a nation to pluck up its fences that secure it, and so lay it open, its fruit-trees that adorn and enrich it, and so leave it desolate--to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in, its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a necessity of going out, and so destroy it as either a vineyard or a city is destroyed--in this case, if that nation take the alarm, repent of their sins and reform their lives, turn every one from his evil way and return to God, God will graciously accept them, will not proceed in his controversy, will return in mercy to them, and, though he cannot change his mind, he will change his way, so that it may be said, He repents him of the evil he said he would do to them. Thus often in the time of the Judges, when the oppressed people were penitent people, still God raised them up saviours; and, when they turned to God, their affairs immediately took a new turn. It was Nineveh's case, and we wish it had oftener been Jerusalem's; see 2Ch 7:14. It is an undoubted truth that a sincere conversion from the evil of sin will be an effectual prevention of the evil of punishment; and God can as easily raise up a penitent people from their ruins as the potter can make anew the vessel of clay when it was marred in his hand.

2. When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any stop be given to the progress of that mercy, it is nothing but sin that gives it (Jer 18:9,10): If God speak concerning a nation to build and to plant it, to advance and establish all the true interests of it, it is his husbandly and his building (1Co 3:9), and, if he speak in favour of it, it is done, it is increased, it is enriched, it is enlarged, its trade flourishes, its government is settled in good hands, and all its affairs prosper and its enterprises succeed.

But if this nation, which God is thus loading with benefits, do evil in his sight and obey not his voice,--if it lose its virtue, and become debauched and profane,--if religion grow into contempt,

and vice to get to be fashionable, and so be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of serious godliness among them,--then God will turn his hand against them, will pluck up what he was planting, and pull down what he was building (Jer 45:4); the good work that was in the doing shall stand still and be let fall, and what favours were further designed shall be withheld; and this is called his repenting of the good wherewith he said he would benefit them, as he changed his purpose concerning Eli's house (1Sa 2:30) and hurried Israel back into the wilderness when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker between God and a people; it forfeits the benefit of his promises and spoils the success of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them (Ho 7:1) and baffles their pleasing expectations from him. It ruins their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into straits, and retards their deliverances, Isa 59:1,2.

4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*.

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.

7 *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it;*

8 if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it;*

10 if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

11 Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.

These verses seem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter to the nation of the Jews and their present state.

I. God was now speaking concerning them to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy; for it is that part of the rule of judgment that their case agrees with (Jer 18:11): "Go, and tell them" (saith God), "Behold I frame evil against you and devise against you. Providence in all its operations is plainly working towards your ruin. Look upon your conduct towards God, and you cannot but see that you deserve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but see that he designs it." He frames evil, as the potter frames the vessel, so as to answer the end.

II. He invites them by repentance and reformation to meet him in the way of his judgments and so to prevent his further proceedings against them: "Return you now every one from his evil ways, that so (according to the rule before laid down) God may turn from the evil he had purported to do unto you, and that providence which seemed to be framed like a vessel on the wheel against you shall immediately be thrown into a new shape, and the issue shall be in favour of you." Note, The warnings of God's word, and the threatenings of his providence, should be improved by us as strong inducements to us to reform our lives, in which it is not enough to turn from our evil ways, but we must make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law.

III. He foresees their obstinacy, and their perverse refusal to comply with this invitation, though it tended so much to their own benefit (Jer 18:12): They said, "There is no hope. If we must not be delivered unless we return from our evil ways, we may even despair of ever being delivered, for we are resolved that we will walk after our own devices. It is to no purpose for the prophets to say any more to us, to use any more arguments, or to press the matter any further; we will have our way, whatever it cost us; we will do every one the imagination of his own evil heart, and will not be under the restraint of the divine law."

Note, That which ruins sinners is affecting to live as they list. They call it liberty to live at large; whereas for a man to be a slave to his lusts is the worst of slaveries. See how strangely some men's hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin that they will not so much as promise amendment; nay, they set the

judgments of God at defiance: "We will go on with our own devices, and let God go on with his; and we will venture the issue."

IV. He upbraids them with the monstrous folly of their obstinacy, and their hating to be reformed. Surely never were people guilty of such an absurdity, never any that pretended to reason acted so unreasonably (Jer 18:13): Ask you among the heathen, even those that had not the benefit of divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jerusalem had, yet, even among them, who hath heart such a thing? The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways. Some of the worst of men, when they are told of their faults, especially when they begin to smart for them, will at least promise reformation and say that they will endeavour to mend. But the virgin of Israel bids defiance to repentance, is resolved to go on frowardly, whatever conscience and Providence say to the contrary, and thus has done a horrible thing. She should have preserved herself pure and chaste for God, who had espoused her to himself; but she has alienated herself from him, and refuses to return to him.

Note, It is a horrible thing, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that those who have made their condition sad by sinning should make it desperate by refusing to reform. Wilful impenitence is the grossest self-murder; and that is a horrible thing, which we should abhor the thought of.

12 And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own
devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord; Ask ye now among the heathen,
who hath heard such things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very
horrible thing.
14 Will *a man* leave the snow of Lebanon *which cometh* from the rock of
the field? *or* shall the cold flowing waters that come from another
place be forsaken?
15 Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to
vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from* the
ancient paths, to walk in paths, *in* a way not cast up;

He shows their folly in two things:--

1. In the nature of the sin itself that they were guilty of. They forsook God for idols, which was the most horrible thing that could be, for they put a most dangerous cheat upon themselves (Jer 18:14,15): Will a thirsty traveller leave the snow, which, being melted, runs down from the mountains of Lebanon, and, passing over the rock of the field, flows in clear, clean, crystal streams? Will he leave these, pass these by, and think to better himself with some dirty puddle-water? Or shall the cold flowing waters that come from any other place be forsaken in the heat of summer? No; when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling refreshing streams, they will make use of them, and not turn their backs upon them.

The margin reads it, "Will a man that is travelling the road leave my fields, which are plain and level, for a rock, which is rough and hard, or for the snow of Lebanon, which, lying in great drifts, makes the road impassable? Or shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold waters? No; in these things men know when they are well off, and will keep so; they will not leave a certainty for an uncertainty. But my people have forgotten me (Jer 18:15), have quitted a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. They have burnt incense to idols, that are as vain as vanity itself, that are not what they pretend to be nor can perform what is expected from them." They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders caused them to err, and they were content to be misled.

(1.) They left the ancient paths, which were appointed by the divine law, which had been walked in by all the saints, which were therefore the right way to their journey's end, a safe way, and, being well-tracked, were both easy to hit and easy to walk in. But, when they were advised to keep to the good old way, they positively said that they would not, Jer 6:16.

(2.) They chose by-paths; they walked in a way not cast up, not in the highway, the King's highway, in which they might travel safely, and which would certainly lead them to their right end, but in a dirty way, a rough way, a way in which they could not but stumble; such was the way of idolatry (such is the way of all

iniquity--it is a false way, it is a way full of stumbling-blocks) and yet this way they chose to walk in and lead others in.

2. In the mischievous consequences of it. Though the thing itself were bad, they might have had some excuse for it if they could have promised themselves any good out of it. But the direct tendency of it was to make their land desolate, and, consequently, themselves miserable (for so the inhabitants must needs be if their country be laid waste), and both themselves and their land a perpetual hissing. Those deserve to be hissed that have fair warning given them and will not take it. Every one that passes by their land shall make his remarks upon it, and shall be astonished, and way his head, some wondering, others commiserating, others triumphing in the desolations of a country that had been the glory of all lands. They shall wag their heads in derision, upbraiding them with their folly in forsaking God and their duty, and so pulling this misery upon their own heads.

Note, Those that revolt from God will justly be made the scorn of all about them, and, having reproached the Lord, will themselves be a reproach. Their land being made desolate, in pursuance of their destruction, it is threatened (Jer 18:17), I will scatter them as with an east wind, which is fierce and violent; by it they shall be hurried to and fro before the enemy, and find no way open to escape. They shall not only flee before the enemy (that they might do and yet make an orderly retreat), but they shall be scattered, some one way and some another. That which completes their misery is, I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

Our calamities may be easily borne if God look towards us, and smile upon us, when we are under them, if he countenance us and show us favour; but if he turn the back upon us, if he show himself displeased, if he be deaf to our prayers and refuse us his help, if he forsake us, leave us to ourselves, and stand at a distance from us, we are quite undone. If he hide his face, who then can behold him? Job 34:29. Herein God would deal with them as they had dealt with him (Jer 2:27), They have turned their back unto me, and not their face. It is a righteous thing with God to show himself strange to those in the day of their trouble

who have shown themselves rude and undutiful to him in their prosperity. This will have its full accomplishment in that day when God will say to those who, though they have been professors of piety, were yet workers of iniquity, Depart from me, I know you not, nay, I never knew you.

16 to make their land desolate, *and* a perpetual hissing; every one that
passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.
17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will
show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

The People's Plots and Jeremiah's Prayer

The prophet here, as sometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for instruction to us.

See here what are the common methods of the persecutors. We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies, Jer 18:18.

1. They laid their heads together to consult what they should do against him, both to be revenged on him for what he had said and to stop his mouth for the future: They said, Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. The enemies of God's people and ministers have been often very crafty themselves, and confederate with one another, to do them mischief. What they cannot act to the prejudice of religion separately they will try to do in concert. The wicked plots against the just. Caiaphas, and the chief priests and elders, did so against our blessed Saviour himself. The opposition which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven is carried on with a great deal of cursed policy. God had said (Jer 18:11), I devise a device against you; and now, as if they resolved to be quits with him and to outwit Infinite Wisdom itself, they resolve to devise devices against God's prophet, not only against his person, but against the word he delivered to them, which they thought by their subtle management to defeat. O the prodigious madness of those that hope to disannul God's counsel!

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the church, which, they suggested, was in danger if Jeremiah was tolerated to preach

as he did: "Come," say they, "let us silence and crush him, for the law shall not perish from the priest; the law of truth is in their mouths (Mal 2:6) and there we will seek it; the administration of ordinances according to the law is in their hands, and neither the one nor the other shall be wrested from them. Counsel shall not perish from the wise; the administration of public affairs shall always be lodged with the privy-counsellors and ministers of state, to whom it belongs; nor shall the word perish from the prophets" --they mean those of their own choosing, who prophesied to them smooth things, and flattered them with visions of peace. Two things they insinuated:--

(1.) That Jeremiah could not be himself a true prophet, but was a pretender and a usurper, because he neither was commissioned by the priests, nor concurred with the other prophets, whose authority therefore will be despised if he be suffered to go on. "If Jeremiah be regarded as an oracle, farewell the reputation of our priests, our wise men, and prophets; but that must be supported, which is reason enough why he must be suppressed."

(2.) That the matter of his prophecies could not be from God, because it reflected sometimes upon the prophets and priests; he had charged them with being the ringleaders of all the mischief (Jer 5:31) and deceiving the people (Jer 14:14); he had foretold that their heart should perish, and be astonished (Jer 4:9), that the wise men should be dismayed (Jer 8:9,10), that the priests and prophets should be intoxicated, Jer 13:13. Now this galled them more than any thing else. Presuming upon the promise of God's presence with their priests and prophets, they could not believe that he would ever leave them. The guides of the church must needs be infallible, and therefore he who foretold their being infatuated must be condemned as a false prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the church, have its best friends been run down.

3. They agreed to do all they could to blast his reputation: "Come, let us smite him with the tongue, put him into an ill name, fasten a bad character upon him, represent him to some as despicable and fit to be prosecuted, to all as odious and not fit to be tolerated." This was their device, fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit--to throw the vilest calumnies at him, in hopes that

some would adhere to him. to dress him up in bearskins, otherwise they could not bait him. Those who projected this, it is likely, were men of figure, whose tongue was no small slander, whose representations, though ever so false, would be credited both by princes and people, to make him obnoxious to the justice of the one and the fury of the other. The scourge of such tongues will give not only smart lashes, but deep wounds; it is a great mercy therefore to be hidden from it, Job 5:21.

4. To set others an example, they resolved that they would not themselves regard any thing he said, though it appeared ever so weighty and ever so well confirmed as a message from God: Let us not give heed to any of his words; for, right or wrong, they will look upon them to be his words, and not the words of God. What good can be done with those who hear the word of God with a resolution not to heed it or believe it? Nay,

5. That they may effectually silence him, they resolve to be the death of him (Jer 18:23): All their counsel against me is to slay me. They hunt for the precious life; and a precious life indeed it was that they hunted for. Long was this Jerusalem's wretched character, Thou that killedst many of the prophets, and wouldst have killed them all.

18 Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for
the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise,
nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the
tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.
19 Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that
contend with me.
20 Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for
my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them,
and to turn away thy wrath from them.

See here what is the common relief of the persecuted. This we may see in the course that Jeremiah took when he met with this hard usage. He immediately applied to his God by prayer, and so gave himself ease.

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's cognizance, Jer 18:19. They would not regard a word he said, would not admit his complaints, nor take any notice of his grievances; but, Lord (says he), do thou give heed to me. It is matter of comfort to faithful ministers that, if men will not give heed to their praying. He appeals to God as an impartial Judge, that will hear both sides, as every judge ought to do. "Do not only give heed to me, but hearken to the voice of those that contend with me; hear what they have to say against me and for themselves, and then make it to appear that thou sittest in the throne, judging right. Hear the voice of my contenders, how noisy and clamorous they are, how false and malicious all they say is, and let them be judged out of their own mouth; cause their own tongues to fall upon them."

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him (Jer 18:20): "Shall evil be recompensed for good, and shall it go unpunished? Wilt not thou recompense me good for that evil?" 2Sa 16:12. To render good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, good for evil is Christian, but evil for good is devilish; it is so very absurd and wicked a thing that we cannot think but God will avenge it. See how great the evil was that they did against him: They have dug a pit for my soul; they aimed to take away his life (no less would satisfy them), and that not in a generous way, by an open assault, against which he might have an opportunity of defending himself, but in a base, cowardly, clandestine way: they dug pits for him, which there was no fence against, Ps 119:85. But see how great the good was which he had done for them: Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them; he had been an intercessor with God for them, had used his interest in heaven on their behalf, which was the greatest kindness they could expect from one of his character. He is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, Ge 20:7. Moses often did this for Israel, and yet they quarrelled with him, and sometimes spoke of stoning him. He did them this kindness when they were in imminent danger of destruction and most needed it. They had themselves provoked God's wrath against them, and it was ready to break in upon them, but he stood in the gap (as Moses, Ps 106:23) and turned away that wrath. Now,

(1.) This was very base in them. Call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse. But it was not strange that those who had forgotten their God did not know their best friends.

(2.) It was very grievous to him, as the like was to David. Ps 35:13,109:4, For my love they are my adversaries. Thus disingenuously do sinners deal with the great intercessor, crucifying him afresh, and speaking against him on earth, while his blood is speaking for them in heaven. See Joh 10:32. But,

(3.) It was a comfort to the prophet that, when they were so spiteful against him, he had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had done his duty to them; and the same will be our rejoicing in such a day of evil. The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul, Pr 29:10.

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon them, not from a revengeful disposition, but in a prophetical indignation against their horrid wickedness, Jer 18:21-23. He prays,

(1.) That their families might be starved for want of bread: "Deliver up the children to the famine, to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that in the city through the straitness of the siege. Thus let this iniquity of the fathers be visited upon the children."

(2.) That they might be cut off by the sword of war, which, whatever it was in the enemy's hand, would be, in God's hand, a sword of justice: "Pour them out (so the word is) by the hands of the sword; let their blood be shed as profusely as water, that their wives may be left childless and widows, their husbands being taken away by death" (some think that the prophet refers to pestilence); let their young men, that are the strength of this generation and the hope of the next, be slain by the sword in battle.

(3.) That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly and by surprise, that thus their punishment might answer to their sin (Jer 18:22): "Let a cry be heard from their houses, loud shrieks, when thou shalt bring a troop of the Chaldeans suddenly upon them, to seize them and all they have, to make them

prisoners and their estates a prey;" for thus they would have done by Jeremiah; they aimed to ruin him at once ere he was aware: "They have dug a pit for me, as for a wild beast, and have hid snares for me, as for some ravenous noxious fowl." Note, Those that think to ensnare others will justly be themselves ensnared in an evil time.

(4.) That they might be dealt with according to the desert of this sin, which was without excuse: "Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; that is, let them not escape the just punishment of it; let them lie under all the miseries of those whose sins are unpardoned."

(5.) That God's wrath against them might be their ruin: Let them be overthrown before thee. This intimates that justice was in pursuit of them, that they endeavoured to make their escape from it, but in vain; "they shall be made to stumble in their flight, and being overthrown they will certainly be overtaken." And then, Lord, in the time of thy anger, do to them (he does not say what he would have done to them, but) do to them as thou thinkest fit, as thou usest to do with those whom thou art angry with--deal thus with them. Now this is not written for our imitation. Jeremiah was a prophet, and by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy, in the foresight of the ruin certainly coming upon his persecutors, might pray such prayers as we may not; and, if we think by this example to justify ourselves in such imprecations, we know not what manner of spirit we are of; our Master has taught us, by his precept and pattern, to bless those that curse us and pray for those that despitefully use us. Yet it is written for our instruction, and is of use to teach us,

[1.] That those who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them may justly expect to have their prayers against them.

[2.] That persecution is a sin that fills the measure of a people's iniquity very fast, and will bring as sure and sore a destruction upon them as any thing.

[3.] Those who will not be won upon by the kindness of God and his prophets will certainly at length feel the just resentments of both.

21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their *blood* by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and *be* widows; and let their men be put to death; *let* their young men *be* slain by the sword in battle.

22 Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them: for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet.

23 Yet, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay *me:* forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal *thus* with them in the time of thine anger.

Jeremiah-19

The Lesson from the Broken Vessel

1 Thus saith the Lord, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and *take* of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests;

The corruption of man having made it necessary that precept should be upon precept, and line upon line (so unapt are we to receive, and so very apt to let slip, the things of God), the grace of God has provided that there shall be, accordingly, precept upon precept, and line upon line, that those who are irreclaimable may be inexcusable. For this reason the prophet is here sent with a message to the same purport with what he had often delivered, but with some circumstances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which ministers should study, for a little circumstance may sometimes be a great advantage, and those that would win souls must be wise.

I. He must take of the elders and chief men, both in church and state, to be his auditors and witnesses to what he said--the ancients of the people and the ancients of the priests, the most eminent men both in the magistracy and in the ministry, that they might be faithful witnesses to record, as those Isa 8:2. It is strange that these great men should be at the beck of a poor prophet, and obey his

summons to attend him out of the city, they know not whither and they knew not why. But, though the generality of the elders were disaffected to him, yet it is likely that there were some few among them who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this respect to the heavenly vision.

Note, Persons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God, by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the word and other divine institutions; and they ought to think it an honour, and no disparagement to themselves, yea, though the circumstances be mean and despicable. It is certain that the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God.

II. He must go to the valley of the son of Hinnom, and deliver this message there; for the word of the Lord is not bound to any one place; as good a sermon may be preached in the valley of Tophet as in the gate of the temple. Christ preached on a mountain and out of a ship. This valley lay partly on the south side of Jerusalem, but the prophet's way to it was by the entry on the east gate--the sun gate (Jer 19:2), so some render it, and suppose it to look not towards the sun-rising, but the noon sun--the potter's gate, so some. This sermon must be preached in that place, in the valley of the son of Hinnom,

1. Because there they had been guilty of the vilest of their idolatries, the sacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of impiety, which the sight of the place might serve to remind them of and upbraid them with.

2. Because there they should feel the sorest of their calamities; there the greatest slaughter should be made among them; and, it being the common sink of the city, let them look upon it and see what a miserable spectacle this magnificent city would be when it should be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, when thou comest thither; whereby it appears (as Mr. Gataker well observed) that God's messages were frequently not revealed to the prophets before the very instant of time wherein they were to deliver them.

III. He must give general notice of a general ruin now shortly coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, Jer 19:3. He must, as those that make proclamation, begin with an Oyes: Hear you the word of the Lord, though it be a terrible word, for you may thank yourselves if it be so. Both rulers and ruled must attend to it, at their peril; the kings of Judah, the king and his sons, the king and his princes and privy-counsellors, must hear the word of the King of kings, for, high as they are, he is above them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem also must hear what God has to say to them. Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt and must concur in the national repentance, or they will both share in the national ruin. Let them all know that the Lord of hosts, who is therefore able to do what he threatens, though he is the God of Israel, nay, because he is so, will therefore punish them in the first place for their iniquities (Am 3:2): He will bring evil upon this place (upon Judah and Jerusalem) so surprising, and so dreadful, that whosoever hears it, his ears shall tingle; whosoever hears the prediction of it, hears the report and representation of it, it shall make such an impression of terror upon him that he shall still think he hears it sounding in his ears and shall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of Eli's house is thus described (1Sa 3:11), and of Jerusalem, 2Ki 21:12.

IV. He must plainly tell them what their sins were for which God had this controversy with them, Jer 19:4,5. They are charged with apostasy from God (They have forsaken me) and abuse of the privileges of the visible church, and which they had been dignified--They have estranged this place. Jerusalem (the holy city), the temple (the holy house), which was designed for the honour of God and the support of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from those purposes, and (as some render the word) they had strangely abused. They had so polluted both with their wickedness that God had disowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He charges them with an affection for and the adoration of false gods, such as neither they nor their fathers have known, such as never had recommended themselves to their belief and esteem by any acts of power or goodness done for them or their ancestors, as that God had abundantly done whom they forsook; yet they took them at a venture for their gods; nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upstarts, and

new fashions in religion were as grateful to their fancies as in other things. They also stand charged with murder, wilful murder, from malice prepense: They have filled this place with the blood of innocents.

It was Manasseh's sin (2Ki 24:4), which the Lord would not pardon. Nay, as if idolatry and murder, committed separately, were not bad enough and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, have consolidated them into one complicated crime, that of burning their children in the fire to Baal (Jer 19:5), which was the most insolent defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared that they loved their new gods better than ever they loved the true God, though they were such cruel task-masters that they required human sacrifices (inhuman I should call them), which the Lord Jehovah, whose all lives and souls are, never demanded from his worshippers; he never spoke of such a thing, nor came it into his mind. See Jer 7:31.

V. He must endeavour to affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming upon them. He must tell them (as he had done before, Jer 7:32) that this valley of the son of Hinnom shall acquire a new name, the valley of slaughter (Jer 19:6), for (Jer 19:7) multitudes shall fall there by the sword, when either they sally out upon the besiegers and are repulsed or attempt to make their escape and are seized: They shall fall before their enemies, who not only endeavour to make themselves masters of their houses and estates, but have such an implacable enmity to them that they seek their lives; they thirst after their blood, and, when they are dead, will not allow a cartel for the burying of the slain, but their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and beasts of the earth.

What a dismal place will the valley of Tophet be then! And as for those that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the besiegers, they shall perish for want of food, when first they have eaten the flesh of their sons and daughters, and dearest friends, through the straitness wherewith their enemies shall straiten them, Jer 19:9. This was threatened in the law as an instance of the extremity to which the judgments of God should reduce them (Le

26:29,De 28:53) and was accomplished, La 4:10. And, lastly, the whole city shall be desolate, the houses laid in ashes, the inhabitants slain or taken prisoners; there shall be no resort to it, nor any thing in it but what looks rueful and horrid; so that every one that passes by shall be astonished (Jer 19:8), as he had said before, Jer 18:16. That place which holiness had made the joy of the whole earth sin had made the reproach and shame of the whole earth.

VI. He must assure them that all their attempts to prevent and avoid this ruin, so long as they continued impenitent and unreformed, would be fruitless and vain (Jer 19:7): I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem (of the princes and senators of Judah and Jerusalem) in this place, in the royal palace, which lay on the south side of the city, not far from the place where the prophet now stood. Note, There is no fleeing from God's justice but by fleeing to his mercy. Those that will not make good God's counsel, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, shall find that God will make void their counsel and blast their projects, which they think ever so well concerted for their own preservation. There is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

2 and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee:

3 and say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

4 Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents;

5 they have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind:

6 therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter.

7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcasses will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.

8 And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof.

9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

10 Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee,

The message of wrath delivered in the Jer 19:1-9 is here enforced, that it might gain credit, two ways:--

I. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an earthen bottle (Jer 19:1), and, when he had delivered his message, he was to break the bottle to pieces (Jer 19:10), and the same that were auditors of the sermon must be spectators of the sign. He had compared this people, in the chapter before, to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making.

But some might say, "It is past that with us; we have been made and hardened long since." "And what though you be," says he, "the potter's vessel is as soon broken in the hand of any man as the vessel while it is soft clay is marred in the potter's hand, and its case is, in this respect, much worse, that the vessel while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again, but, after it is hardened, when it is broken it can never be pieced again." Perhaps what they see will affect them more than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explication of this sign he must inculcate what he had before said, with a further reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of Tophet.

1. As the bottle was easily, irresistibly, and irrecoverably broken by the Chaldean army, Jer 19:11. They depended much upon the

firmness of their constitution, and the fixedness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shows that all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle and sooner broken than that which is not so hard. Though they were made vessels of honour, still they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself, who made them, that resolves to unmake them: I will break this people and this city, dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel; the doom of the heathen (Ps 2:9,Re 2:27), but now Jerusalem's doom, Isa 30:14. A potter's vessel, when once broken, cannot be made whole again, cannot be cured, so the word is. The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn, he will heal. 2. This was done in Tophet, to signify two things:--

(1.) That Tophet should be the receptacle of the slain: They shall bury in Tophet till there be no place to bury any more there; they shall jostle for room to lay their dead, and a very little room will then serve those who, while they lived, laid house to house and field to field. Those that would be placed alone in the midst of the earth while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude when they are underground, for there are innumerable before them.

(2.) That Tophet should be a resemblance of the whole city (Jer 19:12): I will make this city as Tophet. As they had filled the valley of Tophet with the slain which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read (2Ki 23:10) of Josiah's defiling Tophet, because it had been abused to idolatry, which he did (as should seem, Jer 19:14) by filling it with the bones of men; and, whatever it was before, thenceforward it was looked upon as a detestable place. Dead carcases, and other filth of the city, were carried thither, and a fire was continually kept there for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be that, in the language of our Saviour's time, hell was called, in allusion to it, Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom. "Now" (says God) "since that

blessed reformation, when Tophet was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation, but though the idols in Tophet were abolished and made odious those in Jerusalem remained, therefore will I do with the city as Josiah did by Tophet, fill it with the bodies of men, and make it a heap of rubbish." Even the houses of Jerusalem, and those of the kings of Judah, the royal palaces not excepted, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet (Jer 19:13), and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there; since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, because upon the roofs of their houses they have burnt incense unto the host of heaven.

The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer (Ac 10:9), and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, that there they might be so much nearer to them and have a clearer and fuller view of them. We read of those that worshipped the host of heaven upon the house-tops (Zep 1:5), and of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, 2Ki 23:12. This sin upon the house-tops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghill like Tophet.

II. By a solemn recognition and ratification of what he had said in the court of the Lord's house, Jer 19:14,15. The prophet returned from Tophet to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and probably repeated, what he had said in the valley of Tophet, for the benefit of those who had not heard it; what he had said he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are here put together in a little compass, with a reference to all that had gone before.

1 The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatened. The people flattered themselves with a conceit that God would be better than his word, that the threatening was but to frighten them and keep them in awe a little; but the prophet tells them that they deceive themselves if they think so: For thus saith

the Lord of hosts, who is able to make his words good, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the smaller cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, all the evil that I have pronounced against it. Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of Providence will fully answer the predictions of the word, and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners as the scripture makes him; nor shall the unbelief of men make either his promises or his threatenings of no effect or of less effect than they were thought to be of.

2 The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is because they have hardened their necks, and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would not hear my words, that is, would not heed them and yield obedience to them. Note, The obstinacy of sinners in their sinful ways is altogether their own fault; if their necks are hardened, it is their own act and deed, they have hardened them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ears. We have need therefore to pray that God, by his grace, would deliver us from hardness of heart and contempt of his word and commandments.

11 and shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will
I break this people and this city, as *one* breaketh a potter's vessel, that
cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury *them* in Tophet, till
there be no place to bury.

12 Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the
inhabitants thereof, and *even* make this city as Tophet:

13 and the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah,
shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon
whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven,
and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods.

14 Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the Lord had sent
him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord's house,
and said to all the people,

15 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring
upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have
pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks,
that they might not hear my words.

Jeremiah-20

The Curse on Pashur for Imprisoning Jeremiah

1 Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who *was* also chief
governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah
prophesied these things.

Here is, I. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, Jer 20:1,2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore, one would think, should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too, and the more because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers, ought to consult. But this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronized. He was the son of Immer; that is, he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which Immer, when these courses were first settled by David, was father (1Ch 24:14), as Zechariah was of the order of Abiah, Lu 1:5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name mentioned Jer 21:1, who was of the fifth course. This Pashur was chief governor in the temple; perhaps he was only so pro tempore--for a short period, the course he was head of being now in waiting, or he was suffragan to the high priest, or perhaps captain of the temple or of the guards about it. Ac 4:1.

This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity and concern for God and the church. We cannot suppose that Pashur was one of those ancients of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet to hear him prophesy, unless it were with a malicious design to take advantage against him; but, when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable that he was himself a witness of what he said, and so it may be read (Jer 20:1), He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. As we read it, the information was brought to him by others, whose examinations he took: He heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things, and could not bear it, especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was chief governor, without his leave. When power in the church is abused, it is the most dangerous power that can be employed against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah,

1. He smote him, struck him with his hand or staff of authority. Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the high priest ordered to be given to Paul (Ac 23:2), he struck him on the mouth, and bade him hold his prating. Or perhaps he gave him many blows intended to hurt him; he beat him severely, as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen (Mt 21:35) that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal; the high priest, and the rest of the priests, ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter enquired into, whether he had an authority to say what he said. But these rules of justice are set aside and despised, as mere formalities; right or wrong, Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity.

2. He put him in the stocks. Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others (as we) a pair of stocks for his legs: whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, in the high gate of Benjamin, which was in, or by, the house of the Lord, probably a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, that he might deter him from prophesying; and thus to expose him to contempt and render him odious, that he might not be regarded if he did prophesy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been counted as the off-scouring of all things. Would it not raise a pious indignation to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well that there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face.

2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the
stocks that *were* in the high gate of Benjamin, which *was* by the
house of the Lord.
3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth
Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The

Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib [fear round about].

4 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold *it:* and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

God's just displeasure against Pashur, and the tokens of it. On the morrow Pashur gave Jeremiah his discharge, brought him out of the stocks (Jer 20:3); it is probable that he continued him there, in little-ease, as long as was usual to continue any in that punishment. And now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that, when Pashur put Jeremiah in the stocks, the latter gave him any check for which he did; he appears to have quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; when he suffered, he threatened not. But, when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For, when the prophet of the Lord was bound, the word of the Lord was not. What can we think Pashur aimed at in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see by what God says to him that he is disappointed.

1. Did he aim to establish himself, and make himself easy, by silencing one that told him of his faults and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? He shall not gain this point; for,

(1.) Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face and make him always uneasy. To confirm this he shall have a name given him, Magor-missabib--Terror round about, or Fear on every side. God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress but in despair, not only in danger on every side (that a man may be and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, Ps 3:6,27:3), but in fear on every side, and that a man may be when there appears no danger. The wicked flee when no man pursues, are in great gear where no fear is. This shall be Pashur's case (Jer 20:4): "Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself; that is, thou shalt be subject to continual frights, and thy own fancy and imagination shall create thee a constant

uneasiness." Note, God can make the most daring sinner a terror to himself, and will find out a way to frighten those that frighten his people from doing their duty.

1111111And those that will not hear of their faults from God's prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, shall be made to hear of them from conscience, which is a reprover in their own bosoms that will not be daunted nor silenced. And miserable is the man that is thus made a terror to himself. Yet this is not all; some are very much a terror to themselves, but they conceal it and seem to others to be pleasant; but, "I will make thee a terror to all thy friends; thou shalt, upon all occasions, express thyself with so much horror and amazement that all thy friends shall be afraid of conversing with thee and shall choose to stand aloof from thy torment." Persons in deep melancholy and distraction are a terror to themselves and all about them, which is a good reason why we should be very thankful, so long as God continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

(2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in and perhaps studied to oblige in what he did against Jeremiah, shall all fail him. God does not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live miserably, like Cain in the land of shaking, in such a continual consternation that wherever he goes he shall be a monument of divine justice; and, when it is asked, "What makes this man in such a continual terror?" it shall be answered, "It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks." His friends, who should encourage him, shall all be cut off; they shall fall by the sword of the enemy, and his eyes shall behold it, which dreadful sight shall increase his terror.

(3.) He shall find, in the issue, that his terror is not causeless, but that divine vengeance is waiting for him (Jer 20:6); he and his family shall go into captivity, even to Babylon; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect be buried in his chains, he and all his friends. Thus far is the doom of Pashur. Let

persecutors read it, and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable that he did; for it appears by Jer 20:6 that he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people that they should have peace. He prophesied lies to them; and because Jeremiah's prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavoured to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he gain his point? No; Jeremiah stands to what he has said against Judah and Jerusalem, and God by his mouth repeats it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its course; so it had here.

(1.) The country shall be ruined (Jer 20:4): I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. It had long been God's own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country and dispose of the inhabitants so me to the sword and some to captivity, as he pleases, but none shall escape him.

(2.) The city shall be ruined too, Jer 20:5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that, and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon.

[1.] He shall seize their magazines and military stores (here called the strength of this city) and turn them against them. These they trusted to as their strength; but what stead could they stand them in when they had thrown themselves out of God's protection, and when he who was indeed their strength had departed from them?

[2.] He shall carry off all their stock in trade, their wares and merchandises, here called their labours, because it was what they laboured about and got by their labour.

[3.] He shall plunder their fine houses, and take away their rich furniture, here called their precious things, because they valued them and set their hearts so much upon them. Happy are those who

have secured to themselves precious things in God's precious promises, which are out of the reach of soldiers.

[4.] He shall rifle the exchequer, and take away the jewels of the crown and all the treasures of the kings of Judah. This was that instance of the calamity which was first of all threatened to Hezekiah long ago as his punishment for showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, Isa 39:6. The treasury, they thought, was their defence; but that betrayed them, and became an easy prey to the enemy.

5 Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labors thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Jeremiah's Lament

7 O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

Pashur's doom was to be a terror to himself; Jeremiah, even now, in this hour of temptation, is far from being so; and yet it cannot be denied but that he is here, through the infirmity of the flesh, strangely agitated within himself. Good men are but men at the best. God is not extreme to mark what they say and do amiss, and therefore we must not be so, but make the best of it. In these verses it appears that, upon occasion of the great indignation and injury that Pashur did to Jeremiah, there was a struggle in his breast between his graces and his corruptions. His discourse with himself and with his God, upon this occasion, was somewhat perplexed; let us try to methodize it.

I. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation, no

doubt, was according to truth, and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and no doubt would bear him out. He complains,

1. That he was ridiculed and laughed at; they made a jest of every thing he said and did; and this cannot but be a great grievance to an ingenuous mind (Jer 20:7,8): I am in derision; I am mocked. They played upon him, and made themselves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was continually: I was in derision daily. Thus he was universally: Every one mocks me; the greatest so far forget their own gravity, and the meanest so far forget mine. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, was reviled both by priests and people; and the revilings of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of the duty of his office, Jer 20:8. They could find nothing for which to deride him but his preaching; it was the word of the Lord that was made a reproach.

That for which they should have honoured and respected him--that he was entrusted to deliver the word of the Lord to them was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon, but, though he kept as closely as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it for which to banter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think that, though divine revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for:--

(1.) The manner of his preaching: Since he spoke, he cried out. He had always been a lively affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name he always spoke as a man in earnest; he cried aloud and did not spare, spared neither himself nor those to whom he preached; and this was enough for those to laugh at who hated to be serious. It is common for those that are unaffected with and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless unbelieving hearers.

(2.) The matter of his preaching: He cried violence and spoil. He reproved them for the violence and spoil which they were guilty of towards one another; and he prophesied of the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as over-precise, for the latter as over-credulous; in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains further.

2. That he was plotted against and his ruin contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as a bad man and dangerous to the government. This he laments as his grievance, Jer 20:10. Being laughed at, though it touches a man in point of honour, is yet a thing that may be easily laughed at again; for, as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so. But there were those that acted a more spiteful part, and with more subtlety.

(1.) They spoke ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself, and were industrious to spread false reports concerning him: I heard, at second hand, the defaming of many, fear on every side (of many Magor-missabibs, so some read it), of many such men as Pashur was, and who may therefore expect his doom. Or this was the matter of their defamation; they represented Jeremiah as a man that instilled fears and jealousies on every side into the minds of the people, and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or he perceived them to be so malicious against him that he could not but be afraid on every side; wherever he was he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a Magor-missabib. These words are found in the original, verbatim, the same, Ps 31:13, I have heard the slander or defaming of many, fear on every side. Jeremiah, in his complaint, chooses to make use of the same words that David had made use of before him, that it might be a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered similar abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves, as there is occasion.

Whatever we have to say, we may thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter: Report, say they,

and we will report it. They resolve to cast an odium upon him, and this is the method they take: "Let some very bad thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and, though it be ever so false, we will second it, and spread it, and add to it." (For the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carriage.) "Do you that frame a story plausibly, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and we will all report it from you, in all companies, that we come into. Do you say it, and we will swear it; do you set it a going, and we will follow it." And thus both are equally guilty, those that raise and those that propagate the false report. The receiver is as bad as the thief.

(2.) They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him on which to ground an accusation, as the spies that came to Christ feigning themselves to be just men, Lu 20:20,Lu 11:53,54. His familiars, that he conversed freely with and put a confidence in, watched for his halting, observed what he said, which they could by any strained innuendo put a bad construction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, "If we accost him kindly, and insinuate ourselves into his acquaintance, per-adventure he will be enticed to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy and a pensioner to the king of Babylon, or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasonable words; and then we shall prevail against him, and take our revenge upon him for telling us of our faults and threatening us with the judgments of God." Note, Neither the innocence of the dove, no, nor the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation.

II. Here is an account of the temptation he was in under this affliction; his feet were almost gone, as the psalmist's, Ps 73:2. And this is that which is most to be dreaded in affliction, being driven by it to sin, Ne 6:13.

1. He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with (Jer 20:7): O Lord! thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. This as we read it, sounds very harshly. God's servants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Master

and never cheated them; and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If, when God called him to be a prophet and told him he would set him over the kingdoms (Jer 1:10) and make him a defenced city, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid to him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterwards it proved otherwise, he must not say that God had deceived him, but that he had deceived himself; for he knew how the prophets before him had been persecuted, and had no reason to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told him that all the princes, priests, and people of the land would fight against him (Jer 1:18,19), which he had forgotten, else he would not have laid the blame on God thus. Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should meet with, that they might not be offended, Joh 16:1,2.

But the words may very well be read thus: Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; it is the same word that was used, Ge 9:27, margin, God shall persuade Japhet. And Pr 25:15, By much forbearance is a prince persuaded. And Ho 2:14, I will allure her. And this agrees best with what follows: "Thou wast stronger than I, didst over-persuade me with argument; nay, didst overpower me, by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and thou hast prevailed." Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetic office; he pleaded that he was under age and unfit for the service; but God over-ruled his pleas, and told him that he must go, Jer 1:6,7. "Now, Lord," says he, "since thou hast put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision; but why am I so when thou didst thrust me into it?" It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him, sufficient to counterbalance the present contempt he was under.

Note, As long as we see ourselves in the way of God and duty it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it.

2. He was tempted to quit his work and give it over, partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it and partly because

those to whom he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were exasperated and made worse (Jer 20:9): "Then I said, Since by prophesying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, I will not make mention of him as my author for any thing I say, nor speak any more in his name; since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself, and speak no more, for I may as well speak to the stones as to them."

Note, It is a strong temptation to poor ministers to resolve that they will preach no more when they see their preaching slighted and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their ministers into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say that they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God to say, They shall take no more. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thankworthy; and, though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious.

8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*.

10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, *say they*, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

11 But the Lord *is* with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: *their* everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

12 But, O Lord of hosts, that triest the righteous, *and* seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

Here is an account of his faithful adherence to his work and cheerful dependence on his God notwithstanding.

1. He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to this business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up: "I said, in my haste, I will speak no more in his name; what I have in my heart to deliver I will stifle and suppress. But I soon found it was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, which glowed inwardly, and must have vent; it was impossible to smother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy and in a continual agitation; while I kept silence from good my heart was hot within me, it was pain and grief to me, and I must speak, that I might be refreshed;" Ps 29:2,3,Job 32:20. While I kept silence, my bones waxed old, Ps 32:3. See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those that were actuated by it; and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves. I believed, therefore have I spoken. Jeremiah was soon weary with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to pain so much as being silenced, nor to terror so much as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel, whatever it cost me, 1Co 9:16. And it is really a mercy to have the word of God thus mighty in us to overpower our corruptions.

2. He was assured of God's presence with him, which would be sufficient to baffle all the attempts of his enemies against him (Jer 20:11): "They say, We shall prevail against him; the day will undoubtedly be our own. But I am sure that they shall not prevail, they shall not prosper. I can safely set them all at defiance, for the Lord is with me, is on my side, to take my part against them (Ro 8:31), to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me. He is with me to support me and bear me up under the burden which now presses me down. He is with me to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire. He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to strike a terror upon them, and so to overcome them." Note, Even that in God which is terrible is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall be turned against those that seek to terrify his people. God's being a mighty God bespeaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him or any one that, like Jeremiah, was commissioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God

be to those that think to daunt all about them and will themselves be daunted by nothing!

The most formidable enemies that act against us appear despicable when we see the Lord for us as a mighty terrible one, Ne 4:14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance: "If the Lord be with me, my persecutors shall stumble, so that, when they pursue me, they shall not overtake me (Ps 27:2), and then they shall be greatly ashamed of their impotent malice and fruitless attempts. Nay, their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be forgotten; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation, whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave upon them an indelible reproach."

3. He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, Jer 20:12. He looks upon God as the God that tries the righteous, takes cognizance of them, and of every cause that they are interested in. He does not judge in favour of them with partiality, but tries them, and finding that they have right on their side, and that their persecutors wrong them and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. He that tries the righteous tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both; for he sees the reins and the heart, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can pass an unerring judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God,

(1.) To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodges his appeal: Unto thee have I opened my cause. Not but that God perfectly knew his cause, and all the merits of it, without his opening; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him. He knows it, but he will know it from us, and allows us to be particular in the opening of it, not to affect him, but to affect ourselves.

Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and burdened, to open our cause to God and pour out our complaints before him.

(2.) By whom he expects to be righted; "Let me see thy vengeance on them, such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication, the vengeance thou usest to take on persecutors." Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it to whom vengeance belongs, and who hath said, I will repay.

4. He greatly rejoices and praises God, in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, Jer 20:13. So full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, the divine protection he is under, and the divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he stirs up himself and others to give God the glory of it: Sing unto the Lord, praise you the Lord. Here appears a great change with him since he began this discourse; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in that God whom (Jer 20:7) he was distrusting; he stirs up himself to praise that name which (Jer 20:9) he was resolving no more to make mention of.

It was the lively exercise of faith that made this happy change, that turned his sighs into songs and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evil-doers; he means especially himself, his own poor soul. "He hath delivered me formerly when I was in distress, and now of late out of the hand of Pashur, and he will continue to deliver me, 2Co 1:10. He will deliver my soul from the sin that I am in danger of falling into when I am thus persecuted. He hath delivered me from the hand of evil-doers, so that they have not gained their point, nor had their will." Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to who has well-doers under the hand of his protection and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint.

13 Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.

14 Cursed *be* the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

What is the meaning of this? Does there proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing? Could he that said so cheerfully (Jer 20:13), Sing unto the Lord, praise you the Lord, say so passionately (Jer 20:14), Cursed be the day wherein I was born? How shall we reconcile these? What we have in these verses the prophet records, I suppose, to his own shame, as he had recorded that in the foregoing verses to God's glory. It seems to be a relation of the ferment he had been in while he was in the stocks, out of which by faith and hope he had recovered himself, rather than a new temptation which he afterwards fell into, and it should come in like that of David (Ps 31:22), I said in my haste, I am cut off; this is also implied, Ps 77:7. When grace has got the victory it is good to remember the struggles of corruption, that we may be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our spirits another time. See here how strong the temptation was which the prophet, by divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. Let us see here,

I. What the prophet's language was in this temptation.

1. He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birth-day, as Job did in a heat (Job 3:1): "Cursed be the day wherein I was born. It was an ill day to me (Jer 20:14), because it was the beginning of sorrows, and an inlet to all this misery." It is a wish that he had never been born. Judas in hell has reason to wish so (Mt 26:24), but no man on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birth-day, at the return of the year with gladness, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrow, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

2. He wished ill to the messenger that brought his father the news of his birth, Jer 20:15. It made his father very glad to hear that he had a child born (perhaps it was his first-born), especially that it

was a man-child, for then, being of the family of the priests, he might live to have the honour of serving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man that brought him the tidings, when perhaps the father to whom they were brought gave him a gratuity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes, "That parents are often much rejoiced at the birth of their children when, if they did but foresee what misery they are born to, they would rather lament over them than rejoice in them." He is very free and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon the messenger of his birth (Jer 20:16): "Let him be at the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repented not, did not in the least mitigate of alleviate their misery. Let him hear the cry of the invading besieging enemy in the morning, as soon as he is stirring; then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their shouting for victory. And thus let him live in constant terror."

3. He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not slain from the womb, that his first breath was not his last, and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, Jer 20:17. He wishes the messenger of his birth had been better employed and had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of whom he was born had been, to her great misery, always with child of him, and so the womb in which he was conceived would have served, without more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in. Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance between the womb and the grave, Job 1:21. Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.

4. He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes (Jer 20:18): "Wherefore came I forth out of the womb, where I lay hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safely and knew no evil, to see all this labour and sorrow, nay to have my days consumed with shame, to be continually vexed and abused, to have my life not only spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by trouble?"

II. What use we may make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good lessons from it.

1. See the vanity of human life and the vexation of spirit that attends it. If there were not another life after this, we should be tempted many a time to wish that we have never known this; for our few days here are full of trouble.

2. See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion, how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day--to curse a messenger for the sake of his message! What a brutish barbarous thing for a child to wish his own mother had never been delivered of him! See Isa 45:10. We can easily see the folly of it in others, and should take warning thence to suppress all such intemperate heats and passions in ourselves, to stifle them at first and not to suffer these evil spirits to speak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, Ps 39:1,2. 3. See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best. See how much those who think they stand are concerned to take heed lest they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, lead us not into temptation!

15 Cursed *be* the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man
child is born unto thee; making him very glad.
16 And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and
repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the
shouting at noontide;
17 because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might
have been my grave, and her womb *to be* always great *with me*.
18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labor and sorrow,
that my days should be consumed with shame?

Jeremiah-21

The Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold

1 The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when king
Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and
Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

Here is, I. A very humble decent message which king Zedekiah, when he was in distress, sent to Jeremiah the prophet. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah that he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord (2Ch

36:12); he did not always humble himself as he did sometimes; he never humbled himself till necessity forced him to it; he humbled himself so far as to desire the prophet's assistance, but not so far as to take his advice, or to be ruled by him. Observe,

1 The distress which king Zedekiah was now in: Nebuchadrezzar made war upon him, not only invaded the land, but besieged the city, and had now actually invested it. Note, Those that put the evil day far from them will be the more terrified when it comes upon them; and those who before slighted God's ministers may then perhaps be glad to court an acquaintance with them.

2 The messengers he sent--Pashur and Zephaniah, one belonging to the fifth course of the priests, the other to the twenty-fourth, 1Ch 24:9,18. It was well that he sent, and that he sent persons of rank; but it would have been better if he had desired a personal conference with the prophet, which no doubt he might easily have had if he would so far have humbled himself. Perhaps these priests were no better than the rest, and yet, when they were commanded by the king, they must carry a respectful message to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them and an honour to Jeremiah. He had rashly said (Jer 20:18), My days are consumed with shame; and yet here we find that he lived to see better days than those were when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to say, when things are bad with us, "They will always be so." It is possible that those who are despised may come to be respected; and it is promised that those who honour God he will honour, and that those who have afflicted his people shall bow to them, Isa 60:14.

3. The message itself: Enquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us, Jer 21:2. Now that the Chaldean army had got into their borders, into their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loth to own it and brought too late to it. Under this conviction they desire him to stand their friend with God, believing him to have that interest in heaven which none of their other prophets had, who had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah,

(1.) To consult the mind of God for them: "Enquire of the Lord for us; ask him what course we shall take in our present strait, for the measures we have hitherto taken are all broken." Note, Those that will not take the direction of God's grace how to get clear of their sins would yet be glad of the directions of his providence how to get clear of their troubles.

(2.) To seek the favour of God for them (so some read it): "Entreat the Lord for us; be an intercessor for us with God." Note, Those that slight the prayers of God's people and ministers when they are in prosperity may perhaps be glad of an interest in them when they come to be in distress. Give us of your oil. The benefit they promise themselves is, It may be the Lord will deal with us now according to the wondrous works he wrought for our fathers, that the enemy may raise the siege and go up from us. Observe,

[1.] All their care is to get rid of their trouble, not to make their peace with God and be reconciled to him--"That our enemy may go up from us," not, "That our God may return to us." Thus Pharaoh (Ex 10:17): Entreat the Lord that he may take away this death.

[2.] All their hope is that God had done wondrous works formerly in the deliverance of Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it, at the prayer of Isaiah (so we are told, 2Ch 32:20,21), and who can tell but he may destroy these besiegers (as he did those) at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not consider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people: those were days of general reformation and piety, these of general corruption and apostasy. Jerusalem is now the reverse of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God should do for us while we hold fast our iniquity as he did for those that held fast their integrity.

II. A very startling cutting reply which God, by the prophet, sent to that message. If Jeremiah had been to have answered the message of himself we have reason to think that he would have returned a comfortable answer, in hope that their sending such a message was an indication of some good purposes in them, which he would be glad to make the best of, for he did not desire the

woeful day. But God knows their hearts better than Jeremiah does, and sends them an answer which has scarcely one word of comfort in it. He sends it to them in the name of the Lord God of Israel (Jer 21:3), to intimate to them that though God allowed himself to be called the God of Israel, and had done great things for Israel formerly, and had still great things in store for Israel, pursuant to his covenants with them, yet this should stand the present generation in no stead, who were Israelites in name only, and not in deed, any more than God's dealings with them should cut off his relation to Israel as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own security fruitless and ineffectual (Jer 21:4): "I will be so far from teaching your hands to war, and putting an edge upon your swords, that I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand, when you sally out upon the besiegers to beat them off, so that they shall not give the stroke you design; nay, they shall recoil into your own faces, and be turned upon yourselves." Nothing can make for those who have God against them.

2. That the besiegers shall in a little time make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and of all its wealth and strength: I will assemble those in the midst of this city who are now surrounding it. Note, If that place which should have been a centre of devotion be made a centre of wickedness, it is not strange if God make it a rendezvous of destroyers.

3. That God himself will be their enemy; and then I know not who can befriend them, no, not Jeremiah himself (Jer 21:5): "I will be so far from protecting you, as I have done formerly in a like case, that I myself will fight against you." Note, Those who rebel against God may justly expect that he will make war upon them, and that,

(1.) With the power of a God who is irresistibly victorious: I will fight against you with an outstretched hand, which will reach far, and with a strong arm, which will strike home and wound deeply.

(2.) With the displeasure of a God who is indisputably righteous. It is not a correction in love, but an execution in anger, in fury,

and in great wrath; it is upon a sentence sworn in wrath, against which there will lie no exception, and it will soon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. That those who, for their own safety, decline sallying out upon the besiegers, and so avoid their sword, shall yet not escape the sword of God's justice (Jer 21:6): I will smite those that abide in the city (so it may be read), both man and beast, both the beasts that are for food and those that are for service in war, foot and horse; they shall, die of a great pestilence, which shall rage within the walls, while the enemies are encamped about them. Though Jerusalem's gates and walls may for a time keep out the Chaldeans, they cannot keep out God's judgments. His arrows of pestilence can reach those that think themselves safe from other arrows.

5. That the king himself, and people that escape the sword, famine, and pestilence, shall fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, who shall cut them off in cold blood (Jer 21:7): They shall not spare them, nor have pity on them. Let not those expect to find mercy with men who have forfeited God's compassions, and shut themselves out from his mercy. Thus had the decree gone forth; and then to what purpose was it for Jeremiah to enquire of the Lord for them?

2 Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king
of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the Lord will deal
with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from
us.
3 Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:
4 Thus saith the Lord God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the
weapons of war that *are* in your hands, wherewith ye fight against
the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you
without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this
city.
5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and
with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.
6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast:
they shall die of a great pestilence.

7 And afterward, saith the Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

8 And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

By the civil message which the king sent to Jeremiah it appeared that both he and the people began to have a respect for him, which it would have been Jeremiah's policy to make some advantage of for himself; but the reply which God obliges him to make is enough to crush the little respect they begin to have for him, and to exasperate them against him more than ever. Not only the predictions in the Jer 21:1-7, but the prescriptions in these, were provoking; for here,

He advises the people to surrender and desert to the Chaldeans, as the only means left them to save their lives, Jer 21:8-10. This counsel was very displeasing to those who were flattered by their false prophets into a desperate resolution to hold out to the last extremity, trusting to the strength of their walls and the courage of their soldiery to keep out the enemy, or to their foreign aids to raise the siege. The prophet assures them, "The city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall not only plunder it, but burn it with fire, for God himself hath set his face against this city for evil and not for good, to lay it waste and not to protect it, for evil which shall have no good mixed with it, no mitigation or merciful allay; and therefore, if you would make the best of bad, you must beg quarter of the Chaldeans, and surrender prisoners of war." In vain did Rabshakeh persuade the Jews to do this while they had God for them (Isa 36:16), but it was the best course they could take now that God was against them. Both the law and the prophets had often set before them life and death in another sense--life if they obey the voice of God, death if they persist in disobedience, De 30:19. But they had slighted that life

which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here uses the same expression (Jer 21:8):

Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death, which denotes not, as that, a fair proposal, but a melancholy dilemma, advising them of two evils to choose the less; and that less evil, a shameful and wretched captivity, is all the life now left for them to propose to themselves. He that abides in the city, and trusts to that to secure him, shall certainly die either by the sword without the walls or famine or pestilence within. But he that can so far bring down his spirit, and quit his vain hopes, as to go out, and fall to the Chaldeans, his life shall be given him for a prey; he shall save his life, but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expression like that, He shall be saved, yet so as by fire. He shall escape but very narrowly, or he shall have such surprising joy and satisfaction in escaping with his life from such a universal destruction as shall equal theirs that divide the spoil. They thought to make a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their ancestors did that of the Assyrians (Isa 33:23), but they will be sadly disappointed; if by yielding at discretion they can but save their lives, that is all the prey they must promise themselves. Now one would think this advice from a prophet, in God's name, should have gained some credit with them and been universally followed; but, for aught that appears, there were few or none that took it; so wretchedly were their hearts hardened, to their destruction.

9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the Lord : it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

11 And touching the house of the king of Judah, *say*, Hear ye the word of the Lord ;

I. He advises the king and princes to reform, and make conscience of the duty of their place. Because it was the king that sent the message to him, in the reply there shall be a particular word for the house of the king, not to compliment or court them (that was no part of the prophet's business, no, not when they did him the

honour to send to him), but to give them wholesome counsel (Jer 21:11,12): "Execute judgment in the morning; do it carefully and diligently. Those magistrates that would fill up their place with duty had need rise betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do justice upon appeals made to you, and tire out poor petitioners as you have done. Do not lie in your beds in a morning to sleep away the debauch of the night before, nor spend the morning in pampering the body (as those princes, Ec 10:16), but spend it in the despatch of business. You would be delivered out of the hand of those that distress you, and expect that therein God should do you justice; see then that you do justice to those that apply to you, and deliver them out of the hand of their oppressors, lest my fury go out like fire against you in a particular manner, and you fare worst who think to escape best, because of the evil of your doings." Now,

1. This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty that brought all this desolation upon the people. It was the evil of their doings that kindled the fire of God's wrath. Thus plainly does he deal even with the house of the king; for those that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers must thankfully take a prophet's reproofs.

2. This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation. The princes must begin, and set a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They must use their power for the punishment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He reminds them that they are the house of David, and therefore should tread in his steps, who executed judgment and justice to his people. 3. This gives them some encouragement to hope that there may yet be a lengthening of their tranquillity, Da 4:27. If any thing will recover their state from the brink of ruin, this will.

II. He shows them the vanity of all their hopes so long as they continued unreformed, Jer 21:13,14. Jerusalem is an inhabitant of the valley, guarded with mountains on all sides, which were their natural fortifications, making it difficult for an army to approach them. It is a rock of the plain, which made it difficult for an enemy to undermine them. These advantages of their situation they

trusted to more than to the power and promise of God; and, thinking their city by these means to be impregnable, they set the judgments of God at defiance, saying, "Who shall come down against us? None of our neighbours dare make a descent upon us, or, if they do, who shall enter into our habitations?" They had some colour for this confidence; for it appears to have been the sense of all their neighbours that no enemy could force his way into Jerusalem, La 4:12. But those are least safe that are most secure. God soon shows the vanity of that challenge, Who shall come down against us? when he says (Jer 21:13), Behold, I am against thee.

They had indeed by the wickedness driven God out of their city when he would have tarried with them as a friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep them out of their city when he came against them as an enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us? But, if he be against us, who can be for us, to stand us in any stead? Nay, he comes against them not as an enemy that may lawfully and with some hope of success be resisted, but as a judge that cannot be resisted; for he says (Jer 21:14), I will punish you, by due course of law, according to the fruit of your doings, that is, according to the merit of them and the direct tendency of them. That shall be brought upon you which is the natural product of sin. Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy and the justice of a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion, as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible that comes in its way. Jerusalem has become a forest, in which God will kindle a fire that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself a consuming fire; and who is able to stand in his sight when once he is angry?

12 O house of David, thus saith the Lord; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver *him that is* spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

13 Behold, I *am* against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, *and* rock of the plain, saith the Lord; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

Jeremiah-22

Prophecies against the Kings of Judah

1 Thus saith the Lord ; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

Here we have,

I. Orders given to Jeremiah to go and preach before the king. In the foregoing chapter we are told that Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go, in his own proper person, to the house of the king, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings (Jer 22:2): Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah! Subjects must own that where the word of the king is there is power over them, but kings must own that where the word of the Lord is there is power over them. The king of Judah is here spoken to as sitting upon the throne of David, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding his dignity and power by the covenant made with David; let him therefore conform to his example, that he may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With the king his servants are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good ministry as well as a good king.

II. Instructions given him what to preach.

1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, Jer 22:3. They must take care, (1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice in defence of those that were injured, and must deliver the spoiled out of the hand of their oppressors. This was the duty of their place, Ps 82:3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good. (2.) That they do no hurt with it, no wrong, no violence. That is the greatest wrong and violence which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence. They must do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and

widow; for these God does in a particular matter patronise and take under his tuition, Ex 22:21,22.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity, Jer 22:4. There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession, upon the throne of David and of his line, these enjoying a perfect tranquillity, and living in great state and dignity, riding in chariots and on horses, as before, Jer 17:25. Note, the most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government is to do the duty of it.

3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family (Jer 22:5): If you will not hear, will not obey, this house shall become a desolation, the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations in Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though ever so stately, ever so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath: I swear by myself (and God can swear by no greater, Heb 6:13) that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sin will be the ruin of the houses of princes as well as of mean men.

4. He must show how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, Jer 22:6-9.

(1.) It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes and considerable in their own: thou art Gilead unto me and the head of Lebanon. Their lot was cast in a place that was rich and pleasant as Gilead; Zion was a stronghold, as stately as Lebanon: this they trusted to as their security. But,

(2.) This shall not protect them; the country that is now fruitful as Gilead shall be made a wilderness. The cities that are now strong as Lebanon shall be cities not inhabited; and, when the country is laid waste, the cities must be dispeopled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it. When this desolating work is to be done,

[1.] There shall be those that shall do it effectually (Jer 22:7): "I will prepare destroyers against thee; I will sanctify them" (so the word is); "I will appoint them to this service and use them in it." Note, When destruction is designed destroyers are prepared, and perhaps are in the preparing, and things are working towards the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it, long before. And who can contend with destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest: They shall cut down thy choice cedars; and yet, when they are down, shall value them no more than thorns and briers; they shall cast them into the fire, for their choicest cedars have become rotten ones and good for nothing else.

[2.] There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it (Jer 22:8,9); persons of many nations, when they pass by the ruins of this city in their travels, will ask, "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city? How came so strong a city to be overpowered? so rich a city to be impoverished? so populous a city to be depopulated? so holy a city to be profaned? and a city that had been so dear to God to be abandoned by him?" The reason is so obvious that it shall be ready in every man's mouth. Ask those that go by the way, Job 21:29. Ask the next man you meet, and he will tell you it was because they changed their gods, which other nations never used to do. They forsook the covenant of Jehovah their own God, revolted from their allegiance to him and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to, and they worshipped other gods and served them, in contempt of him; and therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never casts any off until they first cast him off. "Go," says God to the prophet, "and preach this to the royal family."

2 and say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sittest
upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people
that enter in by these gates:
3 thus saith the Lord; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and
deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no
wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the
widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.
4 For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates
of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in
chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

5 But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation.
6 For thus saith the Lord unto the king's house of Judah; Thou *art* Gilead unto me, *and* the head of Lebanon: *yet* surely I will make thee a wilderness, *and* cities *which* are not inhabited.
7 And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast *them* into the fire.
8 And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbor, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city?
9 Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.
10 Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; *but* weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

Kings, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men; so it appears in these verses, where we have a sentence of death passed upon two kings who reigned successively in Jerusalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious sons of a very pious father.

Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtless is the same with Jehoahaz, for he is that son of Josiah king of Judah who reigned in the stead of Josiah his father (Jer 22:11), which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people, who made him king though he was not the eldest son, 2Ki 23:30,2Ch 36:1. Among the sons of Josiah (1Ch 3:15) there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother because they thought him a more active daring young man, and fitter to rule; but God soon showed them the folly of their injustice, and that it could not prosper, for within three months the king of Egypt came upon him, deposed him, and carried him away prisoner into Egypt, as God had threatened, De 28:68. It does not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him. We have the story 2Ki 23:34,2Ch 36:4. Now here,

1 The people are directed to lament him rather than his father Josiah: "Weep not for the dead, weep not any more for Josiah." Jeremiah had been himself a true mourner for him, and had stirred up the people to mourn for him (2Ch 35:25): yet now he will have them go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another channel. They must weep sorely for Jehoahaz, who had gone into Egypt; not that there was any great loss of him to the public, as there was of his father, but that his case was much more deplorable. Josiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from seeing the evil to come in this world and removed to see the good to come in the other world; and therefore, Weep not for him, but for his unhappy son, who is likely to live and die in disgrace and misery, a wretched captive. Note, Dying saints may be justly envied, while living sinners are justly pitied. And so dismal perhaps the prospect of the times may be that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for ourselves and for our children, Lu 23:28.

2 The reason given is because he shall never return out of captivity, as he and his people expected, but shall die there. They were loth to believe this, therefore it is repeated here again and again, He shall return no more, Jer 22:10. He shall never have the pleasure of seeing his native country, but shall have the continual grief of hearing of the desolations of it. He has gone forth out of this place, and shall never return, Jer 22:11. He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, Jer 22:12. This came of his forsaking the good example of his father, and usurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Israel this Jehoahaz is represented as a young lion, that soon learned to catch the prey, but was taken, and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain. See Eze 19:3-5.

11 For thus saith the Lord touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of
Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth
out of this place; He shall not return thither any more:
12 but he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and
shall see this land no more.

13 Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; *that* useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

14 that saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and *it is* ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.

15 Shalt thou reign, because thou closest *thyself* in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, *and* then *it was* well with him?

Here is the doom of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum we know not; for, though he was older than his predecessor, there seems to be another son of Josiah, older than he, called Johanan, 1Ch 3:15. But this we know he ruled no better, and fared no better at last. Here we have,

1. His sins faithfully reproved. It is not fit for a private person to say to a king, Thou art wicked; but a prophet, who has a message from God, betrays his trust if he does not deliver it, be it ever so unpleasing, even to kings themselves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry, and probably he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death (as we find afterwards he did, Jer 26:22,23), for then he would have been told of it here; but the crimes for which he is here reproved are,

(1.) Pride and affection of pomp and splendour; as if all the business of a king were to look great, and to do good were to be the least of his care. He must build himself a stately palace, a wide house, and large chambers, Jer 22:14. He must have windows cut out after the newest fashion, perhaps like sash-windows with us. The rooms must be ceiled with cedar, the richest sort of wood. His house must be as well-roofed and wainscoted as the temple itself, or else it will not please him, 1Ki 6:15,16. Nay, it must exceed that, for it must be painted with minium, or vermilion, which dyes red, or, as some read it, with indigo, which dyes blue. No doubt it is lawful for princes and great men to build, and beautify, and furnish their houses so as is agreeable to their dignity; but he that knows what is in man knew

that Jehoiakim did this in the pride of his heart, which makes that to be sinful, exceedingly sinful, which is in itself lawful. Those therefore that are enlarging their houses, and making them more sumptuous, have need to look well to the frame of their own spirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch against all the workings of vain-glory.

But that which was particularly amiss in Jehoiakim's case was that he did this when he could not but perceive, both by the word of God and by his providence, that divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his first three years by the permission and allowance of the king of Egypt, and all the rest by the permission and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy will covet to vie with the greatest monarchs in building and furniture. Observe how peremptory he is in this resolution: "I will build myself a wide house; I am resolved I will, whoever advises me to the contrary." Note, It is the common folly of those that are sinking in their estates to covet to make a fair show. Many have unhumbled hearts under humbling providences, and look most haughty when God is bringing them down. This is striving with our Maker.

(2.) Carnal security and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his prosperity, as if his mountain now stood so strong that it could never be moved. He thought he must reign without any disturbance or interruption because he had enclosed himself in cedar (Jer 22:15), as if that were too fine to be assaulted and too strong to be broken through, and as if God himself could not, for pity, give up such a stately house as that to be burned. Thus when Christ spoke of the destruction of the temple his disciples came to him, to show him what a magnificent structure it was, Mt 23:38,24:1. Note, Those wretchedly deceive themselves who think their present prosperity is a lasting security, and dream of reigning because they are enclosed in cedar. It is but in his own conceit that the rich man's wealth is his strong city.

(3.) Some think he is here charged with sacrilege, and robbing the house of God to beautify and adorn his own house. He cuts him out my windows (so it is in the margin), which some

understand as if he had taken windows out of the temple to put into his own palace and then painted them (as it follows) with vermilion, that it might not be discovered, but might look of a piece with his own buildings. Note, Those cheat themselves, and ruin themselves at last, who think to enrich themselves by robbing God and his house; and, however they may disguise it, God discovers it.

(4.) He is here charged with extortion and oppression, violence and injustice. He built his house by unrighteousness, with money unjustly got and materials which were not honestly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And, because he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the sins that cries in the ears of the Lord of hosts, Jam 5:4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greatest of men to their poor servants and labourers, and will repay those, in justice, that will not in justice pay those whom they employ, but use their neighbour's service without wages. Observe, The greatest of men must look upon the meanest as their neighbours, and be just to them accordingly, and love them as themselves. Jehoiakim was oppressive, not only in his buildings, but in the administration of his government. He did not do justice, made no conscience of shedding innocent blood, when it was to serve the purposes of his ambition, avarice, and revenge.

He was all for oppression and violence, not to threaten it only, but to do it; and, when he was set upon any act of injustice, nothing should stop him, but he would go through with it. And that which was at the bottom of all was covetousness, that love of money which is the root of all evil. Thy eyes and thy heart are not but for covetousness; they were for that, and nothing else. Observe, In covetousness the heart walks after the eyes: it is therefore called the lust of the eye, 1Jo 2:16,Job 31:7. It is setting the eyes upon that which is not, Pr 23:5. The eyes and the heart are then for covetousness when the aims and affections are wholly set upon the wealth of this world; and, where they are so, the temptation is strong to murder, oppression, and all manner of violence and villany.

(5.) That which aggravated all his sins was that he was the son of a good father, who had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it (Jer 22:15,16): Did not thy father eat and drink? When Jehoiakim enlarged and enlightened his house it is probable that he spoke scornfully of his father for contenting himself with such a mean and inconvenient dwelling, below the grandeur of a sovereign prince, and ridiculed him as one that had a dull fancy, a low spirit, and could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was fashionable; that should not serve him which served his father: but God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the spirit of building, was a man of an excellent spirit, a better man than he, and did better for himself and his family. Those children that despise their parents' old fashions commonly come short of their real excellences. Jeremiah tells him,

[1.] That he was directed to do his duty by his father's practice: He did judgment and justice; he never did wrong to any of his subjects, never oppressed them, nor put any hardship upon them, but was careful to preserve all their just rights and properties. Nay, he not only did not abuse his power for the support of wrong, but he used it for the maintaining of right. He judged the cause of the poor and needy, was ready to hear the cause of the meanest of his subjects and do them justice. Note, The care of magistrates must be, not to support their grandeur and take their ease, but to do good, not only not to oppress the poor themselves, but to defend those that are oppressed.

[2.] That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's prosperity.

First, God accepted him: "Was not this to know me, saith the Lord? Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew his God, and worshipped him, and consequently was known and owned of him?"

Note, The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, particularly that which is the duty of our place and station in the world.

Secondly, He himself had the comfort of it: Did he not eat and drink soberly and cheerfully, so as to fit himself for his business, for strength and not for drunkenness? Ec 10:17. He did eat, and drink, and do judgment; he did not (as perhaps Jehoiakim and his princes did) drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted, Pr 31:5. He did eat and drink; that is, God blessed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himself and gave handsome entertainments to his friends, was very hospitable and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride that he had built a fine house, but Josiah's true praise that he kept a good house. Many times those have least in them of true generosity that have the greatest affection for pomp and grandeur; for, to support the extravagant expense of that, hospitality, bounty to the poor, yea, and justice itself, will be pinched.

It is better to live with Josiah in an old-fashioned house, and do good, than live with Jehoiakim in a stately house, and leave debts unpaid. Josiah did justice and judgment, and then it was well with him, Jer 22:15, and it is repeated again, Jer 22:16. He lived very comfortably; his own subjects, and all his neighbours, respected him; and whatever he put his hand to prospered.

Note, While we do well we may expect it will be well with us. This Jehoiakim knew, that his father found the way of duty to be the way of comfort, and yet he would not tread in his steps.

Note, It should engage us to keep up religion in our day that our godly parents kept it up in theirs and recommended it to us from their own experience of the benefit of it. They told us that they had found the promises which godliness has of the life that now is made good to them, and that religion and piety are friendly to outward prosperity. So that we are inexcusable if we turn aside from that good way.

2. Here we have Jehoiakim's doom faithfully read, Jer 22:18,19. We may suppose that it was in the utmost peril of his own life that Jeremiah here foretold the shameful death of Jehoiakim; but thus saith the Lord concerning him, and therefore thus saith he.

(1.) He shall die unlamented; he shall make himself so odious by his oppression and cruelty that all about him shall be glad to part with him, and none shall do him the honour of dropping one tear for him, whereas his father, who did judgment and justice, was universally lamented; and it is promised to Zedekiah that he should be lamented at his death, for he conducted himself better than Jehoiakim had done, Jer 34:5. His relations shall not lament him, no, not with the common expressions of grief used at the funeral of the meanest, where they cried, Ah, my brother! or, Ah, sister! His subjects shall not lament him, nor cry out, as they used to do at the graves of their princes, Ah, lord! or Ah his glory! It is sad for any to live so that, when they die, none will be sorry to part with them. Nay,

(2.) He shall lie unburied. This is worse than the former. Even those that have no tears to grace the funerals of the dead with would willingly have them buried out of their sight; but Jehoiakim shall be buried with the burial of an ass, that is, he shall have no burial at all, but his dead body shall be cast into a ditch or upon a dunghill; it shall be drawn, or dragged, ignominiously, and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. It is said, in the story of Jehoiakim (2Ch 36:6), that Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon, and (Eze 19:9) that he was brought in chains to the king of Babylon.

But it is probable that he died a prisoner, before he was carried away to Babylon as was intended; perhaps he died for grief, or, in the pride of his heart, hastened his own end, and, for that reason, was denied a decent burial, as self-murderers usually are with us. Josephus says that Nebuchadnezzar slew him at Jerusalem, and left his body thus exposed, somewhere at a great distance from the gates of Jerusalem. And it is said (2Ki 24:6) he slept with his fathers. When he built himself a stately house, no doubt he designed himself a stately sepulchre; but see how he was disappointed. Note, Those that are lifted up with great pride are commonly reserved for some great disgrace in life or death.

16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then *it was* well *with him: was* not this to know me? saith the Lord.

17 But thine eyes and thine heart *are* not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do *it*.

18 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord ! or, Ah his glory!

19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages: for all thy lovers are destroyed.

This prophecy seems to have been calculated for the ungracious inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him in the government, reigned but three months, and was then carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, Jer 52:31. We have, in these verses, a prophecy,

I. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on apace, Jer 22:20-23. Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state as a single person, and we have it here under a threefold character:--

1. Very haughty in a day of peace and safety (Jer 22:21): "I spoke unto thee in thy prosperity, spoke by my servants the prophets, reproofs, admonitions, counsels, but thou saidst, I will not hear, I will not heed, thou obeyedst not my voice, and wast resolved that thou wouldst not, and hadst the front to tell me so." It is common for those that live at ease to live in contempt of the word of God. Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked. This is so much the worse that they had it by kind: This has been thy manner from thy youth. They were called transgressors from the womb, Isa 48:8.

2. Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble (Jer 22:20): "When thou seest all thy lovers destroyed, when thou findest thy idols unable to help thee and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Lebanon, and cry, as one undone and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry; thou wilt cry, Help, help, or we are lost; thou wilt lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks upon Lebanon and Bashan, two high hills, in hope to be heard thence by the

advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry from the passages, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress." Thou wilt cry from Abarim (so some read it, as a proper name), a famous mountain in the border of Moab. "Thou wilt cry, as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee; but in vain, for (Jer 22:22) the wind shall eat up all thy pastors, or rulers, that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety; they shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind; they shall be devoured suddenly, insensibly, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. Thy lovers, that thou dependest upon and hast an affection for, shall go into captivity, and shall be so far from saving thee that they shall not be able to save themselves."

3. Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble: "When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thy own priests are at a loss, then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness," Jer 22:22. Note, Many will never be ashamed of their sins till they are brought by them to the last extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our straits to be brought by them to confusion for our sins. The Jewish state is here called an inhabitant of Lebanon, because that famous forest was within their border (Jer 22:23), and all their country was wealthy, and well-guarded as with Lebanon's natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they that they are said to make their nest in the cedars, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. "But, how gracious wilt thou be when pangs come upon thee! Then thou wilt humble thyself before God and promise amendment. When thou art overthrown in stony places thou wilt be glad to hear those words which in thy prosperity thou wouldst not hear, Ps 141:6. Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom, before, thou madest light of."

Note, Many have their pangs of piety who, when the pangs are over, show that they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it: "What will all thy pomp, and state, and wealth avail thee? What will become of it all, or what comfort shalt thou have of it, when thou shalt be in these distresses? No more than a woman in travail, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments

while she is in that condition." So Mr. Gataker. Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

II. Here is a prophecy of the disgrace of the king; his name was Jeconiah, but he is here once and again called Coniah, in contempt. The prophet shortens or nicks his name, and gives him, as we say, a nickname, perhaps to denote that he should be despoiled of his dignity, that his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him:--

1. He shall be carried away into captivity and shall spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, Jer 22:24. The God of truth says it, and confirms it with an oath: "Though he were the signet upon my right hand (his predecessors have been so, and he might have been so if he had conducted himself well, but he being degenerated) I will pluck him thence." The godly kings of Judah had been as signets on God's right hand, near and dear to him; he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince does of his signet-ring, or sign manual; but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of his birth shall be no security to him; notwithstanding that, he shall be thrown off. Answerable to this threatening against Jeconiah is God's promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's guide in their return out of captivity (Hag 2:23): I will take thee, O Zerubbabel! my servant, and make thee as a signet. Those that think themselves as signets on God's right hand must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.

(2.) The king of Babylon shall seize him. Those know not what enemies and mischiefs they lie exposed to who have thrown themselves out of God's protection, Jer 22:25. The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spite to Coniah; they sought his life;

no less than that, they thought, would satisfy their rage; they were such as he had a dread of (they are those whose face thou fearest) which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when it was God himself that gave him into their hands. And, if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them?

(3.) He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity--he and his mother (Jer 22:26), he and his seed (Jer 22:28), that is, he and all the royal family (for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity), or he and the children in his loins; they shall all be cast out to another country, to a strange country, a country where they were not born, nor such a country as that where they were born, a land which they know not, in which they have no acquaintance with whom to converse or from whom to expect any kindness. Thither they shall be carried, from a land where they were entitled to dominion, into a land where they shall be compelled to servitude. But have they no hopes of seeing their own country again?

No: To the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return, Jer 22:27. They conducted themselves ill in it when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north, both far remote, the quite contrary way, and must never expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Those that had abused the dominion they had over others were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires, by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were justly denied the gratification of their innocent desire to see their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatic in that part of this threatening (Jer 22:26), In the country where you were not born, there shall you die. As there is a time to be born and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we shall die we know not; it is enough that our God knows. Let it be our care that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us, wherever we die, though it should be in a far country.

(4.) This shall render him very mean and despicable in the eyes of all his neighbours. They shall be ready to say (Jer 22:28), "This is Coniah a despised broken idol? Yes, certainly he is, and much debased from what he was."

[1.] Time was when he was dignified, nay, when he was almost deified. The people who had seen his father lately deposed were ready to adore him when they saw him upon the throne, but now he is a despised broken idol, which, when it was whole, was worshipped, but, when it is rotten and broken, is thrown by and despised, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will, first or last, be despised and broken; what is unjustly honoured will be justly contemned, and rivals with God will be the scorn of man. Whatever we idolize we shall be disappointed in and then shall despise.

[2.] Time was when he was delighted in; but now he is a vessel in which is not pleasure, or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion or because cracked or dirtied, and so rendered unserviceable. Those whom God has no pleasure in will, some time or other, be so mortified that men will have no pleasure in them.

2. He shall leave no posterity to inherit his honour. The prediction of this is ushered in with a solemn preface (Jer 22:29): O earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and thence infer that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or it is an appeal to the earth itself on which we tread, since those that dwell on earth are so deaf and careless, like that (Isa 1:2), Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! God's word, however slighted, will be heard; the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

Or it is a call to men that mind earthly things, that are swallowed up in those things and are inordinate in the pursuit of them; such have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to hear the word of the Lord. Or it is a call to men considered as

mortal, of the earth, and hastening to the earth again. We all are so; earth we are, dust we are, and, in consideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard the word of the Lord, that, though we are earth, we may be found among those whose names are written in heaven. Now that which is here to be taken notice of is that Jeconiah is written childless (Jer 22:30), that is, as it follows, No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David.

In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think that he had children born in Babylon because mention is made of his seed being cast out there (Jer 22:28) and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy (1Ch 3:17) of seven sons of Jeconiah Assir (that is, Jeconiah the captive) of whom Salathiel is the first. Some think that they were only his adopted sons, and that when it is said (Mt 1:12), Jeconiah begat Salathiel, no more is meant than that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government, the rather because Salathiel is called the son of Neri of the house of Nathan, Lu 3:27,31. Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was childless that none of his seed ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Augustulus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days cannot expect to prosper in their days.

21 I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; *but* thou saidst, I will not hear.
This *hath been* thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not
my voice.

22 The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into
captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all
thy wickedness.

23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how
gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a
woman in travail!

24 *As* I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim
king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I
pluck thee thence;

25 and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into
the hand *of them* whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of
Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the
Chaldeans.

26 And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.
27 But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.
28 *Is* this man Coniah a despised broken idol? *is he* a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?
29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.
30 Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man *that* shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

Jeremiah-23

The Return of the Remnant

1 Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord.

I. Here is a word of terror to the negligent shepherds. The day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them: Woe be to the pastors (to the rulers, both in church and state) who should be to those they are set over as pastors to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep. God here calls them the sheep of my pasture, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for. Woe be to those therefore who are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to do it, but who, instead of that, scatter the flock, and drive them away by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good. In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect scatter them and drive them away. The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, who should have kept them together. Woe be to them when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings and deal with them as they deserve. They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

II. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up. Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private secular interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty.

1 The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, and be happily settled there under a good government, Jer 23:3,4. Though there be but a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly escaped destruction, he will gather that remnant, will find them out wherever they are and find out ways and means to bring them back out of all countries whither he had driven them. It was the justice of God, for the sin of their shepherds, that dispersed them; but the mercy of God shall gather in the sheep, when the shepherds that betrayed them are cut off. They shall be brought to their former habitations, as sheep to their folds, and there they shall be fruitful, and increase in numbers. And, though their former shepherds took no care of them, it does not therefore follow that they shall have no more. If some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be abolished. "They destroyed the sheep, but I will set shepherds over them who shall make it their business to feed them." Formerly they were continually exposed and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed; they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey; but now none of them shall be lacking, none of them missing. Though the times may have been long bad with the church, it does not follow that they will be ever so. Such pastors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made such a figure, were as great blessings to the people as the others were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

2. Messiah the Prince, that great and good Shepherd of the sheep, shall in the latter days be raised up to bless his church, and to be the glory of his people Israel, Jer 23:5,6. The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by that threatening against Jeconiah (Jer 22:30), that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David. But here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of the covenant made with David notwithstanding; for by it the house will be raised out of its ruins to a greater lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the prophet Isaiah; but here we have one, and a very illustrious one; of him doubtless the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. The first words intimate that it would be long ere this promise should have its accomplishment: The days come, but they are not yet. I shall see him, but not now. But all the rest intimate that the accomplishment of it will be glorious.

(1.) Christ is here spoken of as a branch from David, the man the branch (Zec 3:8), his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A branch from David's family, when it seemed to be a root in a dry ground, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the root and offspring of David, Re 22:16. In him doth the horn of David bud, Ps 132:17,18. He is a branch of God's raising up; he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous branch, for he is righteous himself, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous. As an advocate, he is Jesus Christ the righteous.

(2.) He is here spoken of as his church's King. This branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there he shall reign and prosper, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, who went backward in all their affairs. No; he shall set up a kingdom in the world that shall be victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hands; what is the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the

hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper; for he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, all the world over, Ps 96:13. The present kings of the house of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore it is no wonder that they did not prosper. But Christ shall, by his gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and, as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy security and serenity of mind in all his faithful loyal subjects. In his days, under his dominion, Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; that is, all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob shall be protected from the curse of heaven and the malice of hell, shall be privileged from the arrests of God's law and delivered from the attempts of Satan's power, shall be saved from sin, the guilt and dominion of it, and then shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of all evil. See Lu 1:74,75. Those that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come may dwell safely now; for, if God be for us, who can be against us? In the days of Christ's government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul dwells at ease.

(3.) He is here spoken of as The Lord our righteousness.

Observe, [1.] Who and what he is. As God, he is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, denoting his eternity and self-existence. As Mediator, he is our righteousness. By making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace that, upon our believing consent to that covenant, it becomes ours. His being Jehovah our righteousness implies that he is so our righteousness as no creature could be. He is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal righteousness. All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him.

[2.] The profession and declaration of this: This is the name whereby he shall be called, not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so. God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be our righteousness. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him.

That is our righteousness by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing else have we to plead but this, "Christ has died, yea, rather has risen again;" and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation, which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (Jer 23:7,8): They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought up Israel out of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth that brought them up out of the north. This we had before, Jer 16:14,15. But here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves (giving the preference to the latter) as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after those deliverances. Observe the proportion: Just 480 years after they had come out of Egypt Solomon's temple was built (1Ki 6:1); and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, had gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith. Just 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon Messiah the Prince set up the gospel temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon; see Da 9:24,25. Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory compared with the glory which excelleth.

2 Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.

3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord.

5 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David
a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall
execute judgment and justice in the earth.
6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and
this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our
Righteousnes s.
7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no
more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel
out of the land of Egypt;
8 but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of
the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries
whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Denunciation of the Lying Prophets

9 Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my
bones shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine
hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of
his holiness.

Here is a long lesson for the false prophets. As none were more bitter and spiteful against God's true prophets than they, so there were none on whom the true prophets were more severe, and justly. The prophet had complained to God of those false prophets (Jer 14:13), and had often foretold that they should be involved in the common ruin; but here they have woes of their own.

I. He expresses the deep concern that he was under upon this account, and what a trouble it was to him to see men who pretended to a divine commission and inspiration ruining themselves, and the people among whom they dwelt, by their falsehood and treachery (Jer 23:9): My heart within me is broken; I am like a drunken man. His head was in confusion with wonder and astonishment; his heart was under oppression with grief and vexation. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatening to his country made a deep impression upon his spirits. He is here in trouble,

1. Because of the prophets and their sin, the false doctrine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; especially it filled him with horror to hear them making use of God's name and pretending to have their instruction from him. Never was the Lord so abused, and the words of his holiness, as by these men. Note, The dishonour done to God's name, and the profanation of his holy word, are the greatest grief imaginable to a gracious soul.

2. "Because of the Lord, and his judgments, which by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge." He trembled to think of the ruin and desolation which were coming from the face of the Lord (so the word is) and from the face of the word of his holiness, which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatenings of his word, confirmed by his holiness. Note, Even those that have God for them cannot but tremble to think of the misery of those that have God against them.

II. He laments the abounding abominable wickedness of the land and the present tokens of God's displeasure they were under for it (Jer 23:10): The land is full of adulterers; it is full both of spiritual and corporal whoredom. They go a whoring from God, and, having cast off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themselves to all manner of lewdness; and, having dishonoured themselves and their own bodies, they dishonour God and his name by rash and false swearing, because of which the land mourns. Both perjury and common swearing are sins for which a land must mourn in true repentance or it will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine; the pleasant places, or rather the pastures, or (as some read it) the habitations of the wilderness, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we see no signs of repentance. They answer not the end of the correction. The tenour and tendency of men's conversations are sinful, their course continues evil, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of resolution, but it is turned the wrong way; they are zealously affected, but not in a good thing: Their force is not right; their heart is fully set in them to do evil, and they are not

valiant for the truth, have not courage enough to break off their evil courses, though they see God thus contending with them.

10 For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force *is* not right.

11 For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.

He charges it all upon the prophets and priests, especially the prophets. They are both profane (Jer 23:11); the priests profane the ordinances of God they pretend to administer; the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converse and all their conversation are profane, and then it is not strange that the people are so debauched. They both play the hypocrite (so some read it); under sacred pretensions they carry on the vilest designs; yea, not only in their own houses, and the bad houses they frequent, but in my house have I found their wickedness; in the temple, where the priests ministered, where the prophets prophesied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woeful instance in Hophni and Phinehas, 1Sa 2:22. God searches his house, and what wickedness is there he will find it out; and the nearer it is to him the more offensive it is. Two things are charged upon them:--

1. That they taught people to sin by their examples. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long since laid waste. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria that they prophesied in Baal, in Baal's name; so Ahab's prophets did, and so they caused my people Israel to err, to forsake the service of the true God and to worship Baal, Jer 23:13. Now the prophets of Jerusalem did not do so; they prophesied in the name of the true God, and valued themselves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria, who prophesied in Baal; but what the better, when they debauched the nation as much by their immoralities as the other had done by their idolatries? It is a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem that they make use of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity; they make nothing of committing adultery. They make use of the name of the God of truth, and yet walk in lies; they not only prophesy lies, but in their

common conversation one cannot believe a word they say. It is all either jest and banter or fraud and design.

Thus they encourage sinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will say, "Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we should be better than our teachers?" By this means it is that none returns from his wickedness; but they all say that they shall have peace, though they go on, for their prophets tell them so. By this means Judah and Jerusalem have become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and God looked upon them accordingly as fit for nothing but to be destroyed, as they were, with fire and brimstone.

2. That they encouraged people in sin by their false prophecies. They made themselves believe that there was no harm, no danger in sin, and practiced accordingly; and then no marvel that they made others believe so too (Jer 23:16): They speak a vision of their own heart; it is the product of their own invention, and agrees with their own inclination, but it is not out of the mouth of the Lord; he never dictated it to them, nor did it agree either with the law of Moses or with what God has spoken by other prophets. They tell sinners that it shall be well with them though they persist in their sins, Jer 23:17. See here who those are that they encourage--those that despise God, that slight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his institutions, and those that walk after the imagination of their own heart, that are worshippers of idols and slaves to their own lusts; those that are devoted to their pleasures put contempt upon their God. Yet see how these prophets caressed and flattered them: they should have been still saying, There is no peace to those that go on in their evil ways--Those that despise God shall be lightly esteemed--Woe, and a thousand woes, to them; but they still said, You shall have peace; no evil shall come upon you. And, which was worst of all, they told them, God has said so, so making him to patronize sin, and to contradict himself. Note, Those that are resolved to go on in their evil ways will justly be given up to believe the strong delusions of those who tell them that they shall have peace though they go on.

12 Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery *ways* in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, *even* the year of their visitation, saith the Lord.

God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people peace; and to show them the folly of that God tells them that they should have no peace themselves. They were very unfit to warrant the people, and pass their word to them that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves and they are not aware of it, Jer 23:12. Because the prophets and priests are profane, therefore their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness. Those that undertake to lead others, because they mislead them, and know they do so, shall themselves have no comfort in their way.

1. They pretend to show others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist; their light or sight shall fail, so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves.

2. They pretend to give assurances to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing: Their ways shall be to them as slippery ways, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction.

3. They pretend to make the people easy with their flatteries, but they shall themselves be uneasy: They shall be driven, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued, and they shall fall in the way by which they hoped to escape, and so fall into the enemies' hands.

4. They pretend to prevent the evil that threatens others, but God will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, the time fixed for calling them to an account; such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves, and it will be an evil time. The year of visitation is the year of recompenses. It is further threatened (Jer 23:15), I will feed them with wormwood, or poison, with that which is not only nauseous, but noxious, and make them drink waters of gall, or (as some read it) juice of hemlock; see Jer 9:15. Justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first, for from the prophets of Jerusalem, who should have

been patterns of piety and every thing that is praiseworthy, even from them has profaneness gone forth into all the lands. Nothing more effectually debauches a nation than the debauchery of ministers.

13 And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

15 Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

16 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the Lord.

The people are here warned not to give any credit to these false prophets; for, though they flattered them with hopes of impunity, the judgments of God would certainly break out against them, unless they repented (Jer 23:16): "Take notice of what God says, and hearken not to the words of these prophets; for you will find, in the issue, that God's word shall stand, and not theirs. God's word will make you serious, but they make you vain, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, No evil shall come upon you; but hear what God says (Jer 23:19), Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord has gone forth in fury. They tell you, All shall be calm and serene; but God tells you, There is a storm coming, a whirlwind of the Lord, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it. It is a whirlwind raised by divine wrath; it has gone forth in fury, a wind that is brought forth out of the treasuries of divine vengeance; and therefore it is a grievous whirlwind, and shall light heavily, with rain and hail, upon the head of the wicked, which they cannot avoid nor find any shelter from." It shall fall upon the wicked prophets themselves who deceived the people, and the wicked people who suffered themselves to be deceived. A horrible tempest shall be the portion of their cup, Ps 11:6.

This sentence is bound on as irreversible (Jer 23:20): The anger of the Lord shall not return, for the decree has gone forth. God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away, till he have executed the sentence and performed the thoughts of his heart. God's whirlwind, when it comes down from heaven, returns not thither, but accomplishes that for which he sent it, Isa 55:11. This they will not consider now; but in the latter days you shall consider it perfectly, consider it with understanding (so the word is) or with consideration. Note, Those that will not fear the threatenings shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. Those that will not consider in time will be made to consider when it is too late. Son, remember.

17 They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard *it?*

19 Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

20 The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

God disowns all that these false prophets said to sooth people up in their sins (Jer 23:21): I have not sent these prophets; they never had any mission from God. They were not only not sent by him on this errand, but they were never sent by him on any errand; he never had employed them in any service or business for him; and, as to this matter, whereas they pretended to have instructions from him to assure this people of peace, he declares that he never gave them any such instructions. Yet they were very forward--they ran;

they were very bold--they prophesied without any of that difficulty with which the true prophets sometimes struggled.

They said to sinners, You shall have peace. But (Jer 23:18): "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who of you has, that are so confident of this? You deliver this message with a great deal of assurance; but have you consulted God about it? No; you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished. You have not perceived and heard his word, nor marked that; you have not compared this with the scripture; if you had taken notice of that, and of the constant tenour of it, you would never have delivered such a message." The prophets themselves must try the spirits by the touchstone of the law and of the testimony, as well as those to whom they prophesy; but which of those did so that prophesied of peace? That they did not stand in God's counsel nor hear his word is proved afterwards, Jer 23:22. If they had stood in my counsel, as they pretend,

1. They would have made the scriptures their standard: They would have caused my people to hear my words, and would have conscientiously kept closely to them. But, not speaking according to that rule, it is a plain evidence that there is no light in them.

2. They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching. They would have done all they could to turn people from their evil way in general and from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted the reformation of manners, would have made this their scope in all their preaching, to part between men and their sins; but it appeared that this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sins.

3. They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it: If they had stood in my counsel, and the words they had preached had been my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way; a divine power should have gone along with the word for the conviction of sinners. God will bless his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule; Jeremiah

himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to turn from their evil way.

23 *Am* I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?

24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

Several things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for their conviction, that, if possible, they might be brought to recant their error and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider that though they may impose upon men God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can and does. Here,

(1.) God asserts his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, Jer 23:23,24. When they told the people that no evil should befall them though they went on in their evil ways they went upon atheistical principles, that the Lord doth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most incontestable self-evident truths.

[1.] That though God's throne is prepared in the heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world, which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world, which seems to be at hand, Jer 23:23. The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven. Here it runs to and fro as well as there (2Ch 16:9); and what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are veiled in flesh, is as clearly seen by him as what is in the mind of angels, those unveiled spirits above that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among its inhabitants that it is in heaven among its armies. With us nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and in our operations, but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand and afar off, are both alike.

[2.] That, how ingenious and industrious soever men are to disguise themselves and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye (Jer

23:24): "Can any hide himself in the secret places of the earth, that I shall not see him? Can any hide his projects and intentions in the secret places of the heart, that I shall not see them?" No arts of concealment can hide men from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them.

[3.] That he is every where present; he does not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence, but he fills heaven and earth by his essential presence, Ps 139:7,8, &c. No place can either include him or exclude him.

(2.) He applies this to these prophets, who had a notable art of disguising themselves (Jer 23:25,26): I have heard what the prophets said that prophesy lies in my name. They thought that he was so wholly taken up with the other world that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this. But God will make them know that he knows all their impostures, all the shams they have put upon the world, under colour of divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with they pretended to have had from God in a dream, when there was no such thing. This they could not discover. If a man tell me that he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him; he knows I cannot.

But God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidants, saying, So and so I have dreamed; but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, How long? Shall I always bear with them? Is it in the hearts of those prophets (so some read it) to be ever prophesying lies and prophesying the deceits of their own hearts? Will they never see what an affront they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?

2. Let them consider that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and fathering their own fancies upon divine inspiration, was the ready way to bring all religion into contempt and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the

name of God, and prefaced all they said with, Thus saith the Lord. Yet, says God, They think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams. They designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances and the true prophets, as their fathers forgot God's name for Baal. Note, The great thing Satan aims at is to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this. Sometimes he does it by setting up false gods (bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God), sometimes by misrepresenting the true God, as if he were altogether such a one as ourselves. Pretenses to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between their prophecies and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord (Jer 23:28): The prophet that has a dream, which was the way of inspiration that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, let him tell it as a dream; so Mr. Gataker reads it. "Let him lay no more stress upon it than men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it. Let them not say that it is from God, nor call their foolish dreams divine oracles. But let the true prophet, that has my word, speak my word faithfully, speak it as a truth" (so some read it): "let him keep closely to his instructions, and you will soon perceive a vast difference between the dreams that the false prophets tell and the divine dictates which the true prophets deliver. He that pretends to have a message from God, whether by dream or voice, let him declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God and which is not.

Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish; for what is the chaff to the wheat? The promises of peace which these prophets make to you are no more to be compared to God's promises than chaff to wheat." Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthless, as the chaff which the wind drives away. But the word of God has substance in it; it is of value, is food for the soul, the bread of life. Wheat was the staple

commodity of Canaan, that valley of vision, De 8:8,Eze 27:17. There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men and the pure word of God as between the chaff and the wheat. It follows (Jer 23:29), Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord? Is their word so? Has it the power and efficacy that the word of God has? No; nothing like it; there is no more comparison than between painted fire and real fire. Theirs is like an ignis fatuus--a deceiving meteor, leading men into by-paths and dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law (De 33:2), and of the gospel Christ says, I have come to send fire on the earth, Lu 12:49. Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but softens wax; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold. So the word of God is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. God appeals here to the consciences of those to whom the word was sent: "Is not my word like fire? Has it not been so to you? Zec 1:6. Speak as you have found." It is compared likewise to a hammer breaking the rock in pieces. The unhumbled heart of man is like a rock; if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be broken to pieces by it as the hammer. Whatever opposition is given to the word, it will be borne down and broken to pieces.

4. Let them consider that while they went on in this course God was against them. Three times they are told this, Jer 23:30,31,32. Behold, I am against the prophets. They pretended to be for God, and made use of his name, but were really against him; he looks upon them as they were really, and is against them. How can they be long safe, or at all easy, that have a God of almighty power against them? While these prophets were promising peace to the people God was proclaiming war against them. They stand indicted here,

(1.) For robbery: They steal my word every one from his neighbour. Some understand it of that word of God which the good prophets preached; they stole their sermons, their expressions, and mingled them with their own, as hucksters mingle bad wares with some that are good, to make them vendible. Those that were strangers to the spirit of the true prophets

mimicked their language, picked up some good sayings of theirs, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; they were not of a piece with the rest of their discourses. The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools, Pr 26:7. Others understand it of the word of God as it was received and entertained by some of the people; they stole it out of their hearts, as the wicked one in the parable is said to steal the good seed of the word, Mt 13:19. By their insinuations they diminished the authority, and so weakened the efficacy, of the word of God upon the minds of those that seemed to be under convictions by it.

(2.) They stand indicted for counterfeiting the broad seal. Therefore God is against them (Jer 23:31), because they use their tongues at their pleasure in their discourses to the people; they say what they themselves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and say, He saith it. Some read it, They smooth their tongues; they are very complaisant to the people, and say nothing but what is pleasing and plausible; they never reprove them nor threaten them, but their words are smoother than butter. Thus they ingratiate themselves with them, and get money by them; and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the patron of their lies; they say, "He saith so." What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth than to lay the brats of the father of lies at his door?

(3.) They stand indicted as common cheats (Jer 23:32): I am against them, for they prophesy false dreams, pretending that to be a divine inspiration which is but an invention of their own. This is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuse them to say, Caveat emptor--Let the buyer take care of himself, and Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur--If people will be deceived, let them. No; it is the people's fault that they err, that they take things upon trust, and do not try the spirits; but it is much more the prophets' fault that they cause God's people to err by their lies and by their lightness, by the flatteries of their preaching soothing them up in their sins, and by the looseness and lewdness of their conversation encouraging them to persist in them.

[1.] God disowns their having any commission from him: I sent them not, nor commanded them; they are not God's messengers, nor is what they say his message.

[2.] He therefore justly denies his blessing with them: Therefore they shall not profit this people at all. All the profit they aim at is to make them easy; but they shall not so much as do that, for God's providences will at the same time be making them uneasy. They do not profit this people (so some read it); and more is implied than is expressed; they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Those that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are so far from edifying the church that they do it the greatest mischief imaginable.

25 I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my
name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.
26 How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy
lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart;
27 which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams,
which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have
forgotten my name for Baal.
28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that
hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What *is* the chaff
to the wheat? saith the Lord.
29 *Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer
that breaketh the rock in pieces?
30 Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the Lord, that
steal my words every one from his neighbor.
31 Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their
tongues, and say, He saith.
32 Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the
Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies,
and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them:
therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.
33 And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee,
saying, What *is* the burden of the Lord? thou shalt then say unto
them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the Lord.

The profaneness of the people, with that of the priests and prophets, is here reproved in a particular instance, which may

seem of small moment in comparison of their greater crimes; but profaneness in common discourse, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalency of wickedness in it, we are not to think it strange that this matter was so largely and warmly insisted upon here. Observe,

The sin here charged upon them is bantering God's prophets and dialect they used, and jesting with sacred things. They asked, What is the burden of the Lord? Jer 23:33,34. They say, The burden of the Lord, Jer 23:38. This was the word that gave great offence to God, that, whenever they spoke of the word of the Lord, they called it, in scorn and derision, the burden of the Lord. Now,

1. This was a word that the prophets much used, and used it seriously, to show what a weight the word of God was upon their spirits, of what importance it was, and how pressingly it should come upon those that heard it. The words of the false prophets had nothing ponderous in them, but God's words had; those were as chaff, these as wheat. Now the profane scoffers took this word, and made a jest and a byword of it; they made people merry with it, that so, when the prophets used it, they might not make people serious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan, in all ages, to obstruct the efficacy of sacred things by turning them into matter of sport and ridicule; the mocking of God's messengers was the baffling of his messages.

2. Perhaps this word was caught at and reproached by the scoffers as an improper word, newly-coined by the prophets, and not used in that sense by any classic author. It was only in this and the last age that the word of the Lord was called the burden of the Lord, and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that signification. But if men take a liberty, as we see they do, to form new phrases which they think more expressive and significant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But especially we must observe it as a rule that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of speaking.

3. Some think that because when the word of the Lord is called a burden it signifies some word of reproof and threatening, which would lay a load upon the hearers (yet I know not whether that

observation will always hold), therefore in using this word the burden of the Lord in a canting way they reflected upon God as always bearing hard upon them, always teasing them, always frightening them, and so making the word of God a perpetual uneasiness to them. They make the word of God a burden to themselves, and then quarrel with the ministers for making it a burden to them. Thus the scoffers of the latter days, while they slight heaven and salvation, reproach faithful ministers for preaching hell and damnation.

Upon the whole we may observe that, how light soever men may make of it, the great God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, those who burlesque sacred things, and who, that they may make a jest of scripture truths and laws, put jests upon scripture language. In such wit as this I am sure there is no wisdom, and so it will appear at last. Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Those that were here guilty of this sin were some of the false prophets, who perhaps came to steal the word of God from the true prophets, some of the priests, who perhaps came to seek occasions against them on which to ground an information, and some of the people, who had learned of the profane priests and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus if the priests and the prophets, those ringleaders of mischief, had not shown them the way.

34 And *as for* the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house.

35 Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? and, What hath the Lord spoken?

36 And the burden of the Lord shall ye mention no more; for every man's word shall be his burden: for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God.

When they are reproved for this profane way of speaking they are directed how to express themselves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more use of this word; we find it used long after this (Zec 9:1,Mal 1:1,Na 1:1,Hab 1:1); and we do not find it once used in this sense by Jeremiah either before or after. It is true indeed that in many cases it is advisable

to make no use of such words and things as some have made a bad use of, and it may be prudent to avoid such phrases as, though innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made stumbling-blocks. But here God will have the prophet keep to his rule (Jer 15:19), Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Do not thou leave off using this word, but let them leave off abusing it. You shall not mention the burden of the Lord any more in this profane careless manner (Jer 23:36), for it is perverting the words of the living God and making a bad use of them, which is an impious dangerous thing; for, consider, he is the Lord of hosts our God.

Note, If we will but look upon God as we ought to do in his greatness and goodness, and be but duly sensible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped that we shall not dare to affront him by making a jest of his words. It is an impudent thing to abuse him that is the living God, the Lord of hosts, and our God. How then must they express themselves? He tells them (Jer 23:37): Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, when thou art enquiring of him, What hath the Lord answered thee? And what hath the Lord spoken? And they must say thus when they enquire of their neighbours, Jer 23:35.

Note, We must always speak of the things of God reverently and seriously, and as becomes the oracles of God. It is a commendable practice to enquire after the mind of God, to enquire of our brethren what they have heard, to enquire of our prophets what they have to say from God; but then, to show that we enquire for a right end, we must do it after a right manner. Ministers may learn here, when they reprove people for what they say and do amiss, to teach them how to say and do better.

37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the Lord answered thee? and, What hath the Lord spoken?

38 But since ye say, The burden of the Lord; therefore thus saith the Lord; Because ye say this word, The burden of the Lord, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the Lord;

Because they would not leave off this bad way of speaking, though they were admonished of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would still say, The burden of the Lord, though God

had sent to them to forbid them, Jer 23:38. What little regard have those to the divine authority that will not be persuaded by it to leave an idle word! But see what will come of it.

1. Those shall be severely reckoned with that thus pervert the words of God, that put a wrong construction on them and make a bad use of them; and it shall be made to appear that it is a great provocation to God to mock his messengers: I will even punish that man and his house; whether he be prophet or priest, or one of the common people, it shall be visited upon him, Jer 23:34. Perverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, are sins that bring ruining judgments upon families and entail a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have Jer 23:36. Every man's word shall be his own burden; that is, the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him as to sink him into the pit of destruction. God shall make their own tongue to fall upon them, Ps 64:8. God will give them enough of their jest, so that the burden of the Lord they shall have no heart to mention any more; it will be too heavy to make a jest of. They are as the madman that casts firebrands, arrows, and death, while they pretend to be in sport.

2 The words of God, though thus perverted, shall be accomplished. Do they ask, What is the burden of the Lord? Let the prophet ask them, What burden do you mean? Is it this: I will even forsake you? Jer 23:33. This is the burden that shall be laid and bound upon them (Jer 23:39,40): "Behold I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you. I will leave you, and have no thoughts of returning to you." Those are miserable indeed that are forsaken and forgotten of God; and men's bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jerusalem was the city God had taken to himself as a holy city, and then given to them and their fathers; but that shall now be forsaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him; but they shall now be cast out of his presence. They had been great and honourable among the nations; but now God will bring upon them an everlasting reproach and a perpetual shame. Both their sin and their punishment shall be their lasting disgrace. It is here upon record, to their infamy, and will remain so to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable when those that

mock at it shall be vilified and made contemptible. Those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

39 therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, *and cast you* out of my presence:

40 and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

Jeremiah-24

The Lesson from the Good and Bad Figs

1 The Lord showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs *were* set before the temple of the Lord, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.

2 One basket *had* very good figs, *even* like the figs *that are* first ripe: and the other basket *had* very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by showing us that the same providence which to some is a savour of death unto death may by the grace and blessing of God be made to others a savour of life unto life; and that, though God's people share with others in the same calamity, yet it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good and shall issue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender Father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous Judge. Observe,

I The date of this sermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, Jer 24:1. Jeconiah was himself a despised broken vessel, but with him were carried away some very valuable persons, Ezekiel for one (Eze 1:12); many of the princes of Judah then went into captivity, Daniel and his fellows were carried off a little before; of the people only the carpenters and the smiths were forced away, either because the Chaldeans needed some ingenious men of those trades (they had a great plenty of astrologers and

stargazers, but a great scarcity of smiths and carpenters) or because the Jews would severely feel the loss of them, and would, for want of them, be unable to fortify their cities and furnish themselves with weapons of war.

Now, it should seem, there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were those that triumphed in it, and insulted over those to whose lot it fell to go into captivity. Note, We must not conclude concerning the first and greatest sufferers that they were the worst and greatest sinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwise, as it did here.

II The vision by which this distinction of the captives was represented to the prophet's mind. He saw two baskets of figs, set before the temple, there ready to be offered as first-fruits to the honour of God. Perhaps the priests, being remiss in their duty, were not ready to receive them and dispose of them according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah sees them standing before the temple. But that which was the significancy of the vision was that the figs in one basket were extraordinarily good, those in the other basket extremely bad. The children of men are all as the fruits of the fig-tree, capable of being made serviceable to God and man (Jdg 9:11); but some are as good figs, than which nothing is more pleasant, others as damaged rotten figs, than which nothing is more nauseous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man!

The good figs were like those that are first ripe, which are most acceptable (Mic 7:1) and most prized when newly come into season. The bad figs are such as could not be eaten, they were so evil; they could not answer the end of their creation, were neither pleasant nor good for food; and what then were they good for? If God has no honour from men, nor their generation any service, they are even like the bad figs, that cannot be eaten, that will not answer any good purpose. If the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth fit for nothing but the dunghill. Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of his tabernacle, some are sincere, and they are very good; others dissemble with God, and they are very bad. Sinners are the worst of men, hypocrites the

worst of sinners. Corruptio optimi est pessima--That which is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.

3 Then said the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

4 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

5 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for *their* good.

The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirit of those that had gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the good figs, that were very good, the first ripe. These represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them; these are pleasing to God, as good figs are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now observe here,

(1.) Those that were already carried into captivity were the good figs that God would own. This shows,

[1.] That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred by all that is before us. When God's judgments are abroad those are not always the worst that are first seized by them.

[2.] That early suffering sometimes proves for the best to us. The sooner the child is corrected the better effect the correction is likely to have. Those that went first into captivity were as the son whom the father loves, and chastens betimes, chastens while there is hope; and it did well. But those that staid behind were like a child long left to himself, who, when afterwards corrected, is stubborn, and made worse by it, La 3:37.

(2.) God owns their captivity to be his doing. Whoever were the instruments of it, he ordered and directed it (Jer 24:5): I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. It is God that puts his gold into the furnace, to be tried; his hand is, in a special manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

(3.) Even this disgraceful uncomfortable captivity God intended for their benefit; and we are sure that his intentions are never frustrated: I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, separated them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of their enemies and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations; and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so, in the issue, as to many of them. Out of the eater came forth meat. By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the hand of God, weaned from the world, made serious, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity; particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry; and thus it was good for them that they were afflicted, Ps 119:67,71.

(4.) God promises them that he will own them in their captivity. Though they seem abandoned, they shall be acknowledged; the scornful relations they left behind will scarcely own them, or their kindred to them, but God says, I will acknowledge them. Note, The Lord knows those that are his, and will own them in all conditions; nakedness and sword shall not separate them from his love.

(5.) God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time, Jer 24:6. Being sent into captivity for their good, they shall not be lost there; but it shall be with them as it is with gold which the refiner puts into the furnace.

[1.] He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage: "I will set my eyes upon them for good, to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it."

[2.] He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again as soon as the work designed upon it is done: I will bring them again to this land. They were sent abroad for improvement awhile, under a severe discipline; but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their Father's house.

[3.] He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use; so, when God has brought them back from their trial, he will build them and make them a habitation for himself, will plant them and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was to square the rough stones and make them fit for his building, to prune up the young trees and make them fit for his planting.

(6.) He engages to prepare them for these temporal mercies which he designed for them by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, Jer 24:7. It is this that will make their captivity be for their good; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction and their qualification for deliverance. When our troubles are sanctified to us, then we may be sure that they will end well. Now that which is promised is,

[1.] That they should be better acquainted with God; they should learn more of God by his providences in Babylon than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem, thanks to divine grace, for, if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have forgotten God. It is here promised, I will give them, not so much a head to know me, but a heart to know me, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment directing and governing the will and affections. A good understanding have all those that do his commandments, Ps 111:10. Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him he will give that knowledge. It is God himself that

gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance.

[2.] That they should be entirely converted to God, to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end: They shall return to me with their whole heart. God himself undertakes for them that they shall; and, if he turn us, we shall be turned. This follows upon the former; for those that have a heart to know God aright will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion, or hypocritical in their religion, may truly be said to be ignorant of God.

[3.] That thus they should be again taken into covenant with God, as much to their comfort as ever: They shall be my people, and I will be their God. God will own them, as formerly, for his people, in the discoveries of himself to them, in his acceptance of their services, and in his gracious appearances on their behalf; and they shall have liberty to own him for their God in their prayers to him and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have backslidden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is herein well-ordered, that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, and that afflictions are not only consistent with, but flowing from, covenant-love.

2. Here is the moral of the bad figs. Zedekiah and his princes and partizans yet remain in the land, proud and secure enough, Eze 11:3. Many had fled into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted well for themselves and their own safety, and boasted that though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God yet they had acted prudently for themselves. Now as to both these, that looked so scornfully upon those that had gone into captivity, it is here threatened,

(1.) That, whereas those who were already carried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of one another's society, though in captivity, these should be dispersed

and removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, where they should have no joy one of another.

(2.) That, whereas those were carried captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries for their hurt. Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them that they should harden them, not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him.

(3.) That, whereas those should have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, these should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind: In all places whither I shall drive them they shall be a reproach and a proverb. "Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew"--"Such a one is as poor and miserable as a Jew." All their neighbours shall make a jest of them, and of the calamities brought upon them.

(4.) That, whereas those should return to their own land, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead that it was the land God gave to their fathers, for they had it from God, and he gave it to them upon condition of their obedience.

(5.) That, whereas those were reserved for better times, these were reserved for worse; wherever they are removed the sword, and famine, and pestilence, shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and, coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to prosecute those that fly from justice; and those that have escaped one may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation yet, because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity and those of Zedekiah's, it is probable that this has a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those of them that believed were taken care of, but those that continued obstinate in unbelief were driven into all countries for a taunt and a curse, and so they remain to this day.

6 For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them
again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull *them* down;
and I will plant them, and not pluck *them* up.
7 And I will give them a heart to know me, that I *am* the Lord; and
they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall
return unto me with their whole heart.
8 And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely
thus saith the Lord, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and
his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land,
and them that dwell in the land of Egypt:
9 and I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the
earth for *their* hurt, *to be* a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a
curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.
10 And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among
them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them
and to their fathers.

Jeremiah-25

Seventy Years of Desolation

1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah,
in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that
was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;
2 the which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah,
and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

We have here a message from God concerning all the people of Judah (Jer 25:1), which Jeremiah delivered, in his name, unto all the people of Judah, Jer 25:2. Note, That which is of universal concern ought to be of universal cognizance. It is fit that the word which concerns all the people, as the word of God does, the word of the gospel particularly, should be divulged to all in general, and, as far as may be, addressed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been sent to the house of the king (Jer 22:1), and he took courage to deliver his message to them, probably when they had all come up to Jerusalem to worship at one of the solemn feasts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever,

they would be well disposed to hear counsel and receive instruction.

This prophecy is dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and the first of Nebuchadrezzar. It was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's third year that Nebuchadrezzar began to reign by himself alone (having reigned some time before in conjunction with his father), as appears, Da 1:1. But Jehoiakim's fourth year was begun before Nebuchadrezzar's first was completed. Now that that active, daring, martial prince began to set up for the world's master, God, by his prophet, gives notice that he is his servant, and intimates what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatness, which was so formidable to the nations, might not be construed as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the government of the world. Nebuchadrezzar should not bid so fair for universal monarchy (I should have said universal tyranny) but that God had purposes of his own to serve by him, in the execution of which the world shall see the meaning of God's permitting and ordering a thing that seemed such a reflection on his sovereignty and goodness.

Now in this message we may observe the great pains that had been taken with the people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin and a justification of God in his proceedings against them.

I. Jeremiah, for his part, had been a constant preacher among them twenty-three years; he began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, who reigned thirty-one years, so that he prophesied about eighteen or nineteen years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoahaz, and now four years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them the heavier will our account be if we have not improved them. These three years (these three and twenty years) have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree. All this while,

1. God had been constant in sending messages to them, as there was occasion for them: "From that time to this very day the word of the Lord has come into me, for your use." Though they had

the substance of the warning sent them already in the books of Moses, yet, because those were not duly regarded and applied, God sent to enforce them and make them more particular, that they might be without excuse. Thus God's Spirit was striving with them, as with the old world, Ge 6:3.

2. Jeremiah had been faithful and industrious in delivering those messages. He could appeal to themselves, as well as to God and his own conscience, concerning this: I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking. He had declared to them the whole counsel of God; he had taken a great deal of care and pains to discharge his thrust in such a manner as might be most likely to win and work upon them. What men are solicitous about and intent upon they rise up early to prosecute. It intimates that his head was so full of thoughts about it, and his heart so intent upon doing good, that it broke his sleep, and made him get up betimes to project which way he might take that would be most likely to do them good. He rose early, both because he would lose no time and because he would lay hold on and improve the best time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were sober and sedate. Christ came early in the morning to preach in the temple, and the people as early to hear him, Lu 21:38. Morning lectures have their advantages. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning.

II. Besides him, God had sent them other prophets, on the same errand, Jer 25:4. Of the writing prophets Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, were a little before him, and Zephaniah contemporary with him. But, besides those, there were many other of God's servants the prophets who preached awakening sermons, which were never published. And here God himself is said to rise early and send them, intimating how much his heart also was upon it, that this people should turn and live, and not go on and die, Eze 33:11.

III. All the messages sent them were to the purpose, and much to the same purport, Jer 25:5,6.

1. They all told them of their faults, their evil way, and the evil of their doings. Those were not of God's sending who flattered them as if there were nothing amiss among them.

2. They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a sin that was in a special manner provoking to God, their going after other gods, to serve them and to worship them, gods that were the work of their own hands.

3. They all called on them to repent of their sins and to reform their lives. This was the burden of every song, Turn you now every one from his evil way. Note, Personal and particular reformation must be insisted on as necessary to a national deliverance: every one must turn from his own evil way. The street will not be clean unless every one sweep before his own door.

4. They all assured them that, if they did so, it would certainly be the lengthening out of their tranquillity. The mercies they enjoyed should be continued to them: "You shall dwell in the land, dwell at ease, dwell in peace, in this good land, which the Lord has given you and your fathers. Nothing but sin will turn you out of it, and that shall not if you turn from it." The judgments they feared should be prevented: Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt. Note, We should never receive from God the evil punishment if we did not provoke him by the evil of sin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cause, nor causes grief to us unless we give offence to him.

IV. Yet all was to no purpose. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a very lively affectionate preacher, yet they hearkened not to him, Jer 25:3. The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they hearken to them, nor incline their ear, Jer 25:4. That very particular sin which they were told, of all others, was most offensive to God, and made them obnoxious to his justice, they wilfully persisted in: You provoke me with the works of your hands to your own hurt. Note, What is a provocation to God will prove, in the end, hurt to ourselves, and we must bear the blame of it. O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.

3 From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that *is* the three and twentieth year, the word of

the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

4 And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them;* but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

5 They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever:

6 and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

7 Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord ; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words,

Here is the sentence grounded upon the foregoing charge: "Because you have not heard my words, I must take another course with you," Jer 25:8. Note, When men will not regard the judgments of God's mouth they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands, to hear the rod, since they would not hear the word; for the sinner must either be parted from his sin or perish in it. Wrath comes without remedy against those only that sin without repentance. It is not so much men's turning aside that ruins them as their not returning.

I The ruin of the land of Judah by the king of Babylon's armies is here decreed, Jer 25:9. God sent to them his servants the prophets, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will send for his servant the king of Babylon, whom they cannot mock, and despise, and persecute, as they did his servants the prophets.

Note, The messengers of God's wrath will be sent against those that would not receive the messengers of his mercy. One way or other God will be heeded, and will make men know that he is the Lord. Nebuchadrezzar, though a stranger to the true God, the God of Israel, nay, an enemy to him and afterwards a rival with him, was yet, in the descent he made upon his country. God's servant, accomplished his purpose, was employed by him, and

was an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really serving God's designs when he thought he was serving his own ends. Justly therefore does God here call himself The Lord of hosts (Jer 25:8), for here is an instance of his sovereign dominion, not only over the inhabitants, but over the armies of this earth, of which he makes what use he pleases. He has them all at his command.

The most potent and absolute monarchs are his servants. Nebuchadrezzar, who is an instrument of his wrath, is as truly his servant as Cyrus, who is an instrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made desolate, God here musters his army that is to make it so, gathers it together, takes all the families of the north, if there be occasion for them, leads them on as their commander-in-chief, brings them against this land, gives them success, not only against Judah and Jerusalem, but against all the nations round about, that there might be no dependence upon them as allies or assistants against that threatening force. The utter destruction of this and all the neighbouring lands is here described, Jer 25:9-11. It shall be total: The whole land shall be a desolation, not only desolate, but a desolation itself; both city and country shall be laid waste, and all the wealth of both be made a prey of. It shall be lasting, even perpetual desolations; they shall continue so long in ruins, and after long waiting there shall appear so little prospect of relief, that every one shall call it perpetual.

This desolation shall be the ruin of their credit among their neighbours; it shall bury their honour in the dust, shall make them an astonishment and a hissing; every one will be amazed at them, and hiss them off the stage of action with just disgrace for deserting a God who would have been their protection for impostors who would certainly be their destruction. It will likewise be the ruin of all their comfort among themselves; it shall be a final period of all their joy: I will take from them the voice of mirth, hang their harps on the willow-trees, and put them out of tune for songs. I will take from them the voice of mirth; they shall neither have cause for it nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word and therefore the voice of mirth shall no more be heard among them. They shall be deprived of

food: The sound of the mill-stones shall not be heard; for, when the enemy has seized their stores, the sound of the grinding must needs be low, Ec 12:4. An end shall be put to all business; there shall not be seen the light of a candle, for there shall be no work to be done worth candle-light. And, lastly, they shall be deprived of their liberty: Those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

The fixing of time during which the captivity should last would be of great use, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their calamity and the encouragement of faith and prayer. Daniel, who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it, Da 9:2. Nay, God himself had an eye to it (2Ch 36:22); for therefore he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, which appears by this, that, when he has thought fit, some of them have been made known to his servants the prophets and by them to his church.

II The ruin of Babylon, at last, is here likewise foretold, as it had been, long before, by Isaiah, Jer 25:12-14. The destroyers must themselves be destroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire, when the correcting work is done with it. This shall be done when seventy years are accomplished; for the destruction of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when these seventy years commence; some date them from the captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim and first of Nebuchadrezzar, others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after. I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to serve the king of Babylon, and because usually God has taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the 400 years' servitude in Egypt.

And, if so, eighteen or nineteen years of the seventy had run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the

set time, to favour Zion, has come, the king of Babylon must be visited, and all the instances of his tyranny reckoned for; then that nation shall be punished for their iniquity, as the other nations have been punished for theirs. That land must then be a perpetual desolation, such as they had made other lands; for the Judge of all the earth will both do right and avenge wrong, as King of nations and King of saints. Let proud conquerors and oppressors be moderate in the use of their power and success, for it will come at last to their own turn to suffer; their day will come to fall. In this destruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Persians, reference shall be had,

1. To what God had said: I will bring upon that land all my words; for all the wealth and honour of Babylon shall be sacrificed to the truth of the divine predictions, and all its power broken, rather than one iota or tittle of God's word shall fall to the ground. The same Jeremiah that prophesied the destruction of other nations by the Chaldeans foretold also the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves; and this must be brought upon them, Jer 25:13. It is with reference to this very event that God says, I will confirm the word of my servant, and perform the counsel of my messengers, Isa 44:26.

2. Two what they had done (Jer 25:14): I will recompense them according to their deeds, by which they transgressed the law of God, even then when they were made to serve his purposes. They had made many nations to serve them, and trampled upon them with the greatest insolence imaginable; but not that the measure of their iniquity is full many nations and great kings, that are in alliance with and come in to the assistance of Cyrus king of Persia, shall serve themselves of them also, shall make themselves masters of their country, enrich themselves with their spoils, and make them the footstool by which to mount the throne of universal monarchy. They shall make use of them for servants and soldiers. He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity.

9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly

destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations.

10 Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

13 And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, *even* all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

14 For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

The Cup of Wrath for the Nations

15 For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; Take the winecup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

Under the similitude of a cup going round, which all the company must drink of, is here represented the universal desolation that was now coming upon that part of the world which Nebuchadrezzar, who just now began to reign and act, was to be the instrument of, and which should at length recoil upon his own country. The cup in the vision is to be a sword in the accomplishment of it: so it is explained, Jer 25:16. It is the sword that I will send among them, the sword of war, that should be irresistibly strong and implacably cruel.

I. As to the circumstances of this judgment, observe,

1. Whence this destroying sword should come--from the hand of God. It is the sword of the Lord (Jer 47:6), bathed in heaven, Isa 34:5. Wicked men are made use of as his sword, Ps 17:13. It is

the wine-cup of his fury. It is the just anger of God that sends this judgment. The nations have provoked him by their sins, and they must fall under the tokens of his wrath. These are compared to some intoxicating liquor, which they shall be forced to drink of, as, formerly, condemned malefactors were sometimes executed by being compelled to drink poison. The wicked are said to drink the wrath of the Almighty, Job 21:20,Re 14:10. Their share of troubles in his world is represented by the dregs of a cup of red wine full of mixture, Ps 75:8. See Ps 11:6. The wrath of God in this world is but as a cup, in comparison of the full streams of it in the other world.

2. By whose hand it should be sent to them--by the hand of Jeremiah as the judge set over the nations (Jer 1:10), to pass his sentence upon them, and by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar as the executioner. What a much greater figure then does the poor prophet make than what the potent prince makes, if we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverse of it! Jeremiah must take the cup at God's hand, and compel the nations to drink it. He foretels no hurt to them but what God appoints him to foretel; and what is foretold by a divine authority will certainly be fulfilled by a divine power.

3. On whom it should be sent--on all the nations within the verge of Israel's acquaintance and the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and made all the nations to drink of it, that is, he prophesied concerning each of the nations here mentioned that they should share in this great desolation that was coming. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are put first (Jer 25:18); for judgment begins at the house of God (1Pe 4:17), at the sanctuary, Eze 9:6. Whether Nebuchadrezzar had his eye principally upon Jerusalem and Judah in this expedition or no does not appear; probably he had; for it was as considerable as any of the nations here mentioned. However God had his eye principally to them.

And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished; this is denoted by that melancholy parenthesis (as it is this day), for in the fourth year of Jehoiakim things had come into a very bad posture, and all the foundations were out of course. Pharaoh king of Egypt comes next, because the Jews

trusted to that broken reed (Jer 25:19); the remains of them fled to Egypt, and there Jeremiah particularly foretold the destruction of that country, Jer 43:10,11. All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The mingled people, the Arabians (so some), some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine (so others); the kings of the land of Uz, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel, but now their cities and their lords become a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, are places well known to border upon Israel; the Isles beyond, or beside, the sea, are supposed to be those parts of Phœnicia and Syria that lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Dedan and the other countries mentioned (Jer 25:23,24) seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the desert.

Those of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes are joined, now looked upon as inconsiderable and yet afterwards able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbours. The kings of the north, that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay at some distance, will be sure to be seized on and made a prey of by the victorious sword of Nebuchadrezzar. Nay, he shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success that all the kingdoms of the world that were then and there known should become sacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is said to have conquered the world, and the Roman empire is called the world, Lu 2:1.

Or it may be taken as reading the doom of all the kingdoms of the earth; one time or other, they shall feel the dreadful effects of war. The world has been, and will be, a great cockpit, while men's lusts war as they do in their members, Jam 4:1. But, that the conquerors may see their fate with the conquered, it concludes, The king of Sheshach shall drink after them, that is, the king of Babylon himself, who has given his neighbours all this trouble and vexation, shall at length have it return upon his own head. That by Sheshach is meant Babylon is plain from Jer 51:41; but whether it was another name of the same city or the name of another city of the same kingdom is uncertain. Babylon's ruin was foretold, Jer 25:12,13. Upon this prophecy of its being the

author of the ruin of so many nations it is very fitly repeated here again.

4. What should be the effect of it. The desolations which the sword should make in all these kingdoms are represented by the consequences of excessive drinking (Jer 25:16): They shall drink, and be moved, and be mad. They shall be drunken, and spue, and fall and rise no more, Jer 25:27. Now this may serve,

(1.) To make us loathe the sin of drunkenness, that the consequences of it are made use of to set forth a most woeful and miserable condition. Drunkenness deprives men, for the present, of the use of their reason, makes them mad. It takes from them likewise that which, next to reason, is the most valuable blessing, and that is health; it makes them sick, and endangers the bones and the life. Men in drink often fall and rise no more; it is a sin that is its own punishment. How wretchedly are those intoxicated and besotted that suffer themselves at any time to be intoxicated, especially to be by the frequent commission of the sin besotted with wine or strong drink!

(2.) To make us dread the judgments of war. When God sends the sword upon a nation, with warrant to make it desolate, it soon becomes like a drunken man, filled with confusion at the alarms of war, put into a hurry; its counsellors mad, and at their wits' end, staggering in all the measures they take, all the motions they make, sick at heart with continual vexation, vomiting up the riches they have greedily swallowed down (Job 20:15), falling down before the enemy, and as unable to get up again, or do any thing to help themselves, as a man dead drunk is, Hab 2:16.

5. The undoubted certainty of it, with the reason given for it, Jer 25:28,29. They will refuse to take the cup at thy hand; not only they will be loth that the judgment should come, but they will be loth to believe that ever it will come; they will not give credit to the prediction of so despicable a man as Jeremiah. But he must tell them that it is the word of the Lord of hosts, he hath said it; and it is in vain for them to struggle with Omnipotence: You shall certainly drink. And he must give them this reason, It is a time of visitation, it is a reckoning day, and Jerusalem has been called to

an account already: I begin to bring evil on the city that is called by my name; its relation to me will not exempt it from punishment, and should you be utterly unpunished?

No; If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If those who have some good in them smart so severely for the evil that is found in them, can those expect to escape who have worse evils, and no good, found among them? If Jerusalem be punished for learning idolatry of the nations, shall not the nations be punished, of whom they learned it? No doubt they shall: I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, for they have helped to debauch the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

II. Upon this whole matter we may observe,

1. That there is a God that judges in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whose judgment they must abide.

2. That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure.

3. That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had in their turns given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the redeemer will come, even the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

4. That the burden of the word of the Lord will at last become the burden of his judgments. Isaiah had prophesied long since against most of these nations (Jer 13:1-27, &c.) and now at length all his prophecies will have their complete fulfilling.

5. That those who are ambitious of power and dominion commonly become the troublers of the earth and the plagues of their generation. Nebuchadrezzar was so proud of his might that he had no sense of right. These are the men that turn the world upside down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himself a great prince when others thought him no better than a great pirate.

6. That the greatest pomp and power in this world are of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadrezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield and become captives.

16 And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the
sword that I will send among them.
17 Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to
drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me:
18 *to wit*, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and
the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a
hissing, and a curse; as *it is* this day;
19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his
people;
20 and all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and
all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah,
and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,
21 Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,
22 and all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings
of the isles which *are* beyond the sea,
23 Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all *that are* in the utmost corners,
24 and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people
that dwell in the desert,
25 and all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the
kings of the Medes,
26 and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all
the kingdoms of the world, which *are* upon the face of the earth: and
the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.
27 Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts,
the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spew, and fall,
and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among
you.
28 And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink,
then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ye shall
certainly drink.
29 For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name,
and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished:
for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith
the Lord of hosts.

30 Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread *the grapes*, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

We have, in these verses, a further description of those terrible desolations which the king of Babylon with his armies should make in all the countries and nations round about Jerusalem. In Jerusalem God had erected his temple; there were his oracles and ordinances, which the neighbouring nations should have attended to and might have received benefit by; thither they should have applied for the knowledge of God and their duty, and then they might have had reason to bless God for their neighbourhood to Jerusalem; but they, instead of that, taking all opportunities either to debauch or to disturb that holy city, when God came to reckon with Jerusalem because it learned so much of the way of the nations, he reckoned with the nations because they learned so little of the way of Jerusalem.

They will soon be aware of Nebuchadrezzar's making war upon them; but the prophet is here directed to tell them that it is God himself that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

1 The war is here proclaimed (Jer 25:30): The Lord shall roar from on high; not from Mount Zion and Jerusalem (as Joe 3:16,Am 1:2), but from heaven, from his holy habitation there; for now Jerusalem is one of the places against which he roars. He shall mightily roar upon his habitation on earth from that above. He has been long silent, and seemed not to take notice of the wickedness of the nations; the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he shall give a shout, as the assailants in battle do, against all the inhabitants of the earth, to whom it shall be a shout of terror, and yet a shout of joy in heaven, as theirs that tread the grapes; for, when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men, there is a great voice of much people heard in heaven, saying, Hallelujah, Re 19:1. He roars as a lion (Am 3:4,8), as a lion that has forsaken his covert (Jer 25:38), and is going abroad to seek his prey, upon which he roars, that he may the more easily seize it.

2 The manifesto is here published, showing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war (Jer 25:31): The Lord has a controversy with the nations; he has just cause to contend with them, and he will take this way of pleading with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them and kindness to them. He will give those that are wicked to the sword. They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is because of the fierce anger of the Lord (Jer 25:37,38), the fierceness of the oppressor, or (as it might better be read) the fierceness of the oppressing sword (for the word is feminine) is because of his fierce anger; and we are sure that he is never angry without cause; but who knows the power of his anger?

3. The alarm is here given and taken: A noise will come even to the ends of the earth, so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, Jer 25:31. The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm, or tempest, which shall be raised up from the coasts, the remote coasts of the earth, Jer 25:32. The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the whirlwind out of which God answered Job, which was exceedingly terrible, Job 37:1,38:1. And, when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be echoed with shrieks from earth; for who can choose but tremble when God thus speaks in displeasure? See Ho 11:10. Now the shepherds shall howl and cry, the kings, and princes, and the great ones of the earth, the principal of the flock. They used to be the most courageous and secure, but now their hearts shall fail them; they shall wallow themselves in the ashes, Jer 25:34. Seeing themselves utterly unable to make head against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of and a concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be a voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard, Jer 25:36.

Those are great calamities indeed that strike such a terror upon the great men, and put them into this consternation. The Lord hath spoiled their pasture, in which they fed their flock, and out of which they fed themselves; the spoiling of that makes them cry-out thus. Perhaps, carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in when they hear a roaring lion coming towards their flocks, and find they have no way to flee (Jer 25:35) for their own safety, neither can the principal of their flock escape. The enemy will be so numerous, so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot out-face, so we cannot out-run, the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds howl and cry.

4. The progress of this war is here described (Jer 25:32): Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation; as the cup goes round, every nation shall have its share and take warning by the calamities of another to repent and reform. Nay, as if this ere to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, Jer 25:33. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now his hand shall find out all his enemies, wherever they are, Ps 21:8.

Note, When our neighbour's house is on fire it is time to be concerned for our own. When one nation is a seat of war every neighbouring nation should hear, and fear, and make its peace with God. 5. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold: The days of slaughter and dispersions are accomplished, that is, they are fully come (Jer 25:34), the time fixed in the divine counsel for the slaughter of some and the dispersion of the rest, which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the slain of the Lord shall be every where found: they are slain by commission from him, and are sacrificed to his justice. The slain for sin are the slain of the Lord. To complete the misery of their slaughter, they shall not be lamented in particular, so general shall the matter of lamentation be. Nay, they shall not be gathered up, nor buried,

for they shall have no friends left to bury them, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome: and it is well if, as dung manures the earth and makes it fruitful, so these horrid spectacles, which lie as monuments of divine justice, might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to learn righteousness. The effect of this war will be the desolation of the whole land that is the seat of it (Jer 25:38), one land after another. But here are two expressions more that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous.

(1.) You shall fall like a pleasant vessel, Jer 25:34. The most desirable persons among them, who most valued themselves and were most valued, who were looked upon as vessels of honour, shall fall by the sword. You shall fall as a Venice glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces. Even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity; the sword devours one as well as another.

(2.) Even the peaceable habitations are cut down. Those that used to be quiet, and not molested, the habitations in which you have long dwelt in peace, shall now be no longer such, but cut down by the war. Or, Those who used to be quiet, and not molesting any of their neighbours, those who lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, even those shall not escape. This is one of the direful effects of war, that even those who were most harmless and inoffensive suffer hard things. Blessed be God, there is a peaceable habitation above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

31 A noise shall come *even* to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath
a controversy with the nations: he will plead with all flesh; he will
give them *that are* wicked to the sword, saith the Lord.
32 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation
to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts
of the earth.
33 And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from *one* end of the
earth even unto the *other* end of the earth: they shall not be
lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon
the ground.

34 Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves *in the ashes,* ye
principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your
dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.
35 And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of
the flock to escape.
36 A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal
of the flock, *shall be heard:* for the Lord hath spoiled their pasture.
37 And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce
anger of the Lord.
38 He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate
because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce
anger.

Jeremiah-26

Jeremiah Threatened with Death

1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of
Judah came this word from the Lord, saying,

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record, as it were, by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

I. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to what auditory, Jer 26:2. Let not any censure Jeremiah as indiscreet in the choice of place and time, nor say that he might have delivered his message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously; for God gave him orders to preach in the court of the Lord's house, which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner affronted. He must preach this, as it should seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when persons had come from all the cities of Judah to worship in the Lord's house.

These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they defamed, and would, consequently, side with them and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah. But none of these things must move him or daunt him; in the face of all this danger he must preach this sermon, which, if it were not convincing, would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God charges him particularly not to diminish a word, but to speak all the things, nay, all the words, that he had commanded him. Note, God's ambassadors must keep closely to their instructions, and not in the least vary from them, either to please men or to save themselves from harm. They must neither add nor diminish, De 4:2.

II. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses.

1. He must assure them that if they would repent of their sins, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a stop should be put to them, and God would proceed no further in his controversy with them, Jer 26:3. This was the main thing God intended in sending him to them, to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger and turn away the judgments that threatened them, which he was not only willing, but very desirous to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God waits to be gracious, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries a variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must, on the other hand, assure them that if they continued obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, Jer 26:4-6.

(1.) That which God required of them was that they should be observant of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministers, that they should walk in all his law which he set before them, the law of Moses and the ordinances and commandments of it, and that they should hearken to the words of his servants the prophets, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses, which was set before them as a touchstone to try the spirits by; and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, who drew them from the law, instead of drawing them to it. The law was what God himself set before them. The prophets were his own servants, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, rising early to send them, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession and become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets: You have not hearkened. All he expects now is that at length they should heed what he said, and make his word their rule--a reasonable demand.

(2.) That which is threatened in case of refusal is that this city, and the temple in it, shall fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh and the tabernacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God's law and hearken to his prophets, then when the present dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel. Now could a sentence be expressed more unexceptionably? Is it not a rule of justice ut parium par sit ratio--that those whose cases are the same be dealt with alike? If Jerusalem be like Shiloh in respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in respect of punishment? Can any other be expected? This was not the first time he had given them warning to this effect; see Jer 7:12-14. When the temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem, was destroyed, the city was thereby made a curse; for the temple was that which made it a blessing. If the salt lose that savour, it is thenceforth good for nothing. It shall be a curse, that is, it shall be the pattern of a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would say, God make it like Jerusalem! Note, Those that will not be subject to the commands of God make themselves subject to the curse of God.

2 Thus saith the Lord; Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the

Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:
3 if so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.
4 And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,
5 to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending *them*, but ye have not hearkened;
6 then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.
7 So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in the Jer 26:1-6, so plain and practical, so rational and pathetic, and delivered in God's name, would work upon even this people, especially meeting them now at their devotions, and would prevail with them to repent and reform; but, instead of awakening their convictions, it did but exasperate their corruptions, as appears by this account of the effect of it.

I. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime that he had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The priests, and false prophets, and people, heard him speak these words, Jer 26:7. They had patience, it seems, to hear him out, did not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had made an end of speaking all that the Lord commanded him to speak, Jer 26:8. So far they dealt more fairly with him than some of the persecutors of God's ministers have done; they let him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with a bad design, in hopes to have something worse yet to lay to his charge; but, having no worse, this shall suffice to ground an indictment upon:

He hath said, This house shall be like Shiloh, Jer 26:9. See how unfair they are in representing his words. He had said, in God's name, If you will not hearken to me, then will I make this house like Shiloh; but they leave out God's hand in the desolation (I will make it so) and their own hand in it in not hearkening to the voice

of God, and charge it upon him that he blasphemed this holy place, the crime charged both on our Lord Jesus and on Stephen: He said, This house shall be like Shiloh. Well might he complain, as David does (Ps 56:5), Every day they wrest my words; and we must not think it strange if we, and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented. When the accusation was so weakly grounded, no marvel that the sentence passed upon it was unjust:

Thou shalt surely die. What he had said agreed with what God had said when he took possession of the temple (1Ki 9:6-8), If you shall at all turn from following after me, then this house shall be abandoned; and yet he is condemned to die for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the temple that they appear thus warm, but because they are resolved not to part with their sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit that the temple of the Lord will protect them; therefore, right or wrong, Thou shalt surely die. This outcry of the priests and prophets raised the mob, and all the people were gathered together against Jeremiah in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces, were gathered about him (so some read it); they flocked together, some crying one thing and some another. The people that were at first present were hot against him (Jer 26:8), but their clamours drew more together, only to see what the matter was.

II. He is arraigned and indicted for it before the highest court of judicature they had. Here,

1 The princes of Judah were his judges, Jer 26:10. Those that filled the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, the elders of Israel, they, hearing of this tumult in the temple, came up from the king's house, where they usually sat near the court, to the house of the Lord, to enquire into this matter, and to see that nothing was done disorderly. They sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, and held a court, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer.

2 The priests and prophets were his prosecutors and accusers, and were violently set against him. They appealed to the princes, and to all the people, to the court and the jury, whether this man were not worthy to die, Jer 26:11. The corrupt priests and counterfeit

prophets have always been the most bitter enemies of the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family (Jer 22:1, &c.), the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find that they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the house of the Lord, and touches the copyhold of the priests, and contradicts the lies and flatteries of the false prophets, then he is adjudged worthy to die. For the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means, Jer 5:31. Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes the stress of his accusation is laid upon what he said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken they appeal to the people, "You have heard what he hath said; let it be given in evidence."

III. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He does not go about to deny the words, nor to diminish aught from them; what he has said he will stand to, though it cost him his life; he owns that he had prophesied against this house and this city, but,

1. He asserts that he did this by good authority, not maliciously nor seditiously, not out of any ill-will to his country nor any disaffection to the government in church or state, but, The Lord sent me to prophesy thus: so he begins his apology (Jer 26:12), and so he concludes it, for this is that which he resolves to abide by as sufficient to bear him out (Jer 26:15): Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words. As long as ministers keep closely to the instructions they have from heaven they need not fear the opposition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads that he is but a messenger, and, if he faithfully deliver his message, he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador will be resented by the Prince that sent him.

2. He shows them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said, not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence, Jer 26:13. Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger, while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greatest kindness he could do me? "I have indeed (says Jeremiah) prophesied against this city; but, if you will now amend your ways and your doings, the threatened ruin shall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning." Those are very unjust who complain of ministers for preaching hell and damnation, when it is only to keep them from that place of torment and to bring them to heaven and salvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger if they proceed against him (Jer 26:14): "As for me, the matter is not great what become of me; behold, I am in your hand; you know I am; I neither have any power, nor can make any interest, to oppose you, nor is it so much my concern to save my own life: do with me as seems meet unto you; if I be led to the slaughter, it shall be as a lamb." Note, It becomes God's ministers, that are warm in preaching, to be calm in suffering and to behave submissively to the powers that are over them, though they be persecuting powers. But, for themselves, he tells them that it is at their peril if they put him to death: You shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, Jer 26:15. They might think that killing the prophet would help to defeat the prophecy, but they would prove wretchedly deceived; it would but add to their guilt and aggravate their ruin. Their own consciences could not but tell them that, if Jeremiah was (as certainly he was) sent of God to bring them this message, it was at their utmost peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Those that persecute God's ministers hurt not them so much as themselves.

8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all
that the Lord had commanded *him* to speak unto all the people, that
the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying,
Thou shalt surely die.

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This
house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an

inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.

10 When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's *house*.

11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man *is* worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

14 As for me, behold, I *am* in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man *is* not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God.

Here is, I The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited against him. He had indeed spoken the words as they were laid in the indictment, but they are not looked upon to be seditious or treasonable, ill-intended or of any bad tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him not guilty. The priests and prophets, notwithstanding his rational plea for himself, continued to demand judgment against him; but the princes, and all the people, are clear in it that this man is not worthy to die (Jer 26:16); for (say they) he hath spoken to us, not of himself, but in the name of the Lord our God. And are they willing to own that he did indeed speak to them in the name of the Lord and that that Lord is their God? Why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If they say, His prophecy is from heaven, it may justly be asked, Why did you not then believe him? Mt 21:25. Note, It is a pity that those who are so far convinced of the divine original

of gospel preaching as to protect it from the malice of others do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves.

II. A precedent quoted to justify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the elders of the land, either the princes before mentioned or the more intelligent men of the people, stood up, and put the assembly in mind of a former case, as is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah. We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets.

1. Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, Jer 26:18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purport, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed; Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built shall be as the high places of the forest, overrun with briers and thorns. That prophet not only spoke this, but wrote it, and left it on record; we find it, Mic 3:12. By this it appears that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away of the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what has been said many a time, and what we have warrant from the word of God to say.

2. Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah (that is, the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament), did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to silence him and put him to death? No; on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them. Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors, for he feared the Lord (Jer 26:19), as Noah, who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear.

Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he besought the Lord to turn away the judgment threatened and to be reconciled to them, and he found it was not in vain to do so, for the Lord repented him of the evil and returned in mercy to them; he sent an angel, who routed the army of the Assyrians, that threatened to plough Zion like a field. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then you may be sure he would do no harm to the preacher. These elders conclude that it would be of dangerous consequence to the state if they should gratify the importunity of the priests and prophets in putting Jeremiah to death: Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. Note, It is good to deter ourselves from sin with the consideration of the mischief we shall certainly do to ourselves by it and the irreparable damage it will be to our own souls.

III. Here is an instance of another prophet that was put to death by Jehoiakim for prophesying as Jeremiah had done, Jer 26:20, &c. Some make this to be urged by the prosecutors, as a case that favoured the prosecution, a modern case, in which speaking such words as Jeremiah had spoken was adjudged treason. Others think that the elders, who were advocates for Jeremiah, alleged this to show that thus they might procure great evil against their souls, for it would be adding sin to sin. Jehoiakim, the present king, had slain one prophet already; let them not fill up the measure by slaying another. Hezekiah, who protected Micah, prospered; but did Jehoiakim prosper who slew Urijah? No; they all saw the contrary. As good examples, and the good consequences of them, should encourage us in that which is good, so the examples of bad men, and the bad consequences of them, should deter us from that which is evil. But some good interpreters take this narrative from the historian that penned the book, Jeremiah himself, or Baruch, who, to make Jeremiah's deliverance by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this that happened about the same time; for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this in the beginning of his reign, Jer 26:1.

Observe, 1. Urijah's prophecy. It was against this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah. The prophets of the Lord agreed in their testimony, and one would have thought that out of the mouth of so many witnesses the word would be regarded.

2 The prosecution of him for it, Jer 26:21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exasperated against him, and sought to put him to death; in this wicked design the king himself was principally concerned.

3. His absconding thereupon: When he heard that the king had become his enemy, and sought his life, he was afraid, and fled, and went in to Egypt. This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakness of his faith, and it sped accordingly. He distrusted God, and his power to protect him and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that fear of man which brings a snare. It looked as if he durst not stand to what he had said or was ashamed of his Master. It was especially unbecoming him to flee into Egypt, and so in effect to abandon the land of Israel and to throw himself quite out of the way of being useful.

Note, There are many that have much grace, but they have little courage, that are very honest, but withal very timorous.

4. His execution notwithstanding. Jehoiakim's malice, one would think, might have contented itself with his banishment, and it might suffice to have driven him out of the country; but those are bloodthirsty that hate the upright, Pr 29:10. It was the life, that precious life, that he hunted after, and nothing else would satisfy him. So implacable is his revenge that he sends a party of soldiers into Egypt, some hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not sufficiently gratify him to have him slain in Egypt, but he must feed his eyes with the bloody spectacle. They brought him to Jehoiakim, and he slew him with the sword, for aught I know with his own hands. Yet neither did this satisfy his insatiable malice, but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent respects usually and justly paid to the remains of men of distinction, but cast it into the graves of the common people, as if he had not been a prophet of the Lord; thus was the shield of Saul vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Thus Jehoiakim hoped both to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from prophesying in like manner; but in vain; Jeremiah says the same. There is no

contending with the word of God. Herod thought he had gained his point when he had cut off John Baptist's head, but found himself deceived when, soon after, he heard of Jesus Christ, and said, in a fright, This is John the Baptist.

IV. Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and persecutors, when they have tasted the blood of saints, are apt to thirst after more (as Herod, Ac 12:2,3), yet God wonderfully preserved Jeremiah, though he did not flee, as Urijah did, but stood his ground. Ordinary ministers may use ordinary means, provided they be lawful ones, for their own preservation; but those that had an extraordinary protection. God raised up a friend for Jeremiah, whose hand was with him; he took him by the hand in a friendly way, encouraged him, assisted him, appeared for him. It was Ahikam the son of Shaphan, one that was a minister of state in Josiah's time; we read of him, 2Ki 22:12.

Some think Gedaliah was the son of this Ahikam. He had a great interest, it should seem, among the princes, and he used it in favour of Jeremiah, to prevent the further designs of the priests and prophets against him, who would have had him turned over into the hand of the people, not those people (Jer 26:16) that had adjudged him innocent, but the rude and insolent mob, whom they could persuade by their cursed insinuations not only to cry, Crucify him, crucify him, but to stone him to death in a popular tumult; for perhaps Jehoiakim had been so reproached by his own conscience for slaying Urijah that they despaired of making him the tool of their malice. Note, God can, when he pleases, raise up great men to patronize good men; and it is an encouragement to us to trust him in the way of duty that he has all men's hearts in his hands.

17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the
assembly of the people, saying,
18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of
Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the
Lord of hosts; Zion shall be plowed *like* a field, and Jerusalem shall
become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of
a forest.
19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death?
did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord

repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them?
Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.
20 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the
Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who
prophesied against this city and against this land according to all
the words of Jeremiah:
21 and when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the
princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but
when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt;
22 and Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, *namely*, Elnathan the
son of Achbor, and *certain* men with him into Egypt.
23 And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto
Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead
body into the graves of the common people.
24 Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with
Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people
to put him to death.

Jeremiah-27

The Lesson from the Yoke-bars

1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of
Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

Some difficulty occurs in the date of this prophecy. This word is said to come to Jeremiah in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim (Jer 27:1), and yet the messengers, to whom he is to deliver the badges of servitude, are said (Jer 27:3) to come to Zedekiah king of Judah, who reigned not till eleven years after the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. Some make it an error of the copy, and think that it should be read (Jer 27:1), In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, for which some negligent scribe, having his eye on the title of the foregoing chapter, wrote Jehoiakim. And, if one would admit a mistake any where, it should be here, for Zedekiah is mentioned again (Jer 27:12), and the next prophecy is dated the same year, and said to be in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, Jer 28:1. Dr. Lightfoot solves it thus: In the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign Jeremiah is to make these bonds and yokes,

and to put them upon his own neck, in token of Judah's subjection to the king of Babylon, which began at that time; but he is to send them to the neighbouring kings afterwards in the reign of Zedekiah, of whose succession to Jehoiakim, and the ambassadors sent to him, mention is made by way of prediction.

I. Jeremiah is to prepare a sign of the general reduction of all these countries into subjection to the king of Babylon (Jer 27:2): Make thee bonds and yokes, yokes with bonds to fasten them, that the beast may not slip his neck out of the yoke. Into these the prophet must put his own neck to make them taken notice of as a prophetic representation; for every one would enquire, What is the meaning of Jeremiah's yokes? We find him with one on, Jer 28:10. Hereby he intimated that he advised them to nothing but what he was resolved to do himself; for he was not one of those that bind heavy burdens on others, which they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. Ministers must thus lay themselves under the weight and obligation of what they preach to others.

II. He is to send this, with a sermon annexed to it, to all the neighbouring princes; those are mentioned (Jer 27:3) that lay next to the land of Canaan. It should seem, there was a treaty of alliance on foot between the king of Judah and all those other kings. Jerusalem was the place appointed for the treaty. Thither they all sent their plenipotentiaries; and it was agreed that they should bind themselves in a league offensive and defensive, to stand by one another, in opposition to the growing threatening greatness of the king of Babylon, and to reduce his exorbitant power. They had great confidence in their strength thus united, and were ready to call themselves the high allies; but, when the envoys were returning to their respective masters with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry to his master, to signify to him that he must either by consent or by compulsion become a servant to the king of Babylon, let him choose which he will. In the sermon upon this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleases, Jer 27:5. He is the Creator of all things; he made the earth at first, established it, and it abides: it is still the same, though one generation passes away and another comes. He still by a

continued creation produces man and beast upon the ground, and it is by his great power and outstretched arm. His arm has infinite strength, though it be stretched out. Upon this account he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleases. As he hath graciously given the earth to the children of men in general (Ps 115:16), so he give to each his share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever any have of the good things of this world, it is what God sees fit to give them; we ourselves should therefore be content, though we have ever so little, and not envy any their share, though they have ever so much.

2. He publishes a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents. Sciant præsentes et futuri--Let those of the present and those of the future age know. "This is to certify to all whom it may concern that I have given all these lands, with all the wealth of them, into the hands of the king of Babylon; even the beasts of the field, whether tame or wild, have I given to him, parks and pastures; they are all his own." Nebuchadnezzar was a proud wicked man, an idolater; and yet God, in his providence, gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions. Note, The things of this world are not the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had he had by divine grant.

Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is a very bad man, and yet God calls him his servant, because he employed him as an instrument of his providence for the chastising of the nations, and particularly his own people; and for his service therein he thus liberally repaid him. Those whom God makes use of shall not lose by him; much more will he be found the bountiful rewarder of all those that designedly and sincerely serve him.

3. He assures them that they should all be unavoidably brought under the dominion of the king of Babylon for a time (Jer 27:7): All nations, all these nations and many others, shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son. His son was Evil-merodach, and his son's son Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased: then the time

of reckoning with his land came, when the tables were turned, and many nations and great kings, incorporated into the empire of the Medes and Persians, served themselves of him, as before, Jer 25:14. Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.

4. He threatens those with military execution that stood out and would not submit to the king of Babylon (Jer 27:8): That nation that will not put their neck under his yoke I will punish with sword and famine, with one judgment after another, till it is consumed by his hand. Nebuchadnezzar was very unjust and barbarous in invading the rights and liberties of his neighbours thus, and forcing them into a subjection to him; yet God had just and holy ends in permitting him to do so, to punish these nations for their idolatry and gross immoralities. Those that would not serve the God that made them were justly made to serve their enemies that sought to ruin them.

5. He shows them the vanity of all the hopes they fed themselves with, that they should preserve their liberties, Jer 27:9,10. These nations had their prophets too, that pretended to foretell future events by the stars, or by dreams, or enchantments; and they, to please their patrons, and because they would themselves have it so, flattered them with assurances that they should not serve the king of Babylon. Thus they designed to animate them to a vigorous resistance; and, though they had no ground for it, they hoped hereby to do them service.

But he tells them that it would prove to their destruction; for by resisting they would provoke the conqueror to deal severely with them, to remove them, and drive them out into a miserable captivity, in which they should all be lost and buried in oblivion. Particular prophecies against these nations that bordered on Israel severally, the ruin of which is here foretold in the general, we shall meet with, Jer 48:1-49:39,Eze 25:1-17, which had the same accomplishment with this here. Note, When God judges he will overcome. 6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction by a quiet and easy submission, Jer 27:11. The nations that will be content to serve the king of Babylon, and pay him

tribute for seventy years (ten apprenticeships), those will I let remain still in their own land.

Those that will bend shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is often more a point of honour than true wisdom to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Issachar that because he saw rest was good, and the land pleasant, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute (Ge 49:14,15), as these are here advised to do: Serve the king of Babylon and you shall till the land and dwell therein. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, which yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest turns of Providence makes the best of bad: it is better to do so than by struggling to make it worse.

------Levius fit patientia Quicquid corrigere est nefas.

----HOR. ------When we needs must bear,
Enduring patience makes the burden light.

CREECH.

Many might have prevented destroying providences by humbling themselves under humbling providences. It is better to take up a lighter cross in our way than to pull a heavier on our own head.

2 Thus saith the Lord to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck,

3 and send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;

4 and command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters;

5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that *are* upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

6 And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

7 And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

8 And it shall come to pass, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

9 Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

10 for they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

11 But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

12 I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

What was said to all the nations is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus: Judah and Jerusalem had often contested with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods were carried to Babylon already, and some of the vessels of the Lord's house particularly. Now how this struggle would issue was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem who pretended to be prophets, who bade them hold out and they should, in a little time, be too hard for the king of Babylon and recover all that they had lost. Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield and knock under, for that, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained; and to press them to this is the scope of these verses.

I. Jeremiah humbly addresses the king of Judah, to persuade him to surrender to the king of Babylon. His act would be the people's and would determine them, and therefore he speaks to him as to

them all (Jer 27:12): Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and live. Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies? And is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the sweet and easy yoke of our rightful Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that we may secure the lives of our souls? Bring down your spirits to repentance and faith, and that is the way to bring up your spirits to heaven and glory. And with much more cogency and compassion may we expostulate with perishing souls than Jeremiah here expostulates with a perishing people: "Why will you die by the sword and the famine--miserable deaths, which you inevitably run yourselves upon, under pretence of avoiding miserable lives?" What God had spoken, in general, of all those that would not submit to the king of Babylon, he would have them to apply to themselves and be afraid of. It were well if sinners would, in like manner, be afraid of the destruction threatened against all those that will not have Christ to reign over them, and reason thus with themselves, "Why should we die the second death, which is a thousand times worse than that by sword and famine, when we might submit and live?"

II. He addresses himself likewise to the priests and the people (Jer 27:16), to persuade them to serve the king of Babylon, that they might live, and might prevent the desolation of the city (Jer 27:17): "Wherefore should it be laid waste, as certainly it will be if you stand it out?" The priests had been Jeremiah's enemies, and had sought his life to destroy it, yet he approves himself their friend, and seeks their lives, to preserve and secure them, which is an example to us to render good for evil. When the blood-thirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek his soul, and the welfare of it, Pr 29:10. The matter was far gone here; they were upon the brink of ruin, which they would not have been brought to if they would have taken Jeremiah's counsel; yet he continues his friendly admonitions to them, to save the last stake and manage that wisely, and now at length in this their day to understand the things that belong to their peace, when they had but one day to turn them in.

13 Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

14 Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak
unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they
prophesy a lie unto you.
15 For I have not sent them, saith the Lord, yet they prophesy a lie in
my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye,
and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

In both these addresses he warns them against giving credit to the false prophets that rocked them asleep in their security, because they saw that they loved to slumber: "Hearken not to the words of the prophets (Jer 27:14), your prophets, Jer 27:16. They are not God's prophets; he never sent them; they do not serve him, nor seek to please him; they are yours, for they say what you would have them say, and aim at nothing but to please you." Two things their prophets flattered them into the belief of:--

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them should now shortly be broken. They said (Jer 27:14), "You shall not serve the king of Babylon; you need not submit voluntarily, for you shall not be compelled to submit." This they prophesied in the name of the Lord (Jer 27:15), as if God had sent them to the people on this errand, in kindness to them, that they might not disparage themselves by an inglorious surrender. But it was a lie. They said that God sent them; but that was false; he disowns it: I have not sent them, saith the Lord. They said that they should never be brought into subjection to the king of Babylon; but that was false too, the event proved it so. They said that to hold out to the last would be the way to secure themselves and their city; but that was false, for it would certainly end in their being driven out and perishing. So that it was all a lie, from first to last; and the prophets that deceived the people with these lies did, in the issue, but deceive themselves; the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch: That you might perish, you, and the prophets that prophesy unto you, who will be so far from warranting your security that they cannot secure themselves.

Note, Those that encourage sinners to go on in their sinful ways will in the end perish with them.

2. They prophesied that the vessels of the temple, which the king of Babylon had already carried away, should now shortly be

brought back (Jer 27:16); this they fed the priests with the hopes of, knowing how acceptable it would be to them, who loved the gold of the temple better than the temple that sanctified the gold. These vessels were taken away when Jeconiah was carried captive into Babylon, Jer 27:20. We have the story, and it is a melancholy one, 2Ki 24:13,15,2Ch 36:10. All the goodly vessels (that is, all the vessels of gold that were in the house of the Lord), with all the treasures, were taken as prey, and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above any thing; for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the stripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their God had departed from them. Their false prophets therefore had no other way to make them easy than by telling them that the king of Babylon should be forced to restore them in a little while. Now here,

(1.) Jeremiah bids them think of preserving the vessels that remained by their prayers, rather than of bringing back those that were gone by their prophecies (Jer 27:18): If they be prophets, as they pretend, and if the word of the Lord be with them--if they have any intercourse with heaven and any interest there, let them improve it for the stopping of the progress of the judgment; let them step into the gap, and stand with their censer between the living and the dead, between that which is carried away and that which remains, that the plague may be stayed; let them make intercession with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left go not after the rest.

[1.] Instead of prophesying, let them pray. Note, Prophets must be praying men; by being much in prayer they must make it to appear that they keep up a correspondence with heaven. We cannot think that those do, as prophets, ever hear thence, who do not frequently by prayer send thither. By praying for the safety and prosperity of the sanctuary they must make it to appear that, as becomes prophets, they are of a public spirit; and by the success of their prayers it will appear that God favours them.

[2.] Instead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had lost, they must bestir themselves for the securing of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they can gain that point. When God's

judgments are abroad we must not seek great things, but be thankful for a little.

(2.) He assures them that even this point should not be gained, but the brazen vessels should go after the golden ones, Jer 27:19,22. Nebuchadnezzar had found so good a booty once that he would be sure to come again and take all he could find, not only in the house of the Lord, but in the king's house. They shall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and there shall they be. But he concludes with a gracious promise that the time should come when they should all be returned: Until the day that I visit them in mercy, according to appointment, and then I will bring those vessels up again, and restore them to this place, to their place. Surely they were under the protection of a special Providence, else they would have been melted down and put to some other use; but there was to be a second temple, for which they were to be reserved. We read particularly of the return of them, Ezr 1:8.

Note, Though the return of the church's prosperity do not come in our time, we must not therefore despair of it, for it will come in God's time. Though those who said, The vessels of the Lord's house shall shortly be brought again, prophesied a lie (Jer 27:16), yet he that said, They shall at length be brought again, prophesied the truth. We are apt to set our clock before God's dial, and then to quarrel because they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit that we should wait for him.

16 Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you.

17 Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?

18 But if they *be* prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, and *in* the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon.

19 For thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city,
20 which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;
21 yea, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain *in* the house of the Lord, and *in* the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem;
22 They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord ; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

Jeremiah-28

Hananiah's False Prophecy

1 And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying,

This struggle between a true prophet and a false one is said here to have happened in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, and yet in the fourth year, for the first four years of his reign might well be called the beginning, or former part, of it, because during those years he reigned under the dominion of the king of Babylon and as a tributary to him; whereas the rest of his reign, which might well be called the latter part of it, in distinction from that former part, he reigned in rebellion against the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign he went in person to Babylon (as we find, Jer 51:59), and it is probable that this gave the people some hope that his negotiation in person would put a good end to the war, in which hope the false prophets encouraged them, this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibeon, a priests' city, and therefore probably himself a priest, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

I The prediction which Hananiah delivered publicly, solemnly, in the house of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord, in an august assembly, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, who probably were expecting to have some message from heaven. In delivering this prophecy, he faced Jeremiah, he spoke it to him (Jer 28:1), designing to confront and contradict him, as much as to say, "Jeremiah, thou liest." Now this prediction is that the king of Babylon's power, at least his power over Judah and Jerusalem, should be speedily broken, that within two full years the vessels of the temple should be brought back, and Jeremiah, and all the captives that were carried away with him, should return; whereas Jeremiah had foretold that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be bound on yet faster, and that the vessels and captives should not return for 70 years, Jer 28:2-4.

Now, upon the reading of this sham prophecy, and comparing it with the messages that God sent by the true prophets, we may observe what a vast difference there is between them. Here is nothing of the spirit and life, the majesty of style and sublimity of expression, that appear in the discourses of God's prophets, nothing of that divine flame and flatus. But that which is especially wanting here is an air of piety; he speaks with a great deal of confidence of the return of their prosperity, but here is not a word of good counsel given them to repent, and reform, and return to God, to pray, and seek his face, that they may be prepared for the favours God had in reserve for them. He promises them temporal mercies, in God's name, but makes no mention of those spiritual mercies which God always promised should go along with them, as Jer 24:7, I will give them a heart to know me. By all this it appears that, whatever he pretended, he had only the spirit of the world, not the Spirit of God (1Co 2:12), that he aimed to please, not to profit.

II. Jeremiah's reply to this pretended prophecy. 1. He heartily wishes it might prove true. Such an affection has he for his country, and so truly desirous is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a false prophet, so that their ruin might be prevented. He said, Amen; the Lord do so; the Lord perform thy words, Jer 28:5,6. This was not the first time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had

prophesied against them, and deprecated the judgments which yet he certainly knew would come; as Christ prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, when yet he knew it must not pass from him. Though, as a faithful prophet, he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, yet, as a faithful Israelite, he prayed earnestly for the preservation of it, in obedience to that command, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Though the will of God's purpose is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himself, though he has determined, does not desire, the death of sinners, but would have all men to be saved. Jeremiah often interceded for his people, Jer 18:20. The false prophets thought to ingratiate themselves with the people by promising them peace; now the prophet shows that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did, whom they were so fond of; and, though he had no warrant from God to promise them peace, yet he earnestly desired it and prayed for it. How strangely were those besotted who caressed those who did them the greatest wrong imaginable by flattering them and persecuted him who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them! See Jer 27:18.

2. He appeals to the event, to prove it false, Jer 28:7-9. The false prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micaiah, because he never prophesied good concerning them, but evil. Now he pleads that this had been the purport of the prophecies that other prophets had delivered, so that it ought not to be looked upon as a strange thing, or as rendering his mission doubtful; for prophets of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms, so bold were they in delivering the messages which God sent by them, and so far from fearing men, or seeking to please them, as Hananiah did. They made no difficulty, any more than Jeremiah did, of threatening war, famine, and pestilence, and what they said was regarded as coming from God; why then should Jeremiah be run down as a pestilent fellow, and a sower of sedition, when he preached no otherwise than God's prophets had always done before him? Other prophets had foretold destruction did not come, which yet did not disprove their divine

mission, as in the case of Jonah; for God is gracious, and ready to turn away his wrath from those that turn away from their sins.

But the prophet that prophesied of peace and prosperity, especially as Hananiah did, absolutely and unconditionally, without adding that necessary proviso, that they do not by wilful sin put a bar in their own door and stop the current of God's favours, will be proved a true prophet only by the accomplishment of his prediction; if it come to pass, then it shall be known that the Lord has sent him, but, if not, he will appear to be a cheat and an impostor.

2 Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

3 Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon:

4 and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord : for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

5 Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord,

6 even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

7 Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;

8 The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

9 The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, *then* shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.

10 Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it.

We have here an instance,

I. Of the insolence of the false prophet. To complete the affront he designed Jeremiah, he took the yoke from off his neck which he carried as a memorial of what he had prophesied concerning the enslaving of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he broke it, that he might give a sign of the accomplishment of this prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might seem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy. See how the lying spirit, in the mouth of this false prophet, mimics the language of the Spirit of truth: Thus saith the Lord, So will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon, not only from the neck of this nation, but from the neck of all nations, within two full years. Whether by the force of a heated imagination Hananiah had persuaded himself to believe this, or whether he knew it to be false, and only persuaded them to believe it, does not appear; but it is plain that he speaks with abundance of assurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of truth.

II. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly went his way, and when he was reviled he reviled not again, and would not contend with one that was in the height of his fury and in the midst of the priests and people that were violently set against him. The reason why he went his way was not because he had nothing to answer, but because he was willing to stay till God was pleased to furnish him with a direct and immediate answer, which as yet he had not received. He expected that God would send a special message to Hananiah, and he would say nothing till he had received that. I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear, and thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. It may sometimes be our wisdom rather to retreat than to contend. Currenti cede furori--Give place unto wrath.

III. Of the justice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adversary. Jeremiah went his way, as a man in whose mouth there was no rebuke, but God soon put a word into his mouth; for he will appear for those who silently commit their cause to him. 1 The word of God, in the mouth of Jeremiah, is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himself distrust the truth of what he had delivered in God's name because it met with such a daring opposition and contradiction. If what we have spoken be

the truth of God, we must not unsay it because men gainsay it; for great is the truth and will prevail. It will stand, therefore let us stand to it, and not fear that men's unbelief or blasphemy will make it of no effect. Hananiah has broken the yokes of wood, but Jeremiah must make for them yokes of iron, which cannot be broken (Jer 28:13), for (says God) "I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, which shall lie heavier, and bind harder, upon them (Jer 28:14), that they may serve the king of Babylon, and not be able to shake off the yoke however they may struggle, for they shall serve him whether they will or no;" and who is he that can contend with God's counsel? What was said before is repeated again:

I have given him the beasts of the field also, as if there were something significant in that. Men had by their wickedness made themselves like the beasts that perish, and therefore deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beasts are ruled, and such a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with; for whom he would he slew and whom he would he kept alive. 2. Hananiah is sentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commission from God, boldly tells him so to his face, though before he received that commission he went away and said nothing.

(1.) The crimes of which Hananiah stands convicted are cheating the people and affronting God: Thou makest this people to trust in a lie, encouraging them to hope that they shall have peace, which will make their destruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worst: Thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord; thou hast taught them to despise all the good counsel given them in God's name by the true prophets, and hast rendered it ineffectual. Those have a great deal to answer for who, by telling sinners that they shall have peace though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reproofs and admonitions of the word, and the means and methods God takes to bring them to repentance.

(2.) The judgment given against him is, "I will cast thee off from the face of the earth, as unworthy to live upon it; thou shalt be buried in it. This year thou shalt die, and die as a rebel against

the Lord, to whom death will come with a sting and a curse." This sentence was executed, Jer 28:17. Hananiah died the same year, within two months; for his prophecy is dated the fifth month (Jer 28:1) and his death the seventh. Good men may perhaps be suddenly taken off by death in the midst of their days, and in mercy to them, as Josiah was; but this being foretold as the punishment of his sin, and coming to pass accordingly, it may safely be construed as a testimony from Heaven against him and a confirmation of Jeremiah's mission. And, if the people's hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it would have prevented their being further hardened by the deceitfulness of their prophets.

11 And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus
saith the Lord ; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar
king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of
two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

12 Then the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah *the prophet,* after
that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck
of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

13 Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord ; Thou hast
broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of
iron.

14 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke
of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I
have given him the beasts of the field also.

15 Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear
now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this
people to trust in a lie.

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord ; Behold, I will cast thee from off the
face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught
rebellion against the Lord.

17 So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh
month.

Jeremiah-29

Jeremiah's Letter to the Captives

1 Now these *are* the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent
from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried
away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the
people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive
from Jerusalem to Babylon;

We are here told,

That Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, in the name of the Lord. Jeconiah had surrendered himself a prisoner, with the queen his mother, the chamberlains of his household, called here the eunuchs, and many of the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, who were at that time the most active men; the carpenters and smiths likewise, being demanded, were yielded up, that those who remained might not have any proper hands to fortify their city or furnish themselves with weapons of war. By this tame submission it was hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified. Satis est prostrasse leoni--It suffices the lion to have laid his antagonist prostrate; but the imperious conqueror grows upon their concessions, like Benhadad upon Ahab's, 1Ki 20:5,6.

And, not content with this, when these had departed from Jerusalem he comes again, and fetches away many more of the elders, the priests, the prophets, and the people (Jer 29:1), such as he thought fit, or such as his soldiers could lay hands on, and carries them to Babylon. The case of these captives was very melancholy, the rather because they, being thus distinguished from the rest of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater sinners than all men who dwelt at Jerusalem. Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them, to comfort them, assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of succour themselves or to envy their brethren that were left behind.

Note, 1 The word of God written is as truly given by inspiration of God as his word spoken was; and this was the proper way of spreading the knowledge of God's will among his children scattered abroad.

2. We may serve God and do good by writing to our friends at a distance pious letters of seasonable comforts and wholesome counsels. Those whom we cannot speak to we may write to; that which is written remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was sent to the captives in Babylon by the hands of the ambassadors whom king Zedekiah sent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to pay him his tribute and renew his submission to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might perhaps hope that they should be included, Jer 29:3. By such messengers Jeremiah chose to send this message, to put an honour upon it, because it was a message from God, or perhaps because there was no settled way of sending letters to Babylon, but as such an occasion as this offered, and then it made the condition of the captives there the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is some reviving and satisfaction to those that are separated from one another.

2 (after that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

3 by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,

4 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5 Build ye houses, and dwell *in them;* and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

We are here told what he wrote. A copy of the letter at large follows here to Jer 29:24. In these verses,

1. He assures them that he wrote in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who indited the letter; Jeremiah was but the scribe or amanuensis. It would be comfortable to them, in their captivity, to hear that God is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, and

is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the God of Israel still, a God in covenant with his people, though he contend with them, and their enemies for the present are too hard for them. This would likewise be an admonition to them to stand upon their guard against all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, because the God of Israel, the God whom they served, is Lord of hosts. God's sending to them in this letter might be an encouragement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not cast them off, had not abandoned them and disinherited them, though he was displeased with them and corrected them; for, if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have written to them.

2. God by him owns the hand he had in their captivity: I have caused you to be carried away, Jer 29:4v. 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it if God had not ordered it; nor could he have any power against them but what was given him from above. If God caused them to be carried captives, they might be sure that he neither did them any wrong nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to consider that they are what God has appointed us to. I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.

3. He bids them think of nothing but settling there; and therefore let them resolve to make the best of it (Jer 29:5,6): Build yourselves houses and dwell in them, &c. By all this it is intimated to them,

(1.) That they must not feed themselves with hopes of a speedy return out of their captivity, for that would keep them still unsettled and consequently uneasy; they would apply themselves to no business, take no comfort, but be always tiring themselves and provoking their conquerors with the expectations of relief; and their disappointment at last would sink them into despair and make their condition much more miserable than otherwise it would be. Let them therefore reckon upon a continuance there, and accommodate themselves to it as well as they can. Let them build, and plant, and marry, and dispose of their children there as if they were at home in their own land. Let them take a pleasure

in seeing their families built up and multiplied; for, though they must expect themselves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to see better days. If they live in the fear of God, what should hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but weep sometimes when they remember Zion. But let not weeping hinder sowing; let them not sorrow as those that have no hope, no joy; for they have both.

Note, In all conditions of life it is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we may have because we have not all we would have. We have a natural affection for our native country; it strangely draws our minds; but it is with a nescio qua dulcedine--we can give no good account of the sweet attraction; and therefore, if providence remove us to some other country, we must resolve to live easy there, to bring our mind to our condition when our condition is not in every thing to our mind. If the earth be the Lord's, then, wherever a child of God goes, he does not go off his Father's ground. Patria est ubicunque bene est--That place is our country in which we are well off. If things be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are. Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit--Though we suffer now we shall not always.

(2.) That they must not disquiet themselves with fears of intolerable hardships in their captivity. They might be ready to suggest (as persons in trouble are always apt to make the worst of things) that it would be in vain to build houses, for their lords and masters would not suffer them to dwell in them when they had built them, nor to eat the fruit of the vineyards they planted. "Never fear," says God; "if you live peaceably with them, you shall find them civil to you." Meek and quiet people, that work and mind their own business, have often found much better treatment, even with strangers and enemies, than they expected; and God has made his people to be pitied of those that carry them captives (Ps 106:46), and a pity it is but that those who have built houses should dwell in them. Nay,

4. He directs them to seek the good of the country where they were captives (Jer 29:7), to pray for it, to endeavour to promote

it. This forbids them to attempt any thing against the public peace while they were subjects to the king of Babylon. Though he was a heathen, an idolater, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and his church, yet, while he gave them protection, they must pay him allegiance, and live quiet and peaceable lives under him, in all godliness and honesty, not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. Nay, they must pray to God for the peace of the places where they were, that they might oblige them to continue their kindness to them and disprove the character that had been given their nation, that they were hurtful to kings and provinces, and moved sedition, Ezr 4:15.

Both the wisdom of the serpent and the innocency of the dove required them to be true to the government they lived under: For in the peace thereof you shall have peace; should the country be embroiled in war, they would have the greatest share in the calamitous effects of it. Thus the primitive Christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And, if they were to pray for and seek the peace of the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our nativity, where we are a free people under a good government, that in the peace thereof we and ours may have peace. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship.

6 take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your
sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons
and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.
7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be
carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the
peace thereof shall ye have peace.
8 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your
prophets and your diviners, that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you,
neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity,

I. God takes them off from building upon the false foundation which their pretended prophets laid, Jer 29:8,9. They told them that their captivity should be short, and therefore that they must

not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back: "Now herein they deceive you," says God; "they prophesy a lie to you, though they prophesy in my name. But let them not deceive you, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them." As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits by it is our own fault if we be deceived; for by it we may be undeceived. Hearken not to your dreams, which you cause to be dreamed. He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads (by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake they caused themselves to dream of it when they were asleep, and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations), or the dreams which the prophets dreamed and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people, They are your dreams, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for. They caused them to be dreamed; for they hearkened to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such deceits upon them, desiring them to prophesy nothing but smooth things, Isa 30:10. They were dreams of their own bespeaking. False prophets would not flatter people in their sins, but that they love to be flattered, and speak smoothly to their prophets that their prophets may speak smoothly to them.

II. He gives them a good foundation to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock ready for them to rebuild upon. God here promises them that, though they should not return quickly, they should return at length, after seventy years be accomplished. By this it appears that the seventy years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the deliverance of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that that is the best time. The promise is that God will visit them in mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them, he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors by coming to visit them. He will put an end to their captivity, and turn away all the calamities of it. Though they are dispersed, some in one country and some in another, he will gather them

from all the places whither they are driven, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, and incorporate them again in one body. And though they are at a great distance they shall be brought again to their own land, to the place whence they were carried captive, Jer 29:14. Now,

1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them (Jer 29:10): I will perform my good word towards you. Let not the failing of those predictions which are delivered as from God lessen the reputation of those that really are from him. That which is indeed God's word is a good word, and therefore it will be made good, and not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? This will make their return out of captivity very comfortable, that it will be the performance of God's good word to them, the product of a gracious promise.

2. This shall be in pursuance of God's purposes concerning them (Jer 29:11): I know the thoughts that I think towards you. Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts (Ac 15:18) and his works agree exactly with his thoughts; he does all according to the counsel of his will. We often do not know our own thoughts, nor know our own mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself. We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us; but he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are thoughts of good and not of evil; even that which seems evil is designed for good. His thoughts are all working towards the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them an end, and expectation, so it is in the original.

(1.) He will give them to see the end (the comfortable termination) of their trouble; though it last long, it shall not last always. The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, will come. When things are at the worst they will begin to mend; and he will give them to see the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect. He that in the beginning finished

the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy he will make an end. God does nothing by halves.

(2.) He will give them to see the expectation, that end which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them, not the expectations of their fears, nor the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith, the end which he has promised and which will turn for the best to them. 3. This shall be in answer to their prayers and supplications to God, Jer 29:12-15.

(1.) God will stir them up to pray: Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go, and pray unto me. Note, When God is about to give his people the expected good he pours out a spirit of prayer, and it is a good sign that he is coming towards them in mercy. Then, when you see the expected end approaching, then you shall call upon me. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer: and when deliverance is coming we must by prayer go forth to meet it. When Daniel understood that the 70 years were near expiring, then he set his face with more fervency than ever to seek the Lord, Da 9:2,3.

(2.) He will then stir up himself to come and save them (Ps 80:2): I will hearken unto you, and I will be found of you. God has said it, and we may depend upon it, Seek and you shall find. We have a general rule laid down (Jer 29:13): You shall find me when you shall search for me with all your heart. In seeking God we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him and encouragements to our faith and hope. We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as those that search; and this we must do with our heart (that is, in sincerity and uprightness), and with our whole heart (that is, with vigour and fervency, putting forth all that is within us in prayer), and those who thus seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder, Heb 11:6. He never said to such, Seek you me in vain.

9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord.

10 For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.
11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.
12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.
13 And ye shall seek me, and find *me,* when ye shall search for me with all your heart.
14 And I will be found of you, saith the Lord : and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord ; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.
15 Because ye have said, The Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;

Jeremiah, having given great encouragement to those among the captives whom he knew to be serious and well-affected, assuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to those among them who slighted the counsels and comforts that Jeremiah ministered to them and depended upon what the false prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah they would be ready to say, "Why should he make himself so busy, and take upon him to advise us? The Lord has raised us up prophets in Babylon, Jer 29:15. We are satisfied with those prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occasion to hear from any prophets in Jerusalem."

See the impudent wickedness of this people; as the prophets, when they prophesied lies, said that they had them from God, so the people, when they invited those prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and said that it was the Lord that raised them up those prophets. Whereas we may be sure that those who harden people in their sins, and deceive them with false and groundless hopes of God's mercy, are no prophets of God's raising up. These prophets of their own told them that no more should be carried captive, but that those who were in captivity should shortly return. Now, in answer to this,

1 The prophet here foretells the utter destruction of those who remained still at Jerusalem, notwithstanding what those false prophets said to the contrary: "As for the king and people that dwell in the city, who, you think, will be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived; they shall be followed with one judgment after another, sword, famine, and pestilence, which shall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miserable remains shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth," Jer 29:16,18. And thus God will make them, or rather deal with them accordingly, as the salt that has lost its savour, which, being good for nothing, is cast to the dunghill, and so are rotten figs. This refers to the vision and the prophecy upon it which we had Jer 24:1-10 And the reason given for these proceedings against them is the same that has often been given and will justify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners (Jer 29:19): Because they have not hearkened to my words. I called, but they refused.

2. He foretells the judgment of God upon the false prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boasted of them as prophets of God's raising up (Jer 29:20): "Stand still, and hear the doom of the prophets you are so fond of." The two prophets are named here, Ahab and Zedekiah, Jer 29:21. Observe,

(1.) The crimes charged upon them--impiety and immorality: They prophesied lies in God's name (Jer 29:21), and again (Jer 29:23), They have spoken lying words in my name. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God to delude them into a false hope was worse, but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worst of all. And no marvel if those that had the face to do that could allow themselves in the gratification of those vile affections to which God, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up. They have done villainy in Israel, for they have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives. Adultery is villainy in Israel, and in such as pretend to be prophets, who by such wickednesses manifestly disprove their own pretensions. God never sent such profligate wretches on his errands. He is the Lord God of the holy prophets, not of such impure ones.

Here it appears why they flattered others in their sins--because they could not reprove them without condemning themselves. These lewd practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preserve their credit; but I know it and am a witness, saith the Lord. The most secret sins are known to God; he can see the villainy that is covered with the thickest cloak of hypocrisy, and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all these hidden works of darkness and every man will appear in his own colours.

(2.) The judgments threatened against them: The king of Babylon shall slay them before your eyes; nay, he shall put them to a miserable death, roast them in the fire, Jer 29:22. We may suppose that it was not for their impiety and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar punished them thus severely, but for sedition, and some attempts of their turbulent spirits upon the public peace, and stirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedness shall then be detected, and in such a wretched manner they shall end their days, that their names shall be a curse among the captives in Babylon, Jer 29:22. When men would imprecate the greatest evil upon one they hated they would think they could not load them with a heavier curse, in fewer words, than to say, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab. Thus were they made ashamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at last of their folly in hearkening to them. God's faithful prophets were sometimes charged with being the troublers of the land, and as such were tortured and slain; but their names were a blessing when they were gone and their memory sweet, not as these false prophets. As malefactors are attended with infamy and disgrace, so martyrs with glory and honour.

16 *know* that thus saith the Lord of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, *and* of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;

17 thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a

hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

19 because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them;* but ye would not hear, saith the Lord.

20 Hear ye therefore the word of the Lord, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

21 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

22 and of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which *are* in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

23 because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and *am* a witness, saith the Lord.

24 *Thus* shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

25 Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that *are* at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

We have perused the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon, who had reason, with a great deal of thanks to God and him, to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their treasures. But we cannot wonder if the false prophets they had among them were enraged at it; for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them,

I. How he manifested his malice against Jeremiah. This busy fellow is called Shemaiah the Nehelamite, the dreamer (so the margin reads it), because all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God in a dream. He had got a copy of Jeremiah's letter to the captives, or had heard it read, or information was given to him concerning it, and it nettled him exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand, and answer it, yea, that he will. But how?

He does not write to Jeremiah in justification of his own mission, nor offer any rational arguments for the support of his prophecies concerning the speedy return of the captives; but he writes to the priests, those faithful patrons of the false prophets, and instigates them to persecute Jeremiah.

He writes in his own name, not so much as pretending to have the people's consent to it; but, as if he must be dictator to all mankind, he sends a circular letter (as it should seem) among the priests at Jerusalem and the rest of the people, probably by the same messengers that brought the letter from Jeremiah. But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate son of Maaseiah, or of the 24th course of the priests, of which Maaseiah was the father and head. He was not the high priest, but sagan or suffragan to the high priest, or in some other considerable post of command in the temple, as Pashur, Jer 20:1. Perhaps he was chairman of that committee of priests that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognizance of those that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now,

1. He puts him and the other priests in mind of the duty of their place (Jer 29:26): The Lord hath made thee priest instead of Jehoiada the priest. Some think that he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Joash; and (says Mr. Gataker) he would insinuate that this Zephaniah is for spirit and zeal such another as he, and raised up, as he was, for the glory of God and the good of the church; and therefore it was expected from him that he should proceed against Jeremiah. Thus (says he) there is no act so injurious or impious, but that wicked wretches and false prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it also with some specious pretence of piety and zeal for God's glory, Isa 66:6,Joh 16:2. Or, rather, it was some other Jehoiada, his immediate predecessor in this office, who perhaps was carried to Babylon among the priests, Jer 29:1.

Zephaniah is advanced, sooner than he expected, to this place of trust and power, and Shemaiah would have him think that Providence had preferred him that he might persecute God's prophets, that he had come to this government for such a time as

this, and that he was unjust and ungrateful if he did not thus improve his power, or, rather, abuse it. Their hearts are wretchedly hardened who can justify the doing of mischief by their having a power to do it. These priests' business was to examine every man that is mad and makes himself a prophet. God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay-intruders, as men that were mad, actuated by some demon, and not divinely inspired, or as distracted men and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the false prophets are thrown upon the true ones; and, if this had been indeed their character, they would have deserved to be bound as madmen and punished as pretenders, and therefore he concludes that Jeremiah must be so treated. He does not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission and could make it to appear that he was not mad. No; that is taken for granted, and, when once he has had a bad name given him, he must be run down of course.

2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives (Jer 29:28): He sent unto us in Babylon, with the authority of a prophet, saying, This captivity is long, and therefore resolve to make the best of it. And what harm was there in this, that it should be objected to him as a crime? The false prophets had formerly said that the captivity would never come, Jer 14:3. Jeremiah had said that it would come, and the event had already proved him in the right, which obliged them to give credit to him who now said that it would be long, rather than to those who said that it would be short, but had once before been found liars.

3. He demands judgment against him, taking it for granted that he is mad, and makes himself a prophet. He expects that they will order him to be put in prison and in the stocks (Jer 29:26), that they will thus punish him, and by putting him to disgrace possess the people with prejudices against him, ruin his reputation, and so prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jerusalem, hoping that, if they could gain that point, the captives in Babylon would not be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect (Jer 29:27): Why hast thou not rebuked and restrained Jeremiah of Anathoth? See how insolent and imperious these false prophets had grown, that, though they were

in captivity, they would give law to the priests who were not only at liberty, but in power. It is common for those that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours to be thus assuming. Now here is a remarkable instance of the hardness of the hearts of sinners, and it is enough to make us all fear lest our hearts be at any time hardened. For here we find,

(1.) That these sinners would not be convinced by the clearest evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah; it had taken hold of them (Zec 1:6); and yet, because he does not prophesy to them the smooth things they desired, they are resolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None so blind as those that will not see.

(2.) That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the most severe chastisement. They were now sent into a miserable thraldom for mocking the messengers of the Lord and misusing his prophets. This was the sin for which God now contended with them; and yet in their distress they trespass yet more against the Lord, 2Ch 28:22. This very sin they are notoriously guilty of in their captivity, which shows that afflictions will not of themselves cure men of their sins, unless the grace of God work with them, but will rather exasperate the corruptions they are intended to mortify; so true is that of Solomon (Pr 27:22), Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

II. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this (Jer 29:29): Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah. He did not design to do as Shemaiah would have him, but, as it should seem, had a respect for Jeremiah (for we find him employed in messages to him as a prophet, Jer 21:1,37:3), and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power stood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of the letter, that he might see what enemies he had even among the captives. Note, It is kindness to our friends to let them know their foes.

26 The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord, for every man

that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

27 Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?

28 For therefore he sent unto us *in* Babylon, saying, This *captivity is* long: build ye houses, and dwell *in them;* and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

29 And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

30 Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying,

31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

III. What was the sentence passed upon Shemaiah for writing this letter. God sent him an answer, for to him Jeremiah committed his cause: it was ordered to be sent not to him, but to those of the captivity, who encouraged and countenanced him as if he had been a prophet of God's raising up, Jer 29:31,32. Let them know,

1. That Shemaiah had made fools of them. He promised them peace in God's name, but God did not send him; he forged a commission, and counterfeited the broad seal of Heaven to it, and made the people to trust in a lie, and by preaching false comfort to them deprived them of true comfort. Nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worse, he had made traitors of them; he had taught rebellion against the Lord, as Hananiah had done, Jer 28:16. And, if vengeance shall be taken on those that rebel, much more on those that teach rebellion by their doctrine and example.

2. That at his end he shall also be a fool (as the expression is, Jer 17:11); his name and family shall be extinct and shall be buried in oblivion; he shall leave no issue behind him to bear up his name; his pedigree shall end in him: He shall not have a man to dwell among this people; and neither he nor any that come from him shall behold the good that I will do for my people. Note, Those are unworthy to share in God's favours to his church that are not willing to stay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at

Jeremiah's advice to the captives to see to the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be increased and not diminished, and therefore justly is he written childless there. Those that slight the blessings of God's word deserve to lose the benefit of them. See Am 7:16,17.

32 therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord.

Jeremiah-30

The Return from Captivity Promised

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,
2 Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

Here, I. Jeremiah is directed to write what God had spoken to him, which perhaps refers to all the foregoing prophecies. He must write them and publish them, in hopes that those who had not profited by what he said upon once hearing it might take more notice of it when in reading it they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or, rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been often mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will now add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write them not in a letter, as that in the chapter before to the captives, but in a book, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the public rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, Da 9:2.

He must write them in a book, not in loose papers: "For the days come, and are yet at a great distance, when I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah, great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two," Jer 30:3. And this prophecy must be written,

that it may be read then also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers the prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated that they shall be beloved for their fathers' sake (Ro 11:28); for therefore God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that he gave to their fathers, which therefore they shall possess.

II. He is directed what to write. The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teaches, Jer 30:4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order are as truly his word as the ten commandments which were written with his finger.

1. He must write a description of the fright and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in upon every attack that the Chaldeans made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the welcomeness of their deliverance (Jer 30:5): We have heard a voice of trembling--the shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophets told them that they should have peace, but there is fear and not peace, so the margin reads it. No marvel that when without are fightings within are fears. The men, even the men of war, shall be quite overwhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like women in labour, whose pains come upon them in great extremity and they know that they cannot escape them, Jer 30:6. You never heard of a man travailing with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but every man with his hands on his loins, in the utmost anguish and agony, as women in travail, when they see their cities burnt and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a woman in travail, not to that of a death-bed, because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain, like that of a travailing woman, shall be forgotten. All faces shall be turned into paleness.

The word signifies not only such paleness as arises from a sudden fright, but that which is the effect of a bad habit of body, the jaundice, or the green sickness. The prophet laments the calamity upon the foresight of it (Jer 30:7): Alas! for that day is great, a day of judgment, which is called the great day, the great and

terrible day of the Lord (Joe 2:31,Jude 1:6), great, so that there has been none like it. The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour as unparalleled, Mt 24:21. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, a sad time, when God's professing people shall be in distress above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a time of Jacob's trouble; and such times ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob and the honour of the God of Jacob.

2. He must write the assurances which God had given that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities.

(1.) Jacob's troubles shall cease: He shall be saved out of them. Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and shall be wrought for his church.

(2.) Jacob's troublers shall be disabled from doing him any further mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him, Jer 30:8. The Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it: "I will break his yoke from off thy neck, which has long lain so heavy, and has so sorely galled thee. I will burst thy bonds and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shalt no more serve them, nor shall they any more serve themselves of thee; they shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possessions or by thy labours."

And, (3.) That which crowns and completes the mercy is that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, Jer 30:9. They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large and do what they please, but that they may serve the Lord their God and David their king, that they may come again into order, under the established government both in church and state. Therefore they were brought into trouble and made to serve their enemies because they had not served the Lord their God as they ought to have done, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, De 28:47.

But, when the time shall come that they should be saved out of their trouble, God will prepare and qualify them for it by giving them a heart to serve him, and will make it doubly comfortable by giving them opportunity to serve him. Therefore we are delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve God, Lu 1:74,75. And then deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us when by them we find ourselves engaged to and enlarged in the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostasy, nor compelled, as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other gods. They shall serve David their king, such governors as God should from time to time set over them, of the line of David (as Zerubbabel), or at least sitting on the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, as Nehemiah. But certainly this has a further meaning.

The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, They shall obey (or hearken to) the Messiah (or Christ), the Son of David, their king. To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation which commenced at their return out of captivity brought them to the Messiah. He is called David their King because he was the Son of David (Mt 22:42) and he answered to the name, Mt 20:31,32. David was an illustrious type of him both in his humiliation and in his exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the throne of his father David; he raised him up unto them, set him upon the holy hill of Zion. God is often in the New Testament said to have raised up Jesus, raised him up as a King, Ac 3:26,13:23,33. Observe,

[1.] Those that serve the Lord as their God must also serve David their King, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ, to be ruled by him. For all men must honour the Son as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator.

[2.] Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage must make it appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service

of Christ. Those to whom he gives rest must take his yoke upon them.

3 For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

4 And these *are* the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.

5 For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

6 Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?

7 Alas! for that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, *that* I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

9 but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return,

In these verses, as in those foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth, but many precious promises are given them that in due time they should be relieved and a glorious salvation wrought for them.

God himself appeared against them: he scattered them (Jer 30:11); he did all these things unto them, Jer 30:15. All their calamities came from his hands; whoever were the instruments, he was the principal agent. And this made their case very sad that God, even their own God, spoke concerning them, to pull down and to destroy.

Now, 1. This was intended by him as a fatherly chastisement, and no other (Jer 30:11): "I will correct thee in measure, or according to judgment, with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay,

no more than thou canst well bear." What God does against his people is in a way of correction, and that correction is always moderated and always proceeds from love: "I will not leave thee altogether unpunished, as thou art ready to think I should, because of thy relation to me."

Note, A profession of religion, though ever so plausible, will be far from securing to us impunity in sin. God is no respecter of persons, but will show his hatred of sin wherever he finds it, and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people for the multitude of their iniquity, and because their sins were increased, Jer 30:14,15. Are our sorrows multiplied at any time and do they increase? We must acknowledge that it is because our sins have been multiplied and they have increased. Iniquities grow in us, and therefore troubles grow upon us. But,

2. What God intended as a fatherly chastisement they and others interpreted as an act of hostility; they looked upon him as having wounded them with the wound of an enemy and with the chastisement of a cruel one (Jer 30:14), as if he had designed their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction nor had any mercy in reserve for them. It did indeed seem as if God had dealt thus severely with them, as if he had turned to be their enemy and had fought against them, Isa 63:10. Job complains that God had become cruel to him and multiplied his wounds. When troubles are great and long we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not such hard thoughts as these of God and his providence. His are the chastisements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, whatever they may appear.

and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make *him* afraid.

11 For I *am* with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

12 For thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise *is* incurable, *and* thy wound *is* grievous.

13 *There is* none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.

I. Their friends forsook them, and were shy of them. None of those who had courted them in their prosperity would take notice of them now in their distress, Jer 30:13. It is commonly thus when families go to decay; those hang off from them that had been their hangers-on. In two cases we are glad of the assistance of our friends and need their service:--

1. If we be impeached, accused, or reproached, we expect that our friends should appear in vindication of us, should speak a good word for us when we cannot put on a face to speak for ourselves; but here there is none to plead thy cause, none to stand up in thy defence, none to intercede for thee with thy oppressors; therefore God will plead their cause, for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been so much the favourites of Heaven, Isa 63:5.

2. If we be sick, or sore, or wounded, we expect our friends should attend us, advise us, sympathize with us, and, if occasion be, lend a hand for the applying of healing medicines; but here there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and by counsels and comforts to make proper applications to thy case; nay (Jer 30:14), All thy lovers have forgotten thee; out of sight out of mind; instead of seeking thee, they forsake thee. Such as this has often been the case of religion and serious godliness in the world; those that from their education, profession, and hopeful beginnings, one might have expected to be its friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, desert it, forget it, and have nothing to say in its defence, nor will do any thing towards the healing of its wounds. Observe, Thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee. When God is against a people who will be for them? Who can be for them so as to do them any kindness? See Job 30:11. Now, upon this account, their case seemed desperate and past relief (Jer 30:12):

Thy bruise is incurable, thy wound grievous, and (Jer 30:15) thy sorrow is incurable. The condition of the Jews in captivity was such as no human power could redress the grievances of; there they were like a valley full of dead and dry bones, which nothing less than Omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people so diminished, so impoverished, should ever be

restored to their own land and re-established there? So many were the aggravations of their calamity that their sorrow would not admit of any alleviation, but they seemed to be hardened in it, and their souls refused to be comforted, till divine consolations proved strong ones, too strong to be borne down even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. Thy sorrow is incurable because thy sins, instead of being repented of and forsaken, were increased.

Note, Incurable griefs are owing to incurable lusts. Now in this deplorable condition they are looked upon with disdain (Jer 30:17): They called thee an outcast, abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they said, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after. When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built they called that an outcast; now all was in ruins, there was no resort to it, no residence in it, none asked the way to Zion, as formerly; no man seeks after it. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity (and we read of Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon, Zec 2:7), they called them outcasts; these are those who belong to Zion, and are wont to talk much of it and weep at the remembrance of it, but no man seeks after them, or enquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deserted and despised by those about her.

III. For all this God will work deliverance and salvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, nay, because no other hand, can cure their wound, his will, and shall. 1. Though he seemed to stand at a distance from them, yet he assures them of his presence with them, his powerful and gracious presence: I will save thee, Jer 30:10. I am with thee, to save thee, Jer 30:11. When they are in their troubles he is with them, to save them from sinking under them; when the time has come for their deliverance he is with them, to be ready upon the first opportunity, to save them out of their trouble.

2. Though they were at a distance, remote from their own land, afar off in the land of their captivity, yet there shall salvation find them out, thence shall it fetch them, them and their seed,

for they also shall be known among the Gentiles, and distinguished from them, that they may return, Jer 30:10.

3. Though they were now full of fears, and continually alarmed, yet the time shall come when they shall be in rest and quiet, safe and easy, and none shall make them afraid, Jer 30:10.

4. Though the nations into which they were dispersed should be brought to ruin, yet they should be preserved from that ruin (Jer 30:11): Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee, and there might be danger of thy being lost among them, yet I will not make a full end of thee. It was promised that in the peace of these nations they should have peace (Jer 29:7), and yet in the destruction of these nations they should escape destruction. God's church may sometimes be brought very low, but he will not make a full end of it, Jer 5:10,18.

5. Though God correct them, and justly, for their sins, their manifold transgressions and mighty sins, yet he will return in mercy to them, and even their sin shall not prevent their deliverance when God's time shall come.

6. Though their adversaries were mighty, God will bring them down, and break their power (Jer 30:16): All that devour thee shall be devoured, and thus Zion's cause will be pleaded and will be made to appear to all the world a righteous cause. Thus Zion's deliverance will be brought about by the destruction of her oppressors; and thus her enemies will be recompensed for all the injury they have done her; for there is a God that judges in the earth, a God to whom vengeance belongs. "They shall every one of them, without exception, go into captivity, and the day will come when those that now spoil thee shall be a spoil." Those that lead into captivity shall go into captivity, Re 13:10. This might serve to oblige the present conquerors to use their captives well, because the wheel would turn round, and the day would come when they also should be captives, and let them do now as they would then be done by.

7. Though the wound seem incurable, God will make a cure of it (Jer 30:17): I will restore health unto thee. Be the disease ever so dangerous, the patient is safe if God undertakes the cure.

IV. Upon the whole matter, they are cautioned against inordinate fear and grief, for in these precious promises there is enough to silence both.

1. They must not tremble as those that have no hope in the apprehension of future further trouble that might threaten them (Jer 30:10): Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob! neither be dismayed.

Note, Those that are God's servants must not give way to disquieting fears, whatever difficulties and dangers may be before them.

2. They must not sorrow as those that have no hope for the troubles which at present they lie under, Jer 30:15. "Why criest thou for thy affliction? It is true thy carnal confidences fail thee, creatures are physicians of no value, but I will heal thy wound, and therefore, Why criest thou? Why dost thou fret and complain thus? It is for thy sin (Jer 30:14,15), and therefore, instead of repining, thou shouldest be repenting. Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sins? The issue will be good at last, and therefore rejoice in hope.

14 All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; *because* thy sins were increased.

15 Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow *is* incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: *because* thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.

16 Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

17 For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an Outcast, *saying*, This *is* Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

18 Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

We have here further intimations of the favour God had in reserve for them after the days of their calamity were over. It is promised,

I. That the city and temple should be rebuilt, Jer 30:18. Jacob's tents, and his dwelling places, felt the effects of the captivity, for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives; but, when they have returned, the habitations shall be repaired, and raised up out of their ruins, and therein God will have mercy upon their dwelling places, that had been monuments of his justice. Then the city of Jerusalem shall be built upon her own heap, her own hill, though now it be no better than a ruinous heap. The situation was unexceptionable, and therefore it shall be rebuilt upon the same spot of ground. He that can make of a city a heap (Isa 25:2) can when he pleases make of a heap a city again. The palace (the temple, God's palace) shall remain after the manner thereof; it shall be built after the old model; and the service of God shall be constantly kept up there and attended as formerly.

II. That the sacred feasts should again be solemnized (Jer 30:19): Out of the city, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of those that make merry. They shall go with expressions of joy to the temple service, and with the like shall return from it. Observe, The voice of thanksgiving is the same with the voice of those that make merry; for whatever is the matter of our joy should be the matter of our praise. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. What makes us cheerful should make us thankful. Serve the Lord with gladness.

III. That the people should be multiplied, and increased, and made considerable: They shall not be few, they shall not be

small, but shall become numerous and illustrious, and make a figure among the nations; for I will multiply them and I will glorify them. It is for the honour of the church to have many added to it that shall be saved. This would make them be of some weight among their neighbours. Let a people be ever so much diminished and despised, God can multiply and glorify them. They shall be restored to their former honour: Their children shall be as aforetime, playing in the streets (Zec 8:5); they shall inherit their parents' estates and honours as formerly; and their congregation shall, both in civil and sacred things, be established before me. There shall be a constant succession of faithful magistrates in the congregation of the elders, to establish that, and of faithful worshippers in the congregation of the saints. As one generation passes away another shall be raised up, and so the congregation shall be established before God.

IV. That they shall be blessed with a good government (Jer 30:21): Their nobles and judges shall be of themselves, of their own nation, and they shall no longer be ruled by strangers and enemies; their governor shall proceed from the midst of them, shall be one that has been a sharer with them in the afflictions of their captive state; and this has reference to Christ our governor, David our King (Jer 30:9); he is of ourselves, in all things made like unto his brethren. And I will cause him to draw near; this may be understood either,

1. Of the people, Jacob and Israel: "I will cause them to draw near to me in the temple service, as formerly, to come in to covenant with me, as my people (Jer 30:22), to approach to me in communion; for who hath engaged his heart, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, to approach unto me?" How few are there that do so! None can do it but by the special grace of God causing them to draw near. Note, Whenever we approach to God in any holy ordinance we must engage our hearts to do it; the heart must be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept closely to it. The heart is the main thing that God looks at and requires; but it is deceitful, and will start aside of a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it, to bind this sacrifice with cords. Or,

2. It may be understood of the governor; for it is a single person that is spoken of: Their governor shall be duly called to his office, shall draw near to God to consult him upon all occasions. God will cause him to approach to him, for, otherwise, who would engage to take care of so weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many discouragements, he will raise up instruments to do it. But it looks further, to Christ, to him as Mediator. Note,

(1.) The proper work and office of Christ, as Mediator, is to draw near and approach unto God, not for himself only, but for us, and in our name and stead, as the high priest of our profession. The priests are said to draw nigh to God, Le 10:3,21:17. Moses drew near, Ex 20:21.

(2.) God the Father did cause Jesus Christ thus to draw near and approach to him as Mediator. He commanded and appointed him to do it; he sanctified and sealed him, anointed him for this purpose, accepted him, and declared himself well pleased in him.

(3.) Jesus Christ, being caused by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did engage his heart to do it, that is, he bound and obliged himself to it, undertook for his heart (so some read it), for his soul, that, in the fullness of time, it should be made an offering for sin. His own voluntary undertaking, in compliance with his Father's will and in compassion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It also intimates that he was hearty and resolute, free and cheerful, in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way, Isa 63:3-5.

(4.) Jesus Christ was, in all this, truly wonderful. We may well ask, with admiration, Who is this that thus engages his heart to such an undertaking?

V. That they shall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers (Jer 30:22): You shall be my people; and it is God's good work in us that

makes us to him a people, a people for his name, Ac 15:14. I will be your God. It is his good-will to us that is the summary of that part of the covenant.

VI. That their enemies shall be reckoned with and brought down (Jer 30:20): I will punish all those that oppress them, so that it shall appear to all a dangerous thing to touch God's anointed, Ps 105:15. The Jer 30:23,24 come under this head: The whirlwind of the Lord shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. These two verses we had before (Jer 23:19,20); there they were a denunciation of God's wrath against the wicked hypocrites in Israel; here against the wicked oppressors of Israel. The expressions, exactly agreeing, speak the same with that (Isa 51:22,23), I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand and put it into the hand of those that afflict thee. The wrath of God against the wicked is here represented to be.

1. Very terrible, like a whirlwind, surprising and irresistible.

2. Very grievous. It shall fall with pain upon their heads; they shall be as much hurt as frightened.

3. It shall pursue them. Whirlwinds are usually short, but this shall be a continuing whirlwind.

4. It shall accomplish that for which it is sent: The anger of the Lord shall not return till he have done it. The purposes of his wrath, as well as the purposes of his love, will all be fulfilled; he will perform the intents of his heart.

5. Those that will not lay this to heart now will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it: In the latter days you shall consider it, when it will be too late to prevent it.

19 And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

20 Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

21 And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who *is* this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.
22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.
23 Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.
24 The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done *it*, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

Jeremiah-31

1 At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.
2 Thus saith the Lord, The people *which were* left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; *even* Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

God here assures his people

I. That he will again take them into a covenant relation to himself, from which they seemed to be cut off. At the same time, when God's anger breaks out against the wicked (Jer 30:24), his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love: I will be the God (that is, I will show myself to be the God) of all the families of Israel (Jer 31:1),-- not of the two tribes only, but of all the tribes,--not of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families; not only their state in general, but their particular families, and the interests of them, shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family capacity, may apply to God and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, Pr 3:33.

II. That he will do for them, in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of

Egypt, and as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people.

1. He puts them in mind of what he did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, Jer 31:2. They were then, as these were, a people left of the sword, that sword of Pharaoh with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born (a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped) and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off when he pursued them to the Red Sea. They were then in the wilderness, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, as these were now in a strange land, and yet they found grace in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blessed with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going to cause them to rest in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet that it has been raised up from its low estate and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same.

2. They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? It is true, The Lord hath appeared of old unto me (Jer 31:3), in Egypt, in the wilderness, hath appeared with me and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God. The years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise; what good will it do us that he appeared of old to us when now he is a God that hides himself from us? Isa 45:15. Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles under present frowns.

3. To this he answers with an assurance of the constancy of his love: Yea, I have loved thee, not only with an ancient love, but with an everlasting love, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is an everlasting love; therefore have I extended or drawn out lovingkindness unto thee also, as well as to thy ancestors, or, with lovingkindness have I drawn thee to myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those

who are through grace interested in the love of God that it is an everlasting love (from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it), and that nothing can separate them from that love. Those whom God loves with this love he will draw into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will draw them with lovingkindness, with the cords of a man and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

III. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, Jer 31:4,5. Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built. Are they parts of this building dispersed? They shall be collected and put together again, each in its place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it? Is Israel a beautiful virgin? Is she now stripped of her ornaments and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but thou shalt again be adorned and made fine, adorned with thy tabrets, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry. They shall resume their harps which had been hung upon the willow-trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them. They shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable; it shall be a proper time for it, God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when God called to mourning, were a shame to them. Or it may refer to their use of tabrets in the solemnizing of their religious feasts and their going forth in dances then, as the daughters of Shiloh, Jdg 21:19,21.

Our mirth is then indeed an ornament to us when we serve God and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it is promised (Jer 31:5), Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria, which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united (Eze 37:22), and there shall be such perfect peace and security that men shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground: The planters shall plant, not fearing the soldiers' coming

to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves shall eat them freely, as common things, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God (as they were till the fifth year, Le 19:23-25), not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, enough for each.

IV. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his own appointment, and shall have both invitations and inclinations to do so (Jer 31:6): There shall be a day, and a glorious day it will be, when the watchmen upon Mount Ephraim, that are set to stand sentinel there, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet and that there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be discharged from their post, that they may go up to Zion, to praise God for the public peace.

Or the watchmen that tend the vineyards (spoken of Jer 31:5) shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go and keep the solemn feasts at Jerusalem. Now this implies that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, Ps 122:1. But that which is most observable here is that the watchmen of Ephraim are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas formerly the watchman of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God (Ho 9:8), and, in stead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, Ho 5:1.

Note, God can make those who have been enemies to religion and the true worship of God to become encouragers of them and leaders in them. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when the gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation thereby given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

3 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.

4 Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel:
thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in
the dances of them that make merry.
5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the
planters shall plant, and shall eat *them* as common things.
6 For there shall be a day, *that* the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim
shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God.
7 For thus saith the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout
among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O
Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

That God shall have the glory and the church both the honour and comfort of this blessed change (Jer 31:7): Sing with gladness for Jacob, that is, let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, De 32:43. Rejoice, you Gentiles with his people, Ro 15:10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Jacob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect and put a reputation upon him. Even the chief of the nations, that make the greatest figure, shall think it an honour to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. Publish you, praise you. In publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must publish it with praise, and therefore it is often spoken of in the Psalms as mingled with praises, Ps 67:2,3,96:2,3. What we either bring to others or take to ourselves the comfort of we must be sure to give God the praise of. Praise you, and say, O Lord! save thy people; that is, perfect their salvation, go on to save the remnant of Israel, that are yet in bondage; as Ps 126:3,4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done we must call upon him for the future favours which his church is in need and expectation of; and in praying to him we really praise him and give him glory; he takes it so.

8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them
from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame,
the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a
great company shall return thither.

That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity and a very

comfortable passage homeward (Jer 31:8,9), and this beginning of mercy shall be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised.

1. Though they are scattered to places far remote, yet they shall be brought together from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth; wherever they are, God will find them out.

2. Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them: The blind and the lame shall come; such a good-will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not make their blindness and lameness an excuse for staying where they are. There companions will be ready to help them, will be eyes to the blind and legs to the lame, as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels heavenward, Job 29:15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead that he is blind who has God for his guide, or lame who has God for his strength. The women with child are heavy, and it is not fit that they should undertake such a journey, much less those that travail with child; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us.

3. Though they seem to be diminished, and to have become few in numbers, yet, when they come all together, they shall be a great company; and so will God's spiritual Israel be when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock.

4. Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery (Jer 31:9): They shall come with weeping and with supplications, weeping for sin, supplication for pardon; for the goodness of God shall lead them to repentance; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. Weeping and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of the, and prayers help to

wipe away tears. With favours will I lead them (so the margin reads it); in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour.

5. Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? I will cause them t walk in a straight way, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? Yet they shall not stumble.

Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call he will either find them or make them a ready way; and while we are following Providence we may be sure that Providence will not be wanting to us. And, lastly, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people: For I am a Father to Israel, a Father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him (Ps 103:13); and Ephraim is my first-born; even Ephraim, who, having gone astray from God, was no more worthy to be called a son, shall yet be owned as a first-born, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt is given for their release out of Babylon; they are free-born and therefore must not be enslaved, are born to God and therefore must not be the servants of men. Ex 4:22,23, Israel is my son, even my first-born; let my son go that he may serve me. If we take God for our Father, and join ourselves to the church of the first-born, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

9 They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* my firstborn.

10 Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd *doth* his flock.

This paragraph is much to the same purport with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a word of the Lord

which the nations must hear, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord which the nations cannot but take notice of. Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better understand and improve the performance; and let those that hear it themselves declare it to others, declare it in the isles afar off. It will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over. It will look very great in history; let us see how it looks in prophecy.

It is foretold,

1. That those who are dispersed shall be brought together again from their dispersions: He that scattereth Israel will gather him; for he knows whither he scattered them and therefore where to find them, Jer 31:10. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit--The hand that inflicted the wound shall heal it. And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will keep him, as a shepherd does his flock, from being scattered again.

2. That those who are sold and alienated shall be redeemed and brought back, Jer 31:11. Though the enemy that had got possession of him was stronger than he, yet the Lord, who is stronger than all. has redeemed and ransomed him, not by price, but by power, as of old out of the Egyptians' hands.

3. That with their liberty they shall have plenty and joy, and God shall be honoured and served with it, Jer 31:12,13. When they shall have returned to their own land they shall come and sing in the high place of Zion; on the top of that holy mountain they shall sing to the praise and glory of God. We read that they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; they sang together, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, Ezr 3:11. They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord; that is, they shall flock in great numbers and with great forwardness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, to the goodness of the Lord, to the temple where he causes his goodness to pass before his people. They shall come together in solemn assemblies, to praise him for his goodness, and to pray for the fruits of it and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, which, now that they have

obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of, and which therefore they honour God with the first-fruits of and out of which they bring offerings to his altar.

Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. Having plenty (plenty out of want and scarcity) they shall greatly rejoice, their soul shall be as a watered garden, flourishing and fruitful (Isa 58:11), pleasant and fragrant, and abounding in all good things.

Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise which follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that they shall not sorrow any more at all; for it is only in that new Jerusalem that all tears shall be wiped away, Re 21:4.

However, so far it was fulfilled to the returned captives that they had not any more those causes for sorrow which they had formerly had; and therefore (Jer 31:13) young men and old shall rejoice together; so grave shall the young men be in their joys as to keep company with the old men, and so transported shall the old men be as to associate with the young. Salva res est, saltat senex--The state prospers, and the aged dance. God will turn their mourning into joy, their fasts into solemn feasts, Zec 8:19. It was in the return out of Babylon that those who sowed in tears were made to reap in joy, Ps 126:5,6. Those are comforted indeed whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles when he makes them to rejoice from their sorrow, not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it their joy shall borrow lustre from their sorrow, which shall serve as a foil to it; and the more they think of their troubles the more they rejoice in their deliverance.

4. That both the ministers and those they minister to shall have abundant satisfaction in what God gives them (Jer 31:14): I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness; there shall be such a

plenty of sacrifices brought to the altar that those who live upon the altar shall live very comfortably, they and their families shall be satiated with fatness, they shall have enough, and that of the best; and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, and shall think there is enough in that to make them happy; and so there is. God's people have an abundant satisfaction in God's goodness, though they have but little of this world. Let them be satisfied of God's lovingkindness, and they will be satisfied with it and desire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the spiritual blessings which the redeemed of the Lord enjoy by Jesus Christ, infinitely more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the satisfaction of soul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

5. That those particularly who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children who were carried into captivity should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, Jer 31:15-17. Here we have,

(1.) The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children (Jer 31:15): In Ramah was there a voice heard, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but lamentation, and bitter weeping, more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears, Jer 40:1, where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. Rachel is here said to weep for her children. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlehem. Benjamin, one of the two tribes, and Ephraim, head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of whom was one for whom his father grieved andrefused to be comforted (Ge 37:35); the other she herself called Benoni--the son of my sorrow.

Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner grieve for their sons and their daughters that were carried away (as 1Sa 30:6), and such a voice of lamentation was there as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies; they were

never likely to see them any more. This is applied by the evangelists to the great mourning that was at Bethlehem for the murder of the infants there by Herod (Mt 2:17-18), and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They wept for them, and would not be comforted, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, because they were not. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think they are not.

(2.) Seasonable comfort administered to them in reference hereunto, Jer 31:16,17. They are advised to moderate that sorrow, and to set bounds to it: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thy eyes from tears. We are not forbidden to mourn in such a case; allowances are made for natural affection. But we must not suffer our sorrow to run into an extreme, to hinder our joy in God, or take us off from our duty to him. Though we mourn, we must not murmur, nor must we resolve, as Jacob did, to go to the grave mourning. In order to repress inordinate grief, we must consider that there is hope in our end, hope that there will be an end (the trouble will not last always), that it will be a happy and--the end will be peace.

Note, It ought to support us under our troubles that we have reason to hope they will end well. The righteous has hope in his death; that will be the blessed period of his grief and the blessed passage to his joys. "There is hope for thy posterity" (so some read it); "though thou mayest not live to see these glorious days thyself, there is hope that thy posterity shall. Though one generation falls in the wilderness, the next shall enter Canaan. Two things thou mayest comfort thyself with the hope of:"--

[1.] "The reward of thy work:--Thy suffering work shall be rewarded. The comforts of the deliverance shall be sufficient to balance all the grievances of thy captivity." God makes his people glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them, and so there is a proportion between the joys and the sorrows, as between the reward and the work. The glory to be revealed, which the saints hope for in the end, will abundantly countervail the sufferings of this present time, Ro 8:18.

[2.] "The restoration of thy children: They shall come again from the land of the enemy (Jer 31:16); they shall come again to their own border," Jer 31:17. There is hope that children at a distance may be brought home. Jacob had a comfortable meeting with Joseph after he had despaired of ever seeing him. There is hope concerning children removed by death that they shall return to their own border, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection, a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children that are taken into covenant with God when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life. They are not lost, but gone before.

11 For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of *him that was* stronger than he.

12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

14 And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord.

15 Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not.

16 Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

17 And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

18 I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus;* Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed *to the yoke:* turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou *art* the Lord my God.

We have here,

I. Ephraim's repentance, and return to God. Not only Judah, but Ephraim the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it, Ho 14:8. Ephraim shall say, What have I do to any more with idols? Ephraim the people, is here spoken of as a single person to denote their unanimity; they shall be as one man in their repentance and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is intended. Ephraim is here brought in weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that tribe had its denomination, was a man of a tender spirit, mourned for his children many days (1Ch 7:21,22), and sorrow for sin is compared to that for an only son. This penitent is here brought in,

1. Bemoaning himself and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves.

2. Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He charges upon himself, in the first place, that sin which his conscience told him that he was more especially guilty of at this time, and that was impatience under correction: "Thou has chastised me; I have been under the rod, and I needed it, I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock, who would never have felt the goad if he had not first rebelled against the yoke." True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements: "Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised; that is, it was well that I was chastised, otherwise I should have been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it." Or it may intimate his want of feeling under the affliction: "Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised, that was all; I was not awakened by it and quickened by it; I looked no further than the chastisement. I have been under the chastisement as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net," Isa 51:20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but (Jer 31:19) he reflects upon his former sins and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he

remembers the reproach of his youth. Ephraim, as a people, reflect upon the misconduct of their ancestors when they were first formed in a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we ought often to remember it against ourselves and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame.

3. He is here brought in angry at himself, having a holy indignation at himself for his sin and folly: He smote upon his thigh, as the publican upon his breast. He was even amazed at himself, and at his own stupidity and frowardness: He was ashamed, yea even confounded, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself.

4. He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bent to backslide from God, and cannot by any power of his own keep himself close with God, much less, when he has revolted, bring himself back to God, and therefore he prays, Turn thou me and I shall be turned, which implies that unless God do turn him by his grace he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly, that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See Jer 17:14, Heal me and I shall be healed. God works with power, can make the unwilling willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul, it will be converted. 5. He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had of the blessed effect of divine grace: Surely after that I was turned I repented.

Note, All the pious workings of our heart towards God are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of his grace in us. And observe, He was turned, he was instructed, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right in forming of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself is by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon: After that I was instructed I yielded, I smote upon my thigh. When sinners come to a right knowledge they will come to a right way. Ephraim was chastised, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no

further: I was chastised, and that was all. But, when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he smote upon his thigh, was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

II. God's compassion on Ephraim and the kind reception he finds with God, Jer 31:20.

1. God owns him for a child and a prodigal: Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself God bemoans him, as one whom his mother comforts, though she had chidden him, Isa 66:13. Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child? Is it he that is thus sad in spirit and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul (1Sa 26:17), Is this thy voice, my son David? Or, as it is sometimes supplied, Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been undutiful backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been under the chastisement of the rod, shall be accepted of God as dear and pleasant children. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him--had abased himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal who thought himself no more worthy to be called a son, yet, by his father, had the best robe put on him and a ring on his hand.

2. He relents towards him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion: Since I spoke against him, by the threatenings of the word and the rebukes of providence, I do earnestly remember him still, my thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace.

Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he does not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he does not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God is speaking against us, yet he is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, thatthe Lord thinks upon us, though we have forgotten him. I remember him still, and therefore my bowels are troubled for him, as Joseph's yearned

towards his brethren, even when he spoke roughly to them. When Israel's afflictions extorted a penitent confession and submission it is said that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (Jdg 10:16), for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment: My heart is turned within me (Ho 11:8,9); and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded (Jer 31:18), Thou art the Lord my God, therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shows that it was a valid plea and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God and not man and that he is his God. 3. He resolves to do him good: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord, Note, God has mercy in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that insincerity seek him and submit to him; and the more we are afflicted for sin the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

19 Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

20 *Is* Ephraim my dear son? *is he* a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

21 Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, *even* the way *which* thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble and lose their spirits; let them not trifle and lose their time; but with a firm resolution and a close application address themselves to their journey, Jer 31:21,22.

1. They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven: "Turn again, O virgin of Israel! a virgin to be again espoused to thy God; turn again to these thy cities; though they are laid waste and in ruins, they are thy cities, which thy God gave thee, and therefore turn again to them." They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion.

2. They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows which attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, might make them the more thankful for their deliverance. Those that have departed from God into the bondage of sin must return by the way in which they went astray, to the duties they neglected, must do their first works.

3. They must engage themselves and all that is within them in this affair: Set thy heart towards the highway; bring thy mind to it; consider thy duty, the interest, and go about it with a good-will. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a highway; it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well-tracked (Isa 35:8); yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they set their hearts towards it.

4. They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for the journey: Set thee up way-marks, and make thee high heaps or pillars; send before to have such set up in all places where there is any danger of missing the road. Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow.

5. They must compose themselves for their journey: How long will thou go about, O backsliding daughter? Let not their minds fluctuate, or be uncertain about it, but resolve upon it; let them not distract themselves with care and fear; let them not seek about to creatures for assistance, not hurry hither and thither in courting them, which had often been an instance of their backsliding from God; but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed.

6. They are encouraged to do this by an assurance God gives them that he would create a new thing (strange and surprising) in the earth (in that land), a woman shall compass a man. The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments and of a timorous spirit (Isa 54:6), shall surround, besiege, and prevail against a mighty man.

The church is compared to a woman, Re 12:1. And, whereas we find armies compassing the camp of the saints (Re 20:9), now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this new thing created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God an eye to in bringing them back to that land, and which had sometimes been given them for a sign, Isa 7:14,9:6. A woman, the virgin Mary, enclosed in her womb the Mighty One; for so Geber, the word here used, signifies; and God is called Gibbor, the Mighty God (Jer 32:18), as also is Christ in Isa 9:6, where his incarnation is spoken of, as it is supposed to be here. He is El-Gibbor, the mighty God. Let this assure them that God would not cast off this people, for that blessing was to be among them, Isa 65:8.

IV. A comfortable prospect given them of a happy settlement in their own land again.

1. They shall have an interest in the esteem and good-will of all their neighbours, who will give them a good word and put up a good prayer for them (Jer 31:23): As yet or rather yet again (though Judah and Jerusalem have long been an astonishment and a hissing), this speech shall be used, as it was formerly, concerning the land of Judah and the cities thereof, The Lord bless you, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness! This intimates that they shall return much reformed and every way better; and this reformation shall be so conspicuous that all about them shall take notice of it. The cities, that used to be nests of pirates, shall be habitations of justice; the mountain of Israel (so the whole land is called, Ps 78:54), and especially Mount Zion, shall be a mountain of holiness. Observe, Justice towards men, and holiness towards God, must go together. Godliness and honesty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them asunder, not to make one to atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a sure presage of further happiness. And we may with great comfort pray for the blessing of God upon those houses that are habitations of justice, those cities and countries that are mountains of holiness. There the Lord will undoubtedly command the blessing.

2. There shall be great plenty of all good things among them (Jer 31:24,25): There shall dwell in Judah itself, even in it, though it has now long lain waste, both husbandmen and shepherds, the two ancient and honourable employments of Cain and Abel, Ge 4:2. It is comfortable dwelling in a habitation of justice and a mountain of holiness. "And the husbandmen and shepherds shall eat of the fruit of their labours; for I have satiated the weary and sorrowful soul;" that is, those that came weary from their journey, and have been long sorrowful in their captivity, shall now enjoy great plenty. This is applicable to the spiritual blessings God has in store for all true penitents, for all that are just and holy; they shall be abundantly satisfied with divine graces and comforts. In the love and favour of God the weary soul shall find rest and the sorrowful soul joy.

V. The prophet tells us what pleasure the discovery of this brought to his mind, Jer 31:26. The foresights God had given him sometimes of the calamities of Judah and Jerusalem were exceedingly painful to him (as Jer 4:19), but these views were pleasant ones, though at a distance. "Upon this I awaked, overcome with joy, which burst the fetters of sleep; and I reflected upon my dream, and it was such as had made my sleep sweet to me; I was refreshed, as men are with quiet sleep." Those may sleep sweetly that lie down and rise up in the favour of God and in communion with him. Nor is any prospect in this world more pleasing to good men, and good ministers, than that of the flourishing state of the church of God. What can we see with more satisfaction than the good of Jerusalem, all the days of our life, and peace upon Israel?

22 How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

23 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, *and* mountain of holiness.

24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they *that* go forth with flocks.

25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

The New Covenant

27 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.

The prophet, having found his sleep sweet, made so by the revelations of divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of further discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here further promised,

I. That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous. Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown with the seed of both, Jer 31:27. They shall increase and multiply like a field sown with corn; and this is the product of God's blessing (Jer 31:23), for whom God blessed, to them he said, Be fruitful. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel-church. God will build them, and plant them, Jer 31:28. He will watch over them to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences did so transpire to ruin them, that it seemed as if God had watched over them to pluck up and to throw down; but now every thing that falls out shall happily fall in to strengthen and advance their interests. God will be as ready to comfort those that repent of their sins, and are humbled for them, as he is to punish those that continue in love with their sins, and are hardened in them.

II. That they shall be reckoned with no further for the sins of their fathers (Jer 31:29,30): They shall say no more (they shall have no more occasion to say) that God visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children, which God had done in the captivity, for the sins of their ancestors came into the account against them, particularly those of Manasseh: this they had complained of as a hardship. Other scriptures justify God in this method of proceeding, and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, Mt 23:35,36. But it is here promised that this severe

dispensation with them should now be brought to an end, that God would proceed no further in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers and do them good according to that covenant:

They shall no more complain, as they have done, that the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge (which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings), but every one shall die for his own iniquity still; though God will cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with particular persons that provoke him. Note, Public salvations will give no impunity, no security, to private sinners: still every man that eats the sour grapes shall have his teeth set on edge.

Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how tempting soever it looks, will find it a sour grape, and it will set their teeth on edge; sooner or later they will feel from it and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct a tendency in sin to make a man uneasy as there is in sour grapes to set the teeth on edge.

III. That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have, not by providence only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured. But this covenant refers to gospel times, the latter days that shall come; for of gospel grace the apostle understands it (Heb 8:8,9, &c.), where this whole passage is quoted as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ. Observe,

1. Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made--with the house of Israel and Judah, with the gospel church, the Israel of God on which peace shall be (Ga 6:16), with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them; so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel church and covenant.

2. What is the nature of this covenant in general: it is a new covenant and not according to the covenant made with them when they came out of Egypt; not as if that made with them at

Mount Sinai were a covenant of nature and innocency, such as was made with Adam in the day he was created; no, that was, for substance, a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant in comparison with this in gospel times. Sinners were saved by that covenant upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood, confirming that covenant, was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, Ex 24:7,8. Yet this may upon many accounts be called new, in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he took them by the hand, as they had been blind, or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they broke.

Observe, It was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that broke it; for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin are of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it that God was a husband to them, that he had espoused them to himself; it was a marriage-covenant that was between him and them, which they broke by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of our treacherous departures from God that he has been a husband to us, a loving, tender, careful husband, faithful to us, and yet we false to him. 3. What are the particular articles of his covenant. They all contain spiritual blessings; not, "I will give them the land of Canaan and a numerous issue," but, "I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace, good heads and good hearts." He promises,

(1.) That he will incline them to their duty; I will put my law in their inward part and write it in their heart; not, I will give them a new law (as Mr. Gataker well observes), for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, Pr 3:3. He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original.

This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

(2.) That he will take them into relation to himself: I will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them, and they shall be my people, a loyal obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness; heaven itself is no more, Heb 11:16,Re 21:3. Our being to him a people may be taken either as the condition on our part (those and those only shall have God to be to them a God that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to him a people) or as a further branch of the promise that God will by his grace make us his people, a willing people, in the day of his power; and, whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

(3.) That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good: for those that rightly know God's name will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him (Jer 31:34): All shall know me; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God and shall have the means of that knowledge; his ways shall be known upon earth, whereas, for many ages, in Judah only was God known. Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, the true God being to them an unknown God. The things of God shall in gospel times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest, than they were while Moses had a veil upon his face. There shall be such a general knowledge of God that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as a hyperbolical expression (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them), designed only to show that the knowledge of God in gospel times should vastly exceed that knowledge of him which they had under the law.

Or perhaps it intimates that in gospel times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, statedly and constantly, by men authorized and appointed to preach the word in season and out of season, much beyond what was under the law, that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a

neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple, and to a few in comparison; but now all shall or may know God by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be taught. Some give this sense of it (Mr. Gataker mentions it), That many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation than by any means of instruction. In short, the things of God shall by the gospel of Christ be brought to a clearer light than ever (2Ti 1:10), and the people of God shall by the grace of Christ be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, Eph 1:17,18.

(4.) That, in order to all these blessings, sin shall be pardoned. This is made the reason of all the rest: For I will forgive their iniquity, will not impute that to them, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, will forgive and forget: I will remember their sin no more. It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin betaken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

28 And it shall come to pass, *that* like as I have watched over them, to
pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy,
and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith
the Lord.
29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour
grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.
30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth
the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.
31 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new
covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the
day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of
Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband
unto them, saith the Lord:
33 but this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel;
After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward
parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they
shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

35 Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts *is* his name:

Glorious things have been spoken in the Jer 31:1-34 concerning the gospel church, which that epocha of the Jewish church that was to commence at the return from captivity would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishment in.

But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us is that while the world stands God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, shall yet be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now here are two things offered for the confirmation of our faith in this matter--the building of the world and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

I The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, are evidences of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. He that built all things at first is God (Heb 3:4), and the same is he that makes all things now. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace, for this is as the waters of Noah, Isa 54:9. Let us observe here,

1 The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer thence how happy those are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice,

(1.) Of the steady and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, which God is the first mover and supreme director of: He gives the sun for a light by day (Jer 31:35), not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so; for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night; their motions are called ordinances both because they are regular and by rule and because they are determined and under rule. See Job 38:31-33.

(2.) Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows: The Lord of hosts divides the sea, or (as some read it) settles the sea, when the waves thereof roar (divide et impera--divide and rule); when it is most tossed God keeps it within compass (Jer 5:22), and soon quiets it and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas.

(3.) Take notice of the vastness of the heavens and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God who manages such a great world as this is; the heavens above cannot be measured (Jer 31:37), and yet God fills them.

(4.) Take notice of the mysteriousness even of that part of the creation in which our lot is cast and which we are most conversant with. The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath, for the Creator hangs the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7), and we know not how the foundations thereof are fastened, Job 38:6.

(5.) Take notice of the immovable stedfastness of all these (Jer 31:36): These ordinances cannot depart from before God; he has all the hosts of heaven and earth continually under his eye and all the motions of both; he has established them, and they abide, abide according to his ordinance, for all are his servants, Ps 119:90,91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake and the sea be tossed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed.

Herein we must acknowledge the power, goodness, and faithfulness of the Creator.

2 The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred hence: we may be confident of this very thing that the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation, for the spiritual Israel, the gospel church, shall be a holy nation, a peculiar people, 1Pe 2:9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Ro 9:8) and God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, no, not for all that they have done, though they have done very wickedly, Jer 31:37. He justly might cast them off, but he will not. Though he cast them out from their land, and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, but not all; to this the apostle seems to refer (Ro 11:1), Hath God cast away his people? God forbid that we should think so! For (Jer 31:5) at this time there is a remnant, enough to save the credit of the promise that God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this by considering,

(1.) That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church is a God of almighty power, who upholds all things by his almighty word. Our help stands in his name who made heaven and earth, and therefore can do any thing.

(2.) That God would not take all this care of the world but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it; and how shall he have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that shall be to him for a name and a praise?

(3.) That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm because it was well-fixed at first, and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue invariable, as it was a first well settled.

(4.) That he who has promised to preserve a church for himself has approved himself faithful to the word which he has spoken concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for

an everlasting covenant (Ge 9:9,16), will not, we may be sure, be false to his covenant with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an everlasting covenant. Even that which they have done amiss, though they have done much, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See Ps 89:30, &c.

II The rebuilding of Jerusalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and establishment of that, shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel church, the heavenly Jerusalem, Jer 31:38-40. The days will come, though they may be long in coming, when,

1. Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was; the dimensions are here exactly described by the places through which the circumference passed, and no doubt the wall which Nehemiah built, and which, the more punctually to fulfil the prophecy, began about the tower of Hananeel, here mentioned (Ne 3:1), enclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called the gate of the corner, the hill Gareb, &c.

2. When built it shall be consecrated to God and to his service. It shall be built to the Lord (Jer 31:38), and even the suburbs and fields adjacent shall be holy unto the Lord. It shall not be polluted with idols as formerly, but God shall be praised and honoured there; the whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jerusalem is, which therefore has no temple, because it is all temple.

3. Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever; that is, it shall continue very long, the time of the new city from the return to its last destruction being fully as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men shall not pluck it up, nor throw it down. It may lie waste for a time, as Jerusalem did, but

shall recover itself, shall weather the storm and gain its point, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

37 Thus saith the Lord ; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.

38 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.

39 And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.

40 And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, *shall be* holy unto the Lord ; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

Jeremiah-32

Jeremiah Buys a Field at Anathoth

1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which *was* the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar.

It appears by the date of this chapter that we are now coming very nigh to that fatal year which completed the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. God's judgments came gradually upon them, but, they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controversy till all was laid waste, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what is here recorded happened in the tenth. The king of Babylon's army had now invested Jerusalem and was carrying on the siege with vigour, not doubting but in a little time to make themselves masters of it, while the besieged had taken up a desperate

resolution not to surrender, but to hold out to the last extremity. Now,

I. Jeremiah prophesies that both the city and the court shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expressly that the besiegers shall take the city as a prize, for God, whose city it was in a peculiar manner, will give it into their hands and put it out of his protection (Jer 32:3),-- that, though Zedekiah attempt to make his escape, he shall be overtaken, and shall be delivered a prisoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, shall be brought into his presence, to his great confusion and terror, he having made himself so obnoxious by breaking his faith with him, he shall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom, and see with what fury and indignation he will look upon him (His eyes shall behold his eyes, Jer 32:4),-- that Zedekiah shall be carried to Babylon, and continue a miserable captive there, until God visit him, that is, till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before put an end to his days by putting out his eyes.

Note, Those that live in misery may be truly said to be visited in mercy when God by death takes them home to himself. And, lastly, he foretels that all their attempts to force the besiegers from their trenches shall be ineffectual: Though you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not prosper; how should they, when God did not fight for them? Jer 32:5. See Jer 34:2,3.

II. For prophesying thus he is imprisoned, not in the common gaol, but in the more creditable prison that was within the verge of the palace, in the king of Judah's house, and there not closely confined, but in custodia libera--in the court of the prison, where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would be sheltered from the abuses of the mob; but, however, it was a prison, and Zedekiah shut him up in it for prophesying as he did, Jer 32:2,3. So far was he from humbling himself before Jeremiah, as he ought to have done (2Ch 36:12), that he hardened himself against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet as to desire him to enquire of the Lord for them (21:2), yet now he chides him for prophesying (Jer 32:3), and shuts him up in prison, perhaps not with design to punish him any further, but only to restrain him from prophesying

any further, which was crime enough. Silencing God's prophets, though it is not so bad as mocking and killing them, is yet a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Persecution was one of the sins for which God was now contending with them, and yet Zedekiah persists in it even now that he was in the depth of distress. No providences, no afflictions, will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

2 For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which *was* in the king of Judah's house.

3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;

4 and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;

5 and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the Lord : though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper?

6 And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

7 Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*.

Being in prison, he purchases from a near relation of his a piece of ground that lay in Anathoth, Jer 32:6,7, &c.

1. One would not have expected,

(1.) That a prophet should concern himself so far in the business of this world; but why not? Though ministers must not entangle themselves, yet they may concern themselves in the affairs of this life.

(2.) That one who had neither wife nor children should buy land. We find (Jer 16:2) that he had no family of his own; yet he may

purchase for his own use while he lives, and leave it to the children of his relations when he dies.

(3.) One would little have thought that a prisoner should be a purchaser; how should he get money beforehand to buy land with? It is probably that he lived frugally, and saved something out of what belonged to him as a priest, which is no blemish at all to his character; but we have no reason to think that the people were kind, or that his being beforehand was owing to their generosity. Nay,

(4.) It was most strange of all that he should buy a piece of land when he himself knew that the whole land was now to be laid waste and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, and then what good would this do him? But it was the will of God that he should buy it, and he submitted, though the money seemed to be thrown away. His kinsman came to offer it to him; it was not of his own seeking; he coveted not to lay house to house and field to field, but Providence brought it to him, and it was probably a good bargain; besides, the right of redemption belonged to him (Jer 32:8), and if he refused he would not do the kinsman's part. It is true he might lawfully refuse, but, being a prophet, in a thing of this nature he must do that which would be for the honour of his profession. It became him to fulfil all righteousness. It was land that lay within the suburbs of a priests' city, and, if he should refuse it, there was danger lest, in these times of disorder, it might be sold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to the law, to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewise be a kindness to his kinsman, who probably was at this time in great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had he was willing to lay out in such a manner as might tend most to the honour of God and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private interests.

2. Two things may be observed concerning this purchase:--

(1.) How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew by Hanameel's coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that it was the word of the Lord, that it was his mind that he should

make this purchase, he made no more difficulty of it, but bought the field. And,

[1.] He was very honest and exact in paying the money. He weighted him the money, did not press him to take it upon his report, though he was his near kinsman, but weighed it to him, current money. It was seventeen shekels of silver, amounting to about forty shillings of our money. The land was probably but a little field and of small yearly value, when the purchase was so low; besides, the right of inheritance was in Jeremiah, so that he had only to buy out his kinsman's life, the reversion being his already. Some think this was only the earnest of a greater sum; but we shall not wonder at the smallness of the price if we consider what scarcity there was of money at this time and how little lands were counted upon.

[2.] He was very prudent and discreet in preserving the writings. They were subscribed before witnesses. One copy was sealed up, the other was open. One was the original, the other the counterpart; or perhaps that which was sealed up was for his own private use, the other that was open was to be laid up in the public register of conveyances, for any person concerned to consult. Due care and caution in things of this nature might prevent a great deal of injustice and contention. The deeds of purchase were lodged in the hands of Baruch, before witnesses, and he was ordered to lay them up in an earthen vessel (an emblem of the nature of all the securities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things and soon broken), that they might continue many days, for the use of Jeremiah's heirs, after the return out of captivity; for they might then have the benefit of this purchase. Purchasing reversions may be a kindness to those that come after us, and a good man thus lays up an inheritance for his children's children.

(2.) What was the design of having this bargain made. It was to signify that though Jerusalem was now besieged, and the whole country was likely to be laid waste, yet the time should come when houses, and fields, and vineyards should be again possessed in this land, Jer 32:15. As God appointed Jeremiah to confirm his predictions of the approaching destruction of

Jerusalem by his own practice in living unmarried, so he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future restoration of Jerusalem by his own practice in purchasing this field.

Note, It concerns ministers to make it to appear in their whole conversation that they do themselves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do so, and impress it the more deeply upon their hearers, they must many a time deny themselves, as Jeremiah did in both these instances. God having promised that this land should again come into the possession of his people, Jeremiah will, on behalf of his heirs, put in for a share.

Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common business with an eye to the providence and promise of God. Lucius Florus relates it as a great instance of the bravery of the Roman citizens that in the time of the second Punic war, when Hannibal besieged Rome and was very near making himself master of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to sale at that time, was immediately purchased, in a firm belief that the Roman valour would raise the siege, lib. ii. cap. 6. And have not we much more reason to venture our all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's interests, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing interests at last? Non si male nunc et olim sic erit--Though now we suffer, we shall not suffer always.

8 So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance *is* thine, and the redemption *is* thine; buy *it* for thyself. Then I knew that this *was* the word of the Lord.

9 And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver.

10 And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances.

11 So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was open:

12 and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's *son,* and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.
13 And I charged Baruch before them, saying,
14 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.
15 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.
16 Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the Lord, saying,

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God upon occasion of the discoveries God had made to him of his purposes concerning this nation, to pull it down, and in process of time to build it up again, which puzzled the prophet himself, who, though he delivered his messages faithfully, yet, in reflecting upon them, was greatly at a loss within himself how to reconcile them; in that perplexity he poured out his soul before God in prayer, and so gave himself ease. That which disturbed him was not the bad bargain he seemed to have made for himself in purchasing a field that he was likely to have no good of, but the case of his people, for whom he was still a kind and faithful intercessor, and he was willing to hope that, if God had so much mercy in store for them hereafter as he had promised, he would not proceed with so much severity against them now as he had threatened. Before Jeremiah went to prayer he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch, which may intimate to us that when we are going to worship God we should get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and incumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in prison, in distress, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore. Whatever is a burden to us, we may by prayer cast it upon the Lord and then be easy.

In this prayer, or meditation,

I. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the Creator, upholder, and benefactor,

of the whole creation, thereby owning his irresistible power, that he can do what he will, and his incontestable sovereignty, that he may do what he will, Jer 32:17-19.

Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of Providence it is good for us to have recourse to our first principles, and to satisfy ourselves with the general doctrines of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. Let us consider, as Jeremiah does here,

1. That God is the fountain of all being, power, life, motion, and perfection: He made the heaven and the earth with his outstretched arm; and therefore who can control him? Who dares contend with him?

2. That with him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable: Nothing is too hard for thee. When human skill and power are quite nonplussed, with God are strength and wisdom sufficient to master all the opposition.

3. That he is a God of boundless bottomless mercy; mercy is his darling attribute; it is his goodness that is his glory: "Thou not only art kind, but thou showest lovingkindness, not to a few, to here and there one, but to thousands, thousands of persons, thousands of generations."

4. That he is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His reprieves are not pardons, but if in mercy he spares the parents, that they may be led to repentance, yet such a hatred has he to sin, and such a displeasure against sinners, that he recompenses their iniquity into the bosom of their children, and yet does them no wrong; so hateful is the unrighteousness of man, and so jealous of its own honour is the righteousness of God.

5. That he is a God of universal dominion and command: He is the great God, for he is the mighty God, and might among men makes them great. He is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, that is his name, and he answers to his name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. 6. That he contrives every thing for the best, and effects every thing as he contrived it:

He is great in counsel, so vast are the reaches and so deep are the designs of his wisdom; and he is mighty in doing, according to the counsel of his will. Now such a God as this is not to be quarrelled with. His service is to be constantly adhered to and all his disposals cheerfully acquiesced in.

II. He acknowledges the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men and the unerring judgment he passes upon them (Jer 32:19): Thy eyes are open upon all the sons of men, wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all their ways, both the course they take and every step they take, not as an unconcerned spectator, but as an observing judge, to give every one according to his ways and according to his deserts, which are the fruit of his doings; for men shall find God as they are found of him.

III. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Israel formerly.

1. He brought them out of Egypt, that house of bondage, with signs and wonders, which remain, if not in the marks of them, yet in the memorials of them, even unto this day; for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were reminded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but among other men: all the neighbouring nations spoke of it, as that which redounded exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name as at this day. This is repeated (Jer 32:21), that God brought them forth, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, with signs and wonders (witness the ten plagues), with a strong hand, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a stretched-out arm, that reached Pharaoh, proud as he was, and with great terror to them and all about them. This seems to refer to De 4:34.

2. He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land flowing with milk and honey. He swore to their fathers to give it them, and, because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children (Jer 32:22) and they came in and possessed it. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience and also as a plea with God to work deliverance for them. Note, It

is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for his church formerly, especially in the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

IV. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. It is a sad account he here gives of the ungrateful conduct of that people towards God. He had done every thing that he had promised to do (they had acknowledged it, 1Ki 8:56), but they had done nothing of all that he commanded them to do (Jer 32:23); they made no conscience of any of his laws; they walked not in them, paid no respect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they obeyed not his voice. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in causing all this evil to come upon them. The city is besieged, is attacked by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by the famine and pestilence within, so that it is ready to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it (Jer 32:24); it is given into their hands, Jer 32:25. Now,

1. He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the divine predictions, and finds that what God has spoken has come to pass. God had given them fair warning of it before; and, if they had regarded this, the ruin would have been prevented; but, if they will not do what God has commanded, they can expect no other than that he should do what he had threatened.

2. He commits the present state of Jerusalem to the divine consideration and compassion (Jer 32:24): Behold the mounts, or ramparts, or the engines which they make use of to batter the city and beat down the wall of it. And again, "Behold thou seest it, and takest cognizance of it. Is this the city that thou has chosen to put thy name there? And shall it be thus abandoned?" He neither complains of God for what he had done nor prescribes to God what he should do, but desires he would behold their case, and is pleased to think that he does behold it. Whatever trouble we are in, upon a personal or public account, we may comfort ourselves with this, that God sees it and sees how to remedy it.

V. He seems desirous to be let further into the meaning of the order God had now given him to purchase his kinsman's field (Jer

32:25): "Though the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet thou hast said unto me, Buy thou the field." As soon as he understood that it was the mind of God he did it, and made no objections, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but, when he had done it, he desired better to understand why God had ordered him to do it, because the thing looked strange and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we should endeavour that it may be more and more an intelligent obedience. We must never dispute God's statutes and judgments, but we may and must enquire, What mean these statutes and judgments? De 6:20.

17 Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by
thy great power and stretched out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard
for thee:
18 thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest
the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after
them: The Great, The Mighty God, The Lord of hosts, *is* his name;
19 great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes *are* open upon
all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his
ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:
20 which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, *even* unto this
day, and in Israel, and among *other* men; and hast made thee a name,
as at this day;
21 and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt
with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a
stretched out arm, and with great terror;
22 and hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their
fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;
23 and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice,
neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou
commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to
come upon them.
24 Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the
city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it,
because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and
what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest *it*.

25 And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

26 Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying,

27 Behold, I *am* the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

We have here God's answer to Jeremiah's prayer, designed to quiet his mind and make him easy; and it is a full discovery of the purposes of God's wrath against the present generation and the purposes of his grace concerning the future generations. Jeremiah knew not how to sing both of mercy and judgment, but God here teaches to sing unto him of both. When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another we may yet be sure that both are true, both are pure, both shall be made good, and not one iota or tittle of either shall fall to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege. "No," says God, "the execution of the sentence shall go on; Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins."

Note, Assurances of future mercy must not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. But, lest Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy this field intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people, after their return, was only that they should have the possession of their own land again, he further informs him that that was but a type and figure of those spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards; so that in this word of the Lord, which came to Jeremiah, we have first as dreadful threatenings and then as precious promises as perhaps any we have in the Old Testament; life and death, good and evil, are here set before us; let us consider and choose wisely.

I The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced. The decree has gone forth, and shall not be recalled.

1. God here asserts his own sovereignty and power (Jer 32:27): Behold, I am Jehovah, a self-existent self-sufficient being; I am

that I am; I am the God of all flesh, that is, of all mankind, here called flesh because weak and unable to contend with God (Ps 56:4), and because wicked and corrupt and unapt to comply with God. God is the Creator of all, and makes what use he pleases of all. He that is the God of Israel is the God of all flesh and of the spirits of all flesh, and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the God of all flesh, he may well ask, Is any thing too hard for me? What cannot he do from whom all the powers of men are derived, on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him nor defeat his designs.

2. He abides by that he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon (Jer 32:28): I will give this city into his hand, now that he is grasping at it, and he shall take it and make a prey of it, Jer 32:29. The Chaldeans shall come and set fire to it, shall burn it and all the houses in it, God's house not excepted, nor the king's neither.

3. He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that and nothing else, that ruins it.

(1.) They were impudent and daring in sin. They offered incense to Baal, not in corners, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the tops of their houses (Jer 32:29), in defiance of God's justice.

(2.) They designed an affront to God herein. They did it to provoke me to anger, Jer 32:29. They have only provoked me to anger with the works of their hands, Jer 32:30. They could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit, or honour out of it, but did it on purpose to offend God. And again (Jer 32:32), All the evil which they have done was to provoke me to anger. They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy and dare him to his face. "Jerusalem has been to me a provocation of my anger and fury," Jer 32:31. Their conduct in every thing was provoking.

(3.) They began betimes, and had continued all along provoking to God: "They have done evil before me from their youth, ever since they were first formed into a people (Jer 32:30), witness their murmurings and rebellions in the wilderness." And as for Jerusalem, though it was the holy city, it has been a provocation to the holy God from the day that they built it, even to this day, Jer 32:31. O what reason have we to lament the little honour God has from this world, and the great dishonour that is done him, when even in Judah, where he is known and his name is great, and in Salem where his tabernacle is, there was always that found that was a provocation to him!

(4.) All orders and degrees of men contributed to the common guilt, and therefore were justly involved in the common ruin. Not only the children of Israel, that had revolted from the temple, but the children of Judah too, that still adhered to it--not only the common people, the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, but those that should have reproved and restrained sin in others were themselves ringleaders in it, their kings and princes, their priests and prophets.

(5.) God had again and again called them to repentance, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls, and rudely turned their back on him that called them, though he was their master, to whom they were bound in duty, and their benefactor, to whom they were bound in gratitude and interest, Jer 32:33. "I taught them better manners, with as much care as ever any tender parent taught a child, rising up early, in teaching them, studying to adapt the teaching to their capacities, taking them betimes, when they might have been most pliable, but all in vain; they turned not the face to me, would not so much as look upon me, nay, they turned the back upon me," an expression of the highest contempt. As he called them, like froward children, so they went from him, Ho 11:2. They have not hearkened to receive instruction; they regarded not a word that was said to them, though it was designed for their own good.

(6.) There was in their idolatries an impious contempt of God; for (Jer 32:34) they set their abominations (their idols, which they knew to be in the highest degree abominable to God) in the

house which is called by my name, to defile it. They had their idols not only in their high places and groves, but even in God's temple.

(7.) They were guilty of the most unnatural cruelty to their own children; for they sacrificed them to Moloch, Jer 32:35. Thus because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but changed his glory into shame, they were justly given up to vile affections and stripped of natural ones, and their glory was turned into shame. And,

(8.) What was the consequence of all this?

[1.] They caused Judah to sin, Jer 32:35. The whole country was infected with the contagious idolatries and iniquities of Jerusalem.

[2.] They brought ruin upon themselves. It was as if they had done it on purpose that God should remove them from before his face (Jer 32:31); they would throw themselves out of his favour.

II The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem is here promised, Jer 32:36, &c. God will in judgment remember mercy, and there will a time come, a set time, to favour Zion. Observe,

1 The despair to which this people were now at length brought. When the judgment was threatened at a distance they had no fear; when it attacked them they had no hope. They said concerning the city (Jer 32:36), It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, not by any cowardice or ill conduct of ours, but by the sword, famine, and pestilence. Concerning the country they said, with vexation (Jer 32:43), It is desolate, without man or beast; there is no relief, there is no remedy. It is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Note, Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up a holy fear at all times have a good hope to support them in the worst of times.

2 The hope that God gives them of mercy which he had in store for them hereafter. Though their carcases must fall in captivity, yet their children after them shall again see this good land and the goodness of God in it.

(1.) They shall be brought up from their captivity and shall come and settle again in this land, Jer 32:37. They had been under God's anger and fury, and great wrath; but now they shall partake of his grace, and love, and great favour. He had dispersed them, and driven them into all countries.

Those that fled dispersed themselves; those that fell into the enemies; hands were dispersed by them, in policy, to prevent combinations among them. God's hand was in both. But now God will find them out, and gather them out of all the countries whither they were driven, as he promised in the law (De 30:3,4) and the saints had prayed, Ps 106:47,Ne 1:9. He had banished them, but he will bring them again to this place, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past, while they were in their own land, they were continually exposed, and terrified with the alarms of war; but now I will cause them to dwell safely. Being reformed, and having returned to God, neither their own consciences within nor their enemies without shall be a terror to them. He promises (Jer 32:41): I will plant them in this land assuredly; not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy a security and repose, and they shall take root here, shall be planted in stability, and not again be unfixed and shaken.

(2.) God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an everlasting covenant (Jer 32:40), not only because God will be for ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be everlasting. For, doubtless, here the promises look further than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every Israelite indeed. Good Christians may apply them to themselves and plead them with God, may claim the benefit of them and take the comfort of them.

[1.] God will own them for his, and make over himself to them to be theirs (Jer 32:38): They shall be my people. He will make them his by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect, and guide, and govern them as his people. "And, to make them truly, completely, and eternally happy, I will be their God." They shall serve and worship God as theirs and cleave to him only, and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

[2.] God will give them a heart to fear him, Jer 32:39. That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people is that they fear him, that they reverence his majesty, dread his wrath, stand in awe of his authority, pay homage to him, and give him the glory due unto his name. Now what God requires of them he here promises to work in them, pursuant to his choice of them as his people.

Note, As it is God's prerogative to fashion men's hearts, so it is his promise to his people to fashion theirs aright; and a heart to fear God is indeed a good heart, and well fashioned. It is repeated (Jer 32:40): I will put my fear in their hearts, that is, work in them gracious principles and dispositions, that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts, that can work in us both to will and to do.

[3.] He will give them one heart and one way. In order to their walking in one way, he will give them one heart: as the heart is, so will the way be, and both shall be one; that is First, They shall be each of them one with themselves. One heart is the same with a new heart, Eze 11:19. The heart is then one when it is fully determined for God and entirely devoted to God. When the eye is single and God's glory alone aimed at, when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him, then the heart is one and way one; and, unless the heart be thus steady, the goings will not be stedfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray, with David (Ps 86:11), Unite my heart to fear thy name; for God

says, I will give them one heart, that they may fear me. Secondly, They shall be all of them one with each other. All good Christians shall be incorporated into one body; Jews and Gentiles shall become one sheep-fold; and they shall all, as far as they are sanctified, have a disposition to love one another, the gospel they profess having in it the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about minor things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image. Though they may have many paths, they have but one way, that of serious godliness.

[4.] He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace and the perpetuating of the covenant between himself and them. They would have been happy when there were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in paradise, if they had not departed from God. And therefore, now that they are restored to their happiness, they shall be confirmed in it by the preventing of their departures from God, and this will complete their bliss.

First, God will never leave nor forsake them: I will not turn away from them to do them good. Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God's mercy endures for ever. Whom he loves he loves to the end. God may seem to turn from this people (Isa 54:8), but even then he does not turn from doing and designing them good.

Secondly, They shall never leave nor forsake him; that is the thing we are in danger of. We have no reason to distrust God's fidelity and constancy, but our own; and therefore it is here promised that God will give them a heart to fear him for ever, all days, to be in his fear every day and all the day long (Pr 23:17), and to continue so to the end of their days. He will put such a principle into their hearts that they shall not depart from him. Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will depart from him; but the fear of God ruling in the heart, will prevent their departure. That, and nothing else, will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace and not to any strength or resolution of our own.

[5.] He will entail a blessing upon their seed, will give them grace to fear him, for the good of them and of their children after them. As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better consult the good of posterity than by setting up, and keeping up, the fear and worship of God in our families.

[6.] He will take a pleasure in their prosperity and will do every thing to advance it (Jer 32:41): I will rejoice over them to do them good. God will certainly do them good because he rejoices over them. They are dear to him; he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only do them good, but will delight in doing them good. When he punishes them it is with reluctance. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? But, when he restores them, it is with satisfaction; he rejoices in doing them good. We ought therefore to serve him with pleasure and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a cheerful giver, and therefore loves a cheerful servant. I will plant them (says God) with my whole heart and with my whole soul. He will be intent upon it, and take delight in it; he will make it the business of his providence to settle them again in Canaan, and the various dispensations of providence shall concur to it. All things shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church that it will be said, The governor of the world is entirely taken up with the care of his church.

[7.] These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatenings were; and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these, notwithstanding their present despair (Jer 32:42): As I have brought all this great evil upon them, pursuant to the threatenings, and for the glory of divine justice, so I will bring upon them all this good, pursuant to the promise, and for the glory of divine mercy. He that is faithful to his threatenings will much more be so to his promises; and he will comfort his people according to the time that he has afflicted them. The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity.

[8.] As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again fetch a good price in Judah and Jerusalem, and, though now they are a drug, there shall again be a sufficient number of purchasers (Jer 32:43,44): Fields shall be bought in this land, and people will covet to have lands here rather than any where else. Lands, wherever they lie, will go off, not only in the places about Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah and of Israel, too, whether they lie on mountains, or in valleys, or in the south, in all parts of the country, men shall buy fields, and subscribe evidences. Trade shall revive, for they shall have money enough to buy land with. Husbandry shall revive, for those that have money shall covet to lay it out upon lands. Laws shall again have their due course, for they shall subscribe evidences and seal them. This is mentioned to reconcile Jeremiah to his new purchase. Though he had bought a piece of ground and could not go to see it, yet he must believe that this was the pledge of many a purchase, and those but faint resemblances of the purchased possessions in the heavenly Canaan, reserved for all those who have God's fear in their hearts and do not depart from him.

28 Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it:

29 and the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.

30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord.

31 For this city hath been to me *as* a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face;

32 because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

33 And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I
taught them, rising up early and teaching *them,* yet they have not
hearkened to receive instruction.
34 But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my
name, to defile it.
35 And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the
son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass
through *the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither
came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause
Judah to sin.
36 And now therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel,
concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the
hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and
by the pestilence;
37 Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven
them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will
bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell
safely:
38 and they shall be my people, and I will be their God:
39 and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me
for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:
40 and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not
turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in
their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.
41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them
in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole
soul.
42 For thus saith the Lord ; Like as I have brought all this great evil
upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have
promised them.
43 And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, *It is* desolate
without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.
44 Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal
them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places
about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the
mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the
south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah-33

The Restoration of Prosperity to Jerusalem

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second
time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,
2 Thus saith the Lord the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it,
to establish it; the Lord *is* his name;

Observe here, I The date of this comfortable prophecy which God entrusted Jeremiah with. It is not exact in the time, only that it was after that in the foregoing chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was the second time. God speaketh once, yea, twice, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient that we have need of precept upon precept to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, came to Jeremiah when he was in prison.

Note, No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks nor bars can shut out his gracious visits; nay, oftentimes as their afflictions abound their consolations much more abound, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour when the world frowns upon them. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bore date out of a prison.

II The prophecy itself. A great deal of comfort is wrapped up in it for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,

1. Who it is that secures this comfort to them (Jer 33:2): It is the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that framed it, He is the maker and former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, Jer 32:17. He is the maker and former of Jerusalem, of Zion, built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them--built them for his own praise, and therefore will. He formed it, to establish it, and therefore it shall

be established till those things be introduced which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is the maker and former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, he that has made the promise will make it good; for Jehovah is his name, a God giving being to his promises by the performance of them, and when he does this he is known by that name (Ex 6:3), a perfecting God. When the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the creator is called Jehovah, Ge 2:4.

2. How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in--by prayer (Jer 33:3): Call upon me, and I will answer them. The prophet, having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly earnest with God for further discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed (Jer 32:16), but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God must continue instant in prayer. We must call upon him, and then he will answer us. Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him, Ps 2:8. I will show thee great and mighty things (give thee a clear and full prospect of them), hidden things, which, though in part discovered already, yet thou knowest not, thou canst not understand or give credit to. Or this may refer not only to the prediction of these things which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. See Eze 36:37.

3. How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it, and notwithstanding which its restoration should be brought about in due time (Jer 33:4,5): The houses of this city, not excepting those of the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts, or engines of battery, and by the sword, or axes, or hammers. It is the same word that is used Eze 26:9, With his axes he shall break down thy towers. The strongest stateliest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The Jer 33:5 comes in in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem. Those that came to fight with the Chaldeans, to beat them off

from the siege, did more hurt than good, provoked the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were filled with the dead bodies of men, who died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God says that they were such as he had slain in his anger, for the enemies' sword was his sword and their anger his anger. But, it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself from this city, so that he was just in all he brought upon them.

4. What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances.

(1.) Is their state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, Jer 7:22. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint (Isa 1:5); but (Jer 33:6) I will bring it health and cure; I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again," Jer 30:17. Note, Be the case ever so desperate, if God undertake the cure, he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it (Isa 1:6); its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought: "I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; I will give it to them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time." Peace stands here for all good; peace and truth are peace according to the promise and in pursuance of that: or peace and truth are peace and the true religion, peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many falsehoods and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe,

[1.] That peace and truth are the great subject-matter of divine revelation. These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us peace and truth, the method of true peace--truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. Grace and truth, and abundance of both, come by Jesus Christ. Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ came that we might have that life, and might have it more abundantly. Christ rules

by the power of truth (Joh 18:37) and by it he gives abundance of peace, Ps 72:7,85:10.

[2.] That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: it heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, Joh 17:17. He sent his word and healed them, Ps 107:20. And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in a good frame and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

(2.) Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? "I will cause their captivity to return (Jer 33:7), both that of Israel and that of Judah" (for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were chiefly of Judah, and Benjamin, and Levi, yet afterwards many of all the other tribes returned), "and I will rebuild them, as I built them at first." When they by repentance do their first works God will by their restoration do his first works.

(3.) Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subdued, and so the root of the judgments shall be killed, Jer 33:8.

[1.] By sin they have become filthy, and odious to God's holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify them from their iniquity. As those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the water of purification had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land, and the privileges of it, when God had cleansed them from their iniquities. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, Purge me with hyssop.

[2.] By sin they have become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will pardon all their iniquities, will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound over. All who by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

(4.) Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? Their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, Jer 33:9. Jerusalem thus rebuilt, Judah thus repeopled, shall be to me a name of joy, as pleasing to God as ever they have been provoking, and a praise and an honour before all the nations. They, being thus restored, shall glorify God by their obedience to him, and he shall glorify himself by his favours to them. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nations shall hear of all the good that God has wrought in them by his grace and of all the good he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world as ever the wonders of their deliverance out of Egypt did. And they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness.

[1.] The people of God themselves shall fear and tremble; they shall be much surprised at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God and of forfeiting his favour. Ho 3:5, They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.

[2.] The neighbouring nations shall fear because of the prosperity of Jerusalem, shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies. When the church is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is terrible as an army with banners.

3 Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and
mighty things, which thou knowest not.
4 For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses
of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which
are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;
5 They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but *it is* to fill them with the
dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my
fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.
6 Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and
will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.
7 And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to
return, and will build them, as at the first.

8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

9 And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

10 Thus saith the Lord; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say *shall be* desolate without man and without beast, *even* in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,

Here is a further prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return out of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.

I. It is promised that the people who were long in sorrow shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded now that the country would lie for ever desolate, that no beasts would be found in the land of Judah, no inhabitant in the streets of Jerusalem, and consequently there would be nothing but universal and perpetual melancholy (Jer 33:10); but, though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatened (Jer 7:34,16:9) that the voice of joy and gladness should cease there; but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that the voice of joy and gladness shall be heard there, because the captivity shall be returned; for then was their mouth filled with laughter, Ps 126:1,2.

1. There shall be common joy there, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; marriages shall again be celebrated, as formerly, with songs, which in Babylon they had laid aside, for their harps were hung on the willow-trees.

2. There shall be religious joy there; temple-songs shall be revived, the Lord's songs, which they could not sing in a strange land. There shall be heard in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, the voice of those that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts. Note, Nothing is more the praise and honour of a people than to have God the glory of it, the glory

both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him both as the Lord of hosts and as the God who is good and whose mercy endures for ever. This, though a song of old, yet, being sung upon this fresh occasion, will be a new song.

We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, Ezr 3:11. They sang together in praising the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever. The public worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon: They shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord. All the sacrifices were intended for the praise of God, but this seems to be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of humble adorations and joyful thanksgivings, the calves of our lips (Ho 14:2), which shall please the Lord better than an ox of bullock. The Jews say that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease but the sacrifice of praise, and to those days this promise has a further reference.

II. It is promised that the country, which had lain long depopulated, shall be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, without man and without beast; but, after their return, the pastures shall again be clothed with flocks, Ps 65:13. In all the cities of Judah and Benjamin there shall be a habitation of shepherds, Jer 33:12,13. This intimates,

1 The wealth of the country, after their return. It shall not be a habitation of beggars, who have nothing, but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good stocks upon the ground they have returned to.

2 The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, not shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but there shall be shepherds; tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid. See Ps 144:13,14.

3. The industry of the country, and their return to their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob, in their beginning, gloried in this, that they were shepherds (Ge 47:3), and so they

shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, causing their flocks to lie down (Jer 33:12) and to pass under the hands of him that telleth them (Jer 33:13); for, though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing and may seek after it.

Note, It is the prudence of those who have ever so much of the world to keep an account of what they have. Some think that they pass under the hand of him that telleth them that they may be tithed, Le 27:32. Then we may take the comfort of what we have when God has had his dues out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people, reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises (Jer 33:14): I will perform that good thing which I have promised. Though the promise may sometimes work slowly towards an accomplishment, it works surely. The days will come, though they are long in coming.

III. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in (Jer 33:15,16), and probably this is that good thing, that great good thing, which in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and to which their return out of captivity and their settlement again in their own land was preparatory. From the captivity to Christ is one of the famous periods, Mt 1:17. This promise of the Messiah we had before (Jer 23:5), and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds whom God would set over them, which would make one think that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduces it, is to be understood figuratively. Christ is here prophesied of,

1. As a rightful King. He is a branch of righteousness, not a usurper, for he grows up unto David, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable.

2. As a righteous king, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment, righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong and punishing those that do wrong: He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. This may point at Zerubbabel, in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done (Jer 22:17); but it has a further reference to him to whom all judgment is committed and who shall judge the world in righteousness.

3. As a king that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him Judah shall be saved from wrath and the curse, and, being so saved, Jerusalem shall dwell safely, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this prince of peace, this prince of their peace.

4. As a king that shall be praised by his subjects: "This is the name whereby they shall call him" (so the Chaldee reads it, the Syriac, and vulgar Latin); "this name of his they shall celebrate and triumph in, and by this name they shall call upon him." It may be read, more agreeably to the original, This is he who shall call her, The Lord our righteousness. As Moses's altar is called Jehovah-nissi (Ex 17:15), and Jerusalem Jehovah-shammah (Eze 48:35), intimating that they glory in Jehovah as present with them and their banner, so here the city is called The Lord our righteousness, because they glory in Jehovah as their righteousness. That which was before said to be the name of Christ (says Mr. Gataker) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is made of God to us righteousness, and she, by bearing that name, professes to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him. In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, Isa 45:24. And we are made the righteousness of God in him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messiah so much in their mouths that they shall themselves be called by it.

11 the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord *is* good; for his mercy

endureth for ever: *and* of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise
into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity
of the land, as at first, saith the Lord.
12 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate
without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be
a habitation of shepherds causing *their* flocks to lie down.
13 In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the
cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places
about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass
again under the hands of him that telleth *them*, saith the Lord.
14 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that
good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to
the house of Judah.
15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of
righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute
judgment and righteousness in the land.
16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely:
and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our
righteousness.
17 For thus saith the Lord ; David shall never want a man to sit
upon the throne of the house of Israel;

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of Peculiarity with Abraham and his seed, seemed to be all broken and lost while the captivity lasted; but it is here promised that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings, typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

I The covenant of royalty shall be secured and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, Jer 33:17. The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity; the crown had fallen from their head; there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel; Jeconiah was written childless. After their return the house of David made a figure again; but it in the Messiah that this promise is performed that David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel, and

that David shall have always a son to reign upon his throne. For as long as the man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening head, and glorified head over all things, as long as he is King upon the holy hill of Zion, David does not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the first-begotten was brought into the world it was declared concerning him, The Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Lu 1:32,33. For the confirmation of this it is promised,

1. That the covenant with David shall be as firm as the ordinances of heaven, to the stability of which that of God's promise is compared, Jer 31:35. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled and on which it is founded, here called a covenant of the day and the night (Jer 33:20,25), because this is one of the articles of it, That there shall be day and night in their season, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and established their mutual succession, and a government to each, that the sun should rule by day and the moon and stars by night (Ge 1:4,5,16), which establishment was renewed after the flood (Ge 8:22), and has continued ever since, Ps 19:2 The morning and the evening have both of them their regular outgoings (Ps 65:8); the day-spring knows its place, knows its time, and keeps both, so do the shadows of the evening; and, while the world stands, this course shall not be altered, this covenant shall not be broken.

The ordinances of heaven and earth (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth), which God has appointed (Jer 33:25,Job 38:33), shall never be disappointed. Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption be with the Redeemer--God's servant, but David our King, Jer 33:21. This intimates that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end; he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days till time and day shall be no more. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and when the end cometh, and not till then, it shall be delivered up to God, even the Father. But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be

intermixed and counterchanged, prosperity and adversity succeeding each other, as light and darkness, day and night. But this is plainly taught us, that, as sure as we may be that, though the sun will set tonight, it will rise again tomorrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be that, though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, yet it will shine forth again, and recover its lustre, in the time appointed.

2. That the seed of David shall be as numerous as the host of heaven, that is, the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his gospel and his Spirit working with it. From the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth, to be his willing people, Ps 110:3. Christ's seed are not, as David's were, his successors, but his subjects; yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him (Jer 33:22): As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David, so that there shall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extirpated, for want of heirs. The children are numerous; and, if children, then heirs.

II The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promises of that also shall have their full accomplishment. This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple service, for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive. It did so; immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem there were priests and Levites ready to offer burnt-offerings and to do sacrifice continually (Ezr 3:2,3), as is here promised, Jer 33:18. But that priesthood soon grew corrupt; the covenant of Levi was profaned (as appears Mal 2:8), and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period. We must therefore look elsewhere for the performance of this word, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm, and last as long, as the covenant with the day and the night. And we find it abundantly performed,

1. In the priesthood of Christ, which supersedes that of Aaron, and is the substance of that shadow. While that great high priest of our profession is always appearing in the presence of God for us, presenting the virtue of his blood by which he made

atonement in the incense of his intercession, it may truly be said that the Levites do not want a man before God to offer continually, Heb 7:3,17. He is a priest for ever. The covenant of the priesthood is called a covenant of peace (Nu 25:12), of life and peace, Mal 2:5. Now we are sure that this covenant is not broken, nor in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our life and our peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a priest upon his throne, as Melchizedek.

2. In a settled gospel ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies, and to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, the priests, the Levites, do not want successors, and such as have obtained a more excellent ministry. The apostle makes those that preach the gospel to come in the room of those that served at the altar, 1Co 9:13,14.

3. In all true believers, who are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood (1Pe 2:5,9), who are made to our God kings and priests (Re 1:6); they offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, and themselves, in the first place, living sacrifices. Of these Levites this promise must be understood (Jer 33:22), that they shall be as numerous as the sand of the sea, the same that is promised concerning Israel in general (Ge 22:17); for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, Re 5:9,10,7:9,15.

18 neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer
burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice
continually.
19 And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, saying,
20 Thus saith the Lord ; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and
my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and
night in their season;
21 *then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that
he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the
Levites the priests, my ministers.
22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the
sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and
the Levites that minister unto me.
23 Moreover the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying,

24 Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.

The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the gospel Israel. Observe,

1. How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, Jer 33:24. God asks the prophet, "Hast though not heard, and dost thou not consider, what this people have spoken?" either the enemies of Israel, who triumphed in the extirpation of a people that had made such a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves, "this people among whom thou dwellest;" they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him as if he had not dealt faithfully with them. The two families which the Lord hath chosen, Israel and Judah, whereas they were but one when he chose them, he hath even cast them off. "Thus have they despised my people, that is, despised the privilege of being my people as if it were a privilege of no value at all." The neighbouring nations despised them as now no more a nation, but the ruins of a nation, and looked upon all their honour as laid in the dust; but,

2. See how firm the covenant stands notwithstanding, as firm as that with day and night; sooner will God suffer day and night to cease then he will cast away the seed of Jacob. This cannot refer to the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, for they are cast away, but to the Christian church, in which all these promises were to be lodged, as appears by the apostle's discourse, Ro 11:1, &c. Christ is that seed of David that is to be perpetual dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, as this people shall never want such a king, so this king shall never want such a people. Christianity shall continue in the dominion of Christ, and the subjection of Christians to him, till day and night come to an end. And, as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated, I will cause their captivity to return; and, having brought them back, I will have mercy on them. To whom this promise refers appears Ga 6:16, where all that walk according

to the gospel rule are made to be the Israel of God, on whom peace and mercy shall be.

25 Thus saith the Lord; If my covenant *be* not with day and night,
and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth;
26 then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, *so* that
I will not take *any* of his seed *to be* rulers over the seed of Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have
mercy on them.

Jeremiah-34

Jeremiah's Warning to Zedekiah

1 The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the
kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought
against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying,

This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered to Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned, before he was shut up in the prison, for we find this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of some passages out of it, Jer 32:4. Observe,

I The time when this message was sent to Zedekiah; it was when the king of Babylon, with all his forces, some out of all the kingdoms of the earth that were within his jurisdiction, fought against Jerusalem and the cities thereof (Jer 34:1), designing to destroy them, having often plundered them. The cities that now remained, and yet held out, are named (Jer 34:7), Lachish and Azekah. This intimates that things were now brought to the last extremity, and yet Zedekiah obstinately stood it out, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

II The message itself that was sent to him.

1. Here is a threatening of wrath. He is told that again which he had been often told before, that the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans and burnt with fire (Jer 34:2), that he shall himself fall into the enemy's hands, shall be made a prisoner, shall be brought

before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon (Jer 34:3); yet Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon; nor did he, for his eyes were put out, Eze 12:13. This Zedekiah brought upon himself from God by his other sins and from Nebuchadnezzar by breaking his faith with him.

2. Here is a mixture of mercy. He shall die a captive, but he shall not die by the sword he shall die a natural death (Jer 34:4); he shall end his days with some comfort, shall die in peace, Jer 34:5. He never had been one of the worst of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had done in the sight of the Lord he repented of in his captivity, as Manasseh had done, and it was forgiven to him; and, God being reconciled to him, he might truly be said to die in peace, Note, A man may die in a prison and yet die in peace. Nay, he shall end his days with some reputation, more than one would expect, all things considered. He shall be buried with the burnings of his fathers, that is, with the respect usually shown to their kings, especially those that had done good in Israel. It seems, in his captivity he had conducted himself so well towards his own people that they were willing to do him this honour, and towards Nebuchadnezzar that he suffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his prosperity, perhaps he would have grown worse and would have departed at last without being desired; but his afflictions wrought such a change in him that his death was looked upon as a great loss. It is better to live and die penitent in a prison than to live and die impenitent in a palace. They will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! an honour which his brother Jehoiakim had not, Jer 22:18. The Jews say that they lamented thus over him, Alas! Zedekiah is dead, who drank the dregs of all the ages that went before him, that is, who suffered for the sins of his ancestors, the measure of iniquity being filled up in his days. They shall thus lament him, saith the Lord, for I have pronounced the word; and what God hath spoken shall without fail be made good.

III. Jeremiah's faithfulness in delivering this message. Though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himself (for he was imprisoned for it), yet he spoke all these words to Zedekiah, Jer 34:6. It is a mercy

to great men to have those about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil consequences of their evil courses, that they may reform and live.

2 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord ; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:

3 and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.

4 Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword;

5 *but* thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn *odors* for thee; and they will lament thee, *saying*, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.

6 Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem,

7 when the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defensed cities remained of the cities of Judah.

The Broken Covenant concerning Hebrew Servants

8 *This is* the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which *were* at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occasion, the history of which we must take notice of, as necessary to give light to the prophecy.

I. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Chaldean army the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one instance, and that was concerning their servants.

1 The law of God was very express, that those of their own nation should not be held in servitude above seven years, but, after they had served one apprenticeship, they should be discharged and have their liberty; yea, though they had sold themselves into servitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were sold by the judges for the punishment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and strangers, that those of other nations taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual slavery, they and theirs; but their brethren must serve but for seven years at the longest. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, Jer 34:13,14. This was the first of the judicial laws which God gave them (Ex 21:2), and there was good reason for this law.

(1.) God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preserve the honour of it themselves and to put a difference between it and other nations.

(2.) God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to express their grateful sense of that favour, by letting those go to whom their houses were houses of bondage, as Egypt had been to their forefathers. That deliverance is therefore mentioned here (Jer 34:13) as the ground of that law. Note, God's compassions towards us should engage our compassions towards our brethren; we must release as we are released, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called a covenant; for our performance of the duty required is the condition of the continuance of the favours God has bestowed.

2. This law they and their fathers had broken. Their worldly profit swayed more with them than God's command or covenant. When their servants had lived seven years with them they understood their business, and how to apply themselves to it, better than they did when they first came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part with them, though God himself by his law had made them free: Your fathers hearkened not to me in this matter (Jer 34:14), so that from the days of their fathers they had been in this trespass; and they thought they might do it

because their fathers did it, and their servants had by disuse lost the benefit of the provision God made for them; whereas against an express law, especially against an express law of God, no custom, usage, nor prescription, is to be admitted in plea. For this sin of theirs, and their fathers, God now brought them into servitude, and justly.

3. When they were besieged, and closely shut in, by the army of the Chaldeans, they, being told of their fault in this matter, immediately reformed, and let go all their servants that were entitled to their freedom by the law of God, as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, consented to let the people go, and bound themselves in a covenant to do so.

(1.) The prophets faithfully admonished them concerning their sin. From them they heard that they should let their Hebrew servants go free, Jer 34:10. They might have read it themselves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it, therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word; people must hear the word preached because they will not make the use they ought to make of the word written.

(2.) All orders and degrees of men concurred in this reformation. The king, and the princes, and all the people, agreed to let go their servants, whatever loss or damage they might sustain by so doing. When the king and princes led in this good work the people could not for shame but follow. The example and influence of great men would go very far towards extirpating the most inveterate corruptions.

(3.) They bound themselves by a solemn oath and covenant that they would do this, whereby they engaged themselves to God and one another. Note, What God has bound us to by his precept, it is good for us to bind ourselves to by our promise. This covenant was very solemn: it was made in a sacred place, made before me, in the house which is called by my name (Jer 34:15), in the special presence of God, the tokens of which, in the temple, ought to strike an awe upon them and make them very sincere in their appeals to him. It was ratified by a significant sign; they cut

a calf in two, and passed between the parts thereof (Jer 34:18,19) with this dreadful imprecation, "Let us be in like manner cut asunder if we do not perform what we now promise." This calf was probably offered up in sacrifice to God, who was thereby made a party to the covenant. When God covenanted with Abraham, for the ratification of it, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, in allusion to this federal rite, Ge 15:17.

Note, In order that we may effectually oblige ourselves to our duty, it is good to alarm ourselves with the apprehensions of the terror of the wrath and curse to which we expose ourselves if we live in the contempt of it, that wrath which will cut sinners asunder (Mt 24:51), and sensible signs may be of use to make the impressions of it deep and durable, as here.

(4.) They conformed themselves herein to the command of God and their covenant with him; they did let their servants go, though at this time, when the city was besieged, they could very ill spare them. Thus they did right in God's sight, Jer 34:15. Though it was their trouble that drove them to it, yet he was well pleased with it; and if they had persevered in this act of mercy to the poor, to their poor servants, it might have been a lengthening of their tranquillity, Da 4:27.

II. When there was some hope that the siege was raised and the danger over they repented of their repentance, undid the good they had done, and forced the servants they had released into their respective services again. 1 The king of Babylon's army had now gone up from them, Jer 34:21. Pharaoh was bringing an army of Egyptians to oppose the progress of the king of Babylon's victories, upon the tidings of which the Chaldeans raised the siege for a time, as we find, Jer 37:5. They departed from Jerusalem. See how ready God was to put a stop to his judgments, upon the first instance of reformation, so slow is he to anger and so swift to show mercy. As soon as ever they let their servants go free God let them go free.

2. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers they made their servants come back into subjection to them, Jer 34:11, and again Jer 34:16. This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome, after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves that they could not keep in a good mind when they were in it.

But it was especially an affront to God; in doing this they polluted his name, Jer 34:16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it or break it as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they had imprecated upon themselves in case they should break that covenant. It was jesting with God almighty, as if he could be imposed upon by fallacious promises, which, when they had gained their point, they would look upon themselves no longer obliged by. it was lying to God with their mouths and flattering him with their tongues. It was likewise a contempt of the judgments of God and setting them at defiance; as if, when once the course of them was stopped a little and interrupted, they would never proceed again and the judgment would never be revived; whereas reprieves are so far from being pardons that if they be abused thus, and sinners take encouragement from them to return to sin, they are but preparatives for heavier strokes of divine vengeance.

9 that every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, *being* a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, *to wit,* of a Jew his brother.

10 Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more; then they obeyed, and let *them* go.

11 But afterwards they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.

12 Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying,

13 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

14 At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother a Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

15 And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name:

16 but ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

17 Therefore thus saith the Lord; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbor: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

For this treacherous dealing with God they are here severely threatened. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Those that think to put a cheat upon God by a dissembled repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary reformation, will prove in the end to have put the greatest cheat upon their own souls; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. it is here threatened, with an observable air of displeasure against them,

1. That, since they had not given liberty to their servants to go where they pleased, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their course against them without control (Jer 34:17): You have not proclaimed liberty to your servants. Though they had done it (Jer 34:10), yet they might truly be said not to have done it, because they did not stand to it, but undid it again; and factum non dicitur quod non perseverat--that is not said to be done which

does not last. The righteousness that is forsaken and turned away from shall be forgotten, and not mentioned any more than if it had never been, Eze 18:24. "Therefore I will proclaim a liberty for you; I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection, which those forfeit that withdraw from their allegiance. You shall have liberty to choose which of these judgments you will be cut off by, sword, famine, or pestilence;" such a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a great strait, 2Sa 24:14.

Note, Those that will not be in subjection to the law of God put themselves into subjection to the wrath and curse of God. But this shows what liberty to sin really--it is but a liberty to the sorest judgments.

2. That, since they had brought their servants back into confinement in their houses, God would make them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, where they should live in servitude, and, being strangers, could not expect the privileges of free-born subjects.

3. That, since they had broken the covenant which they ratified by a solemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themselves in case they should break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and so shall their doom be; the penalty of their bond shall be recovered, because they have not performed the condition; for so some read Jer 34:18, "I will make the men which have transgressed my covenant as the calf which they cut in twain; I will divide them asunder as they divided it asunder."

4. That, since they would not let go their servants out of the hands, God would deliver them into the hands of those that hated them, even the princes and nobles both of Judah and Jerusalem (of the country and of the city), the eunuchs (chamberlains, or great officers of the court), the priests, and all the people, Jer 34:19. They had all dealt treacherously with God, and therefore shall all be involved in the common ruin without exception. They shall all be given unto the hand of their enemies, that seek, not their wealth only, or their service, but their life, and they shall

have what they seek; but neither shall that content them: when they have their lives they shall leave their dead bodies unburied, a loathsome spectacle to all mankind and an easy prey to the fowls and beasts, a lasting mark of ignominy being hereby fastened on them, Jer 34:20. 5. That, since they had emboldened themselves in returning to their sin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God would therefore bring it upon them again: "They have now gone up from you, and your fright is over for the present, but I will command them to face about as they were; they shall return to this city, and take it and burn it," Jer 34:22.

Note, (1.) As confidence in God is a hopeful presage of approaching deliverance, so security in sin is a sad omen of approaching destruction.

(2.) When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unhumbled and unreformed, it is cum animo revertendi--with a design to return; they do but retreat to come on again with so much the greater force; for when God judges he will overcome.

(3.) It is just with God to disappoint those expectations of mercy which his providence had given cause for when we disappoint those expectations of duty which our professions, pretensions, and fair promises, had given cause for. If we repent of the good we had purposed, God will repent of the good he had purposed. With the froward thou will show thyself froward.

19 the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

20 I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

21 And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

22 Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return
to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it
with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an
inhabitant.

Jeremiah-35

The Obedience of the Rechabites

1 The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, in the days of
Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

This chapter is of an earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it was said and done in the days of Jehoiakim (Jer 35:1); but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army came up into the land (Jer 35:11), which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned 2Ki 24:2, which was upon occasion of Jehoiakim's rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. After the judgments of God had broken in upon this rebellious people he continued to deal with them by his prophets to turn them from sin, that his wrath might turn away from the. For this purpose Jeremiah sets before them the example of the Rechabites, a family that kept distinct by themselves and were no more numbered with the families of Israel than they with the nations. They were originally Kenites, as appears 1Ch 2:55, These are the Kenites that came out of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

The Kenites, at least those of them that gained a settlement in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law, Jdg 1:16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 1Sa 15:6. See Jdg 4:17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab. His son, or a lineal descendant from him, was Jonadab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety. He flourished in the days of Jehu, king of Israel, nearly 300 years before this; for there we find him courted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God (2Ki 10:15,16), which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion of than to have so good

a man as Jonadab ride in the chariot with him. Now here we are told,

I. What the rules of living were which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament, in writing, and duly executed, charged his children, and his posterity after him throughout all generations, religiously to observe; and we have reason to think that they were such as he himself had all his days observed.

1. They were comprised in two remarkable precepts:--

(1.) He forbade them to drink wine, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to make glad the heart of man and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it; but we are so apt to abuse it and get hurt by it, and a good man, who has his heart made continually glad with the light of God's countenance, has so little need of it for that purpose (Ps 4:6,7), that it is a commendable piece of self-denial either not to use it at all or very sparingly and medicinally, as Timothy used it, 1Ti 5:23.

(2.) He appointed them to dwell in tents, and not to build houses, nor purchase lands, nor rent or occupy either, Jer 35:7. This was an instance of strictness and mortification beyond what the Nazarenes were obliged to. Tents were mean dwellings, so that this would teach them to be humble; they were cold dwellings, so that this would teach them to be hardy and not to indulge the body; they were movable dwellings, so that this would teach them not to think of settling or taking root any where in this world. They must dwell in tents all their days. They must from the beginning thus accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no, not under the decays of old age. Now,

2. Why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not merely to show his authority, and to exercise a dominion over them, by imposing upon them what he thought fit; but it was to show his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them, yet not tying them by any

oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline as far as they found it for edification, yet to be dispensed with in any case of necessity, as here, Jer 35:11. He prescribed these rules to them,

(1.) That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life (Ex 2:16), and he would have his posterity keep to it, and not degenerate from it, as Israel had done, who originally were shepherds and dwelt in tents, Ge 46:34. Note, We ought not to be ashamed of the honest employments of our ancestors, though they were but mean.

(2.) That they might comport with their lot and bring their mind to their condition. Moses had put them in hopes that they should be naturalized (Nu 10:32); but, it seems they were not; they were still strangers in the land (Jer 35:7), had no inheritance in it, and therefore must live by their employments, which was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging; for strangers, such as they were, must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? Mind not high things.

(3.) That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac (Ge 26:14), and would seek occasions to quarrel with them and do them a mischief; therefore he thought it would be their prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long-to live meanly, that they might live many days in the land where they were strangers. Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity are often the best policy and men's surest protection.

(4.) That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them; and therefore he obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and, that they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be very sober, and temperate, and abstemious, which would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days, and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort in the land where they were strangers. Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a generous and gracious contempt.

(5.) That they might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity. Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly degenerated, and he would have his family provide, that, if they could not in the peace thereof, yet even in the midst of the troubles thereof, they might have peace. Let them therefore have little to lose, and then losing times would be the less dreadful to them: let them sit loose to what they had, and then they might with less pain be stripped of it. Note, Those are in the best frame to meet sufferings who are mortified to the world and life a life of self-denial.

(6.) That in general they might learn to live by rule and under discipline. It is good for us all to do so, and to teach our children to do so. Those that have lived long, as Jonadab probably had done when he left this charge to his posterity, can speak by experience of the vanity of the world and the dangerous snares that are in the abundance of its wealth and pleasures, and therefore ought to be regarded when they warn those that come after them to stand upon their guard.

2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites;
4 and I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which *was* by the chamber of the princes, which *was* above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door:
5 and I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.
6 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, *neither* ye, nor your sons for ever:
7 neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any:* but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers.
8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;
9 nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:

How strictly his posterity observed these rules, Jer 35:8-10. They had in their respective generations all of them obeyed the voice of Jonadab their father, had done according to all that he commanded them. They drank no wine, though they dwelt in a country where was plenty of it; their wives and children drank no wine, for those that are temperate themselves should take care that all under their charge should be so too. They built no houses, tilled no ground, but lived upon the products of their cattle. This they did partly in obedience to their ancestor, and out of a veneration they had for his name and authority, and partly from the experience they themselves had of the benefit of living such a mortified life. See the force of tradition, and the influence that antiquity, example, and great names, have upon men, and how that which seems very difficult will by long usage and custom become easy and in a manner natural. Now,

1. As to one of the particulars he had given them in charge, we are here told how in a case of necessity they dispensed with the violation of it (Jer 35:11): When the king of Babylon came into

the land with his army, though they had hitherto dwelt in tents, they now quitted their tents, and came and dwelt in Jerusalem, and in such houses as they could furnish themselves with there.

Note, The rules of a strict discipline must not be made too strict, but so as to admit of a dispensation when the necessity of a case calls for it, which therefore, in making vows of that nature, it is wisdom to provide expressly for, that the way may be made the more clear, and we may not afterwards be forced to say, It was an error, Ec 5:6. Commands of that nature are to be understood with such limitations. These Rechabites would have tempted God, and not trusted him, if they had not used proper means for their own safety in a time of common calamity, notwithstanding the law and custom of their family.

2. As to the other particular, we are here told how, notwithstanding the greatest urgency, they religiously adhered to it. Jeremiah took them into the temple (Jer 35:2), into a prophet's chamber, there, rather than into the chamber of the princes, that joined to it, because he had a message from God, which would look more like itself when it was delivered in the chambers of a man of God. There he not only asked the Rechabites whether they would drink any wine, but he set pots full of wine before them, and cups to drink out of, made the temptation as strong as possible, and said, "Drink you wine, you shall have it on free cost. You have broken one of the rules of your order, in coming to live at Jerusalem; why may you not break this too, and when you are in the city do as they there do?" But they peremptorily refused. They all agreed in the refusal. "No, we will drink no wine; for with us it is against the law." The prophet knew very well they would deny it, and, when they did, urged it no further, for he saw they were stedfastly resolved. Note, Those temptations are of no force with men of confirmed sobriety which yet daily overcome such as, notwithstanding their convictions, are of no resolution in the paths of virtue.

10 but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to
all that Jonadab our father commanded us.
11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up
into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for
fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the

Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

12 Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying,

13 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord.

The trial of the Rechabites' constancy was intended but for a sign; now here we have the application of it.

I The Rechabites' observance of their father's charge to them is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God. Let them see it and be ashamed. The prophet asks them, in God's name, "Will you not at length receive instruction? Jer 35:13. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing fasten upon you? Will nothing prevail to discover sin and duty to you? You see how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandment (Jer 35:14); but you have not inclined your ear to me" (Jer 35:15), though one might much more reasonably expect that the people of God should have obeyed him than that the sons of Jonadab should have obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high, for,

1 The Rechabites were obedient to one who was but a man like themselves, who had but the wisdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their flesh; but the Jews were disobedient to an infinite and eternal God, who had an absolute authority over them, as the Father of their spirits.

2. Jonadab was long since dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their disobedience to his orders nor give correction for it; but God lives for ever, to see how his laws are observed, and is in a readiness to revenge all disobedience.

3. The Rechabites were never put in mind of their obligations to their father; but God often sent his prophets to his people, to put them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they would not do it. This is insisted on here as a great aggravation of their disobedience: "I have myself spoken to you, rising early and speaking by the written word and the dictates and admonitions of conscience (Jer 35:14); nay, I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, men

like yourselves, whose terrors shall not make you afraid, rising up early and sending them (Jer 35:15), and yet all in vain."

4. Jonadab never did that for his seed which God had done for his people. He left them a charge, but left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had given his people a good land, and promised them that, if they would be obedient, they should still dwell in it, so that they were bound both in gratitude and interest to be obedient, and yet they would not hear, they would not hearken. 5. God did not tie up his people to so much hardship, and to such instances of mortification, as Jonadab obliged his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed and God's were not.

II. Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience thus aggravated. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment against them, and shall condemn them; for they very punctually performed the commandment of their father, and continued and persevered in their obedience to it (Jer 35:16); but this people, this rebellious and gainsaying people, have not hearkened unto me; and therefore (Jer 35:17), because they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will perform the threatenings of it: "I will bring upon them, by the Chaldean army, all the evil pronounced against them both in the law and in the prophets, for I have spoken to them, I have called to them--spoken in a still small voice to those that were near and called aloud to those that were at a distance, tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them--spoken by my word, called by my providence, both to the same purport, and yet all to no purpose; they have not heard nor answered."

III. Mercy is here promised to the family of the Rechabites for their steady and unanimous adherence to the laws of their house. Though it was only for the shaming of Israel that their constancy was tried, yet, being unshaken, it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory; and God takes occasion from it to tell them that he had favours in reserve for them (Jer 35:18,19) and that they should have the comfort of them. 1. That the family shall continue as long as any of the families of Israel, among whom they were strangers and sojourners. it shall never want a man to inherit what they had, though they had no inheritance to leave. Note, Sometimes those

that have the smallest estates have the most numerous progeny; but he that sends mouths will be sure to send meat. 2. That religion shall continue in the family: "He shall not want a man to stand before me, to serve me." Though they are neither priests nor levites, nor appear to have had any post in the temple service, yet in a constant course of regular devotion, they stand before God, to minister to him. Note,

(1.) The greatest blessing that can be entailed upon a family is to have the worship of God kept up in it from generation to generation.

(2.) Temperance, self-denial, and mortification to the world, do very much befriend the exercises of piety, and help to transmit the observance of them to posterity. The more dead we are to the delights of sense the better we are disposed for the service of God; but nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a family than pride and luxury.

14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

17 therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

18 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the

commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts,
and done according unto all that he hath commanded you;
19 therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab
the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

Jeremiah-36

The Burning of the Roll

1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of
Josiah king of Judah, *that* this word came unto Jeremiah from the
Lord, saying,

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy we meet with a roll written in vision, for discovery of the things therein contained to the prophet himself, who was to receive and digest them, Eze 2:9,10,3:1. Here, in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy, we meet with a roll written in fact, for discovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them; for the written word and other good books are of great use both to ministers and people. We have here,

I The command which God gave to Jeremiah to write a summary of his sermons, of all the reproofs and all the warnings he had given in God's name to his people, ever since he first began to be a preacher, in the thirteenth year of Josiah, to this day, which was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, Jer 36:2,3. What had been only spoken must now be written, that it might be reviewed, and that it might spread the further and last the longer. What had been spoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the same things, perhaps in the same words (which has its advantage one way), must now be contracted and put into less compass, that the several parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once must be recapitulated, and rehearsed to them again, that what was forgotten might be called to mind again and what made no impression upon them at the first hearing might take hold of them when they heard it the second time.

And what was perhaps already written, and published in single sermons, must be collected into one volume, that none might be

lost. Note, The writing of the scripture is by divine appointment. And observe the reason here given for the writing of this roll (Jer 36:3): It may be the house of Judah will hear. Not that the divine prescience was at any uncertainty concerning the event: with that there is no peradventure; God knew certainly that they would deal very treacherously, Isa 48:8. But the divine wisdom directed to this as a proper means for attaining the desired end: and, if it failed, they would be the more inexcusable. And, though God foresaw that they would not hear, he did not tell the prophet so, but prescribed this method to him as a probably one to be used, in the hopes that they would hear, that is, heed and regard what they heard, take notice of it and mix faith with it: for otherwise our hearing the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it to us, would stand us in no stead. Now observe here,

1. What it is hoped they will thus hear: All that evil which I purpose to do unto them. Note, The serious consideration of the certain fatal consequences of sin will be of great use to us to bring us to God.

2. What it is hoped will be produced thereby: They will hear, that they may return every man from his evil way. Note, The conversion of sinners from their evil courses is that which ministers should aim at in preaching; and people hear the word in vain if that point be not gained with them. To what purpose do we hear of the evil God will bring upon us for sin if we continue, notwithstanding, to do evil against him?

3. Of what vast advantage their consideration and conversion will be to them: That I may forgive their iniquity. This plainly implies the honour of God's justice, with which it is not consistent that he should forgive the sin unless the sinner repent of it and turn from it; but it plainly expresses the honour of his mercy, that he is very ready to forgive sin and only waits till the sinner be qualified to receive forgiveness, and therefore uses various means to bring us to repentance, that he may forgive.

II The instructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his scribe, pursuant to the command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, Jer 36:4. God bade Jeremiah write, but, it should seem, he had not the pen of a ready writer, he could

not write fast, or fair, so as Baruch could, and therefore he made use of him as his amanuensis. St. Paul wrote but few of his epistles with his own hand, Ga 6:11,Ro 16:22. God dispenses his gifts variously; some have a good faculty at speaking, others at writing, and neither can say to the other, We have no need of you, 1Co 12:21. The Spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as trustee for him in his purchase of the field (Jer 32:12) and now was advanced to be his scribe and substitute in his prophetical office; and, if we may credit the apocryphal book that bears his name, he was afterwards himself a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Those that begin low are likely to rise high, and it is good for those that are designed for prophets to have their education under prophets and to be serviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a roll of a book on pieces of parchment, or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, so making one long scroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a staff.

III. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it seems was shut up, and could not go to the house of the Lord himself, Jer 36:5. Though he was not a close prisoner, for then there would have been no occasion to send officers to seize him (Jer 36:26), yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was shut out thence where he might be serving God and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been shut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripening apace for ruin when he thus silenced God's faithful messengers.

But, when Jeremiah could not go to the temple himself, he sent one that was deputed by him to read to the people what he would himself have said. Thus St. Paul wrote epistles to the churches which he could not visit in person. Nay, it was what he himself had often said to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the sermons that have been preached may contribute very much towards the answering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the same thing is safe and profitable, and many times very necessary (Php 3:1), and we must be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it, as here, at second hand. Both ministers and people must do what they can when they cannot do

what they would. Observe, When God ordered the reading of the roll he said, It may be they will hear and return from their evil ways, Jer 36:3. When Jeremiah orders it, he says, It may be they will pray (they will present their supplications before the Lord) and will return from their evil way.

Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us is necessary in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God of the necessity of returning to him will present their supplications to him for that grace. And the consideration of this, that great is the anger which God has pronounced against us for sin, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now, according to these orders, Baruch did read out of the book the words of the Lord, whenever there was a holy convocation, Jer 36:8.

2 Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I
have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and
against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the
days of Josiah, even unto this day.
3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I
purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his
evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.
4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch
wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord,
which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.
5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I *am* shut up; I cannot
go into the house of the Lord:
6 therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from
my mouth, the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the
Lord's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them
in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.
7 It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and
will return every one from his evil way: for great *is* the anger and the
fury that the Lord hath pronounced against this people.
8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the
prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the
Lord in the Lord's house.
9 And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah
king of Judah, in the ninth month, *that* they proclaimed a fast

before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.

It should seem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book, to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the most solemn reading of it altogether which is here spoken of; for the directions were given about it in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, whereas this was done in the fifth year, Jer 36:9. But some think that the writing of the book fairly over took up so much time that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet perhaps it might not be past a month or two; he might begin in the latter end of the fourth year and finish it in the beginning of the fifth, for thee ninth month refers to the computation of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now observe here,

1 The government appointed a public fast to be religiously observed (Jer 36:9), on account either of the distress they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans or of the want of rain (Jer 14:1): They proclaimed a fast to the people; whether the king and princes or the priests, ordered this fast, is not certain; but it was plain that God by his providence called them aloud to it. Note, Great shows of piety and devotion may be found even among those who, though they keep up these forms of godliness, are strangers and enemies to the power of it. But what will such hypocritical services avail? Fasting, without reforming and turning away from sin, will never turn away the judgments of God, Jon 3:10. Notwithstanding this fast, God proceeded in his controversy with this people.

2. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's sermons publicly in the house of the Lord, on the fast-day. He stood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window, or balcony, read to the people that were in the court, Jer 36:10. Note, When we are speaking to God we must be willing to hear from him; and therefore, on days of fasting and prayer, it is requisite that the word be read and preached. Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you. Jdg 9:7. For our help in suing out mercy and grace, it is proper that we should be told of sin and duty.

3. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court and were now together in the secretary's office, here called

the scribe's chamber, Jer 36:12. It should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God, to fact, and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion sake, that they proclaimed this fast. We are willing to hope that it was not with a bad design, to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching, but with a good design, to bring the princes into trouble for their sins, that Michaiah informed the princes of what Baruch had read; for his father Gemariah so far countenanced Baruch as to lend him his chamber to read out of. Michaiah finds the princes sitting in the scribe's chamber, and tells them they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of.

Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and edified us we should be ready to communicate it to others that did not hear it, for their edification. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 4. Baruch is sent for, and is ordered to sit down among them and read it all over again to them (Jer 36:14,15), which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his public work and therefore desiring to be excused, nor upbraiding the princes with their being absent from the temple, where they might have heard it when he read it there. Note, God's ministers must become all things to all men, if by any means they may gain some, must comply with them in circumstances, that they may secure the substance. St. Paul preached privately to those of reputation, Ga 2:2.

5. The princes were for the present much affected with the word that was read to them, Jer 36:16. Observe, They heard all the words they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book; for otherwise how could they form a competent judgment of it? And, when they had heard all, they were afraid, were all afraid, one as well as another; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasonings. The reproofs were just, the threatenings terrible, and the predictions now in a fair way to be fulfilled; so that, laying all together, they were in a great consternation. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people (Jer 36:10), but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) looked one upon another, not knowing what to say. They

were all convinced that it was worthy to be regarded, but none of them had courage to second it, only they agreed to tell the king of all these words; and, if he think fit to give credit to them, they will, otherwise not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation.

And yet at the same time they knew the king's mind so far that they advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves (Jer 36:19) and to shift as they could for their own safety, expecting no other than that the king, instead of being convinced, would be exasperated. Note, It is common for sinners, under convictions, to endeavour to shake them off, by shifting off the prosecution of them to other persons, as these princes here, or to another more convenient season, as Felix.

6. They asked Baruch a trifling question, How he wrote all these words (Jer 36:17), as if they suspected there was something extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain answer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing--Jeremiah dictated and he wrote, Jer 36:18. But thus it is common for those who would avoid the convictions of the word of God to start needless questions about the way and manner of the inspiration of it.

10 Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house, in the ears of all the people.

11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the Lord,

12 then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, *even* Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

13 Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and

come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and
came unto them.
15 And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So
Baruch read *it* in their ears.
16 Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were
afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell
the king of all these words.
17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, how didst thou write
all these words at his mouth?
18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto
me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book.
19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and
Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.
20 And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll
in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the
ears of the king.

We have traced the roll to the people, and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king; and we find,

I. That, upon notice given him concerning it, he sent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, Jer 36:20,21. He did not desire that Baruch would come and read it himself, who could read it more intelligently and with more authority and affection than any one else; nor did he order one of his princes to do it (though it would have been no disparagement to the greatest of them), much less would he vouchsafe to read it himself; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, who was sent to fetch it, is bidden to read it, who perhaps scarcely knew how to make sense of it. But those who thus despise the word of God will soon make it to appear, as this king did, that they hate it too, and have not only low, but ill thoughts of it.

II. That he had not patience to hear it read through as the princes had, but, when he had heard three or four leaves read, in a rage he cut it with his penknife, and threw it piece by piece into the fire, that he might be sure to see it all consumed, Jer 36:22,23. This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and a most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was.

1. Thus he showed his impatience of reproof; being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults.

2. Thus he showed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces, and burnt them, if he had had them in his reach, when he was in this passion.

3. Thus he expressed an abstinent resolution never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatever God by his prophets says to the contrary.

4. Thus he foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him, as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. 5. Thus he thought he had effectually provided that the things contained in this roll should spread no further, which was the care of the chief priests concerning the gospel, Ac 4:17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes. "But," says he, "I will take a course that shall prevent its being read any more." See what an enmity there is against God in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities done to him.

III. That neither the king himself nor any of his princes were at all affected with the word: They were not afraid (Jer 36:24), no, not those princes that trembled at the word when they heard it the first time, Jer 36:16. So soon, so easily, do good impressions wear off. They showed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. They rent not their garments, as Josiah, this Jehoiakim's own father, did when he had the book of the law read to him, though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

IV. That there were three of the princes who had so much sense and grace left as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, Jer 36:25. If they had from the first shown themselves, as they ought to have done, affected with the word,

perhaps they might have brought the king to a better mind and have persuaded him to bear it patiently; but frequently those that will not do the good they should put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

V. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect burnt God's warrant by which he was arrested, as it were in a way of revenge, now that he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers (Jer 36:26): But the Lord hid them. The princes bade them abscond (Jer 36:19), but it was neither the princes' care for them nor theirs for themselves that secured them; it was under the divine protection that they were safe.

Note, God will find out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be ever so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour be come; nay, and then he will himself be their hiding place.

VI. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write in another roll the same words that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burnt, Jer 36:27,28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God are very daring, yet not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of no effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a Bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extirpate it nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again; and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burnt arose another Phoenix. The word of the Lord endures for ever.

VII. That the king of Judah, though a king, was severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word. God noticed what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offense at. Jehoiakim was angry because it was written therein, saying, Surely the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land, Jer 36:29. And did not the king of Babylon come two years before this, and go far towards the destroying of this land? He did so (2Ch 36:6,7) in his third year, Da 1:1. So that God and his prophets had

therefore become his enemies because they told him the truth, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him into a fair way to prevent it. But, if this be the thing he takes so much amiss, let him know,

1. That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family, in the first place, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. He shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchange his royal robes for prison-garments, so that he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die in him; his dead body shall lie unburied, or, which comes all to one, he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, that is, thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, heat and frost, which will occasion its putrefying and becoming loathsome the sooner. "Not that his body" (says Mr. Gataker) "could be sensible of such usage, or himself, being deceased, of aught that should befal his body; but that the king's body in such a condition should be a hideous spectacle, and a horrid monument of God's heavy wrath and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it." Even his seed and his servants shall fare the worse for their relation to him (Jer 36:31), for they shall be punished, not for his iniquity, but so much the sooner for their own.

2. That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burnt, the original remains in the divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping God's judgments by struggling with them. Who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?

VIII. That, when the roll was written anew, there were added to the former many like words (Jer 36:32), many more threatenings of wrath and vengeance; for, since they will yet walk contrary to God, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Note, As God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he has still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woes do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of
Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the
king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.
22 Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month: and *there*
was a fire on the hearth burning before him.
23 And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves,
he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the
hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the
hearth.
24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king,
nor any of his servants that heard all these words.
25 Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made
intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he
would not hear them.
26 But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and
Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take
Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the Lord hid
them.
27 Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, after that the king
had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth
of Jeremiah, saying,
28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words
that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath
burned.
29 And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the
Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written
therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and
destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and
beast?
30 Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall
have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall
be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.
31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their
iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of
Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have
pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

32 Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

Jeremiah-37

Jeremiah Imprisoned

1 And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

Here is,

1. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, Jer 37:1,2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jeconiah, and, though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of contemning the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him. Neither he, nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord, though they already began to be fulfilled.

Note, Those have hearts wretchedly hard indeed that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled and brought to heed what he says. These had proof sufficient that it was the Lord who spoke by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

2. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us. He did so before (Jer 21:1,2), and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for his, and it shows that he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people and good ministers, who had an interest in Heaven.

Note, When we are in distress we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should look upon their praying people as the strength of the nation, Zec 12:5,10. And yet this does but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth. If indeed he looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and hearken to the words of the Lord which he spoke by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spoke in God's name, and it appears by this that Zedekiah knew he did.

Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for who will not be advised; but herein they put a cheat upon themselves, for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us if we will not hear them speaking to us from him and for him? Many who despise prayer when they are in prosperity will be glad of it when they are in adversity. Now give us of your oil. When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent for the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him: and how can those expect the comforts of religion who will not stoop to the services of it?

3. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldean army from it. Jeremiah was now at liberty (Jer 37:4); he went in and out among the people, might freely speak to them and be spoken to by them. Jerusalem also, for the present, was at liberty, Jer 37:5 Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh king of Egypt (Eze 17:15), pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his treachery, the king of Egypt, though he came no more in person after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim (2Ki 24:7), yet sent some forces to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged, upon notice of the approach of which the Chaldeans raised the siege, probably not for fear of them but in policy, to fight them at a distance, before any of the Jewish forces could join them. From this they encouraged themselves to hope that Jerusalem was delivered for good and all out of the hands of its enemies and that the storm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners are commonly hardened in their security by

the intermissions of judgments and the slow proceedings of them; and those who will not be awakened by the word of God may justly be lulled asleep by the providence of God.

4. Jerusalem threatened with the return of the Chaldean army and with ruin by it. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to desire him to pray for them, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah sends him word back that the decree had gone forth, and that it was but a folly for them to expect peace, for God had begun a controversy with them, which he would make an end of: Thus saith the Lord, Deceive not yourselves, Jer 37:9. Note, Satan himself, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us if we did not deceive ourselves; and thus sinners are their own destroyers by being their own deceivers, of which this is an aggravation that they are so frequently warned of it and cautioned not to deceive themselves, and they have the word of God, the great design of which is to undeceive them. Jeremiah uses no dark metaphors, but tells them plainly,

(1.) That the Egyptians shall retreat, and either give back or be forced back, into their own land (Eze 17:17), which was said of old (Isa 30:7), and is here said again, Jer 37:7. The Egyptians shall help in vain; they shall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but shall retire with precipitation. Note, If God help us not, no creature can. As no power can prevail against God, so none can avail without God nor countervail his departures from us.

(2.) That the Chaldeans shall return, and shall renew the siege and prosecute it with more vigour than ever: They shall not depart for good and all (Jer 37:9); they shall come again (Jer 37:8); they shall fight against the city. Note, God has the sovereign command of all the hosts of men, even of those that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to serve his purposes. He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as it pleases him; and furious armies, like stormy winds, in all their motions are fulfilling his word.

(3.) That Jerusalem shall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans: They shall take it, and burn it with fire, Jer 37:8. The sentence passed upon it shall be executed, and they shall be

the executioners. "O but" (say they) "the Chaldeans have withdrawn; they have quitted the enterprise as impracticable." "And though they have," says the prophet, "nay, though you had smitten their army, so that many were slain and all the rest wounded, yet those wounded men should rise up and burn this city," Jer 37:10. This is designed to denote that the doom passed upon Jerusalem is irrevocable, and its destruction inevitable; it must be laid in ruins, and these Chaldeans are the men that must destroy it, and it is now in vain to think of evading the stroke or contending with it.

Note, Whatever instruments God has determined to make use of in any service for him, whether or mercy or judgment, they shall accomplish that for which they are designed, whatever incapacity or disability they may lie under or be reduced to. Those by whom God has resolved to save or to destroy, saviours they shall be and destroyers they shall be, yea, though there were all wounded; for as when God has work to do he will not want instruments to do it with, though they may seem far to seek, so when he has chosen his instruments they shall do the work, though they may seem very unlikely to accomplish it.

2 But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.

3 And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.

4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

5 Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

6 Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

7 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

9 Thus saith the Lord; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

10 For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

11 And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any other of the prophets; for the histories of the lives and sufferings of God's ministers have been very serviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

I. We are here told that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jerusalem into the country (Jer 37:11,12): When the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army, upon the notice of their advancing towards them, Jeremiah determined to go into the country, and (as the margin reads it) to slip away from Jerusalem in the midst of the people, who, in that interval of the siege, went out into the country to look after their affairs there. He endeavoured to steal away in the crowd; for, though he was a man of great eminence, he could well reconcile himself to obscurity, though he was one of a thousand, he was content to be lost in the multitude and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage. Whether he designed for Anathoth or no does not appear; his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were such as (unless they had mended since Jer 11:21) might discourage him from coming among them; or he might intend to hide himself somewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wish (Jer 9:2), Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place! Jeremiah found he could do no good in Jerusalem; he laboured in vain among them, and therefore determined to leave them. Note, there are times when it is the wisdom of good men to retire into privacy, to enter into the chamber and shut the doors about them, Isa 26:20.

II. That in this attempt he was seized as a deserter and committed to prison (Jer 37:13-15): He was in the gate of Benjamin, so far he had gained his point, when a captain of the ward, who probably had the charge of that gate, discovered him and took him into custody. He was the grandson of Hananiah, who, the Jews say, was Hananiah the false prophet, who contested with Jeremiah (Jer 28:10), and they add that this young captain had a spite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arrest him without some pretence, and that which he charges upon his is, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans--an unlikely story, for the Chaldeans had now gone off, Jeremiah could not reach them; or, if he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah therefore with good reason, and with both the confidence and the mildness of an innocent man, denies the charge: "It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans; I am going upon my own lawful occasions."

Note, it is no new thing for the church's best friends to be represented as in the interest of her worst enemies. Thus have the blackest characters been put upon the fairest purest minds, and, in such a malicious world as this is, innocency, nay, excellency itself, is no fence against the basest calumny. When at any time we are thus falsely accused we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge and then commit our cause to him that judges righteously. Jeremiah's protestation of his integrity, though he is a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and sincerity, though he is a priest, and is ready to say it in verbo sacerdotis--on the word of a priest, is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy-council, who without examining him and the proofs against him, but upon the base malicious insinuation of the captain, fell into a passion with him: they were wroth; and what justice could be expected from men who, being in anger, would hear no reason?

They beat him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then put him in prison, in the worst prison they had, that in the house of Jonathan the scribe; either it had been his house, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a prison, or it was now his house, and perhaps he was a rigid severe man, that made it a house of cruel bondage

to his prisoners. Into this prison Jeremiah was thrust, into the dungeon, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the most uncomfortable unhealthy place in it; in the cells, or cabins, there he must lodge, among which there is no choice, for they are all alike miserable lodging-places. There Jeremiah remained many days, and for aught that appears, nobody came near him or enquired after him. See what a world this is. The wicked princes, who are in rebellion against God, lie at ease, lie in state in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah, who is in the service of God, lies in pain, in a loathsome dungeon. It is well that there is a world to come.

III. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and showed him some favour; but probably not till the Chaldean army had returned and had laid fresh siege to the city. When their vain hopes, with which they fed themselves (an in confidence of which they had re-enslaved their servants, Jer 34:11), had all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation then ever. "O then" (says Zedekiah) "send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him." When the Chaldeans had withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now that they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Thus gracious will men be when pangs come upon them.

1 The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He asked him secretly in his house, being ashamed to be seen in his company, "Is there any word from the Lord? (Jer 37:17)-- any word of comfort? Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire?"

Note, Those that will not hearken to God's admonitions when they are in prosperity would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? What have they to do with peace? Jeremiah's life and comfort are in Zedekiah's hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour, and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly that there is a word from the Lord, but no word of comfort for him or his people: Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood,

he would have given him a plausible answer, and, though he would not have told him a lie, yet he might have chosen whether he would tell him the worst at this time; what occasion was there for it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, and would not, to obtain mercy of man, be unfaithful either to God or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth.

And, since there was no remedy, it would be a kindness to the king to know his doom, that, being no surprise to him, it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, who told them that the king of Babylon should not come at all, or, when he had withdrawn, should not come again against them, Jer 37:19. "Where are now your prophets, who told you that you should have peace?" Note, Those who deceive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy will justly be upbraided with their folly when the event has undeceived them.

2. He improved this opportunity for the presenting of a private petition, as a poor prisoner, Jer 37:18,20. It was not in Jeremiah's power to reverse the sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah, but it was in Zedekiah's power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him; and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king: "What have I offended against thee, or thy servants, or this people, what law have I broken, what injury have I done to the common welfare, that you have put me in prison?"

And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with has been able to make the same appeal and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically (Jer 37:20), Cause me to return to yonder noisome gaol, to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. This was the language of innocent nature, sensible of its own grievances and solicitous for its own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God's martyr, yet, having so fair an opportunity to get relief, he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murderer. When

Jeremiah delivered God's message he spoke as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but, when he presented his own request, he spoke as one under authority, with the greatest submissiveness: Near me, I pray thee, O my Lord the king! let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee. Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offer to bring an action of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king, to teach us that even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must conduct ourselves with the humility and modesty that become dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God's cause must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king.

(1.) He gave him his request, took care that he should not die in the dungeon, but ordered that he should have the liberty of the court of the prison, where he might have a pleasant walk and breathe a free air.

(2.) He gave him more than his request, took care that he should not die for want, as many did that had their liberty, by reason of the straitness of the siege; he ordered him his daily bread out of the public stock (for the prison was within the verge of the court), till all the bread was spent. Zedekiah ought to have released him, to have made him a privy-counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom. But he had not courage to do that; it was well he did as he did, and it is an instance of the care God takes of his suffering servants that are faithful to him. He can make even their confinement turn to their advantage and the court of the of their prison to become as green pastures to them, and raise up such friends to provide for them that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.

12 then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of
Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.
13 And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward *was*
there, whose name *was* Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of
Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest
away to the Chaldeans.

14 Then said Jeremiah, *It is* false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But
he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him
to the princes.
15 Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him,
and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they
had made that the prison.
16 When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the
cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days;
17 then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out; and the king asked
him secretly in his house, and said, Is there *any* word from the
Lord ? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be
delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.
18 Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended
against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye
have put me in prison?
19 Where *are* now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying,
The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this
land?
20 Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my
supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause
me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die
there.
21 Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit
Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him
daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in
the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the
prison.

Jeremiah-38

Jeremiah Rescued from the Dungeon

1 Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of
Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of
Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the
people, saying,

Here, 1. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching; what he had many a time said, he still says (Jer 38:3): This city shall be given

into the hand of the king of Babylon; though it hold out long, it will taken at last. Nor would he have so often repeated this unwelcome message but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey if he would be advised, Jer 38:2. Let him not stay in the city, in hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose, but let him go forth to the Chaldeans, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he shall live; they will not put him to the sword, but give him quarter (satis est prostrasse leoni--it suffices the lion to lay his antagonist prostrate) and he shall escape the famine and pestilence, which will be the death of multitudes within the city.

Note, Those do better for themselves who patiently submit to the rebukes of Providence than those who contend with them. And, if we cannot have our liberty, we must reckon it a mercy to have our lives, and not foolishly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reserved for better times.

2 The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country and to his trust as a prophet, though he had suffered many a time for his faithfulness; and, though at this time he ate the king's bread, yet that did not stop his mouth. But his persecutors were still bitter against him, and complained that he abused the liberty he had of walking in the court of the prison; for, though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the same things in private conversation to those that came to visit him, and therefore (Jer 38:4) they represented him to the king as a dangerous man, disaffected to his country and to the government he lived under: He seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt--an unjust insinuation, for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done. They represent his preaching as having a bad tendency.

The design of it was plainly to bring men to repent and turn to God, which would have been as much as any thing a strengthening to the hands both the soldiery and of the burghers, and yet they represented it as weakening their hands and discouraging them; and, if it did this, it was their own fault. Note,

It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful ministers as their enemies, only because they show them what enemies they are to themselves while they continue impenitent.

3. Jeremiah hereupon, by the king's permission, is put into a dungeon, with a view to his destruction there. Zedekiah, though he felt a conviction that Jeremiah was a prophet, sent of God, had not courage to own it, but yielded to the violence of his persecutors (Jer 38:5): He is in your hand; and a worse sentence he could not have passed upon him. We found in Jehoiakim's reign that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was (Jer 36:25); but now they were more violent against him, a sign that they were ripening apace for ruin. Had it been in a cause that concerned his own honour or profit, he would have let them know that the king is he who can do what he pleases, whether they will or no; but in the cause of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he basely sneaks, and truckles to them: The king is not he that can do any thing against you. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for who, though they have a secret kindness for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do to prevent mischief designed them.

The princes, having this general warrant from the king, immediately put poor Jeremiah into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the prison (Jer 38:6), a deep dungeon, for they let him down into it with cords, and a dirty one, for there was no water in it, but mire; and he sunk in the mire, up to the neck, says Josephus. Those that put him here doubtless designed that he should die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and so die miserably, die obscurely, fearing, if they should put him to death openly, the people might be affected with what he would say and be incensed against them. Many of God's faithful witnesses have thus been privately made away, and starved to death, in prisons, whose blood will be brought to account in the day of discovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this distress, but he tells us himself (La 3:55,57), I called upon thy name, O Lord! out of the low dungeon, and thou drewest near, saying, Fear not.

4. Application is made to the king by an honest courtier, Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in behalf of the poor sufferer. Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who probably sought opportunities to do good. It may be he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it was in the king's house, Jer 38:7. Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court and in a very corrupt degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all sorts. There were saints even in Cæsar's household. The king was now sitting in the gate of Benjamin, to try causes and receive appeals and petitions, or perhaps holding a council of war there. Thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the case would not admit delay; the prophet might have perished if he had trifled or put it off till he had an opportunity of speaking to the king in private.

Not time must be lost when life is in danger, especially so valuable a life. He boldly asserts the Jeremiah had a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king so, though they were princes that did it, though they were now present in court, and though they had the king's warrant for what they did. Whither should oppressed innocency flee for protection but to the throne, especially when great men are its oppressors? Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter. He does not mince the matter; though he had a place at court, which he would be in danger of losing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will, These men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah. They had dealt unjustly with him, for he had not deserved any punishment at all; and they had dealt barbarously with him, so as they used not to deal with the vilest malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miserable death; for, if they had let him alone where he was, he was likely to die for hunger in the place where he was, in the court of the prison to which he was confined, for there was not more bread in the city: the stores out of which he was to have his

allowance (Jer 37:21) were in a manner spent. See how God can raise up friends for his people in distress where they little thought of them, and animate men for his service even beyond expectation.

5. Orders are immediately given for his release, and Ebed-melech takes care to see them executed. The king, who but now durst do nothing against the princes, had his heart wonderfully changed on a sudden, and will now have Jeremiah released in defiance of the princes, for therefore he orders no less than thirty men, and those of the lifeguard, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, lest the princes should raise a party to oppose it, Jer 38:10. Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God--we may succeed better that we could have thought, for the hearts of kings are in the hand of God. Ebed-melech gained his point, and soon brought Jeremiah the good news; and it is observable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related (for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love which is shown to his people or ministers, no, nor any circumstance of it, Heb 6:10); special notice is taken of his great tenderness in providing old soft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes, to keep the cords wherewith he was to be drawn up from hurting him, his arm-holes being probably galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him, lest they should be lost in the mire, but carefully let them down, Jer 38:11,12.

Note, Those that are in distress should not only be relieved, but relieved with compassion and marks of respect, all which shall be placed to account and abound to a good account in the day of recompence. See what a good use even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore should not be made waste of, any more than broken meat: even in the king's house, and under the treasury too, these were carefully preserved for the use of the poor or sick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, in the court of the prison, Jer 38:13. Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made interest with the king to get him his discharge thence also, now that he had the king's ear; but he though him safer and better provided for there than he would be any where else. God can, when he pleases, make a prison to

become a refuge and hiding-place to his people in distress and danger.

2 Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

3 Thus saith the Lord, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

5 Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he *is* in your hand: for the king *is* not *he that* can do *any* thing against you.

6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that *was* in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

7 Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

8 Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for *there is* no more bread in the city.

10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

12 And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.
13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Zedekiah Seeks Counsel from Jeremiah

14 Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that *is* in the house of the Lord : and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.

In the foregoing chapter we had the king in close conference with Jeremiah, and here again, though (Jer 38:5) he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; such a struggle there was in the breast of this unhappy prince between his convictions and his corruptions. Observe,

I The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon he sent for him to advise with him privately. He met him in the third entry, or (as the margin reads it) the principal entry, that is in, or leads towards, or adjoins to, the house of the Lord, Jer 38:14. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet perhaps he intended to show a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now that he was desiring to hear the word of God. Zedekiah would ask Jeremiah a thing; it should rather be rendered, a word. "I am here asking thee for a word of prediction, of counsel, of comfort, a word from the Lord, Jer 37:17. Whatever word thou has for me hide it not from me; let me know the worst." He had been told plainly what things would come to in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, he asks again, in hopes to get a more pleasing answer, as if God, who is in one mind, were altogether such a one as himself, who was in many minds.

II The bargain that Jeremiah made with him before he would give him his advice, Jer 38:15. He would stipulate,

1. For his own safety. Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him: "And if I do," says Jeremiah, "wilt thou not put me to death? I am afraid thou wilt" (so some take it); "what else can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes?" Not that Jeremiah was backward to seal the doctrine he preached with his blood, when he was called to do so; but, in doing our duty, we ought to use all lawful means for our own preservation; even the apostles of Christ did so.

2. He would answer for the success of his advice, being no less concerned for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He is willing to give him wholesome advice, and does not upbraid him with his unkindness in suffering him to be put into the dungeon, nor bid him go and consult with his princes, whose judgments he had such a value for. Ministers must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves, and render good for evil. He is desirous that he should hear counsel and receive instruction: "Wilt thou not hearken unto me? Surely thou wilt; I am in hopes to find thee pliable at last, and now in this thy day willing to know the things that belong to thy peace."

Note, Then, and then only, there is hope of sinners, when they are willing to hearken to good counsel. Some read it as spoken despairingly: "If I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me; I have reason to fear thou wilt not, and then I might as well keep my counsel to myself." Note, Ministers have little heart to speak to those who have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now, as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zedekiah makes him no answer, will not promise to hearken to his advice: though he desires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reserve himself a liberty, when he does know it, to do as he things fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel. But, as to the prophet's safety, he promises him, upon the word of a king, and confirms his promise with an oath, that, whatever he should say to him, no advantage should be taken against him for it: I will neither put thee to death nor deliver thee into the hands of those that will, Jer 38:16. This, he thought, was a mighty favour, and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, Da 2:48,Jer 38:29.

Zedekiah's oath on this occasion is solemn, and very observable: "As the Lord liveth, who made us this soul, who gave me my life and thee thine, I dare not take away thy life unjustly, knowing that then I should forfeit my own to him that is the Lord of life."

Note, God is the Father of spirits; souls are his workmanship, and they are more fearfully and wonderfully made than bodies are. The soul both of the greatest prince and of the poorest prisoner is of God's making. He fashioneth their hearts alike easily. In all our appeals to God, and in all our dealings both with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that the living God made us these souls.

III. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reasons why he should take it, not from any prudence or politics of his own, but in the name of the Lord, the God of hosts and God of Israel. Not as a statesman, but as a prophet, he advises him by all means to surrender himself and his city to the king of Babylon's princes: "Go forth to them, and make the best terms thou canst with them," Jer 38:17. This was the advice he had given to the people (Jer 38:2, and before, Jer 21:9), to submit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, that which is good counsel to the meanest is so to the greatest, for there is no respect of persons with him. To persuade him to take this counsel, he sets before him good and evil, life and death.

1. If he will tamely yield, he shall save his children from the sword and Jerusalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out; if he will be acknowledge God's justice, he shall experience his mercy: The city shall not be burnt, and thou shalt live and thy house. But,

2. If he will obstinately stand it out, it will be the ruin both of his house and Jerusalem (Jer 38:18); for when God judges he will overcome. This is the case of sinners with God; let them humbly submit to his grace and government and they shall live; let them take hold on his strength, that they may make peace, and they shall make peace; but, if they harden their hearts against his

proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction: they must either bend or break.

15 Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare *it* unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

16 So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, *As* the Lord liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

17 Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house:

18 but if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

19 And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

The objection which Zedekiah made against the prophet's advice, Jer 38:19. Jeremiah spoke to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had a due regard to the divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he understood what the mind of God was he would immediately have acquiesced in it and resolved to observe it, without disputing; but, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advances against it some prudential considerations of his own: but human wisdom is folly when it contradicts the divine counsel. All he suggests is, "I am afraid, not of the Chaldeans; their princes are men of honour, but of the Jews, that have already gone over to the Chaldeans; when they see me follow them, and who had so much opposed their going, they will laugh at me, and say, Hast thou also become weak as water?" Isa 14:10. Now,

1. It was not at all likely that he should be thus exposed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans should so far gratify the Jews, or trample upon him, as to deliver him into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themselves captives, should be in such a

gay humour as to make a jest of the misery of their prince. Note, We often frighten ourselves from our duty by foolish, causeless, groundless, fears, that are merely the creatures of our own fancy and imagination.

2. If he should be taunted at a little by the Jews, could he not despise it and make light of it? What harm would it do him? Note, Those have very weak and fretful spirits indeed that cannot bear to be laughed at for that which is both their duty and their interest.

3. Though it had been really the greatest personal mischief that he could imagine it to be, yet he ought to have ventured it, in obedience to God, and for the preservation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardice to surrender; whereas it would be really an instance of true courage cheerfully to bear a less evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.

20 But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver *thee.* Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

The pressing importunity with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He assures him that, if he would comply with the will of God herein, the thing he feared should not come upon him (Jer 38:20): They shall not deliver thee up, but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him, after all the foolish games he had played, to manage wisely the last stake, and now at length to do well for himself: Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, because it is his voice, so it shall be well unto thee. But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey.

1. He himself would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends by throwing himself into their hands. If he must fall, he should contrive how to fall easily: "Thou shalt not escape, as thou hopest to do," Jer 38:23.

2. He would himself be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem, which he pretended a concern for the preservation of:

"Thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire, for by a little submission and self-denial thou mightest have prevented it." Thus subjects often suffer for the pride and wilfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers.

3. Whereas he causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering, he should certainly fall under a just reproach for standing it out, and that from women too, Jer 38:22. The court ladies who were left when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away will now at length fall into the hands of the enemy, and they shall say, "The men of thy peace, whom thou didst consult with and confide in, and who promised thee peace if thou wouldst be ruled by them, have set thee on, have encouraged thee to be bold and brace and hold out to the last extremity; and see what comes of it? They, by prevailing upon thee, have prevailed against thee, and thou findest those thy real enemies that would be thought thy only friends. Now thy feet are sunk in the mire, thou art embarrassed, and hast noway to help thyself; thy feet cannot get forward, but are turned away back." Thus will Zedekiah be bantered by the women, when all his wives and children shall be made a prey to the conquerors, Jer 38:23.

Note, What we seek to avoid by sin will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. And those that decline the way of duty for fear of reproach will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of disobedience. The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him, Pr 10:24.

21 But if thou refuse to go forth, this *is* the word that the Lord hath showed me:

22 And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house *shall be* brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those *women* shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, *and* they are turned away back.

23 So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

24 Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

25 But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee:

The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private (Jer 38:24): Let no man know of these words. he does not at all incline to take God's counsel, nor so much as promise to consider of it; for so obstinate has he been to the calls of God, and so wilful in the ways of sin, that though he has good counsel given him he seems to be given up to walk in his own counsels. He has nothing to object against Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them.

1. Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had passed between the king and him. Zedekiah is concerned to keep it private, not so much for Jeremiah's safety (for he knew the princes could do him no hurt without his permission), but for his own reputation. Note, Many have really a better affection to good men and good things than they are willing to own. God's prophets are manifest in their consciences (2Co 5:11), but they care not for manifesting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindness than have it known that they do: such, it is to be feared, love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

2. He is instructed what to say to the princes if they should examine him about it. He must tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remand him back to the house of Jonathan the scribe (Jer 38:25,26), and he did tell them so (Jer 38:27), and no doubt it was true: he would not let slip so fair an opportunity of engaging the king's favour; so that this was no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. Note, Though we must be harmless as doves, so as never to tell a wilful lie, yet we must be wise as serpents, so as not needlessly to expose ourselves to danger by telling all we know.

26 Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before
the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house,
to die there.
27 Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told
them, according to all these words that the king had commanded. So
they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.
28 So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that
Jerusalem was taken: and he was *there* when Jerusalem was taken.

Jeremiah-39

The Fall of Jerusalem

1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month,
came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against
Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

We were told, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that Jeremiah abode patiently in the court of the prison, until the day that Jerusalem was taken. He gave the princes no further disturbance by his prophesying, nor they him by their persecutions; for he had no more to say than what he had said, and, the siege being carried on briskly, God found them other work to do. See here what it came to.

I The city is at length taken by storm; for how could it hold out when God himself fought against it? Nebuchadnezzar's army sat down before it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month (Jer 39:1), in the depth of winter. Nebuchadnezzar himself soon after retired to take his pleasure, and left his generals to carry on the siege: they intermitted it awhile, but soon renewed it with redoubled force and vigour. At length, in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, about midsummer, they entered the city, the soldiers being so weakened by famine, and all their provisions being now spent, that they were not able to make any resistance, Jer 39:2. Jerusalem was so strong a place that nobody would have believed the enemy could ever enter its gates, La 4:12. But sin had provoked God to withdraw his protection, and then, like Samson when his hair was cut, it was weak as other cities.

II The princes of the king of Babylon take possession of the middle gate, Jer 39:3. Some think that this was the same with that which is called the second gate (Zep 1:10), which is supposed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other. Here they cautiously made a half, and durst not go forward into so large a city, among men that perhaps would sell their lives as dearly as they could, until they had given directions for the searching of all places, that they might not be surprised by any ambush. They sat in the middle gate, thence to take a view of the city and give orders.

The princes are here named, rough and uncouth names they are, to intimate what a sad change sin had made; there, where Eliakim and Hilkiah, who bore the name of the God of Israel, used to sit, now sit Nergal-sharezer, and Samgar-nebo, &c., who bore the names of the heathen gods. Rab-saris and Rab-mag are supposed to be not the names of distinct persons, but the titles of those whose names go before. Sarsechim was Rab-saris, that is, captain of the guard; and Nergal-sharezer, to distinguish him from the other of the same name that is put first, is called Ram-mag--camp-master, either muster-master or quarter-master: these and the other great generals sat in the gate. And now was fulfilled what Jeremiah prophesied long since (Jer 1:15), that the families of the kingdoms of the north should set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem. Justly do the princes of the heathen set up themselves there, where the gods of the heathen had been so often set up.

2 *And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up.

3 And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, *even* Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

4 And it came to pass, *that* when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

I. Zedekiah, having in disguise perhaps seen the princes of the king of Babylon take possession of one of the gates of the city,

thought it high time to shift for his own safety, and, loaded with guilt and fear, he went out of the city, under no other protection but that of the night (Jer 39:4), which soon failed him, for he was discovered, pursued, and overtaken. Though he made the best of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but in the plains of Jericho fell into the hands of the pursuers, Jer 39:5. Thence he was brought prisoner to Riblah, where the king of Babylon passed sentence upon him as a rebel, not sentence of death, but, one many almost say, a worse thing. For,

1. He slew his sons before his eyes, and they must all be little, some of them infants, for Zedekiah himself was now but thirty-two years of age. The death of these sweet babes must needs be so many deaths to himself, especially when he considered that his own obstinacy was the cause of it, for he was particularly told of this thing: They shall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans, Jer 38:23.

2. He slew all the nobles of Judah (Jer 39:6), probably not those princes of Jerusalem who had advised him to this desperate course (it would be a satisfaction to him to see them cut off), but the great men of the country, who were innocent of the matter.

3. He ordered Zedekiah to have his eyes put out (Jer 39:7), so condemning him to darkness for life who had shut his eyes against the clear light of God's word, and was of those princes who will not understand, but walk on in darkness, Ps 82:5.

4. He bound him with two brazen chains or fetters (so the margin reads it), to carry him away to Babylon, there to spend the rest of his days in misery. All this sad story we had before, 2Ki 25:4, &c.

Ii. Some time afterwards the city was burnt, temple and palace and all, and the wall of it broken down, Jer 39:8. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! this comes of killing the prophets, and stoning those that were sent to thee. O Zedekiah, Zedekiah! this thou mightest have prevented if thou wouldst but have taken God's counsel, and yielded in time."

5 But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah
in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought
him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of
Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.
6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah
before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of
Judah.
7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains,
to carry him to Babylon.
8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the
people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.
9 Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive
into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city,
and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people
that remained.

The people that were left were all carried away captives to Babylon, Jer 39:9. Now they must bid a final farewell to the land of their nativity, that pleasant land, and to all their possessions and enjoyments in it, must be driven some hundreds of miles, like beasts, before the conquerors, that were now their cruel masters, must lie at their mercy in a strange land, and be servants to those who would be sure to rule them with rigour. The word tyrant is originally a Chaldee word, and is often used for lords by the Chaldee paraphrast, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyrannized more than any other: we have reason to think that the poor Jews had reason to say so.

Some few were left behind, but they were the poor of the people, that had nothing to lose, and therefore never made any resistance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to tarry at home, but the captain of the guard gave them vineyards and fields at the same time, such as they were never masters of before, Jer 39:10. Observe here,

1 The wonderful changes of Providence. Some are abased, others advanced, 1Sa 2:5. The hungry are filled with good things, and the rich sent empty away. The ruin of some proves the rise of others. Let us therefore in our abundance rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and in our distresses weep as though we wept not.

2 The just retributions or Providence. The rich had been proud oppressors, and now they were justly punished for their injustice; the poor had been patient sufferers, and now they were graciously rewarded for their patience and amends made them for all their losses; for verily there is a God that judges in the earth, even in this world, much more in the other.

10 But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

Nebuchadrezzar's Care for Jeremiah

11 Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,

Here we must sing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we sang of judgment, and must sing unto God of both. We may observe here,

I. A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and all men's hearts failed them for fear, then might he lift up his head with comfort, knowing that his redemption drew nigh, as Christ's followers when the second destruction of Jerusalem was hastening on, Lu 21:28. Nebuchadnezzar had given particular orders that care should be taken of him, and that he should be in all respects well used, Jer 39:11,12. Hebuzar-adan and the rest of the king of Babylon's princes observed these orders, discharged him out of prison, and did every thing to make him easy, Jer 39:13,14. Now we may look upon this,

1. As a very generous act of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet. Doubtless he had received information concerning him from the deserters, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's successes against Judah and other countries, that he had pressed his prince and people to submit to him, and that he had suffered very hard things for so doing; and in consideration of all this (though perhaps he might have heard also that he had foretold the destruction of Babylon at length) he gave him these extraordinary

marks of his favour. Note, It is the character of a great soul to take notice of the services and sufferings of the meanest. It was honourably done of the king to give this charge even before the city was taken, and of the captains to observe it even in the heat of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Israel. They put him in prison, and the king of Babylon and his princes took him out. God's people and ministers have often found fairer and kinder usage among strangers and infidels than among those that call themselves of the holy city. Paul found more favour and justice with king Agrippa than with Ananias the high priest. 3. As the performance of God's promise to Jeremiah, in recompence for his services. I will cause the enemy to treat thee well in the day of evil, Jer 15:11. Jeremiah had been faithful to his trust as a prophet, and now God approves himself faithful to him and the promise he had made him. Now he is comforted according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and sees thousands fall on each hand and himself safe.

The false prophets fell by those judgments which they said should never come (Jer 14:15), which made their misery the more terrible to them. The true prophet escaped those judgments which he said would come, and that made his escape the more comfortable to him. The same that were the instruments of punishing the persecutors were the instruments of relieving the persecuted; and Jeremiah thought never the worse of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the more of the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we shall meet with in the next chapter.

II. A gracious message to Ebed-melech, to assure him of a recompence for his kindness to Jeremiah. This message was sent to him by Jeremiah himself, who, when he returned him thanks for his kindness to him, thus turned him over to God to be his paymaster. He relieved a prophet in the name of a prophet, and thus he had a prophet's reward. This message was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindness to Jeremiah, but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to show that, as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, so he was to Ebed-melech for

his sake; and it was a token of special favour to both, and they ought so to account it, that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is directed to tell him,

1. That God would certainly bring upon Jerusalem the ruin that had been long and often threatened; and, for his further satisfaction in having been kind to Jeremiah, he should see him abundantly proved a true prophet, Jer 39:16.

2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming. Though he was bravely bold in the service of God, yet he was afraid of the rod of God. The enemies were men of whom he was afraid, Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he knows their souls in adversity.

3. That he shall be delivered from having a share in the common calamity: I will deliver thee; I will surely deliver thee. He had been instrumental to deliver God's prophet out of the dungeon, and now God promises to deliver him; for he will be behind-hand with none for any service they do, directly or indirectly, for his name: "Thou has saved Jeremiah's life, that was precious to thee, and therefore thy life shall be given thee for a prey."

4. The reason given for this distinguishing favour which God had in store for him is because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord. God, in recompensing men's services, has an eye to the principle they go upon in those services, and rewards according to those principles; and there is no principle of obedience that will be more acceptable to God, nor have a greater influence upon us, than a believing confidence in God. Ebed-melech trusted in God that he would own him, and stand by him, and then he was not afraid of the face of man. And those who trust God, as this good man did, in the way of duty, will find that their hope shall not make them ashamed in times of the greatest danger.

12 Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.

13 So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon’s princes;

14 even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison,
and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of
Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the
people.

Ebed-melech Assured of Deliverance

15 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, while he was
shut up in the court of the prison, saying,
16 Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the
Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon
this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be *accomplished* in
that day before thee.
17 But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord; and thou shalt
not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou *art* afraid.
18 For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword,
but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; because thou hast put thy
trust in me, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah-40

Jeremiah and the Remnant with Gedaliah

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after that Nebuzar-
adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he
had taken him being bound in chains among all that were
carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried
away captive unto Babylon.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems misapplied (The word which came to Jeremiah), for here is nothing of prophecy in this chapter, but it is to be referred to Jer 42:7, where we have a message that God sent by Jeremiah to the captains and the people that remained. The story between is only to introduce that prophecy and show the occasion of it, that it may be the better understood, and Jeremiah, being himself concerned in the story, was the better able to give an account of it.

In these verses we have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes (Jer 39:13), but afterwards, being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he, through ignorance and mistake, was bound among the rest and hurried away. Poor man! he seems to have been born to hardship and abuse--man of sorrows indeed! But when the captives were brought manacled to Ramah, not far off, where a council of war, or court-martial, was held for giving orders concerning them, Jeremiah was soon distinguished from the rest, and, by special order of the court, was discharged.

1 The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet (Jer 40:2,3): "The Lord thy God, whose messenger thou has been and in whose name thou hast spoken, has by thee pronounced this evil upon this place; they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and now the Lord hath brought it, and, as by thy mouth he said it, so by my hand he hath done what he said." He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it, that he had been God's instrument to fulfil that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretell; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him It is because you have sinned against the Lord that this thing has come upon you.

The princes of Israel would never be brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sun-beam; but this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the divine goodness would never have been abandoned thus had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told this from the pulpit by their prophets, and they would not regard it; now they are told it from the bench by the conqueror, whom they dare not contradict and who will make them regard it. Note, Sooner or

later men shall be made sensible that their sin is the cause of all their miseries.

2. He gives him free leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He loosed him from his chains a second time (Jer 40:4), invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion; and I will set my eye upon thee (so the word is), not only, "I will look well to thee," but "I will show thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for." If he was not disposed to go to Babylon, he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the disposal of the conquerors. He may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he has purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

3. He advised him to go to Gedaliah and settle with him. This Gedaliah, made governor of the land under the king of Babylon, was an honest Jew, who (it is probably) betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well that he had this great trust put into his hands, Jer 40:5. While Jeremiah had not yet gone back, but stood considering what he should do, Nebuzar-adan, perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon nor determined whither to go, turned the scale for him, and bade him by all means go to Gedaliah. Sudden thoughts sometimes prove wise ones. But when he gave this counsel he did not design to bind him by it, nor will he take ill if he do not follow it: Go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee. It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but unfriendly to prescribe and to be angry if our advice be not take. Let Jeremiah steer what course he pleases, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he does for the best. Nor does he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support: He gave him victuals and a present, either in clothes or money, and so let him go. See how considerate the captain of the guard was in his kindness to Jeremiah.

He set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have

perished, though it was his own country, if he had not been thus kindly furnished with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice, and went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him, Jer 40:6. Whether we may herein commend his prudence I know not; the event does not commend it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort. However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that unless he were forced out of it, as Ezekiel, and Daniel, and other good men were, he would not forsake it, but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land than with princes in an unholy one.

2 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him,
The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.
3 Now the Lord hath brought *it*, and done according as he hath said:
because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his
voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.
4 And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which *were*
upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into
Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto
thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land *is*
before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to
go, thither go.
5 Now while he was not yet gone back, *he said*, Go back also to Gedaliah
the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon
hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him
among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto
thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward,
and let him go.
6 Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah;
and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.
7 Now when all the captains of the forces which *were* in the fields,
even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had
committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the
poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to
Babylon;

We have in these verses,

I. A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness after the many years of trouble and terror with which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah indeed had never in his prophecies spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity; but Providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars.

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made governor in the land, by the king of Babylon, Jer 40:7. To show that he designed to make and keep them easy he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who, they might be sure, would seek their peace. He was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, one of the princes. We read of his father (Jer 26:24) that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to have been a man of great wisdom and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might have been very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him and reposed a confidence in him, for to him he committed all that were left behind.

2. There is great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the dispersion came and put themselves under his government and protection.

(1.) The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah, for their own safety and common preservation. Several are here named, Jer 40:8. They came with their men, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthened one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah his delegate that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it.

(2.) The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced by the love they bore to their own land to return to it again as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority there,

Jer 40:11,12. Canaan itself would be an unsafe unpleasant country if there were no government nor governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they heard there were. It would be a great reviving to those that were dispersed to come together again, to those that were dispersed into foreign countries to come together in their own country, to those that were under strange kings to be under a governor of their own nation. See here in wrath God remembered mercy, and yet admitted some of them upon a further trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath (Jer 40:9): He swore to them and to their men, it is probably according to the warrant and instructions he had received from the king of Babylon, who empowered him to give them these assurances.

(1.) They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans. "Come" (says Gedaliah), "fear not to serve the Chaldeans. Fear not the sin of it." Though the divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. "Fear not the reproach of it, and the disparagement it will be to your nation; it is what God has brought you to, has bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the consequences of it, as if it would certainly make you and yours miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehend him to be; if you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you. Serve the king of Babylon and it shall be well with you." If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their application acceptable to the king (Jer 40:10): "As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, to do homage to them in the name of the whole body if there be occasion, to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when the come to us." All that passes between them and the Chaldeans shall pass through his

hand; and, if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it.

Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance of an oath that he will do his part in protecting them, but, being apt to err (as many good men are) on the charitable side, he did not require an oath from them that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance though it be not sworn, and by joining in with Gedaliah they did, in effect, consent to the terms of government, that they should serve the king of Babylon. But,

(2.) Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet, upon that condition, they shall have the free enjoyment of them and all the profits of them (Jer 40:10): "Gather you wine and summer fruits, and take them for your own use; put them in your vessels, to be laid up for winter-store, as those do that live in a land of peace and hope to eat the labour of your hand, nay, the labour of other people's hands, for you reap what they sowed." Or perhaps they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had laboured. And accordingly we find (Jer 40:12) that they gathered wine and summer fruits very much, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn-harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken. While Gedaliah was in care for the public safety he left them to enjoy the advantages of the public plenty, and, for aught that appears, demanded no tribute from them; for he sought not his own profit, but the profit of many.

II. Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatening a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted! For when God begins in judgment he will make an end. It is here intimated to us,

1. That Baalis the king of the Ammonites had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off, either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, Jer 40:14. Some make Baalis to signify the queen-mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen-dowager, as if she were the first mover of

the bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might be safe when the great king of Babylon protected it; and ye it is ruined by the artifices of this petty prince or princess. happy are those that have the King of kings of their side, who can take the wise in their own craftiness; for the greatest earthly king cannot with all his power secure us against fraud and treachery.

2. That he employed Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murder Gedaliah, and, that he might have a fair opportunity to do it, directed him to go and enrol himself among his subjects and promise him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design itself, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is human nature corrupted and degenerated (even in those that pretend to the best blood) when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah, who was not, as he was, of David's line, though he had ever so much of David's spirit.

3. That Johanan, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain: Dost thou certainly know? surely thou dost, Jer 40:14. He gave him private intelligence of it (Jer 40:15), hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He proffered his service to prevent it, by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac: I will slay him. Wherefore should he slay thee? Herein he showed more courage and zeal than sense of justice; for, if it be lawful to kill for prevention, who then can be safe, since malice always suspects the worst?

4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael's treachery. He said, Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael. Herein he discovered more good humour than discretion, more of the innocency of the dove than the wisdom of the serpent. Princes become uneasy to themselves and all about them when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said that she would believe no more

evil of her people than a mother would believe of her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over-confident of the fidelity of those about them.

8 then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

9 And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

10 As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

11 Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan;

12 even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

Ishmael's Conspiracy against Gedaliah

13 Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

14 and said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know *it:* wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?

16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

Jeremiah-41

1 Now it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

2 Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

It is hard to say which is more astonishing, God's permitting or men's perpetrating such villanies as here we find committed. Such base, barbarous, bloody work is here done by men who by their birth should have been men of honour, by their religion just men, and this done upon those of their own nature, their own nation, their own religion, and now their brethren in affliction, when they were all brought under the power of the victorious Chaldeans, and smarting under the judgments of God, upon no provocation, nor with any prospect of advantage--all done, not only in cold blood, but with art and management. We have scarcely such an instance of perfidious cruelty in all the scripture; so that with John, when he saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, we may well wonder with great admiration. But God permitted it for the completing of the ruin of an unhumbled people, and the filling up of the measure of their judgments, who had filled up the measure of their iniquities. Let it inspire us with an indignation at the wickedness of men and an awe of God's righteousness.

I. Ishmael and his party treacherously killed Gedaliah himself in the first place. Though the king of Babylon had made him a great man, had given him a commission to be governor of the land which he had conquered, though God had made him a good man and a great blessing to his country, and his agency for its welfare

was as life from the dead, yet neither could secure him. Ishmael was of the seed royal (Jer 41:1) and therefore jealous of Gedaliah's growing greatness, and enraged that he should merit and accept a commission under the king of Babylon.

He had ten men with him that were princes of the king too, guided by the same peevish resentments that he was; these had been with Gedaliah before, to put themselves under his protection (Jer 40:8), and now came again to make him a visit; and they did eat bread together in Mizpah. he entertained them generously, and entertained no jealousy of them, notwithstanding the information given him by Johanan. They pretended friendship to him, and gave him no warning to stand on his guard; he was in sincerity friendly to them, and did all he could to oblige them. But those that did eat bread with him lifted up the heel against him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but watched an opportunity, when they had him alone, and assassinated him, Jer 41:2.

II. They likewise put all to the sword that they found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all that were employed under Gedaliah or were in any capacity to revenge his death, Jer 41:3. As if enough of the blood of Israelites had not been shed by the Chaldeans, their own princes here mingle it with the blood of the Chaldeans. The vine-dressers and the husbandmen were busy in the fields, and knew nothing of this bloody massacre; so artfully was it carried on and concealed.

3 Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, *even* with Gedaliah,
at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, *and* the men
of war.
4 And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah,
and no man knew *it*,
5 that there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from
Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their
clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense
in their hand, to bring *them* to the house of the Lord.

Some good honest men, that were going all in tears to lament the desolations of Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered with the rest. Observe,

1. Whence they came (Jer 41:5)-- from Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh, places that had been famous, but wee now reduced; they belonged to the ten tribes, but there were some in those countries that retained an affection for the worship of the God of Israel.

2. Whither they were going--to the house of the Lord, the temple at Jerusalem, which, no doubt, they had heard of the destruction of, and were going to pay their respects to its ashes, to see its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for them. They favour the dust thereof, Ps 102:14. They took offerings and incense in their hand, that if they should find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any priest ready to officiate, they might not be without something to offer; if not, yet they showed their good-will, as Abraham, when he came to the place of the altar, though the altar was gone. The people of God used to go rejoicing to the house of the Lord, but these went in the habit of mourners, with their clothes rent and their heads shaven; for the providence of God loudly called to weeping and mourning, because it was not with the faithful worshippers of God as in months past.

3. How they were decoyed into a fatal snare by Ishmael's malice. Hearing of their approach, he resolved to be the death of them too, so bloodthirsty was he. He seemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Israelite or the face of an honest man. These pilgrims towards Jerusalem he had a spite to, for the sake of their errand. Ishmael went out to meet them with crocodiles' tears, pretending to bewail the desolations of Jerusalem as much as they; and, to try how they stood affected to Gedaliah and his government, he courted them into the town and found them to have a respect for him, which confirmed him in his resolution to murder them. He said, Come to Gedaliah, pretending he would have them come and live with him, when really he intended that they should come and die with him, Jer 41:6.

They had heard such a character of Gedaliah that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but Ishmael, when he had them in the midst of the town, fell upon them and slew them (Jer 41:7), and no doubt took the offerings they had and

converted them to his own use; for he that would not stick at such a murder would not stick at sacrilege. Notice is taken of his disposing of the dead bodies of these and the rest that he had slain; he tumbled them all into a great pit (Jer 41:7), the same pit that Asa king of Judah had digged long before, either in the city or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah (1Ki 15:22), to be a frontier-garrison against Baasha king of Israel and for fear of him, Jer 41:9.

Note, Those that dig pits with a good intention know not what bad use they may be put to, one time or other. He slew so many that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them so much honour, but threw them all promiscuously into one pit. Among these last that were doomed to the slaughter there were ten that obtained a pardon, by working, not on the compassion, but the covetousness, of those that had them at their mercy, Jer 41:8. They said to Ishmael, when he was about to suck their blood, like an insatiable horseleech, after that of the companions, Slay us not, for we have treasurers in the field, country treasures, large stocks upon the ground, abundance of such commodities as the country affords, wheat and barley, and oil and honey, intimating that they would discover it to him and put him in possession of it all, if he would spare them. Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life. This bait prevailed. Ishmael saved them, not for the love of mercy, but for the love of money. Here were riches kept for the owners thereof, not to their hurt (Ec 5:13) and to cause them to lose their lives (Job 31:39), but to their good and the preserving of their lives. Solomon observes that sometimes the ransom of a man's life is his riches. But those who think thus to bribe death, when it comes with commission, and plead with it, saying, Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field, will find death inexorable and themselves wretchedly deceived.

6 And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

7 And it was *so,* when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, *and cast them* into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that *were* with him.

8 But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbare, and slew them not among their brethren.

9 Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, *was* it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: *and* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with *them that were* slain.

10 Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that *were* in Mizpah, *even* the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

He carried off the people prisoners. The king's daughters (whom the Chaldeans cared not for troubling themselves with when they had the king's sons) and the poor of the land, the vine-dressers and husband-men, that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away prisoners towards the country of the Ammonites (Jer 41:10), Ishmael probably intending to make a present of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country, that set him on. This melancholy story is a warning to us never to be secure in this world. Worse may be yet to come when we think the worst is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. These prisoners thought, Surely the bitterness of death, and of captivity, is past; and yet some died by the sword and others went into captivity. When we think ourselves safe, and begin to be easy, destruction may come that way that we little expect it. There is many a ship wrecked in the harbour. We can never be sure of peace on this side heaven.

11 But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

It would have been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treasonable design, though he could not obtain leave to kill Ishmael and to prevent it that way, yet had staid with Gedaliah; for he, and his captains, and their forces,

might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah and a terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief without the effusion of blood: but, it seems they were out upon some expedition, perhaps no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length they hear of all the evil that Ishmael had done (Jer 41:11), and are resolved to try an after-game, which we have an account of in these verses.

1. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers, but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. Those that had shed so much blood, it was a pity but their blood should have been shed; and it is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could and went to fight with Ishmael (Jer 41:12), upon notice of the murders he had committed (for though he concealed it for a time, Jer 41:4, yet murder will out) and which way he was gone; he pursued him, and overtook him by the great pool of Gibeon, which we read of, 2Sa 2:13. And, upon his appearing with such a force, Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy that was something like a match for him.

The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives were glad when they saw Johanan and the captains that were with him, looking upon them as their deliverers (Jer 41:13), and they immediately found a way to wheel about and come over to them (Jer 41:14), Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. These captives staid not till their conquerors were beaten, but took the first opportunity to make their escape, as soon as they saw their friends appear and their enemies thereby disheartened. Ishmael quitted his pray to save his life, and escaped with eight men, Jer 41:15. It seems, two of his ten men, that were his banditti or assassins (spoken of Jer 41:1), either deserted him or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegado, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed royal, and we hear no more of him.

2. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sat down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably, as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them into the land of Egypt, as Ishmael would have led them into the land of the Ammonites; so that though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt, and to complete their ruin, even after they were, as they thought, redeemed. Thus did God still walk contrary to them.

(1.) The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would serve them but they would go to enter into Egypt (Jer 41:17), and, in order to that, they encamped for a time in the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem, David's city. Probably it was some land which David gave to Chimham, the son of Barzillai, which, though it returned to David's family at the year of the Jubilee, yet still bore the name of Chimham. Here Johanan made his headquarters, steering his course towards Egypt, either from a personal affection to that country or an ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the mighty men of war, it seems had escaped; those he took with him, and the women and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they were yet unchanged.

(2.) The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended that they were afraid of the Chaldeans, that they would come and do I know not what with them, because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, Jer 41:18. I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for, though it is true that the Chaldeans had cause enough to resent the murder of their viceroy, yet they were not so unreasonable, or unjust, as to revenge it upon those who appeared so vigorously against the murderers. But they only make use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancestors, which was so strong in them, to return into Egypt. Those will justly lose their

comfort in real fears that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

12 then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that *are* in Gibeon.
13 Now it came to pass, *that* when all the people which *were* with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, then they were glad.
14 So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.
15 But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.
16 Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after *that* he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, *even* mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon:
17 and they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt,
18 because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

Jeremiah-42

Jeremiah's Message to Johanan

1 Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,
2 and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, *even* for all this remnant; (for we are left *but* a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael; it seems he did escape, and it was not the first

time that the Lord hid him. It is strange also that in these violent turns he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them. Though this people were as brands plucked out of the fire, yet have they not returned to the Lord. This people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still the sin that most easily besets them. But now at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is sought out, and all the captains, Johanan himself not excepted, with all the people from the least to the greatest, make him a visit; they came near (Jer 42:1), which intimates that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet and had been shy of him. Now here,

I. They desire him by prayer to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, Jer 42:2,3. They express themselves wonderfully well.

1. With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of: Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee. They compliment him thus in hopes to persuade him to say as they would have him say.

2. With a great opinion of his interest in heaven: "Pray for us, who know not how to pray for ourselves. Pray to the Lord thy God, for we are unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him."

3. With a great sense of their need of divine direction. They speak of themselves as objects of compassion: "We are but a remnant, but a few of many; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is a pity that it should. Thy eyes see what distress we are in, what a plunge we are at; if thou canst do any thing, help us."

4. With desire of divine direction: "Let the Lord thy God take this ruin into his thoughts and under his hand, and show us the way wherein we may walk and may expect to have his presence with us, and the thing that we may do, the course we may take for our own safety." Note, In every difficult doubtful case our eye must be up to God for direction. They then might expect to be directed by a spirit of prophecy, which has now ceased; but we may still in faith pray to be guided by a spirit of wisdom in our hearts and the hints of Providence.

II. Jeremiah faithfully promises them to pray for direction for them, and, whatever message God should send to them by him, he would deliver it to them just as he received it without adding, altering, or diminishing, Jer 42:4. Ministers may hence learn,

1. Conscientiously to pray for those who desire their prayers: I will pray for you according to your words. Though they had slighted him, yet, like Samuel when he was slighted, he will not sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them, 1Sa 12:23.

2. Conscientiously to advise those who desire their advice as near as they can to the mind of God, not keeping back any thing that is profitable for them, whether it be pleasing or no, but to declare to them the whole counsel of God, that they may approve themselves true to their trust.

III. They fairly promise that they will be governed by the will of God, as soon as they know what it is (Jer 42:5,6), and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their sincerity herein, though at the same time they dissembled: "The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us; do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is and then we will in the fear of God comply with it, and for this the Lord the Judge be Judge between us." Note, Those that expect to have the benefit of good ministers' prayers must conscientiously hearken to their preaching and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better than this was: Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us.

1. They now call God their God, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him so (Jer 42:4): I will pray to the Lord your God. He is ours, and therefore we will obey his voice. Our relation to God strongly obliges us to obedience.

2. They promise to obey his voice because they sent the prophet to him to consult him. Note, We do not truly desire to know the mind of God if we do not fully resolve to comply with it when we do know it.

3. It is an implicit universal obedience that they here promise. They will do what God appoints them to do, whether it be good or whether it be evil: "Though it may seem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God command it it is certainly good, and we must not dispute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be easy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or costly, fashionable or unfashionable, whether we get or lose by it in our worldly interests, if it be our duty, we will do it."

4. It is upon a very good consideration that they promise this, a reasonable and powerful one, that it may be well with us, which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it should be well with them upon any other terms.

3 that the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may
walk, and the thing that we may do.
4 Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard *you;*
behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your
words; and it shall come to pass, *that* whatsoever thing the Lord
shall answer you, I will declare *it* unto you; I will keep nothing back
from you.
5 Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful
witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the
which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us.
6 Whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil, we will obey the voice of
the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with
us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.
7 And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord
came unto Jeremiah.

We have here the answer which Jeremiah was sent to deliver to those who employed him to ask counsel of God.

I. It did not come immediately, not till ten days after, Jer 42:7. They were thus long held in suspense, perhaps, to punish them for their hypocrisy or to show that Jeremiah did not speak of himself, nor what he would, for he could not speak when he would, but must wait for instructions. However, it teaches us to continue waiting upon God for direction in our way. The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak.

II. When it did come he delivered it publicly, both to the captains and to all the people, from the meanest to those in the highest station; he delivered it fully and faithfully as he received it, as he had promised that he would keep nothing back from them. If Jeremiah had been to direct them by his own prudence, perhaps he could not have told what to advise them to, the case was so difficult; but what he has to advise is what the Lord the God of Israel saith, to whom they had sent him, and therefore they were bound in honour and duty to observe it. And this he tells them,

1. That it is the will of God that they should stay where they are, and his promise that, if they do so, it shall undoubtedly be well with them he would have them still to abide in this land, Jer 42:10. Their brethren were forced out of it into captivity, and this was their affliction; let those therefore count it a mercy that they may stay in it and a duty to stay in it. Let those whose lot is in Canaan never quit it while they can keep it. It would have been enough to oblige them if God had only said, "I charge you upon your allegiance to abide still in the land;" but he rather persuades them to it as a friend than commands it as a prince.

(1.) He expresses a very tender concern for them in their present calamitous condition: It repenteth me of the evil that I have done unto you. Though they had shown small sign of their repenting of their sins, yet God, as one grieved for the misery of Israel (Jdg 10:16), begins to repent of the judgments he had brought upon them for their sins. Not that he changed his mind, but he was very ready to change his way and to return in mercy to them. God's time to repent himself concerning his servants is when he sees

that, as here, their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left, De 32:36.

(2.) He answers the argument they had against abiding in this land. They feared the king of Babylon (Jer 41:18), lest he should come and avenge the death of Gedaliah upon them, though they were no way accessory to it, nay, had witnessed against it. The surmise was foreign and unreasonable; but, if there had been any ground for it, enough is here said to remove it (Jer 42:11): "Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, though he is a man of great might and little mercy, and a very arbitrary prince, whose will is a law, and therefore you are afraid he will upon this pretence, though without colour of reason, take advantage against you; be not afraid of him, for that fear will bring a snare: fear not him, for I am with you; and, if God be for you to save you, who can be against you to hurt you?" Thus has God provided to obviate and silence even the causeless fears of his people, which discourage them in the way of their duty; there is enough in the promises to encourage them.

(3.) He assures them that if they will still abide in this land they shall not only be safe from the king of Babylon, but be made happy by the King of kings: "I will build you and plant you; you shall take root again, and be the new foundation of another state, a phoenix-kingdom, rising out of the ashes of the last." It is added (Jer 42:12), I will show mercies unto you. Note, In all our comforts we may read God's mercies. God will show them mercy in this, that not only the king of Babylon shall not destroy them, but he shall have mercy upon them and help to settle them. Note, Whatever kindness men do us we must attribute it to God's kindness. He makes those whom he pities to be pitied even by those who carried them captives, Ps 16:46. "The king of Babylon, having now the disposal of the country, shall cause you to return it to your own land, shall settle you again in your own habitations and put you in possession of the lands that formerly belonged to you." Note, God has made that our duty which is really our privilege, and our obedience will be its own recompence. "Abide in this land, and it shall be your own land again and you shall continue in it. Do not quit it now that you stand so fair for the

enjoyment of it again. Be no so unwise as to forsake your own mercies for lying vanities."

2. That as they tender the favour of God and their own happiness they must by no means think of going into Egypt, not thither of all places, not to that land out of which God had delivered their fathers and which he had so often warned them not to make alliance with nor to put confidence in. Observe here,

(1.) The sin they are supposed to be guilty of (and to him that knew their hearts it was more than a supposition): "You begin to say, We will not dwell in this land (Jer 42:13); we will never think that we can be safe in it, no, not though God himself undertake our protection. We will not continue in it, no, not in obedience to the voice of the Lord our God. He may say what he please, but we will do what we please. We will go into the land of Egypt, and there will we dwell, whether God give us leave and go along with us or no," Jer 42:14. It is supposed that their hearts were upon it: "If you wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and are obstinately resolved that you will go and sojourn there, though God oppose you in it both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows." Now the reason they go upon in this resolution is that "in Egypt we shall see no war, nor have hunger of bread,; as we have had for a long time in this land," Jer 42:14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, especially to quit the holy land, because we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think by changing our place to escape the judgments of God, and that evil which pursues sinners in every way of disobedience, and which there is no escaping but by returning to our allegiance.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this sin, if they will persist in it. It is pronounced in God's name (Jer 42:15): "Hear the word of the Lord, you remnant of Judah, who think that because you are a remnant you must be spared of course (Jer 42:2) and indulged in your own humour."

[1.] Did the sword and famine frighten them? Those very judgments shall pursue them into Egypt, shall overtake them, and overcome them there (Jer 42:16,17): "You think, because war

and famine have long been raging in this land, that they are entailed upon it; whereas, if you trust in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you; you think they are confined to it, and, if you can get clear of this land, you shall get out of the reach of them, but God will send them after you wherever you go."

Note, the evils we think to escape by sin we certainly and inevitably run ourselves upon. The men that go to Egypt in contradiction to God's will, to escape the sword and famine, shall die in Egypt by sword and famine. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life; those that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find that they are deceived and that they do not at all better themselves. The grievances common to men will meet them wherever they go. All our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another; still we are where we were.

[2.] Did the desolations of Jerusalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They shall meet with the second part of them too in Egypt (Jer 42:18): As my anger and fury have been poured out here upon Jerusalem, so they shall be poured out upon you in Egypt. Note, Those that have by sin made God their enemy will find him a consuming fire wherever they go. And then you shall be an execration and an astonishment. The Hebrews were of old an abomination to the Egyptians (Ge 43:32), and now they shall be made more so than ever. When God's professing people mingle with infidels, and make their court to them, they lose their dignity and make themselves a reproach.

3. That God knew their hypocrisy in their enquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them to do they were resolved to take their own way; and therefore the sentence which was before pronounced conditionally is made absolute. Having set before them good and evil, the blessing and the curse, in the close he makes application of what he had said. And here,

(1.) He solemnly protests that he had faithfully delivered his message, Jer 42:19. The conclusion of the whole matter is, "Go not down into Egypt; you disobey the command of God if you

do, and what I have said to you will be a witness against you; for know certainly that, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I have plainly admonished you; you cannot now plead ignorance of the mind of God."

(2.) He charges them with base dissimulation in the application they made to him for divine direction (Jer 42:20): "You dissembled in your hearts; you professed one thing and intended another, promising what you never meant to perform." You have used deceit against your soul (so the margin reads it); for those that think to put a cheat upon God will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon themselves.

(3.) He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the command of God; probably they discovered it in their countenance and secret mutterings already, before he had finished his discourse. However, he spoke from him who knew their hearts: "You have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God; you have not a disposition to obey it." Thus Moses, in the close of his farewell sermon, had told them (De 31:27,29), I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck, and that you will corrupt yourselves. Admire the patience of God, that he is pleased to speak to those who, he knows, will not regard him, and deal with those who, he knows, will deal very treacherously, Isa 48:8.

(4.) He therefore reads them their doom, ratifying what he had said before: Know certainly that you shall die by the sword, Jer 42:22. God's threatenings may be vilified, but cannot be nullified, by the unbelief of man. Famine and pestilence shall pursue these sinners; for there is no place privileged from divine arrests, nor can any malefactors go out of God's jurisdiction. You shall die in the place whither you desire to go. Note, We know not what is good for ourselves; and that often proves afflictive, and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of and have our hearts most set upon.

8 Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of
the forces which *were* with him, and all the people from the least
even to the greatest,
9 and said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto
whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him;

10 If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull
you down; and I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up: for I repent
me of the evil that I have done unto you.
11 Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not
afraid of him, saith the Lord : for I *am* with you to save you, and to
deliver you from his hand.
12 And I will show mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon
you, and cause you to return to your own land.
13 But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice
of the Lord your God,
14 saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall
see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of
bread; and there will we dwell:
15 and now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of
Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly
set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;
16 then it shall come to pass, *that* the sword, which ye feared, shall
overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine, whereof
ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there
ye shall die.
17 So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to
sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by
the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the
evil that I will bring upon them.
18 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger
and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of
Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye
shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an
astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this
place no more.
19 The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye
not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.
20 For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the Lord
your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according
unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we
will do *it*.

21 And *now* I have this day declared *it* to you; but ye have not obeyed
the voice of the Lord your God, nor any *thing* for the which he
hath sent me unto you.
22 Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the
famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go
and to sojourn.

Jeremiah-43

The Migration to Egypt

1 And it came to pass, *that* when Jeremiah had made an end of
speaking unto all the people all the words of the Lord their God,
for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, *even* all these
words,

What God said to the builders of Babel may be truly said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with: Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do, Ge 11:6. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself says to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasy at it; it was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all. And now let us see what they have to say to it.

I. They deny it to be a message from God: Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely, Jer 43:2. See here,

1. What was the cause of their disobedience--it was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man. They were proud men that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments and the control of their designs, no, not by the divine wisdom, by the divine will itself. Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey him? Ex 5:2 The proud unhumbled heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell.

2. What was the colour for their disobedience. They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God: The Lord hath not sent

thee on this errand to us. Either they were not convinced that what was said came from God or (which I rather think) though they were convinced of it they would not own it. The light shone strongly in their face, but they either shut their eyes against it or would not confess that they saw it. Note, The reason why men deny the scriptures to be the word of God is because they are resolved not to conform to scripture-rules, and so an obstinate infidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a wilful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from Mount Sinai, they would have said that it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had he not waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarked in the same bottom with them?

What interests could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed? And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why, truly, they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they suggest (Jer 43:3), Baruch sets thee on against us. A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first with Nebuzaradan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have staid to take their lot with this despised ungrateful remnant. But the best services are no fences against malice and slander.

Or, if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him as to make God's name an authority to patronise so villainous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry are industrious to bring a bad name upon it. When men will persist in sin they represent those that would turn them from it as designing men for themselves, nay, as ill-designing men against their neighbours. It is well for persons who are thus misrepresented that their witness is in heaven and their record on high.

II. They determine to go to Egypt notwithstanding. They resolve not to dwell in the land of Judah, as God had ordered them (Jer 43:4), but to go themselves with one consent and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Those that came from all the nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah, out of a sincere affection to that land, they would not leave to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt (Jer 43:5), men, women, and children (Jer 43:6), a long journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind of faithful to Israel; yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men that they know not when they are well off, and often ruin themselves by endeavouring to better themselves; and it is the pride of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though ever so much against their duty and interest.

These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them (and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them than to force them against their consciences; theirs is the worst of tyranny who say to men's souls, even to good men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over), partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way. Though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe that they were voluntary in going along with them; and who could have blamed them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord if the prophets themselves had acted so? They came to Tahpanhes, a famous city of Egypt (so called from a queen of that name, 1Ki 11:19), the same with Hanes (Isa 30:4); it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, Jer 43:9. No place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city and near the court, so little mindful were they of Joseph's wisdom, who would have his brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah than in the most pompous populous cities of Egypt.

2 then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou

speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go
not into Egypt to sojourn there:
3 but Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver
us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death,
and carry us away captives into Babylon.
4 So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and
all the people, obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land
of Judah.
5 But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces,
took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations,
whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah;
6 *even* men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and
every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left
with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah
the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.
7 So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice
of the Lord : thus came they *even* to Tahpanhes.
8 Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes,
saying,

We have here, as also in the next chapter, Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were; he was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Israelites; but there,

1. He received the word of the Lord; it came to him. God can find his people, with the visits of his grace, wherever they are; and, when his ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him.

2. What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Wherever we are we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world. Now we find two messages which

Jeremiah was appointed and entrusted to deliver when he was in Egypt. We may suppose that he rendered what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them and instructing and comforting them; but only two messages of his, which he had received immediately from God, are recorded, one in this chapter, relating to Egypt itself and foretelling its destruction, the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt. God had told them before that if they went into Egypt the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further that the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

I. This is foretold by a sign. Jeremiah must take great stones, such as are used for foundations, and lay them in the clay of the furnace, or brick-kiln, which is in the open way, or beside the way that leads to Pharaoh's house (Jer 43:9), some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick-kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks (Ex 5:7), which perhaps was now remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolation was laid in those brick-kilns, in that clay. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians (they knew not Jeremiah's character), but in the sight of the men of Judah to whom he was sent, that, since he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

II. It is foretold in express words, as express as can be,

1. That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come in person against the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, by the same token that he should set his throne in that very place where these stones were laid, Jer 43:10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that, when it was accomplished, they might be put in mind of the prophecy and confirmed in their belief of the extent and certainly of the divine prescience, to which the smallest and most contingent events are evident. God calls

Nebuchadnezzar his servant, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants and he makes what use he pleases of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, are the tools which his providence makes use of.

2. That he should destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy (Jer 43:11): He shall smite the land of Egypt; and, though it has been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will, whether pestilence (for that is here meant by death, as Jer 15:2) by shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot. And whom he will he shall save alive and carry into captivity. The Jews, by going into Egypt, brought the Chaldeans thither, and so did but ill repay those that entertained them. Those who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon exposed themselves to him.

3. That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples and the images of their gods (Jer 43:12): He shall burn, the houses of the gods of Egypt, but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling; the fire of God's wrath fastens upon them, and then he burns some of them and carries others captive, Isa 46:1. Beth-shemesh, or the house of the sun, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues or standing images there he shall break in pieces (Jer 43:13) and carry away the rich materials of them. It intimates that he should lay all waste when even the temple and the images should not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater and a patron of idolatry; he had his temples and images in honour of the sun as well as the Egyptians; and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometimes makes one wicked man, or wicked nation, a scourge and plague to another.

4. That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall be able to plead its cause or avenge its quarrel (Jer

43:12): He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt, both beautify and fortify himself with them. He shall array himself with them as ornaments and as armour; and this, though it shall be a rich and heavy booty, being expert in war, and expeditious, he shall slip on with as much ease and in as little time, in comparison, as a shepherd slips on his garment, when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt than of a shepherd's coat. And when he has taken what he pleases (as Benhadad threatened to do, 1Ki 20:6) he shall go forth in peace, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, Eze 29:19,30:10. Babylon lay at a great distance from Egypt, and yet thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far-fetched.

9 Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which *is* at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

10 and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

11 And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, *and deliver* such *as are* for death to death; and such *as are* for captivity to captivity; and such *as are* for the sword to the sword.

12 And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace.

13 He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh [the house of the sun], that *is* in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

Jeremiah-44

Jeremiah Prophesies to the Jews in Egypt

1 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

The Jews in Egypt were now dispersed into various parts of the country, into Migdol, and Noph, and other places, and Jeremiah was sent on an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the most of them together in Pathros (Jer 44:15) or going about from place to place preaching to this purport. He delivered this message in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, and in it,

I. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives by the rivers of Babylon were daily mindful of (Ps 137:1), the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten and needed to be put in mind of, though, one would have thought, they had not been so long out of sight as to become out of mind (Jer 44:2): You have seen what a deplorable condition Judah and Jerusalem are brought into; now will you consider whence those desolations came? From the wrath of God; it was his fury and his anger that kindled the fire which made Jerusalem and the cities of Judah waste and desolate (Jer 44:6); whoever were the instruments of the destruction, they were but instruments: it was a destruction from the Almighty.

II. He puts them in mind of the sins that brought those desolations upon Judah and Jerusalem. It was for their wickedness. It was this that provoked God to anger, and especially their idolatry, their serving other gods (Jer 44:3) and giving that honour to counterfeit deities, the creatures of their own fancy and the work of their own hands, which should have been given to the true God only. They forsook the God who was known among them, and whose name was great, for gods that

they knew not, upstart deities, whose original was obscure and not worth taking notice of: "Neither they nor you, nor your fathers, could give any rational account why the God of Israel was exchanged for such impostors." They knew not that they were gods; nay, they could not but know that they were no gods.

2 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they *are* a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein;

3 because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, *and* to serve other gods, whom they knew not, *neither* they, ye, nor your fathers.

4 Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them,* saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

He puts them in mind of the frequent and fair warnings he had given them by his word not to serve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatry, Jer 44:4. The prophets were sent with a great deal of care to call to them, saying, Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate. It becomes us to speak of sin with the utmost dread and detestation as an abominable thing; it is certainly so, for it is that which God hates, and we are sure that hid judgment is according to truth. Call it grievous, call it odious, that we may by all means possible put ourselves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of sin, and the fatal consequences of it, with all seriousness and earnestness: "Oh! do not do it. If you love God, do not, for it is provoking to him; if you love your own souls do not, for it is destructive to them." Let conscience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield. O take heed! do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates; for, if God hates it, though shouldst hate it. But did they regard what God said to them? No: "They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear (Jer 44:5); they still persisted in their idolatries; and you see what came of it, therefore God's anger was poured out upon them, as at this day. Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God's mouth, as they did, but have likewise seen the judgments of his hand, by which you should be startled and awakened, for they were inflicted in

terrorem, that others might hear and fear and do no more as they did, lest they should fare as they fared."

5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

6 Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted *and* desolate, as at this day.

7 Therefore now thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye *this* great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

8 in that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

He reproves them for, and upbraids them with, their continued idolatries, now that they had come into Egypt (Jer 44:8): You burn incense to other gods in the land of Egypt. Therefore God forbade them to go into Egypt, because he knew it would be a snare to them. Those whom God sent into the land of the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous country, were there, by the power of God's grace, weaned from idolatry; but those who went against God's mind into the land of the Egyptians were there, by the power of their own corruptions, more wedded than ever to their idolatries; for, when we thrust ourselves without cause or call into places of temptation, it is just with God to leave us to ourselves. In doing this,

1. They did a great deal of injury to themselves and their families: "You commit this great evil against your souls (Jer 44:7), you wrong them, you deceive them with that which is false, you destroy them, for it will be fatal to them." Note, In sinning against God we sin against our own souls. "It is the ready way to cut yourselves off from all comfort and hope (Jer 44:8), to cut off your name and honour; so that you will, both by your sin and by your misery, become a curse and a reproach among all nations. It will become a proverb, As wretched as a Jew. It is the ready way to cut off from you all your relations, all that you shave have

joy of and have your families built up in, man and woman, child and suckling, so that Judah shall be a land lost for want of heirs."

2. They filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers, and, as if that had been too little for them, added to it (Jer 44:9): "Have you forgotten the wickedness of those who are gone before you, that you are not humbled for it as you ought to be, and afraid of the consequences of it?" Have you forgotten the punishments of your fathers? so some read it. "Do you not know how dear their idolatry cost them? And yet dare you continue in that vain conversation received by tradition from you fathers, though you received the curse with it?"

He reminds them of the sins and punishments of the kings of Judah, who, great as they were, escaped not the judgments of God for their idolatry; yea, and they should have taken warning by the wickedness of their wives, who had seduced them to idolatry. In the original it is, And of his wives, which, Dr. Lightfoot thinks, tacitly reflects upon Solomon's wives, particularly his Egyptian wives, to whom the idolatry of the kings of Judah owed its original. "Have you forgotten this, and what came of it, that you dare venture upon the same wicked courses?" See Ne 13:18,26. "Nay, to come to your own times, Have you forgotten your own wickedness and the wickedness of your wives, when you lived in prosperity in Jerusalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But, alas! to what purpose do I speak to them?" (says God to the prophet, Jer 44:10) "they are not humbled unto this day, by all the humbling providences that they have been under. They have not feared, nor walked in my law." Note, Those that walk not in the law of God do thereby show that they are destitute of the fear of God.

9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

10 They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

11 Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

12 And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, *and* fall in the land of Egypt; they shall *even* be consumed by the sword *and* by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, *and* an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

He threatens their utter ruin for their persisting in their idolatry now that they were in Egypt. Judgment is given against them, as before (Jer 42:22), that they shall perish in Egypt; the decree has gone forth, and shall not be called back. They set their faces to go into the land of Egypt (Jer 44:12), were resolute in their purpose against God, and now God is resolute in his purpose against them: I will set my face to cut off all Judah, Jer 44:11. Those that think not only to affront, but to confront, God Almighty, will find themselves outfaced; for the face of the Lord is against those that do evil, Ps 34:16. It is here threatened concerning these idolatrous Jews in Egypt,

1. That they shall all be consumed, without exception; no degree nor order among them shall escape: They shall fall, from the least to the greatest (Jer 44:12), high and low, rich and poor.

2. That they shall be consumed by the very same judgments which God made use of for the punishment of Jerusalem, the sword, famine, and pestilence, Jer 44:12,13. They shall not be wasted by natural deaths, as Israel in the wilderness, but by these sore judgments, which, by flying into Egypt, they thought to get out of the reach of. 3. That none (except a very few that will narrowly escape) shall ever return to the land of Judah again, Jer 44:14. They thought, being nearer, that they stood fairer for a return to their own land than those that were carried to Babylon; yet those shall return, and these shall not; for the way in which God has promised us any comfort is much surer than that in which we have projected it for ourselves.

Observe, Those that are fretful and discontented will be uneasy and fond of change wherever they are. The Israelites, when they were in the land of Judah, desired to go into Egypt (Jer 42:22), but when they were in Egypt they desired to return to the land of Judah again; they lifted up their soul to it (so it is in the margin), which denotes an earnest desire. But, because they would not dwell there when God commanded it, they shall not dwell they were they desire it. If we walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to us. How can those expect to be well off who would not know when they were so, though God himself told them?

13 For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

14 so that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

15 Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

16 *As for* the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.

We have here the people's obstinate refusal to submit to the power of the word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah. We have scarcely such an instance of downright daring contradiction to God himself as this, or such an avowed rebellion of the carnal mind. Observe,

The persons who thus set God and his judgments at defiance; it was not some one that was thus obstinate, but the generality of the Jews; and they were such as knew either themselves or their wives to be guilty of the idolatry Jeremiah had reproved, Jer 44:15. We find,

1. That the women had been more guilty of idolatry and superstition than the men, not because the men stuck closer to the true God and the true religion than the women, but, I fear, because they were generally atheists, and were for no God and

no religion at all, and therefore could easily allow their wives to be of a false religion, and to worship false gods.

2. That it was consciousness of guilt that made them impatient of reproof: They knew that their wives had burnt incense to other gods, and that they had countenanced them in it, and the women that stood by knew that they had joined with them in their idolatrous usages; so that what Jeremiah said touched them in a sore place, which made them kick against the pricks, as children of Belial, that will not bear the yoke.

17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

The reply which these persons made to Jeremiah, and in him to God himself; it is in effect the same with theirs who had the impudence to say to the Almighty, Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

1. They declare their resolution not to do as God commanded them, but what they themselves had a mind to do; that is, they would go on to worship the moon, here called the queen of heaven; yet some understand it of the sun, which was much worshipped in Egypt (Jer 43:13) and had been so at Jerusalem (2Ki 23:11), and they say that the Hebrew word for the sun being feminine it may not unfitly be called the queen of heaven. And others understand it of all the host of heaven, or the frame of heaven, the whole machine, Jer 7:18. These daring sinners do not now go about to make excuses for their refusal to obey, nor suggest that Jeremiah spoke from himself and not from God (as before, Jer 43:2), but they own that he spoke to them in the name of the Lord, and yet tell him flatly, in so many words, "We will not hearken unto thee; we will do that which is forbidden and run the hazard of that which is threatened."

Note, Those that live in disobedience to God commonly grow worse and worse, and the heart is more and more hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Here is the genuine language of the rebellious heart: We will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. What they said many think who yet have not arrived at such a degree of impudence as to speak it out. It is that which the young man would be at in the days of his youth; he would walk in the way of his heart and the sight of his eyes, and would have and do every thing he has a mind to, Ec 11:9.

2. They give some sort of reasons for their resolution; for the most absurd and unreasonably wicked men will have something to say for themselves, till the day comes when every mouth shall be stopped.

(1.) They plead many of those things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only justify but magnify themselves with; and these Jews have as much right to them as the Romanists have.

[1.] They plead antiquity: We are resolved to burn incense to the queen of heaven, for our fathers did so; it is a practice that pleads prescription; and why should we pretend to be wiser than our fathers?

[2.] They plead authority. Those that had power practised it themselves and prescribed it to others: Our kings and our princes did it, whom God set over us, and who were of the seed of David.

[3.] They plead unity. It was not here and there one that did it, but we, we all with one consent, we that are a great multitude (Jer 44:15), we did it.

[4.] They plead universality. It was not done here and there, but in the cities of Judah.

[5.] They plead visibility. It was not done in a corner, in dark and shady groves only, but in the streets, openly and publicly.

[6.] They plead that it was the practice of the mother-church, the holy see; it was not now learned first in Egypt, but it had been done in Jerusalem.

[7.] They plead prosperity: They had we plenty of bread, and of all good things; we were well and saw no evil. All the former pleas, I fear, were too true in fact; God's witnesses against their idolatry were few and hid; Elijah though that he was left alone: and this last might perhaps be true as to some particular persons, but, as to their nation, they were still under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was no peace to those that went out or came in, 2Ch 15:5. But, supposing all to be true, yet this does not at all excuse them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we must be ruled and judged by, hot the practice of men.

(2.) They suggest that the judgments they had of late been under were brought upon them for leaving off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, Jer 44:18. So perversely did they misconstrue providence, though God, by his prophets, had so often explained it to them, and the thing itself spoke the direct contrary. Since we forsook our idolatries we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, the true reason of which was because they still retained their idols in their heart and an affection to their old sins; but they would have it thought that it was because they had forsaken the acts of sin. Thus the afflictions which should have been for their welfare, to separate between them and their sins, being misinterpreted did but confirm them in their sins. Thus, in the first ages of Christianity, when God chastised the nations by any public calamities for opposing the Christians and persecuting them, they put a contrary sense upon the calamities, as if they were sent to punish them for conniving at the Christians and tolerating them, and cried, Christianos ad leones--Throw the Christians to the lions. Yet, if it had been true, as they said here, that since they returned to the service of the true God, the God of Israel, they had been in want and trouble, was that a reason why they should revolt from him again? That was as much as to say that they served not him, but their own bellies. Those who know

God, and put their trust in him, will serve him, though he starve them, though he slay them, though they never see a good day with him in this world, being well assured that they shall not lose by him in the end.

(3.) They plead that, though the women were most forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the consent and approbation of their husbands; the women were busy to make cakes for meat-offerings to the queen of heaven and to prepare and pour out the drink-offerings, Jer 44:19. We found, before, that this was their work, Jer 7:18. "But did we do it without our husbands, privately and unknown to them, so as to give them occasion to be jealous of us? No; the fathers kindled the fire while the women kneaded the dough; the men that were our heads, whom we were bound to learn of and to be obedient to, taught us to do it by their example."

Note, It is sad when those who are in the nearest relation to each other, who should quicken each other to that which is good and so help one another to heaven, harden each other in sin and so ripen one another for hell. Some understand this as spoken by the husbands (Jer 44:15), who plead that they did not do it without their men, that is, without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but, because the making of the cakes and the pouring out of the drink-offerings are expressly spoken of as the women's work (Jer 7:18), it seems rather to be understood as their plea: but it was a frivolous plea. What would it avail them to be able to say that it was according to their husbands' mind, when they knew that it was contrary to their God's mind?

19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?

20 Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* answer, saying,

Daring sinners may speak many a bold word and many a big word, but, after all, God will have the last word; for he will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh, even the proudest, shall be silent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot; nay, here the prophet would not.

I. Jeremiah has something to say to them from himself, which he could say without a spirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their mistake (a wilful mistake it was) concerning the calamities they had been under and the true intent and meaning of them. They said that these miseries came upon them because they had now left off burning incense to the queen of heaven. "No," says he, "it was because you had formerly done it, not because you had now left it off." When they gave him that answer, he immediately replied (Jer 44:20) that the incense which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods did indeed go unpunished a great while, for God was long-suffering towards them, and during the day of his patience it was perhaps, as they said, well with them, and they saw no evil; but at length they grew so provoking that the Lord could no longer bear (Jer 44:22), but began a controversy with them, whereupon some of them did a little reform; their sins left them, for so it might be said, rather than that they left their sins.

But their old guilt being still upon the score, and their corrupt inclinations still the same, God remembered against them the idolatries of their fathers, their kings, and their princes, in the streets of Jerusalem, which they, instead of being ashamed of, gloried in as a justification of them in their idolatries; they all came into his mind (Jer 44:21), all the abominations which they had committed (Jer 44:22) and all their disobedience to the voice of the Lord (Jer 44:23), all were brought to account; and therefore, to punish them for these, is their land a desolation and a curse, as at this day (Jer 44:22); therefore, not for their late reformation, but for their old transgressions, has all this evil happened to them, as at this day, Jer 44:23.

Note, The right understanding of the cause of our troubles, one would think, should go far towards the cure of our sins. Whatever evil comes upon us, it is because we have sinned against the Lord, and should therefore stand in awe and sin not.

II. Jeremiah has something to say to them, to the women particularly, from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, They have given their answer; now let them hear God's reply, Jer 44:24.

Judah, that dwells in the land of Egypt, has God speaking to them, even there; that is their privilege. Let them observe what he says; that is their duty, Jer 44:26. Now God, in his reply, tells them plainly,

1. That, since they were fully determined to persist in their idolatry, he was fully determined to proceed in his controversy with them; if they would go on to provoke him, he would go on to punish them, and see which would get the better at last. God repeats what they had said (Jer 44:25): "You and your wives are agreed in this obstinacy; you have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands; you have said it, and you stand to it, have said it and go on to do accordingly, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven," as if, though it were a sin, yet their having vowed to do it were sufficient to justify them in the doing of it; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to himself, much less duty, which God has already made sin. "Well" (says God), "you will accomplish, you will perform, your wicked vows: now hear what is my vow, what I have sworn by my great name;" and, if the Lord hath sworn, he will not repent, since they have sworn and will not repent. With the froward he will show himself froward, Ps 18:26.

(1.) He had sworn that what little remains of religion there were among them should be lost, Jer 44:26. Though they joined with the Egyptians in their idolatries, yet they continued upon many occasions to make mention of the name of Jehovah, particularly in their solemn oaths; they said, Jehovah liveth, he is the living God, so they owned him to be, though they worshipped dead idols; they swear, The Lord liveth (Jer 5:2), but I fear they retained this form of swearing more in honour of their nation than of their God. But God declares that his name shall no more be thus named by any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt; that is, there shall be no Jews remaining to use this dialect of their country, or, if there be, they shall have forgotten it and shall learn to swear, as the Egyptians do, by the life of Pharaoh, not of Jehovah.

Note, Those are very miserable whom God has so far left to themselves that they have quite forgotten their religion and lost all the remains of their good education. Or this may intimate that God would take it as an affront to him and would resent it accordingly, if they did make mention of his name and profess any relation to him.

(2.) He hath sworn that what little remnant of people there was there should all be consumed (Jer 44:27): I will watch over them for evil; no opportunity shall be let slip to bring some judgment upon them, until there be an end of them and they be rooted out. Note, To those whom God finds impenitent sinners he will be found an implacable Judge. And, when it comes to this, they shall know (Jer 44:28) whose word shall stand, mind or theirs. They said that they should recover themselves when they returned to worship the queen of heaven; God said they should ruin themselves; and now the event will show which was in the right. The contest between God and sinners is whose word shall stand, whose will shall be done, and who shall get the better. Sinners say that they shall have peace though they go on; God says they shall have no peace. But when God judges he will overcome; God's word shall stand, and not the sinner's.

2. He tells them that a very few of them should escape the sword, and in process of time return into the land of Judah, a small number (Jer 44:28), next to none, in comparison with the great numbers that should return out of the land of the Chaldeans. This seems designed to upbraid those who boasted of their numbers that concurred in sin; there were none to speak of that did not join in idolatry: "Well," says God, "and there shall be as few that shall escape the sword and famine."

3. He gives them a sign that all these threatenings shall be accomplished in their season, that they shall be consumed here in Egypt and shall quite perish: Pharaoh-hophra, the present king of Egypt, shall be delivered into the hand of his enemies that seek his life--of his own rebellious subjects (so some) under Amasis, who usurped his throne--of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (so others), who invaded his kingdom; the former is related by Herodotus, the latter by Josephus. It is likely that this Pharaoh

had tempted the Jews to idolatry by promises of his favour; however, they depended upon him for his protection, and it would be more than a presage of their ruin, it would be a step towards it, if he were gone. They expected more from him than from Zedekiah king of Judah; he was a more potent and politic prince. "But," says God, "I will give him into the hand of his enemies, as I gave Zedekiah."

Note, Those creature-comforts and confidences that we promise ourselves most from may fail us as soon as those that we promise ourselves least from, for they are all what God makes them, not what we fancy them.

The sacred history records not the accomplishment of this prophecy, but its silence is sufficient; we hear no more of these Jews in Egypt, and therefore conclude them, according to this prediction, lost there; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

21 The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it *not* into his mind?

22 so that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, *and* because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

23 Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

24 Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt:

25 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

26 Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the

Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any
man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth.
27 Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the
men of Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the
sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.
28 Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land
of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that
are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose
words shall stand, mine, or theirs.
29 And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the Lord, that I will punish
you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand
against you for evil:
30 Thus saith the Lord ; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of
Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that
seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of
Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his
life.

Jeremiah-45

Jeremiah's Message to Baruch

1 The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of
Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of
Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of
Judah, saying,

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account Jer 36:1-32, and how he was threatened for it by the king, warrants being out for him and he forced to abscond, and how narrowly he escaped under a divine protection, to which story this chapter should have been subjoined, but that, having reference to a private person, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epistle to Philemon is put after his other epistles. Observe,

I The consternation that poor Baruch was in when he was sought for by the king's messengers and obliged to hide his head, and the

notice which God took of it. He cried out, Woe is me now! Jer 45:3. He was a young man setting out in the world; he was well affected to the things of God, and was willing to serve God and his prophet; but, when it came to suffering, he was desirous to be excused. Being an ingenious man, and a scholar, he stood fair for preferment, and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a prison, or worse, was a great disappointment to him. When he read the roll publicly he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would make him to be taken notice of and employed; but when he found that, instead of that, it exposed him to contempt, and brought him into disgrace, he cried out, "I am undone; I shall fall into the pursuers' hands, and be imprisoned, and put to death, or banished: The Lord has added grief to my sorrow, has loaded me with one trouble after another. After the grief of writing and reading the prophecies of my country's ruin, I have the sorrow of being treated as a criminal; for so doing; and, though another might make nothing of this, yet for my part I cannot bear it; it is a burden too heavy for me. I fainted in my sighing (or I am faint with my sighing; it just kills me) and I find no rest, no satisfaction in my own mind. I cannot compose myself as I should and would to bear it, not have I any prospect of relief or comfort." Baruch was a good man, but, we must say, this was his infirmity. Note,

1. Young beginners in religion, like fresh-water soldiers, are apt to be discouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God. They do but run with the footmen, and it wearies them; they faint upon the very dawning of the day of adversity, and it is an evidence that their strength is small (Pr 24:10), that their faith is weak, and that they are yet but babes, who cry for every hurt and every fright.

2. Some of the best and dearest of God's saints and servants, when they have seen storms rising, have been in frights, and apt to make the worst of things, and to disquiet themselves with melancholy apprehensions more than there was cause for. 3. God takes notice of the frets and discontents of his people and is displeased with them. Baruch should have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in such a good cause and with such good company, but, instead of that, he is vexed at it, and blames his lot, nay, and reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him; what he

said was spoken in a heat and passion, but God was offended, as he was with Moses, who paid dearly for it, when, his spirit being provoked, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips. Thou didst say so and so, and it was not well said. God keeps account what we say, even when we speak in haste.

II The reproof that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to see him in such an agitation, and knew not well what to say to him. He was loth to chide him, and yet thought he deserved it, was willing to comfort him, and yet knew not which way to go about it; but God tells him what he shall say to him, Jer 45:4. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of these complaints and fear, but God sees it. They came from his corruptions. That the hurt might therefore not be healed slightly, he searches the wound, and shows him that he had raised his expectations too high in this world and had promised himself too much from it, and that made the distress and trouble he was in so very grievous to him and so hard to be borne.

Note, The frowns of the world would not disquiet us as they do if we did not foolishly flatter ourselves with the hopes of its smiles and court and covet them too much. It is our over-fondness for the good things of this present time that makes us impatient under its evil things. Now God shows him that it was his fault and folly, at this time of day especially, either to desire or to look for an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world. For,

1 The ship was sinking. Ruin was coming upon the Jewish nation, an utter and universal ruin: "That which I have built, to be a house for myself, I am breaking down, and that which I have planted, to be a vineyard for myself, I am plucking up, even this whole land, the Jewish church and state; and dost thou now seek great things for thyself? Dost thou expect to be rich and honourable and to make a figure now? No."

2. "It is absurd for thee to be now painting thy own cabin. Canst thou expect to be high when all are brought low, to be full when all about thee are empty?" To seek ourselves more than the public welfare, especially to seek great things to ourselves when the public is in danger, is very unbecoming Israelites. We may apply

it to this world, and our state in it; God in his providence is breaking down and pulling up; every thing is uncertain and perishing; we cannot expect any continuing city here. What folly is it then to seek great things for ourselves here, where every thing is little and nothing certain!

III. The encouragement that God gave him to hope that though he should not be great, yet he should be safe: "I will bring evil upon all flesh, all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men, but thy life will I give to thee for a prey" (thy soul, so the word is) "in all places whither thou goest. Thou must expect to be hurried from place to place, and, wherever thou goest, to be in danger, but thou shalt escape, though often very narrowly, shalt have thy life, but it shall be as a prey, which is got with much difficulty and danger; thou shalt be saved as by fire."

Note, The preservation and continuance of life are very great mercies, and we are bound to account them such, as they are the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world and to get ready for a better; and at some times, especially when the arrows of death fly thickly about us, life is a signal favour, and what we ought to be very thankful for, and while we have it must not complain though we be disappointed of the great things we expected. Is not the life more than meat?

2 Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch;
3 Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to
my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.
4 Thus shalt thou say unto him, The Lord saith thus; Behold, *that*
which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted
I will pluck up, even this whole land.
5 And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek *them* not: for, behold,
I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I
give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

Jeremiah-46

Prophecies concerning Egypt

1 The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;

The first verse is the title of that part of this book, which relates to the neighbouring nations, and follows here. It is the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows and will call to an account those who know him not nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations that Jeremiah here has a separate saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have the word of the Lord against the Gentiles; in the New Testament we have the word of the Lord for the Gentiles, that those who were afar off are made nigh.

He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors and of late their deceivers, when they put confidence in them. In these verses he foretells the overthrow of the army of Pharaoh-necho, by Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was so complete a victory to the king of Babylon that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt, and so weakened him that he came not again any more out of his land (as we find, 2Ki 24:7), and so made him pay dearly for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2Ki 23:29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt thus foiled, which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

I The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would: "Come then, order the buckler, let the weapons of war be got ready," Jer 46:3. Egypt was famous for horses--let them be harnessed and the cavalry well mounted: Get up, you horsemen, and stand forth, &c., Jer 46:4. See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care

and trouble and at a vast expense, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves. He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile (Jer 46:7,8): Egypt now rises up like a flood, scorning to keep within its own banks and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands. It is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion. The prophet summons them (Jer 46:9): Come up, you horses; rage, you chariots. He challenges them to bring all their confederate troops together, the Ethiopians, that descended from the same stock with the Egyptians (ge 10:6), and were their neighbours and allies, the Libyans and Lydians, both seated in Africa, to the west of Egypt, and from them the Egyptians fetched their auxiliary forces. Let them strengthen themselves with all the art and interest they have, yet it shall be all in vain; they shall be shamefully defeated notwithstanding, for God will fight against them, and against him there is no wisdom nor counsel, Pr 21:30,31. It concerns those that go forth to war not only to order the buckler, and harness the horses, but to repent of their sins, and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

II. They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and sat in heaven and laughed at them,; but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor, Mic 4:11,12. Egypt saith (Jer 46:8): I will go up; I will cover the earth, and none shall hinder me; I will destroy the city, whatever city it is that stands in my way. Like Pharaoh of old, I will pursue, I will overtake. The Egyptians say that they shall have a day of it, but God saith that it shall be his day: The is the day of the Lord God of hosts (Jer 46:10), the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another; they designed it for the advancement of their dignity and the enlargement of their dominion, but God designed it for the great abasement and weakening of their kingdom. It is a day of vengeance for Josiah's death; it is a day of sacrifice to divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims.

Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprises, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them and cutting them off.

III. They are upbraided with their cowardice and inglorious flight when they come to an engagement (Jer 46:5,6): "Wherefore have I seen them, notwithstanding all these mighty and vast preparations and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faces them, dismayed, turned back, quite disheartened, and no spirit left in them."

1. They make a shameful retreat. Even their mighty ones, who, one would think, should have stood their ground, flee a flight, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to look back, but fear is round about them, for they apprehend it so. And yet,

2. They cannot make their escape. They have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground and died upon the spot; for even the swift shall not flee away. The lightness of their heels shall fail them when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the mighty shall not escape, nay, they are beaten down and broken to pieces. They shall stumble in their flight, and fall towards the north, towards their enemy's country; for such confusion were they in when they took to their feet that instead of making homeward, as men usually do in that case, they made forward. Note, The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Valiant men are not always victorious.

IV. They are upbraided with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, Jer 46:11,12. The damsel, the daughter of Egypt, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for balm in Gilead and physicians there; let her use all the medicines her wise men can prescribe for the healing of this hurt, and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat; but all in vain; no cure shall be to them; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as

this into the field again. "The nations that rang of thy glory and strength have now heard of thy shame, how shamefully thou wast routed and how thou are weakened by it." It needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcries of the conquered will proclaim it: Thy cry hath filled the country about. For, when they fled several ways, one mighty man stumbled upon another and dashed against another, such confusion were they in, so that both together became a pray to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of those that were overcome. Let not the mighty man therefore glory in his might, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

2 against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

3 Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.

4 Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with *your* helmets; furbish the spears, *and* put on the brigandines.

5 Wherefore have I seen them dismayed *and* turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for* fear *was* round about, saith the Lord.

6 Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

7 Who *is* this *that* cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?

8 Egypt riseth up like a flood, and *his* waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, *and* will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.

9 Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle *and* bend the bow.

10 For this *is* the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

11 Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt:

in vain shalt thou use many medicines; *for* thou shalt not be cured.

12 The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, *and* they are fallen both together.

13 The word that the Lord spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come *and* smite the land of Egypt.

In these verses we have,

I. Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter disabled the Egyptians from making any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? But still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them. Though the kings of Egypt came no more out of their land (2Ki 24:7), yet they kept safe and easy in their land; and what would they desire more than peaceably to enjoy their own? One would think all men should be content to do this, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; those that encroached on others shall not be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to show how the king of Babylon should shortly come and smite the land of Egypt, and bring the war into their own bosoms which they had formerly carried into his borders, Jer 46:13. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadnezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and probably the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we had Jer 43:10.

1. Here is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amazement (Jer 46:14), notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, the sword is devouring round about in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees, or fugitives rather, had planted themselves, in contempt

of God's command (Jer 44:1), and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is likely to be to them.

2 The retreat hereupon of the forces of other nations which the Egyptians had in their pay is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers to guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders and put to flights. Then were the valiant men swept away (Jer 46:15) as with a sweeping rain (it is the word that is used Pr 28:3); they can none of them stand their ground, because the Lord drives them from their respective posts; he drives them by his terrors; he drives them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not possible that those should fix whom the wrath of God chases. He it was (Jer 46:16) that made many to fall, yea, when their day shall come to fall, the enemy needs not throw them down, they shall fall one upon another, every man shall be a stumbling-block to his fellow, to his follower; nay, if God please, they shall be made to fall upon one another, they shall be made to fall upon one another, every man's sword shall be against his fellow. Her hired men, the troops Egypt has in he service, are indeed in the midst of her like fatted bullocks, lusty men, able bodied and high spirited, who were likely for action and promised to make their part good against the enemy; but they are turned back; their hearts failed them, and, instead of fighting, they have fled away together. How could they withstand their fate when the day of their calamity had come, the day in which God will visit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to fatted bullocks for their luxury; they had wantoned in pleasures, so that they were very unfit for hardships, and therefore turned back and could not stand. In this consternation,

(1.) They all made homeward towards their own country (Jer 46:16): They said, "Arise, and let us go again to our own people, where we may be safe from the oppressing sword of the Chaldeans, that bears down all before it." In times of exigence little confidence is to be put in mercenary troops, that fight purely for pay, and have no interest in theirs whom they fight for.

(2.) They exclaimed vehemently against Pharaoh, to whose cowardice or bad management, it is probably, their defeat was

owing. When he posted them there upon the borders of his country it is probably that he told them he would within such a time come himself with a gallant army of his own subjects to support them; but he failed them, and, when the enemy advanced, they found they had none to back them, so that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders. No marvel then that they quitted their post and deserted the service, crying out, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise (Jer 46:17); he can hector, and talk big of the mighty things he would do, but that is all; he brings nothing to pass. All his promises to those in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vanish into smoke. He brings not the succours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late: He has passed the time appointed; he did not keep his word, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewell, they will never serve under him any more. Note, Those that make most noise in any business are frequently but a noise. Great talkers are little doers.

3. The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here described as bearing down all before it. The King of kings, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and before whom the mightiest kings on earth, though gods to us, are but as grasshoppers, he hath said it, he hath sworn it, As I live, saith this king, as Tabor overtops the mountains and Carmel overlooks the sea, so shall the king of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt, such a command shall he have, such a sway shall he bear, Jer 46:18. He and his army shall come against Egypt with axes, as hewers of wood (Jer 46:22), and the Egyptians shall be no more able to resist them than the tree is to resist the man that comes with an axe to cut it down; so that Egypt shall be felled as a forest is by the hewers of wood, which (if there by many of them, and those well provided with instruments for the purpose) will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a forest, the trees of which cannot be searched or numbered, and very rich, full of hidden treasures, many of which will escape the searching eye of the Chaldean soldiers; but they shall make a great spoil in the country, for they are more than the locusts, that come in vast swarms and overrun a country, devouring every green thing (Joe 1:6,7), so shall the Chaldeans do, for they are innumerable.

Note, The Lord of hosts hath numberless hosts at his command.

4. The desolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waste that should be made of that rich country. Egypt is now like a very fair heifer, or calf (Jer 46:20), fat and shining, and not accustomed to the yoke of subjection, wanton as a heifer that is well fed, and very sportful. Some think here is an allusion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worshipped, from whom the children of Israel learned to worship the golden calf. Egypt is as fair as a goddess, and adores herself, but destruction comes; cutting up comes (so some read it); it comes out of the north; thence the Chaldean soldiers shall come, as so many butchers or sacrificers, to kill and cut up this fair heifer.

(1.) The Egyptians shall be brought down, shall be tamed, and their tune changed: The daughters of Egypt shall be confounded (Jer 46:24), shall be filled with astonishment. Their voice shall go like a serpent, that is, it shall be very low and submissive; they shall not low like a fair heifer, that makes a great noise, but hiss out of their holes like serpents. They shall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of the conquerors, but vent their griefs in silent murmurs. They shall not now, as they used to do, answer roughly, but, with the poor, use entreaties and beg for their lives.

(2.) They shall be carried away prisoners into their enemy's land (Jer 46:19): "O thou daughter! dwelling securely and delicately in Egypt, that fruitful pleasant country, do not think this will last always, but furnish thyself to go into captivity; instead of rich clothes, which will but tempt the enemy to strip thee, get plain and warm clothes; instead of fine shoes, provide strong ones; and inure thyself to hardship, that thou mayest bear it the better." Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble. We provide for the entertainment of our friends, let us not neglect to provide for the entertainment of our enemies, nor among all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians must prepare to flee; for their cities shall be evacuated. Noph particularly shall be desolate, without an inhabitant, so general shall the slaughter and the captivity be. There are some penalties which, we say, the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even these are obnoxious:

The multitude of No shall be punished: it is called populous No, Nah 3:8. Though hand join in hand, yet they shall not escape; nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they ever so many, they shall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes shall fall; and their gods too (Jer 43:12,13), their idols and their great men. Those which they call their tutelar deities shall be no protection to them. Pharaoh shall be brought down, and all those that trust in him (Jer 46:25), particularly the Jews that came to sojourn in his country, trusting in him rather than in God. All these shall be delivered into the hands of the northern nations (Jer 46:24), into the hand not only of Nebuchadnezzar that mighty potentate, but into the hands of his servants, according to the curse on Ham's posterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they should be the servants of servants. These seek their lives, and into their hands they shall be delivered.

5. An intimation is given that in process of time Egypt shall recover itself again (Jer 46:26): Afterwards it shall be inhabited, shall be peopled again, whereas by this destruction it was almost dispeopled. Ezekiel foretels that this should be at the end of forty years, Eze 29:13. See what changes the nations of the earth are subject to, how they are emptied and increased again; and let not nations that prosper be secure, nor those that for the present are in thraldom despair.

14 Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph
and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword
shall devour round about thee.
15 Why are thy valiant *men* swept away? they stood not, because the
Lord did drive them.
16 He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said,
Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our
nativity, from the oppressing sword.
17 They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noise; he hath
passed the time appointed.
18 *As* I live, saith the King, whose name *is* The Lord of hosts, Surely as
Tabor *is* among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, *so* shall he
come.

19 O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

20 Egypt *is like* a very fair heifer, *but* destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.

21 Also her hired men *are* in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, *and* are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, *and* the time of their visitation.

22 The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

23 They shall cut down her forest, saith the Lord, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and *are* innumerable.

24 The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.

25 The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and *all* them that trust in him:

26 and I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the Lord.

27 But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid.

Comfort and peace are here spoken to the Israel of God, Jer 46:27,28. Some understand it of those whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehoahaz, but we read not of any that were carried away captives with him; it may therefore rather refer to the captives in Babylon, whom God had mercy in store for, or, more generally, to all the people of God, designed for their encouragement in the most difficult times, when the judgments of God are abroad among the nations. We had these words of comfort before, Jer 30:10,11.

1. Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cause for it; but fear not thou, O my servant Jacob! and be not dismayed, O Israel! and again, Fear thou not, O Jacob! God would not have his people to be a timorous people.

2 The wicked of the earth shall be put away like dross, not be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being saved, shall be found out and gathered though they be far off, shall be redeemed though they be held fast in captivity, and shall return.

3. The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; they flee when none pursues. But Jacob, being at home in God, shall be at rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid; for what time he is afraid he has a God to trust to.

4. The wicked God beholds afar off; but, wherever thou art, O Jacob! I am with thee, a very present help.

5. A full end shall be made of the nations that oppressed God's Israel, as Egypt and Babylon; but mercy shall be kept in store for the Israel of God: they shall be corrected, but not cast off; the correction shall be in measure, in respect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods; the Jewish nation itself has come to an end as a nation; but the gospel church, God's spiritual Israel, still continues, and will to the end of time; in that this promise is to have its full accomplishment, that, though God correct it, he will never make a full end of it.

28 Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I *am* with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

Jeremiah-47

The Prophecy concerning the Philistines

1 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against
the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.
2 Thus saith the Lord ; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and
shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all
that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men
shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.
3 At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong *horses,* at the
rushing of his chariots, *and at* the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers
shall not look back to *their* children for feebleness of hands;

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies, to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being such near neighbours to them. They were considerably humbled in David's time, but, it seems they had got head again and were a considerable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with their neighbours, which is the event here foretold.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was before Pharaoh smote Gaza. When this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish or in his return thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterwards came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here to show that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their cities in good condition, in no peril from any adversary or evil occurrent. When no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities, yet then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginning of sorrows to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy and a very formidable one shall be brought upon them: Waters rise up out of the north, Jer 47:2.

Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations (Re 17:15), sometimes great and threatening calamities (Ps 69:1); here they signify both. They rise out of the north, whence fair weather and the wind that drives away rain are said to come; but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a deluge. Probably this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would soon be overwhelmed by so vast an army.

2. That they shall all be in a consternation upon it. The men shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children: All the inhabitants of the land shall howl, so that nothing but lamentation shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, Jer 47:3. Before it comes to killing and slaying, the very stamping of the horses and rattling of the chariots, when the enemy makes his approach, shall strike a terror upon the people, to such a degree that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, for they shall not look back to their children, to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. Their hands shall be so feeble that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or they shall be in such a consternation that they shall quite forget even those pieces of themselves. Let none be over-fond of their children, nor dote upon them, since such distress may come that they may either wish they had none or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

3. That the country of the Philistines shall be spoiled and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them and in alliance with them. It is a day to spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them, Jer 47:4. Note, Those whom God will spoil must needs be spoiled; for, if God be against them, who can be for them? Tyre and Zidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in a strait, but now they shall themselves be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every helper that remains.

Note, Those that trust to help from creatures will find it cut off when they most need it and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the remnant of the country of Caphtor were is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistines (Ge 10:14), and probably when their own country was destroyed such as remained came and settled with their kinsmen the Philistines, and were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, Gaza, and Ashkelon, Jer 47:5. Baldness has come upon them; the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief, and they are cut off, with the other cities that were in the plain or valley about them. The products of their fruitful valley shall be spoiled, and made a prey of, by the conquerors.

4. That these calamities should continue long. The prophet, in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness, asks them first (Jer 47:5), How long will you cut yourselves, as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do? O how tedious will the calamity be! not only cutting, but long cutting. But he turns from the effect to the cause: They cut themselves, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore,

(1.) He bespeaks that to be still (Jer 47:6): O thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be ere thou be quiet? He begs it would put up itself into the scabbard, would devour no more flesh, drink no more blood. This expresses the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, looking with compassion, as became a man, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword. Note, War is the sword of the Lord; with it he punishes the crimes of his enemies and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun it often lasts long; the sword, once drawn, does not quickly find the way into the scabbard again; nay, some when they draw the sword throw away the scabbard, for they delight in war. So deplorable are the desolations of war that the blessings of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that swords might be beaten into ploughshares!

(2.) Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war and stops the mouth of his own complaint (Jer 47:7): How

can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against such and such places, particularly specified in its commission? There hath he appointed it. Note,

[1.] The sword of war hath its charge from the Lord of hosts. Every bullet has its charge; you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God. The war itself has its charge; he saith to it, Go, and it goes--Come, and it comes--Do this, and it does it; for he is commander-in-chief.

[2.] When the sword is drawn we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword, shall accomplish that for which he sends them.

4 because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, *and* to cut
off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the
Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of
Caphtor.
5 Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off *with* the remnant
of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?
6 O thou sword of the Lord, how long *will it be* ere thou be quiet?
put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.
7 How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against
Ashkelon, and against the seashore? there hath he appointed it.

Jeremiah-48

The Prophecy concerning Moab

1 Against Moab thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe
unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded *and* taken:
Misgab is confounded and dismayed.

We may observe in these verses,

I The author of Moab's destruction; it is the Lord of hosts, that has armies, all armies, at his command, and the God of Israel (Jer 48:1), who will herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that have always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, though Israel was forbidden to meddle with them (De 2:9), therefore the destruction

of Moab is called the work of the Lord (Jer 48:10), for it is he that pleads for Israel; and his work will exactly agree with his word, Jer 48:8.

II The instruments of it: Spoilers shall come (Jer 48:8), shall come with a sword, a sword that shall pursue them, Jer 48:2. "I will send unto him wanderers, such as come from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall cause him to wander; they seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee and others to be carried into captivity." These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they have devised evil against Heshbon, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom: Come, and let us cut it off from being a nation (Jer 48:2); nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders; they come, not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God's name, engages them to make thorough work of it (Jer 48:10): Cursed be he that does the work of the Lord deceitfully, this bloody work, this destroying work; though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is the work of the Lord, and must not be done by the halves.

The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret instinct (says Mr. Gataker), to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not, out of foolish pity, keep back their sword from blood; they would thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it, upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites and Ahab by letting Benhadad go. Thy life shall go for his life. To this work is applied that general rule given to all that are employed in any service for God, Cursed by he that does the work of the Lord deceitfully or negligently, that pretends to do it, but does it not to purpose, makes a show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will suit his own purposes, or that is slothful in business for God and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, Mal 1:14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

2 *There shall be* no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from *being* a nation.

Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee.

3 A voice of crying *shall be* from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction.

4 Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.

The woeful instances and effects of this destruction. The cities shall be laid in ruins; they shall be spoiled (Jer 48:1) and cut down (Jer 48:2); they shall be desolate (Jer 48:9), without any to dwell therein; there shall be no houses to dwell in, or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. Every city shall be spoiled and no city shall escape. The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies' power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies' pity and favour. The country also shall be wasted, the valley shall perish, and the plain be destroyed, Jer 48:8. The corn and the flocks, which used to cover the plains and make the valleys rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten up, trodden down, or carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape: The priests and princes shall go together into captivity. Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who, they hope, will protect them, shall share with them in the ruin; his temples shall be laid in ashes and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of all this will be,

1. Great shame and confusion: Kirjathaim is confounded, and Misgah is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities: There shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon (so it might be read, Jer 48:2); they shall no more boast of the strength of that city when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. Nor shall they any more boast of their gods (Jer 48:13); they shall be ashamed of Chemosh (ashamed of all the prayers they have made to and all the confidence they put in that dunghill deity), as Israel was ashamed of Beth-el, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians; nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans. Note, Those that will not be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by

woeful experience the utter inability of the gods they have served to do them any service.

2. There will be great sorrow; there is a voice of crying heard (Jer 48:3) and the cry is nothing but spoiling and great destruction. Alas! alas! Moab is destroyed, Jer 48:4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the little ones have caused a cry to be heard, the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the valleys, and you meet with continual weeping (weeping with weeping); all are in tears; you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it would have been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it; but it is so great that it cannot be hid,

3. There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, "Away, away! flee; save your lives (Jer 48:6); shift for your own safety with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the heath, or grig, or dry shrub, in the wilderness; think not of carrying away any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, Mt 24:16-18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly; and therefore give wings unto Moab (Jer 48:9); that would be the greatest kindness you could do them; that is what they will call for, O that we had wings like a dove! for unless they have wings, and can fly, there will be no escaping."

5 For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.

6 Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.

7 For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity *with* his priests and his princes together.

The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them.

1. It is because they have been secure, and have trusted in their wealth and strength, in their works and in their treasures, Jer 48:7. They had taken a great deal of pains to fortify their cities and make large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers, so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance. They trusted in the abundance of their riches and strengthened themselves in their wickedness, Ps 52:7. Now, for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of the vanity and folly of their carnal confidences, God will send an enemy that will master their works and rifle their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature which we repose that confidence in which should be reposed in God only. The reed will break that is leaned upon. 2. It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of the peace and prosperity, Jer 48:11.

(1.) They had been long undisturbed: Moab has been at ease from his youth. It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and had enjoyed great tranquillity, though a small country and surrounded with potent neighbours. God's Israel were afflicted from their youth (Ps 129:1,2), but Moab at ease from his youth. He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, has not known any troublesome weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has not been unsettled, nor any way made uneasy; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel have often done, and yet Moab is a wicked idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones, Ps 83:3,6.

Note, There are many that persist in unrepented iniquity and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity.

(2.) They had been as long corrupt and unreformed: He has settled on his lees; he has been secure and sensual in his prosperity, has rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees. His taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed; he is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world it is no marvel if they are bad as they

used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, therefore fear not God, their hearts and lives are unchanged, Ps 55:19.

8 And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord hath spoken.

9 Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.

10 Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed *be* he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

11 Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

12 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.

13 And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence.

14 How say ye, We *are* mighty and strong men for the war?

15 Moab is spoiled, and gone up *out of* her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name *is* The Lord of hosts.

The destruction is here further prophesied of very largely and with a great copiousness and variety of expression, and very pathetically and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life, which is liable to such lamentable occurrences, and with the power of God's anger and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating on the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God and of his wrath, than to enquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here used.

I. It is a surprising destruction, and very sudden, that is here threatened. They were very secure, thought themselves strong for war and able to deal with the most powerful enemy (Jer 48:14), and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor so much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for the affliction hastens fast (Jer 48:16) and will soon come to a crisis. The enemy shall fly as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly shall he come (Jer 48:40), as an eagle flies upon his prey, and he shall spread his wings, the wings of his army, over Moab; he shall surround it, that none may escape. The strong-holds of Moab are taken by surprise (Jer 48:41), so that all their strength stood them in no stead; and this made the hearts even of their mighty men to fail, for they had not time to recollect the considerations that might have animated them. It requires a more than ordinary degree of courage not to be afraid of sudden fear.

II. It is an utter destruction, and such as lays Moab all in ruins: Moab is spoiled (Jer 48:15), quite spoiled, is confounded and broken down (Jer 48:20); their cities are laid in ashes, or seized by the enemy so that they are forced to quit them, Jer 48:15. Divers cities are here named, upon which judgment has come, and the list concludes with an et cetera--and such like. What occasion was there for him to mention more particulars when it comes upon all the cities of Moab in general, far and near? Jer 48:21-24.

Note, When iniquity is universal we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority: The horn of Moab is cut off, the horn of its strength and power, both offensive and defensive; his arm is broken, that he can neither give a blow nor prevent a blow, Jer 48:25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it? His chosen young men have gone down to the slaughter, Jer 48:15. They went down to the battle promising themselves that they should return victorious; but God told them that they went down to the slaughter; so sure are those to fall against whom God fights. In a word, Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, Jer 48:42. Those that are enemies to God's people will soon be made no people.

16 The calamity of Moab *is* near to come, and his affliction hasteth
fast.
17 All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his
name, say, How is the strong staff broken, *and* the beautiful rod!
18 Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from *thy* glory,
and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, *and*
he shall destroy thy strongholds.
19 O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that
fleeth, and her that escapeth, *and* say, What is done?
20 Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it
in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled,
21 and judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and
upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath,
22 and upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim,
23 and upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon,
24 and upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the
land of Moab, far or near.
25 The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the Lord.
26 Make ye him drunken; for he magnified *himself* against the
Lord: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in
derision.
27 For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among
thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.

It is a shameful destruction and such as shall expose them to contempt: Moab is made drunk (Jer 48:26), and he that is made drunk is made vile; he shall wallow in his vomit, and become an odious spectacle, and shalljustly be in derision. Let the Moabites be intoxicated with the cup of God's wrath till they stagger and fall, and be brought to their wits' end, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions but of their counsels. And again (Jer 48:39): Moab shall be a derision and a dismaying to all about him; they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, Those that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

28 O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and
be like the dove *that* maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth.

29 We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.

30 I know his wrath, saith the Lord; but *it shall* not *be* so; his lies shall not so effect *it*.

It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved and brought upon themselves by sin.

1 The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, Jer 48:29. We have all heard of the pride of Moab; his neighbours took notice of it; it has testified to his face, as Israel's did; he is exceedingly proud, and grows worse and worse. Observe his loftiness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness; the multiplying of words to the same purport intimates in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them Isa 16:6, but here it is expressed more largely that there. Since then they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbled; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction of which pride is the forerunner. Two instances are here given of the pride of Moab:--

(1.) He had conducted himself insolently towards God. He must be brought down with shame (Jer 48:26), for he has magnified himself against the Lord; and again (Jer 48:42), he shall be destroyed from being a people, for this very reason. The Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves a match for the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance.

(2.) He had conducted himself scornfully towards Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles; into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was a derision to him, Jer 48:26,27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolations of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them, they skipped for joy. Many, in such a case, entertain in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike

to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it; it is so invidious a thing. But the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed the enmity they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite they met with in distress and laughing at him, which was as inhuman as it was impious and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note, Those that deride others in distress will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. Those that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of God's church, shall not long go unpunished.

2. Besides this they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, Jer 48:30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, that it was but in sport and to make themselves merry; but, says God, "I know his wrath; I know it comes from the old enmity he has to the seed of Abraham and the worshippers of the true God. I know he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation. He now tells the Chaldeans what bad people the Jews are, and irritates them against them; but it shall not be so as he expects; his lies shall not so effect it. The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself." Some read it, I know his rage. Is it not so? Is he not very furious against the people of God? And his lies I know also. Do they not do so? Do they not belie them? Note, All the fury and all the falsehood of the church's enemies are perfectly known to God, whatever the pretenses are with which they think to cover them, Isa 37:28.

31 Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab;
mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres.

It is a lamentable destruction; it will be just matter of mourning and will turn joy into heaviness.

1 The prophet that foretels it does himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures and concern for human nature. The prophet will himself howl for Moab; his very heart shall mourn for them (Jer 48:31); he will weep for the vine of Sibmah (Jer 48:32); his heart shall sound like pipes for Moab, Jer 48:36. Though the

destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pain to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. These passages, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab (Isa 15:16); for, though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit, and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of those that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

2 The Moabites themselves shall lament it; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in glory, in the midst of wealth, and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall sit in thirst, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, Jer 48:18. It is time for them to sit in thirst, and inure themselves to hardship, when the spoiler has come, who will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive to know how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one that escapes, What is done? Jer 48:19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will howl and cry, in bitterness and anguish of spirit (Jer 48:20); they will abandon themselves to solitude, to lament the desolations of their country; they will leave the cities that used to be full of mirth, and dwell in the rock where they may have their full of melancholy; they shall no more be singing birds, but mourning birds, like the dove (Jer 48:28); the doves of the valley, Eze 7:16. Let those that give themselves up to mirth know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme that they shall make themselves bald and cut themselves (Jer 48:37), which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. Job indeed rent his mantle and shaved his head, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion rises ever so high wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. The sorrow shall be universal (Jer 48:38):

There shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bemoan themselves, and in all the streets, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their grief and fears and in propagating them; for they see all lost: "I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, which shall not be regarded and cannot be pieced again." That which Moab used to rejoice in was their pleasant fruits and the abundance of their rich wines. The delights of sense were all the matter of their joy. Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make all their mirth to cease, Ho 2:11,12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, have gone over the sea (Jer 48:32), are carried into other countries, to be planted there. The spoiler has fallen upon thy summer-fruits and upon thy vintage, and it is this that makes the cry of Heshbon to reach even to Elealeh, Jer 48:34. Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab, Jer 48:33. If the wine fail from the wine-presses, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off. Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting.

Note, Those who make the delights of sense their chief joy, their exceeding joy, since these are things they may easily be deprived of in a little time subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas those who rejoice in God may do that even when the fig-tree does not blossom and there is no fruit in the vine. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too: Even the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate (Jer 48:34), and therefore their grief grew extravagantly loud and noisy, and their lamentations were heard in all placed like the lowing of a heifer of three years old. The expressions here are borrowed from Isa 15:5,6.

3. All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole with them on their ruin (Jer 48:17): All you that are about him bemoan him, Let him have that allay to his grief, let him see himself pities by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance, who do but know his name and have heard of his reputation, take notice of his fall, and say, How is the strong staff

broken, whose strength was the terror of its enemies, and the beautiful rod, whose beauty was the pride of its friends! Let the nations take notice of this and receive instruction. Let none be puffed up with or put confidence in their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

32 O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer:
thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach *even* to the sea of Jazer:
the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon thy vintage.
33 And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the
land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the winepresses:
none shall tread with shouting; *their* shouting *shall be* no shouting.
34 From the cry of Heshbon *even* unto Elealeh, *and even* unto Jahaz,
have they uttered their voice, from Zoar *even* unto Horonaim, *as* a
heifer of three years old: for the waters also of Nimrim shall be
desolate.
35 Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the Lord, him that
offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his
gods.

It is the destruction of that which is dear to them, not only of their summer fruits and their vintage, but of their wealth (Jer 48:36): The riches that he has gotten have perished, though he thought he had laid them up very safely, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone.

Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest is as liable to perishing as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open field. Riches are shedding things, and, like dust as they are, slip through our fingers even when we are in most care to hold them fast and gripe them hard. Yet this is not the worst; even those whose religion was false and foolish were fond of it above any thing, and, such as it was, would not part with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening (Jer 48:35), that God will cause to cease him that offers in the high places, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste, and the priests themselves, who burnt incense to their gods, shall be slain or carried into captivity, Jer 48:7. Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

36 Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches *that* he hath gotten are perished.

37 For every head *shall be* bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands *shall be* cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

38 *There shall be* lamentation generally upon all the housetops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure, saith the Lord.

39 They shall howl, *saying*, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him.

40 For thus saith the Lord ; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

41 Kerioth is taken, and the strongholds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

42 And Moab shall be destroyed from *being* a people, because he hath magnified *himself* against the Lord.

43 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *shall be* upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the Lord.

44 He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, *even* upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the Lord.

It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment shall perish by another: Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon them, Jer 48:43. There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general (Isa 24:17,18), that those who flee from the fear shall fall into the pit and those who come up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare, is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab (Jer 48:44); for it is the year of their visitation, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be known by the judgments which he executes, for he is the King whose name is the Lord of hosts (Jer 48:15); he is not only the King who has authority to give

judgment, but he is the Lord of hosts, who is able to do what he has determined.

The figurative expressions used Jer 48:44 are explained in one instance (Jer 48:45): Those that fled out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces put themselves under the shadow of Heshbon, stood there, and supposed they stood safely, as now armies sometimes retire under the cannon of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they should be disappointed, for, when they flee out of the pit, they fall into the snare; Heshbon, which they thought would shelter them, devours them as Moses had foretold long since (Nu 21:28): A fire has gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon, and devours those that come from all the corners of Moab, and fastens upon the crown of the head of the tumultuous noisy ones, or of the revellers, or children of noise, not meant of the rude clamorous multitude, but of the great men, who bluster, and hector, and make a noise; the judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? We have it (Jer 48:46): "Woe be to thee, O Moab! thou art undone; the people that worship Chemosh perish, and are gone; farewell, Moab. Thy sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, have gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoiced in."

45 They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.

46 Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.

47 Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord. Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab.

Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of captivity in the latter days. God, who brings them into captivity, will bring again their captivity, Jer 48:47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! Even with Moabites he will not contend for ever, nor be always wrath. When Israel returned, Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people to hope for that salvation which

even Moabites shall share in. Yet it looks further, to gospel times; the Jews themselves refer it to the days of the Messiah; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by divine grace, which shall make them free, free indeed. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends; it ends comfortably: Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

Jeremiah-49

The Prophecy concerning the Ammonites

1 Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the Lord ; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why *then* doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?

The Ammonites were next, both in kindred and neighbourhood, to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar. Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half, on the other side Jordan, and was but a bad neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they shall have a share in these circular predictions.

1. An action is here brought, in God's name, against the Ammonites, for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful possessions of the tribe of Gad, that lay next them, Jer 49:1. A writ of enquiry is brought to discover what title they had to those territories, which, upon the carrying away of the Gileadites, by the king of Assyria (2Ki 15:29,1Ch 5:26), were left almost dispeopled, at least unguarded, and an easy prey to the next invader. "What! Does it escheat ob defectum sanguinis--for what of an heir? Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no heir? Are there no Gadites left, to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or, if there were not, are there no Israelites, none left of Judah, that are nearer akin to them than you are?" Why then does their king, as if he were entitled to the forfeited estates, or Milcom, their idol, as if he had the right to dispose of it to his worshippers, inherit Gad, and his people dwell in the cities which fell by lot to that tribe of God's people. Nay, there were sons and heirs of their own body, en ventre de sa mere--in their mother's womb, and the

Ammonites, to prevent their claim, most barbarously murdered them (Am 1:13): They ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border, that, having seized it, none might rise up hereafter to recover it from them. Thus they magnified themselves against their border and boasted it was their own, Zep 2:8.

Note, Though among men might often prevails against right, yet that might shall be controlled by the Almighty, who sits in the throne, judging right; and those will find themselves mistaken who think every thing their own which they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to. As there is justice owing to owners, so also to their heirs, when they are dead, whom it is a great sin to defraud, though they either know not their right or know not how to come at it. This shall be reckoned for particularly, when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

2. Judgment is here given against them for this violence.

(1.) Terrors shall come upon them: God will cause an alarm of war to be heard, even in Rabbah, their capital city and a very strong one, Jer 49:1. The Lord God of hosts, who has all armies at his command, will bring a fear upon them from all that be about them, Jer 49:5. Note, God has many ways to terrify those who have been a terror to his people.

(2.) Their cities shall be laid in ruins: Rabbah, the mother-city, shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters, the other cities that have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, shall be burnt with fire; so that the inhabitants shall be forced to quit them, and they shall cry, and gird themselves with sackcloth, as having lost all they had, and not knowing whither to betake themselves.

(3.) Their country, which they were so proud of, shall be wasted (Jer 49:4): Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, and trustest in thy treasures, O backsliding daughter? They are charged with backsliding or turning away from God and from his worship, for they were the posterity of righteous Lot. It is true, they had never

been so in covenant with God as Israel was; yet all idolaters may be called backsliders, for the worship of the true God was prior to that of false gods. They were untoward and refractory (so some read it); and, when they had forsaken their God, they gloried in their valleys, particularly one that was called the flowing valley, because it flowed with all good things. These they had violently taken away from Israel, and gloried in it when they had done so. They gloried in the strength of their valleys, so surrounded with mountains that they were inaccessible, gloried in the products of them, gloried in the treasures they got together out of them, saying, Who shall come unto me? While they bathed themselves in the pleasures of their country, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they should never be disturbed in the enjoyment of them: To-morrow shall be as this day; therefore they set God and his judgments at defiance; they are proud, voluptuous, and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so: Note, Those who backslide and turn away from God have little reason either to take complacency or to put confidence in any worldly enjoyments whatsoever, Ho 9:1.

(4.) Their people, from the least to the greatest, shall be forced out of the country. Some shall flee to seek for shelter, others shall be carried into captivity, so that their land shall be quite evacuated: Their king and his princes, nay, and Milcom, their god, and his priests, shall go into captivity (Jer 49:3), and every man shall be driven out right forth, shall take the next way, and make the best of it in his flight (Jer 49:5), forgetting the valleys, the flowing valleys, which now fail them. And, to complete their misery, none shall gather up him that wanders, none shall open their doors to them, as Jael to Sisera, to entertain them; and those that flee shall be so much in care to secure themselves that they shall not take notice of others, no, not of those that are nearest to them, that wander, and are at a loss which way to go, as Jer 47:3.

(5.) Then the country of the Ammonites shall fall into the hands of the remaining Israelites (Jer 49:2): Then shall Israel be heir to those that were his heirs, shall possess himself of their land who had possessed themselves of his, by way of reprisal. Note, The equity of divine Providence is to be acknowledged when the losses of the injured are recompensed out of the unjust gains of

the injurious. Though the enemies of God's Israel may make a prey of them for a while, the tables will shortly be turned.

3. Yet there is a prospect given them of mercy hereafter (Jer 49:6), as before to Moab. The day will come when the captivity of the children of Ammon will be brought again; for so it is in human affairs: the wheel goes round.

2 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will cause
an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall
be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then
shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the Lord.
3 Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah,
gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges;
for their king shall go into captivity, *and* his priests and his princes
together.
4 Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O
backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, *saying*, Who
shall come unto me?
5 Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord God of hosts,
from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every
man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth.
6 And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of
Ammon, saith the Lord.

The Prophecy concerning Edom

7 Concerning Edom, thus saith the Lord of hosts; *Is* wisdom no
more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their
wisdom vanished?
8 Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will
bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time *that* I will visit him.
9 If grape gatherers come to thee, would they not leave *some* gleaning
grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.
10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and
he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his
brethren, and his neighbors, and he *is* not.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah: they also were old enemies to the Israel of

God; but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand, and is foretold, not only for warning to them, but for comfort to the Israel of God, whose afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them and joy in their calamity, Ps 137:7. Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is concerning Edom; for, all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions. Now here it is foretold,

That the country of Edom should be all wasted and made desolate, that the calamity of Esau should be brought upon him, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, Jer 49:8. The time is at hand when God will visit him, and call him to an account, and then they shall flee from the sword, turn back from the battle, and dwell deep in some close caverns, where they shall hide themselves. All they have shall be carried off by the conqueror; whereas grape-gatherers will leave some gleanings, and even thieves know when they have enough and will destroy no further, those that destroy them shall never be satiated, (Jer 49:9,10); they shall make Esau quite bare, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come at their most hidden treasure, shall discover even the secret places where they thought to secure their wealth, and rifle them, so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves nor their children, that might be concealed in a little room: He shall not be able to hide himself, and his seed too is spoiled. His brethren the Moabites, and his neighbours the Philistines, whom he might have expected succours from, or at least shelter with, are spoiled as well as he and disabled to do him any service. And he is not, or there is not he, there is none to him, none left him, that may say what follows (Jer 49:11), Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive. When they are flying, or dying, there shall be none left, no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish officers to take care of their wives and children that they leave behind. Edom is not, he is cut off and gone; nor is there any to say, Leave me thy orphans. If the master of a family be cut off, or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with, whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The

Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguishing them from the Edomites in this calamity; and they read it, "But you, O house of Israel! you shall not leave your orphans; I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word. Whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours."

Note, it is an unspeakable comfort to the people of God, when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may, in faith, commit them to him and encourage them to trust in him; and, though they cannot promise themselves great things in the world for them, yet they may hope that he will preserve them alive, always, provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other than to be made a desolation and a reproach; for the decree has gone forth; God hath sworn it by himself (Jer 49:13), that their cities shall be wasted, nay, they shall be perpetual wastes, they shall be made mean and despicable; they had made a mighty figure, but God will make them small among the heathen; and those that despised God's people shall themselves be despised among men (Jer 49:15,Ob 1:2), nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a prodigy (Jer 49:17): Edom shall be such a desolation that every one who goes by shall be astonished; nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror; Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrah, none shall care for coming near the ruins of it, no man shall abide there (Jer 49:18), such a frightful place shall it be made.

11 Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve *them* alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

12 For thus saith the Lord; Behold, they whose judgment *was* not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and *art* thou he *that* shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink *of it*.

That their destruction should be inevitable and very remarkable.

1. God hath determined it (Jer 49:12); he hath said it; nay (Jer 49:13), he hath sworn it, that the Edomites shall not go unpunished, but that they shall drink the cup of trembling, which is put into the hands of all their neighbours; even those whose judgment, or doom, was not to drink of the cup, who had not so well deserved it as they had done, nations that had not been such enemies to Israel as they

had been, or Israel itself, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, who kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption; and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup; and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No; they shall surely drink of it. Note, When God punishes the less guilty it is folly for the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house it will reach the strangers.

2. All the world shall take notice of it (Jer 49:21): The earth is moved, and all the nations are put into a concern, at the noise of their fall; the news of it shall make them tremble. The noise of the outcry is heard to the Red Sea, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom. So loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors and the shrieks of the conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nations, that is shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red Sea to take in lading (1Ki 9:26), and then they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shore. Note, The fall of those who have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power will make so much the greater noise.

13 For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall
become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the
cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

14 I have heard a rumor from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent unto
the heathen, *saying*, Gather ye together, and come against her, and
rise up to the battle.

That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God; he summons them into this service (Jer 49:14): I have heard a rumour, or report, from the Lord, heard it by the prophecy of Obadiah, heard it by a whisper to myself, that an ambassador, or herald, or messenger, is sent to the Gentiles, who are to lay Edom waste, saying, Gather you together, muster all the forces you can, and come against her; for (Jer 49:20) this is the counsel that he hath taken against Edom. The matter is settled, the decree has gone forth, and there is no resisting it. God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in wasting it shall come swiftly and strongly. Nebuchadnezzar is he or whom it is here foretold,

1. That he shall come up like a lion, with fierceness and fury, like a lion enraged by the swelling of Jordan overflowing his banks, which forces him out of his covert by the water-side into the higher grounds, Jer 49:19. He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way. He shall come against the habitation of the strong, the forts and castles; and I will cause him to come suddenly into the land (so the next words might well be read), so as to find them unprovided with necessaries for a defence; for I will look out a chosen man to appoint over her, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people; for when God has work to do he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in doing it: "Who is like me for choosing the instruments, and spiriting them for the work? And who will appoint me the time? Who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet me? Who will join issue with me in battle? And, when I send a lion into the flock, who is that shepherd that can, or dare, stand before me, or against me, to oppose that lion, and think to rescue any of the flock?"

Note, When God has work to do of any kind he will soon find those that are able to engage in it, and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their peopled dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion to do it: Even the least of the flock shall draw them out (Jer 49:20); the meanest servant in Nebuchadnezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall draw them out for the slaughter, shall force them to flee, or to surrender, and make their habitations desolate with them. God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites all hands shall be employed and the poorest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them.

2. Nebuchadnezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds (Jer 49:22): He shall fly as the eagle upon his prey, so swiftly, so strongly, shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, to secure it for himself (as before, Jer 48:40), and immediately the hearts of the mighty men shall fail them, for they shall see he is an enemy that it is in vain to struggle with.

15 For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, *and* despised among men.

16 Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, *and* the pride of thine heart, O

thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.

That the Edomites' confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress.

1. They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them in no stead. This is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, Jer 49:7. That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politics; and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their counsels, and be so baffled in all their designs, that people shall ask, with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites? Is wisdom no more in Teman? Have the wise men of the east country (1Ki 4:30) become fools? Are those at their wits' end that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? Has counsel perished from the understanding men? It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy he infatuates. See Job 12:20. Has their wisdom vanished? Is it tired? (so some); is it worn out? (so others); has it become useless? so others. Yes, it will do them no service when God comes forth to contend with them.

2. They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them, Jer 49:16. They had been a terror to all their neighbours; every body feared them and truckled to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbouring nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terribleness of theirs deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessibleness; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. High as they are, God will bring them down; for, as there is no wisdom, so there is no might against the Lord, See these expressions, Ob 1:3,4,8.

17 Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.

18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor *cities* thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

19 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who *is* a chosen *man, that* I may appoint over her? for who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?

20 Therefore hear the counsel of the Lord, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

21 The earth is moved at the noise of their fall; at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea.

22 Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The Prophecy concerning Damascus

23 Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad; for they have heard evil tidings: they are faint-hearted; *there is* sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Canaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that: yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are names (Jer 49:23), and the palaces of Ben-hadad, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin, Jer 49:27; see also Am 1:4. Some think Ben-hadad (the son of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgment of Damascus,

1. It begins with a terrible fright and faint-heartedness. They hear evil tidings, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and they are confounded; they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, they are faint-hearted, they have no spirit left them, they are like the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet (Isa 57:20), or like men in a storm at sea (Ps 17:26); or the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea-coast, Jer 49:23. See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour.

Damascus now waxes feeble (Jer 49:24), a city that thought she could look the most formidable enemy in the face now turns herself to flee, and owns it is to no more purpose to think of contending with her fate than for a woman in labour to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was a city of praise (Jer 49:25), not praise to God, but to herself, a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was a city of joy, where there was an affluence and confluence of all the delights of the sons of men, and abundance of mirth in the enjoyment of them. We read it (though there is no necessity for this) the city of my joy, which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure. Or it may be the speech of the king lamenting the ruin of the city of his joy. But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief.

Note, Those deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God in his providence can soon cast a damp upon them and put an end to them. He can soon make a city of praise to be a reproach and a city of joy to be a terror to itself.

2. It ends with a terrible fall and fire.

(1.) The inhabitants are slain (Jer 49:26): The young men, who should fight the enemy and defend the city, shall fall by the sword in her streets; and all the men of war, mighty men, expert in war, and engaged in the service of their country, shall be cut off.

(2.) The city is laid in ashes (Jer 49:27): The fire is kindled by the besiegers in the wall, but it shall devour all before it, the

palaces of Ben-hadad particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now thus visited.

24 Damascus is waxed feeble, *and* turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on *her:* anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

25 How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!

26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord of hosts.

27 And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The Prophecy concerning Kedar and Hazor

28 Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the Lord; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.

These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadnezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar (who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the Stony), and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities, of Hazor, that joined to them, who perhaps were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor, in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but, being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia and associated themselves with the Kedarenes. Concerning this people we may here observe,

I. What was their present state and posture? They dwelt in tents and had no walls, but curtains (Jer 49:20), no fortified cities; they had neither gates nor bars, Jer 49:31. They were shepherds, and had no treasures, but stock upon land, no money, but flocks and camels. They had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders, no merchants, for they dwelt alone, Jer 49:31. Those of other nations neither came among them nor traded with them; but they lived within themselves, content with the products and pleasures of their own country. This was their manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And,

1. They were very rich; though they had not trade, no treasures, yet they are here said to be a wealthy nation (Jer 49:31), because they had a sufficiency to answer all the occasions of human life and they were content with it. Note, Those are truly rich who have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or to the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people; they may be found among shepherds that dwell in tents.

2. They were very easy: They dwelt without care. Their wealth was such as nobody envied them, or, if any did, they might come peaceably and enjoy the like; and therefore they feared nobody. Note, Those that live innocently and honestly may live very securely, though they have neither gates nor bars.

II The design of the king of Babylon against them and the descent he make upon them: He has taken counsel against you and has conceived a purpose against you, Jer 49:30. That proud man resolves it shall never be said that he, who had conquered so many strong cities, will leave those unconquered that dwell in tents. It was strange that that eagle should stoop to catch these flies, that so great a prince should play at such small game; but all is fish that comes to the ambitious covetous man's net. Note, It will not always secure men from suffering wrong to be able to say that they have done no wrong; not to have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadnezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people had lived inoffensively among their neighbours, as many do, who yet, like them, are guilty before God; and it was to punish them for their offences against him that God said (Jer 49:28): Arise, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God says to the Chaldeans (Jer 49:31): "Arise, get up to the wealthy nation that dwells without care; go and give them an alarm, that none may imagine their mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved."

III. The great amazement that this put them into, and the great desolation hereby made among them: They shall cry unto them; those on the borders shall send the alarm into all parts of the country, which shall be put into the utmost confusion by it; they shall cry, "Fear is on every side--We are surrounded by the enemy." the very terror of which shall drive them all to their feet and they shall none of them have any heart to make resistance. The enemy shall proclaim fear upon them, or against them, on every side. They need not strike a stroke; they shall shout them out of their tents, Jer 49:29. Upon the first alarm, they shall flee, get far off, and dwell deep (Jer 49:30), as the Edomites, Jer 49:8. And it will be found that this fear on every side is not groundless, for their calamity shall be brought from all sides thereof, Jer 49:31. No marvel there are fears on every side when there are foes on every side. The issue will be,

1. What they have will be a prey to the Chaldeans; they shall take to themselves their curtains and vessels; though they are but plain and coarse, and they have better of their own, yet they shall take them for spite, and spoil for spoiling sake. They shall carry away their tents and their flocks, Jer 49:29. Their camels shall be a booty to those that came for nothing else, Jer 49:31.

2. It is not said that any of them shall be slain, for they attempt not to make any resistance and their tents and flocks are accepted as a ransom for their lives; but they shall be dislodged and dispersed; though now they dwell in the utmost corners, out of the way, and therefore they think out of the reach, of danger (by this character those people were distinguished, Jer 9:23,25,26), yet they shall be scattered thence into all winds, into all parts of the world. Note, Privacy and obscurity are not always a protection and security. Many that affect to be strangers to the world may yet by unthought-of providences be forced into it; and those that live most retired may have the same lot with those that thrust themselves forth and lie most exposed.

3. Their country shall lie uninhabited; for, lying remote and out of all high roads, and having neither cities nor lands inviting to strangers, none shall care to succeed them, so that Hazor shall be a desolation for ever, Jer 49:33. If busy men be displaced, many

strive to get into their placed, because they lived great; but here are easy quiet men displaced, and no man cared to abide where they did, because they lived meanly.

29 Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear *is* on every side.

30 Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the Lord ; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you.

31 Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which have neither gates nor bars, *which* dwell alone.

32 And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them *that are* in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the Lord.

33 And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, *and* a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor *any* son of man dwell in it.

The Prophecy concerning Elam

34 The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

35 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might.

This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable that the other prophecies against the Gentiles, going before, were at the same time. The Elamites were the Persians, descended from Elam the son of Shem (Ge 10:22); yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay nearest to the Jews which was called Elymais, and adjoined to Media-Elam, which, say they, had acted against God's Israel, bore the quiver in an expedition against them (Isa 22:6), and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold, in general, that God will bring evil upon them, even his fierce anger, and that is evil enough, it has all evil in it, Jer 49:37. In particular,

1. Their forces shall be disabled, and rendered incapable of doing them any service. The Elamites were famous archers, but, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam (Jer 49:35), will ruin their artillery, and then the chief of their might is gone. God often orders it so that that which we most trust to first fails us, and that which was the chief of our might proves the least of our help.

2. Their people shall be dispersed. There shall come enemies against them from all parts of the world, and they shall all carry some of them away captive into their respective countries; while others shall flee, some one way and some another, to shift for themselves, so that there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come, Jer 49:36. The four winds shall be brought upon them; the storm shall come sometimes from one point and sometimes from another, to toss and hurry them several ways. We know not from what point the wind of trouble may blow; but, if God encompass us with his favour, we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries; they shall be dismayed before their enemies; but, as if that were not enough, I will send the sword after them, Jer 49:37.

Note, God can make his judgments follow those that think by flight to escape them and to get out of the reach of them. Evil pursues sinners.

3. Their princes shall be destroyed and the government quite changed (Jer 49:38): I will set my throne in Elam. The throne of Nebuchadnezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elymais. Or it may be meant of the throne on which God sits for judgment; he will make them know that he reigns, that he judges in the earth, that kings and princes are accountable to him, and that high as they are he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, Ge 14:1. Chedorlaomer was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successors, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than another man. When God sets his throne in Elam he will

destroy thence the king and the princes that are, and set up whom he pleases.

4. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual (Jer 49:39): In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam. When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, brought the empire into the hands of the Persians, the Elamites no doubt returned in triumph out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country. But this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those who, when the Holy Ghost was given, heard spoken in their own tongues the wonderful works of God (Ac 2:9,11), and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. If the Son make you free, then you shall be free indeed.

36 And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

37 For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, *even* my fierce anger, saith the Lord; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them:

38 and I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the Lord.

39 But it shall come to pass in the latter days, *that* I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah-50

The Prophecy concerning Babylon

1 The word that the Lord spake against Babylon *and* against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

I. Here is a word spoken against Babylon by him whose works all agree with his word and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind of Jeremiah, and yet he must foretel the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whoever are our friends, if,

notwithstanding, they are God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

1 The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of as a thing done, Jer 50:2. let it be published to the nations as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let them hang out the flag, as is usual on days of triumph, to give notice of it; let all the world take notice of it: Babylon is taken. Let God have the honour of it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not conceal it. Take care that it be known, that the Lord may be known by those judgments which he executes, Ps 9:16.

2. It is spoken of as a thing done thoroughly. For,

(1.) The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two principal deities; they shall be confounded, and the images of them broken to pieces.

(2.) The country shall be laid waste (Jer 50:3) out of the north, from Media, which lay north of Babylon, and from Assyria, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; thence the nation shall come that shall make her land desolate. Their land was north of the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatened with evil from the north (Omne malum ab aquilone--Every evil comes from the north); but God will find out nations yet further north to come upon them. The pomp and power of old Rome were brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

II. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both the children of Israel and of Judah; for many there were of the ten tribes that associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here,

1. It is promised that they shall return to their God first and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and

reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, Jer 50:4,5.

(1.) They shall lament after the Lord (as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1Sa 7:2); they shall go weeping. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world as those when they went into captivity, but from godly sorrow; they are tears of repentance for sin, tears of joy for the goodness of God, in the dawning of the day of their deliverance, which, for aught that appears, does more towards the bringing of them to mourn for sin than all the calamities of their captivity; that prevails to lead them to repentance when the other did not prevail to drive them to it. Note, It is a good sign that God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy when they begin to be tenderly affected under his hand.

(2.) They shall enquire after the Lord; they shall not sink under their sorrows, but bestir themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had: They shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God. Those that seek the Lord must seek him sorrowing, as Christ's parents sought him, Lu 2:48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy, for he will be found of those that so seek him. They shall seek the Lord as their God, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are confounded and broken it will be seasonable for them to enquire after their own God and to return to him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only.

(3.) They shall think of returning to their own country again; they shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the holy hill of Zion, on which once stood the house of the Lord their God (Jer 50:5): They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Zion was the city of their solemnities; they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity (Ps 137:1); but, now that the ruin of Babylon gave them some hopes of a release, they talk of nothing else but of going back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they set their faces thitherward. They long to be there; they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short of it. The journey is long and they know not the road, but they will ask the way, for they will press forward till they come to

Zion; and, as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in care not to miss the way. This represents the return of poor souls to God. Heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end; on this they have set their hearts; towards this they have set their faces, and therefore they ask the way thither. They do not ask the way to heaven and set their faces towards the world; nor set their faces towards heaven and go on at a venture without asking the way.

But in all true converts there are both a sincere desire to attain the end and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is to see people thus asking the way to heaven with their faces thitherward.

(4.) They shall renew their covenant to walk with God more closely for the future: Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. They had broken covenant with God, had in effect separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to join themselves to him again, by engaging themselves afresh to be his. Thus, when backsliders return, they must do their first works, must renew the covenant they first made; and it must be a perpetual covenant, that must never be broken; and, in order to that, must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

2. Their present case is lamented as very sad, and as having been long so: "My people" (for he owns them as his now that they are returning to him) "have been lost sheep (Jer 50:6); they have gone from mountain to hill, have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture; they have forgotten their resting-place in their own country and cannot find their way to it." And that which aggravated their misery was,

(1.) That they were led astray by their own shepherds, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and so provoked God to turn them out of their own land. It is bad with a people when their leaders cause them to err, when those that should direct them, and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them.

(2.) That in their wanderings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were entitled to them, as waifs and strays that had no owner (Jer 50:7); it is with them as with wandering sheep, all that found them have devoured them and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries they laughed at them, telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved; that was far from justifying those who did them wrong, yet they bantered them with this excuse, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord; but they could not pretend that they had sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as the habitation of justice and the hope of their fathers; they had put a contempt upon the temple and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justify their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had forsaken the habitation of justice and him that was the hope of their fathers.

3. They are called upon to hasten away, as soon as ever the door of liberty was opened to them (Jer 50:8): "Remove, not only out of the borders, but out of the midst of Babylon; though you be ever so well seated there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and be as the he-goats before the flocks; strive which shall be foremost, which shall lead in so good a work:" a he-goat is comely in going (Pr 30:31) because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work and to set others a good example.

2 Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard;
publish, *and* conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded,
Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images
are broken in pieces.

3 For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which
shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they
shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

4 In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of
Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going
and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God.

5 They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*,
Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant
that shall not be forgotten.
6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them
to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they
have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting
place.
7 All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries
said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the
habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers.
8 Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of
the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks.
9 For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly
of great nations from the north country: and they shall set
themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken:
their arrows *shall be* as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in
vain.

God is here by his prophet, as afterwards in his providence, proceeding in his controversy with Babylon. Observe,

I The commission and charge given to the instruments that were to be employed in destroying Babylon. The army that is to do it is called an assembly of great nations (Jer 50:9), the Medes and Persians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an assembly, because regularly formed by the divine will and counsel to do this execution. God will raise them up to do it, will incline them to and fir them for this service, and then he will cause them to come up, for all their motions are under his conduct and direction: he shall give the word of command, shall order them to put themselves in array against Babylon (Jer 50:14), and then they shall put themselves in array (Jer 50:9), for what God appoints to be done shall be done; and thence she shall be quickly taken; from their first sitting down before it they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. God shall bid them shoot at her and spare no arrows (Jer 50:14), and then their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man, that has both skill and strength, a good eye and a good hand (Jer 50:9); none shall return in vain. When God gives commission he will give success. Nay, they are bidden not only to shoot at her (Jer 50:14), but to shout against her (Jer 50:15) with a triumphant shout, as those that are

already sure of victory. Those whom God directs to shoot may do so with shouting, for they are sure not to miss the mark.

II The desolation and destruction itself that shall be brought upon Babylon. This is here set forth in a great variety of expressions.

1 The wealth of Babylon shall be a rich and easy prey to the conquerors (Jer 50:10): Chaldea shall be a spoil to all her destroyers, who shall enrich themselves by plundering her, and, which is strange, all that spoil her shall be satisfied; they shall have so much that even they themselves shall say that they have enough.

2 The country of Babylon shall be depopulated and lie uninhabited: It shall be wholly desolate (Jer 50:13) to such a degree that every one who goes by shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condoling with them, shall hiss at all her plagues, Jer 50:13.

3. Their ancestors shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset (Jer 50:12), or, Your mother, Babylon itself, the mother-city, shall be confounded, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. Thus the former ages of Christians may justly be confounded and ashamed to see how unlike them the latter ages are, and how wretchedly they have degenerated; and no sin brings a surer and sorer ruin upon persons, or people, than apostasy.

4. The great admirers of Babylon shall see it rendered very despicable: the last of kingdoms, the very tail of the nations, shall it be, a wilderness, a dry land, a desert, Jer 50:11. The country that was populous shall be dispeopled, that was enriched with a fertile soil shall become barren.

5. The great city, the head of it, shall be quite ruined. Her foundations have fallen, and therefore her walls are thrown down; for how can the walls stand when divine vengeance is at the door and shakes the very foundations? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle.

6. There shall not be left in Babylon so much as the poor of the land, for vine-dressers and husbandmen, as there was in Israel (Jer 50:16):

The sower shall be cut off from Babylon, and he that handles the sickle; the country shall be so emptied of people that there shall be none to till the ground and gather in the fruits of it. Harvest shall come, and there shall be no reapers; seed-time shall come, but there shall be no sower; God will do his part, but there shall be no men to do theirs.

7. All their auxiliary forces, which they have hired into their service, shall desert them, as mercenary men often do upon the approach of danger (Jer 50:16): For fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people. This was threatened before concerning Egypt, Jer 46:16.

10 And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied,
saith the Lord.
11 Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine
heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow
as bulls;
12 your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be
ashamed: behold, the hindermost of the nations *shall be* a
wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.
13 Because of the wrath of the Lord it shall not be inhabited, but it
shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be
astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

The procuring provoking cause of this destruction. It comes from God's displeasure; it is because of the wrath of the Lord that Babylon shall be wholly desolate (Jer 50:13), and his wrath is righteous, for (Jer 50:14) she hath sinned against the Lord, therefore spare no arrows. Note, It is sin that makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. An abundance of idolatry and immorality was to be found in Babylon, yet those are not mentioned as the reason of God's displeasure against them, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his people. They have been the destroyers of God's heritage (Jer 50:11); herein indeed God made use of them for the necessary correction of his people, and yet it is laid to their charge as a heinous crime, because they designed nothing but their utter destruction.

1. What they did against Jerusalem they did with pleasure (Jer 50:11): You were glad, you rejoice. God does not afflict his people

willingly, and therefore takes it very ill if the instruments he employs afflict them willingly. When Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem he wept over it, but these Chaldeans triumphed over it.

2 The spoils of Jerusalem they made use of to feed their own luxury: "You have grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls; your having conquered Jerusalem has made you very wanton and proud, easy to yourselves and formidable to all about you, and therefore you must be a spoil." Those that have thus swallowed down riches must vomit them up again. Therefore they have given their hand (Jer 50:15); they have surrendered themselves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded so that now you may take vengeance on her, now you may make reprisals and do unto her as she hath done.

3. They aimed at nothing less than the utter ruin of God's Israel: Israel is a scattered sheep, as before (Jer 50:6), that is not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the most potent adversaries, have roared upon him and driven him away, Jer 50:17. One king of Assyria carried the ten tribes quite away and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoverished it, tore the fleece and flesh of this poor sheep; and now at last this Nebuchadnezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him and broken his bones, has quite ruined him, and therefore the king of Babylon must be punished as the king of Assyria was, Jer 50:18. Note, Those who pursue and prosecute the sins of their predecessors must expect to be pursued and prosecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

14 Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the Lord.

15 Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it *is* the vengeance of the Lord : take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

16 Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land.

17 Israel *is* a scattered sheep; the lions have driven *him* away: first the
king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar
king of Babylon hath broken his bones.
18 Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I
will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished
the king of Assyria.
19 And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on
Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount
Ephraim and Gilead.

The mercy promised to the Israel of God, which shall not only accompany, but accrue from, the destruction of Babylon.

1. God will return their captivity; they shall be released out of their bondage, and brought again to their own habitation as sheep that were scattered to their own fold Jer 50:19. They still retained a title to the land of Canaan; it is their habitation still. The discontinuance of their possession was not the destruction of their right. But now they shall recover the enjoyment of it again.

2. He will restore their prosperity; they shall not only live, but live comfortably, in their own land again; they shall feed upon Carmel and Bashan, the richest and most fruitful parts of the country. These sheep shall be gathered from the deserts to which they were dispersed, and put again into good pasture, which their soul shall be satisfied with though they shall come hungry to it, having been so long stinted, and straitened, and kept short, yet they shall find enough to satiate them and shall have hearts to be satiated with it. They enquired the way to Zion (Jer 50:5), where God was to be served and worshipped. This was what they chiefly aimed at in their return; but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them also to Carmel and Bashan, where they shall abundantly feed themselves. Note, Those that return to God and their duty shall find true satisfaction of soul in so doing; and those that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, that aim to make their habitation in Zion, the holy hill, shall have other things added to them, even all the comforts of Ephraim and Gilead, the fruitful hills.

3. God will pardon their iniquity; this is the root of all the rest (Jer 50:20): In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. Not only the punishments of their iniquity shall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God shall be forgotten, and he will be reconciled to them. Their sin shall be before him as if it had never been; it shall be blotted out as a cloud, crossed out as a debt, shall be cast behind his back; nay, it shall be cast into the depth of the sea, shall be no longer sealed up among God's treasures, nor in any danger of appearing again or rising up against them. This denotes how fully God forgives sin; he remembers it no more. Note, Deliverances out of trouble are then comforts indeed when they are the fruits of the forgiveness of sin, Isa 38:17.

Judah and Israel were so fully forgiven when they were brought back out of Babylon that they are said to have received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins, Isa 40:1. This may include also a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives, as well as a full remission of their sins. If any seek for idols or any idolatrous customs among them, after their return, there shall be none, they shall not find them; their dross shall be purely purged away, and by that it shall appear that their guilt is so; for I will pardon those whom I reserve; I will be propitious to them (so the word is) and that must be through him who is the great propitiation. Note, Those whose sins God pardons he reserves for something very great; for whom he justifies them he glorifies.

20 In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and *there shall be* none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

21 Go up against the land of Merathaim [of the rebels], *even* against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod [visitation]: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the Lord, and do according to all that I have commanded thee.

Here, 1 The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and every thing is got ready for a descent upon that potent kingdom: Go up against that land by Merathaim, the country of the Mardi, that lay part in Assyria and part in Armenia; and go among the inhabitants of Pekod, another country (mentioned Eze 23:23) which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon. The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon

(Jer 50:21), to come against her from the utmost border. Let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, Jer 50:26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work. The archers particularly must be called together against Babylon, Jer 50:29.

Thus the Lord hath opened his armoury (Jer 50:25), his treasury (so the word is), and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation, as great princes fetch out of their magazines and stores all necessary provisions for their armies when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armoury; thence he fetches the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon.

Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He has variety of instruments, has them at command, has armouries ready to be opened according as the occasion is. This is the work of the Lord God of hosts. Note, When God has work to do he will make it appear that he is God of hosts, and will not want instruments to do it with.

2. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, Do according to all that I have commanded thee, Jer 50:21. It was said of Cyrus (Isa 44:28), He shall perform all my pleasure, in his expedition against Babylon. They must waste and utterly destroy after them; when they have destroyed once they must go over them again, or destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must open her store-houses (Jer 50:26), rifle her treasures, and turn her artillery against herself. They must cast her up as heaps; let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish. Tread her down as heaps (so the margin reads it) and destroy her utterly. See how little account the great God makes of those things which men so much value and value themselves so much upon. Their princes and great men, who are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand (Jer 50:27): Slay all her bullocks, all her mighty men; let them go down sottishly and

insensibly, as an ox to the slaughter. Woe unto them! their case is the more sad for the little sense they have of it. Their day has come to fall, the time when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.

3. Assurances are given them of success. Let them do what God commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A great destruction shall be made, Jer 50:21. Babylon shall become a desolation (Jer 50:23); her young men and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day which should have been her defence, Jer 50:30. God is against her (Jer 50:31); he has laid a snare for her (Jer 50:24); he has formed this enterprise against her, that she should be surprised as a bird taken in a snare. Cyrus shall no doubt prevail, for he fights under God. God will kindle a fire in the cities of Babylon (Jer 50:32); and who can stand before him when he is angry, or quench the fire that he has kindled?

4. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. Those that are employed in this war may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is fit all should be that are called to such work.

(1.) Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious, and injurious, to all its neighbours; it has been the hammer of the whole earth (Jer 50:23), beating, beating down, and beating to pieces, all the nations far and near. It has done so long enough; it is time now that it be cut asunder and broken.

Note, He that is the god of nations will sooner or later assert the injured rights of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break the hammer of the whole earth.

(2.) Babylon has bidden defiance to God himself: Thou has striven against the Lord (Jer 50:24), hast joined issue with him (so the word signifies) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him; therefore thou art now found, and caught, as in a snare. Note, Those that strive against the Lord will soon find themselves over-matched.

(3.) Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon's visitation; it is the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple, Jer 50:28. The burning of the temple, and the carrying away of its vessels, were articles in the charge against Babylon on which greater stress was laid than upon its being the hammer of the whole earth; for Zion was the joy and glory of the whole earth.

Note, Whatever wrong is done to God's church (his temple in the world) it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be sorer nor heavier than the vengeance of the temple.

(4.) Babylon has been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall; for it is the glory of God to look upon those that are proud and to abase them, Job 40:11. I am against thee, O thou most proud! Jer 50:31 and again Jer 50:31. Thou pride (so the word is), as proud as pride itself. Note, the pride of men's hearts sets God against them and ripens them apace for ruin; for God resists the proud and will bring them down. The most proud shall stumble and fall; they shall fall not so much by others' thrusting them down as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high that they never look under their feet, to choose their way and avoid stumbling-blocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon's pride must unavoidably be her ruin; for she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel (Jer 50:29), has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him her enemy, and therefore, when she has fallen, none shall raise her up, Jer 50:31. Who can help those up whom God will throw down?

22 A sound of battle *is* in the land, and of great destruction.

23 How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken!
how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!

24 I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and
thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou
hast striven against the Lord.

25 The Lord hath opened his armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this *is* the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.
26 Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left.
27 Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.
28 The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple.
29 Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel.
30 Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord.
31 Behold, I *am* against thee, *O thou* most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time *that* I will visit thee.
32 And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.
33 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The children of Israel and the children of Judah *were* oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

We have in these verses,

I. Israel's sufferings, and their deliverance out of those sufferings. God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt; he has surely seen it, and has heard their cry. Israel and Judah were oppressed together, Jer 50:33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seem to have come and mingled with t hose of the two tribes, and to have mingled tears with them, so that they were oppressed together. They were humble suppliants for their liberty, and that was all;

they could not attempt any thing towards it, for all that took them captives held them fast, and were much too hard for them.

But this is their comfort in distress, that, though they are weak, their Redeemer is strong (Jer 50:34), their Avenger (so the word signifies), he that has a right to them, and will claim his right and make good his claim. He is stronger than their enemies that hold them fast; he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people though they are very weak. The Lord of hosts is his name, and he will answer to his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them for which they depend upon him.

Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God that, though they have hosts against them, they have the Lord of hosts for them and he shall thoroughly plead their cause, pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it and carry it, that he may give rest to the land, and to his people's land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is applicable to all believers, who complain of the dominion of sin and corruption, and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities. Let them know that their Redeemer is strong; he is able to keep what they commit to him, and he will plead their cause. Sin shall not have dominion over them; he will make them free, and they shall be free indeed; he will give them rest, that rest which remains for the people of God.

II. Babylon's sin, and their punishment for that sin.

1 The sins they are here charged with are idolatry and persecution.

(1.) They oppressed the people of God; they held them fast, and would not let them go. They opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa 14:17. This was God's quarrel with them, as of old with Pharaoh; it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. The inhabitants of Babylon must be disquieted (Jer 50:34) because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, as well as rest to those that are troubled, 2Th 1:6,7.

(2.) They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that glory to others which is due to him alone; for (Jer 50:38) it is the land of graven images. All parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them and doted on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them; and in all this they were wretchedly infatuated and acted like men out of their wits; they were carried on in their idolatry without reason or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols properly signifies terrors--Enim, the name given to giants that were formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children. Their idols were scarecrows, yet they doted on them. Babylon was the mother of harlots (Re 17:5), the source of idolatry. Note, It is the maddest thing in the world to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be mad upon idols that cannot profit. But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.

2 The judgments of God upon them for these sins are such as will quite lay them waste and ruin them.

(1.) All that should be their defence and support shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about: but now, they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even upon the inhabitants of Babylon (Jer 50:35), a sword of war; and, as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be,

[1.] Upon their princes; they shall fall by it, and their dignity, wealth, and power, shall not secure them.

[2.] Upon their wise men, their philosophers, their statesmen, and privy-counsellors; their learning and policy shall neither secure them nor stand the public in any stead.

[3.] Upon their soothsayers and astrologers, here called the liars (Jer 50:36), for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity; the sword upon them shall make them dote, so that they shall talk like fools, and be as men that have lost all their wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues.

[4.] Upon their mighty men. A sword shall be upon their spirits; if they are not slain, yet they shall be dismayed, and shall be no longer mighty men; for what stead will their hands stand them in when their hearts fail them?

[5.] Upon their militia (Jer 50:37): The sword shall be upon their horses and chariots; the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize their horses and chariots for themselves, or destroy them. The troops of other nations that were in their service shall be quite disheartened: The mingled people shall become as weak and timorous as women.

[6.] Upon their exchequer: The sword shall be upon her treasures, which are the sinews of war, and they shall be robbed, and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission.

(2.) The country shall be made desolate (Jer 50:38): The waters shall be dried up, the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many channels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which, if was thought, that river had rendered inaccessible. "The water likewise that made the country fruitful shall be dried up, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by the wild beasts of the desert," Jer 50:39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, Isa 13:19-21. It shall become like Sodom and Gomorrah, Jer 50:40. The same was foretold concerning Edom, Jer 49:18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.

(3.) The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies' invading them, Jer 50:41-43. All the expressions here used to denote the formidable power of

the invaders, the terrors wherewith they should array themselves, and the great fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before (Jer 6:22-24) concerning the Chaldeans' invading the land of Judah. The battle which is there said to be against thee, O daughter of Zion! is here said to be against thee, O daughter of Babylon! to intimate that they should be paid in their own coin. God can find out such as shall be for terror and destruction to those that are for terror and destruction to others; and those who have dealt cruelly, and have shown no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with, and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages; there it is said, We have heard the fame thereof and our hands wax feeble; here it is said, The king of Babylon has heard the report and his hands waxed feeble, which intimates that that proud and daring prince shall, in the day of his distress, be as weak and dispirited as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

(4.) That they shall be as much hurt as frightened, for the invader shall come up like a lion to tear and destroy (Jer 50:44) and shall make them and their habitation desolate (Jer 50:45), and the desolation shall be so astonishing that all the nations about shall be terrified by it, Jer 50:46. These three verses we had before (Jer 49:19-21) in the prophecy of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished by the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated, mutatis mutandis--with a few necessary alterations, in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans, to show that though the distributions of Providence may appear unequal for a time its retributions will be equal at last; when thou shalt make an end to spoil thou shalt be spoiled, Isa 33:1,Re 13:10.

34 Their Redeemer *is* strong; The Lord of hosts *is* his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

35 A sword *is* upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise *men*.

36 A sword *is* upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword *is* upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed.

37 A sword *is* upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that *are* in the midst of her; and they shall

become as women: a sword *is* upon her treasures; and they shall be
robbed.
38 A drought *is* upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it *is*
the land of graven images, and they are mad upon *their* idols.
39 Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the
islands shall dwell *there,* and the owls shall dwell therein: and it
shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in
from generation to generation.
40 As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbor *cities*
thereof, saith the Lord; *so* shall no man abide there, neither shall
any son of man dwell therein.
41 Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and
many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.
42 They shall hold the bow and the lance: they *are* cruel, and will not
show mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride
upon horses, *every one* put in array, like a man to the battle, against
thee, O daughter of Babylon.
43 The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands
waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, *and* pangs as of a woman
in travail.
44 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan
unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly
run away from her: and who *is* a chosen *man, that* I may appoint
over her? for who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time?
and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?
45 Therefore hear ye the counsel of the Lord, that he hath taken against
Babylon; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land
of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out:
surely he shall make *their* habitation desolate with them.
46 At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the
cry is heard among the nations.

Jeremiah-51

The Lord's Judgment on Babylon

1 Thus saith the Lord ; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;

NOTE #1

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned to so often that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavor to collect them under their proper heads. Let us then observe here,

I. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in and the use that God in his providence had made of it (Jer 51:7): Babylon hath been a golden cup, a rich and glorious empire, a golden city (Isa 14:4), a head of gold (Da 2:38), filled with all good things, as a cup with wine. Nay, she had been a golden cup in the Lord's hand; he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings; he had made the earth drunk with this cup; some were intoxicated with her pleasures and debauched by her, others intoxicated with her terrors and destroyed by her. In both senses the New-Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, Re 17:2,18:3. Babylon had also been God's battle-axe; it was so at this time, when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, Jer 51:20. The forces of Babylon were God's weapons of war, tools in his hand, with which he broke in pieces, and knocked down, nations and kingdoms,--horses and chariots, which are so much the strength of kingdoms (Jer 51:21),-- man and woman, young and old, with which kingdoms are replenished (Jer 51:22),-- the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, Jer 51:23. Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made when God employed them as instruments of his wrath for the chastising of the nations; and yet now Babylon itself must fall.

Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while will yet at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall; the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last. Nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others.

II. A just complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up against her by the Israel of God.

1. She is complained of for her incorrigible wickedness (Jer 51:9): We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. The people of God that were captives among the Babylonians endeavoured, according to the instructions given them (Jer 10:11), to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still they doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore the Israelites resolved to quit them and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring that they had done their best to save her from ruin, but that it was all to no purpose, and therefore they might as well go home to their respective countries; "for her judgment reaches unto heaven, and it is in vain to withstand it or think to avert it."

2. She is complained of for her inveterate malice against Israel. Other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him (Jer 51:34,35): "The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me, and never thought he could do enough ruin to me; he has emptied me of all that was valuable, has swallowed me up as a dragon, or whale, swallows up the little fish by shoals; he has filled his belly, filled his treasures, with my delicates, with all my pleasant things, and has cast me out, cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this." Zion and Jerusalem shall say, "Let the violence done to me and my children, that are my own flesh, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people, which they have shed like water, be upon them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hands."

Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

III. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. He sits in the throne judging right, is ready to receive complaints, and answers (Jer 51:36): "I will plead thy cause. Leave it with me; I will in due time plead it effectually and take vengeance for thee, and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest." Israel and Judah seemed to have been neglected and forgotten, but God had an eye to them, Jer 51:5.

It is true their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. They were a provoking people and their sings were a great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might justly have abandoned them and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve, and, notwithstanding their iniquities and his severities, Israel is not forsaken, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the Lord of hosts. God is his God still, and will act for him as the Lord of hosts, a God of power.

Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws and fallen under his rebukes, yet it does not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them and love to them will flourish again, Ps 89:30-33. The Chaldeans thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel; but there is a time fixed for vengeance, Jer 51:6. We cannot expect it should come sooner than the time fixed, but then it will come; he will render unto Babylon a recompence, for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouses their cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, Jer 51:11, as before, Jer 50:28.

The Lord God of recompences, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely requite (Jer 51:56), will pay them home; he will render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion (Jer 51:24); he will return it in the sight of his people. They shall have the satisfaction to see their cause pleaded with jealousy. They shall not only live to see those judgments brought upon Babylon, but they shall plainly see them to be the punishment of the wrong they have done to Zion; any man may see it, and say, Verily there is a God that

judges in the earth; for just as Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, has not only slain those that were found in arms, but all without distinction, even all the land (almost all were put to the sword), so at Babylon shall fall the slain not only of the city, but of all the country, Jer 51:49. Cyrus shall measure to the Chaldeans the same that they measured to the Jews, so that every observer may discern that God is recompensing them for what they did against his people; but Zion's children shall in a particular manner triumph in it (Jer 51:10): The Lord has brought forth our righteousness; he has appeared in our behalf against those that dealt unjustly with us, and has given us redress; he has also made it to appear that he is reconciled to us and that we are yet in his eyes a righteous nation. Let it therefore be spoken of to his praise: Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God, that others may be invited to join with us in praising him.

2 and will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.

NOTE #2

IV. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouses Zion's cause and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy, Jer 51:14. It is the Lord of hosts that has said it, that has sworn it, has sworn it by himself (for he could swear by no greater), that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will fill it with men as with caterpillars, that shall overpower it will multitudes, and need only to lift up a shout against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all the inhabitants and make them an easy prey to this numerous army.

But who, and where, is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders (Jer 10:12-16), which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated to show that God will convince those by his judgments who would not be convinced by his word that he is God

over all. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon is able to make his words good, for,

1. He is the God that made the world (Jer 51:15), and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built.

2. He has the command of all the creatures that he has made (Jer 51:16); his providence is a continued creation. He has wind and rain at his disposal. If he speak the word, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens (and it is a wonder how they hang there), fed by vapours out of the earth, and it is a wonder how they ascend thence. Lightnings and rain seem contraries, as fire and water, and yet they are produced together; and the wind, which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we know not whence it comes, is yet, we are sure, brought out of his treasuries.

3. The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word are a mere sham and their worshippers brutish people, Jer 51:17,18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are the work of errors; when they come to be visited (to be examined and enquired into) they perish, that is, their reputation sinks and they appear to be nothing; and those that make them are like unto them. But between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison (Jer 51:19):

The portion of Jacob is not like them; the God who speaks this and will do it is the former of all things and the Lord of all hosts, and therefore can do what he will; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is their portion and they are his; they put a confidence in him as their portion and he is pleased to take a complacency in them and a particular care of them as the lot of his inheritance; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here, which were said before, intimates both the certainty and the importance of them, and obliges us to take special notice of them; God hath spoken once; yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God, power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church; and if God thus speak once, yea, twice, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it and attend to it.

V. A description of the instruments that are to be employed in this service. God has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes (Jer 51:11), Darius and Cyrus, who come against Babylon by a divine instinct; for God's device is against Babylon to destroy it. They do it, but God devised it, he designed it; they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed.

Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. Those whom God employs against Babylon are compared (Jer 51:1) to a destroying wind, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth or by its fierceness blows down all before it. This wind is brought out of God's treasuries (Jer 51:16), and it is here said to be raised up against those that dwell in the midst of the Chaldeans, those of other nations that inhabit among them and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for those that contend with him. These enemies are compared to fanners (Jer 51:2), who shall drive them away as chaff is driven away by the fan. The Chaldeans had been fanners to winnow God's people (Jer 15:7) and to empty them, and now they shall themselves be in like manner despoiled and dispersed.

VI. An ample commission given them to destroy and lay all waste. Let them bend their bow against the archers of the Chaldeans (Jer 51:3) and not spare her young men, but utterly destroy them, for the Lord has both devised and done what he spoke against Babylon, Jer 51:12. This may animate the instruments he employs, but assuring them of success. The methods they take are such as God has devised and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he has spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it; and therefore let all necessary preparations be made. This they are called to, Jer 51:27,28.

Let a standard be set up, under which to enlist soldiers for this expedition; let a trumpet be blown to call men together to it and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raised, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Ararat, and Minni, and Ashkenaz, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower,

and of Ascania, about Phrygia and Bithynia, send in their quota of men for his service; let general officers be appointed and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in great numbers, as the caterpillars, and come, like them, leaping and pawing in the valley; let them lay the country waste, as caterpillars do (Joe 1:4), especially rough caterpillars; let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great and there is occasion for many hands to be employed it.

VII. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against this threatening destroying force. When God employed them against other nations they had spirit and strength to act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer; but now that it comes to their turn to be reckoned with all their might and courage are gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically and in an upbraiding way (Jer 51:11):

Make bright the arrows, which have grown rusty through disuse; gather the shields, which in a long time of peace and security have been scattered and thrown out of the way (Jer 51:12); set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed suit and service to that mother-city, now to come in to her assistance; let them make the watch as strong as they can, and appoint the sentinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the enemy. This intimates that they would be found very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened (and they were so to such a degree that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken), but that all their preparations should come to no purpose. Whoever will may call them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, Jer 51:29.

The whole land shall tremble, and sorrow (a universal consternation) shall seize upon them; for they shall see both the irresistible arm and the irreversible counsel and decree of God against them. They shall see that God is making Babylon a desolation, and therein is performing what he has purposed; and

then the mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, Jer 51:30. God having taken away their strength and spirit, so that they have remained in their holds, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails; they become as timorous as women, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, burnt her dwelling-places and broken her bars. It is to the same purport with Jer 51:56-58.

When the spoiler comes upon Babylon her mighty men, who should make head against him, are immediately taken, their weapons of war fail them, every one of their bows is broken and stands them in no stead. Their politics fail them; they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, who sit in council to concert measures for the common safety, are made drunk; they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair; they can form no right notions of things; they stagger and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another, and, like drunken men, fall out among themselves. At length they sleep a perpetual sleep, and never awake from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The walls of their city fail them, Jer 51:58.

When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet surely, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are the broad walls of Babylon or (as the margin reads it), the walls of broad Babylon. The compass of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, some say 480, that is, about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and fifty cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them. Some say that there was a threefold wall about the inner city and the like about the outer, and that the stones of the wall, being laid in pitch instead of mortar (Ge 11:3), were scarcely separable; and yet these shall be utterly broken, and the high gates and towers shall be burnt, and the people that are employed in the defence of the city shall labour in vain in the fire; they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.

3 Against *him that* bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against *him that* lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host.

NOTE #3

VIII. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders.

1. It is a certain destruction; the doom has passed and it cannot be reversed; a divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted (Jer 51:8): Babylon is fallen and destroyed, is as sure to fall, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon (Jer 51:25): Behold, I am against thee; and those cannot stand long whom God is against. He will stretch out his hand upon it, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of nor withstand the force of. It is his purpose, which shall be performed, that Babylon must be a desolation, Jer 51:29.

2. It is a righteous destruction. Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For (Jer 51:25) Babylon has been a destroying mountain, very lofty and bulky as a mountain, and destroying all the earth, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spoil the grounds about them; but now it shall itself be rolled down from its rocks, which were as the foundations on which it stood. It shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken. It is now a burning mountain, like Ætna and the other volcanoes, that throw out fire, to the terror of all about them. But it shall be a burnt mountain; it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes. So will this world be at the end of time.

Again (Jer 51:33), "Babylon is like a threshing-floor, in which the people of God have been long threshed, as sheaves in the floor; but now the time has come that she shall herself be threshed and her sheaves in her; her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is prepared. Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war, and her people, like corn in harvest, are ripe for destruction," Re 14:15,Mic 4:12.

3. It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well-fenced and fortified against it: She dwells upon many waters (Jer 51:13); the situation of her country is such that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed, by rivers. In allusion to this, the New-Testament Babylon is said to sit upon many waters, that is, to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, Re 17:15. Babylon is abundant in treasures; and yet "thy end has come, and neither they waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee." This end that comes shall be the measure of thy covetousness; it shall be the stint of thy gettings, it shall set bounds to thy ambition and avarice, which otherwise would have ben boundless. God, by the destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, Hitherto shall you come, and no further.

Note, if men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe and very great, was very proud; but she will be deceived (Jer 51:53): Though Babylon should mount her walls and palaces up to heaven, and though (because what is high is apt to totter) she should take care to fortify the height of her strength, yet all will not do; God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength and bring down her height.

4. It is a gradual destruction, which, if they had pleased, they might have foreseen and had warning of; for (Jer 51:46) "A rumor will come one year that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and after that, in another year, shall come a rumour that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way;" so that when he was a great way off they might have sent and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure, to do that, and their hearts were hardened to their destruction.

5. Yet, when it comes, it is a surprising destruction: Babylon has suddenly fallen (Jer 51:8); the destruction came upon them when they did not think of it and was perfected in a little time, as that of the New-Testament Babylon--in one hour, Re 18:17. The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the

attack was made that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; so that those who were posted near the place sent one messenger, one courier, after another, with advice of it, Jer 51:31. The foot-posts shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy has seized the passes (Jer 51:32), the forts or blockades upon the river, and that, having got over the river, he has set fire to the reeds on the river side, to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted and have thrown down their arms and surrendered at discretion.

The messengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a witness by the enemies' being in the palace and slaying the king himself, Da 5:30. That profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when the city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to (Jer 51:38,39): They shall roar together like lions, as men in their revels do, when the wine has got into their heads. They call it singing; but in scripture-language, and in the language of sober men, it is called yelling like lions' whelps. It is probable that they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzzas. Well, says God, in their heat, when they are inflamed (Isa 5:11) and their heads are hot with hard drinking, I will make their feasts, I will give them their portion. They have passed their cup round; now the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them (Hab 2:15,16), a cup of fury, which shall make them drunk that they may rejoice (or rather that they may revel it) and sleep a perpetual sleep; let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep never to wake more (as Jer 51:57); for on that night, in the midst of the jollity, was Belshazzar slain.

6. It is to be a universal destruction. God will make thorough work of it; for, as he will perform what he has purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. The slain shall fall in great abundance throughout the land of the Chaldeans; multitudes shall be thrust through in her streets, Jer 51:4. They are brought down like lambs

to the slaughter (Jer 51:40), in such great numbers, so easily, and the enemies make no more of killing them than the butcher does of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading them, are here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters (Jer 51:42): The sea has come up upon Babylon, which, when it has once broken through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is covered with the multitude of its waves, overpowered by a numerous army; her cities then become a desolation, an uninhabited uncultivated desert, Jer 51:43.

7. It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. "In token that the whole land shall be confounded and all her slain shall fall and that throughout all the country the wounded shall groan, I will do judgment upon her graven images," Jer 51:47 and again Jer 51:52. All must needs perish if their gods perish, from whom they expect protection. Though the invaders are themselves idolaters, yet they shall destroy the images and temples of the gods of Babylon, as an earnest of the abolishing of all counterfeit deities. Bel was the principal idol that the Babylonians worshipped, and therefore that is by name here marked for destruction (Jer 51:44):

I will punish Bel, that great devourer, that image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such a vast resort. He shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with. God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, Job 20:15. His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon shall fall and fail them. 8. It shall be a final destruction. You may take balm for her pain, but in vain; she that would not be healed by the word of God shall not be healed by his providence, Jer 51:8,9. Babylon shall become heaps (Jer 51:37), and, to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and attended with such ill omens (Jer 51:26):

They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations. People shall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it denotes that there shall be nothing left in Babylon on which to ground any hopes or

attempts of raising it into a kingdom again; for, as it follows here, it shall be desolate for ever. St. Jerome says that in his time, though the ruins of Babylon's walls were to be seen, yet the ground enclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts.

IX. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom, when the ruin is approaching, to quit the city and retire into the country (Jer 51:6): "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity." When God's judgments are abroad it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are levelled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the advice Christ gave his disciples, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Let those who shall be in Judea flee to the mountains, Mt 24:16. It is their wisdom to get out of the midst of Babylon, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears (Jer 51:45,46):

Lest your heart faint, and you fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land. Though God had told them that Cyrus should be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet they had been told also that in the peace there of they should have peace, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress those fears, for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms.

Note, Those who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all; it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, Jer 51:50,51: "You Israelites, who have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans your oppressors, and of the Persians their destroyers, now that the year of release has come, go away, stand not still; hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortably seated in Babylon, for this is not your rest, but Canaan is."

1. He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return: "Remember the Lord afar off, his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil; his presence with your fathers formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it." Note, Wherever we are, in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is seasonable to remember the Lord. "And let Jerusalem come into your mind. Though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust (Ps 102:14); though few of you ever saw it, yet believe the report you have had concerning it from those that wept when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come up to a resolution to make the best of your way thither."

Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind; and it will be of great use to us, in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often into our mind.

2. He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives labour under (Jer 51:51); being reminded of Jerusalem, they cry out, "We are confounded; we cannot bear the thought of it; shame covers our faces at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproa

4 Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and *they that*
are thrust through in her streets.
5 For Israel *hath* not *been* forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord
of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One
of Israel.
6 Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be
not cut off in her iniquity; for this *is* the time of the Lord's
vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense.
7 Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all
the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine;
therefore the nations are mad.
8 Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm
for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

9 We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her,
and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment
reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even* to the skies.
10 The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us
declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God.
11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the Lord hath raised
up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device *is* against
Babylon, to destroy it; because it *is* the vengeance of the Lord, the
vengeance of his temple.
12 Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch
strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the Lord
hath both devised and done that which he spake against the
inhabitants of Babylon.
13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures,
thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness.
14 The Lord of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying*, Surely I will fill
thee with men, as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout
against thee.
15 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the
world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his
understanding.
16 When he uttereth *his* voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the
heavens; and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the
earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind
out of his treasures.
17 Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge; every founder is
confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falsehood,
and *there is* no breath in them.
18 They *are* vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation
they shall perish.
19 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them; for he *is* the former of all
things: and *Israel is* the rod of his inheritance: the Lord of hosts *is*
his name.
20 Thou *art* my battle-axe *and* weapons of war: for with thee will I
break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;
21 and with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and
with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;

22 with thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee
will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in
pieces the young man and the maid;
23 I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and
with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of
oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.
24 And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of
Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight,
saith the Lord.
25 Behold, I *am* against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the
Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine
hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make
thee a burnt mountain.
26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for
foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the Lord.
27 Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the
nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her
the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain
against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillars.
28 Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the
captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his
dominion.
29 And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the
Lord shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of
Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.
30 The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have
remained in *their* holds: their might hath failed; they became as
women: they have burned her dwelling places; her bars are broken.
31 One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet
another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at *one*
end,
32 and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned
with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.
33 For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of
Babylon *is* like a threshingfloor, *it is* time to thresh her: yet a little
while, and the time of her harvest shall come.
34 Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath
crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed

me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

35 The violence done to me and to my flesh *be* upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

36 Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

37 And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant.

38 They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps.

39 In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the Lord.

40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats.

41 How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

42 The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof.

43 Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby.

44 And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him; yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

45 My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord.

46 And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumor that shall be heard in the land; a rumor shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year *shall come* a rumor, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

47 Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

48 Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for
Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith
the Lord.
49 As Babylon *hath caused* the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall
fall the slain of all the earth.
50 Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still:
remember the Lord afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your
mind.
51 We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath
covered our faces; for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the
Lord's house.
52 Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will do
judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the
wounded shall groan.
53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should
fortify the height of her strength, *yet* from me shall spoilers come
unto her, saith the Lord.
54 A sound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon, and great destruction from the
land of the Chaldeans:
55 because the Lord hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the
great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their
voice is uttered:
56 because the spoiler is come upon her, *even* upon Babylon, and her
mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the
Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite.
57 And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise *men,* her captains,
and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual
sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name *is* The
Lord of hosts.
58 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be
utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the
people shall labor in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be
weary.
59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son
of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah
the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And
this Seraiah *was* a quiet prince.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon in this and the foregoing chapter; now here we have the conclusion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here (Jer 51:60): Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon. He received this notice that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating and to the perpetuating of the word of God to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon, to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on or ambassador for king Zedekiah, in the fourth year of his reign, Jer 51:59. He went with Zedekiah, or (as the margin reads it) on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon. The character given of him is observable, that this Seraiah was a quiet prince, a prince of rest. He was in honour and power, but not, as most f the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties, and heading factions, and driving things furiously. He was of a calm temper, studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling. He was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man. Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely entrust such a man with his errand too. Note, it is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wisdom of princes to put such into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that had already gone into captivity: "When thou shalt come to Babylon, and shalt see what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shalt therefore be tempted to think, Surely, it will stand forever" (as the disciples, when they observed the buildings of the temple, concluded that nothing would throw them down but the end of the world, Mt 24:3), "then thou shalt read all these words to thyself and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity: let them with an eye of

faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith."

4. He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read (Jer 51:62): Then thou shalt look up to God, and say, O Lord! it is thou that hast spoken against this place, to cut it off. This is like the angel's protestation concerning the destruction of the New-Testament Babylon. These are the true sayings of God, Re 19:9. These words are true and faithful, Re 21:5. Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, having read this prophecy he must foresee Babylon falling, and by virtue of it must curse its habitation, though it be taking root (Job 5:3):

"O Lord! thou hast spoken against this place, and I believe what thou hast spoken, that, as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing. Thou hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, and therefore we will neither envy its pomp nor fear its power." When we see what this world is, how glittering its shows are and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its fashion passes away, and it shall shortly be cut off and be desolate for ever, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God it becomes us to direct to him whose word it is a humble believing acknowledgment of the truth, equity, and goodness, of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and not rise; for they shall be weary, they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burden, under the load of the evil that I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off, nor get from under," Jer 51:53,64.

In the sign it was the stone that sunk the book, which otherwise would have swum. But in the thing signified it was rather the book that sunk the stone; it was the divine sentence passed upon Babylon in this prophecy that sunk that city, which seemed as firm

as a stone. The fall of the New-Testament Babylon was represented by something like this, but much more magnificent, Re 18:21.

A mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall. Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book: Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. Not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies; for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah (Jer 51:59), long before he finished his testimony; but this is recorded last of his prophecies because it was to be last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, Jer 46:1. And the chapter which remains is purely historical, and, as some think, was added by some other hand.

60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon
Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon.
61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and
shalt see, and shalt read all these words;
62 then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to
cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that
it shall be desolate for ever.
63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book,
that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of
Euphrates:
64 and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from
the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary.
Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah-52

The Reign of Zedekiah

1 Zedekiah *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and
he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was*
Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

This narrative begins no higher than the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, though there were two captivities before, one in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the other in the first of Jeconiah; but probably it was drawn up by some of those that were carried away with Zedekiah, as a reproach to themselves for imagining that they should not go into captivity after their brethren, with which hopes they had long flattered themselves. We have here,

1. God's just displeasure against Judah and Jerusalem for their sin, Jer 52:3. His anger was against them to such a degree that he determined to cast them out from his presence, his favourable gracious presence, as a father, when he is extremely angry with an undutiful son, bids him get out of his presence, he expelled them from that good land that had such tokens of his presence in providential bounty and that holy city and temple that had such tokens of his presence in covenant-grace and love. Note, Those that are banished from God's ordinances have reason to complain that they are in some degree cast out of his presence; yet none are cast out from God's gracious presence but those that by sin have first thrown themselves out of it. This fruit of sin we should therefore deprecate above any thing, as David (Ps 51:11), Cast me not away from thy presence.

2. Zedekiah's bad conduct and management, to which God left him, in displeasure against the people, and for which God punished him, in displeasure against him. Zedekiah had arrived at years of discretion when he came to the throne; he was twenty-one years old (Jer 52:1); he was none of the worst of the kings (we never read of his idolatries), yet his character is that he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, for he did not do the good he should have done.

But that evil deed of his which did in a special manner hasten this destruction was his rebelling against the king of Babylon, which was both his sin and his folly, and brought ruin upon his people, not only meritoriously, but efficiently. God was greatly displeased with him for his perfidious dealing with the king of Babylon (as we find, Eze 17:15, &c.); and, because he was angry at Judah and Jerusalem, he put him into the hand of his own counsels, to do that foolish thing which proved fatal to him and his kingdom.

3. The possession which the Chaldeans at length gained of Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege. They sat down before it, and blocked it up, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month (Jer 52:4), and made themselves masters of it in the eleventh year in the fourth month, Jer 52:6.

In remembrance of these two steps towards their ruin, while they were in captivity, they kept a fast in the fourth month, and a fast in the tenth (Zec 8:19): that in the fifth month was in remembrance of the burning of the temple, and that in the seventh of the murder of Gedaliah. We may easily imagine, or rather cannot imagine, what a sad time it was with Jerusalem, during this year and half that it was besieged, when all provisions were cut off from coming to them and they were ever and anon alarmed by the attacks of the enemy, and, being obstinately resolved to hold out to the last extremity, nothing remained but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. That which disabled them to hold out, and yet could not prevail with them to capitulate, was the famine in the city (Jer 52:6); there was no bread for the people of the land, so that the soldiers could not make good their posts, but were rendered wholly unserviceable; and then no wonder that the city was broken up, Jer 52:7. Walls, in such a case, will not hold out long without men, any more than men without walls; nor will both together stand people in any stead without God and his protection.

4. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city by night (Jer 52:7) and made the best of their way, I know not whither, nor perhaps they themselves; but the king was overtaken by the pursuers in the plains of Jericho, his guards were dispersed, and all his army was scattered from him, Jer 52:8. His fright was not causeless, for there is no escaping the judgments of God; they will come upon the sinner, and will overtake him, let him flee where he will (De 28:15), and these judgments particularly that are here executed were there threatened, De 28:52,53, &c.

5. The sad doom passed upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, gave judgment upon him, Jer 52:9. One cannot think of it without the

utmost vexation and regret that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the house of David, should be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king. But he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet; therefore God thus humbled him. Pursuant to the sentence passed upon him by the haughty conqueror, his sons were slain before his eyes, and all the princes of Judah (Jer 52:10); then his eyes were put out, and he was bound in chains, carried in triumph to Babylon; perhaps they made sport with him, as they did with Samson when his eyes were put out; however, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, wearing out the remainder of his life (I cannot say his days, for he saw day no more) in darkness and misery. He was kept in prison till the day of his death, but had some honour done him at his funeral, Jer 34:5. Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

2 And he did *that which was* evil in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

3 For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

The Fall of Jerusalem

4 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

5 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

8 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

9 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him.
10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.
11 Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

The Captivity of Judah

12 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, *which* served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem,

We have here an account of the woeful havoc that was made by the Chaldean army, a month after the city was taken, under the command of Nebuzaradan, who was captain of the guard, or general of the army, in this action. In the margin he is called the chief of the slaughter-men, or executioners; for soldiers are but slaughter-men, and God employs them as executioners of his sentence against a sinful people. Nebuzaradan was chief of those soldiers, but, in the execution he did, we have reason to fear he had no eye to God, but he served the king of Babylon and his own designs, now that he came into Jerusalem, into the very bowels of it, as captain of the slaughter-men there. And,

1. He laid the temple in ashes, having first plundered it of every thing that was valuable: He burnt the house of the Lord, that holy and beautiful house, where their fathers praised him, Isa 64:11.

2. He burnt the royal palace, probably that which Solomon built after he had built the temple, which was, ever since, the king's house.

3. He burnt all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great men, or those particularly; if any escaped, it was only some sorry cottages for the poor of the land.

4. He broke down all the walls of Jerusalem, to be revenged upon them for standing in the way of his army so long. Thus, of a defenced city, it was made a ruin, Isa 25:2.

5. He carried away many into captivity (Jer 52:15); he took away certain of the poor of the people, that is, of the people in the city, for the poor of the land (the poor of the country) he left for vine-dressers and husbandmen. He also carried off the residue of the people that remained in the city, that had escaped the sword and famine, and the deserters, such as he thought fit, or rather such as God thought fit; for he had already determined some for the pestilence, some for the sword, some for famine, and some for captivity, Jer 15:2. But,

6. Nothing is more particularly and largely related here than the carrying away of the appurtenances of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, the vessels of silver and gold, yet some of that sort remained, which were now carried away, Jer 52:19.

But most of the temple-prey that was now seized was of brass, which, being of less value, was carried off last. When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after it, because the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, Jer 27:19, &c. When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the strength and stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, had departed from them. No walls can protect those, nor pillars sustain those, from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support (for there was nothing built upon them), but for ornament and significancy. They were called Jachin--He will establish; and Boaz--In him is strength; so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house nor be the strength of it.

These pillars are here very particularly described (Jer 52:21-23,1Ki 7:15), that the extraordinary beauty and stateliness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away; for the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be

purged by sacrifice or offering, 1Sa 3:14. It is said (Jer 52:20), The brass of all these vessels was without weight; so it was in the making of them (1Ki 7:47), the weight of the brass was not then found out (2Ch 4:18), and so it was in the destroying of them. Those that made great spoil of them did not stand to weigh them, as purchasers do, for, whatever they weighted, it was all their own.

13 and burned the house of the Lord, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men,* burned he with fire:

14 and all the army of the Chaldeans, that *were* with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.

15 Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive *certain* of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude.

16 But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left *certain* of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen.

17 Also the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the Lord, and the bases, and the brazen sea that *was* in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

18 The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

19 And the basins, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of silver *in* silver, took the captain of the guard away.

20 The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brazen bulls that *were* under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the Lord: the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

21 And *concerning* the pillars, the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof *was* four fingers: *it was* hollow.

22 And a chapiter of brass *was* upon it; and the height of one chapiter *was* five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapiters round about, all *of* brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates *were* like unto these.

23 And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; *and* all the
pomegranates upon the network *were* a hundred round about.
24 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and
Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

We have here a very melancholy account,

1. Of the slaughter of some great men, in cold blood, at Riblah, seventy-two in number (according to the number of the elders of Israel, Nu 11:24,25), so they are computed, 2Ki 25:18,19. We read there of five out of the temple, two out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there it is said that there were five, here there were seven, of those that were near the king, which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself and Ebed-melech, who were both discharged, as we have read before, so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two, some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and it is probable that such were made examples of as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon.

Seraiah the chief priest is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was a quiet prince (Jer 51:59), but perhaps Seraiah the priest was not so, but unquiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made monuments of divine justice.

2. Of the captivity of the rest. Come and see how Judah was carried away captive out of his own land (Jer 52:27), and how it spued them out as it spued out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do if they trod in their steps and copied out their abominations, Le 18:28. Now here is an account,

(1.) Of two captivities which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar (the same with that which is

said to be in his eighth year, 2Ki 24:12), another in his eighteenth year, the same with that which is said (Jer 52:12) to be in his nineteenth year. But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former (2Ki 24:14,16), when there were 18,000 carried captive, whereas here they are said to be 3023; they are also small in comparison with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter; for, when all the residue of the people were carried away (Jer 52:15), one would think there should be more than 832 souls; therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that, these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that are here said to be carried away were put to death as rebels.

(2.) Of a third captivity, not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 52:30): Then Nebuzaradan came, and carried away 745 Jews; it is probable that this was done in revenge of the murder of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that those who were now taken were aiders and abetters of Ishmael in that murder, and were not only carried away, but put to death for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives (all the persons were 4600, Jer 52:30), we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how they came to be so numerous again as afterwards we find them; for it should seem that, as at first in Egypt, so again in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction, and the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. And the truth is, this people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

25 he took also out of the city a eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city.

26 So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

27 And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.

28 This *is* the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the
seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty:
29 in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive
from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons:
30 in the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan
the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven
hundred forty and five persons: all the persons *were* four thousand
and six hundred.

Jehoiachin Released and Honored in Babylon

31 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of
Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and
twentieth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in
the *first* year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of
Judah, and brought him forth out of prison,

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage we had likewise before (2Ki 25:27-30), only there it is said to be done on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, here on the twenty-fifth; but in a thing of this nature two days make a very slight difference in the account. It is probable that the orders were given for his release on the twenty-fifth day, but that he was not presented to the king till the twenty-seventh. We may observe in this story,

1. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadnezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well-affected to the prisoner, could not procure him any favour, not one smile, from his father, any more than Jonathan could for David from his father; but, when the old peevish man was dead, his son countenanced Jehoiachin and made him a favourite. It is common for children to undo what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this was.

2. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin, in his beginning, fell from a throne into a prison, but here he is advanced again to a throne of state (Jer 52:32), though not to a throne of power. As, before, the robes were changed into prison-garments, so now they were converted into robes again. Such

chequer-work is this world; prosperity and adversity are set the one over-against the other, that we may learn to rejoice as though we rejoiced not and weep as though we wept not.

3. That, though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair but that the day may dawn at last. Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner, in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old, in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity that he had forgotten the sweets of liberty; or, rather, that after so long an imprisonment it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. Dum spiro spero--While there is life there is hope. Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit--Though now we suffer, we shall not always suffer.

4. That god can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word (Ps 106:46), He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those therefore that are under oppression will find that it is not in vain to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Therefore our times are in God's hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

5. And now, upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn, in general,

(1.) That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate, and become very corrupt.

(2.) That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and, if it be not repented of and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin:

(3.) That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse for sin and an exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both.

(4.) That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings, any more than his promises, of no effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters, for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatenings. Let them not be deceived, God is not mocked.

32 and spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of
the kings that *were* with him in Babylon,
33 and changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread
before him all the days of his life.
34 And *for* his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of
Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days
of his life.

The Lamentations of Jeremiah

[Lamentations]

Lamentations-1

The Sorrows of Captive Zion

1 How doth the city sit solitary,
that was full of people!
How is she become as a widow!
She *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

Those that have any disposition to weep with those that weep, one would think, should scarcely be able to refrain from tears at the reading of these verses, so very pathetic are the lamentations here.

I The miseries of Jerusalem are here complained of as very pressing and by many circumstances very much aggravated. Let us take a view of these miseries.

1. As to their civil state.

(1.) A city that was populous is now depopulated, La 1:1. It is spoken of by way of wonder--Who would have thought that ever it should come to this! Or by way of enquiry--What is it that has brought it to this? Or by way of lamentation--Alas! alas! (as Re 18:10,16,19) how doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! She was full of her own people that replenished her, and full of the people of other nations that resorted to her, with whom she had both profitable commerce and pleasant converse; but now her own people are carried into captivity, and strangers make no court to her: she sits solitary. The chief places of the city are not now, as they used to be, place of concourse, where wisdom cried (Pr

1:20,21); and justly are they left unfrequented, because wisdom's cry there was not heard.

Note, Those that are ever so much increased God can soon diminish. How has she become as a widow! Her king that was, or should have been, as a husband to her, is cut off, and gone; her God has departed from her, and has given her a bill of divorce; she is emptied of her children, is solitary and sorrowful as a widow. Let no family, no state, not Jerusalem, no, nor Babylon herself, be secure, and say, I sit as a queen, and shall never sit as a widow, Isa 47:8,Re 18:7.

(2.) A city that had dominion is now in subjection. She had been great among the nations, greatly loved by some and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both; some made her presents, and others paid her taxes; so that she was really princess among the provinces, and every sheaf bowed to hers; even the princes of the people entreated her favour.

But now the tables are turned; she has not only lost her friends and sits solitary, but has lost her freedom too and sits tributary; she paid tribute to Egypt first and then to Babylon.

Note, Sin brings a people not only into solitude, but into slavery.

(3.) A city that used to be full of mirth has now become melancholy and upon all accounts full of grief. Jerusalem had been a joyous city, whither the tribes went up on purpose to rejoice before the Lord; she was the joy of the whole earth, but now she weeps sorely, her laughter if turned into mourning, her solemn feasts are all gone; she weeps in the night, as true mourners do who weep in secret, in silence and solitude; in the night, when others compose themselves to rest, her thoughts are most intent upon her troubles, and grief then plays the tyrant.

What the prophet's head was for her, when she regarded it not, now her head is--as waters, and her eyes fountains of tears, so that she

weeps day and night (Jer 9:1); her tears are continually on her cheeks. Though nothing dries away sooner than a tear, yet fresh griefs extort fresh tears, so that her cheeks are never free from them.

Note, There is nothing more commonly seen under the sun than the tears of the oppressed, with whom the clouds return after the rain, Ec 4:1.

(4.) Those that were separated from the heathen now dwell among the heathen; those that were a peculiar people are now a mingled people (La 1:3): Judah has gone into captivity, out of her own land into the land of her enemies, and there she abides, and is likely to abide, among those that are aliens to God and the covenants of promise, with whom she finds no rest, no satisfaction of mind, nor any settlement of abode, but is continually hurried from place to place at the will of the victorious imperious tyrants. And again (La 1:5): "Her children have gone into captivity before the enemy; those that were to have been the seed of the next generation are carried off; so that the land that is now desolate is likely to be still desolate and lost for want of heirs."

Those that dwell among their own people, and that a free people, and in their own land, would be more thankful for the mercies they thereby enjoy if they would but consider the miseries of those that are forced into strange countries.

(5.) Those that used in their wars to conquer are now conquered and triumphed over: All her persecutors overlook her between the straits (La 1:3); they gained all possible advantages against her, sot hat her people unavoidably fell into the hand of the enemy, for there was no way to escape (La 1:7); they were hemmed in on every side, and, which way soever they attempted to flee, they found themselves embarrassed. When they made the best of their way they could make nothing of it, but were overtaken and overcome; so that every where her adversaries are the chief and her enemies prosper (La 2:5); which way soever their sword turns they get the better. Such straits do men bring themselves into by sin. If we allow

that which is our greatest adversary and enemy to have dominion over us, and to be chief in us, justly will our other enemies be suffered to have dominion over us.

(6.) Those that had been not only a distinguished by a dignified people, on whom God had put honour, and to whom all their neighbours had paid respect, are now brought into contempt (La 1:8): All that honoured her before despise her; those that courted an alliance with her now value it not; those that caressed her when she was in pomp and prosperity slight her now that she is in distress, because they have seen her nakedness. By the prevalency of the enemies against her they perceive her weakness, and that she is not so strong a people as they thought she had been; and by the prevalency of God's judgments against her they perceive her wickedness, which now comes to light and is every where talked of. Now it appears how they have vilified themselves by their sins: The enemies magnify themselves against them (La 1:9); they trample upon them, and insult over them, and in their eyes they have become vile, the tail of the nations, though once they were the head.

Note, Sin is the reproach of any people.

(7.) Those that lived in a fruitful land were ready to perish, and many of them did perish, for want of necessary food (La 1:11): All her people sigh in despondency and despair; they are ready to faint away; their spirits fail, and therefore they sigh, for they seek bread and seek it in vain. They were brought at last to that extremity that there was no bread for the people of the land (Jer 52:6), and in their captivity they had much ado to get break, La 5:6. They have given their pleasant things, their jewels and pictures, and all the furniture of their closets and cabinets, which they used to please themselves with looking upon, they have sold these to buy bread for themselves and their families, have parted with them for meat to relieve the soul, or (as the margin is) to make the soul come again, when they were ready to faint away. They desired no other cordial than meat.

All that a man has will he give for life, and for break, which is the staff of life. Let those that abound in pleasant things not be proud of them, nor fond of them; for the time may come when they may be glad to let them go for necessary things. And let those that have competent food to relieve their soul be content with it, and thankful for it, though they have not pleasant things.

2. We have here an account of their miseries in their ecclesiastical state, the ruin of their sacred interest, which was much more to be lamented than that of their secular concerns.

(1.) Their religious feasts were no more observed, no more frequented (La 1:4): The ways of Zion do mourn; they look melancholy, overgrown with grass and weeds. It used to be a pleasant diversion to see people continually passing and repassing in the highway that led to the temple, but now you may stand there long enough, and see nobody stir; for none come to the solemn feasts; a full end is put to them by the destruction of that which was the city of our solemnities, Isa 33:20. The solemn feasts had been neglected and profaned (Isa 1:11,12), and therefore justly is an end now put to them.

But, when thus the ways of Zion are made to mourn, all the sons of Zion cannot but mourn with them. It is very grievous to good men to see religious assemblies broken up and scattered, and those restrained from them that would gladly attend them. And, as the ways of Zion mourned, so the gates of Zion, in which the faithful worshippers used to meet, are desolate; for there is none to meet in them. Time was when the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but now he has forsaken them, and is provoked to withdraw from them, and therefore it cannot but fare with them as it did with the temple when Christ quitted it. Behold, you house is left unto you desolate, Mt 23:38.

(2.) Their religious persons were quite disabled from performing their wonted services, were quite dispirited: Her priests sigh for the desolations of the temple; their songs are turned into sighs; they

sigh, for they have nothing to do, and therefore there is nothing to be had; they sigh, as the people (La 1:11), for want of bread, because the offerings of the Lord, which were their livelihood, failed. It is time to sigh when the priests, the Lord's ministers, sigh. Her virgins also, that used, with their music and dancing, to grace the solemnities of their feasts, are afflicted and in heaviness.

Notice is taken of their service in the day of Zion's prosperity (Ps 68:25, Among them were the damsels playing with timbrels), and therefore notice is taken of the failing of it now. Her virgins are afflicted, and therefore she is in bitterness; that is, all the inhabitants of Zion are so, whose character it is that they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and that to them the reproach of it is a burden, Zep 3:18.

(3.) Their religious places were profaned (La 1:10): The heathen entered into her sanctuary, into the temple itself, into which no Israelite was permitted to enter, though ever so reverently and devoutly, but the priests only. The stranger that comes nigh, even to worship there, shall be put to death. Thither the heathen now crows rudely in, not to worship, but to plunder. God had commanded that the heathen should not so much as enter into the congregation, nor be incorporated with the people of the Jews (De 23:3); yet now they enter into the sanctuary without control.

Note, Nothing is more grievous to those who have a true concern for the glory of God, nor is more lamented, than the violation of God's laws, and the contempt they see put upon sacred things. What the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary was complained of, Ps 74:3,4.

(4.) Their religious utensils, and all the rich things with which the temple was adorned and beautified, and which were made use of in the worship of God, were made a prey to the enemy (La 1:10): The adversary has spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things, has grasped them all, seized them all, for himself. What these pleasant things are we may learn from Isa 64:11, where, to the complaint of

the burning of the temple, it is added, All our pleasant things are laid waste; the ark and the altar, and all the other tokens of God's presence with them, these were their pleasant things above any other things, and these were now broken to pieces and carried away.

Thus from the daughter of Zion all her beauty has departed, La 1:6. The beauty of holiness was the beauty of the daughter of Zion; when the temple, that holy and beautiful house, was destroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of the staff of beauty, the taking away of the pledges and seals of the covenant, Zec 11:10.

(5.) Their religious days were made a jest of (La 1:7): The adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths. They laughed at them for observing one day in seven as a day of rest from worldly business. Juvenal, a heathen poet, ridicules the Jews in his time for losing a seventh part of their time:--

--------cui septima quæque fuit lux Ignava et vitæ partem non attigit ullam---- They keep their sabbaths to their cost, For thus one day in sev'n is lost;

whereas sabbaths, if they be sanctified as they ought to be, will turn to a better account than all the days of the week besides. And whereas the Jews professed that they did it in obedience to their God, and to his honour, their adversaries asked them, "What do you get by it now? What profit have you in keeping the ordinances of your God, who now deserts you in your distress?"

Note, it is a very great trouble to all that love God to hear his ordinances mocked at, and particularly his sabbaths. Zion calls them her sabbaths, for the sabbath was made for men; they are his institutions, but they are her privileges; and the contempt put upon sabbaths all the sons of Zion take to themselves and lay to heart accordingly; nor will they look upon sabbaths, or any other divine ordinances, as less honourable, nor value them less, for their being mocked at.

(6.) That which greatly aggravated all these grievances was that her state at present was just the reverse of what it had been formerly,

La 1:7. Now, in the days of affliction and misery, when every thing was black and dismal, she remembers all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, and now knows how to value them better than formerly, when she had the full enjoyment of them. God often makes us know the worth of mercies by the want of them; and adversity is borne with the greatest difficulty by those that have fallen into it from the height of prosperity. This cut David to the heart, when he was banished from God's ordinances, that he could remember when he went with the multitude to the house of God, Ps 42:4.

II The sins of Jerusalem are here complained of as the procuring provoking cause of all these calamities. Whoever are the instruments, God is the author of all these troubles; it is the Lord that has afflicted her (La 1:5) and he has done it as a righteous Judge, for she has sinned.

1. Her sins are for number numberless. Are her troubles many? Her sins are many more. it is for the multitude of her transgressions that the Lord has afflicted her. See Jer 30:14. When the transgressions of a people are multiplied we cannot say, as Job does in his own case, that wounds are multiplied without cause, Job 9:17.

2. They are for nature exceedingly heinous (La 1:8): Jerusalem has grievously sinned, has sinned sin (so the word is), sinned wilfully, deliberately, has sinned that sin which of all others is the abominable things that the Lord hates, the sin of idolatry. The sins of Jerusalem, that makes such a profession and enjoys such privileges, are of all others the most grievous sins. She has sinned grievously (La 1:8), and therefore (La 1:9) she came down wonderfully.

Note, Grievous sins bring wondrous ruin; there are some workers of iniquity to whom there is a strange punishment, Job 31:3. They are such sins as may plainly be read in the punishment.

(1.) They have been very oppressive and therefore are justly oppressed (La 1:3): Judah has gone into captivity, and it is because of affliction and great servitude, because the rich among them afflicted the poor and made them serve with rigour, and particularly (as the Chaldee paraphrases it) because they had oppressed their Hebrew servants, which is charged upon them, Jer 34:11. Oppression was one of their crying sins (Jer 6:6,7) and it is a sin that cries aloud.

(2.) They have made themselves vile, and therefore are justly vilified. They all despise her (La 1:8), for her filthiness is in her skirts; it appears upon her garments that she has rolled them in the mire of sin. None could stain our glory if we did not stain it ourselves.

(3.) They have been very secure and therefore are justly surprised with this ruin (La 1:9): She remembers not her last end; she did not take the warning that was given her to consider her latter end, to consider what would be the end of such wicked courses as she took, and therefore she came down wonderfully, in an astonishing manner, that she might be made to feel what she would not fear; therefore God shall make their plagues wonderful.

III. Jerusalem's friends are here complained of as false and faint-hearted, and very unkind: They have all dealt treacherously with her (La 1:2), so that, in effect, they have become here enemies. Her deceivers have created her as much vexation as her destroyers. The staff that breaks under us may do us as great a mischief as the staff that beats us, Eze 29:6,7.

Her princes, that should have protected her, have not courage enough to make head against the enemy for their own preservation; they are like harts, that, upon the first alarm, betake themselves to flight and make no resistance; nay, they are like harts that are famished for want of pasture, and therefore are gone without strength before the pursuer, and, having no strength for flight, are

soon run down and made a prey of. Her neighbours are unneighbourly, for,

1. There is none to help her (La 1:7); either they could not or they would not; nay,

2. She has not comforter, none to sympathize with her, or suggest any thing to alleviate her griefs, La 1:7,9. Like Job's friends, they saw it was to no purpose, her grief was so great; and miserable comforters were they all in such a case.

IV. Jerusalem's God is here complained to concerning all these things, and all is referred to his compassionate consideration (La 1:9): "O Lord! behold my affliction, and take cognizance of it;" and (La 1:11), "See, O Lord! and consider, take order about it."

Note, The only way to make ourselves easy under our burdens is to cast them upon God first, and leave it to him to do with us as seemeth him good.

2 She weepeth sore in the night, and her
tears *are* on her cheeks:
among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her:* all her
friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become
her enemies.
3 Judah is gone into captivity
because of affliction, and because of great servitude:
she dwelleth among the heathen, she
findeth no rest:
all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.
4 The ways of Zion do mourn,
because none come to the solemn feasts:
all her gates are desolate:
her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she
is in bitterness.
5 Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper;
for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her
transgressions:

her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.
6 And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed:
her princes are become like harts *that* find no pasture,
and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.
7 Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries
all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old,
when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her:
the adversaries saw her, *and* did mock at her sabbaths.
8 Jerusalem hath grievously sinned;
therefore she is removed:
all that honored her despise her, because
they have seen her nakedness: yea, she
sigheth, and turneth backward.
9 Her filthiness *is* in her skirts;
she remembereth not her last end;
therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter.
O Lord, behold my affliction:
for the enemy hath magnified *himself*.
10 The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things:
for she hath seen *that* the heathen entered into her sanctuary,
whom thou didst command *that* they should not enter into thy congregation.
11 All her people sigh, they seek bread;
they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul:
see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile.
12 *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,
which is done unto me,
wherewith the Lord hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

The complaints here are, for substance, the same with those in the foregoing part of the chapter; but in these verses the prophet, in the name of the lamenting church, does more particularly acknowledge the hand of god in these calamities, and the righteousness of his hand.

I The church in distress here magnifies her affliction, and yet no more than there was cause for; her groaning was not heavier than her strokes. She appeals to all spectators: See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, La 1:12. This might perhaps be truly said of Jerusalem's griefs; but we are apt to apply it too sensibly to ourselves when we are in trouble and more than there is cause for. Because we feel most from our own burden, and cannot be persuaded to reconcile ourselves to it, we are ready to cry out, Surely never was sorrow like unto our sorrow; whereas, if our troubles were to be thrown into a common stock with those of others, and then an equal dividend made, share and share alike, rather than stand to that we should each of us say, "Pray, give me my own again."

II. She here looks beyond the instruments to the author of her troubles, and owns them all to be directed, determined, and disposed of by him: "It is the Lord that has afflicted me, and he has afflicted me because he is angry with me; the greatness of his displeasure may be measured by the greatness of my distress; it is in the day of his fierce anger," La 1:12. Afflictions cannot but be very much our griefs when we see them arising from God's wrath; so the church does here.

1. She is as one in a fever, and the fever is of God's sending: "He has sent fire into my bones (La 1:13), a preternatural heat, which prevails against them, so that they are burnt like a hearth (Ps 102:3), pained and wasted, and dried away."

2. She is as one in a net, which the more he struggles to get out of the more he is entangled in, and this net is of God's spreading. "The enemies could not have succeeded in their stratagems had not God spread a net for my feet."

3. She is as one in a wilderness, whose way is embarrassed, solitary, and tiresome: "He has turned me back, that I cannot go on, has made me desolate, that I have nothing to support me with, but am faint all the day."

4. She is as one in a yoke, not yoked for service, but for penance, tied neck and heels together (La 1:14): The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand. Observe, We never are entangled in any yoke but what is framed out of our own transgressions. The sinner is holden with the cords of his own sins, Pr 5:22. The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke (Mt 11:30), but that of our own transgressions is a heavy one. God is said to bind this yoke when he charges guilt upon us, and brings us into those inward and outward troubles which our sins have deserved; when conscience, as his deputy, binds us over to his judgment, then the yoke is bound and wreathed by the hand of his justice, and nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy will unbind it.

5. She is as one in the dirt, and he it is that has trodden under foot all her mighty men, that has disabled them to stand, and overthrown them by one judgment after another, and so left them to be trampled upon by their proud conquerors, La 1:15. Nay, she is as one in a wine-press, not only trodden down, but trodden to pieces, crushed as grapes in the wine-press of God's wrath, and her blood pressed out as wine, and it is God that has thus trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah.

6. She is in the hand of her enemies, and it is the Lord that has delivered her into their hands (La 1:14): He has made my strength to fall, so that I am not able to make head against them; nay, not only not able to rise up against them, but not able to rise up from them, and then he has delivered me into their hands; nay (La 1:15), he has called an assembly against me, to crush my young men, and such an assembly as it is in vain to think of opposing; and again (La 1:17), The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob that his adversaries should be round about him. He that has many a time commanded deliverances for Jacob (Ps 44:4) now commands an invasion against Jacob, because Jacob has disobeyed the commands of his law.

III. She justly demands a share in the pity and compassion of those that were the spectators of her misery (La 1:12): "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Can you look upon me without concern? What! are your hearts as adamants and your eyes as marbles, that you cannot bestow upon me one compassionate thought, or look, or tear? Are not you also in the body? Is it nothing to you that your neighbor's house is on fire?" There are those to whom Zion's sorrows and ruins are nothing; they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. How pathetically does she beg their compassion! (La 1:18): "Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: hear my complaints, and see what cause I have for them." This is a request like that of Job (Job 19:21), Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O you my friends! It helps to make a burden sit lighter if our friends sympathize with us, and mingle their tears with ours, for this is an evidence that, though we are in affliction, we are not in contempt, which is commonly as much dreaded in an affliction as any thing.

13 From above hath he sent fire into my bones,
and it prevaileth against them:
he hath spread a net for my feet,
he hath turned me back:
he hath made me desolate *and* faint all the day.

14 The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand:
they are wreathed, *and* come up upon my neck:
he hath made my strength to fall,
the Lord hath delivered me into *their* hands,
from whom I am not able to rise up.

15 The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me:
he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men:
the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a winepress.

16 For these *things* I weep;
mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water,
because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me:
my children are desolate,
because the enemy prevailed.

She justifies her own grief, though it was very extreme, for these calamities (La 1:16): "For these things I weep, I weep in the night (La 1:2), when none sees; my eye, my eye, runs down with water."

Note, This world is a vale of tears to the people of God. Zion's sons are often Zion's mourners. Zion spreads forth her hands (La 1:17), which is here an expression rather of despair than of desire; she flings out her hands as giving up all for gone. Let us see how she accounts for this passionate grief.

1. Her God has withdrawn from her; and Micah, that had but gods of gold, when they were stolen from him cried out, What have I more? And what is it that you say unto me? What aileth thee? The church here grieves excessively; for, says she, the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. God is the comforter; he used to be so to her; he only can administer effectual comforts; it is his word that speaks them; it is his Spirit that speaks them to us. His are strong consolations, able to relieve the soul, to bring it back when it is gone, and we cannot of ourselves fetch it again; but now he has departed in displeasure, he is far from me, and beholds me afar off.

Note, It is no marvel that the souls of the saints faint away, when God, who is the only Comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a distance.

2. Her children are removed from her, and are in no capacity to help her: it is for them that she weeps, as Rachel for hers, because they were not, and therefore she refuses to be comforted. Her children were desolate, because the enemy prevailed against them; there is none of all her sons to take her by the hand (Isa 51:18); they cannot help themselves, and how should they help her? Both the damsels and the youths, that were her joy and hope, have gone into captivity, La 1:18. It is said of the Chaldeans that they had no compassion upon young men nor maidens, not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2Ch 36:17.

3. Her friends failed her; some would not and others could not give her any relief. She spread forth her hands, as begging relief, but there is none to comfort her (La 1:17), none that can do it, none that cares to do it; she called for her lovers, and, to engage them to help her, called them her lovers, but they deceived her (La 1:19), they proved like the brooks in summer to the thirsty traveller, Job 6:15.

Note, Those creatures that we set our hearts upon and raise our expectations from we are commonly deceived and disappointed in. Her idols were her lovers. Egypt and Assyria were her confidants. But they deceived her. Those that made court to her in her prosperity were shy of her, and strange to her, in her adversity. Happy are those that have made God their friend and keep themselves in his love, for he will not deceive them!

4. Those whose office it was to guide her were disabled from doing her any service. The priests and the elders, that should have appeared at the head of affairs, died for hunger (La 1:19); they gave up the ghost, or were ready to expire, while they sought their meat; they went a begging for bread to keep them alive. The famine is sore indeed in the land when there is no bread to the wise, when priests and elders are starved. The priests and elders should have been her comforters; but how should they comfort others when they themselves were comfortless? "They have heard that I sigh, which should have summoned them to my assistance; but there is none to comfort me. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me."

5. Her enemies were too hard for her, and they insulted over her; they have prevailed, La 1:16. Abroad the sword bereaves and slays all that comes in its way, and at home all provisions are cut off by the besiegers, so that there is as death, that is, famine, which is as bad as the pestilence, or worse--the sword without and terror within, De 32:25. And as the enemies, that were the instruments of the calamity, were very barbarous, so were those that were the standers by, the Edomites and Ammonites, that bore ill will to Israel: They have heard of my trouble, and are glad that thou hast done it (La 1:21); they rejoice in the trouble itself; they rejoice that

it is God's doing; it pleases them to find that God and his Israel have fallen out, and they act accordingly with a great deal of strangeness towards them. Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them, that they are afraid of touching and are shy of, La 1:17. Upon all these accounts it cannot be wondered at, nor can she be blamed, that her sighs are many, in grieving for what is, and that her heart is faint (La 1:22) in fear of what is yet further likely to be.

17 Zion spreadeth forth her hands,
and there is none to comfort her:
the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that*
his adversaries *should be* round about him: Jerusalem
is as a menstruous woman among them.

18 The Lord is righteous;
for I have rebelled against his commandment:
hear, I pray you, all people,
and behold my sorrow:

She justifies God in all that is brought upon her, acknowledging that her sins had deserved these severe chastenings. The yoke that lies so heavily, and binds so hard, is the yoke of her transgressions, La 1:14. The fetters we are held in are of our own making, and it is with our own rod that we are beaten. When the church had spoken here as if she thought the Lord severe she does well to correct herself, at least to explain herself, but acknowledging (La 1:18), The Lord is righteous. He does us no wrong in dealing thus with us, nor can we charge him with any injustice in it; how unrighteous soever men are, we are sure that the Lord is righteous, and manifests his justice, though they contradict all the laws of theirs. Note, Whatever our troubles are, which God is pleased to inflict upon us, we must own that therein he is righteous; we understand neither him nor ourselves if we do not own it, 2Ch 12:6.

She owns the equity of God's actions, but owning the iniquity of her own: I have rebelled against his commandments (La 1:18); and again (La 1:20), I have grievously rebelled. We cannot speak ill enough of sin, and we must always speak worst of our own sin, must call it rebellion, grievous rebellion; and very grievous sins is

to all true penitents. It is this that lies more heavily upon her than the afflictions she was under: "My bowels are troubled; they work within me as the troubled sea; my heart is turned within me, is restless, is turned upside down; for I have grievously rebelled." Note, Sorrow for our sin must be great sorrow and must affect the soul.

my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.
19 I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me:
my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city,
while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.
20 Behold, O Lord; for I *am* in distress:
my bowels are troubled;
mine heart is turned within me;
for I have grievously rebelled:
abroad the sword bereaveth,
at home *there is* as death.

She appeals both to the mercy and to the justice of God in her present case.

1. She appeals to the mercy of God concerning her own sorrows, which had made her the proper object of his compassion (La 1:20): "Behold, O Lord! for I am in distress; take cognizance of my case, and take such order for my relief as thou pleasest."

Note, It is matter of comfort to us that the troubles which oppress our spirits are open before God's eye.

2. She appeals to the justice of God concerning the injuries that her enemies did her (La 1:21,22): "Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, the day that is fixed in the counsels of God and published in the prophecies, when my enemies, that now prosecute me, shall be made like unto me, when the cup of trembling, now put into my hands, shall be put into theirs." It may be read as a prayer, "Let the day appointed come," and so it goes on, "Let their wickedness come before thee, let it come to be remembered, let it come to be reckoned for; take vengeance on them for all the wrongs they have done to me (Ps 109:14,15); hasten the time when

thou wilt do to them for their transgressions as thou hast done to me for mine."

This prayer amounts to a protestation against all thoughts of a coalition with them, and to a prediction of their ruin, subscribing to that which God had in his word spoken of it.

Note, Our prayers may and must agree with God's word; and what day God has here called we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accomplishment of that which God has spoken against his and his church's enemies, that will not repent to give him glory.

21 They have heard that I sigh;
there is none to comfort me:
all mine enemies have heard of my trouble;
they are glad that thou hast done *it:*
thou wilt bring the day *that* thou hast called,
and they shall be like unto me.
22 Let all their wickedness come before thee;
and do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions:
for my sighs *are* many, and my heart *is* faint.

Lamentations-2

Zion's Sorrows Come from the Lord

1 How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger,
and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel,
and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God's church, of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem; but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were groaning under. The

grief is not so much that such and such things are done as that God has done them, that he appears angry with them; it is he that chastens them, and chastens them in wrath and in his hot displeasure; he has become their enemy, and fights against them; and this, this is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery.

I. Time was when God's delight was in his church, and he appeared to her, and appeared for her, as a friend. But now his displeasure is against her; he is angry with her, and appears and acts against her as an enemy. This is frequently repeated here, and sadly lamented. What he has done he has done in his anger; this makes the present day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is the day of his anger (La 2:1), and again (La 2:2) it is in his wrath, and (La 2:3) it is in his fierce anger, that he has thrown down and cut off, and (La 2:6) in the indignation of his anger. Note, To those who know how to value God's favour nothing appears more dreadful than his anger; corrections in love are easily borne, but rebukes in love wound deeply. It is God's wrath that burns against Jacob like a flaming fire (La 2:3), and it is a consuming fire; it devours round about, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the fury that is poured out like fire (La 2:4), like the fire and brimstone which were rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah; but it was their sin that kindled this fire.

God is such a tender Father to his children that we may be sure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him, and give him cause to be angry; nor is he ever angry more than there is cause for. God's covenant with them was that if they would obey his voice he would be an enemy to their enemies (Ex 23:22), and he had been so as long as they kept close to him; but now he is an enemy to them; at least he is as an enemy, La 2:5. He has bent his bow like an enemy, La 2:4. He stood with his right hand stretched out against them, and a sword drawn in it as an adversary. God is not really an enemy to his people, no, not when he is angry with them and corrects them in anger. We may be sorely displeased

against our dearest friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having an enmity to.

But sometimes he is as an enemy to them, when all his providences concerning them seem in outward appearance to have a tendency to their ruin, when every thing made against them and nothing for them. But, blessed be God, Christ is our peace, our peacemaker, who has slain the enmity, and in him we may agree with our adversary, which it is our wisdom to do, since it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

II. Time was when God's church appeared very bright, and illustrations, and considerable among the nations; but now the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud (La 2:1), a dark cloud, which is very terrible to himself, and through which she cannot see his face; a thick cloud (so that word signifies), a black cloud, which eclipses all her glory and conceals her excellency; not such a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderness, or that in which God took possession of the temple and filled it with his glory: no, that side of the cloud is now turned towards them which was turned towards the Egyptians in the Red Sea. The beauty of Israel is now cast down from heaven to the earth; their princes (2Sa 1:19), their religious worship, their beauty of holiness, all that which recommended them to the affection and esteem of their neighbours and rendered them amiable, which had lifted them up to heaven, was now withered and gone, because God had covered it with a cloud. He has cut off all the horn of Israel (La 2:3), all her beauty and majesty (Ps 132:17), all her plenty and fulness, and all her power and authority.

They had, in their pride, lifted up their horn against God, and therefore justly will God cut off their horn. He disabled them to resist and oppose their enemies; he turned back their right hand, so that they were not able to follow the blow which they gave nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right

hand do against the enemy when God draws it back, and withers it, as he did Jeroboam's? Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famed for courage were not able to stand their ground nor make good their post.

2 The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob,
and hath not pitied:
he hath thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah;
he hath brought *them* down to the ground:
he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

Time was when their government flourished, their princes made a figure, their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their side; but now it is quite otherwise: He has polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof, La 2:2.

They had first polluted themselves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things; he threw them to the dunghill, the fittest place for them. He has given up their glory, which was looked upon as sacred (that is a character we give to majesty), to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the priest, whose characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are despised by every body, when God has, in the indignation of his anger, despised the king and the priest, La 2:6.

He has abandoned them; he looks upon them as no longer worthy of the honours conveyed to them by the covenants of royalty and priesthood, but as having forfeited both; and then Zedekiah the king was used despitefully, and Seraiah the chief priest put to death as a malefactor. The crown has fallen from their heads, for her king and her princes are among the Gentiles, prisoners among them, insulted over by them (La 2:9), and treated not only as common persons, but as the basest, without any regard to their character.

Note, It is just with God to debase those by his judgments who have by sin debased themselves.

3 He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel:
he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy,
and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth
round about.

Time was when Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were strong and well fortified, were trusted to by the inhabitants and let alone by the enemy as impregnable. But now the lord has in anger swallowed them up; they are quite gone; the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invaders meet with no opposition: the stately structures, which were their strength and beauty, are pulled down and laid waste.

1 The Lord has in anger swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob (La 2:2), both the cities and the country houses; they are burnt, or otherwise destroyed, so totally ruined that they seem to have been swallowed up, and no remains left of them. He has swallowed up, and has not pitied. One would have thought it a pity that such sumptuous houses, so well built, so well furnished, should be quite destroyed, ad that some pity should have been had for the poor inhabitants that were thus dislodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compassion seemed to fail: He has swallowed up Israel, as a lion swallows up his prey, La 2:5.

2. He has swallowed up not only her common habitations, but her palaces, all her palaces, the habitations of their princes and great men (La 2:5), though those were most stately, and strong, and rich, and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commission, level palaces with cottages, and as easily swallow them up. If palaces be polluted with sin, as theirs were, let them expect to be visited with a curse, which shall consume them, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof, Zec 5:4. 3. He had destroyed not only their dwelling-places, but their strong-holds, their castles, citadels, and places of defence. These he has thrown down in his wrath, and brought them to the ground; for shall they stand in the way of his judgments, and give check to the progress of them? No; let them drop like leaves in autumn; let them be rased to the foundations, and made to touch the ground, La 2:2.

And again (La 2:5), He has destroyed his strong-holds; for what strength could they have against God? And thus he increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation, for they could not but be in a dreadful consternation when they saw all their defence departed from them. This is again insisted on, La 2:7-9.

In order to the swallowing up of her palaces, he has given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces, which were their security, and, when they are broken down, the palaces themselves are soon broken into. The walls of palaces cannot protect them, unless God himself be a wall of fire round about them. This God did in his anger, and yet he has done it deliberately. It is the result of a previous purpose, and is done by a wise and steady providence; for the Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; he brought the Chaldean army in on purpose to do this execution.

Note, Whatever desolations God makes in his church, they are all according to his counsels; he performs the thing that is appointed for us, even that which makes most against us. But, when it is done, he has stretched out a line, a measuring line, to do it exactly and by measure: hitherto the destruction shall go, and no further; no more shall be cut off than what is marked to be so. Or it is meant of the line of confusion (Isa 34:11), a levelling line; for he will go on with his work; he has not withdrawn his hand from destroying, that right hand which he stretched out against his people as an adversary, La 2:4.

As far as the purpose went the performance shall go, and his hand shall accomplish his counsel to the utmost, and not be withdrawn. Therefore he made the rampart and the wall, which the people had rejoiced in and upon which perhaps they had made merry, to lament, and they languished together; the walls and the ramparts, or bulwarks, upon them, fell together, and were left to condole with one another on their fall. Her gates are gone in an instant, so that one would think they were sunk into the ground with their

own weight, and he has destroyed and broken her bars, those bars of Jerusalem's gates which formerly he had strengthened, Ps 147:13. Gates and bars will stand us in no stead when God has withdrawn his protection.

4 He hath bent his bow like an enemy:
he stood with his right hand as an adversary,
and slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion:
he poured out his fury like fire.

Time was when the ordinances of God were administered among them in their power and purity, and they had those tokens of God's presence with them; but now those were taken from them, that part of the beauty of Israel was gone which was indeed their greatest beauty.

1 The ark was God's footstool, under the mercy-seat, between the cherubim; this was of all others the most sacred symbol of God's presence (it is called his footstool, 1Ch 28:2,Ps 99:5,132:7); there the Shechinah rested, and with an eye to this Israel was often protected and saved; but now he remembered not his footstool. The ark itself was suffered, as it should seem, to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans. God, being angry, threw that away; for it shall be no longer his footstool; the earth shall be so, as it had been before the ark was, Isa 66:1. Of what little value are the tokens of his presence when his presence is gone! Nor was this the first time that God gave his ark into captivity, Ps 78:61. God and his kingdom can stand without that footstool.

2. Those that ministered in holy things had been pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion (La 2:4); they had been purer than snow, whiter than mile (La 4:7); none more pleasant in the eyes of all good people than those that did the service of the tabernacle. But now these are slain, and their blood is mingled with their sacrifices. Thus is the priest despised as well as the king. Note, When those that were pleasant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are slain God must be acknowledged in it; he has done it, and the

burning which the Lord has kindled must be bewailed but the whole house of Israel, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Le 10:6.

3. The temple was God's tabernacle (as the tabernacle, while that was in being, was called his temple, Ps 27:4) and this he has violently taken away (La 2:6); he has plucked up the stakes of it and cut the cords; it shall be no more a tabernacle, much less his; he has taken it away, as the keeper of a garden takes away his hovel or shade, when he has done with it and has no more occasion for it; he takes it down as easily, as speedily, and with a little regret and reluctance as if it were but a cottage in a vineyard or a lodge in a garden of cucumbers (Isa 1:8), but a booth which the keeper makes, Job 27:18.

When men profane God's tabernacle it is just with him to take it from them. God has justly refused to smell their solemn assemblies (Am 5:21); they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has destroyed his places of the assembly; what should they do with the places when the services had become an abomination? He has now abhorred his sanctuary (La 2:7); it has been defiled with sin, that only thing which he hates, and for the sake of that he abhors even his sanctuary, which he had delighted in and called his rest for ever, Ps 132:14.

Thus he had done to Shiloh. Now the enemies have made as great a noise of revelling and blaspheming in the house of the Lord as ever had been made with the temple-songs and music in the day of a solemn feast, Ps 74:4. Some, by the places of the assembly (La 2:6), understand not only the temple, but the synagogues, and the schools of the prophets, which the enemy had burnt up, Ps 74:8.

4. The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people constantly put in mind of them; but now the Lord has caused those to be forgotten, not only in the country, among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were there the places left where they used to be observed. Now that Zion was

in ruins no difference was made between sabbath time and other times; every day was a day of mourning, so that all the solemn feasts were forgotten. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts who have not duly valued them, nor conscientiously observed them, but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. Those that have seen the days of the Son of man, and slighted them, may desire to see one of those days and not be permitted, Lu 17:22.

5. The altar that had sanctified their gifts is now cast off, for God will no more accept their gifts, nor be honoured by their sacrifices, La 2:7. The altar was the table of the Lord, but God will no longer keep house among them; he will neither feast them nor feast with them.

6. They had been blest with prophets and teachers of the law; but now the law is no more (La 2:9); it is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the scribes; the tables of the law are gone with the ark; the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What should those do with Bibles who had made no better improvement of them when they had them? Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord; God answers them no more by prophets and dreams, which was the melancholy case of Saul, 1Sa 28:15. They had persecuted God's prophets, and despised the visions they had from the Lord, and therefore it is just with God to say that they shall have no more prophets, no more visions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with visions of their own hearts, for they shall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them how long. Those that misuse God's prophets justly lose them.

5 The Lord was as an enemy:
he hath swallowed up Israel,
he hath swallowed up all her palaces:
he hath destroyed his strongholds,
and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and
lamentation.

6 And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were of* a garden;
he hath destroyed his places of the assembly:
the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion,
and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.
7 The Lord hath cast off his altar,
he hath abhorred his sanctuary,
he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces;
they have made a noise in the house of the Lord,
as in the day of a solemn feast.
8 The Lord hath purposed to destroy
the wall of the daughter of Zion:
he hath stretched out a line,
he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying:
therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament;
they languished together.
9 Her gates are sunk into the ground;
he hath destroyed and broken her bars:
her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles:
the law *is* no *more;*
her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.
10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, *and* keep silence:
they have cast up dust upon their heads;
they have girded themselves with sackcloth:
the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

Justly are these called Lamentations, and they are very pathetic ones, the expressions of grief in perfection, mourning and woe, and nothing else, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, Eze 2:10.

I. Copies of lamentations are here presented and they are painted to the life.

1 The judges and magistrates, who used to appear in robes of state, have laid them aside, or rather are stripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners (La 2:10); the elders now sit no longer in the judgment-seats, the thrones of the house of David, but they sit upon the ground, having no seat to repose themselves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends sat with him upon the ground, Job 2:13.

They open not their mouth in the gate, as usual, to give their opinion, but they keep silence, overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing what to say. They have cast dust upon their heads, and girded themselves with sackcloth, as deep mourners used to do; they had lost their power and wealth, and that made the grieve thus. Ploratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris--Genuine are the tears which we shed over lost property.

2 The young ladies, who used to dress themselves so richly, and walk with stretched-forth necks (Isa 3:16), now are humbled; The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground; those are made to know sorrow who seemed to bid defiance to it and were always disposed to be merry.

3. The prophet himself is a pattern to the mourners, La 2:11. His eyes do fail with tears; he has wept till he can weep no more, has almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind. Nor are the inward impressions of grief short of the outward expressions. His bowels are troubled, as they were when he saw these calamities coming (Jer 4:19,20), which, one would think, might have excused him now; but even he, to whom they were no surprise, felt them an insupportable grief, to such a degree that his liver is poured out on the earth; he felt himself a perfect colliquation; all his entrails were melted and dissolved, as Ps 22:14.

Jeremiah himself had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had had before from his own countrymen, nay, their destruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement; the same that made them prisoners made him a favourite; and yet

his private interests are swallowed up in a concern for the public, and he bewails the destruction of the daughter of his people as sensibly as if he himself had been the greatest sufferer in that common calamity.

Note, The judgments of God upon the land and nation are to be lamented by us, though we, for our parts, may escape pretty well.

II. Calls to lamentation are here given: The heart of the people cried unto the Lord, La 2:18. Some fear it was a cry, not of true repentance, but of bitter complaint; their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in doleful shrieks and outcries, in which they made use of God's name; yet we will charitably suppose that many of them did in sincerity cry unto God for mercy in their distress; and the prophet bids them go on to do so:

"O wall of the daughter of Zion! either you that stand upon the wall, you watchmen on the walls (Isa 62:6), when you see the enemies encamped about the walls and making their approaches towards them, or because of the wall (that is the subject of the lamentation), because of the breaking down of the wall (which was not done till about a month after the city was taken), because of this further calamity, let the daughter of Zion lament still."

This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, Ne 1:3,4. "Let tears run down like a river day and night, weep without intermission, give thyself no rest from weeping, let not the apple of thy eye cease." This intimates,

1. That the calamities would be continuing, and the causes of grief would frequently recur, and fresh occasion would be given them every day and every night to bemoan themselves.

2. That they would be apt, by degrees, to grow insensible and stupid under the hand of God, and would need to be still called

upon to afflict their souls yet more and more, till their proud and hard hearts were thoroughly humbled and softened.

11 Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled,
my liver is poured upon the earth,
for the destruction of the daughter of my people;
because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.
12 They say to their mothers, Where *is* corn and wine?
when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city,
when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom.
13 What thing shall I take to witness for thee?
What thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?
What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee,
O virgin daughter of Zion?
For thy breach *is* great like the sea:
who can heal thee?

Causes for lamentation are here assigned, and the calamities that are to be bewailed are very particularly and pathetically described.

1. Multitudes perish by famine, a very sore judgment, and piteous is the case of those that fall under it. God had corrected them by scarcity of provisions through want of rain some time before (Jer 14:1), and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment, and therefore now by the straitness of the siege God brought it upon them in extremity; for,

(1.) The children died for hunger in their mothers' arms: The children and sucklings, whose innocent and helpless state entitles them to relief as soon as any, swoon in the streets (La 2:11) as the wounded (La 2:12), there being no food to be had for them; those that are starved die as surely as those that are stabbed.

They lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them and wine to refresh them, for they are such as had been bred up to the use of wine and wanted it now; but there is none for them, so that at length their soul is poured into their mothers' bosom, and there they breathe their last. This is mentioned again (La 2:19):

They faint for hunger in the top of every street. Yet this is not the worst,

(2.) There were some little children that were slain by their mothers' hands and eaten, La 2:20. Such was the scarcity of provision that the women ate the fruit of their own bodies, even their children when they were but of a span long, according to the threatening, De 28:53. The like was done in the siege of Samaria, 2Ki 6:29. Such extremities, nay, such barbarities, were they brought to by the famine. Let us, in our abundance, thank God that we have food convenient, not only for ourselves, but for our children.

2. Multitudes fall by the sword, which devours one as well as another, especially when it is in the hand of such cruel enemies as the Chaldeans were.

(1.) They spared no character, no, not the most distinguished; even the priest and the prophet, who of all men, one would think, might expect protection from heaven and veneration on earth, are slain, not abroad in the field of battle, where they are out of their place, as Hophni and Phinehas, but in the sanctuary of the Lord, the place of their business and which they hoped would be a refuge to them.

(2.) They spared no age, no, not those who, by reason of their tender or their decrepit age, were exempted from taking up the sword; for even they perished by the sword. "The young, who have not yet come to bear arms, and the old, who have had their discharge, lie on the ground, slain in the streets, till some kind hand is found that will bury them."

(3.) They spared no sex: My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword. In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of the virgins were spared, and made part of the spoil (Nu 31:18,Jdg 5:30), but here the virgins were put to the sword, as well as the young men.

(4.) This was the Lord's doing; he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction: Thou has slain them in the day of thy anger, for it is God that kills and makes alive, and saves alive, as he pleases. But that which follows is very harsh: Thou has killed, and not pitied; for his soul is grieved for the misery of Israel. The enemies that used them thus cruelly were such as he had both mustered and summoned (La 2:22): "Thou hast called in, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about, that is, the Chaldeans, who are such a terror to me;" enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thickly as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival, so that they were quite overpowered with numbers, and none escaped nor remained; Jerusalem was made a perfect slaughter-house.

Mothers are cut to the heart to see those whom they have taken such care of, and pains with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used, suddenly cut off, though not soon reared:

Those that I have swaddled, and brought up, has my enemy consumed, as if they were brought forth for the murderer, like lambs for the butcher, Ho 9:13. Zion, who was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey.

3. Their false prophets cheated them, La 2:14. This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern (Jer 14:13): Ah! Lord God, the prophets say unto them, You shall not see the sword; and here he inserts it among his lamentations:

Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee; they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see the visions of the Almighty and then to speak his words; but they were all vain and foolish things; their visions were all their own fancies, and, if they thought they had any, it was only the product of a crazed head or a heated imagination, as appeared by what they delivered, which was all

idle and impertinent: nay, it is most likely that they themselves knew that the visions they pretended were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they designedly imposed upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves.

They are thy prophets, not God's prophets; he never sent them, nor were they pastors after his heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were prophets after their hearts.

(1.) Prophets should tell people of their faults, should show them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin; but these prophets knew that would lose them the people's affections and contributions, and knew they could not reprove their hearers without reproaching themselves at the same time, and therefore they have not discovered thy iniquity; they saw it not themselves, or, if they did, saw so little evil in it, or danger from it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means, by taking away their iniquity, to turn away their captivity.

(2.) Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them, but these saw for them false burdens; the messages they pretended to deliver to them from God they knew to be false, and falsely ascribed to God; so that, by soothing them up in carnal security, they caused that banishment which, by plain dealing, they might have prevented.

4. Their neighbours laughed at them (La 2:15): All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee. Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and borne a great sway, among the nations; it was the envy and terror of all about; and, when the city was thus reduced; they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall; they hissed, and wagged the head, pleasing themselves to see how much it had fallen from its former pretensions.

Is this the city (said they) that men called the perfection of beauty? Ps 50:2. How is it now the perfection of deformity! Where is all its beauty now? Is this the city which was called the joy of the whole earth (Ps 48:2), which rejoiced in the gifts of God's bounty and grace more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in? Where is all its joy now and all its glorying? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others' miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

5. Their enemies triumphed over them, La 2:16. Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace now vent their spite and malice, which before they concealed; they now open their mouths, nay, they widen them; they hiss and gnash their teeth in scorn and indignation; they triumph in their own success against her, and the rich prey they have got in making themselves masters of Jerusalem: "We have swallowed her up; it is our doing, and it is our gain; it is all our own now.

Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been. Certainly this is the day that we have long looked for; we have found it; we have seen it; aha! so would we have it." Note, The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly; but they will find themselves deceived; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

6. Their God, in all this, appeared against them (La 2:17): The Lord has done that which he had devised. The destroyers of Jerusalem could have no power against her unless it were given them from above. They are but the sword in God's hand; it is he that has thrown down, and has not pitied. "In this controversy of his with us we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us." He has caused they enemy to rejoice over thee (see Job 30:11); he has set up the horn of thy adversaries, has given them power and matter for pride. This is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God has become their enemy, and yet it is the strongest argument for patience under it; we are bound to submit to what God does, for,

(1.) It is the performance of his purpose: The Lord has done that which he had devised; it is done with counsel and deliberation, not rashly, or upon a sudden resolve; it is the evil that he has framed (Jer 18:11), and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention. What God devises against his people is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue.

(2.) It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the scripture; he has now put in execution his word that he had commanded in the days of old. When he gave them his law by Moses he told them what judgments he would certainly inflict upon them if they transgressed that law; and now that they have been guilty of the transgression of this law he had executed the sentence of it, according to Le 26:16,De 28:15.

Note, In all the providences of God concerning his church it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of his word; for there is an exact agreement between the judgments of God's hand and the judgments of his mouth, and when they are compared they will mutually explain and illustrate each other.

14 Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee:
and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity;
but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.
15 All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee;
they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*,
Is this the city that *men* call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

Comforts for the cure of these lamentations are here sought for and prescribed.

1. They are sought for and enquired after, La 2:13. The prophet seeks to find out some suitable acceptable words to say to her in this case: Wherewith shall I comfort thee, O virgin! daughter of Zion? Note, We should endeavour to comfort those whose calamities we lament, and, when our passions have made the

worst of them, our wisdom should correct them and labour to make the best of them; we should study to make our sympathies with or afflicted friends turn to their consolation. Now the two most common topics of comfort, in case of affliction, are here tried, but are laid by because they would not hold. We commonly endeavour to comfort our friends by telling them,

(1.) That their case is not singular, nor without precedent; there are many whose trouble is greater, and lies heavier upon them, than theirs does; but Jerusalem's case will not admit this argument: "What thing shall I liken to thee, or what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee? What city, what country, is there, whose case is parallel to thine? What witness shall I produce to prove an example that will reach thy present calamitous state? Alas! there is none, no sorrow like thine, because there is none whose honour was like thine."

(2.) We tell them that their case is not desperate, but that it may easily be remedied; but neither will that be admitted here, upon a view of human probabilities; for thy breach is great, like the sea, like the breach which the sea sometimes makes upon the land, which cannot be repaired, but still grows wider and wider. Thou art wounded, and who shall heal thee? No wisdom nor power of man can repair the desolations of such a broken shattered state. It is to no purpose therefore to administer any of these common cordials; therefore,

2 The method of cure prescribed is to address themselves to God, and by a penitent prayer to commit their case to him, and to be instant and constant in such prayers (La 2:19): "Arise out of thy dust, out of thy despondency, cry out in the night, watch unto prayer; when others are asleep, be thou upon thy knees, importunate with God for mercy; in the beginning of the watches, of each of the four watches, of the night (let thy eyes prevent them, Ps 119:148), then pour out thy heart like water before the Lord, be free and full in prayer, be sincere and serious in prayer, open thy mind, spread thy case before the Lord; lift up thy hands

towards him in holy desire and expectation; beg for the life of thy young children. These poor lambs, what have they done? 2Sa 24:17.

Take with you words, take with you these words (La 2:20), Behold, O Lord! and consider to whom thou hast done this, with whom thou hast dealt thus. Are they not thy own, the seed of Abraham thy friend and of Jacob thy chosen? Lord, take their case into thy compassionate consideration!"

Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, even the sorest, a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. And our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but to subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to him, and then to leave it with him. Lord, behold and consider, and thy will be done.

16 All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee:
they hiss and gnash the teeth:
they say, We have swallowed *her* up:
certainly this *is* the day that we looked for;
we have found, we have seen *it*.
17 The Lord hath done *that* which he had devised;
he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old:
he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied:
and he hath caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee,
he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.
18 Their heart cried unto the Lord,
O wall of the daughter of Zion,
let tears run down like a river day and night:
give thyself no rest;
let not the apple of thine eye cease.
19 Arise, cry out in the night:
in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water
before the face of the Lord:
lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children,
that faint for hunger in the top of every street.
20 Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this.

Shall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a span long? Shall
the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?
21 The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets:
my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword;
thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger;
thou hast killed, *and* not pitied.
22 Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about,
so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained:
those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy
consumed.

Lamentations-3

Hope of Relief through God's Mercy

1 I *am* the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

The title of the Ps 102:1-28 might very fitly be prefixed to this chapter--The prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord; for it is very feelingly and fluently that the complaint is here poured out. Let us observe the particulars of it. The prophet complains,

1. That God is angry. This gives both birth and bitterness to the affliction (La 3:1): I am the man, the remarkable man, that has seen affliction, and has felt it sensibly, by the rod of his wrath. Note, God is sometimes angry with his own people; yet it is to be complained of, not as a sword to cut off, by only as a rod to correct; it is to them the rod of his wrath, a chastening which, though grievous for the present, will in the issue be advantageous. By this rod we must expect to see affliction, and, if we be made to see more than ordinary affliction by that rod, we must not quarrel, for we are sure that the anger is just and affliction mild and mixed with mercy.

2. That he is at a loss and altogether in the dark. Darkness is put for great trouble and perplexity, the want both of comfort and of

direction; this was the case of the complainant (La 3:2): "He has led me by his providence, and an unaccountable chain of events, into darkness and not into light, the darkness I feared and not into the light I hoped for." And (La 3:6), He has set me in dark places, dark as the grave, like those that are dead of old, that are quite forgotten, nobody knows who or what they were. Note, The Israel of God, though children of light, sometimes walk in darkness.

3. That God appears against him as an enemy, as a professed enemy. God had been for him, but no "Surely against me is he turned (La 3:3), as far as I can discern; for his hand is turned against me all the day. I am chastened every morning," Ps 73:14. And, when God's hand is continually turned against us, we are tempted to think that his heart is turned against us too. God had said once (Ho 5:14), I will be as a lion to the house of Judah, and now he has made his word good (La 3:10):

"He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, surprising me with his judgments, and as a lion in secret places; so that which way soever I went I was in continual fear of being set upon and could never think myself safe." Do men shoot at those thy are enemies to? He has bent his bow, the bow that was ordained against the church's prosecutors, that is bent against her sons, La 3:12. He has set me as a mark for his arrow, which he aims at, and will be sure to hit, and then the arrows of his quiver enter into my reins, give me a mortal wound, an inward wound, La 3:13. Note, God has many arrows in his quiver, and they fly swiftly and pierce deeply.

4. That he is as one sorely afflicted both in body and mind. The Jewish state may now be fitly compared to a man wrinkled with age, for which there is no remedy (La 3:4): "My flesh and my skin has he made old; they are wasted and withered, and I look like one that is ready to drop into the grave; nay, he has broken my bones, and so disabled me to help myself, La 3:15.

He has filled me with bitterness, a bitter sense of his calamities." God has access to the spirit, and can so embitter that as thereby to embitter all the enjoyments; as, when the stomach is foul, whatever is eaten sours in it: "He has made me drunk with wormwood, so intoxicated me with the sense of my afflictions that I know not what to say or do. He has mingled gravel with my bread, so that my teeth are broken with it (La 3:16) and what I eat is neither pleasant nor nourishing. He has covered me with ashes, as mourners used to be, or (as some read it) he has fed me with ashes. I have eaten ashes like bread," Ps 102:9.

5. That he is not able to discern any way of escape or deliverance (La 3:5): "He has built against me, as forts and batteries are built against a besieged city. Where there was a way open it is now quite made up: He has compassed me on ever side with gall and travel; I vex, and fret, and tire myself, to find a way of escape, but can find none, La 3:7. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out." When Jerusalem was besieged it was said to be compassed in on every side, Lu 19:43.

"I am chained; and as some notorious malefactors are double-fettered, and loaded with irons, so he has made my chain heavy. He has also (La 3:9) enclosed my ways with hewn stone, not only hedged up my way with thorns (Ho 2:6), but stopped it up with a stone wall, which cannot be broken through, so that my paths are made crooked; I traverse to and fro, to the right hand, to the left, to try to get forward, but am still turned back."

It is just with God to make those who walk in the crooked paths of sin, crossing God's laws, walk in the crooked paths of affliction, crossing their designs and breaking their measures. So (La 3:11), "He has turned aside my ways; he has blasted all my counsels, ruined my projects, so that I am necessitated to yield to my own ruin. He has pulled me in pieces; he has torn and is gone away (Ho 5:14), and has made me desolate, has deprived me of all society and all comfort in my own soul."

6. That God turns a deaf ear to his prayers (La 3:8): "When I cry and shout, as one in earnest, as one that would make him hear, yet he shuts out my prayer and will not suffer it to have access to him." God's ear is wont to be open to the prayers of his people, and his door of mercy to those that knock at it; but now both are shut, even to one that cries and shouts. Thus sometimes God seems to be angry even against the prayers of his people (Ps 80:4), and their case is deplorable indeed when they are denied not only the benefit of an answer, but the comfort of acceptance.

7. That his neighbours make a laughing matter of his troubles (La 3:14): I was a derision to all my people, to all the wicked among them, who made themselves an one another merry with the public judgments, and particularly the prophet Jeremiah's griefs. I am their song, their neginath, or hand-instrument of music, their tabret (Job 17:6), that they play upon, as Nero on his harp when Rome was on fire.

8. That he was ready to despair of relief and deliverance: "Thou hast not only taken peace from me, but hast removed my soul far off from peace (La 3:17), so that it is not only not within reach, but no within view. I forget prosperity; it is so long since I had it, and so unlikely that I should ever recover it, that I have lost the idea of it. I have been so inured to sorrow and servitude that I know not what joy and liberty mean. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, My strength and my hope have perished from the Lord (La 3:18); I can no longer stay myself upon God as my support, for I do not find that he gives me encouragement to do so; nor can I look for his appearing in my behalf, so as to put an end to my troubles, for the case seems remediless, and even my God inexorable."

Without doubt it was his infirmity to say this (Ps 77:10), for with God there is everlasting strength, and he is his people's never-failing hope, whatever they may think.

9. That grief returned upon every remembrance of his troubles, and his reflections were as melancholy as his prospects, La 3:19,20. Did he endeavour as Job did (Job 9:27), to forget his complaint? Alas! it was to no purpose; he remembers, upon all occasions, the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall. Thus emphatically does he speak of his affliction, for thus did he think of it, thus heavily did it lie when he reviewed it! It was an affliction that was misery itself.

My affliction and my transgression (so some read it), my trouble and my sin that brought it upon me; this was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is sin that makes the cup of affliction a bitter cup. My soul has them still in remembrance. The captives in Babylon had all the miseries of the siege in their mind continually and the flames and ruins of Jerusalem still before their eyes, and wept when they remembered Zion; nay, they could never forget Jerusalem, Ps 137:1,5. My soul, having them in remembrance, is humbled in me, not only oppressed with a sense of the trouble, but in bitterness for sin.

Note, It becomes us to have humble hearts under humbling providences, and to renew our penitent humiliations for sin upon every remembrance of our afflictions and miseries. Thus we may get good by former corrections and prevent further.

2 He hath led me, and brought *me into* darkness, but not *into* light.
3 Surely against me is he turned;
he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.
4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old;
he hath broken my bones.
5 He hath builded against me,
and compassed *me* with gall and travail.
6 He hath set me in dark places,
as *they that be* dead of old.
7 He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out:
he hath made my chain heavy.
8 Also when I cry and shout, he
shutteth out my prayer.

9 He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone;
he hath made my paths crooked.
10 He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait,
and as a lion in secret places.
11 He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces:
he hath made me desolate.
12 He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.
13 He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.
14 I was a derision to all my people;
and their song all the day.
15 He hath filled me with bitterness,
he hath made me drunken with wormwood.
16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones,
he hath covered me with ashes.
17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I
forgat prosperity.
18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord:
19 remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and
the gall.
20 My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.
21 This I recall to my mind,
therefore have I hope.

Here the clouds begin to disperse and the sky to clear up; the complaint was very melancholy in the former part of the chapter, and yet here the tune is altered and the mourners in Zion begin to look a little pleasant. But for hope, the heart would break. To save the heart from being quite broken, here is something called to mind, which gives ground for hope (La 3:21), which refers to what comes after, not to what goes before. I make to return to my heart (so the margin words it); what we have had in our hearts, and have laid to our hearts, is sometimes as if it were quite lost and forgotten, till God by his grace make it return to our hearts, that it may be ready to us when we have occasion to use it. "I recall it to mind; therefore have I hope, and am kept from downright despair." Let us see what these things are which he calls to mind.

I. That, bad as things are, it is owing to the mercy of God that they are not worse. We are afflicted by the rod of his wrath, but it is of the lord's mercies that we are not consumed, La 3:22. When we are in distress we should, for the encouragement of our faith and hope, observe what makes for us as well as what makes against us. Things are bad but they might have been worse, and therefore there is hope that they may be better. Observe here,

1 The streams of mercy acknowledged: We are not consumed. Note, The church of God is like Moses's bush, burning, yet not consumed; whatever hardships it has met with, or may meet with, it shall have a being in the world to the end of time. It is persecuted of men, but not forsaken of God, and therefore, though it is cast down, it is not destroyed (2Co 4:9), corrected, yet not consumed, refined in the furnace as silver, but not consumed as dross.

2. These streams followed up to the fountain: It is of the Lord's mercies. here are mercies in the plural number, denoting the abundance and variety of those mercies. God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. Note, We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God that we are not consumed. Others have been consumed round about us, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet we are not consumed; we are out of the grave; we are out of hell. Had we been dealt with according to our sins, we should have been consumed long ago; but we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we are bound to acknowledge it to his praise.

II. That even in the depth of their affliction they still have experience of the tenderness of the divine pity and the truth of the divine promise. They had several times complained that God had not pitied (La 2:17,21), but here they correct themselves, and own,

1. That God's compassions fail not; they do not really fail, no, not even when in anger he seems to have shut up his tender mercies. These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry. No; they are new every morning; every morning we have fresh instances of God's compassion towards us; he visits us with them every morning (Job 7:18); every morning does he bring his judgment to light, Zep 3:5. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not.

2. That great is his faithfulness. Though the covenant seemed to be broken, they owned that it still continued in full force; and, though Jerusalem be in ruins, the truth of the Lord endures for ever. Note, Whatever hard things we suffer, we must never entertain any hard thoughts of God, but must still be ready to own that he is both kind and faithful.

22 *It is of* the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed,
because his compassions fail not.
23 *They are* new every morning:
great *is* thy faithfulness.
24 The Lord *is* my portion, saith my soul;
therefore will I hope in him.

That God is, and ever will be, the all-sufficient happiness of his people, and they have chosen him and depend upon him to be such (La 3:24): The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; that is,

1. "When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty, and livelihood, and almost life itself, yet I have not lost my interest in God." Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is portion for ever.

2. "While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough; I have that which is sufficient to counterbalance all my troubles and make up all my losses." Whatever we are robbed of our portion is safe.

3. "This is that which I depend upon and rest satisfied with: Therefore will I hope in him. I will stay myself upon him, and

encourage myself in him, when all other supports and encouragements fail me." Note, It is our duty to make God the portion of our souls, and then to make use of him as our portion and to take the comfort of it in the midst of our lamentations.

25 The Lord *is* good unto them that wait for him, to
the soul *that* seeketh him.

That those who deal with God will find it is not in vain to trust in him; for,

1. He is good to those who do so, La 3:25. He is good to all; his tender mercies are over all his works; all his creatures taste of his goodness. But he is in a particular manner good to those that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. Note, While trouble is prolonged, and deliverance is deferred, we must patiently wait for God and his gracious returns to us. While we wait for him by faith, we must seek him by prayer: our souls must seek him, else we do not seek so as to find. Our seeking will help to keep up our waiting. And to those who thus wait and seek God will be gracious; he will show them his marvellous lovingkindness.

2. Those that do so will find it good for them (La 3:26): It is good (it is our duty, and will be our unspeakable comfort and satisfaction) to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord, to hope that it will come, thought the difficulties that lie in the way of it seem insupportable, to wait till it does come, though it be long delayed, and while we wait to be quiet and silent, not quarrelling with God nor making ourselves uneasy, but acquiescing in the divine disposals. Father, thy will be done. If we call this to mind, we may have hope that all will end well at last.

26 *It is* good that *a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the
salvation of the Lord.

27 *It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

28 He sitteth alone and keepeth silence,
because he hath borne *it* upon him.

That afflictions are really good for us, and, if we bear them aright, will work very much for our good. It is not only good to hope and wait for the salvation, but it is good to be under the trouble in the mean time (La 3:27): It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Many of the young men were carried into captivity. To make them easy in it, he tells them that it was good for them to bear the yoke of that captivity, and they would find it so if they would but accommodate themselves to their condition, and labour to answer God's ends in laying that heavy yoke upon them. It is very applicable to the yoke of God's commands. It is good for young people to take that yoke upon them in their youth; we cannot begin too soon to be religious. It will make our duty the more acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, if we engage in it when we are young. But here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction. Many have found it good to bear this in youth; it has made those humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world, who otherwise would have been proud and unruly, and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. But when do we bear the yoke so that it is really good for us to bear it in our youth? He answers in the following verses,

1. When we are sedate and quiet under our afflictions, when we sit alone and keep silence, do not run to and fro into all companies with our complaints, aggravating our calamities, and quarrelling with the disposals of Providence concerning us, but retire into privacy, that we may in a day of adversity consider, sit alone, that we may converse with God and commune with our own hearts, silencing all discontented distrustful thoughts, and laying our hand upon our mouth, as Aaron, who, under a very severe trial, held his peace. We must keep silence under the yoke as those that have borne it upon us, not wilfully pulled it upon our own necks, but patiently submitted to it when God laid it upon us. When those who are afflicted in their youth accommodate themselves to their afflictions, fit their necks to the yoke and study to answer God's end in afflicting them, then they will find it good for them to

bear it, for it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are thus exercised thereby.

2. When we are humble and patient under our affliction. He gets good by the yoke who puts his mouth in the dust, not only lays his hand upon his mouth, in token of submission to the will of God in the affliction, but puts it in the dust, in token of sorrow, and shame, and self-loathing, at the remembrance of sin, and as one perfectly reduced and reclaimed, and brought as those that are vanquished to lick the dust, Ps 72:9. And we must thus humble ourselves, if so be there may be hope, or (as it is in the original) peradventure there is hope. If there be any way to acquire and secure a good hope under our afflictions, it is this way, and yet we must be very modest in our expectations of it, must look for it with an it may be, as those who own ourselves utterly unworthy of it. Note, Those who are truly humbled for sin will be glad to obtain a good hope, through grace, upon any terms, though they put their mouth in the dust for it; and those who would have hope must do so, and ascribe it to free grace if they have any encouragements, which may keep their hearts from sinking into the dust when they put their mouth there.

3. When we are meek and mild towards those who are the instruments of our trouble, and are of a forgiving spirit, La 3:30. He gets good by the yoke who gives his cheek to him that smites him, and rather turns the other cheek (Mt 5:39) than returns the second blow. Our Lord Jesus has left us an example of this, for he gave his back to the smiter, Isa 50:6. He who can bear contempt and reproach, and not render railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness, who, when he is filled full with reproach, keeps it to himself, and does not retort it and empty it again upon those who filled him with it, but pours it out before the Lord (as those did, Ps 123:4, whose souls were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud), he shall find that it is good to bear the yoke, that it shall turn to his spiritual advantage. The sum is, If tribulation work patience,

that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that makes not ashamed.

29 He putteth his mouth in the dust;
if so be there may be hope.
30 He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him:
he is filled full with reproach.
31 For the Lord will not cast off for ever:
32 but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion
according to the multitude of his mercies.

That God will graciously return to his people with seasonable comforts according to the time that he has afflicted them, La 3:31,32. Therefore the sufferer is thus penitent, thus patient, because he believes that God is gracious and merciful, which is the great inducement both to evangelical repentance and to Christian patience. We may bear ourselves up with this,

1. That, when we are cast down, yet we are not cast off; the father's correcting his son is not a disinheriting of him. 2. That though we may seem to be cast off for a time, while sensible comforts are suspended and desired salvations deferred, yet we are not really cast off, because not cast off for ever; the controversy with us shall not be perpetual.

3. That, whatever sorrow we are in, it is what God has allotted us, and his hand is in it. It is he that causes grief, and therefore we may be assured it is ordered wisely and graciously; and it is but for a season, and when need is, that we are in heaviness, 1Pe 1:6.

4. That God has compassions and comforts in store even for those whom he has himself grieved. We must be far from thinking that, though God cause grief, the world will relieve and help us. No; the very same that caused the grief must bring in the favour, or we are undone. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit--The same hand inflicted the wound and healed it. He has torn, and he will heal us, Ho 6:1.

5. That, when God returns to deal graciously with us, it will not be according to our merits, but according to his mercies, according to the multitude, the abundance, of his mercies. So unworthy we are that nothing but an abundant mercy will relieve us; and from that what may we not expect? And God's causing our grief ought to be no discouragement at all to those expectations.

33 For he doth not afflict willingly,
nor grieve the children of men.

That, when God does cause grief, it is for wise and holy ends, and he takes not delight in our calamities, La 3:33. He does indeed afflict, and grieve the children of men; all their grievances and afflictions are from him. But he does not do it willingly, not from the heart; so the word is.

1. He never afflicts us but when we give him cause to do it. He does not dispense his frowns as he does his favours, ex mero motu--from his mere good pleasure. If he show us kindness, it is because so it seems good unto him; but, if he write bitter things against us, it is because we both deserve them and need them.

2. He does not afflict with pleasure. He delights not in the death of sinners, or the disquiet of saints, but punishes with a kind of reluctance. He comes out of his place to punish, for his place is the mercy-seat. He delights not in the misery of any of his creatures, but, as it respects his own people, he is so far from it that in all their afflictions he is afflicted and his soul is grieved for the misery of Israel.

3. He retains his kindness for his people even when he afflicts them. If he does not willingly grieve the children of men, much less his own children. However it be, yet God is good to them (Ps 73:1), and they may by faith see love in his heart even when they see frowns in his face and a rod in his hand.

34 To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,
35 to turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High,

36 to subvert a man in his cause,
the Lord approveth not.
37 Who *is* he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass,
when the Lord commandeth *it* not?

That we may be entitled to the comforts administered to the afflicted in the La 3:21-36, and may taste the sweetness of them, we have here the duties of an afflicted state prescribed to us, in the performance of which we may expect those comforts.

We must see and acknowledge the hand of God in all the calamities that befal us at any time, whether personal or public, La 3:37,38. This is here laid down as a great truth, which will help to quiet our spirits under our afflictions and to sanctify them to us.

1. That, whatever men's actions are, it is God that overrules them: Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass (that designs a thing and bring his designs to effect), if the Lord commandeth it not? Men can do nothing but according to the counsel of God, nor have any power or success but what is given them from above. A man's heart devises his way; he projects and purposes; he says that he will do so and so (Jam 4:13); but the Lord directs his steps far otherwise than he designed them, and what he contrived and expected does not come to pass, unless it be what God's hand and his counsel had determined before to be done, Pr 16:9,Jer 10:23.

The Chaldeans said that they would destroy Jerusalem, and it came to pass, not because they said it, but because God commanded it and commissioned them to do it. Note, Men are but tools which the great God makes use of, and manages as he pleases, in the government of this lower world; and they cannot accomplish any of their designs without him.

2. That, whatever men's lot is, it is God that orders it: Out of the mouth of the Most High do not evil and good proceed? Yes, certainly they do; and it is more emphatically expressed in the

original: Do not this evil, and this good, proceed out of the mouth of the Most High? Is it not what he has ordained and appointed for us? Yes, certainly it is; and for the reconciling of us to our own afflictions, whatever they be, this general truth must thus be particularly applied. This comfort I receive from the hand of God, and shall I not receive that evil also? so Job argues, Job 2:10.

Are we healthful or sickly, rich or poor? Do we succeed in our designs, or are we crossed in them? It is all what God orders; every man's judgment proceeds from him. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; he forms the light and creates the darkness, as he did at first. Note, All the events of divine Providence are the products of a divine counsel; whatever is done God has the directing of it, and the works of his hands agree with the words of his mouth; he speaks, and it is done, so easily, so effectually are all his purposes fulfilled.

38 Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good?
39 Wherefore doth a living man complain,
a man for the punishment of his sins?

We must not quarrel with God for any affliction that he lays upon us at any time (La 3:39): Wherefore does a living man complain? The prophet here seems to check himself for the complaint he had made in the former part of the chapter, wherein he seemed to reflect upon God as unkind and severe. "Do I well to be angry? Why do I fret thus?" Those who in their haste have chidden with God must, in the reflection, chide themselves for it. From the doctrine of God's sovereign and universal providence, which he had asserted in the La 3:21-36, he draws this inference, Wherefore does a living man complain? What God does we must not open our mouths against, Ps 39:9. Those that blame their lot reproach him that allotted it to them. The sufferers in the captivity must submit to the will of God in all their sufferings.

Note, Though we may pour out our complaints before God, we must never exhibit any complaints against God. What! Shall a

living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? The reasons here urged are very cogent.

1. We are men; let us herein show ourselves men. Shall a man complain? And again, a man! We are men, and not brutes, reasonable creatures, who should act with reason, who should look upward and look forward, and both ways may fetch considerations enough to silence our complaints. We are men, and not children that cry for every thing that hurts them. We are men, and not gods, subjects, not lords; we are not our own masters, not our own carvers; we are bound and must obey, must submit. We are men, and not angels, and therefore cannot expect to be free from troubles as they are; we are not inhabitants of that world where there is no sorrow, but this where there is nothing but sorrow. We are men, and not devils, are not in that deplorable, helpless, hopeless, state that they are in, but have something to comfort ourselves with which they have not.

2. We are living men. Through the good hand of our God upon us we are alive yet, though dying daily; and shall a living man complain? No; he has more reason to be thankful for life than to complain of any of the burdens and calamities of life. Our lives are frail and forfeited, and yet we are alive; now the living, the living, they should praise, and not complain (Isa 38:19); while there is life there is hope, and therefore, instead of complaining that things are bad, we should encourage ourselves with the hope that they will be better.

3. We are sinful men, and that which we complain of is the just punishment of our sins; nay, it is far less than our iniquities have deserved. WE have little reason to complain of our trouble, for it is our own doing; we may thank ourselves. Our own wickedness corrects us, Pr 19:3. We have no reason to quarrel with God, for he is righteous in it; he is the governor of the world, and it is necessary that he should maintain the honour of his government by chastising the disobedient.

Are we suffering for our sins? Then let us not complain; for we have other work to do; instead of repining, we must be repenting; and, as an evidence that God is reconciled to us, we must be endeavouring to reconcile ourselves to his holy will. Are we punished for our sins? It is our wisdom then to submit, and to kiss the rod; for, if we still walk contrary to God, he will punish us yet seven times more; for when he judges he will overcome. But, if we accommodate ourselves to him, though we be chastened of the Lord we shall not be condemned with the world.

40 Let us search and try our ways,
and turn again to the Lord.

We must set ourselves to answer God's intention in afflicting us, which is to bring sin to our remembrance, and to bring us home to himself, La 3:40. These are the two things which our afflictions should put us upon.

1. A serious consideration of ourselves and a reflection upon our past lives. Let us search and try our ways, search what they have been, and then try whether they have been right and good or no; search as for a malefactor in disguise, that flees and hides himself, and then try whether guilty or not guilty. Let conscience be employed both to search and to try, and let it have leave to deal faithfully, to accomplish a diligent search and to make an impartial trial. Let us try our ways, that by them we may try ourselves, for we are to judge of our state not by our faint wishes, but by our steps, not by one particular step, but by our ways, the ends we aim at, the rules we go by, and the agreeableness of the temper of our minds and the tenour of our lives to those ends and those rules.

When we are in affliction it is seasonable to consider our ways (Hag 1:5), that what is amiss may be repented of and amended for the future, and so we may answer the intention of the affliction. We are apt, in times of public calamity, to reflect upon other people's ways, and lay blame upon them; whereas

our business is to search and try our own ways. We have work enough to do at home; we must each of us say, "What have I done? What have I contributed to the public flames?" that we may each of us mend one, and then we should all be mended.

2. A sincere conversion to God: "Let us turn again to the Lord, to him who is turned against us and whom we have turned from; to him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our owner and ruler. We have been with him, and it has never been well with us since we forsook him; let us therefore now turn again to him." This must accompany the former and be the fruit of it; therefore we must search and try our ways, that we may turn from the evil of them to God. This was the method David took. Ps 119:59, I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

41 Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

We must offer up ourselves to God, and our best affections and services, in the flames of devotion, La 3:41. When we are in affliction,

1. We must look up to God as a God in the heavens, infinitely above us, and who has an incontestable dominion over us; for the heavens do rule, and are therefore not to be quarrelled with, but submitted to.

2. We must pray to him, with a believing expectation to receive mercy from him; for that is implied in our lifting up our hands to him (a gesture commonly used in prayer and sometimes put for it, as Ps 141:2, Let the lifting up of my hands be as the evening sacrifice); it signifies our requesting mercy from him and our readiness to receive that mercy.

(3.) Our hearts must go along with our prayers. We must lift up our hearts with our hands, as we must pour out our souls with our words. It is the heart that God looks at in that and every

other service; for what will a sacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impressions be not in some measure answerable to outward expressions, we do but mock God and deceive ourselves. Praying is lifting up the soul to God (Ps 25:1) as to our Father in heaven; and the soul that hopes to be with God in heaven for ever will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be still learning the way thither and pressing forward in that way.

42 We have transgressed and have rebelled:
thou hast not pardoned.

It is easier to chide ourselves for complaining than to chide ourselves out of it. The prophet had owned that a living man should not complain, as if he checked himself for his complaints in the former part of the chapter; and yet here the clouds return after the rain and the wound bleeds afresh; for great pains must be taken with a troubled spirit to bring it into temper.

I. They confess the righteousness of God in afflicting them (La 3:42): We have transgressed and have rebelled. Note, It becomes us, when we are in trouble, to justify God, by owning our sins, and laying the load upon ourselves for them. Call sin a transgression, call it a rebellion, and you do not miscall it. This is the result of their searching and trying their ways; the more they enquired into them the worse they found them. Yet,

II. They complain of the afflictions they are under, not without some reflections upon God, which we are not to imitate, but, under the sharpest trials, must always think and speak highly and kindly of him.

1. They complain of his frowns and the tokens of his displeasure against them. Their sins were repented of, and yet (La 3:42), Thou hast not pardoned. They had not the assurance and comfort of the pardon; the judgments brought upon them for their sins were not removed, and therefore they thought they could not say the sin was pardoned, which was a mistake, but a common mistake with the people of God when their souls

are cast down and disquieted within them. Their case was really pitiable, yet they complain, Thou hast not pitied, La 3:43.

Their enemies persecuted and slew them, but that was not the worst of it; they were but the instruments in God's hand: "Thou hast persecuted us, and thou hast slain us, though we expected thou wouldst protect and deliver us." They complain that there was a wall of partition between them and God, and,

(1.) This hindered God's favours from coming down upon them. The reflected beams of God's kindness to them used to be the beauty of Israel; but now "thou hast covered us with anger, so that our glory is concealed and gone; now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illustrious people that we have formerly been thought to be."

Or, "Thou hast covered us up as men that are buried are covered up and forgotten."

(2.) It hindered their prayers from coming up unto God (La 3:44): "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud," not like that bright cloud in which he took possession of the temple, which enabled the worshippers to draw near to him, but like that in which he came down upon Mount Sinai, which obliged the people to stand at a distance. "This cloud is so thick that our prayers seem as if they were lost in it; they cannot pass through; we cannot obtain an audience."

Note, The prolonging of troubles is sometimes a temptation, even to praying people, to question whether God be what they have always believed him to be, a prayer-hearing God.

2. They complain of the contempt of their neighbours and the reproach and ignominy they were under (La 3:45): "Thou hast made us as the off-scouring, or scrapings, of the first floor, which are thrown to the dunghill." This St. Paul refers to in his account of the sufferings of the apostles. 1Co 4:13, We are

made as the filth of the world and are the off-scouring of all things. "We are the refuse, or dross, in the midst of the people, trodden upon by every body, and looked upon as the vilest of the nations, and good for nothing but to be cast out as salt which has lost its savour. Our enemies have opened their mouths against us (La 3:46), have gaped upon us as roaring lions, to swallow us up, or made mouths at us, or have taken liberty to say what they please of us." These complaints we had before, La 2:15,16.

Note, It is common for base and ill-natured men to run upon, and run down, those that have fallen into the depths of distress from the height of honour. But this they brought upon themselves by sin. If they had not made themselves vile, their enemies could not have made them so: but therefore men call them reprobate silver, because the Lord has rejected them for rejecting him.

3. They complain of the lamentable destruction that their enemies made of them (La 3:47): Fear and a snare have come upon us; the enemies have not only terrified us with those alarms, but prevailed against us by their stratagems, and surprised us with the ambushes they laid for us; and then follows nothing but desolation and destruction, the destruction of the daughter of my people (La 3:48), of all the daughters of my city, La 3:51.

The enemies, having taken some of them like a bird in a snare, chased others as a harmless bird is chased by a bird of prey (La 3:52): My enemies chased me sorely like a bird which is beaten from bush to bush, as Saul hunted David like a partridge. Thus restless was the enmity of their persecutors, and yet causeless. They have done it without cause, without any provocation given them. Though God was righteous, they were unrighteous. David often complains of those that hated him without cause; and such are the enemies of Christ and his church, Joh 15:25.

Their enemies chased them till they had quite prevailed over them (La 3:53): They have cut off my life in the dungeon. They have shut up their captives in close and dark prisons, where they are as it were cut off from the land of the living (as La 3:6), or the state and kingdom are sunk and ruined, the life and being of them are gone, and they are as it were thrown into the dungeon or grave and a stone cast upon them, such as used to be rolled to the door of the sepulchres. They look upon the Jewish nation as dead and buried, and imagine that there is not possibility of its resurrection. Thus Ezekiel saw it, in vision, a valley full of dead and dry bones. Their destruction is compared not only to the burying of a dead man, but to the sinking of a living man into the water, who cannot long be a living man there, La 3:54.

Waters of affliction flowed over my head. The deluge prevailed and quite overwhelmed them. The Chaldean forces broke in upon them as the breaking forth of waters, which rose so high as to flow over their heads; they could not wade, they could not swim, and therefore must unavoidably sink. Note, The distresses of God's people sometimes prevail to such a degree that they cannot find any footing for their faith, nor keep their head above water, with any comfortable expectation.

4. They complain of their own excessive grief and fear upon this account.

(1.) The afflicted church is drowned in tears, and the prophet for her (La 3:48,49): My eye runs down with rivers of water, so abundant was their weeping; it trickles down and ceases not, so constant was their weeping, without any intermission, there being no relaxation of their miseries. The distemper was in continual extremity, and they had no better day. It is added (La 3:51), "My eye affects my heart. My seeing eye affects my heart. The more I look upon the desolation of the city and country the more I am grieved. Which way soever I cast my

eye, I see that which renews my sorrow, even because of all the daughters of my city," all the neighbouring towns, which were as daughters to Jerusalem the mother-city.

Or, My weeping eye affects my heart; the venting of the grief, instead of easing it, did but increase and exasperate it. Or, My eye melts my soul; I have quite wept away my spirits; not only my eye is consumed with grief, but my soul and my life are spent with it, Ps 31:9,10.

Great and long grief exhausts the spirits, and brings not only many a gray head, but many a green head too, to the grave. I weep, ways the prophet, more than all the daughters of my city (so the margin reads it); he outdid even those of the tender sex in the expressions of grief. And it is no diminution to any to be much in tears for the sins of sinners and the sufferings of saints; our Lord Jesus was so; for, when he came near, he beheld this same city and wept over it, which the daughters of Jerusalem did not.

(2.) She is overwhelmed with fears, not only grieves for what is, but fears worse, and gives up all for gone (La 3:54): "Then I said, I am cut off, ruined, and see no hope of recovery; I am as one dead." Note, Those that are cast down are commonly tempted to think themselves cast off, Ps 31:22,Jon 2:4.

5. In the midst of these sad complaints here is one word of comfort, by which it appears that their case was not altogether so bad as they made it, La 3:50. We continue thus weeping till the Lord look down and behold from heaven. This intimates,

(1.) That they were satisfied that God's gracious regard to them in their miseries would be an effectual redress of all their grievances. "If God, who now covers himself with a cloud, as if he took no notice of our troubles (Job 22:13), would but shine forth, all would be well; if he look upon us, we shall be saved,"

Ps 80:19,Da 9:17. Bad as the case is, one favourable look from heaven will set all to rights.

(2.) That they had hopes that he would at length look graciously upon them and relieve them; nay, they take it for granted that he will: "Though he contend long, he will not contend for ever, thou we deserve that he should."

(3.) That while they continued weeping they continued waiting, and neither did nor would expect relief and succour from any hand but his; nothing shall comfort them but his gracious returns, nor shall any thing wipe tears from their eyes till he look down. Their eyes, which now run down with water, shall still wait upon the Lord their God until he have mercy upon them, Ps 123:2.

43 Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us:
thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.
44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud,
that *our* prayer should not pass through.
45 Thou hast made us *as* the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.
46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.
47 Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.
48 Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water
for the destruction of the daughter of my people.
49 Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission,
50 till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.
51 Mine eye affecteth mine heart,
because of all the daughters of my city.
52 Mine enemies chased me sore,
like a bird, without cause.
53 They have cut off my life in the dungeon,
and cast a stone upon me.
54 Waters flowed over mine head;
then I said, I am cut off.

55 I called upon thy name, O Lord,
out of the low dungeon.

We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope; he complains and then comforts himself, yet drops his comforts and returns again to his complaints, as Ps 42:1-11. But, as there, so here, faith gets the last word and comes off a conqueror; for in these verses he concludes with some comfort. And here are two things with which he comforts himself:--

His experience of God's goodness even in his affliction. This may refer to the prophet's personal experience, with which he encourages himself in reference to the public troubles. He that has seasonably succoured particular saints will not fail the church in general. Or it may include the remnant of good people that were among the Jews, who had found that it was not in vain to wait upon God. In three things the prophet and his pious friends had found God good to them:--

1. He had heard their prayers; though they had been ready to fear that the cloud of wrath was such as their prayers could not pass through (La 3:44), yet upon second thoughts, or at least upon further trial, they find it otherwise, and that God had not said unto them, Seek you me in vain. When they were in the low dungeon, as free among the dead, they called upon God's name (La 3:55); their weeping did not hinder praying.

Note, Though we are cast into ever so low a dungeon, we may thence find a way of access to God in the highest heavens. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee (Ps 130:1), as Jonah out of the whale's belly. And could God hear them out of the low dungeon, and would he? Yes, he did: Thou hast heard my voice; and some read the following words as carrying on the same thankful acknowledgment: Thou didst not hide thy ear at my breathing, at my cry; and the original will bear that reading. We read it as a petition for further audience: Hide not thy ear. God's having heard our voice when we cried to him, even out of the

low dungeon, is an encouragement for us to hope that he will not at any time hide his ear.

Observe how he calls prayer his breathing; for in prayer we breathe towards God, we breathe after him. Though we be but weak in prayer, cannot cry aloud, but only breathe in groanings that cannot be uttered, yet we shall not be neglected if we be sincere. Prayer is the breath of the new man, sucking in the air of mercy in petitions and returning it in praises; it is both the evidence and the maintenance of the spiritual life. Some read it, at my gasping. "When I lay gasping for life, and ready to expire, and thought i was breathing my last, then thou tookest cognizance of my distressed case."

2. He had silenced their fears and quieted their spirits (La 3:57): "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee; thou didst graciously assure me of thy presence with me, and give me to see thee nigh unto me, whereas I had thought thee to be at a distance from me." Note, When we draw nigh to God in a way of duty we may by faith see him drawing nigh to us in a way of mercy.

But this was not all: Thou saidst, Fear not. This was the language of God's prophets preaching to them not to fear (Isa 41:10,13,14), of his providence preventing those things which they were afraid of, and of his grace quieting their minds, and making them easy, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits that they were his people still, though in distress, and therefore ought not to fear. 3. He had already begun to appear for them (La 3:58): "O Lord! thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul" (that is, as it follows), "thou hast redeemed my life, hast rescued that out of the hands of those who would have taken it away, hast saved that when it was ready to be swallowed up, hast given me that for a prey." And this is an encouragement to them to hope that he would yet further appear for them: "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therefore wilt deliver my feet

from falling; thou hast pleaded the causes of my life, and therefore wilt plead my other causes."

56 Thou hast heard my voice:
hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.
57 Thou drewest near in the day *that* I called upon thee:
thou saidst, Fear not.
58 O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul;
thou hast redeemed my life.
59 O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong:
judge thou my cause.

He comforts himself with an appeal to God's justice, and (in order to the sentence of that) to his omniscience.

1. He appeals to God's knowledge of the matter of fact, how very spiteful and malicious his enemies were (La 3:59): "O Lord! thou hast seen my wrong, that I have done no wrong at all, but suffer a great deal." He that knows all things knew,

(1.) The malice they had against him: "Thou hast seen all their vengeance, how they desire to do me a mischief, as if it were by way of reprisal for some great injury I had done them." Note, We should consider, to our terror and caution, that God knows all the revengeful thoughts we have in our minds against others, and therefore we should not allow of those thoughts nor harbour them, and that he knows all the revengeful thoughts others have causelessly in their minds against us, and therefore we should not be afraid of them, but leave it to him to protect us from them.

(2.) The designs and projects they had laid to do him a mischief: Thou hast seen all their imaginations against me (La 3:60), and again, "Thou hast heard all their imaginations against me (La 3:61), both the desire and the device they have to ruin me; whether it show itself in word or deed, it is known to thee; nay, though the products of it are not to be seen nor heard, yet their device against me all the day is perceived and understood by him to whom all things are naked and open." Note, The most

secret contrivances of the church's enemies are perfectly known to the church's God, from whom they can hide nothing.

(3.) The contempt and calumny wherewith they loaded him, all that they spoke slightly of him, and all that they spoke reproachfully: "Thou hast heard their reproach (La 3:61), all the bad characters they give me, laying to my charge things that I know not, all the methods they use to make me odious and contemptible, even the lips of those that rose up against me (La 3:62), the contumelious language they use whenever they speak of me, and that at their sitting down and rising up, when they lie down at night and get up in the morning, when they sit down to their meat and with their company, and when they rise from both, still I am their music; they make themselves and one another merry with my miseries, as the Philistines made sport with Samson."

Jerusalem was the tabret they played upon. Perhaps they had some tune or play, some opera or interlude, that was called the destruction of Jerusalem, which, though in the nature of a tragedy, was very entertaining to those who wished ill to the holy city.

Note, God will one day call sinners to account for all the hard speeches which they have spoken against him and his people, Jude 1:15.

2. He appeals to God's judgment upon this fact: "Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; there is no need of any evidence to prove it, nor any prosecutor to enforce and aggravate it; thou seest it in its true colours; and now I leave it with thee. Judge thou my cause, La 3:59. Let them be dealt with,"

(1.) "As they deserve (La 3:64): Render to them a recompence according to the work of their hands. Let them be dealt with as they have dealt with us; let thy hand be against them as their hand has been against us. They have created us a great deal of

vexation; now, Lord, give them sorrow of heart (La 3:65), perplexity of heart" (so some read it); "let them be surrounded with threatening mischiefs on all sides, and not be able to see their way out. Give them despondence of heart" (so others read it); "let them be driven to despair, and give themselves up for gone." God can entangle the head that thinks itself clearest, and sink the heart that thinks itself stoutest.

(2.) "Let them be dealt with according to the threatenings: Thy curse unto them; that is, let thy curse come upon them, all the evils that are pronounced in thy word against the enemies of thy people, La 3:65. They have loaded us with curses; as they loved cursing, so let it come unto them, thy curse which will make them truly miserable. Theirs is causeless, and therefore fruitless, it shall not come; but thine is just, and shall take effect. Those whom thou cursest are cursed indeed. Let the curse be executed, La 3:66.

Persecute and destroy them in anger, as they persecute and destroy us in their anger. Destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord; let them have no benefit of the light and influence of the heavens. Destroy them in such a manner that all who see it may say, It is a destruction from the Almighty, who sits in the heavens and laughs at them (Ps 2:4), and may own that the heavens do rule," Da 4:26. What is said of the idols is here said of their worshippers (who in this also shall be like unto them), They shall perish from under these heavens, Jer 10:11. They shall be not only excluded from the happiness of the invisible heavens, but cut off from the comfort even of these visible ones, which are the heavens of the Lord (Ps 115:16) and which those therefore are unworthy to be taken under the protection of who rebel against him.

60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance *and* all their imaginations
against me.

61 Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord,
and all their imaginations against me;

62 the lips of those that rose up against me,
and their device against me all the day.
63 Behold their sitting down, and their rising up;
I *am* their music.
64 Render unto them a recompense, O Lord,
according to the work of their hands.
65 Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.
66 Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the
Lord.

Lamentations-4

The Punishment of Zion Accomplished

1 How is the gold become dim!
How is the most fine gold changed!
The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every
street.

The elegy in this chapter begins with a lamentation of the very sad and doleful change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem. The city that was formerly as gold, as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty and the joy of the whole earth, has become dim, and is changed, has lost its lustre, lost its value, is not what it was; it has become dross. Alas! what an alteration is here!

I The temple was laid waste, which was the glory of Jerusalem and its protection. It is given up into the hands of the enemy. And some understand the gold spoken of (La 4:1) to be the gold of the temple, the fine gold with which it was overlaid (1Ki 6:22); when the temple was burned the gold of it was smoked and sullied, as if it had been of little value. It was thrown among the rubbish; it was changed, converted to common uses and made nothing of.

The stones of the sanctuary, which were curiously wrought, were thrown down by the Chaldeans, when they demolished it,

or were brought down by the force of the fire, and were poured out, and thrown about in the top of every street; they lay mingled without distinction among the common ruins. When the God of the sanctuary was by sin provoked to withdraw no wonder that the stones of the sanctuary were thus profaned.

II The princes and priests, who were in a special manner the sons of Zion, were trampled upon and abused, La 4:2. Both the house of God and the house of David were in Zion. The sons of both those houses were upon this account precious, that they were heirs to the privileges of those two covenants of priesthood and royalty. They were comparable to fine gold.

Israel was more rich in them than in treasures of gold and silver. But now they are esteemed as earthen pitchers; they are broken as earthen pitchers, thrown by as vessels in which there is no pleasure. They have grown poor, and are brought into captivity, and thereby are rendered mean and despicable, and every one treads upon them and insults over them. Note, The contempt put upon God's people ought to be matter of lamentation to us.

2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold,
how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers,
the work of the hands of the potter!
3 Even the sea monsters draw out the breast,
they give suck to their young ones:
the daughter of my people *is become* cruel,
like the ostriches in the wilderness.

Little children were starved for want of bread and water, La 4:3,4. The nursing-mothers, having no meat for themselves, had no milk for the babes at their breast, so that, though in disposition they were really compassionate, yet in fact they seemed to be cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness, that leave their eggs in the dust (Job 39:14,15); having no food for their children, they were forced to neglect them and do what they could to forget them, because it was a pain to them to think of them when they had nothing for them; in this they were worse than the seals, or sea-monsters, or whales (as some render it), for they drew out the breast, and gave suck to their

young, which the daughter of my people will not do. Children cannot shift for themselves as grown people can; and therefore it was the more painful to see the tongue of the sucking-child cleave to the roof of his mouth for thirst, because there was not a drop of water to moisten it; and to hear the young children, that could but just speak, ask bread of their parents, who had none to give them, no, nor any friend that could supply them. As doleful as our thoughts are of this case, so thankful should our thoughts be of the great plenty we enjoy, and the food convenient we have for ourselves and for our children, and for those of our own house.

4 The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst:
the young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them.
5 They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets:
they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

Persons of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty, La 4:5. Those who were well-born and well bred, and had been accustomed to the best, both for food and clothing, who had fed delicately, had every thing that was curious and nice (they call it eating well, whereas those only eat well who eat to the glory of God), and fared sumptuously every day; they had not only been advanced to the scarlet, but from their beginning were brought up in scarlet, and were never acquainted with any thing mean or ordinary. They were brought up upon scarlet (so the word is); their foot-cloths, and the carpets they walked on, were scarlet, yet these, being stripped of all by the war, are desolate in the streets, have not a house to put their head in, nor a bed to lie on, nor clothes to cover them, nor fire to warm them. They embrace dunghills; on them they were glad to lie to get a little rest, and perhaps raked in the dunghills for something to eat, as the prodigal son who would fain have filled his belly with the husks. Note, Those who live in the greatest pomp and plenty know not what straits they may be reduced to before they die; as sometimes the needy are raised out of the dunghill. Those who were full have hired out themselves for bread, 1Sa 2:5. It is therefore the wisdom of those who have abundance not to use

themselves too nicely, for then hardships, when they come, will be doubly hard, De 28:56.

6 For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is
greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom,
that was overthrown as in a moment,
and no hands stayed on her.

7 Her Nazarites were purer than snow,
they were whiter than milk,
they were more ruddy in body than rubies,
their polishing *was* of sapphire:

Persons who were eminent for dignity, nay, perhaps for sanctity, shared with others in the common calamity, La 4:7,8. Her Nazarites are extremely charged. Some understand it only of her honourable ones, the young gentlemen, who were very clean, and neat, and well-dressed, washed and perfumed; but I see not why we may not understand it of those devout people among them who separated themselves to the Lord by the Nazarites' vow, Nu 6:2. That there were such among them in the most degenerate times appears from Am 2:11, I raised up of your young men for Nazarites. These Nazarites, though they were not to cut their hair, yet by reason of their temperate diet, their frequent washings, and especially the pleasure they had in devoting themselves to God and conversing with him, which made their faces to shine as Moses's, were purer than snow and whiter than milk; drinking no wine nor strong drink, they had a more healthful complexion and cheerful countenance than those who regaled themselves daily with the blood of the grape, as Daniel and his fellows with pulse and water.

Or it may denote the great respect and veneration which all good people had for them; though perhaps to the eye they had no form nor comeliness, yet, being separated to the Lord, they were valued as if they had been more ruddy than rubies and their polishing had been of sapphire. But now their visage is marred (as is said of Christ, Isa 52:14); it is blacker than a coal; they look miserably, partly through hunger and partly through grief and perplexity. They are not known in the streets; those who

respected them now take no notice of them, and those who had been intimately acquainted with them now scarcely knew them, their countenance was so altered by the miseries that attended the long siege. Their skin cleaves to their bones, their flesh being quite consumed and wasted away; it is withered; it has become like a stick, as dry and hard as a piece of wood. Note, It is a thing to be much lamented that even those who are separated to God are yet, when desolating judgments are abroad, often involved with others in the common calamity.

8 their visage is blacker than a coal;
they are not known in the streets:
their skin cleaveth to their bones;
it is withered, it is become like a stick.

Jerusalem came down slowly, and died a lingering death; for the famine contributed more to her destruction than any other judgment whatsoever. Upon this account the destruction of Jerusalem was greater than that of Sodom (La 4:6), for that was overthrown in a moment; one shower of fire and brimstone dispatched it; no hand staid on her; she did not endure any long siege, as Jerusalem has done; she fell immediately into the hands of the Lord, who strikes home at a blow, and did not fall into the hands of man, who, being weak, is long in doing execution, Jdg 8:21. Jerusalem is kept many months upon the rack, in pain and misery, and dies by inches, dies so as to feel herself die. And, when the iniquity of Jerusalem is more aggravated than that of Sodom, no wonder that the punishment of it is so. Sodom never had the means of grace the Jerusalem had, the oracles of God and his prophets, and therefore the condemnation of Jerusalem will be more intolerable than that of Sodom, Mt 11:23,24. The extremity of the famine is here set forth by two frightful instances of it:-- 1 The tedious deaths that it was the cause of (La 4:9); many were slain with hunger, were famished to death, their stores being spent, and the public stores so nearly spent that they could not have any relief out of them. They were stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field; those who were starved were as sure to die as if they had been stabbed and stricken through; only their case was much more miserable. Those who are slain with the sword are soon put out of their

pain; in a moment they go down to the grave, Job 21:13. They have not the terror of seeing death make its advances towards them, and scarcely feel it when the blow is given; it is but one sharp struggle, and the work is done. And, if we be ready for another world, we need not be afraid of a short passage to it; the quicker the better. But those who die by famine pine away; hunger preys upon their spirits and wastes them gradually; nay, and it frets their spirits, and fills them with vexation, and is as great a torture to the mind as to the body. There are bands in their death, Ps 73:4. 2 The barbarous murders that it was the occasion of (La 4:10): The hands of the pitiful women have first slain and then sodden their own children. This was lamented before (La 2:20); and it was a thing to be greatly lamented that any should be so wicked as to do it and that they should be brought to such extremities as to be tempted to it. But this horrid effect of long sieges had been threatened in general (Le 26:29,De 28:53), and particularly against Jerusalem in the siege of the Chaldeans, Jer 19:9,Eze 5:10. The case was sad enough that they had not wherewithal to feed their children and make meat for them (La 4:4), but much worse that they could find in their hearts to feed upon their children and make meat of them. I know not whether to make it an instance of the power of necessity or of the power of iniquity; but, as the Gentile idolaters were justly given up to vile affections (Ro 1:26), so these Jewish idolaters, and the women particularly, who had made cakes to the queen of heaven and taught their children to do so too, were stripped of natural affection and that to their own children. Being thus left to dishonour their own nature was a righteous judgment upon them for the dishonour they had done to God.

9 *They that be* slain with the sword are better than *they that be* slain with hunger:
for these pine away, stricken through for *want of* the fruits of the field.

10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

11 The Lord hath accomplished his fury;

he hath poured out his fierce anger,
and hath kindled a fire in Zion,
and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

Jerusalem comes down utterly and wonderfully.

1 The destruction of Jerusalem is a complete destruction (La 4:11): The Lord has accomplished his fury; he has made thorough work of it, has executed all that he purposed in wrath against Jerusalem, and has remitted no part of the sentence. He has poured out the full vials of his fierce anger, poured them out to the bottom, even the dregs of them. He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has not only consumed the houses, and levelled them with the ground, but, beyond what other fires do, has devoured the foundations thereof, as if they were to be no more built upon.

2. It is an amazing destruction, La 4:12. It was a surprise to the kings of the earth, who are acquainted with, and inquisitive about, the state of their neighbours; nay, it was so to all the inhabitants of the world who knew Jerusalem, or had ever heard or read of it; they could not have believed that the adversary and enemy would ever enter into the gates of Jerusalem; for,

(1.) They knew that Jerusalem was strongly fortified, not only by walls and bulwarks, but by the numbers and strength of its inhabitants; the strong hold of Zion was thought to be impregnable.

(2.) They knew that it was the city of the great King, where the Lord of the whole earth had in a more peculiar manner his residence; it was the holy city, and therefore they thought that it was so much under the divine protection that it would be in vain for any of its enemies to make an attack upon it.

(3.) They knew that many an attempt made upon it had been baffled, witness that of Sennacherib. They were therefore amazed when they heard of the Chaldeans making themselves

masters of it, and concluded that it was certainly by an immediate hand of God that Jerusalem was given up to them; it was by a commission from him that the enemy broke through and entered the gates of Jerusalem.

12 The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world,
would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should
have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

13 For the sins of her prophets, *and* the iniquities of her priests,
that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,

We have here,

The sins they were charged with, for which God brought this destruction upon them, and which served to justify God in it (La 4:13,14): It is for the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests. Not that the people were innocent; no, they loved to have it so (Jer 5:31), and it was to please them that the prophets and priests did as they did; but the fault is chiefly laid upon them, who should have taught them better, should have reproved and admonished them, and told them what would be in the end hereof; of the hands of those watchmen who did not give them warning will their blood be required. Note, Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the measure faster, than the sins of their priests and prophets.

The particular sin charged upon them is persecution; the false prophets and corrupt priests joined their power and interest to shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, the blood of God's prophets and of those that adhered to them. They not only shed the blood of their innocent children, whom they sacrificed to Moloch, but the blood of the righteous men that were among them, whom they sacrificed to that more cruel idol of enmity to the truth and true religion. This was that sin which the Lord would not pardon (2Ki 24:4) and which brought the last destruction upon Jerusalem (Jam 5:6):

You have condemned and killed the just. And the priests and prophets were the ringleaders in persecution, as in Christ's time

the chief priests and scribes were the men that incensed the people against him, who otherwise would have persisted in their hosannas. Now these are those that wandered as blind men in the streets, La 4:14. They strayed from the paths of justice, were blind to every thing that is good, but to do evil they were quick-sighted. God says of corrupt judges, They know not, neither do they understand; they walk in darkness (Ps 82:5); and Christ says of the corrupt teachers, They are blind leaders of the blind, Mt 15:14.

They have so polluted themselves with innocent blood, the blood of the saints, that men could not touch their garments; they made themselves odious to all about them, so that good men were as shy of touching them as of touching a dead body, which contracted a ceremonial pollution, or of touching the bloody clothes of one slain, which tender spirits care not to do. There is nothing that will make prophets and priests to be abhorred so much as a spirit of persecution.

14 they have wandered *as* blind *men* in the streets,
they have polluted themselves with blood,
so that men could not touch their garments.
15 They cried unto them, Depart ye;
it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not:
when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen,
They shall no more sojourn *there.*

The testimony of their neighbours produced in evidence against them, both to convict them of sin and to show the equity of God's proceedings against them. Some that have grown very impudent in sin boast that they care not what people say of them; but God, by the prophet, would have the Jews to take notice of what people said of them and what was the opinion of the standers by concerning them (La 4:15,16), what they said, nay, what they cried unto them, especially to the corrupt priests and prophets, among the heathen.

1. They upbraided them with their pretended purity, while they lived in all manner of real iniquity. They cried to them, "Depart

you; it is unclean. You were so precise that you would not touch a Gentile, by cried, Depart, depart; stand by thyself; I am holier than thou," Isa 65:5. Thus the prosecutors of Christ would not go into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled. "But can you now keep the Gentiles from touching you, when God has delivered you into their hands? When you flee away and wander you will bid them stand off and not touch you, because they are unclean. But in vain; these serpents will not be charmed or enchanted thus; no, they will no respect the persons of the priests, nor favour the elders; the most venerable persons will to them be despicable."

2. They upbraided them with their sins, and the anger of God against them for their sins, and the direful effects of that anger. They cried to them, Depart you; it is unclean. They all cried out shame on them, and could easily foresee that God would not long suffer so provoking a people to continue in so good a land. They knew their statutes and judgments were righteous, and expected they should be a wise and understanding people, De 4:6. But, when they saw them quite otherwise, they cried, Depart, depart; they soon read their doom, that the land would spue them out, as it had done their predecessors, and, when they saw the dispersed of Jacob fleeing and wandering, they told them of it.

They said, Now the anger of the Lord has divided them, has dispersed them into all countries, because they respected not the persons of the priests, the pious priests that were among them, such as Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, Jeremiah, and others; neither did they favour the elders, but despised them and their authority when they went about to check them for their vicious courses. The very heathen foresaw that this would ruin them.

3. They triumphed in their ruin as irrecoverable. They said, when they saw them expelled out of their own land, "Now they shall no more sojourn there; they have bidden it a final farewell, never more to return to it, for God will no more regard them,

and how then can they help themselves?" Herein they were mistaken. God had not cast them off, for all this. Yet thus much is intimated, that all about them observed them to be so very provoking to their God that there was not reason to expect any other than that they should be quite abandoned.

16 The anger of the Lord hath divided them;
he will no more regard them:
they respected not the persons of the priests,
they favored not the elders.

17 As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help:
in our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not save *us*.

The despair which they themselves were almost brought to under their calamities. Having heard what they said concerning them among the heathen, let us now hear what they say concerning themselves (La 4:17): "As for us, we look upon our case to be in a manner helpless. Our end is near (La 4:18), the end both of our church and of our state; we are just at the brink of the ruin of both; nay, our end has come; we are utterly undone; a fatal final period is put to all our comforts; the days of our prosperity are fulfilled; they are numbered and finished." Thus their fears concurred with the hopes of their enemies that the Lord would no more regard them. For,

1 The refuges they fled to disappointed them. They looked for help from this and the other powerful ally, but to no purpose; it proved vain help. The succours they expected did not come in, or at least they had not the success they expected, and their eyes failed with looking for that which never came (La 4:17); they watched in watching; they watched long, and with a great deal of earnestness and impatience, for a nation that promised them assistance, but failed the, and frustrated their expectation. They could not save them; they were too weak to contend with the Chaldean army and therefore retired. Help from creatures is vain help (Ps 60:11), and we may look for it till our eyes fail, till our hearts fail, and come short of it at last.

2 The persecutors they fled from overtook them and overcame them (La 4:18): They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets. When the Chaldeans besieged the city they raised their batteries so high above the walls that they could command the town, and shoot at people as they went along the streets. They hunted them with their arrows from place to place. When the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, their persecutors were swifter than the eagles of heaven when they fly upon their prey, La 4:19.

There was no escaping them; they pursued them upon the mountains, and, when they thought they had got clear of them, they fell into the hands of those that laid wait for them in the wilderness, to cut off their retreat, and to pick up stragglers. nay, the king himself, though he may be supposed to have had all the advantages the exigence of the case would admit to favour his flight, yet could not escape, for divine vengeance pursued him with them, and then (La 4:20), The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits. Some apply it to Josiah, who was killed in battle by the king of Egypt; but it is rather to be understood of Zedekiah, who was the last king of the house of David, and who was pursued by the Chaldeans and seized in the plains of Jericho, Jer 39:5.

He was the anointed of the Lord, heir of that family which God had appointed to the government. He was very much confided in by the Jewish state: They said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen. They promised themselves that the remnant which were left after Jeconiah's captivity should, under the protection of his government, yet again take root downward and bear fruit upward. They thought, though they were so reduced that they could not think of reigning over the heathen, as they had done, yet they might make a shift to live among them and not be insulted and pulled to pieces by them.

Thus apt are sinking interests not only to catch at every twig, but to think it will recover them. Jerusalem died of a

consumption, a flattering distemper. Even when she was ready to expire she formed some hopeful symptoms to herself, and on them grounded a hope that she should recover; but what came of it? The shadow under which they thought they should live proved like that of Jonah's gourd, which withered in a night. He that was the anointed of the Lord was taken in their pits, as if he had been but a beast of prey; so little account did they make of a person deemed sacred and not to be violated.

Note, When we make any creature the breath of our nostrils, and promise ourselves that we shall live by it, it is just with God to stop that breath, and deprive us of the life we expected by it; for God will have the honour of being himself along our life and the length of our days.

18 They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets:
our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.
19 Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven:
they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.
20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord,
was taken in their pits, of whom we said,
Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.
21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
that dwellest in the land of Uz;
the cup also shall pass through unto thee:
thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

David's psalms of lamentation commonly conclude with some word of comfort, which is as life from the dead and light shining out of darkness; so does this lamentation here in this chapter. The people of God are now in great distress, their aspects all doleful, their prospects all frightful, and their ill-natured neighbours the Edomites insult over them and do all they can to exasperate their destroyers against them. Such was their violence against their brother Jacob (Ob 1:10), such their spleen at Jerusalem, of which they cried, Rase it, rase it, Ps 137:7. Now it is here foretold, for the encouragement of God's people,

I. That an end shall be put to Zion's troubles (La 4:22): The punishment of they iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion! not the fulness of that punishment which it deserves, but of that which God has designed and determined to inflict, and which was necessary to answer the end, the glorifying of God's justice and the taking away of their sin. The captivity, which is the punishment of thy iniquity, is accomplished (Isa 40:2), and he will no longer keep thee in captivity; so it may be read, as well as, he will no more carry thee into captivity; he will turn again thy captivity and work a glorious release for thee. Note, The troubles of God's people shall be continued no longer than till they have done their work for which they were sent.

II. That an end shall be put to Edom's triumphs. It is spoken ironically (La 4:21): "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom! go on to insult over Zion in distress, till thou hast filled up the measure of thy iniquity. Do so; rejoice in thy own present exemption from the common fate of thy neighbours." This is like Solomon's upbraiding the young man with his ungoverned mirth (Ec 11:9): "Rejoice, O young man! in thy youth; rejoice, if thou canst, when God comes to reckon with thee, and that he will do ere long. The cup of trembling, which it is now Jerusalem's turn to drink deeply of, shall pass through unto thee; it shall go round till it comes to be thy lot to pledge it."

Note, This is a good reason why we should not insult over any who are in misery, because we ourselves also are in the body, and we know not how soon their case may be ours. But those who please themselves in the calamities of God's church must expect to have their doom, as aiders and abettors, with those that are instrumental in those calamities. The destruction of the Edomites was foretold by this prophet (Jer 49:7. &c.), and the people of God must encourage themselves against their present rudeness and insolence with the prospect of it.

1. It will be a shameful destruction: "The cup that shall pass unto thee shall intoxicate thee" (and that is shame enough to any

man); "thou shalt be drunken, quite infatuated, and at thy wits' end, shalt stagger in all thy counsels and stumble in all thy enterprises, and then, as Noah when he was drunk, thou shalt make thyself naked and expose thyself to contempt." Note, Those who ridicule God's people will justly be left to themselves to do that, some time or other, by which they will be made ridiculous.

2. It will be a righteous destruction. God will herein visit thy iniquity and discover thy sins; he will punish them, and, to justify himself therein, he will discover them, and make it to appear that he has just cause thus to proceed against them. Nay, the punishment of the sin shall so exactly answer the sin that it shall itself plainly discover it. Sometimes God does so visit the iniquity that he that runs may read the sin in the punishment. But, sooner or later, sin will be visited and discovered, and all the hidden works of darkness brought to light.

22 The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion;
he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he
will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he
will discover thy sins.

Lamentations-5

A Prayer for Mercy

1 Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us:
consider, and behold our reproach.

Is any afflicted? let him pray; and let him in prayer pour out his complaint to God, and make known before him his trouble. The people of God do so here; being overwhelmed with grief, they give vent to their sorrows at the footstool of the throne of grace, and so give themselves ease. They complain not of evils feared, but of evils felt: "Remember what has come upon us, La 5:1.

What was of old threatened against us, and was long in the coming, has now at length come upon us, and we are ready to sink under it. Remember what is past, consider and behold what is present, and let not all the trouble we are in seem little to thee, and not worth taking notice of," Ne 9:32.

Note, As it is a great comfort to us, so it ought to be a sufficient one, in our troubles, that God sees, and considers, and remembers, all that has come upon us; and in our prayers we need only to recommend our case to his gracious and compassionate consideration. The one word in which all their grievances are summer up is reproach: Consider, and behold our reproach.

The troubles they were in compared with their former dignity and plenty, were a greater reproach to them than they would have been to any other people, especially considering their relation to God and dependence upon him, and his former appearances for them; and therefore this they complain of very sensibly, because, as it was a reproach, it reflected upon the name and honour of that God who had owned them for his people. And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

They acknowledge the reproach of sin which they bear, the reproach of their youth (which Ephraim bemoans himself for, Jer 31:19), of the early days of their nation. This comes in in the midst of their complaints (La 5:7), but may well be put in the front of them: Our fathers have sinned and are not; they are dead and gone, but we have borne their iniquities. This is not here a peevish complaint, nor an imputation of unrighteousness to God, like that which we have, Jer 31:29,Eze 18:2. The fathers did eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge, and therefore the ways of the Lord are not equal.

But it is a penitent confession of the sins of their ancestors, which they themselves also had persisted in, for which they now justly suffered; the judgments God brought upon them were so

very great that it appeared that God had in them an eye to the sins of their ancestors (because they had not been remarkably punished in this world) as well as to their own sins; and thus God was justified both in his connivance at their ancestors (he laid up their iniquity for their children) and in his severity with them, on whom he visited that iniquity, Mt 23:35,36. Thus they do here,

1. Submit themselves to the divine justice: "Lord, thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for we are a seed of evil doers, children of wrath, and heirs of the curse; we are sinful, and we have it by kind." Note, The sins which God looks back upon in punishing we must look back upon in repenting, and must take notice of all that which will help to justify God in correcting us.

2. They refer themselves to the divine pity: "Lord, our fathers have sinned, and we justly smart for their sins; but they are not; they were taken away from the evil to come; they lived not to see and share in these miseries that have come upon us, and we are left to bear their iniquities. Now, though herein God is righteous, yet it must be owned that our case is pitiable, and worthy of compassion." Note, If we be penitent and patient under what we suffer for the sins of our fathers, we may expect that he who punishes will pity, and will soon return in mercy to us.

2 Our inheritance is turned to strangers,
our houses to aliens.
3 We are orphans and fatherless,
our mothers *are* as widows.
4 We have drunken our water for money;
our wood is sold unto us.
5 Our necks *are* under persecution:
we labor, *and* have no rest.
6 We have given the hand *to* the Egyptians, *and to* the Assyrians, to
be satisfied with bread.

They represent the reproach of trouble which they bear, in divers particulars, which tend much to their disgrace.

1. They are disseised of that good land which God gave them, and their enemies have got possession of it, La 5:2. Canaan was their inheritance; it was theirs by promise. God gave it to them and their seed, and they held it by grant from his crown, (Ps 136:21,22); but now, "It is turned to strangers; those possess it who have no right to it, who are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel and aliens from the covenants of promise; they dwell in the houses that we built, and this is our reproach." It is the happiness of all God's spiritual Israel that the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be disseised of, that shall never be turned to strangers.

2. Their state and nation are brought into a condition like that of widows and orphans (La 5:3): "We are fatherless (that is, helpless); we have none to protect us, to provide for us, to take any care of us. Our king, who is the father of the country, is cut off; nay, God our Father seems to have forsaken us and cast us off; our mothers, our cities, that were as fruitful mothers in Israel, are now as widows, are as wives whose husbands are dead, destitute of comfort, and exposed to wrong and injury, and this is our reproach; for we who made a figure are now looked on with contempt."

3. They are put hard to it to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, whereas once they lived in abundance and had plenty of every thing. Water used to be free and easily come by, but now (La 5:4), We have drunk our water for money, and the saying is no longer true, Usus communis aquarum--Water is free to all. So hardly did their oppressors use them that they could not have a draught of fair water but they must purchase it either with money or with work.

Formerly they had fuel too for the fetching; but now, "Our wood is sold to us, and we pay dearly for every faggot." Now were they punished for employing their children to gather wood for

fire with which to bake cakes for the queen of heaven, Jer 7:18. They were perfectly proscribed by their oppressors, were forbidden the use both of fire and water, according to the ancient form, Interdico tibi aqua et igni--I forbid thee the use of water and fire. But what must they do for bread? Truly that was as hard to come at as any thing, for

(1.) Some of them sold their liberty for it (La 5:6): "We have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, have made the best bargain we could with them, to serve them, that we might be satisfied with bread. We were glad to submit to the meanest employment, upon the hardest terms, to get a sorry livelihood; we have yielded ourselves to be their vassals, have parted with all to them, as the Egyptians did to Pharaoh in the years of famine, that we might have something for ourselves and families to subsist on." The neighbouring nations used to trade with Judah for wheat (Eze 27:17), for it was a fruitful land; but now it eats up the inhabitants, and they are glad to make court to the Egyptians and Assyrians.

(2.) Others of them ventured their lives for it (La 5:9): We got our bread with the peril of our lives; when, being straitened by the siege and all provisions cut off, they either sallied or stole out of the city, to fetch in some supply, they were in danger of falling into the hands of the besiegers and being put to the sword, the sword of the wilderness it is called, or of the plain (for so the word signifies), the besiegers lying dispersed every where in the plains that were about the city. Let us take occasion hence to bless God for the plenty that we enjoy, that we get our bread so easily, scarcely with the sweat of our face, much less with the peril of our lives; and for the peace we enjoy, that we can go out, and enjoy not only the necessary productions, but the pleasures of the country, without any fear of the sword of the wilderness.

4. Those are brought into slavery who were a free people, and not only their own masters, but masters of all about them, and

this is as much as any thing their reproach (La 5:5): Our necks are under the grievous and intolerable yoke of persecution (the iron yoke which Jeremiah foretold should be laid upon them, Jer 28:14); we are used like beasts in the yoke, that wholly serve their owners, and are at the command of their drivers. That which aggravated the servitude was,

(1.) That their labours were incessant, like those of Israel in Egypt, who were daily tasked, nay, overtasked: We labour and have no rest, neither leave nor leisure to rest. The oxen in the yoke are unyoked at night and have rest; so they have, by a particular provision of the law, on the sabbath day; but the poor captives in Babylon, who were compelled to work for their living, laboured and had no rest, no night's rest, no sabbath-rest; they were quite tired out with continual toil.

(2.) That their masters were insufferable (La 5:8): Servants have ruled over us; and nothing is more vexatious than a servant when he reigns, Pr 30:22. They were not only the great men of the Chaldeans that commanded them, but even the meanest of their servants abused them at pleasure, and insulted over them; and they must be at their beck too. The curse of Canaan had now become the doom of Judah: A servant of servants shall he be. They would not be ruled by their God, and by his servants the prophets, whose rule was gentle and gracious, and therefore justly are they ruled with rigour by their enemies and their servants.

(3.) That they saw no probable way for the redress of their grievances: "There is none that doth deliver us out of their hand; not only none to rescue us out of our captivity, but none to check and restrain the insolence of the servants that abuse us and trample upon us," which one would think their masters should have done, because it was a usurpation of their authority; but, it should seem, they connived at it and encouraged it, and, as if they were not worthy of the correction of gentlemen, they are

turned over to the footmen to be spurned by them. Well might they pray, Lord, consider and behold our reproach.

5. Those who used to be feasted are now famished (La 5:10): Our skin was black like an oven, dried and parched too, because of the terrible famine, the storms of famine (so the word is); for, though famine comes gradually upon a people, yet it comes violently, and bears down all before it, and there is no resisting it; and this also is their disgrace; hence we read of the reproach of famine, which in captivity their received among the heathen, Eze 36:30.

6. All sorts of people, even those whose persons and characters were most inviolable, were abused and dishonoured.

(1.) The women were ravished, even the women in Zion, that holy mountain, La 5:11. The committing of such abominable wickednesses there is very justly and sadly complained of.

(2.) The great men were not only put to death, but put to ignominious deaths. Princes were hanged, as if they had been slaves, by the hands of the Chaldeans (La 5:12), who took a pride in doing this barbarous execution with their own hands. Some think that the dead bodies of the princes, after they were slain with the sword, were hung up, as the bodies of Saul's sons, in disgrace to them, and as it were to expiate the nation's guilt.

(3.) No respect was shown to magistrates and those in authority: The faces of elders, elders in age, elders in office, were not honoured. This will be particularly remembered against the Chaldeans another day. Isa 47:6, Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

(4.) The tenderness of youth was no more considered than the gravity of old age (La 5:13): They took the young men to grind at the hand-mills, nay, perhaps at the horse-mills. The young men have carried the grist (so some), have carried the mill, or

mill-stones, so others. They loaded them as if they had been beasts of burden, and so broke their backs while they were young, and made the rest of their lives the more miserable. Nay, they made the little children carry their wood home for fuel, and laid such burdens upon them that they fell down under them, so very inhuman were these cruel taskmasters!

7. An end was put to all their gladness, and their joy was quite extinguished (La 5:14): The young men, who used to be disposed to mirth, have ceased from their music, have hung their harps upon the willow-trees. It does indeed well become old men to cease from their music; it is time to lay it by with a gracious contempt when all the daughters of music are brought low; but it speaks some great calamity upon a people when their young men are made to cease from it.

It was so with the body of the people (La 5:15): The joy of their heart ceased; they never knew what joy was since the enemy came in upon them like a flood, for ever since deep called unto deep, and one wave flowed in upon the neck of another, so that they were quite overwhelmed: Our dance is turned into mourning, instead of leaping for joy, as formerly, we sink and lie down in sorrow. This may refer especially to the joy of their solemn feasts, and the dancing used in them (Jdg 21:21), which was not only modest, but sacred, dancing; this was turned into mourning, which was doubled on their festival days, in remembrance of their former pleasant things.

8. An end was put to all their glory.

(1.) The public administration of justice was their glory, but that was gone: The elders have ceased from the gate (La 5:14); the course of justice, which used to run down like a river, is now stopped; the courts of justice, which used to be kept with so much solemnity, are put down; for the judges are slain, or carried captive.

(2.) The royal dignity was their glory, but that also was gone: The crown has fallen from our head, not only the king himself fallen into disgrace, but the crown; he has no successor; the regalia are all lost. Note, Earthly crowns are fading falling things; but, blessed be God, there is a crown of glory that fades not away, that never falls, a kingdom that cannot be moved. Upon this complaint, but with reference to all the foregoing complaints, they make that penitent acknowledgment, "Woe unto us that we have sinned!

Alas for us! Our case is very deplorable, and it is all owing to ourselves; we are undone, and, which aggravates the matter, we are undone by our own hands. God is righteous, for we have sinned." Note, All our woes are owing to our own sin and folly. If the crown of our head be fallen (for so the words run), if we lose our excellency and become mean, we may thank ourselves, we have by our own iniquity profaned our crown and laid our honour in the dust.

7 Our fathers have sinned, and *are* not;
and we have borne their iniquities.
8 Servants have ruled over us:
there is none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand.
9 We gat our bread with *the peril of* our lives,
because of the sword of the wilderness.
10 Our skin was black like an oven,
because of the terrible famine.
11 They ravished the women in Zion,
and the maids in the cities of Judah.
12 Princes are hanged up by their hand:
the faces of elders were not honored.
13 They took the young men to grind, and
the children fell under the wood.
14 The elders have ceased from the gate, the
young men from their music.
15 The joy of our heart is ceased;
our dance is turned into mourning.
16 The crown is fallen *from* our head:

woe unto us, that we have sinned!
17 For this our heart is faint;
for these *things* our eyes are dim.
18 Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the
foxes walk upon it.

Here, the people of God express the deep concern they had for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities; the interests of God's house lay nearer their hearts than those of their own (La 5:17,18): For this our heart is faint, and sinks under the load of its own heaviness; for these things our eyes are dim, and our sight is gone, as is usual in a deliquium, or fainting fit. "It is because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the holy mountain, and the temple built upon that mountain. For other desolations our hearts grieve and our eyes weep; but for this our hearts faint and our eyes are dim." Note, Nothing lies so heavily upon the spirits of good people as that which threatens the ruin of religion or weakens its interests; and it is a comfort if we can appeal to God that that afflicts us more than any temporal affliction to ourselves. "The people have polluted the mountain of Zion with their sins, and therefore God has justly made it desolate, to such a degree that the foxes walk upon it as freely and commonly as they do in the woods." It is sad indeed when the mountain of Zion has become a portion for foxes (Ps 63:10); but sin had first made it so, Eze 13:4.

19 Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever;
thy throne from generation to generation.

They comfort themselves with the doctrine of God's eternity, and the perpetuity of his government (La 5:19): But thou, O Lord! remainest for ever. This they are taught to do by that psalm which is entitled, A prayer of the afflicted, Ps 102:27,28. When all our creature-comforts are removed from us, and our hearts fail us, we may then encourage ourselves with the belief,

1. Of God's eternity: Thou remainest for ever. What shakes the world gives no disturbance to him who made it; whatever revolutions there are on earth there is no change in the Eternal

Mind; God is still the same, and remains for ever infinitely wise and holy, just and good; with him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

2. Of the never-failing continuance of his dominion: Thy throne is from generation to generation; the throne of glory, the throne of grace, and the throne of government, are all unchangeable, immovable; and this is matter of comfort to us when the crown has fallen from our head. When the thrones of princes, that should be our protectors, are brought to the dust, and buried in it, God's throne continues still; he still rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church. The Lord reigns, reigns for ever, even thy God, O Zion!

20 Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever,
and forsake us so long time?

They humbly expostulate with God concerning the low condition they were now in, and the frowns of heaven they were now under (La 5:20): "Wherefore dost thou forsake us so long time, as if we were quite deprived of the tokens of thy presence? Wherefore dost thou defer our deliverance, as if thou hadst utterly abandoned us? Thou art the same, and, though the throne of thy sanctuary is demolished, thy throne in heaven is unshaken. But wilt thou not be the same to us?" Not as if they thought God had forgotten and forsaken them, much less feared his forgetting and forsaking them for ever; but thus they express the value they had for his favour and presence, which they thought it long that they were deprived of the evidence and comfort of.

The La 5:22 may be read as such an expostulation, and so the margin reads it: "For wilt thou utterly reject us? Wilt thou be perpetually wroth with us, not only not smile upon us and remember us in mercy, but frown upon us and lay us under the tokens of thy wrath, not only not draw nigh to us, but cast us out of thy presence and forbid us to draw nigh unto thee? How ill this be reconciled with thy goodness and faithfulness, and the stability of thy covenant?" We read it, "But thou hast

rejected us; thou hast given us cause to fear that thou hast. Lord, how long shall we be in this temptation?" Note, Thou we may not quarrel with God, yet we may plead with him; and, though we may not conclude that he has cast off, yet we may (with the prophet, Jer 12:1) humbly reason with him concerning his judgments, especially the continuance of the desolations of his sanctuary.

21 Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned;
renew our days as of old.

They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace: "Lord, do not reject us for ever, but turn thou us unto thee; renew our days," La 5:21. Though these words are not put last, yet the Rabbin, because they would not have the book to conclude with those melancholy words (La 5:22), repeat this prayer again, that the sun may not set under a cloud, and so make these the last words both in writing and reading this chapter. They here pray,

1. For converting grace to prepare and qualify them for mercy: Turn us to thee, O Lord! They had complained that God had forsaken and forgotten them, and then their prayer is not, Turn thou to us, but, Turn us to thee, which implies an acknowledgment that the cause of the distance was in themselves. God never leaves any till they first leave him, nor stands afar off from any longer than while they stand afar off from him; if therefore he turn them to him in a way of duty, no doubt but he will quickly return to them in a way of mercy. This agrees with that repeated prayer (Ps 80:3,7,19), Turn us again, and then cause thy face to shine. Turn us from our idols to thyself, by a sincere repentance and reformation, and then we shall be turned.

This implies a further acknowledgment of their own weakness and inability to turn themselves. There is in our nature a proneness to backslide from God, but no disposition to return to him till his grace works in us both to will and to do. So necessary is that grace that we may truly say, Turn us or we shall not be turned, but shall wander endlessly; and so powerful

and effectual is that grace that we may as truly say, Turn us, and we shall be turned; for it is a day of power, almighty power, in which God's people are made a willing people, Ps 110:3.

2. For restoring mercy: Turn us to thee, and then renew our days as of old, put us into the same happy state that our ancestors were in long ago and that they continued long in; let it be with us as it was at the first, and at the beginning, Isa 1:26. Note, If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will be his favour renew our days, so that we shall renew our youth as the eagle, Ps 103:5. Those that repent, and do their first works, shall rejoice, and recover their first comforts. God's mercies to his people have been ever of old (Ps 25:6); and therefore they may hope, even then when he seems to have forsaken and forgotten them, that the mercy which was from everlasting will be to everlasting.

22 But thou hast utterly rejected us;
thou art very wroth against us.

The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

[Ezekiel]

Ezekiel-1

The Prophet's Vision of the Divine Glory

1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

The circumstances of the vision which Ezekiel saw, and in which he received his commission and instructions, are here very particularly set down, that the narrative may appear to be authentic and not romantic. It may be of use to keep an account when and where God has been pleased to manifest himself to our souls in a peculiar manner, that the return of the day, and our return to the place of the altar (Ge 13:4), may revive the pleasing grateful remembrance of God's favour to us. "Remember, O my soul! and never forget what communications of divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place; tell others what God did for thee."

I The time when Ezekiel had this vision is here recorded. It was in the thirtieth year, Eze 1:1. Some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age; being a priest, he was at that age to enter upon the full execution of the priestly office, but being debarred from that by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now that they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began a new computation of time, as they had done from Nabonassar 123 years before.

Nabopolassar reigned nineteen years, and this was the eleventh of his son, which makes the thirty. And it was proper enough for

Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used, as we in foreign countries date by the new style; and he afterwards uses the melancholy computation of his own country, observing (Eze 1:2) that it was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldee paraphrase fixes upon another era, and says that this was the thirtieth year after Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight, after the setting of the moon, in the days of Josiah the king.

And it is true that this was just thirty years from that time; and that was an event so remarkable (as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial) that it was proper enough to date form it; and perhaps therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of thirty years, as having an eye both to that event and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident. It was in the fourth month, answering to our June, and in the fifth day of the month, that Ezekiel had this vision, Eze 1:2.

It is probably that it was on the sabbath day, because we read (Eze 3:16) that at the end of seven days, which we may well suppose to be the next sabbath, the word of the Lord came to him again. Thus John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when he saw the visions of the Almighty, Re 1:10. God would hereby put an honour upon his sabbaths, when the enemies mocked at them, La 1:7. And he would thus encourage his people to keep up their attendance on the ministry of his prophets every sabbath day, by the extraordinary manifestations of himself on some sabbath days.

II The melancholy circumstances he was in when God honoured him, and thereby favoured his people, with this vision. He was in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity. Observe,

1 The people of God were now, some of them, captives in the land of the Chaldeans. The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the first-fruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best; for in Jeremiah's vision these were the good figs, whom God had sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good (Jer 24:5); and, that it might be for their good, God raised up a prophet among them, to teach them out of the law, then when he chastened them, Ps 94:12.

Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought to us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently, when we are in affliction. The word of instruction and the rod of correction may be of great service to us, in concert and concurrence with each other, the word to explain the rod and the rod to enforce the word: both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man, when he is sick and in pain, to have a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, if he have but his ear open to discipline, Job 23:23. One of the quarrels God had with the Jews, when he sent them into captivity, we for mocking his messengers and misusing his prophets; and yet, when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with this forfeited mercy.

It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they were destitute of ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised them up these extraordinary ones; for God's children, if they be hindered in their education one way, shall have it made up another way.

But observe, It was in the fifth year of the captivity that Ezekiel was raised up amongst them, and not before. So long God left them without any prophet, till they began to lament after the Lord and to complain that they saw not their signs and there was none to tell them how long (Ps 74:9), and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them by him would be the more acceptable and comfortable. The Jews that remained in their own land had Jeremiah with them, those that

had gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them; for wherever the children of God are scattered abroad he will find out tutors for them.

2 The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by the river Chebar; for it was by the rivers of Babylon that they sat down, and on the willow-trees by the river's side that they hanged their harps, Ps 137:1,2 The planters in America keep along by the sides of the rivers, and perhaps those captives were employed by their masters in improving some parts of the country by the rivers' sides that were uncultivated, the natives being generally employed in war; or they employed them in manufactures, and therefore chose to fix them by the sides of rivers, that the good they made might the more easily be conveyed by water-carriage. Interpreters agree not what river this of Chebar was, but among the captives by that river Ezekiel was, and himself a captive. Observe here,

(1.) The best men, and those that are dearest to God, often share, not only in the common calamities of this life, but in the public and national judgments that are inflicted for sin; those feel the smart who contributed nothing to the guilt, by which it appears that the difference between good and bad arises not from the events that befal them, but from the temper and disposition of their spirits under them. And since not only righteous men, but prophets, share with the worst in present punishments, we may infer thence, with the greatest assurance, that there are rewards reserved for them in the future state.

(2.) Words of conviction, counsel, and comfort, come best to those who are in affliction from their fellow sufferers. The captives will be best instructed by one who is a captive among them and experimentally knows their sorrows.

(3.) The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel, but some of the brightest of divine revelations were revealed in

the land of the Chaldeans, which was a happy presage of the carrying of the church, with that divine revelation upon which it is built, into the Gentile world; and, as now, so afterwards, when the gospel kingdom was to be set up, the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the spreading of the knowledge of God.

(4.) Wherever we are we may keep up our communion with God. Undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ--From the remotest corners of the earth we may find a way open heavenward.

(5.) When God's ministers are bound the word of the Lord is not bound, 2Ti 2:9. When St. Paul was a prisoner the gospel had a free course. When St. John was banished into the Isle of Patmos Christ visited him there. Nay, God's suffering servants have generally been treated as favourites, and their consolations have much more abounded when affliction has abounded, 2Co 1:5.

2 In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king
Jehoiachin's captivity,
3 the word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son
of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the
hand of the Lord was there upon him.

The discovery which God was pleased to make of himself to the prophet when he was in these circumstances, to be by him communicated to his people. He here tells us what he saw, what he heard, and what he felt.

1. He saw visions of God, Eze 1:1. No man can see God and live; but many have seen visions of God, such displays of the divine glory as have both instructed and affected them; and commonly, when God first revealed himself to any prophet, he did it by an extraordinary vision, as to Isaiah (Isa 6:1-13), to Jeremiah (Jer 1:1-19), to Abraham (Ac 7:2), to settle a correspondence and a satisfactory way of intercourse, so that there needed not afterwards a vision upon ever revelation. Ezekiel was employed in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord their God, and therefore he must himself see the visions of God.

Note, It concerns those to be well acquainted with God themselves, and much affected with what they know of him, whose business it is to bring others to the knowledge and love of him. That he might see the visions of God the heavens were opened; the darkness and distance which hindered his visions were conquered, and he was let into the light of the glories of the upper world, as near and clear as if heaven had been opened to him.

2. He heard the voice of God (Eze 1:3): The word of the Lord came expressly to him, and what he saw was designed to prepare him for what he was to hear. The expression is emphatic. Essendo fuit verbum Dei--The word of the Lord was a really it was to him. There was no mistake in it; it came to him in the fulness of its light and power, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; it came close to him, nay, it came into him, took possession of him and dwelt in him richly. It came expressly, or accurately, to him; he did himself clearly understand what he said and was abundantly satisfied f the truth of it. The essential Word (so we may take it), the Word who is, who is what he is, came to Ezekiel, to send him on his errand.

3. He felt the power of God opening his eyes to see the visions, opening his ear to hear the voice, and opening his heart to receive both: The hand of the Lord was there upon him.

Note, The hand of the Lord goes along with the word f the Lord, and so it becomes effectual; those only understand and believe the report to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. The hand of God was upon him, as upon Moses, to cover him, that he should not be overcome by the dazzling light and lustre of the visions he saw, Ex 33:22. It was upon him (as upon St. John, Re 1:17), to revive and support him, that he might bear up, and not faint, under these discoveries, that he might neither be lifted up nor cast down with the abundance of the revelations. God's grace is sufficient for him, and, in token of that, his hand is upon him.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great
cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness *was* about it, and out
of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.
5 Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures.
And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.
6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.
7 And their feet *were* straight feet; and the sole of their feet *was* like
the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished
brass.
8 And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four
sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.
9 Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they
went; they went every one straight forward.
10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and
the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an
ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.
11 Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* stretched upward; two
wings of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered
their bodies.
12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was
to go, they went; *and* they turned not when they went.
13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like
burning coals of fire, *and* like the appearance of lamps: it went up
and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and
out of the fire went forth lightning.
14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a
flash of lightning.
15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the
earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.
16 The appearance of the wheels and their work *was* like unto the color
of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and
their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.
17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: *and* they turned
not when they went.
18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and
their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four.

19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and
when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels
were lifted up.
20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither *was their*
spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for
the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels.
21 When those went, *these* went; and when those stood, *these* stood;
and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were
lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was*
in the wheels.
22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living
creature *was* as the color of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over
their heads above.
23 And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward
the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every
one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.
24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise
of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as
the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings.
25 And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their
heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.
26 And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness
of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the
likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man
above upon it.
27 And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round
about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and
from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were
the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.
28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain,
so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about.
This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.
And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one
that spake.

Ezekiel-2

The Call of Ezekiel

1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable. God, when he speaks to him, calls him, Son of man (Eze 2:1,3), Son of Adam, Son of the earth. Daniel is once called so (Da 8:17) and but once; the compellation is used to no other of the prophets but to Ezekiel all along. We may take it,

1. As a humble diminishing title. Lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this, that sill he is a son of man, a mean, weak, mortal creature.

Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this, that he was a son of man, and therefore that it was wonderful condescension in God that he was pleased thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels; yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature. What is man, or the son of man, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angles about his throne, who were ready to go on his errands, yet he passes them all by, and pitches on Ezekiel, a son of man, to be his messenger to the house of Israel; for we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid nor their hand be heavy upon us.

Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low and the honour of it laid in the dust. It therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as sons of men, common men. He was now to be employed as a prophet, God's ambassador, and a ruler over the kingdoms (Jer 1:10), a post of great honour, but he must remember that he is a son of man, and,

whatever good he did, it was not by any might of his own, for he was a son of man, but in the strength of divine grace, which must therefore have all the glory. Or,

2. We may take it as an honourable dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament (Da 7:13, I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven), whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, The Son of man. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God and great authority among men; and therefore as David the king is called the Lord's anointed, or Christ, so Ezekiel the prophet is called son of man.

Ezekiel is here set up, and made to stand, that he might receive his commission, Eze 2:1,2. He is set up,

1. By a divine command: Son of man, stand upon thy feet. His lying prostrate was a posture of greater reverence, but his standing up would be a posture of greater readiness and fitness for business. Our adorings of God must not hinder, but rather quicken and excite, our actings for God. He fell on his face in a holy fear and awe of God, but he was quickly raised up again; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted. God delights no in the dejections of his servants, but the same that brings them low will raise them up; the same that is a Spirit of bondage will be a Spirit of adoption. Stand, and I will speak to thee.

Note, We may expect that God will speak to us when we stand ready to do what he commands us.

2. By a divine power going along with that command, Eze 2:2. God bade him stand up; but, because he had not strength of his own to recover his feet nor courage to face the vision, the Spirit entered into him and set him upon his feet.

Note, God is graciously pleased to work that in us which he requires of us and raises those whom he bids rise. We must stir up ourselves, and then God will put strength into us; we must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us. He observed that the Spirit entered into him when Christ spoke to him; for Christ conveys his Spirit by his word as the ordinary means and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. The Spirit set the prophet upon his feet, to raise him up from his dejections, for he is the Comforter. Thus, in a similar case, Daniel was strengthened by a divine touch (Da 10:18) and John was raised by the right hand of Christ laid upon him, Re 1:17.

The Spirit set him upon his feet, made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he heard him that spoke to him. He heard the voice before (Eze 1:28), but now he heard it more distinctly and clearly, heard it and submitted to it. The Spirit sets us upon our feet by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby disposes the understanding to receive the knowledge of it.

2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day.

4 For *they are* impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel is here sent, and made to go, with a message to the children of Israel (Eze 2:3): I send thee to the children of Israel. God had for many ages been sending to them his servants the prophets, rising up betimes and sending them, but to little purpose; they were now sent into captivity for abusing God's messengers, and yet even there God sends this prophet among them, to try if their ears were open to discipline, now that they were holden in the cords of affliction. As the supports of life, so the means of grace, are continued to us after they have been a thousand times forfeited. Now observe,

1 The rebellion of the people to whom this ambassador is sent; he is sent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God. Let the prophet know that there is occasion for his going on this errand, for they are a rebellious nation (Eze 2:3), a rebellious house, Eze 2:5.

They are called children of Israel; they retain the name of their pious ancestors, but they have wretchedly degenerated, they have become Goim--nations, the word commonly used for the Gentiles. The children of Israel have become as the children of the Ethiopian (Am 9:7), for they are rebellious; and rebels at home are much more provoking to a prince than enemies abroad. Their idolatries and false worships were the sins which, more than any thing, denominated them a rebellious nation; for thereby they set up another prince in opposition to their rightful Sovereign, and did homage and paid tribute to the usurper, which is the highest degree of rebellion that can be.

(1.) They had been all along a rebellious generation and had persisted in their rebellion: They and their fathers have transgressed against me.

Note, Those are not always in the right that have antiquity and the fathers on their side; for there are errors and corruptions of long standing: and it is so far from being an excuse for walking in a bad way that our fathers walked in it that it is really an aggravation, for it is justifying the sin of those that have gone before us. They have continued in their rebellion even unto this very day; notwithstanding the various means and methods that have been made use of to reclaim them, to this day, when they are under divine rebukes for their rebellion, they continue rebellious; many among them, like Ahaz, even in their distress, trespass yet more; they are not the better for all the changes that have befallen them, but still remain unchanged.

(2.) They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are impudent children, brazen-faced, and cannot blush; they are

still-hearted, self-willed, and cannot bend, cannot stoop, neither ashamed nor afraid to sin; they will not be wrought upon by the sense either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope this was not the character of all, but of many, and those perhaps the leading men. Observe,

[1.] God knew this concerning them, how inflexible, how incorrigible, they were.

Note, God is perfectly acquainted with every man's true character, whatever his pretensions and professions may be.

[2.] He told the prophet this, that he might know the better how to deal with them and what handle to take them by. He must rebuke such men as those sharply, cuttingly, must deal plainly with them, though they call it dealing roughly. God tells him this, that it might be no surprise or stumbling-block to him if he found that his preaching should not make that impression upon them, which he had reason to think it would.

2 The dominion of the prince by whom this ambassador is sent.

(1.) He has authority to command him whom he sends: "I do send thee unto them, and therefore thou shalt say thus and thus unto them," Eze 2:4. Note, it is the prerogative of Christ to send prophets and ministers and to enjoin them their work. St. Paul thanked Christ Jesus who put him into the ministry (1Ti 1:12); for, as he was sent of the Father, ministers are sent by him; and as he received the Spirit without measure he gives the Spirit by measure, saying, Receive you the Holy Ghost. They are impudent and rebellious, and yet I send thee unto them.

Note, Christ gives the means of grace to many who he knows will not make a good use of those means, puts many a price into the hand of fools to get wisdom, who not only have no heart to it, but have their hearts turned against it. Thus he will magnify

his own grace, justify his own judgment, leave them inexcusable, and make their condemnation more intolerable.

(2.) He has authority by him to command those to whom he sends him: Thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. All he said to them must be spoken in God's name, enforced by his authority, and delivered as from him. Christ delivered his doctrines as a Son--Verily, verily, I say unto you; the prophets as servants--Thus saith the Lord God, our Master and yours. Note, The writings of the prophets are the word of God, and so are to be regarded by every one of us.

(3.) He has authority to call those to an account to whom he sends his ambassadors. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, whether they will attend to the word or turn their backs upon it, they shall know that there has been a prophet among them, shall know by experience.

[1.] If they hear and obey, they will know by comfortable experience that the word which did them good was brought to them by one that had a commission from God and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus those who were converted by St. Paul's preaching are said to be the seals of his apostleship, 1Co 9:2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and bear the witness in themselves that it is not the word of men, but of God.

[2.] If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word (as it is to be feared they will, for they are a rebellious house), yet they shall be made to know that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own consciences and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him; they shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a pernicious dangerous thing it is to despise God's messengers. They shall know by the accomplishment of

the threatenings that the prophet who denounced them was sent of God; thus the word will take hold of men, Zec 1:6. Note,

First, Those to whom the word of God is sent are upon their trial whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, and accordingly will their doom be.

Secondly, Whether we be edified by the word or no, it is certain that God will be glorified and his word magnified and made honourable. Whether it be a savour of life unto life or of death unto death, either way it will appear to be of divine original.

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns *be* with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.

The prophet, having received his commission, here receives a charge with it. It is a post of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a post of service and work, and it is here required of him,

I. That he be bold. He must act in the discharge of this trust with an undaunted courage and resolution, and not be either driven off from his work or made to drive on heavily, by the difficulties and oppositions that he would be likely to meet with in it: Son of man, be not afraid of them, Eze 2:6. Note, Those that will do any thing to purpose in the service of God must not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a snare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God.

1. God tells the prophet what was the character of those to whom he sent him, as before, Eze 2:3,4. They are briers and thorns, scratching, and tearing, and vexing a man, which way soever he turns. They are continually teazing God's prophets and entangling them in their talk (Mt 22:15); they are pricking briers

and grieving thorns. The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright sharper than a thorn-hedge, Mic 7:4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse, and of equal date with the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

Note, Wicked men, especially the persecutors of God's prophets and people, are as briers and thorns, which are hurtful to the ground, choke the good seed, hinder God's husbandry, are vexatious to his husbandmen; but they are nigh unto cursing and their end is to be burned. Yet God makes use of them sometimes for the correction and instruction of his people, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers, Jdg 8:16. Yet this is not the worst of their character: they are scorpions, venomous and malignant. The sting of a scorpion is a thousand times more hurtful than the scratch of a brier. Persecutors are a generation of vipers, are of the serpent's seed, and the poison of asps is under their tongue; and they are more subtle than any beast of the field.

And, which makes the prophet's case the more grievous, he dwells among these scorpions; they are continually about him, so that he cannot be safe nor quiet in his own house; these bad men are his bad neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let slip none, to do him a mischief. God takes notice of this to the prophet, as Christ to the angel of one of the churches, Re 2:13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. Ezekiel had been, in vision, conversing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount he finds he dwells with scorpions.

2. He tells him what would be their conduct towards him, that they would do what they could to frighten him with their looks and their words; they would hector him and threaten him, would look scornfully and spitefully at him, and do their utmost to face him down and put him our of countenance, that they might drive him off from being a prophet, or at least from telling them of

their faults and threatening them with the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and disturb the repose of his mind. They were now themselves in subjection, divested of all power, so that they had no other way of persecuting the prophet than with their looks and their words; and so they did persecute him. Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest, Jer 3:5.

If they had had more power, they would have done more mischief. They were now in captivity, smarting for their rebellion, and particularly their misusing God's prophets; and yet they are as bad as ever. Though thou brag a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him; no providences will of themselves humble and reform men, unless the grace of God work with them.

But, how malicious soever they were, Ezekiel must not be afraid of them nor dismayed, he must not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be disheartened or dispirited in it by all their menaces, but go on in it with resolution and cheerfulness, assuring himself of safety under the divine protection.

II. It is required that he be faithful, Eze 2:7.

1. He must be faithful to Christ who sent him: Thou shalt speak my words unto them. Note, As it is the honour of prophets that they are entrusted to speak God's words, so it is their duty to cleave closely to them and to speak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God. Ministers must always speak according to that rule.

2. He must be faithful to the souls of those to whom he was sent: Whether they will hear of whether they will forbear, he must deliver his message to them as he received it. He must bring them to comply with the word, and not study to accommodate the word to their humours. "It is true they are most rebellious,

they are rebellion itself; but, however, speak my words to them, whether they are pleasing or unpleasing."

Note, The untractableness and unprofitableness of people under the word are no good reason why ministers should leave off preaching to them; nor must we decline an opportunity by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reason to think no good will be done.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they *are* most rebellious.

8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

It is required that he be observant of his instructions.

1. Here is a general intimation what the instructions were that were given him, in the contents of the book which was spread before him, Eze 2:10.

(1.) His instructions were large; for the roll was written within and without, on the inside and on the outside of the roll. It was as a sheet of paper written on all the four sides. One side contained their sins; the other side contained the judgments of God coming upon them for those sins. Note, God has a great deal to say to his people when they have degenerated and become rebellious.

(2.) His instructions were melancholy. He was sent on a sad errand; the matter contained in the book was, lamentations, and mourning, and woe. The idea of his message is taken from the impression it would make upon the minds of those that carefully attended to it; it would set them a weeping and crying out, Woe! and, Alas! Both the discoveries of sin and the denunciations of wrath would be matter of lamentation. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, more woeful, than to see a holy happy people sunk into such a state of sin and misery as it

appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time? Ezekiel echoes to Jeremiah's lamentations.

Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet impenitent sinners will find there are even among his words lamentations and woe.

2. Here is an express charge given to the prophet to observe his instructions, both in receiving his message and delivering it. He is now to receive it and is here commanded,

(1.) To attend diligently to it: son of man, hear what I say unto thee, Eze 2:8. Note, Those that speak from God to others must be sure to hear from God themselves and be obedient to his voice: "Be not thou rebellious; do not refuse to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of disobliging thy countrymen. They are a rebellious house, among whom thou livest; but be not thou like them, do not comply with them in any thing that is evil." If ministers, who are reprovers by office, connive at sin and indulge sinners, either show them not their wickedness or show them not the fatal consequences of it, for fear of displeasing them and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themselves partakers of their guilt and are rebellious like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let ministers do theirs in reproving, and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the success be, as that prophet had, Isa 50:5.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. Even the best of men, when their lot is cast in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned against the worst of crimes.

(2.) To digest it in his own mind by an experience of the favour and power of it: "Do not only hear what I say unto thee, but open thy mouth, and eat that which I give thee. Prepare to eat it and eat it willingly and with an appetite." All God's children are content to be at their heavenly father's finding, and to eat whatever he gives them. That which God's hand reached out to

Ezekiel was a roll of a book, or the volume of a book, a book or scroll of paper or parchment fully written and rolled up.

Divine revelation comes to us from the hand of Christ; he gave it to the prophets, Re 1:1. When we look at the roll of thy book we must have an eye to the hand by which it is sent to us. He that brought it to the prophet spread it before him, that he might now swallow it with an implicit faith, but might fully understand the contents of it, and then receive it and make it his own. Be not rebellious, says Christ, but eat what I give thee. If we receive not what Christ in his ordinances and providences allots for us, if we submit not to his word and rod, and reconcile not ourselves to both, we shall be accounted rebellious.

9 And when I looked, behold, a hand *was* sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book *was* therein;
10 and he spread it before me; and it *was* written within and without: and *there was* written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Ezekiel-3

1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

These verses are fitly joined by some translators to the foregoing chapter, as being of a piece with it and a continuation of the same vision. The prophets received the word from God that they might deliver it to the people of God, furnished themselves that they might furnish them with the knowledge of the mind and will of God. Now here the prophet is taught,

How he must receive divine revelation himself, Eze 3:1. Christ (whom he saw upon the throne, Eze 1:26) said to him, "Son of man, eat this roll, admit this revelation into thy understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is entire, and make no difficulty of it, nay, take a pleasure in it as thou dost in

thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy necessary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou hast eaten."

Thus ministers should in their studies and meditations take in that word of God which they are to preach to others. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, Jer 15:16. They must be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may speak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of divine light and heat. Now observe,

1 How this command is inculcated upon the prophet. In the foregoing chapter, Eat what I give thee; and here (Eze 3:1), "Eat that thou findest, that which is presented to thee by the hand of Christ." Note, Whatever we find to be the word of God, whatever is brought to us by him who is the Word of God, we must receive it without disputing. What we find set before us in the scripture, that we must eat. And again (Eze 3:3), "Cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll; do not eat it and bring it up again, as that which is nauseous, but eat it and retain it, as that which is nourishing and grateful to the stomach. Feast upon this vision till thou be full of matter, as Elihu was, Job 32:18.

Let the word have a place in thee, the innermost place." We must take pains with our own hearts, that we may cause them duly to receive and entertain the word of God, that every faculty may do its office, in order to the due digesting of the word of God, that it may be turned in succum et sanguinem--into blood and spirits. We must empty ourselves of worldly things, that we may fill our bowels with this roll.

2. How this command is explained Eze 3:10): "All my words that I shall speak unto thee, to be spoken unto the people, thou must receive in thy heart, as well as hear with thy ears, receive them in the love of them." Let these sayings sink down into your ears, Lu 9:44. Christ demands the prophet's attention not only to

what he now says, but to all that he shall at any time hereafter speak: Receive it all in thy heart; meditate on these things and give thyself wholly to them, 1Ti 4:15.

3. How this command was obeyed in vision. He opened his mouth and Christ caused him to eat the roll, Eze 3:2. If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Christ will by his Spirit bring it into them and cause it to dwell in us richly. If he that opens the roll, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of revelation, spreads it before us, did not also open our understanding, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom, give us the knowledge of it and cause us to eat it, we should be for ever strangers to it. The prophet had reason to fear that the roll would be an unpleasant morsel and a sorry dish to make a meal of, but it proved to be in his mouth as honey for sweetness.

Note, if we readily obey even the most difficult commands, we shall find that comfort in the reflection which will make us abundant amends for all the hardships we meet with in the way of our duty. Though the roll was filled with lamentations, and mourning, and woe, yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness.

Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, Re 10:9,10. He took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was, as this, in his mouth sweet as honey; but it was bitter in the belly; and we shall find that this was so too, for (Eze 3:14) the prophet went in bitterness.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.
3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it;* and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.
4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

5 For thou *art* not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, *but* to the house of Israel;
6 not to many people of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.
7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hard-hearted.

How he must deliver that divine revelation to others which he himself had received (Eze 3:1): Eat this roll, and then go, speak to the house of Israel. He must not undertake to preach the things of God to others till he did himself fully understand them; let him not go without his errand, nor take it by the halves. But when he does himself fully understand them he must be both busy and bold to preach them for the good of others. We must not conceal the words of the Holy One (Job 6:10), for that is burying a talent which was given us to trade with.

He must go and speak to the house of Israel; for it is their privilege to have God's statutes and judgments made known to them; as the giving of the law (the lively oracles), so prophecy (the living oracles) pertains to them. He is not sent to the Chaldeans to reprove them for their sins, but to the house of Israel to reprove them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiss, not the child of a stranger.

The instructions given him in speaking to them are much the same with those in the foregoing chapter.

(1.) He must speak to them all that, and that only, which God spoke to him. He had said before (Eze 2:7): Thou shalt speak my words to them; here he says (Eze 3:4), Thou shalt speak with my words unto them, or in my words. He must not only say that which for substance is the same that God had said to him, but as near as may be in the same language and expressions. Blessed Paul, though a man of a very happy invention, yet speaks of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, 1Co

2:13. Scripture truths look best in scripture language, their native dress; and how can we better speak God's mind than with his words?

(2.) He must remember that they are the house of Israel whom he is sent to speak to, God's house and his own; and therefore such as he ought to have a particular concern for and to deal faithfully and tenderly with. They were such as he had an intimate acquaintance with, being not only their countryman, but their companion in tribulation; they and he were fellow-sufferers, and had lately been fellow-travellers, in very melancholy circumstances, from Judea to Babylon, and had often mingled their tears, which could not but knit their affections to each other. It was well for the people that they had a prophet who knew experimentally how to sympathize with them, and could not but be touched with the feeling of their infirmities.

It was well for the prophet that he had to do with those of his own nation, not with a people of strange speech and a hard language, deep of lip, so that thou canst not fathom their meaning, and heavy of tongue, whom it is intolerable and impossible to converse with. Every strange language seems to us to be deep and heavy. "Thou art not sent to many such people, whom thou couldst neither speak to nor hear from, neither understand nor be understood among but by an interpreter." The apostles indeed were sent to many people of a strange speech, but they could not have done any good among them if they had not had the gift of tongues; but Ezekiel was sent only to one people, those but a few, and his own, whom having acquaintance with he might hope to find acceptance with.

(3.) He must remember what God had already told him of the bad character of those to whom he was sent, that, if he met with discouragement and disappointment in them, he might not be offended. They are impudent and hard-hearted (Eze 3:7), no convictions of sin would make them blush, no denunciations of

wrath would make them tremble. Two things aggravated their obstinacy:--

[1.] That they were more obstinate than their neighbours would have been if the prophet had been sent to them. Had God sent him to any other people, though of a strange speech, surely they would have hearkened to him; they would at least have given him a patient hearing and shown him that respect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninevites were wrought upon by Jonah's preaching when the house of Israel, that was compassed about with so great a cloud of prophets, was unhumbled and unreformed. But what shall we say to these things? The means of grace are given to those that will not improve them and withheld from those that would have improved them. We must resolve this into the divine sovereignty, and say, Lord, thy judgments are a great deep.

[2.] That they were obstinate against God himself: "They will not hearken unto thee, and no marvel, for they will not hearken unto me;" they will not regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the Lord's voice cries in the city. If they believe not God speaking to them by a minister, neither would they believe though he should speak to them by a voice from heaven; nay, therefore they reject what the prophet says, because it comes from God, whom the carnal mind is enmity to. They are prejudiced against the law of God, and for that reason turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whose business it is to enforce his law.

(4.) He must resolve to put on courage, and Christ promises to steel him with it, Eze 3:8,9. He is sent to such as are impudent and hard-hearted, who will receive no impressions nor be wrought upon either by fair means or foul, who will take a pride in affronting God's messenger and confronting the message. It will be a hard task to know how to deal with them; but,

[1.] God will enable him to put a good face on it: "I have made thy face strong against their faces, endued thee with all the firmness and boldness that the case calls for." Perhaps Ezekiel was naturally bashful and timorous, but, if God did not find him fit, yet by his grace he made him fit, to encounter the greatest difficulties. Note, The more impudent wicked people are in their opposition to religion the more openly and resolutely should God's people appear in the practice and defence of it. Let the innocent stir up himself against the hypocrite, Job 17:8.

When vice is daring let not virtue be sneaking. And, when God has work to do, he will animate men for it and give them strength according to the day. If there be occasion, God can and will by his grace make the foreheads of faithful ministers as an adamant, so that the most threatening powers shall not dash them out of countenance. The Lord God will help men, therefore have I set my face like a flint, Isa 50:7.

[2.] He is therefore commanded to have a good heart on it, and to go on in his work with a holy security, not valuing either the censures or the threats of his enemies: "Fear not, neither be dismayed at their looks; let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee or a stumbling-block before thee." Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttingly (Tit 1:12,13), must be saved with fear, Jude 1:23. Those that keep closely to the service of God may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the angry countenance that drives away a back-biting tongue give any check to a reproving tongue.

(5.) He must continue instant with them in his preaching, whatever the success was, Eze 3:11. He must go to those of the captivity, who, being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive instruction; he must look upon them as the children of his people, to whom he was nearly allied, and for whom he therefore ought to have a very tender concern, as Paul for his kinsmen, Ro 9:3.

And he must tell them not only what the Lord said, but that the Lord said it; let him speak in God's name, and back what he said with his authority: Thus saith the Lord God; tell them so, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Not that it may be indifferent to us what success our ministry has, but, whatever it be, we must go on with our work and leave the issue to God. We must not say "Here are some so good that we do not need to speak to them," or, "Here are others so bad that it is to no purpose to speak to them;" but, however it be, deliver thy message faithfully, tell them, The Lord God saith so and so, let them reject it at their peril.

8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.

9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house.

10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

Full instructions being thus given to the prophet, pursuant to his commission, we are here told,

(1.) With what satisfaction this mission of his was applauded by the holy angels, who were very well pleased to see one of a nature inferior to their own thus honourable employed and entrusted. He heard a voice of a great rushing (Eze 3:12), as if the angels thronged and crowded to see the inauguration of a prophet; for to them is known by the church (that is, by reflection from the church) the manifold wisdom of God, Eph 3:10. They seemed to strive who should get nearest to this great sight. He heard the noise of their wings that touched, or (as the word is) kissed one another, denoting the mutual affections and assistances of the angels. He heard also the noise of the wheels of Providence moving over-against the angels and in concert with them. All this was to engage his attention and to convince him that the God who sent him, having such a glorious train of attendants, no doubt had power sufficient to bear him out in his

work. But all this noise ended in the voice of praise. He heard them saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place.

[1.] From heaven, his place above, whence his glory was now in vision descending, or whither perhaps it was now returning. Let the innumerable company of angels above join with those employed in this vision in saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord. Praise you the Lord from the heavens. Praise him, all his angels, Ps 148:1,2.

[2.] From the temple, his place on earth, whence his glory was now departing. They lament the departure of the glory, but adore the righteousness of God in it: however it be, yet God is blessed and glorious, and ever will be so. The prophet Isaiah heard God thus praised when he received his commission (Isa 6:3); and a comfort it is to all the faithful servants of God, when they see how much God is dishonoured in this lower world, to think how much he is admired and glorified in the upper world. The glory of the Lord has many slights from our place, but many praises from his place.

(2.) With what reluctance of his own spirit, and yet with what a mighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, the prophet was himself brought to the execution of his office. The grace given to him was not in vain; for,

[1.] The Spirit led him with a strong hand. God bade him go, but he stirred not till the Spirit took him up. The Spirit of the living creatures that was in the wheels now was in the prophet too, and took him up, first to hear more distinctly the acclamations of the angels (Eze 3:12), but afterwards (Eze 3:14) lifted him up, and took him away to his work, which he was backward to, being very loth either to bring trouble upon himself or foretel it to his people. He would gladly have been excused, but must own, as another prophet does (Jer 20:7), Thou was stronger than I, and hast prevailed. Ezekiel would willingly have kept all he heard and saw to himself, that it might go no further, but the hand of

the Lord was strong upon him and overpowered him; he was carried on contrary to his own inclinations by the prophetical impulse, so that he could not but speak the things which he had heard and seen, as the apostles, Ac 4:20.

Note, Those whom God calls to the ministry, as he furnishes their heads for it, so he bows their hearts to it.

[2.] He followed with a sad heart: The Spirit took me away, says he, and then I went, but it was in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit. He had perhaps seen what a hard task Jeremiah had at Jerusalem when he appeared as a prophet, what pains he took, what opposition he met with, how he was abused by hand and tongue, and what ill treatment he met with, and all to no purpose. "And" (thinks Ezekiel) "must I be set up for a mark like him?" The life of a captive was bad enough; but what would the life of a prophet in captivity be? Therefore he went in this fret and under this discomposure.

Note, There may in some cases be a great reluctance of corruption even where there is a manifest predominance of grace. "I went, not disobedient to the heavenly vision, or shrinking from the work, as Jonah, but I went in bitterness, not at all pleased with it." When he received the divine revelation himself, it was to him sweet as honey (Eze 3:3); he could with abundance of pleasure have spent all his days in meditating upon it; but when he is to preach it to others, who, he foresees, will be hardened and exasperated by it, and have their condemnation aggravated, then he goes in bitterness.

Note, It is a great grief to faithful ministers, and makes them go on in their work with a heavy heart, when they find people untractable and hating to be reformed. He went in the heat of his spirit, because of the discouragements he foresaw he should meet with; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon him, not only to compel him to his work, but to fit him for it, to carry him through it, and animate him against the difficulties he would

meet with (so we may understand it); and, when he found it so, he was better reconciled to his business and applied himself to it: Then he came to those of the captivity (Eze 3:15), to some place where there were many of them together, and sat where they sat, working, or reading, or talking, and continued among them seven days to hear what they said and observe what they did; and all that time he was waiting for the word of the Lord to come to him.

Note, Those that would speak suitably and profitably to people about their souls must acquaint themselves with them and with their case, must do as Ezekiel did here, must sit where they sit, and speak familiarly to them of the things of God, and put themselves into their condition, yea, though they sit by the rivers of Babylon. But observe, He was there astonished, overwhelmed with grief for the sins and miseries of his people and overpowered by the pomp of the vision he had seen. He was there desolate (so some read it); God showed him no visions, men made him no visit. Thus was he left to digest his grief, and come to a better temper, before the word of the Lord should come to him. Note, Those whom god designs to exalt and enlarge he first humbles and straitens for a time.

11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the Lord from his place.

13 *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me.

15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

These further instructions God gave to the prophet at the end of seven days, that is, on the seventh day after the vision he had; and it is very probably that both that and this were on the sabbath day, which the house of Israel, even in their captivity, observed as well as they could in those circumstances. We do not find that their conquerors and oppressors tied them to any constant service, as their Egyptian task-masters had formerly done, but that they might observe the sabbath-rest for a sign to distinguish between them and their neighbours; but for the sabbath-work they had not the convenience of temple or synagogue, only it should seem they had a place by the river side where prayer was wont to be made (as Ac 16:13); there they met on the sabbath day; there their enemies upbraided them with the songs of Zion (Ps 137:1,3); there Ezekiel met them, and the word of the Lord then and there came to him.

He that had been musing and meditating on the things of God all the week was fit to speak to the people in God's name on the sabbath day, and disposed to hear God speak to him. This sabbath day Ezekiel was not so honoured with visions of the glory of God as he had been the sabbath before; but he is plainly, and by a very common similitude, told his duty, which he is to communicate to the people. Note, Raptures and transports of joy are not the daily bread of God's children, however they may upon special occasions be feasted with them. We must not deny but that we have truly communion with God (1Jo 1:3) though we have it not always so sensibly as at some times.

And, though the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven may sometimes be looked into, yet ordinarily it is plain preaching that is most for edification. God here tells the prophet what his office was, and what the duty of that office; and this (we may suppose)

he was to tell the people, that they might attend to what he said and improve it accordingly. Note, It is good for people to know and consider what a charge their ministers have of them and what an account they must shortly give of that charge. Observe,

What the office is to which the prophet is called: Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel, Eze 3:17. The vision he saw astonished him: he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him to the understanding of his work and so to reconcile him to it. He sat among the captives, and said little, but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do; he is a watchman, and has something to say to them; he is appointed to be as a watchman in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbers of the peace, as a watchman over the flock, to guard against thieves and beasts of prey, but especially as a watchman in the camp, in an invaded country or a besieged town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, nay, upon the first appearance, of danger.

This supposes the house of Israel to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon it; yea, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls (Isa 62:6), watchmen that go about the city, So 3:3. It is a toilsome office. Watchmen must keep awake, be they ever so sleepy, and keep abroad, be it ever so cold; they must stand all weathers upon the watch-tower, Isa 21:8,Ge 31:40.

It is a dangerous office. Sometimes they cannot keep their post, but are in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the sentinel; and yet they dare not quit their post upon pain of death from their general. Such a dilemma are the church's watchmen in; men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false. But it is a needful office; the

house of Israel cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet, except the Lord keep it, the watchman waketh but in vain, Ps 127:1,2.

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

What is the duty of this office. The work of a watchman is to take notice and to give notice.

1 The prophet, as a watchman, must take notice of what God said concerning this people, not only concerning the body of the people, to which the prophecies of Jeremiah and other prophets had most commonly reference, but concerning particular persons, according as their character was. He must not, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger and gain intelligence, but he must look up to God, and further he need not look: Hear the word at my mouth, Eze 3:17.

Note, Those that are to preach must first hear; for how can those teach others who have not first learned themselves?

2. He must give notice of what he heard. As a watchman must have eyes in his head, so he must have a tongue in his head; if he be dumb, it is as bad as if he were blind, Isa 56:10. Thou shalt give them warning from me, sound an alarm in the holy mountain; not in his own name, or as from himself, but in God's name, and from him. Ministers are God's mouth to the children of men. The scriptures are written for our admonition. By them is thy servant warned, Ps 19:11.

But, because that which is delivered vivâ voce--by the living voice, commonly makes the deepest impression, God is pleased, by men like ourselves, who are equally concerned, to enforce upon us the warnings of the written word. Now the prophet, in his preaching, must distinguish between the wicked and the righteous, the precious and the vile, and in his applications must suit his alarms to each, giving every one his portion; and, if he did

this, he should have the comfort of it, whatever the success was, but, if not, he was accountable.

(1.) Some of those he had to do with were wicked, and he must warn them not to go on in their wickedness, but to turn from it, Eze 3:18,19. We may observe here,

[1.] That the God of heaven has said, and does say, to every wicked man, that if he go on still in his trespasses he shall surely die. His iniquity shall undoubtedly be his ruin; it tends to ruin and will end in ruin. Dying thou shalt die, thou shalt die so great a death, shalt die eternally, be ever dying, but never dead. The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, shall fie under the guilt of it, die under the dominion of it.

[2.] That if a wicked man turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way, he shall live, and the ruin he is threatened with shall be prevented; and, that he may do so, he is warned of the danger he is in. The wicked man shall die if he go on, but shall live if he repent. Observe, he is to turn from his wickedness and from his wicked way. It is not enough for a man to turn from his wicked way by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving him rather than of his leaving his sins, but he must turn from his wickedness, from the love of it and the inclination to it, by an inward regeneration; if he do not so much as turn from his wicked way, there is little hope that he will turn from his wickedness.

[3.] That it is the duty of ministers both to warn sinners of the danger of sin and to assure them of the benefit of repentance, to set before them how miserable they are if they go on in sin, and how happy they may be if they will but repent and reform. Note, The ministry of the word is concerning matters of life and death, for those are the things it sets before us, the blessing and the curse, that we may escape the curse and inherit the blessing.

[4.] That, though ministers do not warn wicked people as they ought of their misery and danger, yet that shall not be admitted as an excuse for those that go on still in their trespasses; for, though the watchman did not give them warning, yet they shall die in their iniquity, for they had sufficient warning given them by the providence of God and their own consciences; and, if they would have taken it, they might have saved their lives.

[5.] That if ministers be not faithful to their trust, if they do not warn sinners of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unreproved, the blood of those that perish through their carelessness will be required at their hand. It shall be charged upon them in the day of account that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such precious souls perished in sin; for who knows but if they had had fair warning given them they might have fled in time from the wrath to come? And, if it contract so heinous a guilt as it does to be accessory to the murder of a dying body, what is it to be accessory to the ruin of an immortal soul?

[6.] That if ministers do their duty in giving warning to sinners, though the warning be not taken, yet they may have this satisfaction, that they are jclear from their blood, and have delivered their own souls, though they cannot prevail to deliver theirs. Those that are faithful shall have their reward, though they be not successful.

(2.) Some of those he had to deal with were righteous, at least he had reason to think, in a judgment of charity, that they were so; and he must warn them not to apostatize and turn away from their righteousness, Eze 3:20,21. We may observe here,

[1.] That the best men in the world have need to be warned against apostasy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it and the danger they are in by it. God's servants must be warned (Ps 19:11) that they do not neglect his work and quit his service. One good means to keep us from falling is to keep up a holy fear of falling,

Heb 4:1. Let us therefore fear; and (Ro 11:20) even those that stand by faith must not be high-minded, but fear, and must therefore be warned.

[2.] There is a righteousness which a man may turn from, a seeming righteousness, and, if men turn from this, it thereby appears that it was never sincere, how passable, nay, how plausible soever it was; for, if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, 1Jo 2:19. There are many that begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh, that set their faces heavenward, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and turned from the holy commandment.

[3.] When men turn from their righteousness they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or a re negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter. Omissions make way for commissions.

[4.] When men turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, it is just with God to lay stumbling-blocks before them, that they may grow worse and worse, till they are ripened for destruction. When Pharaoh hardened his heart God hardened it. When sinners turn their back upon God, desert his service, and so cast a reproach upon it, he does, in a way of righteous judgment, not only withdraw his restraining grace and give them up to their own hearts' lusts, but order them by his providence into such circumstances as occasion their sin and hasten their ruin. There are those to whom Christ himself is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, 1Pe 2:8.

[5.] The righteousness which men relinquish shall never be remembered to their honour or comfort; it will stand them in no stead in this world or the other. Apostates lose all that they have wrought; their services and sufferings are all in vain, and shall never be brought to an account, because not continued in. It is a

rule in the law, Factum non dicitur, quod non perseverat--We are said to do only that which we do perseveringly, Ga 3:3,4.

[6.] If ministers do no give fair warning, as they ought, of the weakness of the best, their aptness to stumble and fall, the particular temptations they are in and the fatal consequences of apostasy, the ruin of those that do apostatize will be laid at their door, and they shall answer for it. Not but that there are those who are warned against it, and yet turn from their righteousness; but that case is not put here, as was concerning the wicked man, but, on the contrary, that a righteous man, being warned, takes the warning and does not sin (Eze 3:21); for, if you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. We must not only not flatter the wicked, but not flatter even the righteous as if they were perfectly safe any where on this side heaven.

[7.] If ministers give warning, and people take it, it is well for both. Nothing is more beautiful than a wise reprover upon an obedient ear; the one shall live because he is warned and the other has delivered his soul. What can a good minister desire more than to save himself and those that hear him? 1Ti 4:16.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

21 Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

22 And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

After all this large and magnificent discovery which God had made of himself to the prophet, and the full instructions he had given him how to deal with those to whom he sent him with an ample commission, we should have expected presently to see him preaching the word of God to a great congregation of Israel; but here we find it quite otherwise. his work here, at first, seems not at all proportionable to the pomp of his call.

We have him here retired for further learning. By his unwillingness to go it should seem as if he were not so thoroughly convinced as he might have been of the ability of him that sent him to bear him out; and therefore, to encourage him against the difficulties he foresaw, God will favour him with another vision of his glory, which (if any thing) would put life into him and animate him for his work. In order for this, God calls him out to the plain (Eze 3:22) and there he will have some talk with him. See and admire the condescension of God in conversing thus familiarly with a man, a son of man, a poor captive, nay, with a sinful man, who, when God sent him went in bitterness of spirit, and was at this time out of humour with his work.

And let us own ourselves for ever indebted to the mediation of Christ for this blessed intercourse and communion between God and man, between heaven and earth. See here the benefit of solitude, and how much it befriends contemplation. It is very comfortable to be alone with God, withdrawn from the word for converse with him, to hear from him, to speak to him; and a good man will say that he is never less along than when thus alone. Ezekiel went forth into the plain more willingly than he went among those of the captivity (Eze 3:15); for those that know what it is to have communion with God cannot but prefer that before any converse with this world, especially such as is commonly met with. He went out into the plain, and there he saw the same vision

that he had seen by the river of Chebar; for God is not tied to places.

Note, Those who follow God shall meet with his consolations, wherever they go. God called him out to talk with him, but did more than that: he showed him his glory, Eze 3:23. We are not now to expect such visions, but we must own that we have a favour done us no way inferior if we so by faith behold the glory of the Lord as to be changed into the same image, by the Spirit of the Lord; and this honour have all his saints. Praise you the Lord, 2Co 3:18.

23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.

24 Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.

We have him here restrained from further teaching for the present. When he saw the glory of the Lord he fell on his face, being struck with an awe of God's majesty and a dread of his displeasure; but the Spirit entered into him to raise him up, and then he recovered himself and got upon his feet and heard what the Spirit whispered to him, which is very surprising. One would have expected now that God would send him directly to the chief place of concourse, would give him favour in the eyes of his brethren, and make him and his message acceptable to them, that he would have a wider door of opportunity opened to him and that God would give him a door of utterance to open his mouth boldly; but what is here said to him is the reverse of all this.

1. Instead of sending him to a public assembly, he orders him to confine himself to his own lodgings: Go, shut thyself within thy house, Eze 3:24. He was not willing to appear in public, and, when he did, the people did not regard him, nor show him the respect he deserved, and as a just rebuke both to him and them, to him for his shyness of them and to them for their coldness towards him, God forbids him to appear in public. Note, Our choice is

often made our punishment; and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners when they, or their people, or both, grow indifferent to solemn assemblies. Ezekiel must shut up himself, some think, to give a sign of the besieging of Jerusalem, in which the people should be closely shut up as he was in his house, and which he speaks of in the next chapter.

He must shut himself within his house, that he might receive further discoveries of the mind of God and might abundantly furnish himself with something to say to the people when he went abroad. We find that the elders of Judah visited him and sat before him sometimes in his house (Eze 8:1), to be witnesses of his ecstasies; but it was not till Eze 11:25 that he spoke to those of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shown him. Note, Those that are called to preach must find time to study, and a great deal of time too, must often shut themselves up in their houses, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and so their profiting may appear to all.

2. Instead of securing him an interest in the esteem and affections of those to whom he sent him he tells him that they shall put bands upon him and bind him (Eze 3:25), either

(1.) As a criminal. They shall bind him in order to the further punishing of him as a disturber of the peace; though they were themselves sent into bondage in Babylon for persecuting the prophets, yet there they continue to persecute them. Or, rather,

(2.) As a distracted man. They would go about to bind him as one beside himself; for to that they imputed his violent motions in his raptures. The captains asked Jehu, Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee? Festus said to Paul, Thou art beside thyself; and so the Jews said of our Lord Jesus, Mk 3:21. Perhaps this was the reason why he must keep within doors, because otherwise they would bind him, under pretence of his being mad, and therefore he must not go out among them. Justly are prophets forbidden to go to those that will abuse them.

3. Instead of opening his lips that his mouth might show forth God's praise, God silence him, made his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, so that he was dumb for a considerable time, Eze 3:26. The pious captives in Babylon used this imprecation upon themselves, that, if they should forget Jerusalem, there tongue might cleave to the roof of their mouth, Ps 137:6.

Ezekiel remembers Jerusalem more than any of them, and yet his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, and he that can speak best is forbidden to speak at all; and the reason given is because they are a rebellious house to whom he is sent, and they are not worthy to have him for a reprover. He shall not give them instructions and admonitions, for they are lost and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to speak boldly to them because they are most rebellious (Eze 2:7); but, since that proves to no purpose, he is now for that reason enjoined silence and shall not speak at all to them.

Note, Those whose hearts are hardened against conviction are justly deprived of the mans of conviction. Why should not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found that the reproved resolve to be deaf? If Ephraim be joined to idols, let him alone. Thou shalt be dumb, and not be a reprover, implying that unless he were dumb he would be reproving; if he could speak at all, he would witness against the wickedness of the wicked. But when God speaks with him, and designs to speak by him, he will open his mouth, Eze 3:27.

Note, Though God's prophets may be silenced awhile, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And, when God speaks to his ministers, he not only opens their ears to hear what he says, but opens their mouth to return an answer. Moses, who had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, Ex 34:34.

4. Instead of giving him assurance of success when he should at any time speak to the people, he here leaves the matter very doubtful, and Ezekiel must not perplex and disquiet himself about it, but let it be as it will. He that hears, let him hear, and he is welcome to the comfort of it; let him hear, and his soul shall live; but he that forbears, let him forbear at his peril, and take what comes. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it; neither God nor his prophet shall be any losers by it; but the prophet shall be rewarded for his faithfulness in reproving the sinner, and God will have the glory of his justice in condemning him for not taking the reproof.

25 But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

26 and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they *are* a rebellious house.

27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they *are* a rebellious house.

Ezekiel-4

The Siege of Jerusalem Portrayed

1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, *even* Jerusalem:

The prophet is here ordered to represent to himself and others by signs which would be proper and powerful to strike the fancy and to affect the mind, the siege of Jerusalem; and this amounted to a prediction.

I. He was ordered to engrave a draught of Jerusalem upon a tile, Eze 4:1. It was Jerusalem's honour that while she kept her integrity God had graven her upon the palms of his hands (Isa

49:16), and the names of the tribes were engraven in precious stones on the breast-plate of the high priest; but, now that the faithful city has become a harlot, a worthless brittle tile or brick is thought good enough to portray it upon. This the prophet must lay before him, that the eye may affect the heart.

II. He was ordered to build little forts against this portraiture of the city, resembling the batteries raised by the besiegers, Eze 4:2. Between the city that was besieged and himself that was the besieger he was to set up an iron pan, as an iron wall, Eze 4:3. This represented the inflexible resolution of both sides; the Chaldeans resolved, whatever it cost them, that they would make themselves masters of the city and would never quit it till they had conquered it; on the other side, the Jews resolved never to capitulate, but to hold out to the last extremity.

III. He was ordered to lie upon his side before it, as it were to surround it, representing the Chaldean army lying before it to block it up, to keep the meat from going in and the mouths from going out. He was to lie on his left side 390 days (Eze 4:5), about thirteen months; the siege of Jerusalem is computed to last eighteen months (Jer 52:4-6), but if we deduct from that five months' interval, when the besiegers withdrew upon the approach of Pharaoh's army (Jer 37:5-8), the number of the days of the close siege will be 390. Yet that also had another signification. The 390 days, according to the prophetic dialect, signified 390 years; and, when the prophet lies so many days on his side, he bears the guilt of that iniquity which the house of Israel, the ten tribes, had borne 390 years, reckoning from their first apostasy under Jeroboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of those small remains of them that had incorporated with Judah.

He is then to lie forty days upon his right side, and so long to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes, because the measure-filling sins of that people were those which they were guilty of during the last forty years before their

captivity, since the thirteenth year of Josiah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy (Jer 1:1,2), or, as some reckon it, since the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found and the people renewed their covenant with God. When they persisted in their impieties and idolatries, notwithstanding they had such a prophet and such a prince, and were brought into the bond of such a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy?

Judah, that had such helps and advantages for reformation, fills the measure of its iniquity in less time than Israel does. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay constantly night and day upon his side, but every day, for so many days together, at a certain time of the day, when he received visits, and company came in, he was found lying 390 days on his left side and forty days on his right side before his portraiture of Jerusalem, which all that saw might easily understand to mean the close besieging of that city, and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it and to take their different remarks upon it. His being found constantly on the same side, as if bands were laid upon him (as indeed they were by the divine command), so that he could not turn himself from one side to another till he had ended the days of the siege, did plainly represent the close and constant continuance of the besiegers about the city during that number of days, till they had gained their point.

2 and lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set *battering* rams against it round about.

3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it *for* a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This *shall be* a sign to the house of Israel.

4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to
the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt
thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.
6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right
side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty
days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.
7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and
thine arm *shall be* uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

He was ordered to prosecute the siege with vigour (Eze 4:7): Thou shalt set thy face towards the siege of Jerusalem, as wholly intent upon it and resolved to carry it; so the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's indignation at Zedekiah's treachery in breaking his league with him made him very furious in pushing on this siege, that he might chastise the insolence of that faithless prince and people; and his army promised themselves a rich booty of that pompous city; so that both set their faces against it, for they were very resolute.

Nor were they less active and industrious, exerting themselves to the utmost in all the operations of the siege, which the prophet was to represent by the uncovering of his arm, or, as some read it, the stretching out of his arm, as it were to deal blows about without mercy. When God is about to do some great work he is said to make bare his arm, Isa 52:10. In short, The Chaldeans will go about their business, and go on in it, as men in earnest, who resolve to go through with it. Now,

1. This is intended to be a sign to the house of Israel (Eze 4:3), both to those in Babylon, who were eye-witnesses of what the prophet did, and to those also who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was dumb and could not speak (Eze 3:26); but as his silence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafness, so even then God left not himself without witness, but ordered him to make signs, as dumb men are accustomed to do, and as Zacharias did when he

was dumb, and by them to make known his mind (that is, the mind of God) to the people.

And thus likewise the people were upbraided with their stupidity and dulness, that they were not capable of being taught as men of sense are, by words, but must be taught as children are, by pictures, or as deaf men are, by signs. Or, perhaps, they are hereby upbraided with their malice against the prophet. Had he spoken in words at length what was signified by these figures, they would have entangled him in his talk, would have indicted him for treasonable expressions, for they knew how to make a man an offender for a word (Isa 29:21), to avoid which he is ordered to make use of signs. Or the prophet made use of signs for the same reason that Christ made use of parables, that hearing they might hear and not understand, and seeing they might see and not perceive, Mt 13:14,15. They would not understand what was plain, and therefore shall be taught by that which is difficult; and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet prophesies against Jerusalem (Eze 4:7); and there were those who not only understood it so, but were the more affected with it by its being so represented, for images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can, and for this reason sacraments are instituted to represent divine things, that we might see and believe, might see and be affected with those things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a blessing to go along with them, while (as the prophet here) we make use only of such signs as God himself has expressly appointed, which, we must conclude, are the fittest.

Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly used, and kept under the direction and correction of reason and faith, may be of good use to kindle and excite pious and devout affections, as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants. "Methinks I see so and so, myself dying, time expiring, the world on fire, the dead rising, the great tribunal set, and the like, may have an

exceedingly good influence upon us: for fancy is like fire, a good servant, but a bad master."

3. This whole transaction has that in it which the prophet might, with a good colour of reason, have hesitated at and excepted against, and yet, in obedience to God's command, and in execution of his office, he did it according to order.

(1.) It seemed childish and ludicrous, and beneath his gravity, and there were those that would ridicule him for it; but he knew the divine appointment put honour enough upon that which otherwise seemed mean to save his reputation in the doing of it.

(2.) It was toilsome and tiresome to do as he did; but our ease as well as our credit must be sacrificed to our duty, and we must never call God's service in any instance of it a hard service.

(3.) It could not but be very much against the grain with him to appear thus against Jerusalem, the city of God, the holy city, to act as an enemy against a place to which he was so good a friend; but he is a prophet, and must follow his instructions, not his affections, and must plainly preach the ruin of a sinful place, though its welfare is what he passionately desires and earnestly prays for.

4. All this that the prophet sets before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is designed to bring them to repentance, by showing them sin, the provoking cause of this destruction, sin the ruin of that once flourishing city, than which surely nothing could be more effectual to make them hate sin and turn from it; while he thus in lively colours describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and uneasiness to himself, he is bearing the iniquity of Israel and Judah. "Look here" (says he) "and see what work sin makes, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart form God; this comes of sin, your sins and the sin of your fathers; let that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace

with God and he may return in mercy to you." But observe, It is a day of punishment for a year of sin: I have appointed thee each day for a year. The siege is a calamity of 390 days, in which God reckons for the iniquity of 390 years; justly therefore d they acknowledge that God had punished them less than their iniquity deserved, Ezr 9:13.

But let impenitent sinners know that, though now God is long-suffering towards them, in the other world there is an everlasting punishment. When God laid bands upon the prophet, it was to show them how they were bound with the cords of their own transgression (La 1:14), and therefore they were now holden in the cords of affliction. But we may well think of the prophet's case with compassion, when God laid upon him the bands of duty, as he does on all his ministers (1Co 9:16, Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the gospel); and yet men laid upon him bonds of restraint (Eze 3:25); but under both it is satisfaction enough that they are serving the interests of God's kingdom among men.

8 And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

9 Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side; three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof.

The best exposition of this part of Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem's desolation is Jeremiah's lamentation of it, La 4:3,4,5:10, where he pathetically describes the terrible famine that was in Jerusalem during the siege and the sad effects of it.

The prophet here, to affect the people with the foresight of it, must confine himself for 390 days to coarse fare and short commons, and that ill-dressed, for they should want both food and fuel.

1. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worst bread, made of but little wheat and barley, and the rest of beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, such as we feed horses or fatted hogs with, and this mixed, as mill corn, or as that in the beggar's bag, that has a dish full of one sort of corn at one house and of another at another house; of such corn as this must the prophet's bread be made while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his side, and needed something better to support him, Eze 4:9.

Note, It is our wisdom not to be too fond of dainties and pleasant bread, because we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of, before we die. The meanest sort of food is better than we deserve, and therefore must not be despised nor wasted, nor must those that use it be looked upon with disdain, because we know not what may be our own lot.

2. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the least that a man could be kept alive with, to signify that the besieged should be reduced to short allowance and should hold out till all the bread in the city was spent, Jer 37:21. The prophet must eat but twenty shekels' weight of bread a day (Eze 4:10), that was about ten ounces; and he must drink but the sixth part of a hin of water, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, Eze 4:11.

The stint of the Lessian diet is fourteen ounces of meat and sixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough and to spare, and was by the river side, where there was plenty of water; and yet, that he might confirm his own prediction and be a sign to the children of Israel, God obliges him to live thus sparingly, and he submits to it. Note, God's servants must learn to endure hardness, and to deny themselves the use of lawful delights, when they may thereby serve the glory of God, evidence the sincerity of their faith, and express their sympathy with their brethren in affliction.

The body must be kept under and brought into subjection. Nature is content with a little, grace with less, but lust with

nothing. It is good to stint ourselves of choice, that we may the better bear it if ever we should come to be stinted by necessity. And in times of public distress and calamity it ill becomes us to make much of ourselves, as those that drank wine in bowls and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Am 6:4-6.

3. For the dressing of it, he must bake it with a man's dung (Eze 4:12); that must be dried, and serve for fuel to heat his oven with. The thought of it would almost turn one's stomach; yet the coarse bread, thus baked, he must eat as barley-cakes, as freely as if it were the same bread he had been used to. This nauseous piece of cookery he must exercise publicly in their sight, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was signified by it, that in the extremity of the famine they should not only have nothing that was dainty, but nothing that was cleanly, about them; they must take up with what they could get.

To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet. This circumstance of the sign, the baking of his bread with man's dung, the prophet with submission humbly desired might be dispensed with (Eze 4:14); it seemed to have in it something of a ceremonial pollution, for there was a law that man's dung should be covered with earth, that God might see no unclean thing in their camp, De 23:13,14. And must he go and gather a thing so offensive, and use it in the dressing of his meat in the sight of the people? "Ah! Lord God," says he, "behold, my soul has not been polluted, and I am afraid lest by this it be polluted."

Note, The pollution of the soul by sin is what good people dread more than any thing; and yet sometimes tender consciences fear it without cause, and perplex themselves with scruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned that it is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man, Mt 15:11.

But observe he does not plead, "Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately and have never been used to any thing but what was clean and nice" (and there were those who were so brought up, who in the siege of Jerusalem did embrace dunghills, La 4:5), but that he had been brought up conscientiously, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that died of itself or was torn in pieces; and therefore, "Lord, do not put this upon me now." Thus Peter pleaded (Ac 10:14), Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

Note, it will be comfortable to us, when we are reduced to hardships, if our hearts can witness for us that we have always been careful to abstain from sin, even from little sins, and the appearances of evil. Whatever God commands us, we may be sure, is good; but, if we be put upon any thing that we apprehend to be evil, we should argue against it, from this consideration, that hitherto we have preserved our purity--and shall we lose it now? Now, because Ezekiel with a manifest tenderness of conscience made this scruple, God dispensed with him in this matter.

Note, Those who have power in their hands should not be rigorous in pressing their commands upon those that are dissatisfied concerning them, yea, though their dissatisfactions be groundless or arising from education and long usage, but should recede from them rather than grieve or offend the weak, or put a stumbling-block before them, in conformity to the example of God's condescension to Ezekiel, though we are sure his authority is incontestable and all his commands are wise and good. God allowed Ezekiel to use cow's dung instead of man's dung, Eze 4:15.

This is a tacit reflection upon man, as intimating that he being polluted with sin his filthiness is more nauseous and odious than that of any other creature. How much more abominable and filthy is man! Job 15:16.

10 And thy meat which thou shalt eat *shall be* by weight, twenty
shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it.
11 Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of a hin:
from time to time shalt thou drink.
12 And thou shalt eat it *as* barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with
dung that cometh out of man, in their sight.
13 And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their
defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.
14 Then said I, Ah Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been
polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of
that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there
abominable flesh into my mouth.
15 Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's
dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith.

Now this sign is particularly explained here; it signified,

1. That those who remained in Jerusalem should be brought to extreme misery for want of necessary food. All supplies being cut off by the besiegers, the city would soon find the want of the country, for the king himself is served of the field; and thus the staff of bread would be broken in Jerusalem, Eze 4:16. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nourish, so that they should eat and not be satisfied (Le 26:26), but would take away the bread itself (Isa 3:1), so that what little remained should be eaten by weight, so much a day, so much a head, that they might have an equal share and might make it last as long as possible. But to what purpose, when they could not make it last always, and the besieged must be tired out before the besiegers? They should eat and drink with care, to make it go as far as might be, and with astonishment, when they saw it almost spent and knew not which way to look for a recruit.

They should be astonished one with another; whereas it is ordinarily some alleviation of a calamity to have others share with us in it (Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris), and some ease to the spirit to complain of the burden, it should be

an aggravation of the misery that it was universal, and their complaining to one another should but make them all the more uneasy and increase the astonishment. And the event shall be as bad as their fears; they cannot make it worse than it is, for they shall consume away for their iniquity; multitudes of them shall die of famine, a lingering death, worse than that by the sword (La 4:9); they shall dies so as to feel themselves die. And it is sin that brings all this misery upon them: They shall consume away in their iniquity (so it may be read); they shall continue hardened and impenitent, and shall die in their sins, which is more miserable than to die on a dunghill. Now,

(1.) Let us see here what woeful work sin makes with a people, and acknowledge the righteousness of God herein. Time was when Jerusalem was filled with the finest of the wheat (Ps 147:14); but now it would be glad of the coarsest, and cannot have it. Fulness of bread, as it was one of Jerusalem's mercies, so it had become one of her sins, Eze 16:49. The plenty was abused to luxury and excess, which were therefore thus justly punished with famine. It is a righteous thing with God to deprive us of those enjoyments which we have made the food and fuel of our lusts.

(2.) Let us see what reason we have to bless God for plenty, not only for the fruits of the earth, but for the freedom of commerce, that the husbandman can have money for his bread and the tradesman bread for his money, that there is abundance not only in the field, but in the market, that those who live in cities and great towns, though they sow not, neither do they reap, are yet fed from day to day with food convenient.

2. It signified that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles (Eze 4:13), to eat meat made up by Gentile hands otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always taught to call defiled, and which they would have as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with

dung, that is (as perhaps it may be understood) kneaded and moulded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to pulse and water, rather than they would eat the portion of the king's meat assigned them, because they apprehended it would defile them, Da 1:8.

Or they should be forced to eat putrid meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery, and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they served not God with cheerfulness in the abundance of all things, God will make them serve their enemies in the want of all things.

16 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:

17 that they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

Ezekiel-5

1 And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause *it* to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the *hair*.

We have here the sign by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in, the case of Jerusalem, and how it lay to his heart, even when he foretold the desolations of it. He was so much concerned about it as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woeful day.

I. He must shave off the hair of his head and beard (Eze 5:1), which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning that people, as a useless worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with; his judgments, and all the instruments he made use of in cutting them off, were this sharp knife and this razor, that were proper

to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but, having degenerated, had become as the hair, which, when it grows thick and long, is but a burden which a man wishes to get clear of, as God of the sinners in Zion. Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries, Isa 1:24.

Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but cut it all off, denoting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the prophets must be all shaved off by utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

II. He must weigh the hair and divide it into three parts. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments according to equity (by him men and their actions are weighed in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness) and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment and others by another; one way or other, they shall all be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to denote the loss of their liberty and of their honour: it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Hanun put on David's ambassadors. It denotes also the loss of their joy, for they shaved their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazariteship, for the shaving of the head was a period to that vow (Nu 6:18), and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a holy city.

2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, *and* smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

He must dispose of the hair so that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, Eze 5:2.

1. One third part must be burnt in the midst of the city, denoting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence, and perhaps many in the conflagration of the city, when the days of the siege were fulfilled. Or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened.

2. Another third part was to be cut in pieces with a knife, representing the many who, during the siege, were slain by the sword, in their sallies out upon the besiegers, and especially when the city was taken by storm, the Chaldeans being then most furious and the Jews most feeble.

3. Another third part was to be scattered in the wind, denoting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror and the flight of others into the neighbouring countries for shelter; so that they were hurried, some one way and some another, like loose hairs in the wind.

But, lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, I will draw out a sword after them, so that wherever they go evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people and to make an end when he begins.

4 Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; *for* thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be scattered in the wind, and bind them in his skirts, as one would bind that which he is very mindful and careful of, Eze 5:3. This signified perhaps that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who, it was hoped, would keep possession of the land when the body of the people was carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved must be taken and cast into the fire, Eze 5:4. When Gedaliah and his friends were slain the people that put

themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and in short the land totally cleared of them; then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions a fire came forth into all the house of Israel, who, as fuel upon the fire, kindled and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy; for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.

5 Thus saith the Lord God; This *is* Jerusalem: I have set it in the
midst of the nations and countries *that are* round about her.

6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than
the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that *are* round
about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes,
they have not walked in them.

We have here the explanation of the foregoing similitude: This is Jerusalem. Thus it is usual in scripture language to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as when Christ said, This is my body. The prophet's head, which was to be shaved, signified Jerusalem, which by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be set naked and bare, to be shaved with a razor that is hired, Isa 7:20.

The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. Here we have,

I The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with (Eze 5:5): I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her, and those famous nations and very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than this.

1. Jerusalem was dignified and preferred above the neighbouring nations and their cities. it was set in the midst of them as excelling them all. This holy mountain was exalted above all the hills, Isa 2:2. Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in, Ps 68:16. Jerusalem was a city upon a hill, conspicuous and illustrious, and which all the neighbouring nations had an eye upon, some for good-will, some for ill-will.

2. Jerusalem was designed to have a good influence upon the nations and countries round about, was set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of divine revelation, which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbouring nations, that from them it might diffuse itself further, even to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a divine life as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that observed what excellent statutes and judgments they had concluded them to be a wise and understanding people (De 4:6), fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1Ki 4:34.

And, had they preserved this reputation and made a right use of it, what a blessing would Jerusalem have been to all the nations about! But, failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, when out of Zion went forth the gospel law and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem, and there repentance and remission began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them went forth into all nations. And, when that was done, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note, When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good and that those about them may be the better for them, that their light may shine before men.

II The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction sufficient to justify God in seizing its privileges and putting it under military execution.

1. She has not walked in God's statutes, nor kept his judgments (Eze 5:7); nay, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had refused his judgments and his statutes (Eze 5:6); they did not do their duty, nay, they would not, they said that they would not. Those statutes and judgments which their neighbours admired they despised, which they should have set before their face they cast behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he deals with men; those that refuse his terms cannot expect his favours.

2. She had changed God's judgments into wickedness (Eze 5:6), a very high expression of profaneness, that the people had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them that they had made them the excuse and colour of their wickedness. They introduced the abominable customs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions; this was changing the truth of God into a lie (Ro 1:25) and the glory of God into shame, Ps 4:2.

Note, Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the patron of sin and his judgments were turned into wickedness.

3. She had been worse than the neighbouring nations, to whom she should have set a good example: She has changed my judgments, by idolatries and false worship, more than the nations (Eze 5:6), and she has multiplied (that is, multiplied idols and altars, gods and temples, multiplied those things the unity of which was their praise) more than the nations that were round about. Israel's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they, not content with this one God, multiplied their gods to

such a degree that according to the number of their cities so were their gods, and their altars were as heaps in the furrows of the field; so that they exceeded all their neighbours in having gods many and lords many. They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion.

Note, If those who have made a profession of religion, and have had a pious education, apostatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have seven other spirits more wicked.

4. She had not done according to the judgments of the nations, Eze 5:7. Israel had not acted towards their God, as the nations had acted towards their gods, though they were false gods; they had not been so observant of him nor so constant to him. Has a nation changed its gods, or slighted them, so as they have? Jer 2:11.

Or it may refer to their morals; instead of reforming their neighbors, they came short of them; and many who were of the uncircumcision kept the righteousness of the law better than those who were of the circumcision, Ro 2:26,27.

Those who had the light of scripture did not according to the judgments of many who had only the light of nature. Note, There are those who are called Christians who will in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens. 5. The particular crime charged upon Jerusalem is profaning the holy things, which she had been both entrusted and honoured with (Eze 5:11):

Thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, with thy idols and idolatries. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them, were brought into the temple; and the ceremonies used by idolaters were brought into the worship of God. Thus every thing that is sacred

was polluted. Note, Idols are detestable things any where, but more especially so in the sanctuary.

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are* round about you, *and* have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that *are* round about you;
8 therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, *am* against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.
9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.
10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.
11 Wherefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord God; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish *thee;* neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.
12 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

The punishments that Jerusalem should fall under for these provocations: Shall not God visit for these things? No doubt he shall. The matter of the sentence here passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expression makes it yet more so; the judgments are various, and the threatenings of them varied, reiterated, inculcated, that one may well say, Who is able to stand in God's sight when once he is angry?

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands; and who knows the power of his anger and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Observe what a strong emphasis is laid upon it (Eze 5:8): I, even I, am against thee. God had been for Jerusalem, to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he has turned to be its enemy and fights against it. If God be against us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing

can be for us so as to stand us in any stead: "You think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you, but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand; it is I, even I, that am against thee, not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence. I will execute judgments in thee (Eze 5:10), in the midst of thee (Eze 5:8), not only in the suburbs, but in the heart of the city, not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country."

Note, Those who will not observe the judgments of God's mouth shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst of a people, will enter into the soul, into the bowels like water and like oil into the bones. I will execute judgments. Note, God himself undertakes to execute his own judgments, according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the instruments, he is the principal agent.

2. These punishments shall come from his displeasure. As to the body of the people, it shall not be a correction in love, but he will execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes (Eze 5:15), strange expressions to come from a God who has said, Fury is not in me, and who has declared himself gracious, and merciful, and slow to anger. But they are designed to show the malignity of sin, and the offence it gives to the just and holy God. That must needs be a very evil thing which provokes him to such resentments, and against his own people too, that had been so high in his favour, and expressed with so much satisfaction (Eze 5:13): "My anger, which has long been withheld, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them; it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath fitted by their own wickedness to destruction; and, justice being hereby glorified, I will be comforted, I will be entirely satisfied in what I have done."

As, when God is dishonoured by the sins of men, he is said to be grieved (Ps 95:10), so when he is honoured by their destruction he is said to be comforted. The struggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this case judgment triumphs, triumphs indeed; for mercy that has been so long abused is now silent and gives up the cause, has not a word more to say on the behalf of such an ungrateful incorrigible people: My eye shall not spare, neither will I have any pity, Eze 5:11.

Divine compassion defers the punishment, or mitigates it, or supports under it, or shortens it; but here is judgment without mercy, wrath without any mixture or allay of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened perhaps with design to look further, to the vengeance of eternal fire, which some of the destructions we read of in the Old Testament were typical of, and particularly that of Jerusalem; for surely it is nowhere on this side hell that this word has its full accomplishment, My eye shall not spare, but I will cause my fury to rest. Note, Those who live and die impenitent will perish for ever unpitied; there is a day coming when the Lord will not spare.

3. Punishments shall be public and open: I will execute these judgments in the sight of the nations (Eze 5:8); the judgments themselves shall be so remarkable that all the nations far and near shall take notice of them; they shall be all the talk of that part of the world, and the more for the conspicuousness of the place and people on which they are inflicted. Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs (those that sin rebuke before all), so, if those prevail not, they call for public judgments. He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others (Job 34:26), that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius descants upon it here) why should he suffer it to be said, See what wicked lives those lead who profess to be the worshippers of the only true God! And, as the publicity of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve,

(1.) To aggravate the punishment, and to make it lie the more heavily. Jerusalem, being made waste, becomes a reproach among the nations in the sight of all that pass by, Eze 5:14. The more conspicuous and the more peculiar any have been in the day of their prosperity the greater disgrace attends their fall; and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been a praise in the earth the more it is now a reproach and a taunt, Eze 5:15. This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced (1Ki 9:8), and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, La 2:15.

(2.) To teach the nations to fear before the God of Israel, when they see what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punishes sin even in those that are nearest to him: It shall be an instruction to the nations, Eze 5:15. Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but, she not doing that, God will teach it to them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? If judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If those be thus punished who only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us who are all idolaters? Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malefactors are publicly punished in terrorem--that others may take warning.

4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous.

(1.) They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon (Eze 5:9): "I will do in thee that which I have not done in thee before, though thou hast long since deserved it; nay, that which I have not done in any other city." This punishment of Jerusalem is said to be greater than that of Sodom (La 4:6), which was more grievous than all that went before it; nay, it is such as "I will not do any more the like, all the circumstances taken in, to any other city,

till the like come to be done again to this city, in the final overthrow by the Romans." This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hezekiah, that there was none like him, before or after him.

(2.) They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilfully breaking the bonds of their duty to God (Eze 5:10): The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat the fathers, through the extremity of the famine, or shall be compelled to do it by their barbarous conquerors.

(3.) There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague (Eze 5:12); the pestilence shall pass through thee (Eze 5:17), sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel; others shall be consumed with famine, shall gradually waste away as men in a consumption (Eze 5:12); this is again insisted on (Eze 5:16): I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine; hunger shall make them pine, and shall pierce them to the heart, as if arrows, evil arrows, poisoned darts, were shot into them. God has many arrows, evil arrows, in his quiver; when some are discharged, he has still more in reserve. I will increase the famine upon you.

A famine in a bereaved country may decrease as fruits spring forth; but a famine in a besieged city will increase of course; yet god speaks of it as his act: "I will increase it, and will break your staff of bread, will take away the necessary supports of life, will disappoint you of all that which you depend upon, so that there is no remedy, but you must fall to the ground." Life is frail, is weak, is burdened, so that, if it have not daily bread for its staff to lean upon, it cannot but sink, and is soon gone if that staff be broken. Others shall fall by the sword round about Jerusalem, when they sally out upon the besiegers; it is a sword which God will bring, Eze 5:17.

The sword of the Lord, that used to be drawn for Jerusalem's defence, is now drawn for its destruction. Others are devoured by evil beasts, which will make a prey of those that fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains. They shall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no escaping the judgments of God, Eze 5:17.

And, lastly, those who escape shall be scattered into all parts of the world, into all the winds (so it is expressed, Eze 5:10,12), intimating that they should not only be dispersed, but hurried, and tossed, and driven to and fro, as chaff before the wind. Nay, and Cain's curse (to be fugitives and vagabonds) is not the worst of it neither; their restless life shall be cut off by a bloody death: "I will draw out a sword after them, which shall follow them wherever they go." Evil pursues sinners; and the curse shall come upon them and overtake them.

5. These punishments will prove their ruin by degrees. They shall be diminished (Eze 5:11); their strength and glory shall grow less and less. They shall be bereaved (Eze 5:17), emptied of all that which was their joy and confidence. God sends these judgments on purpose to destroy them, Eze 5:16. The arrows are not sent (as those which Jonathan shot) for their direction, but for their destruction; for god will accomplish his fury upon them (Eze 5:13); the day of God's patience is over, and the ruin is remediless. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment now quickly, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only (this is Jerusalem), we may well suppose that it looks further, to the final destruction of that great city by the Romans when God made a full end of the Jewish nation, and caused his fury to rest upon them.

6. All this is ratified by the divine authority and veracity: I the Lord have spoken it, Eze 5:15 and again Eze 5:17. The sentence is passed by him that is Judge of heaven and earth, whose

judgment is according to truth, and the judgments of whose hand are according to the judgments of his mouth. He has spoken it who can do it, for with him nothing is impossible. He has spoken it who will do it, for he is not a man that he should lie. He has spoken it whom we are bound to hear and heed, whose ipse dixit--word commands the most serious attention and submissive assent: And they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, Eze 5:13. There were those who thought it was only the prophet that spoke it in his delirium; but God will make them know, by the accomplishment of it, that he has spoken it in his zeal. Note, Sooner or later, God's word will prove itself.

13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury
to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know
that I the Lord have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have
accomplished my fury in them.
14 Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the
nations that *are* round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.
15 So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an
astonishment unto the nations that *are* round about thee, when I
shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious
rebukes. I the Lord have spoken *it*.
16 When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall
be for *their* destruction, *and* which I will send to destroy you: and I
will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of
bread:
17 so will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave
thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will
bring the sword upon thee. I the Lord have spoken *it*.

Ezekiel-6

The Prophecy against the Mountains of Israel

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

Here, I The prophecy is directed to the mountains of Israel (Eze 6:1,2); the prophet must set his face towards them. If he could

see so far off as the land of Israel, the mountains of that land would be first and furthest seen; towards them therefore he must look, and look boldly and stedfastly, as the judge looks at the prisoner, and directs his speech to him, when he passes sentence upon him.

Though the mountains of Israel be ever so high and ever so strong, he must set his face against them, as having judgments to denounce that should shake their foundation. The mountains of Israel had been holy mountains, but now that they had polluted them with their high places God set his face against them and therefore the prophet must. Israel is here put, not, as sometimes, for the ten tribes, but for the whole land. The mountains are called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to shame the inhabitants that would not hear. The prophets might as soon gain attention from the mountains as from that rebellious and gainsaying people, to whom they all day long stretched out their hands in vain.

Hear, O mountains! the Lord's controversy (Mic 6:1,2), for God's cause will have a hearing, whether we hear it or no. But from the mountains the word of the Lord echoes to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; for to them also the Lord God speaks, intimating that the whole land is concerned in what is now to be delivered and shall be witnesses against this people that they had fair warning given them of the judgments coming, but they would not take it; nay, they contradicted the message and persecuted the messengers, so that God's prophets might more safely and comfortably speak to the hills and mountains than to them.

II. That which is threatened in this prophecy is the utter destruction of the idols and the idolaters, and both by the sword of war. God himself is commander-in-chief of this expedition against the mountains of Israel. It is he that says, Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you (Eze 6:3); the sword of the Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he sends it, comes

where he brings it, and lights as he directs it. In the desolations of that war,

1 The idols and all their appurtenances should be destroyed. The high places, which were on the tops of mountains (Eze 6:3), shall be levelled and made desolate (Eze 6:6); they shall not be beautified, shall not be frequented as they had been. The altars, on which they offered sacrifice and burnt incense to strange gods, shall be broken to pieces and laid waste; the images and idols shall be defaced, shall be broken and cease, and be cut down, and all the fine costly works about them shall be abolished, Eze 6:4,6. Observe here,

(1.) That war makes woeful desolations, which those persons, places, and things that were esteemed most sacred cannot escape; for the sword devours one as well as another.

(2.) That God sometimes ruins idolatries even by the hands of idolaters, for such the Chaldeans themselves were; but, as if the deity were a local thing, the greatest admirers of the gods of their own country were the greatest despisers of the gods of other countries.

(3.) It is just with God to make that a desolation which we make an idol of; for he is a jealous God and will not bear a rival. (4.) If men do not, as they ought, destroy idolatry, God will, first or last, find out a way to do it. When Josiah had destroyed the high places, altars, and images, with the sword of justice, they set them up again; but God will now destroy them with the sword of war, and let us see who dares re-establish them.

2 The worshippers of idols and all their adherents should be destroyed likewise. As all their high places shall be laid waste, so shall all their dwelling-places too, even all their cities, Eze 6:6. Those that profane God's dwelling-place as they had done can expect no other than that he should abandon theirs, Eze 5:11. If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy, 1Co

3:17. It is here threatened that their slain shall fall in the midst of them (Eze 6:7); there shall be abundance slain, even in those places which were thought most safe; but it is added as a remarkable circumstance that they shall fall before their idols (Eze 6:4), that their dead carcases should be laid, and their bones scattered, about their altars, Eze 6:5.

(1.) Thus their idols should be polluted, and those places profaned by the dead bodies which they had had in veneration. If they will not defile the covering of their graven images, God will, Isa 30:22. The throwing of the carcases among them, as upon the dunghill, intimates that they were but dunghill-deities.

(2.) Thus it was intimated that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with the living God; for the carcases of dead men, that, like them, have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, were the fittest company for them.

(3.) Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to help their worshippers, and idolaters were upbraided with the folly of trusting in them; for, it should seem, they fell by the sword of the enemy when they were actually before their idols imploring their aid and putting themselves under their protection. Sennacherib was slain by his sons when he was worshipping in the house of his god.

(4.) The sin might be read in this circumstance of the punishment; the slain men are cast before the idols, to show that therefore they are slain, because they worshipped those idols; see Jer 8:1,2. Let the survivors observe it, and take warning not to worship images; let them see it, and know that God is the Lord, that the Lord he is God and he alone.

2 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

3 and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the

rivers and to the valleys; Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon
you, and I will destroy your high places.
4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken:
and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols.
5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before
their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.
6 In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high
places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made
desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images
may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.
7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I
am the Lord.
8 Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have *some* that shall escape
the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through
the countries.

Judgment had hitherto triumphed, but in these verses mercy rejoices against judgment. A sad end is made of this provoking people, but not a full end. The ruin seems to be universal, and yet will I leave a remnant, a little remnant, distinguished from the body of the people, a few of many, such as are left when the rest perish; and it is God that leaves them. This intimates that they deserved to be cut off with the rest, and would have been cut off if God had not left them. See Isa 1:9. And it is God who by his grace works that in them which he has an eye to in sparing them. Now,

I. It is a preserved remnant, saved from the ruin which the body of the nation is involved in (Eze 6:8): That you may have some who shall escape the sword. God said (Eze 5:12) that he would draw a sword after those who were scattered, that destruction should pursue them in their dispersion; but here is mercy remembered in the midst of that wrath, and a promise that some of the Jews of the dispersion, as they were afterwards called, should escape the sword. None of those who were to fall by the sword about Jerusalem shall escape; for they trust to Jerusalem's walls for security, and shall be made ashamed of that vain confidence. But some of them shall escape the sword among the

nations, where, being deprived of all other stays, they stay themselves upon God only. They are said to have those who shall escape; for they shall be the seed of another generation, out of which Jerusalem shall flourish again.

II. It is a penitent remnant (Eze 6:9): Those who escape of you shall remember me. Note, To those whom god designs for life he will give repentance unto life. They are reprieved, and escape the sword, that they may have time to return to God. Note, God's patience both leaves room for repentance and is an encouragement to sinners to repent. Where God designs grace to repent he allows space to repent; yet many who have the space want the grace, many who escape the sword do not forsake the sin, as it is promised that these shall do. This remnant, here marked for salvation, is a type of the remnant reserved out of the body of mankind to be monuments of mercy, who are made safe in the same way that these were, by being brought to repentance. Now observe here,

1 The occasion of their repentance, and that is a mixture of judgment and mercy-judgment, that they were carried captives, but mercy, that they escaped the sword in the land of their captivity. They were driven out of their own land, but not out of the land of the living, not chased out of the world, as other were and they deserved to be. Note, The consideration of the just rebukes of Providence we are under, and yet of the mercy mixed with them, should engage us to repent, that we may answer God's end in both. And true repentance shall be accepted of God, though we are brought to it by our troubles; nay, sanctified afflictions often prove means of conversion, as to Manasseh.

2 The root and principle of their repentance: They shall remember me among the nations. Those who forgot God in the land of their peace and prosperity, who waxed fat and kicked, were brought to remember him in the land of their captivity. The prodigal son never bethought himself of his father's house till he was ready to perish for hunger in the far country. Their

remembering God was the first step they took in returning to him. Note, Then there begins to be some hopes of sinners when they have sinned against, and to enquire, Where is God my Maker? Sin takes rise in forgetting God, Jer 3:21.

Repentance takes rise from the remembrance of him and of our obligations to him. God says, They shall remember me, that is, "I will give them grace to do so;" for otherwise they would for ever forget him. That grace shall find them out wherever they are, and by bringing God to their mind shall bring them to their right mind. The prodigal, when he remembered his father, remembered how he has sinned against Heaven and before him; so do these penitents.

(1.) They remember the base affront they had put upon God by their idolatries, and this is that which an ingenuous repentance fastens upon and most sadly laments. They had departed from God to idols, and given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of men's fancies and the work of men's hands, which they should have given to the God of Israel. They departed from God, from his word, which they should have made their rule, from his work, which they should have made their business. Their hearts departed from him.

The heart, which he requires and insists upon, and without which bodily exercise profits nothing, the heart, which should be set upon him, and carried out towards him, when that departs from him, is as the treacherous elopement of a wife from her husband or the rebellious revolt of a subject from his sovereign. Their eyes also go after their idols; they doted on them, and had great expectations from them. Their hearts followed their eyes in the choice of their gods (they must have gods that they could see), and then their eyes followed their hearts in the adoration of them.

Now the malignity of this sin is that it is spiritual whoredom; it is a whorish heart that departs from God; and they are eyes that

go a whoring after their idols. Note, Idolatry is spiritual whoredom; it is the breach of a marriage-covenant with God; it is the setting of the affections upon that which is a rival with him, and the indulgence of a base lust, which deceives and defiles the soul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour,

(2.) They remember what a grief this was to him and how he resented it. They shall remember that I am broken with their whorish heart and their eyes that are full of this spiritual adultery, not only angry at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the lewdness of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to such a degree that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he should be so disingenuously dealt with; he is broken as an aged father is with the undutiful behaviour of a rebellious and disobedient son, which sinks his spirits and makes him to stoop.

Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, Ps 95:10. God's measures were broken (so some); a stop was put to the current of his favours towards them, and he was even compelled to punish them. This they shall remember in the day of their repentance, and it shall affect and humble them more than any thing, not so much that their peace was broken, and their country broken, as that God was broken by their sin. Thus they shall look on him whom they have pierced and shall mourn, Zec 12:10.

Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent so much as to think that his sin has been a grief to God and to the Spirit of his grace.

3. The product and evidence of their repentance: They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. Thus God will give them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. Though he had been broken by their whorish heart, yet he would not quite cast them off. See Isa 57:17,18,Ho 2:13,14. His goodness takes occasion from their badness to appear the more illustrious. Note,

(1.) True penitents see sin to be an abominable thing, that abominable thing which the Lord hates and which makes sinners, and even their services, odious to him, Jer 44:4,Isa 1:11. It defiles the sinner's own conscience, and makes him, unless he be past feeling, an abomination to himself. An idol is particularly called an abomination, Isa 44:19. Those gratifications which the hearts of sinners were set upon as delectable things the hearts of penitents are turned against as detestable things.

(2.) There are many evils committed in these abominations, many included in them, attendant on them, and flowing from them, many transgressions in one sin, Le 16:21. In their idolatries they were sometimes guilty of whoredom (as in the worship of Peor), sometimes of murder (as in the worship of Moloch); these were evils committed in their abominations. Or it denotes the great malignity there is in sin; it is an abomination that has abundance of evil in it.

(3.) Those that truly loathe sin cannot but loathe themselves because of sin; self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themselves, and can never be reconciled to themselves till they have some ground to hope that God is reconciled to them; nay, then they shall lie down in their shame, when he is pacified towards them, Eze 16:63.

4. The glory that will redound to God by their repentance (Eze 6:10): "They shall know that I am the Lord; they shall be convinced of it by experience, and shall be ready to own it, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them, finding that what I have said is made good, and made to work for good, and to answer a good intention, and that it was not without just provocation that they were thus threatened and thus punished." Note,

(1.) One way or other God will make sinners to know and own that he is the lord, either by their repentance or by their ruin.

(2.) All true penitents are brought to acknowledge both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatenings of the word, and to justify God in them and in the accomplishment of them.

9 And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

10 And they shall know that I *am* the Lord, *and that* I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

11 Thus saith the Lord God; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

The same threatenings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this, are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that those he prophesied to might be the more affected with the foresight of them.

I. He must by his gestures in preaching express the deep sense he had both of the iniquities and of the calamities of the house of Israel (Eze 6:11): Smite with thy hand and stamp with thy foot. Thus he must make it to appear that he was in earnest in what he said to them, that he firmly believed it and laid it to heart. Thus he must signify the just displeasure he had conceived at their sins, and the just dread he was under of the judgments coming upon them. Some would reject this use of these gestures, and call them antic and ridiculous; but God bids him use them because they might help to enforce the word upon some and give it the setting on; and those that know the worth of souls will be content to be laughed at by the wits, so they may but edify the weak. Two things the prophet must thus lament:--

1. National sins. Alas! for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of God's faithful servants, especially the evil abominations of the house of Israel, whose sins are more abominable and have more evil in them than the sins of others. Alas! What will be in the end hereof?

2. National judgments. To punish them for these abominations they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. Note, It is our duty to be affected not only with our own sins and sufferings, but with the sins and sufferings of others; and to look with compassion upon the miseries that wicked people bring upon themselves; as Christ beheld Jerusalem and wept over it.

II. He must inculcate what he had said before concerning the destruction that was coming upon them.

1. They shall be run down and ruined by a variety of judgments which shall find them out and follow them wherever they are (Eze 6:12): He that is far off, and thinks himself out of danger, because out of the reach of the Chaldeans' arrows, shall find himself not out of the reach of God's arrows, which fly day and night (Ps 91:5): He shall die of the pestilence. He that is near a place of strength, which he hopes will be to him a place of safety, shall fall by the sword, before he can retreat. He that is so cautious as not to venture out, but remains in the city, shall there die by the famine, the saddest death of all. Thus will God accomplish his fury, that is, do all that against them which he had purposed to do.

2. They shall read their sin in their punishment; for their slain men shall be among their idols, round about their altars, as was threatened before, Eze 6:5-7. There, where they had prostrated themselves in honour of their idols, God will lay them dead, to their own reproach and the reproach of their idols. They lived among them and shall die among them. They had offered sweet odours to their idols, but there shall their dead carcases send

forth an offensive smell, as it were to atone for that misplaced incense. 3. The country shall be all laid waste, as, before, the cities (Eze 6:6): I will make the land desolate. That fruitful, pleasant, populous country, that has been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, shall be desolate, more desolate than the wilderness towards Diblath, Eze 6:14.

It is called Diblathaim (Nu 33:46,Jer 48:22), that great and terrible wilderness which is described, De 8:15, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions. The land of Canaan is at this day one of the most barren desolate countries in the world. City and country are thus depopulated, that the altars may be laid waste and made desolate, Eze 6:6. Rather than their idolatrous altars shall be left standing, both town and country shall be laid in ruins. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore stand in awe and sin not.

12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

13 Then shall ye know that I *am* the Lord, when their slain *men* shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savor to all their idols.

14 So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-7

The End Is Come

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

We have here fair warning given of the destruction of the land of Israel, which was now hastening on apace. God, by the prophet, not only sends notice of it, but will have it inculcated in the same expressions, to show that the thing is certain, that it is near, that

the prophet is himself affected with it and desires they should be so too, but finds them deaf, and stupid, and unaffected.

When the town is on fire men do no seek for fine words and quaint expressions in which to give an account of it, but cry about the streets, with a loud and lamentable voice, "Fire! fire!" So the prophet here proclaims, An end! an end! it has come, it has come; behold, it has come. He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

I. An end has come, the end has come (Eze 7:2), and again (Eze 7:3,6), Now has the end come upon thee--the end which all their wickedness had a tendency to, and which God had often told them it would come to at last, when by his prophets he had asked them, What will you do in the end hereof?--the end which all the foregoing judgments had been working towards, as means to bring it about (their ruin shall now be completed)--or the end, that is, the period of their state, the final destruction of their nation, as the deluge was the end of all flesh, Ge 6:13.

They had flattered themselves with hopes that they should shortly see an end of their troubles. "Yea," says God, "An end has come, but a miserable one, not the expected end" (which is promised to the pious remnant among them, Jer 29:11); "it is the end, that end which you have been so often warned of, that last end which Moses wished you to consider (De 32:29), and which, because Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully," La 1:9.

This end was long in coming, but now it has come. Though the ruin of sinners comes slowly, it comes surely. "It has come; it watches for thee, ready to receive thee." This perhaps looks further, to the last destruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earnest of; and still further to the final destruction of the world of the ungodly. The end of all things is at hand; and Jerusalem's last end was a type of the end of the world, Mt 24:3. Oh that we could all see that end of time and days

very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may secure a happy lot at the end of the days! Da 12:13.

This end comes upon the four corners of the land. The ruin, as it shall be final, so it shall be total; no part of the land shall escape; no, not that which lies most remote. Such will the destruction of the world be; all these things shall be dissolved. Such will the destruction of sinners be; none can avoid it. Oh that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end, before it bring them to an end!

II. An evil, an only evil, behold, has come, Eze 7:5. Sin is an evil, an only evil, an evil that has no good in it; it is the worst of evils. But this is spoken of the evil of trouble; it is an evil, one evil, and that one shall suffice to affect and complete the ruin of the nation; there needs no more to do its business; this one shall make an utter end, affliction needs not rise up a second time, Na 1:9.

It is an evil without precedent or parallel, an evil that stands alone; you cannot produce such another instance. It is to the impenitent an evil, an only evil; it hardens their hearts and irritates their corruptions, whereas there were those to whom it was sanctified by the grace of God and made a means of much good; they were sent into Babylon for their good, Jer 24:5. The wicked have the dregs of that cup to drink which to the righteous is full of mixtures of mercy, Ps 75:8. The same affliction is to us either a half evil or an only evil according as we conduct ourselves under it and make use of it. But when an end, the end, has come upon the wicked world, then an evil, an only evil, comes upon it, and not till then. The sorest of temporal judgments have their allays, but the torments of the damned are an evil, an only evil.

III. The time has come, the set time, for the inflicting of this only evil and the making of this full end; for to all God's purposes there is a time, a proper time, and that prefixed, in which the purpose shall have its accomplishment; particularly the time of reckoning with wicked people, and rendering to them according to their

desserts, is fixed, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of god; and he sees, whether we see it or no, that his day is coming. This they are here told of again and again (Eze 7:10): Behold, the day that has lingered so long has come at last, behold, it has come.

The time has come, the day draws near, the day of trouble is near, Eze 7:7,12. Though threatened judgments may be long deferred, yet they shall not be dropped; the time for executing them will come. Though God's patience may put them off, nothing but man's sincere repentance and reformation will put them by. The morning has come unto thee (Eze 7:7), and again (Eze 7:10),

The morning has gone forth; the day of trouble dawns, the day of destruction is already begun. The morning discovers that which was hidden; they thought their secret sins would never come to light, but now they will be brought to light. They used to try and execute malefactors in the morning, and such a morning of judgment and execution is now coming upon them, a day of trouble to sinners, the year of their visitation. See how stupid these people were, that, though the day of their destruction was already begun, yet they were not aware of it, but must be thus told of it again and again.

The day of trouble, real trouble, is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains, that is, not a mere echo or report of troubles, as they were willing to think it was, nothing but a groundless surmise; as if the men that came against them were but the shadow of the mountains (as Zebul suggested to Gaal, Mt 9:36) and the intelligence they received were but an empty sound, reverberated from the mountains. No; the trouble is not a fancy, and so you will soon find.

IV. All this comes from God's wrath, not allayed, as sometimes it has been, with mixtures of mercy. This is the fountain from which all these calamities flow; and this is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery, which make it bitter indeed (Eze

7:3): I will send my anger upon thee. Observe, God is Lord of his anger; it does not break out but when he pleases, nor fasten upon any but as he directs it and gives it commission. The expression rises higher (Eze 7:8): Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee in full vials, and accomplish my anger, all the purposes and all the products of it, upon thee. This wrath does not single out here and there one to be made examples, but it is upon all the multitude thereof (Eze 7:12,14); the whole body of the nation has become a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction. God does sometimes in wrath remember mercy, but now he says, My eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity, Eze 7:4,9. Those shall have judgment without mercy who made light of mercy when it was offered them.

2 Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land.

3 Now *is* the end *come* upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

All this is the just punishment of their sins, and it is what they have by their own folly brought upon themselves. This is much insisted on here, that they might be brought to justify God in all he had brought upon them. God never sends his anger but in wisdom and justice; and therefore it follows, "I will judge thee according to thy ways, Eze 7:3. I will examine what thy ways have been, compare them with the law, and then deal with thee according to the merit of them, and recompense them to thee," Eze 7:4. Note, In the heaviest judgments God inflicts upon sinners he does but recompense their own ways upon them; they are beaten with their own rod.

And, when God comes to reckon with a sinful people, he will bring every provocation to account: "will recompense upon thee all thy abominations (Eze 7:3); and now thy iniquity shall be found to be hateful (Ps 36:2) and thy abominations shall be in the midst of thee" (Eze 7:4); that is, the secret wickedness shall now be brought to light, and that shall appear to have been in the midst of thee which before was not suspected; and thy sin shall now

become an abomination to thyself. So the abomination of iniquity will be when it comes to be an abomination of desolation, Mt 24:15.

Or, Thy abominations (that is, the punishments of them) shall be in the midst of thee; they shall reach to thy heart. See Jer 4:18. Or therefore God will not spare, nor have pity, because, even when he is recompensing their ways upon them, yet in their distress they trespass yet more; their abominations are still in the midst of them, indulged and harboured in their hearts. It is repeated again (Eze 7:8,9), I will judge thee, I will recompense thee. Two sins are particularly specified as provoking God to bring these judgments upon them--pride and oppression.

1. God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themselves. The rod of affliction has blossomed, but it was pride that budded, Eze 7:10. What buds in sin will blossom in some judgment or other. The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared among all orders and degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in spring.

2. Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another (Eze 7:11): Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness; that is, their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronised by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government had become a rod of wickedness, to such a degree of impudence was violence risen up. I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, Ec 3:16,Isa 5:7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain that our sin is the root of them.

4 And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.
5 Thus saith the Lord God; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come.
6 An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.

7 The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land:
the time is come, the day of trouble *is* near, and not the sounding
again of the mountains.
8 Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish
mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways,
and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.
9 And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will
recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations
that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord
that smiteth.
10 Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the
rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.
11 Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them *shall*
remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither *shall*
there be wailing for them.
12 The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice,
nor the seller mourn: for wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof.

There is no escape from these judgments nor fence against them, for they shall be universal and shall bear down all before them, without remedy.

1. Death in its various shapes shall ride triumphantly, both in town and in country, both within the city and without it, Eze 7:15. Men shall be safe nowhere; for he that is in the field shall die by the sword (every field shall be to them a field of battle) and he that is in the city, though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but famine and pestilence shall devour him. Sin had abounded both in city and country, Iliacos intra muros peccator et extra--Trojans and Greeks offend alike; and therefore among both desolations are made.

2. None of those that are marked for death shall escape: There shall none of them remain. None of those proud oppressors that did violence to their poor neighbours with the rod of wickedness, none of them shall be left, but they shall be all swept away by the desolation that is coming (Eze 7:11): None of their multitude, that is, of the rabble, whom they set on to do mischief, and to

countenance them in doing it, to cry, "Crucify, crucify," when they were resolved on the destruction of any, none of them shall remain, nor any of theirs; their families shall all be destroyed, and neither root nor branch left them.

This multitude, this mob, divine vengeance will in a particular manner fasten upon; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof (Eze 7:12,14) and the vision was touching the whole multitude thereof (Eze 7:13), the bulk of the common people. The judgments coming shall carry them away by wholesale, and they shall neither secure themselves nor their masters whose creatures and tools they were. God's judgments, when they come with commission, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.

3. Those that fall shall not be lamented (Eze 7:11): There shall be no wailing for them, for there shall be none left to bewail them, but such as are hastening apace after them. And the times shall be so bad that men shall rather congratulate than lament the death of their friends, as reckoning those happy that are taken away from seeing these desolations and sharing in them, Jer 16:4,5.

4. They shall not be able to make any resistance. The decree has gone forth, and the vision concerning them shall not return, Eze 7:13. God will not reveal it, and they cannot defeat it; and therefore it shall not return re infecta--without having accomplished any thing, but shall accomplish that for which he sends it. God's word will take place, and then,

(1.) Particular persons cannot make their part good against God: No man shall strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life; it will be to no purpose for sinners to set God and his judgments at defiance as they used to do. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Those that strengthen themselves in their wickedness will be found not only to weaken, but to ruin, themselves, Ps 52:7.

(2.) The multitude cannot resist the torrent of these judgments, nor make head against them (Eze 7:14): They have blown the trumpet, to call their soldiers together, and to animate and encourage those whom they have got together, and thus they think to make all ready; but all in vain; none enlist themselves, or those that do have not courage to face the enemy. Note, If God be against us, none can be for us to do us any service.

5. They shall have no hope of the return of their prosperity, with which to support themselves in their adversity; they shall have given up all for gone; and therefore, "Let not the buyer rejoice that he is increasing his estate and has become a purchaser; nor let the seller mourn that he is lessening his estate and has become a bankrupt," Eze 7:12. See the vanity of the things of this world, and how worthless they are--that in a time of trouble, when we have most need of them, we may perhaps make least account of them.

Those that have sold are the more easy, having the less to lose, and those that have bought have but increased their own cares and fears. Because the fashion of this world passes away, let those that buy be as though they possessed not, because they know not how soon they may be dispossessed, 1Co 7:29-31. It is added (Eze 7:13), "The seller shall not return, at the year of jubilee, to that which is sold, according to the law, though he should escape the sword and pestilence, and live till that year comes; for no inheritances shall be enjoyed here till the seventy years be accomplished, and then men shall return to their possessions, shall claim and have their own again." In the belief of this, Jeremiah, about this time, bought his uncle's field, yet, according to the charge, the buyer did not rejoice, but complain, Jer 32:25.

6. God will be glorified in all: "You shall know that I am the Lord (Eze 7:4), that I am the Lord that smiteth, Eze 7:9. You look at second causes, and think it is Nebuchadnezzar that smites you, but you shall be made to know he is but the staff: it is the hand of the Lord that smiteth you, and who knows the weight of his

hand?" Those who would not know it was the Lord that did them goo shall be made to know it is the Lord that smiteth them; for, one way or other, he will be owned.

13 For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision *is* touching the whole multitude thereof, *which* shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.

14 They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof.

15 The sword *is* without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that *is* in the field shall die with the sword; and he that *is* in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

16 But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.

We have attended the fate of those that are cut off, and are now to attend the flight of those that have an opportunity of escaping the danger; some of them shall escape (Eze 7:16), but what the better? As good die once as, in a miserable life, die a thousand deaths, and escape only like Cain to be fugitives and vagabonds, and afraid of being slain by every one they meet; so shall these be.

They shall have no comfort or satisfaction in their own minds, but be in continual anguish and terror; for, wherever they go, they carry about with them guilty consciences, which make them a burden to themselves.

1. They shall be always solitary and under prevailing melancholy; they shall not be in the cities, or places of concourse, but all alone upon the mountains, not caring for society, but shy of it, as being ashamed of the low circumstances to which they are reduced.

2. They shall be always sorrowful. Those have reason to be so that are under the tokens of God's displeasure; and God can make those so that have been most jovial and have set sorrow at defiance. Those that once thought themselves as the lions of the

mountains, so daring were they, now become as the doves of the valleys, so timid are they, and so dispirited, ready to flee when none pursues and to tremble at the shaking of a leaf. They are all of them mourning (not with a godly sorrow, but with the sorrow of the world, which works death), every one for his iniquity, that is, for those calamities which they now see their iniquity has brought upon them, not only the iniquity of the land, but their own: they shall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to the national guilt.

Note, Sooner or later sin will have sorrow of one kind or other; and those that will not repent of their iniquity may justly be left to pine away in it; those that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God shall be made to mourn for it as it is a shame and ruin to themselves, to mourn at the last, when the flesh and the body are consumed, and to say, How have I hated instruction! Pr 5:11,12.

3. They shall be deprived of all their strength of body and mind (Eze 7:17): All hands shall be feeble, so that they shall not be able to fight, or defend themselves, and all knees shall be weak as water, so that they shall neither be able to flee nor to stand their ground; they shall feel a universal colliquation: their knees shall flow as water, so that they must fall of course. Note, It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength, for God can soon weaken it.

4. They shall be deprived of all their hopes and shall abandon themselves to despair (Eze 7:18); they shall have nothing to hold up their spirits with; their aspects shall show what are their prospects, all dreadful, for they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, as having no expectation ever to wear better clothing. Horror shall cover them, and shame, and baldness, all the expressions of a desperate sorrow, Isa 17:11. Note, Those that will not be kept from sin by fear and shame shall by fear and shame be punished for it; such is the confusion that sin will end in.

17 All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak *as* water.
18 They shall also gird *themselves* with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame *shall be* upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.
19 They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity.

They shall have no benefit from their wealth and riches, but shall be perfectly sick of them, Eze 7:19. Those that were reduced to this distress were such as had had abundance of silver and gold, money, and plate, and jewels, and other valuable goods, from which they promised themselves a great deal of advantage in times of public trouble. They thought their wealth would be their strong city, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ransom of their lives, that they could never want bread as long as they had money, and that money would answer all things; but see how it proved.

1. Their wealth had been a great temptation to them in the day of their prosperity; they set their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it. By their eager pursuit of it they were drawn into sin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in sin; and thus it was the stumbling-block of their iniquity; it occasioned their falling into sin and obstructed their return to God. Note, There are many whose wealth is their snare and ruin. The gaining of the world is the losing of their souls; it makes them proud, secure, covetous, oppressive, voluptuous; and that which, it well used, might have been the servant of their piety, being abused, becomes the stumbling-block of their iniquity.

2. It was no relief to them now in the day of their adversity; for,

(1.) Their gold and silver could not protect them from the judgments of God. They shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not serve to atone his

justice, or turn away his wrath, nor to screen them from the judgments he is bringing upon them. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Pr 11:4. They neither set them so high that god's judgments cannot reach them nor make them so strong that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that men's wealth is utterly unable to deliver them or do them any service. What the better was the rich man for his full barns when his soul was required of him, or that other rich man for his purple, and scarlet, and sumptuous fare, when in hell he could not procure a drop of water to cool his tongue? Money is no defence against the arrests of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the damned.

(2.) Their gold and silver could not give them any content under their calamities.

[1.] They could not fill their bowels; when there was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love or money, their silver and gold could not satisfy their hunger, nor serve to make one meal's meat for them. Note, We could better be without mines of gold than fields of corn; the products of the earth, which may easily be gathered from the surface of it, are much greater blessings to mankind than its treasures, which are with so much difficulty and hazard dug out of its bowels. If God give us daily bread, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though silver and gold we have none.

[2.] Much less could they satisfy their souls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note, The wealth of this world has not that in it which will answer the desires of the soul, or be any satisfaction to it in a day of distress. He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver, much less he that loses it.

(3.) Their gold and silver shall be thrown into the streets, either by the hands of the enemy, who shall have more spoil than they care for or can carry away (silver shall be nothing accounted of; they shall cast that in the streets; but the gold, which is more

valuable, shall be removed and brought to Babylon); or they themselves shall throw away their silver and gold, because it would be an incumbrance to them and retard their flight, or because it would expose them and be a temptation to the enemy to cut their throats for their money, or in indignation at it, because, after all the care and pains they had taken to scrape it together and hoard it up, they found that it would stand them in no stead, but do them a mischief rather.

Note, The world passes away, and the lusts thereof, 1Jo 2:17. The time may come when worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as now they are wedded to it, when those will fare best that have least.

20 As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations *and* of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them.

21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it.

God's temple shall stand them in no stead, Eze 7:20-22. This they had prided themselves in, and promised themselves security from (Jer 7:4,Mic 3:11); but this confidence of theirs shall fail them. Observe,

1 The great honour God had done to that people in setting up his sanctuary among them (Eze 7:20): As for the beauty of his ornament, that holy and beautiful house, where they and their fathers praised God (Isa 64:11), which was therefore beautiful because holy (it was called the beauty of holiness, and holiness is the beauty of its ornament; it was also adorned with gold and gifts)--as for this, he set it in majesty; every thing was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might help to make the people of Israel the more illustrious among their neighbours. He built his sanctuary like high palaces, Ps 78:69. It was a glorious high throne from the beginning, Jer 17:12. But,

2. Here is the great dishonour they had done to God in profaning his sanctuary; they made the images of their counterfeit deities,

which they set up in rivalship with God, and which are here called their abominations and their detestable things (for so they were to God, and so they should have been to them), and these they set up in God's temple, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. And therefore,

3. It is here threatened that they shall be deprived of the temple, and it shall be no succour to them: Therefore have I set it far from them, that is, sent them far from it, so that it is out of the reach of their services and they are out of the reach of its influences. Note, God's ordinances, and the privileges of a profession of religion, will justly be taken away from those that despise and profane them. Nay, they shall not only be kept at a distance from the temple, but the temple itself shall be involved in the common desolation (Eze 7:21); the Chaldeans, who are strangers, and therefore have no veneration for it, who are the wicked of the earth, and therefore have an antipathy to it, shall have it for a prey and for a spoil; all the ornaments and treasures of it shall fall into their hands, who will make no difference between that and other plunder.

This was a grief to the saints in Zion, who complained of nothing so much as of that which the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary (Ps 74:3); but it was the punishment of the sinners in Zion, who, by profaning the temple with strange gods, provoked God to suffer it to be profaned by strange nations, and to turn his face from those that did it as if he had not seen them and their crimes and from those that deprecated it as not regarding them and their prayers. Let the soldiers do as they will; let them enter into the secret place, into the holy of holies, as robbers; let them strip it, let them pollute it; its defence has departed, and then farewell all its glory. Note, Those are unworthy to be honoured with the form of godliness who will not be governed by the power of godliness.

22 My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret
place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

23 Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is
full of violence.

Here is, I The prisoner arraigned: Make a chain, in which to drag the criminal to the bar, and set him before the tribunal of divine justice; let him stand in fetters (as a notorious malefactor), stand pinioned to receive his doom.

Note, Those that break the bands of God's law asunder, and cast away those cords from them, will find themselves bound and held by the chains of his judgments, which they cannot break nor cast from them. The chain signified the siege of Jerusalem, or the slavery of those that were carried into captivity, or that they were all bound over to the righteous judgment of God, reserved in chains.

II The indictment drawn up against the prisoner: The land is full of bloody crimes, full of the judgments of blood (so the word is), that is, of the guilt of blood which they had shed under colour of justice and by forms of law, with the solemnity of a judgment. The innocent blood which Manasseh shed, probably thus shed, by the judgment of the blood, was the measure-filling sin of Jerusalem, 2Ki 24:4. Or, It is full of such crimes as by the law were to be punished with death, the judgment of blood. Idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, Sodomy, and the like, were bloody crimes, for which particular sinners were to die; and therefore, when they had become national, there was no remedy but the nation must be cut off.

Note, Bloody crimes will be punished with bloody judgments. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that should have been the pattern of righteousness, the protector of it, and the punisher of wrong, is now full of violence; the rulers of that city, having greater power and reputation, are greater oppressors than any others. This was sadly to be lamented. How has the faithful city become a harlot!

III. Judgment given upon this indictment. God will reckon with them not only for the profaning of his sanctuary, but for the perverting of justice between man and man; for, as holiness

becomes his house, so the righteous Lord loves righteousness and is the avenger of unrighteousness. Now the judgment given is,

1. That since they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worse than they, God would bring the worst of the heathen upon them to destroy them and lay them waste, the most barbarous and outrageous, that have the least compassion to mankind and the greatest antipathy to the Jews.

Note, Of the heathen some are worse than others, and God sometimes picks out the worst to be a scourge to his own people, because he intends them for the fire when the work is done.

2. That since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly gotten, and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppressing of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed by strangers, and make the pomp of the strong to cease, so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their might at any time prevail against right, as they had done.

3. That, since they had defiled the holy places with their idolatries, God would defile them with his judgments, since they had set up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the presence of their own God. When the holy places are deserted by their God they will soon be defiled by their enemies.

4. Since they had followed one sin with another, God would pursue them with one judgment upon another: "Destruction comes, utter destruction (Eze 7:25); for there shall come mischief upon mischief to ruin you, and rumour upon rumour to frighten you, like the waves in a storm, one upon the neck of another."

Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin shall be prosecuted to it; for God will overcome when he judges. 5. Since they had disappointed God's expectations from them, he would disappoint their expectations from him; for,

(1.) They shall not have the deliverance out of their troubles that they expect. They shall seek peace; they shall desire it and pray for it; they shall aim at and expect it: but there shall be none; their attempts both to court their enemies and to conquer them shall be in vain, and their troubles shall grow worse and worse.

(2.) They shall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect (Eze 7:26): They shall seek a vision of the prophet, shall desire, for their support under their troubles, to be assured of a happy issue out of them. They did not desire a vision to reprove them for sin, nor to warn them of danger, but to promise them deliverance. Such messages they longed to hear. But the law shall perish from the priest; he shall have no words either of counsel or comfort to say to them.

They would not hear what God had to say to them by ways of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. Counsel shall perish from the ancients; the elders of the people, that should advise them what to do in this difficult juncture, shall be infatuated and at their wits' end. It is bad with a people when those that should be their counsellors know not how to consider within themselves, consult with one another, or counsel them.

6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to sin, God would dispirit and dishearten them all, so that they should not be able to make head against the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men shall lie down by consent under the load (Eze 7:27): The king, that should inspire life into them, and the prince, that should lead them onto attack the enemy, shall mourn and be clothed with desolation; their heads and hearts shall fail, their politics and their courage;

and then no wonder if the hands of the people of the land, that should fight for them, be troubled. None of the men of might shall find their hands. What can men contrive or do for themselves when God has departed from them and appears against them? All must needs be in tears, all in trouble, when God comes to judge them according to their deserts, and so make then know, to their cost, that he is the Lord, the God to whom vengeance belongs.

24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.

25 Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and *there shall be* none.

26 Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.

27 The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-8

The Prophet's Vision of the Abominations in Jerusalem

1 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month,* in the fifth *day* of the month, *as* I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me.

2 Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the color of amber.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon; but the messages of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters related to Jerusalem, for in the peace or trouble thereof the captives looked upon themselves to have peace or trouble, and therefore here he has a vision of what was done at Jerusalem, and this vision is continued to the close of the 11th chapter.

I. Here is the date of this vision. The first vision he had was in the fifth year of the captivity, in the fourth month and the fifth day of the month, Eze 1:1,2. This was just fourteen months after. Perhaps it was after he had lain 390 days on his left side, to bear the iniquity of Israel, and before he began the forty days on his right side, to bear the iniquity of Judah; for now he was sitting in the house, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the messages he sends to us, because he will shortly call us to account about them.

II The opportunity is taken notice of, as well as the time.

1 The prophet was himself sitting in his house, in a sedate composed frame, deep perhaps in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the world, and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God: those that sit down to consider what they have learned shall be taught more. Or, he sat in his house, ready to preach to the company that resorted to him, but waiting for instructions what to say. God will communicate more knowledge to those who are communicative of what they do know.

2. The elders of Judah, that were now in captivity with him, sat before him. It is probable that it was on the sabbath day, and that it was usual for them to attend on the prophet every sabbath day, both to hear the word from him and to join with him and prayer and praise: and how could they spend the sabbath better, now that they had neither temple nor synagogue, neither priest nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to spend it so well, as the good people in Elisha's time, 2Ki 4:23. But some think it was on some extraordinary occasion that they attended him, to enquire of the Lord, and sat down at his feet to hear his word. Observe here,

(1.) When the law had perished from the priests at Jerusalem, whose lips should keep knowledge (Eze 7:26), those in Babylon had a prophet to consult. God is not tied to places or persons.

(2.) Now that the elders of Judah were in captivity they paid more respect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the cords of affliction, then he opens their ears to discipline, Job 36:8,10,Ps 141:6. Those that despised vision in the valley of vision prized it now that the word of the Lord precious and there was no open vision.

(3.) When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houses, we must diligently attend them there. A minister's house should be a church for all his neighbours. Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, and God owned him there, and no man forbad him.

III. The divine influence and impression that the prophet was now under: The hand of the Lord fell there upon me. God's hand took hold of him, and arrested him, as it were, to employ him in this vision, but at the same time supported him to bear it.

IV. The vision that the prophet saw, Eze 8:2. He beheld a likeness, of a man we may suppose, for that was the likeness he saw before, but it was all brightness above the girdle and all fire below, fire and flame. This agrees with the description we had before of the apparition he saw, Eze 1:27. It is probably that it was the same person, the man Christ Jesus. It is probable that the elders that sat with him (as the men that journeyed with Paul) saw a light and were afraid, and this happy sight they gained by attending the prophet in a private meeting, but they had no distinct view of him that spoke to him, Ac 22:9.

V. The prophet's remove, in vision, to Jerusalem. The apparition he saw put forth the form of a hand, which took him by a lock of

his head, and the Spirit was that hand which was put forth, for the Spirit of God is called the finger of God.

Or, The spirit within him lifted him up, so that he was borne up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful ready servant of God will be drawn by a hair, by the least intimation of the divine will, to his duty; for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, Ps 27:8.

He was miraculously lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he were to fly away upon eagles' wings. This, it is probable (so Grotius thinks), the elders that sat with him saw; they were witnesses of the hand taking him by the lock of hair, and lifting him up, and then perhaps laying him down again in a trance of ecstasy, while he had the following visions, whether in the body or out of the body, we may suppose, he could not tell, any more than Paul in a like case, much less can we. Note, Those are best prepared for communion with God and the communications of divine light that by divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force.

But, being lifted up towards heaven, he was carried in vision to Jerusalem, and to God's sanctuary there; for those that would go to heaven must take that in their way. The Spirit represented to his mind the city and temple as plainly as if he had been there in person. O that by faith we could thus enter into the Jerusalem, the holy city, above, and see the things that are invisible!

3 And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of mine
head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven,
and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of
the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of
the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.
4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was* there, according to
the vision that I saw in the plain.

The discoveries that were made to him there.

1. There he saw the glory of God (Eze 8:4): Behold, the glory of the god of Israel was there, the same appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne, that he had seen, Eze 1:1-28 Note, God's servants, wherever they are and whithersoever they go, ought to carry about with them a believing regard to the glory of God and to set that always before them; and those that have seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary should desire to see them again, so as they have seen them, Ps 63:2. Ezekiel has this repeated vision of the glory of God both to give credit to and to put honour upon the following discoveries. But it seems to have a further intention here; it was to aggravate this sin of Israel, in changing their own God, the God of Israel (who is a God of so much glory as here he appears to be), for dunghill gods, scandalous gods, false gods, and indeed no gods.

Note, The more glorious we see God to be the more odious we shall see sin to be, especially idolatry, which turns his truth in to a lie, his glory into shame. It was also to aggravate their approaching misery, when this glory of the Lord should remove from them (Eze 11:23) and leave the house and city desolate.

2. There he saw the reproach of Israel--and that was the image of jealousy, set northward, at the gate of the altar, Eze 8:3,5. What image this was is uncertain, probably an image of Baal, or of the grove, which Manasseh made and set in the temple (2Ki 21:7,2Ch 33:3), which Josiah removed, but his successors, it seems, replace there, as probably they did the chariots of the sun which he found at the entering in of the house of the Lord (2Ki 23:11), and this is here said to be in the entry. But the prophet, instead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curiosity, tells us that it was the image of jealousy, to convince our consciences that, whatever image it was, it was in the highest degree offensive to God and provoked him to jealousy. he resented it as a husband would resent the whoredoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it; for God is jealous, and the Lord revenges, Na 1:2.

(1.) The very setting up of this image in the house of the Lord was enough to provoke him to jealousy; for it is in the matters of his worship that we are particularly told, I the Lord thy God am a jealous God. Those that placed this image at the door of the inner gate, where the people assembled, called the gate of the altar (Eze 8:5), thereby plainly intended,

[1.] To affront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adoration of his people, in contempt of his law and in defiance of his justice.

[2.] To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entering into the courts of the Lord's house to bring their offerings to him, and to tempt them to offer them to this image; like the adulteress Solomon describes, that sits at the door of her house, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither, Pr 9:14-16. With good reason therefore is this called the image of jealousy.

(2.) We may well imagine what a surprise and what a grief it was to Ezekiel to see this image in the house of God, when he was in hopes that the judgments they were under had, by this time, wrought some reformation among them; but there is more wickedness in the world, in the church, than good men think there is. And now,

[1.] God appeals to him whether this was not bad enough, and a sufficient ground for God to go upon in casting off this people and abandoning them to ruin. Could he, or any one else, expect any other than that God should go far from his sanctuary, when there were such abominations committed there, in that very place; nay, was he not perfectly driven thence? They did these things designedly, and on purpose that he should leave his sanctuary, and so shall their doom be; they have hereby, in effect, like the Gadarenes, desired him to depart out of their coasts, and therefore he will depart; he will no more dignify and protect his sanctuary, as he has done, but will give it up to reproach and ruin. But,

[2.] Though this is bad enough, and serves abundantly to justify God in all that he brings upon them, yet the matter will appear to be much worse: But turn thyself yet again, and thou wilt be amazed to see greater abominations than these. Where there is one abomination it will be found that there are many more. Sins do not go alone.

5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way
toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north,
and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy
in the entry.
6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they
do ? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel
committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but
turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations.
7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked,
behold a hole in the wall.

We have here a further discovery of the abominations that were committed at Jerusalem, and within the confines of the temple, too. Now observe,

I. How this discovery is made. God, in vision, brought Ezekiel to the door of the court, the outer court, along the sides of which the priests' lodgings were. God could have introduced him at first into the chambers of imagery, but he brings him to them by degrees, partly to employ his own industry in searching out these mysteries of iniquity, and partly to make him sensible with what care and caution those idolaters concealed their idolatries. Before the priests' apartments they had run up a wall, to make them the more private, that they might not lie open to the observation of those who passed by--a shrewd sign that they did something which they had reason to be ashamed of. He that doth evil hates the light. They were not willing that those who saw them in God's house should see them in their own, lest they should see them contradict themselves and undo in private what they did in public.

But, behold, a hole in the wall, (Eze 8:7), a spy-hole, by which you might see that which would give cause to suspect them. When hypocrites screen themselves behind the wall of an external profession, and with it think to conceal their wickedness from the eye of the world and carry on their designs the more successfully, it is hard for them to manage it with so much art by that there is some hole or other left in the wall, something that betrays them, to those who look diligently, not to be what they pretend to be. The ass's ears in the fable appeared from under the lion's skin. This hole in the wall Ezekiel made wider, and behold a door, Eze 8:8. This door he goes in by into the treasury, or some of the apartments of the priests, and sees the wicked abominations that they do there, Eze 8:9. Note, Those that would discover the mystery of iniquity in others, or in themselves, must accomplish a diligent search; for Satan has his wiles, and depths, and devices, which we should not be ignorant of, and the heart is deceitful above all things; in the examining of it therefore we are concerned to be very strict.

II. What the discovery is. It is a very melancholy one.

1. He sees a chamber set round with idolatrous pictures (Eze 8:10): All the idols of the house of Israel, which they had borrowed from the neighbouring nations, were portrayed upon the wall round about, even the vilest of them, the forms of creeping things, which they worshipped, and beasts, even abominable ones, which are poisonous and venomous; at least they were abominable when they were worshipped. This was a sort of pantheon, a collection of all the idols together which they paid their devotions to. Though the second commandment, in the letter of it, forbids only graven images, yet painted ones are as bad and as dangerous as graven images and they were instructed to destroy idolatrous pictures from Canaan (Num 33:52).

2. He sees this chamber filled with idolatrous worshippers (Eze 8:11): There were seventy men of the elders of Israel offering incense to these painted idols. Here was a great number of

idolaters strengthening one another's hands in this wickedness; though it was in a private chamber, and the meeting industriously concealed, yet here were seventy men engaged in it. I doubt these elders were many more than those in Babylon that sat before the prophet in his house, Eze 8:1. They were seventy men, the number of the great Sanhedrim, or chief council of the nation, and, we have reason to fear, the same men; for they were the ancients of the house of Israel, not only in age, but in office, who were bound, by the duty of their place, to restrain and punish idolatry and to destroy and abolish all superstitious images wherever they found them; yet these were those that did themselves worship them in private, so undermining that religion which in public they professed to own and promote only because by it they held their preferments.

They had every man his censer in his hand; so fond were they of the idolatrous service that they would all be their own priests, and very prodigal they were of their perfumes in honour of these images, for a thick cloud of incense went up, that filled the room. O that the zeal of these idolaters might shame the worshippers of the true God out of their indifference to his service! The prophet took particular notice of one whom he knew, who stood in the midst of these idolaters, as chief among them, being perhaps president of the great council at this time or most forward in this wickedness. No wonder the people were corrupt when the elders were so. The sins of leaders are leading sins.

III. What the remark is that made upon it (Eze 8:12): "Son of man, hast thou seen this? Couldst thou have imagined that there was such wickedness committed?" It is here observed concerning it,

1. That it was done in the dark; for sinful works are works of darkness. They concealed it, lest they should lose their places, or at least their credit. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the world, which the day will declare, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

2. That this one idolatrous chapel was but a specimen of many the like. Here they met together, to worship their images in concert, but, it should seem, they had every man the chamber of his imagery besides, a room in his own house for this purpose, in which every man gratified his own fancy with such pictures as he liked best. Idolaters had their household gods, and their family worship of them in private, which is a shame to those who call themselves Christians and yet have no church in their house, no worship of God in their family. Had they chambers of imagery, and shall not we have chambers of devotion? 3. That atheism was at the bottom of their idolatry. They worship images in the dark, the images of the gods of other nations, and they say, "Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom we should serve, seeth us not. Jehovah hath forsaken the earth, and we may worship what God we will; he regards us not."

(1.) They think themselves out of God's sight: They say, The Lord seeth us not. They imagined, because the matter was carried on so closely that men could not discover it, nor did any of their neighbours suspect them to be idolaters, that therefore it was hidden from the eye of God; as if there were any darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of our treacherous departures from him; but the church argues justly, as to this very sin of idolatry (Ps 44:20,21), If we have forgotten the name of our God, and stretched forth our hand to a strange god, will not God search this out? No doubt he will.

(2.) They think themselves out of God's care: "The Lord has forsaken the earth, and looks not after the affairs of it; and then we may as well worship any other god as him." Or, "He has forsaken our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies; and therefore it is time for us to look out for some other god, to whom to commit the protection of it. Our one God cannot, or will not, deliver us; and therefore let us have many." This was a blasphemous reflection upon God, as if he had forsaken them first, else they would not have forsaken him. Note, Those are ripe

indeed for ruin who have arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to lay the blame of their sins upon God himself.

8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.
9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here.
10 So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.
11 And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.
12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.
13 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

Here we have,

I. More and greater abominations discovered to the prophet. He thought that what he had seen was bad enough and yet (Eze 8:13): Turn thyself again, and thou shalt see yet greater abominations, and greater still, Eze 8:15, as before, Eze 8:6. There are those who live in retirement who do no think what wickedness there is in this world; and the more we converse with it, and the further we go abroad into it, the more corrupt we see it. When we have seen that which is bad we may have our wonder at it made to cease by the discovery of that which, upon some account or other, is a great deal worse. We shall find it so in examining our own hearts and searching into them; there is a world of iniquity in them, a great abundance and variety of abominations, and, when we have found out much amiss, still we shall find more; for the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it perfectly? Now the abominations here discovered were,

1. Women weeping for Tammuz, Eze 8:14. An abominable thing indeed, that any should choose rather to serve an idol in tears than to serve the true God with joyfulness and gladness of heart! Yet such absurdities as these are those guilty of who follow after lying vanities and forsake their own mercies. Some think it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks, other for Osiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they shed these tears.

The image, they say, was made to weep, and then the worshippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammuz, and anon rejoiced in its returning to life again. These mourning women sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and there shed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God and the sacred rites of his worship, and some think, with their idolatry, prostrating themselves also to corporeal whoredom; for these two commonly went together, and those that dishonoured the divine nature by the one were justly given up to vile affections and a reprobate sense to dishonour the human nature, which nowhere ever sunk so far below itself as in these idolatrous rites.

2. Men worshipping the sun, Eze 8:16. And this was so much the greater an abomination that it was practised in the inner court of the Lord's house at the door of the temple of the lord, between the porch and the altar. There, where the most sacred rites of their holy religion used to be performed, was this abominable wickedness committed.

Justly might God in jealousy say to those who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? Here were about twenty-five men giving that honour to the sun which is due to God only. Some think they were the king and his princes; it should rather seem that they were priests, for this was the court of the priests, and the proper place to find them in. Those that were entrusted with the true religion, had it committed to their care and were

charged with the custody of it, they were the men that betrayed it.

(1.) They turned their backs towards the temple of the Lord, resolvedly forgetting it and designedly slighting it and putting contempt upon it. Note, When men turn their backs upon God's institutions, and despise them, it is no marvel if they wander endlessly after their own inventions. Impiety is the beginning of idolatry and all iniquity.

(2.) They turned their faces towards the east, and worshipped the sun, the rising sun. This was an ancient instance of idolatry; it is mentioned in Job's time (Job 31:26), and had been generally practised among the nations, some worshipping the sun under one name, others under another. These priests, finding it had antiquity and general consent and usage on its side (the two pleas which the papists use at this day in defence of their superstitious rites, and particularly this of worshipping towards the east), practised it in the court of the temple, thinking it an omission that it was not inserted in their ritual. See the folly of idolaters in worshipping that as a god, and calling it Baal--a lord, which God made to be a servant to the universe (for such the sun is, and so his name Shemesh signified, De 4:19), and in adoring the borrowed light and despising the Father of lights.

14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which *was* toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

16 And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

17 Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the

land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

The inference drawn from these discoveries (Eze 8:17): "Hast thou seen this, O son of man! and couldst thou have thought ever to see such things done in the temple of the Lord?" Now,

1. He appeals to the prophet himself concerning the heinousness of the crime. Can he think it is a light thing to the house of Judah, who know and profess better things, and are dignified with so many privileges above other nations? Is it an excusable thing in those that have God's oracles and ordinances that they commit the abominations which they commit here? Do not those deserve to suffer that thus sin? Should not such abominations as these make desolate? Da 9:27.

2. He aggravates it from the fraud and oppression that were to be found in all parts of the nations: They have filled the land with violence. It is not strange if those that wrong God thus make no conscience of wronging one another, and with all that is sacred trample likewise upon all that is just. And their wickedness in their conversations made even the worship they paid to their own God an abomination (Isa 1:11, &c.):

"They fill the land with violence, and then they return to the temple to provoke me to anger there; for even their sacrifices, instead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt. They return to provoke me (they repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again), and, lo, they put the branch to their nose" --a proverbial expression denoting perhaps their scoffing at God and having him in derision; they snuffed at his service, as men do when they put a branch to their nose.

Or it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served. We read of garlands used in their idolatrous worships (Ac 14:13), out of which every zealot took a branch which they smelled to as a nosegay. Dr. Lightfoot (Hor. Heb. in John 15.6) gives another sense of this place: They put the branch

to their wrath, or to his wrath, as the Masorites read it; that is, they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath, which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or putting the branch to the nose may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men.

3. He passes sentence upon them that they shall be utterly cut off: Therefore, because they are thus furiously bent upon sin, I will also deal in fury with them, Eze 8:18. They filled the land with their violence, and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the suggestions either,

(1.) Of his own pity: My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; repentance shall be hidden from his eyes; or,

(2.) Of their prayers: Though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them; for still their sins cry more loudly for vengeance than their prayers cry for mercy. God will now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idols were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, 1Ki 18:26. Time was when God was ready to hear even before they cried and to answer while they were yet speaking; but now they shall seek me early and not find me, Pr 1:28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that God will regard.

18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them.

Ezekiel-9

The Slaughter of the Guilty

1 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man *with* his destroying weapon in his hand.

In these verses we have,

I The summons given to Jerusalem's destroyers to come forth and give their attendance. He that appeared to the prophet (Eze 8:2), that had brought him to Jerusalem and had shown the wickedness that was done there, he cried, Cause those that have charge over the city to draw near (Eze 9:1), or, as it might better be read, and nearer the original, Those that have charge over the city are drawing near. He had said (Eze 8:18), I will deal in fury; now, says he to the prophet, thou shalt see who are to be employed as the instruments of my wrath. Appropinquaverunt visitationes civitatis--The visitations (or visitors) of the city are at hand.

They would not know the day of their visitations in mercy, and now they are to be visited in wrath. Observe, 1. How the notice of this is given to the prophet: He cried it in my ears with a loud voice, which intimates the vehemency of him that spoke; when men are highly provoked, and threaten in anger, they speak aloud. Those that regard not the counsels God gives them in a still small voice shall be made to hear the threatenings, to hear and tremble. It denotes also the prophet's unwillingness to be told this: he was deaf on that ear, but there is no remedy, their sin will not admit an excuse and therefore their judgment will not admit a delay: "He cried it in my ears with a loud voice; he made me hear it, and I heard it with a sad heart."

2. What this notice is. There are those that have charge over the city to destroy it, not the Chaldean armies, they are to be indeed employed in this work, but they are not the visitors, they are only the servants, or tools rather. God's angels have received a charge now to lay that city waste, which they had long had a charge to protect and watch over. They are at hand, as destroying angels, as ministers of wrath, for every man has his destroying weapon in his hand, as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming sword.

Note, Those that have by sin made God their enemy have made the good angels their enemies too. These visitors are called and caused to draw near. Note, God has ministers of wrath always within call, always at command, invisible powers, by whom he accomplishes is purposes. The prophet is made to see this in vision, that he might with the greater assurance in his preaching denounce these judgments. God told it him with a loud voice, taught it him with a strong hand (Isa 8:11), that it might make the deeper impression upon him and that he might thus proclaim it in the people's ears.

II. Their appearance, upon this summons, is recorded. Immediately six men came (Eze 9:2), one for each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, but six against Jerusalem; for Jerusalem's doom in the judgment will be thrice as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape. One angel served to destroy the first-born of Egypt, and the camp of the Assyrians, but here are six. In the Revelation we find seven that were to pour out the vials of God's wrath, Re 16:1.

They came with every one a slaughter-weapon in his hand, prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations of which the king of Babylon's army was composed, which some reckon to be six, and the commanders of his army (of whom six are named as principal, Jer 39:3), may be called the slaughter-weapons in the hands of the angels. The angels are thoroughly furnished for every service.

1. Observe whence they came--from the way of the higher gate, which lies towards the north (Eze 9:2), either because the Chaldeans came from the north (Jer 1:14, Out of the north an evil shall break forth) or because the image of jealousy was set up at the door of the inner gate that looks towards the north, Eze 8:3,5. At that gate of the temple the destroying angels entered,

to show what it was that opened the door to them. Note, That way that sin lies judgments may be expected to come.

2. Observe where they placed themselves: They went in and stood beside the brazen altar, on which sacrifices were wont to be offered and atonement made. When they acted as destroyers they acted as sacrificers, not from any personal revenge or ill-will, but with a pure and sincere regard to the glory of God; for to his justice all they slew were offered up as victims. They stood by the altar, as it were to protect and vindicate that, and plead its righteous cause, and avenge the horrid profanation of it. At the altar they were to receive their commission to destroy, to intimate that the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifice.

III. The notice taken of one among the destroying angels distinguished in his habit from the rest, from whom some favour might be expected; it should seem he was not one of the six, but among them, to see that mercy was mixed with judgment, Eze 9:2. This man was clothed with linen, as the priests were, and he had a writer's inkhorn hanging at his side, as anciently attorneys and lawyers' clerks had, which he was to make use of, as the other six were to make use of their destroying weapons. Here the honours of the pen exceeded those of the sword, but he was the Lord of angels that made use of the writer's inkhorn; for it is generally agreed, among the best interpreters, that this man represented Christ as Mediator saving those that are his from the flaming sword of divine justice. He is our high priest, clothed with holiness, for that was signified by the fine linen, Re 19:8.

As prophet he wears the writer's inkhorn. The book of life is the Lamb's book. The great things of the law and gospel which God has written to us are of his writing; for it is the Spirit of Christ, in the writers of the scripture, that testifies to us, and the Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Note, It is a matter of great comfort to all good Christians that, in the midst of the destroyers and the destructions that are abroad, there is a Mediator, a great

high priest, who has an interest in heaven, and whom saints on earth have an interest in.

IV. The removal of the appearance of the divine glory from over the cherubim. Some think this was that usual display of the divine glory which was between the cherubim over the mercy seat, in the most holy place, that took leave of them now, and never returned; for it is supposed that it was not in the second temple. Others think it was that display of the divine glory which the prophet now saw over the cherubim in vision; and this is more probable, because this is called the glory of the God of Israel (Eze 8:4), and this is it which he had now his eye upon; this was gone to the threshold of the house, as it were to call to the servants that attended without the door, to send them on their errand and give them their instructions.

And the removal of this, as well as the former, might be significant of God's departure from them, and leaving them their house desolate; and when God goes all good goes, but he goes from none till they first drive him from them. He went at first no further than the threshold, that he might show how loth he was to depart, and might give them both time and encouragement to invite his return to them and his stay with them.

Note, God's departures from a people are gradual, but gracious souls are soon award of the first step he takes towards a remove. Ezekiel immediately observed that the glory of the god of Israel had gone up from the cherub: and what is a vision of angels if God be gone?

2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which
lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his
hand; and one man among them *was* clothed with linen, with a
writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the
brazen altar.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub,
whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to

the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writer's inkhorn by his side;

4 and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

The charge given to the man clothed in linen to secure the pious remnant from the general desolation. We do not read that this Saviour was summoned and sent for, as the destroyers were; for he is always ready, appearing in the presence of God for us; and to him, as the most proper person, the care of those that are marked for salvation is committed, Eze 9:4. Now observe,

1 The distinguishing character of this remnant that is to be saved. They are such as sigh and cry, sigh in themselves, as men in pain and distress, cry to God in prayer, as men in earnest, because of all the abominations that are committed in Jerusalem. It was not only the idolatries they were guilty of, but all their other enormities, that were abominations to God. These pious few had witnessed against those abominations and had done what they could in their places to suppress them; but, finding all their attempts for the reformation of manners fruitless, they sat down, and sighted, and cried, wept in secret, and complained to God, because of the dishonour done to his name by their wickedness and the ruin it was bringing upon their church and nation.

Note, It is not enough that we do not delight in the sins of others, and that we have not fellowship with them, but we must mourn for them, and lay them to heart; we must grieve for that which we cannot help, as those that hate sin for its own sake, and have a tender concern for the souls of others, as David (Ps 119:136), and Lot, who vexed his righteous soul with the wicked conversation of his neighbours. The abominations committed in Jerusalem are to be in a special manner lamented, because they are in a particular manner offensive to God.

2 The distinguishing care taken of them. Orders are given to find those all out that are of such a pious public spirit: "Go through the midst of the city in quest of them, and though they are ever so much dispersed, and ever so closely hid from the fury of their persecutors, yet see that you discover them, and set a mark upon their foreheads,"

(1.) To signify that God owns them for his, and he will confess them another day. A work of grace in the soul is to God a mark upon the forehead, which he will acknowledge as his mark, and by which he knows those that are his.

(2.) To give to them who are thus marked an assurance of God's favour, that they may know it themselves; and the comfort of knowing it will be the most powerful support and cordial in calamitous times. Why should we perplex ourselves about this temporal life if we know by the mark that we have eternal life?

(3.) To be a direction to the destroyers whom to pass by, as the blood upon the door-posts was an indication that that was an Israelite's house, and the first-born there must not be slain. Note, Those who keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity God will keep safe in times of common calamity. Those that distinguish themselves shall be distinguished; those that cry for other men's sins shall not need to cry for their own afflictions, for they shall be either delivered from them or comforted under them. God will set a mark upon his mourners, will book their sighs and bottle their tears. The sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads mentioned in Re 7:3 was the same token of the care God has of his own people with this related here; only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

In these verses we have,

I. A command given to the destroyers to do execution according to their commission. They stood by the brazen altar, waiting for orders; and orders are here given them to cut off and destroy all that were either guilty of, or accessory to, the abominations of Jerusalem, and that did not sigh and cry for them. Note, When God has gathered his wheat into his garner nothing remains but to burn up the chaff, Mt 3:12.

1. They are ordered to destroy all,

(1.) Without exception. They must go through the city, and smite; they must slay utterly, slay to destruction, give them their death's wound. They must make no distinction of age or sex, but cut off old and young; neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocency of the babes, shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, especially by the sword of the Chaldeans, as far as the military execution went. Sometimes even such bloody work as this has been God's work. But what an evil thing is sin, then, which provokes the God of infinite mercy to such severity!

(2.) Without compassion: "Let not your eye spare, neither have you pity (Eze 9:5); you must not save any whom God has doomed to destruction, as Saul did Agag and the Amalekites, for that is doing the work of God deceitfully, Jer 48:10. None need to be more merciful than God is; and he had said (Eze 8:18), My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity." Note, Those that live in sin, and hate to be reformed, will perish in sin, and deserve not to be pitied; for they might easily have prevented the ruin, and would not.

2. They are warned not to do the least hurt to those that were marked for salvation: "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark; do not so much as threaten or frighten any of them; it is promised them that there shall no evil come nigh them, and therefore you must keep at a distance from them." The king of Babylon gave particular orders that Jeremiah should be

protected. Baruch and Ebed-melech were secured, and, it is likely, others of Jeremiah's friends, for his sake. God had promised that it should go well with his remnant and they should be well treated (Jer 15:11); and we have reason to think that none of the mourning praying remnant fell by the sword of the Chaldeans, but that God found out some way or other to secure them all, as, in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Christians were all secured in a city called Pella, and none of them perished with the unbelieving Jews.

Note, None of those shall be lost whom God has marked for life and salvation; for the foundation of God stands sure.

3. They are directed to begin at the sanctuary (Eze 9:6), that sanctuary which, in the chapter before, he had seen the horrid profanation of; they must begin there because there the wickedness began which provoked God to send these judgments. The debaucheries of the priests were the poisoning of the springs, to which all the corruption of the streams was owing. The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all wickedness the most offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin: "Begin there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and reform; begin there, that all the world may see and know that the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and hates sin most in those that are nearest to him."

Note, When judgments are abroad they commonly begin at the house of God, 1Pe 4:17. You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you, Am 3:2. God's temple is a sanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent sinners, but not for any that go on still in their trespasses; neither the sacredness of the place nor the eminency of their place in it will be their security. It should seem the destroyers made some difficulty of putting men to death in the temple, but God bids them not to hesitate at that, but (Eze 9:7), Defile the house, and fill the courts with slain. They

will not be taken from the altar (as was appointed by the law, Ex 21:14), but think to secure themselves by keeping hold of the horns of it, like Joab, and therefore, like him, let them die there, 1Ki 2:30,31. There the blood of one of God's prophets had been shed (Mt 23:35) and therefore let their blood be shed. Note, If the servants of God's house defile it with their idolatries, God will justly suffer the enemies of it to defile it with their violences, Ps 79:1. But these acts of necessary justice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollution of the sanctuary; it was putting away evil from among them.

4. They are appointed to go forth into the city, Eze 9:6,7. Note, Wherever sin has gone before judgement will follow after; and, though judgement begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there. The holy city shall be no more a protection to the wicked people then the holy house was to the wicked priests.

II. Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and,

1. They began at the elders, the ancient men that were before the house, and slew them first, either those seventy ancients who worshipped idols in their chambers (Eze 8:12) or those twenty-five who worshipped the sun between the porch and the altar, who might more properly be said to be before the house. Note, Ringleaders in sin may expect to be first met with by the judgments of God; and the sins of those who are in the most eminent and public stations call for the most exemplary punishments.

2. They proceeded to the common people: They went forth and slew in the city; for, when the decree has gone forth, there shall be no delay; if God begin, he will make an end.

III. Here is the prophet's intercession for a mitigation of the judgement, and a reprieve for some (Eze 9:8): While they were slaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face. Observe here,

1. How sensible the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was spared when so many round about him were cut off. Thousands fell on his right hand, and on his left, and yet the destruction did not come nigh him; only with his eyes did he behold the just reward of the wicked, Ps 91:7,8. He speaks as one that narrowly escaped the destruction, attributing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favor if we have our lives given us for a prey; for we might justly have perished with those that perished.

2. Observe how he improved this mercy; he looked upon it that therefore he was left that he might stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God. Note, We must look upon it that for this reason we are spared, that we may do good in our places, may do good by our prayers. Ezekiel did not triumph in the slaughter he made, but his flesh trembled for the fear of God, (as David's, Ps 119:120); he fell on his face, and cried, not in fear for himself (he was one of those that were marked), but in compassion to his fellow-creatures. Those that sigh and cry for the sins of sinners cannot but sigh and cry for their miseries too; yet the day is coming when all this concern will be entirely swallowed up in a full satisfaction in this, that God is glorified; and those that now fall on their faces, and cry, Ah! Lord God, will lift up their heads, and sing, Hallelujah, Re 19:1,3.

The prophet humbly expostulates with God: "Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel, and shall there be none left but the few that are marked? Shall the Israel of God be destroyed, utterly destroyed? When there are but a few left shall those be cut off, who might have been the seed of another generation? And will

the God of Israel be himself their destroyer? Wilt thou now destroy Israel, who wast wont to protect and deliver Israel? Wilt thou so pour out thy fury upon Jerusalem as by the total destruction of the city to ruin the whole country too? Surely thou wilt not!" Note, Though we acknowledge that God is righteous, yet we have leave to plead with him concerning his judgments, Jer 12:1.

6 slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the house.

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

8 And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah *is* exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.

Here is God's denial of the prophet's request for a mitigation of the judgement and his justification of himself in that denial, Eze 9:9,10.

1. Nothing could be said in extenuation of this sin. God was willing to show mercy as the prophet could desire; he always is so. But here the case will not admit of it; it is such that mercy cannot be granted without wrong to justice; and it is not fit that one attribute of God should be glorified at the expense of another. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should destroy, especially that he should destroy Israel? By no means. But the truth is their crimes are so flagrant that the reprieve of the sinners would be a connivance at the sin: "The iniquity of the house of Judah and Israel is exceedingly great; there is no suffering them to go on at this rate. The land is filled with the innocent blood, and, when the city courts are appealed to for the

defence of injured innocency, the remedy is as bad as the disease, for the city is full of perverseness, or wrestling of judgement; and that which they support themselves with in this iniquity is the same atheistical profane principle with which they flattered themselves in their idolatry, Eze 8:12.

The Lord has forsaken the earth, and left it to us to do what we will in it; he will not intermeddle in the affairs of it; and, whatever wrong we do, he sees not; he either knows it not, or will not take cognizance of it." Now how can those expect benefit by the mercy of God who thus bid defiance to his justice? No; nothing can be offered by an advocate in excuse of the crimes while the criminal puts in such a plea as this in his own vindication; and therefore.

2. Nothing can be done to mitigate the sentence (Eze 9:10): "Whatever thou thinkest of it, as for me, my eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; I have borne with them as long as it was fit that such impudent sinners should be borne with; and therefore now I will recompense their way on their head."

Note, Sinners sink and perish under the weight of their own sins; it is their own way, which they deliberately chose rather than the way of God, and which they obstinately persisted in, in contempt of the word of God, that is recompensed on them. Great iniquities justify God in great severities; nay, he is ready to justify himself, as he does here to the prophet, for he will be clear when he judges.

10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, *but* I will recompense their way upon their head.

11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which *had* the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

Here is a return made of the writ of protection which was issued out for the securing of those that mourned in Zion (Eze 9:11): The man clothed with linen reported the matter, gave an account of what he had done in pursuance of his commission; he had found

out all that mourned in secret for the sins of the land, and cried out against them by a public testimony, and had marked them all in the forehead. Lord, I have done as thou hast commanded me. We do not find that those who were commissioned to destroy reported what destruction they had made, but he who was appointed to protect reported his matter; for it would be more pleasing both to God and to the prophet to hear of those that were saved than of those that perished.

Or this report was made now because the thing was finished, whereas the destroying work would be a work of time, and when it was brought to an end then the report should be made. See how faithful Christ is to the trust reposed in him. Is he commanded to secure eternal life to the chosen remnant? He has done as was commanded him. Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none.

Ezekiel-10

God's Glory Departs from the Temple

1 Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

To inspire us with a holy awe and dread of God, and to fill us with his fear, we may observe, in this part of the vision which the prophet had,

The glorious appearance of his majesty. Something of the invisible world is here in the visible, some faint representations of its brightness and beauty, some shadows, but such as are no more to be compared with the truth and substance than a picture with the life; yet here is enough to oblige us all to the utmost reverence in our thoughts of God and approaches to him, if we will but admit the impressions this discovery of him will make.

1. He is here in the firmament above the head of the cherubim, Eze 10:1. He manifests his glory in the upper world, where

purity and brightness are both in perfection; and the vast expanse of the firmament aims to speak the God that dwells there infinite. It is the firmament of his power and of his prospect too; for thence he beholds all the children of men. The divine nature infinitely transcends the angelic nature, and God is above the head of the cherubim, in respect not only of his dignity above them, but of his dominion over them. Cherubim have great power, and wisdom, and influence, but they are all subject to God and Christ.

2. He is here upon the throne, or that which had the appearance of the likeness of a throne (for God's glory and government infinitely transcend all the brightest ideas our minds can either form or receive concerning them); and it was as it were a sapphire-stone, pure and sparkling; such a throne has God prepared in the heavens, far exceeding the thrones of any earthly potentates.

3. He is here attended with a glorious train of holy angels. When God came into his temple the cherubim stood on the right side of the house (Eze 10:3), as the prince's life-guard, attending the gate of his palace. Christ has angels at command. The orders given to all the angels of God are, to worship him. Some observe that they stood on the right side of the house, that is, the south side, because on the north side the image of jealousy was, and other instances of idolatry, from which they would place themselves at as great a distance as might be.

4. The appearance of his glory is veiled with a cloud, and yet out of that cloud darts forth a dazzling lustre; in the house and inner court there was a cloud and darkness, which filled them, and yet either the outer court, or the same court after some time, was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory, Eze 10:3,4. There was a darting forth of light and brightness; but if any over curious eye pried into it, it would find itself lost in a cloud. His righteousness is conspicuous as the great mountains, and the brightness of it fills the court; but his judgments are a great deep, which we

cannot fathom, a cloud which we cannot see through. The brightness discovers enough to awe and direct our consciences, but the cloud forbids us to expect the gratifying of our curiosity; for we cannot order our speech by reasons of darkness.

Thus (Hab 3:4) he had rays coming out of his hand, and yet there was the hiding of his power. Nothing is more clear than that God is, nothing more dark than what he is. God covers himself with light, and yet, as to us, makes darkness his pavilion. God took possession of the tabernacle and the temple in a cloud, which was always the symbol of his presence. In the temple above there will be no cloud, but we shall see face to face.

5. The cherubim, made a dreadful sound with their wings, Eze 10:5. The vibration of them, as of the strings of musical instruments, made a curious melody; bees, and other winged insects, make a noise with their wings. Probably this intimated their preparing to remove, by stretching forth and lifting up their wings, which made this noise as it were to give warning of it. This noise is said to be as the voice of the almighty God when he speaks, as the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord (Ps 29:3), or as the voice of the Lord when he spoke to Israel on Mount Sinai; and therefore he then gave the law with abundance of terror, to signify with what terror he would reckon for the violation of it, which he was now about to do. This noise of their wings was heard even to the outer court, the court of the people; for the Lord's voice, in his judgments, cries in the city, which those may hear that do not, as Ezekiel, see the visions of them.

2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, *even* under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter *them* over the city.
And he went in in my sight.
3 Now the cherubim stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

The terrible directions of his wrath. This vision has a further tendency than merely to set forth the divine grandeur; further

orders are to be given for the destruction of Jerusalem. The greatest devastations are made by fire and sword. For a general slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem orders were given in the foregoing chapter; now here we have a command to lay the city in ashes, by scattering coals of fire upon it, which in the vision were fetched from between the cherubim.

1. For the issuing out of orders to do this the glory of the Lord was lifted up from the cherub (as in the chapter before for the giving of orders there, Eze 10:3) and stood upon the threshold of the house, in imitation of the courts of judgement, which they kept in the gates of their cities. The people would not hear the oracles which God had delivered to them from his holy temple, and therefore they shall thence be made to hear their doom.

2. The man clothed in linen who had marked those that were to be preserved is to be employed in this service; for the same Jesus that is the protector and Saviour of those that believe, having all judgement committed to him, that of condemnation as well as that of absolution, will come in a flaming fire to take vengeance on those that obey not his gospel. He that sits on the throne calls to the man clothed in linen to go in between the wheels, and fill his hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. This intimates,

(1.) That the burning of the city and temple by the Chaldeans was a consumption determined, and that therein they executed God's counsel, did what he designed before should be done.

(2.) That the fire of divine wrath, which kindles judgement upon a people, is just and holy, for it is fire fetched from between the cherubim. The fire on God's altar, where atonement was made, had been slighted, to avenge which fire is here fetched from heaven, like that by which Nadab and Abihu were killed for offering strange fire. If a city, or town, or house, be burnt, whether by design or accident, if we trace it in its original, we shall find that the coals which kindled the fire came from

between the wheels; for there is not any evil of that kind in the city, but the Lord has done it.

(3.) That Jesus Christ acts by commission from the Father, for from him he receives authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of man. Christ came to send fire on the earth (Lu 12:49) and in the great day will speak this world into ashes. By fire from his hand, the earth, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up.

3. This man clothed with linen readily attended to this service; though, being clothed with linen, he was very unfit to go among the burning coals, yet, being called, he said, Lo, I come; this commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it; the prophet saw him go in, Eze 10:2. He went in, and stood beside the wheels, expecting to be furnished there with the coals he was to scatter; for what Christ was to give he first received, whether for mercy or judgement. He was directed to take fire, but he staid till he had it given him, to show how slow he is to execute judgement, and how long-suffering to us-ward.

4. One of the cherubim reached him a handful of fire from the midst of the living creatures. The prophet, when he first saw this vision, observed that there were burning coals of fire, and lamps, that went up and down among the living creatures (Eze 1:13); thence this fire was taken, Eze 10:7. The spirit of burning, the refiner's fire, by which Christ purifies his church, is of a divine original. It is by a celestial fire, fire from between the cherubim, that wonders are wrought. The cherubim put it into his hand; for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jesus and to serve all his purposes.

5. When he had taken the fire he went out, no doubt to scatter it up and down upon the city, as he was directed. And who can abide the day of his coming? Who can stand before him when he goes out in his anger?

4 Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, *and stood* over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory.
5 And the sound of the cherubim's wings was heard *even* to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.
6 And it came to pass, *that* when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubim; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.
7 And *one* cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim unto the fire that *was* between the cherubim, and took *thereof*, and put *it* into the hands of *him that was* clothed with linen; who took *it*, and went out.
8 And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings.
9 And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubim, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels *was* as the color of a beryl stone.

Ezekiel sees the glory of God removing out of the sanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt, and this sight is as sad as the other was grateful. It was pleasant to see that God had not forsaken the earth (as the idolaters suggested, Eze 9:9), but sad to see that he was forsaking his sanctuary.

The glory of the Lord stood over the threshold, having thence given the necessary orders for the destruction of the city, and it stood over the cherubim, not those in the most holy place, but those that Ezekiel now saw in vision, Eze 10:18. It ascended that stately chariot, as the judge, when he comes off the bench, goes into his coach and is gone.

And immediately the cherubim lifted up their wings (Eze 10:19), as they were directed, and they mounted up from the earth, as birds upon the wing; and, when they went out, the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went by instinct, beside them, by which it appeared that the Spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. Thus, when God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels

above, and all events here below, shall concur to further his departure.

But observe here, In the courts of the temple where the people of Israel had dishonoured their God, had cast off his yoke and withdrawn the shoulder from it, blessed angels appear very ready to serve him, to draw in his chariot, and to mount upwards with it. God has shown the prophet how the will of God was disobeyed by men on earth (Eze 8:1-18); here he shows him how readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures; and it is a comfort to us, when we grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, to think how his angels do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word, Ps 103:20. Let us now,

1. Take a view of this chariot in which the glory of the God of Israel rides triumphantly. He that is the God of Israel is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Israelites comfort themselves with this, that he who is their God is above the cherubim; their Redeemer is so (1Pe 3:22) and has the sole and sovereign disposal of all events; the living creatures and the wheels agree to serve him, so that he is head over all things to the church. The rabbin call this vision that Ezekiel had Mercabah--the vision of the chariot; and thence they call the more abstruse part of divinity, which treats concerning God and spirits, Opus currus--The work of the chariot, as they do the other part, that is more plain and familiar, Opus bereshith--The work of the creation.--

2. Let us attend the motions of this chariot: The cherubim, and the glory of God above them, stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, Eze 10:19. But observe with how many stops and pauses God departs, as loth to go, as if to see if there be any that will intercede with him to return.

None of the priests in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his stay; therefore he leaves their court, and

stands at the east gate, which led into the court of the people, to see if any of them would yet at length stand in the gap.

Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and, when he is ready to depart in displeasure, would return to them in mercy if they were but a repenting praying people.

10 And *as for* their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

11 When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, *were* full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels that they four had.

13 As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

14 And every one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, and the second face *was* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

15 And the cherubim were lifted up. This *is* the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

16 And when the cherubim went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

17 When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also:* for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them.

18 Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim.

19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them, and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.

20 This *is* the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they *were* the cherubim.

21 Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings.

22 And the likeness of their faces *was* the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

Ezekiel-11

Evil Princes Rebuked

1 Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

We have here,

The great security of the prince's of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments of God that were upon them, The prophet was brought, in vision, to the gate of the temple where these princes sat in council upon the present arduous affairs of the city: The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east gate of the Lord's house, and behold twenty-five men were there.

See how obsequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders and how observant of all the discoveries that were made to him. It should seem, these twenty-five men were not the same with those twenty-five whom we saw at the door of the temple, worshipping towards the east (Eze 8:16); those seen to have been priests or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar, but these were princes sitting in the gate of the Lord's house, to try causes (Jer 26:10), and they are here charged, not with corruptions in worship, but with mal-administration in the government; two of them are named, because they were the most active leading men, and perhaps because the prophet knew them, though he had been some years absent--Pelatiah and Jaazaniah, not that mentioned Eze 8:11, for he was the son of Shaphan, this is the son of Azur. Some tell us that Jerusalem was divided into twenty-four wards, and that these

were the governors or aldermen of those wards, with their mayor or president. Now observe,

1 The general character which God gives of these men to the prophet (Eze 11:2): "These are the men that devise mischief; under pretence of concerting measures for the public safety they harden people in their sins, and take off their fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; they gave wicked counsel in this city, counselling them to restrain and silence the prophets, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and to resolve upon holding the city out to the last extremity."

Note, It is bad with a people when the things that belong to their peace are hidden from the eyes of those who are entrusted with their counsels. And, when mischief is done, God knows at whose door to lay it, and, in the day of discovery and recompence, will be sure to lay it at the right door, and will say, These are the men that devised it, though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.

2 The particular charge exhibited against them in proof of this character. They are indicted for words spoken at their council-board, which he that stands in the congregation of the mighty would take cognizance of (Eze 11:3); they said to this effect, "It is not near; the destruction of our city, that has been so often threatened by the prophets, is not near, not so near as they talk of." They are conscious to themselves of such an enmity to reformation that they cannot but conclude it will come at last; but they have such an opinion of God's patience (though they have long abused it) that they are willing to hope it will not come this great while.

Note, Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as a thing doubtful and uncertain, yet he gains his point by persuading them to look upon it as a thing at a distance, so that it loses its force: if it be sure, yet it is not near; whereas, in truth, the Judge stands before the door.

Now, if the destruction is not near, they conclude, Let us build houses; let us count upon a continuance, for this city is the caldron and we are the flesh. This seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying no more than this, "We are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, and shall receive no more damage from the besiegers about it than the cauldron does from the fire under it. Those that think to force us out of our city into captivity shall find it to be as much at their peril as it would be to take the flesh out of a boiling pot with their hands." This appears to be the meaning of it, by the answer God gives to it (Eze 11:9):

"I will bring you out of the midst of the city, where you think yourselves safe, and then it will appear (Eze 11:11) that this is not your caldron, neither are you the flesh." Perhaps it has a particular reference to the flesh of the peace-offerings, which it was so great an offence for the priests themselves to take out of the caldron while it was in seething (as we find 1Sa 2:13,14), and then it intimates that they were the more secure because Jerusalem was the holy city, and they thought themselves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his first visions saw Jerusalem represented by a seething pot, Jer 1:13.

"Now," say they, in a way of jest and ridicule, "if it be a seething pot, we are as the flesh in it, and who dares meddle with us?" Thus they continued mocking the messengers of the Lord, even while they suffered for so doing; but be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Those hearts are indeed which are made more secure by those words of God which were designed for warning to them.

2 Then said he unto me, Son of man, these *are* the men that devise
mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:
3 which say, *It is* not near; let us build houses: this *city is* the caldron,
and we *be* the flesh.
4 Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.

The method taken to awaken them out of their security. One would think that the providences of God which related to them were enough to startle them; but, to help them to understand and improve those, the word of God is sent to them to give them warning (Eze 11:4): Therefore prophesy against them, and try to undeceive them; prophesy, O son of man! upon these dead and dry bones. Note, The greatest kindness ministers can do to secure sinners is to preach against them, and to show them their misery and danger, though they are ever so unwilling to see them. We then act most for them when we appear most against them.

But the prophet, being at a loss what to say to men that were hardened in sin, and that bade defiance to the judgments of God, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him, to make him full of power and courage, and said unto him, Speak. Note, When sinners are flattering themselves into their own ruin it is time to speak, and to tell them that they shall have no peace if they go on. Ministers are sometimes so bashful and timorous, and so much at a loss, that they must be put on to speak, and to speak boldly.

But he that commands the prophet to speak gives him instructions what to say; and he must address himself to them as the house of Israel (Eze 11:5), for not the princes only, but all the people, were concerned to know the truth of their cause, to know the worst of it. They are the house of Israel, and therefore the God of Israel is concerned, in kindness to them, to give them warning; and they are concerned in duty to him to take the warning. And what is it that the must say to them in God's name?

1. Let them know that the God of heaven takes notice of the vain confidences with which they support themselves (Eze 11:5): "I know the things which come into your minds every one of them, what secret reasons you have for these resolutions, and what you aim at in putting so good a face upon a matter you know to be bad."

Note, God perfectly knows not only the things that come out of our mouths, but the things that come into our minds, not only all we

say, but all we think; even those thoughts that are most suddenly darted into our minds, and that as suddenly slip out of them again, so that we ourselves are scarcely aware of them, yet God knows them. He knows us better than we know ourselves; he understands our thoughts afar off. The consideration of this should oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thoughts come into them or lodge within them.

2. Let them know that those who advised the people to stand it out should be accounted before God the murderers of all who had fallen, or should yet fall, in Jerusalem, by the sword of the Chaldeans; and those slain were the only ones that should remain in the city, as the flesh in the caldron. "You have multiplied your slain in the city, not only those whom you have by the sword of justice unjustly put to death under colour of law, but those whom you have by your wilfulness and pride unwisely exposed to the sword of war, though you were told by the prophets that you should certainly go by the worst. Thus you, with your stubborn humour, have filled the streets of Jerusalem with the slain," Eze 11:6.

Note, Those who are either unrighteous or imprudent in beginning or carrying on a war bring upon themselves a great deal of the guilt of blood; and those who are slain in the battles or sieges which they, by such a reasonable peace as the war aimed at, might have prevented, will be called their slain. Now these slain are the only flesh that shall be left in this caldron, Eze 11:7. There shall none remain to keep possession of the city but those that are buried in it. There shall be no inhabitants of Jerusalem but the inhabitants of the graves there, no freemen of the city but the free among the dead.

3. Let them know that, how impregnable soever they thought their city to be, they should be forced out of it, either driven to flight or dragged into captivity: I will bring you forth out of the midst of it, whether you will or no, Eze 11:7,9. They had provoked God to forsake the city, and thought they should do well enough by their

own policy and strength when he was gone; but God will make them know that there is no peace to those that have left their God. If they have by their sins driven God from his house, he will soon by his judgments drive them from theirs; and it will be found that those are least safe that are most secure: "This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall you be the flesh; you shall not soak away in it as you promise yourselves, and die in your nest; you think yourself safe in the midst thereof, but you shall not be long there."

4. Let them know that when God has got them out of the midst of Jerusalem he will pursue them with his judgments wherever he finds them, the judgments which they thought to shelter themselves from by keeping close in Jerusalem. They feared the sword if they should go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their caldron, but, says God, I will bring a sword upon you (Eze 11:8) and you shall fall by the sword, Eze 11:10.

Note, The fear of the wicked shall come upon him. And there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission, no, not in walls of brass. They were afraid of trusting to the mercy of strangers. "But," says God, "I will deliver you into the hands of strangers, whose resentments you shall feel, since you were not willing to lie at their mercy." See Jer 38:17,18.

They thought to escape the judgments of God, but God says that he will execute judgments upon them; and whereas they resolved, if they must be judged, that it should be in Jerusalem, God tells them (Eze 11:10,11) that he will judge them in the borders of Israel, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar slew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the utmost border of the land of Canaan.

Note, Those who have taken ever so deep root in the place where they live cannot be sure that in that place they shall die. 5. Let them know that all this is the due punishment of their sin, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God against them: You

shall know that I am the Lord, Eze 11:10,12. Those shall be made to know by the sword of the Lord who would not be taught by his word what a hatred he has to sin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent sinners to fall into his hands. I will execute judgments, and then you shall know that I am the Lord, for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes upon those that have not walked in his statutes. Hereby it is known that he made the law, because he punishes the breach of it. I will execute judgments among you (says God) because you have not executed my judgments, Eze 11:12.

Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in a uniform steady course of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us in our ruin and confusion. One way or other. God's judgments will be executed; the law will take place either in its precept or in its penalty. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will get him honour upon us by executing his judgments as he has threatened; and thus we shall know that he is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked.

And observe, When they cast off God's statutes, and walked not in them, they did after the manners of the heathen that were round about them, and introduced into their worship all their impure, ridiculous, and barbarous usages. When men leave the settled rule of divine institutions, they wander endlessly. Justly therefore was this made the reason why they should keep God's ordinances, that they might not commit the abominable customs of the heathen, Le 18:30.

5 And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak;
Thus saith the Lord; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I
know the things that come into your mind, *every one of* them.
6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the
streets thereof with the slain.

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Your slain whom ye have laid
in the midst of it, they *are* the flesh, and this *city is* the caldron: but
I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.
8 Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith
the Lord God.
9 And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into
the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you.
10 Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel;
and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.
11 This *city* shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in
the midst thereof; *but* I will judge you in the border of Israel:
12 and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord: for ye have not walked in
my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after
the manners of the heathen that *are* round about you.
13 And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of
Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud
voice, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the
remnant of Israel?

This awakening word is here immediately followed by an awakening providence, Eze 11:13. Here we may observe,

1. With what power Ezekiel prophesied, or, rather, what a divine power went along with it: It came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died; he was mentioned (Eze 11:1) as a principal man among the twenty-five princes that made all the mischief in Jerusalem. It should seem, this was done in vision now, as the slaying of the ancient men (Eze 9:6) upon occasion of which Ezekiel prayed (Eze 11:8) as he did here; but it was an assurance that when this prophecy should be published it should be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earnest of the complete accomplishment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleased often-times to single out some sinners, and to make them monuments of his justice, for warning to others of what is coming; and some that thought themselves very safe and snatched away suddenly, and drop down dead in an instant, as Ananias and Sapphira at Peter's feet when he prophesied.

2. With what pity Ezekiel prayed. Thought the sudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecy, and really an honour to him, yet he was in deep concern about it, and laid it to heart as if he had been his relation or friend: He fell on his face and cried with a loud voice, as one in earnest, "Ah! Lord God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel? Many are swept away by the judgments we have been under; and shall the remnant which have escaped the sword die thus by the immediate hand of heaven? Then thou wilt indeed make a full end." Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infirmity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to mourn so long for Saul; but thus he showed how far he was from desiring the woeful day he foretold. David lamented the sickness of those that hated and persecuted him. And we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, yea, though they are wicked.

The Promise of Restoration and Renewal

14 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

Prophecy was designed to exalt every valley as well as to bring low every mountain and hill (Isa 40:4), and prophets were to speak not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the despised and desponding that trembled at God's word. The prophet Ezekiel, having in the former part of this chapter received instructions for the awakening of those that were at ease in Zion, is in these verses furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon and by the rivers there sat weeping when they remembered Zion. Observe,

How the pious captives were trampled upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, Eze 11:15. God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon. God had owned them as good figs, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon; but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing those that were really the best saints

to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Observe,

1. How they are described: They are thy brethren (says God to the prophet), whom thou hast a concern and affection for; they are the men of thy kindred (the men of thy redemption, so the word is), thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession belongs, but who are so far from being able to do it that they have themselves gone into captivity. They are the whole house of Israel; God so accounts of them because they only have retained their integrity, and are bettered by their captivity. They were not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit; they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances; and perhaps upon that account they are called his brethren and the men of his kindred.

2. How they were disowned by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they said of them, Get you far from the Lord. Those that were at ease and proud themselves scorned their brethren that were humbled and under humbling providences.

(1.) They cut them off from being members of their church. Because they had separated themselves from their rulers and in compliance with the will of God had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon, they excommunicated them, and said, "Get you far from the Lord; we will have nothing to do with you." Those that were superstitious were very willing to shake off those that were conscientious, and were severe in their censures of them and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord and were cut off from the communion of the faithful.

(2.) They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part or lot in the matter: "Unto us is this land given in possession, and you have forfeited your estates by surrendering to the king of Babylon, and we have thereby become entitled to them." God takes notice of, and is

much displeased with, the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

15 Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, *are* they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession.

16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

The gracious promises which God made to them in consideration of the insolent conduct of their brethren towards them. Those that hated them and cast them out said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to their joy, Isa 66:5. God owns that his hand had gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them (Eze 11:16):

"It is true I have cast them far off among the heathen and scattered them among the countries; they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations that they will be lost among them; but I have mercy in store for them." Note, God takes occasion from the contempts which are put upon his people to speak comfort to them, as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his people's hopes is when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair. Now God promises,

1. That he will make up to them the want of the temple and the privileges of it (Eze 11:16): I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come. Those at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; those in Babylon have God, though without the temple.

(1.) God will be a sanctuary to them; that is, a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on the horns of the altar. Or, rather, they shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity as it was

thought could be had nowhere but in the temple. They shall there see God's power and his glory, as they used to see them in the sanctuary; they shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as well as ever the altar sanctified the gift, so that they shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.

(2.) He will be a little sanctuary, not seen or observed by their enemies, who looked with an evil and an envious eye upon that house at Jerusalem which was high and great, 1Ki 9:8. They were but few and mean, and a little sanctuary was fittest for them. God regards the low estate of his people, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the condescensions of divine grace. The great God will be to his people a little sanctuary. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communications of divine grace and comforts.

2. That God would in due time put an end to their afflictions, bring them out of the land of their captivity, and settle them again, them or their children, in their own land (Eze 11:17): "I will gather even you that are thus dispersed, thus despised, and given over for lost by your own countrymen; I will gather you from the people, distinguish you from those with whom you are mingled, deliver you from those by whom you are held captives, and assemble you in a body out of the countries where you have been scattered; you shall not come back one by one, but all together, which will make your return more honourable, safe, and comfortable; and then I will give you the land of Israel, which now your brethren look upon you as for ever shut out from."

Note, It is well for us that men's severe censures cannot cut us off from God's gracious promises. There are many that will be found to have a place in the holy land whom uncharitable men, by their monopolies of it to themselves, had secluded from it. I will give you the land of Israel, give it to you again by a new grant, and they shall come thither. If there be any thing in the change of the person

from you to them, it may signify the posterity of those to whom the promise is made. "You shall have the title as the patriarchs had, and those that come after shall have the possession."

3. That God by his grace would part between them and their sins, Eze 11:18. Their captivity shall effectually cure them of their idolatry: When they come thither to their own land again they shall take away all the detestable things thereof. Their idols, that had been their delectable things, should now be looked upon with detestation, not only the idols of Babylon, where they were captives, but the idols of Canaan, where they were natives; they should not only not worship them as they had done, but they should not suffer any monuments of them to remain: They shall take all the abominations thereof thence. Note, Then it is in mercy that we return to a prosperous estate, when we return not to the sins and follies of that state. What have I to do any more with idols?

4. That God would powerfully dispose them to their duty; they shall not only cease to do evil, but they shall learn to do well, because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace.

(1.) God will plant good principles in them; he will make the tree good, Eze 11:19. This is a gospel promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven whom he has prepared heaven for. It is promised,

[1.] That God will give them one heart, a heart entire for the true God and not divided as it had been among many gods, a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God and not wavering, steady and uniform, and not inconstant with itself. One heart is a sincere and upright heart, its intentions of a piece with its professions.

[2.] That he will put a new spirit within them, a temper of mind agreeable to the new circumstances into which God in his providence would bring them. All that are sanctified have a new

spirit, quite different from what it was; they act from new principles, walk by new rules, and aim at new ends. A new name, or a new face, will not serve without a new spirit. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

[3.] That he will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be, as they have been, dead and dry, and hard and heavy, as a stone, no longer incapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost upon it, as it was on the stony ground.

[4.] That he will give them a heart of flesh, not dead or proud flesh, but living flesh; he will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pains and spiritual pleasures, will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions. This is God's work, it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change it is that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land; for then such a change of the condition is for the better indeed when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the better country, that is, the heavenly.

(2.) Their practices shall be consonant to those principles: I will give them a new spirit, not that they may be able to discourse well of religion and to dispute for it, but that they may walk in my statues in their whole conversation and keep my ordinances in all acts of religious worship, Eze 11:20.

These two must go together; and those to whom God has given a new heart and a new spirit will make conscience of both; and then they shall be my people and I will be their God. The ancient covenant, which seemed to be broken and forgotten, shall be renewed. By their idolatry, it should seem, they had cast God off; by their captivity, it should seem, God had cast them off. But when they were cured of their idolatry, and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Israel own one another again. God, by his good work in them, will make them his people; and then, by the

tokens of his good-will towards them, he will show that he is their God.

17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh:

20 that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But *as for them* whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God.

Here is a threatening of wrath against those who hated to be reformed. As, when judgments are threatened, the righteous are distinguished so as not to share in the evil of those judgments, so, when favours are promised, the wicked are distinguished so as not to share in the comfort of those favours; they have no part nor lot in the matter, Eze 11:21. But, as for those that have no grace, what have they to do with peace? Observe,

1. Their description. Their heart walks after the heart of their detestable things; they have as great a minds to worship devils as devils have to be worshipped. Or, in opposition to the new heart which God gives his people, which is a heart after his own heart, they have a heart after the heart of their idols; in their temper and practice they conformed to the characters and accounts given them of their idols, and the ideas they had of them, and of them they learned lewdness and cruelty. Here lies the root of all their wickedness, the corruption of the heart; as the root of their reformation is laid in the renovation of the heart. The heart has its walks, and according as those are the man is.

2. Their doom. It carries both justice and terror in it: I will recompense their way upon their own heads; I will deal with them as they deserve. There needs no more than this to speak God righteous, that he does but render to men according to their deserts: and yet such are the deserts of sin that there needs no more than this to speak the sinner miserable.

22 Then did the cherubim lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above.

Here is,

1 The departure of God's presence from the city and temple. When the message was committed to the prophet, and he was fully apprized of it, fully instructed how to separate between the precious and the vile, then the cherubim lifted up their wings and the wheels beside them (Eze 11:22) as before, Eze 10:19. Angels, when they have done their errands in this lower world, are upon the wing to be gone, for they lose no time. We left the glory of the Lord last at the east gate of the temple (Eze 10:19), which is here said to be in the midst of the city.

Now here we are told that, finding and wondering that there was none to intercede, none to uphold, none to invite its return, it removed next to the mountain which is on the east side of the city (Eze 11:23); that was the mount of Olives. On this mountain they had set up their idols, to confront God in his temple, when he dwelt there (1Ki 11:7), and thence it was called the mount of corruption (2Ki 23:13); therefore there God does as it were set up his standard, his tribunal, as it were to confront those who thought to keep possession of the temple for themselves now that God had left it. From that mountain there was a full prospect of the city; thither God removed, to make good what he had said (De 32:20), I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be. It was from this mountain that Christ beheld the city and wept over it, in the foresight of its last destruction by the Romans.

The glory of the Lord removed thither, to be as it were yet within call, and ready to return if now at length, in this their day, they

would have understood the things that belonged to their peace. Loth to depart bids oft farewell. God, by going away thus slowly, thus gradually, intimated that he left them with reluctance, and would not have gone if they had not perfectly forced him from them. He did now, in effect, say, How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? But, though he bear long, he will not bear always, but will at length forsake those, and cast them off for ever, who have forsaken him and cast him off.

2 The departure of this vision from the prophet. At length it went up from him (Eze 11:24); he saw it mount upwards, till it went out of sight, which would be a confirmation to his faith that it was a heavenly vision, that it descended from above, for thitherward it returned. Note, The visions which the saints have of the glory of God will not be constant will they come to heaven. They have glimpses of that glory, which they soon lose again, visions which go up from them, tastes of divine pleasures, but not a continual feast. It was from the mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain, when those that had seen him manifested in the flesh saw him no more. It was foretold (Zec 14:4) that his feet should stand upon the mount of Olives, stand last there.

3. The prophet's return to those of the captivity. The same spirit that had carried him in a trance or ecstasy to Jerusalem brought him back to Chaldea; for there the bounds of his habitation are at present appointed, and that is the place of his service. The Spirit came to him, not to deliver him out of captivity, but (which was equivalent) to support and comfort him in his captivity.

4. The account which he gave to his hearers of all he had seen and heard, Eze 11:25. He received that he might give, and he was faithful to him that appointed him; he delivered his message very honestly: he spoke all that, and that only, which God had shown him. He told them of the great wickedness he had seen at Jerusalem, and the ruin that was hastening towards that city, that they might not repent of their surrendering themselves to the king

of Babylon as Jeremiah advised them, and blame themselves for it, nor envy those that staid behind, and laughed at them for going when they did, nor wish themselves there again, but be content in their captivity. Who would covet to be in a city so full of sin and so near to ruin? It is better to be in Babylon under the favour of God than in Jerusalem under his wrath and curse.

But, though this was delivered immediately to those of the captivity, yet we may suppose that they sent the contents of it to those at Jerusalem, with whom they kept up a correspondence; and well would it have been for Jerusalem if she had taken the warning hereby given.

23 And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which *is* on the east side of the city.

24 Afterward the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.

25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had showed me.

Ezekiel-12

Ezekiel Portrays the Removal into Captivity

1 The word of the Lord also came unto me, saying,

Perhaps Ezekiel reflected with so much pleasure upon the vision he had had of the glory of God that often, since it went up from him, he was wishing it might come down to him again, and, having seen it once and a second time, he was willing to hope he might be a third time so favoured; but we do not find that he ever saw it any more, and yet the word of the Lord comes to him; for God did in divers manners speak to the fathers (Heb 1:1) and they often heard the words of God when they did not see the visions of the Almighty. Faith comes by hearing that word of prophecy which is more sure than vision. We may keep up our communion with God without raptures and ecstasies. In these verses the prophet is directed,

By what signs and actions to express the approaching captivity of Zedekiah king of Judah; that was the thing to be foretold, and it is foretold to those that are already in captivity, because as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne they flattered themselves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whose yoke he was now projecting to shake off, from which, it is probable, these poor captives promised themselves great things; and it may be, when he was forming that design, he privately sent encouragement to them to hope that he would rescue them shortly, or procure their liberty by exchange of prisoners.

While they were fed with these vain hopes they could not set themselves either to submit to their affliction or to get good by their affliction. It was therefore necessary, but very difficult, to convince them that Zedekiah, instead of being their deliverer, should very shortly be their fellow-suffered. Now, one would think it might have been sufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God's name, as he does afterwards (Eze 12:10); but, to prepare them for the prophecy of it, he must first give them a sign of it, must speak it to their eyes first and then to their ears: and here we have,

1 The reason why he must take this method (Eze 12:2): It is because they are a stupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not heed or will soon forget what they only hear of, or at least will not be at all affected with it; it will make no impression at all upon them: Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, whom it is next to impossible to work any good upon. They have eyes and ears, they have intellectual powers and faculties, but they see not, they hear not. They were idolaters, whose character it was that they were like the idols they worshipped, which have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, Ps 115:5,6,8.

Note, Those are to be reckoned rebellious that shut their eyes against the divine light and stop their ears to the divine law. The ignorance of those that are wilfully ignorant, that have faculties

and means and will not use them, is so far from being their excuse that it adds rebellion to their sin. None so blind, so deaf, as those that will not see, that will not hear. They see not, they hear not; for they are a rebellious house. The cause is all from themselves: the darkness of the understanding is owing to the stubbornness of the will. Now this is the reason why he must speak to them by signs, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either instructed or ashamed.

Note, Ministers must accommodate themselves not only to the weakness, but to the wilfulness of those they deal with, and deal with them accordingly: if they dwell among those that are rebellious they must speak to them the more plainly and pressingly, and take that course that is most likely to work upon them, that they may be left inexcusable.

2 The method he just take to awaken and affect them; he must furnish himself with all necessaries for removing (Eze 12:3), provide for a journey clothes and money; he must remove from one place to another, as one unsettled and forced to shift; this he must do by day, in the sight of the people; he must bring out all his household goods, to be packed up and sent away (Eze 12:4); and, because all the doors and gates were either locked up that they could not pass through them or so guarded by the enemy that they durst not, he must therefore dig through the wall, and convey his goods away clandestinely through that breach in the wall, Eze 12:5.

He must carry his goods away himself upon his own shoulders, for want of a servant to attend him; he must do this in the twilight, that he might not be discovered; and, when he has made what shift he can to secure some of the best of his effects, he must himself steal away at evening in their sight, with fear and trembling, and must go as those that go forth into captivity (Eze 12:4); that is, he must cover his face (Eze 12:6) as being ashamed to be seen and afraid to be known, or in token of very great sorrow and concern; he must

go away as a poor broken tradesman, who, when he is forced to shut up shop, hides his head, or quits his country.

Thus Ezekiel must be himself a sign to them; and when perhaps he seemed somewhat backward to put himself to all this trouble, and to expose himself to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it God says (Eze 12:3) "It may be they will consider, and will by it be taken off from their vain confidence, though they be a rebellious house."

Note, We must not despair even of the worst, but that yet they may be brought to bethink themselves and repent; and therefore we must continue the use of proper means for their conviction and conversion, because, while there is life, there is hope. And ministers must be willing to go through the most difficult and inconvenient offices (for such was this of Ezekiel's removing), though there be but the it may be of success. If but one soul be awakened to consider, our care and pains will be well bestowed.

3. Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him (Eze 12:7): I did so as I was commanded. Hereby he teaches us all, and ministers especially,

(1.) To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, even the most difficult. Christ himself learned obedience, and so we must all.

(2.) To do all we can for the good of the souls of others, to put ourselves to any trouble or pains for the conviction of those that are unconvinced. We do all things (that is, we are willing to do any thing), dearly beloved, for your edifying. (3.) To be ourselves affected with those things wherewith we desire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give his hearers a melancholy prospect he does himself put on a melancholy aspect.

(4.) To sit loose to this world, and prepare to leave it, to carry out our stuff for removing, because we have here no continuing city. Arise, depart, this it not your rest, for it is polluted. Thou dwellest in a rebellious house, therefore prepare for removing; for who would not be willing to leave such a house, such a wicked world as this is?

2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which
have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not:
for they *are* a rebellious house.
3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and
remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place
to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though
they *be* a rebellious house.
4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff
for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they
that go forth into captivity.
5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.
6 In their sight shalt thou bear *it* upon *thy* shoulders, *and* carry *it*
forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the
ground: for I have set thee *for* a sign unto the house of Israel.
7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day,
as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with
mine hand; I brought *it* forth in the twilight, *and* I bare *it* upon *my*
shoulder in their sight.
8 And in the morning came the word of the Lord unto me, saying,
9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said
unto thee, What doest thou?

He is directed by what words to explain those signs and actions, as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told whose binding was thereby signified. But observe, It was not till morning that God gave him an exposition of the sign, till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for instruction. As what God does, so what he directs us to do, perhaps we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

1. It was supposed that the people would ask the meaning of this sing, or at least they should (Eze 12:9): "Hath not the house of

Israel said unto thee, What doest thou? Yes, I know they have. Though they are a rebellious house, yet they are inquisitive concerning the mind of God," as those (Isa 58:2) who sought God daily.

Therefore the prophet must do such a strange uncouth thing, that they might enquire what it meant; and then, it may be hoped, people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it, when it comes to them in answer to their enquiries. But some understand it as an intimation that they had not made any such enquiries: "Hath not this rebellious house so much as asked thee, What doest thou? No; they take no notice of it; but tell them the meaning of it, though they do not ask."

Note, When God sends to us by his ministers he observes what entertainment we give to the messages he sends us; he hearkens and hears what we say to them, and what enquiries we make upon them, and is much displeased if we pass them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word we should apply to our ministers for further instruction; and then we shall know if we thus follow on to know.

2 The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general (Eze 12:10), This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem; they knew who that was, and gloried in it now that they were in captivity that they had a prince of their own in Jerusalem, and that the house of Israel was yet entire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough. "But tell them," says God, "that in what thou hast done they may read the doom of their friends at Jerusalem. Say, I am your sign," Eze 12:11.

As the conversation of ministers should teach the people what they should do, so the providences of God concerning them are sometimes intended to tell them what they must expect. The unsettled state and removals of ministers give warning to people what they must expect in this world, no continuance, but constant changes. When times of trouble are coming on Christ

tells his disciples, They shall first lay their hands on you, Lu 21:12.

(1.) The people shall be led away into captivity (Eze 12:11): As I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall be forced away from their own houses, no more to return to them, neither shall their place know them any more. We cannot say concerning our dwelling-place that it is our resting-place; for how far we may be tossed from it before we die we cannot foresee.

(2.) The prince shall in vain attempt to make his escape; for he also shall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the same to his face (Jer 34:3): Thou shalt not escape, but shalt surely be taken. Ezekiel here foretels it to those who made him their confidence and promised themselves relief from him.

[1.] That he shall himself carry away his own goods: He shall bear upon his shoulder some of his most valuable effects.

Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter. He that was wont to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noon-day, shall now himself carry his goods on his back and steal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change sin makes with men! All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby. Men shall be their own house-breakers, and steal away their own goods; so it is when the sword of war has cancelled all right and property.

[2.] That he shall attempt to escape in a disguise, with a mask or a visor on, which shall cover his face, so that he shall be able only to look before him, and shall not see the ground with his eyes. He who, when he was in pomp, affected to be seen, now that he is in his flight is afraid to be seen; let none therefore either be proud of being looked at or over-much pleased with

looking about them, when they see a king with his face covered, that he cannot see the ground.

[3.] That he shall be made a prisoner and carried captive into Babylon (Eze 12:13): My net will I spread upon him and he shall be taken in my snare. It seemed to be the Chaldeans' net and their snare, but God owns them for his. Those that think to escape the sword of the Lord will find themselves taken in his net. Jeremiah had said that king Zedekiah should see the king of Babylon and that he should go to Babylon; Ezekiel says, He shall be brought to Babylon, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there.

Those that were disposed to cavil would perhaps object that these two prophets contradicted one another; for one said, He shall see the king of Babylon, the other said, He shall not see Babylon; and yet both proved true: he did see the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he passed sentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, so that he did not see Babylon when he was brought thither. These captives expected to see their prince come to Babylon as a conqueror, to bring them out of their trouble; but he shall come thither a prisoner, and his disgrace will be a great addition to their troubles. Little joy could they have in seeing him when he could not see them.

[4.] That all his guards should be dispersed and utterly disabled for doing him any service (Eze 12:14): I will scatter all that are about him to help him, so that he shall be left helpless; I will scatter them among the nations and disperse them in the countries (Eze 12:15), to be monuments of divine justice wherever they go. But are there not hopes that they may rally again? (he that flies one time may fight another time); no: I will draw out the sword after them, which shall cut them off wherever if finds them; for the sword that God draws out will be sure to do the execution designed. Yet of Zedekiah's scattered troops some shall escape (Eze 12:16):

I will leave a few men of them. Though they shall all be scattered, yet they shall not all be cut off; some shall have their lives given them for a prey. And the end for which they are thus remarkably spared is very observable: That they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; the troubles they are brought into will bring them to themselves and to their right mind, and then they will acknowledge the justice of God in all that is brought upon them and will make an ingenuous confession of their sins, which provoked God thus to contend with them; and, as by this it shall appear that they were spared in mercy, so hereby they will make a suitable grateful return to God for his favours to them in sparing them.

Note, When God has remarkably delivered us from the deaths wherewith we were surrounded we must look upon it that for this end, among others, we were spared, that we might glorify God and edify others by making a penitent acknowledgment of our sins. Those that by their afflictions are brought to this are then made to know that God is the Lord and may help to bring others to the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil. The dispersion of sinners, who had done God much dishonour and disservice in their own country, proves the dispersion of penitents, who shall do him much honour and service in others countries. The Levites are by a curse divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel, yet it is turned into a blessing, for thereby they have the fairest opportunity to teach Jacob God's laws.

10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that *are* among them.

11 Say, I *am* your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove *and* go into captivity.

12 And the prince that *is* among them shall bear upon *his* shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with *his* eyes.

13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my
snare: and I will bring him to Babylon *to* the land of the Chaldeans;
yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.
14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that *are* about him to help
him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.
15 And they shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I shall scatter them
among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.
16 But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the
famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their
abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they
shall know that I *am* the Lord.
17 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,
18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with
trembling and with carefulness;

Here again the prophet is made a sign to them of the desolations that were coming on Judah and Jerusalem.

1. He must himself eat and drink in care and fear, especially when he was in company, Eze 12:17,18. Though he was under no apprehension of danger to himself, but lived in safety and plenty, yet he must eat his bread with quaking (the bread of sorrows, Ps 127:2) and drink his water with trembling and with carefulness, that he might express the calamitous condition of those that should be in Jerusalem during the siege; not that he must dissemble and pretend to be in fear and care when really he was not; but having to foretel this judgment, to show that he firmly believed it himself, and yet was far from desiring it, in the prospect of it he was himself affected with grief and fear.

Note, When ministers speak of the ruin coming upon impenitent sinners they must endeavour to speak feelingly, as those that know the terrors of the Lord; and they must be content to endure hardness, so that they may but do good.

2. He must tell them that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should in like manner eat and drink with care and fear, Eze 12:19,20. Both those that have their home in Jerusalem and those of the land of

Israel that come to shelter themselves there, shall eat their bread with carefulness and drink their water with astonishment, either because they are afraid it will not hold out, but they shall want shortly, or because they are continually expecting the alarms of the enemy, their life hanging in doubt before them (De 28:66), so that what they have they shall have no enjoyment of nor will it do them any good.

Note, Care and fear, if they prevail, are enough to embitter all our comforts and are themselves very sore judgments. They shall be reduced to these straits that thus by degrees, and by the hand of those that thus straiten them, both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is no less than an utter destruction of both that is aimed at in these judgments--that her land may be desolate from all the fulness thereof, may be stripped of all its ornaments and robbed of all its fruits, and then of course the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, for they are served by the field. This universal desolation was coming upon them, and then no wonder that they eat their bread with care and fear. Now we are here told,

(1.) How bad the cause of this judgment was; it is because of the violence of all those that dwell therein, their injustice and oppression, and the mischief they did one another, for which God would reckon with them, as well as for the affronts put upon him in his worship. Note, The decay of virtue in a nation brings on a decay of every thing else; and when neighbours devour one another it is just with God to bring enemies upon them to devour them all.

(2.) How good the effect of this judgment should be: You shall know that I am the Lord; and if, by these judgments, they learn to know him aright, that will make up the loss of all they are deprived of by these desolations. Those are happy afflictions, how grievous soever to flesh and blood, that help to introduce us into and improve us in an acquaintance with God.

19 and say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God of the
inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and* of the land of Israel; They shall eat
their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with
astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is
therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.
20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land
shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.
21 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
22 Son of man, what *is* that proverb *that* ye have in the land of Israel,
saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

Various methods had been used to awaken this secure and careless people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be stirred up, by repentance and reformation, to prevent them.

The prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions, and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power that one would think they must needs be wrought upon; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it, namely, by telling themselves, and one another, that though these judgments threatened should come at last yet they would not come of a long time. This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered, and shown to be vain and groundless, in two separate messages which God sent to them by the prophet at different times, both to the same purport; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them, Eze 12:21,26. Observe,

How they flattered themselves with hopes that the judgments should be delayed. One saying they had, which had become proverbial in the land of Israel, Eze 12:22. They said, "The days are prolonged; the judgments have not come when they were expected to come, but seem to be still put off de die in diem--from day to day, and therefore we may conclude that every vision fails, because it should seem that some do, that because the destruction has not come yet it will never come; we will

never trust a prophet again, for we have been more frightened than hurt.

"And another saying they had which, if it would not conquer their convictions, yet would cool their affections and abate their concern, and that was, "The vision is for a great while to come; it refers to events at a vast distance, and he prophesies of things which, though they may be true, are yet very far off, so that we need not trouble our heads about them (Eze 12:27); we may die in honour and peace before these troubles come."

And, if indeed the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themselves easy, as Hezekiah did. Is it not well if peace and truth shall be in my days? But it was a great mistake, and they did but deceive themselves into their own ruin; and God is here much displeased at it; for,

1. It was a wretched abuse of the patience of God, who, because for a time he kept silence, was thought to be altogether such a one as themselves, Ps 50:21. That forbearance of God which should have led them to repentance hardened them in sin. They were willing to think their works were not evil because sentence against them was not executed speedily; and therefore concluded the vision itself failed, because the days were prolonged.

2. It received countenance form the false prophets that were among them, as should seem from the notice God takes (Eze 12:24) of the vain visions, and flattering divinations, even within the house of Israel, to whom were committed the oracles of God. No marvel if those that deceived themselves by worshipping pretended deities deceived themselves also by crediting pretended prophecies, to which strong delusions God justly gave them up for their idolatries.

3. These sayings had become proverbial; they were industriously spread among the people, so that they had got into

very one's mouth, and not only so, but were generally assented to, as proverbs usually are, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but those of the moderns too.

Note, It is a token of universal degeneracy in a nation when corrupt and wicked sayings have grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan by them to confirm men in their prejudices against the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not serve for an excuse, in saying ill, to plead that it is a common saying.

23 Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

How they are assured that they do but deceive themselves, for the judgments shall be hastened, these profane proverbs shall be confronted: Tell them, therefore, The days are at hand (Eze 12:23), and again, There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, Eze 12:28. Their putting the evil day far from them does but provoke God to bring it the sooner upon them; and it will be so much the sorer, so much the heavier, so much the more a surprise and terror to them when it does come. He must tell them,

1. That God will certainly silence the lying proverbs, and the lying prophecies, with which they buoyed up their vain hopes, and will make them ashamed of both:

(1.) I will make this proverb to cease; for when they find the days of vengeance have come, and not one iota or tittle of the prediction falls to the ground, they will be ashamed to use it as a proverb in Israel, The days are prolonged, and the vision fails. Note, Those that will not have their eyes opened and their mistakes rectified, by the word of God, shall be undeceived by his judgments: for every mouth that speaks perverse things shall be stopped.

(2.) There shall be no more any vain vision, Eze 12:24. The false prophets, who told the people they should have peace and should soon see an end of their troubles, shall be disproved by the event, and then shall be ashamed of their pretensions, and shall hide their heads and impose silence upon themselves. Note, As truth was older than error, so it will survive it; it got the start, and it will get the race. The true prophets' visions and predictions stand, and are in full force, power, and virtue; they give law, and receive credit, when the vain visions, and the flattering divinations, are lost and forgotten, and shall be no more in the house of Israel; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

2. That God will certainly, and very shortly, accomplish every word that he has spoken. With what majesty does he say it (Eze 12:25): I am the LORD! I am Jehovah! That glorious name of his speaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it, and therefore to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promise not yet performed, he was not known by his name Jehovah, Ex 6:3. But, as he is Jehovah in making good his promise, so he is in making good his threatenings. Let them know then that God, with whom they have to do, is the great Jehovah, and therefore,

(1.) He will speak, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear: I am the Lord, I will speak. God will have his saying, whoever gainsays it. God's oracles are called lively ones, for they still speak when the pagan oracles are long ago struck dumb. There has been, and shall be, a succession of God's ministers to the end of the world, by whom he will speak; and, though contempt may be put upon them, that shall not put a period to their ministration: In your days, O rebellious house! will I say the word. Even in the worst ages of the church God left not himself without witness, but raised up men that spoke for him, that spoke from him. I will say the word, the word that shall stand.

(2.) The word that he speaks shall come to pass; it shall infallibly be accomplished according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compass of it: I will say the

word and will perform it (Eze 12:25), for his mind is never changed, nor his arm shortened, nor is Infinite Wisdom ever nonplussed. With men saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God; with him it is dictum, factum--said, and done.

In the works of providence, as in those of creation, he speaks and it is done; for he said, Let there be light, and there was light--Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament, Nu 23:19,1Sa 15:29. Whereas they had said, Every vision fails (Eze 12:22), God says, "No, there shall be the effect of every vision (Eze 12:23); it shall not return void, but every sign shall be answered by the thing signified." Those that see the visions of the Almighty do not see vain visions; God confirms the word of his servants by performing it.

(3.) It shall be accomplished very shortly: "The days are at hand when you shall see the effect of every vision, Eze 12:23. It is said, it is sworn, that delay shall be no longer (Re 10:6); the year of God's patience has now just expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the sentence. It shall be no more prolonged (Eze 12:25); he has borne with you a great while, but he will not bear always. In your days, O rebellious house! shall the word that is said be performed, and you shall see the threatened judgments and share in them. Behold, the Judge stands at the door. The righteous are taken away from the evil to come, but this rebellious house shall not be so quietly taken away; no, they shall live to be hurried away, to be chased out of the world." This is repeated (Eze 12:28): "There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but judgment shall now hasten on apace; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing the deeper shall the arrow pierce."

When we tell sinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think by them to persuade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels (they will own that they do believe there is a state of rewards and punishments in the other world), yet they put by the force of those great truths, and void the

impressions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote; they tell us, "The vision you see is for many days to come, and you prophesy of the times that are very far off; it will be time enough to think of them when they come nearer," whereas really there is but a step between us and death, between us and an awful eternity; yet a little while and the vision shall speak and not lie, and therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready with all speed for a future state; for, though it is future, it is very near, and while impenitent sinners slumber their damnation slumbers not.

24 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

25 For I *am* the Lord : I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God.

26 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying,

27 Son of man, behold, *they of* the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth *is* for many days *to come,* and he prophesieth of the times *that are* far off.

28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-13

False Prophets Condemned

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord ;

The false prophets, who are here prophesied against, were some of them at Jerusalem (Jer 23:14): I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem a horrible thing; some of them among the captives in Babylon, for to them Jeremiah writes (Jer 29:8), Let not your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you. And as God's

prophets, though at a distance from each other in place or time, yet preached the same truths, which was an evidence that they were guided by one and the same good Spirit, so the false prophets prophesied the same lies, being actuated by one and the same spirit of error. There were little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were so hardened in their sin; yet Ezekiel must prophesy against them, in hopes that the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a testimony will be left upon record against them, and they will thereby be left inexcusable.

Ezekiel had express orders to prophesy against the prophets of Israel; so they called themselves, as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. But it is observable that Israel was never imposed upon by pretenders to prophecy till after they had rejected and abused the true prophets; as, afterwards, they were never deluded by counterfeit messiahs till after they had refused the true Messiah and rejected him. These false prophets must be required to hear the word of the Lord. They took upon them to speak what concerned others as from God; let them now hear what concerned themselves as from him. And two things the prophet is directed to do:--

To discover their sin to them, and to convince them of that if possible, or thereby to prevent their proceeding any further, by making manifest their folly unto all men, 2Ti 3:9. They are here called foolish prophets (Eze 13:3), men that did not at all understand the business they pretended to; to make fools of the people they made fools of themselves, and put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. Let us see what is here laid to their charge.

1. They pretend to have a commission from God, whereas he never sent them. They thrust themselves into the prophetic office, without warrant from him who is the Lord God of the holy prophets, which was a foolish thing; for how could they expect that God should own them in a work to which he never called them? They are prophets out of their own hearts (so the margin reads it, Eze 13:2), prophets of their own making, Eze 13:6.

They say, The Lord saith; they pretend to be his messengers, but the Lord has not sent them, has not given them any orders. They counterfeit the broad seal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind, for hereby they put a reproach upon divine revelation, lessen its credit, and weaken its credibility. When these pretenders are found to be deceivers atheists and infidels will thence infer, They are all so. The Lord has not sent them; for though crafty enough in other things like the foxes, and very wise for the world, yet they are foolish prophets and have no experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Note, Foolish prophets are not of God's sending, for whom he sends he either finds fit or makes fit. Where he gives warrant he gives wisdom.

2. They pretend to have instructions from God, whereas he never made himself and his mind known to them: They followed their own spirit (Eze 13:3); they delivered that as a message from God which was the product either of their subtle invention, to serve a turn for themselves, or of their own crazed and heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy. For they have seen nothing, they have not really had any heavenly vision; they pretend that what they say the Lord saith it, but God disowns it: "I have not spoken it, I never said it, never meant any such thing." What they delivered was not what they had seen or heard, as that is which the ministers of Christ deliver (1Jo 1:1), but either what they had dreamed or what they thought would please those they coveted to make an interest in; this is called their seeing vanity and lying divination (Eze 13:6); they pretended to have seen that which they did not see, and produced that as a divine truth which they knew to be false.

To the same purport (Eze 13:7): You have see a vain vision and spoken a lying divination, which had no divine original and would have no effect, but would certainly be disproved by the event; the words are changed (Eze 13:8): You have spoken vanity and seen lies; what they saw and what they said was all alike, a mere sham; they saw nothing, they said nothing, to the purpose, nothing that could be relied on or that deserved regard.

Again (Eze 13:9), They see vanity and divine lies; they pretended to have had visions, as the true prophets had, whereas really they had none, but either it was the creature of their own fancy (they thought they had a vision, as men in a delirium do, that was seeing vanity) or it was a fiction of their own politics, and they knew they had none, and then they saw lies, and divined lies. See Jer 23:16, &c.

Note, Since the devil is universally know to be the father of lies, those put the highest affront imaginable upon God who tell lies, and then father them upon him. But those that had put God's character upon Satan, in worshipping devils, arrived at length at such a pitch of impiety as to put Satan's character upon God.

3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They are like the foxes in the deserts, running to and fro, and seeming to be in a great hurry, but it was to get away and shift for their own safety, not to do any good: The hireling flees, and leaves the sheep. They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves.

But (Eze 13:5), "You have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge of the house of Israel. A breach is made in their fences, at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is the time to do them service; but you have done nothing to help them." They should have made intercession for them, to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no interest in heaven nor intercourse with heaven (as prophets used to have, Ge 20:7) and so could do them no service that way. They should have made it their business by preaching and advice to bring people to repentance and reformation, and so have made up the hedge, and put a stop to the judgments of God; but this was none of their care: they contrived how to pleased people, not how to profit them.

They saw a deluge of profaneness and impiety breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holiness, and threatening to crush them and bear them down, and then they should have come in to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, by witnessing against the wickedness of the time and place they lived in; but they thought that would be as dangerous a piece of service as standing in a breach to make it good against the besiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to stem the tide, stood not in the battle against vice and immorality, but basely deserted the cause of religion and reformation, in the day of the Lord, when it was proclaimed, Who is on the Lord's side? Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Ps 94:16. Those were unworthy the name of prophets that could think so favourably of sin, and had so little zeal for God and the public welfare.

4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened would never come, whereby they hardened those in sin whom they should have endeavoured to turn from sin (Eze 13:6): They have made others to hope that all should be well, and they should have peace, though they went on still in their trespasses, and that the event would confirm the word. They were still ready to say, "We will warrant you that these troubles will be at an end quickly, and we shall be in prosperity again." as if their warrants would confirm false prophecies, in defiance of God himself.

3 Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

He is directed to denounce the judgments of God against them for these sins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.

1. In general, here is a woe against them (Eze 13:3), and what that woe is we are told (Eze 13:8). Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. Note, Those are in a woeful condition that have God against them. Woe, and a thousand woes, to those that have made him their enemy.

2. In particular, they are sentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all (Eze 13:9): God's hand shall be upon them, to seize them and bring them to his bar, to shut them out from his presence, and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into his hands. They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of heaven, and authorized to preside in the congregation of his church on earth; but, by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to, they lost those that otherwise they might have enjoyed, Mt 5:19. Their doom is,

(1.) To be expelled from the communion of saints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it: They shall not be in the secret of my people; their folly shall be so clearly manifested that they shall never be consulted, nor their advice asked; they shall not be present at any debates about public affairs. Or, rather, they shall not be in the assembly of God's people for religious worship, for they shall be ashamed to show their heads there, when they are proved by the events to be false prophets, and, like Cain, shall go out from the presence of the Lord.

The people that are deceived by them shall abandon them, and resolve to have no more to do with them. Those that usurped Moses's chair shall not be allowed so much as a door-keeper's place. In the great day they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous (Ps 1:5), when God gathers his saints together to him (Ps 50:5,16), to be for ever with him.

(2.) To be expunged out of the book of the living. They shall die in their captivity, and shall die childless, shall leave no posterity to take their denomination from them, and so their names shall not be found among those who either themselves or their posterity returned out of Babylon, of whom a particular account was kept in a public register, which was called the writing of the house of Israel, such as we have Ezr 2:1-70 They shall not be found among the living in Jerusalem, Isa 4:3.

Or they shall not be found written among those whom God has from eternity chosen to be vessels of his mercy to eternity. We read of those who prophesied in Christ's name, and yet he will tell them that he never knew them (Mt 7:22,23), because they were not among those that were given to him. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, They shall not be written in the writing of eternal life, which is written for the righteous of the house of Israel. See Ps 69:28.

(3.) To be for ever excluded from the land of Israel. God has sworn in his wrath concerning them that they shall never enter with the returning captives into the land of Canaan, which a second time remains a rest for them. Note, Those who oppose the design of God's threatenings, and will not be awed and influenced by them, forfeit the benefit of his promises, and cannot expect to be comforted and encouraged by them.

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made *others* to hope that they would confirm the word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith *it;* albeit I have not spoken?

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I *am* against you, saith the Lord God.

9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord God.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and *there was* no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered *mortar:*

We have here more plain dealing with the false prophets, and some further articles of their doom. We have seen the people made ashamed of the false prophets (though sometimes they had been fond of them) and casting them away, as they shall do their false gods, with indignation; now here we find them as much ashamed of their false prophecies, which they had sometimes depended upon with much assurance. Observe,

How the people are deceived by the false prophets. Those flatterers seduce them, saying, Peace, and there was no peace, Eze 13:10. They pretended to have seen visions of peace, Eze 13:16. But that could not be, for there was no peace, saith the Lord God. There was no prosperity designed for them, and therefore there could be no ground for their security; yet they told them that God was at peace with them, and had mercy in reserve for them, and that the war they were engaged in with the Chaldeans should soon end in an honourable peace, and their land should enjoy a happy repose and tranquillity. They told the idolaters and other sinners that there was neither harm nor danger in the way they were in.

Thus they seduced God's people; they put a cheat upon them, led them into mistakes, and drew them aside out of that way of repentance and reformation which the other prophets were endeavouring to bring them into. Note, Those are the most dangerous seducers who suggest to sinners that which tends to lessen their dread of sin and their fear of God. Now this is compared to the building of a slight rotten wall, or, according to our Saviour's similitude, which is to the same purport with this (Mt 7:26), the building of a house upon the sand, which seems to be a shelter and protection for a while, but will fall when a storm comes. One false prophet built the wall, set up the notion that God was not at all displeased with Jerusalem, but that the city should be confirmed in its flourishing state, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleasing, and he that started it made himself very acceptable by it and was caressed by every body, which invited others to say the same.

They made the matter look yet more plausible and promising; they daubed the wall, which the first had built, but it was with untempered mortar, sorry stuff, that will not bind nor hold the bricks together; they had no ground for what they said, nor had it any consistency with itself, but was like ropes of sand. They did not strengthen the wall, were in no care to make it firm, to see that they went upon sure grounds; they only daubed it to hide the cracks and make it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any stress, much more to any distress, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees.

Note, Doctrines that are groundless, though ever so grateful, that are not built upon a scripture foundation nor fastened with a scripture cement, though ever so plausible, ever so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead; and those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but ill-built.

11 say unto them which daub *it* with untempered *mortar,* that it shall
fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great
hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend *it*.
12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where *is*
the daubing wherewith ye have daubed *it?*
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will even rend *it* with a stormy
wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine
anger, and great hailstones in *my* fury to consume *it*.

How they will be soon undeceived by the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth.

1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege which they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as an overflowing shower, or inundation (such as Solomon calls a sweeping rain that leaves no food, Pr 28:3), will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time: You, O great hailstones! shall fall, the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon-ball, battering this wall, and with

these a stormy wind, which is sometimes so strong as to rend the rocks (1Ki 19:11), much more an ill-built wall, Eze 13:11.

But that which makes this rain, and hail, and wind, most terrible is that they arise from the wrath of God, and are enforced by that; it is that which sends them; it is that which gives them the setting on (Eze 13:13); it is a stormy wind in my fury, and an overflowing shower in my anger, and great hailstones in my fury. The fury of Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, who highly resented Zedekiah's treachery, made the invasion very formidable, but that was nothing in comparison with God's displeasure. The staff in their hand is my indignation, Isa 10:5. Note, An angry God has winds and storms at command wherewith to alarm secure sinners; and his wrath makes them frightful and forcible indeed; for who can stand before him when he is angry?

2. This storm shall overturn the wall: it shall fall, and the wind shall rend it (Eze 13:11), the hailstones shall consume it (Eze 13:13); I will break it down (Eze 13:14) and bring it to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered; it will appear how false, how rotten it was, to the prophetical reproach of the builders. When the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jerusalem desolate then this credit of the prophets, and the hopes of the people, will both sink together; the former will be found false in flattering the people and the latter foolish in suffering themselves to be imposed upon by them, and so exposed to so much the greater confusion, when the judgment shall surprise them in their security.

Note, Whatever men think to shelter themselves with against the judgments of God, while they continue unreformed, will prove but a refuge of lies and will not profit them in the day of wrath. See Isa 28:17. Men's anger cannot shake that which God has built (for the blast of the terrible ones is but as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but never stirs the wall; see Isa 25:4), but God's anger will overthrow that which men have

built in opposition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the securities wherein they intrench themselves, shall be as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence (Ps 62:3,10); and when their vain predictions are disproved, and their vain expectations disappointed, then it will be discovered that there was no ground for either, Hab 3:13. The day will declare what every man's work is, and the fire will try it, 1Co 3:13.

3. The builders of the wall, and those that daubed it, will themselves be buried in the ruins of it: It shall fall, and you shall be consumed in the midst thereof, Eze 13:14. And thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the just intentions of it, shall be accomplished to the uttermost, both upon the wall and upon those that have daubed it, Eze 13:15. The same judgments that will prove the false prophets to be false will punish them for their falsehood; and they themselves shall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that justice which they bade defiance to.

Thus, if the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will fall together into the ditch. Note, Those that deceive others will in the end prove to have deceived themselves; and no doom will be more fearful than that of unfaithful ministers, that flattered sinners in their sins.

4. Both the deceivers and the deceived, when they thus perish together, will justly be ridiculed and triumphed over (Eze 13:12): When the wall has fallen shall it not be said unto you, by those that gave credit to the true prophets, and feared the word of the Lord, "Now where is the daubing wherewith you have daubed the wall? What has become of all the fine soft words and fair promises wherewith you flattered your wicked neighbours, and all the assurances you gave them that the troubles of the nation should soon be at an end?" The righteous shall laugh at them, the righteous God shall, righteous men shall,

saying, Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, Ps 52:6,7. I also will laugh at your calamity, Pr 1:26.

They will say unto you (Eze 13:15), "The wall is no more, neither he that daubed it; your hopes have vanished, and those that supported them, even the prophets of Israel," Eze 13:16. Note, Those that usurp the honours that do not belong to them will shortly be filled with the shame that does.

14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered *mortar,* and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.

15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered *mortar,* and will say unto you, The wall *is* no *more,* neither they that daubed it;

16 *to wit,* the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and *there is* no peace, saith the Lord God.

17 Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,

As God has promised that when he pours out his Spirit upon his people both their sons and their daughters shall prophesy, so the devil, when he acts as a spirit of lies and falsehood, is so in the mouth not only of false prophets, but of false prophetesses too, and those are the deceivers whom the prophet is here directed to prophesy against; for they are not such despicable enemies to God's truths as deserve not to be taken notice of, nor yet will either the weakness of their sex excuse their sin or the tenderness and respect that are owing to it exempt them from the reproaches and threatenings of the word of God. No:

Son of man, set they face against the daughters of thy people, Eze 13:17. God takes no pleasure in owning them for his people. They are thy people, as Ex 32:7. The women pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab's

prophets were: Go on, and prosper. They prophesy out of their own heart too; they say what comes uppermost and what they know nothing of. Therefore prophesy against them from God's own mouth. The prophet must set his face against them, and try if they can look him in the face and stand to what they say. Note, When sinners grow very impudent it is time for reprovers to be very bold. Now observe,

I. How the sin of these false prophetesses is described, and what are the particulars of it.

1. They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune: "You do mischief by your lying to my people that hear your lies (Eze 13:19); they come to be told the truth, but you tell them lies; and, because you humour them in their sins, they are willing to hear you." Note, It is ill with those people who can better hear pleasing lies than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to those who lie in wait to deceive to tell lies when they find people willing to hear them and to excuse themselves with this, Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur--If the people will be deceived, let them.

2. They profaned the name of God by pretending to have received those lies from him (Eze 13:19): "You pollute my name among my people, and make use of that for the patronising of your lies and the gaining of credit to them." Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name that make use of it to give countenance to falsehood and wickedness. Yet this they did for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread. They did it for gain; they cared not what dishonour they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not profane and prostitute, if they can but get money by the bargain.

But they did it for poor gain; if they could get no more for it, rather than break they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety for the beggar's dole, a piece of bread or a handful of barley; and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms, for God's sake, surely they might have had it, and God would have been honoured; but, taking it as a fee for a false prophecy, God's name if polluted, and the smallness of the reward heightens the offence. For a piece of bread that man will transgress, Pr 28:21. Had their poverty been their temptation to steal, and so to take the name of the Lord in vain, it would not have been nearly so bad as when it tempted them to prophesy lies in his name and so to profane it.

3. They kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions: "You hunt the souls of my people (Eze 13:18), hunt them to make them flee (Eze 13:20), hunt them into gardens (so the margin reads it); you use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions, or you have got such an influence upon them that you make them do just as you would have them to do, and tyrannise over them." It was indeed the people's fault that they did regard them, but it was their fault by lies and falsehoods to command that regard; they pretended to save the souls alive that came to them, Eze 13:18.

If they would but be hearers of them, and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation; thus they beguiled unstable souls that had a concern about salvation as their end but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it to them. "But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party?" Those are justly suspected that make such pretensions.

4. They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane: You slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not

live, Eze 13:19. This is explained (Eze 13:22): You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them, to their great grief and trouble; you put them under invidious characters, to make them either despicable or odious to the people, and pretended to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them.

But on the other side, and which is still worse, you have strengthened the hands of the wicked and emboldened them to go on in their wicked ways and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to. "You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them that they shall have peace though they go on, by which their hands have been strengthened and their hearts hardened." Some think this refers to the severe censures they passed upon those who had already gone into captivity (who were humbled under their affliction, by which their hearts were made sad), and the commendations they gave to those who rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their impieties, by which their hands were strengthened; or by their polluting the name of God they saddened the hearts of good people who have a value and veneration for the word of God, and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of divine revelation and furnished them with arguments against it.

Note, Those have a great deal to answer for who grieve the spirits, and weaken the hands, of good people, and who gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God and religion. Nor can any thing strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance, or that there may be repentance though they do not return from their wicked ways.

5. They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions (as Hananiah did, Jer 28:10), and they were signs agreeable to their sex; they sewed little pillows to the people's arm-holes, to signify that they might be easy and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature, of persons of every age, young and old, distinguishable by their stature, Eze 13:18.

These kerchiefs were badges of liberty or triumph, intimating that they should not only be delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations, preparing them for the reception of them by putting enchanted pillows under their arms and handkerchiefs on their heads, to raise their fancies and their expectations of something great. Or perhaps the expressions are figurative: they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by laying them easy, and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them fine with handkerchiefs, perhaps laid or embroidered on their heads.

18 and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the *women* that sew
pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every
stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will
ye save the souls alive *that come* unto you?

19 And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and
for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save
the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that
hear *your* lies?

20 Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against your
pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I
will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the
souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly.

How the wrath of God against them is expressed. Here is a woe to them (Eze 13:18), and God declares himself against the methods they took to delude and deceive, Eze 13:20. But what course will God take with them?

1. They shall be confounded in their attempts, and shall proceed no further; for (Eze 13:23) you shall see no more vanity nor divine revelations; not that they shall themselves lay down their pretensions in a way of repentance, but when the event gives them the lie they shall be silent for shame; or their fancies and imaginations shall not be disposed to receive impressions which assist them in their divinations as they have been; or they themselves shall be cut off.

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their hands. When they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise, and that though they would not leave their sin their sin has left them, and they see no more vanity nor divine divinations, they shall turn their back upon them, shall slight their predictions. The righteous shall be no more saddened by them, no, nor the wicked strengthened: The pillows shall be torn from their arms, and the kerchiefs from their heads; the fallacies shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they had been.

Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to, and fear of, those who, under colour of a divine authority, impose upon and tyrannise over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over. But it is a sore grief to those who delight in such usurpations to have their power broken and the prey delivered; such was the reformation to the church of Rome. And, when God does this, he makes it to appear that he is the Lord, that it is his prerogative to give law to souls.

21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.

22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life;

23 therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-14

Judgment on Idolaters Who Consult a Prophet

1 Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

Here is, the address which some of the elders of Israel made to the prophet, as an oracle, to enquire of the Lord by him. They came, and sat before him, Eze 14:1. It is probable that they were not of those who were now his fellow-captives, and constantly attended his ministry (such as those we read of Eze 8:1), but some occasional hearers, some of the grandees of Jerusalem who had come upon business to Babylon, perhaps public business, on an embassy from the king, and in their way called on the prophet, having heard much of him and being desirous to know if he had any message from God, which might be some guide to them in their negotiation.

By the severe answer given them one would suspect they had a design to ensnare the prophet, or to try if they could catch hold of any thing that might look like a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecies, and so they might have occasion to reproach them both. However, they feigned themselves just men, complimented the prophet, and sat before him gravely enough, as God's people used to sit. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to be found employed in the external performances of religion.

2 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them. They were strangers to him; he only knew that they were

elders of Israel; that was the character they wore, and as such he received them with respect, and, it is likely, was glad to see them so well disposed. But God gives him their real character (Eze 14:3); they were idolaters, and did only consult Ezekiel as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curiosity, and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself whether they deserved to have any countenance or encouragement given them: "Should I be enquired of at all by them? Should I accept their enquiries as an honour to myself, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No; they have no reason to expect it;" for,

1. They have set up their idols in their heart; they not only have idols, but they are in love with them, they dote upon them, are wedded to them, and have laid them so near their hearts, and have given them so great a room in their affections, that there is no parting with them. The idols they have set up in their houses, though they are now at a distance from the chambers of their imagery, yet they have them in their hearts, and they are ever and anon worshipping them in their fancies and imaginations. They have made their idols to ascend upon their hearts (so the word is); they have subjected their hearts to their idols, they are upon the throne there.

Or when they came to enquire of the prophet they pretended to put away their idols, but it was in pretence only; they still had a secret reserve for them. They kept them up in their hearts; and, if they left them for a while, it was cum animo revertendi--with an intention to return to them, not a final farewell. Or it may be understood of spiritual idolatry; those whose affections are placed upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, they set up their idols in their heart. Many who have no idols in their sanctuary have idols in their hearts, which is no less a usurpation of God's throne and a profanation of his name. Little children, keep yourselves from those idols.

2. They put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Their silver and gold were called the stumbling-block of their iniquity (Eze 7:19), their idols of silver and gold, by the beauty of which they were allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled, and fell into that sin; or their iniquity is their stumbling-block, which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin.

Note, Sinners are their own tempters (every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust), and so they are their own destroyers. If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it; and thus they put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their own faces, and stumble upon it though they see it before their eyes. It intimates that they are resolved to go on in sin, whatever comes of it. I have loved strangers, and after them I will go; that is the language of their hearts. And should God be enquired of by such wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him than do him any honour, as those did who bowed the knee to Christ in mockery? Can those expect an answer of peace from God who thus continue their acts of hostility against him? "Ezekiel, what thinkest thou of it?"

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols;

The answer which God, in just displeasure, orders Ezekiel to give them, Eze 14:4. Let them know that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons that God refuses to give them an answer, but it is laid down as a rule for every man of the house of Israel, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to enquire of God, God will resent it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to his pretended piety. He comes to the prophet, who, he expects, will be civil to him, but God will give him his answer, by punishing him for his impudence:

I the Lord, who speak and it is done, I will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols. Observe, Those who set up idols in their hearts, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a multitude of them. Humble worshippers God answers according to the multitude of his mercies, but bold intruders he answers according to the multitude of their idols, that is,

1. According to the desire of their idols; he will give them up to their own hearts' lust, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and they are of their own setting up; their temptations are the stumbling-block of their iniquity, and they are of their own putting, and God will answer them accordingly; let them take their course.

2. According to the desert of their idols; they shall have such an answer as it is just that such idolaters should have. God will punish them as he usually punishes idolaters, that is, when they stand in need of his help he will send them to the gods whom they have chosen, Jdg 10:13,14. Note, The judgment of God will dwell with men according to what they are really (that is, according to what their hearts are), not according to what they are in show and profession. And what will be the end of this? What will this threatened answer amount to? He tells them (Eze 14:5):

That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, may lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; nay, lay them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin, of sinners, are all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them; their own consciences witness against them, condemn them, and are a terror to them. If God take them, if he discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgment, it is all by their own hearts. O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself. The house of Israel is ruined by its own hands, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Note,

(1.) The ruin of sinners is owing to their estrangement from God.

(2.) It is through some idol or other that the hearts of men are estranged from God; some creature has gained that place and dominion in the heart that God should have.

5 that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they
are all estranged from me through their idols.

6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God;
Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your
faces from all your abominations.

The good counsel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom (Eze 14:6): "Therefore repent, and turn yourselves from your idols. Let this separate between you and them, that they separate between you and God; because they set God's face against you, do you turn away your faces from them," which denotes, not only forsaking them, but forsaking them with loathing and detestation: "Turn from them as from abominations that you are sick of; and then you will be welcome to enquire of the Lord. Come now, and let us reason together."

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth
in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols
in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before
his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me;
I the Lord will answer him by myself:

The extent of this answer which God had given them--to all the house of Israel, Eze 14:7,8. The same thing is repeated, which intimates God's just displeasure against hypocrites, who mock him with the shows and forms of devotion, while their hearts are estranged from him and at war with him. Observe,

1. To whom this declaration belongs. It concerns not only every one of the house of Israel (as before, Eze 14:4), but the stranger that sojourns in Israel; let him not think it will be an excuse for him in his idolatries that he is but a stranger and a sojourner in Israel, and does but worship the gods that his father served and that he himself was bred up in the service of; no, let him not

expect any benefit from Israel's oracles or prophets unless he thoroughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even proselytes shall not be countenanced if they be not sincere: a dissembled conversion is no conversion.

2 The description here given of hypocrites: They separate themselves from God by their fellowship with idols; they cut themselves off from their relation to God and their interest in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourse with him, and set themselves at a distance from him.

Note, Those that join themselves to idols separate themselves from God; nor shall any be for ever separated from the vision and fruition of God, but such as now separate themselves from his service and wilfully withdraw their allegiance from him. But there are those who thus separate themselves from God, and yet come to the prophets with a seeming respect and deference to their office, to enquire of them concerning God, in order to satisfy a vain curiosity, to stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience, or to get or save a reputation among men, but without any desire to be acquainted with God or any design to be ruled by him.

3. The doom of those who thus trifle with God and think to impose upon him: "I the Lord will answer him by myself; let me alone to deal with him; I will give him an answer that shall fill him with confusion, that shall make him repent of his daring impiety." He shall have his answer, not by the words of the prophet, but by the judgments of God. And I will set my face against that man, which denotes great displeasure against him and a fixed resolution to ruin him. God can outface the most impenitent sinner.

The hypocrite thought to save his credit, nay, and to gain applause, but, on the contrary, God will make him a sign and a proverb, will inflict such judgments upon him as shall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him; his misery shall be made use of to express the greatest misery, as

when the worst of sinners are said to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites, Mt 24:51.

God will make him an example; his judgments upon him shall be for warning to others to take heed of mocking God: for thus shall it be done to the man that separates himself from God, and yet pretends to enquire concerning him. The hypocrite thought to pass for one of God's people, and to crowd into heaven among them; but God will cut him off from the midst of his people, will discover him, and pluck him out from the thickest of them; and by this, says God, you shall know that I am the Lord. By the discovery of hypocrites it appears that God is omniscient: ministers know not how people stand affected when they come to hear the word, by God does. And by the punishment of hypocrites it appears that he is a jealous God, and one that cannot and will not be imposed upon.

8 and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign
and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people;
and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.

9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the
Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand
upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

The doom of those pretenders to prophecy who give countenance to these pretenders to piety, Eze 14:9,10. These hypocritical enquirers, though Ezekiel will not give them a comfortable answer, yet hope to meet with some other prophets that will; and if they do, as perhaps they may, let them know that God permits those lying prophets to deceive them in part of punishment: "If the prophet that flatters them be deceived, and gives them hopes which there is no ground for, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, have suffered the temptation to be laid before him, and suffered him to yield to it, and overruled it for the hardening of those in their wicked courses who were resolved to go on in them."

We are sure that God is not the author of sin, but we are sure that he is the Lord of all and the Judge of sinners, and that he often

makes use of one wicked man to destroy another, and so of one wicked man to deceive another. Both are sins in him who does them, and so they are not from God; both are punishments to him to whom they are done, and so they are from God. We have a full instance of this in the story of Ahab's prophets, who were deceived by a lying spirit, which God put into their mouths (1Ki 22:23), and another in those whom God gives up to strong delusions, to believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth, 2Th 2:10,11.

But read the fearful doom of the lying prophet: I will stretch out my hand upon him and will destroy him. When God has served his own righteous purposes by him he shall be reckoned with for his unrighteous purposes. As, when God had made use of the Chaldeans for the wasting of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their rage, so when he had made use of false prophets, and afterwards of false Christs, for the deceiving of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their falsehood.

But herein we must acknowledge (as Calvin upon this place reminds us) that God's judgments are a great deep, that we are incompetent judges of them, and that, though we cannot account for the equity of God's proceedings to the satisfying and silencing of every caviller, yet there is a day coming when he will be justified before all the world, and particularly in this instance, when the punishment of the prophet that flattereth the hypocrite in his evil way shall be as the punishment of the hypocrite that seeketh to him and bespeaks smooth things only, Isa 30:10. The ditch shall be the same to the blind leader and the blind followers.

10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him;*

11 that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God.

The good issue of all this as to the house of Israel; therefore the pretending prophets, and the pretending saints, shall perish

together by the judgments of God, that, some being made examples, the body of the people may be reformed, that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, Eze 14:11.

Note, The punishments of some are designed for the prevention of sin, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. When we see what becomes of those that go astray from God we should thereby be engaged to keep close to him. And, if the house of Israel go not astray, they will not be polluted any more. Note, Sin is a polluting thing; it renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too whenever conscience is awakened; and therefore they shall no more be polluted, that they may be my people and I may be their God. Note, Those whom God takes into covenant with himself must first be cleansed from the pollutions of sin; and those who are so cleansed shall not only be saved from ruin, but be entitled to all the privileges of God's people.

The Justice of God's Punishment of Jerusalem

12 The word of the Lord came again to me, saying,
13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

The scope of these verses is to show,

I. That national sins bring national judgments. When virtue is ruined and laid waste every thing else will soon be ruined and laid waste too (Eze 14:13): When the land sins against me, when vice and wickedness become epidemical, when the land sins by trespassing grievously, when the sinners have become very numerous and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail, then will I stretch forth my hand upon it, for the punishment of it. The divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted; the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to all the

concerns and interests of the nation. Grievous sins bring grievous plagues.

II. That God has a variety of sore judgments wherewith to punish sinful nations, and he has them all at command and inflicts which he pleases. He did indeed give David his choice what judgment he would be punished with for his sin in numbering the people; for any of them would serve to answer the end, which was to lessen the numbers he was proud of; but David, in effect, referred it to God again: "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord; let him choose with what rod we shall be beaten." But he uses a variety of judgments that it may appear he has a universal dominion, and that in all our concerns we may see our dependence on him. Four sore judgments are here specified:--

1. Famine, Eze 14:13. The denying and withholding of common mercies is itself judgment enough, there needs no more to make a people miserable. God needs not bring the staff of oppression, it is but breaking the staff of bread and the work is soon done; he cuts off man and beast by cutting off the provisions which nature makes for both in the annual products of the earth. God breaks the staff of bread when, though we have bread, yet we are not nourished and strengthened by it. Hag 1:6, You eat, but you have not enough.

2. Hurtful beasts, noisome and noxious, either as poisonous or as ravenous. God can make these to pass through the land (eze 14:15), to increase in all parts of it, and to bereave it, not only of the tame cattle, preying upon their flocks and herds, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, so that no man may pass through because of the beasts; none dare travel even in the high roads for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions, or other beasts of prey, as the children of Beth-el by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and rebel against him, it is just with God that the inferior creatures should rise up in arms against men, Le 26:22.

3. War. God often chastises sinful nations by bringing a sword upon them, the sword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it its commission and orders what execution it shall do (Eze 14:17): he says, Sword, go through the land. It is bad enough if the sword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worse when it goes through the bowels of a land. By it God cuts off man and beast, horse and foot. What execution the sword does God does by it; for it is his sword, and it acts as he directs.

4. Pestilence (Eze 14:19), a dreadful disease, which has sometimes depopulated cities; by it God pours out his fury in blood (that is, in death); the pestilence kills as effectually as if the blood were shed by the sword, for it is poisoned by the disease, the sickness we call it. See how miserable the case of mankind is that lies thus exposed to deaths in various shapes. See how dangerous the case of sinners is against whom God has so many ways of fighting, so that, though they escape one judgment, God has another waiting for them.

III. That when God's professing people revolt from him, and rebel against him, they may justly expect a complication of judgments to fall upon them. God has various ways of contending with a sinful nation; but if Jerusalem, the holy city, become a harlot, God will send upon her all his four sore judgments (Eze 14:21); for the nearer any are to God in name and profession the more severely will he reckon with them if they reproach that worthy name by which they are called and give the lie to that profession. They shall be punished seven times more.

IV. That there may be, and commonly are, some few very good men, even in those places that by sin are ripened for ruin. It is no foreign supposition that, even in a land that has trespassed grievously, there may be three such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job. Daniel was now living, and at this time had scarcely arrived at the prime of his eminency, but he was already famous (at least this word of God concerning him would without fail make him

so); yet he was carried away into captivity with the first of all, Da 1:6.

Some of the better sort of people in Jerusalem might perhaps think that, if Daniel (of whose fame in the king of Babylon's court they had heard much) had but continued in Jerusalem, it would have been spared for his sake, as the magicians in Babylon were. "No," says God, "though you had him, who was as eminently good in bad times and places as Noah in the old world and Job in the land of Uz, yet a reprieve should not be obtained." In the places that are most corrupt, and in the ages that are most degenerate, there is a remnant which God reserves to himself, and which still hold fast their integrity and stand fair for the honour of delivering the land, as the innocent are said to do, Job 22:30.

V. That God often spares very wicked places for the sake of a few godly people in them. This is implied here as the expectation of Jerusalem's friends in the day of its distress: "Surely God will stay his controversy with us; for are there not some among us that are emptying the measure of national guilt by their prayers, as others are filling it by their sins? And, rather than God will destroy the righteous with the wicked, he will preserve the wicked with the righteous. If Sodom might have been spared for the sake of ten good men, surely Jerusalem may."

VI. That such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job, will prevail, if any can, to turn away the wrath of God from a sinful people. Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity when all flesh had corrupted their way; and, for his sake, his family, though one of them was wicked (Ham), was saved in the ark. Job was a great example of piety, and mighty in prayer for his children, for his friends; and God turned his captivity when he prayed.

Those were very ancient examples, before Moses, that great intercessor; and therefore God mentions them, to intimate that he had some very peculiar favourites long before the Jewish nation

was formed or founded, and would have such when it was ruined, for which reason, it should seem, those names were made use of, rather than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel; and yet, lest any should think that God was partial in his respects to the ancient days, here is a modern instance, a living one, placed between those two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us not to lessen the useful good men of our own day by over-magnifying the ancients. Let the children of the captivity know that Daniel, their neighbour, and companion in tribulation, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had. Why may not God raise up as great and good men now as he did formerly, and do as much for them?

VII. That when the sin of a people has come to its height, and the decree has gone forth for their ruin, the piety and prayers of the best men shall not prevail to finish the controversy. This is here asserted again and again, that, though these three men were in Jerusalem at this time, yet they should deliver neither son nor daughter; not so much as the little ones should be spared for their sakes, as the little ones of Israel were upon the prayer of Moses, Nu 14:31.

No; the land shall be desolate, and God would not hear their prayers for it, though Moses and Samuel stood before him, Jer 15:1. Note, Abused patience will turn at last into inexorable wrath; and it should seem as if God would be more inexorable in Jerusalem's case than in another (Eze 14:6), because, besides the divine patience, they had enjoyed greater privileges than any other people, which were the aggravations of their sin.

VIII. That, though pious praying men may not prevail to deliver others, yet they shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness, so that, though they may suffer in the common calamity, yet to them the property of it is altered; it is not to them what it is to the wicked; it is unstrung, and does them no hurt; it

is sanctified, and does them good. Sometimes their souls (their lives) are remarkably delivered, and given them for a prey; at least their souls (their spiritual interests) are secured. If their bodies be not delivered, yet their souls are. Riches indeed profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death, from so great a death, so many deaths as are here threatened. This should encourage us to keep our integrity in times of common apostasy, that, if we do so, we shall be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.

14 though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver *but* their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.

15 If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts:

16 *though* these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

17 Or *if* I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it:

18 though these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

19 Or *if* I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast:

20 though Noah, Daniel, and Job, *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

21 For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, *both* sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, *even* concerning all that I have brought upon it.

That, even when God makes the greatest desolations by his judgments, he reserves some to be the monuments of his mercy, Eze 14:22,23. In Jerusalem itself, though marked for utter ruin, yet there shall be left a remnant, who shall not be cut off by any of those sore judgments before mentioned, but shall be carried into captivity, both sons and daughters, who shall be the seed of a new generation.

The young ones, who had not grown up to such an obstinacy in sin as their fathers had who were therefore cut off as incurable, these shall be brought forth out of the ruins of Jerusalem by the victorious enemy, and behold they shall come forth to you that are in captivity, they shall make a virtue of a necessity, and shall come the more willingly to Babylon because so many of their friends have gone thither before them and are there ready to receive them; and, when they come, you shall see their ways and their doing; you shall hear them make a free and ingenuous confession of the sins they had formerly been guilty of, and a humble profession of repentance for them, with promises of reformation; and you shall see instances of their reformation, shall see what good their affliction has done them, and how prudently and patiently they conduct themselves under it.

Their narrow escape shall have a good effect upon them; it shall change their temper and conversation, and make them new men. And this will redound,

1. To the satisfaction of their brethren: They shall comfort you when you see their ways. Note, It is a very comfortable sight to see people, when they are under the rod, repenting and humbling themselves, justifying God and accepting the punishment of their iniquity. When we sorrow (as we ought to do) for the afflictions of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions and making a good use of them.

When those captives told their friends how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them to the calamities of Jerusalem, to the justice of God in punishing his own people so, and to the goodness of God, which now appeared to have had kind intentions in all; and thus "You shall be comforted concerning all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and, when you better understand the thing, shall not have such direful apprehensions concerning it as you have had." Note, It is a debt we owe to our brethren, if we have got good by our afflictions, to comfort them by letting them know it.

2. It will redound to the honour of God: "You shall know that I have not done without cause, not without a just provocation, and yet not without a gracious design, all that I have done in it." Note, When afflictions have done their work, and have accomplished that for which they were sent, then will appear the wisdom and goodness of God in sending them, and God will be not only justified, but glorified in them.

23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-15

Jerusalem like a Useless Vine

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, *or than* a branch which is among the trees of the forest?

The prophet, we may suppose, was thinking what a glorious city Jerusalem was, above any city in the world; it was the crown and joy of the whole earth; and therefore what a pity it was that it should be destroyed; it was a noble structure, the city of God, and the city of Israel's solemnities. But, if these were

the thoughts of his heart, God here returns an answer to them by comparing Jerusalem to a vine.

1. It is true, if a vine be fruitful, it is a most valuable tree, none more so; it was one of those that were courted to have dominion over the trees, and the fruit of it is such as cheers God and man (Jdg 9:12,13); it makes glad the heart, Ps 104:15. So Jerusalem was planted a choice and noble vine, wholly a right seed (Jer 2:21); and, if it had brought forth fruit suitable to its character as a holy city, it would have been the glory both of God and Israel. It was a vine which God's right hand had planted, a branch out of a dry ground, which, though its original was mean and despicable, God had made strong for himself (Ps 80:15), to be to him for a name and for a praise.

2. But, if it be not fruitful, it is good for nothing, it is as worthless and useless a production of the earth as even thorns and briers are: What is the vine-tree, if you take the tree by itself, without consideration of the fruit? What is it more than any tree, that it should have so much care taken of it and so much cost laid out upon it? What is a branch of the vine, though it spread more than a branch which is among the trees of the forest, where it grows neglected and exposed?

Or, as some read it, What is the vine more than any tree if the branch of it be as the trees of the forest; that is, if it bear no fruit, as forest-trees seldom do, being designed for timber-trees, not fruit-trees? Now there are some fruit-trees which, if they do not bear, are nevertheless of good use, as the wood of them may be made to turn to a good account; but the vine is not of this sort: if that do not answer its end as a fruit-tree, it is worth nothing as a timber-tree. Observe,

How this similitude is expressed here. The wild vine, that is among the trees of the forest, or the empty vine (which Israel is compared to, Heb 10:1), that bears no more fruit than a forest-tree, is good for nothing; it is as useless as a brier, and more so,

for that will add some sharpness to the thorny hedge, which the vine-branch will not do. He shows,

1. That it is fit for no use. The wood of it is not taken to do any work; one cannot so much as make a pin of it to hand a vessel upon, Eze 15:3. See how variously the gifts of nature are dispensed for the service of man. Among the plants, the roots of some, the seeds or fruits of others, the leaves of others, and of some the stalks, are most serviceable to us; so, among trees, some are strong and not fruitful, as the oaks and cedars; others are weak but very fruitful, as the vine, which is unsightly, low, and depending, yet of great use. Rachel is comely but barren, Leah homely but fruitful.

2. That therefore it is made use of for fuel; it will serve to heat the oven with. Because it is not meet for any work, it is cast into the fire, Eze 15:4. When it is good for nothing else it is useful this way, and answers a very needful intention, for fuel is a thing we must have, and to burn any thing for fuel which is good for other work is bad husbandry. To what purpose is this waste?

The unfruitful vine is disposed of in the same way with the briers and thorns, which are rejected, and whose end is to be burnt, Heb 6:8. And what care is taken of it then? If a piece of solid timber be kindled, somebody perhaps may snatch it as a brand out of the burning, and say, "It is a pity to burn it, for it may be put to some better use;" but if the branch of a vine be on fire, and, as usual, both the ends of it and the middle be kindled together, nobody goes about to save it. When it was whole it was meet for no work, much less when the fire has devoured it (Eze 15:5); even the ashes of it are not worth saving.

3 Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will *men* take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?

4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for *any* work?

5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for *any* work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?

How this similitude is applied to Jerusalem.

1. That holy city had become unprofitable and good for nothing. It had been as the vine-tree among the trees of the vineyard, abounding in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. When religion flourished there, and the pure worship of God was kept up, many a joyful vintage was then gathered in from it; and, while it continued so, God made a hedge about it; it was his pleasant plant (Isa 5:7); he watered it every moment and kept it night and day (Isa 27:3); but it had now become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, of a wild vine (such as we read of 2Ki 4:39), a vine-tree among the trees of the wild grapes (Isa 5:4), which are not only of no use, but are nauseous and noxious (De 32:32), their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter. It is explained (Eze 15:8):

"They have trespassed a trespass, that is, they have treacherously prevaricated with God and perfidiously apostatized from him;" for so the word signifies. Note, Professors of religion, if they do not live up to their profession, but contradict it, if they degenerate and depart from it, are the most unprofitable creatures in the world, like the salt that has lost its savour and is thenceforth good for nothing, Mk 9:50.

Other nations were famed for valour or politics, some for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewish nation, being famous as a holy people, when they lost their holiness, and became wicked, were thenceforth good for nothing; with that they lost all their credit and usefulness, and became the most base and despicable people under the sun, trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Daniel, and other pious Jews, were of great use in their generation; but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now since the preaching of the gospel, have been, and are, of no common service, not fit for any work.

2. Being so, it is given to the fire for fuel, Eze 15:6.

Note, Those who are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace will be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he will get himself honour upon them, honour that will shine brightly in that flaming fire by which impenitent sinners will be for ever consumed. He will not be a loser at last by any of his creatures. The Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked, that would not otherwise be for him, for the day of evil (Pr 16:4); and in those who would not glorify him as the God to whom duty belongs he will be glorified as the God to whom vengeance belongs.

The fire of God's wrath had before devoured both the ends of the Jewish nation (Eze 15:4), Samaria and the cities of Judah; and now Jerusalem, that was the midst of it, was thrown into the fire, to be burnt too, for it is meet for no work; it will not be wrought upon, by any of the methods God has taken, to be serviceable to him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were like a vine-branch, rotten and awkward; and therefore (Eze 15:7), "I will set my face against them, to thwart all their counsels," as they set their faces against God, to contradict his word and defeat all his designs.

It is decreed; the consumption is determined: I will make the land quite desolate, and therefore, when they go out from one fire, another fire shall devour them (Eze 15:7); the end of one judgment shall be the beginning of another, and their escape from one only a reprieve till another comes; they shall go from misery in their own country to misery in Babylon.

Those who kept out of the way of the sword perished by famine or pestilence. When one descent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought, Surely the bitterness of death is past, yet soon after they returned again with double violence, till they had made a full end.

Thus they shall know that I am the Lord, a God of almighty power, when I set my face against them. Note, God shows himself to be the Lord, by perfecting the destruction of his implacable enemies as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Those whom God sets his face, though they may come out of one trouble little hurt, will fall into another; though they come out of the pit, they will be taken in the snare (Isa 24:18); though they escape the sword of Hazael, they will fall by that of Jehu (1Ki 19:17); for evil pursues sinners.

Nay, though they go out from the fire of temporal judgments, and seem to die in peace, yet there is an everlasting fire that will devour them; for, when God judges, first or last he will overcome, and he will be known by the judgments which he executes. See Mt 3:10,Joh 15:6.

6 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; As the vine tree among the
trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I
give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
7 And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from *one* fire,
and *another* fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I *am* the
Lord, when I set my face against them.
8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a
trespass, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-16

Jerusalem's Unfaithfulness

1 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon; but, as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them (eze 29:1-21), so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another's help both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah

wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed.

This is his commission (Eze 16:2): "Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations (that is, her sins); set them in order before her." Note,

1. Sins are not only provocations which God is angry at, but abominations which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate, Jer 44:4.

2 The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion.

3. Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loth to know her abominations; so partial are men in their own favour that they are hardly made to see and own their own badness, but deny it, palliate or extenuate it.

4. It is requisite that we should know our sins, that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them.

5. It is the work of ministers to cause sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, to know their abominations, to set before them the glass of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements, to tell them plainly of their faults. Thou art the man.

II. That Jerusalem may be made to know her abominations, and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite that she should be put in mind of the great things God had done for her, as the aggravations of her bad conduct

towards him; and, to magnify those favours, she is in Eze 16:1-5 made to know the meanness and baseness of her original, from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, base-born and abandoned, which the mother herself has no affection nor concern for.

1 The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean: "Thy birth is of the land of Canaan (Eze 16:3); thou hadst from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite." The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but strangers and sojourners, had no possession, no power, not one foot of ground of their own but a burying-place. Abraham and Sarah were indeed their father and mother, but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the court Abraham made to the children of Seth (Ge 23:4,8), the dependence they had upon their neighbours the Canaanites, and the fear they were in of them, Ge 13:7,34:30.

If the patriarchs, at their first coming to Canaan, had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, this would have put an honour upon their family and would have looked great in history; but, instead of that, they went from one nation to another (Ps 105:13), as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they were but few in number, yea, very few. And yet this was not the worst; their fathers had served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees (Jos 24:2); even in Jacob's family there were strange gods, Ge 35:2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry; and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a new-born child, which must of necessity die from the womb if the knees prevent it not, Job 3:11,12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase

into a people and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them; a famine drove them thence. Egypt was the open field into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under, but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour, and their lives embittered; they had no encouragement given them to build up their families, no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, who had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead; the king of Egypt, who should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to destroy this man-child as soon as it was born (Re 12:4), ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference.

The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, set their heads on work, by policies and stratagems, to preserve and nurse up their infant states. Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem--So vast were the efforts requisite to the establishment of the Roman name. Virgil. But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens, Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths had when they were first founded, but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, the navel-string not cut, the poor babe not washed, not clothed, no swaddled, because not pitied, Eze 16:4,5.

Note, We owe the preservation of our infant lives to the natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses towards new-born children. This infant is said to be cast out, to the loathing of her person; it was a sign that she was loathed by those that bore her, and she appeared loathsome to all that looked upon her. The Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians, as we find Ge 43:32,46:34. Some think that this refers to the corrupt and

vicious disposition of that people from their beginning: they were not only the weakest and fewest of all people (De 7:7), but the worst and most ill-humoured of all people. God giveth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people, De 9:6.

And Moses tells them there (Eze 16:24), You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They were not suppled, nor washed, nor swaddled; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw any thing in them inviting or promising, but so it seemed good in his sight. And it is a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature. As for our nativity, in the day that we were born we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, our understandings darkened, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us loathsome in the eyes of God. Marvel not then that we are told, You must be born again.

2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,
3 and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity *is* of the land of Canaan; thy father *was* an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite.
4 And *as for* thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple *thee;* thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.
5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.
6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live.

In there verses we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewish nation in raising them up by degrees to be very considerable.

1. God saved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt (Eze 16:6): "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood, loathed and abandoned, and appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, then I said unto thee, Live. I designed thee for life when thou wast doomed to destruction, and resolved to save thee from death." Those shall live to whom God commands life. God looked upon the world of mankind as thus cast off, thus cast out, thus polluted, thus weltering in blood, and his thoughts towards it were thoughts of good, designing it life, and that more abundantly. By converting grace, he says to the soul, Live.

2. He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection, not only pitied them, but set his love upon them, which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but I looked upon thee, and, behold, thy time was the time of love, Eze 16:8. It was the kindness and love of God our Saviour that sent Christ to redeem us, that sends the Spirit to sanctify us, that brought us out of a state of nature into a state of grace. That was a time of love indeed, distinguishing love, when God manifested his love to us, and courted our love to him. Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour, So 8:10.

3. He took them under his protection: "I spread my skirt over thee, to shelter thee from wind and weather, and to cover thy nakedness, that the shame of it might not appear." Boaz spread his skirt over Ruth, in token of the special favour he designed her, Ru 3:9. God took them into his care, as an eagle bears her young ones upon her wings, De 32:11,12. When God owned them for his people, and sent Moses to Egypt to deliver them, which was an expression of the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, then he spread his skirt over them.

4. He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt laid them under (Eze 16:9): "Then washed I thee with water, to make thee clean, and anointed thee with oil, to make thee sweet and supple thee." All the disgrace of their

slavery was rolled away when they were brought, with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. When God said, Israel is my son, my first-born--Let my people go, that they may serve me, that word, backed as it was with so many works of wonder, thoroughly washed away their blood; and when God led them under the convoy of the pillar of cloud and fire he spread his skirt over them.

5. He multiplied them and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned (Eze 16:7) before his spreading his skirt over them, because their numbers increased exceedingly while they were yet bond-slaves in Egypt. They multiplied as the bud of the field in spring time; they waxed great, exceedingly mighty, Ex 1:7,20. Their breasts were fashioned when they were formed into distinct tribes and had officers of their own (Ex 5:19); their hair grew when they grew numerous, whereas they had been naked and bare, very few and therefore contemptible.

6. He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at last. How she is dignified who at first had scarcely her life given her for a prey: I swore unto thee and entered into covenant with thee. This was done at Mount Sinai: "when the covenant between God and Israel was sealed and ratified then thou becamest mine." God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel.

Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his subjects and servants, which intimates their duty--his portion, his treasure, which intimates their privilege; and it is confirmed with an oath, that we might have strong consolation.

7. He beautified and adorned them. This maid cannot forget her ornaments, and she is gratified with abundance of them, Eze 16:10-13. We need not be particular in the application of these.

Her wardrobe was well furnished with rich apparel; they had embroidered work to wear, shoes of fine badgers' skins, linen girdles, and silk veils, bracelets and necklaces, jewels and ear-rings, and even a beautiful crown, or coronet. Perhaps this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians, which might well be spoken of thus long after as a merciful circumstance of their deliverance, when it was spoken of long before, Ge 15:14. They shall come out with great substance.

Or it may be taken figuratively for all those blessings of heaven which adorned both their church and state. In a little time they came to excellent ornaments, Eze 16:7. The laws and ordinances which God gave them were to them as ornaments of grace to the head and chains about the neck, Pr 1:9. God's sanctuary, which he set up among them, was a beautiful crown upon their head; it was the beauty of holiness.

8. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainty: Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil--manna, angels' food--honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock. In Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, De 32:13,14. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the spirit. The hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.

9. He gave them great reputation among their neighbours, and made them considerable, acceptable to their friends and allies and formidable to their adversaries: Thou didst prosper into a kingdom (Eze 16:13), which speaks both dignity and dominion; and, They renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty, Eze 16:14. The nations about had their eye upon them, and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of access to God, De 4:7,8.

Solomon's wisdom, and Solomon's temple, were very much the renown of that nation; and, if we put all the privileges of the Jewish church and kingdom together, we must own that it was the most accomplished beauty of all the nations of the earth. The beauty of it was perfect; you could not name the thing that would be the honour of a people but it was to be found in Israel, in David's and Solomon's time, when that kingdom was in its zenith-piety, learning, wisdom, justice, victory, peace, wealth, and all sure to continue if they had kept close to God.

It was perfect, saith God, through my comeliness which I had put upon thee, through the beauty of their holiness, as they were a people set apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. It was this that put a lustre upon all their other honours and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this spiritually. Sanctified souls are truly beautiful; they are so in God's sight, and they themselves may take the comfort of it. But God must have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted, and, whatever comeliness they have, it is that which God has put upon them and beautified them with, and he will be well pleased with the work of his own hands.

7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy* breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou *wast* naked and bare.

8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine.

9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

10 I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.
13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.
14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it *was* perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.
15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.
16 And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors, and playedst the harlot thereupon: *the like things* shall not come, neither shall it be *so.*
17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,
18 and tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.

In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great favours that God had conferred upon them, by which, one would think, they should have been for ever engaged to him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lewd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind friend and benefactor, that had been in all respects as a father and a husband to her.

Their idolatry was the great provoking sin that they were guilty of; it began in the latter end of Solomon's time (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it), and thenceforward continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity; and, though it now and then met with some check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to a high

degree impudent and barefaced. They not only worshipped the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rabble of the pagan deities.

This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery,

1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals which are due to him alone.

2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is.

3. Because it debauches the conscience, sears and hardens it; and those who by their idolatries dishonour the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reprobate mind, to dishonour the human nature with vile affections, Ro 1:23, &c. It is a besotting bewitching sin; and, when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful scandalous sin for those that have joined themselves to the Lord to join themselves to an idol. Now observe here,

I. What were the causes of this sin. How came the people of God to be drawn away to the service of idols? How came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But,

1. They grew proud (Eze 16:15): "Thou trustedst to thy beauty, and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst play the harlot because of thy renown." They thought, because

they were so complimented and admired by their neighbours, that, further to ingratiate themselves with them and return their compliments, they must join with them in their worship and conform to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry, to gratify his wives and their relations.

Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride and particularly pride in their beauty. Rara est concordia formæ atque pudicitiæ--Beauty and chastity are seldom associated

2. They forgot their beginning (Eze 16:22) "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, how poor, and mean, and despicable thou wast, and what great things God did for thee and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereby." Note, It should be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality to consider what we are and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God.

3. They were weak in understanding and in resolution (Eze 16:30): How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things. Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an imperious whorish woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most imperious, and think themselves fit to manage others when they are far from being able to manage themselves.

II. What were the particulars of it. 1. They worshipped all the idols that came in their way, all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours (Eze 16:15): Thou pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. They were ready to close with every temptation of this kind, though ever so absurd. No foreign idol could be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it, as a common trumpet that prostitutes herself to all comers and multiplies her whoredoms, Eze 16:25. Thus some

common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of such!

2. They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high places, with the fine rich clothing that God had given them (Eze 16:16,18): Thou deckedst thy high places with divers colours, with the coats of divers colours, like Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, and hast played the harlot (that is, worshipped idols) thereupon. Of this he saith, "The like things shall not come, neither shall it be so; that is, this is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these without showing my resentments."

3. They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them (Eze 16:17): The jewels of my gold and my silver which I had given thee. Note, It is God that gives us our gold and silver; the products of trade, of art and industry, are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the use of he still retains a property in. "It is my silver and my gold, though I have given it to thee." It is his still, so that we ought to serve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the disposal of it. Every penny has God's image upon it as well as Cæsar's. Should we make our silver and gold, our plate, money, and jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that they were God's silver and his gold? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their earrings.

4. They served their idols with the good things which God gave them for their own use and to serve him with (Eze 16:18): "Thou hast set my oil and my incense before the, upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill-deities; my meat, and fine flour, and oil, and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and wherewith I fed thee, thou hast regaled them and their hungry priests with, hast made an offering of it to them for a sweet savour, to purify them, and procure acceptance with them: and thus it was, saith

the Lord God; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. These things thou hast done. He that knows all things knows it." See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with that which was given them for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families to honour them with, which may shame our niggardliness and strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

5. They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry, as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection, as in this (see Jer 7:31,19:5,32:35): Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, and not only made them to pass through the fire, or between two fires, in token of their being dedicated to Moloch, but thou hast sacrificed them to be devoured, Eze 16:20.

Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was. Yet that was not the worst of it: it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children more than in their gold and silver and their meat: They are my children (Eze 16:21), the sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me, Eze 16:20. He is the Father of spirits, and rational souls are in a particular manner his; and therefore the taking away of life, human life, unjustly, is a high affront to the God of life.

But the children of Israelites were his by a further right; they were the children of the covenant, born in God's house. He had said to Abraham, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed; they had the seal of the covenant in their flesh from eight days old; they were to bear God's name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree inhuman, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree impious. One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitiless

hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children, and by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for buying sacrifices openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices! How absurd was this, that the children which were born to God should be sacrificed to devils!

Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church are to be looked upon as born unto God, and his children,; as such, and under that character, we are to love them, and pray for them, bring them up for him, and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him; for may he not do what he will with his own? Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made (Eze 16:20), Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter? which intimates that there were those who made a small matter of it, and turned it into a jest.

Note, There is no sin so heinous, so apparently heinous, which men of profligate consciences will not make a mock at. But is whoredom, is spiritual whoredom, a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes and the devil their god? It will be a great matter shortly.

6. They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither and join with them in the worship of their idols: "After all thy wickedness of this kind committed in private, for which, woe, woe, unto thee" (that comes in in a sad parenthesis, denoting those to be in a woeful condition who are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it), "thou hast at length arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it; thou hast long had a whore's heart, but now thou hast come to have a whore's forehead, and canst not blush," Eze 16:23-35. Thou hast built there an eminent place, a brothel-house (so the margin reads it), and such their idol temples were. Thou hast made for thyself a high place, for

one idol or other, in every street, and at every head of the way; and again Eze 16:31.

They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but make themselves vile, and even those that had courted them to it, finding themselves outdone by them, began to be surfeited with the abundance and violence of their idolatries: Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, even by those that had admired it.

The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despicable in the eyes even of their heathen neighbours; much more was their beauty abhorred by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion.

Note, Those shame themselves that bring a reproach on their profession. And justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length be made the object of the loathing of others which men have made the matter of their own pride.

19 My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, *wherewith* I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savor: and *thus* it was, saith the Lord God.

20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. *Is this* of thy whoredoms a small matter,

21 that thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through *the fire* for them?

22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, *and* wast polluted in thy blood.

23 And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord God,)

24 *that* thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street.
25 Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.
26 Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.
27 Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary *food,* and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.

What were the aggravations of this sin.

1. They were fond of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As,

(1.) The Egyptians. They were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most sottish senseless idolatries; they had of old abused Israel by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealings-were always either cruel or false to them; and yet so infatuated were they that they committed fornication with the Egyptians their neighbours, not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but by entering into leagues and alliances with them, and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God.

(2.) The Assyrians. They had also been vexatious to Israel: "And yet thou hast played the whore with them (Eze 16:28); though they lived at a greater distance, yet thou hast entertained their idols and their superstitious usages, and so hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea, hast borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one foolery or other of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy's country, and hast imported them into the land of Canaan, enfranchised and established them there." Thus Mr. George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least,

That Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames By letting in them both pollute her streams.

2. They had been under the rebukes of Providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them (Eze 16:27): I have stretched out my hand over thee, to threaten and frighten thee. So God did before he laid his hand upon them to ruin and destroy them; and that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance first by less judgments. He did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread he diminished their ordinary food, but them short before he cut them off.

When the overplus is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity. Before he delivered them to the Chaldeans to be destroyed he delivered them to the daughters of the Philistines to be ridiculed for their idolatries; for they hated them, and, though they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lewd way of the Israelites, who had grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours, who changed their gods, whereas other nations did not change theirs, Jer 2:10,11.

For this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. Or it may refer to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them (2Ch 28:18); but they did not take warning by those judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which impenitent sinners shall be called to they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, Am 4:11.

3. They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom: Thou couldst not be satisfied, Eze 16:28,29. When they had multiplied their idols and superstitious usages beyond measure, yet still

they were enquiring after new gods and new fashions in worship. Those that in sincerity join themselves to the true God find enough in him for their satisfaction; and, though they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more than God. But those that forsake this living fountain for broken cisterns will find themselves soon surfeited, but never satisfied; they have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still enquiring after more.

4. They were at great expense with their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and altars, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries. Harlots generally had their hire; but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, Eze 16:31-34. "In this respect the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms: others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee, art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee; others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, the gifts which God had graciously given thee, to thy idols; herein thou art like a wife that commits adultery, not for gain, as harlots do, but entirely for the sin's sake."

Note, Spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as theirs after idols were, are often as strong and impetuous as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and, instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by their sin, are at great expense with it; such are transgressors without cause (Ps 25:3), wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? For what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these? Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves, yea, though they have the greatest advantages to be

better and do better. And the way of sin is down-hill. Nitimur in vetitum--We incline to what is forbidden.

28 Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied.

29 Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

30 How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these *things,* the work of an imperious whorish woman;

31 in that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire;

32 *but as* a wife that committeth adultery, *which* taketh strangers instead of her husband!

33 They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

34 And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

35 Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord:

36 Thus saith the Lord God; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;

Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime. This notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, Eze 16:35. The prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, O harlot! hear the word of the Lord. Our Saviour preached to harlots, for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it.

Note, An apostate church is a harlot. Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous. How has the faithful city become a harlot!

Rome is so represented in the Revelation, when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here. Re 17:1, Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore. Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

The crime is stated and the articles of the charge are summed up (Eze 16:36) and (as is usual) with the attendant aggravations (Eze 16:43); for when God speaks in wrath he will be justified, and clear when he judges, clear when he is judged; and sinners, when they are condemned, shall have their sins so set in order before them that their mouth shall be stopped and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are,

1 The violation of the first two commandments of the first table by idolatry, which is here called her whoredoms with her lovers (so she called them, Ho 2:12, because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors), that is, with all the idols of her abominations, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy.

2 The violation of the first two commandments of the second table by the murder of their own innocent infants: The blood of thy children which thou didst give unto them. It is not strange if those that have cast off God and his fear break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection. Their sins are aggravated from the consideration,

(1.) Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves: "Hereby thy filthiness was poured out; the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was exposed to view, and thou wast there by exposed to contempt." God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins.

(2.) Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins: "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou wouldst have perished," Eze 16:43. And,

(3.) The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased: "Thou hast fretted me in all these things, not only angered me, but grieved me." It is a strange expression, and, one would think, enough to melt a heart of stone, that the great God, who cannot admit any uneasiness, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as fretting to him. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.

37 behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all *them* that thou hast loved, with all *them* that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

The sentence is passed in general: I will judge thee as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged (Eze 16:38), and those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death. "Thou hast shed blood, and therefore I will give thee blood; thou hast broken wedlock, and therefore I will give it thee, not only in justice, but in jealousy, not only as a righteous Judge, but as an injured and incensed husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance," Pr 6:34,35. He will recompense their way upon their head, Eze 16:43. In all the judgments God executes upon sinners we must see their own way recompensed upon their head; they are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured. It is the end which their sin, as a way, had a direct tendency to. More particularly,

1. This criminal must be (as is usually done with criminals) exposed to public shame, Eze 16:37. Malefactors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world. Care

is here taken to bring spectators together: "All those whom thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning and prevent their own like ruin; and those also whom thou hast hated, who will insult over thee and triumph in thy fall." Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered around her, but gathered against her; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians, shall now contribute to her ruin.

As, when a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him, so when a man's ways displease the Lord he makes even his friends to be at war with him; and justly makes those a scourge and a plague to sinners, and instruments of their destruction, who were their tempters, and with whom they were partakers in wickedness. Those whom they have suffered to strip them of their virtue shall see them stripped, and perhaps help to strip them, of all their other ornaments; to see the nakedness of the land will they come. It is added, to the same purport (Eze 16:41), I will execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women; thou shalt be made an example of in terrorem--that others may see and fear and do no more presumptuously.

2 The criminal is condemned to die, for her sins are such as death is the wages of (Eze 16:40): They shall bring up a company (that is, a company shall be brought up) against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords; so great a death, so many deaths in one, is this adulteress adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

3. The estate of the criminal is confiscated, and all that belonged to her destroyed with her (Eze 16:39): They shall throw down thy eminent place, and (Eze 16:41) they shall burn thy houses, as the habitations of bad women are destroyed, in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places, erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours, shall be an offence to them, and even they shall break them down. It was long the complaint, even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that the high places were not taken away; but now the army of the Chaldeans, when they lay all waste, shall break them down. If iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation.

4. Thus both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and an end put to both: Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot; there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated, and they shall give no more hire because they shall have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them they shall not give hire any more (Eze 16:41): "Then thou shalt not commit this lewdness of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking above all thy abominations, for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice," Eze 16:43.

Or it may be meant of the reformation of those of them that escape and survive the punishment; they shall take warning, and shall do no more presumptuously. The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever from playing the harlot; it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. And then all shall be well, when this is the fruit, even the taking away of sin; then (Eze 16:42) my jealousy shall depart. I will be quiet, and no more angry. When we begin to be at war with sin God will be at peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs God's

jealousy will soon depart, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so.

Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will make a full end and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. His fury shall rest upon them, and not remove. Compare this with that doom of unbelievers, Joh 3:36. The wrath of God abideth on them. They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be no more angry, for he is eased of his adversaries (Isa 1:24), is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be no more angry, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him, when judgment and mercy were contesting; but now he is quiet, as he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners, wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

39 And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.

40 They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.

41 And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more.

42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these *things;* behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon *thine* head, saith the Lord God: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use *this* proverb against thee, saying, As *is* the mother, *so is* her daughter.

The prophet here further shows Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them, and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all

apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good if we are but as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst. Now God by the prophet shows Jerusalem,

I. That she was as bad as her mother, that is, as the accursed devoted Canaanites that were the possessors of this land before her. Those that use proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that proverb to Jerusalem, As is the mother, so is her daughter, Eze 16:44. She is her mother's own child. The Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was that she loathed her husband and her children, she had all the marks of an adulteress; and that is the character of the daughter: she forsakes the guide of her youth, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels.

When God brought Israel into Canaan he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of the men of that land, who went before them (for which it had spued them out, Le 18:27,28), the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themselves, would be a continual temptation to them; but they learned their way, and trod in their steps, and were as well affected to the idols of Canaan as ever they were (Ps 106:38), and thus, in respect of imitation, it might truly be said that their mother was a Hittite and their father an Amorite (Eze 16:45), for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

II. That she was worse than her sisters Sodom and Samaria, that were adulteresses too, that loathed their husbands and their children, that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, a-la-mode--quite in style, that came newly up, and new fashions in religion, and were given to change. On this comparison between Jerusalem and her sisters

the prophet here enlarges, that he might either shame them into repentance or justify God in their ruin. Observe,

1. Who Jerusalem's sisters were, Eze 16:45. Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the elder sister, or rather the greater, because it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more considerable, and more nearly allied to Israel. If Jerusalem look northward, this is partly on her left hand. This city of Samaria, and the towns and villages, that were as daughters to that mother-city, these had been lately destroyed for their spiritual whoredom. Sodom, and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters, dwelt at Jerusalem's right hand, and was her less sister, less than Jerusalem, less than Samaria, and these were of old destroyed for their corporeal whoredom, Jude 1:7.

2. Wherein Jerusalem's sins resembled her sisters', particularly Sodom's (Eze 16:49): This was the iniquity of Sodom (it is implied, and this is thy iniquity too), pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness. Their going after strange flesh, which was Sodom's most flagrant wickedness, is not mentioned, because notoriously known, but those sins which did not look so black, but opened the door and led the way to these more enormous crimes, and began to fill that measure of her sins, which was filled up at length by their unnatural filthiness. Now these initiating sins were,

(1.) Pride, in which the heart lifts up itself above and against both God and man. Pride was the first sin that turned angels into devils, and the garden of the Lord into a hell upon earth. It was the pride of the Sodomites that they despised righteous Lot, and would not bear to be reproved by him; and this ripened them for ruin.

(2.) Gluttony, here called fulness of bread. It was God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their great sin that they abused it, glutted themselves with it, ate to excess and drank to excess,

and made that the gratification of their lusts which was given them to be the support of their lives.

(3.) Idleness, abundance of idleness, a dread of labour and a love of ease. Their country was fruitful, and the abundance they had they came easily by, which was a temptation to them to indulge themselves in sloth, which disposed them to all that abominable filthiness which kindled their flames. Note, Idleness is an inlet to much sin. The men of Sodom, who were idle, were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, Ge 13:13. The standing waters gather filth and the sitting bird is the fowler's mark. When David arose from off his bed at evening he saw Bathsheba. Quæritur, Ægisthus quare sit factus adulter? In promptu causa est; desidiosus erat--What made Ægisthus an adulterer? Indolence.

(4.) Oppression: Neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy; probably it is implied that she weakened their hands and broke their arms; however, it was bad enough that, when she had so much wealth, and consequently power and interest and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor, in providing for whose wants those that themselves are full of bread may employ their time well; they need not be so abundantly idle as too often they are. These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these were Jerusalem's sins. Their pride, the cause of their sins, is mentioned again (Eze 16:50):

They were haughty, with the horrid effects of their sins, their abominations which they committed before God. Men arrive gradually at the height of impiety and wickedness. Nemo repente fit turpissimus--No man reaches the height of vice at once. But, where pride has got the ascendant in a man, he is in the high road to all abominations.

3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded those of Sodom and Samaria; they were more heinous in the sight of God, either in themselves or by reason of several aggravations: "Thou hast

not only walked after their ways, and trod in their steps, but hast quite outdone them in wickedness, Eze 16:47. Thou thoughtest it a very little thing to do as they did; didst laugh at them as sneaking sinners and silly ones; thou wouldst be more cunning, more daring, in wickedness, wouldst triumph more boldly over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God and religion: 'if a man will break, let him break for something.'

Thus thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways." Jerusalem was more polite, and therefore sinned with more wit, more art and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jerusalem had more wealth and power, and its government was more absolute and arbitrary, and therefore had the more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and shedding malignant influences around her, than Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple, and the ark, and the priesthood, and kings of the house of David; and therefore the wickedness of that holy city, that was so dignified, so near, so dear to God, was more provoking to him than the wickedness of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jerusalem's privileges and means of grace. Sodom has not done as thou hast done, Eze 16:48.

This agrees with what Christ says. Mt 11:24, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee. The kingdom of the ten tribes had been very wicked; and yet Samaria has not committed half thy sins (Eze 16:51), has not worshipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many prophets. It was bad enough that those of Jerusalem were guilty of Sodom's sins, Sodomy itself not excepted, 1Ki 14:24,2Ki 23:7.

And though the Dead Sea, the standing monument of Sodom's sin and ruin, bordered upon their country (Nu 34:12), and that sulphureous lake was always under their nose (God having taken away Sodom and her daughters in such way and manner as he saw good, as he says here, Eze 16:50, so as that one thing should effectually make their overthrow an example to those that afterwards should live ungodly, 2Pe 2:6), yet they did not

take warning, but multiplied their abominations more than they; and,

(1.) By this they justified Sodom and Samaria, Eze 16:51. They pretended, in their haughtiness and superciliousness, to judge them, and in the days of old, when they retained their integrity, they did judge them, Eze 16:52. But now they justify them comparatively: Sodom and Samaria are more righteous than thou, that is, less wicked. It will look like some extenuation of their sins that, bad as they were, Jerusalem was worse, though it was God's own city. Not that it will serve for a plea to justify Sodom, but it condemns Jerusalem, against which Sodom and Samaria will rise up in judgment.

(2.) For this they ought themselves to be greatly ashamed: "Thou who hast judged thy sisters, and cried out shame on them, now bear thy own shame, for thy sins which thou hast committed, which, though of the same kind with theirs, yet, being committed by thee, are more abominable than theirs," Eze 16:52. This may be taken either as foretelling their ruin (Thou shalt bear thy shame) or as inviting them to repentance: "Be thou confounded and bear thy shame; take the shame to thyself that is due to thee." It may be hoped that sinners will forsake their sins when they begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And therefore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall lie, that they may be confounded in all that they have done, because they had been a comfort and encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, Eze 16:54.

Note, There is nothing in sin which we have more reason to be ashamed of than this, that by our sin we have encouraged others in sin, and comforted them in that for which they must be grieved or they are undone. Another reason why they must now be ashamed is because in the day of their prosperity they had looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours: Thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the day of they pride, Eze 16:56.

They thought Sodom not worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem, little dreaming that Jerusalem would at length lie under a worse and more scandalous character than Sodom herself. Those that are high may perhaps come to stand upon a level with those they contemn.

Or "Sodom was not mentioned, that is, the warning designed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin was not regarded." If the Jews had but talked more frequently and seriously to one another, and to their children, concerning the wrath of God revealed from heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighteousness, it might have kept them in awe, and prevented their treading in their steps; but they kept the thought of it at a distance, would not bear the mention of it, and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah to death for putting them in mind of it, when he called them rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, Isa 1:10.

Note, Those are but preparing judgments for themselves that will not take notice of God's judgments upon others.

4. What desolations God had brought and was bringing upon Jerusalem for these wickednesses, wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria.

(1.) She has already long ago been disgraced, and has fallen into contempt, among her neighbours (Eze 16:57): Before her wickedness was discovered, before she came to be so grossly and openly flagitious, she bore the just punishment of her secret and more concealed lewdness, when she fell under the reproach of the daughters of Syria, of the Philistines, who were said to despise her and be ashamed of her (Eze 16:27), and under the reproach of all that were round about her, which seems to refer to the descent made upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Ahaz, and soon after another by the Philistines, 2Ch 28:5,18.

Note, Those that disgrace themselves by yielding to their lusts will justly be brought into disgrace by being made to yield to their enemies; and it is observable that before God brought potent enemies upon them, for their destruction, he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable, for their reproach. If less judgments would do the work, God would not send greater. In this thou hast borne thy lewdness, Eze 16:58. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion.

(2.) She is now in captivity, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her lewdness (Eze 16:58), but for her perfidiousness and covenant-breaking (Eze 16:59): "I will deal with thee as thou hast done; I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off, for thou hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant."

This seems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers at Mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself. They flattered themselves with a conceit that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, notwithstanding their provocations, he would do so still. "No," says God, "you have broken covenant with me, have despised both the promises of the covenant and the obligations of it, and therefore I will deal with thee as thou hast done."

Note, Those that will not adhere to God as their God have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as his people.

(3.) The captivity of the wicked Jews, and their ruin, shall be as irrevocable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take Eze 16:53,55. "When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they

are more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to thy former estate,"

But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, that is, those who now remained there, whom God would deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, Jer 24:9,10.

Sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is a comfort to those of the ten tribes, who are dispersed and in captivity, to see those of the two tribes who had been as bad as they, or worse, in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and die, shall stand and fall, together. The bad ones of both shall perish together; the good ones of both shall return together.

Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do must expect to fare as they fare. Let my enemy be as the wicked.

45 Thou *art* thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou *art* the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother *was* a Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

46 And thine elder sister *is* Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, *is* Sodom and her daughters.

47 Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as *if that were* a very little *thing*, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.

48 *As* I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me:

therefore I took them away as I saw *good*.

51 Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

52 Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.

53 When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then *will I bring again* the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:

54 that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.

55 When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.

56 For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,

57 before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of *thy* reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all *that are* round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about.

58 Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the Lord.

59 For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

60 Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

Here, in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved, for those who shall come after. As was when God swore in his wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt that they should not enter Canaan, "Yet" (says God) "your little ones shall;" so here. And some think that what is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria (Eze 16:53,55), and of Jerusalem with them, is a promise; it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand (as Grotius and some of the Jewish writers do) the

Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned (Jer 48:47,49:6), as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them.

But these closing verses are, without doubt, a previous promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel-times, and in that repentance and that remission of sins which should then be preached with success to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Now observe here,

I. Whence this mercy should take rise-from God himself, and his remembering his covenant with them (Eze 16:60): Nevertheless, though they had been so provoking, and God had been provoked to such a degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet "I will remember my covenant with thee, that covenant which I made with thee in the days of thy youth, and will revive it again. Though thou hast broken the covenant (Eze 16:59), I will remember it, and it shall flourish again."

See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a covenant-way, for thus the mercies of it come to be sure mercies and everlasting (Isa 55:3); and, while this root stands firmly in the ground, there is hope of the tree, though it be cut down, that through the scent of water it will bud again. We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but ex mero motu--from his own mere good pleasure, he remembers it as he had promised. Le 26:42, Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land. He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant no doubt will himself be ever mindful of it, the word which he commanded (and what he commands stands fast for ever) to a thousand generations.

II. How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy (Eze 16:61): "Thou shalt remember thy ways, thy evil ways; God will put thee in mind of them, will set them in order before thee, that thou mayest be ashamed of them."

Note, God's good work in us commences and keeps pace with his good-will towards us. When he remembers his covenant for us, that he may not remember our sins against us, he puts us upon remembering our sins against ourselves. And if we will but be brought to remember our ways, how crooked and perverse they have been and how we have walked contrary to God in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and, when we are so, we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

III. What the mercy is that God has in reserve for them.

1. He will take them into covenant with himself (Eze 16:60): I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant; and again (Eze 16:62), I will establish, re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, my covenant with thee. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all true penitents that the covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of the covenant, for that is inviolable.

2. He will bring the Gentiles into church-communion with them (Eze 16:61): "Thou shalt receive thy sisters, the Gentile nations that are found about thee, thy elder and thy younger, greater than thou art and less, ancient nations and modern, and I will give them unto thee for daughters; they shall be founded, nursed, taught, and educated, by that gospel, that word of the Lord, which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem; so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge the Jerusalem which is from above, and which is free, to be the mother of us all, Ga 4:26. They shall be thy daughters, but not by thy covenant, not by the covenant of peculiarity, not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion and subject to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion."

Or not by thy covenant may mean, "not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers to whom thou mayest give law at pleasure" (such a dominion as that the carnal Jews hope to have over the nations); "no, they shall be thy daughters by my covenant, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in concert, as in indenture tripartite. I will be a Father, a common Father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And, when thou shalt receive them, thou shalt be ashamed of thy own evil ways wherein thou wast conformed to them. Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thy apostasy."

61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

62 And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord:

What the fruit and effect of this will be.

1. God will hereby be glorified (Eze 16:62): "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord. It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant; and thou shalt know it who hast hitherto lived as if thou didst not know or believe it." It had often been said in wrath, You shall know that I am the Lord, shall know it to your cost; here it is said in mercy, You shall know it to your comfort; and it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us that all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

2. They shall hereby be more humbled and abased for sin (Eze 16:63): "That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it and call thyself a thousand times unwise, undutiful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast, and mayest never open thy mouth any more in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive because of thy shame."

Note, Those that rightly remember their sins will be truly ashamed of them; and those that are truly ashamed of their sins will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions, to be dumb, and not open their mouths against what God does. But that which is most observable is, that all this shall be when I am pacified towards thee, saith the Lord God.

Note, It is the gracious ingenuousness of true penitents that the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God's being reconciled to them the more grieved and ashamed they are that ever they have offended God. God is in Jesus Christ pacified towards us; he is our peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled, and in his gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself.

Now the consideration of this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin. This is repenting because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The prodigal, after he had received the kiss which assured him that his father was pacified towards him, was ashamed and confounded, and said, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy the more will our comfort in God be increased.

63 that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-17

The Parable of the Eagles and the Vine

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

We must take all these verses together, that we may have the parable and the explanation of it at one view before us, because they will illustrate one another.

1 The prophet is appointed to put forth a riddle to the house of Israel (Eze 17:2), not to puzzle them, as Samson's riddle was put forth to the Philistines, not to hide the mind of God from them in obscurity, or to leave them in uncertainty about it, one advancing one conjecture and another another, as is usual in expounding riddles; no, he is immediately to tell them the meaning of it. Let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret, 1Co 14:13.

But he must deliver this message in a riddle or parable that they might take the more notice of it, might be the more affected with it themselves, and might the better remember it and tell it to others. For these reasons God often used similitudes by his servants the prophets, and Christ himself opened his mouth in parables. Riddles and parables are used for an amusement to ourselves and an entertainment to our friends. The prophet must make use of these to see if in this dress the things of God might find acceptance, and insinuate themselves into the minds of a careless people.

Note, Ministers should study to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and, as far as they have reason to think will be for edification, should both bring that which is familiar into their preaching and their preaching too into their familiar discourse, that there may not be so vast a dissimilitude as with some there is between what they say in the pulpit and what they say out.

2. He is appointed to expound this riddle to the rebellious house, Eze 17:12. Though being rebellious they might justly have been left in ignorance, to see and hear and not perceive, yet the thing shall be explained to them: Know you not what these things mean? Those that knew the story, and what was now in agitation, might make a shrewd guess at the meaning of this riddle, but, that they

might be left without excuse, he is to give it to them in plain terms, stripped of the metaphor. But the enigma was first propounded for them to study on awhile, and to send to their friends at Jerusalem, that they might enquire after and expect the solution of it some time after.

Let us now see what the matter of this message is.

I Nebuchadnezzar had some time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the same that was called Jeconiah, when he was but eighteen years of age and had reigned in Jerusalem but three months, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, 2Ki 24:12. This in the parable is represented by an eagle's cropping the top and tender branch of a cedar, and carrying it into a land of traffic, a city of merchants (Eze 17:3,4), which is explained Eze 17:12. The king of Babylon took the king of Jerusalem, who was no more able to resist him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the strongest bird of prey, that easily crops it off, perhaps towards the making of her nest. Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel's vision, is a lion, the king of beasts (Da 7:4); there he has eagle's wings, so swift were his motions, so speedy were his conquests.

Here, in this parable, he is an eagle, the king of birds, a great eagle, that lives upon spoil and rapine, whose young ones suck up blood, Job 39:30. His dominion extends itself far and wide, like the great and long wings of an eagle; the people are numerous, for it is full of feathers; the court is splendid, for it has divers colours, which look like embroidering, as the word is. Jerusalem is Lebanon, a forest of houses, and very pleasant. The royal family is the cedar; Jehoiachin is the top branch, the top of the young twigs, which he crops off. Babylon is the land of traffic and city of merchants where it is set. And the king of Judah, being of the house of David, will think himself much degraded and disgraced to be lodged among tradesmen; but he must make the best of it.

II. When he carried him to Babylon he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, Eze 17:5,6. His name was Mattaniah--the gift of

the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar changed into Zedekiah--the justice of the Lord, to remind him to be just like the God he called his, for fear of his justice. This was one of the seed of the land, a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes; he was planted in a fruitful field, for so Jerusalem as yet was; he placed it by great waters, where it would be likely to grow, like a willow-tree, which grows quickly, and grows best in moist ground, but is never designed nor expected to be a stately tree.

He set it with care and circumspection (so some read it); he wisely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. He took of the king's seed (so it is explained, Eze 17:13) and made a covenant with him that he should have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power and dignity, provided he held it as his vassal, dependent on him and accountable to him. He took an oath of him, made him swear allegiance to him, swear by his own God, the God of Israel, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, 2Ch 36:13.

He also took away the mighty of the land, the chief of the men of war, partly as hostages for the performance of the covenant, and partly that, the land being thereby weakened, the king might be the less able, and therefore the less in temptation, to break his league. What he designed we are told (Eze 17:14):

That the kingdom might be base, in respect both of honour and strength, might neither be a rival with its powerful neighbours, nor a terror to its feeble ones, as it had been, that it might not left up itself to vie with the kingdom of Babylon, or to bear down any of the petty states that were in subjection to it. But yet he designed that by the keeping of this covenant it might stand, and continue a kingdom. Hereby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be like the Most High (Isa 14:14), to have all about him subject to him. Now see here,

1. How sad a change sin made with the royal family of Judah. Time was when all the nations about were tributaries to that; now that has not only lost its dominion over other nations, but has itself

become a tributary. How has the gold become dim! Nations by sin sell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and profane their crowns by casting them to the ground.

2. How wisely Zedekiah did for himself in accepting these terms, though they were dishonourable, when necessity brought him to it. A man may live very comfortably and contentedly, though he cannot bear a part, and make a figure, as formerly. A kingdom may stand firmly and safely, though it do not stand so high as it has sometimes done; and so may a family.

III. Zedekiah, while he continued faithful to the king of Babylon, did very well, and, if he would but have reformed his kingdom, and returned to God and his duty, he would have done better, and by that means might soon have recovered his former dignity, Eze 17:6. This plant grew, and though it was set as a willow-tree, and little account was made of it, yet it became a spreading vine of low stature, a great blessing to his own country, and his fruits made glad their hearts; and it is better to be a spreading vine of low stature than a lofty cedar of no use. Nebuchadnezzar was pleased, for the branches turned towards him, and rested on him as the vine on the wall, and he had his share of the fruits of this vine; the roots thereof too were under him, and at his disposal. The Jews had reason to be pleased, for they sat under their own vine, which brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs, and looked pleasant and promising. See how gradually the judgments of God came upon this provoking people, how God gave them respite and so gave them space to repent. He made their kingdom base, to try if that would humble them, before he made it no kingdom; yet left it easy for them, to try if that would win upon them to return to him, that the troubles threatened might be prevented.

3 and say, Thus saith the Lord God; A great eagle with great wings,
long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto
Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:
4 he cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land
of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants.

5 He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed *it* by great waters, *and* set it *as* a willow tree.
6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

Zedekiah knew not when he was well off, but grew impatient of the disgrace of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and, to get clear of it, entered into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reason to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardships upon him or improved his advantages against him, that he oppressed or impoverished his country, for, as the prophet had said before (Eze 17:6) to aggravate his treachery, he shows again (Eze 17:8) what a fair way he was in to be considerable: He was planted in a good soil by great waters; his family was likely enough to be built up, and his exchequer to be filled, in a little time, so that, if he had dealt faithfully, he might have been a goodly vine.

But there was another great eagle that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the king of Egypt, Eze 17:7. Those two great potentates, the kings of Babylon and Egypt, were but two great eagles, birds of prey. This great eagle of Egypt is said to have great wings, but not to be long-winged as the king of Babylon, because, though the kingdom of Egypt was strong, yet it was not of such a vast extent as that of Babylon was.

The great eagle is said to have many feathers, much wealth and many soldiers, which he depended upon as a substantial defence, but which really were no more than so may feathers. Zedekiah, promising himself liberty, made himself a vassal to the king of Egypt, foolishly expecting ease by changing his master. Now this vine did secretly and under-hand bend her roots towards the king of Egypt, that great eagle, and after awhile did openly shoot forth her branches towards him, give him an intimation how much she coveted an alliance with him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation, whereas it was planted by great waters, and did not need any assistance from him. This is expounded, Eze 17:15.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people, to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change sin had made with the people of God! God promised that they should be a numerous people, as the sand of the sea; yet now, if their king had occasion for much people, he must send to Egypt for them, they being for sin diminished and brought low, Ps 107:39. See also the folly of fretful discontented spirits, that ruin themselves by striving to better themselves, whereas they might be easy and happy enough if they would but make the best of that which is.

7 There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

8 It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

9 Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither ? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

10 Yea, behold, *being* planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

11 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

12 Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these *things mean?* tell *them,* Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

13 and hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

14 that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, *but* that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

15 But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such *things?* or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

16 *As* I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place *where* the king *dwelleth* that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, *even* with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

17 Neither shall Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons:

God here threatens Zedekiah with the utter destruction of him and his kingdom, and, in displeasure against him, passes that doom upon him for his treacherous revolt from the king of Babylon. This is represented in the parable (Eze 17:9,19) by the plucking up of this vine by the roots, the cutting off of the fruit, and the withering of the leaves, the leaves of her spring, when they are in their greenness (Job 8:12), before they begin in autumn to wither of themselves. The project shall be blasted; it shall utterly wither. The affairs of this perfidious prince shall be ruined past retrieve; as a vine when the east wind blasts it, so that it shall be fit for nothing but the fire (as we had it in that parable, Eze 15:4), it shall wither even in the furrows where it grew, though they were ever so well watered. It shall be destroyed without great power or many people to pluck it up; for what need is there of raising the militia to pluck up a vine?

Note, God can bring great things to pass without much ado. He needs not great power and many people to effect his purposes; a handful will serve if he pleases. He can without any difficulty ruin a sinful king and kingdom, and make no more of it than we do of rooting up a tree that cumbers the ground. In the explanation of the parable the sentence is very largely recorded: Shall be prosper? Eze 17:15. Can he expect to do ill and fare well? Nay, shall he that does such wicked things escape? Shall he break the covenant, and be delivered from that vengeance which is the just

punishment of his treachery? No; can he expect to do ill and not suffer ill? Let him hear his doom.

1. It is ratified by the oath of God (Eze 17:16): As I live, saith the Lord God, he shall die for it. This intimates how highly God resented the crime, and how sure and severe the punishment of it would be. God swears in his wrath, as he did Ps 95:11. Note, As God's promises are confirmed with an oath, for comfort to the saints, so are his threatenings, for terror to the wicked. As sure as God lives and is happy (I may add, and as long), so sure, so long, shall impenitent sinners die and be miserable.

2. It is justified by the heinousness of the crime he had been guilty of.

(1.) He had been very ungrateful to his benefactor, who had made him king, and undertook to protect him, had made him a prince when he might as easily have made him a prisoner. Note, It is a sin against God to be unkind to our friends and to lift up the heel against those that have helped to raise us.

(2.) He had been very false to him whom he had covenanted with. This is mostly insisted on: He despised the oath. When his conscience or friends reminded him of it he made a jest of it, put on a daring resolution, and broke it, Eze 17:15,16,18,19. He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whose maxim (they say) it is, That princes ought not to be slaves to their word any further than it is for their interest. That which aggravated Zedekiah's perfidiousness was that the oath by which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon was,

[1.] A solemn oath. An emphasis is laid upon this (Eze 17:18): When, lo, he had given his hand, as a confederate with the king

of Babylon, not only as his subject, but as his friend, the joining of hands being a token of the joining of hearts.

[2.] As sacred oath. God says (Eze 17:19): It is my oath that he has despised and my covenant that he has broken. In every solemn oath God is appealed to as a witness of the sincerity of him that swears, and invocated as a judge and revenger of his treachery if he now swear falsely or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called the oath of God (Ec 8:2), as if that had something in it more sacred than another oath; for princes are ministers of God to us for good, Ro 13:4. Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God will recompense upon his own head (Eze 17:19), the trespass which he has trespassed against God, for which God will plead with him, Eze 17:20.

Note, Perjury is a heinous sin and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse,

First, That he who took this oath was a king, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might surely set him above the obligation of oaths. No; though kings are gods to us, they are men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubtless as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation-oath as the people are to the princes by the oath of allegiance.

Secondly, Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worse than a heretic, with whom the church of Rome says, No faith is to be kept. No; though Nebuchadnezzar was a worshipper of false gods, yet the true God will avenge this quarrel when one of his worshippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt due to all men; and, if the professors of the true religion deal perfidiously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from excusing, much less justifying them, that it aggravates their sin, and God will the more surely and severely punish it, because by it they give occasion to the

enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mahometan prince, who, when the Christians broke their league with him, cried out, O Jesus! are these thy Christians?

Thirdly, Nor would it justify him that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was made upon a valuable consideration. He held his life and crown upon this condition, that he should be faithful and bear true allegiance to the king of Babylon; and, if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust if he do not observe the terms. Let him know then that, having despised the oath, and broken the covenant, he shall not escape. And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this, would be so punished, of how much sorer punishment shall those be thought worthy who break covenant with God (when, lo, they had given their hand upon it that they would be faithful), who tread under foot the blood of that covenant as an unholy thing? Between the covenants there is no comparison.

3. It is particularized in divers instances, wherein the punishment is made to answer the sin.

(1.) He had rebelled against the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon should be his effectual conqueror. In the place where that king dwells whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die, Eze 17:16. He thinks to get out of his hands, but he shall fall, more than before, into his hands. God himself will now take part with the king of Babylon against him: I will spread my net upon him, Eze 17:20. God has a net for those who deal perfidiously and think to escape his righteous judgments, in which those shall be taken and held who would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon: "Thither I will bring him," says God, "and plead with him there." Men will justly be forced upon that calamity which they endeavour by sin to flee from.

(2.) He had relied upon the king of Egypt, and the king of Egypt should be his ineffectual helper: Pharaoh with his mighty army shall not make for him in the war (Eze 17:17), shall to him no service, nor give any check to the progress of the Chaldean forces; he shall not assist him in the siege by casting up mounts and building forts, nor in battle by cutting off many person. Note, Every creature is that to us which God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that arm of flesh which we trust in and stay ourselves upon.

Now was again fulfilled what was spoken on a former similar occasion (Isa 30:7), The Egyptians shall help in vain. They did so; for though, upon the approach of the Egyptian army, the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again and took it. It should seem, the Egyptians were not hearty, had strength enough, but no good-will, to help Zedekiah.

Note, Those who deal treacherously with those who put a confidence in them will justly be dealt treacherously with by those they put a confidence in. Yet the Egyptians were not the only states Zedekiah stayed himself upon; he had bands of his own to stand by him, but those bands, though we may suppose they were veteran troops and the best soldiers his kingdom afforded, shall become fugitives, shall quit their posts, and make the best of their way, and shall fall by the sword of the enemy, and the remains of them shall be scattered, Eze 17:21. This was fulfilled when the city was broken up and all the men of war fled, Jer 52:7. This you shall now that I the Lord have spoken it. Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove itself; and those who will not believe shall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

18 seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these *things*, he shall not escape.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; *As* I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

21 And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken *it*.

22 Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set *it;* I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant *it* upon a high mountain and eminent:

When the royal family of Judah was brought to desolation by the captivity of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah it might be asked, "What has now become of the covenant of royalty made with David, that his children should sit upon his throne for evermore? Do the sure mercies of David prove thus unsure?" To this it is sufficient for the silencing of the objectors to answer that the promise was conditional. If they will keep my covenant, then they shall continue, Ps 132:12. But David's posterity broke the condition, and so forfeited the promise. But the unbelief of man shall not invalidate the promise of God. He will find out another seed of David in which it shall be accomplished; and that is promised in these verses.

I The house of David shall again be magnified, and out of its ashes another phoenix shall arise. The metaphor of a tree, which was made us of in the threatening, is here presented in the promise, Eze 17:22,23. This promise had its accomplishment in part when Zerubbabel, a branch of the house of David, was raised up to head the Jews in their return out of captivity, and to rebuild the city and temple and re-establish their church and state; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, who was a root out of a dry ground, and to whom God, according to promise, gave the throne of his father David, Lu 1:32.

1. God himself undertakes the reviving and restoring of the house of David. Nebuchadnezzar was the great eagle that had attempted the re-establishing of the house of David in a dependence upon

him, Eze 17:5. But the attempt miscarried; his plantation withered and was plucked up. "Well," says God, "the next shall be of my planting: I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar and I will set it." Note, As men have their designs, God also has his designs; but his will prosper when theirs are blasted. Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in setting up kingdoms at his pleasure, Da 5:19. But those kingdoms soon had an end, whereas the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, Da 2:44.

2 The house of David is revived in a tender one cropped from the top of his young twigs. Zerubbabel was so; that which was hopeful in him was but the day of small things (Zec 4:10), yet before him great mountains were made plain. Our Lord Jesus was the highest branch of the high cedar, the furthest of all from the root (for soon after he appeared the house of David was all cut off and extinguished), but the nearest of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was taken from the top of the young twigs, for he is the man, the branch, a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground (Isa 53:2), but a branch of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

3. This branch is planted in a high mountain (Eze 17:22), in the mountain of the height of Israel, Eze 17:23. Thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph; there he raised up his son Jesus, sent him to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel that were scattered upon the mountains, set him his king upon his holy hill of Zion, sent forth the gospel from Mount Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; there, in the height of Israel, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as conspicuous and illustrious, was the Christian church first planted. The churches of Judea were the most primitive churches. The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there; but who can pluck up what God will plant?

4. Thence it spreads far and wide. The Jewish state, though it began very low in Zerubbabel's time, was set as a tender branch,

which might easily be plucked up, yet took root, spread strangely, and after some time became very considerable; those of other nations, fowl of every wing, put themselves under the protection of it. The Christian church was at first like a grain of mustard-seed, but became, like this tender branch, a great tree, its beginning small, but its latter end increasing to admiration. When the Gentiles flocked into the church then did the fowl of every wing (even the birds of prey, which those preyed upon, as the wolf and the lamb feeding together, Isa 11:6) come and dwell under the shadow of this goodly cedar. See Da 4:21.

II. God himself will herein be glorified, Eze 17:24. The setting up of the Messiah's kingdom in the world shall discover more clearly than ever to the children of men that God is the King of all the earth, Ps 47:7. Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wise and mighty Providence, than that which was given by the exaltation of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in his hand, and the sovereign disposal of all affairs. All the trees of the field shall know,

1. That the tree which God will have to be brought down, and dried up, shall be so, though it be ever so high and stately, ever so green and flourishing. Neither honour nor wealth, neither external advancements nor internal endowments, will secure men from humbling withering providence.

2. That the tree which God will have to be exalted, and to flourish, shall so be, shall so do, though ever so low, and ever so dry. The house of Nebuchadnezzar, that now makes so great a figure, shall be extirpated, and the house of David, that now makes so mean a figure, shall become famous again; and the Jewish nation, that is now despicable, shall be considerable. The kingdom of Satan, that has borne so long, so large, a sway, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, that was looked upon with contempt, shall be established. The Jews, who, in respect of church-privileges, had

been high and green, shall be thrown out, and the Gentiles, who had been low and dry trees, shall be taken in their room, Isa 54:1.

All the enemies of Christ shall be abased and made his footstool, and his interests shall be confirmed and advanced: I the Lord have spoken (it is the decree, the declared decree, that Christ must be exalted, must be the headstone of the corner), and I have done it, that is, I will do it in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already. With men saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God. What he has spoken we may be sure that he will do, nor shall one iota or tittle of his word fall to the ground, for he is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent either of his threatenings or of his promises.

23 in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done *it*.

Ezekiel-18

The Soul That Sins Shall Die

1 The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying,

2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; and in like manner sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. Here is,

I. An evil proverb commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We had one before (Eze 12:22) and a reply to it; here we have

another. That sets God's justice at defiance: "The days are prolonged and every vision fails; the threatenings are a jest." This charges him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were a wrong: "You use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, now that it is laid waste by the judgments of God, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge; we are punished for the sins of our ancestors, which is as great an absurdity in the divine regimen as if the children should have their teeth set on edge, or stupefied, by the fathers' eating sour grapes, whereas, in the order of natural causes, if men eat or drink any thing amiss, they only themselves shall suffer by it." Now,

1. It must be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evil of sin, of that sin, his detestation of it, and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters, that parents might be restrained from sin by their affection to their children and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parents.

He had likewise often declared by his prophets that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh and other preceding kings; for, looking upon the nation as a body politic, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law that a corporation never dies, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages was but like making a man, when he is old, to possess the iniquities of his youth, Job 13:26. And there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But,

2. They intended it as a reflection upon God, and an impeachment of his equity in his proceedings against them. Thus far that is right which is implied in this proverbial saying, That those who are guilty of wilful sin eat sour grapes; they do that which they will feel from, sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter as bitterness itself in the

reflection. They will set the sinner's teeth on edge. When conscience is awake, and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts as when the teeth are set on edge.

But they suggest it as unreasonable that the children should smart for the fathers' folly and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of, and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance and could not justify it. See how wicked the reflection is, how daring the impudence; yet see how witty it is, and how sly the comparison. Many that are impious in their jeers are ingenious in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb used, commonly used; they had it up ever and anon. And, though it had plainly a blasphemous meaning, yet they sheltered themselves under the similitude from the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now by this it appears that they were unhumbled under the rod, for, instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves; but woe to him that thus strives with his Maker.

3 *As* I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to
use this proverb in Israel.
4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul
of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,
6 *and* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his
eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his
neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

A just reproof of, and reply to, this proverb: What mean you by using it? That is the reproof. "Do you intend hereby to try it out with God? Or can you think any other than that you will hereby provoke him to be angry with you will he has consumed you? Is this the way to reconcile yourselves to him and make your peace with him?" The reply follows, in which God tells them,

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn (Eze 18:3): You shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb; or (as it may be read), You shall not have the

use of this parable. The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise, Jer 31:29. Here it is made the matter of a threatening. There it intimates that God will return to them in ways of mercy; here it intimates that God would proceed against them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case, Jer 23:34,36. God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers.

Or God will so manifest both to themselves and others that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with: "Your own consciences shall tell you, and all your neighbours shall confirm it, that you yourselves have eaten the same sour grapes that your fathers ate before you, or else your teeth would not have been set on edge."

2. That really the saying itself was unjust and a causeless reflection upon God's government. For,

(1.) God does not punish the children for the fathers' sins unless they tread in their fathers' steps and fill up the measure of their iniquity (Mt 23:32), and then they have no reason to complain, for, whatever they suffer, it is less than their own sin has deserved. And, when God speaks of visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, that is so far from putting any hardship upon the children, to whom he only renders according to their works, that it accounts for God's patience with the parents, whom he therefore does not punish immediately, because he lays up their iniquity for their children, Job 21:19.

(2.) It is only in temporal calamities that children (and sometimes innocent ones) fare the worse for their parents' wickedness, and God can alter the property of those calamities, and make them work for good to those that are visited with them; but as to spiritual and eternal misery (and that is the death here spoken of)

the children shall by no means smart for the parents' sins. This is here shown at large; and it is a wonderful piece of condescension that the great God is pleased to reason the case with such wicked and unreasonable men, that he did not immediately strike them dumb or dead, but vouchsafed to state the matter before them, that he may be clear when he is judged. Now, in his reply,

[1.] He asserts and maintains his own absolute and incontestable sovereignty: Behold, all souls are mine, Eze 18:4. God here claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another.

First, Souls are his. He that is the Maker of all things is in a particular manner the Father of spirits, for his image is stamped on the souls of men; it was so in their creation; it is so in their renovation. He forms the spirit of man within him, and is therefore called the God of the spirits of all flesh, of embodied spirits.

Secondly, All souls are his, all created by him and for him, and accountable to him. As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son, is mine. Our earthly parents are only the fathers of our flesh; our souls are not theirs; God challenges them. Now hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter,

1. That God may certainly do what he pleases both with fathers and children, and none may say unto him, What doest thou? He that gave us our being does us no wrong if he takes it away again, much less when he only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it; it is as absurd to quarrel with him as for the thing formed to say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

2. That God as certainly bears a good-will both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either. We are sure that God hates nothing that he has made, and therefore (speaking of the adult, who are capable of acting for themselves) he has such a kindness for all souls that none die but through their own default. All souls

are his, and therefore he is not partial in his judgment of them. Let us subscribe to his interest in us and dominion over us. He says, All souls are mine; let us answer, "Lord, my soul is thine; I devote it to thee to be employed for thee and made happy in thee." It is with good reason that God says, "My son, give me thy heart, for it is my own," to which we must yield, "Father, take my heart, it is thy own."

[2.] Though God might justify himself by insisting upon his sovereignty, yet he waives that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment by which he will proceed as to particular persons; and it is this:--

First, The sinner that persists in sin shall certainly die, his iniquity shall be his ruin: The soul that sins shall die, shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the soul, the body being only the instrument of unrighteousness; it is called the sin of the soul, Mic 6:7. And therefore the punishment of sin is the tribulation and the anguish of the soul, Ro 2:9.

Secondly, The righteous man that perseveres in his righteousness shall certainly live. If a man be just, have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and, as an evidence of that, do judgment and justice (Eze 18:5), he shall surely live, saith the Lord God, Eze 18:9. He that makes conscience of conforming in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his business to serve God and his aim to glorify God, shall without fail be happy here and for ever in the love and favour of God; and, wherein he comes short of his duty, it shall be forgiven him, through a Mediator. Now here is part of the character of this just man.

1. He is careful to keep himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and at a distance from all the appearances of evil.

(1.) From sins against the second commandment. In the matters of God's worship he is jealous, for he knows God is so. He has not only not sacrificed in the high places to the images there set up, but he has not so much as eaten upon the mountains, that is, not had any communion with idolaters by eating things sacrificed to idols, 1Co 10:20. He would not only not kneel with them at their altars, but not sit with them at their tables in their high places. He detests not only the idols of the heathen but the idols of the house of Israel, which were not only allowed of, but generally applauded and adored, by those that were accounted the professing people of God.

He has not only not worshipped those idols, but he has not so much as lifted up his eyes to them; he has not given them a favourable look, has had no regard at all to them, neither desired their favour nor dreaded their frowns. He has observed so many bewitched by them that he has not dared so much as to look at them, lest he should be taken in the snare. The eyes of idolaters are said to go a whoring, Eze 6:9. See De 4:19.

(2.) From sins against the seventh commandment. He is careful to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness; and therefore he has not dared to defile his neighbour's wife, nor said or done any thing which had the least tendency to corrupt or debauch her, no, nor will he make any undue approaches to his own wife when she is put apart for her uncleanness, for it was forbidden by the law, Le 18:19,20:18. Note, It is an essential branch of wisdom and justice to keep the appetites of the body always in subjection to reason and virtue.

(3.) From sins against the eighth commandment. He is a just man, who has not, by fraud and under colour of law and right, oppressed any, and who has not with force and arms spoiled any by violence, not spoiled them of their goods or estates, much less of their liberties and lives, Eze 18:7. Oppression and violence were the sins of the old world, that brought the deluge, and are sins of which still God is and will be the avenger.

Nay, he is one that has not lent his money upon usury, nor taken increase (Eze 18:8), though, being done by contract, it may seem free from injustice (Volenti non fit injuria--What is done to a person with his own consent is no injury to him), yet, as far as it is forbidden by the law, he dares not do it. A moderate usury they were allowed to receive from strangers, but not from their brethren. A just man will not take advantage of his neighbour's necessity to make a prey of him, nor indulge himself in ease and idleness to live upon the sweat and toil of others, and therefore will not take increase from those who cannot make increase of what he lends them, nor be rigorous in exacting what was agreed for from those who by the act of God are disabled to pay it; but he is willing to share in loss as well as profit. Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet et onus--He who enjoys the benefit should bear the burden.

2. He makes conscience of doing the duties of his place. He has restored the pledge to the poor debtor, according to the law. Ex 22:26. "If thou take thy neighbour's raiment for a pledge, the raiment that is for necessary use, thou shalt deliver it to him again, that he may sleep in his own bedclothes."

Nay, he has not only restored to the poor that which was their own, but has given his bread to the hungry. Observe, It is called his bread, because it is honestly come by; that which is given to some is not unjustly taken from others; for God has said, I hate robbery for burnt-offerings. Worldly men insist upon it that their bread is their own, as Nabal, who therefore would not give of it to David (1Sa 25:11); yet let them know that it is not so their own but that they are bound to do good to others with it. Clothes are necessary as well as food, and therefore this just man is so charitable as to cover the naked also with a garment, Eze 18:7. The coats which Dorcas had made for the poor were produced as witnesses of her charity, Ac 9:39. This just man has withdrawn his hands from iniquity, Eze 18:8.

If at any time he has been drawn in through inadvertency to that which afterwards has appeared to him to be a wrong thing, he does not persist in it because he has begun it, but withdraws his hand from that which he now perceives to be iniquity; for he executes true judgment between man and man, according as his opportunity is of doing it (as a judge, as a witness, as a juryman, as a referee), and in all commerce is concerned that justice be done, that no man be wronged, that he who is wronged be righted, and that every man have his own, and is ready to interpose himself, and do any good office, in order hereunto. This is his character towards his neighbours; yet it will not suffice that he be just and true to his brother, to complete his character he must be so to his God likewise (Eze 18:9):

He has walked in my statutes, those which relate to the duties of his immediate worship; he has kept those and all his other judgments, has had respect to them all, has made it his constant care and endeavour to conform and come up to them all, to deal truly, that so he may approve himself faithful to his covenant with God, and, having joined himself to God, he does not treacherously depart from him, nor dissemble with him. This is a just man, and living he shall live; he shall certainly live, shall have life and shall have it more abundantly, shall live truly, live comfortably, live eternally. Keep the commandments, and thou shalt enter into life, Mt 19:17.

7 and hath not oppressed any, *but* hath restored to the debtor his
pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the
hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;
8 he *that* hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any
increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath
executed true judgment between man and man,
9 hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal
truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.
10 If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and *that*
doeth the like to *any* one of these *things,*

God, by the prophet, having laid down the general rule of judgment, that he will render eternal life to those that patiently continue in well-doing, but indignation and wrath to those that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (Ro 2:7,8), comes, in these verses, to show that men's parentage and relation shall not alter the case either one way or other.

I. He applied it largely and particularly both ways. As it was in the royal line of the kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that godly parents have wicked children and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shows,

1. That a wicked man shall certainly perish in his iniquity, though he be the son of a pious father. If that righteous man before described beget a son whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too.

(1.) It is supposed as no uncommon case, but a very melancholy one, that the child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him and prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame of his family, and the curse and plague of his generation. He is here supposed to allow himself in all those enormities which his good father dreaded and carefully avoided, and to shake off all those good duties which his father made conscience of and took satisfaction in; he undoes all that his father did, and goes counter to his example in every thing. He is here described to be a highwayman--a robber and a shedder of blood. He is an idolater:

He has eaten upon the mountains (Eze 18:11) and has lifted up his eyes to the idols, which his good father never did, and has come at length not only to feast with the idolaters, but to sacrifice with them, which is here called committing abomination, for the way of sin is down-hill. He is an adulterer, has defiled his neighbour's

wife. He is an oppressor even of the poor and needy; he robs the spital, and squeezes those who, he knows, cannot defend themselves, and takes a pride and pleasure in trampling upon the weak and impoverishing those that are poor already. He takes away from those to whom he should give. He has spoiled by violence and open force; he has given forth upon usury, and so spoiled by contract; and he has not restored the pledge, but unjustly detained it even when the debt was paid.

Let those good parents that have wicked children not look upon their case as singular; it is a case put here; and by it we see that grace does not run in the blood, nor always attend the means of grace. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, for then the children that are well taught would do well, but God will let us know that his grace is his own and his Spirit a free-agent, and that though we are tied to give our children a good education he is not tied to bless it. In this, as much as any thing, appears the power of original sin and the necessity of special grace.

(2.) We are here assured that this wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity, notwithstanding his being the son of a good father. He may perhaps prosper awhile in the world, for the sake of the piety of his ancestors, but, having committed all these abominations, and never repented of them, he shall not live, he shall not be happy in the favour of God; though he may escape the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of God. He shall surely die; he shall be for ever miserable; his blood shall be upon him. He may thank himself; he is his own destroyed. And his relation to a good father will be so far from standing him in stead that it will aggravate his sin and his condemnation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay, it made him really the more vile and profligate, and, consequently, will make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.

2. That a righteous man shall be certainly happy, though he be the son of a wicked father. Though the father did eat the sour grapes, if the children do not meddle with them, they shall fare never the worse for that. Here,

(1.) It is supposed (and, blessed be God, it is sometimes a case in fact) that the son of an ungodly father may be godly, that, observing how fatal his father's errors were, he may be so wise as to take warning, and not tread in his father's tests, Eze 18:14.

Ordinarily, children partake of the parents' temper and are drawn in to imitate their example; but here the son, instead of seeing his father's sins, and, as is usual, doing the like, sees them and dreads doing the like. Men indeed do not gather grapes of thorns, but God sometimes does, takes a branch from a wild olive and grafts it into a good one. Wicked Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who sees all his father's sins which he has done, and though he will not, like Ham, proclaim his father's shame, or make the worst of it, yet he loathes it, and blushes at it, and thinks the worse of sin because it was the reproach and ruin of his own father.

He considers and does not such like; he considers how ill it became his father to do such things, what an offence it was to God and all good men, what a wound and dishonour he got by it, and what calamities he brought into his family, and therefore he does not such like.

Note, If we did but duly consider the ways of wicked men, we should all dread being associates with them and followers of them. The particulars are here again enumerated almost in the same words with that character given of the just man (Eze 18:6, &c.), to show how good men walk in the same spirit and in the same steps. This just man here, when he took care to avoid his father's sins, took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues; and, if we look back, we shall find some examples for our imitation, as well as others for our admonition.

This just man can not only say, as the Pharisee, I am no adulterer, no extortioner, no oppressor, no usurer, no idolater; but he has given his bread to the hungry and covered the naked. He has taken off his hand from the poor; where he found his father had put

hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours, he eased their burden. He did not say, "What my father has done I will abide by, and if it was a fault it was his and not mine;" as Rehoboam, who contemned the taxes his father had imposed. No; he takes his hand off from the poor, and restores them to their rights and liberties again, Eze 18:15-17. Thus he has executed God's judgments and walked in his statutes, not only done his duty for once, but one on in a course and way of obedience.

(2.) We are assured that the graceless father alone shall die in his iniquity, but his gracious son shall fare never the worse for it. As for his father (Eze 18:18), because he was a cruel oppressor, and did hurt, nay, because, though he had wealth and power, he did not with them do good among his people, lo, even he, great as he is, shall die in his iniquity, and be undone for ever; but he that kept his integrity shall surely live, shall be easy and happy, and he shall not die for the iniquity of his father. Perhaps his father's wickedness has lessened his estate and weakened his interest, but it shall be no prejudice at all to his acceptance with God and his eternal welfare.

11 and that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon
the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife,
12 hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath
not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath
committed abomination,
13 hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then
live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he
shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.
14 Now, lo, *if* he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he
hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like,
15 *that* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his
eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his
neighbor's wife,
16 neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge,
neither hath spoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the
hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

17 *that* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

18 *As for* his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did *that* which *is* not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity.

19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

He appeals to themselves then whether they did not wrong God with their proverb. "Thus plain the case is, and yet you say, Does not the son bear the iniquity of the father? No, he does not; he shall not if he will himself do that which is lawful and right," Eze 18:19. But this people that bore the iniquity of their fathers had not done that which is lawful and right, and therefore justly suffered for their own sin and had no reason to complain of God's proceedings against them as at all unjust, though they had reason to complain of the bad example their fathers had left them as very unkind. Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquity, La 5:7. It is true that there is a curse entailed upon wicked families, but it is as true that the entail may be cut off by repentance and reformation; let the impenitent and unreformed therefore thank themselves if they fall under it.

The settled rule of judgment is therefore repeated (Eze 18:20): The soul that sins shall die, and not another for it. What direction God has given to earthly judges (De 24:16) he will himself pursue: The son shall not die, not die eternally, for the iniquity of the father, if he do not tread in the steps of it, nor the father for the iniquity of the son, if he endeavour to do his duty for the preventing of it. In the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, which is now clouded and eclipsed, the righteousness of the righteous shall appear before all the world to be upon him, to his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a robe, upon his as a crown; and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, to his everlasting confusion, upon him as a

chain, upon him as a load, as a mountain of lead to sink him to the bottomless pit.

20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God's Way Is Just

21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

We have here another rule of judgment which God will go by in dealing with us, by which is further demonstrated the equity of his government. The former showed that God will reward or punish according to the change made in the family or succession, for the better or for the worse; here he shows that he will reward or punish according to the change made in the person himself, whether for the better or the worse. While we are in this world we are in a state of probation; the time of trial lasts as long as the time of life, and according as we are found at last it will be with us to eternity. Now see here,

The case fairly stated, much as it had been before (Eze 3:18, &c.), and here it is laid down once (Eze 18:21-24) and again (Eze 18:26-28), because it is a matter of vast importance, a matter of life and death, of life and death eternal. Here we have,

1. A fair invitation given to wicked people, to turn from their wickedness. Assurance is here given us that, if the wicked will turn, he shall surely live, Eze 18:21,27. Observe,

(1.) What is required to denominate a man a true convert, how he must be qualified that he may be entitled to this act of indemnity.

[1.] The first step towards conversion is consideration (Eze 18:28): Because he considers and turns. The reason why sinners

go on in their evil ways is because they do not consider what will be in the end thereof; but if the prodigal once come to himself, if he sit down and consider a little how bad his state is and how easily it may be bettered, he will soon return to his father (Lu 15:17), and the adulteress to her first husband when she considers that then it was better with her than now, Ho 2:7.

[2.] This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considers he must turn away from his wickedness, which denotes a change in the disposition of the heart; he must turn from his sins and his transgression, which denotes a change in the life; he must break off from all his evil courses, and, wherein he has done iniquity, must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin. What have I to do any more with idols?

[3.] This aversion to sin must be universal; he must turn from all his sins and all his transgressions, with out a reserve for any Delilah, any house of Rimmon. We do not rightly turn from sin unless we truly hate it, and we do not truly hate sin, as sin, if we do not hate all sin.

[4.] This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty; he must keep all God's statutes (for the obedience, if it be sincere, will be universal) and must do that which is lawful and right, that which agrees with the word and will of God, which he must take for his rule, and not the will of the flesh and the way of the world.

(2.) What is promised to those that do thus turn from sin to God.

[1.] They shall save their souls alive, Eze 18:27. They shall surely live, they shall not die, Eze 18:21,28. Whereas it was said, The soul that sins it shall die, yet let not those that have sinned despair but that the threatened death may be prevented if they will but turn and repent in time. When David penitently acknowledges, I have sinned, he is immediately assured of his pardon: "The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die (2Sa

12:13), thou shalt not die eternally." He shall surely live; he shall be restored to the favour of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under his wrath, which is as messengers of death to the soul.

[2.] The sins they have repented of and forsaken shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them: All his transgressions that he has committed, though numerous, though heinous, though very provoking to God, and redounding very much to his dishonour, yet they shall not be mentioned unto him (Eze 18:22), not mentioned against them; not only they shall not be imputed to him to ruin him, but in the great day they shall not be remembered against him to grieve or shame him; they shall be covered, shall be sought for and not found. This intimates the fulness of pardoning mercy; when sin is forgiven it is blotted out, it is remembered no more.

[3.] In their righteousness they shall live; not for their righteousness, as if that were the purchase of their pardon and bliss and an atonement for their sins, but in their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings.

(3.) What encouragement a repenting returning sinner has to hope for pardon and life according to this promise. He is conscious to himself that his obedience for the future can never be a valuable compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's nature, property, and delight, is to have mercy and to forgive, for he has said (Eze 18:23): "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? No, by no means; you never had any cause given you to think so."

It is true God has determined to punish sinners; his justice calls for their punishment, and, pursuant to that, impenitent sinners will lie for ever under his wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree, his consequent will, but it is not his antecedent will, the will of his delight. Though the righteousness of his government requires

that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? It is spoken here comparatively; he has not pleasure in the ruin of sinners, for he would rather they should turn from their ways and live; he is better pleased when his mercy is glorified in their salvation than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A fair warning given to righteous people not to turn from their righteousness, Eze 18:24-26. Here is,

(1.) The character of an apostate, that turns away from his righteousness. He never was in sincerity a righteous man (as appears by that of the apostle, 1Jo 2:19, If they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us), but he passed for a righteous man. He had the denomination and all the external marks of a righteous man; he thought himself one, and others thought him one. But he throws of his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so turns away from his righteousness as one sick of it, and now shows, what he always had, a secret aversion to it; and, having turned away from his righteousness, he commits iniquity, grows loose, and profane, and sensual, intemperate, unjust, and, in short, does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does; for, when the unclean spirit recovers his possession of the heart, he brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter in and dwell there, Lu 11:26.

(2.) The doom of an apostate: Shall he live because he was once a righteous man? No; factum non dicitur quod non perseverat--that which does not abide is not said to be done. In his trespass (Eze 18:24) and for his iniquity (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin), for the iniquity that he has done, he shall die, shall die eternally, Eze 18:26.

The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead--will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? No:

All his righteousness that he has done, though ever so much applauded by men, shall not be mentioned so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him; the righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wickedness of a penitent is. Under the law, if a Nazarite was polluted he lost all the foregoing days of his separation (Nu 6:12), so those that have begun in the spirit and end in the flesh may reckon all their past services and sufferings in vain (Ga 3:3,4); unless we persevere we lose what we have gained, 2Jo 1:8.

22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live?

24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

An appeal to the consciences even of the house of Israel, though very corrupt, concerning God's equity in all these proceedings; for he will be justified, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths.

1 The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous, Eze 18:25,29. The house of Israel has the impudence to say, The way of the Lord is not equal, than which nothing could be more absurd as well as impious. He that formed the eye, shall he not see? Can his ways be unequal whose will is the eternal rule of good and evil, right and wrong? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? No doubt he shall; he cannot do otherwise.

2. God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemers God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God would immediately vindicate the honour of his justice by making those that impeached it eternal monuments of

it. Must those be suffered to draw another breath that have once breathed out such wickedness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again any where but in hell that has once said, The ways of the Lord are not equal? Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to argue with them; and he requires them to own, for it is so plain that they cannot deny,

(1.) The equity of his ways: Are not my ways equal? No doubt they are. He never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners and the afflictions of his own people, yea, and in the eternal damnation of the impenitent, the ways of the Lord are equal.

(2.) The iniquity of their ways: "Are not your ways unequal? It is plain that they are, and the troubles you are in you have brought upon your own heads. God does you no wrong, but you have wronged yourselves." The foolishness of man perverts his way, makes that unequal, and then his heart frets against the Lord, as if his ways were unequal, Pr 19:3. In all our disputes with God, and in all his controversies with us, it will be found that his ways are equal, but ours are unequal, that he is in the right and we are in the wrong.

25 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

26 When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

27 Again, when the wicked *man* turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according
to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from
all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

We have here the conclusion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason the verdict is brought in on God's side; it appears that his ways are equal. Judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation, nothing short of Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire.

But, behold, a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge every one according to his ways, yet he waits to be gracious, and closes all with a call to repentance and a promise of pardon upon repentance.

I. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to, all amounting to the same:--

1. We must repent; we must change our mind and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can towards the undoing of it again.

2. We must turn ourselves from all our transgressions, Eze 18:30,32. Turn yourselves, face about; turn from sin, nay, turn against it as the enemy you loathe, turn to God as the friend you love.

3. We must cast away from us all our transgressions; we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again, give sin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it overboard, as the mariners did Jonah (for it has raised the storm), cast it out of the soul, and crucify it as a malefactor.

4. We must make us a new heart and a new spirit. This was the matter of a promise, Eze 11:19. Here it is the matter of a precept. We must do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace. St. Austin well explains this precept. Deus non jubet impossibilia, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis et petere quod non possis--God does not enjoin impossibilities, but by his commands admonishes us to do what is in our power and to pray for what is not.

II. Here are four good arguments used to enforce these calls to repentance:--

1. It is the only way, and it is a sure way, to prevent the ruin which our sins have a direct tendency to: So iniquity shall not be your ruin, which implies that, if we do not repent, iniquity will be our ruin, here and for ever, but that, if we do, we are safe, we are snatched as brands out of the burning.

2. If we repent not, we certainly perish, and our blood will be upon our own heads. Why will you die, O house of Israel? What an absurd thing it is for you to choose death and damnation rather than life and salvation. Note, The reason why sinners die is because they will die; they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered. Herein sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, are most unreasonable and act most unaccountably.

3. The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but desires our welfare (Eze 18:32): I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, which implies that he has pleasure in the recovery of those that repent; and this is both an engagement and an encouragement to us to repent.

4. We are made for ever if we repent: Turn yourselves, and live. He that says to us, Repent, thereby says to us, Live, yea, he says to us, Live; so that life and death are here set before us.

31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?
32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn *yourselves,* and live ye.

Ezekiel-19

A Lamentation for the Princes of Israel

1 Moreover, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,
2 and say,
What *is* thy mother? A lioness:
she lay down among lions, she
nourished her whelps among
young lions.

Here are, I. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family, which had long made so great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, so that the eclipsing and extinguishing of it are justly lamented by all who know what value to put upon the covenant of our God, as we find, after a very large account of that covenant with David (Ps 89:3,20, &c.), a sad lamentation for the decays and desolations of his family (Isa 89:38,39): But thou hast cast off and abhorred, hast made void the covenant of thy servant and profaned his crown, &c. The kings of Judah are here called princes of Israel; for their glory was diminished and they had become but as princes, and their purity was lost; they had become corrupt and idolatrous as the kings of Israel, whose ways they had learned.

The prophet must take up a lamentation for them; that is, he must describe their lamentable fall as one that did himself lay it to heart, and desired that those he preached and wrote to might do so to. And how can we expect that others should be affected with that which we ourselves are not affected with? Ministers, when they boldly foretel, must yet bitterly lament the destruction of sinners, as those that have not desired the woeful day. He is not directed to

give advice to the princes of Israel (that had been long and often done in vain), but, the decree having gone forth, he must take up a lamentation for them.

II. Instructions given him what to say.

1. He must compare the kingdom of Judah to a lioness, so wretchedly degenerated was it from what it had been formerly, when it sat as a queen among the nations, Eze 19:2. What is thy mother? thine, O king? (we read of Solomon's crown wherewith his mother crowned him, that is, his people, So 3:11), thine, O Judah? The royal family is as a mother to the kingdom, a nursing mother. She is a lioness, fierce, and cruel, and ravenous. When they had left their divinity they soon lost their humanity too; and, when they feared not God, neither did they regard man. She lay down among lions.

God had said, The people shall dwell alone, but they mingled with the nations and learned their works. She nourished her whelps among young lions, taught the young princes the way of tyrants, which was then used by the arbitrary kings of the east, filled their heads betimes with notions of their absolute despotic power, and possessed them with a belief that they had a right to enslave their subjects, that their liberty and property lay at their mercy: thus she nourished her whelps among young lions.

2. He must compare the kings of Judah to lions' whelps, Eze 19:3. Jacob had compared Judah, and especially the house of David, to a lion's whelp, for its being strong and formidable to its enemies abroad (Ge 49:9, He is an old lion; who shall stir him up?) and, if they had adhered to the divine law and promise, God would have preserved to them the might, and majesty, and dominion of a lion, and does it in Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. But these lions' whelps were so to their own subjects, were cruel and oppressive to them, preyed upon their estates and liberties; and, when they thus by their tyranny made themselves a terror to those whom they ought to have protected, it was just with God to make those a terror

to them whom otherwise they might have subdued. Here is lamented,

(1.) The sin and fall of Jehoahaz, one of the whelps of this lioness. He became a young lion (Eze 19:3); he was made king, and thought he was made so that he might do what he pleased, and gratify his own ambition, covetousness, and revenge, as he had a mind; and so he was soon master of all the arts of tyranny; he learned to catch the prey and devoured men. When he got power into his hand, all that had before in any thing disobliged him were made to feel his resentments and become a sacrifice to his rage. But what came of it? He did not prosper long in his tyranny:

The nations heard of him (Eze 19:4), heard how furiously he drove at his first coming to the crown, how he trampled upon all that is just and sacred, and violated all his engagements, so that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly, as a multitude of shepherds is called forth against a lion roaring on his prey, Isa 31:4.

And he was taken, as a beast of prey, in their pit. His own subjects durst not stand up in defence of their liberties, but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and brought him in chains to the land of Egypt. Thither Jehoahaz was carried captive, and never heard of more.

(2.) The like sin and fall of his successor Jehoiakim. The kingdom of Judah for some time expected the return of Jehoahaz out of Egypt, but at length despaired of it, and then took another of the lion's whelps, and made him a young lion, Eze 19:5. And he, instead of taking warning by his brother's fate to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps: He went up and down among the lions, Eze 19:6. He consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious like himself, and took his measures from them, as Rehoboam took the advice of the rash and hot-headed young men.

And he soon learned to catch the prey, and he devoured men (Eze 19:6); he seized his subjects' estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way. He had got the art of discovering what effects men had that lay concealed, and where the treasures were which they had hoarded up; he knew their desolate places (Eze 19:7), where they his their money and sometimes hid themselves; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he laid waste their cities, depopulated them by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families to some place of safety.

The land was desolate, and the country villages were deserted; and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of the noise of his roaring. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the forest to tremble (Am 3:8), and by his terrible roaring so astonished them that they fell down for fear, and, having not spirit to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He hectored, and threatened, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to establish his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin (Eze 19:8):

The nations set against him on every side, to restrain and reduce his exorbitant power, which they joined in confederacy to do for their common safety; and they spread their net over him, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoiakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees (2Ki 24:2), and he was taken in their pit. Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon, 2Ch 36:6. They put this lion within grates, bound him in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon, Eze 19:9. What became of him we know not; but his voice was nowhere heard roaring upon the mountains of Israel. There was an end of his tyranny: he was buried with the burial of an ass (Jer 22:19), though he had been as a lion, the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

Note, The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those who have terrified and enslaved others are themselves terrified and enslaved, when those who by the abuse of their power to destruction which was given them for edification make themselves as wild beasts, as roaring lions and ranging bears (for such, Solomon says, wicked rulers are over the poor people, Pr 28:15), are treated as such--when those who, like Ishmael, have their hand against every man, come at last to have every man's hand against them. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

3 And she brought up one of her whelps:
it became a young lion,
and it learned to catch the prey;
it devoured men.
4 The nations also heard of him;
he was taken in their pit,
and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.
5 Now when she saw that she had waited,
and her hope was lost,
then she took another of her whelps,
and made him a young lion.
6 And he went up and down among the lions, he
became a young lion,
and learned to catch the prey,
and devoured men.
7 And he knew their desolate palaces, and
he laid waste their cities;
and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by
the noise of his roaring.
8 Then the nations set against him on
every side from the provinces, and
spread their net over him:
he was taken in their pit.
9 And they put him in ward in chains,
and brought him to the king of Babylon:
they brought him into holds,
that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of

Israel.
10 Thy mother *is* like a vine in thy blood,
planted by the waters:
she was fruitful and full of branches
by reason of many waters.
11 And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule,
and her stature was exalted among the thick branches,
and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

Jerusalem, the mother-city, is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, Eze 15:1. Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is so:

Like a vine in they blood (Eze 19:10), the blood-royal, like a vine set in blood and watered with blood, which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines, as if the blood which had been shed had been designed for the fattening and improving of the soil, in such plenty was it shed; and for a time it seemed to have that effect, for she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of the waters, the many waters near which she was planted. Places of great wickedness may prosper for a while; and a vine set in blood may be full of branches. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were strong rods, branches of this vine of uncommon bulk and strength, or poles for the support of this vine, for such magistrates are. The boughs of this vine had grown to such maturity that they were fit to make white staves of for the sceptres of those that bore rule, Eze 19:11.

And those are strong rods that are fit for sceptres, men of strong judgments and strong resolutions that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice were filled with men of sense and probity, then Jerusalem's stature was exalted among thick branches; when the government is in good able hands a nation is thereby made considerable Then she was not taken for a weak and lowly vine, but she appeared in her height, a distinguished city, with the multitude of her

branches. Tanquam lenta solent inter viburna cupressi--Midst humble withies thus the cypress soars. "In thy quietness" (so some read that, Eze 19:10, which we translate in thy blood) "thou wast such a vine as this." When Zedekiah was quiet and easy under the king of Babylon's yoke his kingdom flourished thus. See how slow God is to anger, how he defers his judgments, and waits to be gracious.

2. This vine is now quite destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar, being highly provoked by Zedekiah's treachery, plucked it up in fury (Eze 19:12), ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. The vine was cut off close to the ground, though not plucked up by the roots. The east wind dried up the fruit that was blasted. The young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was pleasing, the prospect nothing that was promising. Her strong rods were broken and withered; her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates deposed. The vine itself is planted in the wilderness, Eze 19:13.

Babylon was as a wilderness to those of the people that were carried captives thither; the land of Judah was as a wilderness to Jerusalem, now that the whole country was ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army--a fruitful land turned into barrenness. "It is burnt with fire (Ps 80:16) and that fire has gone out of a rod of her branches (Eze 19:14); the king himself, by rebelling against the king of Babylon, has given occasion to all this mischief.

She may thank herself for the fire that consumes her; she has by her wickedness made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled which devoured the fruit, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger; her fruit is burned with her own branches, so that she has no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule, none to be found now that are fit for the government or dare take this ruin under their

hand, as the complaint is (Isa 3:6,7), none of the house of David left that have a right to rule, no wise men, or men of sense, that are able to rule." It goes ill with any state, and is likely to go worse, when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government and has no strong rods for sceptres. Woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is a child, for it is as well to have no rod as not a strong rod.

Those strong rods, we have reason to fear, had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in catching the prey and devouring men, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and, when the rod of government is turned into the serpent of oppression, it is just with God to say, "There shall be no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule; but let men be as are the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less."

Note, This is a lamentation and shall be for a lamentation. The prophet was bidden (Eze 19:1) to take up a lamentation; and, having done so, he leaves it to be made use of by others. "It is a lamentation to us of this age, and, the desolations continuing long, it shall be for a lamentation to those that shall come after us; the child unborn will rue the destruction made of Judah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming; the bow was long in the drawing; but now that they have come they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity."

Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers' sins are laying up in store for their children's sorrows and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more so than the overthrow of government.

12 But she was plucked up in fury, she
was cast down to the ground, and
the east wind dried up her fruit:
her strong rods were broken and withered;
the fire consumed them.

13 And now she *is* planted in the wilderness,
in a dry and thirsty ground.
14 And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches,
which hath devoured her fruit,
so that she hath no strong rod
to be a sceptre to rule.
This *is* a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Ezekiel-20

God's Dealing with Israel

1 And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month,* the tenth *day* of the month, *that* certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me.

Here is, 1 The occasion of the message which we have in this chapter. That sermon which we had Eze 18:1-32 was occasioned by their presumptuous reflections upon God; this was occasioned by their hypocritical enquiries after him. Each shall have his own. This prophecy is exactly dated, in the seventh year of the captivity, about two years after Ezekiel began to prophesy. God would have them to keep account how long their captivity lasted, that they might see how the years went on towards their deliverance, though very slowly. Certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the Lord, not statedly (as those Eze 8:1), but, as it should seem, occasionally, and upon a particular emergency.

Whether they were of those that were now in captivity, or elders lately come from Jerusalem upon business to Babylon, is not certain; but, by what the prophet says to them (Eze 20:32), it should seem, their enquiry was whether now that they were captives in Babylon, at a distance from their own country, where they had not only no temple, but no synagogue, for the worship of God, it was not lawful for them, that they might ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters, to join with them in their worship and do as the families of these countries do, that serve

wood and stone. This matter was palliated as well as it would bear, like Naaman's pleading with Elisha for leave to bow in the house of Rimmon, in compliment to the king; but we have reason to suspect that their enquiry drove at this.

Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened which ask God leave to go on in sin, and that when they are suffering for it. They came and sat very demurely and with a show of devotion before the prophet, Eze 33:31.

2 The purport of this message.

(1.) They must be made to know that God is angry with them; he takes it as an affront that they come to enquire of him when they are resolved to go on still in their trespasses: As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you, Eze 20:3. Their shows of devotion shall be neither acceptable to God nor advantageous to themselves. God will not take notice of their enquiries, nor give them any satisfactory answers. Note, A hypocritical attendance on God and his ordinances is so far from being pleasing to him that it is provoking.

(2.) They must be made to know that God is justly angry with them (Eze 20:4): "Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? Thou art a prophet, surely thou wilt not plead for them, as an intercessor with God; but surely thou wilt pass sentence on them as a judge for God. See, I have set thee over the nation; wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? Cause them therefore to know the abominations of their fathers."

So the orders run now, as before (Eze 16:2) he must cause them to know their own abominations. Though their own abominations were sufficient to justify God in the severest of his proceedings against them, yet it would be of use for them to know the abominations of their fathers, that they might see what a righteous thing it was with God now at last to cut them off from being a people, who from the first were such a provoking people.

2 Then came the word of the Lord unto me, saying,
3 Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye come to inquire of me? *As* I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.
4 Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge *them?* cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:
5 and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the Lord your God;

The history of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Israel here begins as early as their beginning; so does the history of man's apostasy from his Maker. No sooner have we read the story of our first parents' creation than we immediately meet with that of their rebellion; so we see here it was with Israel, a people designed to represent the body of mankind both in their dealings with God and in his with them. Here is,

I The gracious purposes of God's law concerning Israel in Egypt, where they were bond-slaves to Pharaoh. Be it spoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there,

1. He chose Israel to be a peculiar people to himself, though their condition was bad and their character worse, that he might have the honour of mending both. He therefore chose them, because they were the seed of the house of Jacob, the posterity of that prince with God, that he might keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers, De 7:7,8.

2. He made himself known to them by his name Jehovah (a new name, Ex 6:3), when by reason of their servitude they had almost lost the knowledge of that name by which he was known to their fathers, God Almighty. Note, As the foundation of our blessedness is laid in God's choosing us, so the first step towards it is God's making himself known to us. And whatever distance we are at, whatever distress we are in, he that made himself known to Israel

even in the land of Egypt can find us out, and follow us with the gracious discoveries and manifestations of his favour.

3. He made over himself to them as their God in covenant: I lifted up my hand unto them, saying it, and confirming it with an oath. "I am the Lord your God, to whom you are to pay your homage, and from whom and in whom you are to expect your bliss."

4. He promised to bring them out of Egypt; and made good what he promised. He lifted up his hand, that is, he swore unto them, that he would deliver them; and, they being very unworthy, and their deliverance very unlikely, it was requisite that the promise of it should be confirmed by an oath. Or, He lifted up his hand, that is, he put forth his almighty power to do it; he did it with an outstretched arm, Ps 136:12. 5. He assured them that he would put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He therefore brought them out of Egypt, that he might bring them into a land that he had spied out for them, a second garden of Eden, which was the glory of all lands. So he found it, the climate being temperate, the soil fruitful, the situation pleasant, and every thing agreeable (De 8:7,11:12); or, however this might be, so he made it, by setting up his sanctuary in it.

II The reasonable commands he gave them, and the easy conditions of his covenant with them at that time. Having told them what they might expect from him, he next tells them what was all he expected from them; it was no more than this (Eze 20:7): "Cast you away every man his images that he uses for worship, that are the adorations, but should be the abominations, of his eyes. Let him abominate them, and put them out of his sight, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt." Of these, it seems, many of them were fond; the golden calf was one of them. It was just, and what might reasonably be expected, that, being delivered from the Egyptian slavery, they should quit the Egyptian idolatry, especially when God, at bringing them out, executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt (Nu 33:4) and thereby showed himself above them.

And, whatever other idols they might have an inclination to, one would think they should have had a rooted aversion to the gods of Egypt for Egypt's sake, which had been to them a house of bondage. Yet, it seems, they needed this caution, and it is backed with a good reason: I am the Lord your God, who neither need an assistant nor will admit a rival.

III. Their unreasonable disobedience to these commands, for which God might justly have cut them off as soon as ever they were formed into a people (Eze 20:8): They rebelled against God, not only refused to comply with his particular precepts, but shook off their allegiance, and in effect told him that they should be at liberty to worship what God they pleased. And even then when God came down to deliver them, and sent Moses for that purpose, yet they would not forsake the idols of Egypt, which perhaps made them speak so affectionately of the onions of Egypt (11:5), for among other things the Egyptians worshipped an onion.

It was strange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the idols of Egypt. For this God said he would pour out his fury upon them, even while they were yet in the midst of the land of Egypt. Justly might he have said, "Let them die with the Egyptians." This magnifies the riches of God's goodness, that he was pleased to work so great a salvation for them even when he saw them ripe for ruin. Well might Moses tell them, It is not for your righteousness, De 9:4,5.

IV. The wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them, notwithstanding. Though they forfeited the favour while it was in the bestowing, and when God would have healed them then their iniquity was discovered (Ho 7:1), yet mercy rejoiced against judgment, and God did what he designed purely for his own name's sake, Eze 20:9. When nothing in us will furnish him with a reason for his favours he furnishes himself with one. God made himself known to them in the sight of the heathen when he ordered Moses publicly to say to Pharaoh, Israel is my son, my first-born, let them

go, that they may serve me. Now, if he had left them to perish for their wickedness as they deserved, the Egyptians would have reflected upon him for it, and his name would have been polluted, which ought to be sanctified and shall be so. Note, The church is secured, even when it is corrupt, because God will secure his own honour.

6 in the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them
forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them,
flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands:
7 then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of
his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the
Lord your God.
8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me:
they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes,
neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt.
Then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them to accomplish my
anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.
9 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted
before the heathen, among whom they *were,* in whose sight I made
myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of
Egypt.
10 Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and
brought them into the wilderness.

The history of the struggle between the sins of Israel, by which they endeavoured to ruin themselves, and the mercies of God, by which he endeavoured to save them and make them happy, is here continued: and the instances of that struggle in these verses have reference to what passed between God and them in the wilderness, in which God honoured himself and they shamed themselves. The story of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament (1Co 10:1-33,Heb 3:1-19), as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Christians; and therefore we are particularly concerned in these verses. Observe,

I The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to show how ungrateful

they had been. And we say, If you call a man ungrateful, you can call him no worse. It was a great favour,

1. That God brought them forth out of Egypt (Eze 20:10), though, as it follows, he brought them into the wilderness and not into Canaan immediately. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderness than bond-slaves in a land of plenty, to enjoy God and ourselves in solitude than to lose both in a crowd; yet there were many of them who had such base servile spirits as not to understand this, but, when they met with the difficulties of a desert, wished themselves in Egypt again.

2. That he gave them the law upon Mount Sinai (Eze 20:11), not only instructed them concerning good and evil, but by his authority bound them from the evil and to the good. He gave them his statutes, and a valuable gift it was. Moses commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Israel, De 33:4. God made them to know his judgments, not only enacted laws for them, but showed them the reasonableness and equity of those laws, with what judgment they were formed. The laws he gave them they were encouraged to observe and obey; for, if a man do them, he shall even live in them; in keeping God's commandments there is abundance of comfort and a great reward.

Christ says, If thou wilt into enter life, and enjoy it, keep the commandments. Though those who are the most strict in their obedience are thus far unprofitable servants that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recompensed: This do, and thou shalt live. The Chaldee says, He shall live an eternal life in them. St. Paul quotes this (Ga 3:12) to show that the law is not of faith, but proposes life upon condition of perfect obedience, which we are not capable of rendering, and therefore must have recourse to the grace of the gospel, without which we are all undone.

3. That he revived the ancient institution of the sabbath day, which was lost and forgotten while they were bond-slaves in Egypt; for

their task-masters there would by no means allow them to rest one day in seven. In the wilderness indeed every day was a day of rest; for what need had those to labour who lived upon manna, and whose raiment waxed not old? But one day in seven must be a holy rest (Eze 20:12):

I gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them (the institution of the sabbath was a sign of God's good-will to them, and their observance of it a sign of their regard to him), that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. By this God made it to appear that he had distinguished them from the rest of the world, and designed to model them for a peculiar people to himself; and by their attendance on God in solemn assemblies on sabbath days they were made to increase in the knowledge of God, in an experimental knowledge of the powers and pleasures of his sanctifying grace. Note,

(1.) Sabbaths are privileges, and are so to be accounted; the church acknowledges as a great favour, in that chapter which is parallel to this and seems to have a reference to this (Ne 9:14), Thou madest known unto them thy holy sabbaths.

(2.) Sabbaths are signs; it is a sign that men have a sense of religion, and that there is some good correspondence between them and God, when they make conscience of keeping holy and sabbath day.

(3.) Sabbaths, if duly sanctified, are the means of our sanctification; if we do the duty of the day, we shall find, to our comfort, it is the Lord that sanctifies us, makes us holy (that is, truly happy) here, and prepares us to be happy (that is, perfectly holy) hereafter.

II. Their disobedient undutiful conduct towards God, for which he might justly have thrown them out of covenant as soon as he had taken them into covenant (Eze 20:13): They rebelled in the wilderness. There where they received so much mercy from God,

and had such a dependence upon him, and were in their way to Canaan, yet there they broke out in many open rebellions against the God that led them and fed them. They did not only not walk in God's statutes, but they despised his judgments as not worth observing; instead of sanctifying the sabbaths, they polluted them, greatly polluted them; one gathered sticks, many went out to gather manna on this day. Hereupon God was ready sometimes to cut them off; he said, more than once, that he would consume them in the wilderness.

But Moses interceded, so did God's own mercy more powerfully, and most of all a concern for his own glory, that his name might not be polluted and profaned among the heathen (Eze 20:14), that the Egyptians might not say that for mischief he brought them thus far, or that he was not able to bring them any further, or that he had no such good land as was talked of to bring them to, Ex 32:12,Nu 14:13, &c. Note, God's strongest reasons for his sparing mercy are those which are fetched from his own glory.

III. God's determination to cut off that generation of them in the wilderness. He who lifted up his hand for them (Eze 20:6) now lifted up his hand against them; he who by an oath confirmed his promise to bring them out of Egypt now by an oath confirmed his threatenings that he would not bring them into Canaan (Eze 20:15,16): I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, As truly as I live, these men who have tempted me these ten times shall never see the land which I swore unto their fathers, Nu 14:22,23,Ps 95:11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they put a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was a secret affection to the gods of Egypt: Their heart went after their idols. Note, The bias of the mind towards the world and the flesh, the money and the belly (those two great objects of spiritual idolatry), is the root of bitterness from which springs all disobedience to the divine law. The heart that goes after those idols despises God's judgments.

11 And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them.
12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the Lord that sanctify them.
13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted.
Then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.
14 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.
15 Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands;
16 because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.
17 Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.

The reservation of a seed that should be admitted upon a new trial, and the instructions given to that seed, Eze 20:17. Though they thus deserved ruin, and were doomed to it, yet my eye spared them. When he looked upon them he had compassion on them, and did not make an end of them, but reprieved them till a new generation was reared. Note, It is owing purely to the mercy of God that he has not long ago made an end of us. This new generation is well educated. Moses in Deuteronomy reported and enforce the laws which had been given to those that came out of Egypt, that their children might have them as it were sounding in their ears afresh when they entered Canaan (Eze 20:18):

"I said unto their children in the wilderness, in the plains of Moab, Walk in the statutes of your God and walk not in the statutes of your fathers; do not imitate their superstitious usages nor retain their foolish wicked customs; away with their vain conversation,

which has nothing else to say for itself but that it was received by the tradition of your fathers, 1Pe 1:18. Defile not yourselves with their idols, for you see how odious they rendered themselves to God by them. But keep my judgments and hallow my sabbaths," Eze 20:19,20. Note, If parents be careless, and do not give their children good instructions as they ought, the children ought to make up the want by studying the word of God so much the more carefully and diligently themselves when they grow up; and the bad examples of parents must be made use of by their children for admonition, and not for imitation.

18 But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in
the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor
defile yourselves with their idols:
19 I *am* the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my
judgments, and do them;
20 and hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and
you, that ye may know that I *am* the Lord your God.

The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God (Eze 20:21): The children rebelled against me too. And the same that was said of the fathers' rebellion is here said of the children's, for they were a seed of evil-doers. Moses told them that he knew their rebellion and their stiff neck, De 31:27. And De 9:24, You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They walked not in my statutes (Eze 20:21); nay, they despised my statutes, Eze 20:24.

Those who disobey God's statutes despise them, they show that they have a mean opinion of them and of him whose statutes they are. They polluted God's sabbaths, as their fathers. Note, The profanation of the sabbath day is an inlet to all impiety; those who pollute holy time will keep nothing pure.

It was said of the fathers (Eze 20:16) that their heart went after their idols; they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them. It is said of the children (Eze 20:24) that their eyes went after their fathers' idols; they had grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped their fathers'

idols because they were their fathers' and they had them before their eyes. They were used to them; and, if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage.

And that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was that, if they had done them, they might have lived in them (Eze 20:21), might have been a happy thriving people. Note, Those that go contrary to their duty go contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ, that they may have life, Joh 5:40. And it is therefore just that those who will not live and flourish as they might in their obedience should die and perish in their disobedience.

Now the great instance of that generation's rebellion and inclination to idolatry was the iniquity of Peor, as that of their fathers was the golden calf. Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, Nu 25:3. Then there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which, if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phinehas's zeal, had cut them all off; and yet they owned, in Joshua's time, We ware not cleansed from that iniquity unto this day, Jos 22:17,Ps 106:29. Then it was that God said he would pour out his fury upon them (Eze 20:21), that he lifted up his hand unto them in the wilderness, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, that he would scatter them among the heathen.

This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, De 32:20. Because they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, he said, I will hide my face form them; and (Eze 20:26,27) he said, I would scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, which explains this (Eze 20:21,22), I said I would pour out my fury upon them, but I withdrew my hand for my name's sake.

Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking, that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this, to our comfort, that God will secure

his own honour, by making good his purpose, that while the world stands he will have a church in it.

VI. The judgments of God upon them for their rebellion. They would not regard the statutes and judgments by which God prescribed them their duty, but despised them, and therefore God gave them statutes and judgments which were not good, and by which they should not live, Eze 20:25. By this we may understand the several ways by which God punished them while they were in the wilderness--the plague that broke in upon them, the fiery serpent, and the like--which, in allusion to the law they had broken, are called judgments, because inflicted by the justice of God, and statutes, because he gave orders concerning them and commanded desolations as sometimes he had commanded deliverances, and appointed Israel's plagues as he had done the plagues of Egypt.

When God said, I will consume them in a moment (Nu 16:21), when he said, Take the heads of the people and hang them up (Nu 25:4), when he threatened them with the curse and obliged them to say Amen to every curse (De 27:28), then he gave them judgments by which they should not live. More is implied than is expressed; they are judgments by which they should die. Those that will not be bound by the precepts of the law shall be bound by the sentence of it; for one way or other the word of God will take hold of men, Zec 1:6. Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful; and these God punished them with.

The statutes and judgments which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols were not good, and in practising them they could not live; and God gave them up to those.

He made their sin to be their punishment, gave them up to a reprobate mind, as he did the Gentile idolaters (Ro 1:24,26), gave them up to their own heart's lusts (Ps 81:12), punished them for those superstitious customs which were against the written law by giving them up to those which were against the very light and law of nature; he left them to themselves to be guilty of the most

impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-peor (he polluted them, that is, her permitted them to pollute themselves, in their own gifts, Eze 20:26), and of the most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they caused their children, especially their first-born, which God challenged a particular property in (the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me), to pass through the fire, to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might make them desolate, not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakening to their families and a diminution of the honour and strength of their country.

Note, God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, and yet is not the author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will ruin themselves and make themselves desolate. And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a righteous God, which they themselves will be compelled to own when they see how much their wilful transgressions contribute to their own desolations.

Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their ruler shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their judge when it is too late.

21 Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against me: they walked
not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if*
a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths.
Then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish
my anger against them in the wilderness.
22 Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's
sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in
whose sight I brought them forth.
23 I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I
would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through
the countries;

24 because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.
25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were* not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;
26 and I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I *am* the Lord.
27 Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.
28 *For* when I had brought them into the land, *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savor, and poured out there their drink offerings.

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions, for their further humiliation, and shows,

I. That they had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Though God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, "yet in this (that is, in the very same thing) your fathers have blasphemed me, continued to affront me, that they also have trespassed a trespass against me," Eze 20:27.

Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them: this is blaspheming God; it is speaking reproachfully of his judgments, as if they were of no significancy and were not worth regarding.

1. God had made good his promise: I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them. Though their unbelief and disobedience had made the performance slow, and much retarded it, yet it did not make the promise of no effect. They were often

very near being cut off in the wilderness, but a step between them and ruin, and yet they came to Canaan at last.

Note, Even God's Israel get to heaven by hell-gates; so many are their transgressions, and so strong their corruptions, that it is a miracle of mercy they are happy at last; as hypocrites go to hell by heaven-gates. The righteous scarcely are saved. Per tot discrimina rerum tendimus ad cœlum--Ten thousand dangers fill the road to haven.

2. They had broken his precept by their abominable idolatries. God had appointed them to destroy all the monuments of idolatry, that they might not be tempted to desert his sanctuary; but, instead of defacing them, they fell in love with them, and when they saw every high hill whence they had the most delightful prospects, and all the thick trees where they had the most delightful shades (the former to show forth their pompous idolatries, the latter to conceal their shameful ones), there they offered their sacrifices and made their sweet savour, which should have been presented upon God's altar only. There they presented the provocation of their offering (Eze 20:28), that is, their offerings, which, instead of pacifying God, or pleasing him, were highly provoking-sacrifices which, though costly, yet being misplaced, were an abomination to the Lord.

3. They obstinately persisted herein notwithstanding all the admonitions that were given them (Eze 20:29): "Then I told them, by my servants the prophets, told them where the high place was, to which they went; nay, I put them upon considering it, and asking their own consciences concerning it, by putting this question to them, Which is the high place whereunto you go? What do you find there so inviting that you will leave God's altars, where he requires your attendance, to frequent such places as he has forbidden you to worship in? Do you not know that those high places are of a heathenish extraction, and that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils and not to God? Did not Moses tell you so? De 32:17.

And will you have fellowship with devils? What is that high place to which you go when you turn your back on God's altars? O foolish Israelites, who or what has bewitched you, that you will forsake the fountain of life for broken cisterns, that worship which God appoints, and will accept, for that which he forbids, which he abhors, and which he will punish?"

And yet the name is called Bamah unto this day; they will have their way, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. They are wedded to their high places; even in the best reigns those were not taken away; you could not prevail to take away the name of Bamah--the high place, out of their mouths, but still they would have that in the place of their worship. The sin and the sinner are with difficulty parted.

II. That this generation, after they were unsettled, continued under the dominion of the same corrupt inclinations to idolatry, Eze 20:30. He must say to the present house of Israel, some of whose elders were now sitting before him, "Are you polluted after the manner of your fathers? After all that God has said against you by a succession of prophets, and done against you by a series of judgments, yet will you take no warning? Will you still be as bad as your fathers were, and commit the same abominations that they committed? I see you will; you are bent upon returning to the old abominations; you offer your gifts in the high places, and you make your sons to pass through the fire; either you actually do it or you do it in purpose and imagination, and so you continue idolaters to this day."

These elders seem now to have been projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will reserve for the God of Israel, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more respect and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet is here ordered to tell those who were forming this scheme, and were for

compounding the matter between God and Baal, that they should have no comfort or benefit from either.

1. They should have no benefit by their consulting in private with the prophets of the Lord; for, because they were hearkening after idols, God would have nothing to do with them (Eze 20:31): As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you. What he had said before (Eze 20:3), having largely shown how just it was, he here repeats, as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their enquiries, nor expect an answer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols.

Note, Those reap no benefit by their religion that are not entire and sincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worship unless we be inward and upright with him therein. We make nothing of our profession if it be but a profession. Nay,

2. They should have no benefit from their conforming in public to the practice of their neighbours (Eze 20:32): "That which comes into your mind as a piece of refined politics in the present difficult juncture, and which you would be advised to for your own preservation, and that you may not by being singular expose yourselves to abuses, it shall not be at all, it shall turn to no account to you.

You say, 'We will be as the heathen, we will join with them in worshipping their gods, though at the same time we do not believe them to be gods, but wood and stone, and then we should be taken as the families of the countries; they will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten, that we are Jews, and will allow us the same privileges with their own countrymen.' Tell them," says God, "that this project shall never prosper. Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worship, or, if they do, will think never the better, but the worse, of them for it, and will

look upon them as dissemblers, and not fit to be trusted, who are thus false to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours."

Note, There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead. It is only integrity and uprightness that will preserve men, and recommend them to God and man.

29 Then I said unto them, What *is* the high place whereunto ye go?
And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.

30 Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God;
Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye
whoredom after their abominations?

31 For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass
through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even
unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel?
As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.

32 And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye
say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to
serve wood and stone.

33 *As* I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and
with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over
you:

The design which was now on foot among the elders of Israel was that the people of Israel, being scattered among the nations, should lay aside all their peculiarities and conform to those among whom they lived; but God had told them that the design should not take effect, Eze 20:32.

Now, in these verses, he shows particularly how it should be frustrated. They aimed at the mingling of the families of Israel with the families of the countries; but it will prove in the issue that the wicked Israelites, notwithstanding their compliances, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity, but shall be distinguished from them for destruction; for idolatrous Israelites, that are apostates from God, shall be sooner and more sorely punished than idolatrous Babylonians that never knew the

way of righteousness. Read and tremble at the doom here passed upon them; it is backed with an oath not to be reversed:

As I live, saith the Lord God, thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jerusalem and Babylon their friends by halting between two; but God threatens that neither of them shall serve for a rest or refuge for them.

I. Babylon shall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will cast them out of his protection and then what prince, what people, what place, can serve to be a sanctuary to them? God was Israel's King of old, and had they continued his loyal subjects he would have ruled over them with care and tenderness for their good, but now with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over them, Eze 20:33. That power which should have been exerted fore their protection shall be exerted for their destruction.

Note, There is no shaking off God's dominion; rule he will, either with the golden sceptre or with the iron rod; and those that will not yield to the power of his grace shall be made to sink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, though they may think that they shall be lost in the crowd of the heathen among whom they are scattered, they will be disappointed; for (Eze 20:34) I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered, as, when the rebels are dispersed in battle, those that have escaped the sword of war are pursued and brought together out of all the places whither they were scattered, to be punished by the sword of justice.

They shall be brought into the wilderness of the people (Eze 20:35), either into Babylon, which is called a wilderness (Eze 19:13), and the desert of the sea (Isa 21:1), or into some place which, though full of people, shall be to them as the wilderness was to Israel after they came out of Egypt, a place where God will plead with them face to face, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt (Eze 20:36),-- where their carcases

shall fall and where he will swear concerning them that they shall never return to Canaan, as he did swear concerning their fathers that they should never come into Canaan,--where he will avenge the breach of his law with as much terror as that with which he gave it in the wilderness of Sinai.

Note, God has a good action against apostates, and will find not only time, but a proper place, to plead with them in upon that action, a wilderness even in the midst of the people for that purpose.

II. Israel shall be no more able to protect them than Babylon could; nor shall their relation to God's people stand them in any more stead for the other world than their compliance with idolaters shall for this world; nor shall they stand in the congregation of the righteous any more than in the congregation of evil-doers; for there will come a distinguishing day, when God will separate between the precious and the vile; he will cause them, as the shepherd causes his sheep, to pass under the rod, when he tithes them (Le 27:32), that he may mark which is for God.

God will take particular notice of each of them, one by one, as sheep are counted, and he will bring them into the bond of the covenant (Eze 20:37); he will try them and judge of them according to the tenour of the covenant, and the difference made between some and others by the blessings and curses of the covenant.

Or it may refer to those among them that repented and reformed; he will cause them to pass under the rod of affliction, and, having done them good by it, he will bring them again into the bond of the covenant, will be to them a God in covenant, and use them again as heirs of promise.

1. He will separate the wicked from among them (Eze 20:38): "I will purge out from among you the rebels, who have been a grief

and scandal to you, and who have by their rebellions brought all these calamities upon you." The judgments of God shall find them out, and their naming the name of Israel shall be no shelter to them. They shall be brought out of the countries where they sojourn, and shall not have that rest in them which they promised themselves. But they shall not enter into the land of Israel, nor enjoy the benefit of that rest which God has promised to his people.

Note, Though godly people may share with the wicked in the calamities of the world, yet wicked people shall have no share with the godly in the heavenly Canaan; but it shall be part of the blessedness of that world that they shall be purged out from among them, the tares from the wheat, the chaff from the corn, Eze 13:9.

But wherever these idolaters of the house of Israel were contriving to worship both God and their idols, thinking to please both, God here protests against it (Eze 20:39), as Elijah had done in his name: "If the Lord be God, then follow him, but, if Baal, then follow him; if you will serve your idols, do, and take what comes of it; but then do not pretend relation to God and a religious regard to him, nor pollute his holy name with your gifts at his altar." Spiritual judgments are the sorest judgments. Two of that kind of judgments are threatened in Eze 20:39 against those that were for dividing between the God of Israel and the gods of the nations:--

(1.) That they should be given up to the service of their idols. To them he said ironically, "Since you will not hearken unto me, go you, serve every one his idols, now that you think it will be for your interest, and hereafter also. You shall go on in it. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone; let him take his course, and see what he will get by it at last."

Note, Those who think to serve themselves by sin will find in the end that they have but enslaved themselves to sin.

(2.) That they should be cut off from the service of God and communion with God: "You shall not pollute my holy name with your vain oblations, Isa 1:11. You bring your gifts in your hands, wherewith you pretend to honour me, but at the same time you bring your idols in your hearts, and therefore you do but pollute me, which I will not suffer any more," Am 5:21,22. Note, Those are justly forbidden God's house that profane his house.

2. He will separate them to himself again.

(1.) He will gather them in mercy out of the countries whither they were scattered, to be monuments of mercy, as the incorrigible were gathered to be vessels of wrath, Eze 20:41. Not one of God's jewels shall be lost in the lumber of this world.

(2.) He will bring them to the land of Israel, which he had promised to give to their fathers; and the discontinuance of their possession shall be no defeasance of their right; it is the land of Israel still, and thither God will bring them safely again, Eze 20:42.

(3.) He will re-establish his ordinances among them, will set up his sanctuary in his holy mountain, which is here called the mountain of the height of Israel; for, though the Mount Zion was none of the highest mountains, yet the temple there was one of the highest honours of Israel. It is promised that those who preserved their integrity, and would not serve idols, in other lands, shall return to their prosperity and shall serve the true God in their own land:

All of them in the land shall serve me. Note, It is the true happiness of a people, and a sure token for good to them, when there is a prevailing disposition in them to serve God. Whereas God had forbidden the idolaters to bring their gifts to his altar,

of these he will require offerings and first-fruits, and will accept them, Eze 20:40. What he does not require he will not accept, but what is done with a regard to his precepts he will be well pleased with. He will accept them with their sweet savour, or savour of rest (Eze 20:41), as being very grateful to him and what he takes a complacency in; whereas, to hypocritical worshippers, he says, I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

(4.) He will give them true repentance for their sins, Eze 20:43. When they find how gracious God is to them they will be overcome with his kindness, and blush to think of their bad behaviour towards so good a God: "There, in my holy mountain, when you come to enjoy the privileges of that again, there shall you remember your doings, wherein you have been defiled." Note, The more conversant we are with God's holiness the more we shall see of the odious nature of sin. There you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.

Note, Ingenuous evangelical repentance makes people loathe themselves for their sins, as Job 42:5,6.

(5.) He will give them the knowledge of himself: They shall know by experience that he is the Lord, that he is a God of almighty power and inexhaustible goodness, kind to his people and faithful to his covenant with them. Note, All the favours we receive from God should lead us into a more intimate acquaintance with him.

(6.) He will do all this for his own name's sake, notwithstanding their undeservings and ill-deservings (Eze 20:44); he has wrought with them, that is, wrought for them, wrought in favour of them, wrought in concurrence with them, they doing their endeavour; he has wrought with them purely for his name's sake. His reasons were all fetched from himself.

Had he dealt with them according to their wicked ways and their corrupt doings, though they were the better and sounder part of

the house of Israel, he would have left them to be scattered and lost with the rest; but he recovered and restored them for the sake of his own name, not only that it might not be polluted (Eze 20:14), but that he might be sanctified in them before the heathen (Eze 20:41), that he might sanctify himself (so the word is); for it is God's work to glorify his own name. He will do well for his people that he may have the glory of it, that he may manifest himself to be a God pardoning sin and so keeping promise, that his people may praise him, and that their neighbours may likewise take notice of him, as they did when God burned again their captivity, Ps 126:3. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them.

34 and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.

35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God.

37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

38 and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *also,* if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

40 For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

41 I will accept you with your sweet savor, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

42 And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I shall bring you into
the land of Israel, into the country *for* the which I lifted up mine
hand to give it to your fathers.
43 And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings,
wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in
your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.
44 And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have wrought with
you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor
according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the
Lord God.

The Prophecy against the South

45 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

We have here a prophecy of wrath against Judah and Jerusalem, which would more fitly have begun the next chapter than conclude this; for it has no dependence on what goes before, but that which follows in the beginning of the next chapter is the explication of it, when the people complained that this was a parable which they understood not. In this parable,

1. It is a forest that is prophesied against, the forest of the south field, Judah and Jerusalem. These lay south from Babylon, where Ezekiel now was, and therefore he is directed to set his face towards the south (Eze 20:46), to intimate to them that God had set his face against them, was displeased with them, and determined to destroy them. But, though it be a message of wrath which he has to deliver, he must deliver it with mildness and tenderness; he must drop his word towards the south; his doctrine must distil as the rain (De 32:2), that people's hearts might be softened by it, as the earth by the river of God, which drops upon the pastures of the wilderness (Ps 65:12) and which a south land more especially calls for, Jos 15:19.

Judah and Jerusalem are called forests, not only because they had been full of people, as a wood of trees, but because they had been empty of fruit, for fruit-trees grow not in a forest; and a forest is

put in opposition to a fruitful field, Isa 32:15. Those that should have been as the garden of the Lord, and his vineyard, had become like a forest, all overgrown with briers and thorns; and those that are so, that bring not forth the fruits of righteousness, God's word prophesies against.

2. It is a fire kindled in his forest that is prophesied of, Eze 20:47. All those judgments which wasted and consumed both the city and the country-sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, are signified by this fire.

(1.) It is a fire of God's own kindling: I will kindle a fire in thee; the breath of the Lord is not as a drop, but as a stream, of brimstone to set it on fire, Isa 30:33. He that had been himself a protecting fire about Jerusalem is now a consuming fire in it. All flesh shall see by the fury of this fire, and the desolations it shall make, especially when they compare it with the sins which had made them fuel for this fire, that it is the Lord that has kindled it (Eze 20:48), as a just avenger of his own injured honour.

(2.) This conflagration shall be general: all orders and degrees of men shall be devoured by it--young and old, rich and poor, high and low. Even green trees, which the fire does not easily fasten upon, shall be devoured by this fire; even good people shall some of them be involved in these calamities; and if this be done in the green trees, what shall be done in the dry? The dry trees shall be as tinder and touch-wood to this fire. All faces (that is, all that covers the face of the earth) from the south of Canaan to the north, from Beer-sheba to Dan, shall be burnt therein.

(3.) The fire shall not be quenched; no attempts to give check to the dissolution shall prevail. When God will ruin a nation, who or what can save it?

Now observe,

1 The people's reflection upon the prophet on occasion of this discourse. They said, Does he not speak parables? This was the language either of their ignorance or infidelity (the plainest truths were as parables to them), or of their malice and ill-will to the prophet. Note. It is common for those who will not be wrought upon by the word to pick quarrels with it; it is either too plain or too obscure, too fine or too homely, too common or too singular; something or other is amiss in it.

2 The prophet's complaint to God: Ah, Lord God! they say so and so of me. Note, It is a comfort to us, when people speak ill of us unjustly, that we have a God to complain to.

46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop *thy word*
toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south
field;
47 and say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord; Thus
saith the Lord God; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall
devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming
flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north
shall be burned therein.
48 And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: it shall not
be quenched.
49 Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak
parables?

Ezekiel-21

The Lord's Sharpened Sword

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was entrusted with, in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it; but, when he complained that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it and so silence that

objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar and every mouth shall be stopped.

Note, He that speaks with tongues should pray that he may interpret, 1Co 14:13. When we speak to people about their souls we should study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be the best understood. Christ expounded his parables to his disciples, Mk 4:34.

1 The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy. He must drop his word towards the holy places (Eze 21:2), towards Canaan the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places; but, when they polluted them, that word which used to drop in the holy places shall now drop against them: Prophesy against the land of Israel. It was the honour of Israel that it had prophets and prophecy; but these, being despised by them, are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

2. He is instructed, and is to instruct the people, in the meaning of the fire that was threatened to consume the forest of the south: it signified a sword drawn, the sword of war which should make the land desolate (Eze 21:3): Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel! There needs no more to make a people miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be for us, we need not fear, whoever are against us, so, if he be against us, we cannot hope, whoever are for us. And God's professing people, when they revolt from him, set him against them, who used to be for them. Was the fire there of God's kindling? The sword here is his sword, which he has prepared, and which he will give commission to; it is he that will draw it out of its sheath, where it had laid quiet and threatened no harm.

Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the nations God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour every

green tree and every dry tree? The sword in like manner shall cut off the righteous and the wicked. Good and bad were involved in the common calamities of the nation; the righteous were cut off from the land of Israel when they were sent captives in Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, were cut off from it and conveyed to Babylon.

But though the sword cut off the righteous and the wicked (for it devours one as well as another, 2Sa 11:25), yet far be it from us to think that the righteous are as the wicked, Ge 18:25. No; God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seems to make none. The good figs are sent into Babylon for their good, Jer 24:5,6. It is only in outward appearance that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, Ec 9:2.

But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel. Well might it be said, His eye shall not spare, when it shall not spare, no, not the righteous in it. Since there are not righteous men sufficient to save the land, to make the justice of God the more illustrious the few that there are shall suffer with it, and God's mercy shall make it up to them some other way. Did the fire burn up all faces from the south to the north? The sword shall go forth against all flesh from the south to the north, shall go forth, as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire? They shall be made to know that he has drawn forth the sword, Eze 21:5. And, lastly, Shall the fire that is kindled never be quenched? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed: It shall not return any more, till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered, by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make

impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message he must sigh (Eze 21:6), must fetch many deep sighs, with the breaking of his loins; he must sign as if his heart would burst, sigh with bitterness, with other expressions of bitter sorrow, and this publicly, in the sight of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes as that was to their ears; and it was well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sign, though it was painful to himself and made his breast sore, and though it is probable that the profane among the people would ridicule him for it and call him a whining canting preacher. But, if we be beside ourselves it is to God; and, if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so.

Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the things they speak of, must show that they are themselves in the greatest sincerity affected with them, and must submit to that which may create uneasiness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people, observing the prophet to sigh so much and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, "Wherefore sighest thou? These sighs have some mystical meaning; let us know what it is." And he must answer them (Eze 21:7):

"It is for the tidings, the heavy tidings, that we shall hear shortly; the tidings come (the judgments come which we hear the tidings of), they come apace, and then you will all sigh; nay, that will not serve. every heart shall melt and every spirit fail; your courage will all be gone and you will have no animating considerations to support yourselves with. And, when heart and spirit fail, it will follow of course that all hands will be feeble and unable to fight, and all knees will be weak as water and unable to flee or to stand their ground."

Those who have God for them when flesh and heart fail have him to be the strength of their heart; but those who have God against them have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzar when his thoughts troubled him, Da 5:6. But some people are

worse frightened than hurt; may not the case be so here and the event prove better than likely? No: Behold it cometh, and shall be brought to pass. It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but according to the fear so is the wrath, and more grievous than is feared.

2 Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop *thy word*
toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel,
3 and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I *am*
against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and
will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.
4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the
wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against
all flesh from the south to the north:
5 that all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my
sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more.
6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of *thy* loins; and
with bitterness sigh before their eyes.
7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou?
that thou shalt answer, For the tidings, because it cometh: and
every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit
shall faint, and all knees shall be weak *as* water: behold, it cometh,
and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God.
8 Again the word of the Lord came unto me saying,
9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord; Say, A sword,
a sword is sharpened, and also furbished:

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex interpreters. The sword was unsheathed in the Eze 21:1-7; here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament. Observe,

I. How the sword is here described.

1. It is sharpened, that it may cut and wound, and make a sore slaughter. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and, whatever instruments God shall please to make use of in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury,

according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a sharp sword, Re 19:15.

2. It is furbished, that it may glitter, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of flaming sword. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for a while, during the day of his patience and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again and be made to glitter.

3. It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it (Eze 21:10): It contemneth the rod of my son as every tree. Israel, said God once, is my son, my first-born. The government of that people was called a rod, a strong rod; we read (Eze 19:11) of the strong rods they had for sceptres. But when the sword of God's justice is drawn it contemns this rod, makes nothing of it; though it be a strong rod, and the rod of his son, it is no more than any other tree. When God's professing people have revolted from him, and are in rebellion against him, his sword despises them.

What are they to him more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword: It is the rod of my son; and we know of whom God has said (Ps 2:7), Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, and (Eze 21:9) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. This sword is that rod of iron which contemns every tree and will bear it down. Or, This sword is the rod of my son, a correcting rod, for the chastening of the transgression of God's people (2Sa 7:14), not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a rod to my son.

II. How the sword is here put into the hand of the executioners: "It is the rod of my Son, and he has given it that it may be handled (Eze 21:11), that it may be made use of for the end for which it was drawn. It is given into the hand, not of the fencer to be played with, but of the slayer to do execution with. The sword of war my Son makes use of as a sword of justice, and to him all judgment is

committed. It is made bright (Eze 21:15), it is wrapped up, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp for the slaughter, not as Goliath's sword was wrapped up in a cloth only for a memorial," 1Sa 21:9.

III. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is sent (Eze 21:12): It shall be upon my people; they shall fall by this sword. It is repeated again, as that which is scarcely credible, that the sword of the heathen shall be upon God's own people; nay, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel; their dignity and power as princes shall be no more their security than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But, if the sword be at any time upon God's people, have they not comfort within sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have, while they conduct themselves as becomes his people; but these had not done so, and therefore terrors, by reason of the sword, shall be upon those that call themselves my people.

Note, While good men are quiet, not only from evil, but from the fear of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword, but with the terrors of it, arising from a consciousness of their own guilt. This sword is directed particularly against the great men, for they had been the greatest sinners among them; they had altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds (Jer 5:5), and therefore with them in a special manner God's controversy is, who had been the ringleaders in sin. The sword of the slain is the sword of the great men that are slain, Eze 21:14.

Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will enter into their privy chambers, and find them out there, as the frogs, when they were one of Egypt's plagues, found admission into the chambers of their kings. The sword, the point of this sword, is directed against their gates, against all their gates (Eze 21:15), against all those things with which they thought to keep it out and fortify themselves against it.

Note, The strongest gates, though they be gates of brass, ever so well barred, ever so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But when that is pointed against sinners,

1. They are ready to fear the worst; their hearts faint, so that they are not able to make any resistance.

2 The worst comes; whatever resistance they make, it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and their ruins are multiplied. But what need have we to observe the particular directions of this sword when it has a general commission, is sent with a running warrant? (Eze 21:16): "Go thee, one way or other, which way thou wilt, turn to the right hand or to the left, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thou hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore, whithersoever thy face is set, that way do thou proceed, and, like Jonathan's sword, from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty," 2Sa 1:22.

Note, So full is the world of wicked people that, which way soever God's judgments go forth, they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has of meeting with sinners that the sword of his justice is still as it was at first when it flamed in the hand of the cherubim: it turns every way, Ge 3:24.

IV. What is the nature of this sword, and what are the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, Eze 21:13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in in the midst of these terrible ones, though it be expressed somewhat obscurely.

1 The people of God begin to be afraid that the sword will contemn even the rod, that the sword will go on with such fury that it will despise its commission to be a rod only, will forget its bounds and become a sword indeed, even to God's own people. They fear lest the Chaldeans' sword, which is the rod of God's anger, contemn its being called a rod, and become as the axe that boasts itself against him that heweth therewith or the staff that lifts up itself as if it were no wood, Isa 10:15.

Or, "What if the sword contemn even the rod? that is, what if this sword make the former rods, as that or Sennacherib, to be contemned as nothing to this? What if this should prove not a correcting rod, but a destroying sword, to make a full end of our church and nation?" This is that which the thinking, but timorous, few are apprehensive of.

Note, When threatening judgments are abroad it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly. What if the sword contemn the tribe or sceptre? namely, that of Judah and the house of David (so some think Shebet here signifies); what if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, the Lord is righteous and will be gracious notwithstanding. But,

2. These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so; the sword shall not forget itself, nor the errand on which it is sent: It is a trial, and it is no more than a trial. He that sends it makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it, he pleases. Here shall its proud waves be stayed. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that, whatever they are to others, to them they are but trials; and, when they are tried, they shall come forth as gold, and the proving of their faith shall be the improving of it.

10 it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, *as* every tree.

Here the prophet and the people must show themselves affected with these judgments threatened.

1 The prophet must be very serious in denouncing these judgments. He must say, A sword! a sword! Eze 21:9. Let him not study for fine words, and a variety of quaint expressions; when the town is on fire people do not so give notice of it, but cry, with a frightful doleful voice, Fire! fire! So must the prophet cry, A sword! a sword! and (Eze 21:14), Let the sword be doubled the third time in thy preaching. God speaks once, yea, twice, yea, thrice; it were well if men, after all, would perceive and regard it. It shall be doubled the third time in God's providence; for it was Nebuchadnezzar's third descent upon Jerusalem that made a full end of it. Ruin comes gradually, but at last comes effectually, upon a provoking people.

Yet this is not all: the prophet is not only as a herald at arms to proclaim war, and to cry, A sword! a sword! once and again, and a third time, but, as a person nearly concerned, he must cry and howl (Eze 21:12), must sadly lament the desolations that the sword would make, as one that did himself not only sympathize with the sufferers, but feel from the sufferings. Again (Eze 21:14), Prophesy, and smite thy hands together, wring thy hands, as lamenting the desolation, or clap thy hands, as by thy prophecy instigating and encouraging those that were to be the instruments of it, or as one standing amazed at the suddenness and severity of the judgment. The prophet must smite his hands together; for (says God) I will also smite my hands together, Eze 21:17.

God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence upon them, and therefore the prophet must show himself in earnest in publishing it. God's smiting his hands together, as well as the prophet's smiting, is in token of a holy indignation at their wickedness, which was really very astonishing. When Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam he smote his hands together, Nu 24:10.

Note, God and his ministers are justly angry at those who might be saved and yet will be ruined. Some make it an expression of triumph and exultation, agreeing with that (Isa 1:24), Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries; and that (Pr 1:26), I also will laugh at their calamity. And so it follows here, I will cause my fury to rest, not only it shall be perfected, but it shall be pleased. And observe with what solemnity, with what authority, this sentence is ratified: "I the Lord have said it, who can and will make good what I have said. I have said it, and will never unsay it. I have said it, and who can gainsay it?"

2 The people must be very serious in the prospect of these judgments. An intimation of this comes in in a parenthesis (Eze 21:10): Should we then make mirth? Seeing God has drawn the sword, and the prophet sighs and cries, Should we then make mirth? The prophet seems to give this as a reason why he sighs; as Ne 2:3, Why should not my countenance be sad, when Jerusalem lies waste? Note, Before we allow ourselves to be merry, we ought to consider whether we should be merry or no.

Should we make mirth, we who are sentenced to the sword, who lie under the wrath and curse of God? Shall we make mirth as other people, who have gone a whoring from our God? Ho 9:1. Should we now make mirth, when the hand of God has gone out against us, when God's judgments are abroad in the land and he by them calls to weeping and mourning? Isa 22:11,13. Shall we now make mirth as the king and Haman, when the church is in perplexity (Es 3:15), when we should be grieving for the affliction of Joseph? Am 6:6.

11 And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

12 Cry and howl, son of man; for it shall be upon my people, it *shall be* upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon *thy* thigh.

13 Because *it is* a trial, and what if *the sword* contemn even the rod? it shall be no *more,* saith the Lord God.

14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite *thine* hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it *is* the sword of the great *men that are* slain, which entereth into their privy chambers.

15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that *their* heart may faint, and *their* ruins be multiplied: ah! *it is* made bright, *it is* wrapped up for the slaughter.

16 Go thee one way or other, *either* on the right hand, *or* on the left, whithersoever thy face *is* set.

17 I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said *it*.

18 The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying,

19 Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose *it* at the head of the way to the city.

The prophet, in the verses before, had shown them the sword coming; he here shows them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way.

He must see and show the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem and determined by a supreme power so to do. The prophet must appoint him two ways, that is, he must upon a paper draw out two roads (Eze 21:19), as sometimes is done in maps; and he must bring the king of Babylon's army to the place where the roads part, for there they will make a stand. They both come out of the same land; but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabbath, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause; for, though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack first; here his politics and his politicians leave him at a loss.

The sword must go either to Rabbath or to Judah in Jerusalem. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called Judah in Jerusalem the

defenced; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, La 4:12.

The prophet must describe this dilemma that the king of Babylon is at (Eze 21:21); for the king of Babylon stood (that is, he shall stand considering what course to take) at the head of the two ways. Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet, it seems, he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe,

1 The method he took to come to a resolution; he used divination, applied to a higher and invisible power, perhaps to the determination of Providence by a lot, in order to which he made his arrows bright, that were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the solemnity. Perhaps Jerusalem was written on one arrow and Rabbath on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first. Or he applied to the direction of some pretended oracle: he consulted with images or teraphim, expecting to receive audible answers from them. Or to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices: he looked in the liver, whether the position of that portended good or ill luck.

Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of the earth that in difficult cases they have been glad to make their court to heaven for direction; as it is an instance of their folly that they have taken such ridiculous ways of doing it, when in cases proper for an appeal to Providence it is sufficient that the lot be cast into the lap, with that prayer, Give a perfect lot, and a firm belief that the disposal thereof is not fortuitous, but of the Lord, Pr 16:33.

2 The resolution he was hereby brought to. Even by these sinful practices God served his own purposes and directed him to go to Jerusalem, Eze 21:22. The divination for Jerusalem happened to be at his right hand, which, according to the rules of divination,

determined him that way. Note, What services God designs men for he will be sure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what guidance they are under.

Well, Jerusalem being the mark set up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must open the mouth in the slaughter, must give directions to the soldiers what to do and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; battering rams must be prepared and forts built. O what pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another!

20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the
Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defensed.
21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head
of the two ways, to use divination: he made *his* arrows bright, he
consulted with images, he looked in the liver.
22 At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint
captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice
with shouting, to appoint *battering* rams against the gates, to cast a
mount, *and* to build a fort.
23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to
them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the
iniquity, that they may be taken.

He must show both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin.

1 The people do so, Eze 21:23,24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgment coming. Ezekiel's prophecy is to them a false divination; they are not moved or awakened to repentance by it. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divination is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprise, they laugh at it and continue secure, calling it a false divination; because they have sworn oaths, that is, they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the

promise they have made them to raise the siege, or upon the assurances which the false prophets have given them that it shall be raised.

Or it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated, for which treachery of theirs God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the fairest warnings given them were slighted by them as false divinations. Note, It is not strange if those who make a jest of the most sacred oaths can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles; for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the counsel of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means; nay, the contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be now remembered against them.

(1.) Their present wickedness is discovered. Now that God is contending with them so perverse and obstinate are they that whatever they offer in their own defence does but add to their offence; they never conducted themselves so ill as they did now that they had the loudest call given them to repent and reform: "So that in all your doings your sins do appear. Turn yourselves which way you will, you show a black side." This is too true of every one of us; for not only there is none that lives and sins not, but there is not a must man upon earth that does good and sins not. Our best services have such allays of weakness, and folly, and imperfection, and so much evil is present with us even when we would do good, that we may say, with sorrow and shame, In all our doings, and in all our sayings too, our sins do appear, and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were undone.

(2.) This brings to mind their former wickedness: "You have made your iniquity to be remembered, not by yourselves that it might be repented of, but by the justice of God that it might be reckoned for. Your own sins make the sins of your fathers to be remembered against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for." Note, God remembers former iniquities against those only who by

the present discoveries of their wickedness show that they do not repent of them.

(3.) That they may suffer for all together, they are turned over to the destroyed, that they may be taken (Eze 21:23): "You shall be taken with the hand that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you and out of which you cannot escape." Men are said to be God's hand when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, Ps 17:14. Note, Those who will not be taken with the word of God's grace shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath.

2 The prince likewise brings his ruin upon himself. Zedekiah is the prince of Israel, to whom the prophet here, in God's name, addresses himself; and, if he had not spoken in God's name, he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked?

(1.) He gives him his character, Eze 21:25. Thou profane and wicked prince of Israel! He was not so bad as some of his predecessors, and yet bad enough to merit his character. He was himself profane, lost to every thing that is virtuous and sacred. And he was wicked, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned, and made Israel to sin. Note, Profaneness and wickedness are bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a prince of Israel, who as an Israelite should know better himself, and as a prince should set a better example and have a better influence on those about him.

(2.) He reads him his doom. His iniquity has an end; the measure of it is full, and therefore his day has come, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though those who are wicked and profane may flourish awhile, yet their day will come to fall. The sentence here passed is,

[1.] That Zedekiah shall be deposed. He has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his profaneness profaned his crown, and it shall be cast to the ground (Eze 21:26): Remove the diadem. Crowns and diadems are losable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fades not away, a kingdom that cannot be moved. The Chaldee paraphrase expounds it thus: Take away the diadem from Seraiah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king; neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same, not the same that he has been; this not this (so the word is); profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness remove their diadem, and take off their crown, and make them the reverse of what they were.

[2.] That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon. Every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in exalting him that is low and abasing him that is high, preferring some and degrading others, at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit.

[3.] Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted and come to nothing, Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's who was of the seed-royal (to which the Chaldee paraphrase refers this); neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, first one project and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down?

[4.] This monarchy shall never be restored till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, whose right the kingdom is, who is that seed of David in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, and I will give it to him. He shall have the throne of his father David, Lu 1:32.

Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the spirit of

prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as king and prophet might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is his right. And, having the right, he shall in due time have the possession: I will give it to him; and there shall be a general overturning of all rather than he shall come short of his right, and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way to make room for him, Da 2:45,1Co 15:25. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared that the promise made in David would fail for evermore. "No," says God, "that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever."

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, *I say,* that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand.

25 And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity *shall have* an end,

26 thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this *shall* not *be* the same: exalt *him that is* low, and abase *him that is* high.

27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no *more,* until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*.

Judgment on the Ammonites

28 And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword *is* drawn: for the slaughter *it is* furbished, to consume because of the glittering:

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabbath, when he turned it upon Jerusalem.

Upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance; the reprieve is not a pardon; their day also is at hand; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

I The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is their reproach, Eze 21:28.

1 The reproach they put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets (for such it seems there were among them as well as among the Jews), who pretended to foretel their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them: "They see vanity unto thee and divine a lie, Eze 21:29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and thou art such a fool as to suffer thyself to be imposed upon by them and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them." Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity.

2 The reproach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to them, which was very barbarous and inhuman. Their divines, by puffing them up with a conceit that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they were cut off, and with a confidence that their prosperity should always continue, made them so very haughty and insolent that they did even tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain, slain by the wicked Chaldeans, who had commission to execute God's judgments upon them when their iniquity had an end, that is, when the measure of it was full. We shall meet with this again, Eze 25:3, &c.

Note, Those are ripening apace for misery who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when judgment begins at the house of God.

II The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, Ps 79:12. Let us see how terrible the threatening is and the destruction will be.

1. It shall come from the wrath of God, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself (Eze 21:31): I will pour out my indignation as a shower of fire and brimstone upon thee. The least drop of divine indignation and wrath will create tribulation and anguish enough to the soul of man that does evil; what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? "I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath; that is, I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee; it shall burn with the utmost vehemence." Thou shalt be for fuel to this fire, Eze 21:32. Note, Wicked men make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; they are consumed by it, and it is inflamed by them.

2. It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow: The sword, the sword is drawn (Eze 21:28,Eze 21:9,10); it is drawn to consume because of the glittering, because it is brandished and glitters, and is fit to be made use of. God's executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, shall not return into its sheath (Eze 21:30) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn it does not return till God causes it to return, and he is in one mind and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose?

3. The persons employed in it are brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Men of such a bad character as this, who have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts--human reason, which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy--though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes are made use of to serve God's purposes. God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's Israel. We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be prayed

for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men (2Th 3:2), men that seem made for doing mischief.

4. The place where they should thus be reckoned with: "I will judge thee where thou wast created, where thou wast first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seemest to have taken root; the land of thy nativity shall be the land of thy destruction." Note, God can bring ruin upon us even where we are most secure, and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed and a possession of not to be disturbed. Thy blood shall be shed not only in thy borders, but in the midst of thy land. Lastly, I shall be an irreparable ruin: "Though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it; thou shalt be no more remembered with any respect," Ps 9:6. Justly is their name blotted out who would have Israel's name for ever lost.

29 while they see vanity unto thee, while they divine a lie unto thee,
to bring thee upon the necks of *them that are* slain, of the wicked,
whose day is come, when their iniquity *shall have* an end.
30 Shall I cause *it* to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the
place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity.
31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow against
thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of
brutish men, *and* skilful to destroy.
32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of
the land; thou shalt be no *more* remembered: for I the Lord have
spoken *it*.

Ezekiel-22

The Sins of Jerusalem

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody
city? yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations.

In these verses the prophet by a commission from Heaven sits as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her

hand as a prisoner at the bar; and, if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God's nation, Jer 1:10. This prophet is authorized to judge the bloody city, the city of bloods. Jerusalem is so called, not only because she had been guilty of the particular sin of blood-shed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes (Eze 7:23), such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two things Ezekiel is to do here.

He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is billa vera--a true bill; so he writes upon it whose judgment we are sure is according to truth. He must show her all her abominations (Eze 22:2), that God may be justified in all the desolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with; and they are all exceedingly sinful.

1. Murder: The city sheds blood, not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but in the midst of it, where, one would think, the magistrates would, if any where, be vigilant. Even there people were murdered either in duels or by secret assassinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers according to the law (Ge 9:6), no, nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder (De 21:1), and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus thou hast become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, Eze 22:4. This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin more than any; it is said to be that which the Lord would not pardon, 2Ki 24:4.

(1.) The princes of Israel, who should have been the protectors of injured innocence, every one were to their power to shed blood, Eze 22:6. They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever

came within their power were sure to feel it; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to find none.

(2.) There were those who carried tales to shed blood, Eze 22:9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to incense them against them; or they betrayed what passed in private conversation, to make mischief among neighbours, and set them together by the ears, to bite, and devour, and worry one another, even to death.

Note, Those who, by giving invidious characters and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be accountable for all the hurt it does.

(3.) There were those who took gifts to shed blood (Eze 22:12), who would be hired with money to swear a man out of his life, or, if they were upon a jury, would be bribed to find an innocent man guilty. When so much barbarous bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem we may well conclude,

[1.] That men's consciences had become wretchedly profligate and seared and their hearts hardened; for those would stick at no wickedness who would not stick at this.

[2.] That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away with, whereby, as the guilt of the city was increased, so the number of those that should have stood in the gap to turn away the wrath of God was diminished.

2. Idolatry: She makes idols against herself to destroy herself, Eze 22:3. And again (Eze 22:4), Thou hast defiled thyself in thy idols which thou hast made. Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves and prepare destruction for themselves; besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they

render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even their mind and conscience are defiled, so that to them nothing is pure. Those who did not make idols themselves were yet found guilty of eating upon the mountains, or high places (Eze 22:9), in honour of the idols and in communion with idolaters.

3. Disobedience to parents (Eze 22:7): In thee have the children set light by their father and mother, mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them, which was a sign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder, Isa 3:5. Those that set light by their parents are in the highway to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; nay, the Pharisees in their day taught children, under pretence of respect to the Corban, to set light by their parents and refuse to maintain them, Mt 15:5.

4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves they wronged the poor (Eze 22:7): They dealt by oppression and deceit with the stranger, taking advantage of his necessities, and his ignorance of the laws and customs of the country.

In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, they vexed the fatherless and widows by unreasonable demands and inquisitions, or troublesome law-suits, in which might prevails against right. "Thou hast taken usury and increase (Eze 22:12); not only there are those in thee that do it, but thou hast done it." It was an act of the city or community; the public money, which should have been employed in public charity, was put out to usury, with extortion. Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by violence and wrong. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but those who are greedy of gain will not be held within the rules of equity.

5. Profanation of the sabbath and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here

stand indicted (Eze 22:8): Thou hast despised my holy things, holy oracles, holy ordinances. The rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary; they despised them, and therefore were fond of the customs of the heathen.

Note, Immorality and dishonesty are commonly attended with a contempt of religion and the worship of God. Thou hast profaned my sabbaths. There was not in Jerusalem that face of sabbath-sanctification that one would have expected in the holy city. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their ruin as any thing.

6. Uncleanness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives men up, to punish them for their idolatry and profanation of holy things. Jerusalem had been famous for its purity, but now in the midst of thee they commit lewdness (Eze 22:9); lewdness goes bare-faced, though in the most scandalous instances, as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the discovery of the father's nakedness (Eze 22:10) and is a sin not to be named among Christians without the utmost detestation (1Co 5:1), and was made a capital crime by the law of Moses, Le 20:11. The time to refrain from embracing has not been observed (Ec 3:6), for they have humbled her that was set apart for her pollution. They made nothing of committing lewdness with a neighbour's wife, with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, Eze 22:11. And shall not God visit for these things?

7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness (Eze 22:12): "Thou hast forgotten me, else thou wouldst not have done thus." Note, Sinners do that which provokes God because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is, which they make themselves unfit for, and how formidable his wrath, which they make themselves obnoxious to. Those that pervert their ways forget the Lord their God, Jer 3:21.

3 Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord God; The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.
4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.
5 *Those that be* near, and *those that be* far from thee, shall mock thee, *which art* infamous *and* much vexed.
6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood.
7 In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.
8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.
9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes.

1. Let her know that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and that her sins are such as forbid delays and call for speedy vengeance. She has made her time to come (Eze 22:3), her days to draw near; and she has come to her years of maturity for punishment (Eze 22:4), as an heir that has come to age and is ready for his inheritance. God would have borne longer with them, but they had arrived at such a pitch of impudence in sin that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing. And, when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow overmuch wicked, they die before their time (Ec 7:17) and shorten their reprieves.

2. Let her know that she has exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her, to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours (Eze 22:4): I have made thee a reproach to the heathen, both those who are near, who are eye-witnesses of

Jerusalem's apostasy and degeneracy, and those afar off, who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of (Eze 22:5); they shall all mock thee. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach.

But, now that they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, The Lord is righteous. They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very scandalous (she is infamous, polluted in name, and has quite lost her credit), and because her punishment is very grievous--she is much vexed and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those who fret most at their troubles have commonly those about them who will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them.

3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased, at her wickedness, and does and will witness against it (Eze 22:13): I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain. God, both by his prophets and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness, the oppressions they were guilty of, though they got by them, and their murders (the blood which has been in the midst of thee), and all their other sins. Note, God has sufficiently discovered how angry he is at the wicked courses of his people; and, that they may not say that they have not had fair warning, he smites his hand against the sin before he lays his hand upon the sinner. And this is a good reason why we should despise dishonest gain, even the gain of oppressions, and shake our hands from holding bribes, because these are sins against which God shakes his hands, Isa 33:15.

4. Let her know that, proud and secure as she is, she is no match for God's judgments, Eze 22:14.

(1.) She is assured that the destruction she has deserved will come: I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. He that is true to

his promises will be true to his threatenings too, for he is not a man that he should repent.

(2.) It is supposed that she thinks herself able to contend with God, and so stand a siege against his judgments. She bade defiance to the day of the Lord, Isa 5:19. But,

(3.) She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him: "Can thy heart endure, or can thy hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Thou thinkest thou hast to do only with men like thyself, but shalt be made to know that thou fallest into the hands of a living God." Observe here,

[1.] There is a day coming when God will deal with sinners, a day of visitation. He deals with some to bring them to repentance, and there is no resisting the force of convictions when he sets them on; he deals with others to bring them to ruin. He deals with sinners in this life, when he brings upon them his sore judgments; but the days of eternity are especially the days in which God will deal with them, when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture.

[2.] The wrath of God against sinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable and irresistible. There is no heart stout enough to endure it; it is none of the infirmities which the spirit of a man will sustain. Damned sinners can neither forget nor despise their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to support themselves under their torments. There are no hands strong enough either to ward off the strokes of God's wrath or to break the chains with which sinners are bound over to the day of wrath. Who knows the power of God's anger?

5. Let her know that, since she has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their works, she shall have enough of them (Eze 22:15): "I will not only send thee among the heathen, out of thy own land, but I will scatter thee among them and disperse thee in the countries, to be abused and insulted over by

strangers." And since her filthiness and filthy ones continued in her, notwithstanding all the methods God had taken to refine her (she would not be made clean, Jer 13:27), he will be his judgments consume her filthiness out of her; he will destroy those that are incurably bad and reform those that are inclined to be good.

6. Let her know that God has disowned her and cast her off. He had been her heritage and portion; but now (Eze 22:16), "Thou shalt take thy inheritance in thyself, shift for thyself, make the best hand thou canst for thyself, for God will no longer undertake for thee." Note, Those that give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts will justly be given up to be portioned by them. Those that resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other comfort and happiness than what their own hands can furnish them with, and a miserable portion it will prove. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things. These are the same with this, "Thou shalt take thy inheritance in thyself, and then, when it is too late, shalt own in the sight of the heathen that I am the Lord, who alone am a portion sufficient for my people."

Note, Those that have lost their interest in God will know how to value it.

10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbor's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God.

13 Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days
that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken *it*, and will do
it.
15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the
countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.
16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the
heathen, and thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord.
17 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they *are*
brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they
are *even* the dross of silver.

The same melancholy string is still harped upon, and various turns are given it, to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here show, or at least it is here shown him, that the whole house of Israel has become as dross and that as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now that it is corrupt and degenerate (Ps 119:119): Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.

I. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state, in David's and Solomon's time, had been a head of gold; when the kingdoms were divided it was as the arms of silver. But now,

1. It has degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was: They are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, which some make to signify divers sorts of sinners among them. Their being brass denotes the impudence of some in their wickedness; they are brazen-faced, and cannot blush; their shoes had been iron and brass (De 33:25), but now their brow is so, Isa 48:4. Their being tin denotes the hypocritical profession of piety with which many of them cover their iniquity; they have a specious show, but no intrinsic worth.

Their being iron denotes the cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the iron age. Their

being lead denotes their dulness, sottishness, and stupidity: though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not movable to good. How has the gold become dross! How has the most fine gold changed! So is Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, La 4:1. Yet this is not the worst; these metals, though of less value, are yet of good use. But,

2 The house of Israel has become dross to me. So she is in God's account, whatever she is in her own and her neighbours' account. They were silver, but now they are even the dross of silver; the word signifies all the dirt, and rubbish, and worthless stuff, that are separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it. Note, Sinners, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account as dross, vile, and contemptible, and of no account, as the evil figs which could not be eaten, they were so evil. They are useless and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves and no service to man.

II. How the woeful destruction of this degenerate house of Israel is foretold. They are all gathered together in Jerusalem; thither people fled from all parts of the country as to a city of refuge, not only because it was a strong city, but because it was the holy city. Now God tells them that their flocking into Jerusalem, which they intended for their security, should be as the gathering of various sorts of metal into the furnace or crucible, to be melted down, and to have the dross separated from them. They are in the midst of Jerusalem, surrounded by the forces of the enemy; and, being thus enclosed,

1 The fire of God's wrath shall be kindled upon this furnace, and it shall be blown, to make it burn fiercely and strongly, Eze 22:20,21. God will gather them in his anger and fury. The blowing of the fire makes a great noise, so will the judgments of God upon Jerusalem. When God stirs up himself to execute judgments upon a provoking people, from the consideration of his own glory and the necessity of making some examples, then he may be said to blow the fire of

his wrath against sin and sinners, to heat the furnace seven times hotter.

2 The several sorts of metal gathered in it shall be melted; by a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their constitution shall be dissolved, they shall lose all their former shape and strength, and shall be utterly unable to stand before the wrath of God. The various sorts of sinners shall be melted down together, and united in a common overthrow, as brass and lead in the same furnace, as trees are bound in bundles for the fire. They came together into Jerusalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together there as unto a place of execution.

3. God will leave them in the furnace (Eze 22:20): I will gather you into the furnace and will leave you there. When God brings his own people into the furnace he sits by them, as the refiner by his gold, to see that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring these people into the furnace, as men throw dross into it, which they design shall be consumed, and therefore are in no care about it, but leave it there. Compare with this Ho 5:14, I will tear and go away.

4. Hereby the dross shall be wholly separated and the good metal purified, the impenitent shall be destroyed and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance. Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer, Pr 25:4. This judgment shall do that in the house of Israel for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain, and reprobate silver shall they no more be called, Jer 6:30.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

20 *As* they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt *it;* so will I gather *you* in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave *you there,* and melt you.

21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath,
and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.
22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted
in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have
poured out my fury upon you.
23 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou *art* the land that is not cleansed,
nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

Here is, I. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it and how much it needed these judgments to refine it. Let the prophet tell her plainly, "Thou art the land that is not cleansed, not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace. Means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art not rained upon in the day of indignation." This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he withheld the rain from them, Jer 14:4.

Or, "When thou art under the tokens of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art not rained upon; thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to descend as the rain."

Or, "When thou art corrected thou art not cleansed; thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a day of indignation with thee, yet thy filthiness, which should be done away, has become more offensive, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon."

Or, "Thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with in the day of indignation; thou art not rained upon by divine consolations." So the rich man in torment had not a drop of water, or rain, to cool his tongue.

II. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shows that they had all helped

to fill the measure of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing towards the emptying of it; they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one corrupted his way, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue were ringleaders in iniquity and patterns of vice.

(1.) The prophets, who pretended to make known the mind of God to them, were not only deceivers, but devourers (Eze 22:25), and hardened them in their wickedness both by their preaching, wherein they promised them impunity and prosperity, and by their conversation, in which they were as profligate as any. There is a conspiracy of her prophets against God and religion, against the true prophets and all good men; they conspired together to be all in one song, as Ahab's prophets were, to assure them of peace in their sinful ways.

Note, The unity which is found among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret conspiracy against the truth. Satan is not divided against himself. The prophets are in conspiracy with the murderers and oppressors, to patronise and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may come in sharers with them in the profits of it. They are like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they thunder out threats against those whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters,

[1.] Of their lives: They have devoured souls, have been accessory to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made many to become sorrowful widows who were comfortable wives. They have persecuted those to death who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission.

Or, They devoured souls by flattering sinners into a false peace and a vain hope, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who draw men to wickedness, and encourage them in it, are the devourers and murderers of their souls.

[2.] Of their estates. When Naboth is slain they take possession of his vineyard; They have seized the treasure and precious things, as forfeited; some way or other they had of devouring the widows' houses, as the Pharisees, Mt 23:14.

Or, They got this treasure, and all these precious things, as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for he that puts not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him, Mic 3:5. It was said with Jerusalem when such men as these passed for prophets.

(2.) The priests, who were teachers by office, and had the custody of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they, Eze 22:26.

[1.] They violated the law of God, which they should have observed and taught others to observe. They made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly broke it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phinehas. They did what they had a mind, with an express non obstante--notwithstanding to the word of God. And how should those teach the people their duty who lived in contradiction to their own?

[2.] They profaned God's holy things, about which they were to minister, and which they ought to have restrained others from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things who were unqualified by the law. The table of the Lord was contemptible with them. By dealing in holy things with such unhallowed hands they did themselves profane them.

[3.] They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but they lived at large themselves and encouraged the people to do so too.

[4.] They hid their eyes from God's sabbaths; they took no care about them; it was all one to them whether God's sabbaths were kept holy or no; they neither gave countenance to those who observed them nor check to those who profaned them, nor did they themselves show any regard to them or veneration for them. They winked at those who did servile works on that day, and looked another way when they should have inspected the behaviour of the people on sabbath days. God's sabbaths have such a beauty and glory put upon them by the divine institution as may command respect; but they hid their eyes from them and would not see that excellency in them.

[5.] By all this God himself was profaned among them; his authority was slighted, his goodness made light of, and the highest affront and contempt imaginable were put upon his holiness. Note, The profanation of the honour of the scriptures, of sabbaths and sacred things, is a profanation of the honour of God himself, who is interested in them.

(3.) The princes, who should have interposed with their authority to redress these grievances, were as daring transgressors of the law as any (Eze 22:27): They are like wolves ravening the prey; for such is power without justice and goodness to direct it. All their business was to gratify,

[1.] Their own pride and ambition, by making themselves arbitrary and formidable.

[2.] Their own malice and revenge, by shedding blood and destroying souls, sacrificing to their cruelty all those that stood in their way or had in any thing disobliged them.

[3.] Their own avarice; all they aim at is to get dishonest gain, by crushing and oppressing their subject. Lucri bonus est odor ex re qualibet. Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem--Sweet is the odour of gain, from whatever substance it ascends. Money, money, by fairness or by fraud, get money. But, though they had power sufficient to carry them on in their oppressive courses, yet how could they answer it both to their credit and to their consciences? We are told how (Eze 22:28):

The prophets daubed them with untempered mortar, told them in God's name (horrid wickedness!) that there was no harm in what they did, that they might dispose of the lives and estates of their subjects as they pleased, and could do no wrong, nay, that in prosecuting such and such whom they had marked out they did God service; and thus they stopped the mouth of their consciences. They also justified what they did, to the people, nay, and magnified it as if it were all for the public good, and so saved their reputation, and kept their oppressed subjects from murmuring.

Note, Daubing prophets are the great supporters of ravening princes, but will prove at last their great deceivers, for they daub with untempered mortar which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long that is built up with it. They pretend to be seers, but they see vanity; they pretend to be diviners, but they divine lies; they pretend a warrant from Heaven for what they say, and that it is all as true as gospel; they say, Thus saith the Lord God, but it is all a sham, for the Lord has not spoken any such thing.

(4.) The people that had any power in their hands learned of their princes to abuse it, Eze 22:29. Those that should have complained of the oppression of the subject, and have put in a claim of rights on behalf of the injured, that should have stood up for liberty and property, were themselves invaders of them: The people of the

land have used oppression and exercised robbery. The rich oppress the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and sellers will find some way to oppress one another.

This is such a sin as, when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatened as such. Isa 3:5, The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour. It is an aggravation of the sin that they have vexed the poor and needy, whom they should have relieved, and have oppressed the stranger and deprived him of his right, to whom they ought to have been not only just, but kind. Thus was the apostasy universal and the disease epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an intercessor for them (Eze 22:30): I sought for a man among them that should stand in the gap, but I found none. Note,

(1.) Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people at which good things run out from them and evil things pour in upon them, a gap by which God enters to destroy them.

(2.) There is a way of standing in the gap, and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel to turn away the wrath of God, Ps 106:23.

(3.) When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them he expects some to intercede for them, and enquires if there be but one that does; so much is it his desire and delight to show mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him and be well pleased with him.

(4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that not one is found that will either give them a good word or speak a good word for them.

(5.) When it is so, what can be expected but utter ruin? Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them (Eze 22:31), have given it full scope, that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet, whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is their own way that is therein recompensed upon their heads, and God deals with them no worse, but even much better, than their iniquity deserves.

25 *There is* a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a
roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have
taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many
widows in the midst thereof.
26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy
things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane,
neither have they showed *difference* between the unclean and the
clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned
among them.
27 Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravening the prey,
to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.
28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered *mortar,*
seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the
Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken.
29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised
robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have
oppressed the stranger wrongfully.
30 And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the
hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should
not destroy it: but I found none.
31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have
consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I
recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-23

The Two Sisters

1 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:

God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word comes again; for God speaks the same thing once, yea, twice, yea, many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for man perceives it not. Note, To convince sinners of the evil of sin, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, there is need of line upon line, so loth we are to know the worst of ourselves.

The sinners that are here to be exposed are two women, two kingdoms, sister-kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters of one mother, having been for a long time but one people. Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Observe,

1. Their character when they were one (Eze 23:3): They committed whoredoms in Egypt, for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, Eze 20:8. The representing of those sins which are most provoking to God and most ruining to a people by the sin of whoredom plainly intimates what an exceedingly sinful sin uncleanness is, how offensive, how destructive.

Doubtless it is itself one of the worst of sins, for the worst of other sins are compared to it here and often elsewhere, which should increase our detestation and dread of all manner of fleshly lusts, all appearances of them and approaches to them, as warring against the soul, infatuating sinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God and all that is good, debauching conscience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at last in destruction and perdition.

2. Their names when they became two, Eze 23:4. The kingdom of Israel is called the elder sister, because that first made the breach, and separated from the family both of kings and priests that God had appointed--the greater sister (so the word is), for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom and only two to the other. God says of them both, They were mine, for they were the seed of Abraham his friend and of Jacob his chosen; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the sign of their circumcision, the seal of the covenant. They were mine; and therefore their apostasy was the highest injustice. It was alienating God's property, it was the basest ingratitude to the best of benefactors, and a perfidious treacherous violation of the most sacred engagements.

Note, Those who have been in profession the people of God, but have revolted from him, have a great deal to answer for more than those who never made any such profession.

"They were mine; they were espoused tome, and to me they bore sons and daughters;" there were many among them that were devoted to God's honour, and employed in his service, and were the strength and beauty of these kingdoms, as children are of the families they are born in. In this parable Samaria and the kingdom of Israel shall bear the name of Aholah--her own tabernacle, because the places of worship which that kingdom had were of their own devising, their own choosing, and the worship itself was their own invention; God never owned it. Her tabernacle to herself (so some render it); "let her take it to herself, and make her best of it."

Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of Aholibah--my tabernacle is in her, because their temple was the place which God himself had chosen to put his name there. He acknowledged it to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his presence in it.

Note, Of those that stand in relation to God, and make profession of his name, some have greater privileges and advantages than others; and, as those who have greater are thereby rendered the more inexcusable if they revolt from God, so those who have less will not thereby be rendered inexcusable.

3. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of Israel from God (Eze 23:5): Aholah played the harlot when she was mine. Though the ten tribes had deserted the house of David, yet God owned them for his still; though Jeroboam, in setting up the golden calves, sinned, and made Israel to sin, yet, as long as they worshipped the God of Israel only, though by images, he did not quite cast them off. But they way of sin is down-hill.

Aholah played the harlot, brought in the worship of Baal (1Ki 16:31), set up that other god, that dunghill-god, in competition with Jehovah (1Ki 18:21), as a vile adulteress dotes on her lovers, because they are well dressed and make a figure, because they are young and handsome (Eze 23:6), clothed with blue, captains and rulers, desirable young men, genteel, and that pass for men of honour, so she doted upon her neighbours, particularly the Assyrians, who had extended their conquests near them; she admired their idols and worshipped them, admired the pomp of their courts and their military strength and courted alliances with them upon any terms, as if her own God were not sufficient to be depended upon. We find one of the kings of Israel giving a thousand talents to the king of Assyria, to engage him in his interests, 2Ki 15:19. She doted on the chosen men of Assyria, as worthy to be trusted and employed in the service of the state (Eze 23:7), and on all their idols with which she defiled herself.

Note, Whatever creature we dote upon, pay homage to, and put a confidence in, we make an idol of that creature; and whatever we make an idol of we defile ourselves with. And now again the conviction looks back as far as the original of their nation: Neither left she her whoredoms which she brought from Egypt, Eze 23:8.

Their being idolaters in Egypt was a thing never to be forgotten--that they should be in love with Egypt's idols even when they were continually in fear of Egypt's tyrants and task-masters! But (as some have observed) therefore, at that time, when Satan boasted of his having walked through the earth as all his own, to disprove his pretensions God did not say, Hast thou considered my people Israel in Egypt? (for they had become idolaters, and were not to be boasted of), but, Hast thou considered my servant Job in the land of Uz? And this corrupt disposition in them, when they were first formed into a people, is an emblem of that original corruption which is born with us and is woven into our constitution, a strong bias towards the world and the flesh, like that in the Israelites towards idolatry; it was bred in the bone with them, and was charged upon them long after, that they left not their whoredoms brought from Egypt.

It would never out of the flesh, though Egypt had been a house of bondage to them. Thus the corrupt affections and inclinations which we brought into the world with us we have not lost, nor got clear of, but still retain them, though the iniquity we were born in was the source of all the calamities which human life is liable to.

4. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel for their apostasy from God (Eze 23:9,10): I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers. God first justly gave her up to her lust (Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone), and then gave her up to her lovers. The neighbouring nations, whose idolatries she had conformed to and whose friendship she had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made use of as the instruments of her destruction.

The Assyrians, on whom she doted, soon spied out the nakedness of the land, discovered her blind side, on which to attack her, stripped her of all her ornaments and all her defences, and so uncovered her, and made her naked and bare, carried her sons and daughters into captivity, slew her with the sword, and quite destroyed that kingdom and put an end to it. We have the story at

large 2Ki 17:6, &c., where the cause of the ruin of that once flourishing kingdom by the Assyrians is shown to be their forsaking the God of Israel, fearing other gods, and walking in the statutes of the heathen; it was for this that God was very angry with them and removed them out of his sight, Eze 23:18.

And that the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, should be employed in executing judgments upon them was very remarkable, and shows how God, in a way of righteous judgment, often makes that a scourge to sinners which they have inordinately set their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a tormentor to those impenitent sinners who now hearken to him and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became famous among women, or infamous rather; she became a name (so the word is); not only she came to be the subject of discourse, and much talked of, as the desolations of cities and kingdoms fill the newspapers, but she was thus ruined for her idolatries in terrorem--for warning to all people to take heed of doing likewise; as the public execution of notorious malefactors makes them such a name, such an ill name, as may serve to frighten others from those wicked courses which have brought them to a miserable and shameful end. De 21:21, All Israel shall hear and fear.

3 and they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity.

4 And the names of them *were* Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus *were* their names; Samaria *is* Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.

5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians *her* neighbors,

6 *which were* clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.

7 Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them *that were* the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself.

8 Neither left she her whoredoms *brought* from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her.

9 Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.

10 These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

11 And when her sister Aholibah saw *this*, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in *her* whoredoms.

The prophet Hosea, in his time, observed that the two tribes retained their integrity, in a great measure, when the ten tribes had apostatized (Ho 11:12, Ephraim indeed compasses me about with lies, but Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints; and this was justly expected from them: Ho 4:15, Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend); but this lasted not long.

By some unhappy matches made between the house of David and the house of Ahab the worship of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah, but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezekiah, things were in a good posture: but it lasted not long. In the reign of Manasseh, soon after the kingdom of Judah had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, they became more corrupt than Israel had been in their inordinate love of idols, Eze 23:11.

Instead of being made better by the warning which that destruction gave them, they were made worse by it, as if they were displeased because the Lord had made that breach upon Israel, and for that reason became disaffected to him and to his service. Instead of being made to stand in awe of him as a jealous God, they therefore grew strange to him, and liked those gods better that would admit of partners with them.

Note, Those may justly expect God's judgments upon themselves who do not take warning by his judgments upon others, who see in others what is the end of sin and yet continue to make a light matter of it.

But it is bad indeed with those who are made worse by that which should make them better, and have their lusts irritated and exasperated by that which was designed to suppress and subdue them. Jerusalem grew worse in her whoredoms than her sister Samaria had been in her whoredoms. This was observed before (Eze 16:51), Neither has Samaria committed half of thy sins.

I. Jerusalem, that had been a faithful city, became a harlot, Isa 1:21. She also doted upon the Assyrians (Eze 23:12), joined in league with them, joined in worship with them, grew to be in love with their captains and rulers, and cried them up as finer and more accomplished gentlemen than any that ever the land of Israel produced. "See how richly, how neatly, they are dressed, clothed most gorgeously; how well they sit a horse; they are horsemen riding on horses; how charmingly they look, all of them desirable young men."

And thus they grew to affect every thing that was foreign and to despise their own nation; and even the religion of it was mean and homely, and not to be compared with the curiosity and gaiety of the heathen temples. Thus she increased her whoredoms; she fell in love, fell in league, with the Chaldeans. Hezekiah himself was faulty this way when he was proud of the court which the king of Babylon made to him and complimented his ambassadors with the sight of all his treasures, Isa 39:2.

And the humour increased (Eze 23:14); she doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains (Eze 23:15,16), joined in alliance with that kingdom, invited them to come and settle in Jerusalem, that they might refine the genius of the Jewish nation and make it more polite; nay, they sent for patterns of their images, altars, and temples, and made use of them in their

worship. Thus was she polluted with her whoredoms (Eze 23:17), and thereby she discovered her own whoredom (Eze 23:18), her own strong inclination to idolatry.

And when she had had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew tired of them and disposed to break her league with them, as Jehoiakim and Zedekiah did, her mind being alienated from them, she courted the Egyptians, doted upon their paramours (Eze 23:20), would come into an alliance with them, and, to strengthen the alliance, would join with them in their idolatries and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations; for so wise, so rich, so strong, was the Egyptian nation, and came to such perfection in idolatry, that there was no nation now which they could take such satisfaction in as in Egypt. Thus they called to remembrance the days of their youth (Eze 23:19), the lewdness of their youth, Eze 23:21.

1. They pleased themselves with the remembrance of it. When they began to set their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themselves to put a confidence in that kingdom, because of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they still retained the gust and relish of the leeks and onions they ate there, or rather of the idolatrous worship they learned there, and brought up with them thence. When they began an acquaintance with Egypt they remembered how merrily their fathers worshipped the golden calf, what music and dancing they had at that sport, which they learned in Egypt; and they hoped they should now have a fair pretence to come to that again.

Thus she multiplied her whoredoms, repeated her former whoredoms, and encouraged herself to close with present temptations, by calling to remembrance the days of her youth. Note, Those who, instead of reflecting upon their former sins with sorrow and shame, reflect upon them with pleasure and pride, contract new guilt thereby, strengthen their own corruptions, and in effect bid defiance to repentance. This is returning with the dog to his vomit.

2. They called it God's remembrance, and provoked him to remember it against them. God had said indeed that he would reckon with them for the golden calf, that idol of Egypt (Ex 32:34); but such was his patience that he seemed to have forgotten it till they, by their league now with the Egyptians against the Chaldeans, did, as it were, put him in mind of it; and in the day when he visits he will now, as he has said, visit for that. It is very observable how this adulteress changes her lovers: she dotes first on the Assyrians; then she thought the Chaldeans finer and courted them; after a while her mind was alienated from them, and she thought the Egyptians more powerful (Eze 23:20) and she must contract an intimacy with them. This shows the folly,

(1.) Of fleshly lusts; when they are indulged they grow humoursome and fickle, are soon surfeited but never satisfied; they must have variety, and what is loved one day is loathed the next. Unius adulterium matrimonium vocant--One adultery is called marriage, as Seneca observes.

(2.) Of idolatry. Those who think one God too little will not think a hundred sufficient, but will still be for trying more, as finding all insufficient.

(3.) Of seeking to creatures for help; we go from one to another, but are disappointed in them all, and can never rest till we have made the God of Israel our help.

II The faithful God justly gives a bill of divorce to this now faithless city, that has become a harlot. His jealousy soon discovered her lewdness (Eze 23:13): I saw that she was defiled, that she was debauched, and saw which way her inclination was, that the two sisters both took one way, and that Jerusalem grew worse than Samaria. For, if we stretch out our hand to a strange god, will not God search this out? No doubt he will; and when he has found it can he be pleased with it? No (Eze 23:18): Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her sister. How could

the pure and holy God any longer take delight in such a lewd generation? Note, Sin alienates God's mind from the sinner, and justly, for it is the alienation of the sinner's mind from God; but woe, and a thousand woes, to those from whom God's mind is alienated; for whom he turns from he will turn against.

12 She doted upon the Assyrians *her* neighbors, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men.

13 Then I saw that she was defiled, *that* they *took* both one way,

14 and *that* she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,

15 girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity:

16 and as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them.

18 So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister.

19 Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

20 For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh *is as* the flesh of asses, and whose issue *is like* the issue of horses.

21 Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

22 Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side;

Jerusalem stands indicted by the name of Aholibah, for that she, as a false traitor to her sovereign Lord the God of heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but moved by the instigation of the devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, had compassed

and imagined to shake off his government, had kept up a correspondence had joined in confederacy with his enemies, and the pretenders to a deity, in contempt of his crown and dignity. To this indictment she has pleaded, Not guilty:

I am not polluted; I have not gone after Baalim. But it is found against her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and she stands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment should not be given and execution awarded according to law. In these verses, therefore, we have the sentence.

I. Her old confederates must be her executioners; and those whom she had courted to be her leaders in sin are now to be employed as instruments of her punishment (Eze 23:22): "I will raise up thy lovers against thee, the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didst so much admire and covet an acquaintance with, but from whom thy mind is since alienated and with whom thou hast perfidiously broken covenant." They are called thy lovers (Eze 23:22) and yet (Eze 23:28) those whom thou hatest.

Note, It is common for sinful love soon to turn into hatred; as Amnon's to Tamar. Those of headstrong and unreasonable passions are often very hot against those persons and things that a little before they were as hot for. Fools run into extremes; nay, and wise men may see cause to change their sentiments. And therefore, as we should rejoice and weep as if we rejoiced not and wept not, so we should love and hate as if we loved not and hated not. Ita ama tanquam osurus--Love as one who may have cause to feel aversion.

II The execution to be done upon her is very terrible.

1. Her enemies shall come against her on every side (Eze 23:22), those of the several nations that constituted the Chaldean army (Eze 23:23), all of them great lords and renowned, whose pomp, and grandeur, and splendid appearance made them look the more amiable when they came as friends to protect and patronise

Jerusalem, but the more formidable when they came to chastise its treachery and aimed at no less than its ruin.

(1.) They shall come with a great deal of military force (Eze 23:24), with chariots and wagons furnished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed.

(2.) They shall have justice on their side: "I will set judgment before them" (they shall have right with them as well as might; for the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him), "and therefore they shall judge thee, not only according to God's judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but according to their judgments, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy perfidious dealings with them."

(3.) They shall prosecute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment. It being a war of revenge, they shall deal with thee hatefully, Eze 23:29. This will make the execution the more severe that their swords will be dipped in poison. Thou hatest them, and they shall deal hatefully with thee; those that hate will be hated and will be hatefully dealt with.

(4.) God himself will lead them on, and his anger shall be mingled with theirs (Eze 23:25): I will set my jealousy against thee; that shall kindle this fire, and then they shall deal furiously with thee. If men deal ever so hatefully, ever so furiously, with us, yet, if we have God on our side, we need not fear them; they can do us no real hurt. But if men deal furiously with us, and God set his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

2 The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress are,

(1.) That all she has shall be seized on. The clothes and the fair jewels, with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these she shall be stripped of, Eze 23:26. All those things that were the ornaments of their state shall be taken away: "They shall take away all thy labour, all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare," Eze 23:29. Both city and country shall be impoverished and all the wealth of both swept away.

(2.) That her children shall go into captivity. "They shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and make slaves of them (Eze 23:25); for they are children of whoredoms, unworthy the dignities and privileges of Israelites," Ho 2:4.

(3.) That she shall be stigmatized and deformed: "They shall take away thy nose and thy ears, shall mark thee for a harlot, and render thee for ever odious," Eze 23:25. This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers towards the Jews that fell into their hands, whom, it is probable, they used barbarously. Some will have this to be understood figuratively; and by the nose they think is meant the kingly dignity, and by the ears that of the priesthood.

(4.) That she shall be exposed to shame: Thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered (Eze 23:29), as, when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes to light, and what was done long since is then called to mind.

(5.) That she shall be quite cut off and ruined: "The remnant of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence shall fall by the sword; and the residue of thy houses that have not been battered down about thy ears shall be devoured by the fire," Eze 23:25. And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

III. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other than Samaria's fate. It is common, in giving judgment, to have an eye to precedents; so has God in passing this sentence on Jerusalem (Eze 23:31, &c.): "Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee, by the fatal consequences of her wickedness; and therefore I will give her cup, her portion of miseries, into thy hand, the cup of the Lord's fury, which will be to thee a cup of trembling." Now,

1. This cup is said to be deep and large, and to contain much (Eze 23:32), abundance of God's wrath and abundance of miseries, the fruits of that wrath. It is such a cup as that which we read of, Jer 25:15,16. The cup of divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so those will find into whose hand it shall be put.

2. They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the wicked are said to do (Ps 75:8): "Thou shalt drink it and suck it out, not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee (Eze 23:34); thou shalt break the shreds thereof, and pluck off thy own breasts, for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being full of the fury of the Lord (Isa 51:20), as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy, but it must be drank (for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God), thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of it."

3. They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their wits' end, as men in drink are, staggering, and stumbling, and ready to fall (Eze 23:33): Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow. Note, Drunkenness has sorrow attending it, to such a degree that the utmost confusion and astonishment are here represented by it. Who would think that that which is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the greatest misery, should yet be with many a

beloved sin, that they should damn their own souls to distemper their own bodies? Who has woe and sorrow like them? Pr 23:29.

4. Being so intoxicated, they shall become, as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them (Eze 23:32): Thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision, as acting ridiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people he makes their judges fools and pours contempt on their princes, Job 12:17,21.

23 the Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses.

24 And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, *which* shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments.

25 And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.

In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed; and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good.

1. They have been bad, very bad, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them (Eze 23:30): I will do these things unto thee because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and (Eze 23:35) because thou hast forgotten me and cast me behind thy back. Note, Forgetfulness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us and authority over us, are at the bottom of all our treacherous adulterous departures from him. Therefore men wander after idols, because they forget God, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the baits of sin if they did not first cast God behind their back, as not worthy to be regarded. And those who put such an affront

upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last?

Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms; that is, thou shalt suffer the punishment of them, and thou alone must bear the blame. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and those who will not part with their lewdness and their whoredoms must bear them.

2. They shall be better, much better, and this fire, though consuming to many, shall be refining to a remnant (Eze 23:27): Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee. The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, What have we to do any more with idols? Observe,

(1.) How inveterate the disease was: Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt. Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage.

(2.) How complete the cure was notwithstanding: "Though it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, so that thou shalt not so much as lift up thy eyes to the idols again, nor remember Egypt with pleasure any more." They shall avoid the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as look upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares walk after their eyes. And they shall abandon all inclinations to it: "They shall not remember Egypt; they shall not retain any of that affection for idols which they had from the very infancy of their nation."

They got it, through the corruption of nature, in their bondage in Egypt, and lost it, through the grace of God, in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even the taking away of sin, of that sin; so that whereas, before the captivity, no nation (all things considered) was more impetuously bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity no nation was more

vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were, insomuch that at this day the image-worship which is practised in the church of Rome confirms the Jews as much as any thing in their prejudices against the Christian religion.

26 They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels.

27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more.

28 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand *of them* whom thou hatest, into the hand *of them* from whom thy mind is alienated:

29 and they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labor, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

30 I will do these *things* unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, *and* because thou art polluted with their idols.

31 Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand.

32 Thus saith the Lord God; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.

33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.

34 Thou shalt even drink it and suck *it* out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord God.

35 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

36 The Lord said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations;

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters had in effect

become one again; and therefore, in these verses, the prophet takes those to task jointly who were thus conjoined: "Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah together? Eze 23:36. Wilt thou go about to frame an excuse for them? Thou seest the matter is so bad as not to bear an excuse." Or, rather, "Thou shalt now be employed, in God's name, to judge them, Eze 20:4. The matter is rather worse than better since the union."

I. Let them be made to see the sins they are guilty of: Declare unto them openly and boldly their abominations.

1. They have been guilty of gross idolatry, here called adultery. With their idols they have committed adultery (Eze 23:37), have broken their marriage-covenant with God, have lusted after the gratifications of a carnal sensual mind in the worship of God. This is the first and worst of the abominations he is to charge them with.

2. They have committed the most barbarous murders, in sacrificing their children to Moloch, a sin so unnatural that they deserve to hear of it upon all occasions: Blood is in their hands, innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have caused to pass through the fire (Eze 23:37), not that they might be dedicated to the idols, but that they might be devoured, a sign that they loved their idols better than that which was dearest to them in the world.

3. They have profaned the sacred things with which God had dignified and distinguished them: This they have done unto me, this indignity, this injury, Eze 23:38. Every contempt put upon that which is holy reflects upon him who is the fountain of holiness, and from a relation to whom whatever is called holy has its denomination. God had set up his sanctuary among them, but they defiled it, by making it a house of merchandise, a den of thieves; nay, and much worse; there they set up their idols and worshipped them, and there they shed the blood of God's prophets.

God had revealed to them his holy sabbaths, but they profaned them, by doing all manner of servile work therein, or perhaps by sports and recreations on that day, not only practised, but allowed and encouraged by authority. They defiled the sanctuary on the same day that they profaned the sabbath. To defile the sanctuary was bad enough on any day, but to do it on the sabbath day was an aggravation. We commonly say, The better day the better deed; but here, the better day the worse deed. God takes notice of the circumstances of sin which add to the guilt. He shows (Eze 23:39) what was their profanation both of the sanctuary and of the sabbath.

They slew their children, and sacrificed them to their idols, to the great dishonour both of God and of human nature; and then came, on the same day, their hands imbrued with the blood of their children and their clothes stained with it, to attend in God's sanctuary, not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to present themselves before him, as other Israelites did, expecting acceptance with him, notwithstanding these villanies which they were guilty of; as if God either did not know their wickedness or did not hate it. Thus they profaned the sanctuary, as if that were a protection to the worst of malefactors; for thus they did in the midst of his house.

Note, It is a profanation of God's solemn ordinances when those that are grossly and openly profane and vicious impudently and impenitently so intrude upon the services and privileges of them. Give not that which is holy unto dogs. Friend, how camest thou in hither?

4. They have courted foreign alliances, been proud of them, and reposed a confidence in them. This also is represented by the sin of adultery, for it was a departure from God, not only to whom alone they ought to pay their homage and not to idols, but in whom alone they ought to put their trust, and not in creatures. Israel was a peculiar people, must dwell alone and not be

reckoned among the nations; and they profane their crown, and lay their honour in the dust, when they covet to be like them or in league with them.

But this they have now done; they have entered into strict alliances with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the most renowned and potent kingdoms at that time; but they scorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and states that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real service to them. Note, Affecting an acquaintance and correspondence with great people has often been a snare to good people. Let us see how Jerusalem courts her high allies, thinking thereby to make herself considerable.

(1.) She privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her (Eze 23:40): You sent a messenger for men to come from far. It seems, then, that the neighbours had no desire to come into a confederacy with Jerusalem, but she thrust herself upon them, and sent under-hand to desire them to court her: and, lo, they came. The wisest and best may be drawn unavoidably into company and conversation with profane and wicked people: but it is no sign either of wisdom or goodness to covet an intimacy with such and to court it.

(2.) Great preparation was made for the reception of these foreign ministers, for their public entry and public audience, which is compared to the pains that an adulteress takes to make herself look handsome. Jezebel-like, thou paintedst thy face and deckedst thyself with ornaments, Eze 23:40. The king and princes made themselves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of state, beautified the furniture, and made it look fresh. Thou sattest upon a stately bed (Eze 23:41), a stately throne; a table was prepared, whereon thou has set my oil and my incense. This was either,

[1.] A feast for the ambassadors, a noble treat, agreeable to the other preparations. There was incense to perfume the room and oil to anoint their heads. Or,

[2.] An altar already furnished for the ambassadors' use in the worship of their idols, to let them know that the Israelites were not so strait-laced but that they could allow foreigners the free exercise of their religion among them, and furnish them with chapels, yea, and complimented them so far as to join with them in their devotions; though the law of their God was against it, yet they could easily dispense with themselves to oblige a friend. The oil and incense God calls his, not only because they were the gift of his providence, but because they should have been offered at his altar, which was an aggravation of their sin in serving idols and idolaters with them. See Ho 2:8.

(3.) There was great joy at their coming, as if it were such a blessing as never happened to Jerusalem before (Eze 23:42): A voice of a multitude being at east was with her. The people were very easy, for they thought themselves very safe and happy now that they had such powerful allies; and therefore attended the ambassadors with loud huzzas and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occasion.

The men of the common sort were there to grace the solemnity, and to increase the crowd; and with them were brought Sabeans from the wilderness. The margin reads it drunkards from the wilderness, that would drink healths to the prosperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be most noisy in shouting upon this occasion. Whoever they were, in honour of the ambassadors they put bracelets upon their hands and beautiful crowns upon their heads, which made the cavalcade appear very splendid.

(4.) God by his prophets warned them against making these dangerous leagues with foreigners (Eze 23:43):

"Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, that from the first was fond of leagues with the heathen, of matching with their families (Jdg 3:6), and afterwards of making alliances with their

kingdoms, and, though often disappointed therein, would never be dissuaded from it (this was the adultery she was old in), I said, Will they now commit whoredoms with her and she with them? Surely experience and observation will by this time have convinced both them and her that an alliance between the nation of the Jews and a heathen nation can never be for the advantage of either."

They are iron and clay, that will not mix, nor will God bless such an alliance, or smile upon it. But, it seems, her being old in these adulteries, instead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, does but make her the more impudent and insatiable in them; for, though she was thus admonished of the folly of it, yet they went in unto her, Eze 23:44.

A bargain was soon clapped up, and a league made, first with this, and then with the other, foreign state. Samaria did so, Jerusalem did so, like lewd women. They could not rest satisfied in the embraces of God's laws and care, and the assurances of protection he gave them; they could not think his covenant with them security enough. But they must by treaties and leagues, politic ones (they thought) and well-concerted, throw themselves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their interests under their protection.

Note, Those hearts go a whoring from God that take a complacency in the pomp of the world and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an arm of flesh, Jer 17:5.

II. Let them be made to foresee the judgments that are coming upon them for these sins (Eze 23:45): The righteous men, they shall judge them. Some make the instruments of their destruction to be the righteous men that shall judge them. The Assyrians that destroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that destroyed Jerusalem, those were comparatively righteous, had a sense of justice between man and man and justly resented the treachery of the Jewish nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which, we are sure, are

all righteous. Others understand it of the prophets, whose office it was, in God's name, to judge them and pass sentence upon them.

Or we may take it as an appeal to all righteous men, to all that have a sense of equity; they shall all judge concerning these cities, and agree in their verdict, that forasmuch as they have been notoriously guilty of adultery and murder, and the guilt is national, therefore they ought to suffer the pains and penalties which by law are inflicted upon women in their personal capacity that shed blood and are adulteresses. Righteous men will say, "Why should bloody filthy cities escape any better than bloody filthy persons? Judge, I pray thee," Isa 5:3. This judgment being given by the righteous men, the righteous God will award execution. See here,

1. What the execution will be, Eze 23:46,47. The same as before, Eze 23:23, &c. God will bring a company of enemies upon them, who shall be made to serve his holy purposes even when they are serving their own sinful appetites and passions. These enemies shall easily prevail, for God will give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled; this company shall stone them with stones as malefactors, shall single them out and dispatch them with their swords; and, as was sometimes done in severe executions (witness that of Achan), they shall slay their children and burn their houses.

2. What will be the effects of it.

(1.) Thus they shall suffer for their sins: Their lewdness shall be recompensed upon them (Eze 23:49); and they shall bear the sins of their idols, Eze 23:35,39. Thus God will assert the honour of his broken law and injured government, and let the world know what a just and jealous God he is.

(2.) Thus they shall be broken off from their sins: I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land, Eze 23:27,48. The destruction

of God's city, like the death of God's saints, shall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do; it shall quite take away their sin, so that Jerusalem shall rise out of its ashes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace purified from its dross.

(3.) Thus other cities and nations will have fair warning given them to keep themselves from idols. That all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. This is the end of the punishment of malefactors, that they may be made examples to others, who will see and fear. Smite the scorner and the simple will beware. The judgments of God upon some are designed to teach others, and happy are those who receive instruction from them not to tread in the steps of sinners, lest they be taken in their snares; those who would be taught this must know God is the Lord (Eze 23:49), that he is the governor of the world, a God that judges in the earth, and with whom there is no respect of persons.

37 that they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through *the fire,* to devour *them*.

38 Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.

39 For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

40 And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger *was* sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments,

41 and satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.

42 And a voice of a multitude being at ease *was* with her: and with the men of the common sort *were* brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads.

43 Then said I unto *her that was* old in adulteries, Will they now
commit whoredoms with her, and she *with them?*
44 Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth
the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the
lewd women.
45 And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of
adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood;
because they *are* adulteresses, and blood *is* in their hands.
46 For thus saith the Lord God; I will bring up a company upon
them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled.
47 And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them
with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters,
and burn up their houses with fire.
48 Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women
may be taught not to do after your lewdness.
49 And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall
bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord
God.

Ezekiel-24

The Parable of the Boiling Pot

1 Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the
month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even* of this same day:

We have here,

I The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it (Eze 24:2): "Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon, who is now abroad with his army, thou knowest not where, set himself against Jerusalem this same day." It was many miles, it was many days' journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon. Perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God

knew, and could tell the prophet, "This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army has sat down before it."

Note, As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God and under his view. He tells the prophet, that the prophet might tell the people, that so when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer that, since he was right in his news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with Heaven.

II The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, memorandum, that in the ninth year of Jehoiachin's captivity (for thence Ezekiel dated, Eze 1:2, which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiachin was carried off), in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2Ki 25:1.

See how God reveals things to his servants the prophets, especially those things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may sometimes contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture prophecies. Known unto God are all his works.

III. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is that this siege of Jerusalem, now begun, will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those that were yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.

1. He must show them this by a sign; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a boiling pot. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and probably was designed to put them in mind of that (Jer 1:13, I see a seething pot, with the face towards the north; and the explanation of it, Eze 24:15, makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the northern nations); and, as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said (Eze 11:3), This city is the caldron and we are the flesh, meaning, "We are as safe here as if we were surrounded with walls of brass."

"Well," says God, "it shall be so; you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the flesh in the caldron, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it (Eze 24:4); let it be filled with the flesh of the choice of the flock (Eze 24:5), with the choice pieces (Eze 24:4), and the marrow-bones, and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, either in the pot or under it, the whole beast may be made use of."

A fire of bones, though it be a slow fire (for the siege was to be long), is yet a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the crackling of thorns under a pot, which has noise and blaze, but no intense heat.

Those that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety would be sadly disappointed when the siege laid to it would soon make the place too hot for them; and yet there was not getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

2. He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a woe to the bloody city, Eze 24:6. And again (Eze 24:9), being bloody, let it go to pot, to be boiled; that is the fittest place for it. Let us here see,

(1.) What is the course God takes with it. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry.

[1.] Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them (Eze 24:9): I will make the pile for fire great. Commission is given to the Chaldeans (Eze 24:10) to heap on wood, and kindle the fire, to make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants.

Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impenitent sinners shall never abate, much less go out, for want of fuel. Tophet has fire and much wood, Isa 30:33.

[2.] The meat, as it is boiled, is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "Consume the flesh; let it be thoroughly boiled, boiled to rags. Spice it well, and make it savoury, for those that will fees sweetly upon it. Let the bones be burnt." either the bones under the pot ("let them be consumed with the other fuel") or, as some think, the bones in the pot--"let it boil so furiously that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be by sickness, sword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of misery." And then (Eze 24:6), "Bring it out piece by piece; let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword or made a prisoner. Let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man does upon a good dish of meat when it is set before him. Let no lot fall upon it; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out and devoured, first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first."

It was a very severe military execution when David measured Joab with two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive, 2Sa 8:2. But here is no line, no lot of mercy, made use of; all goes one way, and that is to destruction.

[3.] When all the broth is boiled away the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting of the city on fire, Eze 24:11. The scum of the meat, or (as some translate it) the rust of the meat, has so got into the pot that there is no making it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or, rather, melted in it and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

(2.) What is the quarrel God has with it. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with, for,

[1.] It is a bloody city (Eze 24:7,8): Her blood is in the midst of her. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; nay, and they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in blood-shed, and so it is in the midst of them. Nay, they commit their murders in the face of the sun, and openly and impudently avow them, in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not pour out the blood she shed upon the ground, to cover it with dust, as being ashamed of the sin or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, proper to be concealed (De 23:13), much less dangerous.

Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed upon a rock, where it would not soak in, upon the top of a rock, in despite of divine views and vengeance. They shed innocent blood under colour of justice; so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service, so put it, as it were, on the top of a rock.

Or it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they caused fury to come up and take vengeance, Eze 24:8. It could not be avoided but that God must in anger visit for these things; his soul must be

avenged on such a nation as this. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice.

And, the crime having been public and notorious, it is fit that the punishment should be so too: I have set her blood on the top of a rock. Jerusalem was to be made an example, and therefore was made a spectacle, to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. It is fit that those who sin before all should be rebuked before all; and that the reputation of those should not be consulted by the concealment of their punishment who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

[2.] It is a filthy city. Great notice is taken, in this explanation of the comparison, of the scum of this pot, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the pot whose scum is therein and has not gone out of it, Eze 24:6. The great scum that went not forth out of her (Eze 24:12), that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was molten in it (Eze 24:11), some of this runs over into the fire (Eze 24:12), inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but it shall all be consumed at last, Eze 24:11.

When the hand of God had gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin, quarrelled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last degree against the Chaldeans, snarled at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This as their scum; in their distress they trespassed yet more against the Lord, like that king Ahaz, 2Ch 28:22.

There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better, whose corruptions are excited an exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the

providence of God which were designed for the suppressing and subduing of them, or of those whose scum boiled up once in convictions, and confessions of sin, as if it would be taken off by reformation, but afterwards returned again, in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again. This was Jerusalem's case: She has wearied with lies, wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, wearied herself with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, Eze 24:12.

Note, Those that follow after lying vanities weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, Eze 24:13,14. Because she is incurably wicked she is abandoned to ruin, without remedy.

First, Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain (Eze 24:13): "In thy filthiness is lewdness; thou hast become obstinate and impudent in it; thou hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. In thy filthiness thee is a rooted lewdness; as appears by this, I have purged thee and thou wast not purged. I have given thee medicine, but it has done thee no good. I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual; the intention of them has not been answered." Note, It is sad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost.

Secondly, It is therefore resolved that no more such methods shall be sued: Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more. The fire shall no longer be a refining fire, but a consuming fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened, as it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work.

Note, Those that will not be healed are justly given up and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Thirdly, Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin: I will cause my fury

to rest upon thee. This is the same with what is said of the later Jews, that wrath has come upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:16.

They deserve it: According to thy doings they shall judge thee, Eze 24:14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was: "I the Lord have spoken it, who am able to make good what I have spoken; it shall come to pass, nothing shall prevent it, for I will do it myself, I will not go back upon any entreaties; the decree has gone forth, and I will not spare in compassion to them, neither will I repent." He will neither change his mind nor his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to interceded for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it.

Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he has given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false or they must be damned.

the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day.

3 And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Set on a pot, set *it* on, and also pour water into it:

4 gather the pieces thereof into it, *even* every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill *it* with the choice bones.

5 Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, *and* make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein.

6 Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum *is* therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.

7 For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust;

8 that it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.

9 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great.

10 Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well,
and let the bones be burned.
11 Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be
hot, and may burn, and *that* the filthiness of it may be molten in it,
that the scum of it may be consumed.
12 She hath wearied *herself* with lies, and her great scum went not
forth out of her: her scum *shall be* in the fire.
13 In thy filthiness *is* lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou
wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any
more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.
14 I the Lord have spoken *it:* it shall come to pass, and I will do *it;* I
will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according
to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith
the Lord God.

The Death of Ezekiel's Wife

15 Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
16 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes
with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall
thy tears run down.

These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, Eze 33:21. He had assured them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here,

I The sign by which this was represented to them, and it was a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it.

1. He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him (Eze 24:16): Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thy eyes with a stroke.

Note, (1.) A married state may very well agree with the prophetical office; it is honourable in all, and therefore not sinful in ministers.

(2.) Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations. No doubt Ezekiel found a prudent tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity.

(3.) Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a covering of the eyes (Ge 20:16), to restrain wandering looks after others; but a desire of the eyes, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the desire of the eyes, which find not any object more grateful.

(4.) That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon the desire of our eyes may be removed from us and may become the sorrow of our hearts, which is a good reason why those that have wives should be as though they had none, and those who rejoice in them as though they rejoiced not, 1Co 7:29,30. Death is a stroke which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from.

(5.) When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke we must see and own the hand of God in it: I take away the desire of thy eyes. He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleases; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them; and may he not do what he will with his own?

(6.) Under afflictions of this kind it is good for us to remember that we are sons of men; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou

art a son of Adam, thy wife is a daughter of Eve, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to; and shall the earth be forsaken for us? According to this prediction, he tells us (Eze 24:18), I spoke unto the people in the morning; for God sent his prophets, rising up early and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe,

[1.] Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that.

[2.] We may the more easily bear an affliction if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

2. He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the natural expressions of sorrow, Eze 24:16.

He must not give vent to his passion by weeping, or letting his tears run down, though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and, when the body is sown, it is fit that it should thus be watered. But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this, though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man and would perhaps be ill thought of by the people if he did it not. Much less might he use the customary formalities of mourners. He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the tire of his head, must put on his shoes, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not cover his lips, not throw a veil over his face (as mourners were wont to do, Le 13:45), must not be of a sorrowful countenance, appearing unto men to fast, Mt 6:18.

He must not eat the bread of men, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat

for themselves; but, if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be greatly against the grain to flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but so God commands; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. He appeared in public, in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do, without any signs of mourning.

(1.) Here there was something peculiar, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us.

(2.) Though mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had lost our God, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and, of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples. We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to bless the name of the Lord even when he takes as well as when he gives.

II The explication and application of this sign. The people enquired the meaning of it (Eze 24:19): Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us that thou doest so? They knew that Ezekiel was an affectionate husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason and for instruction to them; and perhaps they were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again.

Note, When we are enquiring concerning the things of God our enquiry must be, "What are those thing to us? What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort, do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?" Ezekiel gives them an answer verbatim--word for word as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must speak to the house of Israel.

1. Let them know that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, Eze 24:21. If this was done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God showed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose that Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined: God will take away the desire of your eyes.

Note, The removal of the comforts of others should awaken us to think of parting with ours too; for are we better than they? We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with those that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will take away that which their soul pities, that is, of which they say, What a pity is it that it should be cut off and destroyed! That for which your souls are afraid (so some read it); you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that?

(1.) That which was their public pride, the temple: "I will profane my sanctuary, by giving that into the enemy's hand, to be plundered and burnt." This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more the desire of our eyes, than any creature-comfort

whatsoever. Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be ours too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called the desire of their eyes. Note, Many that are destitute of the power of godliness are yet very fond of the form of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too.

The sanctuary is here called the excellency of their strength; they had many strong-holds and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all. It was the pride of their strength; they prided in it as their strength that they were the temple of the Lord, Jer 7:4. Note, The church-privileges that men are proud of are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away,

(2.) That which was their family-pleasure, which they looked upon with delight: "Your sons and your daughters (which are the dearer to you because they are but few left of many, the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans." What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures, of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this, was the punishment of sin.

2. Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, You shall do as I have done, Eze 24:22. You shall not mourn nor weep, Eze 24:23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men shall not lament for the dead nor cut themselves (Jer 16:6); not that there shall be any such merciful circumstance without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they shall not mourn, for,

(1.) Their grief shall be so great that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it; their passions shall stifle them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by giving vent to it.

(2.) Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be hardened in their sorrows (Job 6:10) and perfectly stupefied, and moped (as we say), with them.

(3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs.

(4.) They shall not have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief: "You will be so entirely taken up with solid substantial grief that you will have no room for the shadow of it."

(5.) Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by covering their lips, and laying aside their ornaments, and going barefoot; for it is well known that every body is a mourner.

(6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows: "You shall pine away for your iniquities, with seared consciences and reprobate minds, and you shall mourn, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but one towards another," murmuring, and fretting, and complaining of God, thus making their burden heavier and their wound more grievous, as impatient people do under their afflictions by mingling their own passions with them.

17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of
thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and
cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men.
18 So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife
died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.
19 And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these
things are to us, that thou doest *so?*

20 Then I answered them, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

21 Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.

22 And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover *your* lips, nor eat the bread of men.

23 And your tires *shall be* upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.

An appeal to the event, for the confirmation of all this (Eze 24:24): "When this comes, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you cannot believe will ever be, then you shall know that I am the Lord God, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign."

Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are preached will be made to remember them when they are executed. Observe,

1 The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in (Eze 24:25): In that day, that terrible day, when the city shall be broken up, I will take from them,

(1.) That which they depended on--their strength, their walls, their treasures, their fortifications, their men of war; none shall stand them in stead.

(2.) That which they boasted of--the joy of their glory, that which they looked upon as most their glory, and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their God and the palaces of their princes.

(3.) That which they delighted in, which was the desire of their eyes, and on which they set their minds. Note, Carnal people set their minds upon that on which they can set their eyes; they look at, and dote upon, the things that are seen; and it is their folly to set their minds upon that which they have no assurance of and which may be taken from them in a moment, Pr 23:5. Their sons and their daughters were all this--their strength, and joy, and glory; and these shall go into captivity.

2 The notice that should be brought to the prophet, not be revelation, as the notice of the siege was brought to him (Eze 24:2), but in an ordinary way (Eze 24:26): "He that escapes in that day shall, by a special direction of Providence, come to thee, to bring thee intelligence of it," which we find was done, Eze 33:21. The ill-news came slowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow-captives it came too soon.

3. The divine impression which he should be under upon receiving that notice, Eze 24:27. Whereas, from this time to that, Ezekiel was thus far dumb that he prophesied no more against the land of Israel, but against the neighbouring nations, as we shall find in the following chapters, then he shall have orders given him to speak again to the children of his people (Eze 33:2,22); then his mouth shall be opened.

He was suspended from prophesying against them in the mean time, because, Jerusalem being besieged, his prophecies could not be sent into the city,--because, when God was speaking so loudly by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word,--and because then the accomplishment of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for.

Thus Christ forbade his disciples to preach openly that he was Christ till after his resurrection, because that was to be the full proof of it. "But then thou shalt speak with the greater assurance,

and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confusion."

Note, God's prophets are never silenced but for wise and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again (as he will in due time, for even the witnesses that are slain shall arise) it shall appear to have been for his glory that they were for a while silent, that people may the more certainly and fully know that God is the Lord.

24 Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done
shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I *am* the Lord
God.
25 Also, thou son of man, *shall it* not *be* in the day when I take from
them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes,
and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their
daughters,
26 *that* he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause *thee*
to hear *it* with *thine* ears?
27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and
thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign
unto them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-25

The Prophecy against the Ammonites

1 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy
against them;

Here, I The prophet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites, in the name of the Lord Jehovah the God of Israel, who is also the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say, in answer to it? He is bidden to set his face against the Ammonites, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God set his face against them, for the face of the Lord is against those that do evil, Ps 34:16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as

one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore set his face as a flint, Isa 1:7.

He must show his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent, and thus must show that, though he had prophesied so much and so long against Israel, yet still he was for Israel, and, while he witnessed against their corruptions, he adhered to and gloried in God's covenant with them.

Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them, against whom their faces are set.

II. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years, and knows little of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Israel in their calamities, Eze 25:3. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, Aha! so would we have it. They were glad to see,

(1.) The temple burned, the sanctuary profaned by the victorious Chaldeans. This is put first, to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them.

(2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when the land of Israel was made desolate, the cities burnt, the country wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of Judah went into captivity. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves they

were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them, partly because they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion and the divine oracles they were favoured with. It is repeated again (Eze 25:6):

They clapped with their hands, to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to set them on as dogs upon the game; or they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their Plaudite--Give us your applause, thinking it well acted; never was there any thing more diverting or entertaining to them. They stamped with their feet, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion; they not only rejoiced in heart, but they could not forbear showing it, though every one that had any sense of honour and humanity would cry shame upon them for it, especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Israel's fall (if so, they would have been the more excusable:

most people are for themselves); but this as purely from a principle of malice and enmity: Thou hast rejoiced in heart with all thy despite (which signifies both scorn and hatred) against the land of Israel.

Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill-will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours' entertainments. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have rejoiced in Jerusalem's ruin, but should rather have trembled, because they themselves had such a narrow escape at the same time; it was but "cross or pile" [the toss of a halfpenny] which should be besieged first, Rabbath or Jerusalem, Eze 21:20.

And they had reason to think that the king of Babylon would set upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their insolence against Jerusalem was to them an evident token of perdition, Php 1:28.

It is a very wicked thing to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people, and a sin that God will surely reckon for; such delight has God in showing mercy, and so backward is he to punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the ways of his judgments by intercessions, not any thing more provoking than to help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, Zec 1:15.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin for this insolence which they were guilty of. God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, Pr 24:17,18. God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it. And therefore those that touch that shall be made to know that they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, Eze 21:28. Had they repented, that would have been revoked; but now it is ratified.

(1.) A destroying enemy is brought against them: I will deliver thee to the men of the east, first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem (as Josephus relates, Antiq. 10.181), and then to the Arabians, who were properly the children of the east, who, when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate, and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors. Shepherds' tents were their palaces; these they set up in the country of the Ammonites; there they made their dwellings, Eze 25:4. They enjoyed the products of the country:

They shall eat thy fruit and drink thy milk; and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second-hand. They made use even of the royal city for their cattle (Eze 25:5): I will make Rabbath, that was a nice and splendid city, to be a stable for camels; for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not

think they can put the palaces of Rabbath to a better use. Rabbath had been a habitation of brutish men; justly therefore is it now made a stable for camels and the country a couching-lace for flocks, more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished.

(2.) God himself acts as an enemy to them (Eze 25:7): I will stretch out my hand upon thee, a hand that will reach far and strike home, which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand, nor bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them for a spoil to the heathen, so that all their neighbours shall prey upon them, but will cut them off from the people and made them perish out of the countries, so that there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, Jer 49:1, &c.

What can sound more terrible than that resolution (Eze 25:7), I will destroy thee? For the almighty God is able both to save and to destroy, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Both the threatenings here (Eze 25:5,7) conclude with this, You shall know that I am the Lord. For,

[1.] Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon.

[2.] Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God and be poor than be rich and ignorant of him.

3 and say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God;
Thus saith the Lord God; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my
sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel,
when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they
went into captivity;

4 behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a
possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their

dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk.

5 And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.

6 For thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast clapped *thine* hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;

7 behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord.

The Prophecy against Moab

8 Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah *is* like unto all the heathen;

Three more of Israel's ill-natured neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to and triumphing in Jerusalem's fall.

I The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomites, is joined with them (Eze 25:8), because they said the same as the Moabites; but they were afterwards reckoned with by themselves, Eze 25:12. Now observe,

1. What was the sin of the Moabites; they said, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen. They triumphed,

(1.) In the apostasies of Israel, were please to see them forsake their God and worship idols, and hoped that in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten and the house of Judah would be like all the heathen, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion walk unworthy of their profession they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink, and be run down, and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that, though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves like the heathen, yet there is a remnant that retain their

integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose itself among the heathen, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution.

(2.) In the calamities of Israel. They said, "The house of Judah is like all the heathen, in as bad a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this overflowing scourge of these parts of the world than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? Those that looked with so much scorn upon all the heathen are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them."

Note, Those who judge only by outward appearance are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges when they have lost their worldly prosperity, which does not follow, for good men, even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, have graces and comforts within sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the righteous and wicked, yet indeed it is vastly different.

2. What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin (Eze 25:9,10): "I will open the side of Moab, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it."

(1.) See here how it shall be exposed; the frontier-towns, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be the glory of the country, which they trusted in, and boasted of as impregnable; these shall decay, be deserted, or

betrayed, or fall into the enemies' hands, so that Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection than that of the divine power, providence, and promise, will sooner or later see cause to be ashamed of their glorying.

(2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed: The men of the east, when they come to take possession of the country of the Ammonites, shall seize that of the Moabites too. God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he gives to whomsoever he will. The Arabians, who are shepherds, and live quietly, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an overruling Providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that live turbulently.

The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arabians shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, They shall no more be remembered among the nations (Eze 25:10), for they had been accessory to the murder of Gedaliah, Jer 40:14. But of the Moabites it is said, I will execute judgments upon Moab; they shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that they shall know that I am the Lord, that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

9 therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from
his cities *which are* on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-
jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,
10 unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them
in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among
the nations.
11 And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that
I *am* the Lord.

The Prophecy against Edom

12 Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;

The Edomites, the posterity of Esau, between whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is,

1 The sin of the Edomites, Eze 25:12. They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced to do them some real mischiefs, probably made inroads upon their frontiers and plundered their country: Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance. The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder should serve the younger. In Jehoram's time they revolted. Amaziah severely chastised them (2Ki 14:7), and for this they took vengeance.

Now they would pay off all the old scores, and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, Rase it, rase it (Ps 137:7), but cut off those that escaped, as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, Eze 25:11,12, &c. It is called here revenging a revenge, which intimates that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. "Herein he has greatly offended."

Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, Vengeance is mine. We are forbidden to revenge or to bear a grudge. Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a base thing for the Edomites now, in revenge for it, to smite them secretly. But the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals; and it was the more

disingenuous for them to retain the old enmity when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it. De 23:7, Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite.

2 The judgments threatened against them for this sin. God will take them to task for it (Eze 25:13): I will stretch out my hand upon Edom Their country shall be desolate from Teman, which lay in the south part of it; and they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan, which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation.

(1.) They had taken vengeance, and therefore God will lay his vengeance upon them (Eze 25:14): They shall know my vengeance. Those that will not leave it to God to take vengeance for them may expect that he will take vengeance on them; and those that will not believe and fear his vengeance shall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they shall be dealt with according to God's anger and according to his fury, not according to the weakness of the instruments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them.

(2.) They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will lay his vengeance on them by the hand of his people Israel. They suffered much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, Jer 49:8. But besides that there were saviours to come upon Mount Zion, who should judge the mount of Esau (Ob 1:21), and Israel's Redeemer comes with dyed garments from Bozrah (Isa 63:1), this implies a promise that Israel should recover itself again to such a degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the insolence of its neighbours. And we find (1 Mac. v. 3) that Judas Maccabeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their spoil; and Josephus says (Antiq. 13.257), that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel.

Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed when he not only avenges injuries upon those that did them, but by those against whom they were done.

13 therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.

14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God.

The Prophecy against the Philistines

15 Thus saith the Lord God; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy *it* for the old hatred;

The Philistines. And,

1. Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites: They have dealt by revenge with the people of Israel, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, not to disturb them only, but to destroy them, for the old hatred (Eze 25:15), the old grudge they bore them, or (as the margin reads it) with perpetual hatred, a hatred that began long since and which they resolved to continue. The anger was implacable: they dealt by revenge, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart, was upon it.

2. Their punishment likewise is much the same, Eze 25:16. Those that were for destroying God's people shall themselves be cut off and destroyed; and (Eze 25:17) those that were for avenging themselves shall find that God will execute great vengeance upon them. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold, Jer 47:1-7. It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success

of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehension of their own danger; when their neighbour's house was on fire it was time to look to their own; but their impiety and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them that the cup was going round, and they were the less safe for being secure.

16 therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethim, and destroy the remnant of the seacoast.

17 And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Ezekiel-26

Prophecies against Tyrus

1 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and in the first day of the month, but it is not said what month, some think the month in which Jerusalem was taken, which was the fourth month, others the month after; or perhaps it was the first month, and so it was the first day of the year. Observe here,

I The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus said against Jerusalem (Eze 26:2): "Aha! she is broken, broken to pieces, that was the gates of the people, to whom there was a great resort and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon one account and some upon another, and I shall get by it; all the wealth, power, and interest, which Jerusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre, and so now that she is laid waste I shall be replenished."

We do not find that the Tyrians had such a hatred and enmity to Jerusalem and the sanctuary as the Ammonites and Edomites had, or were so spiteful and mischievous to the Jews. They were men of business, and of large acquaintance and free conversation, and therefore were not so bigoted, and of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls that lived retired and knew not the world. All their care was to get estates, and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy, but as a rival.

Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre promised herself that the fall of Jerusalem would be an advantage to her in respect of trade a commerce, that now she shall have Jerusalem's customers, and the great men from all parts that used to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of themselves, and to spend their estates there, will now come to Tyre and spend them there; and whereas many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable in those parts, had retired into Jerusalem, and brought their estates thither for safety, as the Rechabites did, now they will come to Tyre, which, being in a manner surrounded with the sea, will be thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem, and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem.

Note, To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others, when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that does most easily beset us, but is not thought to be such a bad thing, and so provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to say, when those who stand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break of fall into disgrace, "We shall be replenished now that they are laid waste."

But this comes from a selfish covetous principle, and a desire to be placed alone in the midst of the earth, as if we grudged that any should live by us. This comes from a want of that love to our neighbour as to ourselves which the law of God so expressly requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our

happiness which the love of God so expressly forbids. And it is just with God to blast the designs and projects of those who thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruins of others; and we see they are often disappointed.

II The displeasure of God against them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyrus. Tyrus was a pleasant and wealthy city, and might have continued so if she had, as she ought to have done, sympathized with Jerusalem in her calamities and sent her an address of condolence; but when, instead of that, she showed herself pleased with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps sent an address of congratulation to the conquerors, then God says, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus! Eze 26:3. And let her not expect to prosper long if God be against her.

1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her: Many nations shall come against thee, an army made up of many nations, or one nation that shall be as strong as many. Those that have God against them may expect all the creatures against them; for what peace can those have with whom God is at war? They shall come pouring in as the waves of the sea, one upon the neck of another, with an irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them--Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, that had many kings tributaries to him and dependents on him, besides those that were his captives, Da 2:37,38.

He is that head of gold. He shall come with a vast army, horses and chariots, &c., all land-forces. We do not find that he had any naval force, or any thing wherewith he might attack it by sea, which made the attempt the more difficult, as we find Eze 29:18, where it is called a great service which he served against Tyrus. He shall besiege it in form (Eze 26:8), make a fort, and cast a mount, and (Eze 26:9) shall set engines of war against the walls. His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a dust that shall cover the city, Eze 26:10. They shall make a noise that shall even shake the walls; and they shall shout at every attack, as soldiers do when they enter a city that is broken up; the horses shall prance with so much fury

and violence that they shall even tread down the streets though so ever well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution.

(1.) The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, shall destroy the walls and break down the towers, Eze 26:4. For what walls are so strongly built as to be a fence against the judgments of God? Her strong garrisons shall go down to the ground, Eze 26:11. And the walls shall be broken down, Eze 26:12. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last.

(2.) A great deal of blood shall be shed: Her daughters who are in the field, the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother-city, the inhabitants of them shall be slain by the sword, Eze 26:6. The invaders begin with those that come first in their way. And (Eze 26:11) he shall slay thy people with the sword; not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but the burghers, shall be put to the sword, the king of Babylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long.

(3.) The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror (Eze 26:12): They shall make a prey of the merchandise. It was in hope of the plunder that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of riches, that they are kept for the owners to their hurt; they entice and recompense thieves, and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them and were duly entitled to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who are thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief.

(4.) The city itself shall be laid in ruins. All the pleasant houses shall be destroyed (Eze 26:12), such as were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished, shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolation of them. Tyre shall be

utterly ruined; the enemy shall not only pull down the houses, but shall carry away the stones and the timber, and shall lay them in the midst of the water, not to be recovered, or ever made use of again.

Nay (Eze 26:4), I will scrape her dust from her; not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid in the midst of the water, Eze 26:12.

The foundation is in the dust; that dust shall be all taken away, and then the city must fall of course. When Jerusalem was destroyed it was ploughed like a field, Mic 3:12. But the destruction of Tyre is carried further than that; the very soil of it shall be scraped away, and it shall be made like the top of a rock (Eze 26:4,14), pure rock that has no earth to cover it; it shall only be a place for the spreading of nets (Eze 26:5,14); it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon and mend them.

(5.) There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy (Eze 26:13): I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease. Tyre had been a joyous city (Isa 23:7); with her songs she had courted customers to deal with her in a way of trade. But now farewell all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of business or of sport.

Lastly, It shall be built no more (Eze 26:14), not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence, nor built any more in the same place, within the sea, nor built any where for a long time; the present inhabitants shall be destroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be no more. For God has spoken it (Eze 26:5,14); and when what he has said is accomplished they shall know thereby that he is the Lord, and not a man that he should lie nor the son of man that he should repent.

2 Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken *that was* the gates of the people; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, *now* she is laid waste:

3 therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against thee, O
Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the
sea causeth his waves to come up.
4 And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her
towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the
top of a rock.
5 It shall be *a place for* the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for
I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord God: and it shall become a spoil to
the nations.
6 And her daughters which *are* in the field shall be slain by the
sword; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.
7 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus
Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north,
with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and
companies, and much people.
8 He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall
make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up
the buckler against thee.
9 And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes
he shall break down thy towers.
10 By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee:
thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels,
and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter
into a city wherein is made a breach.
11 With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he
shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go
down to the ground.
12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy
merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy
pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and
thy dust in the midst of the water.
13 And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of
thy harps shall be no more heard.
14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be *a place* to
spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the Lord have
spoken *it*, saith the Lord God.

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are exceedingly affecting.

1. See how high, how great, Tyre had been, how little likely ever to come to this. The remembrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great aggravation of their present disgrace and poverty. Tyre was a renowned city (Eze 26:17), famous among the nations, the crowning city (so she is called Isa 23:8), a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself and all about her. She was inhabited of seas, that is, of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the abundance of the seas and the treasures hidden in the sand. She was strong in the sea, easy of access to her friends, but to her enemies inaccessible, fortified by a wall of water, which made her impregnable.

So that she with her pomp, and her inhabitants with their pride, caused their terror to be on all that haunted that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Every body stood in awe of the Tyrians and was afraid of disobliging them.

Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an over-match for.

2. See how low, how little, Tyre is made, Eze 26:19,20. This renowned city is made a desolate city, is no more frequented as it has been; there is no more resort of merchants to it; it is like the cities not inhabited, which are no cities, and having none to keep them in repair, will go to decay of themselves. Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters, which cover it, and upon which the deep is brought up. As the waves had formerly been its defence, so now they shall be its destruction. She shall be brought down with those that descend into the pit, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with Sodom and Gomorrah, that lie in the bottom of the Dead Sea.

Or, she shall be in the condition of those who have been long buried, of the people of old time, who are old inhabitants of the silent grace, who are quite rotted away under ground and quite forgotten above ground; such shall Tyre be, free among the dead, set in the lower parts of the earth, humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be like the places desolate of old, as well as like persons dead of old; it shall be like other cities that have formerly been in like manner deserted and destroyed. It shall not be inhabited again; none shall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it upon that spot, so that it shall be no more; The Tyrians shall be lost among the nations, so that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre:

Thou shalt be sought for, and never found again. New persons may build a new city upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more.

Note, The strongest cities in this world, the best-fortified and best-furnished, are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island many cities are spoken of as in being when the Romans were here which now our antiquaries scarcely know where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence than Roman urns and coins digged up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in (Eze 26:15): There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee, many slain, and great men. It is probable that, when the city was taken, the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword. Then did the wounded cry, and they cried in vain, to the pitiless conquerors; they cried quarter, but it would not be given them; the wounded are slain without mercy, or, rather, that is the only mercy that is shown them, that the second blow shall rid them out of their pain.

4. See what a consternation all the neighbours are in upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expressed here, to show how astonishing it should be.

(1.) the islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall (Eze 26:15), as, when a great merchant breaks, all that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which they are afraid they shall lose. Or, when they see one fail and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus the isles, which thought themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyrus fall, shall tremble and be troubled, saying, "What will become of us?"

And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it; thus all the islands in the Mediterranean Sea shall feel themselves sensibly touched by the destruction of Tyre, it being a place they had so much knowledge of, such interests in, and such a constant correspondence with.

(2.) The princes of the sea shall be affected with it, who ruled in those islands. Or the rich merchants, who live like princes (Isa 23:8), and the masters of ships, who command like princes, these shall condole the fall of Tyre in a most compassionate and pathetic manner (Eze 26:16):

They shall come down from their thrones, as neglecting the business of their thrones and despising the pomp of them. They shall lay away their robes of state, their broidered garments, and shall clothe themselves all over with tremblings, with sackcloth that will make them shiver. Or they shall by their own act and deed make themselves to tremble upon this occasion; they shall sit upon the ground in shame and sorrow; they shall tremble every moment at the thought of what has happened to Tyre, and for fear

of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? They shall take up a lamentation for thee, shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, Eze 26:17. How art thou destroyed!

[1.] It shall be a great surprise to them, and they shall be affected with wonder, that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so famed for politics and so full of money, which is the sinews of war, that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last (Eze 26:21): I make thee a terror.

Note, It is just with God to make those a terror to their neighbours, by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment, who make themselves a terror to their neighbours by the abuse of their power. Tyre had caused her terror (Eze 26:17) and now is made a terrible example.

[2.] It shall be a great affliction to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow (Eze 26:17); they shall take up a lamentation for Tyre, as thinking it a thousand pities that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. When Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed, there were no such lamentations for it; it was nothing to those that passed by (La 1:12); but when Tyre, the trading city, fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men.

[3.] It shall be a loud alarm to them: They shall tremble in the day of thy fall, because they shall have reason to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall, who can stand? Howl, fir-trees, if such a cedar be shaken. Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. The death or decay of others in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain stands strongly and shall not be moved.

5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the prospect of the restoration of Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink when I shall set glory in the land of the living, Eze 26:20. Note,

(1.) The holy land is the land of the living; for none but holy souls are properly living souls. Where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there the land of the living is; there David hoped to see the goodness of the Lord, Ps 27:13. That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the land of the living.

(2.) Though this land of the living may for a time lie under disgrace, yet God will again set glory in it; the glory that had departed shall return, and the restoration of what they had been deprived of shall be so much more their glory. God will himself be the glory of the lands that are the lands of the living.

(3.) It will aggravate the misery of those that have their portion in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those, at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the land of the living. When the rich man was himself in torment he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the land of the living.

15 Thus saith the Lord God to Tyrus; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?

16 Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at *every* moment, and be astonished at thee.

17 And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, *that wast* inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror *to be* on all that haunt it!

18 Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that *are* in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.

19 For thus saith the Lord God; When I shall make thee a desolate
city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the
deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee;
20 when I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit,
with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of
the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the
pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of
the living;
21 I will make thee a terror, and thou *shalt be* no *more:* though thou be
sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord
God.

Ezekiel-27

1 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,
2 Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus;

Here, I The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, Eze 27:2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay; yet the prophet must lament it, because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even those that live at ease are to be lamented if they be not preparing for trouble. He must lament it because its ruin is hastening on apace; it is sure, it is near; and though the prophet foretel it, and justify God in it, yet he must lament it.

Note, We ought to mourn for the miseries of other nations, as well as for our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the honour we owe to all men to bewail their calamities, even those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

II. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of the Lord Jehovah, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, Eze 26:6.

1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride: O Tyrus! thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty (Eze 27:3), of universal beauty (so the word is), every way accomplished, and therefore every where admired. Zion, that had the beauty of holiness, is called indeed the perfection of beauty (Ps 50:2); that is the beauty of the Lord. But Tyre, because well-built and well-filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves on the pomp and pleasure they live in, to call themselves beauties for the sake of them, and, if in these they excel others, to think themselves perfect.

But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themselves in their prosperity when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often, for the humbling of the spirit, finds a way to bring down the estate. Let none reckon themselves beautified any further than they are sanctified, nor say that they are of perfect beauty till they come to heaven.

2. He must upbraid Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies it is usual to insert encomiums of those whose fall we lament; the prophet, accordingly, praises Tyre for all that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the distressed or using her interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who looks upon every one that is proud and abases him, hides the proud in the dust together, and binds their faces in secret, Job 40:12.

(1.) The city of Tyre was advantageously situated, at the entry of the sea (Eze 27:3), having many commodious harbours each way, not as cities seated on rivers, which the shipping can come but one way to. It stood at the east end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant parts; so that she

became a merchant of the people for many isles. Lying between Greece and Asia, it became the great emporium, or mart-town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts: They borders are in the heart of the seas, Eze 27:4.

It was surrounded with water, which was a great advantage to its trade; it was the darling of the sea, laid in its bosom, in its heart.

Note, It is a great convenience, upon many accounts, to live in an island: seas are the most ancient land-mark, not which our fathers have set, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other land-marks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily dwell alone, if they please, as not reckoned among the nations, and yet, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations has determined well for us.

(2.) It was curiously built, according as the fashion then was; and, being a city on a hill, it made a glorious show and tempted the ships that sailed by into her ports (Eze 27:4): They builders have perfected thy beauty; they have so improved in architecture that nothing appears in the buildings of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it wants that perfection of beauty into which the Lord does and will build up his Jerusalem.

(3.) It had its haven replenished with abundance of gallant ships, Isa 33:21. The ship-carpenters did their part, as well as the house-carpenters theirs. The Tyrians are thought to be the first that invented the art of navigation; at least they improved it, and brought it to as great a perfection perhaps as it could be without the loadstone.

[1.] They made the boards, or planks, for the hulk of the ship, of fir-trees fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon, So 4:8. Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak.

[2.] They had cedars from Lebanon, another mountain of Israel, for their masts, Eze 27:5.

[3.] They had oaks from Bashan (Isa 2:13), to make oars of; for it is probable that their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timber for shipping. Thus one country uses what another produced, and so they are serviceable one to another, and cannot say to each other, I have no need of thee.

[4.] Such magnificence did they affect in building their ships that they made the very benches of ivory, which they fetched from the isles of Chittim, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites or Assyrians to make them, so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be.

[5.] So very prodigal were they that they made their sails of fine linen fetched from Egypt, and that embroidered too, Eze 27:7. Or it may be meant of their flags (which they hoisted to notify what city they belonged to), which were very costly. The word signifies a banner as well as a sail.

[6.] They hung those rooms on ship-board with blue and purple, the richest cloths and richest colours they could get from the isles they traded with. For though Tyre was itself famous for purple, which is therefore called the Tyrian dye, yet they must have that which was far-fetched.

(4.) These gallant ships were well-manned, by men of great ingenuity and industry. The pilots and masters of the ships, that had command in their fleets, were of their own city, such as they could put a confidence in (Eze 27:8): Thy wise men, O Tyrus! that were in thee, were thy pilots. But, for common sailors, they had men from other countries; The inhabitants of Arvad and Zidon were thy mariners. These came from cities hear them;

Zidon was sister to Tyre, not two leagues off, to the northward; there they bred able seamen, which it is the interest of the maritime powers to support and give all the countenance they can to.

They sent to Gebal in Syria for calkers, or strengtheners of the clefts or chinks, to stop them when the ships come home, after long voyages, to be repaired. To do this they had the ancients and wise men (Eze 27:9); for there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what has gone to decay than to build anew. In public matters there is occasion for the ancients and wise men to be the repairers of the breaches and the restorers of paths to dwell in. Nay, all the countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, to put their youths apprentice in Tyre, or to put them on board their fleets; so that all the ships in the sea with their mariners were ready to occupy thy merchandise. Those that give good wages shall have hands at command.

(5.) Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, Eze 27:10,11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary that they should have a good army on foot, and therefore they took those of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service, though they had them from afar (which perhaps was their policy), from Persia, Lud, and Phut. These bore their arms when there was occasion, and in time of peace hung up the shield and buckler in the armoury, as it were to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at present no need of them, but they were ready to be taken down whenever there was occasion for them.

Their walls were guarded by the man of Arvad; their towers were garrisoned by the Gammadim, robust men, that had a great deal of strength in their arms; yet the vulgar Latin renders it pygmies, men no longer than one's arm. They hung their shields upon the walls in their magazines or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of the city, that none might dare to approach them,

seeing how well provided they were with all things necessary for their own defence. "Thus they set forth thy comeliness (Eze 27:10), and made they beauty perfect," Eze 27:11.

It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre that it had those of all the surrounding nations in its service, except the land of Israel (though it lay next them), which furnished them with timber, but we do not find that it furnished them with men; that would have trenched upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, 2Ch 2:17,18. It was also the glory of Tyre that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay, and such an armoury, like that in the tower of David, where hung the shields of mighty men, So 4:4.

It is observable that there and here the armouries are said to be furnished with shields and helmets, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive, though it is probable that there were such, to intimate that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection and not to invade and annoy their neighbours, to secure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

(6.) They had a vast trade and a correspondence with all parts of the known world. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity and some in another, according as either its products or its manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were, with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which supported all the rest. We do not find any where in scripture so many nations named together as are here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, Ge 10:1-32.

The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of. Concerning many of them their conjectures are different and they leave us in the dark and at much uncertainty; it is well that it is not material. Modern surveys come

short of explaining the ancient geography. And therefore we will not amuse ourselves here with a particular enquiry either concerning the traders or the goods they traded in. We leave it to the critical expositors, and observe that only which is improvable.

[1.] We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little, of his own knowledge, concerning the trade of Tyre. He was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose when he was young, and there he had been eleven years. And yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there, by which it appears that he was divinely inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that saith this, Eze 27:3.

[2.] This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us that God's eye is upon men, and that he takes cognizance of what they do when they are employed in their worldly business, not only when they are at church, praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling, which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings keep a conscience void of offence, and have our eye always upon him whose eye is always upon us.

[3.] We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness, as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity or to the comfort or ornament of human life. Non omis fert omnia tellus--One land does not supply all the varieties of produce. Providence dispenses its gifts variously, some to each, and all to none, that there may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has made of one blood, though they are made to dwell on all the face of the earth, Ac 17:27.

Let every nations therefore thank God for the productions of its country; though they be not so rich as those of others, yet there is use for them in the public service of the world.

[4.] See what a blessing trade and merchandise are to mankind, especially when followed in the fear of God, and with a regard not only to private advantage, but to a common benefit. The earth is full of God's riches, Ps 104:24. There is a multitude of all kinds of riches in it (as it is here, Eze 27:12), gathered off its surface and dug out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men's ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them.

Now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful; thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in, in lieu of it, from the most distant countries. Those that are not tradesmen themselves have reason to thank God for tradesmen and merchants, by whom the productions of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandmen.

[5.] Besides the necessaries that are here traded in, see what abundance of things are here mentioned that only serve to please fancy, and are made valuable only by men's humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them, and trade in them, and part with those things for them which we can spare that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them. Here are horns of ivory and ebony (Eze 27:15), that are brought for a present, exposed to sale, and offered in exchange, or (as some think) presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour.

Here are emeralds, coral, and agate (Eze 27:16), all precious stones, and gold (Eze 27:22), which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are, to please the taste and smell, the chief of all spices (Eze 27:22), cassia and calamus (Eze 27:19), and, for ornament, purple, broidered work, and fine linen (Eze 27:16), precious clothes for chariots (Eze 27:20), blue clothes (which Tyre was famous for), broidered work, and chests of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar, a sweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, Eze 27:24. Upon the

review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, What a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortably without!

[6.] It is observable that Judah and the land of Israel were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converse with the heathen. But they traded mostly in wheat, a substantial commodity, and necessary, wheat of Minnith and Pannag, two countries in Canaan famous for the best wheat, as some think. The whole land indeed was a land of wheat (De 8:8); it had the fat of kidneys of wheat, De 32:14.

Tyre was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel. They traded likewise in honey, and oil, and balm, or rosin; all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury. And the land which these were the staple commodities of was that which was the glory of all lands, which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in spices and precious stones; and the Israel of God must reckon themselves well provided for if they have food convenient; for those that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God will not set their hearts on the delights of the sons and daughters of men, or the treasures of kings and provinces. We find indeed that the New-Testament Babylon trades in such things as Tyre traded in, Re 18:12,13. For, notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.

[7.] Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place and exporting them to another, yet manufacture-trades were not neglected. The wares of their own making, and a multitude of such wares, are here spoken of, Eze 27:16,18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft-tradesmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad wares of their own making, which may bring them in the multitude of all riches.

[8.] All this made Tyrus very great and very proud: The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in they market (Eze 27:25); thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for thou wast replenished in wealth and number of people, wast beautified, and made very glorious, in the midst of the seas. Those that grow very rich are cried up as very glorious; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, Ge 31:1.

3 and say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, *which art* a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord God; O Tyrus, thou hast said, I *am* of perfect beauty.

4 Thy borders *are* in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty.

5 They have made all thy *ship* boards of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee.

6 *Of* the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches *of* ivory, *brought* out of the isles of Chittim.

7 Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee.

8 The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise *men,* O Tyrus, *that* were in thee, were thy pilots.

9 The ancients of Gebal and the wise *men* thereof were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.

10 They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness.

11 The men of Arvad with thine army *were* upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadim were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect.

12 Tarshish *was* thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all *kind of* riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.

13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they *were* thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

14 They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules.
15 The men of Dedan *were* thy merchants; many isles *were* the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee *for* a present, horns of ivory and ebony.
16 Syria *was* thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate.
17 Judah, and the land of Israel, they *were* thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.
18 Damascus *was* thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool.
19 Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market.
20 Dedan *was* thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.
21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these *were they* thy merchants.
22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they *were* thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold.
23 Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, *and* Chilmad, *were* thy merchants.
24 These *were* thy merchants in all sorts *of things,* in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise.
25 The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.
26 Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

We have seen Tyre flourishing; here we have Tyre falling, and great is the fall of it, so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, have their day to come down. They have their period; and, when they are in their zenith, they will begin to decline. But the destruction of

Tyre was sudden. Her sun went down at noon. And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here,

1. How the ruin of Tyrus will be brought about, Eze 27:26. She is as a great ship richly laden, that is split or sunk by the indiscretion of her steersmen: Thy rowers have themselves brought thee into great and dangerous waters; the governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some mismanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans which was the ruin of their state. By their insolence, by some affront given to the Chaldeans or some attempt made upon them, in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them, and, by their obstinacy in standing it out to the last, enraged him to such a degree that he determined on the ruin of their state, and, like an east wind, broke them in the midst of the seas.

Note, It is ill with a people when those that sit at the stern, instead of putting them into the harbour, run them aground.

2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, her riches, her fairs, and her merchandise (Eze 27:27); all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, shall ball with her into the midst of the seas, in the day of her ruin. Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them; happy therefore are those that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever.

3. What sad lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how wretchedly they have mismanaged and how much they have

contributed to their own ruin, shall cry out so loud as to make even the suburbs shake (Eze 27:28), such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own bad conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts (Eze 27:29), and they shall cry out against thee, as having deceived them, in not proving so well able to hold out as they thought thou hadst been; they shall cry bitterly for the common ruin, and their own share in it.

They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall cast dust on their heads, in indignation against themselves, shall wallow themselves in ashes, as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall make themselves bald (Eze 27:31), with tearing their hair; and, according to the custom of great mourners, those shall gird themselves with sackcloth who used to wear find linen, and, instead of merry songs, they shall weep with bitterness of heart. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous, and hard to be borne, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure and sleeping in carnal security.

4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity (Eze 27:32,33); she that was Tyrus the renowned shall now be called Tyrus the destroyed in the midst of the sea. "What city is like Tyre? Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity to such a depth of adversity?

Time was when thy wares, those of thy own making and those that passed through thy hands, went forth out of the seas, and were exported to all parts of the world; then thou filledst many people, and didst enrich the kings of the earth and their kingdoms." The Tyrians, though they bore such a sway in trade, were yet, it seems, fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live, but thrive by them. All that dealt with them were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with the multitude of their merchandise. "But now those that used to be enriched by thee shall be ruined with thee" (as is

usual in trade); "when thou shalt be broken, and all thou hast is seized on, all thy company shall fall too," Eze 27:34. There is an end of Tyre, that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a snuff.

5. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some and laughter to others, according as they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be sorely afraid, and shall be troubled (Eze 27:35), concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall hiss at her (Eze 27:36), shall ridicule her pride, and vanity, and bad management, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in hers. When God casts his judgments on the sinner men also shall clap their hands at him and shall hiss him out of his place, Job 27:22,23. Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?

27 Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that *are* in thee, and in all thy company which *is* in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.

28 The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots.

29 And all that handle the oar, the mariners, *and* all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land;

30 and shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes:

31 and they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart *and* bitter wailing.

32 And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, *saying*, What *city is* like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?

33 When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.

34 In the time *when* thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall.
35 All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in *their* countenance.
36 The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt be* any more.

Ezekiel-28

1 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said, I *am* a god, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou *art* a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

We had done with Tyrus in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyrus is to be singled out from the rest. Here is something to be said to him by himself, a message to him from God, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

I. He must tell him of his pride. His people are proud (Eze 27:3) and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that God resists the proud. Let us see, 1. What were the expressions of his pride: His heart was lifted up, Eze 28:2. He had a great conceit of himself, was puffed up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him. Out of the abundance of the pride of his heart he said, I am a god; he did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes, They are gods (Ps 82:6); but it does not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is God alone, and will not give his glory to another.

He thought that the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him as the world has upon the God that made it, and that he

was himself independent as God and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have as much wisdom and strength as God himself, and as incontestable an authority, and that his prerogatives were as absolute and his word as much a law as the word of God. He challenged divine honours, and expected to be praised and admired as a god, and doubted not to be deified, among other heroes, after his death as a great benefactor to the world.

Thus the king of Babylon said, I will be like the Most High (Isa 14:14), not like the Most Holy. "I am the strong God, and therefore will not be contradicted, because I cannot be controlled. I sit in the seat of God; I sit as high as God, my throne equal with his. Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet--Cæsar divides dominion with Jove.

I sit as safely as God, as safely in the heart of the seas, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the height of heaven." He thinks his guards of men of war about his throne as pompous and potent as the hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meanness and mortality, and, since he needs to be told, he shall be told, that self-evident truth, Thou art a man, and not God, a depending creature; thou art flesh, and not spirit, Isa 31:3.

Note, Men must be made to know that they are but men, Ps 9:20. The greatest wits, the greatest potentates, the greatest saints, are men, and not gods. Jesus Christ was both God and man. The king of Tyre, though he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, though he has tribute and presents brought to his court with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, though he is flattered by his courtiers and made a god of by his poets, yet, after all, he is but a man; he knows it; he fears it. But he sets his heart as the heart of God; "Thou hast conceited thyself to be a god, hast compared thyself with God, thinking thyself as wise and strong, and as fit to govern the world, as he."

It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be as gods, Ge 3:5. And still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves as their own masters, to do what they will, and their own carvers, to have what they will, their own end, to live to themselves, and their own felicity, to enjoy themselves, sets their hearts as the heart of God, invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown--a presumption that cannot go unpunished.

2. We are here told what it was that he was proud of.

(1.) His wisdom. It is probable that this prince of Tyre was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher, and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue, at least a politician, and one that had great dexterity in managing the affairs of state. And then he thought himself wiser than Daniel, Eze 28:3. We found, before, that Daniel, though now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevalency in prayer, Eze 14:14. Here we find he was famous for his prudence in the management of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and withal a great saint, and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so that he had become wise to a proverb. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be a god he says, I am wiser than Daniel.

There is no secret that they can hide from thee. Probably he challenged all about him to prove him with questions, as Solomon was proved, and he had unriddled all their enigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him. He had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the counsels of the neighbouring princes, and therefore thought himself omniscient, and that no thought could be withholden from him; therefore he said, I am a god.

Note, Knowledge puffeth up; it is hard to know much and not to know it too well and to be elevated with it. He that was wiser than

Daniel was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to be humble and to evidence that they are so.

(2.) His wealth. That way his wisdom led him; it is not said that by his wisdom he searched into the arcana either of nature or government, modelled the state better than it was, or made better laws, or advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning; but his wisdom and understanding were of use to him in traffic.

As some of the kings of Judah loved husbandry (2Ch 26:10), so the king of Tyre loved merchandise, and by it he got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasures with gold and silver, Eze 28:4,5. See what the wisdom of this world is; those are cried up as the wisest men that know how to get money and by right or wrong to raise estates; and yet really this their way is their folly, Ps 49:13. It was the folly of the king of Tyre,

[1.] That he attributed the increase of his wealth to himself and not to the providence of God, forgetting him who gave him power to get wealth, De 8:17,18.

[2.] That he thought himself a wise man because he was a rich man; whereas a fool may have an estate (Ec 2:19), yea, and a fool may get an estate, for the world has been often observed to favour such, when bread is not to the wise, Ec 9:11.

[3.] That his heart was lifted up because of his riches, because of the increase of his wealth, which made him so haughty and secure, so insolent and imperious, and which set his heart as the heart of God. The man of sin, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, showed himself as a god, 2Th 2:4. Those who are rich in this world have therefore need to charge that upon themselves which the word of God charges upon them, that they be not high-minded, 1Ti 6:17.

II. Since pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, he must bell him of that destruction, of that fall, which was now hastening on as the just punishment of his presumption in setting up himself a rival with God. "Because thou hast pretended to be a god (Eze 28:6), therefore thou shalt not be long a man," Eze 28:7. Observe here,

1 The instruments of his destruction: I will bring strangers upon thee--the Chaldeans, whom we do not find mentioned among the many nations and countries that traded with Tyre, Eze 27:1-36 If any of those nations had been brought against it, they would have had some compassion upon it, for old acquaintance-sake; but these strangers will have none. They are people of a strange language, which the king of Tyre himself, wise as he is, perhaps understands not. They are the terrible of the nations; it was an army made up of many nations, and it was at this time the most formidable both for strength and fury. These God has at command, and these he will bring upon the king of Tyre.

2 The extremity of the destruction: They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom (Eze 28:7), against all those things which thou gloriest in as thy beauty and the production of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that their prey which we have made our pride. The king of Tyre's palace, his treasury, his city, his navy, his army, these he glories in as his brightness, these, he thinks, made him illustrious and glorious as a god on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall defile, shall deface, shall deform. He thought them sacred, things that none durst touch; but the conquerors shall seize them as common things, and spoil the brightness of them. But, whatever becomes of what he has, surely his person is sacred. No (Eze 28:8): They shall bring thee down to the pit, to the grave; thou shalt die the death. And,

(1.) It shall not be an honourable death, but an ignominious one. He shall be so vilified in his death that he may despair of being deified after his death. He shall die the deaths of those that are slain

in the midst of the seas, that have no honour done them at their death, but their dead bodies are immediately thrown overboard, without any ceremony or mark of distinction, to be a feast for the fish. Tyre is likely to be destroyed in the midst of the sea (Eze 27:32) and the prince of Tyre shall fare no better than the people.

(2.) It shall not be a happy death, but a miserable one. He shall die the deaths of the uncircumcised (Eze 28:10), of those that are strangers to God and not in covenant with him, and therefore die under his wrath and curse. It is deaths, a double death, temporal and eternal, the death both of body and soul. He shall die the second death; that is dying miserably indeed. The sentence of death here passed upon the king of Tyre is ratified by a divine authority: I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. And what he has said he will do. None can gainsay it, nor will he unsay it.

3. The effectual disproof that this will be of all his pretensions to deity (Eze 28:9): "When the conqueror sets his sword to thy breast, and thou seest no way of escape, wilt thou then say, I am God? Wilt thou then have such a conceit of thyself as thou now hast? No; thy being overpowered by death, and by the fear of it, will force thee to own that thou art not a god, but a weak, timorous, trembling, dying man. In the hand of him that slays thee (in the hand of God, and of the instruments that he employed) thou shalt be a man, and not God, utterly unable to resist, and help thyself." I have said, You are gods; but you shall die like men, Ps 82:6,7.

Note, Those who pretend to be rivals with God shall be forced one way or other to let fall their claims. Death at furthest, when we come into his hand, will make us know that we are men.

3 behold, thou *art* wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can
hide from thee:
4 with thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten
thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:
5 by thy great wisdom *and* by thy traffic hast thou increased thy
riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:

6 therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast set thine
heart as the heart of God;
7 behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of
the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of
thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.
8 They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths
of *them that are* slain in the midst of the seas.
9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I *am* God? but thou
shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee.
10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of
strangers: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord God.
11 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say
unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of
wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

As after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre (Eze 26:1-21) followed a pathetic lamentation for it (Eze 27:1-36), so after the ruin of the king of Tyre is foretold it is bewailed.

I. This is commonly understood of the prince who then reigned over Tyre, spoken to, Eze 28:2. His name was Ethbaal, or Ithobalus, as Diodorus Siculus calls him that was king of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was, it seems, upon all external accounts an accomplished man, very great and famous; but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositors have suggested that besides the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of the angels that sinned, who undid themselves by their pride. And (as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning) some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his merchandises, others to the angels, as that of being in the holy mountain of God.

But, if there be any thing mystical in it (as perhaps there may), I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at, Eze 28:13. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God, and that in the day thou wast created.

II. Some think that by the king of Tyre is meant the whole royal family, this including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back as Hiram, king of Tyre. The then governor is called prince (Eze 28:2); but he that is here lamented is called king. The court of Tyre with its kings had for many ages been famous; but sin ruins it. Now we may observe two things here:--

1. What was the renown of the king of Tyre. He is here spoken of as having lived in great splendour, Eze 28:12-15. He as a man, but it is here owned that he was a very considerable man and one that made a mighty figure in his day.

(1.) He far exceeded other men. Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the reigning king perhaps had not come short of any of them: Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. But the powers of human nature and the prosperity of human life seemed in him to be at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as the reason of men could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world and the enjoyment of it could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore seal up the sum, for nothing can be added; he is a complete man, perfect in suo genere--in his kind.

(2.) He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocency (Eze 28:13): "Thou hast been in Eden, even in the garden of God; thou hast lived as it were in paradise all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of every thing that is good for food or pleasant to the eyes, and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had." One instance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre is, that he outdid all others princes in jewels, which those have the greatest plenty of that trade most abroad, as he did: Every precious stone was his covering.

There is a great variety of precious stones; but he had of every sort and in such plenty that besides what were treasured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes trimmed with them; they were his covering. Nay (Eze 28:14), he

walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, that is, these precious stones, which glittered and sparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner set round with jewels, so that he walked in the midst of them, and then fancied himself as glorious as if, like God, he had been surrounded by so many angels, who are compared to a flame of fire.

And, if he be such an admirer of precious stones as to think them as bright as angels, no wonder that he is such an admirer of himself as to think himself as great as God. Nine several sorts of previous stones are here named, which were all in the high priest's ephod. Perhaps they are particularly named because he, in his pride, used to speak particularly of them, and tell those about him, with a great deal of foolish pleasure, "This is such a precious stone, of such a value, and so and so are its virtues."

Thus is he upbraided with his vanity. Gold is mentioned last, as far inferior in value to those precious stones; and he used to speak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradise was the curious music he had, the tabrets and pipes, hand-instruments and wind-instruments. The workmanship of these was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpose; prepared in thee, the pronoun is feminine--in thee, O Tyre! or it denotes that the king was effeminate in doting on such things. They were prepared in the day he was created, that is, either born, or created king; they were made on purpose to celebrate the joys either of his birth-day or of his coronation-day. These he prided himself much in, and would have all that came to see his palace take notice of them.

(3.) He looked like an incarnate angel (Eze 28:14): Thou art the anointed cherub that covers or protects; that is, he looked upon himself as a guardian angel to his people, so bright, so strong, so faithful, appointed to this office and qualified for it. Anointed kings should be to their subjects as anointed cherubim, that cover them with the wings of their power; and, when they are such, God will own them. Their advancement was from him: I have set thee

so. Some think, because mention was made of Eden, that it refers to the cherub set on the east of Eden to cover it, Ge 3:24. He thought himself as able to guard his city from all invaders as that angel was for his charge. Or it may refer to the cherubim in the most holy place, whose wings covered the ark; he thought himself as bright as one of them.

(4.) He appeared in as much splendour as the high priest when he was clothed with his garments for glory and beauty: "Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God, as president of the temple built on that holy mountain; thou didst look as great, and with as much majesty and authority, as ever the high priest did when he walked in the temple, which was garnished with precious stones (2Ch 3:6), and had his habit on, which had precious stones both in the breast and on the shoulders; in that he seemed to walk in the midst of the stones of fire." Thus glorious is the king of Tyre; at least he thinks himself so.

2. Let us now see what was the ruin of the king of Tyre, what it was that stained his glory and laid all this honour in the dust (Eze 28:15): "Thou wast perfect in thy ways; thou didst prosper in all thy affairs and every thing went well with thee; thou hadst not only a clear, but a bright reputation, from the day thou wast created, the day of thy accession to the throne, till iniquity was found in thee; and that spoiled all." This may perhaps allude to the deplorable case of the angels that fell, and of our first parents, both of whom were perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them.

And when iniquity was once found in him it increased; he grew worse and worse, as appears (Eze 28:18): "Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries; thou hast lost the benefit of all that which thou thoughtest sacred, and in which, as in a sanctuary, thou thoughtest to take refuge; these thou hast defiled, and so exposed thyself by the multitude of thy iniquities." Now observe,

(1.) What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre.

[1.] The iniquity of his traffic (so it is called, Eze 28:18), both his and his people's, for their sin is charged upon him, because he connived at it and set them a bad example (Eze 28:16): By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thus thou hast sinned. The king had so much to do with his merchandise, and was so wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do justice, to give redress to those that suffered wrong and to protect them from violence; nay, in the multiplicity of business, wrong was done to many by oversight; and in his dealings he made use of his power to invade the rights of those he dealt with.

Note, Those that have much to do in the world are in great danger of doing much amiss; and it is hard to deal with many without violence to some. Trades are called mysteries; but too many make them mysteries of iniquity.

[2.] His pride and vain-glory (Eze 28:17): "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou wast in love with thyself, and thy own shadow. And thus thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of the brightness, the pomp and splendour, wherein thou livedst." He gazed so much upon this that it dazzled his eyes and prevented him from seeing his way. He appeared so puffed up with his greatness that it bereaved him both of his wisdom and of the reputation of it. He really became a fool in glorying. Those make a bad bargain for themselves that part with their wisdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and, to please a vain humour, lose a real excellency.

(2.) What the ruin was that this iniquity brought him to.

[1.] He was thrown out of his dignity and dislodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradise and temple (Eze 28:16): I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God. His kingly power was high as a mountain, setting him above others; it was a mountain of God, for the powers that be are ordained of God, and have something in them that is sacred; but, having abused his power, he is reckoned profane, and is therefore deposed and

expelled. He disgraces the crown he wears, and so has forfeited it, and shall be destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire, the precious stones with which his palace was garnished, as the temple was; and they shall be no protection to him.

[2.] He was exposed to contempt and disgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours: "I will cast thee to the ground (Eze 28:17), will cast thee among the pavement-stones, from the midst of the precious stones, and will lay thee a rueful spectacle before kings, that they may behold thee and take warning by thee not to be proud and oppressive."

[3.] He was quite consumed, his city and he in it: I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee. The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which shall lay it, and the palace particularly, in ashes. Or it may be taken more generally for the fire of God's judgments, which shall devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both to ashes upon the earth; and this fire shall be brought forth from the midst of thee. All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are devoured by a fire of their own kindling.

[4.] He was hereby made a terrible example of divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced in the sight of all those that behold him (Eze 28:18): Those that know him shall be astonished at him, and shall wonder how one that stood so high could be brought so low. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jerusalem, when it is destroyed shall be an astonishment and a hissing, 2Ch 7:20,21. So fell the king of Tyre.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone
was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl,
the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the
carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy
pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.
14 Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee *so:*
thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and
down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created,
till iniquity was found in thee.
16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of
thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee
as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O
covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.
17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted
thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the
ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.
18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities,
by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from
the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes
upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.
19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at
thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

The Prophecy against Zidon

20 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
21 Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it,
22 and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against thee, O
Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall
know that I *am* the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in
her, and shall be sanctified in her.

God's glory is his great end, both in all the good and in all the evil which proceed out of the mouth of the Most High; so we find in these verses. 1. God will be glorified in the destruction of Zidon, a city that lay near to Tyre, was more ancient, but not so considerable, had a dependence upon it and stood and fell with it. God says here, I am against thee, O Zidon! and I will be glorified in the midst of thee, Eze 28:22. And again, "Those that would not know be gentler methods shall be made to know that I am the Lord, and I alone, and that I am a just and jealous God, when I shall have executed judgments in her, destroying judgments, when I shall have done execution according to justice and according to the sentence passed, and so shall be sanctified in her."

The Zidonians, it should seem, were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were, who, being men of business and large conversation, were less under the power of bigotry and superstition. The Zidonians were noted for the worship of Ashtaroth; Solomon introduced it, 1Ki 11:5. Jezebel was daughter to the king of Zidon, who brought the worship of Baal into Israel (1Ki 16:31); so that God had been much dishonoured by the Zidonians. Now, says he, I will be glorified, I will be sanctified. The Zidonians were borderers upon the land of Israel, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him and have learned to glorify him; but, instead of that, they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols.

Note, When God is sanctified he is glorified, for his holiness is his glory; and those whom he is not sanctified and glorified by he will be sanctified and glorified upon, by executing judgments upon them, which declare him a just avenger of his own and his people's injured honour. The judgments that shall be executed upon Zidon are war and pestilence, two wasting depopulating judgments, Eze 28:23.

They are God's messengers, which he sends on his errands, and they shall accomplish that for which he sends them. Pestilence and blood shall be sent into her streets; there the dead bodies of those shall lie who perished, some by the plague, occasioned perhaps through ill diet when the city was besieged, and some by the sword of the enemy, most likely the Chaldean armies, when the city was taken, and all were put to the sword. Thus the wounded shall be judged; when they are dying of their wounds they shall judge themselves, and others shall say, They justly fall. Or, as some read it, They shall be punished by the sword, that sword which has commission to destroy on every side. It is God that judges, and he will overcome. Nor is it Tyre and Zidon only on which God would execute judgments, but on all those that despised his people Israel, and triumphed in their calamities; for

this was now God's controversy with the nations that were round about them, Eze 28:26.

Note, When God's people are under his correcting hand for their faults he takes care, as he did concerning malefactors that were scourged, that they shall not seem vile to those that are about them, and therefore takes it ill of those who despise them and so help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, Zec 1:15. God regards them even in their low estate; and therefore let not men despise them.

2. God will be glorified in the restoration of his people to their former safety and prosperity. God had been dishonoured by the sins of his people, and their sufferings too had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme (Isa 52:5); but God will now both cure them of their sins and ease them of their troubles, and so will be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, will recover the honour of his holiness, to the satisfaction of all the world, Eze 28:25. For,

(1.) They shall return to the possession of their own land again: I will gather the house of Israel out of their dispersions, in answer to that prayer (Ps 106:27), Save us, O Lord our God! and gather us from among the heathen; and in pursuance of that promise (De 30:4), Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee. Being gathered, they shall be brought in a body, to dwell in the land that I have given to my servant Jacob. God had an eye to the ancient grant, in bringing them back, for that remained in force, and the discontinuance of the possession was not a defeasance of the right. He that gave it will again give it.

(2.) They shall enjoy great tranquillity there. When those that have been vexatious to them are taken off they shall live in quietness; there shall be no more a pricking brier nor a grieving thorn, Eze 28:24. They shall have a happy settlement, for they shall build houses, and plant vineyards; and they shall enjoy a happy security and serenity there; they shall dwell safely, shall

dwell with confidence, and there shall be none to disquiet them or make them afraid, Eze 28:26.

This never had full accomplishment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity they were ever and anon molested by some bad neighbour or other. Nor has the gospel-church been ever quite free from pricking briers and grieving thorns; yet sometimes the church has rest, and believers always dwell safely under the divine protection and may be quiet from the fear of evil. But the full accomplishment of this promise is reserved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the saints shall be gathered together, and every thing that offends shall be removed, and all griefs and fears for ever banished.

23 For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

24 And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor *any* grieving thorn of all *that are* round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord God.

25 Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob.

26 And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord their God.

Ezekiel-29

Prophecies against Egypt

1 In the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, in the twelfth *day* of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

Here is, I The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the tenth year of the captivity, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, because, in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the reward of his service against Tyre; and therefore the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem and raise the siege (Jer 37:5), but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the failing of all our creature-confidences, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them, that we may cease from man.

II The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt, Eze 29:2 The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it began to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince, not long after this.

III. The prophecy itself. Pharaoh Hophrah (for so was the reigning Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a great dragon, or crocodile, that lies in the midst of his rivers, as Leviathan in the waters, to play therein, Eze 29:3. Nilus, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles. And what is the king of Egypt, in God's account, but a great dragon, venomous and mischievous? Therefore says God, I am against thee. I am above thee; so it may be read. How high soever the princes and potentates of the earth

are, there is a higher than they (Ec 5:8), a God above them, that can control them, and, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God against them, that will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1 The pride and security of Pharaoh. He lies in the midst of his rivers, rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures; and he says, My river is my own. He boasts that he is an absolute prince (his subjects are his vassals; Joseph bought them long ago, Ge 47:23),-- that he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in the government nor competitor for it,--that he is out of debt (what he has is his own, and none of his neighbours have any demands upon him),--that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in, their property, forgetting that whatever we have we have only the use of it, the property is in God. We ourselves are not our own, but his. Our tongues are not our own, Ps 12:4.

Our river is not our own, for its springs are in God. The most potent prince cannot call what he has his own, for, though it be so against all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd: My river is my own, for I have made it for myself. Here he usurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author and the end of his own being and felicity. He only that is the great Creator can say of this world, and of every thing in it, I have made it for myself. He calls his river his own because he looks not unto the Maker thereof, nor has respect unto him that fashioned it long ago, Isa 22:11.

What we have we have received from God and must use for God, so that we cannot say, We made it, much less, We made it for ourselves; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2 The course God will take with this proud man, to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, Eze 29:4,5.

(1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has a hook and a cord for this leviathan, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can (Job 41:1): "I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, will cast thee out of thy palace, out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency and placest such a confidence." Herodotus related of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for twenty-five years, and was so elevated with his successes that he said that God himself would not cast him out of his kingdom; but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy.

(2.) All his fish shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a dependence on him, as he thought, but really such as he had dependence upon. These shall stick to his scales, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But,

(3.) The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales, shall perish together, as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be meat to the beasts and fowls, Eze 29:5. Now this is supposed to have had its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh, in defence of Aricius king of Libya, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians, to re-establish his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces were put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left thrown into the wilderness, he and all the fish of the river with him. Thus issue men's pride, and presumption, and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they might call their own, under God, when they call it their own against him.

3. The ground of the controversy God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people. They encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them (Eze 29:6,7): Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. They pretended to be a staff for them to lean upon, but, when any stress was laid upon them, they were either weak and could not or treacherous and would not do that for them which was expected. They broke under them, to their great disappointment and amazement, so that they rent their shoulder and made all their loins to be at a stand. The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which, when he failed to do, to any purpose, it could not but put them into a great consternation. God had told them, long since, that the Egyptians were broken reeds, Isa 30:6. Rabshakeh had told them so, Isa 36:6.

And now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falsehood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is and will be the avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

2 Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt:

3 speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for myself.

4 But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

5 And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee and all the
fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt
not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat
to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven.
6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I *am* the Lord,
because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.
7 When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and
rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou
brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.
8 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring a sword
upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee.

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is a prophecy,

I. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them is their pride, Eze 29:9. They said, The river is mine and I have made it; therefore their land shall spue them out.

1. God is against them, both against the king and against the people, against thee and against thy rivers. Waters signify people and multitudes, Re 17:15.

2. Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them to destroy both man and beast, the sword of civil war.

3. The country shall be depopulated. The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste (Eze 29:9), the country not cultivated, the cities not inhabited. The wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It shall be utterly waste (wastes of waste, so the margin reads it), and desolate (Eze 29:10); neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited (Eze 29:11); it shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are so, Eze 29:12.

This was the effect not so much of those wars spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them. It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation.

4. The people shall be dispersed and scattered among the nations (Eze 29:12), so that those who thought the balance of power was in their hand should now become a contemptible people. Such a fall does a haughty spirit go before.

II. Of the restoration of Egypt after awhile, Eze 29:13. Egypt shall lie desolate forty years (Eze 29:12) and then I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, Eze 29:14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however, they end about the first year of Cyrus, when the seventy years' captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished,

1. That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to return to the land of their habitation, and give them a settlement there again, Eze 29:14. Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not contend for ever, no, not with them in this world.

2. That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a kingdom again, but it shall be the basest of the kingdoms (Eze 29:15); it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; it shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but, to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall be a long time before it recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified:--

(1.) That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not exalt itself above the nations, nor rule over the nations, as it has

done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own, but of other nations.

(2.) That it may not deceive the people of God (Eze 29:16): It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel; they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it as they have done, which is a sin that brings their iniquity to remembrance, that is, provokes God to punish them not for that only, but for all their other sins. Or it puts them in mind of their idolatries to return to them, when they look to the idolaters, to repose a confidence in them.

Note, The creatures we confide in are often therefore ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensnared again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once gave Egypt for their ransom (Isa 43:3) will now give Egypt for their cure; and it shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall not in this particular be reformed. God, not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, breaks those creature-stays which we lean too much upon, and makes them to be no more, that they may be no more our confidence.

9 And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall
know that I *am* the Lord.
Because he hath said, The river *is* mine, and I have made *it*,
10 behold, therefore I *am* against thee, and against thy rivers, and I
will make the land of Egypt utterly waste *and* desolate, from the
tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.
11 No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass
through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.
12 And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the
countries *that are* desolate, and her cities among the cities *that are*
laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the
Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the
countries.
13 Yet thus saith the Lord God; At the end of forty years will I

gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered:
14 and I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to
return *into* the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation;
and they shall be there a base kingdom.
15 It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself
any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they
shall no more rule over the nations.
16 And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which
bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after
them: but they shall know that I *am* the Lord God.
17 And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first
month, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the Lord came
unto me, saying,

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquest of the Ammonites and Moabites and making himself master of their countries.

Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre. During all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyrenians and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished; and just at the end of the siege of Tyre God delivers this prophecy to Ezekiel, to signify to him that that utter destruction of Egypt which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the Eze 30:20 of the next chapter.

And Dr. Lightfoot observes that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is laid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophrah, foretold in the

former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold Jer 44:30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold Jer 43:10. Observe,

I. What success God would give to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him that land, that he might take the spoil and prey of it, Eze 29:19,20. It was a cheap and easy prey. He subdued it with very little difficulty; the blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it were inconsiderable. But it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Their having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. En! quo discordia cives perduxit miseros--What wretchedness does civil discord bring! Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar should array himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd puts on his coat, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

II. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a recompence to him for the hard service with which he had caused his army to serve against Tyre, Eze 29:18,20.

1 The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work; it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure. It held out thirteen years; all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it, to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was filled up with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this as! In prosecuting this siege every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled, with carrying burdens and labouring in the water when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with.

Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is with difficulty subdued. Those that have much to do in the world find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But,

2. In this service God own that they wrought for him, Eze 29:20. He set them at work, for the humbling of a proud city and its king, though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for him even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God overrule all to his own glory. Yet,

3. For this service he had no wages nor his army. He was at a vast expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed; the Tyrians sent away by ship their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations from it. Therefore,

4. He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. Note, God will be behind-hand with none for any service they do for him, but, one way or other, will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nought. The service done for him by worldly men, with worldly designs, shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants, that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it paying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them. Verily they have their reward. Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's full reward, for that completed his dominion over the then known world in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he was master of that he became the head of gold.

III. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadnezzar was in the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he ran mad (Da 4:28-37), was so seven years, and within a year or two after he had recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was at the highest Israel was at the lowest; then were they in the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but in that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth, Eze 29:21. The day of their deliverance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage, in the honour that shall be done,

1. To their princes; they are the horns of the house of Israel, the seat of their glory and power. These began to bud forth when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon; Daniel sat in the gate of the city; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were set over the affairs of the province (Da 2:49); these were all of the king's seed, and of the princes, Da 1:3.

And it was within a year after the conquest of Egypt that they were thus preferred; and, soon after, three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the budding forth of the horn of the house of Israel. And, some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin king of Judah, Jer 52:31,32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy omens.

2. To their prophets. And I will give thee the opening of the mouth. Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies, after this, are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness, when Daniel and his fellows were in power, and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonians, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlarges the liberties of

his ministers and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.

18 Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

19 therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

20 I have given him the land of Egypt *for* his labor wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.

21 In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-30

1 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Howl ye, Woe worth the day!

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as, in the general, very frightful. What can protect a provoking people when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

I. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow (Eze 30:2,3): "Howl you; you may justly shriek now that it is coming, for you will be made to shriek and make hideous outcries when it comes. Cry out, Woe worth the day! or, Ah the day! alas because of the day! the terrible day! Woe and alas! For the day is near; the day we have so long dreaded, so long deserved. It is the day of the Lord, the day in which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance. You have your day now, when you carry all before you, and trample on all about you, but God will have his day shortly, the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment," Ps 37:13.

It will be a cloudy day, that is, dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm--fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, of reckoning with the heathen for all their heathenish practices, that time which David spoke of when God would pour out his fury upon the heathen (Ps 79:6), when they should sink, Ps 9:15.

II. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her and in her neighbourhood.

1. Egypt herself shall fall (Eze 30:4): The sword shall come upon Egypt, the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? They shall take away her multitude. Is it strong, and well-fixed? Her foundations shall be broken down, and then the fabric, though built ever so fine, ever so high, will fall of course.

2. Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her. When the slain fall so thickly in Egypt great pain shall be in Ethiopia, both that in Africa, which is in the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side. When their neighbour's house was on fire they could not but apprehend their own in danger; nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all fall with them by the sword, Eze 30:5.

Ethiopia and Libya (Cush and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham who are mentioned, and Mizraim, that is, Egypt, between them, Ge 10:6), and the Lydians (who were famous archers, and are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, Jer 46:9), these shall fall with Egypt and Chub (the Chaldeans, the inhabitants of the inner Libya); these and others were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries who upon some account or other resided in Egypt, as did also the men of the land that is in league, some of the remains of the people of Israel

and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called (Ac 3:25), the children of the promise, Ga 4:28. These sojourned in Egypt contrary to God's command, and these shall fall with them.

Note, Those that will take their lot with God's enemies shall have their lot with them, yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

III. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt shall come down under her, shall come down with her (Eze 30:6): Those that uphold Egypt shall fall, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; and now those that pretended to uphold Egypt shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin; they are themselves deceived.

1. Does Egypt think herself upheld by the absolute authority and dominion of her king? The pride of her power shall come down, Eze 30:6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken, and humbled.

2. Is the multitude of her people her support? These shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene, which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall enter. Both the countries and the cities, the husbandmen and the merchants, shall be desolate, Eze 30:7, as before, Eze 29:12. Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, Eze 30:10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, Eze 30:11.

3. Is the river Nile her support, and are the several channels of it a defence to her? "I will make the rivers dry (Eze 30:12), so that those natural fortifications which were thought impregnable, because impassable, shall stand them in no stead."

4. Are her idols a support to her? They shall be destroyed; those imaginary upholders shall appear more than ever to be imaginary, for so images are when they pretend to be deliverers and strongholds (Eze 30:13): I will cause their images to cease out of Noph.

5. Is her royal family her support? There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt; the royal family shall be extirpated and extinguished, which had continued so long.

6. Is her courage her support, and does she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men of war, who have now of late been inured to service? That shall fail: I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.

7. Is the rising generation her support? is she upheld by her children, and does she think herself happy because she has her quiver full of them? Alas! the young men shall fall by the sword (Eze 30:17) and the daughters shall go into captivity (Eze 30:18), and so she shall be robbed of all her hopes.

IV. God shall inflict these desolating judgments on Egypt (Eze 30:8): They shall know that I am the Lord, and greater than all gods, than all their gods, when I have set a fire in Egypt. The fire that consumes nations is of God's kindling; and, when he sets fire to a people, all their helpers shall be destroyed. Those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before him when he is angry? When he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it (Eze 30:15,16), neither its strength nor its multitude can stand it in any stead.

V. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction: The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease and be quite cut off by the hand of the king of Babylon, Eze 30:10. Those that undertook to protect Israel from

the king of Babylon shall not be able to protect themselves. It is said of the Chaldeans, who should destroy Egypt,

1. That they are strangers (Eze 30:12), who therefore shall show no compassion for old acquaintance-sake, but shall behave strangely towards them.

2. That they are the terrible of the nations (Eze 30:11), both in respect of force and in respect of fierceness; and, being terrible, they shall make terrible work.

3. That they are the wicked, who will not be restrained by reason and conscience, the laws of nature or the laws of nations, for they are without law: I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked. They do violence unjustly, as they are wicked; yet, so far as they are instruments in God's hand of executing his judgments, it is on his part justly done. Note, God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another; and even wicked men acquire a title to prey, jure belli--by the laws of war, for God sells it into their hands.

VI. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest: The sword shall go through the land. Various places are here named: Pathros, Zoan, and No (Eze 30:14), Sin and Noph (Eze 30:15,16), Aven and Pi-beseth (Eze 30:17), and Tehaphnehes, Eze 30:18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God's judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily. Their day shall be darkened; their honours, comforts, and hopes, shall be extinguished. Their yokes shall be broken, so that they shall no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done. The pomp of their strength shall cease, and a cloud shall cover them, a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen, or shine further.

And, lastly, the Ethiopians, who are at a distance from them, as well as those who are mingled with them, shall share in their pain and terror. God will by his providence spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopians shall be made afraid, Eze 30:9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure; fearfulness shall, when he pleases, surprise the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves,

1 The land of Egypt mortified: Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt, Eze 30:19. The destruction of Egypt is the executing of judgments, which intimates not only that it is done justly, for its sins, but that it is done regularly and legally, by a judicial sentence. All the executions God does are according to his judgments.

2 The God of Israel herein glorified: They shall know that I am the Lord. The Egyptians shall be made to know it and the people of God shall be made to know it better. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executes.

3 For the day *is* near, even the day of the Lord *is* near, a cloudy day;
it shall be the time of the heathen.
4 And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in
Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take
away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down.
5 Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and
Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them
by the sword.
6 Thus saith the Lord; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and
the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene
shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God.
7 And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries *that are*
desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities *that are*
wasted.
8 And they shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have set a fire in
Egypt, and *when* all her helpers shall be destroyed.

9 In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make
the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon
them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh.
10 Thus saith the Lord God; I will also make the multitude of Egypt to
cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.
11 He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be
brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords
against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain.
12 And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of
the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein,
by the hand of strangers: I the Lord have spoken *it*.
13 Thus saith the Lord God; I will also destroy the idols, and I will
cause *their* images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more
a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of
Egypt.
14 And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will
execute judgments in No.
15 And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will
cut off the multitude of No.
16 And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall
be rent asunder, and Noph *shall have* distresses daily.
17 The young men of Aven and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword:
and these *cities* shall go into captivity.
18 At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break
there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease
in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go
into captivity.
19 Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I
am the Lord.
20 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *month*, in the
seventh *day* of the month, *that* the word of the Lord came unto
me, saying,

This short prophecy of the weakening of the power of Egypt was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians, which attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem, was frustrated in its enterprises, and returned re infectâ--without accomplishing their

purpose; whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege and carried his point.

The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been for many ages considerable. That of Babylon had but lately arrived at its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria. Now it is with them as it is with families and states, some are growing up, others are declining and going back; one must increase and the others must of course decrease.

I. It is here foretold that the king of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of his territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to help either himself or his friend.

1. This was in part done already (Eze 30:21): I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned broken when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish (Jer 46:2), and made himself master of all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates, 2Ki 24:7. Egypt had been long in gathering strength and extending its dominions, and therefore, that there may be a proportion observed in providence, it loses its strength slowly and by degrees. It was soon after the king of Egypt slew good king Josiah, and in the same reign, that its arm was thus broken, and it received that fatal blow which it never recovered. Before Egypt's heart and neck were broken its arm was.

God's judgments come upon a people by steps, that they may meet him repenting. When the arm of Egypt is broken it shall not be bound up to be healed, for none can heal the wounds that God gives but he himself. Those whom he disarms, whom he disables, cannot again hold the sword.

2. This was to be done again. One arm was broken before, and something was done towards the setting of it, towards the healing of the deadly wound that was given to the beast. But now (Eze

30:22), I am against Pharaoh, and will break both his arms, both the strong and that which was broken and set again.

Note, If less judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. Now God will cause the sword to fall out of his hand, which he caught hold of as thinking himself strong enough to hold it. It is repeated (Eze 30:24), I will break Pharaoh's arms. He had been a cruel oppressor to the people of God formerly, and of late the staff of a broken rod to them; and now God by breaking his arms reckons with him for both. God justly breaks that power which is abused either to put wrongs upon people or to put cheats upon them. But this is not all;

(1.) The king of Egypt shall be dispirited when he finds himself in danger of the king of Babylon's forces: he shall groan before him with the groaning of a deadly wounded man. Note, It is common for those that are most elated in their prosperity to be most dejected and disheartened in their adversity. Pharaoh, even before the sword touches him, shall groan as if he had received his death's wound.

(2.) The people of Egypt shall be dispersed (Eze 30:23,26): I will scatter them among the nations. Other nations had mingled with them (Eze 30:5); now they shall be mingled with other nations, and seek shelter in them, and so be made to know that the Lord is righteous.

II. It is here foretold that the king of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, Eze 30:24,25. Put strength into the king of Babylon's arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. 2. That he will put a sword, his sword, into the king of Babylon's hand, which signified his giving him a commission and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war, particularly against Egypt. Note, As judges on the bench, like Pilate (Joh 19:11), so generals in the field, like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

21 Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword.
22 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand.
23 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.
24 And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded *man*.
25 But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.
26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-31

1 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third *month*, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before. When God's people were in the depth of their distress, it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours, that insulted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling, that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people and put into the hands of those that hated them, Isa 51:22,23. In this prophecy,

I The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own (Eze 31:2): Speak to Pharaoh and to his multitude, to the multitude of his attendants, that

contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength. These he was proud of, these he put a confidence in; and they were as proud of him and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, Whom art thou like in thy greatness? We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison. Those that think highly of themselves fancy themselves as great and as good as such and such, that have been mightily celebrated.

The flatterers of princes tell them whom they equal in pomp and grandeur. "Well," says God, "let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is like him in greatness and no way inferior to him; but, let him pitch upon whom he will, he will find that his day came to fall; he will see there was an end of all his perfection, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner." Note, The falls of others, both into sin and ruin, are intended as admonitions to us not to be secure or high-minded, nor to think we stand out of danger.

II. He is directed to show him an instance of one whom he resembles in greatness, and that was the Assyrian (Eze 31:3), whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod. Sennacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy; but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ruins, or rather grafted upon its stock. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, Eze 31:3. The glory of the house of David is illustrated by the same similitude, Eze 17:3. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, had refused to be promoted over the trees because they would not leave their fruitfulness (Jdg 9:8, &c.), and therefore the choice falls upon the cedar, that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1 The Assyrian monarch was a tall cedar, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a high stature, and his top among the thick boughs; he was attended by other princes that were

tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave men. He surpassed all the princes in his neighbourhood; they were all shrubs to him (Eze 31:5): His height was exalted above all the trees of the field; they were many of them very high, but he overtopped them all, Eze 31:8. The cedars, even those in the garden of Eden, which we may suppose were the best of the kind, would not hide him, but his top branches outshot theirs.

2. He was a spreading cedar; his branches did not only run up in height, but run out in breadth, denoting that this mighty prince was not only exalted to great dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth, but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far and his influences much further. This cedar, like a vine, sent forth his branches to the sea, to the river, Ps 80:11. His boughs were multiplied; his branches became long (Eze 31:5); so that he had a shadowing shroud, Eze 31:3. This contributed very much to his beauty, that he grew proportionably large as well as high. He was fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches (Eze 31:7), very comely as well as very stately, fair by the multitude of his branches, Eze 31:9.

His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order by the skill of the gardener, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as amiable in the eyes of wise men as it was admirable in the eyes of all men. The fir-trees were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular; nor were the branches of the chestnut-trees like his branches, so thick, so spreading. In short, no tree in the garden of God, in Eden, in Babylon (for that stood where paradise was planted), where there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight (Ge 2:9), was like to this cedar in beauty; that is, in all the surrounding nations there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and whom every body was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them did virtuously, but he excelled them all, outshone them all. All the trees of Eden envied him, Eze 31:9.

When they found they could not compare with him they were angry and grieved that he so far outdid them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those who in any thing excel others that thereby they make themselves the objects of envy; and who can stand before envy?

3. He was serviceable, as far as a standing growing cedar could be, and that was only by his shadow (Eze 31:6): All the fowls of heaven, some of all sorts, made their nests in his boughs, where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The beasts of the field put themselves under the protection of his branches. There they were levant--rising up, and couchant--lying down; there they brought forth their young; for they had there a natural covert from the heat and from the storm. The meaning of all is, Under his shadow dwelt all great nations; they all fled to him for safety, and were willing to swear allegiance to him if he would undertake to protect them, as travellers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter.

Note, Those who have power ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over; for to that end they are entrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come and trust in his shadow, Jdg 9:15. But the utmost security that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself, can give, is but like the shadow of a tree, which is but a scanty and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed. Let us therefore flee to God for protection, and he will take us under the shadow of his wings, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and stateliest cedar, Ps 17:8,91:4.

4. He seemed to be settled and established in his greatness and power. For,

(1.) It was God that made him fair, Eze 31:9. For by him kings reign. He was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him.

Note, God's hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth, and therefore we must not envy them; yet that will not secure the continuance of their prosperity, for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn it into deformity.

(2.) He seemed to have a good bottom. This cedar was not like the heath in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places (Jer 17:6); it was not a root in a dry ground, Isa 53:2. No; he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur (Eze 31:4): The waters made him great; he had vast treasures, large stores and magazines, which were as the deep that set him up on high, constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs, and crown-rents, which were as rivers running round about his plants; these enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests every where, for he sent out his little rivers, or conduits, to all the trees of the field, to water them; and when they had maintenance from the king's palace (Ezr 4:14), and their country was nourished by the king's country (Ac 12:20), they would be serviceable and faithful to him.

Those that have wealth flowing upon them in great rivers find themselves obliged to send it out again in little rivers; for, as goods are increased, those are increased that eat them, and the more men have the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long, because of the multitude of waters which fed them (Eze 31:5,7); his root was by great waters, which seemed to secure it that its leaf should never wither (Ps 1:3), that it should not see when heat came, Jer 17:8.

Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, Job 5:3,Ps 37:35.

2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?

3 Behold, the Assyrian *was* a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches,
and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature; and his top
was among the thick boughs.
4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her
rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers
unto all the trees of the field.
5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and
his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because
of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth.
6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under
his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young,
and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.
7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for
his root was by great waters.
8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees
were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his
branches; not any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in
his beauty.
9 I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches; so that all
the trees of Eden, that *were* in the garden of God, envied him.
10 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast lifted up
thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick
boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height;

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Assyria in pomp, and power, and prosperity, how like he was to him in his greatness; now here we see,

I. How he does likewise resemble him in his pride, Eze 31:10. For, as face answers to face in a glass, so does one corrupt carnal heart to another; and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcome are fatal to many others too. "Thou, O king of Egypt! hast lifted up thyself in height, hast been proud of thy wealth and power, Eze 29:3. And just so he (that is, the king of Assyria); when he had shot up his top among the thick boughs his heart was immediately lifted up in his height, and he grew insolent and imperious, set God himself at defiance, and trampled upon his

people;" witness the messages and letter which the great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, Isa 36:4.

How haughtily does he speak of himself and his own achievements! how scornfully of that great and good man! There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particularly that of oppressing God's people, which is charged upon them both together (Isa 52:4); but here that sin is traced up to its cause, and that was pride; for it is the contempt of the proud that they are filled with. Note, When men's outward condition rises their minds commonly rise with it; and it is very rare to find a humble spirit in the midst of great advancements.

II. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall; and for the opening of this part of the comparison,

1. Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, says God (Eze 31:11), I have therefore, because he was thus lifted up, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen. Cyaxares, king of the Medes, in the twenty-sixth year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in the first year of his reign, destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became, very emphatically, the mighty one of the heathen, most mighty among them and most mighty over them, to prevail against them.

(1.) Respecting the fall of the Assyrian three things are affirmed:--

[1.] It is God himself that orders his ruin: I have delivered him into the hand of the executioner; I have driven him out. Note, God is the Judge, who puts down one and sets up another (Ps 75:7); and when he pleases he can extirpate and expel those who think themselves, and seem to others, to have taken deepest root. And the mightiest ones of the heathens could not gain their point against

those they contended with if the Almighty did not himself deliver them into their hands.

[2.] It is his own sin that procures his ruin: I have driven him out for his wickedness. None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is for their wickedness. None of our comforts are ever lost but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness.

[3.] It is a mighty one of the heathen that shall be the instrument of his ruin; for God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. He shall surely deal with him, shall know how to manage him, great as he is. Note, Proud imperious men will, sooner or later, meet with their match.

(2.) In this history of the fall of the Assyrian observe,

[1.] A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far; but his day comes to fall.

First, This stately cedar was cropped: The terrible of the nations cut him off. Soldiers, who being both armed and commissioned to kill, and slay, and destroy, may well be reckoned among the terrible of the nations. They have lopped off his branches first, have seized upon some parts of his dominion and forced them out of his hands; so that in all mountains and valleys of the nations about, in the high-lands and low-lands, and by all the rivers, there were cities or countries that were broken off from the Assyrian monarchy, that had been subject to it, but had either revolted or were recovered from it. Its feathers were borrowed; and, when every bird had fetched back its own, it was naked like the stump of a tree. Secondly, It was deserted:

All the people of the earth, that had fled to him for shelter, have gone down from his shadow and have left him. When he was disabled to give them protection they thought they no longer owed

him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them and have a dependence upon them; it is only for what they can get. When Providence frowns upon them their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them.

Thirdly, It was insulted over, and its fall triumphed in (Eze 31:13): Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar. Its fall is triumphed in by the other trees, who were angry to see themselves overtopped so much:

All the trees of Eden, that were cut down and had fallen before him, all that drank water of the rain of heaven, as the stump of the tree that is left in the south is said to be wet with the dew of heaven (Da 4:23) and to bud through the scent of water (Job 14:9), shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves. Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris--To have companions in woe is a solace to those who suffer. But, on the contrary, the trees of Lebanon, that are yet standing in their height and strength, mourned for him, and the trees of the field fainted for him, because they could not but read their own destiny in his fall. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedar be shaken, for they cannot expect to stand long, Zec 11:2.

[2.] An explanation of the similitude of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch and all his adherents and supporters; they are all delivered to death, to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the axe. He and his princes, who, he said, were altogether kings, go down to the grace, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, as common persons of no quality or distinction. They died like men (Ps 82:7); they were carried away with those that go down to the pit, and their pomp did neither protect them nor descend after them. Again (Eze 31:16), He was cast down to hell with those that descend into the pit; he went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are, in obscurity and oblivion.

Again (Eze 31:17), They all that were his arm, on whom he stayed, by whom he acted and exerted his power, all that dwelt under his shadow, his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grace with him, unto those that were slain with the sword, to those that were cut off by untimely deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame. When great men fall a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

[3.] What God designed, and aimed at, in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, First, To give an alarm to the nations about, to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a gaze (Eze 31:16): I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall. They were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus. It give a shock to all their confidences, every one thinking his turn would be next. When he went down to the grace (Eze 31:15) I caused a mourning, a general lamentation, as the whole kingdom goes into mourning at the death of the king. In token of this general grief, I covered the deep for him, put that into black, gave a stop to business, in complaisance to this universal mourning. I restrained the floods, and the great waters were stayed, that they might run into another channel, that of lamentation. Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him; as the allies of Babylon, Re 18:9.

Secondly, To give an admonition to the nations about, and to their kings (Eze 31:14): To the end that none of all the trees by the waters, though ever so advantageously situated, may exalt themselves for their height, may be proud and conceited of themselves and shoot up their top among the thick boughs, looking disdainfully upon others, nor stand upon themselves for their height, confiding in their own politics and powers, as if they could never be brought down. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm, as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his confidence failed him.

Note, The fall of proud presumptuous men is intended for warning to others to keep humble. It would have been well for Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself active in bringing down the Assyrian, if he had taken the admonition.

2. Here is a prophecy of the fall of the king of Egypt in like manner, Eze 31:18. He thought himself like the Assyrian in glory and greatness, over-topping all the trees of Eden, as the cypress does the shrubs. "But thou also shalt be brought down, with the other trees that are pleasant to the sight, as those in Eden. Thou shalt be brought to the grave, to the nether or lower parts of the earth; thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, that die in their uncleanness, die ingloriously, die under a curse and at a distance from God; then shall those whom thou hast trampled upon triumph over thee, saying, This is Pharaoh and all his multitude.

See how mean he looks, how low he lies; see what all his pomp and pride have come to; here is all that is left of him." Note, Great men and great multitudes, with the great figure and great noise they make in the world, when God comes to contend with them, will soon become little, less than nothing, such as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

11 I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness.

12 And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.

13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches:

14 to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of

the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

15 Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

17 They also went down into hell with him, unto *them that be* slain with the sword; and *they that were* his arm, *that* dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.

18 To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that be* slain by the sword.
This *is* Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-32

1 And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou *art* as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers.

Here, I The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, Eze 32:2. It concerns ministers to be much of a serious spirit, and, in order thereunto, to be frequent in taking up lamentations for the fall and ruin of sinners, as those that have not desired, but dreaded, the woeful day.

Note, Ministers that would affect others with the things of God must make it appear that they are themselves affected with the miseries which sinners bring upon themselves by their sins. It becomes us to weep and tremble for those that will not weep and tremble for themselves, to try if thereby we may set them a weeping, set them a trembling.

II. He is ordered to show cause for that lamentation.

1. Pharaoh has been a troubler of the nations, even of his own nation, which he should have procured the repose of: He is like a young lion of the nations (Eze 32:2), loud and noisy, hectoring and threatening as a lion when he roars. Great potentates, if they by tyrannical and oppressive, are in God's account no better than beasts of prey. He is like a whale, or dragon, like a crocodile (so some) in the seas, very turbulent and vexatious, as the leviathan that makes the deep to boil like a pot, Job 41:31.

When Pharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyrenians he came forth with his rivers, with his armies, troubled the waters, disturbed his own kingdom and the neighbouring nations, fouled the rivers, and made them muddy. Note, A great deal of disquiet is often given to the world by the restless ambition and implacable resentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that troubles Israel, and not Elijah.

2. He that has troubled others must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, Jos 7:25.

(1.) This is set forth here by a comparison. Is Pharaoh like a great whale, which, when it comes up the river, gives great disturbance, a leviathan which Job cannot draw out with a hook? (Job 41:1), yet God has a net for him which is large enough to enclose him and strong enough to secure him (Eze 32:3): I will spread my net over thee, even the army of the Chaldeans, a company of many people; they shall force him out of his fastnesses, dislodge him

out of his possessions, throw him like a great fish upon dry ground, upon the open field (Eze 32:4), where being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, Eze 29:5.

What can the strongest fish do to help itself when it is out of the water and lies gasping? The flesh of this great whale shall be laid upon the mountains (Eze 32:5) and the valleys shall be filled with his height. Such numbers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the valleys. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the valleys.

Or, Such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this leviathan, that, when he is laid upon the ground, he shall fill a valley. Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this leviathan as shall water the land of Egypt, the land wherein now he swims, now he sports himself, Eze 32:6.

It shall reach to the mountains, and the waters of Egypt shall again be turned into blood by this means: The rivers shall be full of thee. The judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the breaking of the heads of leviathan in the waters, Ps 74:13,14. But now they go further; this old serpent not only has now his head bruised, but is all crushed to pieces.

(2.) It is set forth by a prophecy of the deep impression which the destruction of Egypt should make upon the neighbouring nations; it would put them all into a consternation, as the fall of the Assyrian monarchy did, Eze 31:15,16. When Pharaoh, who had been like a blazing burning torch, is put out and extinguished it shall make all about him look black, Eze 32:7. The heavens shall be hung with black, the stars darkened, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower receives its light; and therefore (Eze 32:8), when the bright lights of heaven are made dark above, darkness by consequence is set upon the land, upon the earth; so it shall be

on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness, which was upon Egypt of old for three days, seems to be alluded to, as, before, the turning of the waters into blood.

For, when former judgments are forgotten, it is just that they should be repeated. When their privy-counsellors, and statesmen, and those that have the direction of the public affairs, are deprived of wisdom and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace are hidden from their eyes, then their lights are darkened and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, Isa 19:13. The princes of Zoan have become fools. Now upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, countries which they had not known (Eze 32:9), people shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it.

[1.] It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent kingdom thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory, which they have such a value for, stained. The hearts of many people will be vexed to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the gods of Egypt were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others.

[2.] It shall fill them with admiration (Eze 32:10): They shall be amazed at thee, shall wonder to see such great riches and power come to nothing, Re 18:17.

Note, Those that admire with complacency the pomp of this world will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp, which to those that know the vanity of all things here below is no surprise at all.

[3.] It shall fill them with fear: even their kings (that think it their prerogative to be secure) shall be horribly afraid for thee, concluding their own house to be in danger when their

neighbour's is on fire. When I shall brandish my sword before them they shall tremble every man for his own life.

Note, When the sword of God's justice is drawn against some, to cut them off, it is thereby brandished before others, to give them warning. And those that will not be admonished by it, and made to reform, shall yet be frightened by it, and made to tremble. They shall tremble at every moment, because of thy fall. When others are ruined by sin we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing ourselves guilty and obnoxious. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?

(3.) It is set forth by a plain and express prediction of the desolation itself that should come upon Egypt.

[1.] The instruments of the desolation appear here very formidable. It is the sword of the king of Babylon, that warlike, that victorious prince, that shall come upon thee (Eze 32:11), the swords of the mighty, even the terrible of the nations, all of them (Eze 32:12), an army that there is no standing before.

Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may expect, some time or other, to be engaged with those that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been forward to quarrel with his neighbour and to come forth with his rivers, with his armies, Eze 32:2. But God will now give him enough of it.

[2.] The instances of the desolation appear here very frightful, much the same with what we had before, Eze 29:10-12,30:7.

First, The multitude of Egypt shall be destroyed, not decimated, some picked out to be made examples, but all cut off. Note, The numbers of sinners, though they be a multitude, will neither secure them against God's power nor entitle them to his pity.

Secondly, The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled, the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, in renouncing the pomps of this world we did ourselves a great kindness, for they are things that are soon spoiled and that cheat their admirers.

Thirdly, The cattle of Egypt, that used to feed by the rivers, shall be destroyed (Eze 32:13), either cut off by the sword or carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast, that came thither to drink.

Fourthly, The waters of Egypt, that used to flow briskly, shall now grow deep, and slow, and heavy, and shall run like oil (Eze 32:14), a figurative expression signifying that there should be such universal sadness and heaviness upon the whole nation that even the rivers should go softly and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion.

Fifthly, The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be destitute of what whereof it was full (Eze 32:15), corn, and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth; when those are smitten that dwell therein the ground is untilled, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader.

Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fulness of those things and are full of them, that enjoy most and have their hearts set upon those enjoyments. The Egyptians were full of their pleasant and plentiful country, and its rich productions. Every one that talked with them might perceive how much it filled them. But God can soon make their country destitute of that whereof it is full; it is therefore our wisdom to be full of treasures in heaven. When the country is made destitute,

1. It shall be an instruction to them: Then shall they know that I am the Lord. A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and

the fading perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute much to our right knowledge of God as our portion and happiness.

2. It shall be a lamentation to all about them: The daughters of the nations shall lament her (Eze 32:16), either because, being in alliance with her, they share in her grievances and suffer with her, or, being admirers of her, they at least share in her grief and sympathize with her. They shall lament for Egypt and all her multitude; it shall excite their pity to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

3 Thus saith the Lord God; I will therefore spread out my net over
thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up
in my net.
4 Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the
open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon
thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee.
5 And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys
with thy height.
6 I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest,
even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee.
7 And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make
the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the
moon shall not give her light.
8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set
darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God.
9 I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy
destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast
not known.
10 Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall
be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before
them; and they shall tremble at *every* moment, every man for his
own life, in the day of thy fall.
11 For thus saith the Lord God; The sword of the king of Babylon
shall come upon thee.

12 By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them: and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed.
13 I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.
14 Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God.
15 When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I *am* the Lord.
16 This *is* the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: they shall lament for her, *even* for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord God.
17 It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth *day* of the month, *that* the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
18 Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, *even* her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

This prophecy concludes and completes the burden of Egypt, and leaves it and all its multitude in the pit of destruction.

I. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of those who attend it to the grave and accompany it in the grave.

1. This dead corpse of a kingdom is here brought to the grave. The prophet is ordered to cast them down to the pit (Eze 32:18), to foretel their destruction as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, Jer 1:10. He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down. Yet he must foretel it as one that had an affectionate concern for them; he must wail for the multitude of Egypt, even when he casts them down. When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral, befitting her quality; let her be buried with the daughters of the famous nations, in their burying-places and with the same ceremony. It is but a poor allay to the reproach and terror of death to be buried with those that were famous; yet this is all that is allowed to

Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt herself from the common fate of proud and imperious nations? No; she must take her lot with them (Eze 32:19):

"Whom dost thou surpass in beauty? Art thou so much fairer than any other nation that thou shouldst expect therefore to be excused? No; others as fair as thou have sunk into the pit; go down therefore, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. Thou art like them and art likely to lie among them. The multitude of Egypt shall all fall in the midst of those that are slain with the sword, now that there is a general slaughter made among the nations."

Egypt with the rest must drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is delivered to the sword, to the sword of war (but, in God's hand, the sword of justice), is delivered to be publicly executed. Draw her and all her multitude; draw them either as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave, in a hearse, or as malefactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution, on a sledge; draw them to the pit, and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

2. This corpse of a kingdom is bid welcome to the grave, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony. As the surprising fall of the king of Babylon is thus illustrated, Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming, and to introduce thee into those mansions of darkness (Isa 14:9, &c.), so here (Eze 32:21), They shall speak to him out of the midst of hell, as it were congratulating his arrival and calling him to join with them in acknowledging that which neither he nor they would be brought to own when they were in their pomp and pride, that it is in vain to think of contesting with God, and none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. They shall say to him, and to those that pretended to help him, Where are you now?

What have you brought your attempts to at last? Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt that are ready to give her a scornful reception and upbraid her with coming to them at last. These nations here spoken of were probably such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off; let Egypt know that she has neighbour's fare. When she goes to the grave she does but migrare ad plures--migrate to the majority; there are innumerable before her.

But it is observable that though Judah and Jerusalem were just about this time, or a little before, utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that welcome Egypt to the pit; for though they suffered the same things that these nations suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, altered the property of it; it was not to them a going down to the pit, as it was to the heathen; they were not smitten as others were, nor slain according to the slaughter of other nations, Isa 27:7. But let us see who those are that have gone to the grave before Egypt, that lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword, with whom she must now take up her lodging.

(1.) There lie the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy (Eze 32:22): Asshur is there and all her company, all the countries that were tributaries to and had dependence upon that crown. That mighty potentate who used to lie in state, with his guards and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his graves about him and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are all of them slain, fallen by the sword. The number of their months was cut off in the midst, and, being bloody and deceitful men, they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their braves were set in the sides of the pit, all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, Eze 32:23.

All their company is such as were slain, fallen by the sword; a vast congregation there is of such, who had caused terror in the land of the living. But as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears (in the grave the prisoners rest together and hear not the voice of the oppressor, Job 3:18), so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors. Who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors to those who, instead of making themselves blessings, make themselves terrors, in their generation.

(2.) There lies the kingdom of Persia, which perhaps within the memory of man at that time had been wasted and brought down: There is Elam and all her multitude, the king of Elam and his numerous armies, Eze 32:24,25. They also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations in their day. But Elam has now a grave by herself, and the graves of the common people round about her, fallen by the sword; she has her bed in the midst of the slain that went down uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy, and not in covenant with God.

They have borne their shame with those that go down to the pit; they have fallen under the common disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay, they die under particular marks of ignominy, which God and man put upon them. Note, Those who cause their terror shall, sooner or later, bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is put in the midst of those that are slain. All the honour he can now pretend to is to be buried in the chief sepulchre.

(3.) There lies the Scythian power, which, about this time, was busy in the world. Meshech and Tubal, those barbarous northern nations, had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon free quarter for some years, making every thing their own that they could lay their hands on; but at length Cyaxares, king of the Medes, drew them

by a wile into his power, but off abundance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, Eze 32:26.

There lie Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword. These Scythians, dying ingloriously as they lived, are not laid, as the other nations spoken of before, in the bed of honour (Eze 32:27):

They shall not lie with the mighty, shall not be buried in state, as those are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that go down to their graves with their weapons of war carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly their swords laid under their heads, as if they could sleep the sweeter in the grave when they laid their heads on such a pillow. These Scythians are not buried with these marks of honour, but their iniquities shall be upon their sons; they shall, for their iniquity, be left unburied, though they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

(4.) There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was foretold, Eze 25:13. Among the sepulchres of the nations there is Edom, Eze 32:29. There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, her kings and all her princes, her wise statesmen (which Edom was famous for), and her brave soldiers. These with their might are laid by those that were slain by the sword; their might could not prevent it, nay, their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them to engage in war and incensed their neighbours against them, who thought it necessary to curb their growing greatness.

A great deal of pains they took to ruin themselves, as many do, who with their might, with all their might, are laid by those that were slain with the sword. The Edomites retained circumcision,

being of the seed of Abraham. But that shall stand them in no stead; they shall lie with the uncircumcised.

(5.) There lie the princes of the north, and all the Zidonians. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs as the Egyptians were, who relied much upon that part of their strength, but they have gone down with the slain (Eze 32:30), down to the pit. Now they are ashamed of their might, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it and trusted to it; and, as the Edomites with their might, so these with their terror, are laid with those that are slain by the sword and are forced to take their lot with them. They bear their shame with those that go down to the pit, die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of public justice.

(6.) All this is applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hopes of tranquillity when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest, of their neighbours have been laid waste (Eze 32:28): "Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised; when God is pulling down the unhumbled and unreformed nations thou must expect to come down with them."

[1.] It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before (Eze 32:31): Pharaoh shall see them and be comforted; it will be some ease to his mind that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle--his not the first army that has been routed, his not the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenhill observes here, "The comfort which wicked ones have after death is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary." They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow-sufferers; the rich man in hell dreaded it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can see and be comforted.

[2.] But nothing will be an exemption from these miseries; for (Eze 32:32) I have caused my terror in the land of the living. Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every

body fear them. Oderint dum metuant--Let them hate, so that they do but fear. But now the great God has caused his terror in the land of the living; and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that his day is coming, Ps 37:13. In this day of terror Pharaoh and all his multitude shall be laid with those that are slain by the sword.

II The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states may show us something,

1. Of this present world, and the empire of death in it. Come, and see the calamitous state of human life; see what a dying world this is. The strong die, the mighty die, Pharaoh and all his multitude. See what a killing world this is. They are all slain with the sword. As if men did not die fast enough of themselves, men are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. It is not only a great pit, but a great cock-pit.

2. Of the other world. Though it is the destruction of nations as such that perhaps is principally intended here, yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impenitent sinners, of those that are uncircumcised in heart; they are slain by the sword of divine justice; their iniquity is upon them, and with it they bear their shame. Those, Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, though they be as pompous, though they be as numerous, as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

19 Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised.

20 They shall fall in the midst of *them that are* slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes.

21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

22 Asshur *is* there and all her company: his graves *are* about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword:

23 whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round
about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused
terror in the land of the living.
24 There *is* Elam and all her multitude round about her grave; all of
them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down
uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused
their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their
shame with them that go down to the pit.
25 They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her
multitude: her graves *are* round about him: all of them
uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused
in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with
them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of *them that be*
slain.
26 There *is* Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves *are*
round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword,
though they caused their terror in the land of the living.
27 And they shall not lie with the mighty *that are* fallen of the
uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of
war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their
iniquities shall be upon their bones, though *they were* the terror of
the mighty in the land of the living.
28 Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and
shalt lie with *them that are* slain with the sword.
29 There *is* Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their
might are laid by *them that were* slain by the sword: they shall lie
with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit.
30 There *be* the princes of the north, all of them, and all the
Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror
they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with
them that be slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them
that go down to the pit.
31 Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his
multitude, *even* Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith
the Lord God.
32 For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be
laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with *them that are* slain with
the sword, *even* Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-33

The Watchman's Duty

1 Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them,
When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take
a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

The prophet had been, by express order from God, taken off from prophesying to the Jews, just then when the news came that Jerusalem was invested, and close siege laid to it, Eze 24:27. But now that Jerusalem is taken, two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and there his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite, he would not have sent prophets to them; nor, if he had not had mercy in store for them, would he have shown them such things as these. In these verses we have,

I The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions adjusted between him and those that employ him, Eze 33:2,6. 1. It is supposed to be a public danger that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman--when God brings the sword upon a land, Eze 33:2 The sword of war, whenever it comes upon a land, is of God's bringing; it is the sword of the Lord, of his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it.

At such a time, when a country is in fear of a foreign invasion, that they may be informed of all the motions of the enemy, may not be surprised with an attack, but may have early notice of it, in order to their being at their arms and in readiness to give the invader a warm reception, they set a man of their coast, some likely person, that lives upon the borders of their country, where the threatened danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their watchman. Thus wise are the children of this world in their generation.

Note, One man may be of public service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the watchmen of a kingdom; they are continually to employ themselves, and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to expose themselves for the public safety.

2. It is supposed to be a public trust that is lodged in the watchman and that he is accountable to the public for the discharge of it. His business is,

(1.) To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy; and therefore he must not be blind nor asleep, for then he cannot see the sword coming.

(2.) To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet, or, as sentinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A special trust and confidence is reposed in him by those that set him to be their watchman that he will faithfully do these two things; and they venture their lives upon his fidelity. Now,

[1.] If he do his part, if he be betimes aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only delivered his soul, but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great or so near as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surprised by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head.

If any person goes presumptuously into the mouth of danger, though he heard the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the sword comes and takes him away in his folly, he is felo de se--a suicide; foolish man, he has destroyed himself. But,

[2.] If the watchman do not do his duty, if he might have seen the danger, and did not, but was asleep, or heedless, or looking another way, or if he did see the danger (for so the case is put here) and shifted only for his own safety, and blew not the trumpet to warn the people, so that some are surprised and cut off in their iniquity (Eze 33:6), cut off suddenly, without having time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, time to repent and make their peace with God (which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is taken away in his iniquity), his blood shall be required at the watchman's hand; he shall be found guilty of his death, because he did not give him warning of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that gives warning and he that takes warning have delivered their souls.

II The application of this to the prophet, Eze 33:7,9.

1. He is a watchman to the house of Israel. He had occasionally given warning to the nations about, but to the house of Israel he was a watchman by office, for they were the children of the prophets and the covenant They did not set him for a watchman, as the people of the land, Eze 33:2 (for they were not so wise for their souls as to secure the welfare of them, as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interests); but God did it for them; he appointed them a watchman.

2. His business as a watchman is to give warning to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of sin. This is the word he must hear from God's mouth and speak to them.

(1.) God has said, The wicked man shall surely die; he shall be miserable. Unless he repent, he shall be cut off from God and all comfort and hope in him, shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God has said it, and will never unsay it, nor can all the world gainsay it, that the wages of sin is death.

Sin, when it is finished, brings froth death. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacity, their personal interests, which pass into the other world and last to eternity, as national interests do not.

(2.) It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this: Warn them from me. This intimates that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of it; nay, and that God is desirous it should be prevented. Sinners are therefore warned of the wrath to come, that they may flee from it, Mt 3:7.

(3.) It is the work of ministers to give him warning, to say to the wicked, It shall be ill with thee, Isa 3:11. God ways in general, The soul that sinneth it shall die. The minister's business is to apply this to particular persons, and to say, "O wicked man! thou shalt surely die, whoever thou art; if thou go on still in thy trespasses, they will inevitably be thy ruin. O adulterer! O robber! O drunkard! O swearer! O sabbath-breaker! thou shalt surely die." And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to warn the wicked from hi way, warn him to turn from it, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in public, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself. "If the prophet do not warn the wicked of the ruin that is at the end of his wicked way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; for, though the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction."

Note, It will not serve impenitent sinners to plead in the great day that their watchmen did not give them warning, that they were

careless and unfaithful; for, though they were so, it will be made to appear that God left not himself without witness. "But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity; the watchman also shall be called to an account: His blood will I require at thy hand. The blind leader shall fall with the blind follower into the ditch." See what a desire God has of the salvation of sinners, in that he resents it so ill if those concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day who palliate sin, and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe that they shall have peace though they go on.

4. If he do his duty, he may take the comfort of it, though he do not see the success of it (Eze 33:9): "If thou warn the wicked of his way, if thou tell him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn, but persist in it, he shall die in his iniquity, and the fair warning given him will be an aggravation of his sin and ruin; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Note, It is a comfort to ministers that they may through grace save themselves, though they cannot be instrumental to save so many as they wish of those that hear them.

3 if when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the
trumpet, and warn the people;
4 then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not
warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be
upon his own head.
5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his
blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver
his soul.
6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the
trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and
take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity;
but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.
7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house
of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and
warn them from me.

8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man,* thou shalt surely die; if
thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked
man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine
hand.
9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if
he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou
hast delivered thy soul.

God's Way Is Just

10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus
ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and
we pine away in them, how should we then live?

These verses are the substance of what we had before (Eze 18:20, &c.) and they are so full and express a declaration of the terms on which people stand with God (as the former were of the terms on which ministers stand) that it is no wonder that they are here repeated, as those were, though we had the substance of them before. Observe here,

I The cavils of the people against God's proceedings with them. God was now in his providence contending with them, but their uncircumcised hearts were not as yet humbled, for they were industrious to justify themselves, though thereby they reflected on God. Two things they insisted upon, in their reproaches of God, and in both they added iniquity to their sin and misery to their punishment:--

1. They quarrelled with his promises and favours, as having no kindness nor sincerity in them, Eze 33:10. God had set life before them, but they plead that he had set it out of their reach, and therefore did but mock them with the mention of it. The prophet had said, some time ago (Eze 24:23), You shall pine away for your iniquities; with that word he had concluded his threatenings against Judah and Jerusalem; and this they now upbraided him with, as if it had been spoken absolutely, to drive them to despair; whereas it was spoken conditionally, to bring them to repentance.

Thus are the sayings of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds, who are inclined to pick quarrels. He puts them in hopes of life and happiness; and herein they would make him contradict himself; "for" (say they) "if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, as thou hast often told us they are, and if we must, as thou sayest, pine away in them, and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, how shall we then live? If this be our doom, there is no remedy. We die, we perish, we all perish."

Note, It is very common for those that have been hardened with presumption when they were warned against sin to sink into despair when they are called to repent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for them.

2. They quarrelled with his threatenings and judgments, as having no justice or equity in them. They said, The way of the Lord is not equal (Eze 33:17,20), suggesting that God was partial in his proceedings, that with him there was respect of persons and that he was more severe against sin and sinners than there was cause.

II. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both these cavils.

1. Those that despaired of finding mercy with God are here answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to show mercy, Eze 33:11. When they spoke of pining away in their iniquity God sent the prophet to them, with all speed, to tell them that though their case was sad it was not desperate, but there was yet hope in Israel.

(1.) It is certain that God has no delight in the ruin of sinners, nor does he desire it. If they will destroy themselves, he will glorify himself in it, but he has no pleasure in it, but would rather they should turn and live, for his goodness is that attribute of his which is most his glory, which is most his delight. He would rather

sinners should turn and live than go on and die. He has said it, he has sworn it, that by these two immutable things, in both which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. We have his word and his oath; and, since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself: As I live. They questioned whether they should live, though they did repent and reform; yea, says God, as sure as I live, true penitents shall live also; for their life is hid with Christ in God.

(2.) It is certain that God is sincere and in earnest in the calls he gives sinners to repent: Turn you, turn you, from your evil way. To repent is to turn from our evil way; this God requires sinners to do; this he urges them to do by repeated pressing instances: Turn you, turn you. O that they would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly, without delay! This he will enable them to do if they will but frame their doings to turn to the Lord, Ho 5:4. For he has said, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, Pr 1:23. And in this he will accept of them; for it is not only what he commands, but what he courts them to.

(3.) It is certain that, if sinners perish in their impenitency, it is owing to themselves; they die because they will die; and herein they act most absurdly and unreasonably: Why will you die, O house of Israel? God would have heard them, and they would not be heard.

2. Those that despaired of finding justice with God are here answered with a solemn declaration of the rule of judgment which God would go by in dealing with the children of men, which carries along with it the evidence of its own equity; he that runs may read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, as a nation, was now dead; it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judgment concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, Jer 18:8-10. If God speak concerning it to build and to plant, and it do wickedly, he will recall his favours and leave it to ruin. But if he

speak concerning it to pluck up and destroy, and it repent, he will revoke the sentence and deliver it. So it is here.

In short, The most plausible professors, if they apostatize, shall certainly perish for ever in their apostasy from God; and the most notorious sinners, if they repent, shall certainly be happy for ever in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this stupid senseless people, that said, The way of the Lord is not equal; for these rules of judgment are so plainly just that they need no other confirmation of them than the repetition of them.

(1.) If those that have made a great profession of religion throw off their profession, quit the good ways of God and grow loose and carnal, sensual and worldly, the profession they made and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, Eze 33:12,13,18.

[1.] God says to the righteous man that he shall surely live, Eze 33:13. He says it by his word, by his ministers. He that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, He shall live. Surely such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his righteousness, and if, in order to that, he be upright and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in the love of God and be for ever happy in that love.

[2.] Righteous men, who have very good hopes of themselves and whom others have a very good opinion of, are yet in danger of turning to iniquity by trusting to their righteousness. So the case is put here: If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, and come to make a trade of sin--if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way and persist in it. This may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness.

Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceitedness of themselves and confidence in themselves. He trust to the merit of his own righteousness, and thinks he has already made God so much his debtor that now he may venture to commit iniquity, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that whatever evil deeds he may do hereafter he can be in no danger from them, having so many good deeds beforehand to counterbalance them.

Or, He trust to the strength of his own righteousness, thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue that he may thrust himself into any temptation and it cannot overcome him, and so by presuming on his own sufficiency he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on the confines of sin he is drawn at length into the depths of hell. This ruined the Pharisees; they trusted to themselves that they were righteous, and that their long prayers, and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widows' houses.

[3.] If righteous men turn to iniquity, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers, and all their alms, shall be forgotten. No mention shall be made, no remembrance had, of their good deeds; they shall be overlooked, as if they had never been. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, in the day of his transgression.

When he becomes a traitor and a rebel, and takes up arms against his rightful Sovereign, it will not serve for him to plead in his own defence that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government. No; he shall not be able to live. The remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God's justice or his own conscience in the day that he sins, but rather shall, in the estimate of both, highly aggravate the sin and folly of his apostasy. And therefore for his iniquity that

he committed he shall die, Eze 33:13. And again (Eze 33:18), He shall even die thereby; and it is owing to himself.

(2.) If those that have lived a wicked life repent and reform, forsake their wicked ways and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation.

[1.] God says to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die. The way that thou art in leads to destruction. The wages of thy sin is death, and thy iniquity will shortly be thy ruin." It was said to the righteous man, Thou shalt surely live, for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness; but he made an ill use of it, and was emboldened by it to commit iniquity. It was said to the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, for warning to him not to persist in his wicked ways; and he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty.

Thus even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a savour of life unto life, while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a savour of death unto death. When God says to the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, die eternally, it is to frighten him, not out of his wits, but out of his sins.

[2.] There is many a wicked man who was hastening apace to his own destruction who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He turns from his sin (Eze 33:14), and is resolved that he will have no more to do with it; and, as an evidence of his repentance for wrong done, he restores the pledge (Eze 33:15) which he had taken uncharitably from the poor, he gives again that which he had robbed and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor does he only cease to do evil, but he learns to do well; he does that which is lawful and right, and makes conscience of his duty both to God and man--a great change, since, awhile ago, he neither feared God nor regarded man.

But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of divine grace. He that was going on in the paths of death and the destroyer now walks in the statues of life, in the way of God's commandments, which has both life in it (Pr 12:28) and life at the end of it, Mt 19:17. And in this good way he perseveres without committing iniquity, though not free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity. He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins which he before allowed himself in.

[3.] He that does thus repent and return shall escape the ruin he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God. Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for, if he confess and forsake it, he shall find mercy. He shall surely live; he shall not die, Eze 33:15. Again (Eze 33:16), He shall surely live. Again (Eze 33:19), He has done that which is lawful and right, and he shall live thereby. But will not his wickednesses be remembered against him? No; he shall not be punished for them (Eze 33:12):

As for the wickedness of the wicked, though it was very heinous, yet he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turns from his wickedness. Now that it has become his grief it shall not be his ruin.

Now that there is a settled separation between him and sin there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as upbraided with them (Eze 33:16): None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him, either as a clog to his pardon or an allay to the comfort of it, or as any blemish and diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge whether the way of the Lord be not equal, whether this will not justify God in the destruction of sinners and glorify him in the salvation of penitents. The conclusion of the whole matter is (Eze 33:20): "O you house of Israel, though you are all involved now in the

common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made in the spiritual and eternal state, and I will judge you every one after his ways." Though they were sent into captivity by the lump, good fish and bad enclosed in the same net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile and will render to every man according to his works.

Therefore God's way is equal and unexceptionable; but, as for the children of thy people, God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses (Ex 32:7): "They are thy people; I can scarcely own them for mine." As for them, their way is unequal; this way which they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophets is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures it will certainly be found that he is in the right and they are in the wrong.

11 Say unto them, *As* I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.

13 When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

15 *if* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

17 Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.
18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.
19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.
20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

The News of Jerusalem's Fall

21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth *month,* in the fifth *day* of the month, *that* one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.

Here we have,

I The tidings brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burnt in the eleventh year of the captivity and the fifth month, Jer 52:12,13. Tidings hereof were brought to the prophet by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year, and the tenth month (Eze 33:21), which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done; we may well suppose that, there being a constant correspondence at this time more than ever kept up between Jerusalem and Babylon, he had heard the news long before.

But this was the first time he had an account of it from a refugee, from one who escaped, who could be particular, and would be pathetic, in the narrative of it. And the sign given him was the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames (Eze 24:26): He that escapes in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thy ears, to hear it more distinctly than ever, from one that could say, Quæque ipse miserrima vidi--These miserable scenes I saw.

II The divine impressions and influences he was under, to prepare him for those heavy tidings (Eze 33:22): The hand of

the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth to speak to the house of Israel what we had in the former part of this chapter. And now he was no more dumb; he prophesied now with more freedom and boldness, being by the event proved a true prophet, to the confusion of those that contradicted him.

All the prophecies from Eze 24:1-32:32 have relation purely to the nations about, it is probable that the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing; for he could not Say to the Ammonites, Say unto Tyrus, Say unto Pharaoh, &c., so and so, but by letters directed to the persons concerned, as Zacharias, when he could not speak, wrote; and herein he was as truly executing his prophetic office as ever.

Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good by writing letters and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may speak to the children of his people. It is probable that he had, during these three years, been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but that he never spoke to them as a prophet, by inspiration, till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instructions, and opened his mouth, furnished him with power to speak to the people as he ought to speak.

III. The particular message he was entrusted with, relating to these Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land, Eze 33:24. See what work sin had made. The cities of Israel had now become the wastes of Israel, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had escaped the sword and captivity still continued there and began to think of re-settling.

This was so long after the destruction of Jerusalem that it was some time before this that Gedaliah (a modest humble man) and his friends were slain; but probably at this time Johanan, and the

proud men that joined with him, were at the height (Jer 43:2); and before they came to a resolution to go into Egypt, wherein Jeremiah opposed them, it is probable that the project was to establish themselves in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel here opposed them, and probably despatched the message away by the person that brought him the news of Jerusalem's destruction.

Or, perhaps, those here prophesied against might be some other party of Jews, that remained in the land, hoping to take root there and to be sole masters of it, after Johanan and his forces had gone into Egypt. Now here we have,

1. An account of the pride of these remaining Jews, who dwelt in the wastes of the land of Israel. Though the providence of God concerning them had been very humbling, and still was very threatening, yet they were intolerably haughty and secure, and promised themselves peace. He that brought the news to the prophet that Jerusalem was smitten could not tell him (it is likely) what these people said, but God tells him, They say, "The land is given us for inheritance, Eze 33:24.

Our partners being gone, it is now all our own by survivorship, or, for want of heirs, it comes to us as occupants; we shall now be placed alone in the midst of the earth and have it all to ourselves." This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand of God, and a reigning selfishness and narrow-spiritedness; they pleased themselves in the ruin of their country as long as they hoped to find their own account in it, cared not though it were all waste, so that they might have the sole property--a poor inheritance to be proud of! They have the impudence to compare their case with Abraham's, glorying in this, We have Abraham to our father.

"Abraham," say they, "was one, one family, and he inherited the land, and lived many years in the peaceable enjoyment of it; but

we are many, many families, more numerous than he; the land is given us for inheritance."

(1.) They think they can make out as good a title from God to this land as Abraham could: "If God gave this land to him, who was but one worshipper of him, as a reward of his service, much more will he give it to us, who are many worshippers of him, as the reward of our service." This shows the great conceit they had of the own merits, as if they were greater than those of Abraham their father, who yet was not justified by works.

(2.) They think they can make good the possession of this land against the Chaldeans and all others invaders, as well as Abraham could against those that were competitors with him for it: "If he, who was but one, could hold it, much more shall we, who are many, and have many more at command than his 300 trained servants." This shows the confidence they had in their own might; they had got possession, and were resolved to keep it.

2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences did neither humble them nor terrify them, he sends them a message sufficient to do both.

(1.) To humble them, he tells them of the wickedness they still persisted in, which rendered them utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they could not expect God should give it to them. They had been followed with one judgment after another, but they had not profited by those means of grace as might be expected; they were still unreformed, and how could they expect that they should possess the land? "Shall you possess the land? What! such wicked people as you are? How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land? Jer 3:19.

Surely you never reflect upon yourselves, else you would rather wonder that you are in the land of the living than expect to possess this land. For do you now know how bad you are?"

[1.] "You make no conscience of forbidden fruit, forbidden food: You eat with the blood," directly contrary to one of the precepts given to Noah and his sons when God gave them possession of the earth, Ge 9:4.

[2.] "Idolatry, that covenant-breaking sin, that sin which the jealous God has been in a particular manner provoked by to lay your country waste, is still the sin that most easily besets you and which you have a strong inclination to: You lift up your eyes towards your idols, which is a sign that though perhaps you do not bow your knee to them so much as you have done, yet you set your hearts upon them and hanker after them."

[3.] "You are as fierce, and cruel, and barbarous as ever: You shed blood, innocent blood."

[4.] "You confide in your own strength, your own arm, your own bow, and have no dependence on, or regard to, God and his providence: You stand upon your sword (Eze 33:26); you think to carry all before you, and make all your own, by force of arms." How can those expect the inheritance of Isaac (as these did) who are of Ishmael's disposition, that had his hand against every man (Ge 16:12), and Esau's resolution to live by his sword? Ge 27:40.

We met with those (Eze 32:27) who, when they died, thought they could not lie easy underground unless they had their swords under their heads. Here we meet with those who, while they live, think they cannot stand firmly above ground unless they have their swords under their feet, as if swords were both the softest pillows and the strongest pillars; though it was sin, it was sin, that first drew the sword. But, blessed be God, there are those who know better, who stand upon the support of the divine power and promise and lay their heads in the bosom of divine love, not trusting in their own sword, Ps 44:3.

[5.] "You are guilty of all manner of abominations, and, particularly, you defile every one his neighbour's wife, which is an abomination of the first magnitude, and shall you possess the land? What! such vile miscreants as you?" Note, Those cannot expect to possess the land, nor to enjoy any true comfort or happiness here or hereafter, who live in rebellion against the Lord.

(2.) To terrify them, he tells them of the further judgments God had in store for them, which should make them utterly unable to possess this land, so that they could not stand it out against the enemy. Do they say that they shall possess the land? God has said they shall not, he has sworn it, As I live, saith the Lord. Though he has sworn that he delights not in the death of sinners, yet he has sworn also that those who persist in impenitency and unbelief shall not enter into his rest.

[1.] Those that are in the cities, here called the wastes, shall fall by the sword, either by the sword of the Chaldeans, who come to avenge the murder of Gedaliah, or by one another's swords, in their intestine broils.

[2.] Those that are in the open field shall be devoured by wild beasts, which swarmed, of course, in the country when it was dispeopled, and there were none to master them and keep them under, Ex 23:29. When the army of the enemy had quitted the country still there was no safety in it. Noisome beasts constituted one of the four sore judgments, Eze 14:15.

[3.] Those that are in the forts and in the caves, that think themselves safe in artificial or natural fastnesses, because men's eyes cannot discover them nor men's darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they shall die of the pestilence.

[4.] The whole land, even the land of Israel, that had been the glory of all lands, shall be most desolate, Eze 33:28. It shall be desolation, desolation, all over as desolate as desolation itself can make it. The mountain of Israel, the fruitful mountains, Zion itself the holy mountain not excepted, shall be desolate, the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that none shall pass through; as it was threatened (De 28:62), You shall be left few in number.

[5.] The pomp of her strength, whatever she glories in as her pomp and trusts to as her strength, shall be made to cease.

[6.] The cause of all this was very bad; it is for all their abominations which they have committed. It is sin that does all this mischief, that makes nations desolate; and therefore we ought to call it an abomination.

[7.] Yet the effect of all this will be very good: Then shall they know that I am the Lord, am their Lord, and shall return to their allegiance, when I have made the land most desolate. Those are untractable unteachable indeed that are not made to know their dependence upon God when all their creature-comforts fail them and are made desolate.

22 Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he
that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came
to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no
more dumb.
23 Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel
speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we
are many; the land is given us for inheritance.
25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with
the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood:
and shall ye possess the land?
26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile
every one his neighbor's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; *As* I live, surely they that *are* in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that *is* in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that *be* in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

29 Then shall they know that I *am* the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

30 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord.

The Eze 33:1-29 spoke conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy and yet returned not to the Lord; in these verses those are reproved who were now in captivity in Babylon, under divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with.

They made some show of religion and devotion; but their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are here accused of is mocking the messengers of the lord, one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it. Two ways they mocked the prophet Ezekiel:--

I. By invidious ill natured reflections upon him, privately among themselves, endeavouring by all means possible to render him despicable. The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that those who spoke so well to him to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, would surely not speak ill of him behind his back. But God comes and tells him, The children of thy people are still talking against thee (Eze 33:30), or talking of thee, no good, I doubt. Note, Public persons are a common theme or subject of discourse; every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure.

Faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them every day; it is well that they do not; for, if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work not to be easily got over. God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers, not only what is decreed against them, or sworn against them, not only what is written against them, or spoken with solemnity and deliberation, but of what is said against them in common talk, among neighbours when they meet in an evening, by the walls and in the doors of their houses, where whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always.

They had no crime to lay to the prophet's charge, but they loved to talk of him in a careless, scornful, bantering way; they said, jokingly, "Come, and let us hear what is the word that comes forth from the Lord; perhaps it will be something new, and will entertain us, and furnish us with matter for discourse." Note, Those have arrived as a great pitch of profaneness who can make so great a privilege, and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing of the word of God, a matter of sport and ridicule, yea though it be not done publicly, but in private conversation among themselves. Serious things should be spoken of seriously.

II. By dissembling with him in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God and mock his prophets. But their hypocrisy is open before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it will be laid open. Observe here,

1 The plausible profession which these people made and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those (Mt 15:8) who draw nigh to God with their mouths and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.

(1.) They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace: They come unto thee as the people come. In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house (Eze 8:1), and there, it is probable, they spent their new moons and their sabbaths in religious exercises, 2Ki 4:23. When the prophet was bound the word of the Lord was not bound; and the people, when they had not the help for their souls that they wished for, were thankful for what they had; it was a reviving in their bondage.

Now these hypocrites came, according to the coming of the people, as duly and as early as any of the prophet's hearers. Their being said to come as the people came seems to intimate that the reason why they came was because other people came; they did not come out of conscience towards God, but only for company, for fashion-sake, and because it was now the custom of their countrymen.

Note, Those that have no inward principle of love to God's ordinances may yet be found much in the external observance of them. Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel; and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray as well as the publican.

(2.) They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the public assembly; there were none of them whispering, or laughing, or gazing about them, or sleeping. But they sit before thee as my people, with all the shows of gravity, and sereneness, and composure of mind. They sit out the time, without weariness, or wishing the sermon done.

(3.) They were very attentive to the word preached: "They are not thinking of something else, but they hear thy words, and take notice of what thou sayest."

(4.) They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Though, behind his back, they could not give him a

good word, yet, to his face, they showed much love to him and his doctrine; they pretended to have a great concern lest he should spend himself too much in preaching or expose himself to the Chaldeans, for they would be thought to be some of his best friends and well-wishers.

(5.) They took a great deal of pleasure in the word; they delighted to know God's word, Isa 58:2. Herod heard John Baptist gladly, Mk 6:20. Thou art unto them as a very lovely song. Ezekiel's matter was surprising, his language fine, his expressions elegant, his similitudes apt, his voice melodious, and his delivery graceful; so that they could sit with as much pleasure to hear him preach as (if I may speak in the language of our times) to see a play or an opera, or to hear a concert of music. Ezekiel was to them as one that had a pleasant voice and could sing well, or play well on an instrument. Note, Men may have their fancies pleased by the word, and yet not have their consciences touched nor their hearts changed, the itching ear gratified and yet not the corrupt nature sanctified.

2 The hypocrisy of these professions and pretensions; it is all a sham, it is all a jest.

(1.) They have no cordial affection for the word of God. While they show much love it is only with the mouth, from the teeth outward, but their heart goes after their covetousness; they are as much set upon the world as ever, as much in love and league with it as ever. Hearing the word is only their diversion and recreation, a pretty amusement now and then for an hour or two. But still their main business is with their farm and merchandise; the bent and bias of their souls are towards them, and their inward thoughts are employed in projects about them.

Note, Covetousness is the ruining sin of multitudes that make a great profession of religion; it is the love of the world that secretly eats the love of God out of their hearts. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are the thorns that choke

the seed, and choke the soul too. And those neither please God nor profit themselves who, when they are hearing the word of God, are musing upon their worldly affairs. God has his eye on the hearts that do so.

(2.) They yield no subjection to it. They hear thy words, but it is only a hearing that they give thee, for they will not do them, Eze 33:31. And again (Eze 33:32), they do them not. They will not be persuaded by all the prophet can say, either by authority or argument, to cross themselves in any instance, to part with any one beloved sin, or apply themselves to any one duty that is against the grain to flesh and blood. Note, There are many who take pleasure in hearing the word, but make no conscience of doing it; and so they build upon the sand, and deceive themselves.

3. Let us see what will be in the end hereof: Shall their unbelief and carelessness make the word of God of no effect? By no means.

(1.) God will confirm the prophet's word, though they contemn it, and make light of it, Eze 33:33. What he says will come to pass, and not one jot or one tittle shall fall to the ground. Note, The curses of the law, though they may be bantered by profane wits, cannot be baffled.

(2.) They themselves shall rue their folly when it is too late. When it comes to pass they shall know, shall know to their cost, know to their confusion, that a prophet has been among them, though they made no more of him than as one that had a pleasant voice. Note, Those who will not consider that a prophet is among them, and who improve not the day of their visitation while it is continued, will be made to remember that a prophet has been among them when the things that belong to their peace are hidden from their eyes.

The day is coming when vain and worldly men will have other thoughts of things than now they have, and will feel a weight in that which they made light of. They shall know that a prophet has been among them when they see the event exactly answer the prediction, and the prophet himself shall be a witness against them that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it.

When Ezekiel is gone, whom now they speak against, and there is no more any prophet, nor any to show them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well.

Note, Those who will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them will justly be made to know the worth of them by the want of them, as those who should desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, which now they slighted, and might not see it.

31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness.

32 And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

33 And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

Ezekiel-34

The Prophecy against the Shepherds of Israel

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe *be* to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till Eze 40:1-49 It is most probable that it was delivered after the completing of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to enquire into the causes of it.

I The prophet is ordered to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel--the princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim or council of state, or whoever they were that had the direction of public affairs in a higher or lower sphere, the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions shown them, that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity.

God has something to say to the shepherds, for they are but under-shepherds, accountable to him who is the great Shepherd of Israel, Ps 80:1. And that which he says is, Woe to the shepherds of Israel! Though they are shepherds, and shepherds of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter them. Note, If men's dignity and power do not, as they ought, keep them from sin, they will not serve to exempt them from reproof, to excuse their repentance, or to secure them from the judgments of God if they do not repent. We had a woe to the pastors, Jer 23:1. God will in a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.

II. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with, in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them; for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with:--

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge: Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? No doubt they should; they betray their trust if they do not. Not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them and bring them to it.

But these shepherds made this the least of their care; they fed themselves, contrived every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite, and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure of the profits of their places; they did eat the fat, the cream (so some), for he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it (1Co 9:7), and they made sure of the best of the milk. They made sure of the fleece, and clothed themselves with the wool, getting into their hands as much as they could of the estates of their subjects, yea, and killed those that were well fed, that what they had might be fed upon, as Naboth was put to death for his vineyard.

Note, There is a woe to those who are in public trusts, but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefice than about the office, what money is to be got than what good to be done. It is an old complaint, All seek their own, and too many more than their own.

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge: You feed not the flock. They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so lazy and slothful were they; nay, they never desired nor designed it, so treacherous and unfaithful were they.

(1.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were distempered, did not strengthen them, nor heal them, nor bind them up, Eze 34:4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died; they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong or to shelter injured innocency. They took no care of the poor to see them provided for; they might starve, for them. The priests took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error, to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss, and out of course, every where, and nothing was done to rectify them.

(2.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were dispersed, that were driven away by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or that wandered of choice upon the mountains and hills (Eze 34:6), where they were exposed to the beasts of prey and became meat to them, Eze 34:5.

Every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begged, some went abroad and traded, and thus the country became thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and wanted hands both in the fields of corn and in the fields of battle, both in harvest and in war: My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, Eze 34:6.

And they were never enquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country: None did search or seek after them. Nay, with force and cruelty they ruled them, which drove more away, and discouraged those that were driven away from all thoughts of returning. Their case is bad who have reason to expect better treatment among strangers than in their own country. It may be meant of those of the flock that went astray from God and their duty; and the priests, that should have taught the good knowledge of the Lord, used no means to convince and reclaim them, so that they became an easy prey to seducers. Thus were they scattered because there was no shepherd, Eze 34:5. There were those that called themselves shepherds, but really they were not.

Note, Those that do not do the work of shepherds are unworthy of the name. And if those that undertake to be shepherds are foolish shepherds (Zec 11:15), if they are proud and above their business, idle and do not love their business, or faithless and unconcerned about it, the case of the flock is as bad as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd than such shepherds. Christ complains that his flock were as sheep having no shepherd, when yet the scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, Mt 9:36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease, ill with

the flock when the shepherds drive them away and disperse them, by ruling them with force.

3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but* ye feed not the flock.

4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up *that which was* broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

5 And they were scattered, because *there is* no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek *after them*.

7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord;

8 *As* I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up, in God's name, against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a just indignation, and upon the flock with a tender compassion. God, by the prophet, here expresses both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon (Eze 34:7,9) to hear the word of the Lord, to hear this word. Let them hear how little he regards them, who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock, which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not hear the word of the Lord giving them their direction shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

I. How much displeased God is at the shepherds. Their crimes are repeated, Eze 34:8. God's flock became a prey to the deceivers first that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity; and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been no shepherds; and therefore God says (Eze 34:10), and confirms it

with an oath (Eze 34:8), I am against the shepherds. They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and made use of this name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them. "No," says God, "so far from that, I am against them." Note, It is not our having the name and authority of shepherds that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is against them, and they shall know it; for,

1. They shall be made to account for the manner in which they have discharged their trust: "I will require my flock at their hands, and charge it upon them that so many of them are missing." Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment-day who take upon them the care of souls and yet take no care of them. Ministers must watch and work as those that must give account, Heb 13:17. 2. They shall be deprived officio et beneficio--both of the work and of the wages. They shall cease from feeding the flock, that is, from pretending to feed it.

Note, It is just with God to take out of men's hands that power which they have abused and that trust which they have betrayed. But, if this were all their punishment, they could bear it well enough; therefore it is added, "Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, which, instead of protecting, they had made a prey of."

Note, Those that are enriching themselves with the spoils of the public cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them, but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds their false friends, as well as from the lions their open enemies.

II. How much concerned God is for the flock; he speaks as if he were the more concerned for them because he saw them thus neglected, for with him the fatherless finds mercy. Precious promises are made here upon the occasion, which were to have

their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds hear this word of the Lord, and know that they have no part nor lot in the matter. But let the poor sheep hear it and take the comfort of it.

Note, Though magistrates and ministers fail in doing their part, for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under-shepherds may prove careless, but the chief Shepherd neither slumbers nor sleeps. They may be false, but God abides faithful.

1. God will gather his sheep together that were scattered, and bring those back to the fold that had wandered from it: "I, even I, who alone can do it, will do it, and will have all the glory of it. I will both search my sheep and find them out (Eze 34:11) as a shepherd does (Eze 34:12), and bring them back as he does the stray-sheep, upon his shoulders, from all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." There are cloudy and dark days, windy and stormy ones, which scatter God's sheep, which send them hither and thither, to divers and distant places, in quest of secresy and safety.

But, (1.) Wherever they are the eye of God will find them out; for his eyes run to and fro through the earth, in favour of them. I will seek out my sheep; and not one that belongs to the fold, though driven ever so far off, shall be lost. The Lord knows those that are his; he knows their work and where they dwell (Re 2:13), and where they are hidden.

(2.) When his time shall come his arms will fetch them home (Eze 34:13): I will bring them out from the people. God will both incline their hearts to come by his grace and will by his providence open a door for them and remove every difficulty that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body: "I will gather them from the countries into which they are dispersed, not only the most considerable

families of them, but every particular person. I will seek that which was lost and bring again that which was driven away," Eze 34:16.

This was done when so many thousand Jews returned triumphantly out of Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and others. When those that have gone astray from God into the paths of sin are brought back by repentance, when those that erred come to the acknowledgment of the truth, when God's outcasts are gathered and restored, and religious assemblies, that were dispersed, rally again, upon the ceasing of persecution, and when the churches have rest and liberty, then this promise has a further accomplishment.

2. God will feed his people as the sheep of his pasture, that had been famished. God will bring the returning captives safely to their own land (Eze 34:13), will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, and that is a good pasture, and a fat pasture (Eze 34:14); there shall their feeding be, and there shall be their fold; and it is a good fold. There God will not only feed them, but cause them to lie down (Eze 34:15), which denotes a comfortable rest after they had tired themselves with their wanderings, and a constant continuing residence; they shall not be driven out again from these green pastures, as they have been, nor shall they be disturbed, but shall lie down in a sweet repose and there shall be none to make them afraid.

Ps 23:2, He makes me to lie down in green pastures. Compare this with the like promise (Jer 23:3,4), when God restored them not only to the milk and honey of their own land, to the enjoyment of its fruits, but to the privileges of his sanctuary on Mount Zion, the chief of the mountains of Israel. When they had an altar and a temple again, and the benefit of a settled priesthood, then they were fed in a good pasture.

3. He will succour those that are hurt, will bind up that which was broken and strengthen that which was sick, will comfort those that mourn in Zion and with Zion. If ministers, who should speak peace

to those who are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost the Comforter will be faithful to his office. But, as it follows, the fat and the strong shall be destroyed. He that has rest for disquieted saints has terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. As every valley shall be filled, so every mountain and hill shall be brought low, Lu 3:5.

9 therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord;
10 Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.
11 For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.
12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are* scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.
13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.
14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.
15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord
God.
16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that which was* broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.
17 And *as for* you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.

The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the flock. God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them.

But here he is ordered to make a difference between some and others of them, to separate between the precious and the vile and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming (for for judgment he came into this world, Joh 9:39, to fill the hungry with good things and to send the rich empty away, Lu 1:53), but completely at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, judge between cattle and cattle, as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left (Mt 25:32,33), which seems to have reference to this. We have here,

I. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were fat and strong, the rams and the he-goats (Eze 34:17), those that, though they had not power, as shepherds and rulers, to oppress with, yet, being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have much would have more, and, if they set to it, will have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them the one ewe-lamb, 2Sa 12:4. Do not the rich oppress the poor merely with the help of their riches, and draw them before the judgment-seats? Jam 2:6.

Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The rams and the he-goats not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, ate the fat and drank the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they trod down the residue of the pastures and fouled the residue of the waters, so that the flock was obliged to eat that which they had trodden into the dirt, and drink that which they had muddied, Eze 34:18,19.

This intimates that the great men not only by extortion and oppression made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarcely left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them that what little coarse fare they had was embittered to them. And this

seemed a small thing to them; they thought there was no harm in it, as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Note, Many that live in pomp and at ease themselves care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that are at ease, and the proud, grudge that any body should live by them with any comfort. But this as not all; they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock (Eze 34:21):

They thrust with side and shoulder those that were feeble (for the weakest goes to the wall) and pushed the diseased with their horns, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep that if one of the flock be sick and faint the rest will secure it as well as they can, and shelter it from the scorching heat of the sun; but these, on the contrary, were most injurious to the diseased. Those that they could not serve themselves of they did what they could to rid the country of, and so scattered them abroad, as if the poor, whom, Christ says, we must have always with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved, but sent far away from us.

Note, It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and he-goats are designed to represent the scribes and Pharisees, for they are such troublers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from, Eze 34:23.

They devoured widows' houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of divine truths, and oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders, besides that they were continually vexatious and injurious to the poor of the flock that waited on the Lord, Zec 11:11. Note, It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent stations in it, Ac 20:30.

II. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and feeble, and that wait for the consolation of Israel (Eze 34:22): "I will save my flock, and they shall no more be spoiled as they have been by the beasts of prey, by their own shepherds or by the rams and he-goats among themselves." Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom, and the exceedingly great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom. Observe what is here foretold,

1. Concerning the Messiah himself.

(1.) He shall have his commission from God himself: I will set him up (Eze 34:23); I will raise him up, Eze 34:29. He sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him.

(2.) He shall be the great Shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one Shepherd, under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold.

(3.) He is God's servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to his glory--his servant, to re-establish his kingdom among men and advance the interests of that kingdom.

(4.) He is David, one after God's own heart, set as his King upon the holy hill of Zion, made the head of the corner, with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God would give the throne of his father David. He is both the root and offspring of David.

(5.) He is the plant of renown, because a righteous branch (Jer 23:5), a branch of the Lord, that is beautiful and glorious, Isa 4:2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a branch of renown. Some

understand it of the church, the planting of the Lord, Isa 61:3. Its name shall be remembered (Ps 45:17) and Christ's in it.

2. Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded (Eze 34:25): I will make with them a covenant of peace. The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of peace, of all good, all the good we need to make us happy. The tenour of this covenant is:

"I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them (Eze 34:24), will own them and will be owned by them; in order to this my servant David shall be a prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in them, and for them." Note, Those, and those only, that have the Lord Jesus for their prince have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people. From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion: "I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with them; and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it."

3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah and interested in the covenant of peace. These are here set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock. But we have a key to it, Eze 34:31. Those that belong to this flock, though they are spoken of as sheep, are really men, men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them it is promised,

(1.) That they shall enjoy a holy security under the divine protection. Christ, our good Shepherd, has caused the evil beasts to cease out of the land (Eze 34:25), having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broken their power, and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring devouring lion to them; they shall no more be a prey to the heathen nor the heathen a terror to them,

neither shall the beasts of the land devour them. Sin and Satan, death and hell, are conquered. And then they shall dwell safely, not only in the folds, but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are; they shall not only dwell there, but they shall sleep there, which denotes not only that the beasts being made to cease there shall be no danger, but, their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil.

Note, Those may lay down and sleep securely, sleep at ease, that have Christ for their prince; for he will be their protector, and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, nay, none shall make them afraid. If God be for us, who can be against us? Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed. Through Christ, God delivers his people not only from the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all that fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised (Eze 34:27): They shall be safe in their land, in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbours to desire their land; and that which shall make them think themselves safe is their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God:

They shall know that I am the Lord. All our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God and mistakes concerning him. Their experience of his particular care concerning them encourages their confidence in him: "I have broken the bands of their yoke, with which they have been brought and held down under oppression, and have delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them, whence they shall argue, He that has delivered does and will, therefore will we dwell safely." This is explained, and applied to our gospel-state, Lu 1:74. That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, as those may do that serve him in faith.

(2.) That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things, for their comfort and happiness: They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, Eze 34:29. Famine and scarcity, when Israel was punished with that judgment, turned as much to their reproach among the heathen as any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked of. But now they shall not bear that shame of the heathen any more For the showers shall come down in their season, even showers of blessing, Eze 34:26. Christ is a Shepherd that will feed his people; and they shall go in and out, and find pasture.

[1.] They shall not be consumed with hunger; for they shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which leaves those that are put off with it to be consumed with hunger. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called beggarly elements, for there was little in them, compared with the Christian institutes, wherewith the mower fills his hand and he that binds sheaves his bosom. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall not be consumed with that hunger, for they shall be filled. And he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall never thirst.

[2.] Showers of blessings shall come upon them, Eze 34:26,27. The heavens shall yield their dews; the trees of the field also shall yield their fruit. The seat of this plenty is God's hill, his holy hill of Zion, for on that mountain, in the gospel church, it is, that God has made to all nations a feast; to that those must join themselves who would partake of gospel benefits. The cause of this plenty is the showers that come down in their season, that descend upon the mountains of Zion, the graces of Christ, his doctrine that drops as the dew, the graces of Christ, and the fruits and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The instances of this plenty are the blessings of heaven poured down upon us and the productions of grace brought forth by us, our comfort in God's favour and God's glory in our fruit-bearing.

The extent of this plenty is very large, to all the places round about my hill; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, shall go forth light to a dark world, and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Zion shall fare the better for it; and the nearer the church the nearer its God. And, lastly, The effect of this plenty is, I will make them a blessing, eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, Isa 19:24. Or, They shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful.

Note, Those that are the blessed of the Lord must study to make themselves blessings to the world. He that is good, let him do good; he that has received the gift, the grace, let him minister the same.

Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spoke much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure that God would not utterly destroy their nation, how low soever it might be brought, as long as that blessing was in the womb of it, Isa 65:8. But it speaks much more comfort to us, to whom it is fulfilled, who are the sheep of this good Shepherd, are fed in his pastures, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

18 *Seemeth it* a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture,
but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures?
and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue
with your feet?
19 And *as for* my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your
feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.
20 Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, *even* I,
will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.
21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all
the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;
22 therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and
I will judge between cattle and cattle.

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them,
even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their
shepherd.
24 And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince
among them; I the Lord have spoken *it*.
25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause
the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in
the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.
26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a
blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season;
there shall be showers of blessing.
27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall
yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall
know that I *am* the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their
yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served
themselves of them.
28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the
beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none
shall make *them* afraid.
29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no
more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of
the heathen any more.
30 Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God *am* with them, and
that they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, saith the Lord
God.
31 And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men, *and* I *am* your
God, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-35

The Prophecy against Mount Seir

1 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
2 Son of 36man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy
against it,

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatenings we had before (Eze 25:8); but here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has woes of its own.

The prophet must boldly set his face against Edom, and prophesy particularly against it; for the God of Israel has said, O Mount Seir! I am against thee. Note, Those that have God against them have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers, nor dare they prophesy any good to them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

I. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, Eze 35:5. God espouses his people's cause, and will plead it, takes what is done against them as done against himself, and will reckon for it; and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites.

1. Because of the enmity they had against the people of God, that was rooted in the heart. "Thou hast had a perpetual hatred to them, to the very name of an Israelite." The Edomites kept up an hereditary malice against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birth-right and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him (Ge 33:1-20), and we do not find that ever he quarrelled with him again. But the posterity of Esau would never be reconciled to the seed of Jacob, but hated them with a perpetual hatred.

Note, Children will be more apt to imitate the vices than the virtues of their parents, and to tread in the steps of their sin than in the steps of their repentance. Parents should therefore be careful not to set their children any bad example, for though, through the grace of God, they may return, and prevent the mischief of what they have done amiss to themselves, they may not be able to obviate the bad influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last; but it is not to be wondered at that

profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Ge 3:15) will continue to the end. Marvel not if the world hate you.

2. Because of the injuries they had done to the people of God. They shed their blood by the force of the sword, in the time of their calamity; they did not attack them as fair and open enemies, but laid wait for them, to cut off those of them that had escaped (Ob 1:14), or they drove them back upon the sword of the pursuers, by which they fell. It was cowardly, as well as barbarous, to take advantage of their distress; and for neighbours, with whom they had lived peaceably, to smite them secretly when strangers openly invaded them. It was in the time that their iniquity had an end, when the measure of it was full and destruction came.

Note, Even those that suffer justly, and for their sins, are yet to be pitied and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

II. What should be the effect and issue of that controversy. If God stretch out his hand against the country of Edom, he will make it most desolate, Eze 35:3. Desolation and desolation.

1 The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword (Eze 35:6): I will prepare thee unto blood. Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength the more effectually to subdue it. Thus preparation is in the making a great while before for this destruction. Thou hast not hated blood; it implies, "Thou hast delighted in it and thirsted after it." Those that do not keep up a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong, will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, "Unless thou hatest blood" (that is, "unless thou dost repent, and put off this bloody disposition) blood shall pursue thee." And then it is an intimation that the judgment may yet be

prevented by a thorough reformation. If he turn not, he will whet his sword, Ps 7:12.

But, if he turn, he will lay it by. Blood shall pursue thee, the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed or the judgment of blood; thy blood-thirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seekest to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Idumeans, such as had been foretold (Isa 34:6): The mountains and hills, the valleys and rivers, shall be filled with the slain, Eze 35:8. The pursuers shall overtake those that flee and shall give no quarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. Satia te sanguine quem sitisti--Glut thyself with blood, after which thou hast thirsted.

2 The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed (Eze 35:4), the country made most desolate (Eze 35:7); for God will cut off from both him that passes out and him that returns; and when the inhabitants are cut off that should keep the cities in repair they will decay and go into ruins, and when those are cut off that should till the land that will soon be over-run with briers and thorns and become a wilderness. Note, Those that help forward the desolations of Israel may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which completes the judgment is that Edom shall be made perpetual desolations (Eze 35:9) and the cities shall never return to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion.

Note, Those that have a perpetual enmity to God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can expect no other than to be made a perpetual desolation. Implacable malice will justly be punished with irreparable ruin.

3 and say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O mount Seir, I *am* against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate.

4 I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt
know that I *am* the Lord.
5 Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed *the blood of*
the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their
calamity, in the time *that their* iniquity *had* an end:
6 therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto
blood, and blood shall pursue thee: since thou hast not hated
blood, even blood shall pursue thee.
7 Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him
that passeth out and him that returneth.
8 And I will fill his mountains with his slain *men:* in thy hills, and in
thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with
the sword.
9 I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not
return: and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.
10 Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries
shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the Lord was there:

Here is, I. A further account of the sin of the Edomites, and their bad conduct towards the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for setting on the Babylonians, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, Rase it, rase it, down with it, down with it (Ps 137:7), inflaming a rage that needed no spur; here it is further charged upon them that they triumphed in Jerusalem's ruin and in the desolations of the country. Many blasphemies they spoke against the mountains of Israel, saying, with pride and pleasure, They are laid desolate, Eze 35:12.

Note, The troubles of God's church, as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corruptions of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of. Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed,

1. From a sinful passion against the people of Israel; from anger and envy, and hatred against them (Eze 35:11), that perpetual hatred spoken of Eze 35:5. Though they were not a match for

them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldeans did them a mischief.

2. From a sinful appetite to the land of Israel. They pleased themselves with hopes that when the people of Israel were destroyed they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make out something of a title to it, ob defectum sanguinis--for want of other heirs. If Jacob's issue fail, they think that they are next in the entail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue: "These two nations of Judah and Israel shall be mine.

Now is the time for me to put in for them." At least they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours: We will possess it when it is deserted. Ceditur occupanti--Let us get possession and that will be title enough.

Note, Those have the spirit of Edomites who desire the death of others because they hope to get by it, or are pleased with their failing because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses, and crosses, that others meet with in it, instead of showing ourselves, upon such an occasion, greedy of it, we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it and lower our expectations from it. But in this case of the Edomites' coveting the land of Israel, and gaping for it, there was a particular affront to God, when they said, "These lands are given us to devour, and we shall have our bellies full of their riches." God says, You have boasted against me and have multiplied your words against me; for they expected possession upon a vacancy, because Israel was driven out, whereas the Lord was still there, Eze 35:10.

His temple indeed was burnt, and the other tokens of his presence were gone; but his promise to give that land to the seed of Jacob for an inheritance was not made void, but remained in full force

and virtue; and by that promise he did in effect still keep possession for Israel, till they should in due time be restored to it. That was Immanuel's land (Isa 8:8); in that land he was to be born, and therefore that people shall continue in it of whom he is to be born, till he has passed his time in it, and then let who will take it. The Lord is there, the Lord Jesus is to be there; and therefore Israel's discontinuance of possession is no defeasance of their right, but it shall be kept for them, and they shall have, hold, and enjoy it by virtue of the divine grant, till the promise of this Canaan shall by the Messiah be changed into the promise of a far better.

Note, It is a piece of presumption highly offensive to God for Edomites to lay claim to those privileges and comforts that are peculiar to God's chosen Israel and are reserved for them. It is blasphemy against the mountains of Israel, the holy mountains, to say, because they are for the present made a prey of and trodden under foot of the Gentiles (Re 11:2), even the holy city itself, that therefore the Lord has forsaken them, their God has forgotten them. The apostle will by no means admit such a thought as this, that God hath cast away his people, Ro 11:1. No; though they are cast down for a time, they are not cast off for ever. Those reproach the Lord who say they are.

II The notice God took of the barbarous insolence of the Edomites, and the doom passed upon them for it: I have heard all thy blasphemies, Eze 35:12. And again (Eze 35:13), You have multiplied your words against me, and I have heard them, I have observed them, I have kept an account of them.

Note, In the multitude of words, not one escapes God's cognizance; let men speak ever so much, ever so fast, though they multiply words, which they themselves regard not, but forget immediately, yet none of them are lost in the crowd, not the most idle words; but God hears them, and will be able to charge the sinner with them. All the haughty and hard speeches, particularly, which are spoken against the Israel of God, the words which are

magnified (as it is in the margin, Eze 35:13) as well as the words which are multiplied, God takes notice of. For, as the most trifling words are not below his cognizance, so the most daring are not above his rebuke. I have heard all thy blasphemies.

This is a good reason why we should bear reproach as if we heard it not, because God will hear, Ps 38:13,15. God has heard the Edomites' blasphemy; let them therefore hear their doom, Eze 35:14,15. It was a national sin (the blasphemies charged upon them were the sense and language of all the Edomites), and therefore shall be punished with a national desolation. And,

1. It shall be a distinguishing punishment. As God has peculiar favours for Israelites, so he has peculiar plagues for Edomites: so that "When the whole earth rejoices I will make thee desolate; when other nations have their desolations repaired, to their joy, thine shall be perpetual," Eze 35:9.

2 The punishment shall answer to the sin: "As thou didst rejoice in the desolation of the house of Israel, God will give thee enough of desolation; since thou art so fond of it, thou shalt be desolate; I will make thee so." Note, Those who, instead of weeping with the mourners, make a jest of their grievances, may justly be made to weep like the mourners, and themselves to feel the weight, to feel the smart, of those grievances which they set so light by. Some read Eze 35:14 so as to complete the resemblance between the sin and the punishment: The whole earth shall rejoice when I make thee desolate, as thou didst rejoice when Israel was made desolate. Those that are glad at the death and fall of others may expect that others will be glad of their death, of their fall.

3. In the destruction of the enemies of the church God designs his own glory, and we may be sure that he will not come short of his design.

(1.) That which he intends is to manifest himself, as a just and jealous God, firm to his covenant and faithful to his people and

their injured cause (Eze 35:11): I will make myself known among them when I have judged thee. The Lord is and will be known by the judgments which he executes.

(2.) His intention shall be fully answered; not only his own people shall be made to know it to their comfort, but even the Edomites themselves, and all the other enemies of his name and people, shall know that he is the Lord, Eze 35:4,9,15. As the works of creation and common providence demonstrate that there is a God, so the care taken of Israel shows that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is that God alone, the true and living God.

11 therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord God, I will even do according to
thine anger, and according to thine envy, which thou hast used out
of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among
them, when I have judged thee.
12 And thou shalt know that I *am* the Lord, *and that* I have heard all
thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of
Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.
13 Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have
multiplied your words against me: I have heard *them*.
14 Thus saith the Lord God; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will
make thee desolate.
15 As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because
it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O
mount Seir, and all Idumea, *even* all of it: and they shall know that I
am the Lord.

Ezekiel-36

The Future Restoration of Israel

The prophet had been ordered to set his face towards the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them, Eze 6:2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now that

God is returning in mercy to them he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, Eze 36:1,4.

You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord; and what he says to them he says to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken, Eze 36:4,6. The people were gone, some one way and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains and valleys; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them. The earth abides for ever.

Now, to show the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place, which, if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would not have called upon to hear the word of the Lord, nor would he as at this time have shown it such things as these. Here is,

I The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It has become both a prey and a derision to the heathen that are round about, Eze 36:4.

1. It has become a prey to them; and they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them all their neighbours flew to the spoil as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on (Eze 36:3): They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that you might be a possession to the heathen, to the residue of them, even such as had themselves narrowly escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite. Turba Romæ sequitur fortunam ut semper--The mob of Rome still praise the elevated and despise the fallen. It is the common dry, when a man is down, Down with him.

2. It has become a derision to them. They took all they had and laughed at them when they had done. The enemy said, "Aha! even the ancient high places are ours in possession, Eze 36:2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, neither the sanctity nor the

fortifications, of the land of Israel, are its security, but we have become masters of it all." The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it, which is an instance of a base and sordid spirit; for the more glorious and prosperity was the more piteous is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel: You are taken up in the lips of talkers and are an infamy of the people, Eze 36:3.

All the talk of the country about was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spoke of it had some peevish ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the scorning of those that were at ease and the contempt of the proud, Ps 123:4. There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people, among such people, were sure to be a reproach when the crown had fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity, in its suffering days, to be every where spoken against.

II The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly. Let us see,

1. How they dealt with the Israel of God. They carved out large possessions to themselves out of their land, out of God's land; for so indeed it was: "They have appointed my land into their possession (Eze 36:5), and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but intrenched upon God's prerogative." It was the holy land which they laid their sacrilegious hands upon. They did not own any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but cast it out for a prey, as if they had won it in a lawful war.

And this they did without any dread of God and his judgments and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the joy of all their hearts, because they got by it, and with despiteful minds to Israel that lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is all the joy of a worldly heart; and the calamities of God's people are all the joy of a despiteful mind. And those that had not an opportunity of making a prey of God's people made a reproach of them; so that they were the shame of the heathen, Eze 36:6. Every body ridiculed them and made a jest of them; and the truth is they had by their own sin made themselves vile; so that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous and very barbarous.

2. How God would deal with those who were thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He has spoken against the heathen; he has passed sentence upon them; he has determined to reckon with them for it, and this in the fire of his jealousy, both for his own honour and for the honour of his people, Eze 36:5.

Having a love for both as strong as death, he has a jealousy for both as cruel as the grave. They spoke in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them; and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak in his jealousy and in his fury, Eze 36:6. Fury is not in God; but he will exert his power against them and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will so speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure. What he says he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath. He has lifted up his hand and sworn by himself, has sworn and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this (Eze 36:7), Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame.

Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people will, sooner or later, have it burned upon themselves, perhaps in this world (either their follies or their

calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach), at furthest in that day when all the impenitent shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

III. The promises of God's favour to his Israel and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies to show himself so much the more concerned for them and ready to do them good, as David hoped that God would recompense him good for Shimei's cursing him. Let them curse, but bless thou. In this way, as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain if, the more unkind men are, the more kind God is--if, the more kindly he speaks to us by his word and Spirit, the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The prophet must say so to the mountains of Israel, which were now desolate and despised, that God is for them and will burn to them, Eze 36:9. As the curse of God reaches the ground for man's sake, so does the blessing. Now that which is promised is,

1. That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them: My people Israel are at hand to come, Eze 36:8. Though they are at a great distance from their own country, though they are dispersed in many countries, and though they are detained by the power of their enemies, yet they shall come again to their own border, Jer 31:17. The time is at hand for their return. Though there were above forty years of the seventy (perhaps fifty) yet remaining, it is spoken of as near, because it is sure, and there were some among them that should live to see it.

A thousand years are with God but as one day. The mountains of Israel are now desolate; but God will cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel, not as travellers passing over them, but as inhabitants--not tenants, but freeholders: They shall possess thee, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs; thou shalt be their inheritance. It was a type of the heavenly

Canaan, to which all God's children are heirs, every Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2. That they should afford a plentiful comfortable maintenance for their owners at their return. When the land had enjoyed her sabbaths for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful afterwards, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath rest: You shall be tilled and sown (Eze 36:9) and shall yield your fruit to my people Israel, Eze 36:8. Note, It is a blessing to the earth to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.

3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement, in their own land: The cities shall be inhabited; the wastes shall be builded, Eze 36:10. And I will settle you after your old estates, Eze 36:11. Their own sin had unsettled them, but now God's favour shall resettle them. When the prodigal son has become a penitent he is settled again in his father's house, according to his former estate. Bring hither the first robe, and put it on him. Nay, I will do better unto you now than at your beginnings. There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.

4. That the people, after their return, should be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thickly inhabited, and as well peopled, as ever. God will bring back to it all the house of Israel, even all of it (observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, Eze 36:10), all whose spirits God stirred up to return; and those only were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, though but few, in comparison, returned at first, yet

afterwards, at divers times, they all returned; and then (says God) I will multiply these men (Eze 36:10), multiply man and beast; and they shall increase, Eze 36:11. Note, God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church, though for a time it may be diminished, shall recover itself and be again replenished.

5. That the reproach long since cast up on the land of Israel by the evil spies, and of late revived, that it was a land that ate up the inhabitants of it by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite rolled away, and there should never be any more occasion for it. Canaan had got into a bad name. It had of old spued out the inhabitants (Le 18:28), the natives, the aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by those that should have put another construction upon it, Nu 13:32.

It had of late devoured the Israelites, and spued them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, It is a land which, instead of supporting its nations or tribes that inhabit it, bereaves them, overthrows them, and causes them to fall; it is a tenement which breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promises that it shall be so no more: Thou shalt no more bereave them of men (Eze 36:12), shalt devour men no more, Eze 36:14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst. Compare this with that promise, Zec 8:4.

Note, God will take away the reproach of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they hear no more the shame of the heathen (Eze 36:15), especially when it is reformed; when sin, which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then they hear no more the reproach of the people. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will be soon redressed and their honour retrieved.

1 Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and
say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord:
2 Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you,
Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession:
3 therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they
have made *you* desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that
ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are
taken up in the lips of talkers, and *are* an infamy of the people:
4 therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God;
Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the
rivers and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the cities that
are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of
the heathen that *are* round about;
5 therefore thus saith the Lord God; Surely in the fire of my jealousy
have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all
Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with
the joy of all *their* heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a
prey.
6 Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the
mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys, Thus
saith the Lord God; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in
my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen:
7 therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up mine hand,
Surely the heathen that *are* about you, they shall bear their shame.
8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches,
and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to
come.
9 For, behold, I *am* for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be
tilled and sown:
10 and I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, *even* all of
it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded:
11 and I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase
and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will
do better *unto you* than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that
I *am* the Lord.
12 Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, *even* my people Israel; and
they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and
thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them *of men.*

13 Thus saith the Lord God; Because they say unto you, Thou *land*
devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations;
14 therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy
nations any more, saith the Lord God.
15 Neither will I cause *men* to hear in thee the shame of the heathen
any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any
more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith
the Lord God.
16 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
17 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they
defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was
before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return, in due time, to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes that they were unworthy, utterly unworthy, of such a favour; therefore, to remove that discouragement, God here shows them that he would do it for them purely for his own name's sake, that he might be glorified in them and by them, that he might manifest and magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute which of all others is most his glory.

And, the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this is intended further to show that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God. To this end Christ directed all he did in that short prayer, Father, glorify thy name; and God declared it was his end in all he did in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven: I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, Joh 12:28. Now observe here,

I. How God's name had suffered both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

1. God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, Eze 36:17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. But they defiled it by their own way, their wicked way; that is our own way, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people defiles their land, renders it abominable to God and uncomfortable to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him nor with one another. What was unclean might not be made use of.

By the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us we forfeit the use of them; and, the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, nothing is pure to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary and made very things she touched ceremonially unclean, Le 15:19.

Sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which he cannot endure to look upon. They shed blood and worshipped idols (Eze 36:18) and with those sins defiled the land. For this God poured out his fury upon them, scattered them among the heathen. Their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands. Herein God was righteous, and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, nay, he did justice to his own honour, for he judged them according to their way and according to their doings, Eze 36:19.

And yet, the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that for mischief he brought them forth. Their neighbours considered them rather as a holy people than as a sinful people, and therefore took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him and put contempt upon him; and God's name was continually every day blasphemed by their oppressors, Isa 52:5.
2. When they entered into the land of the heathen God had no

glory by them there; but, on the contrary, his holy name was profaned, Eze 36:20.

(1.) It was profaned by the sins of Israel; they were no credit to their profession wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it. The name of God and his holy religion was blasphemed through them, Ro 2:24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words and the trust reposed in them, the enemies of the Lord had thereby great occasion given them to blaspheme, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous.

(2.) It was profaned by the sufferings of Israel; for from them the enemies of God took occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers and to make good his own grants. They said, in scorn, "These are the people of the land, these wicked people (you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts), these miserable people--you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours. These are the people that came out of Jehovah's land, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these those that had statues so righteous whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this the nation that is so much celebrated for a wise and understanding people, and that is said to have God so nigh unto them? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, who appear here so vile, so abject?" Thus God sold his people and did not increase his wealth by their price, Ps 44:12. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

II. Let us now see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them and then working a great salvation for them. He would have scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy, De 32:26,27. But, though they were unworthy of his compassion, yet he had pity for his own holy name, and a

thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which lay bleeding among the heathen, on that jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which the house of Israel, even in the land of their captivity, had profaned, Eze 36:21.

In pity to that God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were more scandalous there than they had been in their own land. "Therefore I will gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land, Eze 36:24. Not for your sake, because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy, but for my holy name's sake (Eze 36:22), that I may sanctify my great name," Eze 36:23.

Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name. His holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself. Nor does any thing make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it: I will sanctify my name which you have profaned. When God performs that which he has sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy: The heathen shall know that I am the Lord when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes and yours. When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe,

1. God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself; he will bring his people out of Babylon, not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake, because he will be glorified.

2. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; therefore he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it has been profaned by the commission of sin.

18 Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had
shed upon the land, and for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted
it:
19 and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed
through the countries: according to their way and according to
their doings I judged them.
20 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they
profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These *are* the
people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land.
21 But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had
profaned among the heathen, whither they went.
22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I
do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy
name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither
ye went.
23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the
heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the
heathen shall know that I *am* the Lord, saith the Lord God, when
I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.
24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of
all countries, and will bring you into your own land.
25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean:
from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.
26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within
you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I
will give you a heart of flesh.

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour (which was answered, in the Eze 36:1-24, with this, that God, in doing it, would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness), but of their unfitness for such a favour, being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. But it is further intended as a draught of

the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant.

As (Eze 34:1-31) after a promise of their return the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd, so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations, which we have as much need of for our sanctification as we have of Christ's merit for our justification.

I. God here promises that he will work a good work in them, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, Eze 36:25-27. We had promises to the same purport, Eze 11:18-20.

1. That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin (Eze 36:25): I will sprinkle clean water upon you, which signifies both the book of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that and to take away the sense of guilt (as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness) and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions, as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself clean, else his blood could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a Holy Spirit that makes us holy: From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you.

And (Eze 36:29) I will save you from all your uncleannesses. Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God and burdensome to themselves. When guilt is pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are cleansed from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being saved from it. This God promises his people here, in order to his being sanctified in them, Eze 36:23. We cannot sanctify God's name unless he sanctify our hearts, nor live to his glory, but by his grace.

2. That God would give them a new heart, a disposition of mind excellent in itself and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change in order to a universal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new Jerusalem, have a new heart and a new spirit, and these are necessary in order to their walking in newness of life. This is that divine nature which believers are by the promises made partakers of.

3. That, instead of a heart of stone, insensible and inflexible, unapt to receive any divine impressions and to return any devout affections, God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh.

4. That since, besides our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will cause them to walk in his statutes, will not only show them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom and will, and active powers, for every good work. In order to this he will put his Spirit within them, as a teacher, guide, and sanctifier. Note, God does not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us: You shall keep my judgments. If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precept.

Note, The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

II. God here promises that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, Eze 36:28. You shall be my people, and I will be your God. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God" (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God unless we be to him a people), but he has chosen us, and loved us, first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the reward; not of merit, not of works: "You shall be my people; I will make you so; I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God." And this is the foundation and top-stone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, Re 21:3,7.

III. He promises that he will bring about all that good for them which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy,

1. Then they shall return to their possessions and be settled again in them (Eze 36:28): You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it to them at first, De 7:7,8. Therefore he is gracious, because he has said that he will be so. This shall follow upon the blessed reformation God would work among them (Eze 36:33): "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance." This is God's method of mercy indeed, first to part men from their sins, and then to restore them to their comforts.

2. Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things. When they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them, then I will call for the corn and will increase it, Eze 36:29.

Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word the fruit both of the tree and of the field shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply the productions shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any a reproach to them, that they should be starved in a land so famed for fruitfulness.

But now I will lay no famine upon you; and none are under that rod without having it laid on by him. Then they shall receive no more reproach of famine, shall never be again upbraided with that, nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from the reproach of famine, but they shall have the credit of abundance. The land that had long lain desolate in the sight of all that passed by, that looked upon it, some with contempt and some with compassion, shall again be tilled (Eze 36:34), and, having long lain fallow, it will now be the more fruitful. Observe, God will call for the corn and yet they must till the ground for it.

Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for; for the promise is not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage our industry and endeavour. And such a blessing will God command on the hand of the diligent that all who pass by shall take notice of it, with wonder, Eze 36:35. They shall say, "See what a blessed change here is, how this land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, the desert turned again into a paradise,"

Note, God has honours in reserve for his people to be crowned with sufficient to counterbalance the contempt they are now loaded with, and in them he will be honoured. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land and of its products is compared (Eze 36:38) to the large flocks of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now lie waste shall be filled with flocks of men, not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over (Ps

65:13), but like the holy flock which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house.

Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for living sacrifices. Crowds are a lovely sight in God's temple.

IV. He shows what shall be the happy effects of this blessed change.

1. It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins (Eze 36:31): Then shall you remember your own evil ways and shall loathe yourselves. See here what sin is; it is an abomination, a loathsome thing, that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the first step towards repentance; it is remembering our own evil ways, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed and being particular in recapitulating them. We must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, our own evil ways, but our defects and infirmities, our doings that were not good, not so good as they should have been; not only our direct violations of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is self-loathing, a holy shame and confusion of face:

"You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, seeing how loathsome you have made yourselves in the sight of God." Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of; but our quarrelling with ourselves is in order to our being, upon good grounds, reconciled to ourselves. And, lastly, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is a sense of the mercy of God; when God settles them in the midst of plenty, then they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities.

Note, The goodness of God should overcome our badness and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of ourselves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed that will not be thus melted.

2. It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it shall bring them to a more clear knowledge of God (Eze 36:36):

"Then the heathen that are left round about you, that spoke ignorantly of God (for so all those do that speak ill of him) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities and to replant the most desolate countries, and that, though the course of his favours to his people may be obstructed for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever." They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel and his works which he has done for them: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. With us saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God.

V. He proposes these things to them, not as the recompence of their merits, but as the return of their prayers.

1. Let them not think that they have deserved it: Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you (Eze 36:22,32); no, be you ashamed and confounded for your own ways. God is doing this, all this which he has promised; it is as sure to be done as if it were done already, and present events have a tendency towards it. But then,

(1.) They must renounce the merit of their own good works, and be brought to acknowledge that it is not for their sakes that it is

done; so, when God brought Israel into Canaan the first time, an express caveat was entered against this thought. De 9:4-6, It is not for thy righteousness. It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in showing mercy he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but for his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed: Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes, which intimates that we are apt to entertain a high conceit of our own merits and are with difficulty persuaded to disclaim a confidence in them.

But, one way or other, God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy, and not their merit, that made them so; and that therefore not unto them, not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due.

(2.) They must repent of the sin of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God are not only not merited, but that they are a thousand times forfeited; and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

2. Yet let them know that they must desire and expect it (Eze 36:37): I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel. God has spoken, and he will do it, and he will be sought unto for it. He requires that his people should seek unto him, and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming towards them in ways of mercy.

(1.) They must pray for it, for by prayer God is sought unto, and enquired after. What is the matter of God's promises must be the matter of our prayers. By asking for the mercy promised we must give glory to the donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must ask, and then God will give him the heathen for his inheritance, must pray the Father, and then he

will send the Comforter; much more must we ask that we may receive.

(2.) They must consult the oracles of God, and thus also God is sought unto and enquired after. The mercy must be, not an act of providence only, but a child of promise; and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which must be both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God enquired of by Daniel, in the name of the house of Israel, when he was about to do those great things for them; he consulted the oracles of God, for he understood by books, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both what was to be expected and when; and then he set his face to seek God by prayer, Da 9:2,3.

Note, Our communion with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operations of his providence concerning us and in both he must be enquired of.

27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that *were* not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

32 Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

33 Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.

34 And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.
35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become* fenced, *and* are inhabited.
36 Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined *places, and* plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*.
37 Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet *for* this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.
38 As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-37

The Valley of Dry Bones

Here is, I The vision of a resurrection from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles (a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus--from privation to possession there is no return), that we could have no thought of it but by the word of the Lord; and that it is certain by that word that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead some have urged from this vision, "For" (say they) "otherwise it would not properly be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, as the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith touching a former deliverance," Isa 7:14. But,

1. Whether it be a confirmation or no, it is without doubt a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, besides that which it is primarily intended to be the sign of.

(1.) The resurrection of souls from the death of sin to the life or righteousness, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life, by the power of divine grace going along with the word of Christ, Joh 5:24,25.

(2.) The resurrection of the gospel church, or any part of it, from an afflicted persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New-Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace.

(3.) The resurrection of the body at the great day, especially the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal.

2. Let us observe the particulars of this vision.

(1.) The deplorable condition of these dead bones. The prophet was made,

[1.] to take an exact view of them. By a prophetic impulse and a divine power he was, in vision, carried out and set in the midst of a valley, probably that plain spoken of Eze 3:22, where God then talked with him; and it was full of bones, of dead men's bones, not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought here, and the slain left unburied till all the flesh was devoured or putrefied, and nothing left but the bones, and those disjointed from one another and dispersed. He passed by them round about, and he observed not only that they were very many (for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead), but that, lo, they were very dry, having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that have been moistened with marrow (Job 21:24), when they have been any while dead, lose all their moisture, and are dry as dust.

The body is now fenced with bones (Job 10:11), but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like those dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much

as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay unburied in the open valley, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, Re 11:8,9. The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried (Eze 39:12,15), for their destruction is final; but the bones of Israel are in the open valley, under the eye of Heaven, for there is hope in their end.

[2.] He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself (Eze 37:3): "Son of man, can these bones live? Is it a thing likely? Cast thou devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy politics to restore a captive nation?" "No," says the prophet, "I know not how it should be done, but thou knowest." He does not say, "They cannot live," lest he should seem to limit the Holy One of Israel; but, "Lord, thou knowest whether they can and whether they shall; if thou dost not put life into them, it is certain that they cannot life."

Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them, and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be effected by any counsel or power but his own.

(2.) The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones together and these dead and dry bones to life. It must be done by prophecy. Ezekiel is ordered to prophesy upon these bones (Eze 37:4,9), to prophesy to the wind. So he prophesied as he was commanded, Eze 37:7,10.

[1.] He must preach, and he did so; and the dead bones lived by a power that went along with the word of God which he preached.

[2.] He must pray, and he did so; and the dead bones were made to live in answer to prayer; for a spirit of life entered into them. See

the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both, for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers prophesy upon the dry bones. Say unto them, Live; yea, say unto them, Live; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again, O you dry bones! hear the word of the Lord. But we call in vain, still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word: Come, O breath! and breathe upon them. God's grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God's grace, and that grace must be sought by prayer.

Note, Ministers must faithfully and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To prophesy upon dry bones seems as great a penance as to water a dry stick; and yet, whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must prophesy as we are commanded, in the name of him who raises the dead and is the fountain of life.

(3.) The wonderful effect of these means. Those that do as they are commanded, as they are commissioned, in the face of the greatest discouragements, need not doubt of success, for God will own and enrich his own appointments.

[1.] Ezekiel looked down and prophesied upon the bones in the valley, and they became human bodies. First, That which he had to say to them was that God would infallibly raise them to life: Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, You shall live, Eze 37:5,6. And he that speaks the word will thereby do the work; he that says, They shall live, will make them alive: He will clothe them with skin and flesh (Eze 37:6), as he did at first, Job 10:11. He that made us so fearfully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, can in like manner new-make us, for his arm is not shortened.

Secondly, That which was immediately done for them was that they were moulded anew into shape. We may well suppose it was with great liveliness and vigour that the prophet prophesied,

especially when he found what he said begin to take effect. Note, The opening, sealing, and applying of the promises, are the ordinary means of our participation of a new and divine nature. As Ezekiel prophesied in this vision there was a noise, a word of command, from heaven, seconding what he said; or it signified the motion of the angels that were to be employed as the ministers of the divine Providence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read of the noise of their wings (Eze 1:24) and the sound of their going, 2Sa 5:24.

And, behold, a shaking, or commotion, among the bones. Even dead and dry bones begin to move when they are called to hear the word of the Lord. This was fulfilled when, upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, those whose spirits God had stirred up began to think of making use of that liberty, and getting ready to be gone. When there was a noise, behold, a shaking; when David heard the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry-trees then he bestirred himself; then there was a shaking. When Paul heard the voice saying, Why persecutest thou me? behold, a shaking of the dry bones; he trembled and was astonished. But this was not all:

The bones came together bone to his bone, under a divine direction; and, though there is in man a multitude of bones, yet of all the bones of those numerous slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, each knew and found its fellow. The dispersed bones came together and the displaced bones were knit together, the divine power supplying that to these dry bones which in a living body every joint supplies. Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the dead; the scattered atoms shall be ranged and marshalled in their proper place and order, and every bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom and power by which the bones were first formed in the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in the return of the Jews; those that were scattered in several parts of the province of Babylon came to their respective families, and all as it were by consent to the general rendezvous, in order to their return. By

degrees sinews and flesh came upon these bones, and the skin covered them, Eze 37:8.

This was fulfilled when the captives got their effects about them, and the men of their place helped them with silver, and gold, and whatever they needed for their remove, Ezr 1:4. But still there was no breath in them; they wanted spirit and courage for such a difficult and hazardous enterprise as this was of returning to their own land.

[2.] Ezekiel then looked up and prophesied to the wind, or breath, or spirit, and said, Come, O breath! and breathe upon these slain. As good have been still dry bones as dead bodies: but as for God his work is perfect; he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; therefore breathe upon them that they may live. In answer to this request, the breath immediately came into them, Eze 37:10.

Note, the spirit of life is from God; he at first in the creation breathed into man the breath of life, and so he will at last in the resurrection. The dispirited despairing captives were wonderfully animated with resolution to break through all the discouragements that lay in the way of their return and applied themselves to it with all imaginable vigour. And then they stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army; not only living men, but effective men, fit for service in the wars and formidable to all that gave them any opposition.

Note, With God nothing is impossible. He can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham and out of dead and dry bones levy an exceedingly great army to fight his battles and plead his cause.

II The application of this vision to the present calamitous condition of the Jews in captivity: These bones are the whole house of Israel, both the ten tribes and the two. See in this what they are and what they shall be.

1 The depth of despair to which they are now reduced, Eze 37:11. They all give up themselves for lost and gone; they say, "Our bones are dried, our strength is exhausted, our spirits are gone, our hope is all lost; every thing we looked for succour and relief from fails us, and we are cut off for our parts. Let who will cherish some hope, we see no ground for any." Note, When troubles continue long, hopes have been often frustrated, and all creature-confidences fail, it is not strange if the spirits sink; and nothing but an active faith in the power, promise, and providence of God will keep them from quite dying away.

2 The height of prosperity to which, notwithstanding this, they shall be advanced: "therefore, because things have come thus to the last extremity, prophesy to them, and tell them, now is God's time to appear for them. Jehovah-jireh--in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, Eze 37:12-14. Tell them,"

(1.) "That they shall be brought out of the land of their enemies, where they are as it were buried alive: I will open your graves." Those shall be restored, not only whose bones are scattered at the grave's mouth (Ps 141:7), but who are buried in the grave; though the power of the enemy is like the bars of the pit, which one would think it impossible to break through, strong as death and cruel as the grave, yet it shall be conquered. God can bring his people up from the depths of the earth, Ps 71:20.

(2.) "That they shall be brought into their own land, where they shall live in prosperity: I will bring you into the land of Israel (Eze 37:12) and place you there (Eze 37:14), and will put my spirit in you and then you shall live." Note, Then God puts spirit in us to good purpose, and so that we shall indeed live, when he puts his Spirit in us. And (lastly) in all this God will be glorified: You shall know that I am the Lord (Eze 37:13), and that I have spoken it and performed it, Eze 37:14.

Note, God's quickening the dead redounds more than any thing to his honour, and to the honour of his word, which he has magnified

above all his name, and will magnify more and more by the punctual accomplishment of every tittle of it.

1 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the
Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley
which *was* full of bones,
2 and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were*
very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry.
3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I
answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.
4 Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto
them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.
5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause
breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:
6 and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you,
and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live;
and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord.
7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there
was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together,
bone to his bone.
8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon
them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in
them.
9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of
man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from
the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they
may live.
10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into
them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding
great army.
11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house
of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost:
we are cut off for our parts.
12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God;
Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to
come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your
graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,
14 and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place
you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have
spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the Lord.

The Prophecy concerning the Reunion of Judah and Israel

15 The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,
16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it,
For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take
another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim,
and *for* all the house of Israel his companions:

Here are more exceedingly great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews after their return to their own land; but they have a further reference to the kingdom of the Messiah and the glories of gospel-times.

I. It is here promised that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love and mutual serviceableness; so that whereas, ever since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David under Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and it is to be feared there had been some clashings between them even in the land of their captivity (Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah and Judah vexing Ephraim), now it should be no longer, but there should be a coalition between them, and, notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them, they should agree to love one another and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign.

The prophet was to take two sticks, and write upon one, For Judah (including Benjamin, those of the children of Israel that were his companions), upon the other, For Joseph, including the rest of the tribes, Eze 37:16. These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into one in his hand, Eze 37:17.

The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion, as children do. Those that would know the meaning should ask the meaning of the word of God which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and divine things are represented to us; the ministers' lips should keep the knowledge hereof and the people should ask it at their mouth, Mal 2:7. It is a necessary question for grown people, as well as children, to ask, What mean you by this service, by this sign? Ex 12:26. The meaning was that Judah and Israel should become one in the hand of God, Eze 37:19.

1. They shall be one, one nation, Eze 37:22. They shall have no separate interests, and, consequently, no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance, no remains, of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect harmony between them, a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwarting one another, nay, beating and bruising one another; but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another.

Vix unita fortior--Force added to force is proportionally more efficient.

Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is to see Judah and Israel, that had long been at variance, now dwelling together in unity. Then they shall become acceptable to their God, amiable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, Isa 11:13,14.

2. They shall be one in God's hand; by his power they shall be united, and, being by his hand brought together, his hand shall keep them together, so that they shall not fly off, to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the centre of their unity and his grace the cement of it. In him, in a regard to him and in his service and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become

one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one.

Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt--Those who agree in a third agree with each other. Note, Those are best united that are one in God's hand, whose union with each other results from their union with Christ and their communion with God through him, Eph 1:10. One in us, Joh 17:21.

3. They shall be one in their return out of captivity (Eze 37:21): I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side, and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen with whom they had mingled themselves: they shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer to comply with their usages, and then they will soon agree to join together in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint-sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension, when they begin to come to themselves and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and, when they are melted, they will run all together.

It was time for them to strengthen one another when their oppressors were so busy to weaken and ruin them all. Likewise their being joint-sharers in the favour of God, and the great and common deliverance wrought out for them all, should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering, should be healing loving times.

4. They shall all be the subjects of one king, and so they shall become one. The Jews, after their return, were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks further, to the kingdom of Christ; he is that one King in allegiance to whom all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And the uniting of Jews and

Gentiles in the gospel church, their becoming one fold under Christ the one great Shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ and partition-wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them twain was made one new man, Eph 2:14,15.

II. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry; this shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even the taking away of their sin (Eze 37:23): Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, those detestable defiling things, no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin, as sin, will hate all sin. And those that are cured of their spiritual idolatry, their inordinate affection to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of all their transgressions. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry:--

1. By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it: "I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, because there they met with the occasion of sin and allurements to it." Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them, or return to them, but to save ourselves out of them, as we would out of infected places; see Zec 2:7,Re 18:4. And it is a great mercy when God, in his providence, saves us out of the dwelling-places where we have sinned, and keeps us from harm by keeping us out of harm's way, in answer to our prayer, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

2. By changing the disposition of their mind: "I will cleanse them (Eze 37:28); that is, I will sanctify them, will work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness, and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols." Those whom God has cleansed he will keep clean.

III. It is here promised that they shall be the people of God, as their God, and the subjects and sheep of Christ their King and Shepherd. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated (Eze 37:23,24) for the encouragement of the faith of Israel: They shall be my people, to serve me, and I will be their God, to save them and to make them happy. David, my servant, shall be king over them, to fight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and overrule all things that concern them for their good. He shall be their shepherd, to guide them and provide for them. Christ is this David, Israel's King of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes to walk in his judgments and to keep his statutes.

IV. It is here promised that they shall dwell comfortably, Eze 37:25,26. They shall dwell in the land of Israel; for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable.

1. They shall have it by covenant; they shall come in again upon their old title, by virtue of the grant made unto Jacob, God's servant. As Christ was David, God's servant, so the church is Jacob, his servant too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as born in God's house. He will make a covenant of peace with them (Eze 37:26), and in pursuance of that covenant he will place them, and multiply them. Note, Temporal mercies are doubly sweet when they come from the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence.

2. They shall come to it by prescription: "It is the land wherein your fathers have dwelt, and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously gratify." It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and therefore shall be theirs. They are beloved for their fathers' sakes.

3. They shall have it entailed upon them and the heirs of their body, and shall have their families built up, so that it shall not be lost for want of heirs. They shall dwell therein all their time, and never be turned out of possession, and they shall leave it for an inheritance to their children and their children's children for ever, who shall enjoy it when they are gone, the prospect of which will be a satisfaction to them.

4. They shall live under a good government, which will contribute very much to the comfort of their lives: My servant David shall be their prince for ever. This can be no other than Christ, of whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Lu 1:33. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all Christ's faithful subjects that, as his kingdom is everlasting, so he is an everlasting King, he lives to reign for ever; and, as sure and as long as he lives and reigns, they shall live and reign also.

5. The charter by which they hold all their privileges is indefeasible. God's covenant with them shall be an everlasting covenant; so the covenant of grace is, for it secures to us an everlasting happiness.

V. It is here promised that God will dwell among them; and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed: I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; my tabernacle also shall be with them, Eze 37:26,27.

1. They shall have the tokens of God's special presence with them and his gracious residence among them. God will in very deed dwell with them upon the earth, for where his sanctuary is he is; when they profaned his sanctuary he took it from them (Isa 64:11), but now that they are purified God will dwell with them again.

2. They shall have opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and so keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives.

3. They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacle they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught of the Lord.

4. Thus their covenant relation to God shall be improved and the bond of it strengthened: "I will be their God and they shall be my people, and they shall know it by having my sanctuary among them, and shall have the comfort of it."

VI. Both God and Israel shall have the honour of this among the heathen, Eze 37:26. "Now the heathen observe how Israel have profaned their own crown by their sins, and God has profaned it by his judgments; but then, when Israel is reformed and God has returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know that the Lord sanctifies Israel, has a title to them and an interest in them more than other people, because his sanctuary is, and shall be, in the midst of them."

Note, God designs the sanctification of those among whom he sets up his sanctuary. And blessed and holy are those who, enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification that the heathen may know it is no less than the almighty grace of God that sanctifies them. Such have God's sanctuary in the midst of them, the kingdom of God within them, in the principles of the spiritual life, and shall have it so for evermore in the enjoyments of an eternal life.

17 and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become
one in thine hand.
18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying,
Wilt thou not show us what thou *meanest* by these?
19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the
stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of
Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of
Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine
hand.

20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before
their eyes.
21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take
the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be
gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their
own land:
22 and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains
of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be
no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two
kingdoms any more at all:
23 neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor
with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but
I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have
sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will
be their God.
24 And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall
have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and
observe my statutes, and do them.
25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my
servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell
therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children
for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.
26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an
everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and
multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for
evermore.
27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and
they shall be my people.
28 And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel,
when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Ezekiel-38

The Prophecy against Gog

1 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

The critical expositors have enough to do here to enquire out Gog and Magog. We cannot pretend either to add to their observations or to determine their controversies. Gog seems to be the king and Magog the kingdom; so that Gog and Magog are like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off, in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria, and Asia the Less. Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that God is against him, Eze 38:2,3.

Note, God does not only see those that are now the enemies of his church and set himself against them, but he foresees those that will be so and lets them know by his word that he is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of his own name; surely their wrath shall praise him, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Ps 76:10. Let us observe here,

I The confusion which God designed to put this enemy to. It is remarkable that this is put first in the prophecy; before it is foretold that God will bring him forth against Israel it is foretold that God will put hooks into his jaws and turn him back (Eze 38:4), that they might have assurance of their deliverance before they had the prospect given them of their danger. Thus tender is God of the comfort of his people, thus careful that they may not be frightened; even before the trouble begins he tells them it will end well.

II The undertaking which he designed to engage him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment.

1 The nations that shall be confederate in this enterprise against Israel are many, and great, and mighty (Eze 38:5,6), Persia, Ethiopia, &c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations here named, and many others. These people had been at variance with one another, and yet in combination against Israel. How are those increased that trouble God's people!

2. They are well furnished with arms and ammunition, and bring a good train of artillery into the field--horses and horsemen (Eze 38:4) bravely equipped with all sorts of armour, bucklers and shields for defence, and all handling swords for offence. Orders are given to make all imaginable preparation for this expedition (Eze 38:7):

"Be thou prepared, and do thou prepare. See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and, lest that should not suffice, make further preparation, thou and all thy company," Let Gog himself be a guard to the rest of the confederates. As commander-in-chief, let him engage to take care of them and their safety; let him pass his word for their security, and take them under his particular protection. The leaders of an army, instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and presumptuously, and throwing away their lives upon desperate undertakings, should study to be a guard to them, and, whenever they send them forth in danger, should contrive to support and cover them. This call to prepare seems to be ironical--Do thy worst, but I will turn thee back; like that Isa 8:9. Gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces.

3. Their design is against the mountains of Israel (Eze 38:8), against the land that is brought back from the sword. It is not long since it was harassed with the sword of war, and it has been always wasted, more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but newly gathered out of many people, and brought forth out of the nations; it has enjoyed comparatively but a short breathing-time, has scarcely recovered any strength since it was brought down by war and captivity; and therefore its neighbours need not fear its

being too great, nay, and therefore it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon. It is a people that dwell safely, all of them, in unwalled villages, very secure, and having neither bars nor gates, Eze 38:11.

It is a certain sign that they intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear no mischief from them. It cannot be thought that those will offend others who do not take care to defend themselves; and this aggravates the sin of these invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise evil against thy neighbour while he dwells securely by thee, and has no distrust of thee, Pr 3:29. But see here how the clouds return after the rain in this world, and what little reason we have ever to be secure till we come to heaven. It is not long since Israel was brought back from the sword of one enemy, and behold the sword of another is drawn against it. Former troubles will not excuse us from further troubles; but when we think we have put off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on again; and therefore we must never boast nor be off our guard.

4. That which the enemy has in view, in forming this project, is to enrich himself and to make himself master, not of the country, but of the wealth of it, to spoil and plunder it, and make a prey of it: At the same time that God intends to bring this matter about things shall come into the mind of this enemy, and he shall think an evil thought, Eze 38:10.

Note, All the mischief men do, and particularly the mischief they do to the church of God, arises from evil thoughts that come into their mind, ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts, spiteful thoughts against those that are good, for the sake of their goodness. It came into Antiochus's mind what a singular people these religious Jews were, and how their worship witnessed against and condemned the idolatries of their neighbours, and therefore, in enmity to their religion, he would plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy people they were, that they

had gotten cattle and goods in the midst of the land (Eze 38:12), and withal how weak they were, how unable to make any resistance, how easy it would be to carry off what they had, and how much glory this rapine would add to his victorious sword; these things coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing on another, he came at last to this resolve (Eze 38:11,12):

"I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; yea, that I will; it will cost me nothing to make them all my own. I will go and disturb those that are at rest, without giving them any notice, not to crush their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence, or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they have done us (they had none of these pretences to make war upon them), but purely to take a spoil and to take a prey" (Eze 38:12), in open defiance to all the laws of justice and equity, as much as the highwayman's killing the traveller that he may take his money. These were the thoughts that came into the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew them; nay, he knew them before they came into his mind, for he understands our thoughts afar off, Ps 139:2. 5.

According to the project thus formed he pours in all his forces upon the land of Israel, and finds those that are ready to come in to his assistance with the same prospects (Eze 38:9): "Thou shalt ascent and come like a storm, with all the force, and fury, and fierceness imaginable, and thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, to darken it, and to threaten it, thou and not only all thy bands, all the force thou canst bring into the field, but many people with thee" (such as are spoken of Eze 38:13), "Sheba and Dedan, the Arabians and the Edomites, and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon and other maritime cities, they and their young lions that are greedy of spoil and live upon it, shall say, Hast thou come to take the spoil of this land?" Yes he has; and therefore they wish him success.

Or perhaps they envy him, or grudge it to him. "Hast thou come for riches who art thyself so rich already?"

Or, knowing that God was on Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, foreseeing that they would be baffled and that he would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself.

Or, if he come to take the prey, they will come and join with him, and add to his forces. When Lysias, who was general of Antiochus's army, came against the Jews, the neighbouring nations joined with him (1 Mac. iii. 41), to share in the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. When thou sawest a thief then thou consentedst with him.

2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief
prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,
3 and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against thee, O
Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:
4 and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will
bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of
them clothed with all sorts *of armor, even* a great company *with*
bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:
5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and
helmet:
6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north
quarters, and all his bands: *and* many people with thee.
7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy
company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto
them.
8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt
come into the land *that is* brought back from the sword, *and is*
gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel,
which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the
nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.
9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud
to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with
thee.
10 Thus saith the Lord God; It shall also come to pass, *that* at the same
time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil
thought:

11 and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,

12 to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are now* inhabited, and upon the people *that are* gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.

13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

This latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former; the dream is doubled, for the thing is certain and to be very carefully regarded.

I. It is here again foretold that this spiteful enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel (Eze 38:15): "Thou shalt come out of the north parts (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) with a mighty army, shalt come like a cloud, and cover the land of my people Israel," Eze 38:16. These words (Eze 38:14), When my people Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it? may be taken two ways:--

1. As intimating his inducements to this attempt. "Thou shalt have intelligence brought thee how securely, and therefore how carelessly, the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a rich, but what an easy prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them" Note, God's providence is to be acknowledged in the occasion, the small occasion perhaps, that is given, and that not designedly neither, to those first thoughts from which great enterprises take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make a bad use of, as here. Or,

2. As intimating his disappointment in this attempt, which here, as before, the prophecy begins with: "When my people Israel dwell safely, not in their own apprehension only, but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the divine protection, shalt not thou be made to know it by the fruitlessness of thy endeavours to destroy them?" Thou shalt soon find that there is no enchantment against Jacob, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; thou shalt know to thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no walls, nor bars, nor gates, they have God himself, a wall of fire, round about them, and that he who touches them touches the apple of his eye; whosoever meddles with them meddles to his own hurt.

And it is for the demonstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. Those that gathered themselves against Israel said, Let us take the spoil and take they prey, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, Mic 4:11,12.

I will bring thee against my land. This is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself bring them; but, if we understand what he aims at, we shall be well reconciled even to this: it is "that the heathen may know me to be the only living and true God when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog! that is, in thy defeat and destruction before their eyes, that all the nations may see, and say, There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens for the help of his people."

Note, God brings his people into danger and distress that he may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance, and suffers the enemies of his church to prevail awhile, though they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said, This shall be in the latter days, namely, in the latter days of the Old-Testament church; so the mischief that Antiochus did to Israel was; but in the latter days of the New-Testament church another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated.

Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into a great while hence, even in the latter days.

II. Reference is herein had to the predictions of the former prophets (Eze 38:17): Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time, of whom Moses spoke in his prophecy of the latter days (De 32:43, He will render vengeance to his adversaries), and David, Ps 9:15 (The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made) and often elsewhere in the Psalms? This is the leviathan of whom Isaiah spoke (Isa 27:1), that congress of the nations of which Joel spoke, Joe 3:1. Many of the prophets had perhaps spoken particularly of this event, though it be not written, as they all had spoken and written too that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord's prophets, though they lived in several ages, for they were all guided by one and the same Spirit.

III. It is here foretold that this furious formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel, and that it should issue in his own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Maccabees to the forces of Antiochus and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases. But these things are here foretold, as usual, in figurative expressions, which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearer the letter than we know of.

1. God will be highly displeased with this bold invader: When he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel, and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then God's fury shall come up in his face, which is an allusion to the manner of men, whose colour rises in their faces when some high affront is offered them and they are resolved to show their resentment of it, Eze 38:18. God will speak against them in his jealousy for his people and in the fire of his wrath against his and their enemies, Eze 38:19.

See how God's permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his making use of it to serve his own purposes, consist with his hatred of sin and his displeasure against it. God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an easy prey it might be and determining thereby to glorify himself; and yet, when he comes against the land, God's fury comes up, and he speaks to him in the fire of his wrath. If any ask, Why does he thus find fault? for who has resisted his will? It is easy to answer, Nay, but, O man! who art thou that repliest against God?

2. His forces shall be put into the greatest confusion and consternation imaginable (Eze 38:19): There shall be a great shaking of them in the land of Israel, a universal concussion (Eze 38:20), such as shall affect the fishes and fowls, the beasts and creeping things, and much more the men that are upon the face of the earth, who sooner receive impressions of fear. There shall be such an earthquake as shall throw down the mountains, those natural heights, and the steep places, towers and walls, those artificial heights; they shall all fall to the ground. Some understand this of the fright which the land of Israel should be put into by the fury of the enemy. But it is rather to be understood of the fright which the enemy should be put into by the wrath of God; all those things which they both raise themselves and stay themselves upon shall be shaken down, and their hearts shall fail them.

3. He shall be routed and utterly ruined; both earth and heaven shall be armed against him

(1.) The earth shall muster up its forces to destroy him. If the people of Israel have not strength and courage to resist him, God will call for a sword against him, Eze 38:21. And he has swords always at command, that are bathed in heaven, Isa 35:5. Throughout all the mountains of Israel, where he hoped to meet with spoil to enrich him, he shall meet with swords to destroy him, and, rather than fail, every man's sword shall be against his brother, as in the day of Midian, Ps 83:9. The great men of Syria shall

undermine and overthrow one another, shall accuse one another, shall fight duels with one another.

Note, God can, and often does, make the destroyers of his people to be their own destroyers and the destroyers of one another. However, he will himself be their destroyer, will take the work into his own hand, that it may be done thoroughly (Eze 38:22): I will plead against him with pestilence and blood. Note, Whom God acts against he pleads against; he shows them the ground of his controversy with them, that their mouths may be stopped, and he may be clear when he judges.

(2.) The artillery of heaven shall also be drawn out against them: I will rain upon him an overflowing rain, Eze 38:22. He comes like a storm upon Israel, Eze 38:9. But God will come like a storm upon him, will rain upon him great hailstones as upon the Canaanites (Jos 10:11), fire and brimstone as upon Sodom, and a horrible tempest, Ps 11:6. Thus the Gog and Magog in the New Testament shall be devoured with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of brimstone, Re 20:9,10. That will be the everlasting portion of all the impenitent implacable enemies of God's church and people.

4. God, in all this, will be glorified. The end he aimed at (Eze 38:16) shall be accomplished (Eze 38:23): Thus will I magnify myself and sanctify myself. Note, In the destruction of sinners God makes it to appear that he is a great and holy God, and he will do so to eternity. And, if men do not magnify and sanctify him as they ought, he will magnify himself, and sanctify himself; and this we should desire and pray for daily, Father, glorify thy own name.

14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith
the Lord God; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth
safely, shalt thou not know *it?*
15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou,
and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great
company, and a mighty army:
16 and thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to
cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee

against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.

17 Thus saith the Lord God; *Art* thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days *many* years, that I would bring thee against them?

18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, *that* my fury shall come up in my face.

19 For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

20 so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that *are* upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountans shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

21 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother.

22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that *are* with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Ezekiel-39

1 Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

This prophecy begins as that before (Eze 39:38:3, I am against thee, and I will turn thee back); for there is need of line upon line, both for the conviction of Israel's enemies and the comfort of Israel's friends. Here, as there, it is foretold that God will bring this enemy from the north parts, as formerly the Chaldeans were

fetched from the north, Jer 1:14 (Omne malum ab aquilone--Every evil comes from the north), and, long after, the Roman empire was overrun by the northern nations, that he will bring him upon the mountains of Israel (Eze 39:2), first as a place of temptation, where the measures of his iniquity shall be filled up, and then as a place of execution, where his ruin shall be completed. And that is it which is here enlarged upon.

1. His soldiers shall be disarmed and so disabled to carry on their enterprise. Though the men of might may find their hands, yet to what purpose, when they find it is put out of their power to do mischief, when God shall smite their bow out of their left hand and their arrow out of their right? Eze 39:3. Note, The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper.

2. He and the greatest part of his army shall be slain in the field of battle (Eze 39:4): Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel; there they sinned, and there they shall perish, even upon the holy mountains of Israel, for there broke he the arrows of the bow, Ps 76:3. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened, and fattened, and made fruitful, with the blood of the enemies. "Thou shalt fall upon the open field (Eze 39:5) and shalt not be able even there to make thy escape." Even upon the mountains he shall not find a pass that he shall be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He and his bands; his regular troops, and the people that are with him that follow the camp to share in the plunder, shall all fall with him.

Note, Those that cast in their lot among wicked people (Pr 1:14), that they may have one purse with them, must expect to take their lot with them, and fare as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made that but a sixth part shall be left (Eze 39:2), the other five shall all be cut off. Never was army so totally routed as this. And, for its greater infamy and reproach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, Eze 39:4. Compare Eze 39:17, Thou shalt fall, for I have

spoken it. Note, Rather shall the most illustrious princes (Antiochus was called Epiphanes--the illustrious) and the most numerous armies fall to the ground than any word of God; for he that has spoken will make it good.

3. His country also shall be made desolate: I will send a fire on Magog (Eze 39:6) and among those that dwell carelessly, or confidently, in the isles, that is, the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to destroy the land of Israel, but shall not only be defeated in that design, but shall have his own destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other people's rights justly lose their own. 4. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name,

(1.) Among his people Israel; they shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness, his care of them, his faithfulness to them. His providence concerning them shall lead them into a better acquaintance with him; every providence should do so, as well as every ordinance: I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people. In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God should know more of him; we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name as a holy name. They shall know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude and that hates all sin, and then it follows, I will not let them pollute my holy name any more.

Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name will not dare to profane it; for it is through ignorance of it that men make light of it and make bold with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men, first to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole man; he first makes us to know his holy name, and so keeps us from polluting it and engages us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he completes his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people and reforms them. When

the Almighty scattered kings for her she was white as snow in Salmon, Ps 68:14.

(2.) Among the heathen; those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. They shall be made to know by dearbought experience that he is a God of power, and his people's God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him and prospered.

2 and I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel:

3 and I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that *is* with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and *to* the beasts of the field, to be devoured.

5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken *it,* saith the Lord God.

6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I *am* the Lord.

7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not *let them* pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I *am* the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.

8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this *is* the day whereof I have spoken.

Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain (Eze 39:8): "Behold it has come, and it is done; it is as sure to be done when the time shall come as if it were done already; this is the day whereof I have long and often spoken, and, though it has been long in coming, yet at length it has come."

Thus it was said unto John (Re 21:6), It is done. To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things

specified as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave the defeat; we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword or struck a stroke: but,

I. They shall burn their weapons, their bows and arrows, which fell out of their hands (Eze 39:3), their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, leading staves, truncheons, and half-pikes, every thing that is combustible. They shall not lay them up in their armouries, nor reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but they shall burn them; not all at once, for a bonfire (to what purpose would be that waste?) but as they had occasion to use them for fuel in their houses, instead of other fire-wood, so that they should have no occasion to take wood out of the field or forests for seven years together (Eze 39:10), such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field where the enemy fell, and in the roads which they passed in their flight.

The weapons were dry and fitter for fuel than green wood; and, by saving the wood in their coppices and forests, they gave it time to grow. Though the mountains of Israel produce plenty of all good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them, as Providence shall give them opportunity to do so.

We may suppose that when those who dwelt in the cities of Israel came forth to spoil those who spoiled them, and make reprisals upon them, they found upon them silver, and gold, and ornaments; yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use but the wood of the weapons for fuel, which is one of the necessaries of human life, to teach us to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, though we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it and of those things which we may very well live without.

And every time they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them (their fire-side), they might from it take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.

II. They shall bury their dead. Usually, after a battle, when many are slain, the enemy desire time to bury their own dead. But here the slaughter shall be so general that there shall not be a sufficient number of the enemies left alive to bury the dead. And, besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel that it would be a work of time to find them out; and therefore it is left to the house of Israel to bury them as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

1. A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying of them, the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea, either the salt sea or the sea of Tiberias, a valley through which there was great passing and repassing of travellers between Egypt and Chaldea. There shall be such a multitude of dead bodies, putrefying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers who go that way shall be forced to stop their noses. See what vile bodies ours are; when the soul has been a little while from them the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous or more noxious. There therefore where the greatest number lay slain shall the burying-place be appointed. In the place where the tree falls there let it lie.

And it shall be called, The valley of Hamon-gog, that is, of the multitude of Gog; for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance. How numerous the forces of the enemy were which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel!

2. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them, no less than seven months (Eze 39:12), which is a further intimation that the slain of the Lord in this action should be many and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they might cleanse the land from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corpses unburied in it, for the prevention of which it was appointed that those who were hanged on a tree should be speedily taken down and buried, De 21:23. This is an intimation that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the saving of a land from ruin the more the inhabitants should do for the cleansing of the land from sin.

3. Great numbers shall be employed in this work: All the people of the land shall be ready to lend a helping hand to it, Eze 39:13.

Note, Every one should contribute the utmost he can in his place towards the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy, which every man should take up arms against. In publico discrimine unusquisque homo miles est--In the season of public danger every man becomes a soldier.

And whoever shall assist in this work it shall be to them a renown; though the office of grave-makers, or common scavengers of the country, seem but mean, yet, when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour.

Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel; it is a credit to religion when those that profess it are ready to every good work; and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. It shall be a renown to them in the day when God will be glorified.

Note, It is for the glory of God when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will see their good works and glorify their Father, Mt 5:16. And when God is honoured he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them that should remain unburied. The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollutions of the country, and therefore they shall appoint men of continual employment, that shall apply themselves to it and do nothing else till the land be thoroughly cleansed; for, otherwise, that which is every one's work would soon become nobody's work.

Note, Those that are engaged in public work, especially for the cleansing and reforming of a land, ought to be men of continual employments, men that will stick to what they undertake and go through with it, men that will apply themselves to it; and those that will do good according to their opportunities will find themselves continually employed.

5. Even the passengers shall be ready to give information to those whose business it is to cleanse the land of what public nuisances they meet with, which call for their assistance. Those that pass through the land, though they will not stay to bury the dead themselves, lest they should contract a ceremonial pollution, will yet give notice of those that they find unburied. If they but discover a bone, they will set up a sign, that the buriers may come and bury it, and that, till it is buried, others may take need of touching it, for which reason their sepulchres among the Jews were whitened, that people might keep at a distance from them.

Note, When good work is to be done every one should lend a hand to further it, even the passengers themselves, who must not think themselves unconcerned, in a common calamity, or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it.

Those whose work it is to cleanse the land must not countenance any thing in it that is defiling; though it were not the body, but only the bone, of a man, that was found unburied, they must encourage those who will give information of it (private information, by a sign, concealing the informer), that they may take it away, and bury it out of sight. Nay, after the end of seven months, which was allowed them for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this they shall give a new name to their city. It shall be called Hamonah--The multitude. O what a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! Thus shall they cleanse the land, with all this care, with all this pains, Eze 39:16.

Note, After conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites that had been employed in the war with the Midianites to purify themselves, Nu 31:24. Having received special favours from God, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

III. The birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcases of the slain while they remain unburied and it shall be impossible to prevent them, Eze 39:17, &c. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, Re 19:17, &c., which is borrowed from this.

1. There is a general invitation given, Eze 39:17. It is to the fowl of every wing and to every beast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that preys upon carcases, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog; let them all gather themselves on every side; here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast; so the margin reads it.

Note, The judgments of God, executed upon sin and sinners, are both a sacrifice and a feast, a sacrifice to the justice of God and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people. When God broke the head of leviathan, he gave him to be meat to Israel, Ps 74:14. The righteous shall rejoice as at a feast when he sees the vengeance, and shall wash his foot, as at a feast, in the blood of the wicked. This

sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel; these are the high places, the altars, where God has been dishonoured by the idolatries of the people, but where he will now glorify himself in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made: They shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, Eze 39:18,19.

(1.) It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God his Maker.

(2.) It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams, and bullocks, and great goats, all of them fatlings of Bashan. It is the blood of the princes of the earth that they shall regale themselves with. What a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they call themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood, which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey!

(3.) It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as sheep for the slaughter, and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the dead bodies of Gods' servants (Ps 79:2), or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full (Eze 39:19): "You shall eat fat, and drink blood, which are satiating surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly: You shall be filled at my table."

Note, God keeps a table for the inferior creatures; he provides food for all flesh. The eyes of all wait upon him, and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table.

And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he has prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and chariots; that is, those who ride in the chariots, mighty men and men of war, who triumphed over nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley and the young eagles, Pr 30:17.

They thought to make an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil pursues sinners even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey is but a type and sign of those terrors which, after death, shall prey upon their consciences (which the poetical fictions represented by a vulture continually pecking at the heart), and this shame is but an earnest of the everlasting shame and contempt they shall rise to.

IV. This shall redound very much both to the glory of God and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people.

1. It shall be much for the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord (Eze 39:21): All the heathen shall see and observe my judgments that I have executed, and thereby my glory shall be set among them. This principle shall be admitted and established among them more than ever, that the God of Israel is a great and glorious God. He is known to be so even among the heathen, that have not, or read not, his written word, by the judgments which he executes.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people; for they shall hereby be made to know that he is their God (Eze 39:22): The house of Israel shall know, abundantly to their comfort, that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward.

(1.) He will be so from that day and forward. God's present mercies are pledges and assurances of further mercies. If God evidence to

us that he is our God he assures us that he will never leave us. This God is our God for ever and ever.

(2.) They shall know it with more satisfaction from that day and forward. They had sometimes been ready to question whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events of this day shall silence their doubts, and, the matter being thus settled and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set
on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the
bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they
shall burn them with fire seven years:
10 so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down
any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire:
and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that
robbed them, saith the Lord God.
11 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will give unto Gog a
place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the
east of the sea; and it shall stop the *noses* of the passengers: and
there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call
it, The valley of Hamon-gog [the multitude of Gog].
12 And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them,
that they may cleanse the land.
13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury *them;* and it shall be to
them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God.
14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing
through the land, to bury with the passengers those that remain
upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven
months shall they search.
15 And the passengers *that* pass through the land, when *any* seeth a
man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have
buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.
16 And also the name of the city *shall be* Hamonah [the multitude]
Thus shall they cleanse the land.

17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.
18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.
19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.
20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God.
21 And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.
22 So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the Lord their God from that day and forward.
23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and has reference not only to the predictions concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the prophecies of this book concerning the captivity of the house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

I. God will let the heathen know the meaning of his people's troubles, and rectify the mistake of those concerning them who took occasion from the troubles of Israel to reproach the God of Israel, as unable to protect them and untrue to his covenant with them. When God, upon their reformation and return to him, turned again their captivity, and brought them back to their own land, and, upon their perseverance in their reformation, wrought such great salvations for them as that from the attempts of Gog upon them, then it would be made to appear, even to the heathen that would but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all

for their reflection, that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had by sin forfeited his favour and thrown themselves out of his protection (Eze 39:23,24):

The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, that iniquity which they learned from the heathen their neighbours, because they trespassed against God. That was the true reason why God hid his face from them and gave them into the hand of their enemies. It was according to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions. Now the evincing of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to his honour; when the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God when the world is made to know,

1. That God punishes sin even in his own people, because he hates it most in those that are nearest and dearest to him, Am 3:2. It is the praise of justice to be impartial.

2. That, when God gives up his people for a prey, it is to correct them and reform them, not to gratify their enemies, Isa 10:7,42:24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves.

3. That no sooner do God's people humble themselves under the rod than he returns in mercy to them.

II. God will give his own people to know what great favour he has in store for them notwithstanding the troubles he had brought them into (Eze 39:25,26): Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob.

1. Why now? Now God will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel,

(1.) Because it is time for him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings: Now will I be jealous for my holy name, that that may no longer be reproached.

(2.) Because now they repent of their sins: They have borne their shame, and all their trespasses. When sinners repent, and take shame to themselves, God will be reconciled and put honour upon them. It is particularly pleasing to God that these penitents look a great way back in their penitential reflections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of when they dwelt safely in their land and none made them afraid. The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their own land, and the divine protection they were under there, shall be improved as an aggravation of the sins they committed in that land; they dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none should have given them any disquiet or disturbance if they had continued in the way of their duty.

Nay, therefore they trespassed because they dwelt safely. Outward safety is often a cause of inward security, and that is an inlet to all sin, Ps 73:1-28 Now this they are willing to bear the shame of, and acknowledge that God has justly brought them into a land of trouble, where every one makes them afraid, because they had trespassed against him in a land of peace, where none made them afraid. And, when they thus humble themselves under humbling providences, God will bring again their captivity: and,

2. What then? When God has gathered them out of their enemies' hands, and brought them home again,

(1.) Then God will have the praise of it: I will be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, Eze 39:27. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be sanctified in their reformation and the making of them a holy people again, and will be glorified in their restoration and the making of them a happy glorious people again.

(2.) Then they shall have the benefit of it (Eze 39:28): They shall know that I am the Lord their God. Note, The providences of God concerning his people, that are designed for their good, have the grace of God going along with them to teach them to eye God as the Lord, and their God, in all; and then they do them good. They shall eye him as the Lord and their God,

[1.] In their calamities, that it was he who caused them to be led into captivity; and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it.

[2.] In their comfort, that it is he who has gathered them to their own land, and left none of them among the heathen. Note, By the variety of events that befal us, if we look up to God in all, we may come to acquaint ourselves better with his various attributes and designs.

(3.) Then God and they will never part, Eze 39:29.

[1.] God will pour out his Spirit upon them, to prevent their departures from him and returns to folly again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then,

[2.] He will never hide his face any more from them, will never suspend his favour as he had done; he will never turn from doing them good, and, in order to that, he will effectually provide that they shall never turn from doing him service.

Note, The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of the continuance of God's favour. He will hide his face no more from those on whom he has poured out his Spirit. When therefore we pray that God would never cast us away from his presence we must as earnestly pray that, in order to that, he would never take his Holy Spirit away from us, Ps 51:11.

24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them.

25 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;
26 after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made *them* afraid.
27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;
28 then shall they know that I *am* the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.
29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-40

The Prophet's Vision of the Temple

1 In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither.

Here is,

1 The date of this vision. It was in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity (Eze 40:1), which some compute to be the thirty-third year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the fourteenth year after the city was smitten. See how seasonably the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given, when they were in the depth of their distress, and an assurance of the return of the morning when they were in the midnight of their captivity: "Then the hand of the Lord was upon me and brought me thither to Jerusalem, now that it was in ruins, desolate and deserted"--a pitiable sight to the prophet.

2 The scene where it was laid. The prophet was brought, in the visions of God, to the land of Israel, Eze 40:2. And it was not the first time that he had been brought thither in vision. We had him carried to Jerusalem to see it in its iniquity and shame (Eze 8:3); here he is carried thither to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, though its present aspect, now that it was quite depopulated, was dismal. He was set upon a very high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, to view this land, which was now a second time a land of promise, not yet in possession.

From the top of this mountain he saw as the frame of a city, the plan and model of it; but this city was a temple as large as a city. The New Jerusalem (Re 21:22) had no temple therein; this which we have here is all temple, which comes much to one. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heaven men dwell with God. Both these are framed in the counsel of God, framed by infinite wisdom, and all very good.

3. The particular discoveries of this city (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass (Eze 40:3), not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might both discover and build the gospel-temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with and access to the benefits and privileges of God's house. He it is that shall build the temple of the Lord, Zec 6:13. His appearing like brass intimates both his brightness and his strength. John, in vision, saw his feet like unto fine brass, Re 1:15.

4. The dimensions of this city or temple, and the several parts of it, were taken with a line of flax and a measuring reed, or rod (Eze 40:3), as carpenters have both their line and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule; and those that would let others into the knowledge of it must do it by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the scripture, the pattern in the mount. That is the line and the measuring reed that is in the hand

of Christ. With that doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that; for then peace is upon the Israel of God when they walk according to that rule.

5. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord and transmit it pure and entire to the church, Eze 40:4.

(1.) He must carefully observe every thing that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged (Eze 40:4): "Behold with thy eyes all that is shown thee (do not only see it, but look intently upon it), and hear with thy ears all that is said to thee; diligently hearken to it, and be sure to set thy heart upon it; attend with a fixedness of thought and a close application of mind." What we see of the works of God, and what we hear of the word of God, will do us no good unless we set out hearts upon it, as those that reckon ourselves nearly concerned in it, and expect advantage to our souls by it.

(2.) He must faithfully declare it to the house of Israel, that they may have the comfort of it. Therefore he receives, that he may give. Thus the Revelation of Jesus Christ was lodged in the hands of John, that he might signify it to the churches, Re 1:1. And, because he is to declare it as a message from God, he must therefore be fully apprised of it himself and much affected with it.

Note, Those who are to preach God's word to others ought to study it well themselves and set their hearts upon it. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself and declare it to the house of Israel is because to this intent he is brought hither, and has it shown to him. Note, When the things of God are shown to us it concerns us to consider to what intent they are shown to us, and, when we are sitting under the ministry of the word, to consider to what intent we are brought thither, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God, in showing us such things, in vain.

2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south.

3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, *there was* a man, whose appearance *was* like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.

4 And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show *them* unto thee *art* thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

5 And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits *long* by the cubit and a handbreadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.

The measuring-reed which was in the hand of the surveyor-general was mentioned before, Eze 40:3. Here we are told (Eze 40:5) what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was measured by it. It was six cubits long, reckoning, not by the common cubit, but the cubit of the sanctuary, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit that this holy house should be measured, and that was a hand-breadth (that it, four inches) longer than the common cubit: the common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty-two, see Eze 43:13.

Yet some of the critics contend that this measuring-reed was but six common cubits in length, and one handbreadth added to the whole. The former seems more probable. Here is an account,

I. Of the outer wall of the house, which encompassed it round, which was three yards thick and three yards high, which denotes the separation between the church and the world on every side and the divine protection which the church is under. If a wall of this vast thickness will not secure it, God himself will be a wall of fire round about it; whoever attack it will do so at their peril.

II. Of the several gates with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the court of the Gentiles, some think because in gospel-times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church that their court should be left unmeasured, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be unnumbered, Re 7:9,11,12.

1. He begins with the east gate, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple, the holy of holies being at the west end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen that worshipped towards the east. Now, in the account of this gate, observe,

(1.) That he went up to it by stairs (Eze 40:6), for the gospel-church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to worship God we must ascend; so is the call, Re 4:1. Come up hither. Sursum corda--Up with your hearts.

(2.) That the chambers adjoining to the gates were but little chambers, about ten feet square, Eze 40:7. These were for those to lodge in who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such as are made spiritual priests to God to content themselves with little chambers and not to seek great things to themselves; so that we may but have a place within the verge of God's court we have reason to be thankful though it be in a little chamber, a mean apartment, though we be but door-keepers there.

(3.) The chambers, as they were each of them four-square, denoting their stability and due proportion and their exact agreement with the rule (for they were each of them one reed long and one reed broad), so they were all of one measure, that there might be an equality among the attendants on the service of the house.

(4.) The chambers were very many; for in our Father's house there are many mansions (Joh 14:2), in his house above, and in that

here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, Ps 27:4,5. Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers, which are parts of the great temple, the universal church, which are, and must be, framed by the scripture-line and rule, and which Jesus Christ takes the measure of, that is, takes cognizance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candle-sticks.

(5.) It is said (Eze 40:14), He made also the posts. He that now measured them was the same that made them; for Christ is the builder of his church and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge of it. And his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his making them, for no account is made of them further than they agree with that. To the law and to the testimony.

(6.) Here are posts of sixty cubits, which, some think, was literally fulfilled when Cyrus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, that is, thirty yards and more, Ezr 6:3.

(7.) Here were windows to the little chambers, and windows to the posts and arches (that is, to the cloisters below), and windows round about (Eze 40:16), to signify the light from heaven with which the church is illuminated; divine revelation is let into it for instruction, direction, and comfort, to those that dwell in God's house, light to work by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by. There were lights to the little chambers; even the least, and least considerable, parts and members of the church, shall have light afforded them. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. But they are narrow windows, as those in the temple, 1Ki 6:4. The discoveries made to the church on earth are but narrow and scanty compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly.

(8.) Divers courts are here spoken of, an outermost of all, then an outer court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into

which the priests only entered, which (some think) may put us in mind "of the diversities of gifts, and graces, and offices, in the several members of Christ's mystical body here, as also of the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of heaven, as there are stars in several spheres and stars of several magnitudes in the fixed firmament." English Annotations. Some draw nearer to God than others and have a more intimate acquaintance with divine things; but to a child of God a day in any of his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. These courts had porches, or piazzas, round them, for the shelter of those that attended in them from wind and weather; for when we are in the way of our duty to God we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection, that he will graciously provide for us, nay, that he will himself be to us a covert from the storm and tempest, Isa 4:5,6.

(9.) On the posts were palm-trees engraven (Eze 40:16), to signify that the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree in the courts of God's house, Ps 92:12. The more they are depressed with the burden of affliction the more strongly do they grow, as they say of the palm-trees. It likewise intimates the saints' victory and triumph over their spiritual enemies; they have palms in their hands (Re 7:9); but lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the posts of the temple as perpetual monuments of their honour. Thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph. Nay, believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out, and shall have his name engraven on them, which will be their brightest ornament and honour, Re 3:12.

(10.) Notice is here taken of the pavement of the court, Eze 40:17,18. The word intimates that the pavement was made of porphyry--stone, which was of the colour of burning coals; for the brightest and most sparkling glories of this world should be put and kept under our feet when we draw near to God and are attending upon him. The stars are, as it were, the burning coals, or stones of a fiery colour, with which the pavement of God's celestial temple is laid; and, if the pavement of the court be so

bright and glittering, how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be!

2 The gates that looked towards the north (Eze 40:20) and towards the south (Eze 40:24), with their appurtenances, are much the same with that towards the east, after the measure of the first gate, Eze 40:21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in Exodus, and of the temple in the books of Kings and Chronicles, to signify the special notice God does take, and his ministers should take, of all that belong to his church. His delight is in them; his eye is upon them. He knows all that are his, all his living temples and all that belongs to them. Observe,

(1.) This temple had not only a gate towards the east, to let into it the children of the east, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom, but it had a gate to the north, and another to the south, for the admission of the poorer and less civilized nations. The new Jerusalem has twelve gates, three towards each quarter of the world (Re 21:13); for many shall come from all parts to sit down there, Mt 8:11.

(2.) To those gates they went up by steps, seven steps (Eze 40:22-26), which, as some observe, may remind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another, going from step to step, from strength to strength, still pressing forward towards perfection--upward, upward, towards heaven, the temple above.

6 Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and
went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate,
which was one reed broad; and the other threshold *of the gate, which*
was one reed broad.
7 And *every* little chamber *was* one reed long, and one reed broad;
and between the little chambers *were* five cubits; and the threshold
of the gate by the porch of the gate within *was* one reed.
8 He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed.

9 Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts
thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate *was* inward.
10 And the little chambers of the gate eastward *were* three on this side,
and three on that side; they three *were* of one measure: and the posts
had one measure on this side and on that side.
11 And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits;
and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits.
12 The space also before the little chambers *was* one cubit *on this side,*
and the space *was* one cubit on that side: and the little chambers
were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side.
13 He measured then the gate from the roof of *one* little chamber to
the roof of another: the breadth *was* five and twenty cubits, door
against door.
14 He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the
court round about the gate.
15 And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the
porch of the inner gate *were* fifty cubits.
16 And *there were* narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their
posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and
windows *were* round about inward: and upon *each* post *were* palm
trees.
17 Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, *there were*
chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty
chambers *were* upon the pavement.
18 And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of
the gates *was* the lower pavement.
19 Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate
unto the forefront of the inner court without, a hundred cubits
eastward and northward.
20 And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north,
he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof.
21 And the little chambers thereof *were* three on this side and three on
that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after
the measure of the first gate: the length thereof *was* fifty cubits, and
the breadth five and twenty cubits.
22 And their windows, and their arches, and their palm trees, *were* after
the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went
up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof *were* before them.

23 And the gate of the inner court *was* over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate a hundred cubits.

24 After that he brought me toward the south, and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures.

25 And *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.

26 And *there were* seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof *were* before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

27 And *there was* a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south a hundred cubits.

In these verses we have a delineation of the inner court. The survey of the outer court ended with the south side of it. This of the inner court begins with the south side (Eze 40:27), proceeds to the east (Eze 40:32), and so to the north (Eze 40:35); for here is no gate either of the outer or inner court towards the west. It should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters towards the west, 1Ch 9:24,26:8. But Josephus says that in the second temple there was no gate on the west side. Observe,

1. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court, the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, the galleries or rows round the court the same, and the very engravings on the posts the same. The work of grace, and its workings, are the same, for substance, in grown Christians that they are in young beginners, only that the former have got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike precious, though it be not alike strong. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for all they are brethren and bear the same image.

2 The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by seven steps, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by eight steps.

This is expressly taken notice of (Eze 40:31,34,37), to signify that the nearer we approach to God the more we should rise above this world and the things of it. The people, who worshipped in the outer court, must rise seven steps above other people, but the priests, who attended in the inner court, must rise eight steps above them, must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

28 And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures;

29 and the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad.

30 And the arches round about *were* five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad.

31 And the arches thereof *were* toward the outer court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.

32 And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures.

33 And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, *were* according to these measures: and *there were* windows therein and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad.

34 And the arches thereof *were* toward the outward court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.

35 And he brought me to the north gate, and measured *it* according to these measures;

36 the little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.

37 And the posts thereof *were* toward the outer court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps.

38 And the chambers and the entries thereof *were* by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt offering.

39 And in the porch of the gate *were* two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering.

40 And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, *were* two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate, *were* two tables.

In these verses we have an account,

I. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the inner court. We find no description of the altars of burnt-offerings in the midst of that court till Eze 39:43:13. But, because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the gospel, here is early notice taken of the tables, at our entrance into the inner court; for till we come to partake of the table of the Lord we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the inner court. But in this gospel-temple we meet with no altar till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our altar, that sanctifies every gift. Here were eight tables provided, whereon to slay the sacrifices, Eze 40:41.

We read not of any tables for this purpose either in the tabernacle or in Solomon's temple. But here they are provided, to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel-times, and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up those sacrifices. Here were the shambles for the altar; here were the dressers on which they laid the flesh of the sacrifice, the knives with which they cut it up, and the hooks on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar (Eze 40:43), and there also they washed the burnt-offerings (Eze 40:38), to intimate that before we draw near to God's altar we must have every thing in readiness, must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual sacrifices, and so compass God's altar.

II The use that some of the chambers mentioned before were put to. 1. Some were for the singers, Eze 40:44. It should seem they

were first provided for before any other that attended this temple-service, to intimate, not only that the singing of psalms should still continue a gospel-ordinance, but that the gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and praise, and give them occasion to break forth into singing, which is often foretold concerning gospel times, Ps 96:1,98:1. Christians should be singers. Blessed are those that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. 2. Others of them were for the priests, both those that kept the charge of the house, to cleanse it, and to see that none came into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair (Eze 40:45), and those that kept the charge of the altar (Eze 40:46), that came near to the Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house shall enjoy the comforts of it.

III. Of the inner court, the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, Eze 40:47. The altar that was before the house was placed in the midst of this court, over-against the three gates, and, standing in a direct line with the three gates of the outer court, when the gates were set open all the people in the outer court might through them be spectators of the service done at the altar. Christ is both our altar and our sacrifice, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is salvation in the midst of the earth (Ps 74:12), to be looked unto from all quarters.

IV. Of the porch of the house. The temple is called the house, emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely, and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch, ere we enter into the house. Between this porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, Joe 2:17. In the porch, besides the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz--He will

establish; in him is strength, Eze 40:49. In the gospel church every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place and to be done decently and in order.

41 Four tables *were* on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew *their sacrifices.*

42 And the four tables *were* of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice.

43 And within *were* hooks, a hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables *was* the flesh of the offering.

44 And without the inner gate *were* the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which *was* at the side of the north gate; and their prospect *was* toward the south: one at the side of the east gate *having* the prospect toward the north.

45 And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect *is* toward the south, *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house.

46 And the chamber whose prospect *is* toward the north *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these *are* the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him.

47 So he measured the court, a hundred cubits long, and a hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar *that was* before the house.

48 And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured *each* post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate *was* three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side.

49 The length of the porch *was* twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and *he brought me* by the steps whereby they went up to it: and *there were* pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

Ezekiel-41

1 Afterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts,
six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other
side, *which was* the breadth of the tabernacle.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the guidance of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts he was at length brought to the temple, Eze 41:1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Those that are willing to dwell in God's courts shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright privilege of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him by introducing him into this prophetical, evangelical, celestial temple, and employing him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spoke of the destroying of this temple, which his hearers understood of this second temple of Jerusalem, he spoke of the temple of his body (Joh 2:19,21); and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the house of God (1Ti 3:15), and all the members of that body, which are living temples, in which the Spirit dwells.

3. The very posts of this temple, the door-posts, were as far one from the other, and consequently the door was as wide, as the whole breadth of the tabernacle of Moses (Eze 41:1), namely, twelve cubits, Ex 26:16,22,25. In comparison with what had been under the law we may say, Wide is the gate which leads into the

church, the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, Eze 41:4. For the new Jerusalem is exactly square (Re 21:16), denoting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved. 5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, Eze 41:7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have fast hold (though God builds high, he builds firmly), yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening of another; they had hold, but not in the wall of the house.

By this spreading gradually, the side-chambers that were on the height of the house (in the uppermost story of all) were six cubits, whereas the lowest were but four; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

2 And the breadth of the door *was* ten cubits; and the sides of the door *were* five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits.

3 Then went he inward, and measured the post of the door, two cubits; and the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits.

4 So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, This *is* the most holy *place.*

5 After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of *every* side chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side.

6 And the side chambers *were* three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which *was* of the house for the side chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house.

7 And *there was* an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house *was still* upward, and so increased *from* the lowest *chamber* to the highest by the midst.

8 I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers *were* a full reed of six great cubits.

9 The thickness of the wall, which *was* for the side chamber without, *was* five cubits: and *that* which *was* left *was* the place of the side chambers that *were* within.

10 And between the chambers *was* the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side.

11 And the doors of the side chambers *were* toward *the place that was* left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that was left *was* five cubits round about.

12 Now the building that *was* before the separate place at the end toward the west *was* seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits.

Here is,

1. An account of a building that was before the separate place (that is, before the temple), at the end towards the west (Eze 41:12), which is here measured, and compared (Eze 41:13) with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured (Eze 41:15) and its galleries, or chambers belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, Eze 41:15-17. But what use was to be made of this other building we are not told; perhaps, in this vision, it signified the setting up of a church among the Gentiles not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it.

2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with cherubim and palm-trees, placed alternately, as in Solomon's

temple, 1Ki 6:29. Each cherub is here said to have two faces, the face of a man towards the palm tree on one side and the face of a young lion towards the palm-tree on the other side, Eze 41:19. These seem to represent the angels, who have more than the wisdom of a man and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, 1Co 11:10.

3. A description of the posts of the doors both of the temple and of the sanctuary; they were squared (Eze 41:21), not round like pillars; and the appearance of the one was as the appearance of the other. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary, or most holy, was narrower than that of the temple, but here it was fully as broad; for in gospel-times the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest than it was under the Old Testament (Heb 9:8) and therefore the door is wider. These doors are described, Eze 41:23,24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them its door, and they were two-leaved, folding doors.

4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an altar of wood, Eze 41:22. No mention is made of its being over-laid with gold; but surely it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned, unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else it intimates that the incense to be offered in the gospel-temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table. This is the table that is before the Lord. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for, the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do is to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

5. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, Eze 41:25,26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold, or

silver, or costly array, but with the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible.

13 So he measured the house, a hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, a hundred cubits long;

14 also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, a hundred cubits.

15 And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which *was* behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, a hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court;

16 the doorposts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows *were* covered;

17 to that above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure.

18 And *it was* made with cherubim and palm trees, so that a palm tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub; and *every* cherub had two faces;

19 so that the face of a man *was* toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: *it was* made through all the house round about.

20 From the ground unto above the door *were* cherubim and palm trees made, and *on* the wall of the temple.

21 The posts of the temple *were* squared, *and* the face of the sanctuary; the appearance *of the one* as the appearance *of the other.*

22 The altar of wood *was* three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, *were* of wood: and he said unto me, This *is* the table that *is* before the Lord.

23 And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors.

24 And the doors had two leaves *apiece,* two turning leaves; two *leaves* for the one door, and two leaves for the other *door.*

25 And *there were* made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubim and palm trees, like as *were* made upon the walls; and *there were* thick planks upon the face of the porch without.

26 And *there were* narrow windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and *upon* the side chambers of the house, and thick planks.

Ezekiel-42

1 Then he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that *was* over against the separate place, and which *was* before the building toward the north.

The prophet has taken a very exact view of the temple and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the outer court, to observe the chambers that were in that square.

I. Here is a description of these chambers, which (as that which went before) seems to us very perplexed and intricate, through our unacquaintedness with the Hebrew language and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe, in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of public worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances will not excuse us from the duties of the closet. We must not only worship in the courts of God's house, but must, both before and after our attendance there, enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read and meditate, and pray to our Father in secret; and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were many; there were three stories of them, and, though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, Eze 42:5,6. There were many, that there might be conveniences for all such devout people as Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple night or day, Lu 2:37. In my Father's house are many mansions. In his house on earth there are so; multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet there is room.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within view of it, within reach of it, to teach us to prefer public worship before private (the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so must we), and to refer our private worship to the public. Our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in public, and to further us in our improvement of them, as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were walks of five yards broad (Eze 42:4), in which those that had lodgings in these chambers might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences. For we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both. But man is made for society, and Christians for the communion of saints; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was high priest in the second temple, that God will give him places to walk in among those that stand by, Zec 3:7.

II. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, Eze 42:13,14.

1. They were for the priests that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business and may not be non-residents. Therefore they are called holy chambers, because they were for use of those that ministered in holy things during their ministration. Those that have public work to do for God and the souls of men have need to be much in private, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their profiting may appear; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit the most holy things, those parts of the offerings which fell to their share; and there they were

to eat them, they and their families, in a religious manner, for the place is holy; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals. 3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar, their linen ephods, coats, girdles, and bonnets. We read of the providing of priests garments after their return out of captivity, Ne 7:70,72.

When they had ended their service at the altar they must lay by those garments, to signify that the use of them should continue only during that dispensation; but they must put on other garments, such as other people wear, when they approached to those things which were for the people, that is, to do that part of their service which related to the people, to teach them the law and to answer their enquiries. Their holy garments must be laid up, that they may be kept clean and decent for the credit of their service.

2 Before the length of a hundred cubits *was* the north door, and the
breadth *was* fifty cubits.
3 Over against the twenty *cubits* which *were* for the inner court, and
over against the pavement which *was* for the outer court, *was*
gallery against gallery in three *stories.*
4 And before the chambers *was* a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a
way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north.
5 Now the upper chambers *were* shorter: for the galleries were higher
than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the
building.
6 For they *were* in three *stories,* but had not pillars as the pillars of the
courts: therefore *the building* was straitened more than the lowest
and the middlemost from the ground.
7 And the wall that *was* without over against the chambers, toward
the outer court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof
was fifty cubits.
8 For the length of the chambers that *were* in the outer court *was* fifty
cubits: and, lo, before the temple *were* a hundred cubits.
9 And from under these chambers *was* the entry on the east side, as
one goeth into them from the outer court.

10 The chambers *were* in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building.

11 And the way before them *was* like the appearance of the chambers which *were* toward the north, as long as they, *and* as broad as they: and all their goings out *were* both according to their fashions, and according to their doors.

12 And according to the doors of the chambers that *were* toward the south *was* a door in the head of the way, *even* the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them.

13 Then said he unto me, The north chambers *and* the south chambers, which *are* before the separate place, they *be* holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the Lord shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place *is* holy.

14 When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy *place* into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they *are* holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to *those things* which *are* for the people.

15 Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east, and measured it round about.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread extends; and that also is here measured, and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

1. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way 500 reeds (Eze 42:16-19), each reed above three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground lying square, was above four miles round. Thus large were the suburbs (as I may call them) of this mystical temple, signifying the great extent of the church in gospel-times, when all nations should be discipled and the kingdoms of the world made Christ's kingdoms. Room should be made in God's

courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles that shall flow into them, as was foretold, Isa 49:18,60:4. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in and all Israel shall be saved.

2. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large. It was to make a separation, by putting a very large distance between the sanctuary and the profane place; and therefore there was a wall surrounding it, to keep off those that were unclean and to separate between the previous and the vile. Note, A difference is to be put between common and sacred things, between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances; and a distance is to be put between our worldly and religious actions, so as still to go about the worship of God with a solemn pause.

16 He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about.
17 He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about.
18 He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed.
19 He turned about to the west side, *and* measured five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed.
20 He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred *reeds* long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

Ezekiel-43

The Glory of the Lord Fills the Temple

1 Afterward he brought me to the gate, *even* the gate that looketh toward the east:

After Ezekiel has patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted to a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said

to him, Come up hither. He has seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but, till the glory of God comes into it, it is but like the dead bodies he had seen in vision (Eze 37:1-28), that had no breath till the Spirit of life entered into them. Here therefore he sees the house filled with God's glory.

I. He has a vision of the glory of God (Eze 43:2), the glory of the God of Israel, that God who is in covenant with Israel, and whom they serve and worship. The idols of the heathen have no glory but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel. This glory came from the way of the east, and therefore he was brought to the gate that leads towards the east, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ's star was seen in the east, and he is that other angel that ascends out of the east, Re 7:2. For he is the morning star, he is the sun of righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God:--

1 The power of his word which he heard: His voice was like a noise of many waters, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of purling streams is grateful, of a roaring sea dreadful, Re 1:15,14:2. Christ's gospel, in the glory of which he shines, was to be proclaimed aloud, the report of it to be heard far; to some it is a savour of life, to others of death, according as they are.

2 The brightness of his appearance which he saw: The earth shone with his glory; for God is light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none has seen nor can see it. Note, That glory of God which shines in the church shines on the world. When God appeared for David the brightness that was before him dispersed the clouds, Ps 18:12. This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel he observed to be the same with the vision he saw when he first received his commission (Eze 1:4), according to that by the river Chebar (Eze 43:3); because God is the same, he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is no variableness. "It was the same" (says he) "as that which

I saw when I came to destroy the city, that is, to foretel the city's destruction," which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to destroy it.

As a judge, in God's name, he passed a sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner when he sent him to speak words of terror and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is and will be glorified. He kills and he makes alive; he wounds and he heals, De 32:39. To the same hand that destroyed we must look for deliverance. He has smitten, and he will bind up. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit--The same hand inflicted the wound and healed it.

II. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory he fell upon his face (Eze 43:3), as not able to bear the lustre of God's glory, or rather as one willing to give him the glory of it by a humble and reverent adoration. But the Spirit took him up (Eze 43:5) when the glory of the Lord had come into the house (Eze 43:4), that he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord in this same appearance departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple to his great satisfaction. See Eze 10:18,19,11:23.

Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with everlasting loving-kindness. God's glory filled the house as it had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up and the temple of Solomon, Ex 40:34,1Ki 8:10. Now we do not find that ever the Shechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have its accomplishment in that glory of the divine grace which shines so brightly in the gospel church, and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now with open face behold the glory of the Lord, in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

2 and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of
the east: and his voice *was* like a noise of many waters: and the
earth shined with his glory.
3 And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw,
even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the
city: and the visions *were* like the vision that I saw by the river
Chebar; and I fell upon my face.
4 And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the
gate whose prospect *is* toward the east.
5 So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and,
behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.

The Ordinances of the Temple

6 And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and the man
stood by me.

God does here, in effect, renew his covenant with his people Israel, upon his retaking possession of the house, and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return both for direction and encouragement; but it looks further, to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel-temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

I. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This conviction is spoken to them to make way for the comforts designed them. Though God gives and upbraids not, it becomes us, when he forgives, to upbraid ourselves with our unworthy conduct towards him. Let them now remember therefore,

1. That they had formerly defiled God's holy name, had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, Eze 43:7. They and their kings had brought contempt on the religion they professed, and their relation to God, by their spiritual whoredom, their idolatry, and by worshipping

images, which they called their kings (for so Moloch signifies) or lords (for so Baal signifies), but which were really the carcases of kings, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable as dead carcases, in their high places, set up in honour of them. They had defiled God's name by their abominations.

And what were they? It was in setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, that is, adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Isa 29:13); or, rather, setting up altars to their idols even in the courts of the temple, than which a more impudent affront could not be put upon the divine Majesty. Thus they set up a separation wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their walls in opposition to his, and thrusting him out from what is his right; and see what injury they do to themselves, for the nearer any come to God with their sins the further they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it:

Though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to hi, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, there was but a wall between me and them (so it is in the margin), so that it might have been expected they would acquaint themselves with him and be in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourly.

Note, It often proves too true, The nearer the church the further from God. They were, by profession, in covenant with God, and yet they had defiled the place of his throne and of the soles of his feet, his temple, where he did both reside and reign. Jerusalem is called the city of the great king (Ps 48:2) and his footstool, Ps 99:5,132:7. Note, When God's ordinances are profaned his holy name is polluted.

2. That for this God had had a controversy with them in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins: Wherefore I have consumed them in my anger. Note, Those that pollute God's holy name fall under his just displeasure.

II. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and, in order to that, to be ashamed of their iniquities (Eze 43:9): "Now let them put away their whoredom; now that they have smarted so severely for it, and now that God is returning in mercy to them and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols and have no more to do with them, that they may not again forfeit the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of them. Let them put away their idols, those loathsome carcases of their kings, far from me, from being a provocation to me." This was seasonable counsel now that the prophet had the model or pattern of the temple to set before them; for,

1. If they see that pattern, they will surely be ashamed of their sins (Eze 43:10): when they see what mercy God has in store for them, notwithstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous conduct towards him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them measure the pattern themselves, and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them; and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then,

2. If they be ashamed of their sins, they shall surely see more of the pattern, Eze 43:11. If they be ashamed of all that they have done, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct particular account of the temple. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God shall see and know more of it. And then, and not till then, we are qualified for God's favours, when we are truly humbled for our own follies.

"Show them the form of the house; let them see what a stately structure it will be; and withal show them the ordinances and laws of it." Note, With the foresights of our comforts it is fit that we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God's house we must acquaint ourselves with the rules of it. Show them these ordinances, that they may keep them and do them.

Note, Therefore we are made to know our duty, that we may do it, and be blessed in our deed.

III. He promises that they shall be such as they should be, and then he will be to them such as they would have him to be, Eze 43:7.

1 The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name. This is pure gospel. The precept of the law says, You must not defile my name: the grace of the gospel says, You shall not. Thus what is required in the covenant is promised in the covenant, Jer 32:40.

2. Then I will dwell in the midst of them for ever; and the same again Eze 43:9. God secures to us his good-will be confirming in us his good work. If we do not defile his name, we may be sure that he will not depart from us.

IV. The general law of God's house is laid down (Eze 43:12), That, whereas formerly only the chancel, or sanctuary, was most holy, now the whole mountain of the house shall be so; the whole limit thereof, including all the courts and all the chambers, shall be as the most holy place, signifying that in gospel-times,

1 The whole church shall have the privilege of the holy of holies, that of a near access to God. All believers have now, under the gospel, boldness to enter into the holiest (Heb 10:19), with this advantage, that whereas the high priest entered in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and, wherever we are, we have through him access to the Father.

2 The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press towards the perfection of holiness, as he who has called us is holy. All must now be most holy. Holiness becomes God's house for ever, and in gospel-times more than ever. Behold this is the law of the house; let none expect the protection of it that will not submit to this law.

7 And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, *neither* they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places.

8 In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.

9 Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.

10 Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern.

11 And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, show them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write *it* in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.

12 This *is* the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about *shall be* most holy. Behold, this *is* the law of the house.

13 And these *are* the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit *is* a cubit and a handbreadth; even the bottom *shall be* a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about *shall be* a span; and this *shall be* the higher place of the altar.

This relates to the altar in this mystical temple, and that is mystical too; for Christ is our altar. The Jews, after their return

out of captivity, had an altar long before they had a temple, Ezr 3:3. But this was an altar in the temple. Now here we have,

I The measures of the altar, Eze 43:13. It was six yards square at the top and seven yards square at the bottom; it was four yards and a half high; it had a lower bench or shelf, here called a settle, a yard from the ground, on which some of the priests stood to minister, and another two yards above that, on which others of them stood, and these were each of them half a yard broad, and had ledges on either side, that they might stand firmly upon them. The sacrifices were killed at the table spoken of before, Eze 40:39. What was to be burnt on the altar was given up to those on the lower bench, and handed by them to those on the higher, and they laid it on the altar. Thus in the service of God we must be assistant to one another.

II The ordinances of the altar. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning the dedication of the altar at first. Seven days were to be spent in the dedication of it, and every day sacrifices were to be offered upon it, and particularly a goat for a sin-offering (Eze 43:25), besides a young bullock for a sin-offering on the first day (Eze 43:19), which teaches us in all our religious services to have an eye to Christ the great sin-offering. Neither our persons nor our performances can be acceptable to God unless sin be taken away, and that cannot be taken away but by the blood of Christ, which both sanctifies the altar (for Christ entered by his own blood, Heb 9:12) and the gift upon the altar.

There were also to be a bullock and a ram offered for a burnt-offering (Eze 43:24), which was intended purely for the glory of God, to teach us to have an eye to that in all our services; we present ourselves as living sacrifices, and our devotions as spiritual sacrifices, that we and they may be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. The dedication of the altar is here called the cleansing and purging of it, Eze 43:20,26. Christ, our altar, though he had no pollution to be cleansed from, yet

sanctified himself (Joh 17:19); and when we consecrate the altars of our hearts to God, to have the fire of holy love always burning upon them, we must see that they be purified and cleansed from the love of the world and the lusts of the flesh.

It is observable that there are several differences between the rites of dedication here and those which were appointed Ex 29:1-46, to intimate that the ceremonial institutions were mutable things, and the changes in them were earnests of their period in Christ. Only here, according to the general law, that all the sacrifices must be seasoned with salt (Le 2:13), particular orders are given (Eze 43:24) that the priests shall cast salt upon the sacrifices. Grace is the salt with which all our religious performances must be seasoned, Col 4:6. An everlasting covenant is called a covenant of salt, because it is incorruptible. The glory reserved for us is incorruptible and undefiled; and the grace wrought in us is the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible.

2. Concerning the constant use that should be made of it, when it was dedicated: Henceforward the priests shall make their burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon this altar (Eze 43:27), for therefore it was sanctified, that it might sanctify the gift that was offered upon it. Observe further,

(1.) Who were to serve at the altar: The priests of the seed of Zadok, Eze 43:19. That family was substituted in the room of Abiathar by Solomon, and God confirms it. His name signifies righteous, for they are the righteous seed that are priests to God, through Christ the Lord our righteousness.

(2.) How they should prepare for this service (Eze 43:26): They shall consecrate themselves, shall fill their hand with the offerings, in token of the giving up of themselves with their offerings to God and to his service. Note, Before we minister to the Lord in holy things we must consecrate ourselves by getting our hands and hearts filled with those things.

(3.) How they should speed in it (Eze 43:27): I will accept you. And if God now accept our works, if our services be pleasing to him, it is enough, we need no more. Those that give themselves to God shall be accepted of God, their persons first and then their performances, through the Mediator.

14 And from the bottom *upon* the ground *even* to the lower settle *shall be* two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle *even* to the greater settle *shall be* four cubits, and the breadth *one* cubit.

15 So the altar *shall be* four cubits; and from the altar and upward *shall be* four horns.

16 And the altar *shall be* twelve *cubits* long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof.

17 And the settle *shall be* fourteen *cubits* long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it *shall be* half a cubit; and the bottom thereof *shall be* a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east.

18 And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God; These *are* the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon.

19 And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock for a sin offering.

20 And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put *it* on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it.

21 Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary.

22 And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse *it* with the bullock.

23 When thou hast made an end of cleansing *it*, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish.

24 And thou shalt offer them before the Lord, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up *for* a burnt offering unto the Lord.

25 Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat *for* a sin offering:
they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock,
without blemish.
26 Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall
consecrate themselves.
27 And when these days are expired, it shall be, *that* upon the eighth
day, and *so* forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings
upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith
the Lord God.

Ezekiel-44

1 Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward
sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it *was* shut.
2 Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be
opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord the God
of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.
3 *It is* for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before
the Lord ; he shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and
shall go out by the way of the same.
4 Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and
I looked, and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the
Lord : and I fell upon my face.

This is much to the same purport with what we had in the beginning of Eze 43:1-31 As the prophet must look again upon what he had before seen, so he must be told again what he had before heard. Here, as before, he sees the house filled with the glory of the Lord, which strikes an awe upon him, so that he falls prostrate at the sight, the humblest posture of adoration and the expression of a holy awe: I fell upon my face, Eze 44:4. Note, The more we see of the glory of God the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

I. God charges the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him (Eze 44:5): "Behold with thy eyes what is shown thee, particularly the entering in of the house and every going forth of it, all the inlets and all the outlets of the sanctuary;" those he must take special notice of.

Note, In acquainting ourselves with divine things we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of the things themselves as at finding the plain appointed way of converse and communion with those things, that we may go in and out and find pasture.

Hear with thy ears all that I say unto thee about the laws and ordinances of the house, which he was to instruct the people in. Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers have need to be very diligent careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are entrusted with nor mistake concerning them.

II. He sends him upon an errand to the people, to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Eze 44:6. It is sad to think that the house of Israel should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew them, that a people in covenant with God should be rebellious against him. Who are his subjects if the house of Israel be rebels? But it is an instance of God's rich mercy that, though they had been rebellious, yet, being the house of Israel, he does not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them, to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, which he would not have done if he had been pleased to kill them. The whole race of mankind has fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel; but our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also, that, as here, the Lord God might dwell among them, Ps 68:18.

1. He must tell them of their faults, must show them their rebellions, must show the house of Jacob their sins. Note, Those that are sent to comfort God's people must first convince them, and so prepare them for comfort. Let it suffice you of all your abominations, Eze 44:6. Note, It is time for those that have continued long in sin to reckon it long enough, and too long, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. "Let the time past of your lives suffice, for by this time, surely, you have surfeited upon

your abominations and have become sick of them," 1Pe 4:3. That which is here charged upon them is,

(1.) That they had admitted those to the privileges of the sanctuary that were not entitled to them; whereas God had said, The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death, they had not only connived at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but had themselves introduced them (Eze 44:7): You brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh, and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary, which was a breaking of the covenant of circumcision, throwing down the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world.

Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, though they were not circumcised, the crime would not have been so great; but they were uncircumcised in heart too, unhumbled, unreformed, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice they brought these with them to feast with them upon the sacrifice, because they were fond of their company, and this was one of their abominations, wherewith they polluted God's sanctuary; it was giving that which was holy unto dogs, Mt 7:6.

Note, The admission of those who are openly wicked and profane to special ordinances is a polluting of God's sanctuary and a great provocation to him.

(2.) That they had employed those in the service of the sanctuary who were not fit for it. Though none but priests and Levites were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all who were priests and Levites did not immediately attend there, but chosen men of them, who were best qualified, who were most wise, serious, and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully; but, in making this choice, they had not regard to merit and qualification for the work: "You have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves, such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you either had got, or hoped to get, money by, or such as would comply with your humours and would

dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you; thus you have not kept the charge of my holy things."

Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if, to serve some secular selfish purpose, they choose such as are unfit and unfaithful, will justly have it laid at their door, that they have betrayed the holy things by lodging them in bad hands.

2. He must tell them their duty (Eze 44:9): "No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary till he has first submitted to the laws of it." But, lest any should think that this excluded the penitent believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is uncircumcised in heart, not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, Col 2:11.

This circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles, witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought Greeks into the temple, Ac 21:28.

5 And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

6 And thou shalt say to the rebellious, *even* to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations,

7 in that ye have brought *into my sanctuary* strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even* my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.

8 And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have
set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.
9 Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart,
nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any
stranger that *is* among the children of Israel.
10 And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went
astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall
even bear their iniquity.

The Master of the house, being about to set up house again, takes account of his servants the priests, and sees who are fit to be turned out of their places and who to be kept in, and takes a course with them accordingly.

I. Those who have been treacherous are degraded and put lower those Levites--or priests who were carried down the stream of the apostasy of Israel formerly, who went astray from God after their idols (Eze 44:10), who had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, who ministered to them before their idols (Eze 44:12), bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them, as Urijah did for Ahaz, and so caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, led them to sin and hardened them in sin; for, if the priests go astray, many will follow their pernicious ways. Perhaps in Babylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion.

Now these priests who had thus prevaricated were justly put under the mark of God's displeasure; or, if they were dead (as it is probable that they were, if the crime were committed before the captivity), the iniquity was visited upon their children. Or perhaps it was the whole family of Abiathar that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it. And,

1. They are sentenced to be deprived, in part, of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition or ordinary Levites. God has lifted up his hand against them, has said it, and sworn it, that they shall bear their iniquity (Eze 44:12); assuredly they shall suffer for it, shall suffer disgrace for it; they

shall bear their shame (Eze 44:13), for though they have (we charitably hope) repented of it, yet they shall not come near to do the office of a priest, that is, those parts of the office that were peculiar to them, they shall not come near to any of the holy things within the sanctuary, Eze 44:13.

Note, those who have robbed God of his honour will justly be deprived of their honour. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to come near to God; and justly might those who have once gone away from him be rejected as unworthy ever to come near to him and put at an everlasting distance.

2. Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence. God deals not in severity, as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, Eze 44:11,14. They are deprived but in part, ab officio--of their office, and, it should seem, not at all à beneficio--of their emoluments. They shall help to slay the sacrifice, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar, but at the tables, Eze 40:29. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall be keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof. Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service may yet be fit to be employed in another; and even those who have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

II. Those who have been faithful are honoured and established, Eze 44:15,16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other: "But the sons of Zadok, who kept their integrity in a time of general apostasy, who went not astray when others did, they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table." Note, God will put marks of honour upon those who give proofs of their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking trying times, and will employ those in his service who have kept close to his service when others deserted it and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability in duty to be established in it. If we keep close to God, God will keep us close to him.

11 Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, *having* charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them.

12 Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity.

13 And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy *place:* but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.

14 But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein.

15 But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God:

16 they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

17 And it shall come to pass, *that* when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within.

God's priests must be regulars, not seculars; and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given,

I. Concerning their clothes; they must wear linen garments when they went in to minister or do any service in the inner court, or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was woollen, because it would cause sweat, Eze 44:17,18. They must dress themselves cool, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves

clean and sweet, and avoid every thing that was sweaty and filthy, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended to. Sweat came in with sin and was part of the curse.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. Clothes came in with sin, coats of skins did; and therefore the priests must use as little and as light clothing as possible, and not such as caused sweat. When they had finished their service they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, Eze 44:19, as before, Eze 42:14. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; or, They shall sanctify the people, that is (as it is explained, Eze 42:14), they shall approach to those things which are for the people, in their ordinary garments.

II. Concerning their hair; in that they must avoid extremes on both hands (Eze 44:20): They must not shave their heads, in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they suffer their locks to grow long, as the beaux, or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must poll their heads and keep their hair short. If a man, especially a minister, wear long hair, it is not becoming (1Co 11:14); it is effeminate.

III. Concerning their diet; they must be sure to drink no wine when they went in to minister, lest they should rink to excess, should drink and forget the law, Eze 44:21. It is not for kings to drink wine, more than will do them good, much less for priests. See Le 10:9,Pr 31:4,5.

IV. Concerning their marriages, Eze 44:22. Here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been divorced, that was at least under the suspicion of immodesty, nor a widow, unless she were a priest's widow, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priests' families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in

honour of their character. Their wives as well as themselves must be of good report.

V. Concerning their preaching and church-government.

1. It was part of their business to teach the people; and herein they must approve themselves both skilful and faithful (Eze 44:23): They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither scruple what is lawful nor venture upon what is unlawful, that they may not pollute what is holy nor pollute themselves with what is profane. Ministers must take pains to cause people to discern between the clean and the unclean, that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

2. It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them (De 17:8,9); and in controversy they shall stand in judgment, Eze 44:24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and, when they have passed a right judgment, shall have the courage to stand to it and stand by it. They must judge, not according to their own fancies, or inclinations, or secular interests, but according to my judgments; that must be their rule and standard.

Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, to the law and to the testimony. Sit liber judex--Let the judge be unbiased. Their business is to keep courts in God's name, to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go to the statute-book: They shall keep my statutes in all my assemblies. God calls the assemblies of his people his assemblies, because they are held in his name, to his glory. Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, are to preside in them, and in all their acts must keep close to God's laws. Another part of their work, as church governors, is to hallow God's sabbaths, to do the public

work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done, and to see that God's people also sanctify that day and do nothing to pollute it.

VI. Concerning their mourning for dead relations; the rule here agrees with the law of Moses, Le 21:1,11. A priest shall not come near any dead body (for they must be purified from dead works) except of his next relations, Eze 44:25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations, when they are removed by death, are not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a sin-offering before they went in again to minister, Eze 44:26,27.

Note, Though sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of sinning in it, either by excess or dissimulation; and those tears have too often need to be wept over again.

VII. Concerning their maintenance; they must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably (Eze 44:28): "You shall give them no possession in Israel, no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life;" for God has said, I am their inheritance, and they need no other in reserve; I am their possession, and they need no other in hand. Some land was allowed them (Eze 48:10), but their principal subsistence was by their office. What God appropriated to himself they were the receivers of, for their own proper use and behoof; they lived upon the holy things, and so God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup.

Note, Those who have God for their inheritance and their possession may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have all; and therefore may well reckon that we have enough. Observe,

1. What the priests were to have from the people, for their maintenance and encouragement.

(1.) They must have the flesh of many of the offerings, the sin-offering and trespass-offering, which would supply them and their families with flesh-meat, and the meat-offerings, which would supply them with bread. What we offer to God will redound to our own advantage.

(2.) They must have every dedicated devoted thing in Israel, which was in many cases to be turned into money and given to the priest. This is explained, Eze 44:20. Every oblation or free-will offering (which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable) of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's. We have the law concerning them Le 27:1-34.

(3.) They were to have the first of the dough when it was going to the oven, as well as the first of their fruits when they were going to the barn. God, who is the first, must have the first; and, if it belong to him, his priests must have it. We may then comfortably enjoy what we have, when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to begin the week with laying by for pious uses, 1Co 16:2 The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should eat that which is torn or which died of itself, Eze 44:31. Those that were in want of necessary food might perhaps expect to be dispensed with in such a case. Poverty has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the people might expect from the priest for their recompence. Those that are kind to a prophet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's reward: That he may cause the blessing to rest in thy house (Eze 44:30), that God may cause it by

commanding it, that the priest may cause it by praying for it; and it was part of the priest's work to bless the people in the name of the Lord, not only their congregations, but their families.

Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house to have the blessing of God upon it and to have the blessing to rest in it, to dwell where we dwell and to attend the entail of it upon those that shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blesses, he surely blesses, the habitation of those who are thus just, Pr 3:33. And ministers, by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part towards causing the blessing to rest there. Peace be to this house.

18 They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird *themselves* with any thing that causeth sweat.

19 And when they go forth into the outer court, *even* into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments.

20 Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads.

21 Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court.

22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.

23 And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

24 And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; *and* they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths.

25 And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for
father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for
sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves.
26 And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days.
27 And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner
court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering,
saith the Lord God.
28 And it shall be unto them for an inheritance; I *am* their
inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I *am*
their possession.
29 They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the
trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs.
30 And the first of all the firstfruits of all *things*, and every oblation of
all, of every *sort* of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also
give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the
blessing to rest in thine house.
31 The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn,
whether it be fowl or beast.

Ezekiel-45

1 Moreover, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye
shall offer an oblation unto the Lord, a holy portion of the land:
the length *shall be* the length of five and twenty thousand *reeds*, and
the breadth *shall be* ten thousand. This *shall be* holy in all the
borders thereof round about.
2 Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred *in length*, with
five hundred *in breadth*, square round about; and fifty cubits round
about for the suburbs thereof.
3 And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and
twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall
be the sanctuary *and* the most holy *place*.
4 The holy *portion* of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of
the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the Lord:
and it shall be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the
sanctuary.

5 And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand
of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have
for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers.
6 And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand
broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the
oblation of the holy *portion:* it shall be for the whole house of Israel.
7 And *a portion shall be* for the prince on the one side and on the other
side of the oblation of the holy *portion,* and of the possession of the
city, before the oblation of the holy *portion,* and before the
possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the
east side eastward: and the length *shall be* over against one of the
portions, from the west border unto the east border.
8 In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no
more oppress my people; and *the rest of* the land shall they give to the
house of Israel according to their tribes.
9 Thus saith the Lord God; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel:
remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take
away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God.
10 Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath.
11 The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may
contain the tenth part of a homer, and the ephah the tenth part of a
homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer.
12 And the shekel *shall be* twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and
twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.
13 This *is* the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of
a homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of a
homer of barley:
14 concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, *ye shall offer* the
tenth part of a bath out of the cor, *which is* a homer of ten baths; for
ten baths *are* a homer:
15 and one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat
pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and
for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord
God.
16 All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in
Israel.
17 And it shall be the prince's part *to give* burnt offerings, and meat
offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons,

and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall
prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt
offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the
house of Israel.
18 Thus saith the Lord God; In the first *month,* in the first *day* of the
month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and
cleanse the sanctuary:
19 and the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put *it*
upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle
of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court.
20 And so thou shalt do the seventh *day* of the month for every one
that erreth, and for *him that is* simple: so shall ye reconcile the
house.
21 In the first *month,* in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall
have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be
eaten.
22 And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all
the people of the land a bullock *for* a sin offering.
23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the
Lord, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the
seven days; and a kid of the goats daily *for* a sin offering.
24 And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and
an ephah for a ram, and a hin of oil for an ephah.
25 In the seventh *month,* in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do
the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering,
according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering,
and according to the oil.

Ezekiel-46

1 Thus saith the Lord God; The gate of the inner court that looketh
toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the
sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall
be opened.
2 And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate
without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests

shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening.

3 Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the Lord in the sabbaths and in the new moons.

4 And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the Lord in the sabbath day *shall be* six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish.

5 And the meat offering *shall be* an ephah for a ram, and the meat offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah.

6 And in the day of the new moon *it shall be* a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish.

7 And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and a hin of oil to an ephah.

8 And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof.

9 But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it.

10 And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth.

11 And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meat offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah.

12 Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto the Lord, *one* shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth *one* shall shut the gate.

13 Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the Lord *of* a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning.

14 And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of a hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the Lord.

15 Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat offering, and the oil, every morning *for* a continual burnt offering.

16 Thus saith the Lord God; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it *shall be* their possession by inheritance.

We have here a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown-lands.

1. If he have a son that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he please, as a token of his favour and in recompence for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever (Eze 46:16), provided it do not go out of the family. There may be a cause for parents, when their children have grown up, to be more kind to one than to another, as Jacob gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, Ge 48:22.

2. Yet, if he have a servant that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, Eze 46:17. The servant might have the rents, issues, and profits, for such a term, but the inheritance, the jus proprietarium--the right of proprietorship, shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit that a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that Joh 8:35. The servant abides not in the house for ever, as the son does.

3. What estates he gives his children must be of his own (Eze 46:18): He shall not take of the people's inheritance, under pretence of having many children to provide for; he shall not find ways to make them forfeit their estates, or to force them to sell them and so thrust his subjects out of their possession; but let him and his sons be content with their own.

It is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown by encroaching upon the rights and properties of

his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will be but a poor prince when the people are scattered every man from his possession, when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression, choosing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, be it ever so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is, in the best manner, at their service. It is better for themselves to gain their affections by protecting their rights than to gain their estates by invading them.

17 But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after, it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them.

18 Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; *but* he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession; that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

19 After he brought me through the entry, which *was* at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there *was* a place on the two sides westward.

We have here a further discovery of buildings about the temple, which we did not observe before, and those were places to boil the flesh of the offerings in, Eze 46:20. He that kept such a plentiful table at his altar needed large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniences of that kind. Observe,

1. Where those boiling-places were situated. There were some at the entry into the inner court (Eze 46:19) and others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, Eze 46:21-23. These were the places where, it is likely, there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost. It is a pity that holy ground should be waste ground.

2. What use they were put to. In those places they were to boil the trespass-offering and the sin-offering, those parts of them which were allotted to the priests and which were more sacred

than the flesh of the peace-offerings, of which the offerer also had a share. There also they were to bake the meat-offering, their share of it, which they had from the altar for their own tables, Eze 46:20.

Care was taken that they should not bear them out into the outer court, to sanctify the people. Let them not pretend to sanctify the people with this holy flesh, and so impose upon them; or let not the people imagine that by touching those sacred things they were sanctified, and made any the better or more acceptable to God. It should seem (from Hag 2:12) that there were those who had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitious vanities.

20 Then said he unto me, This *is* the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, where they shall bake the meat offering; that they bear *them* not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people.

21 Then he brought me forth into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court *there was* a court.

22 In the four corners of the court *there were* courts joined of forty *cubits* long and thirty broad: these four corners *were* of one measure.

23 And *there was* a row *of building* round about in them, round about them four, and *it was* made with boiling places under the rows round about.

24 Then said he unto me, These *are* the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

Ezekiel-47

The Healing Waters from the Temple

1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house *stood toward* the east, and

the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house,
at the south *side* of the altar.
2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led
me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that
looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right
side.
3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth
eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me
through the waters; the waters *were* to the ankles.
4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the
waters; the waters *were* to the knees. Again he measured a
thousand, and brought me through; the waters *were* to the loins.
5 Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could
not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river
that could not be passed over.
6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this?*
Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the
river.
7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river *were*
very many trees on the one side and on the other.
8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east
country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: *which
being* brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.
9 And it shall come to pass, *that* every thing that liveth, which
moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there
shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall
come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live
whither the river cometh.
10 And it shall come to pass, *that* the fishers shall stand upon it from
Engedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a *place* to spread forth
nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the
great sea, exceeding many.
11 But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be
healed; they shall be given to salt.
12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side,
shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall
the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit
according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the

sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

The Borders and Divisions of the Land

13 Thus saith the Lord God; This *shall be* the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph *shall have two* portions.
14 And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: *concerning* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.
15 And this *shall be* the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad;
16 Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which *is* between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath: Hazar-hatticon, which *is* by the coast of Hauran.
17 And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And *this is* the north side.
18 And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel *by* Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And *this is* the east side.
19 And the south side southward, from Tamar *even* to the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And *this is* the south side southward.
20 The west side also *shall be* the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This *is* the west side.
21 So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel.
22 And it shall come to pass, *that* ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.
23 And it shall come to pass, *that* in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give *him* his inheritance, saith the Lord God.

Ezekiel-48

1 Now these *are* the names of the tribes. From the north end to the
coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan,
the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for
these are his sides east *and* west; a *portion for* Dan.
2 And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a
portion for Asher.
3 And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west
side, a *portion for* Naphtali.
4 And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west
side, a *portion for* Manasseh.
5 And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west
side, a *portion for* Ephraim.
6 And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the
west side, a *portion for* Reuben.
7 And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side,
a *portion for* Judah.
8 And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side,
shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty
thousand *reeds in* breadth, and *in* length as one of the *other* parts,
from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in
the midst of it.
9 The oblation that ye shall offer unto the Lord *shall be* of five and
twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth.
10 And for them, *even* for the priests, shall be *this* holy oblation;
toward the north five and twenty thousand *in length,* and toward
the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand
in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in
length: and the sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the midst
thereof.
11 *It shall be* for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok;
which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the
children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.
12 And *this* oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a
thing most holy by the border of the Levites.

13 And over against the border of the priests, the Levites *shall have* five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length *shall be* five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand.

14 And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the firstfruits of the land: for *it is* holy unto the Lord.

15 And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane *place* for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.

16 And these *shall be* the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred.

17 And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty.

18 And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy *portion shall be* ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy *portion;* and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city.

19 And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel.

20 All the oblation *shall be* five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare, with the possession of the city.

21 And the residue *shall be* for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city, over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house *shall be* in the midst thereof.

22 Moreover, from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, *being* in the midst *of that* which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince.

23 As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side,
Benjamin *shall have* a *portion.*
24 And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west
side, Simeon *shall have* a *portion*.
25 And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side,
Issachar a *portion.*
26 And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side,
Zebulun a *portion.*
27 And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west
side, Gad a *portion*.
28 And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border
shall be even from Tamar *unto* the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, *and* to
the river toward the great sea.
29 This *is* the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel
for inheritance, and these *are* their portions, saith the Lord God.
30 And these *are* the goings out of the city on the north side, four
thousand and five hundred measures.
31 And the gates of the city *shall be* after the names of the tribes of
Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of
Judah, one gate of Levi.
32 And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three
gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of
Dan.
33 And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures:
and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate
of Zebulun.
34 At the west side four thousand and five hundred, *with* their three
gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali.
35 *It was* round about eighteen thousand *measures:* and the name of the
city from *that* day *shall be,* The Lord *is* there.

The Book of Daniel

[Daniel]

Daniel-1

The Education of Daniel and His Friends

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

We have in these verses an account,

I. Of the first descent which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and his success in that expedition (Da 1:1,2): He besieged Jerusalem, soon made himself master of it, seized the king, took whom he pleased and what he pleased away with him, and then left Jehoiakim to reign as tributary to him, which he did about eight years longer, but then rebelled, and it was his ruin. Now from this first captivity most interpreters think the seventy years are to be dated, though Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor the captivity completed, till about nineteen years after, In that first year Daniel was carried to Babylon, and there continued the whole seventy years (see Da 1:21), during which time all nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son, Jer 25:11.

This one prophet therefore saw within the compass of his own time the rise, reign, and ruin of that monarchy; so that it was res unius ætatis--the affair of a single age, such short-lived things are the kingdoms of the earth; but the kingdom of heaven is everlasting. The righteous, that see them taking root, shall see their fall, Job 5:3,Pr 29:16. Mr. Broughton observes the proportion of times in God's government since the coming out of Egypt: thence to their entering Canaan forty years, thence seven years to the dividing of the land, thence seven Jubilees to the first year of Samuel, in whom prophecy began, thence to this first year of the captivity seven seventies of years, 490 (ten Jubilees), thence to the return one seventy, thence to the death of Christ

seven seventies more, thence to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years.

II The improvement he made of this success. He did not destroy the city or kingdom, but did that which just accomplished the first threatening of mischief by Babylon. It was denounced against Hezekiah, for showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors (Isa 39:6,7), that the treasures and the children should be carried away, and, if they had been humbled and reformed by this, hitherto the king of Babylon's power and success should have gone, but no further. If less judgments do the work, God will not send greater; but, if not, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Let us see what was now done.

1 The vessels of the sanctuary were carried away, part of them, Da 1:2. They fondly trusted to the temple to defend them, though they went on in their iniquity. And now, to show them the vanity of that confidence, the temple is first plundered. Many of the holy vessels which used to be employed in the service of God were taken away by the king of Babylon, those of them, it is likely, which were most valuable, and he brought them as trophies of victory to the house of his god, to whom, with a blind devotion, he gave praise of his success; and having appropriated these vessels, in token of gratitude, to his god, he put them in the treasury of his temple.

See the righteousness of God; his people had brought the images of other gods into his temple, and now he suffers the vessels of the temple to be carried into the treasuries of those other gods.

Note, When men profane the vessels of the sanctuary with their sins it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. It is probable that the treasures of the king's house were rifled, as was foretold, but particular mention is made of the taking away of the vessels of the sanctuary because we shall find afterwards that the profanation of them was that which filled up the measure of the Chaldeans' iniquity, Da 5:3. But observe, It was only part of them that went now; some were left them yet upon trial, to see if they would take the right course to prevent the carrying away of the remainder. See Jer 27:18.

2 The children and young men, especially such as were of noble or royal extraction, that were sightly and promising, and of good natural parts, were carried away. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children. These were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar,

(1.) As trophies, to be made a show of for the evidencing and magnifying of his success.

(2.) As hostages for the fidelity of their parents in their own land, who would be concerned to conduct themselves well that their children might have the better treatment.

(3.) As a seed to serve him. He took them away to train them up for employments and preferments under him, either out of an unaccountable affectation, which great men often have, to be attended by foreigners, though they be blacks, rather than by those of their own nation, or because he knew that there were no such witty, sprightly, ingenious young men to be found among his Chaldeans as abounded among the youth of Israel; and, if that were so, it was much for the honour of the Jewish nation, as of an uncommon genius above other people, and a fruit of the blessing. But it was a shame that a people who had so much wit should have so little wisdom and grace. Now observe,

[1.] The directions which the king of Babylon gave for the choice of these youths, Da 1:4. They must not choose such as were deformed in body, but comely and well-favoured, whose countenances were indexes of ingenuity and good humour. But that is not enough; they must be skilful in all wisdom, and cunning, or well-seen in knowledge, and understanding science, such as were quick and sharp, and could give a ready and intelligent account of their own country and of the learning they had hitherto been brought up in. He chose such as were young, because they would be pliable and tractable, would forget their own people and incorporate with the Chaldeans. He had an eye to what he designed them for; they must be such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, not only to attend his royal person, but to preside in his affairs.

This is an instance of the policy of this rising monarch, now in the beginning of his reign, and was a good omen of his prosperity, that he was in care to raise up a succession of persons fit for public business. He did not, like Ahasuerus, appoint them to choose him out young women for the service of his government. It is the interest of princes to have wise men employed under them; it is therefore their wisdom to take care for the finding out and training up of such. It is the misery of this world that so many who are fit for public stations are buried in obscurity, and so many who are unfit for them are preferred to them.

[2.] The care which he took concerning them. First, For their education. He ordered that they should be taught the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. They are supposed to be wise and knowing young men, and yet they must be further taught. Give instructions to a wise man and he will increase in learning.

Note, Those that would do good in the world when they grow up must learn when they are young. That is the learning age; if that time be lost, it will hardly be redeemed. It does not appear that Nebuchadnezzar designed they should learn the unlawful arts that were used among the Chaldeans, magic and divination; if he did, Daniel and his fellows would not defile themselves with them. Nay, we do not find that he ordered them to be taught the religion of the Chaldeans, by which it appears That he was at this time no bigot; if men were skilful and faithful, and fit for his business, it was not material to him what religion they were of, provided they had but some religion. They must be trained up in the language and laws of the country, in history, philosophy, and mathematics, in the arts of husbandry, war, and navigation, in such learning as might qualify them to serve their generation.

Note, It is real service to the public to provide for the good education of the youth. Secondly, For their maintenance. He provided for them three years, not only necessaries, but dainties for their encouragement in their studies. They had daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, Da 1:5. This was an instance of his generosity and humanity; though

they were captives, he considered their birth and quality, their spirit and genius, and treated them honourably, and studied to make their captivity easy to them. There is a respect due to those who are well-born and bred when they have fallen into distress. With a liberal education there should be a liberal maintenance.

III. A particular account of Daniel and his fellows. They were of the children of Judah, the royal tribe, and probably of the house of David, which had grown a numerous family; and God told Hezekiah that of the children that should issue from him some should be taken and made eunuchs, or chamberlains, in the palace of the king of Babylon. The prince of the eunuchs changed the names of Daniel and his fellows, partly to show his authority over them and their subjection to him, and partly in token of their being naturalized and made Chaldeans. Their Hebrew names, which they received at their circumcision, had something of God, or Jah, in them: Daniel--God is my Judge; Hananiah--The grace of the Lord; Mishael--He that is the strong God; Azariah--The Lord is a help. To make them forget the God of their fathers, the guide of their youth, they give them names that savour of the Chaldean idolatry.

Belteshazzar signifies the keeper of the hidden treasures of Bel; Shadrach--The inspiration of the sun, which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshach--Of the goddess Shach, under which name Venus was worshipped; Abed-nego, The servant of the shining fire, which they worshipped also. Thus, though they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their conquerors, yet they did what they could by fair means insensibly to wean them from the former and instil the latter into them. Yet see how comfortably they were provided for; though they suffered for their fathers' sins they were preferred for their own merits, and the land of their captivity was made more comfortable to them than the land of their nativity at this time would have been.

2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4 children in whom *was* no blemish, but well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

7 unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name* of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

We observe here, very much to our satisfaction,

I. That Daniel was a favourite with the prince of the eunuchs (Da 1:9), as Joseph was with the keeper of the prison; he had a tender love for him. No doubt Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuity and sweetness of temper (he was greatly beloved, Da 9:23); and yet it is said here that it was God that brought him into favour with the prince of the eunuchs, for every one does not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Note, The interest which we think we make for ourselves we must acknowledge to be God's gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are in favour, it is God that has brought them into favour; and it is by him that they find good understanding. Herein was again verified That work (Ps 106:46), He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Let young ones know that the way to be acceptable is to be tractable and dutiful.

II. That Daniel was still firm to his religion. They had changed his name, but they could not change his nature. Whatever they

pleased to call him, he still retained the spirit of an Israelite indeed. He would apply his mind as closely as any of them to his books, and took pains to make himself master of the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans, but he was resolved that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, he would not meddle with it, nor with the wine which he drank, Da 1:8. And having communicated his purpose, with the reasons of it, to his fellows, they concurred in the same resolution, as appears, Da 1:11. This was not out of sullenness, or peevishness, or a spirit of contradiction, but from a principle of conscience. Perhaps it was not in itself unlawful for them to eat of the king's meat or to drink of his wine. But,

1. They were scrupulous concerning the meat, lest it should be sinful. Sometimes such meat would be set before them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swine's flesh; or they were afraid lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol. The Jews were distinguished from other nations very much by their meats (Le 11:45,46), and these pious young men, being in a strange country, thought themselves obliged to keep up the honour of their being a peculiar people. Though they could not keep up their dignity as princes, they would not lose it as Israelites; for on that they most valued themselves.

Note, When God's people are in Babylon they have need to take special care that they partake not in her sins. Providence seemed to lay this meat before them; being captives they must eat what they could get and must not disoblige their masters; yet, if the command be against it, they must abide by that. Though Providence says, Kill and eat, conscience says, Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth.

2. They were jealous over themselves, lest, though it should not be sinful in itself, it should be an occasion of sin to them, lest, by indulging their appetites with these dainties, they should grow sinful, voluptuous, and in love with the pleasures of Babylon. They had learned David's prayer, Let me not eat of their dainties (Ps 141:4), and Solomon's precept, Be not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat (Pr 23:3), and accordingly they form

their resolution. Note, It is very much the praise of all, and especially of young people, to be dead to the delights of sense, not to covet them, not to relish them, but to look upon them with indifference. Those that would excel in wisdom and piety must learn betimes to keep under the body and bring it into subjection.

3. However, they thought it unseasonable now, when Jerusalem was in distress, and they themselves were in captivity. They had no heart to drink wine in bowls, so much were they grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Though they had royal blood in their veins, yet they did not think it proper to have royal dainties in their mouths when they were thus brought low.

Note, It becomes us to be humble under humbling providences. Call me not Naomi; call me Marah. See the benefit of affliction; by the account Jeremiah gives of the princes and great men now at Jerusalem it appears that they were very corrupt and wicked, and defiled themselves with things offered to idols, while these young gentlemen that were in captivity would not defile themselves, no, not with their portion of the king's meat. How much better is it with those that retain their integrity in the depths of affliction than with those that retain their iniquity in the heights of prosperity!

Observe, The great thing that Daniel avoided was defiling himself with the pollutions of sin; that is the thing we should be more afraid of than of any outward trouble. Daniel, having taken up this resolution, requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself, not only that he might not be compelled to do it, but that he might not be tempted to do it, that the bait might not be laid before him, that he might not see the portion appointed him of the king's meat, nor look upon the wine when it was red. It will be easier to keep the temptation at a distance than to suffer it to come near and then be forced to put a knife to our throat. Note, We cannot better improve our interest in any with whom we have found favour than by making use of them to keep us from sin.

III. That God wonderfully owned him herein. When Daniel requested that he might have none of the king's meat or wine set

before him the prince of the eunuchs objected that, if he and his fellows were not found in as good case as any of their companions, he should be in danger of having anger and of losing his head, Da 1:10. Daniel, to satisfy him that there would be no danger of any bad consequence, desires the matter might be put to a trial. He applies himself further to the under-officer, Melzar, or the steward: "Prove us for ten days; during that time let us have nothing but pulse to eat, nothing but herbs and fruits, or parched peas or lentils, and nothing but water to drink, and see how we can live upon that, and proceed accordingly," Da 1:13.

People will not believe the benefit of abstemiousness and a spare diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Trial was accordingly made. Daniel and his fellows lived for ten days upon pulse and water, hard fare for young men of genteel extraction and education, and which one would rather expect they should have indented against than petitioned for; but at the end of the ten days they were compared with the other children, and were found fairer and fatter in flesh, of a more healthful look and better complexion, than all those who did eat the portion of the king's meat, Da 1:15.

This was in part a natural effect of their temperance, but it must be ascribed to the special blessing of God, which will make a little to go a great way, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox. By this it appears that man lives not by bread alone; pulse and water shall be the most nourishing food if God speak the word. See what it is to keep ourselves pure from the pollutions of sin; it is the way to have that comfort and satisfaction which will be health to the navel and marrow to the bones, while the pleasures of sin are rottenness to the bones.

IV. That his master countenanced him. The steward did not force them to eat against their consciences, but, as they desired, gave them pulse and water (Da 1:16), the pleasures of which they enjoyed, and we have reason to think were not envied the enjoyment. Here is a great example of temperance and contentment with mean things; and (as Epicurus said) "he that lives according to nature will never be poor, but he that lives according to opinion will never be rich." This wonderful

abstemiousness of these young men in the days of their youth contributed to the fitting of them,

1. For their eminent services. Hereby they kept their minds clear and unclouded, and fit for contemplation, and saved for the best employments a great deal both of time and thought; and thus they prevented those diseases which indispose men for the business of age that owe their rise to the intemperances of youth.

2. For their eminent sufferings. Those that had thus inured themselves to hardship, and lived a life of self-denial and mortification, could the more easily venture upon the fiery furnace and the den of lions, rather than sin against God.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Concerning Daniel and his fellows we have here,

I. Their great attainments in learning, Da 1:17. They were very sober and diligent, and studied hard; and we may suppose their tutors, finding them of an uncommon capacity, took a great deal of pains with them, but, after all, their achievements are ascribed to God only. It was he that gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of the lights. It is the Lord our God that gives men power to get this wealth; the mind is furnished only by him that formed it. The great learning which God gave these four children was,

1. A balance for their losses. They had, for the iniquity of their fathers, been deprived of the honours and pleasures that would have attended their noble extraction; but, to make them amends for that, God, in giving them learning, gave them better honours and pleasures than those they had been deprived of.

2. A recompence for their integrity. They kept to their religion, even in the minutest instances of it, and would not so much as defile themselves with the king's meat or wine, but became, in effect, Nazarites; and now God rewarded them for it with eminency in learning; for God gives to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy with them, Ec 2:26.

To Daniel he gave a double portion; he had understanding in visions and dreams; he knew how to interpret dreams, as Joseph, not by rules of art, such as are pretended to be given by the oneirocritics, but by a divine sagacity and wisdom which God gave him. Nay, he was endued with a prophetic spirit, by which he was enabled to converse with God, and to receive the notices of divine things in dreams and visions, Nu 12:6.

According to this gift given to Daniel, we find him, in this book, all along employed about dreams and visions, interpreting or entertaining them; for, as every one has received the gift, so shall he have an opportunity, and so should he have a heart, to minister the same, 1Pe 4:10.

II. Their great acceptance with the king. After three years spent in their education (they being of some maturity, it is likely, when

they came, perhaps about twenty years old) they were presented to the king with the rest that were of their standing, Da 1:18. And the king examined them and communed with them himself, Da 1:19. He could do it, being a man of parts and learning himself, else he would not have come to be so great; and he would do it, for it is the wisdom of princes, in the choice of the persons they employ, to see with their own eyes, to exercise their own judgment, and not trust too much to the representation of others.

The king examined them not so much in the languages, in the rules of oratory or poetry, as in all matters of wisdom and understanding, the rules of prudence and true politics; he enquired into their judgment about the due conduct of human life and public affairs; not "Were they wits?" but, "Were they wise?" And he not only found them to excel the young candidates for preferment that were of their own standing, but found that they had more understanding than the ancients, than all their teachers, Ps 119:99,100.

So far was the king from being partial to his own countrymen, to seniors, to those of his own religion and of an established reputation, that he freely owned that, upon trial, he found those poor young captive Jews ten times wiser and better than all the magicians that were in all his realm, Da 1:20. He was soon aware of something extraordinary in these young men, and, which gave him a surprising satisfaction, was soon aware that a little of their true divinity was preferable to a great deal of the divination he had been used to. What is the chaff to the wheat? what are the magicians' rods to Aaron's? There was no comparison between them.

These four young students were better, were ten times better, than all the old practitioners, put them all together, that were in all his realm, and we may be sure that they were not a few. This contempt did God pour upon the pride of the Chaldeans, and this honour did he put upon the low estate of his own people; and thus did he make not only these persons, but the rest of their nation for their sakes, the more respected in the land of their captivity. Lastly, This judgment being given concerning them, they stood before the king (Da 1:19); they attended in the

presence-chamber, nay, and in the council-chamber, for to see the king's face is the periphrasis of a privy-counsellor, Es 1:14.

This confirms Solomon's observation, Seest thou a man diligent in his business, sober and humble? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men. Industry is the way to preferment. How long the other three were about the court we are not told; but Daniel, for his part, continued to the first year of Cyrus (Da 1:21), though not always alike in favour and reputation. He lived and prophesied after the first year of Cyrus; but that is mentioned to intimate that he lived to see the deliverance of his people out of their captivity and their return to their own land. Note, Sometimes God favours his servants that mourn with Zion in her sorrows to let them live to see better times with the church than they saw in the beginning of their days and to share with her in her joys.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm.

21 And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Daniel-2

Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

We meet with a great difficulty in the date of this story; it is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Da 2:1. Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and, it should seem, he was three years under tutors and governors before he was presented to the king, Da 1:5. How then could this

happen in the second year? Perhaps, though three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so forward that he was taken into business when he had been but one year at school, and so in the second year he became thus considerable. Some make it to be the second year after he began to reign alone, but the fifth or sixth year since he began to reign in partnership with his father.

Some read it, and in the second year, (the second after Daniel and his fellows stood before the king), in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, or in his reign, this happened; as Joseph, in the second year after his skill in dreams, showed and expounded Pharaoh's, so Daniel, in the second year after he commenced master in that art, did this service. I would much rather take it some of these ways than suppose, as some do, that it was in the second year after he had conquered Egypt, which was the thirty-sixth year of his reign, because it appears by what we meet with in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for wisdom and prevalence in prayer long before that; and therefore this passage, or story, which shows how he came to be so eminent for both these must be laid early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Now here we may observe,

I The perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was in by reason of a dream which he had dreamed but had forgotten (Da 2:1): He dreamed dreams, that is, a dream consisting of divers distinct parts, or which filled his head as much as if it had been many dreams. Solomon speaks of a multitude of dreams, strangely incoherent, in which there are divers vanities, Ec 5:7. This dream of Nebuchadnezzar's had nothing in the thing itself but what might be paralleled in many a common dream, in which are often represented to men things as foreign as are here mentioned; but there was something in the impression it made upon him which carried with it an incontestable evidence of its divine original and its prophetic significancy.

Note, The greatest of men are not exempt from, nay, they lie most open to, those cares and troubles of mind which disturb their repose in the night, while the sleep of the labouring man is sweet and sound, and the sleep of the sober temperate man free

from confused dreams. The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep at all for care, and the excesses of gluttons and drunkards will not suffer them to sleep quietly for dreaming. But this recorded here was not from natural causes. Nebuchadnezzar was a troubler of God's Israel, but God here troubled him; for he that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it.

He had his guards about him, but they could not keep trouble from his spirit. We know not the uneasiness of many that live in great pomp, and, one would think, in pleasure, too. We look into their houses, and are tempted to envy them; but, could we look into their hearts, we should pity them rather. All the treasures and all the delights of the children of men, which this mighty monarch had command of, could not procure him a little repose, when by reason of the trouble of his mind his sleep broke from him. But God gives his beloved sleep, who return to him as their rest.

II The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers whether they could tell him what his dream was, which he had forgotten. They were immediately sent for, to show the king his dreams, Da 2:2.

There are many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things; though we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it; so it was with this king. His dream had slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but he was confident he should know it if he heard it again. God ordered it so that Daniel might have the more honour, and, in him, the God of Daniel. Note, God sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of men's minds as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bed-chamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honour. He tells them that he had dreamed a dream, Da 2:3.

They speak to him in the Syriac tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldee, but now they differ much. And henceforward Daniel uses that language, or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same

reason that those words, Jer 10:11, are in that language because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry and to bring them to the knowledge and worship of the true and living God, which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to. But Da 8:1-27 and forward, being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They, in their answer, complimented the king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, Da 2:4.

But the king insisted upon it that they must tell him the dream itself, because he had forgotten it and could not tell it to them. And, if they could not do this, they should all be put to death as deceivers (Da 2:5), themselves cut to pieces and their houses made a dunghill. If they could, they should be rewarded and preferred, Da 2:6.

And they knew, as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he was able to promote them to great honour, and give them that wages of unrighteousness which, like him, they loved so dearly. No question therefore that they will do their utmost to gratify the king; if they do not, it is not for want of good-will, but for want of power, Providence so ordering it that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame as of old the magicians of Egypt had been, that, how much soever his people were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians, having reason on their side, insist upon it that the king must tell them the dream, and then, if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, Da 2:7.

But arbitrary power is deaf to reason. The king falls into a passion, gives them hard words, and, without any colour of reason, suspects that they could tell him but would not; and instead of upbraiding them with impotency, and the deficiency of their art, as he might justly have done, he charges them with a combination to affront him: You have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me. How unreasonable and absurd is this imputation! If they had undertaken to tell him what his dream

was, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with lying and corrupt words; but to say this of them when they honestly confessed their own weakness only shows what senseless things indulged passions are, and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both.

When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, though the request was highly rational and just, he tells them that they did but dally with him, to gain time (Da 2:8), till the time be changed (Da 2:9), either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, though now he is so hot upon it, or till they may hope he has so perfectly forgotten his dream (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him apace as he catches at them) that they may tell him what they please and make him believe it was his dream, and, when the thing which is going, is quite gone from him, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to disprove them. And therefore, without delay, they must tell him the dream. In vain do they plead,

1. That there is no man on earth that can retrieve the king's dream, Da 2:10. There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was; whether they will hold or no is the question. But never were any rules offered to be given by which to discover what the dream was; they cannot work unless they have something to work upon.

They acknowledge that the gods may indeed declare unto man what is his thought (Am 4:13), for God understands our thoughts afar off (Ps 139:2), what they will be before we think them, what they are when we do not regard them, what they have been when we have forgotten them. But those who can do this are gods, that have not their dwelling with flesh (Da 2:11), and it is they alone that can do this. As for men, their dwelling is with flesh; the wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh, which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirit, and their powers and operations; but the gods, that are themselves pure spirit, know what is in man.

See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of many gods, whereas there is but one and can be but one infinite; yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teaches and the works of nature prove, that there is a God, who is a Spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men and all their thoughts, so as it is not possible that any man should. This confession of the divine omniscience is here extorted from these idolaters, to the honour of God and their own condemnation, who though they knew there is a God in heaven, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols, that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not.

2. That there is no king on earth that would expect or require such a thing, Da 2:10. This intimates that they were kings, lords, and potentates, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God and the gospel of Christ are dispensed to the poor. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects, but they think that never any required so unreasonable a thing as this, and therefore hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain; when passion is in the throne reason is under foot: He was angry and very furious, Da 2:12.

Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury what they cannot support with equity.

III. The doom passed upon all the magicians of Babylon. There is but one decree for them all (Da 2:9); they all stand condemned without exception or distinction. The decree has gone forth, they must every man of them be slain (Da 2:13), Daniel and his fellows (though they knew nothing of the matter) not excepted. See here, 1. What are commonly the unjust proceedings of arbitrary power. Nebuchadnezzar is here a tyrant in true colours, speaking death when he cannot speak sense, and treating those as traitors whose only fault is that they would serve him, but cannot. 2. What is commonly the just punishment of pretenders.

How unrighteous soever Nebuchadnezzar was in this sentence, as to the ringleaders in the imposture, God was righteous. Those that imposed upon men, in pretending to do what they could not do, are now sentenced to death for not being able to do what they did not pretend to.

2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriac, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.

5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.

6 But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it.

8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.

9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof.

10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, *that* asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

11 And *it is* a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon.

13 And the decree went forth that the wise *men* should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise *men* of Babylon:

When the king sent for his wise men to tell them his dream, and the interpretation of it (Da 2:2), Daniel, it seems, was not summoned to appear among them; the king, though he was highly pleased with him when he examined him, and thought him ten times wiser than the rest of his wise men, yet forgot him when he had most occasion for him; and no wonder, when all was done in a heat, and nothing with a cool and deliberate thought.

But Providence so ordered it; that the magicians being nonplussed might be the more taken notice of, and so the more glory might redound to the God of Daniel. But, though Daniel had not the honour to be consulted with the rest of the wise men, contrary to all law and justice, by an undistinguishing sentence, he stands condemned with them, and till he has notice brought him to prepare for execution he knows nothing of the matter. How miserable is the case of those who live under arbitrary government, as this of Nebuchadnezzar's! How happy are we, whose lives are under the protection of the law and methods of justice, and lie not thus at the mercy of a peevish and capricious prince!

We have found already, in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer; as a prince he had power with God and by man; by prayer he had power with God, by prudence he had power with man, and in both he prevailed. Thus did he find favour and good understanding in the sight of both, and in these verses we have a remarkable instance of both.

I. Daniel by prudence knew how to deal with men, and he prevailed with them. When Arioch, the captain of the guard, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel (for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, devours one as well as another), he answered with counsel and wisdom (Da 2:14); he did not fall into a passion, and reproach the king as unjust and barbarous,

much less did he contrive how to make resistance, but mildly asked, Why is the decree so hasty? Da 2:15. And whereas the rest of the wise men had insisted upon it that it was utterly impossible for him ever to have his demand gratified, which did but make him more outrageous, Daniel undertakes, if he may but have a little time allowed him, to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, Da 2:16.

The king, being now sensible of his error in not sending for Daniel sooner, whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed upon to respite the judgment, and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a soft answer, by that yielding which pacifies great offences; thus, though where the word of a king is there is power, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repealed; and so some read it here (Da 2:14): Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch, the king's provost-marshal.

II. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition and in thanksgiving, which are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe,

1. His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men whether there was anything in their art, in their books, that might be of use in this matter, but went to his house, there to be alone with God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift.

Observe, (1.) He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He made the thing known to those who had been all along his bosom-friends and associates, requesting that they would desire mercy of God concerning this secret, Da 2:17,18. Though Daniel was probably their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter, Vis unita

fortior--The union of forces produces greater force. See Es 4:16.

Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; it is good to have an intimacy with and an interest in those that have fellowship with God and an interest at the throne of grace; and it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul often entreats his friends to pray for him. Thus we must show that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

(2.) He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon, the general mercy of God: That they would desire the mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, Da 2:18. We ought in prayer to look up to God as the God of heaven, a God above us, and who has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who can do everything. Our savior has taught us to pray to God as our Father in heaven. And, whatever good we pray for, our dependence must be upon the mercies of God for it, and an interest in those mercies we must desire; we can expect nothing by way of recompence for our merits, but all as the gift of God's mercies. They desired mercy concerning this secret.

Note, Whatever is the matter of our care must be the matter of our prayer; we must desire mercy of God concerning this thing and the other thing that occasions us trouble and fear. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burdens. Secret things belong to the Lord our God, and therefore, if there be any mercy we stand in need of that concerns a secret, to him we must apply; and, though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our view and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hidden, nothing is hard.

(3.) Their plea with God was the imminent peril they were in; they desired mercy of God in this matter, that so Daniel and his fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon, that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked. Note, When the lives of good and useful men are in danger it is time to be earnest with God for mercy for them, as for Peter in prison, Ac 12:5.

(4.) The mercy which Daniel and his fellows prayed for was bestowed. The secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night-vision, Da 2:19. Some think he dreamed the same dream, when he was asleep, that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed; it should rather seem that when he was awake, and continuing instant in prayer, and watching in the same, the dream itself, and the interpretation of it, were communicated to him by the ministry of an angel, abundantly to his satisfaction.

Note, The effectual fervent prayer of righteous men avails much. There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ has said, Thus knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

2. His grateful thanksgiving for this mercy when he had received it: Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven, Da 2:19. He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seen whether he would own it to be his dream or no, but was confident that it was so, and that he had gained his point, and therefore he immediately turned his prayers into praises. As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks in a full assurance that he had done it; and in both he had an eye to God as the God of heaven. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

(1.) The honour he gives to God in this thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a great variety and copiousness of expression: Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever. There is that for ever in God which is to be blessed and praised; it is unchangeably and eternally in him. And it is to be blessed for ever and ever; as the matter of praise is God's eternal

perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlastingly in the doing.

[1.] He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself: Wisdom and might are his, wisdom and courage (so some); whatever is fit to be done he will do; whatever he will do he can do, he dares do, and he will be sure to do it in the best manner, for he has infinite wisdom to design and contrive and infinite power to execute and accomplish. With him are strength and wisdom, which in men are often parted.

[2.] He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has a universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Does every thing lie open to mutability? It is God that changes the times and the seasons, and the face of them. No change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God. Are those that were kings removed and deposed?

Do they abdicate? Are they laid aside? It is God that removes kings. Are the poor raised out of the dust, to be set among princes? It is God that sets up kings; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown who is the fountain of all power, King of kings and Lord of lords. Are there men that excel others in wisdom, philosophers and statesmen, that think above the common rate, contemplative penetrating men? It is God that gives wisdom to the wise, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it or no; they have it not of themselves, but it is he that gives knowledge to those that know understanding, which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it and make it our business to know him.

[3.] He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praises him, First, For that he could make such a discovery (Da 2:22): He reveals the deep and secret things which are hidden from the eyes of all living. It was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom when none else could (Job 27:27,28); it is he that reveals things to come to his servants and prophets. He

does himself perfectly discern and distinguish that which is most closely and most industriously concealed, for he will bring into judgment every secret thing; the truth will be evident in the great day. He knows what is in the darkness, and what is done in the darkness, for that hides not from him, Ps 139:11,12.

The light dwells with him, and he dwells in the light (1Ti 6:16), and yet, as to us, he makes darkness his pavilion. Some understand it of the light of prophecy and divine revelation, which dwells with God and is derived from him; for he is the Father of lights, of all lights; they are all at home in him. Secondly, For that he had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the God of his fathers; for, though the Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were beloved for their father's sake. He praises God, who is the fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him, wisdom to know this great secret and might to bear the discovery.

Note, What wisdom and might we have we must acknowledge to be God's gift. Thou hast made this known to me, Da 2:23.

What was hidden from the celebrated Chaldeans, who made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive-Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the Spirit of prophecy just when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known that to him which was the saving of the lives of him and his fellows? Much more reason have we to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul, to us and not to the world, to us and not to the wise and prudent.

(2.) The respect he puts upon his companions in this thanksgiving. Though it was by his prayers principally that this discovery was obtained, and to him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him, both in praying for it (it is what we desired of thee) and in enjoying it--Thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. Either they were present with

Daniel when the discovery was made to him, or as soon as he knew it he told it them (heureka, heureka--I have found it, I have found it), that those who had assisted him with their prayers might assist him in their praises; his joining them with him is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well become those that are taken into communion with God.

Thus St. Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister, with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

15 he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why *is* the decree *so*
hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.
16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him
time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.
17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to
Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:
18 that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this
secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the
wise *men* of Babylon.
19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then
Daniel blessed the God of heaven.
20 Daniel answered and said,
Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever:
for wisdom and might are his:
21 and he changeth the times and the seasons:
he removeth kings, and setteth up kings:
he giveth wisdom unto the wise,
and knowledge to them that know understanding:
22 he revealeth the deep and secret things:
he knoweth what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.
23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers,
who hast given me wisdom and might
and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee:
for thou hast *now* made known unto us
the king's matter.
24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to
destroy the wise *men* of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him;

Destroy not the wise *men* of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaring the dream, and the interpretation of it.

I. He immediately bespoke the reversing of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, Da 2:24. He went with all speed to Arioch, to tell him that his commission was now superseded: Destroy not the wise men of Babylon. Though there were those of them perhaps that deserved to die, as magicians, by the law of God, yet here that which they stood condemned for was not a crime worth of death or of bonds, and therefore let them not die, and be unjustly destroyed, but let them live, and be justly shamed, as having been nonplussed and unable to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shows common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives of even bad men, Mt 5:45.

A good man is a common good. To Paul in the ship God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who yet rendered not according to the benefit done to them, Da 3:8.

II. He offered his service, with great assurance, to go to the king, and tell him his dream and the interpretation of it, and was admitted accordingly, Da 2:24,25. Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to ingratiate himself by introducing Daniel; he pretends he had sought him to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he sought him. But courtiers' business is every way to humour the prince and make their own services acceptable.

III. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians, and to give honour to God, upon this occasion. The king owned that it was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good (Da 2:26): Art thou able to make known unto me the dream? What! Such a babe in this

knowledge, such a stripling as thou are, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it.

Note, In transmitting divine revelation to the children of men it has been God's usual way to make use of the weak and foolish things and persons of the world, and such as were despised and despaired of, to confound the wise and mighty, that the excellency of the power might be of him, 1Co 1:27,28. Daniel from this takes occasion,

1. To put the king out of conceit with his magicians and soothsayers, whom he had such great expectations from (Da 2:27): "This secret they cannot show to the king; it is out of their power; the rules of their art will not reach to it. Therefore let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do; but rather despise them, and cast them off, because they cannot do it." Broughton reads it generally: "This secret no sages, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail-cookers, can show unto the king; let not the king therefore consult them any more."

Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions; we are baffled in our hopes from them. Hitherto they come, and no further; let us therefore say to them, as Job to his friends, Now you are nothing; miserable comforters are you all.

2. To bring him to the knowledge of the one only living and true God, the God whom Daniel worshipped: "Though they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets," Da 2:28. Note, The insufficiency of creatures should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. There is a God in heaven (and it is well for us there is) who can do that for us, and make known that to us, which none on earth can, particularly the secret history of the work of redemption and the secret designs

of God's love to us therein, the mystery which was hidden from ages and generations; divine revelation helps us out where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that, not only to kings, but to the poor of this world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, Ro 16:25,26.

IV. He confirmed the king in his opinion that the dream he was thus solicitous to recover the idea of was really well worth enquiring after, that it was of great value and of vast consequence, not a common dream, the idle disport of a ludicrous and luxuriant fancy, which was not worth remembering or telling again, but that it was a divine discovery, a ray of light darted into his mind from the upper world, relating to the great affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it made known to the king what should be in the latter days (Da 2:28), that is, in the times that were to come, reaching as far as the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, which was to be in the latter days, Heb 1:1. And again (Da 2:29): "The thoughts which came into thy mind were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are"--

Omnia quæ sensu volvuntur vota diurno Tempore sopito reddit amica quies-- The sentiments which we indulge throughout the day often mingle with the grateful slumbers of the night.
CLAUDIAN.

"But they were predictions of what should come to pass hereafter, which he that reveals secrets makes known unto thee; and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint and pursuing it thus."

Note, Things that are to come to pass hereafter are secret things, which God only can reveal; and what he has revealed of those things, especially with reference to the last days of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently enquired into and considered by every one of us. Some think that the thoughts which are said to have come into the king's

mind upon his bed, what should come to pass hereafter, were his own thoughts when he was awake.

Just before he fell asleep, and dreamed this dream, he was musing in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to; and so the dream was an answer to those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make he thus prepares men for.

V. He solemnly professes that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sagacity of his own (Da 2:30): "But, as for me, this secret is not found out by me, but is revealed to me, and that not for any wisdom that I have more than any living, to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery."

Note, It well becomes those whom God has highly favoured and honoured to be very humble and low in their own eyes, to lay aside all opinion of their own wisdom and worthiness, that God alone may have all the praise of the good they are, and have, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freeness of his good-will towards them and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him not for his own sake, but,

1. For the sake of his people, for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, that is, for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and so might be said to make known the interpretation--that their lives might be spared, that they might come into favour and be preferred, and all the people of the Jews might fare the better, in their captivity, for their sakes. Note, Humble men will be always ready to think that what God does for them and by them is more for the sake of others than for their own.

2. For the sake of his prince; and some read the former clause in this sense, "Not for any wisdom of mine, but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart, that thou mightest have satisfaction

given thee as to what thou wast before considering, and thereby instruction given thee how to behave towards the church of God." God revealed this thing to Daniel that he might make it known to the king. Prophets receive that they may give, that the discoveries made to them may not be lodged with themselves, but communicated to the persons that are concerned.

25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise *men,* the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king;

28 but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these;

29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came *into thy mind* upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.

30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for *any* wisdom that I
have more than any living, but for *their* sakes that shall make
known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness *was* excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof *was* terrible.

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet in his maintenance and education; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been made much easier to him than to others of his brethren.

And now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expense he had been at upon him; and for receiving this prophet, though

not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet's reward, such a reward as a prophet only could give, and for which that wealthy mighty prince was now glad to be beholden to him. Here is,

I The dream itself, Da 2:31,45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now behold a great image is set before him in a dream, which might intimate to him what the images were which he bestowed so much cost upon, and paid such respect to; they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination he might shut his eyes, and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expense and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man erect:

It stood before him, as a living man; and, because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the brightness of this image was excellent; and because they were formidable to their enemies, and dreaded by all about them, the form of this image is said to be terrible; both the features of the face and the postures of the body made it so.

But that which was most remarkable in this image was the different metals of which it was composed--the head of gold (the richest and most durable metal), the breast and arms of silver (the next to it in worth), the belly and sides (or thighs) of brass, the legs of iron (still baser metals), and lastly the feet part of iron and part of clay.

See what the things of this world are; the further we go in them the less valuable they appear. In the life of a man youth is a head of gold, but it grows less and less worthy of our esteem; and old age is half clay; a man is then as good as dead. It is so with the world; later ages degenerate. The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold; but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of a hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable

to his knowledge. He has a head of gold, but feet of iron and clay: he knows his duty, but does it not.

Some observe that in Daniel's visions the monarchies were represented by four beasts (Da 7:1-28), for he looked upon that wisdom from beneath, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing. But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, they were represented by a gay and pompous image of a man, for he was an admirer of the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. To him the sight was so charming that he was impatient to see it again. But what became of this image?

The next part of the dream shows it to us calcined, and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarry by an unseen power, without hands, and this stone fell upon the feet of the image, that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces; and then the image must fall of course, and so the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small that they became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and there were not to be found any the least remains of them; but the stone cut out of the mountain became itself a great mountain, and filled the earth.

See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes; when he pleases a little one shall become a thousand. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, as this image was, and they shall perish from off the earth and from under these heavens, Jer 10:11,Isa 2:18. And whatever power destroys idolatry is in the ready way to magnify and exalt itself, as this stone, when it had broken the image to pieces, became a great mountain.

II The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him it is fit that we take the explication of it. It should seem, Daniel had his fellows with him, and speaks for them as well as for

himself, when he says, We will tell the interpretation, Da 2:36. Now,

1. This image represented the kingdoms of the earth that should successively bear rule among the nations and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church. It was the same power, only lodged in four different nations, the two former lying eastward of Judea, the two latter westward.

(1.) The head of gold signified the Chaldean monarchy, which was now in being (Da 2:37,38): Thou, O king! art (or rather, shalt be) a king of kings, a universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries; or, Thou art the highest of kings on earth at this time (as a servant of servants is the meanest servant); thou dost outshine all other kings. But let him not attribute his elevation to his own politics or fortitude. No; it is the God of heaven that has given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, a kingdom that exercises great authority, stands firmly, and shines brightly, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power.

Note, The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth (Da 2:38), that wheresoever the children of men dwell, in all the nations of that part of the world, he was ruler over them all, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which they had a property in, but those that were feræ naturæ--wild, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven. He was lord of all the woods, forests, and chases, and none were allowed to hunt or fowl without his leave.

Thus "thou art the head of gold; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, for seventy years." Compare this with Jer 25:9,11, especially Jer 27:5-7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Scythians; but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here

described till Christ's time. It is called a head, for its wisdom, eminency, and absolute power, a head of gold for its wealth (Isa 14:4); it was a golden city.

Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring into it all the Assyrian kings, about fifty monarchs in all, and compute that it lasted above 1600 years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor any thing like it; therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this head of gold; and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotic power than any of the kings that went before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years current, Evil-merodach twenty-three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years.

(2.) The breast and arms of silver signified the monarchy of the Medes and Persians, of which the king is told no more than this, There shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee (Da 2:39), not so rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. Cyrus was himself a Persian by his father, a Mede by his mother. Some reckon that this second monarchy lasted 130 years, others 204 years. The former computation agrees best with the scripture chronology.

(3.) The belly and thighs of brass signified the monarchy of the Grecians, founded by Alexander, who conquered Darius Codomannus, the last of the Persian emperors. This is the third kingdom, of brass, inferior in wealth and extent of dominion to the Persian monarchy, but in Alexander himself it shall by the power of the sword bear rule over all the earth; for Alexander boasted that he had conquered the world, and then sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

(4.) The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Grecian

monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt, the former governed by the family of the Seleucidæ, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagidæ, from Ptolemæus Lagus; these they make the two legs and feet of this image: Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion that it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended, because it was in the time of that monarchy, and when it was at its height, that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel.

The Roman kingdom was strong as iron (Da 2:40), witness the prevalency of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom broke in pieces the Grecian empire and afterwards quite destroyed the nation of the Jews. Towards the latter end of the Roman monarchy it grew very weak, and branched into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet. Some of these were weak as clay, others strong as iron, Da 2:42. Endeavours were used to unite and cement them for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain: They shall not cleave one to another, Da 2:43.

This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles and the commons, but they did not entirely coalesce. There were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, whose parties were as iron and clay. Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when, for the strengthening of the empire against the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried; but the politics had not the desired effect, when the day of the fall of that empire came.

2 The stone cut out without hands represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom in the kingdoms of the world. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, for it should be neither raised nor supported by human power or policy; no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. This was the stone which the

builders refused, because it was not cut out by their hands, but it has now become the head-stone of the corner.

(1.) The gospel-church is a kingdom, which Christ is the sole and sovereign monarch of, in which he rules by his word and Spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom not of this world, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

(2.) The God of heaven was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judgment, to set him as King upon his holy hill of Zion, and to bring into obedience to him a willing people. Being set up by the God of heaven, it is often in the New Testament called the kingdom of heaven, for its original is from above and its tendency is upwards.

(3.) It was to be set up in the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, of which particular notice is taken (Lu 2:1), That Christ was born when, by the decree of the emperor of Rome, all the world was taxed, which was a plain indication that that empire had become as universal as any earthly empire ever was. When these kings are contesting with each other, and in all the struggles each of the contending parties hopes to find its own account, God will do his own work and fulfil his own counsels. These kings are all enemies to Christ's kingdom, and yet it shall be set up in defiance of them.

(4.) It is a kingdom that knows no decay, is in no danger of destruction, and will not admit any succession or revolution. It shall never be destroyed by any foreign force invading it, as many other kingdoms are; fire and sword cannot waste it; the combined powers of earth and hell cannot deprive either the subjects of their prince or the prince of his subjects; nor shall this kingdom be left to other people, as the kingdoms of the earth are.

As Christ is a monarch that has no successor (for he himself shall reign for ever), so his kingdom is a monarchy that has no revolution. The kingdom of God was indeed taken from the

Jews and given to the Gentiles (Mt 21:43), but still it was Christianity that ruled, the kingdom of the Messiah. The Christian church is still the same; it is fixed on a rock, much fought against, but never to be prevailed against, by the gates of hell.

(5.) It is a kingdom that shall be victorious over all opposition. It shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands broke in pieces the image, Da 2:44,45. The kingdom of Christ shall wear out all other kingdoms, shall outlive them, and flourish when they are sunk with their own weight, and so wasted that their place knows them no more. All the kingdoms that appear against the kingdom of Christ shall be broken with a rod of iron, as a potter's vessel, Ps 2:9.

And in the kingdoms that submit to the kingdom of Christ tyranny, and idolatry, and every thing that is their reproach, shall, as far as the gospel of Christ gets ground, be broken. The day is coming when Jesus Christ shall have put down all rule, principality, and power, and have made all his enemies his footstool; and then this prophecy will have its full accomplishment, and not till then, 1Co 15:24,25. Our savior seems to refer to this (Mt 21:44), when, speaking of himself as the stone set at nought by the Jewish builders, he says, On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

(6.) It shall be an everlasting kingdom. Those kingdoms of the earth that had broken in pieces all about them at length came, in their turn, to be in like manner broken; but the kingdom of Christ shall break other kingdoms in pieces and shall itself stand for ever. His throne shall be as the days of heaven, his seed, his subjects, as the stars of heaven, not only so innumerable, but so immutable. Of the increase of Christ's government and peace there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign for ever, not only to the end of time, but when time and days shall be no more, and God shall be all in all to eternity.

III. Daniel having thus interpreted the dream, to the satisfaction of Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him no interruption,

so full was the interpretation that he had no question to ask, and so plain that he had no objection to make, he closes all with a solemn assertion,

1. Of the divine original of this dream: The great God (so he calls him, to express his own high thoughts of him, and to beget the like in the mind of this great king) has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, which the gods of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped to show things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods (Isa 41:23), and by this proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he declares the end from the beginning, Isa 46:10.

2. Of the undoubted certainty of the things foretold by this dream. He who makes known these things is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them; and we are sure that his counsel shall stand, and cannot be altered, and therefore the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof sure. Note, Whatever God has made known we may depend upon.

32 This image's head *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

33 his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

36 This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

37 Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou *art* this head of gold.

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things:* and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

42 And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron, and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

One might have expected that when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting he would be enraged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it and that another kingdom of another nature should be the everlasting kingdom; but, instead of resenting it as an affront, he received it as an oracle, and here we are told what the expressions were of the impressions it made upon him.

1. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet from this wonderful discovery which he had made both of his secret thoughts, in telling him the dream, and of things to come, in telling him the interpretation

of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration; and therefore he fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, Da 2:46. It was the custom of the country by prostration to give honour to kings, because they have something of a divine power in them (I have said, You are gods); and therefore this king, who had often received such veneration from others, now paid the like to Daniel, whom he supposed to have in him a divine knowledge, which he was so struck with an admiration of that he could not contain himself, but forgot both that Daniel was a man and that himself was a king.

Thus did God magnify divine revelation and make it honourable, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation to him, and burn incense. Herein he cannot be justified, but may in some measure be excused, when Cornelius was thus ready to worship Peter, and John the angel, who both knew better.

But, though it is not here mentioned, yet we have reason to think that Daniel refused these honours that he paid him, and said, as Peter to Cornelius, Stand up, I myself also am a man, or, as the angel to St. John, See thou do it not; for it is not said that the oblation was offered unto him, though the king commanded it, or rather said it, for so the word is. He said, in his haste, Let an oblation be offered to him. And that Daniel did say something to him which turned his eyes and thoughts another way is intimated in what follows (Da 2:47), The king answered Daniel. Note, It is possible for those to express a great honour for the ministers of God's word who yet have no true love for the word. Herod feared John, and heard him gladly, and yet went on in his sins, Mk 6:20.

2. He readily acknowledged the God of Daniel to be the great God, the true God, the only living and true God. If Daniel will not suffer himself to be worshipped, he will (as Daniel, it is likely, directed him) worship God, by confessing (Da 2:47), Of a truth your God is a God of gods, such a God as there is no other, above all gods in dignity, over all gods in dominion.

He is a Lord of kings, from whom they derive their power and to whom they are accountable; and he is both a discoverer and a revealer of secrets; what is most secret he sees and can reveal, and what he has revealed is what was secret and which none but himself could reveal, 1Co 2:10.

3. He preferred Daniel, made him a great man, Da 2:48. God made him a great man indeed when he took him into communion with himself, a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar could make him; but, because God had magnified him, therefore the king magnified him. Does wealth make men great? The king gave him many great gifts; and he had no reason to refuse them, when they all put him into so much the greater capacity of doing good to his brethren in captivity. These gifts were grateful returns for the good services he had done, and not aimed at, nor bargained for, by him, as the rewards of divination were by Balaam.

Does power make a man great? He made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, which no doubt had great influence upon the other provinces; he made him likewise chancellor of the university, chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon, to instruct those whom he had thus outdone; and, since they could not do what the king would have them do, they shall be obliged to do what Daniel would have them do. Thus it is fit that the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. Seeing Daniel could reveal this secret (Da 2:47), the king thus advanced him.

Note, It is the wisdom of princes to advance and employ those who receive divine revelation, and are much conversant with it, who, as Daniel here, show themselves to be well acquainted with the kingdom of heaven. Joseph, like Daniel here, was advanced in the court of the king of Egypt for his interpreting his dreams; and he called him Zaphnath-paaneah--a revealer of secrets, as the king of Babylon here calls Daniel; so that the preambles to their patents of honour are the same--for, and in consideration of, their good services done to the crown in revealing secrets.

4. He preferred his companions for his sake, and upon his special instance and request, Da 2:49. Daniel himself sat in the gate of the king, as president of the council, chief-justice, or prime-minister of state, or perhaps chamberlain of the household; but he used his interest for his friends as became a good man, and procured places in the government for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Those that helped him with their prayers shall share with him in his honours, such a grateful sense had he even of that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews, being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which no doubt they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares it, that it may be easy to them.

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him.

47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth *it is,* that your God *is* a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise *men* of Babylon.

49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

Daniel-3

The Deliverance from the Fiery Furnace

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

We have no certainty concerning the date of this story, only that if this image, which Nebuchadnezzar dedicated, had any relation to that which he dreamed of, it is probable that it

happened not long after that; some reckon it to be about the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, a year before Jehoiachin's captivity, in which Ezekiel was carried away. Observe,

I. A golden image set up to be worshipped. Babylon was full of idols already, yet nothing will serve this imperious prince but they must have one more; for those who have forsaken the one only living God, and begin to set up many gods, will find the gods they set up so unsatisfying, and their desire after them so insatiable, that they will multiply them without measure, wander after them endlessly, and never know when they have sufficient. Idolaters are fond of novelty and variety. They choose new gods. Those that have many will wish to have more. Nebuchadnezzar the king, that he might exert the prerogative of his crown, to make what god he thought fit, set up this image, Da 3:1.

Observe, 1 The valuableness of it; it was an image of gold, not all gold surely; rich as he was, it is probable that he could not afford that, but overlaid with gold. Note, The worshippers of false gods are not wont to mind charges in setting up images and worshipping them; they lavish gold out of the bag for that purpose (Isa 46:6), which shames our niggardliness in the worship of the true God.

2 The vastness of it; it was threescore cubits high and six cubits broad. It exceeded the ordinary stature of a man fifteen times (for that is reckoned but four cubits, or six feet), as if its being monstrous would make amends for its being lifeless. But why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this image? Some suggest that it was to clear himself from the imputation of having turned a Jew, because he had lately spoken with great honour of the God of Israel and had preferred some of his worshippers.

Or perhaps he set it up as an image of himself, and designed to be himself worshipped in it. Proud princes affected to have divine honours paid them; Alexander did so, pretending himself to be the son of Jupiter Olympius. He was told that in the image he had seen in his dream he was represented by the head of gold, which was to be succeeded by kingdoms of baser

metal; but here he sets up to be himself the whole image, for he makes it all of gold. See here,

(1.) How the good impressions that were then made upon him were quite lost, and quickly. He then acknowledged that the God of Israel is of a truth a God of gods and a Lord of kings; and yet now, in defiance of the express law of that God, he sets up an image to be worshipped, not only continues in his former idolatries, but contrives new ones. Note, Strong convictions often come short of a sound conversion. Many a pang have owned the absurdity and dangerousness of sin, and yet have gone on in it.

(2.) How that very dream and the interpretation of it, which then made such good impressions upon him, now had a quite contrary effect. Then it made him fall down as a humble worshipper of God; now it made him set up for a bold competitor with God. Then he thought it a great thing to be the golden head of the image, and owned himself obliged to God for it; but, his mind rising with his condition, now he thinks that too little, and, in contradiction to God himself and his oracle, he will be all in all.

II. A general convention of the states summoned to attend the solemnity of the dedication of this image, Da 3:2,3. Messengers are despatched to all parts of the kingdom to gather together the princes, dukes, and lords, all the peers of the realm, with all officers civil and military, the captains and commanders of the forces, the judges, the treasurers or general receivers, the counsellors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces; they must all come to the dedication of this image upon pain and peril of what shall fall thereon.

He summons the great men, for the great honour of his idol; it is therefore mentioned to the glory of Christ that kings shall bring presents unto him. If he can bring them to pay homage to his golden image, he doubts not but the inferior people will follow of course. In obedience to the king's summons all the magistrates and officers of that vast kingdom leave the services of their particular countries, and come to Babylon, to

the dedication of this golden image; long journeys many of them took, and expensive ones, upon a very foolish errand; but, as the idols are senseless things, such are the worshippers.

III. A proclamation made, commanding all manner of persons present before the image, upon the signal given, to fall down prostrate, and worship the image, under the style and title of The golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. A herald proclaims this aloud throughout this vast assembly of grandees, with their numerous train of servants and attendants, and a great crowd of people, no doubt, that were not sent for; let them all take notice,

1. That the king does strictly charge and command all manner of persons to fall down and worship the golden image; whatever other gods they worship at other times, now they must worship this.

2. That they must all do this just at the same time, in token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service, and that, in order hereunto, notice shall be given by a concert of music, which would likewise serve to adorn the solemnity and to sweeten and soften the minds of those that were loth to yield and bring them to comply with the king's command. This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is due to God who is a spirit.

IV. The general compliance of the assembly with this command, Da 3:7. They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind-instruments and hand-instruments, the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, the melody of which they thought was ravishing (and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay), and immediately they all, as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image. And no marvel when it was proclaimed, That whosoever would not worship this golden image should be immediately

thrown into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, ready prepared for that purpose, Da 3:6.

Here were the charms of music to allure them into a compliance and the terrors of the fiery furnace to frighten them into a compliance. Thus beset with temptation, they all yielded. Note, That way that sense directs the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship has been set up and maintained.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4 Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5 *that* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

6 and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

It was strange that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, would be present at this assembly, when, it is likely, they knew for what intent it was called together. Daniel, we may suppose, was absent, either his business calling him away or having

leave from the king to withdraw, unless we suppose that he stood so high in the king's favour that none durst complain of him for his noncompliance.

But why did not his companions keep out of the way? Surely because they would obey the king's orders as far as they could, and would be ready to bear a public testimony against this gross idolatry. They did not think it enough not to bow down to the image, but, being in office, thought themselves obliged to stand up against it, though it was the image which the king their master set up, and would be a golden image to those that worshipped it. Now,

I. Information is brought to the king by certain Chaldeans against these three gentlemen that they did not obey the king's edict, Da 3:8. Perhaps these Chaldeans that accused them were some of those magicians or astrologers that were particularly called Chaldeans (Da 2:2) who bore a grudge to Daniel's companions for his sake, because he had eclipsed them, and so had these companions. They by their prayers had obtained the mercy which saved the lives of these Chaldeans, and, behold, how they requite them evil for good! for their love they are their adversaries. Thus Jeremiah stood before God, to speak good for those who afterwards dug a pit for his life, Jer 18:20. We must not think it strange if we meet with such ungrateful men.

Or perhaps they were such of the Chaldeans as expected the places to which they were advanced, and envied them their preferments; and who can stand before envy ? They appeal to the king himself concerning the edict, with all due respect to his majesty, and the usual compliment, O king! live forever (as if they aimed at nothing but his honour, and to serve his interest, when really they were putting him upon that which would endanger the ruin of him and his kingdom); they beg leave,

1. To put him in mind of the law he had lately made, That all manner of persons, without exception of nation or language, should fall down and worship this golden image; they put him

in mind also of the penalty which by the law was to be inflicted upon recusants, that they were to be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, Da 3:10,11. It cannot be denied but that this was the law; whether a righteous law or no ought to be considered.

2. To inform him that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, had not conformed to this edict, Da 3:12. It is probable that Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to ensnare them in making the law, for then he would himself have had his eye upon them, and would not have needed this information; but their enemies, that sought an occasion against them, laid hold on this, and were forward to accuse them. To aggravate the matter, and incense the king the more against them,

(1.) They put him in mind of the dignity to which the criminals had been preferred. Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. It was therefore very ungrateful, and an insufferable piece of insolence, for them to disobey the king's command, when they had shared so much of the king's favour. And, besides, the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous; it would be a bad example, and have a bad influence upon others; and therefore it was necessary that it should be severely animadverted upon. Thus princes that are incensed enough against innocent people commonly have but too many about them who do all they can to make them worse.

(2.) They suggest that it was done maliciously, contumaciously, and in contempt of him and his authority: "They have set no regard upon thee; for they serve not the gods which thou servest, and which thou requirest them to serve, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

II. These three pious Jews are immediately brought before the king, and arraigned and examined upon this information.

Nebuchadnezzar fell into a great passion, and in his rage and fury commanded them to be seized, Da 3:13.

How little was it the honour of this mighty prince that he had rule over so many nations when at the same time he had no rule over his own spirit, that there were so many who were subjects and captives to him when he was himself a perfect slave to his own brutish passions and led captive by them! How unfit was he to rule reasonable men who could not himself be ruled by reason! It needed not be a surprise to him to hear that these three men did not now serve his gods, for he knew very well they never had served them, and that their religion, which they had always adhered to, forbade them to do it. Nor had he any reason to think that they designed any contempt of his authority, for they had in all instances shown themselves respectful and dutiful to him as their prince.

But it was especially unseasonable at this time, when he was in the midst of his devotions, dedicating his golden image, to be in such a rage and fury, and so much to discompose himself. The discretion of a man, one would think, should at least have deferred this anger. True devotion calms the spirit, quiets and meekens it; but superstition, and a devotion to false gods, inflame men's passions, inspire them with rage, and fury, and turn them into brutes. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion; so was the wrath of this king; and yet, when he was in such a heat, these three men were brought before him, and appeared with an undaunted courage, and unshaken constancy.

III. The case is laid before them in short, and it is put to them whether they will comply or no. 1 The king asked them whether it was true that they had not worshipped the golden image when others did, Da 3:14. "Is it of purpose?" so some read it. "Was it designedly and deliberately done, or was it only through inadvertency, that you have not served my gods? What! you that I have nourished and brought up, that have been educated and maintained at my charge, that I have been so kind to and done so much for, you that have been in such reputation for wisdom, and therefore should better have known

your duty to your prince; what! do not you serve my gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up?"

Note, The faithfulness of God's servants to him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors, who think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. 2. He was willing to admit them to a new trial; if they did on purpose not do it before, yet, it may be, upon second thoughts, they will change their minds; it is therefore repeated to them upon what terms they now stand, Da 3:15.

(1.) The king is willing that music shall play again, only for their sakes, to soften them into a compliance; and if they will not, like the deaf adder, stop their ears, but will hearken to the voice of the charmers and will worship the golden image, well and good; their former omission shall be pardoned.

But, (2.) The king is resolved, if they persist in their refusal, that they shall immediately be cast into the fiery furnace, and shall not have so much as an hour's reprieve. Thus does the matter lie in a little compass--Turn, or burn; and, because he knew they buoyed themselves up in their refusal with a confidence in their God, he insolently set him a defiance: "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Let him, if he can." Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a God of gods and a Lord of kings, Da 2:47. Proud men are still ready to say, as Pharaoh, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? or, as Nebuchadnezzar, Who is the Lord, that I should fear his power?

9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.
10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image:
11 and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.
12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it* true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made;

well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.

They give in their answer, which they all agree in, that they still adhere to their resolution not to worship the golden image, Da 3:16-18. We have here such an instance of fortitude and magnanimity as is scarcely to be paralleled. We call these the three children (and they were indeed young men), but we should rather call them the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any intemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they rashly thrust themselves upon the trial, or go out of their way to court martyrdom; but, when they were duly called to the fiery trial, they acquitted themselves bravely, with a conduct and courage that became sufferers for so good a cause.

The king was not so daringly bad in making this idol, but they were as daringly good in witnessing against it. They keep their temper admirably well, do not call the king a tyrant or an idolater (the cause of God needs not the wrath of man), but, with an exemplary calmness and sedateness of mind, they deliberately give in their answer, which they resolve to abide by. Observe,

1. Their gracious and generous contempt of death, and the noble negligence with which they look upon the dilemma that they are put to: O Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to

answer thee in this matter. They do not in sullenness deny him an answer, nor stand mute; but they tell him that they are in no care about it. There needs not an answer (so some read it); they are resolved not to comply, and the king is resolved they shall die if they do not; the matter therefore is determined, and why should it be disputed? But it is better read, "We want not an answer for thee, nor have it to seek, but come prepared."

(1.) They needed no time to deliberate concerning the matter of their answer; for they did not in the least hesitate whether they should comply or no. It was a matter of life and death, and one would think they might have considered awhile before they had resolved; life is desirable, and death is dreadful. But when the sin and duty that were in the case were immediately determined by the letter of the second commandment, and no room was left to question what was right, the life and death that were in the case were not to be considered. Note, Those that would avoid sin must not parley with temptation. When that which we are allured or affrighted to is manifestly evil the motion is rather to be rejected with indignation and abhorrence than reasoned with; stand not to pause about it, but say, as Christ has taught us, Get thee behind me, Satan.

(2.) They needed no time to contrive how they should word it. While they were advocates for God, and were called out to witness in his cause, they doubted not but it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak, Mt 10:19. They were not contriving an evasive answer, when a direct answer was expected from them; no, nor would they seem to court the king not to insist upon it. Here is nothing in their answer that looks like compliment; they begin not, as their accusers did, with, O king! live for ever, no artful insinuation, ad captandam benevolentiam--to put him into a good humour, but every thing that is plain and downright: O Nebuchadnezzar! we are not careful to answer thee. Note, Those that make their duty their main care need not be careful concerning the event.

2. Their believing confidence in God and their dependence upon him, Da 3:17. It was this that enabled them to look with

so much contempt upon death, death in pomp, death in all its terrors: they trusted in the living God, and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore feared not the wrath of the king, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to him that is invisible (Heb 11:25,27): "If it be so, if we are brought to this strait, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace unless we serve thy gods, know then,"

(1.) "That though we worship not thy gods yet we are not atheists; there is a God whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully adhere."

(2.) "That we serve this God; we have devoted ourselves to his honour; we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provide for us, and reward us."

(3.) "That we are well assured that this God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; whether he will or no, we are sure that he can either prevent our being cast into the furnace or rescue us out of it." Note, The faithful servants of God will find him a Master able to bear them out in his service, and to control and overrule all the powers that are armed against them. Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.

(4.) "That we have reason to hope he will deliver us," partly because, in such a vast appearance of idolaters, it would be very much for the honour of his great name to deliver them, and partly because Nebuchadnezzar had defied him to do it--Who is that God that shall deliver you? God sometimes appears wonderfully for the silencing of the blasphemies of the enemy, as well as for the answering of the prayers of his people, Ps 74:18-22.De 32:27.

"But, if he do not deliver us from the fiery furnace, he will deliver us out of thy hand." Nebuchadnezzar can but torment and kill the body, and after that, there is no more that he can do; then they are got out of his reach, delivered out of his hand. Note, Good thoughts of God, and a full assurance that he is with us while we are with him, will help very much to carry us through sufferings; and, if he be for us, we need not fear what

man can do unto us; let him do his worst. God will deliver us either from death or in death.

3. Their firm resolution to adhere to their principles, whatever might be the consequence (Da 3:18): "But, if not, though God should not think fit to deliver us from the fiery furnace (which yet we know he can do), if he should suffer us to fall into thy hand, and fall by thy hand, yet be it known unto thee, O king! we will not serve these gods, though they are thy gods, nor worship this golden image, though thou thyself hast set it up." They are neither ashamed nor afraid to own their religion, and tell the king to his face that they do not fear him, they will not yield to him; had they consulted with flesh and blood, much might have been said to bring them to a compliance, especially when there was no other way of avoiding death, so great a death.

(1.) They were not required to abjure their own God, or to renounce his worship, no, nor by any verbal profession or declaration to own this golden image to be a god, but only to bow down before it, which they might do with a secret reserve of their hearts for the God of Israel, inwardly detesting this idolatry, as Naaman bowed in the house of Rimmon.

(2.) They were not to fall into a course of idolatry; it was but one single act that was required of them, which would be done in a minute, and the danger was over, and they might afterwards declare their sorrow for it.

(3.) The king that commanded it had an absolute power; they were under it, not only as subjects, but as captives; and, if they did it, it was purely by coercion and duress, which would serve to excuse them.

(4.) He had been their benefactor, had educated and preferred them, and in gratitude to him they ought to go as far as they could, though it were to strain a point, a point of conscience.

(5.) They were now driven into a strange country, and to those that were so driven out it was, in effect, said, Go, and serve

other gods, 1Sa 26:19. It was taken for granted that in their disposition they would serve other gods, and it was made a part of the judgment, De 4:28. They might be excused if they should go down the stream, when it is so strong.

(6.) Did not their kings, and their princes, and their fathers, yea, and their priests too, set up idols even in God's temple, and worship them there, and not only bow down to them, but erect altars, burn incense, and offer sacrifices, even their own children, to them? Did not all the ten tribes, for many ages, worship gods of gold at Dan and Bethel? And shall they be more precise than their fathers? Communis error facit jus--What all do must be right.

(7.) If they should comply, they would save their lives and keep their places, and so be in a capacity to do a great deal of service to their brethren in Babylon, and to do it long; for they were young men, and rising men. But there is enough in that one word of God wherewith to answer and silence these and many more such like carnal reasonings: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to any images, nor worship them. They know they must obey God rather than man; they must rather suffer than sin, and must not do evil that good may come. And therefore none of these things move them; they are resolved rather to die in their integrity than live in their iniquity. While their brethren, who yet remained in their own land, were worshipping images by choice, they in Babylon would not be brought to it by constraint, but, as if they were good by antiperistasis, were most zealous against idolatry in an idolatrous country.

And truly, all things considered, the saving of them from this sinful compliance was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace as the saving of them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature. These were those who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolve not to defile themselves with his gods.

Note, A stedfast self-denying adherence to God and duty in less instances will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater.

And in this we must be resolute, never, under any pretence whatsoever, to worship images, or to say "A confederacy" with those that do so.

17 If it be *so,* our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

In these verses we have,

I The casting of these three faithful servants of God into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had himself known and owned so much of the true God that, one would have thought, though his pride and vanity induced him to make this golden image, and set it up to be worshipped, yet what these young men now said (whom he had formerly found to be wiser than all his wise men) would revive his convictions, and at least engage him to excuse them; but it proved quite otherwise.

1. Instead of being convinced by what they said, he was exasperated, and made more outrageous, Da 3:19. It made him full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against these men.

Note, Brutish passions the more they are indulged the more violent they grow, and even change the countenance, to the great reproach of the wisdom and reason of a man. Nebuchadnezzar, in this heat, exchanged the awful majesty of a prince upon his throne, or a judge upon the bench, for the frightful fury of a wild bull in a net. Would men in a passion but view their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly and turn all their displeasure against themselves.

2. Instead of mitigating their punishment, in consideration of their quality and the posts of honour they were in, he ordered it to be heightened, that they should heat the furnace seven

times more than it was wont to be heated for other malefactors, that is, that they should put seven times more fuel to it, which, though it would not make their death more grievous, but rather dispatch them sooner, was designed to signify that the king looked upon their crime as seven times more heinous than the crimes of others, and so made their death more ignominious. But God brought glory to himself out of this foolish instance of the tyrant's rage; for, though it would not have made their death the more grievous, yet it did make their deliverance much the more illustrious.

3. He ordered them to be bound in their clothes, and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, which was done accordingly, Da 3:20,21. They were bound, that they might not struggle, or make any resistance, were bound in their clothes, for haste, or that they might be consumed the more slowly and gradually. But God's providence ordered it for the increase of the miracle, in that their clothes were not so much as singed. They were bound in their coats or mantles, their hosen or breeches, and their hats or turbans, as if, in detestation of their crime, they would have their clothes to be burnt with them. What a terrible death was this--to be cast bound into the midst of a burning fiery furnace! Da 3:23.

It makes one's flesh tremble to think of it, and horror to take hold on one. It is amazing that the tyrant was so hard-hearted as to inflict such a punishment, and that the confessors were so stout-hearted as to submit to it rather than sin against God.

But what is this to the second death, to that furnace into which the tares shall be cast in bundles, to that lake which burns eternally with fire and brimstone? Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it; but hell-fire tortures and does not kill. The pain of damned sinners is more exquisite, and the smoke of their torment ascends for ever and ever, and those have no rest, no intermission, no cessation of their pains, who have worshipped the beast and his image (Re 14:10,11), whereas their pain would be soon over that were cast into this

furnace for not worshipping this Babylonian beast and his image.

4. It was a remarkable providence that the men, the mighty men, that bound them, and threw them into the furnace, were themselves consumed or suffocated by the flame, Da 3:22. The king's commandment was urgent, that they should dispatch them quickly, and be sure to do it effectually; and therefore they resolved to go to the very mouth of the furnace, that they might throw them into the midst of it, but they were in such haste that they would not take time to arm themselves accordingly.

The apocryphal additions to Daniel say that the flame ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. Probably God ordered it so that the wind blew it directly upon them with such violence that it smothered them. God did thus immediately plead the cause of his injured servants, and take vengeance for them on their persecutors, whom he punished, not only in the very act of their sin, but by it. But these men were only the instruments of cruelty; he that bade them do it had the greater sin; yet they suffered justly for executing an unjust decree, and it is very probable that they did it with pleasure and were glad to be so employed.

Nebuchadnezzar himself was reserved for a further reckoning. There is a day coming when proud tyrants will be punished, not only for the cruelties they have been guilty of, but for employing those about them in their cruelties, and so exposing them to the judgments of God.

II The deliverance of these three faithful servants of God out of the furnace. When they were cast bound into the midst of that devouring fire we might well conclude that we should hear no more of them, that their very bones would be calcined; but, to our amazement, we here find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are yet alive.

1. Nebuchadnezzar finds them walking in the fire. He was astonished, and rose up in haste, Da 3:24. Perhaps the slaying

of the men that executed his sentence was that which astonished him, as well it might, for he had reason to think his own turn would be next; or it was some unaccountable impression upon his own mind that astonished him, and made him rise up in haste, and go to the furnace, to see what had become of those he had cast into it.

Note, God can strike those with astonishment whose hearts are most hardened both against him and against his people. He that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it, even to that of the greatest tyrant. In his astonishment he calls his counsellors about him, and appeals to them. Did we not cast three men bound into the fire? It seems, it was done by order, not only of the king, but of the council. They durst not but concur with him, which he forced them to do, that they might share with him in the guilt and odium? "True, O king!" say they; "we did order such an execution to be done and it was done." "But now," says the king, "I have been looking into the furnace, and I see four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire," Da 3:25.

(1.) They were loosed from their bonds. The fire that did not so much as singe their clothes burnt the cords wherewith they were bound, and set them at liberty; thus God's people have their hearts enlarged, through the grace of God, by those very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamper them.

(2.) They had no hurt, made no complaint, felt no pain or uneasiness in the least; the flame did not scorch them; the smoke did not stifle them; they were alive and as well as ever in the midst of the flames. See how God of nature can, when he pleases, control the powers of nature, to make them serve his purposes. Now was fulfilled in the letter gracious promise (Isa 43:2), When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. By faith they quench the violence of the fire, quench the fiery darts of the wicked.

(3.) They walked in the midst of the fire. The furnace was large, so that they had room to walk; they were unhurt, so that they were able to walk; their minds were easy, so that they were disposed to walk, as in a paradise or garden of pleasure. Can a man walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt? Pr 6:28. Yes, they did it with as much pleasure as the king of Tyrus walked up and down in the midst of his stones of fire, his precious stones that sparkled as fire, Eze 28:14. They were not striving to get out, finding themselves unhurt; but, leaving it to that God who preserved them in the fire to bring them out of it, they walked up and down in the midst of it unconcerned.

One of the apocryphal writings relates at large the prayer which Azariah, one of the three, prayed in the fire (wherein he laments the calamities and iniquities of Israel, and entreats God's favour to his people), and the song of praise which they all three sang in the midst of the flames, in both which there are remarkable strains of devotion; but we have reason to think, with Grotius, that they were composed by some Jew of a later age, not as what were used, but only as what might have been used, on this occasion, and therefore we justly reject them as no part of holy writ.

(4.) There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was like the Son of God; he appeared as a divine person, a messenger from heaven, not as a servant, but as a son. Like an angel (so some); and angels are called sons of God, Job 38:7. In the apocryphal narrative of this story it is said, The angel of the Lord came down into the furnace; and Nebuchadnezzar here says (Da 3:28), God sent his angel and delivered them; and it was an angel that shut the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the den, Da 6:22.

But some think it was the eternal Son of God, the angel of the covenant, and not a created angel. He appeared often in our nature before he assumed it in his incarnation, and never more seasonable, nor to give a more proper indication and presage of his great errand into the world in the fulness of time, than now, when, to deliver his chosen out of the fire, he came and walked with them in the fire.

Note, Those that suffer for Christ have his gracious presence with them in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, even in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore even there they need fear no evil. Hereby Christ showed that what is done against his people he takes as done against himself; whoever throws them into the furnace does, in effect, throw him in. I an Jesus, whom thou persecutest, Isa 63:9.

2. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the furnace (Da 3:26): He comes near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and bids them come forth and come hither. Come forth, come (so some read it); he speaks with a great deal of tenderness and concern, and stands ready to lend them his hand and help them out. He is convinced by their miraculous preservation that he did evil in casting them into the furnace; and therefore he does not thrust them out privily; no verily, but he will come himself and fetch them out, Ac 16:37.

Observe the respectful title that he gives them. When he was in the heat of his fury and rage against them it is probable that he called them rebels, and traitors, and all the ill names he could invent; but now he owns them for the servants of the most high God, a God who now appears able to deliver them out of his hand. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince the proudest of men that he is the most high God, and above them, and too hard for them, even in those things wherein they deal proudly and presumptuously, Ex 18:11.

He will likewise let them know are who his servants, and that he owns them and will stand by them. Elijah prayed (1Ki 18:36), Let it be known that thou art God and that I am thy servant. Nebuchadnezzar now embraces those whom he had abandoned, and is very officious about them, now that he perceives them to be the favourites of Heaven.

Note, What persecutors have done against God's servants, when God opens their eyes, they must as far as they can undo again. How the fourth, whose form was like the Son of God,

withdrew, and whether he vanished away or visibly ascended, we are not told, but of the other three we are informed,

(1.) That they came forth out of the midst of the fire, as Abraham their father out of Ur (that is, the fire) of the Chaldees, into which, says this tradition of the Jews, he was cast, for refusing to worship idols, and out of which he was delivered, as those his three children were. When they had their discharge they did not tempt God by staying in any longer, but came forth as brands out of the burning.

(2.) That it was made to appear, to the full satisfaction of all the amazed spectators, that they had not received the least damage by the fire, Da 3:27. All the great men came together to view them, and found that there was not so much as a hair of their head singed. Here that was true in the letter which our Saviour spoke figuratively, for an assurance to his suffering servants that they should sustain no real damage (Lu 21:18), There shall not a hair of your head perish. Their clothes did not so much as change colour, nor smell of fire, much less were their bodies in the least scorched or blistered; no, the fire had no power on them.

The Chaldeans worshipped the fire, as a sort of image of the sun, so that, in restraining the fire now, God put contempt, not only upon their king, but upon their god too, and showed that his voice divides the flames of fire as well as the floods of water (Ps 29:7), when he pleases to make a way for his people through the midst of it. It is our God only that is the consuming fire (Heb 12:29); other fire, if he but speak the word, shall not consume.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, *and* to cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace.

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hose, and their hats, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, *and* spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither.* Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

28 *Then* Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

The strict observations that were made, super visum corporis--on inspecting their bodies, by the princes and governors, and all the great men who were present upon this public occasion, and who could not be supposed partial in favour of the confessors, contributed much to the clearing of this miracle and the magnifying of the power and grace of God in it. That indeed a notable miracle has been done is manifest, and we cannot deny it, Ac 4:16. Let us now see what effect it had upon Nebuchadnezzar.

I. He gives glory to the God of Israel as a God able and ready to protect his worshippers (Da 3:28): "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Let him have the honour both of the faithful allegiance which his subjects bear to him

and the powerful protection he grants to them, neither of which can be paralleled by any other nation and their gods." The king does himself acknowledge and adore him, and thinks it is fit that he should be acknowledged and adored by all. Blessed be thee God of Shadrach. Note, God can extort confessions of his blessedness even from those that have been ready to curse him to his face.

1. He gives him the glory of his power, that he was able to protect his worshippers against the most mighty and malign ant enemies: There is no other God that can deliver after this sort (Da 3:29), no, not this golden image which he had set up. For this reason there was no other god that obliged his worshippers to cleave to him only, and to suffer death rather than worship any other, as the God of Israel did, for they could not engage to bear them out in so doing, as he could. If God can work such deliverance as no other can, he may demand such obedience as no other may.

2. He gives him the glory of his goodness, that he was ready to do it (Da 3:28): He has sent his angel and delivered his servants. Bel could not save his worshippers from being burnt at the mouth of the furnace, but the God of Israel saved his from being burnt when they were cast into the midst of the furnace because they refused to worship any other god. By this Nebuchadnezzar was plainly given to understand that all the great success which he had had, and should yet have, against the people of Israel, which he gloried in, as he had therein overpowered the God of Israel, was owing purely to their sin: if the body of that nation had faithfully adhered to their own God and the worship of him only, as these three men did, they would all have been delivered out of his hand as these three men were. And this was a necessary instruction for him at this time.

II. He applauds the constancy of these three men in their religion, and describes it to their honour, Da 3:28. Though he is not himself persuaded to own their God for his and to worship him, because, if he do so, he knows he must worship him only and renounce all others, and he calls him the God of Shadrach,

not my God, yet he commends them for cleaving to him, and not serving nor worshipping any other God but their own.

Note, There are many who are not religious themselves, and yet will own that those are clearly in the right that are religious and are stedfast in their religion. Though they are not themselves persuaded to close with it, they will commend those who, having closed with it, cleave to it. If men have given up their names to that God who will alone be served, let them keep to their principles, and serve him only, whatever it cost them. Such a constancy in the true religion will turn to men's praise, even among those that are without, when unsteadiness, treachery, and double dealing, are what all men will cry shame on. He commends them that they did this,

1. With a generous contempt of their lives, which they valued not, in comparison with the favour of God and the testimony of a good conscience. The yielded their own bodies to be cast into the fiery furnace rather than they would not only not forsake their God, but not affront him, by once paying that homage to any other which is due to him alone. Note, Those shall have their praise, if not of men, yet of God, who prefer their souls before their bodies, and will rather lose their lives than forsake their God. Those know not the worth and value of religion who do not think it worth suffering for.

2. They did it with a glorious contradiction to their prince: They changed the king's word, that is, they were contrary to it, and thereby put contempt upon both his precepts and threatenings, and made him repent and revoke both. Note, Even kings themselves must own that, when their commands are contrary to the commands of God, he is to be obeyed and not they.

(3.) They did it with a gracious confidence in their God. They trusted in him that he would stand by them in what they did, that he would either bring them out of the fiery furnace back to their place on earth or lead them through the fiery furnace forward to their place in heaven; and in this confidence they became fearless of the king's wrath and regardless of their own lives.

Note, A stedfast faith in God will produce a stedfast faithfulness to God. Now this honourable testimony, thus publicly borne by the king himself to these servants of God, we may well think, would have a good influence upon the rest of the Jews that were, or should be, captives in Babylon. Their neighbours could not with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do that, which their brethren were so highly applauded by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these his servants would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, for which end they were sent into captivity; and, when it had had that blessed effect upon them, they might be assured that God would deliver them out of that furnace, as now he delivered their brethren out of this.

III. He issues a royal edict, strictly forbidding any to speak evil of the God of Israel, Da 3:29. We have reason to think that both the sins and the troubles of Israel had given great occasion, though no just occasion, to the Chaldeans to blaspheme the God of Israel, and, it is likely, Nebuchadnezzar himself had encouraged it; but now, though he is no true convert, nor is wrought upon to worship him, yet he resolves never to speak ill of him again, nor to suffer others to do so:

"Whoever shall speak any thing amiss, any error (so some), or rather any reproach or blasphemy, whoever shall speak with contempt of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they shall be counted the worst of malefactors, and dealt with accordingly, they shall be cut in pieces, as Agag was by the sword of Samuel, and their houses shall be demolished and made a dunghill." The miracle now wrought by the power of this God in defence of his worshippers, publicly in the sight of the thousands of Babylon, was a sufficient justification of this edict. And it would contribute much to the ease of the Jews in their captivity to be by this law screened from the fiery darts of reproach and blasphemy, with which otherwise they would have been continually annoyed.

Note, It is a great mercy to the church, and a good point gained, when its enemies though they have not their hearts turned, yet have their mouths stopped and their tongues tied. If a heathen prince laid such a restraint upon the proud lips of blasphemers, much more should Christian princes do it; nay, in this thing, one would think that men should be a law to themselves, and that those who have so little love to God that they care not to speak well of him, yet could never find in their hearts, for we are sure they could never find cause, to speak any thing amiss of him.

IV. He not only reverses the attainder of these three men, but restores them to their places in the government (makes them to prosper, so the word is), and prefers them to greater and more advantageous trusts than they had been in before: He promoted them in the province of Babylon, which was much to their honour and the comfort of their brethren in captivity there. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer and employ men of stedfastness in religion; for those are most likely to be faithful to them who are faithful to God, and it is likely to be well with them when God's favourites are made theirs.

29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.

30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

Daniel-4

Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

Here is, I. Something of form, which was usual in writs, proclamations, or circular letters, issued by the king, Da 4:1 The royal style which Nebuchadnezzar makes use of has nothing in it of pomp or fancy, but is plain, short, and unaffected--Nebuchadnezzar the king. If at other times he made use of great swelling words of vanity in his title, how he laid them all aside;

for he was old, he had lately recovered from a distraction which had humbled and mortified him, and was now in the actual contemplation of God's greatness and sovereignty.

The declaration is directed not only to his own subjects, but to all to whom this present writing shall come--to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. He is not only willing that they should all hear of it, though it carry the account if his own infamy (which perhaps none durst have published if he had not done it himself, and therefore Daniel published the original paper), but he strictly charges and commands all manner of persons to take notice of it; for all are concerned, and it may be profitable to all. He salutes those to whom he writes, in the usual form, Peace be multiplied unto you.

Note, It becomes kings with their commands to disperse their good wishes, and, as fathers of their country, to bless their subjects. So the common form with us. We send greeting, Omnibus quibus hæ præsentes literæ pervenerint, salutem--To all to whom these presents shall come, health; and sometimes Salutem sempiternam--Health and salvation everlasting.

II. Something of substance and matter. He writes this,

1. To acquaint others with the providences of God that had related to him (Da 4:2): I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God (so he calls the true God) has wrought towards me. He thought it seemly (so the word is), that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and the world, now that he had recovered from his distraction, to relate to distant places, and record for future ages, how justly God had humbled him and how graciously he had at length restored him.

All the nations, no doubt, had heard what befell Nebuchadnezzar, and rang of it; but he thought it fit that they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it, and might speak of it not as a matter of news, but as a matter of religion. The events

concerning him were not only wonders to be admired, but signs to be instructed by, signifying to the world that Jehovah is greater than all gods.

Note, We ought to show to others God's dealings with us, both the rebukes we have been under and the favours we have received; and though the account hereof may reflect disgrace upon ourselves, as this did upon Nebuchadnezzar, yet we must not conceal it, as long as it may redound to the glory of God. Many will be forward to tell what God has done for their souls, because that turns to their own praise, who care not for telling what God has done against them, and how they deserved it; whereas we ought to give glory to God, not only by praising him for his mercies, but by confessing our sins, accepting the punishment of our iniquity, and in both taking shame to ourselves, as this mighty monarch here does.

2. To show how much he was himself affected with them and convinced by them, Da 4:3. We should always speak of the word and works of God with concern and seriousness and show ourselves affected with those great things of God which we desire others should take notice of.

(1.) He admires God's doings. He speaks of them as one amazed: How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders! Nebuchadnezzar was now old, had reigned above forty years, and had seen as much of the world and the revolutions of it as most men ever did; and yet never till now, when himself was nearly touched, was he brought to admire surprising events as God's signs and his wonders. Now, How great, how mighty, are they! Note, The more we see events to be the Lord's doing, and see in them the product of a divine power and the conduct of a divine wisdom, the more marvellous they will appear in our eyes, Ps 118:23,Ps 66:2.

(2.) He thence infers God's dominion. This is that which he is at length brought to subscribe to: His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and not like his own kingdom, which he saw, and long since foresaw, in a dream, hastening towards a period. He now owns that there is a God that governs the world and has a

universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men.

And it is the glory of this kingdom that it is everlasting. Other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but God's dominion is from generation to generation. It should seem, Nebuchadnezzar here refers to what Daniel had foretold of a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up, that should never be destroyed (Da 2:44), which, though meant of the kingdom of the Messiah, he understood of the providential kingdom. Thus we may make a profitable practical use and application of those prophetical scriptures which yet we do not fully, and perhaps not rightly, comprehend the meaning of.

2 I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

3 How great *are* his signs! and how mighty *are* his wonders! his kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion *is* from generation to generation.

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace:

5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

Nebuchadnezzar, before he relates the judgments of God that had been wrought upon him for his pride, gives an account of the fair warning he had of them before they came, a due regard to which might have prevented them. But he was told of them, and of the issue of them, before they came to pass, that, when they did come to pass, by comparing them with the prediction of them, he might see, and say, that they were the Lord's doing, and might be brought to believe that there is a divine revelation in the world, as well as a divine Providence, and that the works of God agree with his word.

Now, in the account he here gives of his dream, by which he had notice of what was coming, we may observe,

I The time when this alarm was given to him (Da 4:4); it was when he was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace.

He had lately conquered Egypt, and with it completed his victories, and ended his wars, and made himself monarch of all those parts of the world, which was about the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth year of his reign, Eze 29:17. Then he had this dream, which was accomplished about a year after. Seven years his distraction continued, upon his recovery from which he penned this declaration, lived about two years after, and died in his forty-fifth year. He had undergone a long fatigue in his wars, had made many a tedious and dangerous campaign in the field; but now at length he is at rest in his house, and there is no adversary, nor any evil occurrent. Note, God can reach the greatest of men with his terrors even when they are most secure, and think themselves at rest and flourishing.

II The impression it made upon him (Da 4:5): I saw a dream which made me afraid. One would think no little thing would frighten him that had been a man of war from his youth, and used to look the perils of war in the face without change of countenance; yet, when God pleases, a dream strikes a terror upon him. His bed, no doubt, was soft, and easy, and well-guarded, and yet his own thoughts upon his bed made him uneasy, and the visions of his head, the creatures of his own imagination, troubled him. Note, God can make the greatest of men uneasy even when they say to their souls, Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry; he can make those that have been the troublers of the world, and have tormented thousands, to be their own troublers, their own tormentors, and those that have been the terror of the mighty a terror to themselves. By the consternation which this dream put him into, and the impression it made upon him, he perceived it to be, not an ordinary dream, but sent of God on a special errand.

III. His consulting, in vain, with the magicians and astrologers concerning the meaning of it. He had not now forgotten the dream, as before, Da 2:1-21 He had it ready enough, but he wanted to know the interpretation of it and what was prefigured by it, Da 4:6. Orders are immediately given to summon all the wise men of Babylon that were such fools as to pretend by magic, divination, inspecting the entrails of beasts, or observations of the stars, to predict things to come: they must

all come together, to see if any, or all of them in consultation, could interpret the king's dream. It is probable that these people had sometimes, in a like case, given the king some sort of satisfaction, and by the rules of their art had answered the king's queries so as to please him, whether it were right or wrong, hit or missed; but now his expectation from them was disappointed: He told them the dream (Da 4:7), but they could not tell him the interpretation of it, though they had boasted, with great assurance (Da 2:4,7), that, if they had but the dream told them, they would without fail interpret it.

But the key of this dream was in a sacred prophecy (Eze 31:3, &c.), where the Assyrian is compared, as Nebuchadnezzar here, to a tree cut down, for his pride; and that was a book they had not studied, nor acquainted themselves with, else they might have been let into the mystery of this dream. Providence ordered it so that they should be first puzzled with it, that Daniel's interpreting it afterwards might redound to the glory of the God of Daniel. Now was fulfilled what Isaiah foretold (Isa 47:12,13), that when the ruin of Babylon was drawing on her enchantments and sorceries, her astrologers and star-gazers, should not be able to do her any service.

IV. The court he made to Daniel, to engage him to expound his dream to him: At the last Daniel came in. Da 4:8. Either he declined associating with the rest because of their badness, or they declined his company because of his goodness; or perhaps the king would rather that his own magicians should have the honour of doing it if they could than that Daniel should have it; or Daniel, being governor of the wise men (Da 2:48), was, as is usual, last consulted. Many make God's word their last refuge, and never have recourse to it till they are driven off from all other succours. He compliments Daniel very highly, takes notice of the name which he had himself given him, in the choice of which he thinks he was very happy and that it was a good omen:

"His name was Belteshazzar, from Bel, the name of my god." He applauds his rare endowments: He has the spirit of the holy gods, so he tells him to his face (Da 4:9), with which we may

suppose that Daniel was so far from being puffed up that he was rather very much grieved to hear that which he had by gift from the God of Israel, the true and living God, ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar's god, a dunghill deity. Here is a strange medley in Nebuchadnezzar, but such as is commonly found in those that side with their corruptions against their convictions.

1. He retains the language and dialect of his idolatry, and therefore, it is to be feared, is no convert to the faith and worship of the living God. He is an idolater, and his speech betrayeth him. For he speaks of many gods, and is brought to acquiesce in one as sufficient, no, not in him who is all-sufficient. And some think, when he speaks of the spirit of the holy gods, that he supposes there are some evil malignant deities, whom men are concerned to worship, only to prevent their doing them a mischief, and some who are good beneficent deities, and that by the spirit of the latter Daniel was animated. He also owns that Bel was his god still, though he had once and again acknowledged the God of Israel to be Lord of all, Da 2:47,3:29.

He also applauds Daniel, not as a servant of God, but as master of the magicians (Da 4:9), supposing his knowledge to differ from theirs, not in kind, but only in degree; and he consulted him not as a prophet, but as a celebrated magician, so endeavouring to save the credit of the art when those blundered and were nonplussed who were masters of the art. See how close his idolatry sat to him. He has got a notion of many gods, and has chosen Bel for his god, and he cannot persuade himself to quit either his notion or his choice, though the absurdity of both had been evidenced to him, more than once, beyond contradiction.

He, like other heathens, would not change his gods, though they were no gods, Jer 2:11. Many persist in a false way only because they think they cannot in honour leave it. See how loose his convictions sat, and how easily he had dropped them. He once called the God of Israel a God of gods, Da 2:47. Now he sets him upon a level with the rest of those whom he calls the holy gods.

Note, If convictions be not speedily prosecuted, it is a thousand to one but in a little time they will be quite lost and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar, not going forward with the acknowledgements he had been brought to make of the sovereignty of the true God, soon went backwards, and relapsed to the same veneration he had always had for his false gods. And yet,

2. He professes a great opinion of Daniel, whom he knows to be a servant of the true God, and of him only. He looked upon him as one that had such an insight, such a foresight, as none of his magicians had: I know that no secret troubles thee. Note, The spirit of prophecy quite outdoes the spirit of divination, even the enemies themselves being judges; for so it was adjudged here, upon a fair trial of skill.

6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.

7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, *saying*,

9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

10 Thus *were* the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof *was* great.

The particular account he gives him of his dream.

1. He saw a stately flourishing tree, remarkable above all the trees of the wood. This tree was planted in the midst of the earth (Da 4:10), fitly representing him who reigned in Babylon, which was about the midst of the then known world. His dignity and eminency above all his neighbours were signified by the height of this tree, which was exceedingly great; it reached unto heaven. He over-topped those about him, and aimed to have divine honours given him; nay, he over-powered those about

him, and the potent armies he had the command of, with which he carried all before him, are signified by the strength of this tree: it grew and was strong. And so much were Nebuchadnezzar and his growing greatness the talk of the nations, so much had they their eye upon him (some a jealous eye, all a wondering eye), that the sight of this tree is said to be to the end of all the earth. This tree had every thing in it that was pleasant to the eye and good for food (Da 4:12); The leaves thereof were fair, denoting the pomp and splendour of Nebuchadnezzar's court, which was the wonder of strangers and the glory of his own subjects. Nor was this tree for sight and state only, but for use.

(1.) For protection; the boughs of it were for shelter both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects from the heat and from the storm, should expose themselves to secure them, and study how to make them safe and easy. If the bramble be promoted over the trees, he invites them to come and trust in his shadow, such as it is, Jdg 9:15. It is protection that draws allegiance. The kings of the earth are to their subjects but as the shadow of a great tree; but Christ is to his subjects as the shadow of a great rock, Isa 32:2. Nay, because that, though strong, may be cold, they are said to be hidden under the shadow of his wings (Ps 17:8), where they are not only safe, but warm.

(2.) For provision, The Assyrian was compared to a cedar (Eze 31:6), which affords shadow only; but this tree here had much fruit--in it was meat for all and all flesh was fed of it. This mighty monarch, it should seem by this, not only was great, but did good; he did not impoverish, but enrich his country, and by his power and interest abroad brought wealth and trade to it. Those that exercise authority would be called benefactors (Lu 22:25), and the most effectual course they can take to support their authority is to be really benefactors. And see what is the best that great men, with their wealth and power can attain to, and that is to have the honour of having many to live upon them and to be maintained by them; for, as goods are increased, those are increased that eat them.

2. He heard the doom of this tree read, which he perfectly remembered, and related here, perhaps word for word as he heard it. The sentence was passed upon it by an angel, whom he saw come down from heaven, and heard proclaim this sentence aloud. This angel is here called a watcher, or watchman, not only because angels by their nature are spirits, and therefore neither slumber nor sleep, but because by their office they are ministering spirits, and attend continually to their ministrations, watching all opportunities of serving their great Master.

They, as watchers, encamp round those that fear God, to deliver them, and bear them up in their hands. This angel was a messenger, or ambassador (so some read it), and a holy one. Holiness becomes God's house; therefore angels that attend and are employed by him are holy ones; they preserve the purity and rectitude of their nature, and are in every thing conformable to the divine will. Let us review the doom passed upon the tree.

(1.) Orders are given that it be cut down (Da 4:14); now also the axe is laid to the root of this tree. Though it is ever so high, ever so strong, that cannot secure it when its day comes to fall; the beasts and fowls, that are sheltered in and under the boughs of it, are driven away and dispersed; the branches are cropped, the leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered.

Note, Worldly prosperity in its highest degree is a very uncertain thing; and it is no uncommon thing for those that have lived in the greatest pomp and power to be stripped of all that which they trusted to and gloried in. By the turns of providence, those who made a figure become captives, those who lived in plenty, and above what they had, are reduced to straits, and live far below what they had, and those perhaps are brought to be beholden to others who once had many depending upon them and making suit to them. But the trees of righteousness, that are planted in the house of the Lord and bring forth fruit to him, shall not be cut down, nor shall their leaf wither.

(2.) Care is taken that the root be preserved (Da 4:15); "Leave the stump of it in the earth, exposed to all weathers. There let it lie neglected and buried in the grass. Let the beasts that formerly

sheltered themselves under the boughs now repose themselves upon the stump; but that it may not be raked to pieces, nor trodden to dirt, and to show that it is yet reserved for better days, let it be hooped round with a band of iron and brass, to keep it firm." Note, God in judgment remembers mercy; and may yet have good things in store for those whose condition seems most forlorn. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, that through the scent of water it will bud, Job 14:7-9.

(3.) The meaning of this is explained by the angel himself to Nebuchadnezzar, Da 4:16. Whoever is the person signified by this tree he is sentenced to be deposed from the honour, state, and dignity of a man, to be deprived of the use of his reason, and to be and live like a brute, till seven times pass over him. Let a beast's heart be given unto him. This is surely the saddest and sorest of all temporal judgments, worse a thousand times than death, and though, like it, least felt by those that lie under it, yet to be dreaded and deprecated more than any other. Nay, whatever outward affliction God is pleased to lay upon us, we have reason to bear it patiently, and to be thankful that he continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences. But those proud tyrants who set their heart as the heart of God (Eze 27:2) may justly be deprived of the heart of man, and have a beast's heart given them.

(4.) The truth of it is confirmed (Da 4:17); This matter is by the decree of the watchers and the demand by the word of the holy ones. God has determined it, as a righteous Judge; he has signed this edict; pursuant to his eternal counsel, the decree has gone forth, And,

[1.] The angels of heaven have subscribed to it, as attesting it, approving it, and applauding it. It is by the decree of the watchers; not that the great God needs the counsel or concurrence of the angels in any thing he determines or does, but, as he uses their ministration in executing his counsels, so he is sometimes represented, after the manner of men, as if he consulted them. Whom shall I send? Isa 6:8. Who shall persuade Ahab? 1Ki 22:20. So it denotes the solemnity of this

sentence. The king's breves, or short writs, pass, Teste me ipso--in my presence; but charters used to be signed, His testibus--In the presence of us whose names are under-written; such was Nebuchadnezzar's doom; it was by the decree of the watchers.

[2.] The saints on earth petitioned for it, as well as the angels in heaven: The demand is by the word of the holy ones. God's suffering people, that had long groaned under the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, cried to him for vengeance; they made the demand, and God gave this answer to it; for, when the oppressed cry to God, he will hear, Ex 22:27. Sentence was passed, in Ahab's time, that there should be no more rain, at Elijah's word, when he made intercession against Israel, 1Ki 17:1.

(5.) The design of it is declared. Orders are given for the cutting down of this tree, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules. This judgment must be executed, to convince the unthinking, unbelieving, world, that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, a God that governs the world, that not only has a kingdom of his own in it, and administers the affairs of that kingdom, but rules also in the kingdom of men, in the dominion that one man has over another, and gives that to whomsoever he will; from him promotion comes, Ps 75:6,7.

He advances men to power and dominion that little expected it, and crosses the projects of the ambitious and aspiring. Sometimes he sets up the basest of men, and serves his own purposes by them. He sets up mean men, as David from the sheepfold; he raises the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, Ps 113:7,8.

Nay, sometimes he sets up bad men, to be a scourge to a provoking people. Thus he can do, thus he may do, thus he often does, and gives not account of any of his matters. By humbling Nebuchadnezzar it was designed that the living should be made to know this. The dead know it, that have gone to the world of spirits, the world of retribution; they know that the Most High rules; but the living must be made to know it and lay it to heart, that they may make their peace with God before it be too late.

Thus has Nebuchadnezzar fully and faithfully related his dream, what he saw and what he heard, and then demands of Daniel the interpretation of it (Da 4:18), for he found that no one else was able to interpret it, but was confident that he was: For the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, or of the Holy God, the proper title of the God of Israel. Much may be expected from those that have in them the Spirit of the Holy God.

Whether Nebuchadnezzar had any jealousy that it was his own doom that was read by this dream does not appear; perhaps he was so vain and secure as to imagine that it was some other prince that was a rival with him, whose fall he had the pleasing prospect of given him in this dream; but, be it for him or against him, he is very solicitous to know the true meaning of it and depends upon Daniel to give it to him. Now, When God gives us general warnings of his judgments we should be desirous to understand his mind in them, to hear the Lord's voice crying in the city.

11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth:

12 the leaves thereof *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and a holy one came down from heaven;

14 he cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

15 nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts in the grass of the earth:

16 let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

17 This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the

Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou *art* able; for the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee.

19 Then Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

We have here the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; and when once it is applied to himself, and it is declared that he is the tree in the dream (Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur--Change but the name, the fable speaks of thee), when once it is said, Thou art the man, there needs little more to be said for the explication of the dream. Out of his own mouth he is judged; so shall his doom be, he himself has decided it. The thing was so plain that Daniel, upon hearing the dream, was astonished for one hour, Da 4:19.

He was struck with amazement and terror at so great a judgment coming upon so great a prince. His flesh trembled for fear of God. He was likewise struck with confusion when he found himself under a necessity of being the man that must bring to the king these heavy tidings, which, having received so many favours from the king, he had rather he should have heard from any one else; so far is he from desiring the woeful day that he dreads it, and the thoughts of it trouble him. Those that come after the ruined sinner are said to be astonished at his day, as those that went before, and saw it coming (as Daniel here), were affrighted, Job 18:20.

I The preface to the interpretation is a civil compliment which, as a courtier, he passes upon the king. The king observed him to stand as one astonished, and, thinking he was loth to speak out for fear of offending him, he encouraged him to deal plainly

and faithfully with him; Let not the dream, nor the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. This he speaks either,

1. As one that sincerely desired to know this truth. Note, Those that consult the oracles of God must be ready to receive them as they are, whether they be for them or against them, and must accordingly give their ministers leave to be free with them. Or,

2. As one that despised the truth, and set it at defiance. When we see how regardless he was of this warning afterwards we are tempted to think that this was his meaning; "Let it not trouble thee, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me; nor will I lay it to heart." But, whether he have any concern for himself or no, Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes, "The dream be to those that hate thee. Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thy enemies, not on thy head." Though Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, a persecutor, and an oppressor of the people of God, yet he was, at present, Daniel's prince; and therefore, though Daniel foresees, and is now going to foretell, ill concerning him, he dares not wish ill to him.

II The interpretation itself is only a repetition of the dream, with application to the king. "As for the tree which thou sawest flourishing (Da 4:20,21), it is thou, O king!" Da 4:22. And willing enough would the king be to hear this (as, before, to hear, Thou art the head of gold), but for that which follows. He shows the king his present prosperous state in the glass of his own dream; "Thy greatness has grown and reaches as near to heaven as human greatness can do, and thy dominion is to the end of the earth," Da 2:37,38. "As for the doom passed upon the tree (Da 4:23), it is the decree of the Most High, which comes upon my lord the king," Da 4:24.

He must not only be deposed from his throne, but driven from men, and being deprived of his reason, and having a beast's heart given him, his dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and with them he shall be a fellow-commoner: he shall eat grass as oxen, and, like them, lie out all weathers, and be wet with the dew of heaven, and this till seven times pass over him, that is, seven years; and then he shall know that the Most High rules, and when he is brought to know and own this he

shall be restored to his dominion again (Da 4:26): "Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, shall remain as firm as the stump of the tree in the ground, and thou shalt have it, after thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." God is here called the heavens, because it is in heaven that he has prepared his throne (Ps 103:19), thence he beholds all the sons of men, Ps 33:13.

The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's; and the influence which the visible heavens have upon this earth is intended as a faint representation of the dominion the God of heaven has over this lower world; we are said to sin against heaven, Lu 15:18. Note, Then only we may expect comfortably to enjoy our right in, and government of, both ourselves and others, when we dutifully acknowledge God's title to, and dominion over, us and all we have.

III. The close of the interpretation is the pious counsel which Daniel, as a prophet, gave the king, Da 4:27. Whether he appeared concerned or not at the interpretation of the dream, a word of advice would be very seasonable--if careless, to awaken him, if troubled, to comfort him; and it is not inconsistent with the dream and the interpretation of it, for Daniel knew not but it might be conditional, like the prediction of Nineveh's destruction. Observe,

1. How humbly he gives his advice, and with what tenderness and respect: "O king! let my counsel be acceptable unto thee; take it in good part, as coming from love, and well-meant, and let it not be misinterpreted." Note, Sinners need to be courted to their own good, and respectfully entreated to do well for themselves. The apostle beseeches men to suffer the word of exhortation, Heb 13:22. We think it a good point gained if people will be persuaded to take good counsel kindly; nay, if they will take it patiently.

2. What his advice is. He does not counsel him to enter into a course of physic, for the preventing of the distemper in his head, but to break off a course of sin that he was in, to reform his life. He wronged his own subjects, and dealt unfairly with his allies;

and he must break off this by righteousness, by rendering to all their due, making amends for wrong done, and not triumphing over right with might. He had been cruel to the poor, to God's poor, to the poor Jews; and he must break off this iniquity by showing mercy to those poor, pitying those oppressed ones, setting them at liberty or making their captivity easy to them. Note, It is necessary, in repentance, that we not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well, not only do no wrong to any, but do good to all.

3. What the motive is with which he backs this advice: If it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility. Though it should not wholly prevent the judgment, yet by this means a reprieve may be obtained, as by Ahab's humbling himself, 1Ki 21:29. Either the trouble may be the longer before it comes or the shorter when it does come; yet he cannot assure him of this, but it may be, it may prove so. Note, The mere probability of preventing a temporal judgment is inducement enough to a work so good in itself as the leaving off of our sins and reforming of our lives, much more the certainty of preventing our eternal ruin. "That will be a healing of thy error" (so some read it); "thus the quarrel will be taken up, and all will be well again."

20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth;

21 whose leaves *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

22 it *is* thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;

24 this *is* the interpretation, O king, and this *is* the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

25 that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times
shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.
26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.
27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.
28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.
29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's dream accomplished, and Daniel's application of it to him justified and confirmed. How he took it we are not told, whether he was pleased with Daniel or displeased; but here we have,

I. God's patience with him: All this came upon him, but not till twelve months after (Da 4:29), so long there was a lengthening of his tranquility, though it does not appear that he broke off his sins, or showed any mercy to the poor captives, for this was still God's quarrel with him, that he opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa 14:17. Daniel having counselled him to repent, God so far confirmed his word that he gave him space to repent; he let him alone this year also, this one year more, before he brought this judgment upon him. Note, God is long-suffering with provoking sinners, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2Pe 3:9.

II. His pride, and haughtiness, and abuse of that patience. He walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, in pomp and pride, pleasing himself with the view of that vast city, which, with all the territories thereunto belonging, was under his command, and he said, either to himself or to those about him, perhaps some foreigners to whom he was showing his kingdom and the glory of it, Is not this great Babylon? Yes, it is great, of vast extent, no less that forty-five miles compass within the

walls. It is full of inhabitants, and they are full of wealth. It is a golden city, and that is enough to proclaim it great, Isa 14:4.

See the grandeur of the houses, walls, towers, and public edifices. Every thing in Babylon he thinks looks great; "and this great Babylon I have built." Babylon was built many ages before he was born, but because he fortified and beautified it, and we may suppose much of it was rebuilt during his long and prosperous reign, he boasts that he has built it, as Augustus Cæsar boasted concerning Rome, Lateritiam inveni, marmoream reliqui--I found it brick, but I left it marble. He boasts that he built it for the house of the kingdom, that is, the metropolis of his empire.

This vast city, compared with the countries that belonged to his dominions, was but as one house. He built it with the assistance of his subjects, yet boasts that he did it by the might of his power; he built it for his security and convenience, yet, as if he had no occasion for it, boasts that he built it purely for the honour of his majesty. Note, Pride and self-conceitedness are sins that most easily beset great men, who have great things in the world. They are apt to take the glory to themselves which is due to God only.

III. His punishment for his pride. When he was thus strutting, and vaunting himself, and adoring his own shadow, while the proud word was in the king's mouth the powerful word came from heaven, by which he was immediately deprived,

1. Of his honour as a king: The kingdom has departed from thee. When he thought he had erected impregnable bulwarks for the preserving of his kingdom, now, in an instant, it has departed from him; when he thought it so well guarded that none could take it from him, behold, it departs of itself. As soon as he becomes utterly incapable to manage it, it is of course taken out of his hands.

2. He is deprived of his honour as a man. He loses his reason, and by that means loses his dominion: They shall drive thee from men, Da 4:32. And it was fulfilled (Da 4:33): he was driven from men the same hour. On a sudden he fell stark mad, distracted in

the highest degree that ever any man was. His understanding and memory were gone, and all the faculties of a rational soul broken, so that he became a perfect brute in the shape of a man. He went naked, and on all four, like a brute, did himself shun the society of reasonable creatures and run wild into the fields and woods, and was driven out by his own servants, who, after some time of trial, despairing of his return to his right mind, abandoned him, and looked after him no more.

He had not the spirit of a beast of prey (that of the royal lion), but of the abject and less honourable species, for he was made to eat grass as oxen; and, probably, he did not speak with human voice, but lowed like an ox. Some think that his body was all covered with hair; however, the hair of his head and beard, being never cut nor combed, grew like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. Let us pause a little, and view this miserable spectacle; and let us receive instruction from it.

(1.) Let us see here what a mercy it is to have the use of our reason, how thankful we ought to be for it, and how careful we ought to be not to do any thing which may either provoke God or may have a natural tendency to put us out of the possession of our own souls. Let us learn how to value our own reason, and to pity the case of those that are under the prevailing power of melancholy or distraction, or are delirious, and to be very tender in our censures of them and conduct towards them, for it is a trial common to men, and a case which, some time or other, may be our own.

(2.) Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness. Is this Nebuchadnezzar the Great? What this despicable animal that is meaner than the poorest beggar? Is this he that looked so glorious on the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politics enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now has not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back? Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? Isa 14:16. Never let the wise man then glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his strength.

(3.) Let us see here how God resists the proud, and delights to abase them and put contempt upon them. Nebuchadnezzar would be more than a man, and therefore God justly makes him less than a man, and puts him upon a level with the beasts who set up for a rival with his Maker. See Job 40:11-13.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?

31 While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation:

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his distraction, and his return to his right mind, at the end of the days prefixed, that is, of the seven years. So long he continued a monument of God's justice and a trophy of his victory over the children of pride, and he was made more so by being struck mad than if he had been in an instant struck dead with a thunderbolt; yet it was a mercy to him that he was kept alive, for while there is life there is hope that we may yet praise God, as he did here: At the end of the days (says he), I lifted up my eyes unto heaven (Da 4:34), looked no longer down towards the earth as a beast, but begun to look up as a man. Os homini sublime dedit--Heaven gave to man an erect countenance. But there was more in it than this; he looked up as a devout man, as a penitent, as a humble petitioner for mercy, being perhaps never till now made sensible of his own misery. And now,

I. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him that with it he glorifies God, and humbles himself under his mighty hand. He was told that he should continue in that forlorn case till he should know that the Most High rules, and here we have him brought to the knowledge of this: My understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High. Note, Those may justly be reckoned void of understanding that do not bless and praise God; nor do men ever rightly use their reason till they begin to be religious, nor live as men till they live to the glory of God.

As reason is the substratum or subject of religion (so that creatures which have no reason are not capable of religion), so religion is the crown and glory of reason, and we have our reason in vain, and shall one day wish we had never had it, if we do not glorify God with it. This was the first act of Nebuchadnezzar's returning reason; and, when this became the employment of it, he was then, and not till then, qualified for all the other enjoyments of it. And till he was for a great while disabled to exercise it in other things he never was brought to apply it to this, which is the great end for which our reason is given us. His folly was the means whereby he became wise; he was not recovered by his dream of this judgment (that was soon forgotten like a dream), but he is made to feel it, and then his ear is opened to discipline. To bring him to himself, he must first be beside himself.

And by this it appears that what good thoughts there were in his mind, and what good work was wrought there, were not of himself (for he was not his own man), but it was the gift of God. Let us see what Nebuchadnezzar is now at length effectually brought to the acknowledgment of; and we may learn from it what to believe concerning God.

1. That the most high God lives for ever, and his being knows neither change nor period, for he has it of himself. His flatterers often complimented him with, O king! live for ever. But he is now convinced that no king lives for ever, but the God of Israel only, who is still the same.

2. That his kingdom is like himself, everlasting, and his dominion from generation to generation; there is no succession, no revolution, in his kingdom. As he lives, so he reigns, for ever, and of his government there is no end.

3. That all nations before him are as nothing. He has no need of them; he makes no account of them. The greatest of men, in comparison with him, are less than nothing. Those that think highly of God think meanly of themselves.

4. That his kingdom is universal, and both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth are his subjects, and under his check and control. Both angels and men are employed by him, and are accountable to him; the highest angel is not above his command, nor the meanest of the children of men beneath his cognizance. The angels of heaven are his armies, the inhabitants of the earth his tenants.

5. That his power is irresistible, and his sovereignty uncontrollable, for he does according to his will, according to his design and purpose, according to his decree and counsel; whatever he pleases that he does; whatever he appoints that he performs; and none can resist his will, change his counsel, nor stay his hand, nor say unto him, What doest thou? None can arraign his proceedings, enquire into the meaning of them, nor demand a reason for them. Woe to him that strives with his Maker, that says to him, What doest thou? Or, Why doest thou so?

6. That every thing which God does is well done: His works are truth, for they all agree with his word. His ways are judgment, both wise and righteous, exactly consonant to the rules both of prudence and equity, and no fault is to be found with them.

7. That he has power to humble the haughtiest of his enemies that act in contradiction to him or competition with him: Those that walk in pride he is able to abuse (Da 4:37); he is able to

deal with those that are most confident of their own sufficiency to contend with him.

II. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him as with it to re-enjoy himself, and the pleasures of his re-established prosperity (Da 4:36): At the same time my reason returned to me; he had said before (Da 4:34) that his understanding returned to him, and here he mentions it again, for the use of our reason is a mercy we can never be sufficiently thankful for.

Now his lords sought to him; he did not need to seek to them, and they soon perceived, not only that he had recovered his reason and was fit to rule, but that he had recovered it with advantage, and was more fit to rule than ever. It is probable that the dream and the interpretation of it were well known, and much talked of, at court; and the former part of the prediction being fulfilled, that he should go distracted, they doubted not but that, according to the prediction, he should come to himself again at seven years' end, and, in confidence of that, when the time had expired they were ready to receive him; and then his honour and brightness returned to him, the same that he had before his madness seized him.

He is now established in his kingdom as firmly as if there had been no interruption given him. He becomes a fool, that he may be wise, wiser than ever; and he that but the other day was in the depth of disgrace and ignominy has now excellent majesty added to him, beyond what he had when he went from kingdom to kingdom conquering and to conquer. Note,

1. When men are brought to honour God, particularly by a penitent confession of sin and a believing acknowledgment of his sovereignty, then, and not till then, they may expect that God will put honour upon them, will not only restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but add excellent majesty to them from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam.

2. Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have done the work for which they were sent. When this prince is brought to own God's dominion over himself.

3. All the accounts we take and give of God's dealing with us ought to conclude with praises to him. When Nebuchadnezzar is restored to his kingdom he praises, and extols, and honours the King of heaven (Da 4:37), before he applies himself to his secular business. Therefore we have our reason, that we may be in a capacity of praising him, and therefore our prosperity, that we may have cause to praise him.

It was not long after this that Nebuchadnezzar ended his life and reign. Abydenus, quoted by Eusebius (Præp. Evang. 1. 9), reports, from the tradition of the Chaldeans, that upon his death-bed he foretold the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Whether he continued in the same good mind that here he seems to have been in we are not told, nor does any thing appear to the contrary but that he did: and, if so great a blasphemer and persecutor did find mercy, he was not the last. And, if our charity may reach so far as to hope he did, we must admire free grace, by which he lost his wits for a while that he might save his soul for ever.

35 and all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Daniel-5

The Handwriting on the Wall

1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

We have here Belshazzar the king very gay, but all of a sudden very gloomy, and in straits in the fulness of his sufficiency. See how he affronts God, and God affrights him; and wait what will be the issue of this contest; and whether he that hardened his heart against God prospered.

I. See how the king affronted God, and put contempt upon him. He made a great feast, or banquet of wine; probably it was some anniversary solemnity, in honour off his birth-day or coronation-day, or in honour of some of their idols. Historians say that Cyrus, who was now with his army besieging Babylon, knew of this feast, and presuming that they then would be off their guard, somno vinoque sepulti--buried in sleep and wine, took that opportunity to attack the city, and so with the more ease made himself master of it. Belshazzar upon this occasion invited a thousand of his lords to come and drink with him. Perhaps they were such as had signalized themselves in defense of the city against the besiegers; or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done.

And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine before them, for it was the pride of those eastern kings to be seldom seen. He drank wine before them, for he made this feast, as Ahasuerus did, to show the honour of his majesty. Now in this sumptuous feast,

1. He put an affront upon the providence of God and bade defiance to his judgments. His city was now besieged; a powerful enemy was at his gates; his life and kingdom lay at stake. In all this the hand of the Lord had gone out against him, and by it he called him to weeping, and mourning, and girding with sackcloth. God's voice cried in the city, as Jonah to

Nineveh, Yet forty days, or fewer, and Babylon shall be destroyed. He should therefore, like the king of Nineveh, have proclaimed a fast; but, as one resolved to walk contrary to God, he proclaims a feast, and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine, as if he dared the Almighty to do his worst, Isa 22:12,13.

To show how little fear he had of being forced to surrender, for want of provisions, he spent thus extravagantly. Note, Security and sensuality are sad presages of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by judgments of God may expect to be wounded by them.

2. He put an affront upon the temple of God, and bade defiance to his sanctuary, Da 6:2. While he tasted the wine, he commanded to bring the vessels of the temple, that they might drink in them. When he tasted how rich and fine the wine was, "O," said he, "it is a pity but we should have holy vessels to drink such delicious wine as this in," which was looked upon as a piece of wit, and, to carry on the humour, the vessels of the temple were immediately sent for.

Nay, there seems to have been something more in it than a frolic, and that it was done in a malicious despite to the God of Israel. The heart of his people was very much upon these sacred vessels, as appears from Jer 27:16,18. Their principal care, at their return, was about these, Ezr 1:7.

Now, we may suppose, they had an expectation of their deliverance approaching, reckoning the seventy years of their captivity near a period; and some of them might perhaps have given out some words to that purport, that shortly they should have the vessels of the sanctuary restored to them, in defiance of which Belshazzar here proclaims them to be his own, will keep them in store no longer, but will make use of them among his own plate.

Note, That mirth is sinful indeed, and fills the measure of men's iniquity apace, which profanes sacred things and jests with them. This ripened Babylon for ruin--that no songs would

serve them but the songs of Zion (Ps 137:3), no vessels but the vessels of the sanctuary. Let those who thus sacrilegiously alienate what is dedicated to God and his honour know that he will not be mocked.

3. He put an affront upon God himself, and bade defiance to his deity; for they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, Da 6:4. They gave that glory to images, the work of their own hands and creatures of their own fancy, which is due to the true and living God only. They praised them either with sacrifices offered to them or with songs sung in honour of them. When their heads were giddy, and their hearts merry, with wine, they were in the fittest frame to praise the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone; for one would think that men in their senses, who had the command of a clear and sober thought, could not be guilty of so gross an absurdity; they must be intoxicated ere they could be so infatuated. Drunken worshippers, who are not men, but beasts, are the most proper for the service of dunghill deities, that are not gods, but devils. They have erred through wine, Isa 27:7.

They drank wine, and praised their idol-gods, as if they had been the founders of their feast and the givers of all good things to them.

Or, when they were drinking wine, they praised their gods by drinking healths to them; and the king drank wine before them (Da 6:1), that is, he began the health, first to this god, and then to the other, till they went through the bead-roll or farrago of them, those of wood and stone not excepted. Note, Immorality and impiety, vice and profaneness, strengthen the hands and advance the interests one of another. Drunken frolics were an introduction to idolatry, and then idolatrous healths were a shoeing-horn to further drunkenness.

II. See how God affrighted the king, and struck a terror upon him. Belshazzar and his lords are in the midst of their revels, the cups going round apace, and all upon the merry pin, drinking confusion, it may be, to Cyrus and his army, and roaring out huzzas, in confidence of the speedy raising of the

siege; but the hour had come when that must be fulfilled which had been long ago said of the king of Babylon, when his city should be besieged by the Persians and Medes, Isa 21:2-4. The night of my pleasures has he turned into fear to me. The mirth of this ball at court must be spoiled, and a damp cast upon their jollity, though the king himself be master of the revels; immediately, when God speaks the word, we have him and all his guests in the utmost confusion, and the end of their mirth is heaviness.

1. There appear the fingers of a man's hand writing on the plaster of the wall, before the king's face (Da 6:5), "the angel Gabriel," say the rabbin, "directing these fingers and writing by them." "That divine hand" (says a rabbi of our own, Dr. Lightfoot) "that had written the two tables for a law to his people now writes the doom of Babel and Belshazzar upon the wall."

Here was nothing sent to frighten them which made a noise, or threatened their lives, no claps of thunder nor flashes of lightning, no destroying angel with his sword drawn in his hand, only a pen in the hand, writing upon the wall, over-against the candlestick, where they might all see it by the light of their own candle. Note, God's written word is sufficient to put the proudest boldest sinners into a fright, when he is pleased to give it the setting on. The king saw the part of the hand that wrote, but saw not the person whose hand it was, which made the thing more frightful.

Note, What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes in the book of the creatures and the book of the scriptures (Lo, these are parts of his ways, Job 26:14), may serve to possess us with awful thoughts concerning that of God which we do not see. If this be the finger of God, what is his arm made bare? And what is he?

2 The king is immediately seized with a panic fear (Da 6:6): His countenance was changed (his colour went and came); the joints of his loins were loosed, so that he had no strength in them, but was struck with a pain in his back, as is usual in a

great fright; his knees smote one against another, so violently did he tremble like an aspen leaf. But what was the matter? Why is he in such a fright? He perceives not what is written, and how does he know but it may be some happy presage of deliverance to him and to his kingdom?

But the business was his thoughts troubled him; his own guilty conscience flew in his face, and told him that he had no reason to expect any good news from Heaven, and that the hand of an angel could write nothing but terror to him. He that knew himself liable to the justice of God immediately concluded this to be an arrest in his name, a summons to appear before him. Note, God can soon awaken the most secure and make the heart of the stoutest sinner to tremble; and there needs no more to do it than to let loose his own thoughts upon him; they will soon play the tyrant, and give him trouble enough.

3. The wise men of Babylon are immediately called in, to see what they can make of this writing upon the wall, Da 6:7. The king cried aloud, as one in haste, as one in earnest, to bring the whole college of magicians, to try if they can read this writing, and show the interpretation of it; for the king and all his lords cannot pretend to it, it is out of their sphere. The study of divine revelation (such as they had, or thought they had) and converse with the world of spirits were by the heathen confined to one profession, and no other meddled with it; but what is written to us by the finger of God is legible to all; whoever will may read the mind of God in the scriptures.

To engage these wise men to exert the utmost of their skill in this matter, and provoke them to an emulation in the attempt, he promised that whoever would give him a satisfactory account of this writing should be dignified with the highest honours of the court. He knew what these pretenders to wisdom aimed at, and what would please them, and therefore promised them a scarlet robe and a gold chain, glorious things in the eyes of those that know no better. Nay, he should be primus par regni--chief minister of state, the third ruler in the kingdom, next to the king and his heir apparent.

4. The king is disappointed in his expectations from them; they can none of them read the writing, much less interpret it (Da 6:8), which increases the king's confusion, Da 6:9. He likes the thing yet worse and worse, and fears that mischief is towards him. His lords also, that had been partners with him in his jollity, are now sharers with him in his terrors; they also were astonished at their wits' end; and neither their numbers nor their refreshment by wine would serve to keep up their spirits. The reason why the wise men could not read the writing was not because it was written in any language or characters unknown to them, but God either cast a mist before their eyes or put such confusion upon their spirits that they could not read it, that the honour of expounding this mystical writing might be reserved for Daniel. Note, The terror of an awakened convinced conscience may justly be increased by the utter insufficiency of all creatures to give it ease or satisfaction.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which *was* in Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which *was* at Jerusalem; and the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them.

4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

6 Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. *And* the king spake, and said to the wise *men* of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

8 Then came in all the king’s wise *men:* but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

10 *Now* the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: *and* the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

Here is, I The information given to the king, by the queen-mother, concerning Daniel, how fit he was to be consulted in this difficult case. It is supposed that this queen was the widow of Evil-Merodach, and was that famous Nitocris whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence. She was not present at the feast, as the king's wives and concubines were (Da 5:2); it was not agreeable to her age and gravity to keep a merry night.

But, tidings of the fright which the king and his lords were put into being brought to her apartment, she came herself to the banqueting-house, to recommend to the king a physician for his melancholy. She entreated him not to be discouraged by the insufficiency of his wise men to solve this riddle, for that there was a man in his kingdom that had more than once helped his grandfather at such a dead lift, and, no doubt, could help him, Da 5:11,12. She could not undertake to read the writing herself, but directed him to one that could; let Daniel be called now, who should have been called first. Now observe,

1 The high character she gives of Daniel: He is a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, who has something in him more than human, not only the spirit of a man, which, in all, is the candle of the Lord, but a divine spirit. According to the language of her country and religion, she could not give a higher encomium of any man; she speaks honourably of him as a man that had,

(1.) An admirably good head: Light, and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him. Such an insight had he into things secret, and such a foresight of things to come, that it was evident he was divinely inspired; he had knowledge and understanding beyond all the

other wise men for interpreting dreams, explaining enigmas or hard sentences, untying knots, and resolving doubts. Solomon had a wonderful sagacity of this kind; but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate divine direction. Behold, a greater than Solomon himself is here. Yet what was the wisdom of them both compared with the treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ?

(2.) He had an admirably good heart: An excellent spirit was found in him, which was a great ornament to his wisdom and knowledge, and qualified him to receive that gift; for God gives to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy. He was of a humble, holy, heavenly spirit, had a devout and gracious spirit, a spirit of zeal for the glory of God and the good of men. This was indeed an excellent spirit.

2 The account she gives of the respect that Nebuchadnezzar had for him; he was much in his favour, and was preferred by him:

"The king thy father" (that is, thy grandfather, but even to many generations Nebuchadnezzar might well be called the father of that royal family, for he it was that raised it to such a pitch of grandeur), "the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians." Perhaps Belshazzar had sometimes, in his pride, spoken slightly of Nebuchadnezzar, and his politics, and the methods of his government, and the ministers he employed, and thought himself wiser than he; and therefore his mother harps upon that.

"The king, I say, thy father, to whose good management all thou hast owing, he pronounced him chief of, and gave him dominion over, all the wise men of Babylon, and named him Belteshazzar, according to the name of his god, thinking thereby to put honour upon him;" but Daniel, by constantly making use of his Jewish name himself (which he resolved to keep, in token of his faithful adherence to his religion), had worn out that name; only the queen-dowager remembered it, otherwise he was generally called Daniel.

Note, It is a very good office to revive the remembrance of the good services of worthy men, who are themselves modest, and willing that they should be forgotten.

3. The motion she makes concerning him: Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. By this it appears that Daniel was now forgotten at court. Belshazzar was a stranger to him, knew not that he had such a jewel in his kingdom. With the new king there came in a new ministry, and the old one was laid aside.

Note, There are a great many valuable men, and such as might be made very useful, that lie long buried in obscurity, and some that have done eminent services that live to be overlooked and taken no notice of; but, whatever men are, God is not unrighteous to forget the services done to his kingdom. Daniel, being turned out of his place, lived privately, and sought not any opportunity to come into notice again; yet he lived near the court and within call, though Babylon was now besieged, that he might be ready, if there were occasion, to do any good office, by what interest he had among the great ones, for the children of his people. But Providence so ordered it that now, just at the fall of that monarchy, he should by the queen's means be brought to court again, that he might lie there ready for preferment in the ensuing government. Thus do the righteous shine forth out of obscurity, and before honour is humility.

II The introducing of Daniel to the king, and his request to him to read and expound the writing. Daniel was brought in before the king, Da 5:13. He was now nearly ninety years of age, so that his years, and honours, and former preferments, might have entitled him to a free admission into the king's presence; yet he was willing to be conducted in, as a stranger, by the master of the ceremonies. Note,

1 The king asks, with an air of haughtiness: Art thou that Daniel who art of the children of the captivity? Being a Jew,

and a captive, he was loth to be beholden to him if he could help it.

2. He tells him what an encomium he had heard of him (Da 5:14), that the spirit of the gods was in him; and he had sent for him to try whether he deserved so high a character or no.

3. He acknowledges that all the wise men of Babylon were baffled; they could not read this writing, nor show the interpretation, Da 5:16. But,

4. He promises him the same rewards that he had promised them if he would do it, Da 5:16. It was strange that the magicians, when now, and in Nebuchadnezzar's time, once and again, they were nonplussed, did not attempt something to save their credit; if they had with a good assurance said, "This is the meaning of such a dream, such a writing," who could disprove them? But God so ordered it that they had nothing at all to say, as, when Christ was born, the heathen oracles were struck dumb.

11 there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods;
and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like
the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king
Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, *I say*, thy father, made master of
the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, *and* soothsayers;
12 forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding,
interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving
of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named
Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the
interpretation.
13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. *And* the king spake and
said unto Daniel, *Art* thou that Daniel, which *art* of the children of the
captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?
14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods *is* in thee, and
that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.
15 And now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before
me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the
interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of
the thing:

16 and I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king and make known to him the interpretation.

The interpretation which Daniel gave of these mystic characters, which was so far from easing the king of his fears that we may suppose it increased them rather. Daniel was now in years, and Belshazzar was young; and therefore he seems to take a greater liberty of dealing plainly and roundly with him than he had done upon the like occasions with Nebuchadnezzar. In reproving any man, especially great men, there is need of wisdom to consider all circumstances; for they are the reproofs of instruction that are the way of life. In Daniel's discourse here,

1. He undertakes to read the writing which gave them this alarm, and to show them the interpretation of it, Da 5:17. He slights the offer he made him of rewards, is not pleased that it was mentioned, for he is not one of those that divine for money; what gratuities Nebuchadnezzar gave him afterwards he gladly accepted, but he scorned to bargain for them, or to read the writing to the king for and in consideration of such and such honours promised him. No:

"Let thy gifts be to thyself, for they will not be long thine, and give thy fee to another, to any of the wise men whom thou wouldst have most wished to earn it; I value it not." Daniel sees his kingdom now at its last gasp, and therefore looks with contempt upon his gifts and rewards. And thus should we despise all the gifts and rewards that this world can give did we see, as we may by faith, its final period hastening on. Let it give its perishing gifts to another; there are better gifts which we have our eyes and hearts upon; but let us do our duty in the world, do it all the real service we can, read God's writing to it in a profession of religion, and by an agreeable conversation make known the interpretation of it, and then trust God for his

gifts, his rewards, in comparison with which all the world can give is mere trash and trifles.

2. He largely recounts to the king God's dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar, which were intended for instruction and warning to him, Da 5:18,21. This is not intended for a flourish or an amusement, but is a necessary preliminary to the interpretation of the writing. Note, That we may understand aright what God is doing with us, it is of use to us to review what he has done with others.

(1.) He describes the great dignity and power to which the divine Providence had advanced Nebuchadnezzar, Da 5:18,19. He had a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour, for aught we know, above what any heathen prince ever had before him; he thought that he got his glory by his own extraordinary conduct and courage, and ascribed his successes to a projecting active genius of his own; but Daniel tells him who now enjoyed what he had laboured for that it was the most high God, the God of gods and Lord of kings (as Nebuchadnezzar himself had called him), that gave him that kingdom, that vast dominion, that majesty wherewith he presided in the affairs of it, and that glory and honour which by his prosperous management he acquired. Note, Whatever degree of outward prosperity any arrive at, they must own that it is of God's giving, not their own getting.

Let it never be said, My might, and the power of my hand, have gotten me this wealth, this preferment; but let it always be remembered that it is God that gives men power to get wealth, and gives success to their endeavours. Now the power which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar is here described to be very great in respect both of ability and of authority.

[1.] His ability was so strong that it was irresistible; such was the majesty that God gave him, so numerous were the forces he had at command, and such an admirable dexterity he had at commanding them, that, which way soever his sword turned, it prospered. He could captivate and subdue nations by threatening them, without striking a stroke, for all people

trembled and feared before him, and would compound with him for their lives upon any terms. See what force is, and what the fear of it does. It is that by which the brutal part of the world, even of the world of mankind, both governs and is governed.

[2.] His authority was so absolute that it was uncontrollable. The power which was allowed him, which descended upon him, or which, at least, he assumed, was without contradiction, was absolute and despotic, none shared with him either in the legislative or in the executive part of it. In dispensing punishments he condemned or acquitted at pleasure: Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive, though both were equally innocent or equally guilty.

The jus vitæ et necis--the power of life and death was entirely in his hand. In dispensing rewards he granted or denied preferment at pleasure: Whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down, merely for a humour, and without giving a reason so much as to himself; but it is all ex mero motu--of his own good pleasure, and stat pro ratione voluntas--his will stands for a reason. Such was the constitution of the eastern monarchies, such the manner of their kings.

(2.) He sets before him the sins which Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of, whereby he had provoked God against him.

[1.] He behaved insultingly towards those that were under him, and grew tyrannical and oppressive. The description given of his power intimates his abuse of his power, and that he was directed in what he did by humour and passion, not by reason and equity; so that he often condemned the innocent and acquitted the guilty, both which are an abomination to the Lord. He deposed men of merit and preferred unworthy men, to the great detriment of the public, and for this he was accountable to the most high God, that gave him his power.

Note, It is a very hard and rare thing for men to have an absolute arbitrary power, and not to make an ill use of it. Camden has a distich of Giraldus, wherein he speaks of it as a rare instance,

concerning our king Henry II of England, that never any man had so much power and did so little hurt with it.

Glorior hoc uno, quod nunquam vidimus unum, Nec potuisse magis, nec nocuisse minus-- Of him I can say, exulting, that with the same power to do harm no one was ever more inoffensive.

But that was not all. [2.] He behaved insolently towards the God above him, and grew proud and haughty (Da 5:20): His heart was lifted up, and there his sin and ruin began; his mind was hardened in pride, hardened against the commands of God and his judgments; he was willful and obstinate, and neither the word of God nor his rod made any lasting impression upon him. Note, Pride is a sin that hardens the heart in all other sin and renders the means of repentance and reformation ineffectual.

(3.) He reminds him of the judgments of God that were brought upon him for his pride and obstinacy, how he was deprived of his reason, and so deposed from his kingly throne (Da 5:20), driven from among men, to dwell with the wild asses, Da 6:21. He that would not govern his subjects by rules of reason had not reason sufficient for the government himself. Note, Justly does God deprive men of their reason when they become unreasonable and will not use it, and of their power when they become oppressive and use it ill. He continued like a brute till he knew and embraced that first principle of religion, That the most high God rules.

And it is rather by religion than reason that man is distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts; and it is more his honour to be a subject to the supreme Creator than to be lord of the inferior creatures. Note, Kings must know, or shall be made to know, that the most high God rules in their kingdoms (that is an imperium in imperio--an empire within an empire, not to be excepted against), and that he appoints over them whomsoever he will. As he makes heirs, so he makes princes.

3. In God's name, he exhibits articles of impeachment against Belshazzar. Before he reads him his doom, from the hand-

writing on the wall, he shows him his crime, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. Now that which he lays to his charge is,

(1.) That he had not taken warning by the judgments of God upon his father (Da 5:22): Thou his son, O Belshazzar! hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this. Note, It is a great offence to God if our hearts be not humbled before him to comply both with his precepts and with his providences, humbled by repentance, obedience, and patience; nay, he expects from the greatest of men that their hearts should be humbled before him, by an acknowledgment that, great as they are, to him they are accountable.

And it is a great aggravation of the unhumbledness of our hearts when we know enough to humble them but do not consider and improve it, particularly when we know how others have been broken that would not bend, how others have fallen that would not stoop, and yet we continue stiff and inflexible. It makes the sin of children the more heinous if they tread in the steps of their parents' wickedness, though they have seen how dearly it has cost them, and how pernicious the consequences of it have been. Do we know this, do we know all this, and yet are we not humbled?

(2.) That he had affronted God more impudently than Nebuchadnezzar himself had done, witness the revels of this very night, in the midst of which he was seized with this horror (Da 5:23): "Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, hast swelled with rage against him, and taken up arms against his crown and dignity, in this particular instance, that thou hast profaned the vessels of his house, and made the utensils of his sanctuary instruments of thy iniquity, and, in an actual designed contempt of him, hast praised the gods of silver and gold, which see not, nor hear, nor know anything, as if they were to be preferred before the God that sees, and hears, and knows every thing."

Sinners that are resolved to go on in sin are well enough pleased with gods that neither see, nor hear, nor know, for then they

may sin securely; but they will find, to their confusion, that though those are the gods they choose those are not the gods they must be judged by, but one to whom all things are naked and open.

(3.) That he had not answered the end of his creation and maintenance: The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. This is a general charge, which stands good against us all; let us consider how we shall answer it. Observe,

[1.] Our dependence upon God as our creator, preserver, benefactor, owner, and ruler; not only from his hand our breath was at first, but in his hand our breath is still; it is he that holds our souls in life, and, if he take away our breath, we die. Our times being in his hand, so is our breath, by which our times are measured. In him we live, and move, and have our being; we live by him, live upon him, and cannot live without him. The way of man is not in himself, not at his own command, at his own disposal, but his are all our ways; for our hearts are in his hand, and so are the hearts of all men, even of kings, who seem to act most as free-agents.

[2.] Our duty to God, in consideration of this dependence; we ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour and employ ourselves in his service, to make it our care to please him and our business to praise him.

[3.] Our default in this duty, notwithstanding that dependence; we have not done it; for we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. This is the indictment against Belshazzar; there needs no proof, it is made good by the notorious evidence of the fact, and his own conscience cannot but plead guilty to it. And therefore,

4. He now proceeds to read the sentence, as he found it written upon the wall: "Then" (says Daniel) "when thou hast come to such a height of impiety as thus to trample upon the most sacred things, then when thou wast in the midst of thy sacrilegious

idolatrous feast, then was the part of the hand, the writing fingers, sent from him, from that God whom thou didst so daringly affront, and who had borne so long with thee, but would bear no longer; he sent them, and this writing, thou now seest, was written, Da 5:24. It is he that now writes bitter things against thee, and makes thee to possess thy iniquities," Job 13:26.

Note, As the sin of sinners is written in the book of God's omniscience, so the doom of sinners is written in the book of God's law; and the day is coming when those books shall be opened, and they shall be judged by them. Now the writing was, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, Da 5:25. It is well that we have an authentic exposition of these words annexed, else we could make little of them, so concise are they; the signification of them is, He has numbered, he has weighed, and they divide. The Chaldean wise men, because they knew not that there is but one God only, could not understand who this He should be, and for that reason (some think) the writing puzzled them.

(1.) Mene; that is repeated, for the thing is certain--Mene, mene; that signifies, both in Hebrew and Chaldee, He has numbered and finished, which Daniel explains thus (Da 6:26): "God has numbered thy kingdom, the years and days of the continuance of it; these were numbered in the counsel of God, and now they are finished; the term has expired for and during which thou wast to hold it, and now it must be surrendered. Here is an end of thy kingdom."

(2.) Tekel; that signifies, in Chaldee, Thou art weighed, and, in Hebrew, Thou art too light. So Dr. Lightfoot. For this king and his actions are weighed in the just and unerring balances of divine equity. God does as perfectly know his true character as the goldsmith knows the weight of that which he has weighed in the nicest scales. God does not give judgment against him till he has first pondered his actions, and considered the merits of his case. "But thou art found wanting, unworthy to have such a trust lodged in thee, a vain, light, empty man, a man of no weight or consideration."

(3.) Upharsin, which should be rendered, and Pharsin, or Peres. Parsin, in Hebrew, signifies the Persians; Paresin, in Chaldee, signifies dividing; Daniel puts both together (Da 5:28): "Thy kingdom is divided, is rent from thee, and given to the Medes and Persians, as a prey to be divided among them." Now this may, without any force, be applied to the doom of sinners. Mene, Tekel, Peres, may easily be made to signify death, judgment, and hell.

At death, the sinner's days are numbered and finished; after death the judgment, when he will be weighed in the balance and found wanting; and after judgment the sinner will be cut asunder, and given as a prey to the devil and his angels. Daniel does not here give Belshazzar such advice and encouragement to repent as he had given Nebuchadnezzar, because he saw the decree had gone forth and he would not be allowed any space to repent.

One would have thought that Belshazzar would be exasperated against Daniel, and, seeing his own case desperate, would be in a rage against him. But he was so far convicted by his own conscience of the reasonableness of all he said that he objected nothing against it; but, on the contrary, gave Daniel the reward he promised him, put on him the scarlet gown and the gold chain, and proclaimed him the third ruler in the kingdom (Da 5:29), because he would be as good as his word, and because it was not Daniel's fault if the exposition of the hand-writing was not such as he desired. Note, Many show great respect to God's prophets who yet have no regard to his word. Daniel did not value these titles and ensigns of honour, yet would not refuse them, because they were tokens of his prince's good-will:

but we have reason to think that he received them with a smile, foreseeing how soon they would all wither with him that bestowed them. They were like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night, and therefore it was folly for him to be exceedingly glad of them.

18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor:

19 and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he
slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.
20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:
21 and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.
22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;
23 but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is*, and whose *are* all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.
24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.
25 And this *is* the writing that was written, Mene, mene, tekel , upharsin.
26 This *is* the interpretation of the thing: Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.
27 Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.
28 Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.
29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and *put* a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.
30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

Here is,

1 The death of the king. Reason enough he had to tremble, for he was just falling into the hands of the king of terrors, Da 5:30. In that night, when his heart was merry with wine, the besiegers broke into the city, aimed at the palace; there they found the king,

and gave him his death's wound. He could not find any place so secret as to conceal him, or so strong as to protect him. Heathen writers speak of Cyrus's taking Babylon by surprise, with the assistance of two deserters that showed him the best way into the city. And it was foretold what a consternation it would be to the court, Jer 51:11,39.

Note, Death comes as a snare upon those whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.

2 The transferring of the kingdom into other hands. From the head of gold we now descend to the breast and arms of silver. Darius the Mede took the kingdom in partnership with, and by the consent of, Cyrus, who had conquered it, Da 5:31. They were partners in war and conquest, and so they were in dominion, Da 5:28. Notice is taken of his age, that he was now sixty-two years old, for which reason Cyrus, who was his nephew, gave him the precedency.

Some observe that being now sixty-two years old, in the last year of the captivity, he was born in the eighth year of it, and that was the year when Jeconiah was carried captive and all the nobles, &c. See 2Ki 24:13-15. Just at that time when the most fatal stroke was given was a prince born that in process of time should avenge Jerusalem upon Babylon, and heal the wound that was now given. Thus deep are the counsels of God concerning his people, thus kind are his designs towards them.

31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, *being* about threescore and two years old.

Daniel-6

Daniel in the Lions' Den

1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

We are told concerning Daniel,

I. What a great man he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new-modelled the government, he made Daniel prime-minister of state, set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasury and of the great seal. Darius's dominion was very large; all he got by his conquests and acquests was that he had so many more countries to take care of; no more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He set over the kingdom 120 princes (Da 6:1), and appointed them their districts, in which they were to administer justice, preserve the public peace, and levy the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good as well as the sovereign; and therefore we must submit ourselves both to the king as supreme and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, 1Pe 2:13,14.

Over these princes there was a triumvirate, or three presidents, who were to take and state the public accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of mal-administration, that the king should have no damage (Da 6:2), that he should not sustain loss in his revenue and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject, for by that the king (whether he thinks so or no) receives real damage, both as it alienates the affections of his people from him and as it provokes the displeasure of his God against him.

Of these three Daniel was chief, because he was found to go beyond them all in all manner of princely qualifications. He was preferred above the presidents and princes (Da 6:3), and so wonderfully well pleased the king was with his management that he thought to set him over the whole realm, and let him place and displace at his pleasure. Now, 1. We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius that he would prefer a man thus purely for his personal merit, and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served must go by that rule. Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason, one would think, should have been looked upon as an enemy, and as such imprisoned or banished. He was a native of

a foreign kingdom, and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive.

But, Darius, it seems, was very quick-sighted in judging of men's capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore, though no doubt he had creatures of his own, not a few, that expected preferment in this newly-conquered kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the public welfare that, finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being divinely inspired, he made him his right hand.

2. We must take notice of it, to the glory of God, that, though Daniel was now very old (it was above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon), yet he was as able as ever for business both in body and mind, and that he who had continued faithful to his religion through all the temptations of the foregoing reigns in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a willow, by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliableness to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God he will honour.

II. What a good man he was: An excellent spirit was in him, Da 6:3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject, and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was no error, or fault, to be found in him, Da 6:4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery or dishonesty, but not even with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead inadvertency or forgetfulness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of public trust to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free, not only from fault, but from error, not only from crime, but from mistake.

III. What ill-will was borne him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him because he was advanced above them, and probably hated him because he had a watchful eye upon them and took care they should not wrong the government to enrich themselves. See here,

1 The cause of envy, and that is every thing that is good. Solomon complains of it as a vexation that for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour (Ec 4:4), that the better a man is the worse he is thought of by his rivals. Daniel is envied because he has a more excellent spirit than his neighbours.

2 The effect of envy, and that is every thing that is bad. Those that envied Daniel sought no less than his ruin. His disgrace would not serve them; it was his death that they desired. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy? Pr 27:4. Daniel's enemies set spies upon him, to observe him in the management of his place; they sought to find occasion against him, something on which to ground an accusation concerning the kingdom, some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person borne hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked. And if they could but have found the mote, the mole-hill, of a mistake, it would have been soon improved to the beam, to the mountain, of an unpardonable misdemeanour. But they could find no occasion against him; they owned that they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, because of his observers, Ps 27:11.

Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly, because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. Those especially have need to carry their cup even that have it full. They concluded, at length, that they should not find any occasion against him except concerning the law of his God Da 6:5.

It seems then that Daniel kept up the profession of his religion, and held it fast without wavering or shrinking, and yet that was no bar to his preferment; there was no law that required him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitated him to bear office in the state unless he were. It was all one to the king what God he

prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well. He was at the king's service usque ad aras--as far as the altars; but there he left him. In this matter therefore his enemies hoped to ensnare him.

Quærendum est crimen læsæ religionis ubi majestatis deficit--When treason could not be charged upon him he was accused of impiety. Grotius.

Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion conduct themselves so inoffensively in their whole conversation that their most watchful spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which they walk according to their consciences. It is observable that, when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left that they did not suborn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was innocent of, and to swear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews and are called Christians.

2 and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel *was* first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he *was* faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him from any law now in being; they therefore contrive a new law, by which they hope to ensnare him, and in a matter in which they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God that they gained their point. Here is,

I. Darius's impious law. I call it Darius's, because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it would not have been of force; but it was not properly his: he contrived it not, and was perfectly wheedled to consent to it. The presidents and princes framed the edict, brought in the bill, and by their management it was agreed to by the convention of the states, who perhaps were met at this time upon some public occasion. It is pretended that this bill which they would have to pass into a law was the result of mature deliberation, that all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains, had consulted together about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but advised it, for divers good causes and considerations, that they had done what they could to establish it for a firm decree; nay, they intimate to the king that it was carried nemine contradicente--unanimously:

"All the presidents are of this mind;" and yet we are sure that Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it, and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation, which is far from being so; and that which few approve of is sometimes confidently said to be that which all agree to.

But, O the infelicity of kings, who, being under a necessity of seeing and hearing with other people's eyes and ears, are often wretchedly imposed upon! These designing men, under colour of doing honour to the king, but really intending the ruin of his favourite, press him to pass this into a law, and make it a royal statute, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, shall be put to death after the most barbarous manner, shall be cast into the den of lions, Da 6:7. This is the bill they have been hatching, and they lay it before the king to be signed and passed into a law. Now,

1. There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great and very kind to his subjects, which, they suggest, will be of

good service to him now that he has newly come to his throne, and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need to apply either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And for thirty days together he will be ready to give audience to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings to be benefactors to their subjects and to have their ears open to their complaints and requests; but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be to them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them which is due to God only, it is their disgrace, and not their honour. But,

2. There is a great deal in it that is apparently evil. It is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of any man. Must not a beggar ask an alms, or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? If the child want bread, must he not ask it of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? Nay, those that have business with the king, may they not petition those about him to introduce them? But it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition of any god.

It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God; and so keep up our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature teaches us that the providence of God has the ordering and disposing of all our affairs does not the law of nature oblige us by prayer to acknowledge God and seek to him? Does not every man's heart direct him, when he is in want or distress, to call upon God, and must this be made high treason? We could not live a day without God; and can men live thirty days without prayer? Will the king himself be tied up for so long from praying to God; or, if it be allowed him, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? Did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities malice will drive men to.

Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews

from praying to their God, Daniel would have been as effectually ensnared; but they knew the king would not pass such a law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a little god, was fond of the feather in his cap (for so it was, and not a flower in his crown) and signed the writing and the decree (Da 6:9), which, being once done, according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, was not upon any pretence whatsoever to be altered or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel's pious disobedience to this law, Da 6:10. He did not retire into the country, nor abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelled against him; but, because he knew it was so, therefore he stood his ground, knowing that he had now a fair opportunity of honouring God before men, and showing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed he might have gone to the king, and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misinformation that all the presidents had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them had never been consulted about it; but he went to his house, and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe,

1. Daniel's constant practice, which we were not informed of before this occasion, but which we have reason to think was the general practice of the pious Jews.

(1.) He prayed in his house, sometimes alone and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that prayed in his house, Ac 10:30. Note, Every house not only may be, but ought to be, a house of prayer; where we have a tent God must have an alter, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices.

(2.) In every prayer he gave thanks. When we pray to God for the mercies we want we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer.

(3.) In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as his God, his in covenant, and set himself as in his presence. He did this before his God, and with a regard to him.

(4.) When he prayed and gave thanks he kneeled upon his knees, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility, and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, whom it concerns to be importunate.

(5.) He opened the windows of his chamber, that the sight of the visible heavens might affect his heart with an awe of that God who dwells above the heavens; but that was not all: he opened them towards Jerusalem, the holy city, though now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very stones and dust (Ps 102:14) and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. Thus, though he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his brethren the captives, in remembering Jerusalem and preferring it before his chief joy, Ps 137:5,6.

Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and, when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was that if his people should in the land of their enemies pray unto him with their eye towards the land which he gave

them, and the city he had chosen, and the house which was built to his name, then he would hear and maintain their cause (1Ki 8:48,49), to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions.

(6.) He did this three times a day, three times every day according to the example of David (Ps 55:17), Morning, evening, and at noon, I will pray. It is good to have our hours of prayer, not to bind, but to remind conscience; and, if we think our bodies require refreshment by food thrice a day, can we think seldomer will serve our souls? This is surely as little as may be to answer the command of praying always.

(7.) He did this so openly and avowedly that all who knew him knew it to be his practice; and he thus showed it, not because he was proud of it (in the place where he was there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation, but reproach, that attended it), but because he was not ashamed of it. Though Daniel was a great man, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker and to be his own chaplain; though he was an old man, he did not think himself past it; nor, though it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well doing.

Though he was a man of business, vast business, for the service of the public, he did not think that would excuse him from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable then are those who have but little to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer, and for success in it (Eze 14:14), and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of prayer and making a business of it daily; and in thus doing God blessed him wonderfully.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. When he knew that the writing was signed he continued to do as he did aforetime, and altered not one circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life; he might have prayed so much oftener when those days had

expired and the danger was over, or he might have performed the duty at another time, and in another place, so secretly that it should not be possible for his enemies to discover it; and so he might both satisfy his conscience and keep up his communion with God, and yet avoid the law, and continue in his usefulness.

But, if he had done so, it would have been thought, both by his friends and by his enemies, that he had thrown up the duty for this time, through cowardice and base fear, which would have tended very much to the dishonour of God and the discouragement of his friends. Others who moved in a lower sphere might well enough act with caution; but Daniel, who had so many eyes upon him, must act with courage; and the rather because he knew that the law, when it was made, was particularly levelled against him.

Note, We must not omit duty for fear of suffering, so, nor so much as seems to come short of it. In trying times great stress is laid upon our confessing Christ before men (Mt 10:32), and we must take heed lest, under pretence of discretion, we be found guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. If we do not think that this example of Daniel obliges us to do likewise, yet I am sure it forbids us to censure those that do, for God owned him in it. By his constancy to his duty it now appears that he had never been used to admit any excuse for the omission of it; for, if ever any excuse would serve to put it by, this would have served now,

(1.) That it was forbidden by the king his master, and in honour of the king too; but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, We are to obey God rather than men.

(2.) That it would be the loss of his life, but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, Those who throw away their souls (as those certainly do that live without prayer) to save their lives make but a bad bargain for themselves; and though herein they make themselves, like the king of Tyre, wiser than Daniel, at their end they will be fools.

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

Here is 1. Proof made of Daniel's praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary (Da 6:11): These men assembled; the came tumultuously together, so the word is, the same that was used Da 6:6, borrowed from Ps 2:1, Why do the heathen rage? They came together to visit Daniel, perhaps under pretence of business, at that time which they knew to be his usual hour of devotion; and, if they had not found him so engaged, they would have upbraided him with his faint-heartedness and distrust of his God, but (which they rather wished to do) they found him on his knees praying and making supplication before his God. For his love they are his adversaries; but, like his father David, he gives himself unto prayer, Ps 109:4.

2. Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning the law of his God they lost no time, but applied to the king (Da 6:12), and having appealed to his whether there was not such a law made, and gained from him a recognition of it, and that it was so ratified that it might not be altered, they proceeded to accuse Daniel, Da 6:13. They so describe him, in the information they give, as to exasperate the king and incense him the more against him: "He is of the children of the captivity of Judah; he is of Judah, that despicable people, and now a captive in a despicable state, that can call nothing his own but what he has by the king's favour, and yet he regards not thee, O king! nor the decree that thou hast signed."

Note, It is no new thing for that which is done faithfully, in the conscience towards God, to be misrepresented as done obstinately and in contempt of the civil powers, that is, for the best saints to be reproached as the worst men. Daniel regarded God, and therefore prayed, and we have reason to think prayed for the king and his government, yet this is construed as not regarding the king. That excellent spirit which Daniel was endued with, and that established reputation which he had gained, could not protect him from these poisonous darts. They do not say, He makes his petition to his God, lest Darius should take notice of that to his praise, but only, He makes his petition, which is the thing the law forbids.

3. The great concern the king was in hereupon. He now perceived that, whatever they pretended, it was not to honour him, but in spite to Daniel, that they had proposed that law, and now he is sorely displeased with himself for gratifying them in it, Da 6:14. Note, When men indulge a proud vain-glorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not what vexations they are preparing for themselves; their flatterers may prove their tormentors, and are but spreading a net for their feet. Now, the king sets his heart to deliver Daniel; both by argument and by authority he labours till the going down of the sun to deliver him, that is, to persuade his accusers not to insist upon his prosecution. Note, We often do that, through inconsideration, which afterwards we see cause a thousand times to wish undone again, which is a good reason why we should ponder the path of our feet, for then all our ways will be established.

4. The violence with which the prosecutors demanded judgment, Da 6:15. We are not told what Daniel said; the king himself is his advocate, he needs not plead his own cause, but silently commits himself and it to him that judges righteously. But the prosecutors insist upon it that the law must have its course; it is a fundamental maxim in the constitution of the government of the Medes and Persians, which had now become the universal monarchy, that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed. The same we find Es 1:19,8:8. The Chaldeans magnified the will of their king, by giving him a power to make and unmake laws at his pleasure, to slay and keep alive whom he would. The Persians magnified the wisdom of their king, by supposing that whatever law he solemnly ratified it was so well made that there could be no occasion to alter it, or dispense with it, as if any human foresight could, in framing a law, guard against all inconveniences.

But, if this maxim be duly applied to Daniel's case (as I am apt to think it is not, but perverted), while it honours the king's legislative power it hampers his executive power, and incapacitates him to show that mercy which upholds the throne, and to pass acts of indemnity, which are the glories of a reign. Those who allow not the sovereign's power to dispense with a disabling statute, yet never question his power to pardon an

offence against a penal statute. But Darius is denied this power. See what need we have to pray for princes that God would give them wisdom, for they are often embarrassed with great difficulties, even the wisest and best are.

5. The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself, with the utmost reluctance, and against his conscience, signs the warrant for his execution; and Daniel, that venerable grave man, who carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in his countenance, who had so often looked great upon the bench, and at the council-board, and greater upon his knees, who had power with God and man, and had prevailed, is brought, purely for worshipping his God, as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and thrown into the den of lions, to be devoured by them, Da 6:16. One cannot think of it without the utmost compassion to the gracious sufferer and the utmost indignation at the malicious prosecutors.

To make sure work, the stone laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed, and the king (an over-easy man) is persuaded to seal it with his own signet (Da 6:17), that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel falls by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signets too. Thus, when Christ was buried, his adversaries sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

6. The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God: Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee, Da 6:16. Here

(1.) He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do so even when it was made a crime.

(2.) He leaves it to God to free him from punishment, since he could not prevail to do it: He will deliver thee. He is sure that his God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an almighty God, and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel's companions in a like case from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who

approve themselves faithful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask *a petition* of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing *is* true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which *is* of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

14 Then the king, when he heard *these* words, was sore displeased with himself, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians *is*, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast *him* into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

Here is, I The melancholy night which the king had, upon Daniel's account, Da 6:18. He had said, indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger; and justly might God deprive him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He went to his palace, vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself unwise and unjust for not adhering

to the law of God and nature with a non obstante--a negative to the law of the Medes and Persians.

He ate no supper, but passed the night fasting; his heart was already full of grief and fear. He forbade the music; nothing is more unpleasing that songs sung to a heavy heart. He went to bed, but got no sleep, was full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day. Note, the best way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience, then we may lie down in peace.

II The solicitous enquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, Da 6:19,20. He was up early, very early; for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him? And he was no sooner up than he went in haste to the den of lions, for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant (that would not sufficiently testify his affection for Daniel), nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes that God had graciously undone what he had wickedly done, he cries, with a lamentable voice, as one full of concern and trouble, O Daniel! art thou alive? He longs to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey:

O Daniel! servant of the living God, has thy God whom thou servest made it to appear that he is able to deliver thee from the lions? If he rightly understood himself when he called him the living God, he could not doubt of his ability to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit in this case to exert his power? What he doubted of we are sure of, that the servants of the living God have a Master who is well able to protect them and bear them out in his service.

III. The joyful news he meets with-that Daniel is alive, is safe, and well, and unhurt in the lions' den, Da 6:21,22. Daniel knew the king's voice, though it was now a lamentable voice, and spoke to him with all the deference and respect that were due to him: O king! live for ever. He does not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his easiness in yielding to the malice of his persecutors; but, to show that he has heartily forgiven him,

he meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should not upbraid those with the diskindnesses they have done us who, we know, did them with reluctance, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them. The account Daniel gives the king is very pleasant; it is triumphant.

1. God has preserved his life by a miracle. Darius had called him Daniel's god (thy God whom thou servest), to which Daniel does as it were echo back, Yea, he is my God, whom I own, and who owns me, for he has sent his angel. The same bright and glorious being that was seen in the form of the Son of God with the three children in the fiery furnace had visited Daniel, and, it is likely, in a visible appearance had enlightened the dark den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut the lions' mouths, that they had not in the least hurt him. The angel's presence made even the lions' den his strong-hold, his palace, his paradise; he had never had a better night in his life.

See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour from hurting those that are his. See the care God takes of his faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them out to suffer for him. If he keeps their souls from sin, comforts their souls with his peace, and receives their souls to himself, he does in effect stop the lions' mouths, that they cannot hurt them. See how ready the angels are to minister for the good of God's people, for they own themselves their fellow servants.

2. God has therein pleaded his cause. He was represented to the king as disaffected to him and his government. We do not find that he said any thing in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear up his integrity as the light; and he did it effectually, by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel, in what he had done, had not offended either God or the king: Before him whom I prayed to innocency was found in me. He pretends not to a meritorious excellence, but the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincerity is his comfort--As also that before thee, O king! I have done no hurt, nor designed thee any affront.

IV. The discharge of Daniel from his confinement. His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satisfied, though they are not, or, if it be altered, it is by a power superior to that of the Medes and Persians; and therefore no cause can be shown why Daniel should not be fetched out of the den (Da 6:23): The king was exceedingly glad to find him alive, and gave orders immediately that they should take him out of the den, as Jeremiah out of the dungeon; and, when they searched, no manner of hurt was found upon him; he was nowhere crushed nor scarred, but was kept perfectly well, because he believed in his God. Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust in God to protect them in the way of their duty shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, but shall always find him a present help.

V. The committing of his prosecutors to the same prison, or place of execution rather, Da 6:24. Darius is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and now begins to take courage and act like himself. Those that would not suffer him to show mercy to Daniel shall, now that God has done it for him, be made to feel his resentments; and he will do justice for God who had shown mercy for him. Daniel's accusers, now that his innocency is cleared, and Heaven itself has become his compurgator, have the same punishment inflicted upon them which they designed against him, according to the law of retaliation made against false accusers, De 19:18,19.

Such they were to be reckoned now that Daniel was proved innocent; for, though the fact was true, yet it was not a fault. They were cast into the den of lions, which perhaps was a punishment newly invented by themselves; however, it was what they maliciously designed for Daniel. Nec lex est justior ulla quàm necis artifices arte perire suâ--No law can be more just than that which adjudges the devisers of barbarity to perish by it, Ps 7:15,16,9:15,16. And now Solomon's observation is verified (Pr 11:8), The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. In this execution we may observe,

1 The king's severity, in ordering their wives and children to be thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are God's statutes

above those of the nations! for God commanded that the children should not die for the fathers' crimes, De 24:16. Yet they were put to death in extraordinary cases, as those of Achan, and Saul, and Haman.

2 The lion's fierceness. They had the mastery of them immediately, and tore them to pieces before they came to the bottom of the den. This verified and magnified the miracle of their sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was not because they had not appetite, but because they had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off; so were these lions. And the Lord is known by those judgments which he executes.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: *and* the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

Darius here studies to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel, in casting Daniel into the lions' den, by doing honour to both.

I. He gives honour to God by a decree published to all nations, by which they are required to fear before him. And this is a decree which is indeed fit to be made unalterable, according to

the laws of the Medes and Persians, for it is the everlasting gospel, preached to those that dwell on the earth, Re 14:7. Fear God, and give glory to him. Observe,

1. To whom he sends this decree--to all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Da 6:25. These are great words, and it is true that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged to that which is here decreed; but here they mean no more than every dominion of his kingdom, which, though it contained many nations, did not contain all nations; but so it is, those that have much are ready to think they have all.

2. What the matter of the decree is--that men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. This goes further than Nebuchadnezzar's decree upon a similar occasion, for that only restrained people from speaking amiss of this God, but this requires them to fear before him, to keep up and express awful reverent thoughts of him. And well might this decree he prefaced, as it is, with Peace be multiplied unto you, for the only foundation of true and abundant peace is laid in the fear of God, for that is true wisdom.

If we live in the fear of God, and walk according to that rule, peace shall be upon us, peace shall be multiplied to us. But, though this decree goes far, it does not go far enough; had he done right, and come up to his present convictions, he would have commanded all men not only to tremble and fear before this God, but to love him and trust in him, to forsake the service of their idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him as Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so deeply rooted that it was not to be extirpated by the edicts of princes, nor by any power less than that which went along with the glorious gospel of Christ.

3. What are the causes and considerations moving him to make this decree. They are sufficient to have justified a decree for the total suppression of idolatry, much more will they serve to support this. There is good reason why all men should fear before this God, for,

(1.) His being is transcendent. "He is the living God, lives as a God, whereas the gods we worship are dead things, have not so much as an animal life."

(2.) His government is incontestable. He has a kingdom, and a dominion; he not only lives, but reigns as an absolute sovereign.

(3.) Both his being and his government are unchangeable. He is himself stedfast for ever, and with him is no shadow of turning. And his kingdom too is that which shall not be destroyed by any external force, nor has his dominion any thing in itself that threatens a decay or tends towards it, and therefore it shall be even to the end.

(4.) He has an ability sufficient to support such an authority, Da 6:27. He delivers his faithful servants from trouble and rescues them out of trouble; he works signs and wonders, quite above the utmost power of nature to effect, both in heaven and on earth, by which it appears that he is sovereign Lord of both.

(5.) He has given a fresh proof of all this in delivering his servant Daniel from the power of the lions. This miracle, and that of the delivering of the three children, were wrought in the eyes of the world, were seen, published, and attested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the errors of heathenism, and very proper preparations for pure catholic Christianity.

II. He puts honour upon Daniel (Da 6:28): So this Daniel prospered. See how God brought to him good out of evil. This bold stroke which his enemies made at his life was a happy occasion of taking them off, and their children too, who otherwise would still have stood in the way of his preferment, and have been upon all occasions vexatious to him; and now he prospered more than ever, was more in favour with his prince and in reputation with the people, which gave him a great opportunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus out of the eater

(and that was a lion too) comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.

26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he *is* the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion *shall be even* unto the end.

27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel-7

Daniel's Dream of the Four Beasts

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, *and* told the sum of the matters.

The date of this chapter places it before Da 5:1-31, which was in the last year of Belshazzar, and Da 6:1-28, which was in the first of Darius; for Daniel had those visions in the first year of Belshazzar, when the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was drawing near a period. Belshazzar's name here is, in the original, spelt differently from what it used to be; before it was Bel-she-azar--Bel is he that treasures up riches. But this is Bel-eshe-zar--Bel is on fire by the enemy. Bel was the god of the Chaldeans; he had prospered, but is now to be consumed.

We have, in these verses, Daniel's vision of the four monarchies that were oppressive to the Jews. Observe,

I The circumstances of this vision. Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and now he is himself honoured with similar divine discoveries (Da 7:1): He had visions of his head upon his bed, when he was asleep; so God sometimes revealed himself and his mind to the children of men, when deep sleep fell upon them (Job 33:15); for when we are most retired from

the world, and taken off from the things of sense, we are most fit for communion with God. But when he was awake he wrote the dream for his own use, lest he should forget it as a dream which passes away; and he told the sum of the matters to his brethren the Jews for their use, and gave it to them in writing, that it might be communicated to those at a distance and preserved for their children after them, who shall see these things accomplished. The Jews, misunderstanding some of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, flattered themselves with hopes that, after their return to their own land, they should enjoy a complete and uninterrupted tranquility; but that they might not so deceive themselves, and their calamities be made doubly grievous by the disappointment, God by this prophet lets them know that they shall have tribulation:

those promises of their prosperity were to be accomplished in the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of grace; as Christ has told his disciples they must expect persecution, and the promises they depend upon will be accomplished in the eternal blessings of the kingdom of glory. Daniel both wrote these things and spoke them, to intimate that the church should be taught both by the scriptures and by ministers' preaching, both by the written word and by word of mouth; and ministers in their preaching are to tell the sum of the matters that are written.

II The vision itself, which foretels the revolutions of government in those nations which the church of the Jews, for the following ages, was to be under the influence of. 1. He observed the four winds to strive upon the great sea, Da 7:2. They strove which should blow strongest, and, at length, blow alone. This represents the contests among princes for empire, and the shakings of the nations by these contests, to which those mighty monarchies, which he was now to have a prospect of, owed their rise. One wind from any point of the compass, if it blow hard, will cause a great commotion in the sea; but what a tumult must needs be raised when the four winds strive for mastery! This is it which the kings of the nations are contending for in their wars, which are as noisy and violent as the battle of the winds; but how is the poor sea tossed and torn, how terrible are its concussions, and how violent its convulsions, while the

winds are at strife which shall have the sole power of troubling it! Note, This world is like a stormy tempestuous sea; thanks to the proud ambitious winds that vex it.

2. He saw four great beasts come up from the sea, from the troubled waters, in which aspiring minds love to fish. The monarchs and monarchies are represented by beasts, because too often it is by brutish rage and tyranny that they are raised and supported. These beasts were diverse one from another (Da 7:3), of different shapes, to denote the different genius and complexion of the nations in whose hands they were lodged.

(1.) The first beast was like a lion, Da 7:4. This was the Chaldean monarchy, that was fierce and strong, and made the kings absolute. This lion had eagle's wings, with which to fly upon the prey, denoting the wonderful speed that Nebuchadnezzar made in his conquest of kingdoms. But Daniel soon sees the wings plucked, a full stop put to the career of their victorious arms. Divers countries that had been tributaries to them revolt from them, and make head against them; so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. It has lost the heart of a lion, which it had been famous for (one of our English kings was called Cœur de Lion--Lion-heart), has lost its courage and become feeble and faint, dreading every thing and daring nothing; they are put in fear, and made to know themselves to be but men. Sometimes the valour of a nation strangely sinks, and it becomes cowardly and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nations in an age or two becomes the tail.

(2.) The second beast was like a bear, Da 7:5.

This was the Persian monarchy, less strong and generous than the former, but no less ravenous. This bear raised up itself on one side against the lion, and soon mastered it. It raised up one dominion; so some read it. Persia and Media, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image were the two arms in one breast, now set up a joint government. This bear had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth, the remains of those nations it had

devoured, which were the marks of its voraciousness, and yet an indication that though it had devoured much it could not devour all; some ribs still stuck in the teeth of it, which it could not conquer. Whereupon it was said to it, "Arise, devour much flesh; let alone the bones, the ribs, that cannot be conquered, and set upon that which will be an easier prey." The princes will stir up both the kings and the people to push on their conquests, and let nothing stand before them.

Note, Conquests, unjustly made, are but like those of the beasts of prey, and in this much worse, that the beasts prey not upon those of their own kind, as wicked and unreasonable men do.

(3.) The third beast was like a leopard, Da 7:6. This was the Grecian monarchy, founded by Alexander the Great, active, crafty, and cruel, like a leopard. He had four wings of a fowl; the lion seems to have had but two wings; but the leopard had four, for though Nebuchadnezzar made great despatch in his conquests Alexander made much greater. In six years' time he gained the whole empire of Persia, a great part besides of Asia, made himself master of Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations. This beast had four heads; upon Alexander's death his conquests were divided among his four chief captains; Seleucus Nicanor had Asia the Great; Perdiccas, and after him Antigonus, had Asia the Less; Cassander had Macedonia; and Ptolemeus had Egypt. Dominion was given to this beast; it was given of God, from whom alone promotion comes.

(4.) The fourth beast was more fierce, and formidable, and mischievous, than any of them, unlike any of the other, nor is there any among the beasts of prey to which it might be compared, Da 7:7. The learned are not agreed concerning this anonymous beast; some make it to be the Roman empire, which, when it was in its glory, comprehended ten kingdoms, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Pannonia, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; and then the little horn which rose by the fall of three of the other horns (Da 7:8) they make to be the Turkish empire, which rose in the room of Asia, Greece, and Egypt.

Others make this fourth beast to be the kingdom of Syria, the family of the Seleucidæ, which was very cruel and oppressive to the people of the Jews, as we find in Josephus and the history of the Maccabees. And herein that empire was diverse from those which went before, that none of the preceding powers compelled the Jews to renounce their religion, but the kings of Syria did, and used them barbarously. Their armies and commanders were the great iron teeth with which they devoured and broke in pieces the people of God, and they trampled upon the residue of them. The ten horns are then supposed to be ten kings that reigned successively in Syria; and then the little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, the last of the ten, who by one means or other undermined three of the kings, and got the government. He was a man of great ingenuity, and therefore is said to have eyes like the eyes of a man; and he was very bold and daring, had a mouth speaking great things. We shall meet with him again in these prophecies.

2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four
winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.
3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.
4 The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings
thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made
stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.
5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself
on one side, and *it had* three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth
of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.
6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the
back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and
dominion was given to it.
7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful
and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it
devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of
it: and it *was* diverse from all the beasts that *were* before it; and it had
ten horns.
8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another
little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up
by the roots: and, behold, in this horn *were* eyes like the eyes of man,
and a mouth speaking great things.

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire.

10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Whether we understand the fourth beast to signify the Syrian empire, or the Roman, or the former as the figure of the latter, it is plain that these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God in reference to the persecutions they were likely to sustain both from the one and from the other, and from all their proud enemies in every age; for it is written for their learning on whom the ends of the world have come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope. Three things are here discovered that are very encouraging:--

I. That there is a judgment to come, and God is the Judge. Now men have their day, and every pretender thinks he should have his day, and struggles for it. But he that sits in heaven laughs at them, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps 37:13. I beheld (Da 7:9) till the thrones were cast down, not only the thrones of these beasts, but all rule, authority, power, that are set up in opposition to the kingdom of God among men (1Co 15:24): such are the thrones of the kingdoms of the world, in comparison with God's kingdom; those that see them set up need but wait awhile, and they will see them cast down. I beheld till thrones were set up (so it may as well be read), Christ's throne and the throne of his Father. One of the rabbin confesses that these thrones are set up, one for God, another for the Son of David. It is the judgment that is here set, Da 7:10. Now,

1. This is intended to proclaim God's wise and righteous government of the world by his providence; and an unspeakable satisfaction it gives to all good men, in the midst of the convulsions and revolutions of states and kingdoms, that the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens and his

kingdom rules over all (Ps 103:19), that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, Ps 58:11.

2. Perhaps it points at the destruction brought by the providence of God upon the empire of Syria, or that of Rome, for their tyrannizing over the people of God. But,

3. It seems principally designed to describe the last judgment, for though it follow not immediately upon the dominion of the fourth beast, nay, though it be yet to come, perhaps many ages to come, yet it was intended that in every age the people of God should encourage themselves, under their troubles, with the belief and prospect of it. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, Jude 1:14. Does the mouth of the enemy speak great things, Da 7:8. Here are far greater things which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Many of the New-Testament predictions of the judgment to come have a plain allusion to this vision, especially St John's vision of it, Re 20:11,12.

(1.) The Judge is the Ancient of days himself, God the Father, the glory of whose presence is here described. He is called the Ancient of days, because he is God from everlasting to everlasting. Among men we reckon that with the ancient is wisdom, and days shall speak; shall not all flesh then be silent before him who is the Ancient of days? The glory of the Judge is here set forth by his garment, which was white as snow, denoting his splendour and purity in all the administrations of his justice; and the hair of his head clean and white, as the pure wool, that, as the white and hoary head, he may appear venerable.

(2.) The throne is very formidable. It is like the fiery flame, dreadful to the wicked that shall be summoned before it. And the throne being movable upon wheels, or at least the chariot in which he rode the circuit, the wheels thereof are as burning fire, to devour the adversaries; for our God is a consuming fire, and with him are everlasting burnings, Isa 33:14. This is enlarged upon, Da 7:10. As to all his faithful friends there proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb a pure river

of water of life (Re 22:1), so to all his implacable enemies there issues and comes forth from his throne a fiery stream, a stream of brimstone (Isa 30:33), a fire that shall devour before him. He is a swift witness, and his word a word upon the wheels.

(3.) The attendants are numerous and very splendid. The Shechinah is always attended with angels; it is so here (Da 7:10): Thousand thousands minister to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him. It is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them nor can be benefited by them. See how numerous the heavenly hosts are (there are thousands of angels), and how obsequious they are--they stand before God, ready to go on his errands and to take the first intimation of his will and pleasure. They will particularly be employed as ministers of his justice in the last judgment day, when the Son of man shall come, and all the holy angels with him. Enoch prophesied that the Lord should come with his holy myriads.

(4.) The process is fair and unexceptionable: The judgment is set, publicly and openly, that all may have recourse to it; and the books are opened. As in courts of judgment among men the proceedings are in writing and upon record, which is laid open when the cause comes to a hearing, the examination of witnesses is produced, and affidavits are read, to clear the matter of fact, and the statute and common-law books are consulted to find out what is the law, so, in the judgment of the great day, the equity of the sentence will be as incontestably evident as if there were books opened to justify it.

II. That the proud and cruel enemies of the church of God will certainly be reckoned with and brought down in due time, Da 7:11,12. This is here represented to us,

1. In the destroying of the fourth beast. God's quarrel with this beast is because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke, bidding defiance to Heaven, and triumphing over all that is sacred; this provokes God more than any thing, for the enemy to behave himself proudly, De 32:27. Therefore Pharaoh must be humbled, because he has said, Who is the

Lord? and has said, I will pursue, I will overtake. Enoch foretold that therefore the Lord would come to judge the world, that he might convince all that are ungodly of their hard speeches, Jude 1:15. Note, Great words are but idle words, for which men must give account in the great day.

And see what becomes of this beast that talks so big: He is slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. The Syrian empire, after Antiochus, was destroyed. He himself died of a miserable disease, his family was rooted out, the kingdom wasted by the Parthians and Armenians, and at length made a province of the Roman empire by Pompey. And the Roman empire itself (if we take that for the fourth beast), after it began to persecute Christianity, declined and wasted away, and the body of it was destroyed. So shall all thy enemies perish, O Lord! and be slain before thee.

2. In the diminishing and weakening of the other three beasts (Da 7:12): They had their dominion taken away, and so were disabled from doing the mischiefs they had done to the church and people of God; but a prolonging in life was given them, for a time and a season, a set time, the bounds of which they could not pass. The power of the foregoing kingdoms was quite broken, but the people of them still remained in a mean, weak, and low condition. We may allude to this in describing the remainders of sin in the hearts of good people; they have corruptions in them, the lives of which are prolonged, so that they are not perfectly free from sin, but the dominion of them is taken away, so that sin does not reign in their mortal bodies. And thus God deals with his church's enemies; sometimes he breaks the teeth of them (Ps 3:7), when he does not break the neck of them, crushes the persecution, but reprieves the persecutors, that they may have space to repent. And it is fit that God, in doing his own work, should take his own time and way.

III. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, and kept up, in the world, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let the heathen rage and fret as long as they please, God will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion. Daniel sees

this in vision, and comforts himself and his friends with the prospect of it. This is the same with Nebuchadnezzar's foresight of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which broke in pieces the image; but in this vision there is much more of pure gospel than in that.

1 The Messiah is here called the Son of man--one like unto the Son of man; for he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, was found in fashion as a man. I saw one like unto the Son of man, one exactly agreeing with the idea formed in the divine counsels of him that in the fulness of time was to be the Mediator between God and man. He is like unto the son of man, but is indeed the Son of God. Our Savior seems plainly to refer to this vision when he says (Joh 5:27) that the Father has therefore given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man, and because he is the person whom Daniel saw in vision, to whom a kingdom and dominion were to be given.

2. He is said to come with the clouds of heaven. Some refer this to his incarnation; he descended in the clouds of heaven, came into the world unseen, as the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple in a cloud. The empires of the world were beasts that rose out of the sea; but Christ's kingdom is from above: he is the Lord from heaven. I think it is rather to be referred to his ascension; when he returned to the Father the eye of his disciples followed him, till a cloud received him out of their sight, Ac 1:9. He made that cloud his chariot, wherein he rode triumphantly to the upper world. He comes swiftly, irresistibly, and comes in state, for he comes with the clouds of heaven.

3. He is here represented as having a mighty interest in Heaven. When the cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, it is worth while to enquire (as the sons of the prophets concerning Elijah in a like case) whither it carried him, where it lodged him; and here we are told, abundantly to our satisfaction, that he came to the Ancient of days; for he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God (Joh 20:17); from him he came forth, and to him he returns, to

be glorified with him, and to sit down at his right hand. It was with a great deal of pleasure that he said, Now I go to him that sent me. But was he welcome?

Yes, not doubt, he was, for they brought him near before him; he was introduced into his Father's presence, with the attendance and adorations of all the angels of God, Heb 1:6. God caused him to draw near and approach to him, as an advocate and undertaker for us (Jer 30:21), that we through him might be made nigh. By this solemn near approach which he made to the Ancient of days it appears that the Father accepted the sacrifice he offered, and the satisfaction he made, and was entirely well pleased with all he had done. He was brought near, as our high priest, who for us enters within the veil, and as our forerunner,

4. He is here represented as having a mighty influence upon this earth, Da 7:14. When he went to be glorified with his Father he had a power given him over all flesh, Joh 17:2,5. With the prospect of this Daniel and his friends are here comforted, that not only the dominion of the church's enemies shall be taken away (Da 7:12), but the church's head and best friend shall have the dominion given him; to him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. Php 2:9,10.

To him are given glory and a kingdom, and they are given by him who has an unquestionable right to give them, which, some think with an eye to these words, our Savior teaches us to acknowledge in the close of the Lord's prayer, For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. It is here foretold that the kingdom of the exalted Redeemer shall be,

(1.) A universal kingdom, the only universal monarchy, whatever others have pretended to, or aimed at: All people, nations, and languages, shall fear him, and be under his jurisdiction, either as his willing subjects or as his conquered captives, to be either ruled or overruled by him. One way or other, the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdoms.

(2.) An everlasting kingdom. His dominion shall not pass away to any successor, much less to any invader, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. Even the gates of hell, or the infernal powers and policies, shall not prevail against it. The church shall continue militant to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.

11 I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld *even* till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

Here we have, I The deep impressions which these visions made upon the prophet. God in them put honour upon him, and gave him satisfaction, yet not without a great allay of pain and perplexity (Da 7:15): I Daniel was grieved in my spirit, in the midst of my body. The word here used for the body properly signifies a sheath or scabbard, for the body is no more to the soul; that is the weapon; it is that which we are principally to take care of. The visions of my head troubled me, an again (Da 7:28), my cogitations much troubled me.

The manner in which these things were discovered to him quite overwhelmed him, and put his thoughts so much to the stretch that his spirits failed him, and the trance he was in tired him and made him faint. The things themselves that were discovered amazed and astonished him, and put him into a confusion, till by degrees he recollected and conquered

himself, and set the comforts of the vision over against the terrors of it.

II. His earnest desire to understand the meaning of them (Da 7:16): I came near to one of those that stood by, to one of the angels that appeared attending the Son of man in his glory, and asked him the truth (the true intent and meaning) of all this. Note, It is a very desirable thing to take the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know must ask by faithful and fervent prayer and by accomplishing a diligent search.

III. The key that was given him, to let him into the understanding of this vision. The angel told him, and told him so plainly that he made him know the interpretation of the thing, and so made him somewhat more easy.

1. The great beasts are great kings and their kingdoms, great monarchs and their monarchies, which shall arise out of the earth, as those beasts did out of the sea, Da 7:17. They are but terræfilii--from beneath; they savour of the earth, and their foundation is in the dust; they are of the earth earthy, and they are written in the dust, and to the dust they shall return.

2. Daniel pretty well understands the first three beasts, but concerning the fourth he desires to be better informed, because it differed so much from the rest, and was exceedingly dreadful, and not only so, but very mischievous, or it devoured and broke in pieces, Da 7:19. Perhaps it was this that put Daniel into such a fright, and this part of the visions of his head troubled him more than any of the rest. But especially he desired to know what the little horn was, that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things, and whose countenance was more fearless and formidable than that of any of his fellows, Da 7:20. And this he was most inquisitive about because it was this horn that made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, Da 7:21.

While no more is intimated than that the children of men make war with one another, and prevail against one another, the prophet does not show himself so much concerned (let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, and be dashed in pieces one against another); but when they make war with the saints, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are broken as earthen pitchers, it is time to ask, "What is the meaning of this? Will the Lord cast off his people? Will he suffer their enemies to trample upon them and triumph over them? What is this same horn that shall prevail so far against the saints?"

To this his interpreter answers (Da 7:23-25) that this fourth beast is a fourth kingdom, that shall devour the whole earth, or (as it may be read) the whole land. That the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king that shall subdue three kings, and shall be very abusive to God and his people, shall act,

(1.) Very impiously towards God. He shall speak great words against the Most High, setting him, and his authority and justice, at defiance.

(2.) Very imperiously towards the people of God. He shall wear out the saints of the Most High; he will not cut them off at once, but wear them out by long oppressions and a constant course of hardships put upon them, ruining their estates and weakening their families. The design of Satan has been to wear out the saints of the Most High, that they may be no more in remembrance; but the attempt is vain, for while the world stands God will have a church in it. He shall think to change times and laws, to abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring every body to say and do just as he would have them.

He shall trample upon laws and customs, human and divine. Diruit, ædificut, mutat quadrata rotundis--He pulls down, he builds, he changes square into round, as if he meant to alter even the ordinances of heaven themselves. And in these daring

attempts he shall for a time prosper and have success; they shall be given into his hand until time, times, and half a time (that is, for three years and a half), that famous prophetical measure of time which we meet with in the Revelation, which is sometimes called forty-two months, sometimes 1260 days, which come all to one. But at the end of that time the judgment shall sit and take away his dominion (Da 7:26), which he expounds (Da 7:11) of the beast being slain and his body destroyed. And (as Mr. Mede reads Da 7:12) as to the rest of the beast, the ten horns, especially the little ruffling horn (as he calls it), they had their dominion taken away. Now the question is, Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin, are foretold? Interpreters are not agreed.

Some will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Seleucidæ, and the little horn to be Antiochus, and show the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees; so Junius, Piscator, Polanus, Broughton, and many others: but others will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Romans, and the little horn to be Julius Cæsar, and the succeeding emperors (says Calvin), the antichrist, the papal kingdom (says Mr. Joseph Mede), that wicked one, which, as this little horn, is to be consumed by the brightness of Christ's second coming. The pope assumes a power to change times and laws, potestas autokratorike--an absolute and despotic power, as he calls it. Others make the little horn to be the Turkish empire; so Luther, Vatablus, and others.

Now I cannot prove either side to be wrong; and therefore, since prophecies sometimes have many fulfillings, and we ought to give scripture its full latitude (in this as in many other controversies), I am willing to allow that they are both in the right, and that this prophecy has primary reference to the Syrian empire, and was intended for the encouragement of the Jews who suffered under Antiochus, that they might see even these melancholy times foretold, but might foresee a glorious issue of them at last, and the final overthrow of their proud oppressors; and, which is best of all, might foresee, not long after, the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the

world, with the hopes of which it was usual with the former prophets to comfort the people of God in their distresses.

But yet it has a further reference, and foretels the like persecuting power and rage in Rome heathen, and no less in Rome papal, against the Christian religion, that was in Antiochus against the pious Jews and their religion. And St. John, in his visions and prophecies, which point primarily at Rome, has plain reference, in many particulars, to these visions of Daniel.

3. He has a joyful prospect given him of the prevalency of God's kingdom among men, and its victory over all opposition at last. And it is very observable that in the midst of the predictions of the force and fury of the enemies this is brought in abruptly (Da 7:18,22), before it comes, in the course of the vision, to be interpreted, Da 7:26,27. And this also refers,

(1.) To the prosperous days of the Jewish church, after it had weathered the storm under Antiochus, and the power which the Maccabees obtained over their enemies.

(2.) To the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world by the preaching of his gospel. For judgment Christ comes into this world, to rule by his Spirit, and to make all his saints kings and priests to their God.

(3.) To the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints shall judge the world, shall sit down with him on his throne and triumph in the complete downfall of the devil's kingdom. Let us see what is here foretold.

[1.] The Ancient of days shall come, Da 7:22. God shall judge the world by his Son, to whom he has committed all judgment, and, as an earnest of that, he comes for the deliverance of his oppressed people, comes for the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

[2.] The judgment shall sit, Da 7:26. God will make it appear that he judges in the earth, and will, both in wisdom and in

equity, plead his people's righteous cause. At the great day he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained.

[3.] The dominion of the enemy shall be taken away, Da 7:26. All Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool, and shall be consumed and destroyed to the end: these were the apostle uses concerning the man of sin, 2Th 2:8. He shall be consumed with the spirit of Christ's mouth and destroyed with the brightness of his coming.

[4.] Judgment is given to the saints of the Most High. The apostles are entrusted with the preaching of a gospel by which the world shall be judged. All the saints by their faith and obedience condemn an unbelieving disobedient world; in Christ their head they shall judge the world, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Mt 19:28. See what reason we have to honour those that fear the Lord; how mean and despicable soever the saints now appear in the eye of the world, and how much contempt soever is poured upon them; they are the saints of the Most High; they are near and dear to God, and he owns them for his, and judgment is given to them.

[5.] That which is most insisted upon is that the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, Da 7:18. And again (Da 7:22), The time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. And again (Da 7:27), The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Far be it from us to infer hence that dominion is founded on grace, or that this will warrant any, under pretence of saintship, to usurp kingship.

No; Christ's kingdom is not of this world; but this intimates the spiritual dominion of the saints over their own lusts and corruptions, their victories over Satan and his temptations, and the triumphs of the martyrs over death and its terrors. It likewise promises that the gospel kingdom shall be set up, a kingdom of grace, the privileges and comforts of which now, under the heavens, shall be the earnest and first-fruits of the

kingdom of glory in the heavens. When the empire became Christian, and princes used their power for the defence and advancement of Christianity, then the saints possessed the kingdom.

The saints rule by the Spirit's ruling in them (and this is the victory overcoming the world, even their faith) and by making the kingdoms of this world to become Christ's kingdom. But the full accomplishment of this will be in the everlasting happiness of the saints, the kingdom that cannot be moved, which we, according to his promise, look for (that is the greatness of the kingdom), the crown of glory that fades not away--that is the everlasting kingdom. See what an emphasis is laid upon this (Da 7:18):

The saints shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever; and the reason is because he whose saints they are is the Most High and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Da 7:27. He is so, and therefore theirs shall be so. Because I live, you shall live also, Joh 14:19. His kingdom is theirs; they reckon themselves exalted in his exaltation, and desire no greater honour and satisfaction to themselves than that all dominions should serve and obey him, as they shall do, Da 7: . They shall either be brought into subjection to his golden sceptre or brought to destruction by his iron rod.

Daniel, in the close, when he ends that matter, tells us what impressions this vision made upon him; it overwhelmed his spirits to such a degree that his countenance was changed, and it made him look pale; but he kept the matter in his heart. Note, The heart must be the treasury and store-house of divine things; there we must hide God's word, as the Virgin Mary kept the sayings of Christ, Lu 2:51. Daniel kept the matter in his heart, with a design, not to keep it from the church, but to keep it for the church, that what he had received from the Lord he might fully and faithfully deliver to the people. Note, It concerns God's prophets and ministers to treasure up the things of God in their minds, and there to digest them well. If we would have God's word ready in our mouths when we have occasion for it, we must keep it in our hearts at all times.

17 These great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings, *which* shall arise out of the earth.
18 But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.
19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth *were of* iron, and his nails *of* brass; *which* devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;
20 and of the ten horns that *were* in his head, and *of* the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even *of* that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look *was* more stout than his fellows.
21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;
22 until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.
23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.
24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom *are* ten kings *that* shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.
25 And he shall speak *great* words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.
26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy *it* unto the end.
27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.
28 Hitherto *is* the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Daniel-8

Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the Goat

1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, *even unto* me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.

Here is, I The date of this vision, Da 8:1. It was in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, which proved to be his last year, as many reckon; so that this chapter also should be, in order of time, before the fifth. That Daniel might not be surprised at the destruction of Babylon, now at hand, God gives him a foresight of the destruction of other kingdoms hereafter, which in their day had been as potent as that of Babylon. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone, we should the less admire, and be less affected with, the changes in our own day; for that which is done is that which shall be done, Ec 1:9.

Then it was that a vision appeared to me, even to me, Daniel. Here he solemnly attests the truth of it: it was to him, even to him, that the vision was shown; he was the eye-witness of it. And this vision puts him in mind of a former vision which appeared to him at the first, in the first year of this reign, which he makes mention of because this vision was an explication and confirmation of that, and points at many of the same events. That seems to have been a dream, a vision in his sleep; this seems to have been when he was awake.

II The scene of this vision. The place where that was laid was in Shushan the palace, one of the royal seats of the kings of Persia, situated on the banks of the river Ulai, which surrounded the city; it was in the province of Elam, that part of Persia which lay next to Babylon. Daniel was not there in person, for he was now in Babylon, a captive, in some employment under Belshazzar, and might not go to such a distant country, especially being now an enemy's country.

But he was there in vision; as Ezekiel, when a captive in Babylon, was often brought, in the spirit, to the land of Israel.

Note, The soul may be a liberty when the body is in captivity; for, when we are bound, the Spirit of the Lord is not bound. The vision related to that country, and therefore there he was made to fancy himself to be as strongly as if he had really been there.

III. The vision itself and the process of it.

1. He saw a ram with two horns, Da 8:3. This was the second monarchy, of which the kingdoms of Media and Persia were the two horns. The horns were very high; but that which came up last was the higher, and got the start of the former. So the last shall be first, and the first last. The kingdom of Persia, which rose last, in Cyrus, became more eminent than that of the Medes.

2. He saw this ram pushing all about him with his horns (Da 8:4), westward (towards Babylon, Syria, Greece, and Asia the less), northward (towards the Lydians, Armenians, and Scythians), and southward (towards Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt), for all these nations did the Persian empire, one time or other, make attempts upon for the enlarging of their dominion.

And at last he became so powerful that no beasts might stand before him. This ram, though of a species of animal often preyed upon, became formidable even to the beasts of prey themselves, so that there was no standing before him, no escaping him, none that could deliver out of his hand, but all must yield to him: the kings of Persia did according to their will, prospered in all their ways abroad, had an uncontrollable power at home, and became great. He thought himself great because he did what he would; but to do good is that which makes men truly great.

3. He saw this ram overcome by a he-goat. He was considering the ram (wondering that so weak an animal should come to be so prevalent) and thinking what would be the issue; and, behold, a he-goat came, Da 8:5. This was Alexander the Great, the son of Philip king of Macedonia. He came from the west, from Greece, which lay west from Persia. He fetched a great compass

with his army: he came upon the face of the whole earth; he did in effect conquer the world, and then sat down and wept because there was not another world to be conquered. Unus Pellæo juveni non sufficit orbis--One world was too little for the youth of Pellæ.

This he-goat (a creature famed for comeliness in going, Pr 30:31) went on with incredible swiftness, so that he touched not the ground, so lightly did he move; he rather seemed to fly above the ground than to go upon the ground; or none touched him in the earth, that is, he met with little or no opposition. This he-goat, or buck, had a notable horn between his eyes, like a unicorn. He had strength, and knew his own strength; he saw himself a match for all his neighbours. Alexander pushed his conquests on so fast, and with so much fury, that none of the kingdoms he attacked had courage to make a stand, or give check to the progress of his victorious arms.

In six years he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. Well might he be called a notable horn, for his name still lives in history as the name of one of the most celebrated commanders in war that ever the world knew. Alexander's victories and achievements are still the entertainment of the ingenious. This he-goat came to the ram that had two horns, Da 8:6.

Alexander with his victorious army attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than 30,000 foot and 5000 horse. He ran unto him, to surprise him ere he could get intelligence of his motions, in the fury of his power. He came close to the ram. Alexander with his army came up with Darius Codomannus, then emperor of Persia, being moved with choler against him, Da 8:7.

It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who, though he brought vast numbers into the field, yet, for want of skill, was an unequal match for him, so that Alexander was too hard for him whenever he engaged him, smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, which three expressions, some think, refer to the

three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, by which he was at length totally routed, having, in the last battle, had 600,000 men killed, so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire, broke his two horns, the kingdoms of Media and Persia.

The ram that had destroyed all before him (Da 8:4) now is himself destroyed; Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, not has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand.

Note, Those kingdoms which, when they had power, abused it, and, because none could oppose them, withheld not themselves from the doing of any wrong, may expect to have their power at length taken from them, and to be served in their own kind, Isa 33:1.

4. He saw the he-goat made hereby very considerable; but the great horn, that had done all this execution, was broken, Da 8:8. Alexander was about twenty years old when he began his wars. When he was about twenty-six he conquered Darius, and became master of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, when he was strong, in his full strength, he was broken. He was not killed in war, in the bed of honour, but died of a drunken surfeit, or, as some suspect, by poison and left no child living behind him to enjoy that which he had endlessly laboured for, but left a lasting monument of the vanity of worldly pomp and power, and their insufficiency to make a man happy.

5. He saw this kingdom divided into four parts, and that instead of that one great horn there came up four notable ones, Alexander's four captains, to whom he bequeathed his conquests; and he had so much that, when it was divided among four, they had each of them enough for any one man. These four notable horns were towards the four winds of heaven, the same with the four heads of the leopard (Da 7:6), the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, Asia and Greece-Syria lying to the east, Greece to the west, Asia Minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. Note, Those that heap up riches know not who shall

gather them, nor whose all those things shall be which they have provided.

6. He saw a little horn which became a great persecutor of the church and people of God; and this was the principal thing that was intended to be shown to him in this vision, as afterwards, Da 11:30, &c. All agree that this was Antiochus Epiphanes (so he called himself)--the illustrious, but others called him Antiochus Epimanes--Antiochus the furious. He is called here (as before, Da 7:8), a little horn, because he was in his original contemptible; there were others between him and the kingdom, and he was of a base servile disposition, had nothing in him of princely qualities, and had been for some time a hostage and prisoner at Rome, whence he made his escape, and, though, the youngest brother, and his elder living, got the kingdom. He waxed exceedingly great towards the south, for he seized upon Egypt, and towards the east, for he invaded Persia and Armenia.

But that which is here especially taken notice of is the mischief that he did to the people of the Jews. They are not expressly named, or prophecies must not be too plain; but they are here so described that it would be easy for those who understood scripture-language to know who were meant; and the Jews, having notice of this before, might be awakened to prepare themselves and their children beforehand for these suffering trying times.

(1.) He set himself against the pleasant land, the land of Israel, so called because it was the glory of all lands, for fruitfulness and all the delights of human life, but especially for the tokens of God's presence in it, and its being blessed with divine revelations and institutions; it was Mount Zion that was beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, Ps 48:2 The pleasantness of that land was that there the Messiah was to be born, who would be both the consolation and the glory of his people Israel.

Note, We have reason to reckon that a pleasant place which is a holy place, in which God dwells, and where we may have

opportunity of communing with him. Surely, It is good to be here.

(2.) He fought against the host of heaven, that is, the people of God, the church, which is the kingdom of heaven, the church-militant here on earth. The saints, being born from above, and citizens of heaven, and doing the will of God, by his grace, in some measure, as the angels of heaven do it, may be well called a heavenly host. Or the priests and Levites, who were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and there warred a good warfare, were this host of heaven. These Antiochus set himself against; he waxed great to the host of heaven, in opposition to them and in defiance of them.

(3.) He cast down some of the host (that is, of the stars, for they are called the host of heaven) to the ground, and stamped upon them. Some of those that were most eminent both in church and state, that were burning and shining lights in their generation, he either forced to comply with his idolatries or put them to death; he got them into his hands, and then trampled upon them and triumphed over them; as good old Eleazar, and the seven brethren, whom he put to death with cruel tortures, because they would not eat swine's flesh, 2 Mac. vi. 7. He gloried in it that herein he insulted Heaven itself and exalted his throne above the stars of God, Isa 14:13.

(4.) He magnified himself even to the prince of the host. He set himself against the high priest, Onias, whom he deprived of his dignity, or rather against God himself, who was Israel's King of old, who reigns for ever Zion's King, who himself heads his own host that fight his battles. Against him Antiochus magnified himself; as Pharaoh, when he said, Who is the Lord? Note, Those who persecute the people of God persecute God himself.

(5.) He took away the daily sacrifice. The morning and evening lamb, which God appointed to be offered every day upon his altar to his honour, Antiochus forbade and restrained the offering of. No doubt he took away all other sacrifices, but only the daily sacrifice is mentioned, because that was the greatest

loss of all, for in that they kept up their constant communion with God, which they preferred before that which is only occasional. God's people reckon their daily sacrifices, their morning and evening exercises of devotion, the most needful of their daily business and the most delightful of their daily comforts, and would not for all the world part with them.

(6.) He cast down the place of his sanctuary. He did not burn and demolish the temple, but he cast it down, when he profaned it, made it the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and set up his image in it. He also cast down the truth to the ground, trampled upon the book of the law, that word of truth, tore it, and burnt it, and did what he could to destroy it quite, that it might be lost and forgotten for ever. These were the projects of that wicked prince. In these he practised. And (would you think it?) in these he prospered. He carried the matter very far, seemed to have gained his point, and went near to extirpate that holy religion which God's right hand had planted. But lest he or any other should triumph, as if herein he had prevailed against God himself and been too hard for him, the matter is here explained and set in a true light.

[1.] He could not have done this if God had not permitted him to do it, could have had no power against Israel unless it had been given him from above. God put this power into his hand, and gave him a host against the daily sacrifice. God's providence put that sword into his hand by which he was enabled thus to bear down all before him. Note, We ought to eye and own the hand of God in all the enterprises and all the successes of the church's enemies against the church. They are but the rod in God's hand.

[2.] God would not have permitted it if his people had not provoked him to do so. It is by reason of transgression, the transgression of Israel, to correct them for that, that Antiochus is employed to give them all this trouble. Note, When the pleasant land and all its pleasant things are laid waste, it must be acknowledged that sin is the procuring cause of all the desolation. Who gave Jacob to the spoil? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? Isa 42:24. The great

transgression of the Jews after the captivity (when they were cured of idolatry) was a contempt and profanation of the holy things, snuffing at the service of God, bringing the torn and the lame for sacrifice, as if the table of the Lord were a contemptible thing (so we find Mal 1:7,8, &c., and that the priests were guilty of this Mal 2:1,8), and therefore God sent Antiochus to take away the daily sacrifice and cast down the place of his sanctuary.

Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the privileges of his house who despise and profane them, and to make those know the worth of ordinances by the want of them who would not know it by the enjoyment of them.

7. He heard the time of this calamity limited and determined, not the time when it should come (that is not here fixed, because God would have his people always prepared for it), but how long it should last, that, when they had no more any prophets to tell them how long (Ps 74:9, which psalm seems to have been calculated for this dark and doleful day), they might have this prophecy to give them a prospect of deliverance in due time. Now concerning this we have here,

(1.) The question asked concerning it, Da 8:13. Observe

[1.] By whom the question was put: I heard one saint speaking to this purport, and then another saint seconded him. "O that we knew how long this trouble will last!" The angels here are called saints, for they are holy ones (Da 4:13), the holy myriads, Jude 1:14. The angels concern themselves in the affairs of the church, and enquire concerning them, if, as here, concerning its temporal salvations, much more do they desire to look into the great salvation, 1Pe 1:12. One saint spoke of the thing, and another enquired concerning it. Thus John, who lay in Christ's bosom, was beckoned to by Peter to ask Christ a question, Joh 13:23,24.

[2.] To whom the question was put. He said unto Palmoni that spoke. Some make this certain saint to be a superior angel who understood more than the rest, to whom therefore they came

with their enquiries. Others make it to be the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is the unknown One. Palmoni seems to be compounded of Peloni Almoni, which is used (Ru 4:1) for Ho, such a one, and (2Ki 6:8) for such a place. Christ was yet the nameless One.

Wherefore asked thou after my name, seeing it is secret? Jdg 13:18. He is the numberer of secrets (as some translate it), for from him there is nothing hidden--the wonderful numberer, so others; his name is called Wonderful. Note, If we would know the mind of God, we must apply to Jesus Christ, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not hidden from us, but hidden for us.

[3.] The question itself that was asked: "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice? How long shall the prohibition of it continue? How long shall the pleasant land be made unpleasant by that severe interdict? How long shall the transgression of desolation (the image of Jupiter), that great transgression which makes all our sacred things desolate, how long shall that stand in the temple? How long shall the sanctuary and the host, the holy place and the holy persons that minister in it, be trodden under foot by the oppressor?"

Note, Angels are concerned for the prosperity of the church on earth and desirous to see an end of its desolations. The angels asked, for the satisfaction of Daniel, not doubting but he was desirous to know, how long these calamities should last? The question takes it for granted that they should not last always. The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, though it may come upon their lot. Christ comforted himself in his sufferings with this, The things concerning me have an end (Lu 22:37), and so may the church in hers. But it is desirable to know how long they shall last, that we may provide accordingly.

(2.) The answer given to this question, Da 8:14. Christ gives instruction to the holy angels, for they are our fellow-servants; but here the answer was given to Daniel, because for his sake

the question was asked: He said unto me. God sometimes gives in great favours to his people, in answer to the enquiries and requests of their friends for them. Now,

[1.] Christ assures him that the trouble shall end; it shall continue 2300 days and no longer, so many evenings and mornings (so the word is), so many nychthemerai, so many natural days, reckoned, as in the beginning of Genesis, by the evenings and mornings, because it was the evening and the morning sacrifice that they most lamented the loss of, and thought the time passed very slowly while they were deprived of them. Some make the morning and the evening, in this number, to stand for two, and then 2300 evenings and as many mornings will make but 1150 days; and about so many days it was that the daily sacrifice was interrupted: and this comes nearer to the computation (Da 7:25) of a time, times, and the dividing of a time.

But it is less forced to understand them of so many natural days; 2300 days make six years and three months, and about eighteen days; and just so long they reckon from the defection of the people, procured by Menelaus the high priest in the 142nd year of the kingdom of the Seleucidæ, the sixth month of that year, and the 6th day of the month (so Josephus dates it), to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the reestablishment of religion among them, which was in the 148th year, the 9th month, and the 25th day of the month, 1 Mac. iv. 52. God reckons the time of his people's afflictions he is afflicted. Re 2:10, Thou shalt have tribulation ten days.

[2.] He assures him that they shall see better days afterwards: Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Note, The cleansing of the sanctuary is a happy token for good to any people; when they begin to be reformed they will soon be relieved. Though the righteous God may, for the correction of his people, suffer his sanctuary to be profaned for a while, yet the jealous God will, for his own glory, see to the cleansing of it in due time. Christ died to cleanse his church, and he will so cleanse it as at length to present it blameless to himself.

2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I *was* at Shushan *in* the palace, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had *two* horns: and the *two* horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither *was there any* that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

5 And as I was considering, behold, a he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes.

6 And he came to the ram that had *two* horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant *land*.

10 And it waxed great, *even* to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.

11 Yea, he magnified *himself* even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily *sacrifice* was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.

12 And a host was given *him* against the daily *sacrifice* by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning*

the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

15 And it came to pass, when I, *even* I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

Here we have,

I. Daniel's earnest desire to have this vision explained to him (Da 8:15): I sought the meaning. Note, Those that rightly know the things of God cannot but desire to know more and more of them, and to be led further into the mystery of them; and those that would find the meaning of what they have seen or heard from God must seek it, and seek it diligently. Seek and you shall find. Daniel considered the thing, compared it with the former discoveries, to try if he could understand it; but especially he sought by prayer (as he had done Da 2:18), and he did not seek in vain.

II. Orders given to the angel Gabriel to inform him concerning this vision. One in the appearance of a man (who, some think, was Christ himself, for who besides could command angels?) orders Gabriel to make Daniel understand this vision. Sometimes God is pleased to make use of the ministration of angels, not only to protect his children, but to instruct them, to serve the kind intentions, not only of his providence, but of his grace.

III. The consternation that Daniel was in upon the approach of his instructor (Da 8:17): When he came near I was afraid. Though Daniel was a man of great prudence and courage, and had been conversant with the visions of the Almighty, yet the approach of an extraordinary messenger from heaven put him into this fright. He fell upon his face, not to worship the angel, but because he could no longer bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Nay, being prostrate upon the ground, he fell into a deep sleep, (Da 8:18), which came not from any neglect of the vision, or indifference towards it, but was an effect of his faintness and the oppression of spirit he was under, through the abundance of revelations. The disciples in the garden slept for sorrow; and, as

there, so here, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Daniel would have kept awake, and could not.

IV. The relief which the angel gave to Daniel, with great encouragement to him to expect a satisfactory discovery of the meaning of this vision.

1. He touched him, and set him upon his feet, Da 8:18. Thus when John, in a similar case, was in similar consternation, Christ laid his right hand upon him, Re 1:17. It was a gentle touch that the angel here gave to Daniel, to show that he came not to hurt him, not to plead against him with his great power, or with a hand heavy upon him, but to help him, to put strength into him (Job 23:6), which God can do with a touch. When we are slumbering and grovelling on this earth we are very unfit to hear from God, and to converse with him. But, if God design instruction for us, he will be his grace awaken us out of our slumber, raise us from things below, and set us upright.

2. He promised to inform him: "Understand, O son of man! Da 8:17. Thou shalt understand, if thou wilt but apply thy mind to understand." He calls him son of man to intimate that he would consider his frame, and would deal tenderly with him, accommodating himself to his capacity as a man.

Or thus he preaches humility to him; though he be admitted to converse with angels, he must not be puffed up with it, but must remember that he is a son of man.

Or perhaps this title puts honour upon him: the Messiah was lately called the Son of man (Da 7:13), and Daniel is akin to him, and is a figure of him as a prophet and one greatly beloved. He assures him that he shall be made to know what shall be in the last end of the indignation, Da 8:19. Let it be laid up for a comfort to those who shall live to see these calamitous times that there shall be an end of them; the indignation shall cease (Isa 10:25); it shall be overpast, Isa 26:20. It may intermit and return again, but the last end shall be glorious; good will follow it, nay, and good will be brought out of it. He tells him (Da 8:17), "At the time of the end shall be the vision; when the last

end of the indignation comes, when the course of this providence is completed, then the vision shall be made plain and intelligible by the event, as the event shall be made plain and intelligible by the vision."

Or, "At the time of the end of the Jewish church, in the latter days of it, shall this vision be accomplished, 300 or 400 years hence; understand it therefore, that thou mayest leave it on record for the generations to come." But is he ask more particularly, "When is the time of the end? And how long will it be before it arrive?" let this answer suffice (Da 8:19): At the time appointed the end shall be; it is fixed in the divine counsel, which cannot be altered and which must not be pried into.

V. The exposition which he gave him of the vision.

1. Concerning the two monarchies of Persia and Greece, Da 8:20-22. The ram signified the succession of the kings of Media and Persia; the rough goat signified the kings of Greece; the great horn was Alexander; the four horns that rose in his room were the four kingdoms into which his conquests were cantoned, of which before, Da 8:8. They are said to stand up out of the nations, but not in his power; none of them ever made the figure that Alexander did. Josephus relates that when Alexander had taken Tyre, and subdued Palestine, and was upon his march to Jerusalem, Jaddas, who was them high priest (Nehemiah mentions one of his name, Da 12:11), fearing his rage, had recourse to God by prayer and sacrifice for the common safety, and was by him warned in a dream that upon Alexander's approach he should throw open the gates of the city, and that he and the rest of the priests should go forth to meet him in their habits, and all the people in white.

Alexander, seeing this company at a distance, went himself alone to the high priest, and, having prostrated himself before that God whose name was engraven in the golden plate of his mitre, he first saluted him; and, being asked by one of his own captains why he did so, he said that while he was yet in Macedon, musing on the conquest of Asia, there appeared to

him a man like unto this, and thus attired, who invited him into Asia, and assured him of success in the conquest of it.

The priests led him to the temple, where he offered sacrifice to the God of Israel as they directed him; and there they showed him this book of the prophet Daniel, that it was there foretold that a Grecian should come and destroy the Persians, which animated him very much in the expedition he was now meditating against Darius. Hereupon he took the Jews and their religion under his protection, promised to be kind to those of their religion in Babylon and Media, whither he was now marching, and in honour of him all the priests that had sons born that year called them Alexander. Joseph. lib. 11.

2. Concerning Antiochus, and his oppression of the Jews. This is said to be in the latter time of the kingdom of the Greeks, when the transgressors are come to the full (Da 8:23); that is, when the degenerate Jews have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are ripe for this destruction, so that God cannot in honour bear with them any longer then shall stand up this king, to be flagellum Dei--the rod in God's hand for the chastising of the Jews. Now observe here,

(1.) His character: He shall be a king of fierce countenance, insolent and furious, neither fearing God nor regarding man, understanding dark sentences, or (rather) versed in dark practices, the hidden things of dishonesty; he was master of all the arts of dissimulation and deceit, and knew the depths of Satan as well as any man. He was wise to do evil.

(2.) His success. He shall make dreadful havoc of the nations about him: His power shall be mighty, bear down all before it, but not by his own power (Da 8:24), but partly by the assistance of his allies, Eumenes and Attalus, partly by the baseness and treachery of many of the Jews, even of the priests that came into his interests, and especially by the divine permission. it was not by his own power, but by a power given him from above, that he destroyed wonderfully, and thought he made himself a great man by being a great destroyer. He destroys wonderfully indeed, for he destroys,

[1.] The mighty people, and they cannot resist him by their power. The princes of Egypt cannot stand before him with all their forces, but he practises against them and prospers. Note, The mighty ones of the earth commonly meet with those at length that are too hard for them, that are more mighty than they. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, be it ever so great, unless he could be sure that there were none stronger than he.

[2.] He destroys the holy people, or the people of the holy ones; and their sacred character does neither deter him from destroying them nor defend them from being destroyed. All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the mighty and to the holy in this world.

[3.] The methods by which he will gain this success, not by true courage, wisdom, or justice, but by his policy and craft (Da 8:25), by fraud and deceit, and serpentine subtlety: He shall cause craft to prosper; so cunningly shall he carry on his projects that he shall gain his point by the art of wheedling. By peace he shall destroy many, as others do by war; under the pretence of treaties, leagues, and alliances, with them, he shall encroach on their rights, and trick them into a subjection to him. Thus sometimes what a nation truly brave has gained in a righteous war a nation truly base has regained in a treacherous peace, and craft has been caused to prosper.

[4.] The mischief that he shall do to religion: He shall magnify himself in his heart, and think himself fit to prescribe and give law to every body, so that he shall stand up against the Prince of princes, that is, against God himself. He will profane his temple and altar, prohibit his worship, and persecute his worshippers. See what a height of impudence some men's impiety brings them to; they openly bid defiance to God himself though he is the Kings of kings.

[5.] The ruin that he shall be brought to at last: He shall be broken without hand, that is, without the hand of man. He shall not be slain in war, nor shall he be assassinated, as tyrants

commonly were, but he shall fall into the hand of the living God and die by an immediate stroke of his vengeance. He, hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympius out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a common burial-place, and determined to march thither immediately; but no sooner had he spoken these proud words than he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels; worms bred so fast in his body that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him; his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long.

At first he persisted in his menaces against the Jews; but at length, despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together, and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for the injuries he had done to the Jews and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem. Then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But, finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, It is meet to submit to God, and for man who is mortal not to set himself in competition with God, and so died miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Pacata near Babylon: so Ussher's Annals, A.M. 3840, about 160 years before the birth of Christ.

3. As to the time fixed for the continuance of the cessation of the daily sacrifice, it is not explained here, but only confirmed (Da 8:26). That vision of the evening and morning is true, in the proper sense of the words, and needs no explication. How unlikely soever it might be that God should suffer his own sanctuary to be thus profaned, yet it is true, it is too true, so it shall be.

VI. Here is the conclusion of this vision, and here,

1 The charge given to Daniel to keep it private for the present: Shut thou up the vision; let it not be publicly know among the Chaldeans, lest the Persians, who were now shortly to possess

the kingdom, should be incensed against the Jews by it, because the downfall of their kingdom was foretold by it, which would be unseasonable now that the edict for their release was expected from the king of Persia. Shut it up, for it shall be for many days. It was about 300 years from the time of this vision to the time of the accomplishment of it; therefore he must shut it up for the present, even from the people of the Jews, lest it should amaze and perplex them, but let it be kept safely for the generations to come, that should live about the time of the accomplishment of it, for to them it would be both most intelligible and most serviceable.

Note, What we know of the things of God should be carefully laid up, that hereafter, when there is occasion, it may be faithfully laid out; and what we have not now any use for, yet we may have another time. Divine truths should be sealed up among our treasures, that we may find them again after many days.

2 The care he took to keep it private, having received such a charge, Da 8:27. He fainted, and was sick, with the multitude of his thoughts within him occasioned by this vision, which oppressed and overwhelmed him the more because he was forbidden to publish what he had seen, so that his belly was as wine which has no vent, he was ready to burst like new bottles, Job 32:19.

However, he kept it to himself, stifled and smothered the concern he was in; so that those he conversed with could not perceive it, but he did the king's business according to the duty of his place, whatever it was. Note, As long as we live in this world we must have something to do in it; and even those whom God has most dignified with his favours must not think themselves above their business; nor must the pleasure of communion with God take us off from the duties of our particular callings, but still we must in them abide with God. Those especially that are entrusted with public business must see to it that they conscientiously discharge their trust.

16 And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of* Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this *man* to understand the vision.

17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end *shall be* the vision.
18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.
19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end *shall be.*
20 The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia.
21 And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia: and the great horn that *is* between his eyes *is* the first king.
22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.
23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.
24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.
25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.
26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told *is* true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it *shall be* for many days.
27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick *certain* days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood *it*.

Daniel-9

Daniel's Prayer for His People

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

We left Daniel, in the close of the foregoing chapter, employed in the king's business; but here we have him employed in better business than any king had for him, speaking to God and hearing

from him, not for himself only, but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the oracles of God were committed to him, relating to the days of the Messiah.

Observe, 1. When it was that Daniel had this communion with God (Da 9:1), in the first year of Darius the Mede, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grandson, Cyrus. In this year the seventy years of the Jews' captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out; so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been ready in that year, and, probably, before he was cast into the lions' den. And one powerful inducement, perhaps, it was to him then to keep so close to the duty of prayer, though it cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefit and comfort of it.

2. What occasioned his address to God by prayer (Da 9:2): He understood by books that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Jerusalem. Da 9:2 The book by which he understood this was the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he found it expressly foretold (Jer 29:10), After seventy years be accomplished in Babylon (and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the third year of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself, Da 1:1), I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you.

It was likewise said (Jer 25:11), This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation (chorbath), the same word that Daniel here uses for the desolations of Jerusalem, which shows that he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician, and prime-minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves above their Bibles.

3. How serious and solemn his address to God was when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring (for it appears, by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies, that they exactly computed the years of their captivity), then he set his face to seek God by prayer. Note, God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to excite and encourage, our prayers; and, when we see the day of the performance of them approaching, we should the more earnestly plead them with God and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and, no doubt, in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business set time apart for an extraordinary application to Heaven on Jerusalem's behalf.

God had said to Ezekiel that though Daniel, among others, stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment (Eze 14:14), yet he hopes, now that the warfare is accomplished (Isa 40:2), his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns it is time for God's praying people to bestir themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and required from them, besides their daily sacrifice. Now Daniel sought by prayer and supplications, for fear lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended, or rather that the people might be prepared by the grace of God for the deliverance now that the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe,

(1.) The intenseness of his mind in this prayer; I set my face unto the Lord God to seek him, which denotes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervour of his devout affections, in the duty. We must, in prayer, set God before us, an set ourselves as in his presence; to him we must direct our prayer and must look up. Probably, in token of his setting his face towards God, he did, as usual, set his face towards Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it.

(2.) The mortification of his body in this prayer. In token of his deep humiliation before God for his own sins, and the sins of his

people, and the sense he had of his unworthiness, when he prayed he fasted, put on sackcloth, and lay in as hes, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

2 in the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

4 and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

We have here Daniel's prayer to God as his God, and the confession which he joined with that prayer: I prayed, and made my confession. Note, In every prayer we must make confession, not only of the sins we have been guilty of (which we commonly call confession), but of our faith in God and dependence upon him, our sorrow for sin and our resolutions against it. It must be our confession, must be the language of our own convictions and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think that he offered up much more largely than is here recorded, these being only the heads of it.

I. Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God, 1. As a God to be feared, and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of: "O Lord! the great and dreadful God, that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church's enemies." 2. As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon and put a confidence in: Keeping the covenant and mercy to those that love him, and, as a proof of their love to him, keep his commandments.

If we fulfil our part of the bargain, he will not fail to fulfil his. He will be to his people as good as his word, for he keeps

covenant with them, and not one iota of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be better than his word, for he keeps mercy to them, something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God's mercy now that he was to lay before him the miseries of his people, and upon God's covenant now that he was to sue for the performance of a promise. Note, We should, in prayer, look both at God's greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

II. Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been groaning under, Da 9:5,6. When we seek to God for national mercies we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins. These are the sins Daniel here laments; and we may here observe the variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations (for it becomes penitents to lay load upon themselves):

We have sinned in many particular instances, nay, we have committed iniquity, we have driven a trade of sin, we have done wickedly with a hard heart and a stiff neck, and herein we have rebelled, have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins:--

1. That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses: "We have departed from they precepts and from thy judgments, and have not conformed to them. And (Da 9:10) we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." That which speaks the nature of sin, that it is the transgression of the law, does sufficiently speak the malignity of it; if sin be made to appear sin, it cannot be made to appear worse; its sinfulness is its greatest hatefulness, Ro 7:13. God has set his laws before us plainly and fully, as the copy we should write after, yet we have not walked in them, but turned aside, or turned back.

2. That they had slighted the fair warnings God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, rising up betimes and sending them (Da 9:6): "We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who have put us in mind of thy laws,

and of the sanctions of them; though they spoke in thy name, we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, with a universal respect to all orders and degrees of men, to our kings and princes, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to our fathers, and to all the people of the land, whom they had the condescension and compassion to speak to, yet we have not hearkened to them, nor heard them, or not heeded them, or not complied with them." Mocking God's messengers, and despising his words, were Jerusalem's measure-filling sins, 2Ch 36:16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on; penitents should again and again accuse and reproach themselves till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. All Israel have transgressed thy law, Da 9:11.

It is Israel, God's professing people, who have known better, and from whom better is expected--Israel, God's peculiar people, whom he has surrounded with his favours; not here and there one, but it is all Israel, the generality of them, the body of the people, that have transgressed by departing and getting out of the way, that they might not hear, and so might not obey, thy voice. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon themselves (Da 9:14): We obeyed not his voice, and (Da 9:15) we have sinned, we have done wickedly. Those that would find mercy must thus confess their sins.

5 we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

6 neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

7 O Lord, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are* near, and *that are* far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8 O Lord, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them; and it is

evermore the way of true penitents thus to justify God, that he may be clear when he judges, and the sinner may bear all the blame.

1. He acknowledges that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is dispersed through all the countries about, and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed. God's hand has driven them hither and thither, some near, where they are known and therefore the more ashamed, others afar off, where they are not known and therefore the more abandoned, and it is because of their trespass that they have trespassed (Da 9:7); they mingled themselves with the nations that they might be debauched by them, and now God mingles them with the nations that they might be stripped by them.

2. He owns the righteousness of God in it, that he had done them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved (Da 9:7): "O Lord! righteousness belongs to thee; we have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments, for (Da 9:14) the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he does, even in the sore calamities we are now under, for we obeyed not the words of his mouth, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand." This seems to be borrowed from La 1:18.

3. He takes notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what was brought upon them. In very faithfulness he afflicted them; for it was according to the word which he had spoken. The curse is poured upon us and the oath, that is, the curse that was ratified by an oath in the law of Moses, Da 9:11. This further justifies God in their troubles, that he did but inflict the penalty of the law, which he had given them fair notice of. It was necessary for the preserving of the honour of God's veracity, and saving his government from contempt, that the threatenings of his word should be accomplished, otherwise they look but as bugbears, nay, they seem not at all frightful.

Therefore he has confirmed his words which spoke against us because we broke his laws, and against our judges that judged us because they did not according to the duty of their place punish

the breach of God's laws. He told them many a time that if they did not execute justice, as terrors to evil-workers, he must and would take the work into his own hands; and now he has confirmed what he said by bringing upon us a great evil, in which the princes and judges themselves deeply shared. Note, It contributes very much to our profiting by the judgments of God's hand to observe how exactly they agree with the judgments of his mouth.

4. He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by despising it. "It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special marks of divine displeasure; for under the whole heaven has not been done as has been done upon Jerusalem," Da 9:12. It is Jeremiah's lamentation in the name of the church, Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow? which must suppose another similar question, Was ever sin like unto my sin?

5. He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest; and if they will say Amen to his prayer, as it was fit they should if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust:

"To us belongs confusion of faces as at this day (Da 9:7); we lie under the shame of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due." If Israel had retained their character, and had continued a holy people, they would have been high above all nations in praise, and mane, and honour (De 26:19); but now that they have sinned and done wickedly confusion and disgrace belong to them, to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the inhabitants both of the country and of the city, for they have been all alike guilty before God; it belongs to all Israel, both to the two tribes, that are near, by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes, that are afar off, in the land of Assyria.

"Confusion belongs not only to the common people of our land, but to our kings, our princes, and our fathers (Da 9:8), who

should have set a better example, and have used their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice profaneness."

6. He imputes the continuance of the judgment to their incorrigibleness under it (Da 9:13,14):

"All this evil has come upon us, and has lain long upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, not in a right manner, as we should have made it, with a humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart. We have been smitten, but have not returned to him that smote us. We have not entreated the face of the Lord our God" (so the word is); "we have taken no care to make our peace with God and reconcile ourselves to him."

Daniel set his brethren a good example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example; in their affliction it was expected that they would seek God early, but they sought him not, that they might turn from their iniquities and understand his truth. The errand upon which afflictions are sent is to bring men to turn from their iniquities and to understand God's truth; so Elihu had explained them, Job 36:10.

God by them opens men's ears to discipline and commands that they return from iniquity. And if men were brought rightly to understand God's truth, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step towards this is to make our prayer before the Lord our God, that the affliction may be sanctified before it is removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God, to make it answer the end.

Those who in their affliction make not their prayer to God, who cry not when he binds them, are not likely to turn from iniquity or to understand his truth. "Therefore, because we have not improved the affliction, the Lord has watched upon the evil, as the judge takes care that execution be done according to the sentence. Because we have not been melted, he has kept us still in the furnace, and watched over it, to make the heat yet more

intense;" for when God judges he will overcome, and will be justified in all his proceedings.

9 To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

10 neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of his favour to Israel, and the concern of his own glory in their interests.

1. It is some comfort to them (and not a little) that God has been always ready to pardon sin (Da 9:9): To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness; this refers to that proclamation of his name, Ex 34:6,7, The Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity. Note, It is very encouraging to poor sinners to recollect that mercies belong to God, as it is convincing and humbling to them to recollect that righteousness belongs to him; and those who give him the glory of his righteousness may take to themselves the comfort of his mercies, Ps 62:12. There are abundant mercies in God, and not only forgiveness but forgivenesses; he is a God of pardons (Ne 9:17, marg.); he multiplies to pardon, Isa 55:7. Though we have rebelled against him, yet with him there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellious.

2. It is likewise a support to them to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt; so far he looks back for the encouragement of his faith (Da 9:15): "Thou hast formerly brought thy people out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon? Were they then formed into a people, and shall they not now be reformed and new-formed? Are they now sinful and unworthy, and were they not so then? Are their oppressors now mighty and haughty, and were they not so then? And has not God said the their deliverance out of Babylon shall outshine even that out of Egypt?" Jer 16:14,15. The force of this plea lies in that, "Thou hast gotten thyself renown, hast made thyself a name" (so the word is) "as at this day, even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt; and wilt thou lose the credit of that by letting us perish in Babylon? Didst thou get a renown by that deliverance which we have so often commemorated, and wilt thou not now get thyself a

renown by this which we have so often prayed for, and so long waited for?"

11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

13 As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

14 Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us.

Here is a pathetic complaint of the reproach that God's people lay under, and the ruins that God's sanctuary lay in, both which redounded very much to the dishonour of God and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by bringing them out of Egypt.

1. God's holy people were despised. By their sins and the iniquities of their fathers they had profaned their crown and made themselves despicable, and then though they are, in name and profession, God's people, and upon that account truly great and honourable, yet they become a reproach to all that are round about them. Their neighbours laugh them to scorn, and triumph in their disgrace. Note, Sin is a reproach to any people, but especially to God's people, that have more eyes upon them and have more honour to lose than other people.

2. God's holy place was desolate. Jerusalem, the holy city, was a reproach (Da 9:16) when it lay in ruins; it was an astonishment and a hissing to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house, was desolate (Da 9:17), the altars were demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes. Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyments again. The petition is very pressing, for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with him: "O Lord! I beseech thee, Da 9:16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart's desire and prayer. Now therefore, O our God! hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication (Da 9:17), and grant an answer of peace." Now what are his petitions? What are his requests?

1. That God would turn away his wrath from them; that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing: O let thy anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem, thy holy mountain! Da 9:16. He does not pray for the turning again of their captivity (let the Lord do with them as seems good in his eyes), but he prays first for the turning away of God's wrath. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

2. That he would lift up the light of his countenance upon them (Da 9:17): "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate; return in thy mercy to us, and show that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well." Note, The shining of God's face upon the desolations of the sanctuary is all in all towards the repair of it; and upon that foundation it must be rebuilt. If therefore its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles. Cause thy face to shine and then we shall be saved, Ps 80:3.

3. That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverance (Da 9:19): O Lord! hear; O Lord! forgive. "That the

mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it be removed: O Lord! hearken and do, not hearken and speak only, but hearken and do; do that for us which none else can, and that speedily--defer not, O my God!" Now that he saw the appointed day approaching he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them and not defer. David often prays, Make haste, O God! to help me.

18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions. God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him, which is not to move him (he himself knows what he will do), but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency and encourage our faith.

1. They disdain a dependence upon any righteousness of their own; they pretend not to merit any thing at God's hand but wrath and the curse (Da 9:18): "We do not present our supplications before thee with hope to speed for our righteousness, as if we were worthy to receive thy favour for any good in us, or done by us, or could demand any thing as a debt; we cannot insist upon our own justification, no, though we were more righteous than we are; nay, though we knew nothing amiss of ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified, nor would we answer, but we would make supplication to our Judge." Moses had told Israel long before that, whatever God did for them, it was not for their righteousness, De 9:4,5. And Ezekiel had of late told them that their return out of Babylon would be not for their sakes, Eze 36:22,32.

Note, Whenever we come to God for mercy we must lay aside all conceit of, and confidence in, our own righteousness.

2. They take their encouragement in prayer from God only, as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, and therefore from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy, and so give honour to him when we are suing for grace and mercy from him.

(1.) "Do it for thy own sake (Da 9:19), for the accomplishment of thy own counsel, the performance of thy own promise, and the manifestation of thy own glory." Note, God will do his own work, not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake, and so we must take it.

(2.) "Do it for the Lord's sake, that is, for the Lord Christ's sake," for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord (so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it), for the sake of Adonai, so David called the Messiah (Ps 110:1), and mercy is prayed for for the church for the sake of the Son of man (Ps 80:17), and for thy Word's sake, he is Lord of all. It is for his sake that God causes his face to shine upon sinners when they repent and turn to him, because of the satisfaction he has made. In all our prayers that therefore must be our plea; we must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Ps 71:16. Look upon the face of the anointed. He has himself directed us to ask in his name.

(3.) "Do it according to all thy righteousness (Da 9:16), that is, plead for us against our persecutors and oppressors according to thy righteousness. Though we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of." Or, rather, by the righteousness of God here is meant his faithfulness to his promise. God had, according to his righteousness, executed the threatening, Da 9:11. "Now, Lord, wilt thou not do according to all thy righteousness? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promises as thou hast been to thy threatenings and accomplish them also?"

(4.) "Do it for thy great mercies (Da 9:18), to make it to appear that thou art a merciful God." The good things we ask of God we call mercies, because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And, because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion: "Open thy eyes and behold our desolations, especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O

look with pity upon a pitiable case!" Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God and then left with him.

(5.) "Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to thee. The sanctuary that is desolate is thy sanctuary (Da 9:17), dedicated to thy honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence. Jerusalem is thy city and thy holy mountain (Da 9:16); it is the city which is called by thy name," Da 9:18. It was the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. "The people that have become a reproach are thy people, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them (Da 9:16); they are called by thy name, Da 9:19. Lord, thou hast a property in them, and therefore art interested in their interests; wilt thou not provide for thy own, for those of thy own house? They are thine, save them," Ps 119:94.

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

The Prophecy concerning the Seventy Weeks

20 And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God;

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel-grace that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning-star, this was the day-break to the Sun of righteousness, the day-spring from on high. Here is,

I The time when this answer was given.

1. It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed and laid a strong emphasis upon: While I was speaking (Da 9:20), yea, while I was speaking in prayer (Da 9:21), before he rose from his knees, and while there was yet more which he intended to say.

(1.) He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet further to enlarge upon.

[1.] He was confessing sin and lamenting that--"both my sin and the sin of my people Israel." Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God and is ready to confess it; for there is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not, nor that sins and repents not. St. John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves if they say that they have no sin, and who therefore confess their sins, 1Jo 1:8.

Good men find it an ease to their consciences to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves; and that is confessing sin. He also confessed the sin of his people, and bewailed that. Those who are heartily concerned for the glory of God, the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for the sins of others as well as for their own.

[2.] He was making supplication before the Lord his God, and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for the holy mountain of his God, Mount Zion. The desolations of the sanctuary lay nearer his heart than those of the city and the land; and the repair of that, and the setting up of the public worship of God of Israel again, were the things he had in view, in the deliverance he was preparing for, more than re-establishment of their civil interests. Now,

(2.) While Daniel was thus employed,

[1.] He had a grant made him of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken Isa 65:24, While they are yet speaking, I will hear. Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, Da 9:18,19. And, while he was speaking with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is well pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by angels, but, if we pray with fervency

for that which God has promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer; for he is faithful that has promised.

[2.] He had a discovery made to him of a far greater and more glorious redemption which God would work out for his church in the latter days. Note, Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace must be much in prayer.

2. It was about the time of the evening oblation, Da 9:21. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but, it should seem, the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it, and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of their hands, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight as the evening-sacrifice, Ps 141:2 The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice that Daniel's prayer was accepted when he prayed for the Lord's sake; and for the sake of that this glorious discovery of redeeming love was made to him. The Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of his own blood.

21 yea, while I *was* speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

22 And he informed *me,* and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show *thee;* for thou *art* greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

The message itself. It was delivered with great solemnity, received no doubt with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark and hard to be understood. Daniel, who understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now honourably employed to make known to the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of, at the end of another seventy, not years, but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer

to that prayer. He had prayed for his people and the holy city--that they might be released, that it might be rebuilt; but God answers him above what he was able to ask or think. God not only grants, but outdoes, the desires of those that fear him, Ps 21:4.

1 The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general, it is seventy weeks, that is, seventy times seven years, which makes just 490 years. The great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, will lie within the compass of these years.

(1.) These years are thus described by weeks,

[1.] In conformity to the prophetic style, which is, for the most part, abstruse, and out of the common road of speaking, that the things foretold might not lie too obvious.

[2.] To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which is made purely by the sabbath day, and to signify that that should be perpetual.

[3.] With reference to the seventy years of the captivity; as they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so, being now restored to it they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of it. So much more does God delight in showing mercy than in punishing. The land had enjoyed its sabbaths, in a melancholy sense, seventy years, Le 26:34.

But now the people of the Lord shall, in a comfortable sense, enjoy their sabbaths seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which makes ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the disposals of Providence, that we might see and admire the wisdom of him who has determined the times before appointed.

(2.) The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks are,

[1.] Concerning the time when they commence and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here dated from the going forth of the commandments to restore and to build Jerusalem, Da 9:25. I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus mentioned Ezr 1:1, for by it the people were restored; and, though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus, Isa 44:28. He shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built. That was, both in prophecy and in history, the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem; nay, it should seem, this going forth of the commandment (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it as of Cyrus's) is the same with that going forth of the commandment mentioned Da 9:23, which was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications.

And it looks very graceful that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this but that by this reckoning the Persian monarchy, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted but 130 years; whereas, by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it is computed that it continued 230 years.

So Thucydides, Xenophon, and others reckon. Those who fix it to that first edict set aside these computations of the heathen historians as uncertain and not to be relied upon. But others, willing to reconcile them, begin the 490 years, not at the edict of Cyrus (Ezr 1:1), but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nothus above 100 years after, mentioned Ezr 6:1-12 Others fix on the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mnemon, who sent Ezra with a commission, Ezr 7:8-12. The learned Mr. Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, pro and con, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves.

[2.] Concerning the termination of them; and here likewise interpreters are not agreed. Some make them to end at the death of Christ, and think the express words of this famous prophecy

will warrant us to conclude that from this very hour when Gabriel spoke to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, it was exactly 490 years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion.

But others think, because it is said that in the midst of the weeks (that is, the last of the seventy weeks) he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, they end three years and a half after the death of Christ, when the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But those who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ read it thus, "He shall make strong the testament to the many; the last seven, or the last week, yea, half that seven, or half that week (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half which Christ spent in his public ministry), shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation."

Others make these 490 years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews and the holy city; and much is said here concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary.

[3.] Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week; and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else. In the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week Christ preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations were laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

(3.) But, whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough clear and certain to answer the two great ends of determining them.

[1.] It did serve them to raise and support the expectations of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs; the preceding prophets had often spoken of him as one that should come, but never was the time fixed for his coming until now. And, though there might be so much doubt concerning the date of this reckoning that they could

not ascertain the time just to a year, yet by the light of this prophecy they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find, accordingly, that when Christ came he was generally looked for as the consolation of Israel, and redemption in Jerusalem by him, Lu 2:25,38. There were those that for this reason thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear (Lu 19:11), and some think it was this that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, Ac 2:5.

[2.] It does serve still to refute and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who should come, but still look for another. This prediction should silence them, and will condemn them; for, reckon these seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain that they have expired above 1500 years ago; so that the Jews are for ever without excuse, who will not own that the Messiah has come when they have gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messiah's being come, and that our Jesus is he, that he came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2 The events here foretold are more plain and easy to be understood, at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold,

(1.) Concerning the return of the Jews now speedily to their own land, and their settlement again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for; and yet it is but briefly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a commandment shall go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, Da 9:25. And the commandment shall not be in vain; for though the times will be very troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on, and brought to perfection at last. The street shall be built again, as spacious and splendid as ever it was, and the walls, even in troublous times.

Note, as long as we are here in this world we must expect troublous times, upon some account or other. Even when we have joyous times we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a

gleam, it is but a lucid interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will return after the rain. When the Jews are restored in triumph to their own land, yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it, even in troublous times; nay, the troublousness of the times may by the grace of God contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted the more it multiplies.

(2.) Concerning the Messiah and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that could deliver them from the Roman yoke and give them temporal power and wealth, whereas they were here told that the Messiah should come upon another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome.

[1.] Christ came to take away sin, and to abolish that. Sin had made a quarrel between God and man, had alienated men from God and provoked God against man; it was this that put dishonour upon God and brought misery upon mankind; this was the great mischief-maker. He that would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of this. Christ undertakes to be so, and for this purpose he is manifested, to destroy the works of the devil. He does not say to finish your transgressions and your sins, but transgression and sin in general, for he is the propitiation not only for our sins, that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole world. He came,

First, To finish transgression, to restrain it (so some), to break the power of it, to bruise the head of that serpent that had done so much mischief, to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men, upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom there, that, where sin and death had reigned, righteousness and life through grace might reign. When he died he said, It is finished; sin has now had its death-wound given it, like Samson's, Let me die with the Philistines. Animamque in vulnere ponit--He inflicts the wound and dies.

Secondly, To make an end of sin, to abolish it, that it may not rise up in judgment against us, to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin, to seal up sins (so the margin reads it), that they may not appear or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us, as, when Christ cast the devil into the bottomless pit, he set a seal upon him, Re 20:3. When sin is pardoned it is sought for and not found, as that which is sealed up.

Thirdly, To make reconciliation for iniquity, as by a sacrifice, to satisfy the justice of God and so to make peace and bring God and man together, not only as an arbitrator, or referee, who only brings the contending parties to a good understanding one of another, but as a surety, or undertaker, for us. He is not only the peace-maker, but the peace. He is the atonement.

[2.] He came to bring in an everlasting righteousness. God might justly have made an end of the sin by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it, by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we have not a righteousness wherein to appear before him. Had we stood, our innocency would have been our righteousness, but, having fallen, we must have something else to plead; and Christ has provided us a plea.

The merit of his sacrifice is our righteousness; with this we answer all the demands of the law; Christ has died, yea, rather, has risen again. Thus Christ is the Lord our righteousness, for he is made of God to us righteousness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. By faith we apply this to ourselves and plead it with God, and our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Ro 4:3,5. This is an everlasting righteousness, for Christ, who is our righteousness, and the prince of our peace, is the everlasting Father. It was from everlasting in the counsels of it and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and it will be to the end, for he is able to save to the uttermost. It is of everlasting virtue (Heb 10:12); it is the rock that follows us to Canaan.

[3.] He came to seal up the vision and prophecy, all the prophetical visions of the Old Testament, which had reference to the Messiah. He sealed them up, that is, he accomplished them, answered to them to a tittle; all things that were written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled in him. Thus he confirmed the truth of them as well as his own mission. He sealed them up, that is, he put an end to that method of God's discovering his mind and will, and took another course by completing the scripture-canon in the New Testament, which is the more sure word of prophecy than that by vision, 2Pe 1:19,Heb 1:1.

[4.] He came to anoint the most holy, that is, himself, the Holy One, who was anointed (that is, appointed to his work and qualified for it) by the Holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received without measure, above his fellows; or to anoint the gospel-church, his spiritual temple, or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate it to himself (Eph 5:26), or to consecrate for us a new and living way into the holiest, by his own blood (Heb 10:20), as the sanctuary was anointed, Ex 30:25, &c. He is called Messiah (Da 9:25,26), which signifies Christ-Anointed (Joh 1:41), because he received the unction both for himself and for all that are his.

[5.] In order to all this the Messiah must be cut off, must die a violent death, and so be cut off from the land of the living, as was foretold, Isa 53:8. Hence, when Paul preaches the death of Christ, he says that he preached nothing but what the prophet said should come, Ac 26:22,23. And thus it behoved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for himself--not for any sin of his own, but, as Caiaphas prophesied, he must die for the people, in our stead and for our good,--not for any advantage of his own (the glory he purchased for himself was no more than the glory he had before, Joh 17:4,5); no; it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.

[6.] He must confirm the covenant with many. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace, since it had become impossible for us to be saved by a covenant of innocence. This covenant he shall confirm by his doctrine and

miracles, by his death and resurrection, by the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which are the seals of the New Testament, assuring us that God is willing to accept us upon gospel-terms. His death made his testament of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed by it. He confirmed it to the many, to the common people; the poor were evangelized, when the rulers and Pharisees believed not on him. Or, he confirmed it with many, with the Gentile world. The New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations. Christ gave his life a ransom for many.

[7.] He must cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. By offering himself a sacrifice once for all he shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices, shall supersede them and set them aside; when the substance comes the shadows shall be done away. He causes all the peace-offerings to cease when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his gospel to the world, with which the apostles were entrusted, he took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews shows what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession.

(3.) Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation; and this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah, not only because it was the just punishment of those that put him to death, which was the sin that filled up the measure of their iniquity and brought ruin upon them, but because, as things were, it was necessary to the perfecting of one of the great intentions of his death. He died to take away the ceremonial law, quite to abolish that law of commandments, and to vacate the obligation of it.

But the Jews would not be persuaded to quit it; still they kept it up with more zeal than ever; they would hear no talk of parting with it; they stoned Stephen (the first Christian martyr) for saying that Jesus should change the customs which Moses delivered them (Ac 6:14); so that there was no way to abolish the

Mosaic economy but by destroying the temple, and the holy city, and the Levitical priesthood, and that whole nation which so incurably doted on them.

This was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could never be repaired to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity might not be overmuch lifted up with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because in process of time they would be finally destroyed, and not as now for seventy years only, but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should never be destroyed. Now,

[1.] It is here foretold that the people of the prince that shall come shall be the instruments of this destruction, that is, the Roman armies, belonging to a monarchy yet to come (Christ is the prince that shall come, and they are employed by him in this service; they are his armies, Mt 22:7), or the Gentiles (who, though now strangers, shall become the people of the Messiah) shall destroy the Jews.

[2.] That the destruction shall be by war, and the end of that war shall be this desolation determined. The wars of the Jews with the Romans were by their own obstinacy made very long and very bloody, and they issued at length in the utter extirpation of that people.

[3.] That the city and sanctuary shall in a particular manner be destroyed and laid quite waste. Titus the Roman general would fain have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that this prophecy might be fulfilled.

[4.] That all the resistance that shall be made to this destruction shall be in vain: The end of it shall be with a flood. It shall be a deluge of destruction, like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against.

[5.] That hereby the sacrifice and oblation shall be made to cease. And it must needs cease when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it were so confounded, that (they say) there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron.

[6.] that there shall be an overspreading of abominations, a general corruption of the Jewish nation and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it shall be made desolate, 1Th 2:16. Or it is rather to be understood of the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews (they could not endure them), which overspread the nation, and by which it was made desolate; for these are the words which Christ refers to, Mt 24:15, When you shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, then let those who shall be in Judea flee, which is explained Lu 21:20, When you shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies then flee.

[7.] That the desolation shall be total and final: He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, that is, he shall make it completely desolate. It is a desolation determined, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it is made desolate, it should seem, there is something more determined that is to be poured upon the desolate (Da 9:27), and what should that be but the spirit of slumber (Ro 11:8,25), that blindness which has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in? And then all Israel shall be saved.

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city,
to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make
reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,
and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.
25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the
commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the
Prince, *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street
shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.
26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for
himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the
city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and
unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

Daniel-10

Daniel's Vision by the Great River

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing *was* true, but the time appointed *was* long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

This vision is dated in the third year of Cyrus, that is, of his reign after the conquest of Babylon, his third year since Daniel became acquainted with him and a subject to him. Here is,

I. A general idea of this prophecy (Da 10:1): The thing was true; every word of God is so; it was true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such and such things were said. This he solemnly attests upon the word of a prophet. Et hoc paratus est verificare--He was prepared to verify it; and, if it was a word spoken from heaven, no doubt it is stedfast and may be depended upon. But the time appointed was long, as long as to the end of the reign of Antiochus, which was 300 years, a long time indeed when it is looked upon as to come.

Nay, and because it is usual with the prophets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there is that in this prophecy which looks in type as far forward as to the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead; and then he might well say, The time appointed was long. It was, however, made as plain to him as if it had been a history rather than a prophecy; he understood the thing; so distinctly was it delivered to him, and received by him, that he could say he had understanding of the vision. It did not so much operate upon his fancy as upon his understanding.

II. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself before he had this vision, not in expectation of it, nor, when he prayed that solemn prayer Da 9:1-27, does it appear that he had any expectation of the vision in answer to it, but purely from a principle of devotion and pious sympathy with the afflicted people of God. He was mourning full three weeks (Da 10:2), for his own sins and the sins of his people, and their sorrows. Some think that the particular occasion of his mourning was slothfulness and indifference of many of the Jews, who, though they had liberty to return to their own land, continued still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how to value the privileges offered them; and perhaps it troubled him the more because those that did so justified themselves by the example of Daniel, though they had not that reason to stay behind which he had.

Others think that it was because he heard of the obstruction given to the building of the temple by the enemies of the Jews, who hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose (Ezr 4:4,5), all the days of Cyrus, and gained their point from his son Cambyses, or Artaxerxes, who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scythian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to see how slowly the work of God goes on in the world and what opposition it meets with, how weak its friends are and how active its enemies.

During the days of Daniel's mourning he ate no pleasant bread; he could not live without meat, but he ate little, and very sparingly, and mortified himself in the quality as well as the quantity of what he ate, which may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token of humiliation and sorrow. He did not eat the pleasant bread he used to eat, but that which was course and unpalatable, which he would not be tempted to eat any more of than was just necessary to support nature. As ornaments, so delicacies, are very disagreeable to a day of humiliation.

Daniel ate no flesh, drank no wine, nor anointed himself, for those three week's time, Da 10:3. Though he was now a very old man, and might plead that the decay of his nature required what was nourishing, though he was a very great man, and

might plead that, being used to dainty meats, he could not do without them, it would prejudice his health if he were, yet, when it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he could thus deny himself; let this be noted to the shame of many young people in the common ranks of life who cannot persuade themselves thus to deny themselves.

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.
3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.
4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which *is* Hiddekel;
5 then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz:
6 his body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.
7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.
8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.
9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.
10 And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and *upon* the palms of my hands.

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to bear what Christ has to say to him. Still we have him in a fright, hardly and very slowly recovering himself; but he is still answered and supported with good words and comfortable words. Let us see how Daniel is by degrees brought to himself, and gather up the several passages that are to the same purport.

I. Daniel is in a great consternation and finds it very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that touched him set him at first upon his knees and the palms of his hands, Da 10:10. Note, Strength and comfort commonly come by degrees to those that

have been long cast down and disquieted; they are first helped up a little, and then more. After two days he will revive us, and then the third day he will raise us up. And we must not despise the day of small things, but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy. Afterwards he is helped up, but he stands trembling (Da 10:11), for fear lest he fall again. Note, Before God gives strength and power unto his people he makes them sensible of their own weakness. I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble, Hab 3:16.

But when, afterwards, Daniel recovered so much strength in his limbs that he could stand steadily, yet he tells us (Da 10:15) that he set his face towards the ground and became dumb; he was as a man astonished, who knew not what to say, struck dumb with admiration and fear, and was loth to enter into discourse with one so far above him; he kept silence, yea, even from good, till he had recollected himself a little. Well, at length he recovered, not only the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue; and, when he opened his mouth (Da 10:16), that which he had to say was to excuse his having been so long silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not speak:

"O my lord" (so, in great humility, this prophet calls the angel, though the angels, in great humility, called themselves fellow-servants to the prophets, Re 22:9), "by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me; they break in up on me with violence; the sense of my sinful sorrowful state turns upon me when I see thy purity and brightness."

Note, Man, who has lost his integrity, has reason to blush, and be ashamed of himself, when he sees or considers the glory of the blessed angels that keep their integrity. "My sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength to resist them or bear up a head against them." And again (Da 10:17), like one half dead with the fright, he complains, "As for me, straightway there remained no strength in me to receive these displays of the divine glory and these discoveries of the divine will; nay, there is no breath left in me."

Such a deliquium did he suffer that he could not draw one breath after another, but panted and languished, and was in a manner breathless. See how well it is for us that the treasure of divine revelation is put into earthen vessels, that God speaks to us by men like ourselves and not by angels. Whatever we may wish, in a peevish dislike of the method God takes in dealing with us, it is certain that if we were tried we should all be of Israel's mind at Mt. Sinai, when they said to Moses, Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die, Ex 20:19. If Daniel could not bear it, how could we? Now this he insists upon as an excuse for his irreverent silence, which otherwise would have been blame-worthy: How can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? Da 10:17.

Note, Whenever we enter into communion with God it becomes us to have a due sense of the vast distance and disproportion that there are between us and the holy angels, and of the infinite distance, and no proportion at all, between us and the holy God, and to acknowledge that we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. How shall we that are dust and ashes speak to the Lord of glory?

II The blessed angel that was employed by Christ to converse with him gave him all the encouragement and comfort that could be. It should seem, it was not he whose glory he saw in vision (Da 10:5,6) that here touched him, and talked with him; that was Christ, but this seems to have been the angel Gabriel, whom Christ had once before ordered to instruct Daniel, Da 8:16.

That glorious appearance (as that of the God of glory to Abraham, Ac 7:2) was to give authority and to gain attention to what the angel should say. Christ himself comforted John when he in a like case fell at his feet as dead (Re 1:17); but here he did it by the angel, whom Daniel saw in a glory much inferior to that of the vision in the verses before; for he was like the similitude of the sons of men (Da 10:16), one like the appearance of a man, Da 10:18. When he only appeared, as he had done before (Da 9:21), we do not find that Daniel was put

into any disorder by it, as he was by this vision; and therefore he is here employed a third time with Daniel.

1. He lent him his hand to help him, touched him, and set him upon his hands and knees (Da 10:10), else he would still have lain grovelling, touched his lips (Da 10:16), else he would have been still dumb; again he touched him (Da 10:18), and put strength into him, else he would still have been staggering and trembling.

Note, The hand of God's power going along with the word of his grace is alone effectual to redress all our grievances, and to rectify whatever is amiss in us. One touch from heaven brings us to our knees, sets us on our feet, opens our lips, and strengthens us; for it is God that works on us, and works in us, both to will and to do that which is good.

2. He assured him of the great favour that God had for him: Thou art a man greatly beloved (Da 10:11); and again (Da 10:19), O man greatly beloved! Note, Nothing is more likely, nothing more effectual, to revive the drooping spirits of the saints than to be assured of God's love to them. Those are greatly beloved indeed whom God loves; and it is comfort enough to know it.

3. He silenced his fears, and encouraged his hopes, with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, Fear not, Daniel (Da 10:12); and again (Da 10:19), O man greatly beloved! fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here quieted Daniel.

Those that are beloved of God have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them; God himself speaks peace to them; and they ought, upon the warrant of that, to speak peace to themselves; and that peace, that joy of the Lord, will be their strength. Will God plead against us with his great power? will he take advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? No, but he will put strength into us, Job 23:6. So he did

into Daniel here, when, by reason of the lustre of the vision, no strength of his own remained in him; and he acknowledges it (Da 10:19):

When he had spoken to me I was strengthened. Note, God by his word puts life, and strength, and spirit into his people; for if he says, Be strong, power goes along with the word. And, now that Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's strengthening word and grace, he is ready for any thing: "Now, Let my lord speak, and I can hear it, I can bear it, and am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me."

Note, To those that (like Daniel here) have no might God increases strength, Isa 40:29. And we cannot keep up our communion with God but by strength derived from him; but, when he is pleased to put strength into us, we must make a good use of it, and say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Let God enable us to comply with his will, and them, whatever it is, we will stand complete in it. Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis--Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt.

4. He assured him that his fastings and prayers had come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius (Ac 10:4): Fear not, Daniel, Da 10:12. It is natural to fallen man to be afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel need not fear, for he has by his three weeks' humiliation and supplication sent extraordinary messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive-branch of peace:

"From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand the word of God, which is to be the rule of thy prayers, and to chasten thyself before thy God, that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, thy words were heard," as, before, at the beginning of thy supplication, Da 9:23. Note, As the entrance of God's word is enlightening to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to God, Ps 119:130. From the first day that we begin to look towards God in a way of duty he is ready

to meet us in a way of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.

5. He informed him that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church, as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church: "Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? If thou knewest on what errand I come, thou wouldst not be put into such a consternation by it." Note, If we rightly understood the meaning of God's dealings with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we should be better reconciled to them. "I have come for thy words (Da 10:12), to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers." Thus, when God's praying people call to him, he says, Here I am (Isa 58:9); what would you have with me? See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has, in its time, fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries! On what errand did this angel come to Daniel? He tells him (Da 10:14):

I have come to make thee understand what shall befal thy people in the latter days. Daniel was a curious inquisitive man, that had all his days been searching into secret things, and it would be a great gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church; its interests lay much upon his heart, and it would be a particular satisfaction to him to know what its state should be, and he would know the better what to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but, that he might not be offended in those, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them; and, if they be wearied now that they only run with the footmen, how will they contend with horses?

Note, It would abate our resentment of present troubles to consider that we know not but much greater are before us, which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befal his people in the latter days of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew nigh for the Messiah to appear, for yet the vision is for many days; the principal things that this vision was intended

to give the church the foresight of would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, nearly 300 years after this. Now that which the angel is entrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, nor rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has received from the Lord. It was the revelation of Jesus Christ that the angel gave to St. John to be delivered to the churches, Re 1:1. So here (Da 10:21):

I will show thee what is written in the scriptures of truth, that is, what is fixed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The decree of God is a thing written, it is a scripture which remains and cannot be altered. What I have written I have written.

As there are scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters-patent, which are published to the world, so there are scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls, which are sealed among his treasures, the book of his decrees. Both are scriptures of truth; nothing shall be added to nor taken from either of them. The secret things belong not to us, only now and then some few paragraphs have been copied out from the book of God's counsels, and delivered to the prophets for the use of the church, as here to Daniel; but they are the things revealed, even the words of this law, which belong to us and to our children; and we are concerned to study what is written in these scriptures of truth, for they are things which belong to our everlasting peace.

6. He gave him a general account of the adversaries of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected that troubles would arise, and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last.

(1.) The kings of the earth are and will be its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord, and against his Anointed, Ps 2:2 The angel told Daniel that he was to have come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers, but that the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him one and twenty days, just the

three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying. Cambyses king of Persia had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do them all the mischief he could, and the angel had been all that time employed to counter-work him; so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now, for angels can be but in one place at a time. Or, as Dr. Lightfoot says, This new king of Persia, by hindering the temple, had hindered those good tidings which otherwise he should have brought him.

The kings and kingdoms of the world were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. "When I have gone forth from the kings of Persia, when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindness to the Jews, then the prince of Grecia shall come," Da 10:20. The Grecian monarchy, though favourable to the Jews at first, as the Persian was, will yet come to be vexatious to them. Such is the state of the church-militant; when it has got clear of one enemy it has another to encounter: and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent; when one storm has blown over it is not long before another rises.

(2.) The God of heaven is, and will be, its protector, and, under him, the angels of heaven are its patrons and guardians.

[1.] Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church, making his part good in defence of it twenty-one days, against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia, as consul, or liege-ambassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court, and to do them service, Da 10:13. And, though much was done against them by the kings of Persia (God permitting it), it is probably that much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined (witness Haman's plot) if God had not prevented it by the ministration of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has despatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return to fight with the prince of Persia, will continue to oppose him, and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy (Da 10:20), though he knows that another as mischievous, even that of Grecia, will rise instead of it.

[2.] Here is Michael our prince, the great protector of the church, and the patron of its just but injured cause: The first of the chief princes, Da 10:13. Some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel of the highest order, 1Th 4:16,Jude 1:9. Others think that Michael the archangel is no other than Christ himself, the angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels, he whom Daniel saw in vision, Da 10:5. He came to help me (Da 10:13); and there is none but he that holds with me in these things, Da 10:21. Christ is the church's prince; angels are not, Heb 2:5. He presides in the affairs of the church and effectually provides for its good. He is said to hold with the angels, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the heirs of salvation; and, if he were not on the church's side, its case were bad. But, says David, and so says the church, The Lord takes my part with those that help me, Ps 118:7. The Lord is with those that uphold my soul, Ps 54:4.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for *many* days.

15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.

16 And, behold, *one* like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.

17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.

18 Then there came again and touched me *one* like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,

19 and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* unto thee; be strong,
yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened,
and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.
20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will
I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth,
lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.
21 But I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth: and
there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your
prince.

Daniel-11

1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, *even* I, stood to confirm and
to strengthen him.

The King of the North and the King of the South

2 And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet
three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than *they* all:
and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the
realm of Grecia.

Here, 1 The angel Gabriel lets Daniel know the good service he has done to the Jewish nation (Da 11:1): "In the first year of Darius the Mede, who destroyed Babylon and released the Jews out of that house of bondage, I stood a strength and fortress to him, that is, I was instrumental to protect him, and give him success in his ward, and, after he had conquered Babylon, to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews," which, it is likely, met with much opposition. Thus by the angel, and at the request of the watcher, the golden head was broken, and the axe laid to the root of the tree.

Note, We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those that are friends to the church for the service they are to do it, and confirming them in their good resolutions; herein he uses the ministry of angels more than we are aware of. And the many instances we have known of God's care of his church formerly encourage us to depend upon him in further straits and difficulties.

2. He foretels the reign of four Persian kings (Da 11:2): Now I will tell thee the truth, that is, the true meaning of the visions of the great image, and of the four beasts, and expound in plain terms what was before represented by dark types.

(1.) There shall stand up three kings in Persia, besides Darius, in whose reign this prophecy is dated, Da 9:1. Mr. Broughton makes these three to be Cyrus, Artaxasta or Artaxerxes, called by the Greeks Cambyses, and Ahasuerus that married Esther, called Darius son of Hystaspes. To these three the Persians gave these attributes--Cyrus was a father, Cambyses a master, and Darius a hoarder up. So Herodotus.

(2.) There shall be a fourth, far richer than they all, that is, Xerxes, of whose wealth the Greek authors take notice. By his strength (his vast army, consisting of 800,000 men at least) and his riches, with which he maintained and paid that vast army, he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes's expedition against Greece is famous in history, and the shameful defeat that he met with. He who when he went out was the terror of Greece in his return was the scorn of Greece. Daniel needed not to be told what disappointment he would meet with, for he was a hinderer of the building of the temple; but soon after, about thirty years after the first return from captivity, Darius, a young king, revived the building of the temple, owning the hand of God against his predecessors for hindering it, Ezr 6:7.

3. He foretels Alexander's conquests and the partition of his kingdom, Da 11:3. He is that mighty king that shall stand up against the kings of Persia, and he shall rule with great dominion, over many kingdoms, and with a despotic power, for he shall do according to his will, and undo likewise, which, by the law of the Medes and Persians, their kings could not. When Alexander, after he had conquered Asia, would be worshipped as a god, then this was fulfilled, that he shall do according to his will. That is God's prerogative, but was his pretension.

But (Da 11:4) his kingdom shall soon be broken, and divided into four parts, but not to his posterity, nor shall any of his successors reign according to his dominion; none of them shall have such large territories nor such an absolute power. His kingdom was plucked up for others besides those of his own family. Arideus, his brother, was made king in Macedonia; Olympias, Alexander's mother, killed him, and poisoned Alexander's two sons, Hercules and Alexander. Thus was his family rooted out by its own hands. See what decaying perishing things worldly pomp and possessions are, and the powers by which they are got. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things shown more evidently than in the story of Alexander. All is vanity and vexation of spirit.

3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those.

5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and *one* of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion *shall be* a great dominion.

Here are foretold,

I The rise and power of two great kingdoms out of the remains of Alexander's conquests, Da 11:5.

1 The kingdom of Egypt, which was made considerable by Ptolemæus Lagus, one of Alexander's captains, whose successors were, from him, called the Lagidæ. He is called the king of the south, that is, Egypt, named here, Da 11:8,42,43. The countries that at first belonged to Ptolemy are reckoned to be Egypt, Phœnicia, Arabia, Libya, Ethiopia, &c. Theocr. Idyl. 17.

2 The kingdom of Syria, which was set up by Seleucus Nicanor, or the conqueror; he was one of Alexander's princes, and became stronger than the other, and had the greatest dominion of all, was the most powerful of all Alexander's

successors. It was said that he had no fewer than seven-two kingdoms under him. Both these were strong against Judah (the affairs of which are particularly eyed in this prediction); Ptolemy, soon after he gained Egypt, invaded Judea, and took Jerusalem on a sabbath, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave disturbance to Judea.

II The fruitless attempt to unite these two kingdoms as iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image (Da 11:6): "At the end of certain years, about seventy after Alexander's death, the Lagidæ and the Seleucidæ shall associate, but not in sincerity. Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, shall marry his daughter Berenice to Antiochus Theos, king of Syria," who had already a wife called Laodice. "Berenice shall come to the king of the north, to make an agreement, but it shall not hold:

She shall not retain the power of the arm; neither she nor her posterity shall establish themselves in the kingdom of the north, neither shall Ptolemy her father, nor Antiochus her husband (between whom there was to be a great alliance), stand, nor their arm, but she shall be given up and those that brought her," all that projected that unhappy marriage between her and Antiochus, which occasioned so much mischief, instead of producing a coalition between the northern and southern crowns, as was hoped. Antiochus divorced Berenice, took his former wife Laodice again, who soon after poisoned him, procured Berenice and her son to be murdered, and set up her own son by Antiochus to be king, who was called Seleucus Callinicus.

III. A war between the two kingdoms, Da 11:7,8. A branch from the same root with Berenice shall stand up in his estate. Ptolemæus Euergetes, the son and successor of Ptolemæus Philadelphus, shall come with an army against Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria, to avenge his sister's quarrel, and shall prevail; and he shall carry away a rich booty both of persons and goods into Egypt, and shall continue more years than the king of the north. This Ptolemy reigned forty-six years; and Justin says that if his own affairs had not called him home he would, in this war, have made himself master of the

whole kingdom of Syria. But (Da 11:9) he shall be forced to come into his kingdom and return into his own land, to keep peace there, so that he can no longer carry on the war abroad. Note, It is very common for a treacherous peace to end in a bloody war.

IV. The long and busy reign of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria. Seleucus Callinicus, that king of the north that was overcome (Da 11:7) and died miserably, left two sons, Seleucus and Antiochus; these are his sons, the sons of the king of the north, that shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces, to recover what their father had lost, Da 11:10. But Seleucus the elder, being weak, and unable to rule his army, was poisoned by his friends, and reigned only two years; and his brother Antiochus succeeded him, who reigned thirty-seven years, and was called the Great. And therefore the angel, though he speaks of sons at first, goes on with the account of one only, who was but fifteen years old when he began to reign, and he shall certainly come, and overflow, and over-run, and shall be restored at length to what his father lost.

1 The king of the south, in this war, shall at first have very great success. Ptolemæus Philopater, moved with indignation at the indignities done by Antiochus the Great, shall (though otherwise a slothful prince) come forth, and fight with him, and shall bring a vast army into the field of 70,000 foot, and 5000 horse, and seventy-three elephants. And the other multitude (the army of Antiochus, consisting of 62,000 foot, and 6000 horse, and 102 elephants) shall be given into his hand. Polybius, who lived with Scipio, has given a particular account of this battle of Raphia. Ptolemæus Philopater, having gained this victory, grew very insolent; his heart was lifted up; then he went into the temple of God at Jerusalem, and, in defiance of the law, entered the most holy place, for which God has a controversy with him, so that, though he shall cast down many myriads, yet he shall not be strengthened by it, so as to secure his interest. For,

2 The king of the north, Antiochus the Great, shall return with a greater army than the former; and, at the end of times (that is, years) he shall come with a mighty army, and great riches, against the king of the south, that is, Ptolemæus Epiphanes, who succeeded Ptolemæus Philopater his father, when he was a child, which gave advantage to Antiochus the Great. In this expedition he had some powerful allies (Da 11:14):

Many shall stand up against the king of the south. Philip of Macedon was confederate with Antiochus against the king of Egypt, and Scopas his general, whom he sent into Syria; Antiochus routed him, destroyed a great part of his army; whereupon the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined with him, helped him to besiege Ptolemæus's garrisons. They the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision, to help forward the accomplishment of this prophecy; but they shall fall, and shall come to nothing, Da 11:14. Hereupon (Da 11:15) the king of the north, this same Antiochus Magnus, shall carry on his design against the king of the south another way.

(1.) He shall surprise his strong-holds; all that he has got in Syria and Samaria, and the arms of the south, all the power of the king of Egypt, shall not be able to withstand him. See how dubious and variable the turns of the scale of war are; like buying and selling, it is winning and losing; sometimes one side gets the better and sometimes the other; yet neither by chance; it is not, as they call it, the fortune of war, but according to the will and counsel of God, who brings some low and raises others up.

(2.) He shall make himself master of the land of Judea (Da 11:16): He that comes against him (that is, the king of the north) shall carry all before him and do what he pleases, and he shall stand and get footing in the glorious land; so the land of Israel was, and by his hand it was wasted and consumed, for with the spoil of that good land he victualled his vast army. The land of Judea lay between these two potent kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, so that in all the struggles between them that was sure to suffer, for to it they both bore ill will. Yet some

read this, By his hand it shall be perfected; as if it intimated that the land of Judea, being taken under the protection of this Antiochus, shall flourish, and be in better condition than it had been.

(3.) He shall still push on his war against the king of Egypt, and set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, taking advantage of the infancy of Ptolemy Epiphanes, and the upright ones, many of the pious Israelites, siding with him, Da 11:17. In prosecution of his design, he shall give him his daughter Cleopatra to wife, designing, as Saul in giving his daughter Cleopatra to David, that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; but she shall not stand on her father's side, nor be for him, but for her husband, and so that plot failed him.

(4.) His war with the Romans is here foretold (Da 11:18): He shall turn his face to the isles (Da 11:18), the isles of the Gentiles (Ge 10:5), Greece and Italy. He took many of the isles about the Hellespont-Rhodes, Samos, Delos, &c., which by war or treaty he made himself master of; but a prince, or state (so some), even the Roman senate, or a leader, even the Roman general, shall return his reproach with which he abused the Romans upon himself, or shall make his shame rest on himself, and without his own shame, or any disgrace to himself, shall pay him again. This was fulfilled when the two Scipios were sent with an army against Antiochus. Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy and waste it as he had done; but he did not take hid advice; and Scipio joined battle with him, and gave him a total defeat, though Antiochus had 70,000 men and the Romans but 30,000. Thus he caused the reproach offered by him to cease.

(5.) His fall. When he was totally routed by the Romans, and was forced to abandon to them all he had in Europe, and had a very heavy tribute exacted from him, he turned to his own land, and, not knowing which way to raise money to pay his tribute, he plundered a temple of Jupiter, which so incensed his own subjects against him that they set upon him, and killed

him; so he was overthrown, and fell, and was no more found, Da 11:19.

(6.) His next successor, Da 11:20. There rose up one in his place, a raiser of taxes, a sender forth of the extortioner, or extorter. This character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopater, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, who was a great oppressor of his own subjects, and exacted abundance of money from them; and, when he was told he would thereby lose his friends, he said he knew no better friend he had then money. He likewise attempted to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which this seems especially to refer to. But within a few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle, but poisoned by Heliodorus, one of his own servants, when he had reigned but twelve years, and done nothing remarkable.

V. From all this let us learn,

1. That God in his providence sets up one, and pulls down another, as he pleases, advances some from low beginnings and depresses others that were very high. Some have called great men the foot-balls of fortune; or, rather, they are the tools of Providence.

2. This world is full of wars and fightings, which come from men's lusts, and make it a theatre of sin and misery.

3. All the changes and revolutions of states and kingdoms, and every event, even the most minute and contingent, were plainly and perfectly foreseen by the God of heaven, and to him nothing is new.

4. No word of God shall fall to the ground; but what he has designed, what he has declared, shall infallibly come to pass; and even the sins of men shall be made to serve his purpose, and contribute to the b ringing of his counsels to birth in their season; and yet God is not the author of sin.

5. That, for the right understanding of some parts of scripture, it is necessary that heathen authors be consulted, which give

light to the scripture, and show the accomplishment of what is there foretold; we have therefore reason to bless God for the human learning with which many have done great service to divine truths.

6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in *these* times.

7 But out of a branch of her roots shall *one* stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail:

8 and shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, *and* with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the north.

9 So the king of the south shall come into *his* kingdom, and shall return into his own land.

10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and *one* shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, *even* to his fortress.

11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, *even* with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.

12 *And* when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down *many* ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened *by it*.

13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.

14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.

15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither *shall there be any* strength to withstand.

16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.

17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand *on his side,* neither be for him.

18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause *it* to turn upon him.

19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes *in* the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.

All this is a prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn spoken of before (Da 8:9) a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those that adhered to it. What troubles the Jews met with in the reigns of the Persian kings were not so particularly foretold to Daniel as these, because then they had living prophets with them, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage them; but these troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold, because, before that time, prophecy would cease, and they would find it necessary to have recourse to the written word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus are alluded to in the New-Testament predictions of the antichrist, especially Da 11:36,37.

And as it is usual with the prophets, when they foretel the prosperity of the Jewish church, to make use of such expressions as were applicable to the kingdom of Christ, and insensibly to slide into a prophecy of that, so, when they foretel the troubles of the church, they make use of such expressions as have a further reference to the kingdom of the antichrist, the

rise and ruin of that. Now concerning Antiochus, the angel foretels here,

I. His character: He shall be a vile person. He called himself Epiphanes--the illustrious, but his character was the reverse of his surname. The heathen writers describe him to be an odd-humoured man, rude and boisterous, base and sordid. He would sometimes steal out of the court into the city, and herd with any infamous company incognito--in disguise he made himself a companion of the common sort, and of the basest strangers that came to town. He had the most unaccountable whims, so that some took him to be silly, others to be mad. Hence he was called Epimanes--the madman. He is called a vile person, for he had been a long time a hostage at Rome for the fidelity of his father when the Romans had subdued him; and it was agreed that, when the other hostages were exchanged, he should continue a prisoner at large.

II. His accession to the crown. By a trick he got his elder brother's son, Demetrius, to be sent a hostage to Rome, in exchange for him, contrary to the cartel; and, his elder brother being made away with by Heliodorus (Da 11:20), he took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not give it to him (Da 11:21), because they knew it belonged to his elder brother's son, nor did he get it by the sword, but came in peaceably, pretending to reign for his brother's son, Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome.

But with the help of Eumenes and Attalus, neighbouring princes, he gained an interest in the people, and by flatteries obtained the kingdom, established himself in it, and crushed Heliodorus, who made head against him with the arms of a flood; those that opposed him were overflown and broken before him, even the prince of the covenant, his nephew, the rightful heir, whom he pretended to covenant with that he would resign to him whenever he should return, Da 11:22. But (Da 11:23) after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully, as one whose avowed maxim it is that princes ought not to be bound by their word any longer than it is for their interest.

And with a small people, that at first cleave to him, he shall become strong, and (Da 11:24) he shall enter peaceably upon the fattest places of the kingdom of Syria, and, very unlike his predecessors, shall scatter among the people the prey, and the spoil, and riches, to insinuate himself into their affections; but, at the same time, he shall forecast his devices against the strong-holds, to make himself master of them, so that his generosity shall last but for a time; when he has got the garrisons into his hands he will scatter his spoil no more, but rule by force, as those commonly do that come in by fraud. He that comes in like a fox reigns like a lion.

Some understand Da 11:21-35 of his first expedition into Egypt, when he came not as an enemy, but as a friend and guardian to the young king Ptolemæus Philometer, and therefore brought with him but few followers, yet those stout men, and faithful to his interest, whom he placed in divers of the strong-holds in Egypt, thereby making himself master of them.

23 And after the league *made* with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.

24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: *yea,* and he shall forecast his devices against the strongholds, even for a time.

25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.

His war with Egypt, which was his second expedition thither. This is described, Da 11:25,27. Antiochus shall stir up his power and courage against Ptolemæus Philometer king of Egypt. Ptolemy, thereupon, shall be stirred up to battle against him, shall come against him with a very great and mighty army; but Ptolemy, though he has such a vast army, shall not be able to stand before him; for Antiochus's army shall

overthrow his, and overpower it, and great multitudes of the Egyptian army shall fall down slain.

And no marvel, for the king of Egypt shall be betrayed by his own counsellors; those that feed of the portion of his meat, that eat of his bread and live upon him, being bribed by Antiochus, shall forecast devices against him, and even they shall destroy him; and what fence is there against such treachery? After the battle, a treaty of peace shall be set on foot, and these two kings shall meet at one council-board, to adjust the articles of peace between them; but they shall neither of them be sincere in it, for they shall, in their pretences and promises of amity and friendship, lie to one another, for their hearts shall be at the same time to do one another all the mischief they can. And then no marvel that it shall not prosper. The peace shall not last; but the end of it shall be at the time appointed in the divine Providence, and then the war shall break out again, as a sore that is only skinned over.

26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.

27 And both these kings' hearts *shall be* to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end *shall be* at the time appointed.

28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart *shall be* against the holy covenant; and he shall do *exploits,* and return to his own land.

Another expedition against Egypt. From the former he returned with great riches (Da 11:28), and therefore took the first occasion to invade Egypt again, at the time appointed by the divine Providence, two years after, in the eighth year of his reign, Da 11:29. He shall come towards the south. But this attempt shall not succeed, as the two former did, nor shall he gain his point, as he had done before once and again; for (Da 11:30) the ships of Chittim shall come against him, that is, the navy of the Romans, or only ambassadors from the Roman senate, who came in ships.

Ptolemæus Philometer, king of Egypt, being now in a strict alliance with the Romans, craved their aid against Antiochus, who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of

Alexandria. The Roman senate thereupon sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege, and, when he desired some time to consider of it and consult with his friends about it, Popilius, one of the ambassadors, with his staff drew a circle about him, and told him, as one having authority, he should give a positive answer before he came out of that circle; whereupon, fearing the Roman power, he was forced immediately to give orders for the raising of the siege and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. So Livy and others relate the story which this prophecy refers to. He shall be grieved, and return; for it was a great vexation to him to be forced to yield thus.

29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.

30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.

His rage and cruel practices against the Jews. This is that part of his government, or mis-government rather, which is most enlarged upon in this prediction. In his return from his expedition into Egypt (which is prophesied of, Da 11:28) he did exploits against the Jews, in the sixth year of his reign; then he spoiled the city and temple.

But the most terrible storm was in his return from Egypt, two years after, prophesied of Da 11:30. Then he took Judea in his way home; and, because he could not gain his point in Egypt by reason of the Romans interposing, he wreaked his revenge upon the poor Jews, who gave him no provocation, but had greatly provoked God to permit him to do it, Da 8:23.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to the Jews' religion: His heart was against the holy covenant, Da 11:28. And (Da 11:30) he had indignation against the holy covenant, that covenant of peculiarity by which the Jews were incorporated a people distinct from all other nations, and dignified above them. He hated the law of Moses and the worship of the true God, and was vexed at the privileges of the Jewish nation and the promises made to them.

Note, That which is the hope and joy of the people of God is the envy of their neighbours, and that is the holy covenant. Esau hated Jacob because he had got the blessing. Those that are strangers to the covenant are often enemies to it.

2. He carried on his malicious designs against the Jews by the assistance of some perfidious apostate Jews. He kept up intelligence with those that forsook the holy covenant (Da 11:30), some of the Jews that were false to their religion, and introduced the customs of the heathen, with whom they made a covenant. See the fulfilling of this, 1 Mac. i. 11-15, where it is expressly said, concerning those renegado Jews, that they made themselves uncircumcised and forsook the holy covenant.

We read (2 Mac. iv. 9) of Jason, the brother of Onias the high priest, who by the appointment of Antiochus set up a school at Jerusalem, for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen; and (2 Mac. iv. 23, &c.) of Menelaus, who fell in with the interests of Antiochus, and was the man that helped him into Jerusalem, now in his last return from Egypt. We read much in the book of the Maccabees of the mischief done to the Jews by these treacherous men of their own nation, Jason and Menelaus, and their party.

These upon all occasions he made use of. "Such as do wickedly against the covenant, such as throw up their religion, and comply with the heathen, he shall corrupt with flatteries, to harden them in their apostasy, and to make use of them as decoys to draw in others," Da 11:32.

Note, It is not strange if those who do not live up to their religion, but in their conversations do wickedly against the covenant, are easily corrupted by flatteries to quit their religion. Those that make shipwreck of a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of the faith.

3. He profaned the temple. Arms stand on his part (Da 11:31), not only his own army which he now brought from Egypt, but a great party of deserters from the Jewish religion that joined with them; and they polluted the sanctuary of strength, not only the holy city, but the temple. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. i. 21, &c. He entered proudly into the sanctuary, took away the golden altar, and the candlestick, &c. And therefore (Da 11:25) there was a great mourning in Israel; the princes and elders mourned, &c. And (2 Mac. v. 15, &c.) Antiochus went into the most holy temple, Menelaus, that traitor to the laws and to his own country, being his guide. Antiochus, having resolved to bring all about him to be of his religion, took away the daily sacrifice, Da 11:31.

Some observe that the word Tammidh, which signifies no more than daily, is only here, and in the parallel place, used for the daily sacrifice, as if there were a designed liberty left to supply it either with sacrifice, which was suppressed by Antiochus, or with gospel-worship, which was suppressed by the Antichrist. Then he set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar (1 Mac. i. 54), even an idol altar (v. 59), and called the temple the temple of Jupiter Olympius, 2 Mac. vi. 2.

4. He persecuted those who retained their integrity. Though there are many who forsake the covenant and do wickedly against it, yet there is a people who do know their God and retain the knowledge of him, and they shall be strong and do exploits, Da 11:32. When others yield to the tyrant's demands, and surrender their consciences to his impositions, they bravely keep their ground, resist the temptation, and make the tyrant himself ashamed of his attempt upon them. Good old Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, when he had swine's flesh thrust into his mouth, did bravely spit it out again, though he knew he must be tormented to death for so doing, and was so, 2 Mac. vi. 19.

The mother and her seven sons were put to death for adhering to their religion, 2 Mac. vii. This might well be called doing exploits; for to choose suffering rather than sin is a great exploit. And it was by faith, by being strong in faith, that they

did those exploits, that they were tortured, not accepting deliverance, as the apostle speaks, probably with reference to that story, Heb 11:35.

Or it may refer to the military courage and achievements of Judas Maccabæus and others in opposition to Antiochus. Note, The right knowledge of God is, and will be, the strength of the soul, and, in the strength of that, gracious souls do exploits. Those that know his name will put their trust in him, and by that trust will do great things. Now, concerning this people that knew their God, we are here told,

(1.) That they shall instruct many, Da 11:33. They shall make it their business to show others what they have learned themselves of the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil. Note, Those that have the knowledge of God themselves should communicate their knowledge to those about them, and this spiritual charity must be extensive: they must instruct many. Some understand this of a society newly erected for the propagating of divine knowledge, called Assideans, godly men, pietists (so the name signifies), that were both knowing and zealous in the law; these instructed many.

Note, In times of persecution and apostasy, which are trying times, those that have knowledge ought to make use of it for the strengthening and establishing of others. Those that understand aright themselves ought to do what they can to bring others to understand; for knowledge is a talent that must be traded with. Or, They shall instruct many by their perseverance in their duty and their patient suffering for it. Good examples instruct many, and with many are the most powerful instructions.

(2.) They shall fall by the cruelty of Antiochus, shall be put to the torture, and put to death, by his rage. Though they are so excellent and intelligent themselves, and so useful and serviceable to others, yet Antiochus shall show them no mercy, but they shall fall for some days; so it may be read, Re 2:10, Thou shalt have tribulation ten days. We read much, in the

books of the Maccabees, of Antiochus's barbarous usage of the pious Jews, how many he slew in wars and how many he murdered in cold blood. Women were put to death for having their children circumcised, and their infants were hanged about their necks, 1 Mac. i. 60, 61. But why did God suffer this? How can this be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God? I answer, Very well, if we consider what it was that God aimed at in this (Da 11:35):

Some of those of understanding shall fall, but it shall be for the good of the church and for their own spiritual benefit. It shall be to try them, and to purge, and to make them white. They needed these afflictions themselves. The best have their spots, which must be washed off, their dross, which must be purged out; and their troubles, particularly their share in the public troubles, help to do this; being sanctified to them by the grace of God, they are means of mortifying their corruptions, weaning them from the world, and awakening them to greater seriousness and diligence in religion.

They try them, as silver in the furnace is refined from its dross; they purge them, as wheat in the barn is winnowed from the chaff; and they make them white, as cloth by the fuller is cleared from its spots. See 1Pe 1:7. Their sufferings for righteousness' sake would try and purge the nation of the Jews, would convince them of the truth, excellency, and power of that holy religion which these understanding men died for their adherence to. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church; it is precious blood, and not a drop of it should be shed but upon such a valuable consideration.

(3.) The cause of religion, though it be thus run upon, shall not be run down. When they shall fall they shall not be utterly cast down, but they shall be holpen with a little help, Da 11:34. Judas Maccabæus, and his brethren, and a few with them, shall make head against the tyrant, and assert the injured cause of their religion; they pulled down the idolatrous altars, circumcised the children that they found uncircumcised, recovered the law out of the hand of the Gentiles, and the work prospered in their hands, 1 Mac. ii. 45, &c.

Note, Those that stand by the cause of religion when it is threatened and struck at, though they may not immediately be delivered and made victorious, shall yet have present help. And a little help must not be despised; but, when times are very bad, we must be thankful for some reviving. It is likewise foretold that many shall cleave to them with flatteries; when they see the Maccabees prosper some Jews shall join with them that are no true friends to religion, but will only pretend friendship either with design to betray them or in hope to rise with them; but the fiery trial (Da 11:35) will separate between the precious and the vile, and by it those that are perfect will be made manifest and those that are not.

(4.) Though these troubles may continue long, yet they will have an end. They are for a time appointed, a limited time, fixed in the divine counsels. This warfare shall be accomplished. Hitherto the power of the enemy shall come, and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed.

5. He grew very proud, insolent, and profane, and, being puffed up with his conquests, bade defiance to Heaven, and trampled upon every thing that was sacred, Da 11:36, &c. And here some think begins a prophecy of the antichrist, the papal kingdom. It is plain that St. Paul, in his prophecy of the rise and reign of the man of sin, alludes to this (2Th 2:4), which shows that Antiochus was a type and figure of that enemy, as Babylon also was; but, this being joined in a continued discourse with the foregoing prophecies concerning Antiochus, to me it seems probably that it principally refers to him, and in him had its primary accomplishment, and has reference to the other only by way of accommodation.

(1.) He shall impiously dishonour the God of Israel, the only living and true God, called here the God of gods. He shall, in defiance of him and his authority, do according to his will against his people and his holy religion; he shall exalt himself above him, as Sennacherib did, and shall speak marvellous things against him and against his laws and institutions. This was fulfilled when Antiochus forbade sacrifices to be offered

in God's temple, and ordered the sabbaths to be profaned, the sanctuary and the holy people to be polluted, &c., to the end that they might forget the law and change all the ordinances, and this upon pain of death, 1 Mac. i. 45.

(2.) He shall proudly put contempt upon all other gods, shall magnify himself above every god, even the gods of the nations. Antiochus wrote to his own kingdom that every one should leave the gods he had worshipped, and worship such as he ordered, contrary to the practice of all the conquerors that went before him, 1 Mac. i. 41, 42. And all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king; fond as they were of their gods, they did not think them worth suffering for, but, their gods being idols, it was all alike to them what gods they worshipped.

Antiochus did not regard any god, but magnified himself above all, Da 11:37. He was so proud that he thought himself above the condition of a mortal man, that he could command the waves of the sea, and reach to the stars of heaven, as his insolence and haughtiness are expressed, 2 Mac. ix. 8, 10. Thus he carried all before him, till the indignation was accomplished (Da 11:36), till he had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity; for that which is determined shall be done, and nothing more, nothing short.

(3.) He shall, contrary to the way of the heathen, disregard the god of his fathers, Da 11:37. Though an affection to the religion of their ancestors was, among the heathen, almost as natural to them as the desire of women (for, if you search through the isles of Chittim, you will not find an instance of a nation that has changed its gods, Jer 2:10,11), yet Antiochus shall not regard the god of his fathers; he made laws to abolish the religion of his country, and to bring in the idols of the Greeks.

And though his predecessors had honoured the God of Israel, and given great gifts to the temple at Jerusalem (2 Mac. iii. 2, 3), he offered the greatest indignities to God and his temple.

His not regarding the desire of women may denote his barbarous cruelty (he shall spare no age or sex, no, not the tender ones) or his unnatural lusts, or, in general, his contempt of every thing which men of honour have a concern for, or it might be accomplished in something we meet not with in history. Its being joined to his not regarding the god of his fathers intimates that the idolatries of his country had in them more of the gratifications of the flesh than those of other countries (Lucian has written of the Syrian goddesses), and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

(4.) He shall set up an unknown god, a new god, Da 11:38. In his estate, in the room of the god of his fathers (Apollo and Diana, deities of pleasure), he shall honour the god of forces, a supposed deity of power, a god whom his fathers knew not, nor worshipped; because he will be thought in wisdom and strength to excel his fathers, he shall honour this god with gold, and silver, and precious stones, thinking nothing too good for the god he has taken a fancy to. This seems to be Jupiter Olympius, known among the Phœnicians by the name of Baal-Semen, the lord of heaven, but never introduced among the Syrians till Antiochus introduced it. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds, in the temple of Jerusalem, which is called the sanctuary of strength (Da 11:31), and here the fortresses of munitions; there he shall set up the image of this strange god.

Some read it, He shall commit the munitions of strength, or of the most strong God (that is, the city Jerusalem), to a strange god; he put it under the protection and government of Jupiter Olympius. This god he shall not only acknowledge, but shall increase with glory, by setting his image even upon God's altar. And he shall cause those that minister to this idol to rule over many, shall put them into places of power and trust, and they shall divide the land for gain, shall be maintained richly out of the profits of the country. Some by the Mahuzzim, or god of forces, that Antiochus shall worship, understand money, which is said to answer all things, and which is the great idol of worldly people.

Now here is very much that is applicable to the man of sin; he exalts himself above all that is called god or that is worshipped; magnifies himself above all; his flatterers call him our lord god the pope. By forbidding marriage, and magnifying the single life, he pretends not to regard the desire of women; and honours the god of forces, the god Mahuzzim, or strong holds, saints and angels, whom his followers take for their protectors, as the heathen did of old their demons; these they make presidents of several countries, &c. These they honour with vast treasures dedicated to them, and therein the learned Mr. Mede thinks that this prophecy was fulfilled, and that it is referred to 1Ti 4:1,2.

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice,* and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits.*

33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, *many* days.

34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.

35 And *some* of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, *even* to the time of the end: because *it is* yet for a time appointed.

36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

38 But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

39 Thus shall he do in the most strongholds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge *and* increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

Here seems to be another expedition into Egypt, or, at least, a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had tied him up from invading Ptolemy, but now that king of the south pushes at him (Da 11:40), makes an attempt upon some of his territories, where upon Antiochus, the king of the north, comes against him like a whirlwind, with incredible swiftness and fury, with chariots, and horses, and many ships, a great force. He shall come trough countries, and shall overflow and pass over. In this flying march many countries shall be overthrown by him; and he shall enter into the glorious land, the land of Israel; it is the same word that is translated the pleasant land, Da 8:9. He shall make dreadful work among the nations thereabout; yet some shall escape his fury, particularly Edom and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon, Da 11:41. He did not put these countries under contribution, because they had joined with him against the Jews. But especially the land of Egypt shall not escape, but he will quite beggar that, so bare will he strip it.

This some reckon his fourth and last expedition against Egypt, in the tenth or eleventh year of his reign, under pretence of assisting the younger brother of Ptolemæus Philometer against him. We read not of any great slaughter made in this expedition, but great plunder; for, it should seem, that was what he came for: He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, Da 11:43. Polybius, in Athenæus, relates that Antiochus, having got together abundance of wealth, by spoiling young Philometer, and breaking league with him, and by the contributions of his friends, bestowed a vast deal upon a triumph, in imitation of Paulus Æmilius, and describes the extravagance of it; here we are told how he got that money which he spent so profusely. Notice is here taken likewise of the use he made of the Lybians and Ethiopians, who bordered upon Egypt; they were at his steps; he had them at his foot, had them at his beck, and they made inroads upon Egypt to serve him.

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, *even* Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians *shall be* at his steps.

44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

Here is a prediction of the fall and ruin of Antiochus, as before (Da 8:25), when he is in the height of his honour, flushed with victory, and laden with spoils, tidings out of the east and out of the north (out of the north-east) shall trouble him, Da 11:44. Or, He shall have intelligence, both from the eastern and northern parts, that the king of Parthia is invading his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprises he had in hand, and to go against the Persians and Parthians that were revolting from him; and this vexed him, for now he thought utterly to ruin and extirpate the Jewish nation, when that expedition called him off, in which he perished.

This is explained by a passage in Tacitus (though an impious one) where he commends Antiochus for his attempt to take away the superstition of the Jews, and bring in the manners of the Greeks, among them (ut teterrimam gentem in melius mutaret--to meliorate an odious nation), and laments that he was hindered from accomplishing it by the Parthian war. Now here is, 1 The last effort of his rage against the Jews. When he finds himself perplexed and embarrassed in his affairs he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many, Da 11:44. The story of this we have 1 Mac. iii. 27, &c., what a rage Antiochus was in when he heard of the successes of Judas Maccabæus, and the orders he gave to Lysias to destroy Jerusalem. Then he planted the tabernacles of his palace, or tents of his court, between the seas, between the Great Sea and the Dead Sea. He set up his royal pavilion at Emmaus near Jerusalem, in token that, though he could not be present himself,

yet he gave full power to his captains to prosecute the war against the Jews with the utmost rigour. He placed his tent there, as if he had taken possession of the glorious holy mountain and called it his own.

Note, When impiety grows very impudent we may see its ruin near. 2. His exit: He shall come to his end and none shall help him; God shall cut him off in the midst of his days and none shall be able to prevent his fall. This is the same with that which was foretold Da 8:35 (He shall be broken without hand), where we took a view of his miserable end. Note, When God's time shall come to bring proud oppressors to their end none shall be able to help them, nor perhaps inclined to help them; for those that covet to be feared by all when they are in their grandeur, when they come to be in distress will find themselves loved by none; none will lend them so much as a hand or a prayer to help them; and, if the Lord do not help, who shall?

Of the kings that came after Antiochus nothing is here prophesied, for that was the most malicious mischievous enemy to the church, that was a type of the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming, and none shall help him.

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

Daniel-12

The Time of the End

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament;
and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.
4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to
the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be
increased.
5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on
this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank
of the river.
6 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of
the river, How long *shall it be* to the end of these wonders?
7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of
the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven,
and sware by him that liveth for ever, that *it shall be* for a time, times,
and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to
scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished.
8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what
shall be the end of these *things?*
9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed
till the time of the end.
10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall
do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise
shall understand.
11 And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the
abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two
hundred and ninety days.
12 Blessed *is* he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred
and five and thirty days.
13 But go thou thy way till the end *be:* for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy
lot at the end of the days.

Hosea
[Hosea]

Hosea-1

Hosea's Unfaithful Wife and Her Children

1 The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

1. Here is the prophet's name and surname; which he himself, as other prophets, prefixes to his prophecy, for the satisfaction of all that he is ready to attest what he writes to be of God; he sets his hand to it, as that which he will stand by. His name, Hosea, or Hosea (for it is the very same with Joshua's original name), signifies a saviour; for prophets were instruments of salvation to the people of God, so are faithful ministers; they help to save many a soul from death, by saving it from sin. his surname was Ben-Beeri, or the son of Beeri.

As with us now, so with them then, some had their surname from their place, as Micah the Morashite, Nahum the Elkoshite; others from their parents, as Joel the son of Bethuel, and here Hosea the son of Beeri. And perhaps they made use of that distinction when the eminence of their parents was such as would bring honour upon them; but it is a groundless conceit of the Jews that where a prophet's father is names he also was a prophet. Beeri signifies a well, which may put us in mind of the fountain of life and living waters from which prophets are drawn and must be continually drawing.

2. Here are his authority and commission: The word of the Lord came to him. It was to him; it came with power and efficacy to him; it was revealed to him as a real thing, and not a fancy or imagination of his own, in some such way as God then discovered himself to his servants the prophets. What he said and

wrote was by divine inspiration; it was by the word of the Lord, as St. Paul speaks concerning that which he had purely by revelation, 1Th 4:15. Therefore this book was always received among the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is confirmed by what is quoted out of it in the New Testament, Mt 2:15,9:13,12:7,Ro 9:25,26,1Pe 2:10. For the word of the Lord endures for ever.

3. Here is a particular account of the times in which he prophesied--in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. We have only this general date of his prophecy; and not the date of any particular part of it, as, before, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and, afterwards, in Haggai and Zechariah. Here is only one king of Israel named, though there were many more within this time, because, having mentioned the kings of Judah, there was no necessity of naming the other; and, they being all wicked, he took no pleasure in naming them, nor would do them the honour. Now by this account here given of the several reigns in which Hosea prophesied (and it should seem the word of the Lord still came to him, more or less, at times, throughout all these reigns) it appears,

(1.) That he prophesied a long time, that he began when he was very young, which gave him the advantage of strength and sprightliness, and that he continued at his work till he was very old, which gave him the advantage of experience and authority. It was a great honour to him to be thus long employed in such good work, and a great mercy to the people to have a minister so long among them that so well knew their state, and naturally cared for it, one they had been long used to and who therefore was the more likely to be useful to them. And yet, for aught that appears, he did but little good among them; the longer they enjoyed him the less they regarded him; they despised his youth first, and afterwards his age.

(2.) That he passed through a variety of conditions. Some of these kings were very good, and, it is likely, countenanced and

encouraged him; others were very bad, who (we may suppose) frowned upon him and discouraged him; and yet he was still the same. God's ministers must expect to pass through honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, and must resolve in both to hold fast their integrity and keep close to their work.

(3.) That he began to prophesy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad, when God was himself contending in a more immediate way with that sinful people, who fell into the hands of the Lord, before they were turned over into the hands of man; for in the days of Uzziah, and of Jeroboam his contemporary, the dreadful earthquake was, mentioned Zec 14:5,Am 1:1. And then was the plague of locusts, Joe 1:2-4,Am 7:1.Ho 4:3. The rod of God is sent to enforce the word and the word of God is sent to explain the rod, yet neither prevails till God by his Spirit opens the ear to instruction and discipline.

(4.) That he began to prophesy in Israel at a time when their kingdom was in a flourishing prosperous condition, for so it was in the reign of Jeroboam the second, as we find 2Ki 14:25, He restored the coast of Israel, and God saved them by his hand; yet then Hosea boldly tells them of their sins and foretels their destruction. Men are not to be flattered in their sinful ways because they prosper in the world, but even then must be faithfully reproved, and plainly told that their prosperity will not be their security, nor will it last long if they go on still in their trespasses.

2 The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the Lord.

These words, The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea, may refer either,

1. To that glorious set of prophets which was raised up about this time. About this time there lived and prophesied Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah, Obadiah, and Isaiah; but Hosea was the first of them that foretold the destruction of Israel; the beginning of this

word of the Lord was by him. We read in the history of this Jeroboam here named (2Ki 14:27) that the Lord had not yet said he would blot out the name of Israel, but soon after he said he would, and Hosea was the man that began to say it, which made it so much the harder task to him, to be the first that should carry an unpleasing message and some time before any were raised up to second him. Or, rather,

2. To Hosea's own prophecies. This was the first message God sent him upon to this people, to tell them that they were an evil and an adulterous generation. He might have desired to be excused from dealing so roughly with them till he had gained authority and reputation, and some interest in their affections. No; he must begin with this, that they might know what to expect from a prophet of the Lord. Nay, he must not only preach this to them, but he must write it, and publish it, and leave it upon record as a witness against them. Now here,

I The prophet must, as it were in a looking-glass, show them their sin, and show it to be exceedingly sinful, exceedingly hateful. The prophet is ordered to take unto him a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, Ho 1:2. And he did so, Ho 1:3. He married a woman of ill fame, Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, not one that had been married and had committed adultery, for then she must have been put to death, but one that had lived scandalously in the single state. To marry such a one was not malum in se--evil in itself, but only malum per accidens--incidentally an evil, not prudent, decent, or expedient, and therefore forbidden to the priests, and which, if it were really done, would be an affliction to the prophet (it is threatened as a curse on Amaziah that his wife should be a harlot, Am 7:17), but not a sin when God commanded it for a holy end; nay, if commanded, it was his duty, and he must trust God with his reputation.

But most commentators think that it was done in vision, or that it is no more than a parable; and that was a way of teaching commonly used among the ancients, particularly prophets; what

they meant of others they transferred to themselves in a figure, as St. Paul speaks, 1Co 4:6. He must take a wife of whoredoms, and have such children by her as every one would suspect, though born in wedlock, to be children of whoredoms, begotten in adultery, because it is too common for those who have lived lewdly in the single state to live no better in the married state. "Now" (saith God) "Hosea, this people is to me such a dishonour, and such a grief and vexation, as a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms would be to thee.

For the land has committed great whoredoms." In all instances of wickedness they had departed from the Lord; but their idolatry especially is the whoredom they are here charged with. Giving that glory to any creature which is due to God alone is such an injury and affront to God as for a wife to embrace the bosom of a stranger is to her husband. It is especially so in those that have made a profession of religion, and have been taken into covenant with God; it is breaking the marriage-bond; it is a heinous odious sin, and, as much as any thing, besots the mind and takes away the heart.

Idolatry is great whoredom, worse than any other; it is departing from the Lord, to whom we lie under greater obligations than any wife does or can do to her husband. The land has committed whoredom; it is not here and there a particular person that is guilty of idolatry, but the whole land is polluted with it; the sin has become national, the disease epidemical. What an odious thing would it be for the prophet, a holy man, to have a whorish wife, and children whorish like her! What an exercise would it be of his patience, and, if she persisted in it, what could be expected but that he should give her a bill of divorce! And is it not then much more offensive to the holy God to have such a people as this to be called by his name and have a place in his house? How great is his patience with them! And how justly may he cast them off! It was as if he should have married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, who probably was at that time a noted harlot.

The land of Israel was like Gomer the daughter of Diblaim. Gomer signifies corruption; Diblaim signifies two cakes, or lumps of figs; this denotes that Israel was near to ruin, and that their luxury and sensuality were the cause of it. They were as the evil figs that could not be eaten, they were so evil. It intimates sin to be the daughter of plenty and destruction the daughter of the abuse of plenty. Some give this sense of the command here given to the prophet: "Go, take thee a wife of whoredoms, for, if thou shouldst go to seek for an honest modest woman, thou wouldst not find any such, for the whole land, and all the people of it, are given to whoredom, the usual concomitant of idolatry."

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived,
and bare him a son.
4 And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while,*
and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will
cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.
5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of
Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

The prophet must, as it were through a perspective glass, show them their ruin; and this he does in the names given to the children born of this adulteress; for as lust, when it has conceived, brings forth sin, so sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.

1. He foretels the fall of the royal family in the name he is appointed to give to his first child, which was a son: Call his name Jezreel, Ho 1:4. We find that the prophet Isaiah gave prophetical names to his children (Isa 7:3,8:3), so this prophet here. Jezreel signifies the seed of God (so they should have been); but it signifies also the scattered of God; they shall be as sheep on the mountains that have no shepherds. Call them not Israel, which signifies dominion, they have lost all the honour of that name; but call them Jezreel, which signifies dispersion, for those that have departed from the Lord will wander endlessly. Hitherto they have been scattered as seek; let them now be scattered as chaff.

Jezreel was the name of one of the royal seats of the kings of Israel; it was a beautiful city, seated in a pleasant valley, and it is with allusion to that city that this child is called Jezreel, for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, from whom the present king, Jeroboam, was lineally descended. The house of Jehu smarted for the sins of Jehu, for God often lays up men's iniquity for their children and visits it upon them. It is the kingdom of the house of Israel, which may be meant either of the present royal family, that of Jehu, which God did quickly cause to cease (for the son of this Jeroboam, Zechariah, reigned but six months, and he was the last of Jehu's race), or of the whole kingdom in general, which continued corrupt and wicked, and which was made to cease in the reign of Hoshea, about seventy years after; and with God that is but a little while. Note, Note, Neither the pomp of kings nor the power of kingdoms can secure them from God's destroying judgments, if they continue to rebel against him.

(2.) What is the ground of this controversy: I will revenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, the blood which Jehu shed at Jezreel, when by commission from God and in obedience to his command, he utterly destroyed the house of Ahab, and all that were in alliance with it, with all the worshippers of Baal. God approved of what he did (2Ki 10:30): Thou has done well in executing that which is right in my eyes; and yet here God will avenge that blood upon the house of Jehu, when the time has expired during which it was promised that his family should reign, even to the fourth generation. But how comes the same action to be both rewarded and punished?

Very justly; the matter of it was good; it was the execution of a righteous sentence passed upon the house of Ahab, and, as such, it was rewarded; but Jehu did it not in a right manner; he aimed at his own advancement, not at the glory of God, and mingled his own resentments with the execution of God's justice. He did it with a malice against the sinners, but not with any antipathy to the sin; for he kept up the worship of the golden calves, and took no heed to walk in the law of God, 2Ki 10:31. And therefore

when the measure of the iniquity of his house was full, and God came to reckon with them, the first article in the account is (and, being first, it is put for all the rest) for the blood of the house of Ahab, here called the blood of Jezreel. Thus when the house of Baasha was rooted out it was because he did like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him, 1Ki 16:7.

Note, Those that are entrusted with the administration of justice are concerned to see to it that they do it from a right principle and with a right intention, and that they do not themselves live in those sins which they punish in others, lest even their just executions should be reckoned for, another day, as little less than murders.

(3.) How far the controversy shall proceed; it shall be not a correction, but a destruction. Some make those words, I will visit, or appoint, the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, to signify, not as we read it the revenging of that bloodshed, but the repeating of that bloodshed: "I will punish the house of Jehu, as I punished the house of Ahab, because Jehu did not take warning by the punishment of his predecessors, but trod in the steps of their idolatry. And after the house of Jehu is destroyed I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel; I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish." After the death of Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdom of the ten tribes went to decay, and dwindled sensibly. And, in order to the ruin of it, it is threatened (Ho 1:5), I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel; the strength of the warriors of Israel, so the Chaldee. God will disable them either to defend themselves or to resist their enemies.

And the bow abiding in strength, and being renewed in the hand, intimates a growing power, so the breaking of the bow intimates a sinking ruined power. The bow shall be broken in the valley of Jezreel, where, probably, the armoury was; or, it may be, in that valley some battle was fought, wherein the kingdom of Israel was very much weakened. Note, There is no fence against God's controversy; when he comes forth against a people their strong

bows are soon broken and their strong-holds broken down. In the valley of Jezreel they shed that blood which the righteous God would in that very place avenge upon them; as some notorious malefactors are hanged in chains just where the villainy they suffer for was perpetrated, that the punishment may answer the sin.

2. He foretels God's abandoning the whole nation in the name he gives to the second child. This was a daughter, as the former was a son, to intimate that both sons and daughters had corrupted their way. Some make to signify that Israel grew effeminate, and was thereby enfeebled and made weak. Call the name of this daughter Lo-ruhamah--not beloved (so it is translated Ro 9:25), or not having obtained mercy, so it is translated 1Pe 2:10. It comes all to one. This reads the doom of the house of Israel: I will no more have mercy upon them. It intimates that God had shown them great mercy, but they had abused his favours, and forfeited them, and now he would show them favour no more.

Note, Those that forsake their own mercies for lying vanities have reason to expect that their own mercies should forsake them, and that they should be left to their lying vanities, Jon 2:8. Sin turns away the mercy of God even from the house of Israel, his own professing people, whose case is sad indeed when God says that he will no more have mercy upon them. And then it follows, I will utterly take them away, will utterly remove them (so some), will utterly pluck them up, so others. Note, When the streams of mercy are stopped we can expect no other than that the vials of wrath should be opened. Those whom God will no more have mercy upon shall be utterly taken away, as dross and dung. The word for taking away sometimes signifies to forgive sin; and some take it in that sense here:

I will no more have mercy upon them, though in pardoning I have pardoned them heretofore. Though God has borne long, he will not bear always, with a people that hate to be reformed. Or, I will no more have mercy upon them, that I should in any wise pardon them, or (as our margin reads it) that I should altogether pardon

them. If pardoning mercy is denied, no other mercy can be expected, for that opens the door to all the rest. Some make this to speak comfort: I will no more have mercy upon them till in pardoning I shall pardon them, that is, till the Redeemer comes to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Chaldee reads it, But, if they repent, in pardoning I will pardon them. Even the greatest sinners, if in time they bethink themselves and return, will find that there is forgiveness with God.

6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And *God* said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah [not having obtained mercy]: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

He must show them what mercy God had in store for the house of Judah, at the same time that he was thus contending with the house of Israel (Ho 1:7): But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah. Note, Though some are justly cast off for their disobedience, yet God will always secure to himself a remnant that shall be the vessels and monuments of mercy. When divine justice is glorified in some, yet there are others in whom free grace is glorified.

And, though some through unbelief are broken off, yet God will have a church in this world till the end of time. It aggravates the rejection of Israel that God will have mercy on Judah, and not on them, and magnifies God's mercy to Judah that, though they also have done wickedly, yet God did not reject them, as he rejected Israel: I will have mercy upon them and will save them. Note, Our salvation is owing purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Now,

1. This, without doubt, refers to the temporal salvations which God wrought for Judah in a distinguishing way, the favours shown to them and not to Israel. When the Assyrian armies had destroyed Samaria, and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem; but God had mercy on the

house of Judah, and saved them by the vast slaughter which an angel made, in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians; then they were saved by the Lord their God immediately, and not by sword or bow. When the ten tribes were continued in their captivity, and their land was possessed by others, they being utterly taken away, God had mercy on the house of Judah and saved them, and, after seventy years, brought them back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zec 4:6.

I will save them by the Lord their God, that is, by myself. God will be exalted in his own strength, will take the work into his own hands. That salvation is sure which he undertakes to be the author of; for, if he will work, none shall hinder. And that salvation is most acceptable which he does by himself. So the Lord alone did lead him. The less there is of man in any salvation, and the more of God, the brighter it shines and the sweeter it tastes. I will save them in the word of the Lord (so the Chaldee), for the sake of Christ, the eternal word, and by his power. I will save them not by bow nor by sword, that is,

(1.) They shall be saved when they are reduced to so low an ebb that they have neither bow nor sword to defend themselves with, Jdg 5:8,1Sa 13:22.

(2.) They shall be saved by the Lord when they are brought off from trusting to their own strength and their weapons of war, Ps 44:6.

(3.) They shall be saved easily, without the trouble of sword and bow, Ho 1:7. Isa 9:5, I will save them by the Lord their God. In the calling him their God, he upbraids the ten tribes who had cast him off from being theirs, for which reason he had cast them off, and intimates what was the true reason why he had mercy, distinguishing mercy, for the house of Judah, and saved them: it was in pursuance of his covenant with them as the Lord their God, and in recompence for their faithful adherence to him and to his word and worship. But,

2. This may refer also to the salvation of Judah from idolatry, which qualified and prepared them for their other salvations. And this is indeed a salvation by the Lord their God; it is wrought only by the power of his grace, and can never be wrought by sword or bow. Just at the time that the kingdom of Israel was utterly taken away, under Hoshea, the kingdom of Judah was gloriously reformed, under Hezekiah, and was therefore preserved; and in Babylon God saved them from their idolatry first, and then from their captivity.

3. Some make this promise to look forward to the great salvation which, in the fulness of time, was to be wrought out by the Lord our God, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save his people from their sins.

8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

We have here a prediction,

I. Of the rejection of Israel for a time, which is signified by the name of another child that Hosea had by his adulterous spouse, Ho 1:8,9. And still we must observe that those children whose names carried these direful omens in them to Israel were all children of whoredoms (Ho 1:2), all born of the harlot that Hosea married, to intimate that the ruin of Israel was the natural product of the sin of Israel. If they had not first revolted from God, they would never have been rejected by him; God never leaves any till they first leave him. Here is,

1 The birth of this child: When she had weaned her daughter, she conceived and bore a son. Notice is taken of the delay of the birth of this child, which was to carry in its name a certain presage of their utter rejection, to intimate God's patience with them, and his unwillingness to proceed to extremity. Some think that her bearing another son signifies that people's persisting in their wickedness; lust still conceived and brought forth sin. They added to do evil (so the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it); they were old in adulteries, and obstinate.

2 The name given him: Call him Lo-ammi--Not my people. When they were told that God would no more have mercy on them they regarded it not, but buoyed up themselves with this conceit, that they were God's people, whom he could not but have mercy on. And therefore he plucks that staff from under them, and disowns all relation to them: You are not my people, and I will not be your God. "I will not be yours (so the word it); I will be in no relation to you, will have nothing to do with you; I will not be your King, your Father, your patron and protector." We supply it very well with that which includes all, "I will not be your God; I will not be to you what I have been, nor what you vainly expect I should be, nor what I would have been if you had kept close to me." Observe, "You are not my people; you do not act as becomes my people; you are not observant of me and obedient to me, as my people should be; you are not my people, but the people of this and the other dunghill-deity; and therefore I will not own you for my people, will not protect you, will not put in any claim to you, not demand you, not deliver you out of the hands of those that have seized you; let them take you; you are none of mine. You will not have me to be your God, but pay your homage to the pretenders, and therefore I will not be your God; you shall have no interest in me, shall expect no benefit from me."

Note, Our being taken into covenant with God is owing purely to him and to his grace, for then it begins on his side:

I will be to them a God, and then they shall be to me a people; we love him because he first loved us. But our being cast out of covenant is owing purely to ourselves and our own folly. The breach is on man's side: You are not my people, and therefore I will not be your God; if God hate any, it is because they first hated him. This was fulfilled in Israel when they were utterly taken away into the land of Assyria, and their place knew them no more. They were no longer God's people, for they lost the knowledge and worship of him; no prophets were sent to them, no promises made to them, as were to the two tribes in their captivity; nay, they were no longer a people, but, for aught that

appears, were mingled with the nations into which they were carried, and lost among them.

9 Then said *God,* Call his name Lo-ammi [not my people]: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God.*

10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God.

Of the reduction and restoration of Israel in the fulness of time. Here, as before, mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath; the rejection, as it shall not be total, so it shall not be final (Ho 1:10,11): Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea. See how the same hand that wounded is stretched forth to heal, and how tenderly he that has torn binds up; though God cause grief by his threatenings, yet he will have compassion, and will gather with everlasting kindness. They are very precious promises which are here made concerning the Israel of God, and which may be of use to us now.

1. Some think that these promises had their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when many of the ten tribes joined themselves to Judah, and took the benefit of the liberty which Cyrus proclaimed, came up in great numbers out of the several countries into which they were dispersed, to their own land, appointed Zerubbabel their head, and coalesced into one people, whereas before they had been two distinct nations.

And in their own land, where God had by his prophets disowned and rejected them as none of his, he would by his prophets own them and appear for them as his children; and from all parts of the country they should come up to the temple to worship. And we have reason to think that, though this promise has a further reference, yet it was graciously intended and piously used for the support and comfort of the captives in Babylon, as giving them a general assurance of mercy which God had in store for

them and their land; their nation could not be destroyed so long as this blessing was in it, was in reserve for it.

2. Some think that these promises will not have their accomplishment, at least not in full, till the general conversion of the Jews in the latter days, which is expected yet to come, when the vast incredible numbers of Jews, that are now dispersed as the sand of the sea, shall be brought to embrace the faith of Christ and be incorporated in the gospel-church. Then, and not till then, God will own them as his people, his children, even there where they had lain under the dismal tokens of their rejection. The Jewish doctors look upon this promise as not having had its accomplishment yet. But,

3. It is certain that this promise had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it, for to this these words are applied by St. Paul (Ro 9:25,26), and by St. Peter when he writes to the Jews of the dispersion, 1Pe 2:10. Israel here is the gospel-church, the spiritual Israel (Ga 6:16), all believers who follow the steps, and inherit the blessing of faithful Abraham, who is the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, Ro 4:11,12. Now let us see what is promised concerning this Israel.

(1.) That it shall greatly multiply, and the numbers of it be increased; it shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered. Though Israel according to the flesh be diminished and made few, the spiritual Israel shall be numerous, shall be innumerable. In the vast multitudes that by the preaching of the gospel have been brought to Christ, both in the first ages of Christianity and ever since, this promise is fulfilled, thousands out of every tribe in Israel, and out of other nations, a multitude which no man can number, Re 7:4,9,Ga 4:27.

In this the promise made to Abraham, when God called him Abraham the high father of a multitude, had its full

accomplishment (Ge 17:5), and that Fe 22:17. Some observe that they are here compared to the sand of the sea, not only for their numbers, but as the sand of the sea serves for a boundary to the waters, that they shall not overflow the earth, so the Israelites indeed are a wall of defence to the places where they live, to keep off judgments. God can do nothing against Sodom while Lot is there.

(2.) That God will renew his covenant with the gospel-Israel, and will incorporate it a church to himself, by as full and ample a charter as that whereby the Old-Testament church was incorporated; nay, and its privileges shall be much greater: "In the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people, there shall you be again admitted into covenant, and owned as my people." The abandoned Gentiles in their respective places, and the rejected Jews in theirs, shall be favoured and blessed.

There, where the fathers were cast off for their unbelief, the children, upon their believing, shall be taken in. This is a blessed resurrection, the making of those the people of God that were not a people. Nay, but the privilege is enlarged; now it is not only, You are my people, as formerly, but You are the sons of the living God, whether by birth you were Jews or Gentiles. Israel under the law was God's son, his first-born, but then they were as children under age; now, under the gospel, they have grown up both to greater understanding and greater liberty, Ga 4:1,2. Note,

[1.] It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers that they have the living God for their Father, the ever-living God, and may look upon themselves as his children by grace and adoption.

[2.] The sonship of believers shall be owned and acknowledged; it shall be said to them, for their comfort and satisfaction, nay, and it shall be said for their honour in the hearing of the world, You are the sons of the living God. Let not the saints disquiet themselves; let not others despise them; for, sooner or later, there shall be a manifestation of the children of God, and all the

world shall be made to know their excellency and the value God has for them.

[3.] It will add much to their comfort, very much to their honour, when they are dignified with the tokens of God's favour in that very place where they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This speaks comfort to the believing Gentiles, that they need not go up to Jerusalem, to be received and owned as God's children; no, they may stay where they are, and in that place, though it be in the remotest corner of the earth, in that place where they were at a distance, where it was said to them, "You are not God's people," but are separated from them (Isa 56:3,6), even there, without leaving their country and kindred, they may by faith receive the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with their spirits that "they are the children of God."

(3.) That those who had been at variance should be happily brought together (Ho 1:11): Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together. This uniting of Judah and Israel, those two kingdoms that were now so much at variance, biting and devouring one another, is mentioned only as a specimen, or one instance, of the happy effect of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, the bringing of those that had been at the greatest enmity one against another to a good understanding one of another and a good affection one to another.

This was literally fulfilled when the Galileans, who inhabited that part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, and probably for the most part descended from them, so heartily joined with those that were probably called Jews (that were of Judea) in following Christ and embracing his gospel; and his first disciples were partly Jews and partly Galileans. The first that were blessed with the light of the gospel were of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (Mt 4:15); and, though there was no good-will at all between the Jews and the Galileans, yet, upon their believing in Christ, they were happily consolidated, and there were no remains of the former disaffection they had to one

another; nay, when the Samaritans believed, though between them and the Jews there was a much greater enmity, yet in Christ there was a perfect unanimity, Ac 8:14.

Thus Judah and Israel were gathered together; yet this was but a type of the much more celebrated coalition between Jews and Gentiles, when, by the death of Christ, the partition-wall of the ceremonial law was taken down. See Eph 2:14-16. Christ died, to gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad, Joh 11:51,Eph 1:10.

(4.) That Jesus Christ should be the centre of unity to all God's spiritual Israel. They shall all agree to appoint to themselves one head, which can be no other than he whom God has appointed, even Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the one only head of it, not only a head of government, as of the body politic, but a head of vital influence, as of the natural body. To believe in Christ is to appoint him to ourselves for our head, that is, to consent to God's appointment, and willingly commit ourselves to his guidance and government; and this in concurrence and communion with all good Christians that make him their head; so that, though they are many, yet in him they are one, and so become one with each other. Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt--Those who agree with a third agree with each other.

(5.) That, having appointed Christ for their head, they shall come up out of the land; they shall come, some of all sorts, from all parts, to join themselves to the church, as, under the Jewish economy, they came up from all corners of the land of Israel to Jerusalem, to worship (Ps 122:4), Thither the tribes go up, to which there is a plain allusion in that prophecy of the accession of the Gentiles to the church (Isa 2:3), Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.

It denotes not a local remove (for they are said to be in the same place, Ho 1:10), but a change of their mind, a spiritual ascent to Christ. They shall come up from the earth (so it may be read);

for those who have given up themselves to Christ as their head take their affections off from this earth, and the things of it, to set them upon things above (Col 3:1,2); for they are not of the world (Joh 15:19), but have their conversation in heaven. They shall come up out of the land, though it be the land of their nativity; they shall, in affection, come out from it, that they may follow the Lamb withersoever he goes. Thus the learned Dr. Pocock takes it.

(6.) That, when all this comes to pass, great shall be the day of Jezreel. Though great is the day of Jezreel's affliction (so some understand it), yet great shall be the day of Jezreel's glory. This shall be Israel's day; the day shall be their own, after their enemies have long had their day. Israel is here called Jezreel, the seed of God, the holy seed (Isa 6:13), the substance of the land. This seed is now sown in the earth, and buried under the clods; but great shall be its day when the harvest comes. Great was the church's day when there were added to it daily such as should be saved; then did the Almighty do great things for it.

11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel.

Hosea-2

The Lord's Love for His Unfaithful People

1 Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi [my people]; and to your sisters, Ruhamah [having obtained mercy].

The first words of this chapter some make the close of the foregoing chapter, and add them to the promises which we have here of the great things God would do for them. When they shall have appointed Christ their head, and centered in him, then let them say to one another, with triumph and exultation (let the prophets say it to them, so the Chaldee--Comfort you, comfort you, my people, is now their commission), "say to them, Ammi, and Ruhamah; call them so again, for they shall no longer lie

under the reproach and doom of Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah; they shall now be my people again, and shall obtain mercy." God's spiritual Israel, made up of Jews and Gentiles without distinction, shall call one another brethren and sisters, shall own one another for the people of God and beloved of him, and, for that reason, shall embrace one another, and stir up one another both to give thanks for and to walk worthy of this common salvation which they partake of. Or rather, because the following words seem to have a coherence with these, these also are designed for conviction and humiliation.

The mother (Ho 2:2) seems to be the same with the brethren and sisters (Ho 2:1), the church of the ten tribes, the body of the people, who were brethren, and in a special manner with the heads and leaders, who were as the mother by whom the rest were brought up and nursed. But who are the children that must plead with their mother thus? Either, 1 The godly that were among them, that witnessed against the iniquities of the times, let them boldly go on to bear their testimony against the idolatries and gross corruptions that prevail among them. Let those that had not bowed the knee to Baal reason the case with those that had, and endeavour to convince them with such arguments as are here put into their mouths.

Note, Private persons may, and ought in their places, to appear and plead against the public profanations of God's name and worship. Children may humbly and modestly argue with their parents when they do amiss: Plead with your mother, plead, as Jonathan with Saul concerning David. Or,

2 The sufferers among them, that shared in the calamities of the times, let them not complain of God, let them not quarrel with him, nor lay the blame on him, as if he had dealt hardly with them, and not like a tender father. No; let them plead with their mother, and lay the fault on her, where it ought to be laid; compare Isa 50:1. "For her transgressions is your mother put away; she may thank herself, and you may thank her for all your miseries." Let us see now how they must plead with her.

I. They must put here in mind of the relation wherein she had stood to God, the kindness he had had for her, the many favours he had bestowed upon her, and the further favours he had designed her. Let them tell their brethren and sisters that they had been Ammi and Ruhamah, that they had been God's people and vessels of his mercy, and might have been so still if it had not been their own fault, Ho 2:1. Note, Our relation to God and dependence on him are a great aggravation of our revolts from him and rebellions against him.

II. They must, in God's name, charge her with the violation of the marriage-covenant between her and God. Let them tell her that God does not look upon her as his wife, nor upon himself as her husband any longer. Tell her (Ho 2:2) that she is not my wife, neither am I her husband, that by her spiritual whoredom she has forfeited all the honour and comfort of her relation to God, and provoked him to give her a bill of divorce. Note, No consideration can be more powerful to awaken us to repentance than the provocation we have by sin given to God to disown and cast us off. It is time to look about us, and to think what course we must take, when God threatens to reject us; for woe unto us if he be not our husband. They must charge this home upon her (Ho 2:5):

Their mother has played the harlot; their congregation has run a whoring after false prophets (so the Chaldee), or, rather, after idols, wherein they were encouraged by their false prophets; she that conceived them has done shamefully, in making and worshipping idols. An idol is called a shame (Ho 9:10) and idolatry is a shameful thing. It is not only an affront to God, but a reproach to men, to fall down to the stock of a tree, as the prophet speaks. Or it denotes that the sinner was shameless, impudent in sin, and could not blush; Jer 6:15. Or, She has made ashamed, has made all that see her ashamed of her; her own children are ashamed of their relation to her.

2 Plead with your mother, plead; for she *is* not my wife, neither *am*

I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

3 lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they *be* the children of whoredoms.

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully; for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

They must upbraid her with her horrid ingratitude to God her benefactor, in ascribing to her idols the glory of the gifts he had given her, and then giving that for a reason why she paid them the homage due to him only, Ho 2:5. In this she did shamefully indeed, that she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water. Observe here,

1. Her wicked resolution to persist in idolatry, notwithstanding all that God said, both by his prophets and by his providences, to draw her from it. She said, Whatever is offered to the contrary, I will go after my lovers, or those that cause me to love them, whom I cannot but be in love with. The Chaldee understands it of the nations whose alliance Israel courted and depended upon, who supplied them with what they needed. But it is rather to be understood of the idols they worshipped, to justify their love of which they called them their lovers. See who do shamefully; those that are wilful and resolute in sin, and those that openly profess and own their resolution to go on in it. See the folly of idolaters, to call those their lovers that had not so much as life; yet let us learn to call our God our lover; let us keep up good thoughts of him, and put a high value upon our interest in him and in his love.

2 The gross mistake upon which this resolution was grounded: "I will go after my lovers, because they give me my bread and my water, which are necessary to sustain the body, my wool and my flax, which are necessary to clothe the body, and pleasant

things, my oil, and my drink, my liquors" (so the word is), "wine and strong drink."

Note, (1.) The things of sense are the best things with carnal hearts, and the most powerful attractives, in pursuit of which they care not what they follow after. The God of Israel set before them his statutes and judgments (De 4:8), more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than honey (Ps 119:10), promised them his favour, which would put gladness in their hearts more than corn, wine, and oil (Ps 4:7); but they had no relish at all for these things. Whence they thought their oil and their drink came, thither they would return their best affections. O curvæ in terram animæ et cœlestium inanes!--O degenerate minds, bending towards the earth, and devoid of every thing heavenly!

(2.) It is a great abuse and injury to God, in pursuance of the pleasures and delights of sense to forsake him, who not only gives us better things, but gives us even those things too. The idolaters made Ceres the goddess of their corn, Bacchus the god of their wine, &c., and then foolishly fancied they had their corn and wine from these, forgetting the Lord their God, who both gave them that good land and gave them power to get wealth out of it.

(3.) Many are hardened in sin by their worldly prosperity. They had an abundance of those things when they served their idols, and then imagined them to be given them by their idols, which kept them to their service; thus they argued (Jer 44:17,18), While we burnt incense to the queen of heaven we had plenty of victuals.

IV. They must persuade her to repent and reform. God will disown her if she persist in her whoredoms; let her therefore put away her whoredoms, Ho 2:2. Let her be convinced that it is possible for her to reform; the idols, dear as they are, may yet be parted with; and it will certainly be well with her if she do reform. Note, Our pleading with sinners must be to drive them

to repentance, not to drive them to despair. Let her put away her whoredoms and her adulteries; the doubling of words to the same purport, and both plural, denotes the abundance of idolatries they were guilty of, all which must be abandoned ere God would be reconciled to them. Let her put them out of her sight, as detestable things which she cannot endure to look upon; let her say unto them, Get you hence, Isa 30:22.

Let her put them from her face and from between her breasts, that is, let her not do as harlots use to do, that both discover their own wicked disposition, and allure others to wickedness, by painting their faces, and exposing their naked breasts, and adorning them; let her not thus, by annexing all possible gaieties and pleasures to the worship of idols, engage herself and allure others to it. Let her put away all these. Every sinful course, persisted in, is an adulterous departure from God. And here we may see what it is truly to repent of it and turn from it.

1. True penitents will forsake both open sins, will put away not only the whoredoms that lie in sight, but those that lie in secret between their breasts, the sin that is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.

2. They will both avoid the outward occasions of sin and mortify the inward disposition to it. Idolaters walked after their own eyes, which went a whoring after their idols (Eze 6:9,De 4:19), and therefore they must put them away out of their sight, lest they should be tempted to worship them. Look not upon the wine when it is red. But that is not enough: the axe must be laid to the root; the corrupt bent and inclination of the heart must be changed, and it must be put away from between the breasts, that Christ alone may have the innermost and uppermost place there. So 1:13.

V. They must show her the utter ruin that will certainly be the fatal consequence of her sin if she do not repent and reform (Ho 2:3): Lest I strip her naked. This comes in here not by way of sentence passed upon her, but by way of warning given to her,

that she may prevent it: Let her put away her whoredoms, that I may not strip her naked (so it may be read), intimating that God waits to show mercy to sinners, if they would but qualify themselves for that mercy.

It is here threatened that God will deal with her as the just and jealous husband at length does with an adulterous wife, that has filled his house with a spurious brood, and will not be reclaimed; he turns her and her children out of doors and sends them a begging; I will not have mercy upon her children (Ho 2:4); the particular persons that share in the calamity of the nation, and the rising generation, shall be ruined by it, for they are children of whoredoms, and keep up the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers. Now it is here threatened that they shall be both stripped and starved. They thought their idols gave them their bread and their water, their wool and their flax; but God, by taking them away, will let them know that it was he that gave them.

1. She shall be stripped: Lest I strip her of all her ornaments which she is proud of, and with which she courts her lovers, strip her and set her as in the day that she was born, send her as naked out of the world as she came into it; this death does, Job 1:21. I will strip her, and so expose her to cold, and expose her to shame; and justly is she exposed to shame that did shamefully, Ho 2:5. The day when God brought them out of Egypt, where they were no better than slaves and beggars, was the day in which they were born; and God threatens to bring them back to as low and miserable a condition as he then found them in. Whatever they had that either gained them respect or screened them from contempt, among their neighbours, should be taken from them. See Eze 16:4,39.

2. She shall be starved, shall be deprived not only of her honours, but of her comforts and necessary supports. She shall be famished, shall be made as a wilderness and a dry land, and slain with thirst. She that boasted so much of her bread and

water, her oil and her drinks, which her lovers had given her, shall not have so much as necessary food.

The land shall not afford subsistence for the inhabitants, for want of the rain of heaven; or, if it do, it shall be taken from them by the enemy, so that the rightful owners shall perish for want of it. Some understand it thus: I will make her as she was in the wilderness, and set her as she was in the desert land, where she was sometimes ready to perish for thirst. So it explains the former part of the Ho 2:3: I will set her as in the day that she was born; for it was in the vast howling wilderness that Israel was first formed into a people. They shall be in as deplorable a condition as their fathers were, whose carcases fell in the wilderness, and in this respect, worse, that then the children were reserved to be heirs of the land of promise, but now I will not have mercy upon her children, for their mother has played the harlot.

6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy ways with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

God here goes on to threaten what he would do with this treacherous idolatrous people; and he warns that he may not wound, he threatens that he may not strike. If he turn not, he will whet his sword (Ps 7:12); but, if he turn, he will sheathe it. They did not turn, and therefore all this came upon them: and its being threatened before shows that it was the execution of a divine sentence upon them for their wickedness; and it is written for admonition to us.

I. They shall be perplexed and embarrassed in all their counsels, and disappointed in all their expectations. This is threatened Ho 2:6,7. But to the threatening is annexed a promise that this shall be a means to convince them of their folly, and bring them home to their duty; and so good shall be brought out of evil, in token of the mercy God has yet in reserve for them. And, this being the happy fruit and effect of the distress, it is hard to say whether the prediction, or the distress itself, should be called a threatening or a promise.

1. God will raise up difficulties and troubles in their way, so that their public counsels and affairs shall have no success, nor shall they be able to get forward in them: I will hedge up thy way with thorns, with such crosses as, like thorns and briers, are the product of sin and the curse, and are scratching, and tearing, and vexing, and, when the way we are in is hedged up with them, stop our progress, and force us to turn back. She said, "I will go after my lovers; I will pursue my leagues and alliances with foreign powers, and depend upon them."

But God says, "She shall be frustrated in these projects, and not be able to proceed in them. I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and, if that do not serve, I will make a wall." If some smaller difficulties be got over, and prevail not to break her measures, God will raise greater, for he will overcome when he judges. It shall be such a hedge, and such a wall, that she shall not find her paths. The change of the person here, I will hedge up thy way, and then, She shall not find it, is usual in scripture, especially in an earnest way of speaking. "Sinner, do thou take notice, I will hedge up thy way, and all you that are bystanders take notice what will be the effect of this, you may observe that she cannot find her paths."

She shall be as a traveller that not only knows not which way to go, of many that are before him, but that finds no way at all to go forward. And then she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; she shall endeavour to make an interest in the Assyrians and Egyptians, and to have them for her protectors, but she shall not gain her point; they shall either not come into confederacy with her or not do her any service, shall help in vain and be as the staff of a broken reed. She shall seek them, but shall not find them, shall seek to her idols, but shall not find that satisfaction in them which she promised herself; the gods whom she trusted and courted not only can do nothing for her, but have nothing to say to her to encourage her. Now,

(1.) This is such a just judgment as the Sodomites met with, that were struck with blindness, and wearied themselves to find the

door (Ge 19:11), and the Syrians, 2Ki 6:18. Note, Those that are most resolute in their sinful pursuits are commonly most crossed in them. Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward (Pr 22:5); and thus with them God shows himself froward (Ps 18:26), and walks contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Le 26:23,24. The lamenting prophet complains, He has enclosed my ways, La 3:7,9. The way of God and duty is often hedged about with thorns, but we have reason to think it is a sinful way that is hedged up with thorns.

(2.) This is such a kind rebuke, and indeed such a mercy, as Balaam met with, when the angel stood in his way, to hinder his going forward to curse Israel, Nu 22:22. Note, Crosses and obstacles in an evil course are great blessings, and are so to be accounted. They are God's hedges, to keep us from transgressing, to restrain us from wandering out of the green pastures, to withdraw man from his purpose (Job 33:17), to make the way of sin difficult, that we may not go on in it, and to keep us from it whether we will or not. We have reason to bless God both for restraining grace and for restraining providences.

2. These difficulties that God raises up in their way shall raise up in their minds thoughts of turning back: "Then shall she say, Since I cannot overtake my lovers, I will even go and return to my first husband, that is, will return to God, and humble myself to him, and desire him to take me in again; for, when I kept close to him, it was every way better with me than now." Two things are here extorted from this degenerate apostate people:--

(1.) A just acknowledgement of the folly of their apostasy. They are now brought to own that it was better with them while they kept close to their God than ever it was since they forsook him. Note, Whoever have exchanged the service of God for the services of the world and the flesh have, sooner or later, been made to own that they changed for the worse, and that while they continued in good company, and went on in the way of good duties, and made conscience how they spent their time and

what they said or did, it was better with them; they had more true comfort and enjoyment of themselves than ever they had since they went astray.

(2.) A good purpose, to come back again to their duty: I will go, and return to my first husband; and she knows so much of his goodness and readiness to forgive that she speaks without any doubt of his receiving her again into favour and making her condition as good as ever. Note, The disappointments we meet with in our pursuits of satisfaction in the creature should, if nothing else will do it, drive us at length to the Creator, in whom alone it is to be had. When Moab is weary of the high place he shall go to the sanctuary, Isa 16:12. And when the prodigal son is reduced to husks, short allowance indeed, and remembers that in his father's house there is bread enough, then he says, I will arise and go to my father's house, Lu 15:17,18.

II The necessary supports and comforts of life shall be taken from them, because they had dishonoured God with them, Ho 2:8,9. Their land was plenteous. Now see here,

1. How graciously their plenty was given to them. God gave them not only corn for necessity, but wine for delight, and oil for ornament. Nay, he multiplied their silver and gold, wherewith to traffic with other nations and bring home their products, and which they might hoard up for posterity. Silver and gold will keep longer than corn, and wine, and oil. He gave them wool and flax too, to cover their nakedness, and to serve for ornament enough to them, Eze 16:10. Note, God is a bountiful benefactor even to those who, he foresees, will be ungrateful and unthankful to him.

2. How basely their plenty was abused by them.

(1.) They robbed God of the honour of his gifts: She did not know that I gave her corn and wine; she did not remember it. The law and the prophets had told them, again and again, that all their comforts they received from God's bountiful

providence; but they were so often told by their false prophets and idolatrous priests that they had their corn from such an idol, and their wine from such an idol, &c., that they had quite forgotten their relation to their great benefactor and their obligations to him. She did not consider it; she would not acknowledge it. This they were willingly ignorant of, and more brutish than the ox, that knows his owner, and the ass, that knows his master's crib. She did not know it, for she did not return thanks to him for his gifts, nor study what she should render; nor did she give him his dues out of them, but acted as if she were ignorant who was the donor.

(2.) They served and honoured his enemies with them: They prepared them for Baal; they adorned their images with gold and silver (Jer 10:4), and adorned themselves for the worship of their images, Ho 2:13. See Eze 16:17-19. Wherewith they made Baal (so the margin reads it), that is, the image of Baal. Note, It is a very great dishonour to the God of heaven to make those gifts of his providence the food and fuel of our lusts which he gave us for our support in his service, and to be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

3. How justly their plenty should be taken from them: "Therefore will I return; I will alter my dealings with them, will take another course, and will take away my corn and other good things that I gave her." I will recover them, a law term, as a man by due course of law recovers what is unjustly detained from him, or as, when the tenant has committed waste, the landlord recovers locum vastatum--dilapidations. Observe, God calls their abundance my corn and my wine, my wool and my flax. They called it theirs (my bread and my water, Ho 2:5), but God lets them know that it is not theirs; he only allowed them the use of it as tenants, entrusted them with the management of it as stewards, but still reserved the property in himself. "It is my corn and my wine."

God will have us to know, not only that we have all our creature-comforts and enjoyments from him, but that he has still

an incontestable right and title to them, that they are more his than ours, and therefore are to be used for him, and accounted for to him. He will therefore take their plenty away from them, because they have forfeited it by disowning his right, as a tenant by copy of court-roll, who holds at the will of his lord, forfeits his estate if he makes a feoffment of it as though he were a freeholder. He will recover it, will free or deliver it, that it may be no longer abused, as the creature is said to be delivered from the bondage of corruption under which it groans, Ro 8:21. He will take it away in the time thereof, and in the season thereof, just when they expected it, and thought that they were sure of it. It shall suffer shipwreck in the harbour; and the harvest shall be a heap. He will take it away by unseasonable weather or by unreasonable men. Note, Those that abuse the mercies God gives them, to his dishonour, cannot expect to enjoy them long.

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them:* then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal.

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.

10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

They shall lose all their honour, and be exposed to contempt (Ho 2:10): "I will discover her lewdness, will bring to light all her secret wickedness, and make it public, to her shame; I will show by the punishment of it how heinous, how odious, how offensive it is. The fact has been denied, but now it shall appear; the fault has been diminished, but now it shall appear exceedingly sinful. And this in the sight of her lovers, in the sight of the neighbouring nations, with whom she courted an alliance, and on whom she had a dependence; they shall despise her and be ashamed of her because of her weakness, and poverty, and ill conduct; they shall not think her any longer worthy of their

friendship." See this fulfilled, La 1:8, All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness.

Or in the sight of the sun and moon, which she worshipped as her lovers; before them shall her lewdness be discovered. Compare this with Jer 7:1,2, They shall bring out the bones of their kings and princes, and spread them before the sun and moon, whom they have loved and served. Note, Sin will have shame; let those expect it that have done shamefully. What other lot can this impudent adulteress expect but that of a common harlot, to be carted through the town? And, when God comes to deal thus with her, none shall deliver her out of his hands, neither the gods nor the men they confide in. Note, Those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God's mercy cannot be delivered out of the hand of his justice.

IV. They shall lose all their pleasure, and shall be left melancholy (Ho 2:11): I will cause her mirth to cease. It seems, then, though they had gone a whoring from their God, yet they could find in their hearts to rejoice as other people, which is forbidden, Ho 9:1. Note, Many who lie under guilt and wrath are yet very jocund and merry, and live jovially; but, whether in their laughter their hearts be sad or no, it is certain that the end of their mirth will be heaviness; for God will cause all their mirth to cease. It is as Mr. Burroughs observes here, Sin and mirth can never hold long together; but, if men will not take away sin from their mirth, God will take away mirth from their sin.

1. God will take away the occasions of their sacred mirth--their feast-days, their new moons, their sabbaths, and all their solemn feasts. These God instituted to be observed in a religious manner, and they were to be observed with rejoicing; and, it seems, though they had departed from the pure worship of God, yet they kept up the observance of these, not at God's temple at Jerusalem, for they had long since forsaken that, but probably at Dan and Bethel, where the calves were, or in some other places of meeting that they had. They observed them, not for the honour of God, nor with any true devotion towards him, but only because they

were times of mirth and feasting, music and dancing, and meeting of friends, received by tradition from their fathers. Thus, when they had lost the power of godliness, and denied that, yet, for the pleasing of a vain and carnal mind, they kept up the form of it; and by this means their new-moons and their sabbaths became an iniquity which God could not away with, Isa 1:13. Now observe,

(1.) God calls them their new-moons and their sabbaths, not his (he disowns them), but theirs.

(2.) He will cause them to cease. Note, When men by their sins have caused the life and substance of ordinances to cease it is just with God by his judgments to cause the remaining show and shadow of them to cease.

2. He will take away the supports of their carnal mind. They loved the new-moons and the sabbaths only for the sake of the good cheer that was stirring then, not for the sake of any religious exercises then performed; these they had dropped long ago; and now God will take away their provisions for these solemnities (Ho 2:12): I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees.

Note, If men destroy God's words and ordinances, by which he should be honoured on their feast-days, it is just with him to destroy their vines and fig-trees, with which they regale themselves. While they took the pleasure of these, they gave their lovers the praise of them: "These are my rewards which my lovers have given me; I may thank my stars for these, and my worship of them; I may thank my neighbours for these, and my alliance with them."

And therefore God will destroy them, will wither them with a blast, or bring in a foreign enemy that shall lay the country waste, so that their vineyards shall become a forest; the enclosures shall be thrown down, as is usual in war; all shall be laid in common, so that the beasts of the field shall eat their grapes and their figs. Or they shall be so blasted with the east wind that fruit-trees shall

be of no more use than forest-trees; but, being withered and good for nothing, what fruit there is shall be left to the beasts of the field. Or it shall be devoured by their enemies, by men as barbarous as wild beasts. Now,

(1.) This shall be the ruin of their mirth: God will cause all her mirth to cease. How will he do it? Taking away the new-moons and the sabbaths will not do it; they can very easily part with them, and find no loss; but "I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, will take away her sensual pleasures, and then she will think herself undone indeed." Note, The destruction of the vines and the fig-trees causes all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease; it will say, as Micah, You have taken away my gods, and what have I more?

(2.) This shall be the punishment of her idolatry (Ho 2:13): "I will visit upon her the days of Baalim; I will reckon with her for all the worship of all the Baals they have made gods of, from the days of their fathers unto this day." We read of their worshipping Baal as long ago as the time of the Judges, and, for aught I know, this may look as far back as those times, those days of Baalim; for it is in the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, that God threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and justly is that sin so visited, more than any other, because it commonly supports itself by prescription and long usage. Now that the measure of the iniquity of Israel was full all their former sins came into the account, and shall be required of this generation.

Or the days of Baalim are the solemn festival days which they kept in honour of their idols. Days of sinful mirth must be visited in days of mourning. These were the days wherein she burnt incense to idols, and, to grace the solemnity, decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, that, appearing honourable, the honour she did to Baal might be thought the greater. Or she was as a wife that decks herself with the ear-rings and jewels that her husband gave her, to make herself amiable to her lovers, whom she follows after, and is ever mindful of. But she forgot me, saith

the Lord. Note, Our treacherous departures from God are owing to our forgetfulness of him, of his nature and attributes, his relation to us and our obligations to him. Many who plead that they have weak memories, and forget the things of God, can remember other things well enough; nay, it is because they are so mindful of lying vanities that they are so forgetful of their own mercies.

11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These *are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the Lord.

14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

The state of Israel ruined by their own sin did not look so black and dismal in the former part of the chapter, but that the state of Israel, restrained by the divine grace, looks as bright and pleasant here in the latter part of the chapter, and the more surprisingly so as the promises follow thus close upon the threatenings; nay, which is very strange, they are by a note of connexion joined to, and inferred from, that declaration of their sinfulness upon which the threatenings of their ruin are grounded: She went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord; therefore I will allure her. Fitly therefore is that therefore which is the note of connexion immediately followed with a note of admiration: Behold I will allure her! When it was said, She forgot me, one would think it should have followed, "Therefore I will abandon her, I will forget her, I will never look after her more." No, Therefore I will allure her.

Note, God's thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely above ours; his reasons are all fetched from within himself, and not from any thing in us; nay, his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious, Isa

57:17,18. Therefore, because she will not be restrained by the denunciations of wrath, God will try whether she will be wrought upon by the offers of mercy. Some think it may be translated, Afterwards, or nevertheless, I will allure her. It comes all to one; the design is plainly to magnify free grace to those on whom God will have mercy purely for mercy's sake. Now that which is here promised to Israel is,

I. That though now they were disconsolate, and ready to despair, they should again be revived with comforts and hopes, Ho 2:14,15. This is expressed here with an allusion to God's dealings with that people when he brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness to Canaan, as their forlorn and deplorable condition in their captivity was compared to their state in Egypt in the day that they were born, Ho 2:3. They shall be new-formed by such miracles of love and mercy as they were first-formed by, and such a transport of joy shall they be in as they were in then.

It is hard to say when this had its accomplishment in the kingdom of the ten tribes; but it principally aims, no doubt, at the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles into the church by the gospel of Christ; and it is applicable, nay, we have reason to think it was designed that it should be applied, to the conversion of particular souls to God. Now observe,

1 The gracious methods God will take with them. (1.) He will bring them into the wilderness, as he did at first when he brought them out of Egypt, where he instructed them, and took them into covenant with himself. The land of their captivity shall be to them now, as that wilderness was then, the furnace of affliction, in which God will choose them. See Eze 20:35,36, I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you.

God had said that he would make them as a wilderness (Ho 2:3), which was a threatening; now, when it is here made part of a promise that he would bring them into the wilderness, the meaning may be that he would by his grace bring their minds to

their condition: "They shall have humble hearts under humbling providences; being poor, they shall be poor in spirit, shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity, and then they are prepared to have comfort spoken to them." When God delivered Israel out of Egypt he led them into the wilderness, to humble them and prove them, that he might do them good (De 8:2,3,15,16), and so he will do again.

Note, Those whom God has mercy in store for he first brings into a wilderness--into solitude and retirement, that they may the more freely converse with him out of the noise of this world,--into distress of mind, through sense of guilt and dread of wrath, which brings a soul to be quite at a loss in itself and bewildered, and by those convictions he prepares for consolations,--and sometimes into outward distress and trouble, thereby to open the ear to discipline.

(2.) He will then allure them and speak comfortably to them, will persuade them and speak to their hearts, that is, he will by his word and Spirit incline their hearts to return to him, and encourage them to do so. He will allure them with the promises of his favour, as before he had terrified them with the threatenings of his wrath, will speak friendly to them, both by his prophets and by his providences, as before he had spoken roughly, Isa 40:1,2. By the hand of my servants the prophets I will speak comfort to her heart; so the Chaldee.

This refers to the gospel of Christ, and the offers of divine grace in the gospel, by which we are allured to forsake our sins and to turn to God, and which speaks to the heart of a convinced sinner that which is every way suited to his case, speaks abundant consolation to those that sorrow for sin and lament after the Lord. And when by the Spirit it is indeed spoken to the heart effectually, and so as to reach the conscience (which it is God's prerogative to do), O what a blessed change is wrought by it! Note, The best way of reducing wandering souls to God is by fair means. By the promise of rest in Christ we are invited to take his

yoke upon us; and the work of conversion may be forwarded by comforts as well as by convictions.

(3.) He will give her her vineyards thence. From that time and from that place where he has afflicted her, and brought her to see her folly and to humble herself, thenceforward he will do her good; not only speak comfortably to her, but do well for her, and undo what he had done against her. He had destroyed her vines (Ho 2:12), but now he will give her whole vineyards, as if for every vine destroyed she should have a vineyard restored, and so be repaid with interest; she shall not only have corn for necessity, but vineyards for delight. These denote the privileges and comforts of the gospel, which are prepared for those that come up out of the wilderness leaning upon Christ as their beloved, So 8:5.

Note, God has vineyards of consolation ready to bestow on those who repent and return to him; and he can give vineyards out of a wilderness, which are of all others the most welcome, as rest to the weary.

(4.) He will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope. The valley of Achor was that in which Achan was stoned; it signifies the valley of trouble, because he troubled Israel, and there God troubled him. This was the beginning of the wars of Canaan; and their putting away the accursed thing in that place gave them ground to hope that God would continue his presence with them and complete their victories. So when God returns to his people in mercy, and they to him in duty, it will be to them as happy an omen as any thing.

If they put away the accursed thing from among them, if by mortifying sin they stone the Achan that has troubled their camp, their subduing that enemy within themselves is an earnest to them of victory over all the kings of Canaan. Or, if the allusion be to the name, it intimates that trouble for sin, if it be sincere, opens a door of hope; for that sin which truly troubles us shall not ruin us.

The valley of Achor was a very fruitful pleasant valley, some think the same with the valley of Engedi, famous for vineyards, So 1:14. This God gave to Israel as a pattern and pledge of the whole land of Canaan; so "God will by his gospel give to all believers such gifts, graces, and comforts in this life, as shall be a taste of those more perfect good things of the kingdom of heaven, and shall give them as assured hope of a full possession of them in due time." So the learned Dr. Pocock expounds it; and, to the same purport, this whole context.

2 The great rejoicing with which they shall receive God's gracious returns towards them: She shall sing there as in the days of her youth. This plainly refers to that triumphant and prophetic song which Moses and the children of Israel sang at the Red Sea, Ex 15:1. When they are delivered out of captivity they shall repeat that song, and to them it shall be a new song, because sung upon a new occasion, not inferior to the former. God had said (Ho 2:11) that he would cause all her mirth to cease, but now he would cause it to revive: She shall sing as in the day that she came out of Egypt.

Note, When God repeats former mercies we must repeat former praises; we find the song of Moses sung in the New Testament, Re 15:3. This promise of Israel's singing has its accomplishment in the gospel of Christ, which furnishes us with abundant matter for joy and praise, and wherever it is received in its power enlarges the heart in joy and praise; and this is that land flowing with milk and honey which the valley of Achor opens a door of hope to. We rejoice in tribulation.

II. That, though they had been much addicted to the worship of Baal, they should now be perfectly weaned from it, should relinquish and abandon all appearances of idolatry and approaches towards it, and cleave to God only, and worship him as he appoints, Ho 2:16,17.

Note, The surest pledge and token of God's favour to any people is his effectual parting between them and their beloved sins. The worship of Baal was the sin that did most easily beset the people of Israel; it was their own iniquity, the sin that had dominion over them; but now that idolatry shall be quite abolished, and there shall not be the least remains of it among them.

1 The idols of Baal shall not be mentioned, not any of the Baals that in the days of Baalim had made so great a noise with, O Baal! hear us; O Baal! hear us. The very names of Baalim shall be taken out of their mouths; they shall be so disused that they shall be quite forgotten, as if their names had never been known in Israel; they shall be so detested that people will not bear to mention them themselves, nor to hear others mention them, so that posterity shall scarcely know that ever there were such things. They shall be so ashamed of their former love to Baal that they shall do all they can to blot out the remembrance of it. They shall tie themselves up to the strictest literal meaning of that law against idolatry (Ex 23:13), Make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth, as David, Ps 16:4. Thus the apostle expresses the abhorrence we ought to have of all fleshly lusts: Let them not be once named among you, Eph 5:3.

But how can such a change of the Ethiopian's skin be wrought? It is answered, The power of God can do it, and will. I will take away the names of Baalim; as Zec 13:2, I will cut off the names of the idols. Note, God's grace in the heart will change the language by making that iniquity to be loathed which was beloved. Zep 3:9, I will turn to the people a pure language. One of the rabbin says, This promise relates to the Gentiles, by the gospel of Christ, from the idolatries which they had been wedded to, 1Th 1:9.

2 The very word Baal shall be laid aside, even in its innocent signification. God says, Thou shalt call me Ishi, and call me no more Baali; both signify my husband, and both had been made use of concerning God. Isa 54:5, Thy Maker is thy husband, thy

Baal (so the word is), thy owner, patron, and protector. It is probable that many good people had, accordingly, made use of the word Baali in worshipping the God of Israel; when their wicked neighbours bowed the knee to Baal they gloried in this, that God was their Baal. "But," says God, "you shall call me so no more, because I will have the very names of Baalim taken away."

Note, That which is very innocent in itself should, when it has been abused to idolatry, be abolished, and the very use of it taken away, that nothing may be done to keep idols in remembrance, much less to keep them in reputation. When calling God Ishi will do as well, and signify as much, as Baali, let that word be chosen rather, lest, by calling him Baali, others should be put in mind of their quondam Baals. Some think that there is another reason intimated why God would be called Ishi and not Baali; they both signify my husband, but Ishi is a compellation of love, and sweetness, and familiarity, Baali of reverence and subjection. Ishi is vir meus--my man; Baali is dominus meus--my lord. In gospel-times God has so revealed himself to us as to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of his grace, and to use a holy humble freedom there; we ought to call God our Master, for so he is, but we are more taught to call him our Father. Ishi is a man the Lord (Ge 4:1), and intimates that in gospel-times the church's husband shall be the man Christ Jesus, made like unto his brethren, and therefore they shall call him Ishi, not Baali.

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor
for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth,
and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.
16 And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, *that* thou shalt call me
Ishi [my husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [my lord].
17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they
shall no more be remembered by their name.
18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the
field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the
ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of
the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

That though they had been in continual troubles, as if the whole creation had been at war with them, now they shall enjoy perfect peace and tranquillity, as if they were in a league of friendship with the whole creation (Ho 2:18): In that day, when they have forsaken their idols, and put themselves under the divine protection, I will make a covenant for them.

1. They shall be protected from evil; nothing shall hurt them, nor do them any mischief. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat amnia--When God is at peace with us he makes every creature to be so too. The inferior creatures shall do them no harm, as they had done when the beasts of the field ate up their vineyards (Ho 2:12) and when noisome beasts were one of God's sore judgments, Eze 14:15. The fowl and the creeping things are taken into this covenant; for they also, when God makes use of them as the instruments of his justice, may be come very hurtful, but they shall be no more so; nay, by virtue of this covenant, they shall be made serviceable to them and brought into their interests. Note, God has the command of the inferior creatures, and brings them into what covenant he pleases; he can make the beasts of the field to honour him (so he has promised, Isa 43:20) and to contribute to his people's comfort. And, if the inferior creatures are thus laid under an engagement to serve us, it is our part of the covenant not to abuse them, but to serve God with them.

Some think that this had its accomplishment in the miraculous power Christ gave his disciples to take up serpents, Mk 16:17,18. It agrees with the promises made particularly to Israel, in their return out of captivity (Eze 34:25, I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land), and the more general ones to all the saints. Job 5:22,23, The beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee; and Ps 91:13, Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder. But this is not all; men are more in danger from one another than from the brute beast, and therefore it is further promised that God will make wars to cease, will disarm the enemy: I will break the bow, and sword, and battle. He can do it when he pleases (Ps 44:9), and will do it for those whose ways please him, for he makes even their enemies to be at peace with them, Pr 16:7. This

agrees with the promise that in gospel-times swords shall be beaten into plough-shares, Isa 2:4.

2. They shall be quiet from the fear of evil. God will not only keep them safe, but make them to lie down safely, as those that know themselves to be under the protection of Heaven, and therefore are not afraid of the powers of hell.

IV. That, though God had given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms, yet, upon their repentance, he would again take them into covenant with himself, into a marriage-covenant, Ho 2:19,20. God's making a covenant for them with the inferior creatures was a great favour; but it was nothing to this, that he took them into covenant with himself and engaged himself to do them good. Observe,

1 The nature of this covenant; it is a marriage-covenant, founded in choice and love, and founding the nearest relation: I will betroth thee unto me; and again, and a third time, I will betroth thee.

Note, All that are sincerely devoted to God are betrothed to him; God gives them the most sacred and inviolable security imaginable that he will love them, protect them, and provide for them, that he will do the part of a husband to them, and that he will incline their hearts to join themselves to him and will graciously accept of them in so doing. Believing souls are espoused to Christ, 2Co 11:2 The gospel-church is the bride, the Lamb's wife; and they would never come into that relation to him if he did not by the power of his grace betroth them to himself. The separation begins on our side; we alienate ourselves from God. The coalition begins on his side; he betroths us to himself.

2 The duration of this covenant: "I will betroth thee for ever. The covenant itself shall be inviolable; God will not break it on his part, and you shall not on yours; and the blessings of it shall be everlasting." One of the Jewish rabbin says, This is a promise

that she shall attain to the life of the world to come, which is absolute eternity or perpetuity.

3. The manner in which this covenant shall be made.

(1.) In righteousness and judgment, that is, God will deal sincerely and uprightly in covenant with them; they have broken covenant, and God is righteous. "But," says God, "I will renew the covenant in righteousness." The matter shall be so ordered that God may receive even these backsliding children into his family again, without any reflection upon his justice, nay, his justice being satisfied by the Mediator of this covenant very much to the honour of it. But what reason can there be why God should take a people into covenant with him that had so often dealt treacherously? Will it not reflect upon his wisdom? "No," says God; "I will do it in judgment, not rashly, but upon due consideration; let me alone to give a reason for it and to justify my own conduct."

(2.) In lovingkindness and in mercies. God will deal tenderly and graciously in covenanting with them; and will be not only as good as his word, but better; and, as he will be just in keeping covenant with them, so he will be merciful in keeping them in the covenant. They are subject to many infirmities, and, if he be extreme to mark what they do amiss, they will soon lose the benefit of the covenant. He therefore promises that it shall be a covenant of grace, made in a compassionate consideration of their infirmities, so that every transgression in the covenant shall not throw them out of covenant; he will gather with everlasting lovingkindness.

(3.) In faithfulness. Every article of the covenant shall be punctually performed. Faithful is he that has called them, who also will do it; he cannot deny himself.

4. The means by which they shall be kept tight and faithful to the covenant on their part: Thou shalt know the Lord. This is not only a promise that God will reveal himself to them more fully

and clearly than ever, but that he will give them a heart to know him; they shall know more of him, and shall know him in another manner than ever yet. The ground of their apostasy was their not knowing God to be their benefactor (Ho 2:8); therefore, to prevent the like, they shall all be taught of God to know him. Note, God keeps up his interest in men's souls by giving them a good understanding and a right knowledge of things, Heb 8:11.

V. That, though the heavens had been to them as brass, and the earth as iron, now the heavens shall yield their dews, and by that means the earth its fruits, Ho 2:21,22. God having betrothed the gospel-church and in it all believers to himself, how shall he not with himself and with his Son freely give them all things, all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things they need or can desire? All is theirs, for they are Christ's, betrothed to him; and with the righteousness of the kingdom of God, which they seek first, all other things shall be added unto them. And yet this promise of corn and wine is to be taken also in a spiritual sense (so the learned Dr. Pocock thinks): it is an effusion of those blessings and graces which relate to the soul that is here promised under the metaphor of temporal blessings, the dew of heaven, as well as the fatness of the earth, and that put first, as in the blessing of Jacob, Ge 27:28.

God had threatened (Ho 2:9) that he would take away the corn and the wine; but now he promises to restore them, and that in the common course and order of nature. While they lay under the judgment of famine they called to the earth for corn and wine for the support of themselves and their families. Very gladly would the earth have supplied them, but she cannot give unless she receive, cannot produce corn and wine unless she be enriched with the river of God (Ps 65:9); and therefore she calls to the heavens for rain, the former and latter rain in their season, grapes for it, and by her melancholy aspect when rain is denied pleads for it. "But," say the heavens, "we have no rain to give unless he who has the key of the clouds unlock them, and open these bottles; so that, if the Lord do not help you, we cannot." But, when God takes them into covenant with himself, then the wheel

of nature shall be set a-going again in favour of them, and the streams of mercy shall flow in the usual channel:

Then I will hear, saith the Lord; I will receive your prayers (so the Chaldee interprets the first hearing); God will graciously take notice of their addresses to him. And then I will hear the heavens; I will answer them (so it may be read); and then they shall hear and answer the earth, and pour down seasonable rain upon it; and then the earth shall hear the corn and vines, and supply them with moisture, and they shall hear Jezreel, and be nourishment and refreshment for those that inhabit Jezreel.

See here the coherence of second causes with one another, as links in a chain, and the necessary dependence they all have upon God, the first Cause. Note, We must expect all our comforts from God in the usual method and by the appointed means; and, when we are at any time disappointed in them, we must look up to God, above the hills and the mountains, Ps 121:1,2.

See how ready the creatures are to serve the people of God, how desirous of the honour: the corn cries to the earth, the earth to the heavens, the heavens to God, and all that they may supply them. And see how ready God is to give relief: I will hear, saith the Lord, yea, I will hear. And, if God will hear the cry of the heavens for his people, much more will he hear the intercession of his Son for them, who is made higher than the heavens. See what a peculiar delight those that are in covenant with God may take in their creature-comforts, as seeing them all come to them from the hand of God; they can trace up all the streams to the fountain, and taste covenant-love in common mercies, which makes them doubly sweet.

VI. That whereas they were now dispersed, not only, as Simeon and Levi, divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel, but divided and scattered all the world over, God will turn this curse, as he did that, into a blessing: "I will not only water the earth for her, but will sow her unto me in the earth; her dispersion shall be not

like that of the chaff in the floor, which the wind drives away, but like that of the seed in the field, in order to its greater increase; wherever they are scattered they shall take root downward and bear fruit upward. The good seed are the children of the kingdom.

I will sow her unto me." This alludes to the name of Jezreel, which signifies sown of God, or for God; as she was scattered of him (which is one signification of the words) so she shall be sown of him; and to what he sows he will give the increase. When in all parts of the world Christianity got footing, and every where there were professors of it, then this promise was fulfilled, I will sow her unto me in the earth. Note, The greatest blessing of this earth is that God has a church in it, and from that arises all the tribute of glory which he has out of it; it is what he has sown to himself, and what he will therefore secure to himself.

19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving- kindness, and in mercies.

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;

22 and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.

23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people; and they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

That, whereas they had been Lo-ammi--not a people, and Lo-ruhamah--not finding mercy with God, now they shall be restored to his favour and taken again into covenant with him (Ho 2:23): They had not obtained mercy, but seemed to be abandoned; they were not my people, not distinguished, not dealt with, as my people, but left to lie in common with the nations. This was the case with the rejected Jews; and the same, or more deplorable, was that of the Gentile world (to whom the apostle applies this, Ro 9:24,25), that had no hope, and was without God

in the world; but when great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were, upon their believing in Christ, incorporated into a Christian church, then,

1. God had mercy on those who had not obtained mercy. Those found favour with God, and became the children of his love, who had been long out of favour and the children of his wrath, and, if infinite mercy had not interposed, would have been for ever so. Note, God's mercy must not be despaired of any where on this side hell.

2. He took those into a covenant-relation to himself who had been strangers and foreigners. He says to them, "Thou art my people, whom I will own and bless, protect and provide for;" and they shall say, "Thou art my God, whom I will serve and worship, and to whose honour I will be entirely and for ever devoted." Note,

(1.) The sum total of the happiness of believers is the mutual relation that is between them and God, that he is theirs and they are his; this is the crown of all the promises.

(2.) This relation is founded in free grace. We have not chosen him, but he has chosen us. He first says, They are my people, and makes them willing to be so in the day of his power, and then they avouch him to be theirs.

(3.) As we need desire no more to make us happy than to be the people of God, so we need desire no more to make us easy and cheerful than to have him to assure us that we are so, to say unto us, by his Spirit witnessing with ours, Thou art my people.

(4.) Those that have accepted the Lord for their God must avouch him to be so, must go to him in prayer and tell him so, Thou art my God, and must be ready to make profession before men.

(5.) It adds to the comfort of our covenant with God that in it there is a communion of saints, who, though they are many, yet

here are one. It is not, I will say to them, You are my people, but, Thou art; for he looks upon them as all one in Christ, and, as such in him, he speaks to them and covenants with them; and they also do not say, Thou art our God, for they look upon themselves as one body, and desire with one mind and one mouth to glorify him, and therefore say, Thou art my God.

Or it intimates that such a covenant as God made of old with his people Israel, in general, now under the gospel he makes with particular believers, and says to each of them, even the meanest, with as much pleasure as he did of old to the thousands of Israel, Thou art my people, and invites and encourages each of them to say, Thou art my God, and to triumph therein, as Moses and all Israel did. Ex 15:2, He is my God, and my father's God.

Hosea-3

Hosea and the Adulteress

1 Then said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

Some think that this chapter refers to Judah, the two tribes, as the adulteress the prophet married (Ho 1:3) represented the ten tribes; for this was not to be divorced, as the ten tribes were, but to be left desolate for a long time, and then to return, as the two tribes did. But these are called the children of Israel, which was the ten tribes, and therefore it is more probable that of them this parable, as well as that before, is to be understood. Go, and repeat it, says God to the prophet; Go yet again.

Note, For the conviction and reduction of sinners it is necessary that precept be upon precept, and line upon line. If they will not believe one sign, try another, Ex 4:8,9. Now,

I. In this parable we may observe,

1. God's goodness and Israel's badness strangely serving for a foil to each other, Ho 3:1. Israel is as a woman beloved of her friend, either of him that has married her or of him that only courts her, and yet an adulteress; such is the case between God and Israel. We say of those whose affection is mutual that there is no love lost between them; but here we find a great deal of the love even of God himself lost and thrown away upon an unworthy ungrateful people. The God of Israel retains a very great love for the children of Israel, and yet they are an evil and adulterous generation. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth!

(1.) That God's goodness has not put an end to their badness; the Lord loves them, has a kindness for them, and is continually showing kindness to them; they know it, they cannot but own it, that he has been as a friend and Father to them; and yet they look to other gods, gods that they can see, and to the love of which they are drawn by the eye; they look to them with an eye of adoration (they offer up all their services to them) and with an eye of dependence (they expect all their comforts from them); if they were restrained from bowing the knee to idols, yet they gave them an amorous glance, and had eyes full of that spiritual adultery.

And they loved flagons of wine; they joined with idolaters because they lived merrily and drank hard; they had a kindness for other gods for the sake of the plenty of good wine with which they had been sometimes treated in their temples. Idolatry and sensuality commonly go together; those that make a god of their belly, as drunkards do, will easily be brought to make a god of any thing else. God's priests were to drink no wine when they went in to minister, and his Nazarites none at all. But the worshippers of other gods drank wine in bowls; nay, no less than flagons of wine would content them.

(2.) That their badness had not stopped the current of his favours to them. This is a wonder of mercy indeed, that she is thus beloved of her friend, though an adulteress; such is the love of

the Lord towards the children of Israel. "Go," says God, "love such a woman; see if thou canst find in thy heart to do it. No, thou canst not, the breast of no man would admit such a love; yet such is my love to the children of Israel; it is love to the loveless, to the unlovely, to those that have a thousand times forfeited it." Note, In God's goodwill to poor sinners his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and his love is more condescending and compassionate than ours is, or can be; in this, as much as any thing, he is God, and not man, Ho 11:9.

2 The method found for the bringing of a God so very good and a people so very bad together again; this is the thing aimed at, and what God aims at he will accomplish. To our great surprise, we find a breach thus wide as the sea effectually healed; miracles cease not so long as divine mercy does not cease. Observe here,

(1.) The course God takes to humble them and make them know themselves (Ho 3:2): I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley, that is, I courted her to be reconciled, to leave her ill courses, and return to her first husband, as Ho 2:14. I allured her, and spoke comfortably to her; as the Levite who went after his concubine that had played the harlot from him, and had run away with another man, spoke friendly to her, Jdg 19:3. But here the present which the prophet brought her for the purchasing of her favour is observed to be a very small one; but it was all that was intended for her separate maintenance, and in it she is reduced to a short allowance, and, to punish her for her pride, is made to look very mean. When Samson went to be reconciled to his wife that had disobliged him he visited her with a kid (Jdg 15:1), which was a genteel entertainment.

But the prophet here visited his wife with fifteen pieces of silver, a small sum, which yet she must be content to live upon a great while, so long as till her husband thought fit to restore her to her first estate. She shall also have a homer and a half of barley, for bread-corn, and that is all she must expect till she be sufficiently humbled, and, by a competent time of trial, satisfactory proof

given that she is indeed reformed. Let her be made sensible that it is not for her own merit that her husband makes court to her; it is but a lame price that he values her at. The price of a servant was thirty shekels, Ex 21:32. This was but half so much; yet let her know that it is more than she is worth. God had given Egypt for Israel's ransom once, so precious were they then in his sight, and so honourable, Isa 43:3. But now that they have gone a whoring from him he will give but fifteen pieces of silver for them, so much have they lost in their value by their iniquity.

Note, Those whom God designs honour and comfort for he first makes sensible of their own worthlessness, and brings them to acknowledge, with the prodigal, I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Time was when Israel was fed with the finest of the wheat, but they grew wanton, and loved flagons of wine, and therefore, in order to the humbling and reducing of them, they must be brought in the land of their captivity to eat barley-bread, and be thankful they can get it, and to eat that too by weight and measure, whereas they did not use to be stinted. Note, Poverty and disgrace sometimes prove a happy means of making great sinners true penitents.

(2.) The new terms upon which God is willing to come with them (Ho 3:3): Thou shalt abide for me many days, and shalt not be for another, so will I be for thee. He might justly have given them a bill of divorce, and have resolved to have no more to do with them; but he is willing to show them kindness, and that the matter should be compromised; he deals not with them in strict justice, according to the rigour of the law, but according to the multitude of his mercies; and it represents God's gracious dealings with the apostate race of mankind, that had gone a whoring from him; he bought them indeed with an inestimable price, not for their honour, but for the honour of his own justice; and now this is the proposal he makes to them, the covenant of grace he is willing to enter into with them--they must be to him a people, and he will be to them a God, the same with the proposal here made to Israel.

[1.] They must take to themselves the shame of their apostasy from him, must submit to, and accept of, the punishment of their iniquity: Thou shalt abide for me many days in solitude and silence, as a widow that is desolate and in sorrow; they must lay aside their ornaments, and wait with patience and submission to know what God will do with them, and whether he will please to admit such unworthy wretches into his favour again, as they did Ex 33:4,5.

Their father, their husband, has spit in their face (as God said concerning Miriam), has put them under the marks of his displeasure, and therefore, like her, they must be ashamed seven days, and be shut out of the camp (Nu 12:14), till their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, Le 26:41. Let them sit alone and keep silence, waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and in the mean time let them bear the yoke, La 3:26-28. Let them not expect that God should speedily return in mercy to them,; no, let them want it, let them wait for it many days, during all the days of their captivity, and reckon it a miracle of mercy, and well worth waiting for, it if come at last. Note, Those whom God designs mercy for he will first bring to abase themselves and to put a high value upon his favours.

[2.] They must never return to folly again; that is the condition upon which God will speak peace to his people and to his saints (Ps 85:8), and no other. "Thou shalt not play the harlot, shalt not worship idols in the land of thy captivity, while thou art there set apart for the uncleanness."

Note, It is not enough to take shame to ourselves for the sins we have committed, and to justify God in correcting us for them, but we must resolve, in the strength of God's grace, that we will not offend any more, that we will not again go a whoring from God, after the world and the flesh.

Blessed be God, though it is the law of the covenant, it is not the condition of it that we shall never in any thing do amiss: "But thou shalt not play the harlot; thou shalt not serve other gods,

shalt not be for another man." In the land of their captivity they would be courted to worship the idols of the country; that would be a trial for them, a long trial, many days: "But if thou keep thy ground, and hold fast thy integrity, if, when all this comes upon thee, thou dost not stretch out thy hand to a strange god, thou wilt be qualified for the returns of God's favour." Note, It is a certain sign that our afflictions are means of much good to us, and earnests of more, when we are kept by the grace of God from being overcome by the temptations of an afflicted state.

[3.] Upon these terms their Maker will again be their husband: So will I also be for thee. This is the covenant between God and returning sinners, that, if they will be for him to serve him, he will be for them to save them. Let them renounce and abjure all rivals with God for the throne in the heart, and devote themselves entirely to him and him only, and he will be to them a God all-sufficient. If we be faithful and constant to God in a way of duty, and will never leave nor forsake him, he will be so to us in a way of mercy, and will never leave nor forsake us. And a fairer proposal could not be made.

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and *for* a homer of barley, and a half homer of barley:

3 and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also *be* for thee.

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim:

In the Ho 3:4,5 we have the interpretation of the parable and the application of it to Israel.

1. They must long sit like a widow, stripped of all their joys and honours, La 4:1,2. They shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince; and a nation in this condition may well be called a widow. They want the blessing,

(1.) Of civil government: They shall abide without a king, and without a prince, of their own. There were kings and princes over

them to oppress them and rule them with rigour, but they had no king nor prince to protect them, to fight their battles for them, to administer justice to them, and to take care of their common safety and welfare. Note, Magistracy is a very great blessing to a people, and it is a sad and sore judgment to want it.

(2.) Of public worship: They shall abide without a sacrifice, and without an image (or a statue, or pillar; the word is used concerning the pillars Jacob erected, Ge 28:18,31:45,35:20), and without an ephod and teraphim. The teraphim being here closely joined to the ephod, some thing the urim and thummim were meant by it in the breast-plate of the high priest. The meaning is that in their captivity they should not only have no face of a nation upon them, but no face of a church; they should not have (as a learned expositor speaks) liberty of any public profession or exercise of religion, either true or false, according to their choice.

They shall have no sacrifice or altar (so the LXX.), and therefore no sacrifice because no altar. They shall have no ephod, nor teraphim, no legal priesthood, no means of knowing God's mind, no oracle to consult in doubtful cases, but shall be all in the dark. Note, The case of those is very melancholy that are deprived of all opportunities to worship God in public. This was the case of the Jews in their captivity; and it is so far the case of the scattered Jews at this day that, though they have their synagogues, they have no temple-service. Desolate indeed is their condition that are shut out from communion with God, that have no opportunity of directing their addresses to God by sacrifice and altar, and of receiving instruction from him by ephod and teraphim.

2. They shall at length be received again as a wife (Ho 3:5): Afterwards, in process of time, when they have gone through this discipline, they shall return, that is, they shall repent of their idolatries and forsake them, they shall apply themselves to God and adhere to him, and herein they shall be accepted of him. Two

things are here promised as instances of their return, and steps towards their acceptance with God in their return:--

(1.) The enquiries they shall make after God: They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king. Note, Those that would find God, and find favour with him, must seek him, must ask after him, covet acquaintance with him, desire to be reconciled to him, set their love on him, and labour in this that they may be accepted of him. Their seeking him implies that they had lost him, that they were lamenting their loss, and that they were solicitous to retrieve what they had lost. They shall seek him as their God; for should not a people seek unto their God? And they shall seek David their King, who can be no other than the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the root and offspring of David, whom David himself called Lord (Ps 110:1), and to whom God gave the throne of his father David, Lu 1:32. The Chaldee reads it, They shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah, the Son of David their king. Compare this with Jer 30:9,Eze 34:23,37:25. Note, Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him must apply to Jesus Christ, and must seek to him as their King, and become his willing people, and take an oath of fealty and allegiance to him.

(2.) The reverence they shall have of God: They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. Some by his goodness here understand the temple, towards which they shall look, in worshipping God. The Jews say, There were three things which Israel cast off in the days of Rehoboam--the kingdom of heaven, the family of David, and the house of the sanctuary; and it will never be well with them till they return, and seek them all three, which is here promised. They shall seek the kingdom of heaven in the Lord their God, the royal family in David their King, and the temple in the goodness of the Lord. Others by his goodness understand Christ, the same with David their King. But it is rather to be taken for that attribute of God which he showed as his glory, and by which he proclaimed his name.

Note, It is not only the Lord and his greatness that we are to fear, but the Lord and his goodness, not only his majesty, but his mercy. They shall flee for fear to the Lord and his goodness (so some take it), shall flee to it as their city of refuge. We must fear God's goodness, that is, we must admire it, and stand amazed at it, must adore it, and worship as Moses did at the proclaiming of this name, Ex 34:6. We must be afraid of offending his goodness, of making any ungrateful returns for it, and so forfeiting it. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared, Ps 130:4. We must rejoice with trembling in the goodness of God, must not be high-minded, but fear. Now this promise had its accomplishment when by the gospel of Christ great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were brought home to God, and incorporated in the New-Testament church, served God in Christ, with a filial fear of divine grace, and were accepted of God as his Israel.

And some think it is to be yet further accomplished in the conversion of those Jews to the faith of Christ who shall remain in unbelief, when they shall seek their Messiah as David their King, and by him all Israel shall be saved, when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in. Time was when they sought him to put him to death, saying, We have no king but Cæsar; but the day is coming when they shall seek him to appoint him their head, and to lay their necks under his yoke. He that has here promised that they shall do it will enable them to do it, and bring about this great work in his own way and time, in the latter days of the last times, the times of the Messiah: but, alas! who shall live when God does this? How far we are to expect a general conversion of that nation I cannot say; but I am sure we ought to pray that the Jews may be converted.

5 afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.

Hosea-4

The Lord's Controversy with Israel

1 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

Here is, I The court set, and both attendance and attention demanded: "Hear the word of the Lord, you children of Israel, for to you is the word of this conviction sent, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear." Whom may God expect to give him a fair hearing, and take from him a fair warning, but the children of Israel, his own professing people? Yea, they will be ready enough to hear when God speaks comfortably to them; but are they willing to hear when he has a controversy with them? Yes, they must hear him when he pleads against them, when he has something to lay to their charge: The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, of this land, of this holy land.

Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker; it sows discord between God and Israel. God sees sin in his own people, and a good action he has against them for it. Some more particular actions lie against his own people, which do not lie against other sinners. He has a controversy with them for breaking covenant with him, for bringing a reproach upon him, and for an ungrateful return to him for his favours. God's controversy will be pleaded, pleaded by the judgments of his mouth before they are pleaded by the judgments of his hand, that he may be justified in all he does and may make it appear that he desires not the death of sinners; and God's pleadings ought to be attended to, for, sooner or later, they shall have a hearing.

II The indictment read, by which the whole nation stands charged with crimes of a heinous nature, by which God is highly provoked.

1. They are charged with national omissions of the most important duties: There is no truth nor mercy, neither justice nor charity, these most weighty matters of the law, as our Saviour accounts them (Mt 23:23), judgment, mercy, and faith. The generality of the people seemed to have no sense at all of the thing called honesty; they made no conscience of what they said and did, though ever so contrary to the truth and injurious to their neighbour. Much less had they any sense of mercy, or any obligation they were under to pity and help the poor. And it is not strange that there is no truth and mercy when there is no knowledge of God in the land. What good can be expected where there is no knowledge of God? It was the privilege of that land that in Israel God was made known, and his name was great, which was an aggravation of their sin, that they did not know him, Ps 76:1.

2. Hence follows national commissions of the most enormous sins against both the first and second table, for they had no regard at all to either. Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, against the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments, were to be found in all corners of the land, and among all orders and degrees of men among them, Ho 4:2

The corruption was universal; what good people there were among them were either lost or hid, or they hid themselves. By these they break out, that is, they transgress all bounds of reason and conscience, and the divine law; they have exceeded (Job 36:9); they have been overmuch wicked (Ec 7:17); they suffer their corruptions to break out; they themselves break over, and break through, all that stands in their way and would stop them in their sinful career, as water overflows the banks. Note, Sin is a violent thing and its power exorbitant; when men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil (Ec 8:11) what will be restrained from them? Ge 11:6.

When they break out thus blood touches blood, that is, abundance of murders are committed in all parts of the country,

and, as it were, in a constant series and succession. Cædes aliæ aliis sunt contiguæ--Murders touch murders; a stream of blood runs down among them, even royal blood. It was about this time that there was so much blood shed in grasping at the crown; Shallum slew Zechariah, and Menahem slew Shallum, Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; and the like bloody work, it is likely, there was among other contenders, so that the land was polluted with blood (Ps 106:38); it was filled with blood from one end to the other, 2Ki 21:16.

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.

I. Sentence passed upon this guilty and polluted land, Ho 4:3. It shall be utterly destroyed and laid waste. The whole land is infected with sin, and therefore the whole land shall mourn under God's sore judgments, shall sit in mourning, being stripped of all its wealth and beauty. As the valleys are said to shout for joy, and sing, when there are plenty and peace, so here they are said to mourn when by war and famine they are made desolate. The whole land shall be brimstone, and salt, and burning, was as threatened in the law, De 29:33. They had broken all God's commandments, and now God threatens to take away all their comforts.

The land mourns when there is neither grass for the cattle nor herbs for the service of man; and then every one that dwells therein shall languish for want of nice food to support a wasting life, and fret for want of the usual dainties for delight. The beasts of the field will languish, Jer 14:5,6. Nay, the destruction of the fruits of the earth shall be so great that there shall not be picking for the fowls of the air, to keep them alive; they shall suffer with man, and their dying, or growing lean, will be a punishment to those who used to have their tables replenished with wild-fowl.

Nay, the fishes of the sea shall be taken away, or gathered together, that they may go away in shoals to some other coast, and then the fishing trade will be worth nothing. This desolation shall be in that respect more general than that by Noah's flood, for that did not affect the fishes of the sea, but this shall. It was part of one of the plagues of Egypt that he slew their fish (Ps 105:29); when the waters are dried the fish die, Isa 50:2,Zep 1:2,3.

Note, When man becomes disobedient to God, it is just that the inferior creatures should be made unserviceable to man. Oh what reason have we to admire God's patience and mercy to our land, that though there is in it so much swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, yet there is plenty of flesh, and fish, and fowl, on our tables!

II. An order of court that no pains should be taken with the condemned criminal to bring him to repentance, with the reason for that order. Observe,

1 The order itself (Ho 4:4): Yet let no man strive nor reprove another; let no means be used to reduce and reclaim them; let their physicians give them up as desperate and past cure. It intimates that as long as there is any hope we ought to reprove sinners for their sins; it is a duty we owe to one another to give and to take reproofs; it was one of the laws of Moses (Le 19:17), Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour; it is an instance of brotherly love. Sometimes there is need to rebuke sharply, not only to reprove, but to strive, so loth are men to part with their sins. But it is a sign that persons and people are abandoned to ruin when God says, Let them not be reproved. Yet this is to be understood as God's commands sometimes to the prophets not to pray for them, notwithstanding which they did pray for them; but the meaning is, They are so hardened in sin, and so ripened for ruin, that it will be to little purpose either to deal with them or to deal with God for them. Note, It bodes ill to a people when reprovers are silenced, and when those who should witness against the sins of the times, retire into a corner, and give up the cause. See 2Ch 25:16.

2 The reasons of this order. Let them not reprove one another; for,

(1.) They are determined to go on in sin, and no reproofs will cure them of that: Thy people are as those that strive with the priests; they have grown so very impudent in sin, so very insolent, and impatient of reproof, that they will fly in the face even of a priest himself if he should but give them the least check, without any regard to his character and office; and how then can it be thought that they should take a reproof from a private person?

Note, Those sinners have their hearts wickedly hardened who quarrel with their ministers for dealing faithfully with them; and those who rebel against ministerial reproof, which is an ordinance of God for their reformation, have forfeited the benefit of brotherly reproof too. Perhaps this may refer to the late wickedness of Joash king of Judah, and his people, who stoned Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, for delivering them a message from God, 2Ch 24:21. He was a priest; with him they strove when he was officiating between the temple and the altar; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks the prophet had an eye to his case when he spoke (Ho 4:2) of blood touching blood; the blood of the sacrificer was mingled with the blood of the sacrifice, That, says he, was the apex of their wickedness--thence their ruin was to be dated (Mt 23:35), as this is of their incorrigibleness, that they are as those who strive with the priest, therefore let no man reprove them; for,

(2.) God also is determined to proceed in their ruin (Ho 4:5): "Therefore, because thou wilt take no reproof, no advice, thou shalt fall, and it is in vain for any to think of preventing it, for the decree has gone forth. Thou shalt stumble and fall in the day, and the prophet, the false prophet that flattered and seduced thee, shall fall with thee in the night; both thou and thy prophet shall fall night and day, shall be continually falling into one calamity or other; the darkness of the night shall not help to cover thee from trouble nor the light of the day help thee to flee from it." The prophets are blind leaders and the people blind followers; and to the blind day and night are alike, so that whether it be day or night

both shall fall together into the ditch. "Thou shalt fall in the day, when thy fall is least feared by thyself and thou art very secure; and in the day, when it will be seen and observed by others, and turn most to thy shame; and the prophet shall fall in the night, when to himself it will be most terrible."

Note, The ruin of those who have helped to ruin others will, in a special manner, be intolerable. And did the children think that when they were in danger of falling their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for I will destroy thy mother, Samaria, the mother-city, the whole state, or kingdom, which is as a mother to every part. It shall all be made silent. Note, When all are involved in guilt nothing less can be expected than that all should be involved in ruin.

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

God is here proceeding in his controversy both with the priests and with the people. The people were as those that strove with the priests (Ho 4:4) when they had priests that did their duty; but the generality of them lived in the neglect of their duty, and here is a word for those priests, and for the people that love to have it so, Jer 5:31. And it is observable here how the punishment answers to the sin, and how, for the justifying of his own proceedings, God sets the one over-against the other.

I The people strove with the priests that should have taught them the knowledge of God; justly therefore were they destroyed for lack of knowledge, Ho 4:6. Note, Those that rebel against the light can expect no other than to perish in the dark. Or it is a charge upon the priests, who should have been still teaching the people knowledge (Ec 12:9), but they did not, or did it in such a manner that it was as if they had not done it at all, so there was no knowledge of God in the land; and because there was no vision, or none to any purpose, the people perished, Pr 29:18.

Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion that it is the mother of destruction; lack of knowledge is ruining to any person or people. They are my people that are thus destroyed; their relation to God as his people aggravates both their sin in not taking pains to get the knowledge of that God whose command they were under and with whom they were taken into covenant, and likewise the sin of those who should have taught them; God set his children to school to them, and they never minded them nor took any pains with them.

II. Both priests and people rejected knowledge; and justly therefore will God reject them. The reason why the people did not learn, and the priests did not teach, was not because they had not the light, but because they hated it--not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it; they rejected it. They desired not the knowledge of God's ways, but put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light; and therefore "I will also reject thee; I will refuse to take cognizance of thee and to own thee; you will not know me, but bid me depart; I will therefore say, Depart from me, I know you not. Thou shalt be no priest to me." 1 The priests shall be no longer admitted to the privileges, or employed in the services, of the priesthood, nor shall they ever be received again, as we find, Eze 44:13.

Note, Ministers that reject knowledge, that are grossly ignorant and scandalous, ought not to be owned as ministers; but that which they seem to have should be taken away, Lu 8:18. 2 The people shall be no longer as they have been, a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood, Ex 19:6. God's people, by rejecting knowledge, forfeit their honour and profane their own crown.

III. They forgot the law of God, neither desired nor endeavoured to retain it in mind, nor to transmit the remembrance of it to their posterity, and therefore justly will God forget them and their children, the people's children; they did not educate them,

as they ought to have done, in the knowledge of God and their duty to him, and therefore God will disown them, as not in covenant with him. Note, If parents do not teach their children, when they are young, to remember their Creator, they cannot expect that their Creator should remember them. Or it may be meant of the priests' children; they shall not succeed them in the priests' office, but shall be reduced to poverty, as is threatened against Eli's house, 1Sa 2:20.

IV. They dishonoured God with that which was their honour, and justly therefore will God strip them of it, Ho 4:7. It was their honour that they were increased in number, wealth, power, and dignity. The beginning of their nation was small, but in process of time it greatly increased, and grew very considerable; the family of the priests increased wonderfully. But, as they were increased, so they sinned against God. The more populous the nation grew, the more sin was committed and the more profane they were; their wealth, honour, and power, did but make them the more daring in sin. Therefore, says God, will I change their glory into shame.

Are their numbers their glory? God will diminish them and make them few. Is their wealth their glory? God will impoverish them and bring them low; so that they shall themselves be ashamed of that which they gloried in. Their priests shall be made contemptible and base, Mal 2:9. Note, That which is our honour, if we dishonour God with it, will sooner or later be turned into shame to us: for those that despise God shall be lightly esteemed, 1Sa 2:30.

7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

The priests ate up the sin of God's people, and therefore they shall eat and not have enough.

1. They abused the maintenance that was allowed to the priests, to the priests of the house of Aaron, by the law of God, and to

the mock-priests of the calves by their constitution (Ho 4:8): They eat up the sin of my people, that is, their sin-offerings. If it be meant of the priests of the calves, it intimates their seizing that which they had no right to; they usurped the revenues of the priests, though they were no priests. If it be meant of those who were legal priests, it intimates their greediness of the profits and perquisites of their office, when they took no care at all to do the duty of it. They feasted upon their part of the offerings of the Lord, but forgot the work for which they were so well paid.

They set their heart upon the people's iniquities; they lifted up their soul to them, that is, they were glad then people did commit iniquity, that they might be obliged to bring an offering to make atonement for it, which they should have their share of; the more sins the more sacrifices, and therefore they cared not how much sin people were guilty of. Instead of warning the people against sin, from the consideration of the sacrifices, which showed them what an offence sin was to God, since it needed such an expiation, they emboldened and encouraged the people to sin, since an atonement might be made at so small an expense. Thus they glutted themselves upon the sins of the people, and helped to keep up that which they should have beaten down.

Note, It is a very wicked thing to be well pleased with the sins of others because, in some way or other, they may turn to our advantage.

2. God will therefore deny them his blessing upon their maintenance (Ho 4:10): They shall eat and not have enough. Though they have great plenty by the abundance of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield no good nourishment or their greedy appetites shall not be satisfied with it.

Note, What is unlawfully gained cannot be comfortably used; no, nor that which is inordinately coveted; it is just that the

desires which are insatiable should always be unsatisfied, and that those should never have enough who never know when they have enough. See Mic 6:14,Hag 1:6.

VI. The more they increased the more they sinned (Ho 4:7), and therefore though they commit whoredom, though they take the most wicked methods to multiply their people, yet they shall not increase. Though they have many wives and concubines, as Solomon had, yet they shall not have their families built up thereby in a numerous progeny, any more than he had. Note, Those that hope any way to increase by unlawful means will be disappointed. And therefore God will thus blast all their projects because they have left off to take heed to the Lord; time was when they had some regard to God, and to his authority over them and interest in them, but they have left it off; they take no heed to his word nor to his providences; they do not eye him in either. They forsake him, so as not to take heed to him; they have apostatized to such a degree that they have no manner of regard to God, but are perfectly without God in the world.

Note, Those that leave off to take heed to the Lord leave off all good, and can expect no other than that all good should leave them.

VII. The people and the priests did harden one another in sin; and therefore justly shall they be sharers in the punishment (Ho 4:9): There shall be, like people, like priest. So they were in character; people and priest were both alike ignorant and profane, regardless of God and their duty, and addicted to idolatry: and so they shall be in condition; God will bring judgments upon them, that shall be the destruction both of priest and people; the famine that deprives the people of their meat shall deprive the priests of their meat-offerings, Joe 1:9. It is part of the description of a universal desolation that it shall be as with the people, so with the priest, Isa 24:2. God's judgments, when they come with commission, will make no difference.

Note, Sharers in sin must expect to be sharers in ruin. Thus God will punish them both for their ways, and reward them for their doings. God will cause their doings to return upon them (so the word is); when a sin is committed the sinner thinks it is gone and he shall hear no more of it, but he shall find it called over again, and made to return, either to his humiliation or to his condemnation.

VIII. They indulged themselves in the delights of sense, to hold up their hearts; but they shall find that they take away their hearts (Ho 4:11): Whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart. Some join this with the foregoing words. They have forsaken the Lord, to take heed to whoredom, and wine, and new wine. Or, Because these have taken away their heart. Their sensual pleasures have taken them off from their devotions and drowned all that is good in them. Or we may take it as a distinct sentence, containing a great truth which we see confirmed by every day's experience, that drunkenness and uncleanness are sins which besot and infatuate men, weaken and enfeeble them. They take away both the understanding and the courage.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord.

11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

12 My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

In these verses we have, as before,

I The sins charged upon the people of Israel, for which God had a controversy with them, and they are,

1. Spiritual whoredom, or idolatry. They have in them a spirit of whoredoms, a strong inclination to that sin; the bent and bias of their hearts are that way; it is their own iniquity; they are carried

out towards it with an unaccountable violence, and this causes them to err.

Note, The errors and mistakes of the judgment are commonly owing to the corrupt affections; men therefore have a good opinion of sin, because they have a disposition towards it. And having such erroneous notions of idols, and such passionate motions towards them, no marvel that with such a head and such a heart they have gone a whoring from under their God, Ho 4:12.

They ought to have been in subjection to him as their head and husband, to have been under his guidance and command, but they revolted from their allegiance, and put themselves under the guidance and protection of false gods. So (Ho 4:15) Israel has played the harlot; their conduct in the worship of their idols was like that of a harlot, wanton and impudent.

And (Ho 4:16), Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer, as an untamed heifer (so some), or as a perverse or refractory one (so others), as a heifer that is turned loose runs madly about the pasture, or, if put under the yoke (which seems rather to be alluded to here), will draw back instead of going forward, will struggle to get her neck out of the yoke and her feet out of the furrow. Thus unruly, ungovernable, untractable, were the people of Israel.

They had begun to draw in the yoke of God's ordinances, but they drew back, as children of Belial, that will not endure the yoke; and when the prophets were sent with the goads of reproof, to put them forward, they kicked against the pricks, and ran backwards. The sum of all is (Ho 4:17), Ephraim is joined to idols, is perfectly wedded to them; his affections are glued to them, and his heart is upon them. There are two instances given of their spiritual whoredom, in both which they gave that honour to their idols which is due to God only:--

(1.) They consulted them as oracles, and used those arts of divination which they had learned from their idolatrous priests

(Ho 4:12): My people ask counsel at their stocks, their wooden gods; they apply to them for advice and direction in what they should do and for information concerning the event. They say to a stock, Thou art my father (Jer 2:27); and, if it were indeed a father, it were worthy of this honour; but it was a great affront to God, who was indeed their Father, and whose lively oracles they had among them, with which they had liberty to consult at any time, thus to ask counsel at their stocks. And they expect that their staff should declare to them what course they should take and what the event should be. It is probable that this refers to some wicked methods of divination used among the Gentiles, and which the Jews learned from them, by a piece of wood, or by a staff, like Nebuchadnezzar's divining by his arrows, Eze 21:21. Note, Those who forsake the oracles of God, to take their measures from the world and the flesh, do in effect but consult with their stocks and their staves.

(2.) They offered sacrifice to them as gods, whose favour they wanted and whose wrath they dreaded and deprecated (Ho 4:13): They sacrifice to them, to atone and pacify them, and burn incense to them, to please and gratify them, and hope by both to recommend themselves to them. God had pitched upon the place where he would record his name; but they, having forsaken that, chose places for their irreligious rites which pleased their own fancies; they chose,

[1.] High places, upon the tops of the mountains and upon the hills, foolishly imagining that the height of the ground gave them some advantage in their approaches towards heaven.

[2.] Shady places, under oaks, and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is pleasant to them, especially in those hot countries, and therefore they thought it was pleasing to their gods; or they fancied that a thick shade befriends contemplation, possesses the mind with something of awe, and therefore is proper for devotion.

2. Corporal whoredom is another crime here charged upon them: They have committed whoredom continually, Ho 4:18. They drove a trade of uncleanness; it was not a single act now and then, but their constant practice, as it is of many that have eyes full of adultery and which cannot cease from that sin, 2Pe 2:14. Now the abominable filthiness and lewdness that was found in Israel is here spoken of,

(1.) As a concomitant of their idolatry; their false gods drew them to it; for the devil whom they worshipped, though a spirit, is an unclean spirit. Those that worshipped idols were separated with harlots, and they sacrificed with harlots; for because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but dishonoured him, therefore God gave them up to vile affections, by the indulging of which they dishonoured themselves, Ro 1:24,28.

(2.) As a punishment of it. The men that worshipped idols were separated with harlots that attended the idolatrous rites, as in the worship of Baal-peor, Nu 25:1,2. To punish them for that God gave up their wives and daughters to the like vile affections: They committed whoredom and adultery (Ho 4:13), which could not but be a great grief and reproach to their husbands and parents; for those that are not chaste themselves desire to have their wives and daughters so. But thus they might read their sin in their punishment, as David's adultery was punished in the debauching of his concubines by his own son, 2Sa 12:11.

Note, When the same sin in others is made men's grief and affliction which they have themselves been guilty of they must own that the Lord is righteous.

3. The perverting of justice, Ho 4:18. Their rulers (be it spoken to their shame) do love, Give ye, that is, they love bribes, and have it continually in their mouths, Give, give. They are given to filthy lucre; every one that has any business with them must expect to be asked, What will you give? Though, as rulers, they are bound by office to do justice, yet none can have justice done

them without a fee; and you may be sure that for a fee they will do injustice.

Note, The love of money is the ruin of equity and the root of all iniquity. But of all men it is a shame for rulers (who should be men fearing God and hating covetousness) to love Give ye. Perhaps this is intended in that part of the charge here, Their drink is sour; it is dead; it is gone. Justice, duly administered, is refreshing, like drink to the thirsty, but when it is perverted, and rulers take rewards either to acquit the guilty or to condemn the innocent, the drink is sour; they turn judgment into wormwood, Am 5:7. Or it may refer in general to the depraved morals of the whole nation; they had lost all their life and spirit, and were as offensive to God as dead and sour drink is to us. See De 31:32,33.

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good.
Therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.

The tokens of God's wrath against them for their sins.

1. Their wives and daughters should not be punished for the injury and disgrace they did to their families (Ho 4:14): I will not punish your daughters; and, not being punished for their sin, they would go on in it. Note, The impunity of one sinner is sometimes made the punishment of another. Or, "I will not punish them as I will punish you; for you must own, as Judah did concerning his daughter-in-law, that they are more righteous than you," Ge 38:26.

2. They themselves should prosper for a while, but their prosperity should help to destroy them. It comes in as a token of God's wrath (Ho 4:16): The Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place; they shall have a fat pasture, and a large one, in which they shall

be fed to the full, and fed of the best, but it shall be only to prepare them for the slaughter, as a lamb is that is so fed. If they wax fat and kick, they do but wax fat for the butcher. But others make them feed as a lamb on the common, a large place indeed, but where it has short grass and lies exposed. The Shepherd of Israel will turn them both out of his pastures and out of his protection.

3. No means should be used to bring them to repentance (Ho 4:17): "Ephraim is joined to idols, is in love with them and addicted to them, and therefore let him alone, as Ho 4:4, Let no man reprove him. Let him be given up to his own heart's lusts, and walk in his own counsel; we would have healed him, and he would not be healed, therefore forsake him," See what their end will be, De 32:20.

Note, It is a sad and sore judgment for any man to be let alone in sin, for God to say concerning a sinner, "He is joined to his idols, the world and the flesh; he is incurably proud, covetous, or profane, an incurable drunkard or adulterer; let him alone; conscience, let him alone; minister, let him alone; providences, let him alone. Let nothing awaken him till the flames of hell do it." The father corrects not the rebellious son any more when he determines to disinherit him. "Those that are not disturbed in their sin will be destroyed for their sin."

4. They should be hurried away with a swift and shameful destruction (Ho 4:19): The wind has bound her up in her wings, to carry her away into captivity, suddenly, violently, and irresistibly; he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, Ps 58:9. And then they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices, ashamed of their sin in offering sacrifice to idols, ashamed of their folly in putting themselves to such an expense upon gods that have no power to help them, and thereby making that God their enemy who has almighty power to destroy them.

Note, There are sacrifices that men will one day be ashamed of. Those that have sacrificed their time, strength, honour, and all their comforts, to the world and the flesh, will shortly be ashamed

of it. Yea, and those that bring to God blind, and lame, and heartless sacrifices, will be ashamed of them too.

III. The warning given to Judah not to sin after the similitude of Israel's transgression. It is said in the close of Ho 4:14, Those that do not understand shall fall; those must needs fall that do not understand how to avoid, or get over, the stumbling-blocks they meet with (and therefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall), particularly the two tribes (Ho 4:15): Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend. Though Israel be given to idolatry, yet let not Judah take the infection. Now,

1. This was a very needful caution. The men of Israel were brethren, and near neighbours, to the men of Judah; Israel was more numerous, and at this time in a prosperous condition, and therefore there was danger lest the men of Judah should learn their way and get a snare to their souls. Note, The nearer we are to the infection of sin the more need we have to stand upon our guard.

2. It was a very rational caution: "Let Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah do so; for Judah has greater means of knowledge than Israel, has the temple and priesthood, and a king of the house of David; from Judah Shiloh is to come; and for Judah God has reserved great blessings in store; therefore let not Judah offend, for more is expected from them than from Israel, they will have more to answer for if they do offend, and from them God will take it more unkindly. If Israel play the harlot, let not Judah do so too, for then God will have no professing people in the world." God bespeaks Judah here, as Christ does the twelve, when many turned their backs upon him, Will you also go away? Joh 6:67.

Note, Those that have hitherto kept their integrity should, for that reason, still hold it fast, even in times of general apostasy. Now, to preserve Judah from offending as Israel had done, two rules are here given:--

(1.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry they must keep at a distance from the places of idolatry: Come not you unto Gilgal,

where all their wickedness was (Ho 9:15,12:11); there they multiplied transgression (Am 4:4); and perhaps they contracted a veneration for that place because there it was said to Joshua, The place where thou standest is holy ground (Jos 5:15); therefore they are forbidden to enter into Gilgal, Am 5:5. And for the same reason they must not go up to Bethel, here called the house of vanity, for so Bethaven signifies, not the house of God, as Bethel signifies.

Note, Those that would be kept from sin, and not fall into the devil's hands, must studiously avoid the occasions of sin and not come upon the devil's ground.

(2.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry they must take heed of profaneness, and not swear, The Lord liveth. They are commanded to swear, The Lord liveth in truth and righteousness (Jer 4:2); and therefore that which is here forbidden is swearing so in untruth and unrighteousness, swearing rashly and lightly, or falsely and with deceit, or swearing by the Lord and the idol, Zep 1:5.

Note, Those that would be steady in their adherence to God must possess themselves with an awe and reverence of God, and always speak of him with solemnity and seriousness; for those that can make a jest of the true God will make a god of any thing.

15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend; and come
not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The Lord
liveth.
16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the Lord will feed
them as a lamb in a large place.
17 Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone.
18 Their drink is sour: they have committed whoredom continually:
her rulers *with* shame do love, Give ye.
19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed
because of their sacrifices.

Hosea-5

The Punishment for Israel's Apostasy

1 Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear,
O house of the king; for judgment *is* toward you, because ye have been
a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

Here, I. All orders and degrees of men are cited to appear and answer to such things as shall be laid to their charge (Ho 5:1): Hear you this, O priests! whether in holy orders (as those in Judah, and perhaps many in Israel too, for in the ten tribes there were divers cities of priests and Levites, who, it is probable, staid in their own lot after the revolt of the ten tribes and did so much of their office as might be done at a distance from the temple) or pretending holy orders, as the priests of the calves, who, some think, are included here. "Hearken, you house of Israel, the common people, and give ear, O house of the king!" let them all take notice, for they have all contributed to the national guilt, and they shall all share in the national judgments.

Note, If neither the sanctity of the priesthood nor the dignity of the royal family will prevail to keep out sin, it cannot be expected that they should avail to keep out wrath. If the priests, and the house of the king, though they bear such noble characters, sin like others, their noble characters will not excuse them, but they must smart like others. Nor shall it be any plea for the house of Israel that they were misled by their priests and princes, but they shall receive their doom with them, and neither their meanness nor their multitude shall be their exemption.

II. Witness is produced against them, one instead of a thousand; it is God's omniscience (Ho 5:3): I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me. They have not known the Lord (Ho 5:4), but the Lord has known them, knows their true character however disguised, knows their secret wickedness however

concealed. Note, Men's rejecting the knowledge of God will not secure them from his knowledge of them; and when he contends with them he will prove their sins upon them by his own knowledge, so that is will be in vain to plead Not guilty.

III. Very bad things are laid to their charge.

1. They had been very ingenious and very industrious to draw people either into sin or into trouble: You have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor (Ho 5:1), that is, such snares and nets as the huntsmen used to lay upon those mountains in pursuit of their game. When the worship of the calves was set up in Israel the patrons of that idolatry, and sticklers for it, contrived by all possible arts and wiles to draw men into it and reconcile those to it that at first had a dread of it.

Note, Those that allure and entice men to sin, however they may pretend friendship and good-will, are to be looked upon as snares and nets to them, and their hands as bands, Ec 7:26. But to those whom they could not seduce into sin they were as a net and a snare to bring them into trouble. Some think it was their practice to set spies in the road, and particularly upon the mountains of Mizpah and Tabor, at the times of the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, to watch if any of their people who were piously affected went thither, and to inform against them, that they might be prosecuted for it, thus doing the devil's work, who disquiets those whom he cannot debauch.

2. They had been both very crafty and very cruel in carrying on their designs (Ho 5:2): The revolters are profound to make slaughter. Note, Those who have themselves apostatized from the truths of God are often the most subtle and barbarous persecutors of those who still adhere to them. Nothing will serve them but to make slaughter (it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after): and with the serpent's sting they have his head; they are profound to do it. O the depth of the depths of Satan, of the

wickedness of his agents, of those that have deeply revolted! Isa 31:6. Now that which aggravated this was the many reproofs and warnings that had been given them: Though I have been a rebuker of them all. The prophet had been so, a reprover by office. He had many a time told them of the evil of their ways and doings, had dealt plainly with them all, and had not spared either the priests or the house of the king. God himself had been a rebuker of them all by their own consciences and by his providences.

Note, Sins against reproof are doubly sinful, Pr 29:1.

3. They had committed whoredom, had defiled their own bodies with fleshly lusts, had defiled their own souls with the worship of idols, Ho 5:3. This God was a witness to, though secretly committed and artfully palliated. Nay, the piercing eye of God saw the spirit of whoredom that was in the midst of them, their secret inclination and disposition to those sins, the love they had to their sins, and the dominion their sins had over them, how much they were under the power of a spirit of whoredom, that root of bitterness which bore all this gall and wormwood, that corrupt and poisoned fountain.

4. They had no disposition at all to come into acquaintance and communion with God. The spirit of whoredoms, having caused them to err from him, keeps them wandering endlessly, Ho 5:4.

(1.) They have not known the Lord, nor desire to know him, but have rather declined, nay dreaded, the knowledge of him, for that would disturb them in their sinful ways.

(2.) Therefore they will not frame their doings to turn to their God, by which it appeared that they did not know him aright. This intimates their obstinate persistence in their apostasy from God; they would not turn to God, though he was their God, theirs in covenant, by whose name they had been called, and whom they were bound to serve. They would not return to the worship of him, from which they had turned aside. Nay, they

would not frame their doings to turn to God. They would not consider their ways, nor dispose themselves into a serious temper, nor apply their minds to think of those things that would bring them to God. It is true we cannot by our own power, without the special grace of God, turn to him; but we may by the due improvement of our faculties, and the common aids of his Spirit, frame our doings to turn to him. Those that will not do this, that prepare not their hearts to seek the Lord (2Ch 12:14), owe it to themselves that they are not turned; they die because they will die; and to those that will do this further grace shall not be wanting.

(3.) They were guilty of notorious arrogancy, and insolence in sin (Ho 5:5): The pride of Israel doth testify to his face, doth witness against him that he is a rebel to God and his government. The spirit of whoredoms which was in the midst of them showed itself in the gaiety and gaudiness of their worship, as a harlot is known by her attire, Pr 7:10. The wantonness of her dress testifies to her face that she is not a modest woman. Or their pride in confronting the prophets God sent them and the message they brought (Jer 43:2), or a haughty scornful conduct towards their brethren and those that were under them, witnessed against them that they were not God's people and justified God in all the humbling judgments he brought upon them. His pride testifies in his face; so some read it, agreeing with Isa 3:9, The show of their countenance doth witness against them. They have that proud look which the Lord hates.

(4.) They departed from God to idols, and bred up their children in idolatry (Ho 5:7): They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, as a wife, who, in contempt of the marriage covenant, forsakes her husband, and lives in adultery with another. Thus those who are guilty of spiritual idolatry, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, deal treacherously against the Lord; they violate their engagements to him and frustrate his expectations from them.

Note, Wilful sinners are treacherous dealers. They have begotten strange children, that is, their children which they have begotten are estranged from God, and trained up in a false way of worship; they are a spurious brood, as children of fornication (Joh 8:41), whom God will disown.

Note, Those deal treacherously with God indeed who not only turn from following him themselves but train up their children in wicked ways.

2 And the revolters are profound to make slaughter, though I *have been* a rebuker of them all.

3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, *and* Israel is defiled.

Very sad things are made to be their doom. In general (Ho 5:1), "Judgment is towards you. God is coming forth to contend with you, and to testify his displeasure against you for your sins." It is time to hearken when judgment is towards us. In particular,

1. They shall fall in their iniquity. This follows upon their pride testifying to their face (Ho 5:5) Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity. Note, Pride will have a fall; it is the certain presage and forerunner of it. Those that exalt themselves shall be abased. The face in which pride testifies shall be filled with confusion. They shall not only fall, but fall in their iniquity, the saddest fall of any. Their pride kept them from repenting of their iniquity, and therefore they shall fall in it.

Note, Those that are not humbled for their sins are likely to perish for ever in their sins. It is added, Judah also shall fall with them in her iniquity. As the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria, for their idolatry, so the two tribes, in process of time, were carried into Babylon for following their bad example; but the former fell and were utterly cast down, the latter fell and were raised up again. Judah had the temple and priesthood, and yet these shall not secure them, but, if they sin with Israel and Ephraim, with them they shall fall.

2. They shall fall short of God's favour when they profess to seek it (Ho 5:6): They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but in vain; they shall not find him. This seems to be spoken principally of Judah, when they fell into their iniquity, and when they fell in their iniquity.

(1.) When they fell into their iniquity they sought the Lord; but they did not seek him only, and therefore he was not found of them. When they worshipped strange gods, yet they kept up the show and shadow of the worship of the true God; they went as usual, at the solemn feasts, with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord; but their hearts were not upright with him, because they were not entire for him, and therefore he would not accept them; for then only shall we find him when we seek him with our whole heart, not divided between God and Baal, Eze 14:3.

(2.) When they fell in their iniquity, or found themselves falling by it, they sought the Lord; but they did not seek him early, and therefore he will not be found of them. They shall see ruin coming upon them, and shall then, in their distress, flee to God, and think to make him their friend with burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but it will be too late then to turn away his wrath when the decree has gone forth. Even Josiah's reformation did not prevail to turn away the wrath of God, 2Ki 23:25,26. Those that go with their flocks and their herds only to seek the Lord, and not with their hearts and souls, cannot expect to find him, for his favour is not to be purchased with thousands of rams. Nor shall those speed who do not seek the Lord while he may be found, for there is a time when he will not be found. They shall not find him, for he has withdrawn himself; he will not be enquired of by them, but will turn a deaf ear to their sacrifices. See how much it is our concern to seek God early, now while the accepted time is, and the day of salvation.

3. They and their portions shall all be swallowed up. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, and have thought to strengthen themselves in it by their alliances with strange children; but now shall a month devour them with their portions,

that is, their estates and inheritances, all those things which they have taken, and taken up with, as their portion; or by their portions is meant their idols, whom they chose for their portion instead of God. Note, Those that make an idol of the world, by taking it for their portion, will themselves perish with it. A month shall devour them, or eat them up--a certain time prefixed, and a short time. When God's judgments begin with them they shall soon make an end; one month will do their business. How much may a body be weakened by one month's sickness, or a kingdom wasted by one month's war! Three shepherds (says God) I cut off in one month, Zec 11:8.

Note, The judgments of God sometimes make quick work with a sinful people. A month devours more, and more portions, than many years can repair.

4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms *is* in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord.

5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them.

6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find *him;* he hath withdrawn himself from them.

7 They have dealt treacherously against the Lord; for they have begotten strange children: now shall a month devour them with their portions.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, *and* the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud *at* Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.

Here is, I. A loud alarm sounded, giving notice of judgments coming (Ho 5:8): Blow you the cornet in Gibeah and in Ramah, two cities near together in the confines of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Gibeah a frontier-town of the kingdom of Judah, Ramah of Israel; so that the warning is hereby sent into both kingdoms. "Cry aloud at Beth-aven, or Bethel, which place seems to be already seized upon by the enemy, and therefore the trumpet is not sounded there, but you hear the outcries of those that shout for mastery, mixed with theirs that are overcome." Let them cry aloud, "After thee, O Benjamin! comes the enemy. The tribe of Ephraim is already vanquished,

and the enemy will be upon thy back, O Benjamin! in a little time; thy turn comes next. The cup of trembling shall go round."

The prophet had described God's controversy with them as a trial at law (Ho 4:1); here he describes it as a trial by battle; and here also when he judges he will overcome. Let all therefore prepare to meet their God. He had before spoken of the judgments as certain; here he speaks of them as near; and, when they are apprehended as just at the door, they are very startling and awakening. The blowing of this cornet is explained, Ho 5:9.

Among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be, that which is true or certain, so the word is. Note, The destruction of impenitent sinners is a thing which shall surely be; it is not mere talk, to frighten them, but it is an irrevocable sentence. And it is a mercy to us that it is made known to us, that we have timely warning given us of it, that we may flee from the wrath to come. It is the privilege of the tribes of Israel that, as they are told their duty, so they are told their danger, by the oracles of God committed to them.

II The ground of God's controversy with them.

1. He has a quarrel with the princes of Judah, because they were daring leaders in sin, Ho 5:10. They are like those that remove the bound, or the ancient land-marks. God has given them his law, to be a fence about his own property; but they have sacrilegiously broken through it, and set it aside; they have encroached even upon God's rights, have trampled upon the distinctions between good and evil, and the most sacred obligations of reason and equity, thinking, because they were princes, that they might do any thing, Quicquid libet, licet--Their will was a law. Or it may be understood of their invading the liberty and property of the subject for the advancing of the prerogative, which was like removing the ancient land-marks.

Some have observed that the princes of Judah were more absolute, and assumed a more arbitrary power, than the princes of Israel did; now, for this, God has a controversy with them: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water, in great abundance, like the waters of the flood, which were poured upon the giants of the old world, for the violence which the earth was filled with through them, Ge 6:13.

Note, There are bounds which even princes themselves must not remove, bounds both of religion and justice, which they are limited by, and, if they break through them, they must know that there is a God above them that will call them to account for it.

2. He has a quarrel with the people of Ephraim, because they were sneaking followers in sin (Ho 5:11):

He willingly walked after the commandment, that is, the commandment of Jeroboam and the succeeding kings of Israel, who obliged all their subjects by a law to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel, and never to go up to Jerusalem to worship. This was the commandment; it was the law of the land, and backed with reasons of state; and the people not only walked after it in a blind implicit obedience to authority, but they willingly walked after it, from a secret antipathy they had to the worship of idols. Note, An easy compliance with the commandments of men that thwart the commandments of God ripens a people for ruin as much as any thing. And the punishment of the sequacious disobedience (if I may so call it) answers to the sin; for it is for this that Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, has all his civil rights and liberties broken in upon and trodden down; and,

(1.) It is just with God that it should be so, that those who betray God's property should lose their own, that those who subject their consciences to an infallible judge, and an arbitrary power, should have enough of both.

(2.) There is a natural tendency in the thing itself towards it. Those that willingly walk after the commandment, even when it walks contrary to the command of God, will find the commandment an encroaching thing, and that the more power is given it the more it will claim. Note, Nothing gives greater advantage to a mastiff-like tyranny, that is fierce and furious, than a spaniel-like submission, that is fawning and flattering. Thus is Ephraim oppressed and broken in judgment, that is, he is wronged under a face and colour of right. Note, It is a sad and sore judgment upon any people to be oppressed under pretence of having justice done them. This explains the threatening Ho 5:9, Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke.

Note, Daring sinners must expect that a day of rebuke will come, and such a day of rebuke as will make them desolate, will deprive them of the comfort of all they have and all they hope for.

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of
Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.
10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound:
therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.
11 Ephraim *is* oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly
walked after the commandment.
12 Therefore *will* I *be* unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of
Judah as rottenness.

The different methods that God would take both with Judah and Ephraim, sometimes one method and sometimes the other, and sometimes both together, or rather by which, first the one and then the other, he would advance towards their complete ruin.

1. He would begin with less judgments, which should sometimes work silently and insensibly (Ho 5:12): I will be (that is, my providences shall be) unto Ephraim as a moth; nay (as it might better be supplied), they are unto Ephraim as a moth, for it is such a sickness as Ephraim now sees, Ho 5:13.

Note, The judgments of God are sometimes to a sinful people as a moth, and as rottenness, or as a worm. The former signifies

the little animals that breed in clothes, the latter those that breed in wood; as these consume the clothes and the wood, so shall the judgments of God consume them.

(1.) Silently, so as not to make any noise in the world, nay, so as they themselves shall not be sensible of it; they shall think themselves safe and thriving, but, when they come to look more narrowly into their state, shall find themselves wasting and decaying.

(2.) Slowly, and with long delays and intervals, that he may give them space to repent. Many a nation, as well as many a person, in the prime of its time, dies of a consumption.

(3.) Gradually. God comes upon sinners with less judgments, so to prevent greater, if they will be wise and take warning; he comes upon them step by step, to show he is not willing that they should perish.

(4.) The moth breeds in the clothes, and the worm or rottenness in the wood; thus sinners are consumed by a fire of their own kindling.

2. When it appeared that those had not done their work he would come upon them with greater (Ho 5:14): I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and to the house of Judah as a young lion, though Judah is himself, in Jacob's blessing, a lion's whelp. Lest any should think his power weakened, because he was said to be as a moth to them, he says that he will now be as a lion to them, not only to frighten them with his roaring, but to pull them to pieces.

Note, If less judgments prevail not to do their work, it may be expected that God will send greater. Christ is sometimes a lion of the tribe of Judah, here he is a lion against that tribe. See what God will do to a people that are secure in sin: Even I will tear. He seems to glory in it, as his prerogative, to be able to destroy, as the alone lawgiver, Jam 4:12. "I, even I, will take the work

into my own hands; I say it that will do it." There is a more immediate work of God in some judgments than in others. I will tear, and go away. He will go away,

(1.) As not fearing them; he will go away in state, and with a majestic face, as the lion from his prey.

(2.) As not helping them. If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by his graces and comforts stays with us, it is well enough; but our condition is sad indeed if he tear and go away, if, when he deprives us of our creature comforts, he does himself depart from us. When he goes away he will take away all that is valuable and dear, for, when God goes, all good goes along with him. He will take away, and none shall rescue him, as the prey cannot be rescued from the lion, Mic 5:8. Note, None can be delivered out of the hands of God's justice but those that are delivered into the hands of his grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker.

IV. The different effects of those different methods. 1. When God contended with them by less judgments they neglected him, and sought to creatures for relief, but sought in vain, Ho 5:13. When God was to them as a moth, and as rottenness, they perceived their sickness and their wound; after a while they found themselves going down the hill, and that they were behind--hand in their affairs, their estate was sensibly decaying, and then they sent to the Assyrian, to come in to their assistance, made their court to king Jareb, which some think, was one of the names of Pul, or Tiglathpileser, kings of Assyria, to whom both Israel and Judah applied for relief in their distress, hoping by an alliance with them to repair and re-establish their declining interests.

Note, Carnal hearts, in time of trouble, see their sickness and see their wound, but do not see the sin that is the cause of it, nor will be brought to acknowledge that, no, nor to acknowledge the hand of God, his mighty hand, much less his righteous hand,

in their trouble; and therefore, instead of going the next way to the Creator, who could relieve them, they take a great deal of pains to go about to creatures, who can do them no service. Those who repent not that they have offended God by their sins are loth to be beholden to him in their afflictions, but would rather seek relief any where than with him. And what is the consequence? Yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

Note, Those who neglect God, and seek to creatures for help, will certainly be disappointed; those who depend upon them for support will find them, not foundations, but broken reeds; those who depend upon them for supply will find them, not fountains, but broken cisterns; those who depend upon them for comfort and a cure will find them miserable comforters, and physicians of no value.

The kings of Assyria, whom Judah and Israel sought unto, distressed them and helped them not, 2Ch 28:16,28. Some make king Jareb to signify the great, potent, or magnificent king, for they built much upon his power; others the king that will plead, or should plead, for they built much upon his wisdom and eloquence, and in his interesting himself in their affairs. They had sent him a present (Ho 10:6), a good fee, and, having so retained him of counsel for them, they doubted not of his fidelity to them; but he deceived them, as an arm of flesh does those that trust in it, Jer 17:5,6.

2. When, to convince them of their folly, God brought greater judgments upon them, then they would at length be forced to apply to him, Ho 5:15. When he has torn as a lion,

(1.) He will leave them: I will go and return to my place, to heaven, or to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace, which is his glory. When God punishes sinners he comes out of his place (Isa 26:21); but, when he designs them favour, he returns to his place, where he waits to be gracious, upon their submission. Or he will return to his place when he has corrected them, as not

regarding them, hiding his face from them, and not taking notice of their troubles or prayers; and this for their further humiliation, till they are qualified in some measure for the returns of his favour.

(2.) He will at length work upon them, and bring them home to himself, by their afflictions, which is the thing he waits for; and then he will no longer withdraw from them. Two things are here mentioned as instances of their return:--

[1.] Their penitent confession of sin: Till they acknowledge their offence; marg. Till they be guilty, that is, till they be sensible of their guilt, and be brought to own it, and humble themselves before God for it. Note, When men begin to complain more of their sins than of their afflictions then there begins to be some hope of them; and this is that which God requires of us, when we are under his correcting hand, that we own ourselves in a fault and justly corrected.

[2.] Their humble petition for the favour of God: Till they seek my face, which, it may be expected, they will do when they are brought to the last extremity, and they have tried other helpers in vain. In their affliction they will seek me early, that is, diligently and earnestly, and with great importunity; and if they seek him thus, and be sincere in it, though it might be called seeking him late, because it was long ere they were brought to it, yet it is not too late, nay, he is pleased to call it seeking him early, so willing is he to make the best of true penitents in their return to him.

Note, When we are under the convictions of sin, and the corrections of the rod, our business is to seek God's face; we must desire the knowledge of him, and an acquaintance with him, that he may manifest himself to us, and for us, in token of his being at peace with us. And it may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God that had long gone astray from him, and kept at a distance. Therefore God for a time turns

away from us, that he may turn us to himself, and then return to us. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb [*or,* to the king *that* should plead]: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.
14 For I *will be* unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, *even* I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue *him*.

The Insincerity of Israel's Repentance

15 I will go *and* return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Hosea-6

1 Come, and let us return unto the Lord : for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

These may be taken either as the words of the prophet to the people, calling them to repentance, or as the words of the people to one another, exciting and encouraging one another to seek the Lord, and to humble themselves before him, in hopes of finding mercy with him. God had said, In their affliction they will seek me; now the prophet, and the good people his friends, would strike while the iron was hot, and set in with the convictions their neighbours seemed to be under. Note, Those who are disposed to turn to God themselves should do all they can to excite, and engage, and encourage others to return to him. Observe,

I. What it is they engage to do: "Come, and let us return to the Lord, Ho 6:1. Let us go no more to the Assyrian, nor send to king Jareb; we have had enough of that. But let us return to the Lord, return to the worship of him from our idolatries, and to our hope in him from all our confidences in the creature." Note, It is the great concern of those who have revolted from God to return to him. And those who have gone from him by consent, and in a body, drawing one another to sin, should by consent,

and in a body, return to him, which will be for his glory and their mutual edification.

II. What inducements and encouragements to do this they fasten upon, to stir up one another with.

1 The experience they had had of his displeasure: "Let us return to him, for he has torn, he has smitten. We have been torn, and it was he that tore us; we have been smitten, and it was he that smote us. Therefore let us return to him, because it is for our revolts from him that he has torn and smitten us in anger, and we cannot expect that he should be reconciled to us till we return to him; and for this end he has afflicted us thus, that we might be wrought upon to return to him. His hand will be stretched out still against us if the people turn not to him that smites them," Isa 9:12,13. Note, The consideration of the judgments of God upon us and our land, especially when they are tearing judgments, should awaken us to return to God by repentance, and prayer, and reformation.

2 The expectation they had of his favour: "He that has torn will heal us, he that has smitten will bind us up," as the skilful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bone or bleeding wound. Note, The same providence of God that afflicts his people relieves them, and the same Spirit of God that convinces the saints comforts them; that which is first a Spirit of bondage is afterwards a Spirit of adoption. This is an acknowledgement of the power of God (he can heal though we be ever so ill torn), and of his mercy (he will do it); nay, therefore he has torn that he may heal. Some think this points particularly to the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when they sought the Lord, and joined themselves to him, in the prospect of his gracious return to them in a way of mercy.

Note, It will be of great use to us, both for our support under our afflictions and for our encouragement in our repentance, to keep up good thoughts of God and of his purposes and designs

concerning us. Now this favour of God which they are here in expectation of is described in several instances:--

(1.) They promise themselves that their deliverance out of their troubles should be to them as life from the dead (Ho 6:2): "After two days he will revive us (that is, in a short time, in a day or two), and the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrefy and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, we shall see his face with comfort and it shall be reviving to us. Though he forsake for a small moment, he will gather with everlasting kindness." Note, The people of God may not only be torn and smitten, but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so, nor shall they long lie so; God will in a little time revive them; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return and adhere to him.

But this seems to have a further reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the time limited is expressed by two days and the third day, that it may be a type and figure of Christ's rising the third day, which he is said to do according to the scriptures, according to this scripture; for all the prophets testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

Let us see and admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in ordering the prophet's words so that when he foretold the deliverance of the church out of her troubles he should at the same time point out our salvation by Christ, which other salvations were both figures and fruits of; and, though they might not be aware of this mystery in the words, yet now that they are fulfilled in the letter of them in the resurrection of Christ it is a confirmation to our faith that this is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

And it is every way suitable that a prophecy of Christ's rising should be thus expressed, "He will raise us up, and we shall live," for Christ rose as the first-fruits, and we revive with him, we live through him; he rose for our justification, and all

believers are said to be risen with Christ. See Isa 26:19. And it would serve for a comfort to the church then, and an assurance that God would raise them out of their low estate, for in his fulness of time he would raise his Son from the grave, who would be the life and glory of his people Israel.

Note, A regard by faith to a rising Christ is a great support to a suffering Christian, and gives abundant encouragement to a repenting returning sinner; for he has said, Because I live, you shall live also.

(2.) That then they shall improve in the knowledge of God (Ho 6:3): Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, the Lord. Then, when God returns in mercy to his people and designs favour for them, he will, as a pledge and fruit of his favour, give them more of the knowledge of himself; the earth shall be full of that knowledge, Isa 11:9. Knowledge shall be increased, Da 12:4. All shall know God, Jer 31:34. We shall know, we shall follow to know, the Lord, (so the words are); and it may be taken as the fruit of Christ's resurrection, and the life we live in God's sight by him, that we shall have not only greater means of knowledge, but grace to improve in knowledge by those means.

Note, When God designs mercy for a people he gives them a heart to know him, Jer 24:7. Those that have risen with Christ have the spirit of wisdom and revelation given them. And if we understand our living in his sight, as the Chaldee paraphrast does, of the day of the resurrection of the dead, it fitly follows, We shall know, we shall follow to know, the Lord; for in that day we shall see him be perfected, and yet be eternally increasing. Or, taking it as we read it, If we follow on to know, we have here,

[1.] A precious blessing promised: Then shall we know, shall know the Lord, then when we return to God; those that come to God shall be brought into an acquaintance with him. When we

are designed to live in his sight, then he gives us to know him; for this is life eternal to know God, Joh 17:3.

[2.] The way and means of obtaining this blessing. We must follow on to know him. We must value and esteem the knowledge of God as the best knowledge, we must cry after it, and dig for it (Pr 2:3,4), must seek and intermeddle with all wisdom (Pr 18:1), and must proceed in our enquiries after this knowledge and our endeavours to improve in it. And, if we do the prescribed duty, we have reason to expect the promised mercy, that we shall know more and more of God, and be at last perfect in this knowledge.

(3.) That then they shall abound in divine consolations: His going forth is prepared as the morning, that is, the returns of his favour, which he had withdrawn from us when he went and returned to his place. His out-goings again are prepared and secured to us as firmly as the return of the morning after a dark night, and we expect it, as those do that wait for the morning after a long night, and are sure that it will come at the time appointed and will not fail; and the light of his countenance will be both welcome to us and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. He shall come to us, and be welcome to us, as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth, which refreshes it and makes it fruitful.

Now this looks further than their deliverance out of captivity, and, no doubt, was to have its full accomplishment in Christ, and the grace of the gospel. The Old-Testament saints followed on to know him, earnestly looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and at length the out-goings of divine grace in him, in his going forth to visit this world, were

[1.] As the morning to this earth when it is dark for he went forth as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high visited us. His going forth was prepared as the morning, for he came in the fulness of time; John Baptist was his fore-runner, nay, he was himself the bright and morning star.

[2.] As the rain to this earth when it is dry. He shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass, Ps 72:6. In him showers of blessings descend upon this world, which give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, Isa 55:10. And the favour of God in Christ is what is said of the king's favour, like the cloud of the latter rain, Pr 16:15. The grace of God in Christ is both the latter and the former rain, for by it the good work of our fruit-bearing is both begun and carried on.

2 After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

3 Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.

4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness *is* as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

5 Therefore have I hewed *them* by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments *are as* the light *that* goeth forth.

Two things, two evil things, both Judah and Ephraim are here charged with, and justly accused of:--

I. That they were not firm to their own convictions, but were unsteady, unstable as water, Ho 6:4,5. O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? O Judah! what shall I do unto thee? This is a strange expression. Can Infinite Wisdom be at a loss what to do? Can it be nonplussed, or put upon taking new measures? By no means; but God speaks after the manner of men, to show how absurd and unreasonable they were, and how just his proceedings against them were.

Let them not complain of him as harsh and severe in tearing them, and smiting them, as he has done; for what else should he do? What other course could he take with them? God had tried various methods with them (What could have been done more to his vineyard than he had done? Isa 5:4), and very loth he was to let things go to extremity; he reasons with himself (as Ho 11:9),

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? God would have done them good, but they were not qualified for it: "What shall I do unto thee? What else can I do but cast thee off, when I cannot in honour save thee?" Note, God never destroys sinners till he sees there is no other way with them. See here,

1. What their conduct was towards God: Their goodness, or kindness, was as the morning cloud. Some understand it of their kindness to themselves and their own souls, in their repentance; it is indeed mercy to ourselves to repent of our sins, but they soon retracted that kindness to themselves, undid it again, and wronged their own souls as much as ever.

But it is rather to be taken for their piety and religion; what good appeared in them sometimes, it soon vanished and disappeared again, as the morning cloud and the early dew. Such was the goodness of Israel in Jehu's time, and of Judah in Hezekiah's and Josiah's time; it was soon gone. In time of drought the morning-cloud promises rain, and the early dew is some present refreshment to the earth; but the cloud is dispersed (and hypocrites are compared to clouds without water, Jude 1:12) and the dew does not soak into the ground, but is drawn back again into the air, and the earth is parched still. What shall he do with them? Shall he accept their goodness? No, for it passes away; and factum non dicitur quod non perseverat--that which does not continue can scarcely be said to be done.

Note, That goodness will never be either pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves which is as the morning cloud and the early dew. When men promise fair and do not perform, when they begin well in religion and do not hold on, when they leave their first love and their first works, or, though they do not quite cast off religion, are yet unsteady, uneven, and inconstant in it, then is their goodness as the morning cloud and the early dew.

2. What course God had taken with them (Ho 6:5): "Therefore, because they were so rough and ill-shapen, I have hewn them by the prophets, as timber or stone is hewn for use; I have slain them

by the words of my mouth." What the prophets did was done by the word of God in their mouths, which never returned void. By it they thought themselves slain, were ready to say that the prophets killed them, or cut them to the heart when they dealt faithfully with them.

(1.) The prophets hewed them by convictions of sin, endeavouring to cut off their transgressions from them. They were uneven in religion (Ho 6:4), therefore God hewed them. The hearts of sinners are not only as stone, but as rough stone, which requires a great deal of pains to bring it into shape, or as knotty timber, that is not squared without a great deal of difficulty; ministers' work is to hew them, and God by the minister hews them, for with the froward will he show himself froward. And there are those whom ministers must rebuke sharply; every word should cut, and though the chips fly in the face of the workman, though the reproved fly in the face of the reprover and reckon him an enemy because he tells the truth, yet he goes on with his work.

(2.) They slew them by the denunciations of wrath, foretelling that they should be slain, as Ezekiel is said to destroy the city when he prophesied of the destruction of it, Eze 43:3. And God accomplished that which was foretold: "I have slain them by my judgments, according to the words of my mouth."

Note, The word of God will be the death either of the sin or of the sinner, a savour either of life unto life or of death unto death. Some read it, "I have hewn the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth, that is, I have employed them in laborious service for the people's good, which has wasted their strength; they have spent themselves, and hews away all their spirits, in their work, and in hazardous service, which has cost many of them their lives."

Note, Ministers are the tools which God makes use of in working upon people; and, though with many they labour in vain, yet God will reckon for the wearing out of his tools.

(3.) God was hereby justified in the severest proceedings against them afterwards. His prophets had taken a great deal of pains with them, had admonished them of their sin and warned them of their danger, but the means used had not the desired effect; some good impressions perhaps were made for the present, but they wore off, and passed away as the morning cloud, and now they cannot charge God with severity if he bring upon them the miseries threatened. The prophet turns to him and acknowledges, Thy judgments are as the light that goes forth, evidently just and righteous. Note, Though sinners be not reclaimed by the pains that ministers take with them, yet thereby God will be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges. See Mt 11:17-19.

6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

That they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, Ho 6:6,7. Here observe,

1. What the covenant was that God made with them, and upon what terms they should obtain his favour and be accepted of him (Ho 6:6): I desired mercy and not sacrifice (that is, rather than sacrifice), and insisted upon the knowledge of God more than upon burnt-offerings. Mercy here is the same word which in Ho 6:4 is rendered goodness--chesed--piety, sanctity; it is put for all practical religion; it is the same with charity in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and this accompanied with and flowing from the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in his word, a firm belief that he is, and is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him, a good affection to divine things guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation; this is that which God by his covenant requires, and not sacrifice and offering. This is fully explained, Jer 7:22,23.

I spoke not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings (that was the smallest of the matters I spoke to them of, and on which the

least stress was laid), but this I said, Obey my voice, Mic 6:6-8. To love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt offering and sacrifice, Mk 12:33,Ps 51:16,17. Not but that sacrifice and offering were required, and to be paid, and had their use, and, when they were accompanied with mercy and the knowledge of God, were acceptable to him, but, without them, God regarded them not, he despised them, Isa 1:10,11.

Perhaps this is mentioned here to show a difference between the God whom they deserted and the gods whom they went over to. The true God aimed at nothing but that they should be good men, and live good lives for their own good, and the ceremony of honouring him with sacrifices was one of the smallest matters of his law; whereas the false gods required that only; let their priests and altars be regaled with sacrifices and offerings, and the people might live as they listed. What fools were those then that left a God who aimed at giving his worshippers a new nature, for gods who aimed at nothing but making themselves a new name!

It is mentioned likewise to show that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices (I will not reprove thee for them, Ps 50:8), but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, among them (Ho 4:1), and to teach us all that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful, and, separate from that, the performances of devotion, though ever so plausible, ever so costly, are of no account.

Our Saviour quotes this to show that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals whenever they come in competition, and to justify himself in eating with publicans and sinners, because it was in mercy to the souls of men, and in healing on the sabbath day, because it was in mercy to the bodies of men, to which the ceremony of singularity in eating and the sabbath-rest must give way, Mt 9:13,12:7.

2. How little they had regarded this covenant, though it was so well ordered in all things, though they, and not God, would be the gainers by it. See here what came of it.

(1.) In general, they broke with God, and proved unfaithful; there were good things committed to them to keep, the jewels of mercy and piety, and the knowledge of God, in the cabinet of sacrifice and burnt-offering, but they betrayed their trust, kept the cabinet, but pawned the jewels for the gratification of a base lust, and this is that for which God has justly a quarrel with them (Ho 6:7): They, like men, have transgressed the covenant, that covenant which God made with them; they have broken the conditions of it, and so forfeited the benefit of it. By casting off mercy and the knowledge of God, and other instances of disobedience,

[1.] They had contracted the guilt of perjury and covenant-breaking; they were like men that transgress a covenant by which they had solemnly bound themselves, which is a thing that all the world cries out shame on; men that have done so deserve not again to be valued, or trusted, or dealt with. "There, in that thing, they have dealt treacherously against me; they have been perfidious, base, and false children, in whom is no faith, though I depended upon their being children that would not lie."

[2.] In this they had but acted like themselves, like men, who are generally false and fickle, and in whose nature (their corrupt nature) it is to deal treacherously; all men are liars, and they are like the rest of that degenerate race, all gone aside, Ps 14:2,3. They have transgressed the covenant like men (like the Gentiles that transgressed the covenant of nature), like mean men (the word here used is sometimes put for men of low degree); they have dealt deceitfully, like base men that have no sense of honour.

[3.] Herein they trod in the steps of our first parents: They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant (so it might very well be read); as he transgressed the covenant of innocency, so they

transgressed the covenant of grace, so treacherously, so foolishly; there in paradise he violated his engagements to God, and there in Canaan, another paradise, they violated their engagements. And by their treacherous dealing they, like Adam, have ruined themselves and theirs.

Note, Sin is so much the worse the more there is in it of the similitude of Adam's transgression, Ro 5:14.

[4.] Low thoughts of God and of his authority and favour were at the bottom of all this; for so some read it: They have transgressed the covenant, as of a man, as if it had been but the covenant of a man, that stood upon even ground with them, as if the commands of the covenant were but like those of a man like themselves, and the kindness conveyed by it no more valuable than that of a man. There is something sacred and binding in a man's covenant (as the apostle shows, Ga 3:15), but much more in the covenant of God, which yet they made small account of; and there in that covenant they dealt treacherously, promised fair, but performed nothing. Dealing treacherously with God is here called dealing treacherously against him, for it is both an affront and an opposition. Deserters are traitors, and will be so treated; the revolting heart is a rebellious heart.

(2.) Some particular instances of their treachery are here given: There they dealt treacherously, that is, in the places hereafter named

[1.] Look on the other side Jordan, to the country which lay most exposed to the insults of the neighbouring nations, and where therefore the people were concerned to keep themselves under the divine protection, and yet there you will find the most daring provocations of the divine Majesty, Ho 6:8. Gilead, which lay in the lot of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, was a city of the workers of iniquity. Wickedness was the trade that was driven there; the country was called Gilead, but it was all called a city, because they were all as it were incorporated in one society of rebels against God.

Or (as most think) Ramoth Gilead is the city here meant, one of the three cities of refuge on the other side Jordan, and a Levites' city; the inhabitants of it, though of the sacred tribe, were workers of iniquity, contrived it, and practised it.

Note, It is bad indeed when a Levites' city is a city of those that work iniquity, when those that are to preach good doctrine live bad lives. Particularly it is polluted with blood, as if that were a sin which the wicked Levites were in a special manner guilty of. In popish countries the clergy are observed to be the most bloody persecutors.

Or, as it was a city of refuge, by abusing the power it had to judge of murders it became polluted with blood. They would, for a bribe, protect those that were guilty of wilful murder, whom they ought to have put to death, and would deliver those to the avenger of blood who were guilty but of chance-medley, if they were poor and had nothing to give them; and both these ways they were polluted with blood. Note, Blood defiles the land where it is shed, and where no inquisition is made or no vengeance taken for it. See how the best institutions, that are ever so well designed to keep the balance even between justice and mercy, are capable of being abused and perverted to the manifest prejudice and violation of both.

[2.] Look among those whose business it was to minister in holy things, and they were as bad as the worst and as vile as the vilest (Ho 6:9): The company of priests are so, not here and there one that is the scandal of his order, but the whole order and body of them, the priests go all one way by consent, with one shoulder (as the word is), one and all; and they make one another worse, more daring, and fierce, and impudent, in sin, more crafty and more cruel. A company of priests will say and do that in conspiracy which none of them would dare to say or do singly. The companies of priests were as troops of robbers, as banditti, or gangs of highwaymen, that cut men's throats to get their money.

First, They were cruel and blood-thirsty. They murder those that they have a pique against, or that stand in their way; nothing less will satisfy them.

Secondly, They were cunning. They laid wait for men, that they might have a fair opportunity to compass their mischievous malicious designs; thus the company of priests laid wait for Christ to take him, saying, Not on the feast-day.

Thirdly, They were concurring as one man: They murder in the way; in the highway, where travellers should be safe, there they murder by consent, aiding and abetting one another in it. See how unanimous wicked people are in doing mischief; and should not good people be so then in doing good? They murder in the way to Shechem (so the margin reads it, as a proper name) such as were going to Jerusalem (for that way Shechem lay) to worship. Or in the way to Shechem (some think) means in the same manner that their father Levi, with Simeon his brother, murdered the Shechemites (Ge 34:1-31), by fraud and deceit; and some understand it of their destroying the souls of men by drawing them to sin.

Fourthly, They did it with contrivance: They commit lewdness; the word signifies such wickedness as is committed with deliberation, and of malice prepense, as we say. The more there is of device and design in sin the worse it is.

[3.] Look into the body of the people, take a view of the whole house of Israel, and they are all alike (Ho 6:10): I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel, and, though it be ever so artfully managed, God discovers it, and will discover it to them; and who can deny that which God himself says that he has seen? There is the whoredom of Ephraim, both corporal and spiritual whoredom; there it is too plain to be denied. Note, The sin of sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, has enough in it to make them tremble, for it is a horrible thing, it is amazing,

and it is threatening, enough to make them blush, for Israel is thereby defiled and rendered odious in the sight of God.

[4.] Look into Judah, and you find them sharing with Israel (Ho 6:11): Also, O Judah! he has set a harvest for thee; thou must be reckoned with as well as Ephraim; thou art ripe for destruction too, and the time, even the set time, of thy destruction is hastening on, when thou that hast ploughed iniquity, and sown wickedness, shalt reap the same. The general judgment is compared to a harvest (Mt 13:39), so are particular judgments, Joe 3:13,Re 14:15. I have appointed a time to call thee to account, even when I returned the captivity of my people, that is, when those captives of Judah which were taken by the men of Israel were restored, in obedience to the command of God sent them by Oded the prophet, 2Ch 28:8-15. When God spared them that time he set them a harvest, that is, he designed to reckon with them another time for all together. Note, Preservations from present judgments, if a good use be not made of them, are but reservations for greater judgments.

8 Gilead *is* a city of them that work iniquity, *and is* polluted with blood.

9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, *so* the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

10 I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: there *is* the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.

11 Also, O Judah, he hath set a harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Hosea-7

Israel's Iniquity and Rebellion

1 When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, *and* the troop of robbers spoileth without.

Some take away the last words of the foregoing chapter, and make them the beginning of this: "When I returned, or would have returned, the captivity of my people, when I was about to

come towards them in ways of mercy, even when I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim (the country and common people) was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, the court and the chief city." Now, in these verses, we may observe,

I. A general idea given of the present state of Israel, Ho 7:1,2. See how the case now stood with them.

1. God graciously designed to do well for them: I would have healed Israel. Israel were sick and wounded; their disease was dangerous and malignant, and likely to be fatal, Isa 1:6. But God offered to be their physician, to undertake the cure, and there was balm in Gilead sufficient to recover the health of the daughter of his people; their case was bad, but it was not desperate, nay, it was hopeful, when God would have healed Israel.

(1.) He would have reformed them, would have separated between them and their sins, would have purged out the corruptions that were among them, by his laws and prophets.

(2.) He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and restored to them their peace and prosperity. Several healing attempts were made, and their declining state seemed sometimes to be in a hopeful way of recovery; but their own folly put them back again.

Note, If sinful miserable souls be not healed and helped, but perish in their sin and misery, they cannot lay the blame on God, for he both could and would have healed them; he offered to take the ruin under his hand. And there are some special seasons when God manifests his readiness to heal a distempered church and nation, now and then a hopeful crisis, which, if carefully watched and improved, might, even when the case is very bad, turn the scale for life and health.

2. They stood in their own light and put a bar in their own door. When God would have healed them, when they bade fair for reformation and peace, then their iniquity was discovered and their wickedness, which stopped that current of God's favours, and undid all again.

(1.) Then, when their case came to be examined and enquired into, in order to their cure, that wickedness which had been concealed and palliated was found out; not that it was ever hid from God, but he speaks after the manner of men; as a surgeon, when he probes a wound in order to the cure of it and finds that it touches the vitals and is incurable, goes no further in his endeavour to cure it, so, when God came down to see the case of Israel (as the expression is, Ge 18:21), with kind intentions towards them, he found their wickedness so very flagrant, and them so hardened in it, so impudent and impenitent, that he could not in honour show them the favour he designed them.

Note, Sinners are not healed because they would not be healed. Christ would have gathered them, and they would not.

(2.) Then, when some endeavours were used to reform and reclaim them, that wickedness which had been restrained and kept under broke out; and from God's steps towards the healing of them they took occasion to be so much the more provoking. When endeavours were used to reform them vice grew more impetuous, more outrageous, and swelled so much the higher, as a stream when it is damned up. When they began to prosper they grew more proud, wanton, and secure, and so stopped the progress of their cure.

Note, It is sin that turns away good things from us when they are coming towards us; and it is the folly and ruin of multitudes that, when God would do well for them, they do ill for themselves. And what was it that did them this mischief? In one word, they commit falsehood; they worship idols (so some), defraud one another (so others), or, rather, they dissemble with God in their professions of repentance and regard to him. They say that they

are desirous to be healed by him, and, in order to that, willing to be ruled by him; but they lie unto him with their mouth and flatter him with their tongue.

3. A practical disbelief of God's omniscience and government was at the bottom of all their wickedness (Ho 7:2): "They consider not in their hearts, they never say it to their own hearts, never think of this, that I remember all their wickedness." As if God could not see it, though he is all eye, or did not heed it, though his name is Jealous, or had forgotten it, though he is an eternal mind that can never be unmindful, or would not reckon for it, though he is the Judge of heaven and earth. This is the sinner's atheism; as good say that there is no God as say that he is either ignorant or forgetful, that there is none that judges in the earth as that he remembers not the things he is to give judgment upon. It is a high affront they put upon God; it is a damning cheat they put upon themselves; they say, The Lord shall not see, Ps 94:7. They cannot but know that God remembers all their works; they have been told it many a time; nay, if you ask them, they cannot but own it, and yet they do not consider it; they do not think of it when they should, and with application to themselves and their own works, else they would not, they durst not, do as they do.

But the time will come when those who thus deceive themselves shall be undeceived: "Now their own doings have beset them about, that is, they have come at length to such a pitch of wickedness that their sins appear on every side of them; all their neighbours see how bad they are, and can they think that God does not see it?" Or, rather, "The punishment of their doings besets them about; they are surrounded and embarrassed with troubles, so that they cannot get out, by which it appears that the sins they smart for are before my face, not only that I have seen them, but that I am displeased at them;" for, till God by pardoning our sins has cast them behind his back, they are still before his face. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince those who do not now consider it that he remembers all their works.

4. God had begun to contend with them by his judgments, in earnest of what was further coming: The thief comes in, and the troop of robbers spoils without. Some take this as an instance of their wickedness, that they robbed and spoiled one another. Nec hospes ab hospite tutus--The host and the guest stand in fear of each other. It seems rather to be a punishment of their sin; they were infested with secret thieves among themselves, that robbed their houses and shops and picked their pockets, and troops of robbers, foreign invaders, that with open violence spoiled abroad; so far was Israel from being healed that they had fresh wounds given them daily by robbers and spoilers; and all this the effect of sin, all to punish them for robbing God, Isa 42:24,Mal 3:8,11.

2 And they consider not in their hearts *that* I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

A particular account of the sins of the court, of the king and princes, and those about them, and the tokens of God's displeasure that they were under for them.

1. Their king and princes were pleased with the wickedness and profaneness of their subjects, who were emboldened thereby to be so much them ore wicked (Ho 7:3): They make the king and princes glad with their wickedness. It pleased them to see the people conform to their wicked laws and examples, in the worship of their idols, and other instances of impiety and immorality, and to hear them flatter and applaud them in their wicked ways. When Herod saw that his wickedness pleased the people he proceeded further in it, much more will the people do so when they see that it pleases the prince, Ac 12:3.

Particularly, they made them glad with their lies, with the lying praises with which they crowned the favourites of the prince and the lying calumnies and censures with which they blackened those whom they knew the princes had a dislike to. Those who show themselves pleased with slanders and ill-natured stories

shall never want those about them who will fill their ears with such stories. Pr 29:12, If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, and will make him glad with their lies.

2. Drunkenness and revelling abound much at the court, Ho 7:5. The day of our king was a merry day with them, either his birth-day or his inauguration-day, of which it is probable that they had an anniversary observation, or perhaps it was some holiday of his appointing, which was therefore called his day; on that day the princes met to drink the king's health, and got him among them, to be merry, and made him sick with bottles of wine. It should seem the king did not ordinarily drink to excess, but he was not upon a high day brought to it by the artifices of the princes, tempted by the goodness of the wine, the gaiety of the company, or the healths they urged; and so little was he used to it that it made him sick; and it is justly charged as a crime, as crimen læsæ majestatis--treason, upon those who thus imposed upon him and made him sick; nor would it serve for an excuse that it was the day of their king, but was rather an aggravation of the crime, that, whey they pretended to do him honour, they dishonoured him to the highest degree.

If it is a great affront and injury to a common person to make him drunk, and there is a woe to those that do it (Hab 2:15), much more to a crowned head; for the greater any man's dignity is the greater disgrace it is to him to be drunk. It is not for kings, O Lemuel! it is not for kings, to drink wine, Pr 31:4,5. See what a prejudice the sin of drunkenness is to a man, to a king.

(1.) In his health; it made him sick. It is a force upon nature; and strange it is by what charms men, otherwise rational enough, can be drawn to that which besides the offence it gives to God, and the damage it does to their spiritual and eternal welfare, is a present disorder and distemper to their own bodies.

(2.) In his honour; for, when he was thus intoxicated, he stretched out his hand with scorners; then he that was entrusted with the

government of a kingdom lost the government of himself, and so far forgot,

[1.] The dignity of a king that he made himself familiar with players and buffoons, and those whose company was a scandal.

[2.] The duty of a king that he joined in confederacy with atheists, and the profane scoffers at religion, whom he ought to have silenced and put to shame; he sat in the seat of the scornful, of those that had arrived at the highest pitch of impiety; he struck in with them, said as they said, did as they did, and exerted his power, and stretched forth the hand of his government, in concurrence with them. Goodness and good men are often made the song of the drunkards (Ps 69:12,Ps 35:16); but woe unto thee, O land! when thy king is such a child as to stretch forth his hand with those that make them so, Ec 10:16.

3. Adultery and uncleanness prevailed much among the courtiers. This is spoken of Ho 7:4,6,7, and the charge of drunkenness comes in in the midst of this article; for wine is oil to the fire of lust, Pr 23:33. Those that are inflamed with fleshly lusts, that are adulterers (Ho 7:4), are here again and again compared to an oven heated by the baker (Ho 7:4): They have made ready their heart like an oven (Ho 7:6); they are all hot as an oven, Ho 7:7. Note,

(1.) An unclean heart is like an oven heated; and the unclean lusts and affections of it are as the fuel that makes it hot. It is an inward fire, it keeps the heat within itself; so adulterers and fornicators secretly burn in lust, as the expression is, Ro 1:27. The heat of the oven is an intense heat, especially as it is here described; he that heats it stirs up the fire, and ceases not from raising it up, till the bread is ready to be put in, being kneaded and leavened, all which only signifies that they are like an oven when it is at the hottest; nay, when it is too hot for the baker (so the learned Dr. Pocock), when it is hotter than he would have it, so that the raiser up of the fire ceases as long as while the dough that is kneaded

is in the fermenting, that the heat may abate a little. Thus fiery hot are the lusts of an unclean heart.

(2.) The unclean wait for an opportunity to compass their wicked desires; having made ready their heart like an oven, they lie in wait to catch their prey. The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Job 24:15. Their baker sleeps all the night, but in the morning it burns as a flaming fire. As the baker, having kindled a fire in his oven and laid sufficient fuel to it, goes to bed, and sleeps all night, and in the morning finds his oven well heated, and ready for his purpose, so these wicked people, when they have laid some wicked plot, and formed a design for the gratifying of some covetous, ambitious, revengeful, or unclean lusts, have their hearts so fully set in them to do evil that, though they may stifle them for a while, yet the fire of corrupt affections is still glowing within, and, as soon as ever there is an opportunity for it, their purposes which they have compassed and imagined break out into overt acts, as a fire flames out when it has vent given it. Thus they are all hot as an oven.

Note, Lust in the heart is like fire in an oven, puts it into a heat; but the day is coming when those who thus make themselves like a fiery oven with their own vile affections, if that fire be not extinguished by divine grace, shall be made as a fiery oven by divine wrath (Ps 21:9), when the day comes that shall burn as an oven, Mal 4:1.

4. They resist the proper methods of reformation and redress: They have devoured their judges, those few good judges that were among them, that would have put out these fires with which they were heated; they fell foul upon them, and would not suffer them to do justice, but were ready to stone them, and perhaps did so; or, as some think, they provoked God to deprive them of the blessing of magistracy and to leave all in confusion: All their kings have fallen one after another, and their families with them, which could not but put the kingdom into confusion, crumble it into contending parties, and occasion a great deal of bloodshed.

There are heart-burnings among them; they are hot as an oven with rage and malice at one another, and this occasions the devouring of their judges, the falling of their kings. For the transgressions of a land many are the princes thereof, Pr 28:2. But in the midst of all this trouble and disorder there is none among them that calls unto God, that sees his hand stretched out against them in these judgments, and deprecates the strokes of it, none, or next to none, that stir up themselves to take hold on God, Isa 64:7. Note, Those are not only heated with sin, but hardened in sin, that continue to live without prayer even when they are in trouble and distress.

4 They *are* all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, *who* ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

5 In the day of our king, the princes have made *him* sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: *there is* none among them that calleth unto me.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

Having seen how vicious and corrupt the court was, we now come to enquire how it is with the country, and we find that to be no better; and no marvel if the distemper that has so seized the head affect the whole body, so that there is no soundness in it; the iniquity of Ephraim is discovered, as well as the sin of Samaria, of the people as well as the princes, of which here are divers instances.

I. They were not peculiar and entire for God, as they should have been, Ho 7:8.

1. They did not distinguish themselves from the heathen, as God had distinguished them: Ephraim, he has mingled himself among the people, has associated with them, and conformed himself to them, and has in a manner confounded himself with them and

lost his character among them. God had said, The people shall dwell alone; but they mingled themselves with the heathen and learned their works, Ps 16:35. They went up and down among the heathen, to beg help of one of them against another (so some); whereas, if they had kept close to God, they would not have needed the help of any of them.

2. They were not entirely devoted to God: Ephraim is a cake not turned, and so is burnt on one side and dough on the other side, but good for nothing on either side. As in Ahab's time, so now, they halted between God and Baal; sometimes they seemed zealous for God, but at other times as hot for Baal. Note, It is sad to think how many, who, after a sort, profess religion, are made up of contraries and inconsistencies, as a cake not turned, a constant self-contradiction, and always in one extreme or the other.

II. They were strangely insensible of the judgments of God, which they were under, and which threatened their ruin, Ho 7:9. Observe,

1 The condition they were in. God was not to them, in his judgments, as a moth and as rottenness; they were silently and slowly drawing towards the ruin of their state partly by the encroachments of foreigners upon them: Strangers have devoured his strength, and eaten him up; they have wasted his wealth and treasure, lessened his numbers, and consumed the fruits of the earth. Some devoured them by open wars (as 2Ki 13:7, when the king of Syria made them like the dust by threshing), others by pretending treaties of peace and amity, in which they extorted abundance of wealth from them, and made them pay dearly for that which did them no good, but which afterwards they paid more dearly for, as 2Ki 16:9. This Ephraim got by mingling with the heathen, and suffering them to mingle with him; they devoured that which he rested upon and supported himself with.

Note, Those that make not God their strength (Ps 52:7) make that their strength which will soon be devoured by strangers. They were thus reduced partly by their own mal-administrations among themselves: Yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him (are sprinkled upon him, so the word is), that is, the sad symptoms of a decaying declining state, which is waxing old and ready to vanish away, and the effects of trouble and vexation. Cura facit canos--Care turns gray. The almond-tree does not as yet flourish, but it begins to turn colour, which speaks aloud to him that the evil days are coming, and the years of which he shall say, I have no pleasure in them, Ec 12:1,5.

2. Their regardlessness of these warnings: He knows it not; he is not aware of the hand of God gone out against him; it is lifted up, but he will not see, Isa 26:11. He does not know how near his ruin is, and takes no care to prevent it. Note, Stupidity under less judgments is a presage of greater coming.

III. They went on frowardly in their wicked ways, and were not reclaimed by the rebukes they were under (Ho 7:10): The pride of Israel still testifies to his face, as it had done before (Ho 5:5); under humbling providences their hearts were still unhumbled, their lusts unmortified; and it is through the pride of their countenance that they will not seek after God (Ps 10:4); they do not return to the Lord their God by repentance and reformation, nor do they seek him by faith and prayer for all this; though they suffer for going astray from him, though it can never be well with them till they come back to him, and though they have in vain sought to others for relief, yet they think not of applying to God.

IV. They were infatuated in their counsels, and took very wrong methods when they were in distress (Ho 7:11,12): Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart. To be harmless as a dove, without gall, and not to hurt or injure others, is commendable; but to be sottish as a dove, without heart, that knows not how to defend herself and provide for her own safety, is a shame.

1 The silliness of this dove is,

(1.) That she laments not the loss of her young that are taken from her, but will make her nest again in the same place; so they have their people carried away by the enemy, and are not affected with it, but continue their dealings with those that deal barbarously with them.

(2.) That she is easily enticed by the bait into the net, and has no heart, no understanding, to discern her danger, as many other fowls do, Pr 1:17. She hastes to the snare, and knows not that it is for her life (Pr 7:23); so they were drawn into leagues with neighbouring nations that were their ruin.

(3.) That, when she is frightened, she has not courage to stay in the dove-house, where she is safe, and under the careful protection of her owner, but flutters and hovers, seeking shelter first in one place, then in another, and thereby exposes herself so much the more; so this people, when they were in distress, sought not to God, did not fly like the doves to their windows where they might have been secured from all the birds of prey that struck at them, but threw themselves out of God's protection, and then called to Egypt to help them, and went in all haste to Assyria, to seek for that aid in vain which they might, by repentance and prayer, have found nearer home, in their God.

Note, It is a silly senseless thing for those who have a God in heaven to trust to creatures for the refuge and relief which are to be had in him only; and those that do so are a people of no understanding, they are without heart. Now,

2. See what becomes of this silly dove (Ho 7:12): When they shall go to Egypt and Assyria, I will spread my net upon them. Note, Those that will not abide by the mercy of God must expect to be pursued by the justice of God. Here,

(1.) They are ensnared: "I will spread my net upon them, bring them into straits, that they may see their folly and think of

returning." Note, It is common for those that go away from God to find snares where they expected shelters.

(2.) They are humbled; they soar upward, proud of their foreign alliances and confiding in them; but I will bring them down, let them fly ever so high, as the fowls of heaven, that are shot flying. Note, God can and will bring those down that exalt themselves as the eagle, Ob 1:3,4.

(3.) They are made to smart for their folly: I will chastise them. Note, The disappointments we meet with in the creature, when we put a confidence in it, are a necessary chastisement, or discipline, that we may learn to be wiser another time.

(4.) In all this the scripture is fulfilled. It is as their congregation has heard; they have been many a time told by the word of God, read, and preached, and sung, in their religious assemblies, that "vain is the help of man, that in the son of man there is no help; they have heard both from the law and from the prophets what judgments God would bring upon them for their wickedness; and as they have heard now they shall see, they shall feel." Note, It concerns us to take notice of the word of God which we hear from time to time in the congregation, and to be governed by it, for we must shortly be judged by it; and it will justify God in the condemnation of sinners, and aggravate it to them, that they have had plain public warning given them of it; it is what their congregation has heard many a time, but they would not take warning. "Son, remember thou wast told what would come of it; and now thou seest they were not vain words." See Zec 1:6.

9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this.

11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

They revolted from God and rebelled against him, notwithstanding the various methods he took to retain them in their allegiance, Ho 7:13-15. Here observe,

1. How kindly and tenderly God had dealt with them, as a gracious sovereign towards a people dear unto him, and whose prosperity he had much at heart. He had redeemed them (Ho 7:13), brought them, at first, out of the land of Egypt, and, since, delivered them out of many a distress. He had bound and strengthened their arms, Ho 7:15. When their power was weakened, like an arm broken or out of joint, God set it again, and bound it, as a surgeon does a broken bone, to make it knit.

God had given Israel victories over the Syrians (2Ki 13:16,17), had restored their coast (2Ki 14:25,26), had girded them with strength for battle. "Though I have chastened them" (so the margin reads it), "sometimes corrected them for their faults and thereby taught them, at other times strengthened their arms and relieved them, though I have used both fair means and foul to work upon them, it was all to no purpose; they were mercy-proof and judgment-proof."

2. How impudent their conduct had been towards him notwithstanding, which is described here for the conviction and humiliation of all those who have gone on in any way of wickedness, that they may see how exceedingly sinful their sin is, how heinous, how the God of heaven interprets it, how he resents it.

(1.) He had courted them to him, and taken them into covenant with himself; but they fled from him, as if he had been their dangerous enemy who had always approved himself their faithful friend. They wandered from him, as the silly dove from her nest, for those who forsake God will find no rest nor settlement in the creature, but wander endlessly. They fled from

God when they forsook the worship of him, and ran away from his service, and withdrew themselves from their allegiance to him.

(2.) He had given them his laws, which were all holy, just, and good, by which he designed to keep them in the right way; but they transgressed against him; they sinned with a high hand and a stiff neck, wilfully and presumptuously (so the words signifies); they broke through the fence of the divine law, and therein thwarted the design of the divine love.

(3.) He had made known his truths to them, and given them all possible proofs of the sincerity of his good-will to them; and yet they spoke lies against him. They set up false gods in competition with him; they denied his providence and power; thus they belied the Lord, Jer 5:12. They rejected his messages sent them by his prophets, and said that they should have peace, though they went on in sin, directly against what he said. In their hypocritical professions of religion, shows of devotion, and promises of amendment, they lied to the Lord, which he took as lying against him.

(4.) He was their rightful Lord and King, and had always ruled in Jacob with equity, and for the public good; and yet they rebelled against him, Ho 7:14. They not only went off from him, but took up arms against him, would have deposed him if they could and set up another.

(5.) He designed well for them, but they imagined mischief against him, Ho 7:15. Sin is a mischievous thin; it is mischief against God, for it is treason against his crown and dignity; not that the sinners can do any thing to hurt their Creator (as one of the ancients observes on these words), but what they can they do; and it is so much the worse when it is not done by surprise, or through inadvertency, but designedly and with contrivance. The Jews have a saying, which Dr. Pocock quotes here, The thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression. The designing of mischief is doing it, in God's account. Compassing and

imagining the death of the king is treason by our law. Those that imagine an evil thing, though it prove a vain thing (Ps 2:1), will be reckoned with for the imagination.

3. How they shall be punished for this (Ho 7:13): Woe unto them! for they have fled from me. Note, Those who flee from God have woes sent after them, and are, without doubt, in a woeful case. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them; the word of God says, Woe to them! And observe what follows immediately, Destruction unto them! Note, The woes of God's word have real effects; destruction makes them good. The judgments of his hand shall verify the judgments of his mouth. Those whom he curses, and pronounces woeful, they are cursed, they are woeful indeed.

VI. Their shows of devotion and reformation were but shows, and in them they did but mock God.

1. They pretended devotion, but it was not sincere, Ho 7:14. When the hand of God had gone forth against them they made some sort of application to him. When he slew them, then they sought him. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. But it was all in hypocrisy.

(1.) When they were under personal troubles, and called upon God in secret, they were not sincere in that: They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds. When they were chastened with pain upon their beds, and the multitude of their bones with strong pains, perhaps ill of the wounds they received in war, they cried, and groaned, and complained in the forms of devotion, and, it may be, they used many good words, proper enough for the circumstances they were in; they cried, God help us, and, Lord, look upon us.

But they did not cry with their heart, and therefore God reckons it as no crying to him. Moses is said to cry unto God when he spoke not a word, only his heart prayed with faith and fervency, Ex 14:15. These made a great noise, and said a great deal, and

yet did not cry to God, because their hearts were not right with him, not subjected to his will, devoted to his honour, nor employed in his service. To pray is to lift up the soul to God, this is the essence of prayer. If this be not done, words, though ever so well chosen, are but wind; but, if it be, it is an acceptable prayer, though the groanings cannot be uttered. Note, Those do not pray to God at all that do not pray in the spirit. Nay, God is so far from approving their prayer and accepting it that he calls it howling.

Some think it intimates the noisiness of their prayers (they cried to God as they used to cry to Baal, when they thought he must be awakened), or the brutish violent passions which they vented in their prayers; they snarled at the stone, and howled under the whip, but regarded not the hand. Or it denotes that their hypocritical prayers were so far from being pleasing to God that they were offensive to him; he was angry at their prayers. The songs of the temple shall be howlings, Am 8:3. God will be so far from pitying them that he will justly laugh at their calamity, who have so often laughed at his authority.

(2.) When they were under public troubles, and met together to implore God's favour, in that also they were hypocritical; they assembled themselves, for fashion-sake, because it was usual to call a solemn assembly in times of general mourning, Zep 2:1. But it was only to pray for corn and wine that they came together, which were the things they wanted, and feared being deprived of by the want of rain, the judgment they now laboured under. They did not pray for the favour or grace of God, that God would give them repentance, pardon their sins, and turn away his wrath, but only that he would not take away from them their corn and wine. Note, Carnal hearts, in their prayers to God, covet temporal mercies only, and dread and deprecate no other but temporal judgments, for they have no sense of any other.

2. They pretended reformation, but neither was that sincere, Ho 7:16. Here is,

(1.) The sin of Israel: They return, that is, they make as if they would return; they pretend to repent and amend their doings, but they make nothing of it; they do not come home to God nor return to their allegiance, whereas God says (Jer 4:1), If thou wilt return, O Israel! return to me; do not only turn towards me, but return to me. This dissimulation of theirs makes them like a deceitful bow, which looks as if it were fit for business, and is bent and drawn accordingly, but, when strength comes to be laid to it, either the bow or the string breaks, and the arrow, instead of flying to the mark, drops at the archer's foot. Such were their essays towards repentance and reformation.

(2.) The sin of the princes of Israel. That which is charged upon them is the rage of their tongue, quarrelling with God and his providence and with all about them when they are crossed. Princes think they may say what they will, and that it is their prerogative to huff and bluster, to curse and rail, and to call names at their pleasure, but let them know there is a God above them that will call them to an account for the rage of their tongues and make their own tongues to fall upon them.

(3.) The punishment of Israel and their princes for their sin. As for the princes, they shall fall by the sword either of their enemies or of their own people, some by one and some by the other; and this shall be their derision, this is that for which they shall be derided in the land of Egypt, when they flee to the Egyptians for succour, Ho 7:11. Their sin and punishment shall make them a laughing-stock to all about them. Note, Those that are treacherous and deceitful in their dealings with God, and passionate and outrageous in their conduct towards men, will justly be made a derision to their neighbours, for they make themselves ridiculous.

14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, *and* they rebel against me.

15 Though I have bound *and* strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

16 They return, *but* not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

Hosea-8

The Rebuke of Israel's Idolatry

1 *Set* the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come* as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

The reproofs and threatenings here are introduced with an order to the prophet to set the trumpet to his mouth (Ho 8:1), thus to call a solemn assembly, that all might take notice of what he had to deliver and take warning by it. He must sound an alarm, must, in God's name, proclaim war with this rebellious nation. An enemy is coming with speed and fury to seize their land, and he must awaken them to expect it. Thus the prophet must do the part of a watchman, that was by sound of trumpet to call the besieged to stand to their arms, when he saw the besiegers making their attack, Eze 33:3. The prophet must lift up his voice like a trumpet (Isa 58:1), and the people must hearken to the sound of the trumpet, Jer 6:17. Now,

I. Here is a general charge drawn up against them as sinners, as rebels and traitors against their sovereign Lord.

1. They have transgressed my covenant, Ho 8:1. They have not only transgressed the command (every sin does that), but they have transgressed the covenant; they have been guilty of such sins as break the original contract; they have revolted from their allegiance, and violated the marriage-covenant by their spiritual whoredom; they have, in effect, declared that they will be no longer God's people, nor take him for their God; that is transgressing the covenant. They have not only done foolishly, but have dealt deceitfully.

2. They have trespassed against my law in many particular instances. God's law is the rule by which we are to walk; and this is the malignity of sin, that it trespasses upon the bounds set us by that law.

3. They have cast off the thing that is good. They have put away and rejected good, that is, God himself; so some understand it, and very fitly. He is good, and does good, and is our goodness. There is none good but one, that is God, the fountain of all good. They have cast him off, as not desiring to have any thing more to do with him. God was abandoning them to ruin, and here gives the reason for it. Note, God never casts off any till they first cast him off.

Or, as we read it, They have cast off the thing that is good; they have cast off the service and worship of God, which is, in effect, casting God off. They have cast off that which denominates men good; they have cast off the fear of God, and the regard of man, and all sense of virtue and honesty. Observe, They have transgressed my covenant; it has come to this at last; for they trespassed against my law. Breaking the command made way for breaking the covenant; and they did that, for they cast off that which was good; there it began first. They left off to be wise and to do good, and then they went all to naught, Ps 36:3.

See the method of apostasy; men first cast off that which is good; then those omissions make way for commissions; and frequent actual transgressions of God's law bring men at length to an habitual renunciation of his covenant. When men cast off praying, and hearing, and sabbath-sanctification, and other things that are good, they are in the high road to a total forsaking of God.

II. Here are general threatenings of wrath and ruin for their sin: The enemy shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, and (Ho 8:3) shall pursue him. If by the house of the Lord we understand the temple at Jerusalem, by the eagle that comes against it we must suppose to be meant either Sennacherib, who had taken all the fenced cities of Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem (and, no doubt, aimed at the house of the Lord, to lay that waste, as he had

done the temples of the gods of other nations), or Nebuchadnezzar, who burnt the temple and made a prey of the vessels of the temple.

But, if we make it to point at the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, we must reckon it is the body of that people which as Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, is here called the house of the Lord. They thought their being so would be their protection; but the prophet is directed to tell them that now they had lost the life and spirit of their religion, though they still retained the name and form of it, they were but as a carcase to which the eagles and other birds of prey should be gathered together. The enemy shall pursue them as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly, so furiously.

Note, Those who break their covenant of friendship with God expose themselves to the enmity of all about them, to whom they make themselves a cheap and easy prey; and their having been the house of the Lord, and his living temples, will be no excuse nor refuge to them. See Am 3:2.

III. Here is the people's hypocritical claim of relation to God, when they were in trouble and distress (Ho 8:2): Israel shall cry unto me; when either they are threatened with these judgments, and would plead an exemption, or when the judgments are inflicted on them and they apply to God for relief, pouring out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them, they will plead that among them God is known and his name is great (Ps 76:1) and in their distress will pretend to that knowledge of God's ways which in their prosperity they desired not, but despised.

They will then cry unto God, will call him their God, and (as impudent beggars) will tell him they are well acquainted with him, and have known him long. Note, There are many who in works deny God, and disown him, yet, to serve a turn, will profess that they know him, that they know more of him than some of their neighbours do. But what stead will it stand a man in to be able to say, My God, I know thee, when he cannot say, "My God, I love thee," and "My God, I serve thee, and cleave to thee only?"

IV. Here is the prophet's expostulation with them, in God's name (Ho 8:5): How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? It is not meant of absolute innocency (that is what the guilty can never attain to); but how long will it be ere they repent and reform, ere they become innocent in this matter, and free from the sin of idolatry? They are wedded to their idols; how long will it be ere they are weaned from them, ere they are able to get clear of them? so it might be rendered. This intimates that custom in sin makes it very difficult for men to part with it. It is hard to cleanse from that filthiness, either of flesh or spirit, which has been long wallowed in.

But God speaks as if he thought the time long till sinners cast away their iniquities and come to live a new life. He complains of their obstinacy; it is that which keeps his anger against them burning, which would soon be turned away if they did but attain to innocency from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, How long will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy? but they do not hear him ask, How long will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty?

2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.
3 Israel hath cast off *the thing that is* good: the enemy shall pursue him.
4 They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew *it* not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.

Here are some particular sins which they are charged with, are convicted of the folly of, and warned of the fatal consequences of, and for which God's anger is kindled against them.

1. In their civil affairs. They set up kings without God, and in contempt of him, Ho 8:4. So they did when they rejected Samuel, in whom the Lord was their king, and chose Saul, that they might be like the nations. So they did when they revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, and set up Jeroboam, wherein, though they fulfilled God's secret counsel, yet they aimed not at his glory, nor consulted his oracle, nor applied to him by prayer for direction, nor had any regard to his providence, but were led by

their own humour and hurried on by the impetus of their own passions. So they did now about the time when Hosea prophesied, when it seems to have grown fashionable to set up kings, and depose them again, according as the contenders for the crown could make an interest, 2Ki 15:8, &c.

Note, We cannot expect comfort and success in our affairs when we go about them, and go on in them, without consulting God and acknowledge not him in all our ways: "They set up kings, and I knew it not, that is, I did not know it from them, they did not ask counsel at my mouth, whether they might lawfully do it or whether it would be best for them to do it, though they had prophets and oracles with whom they might have advised." They looked not to the Holy One of Israel, Isa 31:1. Nor did the princes do as Jephthah, who, before he took upon him the government, uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Jdg 11:11. Note, Those that are entrusted with public concerns, and particularly with the election and nomination of magistrates, ought to take God along with them therein, by desiring his direction and designing his honour.

2. In their religious matters they did much worse; for they set up calves against God, in competition with him and contradiction to him. "Of their silver and their gold which God gave them, and multiplied to them, that they might serve and honour him with them, they have made them idols." They called them gods (1Ki 12:28, Behold thy gods, O Israel!) but God calls them idols; the word signifies griefs, or troubles, because they are offensive to God and will be ruining to those that worship them. Their silver and their gold they have made to them idols; so the words are, referring primarily to the images of their gods, which they made of gold and silver, especially the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Idolaters spare no cost in worshipping their idols. But they are very applicable to the spiritual idolatry of the covetous: Their silver and their gold are the gods they place their happiness in, set their hearts upon, to which they pay their homage, and in which they put their confidence. Now, to show them the folly of their idolatry, he tells them,

(1.) Whence their gods came. Trace them to their original, and they will be found the creatures of their own fancies and the work of their own hands, Ho 8:6. The calf they worshipped is here called the calf of Samaria, because it is probable that when Samaria, in Ahab's time, became the metropolis of the kingdom, a calf was set up there to be near the court, besides those at Dan and Bethel, or perhaps one of those was removed thither; for those that are for new gods will still be for newer. Now let them consider what this god of theirs owed its rise and being to.

[1.] To their own invention and institution: From Israel was it also, not from the God of Israel (he expressly forbade it), but from Israel; it was a device of their own (some think), not borrowed from any of their neighbours, no, not from the Egyptians, for, though they worshipped Apis in a living cow, they never worshipped a golden calf; that was from Israel; it was their own iniquity. Now could that be worthy of their worship which was a contrivance of their own? It was from Israel, that is, the gold and silver of which it was made were collected from the people of Israel by a brief: it was a poor god that was framed by contribution.

[2.] It was owing to the skill and labour of the craftsman, De 27:15. The workmen made it, therefore it is not God, Ho 8:6. This is a very cogent conclusive argument, and the inference so very plain that one would think their own thoughts should have suggested it to them, so as to make them ashamed of their idolatry. What can be more absurd than for men to worship that as a god, giving being and good to them, which they themselves gave being to (both matter and form), but could not give life to? A made god is no God. This is a self-evident truth; and yet St. Paul was accused as a criminal for preaching that those are no gods which are made with hands, Ac 19:26. And, here, this which should have turned them from their idols comes in as a reason why they were inseparably wedded to them; therefore they could not attain to innocency because it was from themselves; they were willing to have gods of their own to do what they pleased with, that they themselves might do what they pleased.

(2.) What their gods would come to. If they are not gods, they will not last; nay, if they pretend to be gods, they will be reckoned with: The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces, and those that would not yield to the force of the former argument shall be convinced by this that it is not God, but an unprofitable idol, as the Chaldee calls it. It shall be broken to shivers, like a potter's vessel, though it be a golden calf. It shall be chips or saw-dust; it shall be a spider's web; so St. Jerome. It seems to allude to Moses's grinding to powder the golden calf that was in his time. This shall be served as that was. Sennacherib boasted what he had done to Samaria and her idols, Isa 10:11. Note, Deifying any creature makes way for the destruction of it. If they had made vessels and ornaments for themselves of their silver and gold, they might have remained; but, if they make gods of them, they shall be broken to pieces.

(3.) What their gods would bring them to. The breaking of them to pieces would be a disappointment to those who trusted in them. But that was not all: They have made to themselves idols, that they may be cut off (Ho 8:4), that their gold and silver, which they so abused, may be cut off (so some take it), nay, that they may themselves be cut off from God, from their own land, from the land of the living. Their idolatry will as certainly end in their extirpation as if they had purposely designed it. And, when this proves to be the effect of their sin, what relief will they have from the gods wherein they trusted? None at all: "Thy calf, O Samaria! has cast thee off; it cannot give thee any help in thy distress, and the pleasure thou now takest in it will vanish, and be no pleasure to thee."

Those that were justly sent to the gods whom they had chosen found them miserable comforters, Jdg 10:14. If men will not quit the love and service of sin, yet they shall certainly lose all the delights and profits of it. If Samaria had continued firm and faithful to the God of Israel, he would have been a present powerful help to her; but the calf she preferred before him was a broken reed. The case will be the same with those that make their silver and their gold their god. It will cast them off, and not profit them in the day of wrath, Eze 7:12.

Note, Those that suffer themselves to be deceived into any idolatries will certainly find themselves deceived in them. Cardinal Wolsey owned that if he had served his God as faithfully as he had served his prince he would not have cast him off, as his prince did, in his old age. Their disappointment in their idols is illustrated (Ho 8:7) by a similitude which intimates both that and the destruction which God brought upon them for their idolatry.

[1.] They got no good to themselves by worshipping idols: They have sown the wind. They have put themselves to a great deal of trouble and expense to make and worship their idols, have made a business of it as much as the husbandman does of sowing his corn, in expectation of reaping some mighty advantage from it, and that they should be as prosperous and victorious as the neighbouring nations were, that worshipped idols. But it is all a cheat; it is like sowing the wind, which can yield no increase; they labour in vain, labour for the wind, Ec 5:16. They take great pains to no purpose, and weary themselves for very vanity, Hab 2:13. Those that make an idol of this world do so; they set their eyes on that which is not, which, like the wind, makes a great noise, but has nothing substantial in it.

[2.] They brought ruin upon themselves by it: They shall reap the whirlwind, a great whirlwind (so the word signifies), which shall hurry them away and dash them to pieces. They not only have not their false gods for them but they set the true God against them; their favour will stand them in no more stead than the wind, but his wrath will do them more mischief than a whirlwind.

As a man sows, so shall he reap. "If it may be supposed that a man should sow the wind, and cover it with earth, or keep it there for a while penned up, what could he expect but that it should be forced by its being shut up, and the accession of what might increase its strength, to break forth again in greater quantities with greater violence?" So Dr. Pocock. They promise themselves plenty, peace, and victory, by worshipping idols, but their expectations come to nothing. What they sow never comes up; it has no stalk, no blade,

or, if it have, the bud shall yield no meal; it shall be as the thin ears in Pharaoh's dream, that were blasted with the east wind, and there was nothing in them.

Or if it yield, if they do prosper for a while in their idolatrous courses, the strangers shall swallow it up; it shall be so far from doing them any service that it shall be but as a bait to invite strangers to invade them, and as a spoil to enrich those strangers and enable them to do so much the more mischief. Note, The service of idols is an unprofitable service, and the works of darkness are unfruitful; nay, in the end they will be pernicious. Ro 6:21, The end of those things is death. Those that sow iniquity reap vanity: nay, those that sow to the flesh, reap corruption. The hopes of sinners will be cheats, and their gains will be snares.

5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long *will it be* ere they attain to innocency?

6 For from Israel *was* it also: the workman made it; therefore it *is* not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

8 Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure.

It was the honour and happiness of Israel that they had but one God to trust to and he all-sufficient in every strait, and but one God to serve, and he well worthy of all their devotions. But it was their sin, and folly, and shame, that they knew not when they were well off, that they forsook their own mercies for lying vanities; for,

I. They multiplied their alliances (Ho 8:9): They have hired lovers, or (as the margin reads it) they have hired loves. They were at great expense to purchase the friendship of the nations about them, that otherwise had no value nor affection at all for them, nor cared for having any thing to do with them but only upon the Shechemites' principles--Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours? Ge 34:23. Had Israel maintained the honour of their peculiarity, the surrounding nations would have continued to admire them as a wise and understanding people; but, when they profaned their own

crown, their neighbours despised them, and they had no interest in them further than they paid dearly for it. But those surely have behaved ill among their neighbours who have no loves, no lovers, but what they hire. See here,

1 The contempt that Israel lay under among the nations (Ho 8:8): Israel is swallowed up, devoured by strangers, their land eaten up (Ho 8:7), and themselves too, and, being impoverished, they have quite lost their credit and reputation, like a merchant that has become a bankrupt, so that they are among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, a vessel of dishonour (2Ti 2:20), a despised broken vessel, Jer 22:28. None of their neighbours have any value for them, nor care to have any thing to do with them.

Note, Those that have professed religion, if they degenerate and grow profane, are of all men the most contemptible. If the salt have lost its savour, it is fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men. Or it denotes their dispersion and captivity among the Gentiles; they shall be among them poor and prisoners; and who has pleasure in such?

2 The court that Israel made to the nations notwithstanding (Ho 8:9): They have gone to Assyria, to engage the king of Assyria to help them; and herein they are as a wild ass alone by himself, foolish, headstrong, and unruly; they will have their way, and nothing shall hold them in, no, not the bridle of God's laws, nothing shall turn them back, no, not the sword of God's wrath. They take a course by themselves, and the effect will be that, like a wild ass by himself, they will be the easier and surer prey to the lion. See Job 11:12,Jer 2:24. Note, Man is in nothing more like the wild ass's colt than in seeking for that succour and that satisfaction in the creature which are to be had in God only.

3. The crosses that they were likely to meet with in their alliances with the neighbouring nations (Ho 8:10): Though they have hired among the nations, and hoped thereby to prevent their own ruin, yet now will I gather them, as the sheaves in the floor (Mic 4:12);

so that what they provided for their own safety shall but make them the easier prey to their enemies.

Note, There is no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission; nay, that which men hire for their own preservation often contributes to their own destruction. See Isa 7:20. The king of Assyria, whose friendship they courted, called himself a king of princes, Isa 10:8. Are not my princes altogether kings? He laid burdens upon Israel, levied taxes upon them, 2Ki 15:19,20. And for these they shall sorrow a little; this shall be but a little burden to them in comparison of what they may further expect; or they will be but little sensible of this grievance, will not lay it to heart, and therefore may expect heavier judgments. They have begun to be diminished (so some read it), by the burden of the king of princes; but this is only the beginning of sorrows (Mt 24:8), the beginning of revenges, De 32:42.

Note, God often comes gradually with his judgments upon a provoking people, that he may show how slow he is to wrath, and may awaken them to repentance; but those that are made to sorrow a little, if they are not thereby brought to sorrow after a godly sort, will, another day, be made to sorrow a great deal, to sorrow everlastingly.

9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim
hath hired lovers.
10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them,
and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.
11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him
to sin.
12 I have written to him the great things of my law, *but* they were counted
as a strange thing.

They multiplied their altars and temples. Observe,

1. How they denied the power of godliness, and wholly cast that off (Ho 8:12): I have written to him the great things of my law; this intimates the privilege they enjoyed, as having God's statutes and judgments made known to them, and being entrusted with the lively oracles. Note,

(1.) The things of God's law are magnalia Dei--the great things of God. They are things that proclaim the greatness of the Law-maker, and things of great use and great importance to us; they are our life, and our eternal welfare depends upon our observance of them and obedience to them; they will make us great if we make a right use of them; and they are things which God will magnify and make honourable.

(2.) It is a great privilege to have the things of God's law written; thus they are reduced to a greater certainty, spread the further, and last the longer, with much less danger of being embezzled and corrupted than if they were transmitted by word of mouth only.

(3.) The things of God's law are of his own writing; for Moses and the prophets were his amanuenses, and holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

(4.) It is the advantage of those that are members of the visible church that these great things are written to them, are intended for their direction, and so they must receive them; what things were written in former ages were written for our learning, and are profitable for us. And, if those were happy who had the great things of God's law written to them, how much happier are we who have the gospel written to us! But see how this privilege was slighted; these great things of the law were counted as a strange thing, as unintelligible and unreasonable (which might therefore be slighted, because not to be fathomed, not to be accounted for), or as foreign, and things of no concernment to them, things that they had nothing to do with nor were to be governed by; they used those things as strangers, which they were shy of, and knew not how to bid welcome. We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Note,

[1.] God having written to us the great things of his law, we ought to make them familiar to us, as our nearest relations (Pr 7:3,4); for therefore we have them written, that they may talk with us, Pr 6:22.

[2.] We make nothing of the things of God's law if we make strange of them, as if they did not affect us and therefore we need not be affected with them.

2. How they kept up the form of godliness notwithstanding, and to what little purpose they did so.

(1.) They multiplied their altars (Ho 8:11): Ephraim made many altars to sin. God appointed that there should be but one altar for sacrifice (De 12:3,5); but the ten tribes, having forsaken that, would still be thought very devout, and zealous for the honour of God, and, as if they would make amends for the affront they put on God's altar, they made many altars, dedicated to the God of Israel, whom hereby they intended, or at least pretended, to give glory to; but that would not justify their violation of God's express command, nor would the example of the patriarchs, who before the law of Moses had many altars.

No, they made many altars to sin (that is, they did that which turned into sin to them), and therefore these altars shall be unto them to sin, that is, God will charge it upon them as a heinous sin, and put that upon the score of their crimes which they designed to be for the expiation of their crimes. Or they shall be to them an occasion of further sin. Their multiplying of altars dedicated to the God of Israel would introduce altars dedicated to other gods.

Note, It is a great sin to corrupt the worship of God, and it will be charged as sin upon those that do it, how plausible soever their pretensions may be. And the way of this, as other sins, is down-hill; those that once deviate from the fixed rule of God's commands will wander endlessly.

(2.) They multiplied their sacrifices, Ho 8:13. Their altars were smoking altars: They sacrificed flesh for the sacrifices of God's offerings, and they celebrated their feasts upon their sacrifices; they were at a great expense upon their devotions, and (as those commonly are who set up their own inventions in the room of

divine institutions) were very zealous in their way; as if they hoped by their impositions on themselves to atone for the contempt of the great atonement, and by their observing a ceremonial law of their own to excuse themselves from the obligation of all God's moral precepts. But how did they speed?

[1.] God makes no reckoning of their services: The Lord accepts them not. How should he, when they did not offer their sacrifice upon that altar which alone sanctified the gift, and when they only sacrificed flesh, but not the spiritual sacrifice of a penitent believing heart? Note, Those services only are acceptable to God which are performed according to the rule of his word, and through Jesus Christ, 1Pe 2:5.

[2.] He takes that occasion to reckon with them for their sins; now will he, instead of pardoning their iniquity and blotting out their sins, as they expected, remember their iniquity and visit their sins. Such an abomination to the Lord are the sacrifices of the wicked that they provoke him to call them to an account for all their other abominations. When they think by their sacrifices to bribe the Judge of heaven and earth into a connivance at their wickedness he will resent that as the highest affront they can put upon him, and it shall be the measure-filling sin.

Note, A petition for leave to sin amounts to an imprecation of the curse for sin, and so it shall be answered, according to the multitude of the idols. "I will punish their sins, for they shall return to Egypt;" they shall be carried captive into Assyria, which shall be to them a house of bondage, as Egypt was to their fathers. Or it refers to De 28:68, where returning to Egypt is made to close and complete the miseries of that sinful nation.

(3.) They multiplied their temples, and these also in honour of the true God, as they pretended, but really in contempt of the choice he had made of Jerusalem to put his name there. Israel has forgotten his Maker, Ho 8:14. They pretended to know him, and yet forgot him, for they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, when the remembrance of him would give check to their lusts. It

was an aggravation of their sin in forgetting God that he was their Maker (De 32:15,18,Job 35:10), as nothing obliges us more to remember him than that he is our Creator, Ec 12:1. "He has forgotten his Maker, and builds temples; he seems by the temples he builds to me mindful of his Maker, and to be desirous still to keep him in mind, and yet really he has forgotten him, because he has cast off the fear of him." Some by temples here understand palaces, for so the word sometimes signifies. "He has forgotten his Maker, and yet is so secure and haughty that he sets his judgments at defiance, as Nebuchadnezzar did when he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built?"

Judah is likewise charged with multiplying fenced cities, and trusting in them for safety, when the judgments of God were abroad. To fortify their cities in subjection and subordination to God was well enough; but to fortify them in opposition to God, and without any regard to him or his providence (Isa 22:11), shows their hearts to be desperately hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered, nor shall they. God will send a fire upon his cities, upon the cities both of Judah and Israel, not only the head-cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, but all the other cities of those two kingdoms, and it shall devour not only the cottages, but the palaces thereof; though ever so strong, the fire shall master them; though ever so stately and sumptuous, the fire shall not spare them. This was fulfilled when all the cities of Israel were laid in ashes by the king of Assyria, and all the cities of Judah by the king of Babylon. The fires they both kindled were of his sending; and when he judges he will overcome.

13 They sacrifice flesh *for* the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat *it; but* the
Lord accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and
visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah
hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and
it shall devour the palaces thereof.

Hosea-9

The Punishment for Israel's Persistent Unfaithfulness

1 Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as *other* people: for thou hast gone a whoring
from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.

Here, I The people of Israel are charged with spiritual adultery: O Israel! thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, Ho 9:1. Their covenant with God was a marriage-covenant, by which they were joined to him as their God, renouncing all others. But when they set up idols and worshipped them, when they fled to creatures for succour and put a confidence in them, they went a whoring from God as their God, and honoured the pretenders and rivals with the affection, adoration, and confidence, which were due to God only. Other people were idolaters, but that sin was not, in them, going a whoring from God, as it was in Israel that had been married to him.

Note, The sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God are more provoking to him than the sins of others. As a proof of their going a whoring from God, it is charged upon them that they loved a reward upon every corn-floor.

1. They loved to give rewards to their idols, in the offerings and first-fruits they presented to them out of every corn-floor. They took a strange pleasure in serving their idols with that which they would have grudged to consecrate to God and employ in his service.

Note, It is common for those that are niggardly in the expenses of their religion to be very prodigal in spending upon their lusts. Or, 2. They loved to receive rewards from their idols; and such they reckoned the fruits of the earth to be: These are my rewards, which my lovers have given me, Ho 2:12. Note, Those are directly disposed to spiritual idolatry that love a reward in the corn-floor better than a reward in the favour of God and eternal life.

II. They are forbidden to rejoice as other people do: "Rejoice not, O Israel! for joy. Do not expect to rejoice. What peace, what joy, what hast thou to do with either, while thy whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many?" 2Ki 9:19-22. Be not disposed to rejoice, for it does not become thee, but rather to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, Jam 4:9.

Judah, that keeps close to the true God, nay, and other people that never knew him nor could ever be charged with revolting from him, may be allowed to rejoice, as not having so much cause to be ashamed as Israel has, that has gone a whoring from him. Some think that they had at this time particular occasions for joy, probably upon the account of some losses recovered, or some advantages gained, or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had public rejoicings, as other people used to have upon such occasions; but God sends to them not to rejoice. Note, Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. They must not rejoice, because they have gone a whoring from their God; and therefore,

1. Whatever it was that they rejoiced in, it would be no security nor advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have small joy of any of our creature-comforts if we make not God our chief joy.

2 The sense of sin and dread of wrath ought to be a damp upon their joy and a strong alloy to all their comforts. Note, Those who by departing from God have made work for repentance have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return and make their peace with God.

2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.

3 They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria.

They are threatened with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what was said long before. Ps 72:27, Thou hast destroyed all those that go a whoring from thee. It is here threatened,

1. That their land shall not yield its wonted increase. Canaan, that fruitful land, shall be turned into barrenness for the wickedness of those that dwell therein. They love the reward in the corn-floor, and are so full of the joy of harvest that they have no disposition at all to mourn for their sins; and therefore God will, for their effectual humiliation, take away from them, not only their delights and dainties, but even their necessary food (Ho 9:2):

The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, much less feast them; they shall either be blasted by the hand of God or plundered by the hand of man. The new wine with which they used to make merry shall fail in her. Note, When we make the world, and the things of it, our idol and portion, above what they were designed for, it is just with God to deny us even support and nourishment from them, according to that which they were designed for, to show us our folly and correct us for it. Let those miss of their food in the corn-floor that look for their reward in the corn-floor. We forfeit the good things of this world if we love them as the best things.

2. That their land shall not only cease to feed them, but cease to lodge them and to be a habitation for them; it shall spue them out, as it had done the Canaanites before them (Ho 9:3): They shall not dwell any longer in the Lord's land. The land of Canaan was in a peculiar manner the Lord's land, the land of the Shechinah (so the Chaldee), the land of the Lord of the world (so the Arabic); he whose all the earth is (Ps 24:1) took that for his demesne. The land is mine, says God, Le 25:23. They had used it, or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services, due to God as their landlord, and therefore God justly enters, and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease. "It is my land" (says God) "and I will make it appear, for they shall be turned off, as bad tenants, and be made to know that, though they thought themselves freeholders, they were but tenants at will."

Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness that those who go a whoring from God should not be suffered to dwell upon his land; and therefore, sooner or later, the wicked shall be chased out of the world.

Or it is called the Lord's land because it was the holy land, Immanuel's land, the land that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it, and presence in it, where God was known and his name was great, where God's prophets and oracles were; it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly one. It was a great privilege to have a lot in such a land as this. It was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go a whoring from him, in such a land as this, to deal unjustly in a land of uprightness, Isa 26:10. And it was a sad and sore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exclusion out of the heavenly Canaan.

Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the Lord's land that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church that conform not to the rules of it.

3. That, when they are turned out from the Lord's land, they shall have no rest nor satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was driven out from the presence of the Lord he was a fugitive and a vagabond ever after, and dwelt in the land of trembling. So Israel here. Some shall return into Egypt, the old house of bondage; thither they shall flee from the Assyrian (Ho 8:13) and they shall lose and ruin themselves where they thought to hide and help themselves. Others shall be carried captives to Assyria and there shall be forced to eat unclean things, either

(1.) Such things as were not fit for men to eat, that which is rotten and putrefied, intimating that they shall be reduced to the utmost poverty, as the prodigal that would fain have filled his belly with the husks. Or,

(2.) Such things as were not fit for Jews to eat, being prohibited by their law. It is probable that while they were in their own land, however disobedient in other things, they kept up the distinction of meats, and prided themselves in that; but, since they would not keep the law of God in other things, they should not be suffered to keep it in that, and it was a just punishment of their sin in eating things offered to idols. Note, When at any time we suffer in our food, and either through want or for our health are forced to eat or drink that which is unpleasing, we must acknowledge that God is righteous, because we have sinned about our food, and have indulged ourselves too much in that which is pleasing.

4. That in the land of their enemies, to which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God or obtaining favour with God, by offering any acceptable sacrifice to him; they should not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or show of religion among them; "and so" (as Dr. Pocock expresses it) "should be as it were quite cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all signs of grace, and means of reconciliation with him, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people."

(1.) They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, nor priests to offer them; they shall not so much as offer drink-offerings to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices.

(2.) If they should offer them, neither they nor their sacrifices shall be pleasing to him, for they cannot have any legal offerings, nor are their hearts humbled.

(3.) Instead of their sacrifices of joy and praise, they shall eat the bread of mourners; they shall live desolate, and disconsolate, mourning for the death of their relations and their own miseries, so that if they had opportunity of sacrificing they should never be themselves in a frame fit for it; for they were forbidden to eat of the holy things in their mourning, De 26:14 All that eat of the

bread of mourners are polluted, and incapacitated to partake of the altar.

(4.) Their bread for their soul, the bread which they must either eat or starve, the bread which they shall have for the support of their lives, shall not come into the house of the Lord; they shall have no house of the Lord to bring it to, or, if they had, it is such as is not fit to be brought, nor are they rightly disposed to bring it.

(5.) The return of the days of their sacred and solemn feasts would therefore be very melancholy and uncomfortable to them (Ho 9:5): What will you do in the solemn day, in the sabbath, the solemn day of every week, in the new moons, the solemn days of every month, at the return of the times for keeping the passover, pentecost, and feast of the tabernacles, the solemn days of every year, the days of the feasts of the Lord? Note, The feasts of the Lord are solemn days; and, when we are invited to those feasts, we ought to consider seriously what we shall do. But the question is here put to those who were to be deprived of the benefit and comfort of those solemn feasts, "What will you do then?

You will then spend those days in sorrow and lamentation which, if it had not been your own fault, you might have been spending in joy and praise. You will then be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them and to prize spiritual bread by being made to feel a famine of it." Note, When we enjoy the means of grace we ought to consider what we shall do if ever we should know the want of them, if either they should be taken from us or we be disabled to attend upon them.

5. That they should perish in the land of their dispersion (Ho 9:6): For, lo, they have gone out of the Lord's land, where they might have spent both their sabbath days and other days with comfort, gone because of destruction, gone to Egypt because of the destruction of their own country by the Assyrians, flattering themselves with hopes that they shall return when the storm is over; but those hopes also shall fail them; they shall find there are graves in Egypt, as their murmuring ancestors said (Ex 14:11),

graves for them; for Egypt shall gather them up, as dead men are gathered up and carried forth to the grave, and Memphis (one of the chief cities of Egypt) shall bury them. Gathering and burying are put together, Jer 8:2,Job 27:19.

Note, Those that think presumptuously to flee from the judgments of God are likely enough to meet their death where they hoped to save their lives.

6. That their land, which they left behind and to which they hoped to return, should become a desolation: As for their tabernacles, where they formerly dwelt and where they kept their stores, the pleasant places for their silver, they shall be demolished and laid in ruins, to such a degree that they shall be overgrown with nettles; so that if they should survive the trouble, and return to their own land again, they would find it neither fruitful nor habitable; it would afford them neither food nor lodging. Note, Those that make their money their god reckon the places of their silver their pleasant places, as those that make the Lord their God reckon his tabernacles amiable and his ordinances their pleasant things, Isa 64:11.

But, while the pleasures of communion with God are out of the reach of chance and change, the pleasant places of men's silver, which were purchased with silver, or in which they deposited their silver, or which were beautified and adorned with silver, are liable to be laid in ruins, in nettles, and therewith all the pleasure men took in them.

4 They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the Lord, neither shall they
be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices *shall be* unto them as the bread of
mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread
for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord.

5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the
Lord?

6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them
up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant *places* for their silver, nettles
shall possess them: thorns *shall be* in their tabernacles.

7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know *it:* the prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

For their further awakening, it is here threatened,

I. That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily. They shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not; it is at the door (Ho 9:7): The days of visitation have come, and there shall be no more delay; the days of recompence have come, which they have been so often warned to expect; their prophets have told them that destruction would come, and now it has come, and the time of the divine patience has expired.

Note, 1 The day of God's judgments is both a day of visitation, in which men's sins are enquired into and brought to light, and a day of recompence, in which men's doom will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work; the strict visitation is in order to a just retribution. 2. This day of visitation and recompence is hastening on apace. It is sure; it is near; as if it had already come.

II. That hereby they shall be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes Israel shall know it, shall be made to know that by sad experience which they would not know by instruction. Israel shall know then what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. When thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see. Israel shall know the difference between true prophets and false.

1. They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them that they should have peace though they went on, however they pretended to be spiritual men (as Ahab's prophets did, 1Ki 22:24) were fools and madmen, and not true prophets; they deceived themselves and those to whom they prophesied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, "It is for the

multitude of thy iniquity which, in contempt of the divine law, thou hast persisted in, and, for the great hatred of the true prophets, that reproved thee, in God's name, for it."

Note, Because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and by the multitude of their iniquities bid defiance to it, therefore God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie, so strong that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompence comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them.

2. They shall know then whether the true prophets, that were really spiritual men, guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, fools and madmen; and they shall be convinced that they were so far from being so that they were the wise men of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words fell to the ground they knew he was established to be a prophet (1Sa 3:20); and so here, when God fulfils the word of his messengers, by bringing the days of recompence they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought Bedlam the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of the multitude of their iniquities of that kind, and of their great hatred, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

8 The watchman of Ephraim *was* with my God: *but* the prophet *is* a snare
of a fowler in all his ways, *and* hatred in the house of his God.
9 They have deeply corrupted *themselves,* as in the days of Gibeah:
therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets themselves shall be manifested to their shame (Ho 9:8): "The watchman of Ephraim was with my God; he had been formerly. They had a set of worthy good ministers, that kept close to God and maintained communion with him; but now they have a race of corrupt, malignant, persecuting prophets, that are the ring-leaders of all mischief."

Or, "The watchman of Ephraim now pretends to have been with my God, and prefaces his lies with, Thus saith the Lord; but he is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men that he has become hatred itself in the house of his God, or against the house of his God."

Note, Wicked prophets are the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against religion most dangerous. They may boast that they are watchmen, speculators, and, as far as speculation goes, they may be right, and with my God, may have their heads full of good notions; but look into their lives, and they are the snare of a fowler in all their ways, catching for themselves and making a prey of others; look into their hearts, and they are hatred in the house of my God, very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Woe unto thee, O land! unto thee, O church! that hast such watchmen, such prophets, that are seers, but not doers! Corruptio optimi est pessima--The best things, when corrupted, become the worst.

IV. That God will now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers, which they have trod in the steps of, Ho 9:9,10. 1. They were as bad as their fathers: They have deeply corrupted themselves; they are rooted and riveted in sin; they are far gone in the depths of Satan (Isa 31:6), so that it is next to impossible that they should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out; it is as scarlet and crimson, or as the spots of the leopard: and it is their own fault; they have corrupted themselves, have polluted and hardened their own hearts, as in the days of Gibeah, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death by the men of Gibeah and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronised the villany; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days.

Lewdness and wickedness were as impudent and daring now as in the days of Gibeah; and therefore what can be expected but such a vengeance as was then taken on Gibeah? Every tribe is now as bad

as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

2. They shall therefore be reckoned with for their fathers' sins: He will remember their iniquity and visit their sins, the iniquity they have by kind and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood; the sin of the father shall now be visited upon the children. Hence God takes occasion to upbraid them with the degeneracy and apostasy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness and base ingratitude, Ho 9:10. Here observe,

(1.) The great honour God put upon Israel when he first formed them into a people: I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness. He took as much delight and pleasure in them as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilderness, where he most needed them and least expected them. Or when they were in the wilderness he found them as grapes, not precious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first-ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were precious in his sight, and honourable (Isa 43:4); he planted them a choice vine, a right seed (Jer 2:21), and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first. I saw them with pleasure, as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at the first time. Good people are compared to the good things that are first ripe, Jer 24:2.

One then is worth more than many afterwards. This intimates the delight God took in them and in doing them good, not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully, as a man does the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard. Now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for preferment, one would think they should have maintained their excellency; but,

(2.) See the great disgrace they put upon themselves. God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghill deity (Nu 25:2,3), and they separated themselves unto that shame, that shameful idol, so Baal-peor was in a particular manner, if (as

should seem) the whoredom which the people committed with the daughters of Moab was a part of the service done to Baal-peor.

Note, Whatever those separate themselves to that forsake God it will certainly be a shame to them, first or last. Their abominations are here said to be as they loved; their practices which were an abomination to God were as the best-beloved of their souls. Or when they had once forsaken God they multiplied their abominations, their idols and abominable idolatries, at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers; God had done well for them, but they had acted ungratefully towards him, and in the same manner had the present generation deeply corrupted themselves.

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time: *but* they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto *that* shame; and *their* abominations were according as they loved.

11 *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers; here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for, as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it. We may observe, in these verses,

I The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions are here which describe that.

1. They did not hearken to God (Ho 9:17); they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod; they did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not; all he said to them by his words and by his prophets was to them as a tale that is told; and then no wonder that we hear,

2. Of the wickedness of their doings (Ho 9:15), the downright malice that was in their sins; they were not infirmities, but daring presumptions. How can those but do wickedly who will not hearken to the word of God, that would teach and persuade them

to do well? And no wonder that there were wicked doings among them when,

3. Their worship was corrupt (Ho 9:15): All their wickedness is in Gilgal, which was a place infamous for idolatry, as appears, Ho 4:15,12:11,Am 4:4,5:5. It is probable that the idolaters chose that place for their head-quarters because it had been famous in other ages for solemn transactions between God and Israel, as Jos 5:2,10,1Sa 10:8,11:15. There, where the source of idolatry was, whence it spread through the kingdom, there it might be said that all their wickedness was, for all other wickedness owed its origin to that. Corruptions in worship make way for corruptions in morals. The mother of harlots is the mother of all other abominations, Re 17:5.

The learned Grotius conjectures that there is a mystical sense here. Golgotha in Syriac is the same with Gilgal in Hebrew, and therefore he thinks this may have reference to the putting of Christ to death at Golgotha, which was the greatest sin of the Jewish nation, and of which it might truly be said, All their wickedness was summed up in that. And no wonder that the people did wickedly, both in worship and conversation, when

4. All their princes were revolters; the whole succession of the kings of the ten tribes did evil in the sight of the Lord, or all the set of judges and magistrates at this time were wicked; they turned aside to sinful ways and persisted in those ways.

II The displeasure of God against Ephraim for sin. This is variously expressed here, to show what a provocation sin is to the pure eyes of his glory, and how odious it makes the sinner to him.

1. He departs from them, Ho 9:12. When they revolt from him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that he should depart from them and withdraw both his protection and his bounty? And well may his threatening be enforced as it is, and made terrible: Woe also unto them when I depart from them!

Note, Those are in a woeful condition indeed whom God has forsaken. Our weal or woe depends upon the gracious presence of God with us; and, if he goes, all weal goes with him and all woes come upon us. God has forsaken him; persecute and take him. Saul knew this when he laid such an emphasis upon this part of his complaint, The Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me. Nay, he does not only depart from them, but,

2. He hates them. In Gilgal, where all their wickedness is, there I hated them. There, where the abominations of sin are committed, there God abominates the sinners. In Gilgal he had bestowed many tokens of his favour upon their ancestors, but now that is the place where he hates them for their base ingratitude. Nay, he not only hates them, but,

3. He will love them no more, will never take them into his favour again; the breach between God and Israel is wide as the sea, which cannot be healed. This agrees with what he had said, (Ho 1:6,7), I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, the ten tribes.

4. He will discard them, and have no more to do with them: For the wickedness of their doings, I will drive them out of my house. He will no longer own them as his, or as belonging to his family in the world; he will turn them out of doors as unfaithful tenants that pay him no rent, as unprofitable servants that do him neither credit nor work.

Note, Those that profane God's house can expect no other than to be expelled his house, and no longer suffered to be either lodgers in it or retainers to it. Nay, he will not only drive them out of his house, but,

5. He will drive them far enough (Ho 9:17): My God will cast them away, not only out of his house, but out of his sight; he will quite abandon and reject them; they shall be cast-aways. God said that he would drive them out of his house, and here the prophet seconds it, as one that knew his Master's mind very well: My God

will cast them away. See with what comfort and pleasure he calls God his God. Note, When others disown God, and are disowned by him, it is a very great satisfaction to good people that they can call God their God, can cheerfully own him and see themselves owned by him--all revolters, all ruined, yet God is my God.

12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, *that there shall* not *be* a man *left:* yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, *is* planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

14 Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

The fruit of this displeasure, in the cutting off and abandoning of their posterity, which is the judgment here threatened again and again. Observe here,

1. How numerous Ephraim seemed likely to be. The name Ephraim is derived from fruitfulness, Ge 41:51. Joseph is a fruitful bough, Ge 49:22. And Moses's blessing foretold the ten thousands of Ephraim, De 33:17. This was his glory, Ho 9:11. For this he seemed designed by him that appoints the bounds of men's habitation; for Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place, to encourage his increase, which one may expect as from a tree planted by the river's side. Ephraim is as strong and rich as ever Tyre was, and as proud and secure. The Chaldee paraphrase gives this sense of it, The congregation of Israel, while they observed the law, was like to Tyrus in prosperity and security.

2. How few Ephraim should be (Ho 9:11): Their glory shall fly away like a bird; their children shall be taken away and the hopes of their families cut off. All their glory shall fly as an eagle towards heaven, swiftly and irrecoverably. Note, Worldly glory is glory that will fly away; but those that have their God their glory have in him an unfading everlasting glory. Ephraim has been as a fruitful tree. But now Ephraim is smitten, is blasted; their root is dried up; they shall bear no fruit, Ho 9:16. If the root be dried, the branch must wither of course. Observe,

(1.) God's threatening this judgment of the destroying of their children.

[1.] They shall perish of themselves by the immediate hand of God (Ho 9:11): They shall fly away from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. Some of their children shall die as soon as they are born; the cradle shall be presently turned into a coffin. Others of them shall be still-born, or the womb shall be their grave, and their death there their mothers' death too. Of others their mothers shall miscarry almost as soon as they have conceived, and they shall be as untimely fruit. See how easily God can, and how justly we are sure he might, root out the whole race of mankind, that degenerate, guilty, obnoxious race, and blot out the name of it from under heaven; it is but doing as he does by Ephraim here, writing them all childless, making all their glory to fly away from the birth, the womb, and the conception, drying up their root, that they bear no fruit, and their business is done in a few years.

[2.] They shall perish by the hand of their enemies; they shall die violent deaths (Ho 9:12):

"Though they bring up their children to some maturity, though they escape the diseases and deaths which the infant age is liable to, and are thought to be reared past danger, yet will I bereave them (Ho 9:12), by one judgment or other, so that there shall not be a man left to build up their families and bear up their name." Again (Ho 9:13), Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. The mothers shall travail with pain to bear their children, and a great deal of care, and pains, and cost shall be bestowed upon the nursing of them, and when a cruel enemy comes and puts all to the word, young and old, without mercy, then they seem but as lambs that were all this while fed for the slaughter.

Note, It is a great alloy to the comfort parents have in their children that they know not what they have brought them forth and brought them up for, perhaps for the murderer, or, which is

worse, to be themselves the plagues of their generation. It is threatened again (Ho 9:16), Though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb, those children that they are most fond of.

Note, The parents' love is no security to the children's lives; nay, sometimes death is commissioned to take the darlings of the family and leave the burdens of it.

When sentence was passed upon Israel in the wilderness, that they should all perish there, this mercy was mixed with the wrath, that their children should nevertheless enter into that rest which they through unbelief could not enter into. But this is a total and final rejection; even their children shall be cut off, and the land shall escheat to the crown, ob defectum sanguinis--shall be lost for want of heirs. The Chaldee-paraphrase, and many of the rabbin, by the murderers to whom the children were brought forth, understand those that sacrificed their children to Moloch, a sin which was its own punishment, which showed the parents void of bowels and justly left them void of blessings.

[3.] Those few that escape and remain shall be dispersed (Ho 9:17): They shall be wanderers among the nations; so the remains of the Jews are at this day, and there is no place in the world where they are a distinct nation.

(2.) The prophet's prayer relating to it (Ho 9:14): Give them, O Lord! what wilt thou give? What shall I ask for a people thus doomed to destruction? It is this; since the decree has gone forth, that they must either die from the womb or be brought forth for the murderer, of the two let them rather die from the womb. Rather let them have no children than have them to be made miserable; for the same reason, when a total ruin was coming on the Jewish nation, Christ said, Blessed is the womb that never bore and the paps that never gave suck, Lu 23:29. "Give therefore a miscarrying womb and dry breasts; for it is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, than into the hands of man."

Note, Those that are childless may with this reconcile themselves to the will of God herein, that the time may come when, if they were not so, they would wish they had been so.

15 All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes *are* revolters.

16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay *even* the beloved *fruit* of their womb.

17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

Hosea-10

1 Israel *is* an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

Observe, I. What the sins are which are here laid to Israel's charge, the national sins which bring down national judgment. The prophet deals plainly with them; for what good would it do them to be flattered?

1. They were not fruitful in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Here all their other wickedness began (Ho 10:1): Israel is an empty vine. The church of God is fitly compared to a vine, weak, and of an unpromising outside, yet spreading and fruitful; believers are branches of that vine, and partake of its root and fatness. But this was the character of Israel, they were as an empty vine, a vine that had no sap or virtue in it, and therefore none of those good fruits produced by it that were expected from it, with which God and man should be honoured.

Note, There are many who, though they have not become degenerate vines, are yet empty vines, have no good in them. A vine is of all trees least serviceable if it do not bear fruit. It is thenceforth good for nothing, Eze 15:3,5.

And those that bring forth no grapes will soon come to bring forth wild grapes; those that do no good will do hurt. He is an empty vine, for he brings forth fruit to himself. What good there is in him is not directed to the glory of God, but he takes the praise of it to himself, and prides himself in it. Christians live not to themselves (Ro 14:6), but hypocrites make self their centre; they eat and drink to themselves, Zec 7:5,6. Or Israel is by the judgments of God emptied and spoiled of all his wealth, because he made use of it in the service of his lusts, and not to the honour of God who gave it to him. Note, What we do not rightly employ we may justly expect to be emptied of.

2. They multiplied their altars and images, and the more bountiful God's providence was to them the more prodigal they were in serving their idols: According to the multitude of his fruit which his land brought forth he has increased the altars, and according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Note, It is a great affront to God, and an abuse of his goodness, when the more mercies we receive from him the more sins we commit against him, and when the more wealth men have the more mischief they do. Should not we be thus abundant in the service of our God, as they were in the service of their idols? As we find our estates increasing, we should proportionably abound the more in works of piety and charity.

3. Their hearts were divided, Ho 10:2.

(1.) They were divided among themselves. They were at variance about their idols, some for one, some for another, at variance about their kings, whose separate interests made parties in the kingdom, and in them their very hearts were divided, and alienated one from another, and there was no such thing as cordial friendship to be found among them; it follows therefore, Now shall they be found faulty. Note, The divisions and animosities of a people are the causes of much sin and the presages of ruin.

(2.) They were divided between God and their idols. They had a remaining affection in their hearts for God, but a reigning affection for their idols. They halted between God and Baal, that was the dividing of their heart. But God is the sovereign of the heart and he will by no means endure a rival; he will either have all or none. Satan, like the pretended mother, says, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it; but, if this be yielded to, God says, Nay, let him take it all. A heart thus divided will be found faulty, and be rejected as treacherous in covenanting with God. Note, A heart divided between God and mammon, though it may trim the matter so as to appear plausible, will, in the day of discovery, be found faulty.

4. They made no conscience of what they said and what they did in the most solemn manner, Ho 10:4

(1.) Not of what they said in swearing, which is the most solemn speaking: They have spoken words, and words only, for they meant not as they said; they did verba dare--give words. They swore falsely in making a covenant; they were deceitful in their covenanting with God, the covenant of circumcision, the fair promises they made of reformation when they were in distress; and no marvel if those that were false to their God were false to all mankind. They contracted such a habit of treachery that they broke through the most sacred bonds, and made nothing of them; subjects violated their oaths of allegiance and their kings their coronation-oaths; they broke their leagues with the nations they were in alliance with, nor was any conscience made of contracts between private persons.

(2.) Nor of what they did in judgment, which is the most solemn acting. Justice could not take place when men made nothing of forswearing themselves; for thus judgment, which should have been a healing medicinal plant and of a sweet smell, sprang up as hemlock, which is both nauseous and noxious, in the furrows of the field, in the field that was ploughed and furrowed for good corn.

Note, God is greatly offended with corruptions, not only in his own worship, but in the administration of justice between man and man, and the dishonesty of a people shall be the ground of his controversy with them as well as their idolatry and impiety; for God's laws are intended for man's benefit and the good of the community, as well as for God's honour, and the profanation of courts of justice shall be avenged as surely as the profanation of temples.

2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

3 For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the Lord; what then should a king do to us?

What the judgments are with which Israel should be punished for these sins; they sinned both in civil and religious matters, and in both they shall be punished. 1. They shall have no joy of their kings and of their government. Because justice is turned into oppression, therefore those who are entrusted with the administration of it, and should be blessings to the state, shall be complained of as the burdens of it (Ho 10:3), and those that would not rule their people well shall not be able to protect them:

Now they shall say, "We have no king, that is, we are as if we had none, we have none to do us any good nor stand us in any stead, none to keep us from destroying ourselves or being destroyed by our enemies, none to preserve the public peace nor to fight our battles; and justly has this come to us. Because we feared not the Lord, when we were safe under the protection of our kings, therefore we are rejected by him, and then what shall a king do for us? What good can we expect from a king when we have forfeited the favour of our God?"

Note, Those that cast off the fear of God are not likely to have joy of any of their creature-comforts; nor will men's loyalty to their prince befriend them without religion, for, though that may engage him to be for them, what good will that do them if God be against them? Those that keep themselves in the fear

and favour of God may say, with triumph, "What can the greatest of men do against us?" But those that throw themselves out of his protection must say, with despair, "What can the greatest of men do for us?"

He was a king that said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee? Yet he is a fool that says, If a king cannot help us, we must perish (as these intimate here), for God can do that for us which kings cannot. Time was when they doted upon having a king; but now what can a king (who, they thought, could do any thing) do for them? God can make people sick of those creature-confidences which they were most fond of. This is their complaint when their king is disabled to help them, yet this is not the worst; their civil government shall not only be weakened, but quite destroyed (Ho 10:7):

As for Samaria, the royal city, which is now almost all that is left, her king is cut off as the foam from the water. The foam swims uppermost, and makes a great show upon the face of the water, yet it is but a heap of bubbles raised by the troubling of the water. Such were the kings of Israel, after their revolt from the house of David, a mere scum; their government had no foundation. No better are the greatest of kings when they set up in opposition to God; when God comes to contend with them by his judgments he can as easily disperse and dissolve them, and bring them to nothing, as the froth upon the water. 2. They shall have no joy of their idols and of their worship of them. And miserable is the case of that people whose gods fail them when their kings do.

(1.) The idols they had made, and the altars they had set up in honour of them, should be broken down, and spoiled, and carried away, as common plunder, by the victorious enemy: He shall break down their altars. God shall do it by the hand of the Assyrians: the Assyrians shall do it by order from God. He shall spoil their images, Ho 10:2.

Note, What men make idols of it is just with God to break down and spoil. But the calf at Bethel was the sovereign idol; it was this that the inhabitants of Samaria doted most upon; now it is here foretold that this should be destroyed:

The glory of it has departed from it (Ho 10:5) when it is thrown down and defaced, no more to be worshipped; but this is not all: It shall also be carried to Assyria (as some think that the calf at Dan was some time before) for a present to king Jareb. It was carried to him as a rich booty (for it was a golden calf, and probably adorned with the gifts and offerings of its worshippers) and as a trophy of victory over their enemies: and what more glorious trophy could they bring than this, or more incontestable proof of an absolute conquest? Thus it is said, The sin of Israel shall be destroyed (Ho 10:8), that is, the idols which they made the matter of their sin; it is said of them, They became a sin to all Israel, 1Ki 12:30.

Note, If the grace of God prevail not to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols, the high places shall be destroyed, the high places of Aven, that is, of Bethaven (Ho 10:5) or Bethel; it was called the house of God (so Bethel signifies), but now it is called the house of iniquity, nay, iniquity itself.

The kings did not, as they ought to have done, take away the high places by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war; so that the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars, that is, they shall lie in ruins. Their altars, while they stood, were as thorns and thistles, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse; justly therefore are they buried in thorns and thistles.

(2.) The destruction of their idols, their altars, and their high places, shall be the occasion of sorrow, and shame, and terror to them.

[1.] It shall be an occasion of sorrow to them. When the calf at Bethel is broken the people thereof shall mourn over it. They looked upon the calf to be the protector of their nation, and, when that was gone, thought they must all be undone, which made the poor ignorant people that were deluded into the love of it lament bitterly, as Micah did (Jdg 18:24), You have taken away my gods, and what have I more? The priests that had rejoiced in it shall now mourn for it with the people.

Note, Whatever men make a god of they will mourn for the loss of; and an inordinate sorrow for the loss of any worldly good is a sign we made an idol of it. They used to be very merry in the worship of their idols, but now they shall mourn over them; for sinful mirth shall, sooner or later, be turned into mourning.

[2.] It shall be an occasion of shame to them (Ho 10:6): Ephraim shall receive shame when he sees the gods he trusted to carried into captivity, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel, in putting such confidence in them and paying such adoration to them. God's ark and altars were never thrown down till the people rejected them; but the idolatrous altars were thrown down when the people were doting on them, which shows that the contempt of the former, and the veneration for the latter, were the sins for which God visited them.

[3.] It shall be an occasion of fear to them (Ho 10:5): The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear; they shall be in pain for their gods and afraid of losing them; or, rather, they shall be in pain for themselves and their children and families, when they see the judgments of God breaking in upon them and beginning with their idols, as he executed judgment against the gods of Egypt, Ex 12:12. Thus idolaters are brought in trembling when God arises to shake terribly the earth, Isa 2:21. And here (Ho 10:8), They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us. The supporters of idolatry (Re 6:15,16) are

brought in calling thus in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from God's wrath.

4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant:
thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.
5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth- aven:
for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests
thereof *that* rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.
6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria *for* a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.
7 *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.
8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.
9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

Here, I. They are put in mind of the sins of their fathers and predecessors, for which God would now reckon with them. It was told them (Ho 9:9) that they had corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah, and here (Ho 10:9), O Israel! thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah. Not only the wickedness that was committed in that age is revived in this, and reacted, a copy from that original, but the wickedness that was committed in that age has been continued in a constant series and succession through all the intervening ages down to this; so that the measure of iniquity had been long in filling; and still there had been made additions to it. Or, "Thou has sinned more than in the days of Gibeah" (so it may be read); "the sins of this age exceed those of the worst of former ages.

The case was bad then, for there they stood; the criminals stood in their own defence, and the tribes of Israel, who undertook to chastise them for their wickedness, were at a stand, when both in the first and in the second battle the malefactors were the victors; and the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them till the third engagement, and then did not

overtake them all, for 600 made their escape. But thy sin is worse than theirs, and therefore thou canst not expect but that the battle against the children of iniquity should overtake thee, and overcome thee."

II. They have warning given them, fair warning, of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, Ho 10:10. God had hitherto pitied and spared them. Though they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience and forbearance; but now, "It is in my desire that I should chastise them; it is what I have a purpose of and will take pleasure in." He will rejoice over them to do them hurt, De 28:63. Note, Because God does not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore he does desire their chastisement. And see what the chastisement it: The people shall be gathered against them, as all the other tribes were against Benjamin in the battle of Gibeah. One of the rabbin thus descants upon it:

"Because they receive not chastisement from me by my prophets, who in my name rebuke them, I will chastise them by the hands of the people who shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows," that is, when they shall think to fortify themselves, as it were, within a double entrenchment.

Or, When I shall bind them for their two transgressions (so the margin reads it), meaning their corporal and spiritual whoredom, which they are so often charged with, or the two calves at Dan and Bethel, or those two great evils mentioned Jer 2:12.

Or, When I shall bind them to their two furrows, that is, bring them into servitude to the Assyrians, who shall keep them under the yoke as oxen in the plough, who are bound to the two furrows up the field and down it, and dare not, for fear of the goad, stir a step out of them. The Chaldee says, Those that are gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them, in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows. Thus those that would not be God's freemen shall be their enemies' slaves, and

shall be made to know the difference between God's service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, 2Ch 12:8.

III. They are made to know that their unacquaintedness with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, Ho 10:11. See how nice, and tender, and delicate, Ephraim is; he is as a heifer that is taught to tread out the corn, and loves that work, because, being not allowed to be muzzled, she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and the work itself was dry and easy, and both its own diversion and its own wages. "But," says God, "I have a yoke to put upon her fair neck, fair as it is. I will make Ephraim to ride, that is, I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon (Ps 66:12); and Judah too shall be made to plough, and Jacob to break the clods," that is, they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly as Ephraim. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardships mean that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure.

The learned Dr. Pocock inclines to another sense of these words, as intimating the tender gentle methods God took with this people, to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should return to that obedience; he had managed them as the husbandman does his cattle that he trains up for service. Ephraim being as a docile heifer, fit to be employed, God took hold of her fair neck, to accustom her to the hand, harnessed her, or put the yoke of his commandments upon her, gave his people Israel a law, that, being trained up in his institutions, they might not be tempted by the usages of the heathen; he had used all fair and likely means with them to keep them in their obedience, had set Judah to plough and Jacob to break the clods, had employed them in the observance of precepts proper for them; and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

10 *It is* in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.

11 And Ephraim *is as* a heifer *that is* taught, *and* loveth to tread out *the corn;*
but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah
shall plow, *and* Jacob shall break his clods.
12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow
ground: for *it is* time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain
righteousness upon you.

They are invited and encouraged to return to God by prayer, repentance, and reformation, Ho 10:12,13. See here,

1 The duties they are called to. They are God's husbandry (1Co 3:9), and the duties are expressed in language borrowed from the husbandman's calling. If they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service.

(1.) Let them break up the fallow ground; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as weeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them; let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed, that it may take root. See Jer 4:3.

(2.) Let them sow to themselves in righteousness; let them return to the practice of good works, according to the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness; let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them sow to the Spirit, as the apostle speaks, Ga 6:7,8. Every action is seed sown. Let them sow in righteousness; let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do, and they themselves shall have the benefit of it.

(3.) Let them seek the Lord; let them look up to him for his grace, and beg of him to bless the seed sown. The husbandman must plough and sow with an eye to God, asking of him rain in the season thereof.

2 The arguments used for the pressing of these duties. Consider,

(1.) It is time to do it; it is high time. The husbandman sows in seed-time, and, if that time be far spent, he applies to the work with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God when it is, in a particular manner, time to seek him.

(2.) If we do our part, God will do his. If we sow to ourselves in righteousness--if we be careful and diligent to do our duty, in a dependence upon his grace--he will shower down his grace upon us, will rain righteousness, the very thing that those need most who are to sow in righteousness; for by the grace of God we are what we are. Some apply it to Christ, who should come in the fulness of time, and for whose coming they must prepare themselves; he shall come as the Lord our righteousness, and shall rain righteousness upon us, that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in; he will grant us of it abundantly. It is foretold (Ps 72:6) that he shall come down like rain.

(3.) If we sow in righteousness, we shall reap in mercy, which agrees with that promise, If we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We shall reap according to the measure of mercy (so the word is); it shall be a great reward, according to the riches of mercy, such a reward, not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give, a reward, not of debt, but of grace. We reap not in merit, but in mercy. It is what is sown; God gives a body as it has pleased him.

(4.) We have ploughed wickedness and reaped iniquity; and the time past of our life may suffice that we have done so, Ho 10:13. "You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire; and will you grudge to bear the burden and heat of the day in God's service and in doing that which will be for your own advantage? You have done much to damn your souls; will you not undo it again, and do something to save them?"

(5.) We never got any thing in the service of sin. They have ploughed wickedness (that is, they have done the drudgery of sin), and they have reaped iniquity, that is, they have got all that is to be got by it; they have carried it on to the harvest, and what the better? It is all a cheat. They have eaten the fruit of lies, fruit that is but a lie, which looks fair, but is rotten within; the works of darkness are unfruitful works, Eph 5:11,Ro 6:21. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction.

(6.) As our comforts, so our confidences, in the service of sin will certainly fail us: "Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men; thou has stayed thyself upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and therefore hast ventured to plough wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee; come therefore, and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee."

V. They are threatened with utter destruction, both for their carnal practices and for their carnal confidences, Ho 10:14,15. Therefore, because thou has sown wickedness, and trusted in thy own way, a tumult shall arise among thy people, either by insurrections at home or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion and make a noise, much more both together.

1. Their cities and strongholds shall be a prey to the enemy: The fortresses which they confided in, and in which they had laid up their effects, shall be seized and rifled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle. This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded; and probably Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who had lately put some town, or castle, or house (Beth-arbel is the house of Arbel), under military execution, which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons. God tells them that thus Samaria should be spoiled.

2 The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at Beth-arbel; when it was taken the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children, that is, they were both dashed in pieces together by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes. Jusque datum sceleri--Wickedness has free course. It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman; but see what comes of sin. Homo homini lupus--Man is a wolf to man, and then, Homo homini agnus--Man is a lamb to man.

3. Even royal blood shall be mingled with common gore: In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off, Ho 10:15. Hoshea was the last king of Israel; in him the whole kingdom was cut off and came to a period; it may refer either to him or to some of his predecessors that were cut off by treachery. It shall be done in a morning, in a very little time, as suddenly as the dawning of the morning, or at the time appointed, for so the morning comes, punctually at its time. Or in the morning, when they think the night of calamity is over, and expect a returning day, then shall all their hopes be dashed by the sudden cutting off of their king, Ho 10:7. Kings, though gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men.

And (lastly) what does all this desolation owe its rise to? What is the spring of this bloodshed? He tells us (Ho 10:15): So shall Bethel do unto you. Bethel was the place where one of the calves was; Gilgal, where all their wickedness is said to have been, was hard by; there was their great wickedness, the evil of their evil (so the word is), the sum and quintessence of their sin; and that was it that did this to them, that made all this havoc, for that was it that provoked God to bring it upon them. He does not say, "So shall the king of Assyria do to you;" but, "So shall Bethel do to you." Note, Whatever mischief is done to us it is sin that does it. Are the fortresses spoiled? Are the women and children murdered? Is the king cut off? It is sin that does all this. It is sin that ruins soul, body, estate, all. So shall Bethel do unto you. It is thy own wickedness that corrects thee and thy backslidings that reprove thee.

13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.
14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon *her* children.
15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

Hosea-11

God Yearns for His Wayward People

1 When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Here we find,

I. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more, which they are here, I will not say upbraided with (for God gives, and upbraids not), but put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin and an encouragement to repentance.

1. He had a kindness for them when they were young (Ho 11:1): When Israel was a child then I loved him; when they first began to multiply into a nation in Egypt God then set his love upon them, and chose them because he loved them, because he would love them, De 7:7,8. When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and froward as children, when they were outcasts, and children exposed, then God loved them; he pitied them, and testified his goodwill to them; he bore them as the nurse does the sucking child, nourished them, and suffered their manners. Note, Those that have grown up, nay, those that have grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

2. He delivered them out of the house of bondage: I called my son out of Egypt, because a son, because a beloved son. When God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh he called them his son, his first-born.

Note, Those whom God loves he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when, upon the death of Herod, he and his parents were called out of Egypt (Mt 2:15), so that the words have a double aspect, speaking historically of the calling of Israel out of Egypt and prophetically of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his Son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his, through him, out of spiritual slavery.

3. He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but, such is the condescension of divine grace, as a mother or nurse (Ho 11:3): I taught Ephraim also to go, as a child in leading-strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, showed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, taking them by the arms. He taught them to go in the way of his commandments, by the institutions of the ceremonial law, which were as tutors and governors to that people under age. He took them by the arms, to guide them, that they might not stray, and to hold them up, that they might not stumble and fall. God's spiritual Israel are thus supported. Thou has holden me by my right hand, Ps 73:23.

4. When any thing was amiss with them, or they were ever so little out of order, he was their physician: "I healed them; I not only took a tender care of them (a friend may do that), but wrought an effectual cure: it is a God only that can do that. I am

the Lord that healeth thee (Ex 15:26), that redresseth all thy grievances."

5. He brought them into his service by mild and gentle methods (Ho 11:4): I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love. Note, It is God's work to draw poor souls to himself; and none can come to him except he draw them, Joh 6:44. He draws,

(1.) With the cords of a man, with such cords as men draw with that have a principle of humanity, or such cords as men are drawn with; he dealt with them as men, in an equitable rational way, in an easy gentle way, with the cords of Adam. He dealt with them as with Adam in innocency, bringing them at once into a paradise, and into covenant with himself.

(2.) With bands of love, or cartropes of love. This word signifies stronger cords than the former. He did not drive them by force into his service, whether they would or no, nor rule them with rigour, nor detain them by violence, but his attractives were all loving and endearing, all sweet and gentle, that he might overcome them with kindness. Moses, whom he made their guide, was the meekest man in the world. Kindnesses among men we commonly call obligations, or bonds, bonds of love. Thus God draws with the savour of his good ointments (So 1:4), draws with lovingkindness, Jer 31:3. Thus God deals with us, and we must deal in like manner with those that are under our instruction and government, deal rationally and mildly with them.

6. He eased them of the burdens they had been long groaning under: I was to them as those that take off the yoke on their jaws, alluding to the care of the good husbandman, who is merciful to his beast, and will not tire him with hard and constant labour. Probably, in those times, the yoke on the neck of the oxen was fastened with some bridle, or headstall, over the jaws, which muzzled the mouth of the ox. Israel in Egypt were thus restrained from the enjoyments of their comforts and constrained to hard

labour; but God eased them, removed their shoulder from the burden, Ps 81:6.

Note, Liberty is a great mercy, especially out of bondage.

7. He supplied them with food convenient. In Egypt they fared hard, but, when God brought them out, he laid meat unto them, as the husbandman, when he has unyoked his cattle, fodders them. God rained manna about their camp, bread from heaven, angels' food; other creatures seek their meat, but God laid meat to his own people, as we do to our children, was himself their caterer and carver, anticipated them with the blessings of goodness.

2 *As* they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto
Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.
3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew
not that I healed them.
4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them
as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

Here is Israel very ungrateful to God.

1. They were deaf and disobedient to his voice. He spoke to them by his messengers, Moses and his other prophets, called them from their sins, called them to himself, to their work and duty; but as they called them so they went from them; they rebelled in those particular instances wherein they were admonished; the more pressing and importunate the prophets were with them, to persuade them to that which was good, the more refractory they were, and the more resolute in their evil ways, disobeying for disobedience-sake. This foolishness is bound in the hearts of children, who, as soon as they are taught to go, will go from those that call them.

2. They were fond of idols, and worshipped them: They sacrificed to Baalim, first one Baal and then another, and burnt incense to graven images, though they were called to by the prophets of the Lord again and again not to do this abominable

thing which he hated. Idolatry was the sin which from the beginning, and all along, had most easily beset them.

3. They were regardless of God, and of his favours to them: They knew not that I healed them. They looked only at Moses and Aaron, the instruments of their relief, and, when any thing was amiss, quarrelled with them, but looked not through them to God who employed them. Or, When God corrected them, and kept them under a severe discipline, they understood not that it was for their good, and that God thereby healed them, and it was necessary for the perfecting of their cure, else they would have been better reconciled to the methods God took. Note, Ignorance is at the bottom of ingratitude, Ho 2:8.

4. They were strongly inclined to apostasy. This is the blackest article in the charge (Ho 11:7): My people are bent to backsliding from me. Every word here is aggravating.

(1.) They backslide. There is no hold of them, no stedfastness in them; they seem to come forward, towards God, but they quickly slide back again, and are as a deceitful bow.

(2.) They backslide from me, from God, the chief good, the fountain of life and living waters, from their God who never turned from them, nor war as a wilderness to them.

(3.) They are bent to backslide; they are ready to sin; there is in their natures a propensity to that which is evil; at the best they hang in suspense between God and the world, so that a little thing serves to draw them the wrong way; they are forward to close with every temptation. It also intimates that they are resolute in sin; their hearts are fully set in them to do evil the bias is strong that way; and they persist in their backslidings, whatever is said or done to stop them; and yet,

(4.) "They are, in profession, my people. They are called by my name, and profess relation to me; they are mine, whom I have done much for and expect much from, whom I have nourished

and brought up, as children, and yet they backslide from me." Note, In our repentance we ought to lament not only our backslidings, but our bent to backslide, not only our actual transgressions, but our original corruption, the sin that dwells in us, the carnal mind.

5. They were strangely averse to repentance and reformation. Here are two expressions of their obstinacy:--

(1.) They refused to return, Ho 11:5. So much were they bent to backslide that, though they could not but find, upon trial, the folly of their backslidings, and that when they forsook God they changed for the worse, yet they went on frowardly. I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. They were commanded to return, were courted and entreated to return, were promised that if they would they should be kindly received, but they refused.

(2.) Though they called them to the Most High. God's prophets and ministers called them to return to the God from whom they had revolted, to the most high God, from whom they had sunk into this wretched degeneracy; they called them from the worship of the idols, which were so much below them, and the worship of which was therefore their disparagement, to the true God, who was so much above them, and the worship of whom was therefore their preferment; they called them from this earth to high and heavenly things; but they called in vain.

None at all would exalt him. Though he is the most high God they would not acknowledge him to be so, would do nothing to honour him nor give him the glory due to his name. Or, They would not exalt themselves, would not rise out of that state of apostasy and misery into which they had precipitated themselves; but there they contentedly lay still, would not lift up their heads nor lift up their souls. Note, God's faithful ministers have taken a great deal of pains, to no purpose, with backsliding children, have called them to the Most High; but none would stir, none at all would exalt him.

III. Here is God very angry, and justly so, with Israel; see what are the tokens of God's displeasure with which they are here threatened.

1. God, who brought them out of Egypt, to take them for a people to himself, since they would not be faithful to him, shall bring them into a worse condition than he at first found them in (Ho 11:5): "He shall not return into the land of Egypt, though that was a house of bondage grievous enough; but he shall go into a harder service, for the Assyrian shall be his king, who will use him worse than ever Pharaoh did." They shall not return into Egypt, which lies near, where they may hear often from their own country, and whence they may hope shortly to return to it again; but they shall be carried into Assyria, which lies much more remote, and where they shall be cut off from all correspondence with their own land and from all hopes of returning to it, and justly, because they refused to return. Note, Those that will not return to the duties they have left cannot expect to return to the comforts they have lost.

2. God, who gave them Canaan, that good land, and a very safe and comfortable settlement in it, shall bring his judgments upon them there, which shall make their habitation unsafe and uncomfortable (Ho 11:6): The sword shall come upon them, the sword of war, the sword of a foreign enemy, prevailing against them and triumphing over them.

(1.) This judgment shall spread far. The sword shall fasten upon their cities, those nests of people and store-houses of wealth; it shall likewise reach to their branches, the country villages (so some), the citizens themselves (so others), or the bars (so the word signifies) and gates of their city, or all the branches of their revenue and wealth, or their children, the branches of their families.

(2.) It shall last long: It shall abide on their cities. David thought three months flying before his enemies was the only judgment of the three that was to be excepted against; but this sword shall

abide much longer than three months on the cities of Israel. They continued their rebellions against God, and therefore God continued his judgments on them.

(3.) It shall make a full end: It shall consume their branches, and devour them, and lay all waste, and this because of their own counsels, that is, because they would have their own projects, which God therefore, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up to. Note, The confusion of sinners is owing to their contrivance. God's counsels would have saved them, but their own counsels ruined them.

5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

6 And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.

7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt *him*.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

In these verses we have,

I. God's wonderful backwardness to destroy Israel (Ho 11:8,9): How shall I give thee up? Here observe,

1. God's gracious debate within himself concerning Israel's case, a debate between justice and mercy, in which victory plainly inclines to mercy's side. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! at the glory of God's goodness. Not that there are any such struggles in God as there are in us, or that he is ever fluctuating or unresolved; no, he is in one mind, and knows it; but they are expressions after the manner of men, designed to show what severity the sin of Israel had deserved, and yet how divine grace would be glorified in sparing them notwithstanding. The connexion of this with what goes before is very surprising; it was said of Israel (Ho 11:7) that they were bent to backslide from God, that though they were called to him they would not exalt him, upon which, one would think, it should have followed,

"Now I am determined to destroy them, and never show them mercy any more." No, such is the sovereignty of mercy, such the freeness, the fulness, of divine grace, that it follows immediately, How shall I give thee up? See here,

(1.) The proposals that justice makes concerning Israel, the suggestion of which is here implied. Let Ephraim be given up, as an incorrigible son is given up to be disinherited, as an incurable patient is given over by his physician. Let him be given up to ruin. Let Israel be delivered into the enemy's hand, as a lamb to the lion to be torn in pieces; let them be made as Admah and set as Zeboim, the two cities that with Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone rained from heaven upon them; let them be utterly and irreparably ruined, and be made as like these cities in desolation as they have been in sin. Let that curse which is written in the law be executed upon them, that the whole land shall be brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, De 29:23. Ephraim and Israel deserve to be thus abandoned, and God will do them no wrong if he deal thus with them.

(2.) The opposition that mercy makes to these proposals: How shall I do it? As the tender father reasons with himself, "How can I cast off my untoward son? for he is my son, though he be untoward; how can I find in my heart to do it?" Thus, "Ephraim has been a dear son, a pleasant child: How can I do it? He is ripe for ruin; judgments stand ready to seize him; there wants nothing but giving him up, but I cannot do it. They have been a people near unto me; there are yet some good among them; theirs are the children of the covenant; if they be ruined, the enemy will triumph; it may be they will yet repent and reform; and therefore how can I do it?"

Note, The God of heaven is slow to anger, and is especially loth to abandon a people to utter ruin that have been in special relation to him. See how mercy works upon the mention of those severe proceedings: My heart is turned within me, as we say, Our heart fails us, when we come to do a thing that is against the grain with

us. God speaks as if he were conscious to himself of a strange striving of affections in compassion to Israel: as La 1:20, My bowels are troubled; my heart is turned within me. As it follows here, My repentings are kindled together. His bowels yearned towards them, and his soul was grieved for their sin and misery, Jdg 10:16. Compare Jer 31:20. Since I spoke against him my bowels are troubled for him. When God was to give up his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, and a Saviour for sinners, he did not say, How shall I give him up? No, he spared not his own Son; it pleased the Lord to bruise him; and therefore God spared not him, that he might spare us. But this is only the language of the day of his patience; when men have sinned that away, and the great day of his wrath comes, then no difficulty is made of it; nay, I will laugh at their calamity.

2. His gracious determination of this debate. After a long contest mercy in the issue rejoices against judgment, has the last word, and carries the day, Ho 11:9. It is decreed that the reprieve shall be lengthened out yet longer, and I will not now execute the fierceness of my anger, though I am angry; though they shall not go altogether unpunished, yet he will mitigate the sentence and abate the rigour of it. He will show himself to be justly angry, but not implacably so; they shall be corrected, but not consumed. I will not return to destroy Ephraim; the judgments that have been inflicted shall not be repeated, shall not go so deep as they have deserved. He will not return to destroy, as soldiers, when they have pillaged a town once, return a second time, to take more, as when what the palmer-worm has left the locust has eaten. It is added, in the close of the Ho 11:9, "I will not enter into the city, into Samaria, or any other of their cities; I will not enter into them as an enemy, utterly to destroy them, and lay them waste, as I did the cities of Admah and Zeboim."

3. The ground and reason of this determination: For I am God and not man, the Holy One of Israel. To encourage them, to hope that they shall find mercy, consider,

(1.) What he is in himself: He is God, and not man, as in other things, so in pardoning sin and sparing sinners. If they had offended a man like themselves, he would not, he could not have borne it; his passion would have overpowered his compassion, and he would have executed the fierceness of his anger; but I am God, and not man. He is Lord of his anger, whereas men's anger commonly lords it over them. If an earthly prince were in such a strait between justice and mercy, he would be at a loss how to compromise the matter between them; but he who is God, and not man, knows how to find out an expedient to secure the honour of his justice and yet advance the honour of his mercy. Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of our God, whose thoughts and ways, in receiving returning sinners, are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth, Isa 55:9.

Note, It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies to remember that he is God, and not man. He is the Holy One. One would think this were a reason why he should reject such a provoking people. No; God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to his holiness, but very much to the honour of it, as he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and therein declares his righteousness, now Christ has purchased the pardon and he has promised it.

(2.) What he is to them; he is the Holy One in the midst of thee; his holiness is engaged for the good of his church, and even in this corrupt and degenerate land and age there were some that gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and he required of them all to be holy as he is, Le 19:2. As long as we have the Holy One in the midst of us we are safe and well; but woe to us when he leaves us! Note, Those who submit to the influence may take the comfort of God's holiness.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I *am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

10 They shall walk after the Lord: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

Here is his wonderful forwardness to do good for Israel, which appears in this, that he will qualify them to receive the good he designs for them (Ho 11:10,11):

They shall walk after the Lord. This respects the same favour with that (Ho 3:5), They shall return, and seek the Lord their God; it is spoken of the ten tribes, and had its accomplishment, in part, in the return of some of them with those of the two tribes in Ezra's time; but it had its more full accomplishment in God's spiritual Israel, the gospel-church, brought together and incorporated by the gospel of Christ. The ancient Jews referred it to the time of the Messiah; the learned Dr. Pocock looks upon it as a prophecy of Christ's coming to preach the gospel to the dispersed children of Israel, the children of God that were scattered abroad. And then observe,

1. How they were to be called and brought together: The Lord shall roar like a lion. The word of the Lord (so says the Chaldee) shall be as a lion that roars. Christ is called the lion of the tribe of Judah, and his gospel, in the beginning of it, was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. When Christ cried with a loud voice it was as when a lion roared, Re 10:3. The voice of the gospel was heard afar, as the roaring of a lion, and it was a mighty voice. See Joe 3:16.

2. What impression this call should make upon them, such an impression as the roaring of a lion makes upon all the beasts of the forest: When he shall roar then the children shall tremble. See Am 3:8, The lion has roared; the Lord God has spoken; and then who will not fear? When those whose hearts the gospel reached trembled, and were astonished, and cried out, What shall we do?--when they were by it put upon working out their salvation, and worshipping God with fear and trembling, then this promise was fulfilled.

The children shall tremble from the west. The dispersed Jews were carried eastward, to Assyria and Babylon, and those that returned came from the east; therefore this seems to have

reference to the calling of the Gentiles that lay westward from Canaan, for that way especially the gospel spread. They shall tremble; they shall move and come with trembling, with care and haste, from the west, from the nations that lay that way, to the mountain of the Lord (Isa 2:3), to the gospel-Jerusalem, upon hearing the alarm of the gospel. The apostle speaks of mighty signs and wonders that were wrought by the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, Ro 15:19. Then the children trembled from the west. And, whereas Israel after the flesh was dispersed in Egypt and Assyria, it is promised that they shall be effectually summoned thence (Ho 11:11):

They shall tremble; they shall come trembling, and with all haste, as a bird upon the wing, out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria; a dove is noted for swift and constant flight, especially when she flies to her windows, which the flocking of Jews and Gentiles to the church is here compared to, as it is Isa 60:8. Wherever those are that belong to the election of grace--east, west, north, or south--they shall hear the joyful sound, and be wrought upon by it; those of Egypt and Assyria shall come together; those that lay most remote from each other shall meet in Christ, and be incorporated in the church. Of the uniting of Egypt and Assyria, it was prophesied, Isa 19:23.

3. What effect these impressions should have upon them. Being moved with fear, they shall flee to the ark: They shall walk after the Lord, after the service of the Lord (so the Chaldee); they shall take the Lord Christ for their leader and commander; they shall enlist themselves under him as the captain of their salvation, and give up themselves to the direction of the Spirit as their guide by the word; they shall leave all to follow Christ, as becomes disciples. Note, Our holy trembling at the word of Christ will draw us to him, not drive us from him. When he roars like a lion the slaves tremble and flee from him, the children tremble and flee to him.

4. What entertainment they shall meet with at their return (Ho 11:11): I will place them in their houses (all those that come at

the gospel-call shall have a place and a name in the gospel-church, in the particular churches which are their houses, to which they pertain; they shall dwell in God, and be at home in him, both easy and safe, as a man in his own house; they shall have mansions, for there are many in our Father's house), in his tabernacle on earth and his temple in heaven, in everlasting habitations, which may be called their houses, for they are the lot they shall stand in at the end of the days.

III. Here is a sad complaint of the treachery of Ephraim and Israel, which may be an intimation that it is not Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual Israel, to whom the foregoing promises belong, for as for this Ephraim, this Israel, they compass God about with lies and deceit; all their services of him, when they pretended to compass his altar, were feigned and hypocritical; when they surrounded him with their prayers and praises, every one having a petition to present to him, they lied to him with their mouth and flattered him with their tongue; their pretensions were so fair, and yet their intentions so foul, that they would, if possible, have imposed upon God himself. Their professions and promises were all a cheat, and yet with these they thought to compass God about, to enclose him as it were, to keep him among them, and prevent his leaving them.

IV. Here is a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, which they held fast, and this comes in as an aggravation of the perfidiousness of the ten tribes, and a reason why God had that mercy in store for Judah which he had not for Israel (Ho 1:6,7), for Judah yet rules with God and is faithful with the saints, or with the Most Holy.

1. Judah rules with God, that is, he serves God, and the service of God is not only true liberty and freedom, but it is dignity and dominion. Judah rules, that is, the princes and governors of Judah rule with God; they use their power for him, for his honour, and the support of his interest. Those rule with God that rule in the fear of God (2Sa 23:3), and it is their honour to do so, and their

praise shall be of God, as Judah's here is. Judah is Israel--a prince with God.

2. He is faithful with the holy God, keeps close to his worship and to his saints, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose steps they faithfully tread in. They walk in the way of good men; and those that do so rule with God, they have a mighty interest in Heaven. Judah yet does thus, which intimates that the time would come when Judah also would revolt and degenerate. Note, When we see how many there are that compass God about with lies and deceit it may be a comfort to us to think that God has his remnant that cleave to him with purpose of heart, and are faithful to his saints; and for those who are thus faithful unto death is reserved a crown of life, when hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion without.

11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord.

12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

Hosea-12

Ephraim Rebuked for Falsehood and Oppression

1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

In these verses,

I. Ephraim is convicted of folly, in staying himself upon Egypt and Assyria, when he was in straits (Ho 12:1): Ephraim feeds on wind, that is, feeds himself with vain hopes of assistance from man, when he is at variance with God; and, when he meets with disappointments, he still pursues the same game, and greedily pants and follows after the east wind, which he cannot catch holy of, nor, if he could, would it be nourishing, nay, would be noxious. We say of the wind in the east, It is good neither for man nor beast. It was said (Ho 8:7), He sows the

wind; and as he sows so he reaps (He reaps the whirlwind); and as he reaps so he feeds--He feeds on the wind, the east wind. Note, Those that make creatures their confidence make fools of themselves, and take a great deal of pains to put a cheat upon their own souls and to prepare vexation for themselves:

He daily increaseth lies, that is, multiplies his correspondences and leagues with his neighbours, which will all prove deceitful to him; nay, they will prove desolation to him. Those very nations that he makes his refuge will prove his ruin. Those that stay themselves upon lies will be still coveting to increase them, that they may build their hopes firmly upon them; as if many lies twisted together would make one truth, or many broken reeds and rotten supports one sound one, which is a great delusion and will prove to them a great desolation; for those that observe lying vanities the more they increase them the more disappointments they prepare for themselves and the further they run from their own mercies. The men of Ephraim did so when they thought to secure the Assyrians in their interests by a solemn league, signed, sealed, and sworn to:

They make a covenant with the Assyrians, but they will find there is no hold of them; that potent prince will be a slave to his word no longer than he pleases. They thought to secure the Egyptians for their confederates by a rich present of the commodities of their country, not only to purchase their favour, but to show that their friendship was worth having: Oil is carried into Egypt. But the Egyptians, when they had got the bribe, dropped the cause, and Ephraim was never the better for them. Oleum perdidit et operam--The oil and the labour are both lost. This was feeding on wind; this was increasing lies and desolation.

II. Judah is contended with too, and Jacob, which includes both Ephraim and Judah (Ho 12:2): The Lord has also a controversy with Judah; for though he had a while ago ruled with God, and been faithful with the saints, yet now he begins to degenerate. Or though, in keeping close to the house of David and the house

of Aaron, and in them to the covenants of royalty and priesthood, they were so far in the right, in the former they ruled with God and in the latter were faithful to the saints, yet upon other accounts God had a controversy with them, and would punish them.

Note, Men's being in the right in some things, in the main things, will not exempt them from correction, and therefore should not exempt them from reproof, for those things wherein they are in the wrong. There were those of the seven churches of Asia whom Christ approved and commended, and yet he adds, Nevertheless I have something against thee. So here; though the seed of Jacob are a people near to God, yet God will punish them according to the evil ways they are found in and the evil doings they are found guilty of; for God sees sin even in his own people, and will reckon with them for it.

2 The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob
according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.
3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had
power with God:

Both Ephraim and Judah are put in mind of their father Jacob, whose seed they were and whose name they bore (and it was their honour), of the extraordinary things which he did and which God did for him, that they might be the more ashamed of themselves for degenerating from so illustrious a progenitor and staining the lustre of so great a name, and yet that they might be engaged and encouraged to return to God, the God of their father Jacob, in hopes for his sake to find favour with him. He had called this people Jacob (Ho 12:2), threatening to punish them; but how shall I give them up? How shall that dear name be forgotten?

1. Three glorious things concerning Jacob the person Jacob the people are here put in mind of; but by brief hints only, for it is presumed that they knew the story:--

(1.) His struggling with Esau in the womb: There he took his brother by the heel, Ho 12:3. We have the story Ge 25:26. It

was an early act of bravery, and an effort for the best precedency, a pious ambition for that birthright in the covenant which Esau is justly branded as profane for despising. But his degenerate seed, by mingling with the nations, and making leagues with them, profaned that crown, and laid that honour in the dust, which he so gloriously put in for. Then it was that the dominion was given to him: The elder shall serve the younger. Then he was owned of God as his beloved: Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. But they had by their sin forfeited both the love of God and dominion over their neighbours.

(2.) His wrestling with the angel. "Remember how your father Jacob had power with God by his own strength, the strength he had by the gift of God, who pleaded not against him by his great power, but put strength into him," Job 22:6.

The angel he wrestled with is called God, and therefore is supposed to be the Son of God, the angel of the covenant. "God was both a combatant with Jacob and an assistant of him, showing, in the latter respect, greater strength than in the former, fighting as it were against him with his left hand and for him with his right, and to that putting greater force." So, Dr. Pocock. The providence of God fought against him when he met with one danger after another, in his return homewards; but the grace of God enabled him to go on cheerfully in his way, and, when his faith acted upon the divine promise that was for him prevailed above his fears that arose from the divine providences that wee against him, then by his strength he had power with God.

But it refers especially to his prayer for deliverance from Esau, and for a blessing: He had power over the angel and prevailed, for he wept and made supplication. Here was a mixture of the greatest courage and the greatest tenderness, Jacob wrestling like a champion and yet weeping like a child. Note, Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the saints have obtained the most glorious victories. Thus Jacob commenced Israel--a prince with God; his posterity was called Israel, but they were

unworthy the name, for they had forfeited and lost their communion with God, and their interest in him, by revolting from their duty to him.

(3.) His meeting with God at Bethel: God found him in Bethel, and there he spoke with us. God found him the first time in Bethel, as he went to Padanaram (Ge 28:10), and a second time after his return, Ge 35:9, &c. It is probable that this refers to both; for in both God spoke to Jacob, and renewed the covenant with him, and the prophet might very well say, There he spoke with us who are the seed of Jacob, for both times that God spoke with Jacob at Bethel he spoke with him concerning his seed. Ge 28:14, Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and Ge 35:12, This land I will give unto thy seed.

Thus God then covenanted with him and his seed after him. Now justly are they upbraided with this; for in that very place which their father Jacob called Bethel--the house of God, in remembrance of the communion he there had with God, did they set up one of the calves, and worship it; thus they turned that Bethel into a Beth-aven--a house of iniquity. There God spoke with them exceedingly great and precious promises, which they had despised and lost the benefit of.

2. Two inferences are here drawn from these stories concerning Jacob, for instruction to his seed:--

(1.) Here is a use of information. From what passed between God and Jacob we may learn that Jehovah, the Lord God of hosts, is the God of Israel; he was the God of Jacob, and this is his memorial throughout all the generations of the seed of Jacob (Ho 12:5)-- the more shame for those who forgot the memorial of their church, deserted the God of their fathers, and exchanged a Lord of hosts for Baalim. Note, Those only are accounted the people of God that keep up a memorial of God, such a memorial of him as he himself has instituted, by which he makes himself known and will have us to remember him. Here are two

memorials of his, by which he is distinguished from all others, and is to be acknowledged and adored by us.

[1.] The former denotes his existence of himself. He is Jehovah, much the same with I AM, the same that was, and is, and is to come, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Jehovah is his memorial, his peculiar name.

[2.] The latter denotes his dominion over all: He is the God of hosts, that has all the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and makes what use he pleases of them. Jacob saw Mahanaim--God's two hosts, about the time that he wrestled with the angel (Ge 32:1,2), and so learned to call God the God of hosts, and transmitted it to us as his memorial. God's names, titles, and attributes, are the memorials of him; there is no need for images to be such. And that which was a revelation of God to one is his memorial to many, to all generations.

(2.) Here is a use of exhortation, Ho 12:6. "Is this so, that Jacob thy father had this communion with the Lord God of hosts, and is this still his memorial?" Then,

[1.] Let those that have gone astray from God be converted to him: Therefore turn thou to thy God. He that was the God of Jacob is the God of Israel, is thy God; from him thou hast unjustly and unkindly revolted; therefore turn thou to him by repentance and faith, turn to him as thine, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him.

[2.] Let those that are converted to him walk with him in all holy conversation and godliness: "Keep mercy and judgment, mercy in relieving and succouring the poor and distressed, judgment in rendering to all their due; be kind to all; do wrong to none. Keep piety and judgment" (so it may be read); "live righteously and godly in this present world; be devout and be honest. Do not only practise these occasionally, but be careful, and constant, and conscientious in the practice of them."

[3.] Let those that walk with God be encouraged to live a life of dependence upon him: "Wait on thy God continually, with a believing expectation to receive from him all the succours and supplies thou standest in need of." Those that live a life of conformity to God may live a life of confidence and comfort in him, if it be not their own fault. Let our eyes be ever towards the Lord, and let us preserve a holy security and serenity of mind under the protection of the divine power and the influence of the divine favour, looking, without anxiety, for a dubious event, and by faith keeping our spirits sedate and even; this is waiting on God as our God in covenant, and this we must do continually.

4 yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Beth-el, and there he spake with us;

5 even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord *is* his memorial.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

7 *He is* a merchant, the balances of deceit *are* in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

Here are intermixed, in these verses,

I. Reproofs for sin. When God is coming forth to contend with a people, that he may demonstrate his own righteousness, he will demonstrate their unrighteousness. Ephraim was called to turn to his God and keep judgment (Ho 12:6); now, to show that he had need of that call, he is charged with turning from his God by idolatry, and breaking the laws of justice and judgment.

1. He is here charged with injustice against the precepts of the second table, Ho 12:7,8. Here observe,

(1.) What the sin is wherewith he is charged: He is a merchant. The margin reads it as a proper name, He is Canaan, or a Canaanite, unworthy to be denominated from Jacob and Israel, and worthy to be cast out with a curse from this good land, as the Canaanites were. See Am 9:7.

But Canaan sometimes signifies a merchant, and therefore is most likely to do so here, where Ephraim is charged with deceit in trade. Though God had given his people a land flowing with milk and honey, yet he did not forbid them to enrich themselves by merchandise, and they succeeded the Canaanites in that as well as in their husbandry; they sucked the abundance of the seas and the treasures hidden in the sand, De 33:19.

And, if they had been fair merchants, it would have been no reproach at all to them, but an honour and a blessing. But he is such a merchant as the Canaanites were, who were honest only with good looking to, and, if they could, cheated all they dealt with.

Ephraim does so; he deceives and thereby oppresses. Note, There is oppression by fraud as well as oppression by force. It is not only princes, lords, and masters, that oppress their subjects, tenants, and servants, but merchants and traders are often guilty of oppressing those they deal with, when they impose upon their ignorance, or take advantage of their necessity, to make hard bargains with them, or are rigorous and severe in exacting their debts. Ephraim cheated,

[1.] With a great deal of art and cunning: The balances of deceit are in his hand. He uses balances, and delivers his goods by weight and measure, as if he would be very exact, but they are balances of deceit, false weights and false measures, and thus, under colour of doing right, he does the greatest wrong.

Note, God has his eye upon merchants and traders, when they are weighing their goods and paying their money, whether they do honestly or deceitfully. He observes what balances they have in their hand, and how they hold them; and, though those they deal with may not be aware of that sleight of hand with which they make them balances of deceit, God sees it, and knows it. Trades by the wit of man are made mysteries, but it is a pity that by the sin of man they should ever be made mysteries of iniquity.

[2.] With a great deal of pleasure and pride: He loves to oppress. To oppress is bad enough, but to love to do so is much worse. His conscience does not check and reprove him for it, as it ought to do; if it did, though he committed the sin, he could not delight in it; but his corruptions are so strong, and have so triumphed over his convictions, that he not only loves the gain of oppression, but he loves to oppress, sins for sinning-sake, and takes a pleasure in out-witting and over-reaching those that suspect him not.

(2.) How he justifies himself in this sin, Ho 12:8. Wicked men will have something to say for themselves now when they are told of their faults, some frivolous turn-off or other wherewith to evade the convictions of the word. Ephraim stands indicted for a common cheat. Now see what he pleads to the indictment. He does not deny the charge, nor plead, Not guilty, yet does not make a penitent confession of it and ask pardon, but insists upon his own justification. Suppose it were so that he did use balances of deceit, yet,

[1.] He pleads that he had got a good estate. Let the prophet say what he pleased of his deceit, of the sin of it and the curse of God that attended it, he could not be convinced there was any harm or danger in it, for this he was sure of that he had thriven in it: "Yet I have become rich, I have found me out substance. Whatever you make of it, I have made a good hand of it."

Note, Carnal hearts are often confirmed in a good opinion of their evil ways by their worldly prosperity and success in those ways. But it is a great mistake. Every word in what Ephraim says here proclaims his folly.

First, It is folly to call the riches of this world substance, for they are things that are not, Pr 23:5.

Secondly, It is folly to think that we have them of ourselves, to say (as some read it), I have made myself rich; what substance

I have is owing purely to my ingenuity and industry--I have found it; my might and the power of my hand have gotten me this wealth.

Thirdly, It is folly to think that what we have is for ourselves. I have found me out substance, as if we had it for our own proper use and behoof, whereas we hold it in trust, only as stewards.

Fourthly, It is folly to think that riches are things to be gloried in, and to say with exultation, I have become rich. Riches are not the honours of the soul, are not peculiar to the best men, nor sure to us; and therefore let not the rich man glory in his riches, Jam 1:9,10.

Fifthly, It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way makes us innocent, or will make us safe, or may make us easy, in that way; for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them. See Isa 47:10,Pr 1:32.

[2.] He pleads that he had kept a good reputation. It is common for sinners, when they are justly reproved by their ministers, to appeal to their neighbours, and because they know no ill of them, or will say none, or think well of what the prophets charge them with as bad, fly in the face of their reprovers: In all my labours (says Ephraim) they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin.

Note, Carnal hearts are apt to build a good opinion of themselves upon the fair character they have among their neighbours. Ephraim was very secure; for,

First, All his neighbours knew him to be diligent in his business; they had an eye upon all his labours, and commended him for them. Men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself.

Secondly, None of them knew him to be deceitful in his business. He acted with so much policy that nobody could say to the contrary but that he acted with integrity. For either,

1. He concealed the fraud, so that none discovered it: "Whatever iniquity there is, they shall find none;" as if no iniquity were displeasing to God, and damning to the soul, but that which is open and scandalous before men. What will it avail us that men shall find no iniquity in us, when God finds a great deal, and will bring every secret work, even secret frauds, into judgment? Or,

2. He excused the fraud, so that none condemned it: "They shall find no iniquity in me that were sin, nothing very bad, nothing but what is very excusable, only some venial sins, sins not worth speaking of," which they think God will make nothing of because they do not. It is a fashionable iniquity; it is customary; it is what every body does; it is pleasant; it is gainful; and this, they think, is no iniquity that is sin; nobody will think the worse of them for it. But God sees not as man sees; he judges not as man judges.

2. He is here charged with idolatry, against the precepts of the first table, with that iniquity which is in a special manner vanity, the making and worshipping of images, which are vanities (Ho 12:11): Surely they are vanity; they do not profit, but deceive. Now the prophet mentions two places notorious for idolatry:--

(1.) Gilead on the other side Jordan, which had been branded for it before (Ho 6:8): Is there iniquity in Gilead? It is a thing to be wondered at; it is a thing to be sadly lamented. What! iniquity in Gilead? idolatry there? Gilead was a fruitful pleasant country (pleasant to a proverb, Jer 22:6), and does it so ill requite the Lord? It was a frontier-country, and lay much exposed to the insults of enemies, and therefore stood in special need of the divine protection; what! and yet by iniquity throw itself out of that protection? Is there iniquity in Gilead? Yea,

(2.) And in Gilgal too; there they sacrifice bullocks (ho 9:5), and there their altars which they have set up, either to strange gods in opposition to his own appointed altar, are as thick as

heaps of manure in the furrows of the field that is to be sown, Ho 8:11. Is there iniquity in Gilead only? so some. Is it only in those remote parts of the nation that people are so superstitious, where they border upon other nations? No; they are as bad at Gilgal. In Gilead God protected Jacob their father (of whom he had been speaking) from the rage of Laban; and will you there commit iniquity?

8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: *in* all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that *were* sin.

9 And I *that am* the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

Here are threatenings of wrath for sin. Some make that to be so (Ho 12:9), I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles as in the days of the appointed time, that is, I will bring thee into such a condition as the Israelites were in when they dwelt in tents and wandered for forty years; that was the time appointed in the wilderness. Ephraim forgot that God brought him out of Egypt and brought him up to be what he was, and was proud of his wealth, and took sinful courses to increase it; and therefore God threatens to bring him to a tabernacle-state again, to a poor, mean, desolate, unsettled condition. Note, It is just with God, when men have by their sins turned their tents into houses, by his judgments to turn their houses into tents again. However, that is certainly a threatening (Ho 12:14),

Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly. See how men are deceived in their opinion of themselves, and how they will one day be undeceived. Ephraim thought that there was no iniquity in him that deserved to be called sin (Ho 12:8); but God told him that there was that in him which was sin, and would be found so if he did not repent and reform; for,

1. It was extremely offensive to his God: Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly with his iniquities, which were so distasteful to God, and to him too would be bitterness in the latter end. He was so wilful in sinning against his knowledge and convictions that any one might see, and say, that he designed no other than to provoke God in the highest degree. 2.

It would certainly be destructive to himself; that cannot be otherwise which provokes God against him, and kindles the fire of his wrath. Therefore,

(1.) He shall take away his forfeited life: He shall leave his blood upon him, that is, he shall not hold him guiltless, but bring upon him that death which is the wages of sin. His blood shall be upon his own head (2Sa 1:16), for his own iniquity has testified against him and he alone shall bear it. Note, When sinners perish their blood is left upon them.

(2.) He shall take away his forfeited honour: His reproach shall his Lord return upon him. God is his Lord; he had by idolatry and other sins reproached the Lord, and done dishonour to him, and to his name and family, and had given occasion to others to reproach him; and now God will return the reproach upon him, according to the word he has spoken, that those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed. Note, Shameful sins shall have shameful punishments. If Ephraim put contempt on his God, he shall be so reduced that all his neighbours shall look with contempt upon him.

III. Here are memorials of former mercy, which come in to convict them of base ingratitude in revolting from God. Let them blush to remember,

1. That God had raised them from meanness. When Ephraim had become rich, and was proud of that, he forgot that which God (that he might not forget it) obliged them every year to acknowledge (De 26:5), A Syrian ready to perish was my father. But God here puts them in mind of it, Ho 12:12.

Let them remember, not only the honours of their father Jacob, what a mighty prince he was with God, Ho 12:3 (an honour which they had no share in while they were in rebellion against God), but what a poor servant he was to Laban, which was sufficient to mortify those that were puffed up with the estates they had raised. Jacob fled into Syria from a malicious brother,

and there served a covetous uncle for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep, because he had not estate to endow a wife with. Jacob was poor, and low, and a fugitive; therefore his posterity ought not to be proud. He was a plain man, dwelling in tents, and keeping sheep; therefore balances of deceit ill became them.

He served for a wife that was not a Canaanitess, as Esau's wives were; therefore it was a shame for them to degenerate into Canaanites, and mingle with the nations. God wonderfully preserved him in his flight and preserved him in his service, so that he multiplied exceedingly, and from that root in a dry ground sprang an illustrious nation, that bore his name, which magnifies the goodness of God both to him and them and leaves them under the stain of base ingratitude to that God who was their founder and benefactor.

2. That God had rescued them from misery, had raised them to what they were, not only out of poverty, but out of slavery (Ho 12:13), which laid them under much stronger obligations to serve him and under a yet deeper guilt in serving other gods.

(1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt on purpose that they might serve him, and by redeeming them out of bondage acquired a special title to them and to their service.

(2.) He preserved them, as sheep are kept by the shepherd's care. He preserved them from Pharaoh's rage at the sea, even at the Red Sea, protected them from all the perils of the wilderness, and provided for them.

(3.) He did this by a prophet, Moses, who, though he is called king in Jeshurun (De 33:5), yet did what he did for Israel as a prophet, by direction from God and by the power of his word. The ensign of his authority was not a royal sceptre, but the rod of God; with that he summoned both Egypt's plagues and Israel's blessings. Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ (Ac 3:22), and it is by Christ as a prophet that we are brought out of

the Egypt of sin and Satan by the power of his truth. Now this shows how very unworthy and ungrateful this people were,

[1.] In rejecting their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, which, in the preface to the commandments, is particularly mentioned as a reason for the first, why they should have no other gods before him.

[2.] In despising and persecuting his prophets, whom they should have loved and valued, and have studied to answer God's end in sending them, for the sake of that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt and preserved them in the wilderness. Note, The benefit we have had by the word of God greatly aggravates our sin and folly if we put any slight upon the word of God.

3. That God had taken care of their education as they grew up. This instance of God's goodness we have, Ho 12:10. As by a prophet he delivered them, so by prophets he still continued to speak to them. Man, who is formed out of the earth, is fed out of the earth; so that nation, that was formed by prophecy, by prophecy was fed and taught; beginning at Moses, and so going on to all the prophets through the several ages of that church, we find that divine revelation was all along their tuition.

(1.) They had prophets raised up among themselves (Am 2:11), a succession of them, were scarcely ever without a Spirit of prophecy among them more or less, from Moses to Malachi.

(2.) These prophets were seers; they had visions, and dreams, in which God discovered his mind to them immediately, with a full assurance that it was his mind, Nu 12:6.

(3.) These visions were multiplied; God spoke not only once, yea, twice, but many a time; if one vision was not regarded, he sent another. The prophets had variety of visions, and frequent repetitions of the same.

(4.) God spoke to them by the prophets. What the prophets received from the Lord they plainly and faithfully delivered to them. The people at Mount Sinai begged that God would speak to them by men like themselves, and he did so.

(5.) In speaking to them by the prophets he used similitudes, to make the messages he sent by them intelligible, more affecting, and more likely to be remembered. The visions they saw were often similitudes, and their discourses were embellished with very apt comparisons. And, as God by his prophets, so by his Son, he used similitudes, for he opened his mouth in parables. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, of the sermons we hear; and those that have long enjoyed the means of grace in purity, plenty, and power, that have been frequently, faithfully, and familiarly, told the mind of God, will have a great deal to answer for another day if they persist in a course of iniquity.

IV. Here are intimations of further mercy, and this remembered too in the midst of sin and wrath (as some understand Ho 12:9): "I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, who then and there took thee to be my people, and have approved myself thy God ever since, in a constant series of merciful providences, have yet a kindness for thee, bad as thou art; and I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles, not as in the wilderness, but as in the days of the solemn feast," the feast of tabernacles, which was celebrated with great joy, Le 23:40.

1. They shall be made to see, by the grace of God, that though they are rich, and have found out substance, yet they are but in a tabernacle-state, and have in their worldly wealth no continuing city.

2. They shall yet have cause to rejoice in God, and have opportunity to do it in public ordinances. The feast of tabernacles was the first solemn feast the Jews kept after their return out of Babylon, Ezr 3:4. 3. This, as other promises, was to have its full accomplishment in the grace of the gospel, which

provides tabernacles for believers in their way to heaven, and furnishes them with matter of joy, holy joy, joy in God, such as was in the feast of tabernacles, Zec 14:18,19.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

11 *Is there* iniquity *in* Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep.*

13 And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

14 Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Hosea-13

The Utter Destruction of Ephraim Foretold

1 When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation till after the captivity; the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab; and this is the sin which, in these verses, they are charged with. Observe,

I The provision that God made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have, Ho 14:4. God did what was fit to be done to keep them close to himself; what could have been done more?

1. He made known himself to them as the Lord their God, and took them to be his people in a peculiar manner. Both by his word and by his works all along from the land of Egypt he declared, I am the Lord thy God; he told them so from heaven at Mount Sinai, that he was the Lord and their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophets and by his providences.

2. He gave them a law forbidding them to worship any other: "Thou shalt know no God but me; not only shalt not own and worship any other, but shalt not acquaint thyself with any other, nor make the rites and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee." Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those commended who have not known the depths of Satan.

3. He gave them a good reason for it: There is no saviour besides me. Whatever we take for our God we expect to have for our saviour, to make us happy here and hereafter; as, where we have protection, we owe allegiance, so where we have salvation, and hope for it, we owe adoration.

II The honour that Ephraim had, while he kept himself clear from idolatry (Ho 14:1): While Ephraim spoke trembling, or with trembling (that is, as Dr. Pocock understands it, while he behaved himself towards God as his father Jacob did, with weeping and supplications, and spoke not proudly and insolently against God and his prophets, while he kept up a holy fear of God, and worshipped him in that fear) so long he exalted himself in Israel, that is, he was very considerable among the tribes and made a figure. Jeroboam, who was of that tribe, exalted himself and his family.

When he spoke there was trembling, that is, all about him stood in awe of him; so some understand it. Note, Those that humble themselves, especially that humble themselves before God, shall be exalted. When people speak with modesty and jealousy of themselves, with a diffidence of their own judgment and a deference to others, they exalt themselves, they gain a reputation. But as for Ephraim he soon lost himself:

When he offended in Baal he died, that is, he lost his reputation, his honour soon dwindled and sunk, and was laid in the dust. Baal is here put for all idolatry; when Ephraim forsook God, and took to worship images, the state received its death's wound and

was never good for any thing afterwards. Note, Deserting God is the death of any person or persons.

III. The lamentable growth of idolatry among them (Ho 14:2): Now they sin more and more. When once he began to offend in Baal the ice was broken, and he grew worse and worse, coveted more idols, doted more upon those he had, and grew more ridiculous in the worship of them.

Note, The way of idolatry, as of other sins, is down-hill, and men cannot easily stop themselves. It is the sad case of all those who have forsaken God that they sin yet more and more. Let us trace them in their apostasy.

1. They made themselves molten images, proud to have gods that they could cast into what mould they pleased; probably these were the calves in miniature like the silver shrines for Diana; the zealots for the calf-worship carried about with them, it may be, images of the gods they worshipped, made on purpose for themselves.

2. They made them of their silver, and then doubted not of their property in them, when they purchased them with their own money or made them of their own plate melted down for that purpose. See what cost they put themselves to in the service of their idols, which they honoured with the best they had, and therefore made their molten images of silver.

3. They made them according to their own understanding, according to their own fancy. They consulted with themselves what shape they should make their idol in, and made it accordingly, a god according to the best of their judgment. Or according to their own likeness, in the form of a man. And, when they made their idols men like themselves in shape, they made themselves stocks and stones like them in reality; for those that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them.

4. It was all the work of the craftsmen. Their images did not pretend, like that of Diana, to have come down from Jupiter (Ac 19:35); no, perhaps the workmen stamped their names upon them, such an idol was such a man's work. See Ho 8:6,Isa 44:9, &c.

5. Though they were thus the work of their hands, yet they were the beloved of their souls; for they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Either the priests called upon the people thus to pay their homage, or the people, who were not allowed to come so near themselves, called upon the men that sacrificed, the priests that attended for them, to kiss the calves in their name and stead, because they could not reach to do it, so very fond were they of paying their utmost respects to such an idol as they were taught to have a veneration for. Though they were calves, yet, if they were gods, the worshippers, by themselves or their proxies, thus made their honours to them. They kissed the calves, in token of the adoration of them, affection for them, and allegiance to them, as theirs. Thus we are directed to kiss the Son, to take him for our Lord and our God.

IV. Threatenings of wrath for their idolatry. The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another; and therefore all those that worship images shall be confounded, especially if Ephraim do it, Ps 97:7. Because they are so fond of kissing their calves, therefore God will give them sensible convictions of their folly, Ho 14:3. They promise themselves a great deal of safety and satisfaction in the worship of their idols, and that their prosperity will thereby be established; but God tells them that they shall be disappointed, and driven away in their wickedness. This is illustrated by four similitudes:--They shall be,

1. As the morning cloud, which promises showers of rain to the parched ground.

2. As the early dew, which seems to be an earnest of such showers. But both pass away, and the day proves as dry and hot

as ever; so fleet and transitory their profession of piety was (Ho 6:4), and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them, and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed, and so will all theirs be that make an idol of this world.

3. They are as the chaff, light and worthless; and they shall be driven as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, Ps 1:4,25:5,Job 21:18. Nay,

4. They are as the smoke, noisome and offensive (see Isa 65:5), and they shall be driven away as the smoke out of the chimneys, that is soon dissipated and disappears, Ps 68:2. Note, No solid lasting comfort is to be expected any where but in God.

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images
of their silver, *and* idols according to their own understanding, all of it
the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice
kiss the calves.
3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that
passeth away, as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the
floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.
4 Yet I *am* the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know
no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.
5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.
6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their
heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

We may observe here,

1 The plentiful provision God had made for Israel and the seasonable supplies he had blessed them with (Ho 14:5): "I did know thee in the wilderness, took cognizance of thy case and made provision for thee, even in a land of great drought, when thou wast in extreme distress, and when no relief was to be had in an ordinary way." See a description of this wilderness, De 8:15,Jer 2:6, and say, The God that knew them, and owned them, and fed them there, was a friend indeed, for he was a friend at need and an all-sufficient friend, that could victual so vast an army when

all ordinary ways of provision were cut off, and where, if miracles had not been their daily bread, they must all have perished.

Note, Help at an exigency lays under peculiar obligations and must never be forgotten.

2. Their unworthy ungrateful abuse of God's favour to them. God not only took care of them in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture. And (Ho 14:6) according to their pasture so were they filled. God gave them both plenty and dainties, and they did not spare it, but, having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan they fed themselves to the full. And this was no hopeful presage; it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and had learned to deny themselves; but what was the effect of it? They were filled, and their heart was exalted. Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent, and secure. The best comment upon this is that of Moses, De 32:13-15.

But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. When the body was stuffed up with plenty the soul was puffed up with pride. Then they began to think their religion a thing below them, and they could not persuade themselves to stoop to the services of it. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. When they were poor and lame in the wilderness they thought it was necessary for them to keep in with God; but when they were replenished and established in Canaan they began to think they had no further need of him:

Their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me. Note, Worldly prosperity, when it feeds men's pride, makes them forgetful of God; for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled, what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said to him, Depart from us, Job 22:17.

It is sad that those favours which ought to make us mindful of God, and studious what we shall render to him, should make us

unmindful of him, and regardless what we do against him. We ought to know that we live upon God when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles.

3. God's just resentment of their base ingratitude, Ho 14:7,8. The judgments threatened (Ho 14:3) intimated the departure of all good from them. The threatenings here go further, and intimate the breaking in of all evils upon them; for God, who had so much befriended them, now turns to be their enemy and fights against them, which is expressed here very terribly:

I will be unto them as a lion and as a leopard. The lion is strong, and there is no resisting him. The leopard is here taken notice of to be crafty and vigilant: As a leopard by the way will I observe them. As that beast of prey lies in wait by the road-side to catch travellers, and devour them, so will God by his judgments watch over them to do them hurt, as he had watched over them to do them good, Jer 44:27. No opportunity shall be let slip that may accelerate or aggravate their ruin (Jer 5:6): A leopard shall watch over their cities.

A lynx, or spotted beast (and such the leopard is), is noted for quicksightedness above any creature (lynx visu--the eyes of a lynx), and so it intimates that not only the power, but the wisdom of God is engaged against those whom he has a controversy with. Some read it (and the original will bear it), I will be as a leopard in the way of Assyria. The judgments of God shall surprise them just when they are going to the Assyrians to seek for protection and help from them.

It is added, I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved, and thereby exasperated and made more cruel (2Sa 17:8,Pr 28:15), which intimates how highly God was provoked, and he would make them feel it: He will rend the caul of their heart. The lion is observed to aim at the heart of the beasts he preys upon, and thus will God devour them like a lion. He will send such judgments upon them as shall prey upon their spirits and consume their vitals.

Their heart was exalted (Ho 14:6), but God will take an effectual course to bring it down: The wild beast shall tear them; not only God will be as a lion and leopard to them, but the metaphor shall be fulfilled in the letter, for noisome beasts are one of the four sore judgments with which God will destroy a provoking people, Eze 14:15.

Now all this teaches us,

1. That abused goodness turns into the greater severity. Those who despise God and affront him, when he is to them as a careful tender shepherd, shall find he will be even to his own flock as the beasts of prey are. Those whom God has in vain endured with much long-suffering, and invited with much affection, in them he will show his wrath and make them vessels of it, Ro 9:22. Patientia læsa fit furor--Despised patience will turn into fury.

2. That the judgments of God, when they come with commission against impenitent sinners, will be irresistible and very terrible. They will rend the caul of the heart, will fill the soul with confusion, and tear that in pieces; and we are as unable to grapple with them as a lamb is to make his part good against a roaring lion, for who knows the power of God's anger? Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, let us be persuaded to make peace with him; for are we stronger then he?

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will
I observe *them:*
8 I will meet them as a bear *that is* bereaved *of her whelps,* and will rend the
caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild
beast shall tear them.
9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help.
10 I will be thy king: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities?
and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

The first of these verses is the summary, or contents, of all the rest (Ho 14:9), where we have,

1. All the blame of Israel's ruin laid upon themselves: O Israel! thy perdition is thence; it is of and from thyself; or, "It has

destroyed thee, O Israel! that is, all that sin and folly of thine which thou art before charged with. As thy own wickedness has many a time corrected thee, so that has now at length destroyed thee." Note, Wilful sinners are self-destroyers. Obstinate impenitence is the grossest self-murder. Those that are destroyed of the destroyer have their blood upon their own head; they have destroyed themselves. 2. All the glory of Israel's relief ascribed to God: But in me is thy help. That is,

(1.) It might have been: "I would have helped thee and healed thee, but thou wouldst not be healed and helped, but wast resolutely set upon thy own destruction." This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, not only that they did that which tended to their own ruin, but that they opposed the offers God made them and the methods he took with them to prevent it: I would have gathered them, and they would not. They might have been easily and effectually helped, but they put the help away from them. Nay,

(2.) It may be: "Thy case is bad, but it is not desperate. Thou hast destroyed thyself; but come to me, and I will help thee." This is a plank thrown out after shipwreck, and greatly magnifies not only the power of God, that he can help when things are at the worst, can help those that cannot help themselves, but the riches of his grace, that he will help those that have destroyed themselves and therefore might justly be left to perish, that he will help those that have long refused his help. Dr. Pocock gives a different reading and sense of this verse: "O Israel! this has destroyed thee, that in me is thy help. Presuming upon God and his favour has emboldened thee in those wicked ways which have been thy ruin."

Now, in the rest of these verses, we may see,

I. How Israel destroyed themselves. It is said (Ho 14:16), They rebelled against God, revolted from their allegiance to him, entered into a confederacy with his enemies, and took up arms against him; and this was the thing that ruined them, for never any hardened themselves against God and prospered. Note, Those that

rebel against their God destroy themselves, for they make him their enemy for whom they are an unequal match.

1. They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so they destroy themselves. They are doing that, every day, which will be remembered against them another day (Ho 14:12): The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin is hid; God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him and reckon with him for it afterwards. Their former sins contributed to their present destruction; for they were laid up in store with God, De 32:34,35,Job 14:17.

It is laid up in safety, and will not be forgotten, nor the evidence against him lost; but it is laid up in secret; it is hid; the sinner himself is not aware of it. It is bound up in God's omniscience, in the sinner's own conscience. Note, The sin of sinners is not forgotten till it is pardoned, but an exact account is kept of it, which will be opened in proper time.

2. They make no haste to repent and help themselves when they are under divine rebukes; they are their own ruin because they will not do what they should do towards their own salvation, Ho 14:13.

(1.) They are brought into trouble and distress by sin: The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him. They shall smart for sin, and so be made sensible of it; they shall be thrown into pangs and agonies by it, very sharp and severe, and yet, like the pains of a woman in labour, hopeful and promising, and in order to deliverance; and by these, though God corrects them, yet he designs their good. They are chastened, that they may not be destroyed. But,

(2.) They are not by these forwarded as they ought to be towards repentance and reformation, which would cause their sorrows to issue in true joy: He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long, as he does, in the place of the breaking forth of children, but, being brought to the birth, should struggle to get forth, lest he be stifled and still-born at last. Were the child which the mother is in travail

of capable of understanding its own case, we should reckon it an unwise child that would choose to stay long in the birth; for the captive exile hasteth to be loosed, lest he die in the pit, Isa 51:14.

Note, Those may justly be reckoned their own destroyers who defer and put off their repentance, by which alone they might help themselves. Those are in danger of miscarrying in conversion who delay it, and will not put forth themselves to speed the work and bring it to an issue.

3. Therefore they are destroyed because they have done that which will be their certain ruin and neglected that which would have been their only relief. Here is a sad description of the desolation they are doomed to, Ho 14:15,16. It is here taken for granted that Ephraim is fruitful among his children; his name signifies fruitfulness. He is fruitful in respect of the plentiful products of his country and the great numbers of its inhabitants; it was both a rich and a populous tribe, as was foretold concerning it; but sin turns this fruitful tribe into barrenness.

Joseph was a fruitful bough, but for sin it was blasted. The instrument is an east wind, representing a foreign enemy that should invade it. It is called the wind of the Lord, not only because it shall be a very great and strong wind, but because it shall be sent by divine direction; it shall come from the Lord, and do whatever he appoints; and see what effect it shall have upon that flourishing tribe, what desolations war shall make.

(1.) Was it a rich tribe? The foreign enemy shall make it poor enough. This wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, a freezing blasting wind, and shall dry up the springs and fountains with which this tree is watered, shall exhaust the sources of its wealth. The invader shall waste the country and so impoverish the husbandman, shall intercept trade and commerce and so impoverish the merchant; and let not the great men, whose wealth lies in their rich furniture, think that they shall be exempted from the judgment, for he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. See the folly of those that lay up their treasure on earth,

that lay it up in pleasant vessels (vessels of desire, so the word is), on which they set their affections, and in which they place their comfort and satisfaction.

This is treasure that may be spoiled and that they may be spoiled of; it is what either moth or rust may corrupt, or what thieves and soldiers may steal and carry away. But wise and happy are those who have laid up their treasures in heaven, and in the pleasant things of that world, which cannot be spoiled, which they cannot be stripped of; ever happy are they, and therefore truly wise.

(2.) Was it a populous tribe, and numerous? The enemy shall depopulate it and make its men few: Samaria shall become desolate, without inhabitants.

[1.] Those shall be cut off who are the guard and joy of the present generation; the men who bear arms shall bear them to no purpose, for they shall fall by the sword, so that there shall be none to make head against the fury of the conqueror nor to take care of the concerns either of the public or of private families.

[2.] Those shall be cut off who are the seed and hope of the next generation, who should rise up in the places of those who fell by the sword; the whole nation must be rooted out, and therefore the infants shall be dashed to pieces, in the most cruel and barbarous manner, and, which is if possible yet more inhuman, the women with child shall be ripped up. Thus shall the glory of Samaria flee away from the birth, and from the womb, Ho 9:11,10:14. See instances of this cruelty, 2Ki 8:12,15:16,Am 1:13.

11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.
12 The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* hid.
13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he *is* an unwise son; for he should not stay long in *the place of* the breaking forth of children.

Let us now see how God was the help of this self-destroying people, how he was their only help (Ho 14:10): I will be thy King, to rule and save thee. Though they had refused to be his subjects and had rebelled against him, yet he would still be their King and

would not abandon them. The business and care of a good king is to keep his people, not only from ruined by foreign enemies, but from ruining themselves and one another. Thus will God yet be Israel's King, as he was their King of old. Note, Our case would be sad indeed if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

1. God will be their King when they have no other king; he will protect and save them when those are cut off and gone who should have been their protectors and saviours: I will be he (so Ho 14:10 may be read), he that shall help thee. "Where is the king that may save thee in all thy cities, that may go in and out before thee, and fight thy battles, when thy cities are invaded by a foreign power, and suppress the more dangerous quarrels of thy citizens among themselves? Where are thy judges, who by administering public justice should preserve the public peace? For it is righteousness and peace that kiss each other. Where are thy judges that thou hadst such a desire of and such a dependence upon, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? This refers,

(1.) To the foolish wicked desire which the whole nation had of a kingly government, being weary of the theocracy, or divine government, which they had been under during the time of the Judges, because it looked too mean for them. They rejected Samuel, and in him the Lord, when they said, Give us a king like the nations, whereas the Lord was their King.

(2.) To the desire which the ten tribes had of a kingly government different from that of the house of David, because they thought that was too absolute and bore too hard upon them, and they hoped to better themselves by setting up Jeroboam. Both these are instances,

[1.] Of men's improvidence for themselves. When they are uneasy with their present lot they are fond of novelty, and think to better themselves by a change; but they are commonly disappointed, and do not find that advantage in the alteration which they promised themselves.

[2.] Of men's impiety towards God, in thinking to refine upon his appointments and amend them. God gave Israel judges and prophets for their guidance; but they were weary of them, and cried, Give us a king and princes. God gave them the house of David, established it by a covenant of royalty; but they were soon weary of that too, and cried, We have no part in David.

Those destroy themselves who are not pleased with what God does for them, but think they can do better for themselves. Well, in both these requests, Providence humoured them, gave them Saul first, and afterwards Jeroboam. And what the better were they for them? Saul was given in anger (given in thunder, 1Sa 12:18,19) and soon after was taken away in wrath, upon Mount Gilboa. The kingly government of the ten tribes was given in anger, not only against Solomon for his defection, but against the ten tribes that desired it, for their discontent and disaffection to the house of David; and God was now about to take that away in wrath by the power of the king of Assyria. And then, where is thy King? He is gone, and thou shalt abide many days without a king, and without a prince (Ho 3:4), shalt have none to save thee, none to rule thee. Note,

First, God often gives in anger what we sinfully and inordinately desire, gives it with a curse, and with it gives us up to our own hearts' lusts. Thus he gave Israel quails.

Secondly, What we inordinately desire we are commonly disappointed in, and it cannot save us, as we expected it should.

Thirdly, What God gives in anger he takes away in wrath; what he gives because we did not desire it well he takes away because we did not use it well. It is the happiness of the saints that, whether God gives or takes, it is all in love, and furnishes them with matter for praise. To the pure all things are pure. It is the misery of the wicked that, whether God gives or takes, it is all in wrath; to them nothing is pure, nothing is comfortable.

2. God will do that for them which no other king could do if they had one (Ho 13:14): I will ransom them from the power of the grave. Though Israel, according to the flesh, be abandoned to destruction, God has mercy in store for his spiritual Israel, in whom all the promises were to have their accomplishment, and this among the rest, for to them the apostle applies it (1Co 15:55), and particularly to the blessed resurrection of believers at the great day, yet not excluding their spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life. It is promised,

(1.) That the captives shall be delivered, shall be ransomed, from the power of the grave. Their deliverance shall be by ransom; and we know who it was that paid their ransom, and what the ransom was, for it was the Son of man that gave his life a ransom for many, Mt 20:28. It is he that thus redeemed them. Those who, upon their repenting and believing, are, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, acquitted from the guilt of sin and saved from death and hell, which are the wages of sin, are those ransomed of the Lord that shall, in the great day, be brought out of the grave in triumph, and it shall be as impossible for the banks of death to hold them as it was to hold their Master.

(2.) That the conqueror shall be destroyed: O death! I will be thy plagues. Jesus Christ was the plague and destruction of death and the grave when by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, and when in his own resurrection he triumphed over the grave. But the complete destruction of them will be in the resurrection of believers at the great day, when death shall for ever be swallowed up in victory, and it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But the word which we translate I will may as well be rendered Ubi nunc--Where now are thy plagues? And so the apostle took it: 'O death! where is thy plague, or sting, with which thou hast so long pestered the world? O grave! where is thy victory, or thy destruction, wherewith thou has destroyed mankind?"

Christ has abolished death, has broken the power of it and altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it. This

promise he has made, and it shall be made good to all that are his; for repentance shall be hidden from his eyes; he will never recall this sentence passed on death and the grave, for he is not a man that he should repent. Thanks be to God therefore who gives us the victory.

14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them
from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy
destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.
15 Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come, the
wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring
shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the
treasure of all pleasant vessels.
16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God:
they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and
their women with child shall be ripped up.

Hosea-14

Israel Entreated to Return to the Lord

1 O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine
iniquity.

Here we have,

I. A kind invitation given to sinners to repent, Ho 14:1. It is directed to Israel, God's professing people. They are called to return. Note, Conversion must be preached even to those that are within the pale of the church as well as to heathen. "Thou are Israel, and therefore art bound to thy God in duty, gratitude, and interest; thy revolt from him is so much the more heinous, and thy return to him so much the more necessary." Let Israel see,

1. What work he has made for repentance: "Thou has fallen by thy iniquity." Thou has stumbled; so some read it. Their idols were their stumbling-blocks. "Thou has fallen from God into sin, fallen off from all good, fallen down under the load of guilt and the curse." Note, Sin is a fall; and it concerns those that have fallen by sin to get up again by repentance.

2. What work he has to do in his repentance: "Return to the Lord thy God; return to him as the Lord whom thou has a dependence upon, as thy God, thine in covenant, whom thou has an interest in."

Note, It is the great concern of those that have revolted from God to return to God, and so to do their first works. "Return to him from whom thou has fallen, and who alone is able to raise thee up. Return even to the Lord, or quite home to the Lord; do not only look to him, or take some steps towards him, but make thorough work of it." The ancient Jews had a saying grounded on this, Repentance is a great thing, for it brings men quite up to the throne of glory.

II. Necessary instructions given them how to repent.

1. They must bethink themselves what to say to God when they come to him: Take with you words. They are required to bring, not sacrifices and offerings, but penitential prayers and supplications, the fruit of thy lips, yet not of the lips only, but of the heart, else words are but wind. One of the rabbin says, They must be such words as proceed from what is spoken first in the inner man; the heart must dictate to the tongue. We must take good words with us, by taking good thoughts and good affections with us. Verbaque prævisam rem non invita sequentur--Those who master a subject are seldom at a loss for language.

Note, When we come to God we should consider what we have to say to him; for, if we come without an errand, we are likely to go without an answer. Ezr_9:10, What shall we say? We must take with us words from the scripture, take them from the Spirit of grace and supplication, who teaches us to cry, Abba, Father, and makes intercession in us.

2. They must bethink themselves what to do. They must not only take with them words, but must turn to the Lord; inwardly in their hearts, outwardly in their lives.

2 Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto him, Take away
all iniquity, and receive *us* graciously: so will we render the calves of our
lips.
3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we
say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the
fatherless findeth mercy.

For their assistance herein, and encouragement, God is pleased to put words into their mouths, to teach them what they shall say. Surely we may hope to speed with God, when he himself has ordered our address to be drawn up ready to our hands, and his own Spirit has indited it for us; and no doubt we shall speed if the workings of our souls agree with the words here recommended to us. They are,

1. Petitioning words. Two things we are here directed to petition for:--

(1.) To be acquitted from guilt. When we return to the Lord we must say to him, Lord, take away all iniquity. They were now smarting for sin, under the load of affliction, but are taught to pray, not as Pharaoh, Take away this death, but, Take away this sin. Note, When we are in affliction we should be more concerned for the forgiveness of our sins than for the removal of our trouble. "Take away iniquity, lift it off as a burden we are ready to sink under or as the stumbling-block which we have often fallen over. Lord, take it away, that it may not appear against us, to our confusion and condemnation. Take it all away by a free and full remission, for we cannot pretend to strike any of it off by a satisfaction of our own." When God pardons sin he pardons all, that great debt; and when we pray against sin we must pray against it all and not except any.

(2.) To be accepted as righteous in God's sight: "Receive us graciously. Let us have thy favour and love, and have thou respect to us and to our performances. Receive our prayer graciously; be well pleased with that good which by thy grace we are enabled to do." Take good (so the word is); take it to bestow upon us, so the

margin reads it--Give good. This follows upon the petition for the taking away of iniquity; for, till iniquity is taken away, we have no reason to expect any good from God, but the taking away of iniquity makes way for the conferring of good removendo prohibens--by taking that out of the way which hindered. Give good; they do not say what good, but refer themselves to God; it is not good of the world's showing (Ps 4:6), but good of God's giving. "Give good, that good which we have forfeited, and which thou has promised, and which the necessity of our case calls for."

Note, God's gracious acceptance, and the blessed fruits and tokens of that acceptance, are to be earnestly desired and prayed for by us in our returning to God. "Give good, that good which will make us good and keep us from returning to iniquity again."

2. Promising words. These also are put into their mouths, not to move God, or to oblige him to show them mercy, but to move themselves, and oblige themselves to returns of duty. Note, Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience. Two things they are to promise and vow:--

(1.) Thanksgiving. "Pardon our sins, and accept of us, so will we render the calves of our lips." The fruit of our lips (so the LXX.), a word they used for burnt-offerings, and so it agrees with the Hebrew. The apostle quotes this phrase (Heb 13:15), and by the fruit of our lips understands the sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to his name. Note, Praise and thanksgiving are our spiritual sacrifice, and, if they come from an upright heart, shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock, Ps 69:30,32. And the sense of our pardon and acceptance with God will enlarge our hearts in praise and thankfulness. Those that are received graciously may, and must, render the calves of their lips--poor returns for rich receivings, yet, if sincere, more acceptable than the calves of the stall.

(2.) Amendment of life. They are taught to promise, not only verbal acknowledgements, but a real reformation. And we are taught here,

[1.] In our returns to God to covenant against sin. We cannot expect that God should take it away by forgiving it if we do not put it away by forsaking it.

[2.] To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sin, as we ought to be in our confession, because deceit lies in generals.

[3.] To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by. We must keep ourselves from, and therefore must thus fortify ourselves against, our own iniquity, Ps 18:23. The sin they here covenant against, owning thereby that they had been guilty of it, is giving that glory to another which is due to God only; this they promise they will never do,

First, By putting that confidence in creatures which should be put in God only. They will not trust to their alliances abroad: Asshur (that is, Assyria) shall not save us. "We will not court the help of the Assyrians when we are in distress, as we have done (Ho 5:13,7:11,8:9); we will not contract for it, nor will we confide in it, or depend upon it. Having a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to trust to, we scorn to be beholden to the Assyrians for help." They will not trust to their warlike preparations at home, especially not those which they were forbidden to multiply: "We will not ride upon horses, that is, we will not make court to Egypt," for thence they fetched their horses, De 17:16,Isa 30:16,31:1,3. "When our enemies invade us we will depend upon our God to succour our infantry, and will be in no care to remount our cavalry."

Or, "We will not post on horseback, for haste, from one creature to another, to seek relief, but will take the nearest way, and the only sure way, by addressing ourselves to God," Isa 20:5.

Note, True repentance takes us off from trusting to an arm of flesh, and brings us to rely on God only for all the good we stand in need of.

Secondly, Nor will they do it by paying that homage to creatures which is due to God only. We will not say any more to the works of our hands, You are our gods. They must promise never to worship idols again, and for a good reason, because it is the most absurd and senseless thing in the world to pray to that as a god which is the work of our hands. We must promise that we will not set our hearts upon the gains of this world, nor pride ourselves in our external performances in religion, for that is, in effect, to say to the work of our hands, You are our gods.

3. Pleading words are here put into their mouths: For in thee the fatherless find mercy. We must take our encouragement in prayer, not from any merit God finds in us, but purely from the mercy we hope to find in God. This contains in itself a great truth, that God takes special care of fatherless children, Ps 68:4,5. So he did in his law, Ex 22:22. So he does in his providence, Ps 27:10. It is God's prerogative to help the helpless. In him there is mercy for such, for they are proper objects of mercy. In him they find it; there it is laid up for them, and there they must seek it; seek and you shall find. It comes in here as a good plea for mercy and grace and an encouraging one to their faith.

(1.) They plead the distress of their state and condition: "We are fatherless orphans, destitute of help." Those may expect to find help in God that are truly sensible of their helplessness in themselves and are willing to acknowledge it. This is a good step towards comfort. "If we have not yet boldness to call God Father, yet we look upon ourselves as fatherless without him, and therefore lay ourselves at his feet, to be looked upon by him with compassion."

(2.) They plead God's wonted lovingkindness to such as were in that condition: With thee the fatherless not only may find, but does find, and shall find, mercy. It is a great encouragement to our faith and hope, in returning to God, that it is his glory to father the fatherless and help the helpless.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers of returning Israel. They seek God's face, and they shall not seek in vain. God will be sure to meet those in a way of mercy who return to him in a way of duty. If we speak to God in good prayers, God will speak to us in good promises, as he answered the angel with good words and comfortable words, Zec 1:13. If we take with us the foregoing words in our coming to God, we may take home with us these following words for our faith to feast upon; and see how these answer those.

I. Do they dread and deprecate God's displeasure, and therefore return to him? He assures them that, upon their submission, his anger is turned away from them. This is laid as the ground of all the other favours here promised. I will do so and so, for my anger is turned away, and thereby a door is opened for all good to flow to them, Isa 12:1. Note, Though God is justly and greatly angry with sinners, yet he is not implacable in his anger; it may be turned away; it shall be turned away, from those that turn away from their iniquity. God will be reconciled to those that are reconciled to him and to his whole will.

II. Do they pray for the taking away of iniquity? He assures them that he will heal their backslidings; so he promised, Jer 3:22. Note, Though backslidings from God are the dangerous diseases and wounds of the soul, yet they are not incurable, for God has graciously promised that if backsliding sinners will apply to him as their physician, and comply with his methods, he will heal their backslidings. He will heal the guilt of their backslidings by pardoning mercy and their bent to backslide by renewing grace. Their iniquity shall not be their ruin.

III. Do they pray that God will receive them graciously? In answer to that, behold, it is promised, I will love them freely. God had hated them while they went on sin (Ho 9:15); but now that they return and repent he loves them, not only ceases to be angry with them, but takes complacency in them and designs their good. He loves them freely, with an absolute entire love (so some), so that there are no

remains of his former displeasure, with a liberal bountiful love (so others); he will be open-handed in his love to them, and will think nothing too much to bestow upon them or to do for them. Or with a cheerful willing love; he will love them without reluctancy or renitency. He will not say in the day of thy repentance, How shall I receive thee again? as he said in the day of thy apostasy, How shall I give thee up? Or with an unmerited preventing love. Whom God loves he loves freely, not because they deserve it, but of his own good pleasure. He loves because he will love, De 7:7,8.

5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

Do they pray that God will give good, will make them good? In answer to that, behold, it is promised, I will be as the dew unto Israel, Ho 14:5. Observe,

1. What shall be the favour God will bestow upon them. It is the blessing of their father Jacob, God give thee the dew of heaven, Ge 27:28. Nay, what they need God will not only give them, but he will himself be that to them, all that which they need: I will be as the dew unto Israel. This ensures spiritual blessings in heavenly things; and it follows upon the healing of their backslidings, for pardoning mercy is always accompanied with renewing grace.

Note, To Israelites indeed God himself will be as the dew. He will instruct them; his doctrine shall drop upon them as the dew, De 32:2. They shall know more and more of him, for he will come to them as the rain, Hos 6:3. He will refresh them with his comforts, so that their souls shall be as a watered garden, Isa 58:11. He will be to true penitents as the dew to Israel when they were in the wilderness, dew that had manna in it, Ex 16:14,Nu 11:9. The graces of the Spirit are the hidden manna, hidden in the dew; God will give them bread from heaven, as he did to Israel in the dew in abundance, Joh 1:16.

2. What shall be the fruit of that favour which shall be produced in them. The grace thus freely bestowed on them shall not be in vain. Those souls, those Israelites, to whom God is as the dew, on whom his grace distils,

(1.) Shall be growing. The bad being by the grace of God made good, they shall by the same grace be made better; for grace, wherever it is true, is growing.

[1.] They shall grow upwards, and be more flourishing, shall grow as the lily, or (as some read it) shall blossom as the rose. The growth of the lily, as that of all bulbous roots, is very quick and speedy. The root of the lily seems lost in the ground all winter, but, when it is refreshed with the dews of the spring, it starts up in a little time; so the grace of God improves young converts sometimes very fast. The lily, when it has come to its height, is a lovely flower (Mt 6:29), so grace is the comeliness of the soul, Eze 16:14. It is the beauty of holiness that is produced by the dew of the morning, Ps 110:3.

[2.] They shall grow downwards, and be more firm. The lily indeed grows fast, and grows fine, but it soon fades and is easily plucked up; and therefore it is here promised to Israel that with the flower of the lily he shall have the root of the cedar: He shall cast forth his roots as Lebanon, as the trees of Lebanon, which, having taken deep root, cannot be plucked up, Am 9:15.

Note, Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root, which is out of sight. The more we depend upon Christ and draw sap and virtue from him, the more we act in religion from a principle and the more steadfast and resolved we are in it, the more we cast forth our roots.

[3.] They shall grow round about (Ho 14:6): His branches shall spread on all sides. And (Ho 14:7) he shall grow as the vine, whose branches extend furthest of any tree. Joseph was to be a fruitful bough, Ge 49:22. When many are added to the church from without, when a hopeful generation rises up, then Israel's branches spread. When particular believers abound in good works, and increase in the knowledge of God and in every good gift, then their branches may be said to spread. The inward man is renewed day by day.

(2.) They shall be graceful and acceptable both to God and man. Grace is the amiable thing, and makes those that have it truly amiable. They are here compared to such trees as are pleasant,

[1.] To the sight: His beauty shall be as the olive-tree, which is always green. The Lord called thy name a green olive-tree, Jer 11:16. Ordinances are the beauty of the church, and in them it is, and shall be, ever green. Holiness is the beauty of a soul; when those that believe with the heart make profession with the mouth, and justify and adorn that profession with an agreeable conversation, then their beauty is as the olive-tree, Ps 52:8. It is a promise to the trees of righteousness that their leaf shall not wither.

[2.] To the smell: His smell shall be as Lebanon (Ho 14:6) and his scent as the wine of Lebanon, Ho 14:7. This was the praise of their father Jacob, The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed, Ge 27:27. The church is compared to a garden of spices (So 4:12,14), which all her garments smell of. True believers are acceptable to God and approved of men. God smells a sweet savour from their spiritual sacrifices (Ge 8:21), and they are accepted of the multitude of the brethren. Grace is the perfume of the soul, the perfume of the name, makes it like a precious ointment, Ec 7:1.

The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon (so the margin reads it), not only their reviving comforts now, but their surviving honours when they are gone, shall be as the wine of Lebanon, that has a delicate flavour. Flourishing churches have their faith spoken of throughout the world (Ro 1:8) and leave their name to be remembered (Ps 45:17); and the memory of flourishing saints is blessed, and shall be so, as theirs who by faith obtained a good report.

(3.) They shall be fruitful and useful. The church is compared here to the vine and the olive, which brings forth useful fruits, to the honour of God and man. Nay, the very shadow of the church shall be agreeable (Ho 14:7): Those that dwell under his shadow shall return--under God's shadow (so some), under the shadow of the

Messias, so the Chaldee. Believers dwell under God's shadow (Ps 91:1), and there they are and may be safe and easy. But it is rather under the shadow of Israel, under the shadow of the church.

Note, God's promises pertain to those, and those only, that dwell under the church's shadow, that attend on God's ordinances and adhere to his people, not those that flee to that shadow only for shelter in a hot gleam, but those that dwell under it. Ps 27:4. We may apply it to particular believers; when a man is effectually brought home to God all that dwell under his shadow--children, servants, subjects, friends. This day has salvation come to this house. Those that dwell under the shadow of the church shall return; their drooping spirits shall return, and they shall be refreshed and comforted. He restores my soul, Ps 23:3.

They shall revive as the corn, which, when it is sown, dies first, and then revives, and brings forth much fruit, Joh 12:24. It is promised that God's people shall be blessings to the world, as corn and wine are. And a very great and valuable mercy it is to be serviceable to our generation. Comfort and honour attend it.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive *as* the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon.

8 Ephraim *shall say,* What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him,* and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

I. Concerning Ephraim; he is spoken of and spoken to, Ho 14:8. Here we have,

1. His repentance and reformation: Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? As some read it, God here reasons and argues with him, why he should renounce idolatry: "O Ephraim! what to me and idols? What concord or agreement can there be

between me and idols? What communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial? 2Co 6:14,15.

Therefore thou must break off thy league with them if thou wilt come into covenant with me." As we read it, God promises to bring Ephraim and keep him to this: Ephraim shall say, God will put it into his heart to say it, What have I to do any more with idols? He has promised (Ho 14:3) not to say any more to the works of his hands, You are my gods. But God's promises to us are much more our security and our strength for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God; and therefore God himself is here surety for his servant to good, will put in into his heart and into his mouth.

And, whatever good we say or do at any time, it is he that works it in us. Ephraim had solemnly engaged not to call his idols his gods; but God here engages further for him that he shall resolve to have no more to do with them. He shall abolish them, he shall abandon them, and that with the utmost detestation; for it is necessary not only that in our lives we be turned from sin, but that in our hearts we be turned against sin. See here,

(1.) The power of divine grace. Ephraim had been joined to his idols (Ho 4:17), was so fond of them that one would have thought he could never fall out with them; and yet God will work such a change in him that he shall loathe them as much as ever he loved them.

(2.) See the benefit of sanctified afflictions. Ephraim had smarted for his idolatry; it had brought one judgment after another upon him, and this at length is the fruit, even the taking away of his sin, Isa 27:9.

(3.) See the nature of repentance; it is a firm and fixed resolution to have no more to do with sin. This is the language of the penitent: "I am ashamed that ever I had to do with sin; but I have had enough of it; I hate it, and by the grace of God I will never have any thing to do with it again, no, not with the occasions of it." Thou shalt say

to thy idol, Get thee hence (Isa 30:22), shalt say to the tempter, Get thee behind me, Satan.

2 The gracious notice God is pleased to take of it: I have heard him, and observed him. I have heard, and will look upon him; so some read it.

Note, The God of heaven takes cognizance of the penitent reflections and resolutions of returning sinners. He expects and desires the repentance of sinners, because he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon men (Job 33:27), hearkens and hears, Jer 8:6. And, if there be any disposition to repent, he is well pleased with it. When Ephraim bemoans himself before God, he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child, Jer 31:20.

He meets penitents with mercy, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. God observed Ephraim, to see whether he would bring forth fruits meet for this profession of repentance that he made, and whether he would continue in this good mind. He observed him to do him good, and comfort him, according to the exigencies of his case.

3. The mercy of God designed for him, in order to his comfort and perseverance in his resolutions; still God will be all in all to him. Before, Israel was compared to a tree, now God compares himself to one. He will be to his people,

(1.) As the branches of a tree: "I am like a green fir-tree, and will be so to thee." The fir-trees, in those countries, were exceedingly large and thick, and a shelter against sun and rain. God will be to all true converts both a delight and a defence; under his protection and influence they shall both dwell in safety and dwell in ease. He with be either a sun and a shield or a shade and a shield, according as their case requires. They shall sit down under his shadow with delight, So 2:3. He will be so all weathers, Isa 4:6.

(2.) As the root of a tree: From me is thy fruit found, which may be understood either of the fruit brought forth to us (to him we owe

all our comforts) or of the fruit brought forth by us--from him we receive grace and strength to enable us to do our duty. Whatever fruits of righteousness we brought forth, all the praise of them is due to God; for he works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

II. Concerning every one that hears and reads the words of the prophecy of this book (Ho 14:9): Who is wise? and he shall understand these things. Perhaps the prophet was wont to conclude that sermons he preached with these words, and now he closes with them the whole book, in which he has committed to writing some fragments of the many sermons he had preached. Observe,

1 The character of those that do profit by the truths he delivered: Who is wise and prudent? He shall understand these things, he shall know them. Those that set themselves to understand and know these things thereby make it to appear that they are truly wise and prudent, and will thereby be made more so; and, if any do not understand and know them, it is because they are foolish and unwise. Those that are wise in the doing of their duty, that are prudent in practical religion, are most likely to know and understand both the truths and providences of God, which are a mystery to others, Joh 7:17. The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him, Ps 25:14. Who is wise? This intimates a desire that those who read and hear these things would understand them (O that they were wise!) and a complaint that few were so--Who has believed our report?

2 The excellency of these things concerning which we are here instructed: The ways of the Lord are right; and therefore it is our wisdom and duty to know and understand them. The way of God's precepts, in which he requires us to walk, is right, agreeing with the rules of eternal reason and equity and having a direct tendency to our eternal felicity. The ways of God's providence, in which he walks toward us, are all right; no fault is to be found with any thing that God does, for it is all well done. His judgments upon the impenitent, his favours to the penitent, are all right; however they

may be perverted and misinterpreted, God will at last be justified and glorified in them all. His ways are equal.

3. The different use which men make of them.

(1.) The right ways of God to those that are good are, and will be, a savour of life unto life: The just shall walk in them; they shall conform to the will of God both in his precepts and in his providences, and shall have the comfort of so doing. They shall well understand the mind of God both in his word and in his works; they shall be well reconciled to both, and shall accommodate themselves to God's intention in both. The just shall walk in those ways towards their great end, and shall not come short of it.

(2.) The right ways of God will be to those that are wicked a savour of death unto death: The transgressors shall fall not only in their own wrong ways, but even in the right ways of the Lord. Christ, who is a foundation stone to some, is to others a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. That which was ordained to life becomes through their abuse of it, death to them. God's providences, being not duly improved by them, harden them in sin and contribute to their ruin. God's discovery of himself both in the judgments of his mouth and in the judgments of his hand is to us according as we are affected under it.

Recipitur ad modum recipientis--What is received influences according to the qualities of the receiver. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But of all transgressors those certainly have the most dangerous fatal falls that fall in the ways of God, that split on the rock of ages, and suck poison out of the balm of Gilead. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid of this.

9 Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things?* prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Joel
[Joel]

Joel-1

The Devastation of the Land by Locusts

1 The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

It is a foolish fancy which some of the Jews have, that this Joel the prophet was the same with that Joel who was the son of Samuel (1Sa 8:2); yet one of their rabbin very gravely undertakes to show why Samuel is here called Pethuel. This Joel was long after that. He here speaks of a sad and sore judgment which was now brought, or to be brought, upon Judah, for their sins. Observe,

I The greatness of the judgment, expressed here in two things:--

1. It was such as could not be paralleled in the ages that were past, in history, or in the memory of any living, Joe 1:2 The old men are appealed to, who could remember what had happened long ago; nay, and all the inhabitants of the land are called on to testify, if they could any of them remember the like. Let them go further than any man's memory, and prepare themselves for the search of their fathers (Job 8:8), and they would not find an account of the like in any record. Note, Those that outdo their predecessors in sin may justly expect to fall under greater and sorer judgments than any of their predecessors knew.

2. It was such as would not be forgotten in the ages to come (Joe 1:3): "Tell you your children of it; let them know what dismal tokens of the wrath of God you have been under, that

they make take warning, and may learn obedience by the things which you have suffered, for it is designed for warning to them also. Yea, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation; let them tell it not only as a strange thing, which may serve for matter of talk" (as such uncommon accidents are records in our almanacs--It is so long since the plague, and fire--so long since the great frost, and the great wind), "but let them tell it to teach their children to stand in awe of God and of his judgments, and to tremble before him." Note, We ought to transmit to posterity the memorial of God's judgments as well as of his mercies.

II The judgment itself; it is an invasion of the country of Judea by a great army. Many interpreters both ancient and modern understand it of armies of men, the forces of the Assyrians, which, under Sennacherib, took all the defenced cities of Judah, and then, no doubt, made havoc of the country and destroyed the products of it: nay, some make the four sorts of animals here names (Joe 1:4) to signify the four monarchies which, in their turns, were oppressive to the people of the Jews, one destroying what had escaped the fury of the other.

Many of the Jewish expositors think it is a parabolic expression of the coming of enemies, and their multitude, to lay all waste. So the Chaldee paraphrast mentions these animals (Joe 1:4); but afterwards (Joe 2:25) puts instead of them, Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, potentates, and revenging kingdoms. But it seems much rather to be understood literally of armies of insects coming upon the land and eating up the fruits of it. Locusts were one of the plagues of Egypt. Of them it is said, There never were any like them, nor should be (Ex 10:14), none such as those in Egypt, none such as these in Judah--none like those locusts for bigness, none like these for multitude and the mischief they did. The plague of locusts in Egypt lasted but for a few days; this seems to have continued for four years successively (as some think), because here are four sorts of insects mentioned (Joe 1:4), one destroying what the other left; but others think they came all in one year.

We are not told, in the history of the Old Testament, when this happened, but we are sure that no word of God fell to the ground; and, though a devastation by these insects is primarily intended here, yet it is expressed in such a language as is very applicable to the destruction of the country by a foreign enemy invading it, because, if the people were not humbled and reformed by that less judgment which devoured the land, God would send this greater upon them, which would devour the inhabitants; and by the description of that they are bidden to take it for a warning. If this nation of worms do not subdue them, another nation shall come to ruin them. Observe,

1. What these animals are that are sent against them--locusts and caterpillars, palmer-worms and canker-worms, Joe 1:4. We cannot now describe how these differed one from another; they were all little insects, any one of them despicable, and which a man might easily crush with his foot or with his finger; but when they came in vast swarms, or shoals, they were very formidable and ate up all before them.

Note, God is Lord of hosts, has all creatures at his command, and, when he pleases, can humble and mortify a proud and rebellious people by the weakest and most contemptible creatures. Man is said to be a worm; and by this it appears that he is less than a worm, for, when God pleases, worms are too hard for him, plunder his country, eat up that for which he laboured, destroy the forage, and cut off the subsistence of a potent nation. The weaker the instrument is that God employs the more is his power magnified.

2. What fury and force they came with. They are here called a nation (Joe 1:6), because they are embodied, and act by consent, and as it were with a common design; for, though the locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands (Pr 30:27), and it is there mentioned as an instance of their wisdom. It is prudence for those that are weak severally to unite and act jointly. They are strong, for they are without number. The small dust of the balance is light, and easily blown away, but a heap of dust is weighty; so a worm can do little (yet one worm served to destroy Jonah's gourd), but

numbers of them can do wonders. They are said to have teeth of a lion, of a great lion, because of the great and terrible execution they do. Note, Locusts become as lions when they come armed with a divine commission. We read of the locusts out of the bottomless pit, that their teeth were as the teeth of lions, Re 9:8.

3. What mischief they do. They eat up all before them (Joe 1:4); what one leaves the other devours; they destroy not only the grass and corn, but the trees (Joe 1:7): The vine is laid waste. There vermin eat the leaves which should be a shelter to the fruit while it ripens, and so that also perishes and comes to nothing. They eat the very bark of the fig-tree, and so kill it. Thus the fig-tree does not blossom, nor is there fruit in the vine.

2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land.
Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?
3 Tell ye your children of it, and *let* your children *tell* their children, and
their children another generation.
4 That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that
which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which
the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.
5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine,
because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

A call to the drunkards to lament this judgment (Joe 1:5): Awake and weep, all you drinkers of wine. This intimates,

1. That they should suffer very sensibly by this calamity. It should touch them in a tender part; the new wine which they loved so well should be cut off from their mouth. Note, It is just with God to take away those comforts which are abused to luxury and excess, to recover the corn and wine which are prepared for Baal, which are made the food and fuel of a base lust. And to them judgments of that kind are most grievous. The more men place their happiness in the gratification of sense the more pressing temporal afflictions are upon them. The drinkers of water need not to care when the vine was laid waste; they could live as well without it as they had done; it was no trouble to the Nazarites. But the drinkers of wine will weep and howl. The more delights we make necessary to our

satisfaction the more we expose ourselves to trouble and disappointment.

2. It intimates that they had been very senseless and stupid under the former tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore they are here called to awake and weep. Those that will not be roused out of their security by the word of God shall be roused by his rod; those that will not be startled by judgments at a distance shall be themselves arrested by them; and when they are going to partake of the forbidden fruit a prohibition of another nature shall come between the cup and the lip, and cut off the wine from their mouth.

6 For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth *are* the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast *it* away; the branches thereof are made white.

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

The judgment is here described as very lamentable, and such as all sorts of people should share in; it shall not only rob the drunkards of their pleasure (if that were the worst of it, it might be the better borne), but it shall deprive others of their necessary subsistence, who are therefore called to lament (Joe 1:8), as a virgin laments the death of her lover to whom she was espoused, but not completely married, yet so that he was in effect her husband, or as a young woman lately married, from whom the husband of her youth, her young husband, or the husband to whom she was married when she was young, is suddenly taken away by death. Between a new-married couple that are young, that married for love, and that are every way amiable and agreeable to each other, there is great fondness, and consequently great grief if either be taken away. Such lamentation shall there be for the loss of their corn and wine. Note, The more we are wedded to our creature-comforts that harder it is to part with them. See that parallel place, Isa 32:10-12. Two sorts of people are here brought in, as concerned to lament this devastation, countrymen and clergymen.

Let the husbandmen and vine-dressers lament, Joe 1:11. Let them be ashamed of the care and pains they have taken about their vineyards, for it will be all labour lost, and they shall gain no advantage by it; they shall see the fruit of their labour eaten up before their eyes, and shall not be able to save any of it.

Note, Those who labour only for the meat that perishes will, sooner or later, be ashamed of their labour. The vine-dressers will then express their extreme grief by howling, when they see their vineyards stripped of leaves and fruit, and the vines withered, so that nothing is to be had or hoped for from them, wherewith they might pay their rent and maintain their families.

The destruction is particularly described here: The field is laid waste (Joe 1:10).; all is consumed that is produced; the land mourns; the ground has a melancholy aspect, and looks ruefully; all the inhabitants of the land are in tears for what they have lost, are in fear of perishing for want, Isa 24:4,Jer 4:28. "The corn, the bread-corn, which is the staff of life, is wasted; the new wine, which should be brought into the cellars for a supply when the old is drunk, is dried up, is ashamed of having promised so fair what it is not now able to perform; the oil languishes, or is diminished, because (as the Chaldee renders it) the olives have fallen off."

The people were not thankful to God as they should have been for the bread that strengthens man's heart, the wine that makes glad the heart, and the oil that makes the face to shine (Ps 104:14,15); and therefore they are justly brought to lament the loss and want of them, of all the products of the earth, which God had given either for necessity or for delight (this is repeated, Joe 1:11,12)-- the wheat and barley, the two principal grains bread was then made of, wheat for the rich and barley for the poor, so that the rich and poor meet together in the calamity.

The trees are destroyed, not only the vine and the fig-tree (as before, Joe 1:7), which were more useful and necessary, but

other trees also that were for delight--the pomegranate, palm-tree, and apple-tree, yea, all the trees of the field, as well as those of the orchard, timber-trees as well as fruit-trees.

In short, all the harvest of the field has perished, Joe 1:11. And by this means joy has withered away from the children of men (Joe 1:11); the joy of harvest, which is used to express great and general joy, has come to nothing, is turned into shame, is turned into lamentation.

Note, The perishing of the harvest is the withering of the joy of the children of men. Those that place their happiness in the delights of the sense, when they are deprived of them, or in any way disturbed in the enjoyment of them, lose all their joy; whereas the children of God, who look upon the pleasures of sense with holy indifference and contempt, and know what it is to make God their hearts' delight, can rejoice in him as the God of their salvation even when the fig-tree does not blossom; spiritual joy is so far from withering then, that it flourishes more than ever, Hab 3:17,18. Let us see here,

1. What perishing uncertain things all our creature-comforts are. We can never be sure of the continuance of them. Here the heavens had given their rains in due season, the earth had yielded her strength, and, when the appointed weeks of harvest were at hand, they saw no reason to doubt but that they should have a very plentiful crop; yet then they are invaded by these unthought-of enemies, that lay all waste, and not by fire and sword. It is our wisdom not to lay up our treasure in those things which are liable to so many untoward accidents.

2. See what need we have to live in continual dependence upon God and his providence, for our own hands are not sufficient for us. When we see the full corn in the ear, and think we are sure of it--nay, when we have brought it home, if he blow upon it, nay, if he do not bless it, we are not likely to have any good of it. 3. See what ruinous work sin makes. A paradise is turned into a wilderness, a fruitful land, the most fruitful land upon earth, into barrenness, for the iniquity of those that dwelt therein.

9 The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of
the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn.
10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new
wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.
11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the
wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished.

Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, lament, for they share deeply in the calamity: Gird yourselves with sackcloth (Joe 1:13); nay, they do mourn, Joe 1:9. Observe, The priests are called the ministers of the altar, for on that they attended, and the ministers of the Lord (of my God, says the prophet), for in attending on the altar they served him, did is work, and did him honour.

Note, Those that are employed in holy things are therein God's ministers, and on him they attend. The ministers of the altar used to rejoice before the Lord, and to spend their time very much in singing; but now they must lament and howl, for the meat-offering and drink-offering were cut off from the house of the Lord (Joe 1:9), and the same again (Joe 1:13), from the house of your God. "He is your God in a particular manner; you are in a nearer relation to him than other Israelites are; and therefore it is expected that you should be more concerned than others for that which is a hindrance to the service of his sanctuary." It is intimated,

1. That the people, as long as they had the fruits of the earth brought in in their season, presented to the Lord his dues out of them, and brought the offerings to the altar and tithes to those that served at the altar. Note, A people may be filling up the measure of their iniquity apace, and yet may keep up a course of external performances in religion.

2. That, when the meat and drink failed, the meat-offering and drink-offering failed of course; and this was the sorest instance of the calamity. Note, As far as any public trouble is an obstruction to the course of religion it is to be upon that account, more than any other, sadly lamented, especially by the priests, the Lord's ministers. As far as poverty occasions the decay of

piety and the neglect of divine offices, and starves the cause of religion among a people, it is indeed a sore judgment. When the famine prevailed God could not have his sacrifices, nor could the priests have their maintenance; and therefore let the Lord's ministers mourn.

12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, *even* all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

13 Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God.

14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord.

We have observed abundance of tears shed for the destruction of the fruits of the earth by the locusts; now here we have those tears turned into the right channel, that of repentance and humiliation before God. The judgment was very heavy, and here they are directed to own the hand of God in it, his mighty hand, and to humble themselves under it. Here is,

A proclamation issued out for a general fast. The priests are ordered to appoint one; they must not only mourn themselves, but they must call upon others to mourn too: "Sanctify a fast; let some time be set apart from all worldly business to be spent in the exercises of religion, in the expressions of repentance and other extraordinary instances of devotion." Note, Under public judgments there ought to be public humiliations; for by them the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning. With all the marks of sorrow and shame sin must be confessed and bewailed, the righteous of God must be acknowledged, and his favour implored. Observe what is to be done by a nation at such a time.

1. A day is to be appointed for this purpose, a day of restraint (so the margin reads it), a day in which people must be restrained from their other ordinary business (that they may

more closely attend God's service), and from all bodily refreshments; for,

2. It must be a fast, a religious abstaining from meat and drink, further than is of absolute necessity. The king of Nineveh appointed a fast, in which they were to taste nothing, Jon 3:7. Hereby we own ourselves unworthy of our necessary food, and that we have forfeited it and deserve to be wholly deprived of it, we punish ourselves and mortify the body, which has been the occasion of sin, we keep it in a frame fit to serve the soul in serving God, and, by the appetite's craving food, the desires of the soul towards that which is better than life, and all the supports of it, are excited. This was in a special manner seasonable now that God was depriving them of their meat and drink; for hereby they accommodated themselves to the affliction they were under. When God says, You shall fast, it is time to say, We will fast.

3. There must be a solemn assembly. The elders and the people, magistrates and subjects, must be gathered together, even all the inhabitants of the land, that God might be honoured by their public humiliations, that they might thereby take the more shame to themselves, and that they might excite and stir up one another to the religious duties of the day. All had contributed to the national guilt, all shared in the national calamity, and therefore they must all join in the professions of repentance.

4. They must come together in the temple, the house of the Lord their God, because that was the house of prayer, and there they might be hope to meet with God because it was the place which he had chosen to put his name there, there they might hope to speed because it was a type of Christ and his mediation. Thus they interested themselves in Solomon's prayer for the acceptance of all the requests that should be put up in or towards this house, in which their present case was particularly mentioned. 1Ki 7:37, If there be locust, if there be caterpillar. 5. They must sanctify this fast, must observe it in a religious manner, with sincere devotion. What is a fast worth if it be not sanctified? 6. They must cry unto the Lord. To him they must

make their complaint and offer up their supplication. When we cry in our affliction we must cry to the Lord; this is fasting to him, Zec 7:5.

15 Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

16 Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, *yea,* joy and gladness from the house of our God?

17 The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

Some considerations suggested to induce them to proclaim this fast and to observe it strictly.

1. God was beginning a controversy with them. It is time to cry unto the Lord, for the day of the Lord is at hand, Joe 1:15. Either they mean the continuance and consequences of this present judgment which they now saw but breaking in upon them, or some greater judgments which this was but a preface to. However it be, this they are taught to make the matter of their lamentation: Alas, for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand. Therefore cry to God. For,

(1.) "The day of his judgment is very near, it is at hand; it will not slumber, and therefore you should not. It is time to fast and pray, for you have but a little time to turn yourselves in."

(2.) It will be very terrible; there is no escaping it, no resisting it: As a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. See Isa 13:6. It is not a correction, but a destruction; and it comes from the hand, not of a weak creature, but of the Almighty; and who knows (nay, who does not know) the power of his anger? Whither should we go with our cries but to him from whom the judgment we dread comes? There is no fleeing from him but by fleeing to him, no escaping destruction from the Almighty but by making our submission and supplication to the Almighty; this is taking hold on his strength, that we may make peace, Isa 27:5.

2. They saw themselves already under the tokens of his displeasure. It is time to fast and pray, for their distress is very great, Joe 1:16.

(1.) Let them look into their own houses, and was no plenty there, as used to be. Those who kept a good table were now obliged to retrench: Is not the meat cut off before our eyes? If, when God's hand is lifted up, men will not see, when his hand is laid on they shall see. Is not the meat many a time cut off before our eyes? Let us then labour for that spiritual meat which is not before our eyes, and which cannot be cut off.

(2.) Let them look into God's house, and see the effects of the judgment there; joy and gladness were cut off from the house of God.

Note, The house of our God is the proper place of joy and gladness; when David goes to the altar of God, it is to God my exceeding joy; but when joy and gladness are cut off from God's house, either by corruption of holy things or the persecution of holy persons, when serious godly decays and love waxes cold, then it time to cry to the Lord, time to cry, Alas!

3. The prophet returns to describe the grievousness of the calamity, in some particulars of it. Corn and cattle are the husbandman's staple commodities; now here he is deprived of both.

(1.) The caterpillars have devoured the corn, Joe 1:17. The garners, which they used to fill with corn, are laid desolate, and the barns broken down, because the corn has withered, and the owners think it not worth while to be at the charge of repairing them when they have nothing to put in them, nor are likely to have any thing; for the seed it rotten under the clods, either through too much rain or (which was the more common case in Canaan) for want of rain, or perhaps some insects under ground ate it up. When one crop fails the husband man hopes

the next may make it up; but here they despair of that, the seedness being as bad as the harvest.

(2.) The cattle perish too for want of grass (Joe 1:18): How do the beasts groan! This the prophet takes notice of, that the people might be affected with it and lay to heart the judgment. The groans of the cattle should soften their hard and impenitent hearts. The herds of cattle, the large cattle (black cattle we call them), are perplexed; nay, even the flocks of sheep, which will live upon a common and be content with very short grass, are made desolate. See here the inferior creatures suffering for our transgression, and groaning under the double burden of being serviceable to the sin of man and subject to the curse of God for it. Cursed is the ground for thy sake.

III. The prophet stirs them up to cry to God, with the consideration of the examples given them for it.

1. His own example (Joe 1:19): O Lord! to thee will I cry. He would not put them upon doing that which he would not resolve to do himself; nay, whether they would do it or no, he would.

Note, If God's ministers cannot prevail to affect others with the discoveries of divine wrath, yet they ought to be themselves affected with them; if they cannot bring others to cry to God, yet they themselves be much in prayer. In time of trouble we must not only pray, but cry, must be fervent and importunate in prayer; and to God, from whom both the destruction is and the salvation must be, ought our cry to be always directed. That which engaged him to cry to God was, not so much any personal affliction, as the national calamity:

The fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, which seems to be meant of some parching scorching heat of the sun, which was as fire to the fruits of the earth; it consumed them all. Note, When God calls to contend by fire it concerns those that have any interest in heaven to cry mightily to him for relief. See Nu 11:2,Am 7:4,5.

2 The example of the inferior creatures: "The beasts of the field do not only groan, but cry unto thee, Joe 1:20. They appeal to thy pity, according to their capacity, and as if, though they are not capable of a rational and revealed religion, yet they had something of dependence upon God by natural instinct." At least, when they groan by reason of their calamity, he is pleased to interpret it as if they cried to him; much more will he put a favourable construction upon the groanings of his own children, though sometimes so feeble that they cannot be uttered, Ro 8:26.

The beasts are here said to cry unto God, as from him the lions seek their meat (Ps 104:21) and the young ravens, Job 38:41. The complaints of the brute-creatures here are for want of water (The rivers are dried up, through the excessive heat), and for want of grass, for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. And what better are those than beasts who never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of nothing but the want of delight of sense? Yet their crying to God in those cases shames the stupidity of those who cry not to God in any case.

18 How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.
19 O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.
20 The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Joel-2

1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand;

Here we have God contending with his own professing people for their sins and executing upon them the judgment written in the law (De 28:42), The fruit of thy land shall the locust consume, which was one of those diseases of Egypt that God would bring upon them, De 28:60.

I. Here is the war proclaimed (Joe 2:1): Blow the trumpet in Zion, either to call the invading army together, and then the trumpet sounds a charge, or rather to give notice to Judah and Jerusalem of the approach of the judgment, that they might prepare to meet their God in the way of his judgments and might endeavor by prayers and tears, the church's best artillery, to put by the stroke. It was the priests' business to sound the trumpet (Nu 10:8), both as an appeal to God in the day of their distress and a summons to the people to come together to seek his face.

Note, It is the work of ministers to give warning from the word of God of the fatal consequences of sin, and to reveal his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And though it is not the privilege of Zion and Jerusalem to be exempted from the judgments of God, if they provoke him, yet it is their privilege to be warned of them, that they might make their peace with him. Even in the holy mountain the alarm must be sounded, and then it sounds most dreadful, Am 3:2. Now, shall a trumpet be blown in the city, in the holy city, and the people not be afraid? Surely they will. Am 3:6. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; they shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself; let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

II. Here is a general idea given of the day of battle, which cometh, which is nigh at hand, and there is no avoiding it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, in which he will both manifest and magnify himself. It is a day of darkness and gloominess (Joe 2:2), literally so, the swarms of locusts and caterpillars being so large and so thick as to darken the sky (Ex 10:15), or rather figuratively; it will be a melancholy time, a time of grievous affliction. And it will come as the morning spread upon the mountains; the darkness of this day will come as suddenly as the morning light, as irresistibly, will spread as far, and grow upon them as the morning light.

III. Here is the army drawn up in array (Joe 2:2): They are a great people, and a strong. Any one sees the vast numbers that

there shall be of locusts and caterpillars, destroying the land, will say (as we are all apt to be most affected with what is present), "Surely, never was the like before, nor ever will be the like again."

Note, Extraordinary judgments are rare things, and seldom happen, which is an instance of God's patience. When God had drowned the world once he promised never to do it again. The army is here describe to be,

1. Very bold and daring: They are as horses, as war-horses, that rush into the battle and are not affrighted (Job 39:22); and as horsemen, carried on with martial fire and fury, so they shall run, Joe 2:4. Some of the ancients have observed that the head of a locust is very like, in shape, to the head of a horse.

2. Very loud and noisy--like the noise of chariots, of many chariots, when driven furiously over rough ground, on the tops of the mountains, Joe 2:5. Hence is borrowed part of the description of the locusts which St. John saw rise out of the bottomless pit. Re 9:7,9, The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared to the battle; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to the battle. Historians tell us that the noise made by swarms of locusts in those countries that are infested with them has sometimes been heard six miles off.

The noise is likewise compared to that of a roaring fire; it is like the noise of a flame that devours the stubble, which noise is the more terrible because that which it is the indication of is devouring. Note, When God's judgments are abroad they make a great noise; and it is necessary for the awakening of a secure and stupid world that they should do so.

3. They are very regular, and keep ranks in their march; though numerous and greedy of spoil, yet they are as a strong people set in battle array (Joe 2:5): They shall march every one on his ways, straight forward, as if they had been trained up by the discipline of war to keep their post and observe their

right-hand man. They shall not break their ranks, nor one thrust another, Joe 2:7,8. Their number and swiftness shall breed no confusion. See how God can make creatures to act by rule that have no reason to act by, when he designs to serve his own purposes by them. And see how necessary it is that those who are employed in any service for God should observe order, and keep ranks, should diligently go on in their own work and stand in one another's way.

4. They are very swift; they run like horsemen (Joe 2:4), run like mighty men (Joe 2:7); they run to and fro in the city, and run upon the wall, Joe 2:9. When God sends forth his command on earth his word runs very swiftly, Ps 147:15. Angels have wings, and so have locusts, when God makes use of them.

2 a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness,
as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong;
there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even*
to the years of many generations.

3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the
land *is* as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate
wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

4 The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen,
so shall they run.

5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like
the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people
set in battle array.

Here is the terrible execution done by this formidable army,

1. In the country, Joe 2:2. View the army in the front, and you will see a fire devouring before them; they consume all as if they breathed fire. View it in the rear, and you will see those that come behind as furious as the foremost: Behind them a flame burns. When they are gone, then it will appear what destruction they have made. Look upon the fields that they have not yet invaded, and they are as the garden of Eden, pleasant to the eye, and full of good fruits; they are the pride and glory of the country. But look upon the fields that they have eaten up and they are as a desolate wilderness; one

would not think that these had ever been like the former, and yet so they were perhaps but the day before, or that those should ever be made like these, and yet so they shall be perhaps by to-morrow night; yea, and nothing shall escape them than can possibly be made food for them. Let none be proud of the beauty of their grounds any more than of their bodies, for God can soon change the face of both.

2. In the city. They shall climb the wall (Joe 2:7), they shall run upon the houses, and enter in at the windows like a thief (Joe 2:9); when Egypt was plagued with locusts, they filled Pharaoh's houses and the houses of his servants, Ex 10:5,6. The locusts out of the bottomless pit, Satan's emissaries, and missionaries of the man of sin, do as these locusts. God's judgments too, when they come with commission, cannot be kept out with bars and bolts; they will find or force their way.

V. The impressions that should hereby be made upon the people. They shall find it to no purpose to make opposition. These enemies are invulnerable and therefore irresistible: When they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded, Joe 2:8. And those that cannot be hurt cannot be stopped; and therefore before their faces the people shall be much pained (Joe 2:6), as the merchants are in pain for their trading ships when they hear they are just in the mouth of a squadron of the enemies. "One is in pain for his field, another for his vineyard, and all faces gather blackness," which denotes the utmost consternation imaginable. Men in fear look pale, but men in despair look black; the whiteness of a sudden fright, when it is settled, turns into blackness. What is the matter of our pride and pleasure God can soon make the matter of our pain. The terror that the country should be in is described (Joe 2:10) by figurative expressions:

The earth shall quake and the heavens tremble; even the hearts that seemed undaunted, so firm that nothing would frighten them, as immovable as heaven or earth, shall be seized with astonishment.

Or when the inhabitants of the land are made to quake it seems to them as if all about them trembled too. Through the prevalency of their fear, or for want of the supports of life which they used to have, their eye shall wax dim and their sight fail them, so that to them the sun and moon shall seem to be dark, and the stars to withdraw their shining. Note, When God frowns upon men the lights of heaven will be small joy to them; for man, by rebelling against his Creator, has forfeited the benefit of all the creatures.

But, though this is to be understood figuratively, there is a day coming when it will be accomplished in the letter, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Particular judgments should awaken us to think of the general judgment.

VI. We are here directed to look up both him who is the commander-in-chief of this formidable army, and that is God himself, Joe 2:11. It is his army; it is his camp. He raised it; he gives it commission; he utters his voice before it, as the general gives orders to his army what to do and makes a speech to animate the soldiers; it is the Lord that gives the word of command to all these animals, which they exactly observe. Some think that with this cloud of locusts God sent terrible thunder, for that is called, The voice of the Lord, and was another of the plagues of Egypt, and this made the heavens and the earth tremble.

It is the day of the Lord (as it was called, Joe 2:1), for in this war we are sure he carries the day; it must needs be his, for his camp is great and numerous. Those whom he makes war upon he can, as here, overpower with numbers; and whoever he employs to execute his word, as the minister of his justice, is sure to be made strong and par negotio--equal to what he undertakes; whom God gives commission to he girds with strength for the executing of that commission. And this makes the great day of the Lord very terrible to all those who in that day are to be made the monuments of his justice; for who can abide it? None can escape the arrests of God's

wrath, can make head against the force of it, or bear up under the weight of it, 1Sa 6:20,Ps 76:7.

6 Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

7 They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

8 neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and *when* they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

11 and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

The Mercy of the Lord

12 Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

13 and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

We have here an earnest exhortation to repentance, inferred from that desolating judgment described and threatened in the Joe 2:1-11: Therefore now turn you to the Lord.

1. "Thus you must answer the end and intention of the judgment; for it was sent for this end, to convince you of your sins, to humble you for them, to reduce you to your right minds and to your allegiance." God brings us into straits, that he may bring us to repentance and so bring us to himself. 2. "Thus you may stay the progress of the judgment. Things are bad with you, but thus you may prevent their growing worse; nay, if you take this course, they will soon grow better." Here is a gracious invitation,

I. To a personal repentance, exercised in the soul, every family apart, and their wives apart, Zec 12:12. When the judgments of God are abroad, each person is concerned to contribute his quota to the common supplications, having contributed to the common guilt. Every one must mend one and mourn for one, and then we should all be mended and all found among God's mourners. Observe,

1. What we are here called to, which will teach us what it is to repent, for it is the same that the Lord our God still requires of us, we having all made work for repentance.

(1.) We must be truly humbled for our sins, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments and wronged our interests. There must be outward expressions of sorrow and shame, fasting, and weeping, and mourning; tears for the sin that procured it.

But what will the outward expressions of sorrow avail if the inward impressions be not agreeable, and not only accompany them, but be the root and spring of them, and give rise to them? And therefore it follows, Rend your heart, and not your garments; not but that, according to the custom of that age, it was proper for them to rend their garments, in token of great grief for their sins and a holy indignation against themselves for their folly; but, "Rest not in the doing of that, as if that were sufficient, but be more in care to accommodate your spirits than to accommodate your dress to a day of fasting and humiliation; nay, rend not your garments at all, unless withal you rend your hearts, for the sign without the thing signified is but a jest and a mockery, and an affront to God." Rending the heart is that which God looks for and requires; that is the broken and contrite heart which he will not despise, Ps 51:17.

When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even cuts us to the heart to think how we have dishonoured God and

disparaged ourselves by it, when we conceive an aversion to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavor to get clear of the principles of it and never to return to the practice of it, then we rend our hearts for it, and then will God rend the heavens and come down to us with mercy.

(2.) We must be thoroughly converted to our God, and come home to him when we fall out with sin. Turn you even to me, said the Lord (Joe 2:12), and again (Joe 2:13), Turn unto the Lord your God. Our fasting and weeping are worth nothing if we do not with them turn to God as our God. When we are fully convinced that it is our duty and interest to keep in with him, and are heartily sorry we have ever turned the back upon him, and thereupon, by a firm and fixed resolution, make his glory our end, his will our rule, and his favour our felicity, then we return to the Lord our God, and this we are all commanded and invited to do, and to do it quickly.

2. What arguments are here used to persuade this people thus to turn to the Lord, and to turn to him with all their hearts. When the heart is rent for sin, and rent from it, then it is prepared to turn entirely to God, and to be devoted entirely to him, and he will have it all or none. Now, to bring ourselves to this, let us consider,

(1.) We are sure that he is, in general, a good God. We must turn to the Lord our God, not only because he has been just and righteous in punishing us for our sins, the fear of which should drive us to him, but because he is gracious and merciful, in receiving upon us our repentance, the hope of which should draw us to him. He is gracious and merciful, delights not in the death of sinners, but desires that they may turn and live. He is slow to anger against those that offend him, but of great kindness towards those that desire to please him. These very expressions are used in God's proclamation of his name when he caused his goodness, and with it all his glory, to pass before Moses, Ex 34:6,7. He repents him of the evil, not that he changes his mind, but, when the sinner's mind is changed, God's way towards him is changed; the sentence is reversed, and the curse of the law is taken off.

Note, That is genuine, ingenuous, and evangelical repentance, which arises from a firm belief of the mercy of God, which we have sinned against, and yet are not in despair. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The goodness of God, if it be rightly understood, instead of emboldening us to go on in sin, will be the most powerful inducement to repentance, Ps 130:4. The act of indemnity brings those to God whom the act of attainder frightened from him.

(2.) We have reason to hope that he will, upon our repentance, give us that good which by sin we have forfeited and deprived ourselves of (Joe 2:14), that he will return and repent, that he will not proceed against us as he has done, but will act in favour of us. Therefore let us repent of our sins against him, and return to him in a way of duty, because then we may hope that he will repent of his judgments against us and return to us in a way of mercy. Now observe,

[1.] The manner of expectation is very humble and modest: Who knows if he will? Some think it is expressed thus doubtfully to check the presumption and security of the people, and to quicken them to a holy carefulness and liveliness in their repentance, as Jos 24:19.

Or, rather, it is expressed doubtfully because it is the removal of a temporal judgment that they here promise themselves, of which we cannot be so confident as we can that, in general, God is gracious and merciful. There is no question at all to be made but that if we truly repent of our sins God will forgive them, and be reconciled to us; but whether he will remove this or the other affliction which we are under may well be questioned, and yet the probability of it should encourage us to repent. Promises of temporal good things are often made with a peradventure. It may be, you shall be hid, Zep 2:3. David's sin is pardoned, and yet the child shall die, and, when David prayed for its life, he said, as here, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me in this matter likewise? 2Sa 12:22. The Ninevites repented and reformed upon such a consideration as this, Jon 3:9.

[2.] The matter of expectation is very pious. They hope God will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, not as if he were about to go from them, and they could be content with any blessing in lieu of his presence, but behind him, that is, "After he has ceased his controversy with us, he will bestow a blessing upon us;" and what is it? It is a meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God. The fruits of the earth are called a blessing (Isa 45:8) because they depend upon God's blessing and are necessary blessings to us.

They had been deprived of these, and that which grieved them most while they were so was that God's altar was deprived of its offerings and God's priests of their maintenance; that therefore which they comfort themselves with the prospect of in their return of plenty is that then there shall be meat-offerings and drink-offerings in abundance brought to God's altar, which they more desired than to see the wonted abundance of meat and drink brought to their own tables. Thus when Hezekiah was in hopes that he should recover of his sickness he asked, What is the sign that I shall go up, not to the thrones of judgment, or to the councilboard, but to the house of the Lord? Isa 38:22.

Note, The plentiful enjoyment of God's ordinances in their power and purity is the most valuable instance of a nation's prosperity and the greatest blessing that can be desired. If God give the blessing of meat-offering and the drink-offering, that will bring along with it other blessings, will sanctify them, sweeten them, and secure them.

14 Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; *even* a m

They are here called to a public national repentance, to be exercised in the solemn assembly, as a national act, for the glory of God and the excitement of one another, and that the neighbouring nations might know and observe what it was that qualified them for God's gracious returns in mercy to them, which they would be the admiring witnesses of. Let us see here,

1. How the congregation must be called together, Joe 2:15,16. The trumpet was blown (Joe 2:1), to sound an alarm of war; but now it must be blown in order to a treaty of peace. God is willing to show mercy to his people if he do but find them in a frame fit for it; and therefore, Call them together; sanctify a fast. By the law many annual feasts were appointed, but only one day in the year was to be observed as a fast, the day of atonement, a day to afflict the soul; and, if they had kept close to God and their duty, there would have been no occasion to observe any more; but now that they had by sin brought the judgments of God upon them they are often called to fasting. What was said Joe 1:14 is here repeated:

"Call a solemn assembly; gather the people (press them to come together upon this errand); sanctify the congregation; appoint a time for solemn preparation beforehand and put them in mind to prepare themselves. Let not the greatest be excused, but assemble the elders, the judges and magistrates. Let not the meanest be passed by, but gather the children, and those that suck the breasts." It is good to bring little children, as soon as they are capable of understanding any thing, to religious assemblies, that they may be trained up betimes in the way wherein they should go; but these were brought even when they were at the breast and were kept fasting, that by their cries for the breast the hearts of the parents might be moved to repent of sin, which God might justly so visit upon their children that the tongue of the sucking child might cleave to the roof of his mouth (La 4:4), and that on them God might have compassion, as he had on the infants of Nineveh, Jon 4:11.

New-married people must not be exempted: Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber and the bride out of her closet; let them not take state upon them as usual, not put on their ornaments, nor indulge themselves in mirth, but address themselves to the duties of the public fast with as much gravity and sadness as any of their neighbours. Note, Private joys must always give way to public sorrows, both those for affliction and those for sin.

2. How the work of the day must be carried on, Joe 2:17.

(1.) The priests, the Lord's ministers, must preside in the congregation, and be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God; who should stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God but those whose business it was to make intercession upon ordinary occasions?

(2.) They must officiate between the porch and the altar. There they used to attend about the sacrifices, and therefore now that they have no sacrifices to offer, or next to none, there they must offer up spiritual sacrifices. There the people must see them weeping and wrestling, like their father Jacob, and be helped into the same devout frame. Ministers must themselves be affected with those things wherewith they desire to affect others. It was between the porch and the altar that Zechariah the son of Jehoiada was put to death for his faithfulness; that precious blood God would require at their hands, and therefore, to turn away the judgment threatened for it, there they must weep.

(3.) They must pray. Words here are put into their mouths, which they might in their prayers enlarge upon. Their petition must be, Spare thy people, O Lord! God's people, when they are in distress, can expect no relief against God's justice but what comes from his mercy. They cannot say, Lord, right us, but, Lord, spare us. We deserve the correction; we need it; but, Lord, mitigate it. The sinner's supplication is, Spare us, good Lord. Their plea must be taken from the relation wherein they stand to God ("They are thy people, and thy heritage, therefore have compassion on them"), but especially from the concern of God's glory in their trouble--"Lord, give not thy heritage to reproach, to the reproach of famine; let not the land of Canaan, that has so long been celebrated as the glory of all lands, now be made the scorn of all lands; let not the heathen rule over them, as they will easily do when thy heritage is thus impoverished and disabled to subsist. Let not the heathen make them a proverb, or a by-word" (so some read it); "let it never be said, As poor and beggarly as an Israelite."

Note, The maintaining of the credit of the nation among its neighbours is a blessing to be desired and prayed for by all that wish well to it. But that reproach of the church is especially to be dreaded and deprecated which reflects upon God: "Let them not say among the people, Where is their God--that God who has promised to help them, whom they have boasted so much of and put such a confidence in?" If God's heritage be destroyed, the neighbours will say, "God was either weak and could not relieve them or unkind and would not." De 32:37, Where are now their gods in whom they trusted? And Sennacherib thus triumphs over them. Where are they gods of Hamath and Arpad? But it must by no means be suffered that they should say of Israel, Where is their God? For we are sure that our God is in the heavens (Ps 115:2,3), is in his temple, Ps 11:4.

eat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?

15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

16 gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

17 Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God?

18 Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

19 Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he waits to be gracious; as soon as ever they humble themselves under this hand, and pray, and seek his face, he immediately meets them with his favours. They prayed that God would spare them, and see here with what good words and comfortable words he answered them; for God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

I. Whence this mercy promised shall take rise (Joe 2:18): God will be jealous for his land and pity his people. He will have an eye,

1. To his own honour, and the reputation of his covenant with Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land and had given in the value of it very high; now he will not suffer it to be despised nor disparaged, but will be jealous for the credit of his land, and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a happy people and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people.

2. To their distress: He will pity his people, and, in pity to them, he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents and as petitioners.

II. What his mercy shall be, in several instances:--

1 The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated (Joe 2:20): "I will remove far off from you the northern army, that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north, brought in upon the wings of a north wind, an army which you could put no stop to the progress of; but, when you have made your peace with God, he will ease you of these soldiers that are quartered upon you and will drive them into a land barren and desolate, into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where, after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance. Those that have their face to the east sea (the Dead Sea, which lay east of Judea) shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the Great Sea," called here the utmost sea. They had made the land barren and desolate, and now God will cast them into a land barren and desolate.

Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people come afterwards to be themselves reckoned with; and the rod is thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these

swarms of insects but the ill savour of them. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts they were carried away to the Red Sea, Ex 10:19. Note, When an affliction has done its work it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a penitent people, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed, in wrath, from an impenitent prince, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters, by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed when God by it had accomplished his whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, Isa 10:12.

This enemy shall be driven away, because he has done great things, has done a great deal of mischief, and has magnified to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart; therefore it follows (Joe 2:21), The Lord will do great things for his people, as the enemy has done great things against them, to convince them that wherein they deal proudly he is, and will be, above them, that, what great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as, when he said to them, Go, they went, so, when he said to them, Come, they came, to show that they were soldiers under him.

2 The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised (Joe 2:22) that the pastures of the wilderness, the pastures which the locusts had left as bare as the wilderness, shall again spring and the trees shall again bear their fruit, particularly the fig-tree and the vine. But, when we see how the country is wasted, we are tempted to say, Can these dry bones live? If the Lord should make windows in heaven, it cannot be; but it shall be, for (Joe 2:23) the Lord has given and will give you the former rain and the latter rain, and, if he give them in mercy, he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment, and he will give them in due season, the latter rain in the first month, when it was wanted and expected.

It would make it comfortable to them to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. He has given you a teacher of righteousness, (so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies the rain signifies a teacher. and that which we translate moderately is according to righteousness), and this teacher of righteousness, says one of the rabbin, is the King Messias, and of him many others understand this; for he is a teacher come from God, and he shows us the way of righteousness. But others understand it of any prophet that instructs unto righteousness, and some of Hezekiah particularly, others of Isaiah. Note, It is a good sign that God has mercy in store for a people when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

3. All their losses shall be repaired (Joe 2:25): "I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten; you shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine." Thus does it repent the Lord concerning his servants, when they repent, and, to show how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and, like the jailer, washes their stripes. Though, in justice, he distrained upon them, and did them no wrong, yet, in compassion, he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal, upon his return, made up all he had lost by his sin and folly, and took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's great army which he sent among them, and he will repair what they had devoured because they were his army.

4. They shall have great abundance of all good things. The earth shall yield her increase, and they shall enjoy it. Look into the stores where they lay up, and you shall find the floors full of wheat, and the fats overflowing with wine and oil (Joe 2:24), whereas, in the day of their distress, the wine and oil languished and the barns were broken down, Joe 1:10,17. Look upon their tables, where they lay out what they have laid up, and you shall find that they eat in plenty and are satisfied, Joe 2:26. They do not eat to excess, nor are

surfeited; we hope the drunkards are cured by the late affliction of their inordinate love of wine and strong drink, for, though they were brought in howling for their scarcity (Joe 1:5), they are now brought in again here singing for the plenty of it; but now all shall have enough, and shall known when they have enough, for God will make their food nourishing and give them to be content with it.

These are the mercies promised, and in these God does great things (Joe 2:21), He deals wondrously with his people, Joe 2:26. Herein he glorifies his power, and shows that he can relieve his people though their distress be ever so great, and glorifies his goodness, that he will do it upon their repentance though their provocations were ever so great. Note, When God deals graciously with poor sinners that return to him it must be acknowledged that he deals wondrously and does great things. Some expositors understand these promises figuratively, as pointing at gospel-grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace and the satisfaction of soul they have therein. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the author of it, we may well own that he has sent us (according to his promise here, Joe 2:19) corn, and wine, and oil, or that which is unspeakably better, and we have reason to be satisfied therewith.

20 but I will remove far off from you the northern *army*, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savor shall come up, because he hath done great things.

21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.

22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them and the good account they shall turn to.

1. God shall have the glory thereof, for they shall rejoice in the Lord their God (Joe 2:23), and what is the matter of their rejoicing shall be the matter of their thanksgiving; they shall praise the name of the Lord their God (Joe 2:26) and not praise their idols, nor call their corn and wine the rewards that their lovers had given them. Note, The plenty of our creature-comforts is a mercy indeed to us when by them our hearts are enlarged in love and thankfulness to God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, though we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. When Israel comes out of a wilderness into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then bless the Lord, with a very sensible pleasure, for that good land which he has given him, De 8:10.

2. They shall have the credit, and comfort, and spiritual benefit, thereof. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it,

(1.) Their reputation shall be retrieved; they and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another when they have returned to him in a way of duty and he to them in a way of mercy (Joe 2:19): "I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen, that triumphed in your calamities and insulted over you;" and Joe 2:26,27, "My people shall never be ashamed, as they have been, of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again and ever have the same occasion to boast of it."

Note, It redounds much to the honour of God when he does that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, though they may be for a time, shall not be always, a reproach among the heathens; if we be rightly ashamed of our sins against God, we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God.

(2.) Their joys shall be revived (Joe 2:23): Be glad and rejoice, O land! and all the inhabitants of it. Times of plenty

are commonly times of joy; yet the favour of God puts gladness into the heart more than those who have corn, and wine, and oil increase. But especially be glad them, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, Joe 2:23. They mourned in Zion (Joe 2:15), and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice; for those that sow in penitential tears shall certainly reap in thankful joys. The children of Zion, who led the rest in fasting, must lead the rest in rejoicing.

But observe, They shall rejoice in the Lord their God, not so much in the good themselves that are given them as in the good hand that gives them and in the return of his favour to them, as theirs in covenant, which these good things are the tokens and pledges of. The joy of harvest and the joy of a feast must both terminate in God, whose love we should taste in all the gifts of his bounty, that we may make him our chief joy, as he is our chief good, and the fountain of all good to us.

(3.) Their faith in God shall be confirmed and increased. When temporal mercies are made by the grace of God to be of spiritual advantage to us, and plenty for the body is so far from being an enemy (as with many it proves) that it becomes a friend to the prosperity of the soul, then they are mercies indeed to us. This is promised here (Joe 2:27): You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, the Holy One in the midst of thee (Ho 11:9), and that I am the Lord your God, and none else. As it proves that the Lord is God, and there is none other, because he wounds and he heals, he forms light and darkness, he does good and evil (Isa 45:7,De 32:39), so it proves him to be God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people and a father to them, that as a father he both corrects them when they offend and comforts them when they repent.

It was the burden of the threatenings in Ezekiel's prophecy, Such and such evils I will bring upon you, and you shall know that I am the Lord; and the same is here made the crown of the promises: You shall eat, and be satisfied, and rejoice, and thus you shall know that I am the Lord. Note, We should labour to grow in our acquaintance with God by all

providences, both merciful and afflictive. When God gives to his people plenty, and peace, and joy, upon their return to him, he thereby gives them to understand that he is pleased with their repentance, that he has pardoned their sins, and that he is theirs as much as ever--that they are taken into the same covenant with him, for he is the Lord their God, and into the same communion, for he is in the midst of them, nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for, and, as the sun in the centre of the worlds, so in the midst of them as to diffuse his benign influences to all the parts of his land.

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share therein and be made easy thereby: Fear not, O land! Joe 2:21. Be not afraid, you beasts of the field, Joe 2:22. They had suffered for the sin of man, and for God's quarrel with him; and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the beasts were said to cry unto God (Joe 1:20); and now that cry is answered, and they are directed not to be afraid, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves. God, in sparing Nineveh, had an eye to the cattle (Jon 4:11), for the cattle had fasted, Joe 3:8. This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the creature, that is now made subject to vanity and groans under it, shall be brought, though not into the glorious joy, yet into the glorious liberty, of the children of God, Ro 8:21.

23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

27 And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that* I *am* the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

The Outpouring of God's Spirit

28 And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

The promises of corn, and wine, and oil, in the Joe 2:12-27, would be very acceptable to a wasted country; but here we are taught that we must not rest in those things. God has reserved some better things for us, and these verses have reference to those better things, both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory, with the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told,

I. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, (Joe 2:28,29). We are not at a loss about the meaning of this promise, nor in doubt what it refers to and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an infallible explication and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, on the day of Pentecost (Ac 2:1, &c.), that was the very thing which was spoken of here by the prophet Joel, Joe 2:16,17. That was the gift of the Spirit, which, according to this prediction, was to come, and we are not to look for any other, any more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now,

1 The blessing itself here promised is the pouring out of the Spirit of God, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming by drops, as it were, upon the judges and prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services; but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream, as was promised with an eye to gospel-times, Isa 44:3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.

2 The time fixed for this is afterwards; after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises this shall be fulfilled. St. Peter

expounds this of the last days, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the divine will and grace in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution.

3. The extent of this blessing, in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed. The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, Ro 10:11,12. Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy; but, in the last days, all flesh shall see the glory of God (Isa 40:5) and shall come to worship before him, Isa 66:23.

The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles (Ac 10:44,45), which was but a continuation of the same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, that is, upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. Upon all flesh, that is, upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined, as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves.

(1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex. Not your sons only, but your daughters, shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, Ac 21:9. Not the parents only, but the children, shall be filled with the Spirit, which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church.

(2.) Upon some of each age: "Your old men, who are past their vigour and whose spirits begin to decay, your young men, who have yet but little acquaintance with and experience of divine things, shall yet dream dreams and see visions;" God

will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to the young and old.

(3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition, even upon the servants and the handmaids. The Jewish doctors say, Prophecy does not reside on any but such as are wise, valiant, and rich, not upon the soul of a poor man, or a man in sorrow. But in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, Ga 3:28. There were many that were called being servants (1Co 7:21), but that was no obstruction to their receiving the Holy Ghost.

(4.) The effect of this blessing: They shall prophesy; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which by the utmost sagacities of reason, and their natural powers, they could not have any insight into nor foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the scriptures were written, and the ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.

29 and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced by the universal change of nature, Joe 2:30,31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this, and tremble. There is a great and terrible day of the Lord coming, which shall be ushered in with wonders in heaven and earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood. This is to have its full accomplishment (as the learned Dr. Pocock thinks) in the day of judgment, at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them, yet so that it was accomplished in part in the death of Christ (which is called the judgment of this world, when the earth quaked and the sun was darkened, and a great and terrible

day it was), and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, besides the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the sun into darkness and the moon into blood, and the wars and rumours of wars, and distress of nations, which our Saviour spoke of as the beginning of these sorrows, Mt 24:6,7.

But before the last judgment there will be wonders indeed in heaven and earth, the dissolution of both, without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prefaces to and presages of the judgment of the world in the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out shall foresee and foretel that great and terrible day of the Lord, and expound the wonders in heaven and earth that go before it; for, as to his first coming, so to his second, all the prophets did and do bear witness, Re 10:7.

III. The safety and happiness of all true believers both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, Joe 2:32. This speaks of particular persons, for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations, than the Old. Now observe here,

1. That there is a salvation wrought out. Though the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance from the terror of it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile. In the everlasting gospel, which went from Zion, in the church of the first-born typified by Mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is deliverance; a way of escaping the wrath to come is found out and laid open. Christ is himself not only the Saviour, but the salvation; he is so to the ends of the earth. This deliverance, laid up for us in the covenant of grace, is in performance of the promises made to the fathers. There shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said. See Lu 1:72.

Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that, whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them, if it be not their own fault. And, if we would share in this deliverance, we must ourselves apply to the gospel--Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is in that remnant (that is, among them) that the deliverance is, or in their souls and spirits; there are the earnests and evidences of it. Christ in you, the hope of glory. They are called a remnant, because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant but a chosen one, a remnant according to the election of grace. And here we are told who they are that shall be delivered in the great day.

(1.) Those that sincerely call upon God: Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, whether Jew or Gentile (for the apostle so expounds it, Ro 10:13, where he lays this down as the great rule of the gospel by which we must all be judged), shall be delivered. This calling on God supposes knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependence on him, and, as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for, without that, crying Lord, Lord, will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be the saved remnant. And it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish that they might have been saved on such easy terms.

(2.) Those that are effectually called to God. The deliverance is sure to the remnant whom the Lord shall call, not only with the common call of the gospel, with which many are called that are not chosen, but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whom the Lord predestinates, or prepares, so the Chaldee. St. Peter borrows this phrase, Ac 2:39. Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day that are now effectually called from sin to God, from self to Christ, from things below to things above.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before
the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.
32 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the
Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be
deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord
shall call.

Joel-3

The Lord's Judgment on the Nations

1 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the
captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

We have often heard of the year of the redeemed, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion; now here we have a description of the transactions of that year, and a prophecy of what shall be done when it comes, whenever it comes, for it comes often, and at the end of time it will come once for all.

I. It shall be the year of the redeemed, for God will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, Joe 3:1. Though the bondage of God's people may be grievous and very long, yet it shall not be everlasting. That in Egypt ended at length in their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Let my son go, the he may serve me. That in Babylon shall likewise end well. And the Lord Jesus will provide for the effectual redemption of poor enslaved souls from under the dominion of sin and Satan, and will proclaim that acceptable year, the year of jubilee, the release of debts and servants, and the opening of the prison to those that were bound. There is a day, there is a time, fixed for the bringing again of the captivity of God's children, for the redeeming of them from the power of the grave; and it shall be the last day and the end of all time.

2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley
of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my
people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the
nations, and parted my land.
3 And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for a harlot,
and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

4 Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompense? and if ye recompense me, swiftly *and* speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head;

5 because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:

It shall be the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. Though God may suffer the enemies of his people to prevail against them very far and for a long time, yet he will call them to an account for it, and will lead captivity captive (Ps 68:18), will lead those captive that led his people captive, Re 13:10. Observe,

1. Who those are that shall be reckoned with--all nations, Joe 3:2. This intimates,

(1.) That all the nations had made themselves liable to the judgment of God for wrong done to his people. Persecution is the reigning crying sin of the world; that lying in wickedness itself is set against godliness. The enmity that is in the old serpent, the god of this world, against the seed of the woman, appears more or less in the children of this world. Marvel not if the world hate you.

(2.) That, whatsoever nation injured God's nation, they should not go unpunished; for he that touches the Israel of God shall be made to know that he touches the apple of his eye. Jerusalem will be a burdensome stone to all people, Zec 12:3. But the neighboring nations shall be particularly reckoned with--Tyre, and Sidon, and all the coasts of Palestine, or the Philistines, who have been troublesome neighbours to the Israel of God, Joe 3:4.

When the more remote and potent nations that laid Israel wastes are reckoned with the impotent malice of those that lay near them, and helped forward the affliction, (Zec 1:15), and made a hand of it (Eze 26:2), shall not be passed by. Note, Little persecutors shall be called to an account as well as great ones; and, though they could not do much mischief, shall be reckoned

with according to the wickedness of their endeavors and the mischief they would have done.

2 The sitting of this court for judgment. They shall all be gathered (Joe 3:2), that those who have combined together against God's people, with one consent (Ps 83:5), may together receive their doom. They shall be brought down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, which lay near Jerusalem, and there God will plead with them,

(1.) Because it is fit that criminals should be tried in the same country where they did the fact.

(2.) For their greater confusion, when they shall see that Jerusalem which they have so long endeavored and hoped for the ruin of, in spite of all their rage, made a praise in the earth.

(3.) For the greater comfort and honor of God's Jerusalem, which shall see God pleading their cause.

(4.) Then shall be re-acted what God did for Jehoshaphat when he gave him victory over those that invaded him, and furnished him and his people with matter of joy and praise, in the valley of Berachah. See 2Ch 20:26.

(5.) It was in this valley of Jehoshaphat (as Dr. Lightfoot suggests) that Sennacherib's army, or part of it, lay, when it was destroyed by an angel. They came together to ruin Jerusalem, but God brought them together for their own ruin, as sheaves into the floor, Mic 4:12.

3. The plaintiff called, on whose behalf this prosecution is set on foot; it is for my people, and for my heritage Israel. It is their cause that God will now plead with jealousy. Note, God's people are his heritage, his peculiar, his portion, his treasure, above all people, Ex 19:5,De 32:9. They are his demesne, and therefore he has a good action against those that trespass upon them.

4. The charge exhibited against them, which is very particular. Many affronts they had put upon God by their idolatries, but that for which God has a quarrel with them is the affront they have put upon his people and upon the vessels of his sanctuary.

(1.) They had been very abusive to the people of Israel, had scattered them among the nations and forced them to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or carried them captive into their respective countries and there industriously dispersed them, for fear of their incorporating for their common safety. They parted their land, and took every one his share of it as their own; nay, they have cast lots for my people, and sold them. When they had taken them prisoners,

[1.] They made a jest of them, made a scorn of them as of no value. They would not release them and yet thought them not worth the keeping; they made nothing of playing them away at dice. Or they made a dividend of the prisoners by lot, as the soldiers did of Christ's garments.

[2.] They made a gain of them. When they had them they sold them, yet with so much contempt that they did not increase their wealth by their price, but sold them for their pleasure rather than their profit; they gave a boy taken in war for the hire of a harlot, and a girl for so many bottles of wine as would serve them for one sitting, a goodly price at which they valued them, and goodly preferment for a son and daughter of Israel to be a slave and a drudge in a tavern or a brothel.

Observe, here, how that which is got by sin is commonly spent upon another. The spoil which these enemies of the Jews gathered by injustice and violence they scattered and threw away in drinking and whoring; such is frequently the character, and such the conversation, of the enemies and persecutors of the people of God. The Tyrians and Philistines, when they seized any of the children of Judah and Jerusalem, either took them prisoners in war or kidnapped them, they sold them to the Grecians (with whom the men of Tyre traded in the persons of

men, Eze 27:13), that they might remove them far from their own border, Joe 3:6. It was a great reproach to Israel, God's first-born, his free-born, to be thus bought and sold among the heathen.

(2.) They had unjustly seized God's silver and gold (Joe 3:5), by which some understand the wealth of Israel. The silver and gold which God's people had he calls his, because they had received it from him and devoted it to him; and whosoever robbed them God took it as if they had robbed him and would make reprisals accordingly. Those who take away the estates of good men for well-doing will be found guilty of sacrilege; they take God's silver and gold. But it seems rather to be meant of the vessels and treasures of the temple, which God here calls his goodly pleasant things, precious and desirable to him and all that are his.

These they carried into their temples as trophies of their victory over God's Israel, thinking that therein they triumphed over Israel's God, nay, and that their idols triumphed over him. Thus the ark was put in Dagon's temple. Thus they did unjustly. "What have you to do with me (Joe 3:4), with my people; what wrong have they done you? What provocation have they given you? You had nothing to do with them, and yet you do all this against them. Devices are devised against the quiet in the land, and those offended and harmed that are harmless and inoffensive: Will you render me a recompence?" Can they pretend that either God or his people have done them any injury, for which they may justify themselves by the law of retaliation in doing them these mischiefs? No; they have no colour for it.

Note, It is no new thing for those who have been very civil and obliging to their neighbours to find them very unkind and unneighbourly and for those who do no injuries to suffer many.

5. The sentence passed upon them. In general (Joe 3:4), "If you recompense me, if you pretend a quarrel with me, if you provoke me thus to jealousy, if you touch the apple of my eye, I will swiftly and speedily return your recompence upon your own head." Those that contend with God will find themselves unable to make their part good with him. He will recompense them suddenly, when they little think of it, and have not time to

prevent it; if he take them to task, he will soon effect their ruin. Particularly, it is threatened,

(1.) That they should not gain their end in the mischief they designed against God's people. They thought to remove them so far from their border that they should never return to it again, Joe 3:6. But (says God) "I will raise them out of the place whither you have sold them, and they shall not, as you intended, be buried alive there." Men's selling the people of God will not deprive him of his property in them.

(2.) That they shall be paid in their own coin, as Adonibezek was (Joe 3:8): "I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the children of Judah; you shall lie as much at their mercy as they have been at yours," Isa 60:14. Thus the Jews had rule over those that hated them, Es 9:1. And then they shall justly be sold to the Sabeans, to a people far off. This (some think) had its accomplishment in the victories obtained by the Maccabees over the enemies of the Jews; others think it looks as far forward as the last day, when the upright shall have dominion (Ps 49:14) and the saints shall judge the world. It is certain that none ever hardened his heart against God, or his church, and prospered long; no, not Pharaoh himself, for the Lord has spoken it, for the comfort of all his suffering servants, that vengeance is his and he will repay.

6 the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold
unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.
7 Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them,
and will return your recompense upon your own head:
8 and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children
of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for
the Lord hath spoken *it*.
9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty
men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

What the psalmist had long before ordered to be said among the heathen (Ps 96:10) the prophet here will have in like manner to be published to all nations, That the Lord reigns, and that he comes, he comes to judge the earth, as he had long been judging in the earth.

The notice here given of God's judging the nations may have reference to the destruction of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and to the Antichrist especially, and all the proud enemies of the Christian church; but some of the best interpreters, ancient and modern (particularly the learned Dr. Polock), think the scope of these verses is to set forth the day of the last judgment under the similitude of God's making war upon the enemies of his kingdom, and his gathering in the harvest of the earth, both which similitudes we find used in the Revelation, Re 19:11,Re 14:18. Here we have,

I. A challenge given to all the enemies of God's kingdom to do their worst. To signify to them that God is preparing war against them, they are called upon to prepare war against him, Joe 3:9-11. When the hour of God's judgment shall come effectual methods shall be taken to gather all nations to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, Re 16:14,20:8. It seems to be here spoken ironically: "Proclaim you this among the Gentiles; let all the forces of the nations be summoned to join in confederacy against God and his people." It is like that, Isa 7:9, "Associate yourselves, O you people! and gird yourselves, but you shall be broken to pieces. Prepare war; muster up all your strength; wake up the mighty men; call them into your service; excite them to vigilance and resolution; let all the men of war draw near.

Let them come and enter the lists with Omnipotence if they dare; let them not complain for want of weapons, but let them beat their ploughshares into swords and their pruning-hooks into spears. Let them resolve, if they will, never to return to their husbandry again, but either to conquer or die; let none plead unfitness to bear arms, but let the weak say, I am strong and will venture into the field of battle."

Thus does a God of almighty power bid defiance to all the opposition of the powers of darkness; let the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, against the Lord and his Christ; let them assemble, and come, and gather themselves together; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, and, while he thus calls them, he has them in derision, Ps 2:1,4. The heathen

must be wakened, must be raised from the dead, that they may come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, to receive their doom (Joe 3:12), may come up out of their graves, come up into the air, to meet the Lord there.

Jehoshaphat signifies the judgment of the Lord. Let them come to the place of God's judgment, which perhaps is the chief reason for the using of this name here, but it is put together as a proper name for the sake of allusions to the place so called, which we observed before; let them come thither where God will sit to judge the heathen, to that throne of glory before which shall be gathered all nations (Mt 25:32), for before the judgment-seat of Christ we must all appear. The challenge (Joe 3:9) is turned into a summons, Joe 3:12. It is not only, Come if you dare, but You shall come whether you will or no, for there is no escaping the judgments of God.

II. A charge given to the ministers of God's justice to appear and act against these daring enemies of his kingdom among men: And therefore cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord! Joe 3:11. When they bring their forces into the field, let God bring his, let the archangel's trumpet sound a charge, to call together his mighty ones, that is, his angels. Perhaps it is with reference to this that Christ's coming from heaven at the last day is said to be with his mighty angels, 2Th 1:7. These are the hosts of the Lord, that shall fight his battles when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power when he shall judge among the heathen, Ps 110:6.

Some think these words (Joe 3:9,10), Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, are not a challenge to the enemies' hosts, but a charge to God's hosts; let them draw near, and come up. When God's cause is to be pleaded, either by the law or by the sword, he has those ready that shall please it effectually, witnesses ready to appear for him in the court of judgment, soldiers ready to appear for him in the field of battle. They shall beat ploughshares into swords, if need be.

However, it is plain that to them the charge in given (Joe 3:13), Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; that is, their

wickedness is great, the measure of it is full, and they are ripe for ruin. Our Saviour has expounded this, Mt 13:39. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. And they are commanded to thrust in their sickle. their sharp sickle, and gather in both the harvest and the vintage, Re 14:15,18. Note, The greatness of men's wickedness makes them ripe for God's judgment.

10 beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears:
let the weak say, I *am* strong.
11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves
together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O
Lord.
12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat:
for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

The vast appearance that shall be in that great and solemn day (Joe 3:14): Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision, the same which before was called the valley of Jehoshaphat, or of the judgment of the Lord, for the day of the Lord is near in that valley. Note,

1 The judgment-day, that day of the Lord, has all along been looked upon, and spoken of, as nigh at hand. Enoch said, Behold, the Lord comes, as if the Judge were then standing before the do or, because it is certain that that day will come and will come according to the appointment, and a thousand years with God are but as one day; things are ripening apace for it; we ought always to be ready for it, because our judgment is at hand.

2 The day of judgment will be the day of decision, when every man's eternal state will be determined, and the controversy that has been long depending between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan shall be finally decided, and an end put to the struggle. The valley of the distribution of judgment (so the Chaldee), when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body. The valley of threshing (so the margin), carrying on the metaphor of the harvest, Joe 3:13.

The proud enemies of God's people will then be crushed and broken to pieces, and made as the dust of the summer threshing-

floors. 3. Innumerable multitudes will be gathered together to receive their final doom in that day, as in the destruction of Gog we read of the valley of Hamon-Gog, and the city of Hamonah (Eze 39:15,16), both signifying the multitude of the vanquished enemies; it is the word here used, Hamonim, Hamonim, expressed by the way of admiration--O what vast multitudes of sinners will divine justice be glorified in the ruin of at that day! A multitude of living (says one of the rabbin) and a multitude of dead, for Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.

IV. The amazing change that shall then be made in the kingdom of nature (Joe 3:15): The sun and moon shall be darkened, as before, Joe 2:31. Their glory and lustre shall be eclipsed by the far greater brightness of that glory in which the Judge shall then appear. Nay, they shall themselves be set aside in the dissolution of all things; for the damned sinners in hell shall not be allowed their light, for God himself will be their everlasting light, Isa 60:19. Those that fall under the wrath of God in that day of wrath shall be cut off from all comfort and joy, signified by the darkening not only of sun and moon, but of the stars also.

V. The different impressions which that day will make upon the children of this world and the children of God, according as it will be to them.

1. To the wicked it will be a terrible day. The Lord shall then speak from Zion and Jerusalem, from the throne of his glory, from heaven, where he manifests himself in a peculiar manner, as sometimes he has done in the glorious high throne of his sanctuary, which yet was but a faint resemblance of the glory of that day. He shall speak from heaven, from the midst of his saints and angels (so some understand it), the holy society of which may be called Zion and Jerusalem; for, when we come to the heavenly Jerusalem, we come to the innumerable company of angels; see Heb 12:22. Now is speaking in that day will be to the wicked as roaring, terrible as the roaring of a lion (for so the word signifies); he long kept silence, but now our God shall come, and shall not keep silence, Ps 50:3,21.

Note, The judgment of the great day will make the ears of those to tingle that continue the implacable enemies of God's kingdom. God's voice will then shake terribly both heaven and earth (Isa 2:21), yet once more, Hag 2:6,Heb 12:26.

This denotes that the voice of God will in the great day speak such terror to the wicked as were enough to put even heaven and earth into a consternation. When God comes to pull down and destroy his enemies, and make them all his footstool, though heaven and earth should stand up in defence of them and undertake their protection, it shall be all in vain. Even they shall shake before him and be an insufficient shelter to those whom he comforts forth to contend with. Note, As blessings out of Zion are the sweetest blessings, and enough to make heaven and earth sing, so terrors out of Zion are the sorest terrors, and enough to make heaven and earth shake.

2. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When the heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved and burnt up, then will the Lord be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel (Joe 3:16), and then shall Jerusalem be holy, Joe 3:17. The saints are the Israel of God; they are his people; the church is his Jerusalem. They are in covenant and communion with him; now in the great day,

(1.) Their longings shall be satisfied: The Lord will be the hope of his people. As he always was the founder and foundation of their hopes, so he then will be the crown of their hopes. He will be the harbour of his people (so the word is), their receptacle, refuge, and home. The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall go to be for ever at home with God, to their Father's house, the house not made with hands.

(2.) Their happiness shall be confirmed. God will be in that day the strength of the children of Israel, enabling them to bid that day welcome and to bear up under the weight of its glories and joys. In this world, when the judgments of God are abroad, and sinners are falling under them, God is and will be the hope and

strength of his people, the strength of their heart, and their portion, when other men's hearts fail them for fear.

(3.) Their holiness shall be completed (Joe 3:17): Then shall Jerusalem be holy, the holy city indeed; such shall the heavenly Jerusalem be, such the glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Jerusalem shall be holiness (so the word is); it shall be perfectly holy; there shall be no remainder of sin in it. The gospel-church is a holy society, even in its militant state, but will never be holiness itself till it comes to be triumphant. Then no stranger shall pass through her any more; there shall not enter into the New Jerusalem any thing that defiles or works iniquity; none shall be there but those who have a right to be there, none but its own citizens; for it shall be an unmixed society.

(4.) God shall in all this be manifested and magnified: So shall you know that I am the Lord your God. By the sanctifying and glorifying of the church God will be known in his holiness and glory, as the God that dwells in his holy mountain and makes it holy by dwelling in it; and those that are sanctified and glorified are so through the knowledge of him that called them. The knowledge which true believers have of God is,

[1.] An appropriating knowledge. They know that he is the Lord their God, yet not theirs only, but theirs in common with the whole church, that he is their God, but dwelling in Zion his holy mountain; for, though faith appropriates, it does not engross or monopolize the privileges of the covenant.

[2.] It is an experimental knowledge. They shall find him their hope and strength in the worst of times, and so they shall know that he is the Lord their God. Those know best the goodness of God who have tasted and seen it, and have found him good to them.

13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the
press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness *is* great.
14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the
Lord *is* near in the valley of decision.

15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

The Deliverance of Judah

16 The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

17 So shall ye know that I *am* the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

These promises with which this prophecy concludes have their accomplishments in part in the kingdom of grace, and the comforts and graces of all the faithful subjects of that kingdom, but will have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of glory; for, as to the Jewish church, we know not of any event concerning that which answers to the extent of these promises, and what instances of peace and prosperity they were blessed with, which they may be supposed to be a hyperbolical description of, they were but figures of better things reserved for us, that they in their best estate without us might not be made perfect.

I. It is promised that the enemies of the church shall be vanquished and brought down, Joe 3:19. Egypt, that old enemy of Israel, and Edom, which had an inveterate enmity to Israel, derived from Esau, these shall be a desolation, a desolate wilderness, no more to be inhabited; they have become the people of God's curse; so the Idumeans were, Isa 34:5. No strength nor wealth of a nation is a defence against the judgment of God. But what is the quarrel God has with these potent kingdoms? It is for their violence against the children of Judah, and the injuries they had done them; see Eze 25:3,8,12,15,26:2. They had shed the innocent blood of the Jews that fled to them for shelter or were making their escape through their country.

Note, The innocent blood of God's people is very precious to him, and not a drop of it shall be shed but it shall be reckoned for. In the last day this earth, which has been filled with violence against the people of God, shall be made a desolation, when it and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. And, sooner or later, the oppressors and persecutors of God's Israel shall be brought down and laid in the dust, nay, they will at length be brought down and laid in the flames.

II. It is promised that the church shall be very happy; and truly happy it is in spiritual privileges, even during its militant state, but much more when it comes to be triumphant. Three things are here promised it:--

1. Purity. This is put last here, as a reason for the rest (Joe 3:21); but we may consider it first, as the ground and foundation of the rest: I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, that is, their bloody heinous sins, especially shedding innocent blood; that filth and guilt they had contracted by sin, which rendered them unfit for communion with God, and made them odious to his holiness and obnoxious to his justice; this they shall be washed from in the fountain opened, Zec 13:1.

That shall be cleansed by the blood of Christ which could not be cleansed by the sacrifices and purifications of the ceremonial law. Or, if we apply it to the happiness of a future state, it intimates the cleansing of the saints from all these corruptions from which they were not cleansed either by ordinances or providences in the world; there shall not be the least remains of sin in them there. Here, though they are washing daily, there is still something that is not cleansed; but in heaven, even that also shall be done away. And the reason is because the Lord dwells in Zion, dwells with his church, and much more gloriously with that in heaven, and holiness becomes his house for ever, for which reason, where he dwells there must be, there shall be, a perfection of holiness.

Note, Though the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of that is not cleansed, yet there is a day coming when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be all fair, and no spot, no stain in her; and we must wait for that day.

2. Plenty, Joe 3:18. This is put first, because it is the reverse of the judgment threatened in the foregoing chapters.

(1.) The streams of this plenty overflow the land and enrich it: The mountains shall drop new wine and the hills shall flow with milk, such great abundance shall they have of suitable provision, both for babes and for strong men. It intimates the abundance of vineyards, and all fruitful; and the abundance of cattle in the pastures that fill them with milk. And, to make the corn-land fruitful, the rivers of Judah shall flow with water, so that the country shall be like the garden of Eden, well-watered every where and greatly enriched, Ps 65:9. But this seems to be meant spiritually; the graces and comforts of the new covenant are compared to wine and milk (Isa 55:1), and the Spirit to rivers of living water, Joh 7:38.

And these gifts abound much more under the New Testament than they did under the Old; when believers receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, when they are enriched with everlasting consolations, and filled with joy and peace in believing, then the mountains drop new wine, and the hills flow with milk. Drink you, drink abundantly, O beloved! When there is plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace, then the rivers of Judah flow with water, and make glad, not only the city of our God (Ps 46:4), but the whole land.

(2.) The fountain of this plenty is in the house of God, whence the streams take their rise, as those waters of the sanctuary (Eze 47:1) from under the threshold of the house, and the river of life out of the throne of God and the Lamb, Re 22:1 The psalmist, speaking of Zion, says, All my springs are in thee, Ps 87:7. Those that take temporal blessings to be meant in the former part of the verse, yet by this fountain out of the house of the

Lord understand the grace of God, which, if we abound in temporal blessings, we have so much more need of, that we may not abuse them.

Christ himself is the fountain; his merit and grace cleanse us, refresh us, and make us fruitful. This is said to water the valley of Shittim, which lay a great way off from the temple at Jerusalem, on the other side of Jordan, and was a dry and barren valley, which intimates that gospel-grace, flowing from Christ, shall reach far, even to the Gentile world, to the most remote regions of it, and shall make those to abound in the fruits of righteousness who had long lain as the barren wilderness. This grace is a fountain overflowing, ever-flowing, from which we may be continually drawing, and yet need not fear its being drawn dry. This fountain comes out of the house of the Lord above, from his temple in heaven, flows all that good which here we are daily tasting the streams of, but hope to be shortly, hope to be eternally, drinking at the fountain-head of.

3. Perpetuity. This crowns all the rest (Joe 3:20): Judah shall dwell for ever (when Egypt and Edom are made a desolation), and Jerusalem shall continue from generation to generation. This is a promise, and a precious promise it is,

(1.) That the church of Christ shall continue in the world to the end of time. As one generation of professing Christians passes away, another shall come, in whom the throne of Christ shall endure for ever, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

(2.) That all the living members of that church (Judah and Jerusalem are put for the inhabitants of that city and country, Mt 3:5) shall be established in their happiness to the utmost ages of eternity. This new Jerusalem shall be from generation to generation, for it is a city that has foundations, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.

19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness,
for the violence *against* the children of Judah, because they have shed
innocent blood in their land.

20 But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

21 For I will cleanse their blood *that* I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

Amos
[Amos]

Amos-1

The Judgments on Israel's Neighbors

1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Here is, I The general character of this prophecy. It consists of the words which the prophet saw. Are words to be seen? Yes, God's words are; the apostles speak of the word of life, which they had not only heard, but which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled (1Jo 1:1), such a real substantial thing is the word of God. The prophet saw these words, that is,

1. They were revealed to him in a vision, as John is said to see the voice that spoke to him, Re 1:12.

2. That which was foretold by them was to him as certain as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. It intimates how strong he was in that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.

II The person by whom this prophecy was sent--Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, and was one of them. Some think he was a rich dealer in cattle; the word is used concerning the king of Moab (2Ki 3:4, He was a sheep-master); it is probable that he got money by that business, and yet he must quit it, to follow God as a prophet. Others think he was a poor keeper of cattle, for we find (Am 7:14,15) that he was withal a gatherer of wild figs, a poor employment by which we may suppose he could but just get his bread, and that God took him, as he did David, from following the flock, and Elisha from following the plough.

Many were trained up for great employments, in the quiet, innocent, contemplative business of shepherds. When God would send a prophet to reprove and warn his people, he employed a shepherd, a herdsman, to do it; for they had made themselves as the horse and mule that have no understanding, nay, worse than the ox that knows his owner. God sometimes chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, 1Co 1:27.

Note, Those whom God has endued with abilities for his service ought not to be despised nor laid aside for the meanness either of their origin or of their beginnings. Though Amos himself is not ashamed to own that he was a herdsman, yet others ought not to upbraid him with it nor think the worse of him for it.

III. The persons concerned in the prophecy of this book; it is concerning Israel, the ten tribes, who were now ripened in sin and ripening apace for ruin. God has raised them up prophets among themselves (Am 2:11), but they regarded them not; therefore God sends them one from Tekoa, in the land of Judah, that, coming from another country, he might be the more valued, and perhaps he was the rather sent out of his own country because there he was despised for his having been a herdsman. See Mt 13:55-57.

IV. The time when these prophecies were delivered.

1 The book is dated, as laws used to be, by the reigns of the kings under whom the prophet prophesied. It was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well, and of Jeroboam the second kind of Israel, when the affairs of that kingdom went pretty well; yet then they must both be told both of the sins they were guilty of and of the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins, that they might not with the present gleam of prosperity flatter themselves either into an opinion of their innocence or a confidence of their perpetual security.

2. It is dated by a particular event to which is prophecy had a reference; it was two years before the earthquake, that

earthquake which is mentioned to have been in the days of Uzziah (Zec 14:5), which put the nation into a dreadful fright, for it is there said, They fled before it. But how could they flee from it? Some conjecture that this earthquake was at the time of Isaiah's vision, when the posts of the door were moved, Isa 6:4.

The tradition of the Jews is that it happened just at the time when Uzziah presumptuously invaded the priest's office and went in to burn incense, 2Ch 26:16. Josephus mentions this earthquake, Antiq. 9.225, and says, "By it half of a mountain was removed and carried to a plain four furlongs off; and it spoiled the king's gardens." God by this prophet gave warning of it two years before, that God by it would shake down their houses, Am 3:15.

V. The introduction to these prophecies, containing the general scope of them (Am 1:2): The Lord will roar from Zion. His threatenings by his prophets, and the executions of those threatenings in his providence, will be as terrible as the roaring of a lion is to the shepherds and their flocks. Amos here speaks the same language with his contemporaries, Hosea (Ho 11:10) and Joel, Joe 3:16. The lion roars before he tears; God gives warning before he strikes. Observe,

1. Whence this warning comes--from Zion and Jerusalem, from the oracles of God there delivered; for by them is they servant warned, Ps 19:11. Our God, whose special residence is there, will issue out warrants, given at that court, as it were, for the executing of judgments on the land. See Jer 25:30. In Zion was the mercy-seat; thence the Lord roars, intimating that God's acts of justice are consistent with mercy, allayed and mitigated by mercy, nay, as they are warnings, they are really acts of mercy. We are chastened, that we may be not be condemned.

2. What effect the warning has: The habitations of the shepherds mourn, either because they fear the roaring lion or because they feel what is signified by that comparison, the consequences of a great drought (Am 4:7), which made the top of Carmel (of the most fruitful fields) to wither and become a desert, Joe 1:12-17.

2 And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

3 Thus saith the Lord ; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:

What the Lord says here may be explained by what he says Jer 12:14, Thus said the Lord, against all my evil neighbours that touch the inheritance of my people Israel, Behold, I will pluck them out. Damascus was a near neighbour to Israel on the north, Tyre and Gaza on the west, Edom on the south, Ammon and (in the next chapter) Moab on the east; and all of them had been, one time, one way, or other, pricking briers and grieving thorns to Israel, evil neighbours to them; and, because God espouses his people's cause, he there calls them his evil neighbours, and here comes forth to reckon with them. The method is taken in dealing with each of them is, in part, the same, and therefore we put them together, and yet in each there is something peculiar.

I. Let us see what is repeated, both by way of charge and by way of sentence, concerning them all. The controversy God has with each of them is prefaced with, Thus said the Lord, Jehovah the God of Israel. Though those nations will not worship him as their God, yet they shall be made to know that they are accountable to him as their Judge. The God of Israel is the God of the whole earth, and has something to say to them that shall make them tremble.

Against them the Lord roars out of Zion. And before God, by the prophet, threatens Israel and Judah, he denounces judgments against those nations whom he made use of as scourges to them for their being so, which might serve for a check to their pride and insolence and a relief to his people under their dejections; for hereby they might see that God had not quitted his interest in them, and therefore might hope they had not lost their interest in him. Now as to all these nations here arraigned,

1 The indictment drawn up against them all is thus far the same,

(1.) That they are charged in general with three transgressions, and with four, that is, with many transgressions (as by one or two we mean a few, so by three or four we mean many, as in Latin a man that is very happy is said to be terque quarterque beatus--three and four times happy); or with three and four, that is, with seven transgressions, a number of perfection, intimating that they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and are ripe for ruin; or with three (that is, a variety of sins) and with a fourth especially, which is specified concerning each of them, though the other three are not, as Pr 30:15,18,21,29, where we read of three things, yea, four, generally one seems to be more especially intended.

(2.) That the particular sin which is fastened upon as the fourth, and which alone is specified, is the sin of persecution: it is some mischief or other done to the people of God that is particularly charged upon every one of them, for persecution is the measure-filling sin of any people, and it is this sin that will be particularly reckoned for--I was hungry, and you gave me no meat; much more if it may be said, I was hungry, and you took my meat from me.

2 The judgment given against them all is thus far the same,

(1.) That, their sin having risen to such a height, God will not turn away the punishment thereof. Though he has granted them a long reprieve, and has often turned away their punishment, yet now he will turn it away no longer, but justice shall take its course. "I will not revoke it (so some read it); I will not recall the voice which has gone forth from Zion to Jerusalem (Am 1:2), speaking death and terror to the sinful nations." It is an irrevocable sentence. God has spoken it, and he will not call it back. Note, Though God bear long, he will not bear always, with those that provoke him; and, when the decree brings forth, it will bring up.

(2.) That God will kindle a fire among them; this is said concerning all these evil neighbours, Am 1:4,7,10,12,14. God will send a fire into their cities. When fires are kindled that lay cities, towns, and houses in ashes, whether designedly or

casually, God must be acknowledged in it; they are of his sending. Sin stirs up the fire of his jealousy, and that kindles other fires.

4 but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden [*or,* from Beth-eden]: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord.

6 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom:

Let us see what is mentioned, both by way of charge and by way of sentence, that is peculiar to each of them, that every one may take his portion.

1. Concerning Damascus, the head-city of Syria, a kingdom that was often vexatious to Israel.

(1.) The peculiar sin of Damascus was using the Gileadites barbarously: They threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron (Am 1:3), which may be understood literally of their putting to the torture, or to cruel deaths, the inhabitants of Gilead whom they got into their hands, as David put the Ammonites under saws and harrows 2Sa 12:31. We read with what inhumanity Hazael king of Syria prosecuted his wars with Israel (2Ki 8:12); he dashed their children, and ripped up their women with child; and see what desolations he made in their land, 2Ki 10:32,33.

Or it may be taken figuratively, for his laying the country waste, and this very similitude is used in the history of it. 2Ki 13:7, He destroyed them, and made them like the dust by threshing. Note, Men often do that unjustly and wickedly, and shall be severely reckoned with for it, which yet God just permits them to do. The church is called God's threshing, and the corn of his floor (Isa 21:10); but if men make it their threshing, and the chaff of their floor, they shall be sure to hear of it.

(2.) The peculiar punishment of Damascus is

[1.] That the fire which shall be sent shall fasten upon the court in the first place, not on the chief city, nor the country towns, but on the house of Hazael, which he built; and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad, the royal palaces inhabited by the kings of Syria, many of whom were of that name. Note, Even royal palaces are no defence against the judgments of God, though ever so richly furnished, though ever so strongly fortified.

[2.] That the enemy shall force his way into the city (Am 1:5): I will break the bar of Damascus, and then the gate flies open. Or it may be understood figuratively: all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city shall fail, and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission it is in vain to think of turning them out.

[3.] That the people shall be destroyed with the sword: I will cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, the valley of idolatry, for the gods of the Syrians were gods of the valleys (1Ki 20:23), were worshipped in valleys; as the idols of Israel were worshipped on the hills; him also that holdeth the sceptre of power, some petty king or other that used to boast of the sceptre he held from Beth-Eden, the house of pleasure. Both those that were given to idolatry and those that were given to sensuality should be cut off together.

[4.] That the body of the nation shall be carried off. The people shall go into captivity unto Kir, which was in the country of the Medes. We find this fulfilled (2Ki 16:9) about fifty years after this, when the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin, at the instigation of Ahaz king of Judah.

2. Concerning Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and now the metropolis of that country. (1.) The peculiar sin of the Philistines was carrying away captive the whole captivity, either of Israel or Judah, which some think refers to that inroad made upon Jehoram when they took away all the king's sons and all his substance (2Ch 21:17), or, perhaps, it refers to their

seizing those that fled to them for shelter when Sennacherib invaded Judah, and selling them to the Grecians (Joe 3:4-6), or (as here) to the Edomites, who were always sworn enemies to the people of God. They spared none, but carried off all they could lay their hands on, designing, if possible, to cut off the name of Israel, Ps 83:4-7.

(2.) The peculiar punishment of the Philistines is that the fire which God will send shall devour the palaces of Gaza, and that the inhabitants of the other cities of the Philistines, Ashdod (or Azotus), Ashkelon, and Ekron, shall all be cut off, and God will make as thorough work with them in their ruin as they would have made with God's people when they carried away the whole captivity; for even the remnant of them shall perish, Am 1:8. Note, God will make a full end of those that think to make a full end of his church and people.

3. Concerning Tyre, that famous city of wealth and strength, that was itself a kingdom, Am 1:9.

(1.) The peculiar sin of Tyre is delivering up the whole captivity to Edom, that is, selling to the Edomites those of Israel that fled to them for shelter, or in any way fell into their hands; not caring what hardships they put upon them, so that they could but make gain of them to themselves. Herein they forgot the brotherly covenant, the league that was between Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre (1Ki 5:12), which was intimate that Hiram called Solomon his brother, 1Ki 9:13. Note, It is a great aggravation of enmity and malice when it is the violation of friendship and of a brotherly covenant.

(2.) Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Tyrus but that the palaces thereof shall be devoured, which was done when Nebuchadnezzar took it after thirteen years' siege. Their merchants were all princes, and their private houses were as palaces; but the fire shall make no more of them than of cottages.

4. Concerning Edom, the posterity of Esau.

(1.) Their peculiar sin was an unmerciful, unwearied, pursuit of the people of God, and their taking all advantages against them to do them a mischief, Am 1:11. He did pursue his brother with the sword, not only of old, when the king of Edom took up arms to oppose the children of Israel's passage through his border (Nu 20:18), but ever since upon all occasions; they had not strength and courage enough to face them in the field of battle, but, whenever any other enemy had put Judah or Israel to flight, then the Edomites set in with the pursuers, fell upon the rear, slew those that were half dead already, and (as is usual with cowards when they have an enemy at an advantage) they did cast off all pity.

Those that are least courageous are commonly most cruel. Edom was so; his malice destroyed his compassion (so the word is); he stripped himself of the tenderness of a man, and put on the fierceness of a beast of prey; and, as such a one, he did tear, his anger did tear perpetually. His cruelty was insatiable, and he never knew when he had sucked enough of the blood of Israel, but, like the horse-leech, still cried, Give, give.

Nay, he kept his wrath for ever; when he wanted objects of his wrath, and opportunity to show it, yet he kept it in reserve (it rested in his bosom), he rolled it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and had it ready to spit in the face of Israel upon the next occasion. Cursed be such cruel wrath, and anger so fierce, so outrageous, which makes men like the devil, who continually seeks to devour, and unlike to God, who keeps not his anger for ever. Edom's malice was unnatural, for thus he pursued his brother, whom he ought to have protected: it was hereditary, as if it had been entailed upon the family ever since Esau hated Jacob, and time itself could not wear it out, no, nor the brotherly conduct of Israel towards them (De 2:4), and the express law given to Israel (De 23:7), Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother.

(2.) Here is nothing peculiar in their punishment; but (Am 1:12) a fire shall be sent to devour their palaces. Note, The fire of our anger against our brethren kindles the fire of God's anger against us.

5. Concerning the Ammonites, Am 1:13-15.

(1.) See how violently the fire of their anger turned against the people of God; they not only triumphed in their calamities (as we find, Eze 25:2,6), but they did themselves use them barbarously; they ripped up the women with child of Gilead, a piece of cruelty the very mention of which strikes a horror upon one's mind; one would think it is not possible that any of the human race should be so inhuman. Hazael was guilty of it, 2Ki 8:12. It was done not only in a brutish rage, which falls without consideration upon all that comes before it, but with a devilish design to extirpate the race of Israel by killing not only all that were born, but all that were to be born, worse than Egyptian cruelty.

It was that they might enlarge their border, that they might make the land of Gilead their own, and there might be none to lay claim to it or given them any disturbance in the possession of it. We find (Jer 49:1) that the Ammonites inherited Gad (that is, Gilead) under pretence that Israel had no sons, no heirs. We know how heavy the doom of those was, and how heinous their crime, who said, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours by occupancy. See what cruelty covetousness is the cause of, and what horrid practices those are often put upon that are greedy to enlarge their own border.

(2.) See how violently the fire of God's anger burned against them; shall not God visit for these things done to any of mankind, especially when they are done to his own people? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? No doubt, it shall. The fire shall be kindled with shouting in the day of battle, that is, war shall kindle the fire; it shall be a fire accompanied with the sword, or a roaring fire, which shall make a noise like that of soldiers ready to engage, and it shall be as a tempest in the day of the whirlwind, which comes swiftly, furiously, and bears down all before it.

Or this tempest and whirlwind shall be as bellows to the fire, to make it burn the stronger, and spread the further. It is

particularly threatened that their king and his princes shall go together into captivity, carried away by the king of Babylon, not long after Judah was. See what changes God's providence often makes with men, or rather their own sin; kings become captives, and princes prisoners. Milchom shall go into captivity; some understand it of the god of the Ammonites, whom they called Moloch--a king. He, and his princes, and his priests that attended him, shall to into captivity; their idol shall be so far from protecting them that it shall itself go into captivity with them.

Note, Those who by violence and fraud seek to enlarge their own border will justly be expelled and excluded their own border; nor is it strange if those who make no conscience of invading the rights of others be able to make no resistance against those who invade theirs.

7 but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces
thereof:
8 and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the
sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and
the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.
9 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I
will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they
delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the
brotherly covenant:
10 but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces
thereof.
11 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I
will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he did pursue his
brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear
perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever:
12 but I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of
Bozrah.
13 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of the children of
Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
because they have ripped up the women with child, of Gilead, that they
might enlarge their border:
14 but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the
palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest

in the day of the whirlwind:
15 and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the Lord.

Amos-2

1 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

Here is, I The judgment of Moab, another of the nations that bordered upon Israel. They are reckoned with and shall be punished for three transgressions and for four, as those before. Now,

1. Moab's fourth transgression, as theirs who were before set to the bar, was cruelty. The instance given refers not to the people of God, but to a heathen like themselves: The king of Moab burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime. We find there was war between the Edomites and the Moabites, in which the king of Moab, in distress and rage, offered his own son for a burnt-offering, to appease his deity, 2Ki 3:26,27.

And it should seem that afterwards he, or some of his successors, in revenge upon the Edomites for bringing him to that extremity, having an advantage against the king of Edom, seized him alive and burnt him to ashes, or slew him and burnt his body, or dug up the bones of their dead king, of that particularly who had so straitened him, and, in token of his rage and fury, burnt them to lime. and perhaps made use of the powder of his bones for the white-washing of the walls and ceilings of his palace, that he might please himself with the sight of that monument of his revenge. Est vindicta bonum vita jucundius ipsa--Revenge is sweeter than life itself.

It is barbarous to abuse human bodies, for we ourselves also are in the body; it is senseless to abuse dead bodies, nay, it is impious, for we believe and look for their resurrection; and to abuse the dead bodies of kings (whose persons and names ought to be in a particular manner respected and had in veneration) is an affront to majesty; it is an argument of a base spirit for those

to trample upon a dead lion who, were he alive, would tremble before him.

2. Moab's doom for this transgression is,

(1.) A judgment of death. Those that deal cruelly shall be cruelly dealt with (Am 2:2): Moab shall die; the Moabites shall be cut off with the sword of war, which kills with tumult, with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, circumstances that make it so much the more terrible, as the lion's roaring aggravates his tearing. Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa 9:5.

(2.) It is a judgment upon their judge, who had passed the sentence upon the bones of the king of Edom that they should be burnt to lime: I will cut him off, says God (Am 2:3); he shall know there is a judge that is higher than he. The king, the chief judge, and all the inferior judges and princes, shall be cut off together. If the people sometimes suffer for the sin of their princes, yet the princes themselves shall not escape, Jer 48:47. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

2 but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, *and* with the sound of the trumpet:

3 and I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord.

4 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

5 but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

Judah also is a near neighbour to Israel, and therefore, now that justice is riding the circuit, that shall not be passed by; that nation has made itself like the heathen and mingled with them, and therefore the indictment here runs against them in the same form in which it had run against all the rest:

For these transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; their sins are as many as the sins of other nations, and we find them huddled up with them in the

same character, Jer 9:26, "As for Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, jumble them together; they are all alike;" the sentence here also is the same (Am 2:5): "I will send a fire upon Judah, though it is the land where God is known, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, though it is the holy city, and God has formerly been known in its palaces for a refuge," Ps 48:3. But the sin here charged upon Judah is different from all the rest. The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God, Am 2:4.

1. They put contempt upon his statutes and persisted in disobedience to them: They have despised the law of the Lord, as if it were not worth taking notice of, nor had any thing in it valuable; and herein they despised the wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as the authority and sovereignty, of the Lawmaker; this they did, in effect, when they kept not his commandments, made no conscience of them, took no care about them.

2. They put honour upon his rivals, their idols, here called their lies which caused them to err; for an image is a teacher of lies, Hab 2:18. And those that are led away into the error of idolatry are by that led into a multitude of other errors, Uno dato absurdo mille sequuntur--One absurdity draws after it a thousand. God is an infinite eternal Spirit; but, when the truth of God is by idolatry changed into a lie, all his other truths are in danger of being so changed likewise; thus their idols caused them to err, and God justly gave them up to strong delusions; nor was it any excuse for their sin that they were lies after which their father walked, for they should rather have taken warning than taken pattern by those that perished with these lies in their right hand.

The Judgment on Israel

6 Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes;

We now at length come to the words which Amos saw concerning Israel. The reproofs and threatenings having walked the round, here they centre, here they settle. He begins with them

as with the rest: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; it all these nations must be punished for their iniquities, shall Israel go unpunished? Observe here what their sins were, for which God would reckon with them.

1. Perverting justice. This was the sin of those who were entrusted with the administration of justice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties concerned. They made nothing of selling a righteous man, and his righteous cause when it came to be tried before them, for a piece of silver; sentence was passed, not according to the merits of the cause, but the bribe always turned the scale, and judgment was set to sale by auction to the highest bidder. They would sell the life and livelihood of a poor man for a pair of shoes, for the least advantage to themselves that could be proposed to them; give them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor man, who could not give them as much as that, should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those that will have no mercy. They will rather play at small game that sit out.

For a piece of bread such a man will transgress. Note, Those who will wrong their consciences for any thing will come at length to do it for next to nothing; those who begin to sell justice for silver will in time be so sordid as to see it for a pair of shoes, for a pair of old shoes.

2. Oppressing the poor, and seeking to benefit themselves by doing them a mischief: They pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor; they swallow up the poor with the utmost greediness, and make a prey of those that are in sorrow with dust on their heads, poor orphans that are in mourning for their parents; they catch at them to get their estates into their hands; they never rest till they have got the heads of the poor in the dust, to be trodden on.

Or, They pant after the dust of the earth, that is, silver and gold, white and yellow dust; they covet it earnestly, and levy it upon the head of the poor by their unjust exactions. Note, Men's seeking to enrich themselves by the impoverishing of others is a transgression which God will not long turn away the punishment

of. This is turning aside the way of the meek, contriving to do injury to those who, they know, are mild and patient and will bear injury. They invade their rights, break their measures, and obstruct the course of justice in favour of them, not suffering them to go on with their righteous cause; this is turning aside their way. Note, The more patiently men bear injuries that are done them the greater is the sin of those that injure them, and the more occasion they have to expect that God will give them redress, and take vengeance for them. I, as a deaf man, heard not, and then thou wilt hear.

3. Abominable uncleanness, even incest itself, such as it not named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife (1Co 5:1), his father's concubine: A man and his father will go in unto the same young woman, as black an instance as any other of an unbounded promiscuous lust; and yet where the former iniquities of oppression and extortion are this also is found; for laws of modesty seldom hold those that have broken the bands of justice and cast away its cords from them. This wickedness is such a scandal to religion, and the profession of it, that those who are guilty of it are looked upon as designing thereby to profane God's holy name, and to render it odious among the heathen, as if he countenanced the villainies which those who pretend relation to him allow themselves in, and were altogether such a one as they.

4. Regaling themselves and yet pretending to honour their God with that which they had got by oppression and extortion, Am 2:8. They add idolatry to their injustice, and then think to atone for their injustice with their idolatry.

(1.) They make merry with that which they have unjustly squeezed from the poor. They lay themselves down at ease, and in state, and stretch themselves upon clothes laid to pledge, which they ought to have restored the same night, according to the law, De 24:12,13. And they drink the wine of the condemned, of such as they have fined and laid heavy mulcts upon, spending that in sensuality which they have got by injustice.

(2.) They think to make atonement for this by feasting on the gains of oppression before their altars, and drinking this wine in the house of their God, in the temples where they worshipped their calves, as if they would make God a partner in their crimes by making him a partner of the profits of them--service good enough for false gods; but the true God will not thus be mocked; he has declared that he hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and cannot be served acceptably but with that which is got honestly.

7 that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn
aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the
same maid, to profane my holy name:
8 and they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar,
and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god.
9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height *was* like the
height of the cedars, and he *was* strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his
fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

Here, I. God puts his people Israel in mind of the great things he has done for them, in putting them into possession of the land of Canaan, the greatest part of which these ten tribes now enjoyed, Am 2:9,10.

Note, We need often to be reminded of the mercies we have received, which are the heaviest aggravations of the sins we have committed. God gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our meanness and unworthiness, and the disproportion between his gifts and our merits; but he justly upbraids us with our ingratitude, and ill requital of his favours, and tells us what he has done for us, to shame us for not rendering again according to the benefit done to us. "Son, remember; Israel, remember,

1. That God brought thee out of a house of bondage, rescued thee out of the land of Egypt, where thou wouldst otherwise have perished in slavery."

2. That he led thee forty years through a desert land, and fed thee in a wilderness, where thou wouldst otherwise have perished with hunger. Mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us, for, if they had been cut off, we should not have been.

3. That he made room for them in Canaan, by extirpating the natives by a series of wonders little inferior to those by which they were redeemed out of Egypt: I destroyed the Amorite before them, here put for all the devoted nations. Observe the magnificence of the enemies that stood in their way, which is taken notice of, that God may be the more magnified in the subduing of them. They were of great stature (whose height was like the height of the cedars) and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them; and they were also of great strength, not only tall, but well-set: He was strong as the oaks. Their kingdom was eminent among the nations, and over-topped all its neighbours.

The supports and defences of it seemed impregnable; it was as fine as the stately cedar; it was as firm as the sturdy oak; yet, when God had a vine to plant there (Ps 80:8,9), this Amorite was not only cut down, but plucked up: I destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from beneath, so that the Amorites were no more a nation, nor ever read of any more. Thus highly did God value Israel. He gave men for them and people for their life, Isa 43:4. How ungrateful then were those who put such contempt upon him!

4. That he made them possess the land of the Amorite, not only put it into their hands, so that they became masters of it jure belli--by right of conquest, but gave them a better title to it, so that it became theirs by promise.

II. He likewise upbraids them with the spiritual privileges and advantages they enjoyed as a holy nation, Am 2:11. They had helps for their souls, which taught them how to make good use of their temporal enjoyments and were therefore more valuable. It is true the ten tribes had not God's temple, altar, and priesthood, and it was their own fault that they deserted them, and for that they might justly have been left in utter darkness; but God left not himself without witness, nor them without guides to show them the way.

1. They had prophets that were powerful instructors in piety, divinely inspired, and commissioned to make known the mind of God to them, to show them what is pleasing to God and what

displeasing, to reprove them for their faults and warn them of their dangers, to direct them in their difficulties and comfort them in their troubles. God raised them up prophets, animated them for that work and employed them in it. He raised them up of their sons, from among themselves, as Moses and Christ were raised up from among their brethren, De 18:15.

It was an honour put upon their nation, and upon their families, that they had children of their own to be God's messengers to them, of their own language, not strangers sent from another country, whom they might suspect to be prejudiced against them and their land, but those who, they knew, wished well to them. Note, Faithful ministers are great blessings to any people, and it is God that raises them up to be so, that they may justly be reckoned an honour to the families they are of.

2. They had Nazarites that were bright examples of piety: I raised up of your young men for Nazarites, men that bound themselves by a vow to God and his service, and, in pursuance of that, denied themselves many of the lawful delights of sense, as drinking wine and eating grapes. There were some of their young men that were in their prime for the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life and yet voluntarily abridged themselves of them; these God raised up by the power of his grace, to be monuments of his grace, to his glory, and to be his witnesses against the impieties of that degenerate age.

Note, It is as great a blessing to any place to have eminent good Christians in it as to have eminent good ministers in it; for so they have examples to their rules. We must acknowledge that it bodes well to any people when God raises up numbers of hopeful young people among them, when he makes their young men Nazarites, devout, and conscientious, and mortified to the pleasures of sense; and those that are such Nazarites are purer than snow, whiter than milk; they are indeed the polite young men, for their polishing is of sapphires, Lam 4:7.

Those that have such men, such young men, among them, have therein such an advantage, both for direction and encouragement, to be religious, as they will be called to an

account for another day if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites, raised up among them. Concerning the truth of this, he appeals to themselves:

"Is it not even thus, O you children of Israel? Can you deny it? Have not you yourselves been sensible of the advantage you had by the prophets and Nazarites raised up among you?" Note, Sinners' own consciences will be witnesses for God that he has not been wanting to them in the means of grace, so that, if they perish, it is because they have been wanting to themselves in not improving those means. The men of Judah shall themselves judge between God and his vineyard, whether he could have done more for it, Isa 5:3,4.

10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. *Is it* not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord.

12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.

He charges them with the abuse of the means of grace they enjoyed, and the opposition they gave to God's designs in affording them those means, Am 2:12. They were so far from walking in the light that they rebelled against it, and did what they could to extinguish it, that it might not shine in their faces, to their conviction.

1. They did what they could to debauch good people, to draw them off from their seriousness in devotion and their strictness in conversation: You gave the Nazarites wine to drink, contrary to their vow, that, having broken it in that instance, they might not pretend to keep it in any other. Some they surprised, or allured into it, and with their much fair speech caused them to yield; others they forced and frightened into it, reproached and threatened them if they were more precise than their neighbours; and, by drawing them in to drink wine, they spoiled them for Nazarites.

Note, Satan and his agents are very busy to corrupt the minds of young people that look heavenward; and many that we thought

would have been Nazarites they have overcome by giving them wine to drink, by drawing them in to the love of mirth and pleasure, and drinking company. Multitudes of young men that bade fair for eminent professors of religion have erred through wine, and been undone for ever. And how do the factors for hell triumph in the debauching of a Nazarite!

2. They did what they could to silence good ministers, and to stop their mouths: "You commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not, and threatened them if they did prophesy (Am 7:12), as if God's messengers were bound to observe your orders, and might not deliver their errand unless you gave them leave, and so you not only received the grace of God, in raising up those prophets, in vain, but put the highest affront imaginable upon that God in whose name the prophets spoke." Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that cannot bear faithful preaching, and those much more that suppress it.

IV. He complains of the wrong they did him by their sins (Am 2:13): "I am pressed under you, I am straitened by you, and can no longer bear it, and therefore I will ease myself of my adversaries, Isa 1:24. I am pressed under you and the load of your sins as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, is loaded with corn, in the midst of the joy of harvest, as long as any will lie on."

Note, The great God complains of sin, especially the sins of his professing people, as a burden to him. He is grieved with this generation (Ps 95:10), is broken with their whorish heart (Eze 6:9), a consideration which, if it make not the sinner's repentance very deep, will make his ruin very great. The great God that upholds the world, and never complains that his is pressed under the weight of it (he fainteth not, neither is weary), yet complains of the sins of Israel, yea, and of their hypocritical services too, that he is weary of bearing them, Isa 1:14. No wonder the creature groans being burdened (Ro 8:22), when the Creator says, I am pressed under them.

V. He threatens them with unavoidable ruin. And so some read, Am 2:13, "Behold I will press, or straiten, your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses; they shall be loaded with judgments till

they shall sink under them, and shall make a noise, as a cart overloaded does." Those that will not submit to the convictions of the word, that will neither be won by that nor by the conversation of those about them, shall be made to sink under the weight of God's judgments. If God load us daily with his benefits, and we, notwithstanding that, load him with our sins, how can we expect any other than that he should load us with his judgments?

And it is here threatened in the Am 2:14-16 that, when God comes forth to contend with this provoking people, they shall not be able to stand before him, to flee from him, nor to make their part good with him; for when God judges he will overcome. Though his patience be tired out, his power is not, and so the sinner shall find, to his cost. When the Assyrian army comes to lay the country waste by sword and captivity none shall escape, but every one shall have his share in the common desolation.

1. It will be in vain to think of fleeing from the enemy that comes armed with a commission to make all desolate: The flight shall perish from the swift; those that have been famed for happy escapes and happy retreats shall now find their arts fail them; they shall have no time to flee, or shall find no way to take, or they shall have no strength or spirit to attempt it; they shall be at their wits' end, and then they are soon at their flight's end. Are they, as Asahel, as swift of foot as a wild roe? (2Sa 2:18), yet, like him, they shall run the faster upon their own destruction: He that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself, Am 2:15. Or do they say (as those, Isa 30:16), We will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift? Yet they shall be overtaken: Neither shall he that rides the horse deliver himself from his pursuers. A horse is a vain thing for safety.

2. It will be in vain to think of fighting it out. God is at war with them; and are they stronger than he? Is there any military force that can pretend to be a match for Omnipotence? No: The strong shall not strengthen his force. He that has a habit of strength shall not be able to exert it when he has occasion for it. And the mighty, whose should protect and deliver others, shall not be able to deliver himself, to deliver his soul (so the word is), shall

not save his life. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, nor trust in it, but strengthen himself in the Lord his God, for in him is everlasting strength. And, as the bodily strength shall fail, so shall the weapons of war. The armour as well as the arm shall become insufficient:

Neither shall he stand that handles the bow, though he stand at a distance, but shall betake himself to flight, and not trust to his own bow to save him. Though the arm be ever so strong, and the armour ever so well fixed, neither will avail when the spirit fails (Am 2:16):

He that is courageous among the mighty, that used to look danger in the face, and not be dismayed at it, shall flee away naked in that day, not only disarmed, having thrown away his weapons both offensive and defensive, but plundered of his treasure, which he thought to carry away with him, and he shall think it as much as he could expect that he has his life for a prey. Thus when God pleases he takes away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causes those who used to boast of their courage, and their daring enterprises in the field, to wander and sneak in a wilderness where there is no way, Job 12:24.

13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed *that is* full of sheaves.
14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself:
15 neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and *he that is* swift of foot shall not deliver *himself:* neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.
16 And *he that is* courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord.

Amos-3

The Roar of the Lion

1 Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

The scope of these verses is to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them. That which the prophet has to say to them is to let them know that the Lord has something to say against them, Am 3:1.

They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it; nevertheless he had something against them, and they were called to hear what it was, that they might consider what answer they should make, as the prisoner at the bar is told to hearken to his indictment. The children of Israel would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord has spoken against them; for he will act as he has spoken.

I. Let them know that the gracious cognizance God has taken of them, and the favours he has bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. Israel is a family that God brought up out of the land of Egypt, (Am 3:1), and it was no more than a family when it went down thither; thence God delivered it; thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, that must take notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the whole family that God brought up out of Egypt. It is a family that God has bestowed distinguishing favours upon, has owned in a peculiar manner. You only have I known of all the families of the earth.

Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all the families of the earth. Those that know God are known of him.

In Judah is God known, and therefore Judah is more than any people known of God. God has known them, that is, he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance. Now, one would think, it should follow, "Therefore I will spare you, will connive at your faults, and excuse you." No:

Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Note, The distinguishing favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment; nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely will he reckon with them, if they by a course of wilful sin profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished.

Therefore they shall be punished, because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him, more than the sins of others, and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour by making it appear that he hates sin and hates it most in those that are nearest to him; if they be but as bad as others, they shall be punished worse than others, because it is justly expected that they should be so much better than others. Judgment begins at the house of God, begins at the sanctuary; for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that come nigh unto him, Le 10:3.

II. Let them know that they could not expect any comfortable communion with God unless they first made their peace with him (Am 3:3): Can two walk together except they be agreed? No; how should they? Where there is not friendship there can be no fellowship; if two persons be at variance, they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Israel has affronted God, had broken their covenant with him, and ill-requited his favours to them; and yet they expected that he should continue to walk with them, should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them,

though they took no care by repentance and reformation to agree with their adversary and to turn away his wrath.

"But how can that be?" says God. "While you continue to walk contrary to God you can look for no other than that he should walk contrary to you," Le 26:23,24. Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot walk together except they be agreed. Unless we agree with God in our end, which is his glory, we cannot walk with him by the way.

III. Let them know that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching were not causeless and groundless, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which (if they did not speedily repent) they would infallibly feel the effects of (Am 3:4):

"Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey in view? No: he roars upon his prey. Nor will a young lion cry out of his den if the old lion have taken nothing to bring home to him; nor would God thus give you warning both by the threatenings of his word, and by less judgments, if you had not by your sins made yourselves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not really about to fall upon you with desolating destroying judgments." Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are not bugbears, to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man and certain presages of the judgments of God.

2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I
will punish you for all your iniquities.
3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?
4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion
cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?
5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin *is* for him? shall
one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?
6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?
shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done *it?*

Let them know that, as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work, Am 3:5. When God has come forth to

contend with a sinful people it is necessary that they should understand,

1. That it is their own sin that has entangled them; for can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him? No, nature does not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of men; a bird is not taken in a snare by chance, but with the fowler's design; so the providence of God prepares trouble for sinners, and it is in the work of their own hands that they are snared. Affliction does not spring out of the dust, but it is God's justice, and our own wickedness, that correct us.

2. It is nothing but their own repentance that can disentangle them; for shall one take up a snare from the earth, which he laid with design, except he have taken something as he designed? So neither will God remove the affliction he has sent till it have done its work and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered, and then, and not till then, the snare is broken, is taken up from the earth, and we are delivered in love and mercy.

V. Let them know that all their troubles came from the hand of God's providence and from the counsel of his will (Am 3:6): Shall there be evil in a city, in a family, in a nation, and the Lord has not done it, appointed it, and performed what he appointed? The evil of sin is from ourselves; it is our own doing. But the evil of trouble, personal or public, is from God, and is his doing; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent. Out of his mouth both evil and good proceed. This consideration, that, whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in public calamities and to study to answer God's intention in them.

VI. Let them know that their prophets, who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have received from the Lord to be delivered to his people.

1. God makes it known beforehand to the prophets (Am 3:7): Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, none of that evil in the city spoken of (Am 3:6), but he reveals it to his servants the prophets, though to others it is a secret. Therefore those know not what they do who make light of the warnings which the prophets give them, in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are his servants, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men. The secret of God is with them; it is in some sense with all the righteous (Pr 3:32), with all that fear God (Ps 25:14), but in a peculiar manner with the prophets, to whom the Spirit of prophecy is a Spirit of revelation.

It would have put honour enough upon prophets if it had been only said that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do, but it speaks something very great to say that he does nothing but what he reveals to them, as if they were the men of his counsel. Shall I hide from Abraham, who is a prophet, the thing which I do? Ge 18:17. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those that put contempt on the prophets, whom he puts this honour upon.

2 The prophets cannot but make that known to the people which God has made known to them (Am 3:8): The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy? His prophets, to whom he has spoken in secret by dreams and visions, cannot but speak in public to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured concerning them, and so much affected with them, that they cannot but speak of them; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. I believed; therefore have I spoken, Ac 4:20.

Nay, and besides the prophetic impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word like a fire in their bones (Jer 20:9), they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with; and they would have been false to their trust if they had not done it. Necessity was laid upon them, as upon the preachers of the gospel, 1Co 9:16.

VII. Let them know that they ought to tremble before God upon the fair warning he had given them, as they would,

1. Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard and stand to their arms: Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people be not afraid, or run together? so some read it, Am 3:6. Will they not immediately come together in a fright, to consider what is best to be done for the common safety?

Yet when God by his prophets gives them notice of their danger, and summons them to come and enlist themselves under his banner, it makes no impression; they will sooner give credit to a watchman on their walls than to a prophet sent of God, will sooner obey the summons of the governor of their city than the orders given them by the Governor of the world. God says, Hearken to the voice of the trumpet; but they will not hearken, nay, and they tell him plainly that they will not, Jer 6:17.

2. Upon the roaring of a lion. God is sometimes as a lion, and a young lion, to the house of Judah, Ho 5:14. The lion roars before he tears; thus God warns before he wounds. If therefore the lion roars upon a poor traveller (as he did against Samson, Jdg 14:5), he cannot but be put into great consternation; yet the Lord roars out of Zion (Am 1:2), and none are afraid, but they go on securely as if they were in no danger.

Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken, will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark. O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the terrors of the Lord!

7 Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto
his servants the prophets.

8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken,
who can but prophesy?

The Doom of Samaria

9 Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.

The Israelites are here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of and the punishment they are condemned to.

1. Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to publish it in the palaces of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; nay, the summons must go further, even to the palaces in the land of Egypt. "The great men of both those nations, that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighboring nations, and are conversant with the public intelligence, let them assemble themselves upon the mountains of Samaria," Am 3:9.

There, upon a throne high and lifted up, the judgment is set. Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried; let them be present at the trial, for it shall be (as other trials are) public, in the face of the country; let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his vineyard. God appeals to all impartial righteous men, Eze 23:45.

They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings when they see how the case stands. Note, God's controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny; even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see, and say, that the ways of the Lord are equal, but our ways are unequal. They are likewise summoned to attend, not only that they may justify God and be witness for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning; for, if judgment begin at the house of God, as they see it does, what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? 1Pe 4:17. If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?

Or this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious that the neighboring nations could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit that their punishment should be so. "If it could have been concealed, we would have said, Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;" but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they have grown impudent in sin, let them bear the shame: "Publish it in Ashdod, in Egypt."

1. Let them see how black the charge is, and how well proved. Let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria; let them look off from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud they cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom.

(1.) Look into their streets and you will see nothing but riot and disorder, great tumults in the midst thereof; reason and justice are upon all occasions run down by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob, the dominion of which is the sin and shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin.

(2.) Look into their prisons, and you will see them filled with injured innocents: The oppressed are in the midst thereof, thrown down and crushed by their oppressors, overpowered and overwhelmed, and they had no comforter, Ec 4:1.

(3.) Look into their courts of justice, and you will see that those who preside in those courts know not to do right, because they have always been accustomed to do wrong; they act as if they had no notion at all of the thing called justice, are in no care to do justice themselves nor to see that others do justice.

(4.) Look into their treasures and stores, and you will see them replenished with violence and robbery, with that which was unjustly got and is still unjustly kept. Thus they have heaped treasures together for the last days, but it will prove a treasure of wrath against the day of wrath. It may well be said, Those know not to do right who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong.

2. Let them see how heavy the doom is, and how well executed, Am 3:11,12.

(1.) Their country shall be invaded and ruined; and observe how the punishment answers to the sin.

[1.] Great tumults are in the midst of the land, and therefore an adversary shall be even round about the land; the Assyrian forces shall surround it and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harboured and indulged in the midst of a people they can expect no other than that adversaries should be round about them, so that, go which way they will, they go into the mouth of danger, Lu 19:43.

[2.] They strengthened themselves in their wickedness, but the enemy shall bring down their strength from them, that strength which they abused in oppressing the poor, and doing violence to all about them. Note, That power which is made an instrument of unrighteousness will justly be brought down and broken.

[3.] They stored up robbery in their palaces, and therefore their palaces shall be spoiled; for what is got and kept wrongfully will not be kept long. Even palaces will be no protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men, if they have spoiled others, shall themselves be spoiled, for the Lord is the avenger of all such.

(2.) Their countrymen shall not escape, Am 3:12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up, and they shall be utterly unable to make an resistance; and if any do make their escape, so as neither to fall by the sword or go into captivity, yet they shall be very few, and those of the meanest and least considerable, like two legs, or shanks, of a lamb, or, it may be, a piece of an ear, which the lion drops, or the shepherd takes from him, when he has eaten the whole body; so, perhaps, here and there one may escape from Samaria and from Damascus, when the king of Assyria shall fall upon them both, but none to make any account of; and those that do escape shall do so with the utmost difficult and hazard, by hiding themselves in the corner of a bed or under the bed's feet,

which intimates that their spirits shall sneak shamefully in the time of danger.

They shall not hide themselves in dens and caves, but in the corner of a bed, or the piece of a bed, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape, as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem that there shall be two in a bed together, one taken and the other left.

Note, When God's judgments come forth against a people with commission it will be in vain to think of escaping them. Some make their dwelling in the corner of a bed, and in a couch, to denote their present security and sensuality; they are at ease, as in a bed, or on a couch, but, when God comes to contend with them, he shall make them uneasy, shall take them away out of the bed of their sloth and slumber. Those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God's judgments are abroad shall go captive with the first that go captive.

10 For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

11 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; An adversary *there shall be* even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

12 Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus *in* a couch.

Notice is given of it to themselves, Am 3:13. Let this be testified, and heard, in the house of Jacob, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by the Lord God, the God of hosts, who has authority to pass this sentence and ability to execute it; let them know from him that the day is at hand when God will visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, when he will enquire into them and reckon for them: there will come a day of visitation, a day of punishment, and in that day all those things they are proud of, and put confidence in, shall fail them, and so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

1. Woe to their altars, for God will visit them. He will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of at their altars, and bring

into the account all their superstition and idolatry, all their expenses on their false gods, and all their expectations from them; and he will lay the altars themselves under the marks of his displeasure, for the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground, and with them the altar itself demolished and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against (1Ki 13:2), and immediately rent (Am 3:3), and that prophecy fulfilled with Josiah burnt men's bones upon it, 2Ki 23:15,16.

This seconds that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolatrous altars, God will, and those with them that had them in veneration. Some make the horns of the altar to signify all those things which they flee to for refuge, and trust in, and which they make their sanctuary: they shall all be cut off, so that they shall have nothing to take hold of.

2. Woe to their houses, for God will visit them too. He will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the robbery that have stored up in their houses, and the luxury in which they lived: and I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house, Am 3:15.

Their nobility, and gentry, and rich merchants, had their winter-houses in the city and their summer-houses in the country, so nice were they in guarding against the inconveniences of the winter when the country was thought too cold, and of the summer when the city was thought too hot, though the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat was ever in extremity.

They indulged a foolish affectation of change and variety; but God will, either by war or by the earthquake, smite both the winter-house and the summer-house; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments. The houses of ivory (so called because the ceiling, or wainscot, or some of the ornaments of them, were edged or inlaid with ivory) shall perish, shall be burnt or pulled down; and the great houses shall have an end; the most splendid and spacious houses, the houses of their great men, shall no longer be, or at least be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp or

pleasantness of men's houses will be so far from fortifying them against God's judgments that it will make them the more grievous and vexatious, as their extravagance about them will be put to the score of their sins and follies.

13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts,

14 That, in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.

Amos-4

1 Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

It is here foretold, in the name of God, that oppressors shall be humbled and idolaters shall be hardened.

I. That proud oppressors shall be humbled for their oppressions: for he that does wrong shall receive according to the wrong that he has done. Now observe,

1. How their sin is described, Am 4:1. They are compared to the kine of Bashan, which were a breed of cattle very large and strong, especially if, though bred there, they were fed upon the mountain of Samaria, where the pastures were extraordinarily fat. Amos had been a herdsman, and he speaks in a dialect of his calling, comparing the rich and great men, that lived in luxury and wantonness, to the kine of Bashan, which were wanton and unruly, would not be kept within the bounds of their own pasture, But broke through the hedges, broke down all the fences, and trespassed upon the neighboring grounds; and not only so, but pushed and gored the smaller cattle that were not a match for them.

Those that had their summer-houses upon the mountains of Samaria when they went thither for fresh air were as mischievous as the kine upon the mountains of Bashan and as injurious to those about them.

(1.) They oppress the poor and needy themselves; they crush them, to squeeze something to themselves out of them. They took advantage of their poverty, and necessity, and inability to help themselves, to make them poorer and more necessitous than they were. They made use of their power as judges and magistrates for the invading of men's rights and properties, the poor not excepted; for they made no conscience of robbing even the hospital.

(2.) They are in confederacy with those that do so. They say to their masters (to the masters of the poor, that abuse them and violently take from them what they have, when they ought to relieve them), "Bring, and let us drink; let us feast with you upon the gains of our oppression, and then we will protect you, and stand by you in it, and reject the appeals of the poor against you."

Note, What is got by extortion is commonly made use of as provisions for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof; and therefore men are tyrants to the poor because they are slaves to their appetites. Bring, and let us drink, is the language of those that crush the needy, as if the tears of the oppressed, mingled with their wine, made it drink the better. And by their associations for drinking and reveling, and an excess of riot, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

2. How their punishment is described, Am 4:2,3. God will take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks; he will send the Assyrian army upon them, that shall make a prey of them, shall not only enclose the body of the nation in their net, but shall angle for particular persons, and take them prisoners and captives as with hooks and fish-hooks, shall draw them out of their own land as fish are drawn out of the water, which is their element, them and their children with them, or, They in

their day shall be drawn out by one victorious enemy, and their posterity in their day by another, so that by a succession of destroying judgments they shall at length be wholly extirpated. These kine of Bashan thought they could no more be drawn out with a hook and a cord than the Leviathan can, Job 41:1,2.

But God will make them know that he has a hook for their nose and a bridle for their jaws, Isa 37:29. The enemy shall take them away as easily as the fisherman takes away the little fish, and shall make it their sport and recreation. When the enemy has made himself master of Samaria, then,

(1.) Some shall attempt to escape by flight: You shall go out at the breaches made in the wall of the city, every cow at that which is before her, to shift for her own safety, and make the best of her way; and now the unruly kine of Bashan are tamed, and are themselves crushed, as they crushed the poor and needy. Note, Those to whom God has given a good pasture, if they are wanton in it, will justly be turned out of it; and those who will not be kept within the hedge of God's precept forfeit the benefit of the hedge of God's protection, and will be forced in vain to flee through the breaches they have themselves fearfully made in that hedge.

(2.) Others shall think to shelter themselves, or at least their best effects, in the palace, because it is a castle well fortified and a garrison well manned: You shall throw yourselves (so some read it), or throw them (that is, your posterity, your children, or whatever is dear to you), into the palace, where the enemy will find it ready to be seized. Note, What is got by oppression cannot long be enjoyed with satisfaction.

3. How their sentence to this punishment is ratified: The Lord God has sworn it by his holiness. He had often said it, and they regarded it not; they thought God and his prophets did but jest with them; therefore he swears it in his wrath, and what he has sworn he will not revoke. He swears by his holiness, that attribute of his which is so much his glory, and which is so much glorified in the punishment of wicked people; for, as sure as God

is a holy God, those that plough iniquity and sow wickedness shall reap the same.

2 The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every *cow at that which is* before her; and ye shall cast *them* into the palace, saith the Lord.

That obstinate idolaters shall be hardened in their idolatries (Am 4:4,5): Come to Bethel, and transgress. It is spoken ironically: "Do so; take your course; multiply your transgressions by multiplying your sacrifices, for this liketh you; but what will you do in the end hereof?" Here we see,

1. How intent they were upon the service of their idols, and how willing they were to be at cost upon them; they brought their sacrifices, and their tithes, and their free-will offerings, hoping that therein they should be accepted of God, but it was all an abomination to him. The profuseness of idolaters in the service of their false gods may shame our strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

2. How they mimicked God's institutions. They had their daily sacrifice at the altar of Bethel, as God had at his altar; they had their thank-offerings as God had, only they allowed leaven in them, which God had forbidden, because their priests did not like to have the bread to heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, for something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were pleasant bread.

3. How well pleased they were with these services themselves: This liketh you, O you children of Israel! So you love. What was their own invention they were fond of and wedded to, and thought it must be pleasing to God because it was agreeable to their own fancy.

4. How they upbraided with it: "Come to Bethel, to Gilgal; bring the sacrifices and tithes yourselves; proclaim and publish to the nation the free-offerings, pressing them to bring in abundance of such; go on in this way;" that is,

(1.) "It is plain that you are resolved to do it, whatever God and conscience say to the contrary."

(2.) "Your prophets shall let you alone in it, and not admonish you as they have done, for it is to no purpose. Let no man strive nor rebuke his neighbour." (3.) "Your foolish hearts shall be more and more darkened and besotted, and you shall be quite given up to these strong delusions, to believe a lie."

(4.) "What will you get by it? Come to Bethel and multiply your sacrifices, and see what the better you will be, what returns you will have to your sacrifices, what stead they will stand you in in the day of distress. You shall be ashamed of Bethel your confidence," Jer 48:13.

(5.) "Come, and transgress, come, and multiply your transgression, that you may fill up the measure of your iniquity and be ripened for ruin." Thus Christ said to Judas, What thou doest do quickly; and to the Jews, Fill you up the measure of your fathers, Mt 23:32.

Israel's Failure to Profit from God's Punishments

4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and
bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes after three years:
5 and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim *and*
publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel,
saith the Lord God.
6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want
of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the
Lord.

Here, I. God complains of his people's incorrigibleness under the judgments which he had brought upon them in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them his displeasure, with this design, that they might by repentance make their peace with him; but it had not that effect.

1. It is five times repeated in these verses, as the burden of the charge, "Yet have you not returned unto me, saith the Lord; you have been several times corrected, but in vain; you are not

reclaimed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home."

(1.) This intimates that that which God designed in all his providential rebukes was to reduce them to their allegiance, to influence them to return to him.

(2.) That, if they had returned to their God, they would have been accepted, he would have bidden them welcome, and the troubles they were in would have been removed.

(3.) That the reason why God sent further troubles was because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict.

(4.) That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly: "You have not returned to me from whom you have revolted, to me with whom you are in covenant, to me who stands ready to receive you, to me who have so often called you." Now,

2. To aggravate their incorrigibleness, and to justify himself in inflicting greater judgments, he recounts the less judgments with which he had tried to bring them to repentance.

(1.) There had sometimes been a scarcity of provisions, though there was no visible cause of it (Am 4:6): "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, for you had no meat to chew, whereby your teeth might be fouled," especially no flesh, which dirties the teeth. Or, I have given you emptiness of teeth, nothing to fill your mouths with. "Bread, the staff of life, has been wanting, for you have sown much and brought in little," as Hag 1:9. Some think this refers to that seven years' famine that was in Elisha's time, which we read of 2Ki 8:1. Now when God thus took away their corn in the season thereof, because they had prepared it for Baal, they should have said, We will go and return to our first husband, having paid dearly for leaving him; but it had not that effect. They have not returned to me, saith the Lord.

(2.) Sometimes they had wanted rain, and then of course they wanted the fruits of the earth. This evil was of the Lord: I have withholden the rain from you. God has the key of the clouds, and, if he shut up, who can open? Am 4:7. The rain was withheld when there were yet three months to the harvest, at the time when they used to have it, and therefore the withholding of it was an extraordinary thing, and, if the course of nature was altered, they must therein own the hand of the God of nature; and it was at a time when they most needed it, and therefore the want of it was a very sore judgment, and blasted their expectations of a crop at harvest.

And one circumstance which made this very remarkable was that when there were some places that wanted rain, and withered for want of it, there were other places near adjoining that had it in abundance. God caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, in the same country; nay, he caused it to rain upon one field, one piece of a field, and it was thereby made fruitful and flourishing, but on the next field, on the other side of the hedge, nay, on another part of the same field, it rained not at all, and it was so long without rain that all the products of it withered. No doubt this was literally true, and there were many instances of it which were generally taken notice of. Now,

[1.] By this it appeared that the withholding of the rain was not casual, but by a divine direction and disposal, and that the cloud which waters the earth is turned round about by the counsels of God, to do whatsoever he commands it, whether for correction, or for his land, or for his mercy, Job 37:12-18. Rain does not go by planets (as common people speak), but as God sends it by his winds.

[2.] We have reason to think that those cities on which it rained not were the most infamous for wickedness, such as Bethel and Gilgal (Am 4:4), and that those on which it rained were such as retained something of religion and virtue among them. And so in the town-fields it rained or rained not, upon the piece, according as the owner was; for we are sure the curse of the Lord is in the house, and upon the ground, of the wicked, but he blesses the

habitation of the just, and his field is a field that the Lord has blessed.

[3.] It would be the greater grief and vexation to those whose fields withered for want of rain to see their neighbours' fields well watered and flourishing. My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry, Isa 65:13. The wicked shall see it, and be grieved. Probably those that were oppressed were rained upon, and so they recovered their losses, while the oppressors withered, and so lost their gains.

[4.] Yet, as to the nation in general, it was a mixture of mercy with the judgment, and, consequently, strengthened the call to repentance and reformation, and encouraged them to hope for all mercy, in their returns to God, since there was so much mercy even in God's rebukes of them. But, because they did not make good use of this gracious allay to the extremity of the judgment, they had not the benefit of it, which otherwise they might have had, for (Am 4:8) two or three cities wandered at uncertainty, as beggars, unto one city, to drink water, and, if possible, to have some to carry home with them, but they were not satisfied; it was but here and there one city that had water, while many wanted, and then it was not, as usual, Usus communis aquarum--Water is free to all.

Those that had it had occasion for it, or knew not how soon they might, and therefore could afford but little to those that wanted, saying, Lest there be not enough for us and you. Those that came drank water, but they were not satisfied, because they drank it by measure, and with astonishment; and those that drink of this water shall thirst again, Joh 4:13. They were not satisfied, because their desires were greedy, and what they had God did not bless to them, Hag 1:6. And now, one would think, when they met with all this disappointment, they should have considered their ways and repented; but it had not that effect: "Yet have you not returned to me, no, not so much as to pray in a right manner for the former and latter rain," Zec 10:1.

See the folly of carnal hearts; they will wander from city to city, from one creature to another, in pursuit of satisfaction, and still

they miss of it; they labour for that which satisfies not (Isa 55:2), and yet, after all, they will not return to God, will not incline their ear to him in whom they might have satisfaction. The preaching of the gospel is as rain; God sometimes blesses one place with it more than another; some countries, some cities, are, like Gideon's fleece, wet with this dew, while the ground about is dry; all withers where this rain is wanting. But it were well if people were but as wise for their souls as they are for their bodies, and, when they have not this rain near them, would go and seek it where it is to be had; and, if they seek aright, they shall not seek in vain.

(3.) Sometimes the fruits of their ground were eaten up by caterpillars, or blasted with mildew, Am 4:9. Heaven and earth are armed against those who have made God their enemy. When God pleased, that is, when he was displeased,

[1.] They suffered by a malignant air, the influence of which, either too hot or too cold, blasted their fruits, with a force that could be neither discerned nor resisted, and against which there was no defence.

[2.] They suffered by malignant animals. Their vineyards and gardens yielded their increase in great abundance, so did their fig-trees and olive-trees; but the palmer-worm devoured them before the fruits were ripe, and fit to be gathered in. This was either the same judgment with that which we read of Joe 1:4-6, or a less judgment of the same nature, sent before to give warning of that. But they did not take warning: Yet have you not returned unto me.

(4.) Sometimes the plague had raged among them, and the sword of war had cut off multitudes, Am 4:10. The pestilence is God's messenger; this he sent among them, with directions whom to strike dead, and it was done. It was a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; deaths were scattered among them by the hand of a destroying angel at midnight. And perhaps this pestilence, as that of Egypt, fastened upon the first-born. In the way of Egypt (so the margin); when they were making their escape to Egypt, or going thither to seek for aid, the pestilence seized them by the

way and stopped their journey. The sword of war is likewise the sword of the Lord; this was drawn among them with commission; and then it slew their young men, the strength of the present generation and the seed of the next. God says, I have slain them; he avows the execution.

The slain of the Lord are many. The enemy took away their horses, and converted them to their own use; and the dead carcases of those that were slain either with sword or pestilence were so many, and for want of surviving friends were left so long unburied, that the stench of their camps came up into their nostrils, and was both noisome and dangerous, and might put them in mind of the offensiveness of their sin to God. And yet this did not prevail to humble and reclaim them: You have not returned to him that smites you. Such a rueful woeful sight as this prevailed not to make them religious.

(5.) In these and other judgments some were remarkably cut off, and made monuments of justice, others were remarkably spared, and made monuments of mercy, the setting of which the one over against the other one would have thought likely to work upon them, but it had not its effect, Am 4:11.

[1.] Some were quite ruined, their families destroyed, and themselves in them: I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Perhaps they were consumed with lightning, as Sodom was, or the houses were, in some other way, burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants in them. Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be condemned with an overthrow, and so made an example, 2Pe 2:6. God had threatened to destroy the whole land with such an overthrow as that of Sodom, De 29:23. But he began with some particular places first, to give them warning, or perhaps with some particular persons, whose sins went beforehand to judgment.

[2.] Others very narrowly escaped: "You were many of you as a firebrand plucked out of the burning, like Lot out of Sodom, when the fire had already kindled upon you; and yet you hate sin never the more for the danger it has brought you to, nor love God ever the more for the deliverance he wrought for you. You that

have been so signally delivered, and in such a distinguishing way, have not returned unto me."

7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when *there were* yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city,
and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

8 So two *or* three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

God, in the close, calls upon his people, now at length, in this their day, to understand the things that belong to their peace, before they were hidden from their eyes, Am 4:12,13. Observe here,

1. How God threatens them with sorer judgments than any they had yet been under: "Therefore, seeing you have not been wrought upon by correction hitherto, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel!" He does not say how he will do, but it shall be something worse than had come yet, Joh 5:14.

Or, "Thus I will go on to do unto thee, following one judgment with another, like the plagues of Egypt, till I have made a full end." Nothing but reformation will prevent the ruin of a sinful people. If they turn not to him, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. I will punish you yet seven times more, if you will not be reformed; so it was written in the law, Le 26:23,24.

2. How he awakens them therefore to think of making their peace with God: "Seeing I will do this unto thee, and there is no remedy, prepare to meet they God, O Israel!" that is,

(1.) "Consider how unable thou art to meet him as a combatant." Some make it to be spoken by way of irony or challenge: "Prepare to meet God, who is coming forth to contend with thee. What armour of proof canst thou put on? What courage canst thou steel thyself with? Alas! it is but putting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa 27:4,5. Art thou able with less than 10,000 to meet him that comes forth against thee with more than 20,000?" Lu 14:31.

(2.) "Resolve therefore to meet him as a penitent, as a humble suppliant, to meet him as thy God, in covenant with thee, to submit, and stand it out no longer." We must prepare to meet God in the way of his judgments (Isa 26:8), to take hold on his strength, that we may make peace. Note, Since we cannot flee from God we are concerned to prepare to meet him; and therefore he gives us warning, that we may prepare. When we are to meet him in his ordinances we must prepare to meet him, prepare to seek him.

3. How he sets forth the greatness and power of God as a reason why we should prepare to meet him, Am 4:13. If he be such a God as he is here described to be, it is folly to contend with him, and our duty and interest to make our peace with him; it is good having him our friend and bad having him our enemy.

(1.) He formed the mountains, made the earth, the strongest stateliest parts of it, and by the word of his power still upholds it and them. Whatever are the products of the everlasting mountains, he formed them; whatever salvation is hoped for from hills and mountains, he is the founder of it, Ps 89:11,12. He that formed the great mountains can make them plain, when they stand in the way of his people's salvation.

(2.) He creates the wind. The power of the air is derived from him, and directed by him; he brings the wind out of his treasures, and orders from what point of the compass it shall blow; and he that made it rules it; even the winds and the seas obey him.

(3.) He declares unto man what is his thought. He makes known his counsel by his servants the prophets to the children of men, the thought of his justice against impenitent sinners, and the thought of good he thinks towards those that repent. He can also make known, for he perfectly knows, the thought that is in man's heart; he understands it afar off, and in the day of conviction will set the evil thoughts among the other sins of sinners in order before them.

(4.) He often makes the morning darkness, by thick clouds overspreading the sky immediately after the sun rose bright and

glorious; so when we look for prosperity and joy he can dash our expectations with some unlooked-for calamity.

(5.) He treads upon the high places of the earth, is not only higher than the highest, but has dominion over all, tramples upon proud men, and upon the idols that were worshipped in the highest places.

(6.) Jehovah the God of hosts is his name, for he has his being of himself, and is the fountain of all being, and all the hosts of heaven and earth are at his command. Let us humble ourselves before this God, prepare to meet him, and give all diligence to make him our God, for happy are the people whose God he is, who have all this power engaged for them.

9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured *them:* yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

11 I have overthrown *some* of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what *is* his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, *is* his name.

Amos-5

A Call to Repentance

1 Hear ye this word which I take up against you, *even* a lamentation, O house of Israel.

This chapter begins, as those two next foregoing began, with, Hear this word. Where God has a mouth to speak we must have an ear to hear; it is our duty, it is our interest, yet so stupid are most men that they need to be again and again called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to give audience, to give attention.

Hear this word. this convincing awakening word must be heard and heeded, as well as words of comfort and peace; the word that is taken up against us, as well as that which makes for us; for, whether we hear or forbear, the word of God shall take effect, and not a tittle of it shall fall to the ground. It is the word which I take up--not the prophet only, but the God that sent him. It is the word that the Lord has spoken, Am 3:1

The word to be heard is a lamentation, a lamentable account of the present calamitous state of the kingdom of Israel, and a lamentable prediction of its utter destruction. Their condition is sad: The virgin of Israel has fallen (Am 5:2), has come down from what she was; that state, though not pure and chaste as a virgin, yet was beautiful and gay, and had its charms; she looked high herself, and was courted by many as a virgin; but she has fallen into contempt and poverty, and is universally slighted. Nay, and their condition is helpless: She shall no more rise, shall never recover her former dignity again. God had lately begun to cut Israel short (2Ki 10:32), and, because they repented not, it was not long before he cut Israel down.

1. Their princes, that should have helped them up, were disabled: She is forsaken upon her land. Not only those she was in alliance with abroad failed her, but her friends at home deserted her; she would not have been carried captive into a strange land if she had not first been forsaken upon her own

land and thrown to the ground there, and all her true interests abandoned by those that should have had them at heart. There is none to raise her up, none that can do it, not that cares to lend her a hand.

2. Their people, that should have helped them up, were diminished, Am 5:3. "The city that had a militia, 1000 strong, and, in the beginning of the war, had furnished out 1000 effective men, able-bodied and well-armed, when they come to review their troops after the battle, shall find but 100 left; and, in proportion, the city that sent out 100 shall have but ten come back, so great a slaughter shall be made, and so few left to the house of Israel for the public service and safety." Scarcely one in ten shall escape of the hands that should relieve this abject, this dejected, nation. Note, The lessening of the numbers of God's spiritual Israel, by death or desertion, is just a matter for lamentation; for by whom shall Jacob arise, by whom shall the decays of piety be repaired, when he is thus made small?

2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; *there is* none to raise her up.

3 For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave a hundred, and that which went forth *by* a hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

4 For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live:

5 but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer- sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

This is a message from God to the house of Israel, in which,

I. They are told of their faults, that they might see what occasion there was for them to repent and reform, and that, when they were called to return, they might not need to ask, Wherein shall we return?

1. God tells them, in general (Am 5:12), "I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins; and you shall be made to know them too." In our penitent reflections upon our sins we

must consider, as God does in his judicial remarks upon them, and will do in the great day,

(1.) That they are very numerous; they are our manifold transgressions, sins of various kinds and often repeated. Oh what a multitude of vain and vile thoughts lodge within us! What a multitude of idle, foolish, wicked words have been spoken by us! In what a multitude of instances have we gratified and indulged our corrupt appetites and passions! And how many our own omissions of duty and in duty! Who can understand his errors? Who can tell how often he offends? God knows how many, just how many, our transgressions are; none of them pass him unobserved; we know that they are to us innumerable; more than the hairs of our head; and we have reason to see what danger we have brought ourselves into, and what abundance of work we have made for repentance, by our manifold transgressions, by the numberless number of our sins of daily incursion.

(2.) That some of them are very heinous; they are our mighty sins; sins that are more exceedingly sinful in their own nature and by being committed presumptuously and with a high hand, sins against the light of nature, flagrant crimes, that are mighty to overpower your convictions and to pull down judgments upon you.

2. He specifies some of these mighty sins.

(1.) They corrupted the worship of God, and turned to idols; this is implied Am 5:5. They had sought to Bethel, where one of the golden calves was; they had frequented Gilgal, a place which they chose to set up idols in, because it had been made famous in the days of Joshua by God's wonderful appearances to and for his people. Beer-sheba likewise, a place that had been famous in the days of the patriarchs, was now another rendezvous of idols; as we find also, Am 8:14. And thither they passed, though it lay at a distance, in the land of Judah. Now, having thus shamefully gone a whoring from God, no doubt they should have felt themselves concerned to return to him.

(2.) They perverted justice among themselves (Am 5:7): "You turn judgment to wormwood, that is, you make your administrations of justice bitter and nauseous, and highly displeasing both to God and man." That fruit has become a weed, a weed in the garden; as nothing is more venerable, nothing more valuable, than justice duly administered, so nothing is more hurtful, nothing more abominable, than designedly doing wrong under colour and pretence of doing right. Corruptio optimi est pessima--The best, when corrupted, becomes the worst. "You leave off righteousness in the earth, as if those that do wrong were accountable to the God of heaven only, and not to the princes and judges of the earth." Thus it was as before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence.

(3.) They were very oppressive to the poor, and made them poorer; they trod upon the poor (Am 5:11), trampled upon them, hectored over them, made them their footstool, and were most imperious and barbarous to those that were most obsequious and submissive; they care not what shame and slavery they put those to who were poor and such as they could get nothing by. The judges aimed at nothing but to enrich themselves; and therefore they took from the poor burdens of wheat, took it by extortion, either by way of bribe or by usury. The poor had no other way to save themselves from being trodden upon, and trodden to dirt, by them, than by presenting to them horse-loads of that corn which they and their families should have had to subsist upon, and they forced them to do it.

They took from the poor debts of wheat, so some read it. It was legally due either for rent or for corn lent, but they exacted it with rigour from those who were disabled by the providence of God to pay it, as Ne 5:2,5. In demanding and recovering even a just debt we must take heed left we act either unjustly or uncharitably. This sin of oppression by are again charged with (Am 5:12):

They afflict the just, by turning the edge of the law and of the sword of justice against those that are the innocent and quiet in the land; they hated men because they were more righteous than themselves, and he that departed from evil thereby made himself

a prey to them. They take a bribe from the rich to patronize and protect them in oppressing the poor, so that he who has money in his hand is sure to have the judgment on his side, be his cause ever so bad. Thus they turn aside the poor in the gate, in the courts of justice, from their right. If the poor sue for their right, who cannot bribe them, or are so honest that they will not, though they have it ever so clear in view and ever so near, yet they are turned away from it by their unrighteous sentence and cannot come at it. And therefore the prudent will keep silence, Am 5:13. Men will reckon it their prudence, when they are wronged and injured, to be silent, and make no complaints to the magistrates, for it will be to no purpose; they shall not have justice done them.

(4.) They were malicious persecutors of God's faithful ministers and people, Am 5:10. Their hearts were so fully set in them to do evil that they could not bear to be reproved,

[1.] By the ministry of the word, by the reading and expounding of the law, and the messages which prophets delivered to them in the name of the Lord. They hate him that rebukes in the gate, in the gate of the Lord's house, or in their courts of justice, or in the places of concourse, where Wisdom is lifting up her voice, Pr 1:21. Reprovers in the gate are reprovers by office; these they hated, counting them their enemies because they told them the truth, as Ahab hated Micaiah. They not only despised them, but had an enmity to them, and sought to do them mischief. Those that hate reproof love ruin.

[2.] By the conversation of their honest neighbours. Though things were generally very bad, yet there were some among them that spoke uprightly that made conscience of what they said, and, as it was their praise, so it was the shame of those that spoke deceitfully, and condemned them, as Noah's faith condemned the unbelief of the old world, and for that reason they abhorred them; they were such inveterate enemies to the thing called honesty that they could not endure the sight of an honest man. All that have any sense of the common interest of mankind will love and value such as speak uprightly, for veracity is the bond of human society; to what a pitch of folly and madness then have those arrived who, having banished all notions of justice out of their

own hearts, would have them banished out of the world too, and so put mankind into a state of war, for the abhor him that speaks uprightly! And for this reason the prudent shall keep silence in that time, Am 5:13.

Prophets cannot, dare not, keep silence; the impulse they are under will not allow them to act on prudential considerations; they must cry aloud, and not spare. But as for other wise and good men they shall keep silence, and shall reckon it is their prudence to do so, because it is an evil time.

First, They shall think it dangerous to complain, and therefore shall keep silence; this was one way in which they afflicted the just, that by false suggestions and strained innuendos they made men offenders for a word (Isa 19:21); and therefore the prudent, who were wise as serpents, because they knew not how what they said might be misinterpreted and misrepresented, were so cautious as to say nothing, lest they should run themselves into a premunire, because it was an evil time.

Note, Through the iniquity of the times, as good men are hidden, so good men are silent, and it is their wisdom to be so; little said soon amended. But it is their comfort that they may speak freely to God when they know not to whom else they can speak freely.

Secondly, They shall think if fruitless to reprove. They see what wickedness is committed, and their spirits are stirred up, as Paul's at Athens; but they shall think it prudent not to bear an open testimony against it, because it is to no purpose. They are joined to their idols; let them alone. Let no man strive or rebuke another; for it is but casting pearls before swine. The cautious men will say to a bold reprover, as Erasmus to Luther, "Abi in cellam, et dic, Miserere mei, Domine--Away to thy cell, and cry, Have mercy on me, O Lord!"

Let grave lessons and counsels be kept for better men and better times. And there is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak, Ec 3:7. Evil times will not bear plain dealing, that is evil men will not; and the men the prophet here speaks of had reason to think themselves evil men indeed, when wise and good them

thought it in vain to speak to them and were afraid of having any thing to do with them.

6 Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, and *there be* none to quench *it* in Beth-el.

7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

8 *seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord *is* his name:

9 that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

They are told of their danger and what judgments they lay exposed to for their sins.

1 The places of their idolatry are in danger of being ruined in the first place, Am 5:5. Gilgal, the head-quarters of idolatry, shall go into captivity, not only its inhabitants, but its images, and Bethel, with its golden calf shall come to nought. The victorious enemy shall make nothing of it, so easily shall it be spoiled, and shall bring it to nothing, so effectually shall it be spoiled. Idols were always vanity, and things of nought, and so they shall prove when God appears to abolish them.

2 The body of the kingdom is in danger of being ruined with them, Am 5:6. There is danger lest, if you seek him not in time, he break out like a fire in the house of Joseph and devour it; for our God is a righteous Judge, is a consuming fire, and the men of Israel, as criminals, are stubble before him; woe to those that make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath. It follows, And there shall be none to quench it in Bethel. There their idols were, and their idolatrous priests; thither they brought their sacrifices, and there they offered up their prayers.

But God tells them that when the fire of his judgments should kindle upon them all the gods they served at Bethel should not be able to quench it, should not turn away the judgment, nor be any relief to them under it. Thus those that make an idol of the world will find it insufficient to protect them when God comes to reckon with them for their spiritual idolatry.

3. What they have got by oppression and extortion shall be taken from them (Am 5:11): "You have built houses of hewn stone, which you thought would be lasting; but you shall not dwell in them, for your enemies shall burn them down, or possess them for themselves, or take you into captivity. You have planted pleasant vineyards, have contrived how to make them every way agreeable, and have promised yourselves many a pleasant walk in them; but you shall be forced to walk off, and shall never drink wine of them."

The law had tenderly provided that if a man had built a house, or planted a vineyard, he should be at his liberty to return from the wars, De 20:5,6. But now the necessity would be so urgent that it would not be allowed; all must go to the battle, and many of those who had lately been building and planting should fall in battle, and never enjoy what they had been labouring for. What is not honestly got is not likely to be long enjoyed.

III. They are told their duty, and have great encouragement to set about it in good earnest, and good reason. The duties here prescribed to them are godliness and honesty, seriousness in their applications to God and justice in their dealings with men; and each of these is here pressed upon them with proper arguments to enforce the exhortation.

1. They are here exhorted to be sincere and devout in their addresses to God, Am 5:4. God says to the house of Israel, Seek you me, and with good reason, for should not a people seek unto their God? Isa 8:19. Whither else should they go but to their protector? Israel was a prince with God; let his descendants seek the Lord, as he did, and they shall be so too. Now, in order to their doing this, they must abandon their idolatries. God is not sought truly if he be not sought exclusively, for he will endure no rivals:

"Seek you the Lord, and seek not Bethel (Am 5:5), consult not your idol-oracles, nor ask at the mouth of the priests of Bethel; seek not to the golden calf there for protection, nor bring your prayers and sacrifices any longer thither, or to Gilgal, for you

forsake your own mercies if you observe those lying vanities. But seek the Lord (Am 5:6,8); enquire after him; enquire of him; seek to know his mind as your rule, to secure his favour as your felicity." To press this exhortation we are told to consider,

(1.) What we shall get by seeking God; it will be our life; we shall find him, and shall be happy in him. So he tells them himself (Am 5:4): Seek you me, and you shall live. Those that seek perishing gods shall perish with them (Am 5:5), but those that seek the living God shall live with him: "You shall be delivered from the killing judgments which you are threatened with; your nation shall live, shall recover from its present languishings; your souls shall live; you shall be sanctified and comforted, and made for ever blessed. You shall live."

(2.) What a God he is whom we are to seek, Am 5:8,9.

[1.] He is a God of almighty power himself. The idols were impotent things, could do neither good nor evil, and therefore it was folly either to fear or trust them; but the God of Israel does every thing, and can do any thing, and therefore we ought to seek him; he challenges our homage who has all power in his hand, and it is our interest to have him on our side. Divers proofs and instances are here given of God's power, as Creator, in the kingdom of nature, as both founding and governing that kingdom. Compare Am 4:13.

First, The stars are the work of his hands; those stars which the heathens worshipped (Am 5:26), the stars of your god, those stars are God's creatures and servants. He makes the seven stars and Orion, two very remarkable constellations, which Amos, a herdsman, while he kept his cattle by night, had particularly observed the motions of. He made them at the first, he still makes them to be what they are to this earth and either binds or looses the sweet influences of Peliades and Orion, the two constellations here mentioned. See Job 38:31,Job 9:9, to which passages Amos seems here to refer, putting them in mind of those ancient discoveries of the glory of God before he was called the God of Israel.

Secondly, The constant succession of day and night is under his direction, and is kept up by his power and providence. It is he that turns the night (which is dark as the shadow of death) into the morning by the rising of the sun, and by the setting of the sun makes the day dark with night; and the same power can, for humble penitents, easily turn affliction and sorrow into prosperity and joy, but can as easily turn the prosperity of presumptuous sinners into darkness, into utter darkness.

Thirdly, The rain rises and falls as he appoints. He calls for the waters of the sea; out of them vapours are drawn up by the heat of the sun, which gather into clouds, and are poured out upon the face of the earth, to water it and make it fruitful. This was the mercy that had been withholden from them of late (Am 4:7); and therefore to whom should they apply but to him who had power to give it? For all the vanities of the heathen could not give rain, nor could the heavens themselves give showers Jer 14:22.

It is God that has made these things; Jehovah is his name, the name by which the God of nature, the God of the whole earth, has made himself known to his people Israel and covenanted with them.

[2.] As he is God of almighty power himself, so he gives strength and power unto his people that seek him, and renews strength to those that had lost it, if they wait upon him for it; for (Am 5:9) he strengthens the spoiled against the strong to such a degree that the spoiled come against the fortress and make bold and brave attacks upon those that had spoiled them. This is an encouragement to the people to seek the Lord, that, if they do so, they shall find him above to retrieve their affairs, when they are brought to the lowest ebb; though they are the spoiled, and their enemies are the strong, if they can but engage God for them, they shall soon recruit so as the next time to be not only the aggressors, but the conquerors; they come against the fortress, to make reprisals and become masters of it.

2. They are here exhorted to be honest and just in their dealings with men, Am 5:14,15, where observe,

(1.) The duty required: Seek good, and not evil. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; re-establish it there, whence it has been banished, Am 5:7. Note, Things are not so bad but that they may be amended if the right course be taken; we must not despair but that grievances may be redressed and abuses rectified; justice may yet triumph where injustice tyrannizes.

In order to this, good must be loved and sought, evil must be hated and no longer sought. We must love good principles and adhere to them, love to do good and abound in doing it, love good people, and good converse, and good duties; and, whatever good we do, we must do it from a principle of love, do it of choice and with delight. Those who thus love good will seek it, will contrive to do all the good they can, enquire for opportunities of doing it, and endeavor to do it to the utmost of their power. They will also hate evil, will abhor the thought of doing an unjust thing, and abstain from all appearance of it. In vain do we pretend to seek God in our devotions if we do not seek good in our whole conversations.

(2.) The reasons annexed.

[1.] This is the sure way to be happy ourselves and to have the continual presence of God with us: "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live, may escape the punishment of the evil you have sought and loved (righteousness delivereth from death), that you may have the favour of God, which is your life, which is better than life itself, that you may have comfort in yourselves and may live to some good purpose. You shall live, for so the Lord God of hosts shall be with you and be your life."

Note, Those that keep in the way of duty have the presence of God with them, as the God of hosts, a God of almighty power. "He will be with you as you have spoken, that is, as you have gloried; you shall have that really which, while you went on in unrighteous ways, you only seemed to have and boasted of as if you had." Those that truly repent and reform enter into the enjoyment of that comfort which before they had only flattered themselves with the imagination of. Or, "As you have prayed

when you sought the Lord. Live up to your prayers, and you shall have what you pray for."

[2.] This is the likeliest way to make the nation happy: "If you seek and love that which is good, you may contribute to the saving of the land from ruin." It may be, the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph; though there is but a remnant left, yet, if God be gracious to that remnant, it will rise to a great nation again; and if some among them turn from sin, especially if judgment be established in the gate, though we cannot be certain, yet there is a great probability that public affairs will take a new and happy turn, and every thing will mend if men mend their lives. Temporary promises are made with an It may be; and our prayers must be made accordingly.

10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading *is* upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*.

13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it *is* an evil time.

14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing *shall be* in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways,

Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

Here is, I. A very terrible threatening of destruction approaching, Am 5:16,17. Since they would not take the right course to obtain the favour of God, God would take an effectual course to make them feel the weight of his displeasure. The threatening is introduced with more than ordinary solemnity, to strike an awe

upon them; it is not the word of the prophet only (if so, it might be made light of) but it is the Lord Jehovah, who has an infinite eternal being; it is the God of hosts, who has a boundless irresistible power, and it is Adonai--the Lord, who has an absolute incontestable sovereignty, and a universal dominion; it is he who says it, who can and will make his words good, and he has said,

1. That the land of Israel shall be put in mourning, true mourning, that all places shall be filled with lamentation for the calamities coming upon them. Look into the cities, and wailing shall be in all streets, in the great streets, in the by-streets. Look into the country, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! we are all undone! The lamentation shall be so great as not to be confined within doors, nor kept within the bounds of decency, but it shall be proclaimed in the streets and highways, and shall run wild.

The husbandman shall be called from the plough by the calamities of his country to the natural expressions of mourning; and, because those who will come short of the merits of the cause, such as are skilful of lamentation shall be called to artificial mourning, to put accents upon the lamentations of the real mourners with their Ahone, ahone. Even in all vineyards, where there used to be nothing but mirth and pleasure, there shall be general wailing, when a foreign force invades the country, lays all waste, and there is no making any head against it, no weapons left but prayers and tears.

2. That the land of Israel shall be brought to ruin, and the advances of that ruin are the occasion of all this wailing: I will pass through thee, as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, but then passed over the houses of the Israelites. God's judgments had often passed by them, but now they shall pass through them, shall run them through.

17 And in all vineyards *shall be* wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord.

18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord ! to what end *is* it for you ? the day of the Lord *is* darkness, and not light.

A just and severe reproof to those who made light of these threatenings, and impudently bade defiance to the justice of God and his judgments, Am 5:18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord, that really wish for times of war and confusion, as some do who have restless spirits, and long for changes, or who choose to fish in troubled waters, hoping to raise their families, as some had done, upon the ruins of their country; but the prophet tells them that this should be so great a desolation that nobody could get by it.

Or it is spoken to those who, in their wailings and lamentations for the calamities they were in, wished they might die, and be delivered out of their misery, as Job did, with passion. The prophet shows them the folly of this. Do they know what death is to those who are unprepared for it, and how much more terrible it will be than any thing that can befal them in this life? Or, rather, it is spoken to those who speak jestingly of that day of the Lord which the prophet spoke so seriously of; they desired it, that is, they challenged it; they said, Let him do his worst; let him make speed, and hasten his work, Isa 5:19. Where is the promise of his coming? 2Pe 3:4. It intimates,

1. That they do not believe it. They say that they wish it would come because they do not believe it will ever come; nor will they believe it unless they see it.

2. That they do not fear it; though they may have some belief of it, yet they had so little consideration of it, and their mind is so intent upon other things, that they are under no apprehension at all of peril from it; instead of having the conscience to dread it, they have the curiosity to desire it. In answer to this,

(1.) He shows the folly of those who impudently wished for any of God's judgments, and made a jest of any of the terrors of the Lord: "To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come? You will find it both certain and sad; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it does come. The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light, Am 5:18. Shall it not be so? Am 5:20. Do not your own consciences tell

you that it will be so, that it will be very dark, and no brightness in it?" Note, The day of the Lord will be a dark, dismal, gloomy day to all impenitent sinners; the day of judgment will be so; and sometimes the day of their present trouble. And, when God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light.

(2.) He shows the folly of those who impatiently wished for a change of God's judgment, in hopes that the next would be better and more tolerable. They desire the day of the Lord, in hopes to better themselves (though their hearts and lives be not amended), or, at least, to know the worst. But the prophet tells them that they know not what they ask, Am 5:19. It is as if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, a beast of prey more cruel and ravenous than a lion, or as if a man, to escape all dangers abroad, went into the house for security, and leaned his hand on the wall to rest himself, and there a serpent bit him.

Note, Those who are not reformed by the judgments of God will be pursued by them; and, if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them; fear and the pit and snare surround them, Isa 24:17,18. It is madness therefore to defy the day of the Lord.

19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20 *Shall* not the day of the Lord *be* darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

21 I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

The scope of these verses is to show how little God valued their shows of devotion, nay, how much he detested them, while they went on in their sins. Observe,

I. How unpleasing, nay, how displeasing, their hypocritical services were to God. They had their feast-days at Bethel, in imitation of those at Jerusalem, in which they pretended to rejoice before God. They had their solemn assemblies for religious worship, in which they put on the gravity of those who come before God as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit. They offered to God burnt-offerings, to the honour of God, together with the meat-offerings which by the law were to be offered with them; they offered the peace-offerings, to

implore the favour of God, and they offered them of the fat beasts that they had, Am 5:21,22. In imitation likewise of the temple-music, they had the noise of their songs and the melody of their viols (Am 5:23), vocal and instrumental music, with which they praised God. With these services they hoped to make God amends for the sins they had committed, and to obtain leave to go on in sin; and therefore they were so far from being acceptable to God that they were abominable.

He hated, he despised, their feast-days, not only despised them as no valuable services done to him, but hated them as an affront and provocation to him, as we hate to see men dissemble with us, pretend a respect for us when really they have none. Nothing more hateful, more despicable, than hypocrisy. He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, it shall be counted a curse, when it appears that his heart is not with him. God will not smell in their solemn assemblies, for there is nothing in them that is grateful to him, but a great deal that is offensive. Their sacrifices are not to him of a sweet smelling savour, as Noah's was, Ge 8:21. He will not accept them; he will not regard them, will not take any notice of them; he will not hear the melody of their viols; for, when sin is a jar in the harmony, it grates in his ears: "Take it away," says God, "I cannot bear it." Now this intimates,

1. That sacrifice itself is of small account with God in comparison with moral duties; to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt offering and sacrifice.

2. That the sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him, Pr 15:8. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found when, if any place in hell be hotter than another, that will be the hypocrite's portion.

22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not
accept *them;* neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.
23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the
melody of thy viols.
24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty
stream.

What it was that he required in order to the acceptableness of their sacrifices and without which no sacrifice would be

acceptable (Am 5:24): Let judgment run down as waters, among you, and righteousness as a mighty stream, that is

1. "Let there be a general reformation of manners among you; let religion (God's judgment) and righteousness have their due influence upon you; let your land be watered with it, and let it bear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness; let it run wide as overflowing waters, and yet run strong as might stream."

2. "In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely as waters do, in the natural course; let it be pure as running waters, not muddied with corruption or whatever may pervert justice; let it run like a might stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded, by the fear of man; let all have free access to it as a common stream, and have benefit by it as trees planted by the rivers of waters." The great thing laid to Israel's charge was turning judgment into wormwood (Am 5:7); in that matter therefore they must reform, Zec 7:9. This was what God desired more than sacrifices, Ho 6:6,1Sa 15:22.

25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

What little stress God had laid upon the law of sacrifices, though it was his own law, in comparison with the moral precepts (Am 5:25): "Did you offer unto me sacrifices in the wilderness forty years? No, you did not." For the greatest part of that time sacrifice was very much neglected, because of the unsettledness of their state; after the second year, the passover was not kept till they came into Canaan, and other institutions were in like manner intermitted; and yet, because God will have mercy and not sacrifice, he never imputed the omission to them as their fault, but continued his care of them and kindness to them: it was not that, but their murmuring and unbelief, for which God was displeased with them. He that so owned his people, though they did not sacrifice, when in other things they kept close to him, will certainly disown them, though they do sacrifice, if in other things they depart from him.

But, though ritual sacrifices may thus be dispensed with, spiritual sacrifices will not; even justice and honesty will not excuse for the want of prayer and praise, a broken heart and the love of God. Stephen quotes this passage (Ac 7:42), to show the Jews that they ought not to think it strange that ceremonial law was repealed when from the beginning it was comparatively made light of. Compare Jer 7:22,23.

26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch [*or,* borne Siccuth your king] and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

What little reason they had to expect that their sacrifices should be acceptable to God, when they and their fathers had been all along addicted to the worship of other gods. So some take Am 5:25, "Did you offer to me sacrifices, that is, to me only? No, and therefore not at all to me acceptably;" for the law of worshipping the Lord our God is, Him only we must serve. "But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch (Am 5:26), little shrines that you made to carry about with you, pocket-idols for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have had the images of your Moloch--your king" (probably representing the sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies), "and Chiun, or Remphan" (as Stephen calls it, Ac 7:43, after the LXX.), which it is supposed, represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets.

The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry. They made to themselves the star of their God, some particular star which they took to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to (De 4:19); and those that retain an affection for false gods cannot expect the favour of the true God.

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name *is* The God of hosts.

What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry (Am 5:27): I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus. They were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, since

they were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus.

Their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for, if less judgments do not work that for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or the captivity of Israel under Shalmaneser was far beyond that of Damascus under Tiglath-pileser, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold Am 1:5. For, as the sins of God's professing people are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected that their punishments will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus and that of Samaria carried off together by the king of Assyria, Isa 8:4. Stephen reads it, I will carry you away beyond Babylon (Ac 7:43), further than Judah shall be carried, so far further as not to return. And, to make this sentence appear both the more certain and the more dreadful, he that passes it calls himself the Lord, whose name is, The God of hosts, and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having hosts at command.

Amos-6

The Destruction of Israel

1 Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, *which are* named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: *be they* better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they sound very strangely, and contrary to the sentiments of a vain world: Woe to those that are at ease! We are ready to say, Happy are those that are at ease, that neither feel any trouble nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart; and wise we think are those that do so, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense and care not how the world goes.

Those are looked upon as doing well for themselves that do well for their bodies and make much of them; but against them this woe is denounced, and we are here told what their ease is, and what the woe is.

I. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would secure them from the judgments threatened and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man.

(1.) Those that dwelt in Zion thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they might there be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art (we read of Zion's strong-holds and her bulwarks), and because it was a royal city, where were set the thrones of the house of David (it was the head-city of Judah, and therefore truly great), and especially because it was the holy city, where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel; those that dwelt there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them and would shelter them from his judgments. The temple of the Lord are these, Jer 7:4. They are haughty because of the holy mountain, Zep 3:11. Note, Many are puffed up with pride, and rocked asleep in carnal security, by their church-privileges, and the place they have in Zion.

(2.) Those that dwelt in the mountain of Samaria, though it was not a holy hill, like that of Zion, yet they trusted in it, because it was the metropolis of a potent kingdom, and perhaps, in imitation of Jerusalem, was the head-quarters of its religion; and by lapse of time the hill of Shemer became with them in as good repute as the hill of Zion ever was. They hoped for salvation from these hills and mountains.

(3.) Both these two kingdoms valued themselves upon their relation to Israel, that prince with God, which they looked upon as masking them the chief of the nations, more ancient and honourable than any of them; the first-fruits of the nations (so

the word is), dedicated to God and sanctifying the whole harvest. The house of Israel came to them, that is, was divided into those kingdoms, of which Zion and Samaria were the mother cities.

Those that were at ease were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were chief of the nations, chief of those two kingdoms, and to whom, having their residence in Zion and Samaria, the whole house of Israel applied for judgment. Note, It is hard to be great and not to be proud. Great nations and great men are apt to overvalue themselves, and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little overtop them.

But, for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of those cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion or Samaria was, and yet were destroyed, Am 6:2. "Go to Calneh (which was an ancient city built by Nimrod, Ge 10:10), and see what has become of that, it is now in ruins; so is Hamath the great, one of the chief cities of Syria. Sennacherib boasts of destroying the gods of Hamath. Gath was likewise made desolate by Hazael, and not long ago, 2Ki 12:17. Now were they better than these kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Yes, they were, and their border greater than your border, so that they had more reason than you to be confident of their own safety; yet you see what has become of them, and dare you be secure? Art thou better than populous No?" Na 3:8.

Note, The examples of others' ruin forbid us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them (Am 6:3):

"You put far away the evil day, the day of reckoning, as a thing that shall never come, or you look upon it as at such a distance that it makes no impression at all upon you; you put it far away, and think you can still put it yet further, and adjourn it de die in diem--from day to day, and therefore you cause the seat of violence to draw near; you venture upon all acts of injustice and

oppression, and have fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frames mischief by a law, Ps 94:20. You cause that to come near, as if that would be your protection from these judgments which really ripens you for them." Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgment to be far off from them; but those deceive themselves who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, Am 6:4-6. These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites. Their dignities (in consideration of which they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification), they thought, would justify them in their sensuality; the gains of their oppression and violence, they thought, would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that they might give them no disturbance in it. That which they are here charged with is not in itself sinful (these things might be soberly and moderately used), but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites; and though they were men in office, that had business to mind, they gave themselves up to their pleasures, spent their time in them, and threw away their thoughts, and cares, and estates upon them.

They were in these enjoyments as in their element. Their hearts were upon them; they exceeded all bounds in them, and this at a time when God in his providence was calling them to weeping and mourning, Isa 22:12,13. When they were under guilt and wrath, and the judgments of God were ready to break in upon them, they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant (Isa 56:12), thus walking contrary to God and setting his justice at defiance.

(1.) They were extravagant in their furniture. Nothing would serve them but beds of ivory to sleep upon, or to sit on at their meat, when sackcloth and ashes would have become them better.

(2.) They were lazy, and humoured themselves in the love of ease. They did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business; they were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing; they abound in superfluities (so the margin reads it), when many of their poor brethren wanted necessaries.

(3.) They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best and abundance of it: They ate the lambs out of the flock (lambs by wholesale) and the calves out of the midst of the stall, the fattest they could lay their hand on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor.

(4.) They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts with music and singing: They chant to the sound of the viol, sing and play in concert, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of music, striving herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits on work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never show their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent instruments of music, like David, entertain themselves with that which formerly used to be the entertainment of kings only.

Or it intimates their profaneness in their mirth; they mimicked the temple-music, and made a jest of that, because, it may be, it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride in bantering it as the Babylonians did when they urged the captives to sing to them the songs of Zion; such was Belshazzar's profaneness when he drank wine in temple-bowls, and such is theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm-tunes, on purpose to ridicule a divine institution.

(5.) They drank to excess, and never thought they could pour down enough: They drank wink in bowls, not in glasses, or cups (as Jer 35:5); they hate to be stinted, and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels that they can steal a draught out of.

(6.) They affected the strongest perfumes: They anoint themselves with the chief ointments, to please the smell, and to make them more in love with their own bodies, and to guard against those presages of putrefaction which they carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointments would serve their turn; they must have the chief, such as were far-fetched and dear-bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking and going to decay: They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; the church of God, including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (which are called Joseph, Ps 80:1), was in distress, invaded, insulted, and broken in upon. As to their own kingdom which they were entrusted with the government of, the affairs of which they were directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators of, great breaches were made upon it, upon its peace and welfare; and they were so besotted that they were not aware of them, so indulgent of their pleasures that they never laid them to heart, and had such an aversion to the thing called business that they were in no care or concern to get them repaired.

It is all one to them whether the nation sink or swim, so that they can but lie at ease and live in pleasure. Particular persons that belonged to Joseph were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their case of the wrongs and hardships they sustained and the troubles they were in, nor took any care to relieve them, and right them, contrary to the temper of holy Job, who, when he was in prosperity, wept with him that was in misery and his soul was grieved for the poor, Job 30:25.

Some think that, in calling the afflicted church Joseph, there is an allusion to the story of Pharaoh's butler, who, when he preferred to give the cup again into his master's hand, remembered not Joseph, but forgot him, Ge 40:21,23. Thus they drank wine in bowls, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Note, Those are commonly careless of the troubles of others who are set upon their own pleasures; and it is a great offence to God when his church is in affliction and we are not grieved for it, nor lay it to heart.

II. Here is the doom passed upon them (Am 6:7): Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the banquet of those that stretched themselves upon their couches shall be removed. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and they from it, because they made it the food and fuel of their lusts.

1. Those who lived in luxury shall lose even their liberty; and by being brought into servitude shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion.

2. Those who trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence; they shall go captive.

3. Those who placed their happiness in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures; their banquet shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard.

4. Those who stretched themselves shall be made to contract themselves, and to come into a less compass.

5. Those who put the evil day far from them shall find it nearer to them than it is to others; those shall go captive with the first who flattered themselves with hopes that if trouble did come they should be the last who should be seized by it. Those are ripening apace for trouble themselves who lay not to heart the trouble of others and of the church of God. Those who give themselves to mirth, when God calls them to mourning, will find it a sin that shall not go unpunished, Isa 22:14.

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

4 that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

5 that chant to the sound of the viol, *and* invent to themselves instruments of music, like David;

6 that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.
8 The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

In the former part of the chapter we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures, as if they could never be made merry enough; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they could never be made miserable enough. And observe,

I. How strongly this burden is bound on, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by the Lord the God of hosts, by his mighty, his almighty, hand, which none can resist; it is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation: The Lord God has sworn, and he will not repent, and, since he could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself. How dreadful, how miserable, is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin, God himself has sworn, who can execute his purpose and cannot alter it!

II. How heavily this burden lies! Let us see the particulars. 1. God will abhor and abandon them, and that implies misery enough, all misery: I abhor the excellency of Jacob, all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they call and count themselves the chief of nations. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar, and priesthood, these were, more than any thing, the excellencies of Jacob; but, when these were profaned and polluted by sin, God abhorred them; he hated and despised them, Am 5:21.

Note, God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if he abhors their temple, for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he hates their palaces, for the injustices and oppression he finds there. Note, that creature which we take such a complacency and put such a confidence in as to make it a rival with God is thereby made

abominable to him. He hates the palaces of sinners, for the sake of wickedness of those that dwell therein. Pr 3:33, The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.

And, if God abhor them, immediately it follows, He will deliver up the city with all that is therein, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy, that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth.

Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God are undone to all intents and purposes.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them (Am 6:9): If there remain ten men in one house, that have escaped the sword of the enemy, yet they shall be met with another way; they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope that at least the one-half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, one taken and the other left; but here not one of ten shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality is (Am 6:10) that the nearest relations of the dead shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies, and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it; that is all that the next of kin, to whom the right of redemption belongs, can do for them, and with great reluctance will they do that.

It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the uncle that survives is, ordinarily, the senior relation. "When the uncle comes with the sexton (or him that burns), to bring out the bones out of the house, he shall say to him that he sees next about the house, 'Is there any yet with thee? Are there any left alive?' And he shall say, 'No, this is the last; now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains.'"

But that which makes the judgment the more grievous is that their hearts seem to be hardened under it. "When he that is found by the sides of the house begin to enter into discourse with those that are carrying off the dead, they shall say, 'Hold thy tongue; do not stand preaching to us about the hand of

Providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord; God is so angry with us that there is no speaking to him; he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss that we dare not so much as make mention of his name." '

Thus the foolishness of men perverts their way, and brings them into distress, and then their heart frets against the Lord. Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it. Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention of the name of Jehovah, as by the law of Moses it was forbidden to make mention of the names of the heathen-gods: "We may not do it without incurring the penalty."

Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened indeed that will not be brought to make mention of God's name, and to worship him, when the hand of God has gone out against them, and when, as here, sickness and death are in their families. Thus those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed, Am 6:11. God will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts; they shall both be cracked so as to lose their beauty and strength, and to be hastening towards a fall. The princes' palaces are not above the rebuke of divine justice, nor the poor men's cottages beneath it; neither shall escape. When sin has marked them for ruin God will find ways to bring it about. It is by order from him that breaches are made.

III. How justly they are thus burdened. If we understand the matter aright, we shall say, The Lord is righteous.

1 The methods used for their reformation had been all fruitless and ineffectual (Am 6:12): Shall horses run upon the rock, to hurl or harrow the ground there? Or will one plough there with oxen? No, for there will be no profit to countervail the pains. God has sent them his prophets, to break up their fallow-ground; but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor

work upon them, and therefore they shall not attempt it any more. They will not be reclaimed, and therefore shall not be reproved, but quite abandoned.

Note, Those who will not be cultivated as fields and vineyards shall be rejected as barren rocks and deserts, Heb 6:7,8.

2. They had abused their power to the wrong and oppression of many, whose injured cause the sovereign Judge would not only right, but revenge: You have turned judgment into gall, which is nauseous, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which is noxious; it would make one sick to see how those that were entrusted with the administration of public justice bore down equity with that power which they out to have defended and supported it, and so turned its own artillery against itself. Note, When our services of God are soured with sin his providences will justly be embittered to us.

3. They had set the judgments of God at defiance, and, confiding in their own strength, thought themselves a match for Omnipotence, Am 6:13. They rejoiced in a thing of nought, pleased themselves with a fancy that no evil should befal them, though they had no ground at all for that confidence, nothing to trust to that would bear any weight. They said, "Have we not taken to us horns; have we not arrived to great dignity and dominion, have we not pushed down our enemies and pushed on our victories, and this by our own strength, our own skill and courage, our own wealth and military force? Who then need we be afraid of? Who then need we make court to? Not God himself."

Note, Prosperity and success commonly make men secure and haughty; and those that have done much think they can do any thing, any thing without God, nay, any thing against him. But those who trust in their own strength rejoice in a thing of nought, and so they will find. Probably they did not say this with their lips, totidem verbis--in so many words, but it was the language of their hearts and of their actions, both which God understands.

IV. How easily and effectually this burden shall be brought upon them, Am 6:14. He that brings it upon them is the Lord the God of hosts, who both may do and can do what he pleases, who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with; though they are the house of Israel, yet he will raise up against them a nation which they feared not, but had many a time hoped in, even the Assyrians, and this nation shall afflict them, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from the entering in of Hamath, in the north, to the river of the wilderness, the river of Egypt, Sihor or Nile, in the south. The whole nation has shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the calamity. Note, When men are in any way instruments of affliction to us we must see God raising them up against us, for they are in his hand--the rod, the sword, in his hand. The Lord has bidden Shimei curse David.

9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

10 And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that *is* by the sides of the house, *Is there* yet *any* with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord.

11 For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will *one* plow *there* with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

13 ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness.

Amos-7

Three Visions of Destruction

1 Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, *it was* the latter growth after the king's mowings.

We here see that God bears long, but that he will not bear always, with a provoking people, both these God here showed the prophet: Thus hath the Lord God showed me, Am 7:1,4,7.

He showed him what was present, foreshowed him what was to come, gave him the knowledge both of what he did and of what he designed; for the Lord God reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets, Am 3:7.

I. We have here two instances of God's sparing mercy, remembered in the midst of judgment, the narratives of which are so much like one another that they will be best considered together, and very considerable they are.

1. God is here coming forth against this sinful nation, first by one judgment and then by another.

(1.) He begins with the judgment of famine. The prophet saw this in vision. He saw God forming grasshoppers, or locusts, and bringing them up upon the land, to eat up the fruits of it, and so to strip it of its beauty and starve its inhabitants, Am 7:1. God formed these grasshoppers, not only as they were his creatures (and much of the wisdom and power of God appears in the formation of minute animals, as much in the structure of an ant as of an elephant), but as they were instruments of his wrath. God is said to frame evil against a sinful people, Jer 18:11.

These grasshoppers were framed on purpose to eat up the grass of the land; and vast numbers of them were prepared

accordingly. They were sent in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth, after the king's mowings. See here how the judgment was mitigated by the mercy that went before it. God could have sent these insects to eat up the grass at the beginning of the first growth, in the spring, when the grass was most needed, was most plentiful, and was the best in its kind; but God suffered that to grow, and suffered them to gather it in; the king's mowings were safely housed, for the king himself is served from the field (Ec 5:9), and could as ill be without his mowings as without any other branch of his revenues. Uzziah, who was now king of Judah, loved husbandry, 2Ch 26:10.

But the grasshoppers were commissioned to eat up only the latter growth (the edgrew we call it in the country), the after-grass, which is of little value in comparison with the former. The mercies which God give us, and continues to us, are more numerous and more valuable than those he removes from us, which is a good reason why we should be thankful and not complain. The remembrance of the mercies of the former growth should make us submissive to the will of God when we meet with disappointments in the latter growth. The prophet, in vision, saw this judgment prevailing far.

These grasshoppers ate up the grass of the land, which should have been for the cattle, which the owners must of course suffer by. Some understand this figuratively of a wasting destroying army brought upon them. In the days of Jeroboam the kingdom of Israel began to recover itself from the desolations it had been under in the former reigns (2Ki 14:25); the latter growth shot up, after the mowings of the kings of Syria, which we read of 2Ki 13:3.

And then God commissioned the king of Assyria with an army of caterpillars to come upon them and lay them waste, that nation spoken of Am 6:14, which afflicted them from the entering of Hamath to the river of the wilderness, which seems to refer to 2Ki 14:25, where Jeroboam is said to have restored their coast from the entering of Hamath to the sea of the plain. God can bring all to ruin when we think all is in some good measure repaired.

(2.) He proceeds to the judgment of fire, to show that he has many arrows in his quiver, many ways of humbling a sinful nation (Am 7:4): The Lord God called to contend by fire. He contended, for God's judgment upon a people are his controversies with them; in them he prosecutes his action against them; and his controversies are neither causeless nor groundless. He called to contend; he did by his prophets give them notice of his controversy, and drew up a declaration, setting forth the meaning of it.

Or he called for his angels, or other ministers of his justice, that were to be employed in it. A fire was kindled among them, by which perhaps is meant a great drought (the heat of the sun, which should have warmed the earth, scorched it, and burnt up the roots of the grass which the locusts had eaten the spires of), or a raging fever, which was as a fire in their bones, which devoured and ate up multitudes, or lightning, fire from heaven, which consumed their houses, as Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed (Am 4:11), or it was the burning of their cities, either by accident or by the hand of the enemy, for fire and sword used to go together; thus were the towns wasted, as the country was by the grasshoppers. This fire, which God called for, did terrible execution; it devoured the great deep, as the fire that fell from heaven on Elijah's altar licked up the water that was in the trench.

Though the water designed for the stopping and quenching of this fire was as the water of the great deep, yet it devoured it; for who, or what, can stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God! It did eat up a part, a great part, of the cities where it was sent; or it was as the fire at Taberah, which consumed the outermost parts of the camp (Nu 11:1); when some were overthrown others were as brands plucked out of the fire. All deserved to be devoured, but it ate up only a part, for God does not stir up all his wrath.

2 The prophet goes forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, and by prayer seeks to turn away his wrath, Am 7:2. When he saw, in vision, what dreadful work these caterpillars

made, that they had eaten up in a manner all the grass of the land (he foresaw they would do so, if suffered to go on), then he said, O Lord God! forgive, I beseech thee (Am 7:2); cease, I beseech thee, Am 7:5.

He that foretold the judgment in his preaching to the people, yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee. It was the business of prophets to pray for those to whom they prophesied, and so to make it appear that though they denounced they did not desire the woeful day. Therefore, God showed his prophets the evils coming, that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap, to turn away God's wrath, as Moses, that great prophet, often did. Now observe here,

(1.) The prophet's prayer: O Lord God!

[1.] Forgive, I beseech thee, and take away the sin, Am 7:2. He sees sin at the bottom of the trouble, and therefore concludes that the pardon of sin must be at the bottom of deliverance, and prays for that in the first place. Note, Whatever calamity we are under, personal or public, the forgiveness of sin is that which we should be most earnest with God for.

[2.] Cease, I beseech thee, and take away the judgment; cease the fire, cease the controversy; cause they anger towards us to cease. This follows upon the forgiveness of sin. Take away the cause and effect will cease.

Note, Those whom God contends with will soon find what need they have to cry for a cessation of arms; and there are hopes that though God has begun, and proceeded far, in his controversy, yet it may be obtained.

(2.) The prophet's plea to enforce this prayer: By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? Am 7:2. And it is repeated (Am 7:5) and yet no vain repetition. Christ, in his agony, prayed earnestly, saying the same words, again and again.

[1.] It is Jacob that he is interceding for, the professing people of God, called by his name, calling on his name, the seed of Jacob, his chosen, and in covenant with him. It it Jacob's case that is in this prayer spread before the God of Jacob.

[2.] Jacob is small, very small already, weakened and brought low by former judgments; and therefore, it these come, he will be quite ruined and brought to nothing. The people are few; the dust of Jacob, which was once innumerable, is now soon counted. Those few are feeble (it is the worm Jacob, Isa 41:14); they are unable to help themselves or one another. Sin will soon make a great people small, will diminish the numerous, impoverish the plenteous, and weaken the courageous.

[3.] By whom shall he arise? He has fallen, and cannot help himself up, and he has no friend to help him, none to raise him, unless the hand of God do it; what will become of him, then, if the hand that should raise him to stretched out against him? Note, When the state of God's church is very low and very helpless it is proper to be recommended by our prayers to God's pity.

3. God graciously lets fall his controversy, in answer to the prophet's prayer, once and again (Am 7:3): The Lord repented for this. He did not change his mind, for he is one mind and who can turn him? But he changed is way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy and not in wrath. He said, It shall not be. And again (Am 7:6), This also shall not be. The caterpillars were countermanded, were remanded; a stop was put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual fervent prayer, and how much it avails, what great things it prevails for. A stop has many a time been put to a judgment by making supplication to the Judge. This was not the first time that Israel's life was begged, and so saved. See what a blessing praying people, praying prophets, are to a land, and therefore how highly they ought to be valued.

Ruin would many a time have broken in if they had not stood in the breach, and made good the pass. See how ready, how

swift, God is to show mercy, how he waits to be gracious. Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it and looks about to see if there be any that will intercede for it, Isa 59:16. Nor are former reprieves objected against further instances of mercy, but are rather encouragements to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be, any more than that. It is the glory of God that he multiplies to pardon, that he spares, and forgives, to more than seventy times seven times.

2 And it came to pass, *that* when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small.

3 The Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord.

4 Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me: and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

5 Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small.

6 The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.

7 Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall *made* by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

We have here the rejection of those at last who had been often reprieved and yet never reclaimed, reduced to straits and yet never reduced to their God and their duty. This is represented to the prophet by a vision (Am 7:7,8) and an express prediction of utter ruin, Am 7:9.

1 The vision is of a plumb-line, a line with a plummet at the end of it, such as masons and bricklayers use to run up a wall by, that they may work it straight and true, and by rule.

(1.) Israel was a wall, a strong wall, which God himself had reared, as a bulwark, or wall of defence, to his sanctuary, which he set up among them. The Jewish church says of herself (So 8:10), I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers. This wall was made by a plumb-line, very exact and firm. So happy was its constitution, so well compacted, and every thing so well ordered according to the model; it had long stood fast as a wall of brass. But,

(2.) God now stands upon this wall, not to hold it up, but to tread it down, or, rather, to consider what he should do with it. He stands upon it with a plumb-line in his hand, to take measure of it, that it may appear to be a bowing, bulging wall. Recti est index sui et oblique--This plumb-line would discover where it was crooked. Thus God would bring the people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness, and show wherein they erred; and he would likewise bring his judgments upon them according to equity, would set a plumb-line in the midst of them, to mark how far their wall must be pulled down, as David measured the Moabites with a line (2Sa 8:2) to put them to death. And, when God is coming to the ruin of a people, he is said to lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet; for when he punishes it is with exactness. It is now determined:

"I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be spared and reprieved as they have been; their punishment shall not be turned away," Am 1:3. Note, God's patience, which has long been sinned against, will at length be sinned away; and the time will come when those that have been spared often shall be no longer spared. My spirit shall not always strive. After frequent reprieves, yet a day of execution will come.

2 The prediction is of utter ruin, Am 7:9.

(1.) The body of the people shall be destroyed, with all those things that were their ornament and defence. They are here called Isaac as well as Israel, the house of Isaac (Am 7:16), some think in allusion to the signification of Isaac's name; it is laughter; they shall become a jest among all their neighbours; their neighbours shall laugh at them. The desolation shall fasten upon their high places and their sanctuaries, either their castles or their temples, both built on high places. Their castles they thought safe, and their temples sacred as sanctuaries. These shall be laid waste, to punish them for their idolatry and to make them ashamed of their carnal confidences, which were the two things for which God had a controversy with them. When these

were made desolate they might read their sin and folly in their punishment.

(2.) The royal family shall sink first, as an earnest of the ruin of the whole kingdom: I will rise against the house of Jeroboam, Jeroboam the second, who was now king of the ten tribes; his family was extirpated in his son Zecharias, who was slain with the sword before the people, by Shallum who conspired against him, 2Ki 15:10. How unrighteous soever the instruments were, God was righteous, and in them God rose up against that idolatrous family. Even king's houses will be no shelter against the sword of God's wrath.

8 And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

9 and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

Amos and Amaziah

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

One would have expected,

1. That what we met with in the former part of the chapter would awaken the people to repentance, when they saw that they were reprieved in order that they might have space to repent and that they could not obtain a pardon unless the did repent.

2. That it would endear the prophet Amos to them, who had not only shown his good-will to them in praying against the judgments that invaded them, but had prevailed to turn away those judgments, which, if they had had any sense of gratitude, would have gained him an interest in their affections.

But it fell out quite contrary; they continue impenitent, and the next news we hear of Amos is that he is persecuted. Note, As it

is the praise of great saints that they pray for those that are enemies to them, so it is the shame of many great sinners that they are enemies to those who pray for them, Ps 35:13,109:4. We have here,

I The malicious information brought to the king against the prophet Amos, Am 7:10,11. The informer was Amaziah the priest of Bethel, the chief of the priests that ministered to the golden calf there, the president of Bethel (so some read it), that had the principal hand in civil affairs there. He complained against Amos, not only because he prophesied without license from him, but because he prophesied against his altars, which would soon be deserted and demolished if Amos's preaching could but gain credit. Thus the shrine-makers at Ephesus hated Paul, because his preaching tended to spoil their trade. Note, Great pretenders to sanctity are commonly the worst enemies to those who are really sanctified. Priests have been the most bitter persecutors. Amaziah brings an information to Jeroboam against Amos. Observe,

1 The crime he is charged with is no less than treason: "Amos has conspired against thee, to depose and murder thee; he aims at succeeding thee, and therefore is taking the most effectual way to weaken thee. He sows the seeds of sedition in the hearts of the good subjects of the king, and makes them disaffected to him and his government, that he may draw them by degrees from their allegiance; upon this account the land is not able to bear his words." It is slyly insinuated to the king that the country was exasperated against him, and it is given in as their sense that his preaching was intolerable, and such as nobody could be reconciled to, such as the times would by no means bear, that is, the men of the times would not. Both the impudence of his supposed treason, and the bad influence it would have upon the country, are intimated in that part of the charge, that he conspired against the king in the midst of the house of Israel.

Note, It is no new thing for the accusers of the brethren to misrepresent them as enemies to the king and kingdom, as traitors to their prince and troublers of the land, when really they are the best friends to both. And it is common for designing men

to assert that as the sense of the country which is far from being so. And yet here, I doubt, it was too true, that the people could not bear plain dealing any more than the priests.

2 The words laid in the indictment for the support of this charge (Am 7:11): Amos says (and they have witnesses ready to prove it) Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive; and hence they infer that he is an enemy to his king and country, and not to be tolerated. See the malice of Amaziah; he does not tell the king how Amos had interceded for Israel, and by his intercession had turned away first one judgment and then another, and did not let fall his intercession till he saw the decree had gone forth; he does not tell him that these threatenings were conditional, and that he had often assured them that if they would repent and reform the ruin should be prevented.

Nay, it was not true that he said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, nor did he so die (2Ki 14:28), but that God would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword, Am 7:9. God's prophets and ministers have often had occasion to make David's complaint (Ps 56:5), Every day they wrest my words. But shall it be made the watchman's crime, when he sees the sword coming, to give warning to the people, that they may get themselves secured? or the physician's crime to tell his patient of the danger of his disease, that he may use means for the cure of it? What enemies are foolish men to themselves, to their own peace, to their best friends! It does not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of this information; perhaps he reverenced a prophet, and stood more in awe of the divine authority than Amaziah his priest did.

11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

The method he used to persuade Amos to withdraw and quit the country (Am 7:12,13); when he could not gain his point with the king to have Amos imprisoned, banished, or put to death, or at least to have him frightened into silence or flight, he tried what he could do by fair means to get rid of him; he insinuated himself into his acquaintance, and with all the arts of wheedling endeavored to persuade him to go and prophesy in the land of

Judah, and not at Bethel. He owns him to be a seer, and does not pretend to enjoin him silence, but suggests to him,

1. That Bethel was not a proper place for him to exercise his ministry in, for it was the king's chapel, or sanctuary, where he had his idols and their altars and priests; and it was the king's court, or the house of the kingdom, where the royal family resided and where were set the thrones of judgment; and therefore prophesy not any more here. And why not?

(1.) Because Amos is too plain and blunt a preacher for the court and the king's chapel. Those that wear silk and fine clothing, and speak silken soft words, are fit for king's palaces.

(2.) Because the worship that is in the king's chapel will be a continual vexation and trouble to Amos; let him therefore get far enough from it, and what the eye sees not the heart grieves not for.

(3.) Because it was not fit that the king and his house should be affronted in their own court and chapel by the reproofs and threatenings which Amos was continually teazing them with in the name of the Lord; as if it were the prerogative of the prince, and the privilege of the peers, when they are running headlong upon a precipice, not to be told of their danger.

(4.) Because he could not expect any countenance or encouragement there, but, on the contrary, to be bantered and ridiculed by some and to be threatened and brow-beaten by others; however, he could not think to make any converts there, or to persuade any from that idolatry which was supported by the authority and example of the king. To preach his doctrine there was but (as we say) to run his head against a post; and therefore prophesy no more there. But,

2. He persuades him that the land of Judah was the fittest place for him to set up in: Flee thee away thither with all speed, and there eat bread, and prophesy there. There thou wilt be safe; there thou wilt be welcome; the king's court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee; the priests and

princes there will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honourable maintenance. See here,

(1.) How willing wicked men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to say to the seers, See not, or See not for us; the two witnesses were a torment to those that dwelt on the earth (Re 11:10), and it were indeed a pity that men should be tormented before the time, but that it is in order to the preventing of eternal torment.

(2.) How apt worldly men are to measure others by themselves. Amaziah, as a priest, aimed at nothing but the profits of his place, and he thought Amos, as a prophet, had the same views, and therefore advised him to prophesy were he might eat bread, where he might be sure to have as much as he chose; whereas Amos was to prophesy where God appointed him, and where there was most need of him, not where he would get most money. Note, Those that make gain their godliness, and are governed by the hopes of wealth and preferment themselves, are ready to think these the most powerful inducements with others also.

13 but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it *is* the king's chapel,
and it *is* the king's court.

14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I *was* no prophet, neither
was I a prophet's son; but I *was* a herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore
fruit:

15 and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto
me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

The reply which Amos made to these suggestions of Amaziah's. He did not consult with flesh and blood, nor was it his care to enrich himself, but to make full proof of his ministry, and to be found faithful in the discharge of it, not to sleep in a whole skin, but to keep a good conscience; and therefore he resolved to abide by his post, and, in answer to Amaziah,

1. He justified himself in his constant adherence to his work and to his place (Am 7:14,15); and that which he was sure would not only bear him out, but bind him to it, was that he had a divine warrant and commission for it: "I was no prophet, nor prophet's son, neither born nor bred to the office, not originally designed for a prophet, as Samuel and Jeremiah, not educated

in the schools of the prophets, as many others were; but I was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit." Our sycamores bear no fruit, but, it seems, theirs did, which Amos gathered either for his cattle or for himself and his family, or to sell.

He was a plain country-man, bred up and employed in country work and used to country fare. He followed the flocks as well as the herds, and thence God took him, and bade him go and prophesy to his people Israel, deliver to them such messages as he should from time to time receive from the Lord. God made him a prophet, and a prophet to them, appointed him his work and appointed him his post. Therefore he ought not to be silenced, for,

(1.) He could produce a divine commission for what he did. He did not run before he was sent, but pleads, as Paul, that he was called to be an apostle; and men will find it is at their peril if they contradict and oppose any that come in God's name, if they say to his seers, See not, or silence those whom he has bidden to speak; such fight against God. An affront done to an ambassador is an affront to the prince that sends him. Those that have a warrant from God ought not to fear the face of man.

(2.) The mean character he wore before he received that commission strengthened his warrant, so far was it from weakening it.

[1.] He had no thoughts at all of ever being a prophet, and therefore his prophesying could not be imputed to a raised expectation or a heated imagination, but purely to a divine impulse.

[2.] He was not educated nor instructed in the art or mystery of prophesying, and therefore he must have his abilities for it immediately from God, which is an undeniable proof that he had his mission from him. The apostles, being originally unlearned and ignorant men, evidenced that they owed their knowledge to their having been with Jesus, Act 4:13. When the treasure is put into such earthen vessels, it is thereby made to

appear that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man, 2Co 4:7.

[3.] He had an honest calling, by which he could comfortably maintain himself and his family; and therefore did not need to prophesy for bread, as Amaziah suggested (Am 7:12), did not take it up as a trade to live by, but as a trust to honour God and do good with.

[4.] He had all his days been accustomed to a plain homely way of living among poor husbandmen, and never affected either gaieties or dainties, and therefore would not have thrust himself so near the king's court and chapel if the business God had called him to had not called him thither.

[5.] Having been so meanly bred, he could not have the courage to speak to kings and great men, especially to speak such bold and provoking things to them, if he had not been animated by a greater spirit than his own. If God, that sent him, had not strengthened him, he could not thus have set his face as a flint, Isa 50:7. Note, God often chooses the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty; and a herdman of Tekoa puts to shame a priest of Bethel, when he receives from God authority and ability to act for him.

2. He condemns Amaziah for the opposition he gave them, and denounces the judgments of God against him, not from any private resentment or revenge, but in the name of the Lord and by authority from him, Am 7:16,17. Amaziah would not suffer Amos to preach at all, and therefore he is particularly ordered to preach against him: Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord, hear it and tremble. Those that cannot bear general woes may expect woes of their own.

The sin he is charged with is forbidding Amos to prophesy; we do not find that he beat him, or put him in the stocks, only he enjoined him silence: Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac; he must not only thunder against them, but he must not so much as drop a word against

them; he cannot bear, no, not the most gentle distilling of that rain, that small rain. Let him therefore hear his doom.

(1.) For the opposition he gave to Amos God will bring ruin upon himself and his family. This was the sin that filled the measure of his iniquity.

[1.] He shall have no comfort in any of his relations, but be afflicted in those that were nearest to him: His wife shall be a harlot; either she shall be forcibly abused by the soldiers, as the Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah (they ravish the women of Zion, La 5:11), or she shall herself wickedly play the harlot, which, though her sin, her great sin, would be his affliction, his great affliction and reproach, and a just punishment upon him for promoting spiritual whoredom. Sometimes the sins of our relations are to be looked upon as judgments of God upon us. His children, though they keep honest, yet shall not keep alive: His sons and his daughters shall fall by the sword of war, and he himself shall live to see it. He has trained them up in iniquity, and therefore God will cut them off in it.

[2.] He shall be stripped of all his estate; it shall fall into the hand of the enemy, and be divided by line, by lot, among the soldiers. What is ill begotten will not be long kept.

[3.] He shall himself perish in a strange country, not in the land of Israel, which had been holiness to the Lord, but in a polluted land, in a heathen country, the fittest place for such a heathen to end his days in, that hated and silenced God's prophets and contributed so much to the polluting of his own land with idolatry.

(2.) Notwithstanding the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon the land and nation. He was accused for saying, Israel shall be led away captive (Am 7:11), but he stands to it, and repeats it; for the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect. The burden of the word of the Lord may be striven with, but it cannot be shaken off. Let Amaziah rage, and

fret, and say what he will to the contrary, Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

Note, it is to no purpose to contend with the judgments of God; for when God judges he will overcome. Stopping the mouths of God's ministers will not stop the progress of God's word, for it shall not return void.

16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not *thy word* against the house of Isaac.

17 Therefore thus saith the Lord; Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

Amos-8

The Basket of Summer Fruit

1 Thus hath the Lord God showed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance de die in diem--from day to day, is because they think God thus defers his judgments, and there is no song wherewith they so effectually sing themselves asleep as that, My Lord delays his coming; and therefore God, by his prophets, frequently represents to Israel the day of his wrath not only as just and certain, but as very near and hastening on apace; so he does in these verses.

I The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by a basket of summer-fruit which Amos saw in vision; for the Lord showed it to him (Am 8:1) and obliged him to take notice of it (Am 8:2): Amos, what seest thou? Note, It concerns us to enquire whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to show us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shows once, yea twice, and men perceive it not. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty? Let us consider what we see. He saw a basket of summer-fruit gathered and ready to be eaten, which signified,

1. That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sickle of his judgments and to cut them off; nay, the thing was in effect done already, and they lay ready to be eaten up.

2. That the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion; it was autumn with them, and their year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter.

3. Those we call summer-fruits that will not keep till winter, but must be used immediately, an emblem of this people, that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

II The intent and meaning of this vision is no more than this: It signifies that the end has come upon my people Israel. The word that signifies the end is ketz, which is of near affinity with kitz, the word used for summer-fruit. God has long spared them, and borne with them, but now his patience is tired out; they are indeed his people Israel, but their end, that latter end they have been so often reminded of, but have so long forgotten, has now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea though they be his people Israel. What was said Am 7:8 is here repeated as God's determined resolution, I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be connived at as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

III. The consequence of this shall be a universal desolation (Am 8:3): When the end shall come sorrow and death shall ride in triumph; they are accustomed to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, Re 21:4. But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation,

1. Sorrow reigns, reigns to such a degree that the songs of the temple shall be howlings--the songs of God's temple at Jerusalem, or rather of their idol-temples, where they used, when, in honour of the golden calves, they had eaten and drunk, to rise up to play. They were perhaps wanton profane songs; and it is certain that sooner or later those will be turned into howlings. Or, if they had a sound and show of piety and religion, yet, not coming from the heart, nor being sung to the glory of

God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings.

Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea, and sacred mirth too, it if be not sincere. And, when God's judgments are abroad, they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness, the temple-songs, which used to sound so pleasantly, not only into sighs and groans, but into loud howlings, which sound dismally. They shall come to the temple, and, finding that in ruins, there they shall howl most bitterly.

2. Death reigns, reigns to such a degree that there shall be dead bodies, many dead bodies in every place (Ps 110:6), slain by sword or pestilence, so many that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals; they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall cast them forth with silence, shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent and to take notice of it, either because they have not wherewithal to bear the charges of a funeral, or because, the killing disease being infectious, none will come near them, or for fear the enemy should be provoked, if they should be known to lament their slain.

Or they shall charge themselves and one another silently to submit to the hand of God in these desolating judgments, and not to repine and quarrel with him. Or it may be taken not for a patient, but a sullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgment either of God's righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer
fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of
Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord
God: *there shall be* many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast *them*
forth with silence.

Israel's Doom at Hand

4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

5 saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and showing them,

I The heinousness of the sin they were guilty of; in short, they had the character of the unjust judge (Lu 18:2) that neither feared God nor regarded man.

1. Observe them in their devotions, and you will say, "They had no reverence for God." Bad as they are, they do indeed keep up a show and form of godliness; they observe the sabbath and the new moon; they put some difference between those days and other days, but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, for their hearts were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them, that they said, When will the sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn? Yet is still the character of many that are called Christians.

(1.) They were weary of sabbath days. "When will they be gone?" They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new-moons, and wished them over because they might do no servile work therein. They were weary of the work or business of the sabbaths and new-moons, snuffed at it (Mal 1:13), and were, as Doeg, detained before the Lord (1Sa 21:7); they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars.

Note, Sabbath days and sabbath work are a burden to carnal hearts, that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communication with God? And how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the

work of it and reaped the gains of it? Why then should we be in such haste to part with it?

(2.) They were fond of market-days: they longed to be selling corn and setting forth wheat. When they were employed in religious services they were thinking of their marketings; their hearts went after their covetousness (Eze 33:31), and thus made my Father's house a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves. They were weary of holy duties because their worldly business stood still the while; in this they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary as a fish upon dry ground.

Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market days better than sabbath days, that would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations, and you will see they have no regard to man; and this commonly follows upon the former; those that have lost the savour of piety will not long retain the sense of common honesty. They neither do justly nor love mercy.

(1.) They cheat those they deal with. When they sell their corn they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods and in receiving the money for them. They measure him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they make the ephah small. The measure is scanty, and not statute-measure, and so they wrong him that way. When they receive his money they must weigh fit in their own scales, by their own weights, and the shekel they weigh by is above standard: They make the shekel great, so that the money, being found too light, must have more added to it; and so they cheat that way too, and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice.

By such wicked practices as these men show such a greediness of the world, such a love of themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as prove them to have in their hearts neither the fear nor the love of that God who has so plainly said

that false weights and balances are an abomination to him. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is that they sell the refuse of the wheat, and, taking advantage of their neighbour's ignorance or necessity, make them take it at the same price at which they sell the finest of the wheat.

(2.) The are barbarous and unmerciful to the poor: They swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land to fail.

[1.] They valued themselves so much on their wealth that they looked upon all that were poor with the highest contempt imaginable; they hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them, and therefore did what they could to make them cease, not by relieving them to make them cease to be poor, but by banishing and destroying them to make them cease to be, or at least to be in their land. But he who thus reproaches the poor despises his Maker, in whose hands rich and poor meet together.

[2.] They were so eager to increase their wealth, and make it more, that they robbed the poor to enrich themselves; and they fastened upon the poor, to make a prey of them, because they were not able to obtain any redress nor to resist or revenge the violence of their oppressors. Those riches that are got by the ruin of the poor will bring ruin on those that get them.

They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains; for therefore they falsify the balances by deceit, not only that they may enrich themselves, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else (as they think) at command too, but that they may impoverish those about them, and bring them so low that they may force them to become slaves to them, and so, having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next to nothing. Thus they buy the poor for silver; they bring them and their children into bondage, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the corn they have bought; see Ne 5:2-5.

And there were so many that they were reduced to this extremity that the price was very low; and the oppressors had beaten it

down so that you might buy a poor man to be your slave for a pair of shoes. Property was first invaded and then liberty; it is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars and then to make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in the misery of those that are trampled on and the tenderness of it in the sin of those that trample on them.

6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; *yea,* and sell the refuse of the wheat?

7 The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt.

The grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured they will cry unto God, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them, for, they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself, Ex 22:23,24.

1. God will remember their sin against them: He has sworn by the excellency of Jacob (Am 8:7), by himself, for he can swear by no greater; and who but he is the glory and magnificence of Jacob? He has sworn by those tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them detestable to him; for he is said (Am 6:8) to abhor the excellency of Jacob. He swears in his wrath, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known and was so great in Israel. He swears, Surely I will never forget any of their works, but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them, for more is implied than is expressed.

I will never forget them is as much as to say, I will never forgive them; and then it proclaims the case of these unjust unmerciful men to be miserable indeed, eternally miserable; woe, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy that have shown no mercy.

2. He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described largely, and in a great variety of emphatic expressions,

that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation.

(1.) There shall be a universal terror and consternation: Shall not the land tremble for this (Am 8:8), this land, out of which you thought to drive the poor? Shall not every one mourn that dwells therein? Certainly he shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought for national sins shall be made to tremble and mourn for national judgments; those that look without concern upon the sins of the oppressors, which should make them tremble, and upon the miseries of the oppressed, which should them mourn, God will find out a way to make them tremble at the fury of those that oppress them and mourn for their own losses and sufferings by it.

(2.) There shall be a universal deluge and desolation. When God comes forth against them the waters of trouble and calamity shall rise up wholly as a flood, that swells, when it is dammed up, and soon overflows its banks. Every thing shall make against them. That with which they thought to check the progress of God's judgments shall but make them rise the higher. Judgments shall force their way as the breaking forth of waters. The whole land shall be cast out, and drowned, and laid under water, as the land of Egypt is every year by the overflowing of its river Nile.

Or the expressions may allude to some former judgments of God. Their ruin shall rise up wholly as a flood, as Noah's flood, which overwhelmed the whole world, so shall this the whole land; and the land shall be cast out, and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt, as Pharaoh and his Egyptians were buried in the Red Sea, which was to them the flood of Egypt, both which judgments, as this which is here threatened, were the punishment of violence and oppression, which the Lord is the avenger of.

3. It shall surprise them, and come upon them when they little think of it (Am 8:9): "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, when it is in its full strength and lustre, at their noon, when they promise themselves a long afternoon, and think they have at least half a day good before them. The earth shall be darkened in the clear day, when every thing looks pleasant and hopeful." Thus

uncertain are all our creature-comforts and enjoyments, even life itself; the highest degree of health and prosperity often proves the next degree to sickness and adversity; Job's sun went down at noon; many are taken away in the midst of their days, and their sun goes down at noon. In the midst of life we are in death.

Thus terrible are the judgments of God to those that sleep in security; they are to them as the sun's going down at noon; the less they are expected the more confounding they are. When they cry Peace and safety then sudden destruction comes, comes as a snare, Lu 21:35.

4. It shall change their note, and mar all their mirth (Am 8:10): I will turn your feasts into mourning, as (Am 8:3) the songs of the temple into howlings. Note, The end of the sinner's mirth and jollity is heaviness. As to the upright there arises light in the darkness, which gives them the oil of joy for mourning, so on the wicked their falls darkness in the midst of light, which turns their laughter into mourning, their joy into heaviness. So great, so general, shall the desolation be, that sackcloth shall be brought upon all loins, and baldness upon every head, instead of the well-set hair and the rich garments they used to wear.

The mourning at that day shall be as mourning for an only son, which denotes the most bitter and lasting lamentation. But are there are no hopes that when things are at the worst they will mend, and that at evening time it will yet be light? No, even the end thereof shall be as a bitter day, a day of bitter mourning; that state of impenitent sinners grows worse and worse, and the last of all will be the worst of all. This shall you have at my hand, you shall lie down in sorrow.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

10 and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only *son,* and the end thereof as a bitter day.

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

In these verses is threatened,

I. A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land, a famine of the word of God, the failing of oracles and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance: The days come, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon that land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after, they had great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of hearing the word of God, in season and out of season; they had precept upon precept and line upon line; prophecy was their daily bread; and it is probable that they surfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens that hereafter he will deprive them of this privilege.

Probably in the land of Israel there were not so many prophets, about the time that their destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity they saw not their signs, there were no more any prophets, none to show them how long, Ps 74:9. The Jewish church, after Malachi, had no prophets for many ages; and some think this threatening looks further yet, to the blindness which has in part happened to Israel in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the gospel, and the ministers of it that God sends to them, and covet to have prophets of their own, as their fathers had, but they shall have none, the kingdom of God being taken from them and given to another people. Observe here,

1. What the judgment itself is that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity, not of bread and water (which are the necessary support of the body, and the want of which is very grievous), but a much sorer judgment than that, even a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. There shall be no congregations for ministers to preach to, nor any ministers to preach, nor any instructions and abilities given to those that do set up for

preachers, to fit them for their work. The word of the Lord shall be precious and scarce; there shall be no vision, 1Sa 3:1.

They shall have the written word, Bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them, the water in the well, but nothing to draw with. It is a gracious promise (Isa 30:20) that though they have a scarcity of bread they shall have plenty of the means of grace. God will give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, but their eyes shall see their teachers; and it was a common saying among the Puritans that brown bread and the gospel are good fare. But it is here a threatening that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their teachers should be removed. Now,

(1.) This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that to them were committed the oracles of God; but, when these were taken from them, their beauty was stained and their honour laid in the dust.

(2.) This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them. Surely he was angry indeed with them when he would no more speak to them as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance.

(3.) This made all the other calamities that were upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and shall say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is the sorest famine, the heaviest judgment.

2. What will be the effect of this (Am 8:12): They shall wander from sea to sea, from the sea of Tiberias to the Great Sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets, either by sea or land, from other countries; since they have none among themselves, they shall go from the north to the east; when they are disappointed in one place they shall try another, and shall run to and fro, as men at a loss, and in a

hot pursuit to seek the word of the Lord, to enquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God, but they shall not find it.

(1.) Though to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon; but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those mercies which others have foolishly sinned away.

(2.) Even those that slighted prophets when they had them shall wish for them as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them. Many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or it may be meant thus, Though they should thus wander from sea to sea, in quest of the word of God, yet shall they not find it. Note, The means of grace are moveable things; and the candlestick, when we think it stands most firmly, may be removed out of its place (Re 2:5); and those that now slight the days of the son of man may wish in vain to see them.

And in the day of this famine the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst (Am 8:13); those who, one would think, could well enough have borne the toil, shall sink under it. The Jewish churches, and the masters of their synagogues, some take to be meant by the virgins and the young men; these shall lose the word of the Lord, and the benefit of divine revelation, and shall faint away for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust in their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meant by the fair virgins and the choice young men; they shall faint for thirst, when those that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

12 and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the
east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall
not find *it*.
13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.
14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth;
and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never
rise up again.

The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, Am 8:14. Observe,

1 The sin they are charged with: They swear by the sin of Samaria, that is, by the god of Samaria, the idol that was worshipped at Bethel, not far off from Samaria. Thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by them as their god which was their iniquity, thinking that could help them which would certainly ruin them, and giving the highest honour to that which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, Thy god, O Dan! liveth; that was the other golden calf, a dumb deal idol, and yet caressed and complimented as if it had been the living and true God. They say, The manner, or way, of Beer-sheba liveth; they swore by the religion of Beer-sheba, the way and manner of worship used there, which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swore by and appealed to as a judge of controversy. Thus the papists swear by the mass, as the manner of Beer-sheba.

2 The destruction they are threatened with. Those who thus give that honour to idols which is due to God alone will find that the God they affront is thereby made their enemy, so that they shall fall, and the gods they serve cannot stand their friends, so that they shall never rise again. They will find that God is jealous and will resent the indignity done him, and that he will be victorious and it is to no purpose to contend with him.

Amos-9

The Lord's Judgments Inescapable

1 I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of
the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of
them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that
fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall
not be delivered.

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people; and observe,

I. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision the Lord standing upon the altar (Am 9:1), the altar of burnt-offerings; for the Lord has a sacrifice, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy-seat between the cherubim, and stands upon the altar, the judgment-seat, on which the fire of God used to fall, to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar, to show that the ground of his controversy with this people was their profanation of his holy things; here he stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar, as also to signify that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever, 1Sa 3:14. He stands on the altar, to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given is, Smite the lintel of the door of the temple, the chapiter, smite it with such a blow that the posts may shake, and cut them, wound them in the head, all of them; break down the doors of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this, that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it.

Or it signifies the destruction of those in the first place that should be as the door-posts to the nation for its defence, so that, they being broken down, it becomes as a city without gates and bars. "Smite the king, who is as the lintel of the door, that the princes, who are as the posts, may shake; cut them in the head, cleave them down, all of them, as wood for the fire; and I will slay the last of them, the posterity of them, them and their families, or the least of them, them and all that are employed under them; or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general." There is no living for those on whom God has said, I will slay them, no standing before his sword.

2 Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them;
though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:
3 and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and
take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the
bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite
them:

4 and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

5 And the Lord God of hosts *is* he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt.

What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord to jealousy. Let sinners read it, and tremble; as there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from him. His judgments, when they come with commission, as they will overpower the strongest that think to outface them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to out-run them, Am 9:2.

Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, shall soon be out of breath, and shall not flee away out of the reach of danger; for, as sometimes the wicked flee when none pursues, so he cannot flee away when God pursues, though he would fain flee out of his hand. Nay, he that escapes of them, that thinks he has gained his point, shall not be delivered. Evil pursues sinners, and will arrest them. This is here enlarged upon by showing that wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a refuge of lies. What David says of the ubiquity of God's presence (Ps 139:7-10) is here said of the extent of God's power and justice.

(1.) Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being hilled, or covered over, or hidden, cannot hide them (Am 9:2): "Though they dig into hell, into the centre of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet thence shall my hand take them, and bring them forth to be made public monuments of divine justice." The grave is a hiding-place to the righteous from the malice of the world (Job 3:17), but it shall be no hiding-place to the righteous from the justice of God; thence God's hands shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt.

(2.) Heaven, though it has its name from being heaved, or lifted up, shall not put them out of reach of God's judgments; as hell cannot hide them, so heaven will not. Though they climb up to

heaven in their conceit, yet thence will I bring them down. Those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall never be brought down; but those who climb thither themselves, by their own presumption, and confidence in themselves, will be brought down and filled with shame.

(3.) The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country, shall not protect them: "Though they hide themselves there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, I will search, and take them out thence; neither the thickest bushes, nor the darkest caves, in the top of Carmel, will serve to hide them."

(4.) The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them: Thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them, the crooked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea, Isa 27:1. They shall find their plague and death where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing.

(5.) Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall less judgments excuse them from greater (Am 9:4): Thought they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their own people, among whom they seem to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn: Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them, the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword. When God judges he will overcome. That which binds on all this, makes their escape impossible and their ruin inevitable, is that God will set his eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. His eyes are in every place, are upon all men and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good, to show himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins (Job 13:27) and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserable who have the providence of God: and all the dispensations of it, against them, working for their hurt.

3. What a great and mighty God he is that passes this sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath; but the wrath of God is not so; it is omnipotent wrath. Who knows the power of it? What he had before said he would do (Am 8:8) is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and all that dwell therein mourn, that the judgment should rise up wholly like a flood, and the country should be drowned, and laid under water, as by the flood of Egypt, Am 9:5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is; he does but touch the land and it melts, touch the mountains and they smoke; he can do it with the greatest ease, for,

(1.) He is the Lord God of hosts, who undertakes to do it, the God who has all the power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck and call, who having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleases of them and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those who have the Lord of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them.

(2.) He is the Creator and governor of the upper world: It is he that builds his stories in the heavens, the celestial orbs, or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace. They are his, for he built them at first, when he said, Let there be a firmament, and he made the firmament; and he builds them still, is continually building them, not that they need repair, but by his providence he still upholds them; his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is borne up. Now he that has the command of those stories is certainly to be feared, for thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hailstones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories, to fight against them, as against Sisera.

(3.) He has the management and command of this lower world too, in which we dwell, the terraqueous globe, both earth and sea, so that, which way soever his enemies think to make their escape, he will meet them, or to make opposition, he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it? He has founded his troop in

the earth, his troop of guards, which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle (as the margin reads it), one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleases to discharge against the persecutors, Ps 7:13.

They are all one army, one body, so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishing of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it? He will be too hard for them there, for he has the waters of the sea at command; even its waves, the most tumultuous rebellious waters, do obey him. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of his common providence, causes vapours to ascend out of it, and pours them out in showers, the small rain and the great rain of his strength, upon the face of the earth; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord (Am 5:8) and make him our friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear him and dread having him for our enemy.

4. How justly God passes this sentence upon the people of Israel. He does not destroy them by an act of sovereignty, but by an act of righteousness; for (Am 9:8), it is a sinful kingdom, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it, discovering it to be so; he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will destroy it from off the face of the earth. Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected than that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompence. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, Am 9:7.

(1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it: Are you not as children of Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? A sad change! Children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians!

[1.] They were so in themselves; that was their sin. It is a thing to be greatly lamented that the children of Israel often become as children of the Ethiopians; this children of godly parents

degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them. Those that were well-educated, and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession and become as bad as the worst. How has the gold become dim!

[2.] The were so in God's account, and that was their punishment. He valued them no more, though they were children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of Ps 7:1-17 that was Cush (an Ethiopian, as some understand it) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession are children of Israel, if they degenerate, and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah; because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched, and cast out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do no live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them, and their services.

(2.) See how light he makes of the favours he had conferred upon them; they thought he would not, he could not, cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them. "No," says he, "The favours shown to you are not so distinguishing as you think they are: Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?" It is true I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Caphtor, or Cappadocia, where they were natives, or captives, or both; they are called the remnant of the country of Caphtor (Jer 47:4), and the Philistim are joined with the Caphtorim, Ge 10:14. In like manner the Syrians were brought up from Kir when they had been carried away thither, 2Ki 16:9.

Note, If God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have

its property altered, and shall become an act of common providence; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And, if we live not up to the obligation of God's mercies, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

5. How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones; no, the Judge of all the earth will do right, more right than to slay the righteous with the wicked, Ge 18:25. His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom, to spy out those in it who preserve their integrity and swim against the stream, who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation, so that the destruction shall not be total:

I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, not ruin them by wholesale and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted as corn is sifted; they shall be greatly hurried, and shaken, and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands, as the sieve in the hands of him that sifts (Am 9:9): I will sift the house of Israel among all nations. Wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care to separate between the corn and chaff, which was the thing he designed in sifting them.

(1.) The righteous ones among them, that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from or through the common calamities of the kingdom; not the least grain shall fall on the earth, so as to be lost and forgotten--not the least stone (so the word is), for the good corn is weighty as a stone in comparison with that which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God does and will effectually provide that none who are truly his shall be truly miserable.

(2.) The wicked ones among them who are hardened in their sins shall all of them perish, Am 9:10. See what a height of impiety they have come to: They say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. They think they are innocent, and do not deserve

punishment, or that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment, or that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgments of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them that they shall not prevent or surprise them.

Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impenitent. But see what it will come to at last: All the sinners that thus flatter themselves, and affront God, shall die by the sword, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, though they be the sinners of my people, for their profession shall not be their protection. Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

6 *It is* he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop
in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them
out upon the face of the earth: The Lord *is* his
name.

7 *Are* ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?
saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?
and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord God *are* upon the sinful kingdom, and I
will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly
destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.

9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all
nations, like as *corn* is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall
upon the earth.

10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil
shall not overtake nor prevent us.

The Future Restoration of Israel

11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close
up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it
as in the days of old:

To him to whom all the prophets bear witness this prophet, here in the close, bears his testimony, and speaks of that day, those days that shall come, in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the

Am 9:1-10. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, Ac 15:15-17. It is promised,

That in the Messiah the kingdom of David shall be restored (Am 9:11); the tabernacle of David it is called, that is, his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet, in comparison with the kingdom of heaven, was mean and movable as a tabernacle. The church militant, in its present state, dwelling as in shepherds' tents to feed, as in soldiers' tents to fight, is the tabernacle of David. God's tabernacle is called the tabernacle of David because David desired and chose to dwell in God's tabernacle for ever, Ps 61:4. Now,

1. These tabernacles had fallen an gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained, and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity. Sore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews; in the latter days of it its glory departed; it was like a tabernacle broken down and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and of prosperity.

2. By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and rebuilt. In him God's covenant with David had its accomplishment; and the glory of that house, which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again; the breaches of it were closed and its ruins raised up, as in the days of old; nay, the spiritual glory of the family of Christ far exceeded the temporal glory of the family of David when it was at its height. In him also God's covenant with Israel had its accomplishment, and in the gospel-church the tabernacle of God was set up among men again, and raised up out of the ruins of the Jewish state. This is quoted in the first council at Jerusalem as referring to the calling in of the Gentiles and God's taking out of them a people for his name. Note, While the world stands God will have a church in it, and, if it be fallen down in one place and among one people, it shall be raised up elsewhere.

12 that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.

13 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

That that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it (Am 9:12), that the house of David may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, that is, that Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps 2:8. Those that had been strangers and enemies shall become willing faithful subjects to the Son of David, shall be added to the church, or those of them that are called by my name, saith the Lord, that is, that belong to the election of grace and are ordained to eternal life (Ac 13:48), for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews that the election hath obtained and the rest were blinded, Ro 11:7. Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, here said to be those that were called by his name.

The promise is to all that are afar off, even as many of them as the Lord our God shall call, Ac 2:39. St. James expounds this as a promise that the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called. But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord says this, who does this, who can do it, who has determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it, and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

III. That in the kingdom of the Messiah there shall be great plenty, an abundance of all good things that the country produces (Am 9:13): The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, that is, there shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall last all summer, even till autumn, when it is time to begin to plough again; and in like manner the vintage shall continue till seed-time, and there shall be such abundance of grapes that even the mountains shall drop new wine into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren shall be moistened and shall melt with the fatness or mellowness (as we call it) of the soil. Compare this with Joe 2:24,3:18.

This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which all those are, and shall be, blessed with, who are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have bread, the bread of life, to strengthen their hearts, and the wine of divine consolations to make them glad-meat indeed and drink indeed--all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the word and Spirit of God.

These had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church; divine revelation, and the power that attended it, were to be found only within that enclosure; but in gospel-times the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges by the gospel of Christ preached, and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were always caused to triumph in the success of their preaching, then the ploughman overtook the reaper; and when, the Gentile churches were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, and all manner of spiritual gifts (1Co 1:5), then the mountains dropped sweet wine.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them;* and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled; as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat, Am 9:14. Those that were carried captives shall be brought back out of their captivity; their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return, and shall build the waste cities and inhabit them, shall form themselves into Christian churches and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel charter, by which Christ's cities are incorporated; and they shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof; they shall plant vineyards, and make gardens.

Though the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel-church are laid in common, yet they shall enclose for themselves, not to monopolize these privileges, to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges, in communion with others, and they shall drink the wine, and eat the fruit, of their own vineyards and gardens; for those that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God's Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a yoke of bondage, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, Ga 5:1.

V. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world as never to be rooted out of it (Am 9:15): I will plant them upon their land. God's spiritual Israel shall be planted by the right hand of God himself upon the land assigned them, and they shall no more be pulled up out of it, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostasy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church:--

1. God's grants to it: It is the land which I have given them; and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it.

2. Its interest in him: He is the Lord thy God, who has said it, and will make it good, thine, O Israel! who shall reign for ever as thine unto all generations. And because he lives the church shall live also.

15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the

Lord thy God.

Obadiah
[Obadiah]

Obadiah-1

The Humbling of Edom

1 The vision of Obadiah.
Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumor from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

Edom is the nation against which this prophecy is levelled, and which, some think, is put for all the enemies of Israel, that shall be brought down first or last. The rabbin by Edom understand Rome. Rome Christians they understand it of, and have an implacable enmity to it a such; but, if we understand it of Rome antichristian, we shall find the passages of it applicable enough. And though Edom was mortified in the times of the Maccabees, as it had been before by Jehoshaphat, yet its destruction seems to have been typical, as their father Esau's rejection, and to have had further reference to the destruction of the enemies of the gospel-church; for so shall all God's enemies perish; and we find (Isa 34:5) the sword of the Lord coming down upon Idumea, to signify the general day of God's recompences for the controversy of Zion, Ob 1:8. Some have well observed that it could not but be a great temptation to the people of Israel, when they saw themselves, who were the children of beloved Jacob, in trouble, and the Edomites, not only prospering, but triumphing over them in their troubles; and therefore God gives them a prospect of the destruction of Edom, which should be total and final, and of a happy issue of their own correction. Now we may observe here,

A declaration of war against Edom, (Ob 1:1): "We have heard a rumour, or rather an order, from the Lord, the God of hosts; he has given the word of command; it is his counsel and decree,

which can neither be reversed nor resisted, that all who do mischief to his people shall certainly bring mischief upon themselves. We have heard a report that God is raised up out of his holy habitation, and is preparing his throne for judgment; and an ambassador is sent among the heathen," a herald rather, some minister or messenger of Providence, to alarm the nations, or the Lord's prophets, who gave each nation its burden. Those whom God employs cry to each other, Arise ye, stir up yourselves and one another, and let us rise up against Edom in battle. The confederate forces under Nebuchadnezzar thus animate themselves and one another to make a descent upon that country: Gather yourselves together, and come against her; so it is in the parallel place, Jer 49:14. Note, When God has bloody work to do among the enemies of his church he will find out and fit up both hands and hearts to do it.

2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

4 Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.

5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape gatherers came to thee, would they not leave *some* grapes?

6 How are *the things* of Esau searched out! *how* are his hidden things sought up!

A prediction of the success of that war. Edom shall certainly be subdued, and spoiled, and brought down; for all her confidences shall fail her and stand her in no stead, and in like manner shall all the enemies of God's church be disappointed in those things which they stayed themselves upon.

1. Do they depend upon their grandeur, the figure they make among the nations, their influence upon them, and interest in them? That shall dwindle (Ob 1:2): "Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen, so that none of thy neighbours will court thy friendship, or court an alliance with thee; thou art greatly despised among them, and looked upon with contempt,

as an infatuated and unfaithful nation." And thus (Ob 1:3) the pride of thy heart has deceived thee.

Note,

(1.) Those that think well of themselves are apt to fancy that others think well of them too; but, when they come to make trial of them, they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their pride deceives them and by it slays them.

(2.) God can easily lay those low that have magnified and exalted themselves, and will find out a way to do it, for he resists the proud; and we often see those small and greatly despised who once looked very big and were greatly caressed and admired.

2. Do they depend upon the fortifications of their country, both by nature and art, and glory in the advantages they have thereby? Those also shall deceive them. They dwelt in the clefts of the rock, as an eagle in her nest, and their habitation was high, not only exalted above their neighbours, which was the matter of their pride, but fortified against their enemies, which was the matter of their security, so high as to be out of the reach of danger. Now observe,

(1.) What Edom says in the pride of his heart: Who shall bring me down to the ground? He speaks with a confidence of his own strength, and a contempt of God's judgments, as if almighty power itself could not overpower him. As for all his enemies, even God himself, he puffs at them (Ps 10:5), sets them all at defiance. Their father Esau had sold his birthright, and yet they lifted up themselves, as if to them had still pertained the excellency of dignity and power. Many forfeit their privileges, and yet boast of them. Because Edom is high and lifted up, he imagines none can bring him down.

Note, Carnal security is a sin that most easily besets men in the day of their pomp, power, and prosperity, and does, as much as any thing, both ripen men for ruin and aggravate it when it comes.

(2.) What God says to this, Ob 1:4. If men will dare to challenge Omnipotence, their challenge shall be taken up: Who shall bring me down? says Edom. "I will," says God. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle that soars high and builds high, nay, though thou set thy nest among stars, higher than ever any eagle flew, it is but in thy own imagination, and thence will I bring thee down." This we had Jer 49:15,16.

Note, Sinners will certainly be made ashamed of their pride and security of their pride when it has a fall and of their security when their confidences fail their expectation.

3. Do they depend upon their wealth and treasure, the abundance of which is looked upon as the sinews of war? Is their money their defence? Is that their strong city? It is so only in their own conceit, for it shall rather expose them than protect them; it shall be made a prey to the enemy, and they for the sake of it, Ob 1:5,6. Much to this purport we had Jer 49:9,10. Only here comes in, in a parenthesis, How art thou cut off! thou and all thy stores. The prophet foretels it, but laments it, that the thread of their prosperity was cut off. How art thou fallen, and how great is thy fall! How art thou stupefied! so the Chaldee words it. How senseless art thou under these desolating judgments, as if they were but common strokes! But he shows that it should be an utter ruin, not a usual calamity; for,

(1.) It is indeed a usual calamity for those that have wealth to have it stolen, and to lose a little out of their great deal. Thieves come to them (for where the carcase is, there will the birds of prey be gathered together), robbers come by night, and they steal till they have enough, what they have occasion for, what they have a mind for; they steal no more than they think they can carry away, and out of a great stock it is scarcely missed. Those that rob orchards, or vineyards, carry off what they think fit; but they leave some grapes, some fruit for the owner, who easily bears his loss perhaps and soon recruits it. But,

(2.) It shall not be so with Edom; his wealth shall all be taken away, and nothing shall escape the hands of the destroying army, not that which is most precious and valuable, Ob 1:6. How are

the things of Esau, the things he sets his heart upon and places his happiness in, his good things, his best things, how are these things, which were so carefully treasured up and concealed, now searched out by the enemy and seized! How are the hidden things, his hidden treasures, plundered, rifled, and sought up! His hoards, that had not see the light for many years, are now a spoil to the enemy.

Note, Treasures on earth, though ever so fast locked up and ever so artfully hidden, cannot be so safely laid up but that thieves may break through and steal; it is therefore our wisdom to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

4. Do they depend upon their alliances with neighbouring states and potentates? Those also shall fail them (Ob 1:7): "The men of thy confederacy, all of them, the Ammonites and Moabites, and other thy high allies that were at peace with thee, that entered into a league offensive and defensive with thee, that solemnly engaged not only to do thee no hurt, but to do thee all the service the could, did eat thy bread, were magnificently treated and entertained by thee, lived upon thee; their soldiers had free quarter in thy country, and took pay as thy auxiliaries; they brought thee even to the border of thy land, were very respectful to thy ambassadors, and brought them on their way home, even to the utmost limits of their country; they seemed forward to serve thee with their forces when thou hadst occasion for them, and came along with thee to the border, till thou wast just ready to engage the invading enemy; but then,"

(1.) "They had deceived thee; they flew back and retreated when thou wast in extremity, and proved as a broken reed to the traveller that is weary, and as the brooks in summer to the traveller that is thirsty; they bear no weight, yield no relief." Nay,

(2.) "They have prevailed against thee; they were too hard for thee in the treaty imposed upon thee, and by cheating thee ruined thee, brought thee into danger, and there left thee an easy prey to thy enemy."

Note, Those that make flesh their arm arm it against them. Yet this was not the worst.

(3.) "They have laid a wound under thee; that is, they have laid that under thee for a stay and support, for a foundation to rely on, for a pillow to repose on, which will prove a wound to thee; not as thorns only, but as swords." If God lay under us the arms of his power and love, these will be firm and easy under us; the God of our covenant will never deceive us. But if we trust to the men of our confederacy, and what they will lay under us, it may prove to us a wound and dishonour. And observe the just censure here passed upon Edom for trusting to those who thus played tricks with him: "There is no understanding in him, or else he would never have put it into their power to betray him by putting such a confidence in them."

Note, Those show they have no understanding in them who, when they are encouraged to trust in the Creator, put a cheat upon themselves by reposing a confidence in the creature.

5. Do they depend upon the politics of their counsellors? These shall fail them, Ob 1:8. Edom had been famous for great statesmen, men of learning and experience, that sat at the help of government, and were masters of all the arts of management, that in all treaties used to outwit their neighbours; but now the counsellors have become fools, and the wise God makes them so: Shall I not in that day destroy the wise men out of Edom? As men they shall fall by the sword in common with others (Ps 49:10), and their wisdom shall not secure them; as wise men they shall be infatuated in all their counsels; their best-laid designs shall be baffled, their measures broken, and those very projects by which they thought to establish themselves and the public interests shall be the ruin of both. Thus wisdom perishes from Teman, as it is in the parallel place, Jer 49:7. This was,

(1.) The just punishment of their folly in trusting to an arm of flesh: There is no understanding in them, Ob 1:7. They have not sense to trust in a living God, and a God of truth, but put

confidence in men that are frail, fickle, and false; and therefore God will destroy their understanding.

Note, God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of danger that will not use their understanding to keep out of the way of sin. He that will be foolish, let him be foolish still.

(2.) It was the forerunner of their destruction. A nation is certainly marked for ruin when God hides the things that belong to its peace from the eyes of those that are entrusted with its counsels. Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat--God infatuates those whom he designs to destroy. Job 12:17.

6. Do they depend upon the strength and courage of their soldiers? They are not only able-bodied, but men of spirit and courage, that can face an enemy and stand their ground; but now (Ob 1:9), Thy mighty men, O Teman! shall be dismayed; their courage shall fail them, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter, and none escape. The weak, and feeble, and unarmed must fall of course into the hand of the destroyer when the mighty men are dismayed, and not only lose the day, but lose their lives, because they have lost their spirit. Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken.

Note, The death or disuniting of the mighty often proves the death and destruction of the many; and it is in vain to depend upon mighty men for our protection if we have not an almighty God for us, much less if we have an almighty God against us.

7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee *even* to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, *and* prevailed against thee; *they that eat* thy bread have laid a wound under thee: *there is* none understanding in him.

8 Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise *men* out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

9 And thy mighty *men,* O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

10 For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of them.

When we have read Edom's doom, no less than utter ruin, it is natural to ask, Why, what evil has he done? What is the ground of God's controversy with him? Many things, no doubt, were amiss in Edom; they were a sinful people, and a people laden with iniquity. But that one single crime which is laid to their charge, as filling their measure and bringing this ruin upon them, that for which they here stand indicted, of which they are convicted, and for which they are condemned, is the injury they had done to the people of God (Ob 1:10):

"It is for thy violence against thy brother Jacob, that ancient and hereditary grudge which thou hast borne to the people of Israel, that all this shame shall cover thee and thou shalt be cut off for ever."

Note, Injuries to men are affronts to God, the righteous God, that loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness; and, as the Judge of all the earth, he will give redress to those that suffer wrong and take vengeance on those that do wrong. All violence, all unrighteousness, is sin; but it is a great aggravation of the violence if it be done either,

1. Against any of our own people; it is violence against thy brother, thy near relation, to whom thou shouldst be a goël--a redeemer, whom it is thy duty to right if others wronged him; how wicked is it then for thee thyself to wrong him! Thou slanderest and abusest thy own mother's son; this makes the sin exceedingly sinful, Ps 50:20. Or,

2. Much more if it be done against any of God's people; "it is thy brother Jacob that is in covenant with God, and dear to him. Thou hatest him whom God has loved, and because God espouses and will plead with jealousy, and in whose interests God is pleased so far to interest himself that he takes the violence done to him as done to himself. Whoso touches Jacob touches the apple of the eye of Jacob's God." So that it is crimen

læsæ majestatis--high treason, for which, as for high treason, let Edom expect an ignominious punishment: Shame shall cover thee, and a ruining one; thou shalt be cut off for ever.

In the Ob 1:12-16 we are told more particularly,

I. What the violence was which Edom did against his brother Jacob, and what are the proofs of this charge. It does not appear that the Edomites did themselves invade Israel, but that was more for want of power than will; they had malice enough to do it, but were not a match for them. But that which is laid to their charge is their barbarous conduct towards Judah and Jerusalem when they were in distress, and ready to be destroyed, probably by the Chaldeans, or upon occasion of some other of the calamities of the Jews; for this seems to have been always their temper towards them. See this charged upon the Edomites (Ps 137:7), that in the day of Jerusalem they said, Rase it, rase it, and Eze 25:12. They are here told particularly what they did, by being told what they should not have done (Ob 1:12-14): "Thou shouldst not have looked, thou shouldst not have entered; but thou didst so."

Note, In reflecting upon ourselves it is good to compare what we have done with what we should have done, our practice with the rule, that we may discover wherein we have done amiss, have done those things which we ought not to have done. We should not have been where we were at such a time, should not have been in such and such company, should not have said what we said, nor have taken the liberty that we took. Sin thus looked upon, in the glass of the commandment, will appear exceedingly sinful. Let us see,

1. What was the case of Judah and Jerusalem when the Edomites behaved themselves thus basely and insulted over them.

(1.) It was a day of distress with them (Ob 1:12): It was the day of their calamity, so it is called three times, Ob 1:13. With the Edomites it was a day of prosperity and peace when with the

Israelites it was a day of distress and calamity, for judgment commonly begins at the house of God. Children are corrected when strangers are let alone.

(2.) It was the day of their destruction (Ob 1:12), when both city and country were laid waste, were laid in ruins.

(3.) It was a day when foreigners entered into the gates of Jerusalem, when the city, after a long siege, was broken up, and the great officers of the king of Babylon's army came, and sat in the gates, as judges of the land; when they cast lots upon the spoils of Jerusalem, as the soldiers on Christ's garments, what shares each of the conquerors shall have, what shares of the lands, what shares of the goods; or they cast lots to determine when and where they should attack it.

(4.) It was a day when the strangers carried away captive his forces (Ob 1:11), took the men of war prisoners of war, and carried them off, in poverty and shame, to their own country, or such a multitude of captives that they were as an army.

(5.) "It was a day when thy brother himself, that had long been at home, at rest in his own land, became a stranger, an exile in a strange land." Now, when this was the woeful case of the Jews, the Edomites, their neighbours and brethren, should have pitied them and helped them, condoled with them and comforted them, and should have trembled to think that their own turn would come next; for, if this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? But,

2. See what was the conduct of the Edomites towards them when they were in this distress, for which they are here condemned.

(1.) They looked with pleasure upon the affliction of God's people; they stood on the other side (Ob 1:11), afar off, when they should have come in to the relief of their distressed neighbours, and looked upon them, and their day, looked on their affliction (Ob 1:12,13), with a careless unconcerned eye, as the priest and Levite looked upon the wounded man, and

passed by on the other side. Those have a great deal to answer for that are idle spectators of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers. But this was not all; they looked upon it with a scornful eye, with an eye of complacency and satisfaction; they looked and laughed to see Israel in distress, saying, Aha! so we would have it. They fed their eyes with the rueful spectacle of Jerusalem's ruin, and looked at it as those that had long looked for it and often wished to see it.

Note, We must take heed with what eye we look upon the afflictions of our brethren; and, if we cannot look upon them with a gracious eye of sympathy and tenderness, it is better not to look upon them at all: Thou shouldst not have looked as thou didst upon the day of thy brother.

(2.) They triumphed and insulted over them, upbraided their brethren with their sorrows, and made themselves and their companions merry with them. They rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction. They had not the good manners to conceal the pleasure they took in Judah's destruction and to dissemble it, but openly declared it, and rudely and insolently declared it to them; they rejoiced over them, crowed, and hectored, and trampled upon them. Those have the spirit of Edomites that can rejoice over any, especially over Israelites, in the day of their calamity.

(3.) They spoke proudly-magnified the mouth (so the word is), against Israel, talked with a great disdain of the suffering Israelites, and with an air of haughtiness of the present safety and prosperity of Edom, as it if might be inferred from their present different state that the tables were turned, and now Esau was beloved, and the favourite of heaven, and Jacob hated and rejected.

Note, Those must expect to be in some way or other effectually humbled and mortified themselves that are puffed up and made proud by the humiliations and mortifications of others.

(4.) They went further yet, for they entered into the gate of God's people in the day of their calamity, and laid hands on their substance. Though they did not help to conquer them, they helped to plunder them, and put in for a share in the prey, Ob 1:13. Jerusalem was thrown open, and then they entered in; its wealth was thrown about, and they seized it for themselves, excusing it with this, that they might as well take it as let it be lost; whereas it was taking what was not their own. Babylon lays Jerusalem waste, but Edom, by meddling with the spoil, becomes particeps criminis--partaker of the crime, and shall be reckoned with as an accessary ex post facto--after the fact.

Note, Those do but impoverish themselves that think to enrich themselves by the ruins of the people of God; and those deceive themselves who think they may call all that substance their own which they can lay their hands on in a day of calamity.

(5.) They did yet worse things; they not only robbed their brethren, but murdered them, in the day of their calamity; laid hands not only on their substance, but on their persons, Ob 1:14. When the victorious sword of the Chaldeans was making bloody work among the Jews many made their escape, and were in a fair way to save themselves by flight; but the Edomites basely intercepted them, stood in the cross-way where several roads met, by each of which the trembling Israelites were making the best of their way from the fury of the pursuers, and there they stopped them: some they barbarously and cowardlike cut off themselves; others they took prisoners, and delivered up to the pursuers, only to ingratiate themselves with them, because they were now the conquerors.

They should not have been thus cruel to those that lay at their mercy, and never had done, nor were every likely to do, them any hurt; they should not have betrayed those whom they had such a fair opportunity to protect; but such are the tender mercies of the wicked. One cannot read this without a high degree of compassion towards those who were thus basely abused, who when they fled from the sword of an open enemy, and thought they had got out of the reach of it, fell upon and fell by the sword of a treacherous neighbour, whom they were not

apprehensive of any danger from. Nor can one read this without a high degree of indignation towards those who were so perfectly lost to all humanity as to exercise such cruelty upon such proper objects of compassion.

(6.) In all this they joined with the open enemies and persecutors of Israel: Even thou wast as one of them, an accessary equally guilty with the principals. He that joins in with the evil doers, and is aiding and abetting in their evil deeds, shall be reckoned, and shall be reckoned with, as one of them.

12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid *hands* on their substance in the day of their calamity;

What the shame is that shall cover them for this violence of theirs.

1. They shall soon find that the cup is going round, even the cup of trembling; and, when they come to be in the same calamitous condition that the Israel of God is now in, they will be ashamed to remember how they triumphed over them (Ob 1:15): The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen, when God will recompense tribulation to the troublers of his church. Though judgment begin at the house of God, it shall not end there. This should effectually restrain us from triumphing over others in their misery, that we know not how soon it may be our own case.

2. Their enmity to the people of God, and the injuries they had done them, shall be recompensed into their own bosoms: As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee. The righteous God will render both to nations and to particular persons according to their works; and the punishment is often made exactly to answer to the sin, and those that have abused others come to be themselves abused in like manner.

The just and jealous God will find out a time and way to avenge the wrongs done to his people on those that have been injurious to them. As you have drunk upon my holy mountain (Ob 1:16), that is, as God's professing people, who inhabit his holy mountain, have drunk deeply of the cup of affliction (and their being of the holy mountain would not excuse them), so shall all the heathen drink, in their turn, of the same bitter cup; for, if God bring evil on the city that is called by his name, shall those be unpunished that never knew his name? See Jer 25:29.

And it is part of the burden of Edom (Jer 49:12), Those whose judgment was not to drink of the cup (who had reason to promise themselves an exemption from it) have assuredly drunken, and shall Edom that is the generation of God's wrath go unpunished? No, thou shalt surely drink of it; the cup of trembling shall be taken out of the hand of God's people, and put into the hand of those that afflict them, Isa 51:22,23. Nay, they may expect their case to be worse in the day of their distress than that of Israel was in their day; for,

(1.) The afflictions of God's people were but for a moment, and soon had an end, but their enemies shall drink continually the wine of God's wrath, Re 14:10.

(2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth (Ps 75:8); they shall drink and swallow down, or sup up (as the margin reads it), shall drink it to the bottom.

(3.) The people of God, though they may be made to drink of the wine of astonishment for a while (Ps 60:3), shall yet recover, and come to themselves again; but the heathen shall drink and be as though they had not been; there shall be neither any remains nor any remembrance of them, but they shall be wholly extirpated and rooted out. So let all thy enemies perish, O Lord! so they shall perish, if the turn not.

14 neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

The Exalting of Israel

15 For the day of the Lord *is* near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done,
it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own
head.
16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, *so* shall all the heathen
drink continually; yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down,
and they shall be as though they had not been.
17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness;
and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

After the destruction of the church's enemies is threatened, which will be completely accomplished in the great day of recompence, and that judgment for which Christ came once, and will come again, into this world, here follow precious promises of the salvation of the church, with which this prophecy concludes, and those of Joel and Amos did, which, however they might be in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of Babylon notwithstanding the triumphs of Edom in their captivity, as if it were perpetual, are yet, doubtless, to have their full accomplishment in that great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, to which all the prophets bore witness. It is promised here,

I. That there shall be salvation upon Mount Zion, that holy hill where God sets his anointed King (Ps 2:6): Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, Ob 1:17. There shall be those that escape; so the margin. A remnant of Israel, upon the holy mountain shall be saved, Ob 1:16. Christ said, Salvation is of the Jews, Joh 4:22. God wrought deliverances for the Jews, typical of our redemption by Christ. But Mount Zion is the gospel-church, from which the New-Testament law went forth, Isa 2:3. There salvation shall be preached and prayed for; to the gospel-church those are added who shall be saved; and for those who come in faith and hope to this Mount Zion deliverance shall be wrought from wrath and the curse, from sin, and death, and hell, while those who continue afar off shall be left to perish.

II. That, where there is salvation, there shall be sanctification in order to it: And there shall be holiness, to prepare and qualify the children of Zion for this deliverance; for wherever God designs glory he gives grace. Temporal deliverances are indeed wrought for us in mercy when with them there is holiness, when there is wrought in us a disposition to receive them with love and gratitude to God; when we are sanctified, they are sanctified to us. Holiness is itself a great deliverance, and an earnest of that eternal salvation which we look for. There, upon Mount Zion, in the gospel-church, shall be holiness; for that is it which becomes God's house for ever, and the great design of the gospel, and its grace, is to plant and promote holiness. There shall be the Holy Spirit, the holy ordinances, the holy Jesus, and a select remnant of holy souls, in whom, and among whom, the holy God will delight to dwell. Note, Where there is holiness there shall be deliverance.

18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be *any* remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken *it*.

19 And *they of* the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and *they of* the plain, the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead.

That this salvation and sanctification shall spread, and prevail, and get ground in the world: The house of Jacob, even this Mount Zion, with the deliverance and their holiness there wrought, shall possess their possessions; that is, the gospel-church shall be set up among the heathen, and shall replenish the earth; the apostles of Christ by their preaching shall gain possession of the hearts of men for him whose messengers and ministers they are, and when they possess their hearts they shall possess their possessions, for those who have given up themselves to the Lord give up all they have to him.

When Lydia's heart was opened to Christ her house was opened to his ministers. When the Gentile nations became nations of those that were saved, were disciplined, walked in the light of the Lord, and brought their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem (Re 21:24), then the house of Jacob possessed their possessions. This is the part fulfilled by the planting of the

Christian religion in the world, and shall be fulfilled yet more and more by the setting up of Christ's throne where Satan's seat is, and the erecting of trophies of his victory upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. Now here is foretold,

1. How this possession shall be gained, and the opposition given to it got over (Ob 1:18): The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, for their God is, and will be, a consuming fire; and the house of Esau shall be for stubble, easily devoured and consumed by this fire. This is fulfilled,

(1.) In the conversion of multitudes by the grace of Christ; the gospel, preached in the house of Jacob and Joseph, and there owned and professed, shall be as a fire and a flame to melt and to soften hard hearts, to burn up the dross of sin and corruption, that they may be purified and refined with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. Christ, when he comes, shall be as a refiner's fire, Mal 3:1,2.

(2.) In the confusion of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the gospel of Christ, that oppose it and do all they can to hinder the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah by it. The gospel day is a day that burns like an oven, in which all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be a stubble, Mal 4:1. Jacob and Joseph shall be as a fire and a flame; for those that meddle with them, to do them hurt, will find that they do so at their peril; they shall be to them as a torch of fire in a sheaf, Zec 12:6. The word of God in the mouth of his ministers is said to be like fire, and the people as wood to be devoured by it, Jer 5:14.

And the man of sin is to be consumed by the breath of Christ's mouth, 2Th 2:8. Those that are not refined as gold by fire of the gospel shall be consumed as dross by it; for it will be a savour either of life or of death. When idols and idolatry were abolished, and the wealth and power of nations were brought into the service of Christ and his gospel, and the spoils of the strong man armed were divided by him that was stronger than he, then the house of Jacob and Joseph devoured the house of Esau, so that there was none of them left remaining. This the Lord spoke by his prophets, and this he did by his apostles.

2. How far this possession shall extend, Ob 1:19,20. This is described in Jewish language, which speaks the accession made to the land of Israel, after the return out of captivity into Babylon. The captivity of this host of Israel, that is, this host of Israel that have been so long in captivity and now they have come back are still called the children of the captivity, these shall not only recover their own land, but shall gain ground upon their neighbours adjoining to them, some of whom shall become proselytes and shall incorporate with the Jews, who, by possessing them in a holy communion, possess their land. We must reckon ourselves truly enriched by the conversion of our neighbours to the fear of God and the faith of Christ, and their coming to join with us in the worship of God. Such an accession to our Christian communion we must reckon to be more our wealth and strength than an accession to our estates.

Or, The ancient inhabitants of those lands that were carried away into captivity being lost, and never returning to their estates, the children of Israel shall take possession of that which lies next them; for their numbers shall so increase that their own land shall be too strait for them, and their neighbours' estates shall escheat to them ob defectum sanguinis--through default of heirs. They shall enter upon that which is adjoining to them. The country of Esau shall be possessed by those of the south parts of Canaan, for to them it lies contiguous. Those of the plain, on the west of Canaan, which was a champaign country, shall enter upon the land of the Philistines, their neighbours. Those of Judah, which was the chief of the two returning tribes, shall possess the field of Ephraim and Samaria, which before belonged to the ten tribes; and Benjamin, the other tribe, shall possess Gilead on the other side of Jordan, which had belonged to the two tribes and a half.

The kingdom of Israel shall join with that of Judah both in civil and sacred interests, and, as friends and brethren, shall mutually possess and enjoy one another; and both together shall possess the Canaanites, even to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon; and Jerusalem shall possess the cities of the south, even to Sepharad. Thus did the Jews enlarge their borders on all sides. The modern rabbin teach their scholars by Zarephath and

Sepharad to understand France and Spain, grounding upon this a foolish groundless expectation that some time or other the Jews shall be masters of those countries; and they call and count the Christians Edomites, over whom they are to have dominion.

But the promise here, no doubt, has a spiritual signification, and had its accomplishment in the setting up of the Christian church, the gospel-Israel, in the world, and shall have its accomplishment more and more in the enlargement of it and the additions made to it, till the mystical body is completed. When ministers and Christians prevail with their neighbours to come to Christ, to yield themselves to the Lord, they possess them. The converts that Abraham had are said to be the souls that he had gotten, Ge 12:5. The possession is gained, not vi et armis--by force and arms; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; it is by the preaching of the gospel, and the power of divine grace going along with it, that this possession is got and kept.

IV. That the kingdom of the Redeemer shall be erected and maintained, to the comfort of his loyal subjects and the terror and shame of all his enemies (Ob 1:21): The kingdom shall be the Lord's, the Lord Christ's. God shall give it to him, by putting all things into his hand, all power both in heaven and in earth; men shall give it to him, by resigning themselves to him as his willing people, and appointing him their head. Now the work of kings is to protect their subjects and suppress their enemies; and this Christ will do; he will both reward and punish.

1 The mountain of Zion shall be saved; on it saviours shall come, the preachers of the gospel, who are called saviours, because their business is to save themselves and those that hear them; and in this they are workers together with Christ, but to little purpose if he by his grace did not work together with them.

2 The mountain of Esau shall be judged; and the same that come as saviours on Mount Zion shall judge the mountain of Esau; for the word of the gospel in their mouth, that saves believers, judges unbelievers, convinces and condemns them. Christ's ministers are saviours on Mount Zion when they preach that he that

believes shall be saved; but they judge the mount of Esau when they preach that he that believeth not shall be damned, which they are not only commissioned, but commanded to do, Mk 16:16.

And in the course of God's providence his scripture is fulfilled; when God raises up friends to the church in her distress (as he raised up judges to deliver Israel of old, Jdg 2:16), then saviours come on Mount Zion, to save it from being sunk and ruined; and when the enemies of the church are brought down, and their power broken, then is the mount of Esau judged; and this shall be done in every age in such a way as God thinks best; we may depend upon it that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, but the church shall prevail against them; for the kingdom shall be the Lord's; the kingdoms of the world shall become his, and he has taken, and will take, to himself his great power and reign.

20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel *shall possess* that of the Canaanites, *even* unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which *is* in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

Jonah
[Jonah]

Jonah-1

Jonah Flees from the Lord

1 Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Observe,

1 The honour God put upon Jonah, in giving him a commission to go and prophesy against Nineveh. Jonah signifies a dove, a proper name for all God's prophets, all his people, who ought to be harmless as doves, and to mourn as doves for the sins and calamities of the land. His father's name was Amittai--My truth; for God's prophets should be sons of truth. To him the word of the Lord came--to him it was (so the word signifies), for God's word is a real thing; men's words are but wind, but God's words are substance. He has been before acquainted with the word of the Lord, and knew his voice from that of a stranger; the orders now given him were, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, Jon 1:2.

Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city (Ge 10:11), a great city, that great city, forty-eight miles in compass (some make it much more), great in the number of the inhabitants, as appears by the multitude of infants in it (Jon 4:11), great in wealth (there was no end of its store, Na 2:9), great in power and dominion; it was the city that for some time ruled over the kings of the earth. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God's government and judgment. Nineveh was a great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God. How many great cities and great nations are there that sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death! This great city was a wicked city:

Their wickedness has come up before me (their malice, so some read it); their wickedness was presumptuous, and they sinned with a high hand. It is sad to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only all sinners, but making one another sin. Their wickedness has come up, that is, it has come to a high degree, to the highest pitch; the measure of it is full to the brim; their wickedness has come up, as that of Sodom, Ge 18:20,21.

It has come up before me--to my face (so the word is); it is a bold and open affront to God; it is sinning against him, in his sight; therefore Jonah must cry against it; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before, to proclaim war, and to sound an alarm. Cry aloud, spare not. He must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; he that hath ears let him hear what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city. When the cry of sin comes up to God the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbouring nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly the burden of Nineveh; but Jonah must go and carry the message himself:

"Arise quickly; apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet; arise, and go to Nineveh." Those that go on God's errands must rise and go, must stir themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet not to them only; they had the children's bread, but Nineveh eats of the crumbs.

2 The dishonour Jonah did to God in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent (Jon 1:3): But Jonah, instead of rising to go to Nineveh, rose up to flee to Tarshish, to the sea, not bound for any port, but desirous to get away from the presence of the Lord; and, if he might but do that, he card not whither he went, not as if he thought he could go any where from

under the eye of God's inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which, when it put him upon this work, he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of.

Some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel (which in Ezekiel and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake), and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it if he could but get out of the borders of that land.

(1.) Jonah would not go to Nineveh to cry against it either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, and in a road he knew not, or because he was afraid it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city. He consulted with flesh and blood, and declined the embassy because he could not go with safety, or because he was jealous for the prerogatives of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the honour of divine revelation; he feared it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews to another nation, that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself (Jon 4:2) that the reason of his aversion to this journey was because he foresaw that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, who had been so long a peculiar people to God.

(2.) He therefore went to Tarshish, to Tarsus in Cilicia (so some), probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to sojourn. He went to Joppa, a famous seaport in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish, and there he found one. Providence seemed to favour his design, and give him an opportunity to escape. We may be out of the way of duty and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way. He found the ship just ready to weigh anchor perhaps, and to set sail for Tarshish, and so he lost no time.

Or, perhaps, he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going thither; otherwise all places were alike to him. He did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not

in his way, the way he should go. So he paid the fare thereof; for he did not regard the charge, so he could but gain his point, and get to a distance from the presence of the Lord. He went with them, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were that were going to Tarshish. Jonah, forgetting his dignity as well as his duty, herded with them, and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish.

See what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves, and what need we have, when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word, to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns that therefore he was not rebellious, neither turned away back, because God not only spoke to him, but opened his ear, Isa 50:5. Let us learn hence to cease from man, and not to be too confident either of ourselves or others in a time of trial; but let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

4 But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

When Jonah was set on ship-board, and under sail for Tarshish, he thought himself safe enough; but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted as a deserter from God, as one that had run his colours.

I. God sends a pursuer after him, a mighty tempest in the sea, Jon 1:4. God has the winds in his treasure (Ps 135:7), and out of these treasures God sent forth, he cast forth (so the word is), with force and violence, a great wind into the sea; even stormy winds fulfil his word, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he gathers the winds in his fist (Pr 30:4), where he holds them, and whence he squeezes them when he pleases; for though, as to us, the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs. The effect of this wind as a mighty tempest; for when the winds rise the waves rise. Note, Sin brings storms and tempests into the soul, into the family, into churches and nations; it is a disquieting disturbing thing.

The tempest prevailed to such a degree that the ship was likely to be broken; the mariners expected no other; that ship (so some read it), that and no other. Other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet, it should seem, that ship in which Jonah was was tossed more than any other and was more in danger. This wind was sent after Jonah, to fetch him back again to God and to his duty; and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, though it be by a tempest.

II The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, Jon 1:5. The mariners were affected with their danger, though it was not with them that God has this controversy.

1. They were afraid; though, their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in this tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike a terror upon the most daring, and make even great men and chief captains call for shelter from rocks and mountains.

2. They cried every man unto his god; this was the effect of their fear. Many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea. Lord, in trouble they have visited thee. Every man of them prayed; they were not some praying and others reviling, but every man engaged; as the danger was general, so was the address to heaven; there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself. They cried every man to his god, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelar deity; it is a testimony against atheism that every man had a god, and had the belief of a God; but it is an instance of the folly of paganism that they had gods many, every man the god he had a fancy for, whereas there can be but one God, there needs to be no more.

But, though they had lost that dictate of the light of nature that there is but one God, they still were governed by that direction of

the law of nature that God is to be prayed to (Should not a people seek under their God? Isa 8:19), and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger. Call upon me in the time of trouble. Is any afflicted? Is any frightened? Let him pray.

3. Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and, having called upon their gods to help them, they did what they could to help themselves; for that is the rule, Help thyself and God will help thee. They cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them, as Paul's mariners in a like case cast forth even the tackling of the ship, and the wheat, Ac 27:18,19,38.

They were making a trading voyage, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and much merchandise, by which they hoped to get gain; but now they are content to suffer loss by throwing them overboard. to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is. Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for it. And shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life, the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot countervail the loss of the soul?

See the vanity of worldly wealth, and the uncertainty of its continuance with us. Riches make themselves wings and fly away; nay, and the case may be such that we may be under a necessity of making wings for them, and driving them away, as here, when they could not be kept for the owners thereof but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and sink that which otherwise would sink them, though they have no prospect of ever recovering it. Oh that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honour which they cannot keep without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience and ruining their souls for ever!

Those that thus quit their temporal interests for the securing of their spiritual welfare will be unspeakable gainers at last; for what they lose upon those terms they shall find again to life eternal. But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected gone down into his cabin, nay, into the hold, between the sides of the

ship, and there he lies, and is fast asleep; neither the noise without, for the sense of guilt within, awoke him.

Perhaps for some time before he had avoiding sleeping, for fear of God's speaking to him again in a dream; and now that he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger, he slept so much the more soundly. Note, Sin is of a stupifying nature, and we are concerned to take heed lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of it. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from God and their duty, to rock them asleep in carnal security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to watch therefore.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

The master of the ship called Jonah up to his prayers, Jon 1:6. The ship-master came to him, and bade him for shame get up, both to pray for life and to prepare for death; he gave him,

1. A just and necessary chiding: What meanest thou, O sleeper? Here we commend the ship-master, who gave him this reproof; for, though he was a stranger to him, he was, for the present, as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul we must help, as we can, to save it from death. We pity Jonah, who needed this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproving the king of Nineveh, but, being out of the way of his duty, he does himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry ship-master.

See how men by their sin and folly diminish themselves and make themselves mean. Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first step towards his

recovery, as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm may well be asked what they mean.

2. A pertinent word of advice: "Arise, call upon thy God; we are here crying every man to his god, why dost not thou get up and cry to thine? Art not thou equally concerned with the rest both in the danger dreaded and in the deliverance desired?" Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy ought in all reason to contribute their quota towards the prayers and supplications that are made for it. In times of public distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the public good. And the servants of God themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty.

3. A good reason for this advice: If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. It should seem, the many gods they called upon were considered by them only as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him; for the ship-master speaks of one God still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer, he suggested that the danger was very great and imminent: "We are all likely to perish; there is but a step between us and death, and that just ready to be stepped."

Yet he suggested that there was some hope remaining that their destruction might be prevented and they might not perish. While there is still life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer. He suggested also that it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. "If he think upon us, and act for us, we may yet be saved." And therefore to him we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is ever so imminent.

IV. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1 The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon either in the storm itself or in their own distress by it that they concluded it was a messenger of divine justice sent to arrest some one of those that were in that ship, as having been guilty of some enormous crime, judging as the barbarous people (Ac 28:4), "no

doubt one of us is a murderer, or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus pursued by the vengeance of the sea, and it is for his sake that we all suffer." Even the light of nature teaches that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against some extraordinary sins and sinners. Whatever evil is upon us at any time we must conclude there is a cause for it; there is evil done by us, or else this evil would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot which of them was the criminal that had occasioned this storm: Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause the evil is upon us. None of them suspected himself, or said, Is it I, Lord; is it I? But they suspected one another, and would find out the man.

Note, It is a desirable thing, when any evil is upon us, to know for what cause it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and, the grievance being redressed, the grief may be removed. In order to this we must look up to heaven, and pray, Lord, show me wherefore thou contendest with me; that which I see not teach thou me. These mariners desired to know the person that was the dead weight in their ship, the accursed thing, that that one man might die for the people and that the whole ship might not be lost; this was not only expedient, but highly just.

In order to this they cast lots, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secret is hid, agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination, and to take that for true which the lot spoke; for they knew by the light of nature, what the scripture tells us, that the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord. Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a sacred thing, to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to Providence.

3. The lot fell upon Jonah, who could have saved them this trouble if he would but have told them what his own conscience told him, Thou are the man; but as is usual with criminals, he never confesses till he finds he cannot help it, till the lot falls upon him.

We may suppose there were those in the ship who, upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and yet he is the man that the tempest pursues and that the lot pitches upon; for it is his own child, his own servant, that the parent, that the master, corrects, if they do amiss; others that offend he leaves to the law.

The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners, and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hidden from the eyes of all living. God's right hand will find out all his servants that desert him, as well as all his enemies that have designs against him; yea, though they flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, or go down to the sides of the ship.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination before the master and mariners. He was a stranger; none of them could say that they knew the prisoner, or had any thing to lay to his charge, and therefore they must extort a confession from him and judge him out of his own mouth; and for this there needed no rack, the shipwreck they were in danger of was sufficient to frighten him, so as to make him tell the truth. Though it was discovered by the lot that he was the person for whose sake they were thus damaged and exposed, yet they did not fly outrageously upon him, as one would fear they might have done, but calmly and mildly enquired into his case. There is a compassion due to offenders when they are discovered and convicted. They give him no hard words, but, "Tell us, we pray thee, what is the matter?" Two things they enquire of him:--

(1.) Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated: "Tell us for whose cause this evil is upon us; is it indeed for thy cause, and, if so, for what cause? What is this offence for which thou art thus prosecuted?" Perhaps the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and behaviour made them suspect that the lot had missed its man, had missed its mark, and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore begged of him that he would satisfy them in this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles must not only begin, but

pursue the enquiry, must descend to particulars and accomplish a diligent search.

(2.) What his character was, both as to his calling and as to his country.

[1.] They enquire concerning his calling: What is thy occupation? This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon them: "Art thou a diviner, a sorcerer, a student in the black art? Hast thou been conjuring for this wind? Or what business are thou now going on? It is like Balaam's, to curse any of God's people, and is this wind send to stop thee?"

[2.] They enquire concerning his country. One asked, Whence comest thou? Another, not having patience to stay for an answer to that, asked, What is thy country? A third to the same purport, "Of what people art thou? Art thou of the Chaldeans," that were noted for divination, "or of the Arabians," that were noted for stealing? They wished to know of what country he was, that, knowing who was the god of his country, they might guess whether he was one that could do them any kindness in this storm.

5. In answer to these interrogatories Jonah makes a full discovery.

(1.) Did they enquire concerning his country? He tells them he is a Hebrew (Jon 1:9), not only of the nation of Israel, but of their religion, which they received from their fathers. He is a Hebrew, and therefore is the more ashamed to own that he is a criminal; for the sins of Hebrews, that make such a profession of religion and enjoy such privileges, are greater than the sins of others, and more exceedingly sinful.

(2.) Did they enquire concerning his calling--What is thy occupation? In answer to that he gives an account of his religion, for that was his calling, that was his occupation, that was it that he made a business of: "I fear the Lord Jehovah; that is the God I worship, the God I pray to, even the God of heaven, the sovereign Lord of all, that has made the sea and the dry land and has command of both."

Not the god of one particular country, which they enquired after, and such as the gods were that they had been every man calling upon, but the God of the whole earth, who, having made both the sea and the dry land, makes what work he pleases in both and makes what use he pleases of both. This he mentions, not only as condemning himself for his folly, in fleeing from the presence of this God, but as designing to bring these mariners from the worship and service of their many gods to the knowledge and obedience of the one only living and true God. When we are among those that are strangers to us we should do what we can to bring them acquainted with God, by being ready upon all occasions to own our relation to him and our reverence for him.

(3.) Did they enquire concerning his crime, for which he is now persecuted? He owns that he fled from the presence of the Lord, that he was here running away from his duty, and the storm was sent to fetch him back. We have reason to think that he told them this with sorrow and shame, justifying God and condemning himself and intimating to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is, who could send such a messenger as this tempest was after a runagate servant.

6. We are told what impression this made upon the mariners: The men were exceedingly afraid, and justly, for they perceived,

(1.) That God was angry, even that God that made the sea and the dry land. This tempest comes from the hand of an offended justice, and therefore they have reason to fear it will go hard with them. Judgments inflicted for some particular sin have a peculiar weight and terror in them.

(2.) That God was angry with one that feared and worshipped him, only for once running from his work in particular instance; this made them afraid for themselves. "If a prophet of the Lord be thus severely punished for one offence, what will become of us that have been guilty of so many, and great, and heinous offences?" If the righteous be thus scarcely saved, and for a single act of disobedience thus closely pursued, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? 1Pe 4:17,18.

They said to him, "Why hast thou done this? If thou fearest the God that made the sea and the dry land, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldst flee from his presence? What an absurd unaccountable thing is it!" Thus he was reproved, as Abraham by Abimelech (Ge 20:16); for if the professors of religion do a wrong thing they must expect to hear of it from those that make no such profession. "Why hast thou done this to us?" (so it may be taken) "Why has thou involved us in the prosecution?" Note, Those that commit a willful sin know not how far the mischievous consequences of it may reach, nor what mischief may be done by it.

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil
is upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest
thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou?
9 And he said unto them, I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the
God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*.
10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast
thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the
Lord, because he had told them.
11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may
be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

It is plain that Jonah is the man for whose sake this evil is upon them, but the discovery of him to be so was not sufficient to answer the demands of this tempest; they had found him out, but something more was to be done, for still the sea wrought and was tempestuous (Jon 1:11), and again (Jon 1:13), it grew more and more tempestuous (so the margin reads it); for if we discover sin to be the cause of our troubles, and do not forsake it, we do but make bad worse. Therefore they went on with the prosecution.

I. They enquired of Jonah himself what he thought they must do with him (Jon 1:11): What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm to us? They perceived that Jonah is a prophet of the Lord, and therefore will not do any thing, no, not in his own case, without consulting him. He appears to be a delinquent, but he appears also to be a penitent, and therefore they will not insult over him, nor offer him any rudeness. Note, We ought to act with great tenderness towards those that are overtaken in a fault and are brought into distress by it. They would not cast him into the

sea if he could think of any other expedient by which to save the ship.

Or, perhaps, thus they would show how plain the case was, that there was no remedy but he must be thrown overboard; let him be his own judge as he had been his own accuser, and he himself will say so. Note, When sin has raised a storm, and laid us under the tokens of God's displeasure, we are concerned to enquire what we shall do that the sea may be calm; and what shall we do? We must pray and believe, when we are in a storm, and study to answer the end for which it was sent, and then the storm shall become a calm. But especially we must consider what is to be done to the sin that raised the storm; that must be discovered, and penitently confessed; that must be detested, disclaimed, and utterly forsaken. What have I to do any more with it? Crucify it, crucify it, for this evil it has done.

II. Jonah reads his own doom (Jon 1:12): Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea. He would not himself leap into the sea, but he put himself into their hands, to cast him into the sea, and assured them that then the sea would be calm, and not otherwise. He proposed this, in tenderness to the mariners, that the might no suffer for his sake. "Let thy hand be upon me" (says David, 1Ch 21:17), "who am guilty; let me die for me own sin, but let not the innocent suffer for it." This is the language of true penitents, who earnestly desire that none but themselves may ever smart, or fare the worse, for their sins and follies. He proposed it likewise in submission to the will of God, who sent this tempest in pursuit of him; and therefore judged himself to be cast into the sea, because to that he plainly saw God judging him, that he might not be judged of the Lord to eternal misery.

Note, Those who are truly humbled for sin will cheerfully submit to the will of God, even in a sentence of death itself. If Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, he subjects himself to it, and justifies God in it. No matter though the flesh be destroyed, no matter how it is destroyed, so that the spirit may be but saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1Co 5:5. The reason he gives is, For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon

you. See how ready Jonah is to take all the guilt upon himself, and to look upon all the trouble as theirs: "It is purely for my sake, who have sinned, that this tempest is upon you; therefore cast me forth into the sea; for,"

1. "I deserve it. I have wickedly departed from my God, and it is upon my account that he is angry with you. Surely I am unworthy to breathe in that air which for my sake has been hurried with winds, to live in that ship which for my sake has been thus tossed. Cast me into the sea after the wares which for my sake you have thrown into it. Drowning is too good for me; a single death is punishment too little for such a complicated offence."

2. "Therefore there is no way of having the sea calm. If it is I that have raised the storm, it is not casting the wares into the sea that will lay it again; no, you must cast me thither." When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised there, nothing will turn it into a calm but parting with the sin that occasioned the disturbance, and abandoning that. It is not parting with our money that will pacify conscience; no, it is the Jonah that be thrown overboard. Jonah is herein a type of Christ, that he gives his life a ransom for many; but with this material difference, that the storm Jonah gave himself up to still was of his own raising, but that storm which Christ gave himself up to still was of our raising. Yet, as Jonah delivered himself up to be cast into a raging sea that it might be calm, so did our Lord Jesus, when he died that we might live.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

The poor mariners did what they could to save themselves from the necessity of throwing Jonah into the sea, but all in vain (Jon 1:13): They rowed hard to bring the ship to the land, that, if they must part with Jonah, they might set him safely on shore; but they could not. All their pains were to no purpose; for the sea wrought harder than they could, and was tempestuous against them, so that they could by no means make the land. If they thought sometimes that they had gained their point, they were quickly thrown off to sea again. Still their ship was overladen; their lightening it of the

wares made it never the lighter as long as Jonah was in it. And, besides, they rowed against wind and tide, the wind of God's vengeance, the tide of his counsels; and it is in vain to contend with God, in vain to think of saving ourselves any other way than by destroying our sins.

By this it appears that these mariners were very loth to execute Jonah's sentence upon himself, though they knew it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them. They were thus very backward to it partly from a dread of bringing upon themselves the guilt of blood, and partly from a compassion they could not but have for poor Jonah, as a good man, as a man in distress, and as a man of sincerity. Note, The more sinners humble and abase themselves, judge and condemn themselves, the more likely they are to find pity both with God and man. The more forward Jonah was to say, Cast me into the sea, the more backward they were to do it.

IV. When they found it necessary to cast Jonah into the sea they first prayed to God that the guilt of his blood might not lie upon them, nor be laid to their charge, Jon 1:14. When they found it in vain to row hard they quitted their oars and went to their prayers: Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, unto Jehovah, the true and living God, and no more to the gods many. and lords many, that the had cried to, Jon 1:5. They prayed to the God of Israel, being now convinced, by the providences of God concerning Jonah and the information he had given them, that he is God alone. Having determined to cast Jonah into the sea, they first enter a protestation in the court of heaven that they do not do it willingly, much less maliciously, or with any design to be revenged upon him because it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them. No; his god forgive him, as they do!

But they are forced to do it se defendendo--in self-defence, having no other way to save their own lives; and they do it as ministers of justice, both God and himself having sentenced him to so great a death. They therefore present a humble petition to the God whom Jonah feared, that they might not perish for his life. See,

1. What a fear they had of contracting the guilt of blood, especially the blood of one that feared God, and worshipped him, and had fellowship with him, as they perceived Jonah had, though in a single instance he had been faulty. Natural conscience cannot but have a dread of blood-guiltiness, and make men very earnest in prayer, as David was, to be delivered from it, Ps 51:14. So they were here: We beseech thee, O Lord! we beseech thee, lay not upon us innocent blood. They are now as earnest in praying to be saved from the peril of sin as they were before in praying to be saved from the peril of the sea, especially because Jonah appeared to them to be no ordinary person, but a very good man, a man of God, a worshipper of the great Creator of heaven and earth, upon which account even these rude mariners conceived a veneration for him, and trembled at the thought of taking away his life.

Innocent blood is precious, but saints' blood, prophets' blood, is much more precious, and so those will find to their cost that any way bring themselves under the guilt of it. The mariners saw Jonah pursued by divine vengeance, and yet could not without horror think of being his executioners. Though his God has a controversy with him, yet, think they, Let not our hand be upon him. The Israelites were at this time killing the prophets for doing their duty (witness Jezebel's late persecution), and were prodigal of their lives, which is aggravated by the tenderness these heathens had for one whom they perceived to be a prophet, though he was now out of the way of his duty.

2. What a fear they had of incurring the wrath of God; they were jealous lest he should be angry if they should be the death of Jonah, for he had said, Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm; it is at your peril if you do. "Lord," say they, "let us not perish for this man's life. Let it not be such a fatal dilemma to us. We see we must perish if we spare his life; Oh let us not perish for taking away his life." And their plea is good: "For thou, O Lord! hast done as it pleased thee; thou had laid us under a necessity of doing it; the wind that pursued him, the lot that discovered him, were both under thy direction, which we are herein governed by; we are but the instruments of Providence, and it is sorely against our will that we do it; but we must say, The will of the Lord be done."

Note, When we are manifestly led by Providence to do things contrary to our own inclinations, and quite beyond our own intentions, it will be some satisfaction to us to be able to say, Thou, O Lord! has done as it pleased thee. And, if God please himself, we ought to be satisfied though he do not please us.

V. Having deprecated the guilt they dreaded, they proceeded to execution (Jon 1:15): They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea. They cast him out of their ship, out of their company, and cast him into the sea, a raging stormy sea, that cried, "Give, give; surrender the traitor, or expect no peace." We may well think what confusion and amazement poor Jonah was in when he saw himself ready to be hurried into the presence of that God as a Judge whose presence as a Master he was now fleeing from.

Note, Those know not what ruin they run upon that run away from God. Woe unto them! for they have fled from me. When sin is the Jonah that raises the storm, that must thus be cast forth into the sea; we must abandon it, and be the death of it, must drown that which otherwise will drown us in destruction and perdition. And if we thus by a thorough repentance and reformation cast our sins forth into the sea, never to recall them or return to them again, God will by pardoning mercy subdue our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea too, Mic 7:19.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

The throwing of Jonah into the sea immediately put an end to the storm. The sea has what she came for, and therefore rests contended; she ceases from her raging. It is an instance of the sovereign power of God that he can soon turn the storm into a calm, and of the equity of his government that when the end of an affliction is answered and attained the affliction shall immediately be removed. He will not contend for ever, will not contend any longer till we submit ourselves and give up the cause. If we turn from our sins, he will soon turn from his anger.

VII. The mariners were hereby more confirmed in their belief that Jonah's God was the only true God (Jon 1:16): Then the men feared the Lord with a great fear, were possessed with a deep veneration for the God of Israel, and came to a resolution that they would worship him only for the future; for there is no other God that can destroy, that can deliver, after this sort. When they saw the power of God in raising and laying the tempest, when they saw his justice upon Jonah his own servant, and when they saw his goodness to them in saving them from the brink of ruin, then they feared the Lord, Jer 5:22. As an evidence of their fear of him, they offered sacrifice to him when they came ashore again in the land of Israel, and for the present made vows that they would do so, in thankfulness for their deliverance, and to make atonement for their souls. Or, perhaps, they had something yet on board which might be for a sacrifice to God immediately.

Or it may be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, with which God is better pleased than with that of an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs. See Ps 107:2, &c. We must make vows, not only when we are in the pursuit of mercy, but, which is much more generous, when we have received mercy, as those that are still studying what we shall render.

VIII. Jonah's life, after all, is saved by a miracle, and we shall hear of him again for all this. In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy. Jonah shall be worse frightened than hurt, not so much punished for his sin as reduced to his duty. Though he flees from the presence of the Lord, and seems to fall into his avenging hands, yet God has more work for him to do, and therefore has prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah (Jon 1:17), a whale our Saviour calls it (Mt 12:40), one of the largest sorts of whales, that have wider throats than others, in the belly of which has sometimes been found the dead body of a man in armour. Particular notice is taken, in the history of creation, of God's creating great whales (Ge 1:21) and the leviathan in the waters made to play therein, Ps 104:26. But God finds work for this leviathan, has prepared him, has numbered him (so the word is), has appointed him to be Jonah's receiver and deliverer.

Note, God has command of all the creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people, even the fishes of the sea, that are most from under man's cognizance, even the great whales, that are altogether from under man's government. This fish was prepared, lay ready under water close by the ship, that he might keep Jonah from sinking to the bottom, and save him alive, though he deserved to die.

Let us stand still and see this salvation of the Lord, and admire his power, that he could thus save a drowning man, and his pity, that he would thus save one that was running from him and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies that Jonah was not now consumed. The fish swallowed up Jonah, not to devour him, but to protect him. Out of the eater comes forth meat; for Jonah was alive and well in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, not consumed by the heat of the animal, nor suffocated for want of air. It is granted that to nature this was impossible, but not to the God of nature, with whom all things are possible. Jonah by this miraculous preservation was designed to be made,

1. A monument of divine mercy, for the encouragement of those that have sinned, and gone away from God, to return and repent.

2. A successful preacher to Nineveh; and this miracle wrought for his deliverance, if the tidings of it reached Nineveh, would contribute to his success.

3. An illustrious type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the scriptures (1Co 15:4), according to this scripture, for, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Mt 12:40. Jonah's burial was a figure of Christ's. God prepared Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained that he should make his grave with the rich, Isa 53:9. Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? So was Christ's, one in which never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? So was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the bringing of the doctrine of repentance to the Gentile world. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

16 Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto
the Lord, and made vows.
17 Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.
And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

Jonah-2

Jonah's Prayer of Thanksgiving for Deliverance

1 Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly,
2 and said,
I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me;
out of the belly of hell cried I,
and thou heardest my voice.

God and his servant Jonah had parted in anger, and the quarrel began on Jonah's side; he fled from his country that he might outrun his work; but we hope to see them both together again, and the reconciliation begins on God's side. In the close of the foregoing chapter we found God returning to Jonah in a way of mercy, delivering him from going down to the pit, having found a ransom; in this chapter we find Jonah returning to God in a way of duty; he was called up in the former chapter to pray to his God, but we are not told that he did so; however, now at length he is brought to it. Now observe here,

I. When he prayed (Jon 2:1): Then Jonah prayed; then when he was in trouble, under the sense of sin and the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin, then he prayed. Note, When we are in affliction we must pray; then we have occasion to pray, then we have errands at the throne of grace and business there; then, if ever, we shall have a disposition to pray, when the heart is humbled, and softened, and made serious; then God expects it (in their affliction they will seek me early, seek me earnestly); and, though we bring our afflictions upon ourselves by our sins, yet, if we pray in humility and godly sincerity, we shall be welcome to the throne of grace, as Jonah was. Then when he was in a hopeful way of deliverance, being preserved alive by miracle, a plain indication that he was reserved for further mercy, then he prayed. An apprehension of God's good-will to us, notwithstanding our offences, gives us boldness of access to him,

and opens the lips in prayer which were closed with the sense of guilt and dread of wrath.

II. Where he prayed--in the fish's belly. No place is amiss for prayer. I will that men pray every where. Wherever God casts us we may find a way open to heaven-ward, if it be not our own fault. Undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ--The heavens are equally accessible from every part of the earth. He that has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, wherever he goes carries the altar along with him, that sanctifies the gift, and is himself a living temple. Jonah was here in confinement; the belly of the fish was his prison, was a close and dark dungeon to him; yet there he had freedom of access to God, and walked at liberty in communion with him. Men may shut us out from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. Jonah was now in the bottom of the sea, yet out of the depths he cries to God; as Paul and Silas prayed in the prison, in the stocks.

III. To whom he prayed--to the Lord his God. He had been fleeing from God, but now he sees the folly of it, and returns to him; by prayer he draws near to that God whom he had gone aside from, and engages his heart to approach him. In prayer he has an eye to him, not only as the Lord, but as his God, a God in covenant with him; for, thanks be to God, every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant. This encourages even backsliding children to return. Jer 3:22, Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas;
and the floods compassed me about:
all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.
4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight;
yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
5 The waters compassed me about,
even to the soul:
the depth closed me round about,
the weeds were wrapped about my head.

What his prayer was. He afterwards recollected the substance of it, and left it upon record. He reflects upon the workings of his heart towards God when he was in his distress and danger, and

the conflict that was then in his breast between faith and sense, between hope and fear.

1. He reflects upon the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer (Jon 2:2): He said, I cried, by reason of my affliction, unto the Lord. Note, Many that prayed not at all, or did but whisper prayer, when they were in prosperity, are brought to pray, nay, are brought to cry, by reason of their affliction; and it is for this end that afflictions are sent, and they are in vain if this end be not answered. Those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them, Job 36:13.

"Out of the belly of hell and the grave cried I." The fish might well be called a grave, and, as it was a prison to which Jonah was condemned for his disobedience and in which he lay under the wrath of God, it might well be called the belly of hell. Thither this good man was cast, and yet thence he cried to God, and it was not in vain; God heard him, heard the voice of his affliction, the voice of his supplication. There is a hell in the other world, out of which there is no crying to God with any hope of being heard; but, whatever hell we may be in the belly of in this world, we may thence cry to God. When Christ lay, as Jonah, three days and three nights in the grave, though he prayed not, as Jonah did, yet his very lying there cried to God for poor sinners, and the cry was heard.

2. He reflects upon the very deplorable condition that he was in when he was in the belly of hell, which, when he lay there, he was very sensible of and made particular remarks upon. Note, If we would get good by our troubles, we must take notice of our troubles, and of the hand of God in them. Jonah observes here,

(1.) How low he was thrown (Jon 2:3): Thou hadst cast me into the deep. The mariners cast him there; but he looked above them, and saw the hand of God casting him there. Whatever deeps we are cast into, it is God that casts us into them, and he it is who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell. He was cast into the midst of the seas--the heart of the seas (so the word is), and thence Christ borrows that Hebrew phrase, when he applies it to his own lying so long in the heart of the earth. For he that is laid

dead in the grave, though it be ever so shallow, is cut off as effectually from the land of the living as if he were laid in the heart of the earth.

(2.) How terribly he was beset: The floods compassed me about. The channels and springs of the waters of the sea surrounded him on every side; it was always high-water with him. God's dear saints and servants are sometimes encompassed with the floods of affliction, with troubles that are very forcible and violent, that bear down on all before them, and that run constantly upon them, as the waters of a river in a continual succession, one trouble upon the neck of another, as Job's messengers of evil tidings; they are enclosed by them on all sides, as the church complains, La 3:7.

He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out, nor see which way I may flee for safety. All thy billows and they waves passed over me. Observe, He calls them God's billows and his waves, not only because he made them (the sea is his, and he made it), and because he rules them (for even the winds and the seas obey him), but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and limited them, and ordered them to afflict and terrify him, but not to destroy him. These words are plainly quoted by Jonah from Ps 42:7, where, though the translations differ a little, in the original David's complaint is the same verbatim--word for word, with this of Jonah's: All thy billows and thy waves passed over me. What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically Jonah applied to himself as literally fulfilled.

For the reconciling of ourselves to our afflictions, it is good to search precedents, that we may find there has no temptation taken us but such as is common to men. If ever any man's case was singular, and not to be paralleled, surely Jonah's was, and yet, to his great satisfaction, he finds even the man after God's own heart making the same complaint of God's waves and billows going over him that he has now occasion to make. When God performs the thing that is appointed for us we shall find that many such things are with him, that even our path of trouble is no untrodden path, and that God deals with us no otherwise than as he uses to deal with those that love his name.

And therefore for our assistance in our addresses to God, when we are in trouble, it is good to make use of the complaints and prayers which the saints that have been before us made use of in the like case. See how good it is to be ready in the scriptures; Jonah, when he could make no use of his Bible, by the help of his memory furnished himself from the scripture with a very proper representation of his case: All thy billows and thy waves passed over me. To the same purport, Jon 2:5, The waters compassed me about even to the soul; they threatened his life, which was hereby brought into imminent danger; or they made an impression upon his spirit; he saw them to be tokens of God's displeasure, and in them the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him; this reached to his soul, and put that into confusion.

And this also is borrowed from David's complaint, Ps 69:1 The waters have come in unto my soul. When without are fightings it is no marvel that within are fears. Jonah, in the fish's belly, finds the depths enclosing him round about, so that if he would get out of his prison, yet he must unavoidably perish in the waters. He feels the sea-weed (which the fish sucked in with the water) wrapped about his head, so that he has no way left him to help himself, nor hope that any one else can help him. Thus are the people of God sometimes perplexed and entangled, that they may learn not to trust in themselves, but in God that raises the dead, 2Co 1:8,9.

(3.) How fast he was held (Jon 2:6): He went down to the bottom of the mountains, to the rocks in the sea, upon which the hills and promontories by the seaside seem to be bottomed; he lay among them, nay, he lay under them; the earth with her bars was about him, so close about him that it was likely to be about him for ever. The earth was so shut and locked, so barred and bolted, against him, that he was quite cut off from any hope of ever returning to it. Thus helpless, thus hopeless, did Jonah's case seem to be. Those whom God contends with the whole creation is at war with.

3. He reflects upon the very black and melancholy conclusion he was then ready to make concerning himself, and the relief he obtained against it, Jon 2:4,7.

(1.) He began to sink into despair, and to give up himself for gone and undone to all intents and purposes. When the waters compassed him about even to the soul no marvel that his soul fainted within him, fainted away, so that he had not any comfortable enjoyments or expectations; his spirits quite failed, and he looked upon himself as a dead man. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, and the apprehension of that was the thing that made his spirit faint within him. He thought God had quite forsaken him, would never return in mercy to him, nor show him any token for good again. He had no example before him of any that were brought alive out of a fish's belly; if he thought of Job upon the dunghill, Joseph in the pit, David in the cave, yet these did not come up to his case.

Nor was there any visible way of escape open for him but by miracle; and what reason had he to expect that a miracle of mercy should be wrought for him who was now made a monument of justice? How own conscience told him that he had wickedly fled from the presence of the Lord, and therefore he might justly cast him away from his presence, and, in token of that, take away his Holy Spirit from him, never to visit him more. What hopes could he have of deliverance out of a trouble which his own ways and doings had procured to himself?

Observe, When Jonah would say the worst he could of his case he says this, I am cast out of thy sight; those, and those only, are miserable, whom God has cast out of his sight, whom he will no longer own and favour. What is the misery of the damned in hell but this, that they are cast out of God's sight? For what is the happiness of heaven but the vision and fruition of God?

Sometimes the condition of God's people may be such in this world that they may think themselves quite excluded from God's presence, so as no more to see him, or to be regarded by him. Jacob and Israel said, My way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God, Isa 40:27. Zion said, The

Lord has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me, Isa 49:14. But it is only the surmise of unbelief, for God has not cast away his people whom he has chosen.

(2.) Yet he recovered himself from sinking into despair, with some comfortable prospects of deliverance. Faith corrected and controlled the surmises of fear and distrust. Here was a fierce struggle between sense and faith, but faith had the last word and came off a conqueror. In trying times, the issue will be good at last, providing our faith do not fail; it was therefore the continuance of that in its vigour that Christ secured to Peter. I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, Lu 22:32. David would have fainted if he had not believed, Ps 27:13. Jonah's faith said, Yet I will look again towards thy holy temple. Thus, though he was perplexed, yet not in despair; in the depth of the sea he had this hope in him, as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast. That which he supports himself with the hope of is that he shall yet look again towards God's holy temple.

[1.] That he shall live; he shall look again heaven-ward, shall again see the light of the sun, though now he seems to be cast into utter darkness. Thus against hope he believed in hope.

[2.] That he shall live, and praise God; and a good man does not desire to live for any other purpose, Ps 119:175. That he shall enjoy communion with God again in holy ordinances, shall look towards, and go up to, the holy temple, there to enquire, there to behold the beauty of the Lord. When Hezekiah desired that he might be assured of his recovery, he asked, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?

(Isa 38:22), as if that were the only thing for the sake of which he wished for health; so Jonah here hopes he shall look again towards the temple; that way he had looked many a time with pleasure, rejoicing when he was called to go up to the house of the Lord; and the remembrance of it was his comfort, that, when he had opportunity, he was no stranger to the holy temple. But now he could not so much as look towards it; in the fish's belly he could not tell which way it lay, but he hopes he shall be again able to look towards it, to look on it, to look into it.

Observe, How modestly Jonah expresses himself; as one conscious to himself of guilt and unworthiness, he dares not speak of dwelling in God's house, as David, knowing that he is no more worthy to be called a son, but he hopes that he may be admitted to look towards it. He calls it the holy temple, for the holiness of it was, in his eye, the beauty of it, and that for the sake of which he loved and looked towards it. The temple was a type of heaven; and he promises himself that though being now a captive exile, he should never be loosed, but die in the pit, yet he should look towards the heavenly temple, and be brought safely thither. Though he die in the fish's belly, in the bottom of the sea, yet thence he hopes his soul shall be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

Or these words may be taken as Jonah's vow when he was in distress, and he speaks (Jon 2:9) of paying what he vowed; his vow is that if God deliver him he will praise him in the gates of the daughter of Zion, Ps 9:13,14. His sin for which God pursued him was fleeing from the presence of the Lord, the folly of which he is now convinced of, and promises not only that he will never again look towards Tarshish, but that he will again look towards the temple, and will go from strength to strength till he appear before God there. And thus we see how faith and hope were his relief in his desponding condition. To these he added prayer to God (Jon 2:7): "When my soul fainted within me, then I remembered the Lord, I betook myself to that cordial."

He remembered what he is, how nigh to those that seem to be thrown at the greatest distance by trouble, how merciful to those that seem to have thrown themselves at a distance from him by sin. He remembered what he had done for him, what he had done for others, what he could do, what he had promised to do; and this kept him from fainting. Remembering God, he made his addresses to him: "My prayer came in unto thee; I sent it in, and expected to receive an answer to it." Note, Our afflictions should put us in mind of God, and thereby put us upon prayer to him. When our souls faint we must remember God; and, when we remember God, we must send up a prayer to him, a pious

ejaculation at least; when we think on his name we should call on his name.

4. He reflects upon the favour of God to him when thus in his distress he sought to God and trusted him.

(1.) He graciously accepted his prayer, and gave admission and audience to it (Jon 2:7): My prayer, being sent to him, came in unto him, even into his holy temple; it was heard in the highest heavens, though it was prayed in the lowest deeps.

(2.) He wonderfully wrought deliverance for him, and, when he was in the depth of his misery, gave him the earnest and assurance of it (Jon 2:6): Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God! Some think he said this when he was vomited up on dry ground; and then it is the language of thankfulness, and he sets it over-against the great difficulty of his case, that the power of God might be the more magnified in his deliverance: The earth with her bars was about me for ever, and yet thou hast brought up my life from the pit, from the bars of the pit.

Or, rather, we may suppose it spoken while he was yet in the fish's belly, and then it is the language of his faith: "Thou hast kept me alive here, in the pit, and therefore thou canst, thou wilt, bring up my life from the pit;" and he speaks of it with as much assurance as if it were done already: Thou has brought up my life. Though he has not an express promise of deliverance, he has an earnest of it, and on that he depends: he has life, and therefore believes his life shall be brought up from corruption; and this assurance he addresses to God:

Thou has done it, O Lord my God! Thou art the Lord, and therefore canst do it for me, my God, and therefore wilt do it. Note, If the Lord be our God, he will be to us the resurrection and the life, will redeem our lives from destruction, from the power of the grave.

5. He gives warning to others, and instructs them to keep close to God (Jon 2:8): Those that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy, that is,

(1.) Those that worship other gods, as the heathen mariners did, and call upon them, and expect relief and comfort from them, forsake their own mercy; they stand in their own light; they turn their back upon their own happiness, and go quite out of the way of all good. Note, Idols are lying vanities, and those that pay that homage to them which is due to God only act as contrarily to their interests as to their duty. Or,

(2.) Those that follow their own inventions, as Jonah himself had done when he fled from the presence of the Lord to go to Tarshish, forsake their own mercy, that mercy which they might find in God, and might have such a covenant-right and title to it as to be able to call it their own, if they would but keep close to God and their duty. Those that think to go any where to be from under the eye of God, as Jonah did--that think to better themselves by deserting his service, as Jonah did--and that grudge his mercy to any poor sinners, and pretend to be wiser than he in judging who are fit to have prophets sent them and who are not, as Jonah did--they observe lying vanities, are led away by foolish groundless fancies, and, like him, they forsake their own mercy, and no good can come of it.

Note, Those that forsake their own duty forsake their own mercy; those that run away from the work of their place and day run away from the comfort of it.

6. He solemnly binds his soul with a bond that, if God work deliverance for him, the God of his mercies shall be the God of his praises, Jon 2:9. He covenants with God,

(1.) That he will honour him in his devotions with the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and God has said, for the encouragement of those that do so, that those that offer praise glorify him. He will, according to the law of Moses, bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will offer that according to the law of nature, with the voice of thanksgiving. The love and thankfulness of the heart to God

are the life and soul of this duty; without these neither the sacrifice of thanksgiving nor the voice of thanksgiving will avail any thing.

But gratitude was then, by a divine appointment, to be expressed by a sacrifice, in which the offerer presented the beast slain to God, not in lieu of himself, but in token of himself; and it is now to be expressed by the voice of thanksgiving, the calves of our lips (Ho 14:2), the fruit of our lips (Heb 13:15), speaking forth, singing forth, the high praises of our God. This Jonah here promises, that with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he will mention the lovingkindness of the Lord, to his glory, and the encouragement of others.

(2.) That he will honour him in his conversation by a punctual performance of his vows, which he made in the fish's belly. Some think it was some work of charity that he vowed, or such a vow as Jacob's was, Of all that thou hast given me I will give the tenth unto thee. More probably his vow was that if God would deliver him he would readily go wherever he should please to send him, though it were to Nineveh. When we smart for deserting our duty it is time to promise that we will adhere to it, and abound in it. Or, perhaps, the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the thing he vowed, and that is it which he will pay, as David, Ps 116:17-19.

7. He concludes with an acknowledgment of God as the Saviour of his people: Salvation is of the Lord; it belongs to the Lord, Ps 3:8. He is the God of salvation, Ps 68:19,20. He only can work salvation, and he can do it be the danger and distress ever so great; he has promised salvation to his people that trust in him. All the salvations of his church in general, and of particular saints, were wrought by him; he is the Saviour of those that believe, 1Ti 4:10. Salvation is still of him, as it has always been; from him alone it is to be expected, and on him we are to depend for it. Jonah's experience shall encourage others, in all ages, to trust in God as the God of their salvation; all that read this story shall say with assurance, say with admiration, that salvation is of the Lord, and is sure to all that belongs to him.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;

the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever:
yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.
7 When my soul fainted within me
I remembered the Lord:
and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.
8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.
9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the Lord.
10 And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*.

We have here Jonah's discharge from his imprisonment, and his deliverance from that death which there he was threatened with--his return, though not to life, for he lived in the fish's belly, yet to the land of the living, for from that he seemed to be quite cut off--his resurrection, though not from death, yet from the grave, for surely never man was so buried alive as Jonah was in the fish's belly. His enlargement may be considered,

1. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures. God spoke to the fish, gave him orders to return him, as before he had given him orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures, and it is done; they are all his ready obedient servants. But to man he speaks once, yea, twice, and he perceives it not, regards it not, but turns a deaf ear to what he says. Note, God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes by them.

2. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, that in his distress prays to him. Jonah had sinned, and had done foolishly, very foolishly; his own backslidings did not correct him, and it appears by his after-conduct that his foolishness was not quite driven from him, no, not by the rod of this correction; and yet, upon his praying, and humbling himself before God, here is a miracle in nature wrought for his deliverance, to intimate what a miracle of grace, free grace, God's reception and entertainment of returning sinners are. When God had him at his mercy he showed him mercy, and did not contend for ever.

3. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. He died and was buried, to lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three

nights, a prisoner for our debt; but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers to preach repentance, and remission of sins, even to the Gentiles. And thus was another scripture fulfilled, After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up, Ho 6:2 The earth trembled as if full of her burden, as the fish was of Jonah.

Jonah-3

The Repentance of Nineveh

1 And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying,
2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

We have here a further evidence of the reconciliation between God and Jonah, and that it was a thorough reconciliation, though the controversy between them had run high.

I. Jonah's commission is renewed and readily obeyed.

1. By this it appears that God was perfectly reconciled to Jonah, that he employed him again in his service; and the commission anew given him was an evidence of the remission of his former disobedience. Among men, it has been justly pleaded that the giving of a commission to a criminal convicted is equivalent to a pardon, so it was to Jonah. The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time (Jon 3:1); for,

1. Jonah must be tried, whether he do indeed repent of his former disobedience or no, and whether he have gotten the good designed him both by his strange punishment an by his strange deliverance. He had deserted his work and duty, and had been under arrest for it, had received a sentence of death within himself; but, upon his submission, God had released him, had given him his life, had given him his liberty; but it is upon his good behaviour that he is released, and he must again be put upon the trial whether he will follow the will of God or his own will. After he has been thrown into the sea, and thrown out of it again, God comes and asks him, "Jonah, wilt thou go to Nineveh now?"

For when God judges he will overcome, he will gain his point; he will bring the disobedient stubborn child to his foot at last.

Note, When God has afflicted us, and delivered us out of affliction, we must hear his voice, saying to us, Now return to the duties which before you neglected, and which by these providences you are called to. God now said, in effect, to Jonah, as Christ said to the impotent man, when he had healed him, "Now go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee (Joh 5:14), a worse thing than lying three days and three nights in the whale's belly." God looks upon men, when he has afflicted them and has delivered them out of their affliction, to see whether they will mend of that fault, particularly, for which they were corrected; and therefore in that thing we are concerned to see to it that we receive not the grace of God in vain, neither in the correction nor in the deliverance, for both are designed to be means of grace.

(2.) Jonah shall be trusted, in token of God's favour to him. God might justly have said concerning Jonah, as we should concerning one that had cheated us and dealt treacherously with us, that though we would not proceed to the rigour of the law against him, nor ruin him, yet we would never again repose a confidence in him; justly might the Spirit of prophecy, which Jonah had resisted and rebelled against, depart from him, with a resolution never to return to him any more. One would have expected that though his life was spared, yet he would be laid under a disability and incapacity ever to serve the government again in the character of a prophet.

But, behold! the word of the Lord comes to him again, to show that when God forgives he forgets, and whom he forgives he gives a new heart and a new spirit to; he receives those into his family again, and restores them to their former estate, that had been prodigal children and disobedient servants.

Note, God's making use of us is the best evidence of his being at peace with us. Hereby it will appear that our sins are pardoned, and we have the good-will of God towards us; does his good word come unto us, and do we experience his good work in us!

if so, we have reason to admire the riches of free grace and to own our obligations to the Lord Jesus, who received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell even among them, and employ them in his word, Ps 68:18.

2. By this it appears that Jonah was well reconciled to God, that he was not now, as he had been before, disobedient to the heavenly vision, did not flee from the presence of the Lord, as he had done. He neither endeavored to avoid hearing the command, nor did he decline obeying it; he made no objections, as he had done, that the journey was long, the errand invidious, the delivery of it perilous, and, if the threatened judgment did come, he should be reproached as a false prophet, and the impenitence of his own nation would be upbraided, which he had objected, Jon 4:2. But now, without murmuring and disputing, Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord, Jon 3:3. See here,

(1.) The nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty, from which we had turned aside; it is doing that good which we had left undone.

(2.) The benefit of affliction; it reduces those to their place that had deserted it. Jonah might truly say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word; and therefore, though it was dreadful, though it was painful to me, and for the present not joyous, but grievous, yet it was good, very good, for me, that I was afflicted."

(3.) See the power of divine grace working with affliction, for otherwise affliction of itself would rather drive men from God than bring them to him; but God by his grace can turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make those willing in the day of his power, freely willing to come under his yoke, whose neck had been as an iron sinew.

(4.) See the duty of all those to whom the word of the Lord comes; they must in all points conform themselves to it, and yield a cheerful faithful obedience to the orders God gives them.

Jonah arose, and did not sit still in sloth or sullenness; he went directly to Nineveh, though it was a great way off, and a place where, it is likely, he never was before; yet thither he took his journey, according to the word of the Lord. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; whatever appears to be the word of the Lord we must conscientiously do according to it.

II. Let us now see what was the command or commission given him, and what he did in prosecution of it.

1. He was sent as a herald at arms, in the name of the God of heaven, to proclaim war with Nineveh (Jon 3:2): "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city," that metropolis, and preach unto it, preach against it, so the Chaldee. What is against us is preached to us, that we may hear it and take warning; and what is preached to us, if we do not give ear to it, and mix faith with it, will prove to be against us. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, which was at this time the chief city of the Gentile world, as an indication of God's gracious intentions in process of time to make the light of divine revelation to shine in those dark regions. God knew that if Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, had had the means of grace, they would have repented, and yet he denied them those means, Mt 11:21,23.

He knew that if Nineveh had now the means of grace they would repent, and he gave them those means, sent Jonah, though not to preach repentance to them expressly (for we find not that he had that in his commission), yet to preach them to repentance, for that was the happy effect of what he had in commission. If God thus in dispensing his favours, in giving the means of grace to some places and not to others, and the spirit of grace to some persons and not to others, acts by prerogative and in a way of sovereignty, who may say unto him, What doest thou? May he not do what he will with his own? He is debtor to no man. Go, and preach (says God) the preaching that I bid thee. That is,

(1.) "The preaching that I did bid thee when I first ordered thee to go thither (Jon 1:2); go, and cry against it; denounce divine judgments against it; tell the men of Nineveh that their

wickedness has come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them." This was the message Jonah was then very loth to deliver, and therefore flew off and went to Tarshish; but, when he is brought to it the second time, God does not at all alter the message, to gratify him, or make it the more passable with him; no, he must now preach the very same that he was then ordered to preach and would not. Note, The word of God is an unalterable thing, and will not be made to bend to the humours either of its preachers or of its hearers; it shall never comply with their humours and fancies, but they must comply with its truths and laws. See Jer 15:19. Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Or,

(2.) "The preaching that I shall bid thee when thou comest thither." This was an encouragement to him in his undertaking, that God would go along with him, that the Spirit of prophecy should abide upon him, and be ready to him, when he was at Nineveh, to give him all the further instructions that were needed for him. This intimated that he should hear from him again, which would be his great support in this hazardous expedition; as, when God sent Abraham to offer up Isaac, he gave him a similar intimation, by telling him he must do it upon one of the mountains which he would afterwards direct him to. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; he leads his people step by step, and so he expects they should follow him.

Jonah must go with an implicit faith. Though he knows whither he goes, he shall not know, till he come thither, what message he must deliver, but, whatever it is, he must deliver it, be it pleasing or displeasing. Thus God will keep us in a continual dependence upon himself, and the directions of his word and providence. What he does, and what he will have us do, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. Admirals, sometimes, when they are sent abroad, are not to open their commission till they have got so many leagues off at sea; so Jonah must go to Nineveh, and, when he comes there, shall be told what to say.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the
Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.
4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and
said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

He faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. When he came to Nineveh he found his diocese large; it was an exceedingly great city of three days' journey (Jon 3:3); a city great to God, so the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than as we render it, exceedingly great; this honour that language does to the great God that great things derive their denomination from him.

The greatness of Nineveh consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon, such a city, says Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built. It was 150 furlongs long and 90 broad, and 480 in compass; the walls 100 feet high, and so thick that three chariots might go a-breast upon them; on them were 1500 towers, each of them 200 feet high. It is here said to be of three days' journey; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was 480 furlongs, which, allowing eight furlongs to a mile, makes sixty miles, which may well be reckoned three days' journey for a footman, twenty miles a day.

Or, walking slowly and gravely as Jonah must when he went about preaching, it would take him up at least three days to go through all the principal streets and lanes of the city, to proclaim his message, that all might have notice of it. When he came thither he lost no time; he did not come to look about him, but applied closely to his work; and, when he began to enter into the city, he did not retire into an inn, to refresh himself after his journey, but opened his commission immediately, according to his instructions, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

This, no doubt, he had particular warrant and direction to say; whether he enlarged upon this text, as is most probable, showing them the controversy God had with them, and how provoking their wickedness was, and what reason they had to expect destruction and give credit to this warning, or whether he only repeated those words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message.

1. He must tell them that this great city shall be overthrown; he meant, and they understood him, that it should be overthrown, not by war, but by some immediate stroke from heaven, either

by an earthquake or by fire and brimstone as Sodom was. The wickedness of cities ripens them for destruction, and their wealth and greatness cannot protect them from destruction when the measure of their iniquity is full and the measure of their vengeance has come. Great cities are easily overthrown when the great God comes to reckon with them.

2. He must tell them that it shall shortly be overthrown, at the end of forty days. It has a reprieve granted. So long God will wait to see if, upon this alarm given, they will humble themselves and amend their doings, and so prevent the ruin threatened. See how slow God is to wrath; though Nineveh's wickedness cried for vengeance, yet it shall be spared for forty days, that it may have space to repent and meet God in the way of his judgments. But he will wait no longer; if in that time they turn not, they shall know that he has whet his sword, and made it ready. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to defer his judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in, and so turn away the judgments coming.

The fixing of the day thus, with all possible assurance, would help to convince them that it was a message from God, for no man durst be so positive in fixing a time, however he might prognosticate the thing itself; it would also startle them into preparation for it. It may justly awaken secure sinners by a sincere conversion to prevent their own ruin when they see they have but a little time to turn in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that the thing itself is certain, and the time fixed in the counsel of God, but that we are kept in the dark and uncertainty about it in order that we may be always ready? We cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days as Nineveh now was that it should stand forty days; nay, I think it is more probable that we shall die within thirty or forty days than we should live thirty or forty years; and so many years in the day of our security we are apt to promise ourselves.

Fleres, si scires unum tua tempora mensem; Rides, cum non sit forsitan una dies.

We should be alarmed if we were sure not to live a month, and yet we are careless, though we are not sure to live a day.

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

Here is I. A wonder of divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, upon the warning given them of their destruction approaching. Verily I say unto you, we have not found so great an instance of it, no, not in Israel; and it will rise up in judgment against the men of the gospel--generation, and condemn them; for the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but behold, a greater than Jonas is here, Mt 12:41. Nay, it did condemn the impenitence and obstinacy of Israel at that time. God sent many prophets to Israel, and those well known among them to be mighty in word and deed; but to Nineveh he sent only one, and him a stranger, whose aspect was mean, we may suppose, and his bodily presence weak, especially after the fatigue of so long a journey; and yet they repented, but Israel repented not.

Jonah preached but one sermon, and we do not find that he gave them any sign or wonder by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed; and yet they were wrought upon, while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words wherewith to reason with them, and confirmed them by signs following. Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin; we do not find that he gave them any calls to repentance or directions how to repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, and yet they repented; but Israel persisted in impertinence, though the prophets sent to them drew them with cords of a man, and with bands of love, and assured them of great things which God would do for them if they did repent and reform. Now let us see what was the method of Nineveh's repentance, what were the steps and particular instances of it.

1. They believed God; they gave credit to the word which Jonah spoke to them in the name of God: they believed that though they had many that they called gods, yet there was but one living and true God, the sovereign Lord of all,--that to him they were accountable,--that they had sinned against him and had become obnoxious to his justice,--that this notice sent them of ruin

approaching came from him, and consequently that the ruin itself would come from him at a time prefixed if it were not prevented by a timely repentance,--that he is a merciful God, and there might be some hopes of the turning away of the wrath threatened, if they did turn away from the sins for which it was threatened.

Note, Those that come to God, that come back to him after they have revolted from him, must believe, must believe that he is, that he is reconcilable, that he will be theirs if they take the right course. And observe what great faith God can work by very small, weak, and unlikely means; he can bring even Ninevites by a few threatening words to be obedient to the faith. Some think the Ninevites heard, from the mariners or others, or from Jonah himself, of his being cast into the sea and delivered thence by miracle, and that this served for a confirmation of his mission, and brought them the more readily to believe God speaking by him.

But of this we have no certainty. However, Christ's resurrection, typified by that of Jonah's, served for the confirmation of his gospel, and contributed abundantly to their great success who in his name preached repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

2. They brought word to the king of Nineveh, who, some think, was at this time Sardanapalus, others Pul, king of Assyria. Jonah was not directed to go to him first, in respect to his royal dignity; crowned heads, when guilty heads, are before God upon a level with common heads, and therefore Jonah is not sent to the court, but to the streets of Nineveh, to make his proclamation.

However, an account of his errand is brought to the king of Nineveh, not by way of information against Jonah, as a disturber of public peace, that he might be silenced and punished, which perhaps would have been done if he had cried thus in the streets of Jerusalem, who killed God's prophets and stoned those that were sent unto her. No; the account was brought him of it, not as of a crime, but as a message from heaven, by some that were concerned for the public welfare, and whose hearts trembled for it.

Note, Those kings are happy who have such about them as will give them notice of the things that belong to the kingdom's peace, of the warnings both of the word and of the providence of God, and of the tokens of God's displeasure which they are under; and those people are happy who have such kings over them as will take notice of those things.

3. The king set them a good example of humiliation, Jon 3:6. When he heard of the word of God sent to him he rose from his throne, as Eglon the king of Moab, who, when Ehud told him he had a message to him form God, rose up out of his seat. The king of Nineveh rose from his throne, not only in reverence to a word from God in general, but in fear of a word of wrath in particular, and in sorrow and shame for sin, by which he and his people had become obnoxious to his wrath.

He rose from his royal throne, and laid aside his royal robe, the badge of his imperial dignity, as an acknowledgment that, having not used his power as he ought to have done for the restraining of violence and wrong, and the maintaining of right, he had forfeited his throne and robe to the justice of God, had rendered himself unworthy of the honour put upon him and the trust reposed in him as a king, and that it was just with God to take his kingdom from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, in token of his humiliation for sin and his dread of divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

4. The people conformed to the example of the king, nay, it should seem, they led the way, for they first began to put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them, Jon 3:5. The least of them, that had least to lose in the overthrow of the city, did not think themselves unconcerned in the alarm; and the greatest of them, that were accustomed to lie at ease and live in state, did not think it below them to put on the marks of humiliation. The wearing of sackcloth, especially to those who were used to fine linen, was a very uneasy thing, and they would not have done it if they had not had a deep sense of their sin and

their danger by reason of sin, which hereby they designed to express.

Note, Those that would not be ruined must be humbled, those that would not destroy their souls must afflict their souls; when God's judgments threaten us we are concerned to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and though bodily exercise alone profits nothing, and man's spreading sackcloth and ashes under him, if that be all, is but a jest (it is the heart that God looks at, Isa 58:5), yet on solemn days of humiliation, when God in his providence calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth, we must by the outward expressions of inward sorrow glorify God with our bodies, at least by laying aside their ornaments.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

A general fast was proclaimed and observed throughout that great city, Jon 3:7-9. It was ordered by the decree of the king and his nobles; the whole legislative power concurred in appointing it, and the whole body of the people concurred in observing it, and in both these ways it became a national act, and it was necessary that it should be so when it was to prevent a national ruin. We have here the contents of this proclamation, and it is very observable. See here,

(1.) What it is that is required by it.

[1.] That the fast (properly so called) be very strictly observed. On the day appointed for this solemnity, let neither man or beast taste any thing; let them not take the least refreshment, no, no so much as drink water; let them not plead that they cannot fast so long without prejudice to their health, or that they cannot bear it; let them try for once. What if they do feel it an uneasiness, and

feel from it for some time after? It is better to submit to that than be wanting in any act or instance of that repentance which is necessary to save a sinking city.

Let them make themselves uneasy in body by putting on sackcloth, as well as by fasting, to show how uneasy they are in mind, through sorrow for sin and the fear of divine wrath. Even the beasts must do penance as well as man, because they have been made subject to vanity as instruments of man's sin, and that, either by their complaints or their silent pining for want of meat, they might stir up their owners, and those that attended them, to the expressions of sorrow and humiliation.

Those cattle that were kept within doors must not be fed and watered as usual, because no meat must be stirring on that day. Things of that kind must be forgotten, and not minded. As when the psalmist was intent upon the praises of God he called upon the inferior creatures to join with him therein, so when the Ninevites were full of sorrow for sin, and dread of God's judgments, they would have the inferior creatures concur with them in the expressions of penitence. The beasts that used to be covered with rich and fine trappings, which were the pride of their masters, and theirs too, must now be covered with sackcloth; for the great men will (as becomes them) lay aside their equipage.

[2.] With their fasting and mourning they must join prayer and supplication to God; for the fasting is designed to fit the body for the service of the soul in the duty of prayer, which is the main matter, and to which the other is but preparatory or subservient. Let them cry mightily to God; let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity; let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God, as the cries of the young ravens are (Job 38:41), and of the young lions, Ps 104:21. But especially let the men, women, and children, cry to God; let them cry mightily for the pardon of the sins which cry against them.

It was time to cry to God when there was but a step between them and ruin--high time to seek the Lord. In prayer we must cry

mightily, with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervour of pious and devout affections. By crying mightily we wrestle with God; we take hold of him; and we are concerned to do so when he is not only departing from us as a friend, but coming forth against us as an enemy. It therefore concerns us in prayer to stir up all that is within us. Yet this is not all;

[3.] They must to their fasting and praying add reformation and amendment of life: Let them turn every one from his evil way, the evil way he has chosen, the evil way he is addicted to, and walks in, the evil way of his heart, and the evil way of his conversation, and particularly from the violence that is in their hands; let them restore what they had unjustly taken, and make reparation for what wrong they have done, and let them not any more oppress those they have power over nor defraud those they having dealings with; let the men in authority, at the court-end of the town, turn from the violence that is in their hands, and not decree unrighteous decrees, nor give wrong judgment upon appeals made to them. Let the men of business, at the trading-end of the town, turn from the violence in their hands, and use no unjust weights or measures, nor impose upon the ignorance or necessity of those they trade with.

Note, It is not enough to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin, and, in order to the success of our prayers, must no more regard iniquity in our hearts, Ps 66:18. This is the only fast that God has chosen and will accept, Isa 58:6.Zec 7:5,9. The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; no, then the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not return with the dog to his vomit.

(2.) Upon what inducement this fast is proclaimed and religiously observed (Jon 3:9). Who can tell if God will turn and repent? Observe,

[1.] What it is that they hope for--that God will, upon their repenting and turning, change his way towards them and revoke his sentence against them, that he will turn from his fierce anger, which they own they deserve and yet humbly and earnestly deprecate, and that thus their ruin will be prevented, and they

perish not. They cannot object against the equity of the judgment, they pretend not to set it aside by appealing to a higher court, but hope in God himself, that he will repent, and that his own mercy (to which they fly) shall rejoice against judgment. They believe that God is justly angry with them, that, their sin being very heinous, his anger is very fierce, and that, if he proceed against them, there is no remedy, but they die, they perish, they all perish, and are undone; for who knows the power of his anger? It is not therefore the threatened overthrow that they pray for the prevention of, but the anger of God that they pray for the turning away of. As when we pray for the favour of God we pray for all good, so when we pray against the wrath of God we pray against all evil.

[2.] What degree of hope they had of it: Who can tell if God will turn to us? Jonah had not told them; they had not among them any other prophets to tell them, so that they could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance as we may be, who have the promise and oath of God to depend upon, and especially the merit and mediation of Christ to trust to, for pardon upon repentance. Yet they had a a general notion of the goodness of God's nature, his mercy to man, and his being pleased with the repentance and conversion of sinners; and from this they raised some hopes that he would spare them; they dare not presume, but they will not despair.

Note, Hope of mercy is the great encouragement to repentance and reformation; and though there be but some glimmerings of hope mixed with great fears arising from a sense of our own sinfulness, and unworthiness, and long abuse of divine patience, yet they may serve to quicken and engage our serious repentance and reformation. Let us boldly cast ourselves at the footstool of free grace, resolving that if we perish, we will perish there; yet who knows but God will look upon us with compassion?

II. Here is a wonder of divine mercy in the sparing of these Ninevites upon their repentance (Jon 3:10): God saw their works; he not only heard their good words, by which they professed repentance, but saw their good works, by which they brought forth fruits meet for repentance; he saw that they turned

from their evil way, and that was the thing he looked for and required. If he had not seen that, their fasting and sackcloth would have been as nothing in his account. He saw there was among them a general conviction of their sins and a general resolution not to return to them, and that for some days they lived better, and there was a new face of things upon the city; and this he was well pleased with.

Note, God takes notice of every instance of the reformation of sinners, even those instances that fall not under the cognizance and observation of the world. He sees who turn from their evil way and who do not, and meets those with favour that meet him in a sincere conversion. When they repent of the evil of sin committed by them he repents of the evil of judgment pronounced against them. Thus he spared Nineveh, and did not the evil which he said he would do against it. Here were no sacrifices offered to God, that we read of, to make atonement for sin, but the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, such as the Ninevites now had, it what he will not despise; it is what he will give countenance to and put honour upon.

9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?
10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

Jonah-4

Jonah's Displeasure

1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.
2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

See here, I. How unjustly Jonah quarrelled with God for his mercy to Nineveh, upon their repentance. This gives us occasion

to suspect that Jonah had only delivered the message of wrath against the Ninevites, and had not at all assisted or encouraged them in their repentance, as one would think he should have done; for when they did repent, and found mercy,

1. Jonah grudged them the mercy they found (Jon 4:1): It displeased Jonah exceedingly; and (would you think it?) he was very angry, was in a great heat about it. It was very wrong,

(1.) That he had so little government of himself as to be displeased and very angry; he had no rule over his own spirit, and therefore, as a city broken down, lay exposed to temptations and snares.

(2.) That he had so little reverence of God as to be displeased and angry at what he did, as David was when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza; whatever pleases God should please us, and, though we cannot account for it, yet we must acquiesce in it.

(3.) That he had so little affection for men as to be displeased and very angry at the conversion of the Ninevites and their reception into the divine favour. This was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees, who murmured at our Saviour because he entertained publicans and sinners; but is our eye evil because his is good? But why was Jonah so uneasy at it, that the Ninevites repented and were spared?

It cannot be expected that we should give any good reason for a thing so very absurd and unreasonable; no, nor any thing that has the face or colour of a reason; but we may conjecture what the provocation was. Hot spirits are usually high spirits. Only by pride comes contention both with God and man. It was a point of honour that Jonah stood upon and that made him angry.

[1.] He was jealous for the honour of his country; the repentance and reformation of Nineveh shamed the obstinacy of Israel that repented not, but hated to be reformed; and the favour God had shown to these Gentiles, upon their repentance, was an ill omen to the Jewish nation, as if they should be (as at length they were) rejected and cast out of the church and the Gentiles substituted

in their room. When it was intimated to St. Peter himself that he should make no difference between Jews and Gentiles he startled at the thing, and said, Not so, Lord; no marvel then that Jonah looked upon it with regret that Nineveh should become a favourite. Jonah herein had a zeal for God as the God of Israel in a particular manner, but not according to knowledge. Note, Many are displeased with God under pretence of concern for his glory.

[2.] He was jealous for his own honour, fearing lest, if Nineveh was not destroyed within forty days, he should be accounted a false prophet, and stigmatized accordingly; whereas he needed not be under any discontent about that, for in the threatening of ruin it was implied that, for the preventing of it, they should repent, and, if they did, it should be prevented. And no one will complain of being deceived by him that is better than his word; and he would rather gain honour among them, by being instrumental to save them, than fall under any disgrace. But melancholy men (and such a one Jonah seems to have been) are apt to make themselves uneasy by fancying evils to themselves that are not, nor are ever likely to be. Most of our frets, as well as our frights, are owing to the power of imagination; and those are to be pitied as perfect bond-slaves that are under the power of such a tyrant.

2. He quarreled with God about it. When his heart was hot within him, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; and here he tells us what he said (Jon 4:2,3): He prayed unto the Lord, but it is a very awkward prayer, not like that which he prayed in the fish's belly; for affliction teaches us to pray submissively, which Jonah now forgot to do. Being in discontent, he applied to the duty of prayer, as he used to do in his troubles, but his corruptions got head of his graces, and, when he should have been praying for benefit by the mercy of God himself, he was complaining of the benefit others had by that mercy. Nothing could be spoken more unbecomingly.

(1.) He now begins to justify himself in fleeing from the presence of the Lord, when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh, for which he had before, with good reason, condemned himself:

"Lord," said he, "was not this my saying when I was in my own country? Did I not foresee that if I went to preach to Nineveh they would repent, and thou wouldst forgive them, and then thy word would be reflected upon and reproached as yea and nay?" What a strange sort of man was Jonah, to dread the success of his ministry!

Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they had despaired of doing good by it, but Jonah declined preaching because he was afraid of doing good by it; and still he persists in the same corrupt notion, for, it seems, the whale's belly itself could not cure him of it. It was his saying when he was in his own country, but it was a bad saying; yet here he stands to it, and, very unlike the other prophets, desires the woeful day which he had foretold and grieves because it does not come.

Even Christ's disciples know not what manner of spirit they are of; those did not who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did not receive them, much less did Jonah, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did receive him, Lu 9:55. Jonah thinks he has reason to complain of that, when it is done, which he was before afraid of; so hard is it to get a root of bitterness plucked out of the mind, when once it is fastened there. And why did Jonah expect that God would spare Nineveh? Because I knew that thou was a gracious God, indulgent and easily pleased, that thou wast slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

All this is very true; and Jonah could not but know it by God's proclamation of his name and the experiences of all ages; but it is strange and very unaccountable that that which all the saints had made the matter of their joy and praise Jonah should make the matter of reflection upon God, as if that were an imperfection of the divine nature which is indeed the greatest glory of it--that God is gracious and merciful.

The servant that said, I knew thee to be a hard man, said that which was false, and yet, had it been true, it was not the proper matter of a complaint; but Jonah, though he says what is true,

yet, speaking it by way of reproach, speaks very absurdly. Those have a spirit of contention and contradiction indeed that can find in their hearts to quarrel with the goodness of God, and his sparing pardoning mercy, to which we all owe it that we are out of hell. This is making that to be to us a savour of death unto death which ought to be a savour of life unto life.

(2.) In a passion, he wishes for death (Jon 4:3), a strange expression of his causeless passion! "Now, O Lord! take, I beseech thee, my life from me. If Nineveh must live, let me die, rather than see thy word and mine disproved, rather than see the glory of Israel transferred to the Gentiles," as if there were not grace enough in God both for Jews and Gentiles, or as if his countrymen were the further off from mercy for the Ninevites being taken into favour. When the prophet Elijah had laboured in vain, he wished he might die, and it was his infirmity, 1Ki 19:4.

But Jonah labours to good purpose, saves a great city from ruin, and yet wishes he may die, as if, having done much good, he were afraid of living to do more; he sees of the travail of his soul, and is dissatisfied. What a perverse spirit is mingled with every word he says! When Jonah was brought alive out of the whale's belly, he thought life a very valuable mercy, and was thankful to that God who brought up his life from corruption, (Jon 2:6), and a great blessing his life had been to Nineveh; yet now, for that very reason, it became a burden to himself and he begs to be eased of it, pleading, It is better for me to die than to live. Such a word as this may be the language of grace, as it was in Paul, who desired to depart and be with Christ, which is far better; but here it was the language of folly, and passion, and strong corruption; and so much the worse,

[1.] Jonah being now in the midst of his usefulness, and therefore fit to live. He was one whose ministry God wonderfully owned and prospered. The conversion of Nineveh might give him hopes of being instrumental to convert the whole kingdom of Assyria; it was therefore very absurd for him to wish he might die when he had a prospect of living to so good a purpose and could be so ill spared.

[2.] Jonah being now so much out of temper and therefore unfit to die. How durst he think of dying, and going to appear before God's judgment-seat, when he was actually quarrelling with him? Was this a frame of spirit proper for a man to go out of the world in? But those who passionately desire death commonly have least reason to do it, as being very much unprepared for it. Our business is to get ready to die by doing the work of life, and then to refer ourselves to God to take away our life when and how he pleases.

3 Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for
it is better for me to die than to live.

4 Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?

See how justly God reproved Jonah for this heat that he was in (Jon 4:4): The Lord said, Doest thou well to be angry? Is doing well a displeasure to thee? so some read it. What! dost thou repent of thy good deeds? God might justly have rejected him for this impious heat which he was in, might justly have taken him at his word, and have struck him dead when he wished to die; but he vouchsafes to reason with him for his conviction and to bring him to a better temper, as the father of the prodigal reasoned with his elder son, when, as Jonah here, he murmured at the remission and reception of his brother.

Doest thou well to be angry? See how mildly the great God speaks to this foolish man, to teach us to restore those that have fallen with a spirit of meekness, and with soft answers to turn away wrath. God appeals to himself and to his own conscience: "Doest thou well? Thou knowest thou does not." We should often put this question to ourselves, Is it well to say thus, to do thus? Can I justify it? Must I not unsay it and undo it again by repentance, or be undone forever? Ask,

1. Do I well to be angry? When passion is up, let it meet with this check, "Do I well to be so soon angry, so often angry, so long angry, to put myself into such a heat, and to give others such ill language in my anger? Is this well, that I suffer these headstrong passions to get dominion over me?"

2. "Do I well to be angry at the mercy of God to repenting sinners?" That was Jonah's crime. Do we do well to be angry at that which is so much for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom among men--to be angry at that which angels rejoice in and for which abundant thanksgivings will be rendered to God? We do ill to be angry at that grace which we ourselves need and are undone without; if room were not left for repentance, and hope given of pardon upon repentance, what would become of us? Let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

Jonah persists here in his discontent; for the beginning of strife both with God and man is as the letting forth of waters, the breach grows wider and wider, and, when passion gets head, bad is made worse; it should therefore be silenced and suppressed at first. We have here,

I. Jonah's sullen expectation of the fate of Nineveh. We may suppose that the Ninevites, giving credit to the message he brought, were ready to give entertainment to the messenger that brought it, and to show him respect, that they would have made him welcome to the best of their houses and tables.

But Jonah was out of humour, would not accept their kindness, nor behave towards them with common civility, which one might have feared would have prejudiced them against him and his word; but when there is not only the treasure put into earthen vessels, but the trust lodged with men subject to like passions as we are, and yet the point gained, it must be owned that the excellency of the power appears so much the more to be of God and not of man. Jonah retires, goes out of the city, sits alone, and keeps silence, because he sees the Ninevites repent and reform, Jon 4:5. Perhaps he told those about him that he went out of the city for fear of perishing in the ruins of it; but he went to see what would become of the city, as Abraham went up to see what would become of Sodom, Ge 19:27.

The forty days were now expiring, or had expired, and Jonah hoped that, if Nineveh was not overthrown, yet some judgement or other would come upon it, sufficient to save his credit; however, it was with great uneasiness that he waited the issue. He would not sojourn in a house, expecting it would fall upon his head, but he made himself a booth of the boughs of trees, and sat in that, though there he would lie exposed to wind and weather. Note, It is common for those that have fretful uneasy spirits industriously to create inconveniences themselves, that, resolving to complain, they may still have something to complain of.

II. God's gracious provision for his shelter and refreshment when he thus foolishly afflicted himself and was still adding yet more and more to his own affliction, Jon 4:6. Jonah was sitting in his booth, fretting at the cold of the night and the heat of the day, which were both grievous to him, and God might have said, It is his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it; but he looked on him with compassion, as the tender mother does on the froward child, and relieved him against the grievances which he by his own wilfulness created to himself. He prepared a gourd, a plant with broad leaves, and full of them, that suddenly grew up, and covered his hut or booth, so as to keep off much of the injury of the cold and heat.

It was a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief, that, being refreshed in body, he might the better guard against the uneasiness of his mind, which outward crosses and troubles are often the occasion and increase of. See how tender God is of his people in their afflictions, yea, though they are foolish and froward, nor is he extreme to mark what they do amiss. God had before prepared a great fish to secure Jonah from the injuries of the water, and here a great gourd to secure him from the injuries of the air; for he is the protector of his people against evils of every kind, has the command of plants as well as animals, and can soon prepare them, to make them serve his purposes, can make their growth sudden, which, in a course of nature, is slow and gradual. A gourd, one would think, was but a slender fortification at the best, yet Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd; for,

1. It was really at that time a great comfort to him. A thing in itself small and inconsiderable, yet, coming seasonably, may be to us a very valuable blessing. A gourd in the right place may do us more service than a cedar. The least creatures may be great plagues (as flies and lice were to Pharaoh) or great comforts (as the gourd to Jonah), according as God is pleased to make them.

2. He being now much under the power of imagination took a greater complacency in it than there was cause for. He was exceedingly glad of it, was proud of it, and triumphed in it. Note, Persons of strong passions, as they are apt to be cast down with a trifle that crosses them, so they are apt to be lifted up with a trifle that pleases them. A small toy will serve sometimes to pacify a cross child, as the gourd did Jonah. But wisdom and grace would teach us both to weep for our troubles as though we wept not, and to rejoice in our comforts as though we rejoiced not. Creature-comforts we ought to enjoy and be thankful for, but we need not be exceedingly glad of them; it is God only that must be our exceeding joy, Ps 43:4.

III. The sudden loss of this provision which God had made for his refreshment, and the return of his trouble, Jon 4:7,8. God that had provided comfort for him provided also an affliction for him in that very thing which was his comfort; the affliction did not come by chance, but by divine direction and appointment.

1. God prepared a worm to destroy the gourd. He that gave took away, and Jonah ought to have blessed his name in both; but because, when he took the comfort of the gourd, he did not give God the praise of it, God deprived him of the benefit of it, and justly. See what all our creature-comforts are, and what we may expect them to be; they are gourds, have their root in the earth, are but a thin and slender defence compared with the rock of ages; they are withering things; they perish in the using, and we are soon deprived of the comfort of them. The gourd withered the next day after it sprang up; our comforts come forth like flowers and are soon cut down. When we please ourselves most with them, and promise ourselves most from them, we are disappointed.

A little thing withers them; a small worm at the root destroys a large gourd. Something unseen and undiscerned does it. Our gourds wither, and we know not what to attribute it to. And perhaps those wither first that we have been more exceedingly glad of; that proves least safe that is most dear. God did not send an angel to pluck up Jonah's gourd, but sent a worm to smite it; there it grew still, but it stood him in no stead. Perhaps our creature-comforts are continued to us, but they are embittered; the creature is continued, but the comfort is gone; and the remains, or ruins of it rather, do but upbraid us with our folly in being exceedingly glad of it.

2. He prepared a wind to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd, Jon 4:8. It was a vehement east wind, which drove the heat of the rising sun violently upon the head of Jonah. This wind was not as a fan to abate the heat, but as bellows to make it more intense. Thus poor Jonah lay open to sun and wind.

IV. The further fret that this put Jonah into (Jon 4:8): He fainted, and wished in himself that he might die. "If the gourd be killed, if the gourd be dead, kill me too, let me die with the gourd." Foolish man, that thinks his life bound up in the life of a weed! Note, It is just that those who love to complain should never be left without something to complain of, that their folly may be manifested and corrected, and, if possible, cured. And see here how the passions that run into an extreme one way commonly run into an extreme the other way. Jonah, who was in transports of joy when the gourd flourished, is in pangs of grief when the gourd has withered. Inordinate affection lays a foundation for inordinate affliction; what we are over-fond of when we have it we are apt to over-grieve for when we lose it, and we may see our folly in both.

6 And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he

fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is* better for me to die than to live.

The rebuke God gave him for this; he again reasoned with him: Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? Jon 4:9.

Note, The withering of a gourd is a thing which it does not become us to be angry at. When afflicting providences deprive us of our relations, possessions, and enjoyments, we must bear it patiently, must not be angry at God, must not be angry for the gourd. It is comparatively but a small loss, the loss of a shadow; that is the most we can make of it. It was a gourd, a withering thing; we could expect no other than that it should wither.

Our being angry for the withering of it will not recover it; we ourselves shall shortly wither like it. If one gourd be withered, another gourd may spring up in the room of it; but that which should especially silence our discontent is that though our gourd be gone our God is not gone, and there is enough in him to make up all our losses.

Let us therefore own that we do ill, that we do very ill, to be angry for the gourd; and let us under such events quiet ourselves as a child that is weaned from his mother.

VI. His justification of his passion and discontent; and it is very strange, Jon 4:9. He said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. It is bad to speak amiss, yet if it be in haste, if what is said amiss be speedily recalled and unsaid again, it is the more excusable; but to speak amiss and stand to it is bad indeed. So Jonah did here, though God himself rebuked him, and by appealing to his conscience expected he would rebuke himself. See what brutish things ungoverned passions are, and how much it is our interest, and ought to be our endeavour, to chain up these roaring lions and ranging bears. Sin and death are two very dreadful things, yet Jonah, in his heat, makes light of them both.

1. He has so little regard for God as to fly in the face of his authority, and to say that he did well in that which God said was ill done. Passion often over-rules conscience, and forces it, when it is appealed to, to give a false judgment, as Jonah here did.

2. He has so little regard to himself as to abandon his own life, and to think it no harm to indulge his passion even to death, to kill himself with fretting. We read of wrath that kills the foolish man, and envy that slays the silly one (Job 5:2), and foolish silly ones indeed those are that cut their own throats with their own passions, that fret themselves into consumptions and other weaknesses, and put themselves into fevers with their own intemperate heats.

VII. The improvement of it against him for his conviction that he did ill to murmur at the sparing of Nineveh. Out of his own mouth God will judge him; and we have reason to think it overcame him; for he made no reply, but, we hope, returned to his right mind and recovered his temper, though he could not keep it, and all was well. Now,

1. Let us see how God argued with him (Jon 4:10,11): "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, hast spared it" (so the word is), "didst what thou couldst, and wouldst have done more, to keep it alive, and saidst, What a pity it is that this gourd should ever wither! and should not I then spare Nineveh? Should not I have as much compassion upon that as thou hadst upon the gourd, and forbid the earthquake which would ruin that, as thou wouldst have forbidden the worm that smote the gourd? Consider,"

(1.) "The gourd thou hadst pity on was but one; but the inhabitants of Nineveh, whom I have pity on, are numerous." It is a great city and very populous, as appears by the number of the infants, suppose from two years old and under; there are 120,000 such in Nineveh, that have not come to so much use of understanding as to know their right hand from their left, for they are yet but babes. These are taken notice of because the age of infants is commonly looked upon as the age of innocence. So many there were in Nineveh that had not been guilty of any actual transgression, and consequently had not themselves contributed to the common guilt, and yet, if Nineveh had been overthrown, they would all have been involved in the common calamity; "and shall not I spare Nineveh then, with an eye to them?"

God has a tender regard to little children, and is ready to pity and succour them, nay, here a whole city is spared for their sakes, which may encourage parents to present their children to God by faith and prayer, that though they are not capable of doing him any service (for they cannot discern between their right hand and their left, between good and evil, sin and duty), yet they are capable of participating in his favours and of obtaining salvation. The great Saviour discovered a particular kindness for the children that were brought to him, when he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Nay, God took notice of the abundance of cattle too that were in Nineveh, which he had more reason to pity and spare than Jonah had to pity and to spare the gourd, inasmuch as the animal life is more excellent than the vegetable.

(2.) The gourd which Jonah was concerned for was none of his own; it was that for which he did not labour and which he made not to grow; but the persons in Nineveh whom God had compassion on were all the work of his own hands, whose being he was the author of, whose lives he was the preserver of, whom he planted and made to grow; he made them, and his they were, and therefore he had much more reason to have compassion on them, for he cannot despise the work of his own hands (Job 10:3); and thus Job there argues with him (Jon 4:8,9), Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me, have made me as the clay; and wilt thou destroy me, wilt thou bring me into dust again? And thus he here argues with himself.

(3.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on was of a sudden growth, and therefore of less value; it came up in a night, it was the son of a night (so the word is); but Nineveh is an ancient city, of many ages standing, and therefore cannot be so easily given up; "the persons I spare have been many years in growing up, not so soon reared as the gourd; and shall not I then have pity on those that have been so many years the care of my providence, so many years my tenants?"

(4.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on perished in a night; it withered, and there was an end of it. But the precious souls in

Nineveh that God had pity on are not so short-lived; they are immortal, and therefore to be carefully and tenderly considered. One soul is of more value than the whole world, and the gain of the world will not countervail the loss of it; surely then one soul is of more value than many gourds, of more value than many sparrows; so God accounts, and so should we, and therefore have a greater concern for the children of men than for any of the inferior creatures, and for our own and others' precious souls than for any of the riches and enjoyments of this world.

2. From all this we may learn,

(1.) That though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will take a course effectually to show them their error, and to bring them to themselves and to their right mind again. We have reason to hope that Jonah, after this, was well reconciled to the sparing of Nineveh, and was as well pleased with it as ever he had been displeased.

(2.) That God will justify himself in the methods of his grace towards repenting returning sinners as well as in the course his justice takes with those that persist in their rebellion; though there be those that murmur at the mercy of God, because they do not understand it (for his thoughts and ways therein are as far above ours as heaven above the earth), yet he will make it evident that therein he acts like himself, and will be justified when he speaks. See what pains he takes with Jonah to convince him that it is very fit that Nineveh should be spared.

Jonah had said, I do well to be angry, but he could not prove it. God says and proves it, I do well to be merciful; and it is a great encouragement to poor sinners to hope that they shall find mercy with him, that he is so ready to justify himself in showing mercy and to triumph in those whom he makes the monuments of it, against those whose eye is evil because his is good. Such murmurers shall be made to understand this doctrine, that, how narrow soever their souls, their principles, are, and how willing soever they are to engross divine grace to themselves and those of their own way, there is one Lord over all, that is rich in mercy

to all that call upon him, and in every nation, in Nineveh as well as in Israel, he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him; he that repents, and turns from his evil way, shall find mercy with him.

9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?
And he said, I do well to be angry, *even* unto death.

10 Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which
thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a
night, and perished in a night:

11 and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than
sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand
and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

Micah
[Micah]

Micah-1
A Lament for Samaria and Jerusalem

1 The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of
Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning
Samaria and Jerusalem.

Here is, I. A general account of this prophet and his prophecy, Mic 1:1. This is prefixed for the satisfaction of all that read and hear the prophecy of this book, who will give the more credit to it when they know the author and his authority.

1 The prophecy is the word of the Lord; it is a divine revelation. Note, What is written in the Bible, and what is preached by the ministers of Christ according to what is written there, must be heard and received, not as the word of dying men, which we may be judges of, but as the word of the living God, which we must be judged by, for so it is. This word of the Lord came to the prophet, came plainly, came powerfully, came in a preventing way, and he saw it, saw the vision in which it was conveyed to him, saw the things themselves which he foretold, with as much clearness and certainty as if they had been already accomplished.

2 The prophet is Micah the Morasthite; his name Micah is a contraction of Micaiah, the name of a prophet some ages before (in Ahab's time, 1Ki 22:8); his surname, the Morasthite, signifies that he was born, or lived, at Moresheth, which is mentioned here (Mic 1:14), or Mareshah, which is mentioned Mic 1:15,Jos 15:44. The place of his abode is mentioned, that any one might enquire in that place, at that time, and might find there was, or had been, such a one there, who was generally reputed to be a prophet.

3. The date of his prophecy is in the reigns of three kings of Judah--Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Ahaz was one of the worst of Judah's kings, and Hezekiah one of the best; such variety of times pass over God's ministers, times that frown and times that smile, to each of which they must study to accommodate themselves, and to arm themselves against the temptations of both. The promises and threatenings of this book are interwoven, by which it appears that even in the wicked reign he preached comfort, and said to the righteous then that it should be well with them; and that in the pious reign he preached conviction, and said to the wicked then that it should be ill with them; for, however the times change, the word of the Lord is still the same.

4. The parties concerned in this prophecy; it is concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the head cities of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, under the influence of which the kingdoms themselves were. Though the ten tribes have deserted the houses both of David and Aaron, yet God is pleased to send prophets to them.

II. A very solemn introduction to the following prophecy (Mic 1:2), in which,

1 The people are summoned to draw near and give their attendance, as upon a court of judicature: Hear, all you people, Note, Where God has a mouth to speak we must have an ear to hear; we all must, for we are all concerned in what is delivered. "Hear, you people" (all of them, so the margin reads it), "all you that are now within hearing, and all others that hear it at second hand." It is an unusual construction; but those words with which Micah begins his prophecy are the very same in the original with those wherewith Micaiah ended his, 1Ki 22:28.

2 The earth is called upon, with all that therein is, to hear what the prophet has to say: Hearken, O earth! The earth shall be made to shake under the stroke and weight of the judgments coming; sooner will the earth hear than this stupid senseless people; but God will be heard when he pleads. If the church, and those in it, will not hear, the earth, and those in it, shall, and shame them.

3. God himself is appealed to, and his omniscience, power, and justice, are vouched in testimony against this people: "Let the Lord God be witness against you, a witness that you had fair warning given you, that your prophets did their duty faithfully as watchmen, but you would not take the warning; let the accomplishment of the prophecy be a witness against your contempt and disbelief of it, and prove, to your conviction and confusion, that it was the word of God, and no word of his shall fall to the ground." Note, God himself will be a witness, by the judgments of his hand, against those that would not receive his testimony in the judgments of his mouth. He will be a witness from his holy temple in heaven, when he comes down to execute judgment (Mic 1:3) against those that turned a deaf ear to his oracles, wherein he witnessed to them, out of his holy temple at Jerusalem.

2 Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the
Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.
3 For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come
down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.
4 And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be
cleft, as wax before the fire, *and* as the waters *that are* poured down a
steep place.

A terrible prediction of destroying judgments which should come upon Judah and Israel, which had its accomplishment soon after in Israel, and at length in Judah; for it is foretold,

1. That God himself will appear against them, Mic 1:3. They boasted of themselves and their relation to God, as if that would secure them; but, though God never deceives the faith of the upright, he will disappoint the presumption of the hypocrites, for, behold, the Lord comes forth out of his place, quits his mercy-seat, where they thought they had him fast, and prepares his throne for judgment; his glory departs, for they drive it from them. God's way towards this people had long been a way of mercy, but now he changes his way, he comes out of his place, and will come down. He had seemed to retire, as one regardless of what was done, but now he will show himself, he will rend the heavens, and will come down, not as sometimes, in surprising mercies, but in surprising judgments, to do things not

for them, but against them, which they looked not for, Isa 64:1,26:21.

2. That when the Creator appears against them it shall be in vain for any creature to appear for them. He will tread with contempt and disdain upon the high places of the earth, upon all the powers that are advanced in competition with him or in opposition to him; and he will so tread upon them as to tread them down and level them. High places, set up for the worship of idols or for military fortifications, shall all be trodden down and trampled into the dust. Do men trust to the height and strength of the mountains and rocks, as if they were sufficient to bear up their hopes and bear off their fears? They shall be molten under him, melted down as wax before the fire, Ps 68:2.

Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys, and their products? They shall be cleft, or rent, with those fiery streams that shall come pouring down from the mountains when they are melted. They shall be ploughed and washed away as the ground is by the waters that are poured down a steep place. God is said to cleave the earth with rivers, Hab 3:9. Neither men of high degree, as the mountains, nor men of low degree, as the valleys, shall be able to secure either themselves or the land from judgments of God, when they are sent with commission to lay all waste, and, like a sweeping rain, to leave no food, Pr 28:3. This is applied particularly to the head city of Israel, which they hoped would be a protection to the kingdom (Mic 1:6):

I will make Samaria, that is now a rich and populous city, as a heap of the field, as a heap of dung laid there to be spread, or as a heap of stones gathered together to be carried away, and as plantings of a vineyard, as hillocks of earth raised to plant vines in. God will make of that city a heap, of that defenced city a ruin, Isa 25:2. Their altars had been as heaps in the furrows of the fields (Ho 12:11) and now their houses shall be so, as ruinous heaps. The stones of the city are poured down into the valley by the fury of the conqueror, who will thus be revenged on those walls that so long held out against him. They shall be quite pulled down, so that the very foundations shall be discovered, that had

been covered by the superstructure; and not one stone shall be left upon another.

IV. A charge of sin upon them, as the procuring cause of these desolating judgments (Mic 1:5): For the transgression of Jacob is all this. If it be asked, "Why is God so angry, and why are Jacob and Israel thus brought to ruin by his anger?" the answer is ready: Sin has done all the mischief; sin has laid all waste; all the calamities of Jacob and Israel are owing to their transgressions; if they had not gone away from God, he would never have appeared thus against them.

Note, External privileges and professions will not secure a sinful people from the judgments of God. If sin be found in the house of Israel, if Jacob be guilty of transgression and rebellion, God will not spare them; no, he will punish them first, for their sins are of all others most provoking to him, for they are most reproaching. But it is asked, What is the transgression of Jacob? Note, When we feel the smart of sin it concerns us to enquire what the sin is which we smart for, that we may particularly war against that which wars against us. And what is it?

1. It is idolatry; it is the high places; that is the transgression, the great transgression which reigns in Israel; that is spiritual whoredom, the violation of the marriage-covenant, which merits a divorce. Even the high places of Judah, though not so bad as the transgression of Jacob, were yet offensive enough to God, and a remaining blemish upon some of the good reigns. Howbeit the high places were not taken away.

2. It is the idolatry of Samaria and Jerusalem, the royal cities of those two kingdoms. These were the most populous places, and where there were most people there was most wickedness, and they made one another worse. These were the most pompous places; there men lived most in wealth and pleasure, and they forgot God. These were the places that had the greatest influence upon the country, by authority and example; so that from them idolatry and profaneness went forth throughout all the land, Jer 23:15.

Note, Spiritual distempers are most contagious in persons and places that are most conspicuous. If the head city of a kingdom, or the chief family in a parish, be vicious and profane, many will follow their pernicious ways, and write after a bad copy when great ones set it for them. The vices of leaders and rulers are leading ruling vices, and therefore shall be surely and sorely punished. Those have a great deal to answer for indeed that not only sin, but make Israel to sin. Those must expect to be made examples that have been examples of wickedness. If the transgression of Jacob is Samaria, therefore shall Samaria become a heap. Let the ringleaders in sin hear this and fear.

V. The punishment made to answer the sin, in the particular destruction of the idols, Mic 1:7.

1 The gods they worshipped shall be destroyed: The graven images shall be beaten to pieces by the army of the Assyrians, and all the idols shall be laid desolate. Samaria and her idols were ruined together by Sennacherib (Isa 10:11), and their gods cast into the fire, for they were no gods (Isa 37:19); and this was the Lord's doing: I will lay the idols desolate. Note, If the law of God prevail not to make men in authority destroy idols, God will take the work into his own hands, and will do it himself.

2 The gifts that passed between them and their gods shall be destroyed; for all the hires thereof shall be burnt with fire, which may be meant either of the presents they made to their idols for the replenishing of their altars, and the adorning of their statues and temples (these shall become a prey to the victorious army, which shall rifle not only private houses, but the houses of their gods), or of the corn, and wine, and oil, which they called the rewards, or hires, which their idols, their lovers, gave them (Ho 2:12); these shall be taken from them by him whom (by ascribing them to their dear idols) they had defrauded of the honour due to him.

Note, That cannot prosper by which men either are hired to sin or hire others to sin; for the wages of sin will be death. She gathered it of the hire of the harlot, and it shall return to the hire of a harlot. They enriched themselves by their leagues with the

idolatrous nations, who gave them advantages, to court them into the service of their idols, and their idols' temples were enriched with gifts by those who went a whoring after them. And all this wealth shall become a prey to the idolatrous nations, and so be the hire of a harlot again, wages to an army of idolaters, who shall take it as a reward given them by their gods. It shall be a present to king Jareb, Ho 10:6. What they gave to their idols, and what they thought they got by them, shall be as the hire of a harlot; the curse of God shall be upon it, and it shall never prosper, nor do them any good. It is common that what is squeezed out by one lust is squandered away upon another.

5 For the transgression of Jacob *is* all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria? and what *are* the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem?

6 Therefore I will make Samaria as a heap of the field, *and* as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.

7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered *it* of the hire of a harlot, and they shall return to the hire of a harlot.

8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.

We have here a long train of mourners attending the funeral of a ruined kingdom.

I The prophet is himself chief mourner (Mic 1:8,9): I will wail and howl; I will go stripped and naked, as a man distracted with grief. The prophets usually expressed their own grief for the public grievances, partly to mollify the predictions of them, and to make it appear that is was not out of ill-will that they denounced the judgments of God (so far were they from desiring the woeful day that they dreaded it more than any thing), partly to show how very dreadful and mournful the calamities would be, and to stir up in the people a holy fear of them, that by repentance they might turn away the wrath of God. Note, We ought to lament the punishments of sinners as well as the sufferings of saints in this world; the weeping prophet did so (Jer 9:1); so did this prophet. He makes a wailing like the dragons, or rather the jackals, ravenous beasts that in those countries used to

meet in the night, and howl, and make hideous noises; he mourns as the owls, the screech-owls, or ostriches, as some read it. Two things the prophet here thus dolefully laments:--

1. That Israel's case is desperate: Her wound is incurable; it is ruin without remedy; man cannot help her; God will not, because she will not by repentance and reformation help herself. There is indeed balm in Gilead and a physician there; but they will not apply to the physician, nor apply the balm to themselves, and therefore the wound is incurable.

2. That Judah likewise is in danger. The cup is going round, and is now put into Judah's hand: The enemy has come to the gate of Jerusalem. Soon after the destruction of Samaria and the ten tribes, the Assyrian army, under Sennacherib, laid siege to Jerusalem, came to the gate, but could not force their way any further; however, it was with great concern and trouble that the prophet foresaw the fright, so dearly did he love the peace of Jerusalem.

9 For her wound *is* incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem.

10 Declare ye *it* not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah [dust] roll thyself in the dust.

11 Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Beth- ezel; he shall receive of you his standing.

Several places are here brought in mourning, and are called upon to mourn; but with this proviso, that they should not let the Philistines hear them (Mic 1:10): Declare it not in Gath; this is borrowed from David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan (2Sa 1:20), Tell it not in Gath, for the uncircumcised will triumph in Israel's tears. Note, One would not, if it could be helped, gratify those that make themselves and their companions merry with the sins or with the sorrows of God's Israel. David was silent, and stifled his griefs, when the wicked were before him, Ps 39:1.

But, though it may be prudent not to give way to a noisy sorrow, yet it is duty to admit a silent one when the church of God is in distress. "Roll thyself in the dust" (as great mourners used to do) "and so let the house of Judah and every house in Jerusalem

become a house of Aphrah, a house of dust, covered with dust, crumbled into dust." When God makes the house dust it becomes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and to put our mouths in the dust, thus accommodating ourselves to the providences that concern us.

Dust we are; God brings us to the dust, that we may know it, and own it. Divers other places are here named that should be sharers in this universal mourning, the names of some of which we do not find elsewhere, whence it is conjectured that they are names put upon them by the prophet, the signification of which might either indicate or aggravate the miseries coming upon them, thereby to awaken this secure and stupid people to a holy fear of divine wrath. We find Sennacherib's invasion thus described, in the prediction of it, by the impressions of terror it should make upon the several cities that fell in his way, Isa 10:28,29, &c. Let us observe the particulars here,

1. The inhabitants of Saphir, which signifies neat and beautiful (thou that dwellest fairly, so the margin reads it), shall pass away into captivity, or be forced to flee, stripped of all their ornaments and having their shame naked.

Note, Those who appear ever so fine and delicate know not what contempt they may be exposed to; and the more grievous will the shame be to those who have been inhabitants of Saphir.

2. The inhabitants of Zaanan, which signifies the country of flocks, a populous country, where the people are as numerous and thick as flocks of sheep, shall yet be so taken up with their own calamities, felt or feared, that they shall not come forth in the mourning of Bethezel, which signifies a place near, shall not condole with, nor bring any succour to, their next neighbours in distress; for he shall receive of you his standing; the enemy shall encamp among you, O inhabitants of Zaanan! shall take up a station there, shall find footing among you. Those may well think themselves excused from helping their neighbours who find they have enough to do to help themselves and to hold their own.

3. As for the inhabitants of Maroth (which, some think, is put for Ramoth, others that it signifies the rough places), they waited carefully for good, and were grieved for the want of it, but were disappointed; for evil came from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem, when the Assyrian army besieged it, Mic 1:12. The inhabitants of Maroth might well overlook their own particular grievances when they saw the holy city itself in danger, and might well overlook the Assyrian, that was the instrument, when they saw the evil coming from the Lord.

4. Lachish was a city of Judah, which Sennacherib laid siege to, Isa 36:1,2 The inhabitants of that city are called to bind the chariot to the swift beast, to prepare for a speedy flight, as having no other way left to secure themselves and their families; or it is spoken ironically: "You have had your chariots and your swift beasts, but where are they now?" God's quarrel with Lachish is that she is the beginning of sin, probably the sin of idolatry, to the daughter of Zion (Mic 1:13); they had learned it from the ten tribes, their near neighbours, and so infected the two tribes with it. Note, Those that help to bring sin into a country do but thereby prepare for the throwing of themselves out of it. Those must expect to be first in the punishment who have been ringleaders in sin. The transgressions of Israel were found in thee; when they came to be traced up to their original they were found to take rise very much from that city. God knows at whose door to lay the blame of the transgressions of Israel, and whom to find guilty.

Lachish, having been so much accessory to the sin of Israel, shall certainly be reckoned with: Thou shalt give presents to Moresheth-gath, a city of the Philistines, which perhaps had a dependence upon Gath, that famous Philistine city; thou shalt send to court those of that city to assist thee, but it shall be in vain, for (Mic 1:14) the houses of Achzib (a city which joined to Mareshah, or Moresheth, and is mentioned with it, Jos 15:44) shall be a lie to the kings of Israel; though they depend upon their strength, yet they shall fail them. Here there is an allusion to the name. Achzib signifies a lie, and so it shall prove to those that trust in it.

5. Mareshah, that could not, or would not, help Israel, shall herself be made a prey (Mic 1:15): "I will bring a heir (that is, an enemy) that shall take possession of thy lands, with as much assurance as if he were heir at law to them, and he shall come to Adullam, and to the glory of Israel, that is, to Jerusalem the head city;" or "The glory of Israel shall come to be as Adullam, a poor despicable place;" or, "The king of Assyria, whom Israel had gloried in, shall come to Adullam, in laying the country waste."

6. The whole land of Judah seems to be spoken to (Mic 1:16) and called to weeping and mourning: "Make thee bald, by tearing thy hair and shaving thy head; poll thee for thy delicate children, that had been tenderly and nicely brought up; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle when she casts her feathers and is all over bald; for they have gone into captivity from thee, and are not likely to return; and their captivity will be the more grievous to them because they have been brought up delicately and have not been inured to hardship."

Or this is directed particularly to the inhabitants of Mareshah, as Mic 1:15. That was the prophet's own city, and yet he denounces the judgments of God against it; for it shall be an aggravation of its sin that it had such a prophet, and knew not the day of its visitation. Its being thus privileged, since it improved not the privilege, shall not procure favour for it either with God or with his prophet.

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem.

13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she *is* the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.

14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib [a lie] *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel.

15 Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.

16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

Micah-2

Woe to Those Who Oppress the Poor

1 Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand.

Here is, I The injustice of man contriving the evil of sin, Mic 2:1,2. God was coming forth against this people to destroy them, and here he shows what was the ground of his controversy with them; it is that which is often mentioned as a sin that hastens the ruin of nations and families as much as any, the sin of oppression. Let us see the steps of it.

1. They eagerly desire that which is not their own--that is the root of bitterness, the root of all evil, Mic 2:2. They covet fields and houses, as Ahab did Naboth's vineyard. "Oh that such a one's field and house were mine! It lies convenient for me, and I would manage it better than he does; it is fitter for me than for him."

2. They set their wits on work to invent ways of accomplishing their desire (Mic 2:4); they devise iniquity with a great deal of cursed art and policy; they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves, or bring themselves into danger, or under reproach, by it. This is called working evil! they are working it in their heads, in their families, and are as intent upon it, and with as much pleasure, as if they were doing it, and are as confident of their success (so wisely do they think they have laid the scheme) as if it were assuredly done. Note, It is bad to do mischief upon a sudden thought, but much worse to devise it, to do it with design and deliberation; when the craft and subtlety of the old serpent appear with his poison and venom, it is wickedness in perfection.

They devised it upon their beds, when they should have been asleep; care to compass a mischievous design held their eyes waking. Upon their beds, where they should have been remembering God, and meditating upon him, where they should

have been communing with their own hearts and examining them, they were devising iniquity. It is of great consequence to improve and employ the hours of our retirement and solitude in a proper manner.

3. They employ their power in executing what they have designed and contrived; they practise the iniquity they have devised, because it is in the power of their hand; they find that they can compass it by the help of their wealth, and the authority and interest they have, and that none dare control them, or call them to an account for it; and this, they think, will justify them and bear them out in it. Note, It is the mistake of many to think that as they can do they may do; whereas no power is given for destruction, but all for edification.

4. They are industrious and very expeditious in accomplishing the iniquity they have devised; when they have settled the matter in their thoughts, in their beds, they lose no time, but as soon as the morning is light they practice it; they are up early in the prosecution of their designs, and what ill their hand finds to do they do it with all their might, which shames our slothfulness and dilatoriness in doing good, and should shame us out of them. In the service of God, and our generation, let it never be said that we left that to be done to-morrow which we could do to-day.

5. They stick at nothing to compass their designs; what they covet they take away, if they can, and,

(1.) They care not what wrong they do, though it be ever so gross and open; they take away men's fields by violence, not only by fraud, and underhand practices and colour of law, but by force and with a high hand.

(2.) They care not to whom they do wrong nor how far the iniquity extends which they devise: They oppress a man and his house; they rob and ruin those that have numerous families to maintain, and are not concerned though they send them and their wives and children a begging. They oppress a man and his heritage; they take away from men that which they have an unquestionable title to, having received it from their ancestors,

and which they have but in trust, to transmit it to their posterity; but those oppressors care not how many they impoverish, so they may but enrich themselves. Note, If covetousness reigns in the heart, commonly all compassion is banished from it; and if any man love this world, as the love of the Father, so the love of his neighbour is not in him.

2 And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence; and houses, and take *them* away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

3 Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time *is* evil.

4 In that day shall *one* take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, *and* say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed *it* from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.

The justice of God contriving the evil of punishment for this sin (Mic 2:3): Therefore thus saith the Lord, the righteous God, that judges between man and man, and is an avenger on those that do wrong, Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, that is, against the whole kingdom, the house of Israel, and particularly those families in it that were cruel and oppressive.

They unjustly devise evil against their brethren, and God will justly devise evil against them. Infinite Wisdom will so contrive the punishment of their sin that it shall be very sure, and such as cannot be avoided, very severe, and such as they cannot bear, very signal and remarkable, and such as shall be universally observed to answer to the sin. The more there appears of a wicked wit in the sin the more there shall appear of a holy wisdom and fitness in the punishment; for the Lord will be known by the judgments he executes; he will be owned by them.

1. He finds them very secure, and confident that they shall in some way or other escape the judgment, or, though they fall under it, shall soon throw it off and get clear of it, and therefore he tells them, It is an evil from which they shall not remove their neck. They were children of Belial, that would not endure the easy yoke of God's righteous commands, but broke those bonds asunder, and cast away those cords from them; and therefore

God will lay upon them the heavy yoke of his righteous judgments, and they shall not be able to withdraw their necks from that; those that will not be overruled shall be overcome.

2. He finds them very proud and stately, and therefore he tells them that they shall not go haughtily, with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go (Isa 3:16); for this time is evil, and the events of it are very humbling and mortifying, and such as will bring down the stoutest spirit.

3. He finds them very merry and jovial, and therefore tells them their note shall be changed, their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness (Mic 2:4): In that day, when God comes to punish you for your oppression, shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, with a lamentation of lamentations (so the word is), a most lamentable lamentation, as a song of songs is a most pleasing song.

Their enemies shall insult over them, and make a jest of their griefs, for they shall take up a parable against them. Their friends shall mourn over them, and lay to heart their calamities, and this shall be the general cry, "We are utterly spoiled; we are all undone." Note, Those that were most haughty and secure in their prosperity are commonly most dejected and most ready to despair in their adversity.

4. He finds them very rich in houses and lands, which they have gained by oppression, and therefore tells them that they shall be stripped of all.

(1.) They shall, in their despair, give it all up; they shall say, We are utterly spoiled; he has changed the portion of my people, so that it is now no longer theirs, but it is in the possession and occupation of their enemies: How has he removed it from me! How suddenly, how powerfully! What is unjustly got by us will not long continue with us; the righteous God will remove it. Turning away from us in wrath, he has divided our fields, and given them into the hands of strangers. Woe to those from whom God turns away. The margin reads it, "Instead of restoring, he

has divided our fields; instead of putting us again in the possession of our estates, he has confirmed those in the possession of them that have taken them from us." Note, It is just with God that those who have dealt fraudulently and violently with others should themselves be dealt fraudulently and violently with.

(2.) God shall ratify what they say in their despair (Mic 2:5); so it shall be: Thou shalt have none to cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord, none to divide inheritances, because there shall be no inheritances to divide, no courts to try titles to lands, or determine controversies about them, or cast lots upon them, as in Joshua's time, for all shall be in the enemies' hand. This land, which should be taken from them, they had not only an unquestionable title to, but a very comfortable enjoyment of, for it was in the congregation of the Lord, or rather the congregation of the Lord was in it; it was God's land; it was a holy land, and therefore it was the more grievous to them to be turned out of it. Note, Those are to be considered the sorest calamities which cut us off from the congregation of the Lord, or cut us short in the enjoyment of the privileges of it.

5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord.

6 Prophesy ye not, *say they to them that* prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, *that* they shall not take shame.

Here are two sins charged upon the people of Israel, and judgments denounced against them for each, such judgments as exactly answer the sin--persecuting God's prophets and oppressing God's poor.

I. Persecuting God's prophets, suppressing and silencing them, is a sin that provokes God as much as anything, for it not only spits in the face of his authority over us, but spurns at the bowels of his mercy to us; for his sending prophets to us is a sure and valuable token of his goodwill. Now observe here,

1. What the obstruction and opposition were which this people gave to God's prophets: They said to those that prophesy, Prophesy ye not, as Isa 30:10. They said to the seers, "See not; do not trouble us with accounts of what you have seen, nor bring

us any such frightful messages." They must either not prophesy at all or prophesy only what is pleasing. The word for prophesying here signifies dropping, for the words of the prophets dropped from heaven as the dew.

Note, Those that hate to be reformed hate to be reproved, and do all they can to silence faithful ministers. Amos was forbidden to prophesy, Am 7:10, &c. Therefore persecutors stop their breath, because they have no other way to stop their mouths; for, if they live, they will preach and torment those that dwell on the earth, as the two witnesses did, Re 11:10.

Some read it, Prophesy not; let these prophesy. Let not those prophesy that tell us of our faults, and threaten us, but let those prophesy that will flatter us in our sins, and cry peace to us. They will not say that they will have no ministers at all, but they will have such as will say just what they would have them and go their way. This they are charged with (Mic 2:11), that when they silenced and frowned upon the true prophets they countenanced and encouraged pretenders, and set them up, and made an interest for them, to confront God's faithful prophets:

If a man walk in the spirit of falsehood, pretend to have the Spirit of God, while really it is a spirit of error, a spirit of delusion, and he himself knows that he has no commission, no instruction, from God, yet, if he says, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and strong drink, if he will but assure them that they shall have wine and strong drink enough, that they need not fear the judgments of war and famine which the other prophets threatened them with, that they shall always have plenty of the delights of sense and never know the want of them, and if he will but tell them that it is lawful for them to drink as much as they please of their wine and strong drink, and they need not scruple being drunk, that they shall have peace though they go on and add drunkenness to thirst, such a prophet as this is a man after their own heart, who will tell them that there is neither sin nor danger in the wicked course of life they lead:

He shall even be the prophet of this people; such a man they would have to be their prophet, that will not only associate with

them in their rioting and revellings, but will pretend to consecrate their sensualities by his prophecies and so harden them in their security and sensuality.

Note, It is not strange if people that are vicious and debauched covet to have ministers that are altogether such as themselves, for they are willing to believe God is so too, Ps 50:21. But how are sacred things profaned when they are prostituted to such base purposes, when prophecy itself shall be pressed into the services of a lewd and profane crew! But thus that servant who said, My Lord delays his coming, by the spirit of falsehood, smote his fellow servants and ate and drank with the drunken.

2. How they are here expostulated with upon this matter (Mic 2:7): "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, does it become thee to say and do thus? Wilt thou silence those that prophesy, and forbid them to speak in God's name?" Note, It is an honour and privilege to be named of the house of Jacob. Thou art called a Jew, Ro 2:17.

But, when those who are called by that worthy name degenerate, they commonly prove the worst of men themselves and the worst enemies to God's prophets. The Jews who were named of the house of Jacob were the most violent persecutors of the first preachers of the gospel. Upon this the prophet here argues with these oppressors of the word of God, and shows them,

(1.) What an affront they hereby put upon God, the God of the holy prophets: "Is the Lord's Spirit straitened? In silencing the Lord's prophets you do what you can to silence his Spirit too; but do you think you can do it? Can you make the Spirit of God your prisoner and your servant? Will you prescribe to him what he shall say, and forbid him to say what is displeasing to you? If you silence the prophets, yet cannot the Spirit of the Lord find out other ways to reach your consciences? Can your unbelief frustrate the divine counsels?"

(2.) What a scandal it was to their profession as Jews: "You are named the house of Jacob, and this is your honour; but are these

his doings? Are these the doings of your father Jacob? Do you herein tread in his steps? No; if you were indeed his children you would do his works; but now you seek to kill and silence a man that tells you the truth, in God's name; this did not Abraham (Joh 8:39,40); this did not Jacob." Or, "Are these God's doings? Are these the doings that will please him? Are these the doings of his people? No, you know they are not, however some may be so strangely blinded and bigoted as to kill God's ministers and think that therein they do him service," Joh 16:2.

(3.) Let them consider how unreasonable and absurd the thing was in itself: Do not my words do good to those that walk uprightly? Yes; certainly they do; it is an appeal to the experiences of the generation of the upright: "Call now if there be any of them that will answer you, and to which of the saints will you turn? Turn to which you will, and you will find they all agree in this, that the word of God does good to those that walk uprightly; and will you then oppose that which does good, so much good as good preaching does? Herein you wrong God, who owns the words of the prophets to be his words (they are my words) and who by them aims and designs to do good to mankind (Ps 119:68); and will you hinder the great benefactor from doing good? Will you put the light of the world under a bushel: You might as well say to the sun, Shine not, as say to the seers, See not.

Herein you wrong the souls of men, and deprive them of the benefit designed them by the word of God."

Note, Those are enemies not only to God, but to the world, they are enemies to their country, that silence good ministers, and obstruct the means of knowledge and grace; for it is certainly for the public common good of states and kingdoms that religion should be encouraged. God's words do good to those that walk uprightly. It is the character of good people that they walk uprightly (Ps 15:2); and it is their comfort that the words of God are good and do good to them; they find comfort in them. God's words are good words to good people, and speak comfortably to them.

But those that opposed the words of God, and silenced the prophets, pleaded, in justification of themselves, that God's words were unprofitable and unpleasant to them, and did them no good, nor prophesied any good concerning them, but evil, as Ahab complained of Micaiah, in answer to which the prophet here tells them that it was their own fault; they might thank themselves.

They might find it of good use to them if they were but disposed to make a good use of it; if they would but walk uprightly, as they should, and so qualify themselves for comfort, the word of God would speak comfortably to them. Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise for the same.

3. What they are threatened with for this sin; God also will choose their delusions, and,

(1.) They shall be deprived of the benefit of a faithful ministry. Since they say, Prophesy not, God will take them at their word, and they shall not prophesy to them; their sin shall be their punishment. If men will silence God's ministers, it is just with God to silence them, as he did Ezekiel, and to say, They shall no more be reprovers and monitors to them. Let the physician no longer attend the patient that will not be healed, for he will not be ruled. They shall not prophesy to them, and then they will not take shame. As it is the work of magistrates, so it is also of ministers, to put men to shame when they do amiss (Jdg 18:7), that, being made ashamed of their folly, they may not return again to it; but, when God gives men up to be impudent and shameless in sin, he says to his prophets, They are joined to idols; let them alone.

(2.) They shall be given up to the blind guidance of an unfaithful ministry. We may understand Mic 2:11 as a threatening: If a man be found walking in the spirit of falsehood, having such a lying spirit as was in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, that will strengthen their hands in their wicked ways, he shall be the prophet of this people, that is, God will leave them to themselves to hearken to such; since they will be deceived, let them be deceived; since

they will not admit the truth in the love of it, God will send them strong delusions to believe a lie, 2Th 2:10,11.

They shall have prophets that will prophesy to them for wine and strong drink (so some read it), that will give you a cast of their office to your mind for a bottle of wine of a flagon of ale, will soothe sinners in their sins if they will but feed them with the gratifications of their lusts; to have such prophets, and to be ridden by them, is as sad a judgment as any people can be under and as bad a preface of ruin approaching as it is to a particular person to be under the influence of a debauched conscience.

7 O *thou that art* named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? *are* these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.

9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.

Oppressing God's poor is another sin they are charged with, as before (Mic 2:1,2), for it is a sin doubly hateful and provoking to God. Observe,

1. How the sin is described, Mic 2:8,9. When they contemned God's prophets and opposed them they broke out into all other wickedness; what bonds will hold those that have no reverence for God's word? Those who formerly rose up against the enemies of the nation, in defence of their country and therein behaved themselves bravely, now of late rose up as enemies of the nation, and, instead of defending it, destroyed it, and did it more mischief (as usually such vipers in the bowels of a state do) than a foreign enemy could do. They made a prey of men, women, and children,

(1.) Of men, that were travelling on the way, that pass by securely as men averse from war, that were far from any bad designs, but went peaceably about their lawful occasions; those they set upon, as if they had been dangerous obnoxious people, and pulled off the robe with the garment from them, that is, they stripped them both of the upper and the inner garment, took away their cloak, and would have their coat also; thus barbarously did

they use those that were quiet in the land, who, being harmless, were fearless, and so the more easily make a prey of.

(2.) Of women, whose sex should have been their protection (Mic 2:9): The women of my people have you cast out from their pleasant houses. They devoured widows' houses (Mt 23:14), and so turned them out of the possession of them, because they were pleasant houses, and such as they had a mind for. It was inhuman to deal thus barbarously with women; but that which especially aggravated it was that they were the women of God's people, whom they knew to be under his protection.

(3.) Of children, whose age entitles them to a tender usage: From their children have you taken away my glory for ever. It was the glory of the Israelites' children that they were free, but they enslaved them--that they were born in God's house, and had a right to the privileges of it, but they sold them to strangers, sent them into idolatrous countries, where they were deprived for ever of that glory; at least the oppressors designed their captivity should be perpetual. Note, The righteous God will certainly reckon for injuries done to the widows and fatherless, who, being helpless and friendless, cannot otherwise expect to be righted.

2. What the sentence is that is passed upon them for it (Mic 2:10): "Arise ye, and depart; prepare to quit this land, for you shall be forced out of it, as you have forced the women and children of my people out of their possessions; it is not, it shall not, be your rest, as it was intended that Canaan should be, Ps 95:11. You shall have neither contentment nor continuance in it, because it is polluted by your wickedness." Sin is defiling to a land, and sinners cannot expect to rest in a land which they have polluted, but is will spew them out, as this land spewed out the Canaanites of old when they had polluted it with their abominations, Le 18:27,28.

"Nay, you shall not only be obliged to depart out of this land, but it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction; you shall either be turned out of it or (which is all one) you shall be ruined in it." We may apply this to our state in this present world; it is polluted; there is a great deal of corruption in the world, through

lust, and therefore we should arise, and depart out of it, keep at a distance from the corruption that is in it, and keep ourselves unspotted from it. It is not our rest; it was never intended to be so; it was designed for our passage, but not for our portion--our inn, but not our home. Here we have no continuing city; let us therefore arise and depart; let us sit loose to it and live above it, and think of leaving it and seek a continuing city above.

10 Arise ye, and depart; for this *is* not *your* rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a sore destruction.

11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude of* men.

After threatenings of wrath, the chapter here concludes, as is usual in the prophets, with promises of mercy, which were in part fulfilled when the Jews returned out of Babylon, and had their full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah. Their grievances shall be all redressed.

1. Whereas they were dispersed, they shall be brought together again, and shall jointly receive the tokens of God's favour to them, and shall have communion with each other and comfort in each other (Mic 2:12): "I will surely assemble, O Jacob! all of thee, all that belong to thee, all that are named of the house of Jacob (Mic 2:7) that are now expelled your country, Mic 2:10.

I will bring you together again, and not one of you shall be lost, not one of you shall be missing. I will surely gather the remnant of Israel, that remnant that is designed and reserved for salvation; they shall be brought to incorporate in one body. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." Sheep are inoffensive and sociable creatures; they shall be as the flock in the midst of their fold, where they are safe under the shepherd's eye and care; and they shall make great noise (as numerous flocks and herds do, with their bleating and lowing) by reason of the multitude of men (for the sheep are men, as the prophet

explains this comparison, Eze 34:31), not by reason of their strifes and contentions, but by reason of their great numbers.

This was accomplished when Christ by his gospel gathered together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad, and united both Jews and Gentiles in one fold, and under one Shepherd, when all the complaint was that the place was too strait for them--that was the noise, by reason of their multitude (Isa 49:19,20), when there were some added to the church from all parts of the world, and all men were drawn to Christ by the attractive power of his cross, which shall be done yet more and more, and perfectly done, when he shall send forth his angels to gather in his elect from the four winds.

2. Whereas God had seemed to desert them, and cast them off, now he will own them, and head them, and help them through all the difficulties that are in the way of their return and deliverance (Mic 2:13): the breaker has come up before them, to break down all opposition, and clear the road for them; and under his guidance they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, the door of escape out of their captivity, and have gone out by it with courage and resolution, having Omnipotence for their van-guard. Their King shall pass before them, to head them in the way, even Jehovah (he was their king) on the head of them, as he was on the head of the armies of Israel when they followed the pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness and when he appeared to Joshua as captain of the Lord's host.

Christ is the church's King; he is Jehovah; he heads them, passes before them, brings them out of the land of their captivity, brings them into the land of their rest. He is the breaker, that broke through them, that rent the veil, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

The learned bishop Pearson applies it to the resurrection of Christ, by which he obtained the power and became the pattern of our resurrection. The breaker has gone up before us out of the grave, and has carried away its gates, as Samson did Gaza's, bar and all, and by that breach we go out. The learned Dr.

Pocock mentions, as the sense which some of the ancient Jews give of it, that the breaker is Elias, and their King the Messiah, the Son of David; and he thinks we may apply it to Christ and his forerunner John the Baptist. John was the breaker; he broke the ice, prepared the way of the Lord by the baptism of repentance; in him the gospel began; from his time the kingdom of heaven suffered violence; and so the Christian church is introduced, with Messiah the Prince before it, on the head of it, going forth conquering and to conquer.

13 The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it; and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.

Micah-3

Israel's Leaders Denounced

1 And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it* not for you to know judgment?

Princes and prophets, when they faithfully discharge the duty of their office, are to be highly honoured above other men; but when they betray their trust, and act contrary to it, they should hear of their faults as well as others, and shall be made to know that there is a God above them, to whom they are accountable; at his bar the prophet here, in his name, arraigns them.

I. Let the princes hear their charge and their doom. The heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel, are called upon to hear what the prophet has to say to them, Mic 3:1 The word of God has reproofs for the greatest of men, which the ministers of that word ought to apply as there is occasion. The prophet here has comfort in the reflection upon it, that, whatever the success was, he had faithfully discharged his trust: And I said, Hear, O princes! He had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had not shrunk from his duty for fear of the face of men. He tells them,

1. What was expected from them: Is it not for you to know judgment? He means to do judgment, for otherwise the knowledge of it is of no avail. "Is it not your business to

administer justice impartially, and not to know faces" (as the Hebrew phrase for partiality and respect of persons is), "but to know judgment, and the merits of every cause?" Or it may be taken for granted that the heads and rulers are well acquainted with the rules of justice, whatever others are; for they have those means of knowledge, and have not those excuses for ignorance, which some others have, that are poor and foolish (Jer 5:4); and, if so, their transgression of the laws of justice is the more provoking to God, for they sin against knowledge. "Is it not for you to know judgment? Yes, it is; therefore stand still, and hear your own judgment, and judge if it be not right, whether any thing can be objected against it."

2. How wretchedly they had transgressed the rules of judgment, though they knew what they were. Their principle and disposition are bad: They hate the good and love the evil; they hate good in others, and hate it should have any influence on themselves; they hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good and do good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief. This being their principle, their practice is according to it; they are very cruel and severe towards those that are under their power, and whoever lies at their mercy will find that they have none. They barbarously devour those whom they should protect, and, as unfaithful shepherds, fleece the flock they should feed; nay, instead of feeding it, they feed upon it, Eze 34:2.

It is fit indeed that he who feeds a flock should eat of the milk of the flock (1Co 9:7), but that will not content them: They eat the flesh of my people. It is fit that they should be clothed with the wool, but that will not serve: They flay the skin from off them, Mic 3:3. By imposing heavier taxes upon them than they can bear, and exacting them with rigour, by mulcts, and fines, and corporal punishments, for pretended crimes, they ruined the estates and families of their subjects, took away from some their lives, from others their livelihoods, and were to their subjects as beasts of prey, rather than shepherds. "They break their bones to come at the marrow, and chop the flesh in pieces as for the pot." This intimates that they were,

(1.) Very ravenous and greedy for themselves, indulging themselves in luxury and sensuality.

(2.) Very barbarous and cruel to those that were under them, not caring whom they beggared, so they could but enrich themselves; such evil is the love of money the root of.

3. How they might expect that God should deal with them, since they had been thus cruel to his subjects. The rule is fixed, Those shall have judgment without mercy that have shown no mercy (Mic 3:4): "They shall cry to the Lord, but he will not hear them, in the day of their distress, as the poor cried to them in the day of their prosperity and they would not hear them." There will come a time when the most proud and scornful sinners will cry to the Lord, and sue for that mercy which they once neither valued nor copied out. But it will then be in vain; God will even hide his face from them at that time, that time when they need his favour, and see themselves undone without it. At another time they would have turned their back upon him; but at that time he will turn his back upon them, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

Note, Men cannot expect to do ill and fare well, but may expect to find, as Adoni-bezek did, that done to them which they did to others; for he is righteous who takes vengeance. With the froward God will show himself froward, and he often gives up cruel and unmerciful men into the hands of those who are cruel and unmerciful to them, as they themselves have formerly been to others. This agrees with Pr 21:13, Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and shall not be heard; but the merciful have reason to hope that they shall obtain mercy.

2 Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;

3 who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

4 Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

Let the prophets hear their charge too, and their doom; they were such as prophesied falsely, and the princes bore rule by their means. Observe,

1. What was their sin.

(1.) They made it their business to flatter and deceive the people: They make my people err, lead them into mistakes, both concerning what they should do and concerning what God would do with them. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and those draw them out of the way that should guide them and go before them in it. "They make them to err by crying peace, by telling them that they do well, and that all shall be well with them; whereas they are in the paths of sin, and within a step of ruin.

They cry peace, but they bite with their teeth," which perhaps is meant of their biting their own lips, as we are apt to do when we would suppress something which we are ready to speak. When they cried peace their own hearts gave them the lie, and they were just ready to eat their own words and to contradict themselves, but they bit with their teeth, and kept it in. They were not blind leaders of the blind, for they saw the ditch before them, and yet led their followers into it.

(2.) They made it all their aim to glut themselves, and serve their own belly, as the seducers in St. Paul's time (Ro 16:18), for their god is their belly, Php 3:19. They bite with their teeth, and cry peace; that is, they will flatter and compliment those that will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those that put not into their mouths, that are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies; to them they do not cry peace, as they do to those whom they look upon as their benefactors, but they even prepare war against them; against them they denounce the judgments of God, but as they are to them, as the crafty priests of the church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or frown upon the offerer according as his offering is. Justly is it insisted on as a necessary qualification of a minister (1Ti 3:3,Tit 1:7) that he be not greedy of filthy lucre.

2. What is the sentence passed upon them for this sin, Mic 3:6,7. It is threatened,

(1.) That they shall be involved in troubles and miseries with those to whom they had cried peace: Night shall be upon them, a dark cold night of calamity, such as they, in their flattery, led the people to hope would never come. It shall be dark unto you, darker to you than to others; the sun shall go down over the prophets, shall go down at noon; all comfort shall depart from them, and they shall be deprived of all hope of it. The day shall be dark over them, in which they promised themselves light. Nor shall they be surrounded with outward troubles only, but their mind shall be full of confusion, and they shall be brought to their wits' end; their heads shall be clouded, and their own thoughts shall trouble them; and that is trouble enough. They kept others in the dark, and now God will bring them into the dark.

(2.) That thereby they shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophecy for ever shamed. They never had any true vision; and now, the event disproving their predictions of peace, it shall be made to appear that they never had any, that there never was an answer of God to them, but it was all a sham, and they were cheats and impostors. Their reputation being thus quite sunk, their confidence would of course fail them. And, their spirits being ruffled and confused, their invention would fail them too; and by reason of this darkness, both without and within too, they shall not divine, they shall not have so much as a counterfeit vision to produce, they shall be ashamed, and confounded, and cover their lips, as men that are quite baffled and have nothing to say for themselves.

Note, Those who deceive others are but preparing confusion for their own faces.

5 Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him:

6 Therefore night *shall be* unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.
7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for *there is* no answer of God.
8 But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

Here, I The prophet experiences a divine power going along with him in his work, and he makes a solemn profession and protestation of it, as that which would justify him, and bear him out, in his plain dealing with the princes and rulers. He would not, he durst not, make thus bold with the great men, but that he was carried out to do it by a prophetical impulse and impression. It was not he that said it, but God by him, and he could not but speak the word that God put into his mouth.

It comes in likewise by way of opposition to the false prophets, who were full of shame when they lived to see themselves proved liars, and who never had courage to deal faithfully with the people, but flattered them in their sins; they were sensual, not having the Spirit, but truly (says Micah) I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, Mic 3:8. Having in himself an assurance of the truth of what he said, he said it with assurance. Compare him with those false prophets, and you will say, There is no comparison between them. What is the chaff to the wheat? Jer 23:28. What is painted fire to real fire? Observe here,

1. What the qualifications were with which this prophet was endured: He was full of power, and of judgment, and of might; he had an ardent love to God and to the souls of men, a deep concern for his glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had likewise courage to reprove it and witness against it, not fearing the wrath either of great men or of great multitudes; whatever difficulties or discouragements he met with, they did not deter him nor drive him from his work; none of these things moved him.

And all this was guided by judgment and discretion; he was a man of wisdom as well as courage; in all his preaching there

was light as well as heat, and a spirit of wisdom as well as of zeal. Thus was this man of God thoroughly furnished for every good word he had to say, and every good work he had to do. Those he preached to could not but perceive him to be full both of power and judgment, for they found both their understandings opened and their hearts made to burn within them, with such evidence and demonstration, and with such power, did the word come from him.

2. Whence he had these qualifications, not from and of himself, but he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord. Knowing that it was indeed the Spirit of the Lord that was in him, and spoke by him, that it was a divine revelation that he delivered, he spoke it boldly, and as one having authority, set his face as a flint, knowing he should be justified and borne out in what he said, Isa 50:7,8. Note, Those who act honestly may act boldly; and those who are sure that they have a commission from God need not be afraid of opposition from men.

Nay, he had not only a Spirit of prophecy, which was the ground of his boldness, but the Spirit of sanctification endued him with the boldness and wisdom which were requisite for him. It was not in any strength of his own that he was strong; for who is sufficient for these things? but in the Lord, and in the power of his might; for from him all our sufficiency is. Are we full of power at any time, for that which is good? It is purely by the Spirit of the Lord, for of ourselves we are weak as water; it is the God of Israel that gives strength and power both to his people and to his ministers.

3. What use he made of these qualifications--this judgment and this power; he declared to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. If transgression be found in Jacob and Israel, they must be told of it, and it is the business of God's prophets to tell them of it, to cry aloud and not to spare, Isa 58:1. Those who come to hear the word of God must be willing to be told of their faults, and must not only give their ministers leave to deal plainly and faithfully with them, but take it kindly, and be thankful; but, since few have meekness enough to receive reproof, those have

need of a great deal of boldness who are to give reproofs, and must pray for a spirit both of wisdom and might.

9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

11 The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, *Is* not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us.

The prophet exerts this power in dealing with the heads of the house of Jacob, both the princes and the prophets, whom he had drawn up a high charge against in the former part of the chapter. He repeats the summons of their attendance and attention (Mic 3:9), the same that we had Mic 3:1, directing himself to the princes of the house of Israel, yet he means those of Judah; for it appears (Jer 26:18,19, where Mic 3:12 is quoted) that this was spoken in Hezekiah's kingdom; but, the ten tribes being gone into captivity, Judah is all that is now left of Jacob and Israel. The prophet speaks respectfully to them (hear, I pray you) and gives them their titles of heads and princes. Ministers must be faithful to great men in reproving them for their sins, but they must not be rude and uncivil to them. Now observe here,

1 The great wickedness that these heads of the house of Jacob were guilty of, princes, priest, and prophets; in short, they were covetous and prostituted their offices to their love of money.

(1.) The princes abhorred all judgment; they would not be governed by any of its laws, either in their own practice or in passing sentence upon appeals made to them; they perverted all equity, and scorned to be under the direction or correction of justice, when it could not be made pliable to their secular interests. When, under pretence of doing right, they did the most palpable wrongs, then they perverted equity, and made it serve a purpose contrary to the intention of the founder of magistracy and fountain of power. It is laid to their charge (Mic 3:10) that they build up Zion with blood. "They pretend, in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they build up Zion and Jerusalem; they add new streets and squares to the holy cities, and adorn them; they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state,

and think that therein they do God and Israel good service. But it is with blood and with iniquity, and therefore it cannot prosper; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God justify their contradictions to the law of God."

Those mistake who think that a burning zeal for holy church, and the propagating of the faith, will serve to consecrate robberies and murders, massacres and depredations; no, Zion's walls owe those no thanks that build them up with blood and iniquity. The sin of man works not the righteousness of God.

"The office of the princes is to judge upon appeals made to them; but they judge for reward (Mic 3:11); they give judgment on the side of those that give the bribe; the most righteous cause shall not be carried without a fee, and for a fee the most unrighteous cause shall be carried." Miserable is the people's case when the judge's enquiry upon a cause is not, "What is to be done in it?" but, "What is to be got by it?" (2.) The priests' work was to teach the people, and for that the law had provided them a very honourable comfortable maintenance; but that will not content them, they teach for hire over and above, and will be hired to teach anything, as an oracle of God, which they know will please and gain them an interest.

(3.) The prophets, it should seem, had honorary fees given them by way of gratuity (1Sa 9:7,8); but these prophets governed themselves in their prophesying by the prospect of temporal advantage and that was the main thing they had in their eye: They divine for money. Their tongues were mercenary; they would either prophesy or let it alone, according as they found it most for their advantage; and a man might have what oracle he would from them if he would but pay them for it. Thus they were fit successors of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

Note, Though that which is wicked can never be consecrated by a zeal for the church, yet that which is sacred may be, and often is, desecrated, by the love of the world. When men do that which in itself is good, but do it for filthy lucre, it loses its excellency, and becomes an abomination both to God and man.

2. Their vain presumption and carnal confidence, notwithstanding: They lean upon the Lord, and because they are, in profession, his people, they think there is neither harm nor danger in these their wicked practices. Faith builds upon the Lord, rests in him, and relies upon him, as the soul's foundation; presumption only leans upon the Lord as a prop, makes use of him to serve a turn, while still the world is the foundation that is built upon. They speak with a great deal of confidence,

(1.) Of their honour: "Is not the Lord among us? Have we not the tokens of his presence with us, his temple, his ark, his lively oracles?" They are haughty because of the holy mountain and its dignities (Zep 3:11), as if their church-privileges would palliate the worst of practices, or as if God's presence with them were intended to make the priests and people rich with the sale of their performances. It was true that the Lord was among them by his ordinances, and this puffed them up with pride; but, if they imagined that he was among them by his favour and love, they were mistaken: but it is a cheat the children of men often put upon themselves to think they have God with them, when they have by their sin provoked him to depart from them.

(2.) They are confident of their own safety: No evil can come upon us. Many are rocked asleep; in a fatal security by their church-privileges, as if those would protect them in sin, and shelter them from punishment, which are really, and will be, the greatest aggravations both of their sin and of their punishment. If men's having the Lord among them will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their impudence will be their impunity.

3. The doom passed upon them for their real wickedness, notwithstanding their imaginary protection (Mic 3:12): Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field. This is that passage which is quoted as a bold word spoken by Micah (Jer 26:18), which yet Hezekiah and his princes took well, though in another reign it might have gone near to cost him his head; nay, they repented and reformed, and so the execution of this threatening was prevented, and did not come in those days.

(1.) It is the ruin of holy places that is here foretold, places that had been highly honoured with the tokens of God's presence and the performances of his worship; it is Zion that shall be ploughed as a field, the building burnt to the ground and levelled with it. Some observe that this was literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when the ground on which the city stood was ploughed up in token of its utter desolation, and that no city should be built upon that ground without the emperor's leave. Even Jerusalem, the holy city, shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house, on which the temple is built, shall be overgrown with briars and thorns, as the high places of the forest. If sacred places be polluted by sin, they must expect to be wasted and ruined by the judgments of God.

(2.) It is the wickedness of those who preside in them that brings the ruin: "It is for your sake that Zion shall be ploughed as a field; you pretend to build up Zion, but, doing it by blood and iniquity, you pull it down." Note, The sin of priests and princes is often the ruin of states and churches. Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi--The kings act foolishly and the people suffer for it.

12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Micah-4

The Lord's Universal Reign

1 But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

It is a very comfortable but with which this chapter begins, and very reviving to those who lay the interests of God's church near their heart and are concerned for the welfare of it. When we sometimes see the corruptions of the church, especially of church-rulers, princes, priests, and prophets, seeking their own things and not the things of God, and when we soon after see the desolations of the church, Zion for their sakes ploughed as a field, we are ready to fear that it will one day perish between both, that the

name of Israel shall be no more in remembrance; we are ready to give up all for gone, and to conclude the church will have neither root not branch upon earth.

But let not our faith fail in this matter; out of the ashes of the church another phoenix shall arise. In the last words of the foregoing chapter we left the mountain of the house as desolate and waste as the high places of the forest; and is it possible that such a wilderness should ever become a fruitful field again? Yes, the first words of this chapter bring in the mountain of the Lord's house as much dignified by being frequented as ever it had been disgraced by being deserted.

Though Zion be ploughed as a field, yet God has not cast off his people, but by the fall of the Jews salvation has come to the Gentiles, so that it proves to be the riches of the world, Ro 11:11,12. This is the mystery which God by the prophet here shows us, and he says the very same in the Mic 4:1-3 of this chapter which another prophet said by the word of the Lord at the same time (Isa 2:2-4), that out of the mouth of these two witnesses these promises might be established; and very precious promises they are, relating to the gospel-church, which have been in part accomplished, and will be yet more and more, for he is faithful that has promised.

I. That there shall be a church for God set up in the world, after the defection and destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days; that is, as some of the rabbin themselves acknowledge, in the days of the Messiah. The people of God shall be incorporated by a new charter, a new spiritual way of worship shall be enacted, and a new institution of offices to attend it; better privileges shall be granted by this new charter, and better provision made for enlarging and establishing the kingdom of God among men than had been made by the Old-Testament constitution:

The mountain of the house of the Lord shall again appear firm ground for God's faithful worshippers to stand, and go, and build upon, in their attendance on him, Mic 4:1. And it shall be a centre

of unity to them; a church shall be set up in the world, to which the Lord will be daily adding such as shall be saved.

II. That this church shall be firmly founded and well-built: It shall be established in the top of the mountains; Christ himself will build it upon a rock; it shall be an impregnable fort upon an immovable foundation, so that the gates of hell shall neither overthrow the one nor undermine the other (Mt 16:18); its foundations are still in the holy mountains (Ps 87:1), the everlasting mountains, which cannot, which shall not, be removed. It shall be established, not as the temple, upon one mountain, but upon many; for the foundations of the church, as they are sure, so they are large.

III. That it shall be highly advanced, and become eminent and conspicuous: It shall be exalted above the hills, observed with wonder for its growing greatness from small beginnings. The kingdom of Christ shall shine with greater lustre than ever any of the kingdoms of the earth did. It shall be as a city on a hill, which cannot be hid, Mt 5:14. The glory of this latter house is greater than that of the former, Hag 2:9. See 2Co 3:7,8, &c.

IV. That there shall be a great accession of converts to it and succession of converts in it. People shall flow unto it as the waters of a river are continually flowing; there shall be a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple, while it was standing, to worship there. Then many tribes came to the mountain of the house, to enquire of God's temple; but in gospel-times many nations shall flow into the church, shall fly like a cloud and as the doves to their windows. Ministers shall be sent forth to disciple all nations, and they shall not labour in vain; for, multitudes being wrought upon to believe the gospel and embrace the Christian religion, they shall excite and encourage one another, and shall say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord now raised among us, even to the house of the God of Jacob, the spiritual temple which we need not travel far to, for it is brought to our doors and set up in the midst of us."

Thus shall people be made willing in the day of his power (Ps 110:3), and shall do what they can to make others willing, as Andrew invited Peter, and Philip Nathanael, to be acquainted with Christ. They shall call the people to the mountain (De 33:19), for there is in Christ enough for all, enough for each. Now observe what it is,

1. Which these converts expect to find in the house of the God of Jacob. They come thither for instruction: "He will teach us of his ways, what is the way in which he would have us to walk with him and in which we may depend upon him to meet us graciously." Note, Where we come to worship God we come to be taught of him.

2. Which they engage to do when they are thus taught of God: We will walk in his paths. Note, Those may comfortably expect that God will teach them who are firmly resolved by his grace to do as they are taught.

2 And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the
mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob;
and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the
law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
3 And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar
off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears
into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

That, in order to this, a new revelation shall be published to the world, on which the church shall be founded, and by which multitudes shall be brought into it: For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is here called the word of the Lord, for the Lord gave the word, and great was the company of those that published it, Ps 68:11. It was of a divine original, a divine authority; it began to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself, Heb 2:3.

And it is a law, a law of faith; we are under the law to Christ. This was to go forth from Jerusalem, from Zion, the metropolis of the Old-Testament dispensation, where the temple, and altars, and oracles were, and whither the Jews went to worship from all parts; thence the gospel must take rise, to show the connexion between

the Old Testament and the New, that the gospel is not set up in opposition to the law, but is an explication and illustration of it, and a branch growing out of its roots. It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached and wrought miracles; there he died, rose again, and ascended; there the Spirit was poured out; and those that were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations were ordered to begin at Jerusalem, so that thence flowed the streams that were to water the desert world.

VI. That a convincing power should go along with the gospel of Christ, in all places where it should be preached (Mic 4:3): He shall judge among many people. Messiah, the lawgiver (Mic 4:2), is here the judge, for to him the Father committed all judgment, and for judgment he came into this world; his word, the word of his gospel, that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the golden sceptre by which he shall rule and judge when he sits as king on the holy hill of Zion, Ps 2:6. By it he shall rebuke strong nations afar off; for the Spirit working with the word shall reprove the world, Joh 16:8. It is promised to the Son of David that he shall judge among the heathen (Ps 110:6), which he does when in the chariot of his everlasting gospel he goes forth, and goes on, conquering and to conquer.

VII. That a disposition to mutual peace and love shall be the happy effect of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah: They shall beat their swords into plough-shares; that is, angry passionate men, that have been fierce and furious, shall be wonderfully sweetened, and made mild and meek, Tit 3:2,3. Those who, before their conversion, did injuries, and would bear none, after their conversion can bear injuries, but will do none. As far as the gospel prevails it makes men peaceable, for such is the wisdom from above; it is gentle and easy to be entreated; and if nations were but leavened by it, there would be universal peace. When Christ was born there was universal peace in the Roman empire; those that were first brought into the gospel church were all of one heart and of one soul (Ac 4:32); and it was observed of the primitive Christians how well they loved one another. In heaven this will have its full accomplishment. It is promised,

1. That none shall be quarrelsome. The art of war, instead of being improved (which some reckon the glory of a kingdom), shall be forgotten and laid aside as useless. They shall not learn war any more as they have done, for they shall have no need to defend themselves nor any inclination to offend their neighbours. Nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation; not that the gospel will make men cowards, but it will make men peaceable.

2. That all shall be quiet, both from evil and from the fear of evil (Mic 4:4): They shall sit safely, and none shall disturb them; they shall sit securely, and shall not disturb themselves, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, enjoying the fruit of them, and needing no other shelter than the leaves of them. None shall make them afraid; not only there shall be nothing that is likely to frighten them, but they shall not be disposed to fear. under the dominion of Christ, as that of Solomon, there shall be abundance of peace. Though his followers have trouble in the world, in him they enjoy great tranquillity. If this seems unlikely, yet we may depend upon it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, and no word of his shall fall to the ground; what he has spoken by his word he will do by his providence and grace. He that is the Lord of hosts will be the God of peace; and those may well be easy whom the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, undertakes the protection of.

VIII. That the churches shall be constant in their duty, and so shall make a good use of their tranquillity and shall not provoke the Lord to deprive them of it, Mic 4:5. When the churches have rest they shall be edified, and confirmed, and comforted, and shall resolve to be as firm to their God as other nations are to theirs, though they be no gods. Where we find the foregoing promises, Isa 2:2, &c. it follows (Mic 4:5), O house of Jacob! come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord; and here, We will walk in the name of the Lord our God. Note, Peace is a blessing indeed when it strengthens our resolutions to cleave to the Lord. Observe,

1. How constant other nations were to their gods: All people will walk every one in the name of his god, will own their god and cleave to him, will worship their god and serve him, will depend upon him and put confidence in him. Whatever men make a god of they will make use of, and take his name along with them in all

their actions and affairs. The mariners, in a storm, cried every man to his god, Jon 1:5. And no instance could be found of a nation's changing its gods, Jer 2:11: If the hosts of heaven were their gods, they loved them, and served them, and walked after them, Jer 8:2.

2. How constant God's people now resolve to be to him: "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God, will acknowledge him in all our ways, and govern ourselves by a continual regard to him, doing nothing but what we have warrant from him for, and openly professing our relation to him." Observe, Their resolution is peremptory; it is not a thing that needs be disputed: "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God." It is just and reasonable: He is our God. And it is a resolution for a perpetuity: "We will do it for ever and ever, and will never leave him. He will be ours for ever, and therefore so we will be his, and never repent our choice."

IX. That notwithstanding the dispersions, distress, and infirmities of the church, it shall be formed and established, and made very considerable, Mic 4:6,7.

1 The state of the church had been low, and weak, and very helpless, in the latter times of the Old Testament, partly through the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and partly through the oppressions under which they groaned. They were like a flock of sheep that were maimed, worried, and scattered, Eze 34:16,Jer 50:6,17. The good people among them, and in other places, that were well inclined, were dispersed, were very infirm, and in a manner lost and cast far off.

2. It is promised that all these grievances shall be redressed and the distemper healed. Christ will come himself (Mt 15:24), and send his apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Mt 10:6.

From among the Jews that halted, or that for want of strength, could not go upright, God gathered a remnant (Mic 4:7), that remnant according to the election of grace which is spoken of in Ro 11:7, which embraced the gospel of Christ. And from among the Gentiles that were cast far off (so the Gentiles are described to be, Eph 2:13,Ac 2:39) he raised a strong nation; greater numbers of them were brought into the church than of the Jews,

Ga 4:27. And such a strong nation the gospel-church is that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. The church of Christ is more numerous than any other nation, and strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

X. That the Messiah shall be the king of this kingdom, shall protect and govern it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, and this to the end of time. The Lord Jesus shall reign over them in Mount Zion by his word and Spirit in his ordinances, and this henceforth and for ever, for of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken *it*.

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

Israel's Redemption from Captivity

6 In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

7 and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

These verses relate to Zion and Jerusalem, here called the tower of the flock or the tower of Edor; we read of such a place (Ge 35:21) near Bethlehem; and some conjecture it is the same place where the shepherds were keeping their flocks when the angels brought them tidings of the birth of Christ, and some think Bethlehem itself is here spoken of, as Mic 5:2. Some think it is a tower at that gate of Jerusalem which is called the sheep-gate (Ne 3:32), and conjecture that through that gate Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem. However, it seems to be put for Jerusalem itself, or for Zion the tower of David. All the sheep of Israel flocked thither three times a year; it was the stronghold

(Ophel, which is also a name of a place in Jerusalem, Ne 3:27), or castle, of the daughter of Zion. Now here,

I. We have a promise of the glories of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel-church, which is; the tower of the flock, that one fold in which all the sheep of Christ are protected under one Shepherd: "Unto thee shall it come; that which thou hast long wanted and wished for, even the first dominion, a dignity and power equal to that of David and Solomon, by whom Jerusalem was first raised, that kingdom shall again come to the daughter of Jerusalem, which it was deprived of at the captivity. It shall make as great a figure and shine with as much lustre among the nations, and have as much influence upon them, as ever it had; this is the first or chief dominion."

Now this had by no means its accomplishment in Zerubbabel; his was nothing like the first dominion either in respect of splendour and sovereignty at home or the extent of power abroad; and therefore it must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah (and to that the Chaldee-paraphrase refers it) and had its accomplishment when God gave to our Lord Jesus the throne of his father David (Lu 1:32), set him king upon the holy hill of Zion and gave him the heathen for his inheritance (Ps 2:6), made him, his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, Ps 89:27,Da 7:14.

David, in spirit, called him Lord, and (as Dr. Pocock observes) he witnessed of himself, and his witness was true, that he was greater than Solomon, none of their dominions being like his for extent and duration. The common people welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with hosannas to the son of David, to show that it was the first dominion that came to the daughter of Zion; and the evangelist applies it to the promise of Zion's king coming to her, Mt 21:5,Zec 9:9. Some give this sense of the words: To Zion, and Jerusalem that tower of the flock, to the nation of the Jews, came the first dominion; that is, there the kingdom of Christ was first set up, the gospel of the kingdom was first preached (Lu 24:47), there Christ was first called king of the Jews.

9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? *is there* no king in thee? is thy counselor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

10 Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman
in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt
dwell in the field, and thou shalt go *even* to Babylon; there shalt thou be
delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine
enemies.
11 Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be
defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.
12 But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they
his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

This is illustrated by a prediction of the calamities of the literal Jerusalem, to which some favour and relief should be granted, as a type and figure of what God would do for the gospel-Jerusalem in the last days, notwithstanding its distresses. We have here,

1. Jerusalem put in pain by the providences of God. "She cries out aloud, that all her neighbours may take notice of her griefs, because there is no king in her, none of that honour and power she used to have. Instead of ruling the nations, as she did when she sat a queen, she is ruled by them, and has become a captive. Her counsellors have perished; she is no longer at her own disposal, but is given up to the will of her enemies, and is governed by their counsellors. Pangs have taken her."

(1.) She is carried captive to Babylon, and there is in pangs of grief. "She goes forth out of the city, and is constrained to dwell in the field, exposed to all manner of inconveniences; she goes even to Babylon, and there wears out seventy tedious years in a miserable captivity, all that while in pain, as a woman in travail, waiting to be delivered, and thinking the time very long."

(2.) When she is delivered out of Babylon, and redeemed from the hand of her enemies there, yet still she is in pangs of fear; the end of one trouble is but the beginning of another; for now also, when Jerusalem is in the rebuilding, many nations are gathered against her, Mic 4:11. They were so in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, and did all they could to obstruct the building of the temple and the wall.

They were so in the time of the Maccabees; they said, Let her be defiled; let her be looked upon as a place polluted with sin, and be forsaken and abandoned both of God and man; let her holy places be profaned and all her honours laid in the dust; let our eye look upon Zion, and please itself with the sight of its ruins, as it is said of Edom (Ob 1:12, Thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother); let our eyes see our desire upon Zion, the day we have long wished for. When they hear the enemies thus combine against them, and insult over them, no wonder that they are in pain, and cry aloud. Without are fightings, within are fears.

2. Jerusalem made easy by the promises of God: "Why dost thou cry out aloud? Let thy griefs and fears be silenced; indulge not thyself in them, for, though things are bad with thee, they shall end well; thy pangs are great, but they are like those of a woman in travail (Mic 4:9), that labours to bring forth (Mic 4:10), the issue of which will be good at last." Jerusalem's pangs are not as dying agonies, but as travailing throes, which after a while will be forgotten, for joy that a child is born into the world.

Let the literal Jerusalem comfort herself with this, that, whatever straits she may be reduced to, she shall continue until the coming of the Messiah, for there his kingdom must be first set up, and she shall not be destroyed while that blessing is in her; and when at length she is ploughed as a field, and become heaps (as is threatened, Mic 3:12), yet her privileges shall be resigned to the spiritual Jerusalem, and in that the promises made to her shall be fulfilled. Let Jerusalem be easy then, for,

(1.) Her captivity in Babylon shall have an end, a happy end (Mic 4:10): There shalt thou be delivered, and the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thy enemies there. This was done by Cyrus, who acted therein as God's servant; and that deliverance was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the release from our spiritual bondage which is proclaimed in the everlasting gospel, that acceptable year of the Lord, in

which Christ himself preached liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that were bound, Lu 4:18,19.

(2.) The designs of her enemies against her afterwards shall be baffled, nay, they shall turn upon themselves, Mic 4:12,13. They promise themselves a day of it, but it shall prove God's day. They are gathered against Zion, to destroy it, but it shall prove to their own destruction, which Israel and Israel's God shall have the glory of.

[1.] Their coming together against Zion shall be the occasion of their ruin. They associate themselves, and gird themselves, that they may break Jerusalem in pieces, but it will prove that they shall be broken in pieces, Isa 8:9. They know not the thoughts of the Lord. When they are gathering together, and Providence favours them in it, they little think what God is designing by it, nor do they understand his counsel; they know what they aim at in coming together, but they know not what God aims at in bringing them together; they aim at Zion's ruin, but God aims at theirs.

Note, When men are made use of as instruments of Providence in accomplishing its purposes it is very common for them to intend one thing and for God to intend quite the contrary.

The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God's hand for the correction of his people, in order to their reformation; howbeit he means not so, nor does his heart think so, Isa 10:7. And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God gathers them as sheaves into the floor, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually, destroyed, if they had not gathered together against Zion.

Note, The designs of enemies for the ruin of the church often prove ruining to themselves; and thereby they prepare themselves for destruction and put themselves in the way of it; they are snared in the work of their own hands.

[2.] Zion shall have the honour of being victorious over them, Mic 4:13. When they are gathered as sheaves into the floor, to be trodden down, as the corn then was by the oxen, then, "Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Zion! instead of fearing them, and fleeing from them, boldly set upon them, and take the opportunity Providence favours thee with of trampling upon them. Plead not thy own weakness, and that thou art not a match for so many confederated enemies; God will make thy horn iron, to push them down, and thy hoofs brass, to tread upon them when they are down; and thus thou shalt beat in pieces many people, that have long been beating thee in pieces."

Thus, when God pleases, the daughter of Babylon is made a threshing floor (it is time to thresh her, Jer 51:33), and the worm Jacob is made a threshing instrument, with which God will thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff, Isa 41:14,15. How strangely, how happily, are the tables turned, since Jacob was the threshing-floor and Babylon the threshing instrument! Isa 21:10.

Note, When God has conquering work for his people to do he will furnish them with strength and ability for it, will make the horn iron and the hoofs brass; and, when he does so, they must exert the power he gives them, and execute the commission; even the daughter of Zion must arise, and thresh.

[3.] The glory of the victory shall redound to God. Zion shall thresh these sheaves in the floor, but the corn threshed out shall be a meat-offering at God's altar: I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord (that is, I will have it consecrated) and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. The spoils gained by Zion's victory shall be brought into the sanctuary, and devoted to God, either in part, as those of Midian (Nu 31:28), or in whole, as those of Jericho, Jos 6:17.

God is Jehovah, the fountain of being; he is the Lord of the whole earth, the fountain of power; and therefore he needs not any of our gain or substance, but may challenge and demand it all if he please; and with ourselves we must devote all we have to his honour, to be employed as he directs. Thus far all we have

must have holiness to the Lord written upon it, all our gain and substance must be consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth, Isa 23:18. And extraordinary successes call for extraordinary acknowledgments, whether they be of spoils in war or gains in trade.

It is God that gives us power to get wealth, which way soever it is honestly got, and therefore he must be honoured with what we get. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the successes of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr. Pocock and others think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it.

The nations thought to ruin Christianity in its infancy, but it was victorious over them; those that persisted in their enmity were broken to pieces (Mt 21:44), particularly the Jewish nation; but multitudes by divine grace were gained to the church, and they and their substance were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, the Lord of the whole earth.

13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

Micah-5

The Rule of the Deliverer from Bethlehem

1 Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

Here, as before, we have,

The abasement and distress of Zion, Mic 5:1 The Jewish nation, for many years before the captivity, dwindled, and fell into disgrace: Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops! It is either a summons to Zion's enemies, that had troops at their

service, to come and do their worst against her (God will suffer them to do it), or a challenge to Zion's friends, that had troops too at command, to come and do their best for her; Let them gather in troops, yet it shall be to no purpose; for, says the prophet, in the name of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, He has laid siege against us; the king of Assyria has, the king of Babylon has, and we know not which way to defend ourselves; so that the enemies shall gain their point, and prevail so far as to smite the judge of Israel--the king, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges--with a rod upon the cheek, in contempt of them and their dignity; having made them prisoners, they shall use them as shamefully as any of the common captives.

Complaint had been made of the judges of Israel (Mic 3:11) that they were corrupt and took bribes, and this disgrace came justly upon them for abusing their power; yet it was a great calamity to Israel to have their judges treated thus ignominiously. Some make this the reason why the troops (that is, the Roman army) shall lay siege to

Jerusalem, because the Jews shall smite the judge of Israel upon the cheek, because of the indignities they shall do to the Messiah, the Judge of Israel, whom they smote on the cheek, saying, Prophesy, who smote thee. But the former sense seems more probable, and that it is meant of the besieging of Jerusalem, not by the Romans, but the Chaldeans, and was fulfilled in the indignities done to king Zedekiah and the princes of the house of David.

2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

The advancement of Zion's King. Having shown how low the house of David should be brought, and how vilely the shield of that mighty family should be cast away, as though it had not been anointed with oil, to encourage the faith of God's people, who might be tempted now to think that his covenant with David and his house was abrogated (according to the psalmist's complaint, Ps 89:38,39), he adds an illustrious prediction of the Messiah and his kingdom, in whom that covenant should be established, and the honours of that house should be revived, advanced, and perpetuated. Now let us see,

1. How the Messiah is here described. It is he that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, from the days of eternity, as the word is. Here we have,

(1.) His existence from eternity, as God: his goings forth, or emanations, as the going forth of the beams from the sun, were, or have been, of old, from everlasting, which (says Dr. Pocock) is so signal a description of Christ's eternal generation, or his going forth as the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, that this prophecy must belong only to him, and could never be verified of any other.

It certainly speaks of a going forth that was now past, when the prophet spoke, and cannot but be read, as we read it, his outgoings have been; and the putting of both these words together, which severally are used to denote eternity, plainly shows that they must here be taken in the strictest sense (the same with Ps 90:2, From everlasting to everlasting thou are God), and can be applied to no other than to him who was able to say, Before Abraham was, I am, Joh 8:58. Dr. Pocock observes that the going forth is used (De 8:3) for a word which proceeds out of the mouth, and is therefore very fitly used to signify the eternal generation of him who is called the Word of God, that was in the beginning with God, Joh 1:1,2.

(2.) His office as Mediator; he was to be ruler in Israel, king of his church; he was to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Lu 1:32,33. The Jews object that our Lord Jesus could not be the

Messiah, for he was so far from being ruler in Israel that Israel ruled over him, and put him to death, and would not have him to reign over them; but he answered that himself when he said, My kingdom is not of this world, Joh 18:36.

And it is a spiritual Israel that he reigns over, the children of promise, all the followers of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. In the hearts of these he reigns by his Spirit and grace, and in the society of these by his word and ordinances. And was not he ruler in Israel whom winds and seas obeyed, to whom legions of devils were forced to submit, and who commanded away diseases from the sick and called the dead out of their graves? None but he whose goings forth were from of old, from everlasting, was fit to be ruler in Israel, to be head of the church, and head over all things to the church.

2. What is here foretold concerning him.

(1.) That Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, Mic 5:2. This was the scripture which the scribes went upon when with the greatest assurance they told Herod where Christ should be born (Mt 2:6), and hence it was universally known among the Jews that Christ should come out of the town of Bethlehem where David was, Joh 7:42. Beth-lehem signifies the house of bread, the fittest place for him to be born in who is the bread of life. And, because it was the city of David, by a special providence it was ordered that he should be born there who was to be the Son of David, and his heir and successor for ever. It is called Bethlehem-Ephratah, both names of the same city, as appears Ge 35:19.

It was little among the thousands of Judah, not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants or the figure they made; it had nothing in it worthy to have this honour put upon it; but God in that, as in other instances, chose to exalt those of low degree, Lu 1:52. Christ would give honour to the place of his birth, and not derive honour from it: Though thou be little, yet this shall make thee great, and, as St. Matthew reads it, Thou art not the least among the princes of Judah, but upon this account

art really honourable above any of them. A relation to Christ will magnify those that are little in the world.

(2.) That in the fulness of time he should be born of a woman (Mic 5:3): Therefore will he give them up; he will give up his people Israel to distress and trouble, and will defer their salvation, which has been so long promised and expected, until the time, the set time, that she who travails has brought forth, or (as it should be read) that she who shall bring forth shall have brought forth, that the blessed virgin, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, shall have brought him forth at Bethlehem, the place appointed. This Dr. Pocock thinks to be the most genuine sense of the words.

Though the out-goings of the Messiah were from everlasting, yet the redemption in Jerusalem, the consolation of Israel, must be waited for (Lu 2:25-38) until the time that she who should bring forth (so the virgin Mary is called, as Christ is himself called, He that shall come) shall bring forth; and in the mean time he will give them up. Divine salvations must be waited for until the time fixed for the bringing of them forth.

(3.) That the remnant of his brethren shall then return to the children of Israel. The remnant of the Jewish nation shall return to the spirit of the true genuine children of Israel, a people in covenant with God; the hearts of the children shall be turned to the fathers, Mal 4:6. Some understand it of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews; they shall all be incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel; and, as they are all brethren to one another, so he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb 2:11.

(4.) That he shall be a glorious prince, and his subjects shall be happy under his government (Mic 5:4): He shall stand and feed, that is, he shall both teach and rule, and continue to do so, as a good shepherd, with wisdom, and care, and love. So it was foretold. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the good shepherd that goes before the sheep, and presides among them.

He shall do this, not as an ordinary man, but in the strength of the Lord, as one clothed with a divine power to go through his work, and break through the difficulties in his way, so as not to fail, or be discouraged; he shall do it in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, so as plainly to evidence that God's name was in him (Ex 23:21) the majesty of his name, for he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes.

The prophets prefaced their messages with, Thus saith the Lord; but Christ spoke, not as a servant, but as a Son--Verily, verily, I say unto you. This was feeding in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. All power was given him in heaven and in earth, a power over all flesh, by virtue of which he still rules in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, a name above every name. Christ's government shall be,

[1.] Very happy for his subjects, for they shall abide; they shall be safe and easy, and continue so for ever. Because he lives, they shall live also. They shall lie down in the green pastures to which he shall lead them, shall abide in God's tabernacle for ever, Ps 61:4. His church shall abide, and he in it, and with it, always, even to the end of the world.

[2.] It shall be very glorious to himself: Now shall he be great to the ends of the earth. Now that he stands and feeds his flock, now shall he be great. For Christ reckons it his greatness to do good. Now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, for the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given him for his possession, and the ends of the world shall see his salvation.

(5) That he shall secure the peace and welfare of his church and people against all the attempts of his and their enemies (Mic 5:5,6): This man, as king and ruler, shall be the peace when the Assyrians shall come into our land. This refers to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom from the power of Sennacherib, who invaded them, in the type; but, under the shadow of that, it is a promise of the safety of the gospel-church and of all believers from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness, Satan and all his instruments, the dragon and his

angels, that seek to devour the church of the first-born and all that belong to it. Observe,

[1.] The peril and danger which Christ's subjects are supposed to be in. The Assyrian, a potent enemy, comes into their land (Mic 5:5,6), treads within their borders, nay, prevails so far as to tread in their palaces; it was a time of treading down and of perplexity when Sennacherib made a descent upon Judah, took all the defenced cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem, Isa 36:1,37:3.

This represented the gates of hell fighting against the kingdom of Christ, encompassing the camp of the saints and of the holy city, and threatening to bear down all before them. When the terrors of the law set themselves in array against a convinced soul, when the temptations of Satan assault the people of God, and the troubles of the world threaten to rob them of all their comforts, then the Assyrian comes into their land and treads in their palaces. Without are fightings, within are fears.

[2.] The protection and defence which his subjects are then sure to be under.

First, Christ will himself be their peace. When the Assyrian comes with such a force into a land, can there be any other peace than a tame submission and an unresisted desolation? Yes, even then the church's King will be the conservator of the church's peace, will be for a hiding-place, Isa 32:1,2.

Christ is our peace as a priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God; and he is our peace as a king, conquering our enemies and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; he creates the fruit of the lips, peace. Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress and danger and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet this man may be the peace. In me, says Christ, you shall have peace, when in the world you have tribulation; at such a time our souls may dwell at ease in him.

Secondly, He will find out proper instruments to be employed for their protection and deliverance, and the defeat of their

enemies: Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men, that is, a competent number of persons, proper to oppose the enemy, and make head against him, and protect the church of God in peace, men that shall have the care and tenderness of shepherds and the courage and authority of principal men, or princes of men. Seven and eight are a certain number for an uncertain.

Note, When God has work to do he will not want fitting instruments to do it with; and when he pleases he can do it by a few; he needs not raise thousands, but seven or eight principal men may serve the turn if God be with them. Magistrates and ministers are shepherds and principal men, raised in defence of religion's righteous cause against the powers of sin and Satan in the world.

Thirdly, The opposition given to the church shall be got over, and the opposers brought down. This is represented by the laying of Assyria and Chaldea waste, which two nations were the most formidable enemies to the Israel of God of any, and the destruction of them signified the making of Christ's enemies his footstool:

They shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof; they shall make inroads upon the land, and put to the sword all that they find in arms. Note, Those that threaten ruin to the church of God hasten ruin to themselves; and their destruction is the church's salvation: Thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian. When Satan fell as lightning from heaven before the preaching of the gospel, and Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, were slain before him, then this was fulfilled.

5 And this *man* shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men.

6 And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver *us* from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

Glorious things are here spoken of the remnant of Jacob, that remnant which was raised of her that halted (Mic 4:7), and it seems to be that remnant which the Lord our God shall call (Joe 2:32), on whom the Spirit shall be poured out, the remnant that shall be saved, Ro 9:27.

Note, God's people are but a remnant, a small number in comparison with the many that are left to perish, a little flock; but they are the remnant of Jacob, a people in covenant with God, and in his favour. Now concerning this remnant it is here promised,

I. That they shall be as a dew in the midst of the nations, Mic 5:7. God's church is dispersed all the world over; it is in the midst of many people, as gold in the ore, wheat in the heap. Israel according to the flesh dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations; but the spiritual Israel lies scattered in the midst of many people, as the salt of the earth, or as seed sown in the ground, here a grain and there a grain, Ho 2:23. Now this remnant shall be as dew from the Lord.

1. They shall be of a heavenly extraction; as dew from the Lord, who is the Father of the rain, and has begotten the drops of the dew, Job 38:28. They are born from above, and are not of the earth, savouring the things of the earth.

2. They shall be numerous as the drops of dew in a summer's morning. Ps 110:3, Thou hast the dew of thy youth.

3. They shall be pure and clear, not muddy and corrupt, but crystal drops, as the water of life.

4. They shall be produced silently and without noise, as the dew that distils insensibly, we know not how; such is the way of the Spirit.

5. They shall live in a continual dependence upon God, and be still deriving from him, as the dew, which tarries not for man, not waits for the sons of men; they shall not rely upon human aids and powers, but on divine grace, for they are, and own that they are, no more than what the free grace of God makes them every day.

6. They shall be great blessings to those among whom they live, as the dew and the showers are to the grass, to make it grow without the help of man, or the sons of men. Their doctrine, example, and prayers, shall make them as dew, to soften and moisten others, and make them fruitful. Their speech shall distil as the dew (De 32:2), and all about them shall wait for them as for the rain, Job 29:23.

The people among whom they live shall be as the grass, which flourishes only by the blessing of God, and not by the art and care of man; they shall be beneficial to those about them by drawing down God's blessings on them, as Jacob on Laban's house, and by cooling and mitigating God's wrath, which otherwise would burn them up, as the dew preserves the grass from being scorched by the sun; so Dr. Pocock; they shall be mild and gentle in their behaviour, like their Master, who comes down like rain upon the new-mown grass, Ps 72:6.

8 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots:

That they shall be as a lion among the beasts of the forest, that treads down and tears in pieces, Mic 5:8. As they shall be silent, and gentle, and communicative of all good, to those that receive the truth in the love of it, so they shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the times and places they live in, and strong as a lion, in the strength of God, to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. The weapons of their warfare

are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, 2Co 10:4,5.

They shall have courage which all their adversaries shall not be able to resist (Lu 21:15), as when the lion tears none can deliver. When infidelity is silenced, and all iniquity made to stop her mouth, when sinners are convinced and converted by the power of the gospel, in the doctrine of its ministers and the conversation of its professors, then the remnant of Jacob is like a lion.

This is explained, Mic 5:9, Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thy adversaries; the church shall have the upper hand at last of all that oppose her. Her enemies shall be cut off; they shall cease to be enemies; their enmity shall be cut off. Christ's arrows of conviction shall be sharp in their hearts, so that they shall fall under him; they shall yield themselves subjects to him (Ps 45:5) and be happily conquered and subdued, Ps 110:2.

That they shall be brought off from all carnal confidences, which they have relied on, that by the providence of God they shall enjoy such a security that they shall not need them, and by the grace of God they shall be brought to see the folly of them and come off from them. It was the sin of Israel that they furnished themselves extravagantly with horses and chariots, and were soothsayers and idolaters; see Isa 2:6-8.

But here it is promised that they shall not regard them any more. The tranquillity of the kingdom of Christ is intended in that promise, which explains this, Zec 9:10, I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. Note, It is a great mercy to be deprived of those things in which we have reposed a confidence in competition with God, which we have made our arm, and after which we have gone a whoring from God. Let us observe the particulars:--

1. They had trusted in chariots and horses, and multiplied them (Ps 20:7); but now God will cut off their horses, and destroy their chariots (Mic 5:10), as David houghed the chariot-horses,

2Sa 8:4. They shall not have them, lest they should be tempted to trust in them.

2. They depended upon their strongholds, and fortified cities, for their security; but God will take care that they be demolished (Mic 5:11): I will cut off the cities of thy land; I will throw down thy strongholds. They shall have them for habitations, but not for garrisons, for God will be their only place of defence, their high tower, and their deliverer.

3. Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurors, diviners, and fortune-tellers; and those God will cut off, not only as weak things, and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things, and sufficient to ruin them (Mic 5:12): "I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy hand, that thou shalt no more take hold of them, and stay thyself upon them, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers, for thou shalt be convinced that all their pretensions are a cheat." The justice of the nation shall cut them off according to law, Le 20:27. The preaching of the gospel brought men off from using curious arts, Ac 19:19.

4. Many of them had said to the work of their hands, You are our gods; but now idolatry shall be abolished and abandoned (Mic 5:13): "Thy graven images will I cut off, and thy standing images, both those that were movable and those that were fixed; they shall be destroyed by the power of the law of Moses and deserted by the power of the gospel of Christ, so that thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands, but be ashamed that ever thou hast been so deluded. Among other monuments of idolatry, I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee," Mic 5:14.

These were planted and preserved in honour of their idols, and used in the worship of them; these they were ordered to burn (De 12:2,3), and, if they do not, God will, so that they shall not have them to trust to. And so will I destroy their cities, meaning the cities that were dedicated to the idols, to some dunghill-deity or other, which they confided in for their protection.

IV. That those who stand it out against the gospel of Christ, and continue in league with their idolatries and witchcrafts, shall fall under the wrath of God, and be consumed by it (Mic 5:15): I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen (that is, upon heathenism), such as they have not heard; idolatries shall be done away, and idolaters put to shame. I will execute vengeance upon the heathen who have not heard (so some read it), or who would not hear and receive the doctrine of Christ. God will give his Son either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

11 and I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds:
12 and I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no *more* soothsayers:
13 thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.
14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities.
15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

Micah-6

The Lord's Controversy with Israel

1 Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

Here, I The prefaces to the message are very solemn and such as may engage our most serious attention.

1 The people are commanded to give audience: Hear you now what the Lord says. What the prophet speaks he speaks from God, and in his name; they are therefore bound to hear it, not as the word of a sinful dying man, but of the holy living God. Hear now what he saith, for, first or last, he will be heard.

2 The prophet is commanded to speak in earnest, and to put an emphasis upon what he said: Arise, contend thou before the

mountains, or with the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice, if it were possible; contend with the mountains and hills of Judea, that is, with the inhabitants of those mountains and hills; and, some think, reference is had to those mountains and hills on which they worshipped idols and which were thus polluted. But it is rather to be taken more generally, as appears by his call, not only to the mountains, but to the strong foundations of the earth, pursuant to the instructions given him. This is designed,

(1.) To excite the earnestness of the prophet; he must speak as vehemently as if he designed to make even the hills and mountains hear him, must cry aloud, and not spare; what he had to say in God's name he must proclaim publicly before the mountains, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his message; he must speak as one concerned, as one that desired to speak to the heart, and therefore appeared to speak from the heart.

(2.) To expose the stupidity of the people; "Let the hills hear thy voice, for this senseless careless people will not hear it, will not heed it. Let the rocks, the foundations of the earth, that have no ears, hear, since Israel, that has ears, will not hear." It is an appeal to the mountains and hills; let them bear witness that Israel has fair warning given them, and good counsel, if they would but take it. Thus Isaiah begins with, Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! Let them judge between God and his vineyard.

2 Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

3 O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.

The message itself is very affecting. He is to let all the world know that God has a quarrel with his people, good ground for an action

against them. Their offences are public, and therefore so are the articles of impeachment exhibited against them. Take notice the Lord has a controversy with his people and he will plead with Israel, will plead by his prophets, plead by his providences, to make good his charge. Note,

1. Sin begets a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander.

2. If Israel, God's own professing people, provoke him by sin, he will let them know that he has a controversy with them; he sees sin in them, and is displeased with it, nay, their sins are more displeasing to him than the sins of others, as they are a greater grief to his Spirit and dishonour to his name.

3. God will plead with those whom he has a controversy with, will plead with his people Israel, that they may be convinced and that he may be justified. In the close of the foregoing chapter he pleaded with the heathen in anger and fury, to bring them to ruin; but here he pleads with Israel in compassion and tenderness, to bring them to repentance, Come now, and let us reason together. God reasons with us, to teach us to reason with ourselves. See the equity of God's cause, it will bear to be pleaded, and sinners themselves will be forced to confess judgment, and to own that God's ways are equal, but their ways are unequal, Eze 18:25.

Now, (1.) God here challenges them to show what he had done against them which might give them occasion to desert him. They had revolted from God and rebelled against him; but had they any cause to do so? (Mic 6:3):

"O my people! what have I done unto thee? Wherein have I wearied thee?" If subjects quit their allegiance to their prince, they will pretend (as the ten tribes did when they revolted from Rehoboam), that his yoke is too heavy for them; but can you pretend any such thing? What have I done to you that is unjust or unkind? Wherein have I wearied you with the impositions of service or the exactions of tribute? Have I made you to serve with

an offering? Isa 43:23. What iniquity have your fathers found in me? Jer 2:5.

He never deceived us, nor disappointed our expectations from him, never did us wrong, nor put disgrace upon us; why then do we wrong and dishonour him, and frustrate his expectations from us? Here is a challenge to all that ever were in God's service to testify against him if they have found him, in any thing, a hard Master, or if they have found his demands unreasonable.

(2.) Since they could not show any thing that he had done against them, he will show them a great deal that he has done for them, which should have engaged them for ever to his service, Mic 6:4,5.

They are here directed, and we in them, to look a great way back in their reviews of the divine favour; let them remember their former days, their first days, when they were formed into a people, and the great things God did for them,

[1.] When he brought them out of Egypt, the land of their bondage, Mic 6:4. They were content with their slavery, and almost in love with their chains, for the sake of the garlic and onions they had plenty of; but God brought them up, inspired them with an ambition of liberty and animated them with a resolution by a bold effort to shake off their fetters.

The Egyptians held them fast, and would not let the people go; but God redeemed them, not by price, but by force, out of the house of servants, or, rather, the house of bondage, for it is the same word that is used in the preface to the ten commandments, which insinuates that the considerations which are arguments for duty, if they be not improved by us, will be improved against us as aggravations of sin. When he brought them out of Egypt into a vast howling wilderness, as he left not himself without witness, so he left not them without guides, for he sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, three prophets (says the Chaldee paraphrase), Moses the great prophet of the Old Testament, Aaron his prophet (Ex 7:1), and Miriam a prophetess, Ex 15:20.

Note, When we are calling to mind God's former mercies to us we must not forget the mercy of good teachers and governors when we were young; let those be made mention of, to the glory of God, who went before us, saying, This is the way, walk in it; it was God that sent them before us, to prepare the way of the Lord and to prepare a people for him.

[2.] When he brought them into Canaan. God no less glorified himself, and honoured them, in what he did for them when he brought them into the land of their rest than in what he did for them when he brought them out of the land of their servitude. When Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, were dead, yet they found God the same. Let them remember now what God did for them, First, In baffling and defeating the designs of Balak and Balaam against them, which he did by the power he has over the hearts and tongues of men, Mic 6:5.

Let them remember what Balak the king of Moab consulted, what mischief he devised and designed to do to Israel, when they encamped in the plains of Moab; that which he consulted was to curse Israel, to divide between them and their God, and to disengage him from the protection of them. Among the heathen, when they made war upon any people, they endeavoured by magic charms or otherwise to get from them their tutelar gods, as to rob Troy of its Palladium. Macrobius has a chapter de ritu evocandi Deos--concerning the solemnity of calling out the gods.

Balak would try this against Israel; but remember what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, how contrary to his own intention and inclination; instead of cursing Israel, he blessed them, to the extreme confusion and vexation of Balak. Let them remember the malice of the heathen against them, and for that reason never learn the way of the heathen, nor associate with them. Let them remember the kindness of their God to them, how he turned the curse into a blessing (because the Lord thy God loved thee, as it is, De 23:5), and for that reason never forsake him.

Note, The disappointing of the devices of the church's enemies ought always to be remembered to the glory of the church's protector, who can make the answer of the tongue directly to

contradict the preparation and consultation of the heart, Pr 16:1. Secondly, In bringing them from Shittim, their last lodgment out of Canaan, unto Gilgal, their first lodgment in Canaan.

There it was, between Shittim and Gilgal, that, upon the death of Moses, Joshua, a type of Christ, was raised up to put Israel in possession of the land of promise and to fight their battles; there it was that they passed over Jordan through the divided waters, and renewed the covenant of circumcision; these mercies of God to their fathers they must now remember, that they may know the righteousness of the Lord, his righteousness (so the word is), his justice in destroying the Canaanites, his goodness in giving rest to his people Israel, and his faithfulness to his promise made unto the fathers.

The remembrance of what God had done to them might convince them of all this, and engage them for ever to his service. Or they may refer to the controversy now pleaded between God and Israel; let them remember God's many favours to them and their fathers, and compare with them their unworthy ungrateful conduct towards him, that they may know the righteousness of the Lord in contending with them, and it may appear that in this controversy he has right on his side; his ways are equal, for he will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges.

What the Lord Requires

6 Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

Here is the proposal for accommodation between God and Israel, the parties that were at variance in the beginning of the chapter. Upon the trial, judgment is given against Israel; they are convicted of injustice and ingratitude towards God, the crimes with which they stood charged. Their guilt is too plain to be denied, too great to be excused, and therefore,

They express their desires to be at peace with God upon any terms (Mic 6:6,7): Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Being made sensible of the justice of God's controversy with them, and

dreading the consequences of it, they were inquisitive what they might do to be reconciled to God and to make him their friend. They apply to a proper person, with this enquiry, to the prophet, the Lord's messenger, by whose ministry they had been convinced. Who so fit to show them their way as he that had made them sensible of their having missed it? And it is observable that each one speaks for himself: Wherewith shall I come? Knowing every one the plague of his own heart, they ask, not, What shall this man do? But, What shall I do?

Note, Deep convictions of guilt and wrath will put men upon careful enquiries after peace and pardon, and then, and not till then, there begins to be some hope of them. They enquire wherewith they may come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God. They believe there is a God, that he is Jehovah, and that he is the high God, the Most High. Those whose consciences are convinced learn to speak very honourably of God, whom before they spoke slightly of. Now,

1. We know we must come before God; he is the God with whom we have to do; we must come as subjects, to pay our homage to him, as beggars, to ask alms from him, nay, we must come before him, as criminals, to receive our doom from him, must come before him as our Judge.

2. When we come before him we must bow before him; it is our duty to be very humble and reverent in our approaches to him; and, when we come before him, there is no remedy but we must submit; it is to no purpose to contend with him.

3. When we come and bow before him it is our great concern to find favour with him, and to be accepted of him; their enquiry is, What will the Lord be pleased with? Note, All that rightly understand their own interest cannot but be solicitous what they must do to please God, to avoid his displeasure and to obtain his good-will.

4. In order to God's being pleased with us, our care must be that the sin by which we have displeased him may be taken away, and an atonement made for it. The enquiry here is, What shall I give

for my transgression, for the sin of my soul? Note, The transgression we are guilty of is the sin of our soul, for the soul acts it (without the soul's act it is not sin) and the soul suffers by it; it is the disorder, disease, and defilement of the soul, and threatens to be the death of it: What shall I give for my transgressions? What will be accepted as a satisfaction to his justice, a reparation of his honour? And what will avail to shelter me from his wrath?

5. We must therefore ask, Wherewith may we come before him? We must not appear before the Lord empty. What shall we bring with us? In what manner must we come? In whose name must we come? We have not that in ourselves which will recommend us to him, but must have it from another. What righteousness then shall we appear before him in?

7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?

They make proposals, such as they are, in order to it. Their enquiry was very good and right, and what we are all concerned to make, but their proposals betray their ignorance, though they show their zeal; let us examine them:--

1. They bid high. They offer,

(1.) That which is very rich and costly--thousands of rams. God required one ram for a sin-offering; they proffer flocks of them, their whole stock, will be content to make themselves beggars, so that they may but be at peace with God. They will bring the best they have, the rams, and the most of them, till it comes to thousands.

(2.) That which is very dear to them, and which they would be most loth to part with. They could be content to part with their first-born for their transgressions, if that would be accepted as an atonement, and the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. To those that had become vain in their imaginations this seemed a probable expedient of making satisfaction for sin, because our children are pieces of ourselves; and therefore the heathen sacrificed their children, to appease their offended deities. Note,

Those that are thoroughly convinced of sin, of the malignity of it, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, would give all the world, if they had it, for peace and pardon.

2. Yet they do not bid right. It is true some of these things were instituted by the ceremonial law, as the bringing of burnt-offerings to God's altar, and calves of a year old, rams for sin-offerings, and oil for the meat-offerings; but these alone would not recommend them to God. God had often declared that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams, that sacrifice and offering he would not; the legal sacrifices had their virtue and value from the institution, and the reference they had to Christ the great propitiation; but otherwise, of themselves, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. And as to the other things here mentioned,

(1.) Some of them are impracticable things, as rivers of oil, which nature has not provided to feed men's luxury, but rivers of water to supply men's necessity. All the proposals of peace but those that are according to the gospel are absurd. One stream of the blood of Christ is worth ten thousand rivers of oil.

(2.) Some of them are wicked things, as to give our first-born and the fruit of our body to death, which would but add to the transgression and the sin of the soul. He that hates robbery for burnt-offerings much more hates murder, such murder. What right have we to our first born and the fruit of our body? Do they not belong to God? Are they not his already, and born to him? Are they not sinners by nature, and their lives forfeited upon their own account? How then can they be a ransom for ours?

(3.) They are all external things, parts of that bodily exercise which profiteth little, and which could not make the comers thereunto perfect.

(4.) They are all insignificant, and insufficient to attain the end proposed; they could not answer the demands of divine justice, nor satisfy the wrong done to God in his honour by sin, nor would they serve in lieu of the sanctification of the heart and the reformation of the life. Men will part with any thing rather than

their sins, but they part with nothing to God's acceptance unless they part with them.

III. God tells them plainly what he demands, and insists upon, from those that would be accepted of him, Mic 6:8. Let their money perish with them that think the pardon of sin and the favour of God may be so purchased; no, God has shown thee, O man! what is good. Here we are told,

1. That God has made a discovery of his mind and will to us, for the rectifying of our mistakes and the direction of our practice.

(1.) It is God himself that has shown us what we must do. We need not trouble ourselves to make proposals, the terms are already settled and laid down. He whom we have offended, and to whom we are accountable, has told us upon what conditions he will be reconciled to us.

(2.) It is to man that he has shown it, not only to thee, O Israel! but to thee, O man! Gentiles as well as Jews--to men, who are rational creatures, and capable of receiving the discovery, and not to brutes,--to men, for whom a remedy is provided, not to devils, whose case is desperate. What is spoken to all men every where in general, must by faith be applied to ourselves in particular, as if it were spoken to thee, O man! by name, and to no other.

(3.) It is a discovery of that which is good, and which the Lord requires of us. He has shown us our end, which we should aim at, in showing us what is good, wherein our true happiness does consist; he has shown us our way in which we must walk towards that end in showing us what he requires of us. There is something which God requires we should do for him and devote to him; and it is good.

It is good in itself; there is an innate goodness in moral duties, antecedent to the command; they are not, as ceremonial observances, good because they are commanded, but commanded because they are good, consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil, which are unalterable.

It has likewise a direct tendency to our good; our conformity to it is not only the condition of our future happiness, but is a great expedient of our present happiness; in keeping God's commandments there is great reward, as well as after keeping them.

(4.) It is shown us. God has not only made it known, but made it plain; he has discovered it to us with such convincing evidence as amounts to a demonstration. Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.

2. What that discovery is. The good which God requires of us is not the paying of a price for the pardon of sin and acceptance with God, but doing the duty which is the condition of our interest in the pardon purchased.

(1.) We must do justly, must render to all their due, according as our relation and obligation to them are; we must do wrong to none, but do right to all, in their bodies, goods, and good name.

(2.) We must love mercy; we must delight in it, as our God does, must be glad of an opportunity to do good, and do it cheerfully. Justice is put before mercy, for we must not give that in alms which is wrongfully got, or with which our debts should be paid. God hates robbery for a burnt-offering.

(3.) We must walk humbly with our God. This includes all the duties of the first table, as the two former include all the duties of the second table. We must take the Lord for our God in covenant, must attend on him and adhere to him as ours, and must make it our constant care and business to please him. Enoch's walking with God is interpreted (Heb 11:5) his pleasing God.

We must, in the whole course of our conversation, conform ourselves to the will of God, keep up our communion with God, and study to approve ourselves to him in our integrity; and this we must do humbly (submitting our understandings to the truths of God and our will to his precepts and providences); we must humble ourselves to walk with God (so the margin reads it); every thought within us must be brought down, to be brought into

obedience to God, if we would walk comfortably with him. This is that which God requires, and without which the most costly services are vain oblations; this is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

8 He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the Lord
require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly
with thy God?

9 The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and *the man of* wisdom shall see
thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

God, having shown them how necessary it was that they should do justly, here shows them how plain it was that they had done unjustly; and since they submitted not to his controversy, nor went the right way to have it taken up, here he proceeds in it. Observe,

I. How the action is entered against them, Mic 6:9. God speaks to the city, to Jerusalem, to Samaria. His voice cries to it by his servants the prophets who were to cry aloud and not spare. Note, The voice of the prophets is the Lord's voice, and that cries to the city, cries to the country. Doth not wisdom cry? Pr 8:1.

When the sin of a city cries to God his voice cries against the city; and, when the judgments of God are coming upon a city, his voice first cries unto it. He warns before he wounds, because he is not willing that any should perish. Now observe,

1. How the voice of God is discerned by some: The man of wisdom will see thy name. When the voice of God cries to us we may by it see his name, may discern and perceive that by which he makes himself known. Yet many see it not, are not aware of it, because they do not regard it. God speaks once, yea, twice, and they perceive it not (Job 33:14); but those that are men of wisdom will see it, and perceive it, and make a good use of it.

Note, It is a point of true wisdom to discover the name of God in the voice of God, and to learn what he is from what he says. Wisdom shall see thy name, for the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

2. What this voice of God says to all: "Hear you the rod, and who hath appointed it. Hear the rod when it is coming; hear it at a

distance, before you see it and feel it; and be awakened to go forth to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments. Hear the rod when it has come, and is actually upon you, and you are sensible of the smart of it; hear what it says to you, what convictions, what counsels, what cautions, it speaks to you."

Note, Every rod has a voice, and it is the voice of God that is to be heard in the rod of God, and it is well for those that understand the language of it, which if we would do we must have an eye to him that appointed it.

Note, Every rod is appointed, of what kind it shall be, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. God in every affliction performs the thing that is appointed for us (Job 23:14), and to him therefore we must have an eye, to him we must have an ear; we must hear what he says to us by the affliction. Hear it, and know it for thy good, Job 5:6. The work of ministers is to explain the providences of God and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons that are taught by them.

II. What is the ground of the action, and what are the things that are laid to their charge.

1. They are charged with injustice, a sin against the second table. Are there yet to be found among them the marks and means of fraudulent dealing? What! after all the methods that God has taken to teach them to do justly, will they yet deal unjustly? It seems, they will, Mic 6:10. And shall I count them pure? Mic 6:11.

No; this is a sin which will by no means consist with a profession of purity. Those that are dishonest in their dealings have not the spots of God's children, and shall never be reckoned pure, whatever shows of devotion they may make. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. When a man is suspected of theft, or fraud, the justice of peace will send a warrant to search his house. God here does, as it were, search the houses of those citizens, and there he finds,

(1.) Treasures of wickedness, abundance of wealth, but it is ill-got, and not likely to prosper; for treasures of wickedness profit nothing.

(2.) A scant measure, by which they sold to the poor, and so exacted upon them and cheated them.

(3.) They had wicked balances and a bag of false weights, by which, under a pretence of weighing what they sold, and giving the buyer what was right, they did him the greatest wrong, Mic 6:11.

(4.) Those that had wealth and power in their hands abused it to oppression and extortion; The rich men thereof are full of violence; for those that have much would have more, and are in a capacity of making it more by the power which their abundance of wealth gives them. They are full of violence, that is, they have their houses full of that which is got by violence.

(5.) Those that had not the advantage of doing wrong by their wealth yet found means of defrauding those they dealt with: The inhabitants thereof have spoken lies; if they are not able to use force and violence, they use fraud and deceit; the inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth; they do not stick at a deliberate lie, to make a good bargain. Some understand it of their speaking falsely concerning God, saying, The Lord seeth not; he hath forsaken the earth, Eze 8:12.

2. They are charged with idolatry (Mic 6:6): The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the work of the house of Ahab. Both these kings were wicked, and did evil in the sight of the Lord; but the wickedness which they established by a law, concerning which they made statutes, and which was the peculiar work of that house, was idolatry. Omri walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin of provoking God to anger with their vanities, 1Ki 16:26,31.

Ahab introduced the worship of Baal. These reigns were some ages before the time when this prophet lived, and yet the wickedness which they established by their laws and examples

remained to this day; those statutes were still kept, and that work was still done; and the princes and people still walked in their counsels, took the same measures, and governed themselves and the people by the same politics. Observe,

(1.) The same wickedness continued from one generation to another. Sin is a root of bitterness, soon planted, but not so soon plucked up again. The iniquity of former ages is often transmitted to, and entailed upon, the succeeding ones. Those that make corrupt laws, and bring in corrupt usages, are doing that which perhaps may prove the ruin of the child unborn.

(2.) It was not the less evil in itself, provoking to God, and dangerous to the sinners, for its having been established and confirmed by the laws of princes, the examples of great men, and a long prescription. Though the worship of idols is enacted by the statutes of Omri, recommended by the practice of the house of Ahab, and pleads that it has been the usage of many generations, yet it is still displeasing to God and destructive to Israel; for no laws nor customs are of force against the divine command.

10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,
and the scant measure *that is* abominable?
11 Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of
deceitful weights?
12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof
have spoken lies, and their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth.
13 Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee, in making *thee*
desolate because of thy sins.

What is the judgment given upon this. Being found guilty of these crimes, the sentence is that that which God had given them warning of (Mic 6:9) shall be brought upon them (Mic 6:13): Therefore also will I make thee sick, in smiting thee. As they had smitten the poor with the rod of their oppressions, so would God in like manner smite them, so as to make them sick, sick of the gains they had unjustly gotten, so that though they had swallowed down riches they should vomit them up again, Job 20:15. Their doom is,

1. That what they have they shall not have any comfortable enjoyment of; it shall do them no good. They grasped at more

than enough, but, when they have it, it shall not be enough to make them easy and happy. What is got by fraud and oppression cannot be kept or enjoyed with any satisfaction.

(1.) Their food shall not nourish them: Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied, either because the food shall not digest, for want of God's blessing going along with it, or because the appetite shall by disease be made insatiable and still craving, the just punishment of those that were greedy of gain and enlarged their desires as hell. Men may be surfeited with the good things of this world and yet not satisfied, Ec 5:10,Isa 55:2.

(2.) Their country shall not harbour and protect them: "Thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee, that is, thou shalt be broken and ruined by the intestine troubles, mischiefs at home enough to cast thee down, though thou shouldst not be invaded by a foreign force." God can cast a nation down by that which is in the midst of them, can consume them by a fire in their own bowels. (3.) They shall not be able to preserve what they have from a foreign force, nor to recover what they have lost:

"Thou shalt take hold of what is about to be taken from thee, but thou shalt not hold it fast, shalt catch at it, but shalt not deliver it, shalt not retrieve it." It is meant of their wives and children, that were very dear to them, which they took hold of, as resolved not to part with them, but there is no remedy, they must go into captivity. Note, What we hold closest we commonly lose soonest, and that proves least safe which is most dear.

(4.) What they save for a time shall be reserved for a future and sorer stroke: That which thou deliverest out of the hand of one enemy will I give up to the sword of another enemy; for God has many arrows in his quiver; if one miss the sinner, the next shall not.

(5.) What they have laboured for they shall not enjoy (Mic 6:15): "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; it shall be blasted and withered, and there shall be nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come and reap it for himself, or thou shalt be carried into captivity, and leave it to be reaped by thou knowest not whom.

Thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with oil, having no heart to make use of ornaments and refreshments when all is going to ruin.

Thou shalt tread out the sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine, for many things may fall between the cup and the lip." Note, It is very grievous to be disappointed of our expectations, and not to have the pleasure of that which we have taken pains for; and this will be the just punishment of those that frustrate God's expectations from them, and answer not the cost he has been at upon them. See this threatened in the law, Le 26:16,De 28:30,38, &c.; and compare Isa 62:8,9.

2. That all they have shall at length be taken from them (Mic 6:13): Thou shalt be made desolate because of thy sins; and Mic 6:16, a desolation and a hissing. Sin makes a nation desolate; and when a people that have been famous and flourishing are made desolate it is the astonishment of some and the triumph of others; some lament it, and others hiss at it. Thus you shall bear the reproach of my people.

Their being the people of God, in name and profession while they kept close to their duty and kept themselves in his love, was an honour to them, and all their neighbours thought it so; but now that they have corrupted and ruined themselves, now that their sins and God's judgments have made their land desolate, their having been once the people of God does but turn so much the more to their reproach; their enemies will say, These are the people of the Lord, Eze 36:20. Note, If professors of religion ruin themselves, their ruin will be the most reproachful of any; and they in a special manner will rise at the last day to everlasting shame and contempt.

14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down *shall be* in the
midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and *that*
which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.

15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but
thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink
wine.

16 For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of
Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a

desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

Micah-7

Israel's Moral Corruption

1 Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: *there is* no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.

This is such a description of bad times as, some think, could scarcely agree to the times of Hezekiah, when this prophet prophesied; and therefore they rather take it as a prediction of what should be in the reign of Manasseh. But we may rather suppose it to be in the reign of Ahaz (and in that reign he prophesied, Mic 1:1) or in the beginning of Hezekiah's time, before the reformation he was instrumental in; nay, in the best of his days, and when he had done his best to purge out corruptions, still there was much amiss.

The prophet cries out, Woe is me! He bemoans himself that his lot was cast in such a degenerate age, and thinks it his great unhappiness that he lived among a people that were ripening apace for a ruin which many a good man would unavoidably be involved in. Thus David cries out, Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech! He laments,

1. That there were so few good people to be found, even among those that were God's people; and this was their reproach: The good man has perished out of the earth, or out of the land, the land of Canaan; it was a good land, and a land of uprightness (Isa 26:10), but there were few good men in it, none upright among them, Mic 7:2 The good man is a godly man and a merciful man; the word signifies both. Those are completely good men that are devout towards God and compassionate and beneficent towards men, that love mercy and walk with God.

"These have perished; those few honest men that some time ago enriched and adorned our country are now dead and gone, and

there are none risen up in their stead that tread in their steps; honesty is banished, and there is no such thing as a good man to be met with. Those that were of religious education have degenerated, and become as bad as the worst; the godly man ceases," Ps 12:1.

This is illustrated by a comparison (Mic 7:1): they were as when they have gathered the summer fruits; it was as hard a thing to find a good man as to find any of the summer-fruits (which were the choicest and best, and therefore must carefully be gathered in) when the harvest is over. The prophet is ready to say, as Elijah in his time (1Ki 19:10), I, even I only, am left. Good men, who used to hang in clusters, are now as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, here and there a berry, Isa 17:6.

You can find no societies of them as bunches of grapes, but those that are are single persons: There is no cluster to eat; and the best and fullest grapes are those that grow in large clusters. Some think that this intimates not only that good people were few, but that those few who remained, who went for good people, were good for little, like the small withered grapes, the refuse that were left behind, not only by the gatherer, but by the gleaner.

When the prophet observed this universal degeneracy it made him desire the first-ripe fruit; he wished to see such worthy good men as were in the former ages, were the ornaments of the primitive times, and as far excelled the best of all the present age as the first and full-ripe fruits do those of the latter growth, that never come to maturity.

When we read and hear of the wisdom and zeal, the strictness and conscientiousness, the devotion and charity, of the professors of religion in former ages, and see the reverse of this in those of the present age, we cannot but sit down, and wish, with a sigh, O for primitive Christianity again! Where are the plainness and integrity of those that went before us? Where are the Israelites indeed, without guile? Our souls desire them, but in vain. The golden age is gone, and past recall; we must make the best of what is, for we are not likely to see such times as have been.

2. That there were so many wicked mischievous people among them, not only none that did any good, but multitudes that did all the hurt they could: "They all lie in wait for blood, and hunt every man his brother. To get wealth to themselves, they care not what wrong, what hurt, they do to their neighbours and nearest relations. They act as if mankind were in a state of war, and force were the only right. They are as beasts of prey to their neighbours, for they all lie in wait for blood as lions for their prey; they thirst after it, make nothing of taking away any man's life or livelihood to serve a turn for themselves, and lie in wait for an opportunity to do it.

Their neighbours are as beasts of prey to them, for they hunt every man his brother with a net; they persecute them as noxious creatures, fit to be taken and destroyed, though they are innocent excellent ones." We say of him that is outlawed, Caput gerit lupinum--He is to be hunted as a wolf. "Or they hunt them as men do the game, to feast upon it; they have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin, so that they may but get by it.

Thus they do mischief with both hands earnestly; their hearts desire it, their heads contrive it, and then both hands are ready to put it in execution." Note, The more eager and intent men are upon any sinful pursuit, and the more pains they take in it, the more provoking it is.

3. That the magistrates, who by their office ought to have been the patrons and protectors of right, were the practicers and promoters of wrong: That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, to excite and animate themselves in it, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh, for a reward, for a bribe, with which they well be hired to exert all their power for the supporting and carrying on of any wicked design with both hands. They do evil with both hands well (so some read it); they do evil with a great deal of art and dexterity; they praise themselves for doing it so well. Others read it thus:

To do evil they have both hands (they catch at an opportunity of doing mischief), but to do good the prince and the judge ask for a reward; if they do any good offices they are mercenary in them, and must be paid for them.

The great man, who has wealth and power to do good, is not ashamed to utter his mischievous desire in conjunction with the prince and the judge, who are ready to support him and stand by him in it. So they wrap it up; they perplex the matter, involve it, and make it intricate (so some understand it), that they may lose equity in a mist, and so make the cause turn which way they please.

It is ill with a people when their princes, and judges, and great men are in a confederacy to pervert justice. And it is a sad character that is given of them (Mic 7:4), that the best of them is as a brier, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge; it is a dangerous thing to have any thing to do with them; he that touches them must be fenced with iron (2Sa 23:6,7), he shall be sure to be scratched, to have his clothes torn, and his eyes almost pulled out. And, if this be the character of the best and most upright, what are the worst?

And, when things have come to this pass, the day of thy watchmen comes, that is, as it follows, the day of thy visitation, when God will reckon with thee for all this wickedness, which is called the day of the watchmen, because their prophets, whom God set as watchmen over them, had often warned them of that day. When all flesh have corrupted their way, even the best and the most upright, what can be expected but a day of visitation, a deluge of judgments, as that which drowned the old world when the earth was filled with violence?

4. That there was no faith in man; people had grown so universally treacherous that one knew not whom to repose any confidence in, Mic 7:5. "Those that have any sense of honour, or spark of virtue, remaining in them, have a firm regard to the laws of friendship; they would not discover what passed in private conversation, nor divulge secrets, to the prejudice of a friend.

But those things are now made a jest of; you will not meet with a friend that you dare trust, whose word you dare take, or who will have any tenderness or concern for you; so that wise men shall give it and take it for a rule, trust you not in a friend, for you will find him false, you can trust him no further than you can see him; and even him that passes for an honest man you will find to be so only with good looking to.

Nay, as for him that undertakes to be your guide, to lead you into any business which he professes to understand better than you, you cannot put a confidence in him, for he will be sure to mislead you if he can get any thing by it." Some by a guide understand a husband, who is called the guide of thy youth; and that agrees well enough with what follows, "Keep the doors of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom, from thy own wife; take heed what thou sayest before her, lest she betray thee, as Delilah did Samson, lest she be the bird of the air that carries the voice of that which thou sayest in thy bed-chamber," Ec 10:20. It is an evil time indeed when the prudent are obliged even thus far to keep silence.

5. That children were abusive to their parents, and men had no comfort, no satisfaction, in their own families and their nearest relations, Mic 7:6. The times are bad indeed when the son dishonours his father, gives him bad language, exposes him, threatens him, and studies to do him a mischief, when the daughter rises up in rebellion against her own mother, having no sense of duty, or natural affection; and no marvel that then the daughter-in-law quarrels with her mother-in-law, and is vexatious to her.

Either they cannot agree about their property and interest, or their humours and passions clash, or from a spirit of bigotry and persecution, the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, Mt 10:4,Lu 21:16. It is sad when a man's betrayers and worst enemies are the men of his own house, his own children and servants, that should be his guard and his best friends. Note, The contempt and violation of the laws of domestic duties are a sad symptom of a universal corruption of manners. Those are never likely to come to good that are

undutiful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them and cross them.

2 The good *man* is perished out of the earth; and *there is* none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.

3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward; and the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

4 The best of them *is* as a brier: the most upright *is sharper* than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen *and* thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

6 For the son dishonoreth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies *are* the men of his own house.

7 Therefore I will look unto the Lord ; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

The prophet, having sadly complained of the wickedness of the times he lived in, here fastens upon some considerations for the comfort of himself and his friends, in reference thereunto. The case is bad, but it is not desperate. Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

I. "Though God be now displeased he shall be reconciled to us, and then all will be well, Mic 7:7,9. We are now under the indignation of the Lord; God is angry with us, and justly, because we have sinned against him." Note, It is our sin against God that provokes his indignation against us; and we must see it, and own it, whenever we are under divine rebukes, that we may justify God, and may study to answer his end in afflicting us, by repenting of sin and breaking off from it. Now, at such a time,

1. We must have recourse to God under our troubles (Mic 7:7):

Therefore I will look unto the Lord. When a child of God has ever so much occasion to cry, Woe is me (as the prophet here, Mic 7:1), yet it may be a comfort to him that he has a God to

look to, a God to come to, to fly to, in whom he may rejoice and have satisfaction. All may look bright above him when all looks black and dark about him. The prophet had been complaining that there was no comfort to be had, no confidence to be put, in friends and relations on earth, and this drives him to his God: Therefore I will look unto the Lord.

The less reason we have to delight in any creature the more reason we have to delight in God. If princes are not to be trusted, we may say, Happy is the man that has the God of Jacob for his help, and happy am I, even in the midst of my present woes, if he be my help. If men be false, this is our comfort, that God is faithful; if relations be unkind, he is and will be gracious. Let us therefore look above and beyond them, and overlook our disappointment in them, and look unto the Lord.

2. We must submit to the will of God in our troubles: "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, will bear it patiently, without murmuring and repining, because I have sinned against him."

Note, Those that are truly penitent for sin will see a great deal of reason to be patient under affliction. Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sin? When we complain to God of the badness of the times we ought to complain against ourselves for the badness of our own hearts. 3. We must depend upon God to work deliverance for us, and put a good issue to our troubles in due time; we must not only look to him, but look for him:

"I will wait for the God of my salvation, and for his gracious returns to me." In our greatest distresses we shall see no reason to despair of salvation if by faith we eye God as the God of our salvation, who is able to save the weakest upon their humble petition, and willing to save the worst upon their true repentance. And, if we depend on God as the God of our salvation, we must wait for him, and for his salvation, in his own way and his own time. Let us now see what the church is here taught to expect and promise herself from God, even when things are brought to the last extremity.

(1.) My God will hear me; if the Lord be our God, he will hear our prayers, and grant an answer of peace to them.

(2.) "When I fall, and am in danger of being dashed in pieces by the fall, yet I shall arise, and recover myself again. I fall, but am not utterly cast down," Ps 37:24.

(3.) "When I sit in darkness, desolate and disconsolate, melancholy and perplexed, and not knowing what to do, nor which way to look for relief, yet then the Lord shall be a light to me, to comfort and revive me, to instruct and teach me, to direct and guide me, as a light to my eyes, a light to my feet, a light in a dark place."

(4.) He will plead my cause, and execute judgment for me, Mic 7:9. If we heartily espouse the cause of God, the just but injured cause of religion and virtue, and make it our cause, we may hope he will own our cause, and plead it. The church's cause, though it seem for a time to go against her, will at length be pleaded with jealousy, and judgment not only given against, but executed upon, the enemies of it.

(5.) "He will bring me forth to the light, make me shine eminently out of obscurity, and become conspicuous, will make my righteousness shine evidently from under the dark cloud of calumny, Ps 37:6,Isa 58:10. The morning of comfort shall shine forth out of the long and dark night of trouble."

(6.) "I shall behold his righteousness; I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me and the performance of his promises to me."

The Lord Brings Light and Deliverance

8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise;
when I sit in darkness, the Lord *shall be* a light unto me.
9 I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against
him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will
bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.

Though enemies triumph and insult, they shall be silenced and put to shame, Mic 7:8,10. Observe here,

1. How proudly the enemies of God's people trample upon them in their distress. They said, Where is the Lord their God? As if because they were afflicted God had forsaken them, and they knew not where to find him with their prayers, and he knew not how to help them with his favours. This David's enemies said to him, and it was a sword in his bones, Ps 42:10, and see Ps 115:2. Thus, in reproaching Israel as an abandoned people, they reflected on the God of Israel as an unkind unfaithful God.

2. How comfortably the people of God by faith bear up themselves under these insults (Mic 7:8): "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! I am now down, but shall not be always so, and when my God appears for me then she that is my enemy shall see it, and be ashamed" (not only being disappointed in her expectations of the church's utter ruin, but having the same cup of trembling put into her hand), "then my eyes shall behold her in the same deplorable condition that I am now in; now shall she be trodden down." Note, The deliverance of the church will be the confusion of her enemies; and their shame shall be double, when, as they have trampled upon God's people, so they shall themselves be trampled upon.

III. Though the land continue a great while desolate, yet it shall at length be replenished again, when the time, even the set time, of its deliverance comes.

1. Its salvation shall not come till after it has been desolate; so the margin reads it, Mic 7:13. God has a controversy with the land, and it must lie long under his rebukes, because of those that dwell therein; it is their iniquity that makes their land desolate (Ps 107:34); it is for the fruit of their doings, their evil doings which they have been themselves guilty of, and the evil fruit of them, the sins of others, which they have been accessory to by their bad influence and example. For this they must expect

to smart a great while; for the world shall know that God hates sin even in his own people.

2. When it does come it shall be a complete salvation; and it seems to refer to their deliverance out of Babylon by Cyrus, which Isaiah about this time prophesied of, as a type of our redemption by Christ.

(1.) The decree shall be far removed. God's decree concerning their captivity, and Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the perpetuity of it, his resolution never to release them, "these shall be set aside and revoked, and you shall hear no more of them; they shall no more lie as a yoke upon thy neck."

(2.) Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall be again reared: Then thy walls shall be built, walls for habitation, walls for defence, house-walls, town-walls, temple-walls; it is in order to these that the decree is repealed, Isa 44:28. Though Zion's walls may lie long in ruins, there will come a day when they shall be repaired.

(3.) All that belong to the land of Israel, whithersoever dispersed, and howsoever distressed, far and wide over the face of the whole earth, shall come flocking to it again (Mic 7:12): He shall come even to thee, having liberty to return and a heart to return, from Assyria, whither the ten tribes were carried away, though it lay remote, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress, those strongholds in which they thought they had them fast; for when God's time comes, though Pharaoh will not let the people go, God will fetch them out with a high hand.

They shall come from all the remote parts, from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain, not turning back for fear of your discouragements, but they shall go from strength to strength till they come to Zion. Thus in the great day of redemption God will gather his elect from the four winds.

10 Then *she that is* mine enemy shall see *it*, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

11 *In* the day that thy walls are to be built, *in* that day shall the decree be
far removed.
12 *In* that day *also* he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and *from* the
fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to
sea, and *from* mountain to mountain.
13 Notwithstanding, the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell
therein, for the fruit of their doings.

The Lord's Compassion on Israel

14 Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell
solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed *in* Bashan
and Gilead, as in the days of old.

Here is, I The prophet's prayer to God to take care of his own people, and of their cause and interest, Mic 7:14. When God is about to deliver his people he stirs up their friends to pray for them, and pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, Zec 12:10. And when we see God coming towards us in ways of mercy, we must go forth to meet him by prayer. It is a prophetic prayer, which amounts to a promise of the good prayed for; what God directed his prophet to ask no doubt he designed to give. Now,

1 The people of Israel are here called the flock of God's heritage, for they are the sheep of his hand, the sheep of his pasture, his little flock in the world; and they are his heritage, his portion in the world. Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

2. This flock dwells solitarily in the wood, or forest, in the midst of Carmel, a high mountain. Israel was a peculiar people, that dwelt alone, and was not reckoned among the nations, like a flock of sheep in a wood. They were now a desolate people (Mic 7:13), were in the land of their captivity as sheep in a forest, in danger of being lost and made a prey of to the beasts of the forest. They are scattered upon the mountains as sheep having no shepherd.

3. He prays that God would feed them there with his rod, that is, that he would take care of them in their captivity, would

protect them, and provide for them, and do the part of a good shepherd to them: "Let thy rod and staff comfort them, even in that darksome valley; and even there let them want nothing that is good for them. Let them be governed by thy rod, not the rod of their enemies, for they are thy people."

4. He prays that God would in due time bring them back to feed in the plains of Bashan and Gilead, and no longer to be fed in the woods and mountains. Let them feed in their own country again, as in the days of old. Some apply this spiritually, and make it either the prophet's prayer to Christ or his Father's charge to him, to take care of his church, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, and to go in and out before them while they are here in this world as in a wood, that they may find pasture as in Carmel, as in Bashan and Gilead.

II. God's promise, in answer to this prayer; and we may well take God's promises as real answers to the prayers of faith, and embrace them accordingly, for with him saying and doing are not two things. The prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them; but God answers that he will show them marvellous things (Mic 7:15), will do for them more than they are able to ask or think, will out-do their hopes and expectations; he will show them his marvellous lovingkindness, Ps 17:7.

1. He will do that for them which shall be the repetition of the wonders and miracles of former ages--according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt. Their deliverance out of Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt, nay, it shall eclipse the lustre of that (Jer 16:14,15), much more shall the work of redemption by Christ. Note, God's former favours to his church are patterns of future favours, and shall again be copied out as there is occasion.

2. He will do that for them which shall be matter of wonder and amazement to the present age, Mic 7:16,17. The nations about shall take notice of it, and it shall be said among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them, Ps 126:2 The

impression which the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon shall make upon the neighbouring nations shall be very much for the honour both of God and his church.

(1.) Those that had insulted over the people of God in their distress, and gloried that when they had them down they would keep them down, shall be confounded, when they see them thus surprisingly rising up; they shall be confounded at all the might with which the captives shall now exert themselves, whom they thought for ever disabled. They shall now lay their hands upon their mouths, as being ashamed of what they have said, and not able to say more, by way of triumph over Israel. Nay, their ears shall be deaf too, so much shall they be ashamed at the wonderful deliverance; they shall stop their ears, as being not willing to hear any more of God's wonders wrought for that people, whom they had so despised and insulted over.

(2.) Those that had impudently confronted God himself shall now be struck with a fear of him, and thereby brought, in profession at least, to submit to him (Mic 7:17): They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall be so mortified, as if they were sentenced to the same curse the serpent was laid under (Ge 3:14), Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat. They shall be brought to the lowest abasements imaginable, and shall be so dispirited that they shall tamely submit to them. His enemies shall lick the dust, Ps 72:9.

Nay, they shall lick the dust of the church's feet, Isa 49:23. Proud oppressors shall now be made sensible how mean, how little, they are, before the great God, and they shall with trembling and the lowest submission move out of the holes into which they had crept (Isa 2:21), like worms of the earth as they are, being ashamed and afraid to show their heads; so low shall they be brought, and such abjects shall they be, when they are abased. When God did wonders for his church many of the people of the land became Jews, because the fear of the Jews, and of their God, fell upon them, Es 8:17. So it is promised here: They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee, O Israel! Forced submissions are often but feigned

submissions; yet they redound to the glory of God and the church, though not to the benefit of the dissemblers themselves.

15 According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous *things.*

16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, their ears shall be deaf.

17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee.

18 Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy.

The prophet's thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy, in the name of the church, with a believing dependence upon his promise, Mic 7:18-20. We are here taught,

1. To give to God the glory of his pardoning mercy, Mic 7:18. God having promised to bring back the captivity of his people, the prophet, on that occasion, admires pardoning mercy, as that which was at the bottom of it. As it was their sin that brought them into bondage, so it was God's pardoning their sin that brought them our of it; Ps 85:1,2,Isa 33:24,38:17,60:1,2 The pardon of sin is the foundation of all other covenant-mercies, Heb 8:12. This the prophet stands amazed at, while the surrounding nations stood amazed only at those deliverances which were but the fruits of this.

Note,

(1.) God's people, who are the remnant of his heritage, stand charged with many transgressions; being but a remnant, a very few, one would hope they should all be very good, but they are not so; God's children have their spots, and often offend their Father.

(2.) The gracious God is ready to pass by and pardon the iniquity and transgression of his people, upon their repentance and return to him. God's people are a pardoned people, and to this they owe their all. When God pardons sin, he passes it by,

does not punish it as justly he might, nor deal with the sinner according to the desert of it.

(3.) Though God may for a time lay his own people under the tokens of his displeasure, yet he will not retain his anger for ever, but though he cause grief he will have compassion; he is not implacable; yet against those that are not of the remnant of his heritage, that are unpardoned, he will keep his anger for ever.

(4.) The reasons why God pardons sin, and keeps not his anger for ever, are all taken from within himself; it is because he delights in mercy, and the salvation of sinners is what he has pleasure in, not their death and damnation.

(5.) The glory of God in forgiving sin is, as in other things, matchless, and without compare. There is no God like unto him for this; no magistrate, no common person, forgives as God does. In this his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours; in this he is God, and not man.

(6.) All those that have experienced pardoning mercy cannot but admire that mercy; it is what we have reason to stand amazed at, if we know what it is. Has God forgiven us our transgressions? We may well say, Who is a God like unto thee? Our holy wonder at pardoning mercy will be a good evidence of our interest in it.

2. To take to ourselves the comfort of that mercy and all the grace and truth that go along with it. God's people here, as they look back with thankfulness upon God's pardoning their sins, so they look forward with assurance upon what he would yet further do for them. His mercy endures for ever, and therefore as he has shown mercy so he will, Mic 7:19,20.

(1.) He will renew his favours to us: He will turn again; he will have compassion; that is, he will again have compassion upon us as formerly he had; his compassions shall be new every morning; he seemed to be departing from us in anger, but he

will turn again and pity us. He will turn us to himself, and then will turn to us, and have mercy upon us.

(2.) He will renew us, to prepare and qualify us for his favour: He will subdue our iniquities; when he takes away the guilt of sin, that it may not damn us, he will break the power of sin, that it may not have dominion over us, that we may not fear sin, nor be led captive by it. Sin is an enemy that fights against us, a tyrant that oppresses us; nothing less than almighty grace can subdue it, so great is its power in fallen man and so long has it kept possession. But, if God forgive the sin that has been committed by us, he will subdue the sin that dwells in us, and in that there is none like him in forgiving; and all those whose sins are pardoned earnestly desire and hope; to have their corruptions mortified and their iniquities subdued, and please themselves with the hopes of it. If we be left to ourselves, our iniquities will be too hard for us; but God's grace, we trust, shall be sufficient for us to subdue them, so that they shall not rule us, and then they shall not ruin us.

(3.) He will confirm this good work, and effectually provide that his act of grace shall never be repealed: Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea, as when he brought them out of Egypt (to which he has an eye in the promises here, Mic 7:15) he subdued Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and cast them into the depth of the sea. It intimates that when God forgives sin he remembers it no more, and takes care that it shall never be remembered more against the sinner. Eze 18:22, His transgressions shall not be mentioned unto him; they are blotted out as a cloud which never appears more. He casts them into the sea, not near the shore-side, where they may appear again next low water, but into the depth of the sea, never to rise again. All their sins shall be cast there without exception, for when God forgives sin he forgives all.

(4.) He will perfect that which concerns us, and with this good work will do all that for us which our case requires and which he has promised (Mic 7:20): Then wilt thou perform thy truth to Jacob and thy mercy to Abraham. It is in pursuance of the covenant that our sins are pardoned and our lusts mortified;

from that spring all these streams flow, and with these he shall freely give us all things. The promise is said to be mercy to Abraham, because, as made to him first, it was mere mercy, preventing mercy, considering what state it found him in. But it was truth to Jacob, because the faithfulness of God was engaged to make good to him and his seed, as heirs to Abraham, all that was graciously promised to Abraham. See here,

[1.] With what solemnity the covenant of grace is ratified to us; it was not only spoken, written, and sealed, but which is the highest confirmation, it was sworn to our fathers; nor is it a modern project, but is confirmed by antiquity too; it was sworn from the days of old; it is an ancient charter.

[2.] With what satisfaction it may be applied and relied upon by us; we may say with the highest assurance, Thou wilt perform the truth and mercy; not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. Faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it.

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.
20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Nahum
[Nahum]

Nahum-1
The Lord’s Avenging Wrath

1 The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

This title directs us to consider,

1 The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the burden of Nineveh, not only a prophecy, and a weighty one, but a burdensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill-stone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About 100 years before this Jonah had, in God's name, foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city; but then the Ninevites repented and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth. The Ninevites then saw clearly how much it was to their advantage to turn from their evil way; it was the saving of their city; and yet, soon after, they returned to it again; it became worse than ever, a bloody city, and full of lies and robbery.

They repented of their repentance, returned with the dog to his vomit, and at length grew worse than ever they had been. Then God sent them not this prophet, as Jonah, but this prophecy, to read them their doom, which was now irreversible. Note, The reprieve will not be continued if the repentance be not continued in. If men turn from the good they began to do, they can expect no other than that God should turn from the favour he began to show, Jer 18:10.

2 The poor prophet by whom the word of the Lord is here delivered: It is the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

The burden of Nineveh was what the prophet plainly foresaw, for it was his vision, and what he left upon record (it is the book of the vision), that, when he was gone, the event might be compared with the prediction and might confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself is that he was an Elkoshite, of the town called Elkes, or Elcos, which, Jerome says, was in Galilee. Some observe that the scripture ordinarily says little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were indited. This title directs us to consider,

1 The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the burden of Nineveh, not only a prophecy, and a weighty one, but a burdensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill-stone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About 100 years before this Jonah had, in God's name, foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city; but then the Ninevites repented and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth.

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of the vision), that, when he was gone, the event might be compared with the prediction and might confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself is that he was an Elkoshite, of the town called Elkes, or Elcos, which, Jerome says, was in Galilee. Some observe that the scripture ordinarily says little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were indited.

2 God *is* jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and *is* furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.

Nineveh knows not God, that God that contends with her, and therefore is here told what a God he is; and it is good for us all to mix faith with that which is here said concerning him, which speaks a great deal of terror to the wicked and comfort to good people; for this glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel and a dark side towards the Egyptians.

Let each take his portion from it; let sinners read it and tremble; let saints read it and triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against him enemies, his favour and mercy are here assured to his faithful loyal subjects, and his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible and his favour very desirable.

He is a God of inflexible justice, a jealous God, and will take vengeance on his enemies; let Nineveh know this, and tremble before him. Their idols are insignificant things; there is nothing formidable in them. But the God of Israel is greatly to be feared; for,

1. He resents the affronts and indignities done him by those that deny his being or any of his perfections, that set up other gods in competition with him, that destroy his laws, arraign his proceedings, ridicule his word, or are abusive to his people.

Let such know that Jehovah, the one only living and true God, is a jealous God, and a revenger; he is jealous for the comfort of his worshippers, jealous for his land (Joe 2:18), and will not have that injured. He is a revenger, and he is furious; he has fury (so the word is), not as man has it, in whom it is an ungoverned passion (so he has said, Fury is not in me, Isa 27:4), but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it. He is Lord of anger (so the Hebrew phrase is for that which we read, he is furious); he has anger, but he has it at command and under government. Our anger is often lord over us, as theirs that have no rule over their own spirits, but God is always Lord of his anger and weighs a path to it, Ps 78:50.

2. He resolves to reckon with those that put those affronts upon him. We are told here, not only that he is a revenger, but that he will take vengeance; he has said he will, he has sworn it, De 32:40,41.

Whoever are his adversaries and enemies among men, he will make them feel his resentments; and, though the sentence against his enemies is not executed speedily, yet he reserves wrath for them and reserves them for it in the day of wrath. Against his own people, who repent and humble themselves before him, he keeps not his anger for ever, but against his enemies he will for ever let out his anger. He will not at all acquit the wicked that sin, and stand to it, and do not repent, Na 1:3. Those wickedly depart from their God that depart, and never return (Ps 18:21), and these he will not acquit.

Humble supplicants will find him gracious, but scornful beggars will not find him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud, but late, Lord, Lord. This revelation of the wrath of God against his enemies is applied to Nineveh (Na 1:8), and should be applied by all those to themselves who go on still in their trespasses: With an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof. The army of the Chaldeans shall overrun the country of the Assyrians, and lay it all waste. God's judgments, when they come with commission, are like a deluge

to any people, which they cannot keep off nor make head against. Darkness shall pursue his enemies; terror and trouble shall follow them, whithersoever they go, shall pursue them to utter darkness; if they think to flee from the darkness which pursues them they will but fall into that which is before them.

3 The Lord *is* slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked:* the Lord *hath* his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

He is a God of irresistible power, and is able to deal with his enemies, be they ever so many, ever so mighty, ever so hardy. He is great in power (Na 1:3), and therefore it is good having him our friend and bad having him our enemy. Now here,

1 The power of God is asserted and proved by divers instances of it in the kingdom of nature, where we always find its visible effects in the ordinary course of nature, and sometimes in the surprising alterations of that course.

(1.) If we look up into the regions of the air, there we shall find proofs of his power, for he has his ways in the whirlwind and the storm. Which way soever God goes he carries a whirlwind and a storm along with him, for the terror of his enemies, Ps 18:9, &c. And, wherever there is a whirlwind and a storm, God has the command of it, the control of it, makes his way through it, goes on his way in it, and serves his own purposes by it. He spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and even stormy winds fulfil his word.

He has his way in the whirlwind, that is, he goes on undiscerned, and the methods of his providence are to us unaccountable; as it is said, His way is in the sea. The clouds are the dust of his feet; he treads on them, walks on them, raises them when he pleases, as a man with his feet raises a cloud of dust. It is but by permission, or usurpation rather, that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God's hand.

(2.) If we cast our eye upon the great deeps, there we find that the sea is his, for he made it; for, when he pleases, he rebukes the sea and makes it dry, by drying up all the rivers with which it is continually supplied. He gave those proofs of his power when he divided the Red Sea and Jordan, and can do the same again whenever he pleases.

(3.) If we look round us on this earth, we find proofs of his power, when, either by the extreme heat and drought of summer or the cold and frost of winter, Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languishes, the choicest and strongest flower languishes. His power is often seen in earthquakes, which shake the mountains (Na 1:5), melt the hills, and melt them down, and level them with the plains. When he pleases the earth is burnt at his presence by the scorching heat of the sun, and he could burn it with fire from heaven, as he did Sodom, and at the end of time he will burn the world and all that dwell therein. The earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Thus great is the Lord and of great power.

2. This is particularly applied to his anger. If God be an almighty God, we may thence infer (Na 1:6), Who can stand before his indignation? The Ninevites had once found God slow to anger (as he says Na 1:3), and perhaps presumed upon the mercy they had then had experience of, and thought they might make bold with him; but they will find he is just and jealous as well as merciful and gracious, and, having shown the justice of his wrath, in the next he shows the power of it, and the utter insufficiency of his enemies to contend with him. It is in vain for the stoutest and strongest of sinners to think to make their part good against the power of God's anger.

(1.) See God here as a consuming fire, terrible and mighty. Here is his indignation against sin, and the fierceness of his anger, his fury poured out, not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone rained on Sodom, Ps 11:6. Hell is the fierceness of God's anger, re 16:19. God's anger is so fierce that it beats down all before it: The rocks are thrown down by him, which seemed immovable. Rocks have sometimes been rent by the eruption of subterraneous fires, which is a faint resemblance of the

fierceness of God's anger against sinners whose hearts are rocky, for none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered.

(2.) See sinners here are stubble before the fire, weak and impotent, and a very unequal match for the wrath of God.

[1.] They are utterly unable to bear up against it, so as to resist it, and put by the strokes of it: Who can stand before his indignation? Not the proudest and most daring sinner; not the world of the ungodly; no, not the angels that sinned.

[2.] They are utterly unable to bear up under it so as to keep up their spirits, and preserve any enjoyment of themselves: Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? As it is irresistible, so it is intolerable. Some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world a man may bear up under, but the fierceness of his anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear? Let us therefore fear before him; let us stand in awe, and not sin.

III. He is a God of infinite mercy; and in the midst of all this wrath mercy is remembered. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, that go on still in their transgressions, but let not those that trust in God tremble before him. For, 1. He is slow to anger (Na 1:3), not easily provoked, but ready to show mercy to those who have offended him and to receive them into favour upon their repentance. 2. When the tokens of his rage against the wicked are abroad he takes care for the safety and comfort of his own people (Na 1:7): The Lord is good to those that are good, and to them he will be a stronghold in the day of trouble.

Note, The same almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked is engaged, and shall be employed, for the protection and satisfaction of his own people; he is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of public trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth, laying all waste, he will be a place of defence to those that by faith put themselves under his protection, those that trust in him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him, and devotedness to him; he knows them, he owns them for his, he takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most

effectually for their relief. They are perhaps obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them, Ps 1:6.

5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

7 The Lord *is* good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

8 But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

9 What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

These verses seem to point at the destruction of the army of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, which may well be reckoned a part of the burden of Nineveh, the head city of the Assyrian empire, and a pledge of the destruction of Nineveh itself about 100 years after; and this was an event which Isaiah, with whom probably this prophet was contemporary, spoke much of. Now observe here,

I The great provocation which the Assyrians gave to God, the just and jealous God, for which, though slow to anger, he would take vengeance (Na 1:11): There is one come out of thee, that imagines evil against the Lord--Sennacherib, and his spokesman Rabshakeh. They framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah and his people, but against God himself, reflecting upon him as level with the gods of the heathen, and unable to protect his worshippers, dissuading his people from putting confidence in him, and urging them rather to put themselves under the protection of the great king, the king of Assyria. They contrived to alter the property of Jerusalem, that it should be no longer the city of the Lord, the holy city.

This one, this mighty one, so he thinks himself, that comes out of Nineveh, imagining evil against the Lord, brings upon Nineveh this burden. Never was the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth more daringly, more blasphemously affronted than by Sennacherib at that time. He was a wicked counsellor who

counselled them to despair of God's protection, and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavour to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation (Isa 36:7); with this wicked counsellor he here expostulates (Na 1:9): "What do you imagine against the Lord? What a foolish wicked thing it is for you to plot against God, as if you could outwit divine wisdom and overpower omnipotence itself!"

Note, There is a great deal imagined against the Lord by the gates of hell, and against the interests of his kingdom in the world; but it will prove a vain thing, Ps 2:1,2. He that sits in heaven laughs at the imaginations of the pretenders to politics against him, and will turn their counsels headlong.

II The great destruction which God would bring upon them for it, not immediately upon the whole monarchy (the ruin of that was deferred till the measure of their iniquity was full), but,

1. Upon the army; God will make an utter end of that; it shall be totally cut off and ruined at one blow; one fatal stroke of the destroying angel shall lay them dead upon the spot; affliction shall not rise up the second time, for it shall not need. With some sinners God makes a quick despatch, does their business at once. Divine vengeance goes not by one certain rule, nor in one constant track, but one way or other, by acute diseases or chronical ones, by slow deaths or lingering ones, he will make an utter end of all his enemies, who persist in their imaginations against him.

We have reason to think that the Assyrian army were mostly of the same spirit, and spoke the same language, with their general, and now God would take them to task, though they did but say as they were taught; and it shall appear that they have laid themselves open to divine wrath by their own act and deed, Na 1:10.

(1.) They are as thorns that entangle one another, and are folded together. They make one another worse, and more inveterate against God and his Israel, harden one another's hearts, and strengthen one another's hands, in their impiety; and therefore

God will do with them as the husbandman does with a bush of thorns when he cannot part them: he puts them all into the fire together.

(2.) They are as drunken men, intoxicated with pride and rage; and such as they shall be irrecoverably overthrown and destroyed. They shall be as drunkards, besotted to their own ruin, and shall stumble and fall, and make themselves a reproach, and be justly laughed at.

(3.) They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry, which is irresistibly and irrecoverably consumed by the flame. The judgments of God are as devouring fire to those that make themselves as stubble to them. It is again threatened concerning this great army (Na 1:12) that though they be quiet and likewise many, very secure, not fearing the sallies out of the besieged upon them, because they are numerous, yet thus shall they be cut down, or certainly shall they be cut down, as grass and corn are cut down, with as little ado, when he shall pass through, even the destroying angel that is commissioned to cut them down. Note, The security of sinners, and their confidence in their own strength, are often presages of ruin approaching.

2. Upon the king. He imagined evil against the Lord, and shall he escape? No (Na 1:14): "The Lord has given a commandment concerning thee; the decree has gone forth, that thy name be no more sown, that thy memory perish, that thou be no more talked of as thou hast been, and that the report of thy mighty actions be dispersed upon the wings of fame and celebrated with her trumpet." Because Sennacherib's son reigned in his stead, some make this to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian empire not long after. Note, Those that imagine evil against the Lord hasten evil upon themselves and their own families and interests, and ruin their own names by dishonouring his name. It is further threatened,

(1.) That the images he worshipped should be cut off from their temple, the graven image and the molten image out of the house of his gods, which, some think, was fulfilled when Sennacherib was slain by his two sons, as he was worshipping in the house of

Nisroch his god, by which barbarous parricide we may suppose the temple was looked upon as defiled, and was therefore disused, and the images were cut off from it, the worshippers of those images no longer attending there. Or it may be taken more generally to denote the utter ruin of Assyria; the army of the enemy shall lay all waste, and not spare even the images of their gods, by which God would intimate to them that one of the grounds of his controversy with them was their idolatry.

(2.) That Sennacherib's grave shall be made there, some think in the house of his god; there he is slain, and there he shall be buried, for he is vile; he lies under this perpetual mark of disgrace, that he had so far lost his interest in the natural affection of his own children that two of them murdered him. Or it may be meant of the ignominious fall of the Assyrian monarchy itself, upon the ruins of which that of Babylon was raised. What a noise was made about the grave of that once formidable state, but now despicable, is largely described, Eze 3:3,11,15,16. Note, Those that make themselves vile by scandalous sins God will make vile by shameful punishments.

10 For while *they be* folden together *as* thorns, and while they are drunken
as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.
11 There is *one* come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the
Lord, a wicked counselor.
12 Thus saith the Lord; Though *they be* quiet, and likewise many, yet thus
shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have
afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

The great deliverance which God would hereby work for his own people and the city that was called by his name. The ruin of the church's enemies is the salvation of the church, and a very great salvation it was that was wrought for Jerusalem by the overthrow of Sennacherib's army.

1 The siege shall hereby be raised: "Now will I break his yoke from off thee, by which thou art kept in servitude, and will burst thy bonds asunder, by which thou seemest bound over to the Assyrian's wrath." That vast victorious army, when it forced free quarters for itself throughout all the land of Judah, and lived at discretion there, was as yokes and bonds upon them.

Jerusalem, when it was besieged, was, as it were, bound and fettered by it; but, when the destroying angel had done his work, Jerusalem's bonds were burst asunder, and it was set at liberty again. This was a figure of the great salvation, by which the Jerusalem that is above is made free, is made free indeed.

2 The enemy shall be so weakened and dispirited that they shall never make any such attempt again, and the end of this trouble shall be so well gained by the grace of God that there shall be no more occasion for such a severe correction.

(1.) God will not again afflict Jerusalem; his anger is turned away, and he says, It is enough; for he has by this fright accomplished his whole work upon Mount Zion (Isa 10:12), and therefore "though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more;" the bitter portion shall not be repeated unless there be need and the patient's case call for it; for God doth not afflict willingly.

(2.) The enemy shall not dare again to attack Jerusalem (Na 1:15): The wicked shall no more pass through thee as they have done, to lay all waste, for he is utterly cut off and disabled to do it. His army is cut off, his spirit cut off, and at length he himself is cut off.

3. The tidings of this great deliverance shall be published and welcomed with abundance of joy throughout the kingdom, Na 1:15. While Sennacherib prevailed, and carried all before him, every day brought bad news; but now, behold, upon the mountains, the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, the feet of the evangelist; he is seen coming at a distance upon the mountains, as fast as his feet will carry him; and how pleasant a sight is it once more to see a messenger of peace, after we have received so many of Job's messengers!

We find these words made use of by another prophet to illustrate the mercy of the deliverance of the people of God out of Babylon (Isa 52:7), not that the prophets stole the word one from another (as those did, Jer 23:30), but speaking by the same Spirit, they

often used the same expressions; and it may be of good use for ministers to testify their consent to wholesome truths (1Ti 6:3) by concurring in the same forms of sound words, 2Ti 1:13.

These words are also quoted by the apostle, both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the great redemption wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting gospel, Ro 10:15. Christ's ministers are those messengers of good tidings, that preach peace by Jesus Christ. How beautiful are the feet of those messengers! How welcome their message to those that see their misery and danger by reason of sin! And observe, He that brings these good tidings brings with them a call to Judah to keep her solemn feasts and perform her vows. During the trouble,

(1.) The ordinary feasts had been intermitted. Inter arma silent leges--The voice of law cannot be heard amidst the shouts of battle. While Jerusalem was encompassed with armies they could not go thither to worship; but now that the embargo is taken off they must return to the observance of their feasts; and the feasts of the Lord will be doubly sweet to the people of God when they have been for some time deprived of the benefit of them and God graciously restores them their opportunities again, for we are taught the worth of such mercies by the want of them.

(2.) They had made vows to God, that, if he would deliver them out of this distress, they would do something extraordinary in his service, to his honour; and now that the deliverance is wrought they are called upon to perform their vows; the promise they had then made must now be made good, for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay. And those words, The wicked shall no more pass through thee, may be taken as a promise of the perfecting of the good work of reformation which Hezekiah had begun; the wicked shall not, as they have done, walk on every side, but they shall be cut off, and the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad is a mercy indeed to a nation when it is accompanied with the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, who are its more dangerous enemies.

13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

14 And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, *that* no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

The Tidings of Nineveh's Fall

15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Nahum-2

1 He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily.

Here is, I. An alarm of war sent to Nineveh, Na 2:1 The prophet speaks of it as just at hand, for it is neither doubtful nor far distant: "Look about thee, and see, he that dashes in pieces has come up before thy face. Nebuchadnezzar, who is noted, and will be yet more so, for dashing nations in pieces, begins with thee, and will dissipate and disperse thee;" so some render the word. Babylon is called the hammer of the whole earth, Jer 50:23. The attempt of Nebuchadnezzar upon Nineveh is public, bold, and daring: "He has come up before thy face, avowing his design to ruin thee; and therefore stand to thy arms, O Nineveh!

keep the munition; secure thy towers and magazines: watch the way; set guards upon all the avenues to the city; make thy loins strong; encourage thy soldiers; animate thyself and them; fortify thy power mightily, as cities do when an enemy is advancing against them" (this is spoken ironically); "do the utmost thou canst, yet thou shalt not be able to put by the stroke of this judgment, for there is no counsel or strength against the Lord."

II. A manifesto published, showing the causes of the war (Na 2:2): The Lord has turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel, that is,

1 The Assyrians have been abusive to Jacob, the two tribes (have humbled and mortified them), as well as to Israel, the ten tribes, have emptied them, and marred their vine-branches. For this God will reckon with them; though done long since, it shall come into the account now against that kingdom, and Nineveh the head-city of it. God's quarrel with them is for the violence done to Jacob. Or,

2. God is now by Nebuchadnezzar about to turn away the pride of Jacob by the captivity of the two tribes, as he did the pride of Israel by their captivity; He has determined to do it, to bring emptiers upon them, and the enemy that is to do it must begin with Nineveh, and reduce that first, and humble the pride of that. God is looking upon proud cities, and abasing them, even those that are nearest to him. Samaria is humbled, and Jerusalem is to be humbled, and their pride brought low; and shall not Nineveh, that proud city, be brought down too? Emptiers have emptied the cities, and marred the vine-branches in the country of Jacob and Israel; and must not the excellency of Nineveh, that is so much her pride, be turned away too?

III. A particular account given in of the terrors wherein the invading enemy shall appear against Nineveh; every thing shall contribute to make him formidable.

1. The shields of his mighty men are made red, and probably their other arms and array, as if they were already tinctured with the blood they had shed, or intended hereby to signify they would put all to the sword; they hung out a red flag, in token that they would give no quarter.

2. The valiant men are in scarlet; not only red clothes, to intimate what bloody work they designed to make, but rich clothes, to intimate the wealth of the army, and that is the sinews of war.

3. The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation; when they are making their approaches, they shall fly as swiftly as lightning; the wheels shall strike fire upon the stones, and those that drive them shall drive furiously with a flaming indignation, as Jehu drove. Or they carried flaming

torches with them in the open chariots, when they made their approach in the night, as Gideon's soldiers carried lamps in their pitchers, to be both a guide to themselves and a terror to their enemies, and with them to set all on fire wherever they went.

4. The fir-trees shall be terribly shaken; the great men of Nineveh, that overtop their neighbours, as the stately firs do the shrubs; or the very standing trees shall be made to shake by the violent concussions of the earth, which that great army shall cause.

5. The chariots of war shall be very terrible (Na 2:4): They shall rage in the streets, that is, those that drive them shall rage; you would think the chariots themselves raged; they shall be so numerous, and drive with so much fury, that even in the broad ways, where, one would think, there should be room enough, they shall jostle one another; and these iron chariots shall be made so bright that in the beams of the sun they shall seem like torches in the night; they shall run like the lightnings, so swiftly, so furiously. Nebuchadnezzar's commanders are here called his worthies, his gallants (so the margin reads it), his heroes; those he shall recount, and order them immediately and without fail to render themselves at their respective posts, for he is entering upon action, is resolved to take the field immediately, and to open the campaign with the siege of Nineveh.

His worthies shall remember (so some read it); they shall be mindful of the duty of their place, and the charge they have received, and shall thereby be made so intent upon their business that they shall stumble in their walks, shall make more haste than good speed; they stumble, but shall not fall; for they shall make haste to the wall thereof, shall open the trenches; and the defence, or the covered way, shall be prepared (something to shelter them from the darts of the besieged), and they shall so closely carry on the siege, and with so much vigour, that at length the gates of the rivers shall be opened (Na 2:6); those gates of Nineveh which open upon the river Tigris (on which Nineveh was built) shall be first forced by, or betrayed to, the enemy, and by those gates they shall enter. And then the palace shall be dissolved, either the king's house or the house of Nisroch

his god; the same word signifies both a palace and a temple. When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with a people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods, can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them.

2 For the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men *are* in scarlet: the chariots *shall be* with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.

4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

A prediction of the consequences of this; and it is easy to guess how dismal those will be.

1 The queen shall fall into the hands of the enemy (Na 2:7): Huzzab shall be led away captive; she that was established (so some read it), thought herself safe because she was concealed and shut up in secret, shall be discovered (so the margin reads it) and shall be led away captive, in greater disgrace than that of common prisoners; she shall be brought up in a mock state, and her maids of honour shall lead her, because she is weak and faint, not able to bear such frights and hardships, which are doubly hard and frightful to those that have not been used to them; they shall attend her, not to speak cheerfully to her and to encourage her, but murmuring and moaning themselves, as with the voice of doves, the doves of the valleys (Eze 7:16), noted for their mourning, Isa 38:14,59:11.

They shall be tabering upon their breasts, beating their own breasts in grief and vexation, as if they were drumming upon them, for so the word signifies.

2 The inhabitants, though numerous, shall none of them be able to make head against the invaders, or stand their ground (Na 2:8): Nineveh is of old like a pool of water, replenished with people as a pool with water (and waters signify multitudes, Re

17:15), or as those waters with fish; it was long ago a populous city; in Jonah's time there were 120,000 little children in it (Jon 4:11), and, ordinarily, cities and countries are increasing in their number every year; but, though they have so many hands to be employed in the public service, yet they shall not be able to inspire one another with courage, but they shall flee away like cowards.

Their commanders shall do what they can to animate them; they shall cry, "Stand, stand, have a good heart on it, and we shall do well enough;" but none shall so much as look back; they shall not have the least spark of courage remaining, but every one shall think it is his wisest course to make his best of the opportunity to escape; they shall not so much as look back to see who calls for them.

Note, God can dispirit the strongest and boldest, in the day of distress, so that they shall not be what one would expect from them, but like a pool of water, the water whereof is dried up and gone.

3. The wealth of the city shall become a prey, and all its rich furniture shall fall into the hands of the victorious enemy (Na 2:9); they shall thus animate and excite one another to plunder: Take the spoil of silver; take the spoil of gold; thus the officers shall stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here are silver and gold enough for them, for there is no end of the store of money and plate. Nineveh, having been of old like a pool of water, has gathered a vast deal of mud; and abundance of glory it has out of all the pleasant furniture, all the vessels of desire, which they have gloried in and which shall now be a prey and a pride to the conquerors.

Note, Those who prepare raiment as the clay, and heap up silver as the dust, know not who may put on the raiment and divide the silver, Job 27:16,17. Thus this rich city is empty, and void, and waste, Na 2:10. See the vanity of worldly wealth; instead of defending its owners, it does but expose them, and enable their enemies to do them so much the more mischief.

4. The soldiers and people shall have no heart to appear for the defence of the city. Their spirits shall melt away like wax before the fire; their knees shall smite together (as Belshazzar's did, in his agony, Da 5:6), so that they shall not be able to stand their ground, no, nor to make their escape; much pain shall be in all loins, as is the case in extreme frights, so that they shall not be able to hold up their backs. And the faces of them all shall gather blackness, like that of a pot that is every day over the fire; so the word signifies.

Note, Guilt in the conscience will fill men with terror in an evil day, and those who place their happiness in the wealth of this world and set their hearts upon it think themselves undone when their silver, and their gold, and their pleasant furniture are taken from them.

5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defense shall be prepared.6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves, taboring upon their breasts.

8 But Nineveh *is* of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, *shall they cry;* but none shall look back.

9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for *there is* none end of the store *and* glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

10 She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain *is* in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

11 Where *is* the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, *even* the old lion, walked, *and* the lion's whelp, and none made *them* afraid?

Here we have Nineveh's ruin,

1. Triumphed in by its neighbours, who now remember against it all the oppressions and abuse of power it had been guilty of in its pomp and prosperity (Na 2:11,12): Where is the dwelling of the lions? It is gone; there appear no remnants, no footsteps, of it. Where is the feeding place of the young lions, where they

glutted themselves with prey? The princes of Nineveh had been as lions, as beasts of prey; cruel tyrants are no better, nay, in this respect much worse--that, being men, humanity is expected from them; nay, if they were indeed lions, they would not prey upon those of their own kind. Savis inter se convenit ursæ--Fierce bears agree together.

But in the shape of men they had the cruelty of lions: they walked in Nineveh as a lion in the woods, and none made them afraid; every one stood in awe of them, and they were under no apprehensions of danger from any; though nobody loved them, every body feared them, and that was all they desired. Oderint, dum metuant--Let them hate, so that they do but fear.

The king himself, as well as every prince, made it his business, by all the arts of violence and extortion, to enrich himself and raise his family; he did tear in pieces enough for his whelps (and no little would be enough for them) and he strangled for his lioness, killed all that came near him, and seized what they had for his children, for his wives and concubines, and filled his holes with prey and his dens with ravin, as lions are wont to do.

Note, Many make it an excuse for their rapine and injustice that they have wives and children to provide for, whereas what is so got will never do them any good; those that fear the Lord, and get what they have honestly, shall not want a competency for themselves and theirs; verily they shall be fed, when the young lions, though dens and holes were filled with prey and ravin for them, shall lack, and suffer hunger, Ps 34:10.

2. It is avowed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth; it is his doing, and let all the world take notice that it is so (Na 2:13): Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. And what good can hosts do for her in her defence, when the Lord of hosts is against her for her destruction? The oppressors in Nineveh thought they only set their neighbours against them, who were not a match for them, and whom they could easily overpower; but it proved they set God against them, who is, and will be, the asserter of right and the avenger of wrong. God is against the princes of Nineveh, and then,

(1.) These military preparations will stand them in no stead: I will burn their chariots in the smoke; he does not say in the fire, but, in contempt of them, the very smoke of God's indignation shall serve to burn their chariots; they shall be consumed as soon as the fire of his indignation is kindled, while as yet it does but smoke, and not flame out. Or, The drivers of the chariots shall be smothered and stifled with the smoke; then the chariots of their glory shall be the shame of their families, Isa 22:18.

(2.) Their children, the hopes of their families, shall be cut off: The sword shall devour the young lions, whom they were so solicitous to provide for by oppression and extortion. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of their children, or (which is all one) of comfort in them, that take sinful courses to enrich them, and (as has been said of some) damn their souls to make their sons gentlemen.

(3.) The wealth they have heaped up by fraud and violence shall neither be enjoyed by them nor employed for them: I will cut off thy prey from the earth; not only thou shalt not be the better for it, but no one else shall. Some understand it of the disabling of them for the future to prey upon their neighbours.

(4.) Their agents abroad shall not have that respect from their neighbours and that influence upon them which sometimes they had had: The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard, no more be heeded, which some think refers to Rabshakeh, one of Nineveh's messengers, that had blasphemed the living God, an iniquity which was remembered against Nineveh long after. Those are not worthy to be heard again that have once spoken reproachfully of God.

12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

The Utter Ruin of Nineveh

13 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and

I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Nahum-3

1 Woe to the bloody city! it *is* all full of lies *and* robbery; the prey departeth not;

Here is, I. Nineveh arraigned and indicted. It is a high charge that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her numbers nor her grandeur shall secure her from prosecution.

1. It is a city of blood, in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed by unrighteous war, or under colour and pretence of public justice, or by suffering barbarous murders to go unpunished; for this the righteous God will make inquisition.

2. It is all full of lies; truth is banished from among them; there is no such thing as honesty; one knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust.

3. It is all full of robbery and rapine; no man cares what mischief he does, nor to whom he does it: The prey departs not, that is, they never know when they have got enough by spoil and oppression. They shed blood, and told lies, in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves.

4. There is a multitude of whoredoms in it, that is, idolatries, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself, and to which she seduced the neighbouring nations, as a well-favoured harlot, and sold and ruined nations through her whoredoms.

5. She is a mistress of witchcrafts, and by them she sells families, Na 3:4. That which Nineveh aimed at was a universal monarchy, to be the metropolis of the world, and to have all her neighbours under her feet; to compass this, she used not only arms, but arts, compelling some, deluding others, into subjection to her, and wheedling them as a harlot by her charms to lay their necks under her yoke, suggesting to them that it would be for their advantage. She courted them to join with her

in her idolatrous rites, to tie them the faster to her interests, and made use of her wealth, power, and greatness, to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them, and made a hand of them. These were her whoredoms, like those of Tyre, Isa 23:15,17.

These were her witchcrafts, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And for this that God has a quarrel with her who, having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants and another of slaves, and who claims it as his own prerogative to be universal Monarch.

2 the noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of
the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.
3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear:
and *there is* a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and
there is none end of *their* corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:
4 because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot,
the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms,
and families through her witchcrafts.

Nineveh condemned to ruin upon this indictment. Woe to this bloody city! Na 3:1. See what this woe is.

1. Nineveh had with her cruelties been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore destruction and terror shall be brought upon her. Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way will, sooner or later, meet with their match.

(1.) Hear the alarm with which Nineveh shall be terrified, Na 3:2. It is a formidable army that advances against it; you may hear them at a distance, the noise of the whip, driving the chariot-horses with fury; you may hear the noise of the rattling of the wheels, the prancing horses, and the jumping chariots; the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it.

(2.) See the slaughter with which Nineveh shall be laid waste (Na 3:3), the sword drawn with which execution shall be done, the bright sword lifted up and the glittering spear, the dazzling

brightness of which is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against. See what havoc these make when they are commissioned to slay:

There is a great number of carcases, for the slain of the land shall be many; there is no end of their corpses; there is such a multitude of slain that it is in vain to go about to take the number of them; they lie so thick that passengers are ready to stumble upon their corpses at every step. The destruction of Sennacherib's army, which, in the morning, were all dead corpses, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for those that will not take warning by judgments at a distance shall have them come nearer.

2. Nineveh had with her whoredoms and witchcrafts drawn others to shameful wickedness, and therefore God will load her with shame and contempt (Na 3:5-7): The Lord of hosts is against her, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy, shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen that while she courted her neighbours it was with design to ruin their liberty and property, when all her wicked artifices shall be brought to light, then her shame is discovered to the nations.

When her proud pretensions are baffled, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to nought, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then to see the nakedness of the land do they come, and it appears ridiculous. Then do they cast abominable filth upon her, as upon a carted strumpet, and make her vile as the offscouring of all things; that great city, which all nations had made court to and coveted an alliance with, has become a gazing-stock, a laughing stock. Those that formerly looked upon her, and fled to her, in hopes of protection from her, now look upon her and flee from her, for fear of being ruined with her.

Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and, because miserable, will be made contemptible, and thereby be made more miserable. When

Nineveh is laid waste who will bemoan her? Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or, if it would, none shall do any such good office: When shall I seek comforters for thee?

Note, Those that showed no pity in the day of their power can expect to find no pity in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, come to be undeceived in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate, when she was made a spectacle, or gazing-stock.

Note, The greater men's show was in the day of their abused prosperity the greater will their shame be in the day of their deserved destruction. I will make thee an example; so Drusus reads it. Note, When proud sinners are humbled and brought down it is designed that others should take example by them not to lift up themselves in security and insolence when they prosper in the world.

5 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

7 And it shall come to pass, *that* all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

8 Art thou better than populous No [*or,* than No Amon], that was situate among the rivers, *that had* the waters round about it, whose rampart *was* the sea, *and* her wall *was* from the sea?

Nineveh has been told that God is against her, and then none can be for her, to stand her in any stead; yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and says, I shall have peace. Threatened folks live long; therefore here the prophet largely shows how vain her confidences would prove and insufficient to ward off the judgment of God. To convince them of this,

I. He shows them that other places, which had been as strong and as secure as they, could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Nineveh shall fall unpitied and uncomforted (for miserable comforters will those prove who speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble), and she shall not be able to help herself: Art thou better than populous No? Na 3:8. He takes them off from their vain confidences by quoting precedents. The city mentioned is No, a great city in the land of Egypt (Jer 46:25), No-Ammon, so some read it both there and here. We read of it, Eze 30:14-16.

Some think it was Diospolis, others Alexandria. As God said to Jerusalem, Go, see what I did to Shiloh (Jer 7:12), so to Nineveh that great city, Go, see what I did to populous No. Note, It will help to keep us in a holy fear of the judgments of God to consider that we are not better than those that have fallen under those judgments before us. We deserve them as much, and are as little able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions. Are we better than such and such, who were in like manner exercised? Nay, were not they better than we, and less likely to be afflicted? Now, concerning No, observe,

1. How firm her standing seemed to be, Na 3:8. She was fortified both by nature and art, was situate among the rivers. Nile, in several branches, not only watered her fields, but guarded her wall. Her rampart was the sea, the lake of Mareotis, an Egyptian sea, like the sea of Tiberias. Her wall was from the sea; it was fenced with a wall which was thought to make the place impregnable. It was also supported by its interests and alliances abroad, Na 3:9. Ethiopia, or Arabia, was her strength, either by the wealth brought to her in a way of trade or by the auxiliary forces furnished for military service.

The whole country of Egypt also contributed to the strength of this populous city; so that it was infinite, and there was no end of it (so it might be rendered); She set no bounds to her ambition and knew no end of her wealth and strength; people flocked to her endlessly, and she thought there never would be any end of it; but it is God's prerogative to be infinite. Put and Lubim were thy helpers, two neighbouring countries of Africa, Mauritania

and Libya, that is, Libya Cyrenica, a country that Egypt had much dependence upon. No, thus helped, seemed to sit as a queen, and was not likely to see any sorrow. But,

2. See how fatal her fall proved to be (Na 3:10): Yet was she carried away, and her strength failed her; even she that was so strong, so secure, yet went into captivity. This refers to some destruction of that city which was then well-known, and probably fresh in memory, though not recorded in history; for the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar (if we should understand this prophetically) could not be made an example to Nineveh; for the reducing of Nineveh was one of the first of his victories and that of Egypt one of the last. The strength and grandeur of that great city could not be its protection from military execution.

(1.) Not from that which was most barbarous; for her young children had no compassion shown them, but were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets by the merciless conquerors.

(2.) Not from that which was most inglorious and disgraceful: They cast lots for her honourable men that were made prisoners of war, who should have them for their slaves. So many had they of them that they knew not what to do with them, but they made sport with throwing dice for them; all her great men, that used to be adorned on state-days with chains of gold, were now bound in chains of iron; they were pinioned or handcuffed (so the word properly signifies), not only as slaves, but as condemned malefactors. What a mortification was this to populous No, to have her honourable men and great men, that were her pride and confidence, thus abused! Now hence he infers against Nineveh (Na 3:11), "Thou also shalt be intoxicated, infatuated; thou also shalt reel and stagger, as drunk with the cup of the Lord's fury, that shall be put into thy hand" (see Jer 25:17,27); "Thou shalt fall and rise no more. The cup shall go round, and come to thy turn, O Nineveh! to drink off at last, and shall be to thee as the waters of jealousy."

9 Ethiopia and Egypt *were* her strength, and *it was* infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

10 Yet *was* she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

11 Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

12 All thy strongholds *shall be like* fig trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are* women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

He shows them that all those things which they reposed a confidence in should fail them.

1. Did the men of Nineveh trust to their own magnanimity and bravery? Their hearts should sink and fail them. They shall be hid, shall abscond for shame, being in disgrace, abscond for fear, being in distress and danger, and not able to face the enemies, because of whose strength and terror, having no strength of their own, they shall seek strength, shall come sneaking to their neighbours to beg their assistance in a time of need. Thus God can cut off the spirit of princes, and take away their heart.

2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garrisons and strongholds they had, which were regularly fortified and bravely manned? Those shall prove but paper-walls, and like the first-ripe figs, which, if you give the tree but a little shake, will fall into the mouth of the eater that gapes for them; so easily will all their strongholds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy, upon the first summons, Na 3:12.

Note, Strongholds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and a high wall, but only in his own conceit, Pr 18:10. They are supposed to make their strongholds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable, and serviceable to them against the invader (Na 3:14): Draw thee water for the siege; lay in great quantities of water, that that which is so necessary to the support of human life may not be wanting; it is put here for all manner

of provision, with which Nineveh is ironically told to furnish herself, in expectation of a siege.

"Take ever so much care that thou mayest not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail. Fortify the strongholds, by adding out-works to them, or putting men and arms into them," as with us by planting cannon upon them. "Go into clay, and tread the mortar, and make strong the brick-kiln; take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications; but it shall be all in vain, for (Na 3:15) there shall even the fire devour thee if it be taken by storm." It is by fire and sword that in time of war the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants? Were they, from their number and valour, reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications? Alas! these shall stand them in no stead; they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers (Na 3:13):

Thy people in the midst of thee are women; they have no wisdom, no courage; they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are in such times of danger and distress; they shall be at their wits' end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own imagination, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the valiant men shall become cowards. O verè Phrygiæ, neque enim Phryges--Phrygian dames, not Phrygian men. Though they make themselves many (Na 3:15), as the canker-worm and as the locust, that come in vast swarms, though thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven, though thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders, who, having so much money to stand up in defence of and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, should, one would think, give the enemy a warm reception, yet their hearts shall fail them too; though they be numerous as caterpillars, yet the fire and sword shall eat them up easily and irresistibly as the canker-worm, Na 3:15.

They are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous like them. He adds (Na 3:16), The canker-

worm spoils, or spreads herself, and flies away. Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms.

The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil, without opposition, or any hope of recovering it. Or the rich merchants, who have come from abroad to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove to some other place, will spread their wings and fly away where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them.

Note, It is rare to find even those that have shared with us in our joys willing to share with us in our griefs too. The canker-worms will continue upon the field while there is any thing to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that men have got by they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bid her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms, which on a sudden fly away as the eagle towards heaven, Pr 23:5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of their gates and bars? What fence will those be against the force of the judgments of God? Na 3:13. The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thy enemies, the gates of thy rivers (Na 2:6), the flood-gates, or the passes and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country, or the gates of the cities; these, though ever so strong and well-guarded, shall not answer their end: The fire shall devour thy bars, the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their king and princes? They should do them no service (Na 3:17): Thy crowned heads are as the locusts; those that had pomp and power, as crowned heads, were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance, when the enemy came in like a flood. "Thy captains, that should lead thy forces into the field, are great indeed, and look great, but they are as the great grasshoppers, the maximum quod sic--the largest

specimens of that species; still they are but grasshoppers, worthless things, that can do no service.

They encamp in the hedges, in the cold day, the cold weather, but, when the sun arises, they flee away, and are gone, nobody knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers that lay slumbering about Nineveh, when any trouble arises, flee away, and shift for their own safety. The hireling flees, because he is a hireling." The king of Assyria is told, and it is a shame he needs to be told it (who might observe it himself), that his shepherds slumber; they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place and the trust reposed in them: Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust, and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves and rally again? In this also they should be disappointed; for, when the shepherds are smitten, the sheep are scattered; the people are dispersed upon the mountains and no man gathers them, nor will they ever come together of themselves, but will wander endlessly, as scattered sheep do. The judgment they are under is as a wound, and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, "no healing of thy bruise, no possibility that the wound, which is so grievous and painful to thee, should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate (Na 3:19) and thy neighbours, instead of lending a hand to help thee, shall clap their hands over thee, and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because thou hast been one way or other injurious to them all: Upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually? Thou hast been always doing mischief to those about thee; there is none of them but what thou hast abused and insulted; and therefore they shall be so far from pitying thee that they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with."

Note, Those that have been abusive to their neighbours will, one time or another, find it come home to them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves against their day comes to fall: and those that dare not lay hands on them themselves will clap their hands over them, and upbraid them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served and paid

in their own coin. The troublers shall be troubled will be the burden of many, as it is here the burden of Nineveh.

14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strongholds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.

15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts.

16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away.

17 Thy crowned *are* as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, *but* when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they *are.*

18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust:* thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth *them*.

19 *There is* no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

Habakkuk
[Habakkuk]

Habakkuk-1

Habakkuk Complains of Injustice

1 The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.
2 O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out
unto thee *of* violence, and thou wilt not save!

We are told no more in the title of this book (which we have, Hab 1:1) than that the penman was a prophet, a man divinely inspired and commissioned, which is enough (if that be so, we need not ask concerning his tribe or family, or the place of his birth), and that the book itself is the burden which he saw; he was as sure of the truth of it as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes already accomplished. Here, in these verses, the prophet sadly laments the iniquity of the times, as one sensibly touched with grief for the lamentable decay of religion and righteousness. It is a very melancholy complaint which he here makes to God,

1. That no man could call what he had his own; but, in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he that had power on his side had what he had a mind to, though he had no right on his side: The land was full of violence, as the old world was, Ge 6:11. The prophet cries out of violence (Hab 1:2), iniquity and grievance, spoil and violence. In families and among relations, in neighbour-hoods and among friends, in commerce and in courts of law, every thing was carried with a high hand, and no man made any scruple of doing wrong to his neighbour, so that he could but make a good hand of it for himself. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done him (in losing times it fared best with those that had nothing to lose), but it grieved him to see other people wronged, and he could not but mingle his tears with those of the oppressed.

Note, Doing wrong to harmless people, as it is an iniquity in itself, so it is a great grievance to all that are concerned for God's Jerusalem, who sigh and cry for abominations of this kind. He complains (Hab 1:4) that the wicked doth compass about the righteous. One honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besetting it on every side; many wicked men, in confederacy against it, run it down; nay, one wicked man (for it is singular) with so many various arts of mischief sets upon a righteous man, that he perfectly besets him.

2. That the kingdom was broken into parties and factions that were continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace: There are that raise up strife and contention (Hab 1:3), that foment divisions, widen breaches, incense men against one another, and sow discord among brethren, by doing the work of him that is the accuser of the brethren. Strifes and contentions that have been laid asleep, and begun to be forgotten, they awake, and industriously raise up again, and blow up the sparks that were hidden under the embers. And, if blessed are the peace-makers, cursed are such peace-breakers, that make parties, and so make mischief that spreads further, and lasts longer, than they can imagine. It is sad to see bad men warming their hands at those flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation, and stirring up the fire too.

3. That the torrent of violence and strife ran so strongly as to bid defiance to the restraints and regulations of laws and the administration of justice, Hab 1:4. Because God did not appear against them, nobody else would; therefore the law is slacked, is silent; it breathes not; its pulse beats not (so, it is said, the word signifies); it intermits, and judgment does not go forth as it should; no cognizance is taken of those crimes, no justice done upon the criminals; nay, wrong judgment proceeds; if appeals be made to the courts of equity, the righteous shall be condemned and the wicked justified, so that the remedy proves the worst disease.

The legislative power takes no care to supply the deficiencies of the law for the obviating of those growing threatening mischiefs; the executive power takes no care to answer the good intentions of the laws that are made; the stream of justice is dried up by violence, and has not its free course.

4. That all this was open and public, and impudently avowed; it was barefaced. The prophet complains that this iniquity was shown him; he beheld it which way soever he turned his eyes, nor could he look off it: Spoiling and violence are before me. Note, The abounding of wickedness in a nation is a very great eye-sore to good people, and, if they did not see it, they could not believe it to be so bad as it is. Solomon often complains of the vexation of this kind which he saw under the sun; and the prophet would therefore gladly turn hermit, that he might not see it, Jer 9:2. But then we must needs go out of the world, which there-fore we should long to do, that we may remove to that world where holiness and love reign eternally, and no spoiling and violence shall be before us.

5. That he complained of this to God, but could not obtain a redress of those grievances: "Lord," says he, "why dost thou show me iniquity? Why hast thou cast my lot in a time and place when and where it is to be seen, and why do I continue to sojourn in Mesech and Kedar? I cry to thee of this violence; I cry aloud; I have cried long; but thou wilt not hear, thou wilt not save; thou dost not take vengeance on the oppressors, nor do justice to the oppressed, as if thy arm were shortened or thy ear heavy."

When God seems to connive at the wickedness of the wicked, nay, and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say, We have cleansed our hearts in vain (Ps 73:13), and hardens those in their impiety who say, God has forsaken the earth. We must not think it strange if wickedness be suffered to prevail far and prosper long. God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprieves of bad men and the rebukes of good men; and

therefore, though we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments, yet we must say, "He is wise, and righteous, and good, in all," and must believe the day will come, though it may be long deferred, when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong and the cry of prayer for those that suffer it.

3 Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention.

4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

The Chaldeans Will Punish Judah

5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you.*

We have here an answer to the prophet's complaint, giving him assurance that, though God bore long, he would not bear always with this provoking people; for the day of vengeance was in his heart, and he must tell them so, that they might by repentance and reformation turn away the judgment they were threatened with.

The preamble to the sentence is very awful (Hab 1:5): Behold, you among the heathen, and regard. Since they will not be brought to repentance by the long-suffering of God, he will take another course with them. No resentments are so keen, so deep, as those of abused patience. The Lord will inflict upon them,

1. A public punishment, which shall be beheld and regarded among the heathen, which the neighbouring nations shall take notice of and stand amazed at; see De 29:25,25. This will aggravate the desolations of Israel, that they will thereby be made a spectacle to the world.

2. An amazing punishment, so strange and surprising, and so much out of the common road of Providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be sorer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not; nay, it shall not be credited even by those that had the prediction of it from God before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eye-witnesses of it when it comes:

You will not believe it, though it be told you; it will be thought incredible that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur to enforce and aggravate it, that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken, and that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant and that he had done so much for. The punishment of God's professing people cannot but be the astonishment of all about them.

3. A speedy punishment: "I will work a work in your days, now quickly; this generation shall not pass till the judgment threatened be accomplished. The sins of former days shall be reckoned for in your days; for now the measure of the iniquity is full," Mt 23:36.

4. It shall be a punishment in which much of the hand of God shall appear; it shall be a work of his own working, so that all who see it shall say, This is the Lord's doing; and it will be found a fearful thing to fall into his hands; woe to those whom he takes to task!

5. It shall be such a punishment as will typify the destruction to be brought upon the despisers of Christ and his gospel, for to that these words are applied Ac 13:41, Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish. The ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans for their idolatry was a figure of their ruin by the Romans for rejecting Christ and his gospel, and it is a

very marvellous thing, and almost incredible. Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places *that are* not theirs.

7 They *are* terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat.

The sentence itself is very dreadful and particular (Hab 1:6): Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans. There were those that raised up a great deal of strife and contention among them, which was their sin; and now God will raise up the Chaldeans against them, who shall strive and contend with them, which shall be their punishment.

Note, When God's professing people quarrel among themselves, snarl at, and devour one another, it is just with God to bring the common enemy upon them, that shall make peace by making a universal devastation. The contending parties in Jerusalem were inveterate one against another, when the Romans came and took away their place and nation. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of the destruction threatened, and, though themselves acting unrighteously, they shall execute the righteousness of the Lord and punish the unrighteousness of Israel. Now, here we have,

1. A description of the people that shall be raised up against Israel, to be a scourge to them.

(1.) They are a bitter and hasty nation, cruel and fierce, and what they do is done with violence and fury; they are precipitate in their counsels, vehement in their passions, and push on with resolution in their enterprises; they show no mercy and they spare no pains. Miserable is the case of those that are given up into the hand of these cruel ones.

(2.) They are strong, and therefore formidable, and such as there is no standing before, and yet no fleeing from (Hab 1:7): They are terrible and dreadful, famed for the gallant troops they bring into the field (Hab 1:8); their horses are swifter than leopards to charge and pursue, and more fierce than the evening wolves; and wolves are observed to be the most ravenous towards the evening, after they have been kept hungry all day, waiting for that darkness under the protection of which all the beasts of the forest creep forth, Ps 104:20.

Their squadrons of horse shall be very numerous: "Their horse-men shall spread themselves a great way, for they shall come from far, from all parts of their own country, and shall be dispersed into all parts of the country they invade, to plunder it, and enrich themselves with the spoil of it. And, in making speed to spoil, they shall hasten to the prey (as those, Isa 8:1, margin), for they shall fly as the eagle towards the earth when she hastens to eat and strikes at the prey she has an eye upon."

(3.) Their own will is a law to them, and, in the fierceness of their pursuits, they will not be governed by any laws of humanity, equity, or honour: Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves, Hab 1:7. Appetite and passion rule them, and not reason nor conscience. Their principle is, Quicquid libet, licet--My will is my law. And, Sic volo, sic jubeo; stat pro ratione voluntas--This is my wish, this is my command; it shall be done because I choose it.

What favour can be hoped for from such an enemy? Note, Those who have been unjust and unmerciful, among whom the law is slacked, and judgment doth not go forth, will justly be paid in their own coin and fall into the hands of those who will deal unjustly and unmercifully with them.

2. A prophecy of the terrible execution that shall be made by this terrible nation: They shall march through the breadth of the earth (so it may be read); for in a little time the Chaldean

forces subdued all the nations in those parts, so that they seemed to have conquered the world; they overran Asia and part of Africa. Or, through the breadth of the land of Israel, which was wholly laid waste by them. It is here foretold,

(1.) That they shall seize all as their own that they can lay their hands on. They shall come to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs, which they have no right to, but that which their sword gives them.

(2.) That they shall push on the war with all possible vigour: They shall all come for violence (Hab 1:9), not to determine any disputed right by the sword, but, right or wrong, to enrich themselves with the spoil. Their faces shall sup up as the east wind; their very countenances shall be so fierce and frightful that a look will serve to make them masters of all they have a mind to; so that they shall swallow up all, as the east wind nips and blasts the buds and flowers. Their faces shall look towards the east (so some read it); they shall still have an eye to their own country, which lay eastward from Judea, and all the spoil they seize they shall remit thither.

(3.) That they shall take a vast number of prisoners, and send them into Babylon: They shall gather the captivity as the sand for multitude, and shall never know when they have enough, as long as there are any more to be had.

(4.) That they shall make nothing of the opposition that is given to them, Hab 1:10. Do the distressed Jews depend upon their great men to make a stand, and with their wisdom and courage to give check to the victorious arms of the Chaldeans? Alas! they will make nothing of them. They shall scoff (he shall, so it is in the original, meaning Nebuchadnezzar, who being puffed up with his successes, shall scoff) at the kings and commanders of the forces that think to make head against him; and the princes shall be a scorn to them, so unequal a match shall they appear to be.

Do they depend upon their garrisons and fortified towns? He shall deride every stronghold, for to him it shall be weak, and he shall heap dust, and take it; a little soil, thrown up for ramparts, shall serve to give him all the advantage against them that he can desire; he shall make but a jest of them, and a sport of taking them.

(5.) By all this he shall be puffed up with an intolerable pride, which shall be his destruction (Hab 1:11): Then shall his mind change for the worse. The spirit both of the people and of the king shall grow more haughty and insolent. Those that will not be content with their own rights will not be content when they have made themselves masters of other people's rights too; but as the condition rises the mind rises too.

This victorious king shall pass over all the bounds of reason, equity, and modesty, and break through all their bonds, and thereby he shall offend, shall make God his enemy, and so prepare ruin for himself by imputing this his power to his god, whereas he had it from the God of Israel. Bel and Nebo were the gods of the Chaldeans, and to them they gave the glory of their successes; they were hardened in their idolatry, and blasphemously argued that because they had conquered Israel their gods were too strong for the God of Israel.

Note, It is a great offence (and the common offence of proud people) to take that glory to ourselves, or to give it to gods of our own making, which is due to the living and true God only. These closing words of the sentence give a glimpse of comfort to the afflicted people of God; it is to be hoped that they will change their minds, and grow better, and ripen for deliverance; and they did so. However, their enemies will change their minds, and grow worse, and ripen for destruction, which will inevitably come in God's due time; for a haughty spirit, lifted up against God, goes before a fall.

9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up *as* the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

10 And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn
unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap
dust, and take it.
11 Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend,
imputing this his power unto his god.

Habakkuk Remonstrates with the Lord

12 *Art* thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One
?
We shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment;
and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

The prophet, having received of the Lord that which he was to deliver to the people, now turns to God, and again addresses himself to him for the ease of his own mind under the burden which he saw. And still he is full of complaints. If he look about him, he sees nothing but violence done by Israel; if he look before him, he sees nothing but violence done against Israel; and it is hard to say which is the more melancholy sight. His thoughts of both he pours out before the Lord.

It is our duty to be affected both with the iniquities and with the calamities of the church of God and of the times and places wherein we live; but we must take heed lest we grow peevish in our resentments, and carry them too far, so as to entertain any hard thoughts of God, or lose the comfort of our communion with him.

The world is bad, and always was so, and will be so; it is out of our power to mend it; but we are sure that God governs the world, and will bring glory to himself out of all, and therefore we must resolve to make the best of it, must be ourselves better, and long for the better world. The prospect of the prevalence of the Chaldeans drives the prophet to his knees, and he takes the liberty to plead with God concerning it. In his plea we may observe,

I The truths which he lays down, which he resolves to abide by, and with which he endeavours to comfort himself and his friends,

under the growing threatening power of the Chaldeans; and they will furnish us with pleasing considerations for our support in the like case.

1. However it be, yet God is the Lord our God, and our Holy One. The victorious Chaldeans impute their power to their idols, but we are taught to tell them that the God of Israel is the true God, the living God, Jer 10:10,11.

(1.) He is Jehovah, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection. Our rock is not as theirs.

(2.) "He is my God." He speaks in the people's name; every Israelite may say, "He is mine. Though we are thus sore broken, and all this has come upon us, yet have we not forgotten the name of our God, nor quitted our relation to him, yet have we not disowned him, nor hath he disowned us, Ps 44:17. We are an offending people; he is an offended God; yet he is ours, and we will not entertain any hard thoughts of him, nor of his service, for all this."

(3.) "He is my Holy One." This intimates that the prophet loved God as a holy God, loved him for the sake of his holiness. "He is mine because he is a Holy One; and therefore he will be my sanctifier and my Saviour, because he is my Holy One. Men are unholy, but my God is holy."

2. Our God is from everlasting. This he pleads with him: Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God? It is matter of great and continual comfort to God's people, under the troubles of this present life, that their God is from everlasting. This intimates,

(1.) The eternity of his nature; if he is from everlasting, he will be to everlasting, and we must have recourse to this first principle, when things seen, which are temporal, are discouraging, that we have hope and help sufficient in a god that is not seen, that is eternal. "Art thou not from everlasting, and then wilt thou not make bare thy everlasting arm, in pursuance of thy everlasting counsels, to make unto thyself an everlasting name?"

(2.) The antiquity of his covenant: "Art thou not from of old, a God in covenant with thy people" (so some understand it), "and hast thou not done great things for them in the days of old, which we have heard with our ears, and which our fathers have told us of; and art thou not the same God still that thou ever wast? Thou art God, and changest not."

3. While the world stands God will have a church in it. Thou art from everlasting, and then we shall not die. The Israel of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, though it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles (2Co 6:9), chastened, and not killed; chastened sorely, but not delivered over to death, Ps 118:18. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church from the eternity of God; for Christ has said, Because I live, and therefore as long as I live, you shall live also, Joh 14:19. He is the rock on which the church is so firmly built that the gates of hell shall not, cannot, prevail against it. We shall not die.

4. Whatever the enemies of the church may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends: Thou hast ordained them; thou hast established them. It was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do, nor had they any power against his Israel but what was given them from above. He gave them their commission to take the spoil and to take the prey, Isa 10:6.

Herein God appears a mighty God, that the power of mighty men is derived from him, depends upon him, and is under his check; he says concerning it, Hitherto shall it come, and no further. Those whom God ordains shall do no more than what God has ordained, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people. Men are God's hand, the rod in his hand, Ps 17:14.

And he has ordained them for judgment, and for correction. God's people need correction, and deserve it; they must expect it; they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction, that they may be ruined, but for their

correction, that they may be reformed; they are not intended for a sword, to cut them off, but for a rod, to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts, though they mean not so, neither does their heart think so, Isa 10:7.

Note, It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that, whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure that his counsel shall stand.

5. Though the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and does not approve of that wickedness (Hab 1:13): Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil. The prophet, observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say that it was vain to serve God, and that it was indifferent to him what men were. But he soon suppresses the thought, by having recourse to his first principle, That God is not, that he cannot be, the author or patron of sin; as he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with any allowance or approbation; no, it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates.

He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offence to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice. There is in the nature of God an antipathy to those dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and, though an expedient is happily found out for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will, nor can, be reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it.

Note, God's connivance at sin must never be interpreted into a giving countenance to it; for he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, Ps 5:4,5.

The iniquity which, it is here said, God does not look upon, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people by their persecutors; though God sees cause to permit it, yet he does not

approve of it; so it agrees with that of Balaam (Nu 23:21), He has not be held iniquity against Jacob, nor seen, with allowance, perverseness against Israel, which is very comfortable to the people of God, in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it; though the instruments of their trouble hate them, it does not therefore follow that God does; nay, he loves them, and it is in love that he corrects them.

13 *Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, *and* holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth *the man that is* more righteous than he?

14 and makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, *that have* no ruler over them?

The grievances he complains of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths: "Since we are sure that thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptation given them to question whether thou art so or no? Wherefore lookest thou upon the Chaldeans that deal treacherously with thy people, and givest them success in their attempts upon us?

Why dost thou suffer thy sworn enemies, who blaspheme thy name, to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously, with thy sworn subjects, who desire to fear thy name? What shall we say to this?" This was a temptation to Job (Job 21:7,24:1), to David (Ps 73:2,3), to Jeremiah, Jer 12:1,2.

1. That God permitted sin, and was patient with the sinners. He looked upon them; he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain nor punish them, but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his looking upon them intimates that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but that he gave them encouragement and assistance, as if he smiled upon them and favoured them. He held his tongue when they went on in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. These things thou hast done, and I kept silence.

2. That his patience was abused, and, because sentence against these evil works and workers was not executed speedily, therefore their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil.

(1.) They were false and deceitful, and there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They deal treacherously; under colour of peace and friendship, they prosecute and execute the most mischievous designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing.

(2.) They hated and persecuted men because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. The wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he, for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill will to the image of God, and therefore devour good men, because they bear that image. Though many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves, and worse, yet there were those among them that were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.

(3.) They made no more of killing men that of catching fish. The prophet complains that, Providence having delivered up the weaker to be prey to the stronger, they were, in effect, made as the fishes of the sea, Hab 1:14. So they had been among themselves, preying upon one another as the greater fishes do upon the less (Hab 1:3), and they were made so to the common enemy. They were as the creeping things, or swimming things (for the word is used for fish, Ge 1:20), that have no ruler over them, either to restrain them from devouring one another or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies.

They are given up to the Chaldeans as fish to the fishermen. Those proud oppressors make no conscience of killing them, any more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small account do they make of human lives. They make no difficulty of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are unguarded and unarmed, and it is rather a pastime than any pains to take them. They make no distinction among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own that they can lay their hands on.

They have various ways of spoiling and destroying, as men have of taking fish. Some they take up with the angle (Hab 1:15), one by one; others they catch in shoals, and by wholesale, in their net, and gather them in their drag, their enclosing net. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

(4.) They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it, though it was got dishonestly: Their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous; they prosper in their oppression and fraud; they have a great deal, and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it. And therefore,

[1.] They have great complacency in themselves, and are very pleasant; they live merrily (Hab 1:15): Therefore they rejoice and are glad, because their wealth is great, and their projects succeed for the increase of it, Job 31:25. Soul, take thy ease, Lu 12:19.

[2.] They have a great conceit of themselves, and are great admirers of their own ingenuity and management: They sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag; they applaud themselves for having got so much money, though ever so dishonestly. Note, There is a proneness in us to take the glory of our outward prosperity to ourselves, and to say, My might, and the power of my hands, have gotten me this wealth, De 8:17. This is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the dragnet, because it is our own, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus is because by it their portion is fat. Those that make a god of their money will make a god of their drag-net, if they can but get money by it.

III. The prophet, in the close, humbly expresses his hope that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind always to go on and prosper thus, and expostulates with God concerning it (Hab 1:17): "Shall they therefore empty their net? Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels, with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours?

Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again, to catch more?

And wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a small thing to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the king of nations, and will he not assert their injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain that?" The prophet lodges the matter in God's hand, and leaves it with him, as the psalmist does. Ps 74:22, Arise, O God! Plead thy own cause.

15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion *is* fat, and their meat plenteous.

17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

Habakkuk-2

The Lord's Answer to Habakkuk

1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

Here, I The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God (Hab 2:1): "I will stand upon my watch, as a sentinel on the walls of a besieged city, or on the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence. I will look up, will look round, will look within, and watch to see what he will say unto me, will listen attentively to the words of his mouth and carefully observe the steps of his providence, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction.

I will watch to see what he will say in me" (so it may be read), "what the Spirit of prophecy in me will dictate to me, by way of answer to my complaints." Even in a ordinary way, God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences, whispering to us, This is the way, walk in it; and we must attend to the voice of God in both.

The prophet's standing upon his tower, or high place, intimates his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God must withdraw from the world, and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thought, study the scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves upon the tower.

His standing upon his watch intimates his patience, his constancy and resolution; he will wait the time, and weather the point, as a watchman does, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will say to him, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him as a prophet to give satisfaction to others, and answer their exceptions, when he is reproved or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us.

1. When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of Providence, are tempted to think that it is fate, or fortune, and not a wise God, that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside, then we must take pains to furnish ourselves with considerations proper to clear this matter; we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us, must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation and solve the objected difficulties, must do as the psalmist, consider the days of old and make a diligent search (Ps 77:6), must go into the sanctuary of God, and there labour to understand the end of these things (Ps 73:17); we must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them.

2. When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, his Spirit, and his providences, to our humble representations; when David says, I will direct my prayer unto thee, as an arrow to the mark, he adds, I will look up, will look after my prayer, as a man does after the arrow he has shot, Ps 5:3. We must hear what God the Lord will speak, Ps 85:8.

3. When we go to read and hear the word of God, and so to consult the lively oracles, we must set ourselves to observe what God will thereby say unto us, to suit our case, what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and comfort, he will bring to our souls, that we may receive it, and submit to the power of it, and may consider what we shall answer, what returns we shall make to the word of God, when we are reproved by it.

4. When we are attacked by such as quarrel with God and his providence as the prophet here seems to have been--beset, besieged, as in a tower, by hosts of objectors--we should consider how to answer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear what he says to us for our satisfaction, and have that ready to say to others, when we are reproved, to satisfy them, as a reason of the hope that is in us (1Pe 3:15), and beg of God a mouth and wisdom, and that it may be given us in that same hour what we shall speak.

2 And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make
it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.
3 For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall
speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely
come, it will not tarry.
4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just
shall live by his faith.

God graciously gives him the meeting; for he will not disappoint the believing expectations of his people that wait to hear what he will say unto them, but will speak peace, will answer them with good words and comfortable words, Zec 1:13.

The prophet had complained of the prevalence of the Chaldeans, which God had given him a prospect of; now, to pacify him

concerning it, he here gives him a further prospect of their fall and ruin, as Isaiah, before this, when he had foretold the captivity in Babylon, foretold also the destruction of Babylon. Now, this great and important event being made known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish the vision, and transmit it to the generations to come, who should see the accomplishment of it.

1 The prophet must write the vision, Hab 2:2. Thus, when St. John had a vision of the New Jerusalem, he was ordered to write, Re 21:5. He must write it, that he might imprint it on his own mind, and make it more clear to himself, but especially that it might be notified to those in distant places and transmitted to those in future ages. What is handed down by tradition is easily mistaken and liable to corruption; but what is written is reduced to a certainty, and preserved safe and pure.

We have reason to bless God for written visions, that God has written to us the great things of his prophets as well as of his law. He must write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, must write it legibly, in large characters, so that he who runs may read it, that those who will not allow themselves leisure to read it deliberately may not avoid a cursory view of it. Probably, the prophets were wont to write some of the most remarkable of their predictions in tables, and to hang them up in the temple, Isa 8:1. Now the prophet is told to write this very plain.

Note, Those who are employed in preaching the word of God should study plainness as much as may be, so as to make themselves intelligible to the meanest capacities. The things of our everlasting peace, which God has written to us, are made plain, they are all plain to him that understands (Pr 8:9), and they are published with authority; God himself has prefixed his imprimatur to them; he has said, Make them plain.

2 The people must wait for the accomplishment of the vision (Hab 2:3): "The vision is yet for an appointed time to come. You shall now be told of your deliverance by the breaking of the Chaldeans' power, and that the time of it is fixed in the counsel and decree of God. There is an appointed time, but it is not near; it is yet to be

deferred a great while;" and that comes in here as a reason why it must be written, that it may be reviewed afterwards and the event compared with it. Note, God has an appointed time for his appointed work, and will be sure to do the work when the time comes; it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, but to wait his time. And it is a great encouragement to wait with patience, that, though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and be an abundant recompence to us for our waiting: At the end it shall speak and not lie.

We shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time appointed; nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will fully answer our believing expectations. The promise may seem silent a great while, but at the end it shall speak; and therefore, though it tarry longer than we expected, yet we must continue waiting for it, being assured it will come, and willing to tarry until it does come. The day that God has set for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his and their enemies, is a day,

(1.) That will surely come at last; it is never adjourned sine die--without fixing another day, but it will without fail come at the fixed time and the fittest time.

(2.) It will not tarry, for God is not slack, as some count slackness (2Pe 3:9); though it tarry past our time, yet it does not tarry past God's time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith and patience as will try and discover men what they are, Hab 2:4.

(1.) There are some who will proudly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted up that they scorn to take notice of it; if God will work for them immediately, they will thank him, but they will not give him credit; their hearts are lifted up towards vanity, and, since God puts them off, they will shift for themselves and not be beholden to him; they think their own hands sufficient for them, and God's promise is to them an insignificant thing. That man's soul that is thus lifted up is not upright in him; it is not right with God, is not as it should be. Those that either distrust or despise

God's all-sufficiency will not walk uprightly with him, Ge 17:1. But,

(2.) Those who are truly good, and whose hearts are upright with God, will value the promise, and venture their all upon it; and, in confidence of the truth of it, will keep close to God and duty in the most difficult trying times, and will then live comfortably in communion with God, dependence on him, and expectation of him. The just shall live by faith; during the captivity good people shall support themselves, and live comfortably, by faith in these precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. The just shall live by his faith, by that faith which he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in the New Testament (Ro 1:17,Ga 3:11,Heb 10:38), for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made just by faith shall live, shall be happy here and for ever; while they are here, they live by it; when they come to heaven faith shall be swallowed up in vision.

5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he is* a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and *is* as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people.

The prophet having had orders to write the vision, and the people to wait for the accomplishment of it, the vision itself follows; and it is, as divers other prophecies we have met with, the burden of Babylon and Babylon's king, the same that was said to pass over and offend, Hab 1:11. It reads the doom, some think, of Nebuchadnezzar, who was principally active in the destruction of Jerusalem, or of that monarchy, or of the whole kingdom of the Chaldeans, or of all such proud and oppressive powers as bear hard upon any people, especially upon God's people. Observe,

I The charge laid down against this enemy, upon which the sentence is grounded, Hab 2:5. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are the entangling snares of men, and great men especially; and we find him that led Israel captive himself led captive by each of these. For,

1. He is sensual and voluptuous, and given to his pleasures: He transgresses by wine. Drunkenness is itself a transgression, and is

the cause of abundance of transgression. We read of those that err through wine, Isa 28:7. Belshazzar (in whom particularly this prophecy had its accomplishment) was in the height of his transgression by wine when the hand-writing upon the wall signed the warrant for his immediate execution, pursuant to this sentence, Da 5:1.

2. He is haughty and imperious: He is a proud man, and his pride is a certain presage of his fall coming on. If great men be proud men, the great God will make them know he is above them. His transgressing by wine is made the cause of his arrogance and insolence: therefore he is a proud man. When a man is drunk, though he makes himself as mean as a beast, yet he thinks himself as great as a king, and prides himself in that by which he shames himself. We find the crown of pride upon the head of the drunkards of Ephraim, and a woe to both, Isa 28:1.

3. He is covetous and greedy of wealth, and this is the effect of his pride; he thinks himself worthy to enjoy all, and therefore makes it his business to engross all. The Chaldean monarchy aimed to be a universal one. He keeps not at home, is not content with his own, which he has an incontestable title to, but thinks it too little, and so enjoys it not, nor takes the comfort he might in his own palace, in his own dominion. His sin is his punishment, his ambition is his perpetual uneasiness. Though the home be a palace, yet to a discontented mind it is a prison. He enlarges his desire as hell, or the grave, which daily receives the body of the dead, and yet still cries, Give, give; he is as death, which continues to devour, and cannot be satisfied.

Note, It is the sin and folly of many who have a great deal of the wealth of this world that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have, and the more eager they are for it. And it is just with God that the desires which are insatiable should still be unsatisfied; it is the doom passed on those that love silver that they shall never be satisfied with it, Ec 5:10.

Those that will not be content with their allotments shall not have the comfort of their achievements. This proud prince is still

gathering to him all nations, and heaping to him all people, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be unless they will be his, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him unless he has another, and then another, and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay house to house, and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the earth, Isa 5:8. And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied, the folly of such ambitious princes as place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

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Note, It is the sin and folly of many who have a great deal of the wealth of this world that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have, and the more eager they are for it. And it is just with God that the desires which are insatiable should still be unsatisfied; it is the doom passed on those that love silver that they shall never be satisfied with it, Ec 5:10.

Those that will not be content with their allotments shall not have the comfort of their achievements. This proud prince is still gathering to him all nations, and heaping to him all people, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be unless they will be his, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him unless he has another, and then another, and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay house to house, and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the earth, Isa 5:8. And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied, the folly of such ambitious princes as place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

Woes on the Unrighteous

6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting
proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth *that which*
is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick
clay!
7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that
shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?
8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the
people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and *for* the violence
of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.
9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he
may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power
of evil!

The sentence passed upon him (Hab 2:6): Shall not all these take up a parable against him? His doom is,

1. That, since pride has been his sin, disgrace and dishonour shall be his punishment, and he shall be loaded with contempt, shall be laughed at and despised by all about him, as those that look big, and aim high, deserve to be, and commonly are, when they are brought down and baffled.

2. That, since he has been abusive to his neighbours, those very persons whom he has abused shall be the instruments of his disgrace: All those shall take up a taunting proverb against him. They shall have the pleasure of insulting over him and he the shame of being trampled upon by them. Those that shall triumph in the fall of this great tyrant are here furnished with a parable, and a taunting proverb, to take up against him. He shall say (he that draws up the insulting ditty shall say thus), Ho, he that increases that which is not his! Aha! what has become of him now?

So it may be read in a taunting way. Or, He shall say, that is, the just, who lives by his faith, he to whom the vision is written and made plain, with the help of that shall say this, shall foretel the enemy's fall, even when he sees him flourishing, and suddenly

curse his habitation, even when he is taking root, Job 5:3. He shall indeed denounce woes against him.

(1.) Here is a woe against him for increasing his own possessions by invading his neighbour's rights, Hab 2:6-8. He increases that which is not his, but other people's. Note, No more of what we have is to be reckoned ours than what we came honestly by; nor will it long be ours, for wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not those that thrive in the world be too forward to bless themselves in it, for, if they do not thrive lawfully, they are under a woe. See here,

[1.] What this prosperous prince is doing; he is lading himself with thick clay. Riches are but clay, thick clay; what are gold and silver but white and yellow earth? Those that travel through thick clay are both retarded and dirtied in their journey; so are those that go through the world in the midst of an abundance of the wealth of it; but, as if that were not enough, what fools are those that load themselves with it, as if this trash would be their treasure! They burden themselves with continual care about it, with a great deal of guilt in getting, saving, and spending it, and with a heavy account which they must give of it another day. They overload their ship with this thick clay, and so sink it and themselves into destruction and perdition.

[2.] See what people say of him, while he is thus increasing his wealth; they cry, "How long? How long will it be ere he has enough?" They cry to God, "How long wilt thou suffer this proud oppressor to trouble the nations?" Or they say to one another, "See how long it will last, how long he will be able to keep what he gets thus dishonestly." They dare not speak out, but we know what they mean when they say, How long?

[3.] See what will be in the end hereof. What he has got by violence from others, others shall take by violence from him. The Medes and Persians shall make a prey of the Chaldeans, as they have done of other nations, Hab 2:7,8. "There shall be those that will bite thee and vex thee; those from whom thou didst not fear any danger, that seemed asleep, shall rise up and awake to be a plague to thee. They shall rise up suddenly when thou are most

secure, and least prepared to receive the shock and ward off the blow. Shall they not rise up suddenly?

No doubt they shall, and thou thyself hast reason to expect it, to be dealt with as thou hast dealt with others, that thou shalt be for booties unto them, as others have been unto thee, that, according to the law of retaliation, as thou hast spoiled many nations so thou shalt thyself be spoiled (Hab 2:8); all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee." The king of Babylon thought he had brought all the nations round about him so low that none of them would be able to make reprisals upon him; but though they were but a remnant of people, a very few left, yet these shall be sufficient to spoil him, when God has such a controversy with him,

First, For men's blood, and the thousands of lives that have been sacrificed to his ambition and revenge, especially for the blood of Israelites, which is in a special manner precious to God.

Secondly, For the violence of the land, his laying waste so many countries, and destroying the fruits of the earth, especially in the land of Israel.

Thirdly, For the violence of the city, the many cities that he had turned into ruinous heaps, especially Jerusalem the holy city, and of all that dwelt therein, who were ruined by him.

Note, The violence done by proud men to advance and enrich themselves will be called over again (and must be accounted for) another day, by him to whom vengeance belongs.

(2.) Here is a woe against him for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher, Hab 2:9-11. The crime for which this woe is denounced is much the same with that in the foregoing article--an insatiable desire of wealth and honour; it is coveting an evil covetousness to his house, that is, grasping at an abundance for his family. Note, Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family; it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it (he that is greedy of gain troubles his own house), and, which is worse, it brings the curse of God upon it and upon all the affairs of it.

Woe to him that gains an evil gain; so the margin reads it. There is a lawful gain, which by the blessing of God may be a comfort to a house (a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children), but what is got by fraud and injustice is ill-got, and will be poor gain, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. Now observe,

[1.] What this covetous wretch aims at; it is to set his nest on high, to raise his family to some greater dignity than it had before arrived at, or to set it, as he apprehends, out of the reach of danger, that he may be delivered from the power of evil, that it may not be in the power of the worst of his enemies to do him a mischief nor so much as to disturb his repose.

Note, It is common for men to pretend it as an excuse for their covetousness and ambition that they only consult their own safety, and aim to secure themselves; and yet they do but deceive themselves when they think their wealth will be a strong city to them, and a high wall, for it is so only in their own conceit, Pr 18:11.

[2.] What he will get by it: Thou hast consulted, not safety, but shame, to thy house, by cutting off many people, Hab 2:10.

Note, An estate raised by iniquity is a scandal to a family. Those that cut off, or undermine, others, to make room for themselves, that impoverish others to enrich themselves, do but consult shame to their houses, and fasten upon them a mark of infamy. Yet that is not the worst of it: "Thou hast sinned against thy own soul, hast brought that under guilt and wrath, and endangered that."

Note, Those that do wrong to their neighbour do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads, Not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance that they cannot be proved upon him, let him know that if there be no other witnesses against him the stone shall cry out of the wall against him, and the beam out of the timber in the roof shall answer it, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials wherewith he built the house were unjustly gotten, Hab 2:11. The stones and timber cry to heaven

for vengeance, as the whole creation groans under the sin of man and waits to be delivered from that bondage of corruption.

(3.) Here is a woe against him for building a town and a city by blood and extortion (Hab 2:12): He builds a town, and is him-self lord of it; he establishes a city, and makes it his royal seat. So Nebuchadnezzar did (Da 4:30): Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom? But it is built with the blood of his own subjects, whom he has oppressed, and the blood of his neighbours, whom he has unjustly invaded; it is established by iniquity, by the unrighteous laws that are made for the security of it.

Woe to him that does so; for the towns and cities thus built can never be established; they will fall, and their founders be buried in the ruins of them. Babylon, which was built by blood and iniquity, did not continue long; its day soon came to fall; and then this woe took effect, when that prophecy, which is expressed as a history (Isa 21:9), proved a history indeed: Babylon has fallen, has fallen! And the destruction of that city was,

[1.] The shame of the Chaldeans, who had taken so much pains, and were at such a vast expense, to fortify it (Hab 2:13): Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people who have laboured so hard to defend that city shall labour in the very fire, shall see the out-works which they confided in the strength of set on fire, and shall labour in vain to save them? Or they, in their pursuits of worldly wealth and honour, put themselves to great fatigue, and ran a great hazard, as those that labour in the fire do.

The worst that can be said of the labourers in God's vineyards is that they have borne the burden and heat of the day (Mt 20:12); but those that are eager in their worldly pursuits labour in the very fire, make themselves perfect slaves to their lusts. There is not a greater drudge in the world than he that is under the power of reigning covetousness. And what comes of it? Though they take a world of pains they are but poorly paid for it; for, after all, they weary themselves for very vanity; they were told it was vanity, and when they find themselves disappointed of it, and

disappointed in it, they will own it is worse than vanity, it is vexation of spirit.

[2.] It was the honour of God, as a God of impartial justice and irresistible power; for by the ruin of the Chaldean monarchy (which all the world could not but take notice of) the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, Hab 2:14. The Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, especially when he is pleased to look upon proud men and abase them, for he thereby proves himself to be God alone, Job 40:11,12.

See what good God brings out of the staining and sinking of earthly glory; he thereby manifests and magnifies his own glory, and fills the earth with the knowledge of it as plentifully as the waters cover the sea, which lie deep, spread far, and shall not be dried up until time shall be no more. Such is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ given by the gospel (2Co 4:6), and such was the knowledge of his glory by the miraculous ruin of Babylon.

Note, Such as will not be taught the knowledge of God's glory by the judgments of his mouth shall be made to know and acknowledge it by the judgments of his hand.

10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned *against* thy soul.

11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, *is it* not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?

14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that puttest thy bottle to *him*, and makest *him* drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

The three foregoing articles, upon which the woes here are grounded, are very near akin to each other. The criminals charged by them are oppressors and extortioners, that raise estates by rapine and injustice; and it is mentioned here again (Hab 2:17), the very same that was said Hab 2:8, for that is the crime upon which the greatest stress is laid; it is because of men's blood, innocent blood, barbarously and unjustly shed, which is a provoking crying thing; it is for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein, which God will certainly reckon for, sooner or later, as the asserter of right and the avenger of wrong.

But here are two articles more, of a different nature, which carry a woe to all those in general to whom they belong, and particularly to the Babylonian monarchs, by whom the people of God were taken and held captives.

The promoters of drunkenness stand here impeached and condemned. Belshazzar was one of those; he was so, remarkably that very night that the prophecy of this chapter was fulfilled in the period of his life and kingdom, when he drank wine before a thousand of his lords (Da 5:1), began the healths, and forced them to pledge him. And perhaps it was one reason why the succeeding monarchs of Persia made it a law of their kingdom that in drinking none should compel, but they should do according to every man's pleasure (as we find, Es 1:8), because they had seen in the kings of Babylon the mischievous consequences of forcing healths and making people drunk. But the woe here stands firm and very fearful against all those, whoever they are, who are guilty of this sin at any time, and in any place, from the stately palace (where that was) to the paltry ale-house. Observe,

1. Who the sinner is that is here articled against; it is he that makes his neighbour drunk, Hab 2:15. To give a neighbour drink who is in want, who is thirsty and poor, though it be but a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, to give drink to weary traveller, nay, and to give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to those that are heavy of heart, is a piece of charity which is required of us, and shall be recompensed to us.

I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. But to give a neighbour drink who has enough already, and more than enough, with design to intoxicate him, that he may expose himself, may talk foolishly, and make himself ridiculous, may disclose his own secret concerns, or be drawn in to agree to a bad bargain for himself--this is abominable wickedness; and those who are guilty of it, who make a practice of it, and take a pride and pleasure in it, are rebels against God in heaven, and his sacred laws, factors for the devil in hell, and his cursed interests, and enemies to men on earth, and their honour and welfare; they are like the son of Nebat, who sinned and made Israel to sin.

To entice others to drunkenness, to put the bottle to them, that they may be allured to it by its charms, by looking on the wine when it is red and gives its colour in the cup, or to force them to it, obliging them by the rules of the club (and club-laws indeed they are) to drink so many glasses, and so filled, is to do what we can, and perhaps more than we know of, towards the murder both of soul and body; and those that do so have a great deal to answer for.

2. What the sentence is that is here passed upon him. There is a woe to him (Hab 2:15), and a punishment (Hab 2:16) that shall answer to the sin.

(1.) Does he put the cup of drunkenness into the hand of his neighbour? The cup of fury, the cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's right hand, shall be turned unto him; the power of God shall be armed against him. That cup which had gone round among the nations, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, and a hissing, which had made them stumble and fall, so that they could rise no more, shall at length be put into the hand of the king of Babylon, as was foretold, Jer 25:15,16,18,26,27. Thus the New-Testament Babylon, which had made the nations drunk with the cup of her fornications, shall have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, Re 18:3,6.

(2.) Does he take a pleasure in putting his neighbour to shame? He shall himself be loaded with contempt: "Thou art filled with shame for glory, with shame instead of glory, or art filled now

with shame more than ever thou wast with glory; and the glory thou hast been filled with shall but serve to make thy shame the more grievous to thyself, and the more ignominious in the eyes of others.

Thou also shalt drink of the cup of trembling, and shalt expose thyself by thy fear and cowardice, which shall be as the uncovering of thy nakedness, to thy shame; and all about thee shall load thee with disgrace, for shameful spewing shall be on thy glory, on that which thou hast most prided thyself in, thy dignity, wealth, and dominion; those whom thou hast made drunk shall themselves spew upon it.

For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts (Hab 2:17); thou shalt be hunted and run down with as much violence as ever any wild beasts in Lebanon were, shall be spoiled as they are, and thy fall made a sport of; for thou art as one of the beasts that made them afraid, and therefore they triumph when they have got the mastery of thee." Or, "It is because of the violence thou hast done to Lebanon, that is, the land of Israel (De 3:25) and the temple (Zec 11:1), that God now reckons with thee; that is the sin that now covers thee."

16 Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing *shall be* on thy glory.

17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, *which* made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

The promoters of idolatry stand here impeached and condemned; and this also was a sin that Babylon was notoriously guilty of; it was the mother of harlots. Belshazzar, in his revels, praised his idols. And for this, here is a woe against them, and in them against all others that do likewise, particularly the New-Testament Babylon. Now see here,

1. What they do to promote idolatry; they are mad upon their idols; so the Chaldeans are said to be, Jer 50:38. For,

(1.) They have a great variety of idols, their graven images and molten images, that people may take their choice, which they like best.

(2.) They are very nice and curious in the framing of them: The maker of the work has performed his part admirably well, the fashioner of his fashion (so it is in the margin), that contrived the model in the most significant manner.

(3.) They are at great expense in beautifying and adorning them: They lay them over with gold and silver; because these are things people love and dote upon wherever they meet with them, they dress up their idols in them, the more effectually to court the adoration of the children of this world.

(4.) They have great expectations from them: The maker of the work trusts therein as his god, puts a confidence in it, and gives honour to it as his god. The worshippers of God give honour to him, by offering up their prayers to him, and waiting to receive instructions and directions from him; and these honours they give to their idols.

[1.] They pray to them: They say to the wood, Awake for our relief, "awake to hear our prayers;" and to the dumb stone, "Arise, and save us," as the church prays to her God, Awake, O Lord! arise, Ps 44:23. They own their image to be a god by praying to it. Deliver me, for thou art my God, Isa 44:17. Deos qui rogat ille facit--That to which a man addresses petitions is to him a god.

[2.] They consult them as oracles, and expect to be directed and dictated to by them: They say to the dumb stone, though it cannot speak, yet it shall teach. What the wicked demon, or no less wicked priest, speaks to them from the image, they receive with the utmost veneration, as of divine authority, and are ready to be governed by it. Thus is idolatry planted and propagated under the specious show of religion and devotion.

2. How the extreme folly of this is exposed. God, by Isaiah, when he foretold the deliverance of his people out of Babylon, largely showed the shameful stupidity and sottishness of idolaters, and so he does here by the prophet, on the like occasion.

(1.) Their images, when they have made them, are but mere matter, which is the meanest lowest rank of being; and all the expense they are at upon them cannot advance them one step above that. They are wholly void both of sense and reason, lifeless and speechless (the idol is a dumb idol, a dumb stone, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it), so that the most minute animal, that has but breath and motion, is more excellent then they. They have not so much as the spirit of a beast.

(2.) It is not in their power to do their worshippers any good (Hab 2:18): What profits the graven image? Though it be mere matter, if it were cast into some other form it might be serviceable to some purpose or other of human life; but, as it is made a god of, it is of no profit at all, nor can do its worshippers the least kindness. Nay,

(3.) It is so far from profiting them that it puts a cheat upon them, and keeps them under the power of a strong delusion; they say, It shall teach, but it is a teacher of lies; for it represents God as having a body, as being finite, visible, and dependent, whereas he is a Spirit, infinite, invisible, and independent, and it confirms those that become vain in their imaginations in the false notions they have of God, and makes the idea of God to be a precarious thing, and what every man pleases. If we may say to the works of our hands, You are our gods, we may say so to any of the creatures of our own fancy, though the chimera be ever so extravagant. An image is a doctrine of vanities; it is falsehood, and a work of errors, Jer 10:8,14,15.

It is therefore easy to see what the religion of those is, and what they aim at, who recommend those teachers of lies as laymen's books, which they are to study and govern themselves by, when they have locked up from them the book of the scriptures in an unknown tongue.

3. How the people of God triumph in him, and therewith support themselves, when the idolaters thus shame themselves (Hab 2:20): But the Lord is in his holy temple.

(1.) Our rock is not as their rock, De 32:31. Theirs are dumb idols; ours is Jehovah, a living God, who is what he is, and not, as theirs, what men please to make him. He is in his holy temple in heaven, the residence of his glory, where we have access to him in the way, not which we have invented, but which he himself has instituted. Compare Ps 115:3, But our God is in the heavens, and Ps 11:4.

(2.) The multitude of their gods which they set up, and take so much pains to support, cannot thrust out our God; he is, and will be, in his holy temple still, and glorious in holiness. They have laid waste his temple at Jerusalem; but he has a temple above that is out of the reach of their rage and malice, but within the reach of his people's faith and prayers.

(3.) Our God will make all the world silent before him, will strike the idolaters as dumb as their idols, convincing them of their folly, and covering them with shame. He will silence the fury of the oppressors, and check their rage against his people.

(4.) It is the duty of his people to attend him with silent adorings (Ps 65:1), and patiently to wait for his appearing to save them in his own way and time. Be still, and know that he is God, Zec 2:13.

19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone,
Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver, and
there is no breath at all in the midst of it.

20 But the Lord *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence
before him.

Habakkuk-3

Habakkuk's Prayer

1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.
2 O Lord, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid: O Lord, revive
thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make
known;
in wrath remember mercy.

This chapter is entitled a prayer of Habakkuk. It is a meditation with himself, an intercession for the church. Prophets were praying men; this prophet was so (He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, Ge 20:7); and sometimes they prayed for even those whom they prophesied against. Those that were intimately acquainted with the mind of God concerning future events knew better than others how to order their prayers, and what to pray for, and, in the foresight of troublous times, could lay up a stock of prayers that might then receive a gracious answer, and so be serving the church by their prayers when their prophesying was over.

This prophet had found God ready to answer his requests and complaints before, and therefore now repeats his applications to him. Because God has inclined his ear to us, we must resolve that therefore we will call upon him as long as we live.

1 The prophet owns the receipt of God's answer to his former representation, and the impression it made upon him (Hab 3:2): "O Lord! I have heard thy speech, thy hearing" (so some read it), "that which thou wouldst have us hear, the decree that has gone forth for the afflicting of thy people. I received thine, and it is before me." Note, Those that would rightly order their speech to God must carefully observe, and lay before them, his speech to them. He had said (Hab 2:1), I will watch to see what he will say; and now he owns, Lord, I have heard thy speech; for, if we turn a deaf ear to God's word, we can expect no other than that he should turn a deaf ear to our prayers, Pr 28:9. I heard it, and was afraid. Messages

immediately from heaven commonly struck even the best and boldest men into a consternation; Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel, did exceedingly fear and quake.

But, besides that, the matter of this message made the prophet afraid, when he heard how low the people of God should be brought, under the oppressing power of the Chaldeans, and how long they should continue under it; he was afraid lest their spirits should quite fail, and lest the church should be utterly rooted out and run down, and, being kept low so long, should be lost at length.

2. He earnestly prays that for the elect's sake these days of trouble might be shortened, or the trouble of these days mitigated and moderated, or the people of God supported and comforted under it. He thinks it very long to wait till the end of the years; perhaps he refers to the seventy years fixed for the continuance of the captivity, and therefore, "Lord," says he, "do something on our behalf in the midst of the years, those years of our distress; though we be not delivered, and our oppressors destroyed, yet let us not be abandoned and cast off."

(1.) "Do something for thy own cause: Revive thy work, thy church" (that is the work of God's own hand, formed by him, formed for him); "revive that, even when it walks in the midst of trouble, Ps 138:7,8. Grant thy people a little reviving in their bondage, Ezr 9:8,Ps 85:6. Preserve alive thy work" (so some read it); "though thy church be chastened, let it not be killed; though it have not its liberty, yet continue its life, save a remnant alive, to be a seed of another generation. Revive the work of thy grace in us, by sanctifying the trouble to us and supporting us under it, though the time be not yet come, even the set time, for our deliverance out of it. Whatever becomes of us, though we be as dead and dry bones, Lord, let thy work be revived, let not that sink, and go back, and come to nothing."

(2.) "Do something for thy own honour: In the midst of the years make known, make thyself known, for now verily thou art a God that hidest thyself (Isa 45:15), make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence, in the government of the world, for the safety and welfare of thy church. Though we be buried in

obscurity, yet, Lord, make thyself known; whatever becomes of Israel, let not the God of Israel be forgotten in the world, but discover himself even in the midst of the dark years, before thou art expected to appear." When in the midst of the years of the captivity God miraculously owned the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbled Nebuchadnezzar, this prayer was answered, In the midst of the years make known.

(3.) "Do something for thy people's comfort: In wrath remember mercy, and make that known. Show us thy mercy, O Lord!" Ps 85:7. They see God's displeasure against them in their troubles, and that makes them grievous indeed. There is wrath in the bitter cup; that therefore they deprecate, and are earnest in begging that he is a merciful God and they are vessels of his mercy. Note, Even those that are under the tokens of God's wrath must not despair of his mercy; and mercy, mere mercy, is that which we must flee to for refuge, and rely upon as our only plea. He does not say, Remember our merit, but, Lord, remember thy own mercy.

3 God came from Teman,
and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah.
His glory covered the heavens,
and the earth was full of his praise.

It has been the usual practice of God's people, when they have been in distress and ready to fall into despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them, considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times (Ps 77:5), and pleading with God in prayer, as he is pleased sometimes to plead them with himself. Isa 63:11, Then he remembered the days of old. This is that which the prophet does here, and he looks as far back as the first forming of them into a people, when they were brought by miracles out of Egypt, a house of bondage, through the wilderness, a land of drought, into Canaan, then possessed by mighty nations. He that thus brought them at first into Canaan, through so much difficulty, can now bring them thither again out of Babylon, how great soever the difficulties are that lie in the way. Those works of wonder, wrought of old, are here most magnificently described, for the greater encouragement to the faith of God's people in their present straits.

I. God appeared in his glory, so as he never did before or since (Hab 3:3,4): He came from Teman, even the Holy One from Mount Paran. This refers to the visible display of the glory of God when he gave the law upon Mount Sinai, as appears by De 33:2 whence these expressions are borrowed. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai in a cloud (Ex 19:20) and his glory was as the devouring fire, not only to enforce the law he then gave them, but to avow the deliverance he had wrought for them and to magnify it; for the first word he said there was, "I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt.

I that appear in this glory am the author of that work." Then his glory covered the heavens, which shone with the reflection of that glorious appearance of his; the earth also was full of his praise, or of his splendour, as some read it. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of Mount Sinai, and praised the God of Israel. Or the earth was full of those works of God which were to be praised. His brightness was as the light, as the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength; he had horns, or bright beams (so it should be rendered), coming out of his side or hand.

Rays of glory were darted forth around him; and with some rays borrowed thence it was that Moses's face shone when he came down from that mount of glory. Some by the horns, the two horns (for the word is dual), coming out of his hand, understand the two tables of the law, which perhaps, when God delivered them to Moses, though they were tables of stone, had a glory round them; those books were gilt with beams, and so it agrees with De 33:2, From his right hand went a fiery law for them. It is added, And there was the hiding of his power; there was his hidden power, in the rays that came out of his hand. The operations of his power, compared with what he could have done, were rather the hiding of it than the discovery of it; the secrets of his power, as well as of his wisdom, are double to that which is, Job 11:6.

II. God sent plagues on Egypt, for the humbling of proud Pharaoh, and the obliging of him to let the people go (Hab 3:5): Before him went the pestilence, which slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night; and burning coals went forth at his feet, when, in the plague of hail, there was fire mingled with hail--burning diseases (so the

margin reads it), some think those that wasted Egypt, others those with which the number of the Canaanites was diminished before Israel was brought in up on them. These were at his feet, that is, at his coming, for they are at his command; he says to them, Go, and they go, Come, and they come, Do this, and they do it.

III. He divided the land of Canaan to his people Israel, and expelled the heathen from before them (Hab 3:6): He stood, and measured the earth, measured that land, to assign it for an inheritance to Israel his people, De 32:8,9. He beheld, and drove asunder the nations that were in possession of it; though they combined together against Israel, God dispersed and discomfited them before Israel. Or he exerted such a mighty power as was enough to shake in pieces all the nations of the earth.

Then the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow; the mighty princes and potentates of Canaan, that seemed as high, as strong, and as firmly fixed, as the mountains and hills, were broken to pieces; they and their kingdoms were totally subdued. Or the power of God was so exerted as to shake the mountains and hills; nay, and Sinai did tremble, and the adjacent hills; see Ps 68:7,8. To this he adds, His ways are everlasting, that is, all the motions of his providence are according to his eternal counsels; and he is the same for ever, that which he was yesterday and to-day. His covenant is unchangeable, and his mercy endures for ever.

When he drove asunder the nations of Canaan one might have seen the tents of Cushan in affliction, the curtains of the land of Midian trembling, and all the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries taking the alarm; and though they were not in the commission given to Israel to destroy, nor their land within the warrant given to Israel to possess, yet they thought their own house in danger when their neighbour's house was on fire, and therefore they were in a great fright, Hab 3:7. Balak the king of Moab was so, Nu 22:3,4. Some make the tents of Cushan to be in affliction when, in the days of judge Othniel, God delivered Cushan-rishathaim into his hand (Jdg 3:8), and the curtains of the land of Midian to tremble when, in the days of judge Gideon, a barley cake, in a dream, overthrew the tent of Midian, Jdg 7:13.

4 And *his* brightness was as the light; he had horns *coming* out of his
hand: and there *was* the hiding of his power.
5 Before him went the pestilence,
and burning coals went forth at his feet.

He divided the Red Sea and Jordan, when they stood in the way of Israel's progress, and yet fetched a river out of a rock when Israel wanted it, Hab 3:8. One would have thought that God was displeased with the rivers, and that his wrath was against the sea, for he made them give way and flee before him when he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation, as a general at the head of his forces, mighty to save. Note, God's chariots are not so much chariots of state to himself as chariots of salvation to his people; it is his glory to be Israel's Saviour. This seems to be referred to again (Hab 3:15):

"Thou didst walk through the sea, through the Red Sea, with thy horses, in the pillar of cloud and fire (that was his chariot drawn by angels); thus thou didst walk secure, and so as to accommodate thyself to the slow pace that Israel could go, as Jacob tenderly drove, in consideration of his children and cattle:

Thou didst walk through the heap, or mud, of great waters; and Israel likewise was led through the deep as a horse through the wilderness," Isa 63:13,14. When they came to enter Canaan the overflowing of the water passed by, that is, Jordan, which at that time overflowed all his banks, was divided, Jos 3:15.

Note, When the difficulties in the way of perfecting the salvation of Israel seem most insuperable, when they rise to the height, and overflow, yet then God can put them by, break through them, and get over them. Then the deep uttered his voice, when, the Red Sea and Jordan being divided, the waters roared and made a noise, as if they were sensible of the restraint they were under from proceeding in their natural course, and complained of it.

They lifted up their hands, or sides, on high (for the waters stood up on a heap, Jos 3:16), as if they would have made opposition to the orders given them. They lifted up their voice, lifted up their waves; but in vain. The Lord on high was mightier than they, Ps 93:3,4. With the dividing of the sea and Jordan, notice is again

taken of the trembling of the mountains, as if the stop given to the waters gave a shock to the adjacent hills; they are put together, Ps 114:3,4.

When the sea saw it and fled, and Jordan was driven back, the mountains skipped like rams and the little hills like lambs. The whole creation yielded; earth and waters trembled at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the mighty God of Jacob. But (as Mr. Cowley paraphrases it) Fly where thou wilt, thou sea; and, Jordan's current, cease. Jordan, there is no need of thee; For at God's word, whene'er he please, The rocks shall weep new waters forth instead of these.

So here, Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers; channels were made in the wilderness, such as seemed to cleave the earth, for the waters to run in, which issued out of the rock, to supply the camp of Israel, and which followed them in all their removes. Note, The God of nature can alter and control the powers of nature, which way he pleases, can turn waters into crystal rocks and rocks into crystal streams.

He arrested the motion of the sun and moon, to befriend and complete Israel's victories (Hab 3:11): The sun and moon stood still at the prayer of Joshua, that the Canaanites might not have the benefit of the night to favour their escape; they stood still in their habitation in the heaven (Ps 19:4), but with an eye to Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, where God's work was in the doing, and of which they, though at so vast a distance, attended the motions.

At the light, at the direction, of thy arrows, they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear; they followed Israel's arms, to favour them; according to the intimation of the arrows God shot (as Jonathan's arrows, 1Sa 20:20), and which way soever his spear pointed (the glittering light of which they acknowledged to outshine theirs) that way they directed their influences, benign to Israel and malignant against their enemies, as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Note, The heavenly bodies, as well as earth and seas, are at God's command, and, when he pleases, at Israel's service too.

He carried on and completed Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan and their kings; he slew great kings and famous, Ps 136:17,18. This is largely insisted upon here, as a proper plea with God to enforce the present petition, that he would restore them again to that land which they were, at the expense of so many lives, so many miracles, first put in possession of.

1. Many expressions are here used to set forth the conquest of Canaan.

(1.) God's bow was made quite naked, taken out of the case, to be employed for Israel; we should say, his sword was quite unsheathed, not drawn out a little way, to frighten the enemy, and then put up again, but quite drawn out, not to be returned till they are all cut off.

(2.) He marched through the land from end to end, in indignation, as scorning to let that wicked generation of Canaanites any longer possess so good a land. He marched cum fastidio--with distaste (so some), despising their confederacies.

(3.) He threshed the heathen in anger, trod them down, nay, he trod them out, as corn in the floor, to give them, and what they had, to be meat to his people Israel, Mic 4:13.

(4.) He wounded the heads out of the house of the wicked; he destroyed the families of the Canaanites, and wounded their princes, the heads of their families; nay, he cut off the heads, and so discovered the foundations of them, even to the neck. Are they a building? They are razed even to the foundation. Are they a body? They are plunged into deep mire even to the neck, so that they cannot get out, or help themselves. He broke the heads of leviathan in pieces, Ps 74:14. Some apply this to Christ's victories over Satan and the powers of darkness, in which he wounded the heads over many countries, Ps 110:6.

(5.) He struck through with his staves the head of the villages (Hab 3:14); with Israel's staves God struck through the head of

the villages of the enemies, whether Egypt or Canaan. Staves shall do the same execution as swords when God pleases to make use of them. The enemy came out with the utmost force and fury, as a whirlwind to scatter me (says Israel); for many a time have they thus afflicted me, thus attacked me, from my youth, Ps 129:1. Pharaoh, when he pursued Israel to the Red Sea, came out as a whirlwind; so did the kings of Canaan in their confederacies against Israel. Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly; they were as confident of success in their enterprise as ever any great man was of devouring a poor man, that was no way a match for him; and his design against him was carried on with secrecy. But God disappointed them, and their pride did but make their fall the more shameful and God's care of his poor the more illustrious.

(6.) He walked to the sea with his horses (so some read it, Hab 3:15), that is, he carried Israel's victories to the Great Sea, which was opposite to that side of Canaan at which they entered, so that they went quite through it, and made themselves masters of it all, or rather God made them so, for they got it not by their own sword, Ps 44:3. Now,

2. There were three things that God had a eye to, in giving Israel so many bloody victories over the Canaanites:--

(1.) He would hereby make good his promise to the fathers; it was according to the oaths of the tribes, even his word, Hab 3:9. He had sworn to give this land to the tribes of Israel; it was his oath to Isaac confirmed to Jacob, and repeated many a time to the tribes of Israel, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan. This word God will accomplish, though Israel be ever so unworthy (De 9:5) and their enemies ever so many and mighty. Note, What God does for his tribes is according to the oaths of the tribes, according to what he has said and sworn to them; for he is faithful that has promised.

(2.) He would hereby show his kindness to his people, because of their relation to him, and his interest in them: Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, Hab 3:13. All the powers of nature are shaken, and the course of nature changed, and every thing seems to be thrown into disorder, and all is for the salvation of

God's people. There are a people in the world who are God's people, and their salvation is that which he has in his eye in all the operations of his providence. Heaven and earth shall sooner come together than any of the links in the golden chain of their salvation shall be broken; and even that which seems most unlikely shall by an overruling hand be made to work for their salvation, Php 1:19.

(3.) He would hereby give a type and figure of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. It is for salvation with thy anointed, with Joshua, who led the armies of Israel and was a figure of him whose name he bore, even Jesus our Joshua. What God did for his Israel of old was done with an eye to his anointed, for the sake of the Mediator, who was both the founder and foundation of the covenant made with them. It was salvation with him, for in all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon the face of the anointed, and did them by him.

6 He stood, and measured the earth:
he beheld, and drove asunder the nations;
and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow:
his ways *are* everlasting.
7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction:
and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.
8 Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?
Was thine anger against the rivers?
Was thy wrath against the sea,
that thou didst ride upon thine horses *and* thy chariots of salvation?
9 Thy bow was made quite naked,
according to the oaths of the tribes, *even thy* word. Selah.
Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
10 The mountains saw thee, *and* they trembled:
the overflowing of the water passed by:
the deep uttered his voice,
and lifted up his hands on high.
11 The sun *and* moon stood still in their habitation:
at the light of thine arrows they went,
and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.

13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people,
even for salvation with thine anointed;
thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck.
Selah.

14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages:
they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me:
their rejoicing *was* as to devour the poor secretly.

15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses,
through the heap of great waters.

16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice:
rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself,
that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

Within the compass of these few lines we have the prophet in the highest degree both of trembling and triumphing, such are the varieties both of the state and of the spirit of God's people in this world. In heaven there shall be no more trembling, but everlasting triumphs.

The prophet had foreseen the prevalence of the church's enemies and the long continuance of the church's troubles; and the sight made him tremble, Hab 3:16. Here he goes on with what he had said Hab 3:2, "I have heard thy speech and was afraid. When I heard what sad times were coming upon the church my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice; the news made such an impression that it put me into a perfect ague fit." The blood retiring to the heart, to succour that when it was ready to faint, the extreme parts were left destitute of spirits, so that his lips quivered. Nay, he was so weak, and so unable to help himself, that he was as if rottenness had entered into his bones; he had no strength left in him, could neither stand nor go; he trembled in himself, trembled all over him, trembled within him; he yielded to his trembling, and troubled himself, as our Savior did; his flesh trembled for fear of God and he was afraid of his judgments, Ps 119:120.

He was touched with a tender concern for the calamities of the church, and trembled for fear lest they should end at length in ruin, and the name of Israel be blotted out. Nor did he think it any disparagement to him, nor any reproach to his courage, but freely owned he was one of those that trembled at God's word, for to them he will look with favour: I tremble in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble.

Note, When we see a day of trouble approaching it concerns us to provide accordingly, and to lay up something in store, by the help of which we may rest in that day; and the best way to make sure rest for ourselves in the day of trouble is to tremble within ourselves at the word of God and the threatenings of that word. He that has joy in store for those that sow in tears has rest in store for those that tremble before him. Good hope through grace is founded in a holy fear.

Noah, who was moved with fear, trembled within himself at the warning given him of the deluge coming, had the ark for his resting place in the day of that trouble. The prophet tells us what he said in his trembling. His fear is that, when he comes up to the people, when the Chaldean comes up to the people of Israel, he will invade them, will surround them, will break in upon them, nay (as it is in the margin), He will cut them in pieces with his troops; he cried out, We are all undone; the whole nation of the Jews is lost and gone. Note, When things look bad we are too apt to aggravate them, and make the worst of them.

17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines;
the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat;
the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls:

He had looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and had observed what great things God had done for them, and so he recovered himself out of his fright, and not only retrieved his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy, with an express non obstante--notwithstanding to the calamities he foresaw coming, and this not for himself only, but in the name of every faithful Israelite.

1. He supposes the ruin of all his creature comforts and enjoyments, not only of the delights of this life, but even of the necessary supports of it, Hab 3:17. Famine is one of the ordinary effects of war, and those commonly feel it first and most that sit still and are quiet; the prophet and his pious friends, when the Chaldean army comes, will be plundered and stripped of all they have. Or he supposes himself deprived of all by blasting and unseasonable weather, or some other immediate hand of God. Or though the captives in Babylon have not that plenty of all good things in their own land.

(1.) He supposes the fruit-tree to be withered and become barren; the fig-tree (which used to furnish them with much of their food; hence we often read of cakes of figs) shall not so much as blossom, nor shall fruit be in the vine, from which they had their drink, that made glad the heart: he supposes the labour of the olive to fail, their oil, which was to them as butter is to us; the labour of the olive shall lie (so it is in the margin); their expectations from it shall be disappointed.

(2.) He supposes the bread-corn to fail; the fields shall yield no meat; and, since the king himself is served of the field, if the productions of that be withdrawn, every one will feel the want of them.

(3.) He supposes the cattle to perish for want of the food which the field should yield and does not, or by disease, or being destroyed and carried away by the enemy: The flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stall.

Note, When we are in the full enjoyment of our creature comforts we should consider that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them all, and use them accordingly, as not abusing them, 1Co 7:29,30.

2. He resolves to delight and triumph in God notwithstanding; when all is gone his God is not gone (Hab 3:18): "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I shall have him to rejoice in, and will rejoice

in him." Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Ho 2:11,12. But those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished can enjoy all in God, and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature comforts and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul; and, if he be so, we may rejoice in him as such in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered.

Note, Joy in God is never out of season, nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear that our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. See how the prophet triumphs in God: The Lord God is my strength, Hab 3:19.

He that is the God of our salvation in another world will be our strength in this world, to carry us on in our journey thither, and help us over the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in our way. Even when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may have the want of bread supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit and with the supplies of them.

(1.) We shall be strong for our spiritual warfare and work: The Lord God is my strength, the strength of my heart.

(2.) We shall be swift for our spiritual race: "He will make my feet like hinds' feet, that with enlargement of heart I may run the way of his commands and outrun my troubles."

(3.) We shall be successful in our spiritual enterprises: "He will make me to walk upon my high places; that is, I shall gain my point, shall be restored unto my own land, and tread upon the high places of the enemy," De 32:13,33:29. Thus the prophet, who began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph, for prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. When Hannah had prayed she went her way, and did eat, and her

countenance was no more sad. This prophet, finding it so, publishes his experience of it, and puts it into the hand of the chief singer for the use of the church, especially in the day of our captivity.

And, though then the harps were hung upon the willow-trees, yet in the hope that they would be resumed, and their right hand retrieve its cunning, which it had forgotten, he set his song upon Shigionoth (Hab 3:1), wandering tunes, according to the variable songs, and upon Neginoth (Hab 3:19), the stringed instruments. He that is afflicted, and has prayed aright, may then be so easy, may then be so merry, as to sing psalms.

18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
19 The Lord God *is* my strength,
and he will make my feet like hinds' *feet*,
and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief
singer on my stringed instruments.

Zephaniah
[Zephaniah]

Zephaniah-1

The Day of the Lord's Wrath

1 The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

Here is, I The title-page of this book (Zep 1:1), in which we observe,

1. What authority it has, and who gave it that authority; it is from heaven, and not of men: It is the word of the Lord.

2. Who was the instrument of conveying it to the church. His name was Zephaniah, which signifies the servant of the Lord, for God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets. The pedigree of other prophets, whose extraction we have an account of, goes no further back than their father, except Zecharias, whose grandfather also is named. But this of Zephaniah goes back four generations, and the highest mentioned is Hizkiah; it is the very same name in the original with that of Hezekiah king of Judah (2Ki 18:1), and refers probably to him; if so, our prophet, being lineally descended from that pious prince, and being of the royal family, could with the better grace reprove the folly of the king's children as he does, Zep 1:8.

3. When this prophet prophesied--in the days of Josiah king of Judah, who reigned well, and in the twelfth year of his reign began vigorously, and carried on a work of reformation, in which he destroyed idols and idolatry. Now it does not appear whether Zephaniah prophesied in the beginning of his reign; if so, we may suppose his prophesying had a great and good influence on that reformation. When he, as God's messenger, reproved the idolatries of Jerusalem, Josiah, as God's vice-gerent, removed them; and reformation is likely to go on and

prosper when both magistrates and ministers do their part towards it. If it were towards the latter end of his reign that he prophesied, we sadly see how a corrupt people relapse into their former distempers. The idolatries Josiah had abolished, it should seem, returned in his own time, when the heat of the reformation began a little to abate and wear off. What good can the best reformers do with a people that hate to be reformed, as if they longed to be ruined?

2 I will utterly consume all *things* from off the land, saith the Lord.
3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven,
and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and
I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord.
4 I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants
of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, *and*
the name of the Chemarim with the priests;
5 and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them
that worship *and* that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham;

The summary, or contents, of this book. The general proposition contained in it is, That utter destruction is coming apace upon Judah and Jerusalem for sin. Without preamble, or apology, he begins abruptly (Zep 1:2):

By taking away I will make an end of all things from off the face of the land, Saith the Lord. Ruin is coming, utter ruin, destruction from the Almighty. He has said it who can, and will, make good what he has said: "I will utterly consume all things. I will gather all things" (so some); "I will recall all the blessings I have bestowed, because they have abused them and so forfeited them." The consumption determined shall take away,

1 The inferior creatures: I will consume the beasts, the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea (Zep 1:3), as, in the deluge, every living substance was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground, Ge 7:23. The creatures were made for man's use, and therefore when he has perverted the use of them, and made them subject to vanity, God, to show the greatness of his displeasure against the sin of man, involves them in his punishment. The expressions are figurative, denoting universal desolation. Those

that fly ever so high, as the fowls of heaven, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemies' hand--those that hide ever so close, as the fishes of the sea, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemies' eye--shall yet become a prey to them, and be utterly consumed.

2 The children of men: "I will consume man; I will cut off man from the land. The land shall be dispeopled and left uninhabited; I will destroy, not only Israel, but man. The land shall enjoy her sabbaths. I will cut off, not only the wicked men, but all men; even the few among them that are good shall be involved in this common calamity. Though they shall not be cut off from the Lord, yet they shall be cut off from the land." It is with Judah and Jerusalem that God has this quarrel, both city and country, and upon them he will stretch out his hand, the hand of his power, the hand of his wrath; and who knows the power of his anger? Zep 1:4.

Those that will not humble themselves under God's mighty hand shall be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah, where God is known, and Jerusalem, where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them.

3. All wicked people, and all those things that are the matter of their wickedness (Zep 1:3): "I will consume the stumbling-blocks with the wicked, the idols with the idolaters, the offences with the offenders." Josiah had taken away the stumbling-blocks, and, as far as he could, had purged the land of the monuments of idolatry, hoping that there would be no more idolatry; but the wicked will do wickedly, the dog will return to his vomit, and therefore, since the sin will not otherwise be cured, the sinners must themselves be consumed, even the wicked with the stumbling-blocks of their iniquity, Eze 14:3. Since it was not done by the sword of justice, it shall be done by the sword of war. See who the sinners are that shall be consumed.

(1.) The professed idolaters, who avowed idolatry, and were wedded to it. The remnant of Baal shall be cut off, the images of

Baal, and the worshippers of those images. Josiah cut off a great deal of Baal; but that which was so close as to escape the eye, or so bold as to escape the hand, of his justice, God will cut off, even all the remains of it. The Chaldeans would spare none of the images of Baal, or the worshippers of those images. The Chemarim shall be cut off; we read of them in the history of Josiah's reformation. 2Ki 23:5, He put down the idolatrous priests: the word is the Chemarim. The word signifies black men, some think because they wore black clothes, affecting to appear grave, others because their faces were black with attending the altars, or the fires in which they burnt their children to Moloch. They seem to have been immediate attendants upon the service of Baal. They shall be cut off with the priests, the regulars with the seculars.

The very name of them shall be cut off; the order shall be quite abolished, so as to be forgotten, or remembered with detestation. And, among other idolaters, the worshippers of the host of heaven upon the house-tops shall be cut off (Zep 1:5), who justified themselves in their idolatry with those that did not worship images, the work of their own hands, but offered their sacrifices and burnt their incense to the sun, moon, and stars, immediately upon the tops of their houses. But God will let them know that he is a jealous God, and will not endure any rival; and, though some have thought that the most specious and plausible idolatry, yet it will appear as great an offence to God to give divine honours to a star as to give them to a stone or a stock. Even the worshippers of the host of heaven shall be consumed as well as the worshippers of the beasts of the earth or the fiends of hell. The sin of the adulteress is not the less sinful for the gaiety of the adulterer.

(2.) Those also shall be consumed that think to compound the matter between God and idols, and keep an even hand between them, that halt between God and Baal, and worship between Jehovah and Moloch, and swear by both; or, as it might better be read, swear to the Lord and to Malcham. They bind themselves by oath and covenant to the service both of God and idols. They have a good opinion of the worship of the God of Israel; it is the religion of their country, and has been long so, and therefore they

will by no means quit it; but they think it will be very much improved and beautified if they join with it the worship of Moloch, for that also is much used in other countries, and travellers admire it; there is a great deal of good fancy and strong flame in it.

They cannot keep always to the worship of a God whom they have no visible representation of, and therefore they must have an image; and what better than the image of Moloch--a king? They think they shall effectually atone for their sin if they swear to Moloch, and, pursuant to that oath, burn their children in sacrifice to that idol; and yet, if they do amiss in that, they hope to atone for it in worshipping the God of Israel too.

Note, Those that think to divide their affections and adorations between God and idols will not only come short of acceptance with God, but will have their doom with the worst of idolaters; for what communion can there be between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, God and mammon? She whose own the child is not pleads for the dividing of it, for, if Satan have half, he will have all; but the true mother says, Divide it not, for, if God have but half, he will have none. Such waters will not be long sweet, if they come from a fountain that sends forth bitter water too; what have those to do to swear by the Lord that swear by Malcham?

(3.) Those also shall be consumed that have apostatized from God, together with those that never gave up their names to him, Zep 1:6. I will cut off,

[1.] Those that are turned back from the Lord, that were well taught, and began well, that had given up their names to him, and set out at first in the worship of him, but have flown off, and turned aside, and fallen in with idolaters, and deserted those good ways of God which they were brought up in, and despised them. Those God will be sure to reckon with who are renegadoes from his service, who began in the Spirit and ended in the flesh; they shall be treated as deserters, to whom no mercy is shown.

[2.] Those that have not sought the Lord, nor ever enquired for him, never made any profession of religion, and think to excuse themselves with that, shall find that this will not excuse them; nay, this is the thing laid to their charge; they are atheistical careless people, that live without God in the world; and those that do so are certainly unworthy to live upon God in the world.

6 and them that are turned back from the Lord; and *those* that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him.

7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord *is* at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

Notice is here given to Judah and Jerusalem that God is coming forth against them, and will be with them shortly; his presence, as a just avenger, his day, the day of his judgment and his wrath, are not far off, Zep 1:7.

Those that improve not the presence of God with them as a Father, but sin away that presence, may expect his presence with them as a Judge, to call them to an account for the contempt put upon his grace. The day of the Lord will come. Men have their day now, when they take a liberty to do what they please; but God's day is at hand; it is here called his sacrifice, a sacrifice of his preparing, for the punishing of presumptuous sinners is a sacrifice to the justice of God, some reparation to his injured honour.

Those that brought their offerings to other gods were themselves justly made victims to the true God. On a day of sacrifice great slaughter was made; so shall there be in Jerusalem; men shall be killed up as fast as lambs for the altar, with as little regret, with as much pleasure: The slain of the Lord shall be many. On a day of sacrifice great feasts were made upon the sacrifices; so the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shall be feasted upon by their enemies the Chaldeans; these are the guests God has prepared and invited to come and glut themselves--their revenge with slaughter and their covetousness with plunder. Now observe,

I. Who those are that are marked to be sacrificed, that shall be visited and punished in this day of reckoning, and what it is they shall be called to an account for.

1 The royal family, because of the dignity of their place, shall be first reckoned with for their pride, and vanity, and affectation (Zep 1:8): I will punish the princes, and the king's children, who think themselves accountable to God, and that, high as they are, he is above them. They shall be punished, and all such as, like them, are clothed with strange apparel, such as, in contempt of their own country (where, probably, it was the custom to go in a very plain dress, as became the seed of Jacob that plain man), affected to appear in the fashion of other nations and introduced their modes in apparel, studying to resemble those from whom God had appointed them, even in their clothes, industriously to distinguish themselves.

The princes and the king's children scorned to wear any home-made stuffs, though God had provided them fine linen and silks (Eze 16:10), but they must send abroad to strange countries for their clothes, which would not please unless they were far-fetched and dear-bought; and even those of inferior rank affected to imitate the princes and the king's children. Pride in apparel is displeasing to God, and a symptom of the degeneracy of a people.

2 The noblemen, and their stewards and servants, come next to be reckoned with (Zep 1:9): In the same day will I punish those that leap on the threshold, a phrase, no doubt, well understood then, and which probably signified the invading of their neighbour's rights. Entering their houses by force and violence, and seizing their possessions, they leap on the threshold, as much as to say that the house is their own and they will keep their hold of it; and, accordingly, they make all in it their own that they can lay their hands on, and so fill their masters' houses with goods gotten by violence and deceit and with all the guilt thereby contracted.

Nor shall it suffice them to say that the ill-gotten gains were not for themselves but for their masters, and that what they did was by their order; for the obligations we lie under to keep God's commandments are prior and superior to the obligations we lie under to serve the interests of any master on earth.

3. The trading people, and the rich merchants, are next called to account. Iniquity is found in their end of the town, among the inhabitants of Maktesh, a low part of Jerusalem, deep like a mortar (for so the word signifies); the goldsmiths lived there (Ne 3:32) and the merchants; and they are now cut down (they are broken, and have shut up their shops, and become bankrupts); nay, All those that bear silver are cut off, in the first place, by the invaders, for the sake of the silver they carry, which is so far from being a protection to them that it will expose and betray them.

The conquerors aimed at the wealthy men, and carried them off first, while the poor of the land escaped. Or it may be meant of a general decay of trade, which was a preface and introduction to the general destruction of the land. It is the token of a declining state when great dealers are cut down, and great bankers are cut off and become bankrupts, who cannot fall alone, but with themselves ruin many.

4. All the secure and careless people, the sons of pleasure, that live a loose idle life, are next reckoned with (Zep 1:12); they come from all parts of the country, to take up their quarters in the head-quarters of the kingdom, where they take private lodgings, and indulge themselves in ease and luxury; but God will find them out, and punish them: At that time I will search Jerusalem with candles, to discover them, that they may be brought out to condign punishment.

This intimates that they conceal themselves, as being either ashamed of the sin or afraid of the punishment of it; when the judgments of God are abroad they hope to escape by absconding and getting out of the way, but God will search Jerusalem, as search is made for a malefactor in disguise, that is harboured by his accomplices. God's hand will find out all his enemies, wherever they lie hid, and will punish not only the secret idolaters, but the secret epicures and profane; and those are the persons that are here described, and marks are given by which they will be discovered when strict search is made for them.

(1.) Their dispositions are sensual: They are settled on their lees, intoxicated with their pleasures, strengthening themselves in their wealth and wickedness; they are secure and easy, and, because they have had no changes, they fear none, as Moab, Jer 48:11. They have not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They fill themselves with wine and strong drink, and banish all thought, saying, To-morrow shall be as this day, Isa 56:12. Their being settled on their lees signifies the same with being enclosed in their own fat, Ps 17:10.

(2.) Their notions are atheistical. They could not live such loose lives but that they say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; that is, He will do nothing. They deny his providential government of the world: "What good and evil there is in the world comes by the wheel of fortune, and not by the disposal of a wise and supreme director." They deny his moral government, and his dispensing rewards and punishments: "The Lord will not do good to those that serve him, nor do evil to those that rebel against him; and therefore there is nothing got by religion, nor lost by sin."

This was the effect of their sensuality; if they were not drowned in sense, they could not be thus senseless, nor could they be so stupid if they had not stupefied themselves with the love of pleasure. It was also the cause of their sensuality; men would not make a god of their belly if they had not at first become so vain, so vile, in their imaginations, as to think the God that made them altogether such a one as themselves. But God will punish them; their end is destruction, Php 3:19.

8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel.

9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

What the destruction will be with which God will punish these sinners, and what course he will take with them.

1. He will silence them (Zep 1:7): Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord. He will force them to hold their peace, will strike them dumb with horror and amazement. They shall be

speechless. All the excuses of their sin, and exceptions against the sentence, will be overruled, and they shall not have a word to say for themselves.

2. He will sacrifice them, for it is the day of the Lord's sacrifice (Zep 1:8); he will give them into the hands of their enemies, and glorify himself thereby.

3. He will fill both city and country with lamentation (Zep 1:10): In that day there shall be a noise of a cry from the fish-gate, so called because near either to the fish-ponds or to the fish-market. It belonged to the city of David (2Ch 33:14,Ne 3:3); perhaps the same with that which is called the first gate (Zec 14:10), and, if so, it will explain what follows here, And a howling from the second, that is, the second gate, which was next to that fish-gate. The alarm shall go round the walls of Jerusalem from gate to gate; and there shall be a great crashing from the hills, a mighty noise from the mountains round about Jerusalem, from the acclamations of the victorious invaders, or from the lamentations of the timorous invaded, or from both. The inhabitants of the city, even of the closest safest part of the city, shall howl (Zep 1:11), so clamorous shall the grief be.

4. They shall be stripped of all they have; it shall be a prey to the enemy (Zep 1:13): Their household goods, and shop-goods, shall become a booty, and a rich booty they shall be; their houses shall be levelled with the ground and be a desolation; those of them that have built new houses shall not inherit them, but the invaders shall get and keep possession of them. And the vineyards they have planted they shall not drink the wine of, but, instead of having it for the relief of their friends that faint among them, they shall part with it for the animating of their foes that fight against them, De 28:30.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, *that there shall be* the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and a howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.

11 Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

12 And it shall come to pass at that time, *that* I will search Jerusalem with
candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in
their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.
13 Therefore, their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a
desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit *them;* and they
shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.
14 The great day of the Lord *is* near, *it is* near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the
voice of the day of the Lord : the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

Nothing could be expressed with more spirit and life, nor in words more proper to startle and awaken a secure and careless people, than the warning here given to Judah and Jerusalem of the approaching destruction by the Chaldeans. That is enough to make the sinners in Zion tremble--that it is the day of the Lord, the day in which he will manifest himself by taking vengeance on them. It is the great day of the Lord, a specimen of the day of judgment, a kind of doom's-day, as the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is represented to be in our Saviour's prediction concerning it, Mt 24:27.

I. This day of the Lord is here spoken of as very near. The vision is not for a great while to come, as those imagine who put the evil day far from them. Those deceive themselves who look upon it as a thing at a distance, for it is near--it is near--it hastens greatly. The prophet gives the alarm like one that is in earnest, like one that awakens a family with the cry of Fire! fire! when it is at the next door that the danger is: "It is near! it is near! and therefore it is high time to bestir yourselves, and do what you can for your own safety before it be too late." It is madness for those to slumber whose damnation slumbers not, and to linger when it hastens.

II. It is spoken of as a very dreadful day. The very voice of this day of the Lord, the noise of it, when it is coming, shall be so terrible as to make the mighty men cry there bitterly, cry for fear as children do. It shall be a vexation to hear the report of it. In the last great day of the Lord the mighty men shall cry bitterly to rocks and mountains to shelter them; but in vain. Observe how emphatically the prophet speaks of this day approaching (Zep 1:15): It is a day of wrath, God's wrath, wrath in perfection, wrath to the utmost. It will be a day of trouble and distress to the sinners;

they shall be in pain, and shall see no ways of easing or helping themselves. The miseries of the damned are summed up (perhaps with reference to this) in the indignation and wrath of God, which are the cause, and the tribulation and anguish of the sinner's soul, which are the effect, Ro 2:8,9.

It will be a day of trouble and distress to the inhabitants, and a day of wasteness and desolation to the whole land; that fruitful land shall be turned into a wilderness. It shall be a day of darkness and gloominess; every thing shall look dismal, and there shall not be the least gleam of comfort, or glimpse of hope; look round, and it is all black. It is a day of clouds and thick darkness; there is not only nothing encouraging, but every thing threatening; the thick clouds are big with storms and tempests.

15 That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness
and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and
thick darkness,
16 a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the
high towers.
17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men,
because they have sinned against the Lord : and their blood shall be
poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.

It is spoken of as a destroying day, Zep 1:16,17. It shall be destroying,

1. To places, even the strongest and best fortified: A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, to break into them, and against the high towers, to bring them down; for what forts, what fences, can hold out against the wrath of God?

2. To persons (Zep 1:17): "I will bring distress upon men, the strongest and stoutest of men; their hearts and hands shall fail them; they shall walk like blind men, wandering endlessly, because they have sinned against the Lord."

Note, Those that walk as bad men will justly be left to walk as blind men, always in the dark, in doubt and danger, without any guide or comfort, and falling at length into the ditch. Because they have sinned against the Lord he will deliver them into the

hands of cruel enemies, that shall pour out their blood as dust, so profusely, and with as little regret, and their flesh shall be thrown as dung upon the dunghill.

IV. The destruction of that day will be unavoidable and universal, Zep 1:18. 1. There shall be no escaping it by ransom: Neither their silver nor their gold, which they have hoarded up so covetously against the evil day, or which they have spent so prodigally to make friends for such a time, shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. Another prophet borrowed these words from this, with reference to the same event, Eze 7:19.

Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Pr 11:4. Nay, riches expose to the wrath of men (Ec 5:13), and riches abused to the wrath of God.

2. There shall be no escaping it by flight or concealment; for the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy, and where then can a hiding-place be found? See what the fire of God's jealousy is, and what the force of it; it will devour whole lands; how then can particular persons stand before it? He shall make riddance, a speedy riddance, of all those that dwell in the land, as the husbandman, when he rids his ground, cuts up all the briers and thorns for the fire.

Note, Sometimes the judgments of God make riddance, even utter riddance, with sinful nations, a speedy riddance; their destruction is effected, is completed, in a little time. Let not sinners be laid asleep by the patience of God, for when the measure of their iniquity is full his justice will both overtake and overcome, will make quick work and thorough work.

18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Zephaniah-2

The Doom of the Surrounding Nations

1 Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;
2 before the decree bring forth, *before* the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you.

Here we see what the prophet meant in that terrible description of the approaching judgments which we had in the foregoing chapter. From first to last his design was, not to drive the people to despair, but to drive them to God and to their duty--not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins. In pursuance of that he here calls them to repentance, national repentance, as the only way to prevent national ruin. Observe,

I The summons given them to a national assembly (Zep 2:1): Gather yourselves together. He had told them, in the last words of the foregoing chapter, that God would make a speedy riddance of all that dwelt in the land, upon which, one would think, it should follow, "Disperse yourselves, and flee for shelter where you can find a place." When the decree had absolutely gone forth for the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that was the advice given (Mt 24:16), Then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains; but here it is otherwise. God warns, that he may not wound, threatens, that he may not strike, and therefore calls to the people to use means for the turning away of his wrath. The summons is given to a nation not desired. The word signifies either,

1. Not desiring, that has not any desires towards God or the remembrance of his name, is not desirous of his favour or grace, but very indifferent to it, has no mind to repent and reform. "Yet come together, and see if you can stir up desires in one another." Thus God is often found of those that sought him not, nor asked for him, Isa 65:1. Or,

2. Not desirable, no ways lovely, nor having any thing in them amiable, or which might recommend them to God. The land of

Israel had been a pleasant land, a land of delight (Da 11:41); but now it is unlovely, it is a nation not desired, to which God might justly say, Depart from me; but he says, "Gather together to me, and let us see if any expedient can be found out for the preventing of the ruin. Gather together, that you may in a body humble yourselves before God, may fast, and pray, and seek his face. Gather together, to consult among yourselves what is to be done in this critical juncture, that every one may consider of it, may give and take advice, and speak his mind, and that what is done may be done by consent and so may be a national act."

Some read it, "Enquire into yourselves, yea, enquire into yourselves; examine your consciences; look into your hearts; search and try your ways; enquire into yourselves, that you may find out the sin by which God has been provoked to this displeasure against you, and may find out the way of returning to him." Note, When God is contending with us it concerns us to enquire into ourselves.

II. Arguments urged to press them to the utmost seriousness and expedition herein (Zep 2:2): "Do it in earnest; do it with all speed before it is too late, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass." The manner of speaking here is very lively and awakening, designed to make them apprehensive, as all sinners are concerned to be,

1. That their danger is very great, that their all lies at stake, that it is a matter of life and death, which therefore well requires and well deserves the closest application of mind that can be. It is not a trifle, and therefore is not a thing to be trifled about. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that is kindled against them, and is just ready to kindle upon them, that devouring fire which none can dwell with, which none can make head against or hold up their head under. "It is the day of the Lord's anger, the day set for the pouring out of the full vials of it, that you are threatened with, that great day of the Lord" spoken of, Zep 1:14. "Are you not concerned to prepare for that day?"

2. That it is very imminent: "Bestir yourselves now quickly, before the decree bring forth, and then it will be too late, the opportunity will be lost and never retrieved. The decree is as it were big with child, and it will bring forth the day, the terrible day, which shall pass as chaff, which shall hurry you away into captivity as chaff before the wind." We know not what a day may bring forth (Pr 27:1), but we do know what the decree will bring forth against impenitent sinners, whom therefore it highly concerns to repent in time, in the accepted time.

Note, It is the wisdom of those whom God has a controversy with to agree with him quickly, while they are in the way, before his fierce anger comes upon them, not to be turned away. In a case of this nature delays are highly dangerous and may be fatal; they will be so if by them the heart is hardened. How solicitous should we all be to make our peace with God before the Spirit withdraw from us, or cease to strive with us, before the day of grace be over or the day of life, before our everlasting state shall be determined on the other side of the great gulf fixed!

3 Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

Directions prescribed for the doing of this effectually. It is not enough to gather together in a consternation, but they must seriously and calmly apply to the duty of the day (Zep 2:3): Seek you the Lord. That they might find mercy with God, they are here put upon seeking; for so is the rule--Seek, and you shall find. A general call was given to the whole nation to gather together, but little good is to be expected from the far greater part of them; if the land be saved, it must be by the interest and intercession of the pious few, and therefore to them the exhortation here is particularly directed. And observe,

1. How they are described--they are the meek of the earth, or of the land. It is the distinguishing character of the people of God that they are the meek ones of the earth; this is their badge; it is their livery. They are modest, and humble, and low in their own eyes; they are mild, and gentle, and yielding to others, not soon angry, not very angry, not long angry; they are the quiet in the land, Ps 35:20.

And they are subject and submissive to their God, to all his precepts and all his providences. Actuated by this principle and disposition, they have wrought his judgments, that is, have obeyed his laws, observed his institutions, have made conscience of their duty to him, and have laid out themselves for the advancement of his honour and interest in the world.

2. What they are required to do; they must seek, which denotes both a careful enquiry and a constant endeavour, that they may know and do their duty.

(1.) They must seek the Lord, seek his favour and grace, address him upon all occasions, ask of him what they need, seek him early, seek him diligently, and continue seeking him.

(2.) They must seek righteousness. "Seek to God for the performance of his promises to you, and see to it that you abound yet more in duty to him; seek for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to you, for the graces of God's Spirit to be implanted in you; hunger and thirst after them."

(3.) They must seek meekness. This is a grace they were so eminent for that they were denominated the meek of the land, and yet this they must seek. Note, Those that are ever so good must still strive to be better, those that have ever so much grace must be still praying and labouring for more. Nay, those that excel in any particular grace must still seek to excel yet more in that, because in that most assaults will be made upon them by their enemies, in that most is expected from them by their friends, and in that they are most apt to be themselves secure. Si dixisti, Sufficit, periisti--Say but, I am all that I ought to be, and you are undone.

In the difficult trying times approaching, the meek will find exercise for all the meekness they have, and all little enough, and therefore should seek it earnestly, and pray that when God in his providence gives them occasion for it he would by his grace enable them to exercise it, to show all meekness to all men, in all instances, that, as the day is, so may the strength be.

IV. Encouragements given to take these directions: It may be, you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

1. "You particularly that are the meek of the earth. Though the day of the Lord's anger do come upon the land, yet you shall be safe, you shall be taken under special protection. Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, Jer 15:11. Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey, Jer 45:5. I will deliver thee in that day, Jer 39:17. It may be, you shall be hid; if any be hid, you shall." Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for all things come alike to all, but they are most likely to be hid, and stand fairest for a distinguishing care of Providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, though they have but the it may be of a promise, and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness lest they should seem to come short, and should do any thing to throw themselves out of the divine protection.

Note, those that hold fast their integrity, in times of common iniquity, have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy, in times of common calamity. They shall be hid (as Luther says) aut in cœlo, aut sub cœlo--either in heaven or under heaven, either in the possession of heaven or under the protection of heaven. Or,

2. "You of this nation, though it be a nation not desired, yet, in the day of the Lord's anger with the neighbouring nations, when his judgments are abroad, you shall be hid; your land shall be preserved for the sake of those few meek ones that stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God." It concerns us all to make it sure to ourselves that we shall be hid in the great day of God's wrath; and, if we hide ourselves in the chambers of duty, God will hide us in chambers of safety, Isa 26:20. If we prepare an ark, that shall be our hiding-place, Ge 7:1.

4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive
out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up.
5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites
! the word of the Lord *is* against you; O Canaan, the land of the
Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

The prophet here comes to foretel what share the neighbouring nations should have in the destruction made upon those parts of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious Chaldees, as others of the prophets did at that time, which is designed,

1. To awaken the people of the Jews, by making them sensible how strong, how deep, how large, the inundation of calamities should be, that the day of the Lord, which was near, might appear the more dreadful, and they might thereby be quickened to prepare for it as for a general deluge.

2. To comfort them with this thought, that their case, though s should not be singular (Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris--T wretched find it consolatory to have companions of their woe), a much more with this, that though God had seemed to be their ener and to fight against them, yet he was still so far their friend, and enemy to their enemies, that he resented, and would revenge, indignities done them.

In these verses we have the doom of the Philistines, who were near neighbours, and old enemies, to the people of Israel. Five lordships there were in that country; only four are here named--Gaza and Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron; Gath, the fifth, is not named, some think because it was now subject to Judah. They were the inhabitants of the sea-coasts (Zep 2:5), for their country lay upon the Great Sea. The nation of the Cherethites is here joined with them, which bordered upon them (1Sa 30:14) and fell with them, as is foretold also, Eze 25:16.

The Philistines' land is here called Canaan, for it belonged to that country which God gave to his people Israel, and was inserted in the grant made to them, Jos 13:3. This land is yet to be possessed (five lords of the Philistines), so that they wrongfully kept Israel out of the possession of it (Jdg 3:3), which is now remembered against them. For, though the rights of others may be long detained unjustly, the righteous God will at length avenge the wrong.

I. It is here foretold that the Philistines, the usurpers, shall be dispossessed and quite extirpated. In general, here is a woe to

them (Zep 2:5), which, coming from God, denotes all misery: The word of the Lord is against them--the word of the former prophets, which, though not yet accomplished, will be in its season, Isa 14:31. This word, now by this prophet, is against them.

Note, Those are really in a woeful condition that have the word of the Lord against them, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. Those that rebel against the precepts of God's word shall have the threatenings of the word against them. The effect will be no less than their destruction,

1. God himself will be the author of it: "I will even destroy thee, who can make good what I say and will."

2. It shall be a universal destruction; it shall extend itself to all parts of the land, both city and country: Gaza shall be forsaken, though now a populous city. It was foretold (Jer 47:6) that baldness should come upon Gaza; Alexander the Great razed that city, and we find (Ac 8:26) that Gaza was a desert. Ashkelon shall be a desolation, a pattern of desolation. Ashdod shall be driven out at noon-day; in the extremity of the scorching heat they shall have no shade, no shelter to protect them; but then, when most incommoded by the weather, they shall be forced away into captivity, which will be an aggravating circumstance of it.

Ekron likewise shall be rooted up, that had been long taking root. The land of the Philistines shall be dispeopled; there shall be no inhabitant, Zep 2:5. God made the earth to be inhabited (Isa 45:18), otherwise he would have made it in vain; but, if men do not answer the end of their creation in serving God, it is just with God that the earth should not answer the end of its creation in serving them for a habitation; man's sin has sometimes subjected it to this vanity.

3. It shall be an utter destruction. The sea-coast, which used to be a harbour for ships and a habitation for merchants, shall now be deserted, and be only cottages for shepherds and folds for

flocks (Zep 2:6), and then perhaps put to better use than when it was possessed by the lords of the Philistines.

II. It is here foretold that the house of Judah, the rightful owners, shall recover the possession of it, Zep 2:7. The remnant of those that shall return out of captivity, when God visits them, shall be made to lie down in safety in the houses of Ashkelon, to lie down in the evening, when they are weary and sleepy. There they shall feed themselves and their flocks. Note, God will at length restore his people to their rights, though they may be long kept out from them.

6 And the seacoast shall be dwellings *and* cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

8 I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified *themselves* against their border.

The Moabites and Ammonites were both of the posterity of Lot; their countries joined, and, both adjoining to Israel, they are here put together in the prophecy against them.

I. They are both charged with the same crime, and that was reproaching and reviling the people of God and triumphing in their calamities (Zep 2:8): They have reproached my people; while God's people kept close to their duty it is probable that they reproached them for the singularities of their religion; and now that they had revolted from God, and fallen under his displeasure, they reproached them for that too. It has been the common lot of God's people in all ages to be reproached and reviled upon one account or other. Thus the old serpent spits his venom; and pride is at the bottom of it; it is in their pride that they have magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts, thinking themselves as good as they, as great, and every way as happy. It is the comtempt of the proud that God's people are filled with, Ps 123:4.

They have spoken big (so some read it, magna locuti sunt--they have spoken great things) against their border (Zep 2:8), against those of them that bordered upon their country, whom upon all occasions they insulted, or against the property they claimed, which they disputed, or the protection they boasted of, which they ridiculed; they spoke big against the people of the Lord of hosts as a deserted abandoned people. Great swelling words of vanity are the genuine language of the church's enemies. "But I have heard them" (says God), "and will let you know that I have heard them. I have heard, and I will reckon for them," Jude 1:15.

And, if God hears the reproaches and revilings we are under, it is a good reason why we should be as a deaf man that hears not, Ps 38:14,15. Nay, God not only takes notice of, but interests himself in the reproaches cast on his people, because they are his; and it is certain that those who look with disdain upon the people of the Lord of hosts thereby dishonour the Lord of hosts himself. See this very thing charged on Moab and Ammon, Eze 25:3,8.

II. They are both laid under the same doom. Associates in iniquity may expect to be such in desolation. See with what solemnity sentence is pronounced upon them, Zep 2:9. It is the Lord of hosts, the sovereign Lord of all, who has authority to pass this sentence and ability to execute it; it is the God of Israel, who is jealous for their honour; it is he that has said it, nay, he has sworn it, As I live, saith the Lord. The sentence is,

1. That the Moabites and Ammonites shall be quite destroyed; they shall be as Sodom and Gomorrah, the marks of whose ruins in the Dead Sea lay near adjoining to the countries of Moab and Ammon; they shall, though not by the same means (even fire from heaven), Yet almost in the same manner, be laid waste; not again to be inhabited, or not of a long time. The country shall produce nothing but nettles, instead of corn; and there shall be brine-pits, instead of the pleasant fountains of water with which the country had abounded.

2. That Israel shall be too hard for them, shall spoil them of their goods and possess their country by lawful war. Note, Proud men

sometimes, by the just judgment of God, fall under the mortification of being trampled upon themselves by those whom once they haughtily trampled upon. And this shall they have for their pride.

9 Therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, *even* the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the Lord of hosts.

Other nations shall in like manner be humbled, that the Lord alone may be exalted (Zep 2:11): The Lord will be terrible unto the Moabites and Ammonites in particular, who have made themselves a terror to his Israel. For,

1. Heathen gods must be abolished. They have long had possession, and their worshippers have both glorified them and gloried in them. But the Lord will famish all the gods of the earth, will starve them out of their strong-holds. The Pagans had a fond conceit that their idols were regaled by their offerings, and did eat the fat of their sacrifices, De 32:38. Omnia comesta à Belo--Bel has eaten all. But it is here promised that when the Christian religion is set up in the world men shall be turned from the service of these dumb idols, shall forsake their altars, and bring no more sacrifices to them, and thus they shall be famished, or made lean (as the word is), their priests shall.

This intimates the vanity of those idols; it lies in the power of their worshippers to famish them; whereas the true God says, If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. It intimates also the victory of the God of Israel over them. Now know we that he is greater than all gods.

2. Heathen nations must be converted; when the gospel gets ground, by it men shall be brought to worship him who lives for ever (for that is the command of the everlasting gospel, Re 14:7), every one from his place; they shall not need to go up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, but wherever they are,

they may have access to him. I will that men pray every where. God shall be worshipped, not only by all the tribes of Israel and the strangers who join themselves to them, but by all the isles of the heathen. This is a promise which looks favourably upon our native country, for it is one of the most considerable of the isles of the Gentiles, by which God will be glorified.

11 The Lord *will be* terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and *men* shall worship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the heathen.

12 Ye Ethiopians also, ye *shall be* slain by my sword.

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, *and* dry like a wilderness.

The cup is going round, when Nebuchadnezzar is going on conquering and to conquer; and not only Israel's near neighbours, but those that lay more remote, must be reckoned with for the wrongs they have done to God's people; the Ethiopians and the Assyrians are here taken to task.

1 The Ethiopians, or Arabians, that had sometimes been a terror to Israel (as in Asa's time, 2Ch 14:9), must now be reckoned with: They shall be slain by my sword, Zep 2:12. Nebuchadnezzar was God's sword, the instrument in his hand with which these and other enemies were subdued and punished, Ps 17:14.

2 The Assyrians, and Nineveh the head city of their monarchy, are next set to the bar, to receive their doom: He that is God's sword will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and make himself master of it. Assyria had been the rod of God's anger against Israel, and now Babylon is the rod of God's anger against Assyria, Isa 10:5. He will make Nineveh a desolation, as was lately and largely foretold by the prophet Nahum. Observe,

(1.) How flourishing Nineveh's state had formerly been (Zep 2:15): This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly. Nineveh was so strong that she feared no evil, and therefore dwelt carelessly and set danger at defiance; she was so rich that she thought herself sure of all good, and therefore was a rejoicing city, full of mirth and gaiety; and she had such a dominion that

she admitted no rival, but said in her heart, "I am, and there is none besides me that can compare with me, no city in the world that can pretend to be equal with me." God can with his judgments frighten the most secure, humble the most haughty, and mar the mirth of those that most laugh now.

(2.) How complete Nineveh's ruin shall now be; it shall be made a desolation, Zep 2:13. Such a heap of ruins shall this once pompous city be that it shall be,

[1.] A receptacle for beasts, such a wilderness that flocks shall lie down in it; nay, such a waste, desolate, frightful place, that wild beasts, shall take up their abode there; the melancholy birds, as the cormorant and bittern, shall make their nests in what remains of the houses, as they sometimes do in old ruinous buildings that are uninhabited and unfrequented. The lintels, or chapiters of the pillars, the windows and thresholds, and all the fine cedar-work curiously engraven, shall lie exposed; and on them these rueful ominous birds shall perch, and their voice shall sing. How are the songs of mirth turned into hideous horrid noises! What little reason have men to be proud of stately buildings, and rich furniture, when they know not what all the pomp of them may come to at last!

[2.] A derision to travellers. Those that had come from far, to gratify their curiosity with the sight of Nineveh's splendour, shall now look on her with as much contempt as ever they looked upon her with admiration (Zep 2:15): Every one that passes by shall hiss at her, and wag his hand, making light of her desolations, nay, and making sport with them--"There is an end of proud Nineveh." They shall not weep, and wring their hands (the adversities of those are unpitied and unlamented who were insolent and haughty in their prosperity), but they shall hiss and wag their hands, forgetting that perhaps their own ruin is not far off.

14 And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the

upper lintels of it; *their* voice shall sing in the windows; desolation
shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.
15 This *is* the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I
am, and *there is* none besides me: how is she become a desolation, a
place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss,
and wag his hand.

Zephaniah-3

Jerusalem's Sin and Redemption

1 Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

One would wonder that Jerusalem, the holy city, where God was known, and his name was great, should be the city of which this black character is here given, that a place which enjoyed such abundance of the means of grace should become so very corrupt and vicious, and that God should permit it to be so; yet so it is, to show that the law made nothing perfect; but if this be the true character of Jerusalem, as no doubt it is (for God's judgments will make none worse than they are), it is no wonder that the prophet begins with woe to her. For the holy God hates sin in those that are nearest to him, nay, in them he hates it most. A sinful state is, and will be, a woeful state.

I. Here is a very bad character given of the city in general. How has the faithful city become a harlot!

1. She shames herself; she is filthy and polluted (Zep 3:1), has made herself infamous (so some read it), the gluttonous city (so the margin), always cramming, and making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin is the filthiness and pollution of persons and places, and makes them odious in the sight of the holy God.

2. She wrongs her neighbours and inhabitants; she is the oppressing city. Never any place had statutes and judgments so righteous as this city had, and yet, in the administration of the government, never was more unrighteousness.

3. She is very provoking to her God, and in every respect walks contrary to him, Zep 3:2. He had given his law, and spoken to her by his servants the prophets, telling her what was the good she should do and what the evil she should avoid; but she obeyed not his voice, nor made conscience of doing as he commanded her, in any thing. He had taken her under an excellent discipline, both of the word and of the rod; but she did not receive the instruction of the one nor the correction of the other, did not submit to God's will nor answer his end in either.

He encouraged her to depend upon him, and his power and promise, for deliverance from evil and supply with good; but she trusted not in the Lord; her confidence was placed in her alliances with the nations more than in her covenant with God. He gave her tokens of his presence, and instituted ordinances of communion for her with himself; but she drew not near to her God, did not meet him where he appointed and where he promised to meet her. She stood at a distance, and said to the Almighty, Depart.

II. Here is a very bad character of the leading men in it; those that should by their influence suppress vice and profaneness there are the great patterns and patrons of wickedness, and those that should be her physicians are really her worst disease.

1. Her princes are ravenous and barbarous as roaring lions that make a prey of all about them, and they are universally feared and hated; they use their power for destruction, and not for edification.

2. Her judges, who should be the protectors of injured innocence, are evening wolves, rapacious and greedy, and their cruelty and covetousness both insatiable: They gnaw not the bones till the morrow; they take so much delight and pleasure in cruelty and oppression that when they have devoured a good man they reserve the bones, as it were, for a sweet morsel, to be gnawed the next morning, Job 31:31.

3. Her prophets, who pretend to be special messengers from heaven to them, are light and treacherous persons, fanciful, and of a vain imagination, frothy and airy, and of a loose conversation, men of no consistency with themselves, in whom one can put no confidence. They were so given to bantering that it was hard to say when they were serious. Their pretended prophecies were all a sham, and they secretly laughed at those that were deluded by them.

4. Her priests, who are teachers by office and have the charge of the holy things, are false to their trust and betray it. They were to preserve the purity of the sanctuary, but they did themselves pollute it, and the sacred offices of it, which they were to attend upon--such priests as Hophni and Phinehas, who by their wicked lives made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred.

They were to expound and apply the law, and to judge according to it; but, in their explications and applications of it, they did violence to the law; they corrupted the sense of it, and perverted it to the patronising of that which was directly contrary to it. By forced constructions, they made the law to speak what they pleased, to serve a turn, and so, in effect, made void the law.

2 She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord ; she drew not near to her God.

3 Her princes within her *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.

4 Her prophets *are* light *and* treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

5 The just Lord *is* in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

We have here the aggravations of this general corruption of all orders and degrees of men in Jerusalem.

1. They had the tokens of God's presence among them, and all the advantages that could be of knowing his will, with the strongest inducements possible to do it, and yet they persisted in their disobedience, Zep 3:5.

(1.) They had the honour and privilege of the Shechinah, God's dwelling in their land, so as he dwelt not with any other people: "The just Lord is in the midst of thee, to take cognizance of all thou doest amiss and give countenance to all thou doest well; he is in the midst of thee as a holy God, and therefore thy pollutions are the more offensive, De 23:14. He is in the midst of you as a just God, and therefore will punish the affronts you put upon him, and the wrongs and injuries you do to one another."

(2.) They had God's own example set before them, in the discovery he made of himself to them, that they might conform to it: "He will not do iniquity, and therefore you should not;" for this was the great rule of their institution, "Be you holy, for I am holy. God will be true to you; be not you then false to him."

(3.) He sent to them his prophets, rising up early and sending them: Every morning he brings his judgment to light, as duly as the morning comes; he fails not. He shows them plainly what the good is which he requires of them, and puts them in mind of it; he wakens morning by morning (Isa 50:4), wakens his prophets with the rising sun, to bring to light the things which belong to their peace. So that, upon the whole matter, what more could have been done to his vineyard, to make it fruitful? Isa 5:4.

And yet, after all, the unjust know no shame; those that have been unjust are unjust still, and are not ashamed of their unrighteousness, neither can they blush. If they had any sense of honour, any shame left in them, they would not go so directly contrary to their profession and to the instructions given them. But those that are past shame are past cure.

2. God had set before their eyes some remarkable monuments of his justice, which were designed for warning to them (Zep 3:6): I have cut off the nations, the seven nations of Canaan, which the land spewed out for their wickedness, upon which they had this caution given them, to take heed lest it spew them out also, Le 18:28.

Or it may refer to some of the neighbouring nations that were made desolate for their wickedness, especially to the nations of

Israel, the ten tribes. Their towers were desolate, their high towers, their strong towers, their pride and power broken; their streets were wasted, so that none passed along through them; their cities were destroyed and laid in ruins; no man was to be found in them, no inhabitant, all were slain or carried into captivity. The enemies did it, but God avows it: I cut them off, says he. And God designed this for an admonition to Jerusalem (Eze 23:9,11):

"I said, Surely thou wilt fear me; surely these judgments upon others will deter thee from the like wicked practices; surely thou wilt receive instruction by these providences; it ought to be expected that thou wouldst not continue to sin like the nations when thou seest the ruin which their sin brought upon them." They could not but see their own house in danger when their neighbour's was on fire; and, when we are frightened, God should be feared.

3. He had set before them life and death, good and evil, both in his word and in his providence.

(1.) He had assured them of the continuance of their prosperity if they would fear him and receive instruction, for so their dwelling would not be cut off as their neighbour's was; if they took the warning given them, and reformed, what was past should be pardoned, and their tranquility lengthened out.

(2.) He had made them feel the smart of the rod, though he reprieved them from the sword: Howsoever I punished them, that, being chastened, they might not be condemned. Such various methods did God take with them, to reclaim them, but all in vain; they were not won upon by gentle methods, nor had severe ones any effect, for they rose early, and corrupted all their doings; they were more resolute and eager in their wicked courses than ever, more studious and solicitous in making provision for their lusts, and let slip no opportunity for the gratification of them. God rose up early, to send them his prophets, to reduce and reclaim them, but they were up before him, to shut and bolt the door against them.

Their wickedness was universal: All their doings were corrupted; and it was all owing to themselves; they could not lay the blame upon the tempter, but they alone must bear it; they themselves wilfully and designedly corrupted all their doings; for every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed.

6 I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.

7 I said, Surely, thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, *and* corrupted all their doings.

8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination *is* to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, *even* all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

Things looked very bad with Jerusalem in the Zep 3:1-7; she has got into a very bad name, and seems to be incorrigible, incurable, mercy-proof and judgment-proof. Now one would think it should follow, Therefore expect no other but that she should be utterly abandoned and rejected as reprobate silver; since they will not be wrought upon by prophets or providences, let them be made a desolation as their neighbours have been. But behold and wonder at the riches of divine grace, which takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious.

They still grew worse and worse, therefore wait you upon me, saith the Lord, Zep 3:8. "Since the law, it seems, will make nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope shall. Let those that lament the corruptions of the church wait upon God, till he send his Son into the world, to save his people from their sins, till he send his gospel to reform and refine his church, and to purify to himself a peculiar people both of Jews and Gentiles." And there were those who, according to this direction and encouragement, waited for redemption, for this redemption in Jerusalem; and long-looked-for came at last, Lu 2:38. For judgment Christ will come into this world, Joh 9:39.

I. To avenge what has been done amiss against his church, to bring down and destroy the enemies of it, its spiritual enemies, of which the destruction of Babylon, and other oppressors of God's people, in the Old-Testament times, was a type, and would be a happy presage. He will rise up to the prey, to lead captivity captive (Ps 67:18), to conquer and spoil the powers of darkness, and the powers on earth that set themselves against the Lord and his anointed; he will break them with a rod of iron (Ps 2:5,9,11:5,6); his determination is to gather the nations and to assemble the kingdoms. By the gospel of Christ preached to every creature all nations are summoned, as it were, to appear in a body before the Lord Jesus, who is about to set up his kingdom in the world.

But, since the greatest part of mankind will not obey the summons, he will pour upon them his indignation, for he that believes not is condemned already. At the time of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be on earth distress of nations with perplexity (Lu 21:25), great tribulation, such as never was, nor ever shall be, Mt 24:21.

Then God pours upon the nations his indignation, even all his fierce anger, for their indignation and fierce anger against the Messiah and his kingdom, Ps 2:1,2. Then all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of his jealousy; both Jews and Gentiles shall be reckoned with for their enmity to the gospel. Principalities and powers shall be spoiled, and made a show of openly, and the victorious Redeemer shall triumph over them. The end of those that continue to be of the earth, and to mind earthly things, after God has set up the kingdom of heaven among men, shall be destruction (Php 3:19); they shall be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy.

9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.

10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, *even* the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst

of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.

To amend what he finds amiss in his church. When God intends the restoration of Israel, and the revival of their peace and prosperity, he makes way for the accomplishment of his purpose by their reformation and the revival of their virtue and piety; for this is God's method, both with particular persons and with communities, first to make them holy and then to make them happy.

These promises were in part accomplished after the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when by their captivity they were thoroughly cured of their idolatry; and this was all the fruit, even the taking away of sin. But they look further, to the blessed effects of the gospel and the grace of it, to those times of reformation in which we live, Heb 9:10.

1. It is promised that there shall be a reformation in men's discourse, which had been generally corrupt, but should now be with grace seasoned with salt (Zep 3:9): "Then will I turn to the people a pure language; I will turn the people to such a language from that evil communication which has almost ruined all good manners among them." Note, Converting grace refines the language, not by making the phrases witty, but the substance wise. Among the Jews, after the captivity, there needed a reformation of the dialect, for they had mingled the language of Canaan with that of Ashdod (Ne 13:24), and that grievance shall be redressed.

But that is not all: their language shall be purified from all profaneness, filthiness, and falsehood. I will turn them to a choice language (so some read it); they shall not speak rashly, but with caution and deliberation; they shall choose out their words. Note, An air of purity and piety in common conversation is a very happy omen to any people; other graces, other blessings, shall be given where God gives a pure language to those who have been a people of unclean lips.

2. That the worship of God, according to his will, shall be more closely applied to, and more unanimously concurred in. Instead of sacrifice and incense, they shall call upon the name of the Lord. Prayer is the spiritual offering with which God must be honoured; and, to prepare and fit us for that duty, it is necessary that we have a pure language. We are utterly unfit to take God's name into our lips, unless they be pure lips. The purifying of the language in common conversation is necessary to the acceptableness of the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart on our devotion; for how can sweet waters and bitter come out of the same fountain? Jam 3:9-12.

It is likewise promised that their language being thus purified they shall serve God with one consent, with one shoulder (so the word is), alluding to oxen in the yoke, that draw even. When Christians are unanimous in the service of God the work goes on cheerfully. This is the effect of the pure language, purified from passion, envy, and censoriousness.

Note, Purity is the way to unity; the reformation of manners is the way to a comprehension. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.

3. That those that were driven from God shall return to him and be accepted of him (Zep 3:10): From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, that is, from Egypt (so described, Isa 18:1) or from some other very remote country--my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring my offering. Those that by reason of their distance had almost forgotten God, their obligations to him, shall be put in mind of him, as the prodigal son was of his father's house, in the far country. Those that by reason of their dispersion, under the tokens of his displeasure, might be afraid of coming to him, yet even they shall be gathered under his wings; the daughter of his dispersed, that is afar off, will be found among those whom the Lord our God shall call; and, though they are dispersed, he will own them for his; his calling them my dispersed puts honour upon them, sufficient to counterbalance all the disgrace of their dispersion. These shall come,

(1.) With their humble petitions: They are my suppliants. Note, True converts are suppliants to God; they do not plead, but make supplication to their Judge (Job 9:15); and wherever they are, though beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, a great way off from his house of prayer, he has his eye upon them and his ear open to them; they are his suppliants.

(2.) With their spiritual sacrifices: They shall bring my offering, shall bring themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God (Ro 12:1); the conversion of the Gentiles is called the offering up of the Gentiles (Ro 15:16); and with themselves they shall bring the gospel-sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and alms, with which God is well pleased.

4. That sin and sinners shall be purged out from among them, Zep 3:11. God will take away,

(1.) Their just reproach: In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings. They shall be ashamed as penitents, and shall continue to be so (see Eze 16:63), but they shall not be ashamed as sinners that return to folly again. "Thou shalt not be ashamed, that is, thou shalt no more do a shameful thing, as thou hast done." The guilt of sin being taken away by pardoning mercy, the reproach of it shall be rolled away from the sinner's own conscience, that being purified, and pacified, and cleansed from dead works. When wickedness and wicked people abound in a nation those few in it that are good are ashamed of them and of their land; but when sinners are converted, and the land reformed, that shame and the cause of it are removed.

(2.) Their unjust glorying: "I will take away out of the midst of thee, not only the profane, who are a shame to thy land, but the hypocrites, who appear beautiful outwardly, and rejoice in thy pride, in the holy city, the holy house." These were indeed Israel's glory, but they made them their pride, and rejoiced in them, as if they were an invincible bulwark to secure them in their sinful ways; they relied on them as their righteousness and strength, boasting of the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord (Jer 7:4); they were haughty because of the holy mountain, were conceited of themselves, scornful of others, and

set even the judgments of God at defiance. Note, Church-privileges, when they are not duly improved as they ought to be, are often made the matter of men's pride and the ground of their security. But that haughtiness is the most offensive to God which is supported and fed by the pretensions of holiness. This God will silence and take away.

5. That God will have a remnant of holy, humble, serious people among them, that shall have the comfort of their relation to him and interest in him (Zep 3:12): I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people. When the Chaldeans carried away the Jews into captivity they left of the poor of the land for vine-dressers and husbandmen, a type and figure of God's distinguished remnant, whom he sets apart for himself. They are afflicted and poor, low in the world; such God has chosen, Jam 2:5. The poor are evangelized, low in their own eyes, afflicted for sin, poor in spirit.

They are God's leaving, for it is a remnant according to the election of grace. I have reserved them to myself, says God (Ro 11:4,5), and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.

Note, Those whom God designs for the glory of his name he enables to trust in his name; and the greater their affliction and poverty in the world are the more reason they see to trust in God, having nothing else to trust to, 1Ti 5:5.

6. That this select remnant shall be blessed with purity and peace, Zep 3:13.

(1.) They shall be blessed with purity, both in words and actions: They shall neither do iniquity nor speak lies. Justice and veracity shall command them and govern them, though they be ever so much against their secular interest. They shall not only not speak a direct deliberate lie, but there shall not be a deceitful tongue found in their mouth, not in the mouth of any of them; not the least equivocation shall come from them.

(2.) They shall be blessed with peace. They shall, as the sheep of God's pasture, feed and lie down, and none shall make them

afraid. They shall not be fearful themselves, nor shall any about them be frightful to them.

Note, Those that are careful not to do iniquity need not be afraid of any calamity, for it cannot hurt them, and therefore should not terrify them.

13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall
a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie
down, and none shall make *them* afraid.

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all
the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

15 The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine
enemy: the King of Israel, *even* the Lord, *is* in the midst of thee: thou
shalt not see evil any more.

After the promises of the taking away of sin, here follow promises of the taking away of trouble; for when the cause is removed the effect will cease. What makes a people holy will make them happy of course. The precious promises here made to the purified people were to have their full accomplishment in the comforts of the gospel, in the hope, and much more in the enjoyment, of which, they are here called upon,

1. To rejoice and sing (Zep 3:14): Sing, O daughter of Zion! sing for joy; Shout, O Israel! in a holy transport and exultation; be glad and rejoice with all the heart; let the joy be inward, let it be great. Those that love God with all their heart have occasion with all their heart to rejoice in him. It was promised (Zep 3:13) that their sins should be mortified and their fears silenced, and then follows, Sing and rejoice. Note, Those that reform have cause to rejoice, whereas Israel cannot rejoice for joy as other people, while she goes a whoring from her God. God's promises, applied by faith, furnish the saints with constant and abundant matter for joy; they are filled with joy and peace in believing them.

2. To throw off all their discouragements (Zep 3:16): In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem (God will say it by his prophets, by his providences, their neighbours shall say it, they shall say it to one another), "Fear thou not, be not disposed to fear, do not easily admit the impressions of it; when things are bad, fear not

their being worse, but hope they will mend; frighten not thyself upon every occasion. Let not thy hands be slack or faint; wring not thy hands in despair; drop not thy hands in despondence; disfit not thyself for thy work and warfare by giving way to doubts and fears. Pluck up thy spirits, and, in token of that, lift up thy hands, the hands that hung down, Heb 12:12.Isa 35:3. Lift up thy hands in prayer to God; lift up thy hands to help thyself." Fear makes the hands slack, but faith and hope make them vigorous, and the joy of the Lord will be our strength both for doing and suffering.

Let us now see what these precious promises are which are here made to the people of God, for the banishing of their griefs and fears and the encouraging of their hopes and joys; and to us are these promises made as well as to them.

I. An end shall be put to all their troubles and distresses (Zep 3:15): "The Lord has taken away thy judgments, has removed all the calamities thou hast been groaning under, which were the punishments of thy sin; the noise of war shall be silenced, the reproach of famine done away, and the captivity brought back. Though some grievances remain, they shall be only afflictions, and not judgments, for sin shall be pardoned. He has cast out thy enemy, that has thrust himself into thy land, and triumphed over thee. He has swept out thy enemy" (so some read it), "as dirt is swept out of the house to the dunghill." When they sweep out their sins with the besom of reformation God will sweep out their enemies with the besom of destruction. If they should need correction, they shall fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, and shall not again fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel: "Thou shalt not see evil any more, not such evil days as thou hast seen."

Note, The way to get clear of the evil of trouble is to keep clear from the evil of sin; and to those that do so trouble has no real evil in it.

II. God will give them the tokens of his presence with them; though he has long seemed to stand at a distance (they having provoked him to withdraw), he will make it to appear that he is

with them of a truth: "The Lord is in the midst of thee, O Zion! of thee, O Jerusalem! as the sun in the centre of the universe, to diffuse his light and influence upon every part. He is in the midst of thee, to preside in all thy affairs and to take care of all thy interests." And,

1. "He is the King of Israel (Zep 3:15) and is in the midst of thee as a king in the midst of his people." With an eye to this, our Lord Jesus is called the King of Israel (Joh 1:49); and he is, and will be, in the midst of his church always, even to the end of the world, to receive the homage of his subjects, and to give out his favours to them, even where but two or three are gathered together in his name.

2. "He is the Lord thy God, thine in covenant, and he is in the midst of thee as thy God, whom thou hast an interest in and whose own thou art. He has put himself into dear relations to thee, laid himself by promise under obligations to thee, and, that thou mayest have abundant comfort in both, he is in the midst of thee, nigh at hand to answer both."

3. "He that is in the midst of thee as thy God and King is mighty, is almighty, is able to do all that for thee that thou needest and canst desire." 4. "He has engaged his power for thy succour: He will save. He will be Jesus, will answer the name, for he will save his people from their sins."

16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to* Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.

17 The Lord thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

18 I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who* are of thee, *to whom* the reproach of it *was* a burden.

God will take delight in them, and in doing them good. T
expressions of this are very lively and affecting (Zep 3:17): He v
rejoice over thee with joy, will not only be well pleased with th
upon thy repentance and reformation, and take thee into favour,
will take a complacency in thee, as the bridegroom does in his bri
or the bride in her ornaments, Isa 62:3-5.

The conversion of sinners and the consolation of saints are the joy of angels, for they are the joy of God him-self. The church should be the joy of the whole earth (Ps 48:2), for it is the joy of the whole heaven. He will rest in his love, will be silent in his love, so the word is. "I will not rebuke thee as I have done, for thy sins; I will acquiesce in thee, and in my relation to thee." I know not where there is the like expression of Christ's love to his church, unless in that song of songs, So 4:9, Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thy eyes.

O the condescensions of divine grace! The great God not only loves his saints, but he loves to love them, is pleased that he has pitched upon these objects of his love. He will joy over them with singing. He that is grieved for the sin of sinners rejoices in the graces and services of the saints, and is ready to express that joy by singing over them. The Lord takes plea-sure in those that fear him, and in them Jesus Christ will shortly be glorified and admired.

IV. God will comfort Zion's mourners, who sympathize with her in her griefs, and will wipe away their tears (Zep 3:18): I will gather those who are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. See,

1. Who those are whom God will rejoice in and make to rejoice. They are such as are sorrowful. Those only must expect to reap in joy that sow in tears. The sorrowful now shall be for ever joyful.

2. What is the great matter of sorrow to Zion's mourners, when Zion is in mourning. Many are her calamities. The city is ruined, and the palaces are demolished; trade is at an end, and the administration of public justice; but all these are nothing to them in comparison with the desolations of the sanctuary, the destruction of the temple and the altar, to attend on which, in solemn feasts, all Israel used to come together three times a year. It is for those sacred solemn assemblies that they are sorrowful,

(1.) Because they are dispersed; there is no temple to come up to, or, if there were, no people to come up to it; so that the solemn feasts and sabbaths are forgotten in Zion, La 2:6. Note, The restraining of public assemblies for religious worship, the scattering of them by their enemies, or the forsaking of them by their friends, so that either there are no assemblies or not solemn ones, is a very sorrowful thing to all good people. If the ways of Zion mourn, the sons of Zion mourn too. And hereby they make it to appear that they are indeed of Zion, living members of that body with the grievances of which they are so sensibly affected.

(2.) Because they are despised; the reproach of the solemn assemblies is a burden to them. It had been the lot of the solemn assemblies to lie under a great deal of reproach. Satan and his instruments having a particular spite at them, as the great support of the interest of God's kingdom among men. Black and odious characters have been put upon those assemblies; and this is a burden to all those that have a cordial concern for the glory of God and the welfare of the souls of men. They reckon that the reproaches of those who reproach the solemn assemblies fall upon them, fall foul upon them.

V. God will recover the captives out of the hands of their oppressors, and bring home the banished that seemed to be expelled, Zep 3:19,20.

1. Their enemies shall be disabled to detain them in bondage: "At that time I will undo all that afflict thee, will break their power, and blast their counsels, so that they shall be forced to surrender the prey they have taken." Conficiam--I will take them to task; "I will be doing with them shortly, and so as to make an end of them." Note, Those that abuse and oppress God's people take the ready way to undo themselves.

2. They shall be enabled to assert and recover their liberty, and all the difficulties in the way of it shall be surmounted. Is the church weak and wounded? I will save her that halts, as was promised, Mic 4:7.

He will help her when she cannot help herself; even the lame shall take the prey, Isa 33:23. Is she dispersed, and not likely to incorporate for her common benefit? I will gather her that was driven out, and bring her again at the time that I gather her. One act of mercy and grace shall serve both to collect them out of their dispersions and to conduct them to their own land. When the people's hearts are prepared, the work will be done suddenly; and who can hinder it if God undertake to effect it? "I will turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord; you shall plainly discern the hand of God in it, and say, This is the Lord's doing."

VI. God will by all this put honour upon them and gain them respect from all about them. Israel was at first made high above all nations in praise and fame, De 26:19. The reproach brought upon them was therefore one of the sorest of their grievances (nothing cuts deeper to those that are in honour than disgrace does); and therefore when God returns, in mercy, to his church, it is here promised that she shall regain her credit; all the reproach shall be for ever rolled way, as Israel's at Gilgal, Jos 5:9. The church shall be as honourable as ever she had been despicable.

1. Even those that reproached her shall be made to respect her: "I will get them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame, that the same who were the witnesses of their disgrace may see cause to change their mind concerning them." Those that said, "This is Zion whom no man looks after," shall say, "This is Zion whom the great God looks after." And she that was looked upon to be the offscouring of the earth now appears to be the darling of heaven.

2. Even those that never knew her shall be brought to honour her (Zep 3:20): I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth. So the Jewish church was when the fear of the Jews fell upon their neighbours (Es 8:17), and some of all nations said, we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zec 8:23. So the Christian church was when it was made to flourish in the world, for there is that in it which may justly recommend it to the value and esteem of all the people of

the earth. And so the universal church of the firstborn will be in the great day, when the saints shall be brought together to Christ, that he may be admired and glorified in them, and they admired and glorified in him before angels and men. Then will God's Israel be made a name and a praise to eternity.

19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

20 At that time will I bring you *again,* even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.

Haggai
[Hagg ai]

Haggai-1

The People Urged to Build the Temple

1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first
day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet
unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua
the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,
2 Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is
not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon that they saw not their signs, and there was no more prophet (Ps 74:9), which was a just judgment upon them for mocking and misusing the prophets. We read of no prophets they had in their return, as they had in their coming out of Egypt, Ho 12:13. God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit to exert themselves in that escape (Ezr 1:5); for, though God makes use of prophets, he needs them not, he can do his work without them.

But the lamp of Old-Testament prophecy shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire; and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of a special messenger from heaven, when the word of the Lord had been long precious (as when prophecy began, 1Sa 3:1) and there had been no open vision. In the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, this prophet was sent; and the word of the Lord came to him, and came by him to the leading men among the Jews, who are here named, Hag 1:1 The chief governor,

1. In the state; that was Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, who was commander-in-chief of the Jews, in their return out of captivity.

2. In the church; and that was Joshua the son of Josedech, who was now high priest. They were great men and good men, and yet

were to be stirred up to their duty when they grew remiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mending of it. The prophets, who were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe,

What the sin of the Jews was at this time, Hag 1:2. As soon as they came up out of captivity they set up an altar for sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, Ezr 3:10. They then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly; but, being served with a prohibition some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force, when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but afterwards, when the violence of the opposition had abated, they continued very indifferent to it, had no spirit nor courage to set about it again, but seemed glad that they had a pretence to let it stand still.

Though those who are employed for God may be driven off from their work by a storm, yet they must return to it as soon as the storm is over. These Jews did not do so, but continued loitering until they were afresh reminded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another was, The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built; that is,

1. "Our time has not come for the doing of it, because we have not yet recovered, after our captivity; our losses are not repaired, nor have we yet got before-hand in the world. It is too great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are; let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches, and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham." They did not say that they would not build a temple at all, but, "Not yet; it is all in good time."

Note, Many a good work is put by by being put off, as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient

season. They do not say that they will never repent, and reform, and be religious, but, "Not yet." And so the great business we were sent into the world to do is not done, under pretence that it is all in good time to go about it.

2. "God's time has not come for the doing of it; for (say they) the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way is not broken off, and therefore we ought not to proceed, though there be a present connivance of authority."

Note, There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty, when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of our courage and faith. It is bad to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vouch Providence for the patronising of our neglects.

3 Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,
4 *Is it* time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house *lie*
waste?

What the judgments of God were by which they were punished for this neglect, Hag 1:6,9-11. They neglected the building of God's house, and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs. They desired to be excused from such an expensive piece of work under this pretence, that they must provide for their families; their children must have meat and portions too, and, until they have got before-hand in the world, they cannot think of rebuilding the temple.

Now, that the punishment might answer to the sin, God by his providence kept them still behind-hand, and that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the smart of the judgment, and every one complained of the unseasonable weather, the great losses they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade; but they were not sensible of the cause of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them.

They did not, or would not, see and own that it was for their putting off the building of the temple that they lay under these manifest

tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore God here gives them notice that this is that for which he contended with them.

Note, We need the help of God's prophets and ministers to expound to us, not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning in his rod as well as in his word, to discover to us not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shows himself offended at us. Let us observe,

1. How God contended with them. He did not send them into captivity again, nor bring a foreign enemy upon them, as they deserved, but took the correcting of them into his own hands; for his mercies are great.

(1.) He that gives seed to the sower denied his blessing upon the seed sown, and then it never prospered; they had nothing, or next to nothing, from it. They sowed much (Hag 1:6), kept a great deal of ground in tillage, which, they might expect, would turn to a better advantage than usual, because their land had long lain fallow and had enjoyed its sabbaths. Having sown much, they looked for much from it, enough to spend and enough to spare too; but they were disappointed: They bring in little, very little (Hag 1:6); when they have made the utmost of it, it comes to little (Hag 1:9); it did not yield as they expected. Isa 5:10, The seed of a homer shall yield an ephah, a bushel's sowing shall yield a peck.

Note, Our expectations from the creature are often most frustrated when they are most raised; and then, when we look for much, it comes to little, that our expectation may be from God only, in whom it will be outdone. We are here told how they came to be disappointed (Hag 1:10): The heaven over you is stayed from dew; he that has the key of the clouds in his hands shut them up, and withheld the rain when the ground called for it, the former or the latter rain, and then of course the earth is stayed from her fruit; for, if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron.

The corn perhaps came up very well, and promised a very plentiful crop, but, for want of the dews at earing-time, it never filled, but was parched with the heat of the sun and withered away. The

restored captives, who had long been kept bare in Babylon, thought they should never want when they had got their own land in possession again and had that at command. But what the better are they for it, unless they had the clouds at command too? God will make us sensible of our necessary and constant dependence upon him, throughout all the links in the chain of second causes, from first to last; so that we can at no time say, "Now we have no further occasion for God and his providence."

See Ho 2:21. But God not only withheld the cooling rains, but he appointed the scorching heats (Hag 1:11): I called for a drought upon the land, ordered the weather to be extremely hot, and then the fruits of the earth were burnt up.

See how every creature is that to us which God makes it to be, either comfortable or afflictive, serving us or incommoding us. Nothing among the inferior creatures is so necessary and beneficial to the world as the heat of the sun; it is that which puts life into the plants and renews the face of the earth at spring. And yet, if that go into an extreme, it undoes all again. Our Creator is our best friend; but, if we make him our enemy, we make the best friends we have among the creatures our enemies too. This drought God called for, and it came at the call; as the winds and the waves, so the rays of the sun, obey him. It was universal, and the ill effects of it were general; it was a drought upon the mountains, which, lying high, were first affected with it.

The mountains were their pasture-grounds, and used to be covered over with flocks, but now there was no grass for them. It was upon the corn, the new wine, and the oil; all failed through the extremity of the hot weather, even all that the ground brought forth; it all withered. Nay, it had a bad influence upon men; the hot weather enfeebled some, and made them weary and faint, and spent their spirits; it inflamed others, and put them into fevers. It should seem, it brought diseases upon cattle too. In short, it spoiled all the labour of their hands, which they hoped to eat of and maintain their families by.

Note, Meat for the belly is meat that perishes, and, if we labour for that only, we are in danger of losing our labour; but we are sure

our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord if we labour for the meat which endures to eternal life. For the hand of the diligent, in the business of religion, will infallibly make rich, whereas, in the business of this life, the most solicitous and the most industrious often lose the labour of their hands. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

(2.) He that gives bread to the eater denied his blessing upon the bread they ate, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and failing of the corn in the field was visible--it was for want of rain; but, besides that, there was a secret blast and curse attending that which they brought home.

[1.] When they had it in the barn they were not sure of it: I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts (Hag 1:9), and that withered it, as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of, but know not the way of. I did blow it away; so the margin reads it. When men have heaped wealth together God can scatter it with the breath of his mouth as easily as we can blow away a feather.

Note, We can never be sure of any thing in this world; it is exposed, not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed; for there moth and rust corrupt, Mt 6:19. And, if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyments, we must make God our friend; for, if he bless them to us, they are blessings indeed, but if he blow upon them we can expect no good from them: they make themselves wings and fly away.

[2.] When they had it upon the board it was not that to them that they expected: "You eat, but you have not enough, either because the meat is washy, and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy, and not satisfied. You eat, but you have no good digestion, and so are not nourished by it, nor does it answer the end, or you have not enough because you are not content, nor think it enough. You drink, but are not cooled and refreshed by it; you are not filled with drink; you are stinted, and have not enough to quench your thirst. The new wine is cut off from your mouth (Joe 1:5), nay, and you drink your water too by measure and with astonishment; you

have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of falling short."

[3.] That which they had upon their backs did them no good there: "You clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; your clothes soon wear out, and wax old, and grow thin, because God blows upon them," contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness when God blessed them. It is God that makes our garments warm upon us, when he quiets the earth, Job 37:17.

[4.] That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, they were not sure of:

"He that earns wages by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, puts it into a bag with holes; it drops through, and wastes away insensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear that they spend their money as fast as they get it." Those that lay up their treasure on earth put it into a bag with holes; they lose it as they go along, and those that come after them pick it up. But, if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for ourselves bags that wax not old, Lu 12:33.

2. Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of the favours promised them at their return (Joe 2:24); they provoked him to do it: It is because of my house that is waste. This is the quarrel God has with them. The foundation of the temple is laid, but the building does not go on. "Every man runs to his own house, to finish that, and to make that convenient and fine, and no care is taken about the Lord's house; and therefore it is that God crosses you thus in all your affairs, to testify his displeasure against you for that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly."

Note, As those who seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof shall not only find them, but are most likely to have other things added to them, so those who neglect and postpone those things will not only lose them, but will justly have other things taken away from them. And if God cross us in our temporal affairs, and we meet with trouble and disappointment, we shall find this is the cause of it, the work we have to do for God

and our own souls is left undone, and we seek our own things more than the things of Jesus Christ, Php 2:21.

5 Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.
6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes.
7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.
8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.
9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little; and when ye brought *it* home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that *is* waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

The reproof which the prophet gives them for their neglect of the temple-work (Hag 1:4): "Is it time for you, O you! to dwell in your ceiled houses, to have them beautified and adorned, and your families settled in them?" They were not content with walls and roofs for necessity, but they must have for gaiety and fancy. "It is high time," says one, "that my house were wainscoted." "It is high time," says another, "that mine were painted." And God's house, all this time, lies waste, and nothing is done at it. "What!" says the prophet, "is it time that you should have your humour pleased, and not time you should have your God pleased?" How much was their disposition the reverse of David's, who could not be easy in his house of cedar while the ark of God was in curtains (2Sa 7:2), and of Solomon's, who built the temple of God before he built a palace for himself.

Note, Those are very much strangers to their own interest who prefer the conveniences and ornaments of the temporal life before the absolute necessities of the spiritual life, who are full of care to enrich their own houses, while God's temple in their hearts lies waste, and nothing is done for it or in it.

IV. The good counsel which the prophet gives to those who thus despised God, and whom God was therefore justly displeased with.

1. He would have them reflect: Now therefore consider your ways, Hag 1:5 and again Hag 1:7. "Be sensible of the hand of God gone

out against you, and enquire into the reason; think what you have done that has provoked God thus to break in upon your comforts; and think what you will do to testify your repentance, that God may return in mercy to you."

Note, It is the great concern of every one of us to consider our ways, to set our hearts to our ways (so the word is), to think on our ways (Ps 119:59), to search and try them (La 3:40), to ponder the path of our feet (Pr 4:26), to apply our minds with all seriousness to the great and necessary duty of self-examination, and communing with our own hearts concerning our spiritual state, our sins that are past, and our duty for the future; for sin is what we must answer for, duty is what we must do; about these therefore we must be inquisitive, rather than about events, which we must leave to God. Many are quick-sighted to pry into other people's ways who are very careless of their own; whereas our concern is to prove every one his own work, Ga 6:4.

2. He would have them reform (Hag 1:8): "Go up to the mountain, to Lebanon, and bring wood, and other materials that are wanting, and build the house with all speed; put it off no longer, but set to it in good earnest." Note, Our considering our ways must issue in the amending of whatever we find amiss in them. If any duty has been long neglected, that is not a reason why it should still be so, but why now at length it should be revived; better late than never. For their encouragement to apply in good earnest to this work, he assures them,

(1.) That they should be accepted of him in it: Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it; and that was encouragement enough for them to apply to it with alacrity and resolution, and to go through with it, whatever it cost them.

Note, Whatever God will take pleasure in, when it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of, and to reckon that inducement enough to set about it, and go on with it in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms than in contributing any thing towards that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to be the top of our ambition to be accepted of the Lord, 2Co 5:9. Though they had foolishly

neglected the house of God, yet, if at length they will resume the care of it, God will not remember against them their former neglects, but will take pleasure in the work of their hands. Those who have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favour.

(2.) That he would be honoured by them in it: I will be glorified, saith the Lord. He will be served and worshipped in the temple when it is built, and sanctified in those that come nigh to him. It is worth while to bestow all possible care, and pains, and cost, upon that by which God may be glorified.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed
from her fruit.
11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and
upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that*
which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and
upon all the labor of the hands.
12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech,
the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of
the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord
their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.

As an ear-ring of gold (says Solomon), and an ornament of fine gold, so amiable, so acceptable, in the sight of God and man, is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear, Pr 25:12. The prophet here was a wise but faithful reprover, in God's name, and he met with an obedient ear. The foregoing sermon met with the desired success among the people, and their obedience met with due encouragement from God. Observe,

I. How the people returned to God in a way of duty. All those to whom that sermon was preached received the word in the love of it, and were wrought upon by it. Zerubbabel, the chief governor, did not think himself above the check and command of God's word. He was a man that had been eminently useful in his day, and serviceable to the interest of the church, yet did not plead his former merits in answer to this reproof for his present remissness, but submitted to it. Joshua's business, as high priest, was to teach, and yet he was willing himself to be taught, and willingly received admonition and instruction.

The remnant of the people (and the whole body of them was but a remnant, a very few of the many thousands of Israel) also were very pliable; they all obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and bowed their neck to the yoke of his commands, and it is here recorded to their honour that they did so, Hag 1:12. Their father said, Sons, go work to-day in my vineyard, in my temple; and they not only said, We go, sir, but they went immediately.

1. They looked upon the prophet to be the Lord's messenger, and the word he delivered to be the Lord's message to them; and therefore received it not as the word of man, but as the word of Almighty God; they obeyed his words, as the Lord their God had sent him, Hag 1:12. Note, In attending to God's ministers we must have an eye to him that sent them, and receive them for his sake, while they act according to their commission.

2. They did fear before the Lord. Prophecy was a new thing with them; they had had no special messenger from heaven for a great while, and therefore now that they had one, and but one, they paid an extraordinary regard to him; whereas their fathers, who had many prophets, mocked and misused them. It is sometimes so; when good preaching is most scarce it does most good, whereas the manna that is rained in plenty is loathed as light bread. And, because they so readily received this prophet, God, within a month or two after, raised them up another, Zec 1:1.

They feared before the Lord; they had a great regard to the divine authority and a great dread of the divine wrath, and were of those that trembled at God's word. The judgments of God which they had been under, though very severe, had not prevailed to make them fear before the Lord, until the word of God was sent to expound his providences, and then they feared.

Note, A holy fear of God will have a great influence upon our obedience to him. Serve the Lord with fear; if we fear him not, we shall not serve him. 3. The Lord stirred up their spirits, Hag 1:14.

(1.) He excited them to their duty, and put it into their hearts to go about it.

Note, Then the word of God has its success when God by his grace stirs up our spirits to comply with it; and without that grace we should remain stupid and utterly averse to every thing that is good. It is in the day of a divine power that we are made willing.

(2.) He encouraged them in their duty, and with those encouragements enlarged their hearts, Ps 119:32. When they heard the word they feared; but, lest they should sink under the weight of that fear, God stirred them up, and made them cheerful and bold to encounter the difficulties they might meet with. Note, When God has work to do, he will either find or make men fit to do it, and stir them up to it.

4. They applied to their work with all possible vigour: They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God. Every one, according as his capacity or ability was, lent a hand, some way or other, to further that good work; and this they did with an eye to God as the Lord of hosts, and as their God, the God of Israel. The consideration of God's sovereign dominion in the world by his providence, and his covenant-relation to his people by his grace, should stir up our spirits to act for him, and for the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men, to the utmost of our power.

5. They did this speedily; it was but on the first day of the sixth month that Haggai preached them this sermon, and by the twenty-fourth of the same month, little more than three weeks after, they were all busy working in the house of the Lord their God, Hag 1:15. To show that they were ashamed of their delays hitherto, now that they were convinced and called they were resolved to delay no longer, but to strike while the iron was hot, and to set about the work while they were under convictions. Note, Those that have lost time have need to redeem time; and the longer we have loitered in that which is good the more haste we should make when we are convinced of our folly.

II. How God met them in a way of mercy. The same prophet that brought them the reproof brought them a very comforting encouraging word (Hag 1:13): Then spoke Haggai, the Lord's

messenger, in the Lord's message, in his name, and as from him, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord. That is all he has to say, and that is enough; as that word of Christ to his disciples is (Mt 28:20), "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. I am with you, that is, I will forgive your neglects hitherto, and they shall not be remembered against you; I will remove the judgments you have been under for those neglects, and will appear for you, as I have in them appeared against you. I am with you to protect you against your enemies that bear ill-will to your work, and to prosper you, and to give you success in it--with you to strengthen your hands, and bless the work of them, without which blessing those labour in vain that build."

Note, Those that work for God have God with them; and, if he be for us, who can be against us? If he be with us, what difficulty can stand before us?

13 Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto
the people, saying, I *am* with you, saith the Lord.
14 And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel,
governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high
priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and
did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God,
15 in the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of
Darius the king.

Haggai-2

The Glory of the New Temple

1 In the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came
the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying,

Here is, I The date of this message, Hag 2:1. It was sent on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, when the builders had been about a month at work (since the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month), and had got it in some forwardness. Note, Those that are hearty in the service of God shall receive fresh encouragements from him to proceed in it, as their case calls for them. Set the wheels a going, and God will oil them.

II The direction of this message, Hag 2:2 The encouragements here are sent to the same persons to whom the reproofs in the foregoing chapter are directed; for those that are wounded by the convictions of the word shall be healed and bound up by its consolations. Speak to Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the residue of the people, the very same that obeyed the voice of the Lord (Hag 1:12) and whose spirits God stirred up to do so (Hag 1:14); to them are sent these words of comfort.

2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

3 Who *is* left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? *is it* not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I *am* with you, saith the Lord of hosts:

5 *According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

The message itself, in which observe,

1 The discouragements which those laboured under who were employed in this work. That which was such a damp upon them, and an alloy to their joy, when the foundation of the temple was laid, was still a clog upon them--that they could not build such a temple now as Solomon built, not so large, so stately, so sumptuous, a one as that was. This fetched tears from the eyes of many, when the dimensions of it were first laid (Ezr 3:12), and still it made the work go on heavily--that the glory of this house, in comparison with that of the former, was as nothing, Hag 2:3.

It was now about seventy years since Solomon's temple was destroyed (for that was in the nineteenth year of the captivity, and this about the nineteenth after the captivity), so that there might be some yet alive who could remember to have seen it, and still they would be upbraiding themselves and their brethren with the great disparity between this house and that. One could remember the gold with which it was overlaid, another the precious stones

with which it was garnished; one could describe the magnificence of the porch, another of the pillars--and where are these now?

This weakened the hands of the builders; for, though our gracious God is pleased with us if we do in sincerity as well as we can in his service, yet our proud hearts will scarcely let us be pleased with ourselves unless we do as well as others whose abilities far exceed ours. And it is sometimes the fault of old people to discourage the services of the present age by crying up too much the performances and attainments of the former age, with which others should be provoked to emulation, but not exposed to contempt. Say not thou that the former days were better than these (Ec 7:10), but thank God that there is any good in these, bad as they are.

2 The encouragement that is given them to go on in the work, notwithstanding (Hag 2:4): Yet now, though this house is likely to be much inferior to the former, be strong, O Zerubbabel! and be strong, O Joshua! Let not these leading men give way to this suggestion, nor be disheartened by it, but do as well as they can, when they cannot do so well as they would; and let all the people of the land be strong too, and work; and, if the leaders have but a good heart on it, it is hoped that the followers will have the better heart.

Note, Those that work for God ought to exert themselves with vigour, and then to encourage themselves with hope that it will end well.

3. The grounds of these encouragements. God himself says to them, Fear you not (Hag 2:5), and he gives good reasons for it.

(1.) They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence: Be strong, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, Hag 2:4. This he had said before (Hag 1:13), I am with you. But we need to have these assurances repeated, that we may have strong consolation. The presence of God with us, as the Lord of hosts, is enough to silence all our fears and to help us over all the discouragements we may meet with in the way of our duty. The

Jews had hosts against them, but they had the Lord of hosts with them, to take their part and plead their cause. He is with them; for,

[1.] He adheres to his promise. His covenant is inviolable, and he will be always theirs, and will appear and act for them, according to the word that he covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt. Though he chastens them for their transgressions with the rod, yet he will not make his faithfulness to fail.

[2.] He dwells among them by his Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy. When he first formed them into a people he gave his good Spirit to instruct them (Neh 9:20); and still the Spirit, though often grieved and provoked to withdraw, remained among them. It was the Spirit of God that stirred up their spirits to come out of Babylon (Ezr 1:5), and now to build the temple, Hag 1:14.

Note, We have reason to be encouraged as long as we have the Spirit of God remaining among us to work upon us, for so long we have God with us to work for us.

(2.) They shall have the Messiah among them shortly--him that should come. To him bore all the prophets witness and this prophet particularly here, Hag 2:6,7. Here is an intimation of the time of his coming, that it should not be long ere he came: "Yet once, it is a little while, and he shall come. The Old-Testament church has but one stage more (if we may say so) to travel; five stages were now past, from Adam to Noah, thence to Abraham, thence to Moses, thence to Solomon's temple, thence to the captivity, and now yet one stage more, its sixth day's journey, and then comes the sabbatism of the Messiah's kingdom.

Let the Son of man, when he comes, find faith on the earth, and let the children of promise continue still looking for him, for now it is but a little while and he will come; hold out, faith and patience, yet awhile, for he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And, as he then said of his first appearance, so now of his second, Surely I come quickly. Now concerning his coming it is here foretold,

[1.] That it shall be introduced by a general shaking (Hag 2:6): I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. This is applied to the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, to make way for which he will judge among the heathen, Ps 110:6. God will once again do for his church as he did when he brought them out of Egypt; he shook the heavens and earth at Mount Sinai, with thunder, and lightnings, and earthquakes; he shook the sea and the dry land when lanes were made through the sea and streams fetched out of the rock.

This shall be done again, when, at the sufferings of Christ, the sun shall be darkened, the earth shake, the rocks rend--when, at the birth of Christ, Herod and all Jerusalem are troubled (Mt 2:3), and he is set for the fall and rising again of many. When his kingdom was set up it was with a shock to the nations; the oracles were silenced, idols were destroyed, and the powers of the kingdoms were moved and removed, Heb 12:27. It denotes the removing of the things that are shaken. Note, The shaking of the nations is often in order to the settling of the church and the establishing of the things that cannot be shaken.

[2.] That it shall issue in a general satisfaction. He shall come as the desire of all nations--desirable to all nations, for in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed with the best of blessings--long expected and desired by the good people in all nations, that had any intelligence from the Old-Testament predictions concerning him. Balaam in the land of Moab had spoken of a star that should arise out of Jacob, and Job in the land of Uz of his living Redeemer; the concourse of devout men from all parts at Jerusalem (Ac 2:5) was in expectation of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom about that time.

All the nations that are brought in to Christ, and discipled in his name, have called him, and will call him, all their salvation and all their desire. This glorious title of Christ seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy (Ge 49:10), that to him shall the gathering of the people be.

(3.) The house they are now building shall be filled with glory to such a degree that its glory shall exceed that of Solomon's temple. The enemies of the Jews followed them with reproach, and cast contempt upon the house they were building; but they might very well endure that when God undertook to fill it with glory. It is God's prerogative to fill with glory; the glory that comes from him is satisfying, and not vain glory. Moses's tabernacle and Solomon's temple were filled with glory when God in a cloud took possession of them; but this house shall be filled with glory of another nature.

[1.] Let them not be concerned because this house will not have so much silver and gold about it as Solomon's temple had, Hag 2:8. God needs not the silver and gold to adorn his temple, for (says he), The silver is mine, and the gold is mine. All the silver and gold in the world are his; all that is hid in the bowels of the earth (for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof), all that is laid up in the exchequers, banks, and treasuries of the children of men, and all that circulates for the maintaining of trade and commerce; it is all the Lord's. Every penny bears his image as well as Cæsar's; and therefore when gold and silver are dedicated to his honour, and employed in his service, no addition is made to him, for it was his before.

When David and his princes offered vast sums for the service of the house of God, they acknowledged, It is all thy own, and of thy own, Lord, have we given thee, 1Ch 29:14,16. Therefore God needs not sacrifice, for every beast of the forest is his, Ps 50:10.

Note, If we have silver and gold, we must serve and honour God with them, for they are all his own, we have but the use of them, the property remains in him; but, if we have not silver and gold to honour him with, we must honour him with such as we have, and he will accept us, for he needs them not; all the silver and gold in the world are his already. The earth is full of his riches, so is the great and wide sea also.

[2.] Let them be comforted with this, that, though this temple have less gold in it, it shall have more glory than Solomon's (Hag 2:9): The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.

This was never true in respect of outward glory. This latter house was indeed in its latter times very much beautified and enriched by Herod, and we find the disciples admiring the stones and buildings of the temple, how fine they were (Mk 13:1); but it was nothing in comparison with Solomon's temple; and, besides, the Jews own that several of the divine glories of the first temple were wanting in this--the ark, the urim and thummim, the fire from heaven, and the Schechinah; so that we cannot conceive how the glory of this latter house should in any thing exceed that of the former, but in that which would indeed excel all the glories of the first house--the presence of the Messiah in it, the Son of God, his being presented there the glory of his people Israel, his attending there at twelve years old, and afterwards his preaching and working miracles there, and his driving the buyers and sellers out of it.

It was necessary, then, that the Messiah should come while the second temple stood; but, that being long since destroyed, we must conclude that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, is he that should come, and we are to look for no other. It was also the glory of this latter house,

First, That, before the coming of Christ, it was always kept free from idols and idolatries, and was never polluted with those abominable things, as the first temple often was (2Ki 23:11,12), and in this its glory excelled all the glory of that. Note, The purity of the church, and the strict adherence to divine institutions, are much more its glory than external pomp and splendour.

Secondly, That, after Christ, the gospel was preached in it by the apostles, even all the words of this life, Ac 5:20. In the temple Jesus Christ was daily preached, Ac 5:42. Now the ministration of righteousness and life by the gospel was unspeakably more glorious than the law, which was a ministration of death and condemnation, 2Co 3:9,10.

Note, That is the most valuable glory which arises from our relation to Christ and our interest in him. As, where Christ is, behold a greater than Solomon is there, so the heart in which he

dwells, and makes a living temple, behold it is more glorious than Solomon's temple, and will be so to eternity.

(4.) They should see a comfortable end of their present troubles, and enjoy the pleasure of a happy settlement: In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts. Note, God's presence with his people in his ordinances secures to them all good. If God be with us, peace is with us. But the Jews under the latter temple had so much trouble that we must conclude this promise to have its accomplishment in that spiritual peace which Jesus Christ has by his blood purchased for, and by his last will and testament bequeathed to, all believers (Joh 14:27), that peace which Christ himself preached as the prophet of peace, and gives as the prince of peace. God will give peace in this place; he will give his Son to be the peace, Eph 2:14.

6 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it *is* a little while, and I
will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land;*
7 and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come:
and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.
8 The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, saith the Lord of hosts.
9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith
the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of
hosts.

The People's Unfaithfulness Reproved

10 In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month,* in the second year of
Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

This sermon was preached two months after that in the former part of the chapter. The priests and Levites preached constantly, but the prophets preached occasionally; both were good and needful. We have need to be taught our duty in season and out of season. The people were now going on vigorously with the building of the temple, and in hopes shortly to have it ready for their use and to be employed in the services of it; and now God sends them a message by his prophet, which would be of use to them.

I. By way of conviction and caution. They were now engaged in a very good work, but they were concerned to see to it, not only that it was good for the matter of it, but that it was done in a right manner, for otherwise it would not be accepted of God. God sees there are many among them that spoil this good work, by going about it with unsanctified hearts and hands, and are likely to gain no advantage to themselves by it; these are here convicted, and all are warned thereby to purify the hands they employ in this work, for to the pure only all things are pure, and from the pure only that comes which is pure.

This matter is here illustrated by the established rules of the ceremonial law, in putting a difference between the clean and the unclean, about which many of the appointments of the law were conversant. Hereby it appears that a spiritual use is to be made of the ceremonial law, and that it was intended, not only as a divine ritual to the Jews, but for instruction in righteousness to all, even to us upon whom the ends of the world have come, to discover to us both sin and Christ, both our disease and our remedy. Now observe here,

1. What the rule of the law was. The prophet is ordered to enquire of the priests concerning it (Hag 2:11); for their lips should keep this knowledge, and the people should enquire the law at their mouth, Mal 2:7. Haggai himself, though a prophet, must ask the priests concerning the law. His business, as an extraordinary messenger, was to expound the providences of God, and to give directions concerning particular duties, as he had done, Hag 1:8,9. But he would not take the priests' work out of the hands of those who were the ordinary ministers, and whose business it was to expound the ordinances of God, to teach the people the meaning of them, and to give the general rules for the observance of them.

In a case of that nature, Haggai must himself consult them. Note, God has given to his ministers diversities of gifts, and calls them out to do diversities of services, so that they have need one of another, should make use one of another, and be helpful one to another.

The prophet, though divinely inspired, cannot say to the priest, I have no need of thee, nor can the priest say so to the prophet. Perhaps Haggai was therefore ordered to consult the priests, that out of their own mouths he might judge both them and the people committed to their charge, and convict them of worse than ceremonial pollution. See Le 10:10,11. Now the rules of the law, in the cases propounded, are,

(1.) That he that has holy flesh in his clothes cannot by the touch of his clothes communicate holiness (Hag 2:12): If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, though the garment is thereby so far made a devoted thing as that it is not to be put to common use till it has first been washed in the holy place (Le 6:27), yet it shall by no means transmit a holiness to either meat or drink, so as to make it ever the better to those that use it.

(2.) That he that is ceremonially unclean by the touch of a dead body does by his touch communicate that uncleanness. The law is express (Nu 19:22), Whatsoever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; yet this Haggai will have from the priests' own mouth, for concerning those things that we find very plain in our Bibles yet it is good to have the advice of our ministers. The sum of these two rules is that pollution is more easily communicated than sanctification; that is (says Grotius), There are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and that a difficult one.

Bonum oritur ex integris; malum ex quolibet defectu--Good implies perfection; evil commences with the slightest defect. Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God if they are not good themselves, but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it.

2. How it is here applied (Hag 2:14): So is this people, and so is this nation, before me. He does not call them his people and his nation (they are unworthy to be owned by him), but this people, and this nation. They have been thus before God; they thought their offering sacrifices on the altar would sanctify them, and excuse their neglect to build the temple, and remove the curse

which by that neglect they had brought upon their common enjoyments:

"No," says God, "your holy flesh and your altar will be so far from sanctifying your meat and drink, your wine and oil, to you, that your contempt of God's temple will bring a pollution, not only on your common enjoyments, but even on your sacrifices too; so that while you continued in that neglect all was unclean to you, nay, and so is this people still; and so they will be; on these terms they will still stand with me, and on no other--that if they be profane, and sensual, and morally impure, if they have wicked hearts, and live wicked lives, though they work ever so hard at the temple while it is building, and though they offer ever so many and costly sacrifices there when it is built, yet that shall not serve to sanctify their meat and drink to them, and to give them a comfortable use of them; nay, the impurity of their hearts and lives shall make even that work of their hands, and all their offerings, unclean, and an abomination to God."

And the case is the same with us. Those whose devotions are plausible, but whose conversation is wicked, will find their devotions unable to sanctify their enjoyments, but their wickedness prevailing to pollute them. Note, When we are employed in any good work we should be jealous over ourselves, lest we render it unclean by our corruptions and mismanagements.

11 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying,

12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13 Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean.

By way of comfort and encouragement. If their hearts be right with God, and their eye single in his service, they shall have the

benefit of their devotion. God will take away the judgment of famine wherewith they have been corrected for their remissness, and will restore them great plenty. This they are called to consider, and to observe whether God would not be to the utmost as good as his word, and by his providence remarkably countenance and recompense their reformation in this matter. To make this the more signal, let them set down the day when they began to work at the building of the temple, to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid some time before. On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month they began to prepare materials (Hag 1:15), and now on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month they began to lay a stone upon a stone in the temple of the Lord; let them take notice of this day, and observe,

1. How they had gone behind-hand in their estates before this day. Let them remember the time when there was a sensible waste and decay in all they had, Hag 2:16. A man went to his garner, expecting to find a heap of twenty measures of corn, so much he used to have from such a piece of ground, or so much used to be left at that time of the year, or so much he took it for granted there was when he fetched the last from it, but he found it unaccountably diminished, and, when he came to measure it, there were but ten measures; it had run in and dried away in the keeping, or vermin had eaten it, or it was stolen.

In like manner he went to the wine-press, expecting to draw fifty vessels of wine, for so much he used to have from such a quantity of grapes, but they did not yield as usual, for he could get but twenty. This agrees with what we had, Hag 1:9, You looked for much, and it came to little.

Note, It is our folly that we are apt to raise our expectation from the creature, and to think tomorrow must needs be as this day and much more abundant, but we are commonly disappointed, and the more we expect the more grievous the disappointment is. In the stores and treasures of the new covenant we need not fear being disappointed when we come by faith to draw from them. But this was not all. God did visibly contend with them in the weather (Hag 2:17):

I smote you with blastings, winds and frosts, which made every green thing to wither, and with mildew, which choked the corn when it was knitting, and with hail, which battered it down and broke it when it had grown to some maturity; thus they were disappointed in all the labour of their hands, while they neglected to lay their hand to the work of God and to labour in that.

Note, While we take no care of God's interest we cannot expect he should take care of ours. And, when he thus walks contrary to us, he expects that we should return to him and to our duty. But this people either saw not the hand of God in it (imputing it to chance) or saw not their own sin as the provoking cause of it, and therefore turned not to him. They were a long time incorrigible and unhumbled under these rebukes, so that God's hand was stretched out still, for the people turned not to him that smote them, Isa 9:12,13. They might easily observe that as long as they continued in neglect of the temple work all their affairs went backward. But,

2. Let them now observe, and they should find that from this day forward God would bless them (Hag 2:18,19): "Consider now whether when you begin to change you way towards God you do not find God changing his way towards you; from this day, when you fall to work about the temple, consider it, I say, and you shall find a remarkable turn given for the better to all your affairs. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yes it is, and not yet thrown into the ground. The fruit-trees do not as yet bud, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the olive-tree, have not as yet brought forth, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest or vintage next year.

Nature does not promise it; but now that you begin to apply in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promises it; he has said, From this day I will bless you. It is the best day's work you ever did in your lives, for hence you may date the return of your prosperity." He does not say what they shall be, but, in general, I will bless you; and those that know what are the fruits flowing from God's blessing know they can desire no more to make them happy. "I will bless you, and then you shall soon recover all your

losses, shall thrive as fast as before you went backward; for the blessing of the Lord, that maketh rich, and those whom he blesses are blessed indeed."

Note, When we begin to make conscience of our duty to God we may expect his blessing; and this tree of life is so known by its fruits that one may discern almost to a day a remarkable turn of Providence in favour of those that return in a way of duty; so that they and others may say that from this day they are blessed. See Mal 3:10. And whoso is wise will observe these things, and understand by them the lovingkindness of the Lord.

15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord:
16 since those *days* were, when *one* came to a heap of twenty *measures*, there were *but* ten: when *one* came to the pressvat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press, there were *but* twenty.
17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the Lord.
18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, *even* from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider *it*.
19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless *you*.

The Lord's Promise to Zerubbabel

20 And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth *day* of the month, saying,

After Haggai's sermon ad populum--to the people, here follows one, the same day, ad magistratum--to the magistrates, a word directed particularly to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, who was a leading active man in this good work which the people now set about, and therefore he shall have some particular marks put upon him (Hag 2:21): Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, speak to him by himself. He has thoughts in his head far above those of the common people, as wise princes are wont to have, who move in a higher and larger sphere than others.

The people of the land are in care about their corn-fields and vineyards; God has assured them that they shall prosper, and we hope that will make them easy; but Zerubbabel is concerned about the community and its interests, about the neighbouring nations, and the revolutions of their governments, and what will become of the few and feeble Jews in those changes and convulsions, and how such a poor prince as he is should be able to keep his ground and serve his country. "Go to him," says God, "and tell him it shall be well with him and his remnant, and let that make him easy."

Let him expect to hear of great commotions in the nations of the earth, and let them not be a surprise to him; behold, he is told of them before (Hag 2:21,22): I will shake the heavens and the earth. This he had said before (Hag 2:6,7), and now says it again to Zerubbabel; let him expect shaking times, universal concussions. The world is like the sea, like the wheel, always in motion, but sometimes in a special manner turbulent. But, Blessed be God, if the earth be shaken, it is to shake the wicked out of it, Job 38:13. In the apocalyptic visions earthquakes bode no ill to the church.

Here the heavens and the earth are shaken, that proud oppressors may be broken and brought down: I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms. The Chaldean monarchy, which had been the throne of kingdoms a great while, was already overthrown; and the powers that are, and are yet to come, shall in like manner be overthrown; their day will come to fall.

1. Though they be ever so powerful, yet the strength of their kingdoms shall be destroyed. They trust in chariots and horses (Ps 20:7), but their chariots shall be overthrown, and those that ride in them, so that they shall not be able to attack the people of God, whom they persecute, not to escape the judgments of God, which persecute them.

2. Though there appear none likely to be the instruments of their destruction, yet God will bring it about, for they shall be brought down every one by the sword of his brother. This reads the doom of all the enemies of God's church, that will not repent to give him glory; it seems likewise designed as a promise of Christ's victory

over the powers of darkness, his overthrow of Satan's throne, that throne of kingdoms, the throne of the god of this world, the taking from him all the armour wherein he trusted and dividing the spoil. And all opposing rule, principality, and power, shall be put down, that the kingdom may be delivered up to God, even the Father.

21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

22 and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

Let him depend upon it that he shall be safe under the divine protection in the midst of all these commotions, Hag 2:23. Zerubbabel was active to build God a house, and therefore God makes the same promise to him as he did to David on the like occasion--that he would build him a house, and establish it, even in that day when heaven and earth are shaken.

This promise refers to this good man himself and to his family. He honoured God, and God would honour him. His successors likewise in the government of Judah might take encouragement from it; though their authority was very precarious as to men, yet God would confirm it, and this would contribute to the stability of the people over whom God had set them. But this promise has special reference to Christ, who lineally descended from Zerubbabel, and is the sole builder of the gospel-temple.

1. Zerubbabel is here owned as God's servant, and it is an honourable mention that is hereby made of him, as Moses and David my servants. When God destroys his enemies he will prefer his servants. Our Lord Jesus is his Father's servant in the work of redemption, but faithful as a Son, Isa 42:1.

2. He is owned as God's elect: I have chosen thee to this office; and whom God makes choice of he will make use of. Our Lord Jesus is chosen of God, 1Pe 2:4. And he is the head of the chosen remnant; in him they are chosen.

3. It is promised that, being chosen, God will make him as a signet. Jeconiah had been as the signet on God's right hand, but was plucked thence (Jer 22:24); and now Zerubbabel is substituted in the room of him. He shall be near and dear to God, precious in his sight, and honourable, and his family shall continue till the Messiah spring out of it, who is the signet on God's right hand. This intimates,

(1.) The delight the Father has in him. In him he once and again declared himself to be well pleased. He is set as a seal upon his heart, a seal upon his arm, is brought near unto him (Da 7:13), is hidden in the shadow of his hand, Isa 49:2.

(2.) The dominion the Father has entrusted him with. Princes sign their edicts, grants, and commissions, with their signet-rings, Es 3:10. Our Lord Jesus is the signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to him and derived from him. By him the great charter of the gospel is signed and ratified, and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen.

23 In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah
[Zechariah]

Zechariah-1

A Call to Return to the Lord

1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of
the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the
prophet, saying,
2 The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

Here is, I The foundation of Zechariah's ministry; it is laid in a divine authority: The word of the Lord came to him. He received a divine commission to be God's mouth to the people and with it instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that which also he delivered unto them. The word of the Lord was to him; it came in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing, and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this, we have here,

1 The time when the word of the Lord came first to him, or when the word that next follows came to him: it was in the second year of Darius. Before the captivity the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel; but now by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to whom they were subjects. Such a melancholy change had sin made of their circumstances. Zerubbabel took not so much state upon him as to have public acts dated by the years of his government, and in things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, complied with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as Da 7:1,8:1.

Zechariah preached his first sermon in the eighth month of this second year of Darius; Haggai preached his in the sixth month of the same year, Hag 1:1 The people being readily obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet; for to him that has, and uses well what he has, more shall be given.

2 The name and family of the prophet to whom the word of the Lord came; He was Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo, and he was the prophet, as Haggai is called the prophet, Hag 1:1.

For, though in former ages there was one Iddo a prophet (2Ch 12:15), yet we have no reason to think that Zechariah was of his progeny, or should be denominated from him. The learned Mr. Pemble is decidedly of opinion that this Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, is the same that our Saviour says was slain between the temple and the altar, perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the temple (Mt 23:35), and that our Saviour does not mean (as is commonly thought) Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, for why should Jehoiada be called Barachiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's account persuades us to think so; for, reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the Jews, he begins at Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy prophets. Whereas, after Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, many prophets and righteous men were put to death by them.

It is true there is no mention made in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but Josephus might industriously conceal that shame of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spoke in his prophesying concerning Christ of his being sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends, and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ. Probably, being assaulted by his persecutors, he took sanctuary in the court of the priests (and some think he was himself a priest), and so was slain between the porch and the altar.

II The first-fruits of Zechariah's ministry. Before he came to visions and revelations, and delivered his prophetic discourses, he preached that which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin with that. Before he published the promises of mercy, he published calls to repentance, for thus the way of the Lord must be prepared. Law must be first preached, and then gospel. Now,

1 The prophet here puts them in mind of the controversy God had had with their fathers (Zec 1:2): "The Lord has been sorely displeased with your fathers, and has laid them under the tokens of

his displeasure. You have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have seen with your eyes the woeful remains of it. God's quarrel with you has been of long standing, and therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up."

Note, The judgments of God, which those that went before us were under, should be taken as warnings to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repentance, that we may cut off the entail of the curse and get it turned into a blessing.

2. He calls them, in God's name, to return to him, and make their peace with him, Zec 1:3. God by him says that to this backsliding people which he had often said by his servants the prophets: "Turn you to me in a way of faith and repentance, duty and obedience, and I will turn to you in a way of favour and mercy, peace and reconciliation." Let the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall be taken under the protection of the government and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects. Let them change their way, and God will change his. See Mal 3:7.

But that which is most observable here is that God is called here the Lord of hosts three times: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts. It is he that speaks, and therefore you are bound to regard what he says." Turn you to me, saith the Lord of hosts (this intimates the authority and obligation of the command), and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts--this intimates the validity and value of the promise; so that it is no vain repetition.

Note, The consideration of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion should both engage and encourage sinners to repent and turn to him. It is very desirable to have the Lord of hosts our friend and very dreadful to have him our enemy.

3. He warns them not to persist in their impenitence, as their fathers had done (Zec 1:4): Be you not as your fathers. Instead of being hardened in their evil courses by the example of their fathers' sins, let them rather be deterred from them by the example of their fathers' punishment. We are apt to be governed very much by precedent, and we are well or ill governed according to the use we make of the precedents before us. The same examples to some are

a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death. Some argued, "Shall we be wiser than our fathers? They never minded the prophets, and why then should we mind them? They made laws against them, and why should we tolerate them?" But they are here taught how they should argue: "Our fathers slighted the prophets, and God was sorely displeased with them for it; therefore let us the more carefully regard what God says to us by his prophets." "Review what is past, and observe,"

(1.) "What was the message that God sent by his servants the prophets to your fathers: The former prophets cried to your fathers. cried aloud, and did not spare, not spare themselves, not spare your fathers; they cried as men in earnest, as men that would be heard; they spoke not as from themselves, but in the name of the Lord of hosts; and this was the substance of what they said, the burden of every song, the application of every sermon--Turn you now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings; the very same that we now preach to you. Be persuaded to leave your sins; resolve to have no more to do with them. A speedy reformation is the only way to prevent an approaching ruin: Turn you now from sin to God without delay."

(2.) "How little this message was regarded by your fathers: But they did not hear, they did not heed. They turned a deaf ear to these calls: They would not hearken unto me, saith the Lord. They would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled, by the word I sent them; say not then that you will do as your fathers did, for they did amiss;" see Jer 44:17. Note, We must not follow the examples of our dear fathers unless they were God's dear children, nor any further than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

(3.) "What has become both of your fathers and of the prophets that preached to them? They are all dead and gone," Zec 1:5.

[1.] Your fathers, where are they? The whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. Note, When we think of our ancestors, that have gone through the world and gone out of it before us, we should think, Where are they? Here they were, in the towns and countries where we live, passing and repassing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, trading

in the same shops and exchanges, worshipping God in the same churches. But where are they?

They are somewhere still; when they died there was not an end of them. They are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace. Where are they? Those of them that lived and died in sin are in torment, and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we come not to that place of torment, Lu 16:28,29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ are in paradise; and, if we live and die as they did, we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally.

[2.] The prophets also, did they live for ever? No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last. Christ is a prophet that lives for ever, but all other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon may be the last. People are to look upon them as such, and to hear accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the light with them, that they may walk and work while they have the light. Oh that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it, that we are dying ministers dealing with dying people about the concerns of immortal souls and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are gone, that were before us of old, Jer 28:8.

Those that were the glory of men withered and fell; but the word of the Lord endures for ever, 1Pe 1:24,25. The prophets that are now, do we live for ever? (so some read it); no, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you, and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world both we and our prophets shall live for ever; and to prepare for that world ought to be our great care and business in this.

(4.) "What were the effects of the word which God spoke to them by his prophets, Zec 1:6. The preachers died, and the hearers died,

but the word of God died not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground." As the rain and snow from heaven, it shall not return void, Isa 55:11. He appealed to themselves; they knew very well,

[1.] That the judgments God had threatened were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear: "My statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets, the precepts with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, did they not take hold of your fathers?" Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them, the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them, nor get out of the reach of them. God's words took hold of them as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution for contempt.

Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the threatenings of God's word of no effect, but, sooner or later, they will take place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly take hold of those that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judges he will overcome.

[2.] That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong: They returned, and said (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation they acknowledged), Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings, to reckon with us for them, so has he dealt with us, and we must acknowledge both his truth and his justice, must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. Sero sapiunt Phryges--It is late before the Phrygians become wise. This after-wit, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men, who will look no further than they can see.

They would never be persuaded to say in time, "God will be as good as his word, for he is faithful; he will deal with us according to our deserts, for he is righteous." But now they see both plainly enough when the sentence is executed; now he that runs may read, and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present

providences and the former predictions which then were slighted, between the present punishments and the former sins which then were persisted in. Now they cannot but say, The Lord is righteous, Da 9:11-13.

3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye
unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the
Lord of hosts.
4 Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried,
saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways,
and *from* your evildoings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me,
saith the Lord.
5 Your fathers, where *are* they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?
6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the
prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and
said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our
ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

The Vision of the Horses

7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which *is* the
month Sebat in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord
unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet,
saying,

We not come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zechariah, to awaken the people's attention, and to engage their humble reverence of the word and their humble enquiries into it, and to fix it the more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seem designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple.

The scope of this vision (which is as an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, now in their present state, when they seem to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated (Zec 1:7) the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, three months after he preached that sermon (Zec 1:1), in which he calls them to repentance from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that that sermon had a good effect, and that

they returned to God in a way of duty, the assurances he had given them are confirmed, that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

I. What the prophet saw, and the explication of that.

1. He saw a grove of myrtle-trees, a dark shady grove, down in a bottom, hidden by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were over-topped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has not been always visible, but sometimes hidden, as the woman in the wilderness, Re 12:6.

2. He saw a man mounted upon a red horse, standing in the midst of this shady myrtle-grove. This man is no other than the man Christ Jesus, the same that appeared to Joshua with his sword drawn in his hand as captain of the host of the Lord (Jos 5:13,14) and to John with his bow and his crown, Re 6:2. Though the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it. Was it hidden by the hills? He was much more hidden in the myrtle-grove, yet hidden as in an ambush, ready to appear for the seasonable relief of his people, to their happy surprise. Compare Isa 45:15, Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, and yet Israel's God and Saviour at the same time, their Holy One in the midst of them.

He was riding, as a man of war, as a man in haste, riding on the heavens for the help of his people, De 33:26. He rode on a red horse, either naturally so or dyed red with the blood of war, as this same victorious prince appeared red in his apparel, Isa 63:1,2. Red is a fiery colour, denoting that he is jealous for Jerusalem (Zec 1:14) and very angry at her enemies. Christ, under the law, appeared on a red horse, denoting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to resist unto blood. But, under the gospel, he appears on a white horse (Re 6:2,19:11), denoting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph, and hangs out the white, not the bloody flag.

3. He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders: Behind him there were some red horses, and some speckled, and some white, angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, some in acts of judgment, others of mercy, others in mixed events.

Note, The King of the church has angels at command, not only to do him honour, but to minister for the good of those that are his. 4. He enquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him, as his instructor, besides those he saw in the vision; so had Ezekiel (Eze 40:3), and Daniel, Da 8:16. Zechariah asked him (Zec 1:9), O my Lord! what are these? And, it should seem this angel that talked with him was Christ himself, the man on the red horse, whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zechariah addresses himself. Would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application, not to angels (they are themselves learners), but to Christ himself, who is alone able to take the book, and open the seals, Re 5:7.

The prophet's question implies a humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance and an earnest desire to be informed. O let me know what these are! This he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God, in their present distress.

5. He received from the angel that talked with him (Zec 1:9), and from the man that stood among the myrtle-trees (Zec 1:10), the interpretation of this vision.

Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He immediately said, I will show thee what these are. What knowledge we have, or may have, concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, These are those whom the Lord has sent: they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, 2Ch 16:9) to walk, to run, to fly swiftly through the earth, to observe what is done in it and to execute the divine commands.

God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were there* red horses, speckled, and white.

9 Then said I, O my lord, what *are* these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these *be.*

10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These *are they* whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

What the prophet heard, and what instructions were thereby given him. Faith comes by hearing, and, generally, in visions there was something said.

1. He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, Zec 1:11. They had been out abroad, as flying posts (being hastened by the King of kings' commandment, Es 3:15), and, having returned, they give this account to the Angel that stood among the myrtle-trees (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable): We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold all the earth sits still and is at rest. We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far from being so. For,

(1.) We find the world of angels here very busy. Those that are employed in the court above rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below are never idle, nor lose time; they are still ascending and descending upon the Son of man (Joh 1:51, as on Jacob's ladder, Ge 28:12); they are still walking to and fro through the earth. Thus active, thus industrious, Satan owns himself to be in doing mischief, Job 1:7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries which, as roaring lions, go about continually, seeking to devour us. Though holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet, while they are going on God's errands, they hesitate not to walk to and fro through it. Their own

habitation, which those that fell liked not, they will like the better when they return.

(2.) We find the world of mankind here very careless: All the earth sits still, and is at rest, while all the church is made uneasy, tossed with tempests and not comforted. Those that are strangers to the church are secure; those that are enemies to it are successful. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed. The children of men are merry and jovial, but none grieve for the affliction of God's children. Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into, what a spirit of slumber has seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned! They sit still and are at rest, Lu 17:26, &c.

2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for his afflicted church, Zec 1:12. The angels related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of. No; it is the Angel among the myrtle-trees that is the great intercessor. Upon the report of the angels he immediately turned heavenward, and said, Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church?

(1.) The thing he intercedes for is mercy; as Ps 85:7, Show us thy mercy, O Lord! Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation.

(2.) The thing he complains of is the delay of this mercy: How long wilt thou not have mercy! He knows that mercies through him shall be built up for ever (Ps 89:2), but thinks it long that the building is deferred.

(3.) The objects of compassion recommended to the divine mercies are, Jerusalem, the holy city, and the other cities of Judah that were now in ruins; for God had had indignation against them now threescore and ten years. He mentions seventy years because that was the time fixed in the divine councils for the continuance of the

captivity; so long the indignation lasted, and though now for a little space grace had been shown them from the Lord their God, to give them some reviving (Ezr 9:8), yet the scars of those seventy years' captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that this is the melancholy string they still harp upon--the divine indignation during those seventy years.

Dr. Lightfoot thinks that whereas the seventy years of the captivity were reckoned from Jehoiakim's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus, these seventy years are to be computed from the eleventh of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation, as that seventy years mentioned Zec 7:5 was about nineteen years after; the captivity went off, as it came on, gradually. "Lord, we are still under the burden of the seventy years' wrath, and wilt thou be angry with us for ever?"

3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, and him the Father heareth always (Zec 1:13): The Lord answered the angel, this angel of the covenant, with good words and comfortable words, with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favour to them. These were comfortable words to Christ, who is grieved in the grievances of his church, and comfortable to all that mourn with Zion. God often answers prayer with good words, when he does not immediately appear in great works; and those good words are real answers to prayer. Men's good words will not feed the body (Jam 2:16), but God's good words will feed the faith, for saying and doing with him are not two things, though they are with us.

4. He heard that reply which was given to the angel repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people, for their comfort. The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him he signified to his servant John, and by him to the churches, Re 1:1,4.

Thus all the good words and comfortable words of the gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them to all the world. Now that God would speak comfortably to Jerusalem, Zechariah is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord. The voice said, Cry. Cry then. The prophets must now cry as loudly to show God's people their comforts as ever they did formerly to show them their transgressions, Isa 40:2,3,6. And if he ask, What shall I cry? he is here instructed.

(1.) He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, Zec 1:14. He takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been formerly by the iniquities found in his church. The earth sat still and was at rest (Zec 1:11), not relenting at all, nor showing the least remorse, for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem, as Joseph's brethren, who, when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread; and this God took very ill (Zec 1:15):

I am very sorely displeased with the heathen, that are at ease, and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more will he be displeased with those that are at ease in Zion (Am 6:1), with Zion's own sons, that sympathize not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only not concerned for her, but they were concerned against her: I was but a little displeased with my people, and designed to correct them moderately, but those that were employed as instruments of the correction cast off all pity, and with the greatest rage and malice helped forward the affliction and added to it, persecuting those whom God had smitten (Ps 69:26) and insulting over those whom he had troubled. See Isa 47:6,Isa 10:5,Eze 25:12,15.

Note, God is displeased with those who help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity, in such a case, is good divinity.

(2.) He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, Zec 1:16. He must cry, "Thus saith the

Lord, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies. I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purport," Zec 1:17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction. The Lord, even the Lord of hosts, assures them,

[1.] That the temple shall be built that is now but in the building. This good work which they are now about, though it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him, as formerly. Note, It is good news indeed to any place to hear that God will build his house in it.

[2.] That Jerusalem shall again be built as a city compact together, which had formerly been its glory, Ps 122:3. A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem, in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity.

[3.] That the nation shall again become populous and rich, though now diminished and impoverished. Not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass, shall yet spread abroad, or be diffused; their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them; and this through prosperity: they shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them; they shall complain that the place is too strait, Isa 49:20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad, through their calamities, so they should now be through their prosperity. Let thy fountains be dispersed, Pr 5:16. The cities that should thus increase God calls his cities; they are blessed by him, and they are fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land.

[4.] That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced, by divine consolations: The Lord shall yet comfort Zion. Yet at length, though her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion and all her mourners.

[5.] That all this will be the fruit of God's preventing distinguishing favour: He shall yet choose Jerusalem, shall renew his choice, renew his covenant, shall make it appear that he has chosen

Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now rebuild them, when he brings them out of Babylon, not for any worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, De 7:7,8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

11 And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

12 Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years ?

13 And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me *with* good words *and* comfortable words.

14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen *that are* at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

16 Therefore thus saith the Lord ; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched upon Jerusalem.

17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

The Vision of the Horns and Carpenters

18 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.

19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What *be* these? And he answered me, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

It is the comfort and triumph of the church (Isa 59:19) that when the enemy shall come in like a flood, with mighty force and fury, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Now, in this vision (the second which this prophet had), we have an illustration of that, God's Spirit making a stand, and making head, against the formidable power of the church's adversaries.

I. We have here the enemies of the church bold and daring, and threatening to be its death, to cut off the name of Israel; such the people of God had lately been insulted by: I looked and behold four horns (Zec 1:18), which are explained Zec 1:19. They are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, that is, the Jews both in the country and in the city, because they were the Israel of God. They have tossed them (so some read it), as furious bulls with their horns toss that which they are enraged at. They have scattered them, so that no man did lift up his head, Zec 1:21. No man durst show his face for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them.

They are horns, denoting their dignity and dominion--horns exalted, denoting also their strength, and power, and violence. They are four horns, for the Jews are surrounded with them on every side; when they avoid one horn that pushes at them they run upon another. The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of Israel that joined themselves to them, set about the building of the temple; but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehum, and Shimshai, and the other Samaritans that opposed the building of the temple, were these horns, Ezr 4:8. So were Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabians, that opposed the building of the wall, Ne 4:7.

Note, The church's enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New-Testament church has seven heads and ten horns (Re 17:3), so that those who endeavour to do the church any service must expect to be pushed at.

II. We have here the friends of the church active and prevailing. The prophet did himself lift up his eyes and see the four horns, and saw them so formidable that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but the Lord then showed him four carpenters, or smiths, who were empowered to cut off these horns, Zec 1:20,21. With an eye of sense we see the power of the enemies of the church; look which way we will, the world shows us that. But it is with an eye of faith that we see it

safe, notwithstanding; it is the Lord that shows us that, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant to see the angelic guards round about his master, 2Ki 6:17.

Observe, Those that were to fray or break the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out, were,

1. Carpenters or smiths (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron), men who had skill and ability to do it, whose proper business it was, and who understood their business and had tools at hand to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church whom he either finds, or makes, fit for it. If there be horns (which denote the force and fury of beasts) against the church, there are carpenters (which denote the wisdom and forecast of men) for the church, by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts, for every kind of beasts is tamed, and has been tamed, of mankind, Jam 3:7.

2. They were four carpenters, as many horns so many hands to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interests, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these four carpenters understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, who carried on the work of God in spite of the opposition given to it. Those horned beasts broke into God's vineyard to tread it down; but the good magistrates and the good ministers whom God raised up, though they had not power to cut off the horns of the wicked (as David did, Ps 75:5,10), yet frightened them and cast them out. Note, When God has work to do he will raise up some to do it and others to defend it and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.

20 And the Lord showed me four carpenters.

21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up *their* horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

Zechariah-2

The Exiles Summoned

1 I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.

This prophet was ordered, in God's name, to assure the people (Zec 1:16) that a line should be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Now here we have that promise illustrated and confirmed, that the prophet might deliver that part of his message to the people with the more clearness and assurance.

He sees, in a vision, a man going to measure Jerusalem (Zec 2:1,2): He lifted up his eyes again, and looked. God had shown him that which was very encouraging to him, (Zec 1:20), and therefore now he lifted up his eyes again and looked. Note, The comfortable sights which by faith we have had of God's goodness made to pass before us should engage us to lift up our eyes again, and to search further into the discoveries made to us of the divine grace; for there is still more to be seen. In the close of the foregoing chapter he had seen Jerusalem's enemies baffled and broken, so that now he begins to hope she shall not be ruined. But that is not enough to make her happy, and therefore that is not all that is promised. Here is more carpenter's work to be done. When David had resolved to cut off the horns of the wicked he engaged likewise that the horns of the righteous should be exalted, Ps 75:10.

And so does the Son of David here; for he is the man, even the man Christ Jesus, whom the prophet sees with a measuring line in his hand; for he is the master builder of his church (Heb 3:3), and he builds exactly by line and level. Zechariah took the boldness to ask him whither he was going and what he designed to do with that measuring line. And he readily told him that he was going to measure Jerusalem, to take a particular account of the dimensions of it each way, that it might be computed what was necessary for the making of a wall about it, and that it might appear, by comparing its dimensions with the vast numbers that should inhabit it, what additions were necessary to be made for the receiving and containing of them; when multitudes flock to Jerusalem (Isa 60:4) it is time for her to enlarge the place of her

tent, Isa 54:2. Note, God takes notice of the extent of his church, and will take care that, when ever so many guests are brought in to the wedding supper, still there shall be room, Lu 14:22. In the New Jerusalem, my Father's house above, there are many mansions.

2 Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what *is* the breadth thereof, and what *is* the length thereof.

3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,

4 and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited *as* towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:

5 For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

He is informed that this vision means well to Jerusalem, that the measuring line he saw was not a line of confusion (as that Isa 34:11), not a line to mete out for destruction, as when God purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion he stretched out a line (La 2:8); but it is as when he divided the inheritance by line, Ps 78:55.

The angel that talked with the prophet went forth, as he designed, to measure Jerusalem, but another angel went out to meet him, to desire that he would first explain this vision to the prophet, that it might not occasion him any uneasy speculations: Run, and speak to this young man (for, it seems, the prophet entered upon his prophecy when he was young, yet no man ought to despise his youth when God thus highly honoured it); he is a young man, not experienced, and may be ready to fear the worst; therefore bid him hope the best; tell him that Jerusalem shall be both safe and great,

1. As safe and great as numbers of men can make it (Zec 2:4): Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls; the inhabitants of it shall increase, and multiply, and replenish it to admiration, so that it shall extend itself far beyond the present dimensions which now there is an account taken of. The walls of a city, as they defend it, so they straiten and confine it, and keep its inhabitants from multiplying beyond such a pitch; but

Jerusalem, even when it is walled, to keep off the enemy, shall be inhabited as towns without walls.

The city shall be in a manner lost in the suburbs, as London is, where the out-parishes are more populous than those within the walls. So shall it be with Jerusalem; it shall be extended as freely as if it had no walls at all, and yet shall be as safe as if it had the strongest walls, such a multitude of men (which are the best walls of a city) shall there be therein, and of cattle too, to be not only food, but wealth too, for those men. Note, The increase of the numbers of a people is a great blessing, is a fruit of God's blessing on them and an earnest of further blessings, Ps 107:38. They are multiplied, for he blesses them.

2. As safe and great as the presence of God can make it, Zec 2:5.

(1.) It shall be safe, for God himself will be a wall of fire round about it. Jerusalem had no walls about it at this time, but lay naked and exposed; formerly, when it had walls, the enemies not only broke through them, but broke them down; but now God will be unto her a wall of fire. Some think it alludes to shepherds that made fires about their flocks, or travellers that made fires about their tents in desert places, to frighten wild beasts from them. God will not only make a hedge about them as he did about Job (Job 1:10), not only make walls and bulwarks about them, Isa 26:1 (those may be battered down), not only be as the mountains round about them, Ps 125:2 (mountains may be got over), but he will be a wall of fire round them, which cannot be broken through, nor scaled, nor undermined, nor the foundations of it sapped, nor can it be attempted, or approached, without danger to the assailants. God will not only make a wall of fire about her, but he will himself be such a wall; for our God is a consuming fire to his and his church's enemies. He is a wall of fire, not on one side only, but round about on every side.

(2.) It shall be great, for God himself will be the glory in the midst of it. His temple, his altar, shall be set up and attended there, and his institutions observed, and there then shall the tokens of his special presence and favour be, which will be the glory in the midst of them, will make them truly admirable in the eyes of all about

them. God will have honour from them, and put honour upon them. Note, Those that have God for their God have him for their glory; those that have him in the midst of them have glory in the midst of them, and thence the church is said to be all glorious within. And those persons and places that have God to be the glory in the midst of them have him for a wall of fire round about them, for upon all that glory there is, and shall be, a defence, Isa 4:5.

Now all this was fulfilled in part in Jerusalem, which in process of time became a very flourishing city, and made a very great figure in those parts of the world, much beyond what could have been expected, considering how low it was brought and how long it was ere it recovered itself; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is extended far, as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it, and which has God, the Son of God, for its prince and protector.

6 Ho, ho, *come forth,* and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord
: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the
Lord.

One would have thought that Cyrus's proclamation, which gave liberty to the captive Jews to return to their own land, would suffice to bring them all back, and that, as when Pharaoh gave them leave to quit Egypt and their house of bondage there, they would not leave a hoof behind; but it seems it had not that effect. There were about 40,000 whose spirits God stirred up to go, and they went; but many, perhaps the greater part, staid behind.

The land of their captivity was to most of them the land of their nativity; they had taken root there, had gained a settlement, and many of them a very comfortable one; some perhaps had got estates and preferments there, and they did not think they could better themselves by returning to their own land. Patria est ubicunque bene est--My country is every spot where I feel myself happy.

They had no great affection to their own land, and apprehended the difficulties in their way to it insuperable. This proceeded from a bad cause--a distrust of the power and promise of God, a love of ease and worldly wealth, and an indifference to the religion of their country and to the God of Israel himself; and it had a bad effect,

for it was a tacit censure of those as foolish, rash, and given to change, that did return, and a weakening of their hands in the work of God.

Such as these could not sing (Ps 137:1-9) in their captivity, for they had forgotten thee, O Jerusalem! and were so far from preferring thee before their chief joy that they preferred any joy before thee. Here is therefore another proclamation issued out by the God of Israel, strictly charging and commanding all his free-born subjects, wherever they were dispersed, speedily to return into their own land and render themselves at their respective posts there.

They are loudly summoned (Zec 2:6): Ho! ho! come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord. This fitly follows upon the promise of the rebuilding and enlarging of Jerusalem. If God will build it for them and their comfort, they must come and inhabit it for him and his glory, and not continue sneaking in Babylon.

Note, The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed should engage us, whatever it cost us, to join ourselves to them and cast in our lot among them. When Zion is enlarged, to make room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness imaginable for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man be ever so easy upon temporal accounts. No: Come forth and flee with all speed, and lose no time. Escape for thy life; look not behind thee. To induce them to hasten their return, let them consider,

1. They are now dispersed, and are concerned to incorporate themselves for their mutual common defence (Zec 2:6): "I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven, sent some into one corner of the world and some into another; this has been your condition a long time, and therefore you should now think of coming together again, to help one another." God owns that his scattering them was in wrath, and therefore they must take this invitation as a token of God's being willing to be reconciled to them again, so that they kicked at his kindness in refusing to accept the call.

2. They are now in bondage, and are concerned to assert their own liberty; and therefore, "Deliver thyself, O Zion! flee from the oppressor, and make the best of thy way. Let us see some such bold efforts and struggles to help thyself as become the generous gracious seed of Abraham." Zec 2:7.

Note, When Christ has proclaimed that deliverance to the captives which he has himself wrought out it then concerns each of us to deliver ourselves, to loose ourselves from the bands of our necks (Isa 52:2), and, since we are under grace, to resolve that sin shall not have dominion over us, Zion herself is here said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon, because many of the precious sons of Zion dwelt there, and where the people of God are there the church of God is, for it is not tied to places. Now it is not fit that Zion should dwell with the daughter of Babylon; what communion can light have with darkness?

Zion will be in danger of partaking with the daughter of Babylon both in her sins and in her plagues; and therefore, "Come out of her, my people, Re 18:4. Deliver thyself, O Zion! by a speedy return to thy own land, and do not destroy thyself by continuing in that polluted devoted land." Those that would be found among the generation of God's children must save themselves from the untoward generation of this world; it was St. Peter's charge to his new converts, Ac 2:40.

3. They have seemed to be forsaken and forgotten of God, but God will now make it to appear that he espouses their cause and will plead it with jealousy, Zec 2:8,9. It was a discouragement to those who remained in Babylon to hear of the difficulties and oppositions which their brethren met with that had returned, by which they were still in danger of being crushed and overpowered. "And we might as well sit still" (think they) "as rise up and fall." In answer to this objection, the angel that talked with the prophet (that is, Jesus Christ) tells him what he had commission to do for their protection and the perfecting of their salvation, and herein he has an eye to the great redemption which, in the fulness of time, he was to be the author of. Christ, who is Jehovah, and the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, in both which he has a sovereign power, says, He (that is, the Father) has sent me.

Note, What Jesus has done, and does, for his church against his enemies, he was sent and commissioned by the Father to do. With great satisfaction he often speaks of the Father that sent him.

(1.) He is sent after the glory. After the glorious beginning of their deliverance he is sent to perfect it, for he is the finisher of that work which he is the author of. Christ is sent, in the first place, to the nation and people of the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, Ro 9:4. And he was himself the glory of his people Israel. But after the glory, after his care of them, he is sent to the nations, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, by the power of his gospel to captivate them, and bring them, and every high thought among them, into obedience to himself.

(2.) He is sent to the nations that spoiled them, to take vengeance on them for the wrongs done to Zion, when the year of his redeemed comes and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, Isa 34:8. He is sent to shake his hand upon them, to lift up his mighty hand against them and to lay upon them his heavy hand, to bruise them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, Ps 2:9. Some think it intimates how easily God can subdue and humble them with the turn of his hand; it is but shaking his hand over them and the work is done.

They shall be a spoil to their servants, shall be enslaved to those whom they had enslaved, and be plundered by those whom they had plundered. In Esther's time this was fulfilled, when the Jews had rule over those that hated them (Es 9:1), and often in the time of the Maccabees. The promise is further fulfilled in Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies, his spoiling principalities and powers and making a show of them openly, Col 2:15. And it is still in force to the gospel-church. Christ will reckon with all that are enemies to it, and sooner or later will make them his footstool, Ps 110:1,Re 3:9.

(3.) What he will do for his church shall be an evident proof of God's tender care of it and affection to it: He that touches you touches the apple of his eye. This is a high expression of God's love to his church. By his resentment of the injuries done to her it

appears how dear she is to him, how he interests himself in all her interests, and takes what is done against her, not only as done against himself, but as done against the very apple of his eye, the tenderest part, which nature has made very fine, has put a double guard upon, and taught us to be in a special manner careful of, and which the least touch is a great offence to.

This encourages the people of God to pray with David (Ps 17:8), Keep me as the apple of thy eye; and engages them to do as Solomon directs (Pr 7:2), to keep his law as the apple of their eye. Some understand it thus: "He that touches you touches the apple of his own eye; whoever do you any injury will prove, in the issue, to have done the greatest injury to themselves."

(4.) It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission: You shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to be the protector of his church, that the promises made to the church are yea and amen in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him and was with him.

7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon.
8 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto
the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you, toucheth the
apple of his eye.
9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a
spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath
sent me.
10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell
in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.

Here is, I. Joy proclaimed to the church of God, to the daughter of Zion, that had separated herself from the daughter of Babylon. The Jews that had returned were in distress and danger, their enemies in the neighbourhood were spiteful against them, their friends that remained in Babylon were cool towards them, shy of them, and declined coming in to their assistance; and yet they are directed to sing, and to rejoice even in tribulation.

Note, Those that have recovered their purity, and integrity, and spiritual liberty, though they have not yet recovered their outward

prosperity, have reason to sing and rejoice, to give glory to God and take comfort to themselves.

I. God will have a people among them. If their brethren in Babylon will not come to them, those of other nations shall, and shall replenish Jerusalem and the cities of Judah: Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day that are now at a distance from him and strangers to him. The Jewish nation, after the captivity, multiplied very much, by the accession of proselytes to it, that were naturalized, and were entitled to all the privileges of native Israelites, and perhaps they were equal in number; and therefore Paul mentions it as an honour to him which many Jews had not, that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Php 3:5.

And this was an earnest of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the christian church and in that this and other similar promises were to have their full accomplishment. It was therefore strange that that should be so great an offence to the Jews, as we find it was in the apostles' times, which was promised them as a blessing in the prophets' times--that many nations should be joined to the Lord. And, as there had been one law, so should there be one gospel for the stranger and for those born in the land; whatever nation they come from, when they join themselves to the Lord, they shall be my people, as dear to God as ever Israel had been. Note, God will own those for his people who with purpose of heart join themselves to him; and, when many do so, we ought to look upon them, not with a jealous eye, but with a joyful one. Angels rejoice, and therefore so should the daughter of Zion, when many nations are joined to the Lord.

II. They shall have his presence among them: Sing and rejoice, for I come. Those to whom God comes have reason to rejoice, for he will be to them their chief joy. God will come, not to make them a visit only, but to reside with them and preside over them: I will dwell in the midst of thee (Zec 2:10), and it is repeated (Zec 2:11), because it was to have a double accomplishment,

1. In the dedication of the temple, in their regularly observing all God's institutions there and God's owning them therein. Those

have God dwelling in the midst of them that have his ordinances administered in their purity, and a divine power going along with them; with these tokens of God's presence the Jewish church was blessed, after this, as much as ever.

2. In the incarnation of Christ. He that here promises to dwell among them is that Lord whom the Lord of hosts has sent (Zec 2:11), and therefore must be the Lord Jesus, who came and dwelt in the midst of the Jewish nation, the eternal Word, that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This was the great honour reserved for that nation in its last days; the promise of it effectually secured their continuance till it was accomplished. They could not be destroyed while that blessing was in them; and the prospect of it, according to the promise, was the great support and comfort of those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

It is promised that when Christ comes and dwells among them they shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent him; all that were Israelites indeed were made to know it; sufficient proofs were given of it by the miracles Christ wrought, so that they might have known it, and yet there were those that perished in ignorance and unbelief, that would not know it, for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

III. They shall have all their ancient dignities and privileges restored to them again, Zec 2:12.

1. Canaan shall be a holy land again, not polluted by sin as it had been formerly, not profaned by the enemies as it had been of late; it shall be an enclosure again, and not laid in common.

2. Judah shall be in this holy land, shall inhabit it, and enjoy the comfort of it, and no longer be lost and scattered in Babylon.

3. Judah shall be God's portion, which he will delight in, which shall be dear to him, by which he will be served, and in which he will be glorified. The Lord's portion is his people.

4. God will inherit Judah again as his portion, will claim his interest, and recover the possession out of the hands of those that

had invaded his right. He will protect his people and govern them as a man does his inheritance, and will be at home among them.

5. He will choose Jerusalem again, as he had chosen it formerly, to put his name there; he will renew and confirm the choice, and continue it a chosen place, till it must resign its honours to the Jerusalem that is from above. Though the election seemed to be set aside for a while, yet it shall obtain.

II. Here is silence proclaimed to all the world besides, Zec 2:13. The daughter of Zion must sing, but all flesh must be silent. Observe here,

1. A very awful description of God's appearances for the relief of his people. He is raised up out of his holy habitation; as a man out of sleep (Ps 44:23,78:65), or as a man entering with resolution upon a business that he will go through with. Heaven is his holy habitation above; thence we must expect him to appear, Isa 64:1. His temple is so in this lower world; thence from between the cherubim he will shine forth, Ps 80:1. He is about to do something unusual, unexpected, and very surprising, and to plead his people's cause, which had long seemed neglected.

2. A seasonable caution and direction at such a time: Be silent, O all flesh! before the Lord--before Christ and his grace (let not flesh object against the methods he takes)--before God and his providence; the enemies of the church shall be silenced; all iniquity shall stop her mouth. The friends of the church also must be silent. Leave it to God to take his own way, and neither prescribe to him what he should do nor quarrel with him whatever he does. Be still, and know that he is God. Stand still, and see his salvation. See Hab 2:20,Zep 1:7. Silently acquiesce in his holy will, and patiently wait the issue, as those who are assured that when God is raised up out of his holy habitation he will not retreat, nor sit down again, till he has accomplished his whole work.

11 And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

12 And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Zechariah-3

The Prophet's Vision of Joshua the High Priest

1 And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan [an adversary] standing at his right hand to resist him.

There was a Joshua that was a principal agent in the first settling of Israel in Canaan; here is another of the same name very active in their second settlement there after the captivity; Jesus is the same name, and it signifies Saviour; and they were both figures of him that was to come, our chief captain and our chief priest. The angel that talked with Zechariah showed him Joshua the high priest; it is probable that the prophet saw him frequently, that he spoke to him, and that there was a great intimacy between them; but, in his common views, he only saw how he appeared before men; if he must know how he stands before the Lord, it must be shown him in vision; and so it is shown him. And men are really as they are with God, not as they appear in the eye of the world. He stood before the angel of the Lord, that is, before Christ, the Lord of the angels, to whom even the high priests themselves, of Aaron's order, were accountable. He stood before the angel of the Lord to execute his office, to minister to God under the inspection of the angels.

He stood to consult the oracle on the behalf of Israel, for whom, as high priest, he was agent. Guilt and corruption are our two great discouragements when we stand before God. By the guilt of the sins committed by us we have become obnoxious to the justice of God; by the power of the sin that dwells in us we have become odious to the holiness of God. All God's Israel are in danger upon these two accounts. Joshua was so here, for the law made men priests that had infirmity, Heb 7:28. And, as to both, we have relief from Jesus Christ, who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification.

I. Joshua is accused as a criminal, but is justified.

1. A violent opposition is made to him. Satan stands at his right hand to resist him to be a Satan to him, a law-adversary. He stands at his right hand, as the prosecutor, or witness, at the right hand of the prisoner. Note, The devil is the accuser of the brethren, that accuses them before God day and night, Re 12:10. Some think the chief priest was accused for the sin of many of the inferior priests, in marrying strange wives, which they were much guilty of after their return out of captivity, Ezr 1,2,Ne 13:28. When God is about to reestablish the priesthood Satan objects the sins that were found among the priests, as rendering them unworthy the honour designed them.

It is by our own folly that we give Satan advantage against us and furnish him with matter for reproach and accusation; and if any thing be amiss, especially with the priests, Satan will be sure to aggravate it and make the worst of it. He stood to resist him, that is, to oppose the service he was doing for the public good. He stood at his right hand, the hand of action, to discourage him, and raise difficulties in his way.

Note, When we stand before God to minister to him, or stand up for God to serve his interests, we must expect to meet with all the resistance that Satan's subtlety and malice can give us. Let us then resist him that resists us and he shall flee from us.

2. A victorious defence is made for him (Zec 3:2): The Lord (that is, the Lord Christ) said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee.

Note, It is the happiness of the saints that the Judge is their friend; the same that they are accused to is their patron and protector, and an advocate for them, and he will be sure to bring them off.

(1.) Satan is here checked by one that has authority, that has conquered him, and many a time silenced him. The accuser of the brethren, of the ministers and the ministry, is cast out; his indictments are quashed, and his suggestions against them as well as his suggestions to them, are shown to be malicious, frivolous, and vexatious. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! The Lord said (that

is, the Lord our Redeemer), The Lord rebuke thee, that is, the Lord the Creator. The power of God is engaged for the making of the grace of Christ effectual. "The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thy enmity to a servant of his"

Note, those that belong to Christ have him ready to appear vigorously for them when Satan appears most vehement against them. He does not parley with him, but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp reprimand: The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan! This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy. Get thee behind me, Satan.

(2.) Satan is here argued with. He resists the priest, but let him know that his resistance,

[1.] Will be fruitless; it will be to no purpose to attempt any thing against Jerusalem, for the Lord has chosen it, and he will abide by his choice. Whatever is objected against God's people, God saw it; he foresaw it when he chose them and yet he chose them, and therefore that can be no inducement to him now to reject them; he knew the worst of them when he chose them; and his election shall obtain.

[2.] It is unreasonable; for is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Joshua is so, and the priesthood, and the people, whose representative he is. Christ has not that to say for them for which they are to be praised, but that for which they are to be pitied. Note, Christ is ready to make the best of his people, and takes notice of every thing that is pleadable in excuse of their infirmities, so far is he from being extreme to mark what they do amiss.

They have been lately in the fire; no wonder that they are black and smoked, and have the smell of fire upon them, but they are therefore to be excused, not to be accused. One can expect no other than that those who but the other day were captives in Babylon should appear very mean and despicable. They have been lately brought out of great affliction; and is Satan so barbarous as to desire to have them thrown into affliction again?

They have been wonderfully delivered out of the fire, that God might be glorified in them; and will he then cast them off and abandon them? No, he will not quench the smoking flax, the smoking fire-brand; for he snatched it out of the fire because he intended to make use of it. Note, Narrow escapes from imminent danger are happy presages and powerful pleas for more eminent favours. A converted soul is a brand plucked out of the fire by a miracle of free grace, and therefore shall not be left to be a prey to Satan.

2 And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is* not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from the thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

Joshua appears as one polluted, but is purified; for he represents the Israel of God, who are all as an unclean thing, till they are washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Now observe here,

1 The impurity wherein Joshua appeared (Zec 3:3): He was clothed, not only in coarse, but in filthy garments, such as did very ill become the dignity of his office and the sanctity of his work. By the law of Moses the garments of the high priest were to be for glory and for beauty, Ex 28:2. But Joshua's garments were a shame and reproach to him; yet in them he stood before the angel of the Lord; he had no clean linen wherein to minister and to do the duty of his place.

Now this intimates, not only that the priesthood was poor and despised, and loaded with contempt, but that there was a great deal of iniquity cleaving to the holy things. The returned Jews were so taken up with their troubles that they thought they needed not complain of their sins, and were not aware that those were the great hindrances of the progress of God's work among them; because they were free from idolatry they thought themselves chargeable

with no iniquity. But God showed them there were many things amiss in them, which retarded the advances of God's favours towards them.

There were spiritual enemies warring against them, more dangerous than any of the neighbouring nations. The Chaldee paraphrase says, Joshua had sons who took unto them wives which were not lawful for the priests to take; and we find it was so, Ezr 10:18. And, no doubt, there were other things amiss in the priesthood, Mal 2:1. Yet Joshua was permitted to stand before the angel of the Lord. Though his children did not as they should, yet the covenant of priesthood was not broken. Note, Christ bears with his people, whose hearts are upright with him, and admits them into communion with himself, notwithstanding their manifold infirmities.

2 The provision that was made for his cleansing. Christ gave orders to the angels that attended him, and were ready to do his pleasure, to put Joshua into a better state. Joshua presented himself before the Lord in his filthy garments, as an object of his pity; and Christ graciously looked upon him with compassion, and not, as justly he might have done, with indignation. Christ loathed the filthiness of Joshua's garments, yet did not put him away, but put them away. Thus God by his grace does with those whom he chooses to be priests to himself; he parts between them and their sins, and so prevents their sins parting between them and their God; he reconciles himself to the sinner, but not to the sin. Two things are here done for Joshua, representing a double work of divine grace wrought in and for believers:--

(1.) His filthy garments are taken from him, Zec 3:4. The meaning of this is given us in what Christ said, and he said it as one having authority, Behold, I have caused thy iniquity to pass from thee. The guilt of it is taken away by pardoning mercy, the stench and stain of it by peace spoken to the conscience, and the power of it broken by renewing grace. When God forgives our sins he causes our iniquity to pass from us, that it may not appear against us, to condemn us; it passes from us as far as the east is from the west.

When he sanctifies the nature he enables us to put off the old man, to cast away from us the filthy rags of our corrupt affections and lusts, as things we will never have any thing more to do with, will never gird to us or appear in. Thus Christ washes those from their sins in his own blood whom he makes to our God kings and priests, Re 1:5,6. Either we must be cleansed from the pollutions of sin or we shall, as polluted, be put from that priesthood, Ezr 2:62.

(2.) He is clothed anew, has not only the shame of his filthiness removed, but the shame of his nakedness covered: I will clothe thee with change of raiment. Joshua had no clean linen of his own, but Christ will provide for him, for he will not let a priesthood of his own instituting be lost, be either contemptible before men or unacceptable before God. The change of raiment here is rich costly raiment, such as is worn on high days. Joshua shall appear as lovely as ever he appeared loathsome.

Those that minister in holy things shall not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; God will make them wise, and humble, and diligent, and faithful, and examples of every thing that is good; and then Joshua is clothed with change of raiment. Thus those whom Christ makes spiritual priests are clothed with the spotless robe of his righteousness and appear before God in that, and with the graces of his Spirit, which are ornaments to them. The righteousness of saints, both imputed and implanted, is the fine linen, clean and white, with which the bride, the Lamb's wife, is arrayed, Re 19:8.

III. Joshua is in danger of being turned out of office; but, instead of that, he is reinstalled and established in his office. He not only has his sins pardoned, and is furnished with grace sufficient for himself, but, as rectus in curia--acquitted in court, he is restored to his former honours and trusts.

1 The crown of the priesthood is put upon him, Zec 3:5. This was done at the special instance and request of the prophet: I said, "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head, as a badge of his office. Now that he looks clean, let him also look great; let him be dressed up in all the garments of the high priest." Note, When God designs the restoring or reviving of religion he stirs up his prophets and

people to pray for it, and does it in answer to their prayers. Zechariah prayed that the angels might be ordered to set the mitre on Joshua's head, and they did it immediately, and clothed him with the priestly garments; for no man took this honour to himself, but he that was called of God to it.

The angel of the Lord stood by, as having the oversight of the work which the created angels were employed in. He stood by, as one well pleased with it, and resolved to stand by the orders he had given for the doing of it and to continue his presence with that priesthood.

2 The covenant of the priesthood is renewed with him, which is called God's covenant of peace, Nu 25:12. Mr. Pemble calls it the patent of his office, which is here declared and delivered to him before witnesses, Zec 3:6,7.

The angel of the Lord, having taken care to make him fit for his office (and all that God calls to any office he either finds fit or makes so), invests him in it. And though he is not made a priest with an oath (that honour is reserved for him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedek, Heb 7:21), yet, being a type of him, he is inaugurated with a solemn declaration of the terms upon which he held his office. The angel of the Lord protested to Joshua that, if he would be sure to do the duty of his place, he should enjoy the dignity and reward of it. Now see,

(1.) What the conditions are upon which he enters into his office. Let him know that he is upon his good behaviour; he must walk in God's ways, that is, he must live a good life and be holy in all manner of conversation; he must go before the people in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also keep God's charge, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood, and must see to it that the inferior priests performed the duties of their place decently and in order. He must take heed to himself, and to all the flock, Ac 20:28.

Note, Good ministers must be good Christians; yet that is not enough: they have a trust committed to them, they are charged with

it, and they must keep it with all possible care, that they may give up their account of it with joy, 1Ti 6:14.

(2.) What the privileges are which we may expect, and be assured of, in the due discharge of his office. His patent runs, Quamdiu se bene gesserit--During good behaviour. Let him be sure to do his part, and God will own him.

[1.] "Thou shalt judge my house; thou shalt preside in the affairs of the temple, and the inferior priests shall be under thy direction." Note, The power of the church, and of church rulers, is not a legislative, but only a judicial power. The high priest might not make any new laws for God's house, nor ordain any other rites of worship than what God had ordained; but he must judge God's house, that is, he must see to it that God's laws and ordinances were punctually observed, must protect and encourage those that did observe them, and enquire into and punish the violation of them.

[2.] "Thou shalt also keep my courts; thou shalt have oversight of what is done in all the courts of the temple, and shalt keep them pure and in good order for the worship to be performed in them." Note, Ministers are God's stewards, and they are to keep his courts, in honour of him who is the chief Lord and for the preserving of equity and good order among his tenants.

[3.] "I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by, among these angels that are inspectors and assistants in this instalment." They shall stand by while Joshua is at work for God, and shall be as a guard to him, or he shall be highly honoured and respected as an angel of God, Ga 4:14. Ministers are called angels, Re 1:20. Those that walk in God's ways may be said to walk among the angels themselves, for they do the will of God as the angels do it that are in heaven, and are their fellow-servants, Re 19:10. Some make it a promise of eternal life, and of a reward of his fidelity in the future state. Heaven is not only a palace, a place to repose in, but a paradise, a garden, a place to walk in; and there are walks among the angels, in society with that holy and glorious company. See Eze 28:14.

5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the

angel of the Lord stood by.
6 And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying,
7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou
wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt
also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these
that stand by.
8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before
thee: for they *are* men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my
servant the Branch.

As the promises made to David often slide insensibly into promises of the Messiah, whose kingdom David's was a type of, so the promises here made to Joshua immediately rise as far upward, and look as far forward, as to Christ, whose priesthood Joshua's was now a shadow of, not only in general, as it kept up the line of Aaron's priesthood, but especially as it was the reviving of that happy method of correspondence between heaven and earth, to which a great interruption had been given by the iniquity and captivity of Israel. Christ is a high priest, as Joshua was, for sinners and sufferers, to mediate for those that have been under guilt and wrath. And it was fit that Joshua should understand the priesthood of Christ, because all the virtue of his priesthood, its value and usefulness to the church, depended upon and was derived from the priesthood of Christ. See,

To whom this promise of Christ is directed (Zec 3:8): "Hear now, O Joshua! Thou hast heard with pleasure what belongs to thyself; but, behold, a greater than Joshua is at hand. Hear now concerning him, thou and the rest of the priests, thy fellows, who sit before thee, at thy feet, as learners, but whom thou art to look upon as thy fellows, for all you are brethren; let the high priest, and all the inferior priests, take notice of this, for they are men wondered at."

They are set for signs, for types and figures of Christ's priesthood. What God now did for Joshua and his fellows was a happy omen of the coming of the Messiah promised, and would be so interpreted, with a pleasing wonder, by all that had understanding of the times. Or they are men wondered at for their singularity, hooted at as strange sort of people, because they run not with others to the same excess of riot (1Pe 4:4), or for their strange afflictions and surprising deliverance out of them, as Ps 71:7, I am

as a wonder unto many. They are men of wonder; they are a wonder to themselves, are amazed to think how happily their condition is altered. God's people and ministers are, upon many accounts, men wondered at. The high priest and his fellows here (as the prophet and his children, Isa 8:18) are for signs and for wonders. But men's wonder at them will cease when the Messiah comes, as the stars are eclipsed by the light of the sun; for his name shall be called Wonderful.

9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone
shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith
the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one
day.

10 In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor
under the vine and under the fig tree.

The promise itself, which consists of several parts, all designed for the comfort and encouragement of Joshua and his friends in that great good work of building the temple, which they were now engaged in. An eye to Christ, and a believing dependence upon the promises relating to him and his kingdom, would carry them through the difficulties they met with in that and their other services.

1 The Messiah shall come: Behold, I will bring forth my servant the branch. He has been long hid, but the fulness of time is now at hand, when he shall be brought forth into the world, brought forth among his people Israel. God himself undertakes to bring him forth, and therefore, no doubt, he will own him and stand by him. He is God's servant, employed in his work, obedient to his will, and entirely devoted to his honour and glory. He is the branch; so he was called Isa 4:2, The branch of the Lord. Isa 11:1, A branch out of the roots of Jesse. Jer 23:5, A righteous branch; and Jer 23:15, The branch of righteousness. His beginning was small, as a tender branch, but in time he should become a great tree and fill the earth, Isa 53:2. He is the branch from which all our fruit must be gathered.

2. Many eyes shall be upon him. He is the stone laid before Joshua, alluding to the foundation or chief corner-stone, of the temple, which probably was laid, with great solemnity, in the presence of Joshua. Christ is not only the branch, which is the beginning of a

tree, but the foundation, which is the beginning of a building; and, when he shall be brought forth, seven eyes shall be upon him. The eye of his Father was upon him, to take care of him, and protect him, especially in his sufferings; when he was buried in the grave, as the foundation-stones are under ground, the eyes of Heaven were still upon him, buried out of men's sight, but not out of God's.

The eyes of all the prophets and Old-Testament saints were upon this one stone; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it and was glad. The eyes of all believers are upon him; they look unto him and are saved, as the eyes of the stung Israelites were upon the brazen serpent. Some understand this one stone to have the seven eyes in it as the wheels had in Ezekiel's vision, and think it denotes that perfection of wisdom and knowledge which Jesus Christ was endued with, for the good of his church. His eyes run to and fro through the earth.

3. God himself will beautify him, and put honour upon him: I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts. This stone the builders refused, as rough and unsightly; but God undertakes to smooth and polish it, nay, and to carve it so that it shall be the head stone of the corner, the most beautiful in all the building. Christ was God's workmanship; and abundance of his wisdom appears in the contrivance of our redemption, which will appear when the engraving is perfected. This stone is a precious stone, though laid for a foundation; and the graving of it seems to allude to the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high priest, which had the names of the tribes graven upon them, as the engraving of a signet, Ex 28:21,22.

In that breast-plate there were twelve stones laid before Aaron, and for aught that appears those were lost; but there shall be one worth them all laid before Joshua, and that is Christ himself. This precious stone shall sparkle as if it had seven eyes; there shall appear a perfection of wisdom and prudence in the oracles that proceed from the breast-plate of judgment. And God will engrave the engraving thereof; he will entrust Christ with all his elect, and he shall appear as their representative, and agent for them, as the high priest did when he went in before the Lord with the names of all Israel engraven in the precious stones of his breast-plate. When

God gave a remnant to Christ, to be brought through grace to glory, then he engraved the graving of this precious stone.

4. By him sin shall be taken away, both the guilt and the dominion of it: I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. When the high priest had the names of Israel engraven on the precious stones he was adorned with he is said to bear the iniquity of the holy things (Ex 28:38); but the law made nothing perfect, Heb 10:1. He bore the iniquity of the land, as a type of Christ; but he could not remove it; the doing of that was reserved for Christ, that blessed Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world; and he did it in one day, that day in which he suffered and died; that was done by the sacrifice offered that day which could not be done by the sacrifices of ages before, no, not by all the days of atonement which from Moses to Christ returned every year. This agrees with the angel's prediction (Da 9:24):

He shall finish transgression and make an end of sin. And some make the engravings wherewith God engraved him to signify the wounds and stripes which were given to his blessed body, which he underwent for our transgression, for our iniquity, and by which we are healed.

5. The effect of all this shall be the sweet enjoyment which all believers shall have of themselves, and the sweet communion they shall have with one another (Zec 3:10): In that day you shall call every man his neighbour under the vine and the fig-tree, which yield most pleasant fruit, and whose leaves also afford a refreshing shade for arbours. When iniquity is taken away,

(1.) We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the vine or the fig-tree, Ro 5:1.

(2.) We repose in a sweet tranquillity and are quiet from the fear of evil. What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon (1Ki 4:24,25); for he is the prince of peace.

(3.) We ought to invite others to come to partake with us in the enjoyment of these privileges, to call every man his neighbour to come and sit with him, for mutual converse, under the vine and fig-tree, and to share with him in the fruits he is surrounded with. Gospel-grace, as far as it comes with power, makes men neighbourly; and those that have the comfort of acquaintance with Christ themselves, and communion with God through him, will be forward to court others to it. Let us go unto the house of the Lord.

Zechariah-4

The Candlestick and the Olive Trees

1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man
that is wakened out of his sleep,
2 and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and
behold a candlestick all *of* gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his
seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which *are*
upon the top thereof:
3 and two olive trees by it, one upon the right *side* of the bowl, and the
other upon the left *side* thereof.
4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What
are these, my lord?
5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me,
Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.
6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the
Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by
my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.
7 Who *art* thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a
plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone *thereof with* shoutings,
crying, Grace, grace unto it.
8 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his
hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts
hath sent me unto you.
10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice,
and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven;

they *are* the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole
earth.
11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What *are* these two olive trees
upon the right *side* of the candlestick and upon the left *side* thereof?
12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What *be these* two olive
branches, which through the two golden pipes empty the golden *oil* out
of themselves?
13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these *be?*
And I said, No, my lord.
14 Then said he, These *are* the two anointed ones, that stand by the
Lord of the whole earth.

Zechariah-5

The Flying Roll

1 Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying
roll.
2 And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying
roll; the length thereof *is* twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten
cubits.
3 Then said he unto me, This *is* the curse that goeth forth over the
face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off *as* on
this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off *as*
on that side according to it.
4 I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the
house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by
my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall
consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

The Woman in the Ephah

5 Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift
up now thine eyes, and see what *is* this that goeth forth.
6 And I said, What *is* it? And he said, This *is* an ephah that goeth forth.
He said moreover, This *is* their resemblance through all the earth.

7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this *is* a woman
that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.
8 And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the
ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.
9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out
two women, and the wind *was* in their wings; for they had wings like
the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth
and the heaven.
10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the
ephah?
11 And he said unto me, To build it a house in the land of Shinar: and it
shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

Zechariah-6

The Four Chariots

1 And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there
came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the
mountains *were* mountains of brass.
2 In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black
horses;
3 and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grizzled
and bay horses.
4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What
are these, my lord?
5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These *are* the four spirits of
the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the
earth.
6 The black horses which *are* therein go forth into the north country;
and the white go forth after them; and the grizzled go forth toward the
south country.
7 And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and
fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro
through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.
8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that
go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north
country.

The Symbolic Crowning of Joshua

9 And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,
10 Take of *them of* the captivity, *even* of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah,
which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go
into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;
11 then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set *them* upon the head
of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;
12 and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying,
Behold the man whose name *is* The Branch; and he shall grow up out
of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord:
13 even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory,
and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his
throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.
14 And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and
to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the
Lord.
15 And they *that are* far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord,
and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And
this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord
your God.

Zechariah-7

Insincere Fasting Reproved

1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of
the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month,
even in Chisleu;

This occasional sermon, which the prophet preached, and which is recorded in this and the next chapter, was above two years after the former, in which he gave them an account of his visions, as appears by comparing the date of this (Zec 7:1), in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, with the date of that (Zec 1:1), in the eighth month of the second year of Darius; not that Zechariah was idle all that while (it is expressly said that he and Haggai continued prophesying till the temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius;

Ezr 6:14,15), but during that time he did not preach any sermon that was afterwards published, and left upon record, as this is.

God may be honoured, his work done, and his interest served, by word of mouth as well as by writing; and by inculcating and pressing what has been taught, as well as by advancing something new. Now here we have,

I. A case proposed concerning fasting. Some persons were sent to enquire of the priests and prophets whether they should continue to observe their yearly fasts, particularly that in the fifth month, as they had done. It is uncertain whether the case was put by those that yet remained in Babylon, who, being deprived of the benefit of the solemn feasts which God's ordinance appointed them, made up the want by the solemn fasts which God's providences called them to; or by those that had returned, but lived in the country, as some rather incline to think, because they are called the people of the land, Zec 7:5. But, as to that, the answer given to the messengers of the captive Jews might be directed, not to them only, but to all the people. Observe,

1. Who they were that came with this enquiry--Sherezer and Regem-melech, persons of some rank and figure, for they came with their men, and did not think it below them, or any disparagement to them, to be sent on this errand, but rather an addition to their honour to be,

(1.) Attendants in God's house, there to do duty and receive orders. The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

(2.) Agents for God's people, to negotiate their affairs. Men of estates, having more leisure than men of business, ought to employ their time in the service of the public, and by doing good they make themselves truly great; the messengers of the churches were the glory of Christ, 2Co 8:23.

2. What the errand was upon which they came. They were sent perhaps not with gold and silver (as those, Zec 6:10,11), or, if they

were, that is not mentioned, but upon the two great errands which should bring us all to the house of God,

(1.) to intercede with God for his mercy. They were sent to pray before the Lord, and, some think (according to the usage then), to offer sacrifice, with which they offered up their prayers. The Jews, in captivity, prayed towards the temple (as appears Da 6:10); but now that it was in a fair way to be rebuilt they sent their representatives to pray in it, remembering that God had said that his house should be called a house of prayer for all people, Isa 56:7. In prayer we must set ourselves as before the Lord, must see his eye upon us and have our eye up to him.

(2.) To enquire of God concerning his mind. Note, When we offer up our requests to God it must be with a readiness to receive instructions from him; for, if we turn away our ear from hearing his law, we cannot expect that our prayers should be acceptable to him. We must therefore desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life that we may enquire there (Ps 27:4), asking, not only, Lord, what wilt thou do for me? but, Lord what wilt thou have me to do?

3. Whom they consulted. They spoke to the priests that were in the house of the Lord and to the prophets; the former were an oracle for ordinary cases, the latter for extraordinary; they were blessed with both, and would try if either could acquaint them with the mind of God in this case. Note, God having given diversities of gifts to men, and all to profit with, we should make use of all as there is occasion. They were not so wedded to the priests, their stated ministers, as to distrust the prophets, who appeared, by the gifts given them, well qualified to serve the church; nor yet were they so much enamoured with the prophets as to despise the priests, but they spoke both to the priests and to the prophets, and, in consulting both, gave glory to the God of Israel, and that one Spirit who works all in all. God might speak to them either by urim or by prophets (1Sa 28:6), and therefore they would not neglect either.

The priests and the prophets were not jealous one of another, nor had any difference among themselves; let not the people then make

differences between them, but thank God they had both. The prophets did indeed reprove what was amiss in the priests, but at the same time told the people that the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they must enquire the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, Mal 2:7.

Note, Those that would know God's mind should consult God's ministers, and in doubtful cases ask advice of those whose special business it is to search the scriptures.

4. What the case was which they desired satisfaction in (Zec 7:3): Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years. Observe,

(1.) What had been their past practice, not only during the seventy years of the captivity but to this time, which was twenty years after the liberty proclaimed them; they kept up solemn stated fasts for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed, according as their opportunities were, in their closets, families, or such assemblies for worship as they had. In the case here, they mention only one, that of the fifth month; but it appears, by Zec 8:19, that they observed four anniversary fasts, one in the fourth month (June 17), in remembrance of the breaking up of the wall of Jerusalem (Jer 52:6), another in the fifth month (July 4), in remembrance of the burning of the temple (Jer 52:12,13), another in the seventh month (September 3), in remembrance of the killing of Gedaliah, which completed their dispersion, and another in the tenth month (December 10), in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, 2Ki 25:1.

Now it was very commendable in them to keep those fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences, by which God called them to weeping and mourning, thus to accommodate themselves to their troubles, and prepare themselves for deliverance. It would likewise be a means of possessing their children betimes with a due sense of the hand of the Lord gone out against them.

(2.) What was their present doubt-whether they should continue these fasts or no. The case is put as by a single person: Should I

weep? But it was the case of many, and the satisfaction of one would be a satisfaction to the rest. Or perhaps many had left it off, but the querist will not be determined by the practice of others; if God will have him continue it, he will, whatever others do. His fasting is described by his weeping, separating himself. A religious fast must be solemnized, not only by abstinence, here called a separating ourselves from the ordinary lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by weeping. "Should I still keep such days to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years?" It is said (Zec 7:5) to be seventy years, computed from the last captivity, as before, Zec 1:12. The enquiry intimates a readiness to continue it, if God so appoint, though it be a mortification to the flesh.

[1.] Something is to be said for the continuance of these fasts. Fasting and praying are good work at any time, and do good; we have always both cause enough and need enough to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be an evidence of their being too secure, and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress, and under the tokens of God's displeasure; and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physic while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper. But,

[2.] There is something to be said for the letting fall of these fasts. God had changed the method of his providences concerning them, and returned in ways of mercy to them; and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now that the bridegroom has returned, why should the children of the bride-chamber fast?

Every thing is beautiful in its season. And as to the fast of the fifth month (which is that they particularly enquire about), that, being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded rather than any of the other, because the temple was now in a fair way to be rebuilt. But, having long kept up this fast, they would not leave it off without advice, and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case. Note, A good method of religious services, which we have found beneficial to ourselves and others, ought not to be altered without good reason, and therefore not without mature deliberation.

2 when they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem- melech,
and their men, to pray before the Lord,
3 *and* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the Lord of
hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month,
separating myself, as I have done these so many years?
4 Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying,
5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When
ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month,* even those
seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me?

An answer given to this case. It should seem that, though the question looked plausible enough, those who proposed it were not conscientious in it, for they were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance; they seemed to boast of their fasting, and to upbraid God Almighty with it, that he had not sooner returned in mercy to them; "for we have done it these so many years." As those, Isa 58:3, Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? And some think that unbelief, and distrust of the promises of God, were at the bottom of their enquiry; for, if they had given them the credit that was due to them, they needed not to doubt but that their fasts ought to be laid aside, now that the occasion of them was over.

And therefore the first answer to their enquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy, directed, not only to the people of the land, but to the priests, who had set up these fasts, and perhaps some of them were for keeping them up, to serve some purpose of their own. Let them all take notice that, whereas they thought they had made God very much their debtor by these fasts, they were much mistaken, for they were not acceptable to him, unless they had been observed in a better manner and to better purpose.

1. What they did that was good was not done aright (Zec 7:5): You fasted and mourned. They were not chargeable with the omission or neglect of the duty, though it was displeasing to the body (thy fasts were continually before me, Ps 50:8), but they had not managed them aright. Note, Those that come to enquire of their duty must be willing first to be told of their faults. And those that seem zealous for the outside of a duty ought to examine themselves faithfully whether they have the regard they ought to have to the inside of it.

(1.) They had not an eye to God in their fasting: Did you at all fast unto me, even to me? He appeals to their own consciences; they will witness against them that they had not been sincere in it, much more will God, who is greater than the heart and knows all things. You know very well that you did not at all fast to me; in fasting did you fast to me? There was the carcase and form of the duty, but none of the life, and soul, and power of it. Was it to me, even to me? The repetition intimates what a great deal of stress is laid upon this as the main matter, in that and other holy exercises, that they be done to God, even to him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end, in them, seeking to please him and to obtain his favour, and studious by the sincerity of our intention to approve ourselves to him. When this was wanting every fast was but a jest.

To fast, and not fast to God, was to mock him and provoke him, and could not be pleasing to him. Those that make fasting a cloak for sin, as Jezebel's fast, or by it make their court to men for their applause, as the Pharisees, or that rest in outward expressions of humiliation while their hearts are unhumbled, as Ahab, do they fast to God, even to him? Is this the fast that God has chosen? Isa 58:5. If the solemnities of our fasting, though frequent, long, and severe, do not serve to put an edge upon devout affections, to quicken prayer, to increase godly sorrow, and to alter the temper of our minds and the course of our lives for the better, they do not at all answer the intention, and God will not accept them as performed to him, even to him.

(2.) They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting that they had in their eating and drinking (Zec 7:6): "When you did eat, and when you did drink, on other days (nay, perhaps on your fast-days, in the observation of which you could, when you saw cause, dispense with yourselves, and take a liberty to eat and drink), did you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? Have you not always done as you had a mind yourselves? Why then do you now pretend a desire to know the mind of God? In your religious feasts and thanksgivings you have had no more an eye to God than in your fasts." Or, rather, it refers to their common meals; they did no more design the honour of God in their fasting and praying than

they did in their eating and drinking; but self was still the centre in which the lines of all their actions, natural, civil, and religious, met. They needed not be in such care about the continuance of their fasts, unless they had kept them better.

Note, We miss our end in eating and drinking when we eat to ourselves and drink to ourselves, whereas we should eat and drink to the glory of God (1Co 10:31), that our bodies may be fit to serve our souls in his service.

2 The principal good thing they should have done was left undone (Zec 7:7): "Should you not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets? Yes, that you should have done on your fast-days; it was not enough to weep and separate yourselves on your fast-days, in token of your sorrow for the judgments you were under, but you should have searched the scriptures of the prophets, that you might have seen what was the ground of God's controversy with your fathers, and might have taken warning by their miseries not to tread in the steps of their iniquities. You ask, Shall we do as we have done, in fasting?

No, you must do that which you have not yet done; you must repent of your sins and reform you lives. This is what we now call you to, and it is the same that the former prophets called your fathers to." To affect them the more with the mischief that sin had done them, that they might be brought to repent of it, he puts them in mind of the former flourishing state of their country:

Jerusalem was then inhabited and in prosperity, that is now desolate and in distress. The cities round about, that are now in ruins, were then inhabited too and in peace. The country likewise was very populous: Men inhabited the south of the plain, which was not at all fortified, and yet they lived safely, and which was fruitful, and so they lived plentifully. But then God by the prophets cried to them, as one in earnest, and importunate with them, to amend their ways and doings, or else their prosperity would soon be at an end. "Now," says the prophet, "you should have taken notice of that, and have inferred that what was required of them for the preventing of the judgments, and which they did not, is

required of you for the removal of the judgments; and, if you do it not, all your fasting and weeping signify nothing."

Note, The words of the later prophets agree with those of the former; and, whether people are in prosperity or adversity, they must be called upon to leave their sins and do their duty; this must still be the burden of every song.

6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves,*
and drink *for yourselves?*
7 *Should ye* not *hear* the words which the Lord hath cried by the former
prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the
cities thereof round about her, when *men* inhabited the south and the
plain?

Disobedience the Cause of Captivity

8 And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying,
9 Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and
show mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

What was said Zec 7:7, that they should have heard the words of the former prophets, is here enlarged upon, for warning to these hypocritical enquirers, who continued their sins when they asked with great preciseness whether they should continue their fasts. This prophet had before put them in mind of their fathers' disobedience to the calls of the prophets, and what was the consequence of it (Zec 1:4-6), and now here again; for others' harms should be our warnings. God's judgments upon Israel of old for their sins were written for admonition to us Christians (1Co 10:11), and the same use we should make of similar providences in our own day.

I. This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons which the former prophets preached to their fathers (Zec 7:9,10), because the very same things were required of them now. "Thus does the Lord of hosts speak to you now, and thus he did speak to your fathers, saying, Execute true judgment." The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the tranquillity of their fathers and must be the restoring of their tranquillity, are not keeping fasts and offering sacrifices, but doing justly and loving

mercy, duties which they were bound to by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them, duties which had a direct tendency to the public welfare and peace, and which they themselves would be the gainers by, and not God.

1. Magistrates must administer justice impartially, according to the maxims of the law and the merits of the cause, without respect of persons: "Judge judgment of truth, and execute it when you have judged it."

2. Neighbours must have a tender concern for one another, and must not only do one another no wrong, but must be ready to do one another all the good offices that lie in their power. They must show mercy and compassion every man to his brother, as the case called for it. The infirmities of others, as well as their calamities, are to be looked upon with compassion. Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim--This kindness we ask and exercise.

3. They must not bear hard upon those whom they have advantage against, and who, they know, are not able to help themselves. They must not, either in commerce or in course of law, oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor, Zec 7:10. The weakest must not be thrust to the wall because they are weakest. No thanks to men not to deny right to those who are in a capacity to demand it and recover it; but we must, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, give those their own who have not power to force it from us. Or it intimates that that which is but exactness with others is exaction upon the widows and the fatherless; nay, that not relieving and helping them as we ought is, in effect, oppressing them.

4. They must not only not do wrong to any, but they must not so much as desire it nor think of it: "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. Do not project it; do not wish it; nay do not so much as please yourself with the fancy of it." The law of God lays a restraint upon the heart, and forbids the entertaining, forbids the admitting, of a malicious, spiteful, ill-natured thought. De 15:9, Beware that there be not a thought in thy Belial heart against thy brother.

10 and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

12 Yea, they made their hearts *as* an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

He describes the wilfulness and disobedience of their fathers, who persisted in all manner of wickedness and injustice, notwithstanding these exhortations and admonitions frequently given them in God's name; various expressions to this purport are here heaped up (Zec 7:11,12), setting forth the stubbornness of that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be. They were obstinate and refractory, and persisted in their transgressions of the law purely from a spirit of contradiction to the law.

1. They would not, if they could help it, come within hearing of the prophets, but kept at a distance; or, if they could not avoid hearing what they said, yet they resolved they would not heed it: They refused to hearken, and looked another way as if they had not been spoken to.

2. If they did hear what was said to them, and, as it seemed, inclined at first to comply with it, yet they flew off when it came to the setting to, and, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, they pulled away the shoulder, and would not submit to the easy yoke and the light burden of God's commandments. They gave a withdrawing shoulder (so the word is); they seemed to lay their shoulder to the work, but they presently withdrew it again, as those Jer 34:10,11. They were like a deceitful bow, as that son that said, I go, sir, but went not.

3. They filled their own minds with prejudices against the word of God, and had some objection or other ready wherewith to fortify themselves against every sermon they heard. They stopped their ears, that they should not hear, as the deaf adder (Ps 58:4), and

none are so deaf as those that will not hear, that make their own ear heavy, as the word is.

4. They resolved that nothing which was said to them, for the enforcing of these injunctions, should make any impression upon them: They made their hearts as an adamant-stone, as a diamond, the hardest of stones to be wrought upon, or as a flint, which the mason cannot hew into shape as he can other stone out of the quarry. Nothing is so hard, so unmalleable, so inflexible, as the heart of a presumptuous sinner; and those whose hearts are hard may thank themselves; they are of their own hardening, and it is just with God to give them over to a reprobate sense, to the hardness and impenitence of their own hearts.

These stubborn sinners hardened their hearts on purpose lest they should hear what God said to them by the written word, by the law of Moses, and by the words of the prophets that preached to them; they had Moses and the prophets, but resolved they would hear neither, nor would they have been persuaded though one had been sent to them from the dead. The words of the prophet were not regarded by them, though they were words which the Lord of hosts sent and directed to them, though he sent them immediately by his Spirit in the prophets; so that in despising them they affronted God himself and resisted the Holy Ghost.

Note, The reason why men are not good is because they will not be so; they will not consider, will not comply; and therefore, if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

III. He shows the fatal consequences of it to their fathers: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts. God was highly displeased with them, and justly; he required nothing of them but what was reasonable in itself and beneficial to them; and yet they refused, and in a most insolent manner too. What master could bear to be so abused by his own servant? Such an implacable enmity to the gospel as this was to the law and the prophets was that which brought wrath to the uttermost upon the last generation of the Jewish church, 1Th 2:16. Great sins against the Lord of hosts, whose authority is incontestable, bring great wrath from the Lord of hosts, whose power is irresistible. And the effect was,

1. As they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers, Zec 7:13. As he cried to them in their prosperity to leave their sins, and they would not hear, but persisted in their iniquities, so they cried to him in the day of their trouble to remove his judgments, and he would not hear, but lengthened out their calamities. Those that set God at defiance, in the height of their pride, when pangs came upon them cried unto him. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. But God has said it, and will abide by it, He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination, Pr 28:9,Pr 1:24, &c. Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the success of prayer, Ps 66:18.

2. As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, and were of desultory and unsettled spirits, so God dissipated them and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind: He scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not, and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from, Zec 7:14.

3. As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it: Their land was desolate after them, and no man passed through or returned. All that country that was the kingdom of the two tribes, after the dispersion of the remaining Jews, upon the slaughter of Gedaliah, was left utterly uninhabited; there was not man, woman, or child, in it, till the Jews returned at the end of seventy years' captivity; nay, it should seem, the very roads that lay through the country were deserted (none passed or repassed), which, as it had an intimation of mercy in it (though they were cast out of it, yet it was kept empty for their return), so for the present it made the judgment appear much the more dismal; for what a horrid wilderness must a land be that had been so many years uninhabited!

And they might thank themselves; it was they that by their own wickedness laid the pleasant land desolate. It was not so much the Chaldeans that did it. No; they did it themselves. The desolations of a land are owing to the wickedness of its inhabitants, Ps 107:34. This came of their wilful disobedience to the law of God. And the

present generation saw how desolate sin had made that pleasant land, and yet would not take warning.

13 Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear;
so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts:
14 but I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom
they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man
passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

Zechariah-8

The Restoration of Jerusalem Promised

1 Again the word of the Lord of hosts came *to me,* saying,
2 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy,
and I was jealous for her with great fury.

The prophet, in his foregoing discourses, had left his hearers under a high charge of guilt and a deep sense of wrath; he had left them in a melancholy view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which was the effect of their fathers' disobedience; but because he designed to bring them to repentance, not to drive them to despair, he here sets before them the great things God had in store for them, encouraging them hereby to hope that their case of conscience would shortly determine itself and that God's providence would as loudly call them to joy and gladness as ever it called them to fasting and mourning. It is here promised,

I. That God will appear for Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause.

1. He will be revenged on Zion's enemies (Zec 8:2): I was jealous for Zion, or of Zion; that is, "I have of late been heartily concerned for her honour and interests, with great jealousy. The great wrath that was against her (Zec 7:12) now turns against her adversaries. I am now jealous for her with great fury, and can no more bear to have her abused in her afflictions than I could bear to be abused by her provocations." This he had said before (Zec 1:14,15), that they might promise themselves as much from the power of his anger, when it was turned for them, as they had felt from it when it was against them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, and had

done her the most mischief; and therefore God, in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, will take away her sins, and then, whatever other enemies injured her, it was at their peril.

2. He will be resident in Zion's palaces (Zec 8:3): "I have returned to Zion, after I had seemed so long to stand at a distance, and I will again dwell in the midst of Jerusalem as formerly." This secures to them the tokens of his presence in his ordinances and the instances of his favour in his providences.

II. That there shall be a wonderful reformation in Jerusalem, and religion, in the power of it, shall prevail and flourish there. "Jerusalem, that has dealt treacherously both with God and man, shall become so famous for fidelity and honesty that it shall be called and known by the name of a city of truth, and the inhabitants of it shall be called children that will not lie. The faithful city has become a harlot (Isa 1:21), but shall now become a faithful city again, faithful to the God of Israel and to the worship of him only." This was fulfilled; for the Jews after the captivity, though there was much amiss among them, were never guilty of idolatry.

Jerusalem shall be called the mountain of the Lord of hosts, owning him and owned by him, and therefore the holy mountain, cleared from idols and consecrated to God, and not, as it had been, the mount of corruption, 2Ki 23:13. Note, The city of God ought to be a city of truth and the mountain of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain. Those that profess religion, and relation to God, must study to adorn their profession by all instances of godliness and honesty.

3 Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the
midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called A city of
truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The holy mountain.
4 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women
dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his
hand for very age.

That there shall be in Jerusalem a great increase of people, and all the marks and tokens of a profound tranquillity, When it has become a city of truth and a mountain of holiness, it is then peaceable and prosperous, and every thing in it looks bright and pleasant.

1. You may look with pleasure upon the generation that is going off the stage, and see them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of nature, and not driven off from it by war, famine, or pestilence (Zec 8:4): In the streets of Jerusalem, that had been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted and left desolate, shall now dwell old men and old women, who have not been cut off by untimely deaths (either through their own intemperance or God's vengeance), but have the even thread of their days spun out to a full length; they shall feel no distemper but the decay of nature, and go to their grave in a full age, as a shock of corn in his season. They shall have every one his staff in his hand, for very age, to support him, as Jacob, who worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff, Heb 11:21.

Old age needs a support, and should not be ashamed to use it, but should furnish itself with divine graces, which will be the strength of the heart and a better support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary head, as it is a crown of glory to those that wear it, so it is to the places where they live. It is a graceful thing to a city to see abundance of old people in it; it is a sign, not only of the healthfulness of the air, but of the prevalence of virtue and the suppression and banishment of those many vices which cut off the number of men's months in the midst; it is a sign, not only that the climate is temperate, but that the people are so.

2. You may look with as much pleasure upon the generation that is rising up in their room (Zec 8:5): The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets. This intimates,

(1.) That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children; their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the divine blessing, Ge 1:28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, boys and girls, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up.

(2.) That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and

cheerful, and play in the streets. It is their pleasant playing age; let us not grudge it to them; much good may it do them and no harm. Evil days will come time enough, and years of which they will say that they have no pleasure in them, in consideration of which they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator.

(3.) That they shall have great plenty, meat enough for all their mouths. In time of famine we find the children swooning as the wounded, in the streets of the city, La 2:11,12. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign that they want for nothing.

(4.) That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security. There shall be no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters, no complaining in the streets (Ps 144:14); for, when there is playing in the streets, it is a sign that there is little care or fear there. Time was when the enemy hunted their steps so closely that they could not go in their streets (La 4:18), but now they shall play in the streets and fear no evil.

(5.) That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities that are divided into factions and parties the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly playing in the streets, not devouring, but diverting, one another.

(6.) That the sports and diversions used shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play than what they are willing that persons should see in the streets, no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the holy mountain, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of.

(7.) That childish youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasing to see the boys and girls playing in the streets, but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, who should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for children to be sitting in the market-place, crossing questions (Mt 11:16,17), but it is no way fit that men, who are able

to work in the vineyard, should stand all the day idle there, Mt 20:3.

IV. That the scattered Israelites shall be brought together again from all parts whither they were dispersed (Zec 8:7): "I will save my people from the east country, and from the west; I will save them from being lost, or losing themselves, in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in any other country whither they were driven." They shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn nor shall they incorporate with them; but I will save them, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again; by the prosperity of their land I will invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, shall choose to dwell there, because it is the holy city, though, upon many other accounts, it was more eligible to dwell in the country; and therefore we find (Ne 11:2) that the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

V. That God would renew his covenant with them, would be faithful to them and make them so to him: They shall be my people and I will be their God. That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new-made, in truth and in righteousness. Some think that the former denotes God's part of the covenant (he will be their God in truth, he will make good all his promises of favour to them) and the latter man's part of the covenant--they shall be his people in righteousness, they shall be a righteous people and shall abound in the fruits of righteousness, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God.

See Ho 2:19,20. God will never leave nor forsake them in a way of mercy, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave nor forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church, for some ages, between the captivity and Christ's time; they were to have a further and a fuller accomplishment in the gospel-church, that heavenly Jerusalem, which is from above, is

free, and is the mother of us all; but the fullest accomplishment of all will be in the future state.

All these precious promises are here ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced, with that question (Zec 8:6): "If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in my eyes? If it seem unlikely to you that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus replenished, is it therefore impossible with God?" The remnant of this people (and God's people in this world are but a remnant), being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially in these days, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days. Considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible, they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks. How can these things be? How can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God?

Note, We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong if we think that, when we are nonplussed, he is so, and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insuperable. With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

6 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts.

7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

8 and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

9 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. These

verses contain strong encouragements with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

I. Who they were to whom these encouragements did belong--to those who, in obedience to the call of God by his prophets, applied in good earnest to the building of the temple (Zec 8:9): "Let your hands be strong, that are busy at work for God, you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, and are not disobedient to them as your fathers were, in the former days, to the words of those prophets that were sent to them. You may take the comfort of the promises, and shall have the benefit of them, who have obeyed the precepts given you in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, when you were told that, having begun with it, you must go on, that the temple might be built; God told you that you must go on with it, and you have laboured hard at it for some time, in obedience to the heavenly vision.

Now you are those whose hands must be strengthened and whose hearts must be comforted, with these precious promises; to you is the word of this consolation sent."

Note, Those, and those only, that are employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by him; those who lay their hands to the plough of duty shall have them strengthened with the promises of mercy; and those who avoid their fathers' faults, not only cut off the entail of the curse, but have it turned into a blessing.

II. What the discouragements were which they had hitherto laboured under, Zec 8:10. These are mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now about to bestow upon them, to make them appear the more strange, to the glory of God, and the more sweet, to their comfort. The truth was the times had long been very bad, and the calamities and difficulties of them were many and great.

1. Trade was dead; there was nothing to be done and therefore nothing to be got. Before these days of reformation began there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beasts. The fruits of the earth (though it had long lain fallow, and therefore, one would think, should have been the more fertile) were thin and poor, so that the husbandman had no occasion to hire harvest people to reap his

corn, nor teams to carry it home, for he could be scarcely said to have any. Merchants had no goods to import or export, so that they needed not to hire either men or beasts; hence the poor people, who lived by their labour, had no way of getting bread for themselves and their families.

2. Travelling was dangerous, so that all commerce both by sea and land was cut off; nay, none durst stir abroad so much as to visit their friends, for their was no peace to him that went out, or came in, because of the affliction. The Samaritans, and Ammonites, and their other evil neighbours, made inroads upon them in small parties, and seized all they could lay their hands on; the roads were infested with highwaymen, and both city and country with housebreakers; so that neither men's persons nor their goods were safe at home or abroad.

3. There was no such thing as friendship or good neighbourship among them: I set all men every one against his neighbour. In this there was a great deal of sin, for these wars and fightings came from men's lust, and this God was not the author of; but there was in it a great deal of misery also, and so God was in it a just avenger of their disobedience to him; because they were of an evil spirit towards him, a spirit of contradiction to his laws, God sent among them an evil spirit, to make them vexatious one to another. Those that throw off the love of God forfeit the comfort of brotherly love.

10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither *was there any* peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbor.

11 But now I *will* not *be* unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts.

12 For the seed *shall be* prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these *things.*

What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them: "Thus and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but now God will change his way towards you, Zec 8:11. Now that you return to your duty God will comfort you according to the time that he has afflicted you; the ebbing tide shall flow again."

1. God will not proceed in his controversy with them; I will not be to them as in the former days. Note, It is with us well or ill according as God is to us; for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be. And, if we walk not contrary to God as in the former days, he will not walk contrary to us as in the former days; for it is only with the froward that he will wrestle.

2. They shall have great plenty and abundance of all goods things (Zec 8:12): The seed sown shall be prosperous, and yield a great increase; the vine shall give her fruit, which makes glad the heart, and the ground its products, which strengthen the heart; they shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. The heavens shall give their dew, without which the earth would not yield her increase, which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth and of their dependence on him. It is said of a sweeping rain that it leaves no food (Pr 28:3); but here the gentle dew waters the earth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And thus God will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

They are but a remnant, a residue, very few, one would think scarcely worth looking after; but, now that they are at work for God, he will take care that they shall want nothing which is fit for them. This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said, a little before (Hag 2:16,19), From this day will I bless you. Note, God's people, that serve him faithfully, have great possessions. "All is yours, for you are Christ's."

3. They shall recover their credit among their neighbours (Zec 8:13): You were a curse among the heathen. Every one censured and condemned them, spoke ill of them, and wished ill to them, upon the account of the great disgrace that they were under; some think that they were made a form of execration, so that if a man would load his enemy with the heaviest curse he would say, God make thee like a Jew! "But now, I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Your restoration shall be as much taken notice of to your honour as ever your desolation and dispersion were to your

reproach; you shall be applauded and admired as much as ever you were vilified and run down, shall be courted and caressed as much as ever you were slighted and abandoned."

Most men smile or frown upon their neighbours according as Providence smiles or frowns upon them; but those whom God plainly blesses as his own, shows favour to and puts honour upon, we ought also to respect and be kind to. The blessed of the Lord are the blessing of the land, and should be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the house both of Israel and Judah; for many of the ten tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes, and shared with them in those blessings; and, it is probable, besides what came at first, many, very many, flocked to them afterwards, when they saw their affairs take this turn.

4. God himself will determine to do them good, Zec 8:14,15. All their comforts take rise from the thoughts of the love that God had towards them, Jer 29:11. Compare these promises with the former threatenings.

(1.) When they provoked him to anger with their sins, he said that he would punish them, and so he did; it was his declared purpose to bring destroying judgments upon them, and, because they repented not of their rebellions against him, he repented not of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but is always the product of thought, and there is a counsel in that part of the will of God. If the sinner turn not, God will not turn.

(2.) Now that they pleased him with their services; he said that he would do them good; and will he not be as true to his promises as he was to his threatenings? No doubt he will: "So again have I thought to do well to Jerusalem in those days, when you begin to hearken to the voice of God speaking to you by his prophets; and these thoughts also shall be performed."

IV. The use they are to make of these encouragements.

1. Let them take the comfort which these promises give to them: Fear you not (Zec 8:15); let your hands be strong (Zec 8:9); and both together (Zec 8:13), Fear not, but let your hands be strong.

(1.) The difficulties they met with in their work must not drive them from it, nor make them go on heavily in it, for the issue would be good and the reward great. Let this therefore animate them to proceed with vigour and cheerfulness.

(2.) The dangers they were exposed to from their enemies must not terrify them; those that have God for them, engaged to do them good, need not fear what man can do against them.

2. Let them do the duty which those promises call for from them, Zec 8:16,17. The very same duties which the former prophets pressed upon their fathers from the consideration of the wrath threatened (Zec 7:9,10) this prophet presses upon them from the consideration of the mercy promised: "Leave it to God, to perform for you what he has promised, in his own way and time, but upon condition that you make conscience of your duty. These are the things then that you shall do; this is your part of the covenant; these are the articles which you are to perform, fulfil, and keep, that you may not put a bar in your own door and stop the current of God's favours."

(1.) "You must never tell a lie, but always speak as you think, and as the matter is, to the best of your knowledge: Speak you every man the truth to his neighbour, both in bargains and in common converse; dread every word that looks like a lie." This precept the apostle quotes (Eph 4:25), and backs it with this reason, We are members one of another.

(2.) Those that are entrusted with the administration of public justice must see to it, not only that none be wronged by it, but that those who are wronged be righted by it: Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates. Let the judges that sit in the gates in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to truth and to peace; let them take care to do justice, to accommodate differences, and to prevent vexatious suits. It must be a judgment of truth in order to peace, and making those friends that were at

variance, and a judgment of peace as far as is consistent with truth, and no further.

(3.) No man must bear malice against his neighbour upon any account; this is the same with what we had Zec 7:10. We must not only keep our hands from doing evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that they imagine not any evil against our neighbour, Pr 3:29. Injury and mischief must be crushed in the thought, in the embryo.

(4.) Great reverence must be had for an oath, and conscience made of it: "Never take a false oath, nay, love no false oath; that is, hate it, dread it, keep at a distance from it. Love not to impose oaths upon others, lest they swear falsely; love not that any should take a false oath for your benefit, and forswear themselves to do you a kindness." A very good reason is annexed against all these corrupt and wicked practices: "For all these are things that I hate, and therefore you must hate them if you expect to have God your friend." These things here forbidden are all of them found among the seven things which the Lord hates, Pr 6:16-19.

Note, We must forbear sin, not only because God is angry at it, and therefore it is dangerous to us, but because he hates it, and therefore it ill becomes us and is a very ungrateful thing.

13 And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.

14 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not:

15 so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

16 These *are* the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

17 and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these *are things* that I hate, saith the Lord.

18 And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me, saying,

19 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month,* and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.

These verses contain two precious promises, for the further encouragement of those pious Jews that were hearty in building the temple.

That a happy period should be put to their fasts, and there should be no more occasion for them, but they should be converted into thanksgiving days, Zec 8:19. This is a direct answer to the enquiry concerning their fasts, Zec 7:3. Those of them that fasted in hypocrisy had their doom in the foregoing chapter, but those that in sincerity humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, have here a comfortable assurance given them of a large share in the happy times approaching. The four yearly fasts which they had religiously observed should be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and solemn feasts, and those cheerful ones.

Note, Joyous times will come to the church after troublous times; if weeping endure for more than a night, and joy come not next morning, yet the morning will come that will introduce it at length. And, when God comes towards us in ways of mercy, we must meet him with joy and thankfulness; when God turns judgments into mercies we must turn fasts into festivals, and thus walk after the Lord.

And those who sow in tears with Zion shall reap in joy with her; those who submit to the restraints of her solemn fasts while they continue shall share in the triumphs of her cheerful feasts when they come, Isa 66:10. The inference from this promise is, "Therefore love the truth and peace; be faithful and honest in all your dealings, and let it be a pleasure to you to be so, though thereby you cut yourselves short of those gains which you see others get dishonestly; and, as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men, and be in your element when you are in charity. Let the truths of God rule in your heads, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

20 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; *It shall* yet *come to pass,* that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

21 and the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also.

That a great accession should be made to the church by the conversion of many foreigners, Zec 8:20-23. This was fulfilled but in part when, in the latter times of the Jewish church, there were abundance of proselytes from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote, who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem, which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed greatly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Saviour's time, though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins.

But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head, a mystery which is made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets (Ro 16:26), and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that when it was accomplished it was so great a surprise and stumbling-block to the Jews. Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be added to the church--people, and the inhabitants of many cities (Zec 8:20); not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do, but intelligent inquisitive citizens, men of business and acquaintance with the world, shall embrace the gospel of Christ; yea, many people and strong nations (Zec 8:22), some of all languages, Zec 8:23.

By this it appears that they are brought into the church, not by human persuasion, for they are of different languages, not by external force, for they are strong nations, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of divine truth and grace. Note, God has his remnant in all parts; and in the general assembly of the church of the first-born some will be found out of all nations and kindreds, Re 7:9.

2. How their accession to the church is described: They shall come to pray before the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts (Zec 8:21);

and, to show that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated (Zec 8:22):

They shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because these were not expected from the proselytes of the gate, but because, when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God and members of the church: and all that are converts to God are members of the church.

(1.) They are such as seek the Lord of hosts, such as enquire for God their Maker, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory. This is the generation of those that seek him.

(2.) They are such as pray before the Lord,--such as make conscience, and make a business, of the duty of prayer,--such as dare not, would not, for all the world, live without it,--such as by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him.

(3.) They are such as herein have an eye to the divine revelation and institution, which is signified by their doing this in Jerusalem, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a believing regard to.

3. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealous in exciting one another to it (Zec 8:21): The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, as formerly when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts; and they shall say, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord; I will go also. This intimates,

(1.) That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him; thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ and Philip invited Nathanael. True grace hates monopolies.

(2.) That those who are duly sensible of their need of Christ, and of the favour of God through him, will stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him: "Let us go speedily to pray; it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time; in a matter of such moment delays are dangerous."

(3.) That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant to go to the house of God in company (Ps 55:14), with the multitude (Ps 42:4), and it is of good use to those that do so to excite one another to go speedily and lose no time; we should be glad when it is said to us, Let us go, Ps 122:1. As iron sharpens iron, so may good men sharpen the countenances and spirits one of another in that which is good.

(4.) That those who stir up others to that which is good must take heed that they do not turn off, or tire, or draw back themselves; he that says, Let us go, says, I will go also. What good we put others upon doing we must see to it that we do ourselves, else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, "Do you go, and I will stay at home;" but, "Do you go, and I will go with you." "A singular pattern (says Mr. Pemble) of zealous charity, that neither leaves others behind nor turns others before it."

4. Upon what inducement they shall join themselves to the church, not for the church's sake, but for his sake who dwells in it (Zec 8:23): Ten men of different nations and languages shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, begging of him not to outgo them, but to take them along with him. This intimates the great honour they have for a Jew, as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance; they cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but are ambitious to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

The gospel was preached to the Jews first (for of that nation the apostles were) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St. Paul

was a Jew whose skirt many took hold of when they welcomed him as an angel of God, and begged him to take them along with him to Christ; thus the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus, Joh 12:21.

Note, It is the privilege of the saints that they have God with them, have him among them--the knowledge, and fear, and worship of him; they have his favour and gracious presence, and this should invite us into communion with them. It is good being with those who have God with them, and those who join themselves to the Lord must join themselves to his disciples; if we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people, cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take our lot with them.

22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord
of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.
23 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass,* that ten
men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take
hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for
we have heard *that* God *is* with you.

Zechariah-9

The Judgment on Neighboring Nations

1 The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and
Damascus *shall be* the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the
tribes of Israel, *shall be* toward the Lord.

After the precious promises we had in the foregoing chapter of favour to God's people, their persecutors, who hated them, come to be reckoned with, those particularly that bordered close upon them.

I The Syrians had been bad neighbours to Israel, and God had a controversy with them. The word of the Lord shall be a burden in the land of Hadrach, that is, of Syria, but it does not appear why it was so called. That that kingdom is meant is plain, because Damascus, the metropolis of that kingdom, is said to be the rest of this burden; that is, the judgments here threatened shall light and lie upon that city. Those are miserable upon whom the burden of

the word of the Lord rests, upon whom the wrath of God abides (Joh 3:36); for it is a weight that they can neither shake off nor bear up under. There are those whom God causes his fury to rest upon.

Those whom the wrath of God makes its mark it will be sure to hit; those whom it makes its rest it will be sure to sink. And the reason of this burden's resting on Damascus is because the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel (or rather, even of all the tribes of Israel), are towards the Lord, because the people of God by faith and prayer look up to him for succour and relief and depend upon him to take their part against their enemies.

Note, It is a sign that God is about to appear remarkably for his people when he raises their believing expectations from him and dependence upon him, and when by his grace he turns them from idols to himself. Isa 17:7,8, At that day shall a man look to his Maker. It may be read thus, for the Lord has an eye upon man, and upon all the tribes of Israel; he is King of nations as well as King of saints; he governs the world as well as the church, and therefore will punish the sins of other people as well as those of his own people. God is Judge of all, and therefore all must give account of themselves to him.

When St. Paul was converted at Damascus, and preached there, and disputed with the Jews, then the word of the Lord might be said to rest there, and then the eyes of men, of other men besides the tribes of Israel, began to be towards the Lord; see Ac 9:22.

Hamath, a country which lay north of Damascus, and which we often read of, shall border thereby (Zec 9:2); it joins to Syria, and shall share in the burden of the word of the Lord that rests upon Damascus. The Jews have a proverb, Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour, who is in danger of partaking in his sins and in his plagues. Woe to the land of Hadrach, and woe to Hamath that borders thereby.

II. Tyre and Zidon come next to be called to an account here, as in other prophecies, Zec 9:2-4. Observe here,

1. Tyrus flourishing, thinking herself very safe, and ready to set God's judgments, not only at a distance, but at defiance: for,

(1.) She is very wise. It is spoken ironically; she thinks herself very wise, and able to outwit even the wisdom of God. It is granted that her king is a great politician, and that her statesmen are so, Eze 28:3. But with all their wit and policy they shall not be able to evade the judgments of God when they come with commission; there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord; nay, it is his honour to take the wise in their own craftiness.

(2.) She is very strong, and well fortified both by nature and art: Tyrus did build herself a strong-hold, which she thought could never be brought down nor got over.

(3.) She is very rich; and money is a defence; it is the sinews of war, Ec 7:12. By her vast trade she has heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets, that is, she has an abundance of them, heaps of silver as common as heaps of sand, Job 27:16. Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as the stones of the streets; but Tyre went further, and made fine gold to be as the mire of the streets. It were well if we could all learn so to look upon it, in comparison with the merchandise of wisdom and grace and the gains thereof.

2. Tyrus falling, after all. Her wisdom, and wealth, and strength, shall not be able to secure her (Zec 9:4): The Lord will cast her out of that strong-hold wherein she has fortified herself, will make her poor (so some read it); there have been instances of those that have fallen from the height of plenty to the depth of poverty, and great riches have come to nothing. God will smite her power in the sea; her being surrounded by the water shall not secure her, but she shall be devoured with fire, and burnt down to the ground. Tyrus, being seated in the midst of the water, was, one would have thought, in danger of being some time or other overflowed or washed away by that; yet God chooses to destroy it by the contrary element. Sometimes he brings ruin upon his enemies by those means which they least suspect. Water enough was nigh at hand to quench the flames of Tyre, and yet by them she shall be devoured;

for who can put out the fire which the breath of the Almighty blows up?

2 And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.

3 And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

4 Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.

God next contends with the Philistines, with their great cities and great lords, that bordered southward upon Israel.

1. They shall be alarmed and affrighted by the word of the Lord lighting and resting upon Damascus (Zec 9:5); the disgraces of Israel had many a time been published in the streets of Ashkelon, and they had triumphed in them; but now Ashkelon shall see the ruin of her friends and allies, and shall fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron, concluding that their own turns come next, now that the cup of trembling goes round.

What will become of their house when their neighbour's is on fire? They had looked upon Tyre and Zidon as a barrier to their country; but, when those strong cities were ruined, their expectations from them were ashamed, as our expectation from all creatures will be in the issue.

2. They shall themselves be ruined and wasted.

(1.) The government shall be dissolved: The king shall perish from Gaza, not only the present king shall be cut off, but there shall be no succession, no successor,

(2.) The cities shall be dispeopled: Ashkelon shall not be inhabited; the rightful owners shall be expelled, either slain or carried into captivity.

(3.) Foreigners shall take possession of their land and become masters of all its wealth (Zec 9:6):

A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod; a spurious brood of strangers shall enter upon the inheritances of the natives, which they have no more right to than a bastard has to the estates of the legitimate children. And thus God will cut off the pride of the Philistines, all the strength and wealth which they prided themselves in, and which were the ground of their confidence in themselves and their contempt of the Israel of God.

This prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines, and of Damascus, and Tyre, was accomplished, not long after this, by Alexander the Great, who ravaged all these countries with his victorious army, took the cities, and planted colonies in them, which Quintus Curtius gives a particular account of in the history of his conquests. And some think he is meant by the bastard that shall dwell in Ashdod, for his mother Olympia owned him begotten in adultery, but pretended it was by Jupiter. The Jews afterwards got ground of the Philistines, Syrians, and others of their neighbours, took some of their cities from them and possessed their countries, as appears by the histories of Josephus and the Maccabees, and this was foretold before, Zep 2:4,Ob 1:20.

3. Some among them shall be converted, and brought home to God, by his gospel and grace; so some understand Zec 9:7, as a promise,

(1.) That God would take away the sins of these nations--their blood and their abominations, their cruelties and their idolatries. God will part between them and these sins which they have rolled under their tongue as a sweet morsel, and are as loth to part with as men are to part with the meat out of their mouths, and which they hold fast between their teeth. Nothing is too hard for the grace of God to do.

(2.) That he would accept of a remnant of them for his own: He that remains shall be for our God. God would preserve a remnant even of these nations, that should be the monuments of his mercy and grace and be set apart for him; and the disadvantages of their birth shall be no bar to their acceptance with God, but a Philistine shall be as acceptable to God, upon gospel-terms, as one of Judah, nay, as a governor, or chief one, in Judah, and a man of Ekron shall be as a Jebusite, or a man of Jerusalem, as a proselyted Jebusite,

as Araunah the Jebusite, 2Sa 24:16. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of nations, but all are one in him, all alike welcome to him.

IV. In all this God intends mercy for Israel, and it is in kindness to them that God will deal thus with the neighbouring nations, to avenge their quarrel for what is past and to secure them for the future.

1. Thus some understand the Zec 9:7, as intimating,

(1.) That thus God would deliver his people from their bloody adversaries, who hated them, and to whom they were an abomination, when they were just ready to devour them and make a prey of them: I will take away his blood (that is, the blood of Israel) out of the mouth of the Philistines and from between their teeth (Am 3:12), when, in their hatred of them and enmity to them, they were greedily devouring them.

(2.) That he would thus give them victory and dominion over them: And he that remains (that is, the remnant of Israel) shall be for our God, shall be taken into his favour, shall own him and be owned by him, and he shall be as a governor in Judah; though the Jews have been long in servitude, they shall recover their ancient dignity, and be victorious, as David and other governors in Judah formerly were; and Ekron (that is, the Philistines) shall be as the Jebusites, and the rest of the devoted nations, who were brought into subjection under them.

2. However, this is plainly the sense of Zec 9:8, that God will take his people under his special protection, and therefore will weaken their neighbours, that it may not be in their power to do them a mischief: I will encamp about my house because of the army. Note, God's house lies in the midst of an enemy's country, and his church is as a lily among thorns; and therefore God's power and goodness are to be observed in the special preservation of it. The camp of the saints, being a little flock in comparison with the numerous armies of the powers of darkness that are set against it round about, would certainly be swallowed up if the angels of God did not

encamp about it, as they did about Elisha, to deliver it, Re 20:9,Ps 34:7.

When the times are unusually perilous, when armies are marching and counter-marching, and all bearing ill-will to Zion, then Providence will as it were double its guards upon the church of God, because of him that passes by and because of him that returns, that whether he return a conqueror or conquered he may do it no harm. And, as none that pass by shall hurt them, so no oppressor shall pass through them any more; they shall have no enemy within themselves to rule them with rigour, and to make their lives bitter to them with sore bondage, as of old in Egypt.

This was fulfilled when, for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees, Judea was a free and flourishing state, or perhaps when Alexander the Great, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high priest, favoured the Jews, and took them under his protection, at the same time when he wasted the neighbouring countries. And the reason given for all this is, "For now have I seen with my eyes, now have I carefully distinguished between my people and other people, with whom before they seemed to have their lot in common, and have made it to appear that I know those that are mine," This agrees with Ps 34:15, The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; now his eyes, which run to and fro through the earth, shall fix upon them, that he may show himself tender of them, and strong on their behalf, 2Ch 16:9.

5 Ashkelon shall see *it*, and fear; Gaza also *shall see it*, and be very
sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the
king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.
6 And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the
Philistines.
7 And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations
from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, *shall be* for our
God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.
8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of
him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no
oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with
mine eyes.

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

That here begins a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom is plain from the literal accomplishment of the Zec 9:9 in, and its express application to, Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, Mt 21:5,Joh 12:15.

I. Here is notice given of the approach of the Messiah promised, as matter of great joy to the Old-Testament church: Behold, thy king cometh unto thee. Christ is a king, invested with regal powers and prerogatives, a sovereign prince, an absolute monarch, having all power both in heaven and on earth. He is Zion's king. God has set him upon his holy hill of Zion, Ps 2:6. In Zion his glory as a king shines; thence his law went forth, even the word of the Lord. In the gospel-church his spiritual kingdom is administered; it is by him that the ordinances of the church are instituted, and its officers commissioned; and it is taken under his protection; he fights the church's battles and secures its interests, as its king. "This King has been long in coming, but now, behold, he cometh; he is at the door. There are but a few ages more to run out, and he that shall come will come.

He cometh unto thee; the Word will shortly be made flesh, and dwell within thy borders; he will come to his own. And therefore rejoice, rejoice greatly, and shout for joy; look upon it as good news, and be assured it is true; please thyself to think that he is coming, that he is on his way towards thee; and be ready to go forth to meet him with acclamations of joy, as one not able to conceal it, it is so great, nor ashamed to own it, it is so just; cry Hosanna to him." Christ's approaches ought to be the church's applauses.

II. Here is such a description of him as renders him very amiable in the eyes of all his loving subjects, and his coming to them very acceptable.

1. He is a righteous ruler; all his acts of government will be exactly according to the rules of equity, for he is just.

2. He is a powerful protector to all those that bear faith and true allegiance to him, for he has salvation; he has it in his power; he has it to bestow upon all his subjects. He is the God of salvation; treasures of salvation are in him. He is servatus--saving himself (so some read it), rising out of the grave by his own power and so qualifying himself to be our Saviour.

3. He is a meek, humble, tender Father to all his subjects as his children; he is lowly; he is poor and afflicted (so the word signifies), so it denotes the meanness of his condition; having emptied himself, he was despised and rejected of men. But the evangelist translates it so as to express the temper of his spirit: he is meek, not taking state upon him, nor resenting injuries, but humbling himself from first to last, condescending to the mean, compassionate to the miserable; this was a bright and excellent character of him as a prophet (Mt 11:29, Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart), and no less so as a king.

It was a proof of this that, when he made his public entry into his own city (and it was the only passage of his life that had any thing in it magnificent in the eye of the world), he chose to ride, not upon a stately horse, or in a chariot, as great men used to ride, but upon an ass, a beast of service indeed, but a poor silly and contemptible one, low and slow, and in those days ridden only by the meaner sort of people; nor was it an ass fitted for use, but an ass's colt, a little foolish unmanageable thing, that would be more likely to disgrace his rider than be any credit to him; and that not his own neither, nor helped off, as sometimes a sorry horse is, by good furniture, for he had no saddle, no housings, no trappings, no equipage, but his disciples' clothes thrown upon the colt;' for he made himself of no reputation when he visited us in great humility.

10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.

His kingdom is here set forth in the glory of it. This king has, and will have, a kingdom, not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of heaven.

1. It shall not be set up and advanced by external force, by an arm of flesh or carnal weapons of warfare. No; he will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horses from Jerusalem (Zec 9:10), for he shall have no occasion for them while he himself rides upon an ass. He will, in kindness to his people, cut off their horses and chariots, that they may not cut themselves off from God by putting that confidence in them which they should put in the power of God only. He will himself undertake their protection, will himself be a wall of fire about Jerusalem and give his angels charge concerning it (those chariots of fire and horses of fire), and then the chariots and horses they had in their service shall be discarded and cut off as altogether needless.

2. It shall be propagated and established by the preaching of the gospel, the speaking of peace to the heathen; for Christ came and preached peace to those that were afar off and to those that were nigh; and so established his kingdom by proclaiming on earth peace, and good-will towards men.

3. His kingdom, as far as it prevails in the minds of men and has the ascendant over them, will make them peaceable, and slay all enmities; it will cut off the battle-bow, and beat swords into plough-shares. It will not only command the peace, but will create the fruit of the lips, peace.

4. It shall extend itself to all parts of the world, in defiance of the opposition given to it. "The chariot and horse that come against Ephraim and Jerusalem, to oppose the progress of Zion's King, shall be cut off; his gospel shall be preached to the world, and be received among the heathen, so that his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, as was foretold by David," Ps 72:8. The preachers of the gospel shall carry it from one country, one island, to another, till some of the remotest corners of the world are enlightened and reduced by it.

IV. Here is an account of the great benefit procured for mankind by the Messiah, which is redemption from extreme misery, typified by the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon (Zec 9:11): "As for thee also (thee, O daughter of Jerusalem! or thee, O Messiah the Prince!) by the blood of thy

covenant, by force and virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, sealed with the blood of circumcision, and the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of sacrifices, in pursuance and performance of that covenant, I have now of late sent forth thy prisoners, thy captives out of Babylon, which was to them a most uncomfortable place, as a pit in which was no water." It was part of the covenant that, if in the land of their captivity, they sought the Lord, he would be found of them, Le 26:42,44,45,De 30:4.

It was by the blood of that covenant, typifying the blood of Christ, in whom all God's covenants with man are yea and amen, that they were released out of captivity; and this was but a shadow of the great salvation wrought out by thy King, O daughter of Zion! Note, A sinful state is a state of bondage; it is a spiritual prison; it is a pit, or a dungeon, in which there is no water, no comfort at all to be had.

We are all by nature prisoners in this pit; the scripture has concluded us all under sin, and bound us over to the justice of God. God is pleased to deal upon new terms with these prisoners, to enter into another covenant with them; the blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant, purchased it for us and all the benefits of it; by that blood of the covenant effectual provision is made for the sending forth of these prisoners upon easy and honourable terms, and proclamation made of liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those that were bound, like Cyrus's proclamation to the Jews in Babylon, which all those whose spirits God stirs up will come and take the benefit of.

11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy
prisoners out of the pit wherein *is* no water.
12 Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even today do I
declare *that* I will render double unto thee;
13 when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised
up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the
sword of a mighty man.

The prophet, having taught those that had returned out of captivity to attribute their deliverance to the blood of the covenant and to the promise of the Messiah (for they were so wonderfully helped because that blessing was in them, was yet in the womb of their

nation), now comes to encourage them with the prospect of a joyful and happy settlement, and of glorious times before them; and such a happiness they did enjoy, in a great measure, for some time; but these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel which we enjoy by Jesus Christ.

I. They are invited to look unto Christ, and flee unto him as their city of refuge (Zec 9:12): Turn you to the strong-hold, you prisoners of hope. The Jews that had returned out of captivity into their own land were yet, in effect, but prisoners (We are servants this day, Ne 9:36), yet prisoners of hope, or expectation, for God had given them a little reviving in their bondage, Ezr 9:8.

Those that yet continued in Babylon, detained by their affairs there, yet lived in hope some time or other to see their own land again. Now both these are directed to turn their eyes upon the Messiah, set before them in the promise as their strong-hold, to shelter themselves in him, and stay themselves upon him, for the perfecting of the mercy which by his grace, and for his sake, was so gloriously begun. Look unto him, and be you saved, Isa 45:22. The promise of the Messiah was the strong-hold of the faithful long before his coming; they saw his day at a distance and were glad, and the believing expectation of the redemption in Jerusalem was long the support and consolation of Israel, Lu 2:25,38.

They, in their dangers and distresses, were ready to turn towards this and the other creature for relief; but the prophets directed them still to turn to Christ, and to comfort themselves with the joy of their king coming to them with salvation. But, as their deliverance was typical of our redemption by Christ (Zec 9:11), so this invitation to the strong-hold speaks the language of the gospel-call. Sinners are prisoners, but they are prisoners of hope; their case is sad, but it is not desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning them. Christ is a strong-hold for them, a strong tower, in whom they may be safe and quiet from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of their spiritual enemies. To him they must turn by a lively faith; to him they must flee, and trust in his name.

14 And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

15 The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, *and* make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, *and* as the corners of the altar.

They are assured of God's favour to them: "Even to day do I declare, when things are at the worst, and you think your case deplorable to the last degree, yet I solemnly promise that I will render double unto thee, to thee, O Jerusalem! to every one of you prisoners of hope. I will give you comforts double to the sorrows you have experienced, or blessings double to what I ever bestowed upon your fathers, when their condition was at the best; the glory of your latter state, as well as of your latter house, shall be greater, shall be twice as great as that of your former."

And so it was no otherwise than by the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom; these spiritual blessings in heavenly things were double to what they had ever enjoyed in their most prosperous state. As a pledge of this, in the fulness of time God here promises to the Jews victory, plenty, and joy, in their own land, which yet should be but a type and shadow of more glorious victories, riches, and joys, in the kingdom of Christ.

1. They shall triumph over their enemies. The Jews, after their return, were surrounded with enemies on all sides. They were as a speckled bird; all the birds of the field were against them. Their land lay between the two potent kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, branches of the Grecian monarchy, and what frequent dangers they should be in between them was foretold, Da 11:1-45. But it is here promised that out of them all the Lord would deliver them; and this promise had its primary accomplishment in the times of the Maccabees, when the Jews made head against their enemies, kept their head above water, and, after many struggles and difficulties, came to be head over them. It is promised,

(1.) That they shall be instruments in God's hand for the defeating and baffling of their persecutors: "I have bent Judah for me, as my bow of steel; that bow I have filled with Ephraim as my arrows,

have drawn it up to its full bent, till the arrow be at the head;" for some think that this is signified by the phrase of filling the bow. The expressions here are very fine, and the figures lively. Judah had been taught the use of the bow (2Sa 1:18), and Ephraim had been famous for it, Ps 78:9.

But let them not think that they gain their successes by their own bow, for they themselves are no more than God's bow and his arrows, tools in his hands, which he makes use of and manages as he pleases, which he holds as his bow and directs to the mark as his arrows. The best and bravest of men are but what God makes them, and do no more service than he enables them to do.

The preachers of the gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth, he went on, conquering and to conquer, Re 6:2 The following words explain this: I have raised up and animated thy sons, O Zion! against thy sons, O Greece! This was fulfilled when against Antiochus, one of the kings of the Grecian monarchy, the people that knew their God were strong and did exploits, Da 11:32. And they in the hand of an almighty God were made as the sword of a mighty man, which none can stand before. Wicked men are said to be God's sword (Ps 17:13), and sometimes good men are made so; for he employs both as he pleases.

(2.) That God will be captain, and commander-in-chief, over them, in every expedition and engagement (Zec 9:14): The Lord shall be seen over them; he shall make it appear that he presides in their affairs, and that in all their motions they are under his direction, as apparently, though not as sensibly, as he was seen over Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire when he led them through the wilderness.

[1.] Is their army to be raised, or mustered, and brought into the field? The Lord shall blow the trumpet, to gather the forces together, to proclaim the war, to sound the alarm, and to give directions which way to march, which way to move; for, if God blow the trumpet, it shall not give an uncertain sound, nor a feeble ineffectual one.

[2.] Is the army taking the field, and entering upon action? Whatever enterprise the campaign is opened with, God shall go forth at the head of their forces, with whirlwinds of the south, which were of incredible swiftness and fierceness; and before these whirlwinds thy sons, O Greece! shall be as chaff.

[3.] Is the army actually engaged? God's arrows shall go forth as lightning, so strongly, so suddenly, so irresistibly; his lightnings shall go forth as arrows and scattered them, that is, he shot out his lightnings and discomfited them. This alludes to that which God had done for Israel of old when he brought them out of Egypt, and into Canaan, and had its accomplishment partly in the wonderful successes which the Jews had against their neighbours that attacked them in the time of the Maccabees, by the special appearances of the divine Providence for them, and perfectly in the glorious victories gained by the cross of Christ and the preaching of the cross over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whereby we are made more than conquerors.

[4.] Are they in danger of being overpowered by the enemy? The Lord of hosts shall defend them (Zec 9:15); The Lord their God shall save them (Zec 9:16); so that their enemies shall not prevail over them, nor prey upon them. God shall be unto them for defence as well as offence, the shield of their help as well as the sword of their excellency, and this as the Lord of hosts, who has power to defend them, and as their God, who is engaged by promise to defend them, and by the property he has in them. He shall save them in that day, that critical dangerous day, as the flock of his people, with the same care and tenderness that the shepherd protects his sheep with. Those are safe whom God saves.

[5.] Did their enemies hope to swallow them up? It shall be turned upon them, and they shall devour their enemies, and shall subdue with sling-stones, for want of better weapons, those that come forth against them. The stones of the brook, when God pleases, shall do as great execution as the best train of artillery; for the stars in their courses shall fight on the same side. Goliath was subdued with a sling-stone. Having subdued, they shall devour, shall drink the blood of their enemies, as it were, and, as conquerors are wont to do, they shall make a noise as through wine.

It is usual for conquerors with loud huzzas and acclamations to glory in their victories and proclaim them. We read of those that shout for mastery, and of the shout of a king among God's people. They shall be filled with blood and spoil, as the bowls and basins of the temple, or the corners of the altar, were wont to be filled with the blood of the sacrifices; for their enemies shall fall as victims to divine justice.

2. They shall triumph in their God. They shall take the comfort and give God the glory of their successes. So some read Zec 9:15. They shall eat (that is, they shall quietly enjoy) what they have got; God will give them power to eat it after they have subdued the sling-stones (that is, their enemies that slung stones at them), and they shall drink and make a noise, a joyful noise, before the Lord their maker and protector, as through wine, as men are merry at a banquet of wine.

Being not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but filled with the Spirit, they shall speak to themselves and one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as those that are drunk do with vain and foolish songs, Eph 5:18,19. And, in the fulness of their joy, they shall offer abundance of sacrifices to the honour of God, so that they shall fill both the bowls and the corners of the altar with the fat and blood of their sacrifices. And, when they thus triumph in their successes, their joy shall terminate in God as their God, the God of their salvation. They shall triumph,

(1.) In the love he has for them, and the relation wherein they stand to him, that they are the flock of his people and he is their Shepherd, and that they are to him as the stones of a crown, which are very precious and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard. Never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown as God is, and will be, with his people, who are near and dear unto him, and in whom he glories. They are a crown of glory and a royal diadem in his hand, Isa 62:2,3. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels, Mal 3:17.

And they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon his land, as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy. God's people are

his glory; so he is pleased to make them, so he is pleased to reckon them. He sets them up as a banner upon his own land, waging war against those who hate him, to whom it is a flag of defiance, while it is a centre of unity to all that love him, to all the children of God, that are scattered abroad, who are invited to come and enlist themselves under this banner, Isa 11:10,12.

(2.) In the provision he makes for them, Zec 9:15. This is the matter of their triumph (Zec 9:17): For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty! This is the substance, this the burden, of the songs wherewith they shall make a noise before the Lord. We are here taught,

[1.] To admire and praise the amiableness of God's being: How great is his beauty! All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know him. They are to him as the stones of a crown; but what is he to them? Our business in the temple is to behold the beauty of the Lord (Ps 27:4), and how great is that beauty! How far does it transcend all other beauties, particularly the beauty of his holiness. This may refer to the Messiah, to Zion's King that cometh. See that king in his beauty (Isa 33:17), who is fairer than the children of men, the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Though, in the eye of the world, he had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith how great is his beauty!

[2.] To admire and give thanks for the gifts of God's favour and grace, his bounty as well as his beauty; for how great is his goodness! How rich in mercy is he! How deep, how full, are its springs! How various, how plenteous, how precious, are its streams! What a great deal of good does God do! How rich in mercy is he! Here is an instance of his goodness to his people: Corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids; that is, God will bless his people with an abundance of the fruits of the earth.

Whereas they had been afflicted with scarcity to such a degree that the young men and the maidens were ready to swoon and faint away for hunger and thirst (La 2:12,21,4:7,8,5:10), now they shall have bread enough and to spare, not water only, but wine, new

wine, which shall make the young people grow and be cheerful, and (which some have observed to be the effect of plenty and the cheapness of corn) the poor will be encouraged to marry, and re-people the land, when they shall have wherewithal to maintain their families. Note, What good gifts God bestows upon us we must serve him cheerfully with, and must race the streams up to the fountain, and, when we are refreshed with corn and wine, must say, How great is his goodness!

16 And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for *they shall be as* the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.

17 For how great *is* his goodness, and how great *is* his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

Zechariah-10

The Lord's Redemption of His People

1 Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; *so* the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious and very gracious, were promised to this poor afflicted people in the foregoing chapter; now here God intimates to them that he will for these things be enquired of by them, and that he expects they should acknowledge him in all their ways and in all his ways towards them--and not idols that were rivals with him for their respects.

I The prophet directs them to apply to God by prayer for rain in the season thereof. He had promised, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather, there had been great scarcity of both; but the earth will not yield its fruits unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the dew of heaven, in order to the fatness and fruitfulness of the earth (Zec 10:1): "Ask you of the Lord rain. Do not pray to the clouds, nor to the stars, for rain, but to the Lord; for he it is that hears the heavens, when they hear the earth," Ho 2:21.

Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must ask of God, rain in the time of the latter rain, when there is most need of it. The former rain fell at the seed-time, in autumn, the latter fell in the spring, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear and filled it. If either of these rains failed, it was very bad with that land; for from the end of May to September they never had any rain at all. Jerome, who lived in Judea, says that he never saw any rain there in June or July.

They are directed to ask for it in the time when it used to come. Note, We must, in our prayers, dutifully attend the course of Providence; we must ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But, since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. Ask and it shall be given you. So the Lord shall make bright clouds (which, though they are without rain themselves, are yet presages of rain)--lightnings (so the margin reads it), for he maketh lightnings for the rain. He will give them showers of rain in great abundance, and so give to every one grass in the field; for God is universally good, and makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.

2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and
have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their
way as a flock, they were troubled, because *there was* no shepherd.
3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the
goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah,
and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

He shows them the folly of making their addresses to idols as their fathers had done (Zec 10:2):

The idols have spoken vanity; the teraphim, which they courted and consulted in their distress, were so far from being able to command rain for them that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. The diviners, who were the prophets of those idols, have seen a lie (their visions were all a cheat and a sham); and they have told false dreams, such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God.

Thus they comforted in vain those that consulted the lying oracles; all the vanities of the heathen put together could not give rain, Jer 14:22.

Yet this was not the worst of it; they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God, for therefore they went their way into captivity as a flock driven into the fold, and they were troubled with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep are, because there was no shepherd, no prince to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them and keep them together. Those that wandered after strange gods were made to wander, into strange nations.

III. He shows them the hand of God in all the events that concerned them, both those that made against them and those that made for them, Zec 10:3. Let them consider,

1. When every thing went cross it was God that walked contrary to them (Zec 10:3): "My anger was kindled against the shepherds that should have fed the flock, but neglected it, and starved it. I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol-shepherds." The captivity in Babylon was a token of God's anger against them; in it likewise he punished the goats, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous; they were set on the left hand, to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the goats and the shepherds that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a fatherly chastisement, which to them came from his wrath, and was a judicial punishment.

2. When things began to change for the better it was God that gave them the happy turn. "He has now visited his flock with favour, to enquire after them, and provides what he finds proper for them, and he has made them as his goodly horse in the battle, has beautified them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them, as a man does the horse he rides on, has made them valuable in themselves and formidable to those about them, as his goodly horse." It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

IV. He shows them that every creature is to them what God makes it to be (Zec 10:4): Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nails.

1. All the power that was engaged against them was from God. Out of him came all the combined force of their enemies; every oppressor together (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them unless it had been given them from above.

2. All the power likewise that was engaged for them was derived from him and depended on him. Out of him came forth the corner-stone of the building, the power of magistrates, which keeps the several parts of the state together. Princes are often called the corners of the people, as 1Sa 14:38, marg. Out of him came forth the nail that fixed the state, the nail in the sure place (Isa 22:23), the nail in his holy place, Ezr 9:8. Out of him came forth the battle-bow, the military power, and out of him every oppressor, or exactor, that had the civil power in his hand; and therefore to God, the fountain of power, we must always have an eye, and see every man's judgment proceeding from him.

4 Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

5 And they shall be as mighty *men,* which tread down *their enemies* in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord *is* with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which look further than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God, the gospel-church, and all true believers.

I. They shall have God's favour and presence, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest: The Lord is with them, Zec 10:5. He espouses their cause, takes their part, is on their side; and, if he be for them, who can be against them? Again (Zec 10:6), I have mercy upon them. All their dignity and joy are owing purely to God's mercy; and mercy, as

it supposes misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could pretend to merit nothing at God's hand but wrath and the curse; yet it is promised, They shall be as though I had not cast them off. The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but shall not be so much as remembered against them. God will be as perfectly reconciled to them as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing than the weakening of love.

They shall have such a full assurance of God's being reconciled to them, and upon that shall be so well reconciled to themselves, that they shall be as easy as if they had never been cast off; and their condition, after their restoration to the divine favour, shall be so very happy that there shall not remain the least scar from the wounds which were given them by their being cast off. Such favour does God show to returning repenting sinners, who were by nature at a distance, and children of wrath; such fellowship are they admitted into, and such freedom does he use with them, that they are as though they had never been cast off.

1 The covenant they are admitted into is the same that ever it was: I am the Lord their God, according to the original contract, the covenant made with their fathers.

2 The communion they are admitted into is the same that ever it was: I will hear them. They shall be as welcome as ever to speak to him, and as sure as ever to receive from him an answer of peace; for, as he never did, so he never will, say to Jacob's seed, Seek you me in vain.

II. They shall be victorious over their enemies, that would draw them from either their duty to God or their comfort in God (Zec 10:5): They shall be as mighty men, that are both strong in body and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men. Those of Ephraim, as well as those of Judah, shall be like a mighty man (Zec 10:7), that dares to go about a difficult enterprise and is able to go through with it. They shall, as mighty men, tread down their enemies in the battle, as the dirt that is thrown out of the

houses is trodden with other dirt in the mire of the streets. And they shall therefore fight, because the Lord is with them.

Some would argue that they may therefore sit still, and do nothing, because the Lord is with them, who can and will do all. No; God's gracious presence with us to help us must not supersede, but quicken and animate, our endeavours to help ourselves; and we must therefore work out our salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that works in us both to will and to do. They shall fight with readiness and resolution because, if God be with them, they are sure to be conquerors, more than conquerors. For then the riders on horses shall be confounded. The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed, and put into disorder, by the infantry of the Jews.

The preachers of the gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare; they charged bravely, because God was with them; and the riders on horses that opposed them were confounded, for God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. But whence have they all this might? How come they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so (Zec 10:6):

I will strengthen the house of Judah, and so I will save the house of Joseph. Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are engaged to the utmost diligence in using the strength God gives us; and yet, when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our strength, and so becomes both our song and our salvation.

III. Those of them that are dispersed shall be gathered together into one body (Zec 10:6): I will bring them again to place them, bring them from other lands to place them in their own land. This was a token of their being perfectly restored to all their other ancient privileges--they shall be restored to the possession of their own land. This was fulfilled when the children of God that were scattered abroad were by faith in Christ incorporated in the gospel-church, and Jews and Gentiles became one fold, Joh 10:16. In order to this (Zec 10:8) I will hiss for them, or, rather,

whistle for them, as the shepherd with his pipe calls his sheep together, that know his voice; and so I will gather them. The preaching of the gospel was, as it were, God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures. I will gather them, for I have redeemed them.

Note, Those whom Christ has redeemed by his blood God will gather by his grace, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. This promise is enlarged upon Zec 10:10, I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt. Some think this was literally fulfilled when Ptolemæus Philadelphus king of Egypt sent 120,000 Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering in of precious souls out of a bondage worse than that in Egypt or Assyria, and the bringing of them into the glorious liberties of the children of God and their enjoyments, which are as the beautiful fruitful pastures in the land of Gilead and Lebanon.

All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead, the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon, the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be got together? How shall those that are set at such a distance from their own country be brought to it again? It is true the difficulties seem insuperable, but they shall be got over as easily, as effectually as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt and their entrance into Canaan: He shall pass through the sea with affliction, as of old through the Red Sea, to the sore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts, or to the sore affliction of the sea, the waves whereof he shall smite, so that it shall be driven back, as when the sea saw and fled, Ps 114:3.

And all the deeps of the river (all the rivers, though ever so deep) shall dry up, as Jordan did, to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Does the pride of Assyria stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it who sets bounds to the proud waves of the sea, and it shall be brought down. Does the sceptre of Egypt oppose it? That shall depart away, so that it shall not be able to obstruct the gathering

in of God's Israel when his time shall come for the doing of it. When the gospel-church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel great opposition was given to it by the enraged combined powers of earth and hell. Insuperable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it. But, by a divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was driven back at the presence of the Lord.

6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I *am* the Lord their God, and will hear them.

7 And *they of* Ephraim shall be like a mighty *man*, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see *it*, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.

8 I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.

They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world, shall be replenished (Zec 10:8): They shall increase as they have increased formerly in Egypt, and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When God gathers his redeemed ones to himself they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homeward shall be like that of a snow-ball. Crescit eundo--The further it goes the larger it grows by accretion. I will gather them, and they shall increase.

Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it comes to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. There are added to it daily such as shall be saved.

1. It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it there, Zec 10:10. In Judah only God had been known, and his name was great in Israel only; here only he revealed his statutes and judgments. But in gospel-times that place shall be much too strait; the church's tent must be enlarged, and its cords lengthened: Then I will sow them among the people, Zec 10:9.

Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed into every nation under heaven (Ac 2:5); and, as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves into colonies because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but proselyted to the Jewish religion. Now these were sown among the people, Ho 2:23.

And this contributed very much to the spreading of the gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those Ac 2:1-47, and the eunuch, Ac 8:26-40 And their own synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles were the first receptacles of the apostles and their preaching, wherever they came.

Thus when God sowed them among the people, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, he took care that they should remember him, and make mention of his name in far countries; and, by keeping up the knowledge of God among them as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament, they would be the more ready to admit the knowledge of Christ as he has revealed himself in the New Testament.

2. It shall last to future ages. The church shall not be res unius ætatis--a temporary thing, but a seed in it shall serve the Lord, Zec 10:7. Yea, their children shall see it and be glad; and they shall live with their children, and turn again, Zec 10:9. Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the gospel was first preached, The promise is to you and to your children, Ac 2:39. They shall be so sown among the people as never to be extirpated. Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs.

V. God himself will be both their strength and their song.

1. In him they shall be comforted, and shall have abundant satisfaction (Zec 10:7): Their heart shall rejoice as through wine; for Christ's love, which is their joy, is better than wine. They shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice. When we resolutely resist, and so overcome, our spiritual enemies, then our hearts shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy if our resistance be feeble and we yield to the temptations of Satan. Their heart shall rejoice, and then they shall be as a mighty man; for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. And with their graces their joys shall be propagated: Their children shall see it and be glad, and their hearts also shall rejoice in the Lord. It is good to acquaint children betimes with the delights of religion, and to make the services of it as pleasant as may be to them, that, learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him.

2. By him they shall be carried on with vigour, and enlargement of heart, in his service (Zec 10:12): I will strengthen them in the Lord, strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, that strengthens all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe,

(1.) How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty: I the Lord will strengthen them in the Lord, in the Messiah, who is Jehovah our strength, as well as Jehovah our righteousness. Strength is treasured up for us in Christ, and from him it is communicated to us. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and without him we can do nothing. His strength is commanded him for this purpose, Ps 68:28.

(2.) What good use they shall make of this strength given unto them: They shall walk up and down in his name. If God strengthen us, we must bestir ourselves, must walk up and down in all the duties of the Christian life, must be active and busy in the work of God, must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must walk up and down in the name of Christ, must do all by warrant from him and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ;

and, whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain. See Ps 80:17,18.

9 And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me
in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.
10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them
out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and
Lebanon; and *place* shall not be found for them.
11 And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the
waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride
of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart
away.
12 And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and
down in his name, saith the Lord.

Zechariah-11

1 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.
2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled:
howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.
3 *There is* a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled:
a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

The Foolish Shepherds

4 Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;
5 whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they
that sell them say, Blessed *be* the Lord; for I am rich: and their own
shepherds pity them not.
6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but,
lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand, and into
the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and
out of their hand I will not deliver *them*.
7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, *even* you, O poor of the flock. And
I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called
Bands; and I fed the flock.
8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them,
and their soul also abhorred me.

9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that
is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of
another.
10 And I took my staff, *even* Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break
my covenant which I had made with all the people.
11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited
upon me knew that it *was* the word of the Lord.
12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price; and if not,
forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver.
13 And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that
I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast
them to the potter in the house of the Lord.
14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, *even* Bands, that I might break the
brotherhood between Judah and Israel.
15 And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a
foolish shepherd.
16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *which* shall not visit those
that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is
broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the
fat, and tear their claws in pieces.
17 Woe to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword *shall be* upon
his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his
right eye shall be utterly darkened.

Zechariah-12

The Future Deliverance of Jerusalem

1 The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which
stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth,
and formeth the spirit of man within him.

Here is, I The title of this charter of promises made to God's Israel; it is the burden of the word of the Lord, a divine prediction; it is of weight in the delivery of it; it is to be pressed upon people, and will be very pressing in the accomplishment of it; it is a burden, a heavy burden, to all the church's enemies, like that talent of lead, Zec 5:7,8. But it is for Israel; it is for their comfort and benefit. As even the fiery law (De 33:2), so the fiery prophecies and fiery

providences that come from God's right hand, come for them; the word that speaks terror to their enemies speaks peace to them, as the pillar of cloud and fire, which turned a bright side towards the Israelites, to direct and encourage them, but a black side towards the Egyptians, to terrify and dispirit them. Happy are those that have even the burdens of God's word for them, as well as the blessings of it.

II The title of him that grants this charter, which is prefixed to it to show that he has both authority to make these promises and ability to make them good, for he is the Creator of the world and our Creator, and therefore has an incontestable irresistible dominion.

1. He stretches out the heavens; not only he did so at the first, when he said, Let there be a firmament, and he made the firmament, but he does so still; he keeps them stretched out like a curtain, keeps them from running in, and will do so till the end come, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. No bounds can be set to his power who stretches out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him.

2. He lays the foundation of the earth, and keeps it firm and fixed on its own basis, or rather on its own axis, though it is founded on the seas (Ps 24:1), nay, though it is hung upon nothing, Job 26:7. The founder of this earth is no doubt the ruler of it, and judges in it, and those deceive themselves who say, The Lord has forsaken the earth, for, if he had, it would have sunk, since it is he that not only did lay its foundations at first, but does still lay them, still uphold them.

3. He forms the spirit of man within him. He made us these souls, Jer 38:16. He not only breathed into the first man, but still breathes into every man the breath of life; the body is derived from the fathers of our flesh, but the soul is infused by the Father of spirits, Heb 12:9. He fashions men's hearts; they are in his hand, and he turns them as the rivers of water, and casts them into what mould he pleases, so as to serve his own purposes with them; and he can therefore save his church by inspiriting his friends and dispiriting his enemies, and will eternally save all his chosen by forming their spirits anew.

III. The promises themselves that are here made them, by which the church shall be secured, and in which all its friends may enjoy a holy security.

1. It is promised that, whatever attacks the enemies of the church may make upon her purity or peace, they will certainly issue in their own confusion. The enemies of God and of his kingdom bear a great deal of malice and ill-will to Jerusalem, and form designs for its destruction; but it will prove, at last, that they are but preparing ruin for themselves; Jerusalem is in safety, and those are in all the danger who fight against it. This is here illustrated by three comparisons:--

(1.) Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling to all that lay siege to it, Zec 12:2. They promise themselves that it shall be to them a cup of wine, which they shall easily and with pleasure drink off, and they thirst for its spoils, nay, they thirst for its blood, as for such a cup; but it shall prove a cup of slumber, nay, a cup of poison, to them, which, when they take it into their hands, and think it is all their own, they shall not be able to drink off:

the fumes of it shall give them enough. When the kings were assembled against her, and saw how God was known in her palaces for a refuge, they trembled and hasted away; fear took hold upon them, as we find, Ps 48:3-6. Thus Alexander the Great was struck with amazement when he met Jaddus the high priest, and was deterred thereby from offering any violence to Jerusalem. When Sennacherib laid siege against Judah and Jerusalem he found them such a cup of stupifying wine as laid all his mighty men asleep, Ps 76:5,6. Some read it, I will make Jerusalem a post of contrition or breaking. Those that make any attempts upon Jerusalem do but run their heads against a post, which they cannot move, but are sure to hurt themselves. The blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall (Isa 25:4), broken by it, but not shaking it. God's church is a cup of consolation to all her friends (Isa 66:11), but a cup of trembling to all that would either debauch her by errors and corruptions or destroy her by wars and persecutions. See Isa 51:22,23.

(2.) Jerusalem shall be a burdensome stone to all that attempt to remove it or carry it away, Zec 12:3. All the people of the earth are here supposed to be gathered together against it, some one time and some another; there has been a succession of enemies, from age to age, making war upon the church. But though they were all at once in a confederacy against it, and had formed a resolution to cut off the name of Israel, that it should be no more in remembrance (Ps 83:4), they will find it a task too hard for them. Those that are for keeping up and advancing the kingdom of sin in the world look upon Jerusalem, even the church of God, as the great obstacle to their designs, and they must have it out of the way; but they will find it heavier than they think it is; so that,

[1.] They cannot remove it. God will have a church in the world, in spite of them; it is built upon a rock, and is as Mount Zion, that abides for ever, Ps 125:1. This stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, will not only keep its ground, but fill the earth, Da 2:35. Nay,

[2.] It will break in pieces all that burden themselves with it, as that stone smote the image, Da 2:45. All that think themselves a match for it shall be cut in pieces by it. Some think it is an allusion to a sport which Jerome, upon this place, says was in use among the Jews, as among us: young men tried their strength, and strove for mastery, by heaving up great stones, which, if they proved too heavy for them, fell upon them, and bruised them.

Those that make a jest of religion, and banter sacred things, will find them a burdensome stone, that it is ill-jesting with edged-tools, and though they make light of it (saying, Am not I in sport?) they bring upon themselves an insupportable sinking load of guilt. Our Saviour seems to allude to these words when he speaks of himself as a burdensome stone to those that will not have him for their foundation-stone, which shall fall upon them and grind them to powder, Mt 21:44.

(3.) The governors of Judah shall be among their enemies like a hearth of fire among the wood, and a torch of fire in a sheaf, Zec 12:6. Not that their own passions shall make them incendiaries and

firebrands to all about them; no; Zion's King is meek and lowly, and all subordinate governors must be like him; but God's justice will make them avengers of his cause, and theirs, upon their enemies. Those that contend with them will find it is like an opposition given by briers and thorns to a consuming fire, Isa 27:4. It will go through them, and burn them together. It is God's wrath, and not theirs, that is the fire which devours the adversaries. God's fire is said to be in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem. Isa 31:9.

The enemies thought to be as water to this fire, to extinguish it and put it quite out; but God will make them as wood, nay, as a sheaf of corn (which is more combustible), to this fire, not only to be consumed by it, but to be made thereby to burn the more strongly. When God would make Abimelech and the men of Shechem one another's destroyers fire is said to come out from the one to devour the other, Jdg 9:20.

So here, Fire shall come out from the governors of Judah to devour all the people round about, as from the mouth of God's witnesses to consume those who offer to hurt them, Re 11:5. The persecutors of the primitive church found this fulfilled in it, witness Lactantius's history of God's judgments upon the primitive persecutors, and the confession of Julian the apostate at last. Thou hast overcome me, O thou Galilean! The church's motto may be, Nemo me impune lacesset--He that assails me does it at his peril. If you are weary of your life, persecute the Christians, was once a proverb.

2. It is promised that God will infatuate the counsels and enfeeble the courage of the church's enemies (Zec 12:4): "In that day, when the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness;" and again, "I will smite every horse of the people with blindness, so that they shall be no way serviceable to them; blinding the horses will be as bad as houghing them." The horses and their horsemen shall both forget the military exercise to which they were trained, and, instead of keeping ranks and observing the rules of their discipline, they shall both grow mad, and ruin themselves. The church's infantry shall be too hard for the enemy's

cavalry; and those who were upbraided with trusting in horses shall be baffled by those who were forbidden to multiply horses.

3. It is promised that Jerusalem shall be re-peopled and replenished (Zec 12:6): Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that Jerusalem, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in New England called their towns by the names of towns in Old England. No; they shall have a new Jerusalem upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground, with the old one. They had so after their return out of captivity, but this was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is a Jerusalem inhabited in its own place; for, the gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place its own.

4. It is promised that the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be enabled to defend themselves, and yet shall be taken under the divine protection, Zec 12:8. See here in what method God preserves his church, and those that are his, from the gates of hell to and through the gates of heaven.

(1.) He does himself secure them: In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, not only Jerusalem itself from being taken and destroyed, but every inhabitant of it from being any way damaged. God will not only be a wall of fire about the city, to fortify that, but he will encompass particular persons with his favour as with a shield, so that no dart of the besiegers shall touch them.

(2.) He does it by giving them strength and courage to help themselves. What God works in his people by his grace contributes more to their preservation and defence than what he works for them by his providence. The God of Israel gives strength and power to his people, that they may do their part, and then he will not be wanting to do his. It is the glory of God to strengthen the weak, that most need his help, that see and own their need of it, and will be the most thankful for it.

[1.] In that day the feeblest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as David, shall be men of war, as bold and brave, as skilful and strong, as David himself, shall attempt and accomplish great things, as David did, and become as serviceable to Jerusalem in guarding it as David himself was in founding it, and as formidable as he was to the enemies of it. See what divine grace does; it makes children not only men, but champions, makes weak saints to be not only good soldiers, but great soldiers, like David. And see how God often does his own work as easily and effectually, and more to his own glory, by weak and obscure instruments than by the most illustrious.

[2.] The house of David shall be as God, that is, as the angel of the Lord, before them. Zerubbabel was now the top-branch of the house of David; he shall be endued with wisdom and grace for the service to which he is called, and shall go before the people as an angel, as that angel (so some think) which went before the people of Israel through the wilderness, which was God himself, Ex 23:20. God will increase the gifts and abilities both of the people and princes, in proportion to the respective services for which they are designed. It was said of David that he was as an angel of God, to discern good and bad, 2Sa 14:17.

Such shall the house of David now be. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as strong and fit for action as nature made David, and their magistrates as wise and fit for counsel as grace made him. But this was to have its full accomplishment in Christ; now the house of David looked little and mean, and its glory was eclipsed, but in Christ the house of David shone more brightly than ever, and its countenance was as that of an angel; in him it became more blessed, and more a blessing, than ever it had been.

5. It is promised that there shall be a very good understanding between the city and the country, and that the balance shall be kept even between them; there shall be no mutual envies or jealousies between them; they shall not keep up any separate interests, but shall heartily unite in their counsels, and act in concert for the common good; and this happy agreement between the city and the country, the head and the body, is very necessary to the health, welfare, and safety of any nation.

(1.) The governors of Judah, the magistrates and gentry of the country, shall think honourably of the citizens, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the merchants and tradesmen; they shall not run them down, and contrive how to keep them under, but they shall say in their hearts, not in compliment but in sincerity, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength, the strength of my country, of my family, in the Lord of hosts their God, Zec 12:5.

They will therefore, upon all occasions, pay respect and deference to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, the ruling-city, and the city that is to be first served, because they look upon it to be the bulwark of the nation and its strongest fortification in times of public danger and distress, which therefore they would all come in to the assistance of and come under the protection of, and this not so much because it was a rich city, and money is the sinews of war, nor because it was a populous city and could bring the greatest numbers into the field, nor because its inhabitants were generally the most ingenious active men, the best soldiers and the best commanders (of Zion it shall be said, This and that brave man were born there), but because it was a holy city, where God's house and household, the temple and the priests, were, where his worship was kept up and his feasts were observed, and because it should now be more than ever a praying city, for upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem God will pour a spirit of supplication (Zec 12:10); therefore the governors of Judah shall say, These are my strength; they are so upon the account of their relation to, their interest in, and their communion with, the Lord of hosts, their God.

Because the Lord of hosts is in a particular manner their God (for in Salem is his tabernacle and his dwelling-place in Zion), therefore they shall be my strength.

Note, It is well with a kingdom when its great men know how to value its good men, when its governors look upon religion and religious people to be their strength, and consider it their interest to support them, and learn to call godly praying people, and skilful faithful ministers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, as Joash called Elisha, and not the troublers of the land, as Ahab called Elijah.

(2.) The court and the city shall not despise, nor look with contempt upon, the inhabitants of the country; no, not the meanest of them, much less upon the governors of Judah; for God will put signal honour upon Judah, and so save them from the contempt of their brethren. As Jerusalem was dignified by special ordinances, so Judah shall be dignified with special providences. God says (Zec 12:4), I will open my eyes upon the house of Judah, upon the poor country people. Proud men scornfully overlook them, but the great God will graciously look upon them and look after them. Nay, (Zec 12:7), the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first. Those that dwell in tents lie most exposed; but God will remarkably protect and deliver them before those that dwell in Jerusalem. He will appear glorious in what he does for the inhabitants of his villages in Israel, Jdg 5:11.

Thus, in the mystical body, God gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there may be no schism in the body (see 1Co 12:22-25), which is the reason here given why the glory of the house of David, which has great power, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who have great wealth, and both which live in great pomp and pleasure, may not magnify themselves against Judah and the tents of Judah, the dwellers in which work hard, and fare hard, and perhaps are not so well bred.

Note, Courtiers and citizens ought not to despise country people, nor look with disdain upon those whom God opens his eyes upon and who are first saved, while it is so hard for the rich and great to enter the kingdom of God. If God by his grace has magnified the dwellers in the tents of Judah, having chosen the weak and foolish things of the world and chosen to employ them, we affront him if we vilify them, or magnify ourselves against them, Jam 2:5,6. This promise has a further reference to the gospel-church, in which no difference shall be made between high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision, but all shall be alike welcome to Christ, and partake of his benefits, Col 3:11. Jerusalem shall not then be thought, as it had been, more holy than other parts of the land of Israel.

2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem.

3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

4 In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem *shall be* my strength in the Lord of hosts their God.

6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, *even* in Jerusalem.

7 The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify *themselves* against Judah.

8 In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David *shall be* as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

The day here spoken of is the day of Jerusalem's defence and deliverance, that glorious day when God will appear for the salvation of his people, which, if it do refer to the successes which the Jews had against their enemies in the time of the Maccabees, yet certainly looks further, to the gospel-day, to Christ's victories over the powers of darkness and the great salvation he has wrought for his chosen. Now we have here an account of two remarkable works designed in that day.

I. A glorious work of God to be wrought for his people: "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem, Zec 12:9. Nations come against Jerusalem, many and mighty nations; but they shall all be destroyed, their power shall be broken, and their attempts baffled; the mischief they intend shall return upon

their own head." God will seek to destroy them, not as if he were at a loss for ways and means to bring it about (Infinite Wisdom was never nonplussed), but his seeking to do it intimates that he is very earnest and intent upon it (he is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and has the day of vengeance in his heart) and that he overrules means and instruments, and all the motions and operations of second causes, in order to it.

He is framing evil against them; when he seems to be setting them up he is seeking to destroy them. In Christ's first coming, he sought to destroy him that had the power of death, and did destroy him, bruised the serpent's head, and broke all the powers of darkness that fought against God's kingdom among men and against the faithful friends and subjects of that kingdom; he spoiled them, and made a show of them openly. In his second coming, he will complete their destruction, when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, and death itself shall be swallowed up in that victory. The last enemy shall be destroyed of all that fought against Jerusalem.

II. A gracious work of God to be wrought in his people, in order to the work that is to be wrought for them. When he seeks to destroy their enemies he will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication. Note, When God intends great mercy for his people the first thing he does is to set them a praying; thus he seeks to destroy their enemies by stirring them up to seek to him that he would do it for them; because, though he has proposed it and promised it, and it is for his own glory to do it, yet he will for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, Eze 36:37.

Ask, and it shall be given. This honour will he have to himself, and this honour will he put upon prayer and upon praying people. And it is a happy presage to the distressed church of deliverance approaching, and is, as it were, the dawning of its day, when his people are stirred up to cry mightily to him for it. But this promise has reference to, and is performed in, the graces of the Spirit given to all believers, as that Isa 44:3, I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, which was fulfilled when Jesus was glorified, Joh 7:39. It is a promise of the Spirit, and with him of all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ. Now observe here,

1. On whom these blessings are poured out.

(1.) On the house of David, on the great men; for they are no more, and no better, than the grace of God makes them. It was promised (Zec 12:8) that the house of David should be as the angel of the Lord. Now, in order to that, the Spirit of grace is poured upon them; for the more the saints have of the Spirit of grace the more like they are to the holy angels. When God was about to appear for the land, he poured his Spirit of grace upon the house of David, the leading men of the land. It bodes well to a people when princes and great men go before the rest in that which is good, as 2Ch 20:5. The house of David is all summed up in Jesus Christ, the Son of David; and upon him, as the head, the Spirit of grace is poured out, from him to be diffused to all his members; from his fulness we receive, and grace for grace.

(2.) On the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the common people; for the operations of the Spirit are the same upon the mean and weak Christians that they are upon the strong and more grown. The inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot influence public affairs by their powers and policies, as the great men of the house of David may, yet they may do good service by their prayers, and therefore upon them the Spirit shall be poured out. The church is Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem; all true believers, that have their conversation in the heaven, are inhabitants of this Jerusalem, and to them this promise belongs. God will pour his Spirit upon them. This is the earnest which all that believe in Christ shall receive; thus they are sanctified; thus they are sealed.

2. What these blessings are: I will pour upon them the Spirit. That includes all good things, as it qualifies us for the favour of God, and all his other gifts. He will pour out the Spirit,

(1.) As a Spirit of grace, to sanctify us and to make us gracious. (2.) As a Spirit of supplications, inclining us to, instructing and assisting us in, the duty of prayer. Note, Wherever the Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he is given as a Spirit of sanctification.

Wherever he is a Spirit of adoption, he teaches to cry, Abba, Father. As soon as ever Paul was converted, Behold, he prays, Ac 9:11. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living saint without prayer. There is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prayer now under the gospel than was under the law; and the further the work of sanctification is carried in us the better is the work of supplication carried on by us.

3. What the effect of them will be: I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace. One would think that it should follow, "And they shall look on him whom they have believed, and shall rejoice" (and it is true that that is one of the fruits of the pouring out of the Spirit, whence we read of the joy of the Holy ghost), but it follows, They shall mourn; for there is a holy mourning, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, a mourning for sin, which is of use to quicken faith in Christ and qualify for joy in God. It is here made the matter of a promise that they shall mourn, for there is a mourning that will end in rejoicing and has a blessing entailed upon it.

This mourning is a fruit of the Spirit of grace, an evidence of a work of grace in the soul, and a companion of the Spirit of supplication, as it expresses lively affections working in prayer; hence prayers and tears are often put together, 2Ki 20:5. Jacob, that wrestler with God, wept and made supplication. But here it is a mourning for sin that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit.

(1.) It is a mourning grounded upon a sight of Christ: They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him. Here,

[1.] It is foretold that Christ should be pierced, and this scripture is quoted as that which was fulfilled when Christ's side was pierced upon the cross; see Joh 19:37.

[2.] He is spoken of as one whom we have pierced; it is spoken primarily of the Jews, who persecuted him to death (and we find that those who pierced him are distinguished from the other kindreds of the earth that shall wail because of him, Re 1:7); yet it is true of us all as sinners, we have pierced Christ, inasmuch as our

sins were the cause of his death, for he was wounded for our transgressions, and they are the grief of his soul; he is broken with the whorish heart of sinners, who therefore are said to crucify him afresh and put him to open shame.

[3.] Those that truly repent of sin look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced, who was pierced for their sins and is pierced by them; and this engages them to look unto him, as those that are deeply concerned for him.

[4.] This is the effect of their looking to Christ; it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified; when they heard it those who had had a hand in piercing him were pricked to the heart, and cried out, What shall we do? It is fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ, and mourn for him, not so much for his sufferings as for their own sins that procured them. Note, The genuine sorrows of a penitent soul flow from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort.

(2.) It is a great mourning.

[1.] it is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin as one mourns for an only son, in whose grave the hopes of his family are buried, and shall be inwardly in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born, as the Egyptians were when there was a cry throughout all their land for the death of their first-born. The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for a son, for an only son, for a first-born, is natural, sincere, unforced, and unaffected, it is secret and lasting; such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other.

[2.] It is like the mourning of a people for the death of a wise and good prince. It shall be like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon, where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation (Zec 12:11), and perhaps the

greater because they were told that it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing; therefore they cried out, The crown has fallen from our head. Woe unto us, for we have sinned! La 5:16. Christ is our King; our sins were his death, and, for that reason, ought to be our grief.

(3.) It is a general universal mourning (Zec 12:12): The land shall mourn. The land itself put on mourning at the death of Christ, for there was then darkness over all the land, and the earth trembled; but this is a promise that, in consideration of the death of Christ, multitudes shall be effectually brought to sorrow for sin and turn to God; it shall be such a universal gracious mourning as was when all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord, 1Sa 7:2. Some think this is yet to have its complete accomplishment in the general conversion of the Jewish nation.

(4.) It is also a private particular mourning. There shall be not only a mourning of the land, by its representatives in a general assembly (as Jdg 2:5, when the place was called Bochim--A place of weepers), but it shall spread itself into all corners of the land: Every family apart shall mourn (Zec 12:12), all the families that remain, Zec 12:14. All have contributed to the guilt, and therefore all shall share in the grief.

Note, The exercises of devotion should be performed by private families among themselves, besides their joining in public assemblies for religious worship. National fasts must be observed, not only in our synagogues, but in our houses. In the mourning here foretold the wives mourn apart by themselves, in their own apartment, as Esther and her maids. And some think it intimates their denying themselves the use even of lawful delights in a time of general humiliation 1Co 7:5. Four several families are here specified as examples to others in this mourning:--

[1.] Two of them are royal families: the house of David, in Solomon, and the house of Nathan, another son of David, brother to Solomon, from whom Zerubbabel descended, as appears by Christ's genealogy, Lu 3:27-31. The house of David, particularly that of Nathan, which is now the chief branch of that house, shall go before in this good work. The greatest princes must not think

themselves exempted from the law of repentance, but rather obliged most solemnly to express it, for the exciting of others, as Hezekiah humbled himself (2Ch 32:26), the princes and the king (2Ch 12:6), and the king of Nineveh, Jon 3:6.

[2.] Two of them are sacred families (Zec 12:13), the family of the house of Levi, which was God's tribe, and in it particularly the family of Shimei, which was a branch of the tribe of Levi (1Ch 6:17), and probably some of the descendants of that family were now of note for preachers to the people or ministers to the altar. As the princes must mourn for the sins of the magistracy, so must the priests for the iniquity of the holy things. In times of general tribulation and humiliation the Lord's ministers are concerned to weep between the porch and the altar (Joe 2:17), and not only there, but in their houses apart; for in what families should godliness, both in the form and in the power of it, be found, if not in ministers' families?

10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;

13 the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;

14 all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

Zechariah-13

1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

Behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the sin of the church; for therefore was the Son of God manifested, to take away our sin, 1Jo 3:5.

I. He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross (Zec 13:1): In that day, in the gospel-day, there shall be a fountain opened, that is, provision made for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin who truly repent and are sorry for them. In that day, when the Spirit of grace is poured out to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those who have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of their pardon in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified and pacified by the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, 1Jo 1:7.

For Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins; and where he gives the one no doubt he gives the other. This fountain opened is the pierced side of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before (Zec 12:10), for thence came there out blood and water, and both for cleansing. And those who look upon Christ pierced, and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in bitterness for him, may look again upon Christ pierced and rejoice in him, because it pleased the Lord thus to smite this rock, that it might be to us a fountain of living waters. See here,

1. How we are polluted; we are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness; it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God and uneasy in ourselves, unfit to be employed in the service of God and admitted into communion with him, as those who were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are under sin, which is uncleanness. The truth is, we are all as an unclean thing, and deserve to have our portion with the unclean.

2. How we may be purged. Behold, there is fountain opened for us to wash in, and there are streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that, if we be not made clean, it is our own fault. The blood of Christ, and God's pardoning mercy in that blood, revealed in the new covenant, are,

(1.) A fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, for the forgiving of the greatest sins and sinners, upon gospel-terms. Such

were some of you, but you are washed, 1Co 6:11. Under the law there were a brazen laver and a brazen sea to wash in; those were but vessels, but we have a fountain to ourselves, overflowing, ever-flowing.

(2.) A fountain opened; for, whoever will, may come and take the benefit of it; it is opened, not only to the house of David, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or it is opened for all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and, as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are washed from their sins in his blood, that they may be made to our God kings and priests, Re 1:5,6.

II. He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins. This evermore accompanies the former; those that are washed in the fountain opened, as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day,

1. Idolatry shall be quite abolished and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it (Zec 13:2): I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land. The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such idols among them; they shall either not be named at all or not with any respect; they shall no more be remembered, as was promised, Ho 2:17.

This was fulfilled in the rooted aversion which the Jews had, after the captivity, to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day; it was fulfilled also in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken off from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and it is still in the fulfilling when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only.

2. False prophecy shall also be brought to an end: I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit, the prophets that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to pass out of the land. The devil is

an unclean spirit; sin and uncleanness are from him; he has his prophets, that serve his interests and receive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit, and the prophets would not deceive as they do; take away the false prophets that produce sham commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he does. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets he banishes the unclean spirit out of the land, that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart.

The church of the Jews, when they were addicted to idols, did also dote much upon false prophets, who flattered them in their sins with promises of impunity and peace; but here it is promised, as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them; they were so after the captivity, till, through the blindness of their zeal against false prophets, they had put Christ to death under that character, and, after that, there arose many false Christs and false prophets, and deceived many, Mt 24:11. It is here foretold,

(1.) That false prophets, instead of being indulged and favoured, should be brought to condign punishment even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any of flagrant zeal against those deceivers (Zec 13:3): When any shall set up for a prophet, and shall speak lies in the name of the Lord, shall preach that which tends to draw people from God and to confirm them in sin, his own parents shall be the first and most forward to prosecute him for it, according to the law. De 13:6-11, "If thy son entice thee secretly from God, thou shalt surely kill him. Show thy indignation against him, and prevent any further temptation from him." His father and his mother shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

Note, We ought to conceive, and always to retain, a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by-paths, as those who cannot bear that which is evil, Re 2:22.

And holy zeal for God and godliness will make us hate sin, and dread temptation, most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest, as Adam's from

Eve, Job's from his wife; and there it will be the most praiseworthy to show our zeal, as Levi, who, in the cause of God, did not acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children, De 33:9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations when they come in competition with our duty to God, Lu 14:26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be over-ruled by gracious affections.

(2.) That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions (Zec 13:4): "The prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision; they shall not repeat it, or insist upon it, but desire that it may be forgotten and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham, because God has by his grace awakened their consciences and shown them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions, and gives them the lie, or because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with, but are generally despised and distasted; they perceive the people ashamed of them, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves. And therefore they shall no longer wear a rough garment, or garment of hair, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being mortified to the pleasures and delights of sense."

The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophets; but, their folly being now made manifest, they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unthinking unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing, if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct; but it is a bad thing if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let men be really as good as they seem to be, but not seem to be better than really they are. This pretender, as a true penitent,

[1.] Shall undeceive those whom he had imposed upon: He shall say, "I am no prophet, as I have pretended to be, was never designed nor set apart to the office, never educated nor brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets. I am a husbandman, and was bred to that business; I was never taught of God to prophesy, but taught of man to keep cattle" Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterwards called to be a

prophet, Am 7:14,15. But this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others will be forward to confess their sin, and will be so just as to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus those who had used curious arts, when they were converted showed their deeds, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people, Ac 19:18.

[2.] He shall return to his own proper employment, which is the fittest for him: I will be a husbandman (so it may be read); "I will apply myself to my calling again, and meddle no more with things that belong not to me; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth, and cattle I will again keep, and never set up for a preacher any more." Note, When we are convinced that we have gone out of the way of our duty we must evince the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, though it be the severest mortification to us.

[3.] He shall acknowledge those to be his friends who by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, Zec 13:6. When he who with the greatest assurance had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet suddenly drops his claims, and says, I am no prophet, every body will be surprised at it, and some will ask, "What are these wounds, or marks of stripes, in thy hands? how camest thou by them? Hast thou not been examined by scourging? And is not that it that has brought thee to thyself?" (Vexatio dat intellectum--Vexation sharpens the intellect.) "Hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproof that gave thee this wisdom?" And he shall own, "Yes, it was; these are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends, who bound me, and used me hardly and severely, as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses."

By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet that thrust him through (Zec 13:3) did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction, and he would not be reclaimed; for so was the law concerning a disobedient son--his parents must first have chastened him in vain before they were allowed to bring him forth to be stoned, De 21:18,19. But here is another who was reduced by stripes, and so prevented the capital punishment; and

he had the sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him, that they might reclaim him; for faithful are the wounds of a friend, Pr 27:6.

Some good interpreters, observing how soon this comes after the mention of Christ's being pierced, think that these are the words of that great prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before. Christ was wounded in his hands, when they were nailed to the cross, and, after his resurrection, he had the marks of these wounds; and here he tells how he came by them; he received them as a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified; but he received them in the house of his friends--the Jews, who should have been his friends; for he came to his own, and, though they were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his friends, as he did Judas (Friend, wherefore hast thou come?) because they forwarded his sufferings for him; as he called Peter Satan--an adversary, because he dissuaded him from them.

2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, *that* I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

3 And it shall come to pass, *that* when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

5 but he shall say, I *am* no prophet, I *am* a husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

6 And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.

The Smiting of the Lord's Shepherd

7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man *that is* my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

Here is a prophecy,

I. Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be pierced, and was to be the fountain opened. Awake, O sword! against my Shepherd, Zec 13:7. These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against his Son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin; for it pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief; and he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, Isa 53:4,10. Observe,

1. How he calls him. "As God, he is my fellow;" for he thought it no robbery to be equal with God. He and the Father are one. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and, in the work of man's redemption, he was his elect, in whom his soul delighted, and the counsel of peace was between them both. "As Mediator, he is my Shepherd, that great and good Shepherd that undertook to feed the flock," Zec 11:7. He is the Shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep.

2. How he uses him: Awake, O sword! against him. If he will be a sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life-blood, there was no remission. Men thrust him through as the good Shepherd (compare Zec 13:3), that he might purchase the flock of God with his own blood, Ac 20:28. It is not a charge given to a rod to correct him, but to a sword to slay him; for Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself, Da 9:26. It is not the sword of war that receives this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal, upon an ignominious tree.

This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till, by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. He was the Lamb slain

from the foundation of the world, in the decree and counsel of God; but the sword designed against him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not, "Awake, and smite him; strike home; not with a drowsy blow, but an awakened one;" for God spared not his own Son.

II. Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon: Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. This our Lord Jesus himself declares to have been fulfilled when all his disciples were offended because of him in the night wherein he was betrayed, Mt 26:31,Mk 14:27. They all forsook him and fled. The smiting of the Shepherd is the scattering of the sheep. They were scattered every one to his own, and left him alone, Joh 16:32. Herein they were like timorous sheep; yet the Shepherd thus provided for their safety, for he said, If you seek me, let these go their way. Some make another application of this; Christ was the Shepherd of the Jewish nation; he was smitten; they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad, and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day.

These words, I will turn my hand upon the little ones, may be understood either as a threatening (as Christ suffered, so shall his disciples, they shall drink of the cup that he drank of and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with) or as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again; the lambs of his flock, though frightened by the beasts of prey, shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms and laid in his bosom. Sometimes, when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which, it was feared, would be a prey (Nu 14:31), are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

III. Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews (Zec 13:8); and this word has, and shall have, its accomplishment, in the destruction of the corrupt and hypocritical part of the church. It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off and die. The Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two-thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the cutting off,

and dying, or two parts in all the earth, the abolishing of heathenism and Judaism, that Christianity, the third part, might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And, some time after, Pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated, when the empire became Christian.

IV. Of the reformation and preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general (Zec 13:9): The third part shall be left. When Jerusalem and Judea were destroyed, all the Christians in that country, having among them the warning Christ gave them to flee to the mountains, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called Pella, on the other side Jordan. We have here first the trials and then the triumphs of the Christian church, and of all the faithful members of it.

1. Their trials: I will bring that third part through the fire of affliction. and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the fiery trial which tried the people of God then, 1Pe 4:12. Those whom God sets apart for himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world; they must be tried that their faith may be found to praise and honour (1Pe 1:6,7), as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac, Now know I that thou fearest me. They must be tried, that both those that are perfect and those that are not may be made manifest. They must be refined from their dross; their corruption must be purged out; they must be brightened and bettered.

2. Their triumphs.

(1.) Their communion with God is their triumph: They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him. This honour have all his saints.

(2.) Their covenant with God is their triumph: "I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own; and they

shall say, the Lord is my God, and a God all-sufficient to me; and in me they shall boast every day and all the day long. This God is our God for ever and ever."

8 And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein.

9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It *is* my people: and they shall say, The Lord *is* my God.

Zechariah-14

Jerusalem and the Nations

1 Behold, the day the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

God's providences concerning his church are here represented as strangely changing and strangely mixed.

I. As strangely changing. Sometimes the tide runs high and strong against them, but presently it turns, and comes to be in favour of them; and God has, for wise and holy ends, set the one over against the other.

1. God here appears against Jerusalem; judgment begins at the house of God. When the day of the Lord comes (Zec 14:1) Jerusalem must pass through the fire to be refined. God himself gathers all nations against Jerusalem to battle (Zec 14:2); he gives them a charge, as he did Sennacherib, to take the spoil and to take the prey (Isa 10:6), for the people of Jerusalem have now become the people of his wrath. And who can stand before him or before nations gathered by him? Where he gives commission he will give success.

The city shall be taken by the Romans, who have nations at command; the houses shall be rifled, and all the riches of them taken away, by the enemy; and, to gratify an insatiable lust of uncleanness as well as avarice, the women shall be ravished, as if victory were a license to the worst of villanies, jusque datum sceleri--and crimes were sanctioned by law. One-half of the city

shall then be carried into captivity, to be sold or enslaved, and shall not be able to help itself, such is the destruction that shall be made in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

2. He presently changes his way, and appears for Jerusalem; for, though judgment begin at the house of God, yet, as it shall not end there, so it shall not make a full end there, Jer 4:27,30:11.

(1.) A remnant shall be spared, the same with that third part spoken of, Zec 13:8. One-half shall go into captivity, whence they may hereafter be fetched back, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off, as one would have feared, from the city. Many of the Jews shall receive the gospel, and so shall prevent their being cut off from the city of God, his church upon earth. In it shall be a tenth, Isa 6:13; See Eze 5:3.

(2.) Their cause shall be pleaded against their enemies (Zec 14:3): Then, when God has made use of these nations as a scourge to his people, he shall go forth and fight against them by his judgments, as when he fought against the enemies of his church formerly in the day of battle, with the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others.

Note, The instruments of God's wrath will themselves be made the objects of it; for it will come to their turn to drink of the cup of trembling; and whom God fights against he will be sure to overcome and be too hard for.

And every former day of battle, which God has made to his people a day of triumph, as it is an engagement to God to appear for his people, because he is the same, so it is an encouragement to them to trust in him. It is observable that the Roman empire never flourished, after the destruction of Jerusalem as it had done before, but in many instances God fought against it.

(3.) Though Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed, yet God will have a church in the world, into which Gentiles shall be admitted, and with whom the believing Jews shall be incorporated, Zec 14:4,5. These verses are dark and hard to be understood; but divers good expositors take this to be the meaning of them.

[1.] God will carefully inspect Jerusalem, even then when the enemies of it are laying it waste: His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, whence he may take a full view of the city and temple, Mk 13:3. When the refiner puts his gold into the furnace he stands by it, and has his eye upon it, to see that it receive no damage; so when Jerusalem, God's gold, is to be refined, he will have the oversight of it. He will stand by upon the mount of Olives; this was literally fulfilled when our Lord Jesus was often upon this mountain, especially when thence he ascended up into heaven, Ac 1:12. It was the last place on which his feet stood on this earth, the place from which he took rise.

[2.] The partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken away. The mountains about Jerusalem, and particularly this, signified it to be an enclosure, and that it stood in the way of those who would approach to it. Between the Gentiles and Jerusalem this mountain of Bether, of division, stood, So 2:17.

But by the destruction of Jerusalem this mountain shall be made to cleave in the midst, and so the Jewish pale shall be taken down, and the church laid in common with the Gentiles, who were made one with the Jews by the breaking down of this middle wall of partition, Eph 2:14. Who art thou, O great mountain? And a great mountain the ceremonial law was in the way of the Jews' conversion, which, one would think, could never have been got over; yet before Christ and his gospel it was made plain. This mountain departs, this hill removes, but the covenant of peace cannot be broken; for peace is still preached to him that is afar off and to those that are nigh.

[3.] A new and living way shall be opened to the new Jerusalem, both to see it and to come into it. The mountain being divided, one-half towards the north and the other half towards the south, there shall be a very great valley, that is, a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentile world, by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel-Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord, that goes forth from Jerusalem, shall have a free course into the Gentile world. Thus the way of the Lord is prepared, for every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and plain and pleasant valleys shall come in the room of them, Isa 40:4.

[4.] Those of the Jews that believe shall come in, and join themselves to the Gentiles, and incorporate with them in the gospel-church: You shall flee to the valley of the mountains, that valley that is opened between the divided halves of the mount of Olives; they shall hasten into the church with the Gentiles, as formerly the Gentiles with them, Zec 8:23. The valley of the mountains is the gospel-church, to which there were added of the Jews daily such as should be saved, who fled to that valley as to their refuge.

This valley of the mountains is said to reach unto Azal, or to the separate place, that is, to all those whom God has set apart for himself. When God makes his mountains a way (Isa 49:11), by making them a valley, the way shall be opened to all the way-faring men (Isa 35:8), and, though fools, they shall not err therein. Or, to those that are now separated from God this valley shall reach; for the Gentiles, who are afar off, shall be made nigh, with the Jews, who are a people near unto him, and both have an access, a mutual access to each other and a joint access to God as a Father by one Spirit, Eph 2:18.

[5.] They shall flee to the valley of the mountains, to the gospel-church, under dreadful apprehensions of their danger from the curse of the law. They shall flee from the wrath to come, from the avenger of blood, who is in pursuit of them, to the church as to a city of refuge, or as doves to their windows, as they fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, Am 1:1. Therefore the gospel reveals the wrath of God from heaven (Ro 1:18) that we might be awakened to escape for our lives, to flee as from an earthquake, for we feel the earth ready to sink under us, and we can find no firm footing in it, and therefore must flee to Christ, in whom alone we can stand fast and be easy.

(4.) God shall appear in his glory for the accomplishing of all this: The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee, which may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, or to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem, or his coming to set up his kingdom in the world, which is called the coming of the Son of man (Mt 24:37), or to his last coming, at the end of time; however, it teaches us,

[1.] That the Lord will come; it has been the faith of all the saints, Behold, the Lord comes to fulfil every word that he has spoken in its season.

[2.] When he comes all his saints come with him; they attend his motions and are ready to serve his interests. Christ will come at the end of time with ten thousands of his saints, as when he came to give the law upon Mount Sinai.

[3.] Every particular believer, being related to God as his God, may triumph in the expectation of his coming and speak of it with pleasure, The Lord my God shall come, shall come to the comfort of all that are his; for, "Blessed Lord, all the saints shall be with thee, and it shall be their everlasting happiness to dwell in thy presence; and therefore come, Lord Jesus." And some think that this may be read as a prayer, Yet, O Lord my God! come, and bring all the saints with thee.

2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

God's providences appear here strangely mixed (Zec 14:6,7): In that day of the Lord the light shall not be clear nor dark, not day nor night; but at evening time it shall be light. Some refer this to all the time from hence to the coming of the Messiah; the Jewish church had neither perfect peace nor constant trouble, but a cloudy day, neither rain nor sunshine. But it may be taken more generally, as designed to represent the method God usually takes in the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace. Here is,

1. An idea of the usual course and tenour of God's dispensations; the day of his grace and the day of his providence are neither clear nor dark, not day nor night. It is so with the church of God in this world; where the Sun of righteousness has risen it cannot be dark night, and yet short of heaven it will not be clear day. It is so with

particular saints; they are not darkness, but light in the Lord, and yet, while there is so much error and corruption remaining in them, it is not perfect day. So it is as to the providences of God that relate to his church; in general the affairs of the church are neither good nor bad in any extremity, but there is a mixture of both; we are singing both of mercy and judgment, and are uncertain which will prevail, whether it be an evening or a morning twilight. We are between hope and fear, not knowing what to make of things.

2. An intimation of comfort with reference hereunto: It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord. This intimates,

(1.) The beauty and harmony of such mixed events; there is one and the same design and tendency in all; all the wheels make but one wheel, all the revolutions but one day.

(2.) The brevity of them; it is, as it were, but for one day, for a little moment; the cloud that darkens the light will soon blow over.

(3.) The eye God has upon all these events, and the hand he has in them all; they are known to the Lord; he takes notice of them, and orders and disposes of all for the best, according to the counsel of his will.

3. An issue very joyful secured at last: At evening-time it shall be light: it shall be clear light, and no longer dark; we are sure of it in the other world, and we hope for it in this world--at evening-time, when our hopes are quite spent with waiting all day to no purpose, nay, when we fear it will be quite dark, when things are at the worst and the case of the church is most deplorable. As to the church's enemies the sun goes down at noon, so to the church it rises at night; unto the upright springs light out of darkness (Ps 112:4); deliverance comes when the tale of bricks is doubled, and when God's people have done looking for it, and so it comes with a pleasing surprise.

4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives,
which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall
cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west,
and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall
remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

5 And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the
mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from
before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah:
and the Lord my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee.
6 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor*
dark:
7 but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor
night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light.
8 And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem;
half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder
sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

Here are, I. Blessings promised to Jerusalem, the gospel-Jerusalem, in the day of the Messiah, and to all the earth, by virtue of the blessings poured out on Jerusalem, especially to the land of Israel.

1. Jerusalem shall be a spring of living waters to the world; it was made so when there the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and thence the word of the Lord diffused itself to the nations about (Zec 14:8): Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; for there they began, and thence those set out who were to preach repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, Lu 24:47. Note, Where the gospel goes, and the graces of God's Spirit go along with it, there living waters go; those streams that make glad the city of our God make glad the country also, and make it like paradise, like the garden of the Lord, which was well watered. It was the honour of Jerusalem that thence the word of the Lord went forth (Isa 2:3); and thus far, even in its worst and most degenerate age, for old acquaintance-sake, it was made a blessing, and to be so is to be blessed.

Half of these waters shall go towards the former sea and half towards the hinder sea, as all rivers bend their course towards some sea or other, some eastward, others westward. The gospel shall spread into all parts of the world, into some that lie remote from Jerusalem one way and others that lie as far off another way; for the dominion of the Redeemer, which was thereby to be set up, must be from sea to sea (Ps 72:8), and the earth must be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and as the

waters that in various channels run to the sea. The knowledge of God shall diffuse itself,

(1.) Every way. These living waters shall produce both eastern churches and western churches, that shall each of them in its turn be illustrious.

(2.) Every day: In summer and in winter it shall be. Note, Those who are employed in spreading the gospel may find themselves work both winter and summer, and are to serve the Lord therein at all seasons, Ac 20:18. And such a divine power goes along with these living waters that they shall not be dried up, nor the course of them be obstructed, either by the droughts in summer or by the frosts in winter.

2 The kingdom of God among men shall be a universal and united kingdom, Zec 14:9.

(1.) It shall be a universal kingdom: The Lord shall be King over all the earth. He is, and ever was, so of right, and in the sovereign disposals of his providence his kingdom does rule over all and none are exempt from his jurisdiction; but it is here promised that he shall be so by actual possession of the hearts of his subjects; he shall be acknowledged King by all in all places; his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word (Re 11:15), The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

(2.) It shall be a united kingdom: There shall be one Lord, and his name one. All shall worship one God only, and not idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abandoned, and all false ways of worship abolished; and as God shall be the centre of their unity, in whom they shall all meet, so the scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all walk.

3. The land of Judea, and Jerusalem, its mother-city, shall be repaired and replenished, and taken under the special protection of Heaven, Zec 14:10,11. Some think this denotes particular favour

to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel-church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them.

(1.) The church shall be like a fruitful country, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judea, which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be turned as a plain; it shall become a smooth level valley, from Geba, or Gibeah, its utmost border north, to Rimmon, which lay south of Jerusalem and was the utmost southern limit of Judea. The gospel of Christ, where it comes in its power, levels the ground; mountains and hills are brought low by it, that the Lord alone may be exalted.

(2.) It shall be like a populous city. As the holy land shall be levelled, so the holy city shall be peopled, shall be rebuilt and replenished. Jerusalem shall be lifted up out of its low estate, shall be raised out of its ruins; when the land is turned as a plain, and not only the mount of Olives removed (Zec 14:4), but other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be lifted up, that is, shall appear the more conspicuous; she shall be inhabited in her place, even in Jerusalem, Zec 12:6. The whole city shall be inhabited in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, between which there shall be no ground lost, but all built upon, from Benjamin's-gate north-east to the corner-gate north-west, and from the tower of Hananeel in the south to the king's wine-presses in the north; when the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are daily added to it, then this promise is fulfilled.

(3.) This country and this city shall both be safe, both the meat in the country and the mouths in the city: Those that dwell in it shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste, no more anathema (as some read it), no more cutting off, no more curse, or separation from God to evil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been groaning under, but

Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited; there shall be no danger, nor any apprehension of it; neither shall its friends be fearful to disquiet themselves nor its enemies formidable to disquiet them. That promise of Christ explains this--that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church; and so do the holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the divine protection.

9 And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and *from* the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

Here are judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that have fought, or do fight, against Jerusalem; and the threatening of these judgments is in order to the preservation of the church in safety. Men that read and hear of these plagues will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem, much more when these threatenings are fulfilled in some will others hear and fear.

Those that fight against the city of God, and his people, will be found fighting against God, against whom none ever hardened his heart and prospered (Zec 14:12):

This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; whoever they are, God will punish them for the affront done to him, and avenge Jerusalem upon them.

1. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases: Their flesh shall consume away, and they shall be miserably emaciated, even while they stand on their feet, so that they shall be walking skeletons; nothing shall remain but skin and bones. The flesh which they pampered and indulged, and made provision for, when they were fed to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now consume away, that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen shall stick out, Job 33:21.

They keep their feet, and hope to keep their ground, crawling about as long as they can; but they must yield at last. The organs of sight, the outlets of sin, their eyes, shall consume away in their holes, shall sink into their heads or perhaps start out of them; their envious malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles of misery, these shall consume, which shall make not only their countenances ghastly, but their lives wretched.

The organs of speech, the outlets of sin, their tongue, shall consume away in their mouth, whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself and invectives against his people. Thus their own tongues shall fall upon them, and their punishment shall be legible in their sin, as his was whose tongue was tormented in hell-flames. Thus Antiochus and Herod consumed away.

2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another (Zec 14:13): A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them. But are tumults from the Lord, who is the God of order, and not of confusion? As they are the sin of those that raise them they are not from the Lord, but from the wicked one, and from men's own lusts; but, as they are the punishment of those that suffer by them, they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions, by the sins, and follies, and restless spirits, of men. It is of themselves that they bite and devour one another, but it is of the Lord, the righteous Judge, that thus they are consumed one of another (Ga 5:15); as Ahab was deceived by a lying spirit from the Lord, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were divided, and so destroyed, by an evil spirit from the Lord, Jdg 9:23.

Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church will justly be separated, and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, to hold him from striking, or to bind him as his prisoner; nay, his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour, to strike and wound him.

Note, Those that aim to destroy the church are often made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set

against his fellow, by him whose sword they all are. Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews, when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel-church; and to that well enough agrees Zec 14:14, Thou also, O Judah! shalt fight against Jerusalem; the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hands; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. Suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit--Rome was urged into ruin by its very strength.

3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, or the spoils of their country (Zec 14:14): Judah also shall eat at Jerusalem (so one learned interpreter reads it); people shall come from all parts to share in the prey; as when Sennacherib's army was routed before Jerusalem there was the prey of a great spoil divided (Isa 33:23), so it shall be now; the wealth of all the heathen round about, that had spoiled Jerusalem, shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance, that an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize.

Note, The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just, and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians.

4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off, as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt (Zec 14:15): All the beasts that shall be in the tents of these wicked men, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them, not only beasts used in war, as the horse, but those used for travel, or in the plough, as the mule, the camel, and the ass. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man and in his plagues. Thus God will show his indignation against sin, and will make the creature that is thus subject to vanity groan to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Ro 8:21,22.

11 And *men* shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction;
but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the
people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume
away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume

away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor.

14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.

15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

16 And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Three things are here foretold:--

I. That a gospel-way of worship being set up in the church there shall be a great resort to it and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to them in their narrow escape that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, Zec 14:16.

Those that were not consumed shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy. It is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them; those that had come against Jerusalem, finding their attempts vain and fruitless, shall become as much her admirers as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall come to Jerusalem to worship there, and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to.

Note, As some of Christ's foes shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and, when the principle of enmity is slain in them, their former acts of hostility are pardoned to them, and their services are admitted and accepted, as though they had never fought against Jerusalem. They shall go up to worship at Jerusalem, because that was the place which God had

chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right,

1. In the object of our worship. They shall no longer worship the Molochs and Baals, the kings and lords, that the Gentiles worship, the creatures of their own imagination, but the King, the Lord of hosts, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the sovereign Lord of all.

2. In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself has appointed. Gospel-worship is here represented by the keeping of the feast of tabernacles, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner acted and signified in that feast-contempt of the world, and joy in God, Ne 8:17. The life of a good Christian is a constant feast of tabernacles, and, in all acts of devotion, we must retire from the world and rejoice in the Lord, must worship as in that feast.

3. In the Mediator of our worship; we must go to Christ our temple with all our offerings, for in him only our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, 1Pe 2:5. If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God; we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only.

4. In the time of it; we must be constant. They shall go up from year to year, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life is a day of the feast of tabernacles, and every Lord's day especially (that is the great day of the feast); and therefore every day we must worship the Lord of hosts and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

II. That those who neglect the duties of gospel-worship shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances: Upon them there shall be no rain, Zec 14:17. Some understand it figuratively; the rain of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace, which should accompany that doctrine. God will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon them. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the

means of grace, to deny the green pastures to those that attend not the shepherd's tents. Or we may take it literally:

On them there shall be no rain, to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple were punished with the want of rain (Hag 2:17), and so were those that neglected to attend there when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful towards God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed, and go backward, in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it--they do not keep close to the worship of God as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we omit or postpone the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him. But what shall be done to the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the want of rain is no threatening, for they have no rain at any time; they need none; they desire none; the river Nilus is to them instead of the clouds of heaven, waters their land, and makes it fruitful, so that what is a punishment to others is none to them? Zec 14:18,19.

It is threatened that if the family of Egypt go not up, that have no rain, yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be, in effect, the same plague wherewith other nations are smitten for their neglect. God can, and often did, restrain the overflowing of the river, which was equivalent to the shutting up of the clouds; or if the river did its part, and rose as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by several of the ten plagues of Egypt, so that this (that is, the same) shall be the punishment of Egypt that is the punishment of other nations who come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to, and depending on, the mercy of heaven, cannot therefore think themselves guarded against the justice of Heaven. It does not follow that those who can live without rain can therefore live without God; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures, are that to us that God makes them to be, and no more; nor can any man's way of living enable him to set light by the judgments of

God. This shall be the punishment--margin, This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. The same word signifies both sin and the punishment of sin, so close and inseparable is the connexion between them (as Ge 4:7), and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them; those contract guilt that go not up to worship at the times appointed, as they have opportunity; and it is a sin that is its own punishment, for those who forsake the duty forfeit the privilege of communion with God.

17 And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of *all* the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that *have* no *rain;* there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

That those who perform the duties of gospel-worship shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a gospel-conversation too. This is promised (Zec 14:20,21), and it is necessary to the completing of the beauty and happiness of the church. In general, all shall be holiness to the Lord.

1 The name and character of holiness shall not be so confined as formerly. Holiness to the Lord had been written only upon the high priest's forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be living temples, and spiritual priests, dedicated to the honour of God and employed in his service.

2. Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been, because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments, and brighter patterns of holiness, and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification, after Christ's ascension than ever before.

(1.) There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things shall be devoted to God that seemed very foreign.

[1.] The furniture of their horses shall be consecrated to God. "Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven Holiness to the Lord, or upon the bridles of the horses (so the margin) or the trappings. The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people, as they have been, but for him and them. Even their wars shall be holy wars, their troopers serving under God's banner.

Their great men, who ride in state with a pompous retinue, shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours. Holiness to the Lord shall be written on the harness of their chariot-horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches; every gentleman shall take the high priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a memento to himself not to do any thing unworthy of it.

Travellers shall have it upon their bridles, with which they guide their horses, as those who desire always to be put in mind of it, by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The bells of the horses, which are designed to quicken them in their journey and to give notice of their approach, shall have Holiness to the Lord upon them," to signify that this is that which we ought to be influenced by ourselves, and make profession of to others, wherever we go.

[2.] The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service.

First, The furniture of the priests' houses, or apartments adjoining to the house of the Lord. The common drinking cups they used shall be like the bowls before the altar, that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the drink-offerings. The vessels which they used for their own tables shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meals shall look like sacrifices; they shall eat and drink, not to themselves, but to him that spreads their tables and fills their cups. And thus, in ministers' families especially, should common

actions be done after a godly sort, however they are done in other families.

Secondly, The furniture of other houses, those of the common people:

"Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord. The pots in which they boil their meat, the cups out of which they drink their wine (Jer 35:5), in these God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust which should be oil to the wheels of obedience," as had formerly been, when all tables were full of vomit and filthiness, Isa 28:8. "What they eat and drink out of these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor;" then are they Holiness to the Lord, as the merchandise and the hire of the converted Tyrians are said to be (Isa 23:18); for both in our gettings and in our spendings we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule and the glory of God as our end.

Thirdly, When there shall be such an abundance of real holiness people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness: "Those that sacrifice shall come and take of these common vessels, and seethe their sacrifices therein, making no distinction between them and the bowls before the altar." In gospel-times the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth, and neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, Joh 4:21.

One place shall be as acceptable to God as another (I will that men pray every where); and one vessel shall be as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had to the circumstance, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the substance is religiously preserved and adhered to. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels of the sanctuary would serve for; but, rather than any should be turned back or deferred, they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites in a case of necessity helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2Ch 29:34.

(2.) There shall be no unholiness introduced into their sacred things, to corrupt them: In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. Some read it, There shall be no more the merchant, for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or though those that were Canaanites, strangers and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them.

Or it intimates that though in gospel-times people should grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church-discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment short of the heavenly Jerusalem, that house of the Lord of hosts, into which no unclean thing shall enter; for at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends, and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.

19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

Malachi
[Mal achi]

Malachi-1
The Lord's Love for Jacob

1 The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

The prophecy of this book is entitled, The burden of the word of the Lord (Mal 1:1), which intimates,

1. That it was of great weight and importance; what the false prophets said was light as the chaff, what the true prophets said was ponderous as the wheat, Jer 23:38.

2. That it ought to be often repeated to them and by them, as the burden of a song.

3. That there were those to whom it was a burden and a reproach; they were weary of it, and found themselves so aggrieved by it that they were not able to bear it.

4. That to them it would prove a burden indeed, to sink them to the lowest hell, unless they repented. 5. That to those who loved it and embraced it, and bade it welcome, though it was a light burden, as our Saviour calls it (Mt 11:30), yet it was a burden.

This burden of the word of the Lord was sent,

1. To Israel, for to them pertained the lively oracles of prophecy as well as those of the written word. Many prophets God had sent to Israel, and now he will try them with one more.

2. By Malachi, by the hand of Malachi, as if it were not a message by word of mouth, but a letter put into his hand, for the greater certainty.

In these verses, they are charged with ingratitude, in that they were not duly sensible of God's distinguishing goodness to them; and such a charge as this may well be called a burden, for it is a heavy one.

I. God asserts the great kindness he had, and had often expressed, for them (Mal 1:2): I have loved you, saith the Lord. Thus abruptly does the sermon begin, as if God intended, whatever reproofs should be given them, to reconcile them to his love, and to take care that they should still have good thoughts of him. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. Thus kindly does the sermon begin.

God will have his people satisfied that he loves them and is ever mindful of his love. This is the same with what he said of old to the virgin of Israel, that he might engage her affections to himself (Jer 31:3,4): Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love. In this one word God sums up all his gracious dealings with them; love was the spring of all; he loved them because he would love them (De 7:7,8), loved them in their childhood, Ho 11:1. His delight was in them, Isa 62:4. "I have loved you, but you have not loved me, nor made any suitable returns for my love." Note, God's people need to be often reminded of his love to them.

II. They question his love, and diminish the instances of it, and seem to quarrel with him for telling them of it: Yet you say, Wherein hast thou loved us? As God traces up all his favours to them to the fountain, which was his love, so he traces up all their sins against him to the fountain, which was their contempt of his love. Instead of acknowledging his kindness, and studying what they shall render, they scorn to own that they have been beholden to him, challenge him to produce proofs of his love that are material, and think and speak very slightly of the instances they have had of his kindness, as if they were so few, so small, as not to be worth taking notice of, and no more than what they had sufficiently made returns for, or at least than he had sufficiently balanced with instances of his wrath. "Have we not been wasted, impoverished, and carried captive; and wherein then hast thou loved us?"

Note, God justly takes it very ill to have his favours slighted, as not worth speaking of; and it is very absurd for us to ask wherein he has loved us, when, which way soever we look, we meet with the proofs and instances of his love to us.

2 I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob,
3 and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.
4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.
5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel.

He makes it out, beyond contradiction, that he has loved them, loved them in a distinguishing way, which was in a special manner obliging. For proof of this he shows the difference he had made, and would still make, between Jacob and Esau, between Israelites and Edomites. Some read their question, Wherefore hast thou loved us? as if they did indeed own that he had loved them, but withal insinuate that there was a reason for it--that he loved them because their father Abraham had loved him, so that it was not a free love, but a love of debt, to which he replies, "Was not Esau as near akin to Abraham as you are? Was he not Jacob's own brother, his elder brother? And therefore, if there were any right to a recompence for Abraham's love, Esau had it, and yet I hated Esau and loved Jacob."

1. Let them see what a difference God had made between Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother, his twin-brother: "Yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau, that is, took Jacob into covenant, and entailed the blessing on him and his, but refused and rejected Esau."

Note, Those that are taken into covenant with God, that have the lively oracles and the means of grace committed to them, have reason to look upon these as tokens of his love. Jacob is loved, for

he has these, Esau hated, for he has not. The apostle quotes this (Ro 9:13), and compares it with what the oracle said to Rebecca concerning her twins (Ge 25:23), The elder shall serve the younger, to illustrate the doctrine of God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours; for may he not do what he will with his own? Esau was justly hated, but Jacob freely loved; even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy eyes, and it is not for us to ask why or wherefore.

2. Let them see what he was now doing and would do with them, pursuant to this original difference.

(1.) The Edomites shall be made the monuments of God's justice, and he will be glorified in their utter destruction: For Esau have I hated; I laid his mountains waste, the mountains of Seir, which were his heritage. When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army the country of Edom was, among the rest, laid in ruins, and became a habitation for the dragons of the wilderness, so perfectly desolate was it; as was foretold, Isa 34:6,11. The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem's overthrow (Ps 137:7), and therefore it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And, though Edom's ruins were last, yet they were lasting, and the desolation perpetual; and in this the difference was made between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise all things come alike, and there seems to be one event.

Jacob's cities are laid waste, but they are rebuilt; Edom's are laid waste, and never rebuilt. The sufferings of the righteous will have an end and will end well; all their grievances will be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be endless and remediless, as Edom's desolations, Mal 1:4. Observe here,

[1.] The vain hopes of the Edomites, that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, though they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, "It is true, we are impoverished; it is the common chance, and there is no remedy; but we will return and build the desolate places; we are resolved we will" (not so much

as asking God leave); "we will whether he will or no; nay, we will do it in defiance of God's curse, and that sentence pronounced upon Edom (Isa 34:10), From generation to generation it shall lie waste." They build presumptuously, as Hiel built Jericho in direct contradiction to the word of God (1Ki 16:34), and it shall speed accordingly. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences to think to make their part good against God himself, and to build, and plant, and flourish again as much as ever, though God has said that they shall be impoverished. But see,

[2.] The dashing of these hopes and the disappointment of them: They say, We will build; but what says the Lord of hosts? For we are sure his word shall stand, and not theirs; and he says,

First, Their attempts shall be baffled: They shall build, but I will throw down. Note, Those that walk contrary to God will find that he will walk contrary to them; for who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered? When the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel they became Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them; for when, in the time of the emperor Adrian, they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprise.

Secondly, They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin. All that see them shall call them the border of wickedness, a sinful nation, incurably so, and therefore the people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever. Since their wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired. Against Israel God was a little displeased (Zec 1:15), but against Edom he has indignation, and will have for ever, for they are the people of his curse, Isa 34:5.

(2.) The Israelites shall be made the monuments of his mercy, and he will be glorified in their salvation, Mal 1:5. "The Edomites shall be stigmatized as a people hated of God, but your eyes shall see your doubts concerning his love to you for ever silenced; for you shall say, and have cause to say, The Lord is and will be magnified

from the border of Israel, from every part and border of the land of Israel." The border of Edom is a border of wickedness, and therefore the Lord will have indignation against it for ever; but the border of Israel is a border of holiness, the border of the sanctuary (Ps 78:54), and therefore God will make it to appear (though it may for a time lie desolate) that he has mercy in store for it, and thence he will be magnified; he will give his people Israel both cause, and hearts, to praise him. When the border of Edom still remains desolate, and the border of Israel is repaired and replenished, then it will appear that God has loved Jacob. Note,

[1.] Those who doubt of God's love to his people shall, sooner or later, have convincing and undeniable proofs given them of it: "your own eyes shall see what you will not believe."

[2.] Deliverances out of trouble are to be reckoned proofs of God's good-will to his people, though they may be suffered to fall into trouble, Ps 34:19.

[3.] Distinguishing favours are very obliging. If God rear up again the border of Israel, but leave the border of Edom in ruins, let no Israelite ask, for shame, Wherein hast thou loved us?

[4.] The dignifying of Israel is the magnifying of the God of Israel, and, one way or other, God will have honour from his professing people. [5.] God's goodness being his glory, when he does us good we must proclaim him great, for that is magnifying him. It is an instance of his goodness that he has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and for this those that love his salvation say, The Lord be magnified, Ps 35:27.

The Lord Rebukes the Priests

6 A son honoreth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honor? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

The prophet is here, by a special commission, calling the priests to account, though they were themselves appointed judges, to call the

people to an account. Let the rulers in the house of God know that there is one above them, who will reckon with them for their mal-administrations. Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests! Mal 1:6. God will have a saying to unfaithful ministers; and it concerns those who speak from God to his people to hear and heed what he says to them, that they may save themselves in the first place, otherwise how should they help to save those that hear them?

It is a severe, and no doubt a just reproof, that is here given to the priests, for the profanation of the holy things of God, with which they were entrusted; and, if this was the crime of the priests, we have reason to fear the people also were guilty of it: so that what is said to the priests is said to all, nay, it is said to us, who, as Christians, profess ourselves, not only the people of God, but priests to him. Observe here,

I. What it was that God expected from them, and with what good reason he expected it (Mal 1:6): A son honours his father, because he is his father; nature has written this law in the hearts of children, before God wrote it at Mount Sinai; nay, a servant, though his obligation to his master is not natural, but by voluntary compact, yet thinks it his duty to honour him, to be observant of his orders, and true to his interests. Children and servants pay respect to their parents and masters; every one cries out shame on them if they do not, and their own hearts cannot but reproach them too; the order of families is thus kept up, and it is their beauty and advantage.

But the priests, who are God's children and his servants, do not fear and honour him. They were fathers and masters to the people, and expected to be called so (Jdg 18:19,Mt 22:7,10) and to be reverenced and obeyed as such; but they forgot their Father and Master in heaven, and the duty they owed to him. We may each of us charge upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. Note,

1. We are every one of us to look upon God as our Father and Master, and upon ourselves as his children and servants.

2. Our relation to God as our Father and Master strongly obliges us to fear and honour him. If we honour and fear the fathers of our

flesh, much more the Father and Master of our spirits, Heb 12:9. 3. It is a thing to be justly complained of, and lamented, that God is so little feared and honoured even by those that own him for their Father and Master. Where is his honour? Where is his fear?

II. What the contempt was which the priests put upon God.

1. This is that, in general, which is charged upon them:--

(1.) They despised God's name; their familiarity with it, as priests, bred contempt of it, and served them only to gain a veneration by it for themselves and their own name, while God's name was of small account with them. God's name is all that whereby he has made himself known--his word and ordinances; these they had low thoughts of, and vilified that which it was their business to magnify; and no wonder that when they despised it themselves they did that which made it despicable to others, causing even the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, as Eli's sons did.

(2.) They profaned God's name, Mal 1:12. They polluted it, Mal 1:7. They not only made no account of sacred things, but they made an ill use of them, and perverted them to the service of the worst and vilest purposes--their own pride, covetousness, and luxury. There cannot be a greater provocation to God than the profanation of his name; for it is holy and reverend. His purity cannot be polluted by us, for he is unspotted, but his name may be profaned; and nothing profanes it more than the misconduct of priests, whose business it is to do honour to it. This is the general charge exhibited against them. To this they plead Not guilty, and challenge God to prove it upon them, and to make good the charge, which added daring impudence to their daring impiety: You say, Wherein have we despised thy name? (Mal 1:6), and wherein have we polluted thee? Mal 1:7.

It is common with proud sinners, when they are reproved, to stand thus upon their own justification. These priests had most horridly profaned sacred things, and yet, like the adulterous woman, they said that they had done no wickedness; they were so inobservant of themselves that they remembered not or reflected not upon their own acts, or they were so ignorant of the divine law that they

thought there was no harm in them, and that what they did could not be construed into despising God's name, or they were so atheistical as to imagine that though they knew their own guilt yet God did not, or they were so scornful in their conduct towards God and his prophets that they took a pride in bantering a serious and just reproof, and turning it off with a jest. They either laugh at the reproof, as those that despise it, and harden their hearts against it, or they laugh it off, as those that resolve they will not be touched by it, or will not seem to be so.

Which way soever we take it, their defence was their offence, and, in justifying themselves, their own tongues condemned them, and their saying, Wherein have we despised thy name? proved them proud and perverse. Had they asked this question with a humble desire to be told more particularly where in they had offended, it would have been an evidence of their repentance, and would have given hopes of their reformation; but to ask it thus in disdain and defiance of the word of God argues their hearts fully set in them to do evil. Note, Sinners ruin themselves by studying to baffle their own convictions; but they will find it hard to kick against the pricks.

2. Justly might they have been convicted and condemned upon the general charge, and their plea thrown out as frivolous; but God will not only overcome, but will be clear, will be justified when he judges, and therefore he shows them very particularly wherein they had despised his name, and what the contempt was that they cast upon him. As formerly, when he charged them with idolatry, so now, when he charges them with profaneness, he bids them see their way in the valley and know what they have done, Jer 2:23.

(1.) They despised God's name in what they said, in the low opinion they had of his institutions: "You say in your hearts, and perhaps speak it out when you priests get together over your cups. out of the hearing of the people, The table of the Lord is contemptible" (Mal 1:7), and again (Mal 1:12), "You say, The table of the Lord is polluted; it is to be no more regarded than any other table." Either the table in the temple, on which the show-bread was placed, is that which they reflect upon (not understanding the mystery of it, they despised it as an insignificant

thing), or rather the altar of burnt-offerings is here called the table, for there God, and his priests, and his people, did, as it were, feast together upon the sacrifices, in token of friendship. This they thought was contemptible.

Formerly, in the days of superstition, it was thought contemptible in comparison with the idolatrous alters that the heathen had, and was set aside to make room for a new-fashioned one (2Ki 16:14,15); now it is thought contemptible in comparison with their own tables, and those of their great men: The fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Those who served at the altar were to live upon the altar; but they complained that they lived poorly and meanly, and that it was not worth while to attend the service of the altar for the fruit and meat of it, for it was very ordinary and always the same again; they had no dainties, no varieties, no nice dishes. Nay, that part of the sacrifices which was given to God, the blood and the fat, they looked upon with contempt, as not worthy the multitude of laws God had made about it; they asked, "What need is there of so much ado about burning the fat and pouring out the blood?"

Note, Those greatly profane and pollute God's name who despise the business of religion, though it is very honourable, as not worth taking pains in, and the advantages of religion, though highly valuable, as not worth taking pains for. Those who live in a careless neglect of holy ordinances, who come to them and attend on them irreverently, and go away from them never the better and under no concern, do in effect say, "The table of the Lord is contemptible; there is neither virtue nor value in it, neither credit nor comfort from it."

(2.) They despised God's name in what they did, which was of a piece with what they said, and flowed from it; corrupt principles and notions are roots of bitterness, which bear the gall and wormwood of corrupt practices. They looked upon the table and altar of the Lord as contemptible, and then,

[1.] They thought any thing would serve for a sacrifice, though ever so coarse and mean, and were so far from bringing the best, as they ought to have done, that they picked out the worst they had,

which was fit neither for the market nor for their own tables, and offered that at God's altar. With every sacrifice they were to bring a meat-offering of fine flour mingled with oil; but they brought polluted bread (Mal 1:7), coarse bread, servants' bread, perhaps it was dry and mouldy, or made of the refuse of the wheat, which they thought good enough to be burnt upon the altar; for had it been better they would have said, To what purpose is this waste? And as to the beasts they offered, though the law was express that what was offered in sacrifice should not have a blemish, yet they brought the blind, and the lame, and the sick (Mal 1:8), and again (Mal 1:13), the torn, and the lame, and the sick, that was ready to die of itself.

They looked no further than the burning of the sacrifice, and they pleaded that it was a pity to burn it if it was good for any thing else. The people were so far convinced of their duty that they would bring sacrifices; they durst not wholly omit the duty, but they brought vain oblations, mocked God, and deceived themselves, by bringing the worst they had; and the priests, who should have taught them better, accepted the gifts brought to the altar and offered them up there, because, if they should refuse them, the people would bring none at all, and then they would lose their perquisites; and therefore, having more regard to their own profit than to God's honour, they accepted that which they knew he would not accept. Some make Mal 1:8 to be a continuation of what the priests profanely said Mal 1:7, You say to the people, If you offer the blind for sacrifice, it is not evil; or the lame and the sick, it is not evil.

Note, It is a very evil thing, whether men think so or no, to offer the blind and the lame, the torn and the sick, in sacrifice to God. If we worship God ignorantly, and without understanding, we bring the blind for sacrifice; if we do it carelessly, and without consideration, if we are cold, and dull, and dead, in it, we bring the sick; if we rest in the bodily exercise, and do not make heart-work of it, we bring the lame; and, if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring the torn. And is not this evil? Is it not a great affront to God and a great wrong and injury to our own souls? Do not our books tell us, nay, do not our own

hearts tell us, that this is evil? for God, who is the best, ought to be served with the best we have.

[2.] They would do no more of their work than what they were paid for. The priests would offer the sacrifices that were brought to the altar, because they had their share of them; but as for any other service of the temple, that had not a particular fee belonging to it, they would not stir a step, nor lend a hand, to it; and this was the general temper of them, Mal 1:10. There is not a man among the priests that would shut the doors, or kindle a fire, for nought. If he were required to do the smallest piece of service, he would ask, how shall I be paid for it? They would do nothing gratis, but were all for what they could get, every one for his gain, from his quarter, Isa 56:11.

Note, Though God has given order that his servants be well paid in this world, yet those are no acceptable servants to him who are mercenary, and would never do the work but for the wages.

[3.] Their work was a perfect drudgery to them (Mal 1:13):

You said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! Both priests and people were of this mind, that they thought God imposed too hard a task upon them; the people grudged the charge of providing the sacrifice and the priests grudged the pains of offering it; they thought the feasts of the Lord came too thick, and they were forced to attend too often, and too long, in the courts of the Lord; the priests thought it a severe penance imposed upon them to purify themselves as was required when they attended the altar and ate of the holy things; they thought the duty of their office toilsome and troublesome, and snuffed at it as unreasonable, and bearing hard upon them; they did it, but it was grudgingly and with reluctance. God speaks of it, in justification of his law, that he had not made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense, Isa 43:23.

Wherein have I wearied thee? Mic 6:3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were, as Doeg, detained before the Lord; they would rather have been any where else.

Note, Those are highly injurious, both to God and themselves, who are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it.

7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we
polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord *is* contemptible.
8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer
the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he
be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.
9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this
hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord
of hosts.

Observe how God expostulates and reasons the case with them, for their conviction and humiliation.

1. Would they, durst they, affront an earthly prince thus? "You offer to God the lame and the sick; offer it now unto thy governor (Mal 1:8), either as tribute or as a present, when thou art entreating his favour, or in gratitude for some favour received; will he be pleased with thee? Or, rather, will he not take himself to be affronted by it?" Note, Those who are careless and irreverent in the duties of religious worship should consider what a shame it is to offer that to their God which they would scorn to offer to their governor, to be more observant of the laws of breeding and good manners than of the laws of religion, and more afraid of being rude than of being profane.

2. Could they imagine that such sacrifices as these would be pleasing to God, or answer the end of sacrifices? "Should I accept this at your hand, saith the Lord? Mal 1:13. Have you any reason to think I should either not discern or not resent the affront, that I should connive at the violation of my own laws? No (Mal 1:10); I have no pleasure in you, and therefore, I will not accept an offering, such an offering, at your hand." If God has no pleasure in the person, if the person be not in a justified state, if he be not sanctified, God will not accept the offering. God had respect to Abel first and then to his sacrifice.

Note, In order to our acceptance with God it is not enough to do that which, for the matter of it, is good, but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. It was the

ancient rule laid down (Ge 4:7), If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? Now, if we be not accepted of God, in vain do we worship him; it is all lost labour; nay, we are all undone, for ever undone, if we come short of God's acceptance. Those therefore make a bad bargain for themselves who, to save charges in their religion, miss all the ends of it, and, by thinking to go the nearest way to work, bring nothing to pass. Those who make it the top of their ambition, as we all ought to do, whether present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord, will not dare to bring the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice.

3. How could they expect to prevail with God in their intercessions for the people when they thus affronted God in their sacrifices? So some understand Mal 1:9, as spoken ironically, "And now if you will do the duty of priests, and stand in the gap to turn away the judgments of God that you see ready to pour in upon us, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us, and to our land which is almost eaten up with locusts and caterpillars," as appears Mal 3:11. "Try now what interest you have at the throne of grace; improve it for the removing of this plague, for it has been by your means; you have provoked God to send it.

But as you go on thus to profane his sacred things will he regard your persons or your prayers? No, you cannot prevail with him to command it away." For, if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us, either for ourselves or for others.

4. Had God deserved this at their hands? No, he had provided comfortably for them, and had given them such encouragement in their work as might have engaged them to do it cheerfully and well; so some understand Mal 1:10, "Who is there among you that shall shut a door, or kindle a fire, for nought? No, God does not expect you should serve him for nothing; you are well paid for it, and shall be so; not a cup of cold water, given for the honour of God, shall lose its reward."

Note, The consideration of our constant receivings from God, and the present rewards of obedience in obedience, very much aggravates our slothfulness and niggardliness in our returns of duty to God.

IV. He calls them to repentance for their profanations of his holy name. So we may understand Mal 1:9, "Now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us. Humble yourselves for your sin, cry mightily to God for pardon, and make up in the faith and fervency of your prayers what has been wanting in the worth and value of your sacrifices; for all the rebukes of Providence we are under are by your means." Note, Those who have by their sins helped to kindle a fire are highly concerned by their repentance, prayers, and the personal reformation, to help to quench it. We must see how much God's judgments are by our means, and be awakened thereby to be earnest with him to return in mercy; and, if we take not this course, how can we think he should regard our persons?

V. He declares his resolution both to secure the glory of his own name and to reckon with those who profane it. Those who put contempt upon God and religion, and think to run down sacred things, let them know,

1. That they shall not gain their point. God will magnify his law and make it honourable, though they vilify it and make it contemptible; for (Mal 1:11) from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles. It might be said, "If these are not the worshippers whom God will accept, then he has no worshippers." As if he must make the best of their service, or else he would have no service done him; and then what will he do for his great name? But let him alone for that; though Israel be not faithful, be not gathered, yet God will be glorious. Though these priests provoke him to take down the ceremonial economy, and to abolish that law of commandments, which could not make the comers thereunto perfect, yet he will be no loser by that, at the long run; for,

(1.) Instead of those carnal ordinances, which they profaned, a spiritual way of worship shall be introduced and established: Incense shall be offered to God's name (which signifies prayer and praise, Ps 141:2,Re 8:3), instead of the blood and fat of bulls and goats. And it shall be a pure offering, refined, not only from the corruptions that were in the priests' practice, but from the mere

bodily exercise that was in the institutions themselves, which are called carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of reformation, Heb 9:10. When the hour came in which the true worshippers worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth, then this incense was offered, even this pure offering.

(2.) Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a small people in a corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; in every place, in every part of the world, incense shall be offered to his name; nations shall be discipled, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them in their own language. This is a plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace by which the Gentiles, who had been strangers and foreigners, came to be fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It is twice said (for the thing was certain), My name shall be great among the Gentiles, whereas hitherto in Judah only he was known, and his name was great, Ps 76:1. God's name shall be declared to them, the declaration of it shall be received and believed, and there shall be those among the Gentiles who shall magnify and glorify the name of God better than ever the Jews had done, even the priests themselves.

2. That they shall not go unpunished, Mal 1:14. Here is the doom of those who do like these priests, for the sentence on them is a sentence on all such. Observe,

(1.) The description of profane and careless worshippers. They are such as vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing when they have in their flock a male. They have of the best, wherewith to serve and honour him, so bountiful has be been in his gifts to them, but they put him off with the worst, and think that good enough for him, so ungrateful are they in their returns to him. This was the fault of the people, but the priests connived at it, and indulged them in it. We find a distinction in the law which allowed that to be offered for a free-will offering which would not be accepted for a vow, Le 22:23. But the priests would accept it, though God would

not, pretending to be more indulgent than he was, for which he will give them no thanks another day.

(2.) The character given of such worshippers. They are deceivers; they deal falsely and fraudulently with God; they play the hypocrite with him; they pretend to honour him, in making the vow, but, when it comes to be performed, they put an affront upon him, to such a degree that it would have been better not to have vowed than to vow and thus to pay; but let not such be themselves deceived, for God is not mocked. Those who think to put a cheat upon God will prove, in the end, to have put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Hypocrites are deceivers, and they will prove self-deceivers, and so self-destroyers.

(3.) The doom passed upon them: They are cursed; they expect a blessing, but will meet with a curse, the tokens of God's wrath, according to the judgment written.

(4.) The reason of this doom: "For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and therefore will reckon with those who deal with me but as a man like themselves; my name is dreadful among the heathen, and therefore I will not bear that it should be contemptible among my own people." The heathen paid more respect to their gods, though idols, than the Jews did to theirs, though the only true and living God. Note, The consideration of God's universal dominion, and the universal acknowledgment of it, should restrain us from all irreverence in his service.

10 Who *is there* even among you that would shut the doors *for nought?*
neither do ye kindle *fire* on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in
you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your
hand.
11 For, from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same,
my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense
shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall*
be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.
12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord *is*
polluted; and the fruit thereof, *even* his meat, *is* contemptible.
13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it!* and ye have snuffed at it,
saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the

lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord.

14 But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I *am* a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name *is* dreadful among the heathen.

Malachi-2

Israel's Unfaithfulness Rebuked

1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment *is* for you.

What was said in the foregoing chapter was directed to the priests (Mal 1:6): Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests! that despise my name. But the crimes there charged upon them they were guilty of as sacrificers, and for those they might think it some excuse that they offered what the people brought, and therefore that, if they were not so good as they should be, it was not their fault, but the people's; and therefore here the corruptions there complained of are traced to the source and spring of them--the faults the priests were guilty of as teachers of the people, as expositors of the law and the lively oracles; and this is a part of their office which still remains in the hands of gospel-ministers (who are appointed to be pastors and teachers, like the priests under the law, though not sacrificers, like them), and therefore by them the admonition here is to be particularly regarded.

If the priests had given the people better instructions, the people would have brought better offerings; and therefore the blame returns upon the priests: "And now, O you priests! this commandment is purely for you (Mal 2:1), who should have taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, and how to worship him aright." Note, The governors of the churches are under God's government, and to him they are accountable. Even for those who command God has commandments. Nay (Mal 2:4), you shall know that I have sent these commandments for you. They should know it either,

1. By the power of the Spirit working with the word for their conviction and reformation: "You shall know its original by its

efficacy, whence it comes by what it does." When the word of God to us brings about, and carries on, the work of God in us, then we cannot but know that he sent it to us, that it is not the word of Malachi--God's messenger, but it is indeed the word of God, and is sent, not only in general to all, but in particular to us. Or,

2. By the accomplishment of the threatenings denounced against them: "You shall know, to your cost, that I have sent this commandment to you, and it shall not return void."

Let us now see what this commandment is which is for the priests, which, they must know, was sent to them; and let us put into method the particulars of the charge.

I. Here is a recital of the covenant God made with that sacred tribe, which was their commission for their work and the patent of their honour: The Lord of hosts sent a commandment to them, for the establishing of this covenant (Mal 2:4), for his covenant is said to be the word which he commanded (Ps 105:8); and he sent this commandment by the prophet at this time for the re-establishing of it, that it might not be cut off for their persisting in the violation of it. Let the sons of Levi know then (and particularly the sons of Aaron) what honour God put upon their family, and what a trust he reposed in them (Mal 2:5): My covenant was with him of life and peace.

Besides the covenant of peculiarity made with all the house of Israel, there was a covenant of priesthood made with one family, that they should do the services, and, upon condition of that, should enjoy all the privileges, of the priest's office--that, as Israel was a peculiar nation, a kingdom of priests, so the house of Aaron should be a family of priests, set apart for the service and honour of God, to bear up his name in that nation, as they were to bear up his name among the nations; both the one and the other, in different degrees, were to give glory unto God's name, Mal 2:2. God covenanted with them as his menial servants, obliged them to do his work and promised to own and accept them in it. This is called his covenant of life and peace, because it was intended for the support of religion, which brings life and peace to the souls of men--life to the dead, peace to the distressed, or because life and peace were

by this covenant promised to those priests that faithfully and conscientiously discharged their duty; they shall have peace, which implies security from all evil, and life, which comprises the summary of all good.

What is here said of the covenant of priesthood is true of the covenant of grace made with all believers, as spiritual priests; it is a covenant of life and peace; it assures all believers of life and peace, everlasting peace, everlasting life, all happiness both in this world and in that to come. This covenant was made with the whole tribe of Levi when they were distinguished from the rest of the tribes, were not numbered with them, but were taken from among them and appointed over the tabernacle of testimony (Nu 1:49,50), by virtue of which appointment God says (Nu 3:12), The Levites shall be mine. It was made with Aaron when he and his sons were taken to minister unto the Lord in the priest's office, Ex 28:1. Aaron is therefore called the saint of the Lord, Ps 106:16. It was made with Phinehas and his family, a branch of Aaron's, upon a particular occasion, Nu 25:12,13.

And there the covenant of priesthood is called, as here, the covenant of peace, because by it peace was made and kept between God and Israel. These great blessings of life and peace, contained in that covenant, God gave to him, to Levi, to Aaron, to Phinehas; he promised life and peace to them and their posterity, entrusted them with these benefits for the use and behoof of God's Israel; they received that they might give, as Christ himself did, Ps 68:18. Now, for the further opening of this covenant, observe,

1 The considerations upon which it was grounded: It was for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The tribe of Levi gave a signal proof of their holy fear of God, and their reverence for his name, when they appeared so bravely against the worshippers of the golden calf (Ex 32:26); and for their zeal in that matter God bestowed this blessing upon them and invited them to consecrate themselves unto him. Phinehas also showed himself zealous in the fear of God and his judgments when, to stay the plague, he stabbed Zimri and Cozbi, Ps 106:30,31.

Note, Those, and those only, who fear God's name, can expect the benefit of the covenant of life and peace; and those who give proofs of their zeal for God shall without fail be recompensed in the glorious privileges of the Christian priesthood. Some read this, not as the consideration of the grant, but as the condition of it: I gave them to him, provided that he should fear before me. If God grant us life and peace, he expects we should fear before him.

2 The trust that was lodged in the priests by this covenant, Mal 2:7.

They were hereby made the messengers of the Lord of hosts, messengers of that covenant of life and peace, not mediators of it, but only messengers, or ambassadors, employed to treat of the terms of peace between God and Israel. The priests were God's mouth to his people, from whom they must receive instructions according to the lively oracles. This was the office to which Levi was advanced; because, in his zeal for God, he did not acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children, therefore they shall teach Jacob God's judgments, De 33:9,10.

Note, It is an honour to God's servants to be employed as his messengers and to be sent on his errands. Angels have their name thence. Haggai was called the Lord's messenger. This being their office, observe,

(1.) What is the duty of ministers: The priests' lips should keep knowledge, not keep it from the people, but keep it for them. Ministers must be men of knowledge; for how are those able to teach others the things of God who are themselves unacquainted with those things or unready in them? They must keep knowledge, must furnish themselves with it and retain what they have got, that they may be like the good householder, who brings out of his treasury things new and old. Not only their heads, but their lips, must keep knowledge; they must not only have it, but they must have it ready, must have it at hand, must have it (as we say) at their tongue's end, to be communicated to others as there is occasion. Thus we read of wisdom in the lips of him that has understanding, with which they feed many, Pr 10:13,21.

(2.) What is the duty of the people: They should seek the law at his mouth; they should consult the priests as God's messengers, and not only hear the message, but ask questions upon it, that they may the better understand it and that mistakes concerning it may be prevented and rectified. We are all concerned fully to know what the will of the Lord is, to know it distinctly and certainly; we should be desirous to know it and therefore inquisitive concerning it. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? We must not only consult the written word (to the law and to the testimony), but must have recourse to God's messengers, and desire instruction and advice from them in the affairs of our souls as we do from physicians and lawyers concerning our bodies and estates.

Not but that ministers ought to lay down the law of God to those who do not enquire concerning it, or desire the knowledge of it (they must instruct those that oppose themselves, 2Ti 2:25, as well as those that offer themselves), but it is people's duty to apply to them for instruction, not only to hear, but to ask questions. Watchman, what of the night? Thus if you will enquire, enquire you; see Isa 21:8,11,12. People should not only seek comfort at the mouth of their ministers, but should seek the law there; for, if we found in the way of duty, we shall find it the way of comfort.

2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay *it* to heart, to give glory unto
my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you,
and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because
ye do not lay *it* to heart.

3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, *even*
the dung of your solemn feasts; and *one* shall take you away with it.

Here is a memorial of the fidelity and zeal of many of their predecessors in the priest's office, which are mentioned as an aggravation of their sin in degenerating from such honourable ancestors and deserting such illustrious examples, and as a justification of God in withdrawing from them those tokens of his presence which he had granted to those that kept close to him. See here (Mal 2:6) how good the godly priest was, whose steps they should have trod in, and what good he did, God's grace working with him.

1. See how good he was. He was ready and mighty in the scriptures: The law of truth was in his mouth, for the use of those

that asked the law at his mouth; and in all his discourses there appeared more or less of the law of truth. Every thing he said was under the government of that law, and with it he governed others. He spoke as one having authority (every word was a law), and as one that had both wisdom and integrity--it was a law of truth, and truth is a law, it has a commanding power. It is by truth that Christ rules. The law of truth was in his mouth, for his resolutions of cases of conscience proposed to him were such as might be depended upon; his opinion was good law.

Iniquity was not found in his lips; he did not handle the word of God deceitfully, to please men, to serve a turn, or to make an interest for himself, but told all that consulted him what the law was, whether it were pleasing or displeasing. He did not pronounce that unclean which was clean, nor that clean which was unclean, as one of the rabbin expounds it. And his conversation was of a piece with his doctrine. God himself gives him this honourable testimony:

He walked with me in peace and equity. He did not think it enough to talk of God, but he walked with him. The temper of his mind, and the tenour of his life, were of a piece with his doctrine and profession; he lived a life of communion with God, and made it his constant care and business to please him; he lived like a priest that was chosen to walk before God, 1Sa 2:30. His conversation was quiet; he was meek and gentle towards all men, was a pattern and promoter of love; he walked with God in peace, was himself peaceable and a great peace-maker.

His conversation was also honest; he did no wrong to any, but made conscience of rendering to all their due: He walked with me in equity, or rectitude. We must not, for peace-sake, transgress the rules of equity, but must keep the peace as far as is consistent with justice. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable. Ministers, of all men, are concerned to walk with God in peace and equity, that they may be examples to the flock.

2. See what good he did; he answered the ends of his advancement to that office: He did turn many away from iniquity; he made it his business to do good, and God crowned his endeavours with

wonderful success; he helped to save many a soul from death, and there are multitudes now in heaven blessing God that ever they knew him. Ministers must lay out themselves to the utmost for the conversion of sinners, and even among those that have the name of Israelites there is need of conversion-work, there are many to be turned from iniquity; and they must reckon it an honour, and a rich reward of their labour, if they may but be instrumental herein.

It is God only that by his grace can turn men from iniquity, and yet it is here said of a pious laborious minister that he turned men from iniquity as a worker together with God, and an instrument in his hand; and those that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, Da 12:3. Note, Those ministers, and those only, are likely to turn men from iniquity, that preach sound doctrine and live good lives, and both according to the scripture; for, as one of the rabbin observes here, When the priest is upright many will be upright.

III. Here is a high charge drawn up against the priests of the present age, who violated the covenant of the priesthood and went directly contrary both to the rules and to the examples that were set before them. Many particulars of their sins we had in the foregoing chapter, and we find (Ne 13:1-31) that many corruptions had crept into the church of the Jews at this time, mixed marriages, admitting strangers into the house of God, profanation of the sabbath-day, which were all owing to the carelessness and unfaithfulness of the priests; here it is charged upon them in general,

1. That they transgressed the rule: You have departed out of the way (Mal 2:8), out of the good way which God has prescribed to you, and which your godly ancestors walked before you in. It is ill with a people when those whose office it is to guide them in the way do themselves depart out of it: "You have not kept my ways, not kept in them yourselves, nor done your part to keep others in them," Mal 2:9.

2. That they betrayed their trust: "You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, have violated it, have contradicted the great intentions of it, and have done what in you lay to frustrate and defeat them; you have managed your office as if it were designed only to feed you fat and make you great; and not for the glory of God and the good

of the souls of men." This was a corrupting of the covenant of Levi; it was perverting the ends of the office, and making it subservient to those sensual secular things over which it ought always to have dominion.

And thus they forfeited the benefit of that covenant, and corrupted it to themselves; they made it void, and lost the life and peace which were by it settled upon them. We have no reason to expect God should perform his part of the covenant if we do not make conscience of performing ours. Another instance of their betraying their trust was that they were partial in the law, Mal 2:9. In the law given to them they would pick and choose their duty; this they would do and that they would not do, just as they pleased; this is the fashion of hypocrites, while those whose hearts are upright with God have a respect to all his commandments.

Or, rather, in the law they were to lay down to the people; in this they knew faces (so the word is); they accepted persons; they wilfully misinterpreted and misapplied the law, either to cross those they had a spleen against or to countenance those they had a kindness for; they would wink at those sins in some which in others they would be sharp upon, according as their interest or inclination led them. God is no respecter of persons in making his law, nor will he in reckoning for the breach of it; he regards not the rich more than the poor, and therefore his priests, his ministers, misrepresent him, and do him a great deal of dishonour, if, in doctrine or discipline, they be respecters of persons. See 1Ti 5:21.

3. That they did a great deal of mischief to the souls of men, which they should have helped to save: You have caused many to stumble at the law, not only to fall in the law (as the margin reads it) by transgressing it, taught and encouraged to do so by the examples of the priests, but to stumble at the law, by contracting prejudices against it, as if the law were the minister of sin and gave countenance to it. Thus Hophni and Phinehas by their wickedness made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, 1Sa 2:17.

There are many to whom the law of God is a stumbling-block, the gospel of Christ a savour of death unto death, and Christ himself a rock of offence; and nothing contributes more to this than the

vicious lives of those that make a profession of religion, by which men are tempted to say, "It is all a jest." This is properly a scandal, a stone of stumbling; there is no good reason why it should be so to any, but woe to those by whom this offence comes.

4. That, when they were under the rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God for it, they would not hear, that is, they would not heed, they would not lay it to heart; they were not at all grieved or shamed for their sin, nor affected with the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under. What we hear does us no good unless we lay it to heart and admit the impressions of it: You will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, by repentance and reformation. Therefore we should lay to heart the things of God, that we may give glory to the name of God, may praise him in and for all that whereby he has made himself known. It is bad in any to rob God of his honour, but worst in ministers, whose office and business it is to bear up his name and to give him the glory due to it.

4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that
my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.
5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him
for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

Here is a record of the judgments God had brought upon these priests for their profaneness, and their profanation of holy things.

1. They had lost their comfort (Mal 2:2): I have already cursed your blessings. They had not the comfort of their work, which is the satisfaction of doing good; for the blessings with which they, as priests, blessed the people, God was so far from saying Amen to that he turned them into curses, as he did Balaam's curses into blessings. That profane people should not have the favour of receiving God's blessings, nor those profane priests the honour of conferring and conveying them, but both should lie under the tokens of his wrath.

Nor had they the comfort of their wages, for the blessings with which God blessed them were turned into a curse to them by their abuse of them; they could not receive them as the gifts of his favour

when they had made themselves so obnoxious to his displeasure by not laying to heart the reproofs given them.

2. They had lost their credit (Mal 2:9): Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people. While they glorified God he dignified them and supported their reputation, and a great interest they had in the love and esteem of the people while they did their duty and walked with God in peace and equity; every one had a value and veneration for them; they were truly styled the reverend, the priests; but when they forsook the ways of God, and corrupted the covenant of Levi, they thereby made themselves not only mean, but vile, in the eyes even of the common people, who, the more they honoured the order, the more they hated the men that were a dishonour to it.

Their conduct, their misconduct, had a direct tendency to this, and God owns his hand in it, and will have it looked upon as a just judgment of his upon them, and not only produced by their sin but answering to it; they put dishonour upon God, and made his table and the fruit thereof contemptible (Mal 1:12), and therefore God justly put dishonour upon them and made them contemptible; they exposed themselves, and therefore God exposed them. Note, As sin is a reproach to any people, so especially to priests; there is not a more despicable animal upon the face of the earth than a profane, wicked, scandalous minister.

V. Here is a sentence of wrath passed upon them; and this the prophet begins with, Mal 2:2,3. But it is conditional: If you will not lay it to heart, implying, "If you will, God's anger shall be turned away, and all shall be well; but, if you persist in these wicked courses, hear your doom--Your sin will be your ruin."

1. They shall fall and lie under the curse of God: I will send a curse upon you. The wrath of God shall be revealed against them, according to the threatenings of the written word. Note, Those who violate the commands of the law lay themselves under the curses of the law.

2. Neither their employments nor their enjoyments, as priests, shall be clean to them: "I will curse your blessings, so that you shall neither be blessed yourselves nor blessings to the people, but even your plenty shall be a plague to you and you shall be plagues to your generation."

3. The fruits of the earth, which they had the tithe of, should be no comfort to them: "Behold, I will corrupt your seed; the corn you sow shall rot under ground and never come up again, the consequence of which must needs be famine and scarcity of provisions; so that no meat-offerings shall be brought to the altar, which the priests will soon have a loss of."

Or it may be understood of the seed of the word which they preached; God threatens to deny his blessing to the instructions they gave the people, so that their labour shall be lost, as that of the husbandman is when the seed is corrupt; and so it agrees with that threatening (Jer 23:32), They shall not profit this people at all.

4. They and their services shall be rejected of God; he will be so far from taking any pleasure in them that he will loathe and detest them: I will spread dung in your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts. He refers to the sacrifices that were offered at those feasts. Instead of being himself pleased with the fat of their sacrifices, he will show himself displeased by throwing the dung of them in their faces, which he does, in effect, when he says, Bring no more vain oblations; your incense is an abomination to me.

Note, Those who rest in their external performances of religion, which they should count but dung, that they may win Christ, shall not only come short of acceptance with God in them, but shall be filled with shame and confusion for their folly. 5. All will end, at last, in their utter ruin: One shall take you away with it. They shall be so overspread with the dung of their sacrifices that they shall be carried away with it to the dunghill, as a part of it. Any one shall serve to take you away, the common scavenger. Reprobate silver shall men call them, and treat them accordingly, because the Lord has rejected them.

6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.
7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the Lord of hosts.
8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.
9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.
10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Corrupt practices are the genuine fruit and product of corrupt principles; and the badness of men's hearts and lives is owing to some loose atheistical notions which they have got and which they govern themselves by.

Now, in these verses, we have an instance of this; we here find men dealing falsely with one another, and it is because they think falsely of their God. Observe,

I. How corrupt their practices were. In general, they dealt treacherously every man against his brother, Mal 2:10. It cannot be expected that he who is false to his God should be true to his friend. They had dealt treacherously with God in his tithes and offerings, and had defrauded him, and thus conscience was debauched, its bonds and cords were broken, a door was opened to all manner of injustice and dishonesty, and the bonds of relation and natural affection are broken through likewise and no difficulty made of it. Some think that the treacherous dealings here reproved are the same with those instances of oppression and extortion which we find complained of to Nehemiah about this time, Ne 5:3-7.

Therein they forgot the God of their fathers, and the covenant of their fathers, and rendered their offerings unacceptable, Isa 1:11. But it seems rather to refer to what was amiss in their marriages, which was likewise complained of, Ne 13:23. Two things they are

here charged with, as very provoking to God in this matter--taking strange wives of heathen nations, and abusing and putting away the wives they had of their own nation; in both these they dealt treacherously and violated a sacred covenant; the former was in contempt of the covenant of peculiarity, the latter of the marriage-covenant.

1. In contempt of the covenant God made with Israel, as a peculiar people to himself, they married strange wives, which was expressly prohibited, and provided against, in that covenant, De 7:3. Observe here,

(1.) What good reason they had to deal faithfully with God and one another in this covenant, and not to make marriages with the heathen.

[1.] They were expressly bound out from such marriages by covenant. God engaged to do them good upon this condition, that they should not mingle with the heathen; this was the covenant of their fathers, the covenant made with their fathers, denoting the antiquity and the authority of it, and its being the great charter by which that nation was incorporated. They lay under all possible obligations to observe it strictly, yet they profaned it, as if they were not bound by it. Those profane the covenant of their fathers who live in disobedience to the command of the God of their fathers.

[2.] They were a peculiar people, united in one body, and therefore ought to have united for the preserving of the honour of their peculiarity: Have we not all one Father? Yes, we have, for has not one God created us? Are we not all his offspring? And are we not made of one blood? Yes, certainly we are. God is a common Father to all mankind, and, upon that account, all we are brethren, members one of another, and therefore ought to put away lying (Eph 4:25), and not to deal treacherously, no, not any man against his brother. But here it seems to refer to the Jewish nation: Have we not all one father, Abraham, or Jacob? This they prided themselves in, We have Abraham to our father; but here it is turned upon them as an aggravation of their sin in betraying the honour of their nation by intermarrying with heathens:

"Has not one God created us, that is, formed us into a people, made us a nation by ourselves, and put a life into us, distinct from that of other nations? And should not this oblige us to maintain the dignity of our character?"

Note, The consideration of the unity of the church in Christ, its founder and Father, should engage us carefully to preserve the purity of the church and to guard against all corruptions.

[3.] They were dedicated to God, as well as distinguished from the neighbouring nations. Israel was holiness to the Lord (Jer 2:3), taken into covenant with him, set apart by him for himself, to be to him for a name and a praise, and upon this account he loved them and delighted in them; the sanctuary set up among them was the holiness of the Lord, which he loved, of which he said, It is my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it; but by marrying strange wives they profaned this holiness, and laid the honour of it in the dust. Note, Those who are devoted to God, and beloved of him, are concerned to preserve their integrity, that they may not throw themselves out of his love, nor lose the honour, or defeat the end, of their dedication to him.

(2.) How treacherously they dealt, notwithstanding, They profaned themselves in that very thing which was prescribed to them for the preserving of the honour of their singularity: Judah has married the daughter of a strange god. The harm was not so much that she was the daughter of a strange nation (God has made all nations of men, and is himself King of nations), but that she was the daughter of a strange god, trained up in the service and worship of false gods, at their disposal, as a daughter at her father's disposal, and having a dependence upon them; hence some of the rabbin (quoted by Dr. Pocock) say, He that marries a heathen woman is as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol. The corruption of the old world began with the intermarriages of the sons of God with the daughters of men, Ge 6:2. It is the same thing that is here complained of, but as it is expressed it sounds worse:

The sons of God married the daughters of a strange god. Herein Judah is said to have dealt treacherously, for they basely betrayed their own honour and profaned that holiness of the Lord which they

should have loved (so some read it); and it is said to be an abomination committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; it was hateful to God, and very unbecoming those that were called by his name. Note, it is an abominable thing for those who profess the holiness of the Lord to profane it, particularly by yoking themselves unequally with unbelievers.

(3.) How severely God would reckon with them for it (Mal 2:12): The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, that marries the daughter of a strange god. He has, in effect, cut himself off from the holy nation, and joined in with foreigners and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and so shall his doom be; God will cut him off, him and all that belongs to him; so the original intimates. He shall be cut off from Israel and from Jerusalem, and not be written among the living there. The Lord will cut off both the master and the scholar, that are guilty of this sin, both the teachers and the taught. The blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch, both him that wakeneth and him that answereth (so it is in the margin), for the master calls up his scholar to his business, and stirs him up in it.

They shall be cut off together out of the tabernacles of Jacob. God will no more own them as belonging to his nation; nay, and the priest that offers an offering to the Lord, if he marry a strange wife (as we find many of the priests did, Ezr 10:18), shall not escape; the offering he offers shall not atone for him, but he shall be cut off from the temple of the Lord, as others from the tabernacles of Jacob. Nehemiah chased away from him, and from the priesthood, one of the sons of the high priest, whom he found guilty of this sin, Ne 13:28.

2. In contempt of the marriage-covenant, which God instituted for the common benefit of mankind, they abused and put away the wives they had of their own nation, probably to make room for those strange wives, when it was all the fashion to marry such (Mal 2:13): This also have you done; this is the second article of the charge. For the way of sin is down-hill, and one violation of the covenant is an inlet to another.

(1.) Let us see what it is that is here complained of. they did not behave as they ought to have done towards their wives.

[1.] They were cross with them, froward and peevish, and made their lives bitter to them, so that when they came with their wives and families to worship God at the solemn feasts, which they should have done with rejoicing, they were all out of humour; the poor wives were ready to break their hearts, and, not daring to make their case known to any other, they complained to God, and covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying.

This is illustrated by the instance of Hannah, who, upon the account of her husband's having another wife (though otherwise a kind husband), and the discontent thence arising, whenever they went up to the house of the Lord to worship fretted and wept, and was in bitterness of soul, and would not eat, 1Sa 1:6,7,10. So it was with these wives here; and this was so contrary to the cheerfulness which God requires in his worshippers that it spoiled the acceptableness of their devotions:

God regards not their offering any more. See here what a good Master we serve, who will not have his altar covered with tears, but compassed with songs. This condemns those who left his worship for that of idols, among the rites of which we find women weeping for Tammuz (Eze 8:14), and the blood of the worshippers gushing out upon the altar, 1Ki 18:28. See also what a wicked thing it is to put others out of frame for the cheerful worship of God; though it is their fault by their fretfulness to indispose themselves for their duty, yet it is much more the fault of those who provoked them to make them to fret. It is a reason given why yoke-fellows should live in holy love and joy--that their prayers may not be hindered, 1Pe 3:7.

[2.] They dealt treacherously with them, Mal 2:14-16. They did not perform their promises to them, but defrauded them of their maintenance or dower, or took in concubines, to share in the affection that was due to their wives only.

[3.] They put them away, gave them a bill of divorce, and turned them off, nay, perhaps they did it without the ceremony that the law of Moses prescribed, Mal 2:16.

[4.] In all this they covered violence with their garment; they abused their wives, and were vexatious to them, and yet, in the sight of others, they pretended to be very loving to them and tender of them, and to cast a skirt over them. It is common for those who do violence to advance some specious pretence or other wherewith to cover it as with a garment.

(2.) Let us see the proof and aggravations of the charge.

[1.] It is sufficiently proved by the testimony of God himself: "The Lord has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth (Mal 2:14), has been witness to the marriage-covenant between thee and her, for to him you appealed concerning your sincerity in it and fidelity to it; he has been a witness to all the violations of it, and all thy treacherous dealings in contempt of it, and is ready to judge between thee and her."

Note, This should engage us to be faithful both to God and to all with whom we have to do, that God himself is a witness both to all our covenants and to all our covenant-breaches; and he is a witness against whom there lies no exception.

[2.] It is highly aggravated by the consideration of the person wronged and abused.

First, "She is thy wife; thy own, bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, the nearest to thee of all the relations thou hast in the world, and to cleave to whom thou must quit the rest."

Secondly, "She is the wife of thy youth, who had thy affections when they were at the strongest, was thy first choice, and with whom thou hast lived long. Let not the darling of thy youth be the scorn and loathing of thy age."

Thirdly, "She is thy companion; she has long been an equal sharer with thee in thy cares, and griefs, and joys." The wife is to be looked upon, not as a servant, but as a companion to the husband, with whom he should freely converse and take sweet counsel, as with a friend, and in whose company he should take delight more than in any other's; for is she not appointed to be thy companion?

Fourthly, "She is the wife of thy covenant, to whom thou art so firmly bound that, while she continues faithful, thou canst not be loosed from her, for it was a covenant for life. It is the wife with whom thou hast covenanted, and who has covenanted with thee; there is an oath of God between you, which is not to be trifled with, is not to be played fast and loose with." Married people should often call to mind their marriage-vows, and review them with all seriousness, as those that make conscience of performing what they promised.

(3.) Let us see the reasons given why man and wife should continue together, to their lives' end, in holy love and peace, and neither quarrel with each other nor separate from each other.

[1.] Because god has joined them together (Mal 2:15): Did not he make one, one Eve for one Adam, that Adam might never take another to her to vex her (Le 18:18), nor put her away to make room for another? It is great wickedness to complain of the law of marriage as a confinement, when Adam in innocency, in honour, in Eden, in the garden of pleasure, was confined to one. Yet God had the residue of the Spirit; he could have made another Eve, as amiable as that he did make, but, designing Adam a help meet for him, he made him one wife; had he made him more, he would not have had a meet help.

And wherefore did he make but one woman for one man? It was that he might seek a godly seed--a seed of God (so the word is), a seed that should bear the image of God, be employed in the service of God, and be devoted to his glory and honour,--that every man having his own wife, and but one, according to the law, (1Co 7:2), they might live in chaste and holy love, under the directions and restraints of the divine law, and not, as brute beasts, under the dominion of lust, and thus might propagate the nature of man in

such a way as might make it most likely to participate of a divine nature,--that the children, being born in holy matrimony, which is an ordinance of God, and by which the inclinations of nature are kept under the regulations of God's command, might thus be made a seed to serve him, and be bred, as they are born, under his direction and dominion.

Note, The raising up of a godly seed, which shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation, is one great end of the institution of marriage; but that is a good reason why the marriage-bed should be kept undefiled and the marriage bond inviolable. Husbands and wives must therefore live in the fear of God, that their seed may be a godly seed, else were they unclean, but now they are holy, as children of the covenant, the marriage-covenant, which was a type of the covenant of grace, and the conjugal union, when thus preserved entire, of the mystical union between Christ and his church, in which he seeks and secures to himself a godly seed; see Eph 5:25,32.

[2.] Because he is much displeased with those who go about to put asunder what he has joined together (Mal 2:16):

The God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away. He hath indeed permitted it to the Jews, for the hardness of their hearts, or, rather, limited and clogged it (Mt 19:8); but he hated it, especially as those practised it who put away their wives for every cause, Mt 19:3. Let those wives that elope from their husbands and put themselves away, those husbands that are cruel to their wives and turn them away, or take their affections off from their wives and place them upon others, yea, and those husbands and wives that live asunder by consent, for want of love to each other, let such as these know that the God of Israel hates such practices, however vain men may make a jest of them.

(4.) Let us see the caution inferred from all this. We have it twice (Mal 2:15): Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth; and again, Mal 2:16.

Note, Those that would be kept from sin must take heed to their spirits, for there all sin begins; they must keep their hearts with all

diligence, must keep a jealous eye upon them and a strict hand, and must watch against the first risings of sin there. We shall act as we are spirited; and therefore, that we may regulate our actions, we must consider what manner of spirit we are of; we must take heed to our spirits with reference to our particular relations, and see that we stand rightly affected to them and be of a good temper, for otherwise we shall be in danger of dealing treacherously. If our own hearts deal treacherously with us, whom will they not deal treacherously with?

11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in
Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the
Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.
12 The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the
scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an
offering unto the Lord of hosts.
13 And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears,
with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the
offering any more, or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand.

Observe how corrupt their principles were, to which were owing all these corrupt practices. Let us trace up the streams to the fountain (Mal 2:17):

You have wearied the Lord with your words. They thought to evade the convictions of the word, and to justify themselves by cavilling with God's proceedings; but their defence was their offence, and their vindication of themselves was the aggravation of their crime; they affronted the Lord with their words, and repeated them so often, and persisted so long in their contradictions, that they even wearied him; see Isa 7:13.

They made him weary of doing them good as he had done, and stopped the current of his favours; or they represented him as weary of governing the world, and willing to quit it and lay aside the care of it.

Note, It is a wearisome thing, even to God himself, to hear people insist upon their own justification in their corrupt and wicked practices, and plead their atheistical principles in vindication of them. But, as if God by his prophet had done them wrong, see how

impudently they ask, Wherein have we wearied him? What are those vexatious words whereby we have wearied him? Note, Sinful words are more offensive to the God of heaven than they are commonly thought to be. But God has his proofs ready; two things they had said, at least in their hearts (and thoughts are words to God), with which they had wearied him:--

1. They had denied him to be a holy God, and had asserted that concerning him which is directly contrary to the doctrine of his holiness. As he is a holy God, he hates sin, is of purer eyes than to behold it, and cannot endure to look upon it, Hab 1:13. He is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, Ps 5:4. And yet they had the impudence to say, in direct contradiction to this, Every one that does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delights in them. This wicked inference they drew, without any reason, from the prosperity of sinners in their sinful courses (see Mal 3:15), as if God's love or hatred were to be known by that which is before us, and those must be concluded good in the sight of the Lord who are rich in the world.

Or this they said because they wished it might be so; they were resolved to do evil, and yet to think themselves good in the sight of the Lord, and to believe that he delighted in them, notwithstanding; and therefore, under pretence of making God not so severe as he was commonly represented, they said as they would have it, and thought he was altogether such a one as themselves. Note, Those who think God a friend to sin affront him and deceive themselves.

2. They had denied him to be the righteous governor of the world. If he did not delight in sin and sinners, yet it would serve their turn to believe that he would never punish it or them. They said, "Where is the God of judgment? That God who, we have been so often told, would call us to an account, and reckon with us for what we have said and done--where is he? He has forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of what is said and done there; he has said that he will come to judgment; but where is the promise of his coming?

We may do what we please; he sees us not, nor will regard us." It is such a challenge to the Judge of the whole earth as bids defiance to his justice, and, in effect, dares him to do his worst. Such scoffers

as these there were in the latter days of the Jewish church, and such there shall be in the latter days of the Christian church; but their unbelief shall not make the promise of God of no effect; for the day of the Lord will come. Behold, the Judge stands before the door; the God of judgment is at hand.

14 Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

16 For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

The Near Approach of the Day of Judgment

17 Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him?* When ye say, Every one that doeth evil *is* good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or,
Where *is* the God of judgment?

Malachi-3

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

The first words of this chapter seem a direct answer to the profane atheistical demand of the scoffers of those days which closed the foregoing chapter: Where is the God of judgment? To which it is readily answered, "Here he is; he is just at the door; the long-expected Messiah is ready to appear; and he says, For judgment have I come into this world, for that judgment which you have so impudently bid defiance to." One of the rabbin says that the meaning of this is, That God will raise up a righteous King, to set things in order, even the king Messiah.

And the beginning of the gospel of Christ is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise, with which the Old Testament concludes, Mk 1:1,2. So that by this the two Testaments are, as it were, tacked together, and made to answer one another. Now here we have,

I. A prophecy of the appearing of his forerunner John the Baptist, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold (Isa 40:3), as the preparing of the way of the Lord, to which this seems to have a reference, for the words of the latter prophets confirmed those of the former: Behold, I will send my messenger, or I do send him, or I am sending him. "I am determined to send him; he will now shortly come, and will not come unsent, though to a careless generation he comes unsent for." Observe,

1. He is God's messenger; that is his office; he is Malachi (so the word is), the same with the name of this prophet; he is my angel, my ambassador. John Baptist had his commission from heaven, and not of men. All held John Baptist for a prophet, for he was God's messenger, as the prophets were, and came on the same errand to the world that they were sent upon--to call men to repentance and reformation.

2. He is Christ's harbinger: He shall prepare the way before me, by calling men to those duties which qualify them to receive the comforts of the Messiah and his coming, and by taking them off from a confidence in their relation to Abraham as their father (which, they thought, would serve their turn without a saviour), and by giving notice that the Messiah was now at hand, and so raising men's expectations of him, and making them readily to go into the measures he would take for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. Note, God observes a method in his work, and, before he comes, takes care to have his way prepared. This is like the giving of a sign.

The church was told, long before, that the Messiah would come; and here it is added that, a little before he appears, there shall be a signal given; a great prophet shall arise, that shall give notice of his approach, and call to the everlasting gates and doors to lift up

their heads and give him admission. The accomplishment of this is a proof that Jesus is the Christ, is he that should come, and we are to look for no other; for there was such a messenger sent before him, who made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Lu 1:17. The Jewish writers run into gross absurdities to evade the conviction of this evidence; some of them say that this messenger is the angel of death, who shall take the wicked out of this life, to be sent into hell torments; others of them say that it is Messiah the son of Joseph, who shall appear before Messiah the son of David; others, this prophet himself; others, an angel from heaven: such mistakes do those run into that will not receive the truth.

II. A prophecy of the appearing of the Messiah himself: "The Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the God of judgment, who, you think, has forsaken the earth, and you wot not what has become of him. The Messiah has been long called he that should come, and you may assure yourselves that now shortly he will come."

1. He is the Lord--Adonai, the basis and foundation on which the world is founded and fastened, the ruler and governor of all, that one Lord over all (Ac 10:36) that has all power committed to him (Mt 28:18) and is to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Lu 1:33.

2. He is the Messenger of the covenant, or the angel of the covenant, that blessed one that was sent from heaven to negotiate a peace, and settle a correspondence, between God and man. He is the angel, the archangel, the Lord of the angels, who received commission from the Father to bring man home to God by a covenant of grace, who had revolted from him by the violation of the covenant of innocency. Christ is the angel of this covenant, by whose mediation it is brought about and established as God's covenant with Israel was made by the disposition of angels, Ac 7:53,Ga 3:19. Christ, as a prophet, is the messenger and mediator of the covenant; nay, he is given for a covenant, Isa 49:8.

That covenant which is all our salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb 2:3. Though he is the prince of the covenant (as some read this) yet he condescended to be the messenger of it, that we

might have full assurance of God's good-will towards man, upon his word.

3. He it is whom you seek, whom you delight in, whom the pious Jews expect and desire, and whose coming they think of with a great deal of pleasure. In looking and waiting for him, they looked for redemption in Jerusalem and waited for the consolation of Israel, Lu 2:25,38. Christ was to be the desire of all nations, desirable to all (Hag 2:7); but he was the desire of the Jewish nation actually, because they had the promise of his coming made to them.

Note, Those that seek Jesus shall find pleasure in him. If he be our heart's desire he will be our heart's delight; and we have reason to delight in him who is the messenger of the covenant, and to bid him welcome who came to us on so kind an errand. 4. He shall suddenly come; his coming draws nigh, and we see it not at so great a distance as the patriarchs saw it at. Or, He shall come immediately after the appearing of John Baptist, shall even tread on the heels of his forerunner; when that morning-star appears, believe that the Sun of righteousness is not far off.

Or, He shall come suddenly, that is, he shall come when by many he is not looked for; as his second coming will be, so his first coming was, at midnight, when some had done looking for him, for shall he find faith on the earth? Lu 18:8. The Jews reckon the Messiah among the things that come unawares; so Dr. Pocock. And the coming of the Son of man in his day is said to be as the lightning, which is very surprising, Lu 17:24.

5. He shall come to his temple, this temple at Jerusalem, which was lately built, that latter house which he was to be the glory of. It is his temple, for it is his Father's house, Joh 2:16. Christ, at forty days old, was presented in the temple, and thither Simeon went by the Spirit, according to the direction of this prophecy, to see him, Lu 2:27. At twelve years old he was in the temple about his Father's business, Lu 2:49.

When he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, it should seem that he went directly to the temple (Mt 21:12), and (Mal 3:14) thither the

blind and the lame came to him to be healed; there he often preached, and often disputed, and often wrought miracles. By this it appears that the Messiah was to come while that temple was standing; that, therefore, being long since destroyed, we must conclude that he has come, and we are to look for no other. Note, Those that would be acquainted with Christ and obtain his favour must meet him in his temple, for there he records his name and there he will bless his people. There we must receive his oracles and there we must pay our homage.

6. The promise of this coming is repeated and ratified: Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts; you may depend upon his word, who cannot lie, he shall come, he will come, he will not tarry.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when
he appeareth?
For he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:
3 and he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify
the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer
unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

An account given of the great ends and intentions of his coming, Mal 3:2. He is one whom they seek, and one whom they delight in; and yet who may abide the day of his coming? It is a thing to be thought of with great seriousness, and with a holy awe and reverence; for who shall stand when he appears, though he comes not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life? This may refer,

1. To the terrors of his appearance. Even in the days of his flesh there were some emanations of his glory and power, such as none could stand before, witness his transfiguration, and the prodigies that attended his death; and we read of some that trembled before him, as Mk 5:33.

2. To the troublous times that should follow soon after. The Jewish doctors speak of the pangs or griefs of the Messiah, meaning (they say) the great afflictions that should be to Israel at the time of his coming; he himself speaks of great tribulation then approaching, such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be, Mt 24:21.

3. To the trial which his coming would make of the children of men. He shall be like a refiner's fire, which separates between the gold and the dross by melting the ore, or like fuller's soap, which with much rubbing fetches the spots out of the cloth. Christ came to discover men, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed (Lu 2:35), to distinguish men, to separate between the precious and the vile, for his fan in his hand (Mt 3:12), to send fire on the earth, not peace, but rather division (Lu 12:49,51), to shake heaven and earth, that the wicked might be shaken out (Job 38:13) and that the things which cannot be shaken might remain, Heb 12:27. See what the effect of the trial will be that shall be made by the gospel.

(1.) The gospel shall work good upon those that are disposed to be good, to them it shall be a savour of life unto life (Mal 3:3): He shall sit as a refiner. Christ by his gospel shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls; for to this end he gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Eph 5:26) and purify to himself a peculiar people, Tit 2:14. Christ is the great refiner. Observe,

[1.] Who they are that he will purify--the sons of Levi, all those that are devoted to his praise and employed in his service, as the tribe of Levi was, and whom he designs to make unto our God spiritual priests (Re 1:6), a holy priesthood, 1Pe 2:5.

Note, All true Christians are sons of Levi, set apart for God, to do the service of his sanctuary, and to war the good warfare.

[2.] How he will purify them; he will purge them as gold and silver, that is, he will sanctify them inwardly; he will not only wash away the spots they have contracted from without, but will take away the dross that is found in them; he will separate from them their indwelling corruptions, which rendered their faculties worthless and useless, and so make them like gold refined, both valuable and serviceable. He will purge them with fire, as gold and silver are purged, for he baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Mt 3:11), with the Holy Ghost working like fire. He will purge them

by afflictions and manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith may be found to praise and honour, 1Pe 1:6,7. He will purge them so as to make them a precious people to himself.

[3.] What will be the effect of it: That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, that is, that they may be in sincerity converted to God and consecrated to his praise (hence we read of the offering up, or sacrificing, of the Gentiles to God, when they were sanctified by the holy Ghost, Ro 15:16), and that they may in a spiritual manner worship God according to his will, may offer the sacrifices of righteousness, (Ps 4:5), the offering of prayer, and praise, and holy love, that they may be the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, Joh 4:23,24.

Note, We cannot offer unto the Lord any right performances in religion unless our persons be justified and sanctified. Till we ourselves be refined and purified by the grace of God, we cannot do any thing that will redound to the glory of God. God had respect to Abel first, and then to his offering; and therefore God purges his people, that they may offer their offerings to him in righteousness, Zep 3:9. He makes the tree good that the fruit may be good. And then it follows (Mal 3:4), The offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant unto the Lord.

It shall no longer be offensive, as it has been, when, in the former days, they worshipped other gods with the God of Israel, or when, in the present days, they brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice; but it shall be acceptable; he will be pleased with the offerers, and their offerings, as in the days of old and as in former years, as in the primitive times of the church, as when God had respect to Abel's sacrifice and smelled a savour of rest from Noah's, and when he kindled Aaron's sacrifice with fire from heaven. When the Messiah comes,

First, He will, by his grace in them, make them acceptable; when he has purified and refined them, then they shall offer such sacrifices as God requires and will accept.

Secondly, He will, by his intercession for them, make them accepted; he will recommend them and their performances to God,

so that their prayers, being perfumed with the incense of his intercession, shall be pleasant unto the Lord; for he has made us accepted in the Beloved, and in him is well pleased with those that are in him (Mt 3:17) and bring forth fruit in him.

(2.) It shall turn for a testimony against those that are resolved to go on in their wickedness, Mal 3:5. This is the direct answer to their challenge, "Where is the God of judgment? You shall know where he is, and shall know it to your terror and confusion, for I will come near to you to judgment; to you that set divine justice at defiance." To them the gospel of Christ will be a savour of death unto death; it will bind them over to condemnation and will judge them in the great day, Joh 12:48. Let us see here,

[1.] Who the sinners are that must appear to be judged by the gospel of Christ. They are the sorcerers, who died in spiritual wickedness, that forsake the oracles of the God of truth to consult the father of lies; and the adulterers, who wallow in the lusts of the flesh, those adulterers who were charged with dealing treacherously (Mal 2:15); and the false swearers, who profane God's name and affront his justice, by calling him to witness to a lie; and the oppressors, who barbarously injure and trample upon those who lie at their mercy, and are not able to help themselves: they defraud the hireling in his wages and will not give him what he agreed for; they crush the widow and fatherless, and will not pay them their just debts, because they cannot prove them, or have not wherewithal to sue for them; the poor stranger too, who has no friend to stand by him and is ignorant of the laws of the country, they turn aside from his right, so that he cannot keep or cannot recover his own.

That which is at the bottom of all this is, They fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. The transgression of the wicked plainly declares that there is no fear of God before his eyes. Where no fear of God is no good is to be expected.

[2.] Who will appear against them: I will come near, says God, and will be a swift witness against them. They justify themselves, and, their sins having been artfully concealed, hope to escape punishment for want of proof; but God, who sees and knows all

things, will himself be witness against them, and his omniscience is instead of a thousand witnesses, for to it the sinner's own conscience shall be made to subscribe, and so every mouth shall be stopped.

He will be a swift witness; though they reflect upon him as slow and dilatory, and ask, Where is the God of judgment, and where the promise of his coming? they will find that he is not slack concerning his threatenings any more than he is concerning his promises. Judgment against those sinners shall not be put off for want of evidence, for he will be a swift witness. His judgment shall overtake them, and it shall be impossible for them to outrun it. Evil pursues sinners.

IV. The ratification of all this (Mal 3:6): For I am the Lord; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed. Here we have,

1. God's immutability asserted by Himself, and glorified in: "I am the Lord; I change not; and therefore no word that I have spoken shall fall to the ground." Is God a just revenger of those that rebel against him? Is he the bountiful rewarder of those that diligently seek him? In both these he is unchangeable. Though the sentence passed against evil works (Mal 3:5) be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed, for he is the Lord; he changes not; he is as much an enemy to sin as ever he was, and impenitent sinners will find him so. There needs no scire facias--a writ calling one to show cause, to revive God's judgment, for it is never antiquated, or out of date, but against those that go on still in their trespasses the curse of his law still remains in full force, power, and virtue.

2. A particular proof of it, from the comfortable experience which the people of Israel had had of it. They had reason to say that he was an unchangeable God, for he had been faithful to his covenant with them and their fathers; if he had not adhered to that, they would have been consumed long ago and cut off from being a people; they had been false and fickle in their conduct to him, and he might justly have abandoned them, and then they would soon have been consumed and ruined; but because he remembered his covenant, and would not violate that, nor alter the thing that had

gone forth out of his lips, they were preserved from ruin and recovered from the brink of it. It was purely because he would be as good as his word, De 7:8,Le 26:42.

Now as God had kept them from ruin, while the covenant of peculiarity remained in force, purely because he would be faithful to that covenant, and would show that he is not a man that he should lie (Nu 23:19), so, when that covenant should be superseded and set aside by the New Testament, and they, by rejecting the blessings of it, lay themselves open to the curses, he will show that in the determinations of his wrath, as well as in those of his mercy, he is not a man, that he should repent, but will then be as true to his threatenings as hitherto he had been to his promises; see 1Sa 15:29. We may all apply this very sensibly to ourselves; because we have to do with a God that changes not, therefore it is that we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not; they are new every morning; great is his faithfulness, La 3:22,23.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the
Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness
against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and
against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his*
wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger
from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.

The Payment of Tithes

6 For I *am* the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not
consumed.

7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine
ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return
unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we
return?

We have here God's controversy with the men of that generation, for deserting his service and robbing him--wicked servants indeed, that not only run away from their Master, but run away with their Master's goods.

I. They had run away from their Master, and quitted the work he gave them to do (Mal 3:7): You have gone away from my ordinances and have not kept them. The ordinances of God's worship were the business which as servants they must mind, the talents which they must trade with, and the trust which was committed to them to keep; but they went away from them, grew weary of them, and withdrew their neck from that yoke; they deviated from the rule that God had prescribed to them, and betrayed the trust lodged with them. They had revolted from God, not only in worship, but in conversation; they had not kept his ordinances.

This disobedience they were chargeable with, and had been guilty of, even from the days of their fathers; either as in the days of their fathers of old, who were sent into captivity for their disobedience, or, "Now, for some generations past, you have fallen off from what you were, when first you came back out of captivity." Ezra owns it in one particular instance: Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day, Ezr 9:7. Now observe,

1. What a gracious invitation God gives them to return and repent: "Return unto me, and to your duty, return to your service, return to your allegiance, return as a traveller that has missed his way, as a soldier that has run his colours, as a treacherous wife that has gone away from her husband; return, thou backsliding Israel, return to me; and then I will return unto you and be reconciled, will remove the judgments you are under and prevent those you fear." This had been of old the burden of the song (Zec 1:3), and is still.

2. What a peevish answer they return to this gracious invitation:

"But you said with disdain, said it to the prophets that called you, said it to one another, said it to your own hearts, to stifle the convictions you were under; you said, Wherein shall we return?"

Note, God takes notice what returns our hearts make to the calls of his word, what we say and what we think when we have heard a sermon, what answer we give to the message sent us. When God calls us to return, we should answer as those did Jer 3:22, Behold, we come. But not as these here, Wherein shall we return?

(1.) They take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and called upon to amend them; they are ready to say, "What ado do these prophets make about returning and repenting; why are we disgraced and disturbed thus, our own consciences and our neighbours stirred up against us?" It is ill with those who thus count reproofs reproaches, and kick against the pricks.

(2.) They are so ignorant of themselves, and of the strictness, extent, and spiritual nature, of the divine law, that they see nothing in themselves to be repented of, or reformed; they are pure in their own eyes, and think they need no repentance.

(3.) They are so firmly resolved to go on in sin that they will find a thousand foolish frivolous excuses to shift off their repentance, and turn away the calls that are given them to repent. They seem to speak only as those that wanted something to say; it is a mere evasion, a banter upon the prophet, and a challenge to him to descend to particulars.

Note, Many ruin their own souls by baffling the calls that are given them to repent of their sins.

8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have
we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.
9 Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole
nation.
10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in
mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I
will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing,
that *there shall* not *be room* enough *to receive it*.

They had robbed their Master, and embezzled his goods. They had asked, "Wherein shall we return? What have we done amiss?" And he soon tells them. Observe,

1 The prophet's high charge exhibited, in God's name, against the people. They stand indicted for robbery, for sacrilege, the worst of robberies: You have robbed me. He expostulates with them upon it: Will a man be so daringly impudent as to rob God? Man, who is a weak creature, and cannot contend with God's power, will he

think to rob him vi et armis--forcibly? Man, who lies open to God's knowledge, and cannot conceal himself from that, will he think to rob him clam et secreto--privily? Man, who depends upon God, and derives his all from him, will he rob him that is his benefactor? This is ungrateful, unjust, and unkind, indeed; and it is very unwise thus to provoke him from whom our judgment proceeds. Will a man do violence to God? so some read it. Will a man do violence to God? so some read it. Will a man stint or straiten him? so others read it. Robbing God is a heinous crime.

2 The people's high challenge in answer to that charge: But you say, Wherein have we robbed thee? They plead Not guilty, and put God upon the proof of it. Note, Robbing God is such a heinous crime that those who are guilty of it are not willing to own themselves guilty. They rob God, and know not what they do. They rob him of his honour, rob him of that which is devoted to him, to be employed in his service, rob him of themselves, rob him of sabbath-time, rob him of that which is given for the support of religion, and give him not his dues out of their estates; and yet they ask, Wherein have we robbed thee?

3. The plain proof of the charge, in answer to this challenge; it is in tithes and offerings. Out of these the priests and Levites had maintenance for themselves and their families; but they detained them, defrauded the priests of them, would not pay their tithes, or not in full, or not of the best; they brought not the offerings which God required, or brought the torn, and lame, and sick, which were not fit for use. They were all guilty of this sin, even the whole nation, as if they were in confederacy against God, and all combined to rob him of his dues and to stand by one another in it when they had done. For this they were cursed with a curse, Mal 3:9.

God punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects that ate up the fruits of the earth. God had thus punished them for neglecting to build the temple (Hag 1:10,11), and now for not maintaining the temple-service. Note, Those that deny God his part of their estates may justly expect a curse upon their own part of them: "You are cursed with a curse for robbing me, and yet you go on to do it."

Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men persist in it notwithstanding the rebukes of Providence which they are under for it. Nay, it should seem, because God had punished them with scarcity of bread, they made that a pretence for robbing him-that now, being impoverished, they could not afford to bring their tithes and offerings, but must save them, that they might have bread for their families.

Note, It argues great perverseness in sin when men make those afflictions excuses for sin which are sent to part between them and their sins. When they had but little they should have done the more good with that little, and that would have been the way to make it more; but it is ill with the patient when that which should cure the disease serves only to palliate it, and prevent its being searched into.

4. An earnest exhortation to reform in this matter, with a promise that if they did the judgments they were under should be quickly removed.

(1.) Let them take care to do their duty (Mal 3:10): Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse. They had brought some; but, like Ananias and Sapphira, had kept back part of the price, pretending they could not spare so much as was required, and necessity has no law; but even necessity must have this law, and it would redress the grievance of their necessity: "Bring in the full tithes to the utmost that the law requires, that there may be meat in God's house for those that serve at the altar, whether there be meat in your houses or no." Note, God must be served in the first place, and our quota must be contributed for the support of religion in the place where we live, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom may come, and his will be done, even before we provide our daily bread; for the interests of our souls ought to be preferred before those of our bodies.

(2.) Let them then trust God to provide for them and their comfort "Let God be first served, and then prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, whether I will not open the windows of heaven." They said, "Let God give us our plenty again, as formerly, and try

us whether we will not then bring him his tithes and offerings, as we did formerly." "No," says God, "do you first bring in all your tithes as they become due, and all the arrears of what is past, and try me, whether I will not then restore you your plenty."

Note, Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust; and we may all venture to do so, for, though many have been losers for him, never any were losers by him in the end. It is fit that we should venture first, for his reward is with him, but his work is before him; we must first do the work which is our part, and then try him and trust him for the reward. Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method when he said (1Ki 17:13), "Make me a little cake first, and then prove me whether there shall not be enough afterwards for thee and thy son." That which discourages people from the expenses of charity is the weakness of their faith concerning the gains and advantages of charity; they cannot think that they shall get by it. But it is a reasonable demand that God here makes: "Prove me now; is any thing to be got by charity? Come and see;" Nothing venture, nothing win. Trust upon honour, "And you shall find,"

[1.] "That, whereas the heavens have been shut up, and there has been no rain, now God will open to you the windows of heaven, for in his hand the key of the clouds is, and you shall have seasonable rain." Or the expression is figurative; every good gift coming from above, thence God will plentifully pour out upon them the bounties of his providence. Very sudden plenty is expressed by opening the windows of heaven, 2Ki 7:2. We find the windows of heaven opened, to pour down a deluge of wrath, in Noah's flood, Ge 7:11.

But here they are opened to pour down blessings, to such a degree that there should not be room enough to receive them. So plentifully shall their ground bring forth that they shall be tempted to pull down their barns and build greater, for want of room, Lu 12:18. Or, as Dr. Pocock explains it, "I will pour out on you such a blessing as shall be not enough only, and such as shall be sufficient, but more and more than enough;" that is, a great addition. The oil that is multiplied shall not be stayed as long as there are vessels to receive it, 2Ki 4:6.

Note, God will not only be reconciled to sinners that repent and reform, but he will be a benefactor, a bountiful benefactor, to them. We are never straitened in him, but often straitened in our own bosoms. God has blessings ready to bestow upon us, but, through the weakness of our faith and narrowness of our desires, we have not room to receive them.

[2.] That, whereas the fruits of their ground had been eaten up by locusts and caterpillars God would now remove that judgment (Mal 3:11): "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and will check the progress of those destroying animals, that they shall no more destroy the products of the earth and the fruits of the trees." God has all creatures at his beck, can command them and remand them at his pleasure. Neither shall the vine cast her fruit before the time; it shall not be blasted or blown off. Or, as some read it, Neither shall the devourer make your vine barren, as the locusts did, Joe 1:7.

[3.] That, whereas their neighbours had upbraided them with their scarcity, and they had lain under the reproach of famine, which was the more grievous because their country used to be boasted of for its plenty, now all nations shall call them blessed, shall speak honourably of them, and own them to be a happy people.

[4.] That whereas their sin had made their land unpleasing to God (even their temple, and altars, and offerings were so, Mal 2:13), and whereas his judgments had made their land unpleasant to them, and very melancholy, "Now you shall be a delightsome land, your country shall be acceptable to God and comfortable to yourselves." Note, The reviving of religion in a land will make it indeed a delightsome land both to God and to all good people; he will say, It is my rest for ever; here will I dwell; and they will say the same, Isa 62:4,De 11:12.

It should seem that this charge to bring in the tithes had its good effect, for we find (Ne 13:12) that all Judah did bring in their tithe into the treasuries, and, no doubt, they had the benefit of these promises, in the return of their plenty, immediately upon their return to their duty, that they might plainly discern for what cause

the evil had been upon them (for when the cause was removed the evil was removed), and that they might see how perfectly reconciled God was to them upon their repentance, and how their transgression was remembered no more, for the curse was not only taken away, but turned into an abundant blessing.

11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy
the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before
the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.
12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land,
saith the Lord of hosts.

The Distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say,
What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

Among the people of the Jews at this time, though they all enjoyed the same privileges and advantages, there were men of very different characters (as ever were, and ever will be, in the world and in the church), like Jeremiah's figs, some very good and others very bad, some that plainly appeared to be the children of God and others that as plainly discovered themselves to be the children of the wicked one. There are tares and wheat in the same field, chaff and corn in the same floor; and here we have an account of both.

I. Here is the angry notice God takes of the impudent blasphemous talk of the sinners in Zion and his just resentments of it. Probably there was a club of them that were in league against religion, that set up for wits, and set their wits on work to run it down and ridicule it, and herein strengthened one another's hands. Here is,

1. An indictment found against them, for treasonable words spoken against the King of kings: Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. They spoke against God, in reflection upon him, in contradiction to him, as their fathers in the wilderness (Ps 70:19); yea, they spoke against God. What he said, and what he designed, they opposed, as if they had been retained of counsel against him and his cause. Their words against God were stout; they came from their pride, and haughtiness, and contempt of God.

What they said against God they spoke loudly, as if they cared not who heard them; they were not themselves ashamed to say it, and they desired to propagate their atheistical notions and to infect the minds of others with them. They spoke it boldly, as those that were resolved to stand to it, and were in no fear of being called to an account. They spoke it proudly, and with insolence and disdain, scorning to be under the divine check and government. They strengthened themselves; they would be valiant against the Almighty, Job 15:25.

2. Their plea to this indictment. They said, What have we spoken so much against thee? They deny the words, and put the prophet to prove them; or, if they spoke the words, they did not design them against God, and therefore will not own there was any harm in them; at least they extenuate the matter: What have we spoken so much against thee, so much that there needs all this ado about it? They cannot deny that they have spoken against God, but they make a light matter of it, and wonder it should be taken notice of: "Words" (say they) "are but wind; others have said more and done worse; if we are not so good as we should be, yet we hope we are not so bad as we are represented to be." Note, It is common for sinners that are unconvinced and unhumbled to deny or extenuate the faults they are justly charged with, and to insist upon their own justification, against the reproofs of the word and of their own consciences. But it will be to no purpose.

3. The words themselves which they are charged with. God keeps an account of what men say, as well as of what they do, and will let them know that he does so. We quickly forget what we have said, and are ready to deny what we have said amiss; but God can say, You have said so and so. They had said it as their deliberate judgment.

(1.) That there is nothing to be got in the service of God, thought it is a service that subjects men to labour and sorrow. They said, It is vain to serve God, or, "He is vain that serves God, that is, he labours in vain and to no purpose; he has his labour for his pains, and therefore is a fool for his labour. What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, or his observation, that we have observed what he has appointed us to observe?" What mammon, or wealth, have

we gained, says the Chaldee, intimating (says Dr. Pocock) that it was for mammon's sake only that they served God, and so indeed not God at all, but mammon. "We have walked mournfully, or in black, with great gravity and great grief, before the Lord of hosts, have afflicted our souls at the times appointed for that purpose, and yet we are never the better." Perhaps this comes in as a reason why they would not trust God to prosper them upon their bringing in the tithes (Mal 3:10); "For," say they, "we have tried him in other things, and have lost by him." This is a very unjust and unreasonable reflection upon the service of God, and we can call witnesses enough to confront the slander.

[1.] They would have it thought that they had served God and had kept his ordinances, whereas it was only the external observance of them that they had kept up, while they were perfect strangers to the inward part of the duty, and therefore might say, It is in vain. God says so (Mt 15:9), In vain do those worship me whose hearts are far from me while they draw near with their mouth; but whose fault is that? Not God's, who is the rewarder of those that seek him diligently, but theirs who seek him carelessly.

[2.] They insisted much upon it that they had walked mournfully before God, whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully before him. They by their own superstitions made the service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy; it is the yoke of antichrist that is heavy.

[3.] They complained that they had got nothing by their religion; they were still in poverty and affliction, and behindhand in the world. This is an old piece of impiety. Job 21:14,15, What profit shall we have if we pray unto him? Elihu charges Job with saying something like this. Job 34:9, It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. The enemies of religion do but set up against it the old cavils that have been long since answered and exploded. Perhaps this refers to the errors of the sect of the Sadducees, which was the scandal of the Jewish church in its latter days; they denied a future state, and then said, It is vain to serve God, which has indeed some colour in it, for, if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable, 1Co 15:19.

Note, Those do a great deal of wrong to God's honour who say that religion is either an unprofitable or an unpleasant thing; for the matter is not so: wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and wisdom's gains better than that of fine gold.

(2.) They maintained that wickedness was the way to prosperity, for they had observed that the workers of wickedness were set up in the world, and those that tempted God were delivered, Mal 3:15. The outward prosperity of sinners in their sins, as it has weakened the hands of the godly in their godliness (Ps 73:13), so it has strengthened the hands of the wicked in their wickedness. Note,

[1.] Those that work wickedness tempt God by presumptuous sins; they do, as it were, try God, whether he can and will punish them as he has said in his word, and, in effect, challenge him to do his worst, by provoking him in the highest degree.

[2.] Those that tempt God by their wicked works are many times both delivered out of the adversity into which they were justly brought and advanced to the prosperity which they were utterly unworthy of. They are not only set up once, but when we thought their day had come to fall, and they were in trouble, they were delivered and set up again; so strangely did Providence seem to smile upon them.

[3.] Though it be thus, yet it will not warrant us to call the proud happy. For they may be delivered and set up for a while, but it will appear that God resists them, and that their pride is a preface to their fall; and, if so, they are truly miserable, and it is folly to call them happy, and to bless those whom the Lord abhors. Wait awhile, and you shall see those that work wickedness set up as a mark to the arrows of God's vengeance, and those that tempt God delivered to the tormentors. Judge of things as they will appear shortly, when the doom of these proud sinners (which follows here, Mal 4:1) comes to be executed to the utmost.

14 Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?

15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered.

16 Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Here is the gracious notice God takes of the pious talk of the saints in Zion, and the gracious recompence of it. Even in this corrupt and degenerate age, when there was so great a decay, nay, so great a contempt, of serious godliness, there were yet some that retained their integrity and zeal for God; and let us see,

1. How they distinguished themselves, and what their character was; it was the reverse of theirs that spoke so much against God; for,

(1.) They feared the Lord--that is the beginning of wisdom and the root of all religion; they reverenced the majesty of God, submitted to his authority, and had a dread of his wrath in all they thought and said; they humbly complied with God, and never spoke any stout words against him. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant.

(2.) They thought upon his name; they seriously considered and frequently mediated upon the discoveries God has made of himself in his word and by his providences, and their mediation of him was sweet to them and influenced them. They thought on his name; they consulted the honour of God and aimed at that as their ultimate end in all they did.

Note, Those that know the name of God should often think of it and dwell upon it in their thoughts; it is a copious curious subject, and frequent thoughts of it will contribute very much to our communion with God and the stirring up of our devout affections to him.

(3.) They spoke often one to another concerning the God they feared, and that name of his which they thought so much of; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and a good man, out of a good treasure there, will bring forth good things. Those that feared the Lord kept together as those that were company for each other; they spoke kindly and endearingly one to another, for the preserving and promoting of mutual love, that that might not wax cold when iniquity did thus abound.

They spoke intelligently and edifyingly to one another, for the increasing and improving of faith and holiness; they spoke one to another in the language of those that fear the Lord and think on his name--the language of Canaan. When profaneness had come to so great a height as to trample upon all that is sacred, then those that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.

[1.] Then, when iniquity was bold and barefaced, the people of God took courage, and stirred up themselves, the innocent against the hypocrite, Job 17:8. The worse others are the better we should be; when vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking.

[2.] Then, when religion was reproached and misrepresented, its friends did all they could to support the credit of it and to keep it in countenance. It had been suggested that the ways of God are melancholy unpleasant ways, solitary and sorrowful; and therefore then those that feared God studied to evince the contrary by their cheerfulness in mutual love and converse, that they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

[3.] Then, when seducers were busy to deceive and to possess unwary souls with prejudices against religion, those that feared God were industrious to arm themselves and one another against the contagion by mutual instructions, excitements, and encouragements, and to strengthen one another's hands. As evil communication corrupts good minds and manners, so good communication confirms them.

2. How God dignified them, and what further honour and favour he intended for them. Those who spoke stoutly against God, no doubt looked with disdain and displeasure upon those that feared

him, hectored and bantered them; but they had little reason to regard that, or be disturbed at it, when God countenanced them.

(1.) He took notice of their pious discourses, and was graciously present at their conferences: The Lord hearkened and heard it, and was well pleased with it. God says (Jer 8:6) that he hearkened and heard what bad men would say, and they spoke not aright; here he hearkened and heard what good men did say, for they spoke aright.

Note, The gracious God observes all the gracious words that proceed out of the mouths of his people; they need not desire that men may hear them, and commend them; let them not seek praise from men by them, nor affect to be taken notice of by them; but let it satisfy them that, be the conference ever so private, God sees and hears in secret and will reward openly. When the two disciples, going to Emmaus, were discoursing concerning Christ, he hearkened and heard, and joined himself to them, and made a third, Lu 24:15.

(2.) He kept an account of them: A book of remembrance was written before him. Not that the Eternal Mind needs to be reminded of things by books and writings, but it is an expression after the manner of men, intimating that their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance as punctually and particularly as if they were written in a book, as if journals were kept of all their conferences. Great kings had books of remembrance written, and read before them, in which were entered all the services done them, when, and by whom, as Es 2:23.

God, in like manner, remembers the services of his people, that, in the review of them, he may say, Well done; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. God has a book for the sighs and tears of his mourners (Ps 56:8), much more for the pleadings of his advocates. Never was any good word spoken of God, or for God, from an honest heart, but it was registered, that it might be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, and in no wise lose its reward.

(3.) He promises them a share in his glory hereafter (Mal 3:17): They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels. When God utterly cuts off the Jewish church and

nation for their infidelity, the remnant among them, that believed his word, and, having waited for the consolation of Israel, welcome him when he comes, shall be admitted into the Christian church, and shall become a peculiar people to God; God will take care of them, that they perish not with those that believe not; but that they be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger against that nation. They shall be my segullah--my peculiar treasure (it is the word used, Ex 19:5), in the day when I make or do what I have said and designed to do; so some read it.

These pious ones shall have all the glorious privileges of God's Israel appropriated to them and centering in them; they shall now be his peculiar treasure, when the rest are rejected; they shall now be the vessels of mercy and honour, when the rest are made vessels of wrath and dishonour, vessels in which is no pleasure. This may be applied to all the faithful people of God, and the distinction he will put between them and others in the great day. Note,

[1.] The saints are God's jewels; they are highly esteemed by him and are dear to him; they are comely with the comeliness that he puts upon them, and he is pleased to glory in them; they are a royal diadem in his hand, Isa 62:3. He looks upon them as his own proper goods, his choice goods, his treasure, laid up in his cabinet, and the furniture of his closet, Ps 135:4. The rest of the world is but lumber, in comparison with them.

[2.] There is a day coming when God will make up his jewels. They shall be gathered up out of the dirt into which they are now thrown, and gathered together from all places to which they are now scattered; he shall send forth his angels to gather his elect, who are his jewels, from the four winds of heaven (Mt 24:31), to gather his jewels into his jewel-house, as the wheat from several fields into the barn. All the saints will then be gathered to Christ, and none but saints, and saints made perfect; then God's jewels will be made up, as stones into a crown, as stars into a constellation.

[3.] Those who now own God for theirs, he will then own for his, will publicly confess them before angels and men: "They shall be mine; their sanctification shall be completed, and so they shall be perfectly and entirely mine, without any remaining interests of the

world and the flesh." Their relation to God shall be acknowledged, and his property in them. He will separate them from those that are not his, and give them their portion with those that are his; for to them it shall be said, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. They were in doubt, sometimes, whether they were belonging to God or no; but the matter shall then be put out of doubt. God himself will say unto them, You are mine. Now their relation to God is what they are reproached with, but it will then be gloried in; God himself will glory in it.

(4.) He promises them a share in his grace now: I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him. God had promised to own them as his and take them to be with him; but it might be a discouragement to them to think that they had offended God, and that he might justly disown them, and cast them off; but, as to that, he says, "I will spare them; I will not deal with them as they deserve. I will rejoice over them" (so some expound it) "as the bridegroom over his bride," Isa 62:5,Zep 3:17. But the word usually signifies to spare with commiseration and compassion, as a father pities his children, Ps 103:13. Note,

[1.] It is our duty to serve God with the disposition of children. We must be his sons, must by a new birth partake of a divine nature, must consent to the covenant of adoption and partake of the spirit of adoption. And we must be his servants; God will not have his children trained up in idleness; they must do him service, and they must do it from a principle of love, with cheerfulness and delight, and as those that are therein serving their own true interest, and this is serving as a son with the father, Php 2:22.

[2.] If we serve God with the disposition of children, he will spare us with the tenderness and compassion of a Father. Even God's children that serve him stand in need of sparing mercy, that mercy to which we owe it that we are not consumed, that mercy which keeps us out of hell. Nehemiah, when he had done much good, yet, knowing there is not a just man on earth, that does good and sins not, and that every sin deserves God's wrath, prays, Lord, spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy; see Ne 13:22.

And God, as a Father, will show them this mercy. He will not be extreme to mark what we do amiss, but will make the best of us and our poor performances; he will mitigate the afflictions his children are exercised with, and save them from the ruin they deserve. The father continues to spare the son, and does it with complacency, because he is his own; thus God will spare humble penitents and petitioners, as a man spares his son that serves him, though we do him so little service, nay, though we do him so much disservice.

3. How they will thus be distinguished from the children of this world (Mal 3:18): "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between sinners and saints, between those that serve God and make conscience of their duty to him and those that serve him not, but put contempt upon his service. You that now speak against God as making no difference between good and bad, and therefore say, It is in vain to serve him (Mal 3:14), you shall be made to see your error; you that would speak for God, but know not what to say as to this, that there seems to be one event to the righteous and to the wicked, and all things come alike to all, will then have the matter set in a true light, and will see, to your everlasting satisfaction, the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Then you shall return, that is, you shall change you mind, and come to a right understanding of the thing."

This primarily respects the manifest difference that was made by the divine Providence between the believing Jews and those that persisted in their infidelity, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation, by the Romans. But it is to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and on that great discriminating day when it shall be easy enough to discern between the righteous and the wicked. Note,

(1.) All the children of men are either righteous or wicked, either such as serve God or such as serve him not. This is that division of the children of men which will last for ever, and by which their eternal state will be determined; all are going either to heaven or to hell.

(2.) In this world it is often hard to discern between the righteous and the wicked. They are mingled together, good fish and bad in the same net. The righteous are so distempered, and the wicked so disguised, that we are often deceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other. There are many who, we think, serve God, who, having not their hearts right with him, will be found none of his servants; and, on the other hand, many will be found his faithful servants, who, because they followed not with us, did not, as we thought, serve him.

But that which especially raised the difficulty here was that the divine Providence seemed to make no difference between the righteous and the wicked; you could not know wicked men by God's frowning upon them, for they commonly prospered in the world, nor righteous men by his smiling upon them, for they were involved with others in the same common calamity. None now knows God's love or hatred by all that is before him, Ec 9:1.

(3.) At the bar of Christ, in the last judgment, it will be easy to discern between the righteous and the wicked; for then every man's character will be both perfected and perfectly discovered, every man will then appear in his true colours, and his disguises will be taken off. Some men's sins indeed go beforehand, and you may now tell who is wicked, but others follow after; however, in the great day, we shall see who was righteous and who wicked. Every man's condition likewise will be both perfected and everlastingly determined; the righteous will then be perfectly happy and the wicked perfectly miserable, without mixture or allay.

When the righteous are all set on the right hand of Christ, and invited to come for a blessing, and all the wicked on his left hand, and are told to depart with a curse, then it will be easy to discern between them. As to ourselves, therefore, we are concerned to think among which we shall have our lot, and, as to others, we must judge nothing before the time.

18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Malachi-4

The Coming Day of the Lord

1 For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

The great and terrible day of the Lord is here prophesied of. This, like the pillar of cloud and fire, shall have a dark side turned towards the Egyptians that fight against God, and a bright side towards the faithful Israelites that follow him: The day cometh, that is, the Lord cometh, the day of the Lord; and it has reference both to the first and to the second coming of Jesus Christ; the day of both was fixed, and should answer the character here given of it.

I. In both Christ is a consuming fire to those that rebel against him. The day of his coming shall burn as an oven; it shall be a day of wrath, of fiery indignation. This was foretold concerning the Messiah, Ps 21:9, Thy hand shall find out all thy enemies, and shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of thy anger. It will be a day of terror and destruction like the burning of a city, or rather of a wood, the trees whereof are withered and dried, for to that the allusion seems to be, as Isa 10:17,18, The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field. Now observe here,

1. Who shall be fuel to this fire--all the proud in heart, whose words have been stout against God, and their necks stiff and unapt to yield to the yoke of his commandments (all those that in the pride of their countenances will not seek after God, nor submit to the grace and government of Jesus Christ--all that proudly say they will not have Christ to reign over them), and all those that do wickedly in their affections and conversations, that wilfully persist in sin, in contempt of and contradiction to the law of God; they are such as do wickedly against the covenant, as another prophet had lately expressed it, Da 11:32.

God, that has perfect knowledge of every one's character, knows who are the proud, and of every one's actions, knows who they are that do wickedly; and they shall be as stubble to this fire; they shall be consumed by it, easily consumed, utterly consumed, and it is wholly owing to themselves that they shall be so, for they make themselves stubble, that is, combustible matter, to this fire. If they were not stubble, it would not burn them; for the fire will be to every man according as he and his works are found; if they be wood, hay, and stubble, they will be consumed; but if they be gold, silver, and precious stones, they will abide the fire and be purified by it, 1Co 3:13-15. Those that by their unbelief oppose Christ thereby set themselves as briers and thorns before a devouring fire, Isa 27:4,5.

2. What shall be the force and what the fruit of this fire: The day that cometh shall burn them up, shall both terrify and ruin them, and shall leave them neither root nor branch, neither son nor nephew (so the Chaldee paraphrase): neither they nor their posterity shall be spared; they shall be wholly extirpated and cut off. Who knows the power of God's anger? The proud and those that do wickedly will not fear it, but they shall be made to feel it. Where are those now that called the proud happy, when thus they are made completely miserable, when there remains no branch of their happiness to be enjoyed for the present, nor any root of it out of which it might again spring up? Now this was fulfilled,

(1.) When Christ, in his doctrine, spoke terror and condemnation to the proud Pharisees and the other Jews that did wickedly, when he sent that fire on the earth which burnt up the chaff of the traditions of the elders and the corrupt glosses they had put upon the law of God.

(2.) When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the nation of the Jews, as a nation, quite blotted out from under heaven, and neither root nor branch left them. This seems to be principally intended here; our Saviour says that those should be the days of vengeance, when all the things that were written to that purport should be fulfilled, Lu 21:22. Then the unbelieving Jews were as

stubble to the devouring fire of God's judgments, which gathered together to them as the eagles to the carcase.

(3.) It is certainly applicable, and is to be applied, to the day of judgment, to the particular judgment at death (some of the Jewish doctors refer it the punishment that seizes on the souls of the wicked immediately after they go out of the body), but especially to the general judgment, at the end of time, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, to execute judgment on the proud, and all that do wickedly. The whole world shall then burn as an oven, and all the children of this world, that set their hearts upon it and choose their portion in it, shall take their ruin with it, and the fire then kindled shall never be quenched.

2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the Lord of hosts.

In both Christ is a rejoicing light to those who serve him faithfully, to those who fear his name and give him the glory due to it (Mal 4:2), who stand in awe of that name of his which the wicked profane and trample upon. Here are mercy and comfort kept in store for all those who fear the Lord and think on his name. Observe,

1. Whence this mercy and comfort shall flow to them: To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings. The day that comes, as it will be a stormy day to the wicked, a day in which God will rain upon them fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, as he did on Sodom (Ps 11:6), a day of clouds and thick darkness (Am 5:18,20), so it will be a fair and bright day to those who fear God, and reviving as the rising sun is to the earth; and particular notice is taken of the rising of the sun upon Zoar when that was mercifully distinguished from the cities of the plain, which the fire consumed; see Ge 19:23.

So to those that fear God is comfort spoken. When the hearts of others fail for fear let them lift up their heads for joy, for their redemption draws nigh, Lu 21:28.

But by the Sun of righteousness here we are certainly to understand Jesus Christ, who would undertake to secure the believing remnant, in the day of the general destruction of the Jews, from falling with the rest, and to comfort them in that day of distress and perplexity with his consolations; he directed those that were in Judea to flee to the mountains (Mt 24:16), and they did so, and were all safe and easy in Pella. But it is to be applied more generally,

(1.) To the coming of Christ in the flesh to seek and save those that were lost; then the Sun of righteousness arose upon this dark world. Christ is the light of the world, the true light, the great light that makes day and rules the day (Joh 8:12), as the sun. He is the light of men (Joh 1:4), is to men's souls as the sun is to the visible world, which without the sun would be a dungeon; so would mankind be darkness itself without the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. Christ is the Sun that has light in himself, and is the fountain of light (Ps 19:4-6); he is the Sun of righteousness, for he is himself a righteous Saviour. Righteousness is both the light and the heat of this Sun; the word of his righteousness is so; it guides, instructs, and quickens; so is the everlasting righteousness he has brought in.

He is made of God to us righteousness; he is the Lord our righteousness, and therefore is fitly called the Sun of righteousness. Through him we are justified and sanctified, and so are brought to see light. This Sun of righteousness, in the fulness of time, arose upon the world, and with him light came into the world (Joh 3:19), a great light, Mt 4:16. In him the day-spring from on high visited us, to give light to those that sit in darkness, Lu 1:78,79. Righteousness sometimes signifies mercy or benignity, and it was in Christ that the tender mercy of our God visited us.

(2.) It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, brought into the souls of men. Grotius understands it of Christ's giving the Spirit to those that are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a comforter to them, a sun and a shield. Those that are possessed and governed by a holy fear of God and a dread of his majesty shall have his love also shed abroad in their hearts by the

Holy Ghost; and then the sun may be said to arise there, and to bring both a delightful day and a fruitful spring along with it.

(3.) Christ's second coming will be a glorious and welcome sun-rising to all that fear his name; it will be that morning of the resurrection in which the upright shall have dominion, Ps 49:14. That day which to the wicked will burn as an oven will to the righteous be bright as the morning; and it is what they wait for, more than those that wait for the morning.

2. What this mercy and comfort shall bring to them: He shall arise with healing under his wings, or in his rays or beams, which are as the wings of the sun. Christ came, as the sun, to bring not only light to a dark world, but health to a diseased distempered world. The Jews (says Dr. Pocock) have a proverbial saying, As the sun riseth, infirmities decrease; the flowers which drooped and languished all night revive in the morning. Christ came into the world to be the great physician, yea, and the great medicine too, both the balm in Gilead and the physician there.

When he was upon earth, he went about as the sun in his circuit, doing this good; he healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people; he healed by wholesale, as the sun does. He shall arise with healing in his skirts; so some read it, and they apply it to the story of the woman's touching the hem of his garment, and being thereby made whole, and his finding that virtue went out of him, Mk 5:28-30. But his healing bodily diseases was a specimen of his great design in coming into the world to heal the diseases of men's souls, and to put them into a good state of health, that they may serve and enjoy both God and themselves.

3. What good effect it shall have upon them.

(1.) It shall make them vigorous in themselves: "You shall go forth, as those that are healed go abroad and return to their business." The souls shall go forth out of their bodies at death, and the bodies out of their graves at the resurrection, as prisoners out of their dungeons, and both to see the light and be set at liberty. "You shall go forth as plants out of the earth, when in the spring the sun returns." Some make it to mean the going forth of the Christians

from Jerusalem, and the escape they thereby made from its destruction.

And thus the souls on whom the Sun of righteousness arises go forth out of the world, go forth out of Babylon, as those that are made free indeed. "You shall likewise grow up; being restored to health and liberty, you shall increase in knowledge, and grace, and spiritual strength." The souls on which the Sun of righteousness arises are growing up towards the perfect man; those that by the grace of God are made wise and good are by the same grace made wiser and better; and their path, like that of the rising sun, shines more and more to the perfect day, Pr 4:18.

Their growth is compared to that of the calves of the stall, which is a quick, strong, and useful growth. "You shall grow up, not as the flower of the field, which is slender, and weak, and of little use, and withers soon after it has grown up, but as the calves of the stall," that, as one of the rabbin expounds it, grow great in flesh and fatness, with which both God's altars and men's tables are replenished; so the growth of the saints, on whom the Sun of righteousness arises, honours both God and man. Some read it, instead of You shall grow up, You shall move yourselves, or leap for joy, shall be as frolicsome as calves of the stall, when they are let loose in the open field; it denotes the joy of the saints, who rejoice in Christ Jesus; they shall even leap for joy; they are always caused to triumph.

(2.) It shall make them victorious over their enemies (Mal 4:3): You shall tread down the wicked. Time was when the wicked trod them down, said to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over; but the day will come when they shall tread down the wicked. The wicked, being made Christ's footstool, are made theirs also (Ps 110:1), and come and worship before the feet of the church, Re 3:9. The elder shall serve the younger. When believers by faith overcome the world, when they suppress their own corrupt appetites and passions, when the God of peace bruises Satan under their feet, then they tread down the wicked. When it came to the turn of the Christians to triumph over the Jews that had insulted over them, then this promise was fulfilled:

They shall be ashes under the soles of your feet; they shall not only be trodden down, but trodden to dirt. When the day that comes shall have burnt them up, they shall trample upon them as ashes. When the righteous shall rise to everlasting life, the wicked shall rise to everlasting contempt; and, though they shall not triumph over them, they shall triumph in that God whose justice is glorified in their destruction. The saints in glory are said to have power given them over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron, Re 2:26,27. This you shall do, in the day that I shall do this.

Note, The saints' triumphs are all owing to God's victories; it is not they that do this, but God that does it for them, that says, Come set your feet on the necks of these kings. Some read it, "In the day that I make, or shall make, the great day that I shall make remarkable, of which you will say with joy, This is the day which the Lord has made." The day of the destruction of Jerusalem is called the great and notable day of the Lord (Ac 2:20), and our Saviour in foretelling that destruction made use of such expressions as, like these, might be applied likewise to the end of the world and the last judgment; for it was such a terrible revelation of the wrath of God from heaven, and caused such a scene of horror upon this earth, that it might fitly serve for a type of that glorious transaction which will be an outlet to the days of time and an inlet to the days of eternity.

By the accomplishment of these prophecies in the ruin of the Jewish nation, we should have our faith confirmed in the assurances Christ has given us concerning the dissolution of all things. Surely I come quickly; so says Christ, the Lord of hosts, to whom all power in heaven and earth is committed.

4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.

This is doubtless intended for a solemn conclusion, not only of this prophecy, but of the canon of the Old Testament, and is a plain information that they were not to expect any more sayings nor writing by divine inspiration, any more of the dictates of the Spirit of prophecy, till the beginning of the gospel of the Messiah, which sets aside the Apocrypha as no part of holy writ, and which therefore the Jews never received.

Now that prophecy ceases, and is about to be sealed up, there are two things required of the people of God, that lived then:--

I. They must keep up an obedient veneration for the law of Moses (Mal 4:4): Remember the law of Moses my servant, and observe to do according to it, even that law which I commanded unto him in Horeb, that fiery law which was intended for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments, not only the law of the ten commandments, but all the other appointments, ceremonial and judicial, then and there given. Observe here,

1 The honourable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer of the Old Testament, in Malachi, the last writer. God by him calls him Moses my servant; for the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. See how the penmen of scripture, though they lived in several ages at a great distance from each other (it was above 1200 years from Moses to Malachi), all concurred in the same thing, and supported one another, being all actuated and guided by one and the same Spirit.

2 The honourable mention that is made of the law of Moses; it was what God himself commanded; he owns it for his law, and he commanded it for all Israel, as the municipal law of their kingdom. Thus will God magnify his law and make it honourable. Note, We are concerned to keep the law because God has commanded it and commanded it for us, for we are the spiritual Israel; and, if we expect the benefit of the covenant with Israel (Heb 8:10), we must observe the commands given to Israel, those of them that were intended to be of perpetual obligation.

3. The summary of our duty, with reference to the law. We must remember it. Forgetfulness of the law is at the bottom of all our transgressions of it; if we would rightly remember it, we could not but conform to it. We should remember it when we have occasion to use it, remember both the commands themselves and the sanctions wherewith they are enforced. The office of conscience is to bid us remember the law. But how does this charge to remember the law of Moses come in here?

(1.) This prophet had reproved them for many gross corruptions and irregularities both in worship and conversation, and now, for the reforming and amending of what was amiss, he only charges them to remember the law of Moses: "Keep to that rule, and you will do all you should do." He will lay upon them no other burden than what they have received; hold that fast, Re 2:24,25. Note, Corrupt churches are to be reformed by the written word, and reduced into order by being reduced to the standard of the law and the testimony, see 1Co 11:23.

(2.) The church had long enjoyed the benefit of prophets, extraordinary messengers from God, and now they had a whole book of their prophecies put together, and it was a finished piece; but they must not think that hereby the law of Moses was superseded, and had become as an almanac out of date, as if now they were advanced to a higher form and might forget that.

No; the prophets do but confirm and apply the law, and press the observance of that; and therefore still Remember the law. Note, Even when we have made considerable advances in knowledge we must still retain the first principles of practical religion and resolve to abide by them. Those that study the writings of the prophets, and the apocalypse, must still remember the law of Moses and the four gospels.

(3.) Prophecy was now to cease in the church for some ages, and the Spirit of prophecy not to return till the beginning of the gospel, and now they are told to remember the law of Moses; let them live by the rules of that, and live upon the promises of that. Note, We need not complain for want of visions and revelations as long as we have the written word, and the canon of scripture complete, to be our guide; for that is the most sure word of prophecy, and the touchstone by which we are to try the spirits.

Though we have not prophets, yet, as long as we have Bibles, we may keep our communion with God, and keep ourselves in his way.

(4.) They were to expect the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom, and in that

expectation they must remember the law of Moses, and live in obedience to that, and then they might expect the comforts that the Messiah would bring to the willing and obedient. Let them observe the law of Moses, and live up to the light which that gave them, and then they might expect the benefit of the gospel of Christ, for to him that has, and uses what he has well, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

6 and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

They must keep up a believing expectation of the gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it in the appearing of Elijah the prophet (Mal 4:5,6): "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet. Though the Spirit of prophecy cease for a time, and you will have only the law to consult, yet it shall revive again in one that shall be sent in the spirit and power of Elias," Lu 1:17. The law and the prophets were until John (Lu 16:16); they continued to be the only lights of the church till that morning-star appeared.

Note, As God never left himself without witness in the world, so neither in the church, but, as there was occasion, carried the light of divine revelation further and further to the perfect day. They had now Moses and the prophets, and might hear them; but God will go further: he will send them Elijah. Observe,

1. Who this prophet is that shall be sent; it is Elijah. The Jewish doctors will have it to be the same Elijah that prophesied in Israel in the days of Ahab--that he shall come again to be the forerunner of the Messiah; yet others of them say not the same person, but another of the same spirit. It should seem, those different sentiments they had when they asked John, "Art thou Elias, or that prophet that should bear his name?" Joh 1:19-21. But we Christians know very well that John Baptist was the Elias that was to come, Mt 17:10-13; and very expressly, Mt 11:14, This is Elias that was to come; and Mal 4:10, the same of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger, Mal 3:1.

Elijah was a man of great austerity and mortification, zealous for God, bold in reproving sin, and active to reduce an apostate people to God and their duty; John Baptist was animated by the same spirit and power, and preached repentance and reformation, as Elias had done; and all held him for a prophet, as they did Elijah in his day, and that his baptism was from heaven, and not of men. Note, When God has such work to do as was formerly to be done he can raise up such men to do it as he formerly raised up, and can put into a John Baptist the spirit of an Elias.

2. When he shall be sent--before the appearing of the Messiah, which, because it was the judgment of this world, and introduced the ruin of the Jewish church and nation, is here called the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. John Baptist gave them fair warning of this when he told them of the wrath to come (that wrath to the uttermost which was hastening upon them) and put them into a way of escape from it, and when he told them of the fan in Christ's hand, with which Christ would thoroughly purge his floor; see Mt 3:7,10,12.

That day of Christ, when he came first, was as that day will be when he comes again--though a great and joyful day to those that embrace him, yet a great and dreadful day to those that oppose him. John Baptist was sent before the coming of this day, to give people notice of it, that they might get ready for it, and go forth to meet it.

3. On what errand he shall be sent: He shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers; that is, "he shall be employed in this work; he shall attempt it; his doctrine and baptism shall have a direct tendency to it, and with many shall be successful: he shall be an instrument in God's hand of turning many to righteousness, to the Lord their God, and so making ready a people prepared for him," Lu 1:16,17.

Note, The turning of souls to God and their duty is the best preparation of them for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It is promised concerning John,

(1.) That he shall give a turn to things, shall make a bold stand against the strong torrent of sin and impiety which he found in full

force among the children of his people, and beating down all before it. This is called his coming to restore all things (Mt 17:11), to set them to rights, that they may again go in the right channel.

(2.) That he shall preach a doctrine that shall reach men's hearts, and have an influence upon them, and work a change in them. God's word, in his mouth, shall be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Many had their consciences awakened by his ministry who yet were not thoroughly wrought upon, such a spirit and power was there in it.

(3.) That he shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, and of the children with the fathers (for so some read it), to God and to their duty. He shall call upon young and old to repent, and shall not labour in vain, for many of the fathers that are going off, and many of the children that are growing up, shall be wrought upon by his ministry.

(4.) That thus he shall be an instrument to revive and confirm love and unity among relations, and shall bring them closer and bind them faster to each other, by bringing and binding them all to their God. He shall prepare the way for that kingdom of heaven which will make all its faithful subjects of one heart and one soul (Ac 4:32), which will be a kingdom of love, and will slay all enmities.

4. With what view he shall be sent on this errand: Lest I come and smite the earth, that is, the land of Israel, the body of the Jewish nation (that were of the earth earthy), with a curse. They by their impiety and impenitence in it had laid themselves open to the curse of God, which is a separation to all evil. God was ready to smite them with that curse, to bring utter ruin upon them, to strike home, to strike dead, with the curse; but he will yet once more try them, whether they will repent and return, and so prevent it; and therefore he sends John Baptist to preach repentance to them, that their conversion might prevent their confusion; so unwilling is God that any should perish, so willing to have his anger turned away.

Had they universally repented and reformed, their repentance would have had this desired effect; but, they generally rejecting the counsel of God in John's baptism, it proved against themselves

(Lu 7:30) and their land was smitten with the curse which both it and they lie under to this day. Note, Those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who turn not to him that smites them with a rod, with a cross, Isa 9:13.

Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, says John Baptist, and it is ready to be smitten, to be cut down, with a curse; therefore bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Some observe that the last word of the Old Testament is a curse, which threatens the earth (Zec 5:3), our desert of which we must be made sensible of, that we may bid Christ welcome, who comes with a blessing; and it is with a blessing, with the choicest of blessings, that the New Testament ends, and with it let us arm ourselves, or rather let God arm us, against this curse. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel According To St. Matthew

[Mat thew]

Matthew-1

The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of
Abraham.
2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat
Judah and his brethren;
3 and Judah begat Pharez and Zerah of Tamar; and Pharez begat
Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram;
4 and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and
Nahshon begat Salmon;
5 and Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth;
and Obed begat Jesse;
6 and Jesse begat David the king.
And David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of
Uriah;
7 and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and
Abijah begat Asa;
8 and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram; and
Jehoram begat Uzziah;
9 and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat
Hezekiah;
10 and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and
Amon begat Josiah;
11 and Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren, about the time they were carried
away to Babylon.
12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begat Shealtiel;
and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel;
13 and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and
Eliakim begat Azor;
14 and Azor begat Zadok; and Zadok begat Achim; and Achim begat
Eliud;

15 and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
16 and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.
17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

1st division. 2nd division. 3rd divis. Abraham, David, Josias, Isaac, Solomon, Jechonias Jacob, Roboam, Salathiel, Judas, Abia, Zorobabel, Phares, Asa, Abiud, Esrom, Josaphat, Eliakim, Aram, Joram, Azor, Aminadab, Ozias, Sadoc, Naasson, Joatham, Achim, Salmon, Achaz Eliud, Booz, Ezekias, Eleazar, Obed, Manasses, Matthan, Jesse, Amon, Jacob, David. Josias. Joseph. --14 --14 --14.

All the generations, etc. This division of the names in their genealogy was doubtless adopted for the purpose of aiding the memory. It was common among the Jews; and other similar instances are preserved. They were destitute of other books beside the Old Testament, and had but few copies of that among them, and those chiefly in their synagogues. They would, therefore, naturally devise plans to keep up the remembrance of the principal facts in their history. One method of doing this was to divide the tables of genealogy into portions of equal length, to be committed to memory. This greatly facilitated the remembrance of the names. A man who wished to commit to memory the names of a regiment of soldiers, would naturally divide it into companies and platoons, and this would greatly facilitate his work. This was doubtless the reason in the case before us. And though it is not strictly accurate, yet it was the Jewish way of keeping their records, and answered their purpose. There were three leading persons and events that nearly, or quite, divided their history into equal portions--Abraham, David, and the Babylonish captivity. From one to the other was about fourteen generations, and, by omitting a few names, it was sufficiently accurate to be made a general guide or directory in remembering their history.

In counting these divisions, however, it will be seen that there is some difficulty in making out the number fourteen in each division. This may be explained in the following manner. In the first division, Abraham is the first, and David the last, making together fourteen In the second series, David would naturally be placed first, and the fourteen was completed in Josiah, about the time of the captivity, as sufficiently near for the purpose of convenient computation, 2 Chron xxxv. In the third division, Josiah would naturally be placed first, and the number was completed in Joseph. So that David and Josiah would be reckoned twice. This may be shown by the following table of the names:

Carrying away into Babylon. This refers to the captivity of Jerusalem, and the removal of the Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, 588 years before Christ. See 2 Chron xxxvi. Josiah was king when these calamities began to come upon the Jews; but the exact time of the seventy years of captivity did not commence until the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign, or 32 years after the death of Josiah. Babylon was situated on the, Euphrates, and was encompassed with walls which were about 60 miles in circuit, 87 feet broad, and 350 feet high; and the city was entered by a hundred brazen gates, 25 on each side. It was the capital of a vast empire, and the Jews remained there for seventy years. Is 13:1 and following.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Betrothed, or engaged to be married. There was commonly an interval of ten or twelve months, among the Jews, between the contract of marriage and the celebration of the nuptials, see Gen

24:55; Jud 14:8, yet such was the nature of this engagement, that unfaithfulness to each other was deemed adultery. See De 22:25,28.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

Her husband. The word in the original does not imply that they were married. It means here the man to whom she was espoused.

A just man. Justice consists in rendering to every man his own. Yet this is evidently not the character intended to be given here of Joseph. It means that he was kind, tender, merciful; so attached to Mary, that he was not willing that she should be exposed to public shame. He sought, therefore, secretly to dissolve the connexion, and to restore her to her friends without the punishment commonly inflicted on adultery. The word just has not unfrequently this meaning of mildness, or mercy. See 1Jn 1:9.

A public example. To expose her to public shame or infamy. Adultery has always been considered a crime of a very heinous nature. In Egypt it was punished by cutting off the nose of the adulteress; in Persia the nose and ears were cut off; in Judea the punishment was death by stoning, Lev 20:10, Eze 16:38, 40, Jn 8:5. This punishment was also inflicted where the person was not married, but betrothed, De 22:23, 24. In this case, therefore, the regular punishment would have been death in this painful and ignominious manner. Yet Joseph was a religious man, mild and tender; and he was not willing to complain of her to the magistrate, and expose her to death, but sought to avoid the shame, and to put her away privately.

Put her away privily. The law of Moses gave the husband the power of divorce, De 24:1. It was customary, in a bill of divorce, to specify the causes for which the divorce was made, and witnesses were also present to testify to the divorce. But in this case, it seems, Joseph resolved to put her away without specifying the cause: for he was not willing to make her a public example. This is the meaning here of privately. Both to Joseph and Mary this must have been a great trial. Joseph was ardently attached to her, but her character was

likely to be ruined, and he deemed it proper to separate her from him. Mary was innocent, but Joseph was not yet satisfied of her innocence. Yet we may learn how to put our trust in God. He will defend the innocent. Mary was in danger of being exposed to shame. Had she been connected with a cruel, passionate, and violent man, she would have died in disgrace. But God had so ordered it, that she was connected with a man mild, amiable, and tender; and, in due time, Joseph was apprized of the truth in the case, and took his faithful and beloved wife to his bosom. Thus our only aim should be to preserve a conscience void of offence, and God will guard our reputation. We may be assailed, or circumstances may be against us; but in due time God will take care to vindicate our character, and save us from ruin.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

He thought on these things. He did not act hastily. He did not take the course which the law would have permitted him to do, if he had been hasty, violent, or unjust. It was a case deeply affecting his happiness, his character, and the reputation and character of his chosen companion. God will guide the thoughtful and the anxious. And when we have looked patiently at a perplexed subject, and know not what to do, then God, as in the case of Joseph, will interpose to lead us, and direct our way,

The angel of the Lord. The word angel literally means a messenger. It is applied chiefly in the Scriptures to those invisible holy beings who have not fallen into sin; who live in heaven, (1Timm 5:21, comp. Jude 1:6) and who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, Heb 1:13, 14, Dan 9:21. The word is sometimes applied to men, as messengers, (Lk 7:24, 9:52, Jas 2:25) to the winds, (Ps 104:4); to the pestilence, (Ps 78:49); or to whatever is appointed to make known, or to execute the will of God. It is commonly applied, however, to the unfallen, happy spirits that are in heaven, whose only dignity and pleasure it is to do the will of

God. Various ways were employed by them in making known the will of God, by dreams, visions, assuming a human appearance, etc.

In a dream. This was a common way of making known the will of God to the ancient prophets and people of God, Gen 20:3, 31:10,11,24, 37:5; Gen 41:1, 1Kgs 3:5, Dan 7:1, Job 4:13-16. In what way it was ascertained that these dreams were from God, cannot now be told. It is sufficient for us to know that in this way many of the prophecies were communicated; and to remark, that now there is no evidence that we are to put reliance on our dreams. Dreams are wild, irregular movements of the mind, when it is unshackled by reason, and it is mere superstition to suppose that God now makes known his will in this way.

Fear not. Do not hesitate, or have fears about her virtue and purity. Do not fear that she will be unworthy of you, or will disgrace you.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus:
for he shall save his people from their sins.

His name JESUS. The name Jesus is the same as Saviour. It is derived from the verb signifying to save. In Hebrew it is the same as Joshua. In two places in the New Testament it is used where it means Joshua, the leader of the News into Canaan, and in our translation the name Joshua should have been retained, Acts 7:45, Heb 4:8. It was a very common name among the Jews.

He shall save. This expresses the same as the name, and on this account the name was given to him. He saves men by having died to redeem them; by giving the Spirit to renew them, (Jn 16:7, 8) by his power in enabling them to overcome their spiritual enemies, in defending them from danger, in guiding them in the path of duty, in sustaining them in trials and in death; and he will raise them up at the last day, and exalt them to a world of purity and love.

His people. Those whom the Father has given to him. The Jews were called the people of God, because he had chosen them to himself, and regarded them as his peculiar and beloved people, separate from all the nations of the earth. Christians are called the people of Christ,

because it was the purpose of the Father to give them to him, (Is 53:11, Jn 6:37) and because in due time he came to redeem them to himself, Tit 2:14, 1Pet 1:2.

From their sins. This is the great business of Jesus in coming and dying. It is not to save men IN their sins, but FROM their sins. Sinners could not be happy in heaven. It would be a place of wretchedness to the guilty. The design of Jesus was, therefore, to save from sin;

1. by dying to make an atonement, (Tit 2:14); and,

2. by renewing the heart, and purifying the soul, and preparing his people for a pure and holy heaven. And from this we may learn,

(1.) that Jesus had a design in coming into the world--he came to save his people--and that design will surely be accomplished. It is impossible that in any part of it he should fail.

(2.) We have no evidence that we are his people, unless we are saved from the power and dominion of sin. A mere profession of being his people will not answer. Unless we give up our sins; unless we renounce the pride, pomp, and pleasure of the world, and all our lusts and crimes, we have no evidence that we are the children of God. It is impossible that we should be Christians if we indulge in sin, and live in the practice of any known iniquity.

(3.) That all professing Christians should feel that there is no salvation unless it is from sin, and that they can never be admitted to a holy heaven hereafter, unless they are made pure, by the blood of Jesus, here.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the
Lord by the prophet, saying,
23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God
with us.

The prophecy here quoted is recorded in Isa 7:14. It was delivered about 740 years before Christ, in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. The land of Judea was threatened with an invasion by the united armies of Syria and Israel, under the command of Rezin and Pekah. Ahaz was alarmed, and seems to have contemplated calling in aid from Assyria to defend him. Isaiah was directed in his consternation to go to Ahaz, and tell him to ask a sign from God, (Is 7:10, 11); that is, to look to God rather than to Assyria for aid. This he refused to do. He had not confidence in God; but feared that the land would be overrun by the armies of Syria, (Isa 7:12) and relied only on the aid which he hoped to receive from Assyria. Isaiah answered that, in these circumstances, the Lord would himself give a sign, or a pledge, that the land should be delivered. The sign was, that a virgin should have a son, and before that son would arrive to years of discretion, the land would be forsaken by these hostile kings. The prophecy was, therefore, designed originally to denote to Ahaz that the land would certainly be delivered from its calamities and dangers, and that the deliverance would not be long delayed. The united land of Syria and Israel, united now in confederation, would be deprived of both their kings, and thus the land of Judah be freed from the threatening dangers. This appears to be the literal fulfillment of the passage in Isaiah.

Might be fulfilled. It is more difficult to know in what sense this could be said to be fulfilled in the birth of Christ. To understand this, it may be remarked that the word fulfilled is used in the Scriptures, and in other writings, in many senses, of which the following are some:

1st. When a thing is clearly predicted, and comes to pass: as the destruction of Babylon, foretold in Isa 13:19-22; and of Jerusalem, in Matthew 24.

2nd. When one thing is testified or shadowed forth by another, the type is said to be fulfilled. This was the case in regard to the types and sacrifices in the Old Testament, which were fulfilled by the coming of Christ. See Hebrews 9.

3rd. When prophecies of future events are expressed in language more elevated and full than the particular thing, at first denoted, demands. Or, when the language, though it may express one event, is also so full and rich as appropriately to express other events in similar circumstances, and of similar import. Thus, e.g., the last chapters of Isaiah, from the fortieth chapter, foretell the return of the Jews from Babylon; and every circumstance mentioned occurred in their return. But the language is more expanded and sublime than was necessary to express their return. It will also express appropriately a much more important and magnificent deliverance--that of the redeemed under the Messiah, and the return of the people of God to him, and the universal spread of the gospel; and therefore it may be said to be fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, and the spread of the gospel. So, if there were any other magnificent and glorious events, still, in similar circumstances, and of like character, it might be said also that these prophecies were fulfilled in all of them. The language is so full and rich, and the promises so grand, that they appropriately express all these deliverances. This may be the sense in which the prophecy now under consideration may be said to have been fulfilled.

4th. Language is said to be fulfilled when though it was used to express one event, yet it may be used also to express another. Thus a fable may be said to be fulfilled when an event occurs similar to the one concerning which it was first spoken. A parable has its fulfillment in all the cases to which it is applicable; and so of a proverb, or a declaration respecting human nature. The declaration "there is none that doeth good," (Ps 14:3,) was at first spoken of a particular race of wicked men. Yet it is applicable to others, and in this sense may be said to have been fulfilled. See Rom 3:10. In this use of the word fulfilled, it means not that the passage was at first intended to apply to this particular thing, but that the words aptly or appropriately express the thing spoken of, and may be applied to it. We may say of this as was said of another thing, and thus the words express both, or are fulfilled. The writers of the New Testament seem occasionally to have used the word in this sense.

A virgin shall be with child. Matthew clearly understands this as applying literally to a virgin. Comp. Lk 1:34. It thus implies that the conception of Christ was entirely miraculous, or that the body of the Messiah was created directly by the power of God, agreeably to the declaration in Heb 10: 5, "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me."

Immanuel. This is a Hebrew word, and means, literally, God with us. Matthew doubtless understands this word as denoting that the Messiah was really "God with us," or that the Divine nature was united to the human. He does not affirm that this was its meaning when used in reference to the child to whom it was first applied; but this was its meaning as applicable to the Messiah. It was fitly expressive of his character; and in this sense it was fulfilled. When first used by Isaiah, it denoted simply that the birth--of the child was a sign that God was with the Jews, to deliver them. The Hebrews often used the name of Jehovah, or God, in their proper names. Thus, Isaiah means "the salvation of Jehovah "Eleazer, "help of God;" Eli, "my God," etc. But Matthew evidently intends more than was denoted by the simple use of such names. He had just given an account of his miraculous conception; of his being begotten by the Holy Ghost. God was therefore his Father. He was Divine as well as human. His appropriate name was "God with us." And though the mere use of such a name would not prove that he had a Divine nature, yet, as Matthew uses it, and meant evidently to apply it, it does prove that Jesus was more than a man; that he was God as well as man. And it is this which gives glory to the plan of redemption. It is this which is the wonder of angels. It is this which makes the plan so vast, so grand, so full of instruction and comfort to Christians. See Php 2:6-8. It is this which sheds such peace and joy into the sinner's heart; which gives him such security of salvation; and renders the condescension of God in redemption so great, and his character so lovely.

"Till God in human flesh I see,

My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three,
Are terror to my mind.

"But if IMMANUEL'S face appears,
My hope, my joy, begins;
His grace removes my slavish fears,
His blood removes my sins."

For a full examination of the passage, see Barnes "Is 7:14".

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
25 and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

Matthew-2

The Visit of the Wise Men

1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

When Jesus was born. See the full account of his birth in Lk 2:1-20.

In Bethlehem of Judaea. Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ, was a small town about six miles south of Jerusalem. The word Bethlehem denotes "house of bread"---perhaps given to the place on account of its great fertility. It was also called Ephratah, a word supposed likewise to signify fertility, Gen 35:19, Ruth 4:11, Ps 132:6. It was called the city of David, (Lk 2:4) because it was the city of his nativity, 1Sam 16:1,18. It was called Bethlehem of Judea, to distinguish it from a town of the same name in Galilee, Josh 19:15. The soil of Bethlehem was noted for its fertility.

Ancient travellers frequently spoke of its productions. The town is situated on an eminence, in the midst of hills and vales. At present it contains about 200 houses, inhabited chiefly by Christians and Mohammedans, who live together in peace. About 200 paces east of Bethlehem, the place is still shown where our Saviour is supposed to have been born. There is a church and a convent there; and beneath the church a subterranean chapel, which is lighted by thirty-two lamps, which is said to be the place where was the stable in which Jesus was born. No reliance is, however, to be placed on this tradition.

Herod the king. Judea, where our Saviour was born, was a province of the Roman empire. It was taken about sixty-three years before, by Pompey, and placed under tribute. Herod received his appointment from the Romans, and had reigned, at the time, of the birth of Jesus thirty-four years. Though he was permitted to be called king, yet he was in all respects dependent on the Roman emperor. He was commonly called Herod the Great, because he had distinguished himself in the wars with Antigonus, and his other enemies, and because he had evinced great talents, as well as great cruelties and crimes, in governing and defending his country; in repairing the temple; and in building and ornamenting the cities of his kingdom. At this time Augustus was emperor of Rome. The world was at peace. All the known nations of the earth were united under the Roman emperor. Intercourse between different nations was easy and safe. Similar laws prevailed. The use of the Greek language was general throughout the world. All these circumstances combined to render this a favourable time to introduce the gospel, and to spread it through the earth; and the Providence of God was remarkable in fitting the nations in this manner for the easy and rapid spread of the Christian religion among all nations.

Wise men. The original word here is magoi from which comes our word magician, now used in a bad sense, but not so in the original. The persons here denoted were philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They dwelt chiefly in Persia and Arabia. They were

the learned men of the eastern nations, devoted to astronomy, to religion, and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counsellors, and followed the camps in war, to give advice.

From the east. It is unknown whether they came from Persia or Arabia. Both countries might be denoted by the word east--that is, east from Judea.

Jerusalem. The capital of Judea. As there is frequent reference in the New Testament to Jerusalem; as it was the place of the public worship of God; as it was the place where many important transactions in the life of the Saviour occurred, and the place where he died; and as no Sabbath-school teacher can intelligently explain the New Testament without some knowledge of that city, it seems desirable to present a brief description of it. A more full description may be seen in Calmet's Dictionary, and in the common works or Jewish Antiquities. Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, and was built on the line dividing this tribe from the tribe of Benjamin. It was once called Salem, (Gen 14:18, Ps 76:2) and, in the days of Abraham, was the abode of Melchizedek. When the Israelites took possession of the promised land, they found this stronghold in the possession of the Jebusites, by whom it was called Jehus or Jebusi, Josh 18:28. The name Jerusalem was compounded probably of the two, by changing a single letter, and calling it, for the sake of the sound, Jerusalem instead of Jebusalem. The ancient Salem was probably built on Mount Moriah or Acra--the eastern and western mountains on which Jerusalem was subsequently built. When the Jebusites became masters of the place, they erected a fortress in the southern quarter of the city, which was subsequently called Mount Zion, but which they called Jebus; and although the Israelites took possession of the adjacent territory, (Josh 18:28) the Jebusites still held this fortress or upper town until the time of David, who wrested it from them, (2Sam 5:7-9,) and then removed his court from Hebron to Jerusalem, which was thenceforward known as the city of David, 2Sam 6:12; 1Kgs 8:1. Jerusalem was built on several hills--Mount Zion on the south, Mount Moriah on

the east--on which the temple was subsequently built, (Mt 21:12) Mount Acra on the west, and Mount Betheza on the north. Mount Moriah and Mount Zion were separated by a valley called, by Josephus, the Valley of Cheesemongers, over which there was a bridge, or raised way, leading from the one to the other. On the south-east of Mount Moriah and between that and Mount Zion, there was a bluff or high rock, capable of strong fortification, called Ophel. The city was encompassed by hills. On the west there were hills which overlooked the city; on the south was the valley of Jehoshaphat, or the valley of Hinnom, (Mt 5:22) separating it from what is called the Mount of Corruption; on the east was the valley or the brook Kedron, dividing the city from the Mount of Olives; and on the north the country was more level--though it was a broken or rolling country. To the south-east, the valleys of the Kedron and Jehoshaphat united, and the waters flowed through the broken mountains in a south-east direction to the Dead Sea, some fifteen miles distant. The city of Jerusalem stands in 30 50' north latitude, and 35 20' east longitude from Greenwich. It is thirty-four miles south-easterly from Jaffa, the ancient Joppa, (which is its seaport,) and one hundred and twenty miles south-westerly from Damascus. The best view of the city of Jerusalem is from Mount Olivet on the east, (Mt 24:3) the mountains on the east being somewhat higher than those on the west. The city was anciently enclosed within walls, a part of which are still standing. The position of the walls has been at various times changed, as the city has been larger or smaller, or as it has extended in different directions. The wall on the south formerly included the whole of Mount Zion, though the modern wall runs over the summit, including about half of the mountain. In the time of the Saviour, the northern wall enclosed only Mounts Acra and Moriah north; though, after his death, Agrippa extended the wall so as to include Mount Bezetha on the north. About half of that is included in the present wall. The limits of the city on the east and the west, being more determined by the nature of the place, have been more fixed and permanent. The city was watered in part by the fountain of Siloam on the east, for a description of which Lk 13:4 Lk 13:4, Isa 7:3 and in part by the fountain of Gihon, on the west of the city, which flowed into the vale of Jehoshaphat; and in the time of

Solomon by an aqueduct, part of which is still remaining, by which water was brought from the vicinity of Bethlehem. The "pools of Solomon," three in number, one rising above another, and adapted to hold a large quantity of water, are still remaining in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The fountain of Siloam still flows freely, (Isa 7:3), though the fountain of Gihon is commonly dry. A reservoir or tank, however, remains at Gihon. Jerusalem had, perhaps, its highest splendour in the time of Solomon. About four hundred years after, it was wholly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. It lay utterly desolate during the seventy years of the Jewish captivity. Then it was rebuilt, and restored to some degree of its former magnificence, and remained about six hundred years, when it was utterly destroyed by Titus, A.D. 70. In the reign of Adrian, the city was partly rebuilt under the name of AElia. The monuments of pagan idolatry were erected in it; and it remained under pagan jurisdiction until Helena, the mother of Constantine, overthrew the memorials of idolatry, and erected a magnificent church over the spot which was supposed to be the place of the Redeemer's sufferings and burial. Julian, the apostate, attempting to destroy the credit of the prophecy of the Saviour that the temple should remain in ruins, (Matthew 25.) endeavoured to rebuild the temple.

His own historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, (see Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses,) says that the workmen were impeded by balls of fire coming from the earth, and that he was compelled to abandon the undertaking. Jerusalem continued in the power of the eastern emperors till the reign of the caliph Omar, the third in succession from Mohammed, who reduced it under his control about the year 640. The Saracens continued masters of Jerusalem until the year 1099, when it was taken by the crusaders under Godfrey of Bouillon. They founded a new kingdom, of which Jerusalem was the capital, which lasted eighty-eight years under nine kings. At last this kingdom was utterly ruined by Saladin; and though the Christians once more obtained possession of the city, yet they were obliged again to relinquish it. In 1217 the Saracens were expelled by the Turks, who have ever since continued in possession of it. Jerusalem has been taken and pilaged seventeen times, and millions of men have been slaughtered within its walls.

At present there is a splendid mosque--the mosque of Omar--on the site of the temple. It is a city containing a population variously estimated at from 15,000, to 50,000, (though probably not far from 20,000,) comprising Jews, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, and Papists: The Jews have a number of synagogues. The Catholics have a convent, and have the control of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Greeks have twelve convents; the Armenians have three convents on Mount Zion, and one in the city; the Copts, Syrians, and Abyssinians have each of them one convent. The streets are narrow, and the houses are of stone, most of them low and irregular, with flat roofs or terraces, and with small windows only towards the street, usually protected by iron grates. The above description has been obtained from a great variety of sources, and it would be useless to refer to the works where the facts have been obtained. As a reference to Jerusalem often occurs in the New Testament, and as it is very important to possess a correct view of the site of the ancient and modern city, a view is annexed to the second vol. It is by Catherwood, and is probably the most exact view of the city that has been published.

2 saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

Where is he, etc. There was, at this time, a prevalent expectation that some remarkable personage was about to appear in Judea. The Jews were anxiously looking for the coming of the Messiah. By computing the time mentioned by Daniel, (Dan 9:25-27,) they knew that the period was approaching when the Messiah should appear. This personage, they supposed, would be a temporal prince, and they were expecting that he would deliver them from Roman bondage. It was natural that this expectation should spread into other countries. Many Jews, at that time, dwelt in Eypt, in Rome, and in Greece; many, also, had gone to eastern countries, and in every place they carried their Scriptures, and diffused the expectation that some remarkable person was about to appear. Suetonius, a Roman historian, speaking of this rumour, says :--"An ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the East, that the Fates had decreed some one to proceed from Judea, who should attain universal empire." Tacitus, another Roman historian, says:--

"Many were persuaded that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests, that at that very time the East should prevail, and that some one should proceed from Judea and possess the dominion."

Josephus also, and Philo, two Jewish historians, make mention of the same expectation. The fact that such a person was expected is clearly attested. Under this expectation these wise men came to do him homage, and inquired anxiously where he was born?

His star. Among the ancients, the appearance of a star or comet was regarded as an omen of some remarkable event. Many such appearances are recorded by the Roman historians at the birth or death of distinguished men. Thus, they say, that at the death of Julius Caesar a comet appeared in the heavens, and shone seven days. These wise men also considered this as an evidence that the long-expected Prince was born. It is possible that they had been led to this belief by the prophecy of Balaam, Nu 24:17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob," etc. What this star was, is not known. There have been many conjectures respecting it, but nothing is revealed concerning it. We are not to suppose that it was what we commonly mean by a star. The stars are vast bodies fixed in the heavens, and it is absurd to suppose that one of them was sent to guide the wise men. It is most probable that it was a luminous appearance, or meteor, such as we now see sometimes shoot from the sky, or such as appear stationary, which the wise men saw, and which directed them to Jerusalem. It is possible that the same thing is meant which is mentioned by Lk 2:9--"The glory of the Lord shone round about them," i.e., (Lk 2:9 on this place) a great light appeared shining around them. That light might have been visible from afar, and have been seen by the wise men in the East.

In the East. This does not mean that they had seen the star to the east of themselves, but that, when they were in the East, they had seen this star. As this star was in the direction of Jerusalem, it must have been west of them. It might be translated, "We, being in the East, have seen his star." It is called his star, because they supposed it to be intended to indicate the time and place of his birth.

To worship him. This does not mean that they had come to pay him religious homage, or to adore him. They regarded him as the King of the Jews. There is no evidence that they supposed he would be Divine. They came to honour him as a prince, or a king, not as God. The original word implies no more than this. It meant to prostrate one's self before another; to fall down and pay homage to another. This was the mode in which homage was paid to earthly kings; and this they wished to pay to the new-born King of the Jews. See the same meaning of the word in Mt 20:20, 18:26, Acts 10:25, Lk 14:10. The English word worship also meant, formerly, "to respect, to honour, to treat with civil reverence." (Webster.)

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

He was troubled. Herod had obtained the kingdom by great crimes, and by shedding much blood. He was, therefore, easily alarmed by any remarkable appearances; and the fact that this star appeared, and that it was regarded as proof that the King of the Jews was born, alarmed him. Besides, it was a common expectation that the Messiah was about to appear, and he feared that his reign was about to come to an end. He, therefore, began to inquire in what way he might secure his own safety, and the permanency of his government.

All Jerusalem. The people of Jerusalem, and particularly the friends of Herod. There were many waiting for the consolation of Israel, to whom the coming of the Messiah would be a matter of joy; but all of Herod's friends would doubtless be alarmed at his coming.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

The Chief Priests. By the chief priests here are meant not only the high priest and his deputy, but also the heads or chiefs of the twenty-four classes into which David had divided the sacerdotal families, 1Chr 23:6, 24:1, 2Chr 8:14, 36:14; Ezr 8:24.

Scribes. By the scribes, in the New Testament, are meant learned men, men skilled in the law, and members of the great council. They were probably the learned men, or the lawyers of the nation. They kept the records of the court of justice, the registers of the synagogues, wrote their articles of contract and sale, their bills of divorce, &c. They were also called lawyers, Mt 22:35, and doctors of the law, Lk 5:17. They were called scribes from the fact of their writing the public records. They were not, however, a religious sect, but might be either Pharisees or Sadducees. By the chief priests and scribes here mentioned, is denoted the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. This was composed of seventy-two men, who had the charge of the civil and religious affairs of the Jews. On this occasion, Herod, in alarm, called them together, professedly to make inquiry respecting the birth of the Messiah.

Demanded of them. Inquired, or asked of them. As they were the learned men of the nation, and as it was their business to study and explain the Old Testament, they were presumed to know what the prophecies had declared on that point. His object was to ascertain from prophecy where he was born, that he might strike an effectual blow. He seems not to have had any doubt about the time when he should be born. He was satisfied that the time had come.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

By the prophet. The sanhedrim answered without hesitation. It was settled by prophecy. This prophecy is found in Mic 5:2. In that prophecy, both the place of his birth and the character of the Messiah are so clearly set forth, that there was no room to doubt. It will be observed that there is a considerable difference between the passage as quoted by the sanhedrim, and as it stands in Micah The main point, however, is retained--the place of his birth. We are not concerned, therefore, in showing how these passages can be

reconciled. Matthew is not responsible for the correctness of the quotation. He affirms only that they gave this answer to Herod, and that Herod was satisfied. Admitting that they did not quote the passage correctly, it does not prove that Matthew has not reported their answer as they gave it; and this is all that he pretends to give.

Art not the least. In Micah, "though thou be little." Though a small place so far as population is concerned, yet it shall not be small, or least, in honour; for the Messiah shall be born there. His birth gave the place an honour which could not be conferred on the larger cities by all their numbers, their splendour, and their wealth. The birth of a distinguished personage was always supposed to give honour and importance to a city or country. Thus seven cities contended for the honour of giving birth to Homer; Stratford-upon-Avon is distinguished as the birth-place of Shakespeare; and Corsica as the birth-place of Napoleon.

A Governor. A Ruler. This is one of the characters of the Messiah, who is the King of his people, Jn 18:37. The word rule here means to rule as a shepherd does his flock, in faithfulness and tenderness. Comp. Jn 10:11, Is 40:10,11, 9:6.

6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor,
that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

Diligently. Accurately; exactly. He took pains to learn the precise time that the star appeared. He did this because he naturally concluded that the star appeared just at the time of his birth, and he wished to know precisely how old the child was.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him,* bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

Go, and search diligently, etc. Herod took all possible means to obtain accurate information respecting the child, that he might be sure of destroying him. He not only ascertained the probable time of his birth, and the place where he would be born, but he sent the

wise men that they might actually see him, and bring him word. All this might have looked suspicious if he had not clothed it with the appearance of religion. He said to them, therefore, that he did it that he might go and worship him also. From this we may learn,

(1.) that wicked men often cloak their evil designs under the appearance of religion. They attempt to deceive those who are really good, and to make them suppose that they have the same design. But God cannot be deceived, and he will bring them to punishment.

(2.) Wicked men often make use of the pious to advance their evil purposes. Men like Herod will stop at nothing if they can carry their ends. They endeavour to deceive the simple, allure the unsuspecting, and to beguile the weak, to answer their purposes of wickedness.

(3.) The plans of wicked men are often well laid. They occupy a long time; they make diligent inquiry; and all of it has the appearance of religion. But God sees the design; and though men are deceived, yet God cannot be, Prov 15:3.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

The star--went before them. From this it appears that the star was a luminous meteor, perhaps at no great distance from the ground. It is not unlikely that they lost sight of the star after they had commenced their journey from the East. It is probable that it appeared to them first in the direction of Jerusalem. They concluded that the expected King had been born, and immediately commenced their journey to Jerusalem. When they arrived there, it was important that they should be directed to the very place where he was, and the star again appeared. It was for this reason that they rejoiced, They felt assured that they were under a heavenly guidance, and would be conducted to the new-born King of the Jews. And this shows,

(1.) that the birth of Jesus was an event of great moment, worthy of the Divine direction of these men to find the place of his nativity.

(2.) God will guide those who are disposed to find the Saviour. Even if for a time the light should be withdrawn, yet it will again appear, and direct us in the way to the Redeemer.

(3.) Direction to Christ should fill us with joy. He is the way, the truth, and the life; the Saviour, the Friend, the all in all; there is no other way of life, and there is no peace to the soul till he is found. When we are guided ta him, therefore, our hearts should overflow with joy and praise; and we should humbly and thankfully follow every direction that leads to the Son of God, Jn 12:35,36.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

They presented unto him gifts. These were presented to him as King of the Jews, because they supposed he was to be a distinguished prince and conqueror. It was customary at the birth of a prince to show respect for him by making him presents or offerings of this kind. This custom is still common in the East; and it is everywhere there unusual to approach a person of distinguished rank without a valuable present. See Gen 23:14, 43:11, 1Sam 10:27, 1Kgs 10:2, Ps 72:10-15.

Frankincense. This was a production of Arabia. It was a white resin or gum. It was obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark, and suffering the gum to flow out. It was highly odoriferous or fragrant when burned, and was, therefore, used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. See Ex 30:8, Lev 16:12. It is produced, also, in the East Indies, but chiefly in Arabia; and hence it has been supposed probable that the wise men came from Arabia.

Myrrh. This was also a production of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. The name denotes bitterness, and was given to it on account of its great bitterness. It was used chiefly in embalming the dead, because it had the property of preserving them from putrefaction. Comp. Jn 19:39. It was much used in Egypt and in Judea. It was obtained from a thorny tree, which grows eight or nine feet high. It was at an early period an article of commerce, (Ge 37:25) and was an ingredient of the holy ointment, Ex 30:23. It was also used as an agreeable perfume, Est 2:12, Ps 45:8, Prov 7:17. It was, also, sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Saviour, when about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion, Mk 15:23. Comp. Mt 27:34. These offerings were made because they were the most valuable which their country produced. They were tokens of respect and homage which they paid to the new-born King of the Jews. They evinced their high regard for him, and their belief that he was to be an illustrious prince; and the fact that their deed is recorded with approbation, shows us that we should offer our most valuable possessions, our all, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wise men came from far to do him homage, and bowed down and presented their best gifts and offerings. It is right that we give to him, also, our hearts, our property, our all.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Warned of God, etc. This was done, doubtless, because, if they had given Herod precise information where he was, it would have been easy for him to send forth and slay him. And from it we learn that God will watch over those whom he loves; that he knows how to foil the purposes of the wicked, and to deliver his own out of the hands of those who would destroy them.

The Slaying of the Infants

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

Flee into Egypt. Egypt is situated to the south-west of Judea, and is distant from Bethlehem perhaps about sixty miles. It was at this time a Roman province. The Greek language was spoken there. There were many Jews there, who had a temple and synagogues; and Joseph, therefore, would be among his own countrymen, and yet beyond the reach of Herod. The jurisdiction of Herod extended only to the river Sihon or river of Egypt, and of course, beyond that, Joseph was safe from his designs. For a description of Egypt, Isa 19:1. It is remarkable that this is the only time in which our Saviour was out of Palestine, and that this was in the land where the children of Israel had suffered so much and so long under the oppression of the Egyptian kings. The very land which was the land of bondage and groaning for the Jews, became now the land of refuge and safety for the new-born King of Judea. God can overturn nations and kingdoms, so that those whom he loves shall be safe anywhere.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

The death of Herod. Herod died in the thirty-seventh year of his reign. It is not certainly known in what year he began his reign, and hence it is impossible to determine the time that Joseph remained in Egypt. The best chronologers have supposed that he died somewhere between two and four years after the birth of Christ; but at what particular time cannot now be determined. Nor can it be determined at what age Jesus was taken into Egypt. It seems probable that he was supposed to be a year old, (Mt 2:16) and of course the time that he remained in Egypt was not long. Herod died of a most painful and loathsome disease in Jericho. Mt 2:16; also Josephus, Ant. xvii. 10.

That it might be fulfilled, etc. This language is recorded in Hos 11:1. It there evidently speaks of God's calling his people out of Egypt under Moses. See Ex 4:22,23. It might be said to be fulfilled in his calling Jesus from Egypt, because the words in Hosea aptly expressed this also. The same love which led him to deliver his

people Israel from the land of Egypt, now led him also to deliver his Son from that place. The words used by Hosea would express both events Mt 1:22. Perhaps, also, the place in Hosea became a proverb, to express any great deliverance from danger; and thus it could be said to be fulfilled in Christ, as other proverbs are in cases to which they are applicable. It cannot be supposed that the passage in Hosea was a prophecy of the Messiah, but was only used by Matthew appropriately to express the event.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Mocked of the wise men. When he saw that he had been deceived by them; that is, that they did not return as he had expected. It does not mean that they did it for the purpose of mocking or deriding him; but that he was disappointed in their not returning.

Exceeding wroth. Very angry. He had been disappointed and deceived. He expected to send an executioner and kill Jesus alone. But since he was disappointed in this, he thought he would accomplish the same thing, and be sure to destroy him, if he sent forth and put all the children in the place to death. This is an illustration of the power of anger. It stops at nothing. If it cannot accomplish just what it wishes, it does not hesitate to go much farther, and accomplish much more evil than it at first designed. He that has a wicked heart, and indulges in anger, knows not where it will end, and will commonly commit far more evil than he at first intended.

Slew all the children. That is, all the male children. This is implied in the original. The design of Herod was to cut off him that had been born King of the Jews. His purpose, therefore, did not require that he should slay all the female children; and though he was cruel, yet we have no right to think that he attempted here anything except what he thought to be for his own safety, and to secure himself from a rival.

In all the coasts thereof. The word coast is commonly applied now to the regions around the sea, as the sea coast. Here it means the adjacent places, the settlements or hamlets around Bethlehem--all that were in that neighbourhood. We do not know how large a place Bethlehem was; nor, of course, how many were slain. But it was not a large place, and the number could not be very great. It is not probable that it contained more than one or two thousand inhabitants; and in this case the number of children slain was not probably over twenty or thirty.

From two years old and under. Some writers have said that this does not mean, in the principal, that they had completed two years; but that they had entered in the second year, or had completed about one year, and entered on the second. But the meaning of the word is doubtful. It is quite probable that they would not be particular about the exact age, but slew all that were about that age.

According to the time, etc. He had endeavoured to ascertain of the wise men the exact time of his birth. He supposed he knew the age of Jesus. He slew, therefore, all that were of his age; that is, all that were born about the time when the star appeared, perhaps from six months old to two years. There is no reason to think that he would command those to be slain who had been born after the star appeared.

This destruction of the infants is not mentioned by Josephus, but for this omission three reasons may be given:

(1.) Josephus, a Jewish historian, and a Jew, would not be likely to record anything that would appear to confirm the truth of Christianity.

(2.) This act of Herod was really so small compared with his other crimes, that the historian might not think it worthy of record. Bethlehem was a small and obscure village, and the other crimes of Herod were so great and so public, that it is not to be wondered at that the Jewish historian has passed over this.

(3.) The order was probably given in secret, and might not have been known to Josephus. It pertained to the Christian history; and if the evangelists had not written, it might have been unknown or forgotten. Besides, no argument can be drawn from the silence of the Jewish historian. No reason can be given why Matthew should not be considered to be as fully entitled to credit as Josephus. Yet there is no improbability in the account given by Matthew. Herod was an odious and bloody tyrant, and the facts of his reign prove that he was abundantly capable or this wickedness. The following bloody deeds will show that the slaying of the infants was in perfect accordance with his character. The account is taken from Josephus, as arranged by Dr. Lardnet. Aristobulus, brother of his wife Marianne, was murdered by his direction at eighteen years of age, because the people of Jerusalem had shown some affection for his person. In the seventh year of his reign he put to death Hyreanus, grandfather of Mariamne, then eighty years of age, and who had formerly saved Herod's life; a man who had, ill every revolution of fortune, shown a mild and peaceable disposition. His beloved and beautiful wife, Mariamnne, had a public execution, and her mother Alexandra followed soon after. Alexander and Aristobulus, his two sons by Mariamne were strangled in prison by his orders upon groundless suspicions, as it seems, when they were at man's estate, were married, and had children. In his last sickness, a little before he died, he sent orders throughout Judea, requiring the presence of all the chief men of the nation at Jericho. His orders were obeyed, for they were enforced with no less penalty than that of death. When they were come to Jericho, he had them all shut up in the circus; and calling for his sister Salome, and her husband Alexis, he told them--" My life is now short. I know the Jewish people, and nothing will please them better than my death. You have them now in your custody. As soon as the breath is out of my body, and before my death can be known, do you let in the soldiers upon them, and kill them. All Judea, then, and every family, will, though unwillingly, mourn at my death." Nay, Josephus says, that with tears in his eyes he conjured them, by their love to him and their fidelity to God, not to fail of doing him this honour. What objection, after this account, can there be to the account of his murdering the

infants at Bethlehem? Surely there could be no cruelty, barbarity, and horrid crime, which such a man was not capable of perpetrating.

17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,
18 In Ramah was there a voice heard,
lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping *for* her children,
and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Jeremy. Jeremiah. This quotation is taken from Jer 31:15. The word "fulfilled," here, is taken evidently in the sense that the words in Jeremiah aptly express the event which Matthew was recording. The original design of this prophecy was to describe the sorrowful departure of the people into captivity, after the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan. The captives were assembled at Rama, Jeremiah himself being in chains, and there the fate of those who had escaped in the destruction of the city was decided at the will of the conqueror, Jer 40:1 The nobles had been slain, and the eyes of their king put out after the murder of his sons before his sight, and the people were then gathered at Rama in chains, whence they were to start on their mournful journey, slaves to a cruel monarch, leaving behind them all that was dear in life. The sadness of such a scene is well expressed in the language of the prophet, and no less beautifully and fitly applies to the melancholy event which the evangelist records; and there could be no impropriety in his using it as a quotation.

Rama was a small town in the tribe of Benjamin, not far from Bethlehem. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, and was buried near to Bethlehem, Gen 35:16-19. Rama was about six miles north-west of Jerusalem, near Bethel. The name Rama signifies an eminence, and was given to the town because it was situated on a hill. Rama is commonly supposed to be the same as the Arimathea of the New Testament--the place where Joseph lived who begged the body of Jesus. See Mt 27:57. This is also the same place in which Samuel was born, where he resided, died, and was buried, and where he anointed Saul as king, 1Sam 1:1,19, 2:11, 8:4, 19:18 1Sam 25:1. Mr. King, an American missionary, was at Rama --now

called Romba--in 1824; and Mr. Whiting, another American missionary, was there in 1835. He says,

"The situation is exceedingly beautiful. It is about two hours distant from Jerusalem to the north-west, on an eminence commanding a view of a wide extent of beautiful diversified country. Hills, plains, and valleys, highly cultivated fields of wheat and barley, vineyards and oliveyards, are spread out before you as on a map; and numerous villages are scattered here and there over the whole view. To the west and north-west, beyond the hill-country, appears the vast plain of Sharon, and farther still you look out upon the great and wide sea. It occurred to me as not improbable, that in the days of David and Solomon, this place may have been a favourite retreat during the heat of summer; and that here the former may have often struck his sacred lyre. Some of the psalms, or at least one of them, (see Ps 104:25) seem to have been composed in some place which commanded a view of the Mediterranean; and this is the only place, I believe, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, that affords such a view."

Rama was once a strongly fortified city, but there is no city here at present. A half-ruined Mohammedan mosque, which was originally a Christian church, stands over the tomb of the prophet; besides which, a few miserable dwellings are the only buildings that remain on this once celebrated spot.

There is a town about thirty miles north-west of Jerusalem, on the road to Joppa, now called Ramla, or Ramle, which is described by many geographers, and some of the best maps, as the Rama of Samuel, and the Arimathea of Joseph. It commands a view of the whole valley of Sharon, from the mountains of Jerusalem to the sea, and from the foot of Carmel to the hills of Gaza.--Un. Bib. Die.

By a beautiful figure of speech, the prophet introduces the mother weeping over the tribe, her children, and with them weeping over the fallen destiny of Israel, and over the calamities about to come upon the land. Few images could be more striking than thus to introduce a mother, long dead, whose sepulchre was near, weeping

bitterly over the terrible calamities that befell her descendants. The language and the image aptly and beautifully expressed the sorrows of the mothers in Bethlehem, when Herod slew their infant children. Under the cruelty of the tyrant, almost every family was a family of tears; and well might there be lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.

We may remark here, that the sacred writers were cautious of speaking of the characters of wicked men. Here was one of the worst men in the world, committing one of the most awful crimes, and yet there is not a single mark of exclamation; not a single reference to any other part of his conduct; nothing that could lead to the knowledge that his other conduct was not upright. There is no wanton and malignant dragging him into the narrative, that they might gratify malice, in making free with a very bad character. What was to their purpose, they record; what was not, they left to others. This is the nature of religion. It does not speak evil of others except when necessary, nor then does it take pleasure in it.

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

20 saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.

Herod was dead. Mt 2:15. Herod left three sons, and the kingdom was at his death divided between them. To Archelaus was given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; to Philip, Batanea, Trachonitis, etc.; to Antipas, Galllea and Perea. Each of these was also called Herod, and these are the individuals who are so frequently referred to in the New Testament during the ministry of the Saviour and the labours of the apostles. The following table will show at a glance the chief connexions of this family, as far as they are mentioned in the sacred history.

21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:

He heard that Archelaus did reign. Archelaus possessed a cruel and tyrannical disposition similar to his father. At one of the passovers he caused three thousand of the people to be put to death in the temple and city. For his crimes, after he had reigned nine years, he was banished by Augustus, the Roman emperor, to Gaul, where he died. Knowing his character, and fearing that he would not be safe there, Joseph hesitated about going there, and was directed by God to go to Galilee, a place of safety.

The parts of Galilee. The country of Galilee. At this time the land of Palestine was divided into three parts: GALILEE, on the north; SAMARIA, in the middle; and Judea, on the south. Galilee was under the government of Herod Antipas, who was comparatively a mild prince; and in his dominions Joseph might find safety.

23 and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Matthew-3

The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

In those days. The days here referred to cannot be those mentioned in the preceding chapter, for John was but six months older than Christ. Perhaps Matthew intended to extend his narrative to the whole time that Jesus dwelt at Nazareth; and the meaning is, "in those days while Jesus still dwelt at Nazareth." John began to preach. It is not probable that John began to baptize or preach long before the Saviour entered on his ministry; and, consequently, from the time that is mentioned at the close of the second chapter, to that mentioned in the beginning of the third, an interval of twenty-five or more years elapsed.

John the Baptist. Or, John the baptizer--so called from his principal office, that of baptizing. Baptism, or the application of water, was

a rite well known to the Jews, and practised when they admitted proselytes to their religion from heathenism.--Lightfoot.

Preaching. The word rendered to preach, means, to proclaim in the manner of a public crier; to make proclamation. The discourses recorded in the New Testament are mostly brief, sometimes a single sentence. They were public proclamations of some great truth. Such appear to have been the discourses of John, calling men to repentance.

In the wilderness of Judea. This country was situated along the Jordan, and the Dead Sea, to the east of Jerusalem. The word translated wilderness does not denote, as with us, a place of boundless forests, entirely destitute of inhabitants; but a mountainous, rough, and thinly-settled country, covered, to some considerable extent, with forests and rocks, and better fitted for pasture than for tilling. There were inhabitants in those places, and even villages, but they were the comparatively unsettled portions of the country, 1Sam 25:1,2. In the time of Joshua there were six cities in what was then called a wilderness, Josh 15:61,62.

Repent ye. Repentance implies sorrow for past offences, (2Cor 7:10) a deep sense of the evil of sin as committed against God, (Ps 51:4) and a full purpose to turn from transgression and to lead a holy life. A true penitent has sorrow for sin, not only because it is ruinous to his soul, but chiefly because it is an offence against God, and is that abominable thing which he hates, Jer 44:4. It is produced by seeing the great danger and misery to which it exposes us; by seeing the justness and holiness of God, (Job 42:6) and by seeing that our sins have been committed against Christ, and were the cause of his death, Zech 12:10, Lk 22:61, 62. There are two words in the New Testament translated repentance-- one of which denotes a change of mind, or a reformation of life; and the other, sorrow or regret that sin has been committed. The word used here is the former; calling the Jews to a change of life, or a reformation of conduct. In the time of John, the nation had become extremely wicked and corrupt, perhaps more so than at any preceding period,

Hence both he and Christ began their ministry by calling to repentance.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. The phrases, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of Christ, and kingdom of God, are o frequent occurrence in the Bible. They all refer to the same thing. The expectation of such a kingdom was taken from the Old Testament, and especially from Daniel, Dan 7:13,14. The prophets had told of a successor to David that should sit on his throne, 1Kgs 2:4, 8:25, Jer 33:17. The Jews expected a great national deliverer. They supposed that when the Messiah should appear, all the dead would be raised; that the judgment would take place; and that the enemies of the Jews would be destroyed, and themselves advanced to great national dignity and honour.

The language in which they were accustomed to describe this event was retained by our Saviour and his apostles. Yet they early attempted to correct the common notions respecting his reign. This was one design, doubtless, of John in preaching repentance. Instead of summoning them to military exercises, and collecting an army, which would have been in accordance with their expectations, he called them to a change of life; to the doctrine of repentance--a state of things far more accordant with the approach of a kingdom of purity.

The phrases, kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven, have been supposed to have a considerable variety of meaning. Some have thought that they refer to the state of things in heaven; others, to the personal reign of Christ on earth; others, that they mean the church, or the reign of Christ in the hearts of his people. There can be no doubt that there is reference in the words to the condition of things in heaven, after this life. But the church of God is a preparatory state to that beyond the grave; a state in which Christ pre-eminently rules and reigns; and there is no doubt that it sometimes refers to the state of things in the church; and it means, therefore, the state of things which the Messiah was to set up-- his spiritual reign began in the church on earth, and completed in heaven.

The phrase would be best translated, "the reign of God draws near." We do not say commonly of a kingdom that it is moveable, or that it approaches. A reign may be said to be at hand; or the time when Christ should reign was at hand. In this sense it is meant that the time when Christ should reign, or set up his kingdom, or begin his dominion on earth, under the Christian economy, was about to commence. The phrase, then, should not be confined to any period of that reign, but includes his whole dominion over his people on earth and in heaven.

In the passage here it clearly means that the coming of the Messiah was near; or that the time of the reign of God, which the Jews had expected, was coming.

The word heaven, or heavens, as it is in the original, means sometimes the place, so called; and sometimes is, by a figure of speech, put for the Great Being whose residence is there; as in Dan 4:26, "the heavens do rule." See also Mk 11:30, Lk 15:18. As that kingdom was one of purity, it was proper that the people should prepare themselves for it by turning from their sins, and directing their minds to a suitable fitness for his reign.

2 and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The prophet Esaias. The prophet Isaiah. Esias is the Greek mode of writing the name. This passage is taken from Isa 40:3. It is here said to have been spoken in reference to John, the forerunner of Christ. The language is such as was familiar to the Jews, and such as they would understand. It was spoken at first with reference to the return from the captivity at Babylon. Anciently, it was customary in the march of armies to send messengers, or pioneers, before them, to proclaim their approach; to provide for them; to remove obstructions; to make roads, level hills, fill up valleys, etc. Isaiah, describing the return from Babylon, uses language taken from that custom. A crier, or herald is introduced. In the vast deserts that lay

between Babylon and Judea, he is represented as lifting up his voice, and, with authority, commanding a public road to be made for the return of the captive Jews, with the Lord as their deliverer. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," says he; or, as Isaiah adds, Let the valleys be exalted, or filled up, and the hills be levelled, and a straight, level highway be prepared, that they may march with ease and safety. Isa 40:3.

As applied to John, it means, that he was sent to remove obstructions, and to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah; like a herald going before an army on the march, to make preparations for their coming.

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

His raiment of camel's hair. His clothing. This is not the fine hair of the camel from which our elegant cloth is made, called eamlet; nor the more elegant stuff, brought from the East Indies, under the name of camel's hair; but the long, shaggy hair of the camel, from which a coarse, cheap cloth is made, still worn by the poorer classes in the East, and by monks. This dress of the camel's hair, and a leathern girdle, it seems, was the common dress of the prophets, 2Kgs 1:8, Zech 13:4.

His meat was locusts. His food. These constituted the food of the common people. Among the Greeks, the vilest of the people used to eat them; and the fact that John made his food of them is significant of his great poverty and humble life. The Jews were allowed to eat them, Lev 11:22. Locusts are flying insects, and are of various kinds. The green locusts are about two inches in length, and about the thickness of a man's finger. The common brown locust is about three inches long. The general form and appearance of the locust is not unlike the grasshopper They were one of the plagues of Egypt, Ex 10:1. In eastern countries they are very numerous. They appear in such quantities as to darken the sky, and devour in a short time every green thing. The whole earth is sometimes covered with them for many leagues, Joel 1:4, Isa 33:4.

Wild honey. This was probably the honey that he found in the rocks of the wilderness. Palestine was often called the land flowing with milk and honey, Ex 3:8,17, 13:5. Bees were kept with great care and great numbers of them abounded in the fissures of trees and the clefts of rocks. There is also a species of honey called wild-honey, or wood-honey 1Sam 14:27, or honey-dew, produced by certain little insects, and deposited on the leaves of trees, and flowing from them in great quantities to the ground. See 1Sam 14:24-27. This is said to be produced still in Arabia; and perhaps it was this which John lived upon.

In the preaching of John the Baptist, we are presented with an example of a faithful minister of God. Neither the wealth, dignity, nor power of his auditors, deterred him from fearlessly declaring the truth respecting their character. He called things by their right names. He did not apologize for their sin. He set it fairly before them, and denounced the appropriate curse. So should all ministers of the gospel. Rank, riches, and power, should have nothing to do in shaping and gauging their ministry. In respectful terms, but without shrinking, all the truths of the gospel must be spoken, or woe will follow the ambassador of Christ.

In John we have also an example of humility. Blessed with great success; attended by the great and noble, and with nothing but principle to keep him from turning it to his advantage, he still kept himself out of view, and pointed to a far greater personage at hand, So should every minister of Jesus, however successful, keep the Lamb of God in his eye, and be willing--nay, rejoice--to lay all his success and honours at his feet.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,
6 and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.
7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

Pharisees and Sadducees. The Jews were divided into three great sects, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. In addition to

these, some smaller sects are mentioned in the New Testament, and by Josephus: the Herodians, probably political friends of Herod; the Galileans, a branch of the Pharisees; and the Therapeutae, a branch of the Essenes, but converts from the Greeks. The principal of these sects are supposed to have originated about 150 years before Christ, as they are mentioned by Josephus at about that time in his history. Of course nothing is said of them in the Old Testament, as that was finished about 400 years before the Christian era.

I The PHARISEES were the most numerous and wealthy sect of the Jews. They derived their name from the Hebrew word Pharash, which signifies to set apart, or to separate, because they separated themselves from the rest of their countrymen, and professedly devoted themselves to peculiar strictness in religion. Their leading tenets were the following:-- that the world was governed by fate, or by a fixed decree of God; that the souls of men were immortal, and were either eternally happy or miserable beyond the grave; that the dead would be raised; that there were angels, good and bad; that God was under obligation to bestow peculiar favour on the Jews; and that they were justified by the merits of Abraham, or by their own conformity to the law. They were proud, haughty, self-righteous, and held the common people in great disrespect, Jn 7:49. They sought the offices of the state, and affected great dignity. They were ostentatious in their religious worship, praying in the corners of the streets, and seeking publicity in the bestowment of alms. They sought principally external cleanliness; and dealt much in ceremonial ablutions and washing.

Some of the laws of Moses they maintained very strictly. In addition to the written laws, they held to a multitude which they maintained had come down from Moses by tradition. These they felt themselves as much bound to observe as the written law. Under the influence of these laws, they washed themselves before meals with great scrupulousness; they fasted twice a week--on Thursday, when they supposed Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and on Monday, when he descended; they wore broad phylacteries, and enlarged the fringe or borders of their garments; they loved the chief rooms at

feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues. They were in general a corrupt, hypocritical, office-seeking, haughty class of men. There are, however, some honourable exceptions recorded, Acts 5:34. Perhaps, also, Mk 15:43, Lk 2:25, 23:51, Jn 19:38.

II The SADDUCEES are supposed to have taken their name from Sadok, who flourished about 260 years before the Christian era. He was a pupil of Antigonus Sochaeus, president of the sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. He had taught the duty of serving God disinterestedly, without the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment Sadok, not properly understanding the doctrine of his master drew the inference that there was no future state of rewards or punishments and on this belief he founded the sect. The other notions which they held, all to be traced to this leading doctrine, were:--

1st. That there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, (Mt 22:23, Acts 23:8) and that the soul of man perishes with the body.

2nd. They rejected the doctrine of fate.

3rd. They rejected all traditions, and professed to receive only the books of the Old Testament.

They were far less numerous than the Pharisees, but their want of numbers was compensated, in some degree, by their wealth and standing in society. Though they did not generally seek office, yet several of them were advanced to the high-priesthood.

III. The ESSENES, a third sect of the Jews, are not mentioned in the New Testament. They differed from both the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were Jewish monks, or hermits, passing their time little in society, but mostly in places of obscurity and retirement. It is not probable, therefore, that our Saviour often, if ever, encountered them; and this, it is supposed, is the reason why they are not mentioned in the New Testament.

They were a contemplative sect, having little to do with the common business of life. The property which they possessed they held in common. They denied themselves generally of the usual comforts of life, and were exceedingly strict in the observance of the duties of religion. They were generally more pure than the rest of the Jews, and appear to have been an unambitious, a modest, and retiring sort of people. The two sexes were not in company, except on the Sabbath, when they partook of their coarse fare, bread and salt only, together. They practised dancing in their worship. Few of them were married; they were opposed to oaths; and asserted that slavery was repugnant to nature. In regard to doctrine, they did not differ materially from the Pharisees, except that they objected to the sacrifices of slain animals, and of course did not visit the temple, and were not, therefore, likely to come into public contact with the Saviour. They perpetuated their sect by proselytes, and by taking orphan children to train up.

The other sects of the Jews were too insignificant to demand any particular notice here. It may be said of the Jews generally, that they possessed little of the spirit of religion; that they had corrupted some of the most important doctrines of the Bible; and that they were an ignorant, proud, ambitious, and sensual people. There was great propriety, therefore, in John's proclaiming the necessity of repentance.

Generation of vipers. Vipers are a species of serpents. They are from two to five feet in length, and about an inch thick, with a flat head. They are of an ash or yellowish colour, speckled with long brown spots. There is no serpent that is more poisonous than their bite; and the person bitten swells up almost immediately, and falls down dead. See Acts 28:6. The word serpent, or viper, is used to denote both cunning and malignancy. In the phrase, be ye wise as serpents, it means, be prudent, or wise, referring to the account in Gen 3:1-6. Among the Jews the serpent was regarded as the symbol of cunning, circumspection, and prudence. He was so regarded in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the phrase "-generation of vipers," Mt 12:34, the viper is the symbol of wickedness, of envenomed

malice--a symbol drawn from the venom of the serpent. It is not quite certain in which of these senses the phrase is used in this place; probably to denote their malignancy and wickedness. See Mt 12:34, 23:33.

Wrath to come. John expresses his astonishment that sinners so hardened and so hypocritical as they were should have been induced to flee from coming wrath. The wrath to come means the Divine indignation, or the punishment that will come on the guilty. See 1Thes 1:10, 2:16.

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

meet for repentance—that is, such fruit as befits a true penitent. John now being gifted with a knowledge of the human heart, like a true minister of righteousness and lover of souls here directs them how to evidence and carry out their repentance, supposing it genuine; and in the following verses warns them of their danger in case it were not.

9 and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

And think not to say, etc. They regarded it, as sufficient righteousness that they were descended from so holy a man as Abraham. They deemed it as such an honour that it would go far to justify all his descendants, Jn 8:33-37, 53. John assured them that this was a matter of small consequence in the sight of God. Of the very stones of the Jordan he could raise up children to Abraham. The meaning seems to be this: God, from these stones, could more easily raise up those who should be worthy children of Abraham, or be like him, than simply because you are descendants of Abraham make you, who are proud and hypocritical, subjects of the Messiah's kingdom. Or, mere nativity, or the privileges of birth, avail nothing where there is not righteousness of life. Some have supposed, however, that by these stones he meant the Roman soldiers, or the heathen, who might also have attended on his ministry; and that God could of them raise up children to Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

The axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Laying the axe at the root of a tree is intended to denote that the tree is to be cut down. It was not merely to be trimmed, to be cut about the limbs, but the very tree itself was to be struck. That is, a searching, trying kind of preaching has been commenced. A kingdom of justice is to be set, up. Principles and conduct are to be investigated. No art, no dissimulations, are to be successful. Men are to be tried by their lives, not by birth, or profession. They who are not found to bear this test, are to be rejected. The very root shall feel the blow, and the fruitless tree shall fall. This is a beautiful and very striking figure of speech, and a very direct threatening of future wrath. John regarded them as making a fair and promising profession, as trees do in blossom. But he told them, also, that they should bear fruit as well as flowers. Their professions of repentance were not enough. They should show, by a holy life, that their profession was genuine.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:

Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. The word here translated shoes, has a signification different from what it has in our language. At first, in order to keep the feet from the sharp stones, or the burning sand, small pieces of wood were fastened to the soles of the feet, called sandals. Leather, or skins of beasts dressed, afterwards were used. The foot was not covered at all; but the sandal, or piece of leather or wood, was bound by thongs.

The wooden sandal is much worn in Arabia, Judea, and Egypt. It has a raised heel and toe, as represented in some of the preceding cuts; and, though often expensive and neat, it was usually a cheap, coarse, and very clumsy article.

The people put off these when they entered a house, and put them on when they left it. To loose and bind on sandals, on such occasions, was the business of the lowest servants; and their office was to loose and carry about their masters' sandals. The expression

here, then, was an expression of great humility; and John says that he was not worthy to be the servant of Him who should come after him.

Shall baptize you. Shall send upon you the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is frequently represented as being poured out upon his people, Provo 1:23, Is 44:3, Joel 2:28,29, Acts 2:17,18. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the same, therefore, as the sending of his influences to convert, purify, and guide the soul.

The Holy Ghost: The Third Person of the adorable Trinity, whose office it is to enlighten, renew, sanctify, and comfort the soul. He was promised by the Saviour to convince of sin, Jn 16:8. To enlighten or teach the disciples, Jn 14:26, 16:13. To comfort them in the absence of the Saviour, Jn 14:18, 16:7. To change the heart, Tit 3:5. To be baptized with the Holy Ghost means, that the Messiah would send upon the world a far more powerful and mighty influence than had attended the preaching of John. Many more would be converted. A mighty change would take place. His ministry would not affect the external life only, but the heart, the motives, the soul; and produce rapid and permanent changes in the lives of men. See Acts 2:17,18.

With fire. This expression has been very variously understood. Some have supposed that he refers to the afflictions and persecutions with which men would be tried under the gospel; others, that the word fire means judgment or wrath. A part of his hearers he would baptize with the Holy Ghost, but the wicked with fire and vengeance. Fire is a symbol of vengeance. See Is 5:24, 61:2, 66:24. If this be the meaning, as seems to be probable, then John says that the ministry of the Messiah would be far more powerful than his was. It would be more searching and trying; and they who were not fitted to abide the test, would be cast into eternal fire. Some have supposed, however, that by fire, here, he intends to denote that his ministry would be refining, powerful, purifying, as fire is sometimes an emblem of purity, Mal 3:2. It is difficult to ascertain the precise meaning, further than that his ministry would

be very trying, purifying, searching. Multitudes would be converted; and those who were not true penitents should not be able to abide the trial, and should be driven away.

12 whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

In these words the baptists compare Christ, the promised Messiah, to an husbandman, the Jewish church to a barnfloor. The office of the husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow his corn, separating it from the chaff: preserving the one and consuming the other. Learn hence,

1. That the church is Christ's floor.

2. That this floor Christ will purge and that thoroughly.

3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor.

The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church; in a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed.

Thus in the church there is and will be a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere Christians. But this floor Christ will purge; purge it, but not break it up: purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and its existence:

And the fan with which he will purge his floor is his word, accompanied with the wind of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wind dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both the floor is purged. His fan is in his hand, &c.

The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

Here we have our Savior's solemn inauguration and public entrance upon this prophetic office, by baptism, or washing with water, according to the manner of the priests under the ceremonial law, Exod 29:4.

Where we have observable,

1. The circumstance of time: Then cometh Jesus: that is, after he had lain hid in Nazareth thirty years he comes abroad, and enters upon his public ministry.
Teaching us by his example, That when we are ripe and fit for public service, we should no less willingly leave our obscurity, than we took the benefit of it for our preparation.

2. The action itself, Christ is baptized now, as he was circumcised before; not because there was any impurity in him, either filth, or foreskin, which wanted either the circumcising knife, or the baptismal water; yet purity itself condescends to be washed, Christ to be baptized; for these reasons:

A. That by this symbol he might enter himself into the society of Christians, as by circumcision he had done into the society of Jews; as a king condescends sometimes to be made a free man of a city or corporation.

B. That he might by his own baptism sanctify the ordinance of baptism unto his church.

C. That thereby he might fulfil the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which required the washing of the priests in water, when they entered upon their office as appears from Exod 29:4.

3. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John; Christ cometh to John, not John to Christ.

Behold! the Lord seeketh to his servant, Christ will be baptized of his messenger! Our Savior's design hereby no doubt was, to put honour upon the ministry of John.

Oh! how dare the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man being appointed by God, which Christ honoured in his own person, and graced with his own presence!

14 But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

1. The modesty of John's refusal: John forbade him, and refused to admit him. But why?

A. In regard of Christ, because he knew he needed it not: such was his majesty and greatness, that he was above it: and such was his purity and holiness, that he could not want it.

B. In respect of himself, he knew his own uncleanness: I have need to be baptized of thee, &c. He thought it unsuitable that a sinner should baptize and wash him that was no sinner.

C. With respect to the people; lest they seeing Christ baptized should apprehend him to be a sinner, and one that wanted the baptism of repentance as well as themselves.

D. As the modesty of John's refusal, so the reason he assigns for it: I have need to be baptized of thee; as if he had said, "Thou art purity, I am pollution; thou art spirit, I am flesh; humble apprehension has this holy man of himself.
Learn, That the more holy a person is, the more sensible he is of his unholiness; where there is most grace, there is the greatest sense of the want of grace.

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

All righteousness. There was no particular precept in the Old Testament requiring this, but he chose to give the sanction of his example to the baptism of John, as to a Divine ordinance. The

phrase "all righteousness," here, is the same as a righteous institution or appointment. Jesus had no sin. But he was about to enter on his great work. It was proper that he should be set apart by his forerunner, and show his connection with him, and give his approbation to what John had done. Also, he was baptized that occasion might be taken, at the commencement of his work, for God publicly to declare his approbation of him, and his solemn appointment to the office of Messiah.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

Here we have the solemn inauguration of Christ into his prophetic office, accompanied with a threefold miracle.

1. The opening of the heavens.

2. The descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, like as a dove descends.

3. God the Father's voice concerning his son.

The heavens were opened to shew that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our sins, is now opened to us, by Christ's undertaking for us. As the first Adam shuts us out of heaven, the second Adam lets us into it; he opened heaven, to us by his meritorious passion, and he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession.

Next, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Savior: here we have an evidence of the blessed Trinity; the Father speaks from Heaven, the Son comes out of the water,
Hence we gather, That the Holy Ghost is not a quality, or an operation, but a person, and a person really distinct from the Father and the Son.

The Spirit of God. See Mt 3:11. This was the Third Person of the Trinity, descending upon him in the form of a dove, Lk 3:22. The dove, among the Jews, was the symbol of purity or harmlessness,

(Mt 10:16) and of softness, (Ps 55:7.) The form chosen here was doubtless an emblem of the innocence, meekness, and tenderness of the Saviour. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in this manner, was the public approbation of Jesus, (Jn 1:33,) and a sign of his being set apart to the office of the Messiah. We are not to suppose that there was any change wrought in the moral character of Jesus, but only that he was publicly set apart to his work, and solemnly approved by God in the office to which he was appointed.

17 and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Last of all, We have the audible voice of God the Father pronouncing,

1. The nearness of Christ's relation to himself, This is my Son, not by adoption, but by eternal generation.

2. The endearedness of his person, This is my beloved Son.

3. The fruit and benefit of this near and dear relation unto us; In him I am well pleased.

Note,

A. That there is no possibility for any person to please God out of Christ; both our persons and our performances find acceptance only for his sake.

B. That in and through Christ, God is well pleased with all believers: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, &c.

Lord! what revivng news is this to thy church, to hear that her head and husband, her surety, mediator, and intercessor, is that only Son of God in whom his soul is delighted and ever well pleased! That Son who always pleased thee, and by and through whom thou art well pleased with, and reconciled to, thy offending creatures!

Matthew-4

The Temptation of Jesus

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Observe, 1. The great humiliation of the Son of God, how exceedingly was he humbled by the horrid temptations wherewith he was assaulted, than which nothing could be more grievous to his holy heart. What could be more burdensome to him that was brought up from eternity with God the Father, than to be shut up in a wilderness with the devil, there to be baited by him so many days, having his ears files, though not defiled, with horrid blasphemies spit upon the holy and reverend name of God! Oh deep abasement and wonderful humiliation of the Son of God!

Observe, 2. The time when Christ entered the lists with Satan, implied in the word then! that is first, immediately after his baptism; he is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation:
secondly, immediately after the Spirit descended upon, and the Father had by a voice from heaven, manifested his complacency and satisfaction in him: This is my beloved Son, &c.
Note thence, That great manifestations of love from God, are usually followed with great temptations from Satan.

Observe, 3. The place where this combat was fought, and that is, in the wilderness.
Learn thence, That no place can privilege us from temptation, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assualts: the solitary wilderness has a tempter in it, yea Satan sometimes makes use of men's solitariness, to further his temptations: a cell, a nunnery, or a cloister, are as open to Satan as the open fields, and the persons that live in the have a tempter without, and an inticer within as well as other men.

Observe, 4. The efficient cause of Christ's going into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan: He was led up of the Spirit, says St. Matthew: The Spirit drove him, says St. Mark: that is, the Holy Spirit of God, not Satan the unclean spirit, for the devil is seldom if ever called the spirit, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the evil spirit, or the unclean spirit.

Christ was led by the Spirit; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God into the wilderness, to be tempted by Satan. The word to tempt, in the original, means to try, to endeavour, to attempt to do a thing; then, to try the nature of a thing, as metals by fire; then, to test moral qualities by trying them, to see how they will endure; then, to endeavour to draw men away from virtue by suggesting motives to evil. This is the meaning here, and this is now the established meaning of the word in the English language.

Learn hence, 1. That none of the children of God are assaulted, are ordered by divine and special dispensation. Satan could not assault our Saviour till he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for that end; and he shall not assault any of his members, but by divine permission.

The devil. This word originally means an adversary, or an accuser; thence any one opposed; thence an enemy of any kind. It is given in the Scriptures, by way of eminence, to the leader of evil angels--a being characterized as full of subtlety, envy, art, and hatred of mankind. He is known, also, by the name of Satan, Job 1:6-12, Mt 12:26; Beelzebub, Mt 12:24; the old Serpent, Rev 12:9; and the prince of the power of the air, Eph 2:2 The name is sometimes given to men and women. 2Ti 3:3 Truce-breakers, slanderers--in the original, devils. 1Timm 3:2: So must their wives be grave, not slanderers--in the original, devils.

2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward ahungered.

Forty days and forty nights. It has been questioned by some whether Christ abstained wholly from food, or only from bread and the food

to which he was accustomed. Luke says, (Lk 4:2,) that he ate nothing. This settles the question. Mark says, Mk 1:13, that angels came and ministered unto him. At first view, this would seem to imply that he did eat during that time. But Mark does not mention the time when the angels performed the office of kindness; and we are at liberty to suppose that he meant to say that it was done at the close of the forty days; and the rather as Matthew, after giving an account of the temptation, says the same thing, Mk 4:2. There are other instances of persons fasting forty days, recorded in the Scriptures. Thus Moses fasted forty days, Ex 34:28. Elijah also fasted the same length of time, 1Kgs 19:8. In these cases, they were no doubt miraculously supported.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

Observe here,

1. The occasion of the temptation. The occasion was our Savior's hunger and want of bread.

2. The temptation itself. Learn thence, That when God suffers any of his dear children to fall into want, and to be straitened for outward things, Satan takes a mighty advantage thereupon, to tempt and assualt them.

But what doth he tempt our Savior to? To the sin of distrust, to question his sonship; If thou be the Son of God; and next to distrust his Father's providence and care. Command that these stones be made bread. As Satan had said, "How unlikely is it, that thou shouldst be highly favoured, and yet deserted? What! the Son of God; and yet ready to starve! Certainly if thou canst not supply thy necessities, thou art nothing akin to God.'

Learn hence, 1. That Satan's grand design is, first to tempt the children of God to doubt of their adoption; and next, to distrust God's fatherly care over them and provision for them; and last of all, to use unwarrantable means to help themselves.

Thus Satan dealt with Christ, and thus he deals with Christians: for for to work a miracle at Satan's direction was not a lawful means of providing food for himself.

If thou be the Son of God. If thou art the Messiah--if God's own Son--then thou hast power to work a miracle; and here is a fit opportunity to try thy power, and show that thou art truly his Son. Command that these stones, etc. The stones that were lying around him in the wilderness, No temptation could have been more plausible, or more likely to succeed, than this. He had just been declared to be the Son of God, (Mt 3:17) and here was an opportunity to show that he was really so. The circumstances were such as to make it appear plausible and proper to work this miracle. "Here you are," was the language of Satan, "hungry, cast out, alone, needy, poor, and yet the Son of God! If you have this power, how easy could you satisfy your wants! How foolish is it, then, for the Son of God, having all power, to be starving in this manner, when by a word he could show his power, and relieve his wants, and when in the thing itself there could be nothing wrong!"

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

But he answered and said, etc. In reply to this artful temptation, Christ answered by a quotation from the Old Testament. The place is found in De 8:3. Of all passages in Old Testament Scripture, none could have been pitched upon more apposite, perhaps not one so apposite, to our Lord's purpose. "The Lord . . . led thee (said Moses to Israel, at the close of their journeyings) these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only," &c., "Now, if Israel spent, not forty days, but forty years in a waste, howling wilderness, where there were no means of human subsistence, not starving, but divinely provided for, on purpose to prove to every age that human support depends not upon bread, but upon God's unfailing word of promise and pledge of all needful

providential care, am I, distrusting this word of God, and despairing of relief, to take the law into My own hand? True, the Son of God is able enough to turn stones into bread: but what the Son of God is able to do is not the present question, but what is man's duty under want of the necessaries of life. And as Israel's condition in the wilderness did not justify their unbelieving murmurings and frequent desperation, so neither would Mine warrant the exercise of the power of the Son of God in snatching despairingly at unwarranted relief. As man, therefore, I will await divine supply, nothing doubting that at the fitting time it will arrive."

In that place the discourse is respecting manna. Moses says that the Lord humbled the people, and fed them with manna, an unusual kind of food, that they might learn that man did not live by bread only, but that there were other things to support life, and that every thing which God had commanded was proper for this. The term "word," used in this place, means very often, in Hebrew, thing, and clearly in this place has that meaning. Neither Moses nor our Saviour had any reference to spiritual food, or to the doctrines necessary to support the faith of believers; but they simply meant that God could support life by other things than bread; that man was to live, not by that only, but by every other thing which proceeded out of his mouth; that is, which he chose to command men to eat. The substance of his answer, then, is:--"It is not so imperiously necessary that I should have bread, as to make a miracle proper to procure it. Life depends on the will of God. He can support it in other ways, as well as by bread. He has created other things to be eaten, and man may live by everything that his Maker has commanded." And from this temptation we may learn,

(1.) that Satan often takes advantage of our circumstances and wants to tempt us. The poor, and hungry, and naked, he often tempts to repine and complain, and to be dishonest in order to supply their necessities.

(2.) Satan's temptations are often the strongest immediately after we have been remarkably favoured. Jesus had just been called the

Son of God, and Satan took this opportunity to try him. He often attempts to fill us with pride and vain self-conceit, when we have been favoured with any peace of or any new view of God, and endeavours to urge us to do something which may bring us low, and lead us to sin.

(3.) His temptations are plausible. They often seem to be only urging us to do what is good and proper. They seem even to urge us to promote the glory of God, and to honour him. We are not to think, therefore, that because a thing may seem to be good in itself, that therefore it is to be done. Some of his most powerful temptations are when he seems to be urging us to do what shall be for the glory of God.

(4.) We are to meet the temptations of Satan, as the Saviour did, with the plain and positive declarations of Scripture. We are to inquire whether the thing is commanded, and whether, therefore, it is right to do it, and not trust to our own feelings, or even our wishes, in tho matter.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

Taketh him up. This does not mean that he bore him through the air, or that he compelled him to go against his will, or that he wrought a miracle, in any way, to place him there. There is no evidence that Satan had power to do any of these things; and the word translated taketh him up does not imply any such thing. It means, to conduct one; to lead one; to attend or accompany one; or to induce one to go. It is used in the following places in the same sense. Numb. xxiii. 14: "And he (Balak) brought him (Balaam) into the field of Zophim," etc.; that is, he led him, or induced him to go there. Mt 17:1: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James," etc.; i.e. led, or conducted them--not by any means implying that he bore them by force. Mt 20:17: "Jesus, going to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart," etc. See also Mt 26:37, 27:27, Mk 5:40. From these passages, and many more, it appears that all that is meant here is, that Satan conducted Jesus, or accompanied him; but not that this was done against the will of Jesus.

The holy city. Jerusalem--called holy because the temple was there, and it was the place of religious solemnities.

Setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple. It is not perfectly certain to what part of the temple the sacred writer here refers. It has been supposed by some that he means the roof. But Josephus says that the roof was covered by spikes of gold, to prevent its being polluted by birds; and such a place would have been very inconvenient to stand upon. Others suppose that it was the top of the porch or entrance to the temple. But it is more than probable that the porch leading to the temple was not as high as the main building. It is more probable that he refers to a part of the sacred edifice sometimes called Solomon's porch. The temple was built on the top of Mount Moriah. The temple itself, together with the courts and porches, occupied a large space of ground. Mt 21:12. To secure a level spot sufficiently large, it was necessary to put up a high wall on the east. The temple was surrounded with porches or piazzas fifty-five feet broad, and seventy-five high. The porch on the south side was, however, sixty-seven feet broad, and one hundred and fifty high. From the top of this to the bottom of the valley below was more than seven hundred feet; and Josephus says that one could scarcely look down without dizziness. The word pinnacle does not quite express the force of the original. It is a word given usually to birds, and denotes wings, or anything in the form of wings, and was given to the roof of this porch because it resembled a bird dropping its wings. It was on this place, doubtless, that Christ was placed.

Satan proposed that he should cast himself down thence; and, if he was the Son of God, he said it could do no harm. There was a promise that he should be protected. This promise was taken from Ps 91:11,12.

To this passage of Scripture Christ replied With another, which forbade the act. This is taken from De 6:16, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." That is, thou shalt not try him; or, thou shalt not,

by throwing thyself into voluntary and uncommanded dangers, appeal to God for protection, or trifle with the promises made to those who are thrown into danger by his providence. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of his people who are placed by him in trial or danger; but it is not true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke him, and trifle with the promised help. Thus Satan, artfully using and perverting Scripture, was met and repelled by Scripture rightly applied.

6 and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:
for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:
and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Observe, 1. Here we have observable, first, the sin which Satan tempts Christ unto; and next, the argument which he tempts him from. The sin tempted to, is the sin of self-murder; Cast thyself down. Whence we learn, That self-murder is a sin which Christ himself was, and the best of saints may, by Satan, be tempted to the commission of.

But for as much as Satan tempted Christ to murder himself, but had not the power to do it himself,(do thou cast thyself down,) we learn, That though Satan may tempt, yet he cannot compel; he may entice, but cannot enforce any to sin, without their own consent.

Observe, 2. The argument which Satan uses; it is a scripture; argument; he quotes the promise of God. He shall give his angels charge over thee. What a marvel is here, to find Satan with a Bible under his arm, and a text of scripture in his mouth! Christ had alleged scripture before to Satan; here Satan retorts scripture back again to Christ: It is written, says Christ; It is written, says Satan. Learn thence, That it is no wonder to hear heretics and hypocrites quote scripture, when Satan himself durst recite it: he that had profanely touched the sacred body of Christ with his hand, sticks not presumptuously to handle the holy scripture of God with his tongue.

Yet observe, How wretchedly the devil wrests, perverts, and misapplies, the scripture. When God promises his angels shall keep us, it is in viis, non in praecipitiis; 'tis in all God's ways, not in any of our own crooked paths. Note here, That although the children of God have the promise of the guardianship of holy angels, yet then only may they expect their protection, when they are walking in the way of their duty, and using the means for their own preservation.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Though the devil had wrested and abused scripture, yet still Christ alleges scripture. The abuse of the holy scriptures by heretics and seducers is no argument against the use of them. We must not throw away our Bibles because the devil quotes scripture: but as Christ here compares scripture with scripture, so should we, in order to find out the true sense and meaning of it; for scripture is the best interpreter of itself; scripture is nost clearly expounded by scripture. This Satan knew full well, and therefore dares not make any further reply.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

The next sin, which Satan tempts our Saviour to, is the sin of idolatry, even to worship the devil himself. O thou impudent and foul spirit! To desire thy Creator to adore thee, an apostate creature! Surely there can be no sin so black and foul, so gross and monstrous, but that the christian may be tempted to it, when Christ himself was tempted to worship the tempter. St. Matthew reads the words, If thou wilt fall down and worship me: St. Luke, If thou wilt worship before me. Whence we may gather, says Dr. Lightfoot, That if to worship before the devil be to worship the devil, then to worship before an image is to worship the image.

The bait which Satan makes use of to allure our Saviour to the sin of idolatry; and that was, in representing to his eye and view all the glories of the world in the most inviting manner, and that in a moment of time; to the intent it might affect him the more and prevail the sooner. Learn thence, That the pomp and greatness, the glory and grandeur, of this world, is made use of by Satan, as a

dangerous snare to draw men to a compliance with him, in his temptations unto sin. When Satan sets thee upon a pinnacle, look to thyself.

An exceeding high mountain. It is not known what mountain this was. It was probably some elevated place in the vicinity of Jerusalem, on the top of which could be seen no small part of the land of Palestine. The Abbe Mariti speaks of a mountain on which he was, which answers to the description here. "This part of the mountain," says he, "overlooks the mountains of Arabia, the country of Gilead, the country of the Arnorites, the plains of Moab, the plains of Jericho, the river Jordan, and the whole extent of the Dead Sea." So Moses, before he died, went up into Mount Nebo, and from it God showed him "all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar," De 34:1-3. This shows that there were mountains from which no small part of the land of Canaan could be seen; and we must not suppose that there was any miracle when they were shown to the Saviour.

All the kingdoms of the world. It is not probable that anything more here is intended than the kingdoms of Palestine, or the land of Canaan, and those in the immediate vicinity. Judea was divided into three parts, and those parts were called kingdoms; and the sons of Herod, who presided over them, were called kings. The term world is often used in this limited scale to denote a part, or a large part of the world, particularly the land of Canaan. See Rom 4:13, where it means the land of Judah; also Lk 2:1, Lk 2:1.

The glory of them. The riches, splendour, towns, cities, mountains, etc., of this beautiful land.

9 and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

All these things, etc. All these kingdoms. All these dominions Satan claimed a right to bestow on whom he pleased, and with considerable justice. They were excessively wicked; and with no

small degree of plausibility, therefore, he asserted his claim to give them away. This temptation had much plausibility. Satan regarded Jesus as the King of the Jews. As the Messiah, he supposed he had come to take possession of all that country. He was poor, and unarmed, and without followers or armies. Satan proposed to put him in possession of it at once, without any difficulty, if he would acknowledge him as the proper lord and disposer of that country; if he would trust to him, rather than to God.

Worship me. Mt 2:2 The word here seems to mean, to acknowledge Satan as having a right to give these kingdoms to him; to acknowledge his dependence on him rather than God; that is, really to render religious homage. We may be surprised at his boldness. But he had been twice foiled. He supposed it was an object dear to the heart of the Messiah and he seemed not to be asking too much, if he gave them to Jesus, that Jesus should be willing to acknowledge the gift, and express gratitude for it. So plausible are Satan's temptations, even when blasphemous; and so artfully does he present his allurements to the mind.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Get thee hence. These temptations, and this one especially, our Saviour met with a decided rebuke. This was a bolder attack than any which had been offered. Others had been but an address to his necessities, and an offer of the protection of God in great danger; in both cases plausible, and in neither a direct violation of the law of God. Here was a higher attempt, a more decided and deadly thrust at the piety of the Saviour. It was a proposition that the Son of God should worship the devil, instead of honouring and adoring Him who made heaven and earth; that he should bow down before the prince of wickedness, and give him homage.

It is written. In De 6:13. Satan asked him to worship him. This was expressly forbidden. And Jesus therefore drove him from his presence.

Observe here, 1. With what zeal and indignation of spirit our blessed Saviour repels and beats back this temptation of Satan: Get thee hence. Note thence, That the greater the sins are which the devil tempts us to, the greater our zeal and indignation ought to be in opposing and resisting the temptation to them. A great temptation must be withstood with great resolution.

Observe, 2. The weapon with which he repels and beats back the fiery dart of Satan's temptation, and that is, with the shield of scripture: It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. Learn thence, That God is the sole object of religious worship: it is so peculiarly the Creator's due, that to give it to any creature is gross idolatry, and repugnant to the scriptures. No creature is to pay divine adoration to any but his Creator; hence it appears that Christ is not a creature, divine worship being given to him.

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

The devil leaveth him. The devil left him for a time, Lk 4:13. He intended to return again to the temptation, and if possible to seduce him yet from God.

And, behold, angels came and ministered. See Mt 1:20. They came and supplied his wants, and comforted him. From the whole of this we may learn,

(1.) That no one is so holy as to be free from temptation; for the pure Son of God was sorely tempted by the devil.

(2.) That when God permits a temptation or trial to come upon us, he will, if we look to him, give us grace to resist and overcome it, 1Cor 10:3.

(3.) We see the art of the tempter. His temptations are adapted to times and circumstances. They are plausible. What could have been, more plausible than his suggestions to Christ? They were applicable to his circumstances. They had the appearance of much piety. They were backed by passages of Scripture--misapplied, but

still most artfully presented. He never comes boldly and tempts men to sin, telling them that they are committing sin. Such a mode would defeat his design. It would put people on their guard. He commences, therefore, artfully, plausibly, and the real purpose does not appear till he has prepared the mind for it. This is the way with all temptation. No wicked man would at once tempt another to be profane, to be drunk, to be an infidel, or to commit adultery.. The principles are first corrupted; the confidence is secured; the affections are won; and then the allurement is by little and little presented, till the victim fails. How should every one be on his guard at the very first appearance of evil, at the first suggestion that may possibly lead to evil.

(4.) One of the best ways of meeting temptation is by applying Scripture. So our Saviour did, and they will always best succeed who best wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Eph 6:17.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

We have here an account of Christ's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, for he came into the world to be a Preacher; the great salvation which he wrought out, he himself began to publish (Heb 2:3) to show how much his heart was upon it, and ours should be.

Several passages in the other gospels, especially in that of St. John, are supposed, in the order of the story of Christ's life, to intervene between his temptation and his preaching in Galilee. His first appearance after his temptation, was when John Baptist pointed to him, saying, Behold the Lamb of God, Joh 1:29. After that, he went up to Jerusalem, to the passover (Joh 2:12-25), discoursed with Nicodemus (Joh 3:1-21), with the woman of Samaria (Joh 4:1-42), and then returned into Galilee, and preached there. But Matthew, having had his residence in Galilee, begins his story of Christ's

public ministry with his preaching there, which here we have an account of. Observe,

The time; When Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, then he went into Galilee, Mt 4:12. Note, The cry of the saints' sufferings comes up into the ears of the Lord Jesus. If John be cast into prison, Jesus hears it, takes cognizance of it, and steers his course accordingly: he remembers the bonds and afflictions that abide his people. Observe,

1. Christ did not go into the country, till he heard of John's imprisonment; for he must have time given him to prepare the way of the Lord, before the Lord himself appear. Providence wisely ordered it, that John should be eclipsed before Christ shone forth; otherwise the minds of people would have been distracted between the two; one would have said, I am of John, and another, I am of Jesus. John must be Christ's harbinger, but not his rival. The moon and stars are lost when the sun rises. John had done his work by the baptism of repentance, and then he was laid aside. The witnesses were slain when they had finished their testimony, and not before, Re 11:7.

2. He did go into the country as soon as he heard of John's imprisonment; not only to provide for his own safety, knowing that the Pharisees in Judea were as much enemies to him as Herod was to John, but to supply the want of John Baptist, and to build upon the good foundation he had laid. Note, God will not leave himself without witness, nor his church without guides; when he removes one useful instrument, he can raise up another, for he has the residue of the Spirit, and he will do it, if he has work to do. Moses my servant is dead, John is cast into prison; now, therefore, Joshua, arise; Jesus, arise.

13 and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali:

Leaving Nazareth. Because his townsmen cast him out, and rejected him. See Lk 4:14-30. The particular city he chose for his residence; not Nazareth, where he had been bred up; no, he left Nazareth;

particular notice is taken of that, Mt 4:13. And with good reason did he leave Nazareth; for the men of that city thrust him out from among them, Lu 4:29. He made them his first, and a very fair, offer of his service, but they rejected him and his doctrine, and were filled with indignation at him and it; and therefore he left Nazareth, and shook off the dust of his feet for a testimony against those there, who would not have him to teach them. Nazareth was the first place that refused Christ, and was therefore refused by him. Note, It is just with God, to take the gospel and the means of grace from those that slight them, and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. Unhappy Nazareth! If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, how well had it been for thee! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

Came and dwelt in Capernaum. This was a city on the north-west corner of the sea of Tiberias. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is repeatedly in the Gospels. Though it was once a city of renown, and the metropolis of all Galilee, the site it occupied is now uncertain. But he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which was a city of Galilee, but many miles distant from Nazareth, a great city and of much resort. It is said here to be on the sea coast, not the great sea, but the sea of Tiberias, an inland water, called also the lake of Gennesaret. Close by the falling of Jordan into the sea stood Capernaum, in the tribe of Naphtali, but bordering upon Zebulun; hither Christ came, and here he dwelt. Some think that his father Joseph had a habitation here, others that he took a house or lodgings at least; and some think it more than probable, that he dwelt in the house of Simon Peter; however, here he fixed not constantly, for he went about doing good; but this was for some time his head quarters: what little rest he had, was here; here he had a place, though not a place of his own, to lay his head on. And at Capernaum, it should seem, he was welcome, and met with better entertainment than he had at Nazareth. Note, If some reject Christ, yet others will receive him, and bid him welcome. Capernaum is glad of Nazareth's leavings. If Christ's own countrymen be not gathered, yet he will be glorious. "And thou, Capernaum, has now a day of it; thou art now lifted up to heaven; be wise for thyself, and know the time of thy visitation."When Mr. Fisk, an American missionary, travelled in

Syria in 1823, he found twenty or thirty uninhabited Arab huts, occupying what are supposed to be the ruins of the once exalted city of Capernaum.

In this place, and its neighbourhood, Jesus spent no small part of the three years of his public ministry. It is hence called his own city, Mt 9:1. Here he healed the nobleman's son, (Jn 4:47) Peter's wife's mother, (Mt 8:14) the centurion's servant, (Mt 8:5) and the ruler's daughter, (Mt 9:28-25.)

Upon the sea coast. The sea of Tiberius.

In the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim. These were two tribes of the children of Israel which were located in this part of the land of Canaan, and constituted, in the time of Christ, a part of Galilee. Comp. Gen 49:13, Josh 19:10,32. The word borders here means boundaries. Jesus came and dwelt in the boundaries or regions of Zebulun and Naphtali.

14 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,
15 The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali,
by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

Galilee of the Gentiles. Galilee was divided into upper and lower Galilee. Upper Galilee was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because it was occupied chiefly by Gentiles. It was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, Sidon, etc. The word Gentiles includes, in the Scriptures, all who are not Jews. It means the same as nations, or, as we should say, the heathen nations.

The place in Galilee he comes to, Capernaum. Christ had three cities which he called his own; Nazareth, where he was bred; Bethlehem, where he was born; and Capernaum, where he dwelt: this was a sea-coast town in the bordes of Zabulon and Nephthali.

The people which sat in darkness. This is an expression denoting great ignorance. As in darkness or night we can see nothing, and know not where to go, so those who are ignorant of God, and their duty, are said to be in darkness. The instruction which removes this

ignorance is called light. See Jn 3:19, 1Pet 2:9, 1Jn 1:6; 1Jn 2:8. As ignorance is often connected with crime and vice, so darkness is sometimes used to denote sin, 1Thes 5:5, Eph 5:11, Lk 22:53.

Now, concerning the inhabitants of these places, observe, (1.) The posture they were in before the gospel came among them (Mt 4:16); they were in darkness. Note, Those that are without Christ, are in the dark, nay, they are darkness itself; as the darkness that was upon the face of the deep. Nay, they were in the region and shadow of death; which denotes not only great darkness, as the grave is a land of darkness, but great danger. A man that is desperately sick, and not likely to recover, is in the valley of the shadow of death, though not quite dead; so the poor people were on the borders of damnation, though not yet damned-dead in law. And, which is worst of all, they were sitting in this condition. Sitting in a continuing posture; where we sit, we mean to stay; they were in the dark, and likely to be so, despairing to find the way out. And it is a contented posture; they were in the dark, and they loved darkness, they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. Their condition was sad; it is still the condition of many great and mighty nations, which are to be thought of, and prayed for, with pity. But their condition is more sad, who sit in darkness in the midst of gospel-light. He that is in the dark because it is night, may be sure that the sun will shortly arise; but he that is in the dark because he is blind, will not so soon have his eyes opened. We have the light, but what will that avail us, if we be not the light in the Lord? (2.) The privilege they enjoyed, when Christ and his gospel came among them; it was as great a reviving as ever light was to a benighted traveller. Note, When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there, Joh 3:19,Lu 1:78,79. Light is discovering, it is directing; so is the gospel.

It is a great light; denoting the clearness and evidence of gospel-revelations; not like the light of a candle, but the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Great in comparison with the light of the law, the shadows of which were now done away. It is a great light, for it discovers great things and of vast consequence; it will

last long, and spread far. And it is a growing light, intimated in that word, It is sprung up. It was but spring of day with them; now the day dawned, which afterward shone more and more. The gospel-kingdom, like a grain of mustard-seed or the morning light, was small in its beginnings, gradual in its growth, but great in its perfection.

Observe, the light sprang up to them; they did not go to seek it, but were prevented with the blessings of this goodness. It came upon them ere they were aware, at the time appointed, by the disposal of him who commandeth the morning, and causes the day-spring to know its place, that it may take hold of the ends of the earth, Job 38:12,13.

The region and shadow of death. This is a forcible and beautiful image, designed also to denote ignorance and sin. It is often used in the Bible, and is very expressive. A shadow is caused by an object coming between us and the sun. So the Hebrews imaged death as standing between us and the sun, and casting a long, dark, and baleful shadow abroad on the face of the nations, denoting their great ignorance, sin, and woe. It denotes a dismal, gloomy, and dreadful shade, where death and sin reign, like the chill damps, and horrors of the dwelling-place of the dead. See Job 10:21, 16:16; 34:22, Ps 23:4, Jer 2:6. These expressions denote that the country of Galilee was peculiarly ignorant and blind. We know that the people were proverbially so. They were distinguished for a coarse, outlandish manner of speech, (Mk 14:70) and are represented as having been distinguished by a general profligacy of morals and manners. It shows the great compassion of the Saviour, that he went to preach to such poor and despised sinners.

Instead of seeking the so called learned in moral laws, he chose to minister to the needy, the ignorant, and the contemned. His office is to enlighten the ignorant; his delight to guide the wandering, and to raise up those that are in the shadow of death. In doing this, Jesus set an example for all his followers. It is their duty to seek out those who are sitting in the shadow of death, and to send the gospel to

them. No small part of the world is still lying in wickedness, as wicked and wretched as was the land of Zebulun and Naphtali in the time of Jesus. The Lord Jesus is able to enlighten them also. And every Christian should conceive it a privilege, as well as a duty, to imitate his Saviour in this, and to be permitted to send to them the light of life. See Mt 28:19.

Learn hence, 1. That a people destitute of the saving knowledge of the gospel are in great darkness, how great soever the light of their outward comforts may be. This people had natural light enough, and civil light enough; they might had an abundance of wealth and riches, peace and plenty; but they wanted the light of Christ and his gospel,and therefore are said to sit in darkness.

2. That wherever the gospel is preached amongst a people, it is a light springing up and shining forth among them; quickening and enlivening, reviving and cheering, the souls of those who entertain it, how great soever their outward darkness and distress may be. The people that sat in darkness saw great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up, &c.

16 the people which sat in darkness saw great light;
and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

The prophecy that was fulfilled is this, Mt 4:14-16. It is quoted from Isa 9:1,2, but with some variation. The prophet in that place is foretelling a greater darkness of affliction to befal the contemners of Immanuel, than befel the countries there mentioned, either in their first captivity under Benhadad, which was but light (1Ki 15:20), or in their second captivity under the Assyrian, which was much heavier, 2Ki 15:29. The punishment of the Jewish nation for rejecting the gospel should be sorer than either (see Isa 8:21,22); for those captivated places had some reviving in their bondage, and saw a great light again, Mt 9:2. This is Isaiah's sense; but the Scripture has many fulfillings; and the evangelist here takes only the latter clause, which speaks of the return of the light of liberty and prosperity to those countries that had been in the darkness of captivity, and applies it to the appearing of the gospel among them.

The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up—The prophetic strain to which these words belong commences with the seventh chapter of Isaiah, to which the sixth chapter is introductory, and goes down to the end of the twelfth chapter, which hymns the spirit of that whole strain of prophecy. It belongs to the reign of Ahaz and turns upon the combined efforts of the two neighboring kingdoms of Syria and Israel to crush Judah. In these critical circumstances Judah and her king were, by their ungodliness, provoking the Lord to sell them into the hands of their enemies. What, then, is the burden of this prophetic strain, on to the passage here quoted? First, Judah shall not, cannot perish, because IMMANUEL, the Virgin's Son, is to come forth from his loins. Next, one of the invaders shall soon perish, and the kingdoms of neither be enlarged. Further, while the Lord will be the Sanctuary of such as confide in these promises and await their fulfilment, He will drive to confusion, darkness, and despair the vast multitude of the nation who despised His oracles, and, in their anxiety and distress, betook themselves to the lying oracles of the heathen. This carries us down to the end of the eighth chapter. At the opening of the ninth chapter a sudden light is seen breaking in upon one particular part of the country, the part which was to suffer most in these wars and devastations—"the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee and the Gentiles." The rest of the prophecy stretches over both the Assyrian and the Chaldean captivities and terminates in the glorious Messianic prophecy of the eleventh chapter and the choral hymn of the twelfth chapter. Well, this is the point seized on by our Evangelist. By Messiah's taking up His abode in those very regions of Galilee, and shedding His glorious light upon them, this prediction, He says, of the Evangelical prophet was now fulfilled; and if it was not thus fulfilled, we may confidently affirm it was not fulfilled in any age of the Jewish ceremony, and has received no fulfilment at all. Even the most rationalistic critics have difficulty in explaining it in any other way.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

"for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Mt 3:2, 10:7 Here our Savior begins to enter upon his prophetic office, and by preaching to make known the will of God to mankind; and observe, the doctrine which he preached is the same that John the Baptist did preach, namely, the doctrine of repentance, Repent ye: and the argument is the same also, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: that is, now is the so much expected time of the appearing of the promised Messiah.

Learn hence, That the doctrine of Christ and his ambassadors is alike, and the same in substance: they both teach the doctrine of repentance to a lost world, as most suitable to the time and dispensation of the gospel.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Our blessed Saviour, as he was the great prophet of his church, had power and authority to appoint teachers under him; and accordingly here he begins to call his apostles to that great work; and in his call we have several particulars very observable: as,

1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen; not a Paul, that had long studied at the feet of Gamaliel, is first called; they were unlearned men, not bred up to books or literature as Moses was, who was conversant with all the learning of the Egyptians. Note, Christ sometimes chooses to endow those with the gifts of grace who have least to show of the gifts of nature. But Peter, who was a stranger to eloquence and human learning. Where they were called--by the sea of Galilee, where Jesus was walking, Capernaum being situated near that sea. Concerning this sea of Tiberias, the Jews have a saying, That of all the seven seas that God made, he made choice of none but the sea of Gennesaret; which is very applicable to Christ's choice of it, to honour it, as he often did, with his presence and his miracles. Here, on the banks of the sea,

Christ was walking for contemplation, as Isaac in the field; hither he went to call his disciples; not to Herod's court (for few mighty or noble are called), not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee; surely Christ sees not as man sees. Not but that the same power which effectually called Peter and Andrew would have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible; but, as in other things, so in his converse and attendance, he would humble himself, and show that God ha chosen the poor of this world. Galilee was a remote part of the nation, the inhabitants were less cultivated and refined, their very language was broad and uncouth to the curious, their speech betrayed them. They who were picked up at the sea of Galilee, had not the advantages and improvements, no, not of the more polished Galileans; yet thither Christ went, to call his apostles that were to be the prime ministers of state in his kingdom, for he chooses the foolish things of this world, to confound the wise. Hereby our Savior took effectual care that his gospel should be known to be the power of God, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instrument should not carry away the glory of the work.

2. How our Savior calls his apostles by couples, two and two, Peter and Andrew, James and John; to let us understand, that the work of the ministry requries the concurrence of all hands that are called to it; all the ministers of God should put their hands, join their hearts, and set their shoulders, as one man, to this great work; and all little enough to carry it on with advantage and success.

3. The work which they were called to, from being fishermen to being fishers of men. They catched fish before with the labor of their hands; they shall catch men now with the labour of their tongues. They were men of business, who had been bred up to labour. Note, diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and no hindrance to a holy life. Moses was called from keeping sheep, and David from following the ewes, to eminent employments. Idle people lie more open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God.

4. Our Savior's command: first to follow him, before they are sent out by him: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers before his ambassadors. We must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, for honour and applause, but not for souls; if we be not first inclosed ourselves in the net of the gospel, we can have but small hopes of bringing in others.

5. The promise which Christ gives the apostles for their encouragement:

A. To qualify them, I will make you fishers.

B. To succeed them, I will make you fishers of men.

Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part: but the blessing and success is Christ's. "Our labour is only in the cast, Christ's power is wholly in the draught. Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, and more wallow in the mud; and we shall labour all our days and catch nothing, if Christ doth not bring our fish to the net, and inclose them in it, as well as assist us in the throwing of it."--Bp Hall.

6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Savior's call, Straightway they followed him. Whom Christ calls, he calls persuasively and effectually; whom he calls, he draws, and works them to a willing compliance with their duty.

7. They were men that were accustomed to hardships and hazards; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in perils by waters. Note, Those who have learned to bear hardships, and run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

Lastly observe, Upon their call to the ministry they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and their nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment.

Teaching us, that the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves to their work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs: nothing but an indispensable necessity in providing for a family can excuse a minister's entangling himself with worldly business.

20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

Straightway. Immediately--as all should do when the Lord Jesus calls them.

Left their nets. Their nets were the means of their living, perhaps all their property. By leaving them immediately, and following him, they gave every evidence of sincerity. They showed, what we should, that they were willing to forsake all fro the sake of Jesus, and to follow him wherever he should lead them. They went forth to persecution and death, for the sake of Jesus; but also to the honour of saving souls from death, and establishing a church that shall continue to the end of time. Little did they know what awaited them, when they left their unmended nets to rot on the beach, and followed the unknown and unhonoured Jesus of Nazareth. So we know not what awaits us, when we become his followers but we should cheerfully go, when our Saviour calls, willing to commit all into his hand--come honour or dishonour, sickness or health, riches or poverty, life or death. Be it ours to do our duty at once, and to commit the result to the great Redeemer who has call us. Comp. Mt 6:33, 8:21,22 Jn 21:21,22.

Followed him. This is an expression denoting that they became his disciples, 2Kgs 6:19.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

What they were doing. Peter and Andrew were then using their nets, they were fishing; and James and John were mending their nets, which was an instance of their industry and good husbandry.

They did not go to their father for money to buy new nets, but took pains to mend their old ones. It is commendable to make what we have go as far, and last as long, as may be. James and John were with their father Zebedee, ready to assist him, and make his business easy to him. Note, It is a happy and hopeful presage, to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful to them.

1. They were all employed, all very busy, and none idle. Note, When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. "Am I in Christ?" is a very needful question for us to ask ourselves; and, next to that, "Am I in my calling?"

2. They were differently employed; two of them were fishing, and two of them mending their nets. Note, Ministers should be always employed, either in teaching or studying; they may always find themselves something to do, if it be not their own fault; and mending their nets, is, in its season, as necessary work as fishing.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

Left their father. This showed how willing they were to follow Jesus. They left their father. They showed us what we ought to do. If necessary, we should leave father, and mother, and every friend, Lk 14:26. If they will go with us, and be Christians, it is well; if not, yet they should not hinder us. We should be the followers of Jesus. And while, in doing it, we should treat our friends tenderly and kindly, yet we ought at all hazards to obey God, and do our duty to him. We may add, that many, very many children, since Sabbath schools have commenced, have been the means of their parents' conversion. Many children have spoken to their parents, or read the Bible to them, or other books, and prayed for them, and God has blessed them and converted them. Every child in a Sunday school ought to be a Christian; and then should strive and pray that God would convert his parents, and make them Christians too.

We see here, too, what humble instruments God makes use of to convert men. He chose fishermen to convert the world. He chooses the foolish to confound the wise.

And it shows that religion is true, and is the power of God, when he makes use of such instruments to change the hearts of men, and save their souls. 1Cor 1:26 and following.

Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Synagogues. Places of worship, or places where the people assembled together to worship God. The origin of synagogues is involved in much obscurity. The sacrifices of the Jews were appointed to be held in one place, at Jerusalem. But there was nothing to forbid the other services of religion to be performed at any place. Accordingly, the praises of God were sung in the schools of the prophets; and those who chose were assembled by the seers on the Sabbath, and the new-moons, for religious worship, 2Kgs 4:23, 1Sam 10:5-11. The people would soon see the necessity of providing convenient places for their services, to shelter them from storms and heat; and this was probably the origin of synagogues. At what tinge they were commenced is unknown. They are mentioned by Josephus a considerable time before the coming of Christ; and in his time they were multiplied, not only in Judea, but wherever there were Jews. There were no less than 480 in Jerusalem alone, before it was taken by the Romans.

The synagogues were built in elevated places--in any place where ten men were found who were willing to associate for the purpose; and were the regular customary places of worship. In them the law, i.e., the Old Testament, divided into suitable portions, was read, prayers were offered, and the Scriptures were expounded. The law was so divided, that the five books of Moses, and portions of the prophets, could be read through each year. The Scriptures, after being read, were expounded. This was done, either by the officers of the synagogues, or by any person who might be invited to it by the officiating minister. Our Saviour and the apostles were in the

habit of attending at those places constantly, and of speaking to the people, Lk 4:15-27, Acts 13:14, 15.

The synagogues were built in imitation of the temple, with a centre building, supported by pillars, and a court surrounding it. Mt 21:12. In the centre building, or chapel, was a place prepared for the reading of the law. The law was kept in a chest, or ark, near to the pulpit. The uppermost seats, (Mt 23:6) were those nearest to the pulpit. The people sat round, facing the pulpit. When the law was read, the officiating person rose; when it was expounded, he was seated. Our Saviour imitated their example, and was commonly seated in addressing the people, Mt 5:1, 13:1.

Teaching. Instructing the people, or explaining the gospel.

The Gospel of the kingdom. The good news respecting the kingdom which he was about to set up; or the good news respecting the coming of the Messiah and the nature of his kingdom.

Preaching. See Mt 3:1.

Our blessed Savior, when he sent forth his apostles, went along with them, and laboured himself as much as any of them. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen who can set others to the drag, and care only to feed themselves with the fish, not willing to wet their hands with the net?

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

And his fame went throughout all Syria. It is not easy to fix the exact bounds of Syria in the time of our Saviour. It was, perhaps, the general name for the country lying between the Euphrates on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west; and between Mount Taurus on the north, and Arabia on the south. Through all this region his celebrity was spread by his power of working miracles;

and, as might be expected, the sick from every quarter were brought to him, in the hope that he would give relief.

Those possessed with devils. Much difficulty exists, and much has been written, respecting those in the New Testament said to be possessed with the devil. It has been maintained by many, that the sacred writers meant only by this expression to denote those who were melancholy or epileptic, or afflicted with some other grievous disease. This opinion has been supported by arguments too long to be repeated here. On the other hand, it has been supposed that the persons so described were under the influence of evil spirits, who had complete possession of the faculties, and who produced many symptoms of disease not unlike melancholy, and madness, and epilepsy. That such was the fact, will appear from the following considerations:

1st. That Christ and the apostles spoke to them, and of them as such; that they addressed them, and managed them, precisely as if they were so possessed, leaving their hearers to infer beyond a doubt that such was their real opinion.

2nd. They spake, conversed, asked questions, gave answers, and expressed their knowledge of Christ, and their fear of him--things that certainly could not be said of diseases, Mt 8:29, Lk 8:28.

3rd. They are represented as going out of the persons possessed, and entering the bodies of others, Mt 8:32.

4th. Jesus spoke to them, and asked their name, and they answered him. He threatened them, commanded them to be silent, to depart, and not to return, Mk 1:25, 5:8, 9:26.

5th. Those possessed are said to know Christ; to be acquainted with the Son of God, Lk 4:34, Mk 1:24. This could not be said of diseases.

6th. The early fathers of the church interpreted these passages in the same way. They derived their opinions probably from the apostles themselves, and their opinions are a fair interpretation of the apostles' sentiments.

7th. If it may be denied that Christ believed in such possessions, it does not appear why any other clear sentiment of his may not in the same way be disputed. There is, perhaps, no subject on which he expressed himself more clearly, or acted more uniformly, or which he left more clearly impressed on the minds of his disciples.

Nor is there any absurdity in the opinion that those persons were really under the influence of devils. For--

1st. It is no more absurd to suppose that an angel, or many angels, should have fallen and become wicked, than that so many men should.

2nd. It is no more absurd that Satan should have possession of the human faculties, or inflict diseases, than that men should do it--a thing which is done every day. What more frequent than for a wicked man to corrupt the morals of others, or by inducing them to become intemperate, to produce a state of body and mind quite as bad as to be possessed with the devil?

3rd. We still see a multitude of cases that no man can prove not to be produced by the presence of an evil spirit. Who would attempt to say that some evil being may not have much to do in the case of madmen?

4th. It afforded an opportunity for Christ to show his power over the enemies of himself and of man, and thus to evince himself qualified to meet every enemy of the race, and triumphantly to redeem his people. lie came to destroy the power of Satan, Acts 26:18, Rom 16:20.

Those which were lunatick. This name is given to the disease from the Latin name of the moon, (Luna.) It has the same origin in the Greek. It was given because it was formerly imagined that it was affected by the increase or the decrease of the moon. The name is still retained, although it is not certain that the moon has any effect on the disease. On this point physicians are not determined, but no harm arises from the use of the name. It is mentioned only in this place, and in Mt 17:15. It was probably the falling sickness, or the epilepsy, the same as the disease mentioned Mk 9:18-20; Lk 9:39,40.

And those that had the palsy. Many infirmities were included under the general name of palsy, in the New Testament.

1st. The paralytic shock, affecting the whole body.

2nd. The hemiplegy, affecting only one side of the body--the most frequent form of the disease.

3rd. The paraplegy, affecting all the system below the neck.

4th. The catalepsy. This is caused by a contraction of the muscles in the whole or a part of the body, and is very dangerous. The effects are very violent and fatal. For instance, if, when a person is struck, he happens to have his hand extended, he is unable to draw it back; if not extended, he is unable to stretch it out. It appears diminished in size, and dried up in appearance. Hence it was called the withered hand, Mt 12:10-13.

5th. The cramp. This, in eastern countries, is a fearful malady, and by no means unfrequent. It originates from chills in the night. The limbs, when seized with it, remain unmovable, and the person afflicted with it resembles one undergoing a torture. This was probably the disease of the servant of the centurion, Mt 8:6, Lk 7:2. Death follows from this disease in a few days.

The mercy of them. The miracles that Moses wrought, to prove his mission, were most of them plagues and judgments, to intimate the terror of that dispensation, though from God; but the miracles that Christ wrought, were most of them cures, and all of them (except the cursing of the barren fig tree) blessings and favours; for the gospel dispensation is founded, and built up in love, and grace, and sweetness; and the management is such as tends not to affright but to allure us to obedience. Christ designed by his cures to win upon people, and to ingratiate himself and his doctrine into their minds, and so to draw them with the bands of love, Ho 11:4. The miracle of them proved his doctrine a faithful saying, and convinced men's judgments; the mercy of them proved it worthy of all acceptation, and wrought upon their affections. They were not only great works, but good works, that he showed them from his Father (Joh 10:32); and this goodness was intended to lead men to repentance (Ro 2:4), as also to show that kindness, and beneficence, and doing good to all, to the utmost of our power and opportunity, are essential branches of that holy religion which Christ came into the world to establish.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judea, and *from* beyond Jordan.

From Decapolis. Decapolis was the name of a region of country in the bounds of the half tribe of Manasseh, mainly on the east of Jordan. It was so called because it included ten cities--the meaning of the word Decapolis in Greek. Geographers generally agree that Scythopolis was the chief of these cities and was the only one of them west of the Jordan; that Hippo, (Hippos,) Gedara, Dion, (or Dios,) Pelea, (or Pella,) Gerasa, (or Gergesa,) Philadelphia and Raphana, (or Raphanae,) were seven of the remaining nine, and the other two were either Kanatha and Capitolias, or Damascus and Otopos. These cities were inhabited chiefly by foreigners (Greeks) in the days of our Saviour, and not by Jews. Hence the keeping of swine by the Gergesenes, (Mt 8:30-33,) which was forbidden by the Jewish law.

and from Jerusalem, and from beyond Jordan—meaning from Perea. Thus not only was all Palestine upheaved, but all the

adjacent regions. But the more immediate object for which this is here mentioned is, to give the reader some idea both of the vast concourse and of the varied complexion of eager attendants upon the great Preacher, to whom the astonishing discourse of the next three chapters was addressed. On the importance which our Lord Himself attached to this first preaching circuit, and the preparation which He made for it, see on Mr 1:35-39.

Matthew-5

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

The Beginning of the Sermon on the Mount

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

Seeing the multitudes The great numbers that came to attend on his ministry. The substance of this discourse is recorded in the sixth chapter of Luke. It is commonly called the sermon on the mount. It is not improbable that it was repeated, in substance, on different occasions, and to different people. At those times, parts of it might have been omitted, and Luke may have recorded it as it was pronounced on one of these occasions. Lk 6:17-20.

Went up into a mountain. This mountain, or hill, was somewhere in the vicinity of Capernaum, but where precisely is not mentioned. He ascended the hill, doubtless, because it was more convenient to address the multitude from an eminence, than on the same level with them. A hill or mountain is still shown a short distance to the northwest of the ancient site of Capernaum, which tradition reports to have been the place where this sermon was delivered, and which is called on the maps the Mount of Beatitudes. But there is no positive evidence that this is the place where this discourse was uttered.

And when he was set. This was the common mode of teaching among the Jews, Lk 4:20, 5:3, Jn 8:2, Acts 13:14, 16:13.

His disciples came. The word disciples means learners; those who are taught. Here it is put for those who attended on the ministry of Jesus, and does not imply that they were all Christians. See Jn 6:66.

2 and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Christ begins his sermon with blessings, for he came into the world to bless us (Ac 3:26), as the great High Priest of our profession; as the blessed Melchizedec; as He in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, Ge 12:3. He came not only to purchase blessings for us, but to pour out and pronounce blessings on us; and here he does it as one having authority, as one that can command the blessing, even life for evermore, and that is the blessing here again and again promised to the good; his pronouncing them happy makes them so; for those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. The Old Testament ended with a curse (Mal 4:6), the gospel begins with a blessing; for hereunto are we called, that we should inherit the blessing. Each of the blessings Christ here pronounces has a double intention: 1. To show who they are that are to be accounted truly happy, and what their characters are. 2. What that is wherein true happiness consists, in the promises made to persons of certain characters, the performance of which will make them happy. Now,

1. This is designed to rectify the ruinous mistakes of a blind and carnal world. Blessedness is the thing which men pretend to pursue; Who will make us to see good? Ps 4:6. But most mistake the end, and form a wrong notion of happiness; and then no wonder that they miss the way; they choose their own delusions, and court a shadow. The general opinion is, Blessed are they that are rich, and great, and honourable in the world; they spend their days in mirth, and their years in pleasure; they eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf; happy the people that is in such a case; and their designs, aims, and purposes are accordingly; they bless the covetous (Ps 10:3); they will be rich. Now our Lord Jesus comes to correct this fundamental error, to advance a new hypothesis, and to give us quite another notion of blessedness and blessed people,

which, however paradoxical it may appear to those who are prejudiced, yet is in itself, and appears to be to all who are savingly enlightened, a rule and doctrine of eternal truth and certainty, by which we must shortly be judged. If this, therefore, be the beginning of Christ's doctrine, the beginning of a Christian's practice must be to take his measures of happiness from those maxims, and to direct his pursuits accordingly.

2. It is designed to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor who receive the gospel, by assuring them that his gospel did not make those only happy that were eminent in gifts, graces, comforts, and usefulness; but that even the least in the kingdom of heaven, whose heart was upright with God, was happy in the honours and privileges of that kingdom.

3. It is designed to invite souls to Christ, and to make way for his law into their hearts. Christ's pronouncing these blessings, not at the end of his sermon, to dismiss the people, but at the beginning of it, to prepare them for what he had further to say to them, may remind us of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, on which the blessings and cursings of the law were read, De 27:12, &c. There the curses are expressed, and the blessings only implied; here the blessings are expressed, and the curses implied: in both, life and death are set before us; but the law appeared more as a ministration of death, to deter us from sin; the gospel as a dispensation of life, to allure us to Christ, in whom alone all good is to be had. And those who had seen the gracious cures wrought by his hand (Mt 4:23,24), and now heard the gracious words proceeding out of his mouth, would say that he was all of a piece, made up of love and sweetness.

4. It is designed to settle and sum up the articles of agreement between God and man. The scope of the divine revelation is to let us know what God expects from us, and what we may then expect from him; and no where is this more fully set forth in a few words than here, nor with a more exact reference to each other; and this is that gospel which we are required to believe; for what is faith but a conformity to these characters, and a dependence upon these promises? The way to happiness is here opened, and made a highway (Isa 35:8); and this coming from the mouth of Jesus

Christ, it is intimated that from him, and by him, we are to receive both the seed and the fruit, both the grace required, and the glory promised. Nothing passes between God and fallen man, but through his hand. Some of the wiser heathen had notions of blessedness different from the rest of mankind, and looking toward this of our Saviour. Seneca, undertaking to describe a blessed man, makes it out, that it is only an honest, good man that is to be so called: De vita beata. cap. 4. Cui nullum bonum malumque sit, nisi bonus malusque animus--Quem nec extollant fortuita, nec frangant--Cui vera voluptas erit voluptatum comtemplio--Cui unum bonum honestas, unum malum turpitudo.--In whose estimation nothing is good or evil, but a good or evil heart--Whom no occurrences elate or deject--Whose true pleasure consists in a contempt of pleasure--To whom the only good is virtue, and the only evil vice.

The Beatitudes

3 Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. The word blessed means happy, referring to that which produces felicity, from whatever quarter it may come.

Poor in spirit. Luke says simply, blessed are THE poor. It has been disputed whether Christ meant the poor in reference to the things of this life, or the humble. The gospel is said to be preached to the poor, Lk 4:18, Mt 11:5. It was predicted that the Messiah should preach to the poor, Is 61:1. It is said that they have peculiar facilities for being saved, Mt 19:23, Lk 18:24. The state of such persons is therefore comparatively blessed, or happy. Riches produce care, anxiety, and dangers, and not the least is the danger of losing heaven by them. To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God; to be willing to be where God places us, to bear what he lays on us, to go where he bids us, and to die when he commands; to be willing to be in his hands, and to feel that we

deserve no favour from him. It is opposed to pride, and vanity, and ambition. Such are happy:

(1.) Because there is more real enjoyment in thinking of ourselves as we are, than in being filled with pride and vanity.

(2.) Because such Jesus chooses to bless, and on them he confers his favours here.

(3.) Because theirs will be the kingdom of heaven hereafter. It is remarkable that Jesus began his ministry in this manner, so unlike all others. Other teachers had taught that happiness was to be found in honour, or riches, or splendour, or sensual pleasure. Jesus overlooked all those things, and fixed his eye on the poor, and the humble, and said that happiness was to be found in the lowly vale of poverty, more than in the pomp and splendours of life.

Blessed are the poor in spirit—All familiar with Old Testament phraseology know how frequently God's true people are styled "the poor" (the "oppressed," "afflicted," "miserable") or "the needy"—or both together (as in Ps 40:17; Isa 41:17). The explanation of this lies in the fact that it is generally "the poor of this world" who are "rich in faith" (Jas 2:5; compare 2Co 6:10; Re 2:9); while it is often "the ungodly" who "prosper in the world" (Ps 73:12). Accordingly, in Lu 6:20, 21, it seems to be this class—the literally "poor" and "hungry"—that are specially addressed. But since God's people are in so many places styled "the poor" and "the needy," with no evident reference to their temporal circumstances (as in Ps 68:10; 69:29-33; 132:15; Isa 61:1; 66:2), it is plainly a frame of mind which those terms are meant to express. Accordingly, our translators sometimes render such words "the humble" (Ps 10:12, 17), "the meek" (Ps 22:26), "the lowly" (Pr 3:34), as having no reference to outward circumstances. But here the explanatory words, "in spirit," fix the sense to "those who in their deepest consciousness realize their entire need" (compare the Greek of Lu 10:21; Joh 11:33; 13:21; Ac 20:22; Ro 12:11; 1Co 5:3; Php 3:3). This self-emptying conviction, that "before God we are void of

everything," lies at the foundation of all spiritual excellence, according to the teaching of Scripture. Without it we are inaccessible to the riches of Christ; with it we are in the fitting state for receiving all spiritual supplies (Re 3:17, 18; Mt 9:12, 13).

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—(See on Mt 3:2). The poor in spirit not only shall have—they already have—the kingdom. The very sense of their poverty is begun riches. While others "walk in a vain show"—"in a shadow," "an image"—in an unreal world, taking a false view of themselves and all around them—the poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their real case. Having courage to look this in the face, and own it guilelessly, they feel strong in the assurance that "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness" (Ps 112:4); and soon it breaks forth as the morning. God wants nothing from us as the price of His saving gifts; we have but to feel our universal destitution, and cast ourselves upon His compassion (Job 33:27, 28; 1Jo 1:9). So the poor in spirit are enriched with the fulness of Christ, which is the kingdom in substance; and when He shall say to them from His great white throne, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you," He will invite them merely to the full enjoyment of an already possessed inheritance.

1. It is not said, blessed are the poor in estate, but blessed are the poor in spirit: it is not a poverty of purse and possession, but a poverty of spirit, that entitles us to the blessing.

2. It is not said, blessed are the spiritually poor, but blessed are the poor in spirit: he that is destitute of the grace and spirit of Christ, that has no sense of his spiritual wants, he is spiritualllly poor, but he is not poor in spirit.

3. It is not said, blessed are the poor-spirited, but the poor in spirit. Such an act below and beneath themselves as men and as

Christians, these are poor-spirited men; but these are not poor in spirit.

4. It is not said, blessed are they that make themselves poor by leaving their estates and callings, and turning beggars, as some do among the Papists; but blessed are they whom the gospel makes poor, by giving them a sight of their spiritual wants and necessities, and directing them to Christ that they may be made rich.

In sum, not those that are poor in estate, or those whom the world has made poor in possession, but those whom the gospel has made poor in spirit, that is, the truly humble, lowly spirits, have a right and title to the kingdom of heaven. Now, humility is called poverty of spirit, because it is the effect and fruit of God's Spirit.

Their's is the kingdom of heaven. That is, either they have peculiar facilities for entering the kingdom of heaven, and of becoming Christians here, or they shall enter heaven hereafter. Both these ideas are probably included. A state of poverty--a state where we are despised or unhonoured by men--is a state where men are most ready to seek the comforts of religion here, or a home in the heavens hereafter. Mt 2:2.

MHC:
The poor in spirit are happy, Mt 5:3. There is a poor-spiritedness that is so far from making men blessed that it is a sin and a snare--cowardice and base fear, and a willing subjection to the lusts of men. But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul, by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ. To be poor in spirit is, 1. To be contentedly poor, willing to be emptied of worldly wealth, if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is a low condition. Many are poor in the world, but high in spirit, poor and proud, murmuring and complaining, and blaming their lot, but we must accommodate ourselves to our poverty, must know how to be abased, Php 4:12. Acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we must be easy in it, patiently bear the inconveniences of it, be

thankful for what we have, and make the best of that which is. It is to sit loose to all worldly wealth, and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully to bear losses and disappointments which may befal us in the most prosperous state. It is not, in pride or pretence, to make ourselves poor, by throwing away what God has given us, especially as those in the church of Rome, who vow poverty, and yet engross the wealth of the nations; but if we be rich in the world we must be poor in spirit, that is, we must condescend to the poor and sympathize with them, as being touched with the feeling of their infirmities; we must expect and prepare for poverty; must not inordinately fear or shun it, but must bid it welcome, especially when it comes upon us for keeping a good conscience, Heb 10:34. Job was poor in spirit, when he blessed God in taking away, as well as giving. 2. It is to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. To be poor in spirit, is to think meanly of ourselves, of what we are, and have, and do; the poor are often taken in the Old Testament for the humble and self-denying, as opposed to those that are at ease, and the proud; it is to be as little children in our opinion of ourselves, weak, foolish, and insignificant, Mt 18:4,19:14. Laodicea was poor in spirituals, wretchedly and miserably poor, and yet rich in spirit, so well increased with goods, as to have need of nothing, Re 3:17. On the other hand, Paul was rich in spirituals, excelling most in gifts and graces, and yet poor in spirit, the least of the apostles, less than the least of all saints, and nothing in his own account. It is to look with a holy contempt upon ourselves, to value others and undervalue ourselves in comparison of them. It is to be willing to make ourselves cheap, and mean, and little, to do good; to become all things to all men. It is to acknowledge that God is great, and we are mean; that he is holy and we are sinful; that he is all and we are nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing; and to humble ourselves before him, and under his mighty hand. 3. It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength, that we may depend only upon the merit of Christ for our justification, and the spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. That broken and contrite spirit with which the publican cried for mercy to a poor sinner, is that poverty of spirit. We must call ourselves poor, because always in want of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house.

Now, (1.) This poverty in spirit is put first among the Christian graces. The philosophers did not reckon humility among their moral virtues, but Christ puts it first. Self-denial is the first lesson to be learned in his school, and poverty of spirit entitled to the first beatitude. The foundation of all other graces is laid in humility. Those who would build high must begin low; and it is an excellent preparative for the entrance of gospel-grace into the soul; it fits the soil to receive the seed. Those who are weary and heavy laden, are the poor in spirit, and they shall find rest with Christ.

(2.) They are blessed. Now they are so, in this world. God looks graciously upon them. They are his little ones, and have their angels. To them he gives more grace; they live the most comfortable lives, and are easy to themselves and all about them, and nothing comes amiss to them; while high spirits are always uneasy.

(3.) Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of grace is composed of such; they only are fit to be members of Christ's church, which is called the congregation of the poor (Ps 74:19); the kingdom of glory is prepared for them. Those who thus humble themselves, and comply with God when he humbles them, shall be thus exalted. The great, high spirits go away with the glory of the kingdoms of the earth; but the humble, mild, and yielding souls obtain the glory of the kingdom of heaven. We are ready to think concerning those who are rich, and do good with their riches, that, no doubt, theirs is the kingdom of heaven; for they can thus lay up in store a good security for the time to come; but what shall the poor do, who have not wherewithal to do good? Why, the same happiness is promised to those who are contentedly poor, as to those who are usefully rich. If I am not able to spend cheerfully for his sake, if I can but want cheerfully for his sake, even that shall be recompensed. And do not we serve a good master then?

4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are they that mourn. This is capable of two meanings: either that those are blessed who are afflicted with the loss of friends or possessions; or that they who mourn over sin are blessed. As Christ came to preach repentance, to induce men to mourn over their sins, and to forsake them, it is probable that he had the latter

particularly in view, 2Cor 7:10. At the same time, it is true that the gospel only can give true comfort to those in affliction, Is 61:1-3, Lk 4:18. Other sources of consolation do not reach the deep sorrows of the soul. They may blunt the sensibilities of the mind; they may produce a sullen and reluctant submission to what we cannot help; but they do not point to the true source of comfort. In the God of mercy only; in the Saviour; in the peace that flows from the hope of a better world, and there only, is there comfort, 2Cor 3:17,18, 5:1. Those that mourn thus shall be comforted. So those that grieve over sin; that sorrow that they have committed it, and are afflicted and wounded that they have offended God, shall find comfort in the gospel. Through the merciful Saviour those sins may be forgiven. In him the weary and heavy-laden soul shall find peace, (Mt 11:28-30;) and the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, shall sustain us here, (Jn 14:26,27) and in heaven all tears shall be wiped away, Rev 21:4.

They that mourn are happy (Mt 5:4); Blessed are they that mourn. This is another strange blessing, and fitly follows the former. The poor are accustomed to mourn, the graciously poor mourn graciously. We are apt to think, Blessed are the merry; but Christ, who was himself a great mourner, says, Blessed are the mourners. There is a sinful mourning, which is an enemy to blessedness--the sorrow of the world; despairing melancholy upon a spiritual account, and disconsolate grief upon a temporal account. There is a natural mourning, which may prove a friend to blessedness, by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying the afflictions to us, for which we mourn. But there is a gracious mourning, which qualifies for blessedness, an habitual seriousness, the mind mortified to mirth, and an actual sorrow. 1. A penitential mourning for our own sins; this is godly sorrow, a sorrow according to God; sorrow for sin, with an eye to Christ, Zec 12:10. Those are God's mourners, who live a life of repentance, who lament the corruption of their nature, and their many actual transgressions, and God's withdrawings from them; and who, out of regard to God's honour, mourn also for the sins of others, and sigh and cry for their abominations, Eze 9:4. 2. A sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others; the mourning of those who weep with them

that weep, are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, for the desolations of Zion (Zep 3:18,Ps 137:1), especially who look with compassion on perishing souls, and weep over them, as Christ over Jerusalem.

Now these gracious mourners,

(1.) Are blessed. As in vain and sinful laughter the heart is sorrowful, so in gracious mourning the heart has a serious joy, a secret satisfaction, which a stranger does not intermeddle with. They are blessed, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who was a man of sorrows, and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. The are armed against the many temptations that attend vain mirth, and are prepared for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

(2.) They shall be comforted. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provision is made for their comfort; light is sown for them; and in heaven, it is certain, they shall be comforted, as Lazarus, Lu 16:25. Note, The happiness of heaven consists in being perfectly and eternally comforted, and in the wiping away of all tears from their eyes. It is the joy of our Lord; a fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; which will be doubly sweet to those who have been prepared for them by this godly sorrow. Heaven will be a heaven indeed to those who go mourning thither; it will be a harvest of joy, the return of a seed-time of tears (Ps 126:5,6); a mountain of joy, to which our way lies through a vale of tears. See Isa 66:10.

5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The meek. Meekness is patience in the reception of injuries. It is neither meanness, nor a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice; but it is the opposite of sudden anger, of malice, of long-harboured vengeance. Christ insisted on his right when he said, "If I have done evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" Jn 18:23. Paul asserted his right when he said, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us

into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily; nay, verily, but let them come themselves, and fetch us out," Acts 16:37.

And yet Christ was the very model of meekness. It was one of his characteristics, "I am meek," Mt 11:29. So of Paul. No man endured more, and more patiently, than he. Yet they were not passionate. They bore it patiently. They did not harbour malice. They did not press their rights through thick and thin, and trample down the rights of others to secure their own.

Meekness is the reception of injuries with a belief that God will vindicate us. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," Rom 12:19. It little becomes us to take his place, and to do what he has a right to do, and what he has promised to do.

Meekness produces peace. It is proof of true greatness of soul. It comes from a heart too great to be moved by little insults. It looks upon those who offer them with pity. He that is constantly ruffled, that suffers every little insult or injury to throw him off his guard, and to raise a storm of passion within, is at the mercy of every mortal that chooses to disturb him. He is like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

The meek are happy (Mt 5:5); Blessed are the meek. The meek are those who quietly submit themselves to God, to his word and to his rod, who follow his directions, and comply with his designs, and are gentle towards all men (Tit 3:2); who can bear provocation without being inflamed by it; are either silent, or return a soft answer; and who can show their displeasure when there is occasion for it, without being transported into any indecencies; who can be cool when others are hot; and in their patience keep possession of their own souls, when they can scarcely keep possession of any thing else. They are the meek, who are rarely and hardly provoked, but quickly and easily pacified; and who would rather forgive twenty injuries than revenge one, having the rule of their own spirits.

These meek ones are here represented as happy, even in this world.

1. They are blessed, for they are like the blessed Jesus, in that wherein particularly they are to learn of him, Mt 11:29. They are like the blessed God himself, who is Lord of his anger, and in whom fury is not. They are blessed, for they have the most comfortable, undisturbed enjoyment of themselves, their friends, their God; they are fit for any relation, and condition, any company; fit to live, and fit to die.

2. They shall inherit the earth; it is quoted from Ps 37:11, and it is almost the only express temporal promise in all the New Testament. Not that they shall always have much of the earth, much less that they shall be put off with that only; but this branch of godliness has, in a special manner, the promise of life that now is. Meekness, however ridiculed and run down, has a real tendency to promote our health, wealth, comfort, and safety, even in this world. The meek and quiet are observed to live the most easy lives, compared with the froward and turbulent. Or, They shall inherit the land (so it may be read), the land of Canaan, a type of heaven. So that all the blessedness of heaven above, and all the blessings of earth beneath, are the portion of the meek.

They shall inherit the earth. This might have been translated the land. It is probable that here is a reference to the manner in which the Jews commonly expressed themselves to denote any great blessing. It was promised to them that they should inherit the land of Canaan. For a long time the patriarchs looked forward to this, Gen 15:7,8, Ex 32:13. They regarded it as a great blessing, It was so spoken of in the journey in the wilderness; and their hopes were crowned when they took possession of the promised land, De 1:38, 16:20. In the time of our Saviour they were in the constant habit of using the Old Testament, where this promise perpetually occurs, and they used it as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, perhaps as the sum of all blessings, Ps 37:20, Is 60:21. Our Saviour used it in this sense; and meant to say, not that

the meek should own great property or have many lands, but that they should possess peculiar blessings. The Jews also considered the land of Canaan as a type of heaven, and of the blessings under the Messiah. To inherit the land became, therefore, an expression denoting those blessings. When our Saviour promises it here, he means that the meek shall be received into his kingdom, and partake of its blessings here, and of the glories of the heavenly Canaan hereafter. The value of meekness, even in regard to worldly property and success in life, is often exhibited in the Scriptures, Prov 22:24,25, 15:1, 25:8, 15. It is also seen in common life that a meek, patient, mild man, is the most prospered. An impatient and quarrelsome man raises up enemies; often loses property in lawsuits; spends his time in disputes and broils, rather than in sober, honest industry; and is harassed, vexed, and unsuccessful in all that he does.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" 1Timm 4:8, 6:3-6,

The wages and reward belonging to that grace and duty, the inheritance of the earth.
Meekness either respects God, or our neighbour. As it respects God, so it implies flexibleness to his commanding will, and submissiveness to his providential pleasure.
As it respects our neighbour, it consists in forgiving injuries, bearing reproaches, and recompensing good for evil.

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.

Blessed are they that hunger, etc. Hunger and thirst, here, are expressive of strong desire. Nothing would better express the strong desire which we ought to feel to obtain righteousness, than hunger and thirst. No wants are so keen, none so imperiously demand supply as these. They occur daily; and when long continued, as in case of those shipwrecked, and doomed to wander months or years over burning sands, with scarcely any drink or food, nothing is more distressing. An ardent desire for anything is often represented in the Scriptures by hunger and thirst, Ps 42:1,2,

63:1,2. A desire for the blessings of pardon and peace; a deep sense of sin, and want, and wretchedness, is also represented by thirsting, Is 55:1,2. Those that are perishing for want of righteousness; that feel that they are lost sinners, and strongly desire to be holy, shall be filled. Never was there a desire to be holy, which God was not willing to gratify. And the gospel of Christ has made provision to satisfy all who truly desire to be holy. See Is 55:1-13, 65:13, Jn 4:14, 6:35, 7:37,38, Ps 17:15.

They that hunger and thirst after righteousness are happy, Mt 5:6. Some understand this as a further instance of our outward poverty, and a low condition in this world, which not only exposes men to injury and wrong, but makes it in vain for them to seek to have justice done to them; they hunger and thirst after it, but such is the power on the side of their oppressors, that they cannot have it; they desire only that which is just and equal, but it is denied them by those that neither fear God nor regard men. This is a melancholy case! Yet, blessed are they, if they suffer these hardships for and with a good conscience; let them hope in God, who will see justice done, right take place, and will deliver the poor from their oppressors, Ps 103:6. Those who contentedly bear oppression, and quietly refer themselves to God to plead their cause, shall in due time be satisfied, abundantly satisfied, in the wisdom and kindness which shall be manifested in his appearances for them. But it is certainly to be understood spiritually, of such a desire as, being terminated on such an object, is gracious, and the work of God's grace in the soul, and qualifies for the gifts of the divine favour.

1. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings. See Ps 24:5,Mt 6:33. They are purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ; conveyed and secured by the imputation of that righteousness to us; and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. To have Christ made of God to us righteousness, and to be made the righteousness of God in him; to have the whole man renewed in righteousness, so as to become a new man, and to bear the image of God; to have an interest in Christ and the promises--this is righteousness.

2. These we must hunger and thirst after. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink, who cannot be satisfied with any thing but meat and drink, and will be satisfied with them, though other things be wanting. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and importunate; "Give me these, or else I die; every thing else is dross and chaff, unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough, though I had nothing else." Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently, and call for fresh satisfactions; so these holy desires rest not in any thing attained, but are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily fresh supplies of grace. The quickened soul calls for constant meals of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who hunger and thirst will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond, in his practical Catechism, distinguishes between hunger and thirst. Hunger is a desire of food to sustain, such as sanctifying righteousness. Thirst is the desire of drink to refresh, such as justifying righteousness, and the sense of our pardon.

Those who hunger and thirst after spiritual blessings, are blessed in those desires, and shall be filled with those blessings.

(1.) They are blessed in those desires. Though all desires of grace are not grace (feigned, faint desires are not), yet such a desire as this is; it is an evidence of something good, and an earnest of something better. It is a desire of God's own raising, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. Something or other the soul will be hungering and thirsting after; therefore they are blessed who fasten upon the right object, which is satisfying, and not deceiving; and do not pant after the dust of the earth, Am 2:7,Isa 55:2.

(2.) They shall be filled with those blessings. God will give them what they desire to complete their satisfaction. It is God only who

can fill a soul, whose grace and favour are adequate to its just desires; and he will fill those with grace for grace, who, in a sense of their own emptiness, have recourse to his fulness. He fills the hungry (Lu 1:53), satiates them, Jer 31:25. The happiness of heaven will certainly fill the soul; their righteousness shall be complete, the favour of God and his image, both in their full perfection.

7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the merciful. That is, those who are so affected by the sufferings of others, as to be disposed to alleviate them. This is given as an evidence of piety; and it is said that they who show mercy to others shall obtain it. The same sentiment is found in Mt 10:42. Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water only unto one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward. See also Mt 25:34-40. It should be done to glorify God; that is, in obedience to his commandments, and with a desire that he should be honoured; and feeling that we are benefiting one of his creatures. Then he will regard it as done to him, and will reward us. See the sentiment of this verse, that the merciful shall obtain mercy, more fully expressed in 2Sam 22:26,27; and in Ps 18:25,26.

Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy. In nothing does God more delight than in the exercise of mercy, Ex 34:6, Eze 33:11 1Timm 2:4, 2Pet 3:9. To us, guilty sinners; to us, wretched, dying, and exposed to eternal woe, he has shown his mercy by giving his Son to die for us; by expressing his willingness to pardon and save us; and by sending his Spirit to renew and sanctify the heart. Each day of our life, each hour, and each moment, we partake of his undeserved mercy. All the blessings we enjoy are proofs of his mercy. If we also show mercy to the poor, the wretched, the guilty, it shows that we are like God; we have his spirit, and shall not lose our reward. And we have abundant opportunity to do it. Our world is full of guilt and woe, which we may help to relieve; and every day of our lives we have opportunity by helping the poor and wretched, and by forgiving those who injure us, to show that we are like God. Mt 6:14.

And as an encouragement, he adds, that as we deal with others, God will deal with us; our charity towards men shall be crowned with mercy from God, and that in abundance too; for our rivulet of charity we shall partake of an ocean of mercy: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Learn, That the merciful man is a blessed man, and therefore blessed because he shall obtain mercy, when he most wants it, and most desires it. Mercy, not wages.

"According to the view given in Scripture," says TRENCH most justly, "the Christian stands in a middle point, between a mercy received and a mercy yet needed. Sometimes the first is urged upon him as an argument for showing mercy—'forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you' (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32): sometimes the last—'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy'; 'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven' (Lu 6:37; Jas 5:9). And thus, while he is ever to look back on the mercy received as the source and motive of the mercy which he shows, he also looks forward to the mercy which he yet needs, and which he is assured that the merciful—according to what BENGEL beautifully calls the benigna talio ('the gracious requital') of the kingdom of God—shall receive, as a new provocation to its abundant exercise." The foretastes and beginnings of this judicial recompense are richly experienced here below: its perfection is reserved for that day when, from His great white throne, the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and thirsty, and a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and ye ministered unto Me." Yes, thus He acted towards us while on earth, even laying down His life for us; and He will not, He cannot disown, in the merciful, the image of Himself.

The merciful are happy, Mt 5:7. This, like the rest, is a paradox; for the merciful are not taken to be the wisest, nor are likely to be the richest; yet Christ pronounces them blessed. Those are the merciful, who are piously and charitably inclined to pity, help, and succour

persons in misery. A man may be truly merciful, who has not wherewithal to be bountiful or liberal; and then God accepts the willing mind. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must, by Christian sympathy, partake of the afflictions of our brethren; pity must be shown (Job 6:14), and bowels of mercy put on (Col 3:12); and, being put on, they must put forth themselves in contributing all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity the ignorant, and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and snatch them as brands out of the burning. We must have compassion on those who are melancholy and in sorrow, and comfort them (Job 16:5); on those whom we have advantage against, and not be rigorous and severe with them; on those who are in want, and supply them; which if we refuse to do, whatever we pretend, we shut up the bowels of our compassion, Jam 2:15,16,1Jo 3:17. Draw out they soul by dealing thy bread to the hungry, Isa 58:7,10. Nay, a good man is merciful to his beast.

Now as to the merciful. 1. They are blessed; so it was said in the Old Testament; Blessed is he that considers the poor, Ps 41:1. Herein they resemble God, whose goodness is his glory; in being merciful as he is merciful, we are, in our measure, perfect as he is perfect. It is an evidence of love to God; it will be a satisfaction to ourselves, to be any way instrumental for the benefit of others. One of the purest and most refined delights in this world, is that of doing good. In this word, Blessed are the merciful, is included that saying of Christ, which otherwise we find not in the gospels, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35. 2. They shall obtain mercy; mercy with men, when they need it; he that watereth, shall be watered also himself (we know not how soon we may stand in need of kindness, and therefore should be kind); but especially mercy with God, for with the merciful he will show himself merciful, Ps 18:25. The most merciful and charitable cannot pretend to merit, but must fly to mercy. The merciful shall find with God sparing mercy (Mt 6:14), supplying mercy (Pr 19:17), sustaining mercy (Ps 41:2), mercy in that day (2Ti 1:18); may, they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them (Mt 25:34,35); whereas

they shall have judgment without mercy (which can be nothing short of hell-fire) who have shown no mercy.

8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the pure in heart. That is, whose minds, motives, and principles are pure. Who seek not only to have the external actions correct, but who desire to be holy in heart, and who are so. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

Here is the most comprehensive character of the blessed: they are pure in heart. Note, True religion consists in heart-purity. Those who are inwardly pure, show themselves to be under the power of pure and undefiled religion. True Christianity lies in the heart, in the purity of heart; the washing of that from wickedness, Jer 4:14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps 24:4,5,1Ti 1:5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture--an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and from worldly lusts; covetousness is called filthy lucre; from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, all that which come out of the heart, and defiles the man. The heart must be purified by faith, and entire for God; must be presented and preserved a chaste virgin to Christ. Create in me such a clean heart, O God!

But oh, with what grand simplicity, brevity, and power is this great fundamental truth here expressed! And in what striking contrast would such teaching appear to that which was then current, in which exclusive attention was paid to ceremonial purification and external morality! This heart purity begins in a "heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," or a "conscience purged from dead works" (Heb 10:22; 9:14; and see Ac 15:9); and this also is taught in the Old Testament (Ps 32:1, 2; compare Ro 4:5-8; Isa 6:5-8). The conscience thus purged—the heart thus sprinkled—there is light within wherewith to see God. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with the other"—He with us and we with Him—"and the blood of

Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us"—us who have this fellowship, and who, without such continual cleansing, would soon lose it again—"from all sin" (1Jo 1:6, 7). "Whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1Jo 3:6); "He that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3Jo 11). The inward vision thus clarified, and the whole inner man in sympathy with God, each looks upon the other with complacency and joy, and we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory." But the full and beatific vision of God is reserved for that time to which the Psalmist stretches his views—"As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Ps 17:15). Then shall His servants serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads (Re 22:3, 4). They shall see Him as He is (1Jo 3:2). But, says the apostle, expressing the converse of this beatitude—"Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

They shall see God. There is a sense in which all shall see God, Rev 1:7. That is, they shall behold him as a Judge, not as a Friend. In this place it is spoken of as a peculiar favour. So also in Rev 22:4. And they shall see his face. To see the face of one, or to be in his presence, were, among the Jews, terms expressive of great favour. It was regarded as a high honour to be in the presence of kings and princes, and to be permitted to see them, Prov 22:29. He shall stand before kings, etc. See also 2Ki 25:19. "Those that stood in the king's presence ;" in the Hebrew, those that saw the face of the king; that is, who were his favourites and friends. So here, to see God, means to be his friends and favourites, and to dwell with him in his kingdom.

9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Those who strive to prevent contention, and strife, and war. Who use their influence to reconcile opposing parties, and to prevent lawsuits, and hostilities, in families and neighbourhoods. Every man may do something of this; and no man is more like God than he who does it. There ought not to be unlawful and officious interference in that which is none of our but, has business; without any danger of acquiring this character, every

man many opportunities of reconciling opposing parties. Friends, neighbours, men of influence, lawyers, physicians, may do much to promote peace. And it should be taken in hand in the beginning. "The beginning of strife," says Solomon, "is like the letting out of water." "An ounce of prevention," says the English proverb, "is worth a pound of cure." Long and most deadly quarrels might be prevented by a little kind interference in the beginning. Children of God. Those who resemble God, or who manifest a spirit like his. He is the Author of peace, (1Cor 14:33) and all those who endeavour to promote peace are like him, and are worthy to be called his children.

The peace-makers are happy, Mt 5:9. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable; the blessed ones are pure toward God, and peaceable toward men; for with reference to both, conscience must be kept void of offence. The connection between peace and puity; purity of heart and peaceableness of life accompany one another. There is no inward purity where there is not an endeavour after outward peace. The peace-makers are those who have,

1. A peaceable disposition: as, to make a lie, is to be given and addicted to lying, so, to make peace, is to have a strong and hearty affection to peace. I am for peace, Ps 120:7. It is to love, and desire, and delight in peace; to be put in it as in our element, and to study to be quiet.

2. A peaceable conversation; industriously, as far as we can, to preserve the peace that it be not broken, and to recover it when it is broken; to hearken to proposals of peace ourselves, and to be ready to make them to others; where distance is among brethren and neighbours, to do all we can to accommodate it, and to be repairers of the breaches. The making of peace is sometimes a thankless office, and it is the lot of him who parts a fray, to have blows on both sides; yet it is a good office, and we must be forward to it. Some think that this is intended especially as a lesson for ministers,

who should do all they can to reconcile those who are at variance, and to promote Christian love among those under their charge.

Now,
(1.) Such persons are blessed; for they have the satisfaction of enjoying themselves, by keeping the peace, and of being truly serviceable to others, by disposing them to peace. They are working together with Christ, who came into the world to slay all enmities, and to proclaim peace on earth.

(2.) They shall be called the children of God; it will be an evidence to themselves that they are so; God will own them as such, and herein they will resemble him. He is the God of peace; the Son of God is the Prince of peace; the Spirit of adoption is a Spirit of peace. Since God has declared himself reconcilable to us all, he will not own those for his children who are implacable in their enmity to one another; for if the peacemakers are blessed, woe to the peace-breakers! Now by this it appears, that Christ never intended to have his religion propagated by fire and sword, or penal laws, or to acknowledge bigotry, or intemperate zeal, as the mark of his disciples. The children of this world love to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are the peace-makers, the quiet in the land.

10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Persecuted. To persecute, means literally to pursue, follow after, as one does a flying enemy. Here it means to vex, or oppress one, on account of his religion. They persecute others who injure their names, reputation, property, or endanger or take their life, on account of their religious opinions.

For righteousness' sake. Because they are righteous, or are the friends of God. We are not to seek persecution. We are not to provoke it by strange sentiments or conduct, or by violating the laws of civil society, or by modes of speech that are unnecessarily offensive to others. But if, in the honest effort to be Christians, and to live the life of Christians, others persecute and revile us, we are to consider this as a blessing. It is all evidence that we are the

children of God, and that he will defend us. All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution, 2Ti 3:12

Their's is the kingdom of heaven. They have evidence that they are Christians, and shall be brought to heaven.

1. That all the disciples and followers of Christ, live they ever so holily and inoffensively in the world, yet must they expect suffering and persecution.

2. That the keenest and sharpest edge of persecution is usually turned against the ministers of Christ, and falls heaviest on the prophets of God.

3. That such sufferings and such persecutions as will afford a man solid comfort, and entitle him to real blessedness, must be endured and undergone for righteousness-sake.

4. That it is the will and command of Christ, that those which suffer for him, and for righteousness-sake, should not only be meek and patient, but joyous and cheerful: rejoice, and be exceeding glad.

5. That such a patient and cheerful suffering of persecution for Christ in this life, shall certainly be rewarded with the glory and blessedness of the life that is to come. Great is your reward, &c.

How entirely this final beatitude has its ground in the Old Testament, is evident from the concluding words, where the encouragement held out to endure such persecutions consists in its being but a continuation of what was experienced by the Old Testament servants of God. But how, it may be asked, could such beautiful features of character provoke persecution? To this the following answers should suffice: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." "The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the

world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "There is yet one man (said wicked Ahab to good Jehoshaphat) by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil" (Joh 3:20; 7:7; 15:19; 2Ch 18:7). But more particularly, the seven characters here described are all in the teeth of the spirit of the world, insomuch that such hearers of this discourse as breathed that spirit must have been startled, and had their whole system of thought and action rudely dashed. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of men's heart; a pensive disposition, in the view of one's universal deficiencies before God, is ill relished by the callous, indifferent, laughing, self-satisfied world; a meek and quiet spirit, taking wrong, is regarded as pusillanimous, and rasps against the proud, resentful spirit of the world; that craving after spiritual blessings rebukes but too unpleasantly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; so does a merciful spirit the hard-heartedness of the world; purity of heart contrasts painfully with painted hypocrisy; and the peacemaker cannot easily be endured by the contentious, quarrelsome world. Thus does "righteousness" come to be "persecuted." But blessed are they who, in spite of this, dare to be righteous.

11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Revile you. Reproach you; call you by evil and contemptuous names; ridicule you because you are Christians. Thus they said of Jesus, that he was a Samaritan and had a devil; that he was mad; and thus they reviled and mocked him on the cross. But being reviled, he reviled not again, (1Pet 2:23) and thus being reviled, we should bless, (1Cor 4:12) and thus, though the contempt of the world is not in itself desirable, yet it is blessed to tread in the footsteps of Jesus, to imitate his example, and even to suffer for his sake, Php 1:29.

All manner of evil--falsely. An emphasis should be laid on the word falsely in this passage. It is not blessed to have evil spoken of us if we deserve it; but if we deserve it not, then we should not consider it as a calamity. We should take it patiently, and show how much

the Christian, under the consciousness of innocence, can bear, 1Pet 3:13-18.

For my sake. Because you are attached to me; because you are Christians. We are not to seek such things. We are not to do things to offend others; to treat them harshly or unkindly, and court revilings. We are not to say or do things, though they may be on the subject of religion, designed to disgust or offend. But if, in the faithful endeavour to be Christians, we are reviled, as our Master was, then we are to take it with patience, and to remember that thousands before us have been treated in like manner. When thus reviled, or persecuted, we are to be meek, patient, humble; not angry; not reviling again; but endeavouring to do good to our persecutors and slanderers, 2Ti 2:24,25. In this way, many have been convinced of the power and excellence of that religion which they were persecuting and reviling. They have seen that nothing else but Christianity could impart such patience and meekness to the persecuted; and have, by this means, been constrained to submit themselves to the gospel of Jesus. Long since, it became a proverb, "that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake—Observe this. He had before said, "for righteousness' sake." Here He identifies Himself and His cause with that of righteousness, binding up the cause of righteousness in the world with the reception of Himself. Would Moses, or David, or Isaiah, or Paul have so expressed themselves? Never. Doubtless they suffered for righteousness' sake. But to have called this "their sake," would, as every one feels, have been very unbecoming. Whereas He that speaks, being Righteousness incarnate (see Mr 1:24; Ac 3:14; Re 3:7), when He so speaks, speaks only like Himself.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven:
for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, are happy. This is the greatest paradox of all, and peculiar to Christianity; and therefore it is put last, and more largely insisted upon than any of the rest, Mt 5:10-12. This beatitude, like Pharaoh's dream, is

doubled, because hardly credited, and yet the thing is certain; and in the latter part there is change of the person, "Blessed are ye--ye my disciples, and immediate followers. This is that which you, who excel in virtue, are more immediately concerned in; for you must reckon upon hardships and troubles more than other men." Observe here,

1 The case of suffering saints described; and it is a hard case, and a very piteous one.

(1.) They are persecuted, hunted, pursued, run down, as noxious beasts are, that are sought for to be destroyed; as if a Christian did caput gerere lupinum--bear a wolf's head, as an outlaw is said to do--any one that finds him may slay him; they are abandoned as the offscouring of all things; fined, imprisoned, banished, stripped of their estates, excluded from all places of profit and trust, scourged, racked, tortured, always delivered to death, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter. This has been the effect of the enmity of the serpent's seed against the holy seed, ever since the time of righteous Abel. It was so in Old-Testament times, as we find, Heb 11:35, &c. Christ has told us that it would much more be so with the Christian church, and we are not to think it strange, 1Jo 3:13. He has left us an example.

(2.) The are reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Nicknames, and names of reproach, are fastened upon them, upon particular persons, and upon the generation of the righteous in the gross, to render them odious; sometimes to make them formidable, that they may be powerfully assailed; things are laid to their charge that they knew not, Ps 35:11,Jer 20:18,Ac 17:6. Those who have had no power in their hands to do them any other mischief, could yet do this; and those who have had power to persecute, had found it necessary to do this too, to justify themselves in their barbarous usage of them; they could not have baited them, if they had not dressed them in bear-skins; nor have given them the worst of treatment, if they had not first represented them as the worst of men. They will revile you, and persecute you. Note, Reviling the saints is persecuting them, and will be found so shortly, when hard speeches must be accounted

for (Jude 1:15), and cruel mockings, Heb 11:36. They will say all manner of evil of you falsely; sometimes before the seat of judgment, as witnesses; sometimes in the seat of the scornful, with hypocritical mockers at feasts; they are the song of the drunkards; sometimes to face their faces, as Shimei cursed David; sometimes behind their backs, as the enemies of Jeremiah did. Note, There is no evil so black and horrid, which, at one time or other, has not been said, falsely, of Christ's disciples and followers.

(3.) All this is for righteousness' sake (Mt 5:10); for my sake, Mt 5:11. If for righteousness' sake, then for Christ's sake, for he is nearly interested in the work of righteousness. Enemies to righteousness are enemies to Christ. This precludes those from the blessedness who suffer justly, and are evil spoken of truly for their real crimes; let such be ashamed and confounded, it is part of their punishment; it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. Those suffer for righteousness' sake, who suffer because they will not sin against their consciences, and who suffer for doing that which is good. Whatever pretence persecutors have, it is the power of godliness that they have an enmity to; it is really Christ and his righteousness that are maligned, hated, and persecuted; For thy sake I have borne reproach, Ps 69:9,Ro 8:36.

2 The comforts of suffering saints laid down.

(1.) They are blessed; for they now, in their life-time, receive their evil things (Lu 16:25), and receive them upon a good account. They are blessed; for it is an honour to them (Ac 5:41); it is an opportunity of glorifying Christ, of doing good, and of experiencing special comforts and visits of grace and tokens of his presence, 2Co 1:5,Da 3:25.Ro 8:29.

(2.) They shall be recompensed; Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They have at present a sure title to it, and sweet foretastes of it; and shall ere long be in possession of it. Though there be nothing in those sufferings than can, in strictness, merit of God (for the sins of the best deserve the worst), yet this is here promised as a reward (Mt 5:12); Great is your reward in heaven: so great, as far to transcend the service. It is in heaven, future, and out of sight; but well secured, out of the reach of chance, fraud,

and violence. Note, God will provide that those who lose for him, though it be life itself, shall not lose by him in the end. Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompence for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which has borne up the suffering saints in all ages--this joy set before them.

(3.) "So persecuted they the prophets that were before you, Mt 5:12. They were before you in excellency, above what you are yet arrived at; they were before you in time, that they might be examples to you of suffering affliction and of patience, Jam 5:10. They were in like manner persecuted and abused; and can you expect to go to heaven in a way by yourself? Was not Isaiah mocked for his line upon line? Elisha for his bald head? Were not all the prophets thus treated? Therefore marvel not at it as a strange thing, murmur not at it as a hard thing; it is a comfort to see the way of suffering a beaten road, and an honour to follow such leaders. That grace which was sufficient for them, to carry them through their sufferings, shall not be deficient to you. Those who are your enemies are the seed and successors of them who of old mocked the messengers of the Lord," 2Ch 36:16,Mt 23:31,Ac 7:52.

The Salt of the Earth

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the salt of the earth. Salt renders food pleasant and palatable, and preserves from putrefaction. So Christians, by their lives and instructions, are to keep the world from entire moral corruption. By bringing down, by their prayers, the blessing of God, and by their influence and example, they save the world from universal vice and crime.

Salt have lost his savour. That is, if it has become insipid, tasteless, or have lost its preserving properties. The salt used in this country is a chemical compound--muriate of soda-- and if the saltness were lost, or it were to lose its savour, there would be nothing remaining.

It enters into the very nature of the substance. In eastern countries, however, the salt used was impure, mingled with vegetable and earthy substances; so that it might lose the whole of its saltness, and a considerable quantity of earthy matter remain. This was good for nothing, except that it was used, as it is said, to place in paths, or walks, as we use gravel. This kind of salt is common still in that country. It is found in the earth in veins or layers, and when exposed to the sun and rain, loses its saltness entirely. Maundrell says,

"I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour. The inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof."

As it Christ had said, "Ye are to be preachers and patterns to the world; ye are appointed by your pure doctrine, and good conversation, to purge the world from that corruption in which it lies: but if you lose either soundness of doctrine, or the savour of a good conversation, you will be wholly useless, as to these great ends, and must expect to be cast off by me, as unsavoury salt is cast to the dunghill."

Ye are the salt of the earth. This would encourage and support them under their sufferings, that, though they should be treated with contempt, yet they should really be blessings to the world, and the more so for their suffering thus. The prophets, who went before them, were the salt of the land of Canaan; but the apostles were the salt of the whole earth, for they must go into all the world to preach the gospel. It was a discouragement to them that they were so few and so weak. What could they do in so large a province as the whole earth? Nothing, if they were to work by force of arms and dint of sword; but, being to work silent as salt, one handful of that salt would diffuse its savour far and wide; would go a great way, and work insensibly and irresistibly as leaven, Mt 13:33. The doctrine of the gospel is as salt; it is penetrating, quick, and powerful (Heb 4:12); it reaches the heart Ac 2:37. It is cleansing, it is relishing, and preserves from putrefaction. We read of the savour of the

knowledge of Christ (2Co 2:14); for all other learning is insipid without that. An everlasting covenant is called a covenant of salt (Nu 18:19); and the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Salt was required in all the sacrifices (Le 2:13), in Ezekiel's mystical temple, Eze 43:24. Now Christ's disciples having themselves learned the doctrine of the gospel, and being employed to teach it to others, were as salt. Note, Christians, and especially ministers, are the salt of the earth.

1. If they be as they should be they are as good salt, white, and small, and broken into many grains, but very useful and necessary. Pliny says, Sine sale, vita humana non potest degere--Without salt human life cannot be sustained. See in this,

(1.) What they are to be in themselves--seasoned with the gospel, with the salt of grace; thoughts and affections, words and actions, all seasoned with grace, Col 4:6. Have salt in yourselves, else you cannot diffuse it among others, Mk 9:50.

(2.) What they are to be to others; they must not only be good but do good, must insinuate themselves into the minds of the people, not to serve any secular interest of their own, but that they might transform them into the taste and relish of the gospel.

(3.) What great blessings they are to the world. Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were a vast heap of unsavoury stuff, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace, and so to render it acceptable to God, to the angels, and to all that relish divine things.

(4.) How they must expect to be disposed of. They must not be laid on a heap, must not continue always together at Jerusalem, but must be scattered as salt upon the meat, here a grain and there a grain; as the Levites were dispersed in Israel, that, wherever they live, they may communicate their savour. Some have observed, that whereas

it is foolishly called an ill omen to have the salt fall towards us, it is really an ill omen to have the salt fall from us.

2. If they be not, they are as salt that has lost its savour. If you, who should season others, are yourselves unsavoury, void of spiritual life, relish, and vigour; if a Christian be so, especially if a minister be so, his condition is very sad; for,

(1.) He is irrecoverable: Wherewith shall it be salted? Salt is a remedy for unsavoury meat, but there is no remedy for unsavoury salt. Christianity will give a man a relish; but if a man can take up and continue the profession of it, and yet remain flat and foolish, and graceless and insipid, no other doctrine, no other means, can be applied, to make him savoury. If Christianity do not do it, nothing will.

(2.) He is unprofitable: It is thenceforth good for nothing; what use can it be put to, in which it will not do more hurt than good? As a man without reason, so is a Christian without grace. A wicked man is the worst of creatures; a wicked Christian is the worst of men; and a wicked minister is the worst of Christians.

(3.) He is doomed to ruin and rejection; He shall be cast out--expelled the church and the communion of the faithful, to which he is a blot and a burden; and he shall be trodden under foot of men. Let God be glorified in the shame and rejection of those by whom he has been reproached, and who have made themselves fit for nothing but to be trampled upon.

The Light of the World

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

The light of the world. The light of the world often denotes the sun, Jn 11:9. The sun renders objects visible, shows their form their nature, their beauties, and deformities. The term light is often applied to religious teachers. See Jn 1:4, 8:12, Is 49:6. It is pre-

eminently applied to Jesus in these places; because he is, in the moral world, what the sun is in the natural world. The apostles, and Christian ministers, and all Christians, are lights of the world, because they, by their instructions and examples, show what God requires, what is the condition of man, what is the way of duty, peace, and happiness--the way that leads to heaven.

A city that is set on an hill, etc. Many of the cities of Judea were placed on the summits or sides of mountains, and could be seen from afar. This was the case with Jerusalem; and it is said by Maundrell, that near the place where our Saviour is supposed to have delivered his sermon, there is still such a town, called Saphat, anciently This can Bethesda. be seen far and near. Perhaps Jesus pointed to such a city, and told his disciples that they were like it. They were seen from far. Their actions could not be hid. The eyes of the World were upon them. They must be seen; and as this was the case, they ought to be holy, harmless, and undefiled.

The doctrine delivered is this, That Christians in general and the ministers of the gospel in particular, are the light of the world. But how? Not originally, but derivatively; not efficiently, but instrumentally, Christ himself is the light of the world by way of original, his ministers are lights by way of derivation, and participation from him.

1. Christ teaches them the end why he communicated light unto them, namely, to enlighten, direct, and quicken others: even as the sun in the firmament, and a candle in the house, diffuses and disperses its light to all that are within reach of it; so should all Christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, direct people in their way towards heaven.

2. The inference which our Saviour draws from the foregoing doctrine, ye are the light of the world, therefore let your light shine before men.

a. That our good works must shine, but not blaze; all vain glory and ostentation must be avoided in the good works we do.

b. Although we must abound in good works that men may see them, yet not to be seen of men.

c. That the glorifying of God, and doing good to mankind, must be the great end we propound in all the good works which we perform.

Ye are the light of the world—This being the distinctive title which our Lord appropriates to Himself (Joh 8:12; 9:5; and see Joh 1:4, 9; 3:19; 12:35, 36) —a title expressly said to be unsuitable even to the highest of all the prophets (Joh 1:8) —it must be applied here by our Lord to His disciples only as they shine with His light upon the world, in virtue of His Spirit dwelling in them, and the same mind being in them which was also in Christ Jesus. Nor are Christians anywhere else so called. Nay, as if to avoid the august title which the Master has appropriated to Himself, Christians are said to "shine"—not as "lights," as our translators render it, but—"as luminaries in the world" (Php 2:15); and the Baptist is said to have been "the burning and shining"—not "light," as in our translation, but "lamp" of his day (Joh 5:35). Let it be observed, too, that while the two figures of salt and sunlight both express the same function of Christians—their blessed influence on their fellow men—they each set this forth under a different aspect. Salt operates internally, in the mass with which it comes in contact; the sunlight operates externally, irradiating all that it reaches. Hence Christians are warily styled "the salt of the earth"—with reference to the masses of mankind with whom they are expected to mix; but "the light of the world"—with reference to the vast and variegated surface which feels its fructifying and gladdening radiance. The same distinction is observable in the second pair of those seven parables which our Lord spoke from the Galilean Lake—that of the "mustard seed," which grew to be a great overshadowing tree, answering to the sunlight which invests the world, and that of the "leaven," which a woman took and, like the salt, hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (Mt 13:31-33).

Ye are the light of the world, Mt 5:14. This also bespeaks them useful, as the former (Sole et sale nihil utilius--Nothing more useful than the sun and salt), but more glorious. All Christians are light in the Lord (Eph 5:8), and must shine as lights (Php 2:15), but ministers in a special manner. Christ call himself the Light of the world (Joh 8:12), and they are workers together with him, and have some of his honour put upon them. Truly the light is sweet, it is welcome; the light of the first day of the world was so, when it shone out of darkness; so is the morning light of every day; so is the gospel, and those that spread it, to all sensible people. The world sat in darkness, Christ raised up his disciples to shine in it; and, that they may do so, from him they borrow and derive their light.

This similitude is here explained in two things:

1. As the lights of the world, they are illustrious and conspicuous, and have many eyes upon them. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. The disciples of Christ, especially those who are forward and zealous in his service, become remarkable, and are taken notice of as beacons. They are for signs (Isa 7:18), men wondered at (Zec 3:8); all their neighbours have any eye upon them. Some admire them, commend them, rejoice in them, and study to imitate them; others envy them, hate them, censure them, and study to blast them. They are concerned therefore to walk circumspectly, because of their observers; they are as spectacles to the world, and must take heed of every thing that looks ill, because they are so much looked at. The disciples of Christ were obscure men before he called them, but the character he put upon them dignified them, and as preachers of the gospel they made a figure; and though they were reproached for it by some, they were respected for it by others, advanced to thrones, and made judges (Lu 22:30); for Christ will honour those that honour him.

2. As the lights of the world, they are intended to illuminate and give light to others (Mt 5:15), and therefore, (1.) They shall be set up as lights. Christ has lighted these candles, they shall not be put under a bushel, not confined always, as they are now, to the cities of Galilee, or the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but they shall be

sent into all the world. The churches are the candlesticks, the golden candlesticks, in which these lights are placed, that they light may be diffused; and the gospel is so strong a light, and carries with it so much of its own evidence, that, like a city on a hill, it cannot be hid, it cannot but appear to be from God, to all those who do not wilfully shut their eyes against it. It will give light to all that are in the house, to all that will draw near to it, and come where it is. Those to whom it does not give light, must thank themselves; they will not be in the house with it; will not make a diligent and impartial enquiry into it, but are prejudiced against it. (2.) They must shine as lights, [1.] By their good preaching. The knowledge they have, they must communicate for the good of others; not put it under a bushel, but spread it. The talent must not be buried in a napkin, but traded with. The disciples of Christ must not muffle themselves up in privacy and obscurity, under pretence of contemplation, modesty, or self-preservation, but, as they have received the gift, must minister the same, Lu 12:3. [2.] By their good living. They must be burning and shining lights (Joh 5:35); must evidence, in their whole conversation, that they are indeed followers of Christ, Jam 3:13. They must be to others for instruction, direction, quickening, and comfort, Job 29:11. See here,

First, How our light must shine--by doing such good works as men may see, and may approve of; such works as are of good report among them that are without, and as will therefore give them cause to think well of Christianity. We must do good works that may be seen to the edification of others, but not that they may be seen to our own ostentation; we are bid to pray in secret, and what lies between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open and obvious to the sight of men, we must study to make congruous to our profession, and praiseworthy, Php 4:8. Those about us must not only hear our good words, but see our good works; that they may be convinced that religion is more than a bare name, and that we do not only make a profession of it, but abide under the power of it.

Secondly, For what end our light must shine--"That those who see your good works may be brought, not to glorify you (which was the things the Pharisees aimed at, and it spoiled all their performances), but to glorify your Father which is in heaven." Note, The glory of God is the great thing we must aim at in every thing we do in religion, 1Pe 4:11. In this centre the lines of all our actions must meet. We must not only endeavor to glorify God ourselves, but we must do all we can to bring others to glorify him. The sight of our good works will do this, by furnishing them, 1. With matter for praise. "Let them see your good works, that they may see the power of God's grace in you, and may thank him for it, and give him the glory of it, who has given such power unto men." 2. With motives of piety. "Let them see your good works, that they may be convinced of the truth and excellency of the Christian religion, may be provoked by a holy emulation to imitate your good works, and so may glorify God." Note, The holy, regular, and exemplary conversation of the saints, may do much towards the conversion of sinners; those who are unacquainted with religion, may hereby be brought to know what it is. Examples teach. And those who are prejudiced against it, may hereby by brought in love with it, and thus there is a winning virtue in a godly conversation.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Let your light so shine, etc. Let your holy life, your pure conversation, and your faithful instruction, be everywhere seen and known, Always, in all societies, in all business, at home and abroad, in prosperity and adversity, let it be seen that you are real Christians.

That they may see your good works. This is not the motive to influence us, simply that we must be seen, (comp. Mt 6:1); but that our heavenly Father may be glorified. It is not right to do a thing merely to be seen by others, for this is pride and ostentation; but we are to do it that, being seen, God may be honoured. The Pharisees acted to be seen of men; true Christians act to glorify God, and care

little what men may think of them, except as by their conduct others may be brought to honour God.

Glorify your Father. Praise, or honour God, or be led to worship him. Seeing in your lives the excellency of religion, the power and purity of the gospel, they may be won to be Christians also, and give praise and glory to God for his mercy to a lost world. We learn here,

(1.) that religion, if it exists, cannot be concealed.

(2.) That where it is not manifest in the life, it does not exist.

(3.) That professors of religion, who live like other men, give evidence that they have never been renewed.

(4.) That to attempt to conceal or hide our Christian knowledge or experience is to betray our trust, and injure the cause of piety, and render our lives useless. And,

(5.) that good actions will be seen, and will lead men to honour God. If we have no other way of doing good--if we are poor, and unlearned and unknown--yet we may do good by our lives. No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain. The feeblest light at midnight is of use.

> "How far this little calldie throws his beams!"
> So shines a good deed in a naughty world!"

As nobody lights a lamp only to cover it up, but places it so conspicuously as to give light to all who need light, so Christians, being the light of the world, instead of hiding their light, are so to hold it forth before men that they may see what a life the disciples of Christ lead, and seeing this, may glorify their Father for so redeeming, transforming, and ennobling earth's sinful children, and

opening to themselves the way to like redemption and transformation.

Jesus' Attitude toward the Law

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I
am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Think not that I am come, etc. Our Saviour was just entering on his work. It was important for him to state what he came to do. By his setting up to be a teacher in opposition to the Scribes and Pharisees, some might charge him with an intention to destroy their law, and abolish the customs of the nation. He therefore told them that he did not come for that end, but really to fulfil or accomplish what was in the law and the prophets. To destroy. To abrogate; to deny their Divine authority; to set men free from the obligation to obey them.

The law. The five books of Moses, called the law. Lk 24:44.

The prophets. The books which the prophets wrote. These two divisions here seem to comprehend the Old Testament; and Jesus says that he came not to do away or destroy the authority of the Old Testament.

But to fulfil. To complete the design; to fill up what was predicted; to accomplish what was intended in them. The word fulfil, also, means sometimes to teach or inculcate, Co 1:25. The law of Moses contained many sacrifices and rites which were designed to shadow forth the Messiah, Heb 9:1-28. These were fulfilled when he came and offered himself a sacrifice to God--

"A sacrifice of nobler name,
And richer blood than they."

The prophets contained many predictions respecting his coming and death. These were all to be fulfilled and fully accomplished by his life and his sufferings.

Our Saviour here informs his followers, That he had no design to abrogate any part of the moral law, or to loose mankind from the least measure of their duty either towards God or man, but that he came to fulfil it:

1. By yielding a personal obedience to it.

2. By giving a fuller and stricter interpretation of it, than the Pharisess were wont to give; for they taught, that the law did only reach to the outward man, and restrain outward actions.

As if Christ had said, "Though I preach a more special doctrine than is contained even in the letter of the moral law, yet think not that I am come to destroy and dissolve the obligation of that law, for I came to fulfil the types and predictions of the prophets, and to give you the full sense and spiritual import of the moral law."

He protests against the thought of cancelling and weakening the Old Testament; Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets.

"Let not the pious Jews, who have an affection for the law and the prophets, fear that I come to destroy them." Let them be not prejudiced against Christ and his doctrine, from a jealousy that this kingdom he came to set up, would derogate from the honour of the scriptures, which they had embraced as coming from God, and of which they had experienced the power and purity; no, let them be satisfied that Christ has no ill design upon the law and the prophets. "Let not the profane Jews, who have a disaffection to the law and the prophets, and are weary of that yoke, hope that I am come to destroy them." Let not carnal libertines imagine that the Messiah is come to discharge them from the obligation of divine precepts and yet to secure to them divine promises, to make the happy and yet to

give them leave to live as they list. Christ commands nothing now which was forbidden either by the law of nature or the moral law, nor forbids any thing which those laws had enjoined; it is a great mistake to think he does, and he here takes care to rectify the mistake; I am not come to destroy. The Saviour of souls is the destroyer of nothing but the works of the devil, of nothing that comes from God, much less of those excellent dictates which we have from Moses and the prophets. No, he came to fulfil them. That is,

[1.] To obey the commands of the law, for he was made under the law, Ga 4:4. He in all respects yielded obedience to the law, honoured his parents, sanctified the sabbath, prayed, gave alms, and did that which never any one else did, obeyed perfectly, and never broke the law in any thing.

[2.] To make good the promises of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, which did all bear witness to him. The covenant of grace is, for substance, the same now that it was then, and Christ the Mediator of it.

[3.] To answer the types of the law; thus (as bishop Tillotson expresses it), he did not make void, but make good, the ceremonial law, and manifested himself to be the Substance of all those shadows.

[4.] To fill up the defects of it, and so to complete and perfect it. Thus the word plerosai properly signifies. If we consider the law as a vessel that had some water in it before, he did not come to pour out the water, but to fill the vessel up to the brim; or, as a picture that is first rough-drawn, displays some outlines only of the piece intended, which are afterwards filled up; so Christ made an improvement of the law and the prophets by his additions and explications.

[5.] To carry on the same design; the Christian institutes are so far from thwarting and contradicting that which was the main design

of the Jewish religion, that they promote it to the highest degree. The gospel is the time of reformation (Heb 9:10), not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it, and, consequently, its establishment.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Till heaven and earth pass. This expression denotes that the law never should be destroyed till it should be all fulfilled. It is the same as saying, everything else may change--the very earth and heaven may pass away--but the law of God shall not be destroyed, till its whole design shall be accomplished. That the law of God is an eternal and unchangeable rule of life and manners.

One jot. The word jot, or yod--'--is the name of the Hebrew letter I, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

One tittle. The Hebrew letters were written with small points or apices, as in the letter Schin--*** or Sin ***-- which serve to distinguish one letter from another. To change a small point of one letter, therefore, might vary the meaning of a word, and destroy the sense. Hence the Jews were exceedingly cautious in writing these letters, and considered the smallest change or omission a reason for destroying the whole manuscript when they were transcribing the Old Testament. The expression, "one jot or tittle," became proverbial, and means that the smallest part of the law should not be destroyed.

The laws of the Jews are common!y divided into moral, ceremonial, and judicial. The moral laws are such as grow out of the nature of things, which cannot, therefore, be changed--such as the duty of loving God and his creatures. These cannot be abolished as it can never be made right to hate God, or to hate our fellow-men Of this kind are the ten commandments; and these our Saviour has neither abolished nor superseded. The ceremonial laws are such as are appointed to meet certain states of society, or to regulate the religious rites and ceremonies of a people. These can be changed when circumstances are changed, and yet the moral law be

untouched. A general may command his soldiers to appear sometimes in a red coat, and sometimes in blue, or in yellow. This would be a ceremonial law, and might be changed as he pleased. The duty of obeying him, and of being faithful to his country, could not be changed. This is a moral law. A parent might suffer his children to have fifty different dresses at different times, and love them equally in all. The dress is a mere matter of ceremony, and may be changed. The child, in all these garments, is bound to love and obey his father. This is a moral law, and cannot be changed. So the laws of the Jews. Those to regulate mere matters of ceremony, and rites of worship, might be changed. Those requiring love and obedience to God, and love to men, could not be changed, and Christ did not attempt it, Mt 19:19, 22:37-39, Lk 10:27, Rom 13:9.

A third species of law was the judicial, or those regulating courts of justice, contained in the Old Testament. These were of the nature of the ceremonial law, and might also be changed at pleasure. The judicial law regulated the courts of justice of the Jews. It was adapted to their own civil society. When the form of the Jewish polity was changed, this was of course no longer binding. The ceremonial law was fulfilled by the coming of Christ: the shadow was lost in the substance, and ceased to be binding. The moral law was confirmed and unchanged.

He asserts the perpetuity of it; that not only he designed not the abrogation of it, but that it never should be abrogated (Mt 5:18); "Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, solemnly declare it, that till heaven and earth pass, when time shall be no more, and the unchangeable state of recompences shall supersede all laws, one jot, or one tittle, the least and most minute circumstance, shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled;" for what is it that God is doing in all the operations both of providence and grace, but fulfilling the scripture? Heaven and earth shall come together, and all the fulness thereof be wrapped up in ruin and confusion, rather than any word of God shall fall to the ground, or be in vain. The word of the Lord endures for ever, both that of the law, and that of the gospel. Observe, The care of God concerning his law extends

itself even to those things that seem to be of least account in it, the iotas and the tittles; for whatever belongs to God, and bears his stamp, be it ever so little, shall be preserved. The laws of men are conscious to themselves of so much imperfection, that they allow it for a maxim, Apices juris non sunt jura--The extreme points of the law are not the law, but God will stand by and maintain every iota and every tittle of his law.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

He gives it in charge to his disciples, carefully to preserve the law, and shows them the danger of the neglect and contempt of it (Mt 5:19); Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least commandments of the law of Moses, much more any of the greater, as the Pharisees did, who neglected the weightier matters of the law, and shall teach men so as they did, who made void the commandment of God with their traditions (Mt 15:3), he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. Though the Pharisees be cried up for such teachers as should be, they shall not be employed as teachers in Christ's kingdom; but whosoever shall do and teach them, as Christ's disciples would, and thereby prove themselves better friends to the Old Testament than the Pharisees were, they, though despised by men, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Note,

(1.) Among the commands of God there are some less than others; none absolutely little, but comparatively so. The Jews reckon the least of the commandments of the law to be that of the bird's nest (De 22:6,7); yet even that had a significance and an intention very great and considerable.

(2.) It is a dangerous thing, in doctrine or practice, to disannul the least of God's commands; to break them, that is, to go about either to contract the extent, or weaken the obligation of them; whoever does so, will find it is at his peril. Thus to vacate any of the ten commandments, is too bold a stroke for the jealous God to pass by.

It is something more than transgressing the law, it is making void the law, Ps 119:126.

(3.) That the further such corruptions as they spread, the worse they are. It is impudence enough to break the command, but is a greater degree of it to teach men so. This plainly refers to those who at this time sat in Moses' seat, and by their comments corrupted and perverted the text. Opinions that tend to the destruction of serious godliness and the vitals of religion, by corrupt glosses on the scripture, are bad when they are held, but worse when they are propagated and taught, as the word of God. He that does so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, in the kingdom of glory; he shall never come thither, but be eternally excluded; or, rather, in the kingdom of the gospel-church. He is so far from deserving the dignity of a teacher in it, that he shall not so much as be accounted a member of it. The prophet that teaches these lies shall be the tail in that kingdom (Isa 9:15); when truth shall appear in its own evidence, such corrupt teachers, though cried up as the Pharisees, shall be of no account with the wise and good. Nothing makes ministers more contemptible and base than corrupting the law, Mal 2:8,11. Those who extenuate and encourage sin, and discountenance and put contempt upon strictness in religion and serious devotion, are the dregs of the church. But, on the other hand, Those are truly honourable, and of great account in the church of Christ, who lay out themselves by their life and doctrine to promote the purity and strictness of practical religion; who both do and teach that which is good; for those who do not as they teach, pull down with one hand what they build up with the other, and give themselves the lie, and tempt men to think that all religion is a delusion; but those who speak from experience, who live up to what they preach, are truly great; they honour God, and God will honour them (1Sa 2:30), and hereafter they shall shine as the stars in the kingdom of our Father.

These least commandments. The Pharisees, it is probable, divided the precepts of the law into lesser and greater, teaching that they who violated the former were guilty of a trivial offence only. See Mt 23:23. Christ teaches that in his kingdom they who make this

distinction, or who taught that any laws of God might be violated with impunity, should be called least; while they should be held in high regard who observed all the laws of God without distinction.

Shall be called the least. That is, shall be least. The meaning of this passage seems to be this: "In the kingdom of heaven," that is, in the kingdom of the Messiah, or in the church which he is about to establish, (Mt 3:2) he that breaks the least of these commandments shall be in no esteem, or shall not be regarded as a proper religious teacher. The Pharisees divided the law into greater and lesser precepts. They made no small part of it void by their traditions and divisions, Mt 23:23, 15:3-6. Jesus says, that in his kingdom all this vain division and tradition should cease. Such divisions and distinctions should be a small matter. He that attempted it should be the least of all. Men would be engaged in yielding obedience to all the law of God, without any such vain distinctions.

Shall be called great, he that teaches that all the law of God is binding, and that all of it should be obeyed, without attempting to specify what is most important, shall be a teacher worthy of his office, shall teach the truth, and shall be called great. We learn hence,

(1.) that all the law of God is binding on Christians. Comp. Jas 2:10

(2.) That all the commands of God should be preached, in their proper place, by Christian ministers.

(3.) That they who pretend that there are any laws of God so small that they need not obey them, are unworthy of his kingdom. And,

(4.) that true piety has respect to all the commandments of God, and keeps them, Ps 119:6.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Your righteousness. Your holiness, your views of the nature or righteousness, and your conduct and lives. Unless you are more holy than they are, you cannot be saved.

Shall exceed. Shall excel, or abound more. This righteousness was external, and was not real holiness. The righteousness of true Christians is seated in the heart, and is therefore genuine. Jesus means, that unless they had more real holiness of character than the scribes, they could not be saved.

The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Mt 3:7. Their righteousness consisted in outward observances of the ceremonial and traditional law. They offered sacrifices, fasted often, prayed much, were very punctilious about ablutions and tithes and the ceremonies of religion, but neglected justice, truth, purity, holiness of heart, and did not strive to be pure in their motives before God. See Mt 23: 13-33. The righteousness that Jesus required in his kingdom was purity, chastity, honesty, temperance, the fear of God, and the love of man. It is pure, eternal, teaching the motives, and making the life holy.

The Kingdom of heaven. See Mt 3:2. Shall not be a fit subject of his kingdom here, or saved in the world to come.

Here is the special qualification of that righteousness expressed, which will entitle us to heaven and salvation: it must be a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and that these three ways;

1. In its principle and motive; love to God, and obedience to his command; not the applause and commendation of men.

2. In its aim and end; the Pharisees made themselves. their own credit and esteem, their worldly gain and interest, their ultimate end; and not God's glory, their supreme aim.

3. In the manner of performance; the Pharisees duty wanted that purity and spirituality which the law of God required. They had respect only to the outward action, without any regard to the inward intention, and to that purity of heart which God required.

Quest. In what things are we to exceed the Scribes and Pharisees?

Answ. In sincerity, or by being that within which we seem to be without.
-In simplicity, or having holy ends in our religious actions.
-In humility, or having low and humble thoughts of ourselves, and our best performances.
-In charity, or having compassion on all distressed persons.
-In universality of obedience to all commands.

Learn, That holiness of heart, and righteousness of life, which God's law requires of us, is absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation.

The righteousness which Christ came to establish by this rule, must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, Mt 5:20. This was strange doctrine to those who looked upon the scribes and Pharisees as having arrived at the highest pitch of religion. The scribes were the most noted teachers of the law, and the Pharisees the most celebrated professors of it, and they both sat in Moses' chair (Mt 23:2), and had such a reputation among the people, that they were looked upon as super-conformable to the law, and people did not think themselves obliged to be as good as they; it was therefore a great surprise to them, to hear that they must be better than they, or they should not go to heaven; and therefore Christ here avers it with solemnity; I say unto you, It is so. The scribes and Pharisees were enemies to Christ and his doctrine, and were great oppressors; and yet it must be owned, that there was something commendable in them. They were much in fasting and prayer, and giving of alms; they were punctual in observing the ceremonial appointments, and made it their business to teach others; they had such an interest in the people that they ought, if but two men went to heaven, one

would be a Pharisee; and yet our Lord Jesus here tells his disciples, that the religion he came to establish, did not only exclude the badness, but excel the goodness, of the scribes and Pharisees. We must do more than they, and better than they, or we shall come short of heaven. They were partial in the law, and laid most stress upon the ritual part of it; but we must be universal, and not think it enough to give the priest his tithe, but must give God our hearts. They minded only the outside, but we must make conscience of inside godliness. They aimed at the praise and applause of men, but we must aim at acceptance with God: they were proud of what they did in religion, and trusted to it as a righteousness; but we, when we have done all, must deny ourselves, and say, We are unprofitable servants, and trust only to the righteousness of Christ; and thus we may go beyond the scribes and Pharisees.

The superiority to the Pharisaic righteousness here required is plainly in kind, not degree; for all Scripture teaches that entrance into God's kingdom, whether in its present or future stage, depends, not on the degree of our excellence in anything, but solely on our having the character itself which God demands. Our righteousness, then—if it is to contrast with the outward and formal righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—must be inward, vital, spiritual. Some, indeed, of the scribes and Pharisees themselves might have the very righteousness here demanded; but our Lord is speaking, not of persons, but of the system they represented and taught.

Jesus' Attitude toward Anger

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Ye have heard. Or, this is the common interpretation among the Jews. Jesus proceeds here to comment on some prevailing opinions among the Jews; to show that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was defective; and that men needed a better righteousness, or they could not be saved. He shows what he meant by that better righteousness, by showing that the common opinions of the scribes were erroneous.

By them of old time. This might be translated, to the ancients, referring to Moses and the prophets. But it is more probable that he here refers to the interpreters of the law and the prophets. Jesus did not set himself against the law of Moses, but against the false and pernicious interpretations of the law prevalent in his time.

Thou shalt not kill. See Ex 20:13. This literally denotes taking the life of another, with malice, or with intention to murder him. The Jews understood it as meaning no more. The comment of our Saviour shows that it was spiritual, and was designed to extend to the thoughts and feelings, as well as the external act.

Shall be in danger of. Shall be held guilty, and be punished by. The law of Moses declared that the murderer should be put to death, Lev 24:21, Nu 35:16. It did not say, however, by whom this should be done, and it was left to the Jews to organize courts to have cognizance of such crimes, De 16:18.

The judgment. This was the tribunal that had cognizance of cases of murder, etc. It was a court that sat in each city or town, and consisted commonly of seven members. It was the lowest court among the Jews, and from it an appeal might be taken to the Sanhedrim.

22 but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Now this gloss of theirs upon this commandment was faulty, for it intimated that the law of the sixth commandment was only external, and forbade no more than the act of murder, and laid to restraint upon the inward lusts, from which wars and fightings come. This was indeed the proton pseudos--the fundamental error of the Jewish teachers, that the divine law prohibited only the sinful act, not the sinful thought; they were disposed hærere in cortice--to rest in the letter of the law, and they never enquired into the spiritual meaning of it. Paul, while a Pharisee, did not, till, by the key of the tenth

commandment, divine grace let him into the knowledge of the spiritual nature of all the rest, Ro 7:7,14.

When it exceeds due bounds; when we are hardy and headstrong in our anger, violent and vehement, outrageous and mischievous, and when we seek the hurt of those we are displeased at. This is a breach of the sixth commandment, for he that is thus angry, would kill if he could and durst; he has taken the first step toward it; Cain's killing his brother began in anger; he is a murderer in the account of God, who knows his heart, whence murder proceeds, Mt 15:19.

But I say unto you. Jesus being God as well as man, (Jn 1:1) and, therefore, being the original Giver of the law, had a right to expound it, or change it as he pleased. Comp. Mt 12:6,8. He therefore spoke here and elsewhere as having authority, and not as the scribes. It may be added here, that no mere man ever spake as Jesus did, when explaining or enforcing the law. He did it as having a right to do it; and he that has a right to ordain and change laws in the government of God must be himself Divine.

His brother. By a brother here seems to be meant a neighbour, or perhaps any one with whom we may be associated. As all men are descended from one Father, and are all the creatures of the same God, so they are all brethren; and so every man should be regarded and treated as a brother.

Raca. This is a Syriac word, expressive of great contempt. It comes from a verb signifying to be empty, vain; and hence, as a word of contempt, denotes senseless, stupid, shallow-brains. Jesus teaches here, that to use such words is a violation of the sixth commandment. It is a violation of the spirit of that commandment, and, if indulged, may lead to a more open and dreadful infraction of that law. Children should learn that to use such words is highly offensive to God, for we must give an account of every idle word which we speak in the day of judgment.

In danger of the council. The word translated council is, in the original, sanhedrim, and there can be no doubt that he refers to the Jewish tribunal of that name. This was instituted in the time of the Maccabees, probably about 200 years before Christ. It was composed of seventy-two judges; the high priest was the president of this tribunal. The seventy-two members were made up of the chief priests and elders of the people, and the scribes. The chief priests were such as had discharged the office of the high priest, and those who were the heads of the twenty-four classes of priests, who were called in an honorary way high or chief priests. See Mt 2:4. The elders were the princes of the tribes, or heads of the family associations. It is not to be supposed that all the elders had a right to a seat here, but such only as were elected to the office. The scribes were learned men of the nation, elected to this tribunal, being neither of the rank of priests nor elders. This tribunal had cognizance of the great affairs of the nation. Till the time when Judea was subjected to the Romans, it had the power of life and death. It still retained the power of passing sentence, though the Roman magistrate held the right of execution. It usually sat in Jerusalem, in a room near the temple. It was before this tribunal that our Saviour was tried. It was then assembled in the palace of the high priest, Mt 26:3-57; Jn 18:24.

Thou fool. This term expressed more than want of wisdom. It was expressive of the highest guilt. It had been commonly used to denote those who were idolaters, (De 22:21) and also one who is guilty of great crimes, Ps 14:1. Our Lord Himself applies the very word "fools" twice in one breath to the blind guides of the people (Mt 23:17, 19) —although, in both cases, it is to false reasoners rather than persons that such words are applied.

He tells them, that given opprobrious language to our brother is tongue-murder, calling him, Raca, and, Thou fool. When this is done with mildness and for a good end, to convince others of their vanity and folly, it is not sinful. Thus James says, O vain man; and Paul, Thou fool; and Christ himself, O fools, and slow of heart. But when it proceeds from anger and malice within, it is the smoke of

that fire which is kindled from hell, and falls under the same character.

(1.) Raca is a scornful word, and comes from pride, "Thou empty fellow;" it is the language of that which Solomon calls proud wrath (Pr 21:24), which tramples upon our brother-disdains to set him even with the dogs of our flock. This people who knoweth not the law, is cursed, is such language, Joh 7:49.

(2.) Thou fool, is a spiteful word, and comes from hatred; looking upon him, not only as mean and not to be honoured, but as vile and not to be loved; "Thou wicked man, thou reprobate." The former speaks a man without sense, this (in scripture language) speaks a man without grace; the more the reproach touches his spiritual condition, the worse it is; the former is a haughty taunting of our brother, this is a malicious censuring and condemning of him, as abandoned of God. Now this is a breach of the sixth commandment; malicious slanders and censures are poison under the tongue, that kills secretly and slowly; bitter words are as arrows that would suddenly (Ps 64:3), or as a sword in the bones. The good name of our neighbour, which is better than life, is thereby stabbed and murdered; and it is an evidence of such an ill-will to our neighbour as would strike at his life, if it were in our power.

Hellfire. The original of this is, "the GEHENNA of ore." The word GEHENNA, commonly translated hell, is made up of two Hebrew words, and signifies the valley of Hinnom. This was formerly a pleasant valley, near to Jerusalem, on the south, [or south- east.] A small brook or torrent usually ran through this valley, and partly encompassed the city. This valley the idolatrous Israelites devoted formerly to the horrid worship of Moloch, 2Kgs 16:3, 2Chr 28:3. In that worship the ancient Jewish writers inform us that the idol of Moloch was of brass, adorned with a royal crown, having the head of a calf, and his arms extended, as if to embrace any one. When they offered children to him, they heated the statue within by a great fire; and when it was burning hot, they put the miserable child into his arms, where it was soon consumed by the heat; and, in order

that the cries of the child might not be heard, they made a great noise with drums and other instruments about the idol. These drums were called Toph; and hence a common name of the place was TOPHET, Jer 7:31,32.

The following cut may furnish a useful illustration of this idol.

After the return of the Jews from captivity, this place was held in such abhorrence, that, by the example of Josiah, (2Ki 23:10) it was made the place where to throw all the dead carcases and filth of the city; and was not unfrequently the place of executions. It became, therefore, extremely offensive; the sight was terrific; the air was polluted and pestilential; and to preserve it in any manner pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning there. The extreme loathsomeness of the place; the filth and putrefaction; the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and by night, made it one of the most appalling and terrific objects with which a Jew was acquainted. It was called the GEHENNA of fire; and was the image which our Saviour often employed to denote the future punishment of the wicked.

In this verse it denotes a degree of suffering higher than the punishment inflicted by the court of seventy, or the sanhedrim; and the whole verse may therefore mean, "He that hates his brother is guilty of a violation of the sixth commandment, and shall be punished with a severity similar to that inflicted by the court of judgment. He that shall suffer his passions to transport him to still greater extravagances, and shall make him an object of derision and contempt, shall be exposed to still severer punishment, corresponding to that which the sanhedrim, or council, inflicts. But he who shall load his brother with odious appellations and abusive language, shall incur the severest degree of punishment, represented by being burnt alive in the horrid and awful valley of Hinnom."

The amount, then, of this difficult and important verse is this: The Jews considered but one crime a violation of the sixth

commandment, viz., actual murder, or willful, unlawful, taking life. Jesus says that the commandment is much broader. It relates not only to the external act, but to the feelings and words. He specifies three forms of such violation:

(1.) Unjust anger.

(2.) Anger accompanied with an expression of contempt.

(3.) Anger, with an expression not only of contempt, but wickedness. Among the Jews there were three degrees of condemnation: that by the "judgment," the "council," and the "fire of Hinnom." Jesus says, likewise, there shall be grades of condemnation for the different ways of violating the sixth commandment. Not only murder shall be punished by God; but anger, and contempt, shall be regarded by him as a violation of the law, and punished according to the offense. As these offenses were not actually cognizable before the Jewish tribunals, he must mean that they will be punished hereafter. And all these expressions relate to degrees of punishment, proportionate to crime, in the future world--the world of justice and of woe.

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee;

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, etc. The Pharisees were intent only on the external act in worship. They looked not at all to the internal acts of the mind. If a man conformed to the external rites of religion, however much envy, and malice, and secret hatred he might have, they thought he was doing well. Our Saviour taught a different doctrine. It was of more consequence to have the heart right, than to perform the outward act. If therefore, says he, a man has gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, and should remember that any one had anything against him, it was his duty there to leave his offering, and go and be reconciled. While a difference of this nature existed, his offering could not be acceptable. He was not to wait till the offended brother should come to him; he was to go and seek him out, and be reconciled. So now, the worship of God will not be acceptable, however well performed

externally, until we are at peace with those that we have injured. "To obey is better than sacrifice." He that comes to worship his Maker filled with malice, and hatred, and envy, and at war with his brethren, is a hypocritical worshipper, and must meet with God's displeasure. God is not deceived; and he will not be mocked.

Thy gift. Thy sacrifice. What thou art about to devote to God as an offering. To the altar. The altar was situated in front of the temple, see the representation on following page and was the place on which sacrifices were made. Mt 21:12. To bring a gift to the altar, was expressive of worshipping God, for this was the way in which he was formerly worshipped.

Thy brother. Any man, especially any fellow-worshipper. Any one of the same religious society.

Hath aught. Is offended, or thinks he has been injured by you in any manner:

First be reconciled. This means to settle the difficulty; to make proper acknowledgment, or satisfaction, for the injury. If you have wronged him, make restitution. If you owe him a debt which ought to be paid, pay it. If you have injured his character, confess it, and seek pardon. If he is under an erroneous impression; if your conduct has been such as to lead him to suspect that you have injured him, make an explanation. Do all in your power, and all you ought to do, to have the matter settled. From this we learn,

(1.) that in order to worship God acceptably, we must do justice to our fellow-men.

(2.) Our worship will not be acceptable, unless we do all we can to live peaceably with others.

(3.) It is our duty to seek reconciliation with others when we have injured them.

(4.) This should be done before we attempt to worship God.

(5.) This is often the reason why God does not accept our offerings, and we go empty away from our devotions. We do not do what we ought to others; we cherish improper feelings, or refuse to make proper acknowledgments, and God will not accept such attempts to worship him.

Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother—The meaning evidently is—not, "dismiss from thine own breast all ill feeling," but "get thy brother to dismiss from his mind all grudge against thee."

and then come and offer thy gift—"The picture," says THOLUCK, "is drawn from life. It transports us to the moment when the Israelite, having brought his sacrifice to the court of the Israelites, awaited the instant when the priest would approach to receive it at his hands. He waits with his gift at the rails which separate the place where he stands from the court of the priests, into which his offering will presently be taken, there to be slain by the priest, and by him presented upon the altar of sacrifice." It is at this solemn moment, when about to cast himself upon divine mercy, and seek in his offering a seal of divine forgiveness, that the offerer is supposed, all at once, to remember that some brother has a just cause of complaint against him through breach of this commandment in one or other of the ways just indicated. What then? Is he to say, As soon as I have offered this gift I will go straight to my brother, and make it up with him? Nay; but before another step is taken—even before the offering is presented—this reconciliation is to be sought, though the gift have to be left unoffered before the altar. The converse of the truth here taught is very strikingly expressed in Mr 11:25, 26: "And when ye stand praying (in the very act), forgive, if ye have aught (of just complaint) against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you," &c.

For preventing the sin of rash anger, which in our Savior's account is a degree of murder, he exhorts all his disciples and followers to brotherly agreement, and to seek mutual reconciliation with each other. Agree with thine adversary, that is, thy offended or offending brother; agree with him, as becomes a man; quickly, as becomes a Christian; implying, that it is a necessary duty for every Christian to seek reconciliation sincerely and speedily with such as have offended him, or have been offended by him.

The argument or motive with which Christ enforces his exhortation to brotherly reconciliation, drawn from the peril and danger of the neglect; and this is two-fold: The first respects our present duties and services, when we wait upon God at his altar, and attend upon him in holy offices. None of our performances will find malice and hatred, anger and ill-will, against our brother.

Learn, that no sacrifice we can offer will be acceptable to God, so long as we ourselves are implacable to men.
A second danger respects us, when we appear before God in judgement; then God will be our Adversary, Christ our Judge, Satan our accuser, hell our tormentor; If now from the heart we do not every one forgive our brother his trespasses.

Because, till this be done, we are utterly unfit for communion with God in holy ordinances, Mt 5:23,24. The case supposed is, "That thy brother have somewhat against thee," that thou has injured and offended him, either really or in his apprehension; if thou are the party offended, there needs not this delay; if thou have aught against thy brother, make short work of it; no more is to be done but to forgive him (Mk 11:25), and forgive the injury; but if the quarrel began on thy side, and the fault was either at first or afterwards thine, so that thy brother has a controversy with thee, go and be reconciled to him before thou offer thy gift at the altar, before thou approach solemnly to God in the gospel-services of prayer and praise, hearing the word or the sacraments.

Note,

(1.) When we are addressing ourselves to any religious exercises, it is good for us to take that occasion of serious reflection and self-examination: there are many things to be remembered, when we bring our gift to the altar, and this among the rest, whether our brother hath aught against us; then, if ever, we are disposed to be serious, and therefore should then call ourselves to an account.

(2.) Religious exercises are not acceptable to God, if they are performed when we are in wrath; envy, malice, and uncharitableness, are sins so displeasing to God, that nothing pleases him which comes from a heart wherein they are predominant, 1Ti 2:8. Prayers made in wrath are written in gall, Isa 1:15,58:4.

(3.) Love or charity is so much better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice, that God will have reconciliation made with an offended brother before the gift be offered; he is content to stay for the gift, rather than have it offered while we are under guilt and engaged in a quarrel.

(4.) Though we are unfitted for communion with God, by a continual quarrel with a brother, yet that can be no excuse for the omission or neglect of our duty: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, lest otherwise, when thou has gone away, thou be tempted not to come again." Many give this as a reason why they do not come to church or to the communion, because they are at variance with some neighbour; and whose fault is that? One sin will never excuse another, but will rather double the guilt. Want of charity cannot justify the want of piety. The difficulty is easily got over; those who have wronged us, we must forgive; and those whom we have wronged, we must make satisfaction to, or at least make a tender of it, and desire a renewal of the friendship, so that if reconciliation be not made, it may not be our fault; and then come, come and welcome, come and offer thy gift, and it shall be accepted. Therefore we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath any day, because we must go to prayer before we go to sleep; much less let

the sun rise upon our wrath on a sabbath-day, because it is a day of prayer.

Lord! how heinous then is this sin of inveterate anger, hatred, and malice, in our hearts, against any person! No gifts, though never so costly, no devotions, though never so specious, will prevail with God to pass it by, whilst we live: and if we die with hearts full of this rancour and bitterness, we can never expect to be encircled in the arms of Him who is all love, all mercy, all goodness and compassion: no reconciliation with God without an hearty good-will to all men.

24 leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

Agree with thine adversary quickly. This is still an illustration of the sixth commandment. To be in hostility, to go to law, to be litigious, is a violation always, on one side or the other, of the law requiring us to love our neighbour; and our Saviour regards it as a violation of the sixth commandment. While you are in the way with him, says he, that is, while you are going to the court, before the trial has taken place, it is your duty, if possible, to come to an agreement. It is wrong to carry the contention to a court of law. See 1Cor 6:6,7. The consequence of not being reconciled, he expresses in the language of courts. The adversary shall deliver thee to the judge, and he to the executioner, and he shall throw you into prison. He did not mean to say, that this would be literally the way with God; but that His dealings with those that harboured these feelings, and would not be reconciled with their brethren, were represented by the punishment inflicted by human tribunals. That is, he would hold all such as violators of the sixth commandment, and would punish them accordingly.

There is no propriety in the use sometimes made of this verse, in regarding God as the "adversary" of the sinner, and urging him to be reconciled to God while in the way to judgment. Nor does the

phrase, "thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing," refer to the eternity of future punishment. It is language taken from courts of justice, to illustrate the truth that God will punish men according to justice, for not being reconciled. It will be eternal, indeed, but this passage does not prove it.

Thine adversary. A man that is opposed to us in law. It here means a creditor; a man who has a just claim on us.

In the way with him. While you are going before the court. Before the trial comes on.

The officer. The executioner; or, as we should say, the sheriff.

The uttermost farthing. The last farthing. All that is due. The farthing was a small coin used in Judea, equal to two mites. It was equal to about seven mills of our money, [three halfpence.]

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Jesus' Attitude toward Adultery

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

Ye have heard--Thou shalt not commit adultery. Our Saviour in these verses explains the seventh commandment. It is probable that the Pharisees had explained this commandment as they had the sixth, as extending only to the external act; and that they regarded evil thoughts and a wanton imagination as of little consequence, or as not forbidden by the law. Our Saviour assures them that the commandment did not regard the external act merely, but the secrets of the heart, and the movements of the eye. That they who indulged a wanton desire; that they who looked on a woman to increase their lust, have already, in the sight of God, violated the commandment, and committed adultery in the heart. Such was the guilt of David, whose deep and awful crime fully shows the danger of indulging in evil desires, and in the rovings of a wanton eye. See 2Sam 11:1-27 Ps 51:1-19. See also 2Pet 2:14. So exceeding strict

and broad is the law of God! And so heinous in his sight are thoughts and feelings, which may be for ever concealed from the world!

We are here taught, that there is such a thing as heart-adultery, adulterous thoughts and dispositions, which never proceed to the act of adultery or fornication; and perhaps the defilement which these give to the soul, that is here so clearly asserted, was not only included in the seventh commandment, but was signified and intended in many of those ceremonial pollutions under the law, for which they were to wash their clothes, and bathe their flesh in water. Whosoever looketh on a woman (not only another man's wife, as some would have it, but any woman), to lust after her, has committed adultery with her in his heart, Mt 5:28. This command forbids not only the acts of fornication and adultery, but,

(1.) All appetites to them, all lusting after the forbidden object; this is the beginning of the sin, lust conceiving (Jam 1:15); it is a bad step towards the sin; and where the lust is dwelt upon and approved, and the wanton desire is rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, it is the commission of sin, as far as the heart can do it; there wants nothing but convenient opportunity for the sin itself. Adultera mens est--The mind is debauched. Ovid. Lust is conscience baffled or biassed: biassed, if it say nothing against the sin; baffled, if it prevail not in what is says.

(2.) All approaches toward them; feeding the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit; not only looking for that end, that I may lust; but looking till I do lust, or looking to gratify the lust, where further satisfaction cannot be obtained. The eye is both the inlet and outlet of a great deal of wickedness of this kind, witness Joseph's mistress (Ge 39:7), Samson (Jdg 16:1), David, 2Sa 11:2. We read the eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin, 2Pe 2:14. What need have we, therefore, with holy Job, to make a covenant with our eyes, to make this bargain with them that they should have the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun and the works of God, provided they would never fasten or dwell upon any thing that

might occasion impure imaginations or desires; and under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears! Job 31:1. What have we the covering of the eyes for, but to restrain corrupt glances, and to keep out of their defiling impressions? This forbids also the using of any other of our senses to stir up lust. If ensnaring looks are forbidden fruit, much more unclean discourses, and wanton dalliances, the fuel and bellows of this hellish fire. These precepts are hedges about the law of heart-purity, Mt 5:8. And if looking be lust, they who dress and deck, and expose themselves, with design to be looked at and lusted after (like Jezebel, that painted her face and tired her head, and looked out at the window) are no less guilty. Men sin, but devils tempt to sin.

28 but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her
hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is
profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy
whole body should be cast into hell.

Thy right eye. The Hebrews, like others, were accustomed to represent the affections of the mind by the members or parts of the body, Rom 7:23, 6:13. Thus, the bowels denoted compassion; the heart, affection or feeling; the reins, understanding, secret purpose. An evil eye denotes sometimes envy, (Mt 20:15) sometimes an evil passion, or sin in general. Mk 7:21,22, "Out of the heart proceedeth an evil eye." In this place as in 2Pet 2:14 it is used to denote strong adulterous passion, unlawful desire and inclination. The right eye and hand are mentioned, because they are of most use to us, and denote that, however strong the passion may be, or difficult to part with, yet that we should do it.

Shall offend thee. The noun from which the verb "offend," in the original, is derived, commonly means a stumbling-block, or a stone placed in the way, over which one might fall. It also means a net, or a certain part of a net, against which, if a bird strikes, it springs the net, and is taken. It comes to signify, therefore, anything by which we fall, or are ensnared; and, applied to morals, means anything by which we fall into sin, or by which we are ensnared. The English word offend means now, commonly, to displease; to make angry; to

affront. This is by no means the sense of the word in Scripture. It means, to cause to fall, or to allure, into sin. The eye does this, when it wantonly looks on a woman to lust after her.

Pluck it out, etc. It cannot be supposed that Christ intended this to be taken literally. His design was to teach that the dearest objects, if they caused us to sin, were to be abandoned; that, by all sacrifices and self-denials, we must overcome the evil propensities of our natures, and resist our wanton imaginations. Some of the Fathers, however, took this commandment literally. Our Saviour several times repeated this sentiment. See Mt 18:9, Mk 9:43-47. See also Co 3:5.

It is profitable for thee. It is better for thee. You will be a gainer by it.

One of the members perish. It is better to deny yourself the gratification of an evil passion here, however much it may cost you, than to go down to hell for ever.

Thy whole body be cast into hell. Thy body, with all its unsubdued and vicious propensities. This will constitute no small part of the misery of hell. The sinner will be sent there as he is, with every evil desire, every unsubdued propensity, every wicked and troublesome passion, and yet with no possibility of gratification. It constitutes our highest notions of misery, when we think of a man filled with anger, pride, malice, avarice, envy, and lust, and no opportunity of gratifying them for ever. This is all that is necessary to make an eternal hell.

Now in these verses Christ prescribes a remedy for the cure of this eye-malady: If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: which is not to be understood literally, as if Christ commanded any man to maim his bodily members; but spiritually, to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye, which otherwise would prove a dangerous snare to the soul.

Learn, 1. That sin may be avoided: it is our duty to avoid whatsoever leads to it, or may be an occasion of it; if we find the view of an ensnaring object will inflame us, we must, though not put out our eye, yet make a covenant with our eye that we will not look upon it.

Note, 2. That the best course we can take to be kept from the outward acts of sin, is to mortify our inward affection and love to sin. This is to kill it in the root; and if once our inward affections be mortified, our bodily members may be spared and preserved; for they will no longer be weapons of sin but instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

When we are tempted to think it hard to deny ourselves, and to crucify fleshly lusts, we ought to consider how much harder it will be to lie for ever in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; those do not know or do not believe what hell is, that will rather venture their eternal ruin in those flames, than deny themselves the gratification of a base and brutish lust.

In hell there will be torments for the body; the whole body will be cast into hell, and there will be torment in every part of it; so that if we have a care of our own bodies, we shall possess them in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness. Even those duties that are most unpleasant to flesh and blood, are profitable for us; and our Master requires nothing from us but what he knows to be for our advantage.

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Jesus' Attitude toward Divorce

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

32 but I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

It hath been said, etc. That is, by Moses, De 24:1,2 The husband was directed, if he put his wife away, to give her a bill of divorce, that is, a certificate of the fact that she had been his wife, and that he had dissolved the marriage. There was considerable difference of opinion among the Jews for what causes the husband was permitted to do this. One of their famous schools maintained that it might be done for any cause, however trivial. The other, that adultery only could justify it. The truth was, however, that the husband exercised this right at pleasure; that he was judge in the case, and dismissed his wife when, and for what cause, he chose. And this seems to be agreeable to the law in Deuteronomy. Our Saviour, in Mk 10:1-12, says that this was permitted on account of the hardness of their hearts; but in the beginning it was not so. God made a single pair, and ordained marriage for life. But Moses found the people so much hardened, so long accustomed to the practice, and so rebellious, that, as a matter of civil appointment, he thought it best not to attempt any change. Our Saviour brought marriage back to its original institution, and declared that whosoever put away his wife henceforward should be guilty of adultery. But one offence, he declared, could justify divorce. This is now the law of God. This was the original institution. This is the only law that is productive of peace and good morals, and the due respect of a wife and the good of children. Nor has any man, or set of men, a right to interfere, and declare that divorces may be granted for any other cause. Whosoever, therefore, are divorced for any cause except the single one of adultery, if they marry again, are, according to the Scriptures, living in adultery. No earthly laws can trample down the laws of God, or make that right which he has solemnly pronounced wrong.

Jesus' Attitude toward Oaths

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt
not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
34 but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is
God's throne:
35 nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city
of the great King.

We have here an exposition of the third commandment, which we are the more concerned right to understand, because it is particularly said, that God will not hold him guiltless, however he may hold himself, who breaks this commandment, by taking the name of the Lord in vain. Now as to this command,

I. It is agreed on all hands that it forbids perjury, forswearing, and the violation of oaths and vows, Mt 5:33. This was said to them of old time, and is the true intent and meaning of the third commandment. Thou shalt not use, or take up, the name of God (as we do by an oath) in vain, or unto vanity, or a lie. He hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, is expounded in the next words, nor sworn deceitfully, Ps 24:4. Perjury is a sin condemned by the light of nature, as a complication of impiety toward God and injustice toward man, and as rendering a man highly obnoxious to the divine wrath, which was always judged to follow so infallibly upon that sin, that the forms of swearing were commonly turned into execrations or imprecations; as that, God do so to me, and more also; and with us, So help me God; wishing I may never have any help from God, if I swear falsely. Thus, by the consent of nations, have men cursed themselves, not doubting but that God would curse them, if they lied against the truth then, when they solemnly called God to witness to it.

It is added, from some other scriptures, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths (Nu 30:2); which may be meant, either, 1. Of those promises to which God is a party, vows made to God; these must be punctually paid (Ec 5:4,5): or, 2. Of those promises made to our brethren, to which God was a Witness, he being appealed to concerning our sincerity; these must be performed to the Lord, with an eye to him, and for his sake: for to him, by ratifying the promises with an oath, we have made ourselves debtors; and if we break a promise so ratified, we have not lied unto men only, but unto God.

II. It is here added, that the commandment does not only forbid false swearing, but all rash, unnecessary swearing: Swear not at all, Mt 5:34,Jam 5:12. Not that all swearing is sinful; so far from that, if

rightly done, it is a part of religious worship, and we in it give unto God the glory due to his name. See De 6:13,10:20,Isa 45:23,Jer 4:2. We find Paul confirming what he said by such solemnities (2Co 1:23), when there was a necessity for it. In swearing, we pawn the truth of something known, to confirm the truth of something doubtful or unknown; we appeal to a greater knowledge, to a higher court, and imprecate the vengeance of a righteous Judge, if we swear deceitfully.

Now the mind of Christ in this matter is,

1. That we must not swear at all, but when we are duly called to it, and justice or charity to our brother, or respect to the commonwealth, make it necessary for the end of strife (Heb 6:16), of which necessity the civil magistrate is ordinarily to be the judge. We may be sworn, but we must now swear; we may be adjured, and so obliged to it, but we must not thrust ourselves upon it for our own worldly advantage.

2. That we must not swear lightly and irreverently, in common discourse: it is a very great sin to make a ludicrous appeal to the glorious Majesty of heaven, which, being a sacred thing, ought always to be very serious: it is a gross profanation of God's holy name, and of one of the holy things which the children of Israel sanctify to the Lord: it is a sin that has no cloak, no excuse for it, and therefore a sign of a graceless heart, in which enmity to God reigns: Thine enemies take thy name in vain.

3. That we must in a special manner avoid promissory oaths, of which Christ more particularly speaks here, for they are oaths that are to be performed. The influence of an affirmative oath immediately ceases, when we have faithfully discovered the truth, and the whole truth; but a promissory oath binds so long, and may be so many ways broken, by the surprise as well as strength of a temptation, that it is not to be used but upon great necessity: the frequent requiring and using of oaths, is a reflection upon Christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity, as that their sober words should be as sacred as their solemn oaths.

4. That we must not swear by any other creature. It should seem there were some, who, in civility (as they thought) to the name of

God, would not make use of that in swearing, but would swear by heaven or earth, &c. This Christ forbids here (Mt 5:34) and shows that there is nothing we can swear by, but it is some way or other related to God, who is the Fountain of all beings, and therefore that it is as dangerous to swear by them, as it is to swear by God himself: it is the verity of the creature that is laid at stake; now that cannot be an instrument of testimony, but as it has regard to God, who is the summum verum--the chief Truth. As for instance,

(a.) Swear not by the heaven; "As sure as there is a heaven, this is true;" for it is God's throne, where he resides, and in a particular manner manifests his glory, as a Prince upon his throne: this being the inseparable dignity of the upper world, you cannot swear by heaven, but you swear by God himself.

(b.) Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool. He governs the motions of this lower world; as he rules in heaven, so he rules over the earth; and though under his feet, yet it is also under his eye and care, and stands in relation to him as his, Ps 24:1. The earth is the Lord's; so that in swearing by it, you swear by its Owner.

(c.) Neither by Jerusalem, a place for which the Jews had such a veneration, that they could not speak of any thing more sacred to swear by; but beside the common reference Jerusalem has to God, as part of the earth, it is in special relation to him, for it is the city of the great King (Ps 48:2), the city of God (Ps 46:4), he is therefore interested in it, and in every oath taken by it.

(d.) "Neither shalt thou swear by the head; though it be near thee, and an essential part of thee, yet it is more God's than thine; for he made it, and formed all the springs and powers of it; whereas thou thyself canst not, from any natural intrinsic influence, change the colour of one hair, so as to make it white or black; so that thou canst not swear by thy head, but thou swearest by him who is the Life of thy head, and the Lifter up of it." Ps 3:3.

5. That therefore in all our communications we must content ourselves with, Yea, yea, and nay, nay, Mt 5:37. In ordinary discourse, if we affirm a thing, let us only say, Yea, it is so; and, if need be, to evidence our assurance of a thing, we may double it, and say, Yea, yea, indeed it is so: Verily, verily, was our Saviour's yea, yea. So if we deny a thing, let is suffice to say, No; or if it be

requisite, to repeat the denial, and say, No, no; and if our fidelity be known, that will suffice to gain us credit; and if it be questioned, to back what we say with swearing and cursing, is but to render it more suspicious. They who can swallow a profane oath, will not strain at a lie. It is a pity that this, which Christ puts in the mouths of all his disciples, should be fastened, as a name of reproach, upon a sect faulty enough other ways, when (as Dr. Hammond says) we are not forbidden any more than yea and nay, but are in a manner directed to the use of that.

The reason is observable; For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, though it do not amount to the iniquity of an oath. It comes ek tou Diabolou; so an ancient copy has it: it comes from the Devil, the evil one; it comes from the corruption of men's nature, from passion and vehemence; from a reigning vanity in the mind, and a contempt of sacred things: it comes from that deceitfulness which is in men, All men are liars; therefore men use these protestations, because they are distrustful one of another, and think they cannot be believed without them. Note, Christians should, for the credit of their religion, avoid not only that which is in itself evil, but that which cometh of evil, and has the appearance of it. That may be suspected as a bad thing, which comes from a bad cause. An oath is physic, which supposes a disease.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Love for Enemies

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Verses 38-42. In these verses the law of retaliation is expounded, and in a manner repealed. Observe,

I. What the Old-Testament permission was, in case of injury; and here the expression is only, Ye have heard that is has been said; not,

as before, concerning the commands of the decalogue, that it has been said by, or to, them of old time. It was a command, that every one should of necessity require such satisfaction; but they might lawfully insist upon it, if they pleased; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. This we find, Ex 21:24,Le 24:20,De 19:21; in all which places it is appointed to be done by the magistrate, who bears not the sword in vain, but is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath, Ro 13:4. It was a direction to the judges of the Jewish nation what punishment to inflict in case of maims, for terror to such as would do mischief on the one hand, and for a restraint to such as have mischief done to them on the other hand, that they may not insist on a greater punishment than is proper: it is not a life for an eye, nor a limb for a tooth, but observe a proportion; and it is intimated (Nu 35:31), that the forfeiture in this case might be redeemed with money; for when it is provided that no ransom shall be taken for the life of a murderer, it is supposed that for maims a pecuniary satisfaction was allowed.

But some of the Jewish teachers, who were not the most compassionate men in the world, insisted upon it as necessary that such revenge should be taken, even by private persons themselves, and that there was no room left for remission, or the acceptance of satisfaction. Even now, when they were under the government of the Roman magistrates, and consequently the judicial law fell to the ground of course, yet they were still zealous for any thing that looked harsh and severe.

Now, so far this is in force with us, as a direction to magistrates, to use the sword of justice according to the good and wholesome laws of the land, for the terror of evil-doers, and the vindication of the oppressed. That judge neither feared God nor regarded man, who would not avenge the poor widow of her adversary, Lu 18:2,3. And it is in force as a rule to lawgivers, to provide accordingly, and wisely to apportion punishments to crimes, for the restraint of rapine and violence, and the protection of innocency.

II. What the New-Testament precept is, as to the complainant himself, his duty is, to forgive the injury as done to himself, and no further to insist upon the punishment of it than is necessary to the

public good: and this precept is consonant to the meekness of Christ, and the gentleness of his yoke.

Two things Christ teaches us here:

1. We must not be revengeful (Mt 5:39); I say unto you, that ye resist not evil;--the evil person that is injurious to you. The resisting of any ill attempt upon us, is here as generally and expressly forbidden, as the resisting of the higher powers is (Ro 13:2); and yet this does not repeal the law of self-preservation, and the care we are to take of our families; we may avoid evil, and may resist it, so far as is necessary to our own security; but we must not render evil for evil, must not bear a grudge, nor avenge ourselves, nor study to be even with those that have treated us unkindly, but we must go beyond them by forgiving them, Pr 20:22,24:29,25:21,22,Ro 12:7. The law of retaliation must be made consistent with the law of love: nor, if any have injured us, is our recompence in our own hands, but in the hands of God, to whose wrath we must give place; and sometimes in the hands of his viceregents, where it is necessary for the preservation of the public peace; but it will not justify us in hurting our brother to say that he began, for it is the second blow that makes the quarrel; and when we were injured, we had an opportunity not to justify our injuring him, but to show ourselves the true disciples of Christ, by forgiving him.

Three things our Saviour specifies, to show that Christians must patiently yield to those who bear hard upon them, rather than contend; and these include others.

(1.) A blow on the cheek, which is an injury to me in my body; "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek," which is not only a hurt, but an affront and indignity (2Co 11:20), if a man in anger or scorn thus abuse thee, "turn to him the other cheek;" that is, "instead of avenging that injury, prepare for another, and bear it patiently: give not the rude man as good as he brings; do not challenge him, nor enter an action against him; if it be necessary to the public peace that he be bound to his good behaviour, leave that to the magistrate; but for thine own part, it will ordinarily be the wisest course to pass it by, and take no further notice of it: there are no bones broken, no great harm done, forgive it and forget it; and if proud fools think the worse of thee, and laugh at thee for it, all wise men will value and

honour thee for it, as a follower of the blessed Jesus, who, though he was the Judge of Israel, did not smite those who smote him on the cheek," Mic 5:1. Though this may perhaps, with some base spirits, expose us to the like affront another time, and so it is, in effect, to turn the other cheek, yet let not that disturb us, but let us trust God and his providence to protect us in the way of our duty. Perhaps, the forgiving of one injury may prevent another, when the avenging of it would but draw on another; some will be overcome by submission, who by resistance would but be the more exasperated, Pr 25:22. However, our recompence is in Christ's hands, who will reward us with eternal glory for the shame we thus patiently endure; and though it be not directly inflicted, it if be quietly borne for conscience' sake, and in conformity to Christ's example, it shall be put upon the score of suffering for Christ.

(2.) The loss of a coat, which is a wrong to me in my estate (Mt 5:40); If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat. It is a hard case. Note, It is common for legal processes to be made use of for the doing of greatest injuries. Though judges be just and circumspect, yet it is possible for bad men who make no conscience of oaths and forgeries, by course of law to force off the coat from a man's back. Marvel not at the matter (Ec 5:8), but, in such a case, rather than go to the law by way of revenge, rather than exhibit a cross bill, or stand out to the utmost, in defence of that which is thy undoubted right, let him even take thy cloak also. If the matter be small, which we may lose without an considerable damage to our families, it is good to submit to it for peace' sake. "It will not cost thee so much to buy another cloak, as it will cost thee by course of law to recover that; and therefore unless thou canst get it again by fair means, it is better to let him take it."

(3.) The going a mile by constraint, which is a wrong to me in my liberty (Mt 5:41); "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, to run an errand for him, or to wait upon him, grudge not at it, but go with him two miles rather than fall out with him:" say not, "I would do it, if I were not compelled to it, but I hate to be forced;" rather say, "Therefore I will do it, for otherwise there will be a quarrel;" and it is better to serve him, than to serve thy own lusts of pride and revenge. Some give this sense of it: The Jews taught that the disciples of the wise, and the students of the law, were not to be

pressed, as others might, by the king's officers, to travel upon the public service; but Christ will not have his disciples to insist upon this privilege, but to comply rather than offend the government. The sum of all is, that Christians must not be litigious; small injuries must be submitted to, and no notice taken of them; and if the injury be such as requires us to seek reparation, it must be for a good end, and without thought of revenge: though we must not invite injuries, yet we must meet them cheerfully in the way of duty, and make the best of them. If any say, Flesh and blood cannot pass by such an affront, let them remember, that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. We must be charitable and beneficent (Mt 5:42); must not only do no hurt to our neighbours, but labour to do them all the good we can. (1.) We must be ready to give; "Give to him that asketh thee. If thou has an ability, look upon the request of the poor as giving thee an opportunity for the duty of almsgiving." When a real object of charity presents itself, we should give at the first word: Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; yet the affairs of our charity must be guided with discretion (Ps 112:5), lest we give that to the idle and unworthy, which should be given to those that are necessitous, and deserve well. What God says to us, we should be ready to say to our poor brethren, Ask, and it shall be given you. (2.) We must be ready to lend. This is sometimes as great a piece of charity as giving; as it not only relieves the present exigency, but obliges the borrower to providence, industry, and honesty; and therefore, "From him that would borrow of thee something to live on, or something to trade on, turn not thou away: shun not those that thou knowest have such a request to make of thee, nor contrive excuses to shake them off." Be easy of access to him that would borrow: though he be bashful, and have not confidence to make known his case and beg the favour, yet thou knowest both his need and his desire, and therefore offer him the kindness. Exorabor antequam rogor; honestis precibus occuram--I will be prevailed on before I am entreated; I will anticipate the becoming petition. Seneca, De Vitâ Beatâ. It becomes us to be thus forward in acts of kindness, for before we call, God hears us, and prevents us with the blessings of his goodness.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.
44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
45 that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

We have here, lastly, an exposition of that great fundamental law of the second table, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, which was the fulfilling of the law.

I. See here how this law was corrupted by the comments of the Jewish teachers, Mt 5:43. God said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; and by neighbour they understood those only of their own country, nation, and religion; and those only that they were pleased to look upon as their friends: yet this was not the worst; from this command, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, they were willing to infer what God never designed; Thou shalt hate thine enemy; and they looked upon whom they pleased as their enemies, thus making void the great command of God by their traditions, though there were express laws to the contrary, Ex 23:4,5,De 23:7. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, nor an Egyptian, though these nations had been as much enemies to Israel as any whatsoever. It was true, God appointed them to destroy the seven devoted nations of Canaan, and not to make leagues with them; but there was a particular reason for it--to make room for Israel, and that they might not be snares to them; but it was very ill-natured from hence to infer, that they must hate all their enemies; yet the moral philosophy of the heathen then allowed this. It is Cicero's rule, Nemini nocere nisi prius lacessitum injuriâ--To injure no one, unless previously injured. De Offic. See how willing corrupt passions are to fetch countenance from the word of God, and to take occasion by the commandment to justify themselves.

II. See how it is cleared by the command of the Lord Jesus, who teaches us another lesson: "But I say unto you, I, who come to be the great Peace-Maker, the general Reconciler, who loved you when you were strangers and enemies, I say, Love your enemies," Mt 5:44. Though men are ever so bad themselves, and carry it ever so basely towards us, yet that does not discharge us from the great debt we owe them, of love to our kind, love to our kin. We cannot but find ourselves very prone to wish the hurt, or at least very coldly to desire the good, of those that hate us, and have been abusive to us; but that which is at the bottom hereof is a root of bitterness, which must be plucked up, and a remnant of corrupt nature which grace must conquer. Note, it is the great duty of Christians to love their enemies; we cannot have complacency in one that is openly wicked and profane, nor put a confidence in one that we know to be deceitful; nor are we to love all alike; but we must pay respect to the human nature, and so far honour all men: we must take notice, with pleasure, of that even in our enemies which is amiable and commendable; ingenuousness, good temper, learning, and moral virtue, kindness to others, profession of religion, &c., and love that, though they are our enemies. We must have a compassion for them, and a good will toward them. We are here told,

1. That we must speak well of them: Bless them that curse you. When we speak to them, we must answer their revilings with courteous and friendly words, and not render railing for railing; behind their backs we must commend that in them which is commendable, and when we have said all the good we can of them, not be forward to say any thing more. See 1Pe 3:9. They, in whose tongues is the law of kindness, can give good words to those who give bad words to them.

2. That we must do well to them: "Do good to them that hate you, and that will be a better proof of love than good words. Be ready to do them all the real kindness that you can, and glad of an opportunity to do it, in their bodies, estates, names, families; and especially to do good to their souls." It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, that the way to make him a friend was to do him an ill turn; so many did he serve who had disobliged him.

3. We must pray for them: Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. Note,

(1.) It is no new thing for the most excellent saints to be hated, and cursed, and persecuted, and despitefully used, by wicked people; Christ himself was so treated.

(2.) That when at any time we meet with such usage, we have an opportunity of showing our conformity both to the precept and to the example of Christ, by praying for them who thus abuse us. If we cannot otherwise testify our love to them, yet this way we may without ostentation, and it is such a way as surely we durst not dissemble in. We must pray that God will forgive them, that they may never fare the worse for any thing they have done against us, and that he would make them to be at peace with us; and this is one way of making them so. Plutarch, in his Laconic Apophthegms, has this of Aristo; when one commended Cleomenes's saying, who, being asked what a good king should do, replied, Tous men philous euergetein, tous de echthrous kakos poiein--Good turns to his friends, and evil to his enemies; he said, How much better is it tous men philous euergetein, tous de echthrous philous poiein--to do good to our friends, and make friends of our enemies. This is heaping coals of fire on their heads.

Two reasons are here given to enforce this command (which sounds so harsh) of loving our enemies. We must do it,

[1.] That we may be like God our Father; "that ye may be, may approve yourselves to be, the children of your Father which is in heaven." Can we write a better copy? It is a copy in which love to the worst of enemies is reconciled to, and consistent with, infinite purity and holiness. God maketh his sun to rise, and sendeth rain, on the just and the unjust, Mt 5:45. Note, First, Sunshine and rain are great blessings to the world, and they come from God. It is his sun that shines, and the rain is sent by him. They do not come of course, or by chance, but from God. Secondly, Common mercies must be valued as instances and proofs of the goodness of God, who in them shows himself a bountiful Benefactor to the world of mankind, who would be very miserable without these favours, and are utterly

unworthy of the least of them. Thirdly, These gifts of common providence are dispensed indifferently to good and evil, just and unjust; so that we cannot know love and hatred by what is before us, but by what is within us; not by the shining of the sun on our heads, but by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness in our hearts. Fourthly, The worst of men partake of the comforts of this life in common with others, though they abuse them, and fight against God with his own weapons; which is an amazing instance of God's patience and bounty. It was but once that God forbade his sun to shine on the Egyptians, when the Israelites had light in their dwellings; God could make such a distinction every day. Fifthly, The gifts of God's bounty to wicked men that are in rebellion against him, teach us to do good to those that hate us; especially considering, that though there is in us a carnal mind which is enmity to God, yet we share in his bounty. Sixthly, Those only will be accepted as the children of God, who study to resemble him, particularly in his goodness.

[2.] That we may herein do more than others, Mt 5:46,47. First, Publicans love their friends. Nature inclines them to it; interest directs them to it. To do good to them who do good to us, is a common piece of humanity, which even those whom the Jews hated and despised could give as good proofs as of the best of them. The publicans were men of no good fame, yet they were grateful to such as had helped them to their places, and courteous to those they had a dependence upon; and shall we be no better than they? In doing this we serve ourselves and consult our own advantage; and what reward can we expect for that, unless a regard to God, and a sense of duty, carrying us further than our natural inclination and worldly interest? Secondly, We must therefore love our enemies, that we may exceed them. If we must go beyond scribes and Pharisees, much more beyond publicans. Note, Christianity is something more than humanity. It is a serious question, and which we should frequently put to ourselves, "What do we more than others? What excelling thing do we do? We know more than others; we talk more of the things of God than others; we profess, and have promised, more than others; God has done more for us, and therefore justly expects more from us than from others; the glory of God is more concerned in us than in others; but what do we more than others? Wherein do we live above the rate of the children of this world? Are we not carnal, and

do we not walk as men, below the character of Christians? In this especially we must do more than others, that while every one will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle, and is consonant to a higher rule, than the most of men act by. Others salute their brethren, they embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion; but we must not so confine our respect, but love our enemies, otherwise what reward have we? We cannot expect the reward of Christians, if we rise no higher than the virtue of publicans." Note, Those who promise themselves a reward above others must study to do more than others.

Lastly, Our Saviour concludes this subject with this exhortation (Mt 5:48), Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Which may be understood,

1. In general, including all those things wherein we must be followers of God as dear children. Note, It is the duty of Christians to desire, and aim at, and press toward a perfection in grace and holiness, Php 3:12-14. And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, 1Pe 1:15,16. Or,

2. In this particular before mentioned, of doing good to our enemies; see Lu 6:36. It is God's perfection to forgive injuries and to entertain strangers, and to do good to the evil and unthankful, and it will be ours to be like him. We that owe so much, that owe our all, to the divine bounty, ought to copy it out as well as we can.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew-6

Jesus' Teaching on Almsgiving

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them:
otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.
2 Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the
streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have
their reward.

As we must do better than the scribes and Pharisees in avoiding heart-sins, heart-adultery, and heart-murder, so likewise in maintaining and keeping up heart-religion, doing what we do from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men; that is, we must watch against hypocrisy, which was the leaven of the Pharisees, as well as against their doctrine, Lu 12:1. Almsgiving, prayer, and fasting, are three great Christian duties--the three foundations of the law, say the Arabians: by them we do homage and service to God with our three principal interests; by prayer with our souls, by fasting with our bodies, by alms-giving with our estates. Thus we must not only depart from evil, but do good, and do it well, and so dwell for evermore.

Now in these verses we area cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Take heed of it. Our being bid to take heed of it intimates that it is sin.

1. We are in great danger of; it is a subtle sin; vain-glory insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wondrous works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh.

2. It is a sin we are in great danger by. Take heed of hypocrisy, for if it reign in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

Two things are here supposed,

I The giving of alms is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. It is prescribed by the law of nature and of Moses, and great stress is laid upon it by the prophets. Divers ancient copies here for ten eleemosynen--your alms, read ten dikaiosynen--your righteousness, for alms are righteousness, Ps 112:9,Pr 10:2 The Jews called the poor's box the box of righteousness. That which is given to the poor is said to be their due, Pr 3:27. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. If superstitious papists have placed a merit in works of charity, that will not be an excuse for covetous protestants that are barren in such good works. It is true, our alms-deeds do not deserve heaven; but it is as true that we cannot go to heaven without them. It is pure religion (Jam 1:27), and will be the test at the great day; Christ here takes it for granted that his disciples give alms, nor will he own those that do not.

Take heed that ye do not your alms—But the true reading seems clearly to be "your righteousness." The external authority for both readings is pretty nearly equal; but internal evidence is decidedly in favor of "righteousness." The subject of the second verse being "almsgiving" that word—so like the other in Greek—might easily be substituted for it by the copyist: whereas the opposite would not be so likely. But it is still more in favor of "righteousness," that if we so read the first verse, it then becomes a general heading for this whole section of the discourse, inculcating unostentatiousness in all deeds of righteousness—Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting being, in that case, but selected examples of this righteousness; whereas, if we read, "Do not your alms," &c., this first verse will have no reference but to that one point. By "righteousness," in this case, we are to understand that same righteousness of the kingdom of heaven,

whose leading features—in opposition to traditional perversions of it—it is the great object of this discourse to open up: that righteousness of which the Lord says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). To "do" this righteousness, was an old and well-understood expression. Thus, "Blessed is he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps 106:3). It refers to the actings of righteousness in the life—the outgoings of the gracious nature—of which our Lord afterwards said to His disciples, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (Joh 15:8).

The duty directed to, almsgiving after a right manner; Do not your alms before man: some copies read it, Do not your rigteousness before men: because almsgiving is a considerable part of that righteousness and justice which we owe unto our neighbour: he that is uncharitable is unjust: acts of charity are acts of justice and equity. It also intimates to us, that the matter of our alms should be goods righteously gotten: to give alms of what is gotten unjustly, is robbery, and not righteousness.

II. That it is such a duty as has a great reward attending it, which is lost if it be done in hypocrisy. It is sometimes rewarded in temporal things with plenty (Pr 11:24,25,19:17); security from want (Pr 28:27,Ps 37:21,25); succour in distress (Ps 41:1,2); honour and a good name, which follow those most that least covet them, Ps 112:9. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just (Lu 14:14), in eternal riches. Quas dederis, solas semper habebis, opes. The riches you impart form the only wealth you will always retain.--Martial.

This being supposed, observe now,

1. What was the practice of the hypocrites about this duty. They did it indeed, but not from any principle of obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vain-glory; not in compassion to the poor, but

purely for ostentation, that they might be extolled as good men, and so might gain an interest in the esteem of the people, with which they knew how to serve their own turn, and to get a great deal more than they gave. Pursuant to this intention, they chose to give their alms in the synagogues, and in the streets, where there was the greatest concourse of people to observe them, who applauded their liberality because they shared in it, but were so ignorant as not to discern their abominable pride. Probably they had collections for the poor in the synagogues, and the common beggars haunted the streets and highways, and upon these public occasions they chose to give their alms. Not that it is unlawful to give alms when men see us; we may do it; but not that men may see us; we should rather choose those objects of charity that are less observed. The hypocrites, if they gave alms to their own houses, sounded a trumpet, under pretence of calling the poor together to be served, but really to proclaim their charity, and to have that taken notice of and made the subject of discourse.

Now the doom that Christ passes upon this is very observable; Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. At first view this seems a promise--If they have their reward they have enough, but two words in it make it a threatening.

(a.) It is a reward, but it is their reward; not the reward which God promises to them that do good, but the reward which they promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be seen of men, and they are seen of men; they chose their own delusions with which they cheated themselves, and they shall have what they chose. Carnal professors stipulate with God for preferment, honour, wealth, and they shall have their bellies filled with those things (Ps 17:14); but let them expect no more; these are their consolation (Lu 6:24), their good things (Lu 16:25), and they shall be put off with these. "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny? It is the bargain that thou art likely to abide by."

(b.) It is a reward, but it is a present reward, they have it; and there is none reserved for them in the future state. They now have all that

they are likely to have from God; they have their reward here, and have none to hope for hereafter. Apechousi ton misthon. It signifies a receipt in full. What rewards the godly have in this life are but in part of payment; there is more behind, much more; but hypocrites have their all in this world, so shall their doom be; themselves have decided it. The world is but for provision to the saints, it is their spending-money; but it is pay to hypocrites, it is their portion.

2. What is the precept of our Lord Jesus about it, Mt 6:3,4. He that was himself such an example of humility, pressed it upon his disciples, as absolutely necessary to the acceptance of their performances. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth when thou givest alms." Perhaps this alludes to the placing of the Corban, the poor man's box, or the chest into which they cast their free-will offerings, on the right hand of the passage into the temple; so that they put their gifts into it with the right-hand. Or the giving of alms with the right hand, intimates readiness to it and resolution in it; do it dexterously, not awkwardly nor with a sinister intention. The right hand may be used in helping the poor, lifting them up, writing for them, dressing their sores, and other ways besides giving to them; but, "whatever kindness thy right hand doeth to the poor, let not thy left hand know it: conceal it as much as possible; industriously keep it private. Do it because it is a good work, not because it will give thee a good name." In omnibus factis, re, non teste, moveamur--In all our actions, we should be influenced by a regard to the object, not to the observer. Cic. de Fin. It is intimated,

(a.) That we must not let others know what we do; no, not those that stand at our left hand, that are very near us. Instead of acquainting them with it, keep it from them if possible; however, appear so desirous to keep it from them, as that in civility they may seem not to take notice of it, and keep it to themselves, and let it go no further.

(b.) That we must not observe it too much ourselves: the left hand is a part of ourselves; we must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good we do, must not applaud and admire ourselves.

Self-conceit and self-complacency, and an adoring of our own shadow, are branches of pride, as dangerous as vain-glory and ostentation before men. We find those had their good works remembered to their honour, who had themselves forgotten them: When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst?

Note thence, That the secrecy of our charity is one good evidence of its sincerity. Hence the Egyptians made the emblem of charity to be a blind boy reaching out honey to a bee that had lost her wings.

3. What is the promise to those who are thus sincere and humble in their alms-giving. Let thine alms be in secret, and then thy Father who seeth in secret will observe them. Note, When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. As God hears the wrongs done to us when we do not hear them (Ps 38:14,15), so he sees the good done by us, when we do not see it. As it is a terror to hypocrites, so it is a comfort to sincere Christians, that God sees in secret. But this is not all; not only the observation and praise, but the recompence is of God, himself shall reward thee openly. Note, They who in their alms-giving study to approve themselves to God, only turn themselves over to him as their Paymaster. The hypocrite catches at the shadow, but the upright man makes sure of the substance. Observe how emphatically it is expressed; himself shall reward, he will himself be the Rewarder, Heb 11:6. Let him alone to make it up in kind or kindness; nay, he will himself be the Reward (Ge 15:1), thine exceeding great reward. He will reward thee as thy Father, not as a master who gives his servant just what he earns and no more, but as a father who gives abundantly more, and without stint, to his son that serves him. Nay, he shall reward thee openly, if not in the present day, yet in the great day; then shall every man have praise of God, open praise, thou shall be confessed before men. If the work be not open, the reward shall, and that is better.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4 that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself
shall reward thee openly.

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are:* for they love
to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they
may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

And when thou prayest, etc. Hypocrites manifested the same spirit about prayer as alms-giving: it was done in public places. The word synagogues, here, clearly means not the place of worship of that name, but places where many were accustomed to assemble-- near the markets, or courts, where they could be seen of many. Our Lord evidently could not mean to condemn prayers in the synagogues. It might be said that he condemned ostentatious prayer there, while they neglected secret prayer; but this does not appear to be his design. The Jews were much in the habit of praying in public places. At certain times of the day they always offered their prayers. Wherever they were, they suspended their employment, and paid their devotions. This is also practised now everywhere by the Mohammedans, and in many places by the Roman Catholics. It seems, also, that they sought publicity, and regarded it as proof of great piety.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut
thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth
in secret shall reward thee openly.

Enter into thy closet. Every Jewish house had a place for secret devotion. The roofs of their houses were flat places for walking, conversation, and meditation, in the cool of the evening. Mt 9:2. Over the porch, or entrance of the house, was, however, a small room of the size of the porch, raised a story above the rest of the house, expressly appropriated for the place of retirement, in secrecy and solitude, the pious Jew might offer his prayers, unseen by any but the Searcher of hearts. To this place, or to some similar place, our Saviour directed his disciples to repair when they wished to hold communion with God. This is the place commonly mentioned in the New Testament as the upper room, or the place for secret prayer.

The meaning of the Saviour is, that there should be some place where we may be in secret--where we may be alone with God. There should be some place to which we may resort where no ear will hear us but His ear, and no eye can see us but His eye. Unless there is such a place, secret prayer will not be long or strictly maintained. It is often said that we have no such place, and can secure none. We are away from home; we are travelling; we are among strangers; we are in stages and steam-boats, and how can we find such places of retirement? I answer, the desire to pray, and the love of prayer, will create such places in abundance. The Saviour had all the difficulties which we can have, but yet he lived in the practice of secret prayer. To be alone, he rose up "a great while before day," and went into a solitary place and prayed. With him, a grove, a mountain, a garden, furnished such a place; and though a traveller, and among strangers, and without a house, he lived in the habit of secret prayer. What excuse have they who have a home, and who spend the precious hours of the morning in sleep, and who will practise no self-denial that they may be alone with God? O Christian! thy Saviour would have broken in upon these hours, and would have trod his solitary way to the mountain or the grove, there he might pray. He did do it. He did it to pray for thee, too indolent and too unconcerned about thy own salvation and that of the world, to practise the least self-denial in order to commune with God! How can religion live thus ? How can such a soul be saved?

The Saviour does not specify the times when we should pray in secret. He does not say how often it should be done. The reasons may have been,

(1.) that he designed that his religion should be voluntary--and there is not a better test of true piety than a disposition to engage often in secret prayer. He designed to leave it to his people to show attachment to him by coming to God often--and as often as they chose.

(2.) An attempt to specify the times when this should be done would tend to make religion formal and heartless. Mohammed undertook

to regulate this, and the consequence is a cold and formal prostration at the appointed hours of prayer all over the land where his religion has spread.

(3.) The periods are so numerous, and the seasons for secret prayer vary so much, that it would not be easy to fix rules when this should be done. Yet without giving rules--where the Saviour has given none--we may suggest the following as times when secret prayer is proper:

(a) In the morning. Nothing can be more appropriate when we have been preserved through the night, and when we are about to enter upon the duties and dangers of another day, than to render him thanks, and to commit ourselves to his fatherly care.

(b) In the evening. When the day has closed, what more natural than to render thanks and to implore forgiveness for what we have said or done amiss, and to pray for a blessing on the labours of the day; and when about to lie down again to sleep, not knowing but it may be our last sleep, and that we may awake in eternity, what more proper than to commend ourselves to the care of Him "who never slumbers nor sleeps."

(c.) We should pray in times of embarrassment and perplexity. Such times occur in every man's life, and it is then a privilege and a duty to go to God and seek his direction. In the most difficult and embarrassed time of the American revolution, Washington was seen to retire daily to a grove in the vicinity of the camp at Valley Forge. Curiosity led a man to observe him on one occasion, and the father of his country was seen on his knees supplicating the God of Hosts in prayer. Who can tell how much the liberty of this nation is owing to the answer to the secret prayer of Washington?

(d.) We should pray when we are beset with strong temptations. So the Saviour prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, (Comp. Heb 5:7,8) and so we should pray when we are tempted.

(e.) We should pray when the Spirit prompts us to pray; when we feel just like praying; when nothing can satisfy the soul but prayer. Such times occur in the life, of every Christian; and they are "spring-times" of piety--favourable gales to waft us on to heaven. Prayer to the Christian, at such times, is just as congenial as conversation with a friend when the bosom is filled with love; as the society of father, mother, sister, child is, when the heart glows with attachment; as the strains of sweet music are to the ear best attuned to the love of harmony; as the most exquisite poetry is to the heart enamoured with the muses; and as the most delicious banquet is to the hungry. Prayer, then, is the element of being; the breath; the vital air; and then the Christian must and should pray. He is the most eminent Christian who is most favoured with such strong emotions urging him to prayer. The heart is then full. The soul is tender. The sun of glory shines with unusual splendour. No cloud intervenes. The Christian rises from the earth, and pants for glory. Then we may go alone with God, We may enter the closet, and breathe forth our warm desires into the ever-open ear of God, and he who sees in secret will reward us openly.

Who seeth in secret. Who sees what the human eye cannot see; who sees the secret real designs and desires of the heart. Prayer should always be offered, remembering that God is acquainted with our real desires; and that it is those real desires, and not the words of prayer, that he will answer.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do:* for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Use not vain repetitions. The original word here is supposed to be derived from the name of a Greek poet, who made long and weary verses, declaring, by many forms and endless repetitions, the same sentiment. Hence it means to repeat a thing often, to say the same thing in different words, or to repeat the same words, as though God did not hear at first. An example of this we have in 1Kgs 18:26: "They Called on Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us;"*

The heathen do. The original word is one commonly translated Gentile. The world was divided into two parts, the Jews and the Gentiles; that is, in the original, the "nations," the nations destitute of the true religion. Christ does not fix the length of our prayers. He says that they should not repeat the same thing, as though God did not hear. And it is not improbable that he intended to condemn the practice of long prayers. His own supplications were remarkably short.

A vain-glorious ostentation in prayer was condemned by our Saviour in the former verse; here a vain-glorious multiplicity of words, by idle tautologies and impetinent repetitions, is condemned also; after the manner of the heathens, who expected to have their prayers granted by God, for the multiplicity of words used by themselves.

Hence note, That a Christian's business in prayer being not to inform God (for he knoweth what things we need before we ask him) nor yet to move and persuade God (for he is our Father) it certainly argues an undue apprehension of God, when we lengthen out our prayers with vain repetitions and a multitude of words.

Yet note,

1. That it is not all repetition of the same words in prayer which Christ here condemns, for he himself prayed thrice, using the same words, that the cup might pass from him.

2. Nor, that are we to apprehend that prayers continued to a considerable length are forbidden by Christ; for Solomon's prayer was such, 1Kgs 8:1-66. In Neh 9:1-23, it is said, the people confessed, and worshipped for three hours; Christ continued in prayer all night; and the church, Acts 7:1-60, made prayers without ceasing for St. Peter's enlargement.

And we read of St. Paul's praying night and day, 1Thess 3:10, and of his commanding the churches to be instant in prayer, and to

continue in prayer. But Christ here condemns prayers lengthened out upon an apprehension that we shall be heard by our much speaking, or can move God by arguments, whilst we continue in our sins. (Dr. Whitby)

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

When Christ had condemned what was amiss, he directs to do better; for his are reproofs of instruction. Because we know not what to pray for as we ought, he here helps our infirmities, by putting words into our mouths; after this manner therefore pray ye, Mt 6:9. So many were the corruptions that had crept into this duty of prayer among the Jews, that Christ saw it needful to give a new directory for prayer, to show his disciples what must ordinarily be the matter and method of their prayer, which he gives in words that may very well be used as a form; as the summary or contents of the several particulars of our prayers. Not that we are tied up to the use of this form only, or of this always, as if this were necessary to the consecrating of our other prayers; we are here bid to pray after this manner, with these words, or to this effect. That in Luke differs from this; we do not find it used by the apostles; we are not here taught to pray in the name of Christ, as we are afterward; we are here taught to pray that the kingdom might come which did come when the Spirit was poured out: yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it as a form, and it is a pledge of the communion of saints, it having been used by the church in all ages, at least (says Dr. Whitby) from the third century. It is our Lord's prayer, it is of his composing, of his appointing; it is very compendious, yet very comprehensive, in compassion to our infirmities in praying. The matter is choice and necessary, the method instructive, and the expression very concise. It has much in a little, and it is requisite that we acquaint ourselves with the sense and meaning of it, for it is used acceptably no further than it is used with understanding and without vain repetition.

The Lord's prayer (as indeed every prayer) is a letter sent from earth to heaven. Here is the inscription of the letter, the person to whom it is directed, our Father; the where, in heaven; the contents of it in several errands of request; the close, for thine is the kingdom; the seal, Amen; and if you will, the date too, this day. Plainly thus: there are three parts of the prayer.

I. The preface, Our Father who art in heaven. Before we come to our business, there must be a solemn address to him with whom our business lies; Our Father. Intimating, that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others; for we are members one of another, and are called into fellowship with each other. We are here taught to whom to pray, to God only, and not to saints and angels, for they are ignorant of us, are not to have the high honours we give in prayer, nor can give favours we expect. We are taught how to address ourselves to God, and what title to give him, that which speaks him rather beneficent than magnificent, for we are to come boldly to the throne of grace.

1. We must address ourselves to him as our Father, and must call him so. He is a common Father to all mankind by creation, Mal 2:10,Ac 17:28. He is in a special manner a Father to the saints, by adoption and regeneration (Eph 1:5,Ga 4:6); and an unspeakable privilege it is. Thus we must eye him in prayer, keep up good thoughts of him, such as are encouraging and not affrighting; nothing more pleasing to God, nor pleasant to ourselves, than to call God Father. Christ in prayer mostly called God Father. If he be our Father, he will pity us under our weaknesses and infirmities (Ps 103:13), will spare us (Mal 3:17), will make the best of our performances, though very defective, will deny us nothing that is good for us, Lu 11:11-13. We have access with boldness to him, as to a father, and have an advocate with the Father, and the Spirit of adoption. When we come repenting of our sins, we must eye God as a Father, as the prodigal did (Lu 15:18,Jer 3:19); when we come begging for grace, and peace, and the inheritance and blessing of sons, it is an encouragement that we come to God, not as an

unreconciled, avenging Judge, but as a loving, gracious, reconciled Father in Christ, Jer 3:4.

2. As our Father in heaven: so in heaven as to be every where else, for the heaven cannot contain him; yet so in heaven as there to manifest his glory, for it is his throne (Ps 103:19), and it is to believers a throne of grace: thitherward we must direct our prayers, for Christ the Mediator is now in heaven, Heb 8:1. Heaven is out of sight, and a world of spirits, therefore our converse with God in prayer must be spiritual; it is on high, therefore in prayer we must be raised above the world, and lift up our hearts, Ps 5:1. Heaven is a place of perfect purity, and we must therefore lift up pure hands, must study to sanctify his name, who is the Holy One, and dwells in that holy place, Le 10:3. From heaven God beholds the children of men, Ps 33:13,14. And we must in prayer see his eye upon us: thence he has a full and clear view of all our wants and burdens and desires, and all our infirmities. It is the firmament of his power likewise, as well as of his prospect, Ps 150:1. He is not only, as a Father, able to help us, able to do great things for us, more than we can ask or think; he has wherewith to supply our needs, for every good gift is from above. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness, but a Father in heaven, and therefore we must come with reverence, Ec 5:2. Thus all our prayers should correspond with that which is our great aim as Christians, and that is, to be with God in heaven. God and heaven, the end of our whole conversation, must be particularly eyed in every prayer; there is the centre to which we are all tending. By prayer, we send before us thither, where we profess to be going.

II. The petitions, and those are six; the three first relating more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual; as in the ten commandments, the four first teach us our duty toward God, and the last six our duty toward our neighbour. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then to hope that other things shall be added.

1. Hallowed be thy name. It is the same word that in other places is translated sanctified. But here the old word hallowed is retained, only because people were used to it in the Lord's prayer. In these words,

(a) We give glory to God; it may be taken not as a petition, but as an adoration; as that, the Lord be magnified, or glorified, for God's holiness is the greatness and glory of all his perfections. We must begin our prayers with praising God, and it is very fit he should be first served, and that we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from him. Let him have praise of his perfections, and then let us have the benefit of them.

(b) We fix our end, and it is the right end to be aimed at, and ought to be our chief and ultimate end in all our petitions, that God may be glorified; all our other requests must be in subordination to this, and in pursuance of it. "Father, glorify thyself in giving me my daily bread and pardoning my sins," &c. Since all is of him and through him, all must be to him and for him. In prayer our thoughts and affections should be carried out most to the glory of God. The Pharisees made their own name the chief end of their prayers (Mt 6:5, to be seen of men), in opposition to which we are directed to make the name of God our chief end; let all our petitions centre in this and be regulated by it. "Do so and so for me, for the glory of thy name, and as far as is for the glory of it."

(c.) We desire and pray that the name of God, that is, God himself, in all that whereby he has made himself known, may be sanctified and glorified both by us and others, and especially by himself. "Father, let thy name be glorified as a Father, and a Father in heaven; glorify thy goodness and thy highness, thy majesty and mercy. Let thy name be sanctified, for it is a holy name; no matter what becomes of our polluted names, but, Lord, what wilt thou do to thy great name?" When we pray that God's name may be glorified,

[1.] We make a virtue of necessity; for God will sanctify his own name, whether we desire it or not; I will be exalted among the heathen, Ps 46:10.

[2.] We ask for that which we are sure shall be granted; for when our Saviour prayed, Father glorify thy name, it was immediately answered, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.

2. Thy kingdom come. This petition has plainly a reference to the doctrine which Christ preached at this time, which John Baptist had preached before, and which he afterwards sent his apostles out to preach--the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of your Father who is in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, this is at hand, pray that it may come. Note, We should turn the word we hear into prayer, our hearts should echo to it; does Christ promise, surely I come quickly? our hearts should answer, Even so, come. Ministers should pray over the word: when they preach, the kingdom of God is at hand, they should pray, Father, thy kingdom come. What God has promised we must pray for; for promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer; and when the accomplishment of a promise is near and at the door, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we should then pray for it the more earnestly; thy kingdom come; as Daniel set his face to pray for the deliverance of Israel, when he understood that the time of it was at hand, Da 9:2. See Lu 19:11. It was the Jews' daily prayer to God, Let him make his kingdom reign, let his redemption flourish, and let his Messiah come and deliver his people. Dr. Whitby, ex Vitringa. "Let thy kingdom come, let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all; let all be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, and to embrace him as their Saviour and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel-church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it, and live as becomes their character."

3. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. We pray that God's kingdom being come, we and others may be brought into obedience to all the laws and ordinances of it. By this let it appear that Christ's kingdom is come, let God's will be done; and by this let is appear that it is come as a kingdom of heaven, let it introduce a heaven upon earth. We make Christ but a titular Prince, if we call him King, and do not do his will: having prayed that he may rule us, we pray that we may in every thing be ruled by him. Observe,

(a) The thing prayed for, thy will be done; "Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and mine; 1Sa 3:18. I refer myself to thee, and am well satisfied that all thy counsel concerning me should be performed." In this sense Christ prayed, not my will, but thine be done. "Enable me to do what is pleasing to thee; give me that grace that is necessary to the right knowledge of thy will, and an acceptable obedience to it. Let thy will be done conscientiously by me and others, not our own will, the will of the flesh, or the mind, not the will of men (1Pe 4:2), much less Satan's will (Joh 8:44), that we may neither displease God in any thing we do (ut nihil nostrum displiceat Deo), nor be displeased at any thing God does" (ut nihil Dei displiceat nobis).

(b) The pattern of it, that it might be done on earth, in this place of our trial and probation (where our work must be done, or it never will be done), as it is done in heaven, that place of rest and joy. We pray that earth may be made more like heaven by the observance of God's will (this earth, which, through the prevalency of Satan's will, has become so near akin to hell), and that saints may be made more like the holy angels in their devotion and obedience. We are on earth, blessed be God, not yet under the earth; we pray for the living only, not for the dead that have gone down into silence.

4. Give us this day our daily bread. Because our natural being is necessary to our spiritual well-being in this world, therefore, after the things of God's glory, kingdom, and will, we pray for the necessary supports and comforts of this present life, which are the

gifts of God, and must be asked of him, Ton arton epiousion--Bread for the day approaching, for all the remainder of our lives. Bread for the time to come, or bread for our being and subsistence, that which is agreeable to our condition in the world (Pr 30:8), food convenient for us and our families, according to our rank and station.

Every word here has a lesson in it:

(a) We ask for bread; that teaches us sobriety and temperance; we ask for bread, not dainties, not superfluities; that which is wholesome, though it be not nice.

(b) We ask for our bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the bread of deceit (Pr 20:17), not the brad of idleness (Pr 31:27), but the bread honestly gotten.

(c) We ask for our daily bread; which teaches us not to take thought for the morrow (Mt 6:34), but constantly to depend upon divine Providence, as those that live from hand to mouth.

(d) We beg of God to give it us, not sell it us, nor lend it us, but give it. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their daily bread,

(e) We pray, "Give it to us; not to me only, but to others in common with me." This teaches us charity, and a compassionate concern for the poor and needy. It intimates also, that we ought to pray with our families; we and our households eat together, and therefore ought to pray together.

(f) We pray that God would give us this day; which teaches us to renew the desire of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed; as duly as the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we could as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, This is connected with the former; and forgive, intimating, that unless our sins be pardoned, we can have no comfort in life, or the supports of it. Our daily bread does but feed us as lambs for the slaughter, if our sins be not pardoned. It intimates, likewise, that we must pray for daily pardon, as duly as we pray for daily bread. He that is washed, needeth to wash his feet. Here we have,

(a) A petition; Father in heaven forgive us our debts, our debts to thee. Note,

[1.] Our sins are our debts; there is a debt of duty, which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator; we do not pray to be discharged from that, but upon the non-payment of that there arises a debt of punishment; in default of obedience to the will of God, we become obnoxious to the wrath of God; and for not observing the precept of the law, we stand obliged to the penalty. A debtor is liable to process, so are we; a malefactor is a debtor to the law, so are we.

[2.] Our hearts' desire and prayer to our heavenly Father every day should be, that he would forgive us our debts; that the obligation to punishment may be cancelled and vacated, that we may not come into condemnation; that we may be discharged, and have the comfort of it. In suing out the pardon of our sins, the great plea we have to rely upon is the satisfaction that was made to the justice of God for the sin of man, by the dying of the Lord Jesus our Surety, or rather Bail to the action, that undertook our discharge.

(b) An argument to enforce this petition; as we forgive our debtors. This is not a plea of merit, but a plea of grace. Note, Those that come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them, else they curse themselves when they say the Lord's prayer. Our duty is to forgive our debtors; as to debts of money, we must not be rigorous and severe in exacting them from those that cannot pay

them without ruining themselves and their families; but this means debt of injury; our debtors are those that trespass against us, that smite us (Mt 5:39,40), and in strictness of law, might be prosecuted for it; we must forbear, and forgive, and forget the affronts put upon us, and the wrongs done us; and this is a moral qualification for pardon and peace; it encourages to hope, that God will forgive us; for if there be in us this gracious disposition, it is wrought of God, and therefore is a perfection eminently and transcendently in himself; it will be an evidence to us that he has forgiven us, having wrought in us the condition of forgiveness.

6. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. This petition is expressed,

(a) Negatively: Lead us not into temptation. Having prayed that the guilt of sin may be removed, we pray, as it is fit, that we may never return again to folly, that we may not be tempted to it. It is not as if God tempted any to sin; but, "Lord, do not let Satan loose upon us; chain up that roaring lion, for he is subtle and spiteful; Lord, do not leave us to ourselves (Ps 19:13), for we are very weak; Lord, do not lay stumbling-blocks and snares before us, nor put us into circumstances that may be an occasion of falling." Temptations are to be prayed against, both because of the discomfort and trouble of them, and because of the danger we are in of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grief that then follow.

(b) Positively: But deliver us from evil; apo tou ponerou--from the evil one, the devil, the tempter; "keep us, that either we may not be assaulted by him, or we may not be overcome by those assaults:" Or from the evil thing, sin, the worst of evils; an evil, an only evil; that evil thing which God hates, and which Satan tempts men to and destroys them by. "Lord, deliver us from the evil of the world, the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the evil of every condition in the world; from the evil of death; from the sting of death, which is sin: deliver us from ourselves, from our own evil

hearts: deliver us from evil men, that they may not be a snare to us, nor we a prey to them."

III. The conclusion: For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen. Some refer this to David's doxology, 1Ch 29:11. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness. It is,

1. A form of plea to enforce the foregoing petitions. It is our duty to plead with God in prayer, to fill our mouth with arguments (Job 23:4) not to move God, but to affect ourselves; to encourage the faith, to excite our fervency, and to evidence both. Now the best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God himself, and from that which he has made known of himself. We must wrestle with God in his own strength, both as to the nature of our pleas and the urging of them. The plea here has special reference to the first three petitions; "Father in heaven, thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom; thy will be done, for thine is the power; hallowed be thy name, for thine is the glory." And as to our own particular errands, these are encouraging: "Thine is the kingdom; thou hast the government of the world, and the protection of the saints, thy willing subjects in it;" God gives and saves like a king. "Thine is the power, to maintain and support that kingdom, and to make good all thine engagements to thy people." Thine is the glory, as the end of all that which is given to, and done for, the saints, in answer to their prayers; for their praise waiteth for him. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer.

2. It is a form of praise and thanksgiving. The best pleading with God is praising of him; it is the way to obtain further mercy, as it qualifies us to receive it. In all our addresses to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share, for praise becometh the saints; they are to be our God for a name and for a praise. It is just and equal; we praise God, and give him glory, not because he needs it--he is praised by a world of angels, but because he deserves it; and it is our duty to give him glory, in compliance with his design in revealing himself to us. Praise is the work and happiness of

heaven; and all that would go to heaven hereafter, must begin their heaven now. Observe, how full this doxology is, The kingdom, and the power, and the glory, it is all thine. Note, It becomes us to be copious in praising God. A true saint never thinks he can speak honourably enough of God: here there should be a gracious fluency, and this for ever. Ascribing glory to God for ever, intimates an acknowledgement, that it is eternally due, and an earnest desire to be eternally doing it, with angels and saints above, Ps 71:14.

Lastly, To all this we are taught to affix our Amen, so be it. God's Amen is a grant; his fiat is, it shall be so; our Amen is only a summary desire; our fiat is, let it be so: it is in the token of our desire and assurance to be heard, that we say Amen. Amen refers to every petition going before, and thus, in compassion to our infirmities, we are taught to knit up the whole in one word, and so to gather up, in the general, what we have lost and let slip in the particulars. It is good to conclude religious duties with some warmth and vigour, that we may go from them with a sweet savour upon our spirits. It was of old the practice of good people to say, Amen, audibly at the end of every prayer, and it is a commendable practice, provided it be done with understanding, as the apostle directs (1Co 14:16), and uprightly, with life and liveliness, and inward expressions, answerable to that outward expression of desire and confidence.

Most of the petitions in the Lord's prayer had been commonly used by the Jews in their devotions, or words to the same effect: but that clause in the fifth petition, As we forgive our debtors, was perfectly new, and therefore our Saviour here shows for what reason he added it, not with any personal reflection upon the peevishness, litigiousness, and ill nature of the men of that generation, though there was cause enough for it, but only from the necessity and importance of the thing itself. God, in forgiving us, has a peculiar respect to our forgiving those that have injured us; and therefore, when we pray for pardon, we must mention our making conscience of that duty, not only to remind ourselves of it, but to bind ourselves

to it. See that parable, Mt 18:23-25. Selfish nature is loth to comply with this, and therefore it is here inculcated, Mt 6:14,15.

1. In a promise. If ye forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive. Not as if this were the only condition required; there must be repentance and faith, and new obedience; but as where other graces are in truth, there will be this, so this will be a good evidence of the sincerity of our other graces. He that relents toward his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God. Those which in the prayer are called debts, are here called trespasses, debts of injury, wrongs done to us in our bodies, goods, or reputation: trespasses is an extenuating term for offences, paraptomata--stumbles, slips, falls. Note, It is a good evidence, and a good help of our forgiving others, to call the injuries done us by a mollifying, excusing name. Call them not treasons, but trespasses; not wilful injuries, but casual inadvertencies; peradventure it was an oversight (Ge 43:12), therefore make the best of it. We must forgive, as we hope to be forgiven; and therefore must not only bear no malice, nor mediate revenge, but must not upbraid our brother with the injuries he has done us, nor rejoice in any hurt that befals him, but must be ready to help him and do him good, and if he repent and desire to be friends again, we must be free and familiar with him, as before.

2. In a threatening. "But if you forgive not those that have injured you, that is a bad sign you have not the other requisite conditions, but are altogether unqualified for pardon: and therefore your Father, whom you call Father, and who, as a father, offers you his grace upon reasonable terms, will nevertheless not forgive you. And if other grace be sincere, and yet you be defective greatly in forgiving, you cannot expect the comfort of your pardon, but to have your spirit brought down by some affliction or other to comply with this duty." Note, Those who would have found mercy with God must show mercy to their brethren; no can we expect that he should stretch out the hands of his favour to us, unless we lift up to him pure hands, without wrath, 1Ti 2:8. If we pray in anger, we have reason to fear God will answer in anger. It has been said,

Prayers made in wrath are written in gall. What reason is it that God should forgive us the talents we are indebted to him, if we forgive not our brethren the pence they are indebted to us? Christ came into the world as the great Peace-Maker, and not only to reconcile us to God, but one to another, and in this we must comply with him. It is great presumption and of dangerous consequence, for any to make a light matter of that which Christ here lays such a stress upon. Men's passions shall not frustrate God's word.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
15 but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Jesus' Teaching on Fasting

16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
18 that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

We are here cautioned against hypocrisy in fasting, as before in almsgiving, and in prayer.

I. It is here supposed that religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, when God, in his providence, calls to it, and when the case of their own souls upon any account requires it; when the bridegroom is taken away, then shall they fast, Mt 9:15. Fasting is here put last, because it is not so much a duty for its own sake, as a means to dispose us for other duties. Prayer comes in between almsgiving and fasting, as being the life and soul of both. Christ here speaks especially of private fasts, such as particular persons prescribe to themselves, as free-will offerings, commonly used among the pious Jews; some fasted one day, some two, every week;

others seldomer, as they saw cause. On those days they did not eat till sun-set, and then very sparingly. It was not the Pharisee's fasting twice in the week, but his boasting of it, that Christ condemned, Lu 18:12. It is a laudable practice, and we have reason to lament it, that is so generally neglected among Christians. Anna was much in fasting, Lu 2:37. Cornelius fasted and prayed, Ac 10:30. The primitive Christians were much in it, see Ac 13:3,14:23. Private fasting is supposed, 1Co 7:5. It is an act of self-denial, and mortification of the flesh, a holy revenge upon ourselves, and humiliation under the hand of God. The most grown Christians must hereby own, they are so far from having any thing to be proud of, that they are unworthy of their daily bread. It is a means to curb the flesh and the desires of it, and to make us more lively in religious exercises, as fulness of bread is apt to make us drowsy. Paul was in fastings often, and so he kept under this body, and brought it into subjection.

II. We are cautioned not to do this as the hypocrites did it, lest we lose the reward of it; and the more difficulty attends the duty, the greater loss it is to lose the reward of it.

Now, 1 The hypocrites pretended fasting, when there was nothing of that contrition or humiliation of soul in them, which is the life and soul of the duty. Theirs were mock-fasts, the show and shadow without the substance; they took on them to be more humbled than really they were, and so endeavored to put a cheat upon God, than which they could not put a greater affront upon him. The fast that God has chosen, is a day to afflict the soul, not to hang down the head like a bulrush, nor for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him; we are quite mistaken if we call this a fast, Isa 58:5. Bodily exercise, if that be all, profits little, since that is not fasting to God, even to him.

2. They proclaimed their fasting, and managed it so that all who saw them might take notice that it was a fasting-day with them. Even on these days they appeared in the streets, whereas they should have been in their closets; and the affected a downcast look, a melancholy countenance, a slow and solemn pace; and perfectly disfigured themselves, that men might see how often they fasted, and might extol them as devout, mortified men. Note, It is sad that

men, who have, in some measure, mastered their pleasure, which is sensual wickedness, should be ruined by their pride, which is spiritual wickedness, and no less dangerous. Here also they have their reward, that praise and applause of men which they court and covet so much; they have it, and it is their all.

III. We are directed how to manage a private fast; we must keep it in private, Mt 6:17,18. He does not tell us how often we must fast; circumstances vary, and wisdom is profitable therein to direct; the Spirit in the word has left that to the Spirit in the heart; but take this for a rule, whenever you undertake this duty, study therein to approve yourselves to God, and not to recommend yourselves to the good opinion of men; humility must evermore attend upon our humiliation. Christ does not direct to abate any thing of the reality of the fast; he does not say,"take a little meat, or a little drink, or a little cordial;" no, "let the body suffer, but lay aside the show and appearance of it; appear with thy ordinary countenance, guise, and dress; and while thou deniest thyself thy bodily refreshments, do it so as that it may not be taken notice of, no, not by those that are nearest to thee; look pleasant, anoint thine head and wash thy face, as thou dost on ordinary days, on purpose to conceal thy devotion; and thou shalt be no loser in the praise of it at last; for though it be not of men, it shall be of God." Fasting is the humbling of the soul (Ps 35:13), that is the inside of the duty; let that therefore be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen. If we be sincere in our solemn fasts, and humble, and trust God's omniscience for our witness, and his goodness for our reward, we shall find, both that he did see in secret, and will reward openly. Religious fasts, if rightly kept, will shortly be recompensed with an everlasting feast. Our acceptance with God in our private fasts should make us dead, both to the applause of men (we must not do the duty in hopes of this), and to the censures of men too (we must not decline the duty for fear of them). David's fasting was turned to his reproach, Ps 69:10; and yet, Mt 6:13, As for me, let them say what they will of me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time.

The Jews fasted often. They had four annual fasts, in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem, (Jer 52:7) of the

burning of the temple, (Zech 7:3) in memory of the death of Gedaliah, (Jer 41:4,) and in memory of the commencement of the attack on Jerusalem, Zech 8:19. In addition to these, they had a multitude of occasional fasts. It was customary, also, for the Pharisees to fast twice a week, Lk 17:12.

Treasure in Heaven

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth
corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust
doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Worldly-mindedness is as common and as fatal a symptom of hypocrisy as any other, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul, under the cloak of a visible and passable profession of religion, than by this; and therefore Christ, having warned us against coveting the praise of men, proceeds next to warn us against coveting the wealth of the world; in this also we must take heed, lest we be as the hypocrites are, and do as they do: the fundamental error that they are guilty of is, that they choose the world for their reward; we must therefore take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness, in the choice we make of our treasure, our end, and our masters.

I. In choosing the treasure we lay up. Something or other every man has which he makes his treasure, his portion, which his heart is upon, to which he carries all he can get, and which he depends upon for futurity. It is that good, that chief good, which Solomon speaks of with such an emphasis, Ec 2:3. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing, which it has a complacency and confidence in above other things. Now Christ designs not to deprive us of our treasure, but to direct us in the choice of it; and here we have,

1. A good caution against making the things that are seen, that are temporal, our best things, and placing our happiness in them. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. Christ's disciples had left all to follow him, let them still keep in the same good mind. A treasure is an abundance of something that is in itself, at least in our opinion, precious and valuable, and likely to stand us in stead hereafter. Now we must not lay up our treasures on earth, that is,

(a) We must not count these things the best things, nor the most valuable in themselves, nor the most serviceable to us: we must not call them glory, as Laban's sons did, but see and own that they have no glory in comparison with the glory that excelleth.

(b) We must not covet an abundance of these things, nor be still grasping at more and more of them, and adding to them, as men do to that which is their treasure, as never knowing when we have enough.

(c) We must not confide in them for futurity, to be our security and supply in time to come; we must not say to the gold, Thou art my hope.

(d) We must not content ourselves with them, as all we need or desire: we must be content with a little for our passage, but not with all for our portion. These things must not be made our consolation (Lu 6:24), our good things, Lu 16:25. Let us consider we are laying up, not for our posterity in this world, but for ourselves in the other world. We are put to our choice, and made in a manner our own carvers; that is ours which we lay up for ourselves. It concerns thee to choose wisely, for thou art choosing for thyself, and shalt have as thou choosest. If we know and consider ourselves what we are, what we are made for, how large our capacities are, and how long our continuance, and that our souls are ourselves, we shall see it is foolish thing to lay up our treasures on earth.

2. Here is a good reason given why we should not look upon any thing on earth as our treasure, because it is liable to loss and decay:

(a) From corruption within. That which is treasure upon earth moth and rust do corrupt. If the treasure be laid up in fine clothes, the moth frets them, and they are gone and spoiled insensibly, when we thought them most securely laid up. If it be in corn or other eatables, as his was who had his barns full (Lu 12:16,17), rust (so we read it) corrupts that: Brosis--eating, eating by men, for as goods are increased they are increased that eat them (Ec 5:11); eating by mice or other vermin; manna itself bred worms; or it grows mouldy and musty, is struck, or smutted, or blasted; fruits soon rot. Or, if we understand it of silver and gold, they tarnish and canker; they grow less with using, and grow worse with keeping (Jam 5:2,3); the rust and the moth breed in the metal itself and in the garment itself. Note, Worldly riches have in themselves a principal of corruption and decay; they wither of themselves, and make themselves wings.

(b) From violence without. Thieves break through and steal. Every hand of violence will be aiming at the house where treasure is laid up; nor can any thing be laid up so safe, but we may be spoiled of it. Numquam ego fortunæ credidi, etiam si videretur pacem agere; omnia illa quæ in me indulgentissime conferebat, pecuniam, honores, gloriam, eo loco posui, unde posset ea, since metu meo, repetere--I never reposed confidence in fortune, even if she seemed propitious: whatever were the favours which her bounty bestowed, whether wealth, honours, or glory, I so disposed of them, that it was in her power to recall them without occasioning me any alarm. Seneca. Consol. ad Helv. It is folly to make that our treasure which we may so easily be robbed of.

3. Good counsel, to make the joys and glories of the other world, those things not seen that are eternal, our best things, and to place our happiness in them. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Note,

(a) There are treasures in heaven, as sure as there are on this earth; and those in heaven are the only true treasures, the riches and glories and pleasures that are at God's right hand, which those that

are sanctified truly arrive at, when they come to be sanctified perfectly.

(b) It is our wisdom to lay up our treasure in those treasures; to give all diligence to make sure our title to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to depend upon that as our happiness, and look upon all things here below with a holy contempt, as not worthy to be compared with it. We must firmly believe there is such a happiness, and resolve to be content with that, and to be content with nothing short of it. If we thus make those treasures ours, they are laid up, and we may trust God to keep them safe for us; thither let us then refer all our designs, and extend all our desires; thither let us send before our best efforts and best affections. Let us not burthen ourselves with the cash of this world, which will but load and defile us, and be liable to sink us, but lay up in store good securities. The promises are bills of exchange, by which all true believers return their treasure to heaven, payable in the future state: and thus we make that sure that will be made sure.

(c) It is a great encouragement to us to lay up our treasure in heaven, that there it is safe; it will not decay of itself, no moth nor rust will corrupt it; nor can we be by force or fraud deprived of it; thieves do not break through and steal. It is a happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, an inheritance incorruptible.

4. A good reason why we should thus choose, and an evidence that we have done so (Mt 6:21), Where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there will you heart be. We are therefore concerned to be right and wise in the choice of our treasure, because the temper of our minds, and consequently the tenor of our lives, will be accordingly either carnal or spiritual, earthly or heavenly. The heart follows the treasure, as the needle follows the loadstone, or the sunflower the sun. Where the treasure is there the value and esteem are, there the love and affection are (Col 3:2), that way the desires and pursuits go, thitherward the aims and intents are levelled, and all is done with that in view. Where the treasure is, there our cares and fears are, lest we come short of it; about that we are most

solicitous; there our hope and trust are (Pr 18:10,11); there our joys and delights will be (Ps 119:111); and there our thoughts will be, there the inward thought will be, the first thought, the free thought, the fixed thought, the frequent, the familiar thought. The heart is God's due (Pr 23:26), and that he may have it, our treasure must be laid up with him, and then our souls will be lifted up to him.

This direction about laying up our treasure, may very fitly be applied to the foregoing caution, of not doing what we do in religion to be seen of men. Our treasure is our alms, prayers, and fastings, and the reward of them; if we have done these only to gain the applause of men, we have laid up this treasure on earth, have lodged it in the hands of men, and must never expect to hear any further of it. Now it is folly to do this, for the praise of men we covet so much is liable to corruption: it will soon be rusted, and moth-eaten, and tarnished; a little folly, like a dead fly, will spoil it all, Ec 10:1. Slander and calumny are thieves that break through and steal it away, and so we lose all the treasure of our performances; we have run in vain, and laboured in vain, because we misplaced our intentions in doing of them. Hypocritical services lay up nothing in heaven (Isa 58:3); the gain of them is gone, when the soul is called for, Job 27:8. But if we have prayed and fasted and given alms in truth and uprightness, with an eye to God and to his acceptance, and have approved ourselves to him therein, we have laid up that treasure in heaven; a book of remembrance is written there (Mal 3:16), and being there recorded, they shall be there rewarded, and we shall meet them again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. Hypocrites are written in the earth (Jer 17:13), but God's faithful ones have their names written in heaven, Lu 10:20. Acceptance with God is treasure in heaven, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen. His well done shall stand for ever; and if we have thus laid up our treasure with him, with him our hearts will be; and where can they be better?

II. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the end we look at. Our concern as to this is represented by two sorts of eyes which men have, a single eye and an evil eye,

Mt 6:22,23. The expressions here are somewhat dark because concise; we shall therefore take them in some variety of interpretation. The light of the body is the eye, that is plain; the eye is discovering and directing; the light of the world would avail us little without this light of the body; it is the light of the eye that rejoiceth the heart (Pr 15:30), but what is that which is here compared to the eye in the body.

1. The eye, that is, the heart (so some) if that be single--haplous--free and bountiful (so the word is frequently rendered, as Ro 12:8,2Co 8:2,9:11,13,Jam 1:5, and we read of a bountiful eye, Pr 22:9). If the heart be liberally affected and stand inclined to goodness and charity, it will direct the man to Christian actions, the whole conversation will be full of light, full of evidences and instances of true Christianity, that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father (Jam 1:27), full of light, of good works, which are our light shining before men; but if the heart be evil, covetous, and hard, and envious, griping and grudging (such a temper of mind is often expressed by an evil eye, Mt 20:15,Mk 7:22,Pr 7:22), the body will be full of darkness, the whole conversation will be heathenish and unchristian. The instruments of the churl are and always will be evil, but the liberal deviseth liberal things, Isa 32:5-8. If the light that is in us, those affections which should guide us to that which is good, be darkness, if these be corrupt and worldly, if there be not so much as good nature in a man, not so much as a kind disposition, how great is the corruption of a man, and the darkness in which he sits! This sense seems to agree with the context; we must lay up treasure in heaven by liberality in giving alms, and that not grudgingly but with cheerfulness, Lu 12:33,2Co 9:7. But these words in the parallel place do not come in upon any such occasion, Lu 11:34, and therefore the coherence here does not determine that to be the sense of them.

2. The eye, that is, the understanding (so some); the practical judgment, the conscience, which is to the other faculties of the soul, as the eye is to the body, to guide and direct their motions; now if

this eye be single, if it make a true and right judgment, and discern things that differ, especially in the great concern of laying up the treasure so as to choose aright in that, it will rightly guide the affections and actions, which will all be full of the light of grace and comfort; but if this be evil and corrupt, and instead of leading the inferior powers, is led, and bribed, and biassed by them, if this be erroneous and misinformed, the heart and life must needs be full of darkness, and the whole conversation corrupt. They that will not understand, are said to walk on in darkness, Ps 82:5. It is sad when the spirit of a man, that should be the candle of the Lord, is an ignis fatuus: when the leaders of the people, the leaders of the faculties, cause them to err, for then they that are led of them are destroyed, Isa 9:16. An error in the practical judgment is fatal, it is that which calls evil good and good evil (Isa 5:20); therefore it concerns us to understand things aright, to get our eyes anointed with eye-salve.

3. The eye, that is, the aims and intentions; by the eye we set our end before us, the mark we shoot at, the place we go to, we keep that in view, and direct our motion accordingly; in every thing we do in religion; there is something or other that we have in our eye; now if our eye be single, if we aim honestly, fix right ends, and move rightly towards them, if we aim purely and only at the glory of God, seek his honor and favour, and direct all entirely to him, then the eye is single; Paul's was so when he said, To me to live is Christ; and if we be right here, the whole body will be full of light, all the actions will be regular and gracious, pleasing to God and comfortable to ourselves; but if this eye be evil, if, instead of aiming only at the glory of God, and our acceptance with him, we look aside at the applause of men, and while we profess to honour God, contrive to honour ourselves, and seek our own things under colour of seeking the things of Christ, this spoils all, the whole conversation will be perverse and unsteady, and the foundations being thus out of course, there can be nothing but confusion and every evil work in the superstructure. Draw the lines from the circumference to any other point but the centre, and they will cross. If the light that is in thee be not only dim, but darkness itself, it is a fundamental error, and destructive to all that follows. The end specifies the action. It is of the last importance in religion, that we

be right in our aims, and make eternal things, not temporal, our scope, 2Co 4:18. The hypocrite is like the waterman, that looks one way and rows another; the true Christian like the traveller, that has his journey's end in his eye. The hypocrite soars like the kite, with his eye upon the prey below, which he is ready to come down to when he has a fair opportunity; the true Christian soars like the lark, higher and higher, forgetting the things that are beneath.

The light of the body, etc. The sentiment stated in the preceding verses--the duty of fixing the affections on heavenly things--Jesus proceeds to illustrate by a reference to the eye. When the eye is directed singly and steadily towards an object, and is in health, or is single, everything is clear and plain. If it vibrates, flies to different objects, is fixed on no one singly, or is diseased, nothing is seen clearly. Everything is dim and confused. The man, therefore, is unsteady. The eye regulates the motion of the body. To have an object distinctly in view, is necessary to correct and regulate action, Rope-dancers, in order to steady themselves, fix the eye on some object on the wall, and look steadily at that. If they should look down on the rope or the people, they would become dizzy and fall. A man crossing a stream on a log, if he will look across at some object steadily, will be in little danger. If he looks down on the dashing and rolling waters, he will become dizzy, and fall. So Jesus says, in order that the conduct may be right, it is important to fix the affections on heaven. Having the affections there--having the eye of faith single, steady, unwavering--all the conduct will be correspondent.

Single. Steady, devoted to one object. Not confused, as persons' eyes are when they see double.

Thy whole body shall be full of light. Your conduct will be regular and steady. All that is needful to direct the body is that the eye be fixed right. No other light is required. So all that is needful to direct the soul and the conduct is that the eye of faith be fixed on heaven, that the affections be there.

If therefore the light that is in thee, etc. The word light, here, signifies the mind, or principles of the soul. If this be dark, how great is that darkness! The meaning of this passage may be thus expressed: The light of the body, the guide and director, is the eye. All know how calamitous it is when that light is irregular or extinguished, as when the eye is diseased or lost. So the light that is in us is the soul. If that soul is debased by attending exclusively to earthly objects--if it is diseased, and not fixed on heaven--how much darker and more dreadful will it be than any darkness of the eye! Avarice darkens the mind, obscures the view, and brings in a dreadful and gloomy night over all the faculties.

III. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the master we serve, Mt 6:24. No man can serve two masters. Serving two masters is contrary to the single eye; for the eye will be to the master's hand, Ps 123:1,2. Our Lord Jesus here exposes the cheat which those put upon their own souls, who think to divide between God and the world, to have a treasure on earth, and a treasure in heaven too, to please God and please men too. Why not? says the hypocrite; it is good to have two strings to one's bow. They hope to make their religion serve their secular interest, and so turn to account both ways. The pretending mother was for dividing the child; the Samaritans will compound between God and idols. No, says Christ, this will not do; it is but a supposition that gain is godliness, 1Ti 6:5. Here is,

1. A general maxim laid down; it is likely it was a proverb among the Jews, No man can serve two masters, much less two gods; for their commands will some time or other cross or contradict one another, and their occasions interfere. While two masters go together, a servant may follow them both; but when they part, you will see to which he belongs; he cannot love, and observe, and cleave to both as he should. If to the one, not to the other; either this or that must be comparatively hated and despised. This truth is plain enough in common cases.

2 The application of it to the business in hand. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Mammon is a Syriac word, that signifies gain; so that whatever in this world is, or is accounted by us to be, gain (Php 3:7), is mammon. Whatever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is mammon. To some their belly is their mammon, and they serve that (Php 3:19); to others their ease, their sleep, their sports and pastimes, are their mammon (Pr 6:9); to others worldly riches (Jam 4:13); to others honours and preferments; the praise and applause of men was the Pharisees' mammon; in a word, self, the unity in which the world's trinity centres, sensual, secular self, is the mammon which cannot be served in conjunction with God; for if it be served, it is in competition with him and in contradiction to him. He does not say, We must not or we should not, but we cannot serve God and Mammon; we cannot love both (1Jo 2:15,Jam 4:4); or hold to both, or hold by both in observance, obedience, attendance, trust, and dependence, for they are contrary the one to the other. God says, "My son, give me thy heart." Mammon says, "No, give it me." God says, "Be content with such things as ye have." Mammon says, "Grasp at all that ever thou canst. Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem--Money, money; by fair means or by foul, money." God says, "Defraud not, never lie, be honest and just in all thy dealings." Mammon says "Cheat thine own Father, if thou canst gain by it." God says, "Be charitable." Mammon says, "Hold thy own: this giving undoes us all." God says, "Be careful for nothing." Mammon says, "Be careful for every thing." God says, "Keep holy thy sabbath-day." Mammon says, "Make use of that day as well as any other for the world." Thus inconsistent are the commands of God and Mammon, so that we cannot serve both. Let us not then halt between God and Baal, but choose ye this day whom ye will serve, and abide by our choice.

22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole
body shall be full of light.
23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore
the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

God and Mammon

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the
other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve
God and mammon.

Care and Anxiety

25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat,
or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not
the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?
26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor
gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much
better than they?
27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how
they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
29 and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed
like one of these.
30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and
tomorrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of
little faith?

There is scarcely any one sin against which our Lord Jesus more largely and earnestly warns his disciples, or against which he arms them with more variety of arguments, than the sin of disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares about the things of life, which are a bad sign that both the treasure and the heart are on the earth; and therefore he thus largely insists upon it. Here is,

I The prohibition laid down. It is the counsel and command of the Lord Jesus, that we take no thought about the things of this world; I say unto you. He says it as our Lawgiver, and the Sovereign of our hearts; he says it as our Comforter, and the Helper of our joy. What

is it that he says? It is this, and he that hath ears to hear, let him hear it. Take no thought for your life, nor yet for your body (Mt 6:25). Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? (Mt 6:31) and again (Mt 6:34), Take no thought, me merimnate--Be not in care. As against hypocrisy, so against worldly cares, the caution is thrice repeated, and yet no vain repetition: precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, to the same purport, and all little enough; it is a sin which doth so easily beset us. It intimates how pleasing it is to Christ, and of how much concern it is to ourselves, that we should live without carefulness. It is the repeated command of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, that they should not divide and pull in pieces their own minds with care about the world. There is a thought concerning the things of this life, which is not only lawful, but duty, such as is commended in the virtuous woman. See Pr 27:23. The word is used concerning Paul's care of the churches, and Timothy's care for the state of souls, 2Co 11:28,Php 2:20.

But the thought here forbidden is,

1. A disquieting, tormenting thought, which hurries the mind hither and thither, and hangs it in suspense; which disturbs our joy in God, and is a damp upon our hope in him; which breaks the sleep, and hinders our enjoyment of ourselves, of our friends, and of what God has given us.

2. A distrustful, unbelieving thought. God has promised to provide for those that are his all things needful for life as well as godliness, the life that now is, food and a covering: not dainties, but necessaries. He never said, "They shall be feasted," but, "Verily, they shall be fed." Now an inordinate care for time to come, and fear of wanting those supplies, spring from a disbelief of these promises, and of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence; and that is the evil of it. As to present sustenance, we may and must use lawful means to get it, else we tempt God; we must be diligent in our callings, and prudent in proportioning our expenses to what we have, and we must pray for daily bread; and if all other means fail, we may and must ask relief of those that are able to give it. He was none of

the best of men that said, To beg I am ashamed (Lu 16:3); as he was, who (Mt 6:21) desired to be fed with the crumbs; but for the future, we must cast our care upon God, and take no thought, because it looks like a jealousy of God, who knows how to give what we want when we know not now to get it. Let our souls dwell at ease in him! This gracious carelessness is the same with that sleep which God gives to his beloved, in opposition to the worldling's toil, Ps 127:2. Observe the cautions here,

(a) Take no thought for your life. Life is our greatest concern for this world; All that a man has will he give for his life; yet take no thought about it. [1.] Not about the continuance of it; refer it to God to lengthen or shorten it as he pleases; my times are in thy hand, and they are in a good hand. [2.] Not about the comforts of this life; refer it to God to embitter or sweeten it as he pleases. We must not be solicitous, no not about the necessary support of this life, food and raiment; these God has promised, and therefore we may more confidently expect; say not, What shall we eat? It is the language of one at a loss, and almost despairing; whereas, though many good people have the prospect of little, yet there are few but have present support.

(b) Take no thought for the morrow, for the time to come. Be not solicitous for the future, how you shall live next year, or when you are old, or what you shall leave behind you. As we must not boast of to-morrow, so we must not care for to-morrow, or the events of it.

II The reasons and arguments to enforce this prohibition. One would think the command of Christ was enough to restrain us from this foolish sin of disquieting, distrustful care, independently of the comfort of our own souls, which is so nearly concerned; but to show how much the heart of Christ is upon it, and what pleasures he takes in those that hope in his mercy, the command is backed with the most powerful arguments. If reason may but rule us, surely we shall ease ourselves of these thorns. To free us from anxious thoughts, and to expel them, Christ here suggests to us comforting thoughts, that we may be filled with them. It will be worth while to take pains with

our own hearts, to argue them out of their disquieting cares, and to make ourselves ashamed of them. They may be weakened by right reason, but it is by an active faith only that they can be overcome. Consider then,

1. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Mt 6:25. Yes, no doubt it is; so he says who had reason to understand the true value of present things, for he made them, he supports them, and supports us by them; and the thing speaks for itself. Note,

(a) Our life is a greater blessing than our livelihood. It is true, life cannot subsist without a livelihood; but the meat and raiment which are here represented as inferior to the life and body are such as are for ornament and delight; for about such as are for ornament ad delight; for about such we are apt to be solicitous. Meat and raiment are in order to life, and the end is more noble and excellent than the means. The daintiest food and finest raiment are from the earth, but life from the breath of God. Life is the light of men; meat is but the oil that feeds that light: so that the difference between rich and poor is very inconsiderable, since, in the greatest things, they stand on the same level, and differ only in the less.

(b) This is an encouragement to us to trust God for food and raiment, and so to ease ourselves of all perplexing cares about them. God has given us life, and given us the body; it was an act of power, it was an act of favour, it was done without our care: what cannot he do for us, who did that?--what will he not? If we take care about our souls and eternity, which are more than the body, and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. God has maintained our lives hitherto; if sometimes with pulse and water, that has answered the end; he has protected us and kept us alive. He that guards us against the evils we are exposed to, will supply us with the good things we are in need of. If he had been pleased to kill us, to starve us, he would not so often have given his angels a charge concerning us to keep us.

2. Behold the fowls of the air, and consider the lilies of the field. Here is an argument taken from God's common providence toward the inferior creatures, and their dependence, according to their capacities, upon that providence. A fine pass fallen man has come to, that he must be sent to school to the fowls of the air, and that they must teach him! Job 12:7,8.

(a) Look upon the fowls, and learn to trust God for food (Mt 6:26), and disquiet not yourselves with thoughts what you shall eat.

[1.] Observe the providence of God concerning them. Look upon them, and receive instruction. There are various sorts of fowls; they are numerous, some of them ravenous, but they are all fed, and fed with food convenient for them; it is rare that any of them perish for want of food, even in winter, and there goes no little to feed them all the year round. The fowls, as they are least serviceable to man, so they are least within his care; men often feed upon them, but seldom feed them; yet they are fed, we know not how, and some of them fed best in the hardest weather; and it is your heavenly Father that feeds them; he knows all the wild fowls of the mountains, better than you know the tame ones at your own barn-door, Ps 50:11. Not a sparrow lights to the ground, to pick up a grain of corn, but by the providence of God, which extends itself to the meanest creatures. But that which is especially observed here is, that they are fed without any care or project of their own; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. The ant indeed does, and the bee, and they are set before us as examples of prudence and industry; but the fowls of the air do not; they make no provision for the future themselves, and yet every day, as duly as the day comes, provision is made for them, and their eyes wait on God, that great and good Housekeeper, who provides food for all flesh.

[2.] Improve this for your encouragement to trust in God. Are ye not much better than they? Yes, certainly you are. Note, The heirs of heaven are much better than the fowls of heaven; nobler and more excellent beings, and, by faith, they soar higher; they are of a better nature and nurture, wiser than the fowls of heaven (Job 35:11):

though the children of this world, that know not the judgment of the Lord, are not so wise as the stork, and the crane, and the swallow (Jer 8:7), you are dearer to God, and nearer, though they fly in the open firmament of heaven. He is their Master and Lord, their Owner and Master; but besides all this, he is your Father, and in his account ye are of more value than many sparrows; you are his children, his first-born; now he that feeds his birds surely will not starve his babes. They trust your Father's providence, and will not you trust it? In dependence upon that, they are careless for the morrow; and being so, they live the merriest lives of all creatures; they sing among the branches (Ps 104:12), and, to the best of their power, they praise their Creator. If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about the morrow as they are, we should sing as cheerfully as they do; for it is worldly care that mars our mirth and damps our joy, and silences our praise, as much as any thing.

(b) Look upon the lilies, and learn to trust God for raiment. That is another part of our care, what we shall put on; for decency, to cover us; for defence, to keep us warm; yea, and, with many, for dignity and ornament, to make them look great and fine; and so much concerned are they for gaiety and variety in their clothing, that this care returns almost as often as that for their daily bread. Now to ease us of this care, let us consider the lilies of the field; not only look upon them (every eyes does that with pleasure), but consider them. Note, There is a great deal of good to be learned from what we see every day, if we would but consider it, Pr 6:6,24:32.

[1.] Consider how frail the lilies are; they are the grass of the field. Lilies, though distinguished by their colours, are still but grass. Thus all flesh is grass: though some in the endowments of body and mind are as lilies, much admired, still they are grass; the grass of the field in nature and constitution; they stand upon the same level with others. Man's days, at best, are as grass, as the flower of the grass 1Pe 1:24. This grass to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; in a little while the place that knows us will know us no more. The grave is the oven into which we shall be cast, and in which we shall be consumed as grass in the fire, Ps 49:14. This intimates a reason

why we should not take thought for the morrow, what we shall put on, because perhaps, by to-morrow, we may have occasion for our grave-clothes.

[2.] Consider how free from care the lilies are: they toil not as men do, to earn clothing; as servants, to earn their liveries; neither do they spin, as women do, to make clothing. It does not follow that we must therefore neglect, or do carelessly, the proper business of this life; it is the praise of the virtuous woman, that she lays her hand to the spindle, makes fine linen and sells it, Pr 31:19,24. Idleness tempts God, instead of trusting him; but he that provides for inferior creatures, without their labour, will much more provide for us, by blessing our labour, which he has made our duty. And if we should, through sickness, be unable to toil and spin, God can furnish us with what is necessary for us.

[3.] Consider how fair, how fine the lilies are; how they grow; what they grow from. The root of the lily or tulip, as other bulbous roots, is, in winter, lost and buried under ground, yet, when spring returns, it appears, and starts up in a little time; hence it is promised to God's Israel, that they should grow as the lily, Ho 14:5. Consider what they grow to. Out of that obscurity in a few weeks they come to be so very gay, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. The array of Solomon was very splendid and magnificent: he that had the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces, and studiously affected pomp and gallantry, doubtless had the richest clothing, and the best made up, that could be got; especially when he appeared in his glory on high days. And yet, let him dress himself as fine as he could, he comes far short of the beauty of the lilies, and a bed of tulips outshines him. Let us, therefore, be ambitious of the wisdom of Solomon, in which he was outdone by none (wisdom to do our duty in our places), rather than the glory of Solomon, in which he was outdone by the lilies. Knowledge and grace are the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes. Now God is here said thus to clothe the grass of the field. Note, All the excellences of the creature flow from God, the Fountain and spring of them. It was he that gave the horse his strength, and the lily

its beauty; every creature is in itself, as well as to us, what he makes it to be.

[4.] Consider how instructive all this is to us, Mt 6:30.

First, As to fine clothing, this teaches us not to care for it at all, not to covet it, nor to be proud of it, not to make the putting on of apparel our adorning, for after all our care in this the lilies will far outdo us; we cannot dress so fine as they do, why then should we attempt to vie with them? Their adorning will soon perish, and so will ours; they fade--are to-day, and to-morrow are cast, as other rubbish, into the oven; and the clothes we are proud of are wearing out, the gloss is soon gone, the color fades, the shape goes out of fashion, or in awhile the garment itself is worn out; such is man in all his pomp (Isa 40:6,7), especially rich men (Jam 1:10); they fade away in their ways.

Secondly, As to necessary clothing; this teaches us to cast the care of it upon God--Jehovah-jireh; trust him that clothes the lilies, to provide for you what you shall put on. If he give such fine clothes to the grass, much more will he give fitting clothes to his own children; clothes that shall be warm upon them, not only when he quieteth the earth with the south wind, but when he disquiets it with the north wind, Job 37:17. He shall much more clothe you: for you are nobler creatures, of a more excellent being; if so he clothe the short-lived grass, much more will he clothe you that are made for immortality. Even the children of Nineveh are preferred before the gourd (Jon 4:10,11), much more the sons of Zion, that are in covenant with God. Observe the title he gives them (Mt 6:30), O ye of little faith. This may be taken, 1. As an encouragement to truth faith, though it be but weak; it entitles us to the divine care, and a promise of suitable supply. Great faith shall be commended, and shall procure great things, but little faith shall not be rejected, even that shall procure food and raiment. Sound believers shall be provided for, though they be not strong believers. The babes in the family are fed and clothed, as well as those that are grown up, and with a special care and tenderness; say not, I am but a child, but a dry tree (Isa 56:3,5), for

though poor and needy yet the Lord thinketh on thee. Or, 2. It is rather a rebuke to weak faith, though it be true, Mt 14:31. It intimates what is at the bottom of all our inordinate care and thoughtfulness; it is owing to the weakness of our faith, and the remains of unbelief in us. If we had but more faith, we should have less care.

3. Which of you, the wisest, the strongest of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature? (Mt 6:27) to his age, so some; but the measure of a cubit denotes it to be meant of the stature, and the age at longest is but a span, Ps 39:5. Let us consider,

(a) We did not arrive at the stature we are of by our own care and thought, but by the providence of God. An infant of a span long has grown up to be a man of six feet, and how was one cubit after another added to his stature? not by his own forecast or contrivance; he grew he knew not how, by the power and goodness of God. Now he that made our bodies, and made them of such size, surely will take care to provide for them. Note, God is to be acknowledged in the increase of our bodily strength and stature, and to be trusted for all needful supplies, because he has made it to appear, that he is mindful for the body. The growing age is the thoughtless, careless age, yet we grow; and shall not he who reared us to this, provide for us now we are reared?

(b) We cannot alter the stature we are of, if we would: what a foolish and ridiculous thing would it be for a man of low stature to perplex himself, to break his sleep, and beat his brains, about it, and to be continually taking thought how he might be a cubit higher; when, after all, he knows he cannot effect it, and therefore he had better be content and take it as it is! We are not all of a size, yet the difference in stature between one and another is not material, nor of any great account; a little man is ready to wish he were as tall as such a one, but he knows it is to no purpose, and therefore does as well as he can with it. Now as we do in reference to our bodily stature, so we should do in reference to our worldly estate.

[1.] We should not covet an abundance of the wealth of this world, any more than we would covet the addition of a cubit to one's stature, which is a great deal in a man's height; it is enough to grow by inches; such an addition would but make one unwieldy, and a burden to one's self.

[2.] We must reconcile ourselves to our state, as we do to our stature; we must set the conveniences against the inconveniences, and so make a virtue of necessity: what cannot be remedied must be made the best of. We cannot alter the disposals of Providence, and therefore must acquiesce in them, accommodate ourselves to them, and relieve ourselves, as well as we can, against inconveniences, as Zaccheus against the inconvenience of his stature, by climbing into the tree.

4. After all these things do the Gentiles seek, Mt 6:32. Thoughtfulness about the world is a heathenish sin, and unbecoming Christians. The Gentiles seek these things, because they know not better things; they are eager for this world, because they are strangers to a better; they seek these things with care and anxiety, because they are without God in the world, and understand not his providence. They fear and worship their idols, but know not how to trust them for deliverance and supply, and, therefore, are themselves full of care; but it is a shame for Christians, who build upon nobler principles, and profess a religion which teaches them not only that there is a Providence, but that there are promises made to the good of the life that now is, which teaches them a confidence in God and a contempt of the world, and gives such reasons for both; it is a shame for them to walk as Gentiles walk, and to fill their heads and hearts with these things.

5. Your heavenly Father knows ye have need of all these things; these necessary things, food and raiment; he knows our wants better than we do ourselves; though he be in heaven, and his children on earth, he observes what the least and poorest of them has occasion for (Re 2:9), I know thy poverty. You think, if such a good friend did not but know your wants and straits, you would soon have relief:

your God knows them; and he is your Father that loves you and pities you, and is ready to help you; your heavenly Father, who has wherewithal to supply all your needs: away, therefore, with all disquieting thoughts and cares; go to thy Father; tell him, he knows that thou has need of such and such things; he asks you, Children, have you any meat? Joh 21:5. Tell him whether you have or have not. Though he knows our wants, he will know them from us; and when we have opened them to him, let us cheerfully refer ourselves to his wisdom, power, and goodness, for our supply. Therefore, we should ease ourselves of the burthen of care, by casting it upon God, because it is he that careth for us (1Pe 5:7), and what needs all this ado? If he care, why should be care?

6. Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Mt 6:33. Here is a double argument against the sin of thoughtfulness; take no thought for your life, the life of the body; for,

(a) You have greater and better things to take thought about, the life of your soul, your eternal happiness; that is the one thing needful (Lu 10:42), about which you should employ your thoughts, and which is commonly neglected in those hearts wherein worldly cares have the ascendant. If we were but more careful to please God, and to work out our own salvation, we should be less solicitous to please ourselves, and work out an estate in the world. Thoughtfulness for our souls in the most effectual cure of thoughtfulness for the world.

(b) You have a surer and easier, a safer and more compendious way to obtain the necessaries of this life, than by carking, and caring, and fretting about them; and that is, by seeking first the kingdom of God, and making religion your business: say not that this is the way to starve, no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world. Observe here,

[1.] The great duty required: it is the sum and substance of our whole duty: "Seek first the kingdom of God, mind religion as your great and principle concern." Our duty is to seek; to desire, pursue, and

aim at these things; it is a word that has in it much of the constitution of the new covenant in favour of us; though we have not attained, but in many things fail and come short, sincere seeking (a careful concern and an earnest endeavor) is accepted. Now observe, First, The object of this seeking; The kingdom of God, and his righteousness; we must mind heaven as our end, and holiness as our way. "Seek the comforts of the kingdom of grace and glory as your felicity. Aim at the kingdom of heaven; press towards it; give diligence to make it sure; resolve not to take up short of it; seek for this glory, honour, and immortality; prefer heaven and heavenly blessings far before earth and earthly delights." We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heaven of it. And with the happiness of this kingdom, seek the righteousness of it; God's righteousness, the righteousness which he requires to be wrought in us, and wrought by us, such as exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees; we must follow peace and holiness, Heb 12:14. Secondly, The order of it. Seek first the kingdom of God. Let your care for your souls and another world take the place of all other cares: and let all the concerns of this life be made subordinate to those of the life to come: we must seek the things of Christ more than our own things; and if every they come in competition, we must remember to which we are to give the preference. "Seek these things first; first in thy days: let the morning of thy youth be dedicated to God. Wisdom must be sought early; it is good beginning betimes to be religious. Seek the first every day; let waking thoughts be of God." Let this be our principle, to do that first which is most needful, and let him that is the First, have the first.

[2.] The gracious promise annexed; all these things, the necessary supports of life, shall be added unto you; shall be given over and above; so it is in the margin. You shall have what you seek, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, for never any sought in vain, that sought in earnest; and besides that, you shall have food and raiment, by way of overplus; as he that buys goods has paper and packthread given him in the bargain. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, 1Ti 4:8. Solomon asked wisdom, and had that and other things added to him, 2Ch 1:11,12. O what a blessed change would it make in our hearts and lives, did we but firmly believe this

truth, that the best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another world! We then begin at the right end of our work, when we begin with God. If we give diligence to make sure to ourselves the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, as to all the things of this life, Jehovah-jireh--the Lord will provide as much of them as he sees good for us, and more we would not wish for. Have we trusted in him for the portion of our inheritance at our end, and shall we not trust him for the portion of our cup, in the way to it? God's Israel were not only brought to Canaan at last, but had their charges borne through the wilderness. O that we were more thoughtful about the things that are not seen, that are eternal, and then the less thoughtful we should be, and the less thoughtful we should need to be, about the things that are seen, that are temporal! Also regard not your stuff, Ge 45:20,23.

7. The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, Mt 6:34. We must not perplex ourselves inordinately about future events, because every day brings along with it its own burthen of cares and grievances, as, if we look about us, and suffer not our fears to betray the succours which grace and reason offer, it brings along with it its own strength and supply too. So that we are here told,

(a) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is needless; Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. If wants and troubles be renewed with the day, there are aids and provisions renewed likewise; compassions, that are new every morning, La 3:22,23. The saints have a Friend that is their arm every morning, and gives out fresh supplies daily (Isa 33:2), according as the business of every day requires (Ezr 3:4), and so he keeps his people in constant dependence upon him. Let us refer it therefore to the morrow's strength, to do the morrow's work, and bear the morrow's burthen. To-morrow, and the things of it, will be provided for without us; why need we anxiously care for that which is so wisely cared for already? This does not forbid a prudent foresight, and preparation accordingly, but a perplexing solicitude, and a prepossession of difficulties and calamities, which may perhaps never come, or if they

do, may be easily borne, and the evil of them guarded against. The meaning is, let us mind present duty, and then leave events to God; do the work of the day in its day, and then let to-morrow bring its work along with it.

(b) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is one of those foolish and hurtful lusts, which those that will be rich fall into, and one of the many sorrows, wherewith they pierce themselves through. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. This present day has trouble enough attending it, we need not accumulate burthens by anticipating our trouble, nor borrow perplexities from to-morrow's evils to add to those of this day. It is uncertain what to-morrow's evils may be, but whatever they be, it is time enough to take thought about them when they come. What a folly it is to take that trouble upon ourselves this day by care and fear, which belongs to another day, and will be never the lighter when it comes? Let us not pull that upon ourselves all together at once, which Providence has wisely ordered to be borne by parcels. The conclusion of this whole matter then is, that it is the will and command of the Lord Jesus, that his disciples should not be their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant, by their apprehension of troubles, than God has made it by the troubles themselves. By our daily prayers we may procure strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them, and then let none of these things move us.

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof.

Matthew-7

Judging Others

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

A caution against judging Mt 7:1,2. There are those whose office it is to judge-magistrates and ministers. Christ, though he made not himself a Judge, yet came not to unmake them, for by him princes decree justice; but this is directed to private persons, to his disciples, who shall hereafter sit on thrones judging, but not now. Now observe,

1 The prohibition; Judge not. We must judge ourselves, and judge our own acts, but we must not judge our brother, not magisterially assume such an authority over others, as we allow not them over us: since our rule is, to be subject to one another. Be not many masters, Jam 3:1. We must not sit in the judgment-seat, to make our word a law to every body. We must not judge our brother, that is, we must not speak evil of him, so it is explained, Jam 4:11. We must not despise him, nor set him at nought, Ro 14:10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass such a judgment upon our brother as has no ground, but is only the product of our own jealousy and ill nature. We must not make the worst of people, nor infer such invidious things from their words and actions as they will not bear. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief. We must not judge of a man's state by a single act, nor of what he is in himself by what he is to us, because in our own cause we are apt to be partial. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, for it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state, nor call them hypocrites, reprobates, and castaways; that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him.

2 The reason to enforce this prohibition. That ye be not judged. This intimates,

(A) That if we presume to judge others, we may expect to be ourselves judged. He who usurps the bench, shall be called to the bar; he shall be judged of men; commonly none are more censured, than those who are most censorious; every one will have a stone to throw at them; he who, like Ishmael, has his hand, his tongue, against every man, shall, like him, have every man's hand and tongue against him (Ge 16:12); and no mercy shall be shown to the reputation of those that show no mercy to the reputation of others. Yet that is not the worst of it; they shall be judged of God; from him they shall receive the greater condemnation, Jam 3:1. Both parties must appear before him (Ro 14:10), who, as he will relieve the humble sufferer, will also resist the haughty scorner, and give him enough of judging.

(B) That if we be modest and charitable in our censures of others, and decline judging them, and judge ourselves rather, we shall not be judged of the Lord. As God will forgive those that forgive their brethren; so he will not judge those that will not judge their brethren; the merciful shall find mercy. It is an evidence of humility, charity, and deference to God, and shall be owned and rewarded by him accordingly. See Ro 14:10.

The judging of those that judge others is according to the law of retaliation; With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, Mt 7:2 The righteous God, in his judgments, often observes a rule of proportion, as in the case of Adonibezek, Jdg 1:7. See also Re 13:10,18:6. Thus will he be both justified and magnified in his judgments, and all flesh will be silenced before him. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again; perhaps in this world, so that men may read their sin in their punishment. Let this deter us from all severity in dealing with our brother. What shall we do when God rises up? Job 31:14. What would become of us, if God should be as exact and severe in judging us, as we are in judging our brethren; if he should weigh us in the same balance? We may justly

expect it, if we be extreme to mark what our brethren do amiss. In this, as in other things, the violent dealings of men return upon their own heads.

it shall be measured to you again—This proverbial maxim is used by our Lord in other connections—as in Mr 4:24, and with a slightly different application in Lu 6:38 —as a great principle in the divine administration. Unkind judgment of others will be judicially returned upon ourselves, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. But, as in many other cases under the divine administration, such harsh judgment gets self-punished even here. For people shrink from contact with those who systematically deal out harsh judgment upon others—naturally concluding that they themselves may be the next victims—and feel impelled in self-defense, when exposed to it, to roll back upon the assailant his own censures.

2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure
ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest
not the beam that is in thine own eye?

4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine
eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye?

Some cautions about reproving. Because we must not judge others, which is a great sin, it does not therefore follow that we must not reprove others, which is a great duty, and may be a means of saving a soul from death; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt. Now observe here,

1. It is not every one who is fit to reprove. Those who are themselves guilty of the same faults of which they accuse others, or of worse, bring shame upon themselves, and are not likely to do good to those whom they reprove, Mt 7:3-5. Here is,

(a) A just reproof to the censorious, who quarrel with their brother for small faults, while they allow themselves in great ones; who are quick-sighted to spy a mote in his eye, but are not sensible of a beam in their own; nay, and will be very officious to pull out the mote out

of his eye, when they are as unfit to do it as if they were themselves quite blind. Note,

[1.] There are degrees in sin: some sins are comparatively but as motes, others as beams; some as a gnat, others as a camel: not that there is any sin little, for there is no little God to sin against; if it be a mote (or splinter, for so it might better be read), it is in the eye; if a gnat, it is in the throat; both painful and perilous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out.

[2.] Our own sins ought to appear greater to us than the same sins in others: that which charity teaches us to call but a splinter in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a beam in our own; for the sins of others must be extenuated, but our own aggravated.

[3.] There are many that have beams in their own eyes, and yet do not consider it. They are under the guilt and dominion of very great sins, and yet are not aware of it, but justify themselves, as if they needed no repentance nor reformation; it is as strange that a man can be in such a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in him eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world so artfully blinds their minds, that notwithstanding, with great assurance, they say, We see.

[4.] It is common for those who are most sinful themselves, and least sensible of it, to be most forward and free in judging and censuring others: the Pharisees, who were most haughty in justifying themselves, were most scornful in condemning others. They were severe upon Christ's disciples for eating with unwashen hands, which was scarcely a mote, while they encouraged men in a contempt of their parents, which was a beam. Pride and uncharitableness are commonly beams in the eyes of those that pretend to be critical and nice in their censures of others. Nay, many are guilty of that secret, which they have the face to punish in others when it is discovered. Cogita tecum, fortasse vitium de quo quereris, si te diligenter excusseris, in sinu invenies; inique publico irasceris

crimini tuo--Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain, might, on a strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and that it would be unjust publicly to express indignation against your own crime. Seneca, de Beneficiis. But,

[5.] Men's being so severe upon the faults of others, while they are indulgent of their own, is a mark of hypocrisy. Thou hypocrite, Mt 7:5. Whatever such a one may pretend, it is certain that he is no enemy to sin (if he were, he would be an enemy to his own sin), and therefore he is not worthy of praise; nay, it appears that he is an enemy to his brother, and therefore worthy of blame. This spiritual charity must begin at home; "For how canst thou say, how canst thou for shame say, to thy brother, Let me help to reform thee, when thou takest no care to reform thyself? Thy own heart will upbraid thee with the absurdity of it; thou wilt do it with an ill grace, and thou wilt expect every one to tell thee, that vice corrects sin: physician, heal thyself;" I præ, sequar--Go you before, I will follow. See Ro 2:21.

[6.] The consideration of what is amiss in ourselves, though it ought not to keep us from administering friendly reproof, ought to keep us from magisterial censuring, and to make us very candid and charitable in judging others. "Therefore restore with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself (Ga 6:1); what thou has been, what thou art, and what thou wouldst be, if God should leave thee to thyself."

(b) Here is a good rule for reproves, Mt 7:5. Go in the right method, first cast the beam out of thine own eye. Our own badness is so far from excusing us in not reproving, that our being by it rendered unfit to reprove is an aggravation of our badness; I must not say, "I have a beam in my own eye, and therefore I will not help my brother with the mote out of his." A man's offence will never be his defence: but I must first reform myself, that I may thereby help to reform my brother, and may qualify myself to reprove him. Note, Those who blame others, ought to be blameless and harmless themselves. Those who are reprovers in the gate, reprovers by office, magistrates and

ministers, are concerned to walk circumspectly, and to be very regular in their conversation: an elder must have a good report, 1Ti 3:2,7. The snuffers of the sanctuary were to be of pure gold.

Our Lord uses a most hyperbolical, but not unfamiliar figure, to express the monstrous inconsistency of this conduct. The "hypocrisy" which, not without indignation, He charges it with, consists in the pretense of a zealous and compassionate charity, which cannot possibly be real in one who suffers worse faults to lie uncorrected in himself. He only is fit to be a reprover of others who jealously and severely judges himself.

5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

It is not every one that is fit to be reproved; Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, Mt 7:6. This may be considered, either, (1.) As a rule to the disciples in preaching the gospel; not that they must not preach it to any one who were wicked and profane (Christ himself preached to publicans and sinners), but the reference is to such as they found obstinate after the gospel was preached to them, such as blasphemed it, and persecuted the preachers of it; let them not spend much time among such, for it would be lost labour, but let them turn to others, Ac 13:41. So Dr. Whitby. Or, (2.) As a rule to all in giving reproof. Our zeal against sin must be guided by discretion, and we must not go about to give instructions, counsels, and rebukes, much less comforts, to hardened scorners, to whom it will certainly do no good, but who will be exasperated and enraged at us. Throw a pearl to a swine, and he will resent it, as if you threw a stone at him; reproofs will be called reproaches, as they were (Lu 11:45,Jer 6:10), therefore give not to dogs and swine (unclean creatures) holy things. Note, [1.] Good counsel and reproof are a holy thing, and a pearl: they are ordinances of God, they are precious; as an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is the wise reprover (Pr 25:12), and a wise reproof is like an excellent oil (Ps 141:5); it is a tree of life (Pr 3:18). [2.] Among the generation of the wicked, there are some that have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that they are looked

upon as dogs and swine; they are impudently and notoriously vile; they have so long walked in the way of sinners, that they have sat down in the seat of the scornful; they professedly hate and despise instruction, and set it at defiance, so that they are irrecoverably and irreclaimably wicked; they return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow to her wallowing in the mire. [3.] Reproofs of instruction are ill bestowed upon such, and expose the reprover to all the contempt and mischief that may be expected from dogs and swine. One can expect no other than that they will trample the reproofs under their feet, in scorn of them, and rage against them; for they are impatient of control and contradiction; and they will turn again and rend the reprovers; rend their good names with their revilings, return them wounding words for their healing ones; rend them with persecution; Herod rent John Baptist for his faithfulness. See here what is the evidence of men's being dogs and swine. Those are to be reckoned such, who hate reproofs and reprovers, and fly in the face of those who, in kindness to their souls, show them their sin and danger. These sin against the remedy; who shall heal and help those that will not be healed and helped? It is plain that God has determined to destroy such. 2Ch 25:16. The rule here given is applicable to the distinguishing, sealing ordinances of the gospel; which must not be prostituted to those who are openly wicked and profane, lest holy things be thereby rendered contemptible, and unholy persons be thereby hardened. It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs. Yet we must be very cautious whom we condemn as dogs and swine, and not do it till after trial, and upon full evidence. Many a patient is lost, by being thought to be so, who, if means had been used, might have been saved. As we must take heed of calling the good, bad, by judging all professors to be hypocrites; so we must take heed of calling the bad, desperate, by judging all the wicked to be dogs and swine. [4.] Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those that will turn again and rend them. Let them not be righteous over much, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and precious is the blood of his subjects to him.

Ask, Seek, Knock

7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be
opened unto you:
8 for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth;
and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.
9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a
stone?

Our Saviour, in the foregoing chapter, had spoken of prayer as a commanded duty, by which God is honoured, and which, if done aright, shall be rewarded; here he speaks of it as the appointed means of obtaining what we need, especially grace to obey the precepts he had given, some of which are so displeasing to flesh and blood.

I. Here is a precept in three words to the same purport, Ask, Seek, Knock (Mt 7:7); that is, in one word, "Pray; pray often; pray with sincerity and seriousness; pray, and pray again; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. Ask, as a beggar asks alms." Those that would be rich in grace, must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they shall find it a thriving trade. "Ask; represent your wants and burthens to God, and refer yourselves to him for support and supply, according to his promise. Ask as a traveller asks the way; to pray is to enquire of God, Eze 36:37. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost, or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Seek by prayer, Da 9:3. Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door." We would be admitted to converse with God, would be taken into his love, and favour, and kingdom; sin has shut and barred the door against us; by prayer, we knock; Lord, Lord, open to us. Christ knocks at our door (Re 3:20,So 5:2); and allows us to knock at his, which is a favour we do not allow to common beggars. Seeking and knocking imply something more than asking and praying.

1. We must not only ask but seek; we must second our prayers with our endeavors; we must, in the use of the appointed means, seek for that which we ask for, else we tempt God. When the dresser of the

vineyard asked for a year's respite for the barren fig-tree, he added, I will dig about it, Lu 13:7,8. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates; and power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it.

2. We must not only ask, but knock; we must come to God's door, must ask importunately; not only pray, but plead and wrestle with God; we must seek diligently; we must continue knocking; must persevere in prayer, and in the use of means; must endure to the end in the duty.

II. Here is a promised annexed: our labour in prayer, if indeed we do labour in it, shall not be in vain: where God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God; he shall give thee an answer of peace. The precept is threefold, ask, seek, knock; there is precept upon precept; but the promise is sixfold, line upon line, for our encouragement; because a firm belief of the promise would make us cheerful and constant in our obedience. Now here,

1 The promise is made, and made so as exactly to answer the precept, Mt 7:7. Ask, and it shall be given you; not lent you, not sold you, but given you; and what is more free than gift? Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, whatever you ask, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? It is but ask and have; ye have not, because ye ask not, or ask not aright: what is not worth asking, is not worth having, and then it is worth nothing. Seek, and ye shall find, and then you do not lose your labour; God is himself found of those that seek him, and if we find him we have enough. "Knock, and it shall be opened; the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. It will be asked, who is at the door? If you be able to say, a friend, and have the ticket of promise ready to produce in the hand of faith, doubt not of admission. If the door be not opened at the first knock, continue instant in prayer; it is an affront to a friend to knock at his door, and then go away; though he tarry, yet wait."

2. It is repeated, Mt 7:8. It is to the same purport, yet with some addition.

(a) It is made to extend to all that pray aright; "Not only you my disciples shall receive what you pray for, but every one that asketh, receiveth, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith: for God is no respecter of persons."

(b) It is made so as to amount to a grant, in words of the present tense, which is more than a promise for the future. Every one that asketh, not only shall receive, but receiveth; by faith, applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised: so sure and inviolable are the promises of God, that they do, in effect, give present possession: an active believer enters immediately, and makes the blessings promised his own. What have we in hope, according to the promise, is as sure, and should be as sweet, as what we have in hand. God hath spoken in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine, Manasseh mine (Ps 108:7,8); it is all mine own, if I can but make it so by believing it so. Conditional grants become absolute upon the performance of the condition; so here, he that asketh, receiveth. Christ hereby puts his fiat to the petition; and he having all power, that is enough.

3. It is illustrated, by a similitude taken from earthly parents, and their innate readiness to give their children what they ask. Christ appeals to his hearers, What man is there of you, though never so morose and ill-humoured, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Mt 7:9,10. Whence he infers (Mt 7:11), If ye then, being evil, yet grant your children's requests, much more will your heavenly Father give you the good things you ask. Now this is of use,

(a) To direct our prayers and expectations.

[1.] We must come to God, as children to a Father in heaven, with reverence and confidence. How naturally does a child in want or distress run to the father with its complaints; My head, my head; thus should the new nature send us to God for supports and supplies.

[2.] We must come to him for good things, for those he gives to them that ask him; which teaches us to refer ourselves to him; we know not what is good for ourselves (Ec 6:12), but he knows what is good for us, we must therefore leave it with him; Father, thy will be done. The child is here supposed to ask bread, that is necessary, and a fish, that is wholesome; but if the child should foolishly ask for a stone, or a serpent, for unripe fruit to eat, or a sharp knife to play with, the father, though kind, is so wise as to deny him. We often ask that of God which would do us harm if we had it; he knows this, and therefore does not give it to us. Denials in love are better than grants in anger; we should have been undone ere this if we had had all we desired; this is admirably well expressed by a heathen, Juvenal, Sat. 10.

(b) To encourage our prayers and expectations. We may hope that we shall not be denied and disappointed: we shall not have a stone for bread, to break our teeth (though we have a hard crust to employ our teeth), nor a serpent for a fish, to sting us; we have reason indeed to fear it, because we deserve it, but God will be better to us than the desert of our sins. The world often gives stones for bread, and serpents for fish, but God never does; nay, we shall be heard and answered, for children are by their parents.

[1.] God has put into the hearts of parents a compassionate inclination to succour and supply their children, according to their need. Even those that have had little conscience of duty, yet have done it, as it were by instinct. No law was ever thought necessary to oblige parents to maintain their legitimate children, nor, in Solomon's time, their illegitimate ones.

[2.] He has assumed the relation of a Father to us, and owns us for his children; that from the readiness we find in ourselves to relieve

our children, we may be encouraged to apply ourselves to him for relief. What love and tenderness fathers have are from him; not from nature but from the God of nature; and therefore they must needs be infinitely greater in himself. He compares his concern for his people to that of a father for his children (Ps 103:13), nay, to that of a mother, which is usually more tender, Isa 66:13,Isa 49:14,15. But here it is supposed, that his love, and tenderness, and goodness, far excel that of any earthly parent; and therefore it is argued with a much more, and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that God is a better Father, infinitely better than any earthly parents are; his thoughts are above theirs. Our earthly fathers have taken care of us; we have taken care of our children; much more will God take care of his; for they are evil, originally so; the degenerate seed of fallen Adam; they have lost much of the good nature that belonged to humanity, and among other corruptions, have that of crossness and unkindness in them; yet they give good things to their children, and they know how to give, suitably and seasonably; much more will God, for he takes up when they forsake, Ps 27:10. And, First, God is more knowing; parents are often foolishly fond, but God is wise, infinitely so; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. Secondly, God is more kind. If all the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world were crowded into the bowels of one, yet compared with the tender mercies of our God, they would be but as a candle to the sun, or a drop to the ocean. God is more rich, and more ready to give to his children than the fathers of our flesh can be; for he is the Father of our spirits, an ever-loving, ever-living Father. The bowels of Fathers yearn even towards undutiful children, towards prodigals, as David's toward Absalom, and will not all this serve to silence disbelief?

10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

All things whatsoever, etc. This command has been usually called the Saviour's golden rule, a name given to it on account of its great value. All that you expect or desire of others in similar

circumstances, do to them. Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you would expect of him then. This would make you impartial, and candid, and just. It would destroy avarice, envy, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder. It has been well said, that this law is what the balance-wheel is to machinery. It would prevent all irregularity of movement in the moral world, as that does in a steam-engine. It is easily applied, its justice is seen by all men, and all must acknowledge its force and value.

This is the law and the prophets. That is, this is the sum or substance of the Old Testament. It is nowhere found in so many words, but it is a summary expression of all that the law required. The sentiment was in use among the Jews. Hillel, an ancient Rabbi, said to a man who wished to become a proselyte, and who asked him to teach him the whole law, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to another." Something of the same sentiment was found among the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The Narrow Gate

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that
leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
14 because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and
few there be that find it.

All things whatsoever, etc. This command has been usually called the Saviour's golden rule, a name given to it on account of its great value. All that you expect or desire of others in similar circumstances, do to them. Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you would expect of him then. This would make you impartial, and candid, and just. It would destroy avarice, envy, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder. It has been well said, that this law is what the balance-wheel is to machinery. It would prevent all irregularity of movement in the moral world, as that does in a steam-engine. It is easily applied, its justice is seen by all men, and all must acknowledge its force and value.

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II. We must make religion our business, and be intent upon it; we must be strict and circumspect in our conversation, which is here represented to us as entering in at a strait gate, and walking on in a narrow way, Mt 7:13,14. Observe here,

1 The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place hereafter, no middle way now: the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity.

Here is, (1.) An account given us of the way of sin and sinners; both what is the best, and what is the worst of it.

[1.] That which allures multitudes into it, and keeps them in it; the gate is wide, and the way broad, and there are many travellers in that way. First, "You will have abundance of liberty in that way; the gate is wide, and stands wide open to tempt those that go right on their way. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions: you may walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; that gives room enough." It is a broad way, for there is nothing to hedge in those that walk in it, but they wander endlessly; a broad way, for there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways, contrary to each other, but all paths in this broad way. Secondly, "You will have abundance of company in that way: many there be that go in at this gate, and walk in this way." If we follow the multitude, it will be to do evil: if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream, and do as the most

do; but it is too great a compliment, to be willing to be damned for company, and to go to hell with them, because they will not go to heaven with us: if many perish, we should be the more cautious.

[2.] That which should affright us all from it is, that it leads to destruction. Death, eternal death, is at the end of it (and the way of sin tends to it),--everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Whether it be the high way of open profaneness, or the back way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

(2.) Here is an account given us of the way of holiness.

[1.] What there is in it that frightens many from it; let us know the worst of it, that we may sit down and count the cost. Christ deals faithfully with us, and tells us,

First, That the gate is strait. Conversion and regeneration are the gate, by which we enter into this way, in which we begin a life of faith and serious godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace we must pass, by the new birth, Joh 3:3,5. This is a strait gate, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, 1Sa 14:4. There must be a new heart, and a new spirit, and old things must pass away. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what we have been doing all our days must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a strait gate, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; nay, we must strip, must deny ourselves, put off the world, put off the old man; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. The gate is strait to all, but to some straiter than others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. The gate is strait; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, Mt 25:10.

Secondly, That the way is narrow. We are not in heaven as soon as we have got through the strait gate, nor in Canaan as soon as we have got through the Red Sea; no, we must go through a wilderness, must travel a narrow way, hedged in by the divine law, which is

exceedingly broad, and that makes the way narrow; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a right eye and a right hand; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination. We must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony, must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection. We must go through much tribulation. It is hodos tethlimmene--an afflicted way, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but, as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

Thirdly, The gate being so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but few that find it, and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark, 1Pe 3:20. In vitia alter alterum trudimus; Quomodo ad salutem revocari potest, quum nullus retrahit, et populus impellit--In the ways of vice men urge each other onward: how shall any one be restored to the path of safety, when impelled forwards by the multitude, without any counteracting influence? Seneca, Epist. 29. This discourages many: they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but instead of stumbling at this, say rather, If so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

[2.] Let us see what there is in this way, which, notwithstanding this, should invite us all to it; it leads to life, to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss, the hope of which, at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences of the road. Life and godliness are put together (2Pe 1:3); The gate is strait and the way narrow and up-hill, but one hour in heaven will make amends for it.

2 The great concern and duty of every one of us, in consideration of all this; Enter ye in at the strait gate. The matter is fairly stated;

life and death, good and evil, are set before us; both the ways, and both the ends: now let the matter be taken entire, and considered impartially, and then choose you this day which you will walk in; nay, the matter determines itself, and will not admit of a debate. No man, in his wits, would choose to go to the gallows, because it is a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it is a rough, dirty way to it; yet such absurdities as these are men guilty of, in the concerns of their souls. Delay not, therefore; deliberate not any longer, but enter ye in at the strait gate; knock at it by sincere and constant prayers and endeavors, and it shall be opened; nay, a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it, and submit to it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible if we strive, Lu 13:24.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

MHC COMMENTARY:

We have here a caution against false prophets, to take heed that we be not deceived and imposed upon by them. Prophets are properly such as foretel things to come; there are some mentioned in the Old Testament, who pretended to that without warrant, and the event disproved their pretensions, as Zedekiah, 1Ki 22:11, and another Zedekiah, Jer 29:21. But prophets did also teach the people their duty, so that false prophets here are false teachers. Christ being a Prophet and a Teacher come from God, and designing to send abroad teachers under him, gives warning to all to take heed of counterfeits,

who, instead of healing souls with wholesome doctrine, as they pretend, would poison them.

They are false teachers and false prophets,
1. Who produce false commissions, who pretend to have immediate warrant and direction from God to set up for prophets, and to be divinely inspired, when they are not so. Though their doctrine may be true, we are to beware of them as false prophets. False apostles are those who say they are apostles, and are not (Re 2:2); such are false prophets. "Take heed of those who pretend to revelation, and admit them not without sufficient proof, lest that one absurdity being admitted, a thousand follow."

2. Who preach false doctrine in those things that are essential to religion; who teach that which is contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, to the truth which is accordingly to godliness. The former seems to be the proper notion of pseudo-propheta, a false or pretending prophet, but commonly the latter falls in with it; for who would hang out false colours, but with design, under pretence of them, the more successfully to attack the truth. "Well, beware of them, suspect them, try them, and when you have discovered their falsehood, avoid them, have nothing to do with them. Stand upon your guard against this temptation, which commonly attends the days of reformation, and the breakings out of divine light in more than ordinary strength and splendour." When God's work is revived, Satan and his agents are most busy. Here is,

I. A good reason for this caution, Beware of them, for they are wolves in sheep's clothing, Mt 7:15.

1. We have need to be very cautious, because their pretences are very fair and plausible, and such as will deceive us, if we be not upon our guard. They come in sheep's clothing, in the habit of prophets, which was plain and coarse, and unwrought; they wear a rough garment to deceive, Zec 13:4. Elijah's mantle the Septuagint calls he melote--a sheep-skin mantle. We must take heed of being imposed upon by men's dress and garb, as by that of the scribes, who desire to walk in

long robes, Lu 20:46. Or it may be taken figuratively; they pretend to be sheep, and outwardly appear so innocent, harmless, meek, useful, and all that is good, as to be excelled by none; they feign themselves to be just men, and for the sake of their clothing are admitted among the sheep, which gives them an opportunity of doing them a mischief ere they are aware. They and their errors are gilded with the specious pretences of sanctity and devotion. Satan turns himself into an angel of light, 2Co 11:13,14. The enemy has horns like a lamb (Re 13:11); faces of men, Re 9:7,8. Seducers in language and carriage are soft as wool, Ro 16:18,Isa 30:10.

2. Because under these pretensions their designs are very malicious and mischievous; inwardly they are ravening wolves. Every hypocrite is a goat in sheep's clothing; not only not a sheep, but the worst enemy the sheep has, that comes not but to tear and devour, to scatter the sheep (Joh 10:12), to drive them from God, and from one another, into crooked paths. Those that would cheat us of any truth, and possess us with error, whatever they pretend, design mischief to our souls. Paul calls them grievous wolves, Ac 20:29. They raven for themselves, serve their own belly (Ro 16:18), make a prey of you, make a gain of you. Now since it is so easy a thing, and withal so dangerous, to be cheated, Beware of false prophets.

II. Here is a good rule to go by in this caution; we must prove all things (1Th 5:21), try the spirits (1Jo 4:1), and here we have a touchstone; ye shall know them by their fruits, Mt 7:16-20. Observe,

1 The illustration of this comparison, of the fruit's being the discovery of the tree. You cannot always distinguish them by their bark and leaves, nor by the spreading of their boughs, but by their fruits ye shall know them. The fruit is according to the tree. Men may, in their professions, put a force upon their nature, and contradict their inward principles, but the stream and bent of their practices will agree with them. Christ insists upon this, the agreeableness between the fruit and the tree, which is such as that,

(a) If you know what the tree is, you may know what fruit to expect. Never look to gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles; it is not in their nature to produce such fruits. An apple may be stuck, or a bunch of grapes may hang, upon a thorn; so may a good truth, a good word or action, be found in a bad man, but you may be sure it never grew there. Note,

[1.] Corrupt, vicious, unsanctified hearts are like thorns and thistles, which came in with sin, are worthless, vexing, and for the fire at last.

[2.] Good works are good fruit, like grapes and figs, pleasing to God and profitable to men.

[3.] This good fruit is never to be expected from bad men, and more than a clean thing out of an unclean: they want an influencing acceptable principle. Out of an evil treasure will be brought forth evil things.

(b) On the other hand, if you know what the fruit is, you may, by that, perceive what the tree is. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nay, it cannot but bring forth evil fruit. But then that must be reckoned the fruit of the tree which it brings forth naturally and which is its genuine product--which it brings forth plentifully and constantly and which is its usual product. Men are known, not by particular acts, but by the course and tenour of their conversation, and by the more frequent acts, especially those that appear to be free, and most their own, and least under the influence of external motives and inducements.

2 The application of this to the false prophets.

(a) By way of terror and threatening (Mt 7:19); Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down. This very saying John the Baptist had used, Mt 3:10. Christ could have spoken the same sense in other words; could have altered it, or given it a new turn; but he thought it no disparagement to him to say the same that John had said before him; let not ministers be ambitious of coining new expressions, nor

people's ears itch for novelties; to write and speak the same things must not be grievous, for it is safe. Here is,

[1.] The description of barren trees; they are trees that do not bring forth good fruit; though there be fruit, if it be not good fruit (though that be done, which for the matter of it is good, if it be not done well, in a right manner, and for a right end), the tree is accounted barren.

[2.] The doom of barren trees; they are, that is, certainly they shall be, hewn down, and cast into the fire; God will deal with them as men use to deal with dry trees that cumber the ground: he will mark them by some signal tokens of his displeasure, he will bark them by stripping them of their parts and gifts, and will cut them down by death, and cast them into the fire of hell, a fire blown with the bellows of God's wrath, and fed with the wood of barren trees. Compare this with Eze 31:12,13,Da 4:14,Joh 15:6.

(b) By way of trial; By their fruits ye shall know them.

[1.] By the fruits of their persons, their words and actions, and the course of their conversation. If you would know whether they be right or not, observe how they live; their works will testify for them or against them. The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's chair, and taught the law, but they were proud, and covetous, and false, and oppressive, and therefore Christ warned him disciples to beware of them and of their leaven, Mk 12:38. If men pretend to be prophets and are immoral, that disproves their pretensions; those are no true friends to the cross of Christ, whatever they profess, whose God is their belly, and whose mind earthly things, Php 3:18,19. Those are not taught nor sent of the holy God, whose lives evidence that they are led by the unclean spirit. God puts the treasure into earthen vessels, but not into such corrupt vessels: they may declare God's statutes, but what have they to do to declare them?

[2.] By the fruits of their doctrine; their fruits as prophets: not that this is the only way, but it is one way, of trying doctrines, whether they be of God or not. What do they tend to do? What affections and

practices will they lead those into, that embrace them? If the doctrine be of God, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversations, unjust or uncharitable, factious or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of the narrow way, we may conclude, that this persuasion comes not of him that calleth us, Ga 5:8.

BURKITT COMMENTARY:

Observe here, 1. A caution given, Beware of false prophets. There were two sorts of deceivers which our Saviour gave his disciples a special warning of; namely false Christs and false prophets: false Christs were such as pretended to be the true Messiahs; false prophets were such as pretended to own Christianity, but drew people away from the simplicity of the gospel.

Observe, 2. The ground of this caution: They come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves; that is, they make fair pretences to strictness in religion, and to greater measures and degrees of mortification and self-denial than others.

Whence we learn, That such who go about to seduce others, usually pretend to extraordinary measures of sanctity themselves, to raise an admiration among those who judge of saints more by their looks than by their lives; more by their expressions than by their actions. What heavenly looks and devout gestures, what long prayers and frequent fastings had the hypocritical Pharisees, beyond what Christ or his disciples ever practised!

Observe, 3. The rule laid down by Christ, whereby we are to judge of false teachers; by their fruits ye shall know them.

Learn, That the best course we can take to judge of teachers pretending to be sent of God, is to examine the design and tendency of their doctrines, and the course and tenor of their conversations. Good teachers, like good trees, will bring forth the good fruits of truth and holiness; but evil men and seducers, like corrupt trees, will bring forth error and wickedness in their life and doctrine.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

I Never Knew You

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.
22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

MHC COMMENTARY:

We have here the conclusion of this long and excellent sermon, the scope of which is to show the indispensable necessity of obedience to the commands of Christ; this is designed to clench the nail, that it might fix in a sure place: he speaks this to his disciples, that sat at his feet whenever he preached, and followed him wherever he went. Had he sought his own praise among men, he would have said, that was enough; but the religion he came to establish is in power, not in word only (1Co 4:20), and therefore something more is necessary.

I. He shows, by a plain remonstrance, that an outward profession of religion, however remarkable, will not bring us to heaven, unless there be a correspondent conversation, Mt 7:21-23. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus; the keys are put into his hand; he has power to prescribe new terms of life and death, and to judge men according to them: now this is a solemn declaration pursuant to that power. Observe here,

1. Christ's law laid down, Mt 7:21. Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, into the kingdom of grace and glory. It is an answer to that question, Ps 15:1. Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?--the church militant; and who shall dwell in thy holy hill?--the church triumphant. Christ here shows,

(a) That it will not suffice to say, Lord, Lord; in word and tongue to own Christ for our Master, and to make addresses to him, and professions of him accordingly: in prayer to God, in discourse with men, we must call Christ, Lord, Lord; we say well, for so he is (Joh 13:13); but can we imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven, that such a piece of formality as this should be so recompensed, or that he who knows and requires the heart should be so put off with shows for substance? Compliments among men are pieces of civility that are returned with compliments, but they are never paid as real services; and can they then be of an account with Christ? There may be a seeming importunity in prayer, Lord, Lord: but if inward impressions be not answerable to outward expressions, we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. This is not to take us off from saying, Lord, Lord; from praying, and being earnest in prayer, from professing Christ's name, and being bold in professing it, but from resting in these, in the form of godliness, without the power.

(b) That it is necessary to our happiness that we do the will of Christ, which is indeed the will of his Father in heaven. The will of God, as Christ's Father, is his will in the gospel, for there he is made known, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and in him our Father. Now this is his will, that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another. This is his will, even our sanctification. If we comply not with the will of God, we mock Christ in calling him Lord, as those did who put on him a gorgeous robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews. Saying and doing are two things, often parted in conversation of men: he that said, I go, sir, stirred never a step (Mt 21:30); but these two things God has joined in his command, and let no man that puts them asunder think to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2 The hypocrite's plea against the strictness of this law, offering other things in lieu of obedience, Mt 7:22. The plea is supposed to be in that day, that great day, when every man shall appear in his own colours; when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifest, and among the rest, the secret pretences with which sinners now support their vain hopes. Christ knows the strength of their cause, and it is but weakness; what they now harbour in their bosoms, they will then produce in arrest of judgment to stay the doom, but is will be in vain. They put in their plea with great importunity, Lord, Lord; and with great confidence, appealing to Christ concerning it; Lord, does thou not know,

(1.) That we have prophesied in thy name? Yes, it may be so; Balaam and Caiaphas were overruled to prophesy, and Saul was against his will among the prophets, yet that did not save them. These prophesied in his name, but he did not send them; they only made use of his name to serve a turn. Note, A man may be a preacher, may have gifts for the ministry, and an external call to it, and perhaps some success in it, and yet be a wicked man; may help others to heaven, and yet come short himself.

(2.) That in thy name we have cast out devils? That may be too; Judas cast out devils, and yet was a son of perdition. Origen says, that in his time so prevalent was the name of Christ to cast out devils, that sometimes it availed when named by wicked Christians. A man might cast devils out of others, and yet have a devil, nay, be a devil himself.

(3.) That in thy name we have done many wonderful works. There may be a faith of miracles, where there is no justifying faith; none of that faith which works by love and obedience. Gifts of tongues and healing would recommend men to the world, but it is real holiness or sanctification that is accepted of God. Grace and love are a more excellent way than removing mountains, or speaking with the tongues of men and of angels, 1Co 13:1,2. Grace will bring a man to heaven without working miracles, but working miracles will

never bring a man to heaven without grace. Observe, That which their heart was upon, in doing these works, and which they confided in, was the wonderfulness of them. Simon Magus wondered at the miracles (Ac 8:13), and therefore would give any money for power to do the like. Observe, They had not many good works to plead: they could not pretend to have done many gracious works of piety and charity; one such would have passed better in their account than many wonderful works, which availed not at all, while they persisted in disobedience. Miracles have now ceased, and with them this plea; but do not carnal hearts still encourage themselves in their groundless hopes, with the like vain supports? They think they shall go to heaven, because they have been of good repute among professors of religion, have kept fasts, and given alms, and have been preferred in the church; as if this would atone for their reigning pride, worldliness, and sensuality; and want of love to God and man. Bethel is their confidence (Jer 48:13), they are haughty because of the holy mountain (Zep 3:11); and boast that they are the temple of the Lord, Jer 7:4. Let us take heed of resting in external privileges and performances, lest we deceive ourselves, and perish eternally, as multitudes do, with a lie in our right hand.

3. The rejection of this plea as frivolous. The same that is the Law-Maker (Mt 7:21) is here the Judge according to that law (Mt 7:23), and he will overrule the plea, will overrule it publicly; he will profess to them with all possible solemnity, as sentence is passed by the Judge, I never knew you, and therefore depart from me, ye that work iniquity.--Observe,

(a) Why, and upon what ground, he rejects them and their plea--because they were workers for iniquity. Note, It is possible for men to have a great name for piety, and yet to be workers of iniquity; and those that are so will receive the greater damnation. Secret haunts of sin, kept under the cloak of a visible profession, will be the ruin of the hypocrites. Living in known sin nullifies men's pretensions, be they ever so specious.

(b) How it is expressed; I never knew you; "I never owned you as my servants, no, not when you prophesied in my name, when you were in the height of your profession, and were most extolled." This intimates, that if he had ever known them, as the Lord knows them that are his, had ever owned them and loved them as his, he would have known them, and owned them, and loved them, to the end; but he never did know them, for he always knew them to be hypocrites, and rotten at heart, as he did Judas; therefore, says he, depart from me. Has Christ need of such guests? When he came in the flesh, he called sinners to him (Mt 9:13), but when he shall come again in glory, he will drive sinners from him. They that would not come to him to be saved, must depart from him to be damned. To depart from Christ is the very hell of hell; it is the foundation of all the misery of the damned, to be cut off from all hope of benefit from Christ and he mediation. Those that go no further in Christ's service than a bare profession, he does not accept, nor will he own them in the great day. See from what a height of hope men may fall into the depth of misery! How they may go to hell, by the gates of heaven! This should be an awakening word to all Christians. If a preacher, one that cast out devils, and wrought miracles, be disowned of Christ for working iniquity; what will become of us, if we be found such? And if we be such, we shall certainly be found such. At God's bar, a profession of religion will not bear out any man in the practice and indulgence of sin; therefore let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity.

II. He shows, by a parable, that hearing these sayings of Christ will not make us happy, if we do not make conscience of doing them; but that if we hear them and do them, we are blessed in our deed, Mt 7:24-27.

1 The hearers of Christ's word are here divided into two sorts; some that hear, and do what they hear; others that hear and do not. Christ preached now to a mixed multitude, and he thus separates them, one from the other, as he will at the great day, when all nations shall be gathered before him. Christ is still speaking from heaven by his word

and Spirits, speaks by ministers, by providences, and of those that hear him there are two sorts.

(a) Some that hear his sayings and do them: blessed be God that there are any such, though comparatively few. To hear Christ is not barely to give him the hearing, but to obey him. Note, It highly concerns us all to do what we hear of the saying of Christ. It is a mercy that we hear his sayings: Blessed are those ears, Mt 13:16,17. But, if we practise not what we hear, we receive that grace in vain. To do Christ's sayings is conscientiously to abstain from the sins that he forbids, and to perform the duties that he requires. Our thoughts and affections, our words and actions, the temper of our minds, and the tenour of our lives, must be conformable to the gospel of Christ; that is the doing he requires. All the sayings of Christ, not only the laws he has enacted, but the truths he has revealed, must be done by us. They are a light, not only to our eyes, but to our feet, and are designed not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives: nor do we indeed believe them, if we do not live up to them. Observe, It is not enough to hear Christ's sayings, and understand them, hear them, and remember them, hear them, and talk of them, repeat them, dispute for them; but we must hear, and do them. This do, and thou shalt live. Those only that hear, and do, are blessed (Lu 11:28,Joh 13:17), and are akin to Christ. Mt 12:50.

(b) There are others who hear Christ's sayings and do them not; their religion rests in bare hearing, and goes no further; like children that have the rickets, their heads swell with empty notions, and indigested opinions, but their joints are weak, and they heavy and listless; they neither can stir, nor care to stir, in any good duty; they hear God's words, as if they desired to know his ways, like a people that did righteousness, but they will not do them, Eze 33:30,31,Isa 58:2. Thus they deceive themselves, as Micah, who thought himself happy, because he had a Levite to be his priest, though he had not the Lord to be his God. The seed is sown, but it never comes up; they see their spots in the glass of the word, but wash them off, Jam 1:22,24. Thus they put a cheat upon their own souls; for it is certain, if our hearing be not the means of our obedience, it will be the

aggravation of our disobedience. Those who only hear Christ's sayings, and do them not, sit down in the midway to heaven, and that will never bring them to their journey's end. They are akin to Christ only by the half-blood, and our law allows not such to inherit.

2. These two sorts of hearers are here represented in their true characters, and the state of their case, under the comparison of two builders; one was wise, and built upon a rock, and his building stood in a storm; the other foolish, and built upon the sand, and his building fell. Now,

(a) The general scope of this parable teaches us that the only way to make sure work for our souls and eternity is, to hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus, these sayings of his in this sermon upon the mount, which is wholly practical; some of them seem hard sayings to flesh and blood, but they must be done; and thus we lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come (1Ti 6:19); a good bond, so some read it; a bond of God's making, which secures salvation upon gospel-terms, that is a good bond; not one of our own devising, which brings salvation to our own fancies. They make sure the good part, who, like Mary, when they hear the word of Christ, sit at his feet in subjection to it: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

(b) The particular parts of it teach us divers good lessons.

[1.] That we have every one of us a house to build, and that house is our hope for heaven. It ought to be our chief and constant care, to make our calling and election sure, and so we make our salvation sure; to secure a title to heaven's happiness, and then to get the comfortable evidence of it; to make it sure, and sure to ourselves, that when we fail, we shall be received into everlasting habitations. Many never mind this: it is the furthest thing from their thoughts; they are building for this world, as if they were to be here always, but take no care to build for another world. All who take upon them a profession of religion, profess to enquire, what they shall do to be saved; how they may get to heaven at last, and may have a well-grounded hope of it in the mean time.

[2.] That there is a rock provided for us to build this house upon, and that rock is Christ. He is laid for a foundation, and other foundation can no may lay, Isa 28:16,1Co 3:11. He is our Hope, 1Ti 1:1. Christ in us is so; we must ground our hopes of heaven upon the fulness of Christ's merit, for the pardon of sin, the power of his Spirit, for the sanctification of our nature, and the prevalency of his intercession, for the conveyance of all that good which he has purchased for us. There is that in him, as he is made known, and made over, to us in the gospel, which is sufficient to redress all our grievances, and to answer all the necessities of our case, so that he is a Saviour to the uttermost. The church is built upon this Rock, and so is every believer. He is strong and immovable as a rock; we may venture our all upon him, and shall not be made ashamed of our hope.

[3.] That there is a remnant, who by hearing and doing the sayings of Christ, build their hopes upon this Rock; and it is their wisdom. Christ is our only Way to the Father, and the obedience of faith is our only way to Christ: for to them that obey him, and to them only, he becomes the Author of eternal salvation. Those build upon Christ, who having sincerely consented to him, as their Prince and Saviour, make it their constant care to conform to all the rules of his holy religion, and therein depend entirely upon him for assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and count every thing but loss and dung that they may win Christ, and be found in him. Building upon a rock requires care and pains: they that would make their calling and election sure, must give diligence. They are wise builders who begin to build so as they may be able to finish (Lu 14:30), and therefore lay a firm foundation.

[4.] That there are many who profess that they hope to go to heaven, but despise this Rock, and build their hopes upon the sand; which is done without much pains, but it is their folly. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity, as if they were a sure token of God's favour, Ho 12:8. Others upon their external profession of religion, the privileges they enjoy, and the performances they go through in that profession, and the

reputation they have got by it. They are called Christians, were baptized, go to church, hear Christ's word, say their prayers, and do nobody any harm, and, if they perish, God help a great many! This is the light of their own fire, which they walk in; this is that, upon which, with a great deal of assurance, they venture; but it is all sand, took weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

[5.] That there is a storm coming, that will try what our hopes are bottomed on; will try every man's work (1Co 3:13); will discover the foundation, Hab 3:13. Rain, and floods, and wind, will beat upon the house; the trial is sometimes in this world; when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, then it will be seen, who only heard the word, and who heard and practiced it; then when we have occasion to use our hopes, it will be tried whether they were right, and well-grounded, or not. However, when death and judgment come, then the storm comes, and it will undoubtedly come, how calm soever things may be with us now. Then every thing else will fail us but these hopes, and then, if ever, they will be turned into everlasting fruition.

[6.] That those hopes which are built upon Christ the Rock will stand, and will stand the builder in stead when the storm comes; they will be his preservation, both from desertion, and from prevailing disquiet. His profession will not wither; his comforts will not fail; they will be his strength and song, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. When he comes to the last encounter, those hopes will take off the terror of death and the grave; will carry him cheerfully through that dark valley; will be approved by the Judge; will stand the test of the great day; and will be crowned with endless glory, 2Co 1:12,2Ti 4:7,8. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds so doing, so hoping.

[7.] That those hopes which foolish builders ground upon any thing but Christ, will certainly fail them on a stormy day; will yield them no true comfort and satisfaction in trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; will be no fence against temptations to apostacy, in a time of persecution. When God takes away the soul,

where is the hope of the hypocrite? Job 27:8. It is as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand, Job 8:14,15. It fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another: when a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes; then, when he thought it would have been turned into fruition, it fell, and great was the fall of it. It was a great disappointment to the builder; the shame and loss were great. The higher men's hopes have been raised, the lower they fall. It is the sorest ruin of all that attends formal professors; witness Capernaum's doom.

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Barnes Commentary:

Not every one that saith, etc. He goes on to say that many, on the ground of that profession, will claim admittance into his kingdom. Many will plead that they had done miracles, and preached or prophesied much, and will demand an entrance into heaven. The power of working miracles had no necessary connexion with piety. God may as well, if he chooses, give the power of raising the dead to a wicked man, as the skill of healing to a wicked physician. A miracle is a display of his own power through the medium of another. An act of healing the sick is also a display of his power through the agency of another. In neither of these cases is there any necessary connexion with moral character. So of preaching, or prophesying. God may use the agency of a man of talents, though not pious, to carry forward his purposes. Saving power on the mind is the work of God; and he may convey it by any agency which he may choose. Accordingly, many may be found in the day of judgment who may have been endowed with powers of prophecy, or miracle, as Balaam, or the magicians of Egypt; in the same way as many men of distinguished talents may be found yet destitute of piety, and shut out of his kingdom. See Mk 9:38, Lk 9:49, 1Cor 13:1-3. In this last place, Paul says, that though he spoke with the tongue of angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and could remove

mountains, and had not charity or love, all would be of no avail. 1Cor 13:1-3.

I never knew you. That is, I never approved, loved, or regarded you as my friends. See Ps 1:6, 2Ti 2:19, 1Cor 8:3. This proves that, with all their pretensions, they had never been true followers of Christ. Jesus will not then say to false prophets and false professors of religion, that he had once known them, and then rejected them; that they had been once Christians and then had fallen away; that they had been pardoned, and then had apostatized; but that he had never known them--THEY HAD NEVER BEEN TRUE CHRISTIANS. Whatever might have been their pretended joys, their raptures, their hopes, their self-confidence, their visions, their zeal, they had never been regarded by the Saviour as his true friends. I know not a more decided proof that Christians do not fall away from grace than this text. It settles the question; and proves that whatever else such men had, they never had any true religion. See 1Jn 2:19.

Jesus closes the sermon on the mount by a beautiful comparison, illustrating the benefit of attending to his words. It was not sufficient to hear them; they must be obeyed. He compares the man who should hear, and obey him, to a man who built his house on a rock. Palestine was, to a considerable extent, a land of hills and: mountains. Like other countries of that description, it was subject to sudden and violent rains. The Jordan, the principal stream, was annually swollen to a great extent, and became rapid and furious in its course. The streams which ran among the hills, whose channels might have been dry during some months of the year, became suddenly swollen with the rain, and would pour down impetuously into the plains below. Everything in the way of these torrents would be swept off. Even a house erected within the reach of these sudden inundations, and especially if founded on sand, or any unsolid basis, would not stand before them. The rising, bursting stream would shake it to its foundation; the rapid torrent would gradually wash away its base; it would totter and fall, and be swept away. Rocks in that country were common, and it was easy to secure for their houses a solid foundation. No comparison could, to a Jew, have been more

striking. So tempests, and storms of affliction and persecution, beat around the soul. Suddenly, when we think we are in safety, the heavens may be overcast; the storm may lower; and calamity beat upon us. In a moment, health, friends, comforts, may be gone. How desirable then to be possessed of something that the tempest cannot reach! Such is an interest in Christ; attention to his words; reliance on his promises; confidence in his protection; and a hope of heaven through his blood. Earthly calamities do not reach these; and, possessed of religion, all the storms and tempests of life may beat harmlessly around us.

There is another point in this comparison. The house built on the sand is beat upon by the floods and rains; its foundation gradually is worn away; it falls, and is borne down the stream, and is destroyed. So falls the slumber. The floods are wearing away his sandy foundation; and soon one tremendous storm shall beat upon him, and he and his hopes shall fall, for ever fall. Out of Christ, perhaps having heard his words from very childhood; perhaps having taught them to others in the Sunday-school; perhaps having been the means of laying the foundation on which others shall build for heaven, he has laid for himself no foundation; and soon an eternal tempest shall beat around his naked soul. How great will be that fall! What will be his emotions when sinking for ever in the flood, and destined for ever to live and writhe in the peltings of that ceaseless storm that shall beat when "God shall rain snares, fire, and a horrible tempest" upon the wicked!

The Two Foundations

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

Not every one; that is, Not any one that saith Lord, Lord, that is, that owneth me by way of profession, by way of prayer, and by way of appeal, shall be saved; But he that doeth the will of my Father sincerely and universally.

Learn hence, 1. That multitude at the great day shall be really disowned by Christ, as none of his servants, that did nominately own

him for their Lord and Master: many that have now prophesied in his name, shall then perish in his wrath: many that have cast out devils now, shall be cast out to devils then: such as have now done many wonderful works, shall then perish for evil workers.

Note, 2. That a bare name and profession of Christianity, without the practice of it, is a very insufficient ground to build our hopes of heaven and salvation upon. A profession of faith and purposes of obedience, without actual obedience to the commands of God, will avail no person to salvation.

3. That gifts, eminent gifts, yea extraordinary and miraculous gifts, are not to be rested in or depended upon as sufficient evidences for heaven and salvation. Gifts are as the gold which adorns the temple, but grace is like the temple that sanctifies the gold.

Christ here speaks of two houses, the one built upon a rock, the other on the sand; these two houses were alike skilfully and strongly built to outward appearance; while the sun shone and the weather was fair, none could discern but that the house upon the sand was built as well, and might stand as long, as that on the rock; but when the rain fell the foundation failed.

Thus, where is the hypocrite with all his faith and fear, with all his shew and appearance of grace, in a wet and windy day? His goodly outside is like the apples of Sodom, fair and alluring to the eye, being touched, instantly evaporate into dust and smoke. A hypocrite stands in grace no longer than till he falls into trouble; and accordingly our Saviour here concludes his excellent sermon with an elegant similitude.

The wise builder is not the frequent hearer, but the faithful doer of the word, or the obedient Christian; the house is heaven, and the hope of eternal life; the rock is Christ; the building upon the sand, is rested in the rare performance of outward duties: the rains, the winds, and the floods, are all kinds of afflicting evils, sufferings, and persecutions, that may befall us.

Note, 1. That the obedient believer is the only wise man, that builds his hope of heaven upon a sure and abiding foundation.

Note, 2. That such professors as rest in the outward performances of holy duties, are foolish builders, their foundation is weak and sandy, and all their hopes of salvation vain and uncertain. An outward profession of Christianity, though set off by prophesying and doing miracles, will not avail any man towards his account at the great day, without that real and faithful, that universal and impartial, obedience to the laws of Christ which the gospel requires.

25 and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat
upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.
26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall
be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
27 and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat
upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.
28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were
astonished at his doctrine:
29 for he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

Matthew-8

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed
him.

The first verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon: the people that heard him were astonished at his doctrine; and the effect was, that when he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; though he was so strict a Lawgiver, and so faithful a Reprover, they diligently attended him, and were loth to disperse, and go from him. Note, They to whom Christ has manifested himself, cannot but desire to be better acquainted with him. They who know much of Christ should covet to know more; and then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord. It is pleasing to see

people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching, and to follow the Lamb withersoever he goes. Now was Jacob's prophecy concerning the Messiah fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be; yet they who gathered to him did not cleave to him. They who followed him closely and constantly were but few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

BARNES COMMENTARY:

There came a leper. No disease with which the human family has been afflicted, has been more dreadful than that which is often mentioned in the Bible as the leprosy. It first exhibits itself on the surface of the skin. The appearance is not always the same, but it commonly resembles the spot made by the puncture of a pin, or the pustules of a ring-worm. The spots generally make their appearance very suddenly. Perhaps its appearance might be hastened by any sudden passion, as fear or anger. See Nu 12:10, 2Chr 26:19. The spots commonly exhibit themselves, at first, on the face, about the nose and eyes, and increase in size a number of years, till they become as large as a pea or a bean. There are three kinds of leprosy, distinguished by the appearance of the spots--the white, the black, and the red leprosy. These spots, though few at first, gradually spread till they cover the whole body. But though the appearance of the disease is at first in the skin, yet it is deeply seated in the bones, and marrow, and joints of the body. We have reason to suppose that, in children, it is concealed in the system for a number of years, till they arrive at the age of puberty; and in adults for three or four years, till at last it gives fearful indications on the skin of its having gained a well-rooted and permanent existence. A leprous person may live twenty, or thirty, or even fifty years, if he received the disease at his birth, but they will be years of indescribable misery. The bones and marrow are pervaded with the disease. The malady advances, from one stage to another, with slow and certain ruin. "Life still lingers amidst the desolation;" the joints, and hands,

and feet, lose their power; and the body collapses, or falls together, in a form hideous and awful. There is a form of the disease in which it commences at the extremities: the joints separate; the fingers, toes, and other members, one by one, fall off; and the malady thus gradually approaches the seat of life. The wretched victim is thus doomed to see himself dying piece-meal, assured that no human power can arrest, for a moment, the silent and steady march of this foe to the seat of life. This disease is contagious and hereditary. It is easily communicated from one to another, and is transmitted to the third and fourth generation. The last generation that is afflicted with it commonly exhibits the symptoms by decayed teeth, and fetid breath, and diseased complexion.

Moses gave particular directions by which the real leprosy was to be distinguished from other diseases. See Lev 13:1 and following. The leprous person was, in order to avoid contagion, very properly separated from the congregation. The inspection of the disease was committed to the priest; and a declaration, on his part, that the person was healed, was sufficient evidence to restore the afflicted man to the congregation. It was required, also, that the leprous person should bring an offering to the priest of two birds, commonly doves, one of which was slain, and the other dismissed. See Lev 14:1 and following. In compliance with the laws of the land, Jesus directed the man that he had healed to make the customary offering, and to obtain the testimony of the priest that he was healed. The leprosy has once, and but once appeared in America. This loathsome and most painful disease has, in all other instances, been confined to the old world, and chiefly to the eastern nations. It is matter of profound gratitude to a benignant God, that this scourge has been permitted but once to visit the new world. That awful calamity was in the island of Guadaloupe, in the West Indies, about the year 1730; and is thus described by an eye witness, M. Peyssanel:

"Its commencement is imperceptible. There appear only some few white spots on the skin. At first they are attended with no pain or

inconvenience; but no means whatever will remove them. The disease imperceptibly increases for many years. The spots become larger, and spread over the whole body. When the disease advances, the upper part of the nose swells, the nostrils become enlarged, and the nose itself soft. Tumours appear on the jaws; the eyebrows swell; the ears become thick; the points of the fingers, as also the feet and the toes, swell; the nails become scaly; the joints of the hands and feet separate, and drop off. In the last stage of the disease the patient becomes a hideous spectacle, and falls to pieces."

Worshipped him. Bowed down before him, to show him respect. Mt 2:2.

If thou wilt. This was an exhibition of great faith, and also an acknowledgment of his dependence on the will of Jesus, in order to be healed. So every sinner must come. He must feel that Jesus can save him. He must also feel that he has no claim on him; that it depends on his sovereign will; and must cast himself at his feet with the feelings of the leper:--
"I can but perish if I go; I am resolved to try: For if I stay away, I know I shall for ever die."
Happily, no one ever came to Jesus with this feeling who was not received, and pardoned.

Make me clean. Heal me. The leprosy was regarded as an unclean and disgusting disease. To be healed, therefore, was expressed by being cleansed from it.

3 And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.
And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

BURKITT COMMENTARY:

Note here, in general, that the Jews paid civil adoration to their kings and to their prophets: thus Saul stooped with his face to the ground to Samuel; Nebuchadnezzer fell on his face before Daniel, and Obadiah before Elijah; from whence may be gathered, that the

adorations given to Christ by them that knew nothing of his divinity, were paid him as a prophet sent from God.

Only next, several particulars are here observable; as,

Observe,1. The petitioner, and that is a leper; he came and worshipped Christ, and petitions him to heal him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Where he discovers a firm belief of Christ's power, but a diffidence and distrust in Christ's will, to heal him. Learn, Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him.

Observe, 2. How readily our Saviour grants his petition; Jesus touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. Our Saviour, by touching the leper, shewed himself to be above the law, as God; though subject to the law, as man; for by the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched. Yet it was a received rule among the Jews, that a prophet might vary from the punctilios of the ceremonial law, or change a ritual law; so did Elijah stretch himself on the dead child, and Elisha on the Shunamite's son, notwithstanding the prohibition of coming near the dead. But Christ's curing the leper by the word of his mouth, and the touch of his hand, shewed his divine power, and proved himself to be truly and really sent of God; leprosy being called by the Jews the finger of God, a disease of his sending, and of his removing, our Saviour, therefore, as a proof and of his being the Messias, tells the disciples of John, That the lepers were cleansed, Matt 11:5 and the dead raised. Which being put together, intimates that the cleansing of the leper is as peculiar and act of divine power, as the raising of the dead; and accordingly, 2Kgs 5:7 said the king, Am I a God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy?

Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure; immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ

shewed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness.

Observe, 4. The charge and command given by Christ after the cure: first, To tell it to no man: wherein the modesty, humility, and piety, of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all the praise, honour, and glory, should redound entirely to God; his care of his own safety, lest the publishing of this miracle should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees.

Christians, behold your pattern to do much good, and make but little noise. Christ affected no popular air, he did not spoil a good work by vain ostentation. When we work hard for God, take we great care that pride doth not blow either it or us. O how difficult it is for us to do much service, and not value ourselves too much for the services which we do!

The second part of the charge which Christ gave the recovered leper, was, To shew himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them; that is, a testimony to the Jews, that he was the Messiah, and that he did not oppose the ceremonial law given by Moses.

Where Note, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed, so long as the time for its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet whilst it stood, he would have it observed.

Here Dr. Lightfoot observes, that though the priesthood was much degenerated from its primitive institution, by human inventions, yet Christ sends the leper to submit to it; because though they did corrupt, yet they did not extinguish the divine institution.

4 And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

MHC COMMENTARY:

The first verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon: the people that heard him were astonished at his doctrine; and the effect was, that when he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; though he was so strict a Lawgiver, and so faithful a Reprover, they diligently attended him, and were loth to disperse, and go from him. Note, They to whom Christ has manifested himself, cannot but desire to be better acquainted with him. They who know much of Christ should covet to know more; and then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord. It is pleasing to see people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching, and to follow the Lamb withersoever he goes. Now was Jacob's prophecy concerning the Messiah fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be; yet they who gathered to him did not cleave to him. They who followed him closely and constantly were but few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

In Mt 8:1-4 we have an account of Christ's cleansing a leper. It should seem, by comparing Mk 1:40,Lu 5:12, that this passage, though placed, by St. Matthew, after the sermon on the mount, because he would give account of his doctrine first, and then of his miracles, happened some time before; but that is not at all material. This is fitly recorded with the first of Christ's miracles,

1. Because the leprosy was looked upon, among the Jews, as a particular mark of God's displeasure: hence we find Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah, smitten with leprosy for some one particular sin; and therefore Christ, to show that he came to turn away the wrath of God, by taking away sin, began with the cure of a leper.

2. Because this disease, as it was supposed to come immediately from the hand of God, so also it was supposed to be removed immediately by his hand, and therefore it was not attempted to be cured by physicians, but was put under the inspection of the priests, the Lord's ministers, who waited to see what God would do. And its being in a garment, or in the walls of a house, was altogether supernatural: and it should seem to be a disease of a quite different nature from what we now call the leprosy. The king of Israel said, Am I God, that I am sent to, to recover a man of a leprosy? 2Ki 5:7. Christ proved himself God, by recovering many from the leprosy, and authorizing his disciples, in his name, to do so too (Mt 10:8), and it is put among the proofs of his being the Messiah, Mt 11:5. He also showed himself to be the Saviour of his people from their sins; for though every disease is both the fruit of sin, and a figure of it, as the disorder of the soul, yet the leprosy was in a special manner so; for it contracted such a pollution, and obliged to such a separation from holy things, as no other disease did; and therefore in the laws concerning it (Le 13:1-14:57), it is treated, not as a sickness, but as an uncleanness; the priest was to pronounce the party clean or unclean, according to the indications: but the honour of making the lepers clean was reserved for Christ, who was to do it as the High Priest of our profession; he comes to do that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Ro 8:3. The law discovered sin (for by the law is the knowledge of sin), and pronounced sinners unclean; it shut them up (Ga 3:23), as the priest did the leper, but could go no further; it could not make the comers thereunto perfect. But Christ takes away sin; cleanses us from it, and so perfecteth for ever them that are sanctified. Now here we have,

I The leper's address to Christ. If this happened, as it is here placed, after the sermon on the mount, we may suppose that the leper, though shut out by his disease from the cities of Israel, yet got within hearing of Christ's sermon, and was encouraged by it to make his application to him; for he that taught as one having authority, could heal so; and therefore he came and worshipped him, as one clothed with a divine power. His address is, Lord, if

thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. The cleaning of him may be considered,

1. As a temporal mercy; a mercy to the body, delivering it from a disease, which, though it did not threaten life, embittered it. And so it directs us, not only to apply ourselves to Christ, who has power over bodily diseases, for the cure of them, but it also teaches us in what manner to apply ourselves to him; with an assurance of his power, believing that he is as able to cure diseases now, as he was when on earth, but with a submission to his will; Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst. As to temporal mercies, we cannot be so sure of God's will to bestow them, as we may of his power, for his power in them is unlimited by a regard to his glory and our good: when we cannot be sure of his will, we may be sure of his wisdom and mercy, to which we may cheerfully refer ourselves; Thy will be done: and this makes the expectation easy, and the event, when it comes, comfortable.

2. As a typical mercy. Sin is the leprosy of the soul; it shuts us out from communion with God, to which that we maybe restored, it is necessary that we be cleansed from this leprosy, and this ought to be our great concern. Now observe, It is our comfort when we apply ourselves to Christ, as the great Physician, that if he will, he can make us clean; and we should, with an humble, believing boldness, go to him and tell him so. That is,

(a) We must rest ourselves upon his power; we must be confident of this, that Christ can make us clean. No guilt is so great but that there is a sufficiency in his righteousness to atone for it; no corruption so strong, but there is a sufficiency in his grace to subdue it. God would not appoint a physician to his hospital that is not par negotio--every way qualified for the undertaking.

(b) We must recommend ourselves to his pity; we cannot demand it as a debt, but we must humbly request it as a favour; "Lord, if thou wilt. I throw myself at thy feet, and if I perish, I will perish there."

II. Christ's answer to this address, which was very kind, Mt 8:3.

1. He put forth his hand and touched him. The leprosy was a noisome, loathsome disease, yet Christ touched him; for he did not disdain to converse with publicans and sinners, to do them good. There was a ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a leper; but Christ would show, that when he conversed with sinners, he was in no danger of being infected by them, for the prince of this world had nothing in him. If we touch pitch, we are defiled; but Christ was separate from sinners, even when he lived among them.

2. He said, I will, be thou clean. He did not say, as Elisha to Naaman, Go, wash in Jordan; did not put him upon a tedious, troublesome, chargeable course of a physic, but spake the word and healed him.

(a) Here is a word of kindness, I will; I am as willing to help thee, as thou art to be helped. Note, They who by faith apply themselves to Christ for mercy and grace, may be sure that he is willing, freely willing, to give them the mercy and grace they come to him for. Christ is a Physician, that does not need to be sought for, he is always in the way; does not need to be urged, while we are yet speaking, he hears; does not need to be feed, he heals freely, not for price nor reward. He has given all possible demonstration, that he is as willing as he is able to save sinners.

(b) A word of power, Be thou clean. Both a power of authority, and a power of energy, are exerted in this word. Christ heals by a word of command to us; Be thou clean; "Be willing to be clean, and use the means; cleanse thyself from all filthiness;" but there goes along with this a word of command concerning us, a word that does the work; I will that thou be clean. Such a word as this is necessary to

the cure, and effectual for it; and the Almighty grace which speaks it, shall not be wanting to those who truly desire it.

III. The happy change hereby wrought: Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Nature works gradually, but the God of nature works immediately; he speaks it, it is done; and yet he works effectually; he commands, and it stands fast. One of the first miracles Moses wrought, was curing himself of a leprosy (Ex 4:7), for the priests under the law offered sacrifices first for their own sin; but one of Christ's first miracles was curing another of leprosy, for he had no sin of his own to atone for.

IV. The after-directions Christ gave him. It is fit that they who are cured by Christ should ever after be ruled by him.

1. See thou tell no man; "Tell no man till thou has shown thyself to the priest, and he has pronounced thee clean; and so thou hast a legal proof, both that thou wast before a leper, and art now thoroughly cleansed." Christ would have his miracles to appear in their full light and evidence, and not to be published till they could appear so. Note, They that preach the truths of Christ should be able to prove them; to defend what they preach, and convince gainsayers. "Tell no man, till thou hast showed thyself to the priest, lest if he hear who cured thee, he should out of spite deny to give thee a certificate of the cure, and so keep thee under confinement." Such were the priests in Christ's time, that they who had any thing to do with them had need to have been as wise as serpents.

2. Go show thyself to the priest, according to the law, Le 14:2. Christ took care to have the law observed, lest he should give offence, and to show that he will have order kept up, and good discipline and respect paid to those that are in office. It may be of use to those that are cleansed of their spiritual leprosy, to have recourse to Christ's ministers, and to open their case to them, that they may assist them in their enquiries into their spiritual state, and advise, and comfort, and pray for them.

3. Offer the gift that Moses commanded, in token of thankfulness to God, and recompence to the priest for his pains; and this for a testimony unto them; either,

(a) Which Moses commanded for a testimony: the ceremonial laws were testimonies of God's authority over them, care of them, and of that grace which should afterwards be revealed. Or,

(b) "Do thou offer it for a testimony, and let the priest know who cleansed thee, and how; and it shall be a testimony, that there is one among them who does that which the high priest cannot do. Let it remain upon record as a witness of my power, and a testimony for me to them, if they will use it and improve it; but against them, if they will not:" for so Christ's word and works are testimonies.

A Centurion's Servant Healed

5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,
6 and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.
7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.
8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.
9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*.

We have here an account of Christ's curing the centurion's servant of a palsy. This was done at Capernaum, where Christ now dwelt, Mt 4:13. Christ went about doing good, and came home to do good too; every place he came to was the better for him.

The persons Christ had now to do with were,

1. A centurion; he was a supplicant, a Gentile, a Roman, an officer of the army; probably commander-in-chief of that part of the Roman army which was quartered at Capernaum, and kept garrison there.

(a) Though he was a soldier (and a little piety commonly goes a great way with men of that profession), yet he was a godly man; he was eminently so. Note, God has his remnant among all sorts of people. No man's calling or place in the world will be an excuse for his unbelief and impiety; none shall say in the great day, I had been religious, if I had not been a soldier; for such there are among the ransomed of the Lord. And sometimes where grace conquers the unlikely, it is more than a conqueror; this soldier that was good, was very good.

(b) Though he was a Roman soldier, and his very dwelling among the Jews was a badge of their subjection to the Roman yoke, yet Christ, who was King of the Jews, favoured him; and therein has taught us to do good to our enemies, and not needlessly to interest ourselves in national enmities.

(c) Though he was a Gentile, yet Christ countenanced him. It is true, he went not to any of the Gentile towns (it was the land of Canaan that was Immanuel's land, Isa 8:8), yet he received addresses from Gentiles; now good old Simeon's word began to be fulfilled, that he should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel. Matthew, in annexing this cure to that of the leper, who was a Jew, intimates this; the leprous Jews Christ touched and cured, for he preached personally to them; but the paralytic Gentiles he cured at a distance; for to them he did not go in person, but sent his word and healed them; yet in them he was more magnified.

2. The centurion's servant; he was the patient. In this also it appears, that there is no respect of persons with God; for in Christ Jesus, as there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, so there is neither bond nor free. He is as ready to heal the poorest servant, as the

richest master; for himself took upon him the form of a servant, to show his regard to the meanest.

Now in the story of the cure of this servant, we may observe an intercourse or interchanging of graces, very remarkable between Christ and the centurion. See here,

I The grace of the centurion working towards Christ. Can any good thing come out of a Roman soldier? any thing tolerable, much less any thing laudable? Come and see, and you will find abundance of good coming out of this centurion that was eminent and exemplary. Observe, 1. His affectionate address to Jesus Christ, which speaks,

(1.) A pious regard to our great Master, as one able and willing to succour and relieve poor petitioners. He came to him beseeching him, not as Naaman the Syrian (a centurion too) came to Elisha, demanding a cure, taking state, and standing upon points of honour; but with cap in hand as a humble suitor. By this it seems that he saw more in Christ than appeared at first view; saw that which commanded respect, though to those who looked no further, his visage was marred more than any man's. The officers of the army, being comptrollers of the town, no doubt made a great figure, yet he lays by the thoughts of his post of honour, when he addresses himself to Christ, and comes beseeching him. Note, the greatest of men must turn beggars, when they have to do with Christ. He owns Christ's sovereignty, in calling him Lord, and referring the case to him, and to his will, and wisdom, by a modest remonstrance, without any formal and express petition. He knew he had to do with a wise and gracious Physician, to whom the opening of the malady was equivalent to the most earnest request. A humble confession of our spiritual wants and diseases shall not fail of an answer of peace. Pour out thy complaint, and mercy shall be poured out.

(2.) A charitable regard to his poor servant. We read of many that came to Christ for their children, but this is the only instance of one that came to him for a servant: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick. Note, it is the duty of masters to concern themselves for their

servants, when they are in affliction. The palsy disabled the servant for his work, and made him as troublesome and tedious as any distemper could, yet he did not turn him away when he was sick (as that Amalekite did his servants, 1Sa 30:13), did not send him to his friends, not let him lie by neglected, but sought out the best relief he could for him; the servant could not have done more for the master, than the master did here for the servant. The centurion's servants were very dutiful to him (Mt 8:9), and here we see what made them so; he was very kind to them, and that made them the more cheerfully obedient to him. As we must not despise the cause of our servants, when they contend with us (Job 31:13,15), so we must not despise their case when God contends with them; for we are made in the same mould, by the same hand, and stand upon the same level with them before God, and must not set them with the dogs of our flock. The centurion applies not to witches or wizards for his servant, but to Christ. The palsy is a disease in which the physician's skill commonly fails; it was therefore a great evidence of his faith in the power of Christ, to come to him for a cure, which was above the power of natural means to effect. Observe, How pathetically he represents his servant's case as very sad; he is sick of the palsy, a disease which commonly makes the patient senseless of pain, but this person was grievously tormented; being young, nature was strong to struggle with the stroke, which made it painful. (It was not paralysis simplex, but scorbutica). We should thus concern ourselves for the souls of our children, and servants, that are spiritually sick of the palsy, the dead-palsy, the dumb palsy; senseless of spiritual evils, inactive in that which is spiritually good, and bring them to the means of healing and health.

2. Observe his great humility and self-abasement. After Christ had intimated his readiness to come and heal his servants (Mt 8:7), he expressed himself with the more humbleness of mind. Note, Humble souls are made more humble, by Christ's gracious condescensions to them. Observe what was the language of his humility; Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof (Mt 8:8), which speaks mean thought of himself, and high thoughts of our Lord Jesus. He does not say, "My servant is not worthy that thou shouldest come into his chamber, because it is in

the garret;" But I am not worthy that thou shouldest come into my house. The centurion was a great man, yet he owned his unworthiness before God. Note, Humility very well becomes persons of quality. Christ now made but a mean figure in the world, yet the centurion, looking upon him as a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, paid him this respect. Note, We should have a value and veneration for what we see of God, even in those who, in outward condition, are every way our inferiors. The centurion came to Christ with a petition, and therefore expressed himself thus humbly. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, and to God through Christ, it becomes us to abase ourselves, and to lie low in the sense of our own unworthiness, as mean creatures and as vile sinners, to do any thing for God, to receive any good from him, or to have any thing to do with him.

3. Observe his great faith. The more humility the more faith; the more diffident we are of ourselves, the stronger will be our confidence in Jesus Christ. He had an assurance of faith not only that Christ could cure his servant, but,

(a) That he could cure him at a distance. There needed not any physical contact, as in natural operations, nor any application to the part affected; but the cure, he believed, might be wrought, without bringing the physician and patient together. We read afterwards of those, who brought the man sick of the palsy to Christ, through much difficulty, and set him before him; and Christ commended their faith for a working faith. This centurion did not bring his man sick of the palsy, and Christ commended his faith for a trusting faith: true faith is accepted of Christ, though variously appearing: Christ puts the best construction upon the different methods of religion that people take, and thereby has taught us to do so too. This centurion believed, and it is undoubtedly true, that the power of Christ knows no limits, and therefore nearness and distance are alike to him. Distance of place cannot obstruct either the knowing or working of him that fills all places. Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Jer 23:23.

(b) That he could cure him with a word, not send him a medicine, much less a charm; but speak the word only, and I do not question but my servant shall be healed. Herein he owns him to have a divine power, an authority to command all the creatures and powers of nature, which enables him to do whatsoever he pleases in the kingdom of nature; as at first he raised that kingdom by an almighty word, when he said, Let there be light. With men, saying and doing are two things; but not so with Christ, who is therefore the Arm of the Lord, because he is the eternal Word. His saying, Be ye warmed and filled (Jam 2:16), and healed, warms, and fills and heals.

The centurion's faith in the power of Christ he here illustrates by the dominion he had, as a centurion, over his soldiers, as a master over his servants; he says to one, Go, and he goes, &c. They were all at his beck and command, so as that he could by them execute things at a distance; his word was a law to them--dictum factum; well-disciplined soldiers know that the commands of their officers are not to be disputed, but obeyed. Thus could Christ speak, and it is done; such a power had he over all bodily diseases. The centurion had this command over his soldiers, though he was himself a man under authority; not a commander-in-chief, but a subaltern officer; much more had Christ this power, who is the supreme and sovereign Lord of all. The centurion's servants were very obsequious, would go and come at every the least intimation of their master's mind. Now,

[1.] Such servants we all should be to God: we must go and come at his bidding, according to the directions of his word, and the disposals of his providence; run where he sends us, return when he remands us, and do what he appoints. What saith my Lord unto his servant? When his will crosses our own, his must take place, and our own be set aside.

[2.] Such servants bodily diseases are to Christ. They seize us when he sends them; they leave us when he calls them back; they have that effect upon us, upon our bodies, upon our souls, that he orders. It is a matter of comfort to all that belong to Christ, for whose good

his power is exerted and engaged, that every disease has his commission, executes his command, is under his control, and is made to serve the intentions of his grace. They need not fear sickness, nor what it can do, who see it in the hand of so good a Friend.

II. Here is the grace of Christ appearing towards this centurion; for to the gracious he will show himself gracious.

1. He complies with his address at the first word. He did but tell him his servant's case, and was going on to beg a cure, when Christ prevented him, with this good word, and comfortable word, I will come and heal him (Mt 8:7); not I will come and see him--that had evinced him a kind Saviour; but, I will come and heal him--that shows him a mighty, an almighty Saviour; it was a great word, but no more than he could make good; for he has healing under his wings; his coming is healing. They who wrought miracles by a derived power, did not speak thus positively, as Christ did, who wrought them by his own power, as one that had authority. When a minister is sent for to a sick friend, he can but say, I will come and pray for him; but Christ says, I will come and heal him: it is well that Christ can do more for us than our ministers can. The centurion desired he would heal his servant; he says, I will come and heal him; thus expressing more favour than he did either ask or think of. Note, Christ often outdoes the expectations of poor supplicants. See an instance of Christ's humility, that he would make a visit to a poor soldier. He would not go down to see a nobleman's sick child, who insisted upon his coming down (Joh 4:47-49), but he proffers to go down to see a sick servant; thus does he regard the low estate of his people, and give more abundant honour to that part which lacked. Christ's humility, in being willing to come, gave an example to him, and occasioned his humility, in owning himself unworthy to have him come. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions to us, should make us the more humble and self-abasing before him.

2. He commends his faith, and takes occasion from it to speak a kind word of the poor Gentiles, Mt 8:10-12. See what great things a strong but self-denying faith can obtain from Jesus Christ, even of general and public concern.

(a) As to the centurion himself; he not only approved him and accepted him (that honour have all true believers), but he admired him and applauded him: that honour great believers have, as Job; there is none like unto him in the earth.

[1.] Christ admired him, not for his greatness, but for his graces. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled; not as if it were to him new and surprising, he knew the centurion's faith, for he wrought it; but it was great and excellent, rare and uncommon, and Christ spoke of it as wonderful, to teach us what to admire; not worldly pomp and decorations, but the beauty of holiness, and the ornaments which are in the sight of God of great price. Note, The wonders of grace should affect us more than the wonders of nature or providence, and spiritual attainments more than any achievements in this world. Of those that are rich in faith, not of those that are rich in gold and silver, we should say that they have gotten all this glory, Ge 30:1. But whatever there is admirable in the faith of any, it must redound to the glory of Christ, who will shortly be himself admired in all them that believe, as having done in and for them marvellous things.

[2] He applauded him in what he said to them that followed. All believers shall be, in the other world, but some believers are, in this world, confessed and acknowledged by Christ before men, in his eminent appearances for them and with them. Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Now this speaks, First, Honour to the centurion; who, though not a son of Abraham's loins, was an heir of Abraham's faith, and Christ found it so. Note, The thing that Christ seeks is faith, and wherever it is, he finds it, though but as a grain of mustard-seed. He had not found so great faith, all things considered, and in proportion to the means; as the poor widow is said to cast in more than they all, Lu 21:3. Though the

centurion was a Gentile, yet he was thus commended. Note, We must be so far from grudging, that we must be forward, to give those their due praise, that are not within our denomination or pale. Secondly, It speaks shame to Israel, to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and all the assistances and encouragements of faith. Note, When the Son of man comes, he finds little faith, and, therefore, he finds so little fruit. Note, the attainments of some, who have had but little helps for their souls, will aggravate the sin and ruin of many, that have had great plenty of the means of grace, and have not made a good improvement of them. Christ said this to those that followed him, if by any means he might provoke them to a holy emulation, as Paul speaks, Ro 11:14. They were Abraham's seed; in jealousy for that honour, let them not suffer themselves to be outstripped by a Gentile, especially in that grace for which Abraham was eminent.

(b) As to others. Christ takes occasion from hence to make a comparison between Jews and Gentiles, and tells them two things, which could not but be very surprising to them who had been taught that salvation was of the Jews.

[1.] That a great many of the Gentiles should be saved, Mt 8:11. The faith of the centurion was but a specimen of the conversion of the Gentiles, and a preface to their adoption into the church. This was a topic our Lord Jesus touched often upon; he speaks it with assurance; I say unto you, "I that know all men;" and he could not say any thing more pleasing to himself, or more displeasing to the Jews; an intimation of this kind enraged the Nazarenes against him, Lu 4:27. Christ gives us here an idea, First, of the persons that shall be saved; many from the east and the west: he had said (Mt 7:14), Few there be that find the way of life; and yet here many shall come. Few at one time, and in one place; yet, when they come altogether, they will be a great many. We now see but here and there one brought to grace; but we shall shortly see the Captain of our salvation bringing many sons to glory, Heb 2:10. He will come with ten thousands of his saints (Jude 1:14), with such a company as no man can number (Re 7:9); with nations of them that are saved,

Re 21:24. They shall come from the east and from the west; places far distant from each other; and yet they shall all meet at the right hand of Christ, the Centre of their unity. Note, God has his remnant in all places; from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, Mal 1:11. The elect will be gathered from the four winds, Mt 24:31. They are sown in the earth, some scattered in every corner of the field. The Gentile world lay from east to west, and they are especially meant here; though they were strangers to the covenant of promise now, and had been long, yet who knows what hidden ones God had among them then? As in Elijah's time in Israel (1Ki 19:14), soon after which they flocked into the church in great multitudes, Isa 60:3,4. Note, When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many there, that we thought had been going thither, so we shall meet a great many there, that we did not expect. Secondly, Christ gives us an idea of the salvation itself. They shall come, shall come together, shall come together to Christ, 2Th 2:1. 1. They shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace on earth, into the covenant of grace made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they shall be blessed with faithful Abraham, whose blessing comes upon the Gentiles, Ga 3:14. This makes Zaccheus a son of Abraham, Lu 19:9. 2. They shall be admitted into the kingdom of glory in heaven. They shall come cheerfully, flying as doves to their windows; they shall sit down to rest from their labours, as having done their day's work; sitting denotes continuance: while we stand, we are going; where we sit, we mean to stay; heaven is a remaining rest, it is a continuing city; they shall sit down, as upon a throne (Re 3:21); as at a table; that is the metaphor here; they shall sit down to be feasted; which denotes both fulness of communication, and freedom and familiarity of communion, Lu 22:30. They shall sit down with Abraham. They who in this world were ever so far distant from each other in time, place, or outward condition, shall all meet together in heaven; ancients and moderns, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. The rich man in hell sees Abraham, but Lazarus sits down with him, leaning on his breast. Note, Holy society is a part of the felicity of heaven; and they on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are most obscure, shall share in glory with the renowned patriarchs.

[2.] That a great many of the Jews should perish, Mt 8:12. Observe,

First, A strange sentence passed; The children of the kingdom shall be cast out; the Jews that persist in unbelief, though they were by birth children of the kingdom, yet shall be cut off from being members of the visible church: the kingdom of God, of which they boasted that they were the children, shall be taken from them, and they shall become not a people, not obtaining mercy, Ro 11:20,Ro 9:31. In the great day it will not avail men to have been children of the kingdom, either as Jews or as Christians; for men will then be judged, not by what they were called, but by what they were. If children indeed, then heirs; but many are children in profession, in the family, but not of it, that will come short of the inheritance. Being born of professing parents denominates us children of the kingdom; but if we rest in that, and have nothing else to show for heaven but that, we shall be cast out.

Secondly, A strange punishment for the workers of iniquity described; They shall be cast into outer darkness, the darkness of those that are without, of the Gentiles that were out of the church; into that the Jews were cast, and into worse; they were blinded, and hardened, and filled with terrors, as the apostle shows, Ro 11:8-10. A people so unchurched and given up to spiritual judgments, are in utter darkness already: but it looks further, to the state of damned sinners in hell, to which the other is a dismal preface. They shall be cast out from God, and all true comfort, and cast into darkness. In hell there is fire, but no light; it is utter darkness; darkness in extremity; the highest degree of darkness, without any remainder, or mixture, or hope, of light; not the least gleam or glimpse of it; it is darkness that results from their being shut out of heaven, the land of light; they who are without, are in the regions of darkness; yet that is not the worst of it, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 1. In hell there will be great grief, floods of tears shed to no purpose; anguish of spirit preying eternally upon the vitals, in the sense of the wrath of God, is the torment of the damned. 2. Great indignation: damned sinners will gnash their teeth for spite and vexation, full of the fury of the Lord; seeing with envy the

happiness of others, and reflecting with horror upon the former possibility of their own being happy, which is now past.

3. He cures his servant. He not only commends his application to him, but grants him that for which he applied, which was a real answer, Mt 8:13. Observe,

(a) What Christ said to him: he said that which made the cure as great a favour to him as it was to his servant, and much greater; As thou hast believed, so be it done to thee. The servant got a cure of his disease, but the master got the confirmation and approbation of his faith. Note, Christ often gives encouraging answers to his praying people, when they are interceding for others. It is kindness to us, to be heard for others. God turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42:10. It was a great honour which Christ put upon this centurion, when he gave him a blank, as it were; Be it done as thou believest. What could he have more? Yet what was said to him is said to us all, Believe, and ye shall receive; only believe. See here the power of Christ, and the power of faith. As Christ can do what he will, so an active believer may have what he will from Christ; the oil of grace multiplies, and stays not till the vessels of faith fail.

(b) What was the effect of this saying: the prayer of faith was a prevailing prayer, it ever was so, and ever will be so; it appears, by the suddenness of the cure, that it was miraculous: and by its coincidence with Christ's saying, that the miracle was his; he spake, and it was done; and this was a proof of his omnipotence, that he has a long arm. It is the observation of a learned physician, that the diseases Christ cured were chiefly such as were the most difficult to be cured by any natural means, and particularly the palsy. Omnis paralysis, præsertim vetusta, aut incurabilis est, aut difficilis curatu, etiam pueris: atque soleo ego dicere, morbos omnes qui Christo curandi fuerunt propositi, difficillimos sua matura curatu esse--Every kind of palsy, especially of long continuance, is either incurable, or is found to yield with the utmost difficulty to medical skill, even in young subjects; so that I have frequently remarked,

that all the diseases which were referred to Christ for cure appear to have been of the most obstinate and hopeless kind. Mercurialis De Morbis Puerorum, lib. 2. cap. 5.

10 When Jesus heard *it*, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I
say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall
sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven:
12 but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there
shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so*
be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid,
and sick of a fever.

I. A particular account of the cure of Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever; in which observe,

1 The case, which was nothing extraordinary; fevers are the most common distempers; but, the patient being a near relation of Peter's, it is recorded as an instance of Christ's peculiar care of, and kindness to, the families of his disciples. Here we find,

(1.) That Peter had a wife, and yet was called to be an apostle of Christ; and Christ countenanced the marriage state, by being thus kind to his wife's relations. The church of Rome, therefore, which forbids ministers to marry, goes contrary to that apostle from whom they pretend to derive an infallibility.

(2.) That Peter had a house, though Christ had not, Mt 8:20. Thus was the disciple better provided for than his Lord.

(3.) That he had a house at Capernaum, though he was originally of Bethsaida; it is probably, he removed to Capernaum, when Christ removed thither, and made that his principal residence. Note, It is worth while to change our quarters, that we may be near to Christ,

and have opportunities of converse with him. When the ark removes, Israel must remove and go after it.

(4.) That he had his wife's mother with him in his family, which is an example to yoke-fellows to be kind to one another's relations as their own. Probably, this good woman was old, and yet was respected and taken care of, as old people ought to be, with all possible tenderness.

(5.) That she lay ill of a fever. Neither the strength of youth, nor the weakness and coldness of age, will be a fence against diseases of this kind. The palsy was a chronical disease, the fever an acute disease, but both were brought to Christ.

2 The cure, Mt 8:15.

(1.) How it was effected; He touched her hand; not to know the disease, as the physicians do, by the pulse, but to heal it. This was an intimation of his kindness and tenderness; he is himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities; it likewise shows the way of spiritual healing, by the exerting of the power of Christ with his word, and the application of Christ to ourselves. The scripture speaks the word, the Spirit gives the touch, touches the heart, touches the hand.

(2.) How it was evidenced: this showed that the fever left her, she arose, and ministered to them. By this it appears,

[a] That the mercy was perfected. They that recover from fevers by the power of nature are commonly weak and feeble, and unfit for business a great while after; to show therefore that this cure was above the power of nature, she was immediately so well as to go about the business of the house.

[b] That the mercy was sanctified; and the mercies that are so are indeed perfected. Though she was thus dignified by a peculiar favour, yet she does not assume importance, but is as ready to wait

at table, if there be occasion, as any servant. They must be humble whom Christ has honoured; being thus delivered, she studies what she shall render. It is very fit that they whom Christ hath healed should minister unto him, as his humble servants, all their days.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

16 When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

MHC:

Here is a general account of the many cures that Christ wrought. This cure of Peter's mother-in-law brought him abundance of patients. "He healed such a one; why not me? Such a one's friend, why not mine?" Now we are here told,

1. What he did, Mt 8:16. (1.) He cast out devils; cast out the evil spirits with his word. There may be much of Satan's agency, by the divine permission, in those diseases of which natural causes may be assigned, as in Job's boils, especially in the diseases of the mind; but, about the time of Christ's being in the world, there seems to have been more than ordinary letting loose of the devil, to possess and vex the bodies of people; he came, having great wrath, for he knew that his time was short; and God wisely ordered it so, that Christ might have the fairer and more frequent opportunities of showing his power over Satan, and the purpose and design of his coming into the world, which was to disarm and dispossess Satan, to break his power, and to destroy his works; and his success was as glorious as his design was gracious. (2.) He healed all that were sick; all without exception, though the patient was ever so mean, and the case ever so bad.

2. How the scripture was herein fulfilled, Mt 8:17. The accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies was the great thing Christ had in his eye, and the great proof of his being the Messiah: among other things, it was written of him (Isa 53:4), Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: it is referred to, 1Pe 2:24, and there it is construed, he hath borne our

sins; here it is referred to, and is construed, he hath borne our sicknesses; our sins make our sicknesses our griefs; Christ bore away sin by the merit of his death, and bore away sickness by the miracles of his life; nay, though those miracles are ceased, we may say, that he bore our sicknesses then, when he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree; for sin is both the cause and the sting of sickness. Many are the diseases and calamities to which we are liable in the body: and there is more, in this one line of the gospels, to support and comfort us under them, than in all the writings of the philosophers--that Jesus Christ bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; he bore them before us; though he was never sick, yet he was hungry, and thirsty, and weary, and troubled in spirit, sorrowful and very heavy; he bore them for us in his passion, and bears them with us in compassion, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities: and thus he bears them off from us, and makes them sit light, if it be not our own fault. Observe how emphatically it is expressed here: Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses; he was both able and willing to interpose in that matter, and concerned to deal with our infirmities and sicknesses, as our Physician; that part of the calamity of the human nature was his particular care, which he evidenced by his great readiness to cure diseases; and he is no less powerful, no less tender now, for we are sure that never were any the worse for going to heaven.

Barnes:

That it might be fulfilled, etc. This passage is found in Is 53:4. Our English translation of that important passage is, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." The Greek in Matthew is an exact translation of the Hebrew, and the same translation should have been made in both places. In the fifty-third chapter, Isaiah fully states the doctrine of atonement, or that the Messiah was to suffer for sin. In the verse quoted here, however, he states the very truth which Matthew declares. The word translated griefs, in Isaiah, and infirmities, in Matthew, means properly, in the Hebrew and Greek, diseases of the body. In neither does it refer to the disease of the mind, or to sin. To bear those griefs, is clearly to bear them away, or to remove them. This was done by his

miraculous power in healing the sick. The word rendered "sorrows," in Isaiah, and" sicknesses," in Matthew, means pains, griefs, or anguish of mind. To carry, then; is to sympathize with the sufferers; to make provision for alleviating those sorrows; and to take them away. This he did by his precepts, his example; and the cause of all sorrows--sin--he removed by his atonement. The passage in Isaiah and Matthew, therefore, mean precisely the same thing. See Magee on Atonement, and Isa 53:1 and following.

The Would-be Followers of Jesus

18 Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head.

Christ's communication with two, who, upon his remove to the other side, were loth to stay behind, and had a mind to follow him, not as others, who were his followers at large, but to come into close discipleship, which the most were shy of; for it carried such a face of strictness as they could not like, nor be well reconciled to; but here is an account of two who seemed desirous to come into communion, and yet were not right; which is here given as a specimen of the hindrances by which many are kept from closing with Christ, and cleaving to him; and a warning to us, to set out in following Christ, so as that we may not come short; to lay such a foundation, as that our building may stand.

We have here Christ's managing of two different tempers, one quick and eager, the other dull and heavy; and his instructions are adapted to each of them, and designed for our use.

1. Here is one that was too hasty in promising; and he was a certain scribe (Mt 8:19), a scholar, a learned man, one of those that studied and expounded the law; generally we find them in the gospels to be men of no good character; usually coupled with the Pharisees, as enemies to Christ and his doctrine. Where is the scribe? 1Co 1:20. He is very seldom following Christ; yet here was

one that bid pretty fair for discipleship, a Saul among the prophets. Now observe,

(1.) How he expressed his forwardness; Master, I will follow thee, whithersoever thou goest. I know not how any man could have spoken better. His profession of a self-dedication to Christ is, [1.] Very ready, and seems to be ex mero motu--from his unbiased inclination: he is not called to it by Christ, nor urged by any of the disciples, but, of his own accord, he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ; he is not a pressed man, but a volunteer. [2.] Very resolute; he seems to be at a point in this matter; he does not say, "I have a mind to follow thee;" but, "I am determined, I will do it." [3.] It was unlimited and without reserve; "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; not only to the other side of the country, but if it were to the utmost regions of the world." Now we should think ourselves sure of such a man as this; and yet it appears, by Christ's answer, that his resolution was rash, his ends low and carnal: either he did not consider at all, or not that which was to be considered; he saw the miracles Christ wrought, and hoped he would set up a temporal kingdom, and he wished to apply betimes for a share in it. Note, There are many resolutions for religion, produced by some sudden pangs of conviction, and taken up without due consideration, that prove abortive, and come to nothing: soon ripe, soon rotten.

(2.) How Christ tried his forwardness, whether it were sincere or not, Mt 8:20. He let him know that this Son of man, whom he is so eager to follow, has not where to lay his head, Mt 8:20. Now from this account of Christ's deep poverty, we observe,

[1.] That it is strange in itself, that the Son of God, when he came into the world, should put himself into such a very low condition, as to want the convenience of a certain resting-place, which the meanest of the creatures have. If he would take our nature upon him, one would think, he should have taken it in its best estate and circumstances: no, he takes it in its worst. See here, First, How well provided for the inferior creatures are: The foxes have holes; though they are not only not useful, but hurtful, to man, yet God provides holes for them in which they are earthed: man endeavours to destroy them, but thus they are sheltered; their holes are their

castles. The birds of the air, though they take no care for themselves, yet are taken care of, and have nests (Ps 104:17); nests in the field; some of them nests in the house; in God's courts, Ps 84:3. Secondly, How poorly the Lord Jesus was provided for. It may encourage us to trust God for necessaries, that the beasts and birds have such good provision; and may comfort us, if we want necessaries, that our Master did so before us. Note, Our Lord Jesus, when he was here in the world, submitted to the disgraces and distresses of extreme poverty; for our sakes he became poor, very poor. He had not a settlement, had not a place of repose, not a house of his own, to put his head in, not a pillow of his own, to lay his head on. He and his disciples lived upon the charity of well-disposed people, that ministered to him of their substance, Lu 8:2. Christ submitted to this, not only that he might in all respects humble himself, and fulfil the scriptures, which spake of him as poor and needy, but that he might show us the vanity of worldly wealth, and teach us to look upon it with a holy contempt; that he might purchase better things for us, and so make us rich, 2Co 8:9.

[2.] It is strange that such a declaration should be made on this occasion. When a scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he would have encouraged him, and said, Come, and I will take care of thee; one scribe might be capable of doing him more credit and service than twelve fishermen: but Christ saw his heart, and answered to the thoughts of that, and therein teaches us all how to come to Christ. First, The scribe's resolve seems to have been sudden; and Christ would have us, when we take upon us a profession of religion, to sit down and count the cost (Lu 14:28), to do it intelligently, and with consideration, and choose the way of godliness, not because we know no other, but because we know no better. It is no advantage to religion, to take men by surprise, ere they are aware. They that take up a profession in a pang, will throw it off again in a fret; let them, therefore, take time, and they will have done the sooner: let him that will follow Christ know the worst of it, and expect to lie hard, and fare hard. Secondly, His resolve seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle. He saw what abundance of cures Christ wrought, and concluded that he had large fees, and would get an estate quickly, and therefore he would follow him in hopes of growing rich with him; but Christ rectifies

his mistake, and tells him, he was so far from growing rich, that he had not a place to lay his head on; and that if he follow him, he cannot expect to fare better than he fared. Note, Christ will accept none for his followers that aim at worldly advantages in following him, or design to make any thing but heaven of their religion. We have reason to think that this scribe, hereupon, went away sorrowful, being disappointed in a bargain which he thought would turn to account; he is not for following Christ, unless he can get by him.

2. Here is another that was too slow in performing. Delay in execution is as bad, on the one hand, as precipitancy in resolution is on the other hand; when we have taken time to consider, and then have determined, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow, which we could do to-day. This candidate for the ministry was one of Christ's disciples already (Mt 8:21), a follower of him at large. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, from an ancient tradition, that this was Philip; he seems to be better qualified and disposed than the former; because not so confident and presumptuous: a bold, eager, over-forward temper is not the most promising in religion; sometimes the last are first, and the first last. Now observe here,

(1.) The excuse that this disciple made, to defer an immediate attendance on Christ (Mt 8:21); "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Before I come to be a close and constant follower of thee, let me be allowed to perform this last office of respect to my father; and in the mean time, let it suffice to be a hearer of thee now and then, when I can spare time." His father (some think) was now sick, or dying, or dead; others think, he was only aged, and not likely in a course of nature, to continue long; and he desired leave to attend upon him in his sickness, at his death, and to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed a reasonable request, and yet it was not right. He had not the zeal he should have had for the work, and therefore pleaded this, because it seemed a plausible plea. Note, An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. The meaning of Non vacat is, Non placet--The want of leisure is the want of inclination. We will suppose it to come from a true filial affection and respect for his father, yet still the preference should have been given to Christ. Note, Many are hindered from and in the

way of serious godliness, by an over-concern for their families and relations; these lawful things undo us all, and our duty to God is neglected, and postponed, under colour of discharging our debts to the world; here therefore we have need to double our guard.

(2.) Christ's disallowing of this excuse (Mt 8:22); Jesus said to him, Follow me; and, no doubt, power accompanied this word to him, as to others, and he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him, as Ruth to Naomi, when the scribe, in the Mt 8:19,20, like Orpah, took leave of him. That said, I will follow thee; to this Christ said, Follow me; comparing them together, it is intimated that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, not of our promises to him; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy; he calls whom he will, Ro 9:16. This is because, He [Jesus] foreknew him, Ro 8: 29. And further, Note, Though chosen vessels may make excuses, and delay their compliance with divine calls a great while, yet Christ will at length answer their excuses, conquer their unwillingness, and bring them to his feet; when Christ calls, he will overcome, and make the call effectual, 1Sa 3:10. His excuse is laid aside as insufficient; Let the dead bury their dead. It is a proverbial expression; "Let one dead man bury another: rather let them lie unburied, than that the service of Christ should be neglected. Let the dead spiritually bury the dead corporally; let worldly offices be left to worldly people; do not thou encumber thyself with them. Burying the dead, and especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time: it may be done as well by others, that are not called and qualified, as thou art, to be employed for Christ; thou hast something else to do, and must not defer that." Note, Piety to God must be preferred before piety to parents, though that is a great and needful part of our religion. The Nazarites, under the law, were not to mourn for their own parents, because they were holy to the Lord (Nu 6:6-8); nor was the high priest to defile himself for the dead, no, not for his own father, Le 21:11,12. And Christ requires of those who would follow him, that they hate father and mother (Lu 14:26); love them less than God; we must comparatively neglect and disesteem our nearest relations, when they come in competition with Christ, and either our doing for him, or our suffering for him.

Finally, it might mean Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests in himself, that is in the heart of the scribe himself while there is no any place to the Son of Man to lay his head. He himself is not the right temple of God; that is his heart is full of worldly things and there is no place for Jesus.

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Jesus Calms a Storm

23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.
24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

Christ had given sailing orders to his disciples (Mt 8:18), that they should depart to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, into the country of Gadara, in the tribe of Gad, which lay east of Jordan; thither he would go to rescue a poor creature that was possessed with a legion of devils, though he foresaw how he should be affronted there. Now.

1. He chose to go by water. It had not been much about, if he had gone by land; but he chose to cross the lake, that he might have occasion to manifest himself the God of the sea as well as of the dry land, and to show that all power is his, both in heaven and in earth. It is a comfort to those who go down to the sea in ships, and are often in perils there, to reflect that they have a Saviour to trust in, and pray to, who knows what it is to be at sea, and to be in storms there. But observe, when he went to sea, he had no yacht or pleasure-boat to attend him, but made use of his disciples' fishing-boats; so poorly was he accommodated in all respects.

2. His disciples followed him; the twelve kept close to him, when others staid behind upon the terra firma, where there was sure footing. Note, They, and they only, will be found the true disciples of Christ, that are willing to go to sea with him, to follow him into dangers and difficulties. Many would be content to go the land-way

to heaven, that will rather stand still, or go back, than venture upon a dangerous sea; but those that would rest with Christ hereafter must follow him now wherever he leads them, into a ship or into a prison, as well as into a palace. Now observe here,

I The peril and perplexity of the disciples in this voyage; and in this appeared the truth of what Christ had just now said, that those who follow him must count upon difficulties, Mt 8:20.

1. There arose a very great storm, Mt 8:24. Christ could have prevented this storm, and have ordered them a pleasant passage, but that would not have been so much for his glory and the confirmation of their faith as their deliverance was: this storm was for their sakes, as Joh 11:4. One would have expected, that having Christ with them, they should have had a very favourable gale, but it is quite otherwise; for Christ would show that they who are passing with him over the ocean of this world to the other side, must expect storms by the way. The church is tossed with tempests (Isa 54:11); it is only the upper region that enjoys a perpetual calm, this lower one is ever and anon disturbed and disturbing.

2. Jesus Christ was asleep in this storm. We never read of Christ's sleeping but at this time; he was in watchings often, and continued all night in prayer to God: this was a sleep, not of security, like Jonah's in a storm, but of holy serenity, and dependence upon his Father: he slept to show that he was really and truly man, and subject to the sinless infirmities of our nature: his work made him weary and sleepy, and he had no guilt, no fear within, to disturb his repose. Those that can lay their heads upon the pillow of a clear conscience, may sleep quietly and sweetly in a storm (Ps 4:8), as Peter, Ac 12:6. He slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples, whether they could trust him when he seemed to slight them. He slept not so much with a desire to be refreshed, as with a design to be awaked.

3. The poor disciples, though used to the sea, were in a great fright, and in their fear came to their Master, Mt 8:25. Whither else should

they go? It was well they had him so near them. They awoke him with their prayers; Lord, save us, we perish. Note, They who would learn to pray must go to sea. Imminent and sensible dangers will drive people to him who alone can help in time of need. Their prayer has life in it, Lord, save us, we perish.

(a) Their petition is, Lord, save us. They believed he could save them; they begged he would, Christ's errand into the world was to save, but those only shall be saved that call on the name of the Lord, Ac 2:21. They who by faith are interested in the eternal salvation wrought out by Christ, may with a humble confidence apply themselves to him for temporal deliverances. Observe, They call him, Lord, and then pray, Save us. Note, Christ will save none but those that are willing to take him for their Lord; for he is a Prince and a Saviour.

(b) Their plea is, We perish; which was,

[1.] The language of their fear; they looked upon their case as desperate, and gave up all for lost; they had received a sentence of death within themselves, and this they plead, "We perish, if thou dost not save us; look upon us therefore with pity."

[2.] It was the language of their fervency; they pray as men in earnest, that beg for their lives; it becomes us thus to strive and wrestle in prayer; therefore Christ slept, that he might draw out this importunity.

II The power and grace of Jesus Christ put forth for their succour: then the Lord Jesus awaked, as one refreshed, Ps 78:65. Christ may sleep when his church is in a storm, but he will not outsleep himself: the time, the set time to favour his distressed church, will come, Ps 102:13.

1. He rebuked the disciples (Mt 8:26); Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? He does not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears. Christ

reproved them first, and then delivered them; this is his method, to prepare us for a mercy, and then to give it us. Observe,

(a) His dislike of their fears; "Why are ye fearful? Ye, my disciples? Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, let heathen mariners tremble in a storm, but you shall not be so. Enquire into the reasons of your fear, and weigh them."

(b) His discovery of the cause and spring of their fears; O ye of little faith. Many that have true faith are weak in it, and it does but little. Note,

[1.] Christ's disciples are apt to be disquieted with fears in a stormy day, to torment themselves with jealousies that things are bad with them, and dismal conclusions that they will be worse.

[2.] The prevalence of our inordinate fears in a stormy day is owing to the weakness of our faith, which would be as an anchor to the soul, and would ply the oar of prayer. By faith we might see through the storm to the quiet shore, and encourage ourselves with hope that we shall weather our point.

[3.] The fearfulness of Christ's disciples in a storm, and their unbelief, the cause of it, are very displeasing to the Lord Jesus, for they reflect dishonour upon him, and create disturbance to themselves.

2. He rebukes the wind; the former he did as the God of grace, and the Sovereign of the heart, who can do what he pleases in us; this he did as the God of nature, the Sovereign of the world, who can do what he pleases for us. It is the same power that stills the noise of the sea, and the tumult of fear, Ps 65:7. See,

(a) How easily this was done, with a word's speaking. Moses commanded the waters with a rod; Joshua, with the ark of the covenant; Elisha, with the prophet's mantle; but Christ with a word. See his absolute dominion over all the creatures, which bespeaks

both his honour, and the happiness of those that have him on their side.

(b) How effectually it was done? There was a great calm, all of a sudden. Ordinarily, after a storm, there is such a fret of the waters, that it is a good while ere they can settle; but if Christ speak the word, not only the storm ceases, but all the effects of it, all the remains of it. Great storms of doubt, and fear in the soul, under the power of the spirit of bondage, sometimes end in a wonderful calm, created and spoken by the Spirit of adoption.

3. This excited their astonishment (Mt 8:27); The men marvelled. They had been long acquainted with the sea, and never saw a storm so immediately turned into a perfect calm, in all their lives. It has all the marks and signatures of a miracle upon it; it is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in their eyes. Observe,

(a) Their admiration of Christ; What manner of man is this! Note, Christ is a Non such; every thing in him is admirable: none so wise, so mighty, so amiable, as he.

(b) The reason of it; Even the winds and the sea obey him. Upon this account, Christ is to be admired, that he has a commanding power even over winds and seas. Others pretended to cure diseases, but he only undertook to command the winds. We know not the way of the wind (Joh 3:8), much less can we control it; but he that bringeth forth the wind out of his treasury (Ps 135:7), when it is out, gathers it into his fists, Pr 30:4. He that can do this, can do any thing, can do enough to encourage our confidence and comfort in him, in the most stormy day, within or without, Isa 26:4. The Lord sits upon the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters. Christ, by commanding the seas, showed himself to be the same that made the world, when, at his rebuke, the waters fled (Ps 104:7,8), as now, at his rebuke, they fell.

25 And his disciples came to *him,* and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?

Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

The Gergesene Demoniacs

28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

MHC:

We have here the story of Christ's casting the devils out of two men that were possessed. The scope of this chapter is to show the divine power of Christ, by the instances of his dominion over bodily diseases, which to us are irresistible; over winds and waves, which to us are yet more uncontrollable; and lastly, over devils, which to us are most formidable of all. Christ has not only all power in heaven and earth and all deep places, but has the keys of hell too. Principalities and powers were made subject to him, even while he was in his estate of humiliation, as an earnest of what should be at his entrance into his glory (Eph 1:21); he spoiled them, Col 2:15. It was observed in general (Mt 8:16), that Christ cast out the spirits with his word; here we have a particular instance of it, which have some circumstances more remarkable than the rest. This miracle was wrought in the country of the Gergesenes; some think, they were the remains of the old Girgashites, De 7:1. Though Christ was sent chiefly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet some sallies he made among the borderers, as here, to gain this victory over Satan, which was a specimen of the conquest of his legions in the Gentile world.

Now, besides the general instance which this gives us of Christ's power over Satan, and his design against him to disarm and dispossess him, we have here especially discovered to us the way

and manner of evil spirits in their enmity to man. Observe, concerning this legion of devils, What work they made where they were, and where they went.

I. What work they made where they were; which appears in the miserable condition of these two that were possessed by them; and some think, these two were man and wife, because the other Evangelists speak but of one.

1. They dwelt among the tombs; thence they came when the met Christ. The devil having the power of death, not as judge, but as executioner, he delighted to converse among the trophies of his victory, the dead bodies of men; but there, where he thought himself in the greatest triumph and elevation, as afterwards in Golgotha, the place of a skull, did Christ conquer and subdue him. Conversing among the graves increased the melancholy and frenzy of the poor possessed creatures, and so strengthened the hold he had of them by their bodily distemper, and also made them more formidable to other people, who generally startle at any thing that stirs among the tombs.

2. They were exceeding fierce; not only ungovernable themselves, but mischievous to others, frightening many, having hurt some; so that no man durst pass that way. Note, The devil bears malice to mankind, and shows it by making men spiteful and malicious one to another. Mutual enmities, where they should be mutual endearments and assistances, are effects and evidences of Satan's enmity to the whole race; he makes one man a wolf, a bear, a devil, to another--Homo homini lupus. Where Satan rules in a man spiritually, by those lusts that war in the members, pride, envy, malice, revenge, they make him as unfit for human society, as unworthy of it, and as much an enemy to the comfort of it, as these poor possessed creatures were.

3. They bid defiance to Jesus Christ, and disclaimed all interest in him, Mt 8:29. It is an instance of the power of God over the devils, that, notwithstanding the mischief they studied to do by and to these

poor creatures, yet they could not keep them from meeting Jesus Christ, who ordered the matter so as to meet them. It was his overpowering hand that dragged these unclean spirits into his presence, which they dreaded more than any thing else: his chains could hold them, when the chains that men made for them could not. But being brought before him, they protested against his jurisdiction, and broke out into a rage, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Here is,

(a) One word that the devil spoke like a saint; he addressed himself to Christ as Jesus the Son of God; a good word, and at this time, when it was a truth but in the proving, it was a great word too, what flesh and blood did not reveal to Peter, Mt 16:17. Even the devils know, and believe, and confess Christ to be the Son of God, and yet they are devils still, which makes their enmity to Christ so much the more wicked, and indeed a perfect torment to themselves; for how can it be otherwise, to oppose one they know to be the Son of God? Note, It is not knowledge, but love, that distinguishes saints from devils. He is the first-born of hell, that knows Christ and yet hates him, and will not be subject to him and his law. We may remember that not long since the devil made a doubt whether Christ were the Son of God or not, and would have persuaded him to question it (Mt 4:3), but now he readily owns it. Note, Though God's children may be much disquieted in an hour of temptation, by Satan's questioning their relation to God as a Father, yet the Spirit of adoption shall at length clear it up to them so much to their satisfaction, as to set it even above the devil's contradiction.

(b) Two words that he said like a devil, like himself.

[1.] A word of defiance; What have we to do with thee? Now, First, It is true that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Saviour, for he took not on him the nature of the angels that fell, nor did he lay hold on them (Heb 2:16); they are in no relation to him, they neither have, nor hope for, any benefit by him. O the depth of this mystery of divine love, that fallen man hath so much to do with Christ, when fallen angels have nothing to do with him! Surely here

was torment enough before the time, to be forced to own the excellency that is in Christ, and yet that he has no interest in him. Note, It is possible for me to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet have nothing to do with him. Secondly, It is as true, that the devils desire not to have any thing to do with Christ as a Ruler; they hate him, they are filled with enmity against him, they stand in opposition to him, and are in open rebellion against his crown and dignity. See whose language they speak, that will have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ, with his laws and ordinances, that throw off his yoke, that break his bands in sunder, and will not have him to reign over them; that say to the Almighty Jesus, Depart from us: they are of their father the devil, they do his lusts, and speak his language. Thirdly, But it is not true, that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Judge, for they have, and they know it. These devils could not say, What hast thou to do with us? could not deny that the Son of God is the Judge of devils; to his judgment they are bound over in chains of darkness, which they would fain shake off, and shake off the thought of.

[2.] A word of dread and deprecation; "Art thou come hither to torment us--to cast us out from these men, and to restrain us from doing the hurt we would do?" Note, To be turned out, and tied up, from doing mischief, is a torment to the devil, all whose comfort and satisfaction are man's misery and destruction. Should not we then count it our heaven to be doing well, and reckon that our torment, whether within or without, that hinders us from well-doing? Now must we be tormented by thee before the time; Note, First, There is a time in which devils will be more tormented than they are, and they know it. The great assize at the last day is the time fixed for their complete torture, in that Tophet which is ordained of old for the king, for the prince of the devils, and his angels (Isa 30:33,Mt 25:41); for the judgment of that day they are reserved, 2Pe 2:4. Those malignant spirits that are, by the divine permission, prisoners at large, walking to and fro through the earth (Job 1:7), are even now in a chain; hitherto shall their power reach, and no further; they will then be made close prisoners: they have now some ease; they will then be in torment without ease. This they here take for granted, and ask not never to be tormented (despair of

relief is the misery of their case), but they beg that they may not be tormented before the time; for though they knew not when the day of judgment should be, they knew it should not be yet. Secondly, The devils have a certain fearful looking for of that judgment and fiery indignation, upon every approach of Christ, and every check that is given to their power and rage. The very sight of Christ and his word of command to come out of the man, made them thus apprehensive of their torment. Thus the devils believe, and tremble, Jam 2:19. It is their own enmity to God and man that puts them upon the rack, and torments them before the time. The most desperate sinners, whose damnation is sealed, yet cannot quite harden their hearts against the surprise of fearfulness, when they see the day approaching.

II. Let us now see what work they made where they went, when they were turned out of the men possessed, and that was into a herd of swine, which was a good way off, Mt 8:30. These Gergesenes, though living on the other side Jordan, were Jews. What had they to do with swine, which by the law were unclean, and not to be eaten nor touched? Probably, lying in the outskirts of the land, there were many Gentiles among them, to whom this herd of swine belonged: or they kept them to be sold, or bartered, to the Romans, with whom they had now great dealings, and who were admirers of swine's flesh. Now observe,

1. How the devils seized the swine. Though they were a good way off, and, one would think, out of danger, yet the devils had an eye upon them, to do them a mischief: for they go up and down, seeking to devour, seeking an opportunity; and they seek not long but they find. Now here,

(a) They asked leave to enter into the swine (Mt 8:31); they besought him, with all earnestness, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. Hereby, [1.] They discover their own inclination to do mischief, and what a pleasure it is to them; those, therefore, are their children, and resemble them, whose sleep departeth from them, except they cause some to fall, Pr 4:16. "Let

us go into the herd of swine, any where rather than into the place of torment, any where to do mischief." If they might not be suffered to hurt men in their bodies, they would hurt them in their goods, and in that too they intend hurt to their souls, by making Christ a burthen to them: such malicious devices hath that old subtle serpent! [2.] They own Christ's power over them; that, without his sufferance and permission, they could not so much as hurt a swine. This is comfortable to all the Lord's people, that, though the devil's power be very great, yet it is limited, and not equal to his malice (what would become of us, if it were?) especially that it is under the control of our Lord Jesus, our most faithful, powerful friend and Saviour; that Satan and his instruments can go no further than he is pleased to permit; here shall their proud waves be stayed.

(b) They had leave. Christ said unto them, Go (Mt 8:32), as God did to Satan, when he desired leave to afflict Job. Note, God does often, for wise and holy ends, permit the efforts of Satan's rage, and suffer him to do the mischief he would, and even by it serve his own purposes. The devils are not only Christ's captives, but his vassals; his dominion over them appears in the harm they do, as well as in the hindrance of them from doing more. Thus even their wrath is made to praise Christ, and the remainder of it he does and will restrain. Christ permitted this, [1.] For the conviction of the Sadducees that were then among the Jews, who denied the existence of spirits, and would not own that there were such beings, because they could not see them. Now Christ would, by this, bring it as near as might be to an ocular demonstration of the being, multitude, power, and malice, of evil spirits, that, if they were not hereby convinced, they might be left inexcusable in their infidelity. We see not the wind, but it would be absurd to deny it, when we see trees and houses blown down by it. [2.] For the punishment of the Gadarenes, who perhaps, though Jews, took a liberty to eat swine's flesh, contrary to the law: however, their keeping swine bordered upon evil; and Christ would also show what a hellish crew they were delivered from, which, if he had permitted it, would soon have choked them, as they did their swine. The devils, in obedience to Christ's command, came out of the men, and having permission, when they were come out, immediately they went into the herd of

swine. See what an industrious enemy Satan is, and how expeditious; he will lose no time in doing mischief. Observe,

2. Whither they hurried them, when they had seized them. They were not bid to save their lives, and, therefore, they were made to run violently down a steep place into the sea, where they all perished, to the number of about two thousand, Mk 5:13. Note, The possession which the devil gets is for destruction. Thus the devil hurries people to sin, hurries them to that which they have resolved against, and which they know will be shame and grief to them: with what a force doth the evil spirit work in the children of disobedience, when by so many foolish and hurtful lusts they are brought to act in direct contradiction, not only to religion, but to right reason, and their interest in this world! Thus, likewise, he hurries them to ruin, for he is Apollyon and Abaddon, the great destroyer. By his lusts which men do, they are drowned in destruction and perdition. This is Satan's will, to swallow up and to devour; miserable then is the condition of those that are led captive by him at his will. They are hurried into a worse lake than this, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Observe,

3. What effect this had upon the owners. The report of it was soon brought them by the swine-herds, who seemed to be more concerned for the loss of the swine than any thing else, for they went not to tell what was befallen to the possessed of the devils, till the swine were lost, Mt 8:33. Christ went not into the city, but the news of his being there did, by which he was willing to feel how their pulse beat, and what influence it had upon them, and then act accordingly. Now,

(a) Their curiosity brought them out to see Jesus. The whole city came out to meet him, that they might be able to say, they had seen a man who did such wonderful works. Thus many go out, in profession, to meet Christ for company, that have no real affection for him, nor desire to know him.

(b) Their covetousness made them willing to be rid of him. Instead of inviting him into their city, or bringing their sick to him to be healed, they desired him to depart out of their coasts, as if they had borrowed the words of the devils, What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? And now the devils had what they aimed at in drowning the swine; they did it, and then made the people believe that Christ had done it, and so prejudiced them against him. He seduced our first parents, by possessing them with hard thoughts of God, and kept the Gadarenes from Christ, by suggesting that he came into their country to destroy their cattle, and that he would do more hurt than good; for though he had cured two men, yet he had drowned two thousand swine. Thus the devil sows tares in God's field, does mischief in the Christian church, and then lays the blame upon Christianity, and incenses men against that. They besought him that he would depart, lest, like Moses in Egypt, he should proceed to some other plague. Note, There are a great many who prefer their swine before their Saviour, and so come short of Christ, and salvation by him. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer his word to have a place in them, because he and his word will be the destruction of their brutish lusts--those swine which they give up themselves to feed. And justly will Christ forsake those that thus are weary of him, and say to them hereafter, Depart, ye cursed, who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us.

30 And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding.
31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

BARNES BIBLE COMMENTARY:

Country of the Gergesenes. Mk 5:1 says, that he came into the country of the Gadarenes. This difference is only apparent. Gadara was a city not far from the lake Gennesareth; one of the ten cities that were called Decapolis. Mt 4:25. Gergesa was a city about twelve miles to the south-east of Gadara, and about twenty miles to the east of the Jordan. There is no contradiction, therefore, in the evangelists. He came into the region in which the two cities were situated, and one mentioned one, and the other another. It shows that the writers had not agreed to impose on the world; for if they

had, they would have mentioned the same city; and it shows they were familiar with the country. No man would have written in this manner, but those who were acquainted with the facts. Impostors do not mention places, or names, if they can avoid it.

There met him two. Mark and Luke speak of only one that met him. "There met him out of the tombs a man," Mk 5:2. "There met him out of the city a certain man," etc., Lk 8:27. This difference of statement has given rise to considerable difficulty. It is to be observed, however, that neither Mark nor Luke say that there was no more than one. For particular reasons they might have been led to fix the attention on one of them that was more notorious, and furious, and difficult to be managed. Had they denied plainly that there was more than one, and had Matthew affirmed that there were two, there would have been an irreconcilable contradiction. As it is, they relate the affair as other men would. It shows that they were honest witnesses. Had they been impostors; had Matthew and Luke agreed to write books to deceive the world, they would have agreed exactly in a case so easy as this. They would have told the story with the same circumstances. Witnesses in courts of law; often differ in unimportant matters; and, provided the main narrative coincides, their testimony is thought to be more valuable.

Luke has given us a hint why he recorded only the cure of one of them. He says, there met him "out of the city," a man, etc.; or, as it should be rendered, "a man of the city," a citizen. Yet the man did not dwell in the city; for he adds in the same verse, "neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs." The truth of the case was, that he was born and educated in the city; he had probably been a man of wealth and eminence; he was well known; and the people felt a deep interest in the case. Luke was, therefore, particularly struck with his case; and as his cure fully established the power of Jesus, he recorded it. The other that Matthew mentions was probably a stranger, or a person less notorious as a maniac, and he felt less interest in the cure. Let two persons go into a lunatic asylum, and meet two insane persons, one of whom should be exceedingly fierce and ungovernable, and well known as having been a man of

worth and standing; let them converse with them; and let the more violent one attract the principal attention, and they would very likely give the same account that Matthew and Luke do; and no one would doubt the statement was correct.

Coming out of the tombs. Mark and Luke say that they dwelt in the tombs. The sepulchres of the Jews were commonly caves, beyond the walls of the cities in which they dwelt, or excavations made in the sides of hills, or sometimes in solid rocks. These caves, or excavations, were sometimes of great extent, They descended to them by flights of steps. These graves were not in the midst of cities, but in groves, and mountains, and solitudes. They afforded, therefore, to insane persons and demoniacs retreat and shelter. They delighted in these gloomy and melancholy recesses, as being congenial to the wretched state of their minds. Josephus, also, states that these sepulchres were the haunts and lurking-places of those desperate bands of robbers that infested Judea. The annexed cut will furnish an illustration of the nature of the sepulchres occurring in the east. A more full illustration may be seen by referring to Isa 64:4.

Son of God. The title, Son of God, is often given to Christ. Men are sometimes called sons, or children of God, to denote their piety and adoption into his family, 1Jn 3:1. But the title given, to Christ denotes his superiority to the prophets, (Heb 1:1) to Moses the founder of the Jewish economy, (Heb 3:6) it denotes his peculiar and near relation to the Father, as evinced by his resurrection, (Ps 2:7, Acts 13:33) it denotes his peculiar relation to God from his miraculous conception, (Lk 1:35) and is equivalent to a declaration that he is Divine, or equal to the Father, Jn 10:36.

rt thou come hither to torment us, etc. By the time here mentioned is meant the day of judgment. The Bible reveals the doctrine that evil spirits are not now bound as they will be after that day; that they are permitted to tempt and afflict men; but that in the day of judgment they also will be condemned to everlasting punishment with all the wicked, 2Pet 2:4, Jude 1:6. These spirits seemed to be

apprized of that, and alarmed lest the day that they had feared had come. They besought him, therefore, not to send them out of that country; not to consign them then to hell, but to put off the day of their final punishment. Mark and Luke say that Jesus inquired the name of the principal demoniac, and that he called his name Legion, for they were many. The name legion was given to a division in the Roman army. It did not always denote the same number; but, in the time of Christ, it consisted of six thousand--three thousand foot and three thousand horsemen. It came, therefore, to signify a large number, without specifying the exact amount.

They that kept them fled, etc. These swine were doubtless owned by the inhabitants of Gadara. Whether they were Jews or Gentiles is not certainly known. It was not properly in the territory of Judea; but as it was on its borders, it is probable that the inhabitants were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Swine were to Jews unclean animals, and it was unlawful for them to eat them, Lev 11:7. The Jews were forbidden by their own laws to keep them, even for the purpose of traffic. Either, therefore, they had expressly violated the law, or these swine were owned by the Gentiles.

The keepers fled in consternation. They were amazed at his power. Perhaps they feared a further destruction of property; or, more likely, they were acquainted with the laws of the Jews, and regarded this as a judgment of Heaven for keeping forbidden animals, and for tempting the Jews to violate the commands of God. They dreaded, perhaps, further punishment, and foolishly came and besought Jesus to depart from their country.

This is the only one of our Saviour's miracles, except the case of the fig-tree that he cursed, (Mt 21:18-20,) in which he caused any destruction of property. It is a striking proof of his benevolence, that his miracles tended directly to the comfort of mankind. It was a proof of goodness added to the direct purpose for which his miracles were wrought. That purpose was to confirm his Divine mission; and it might have been as fully done by splitting rocks, or

removing mountains, or causing water to run up steep hills, as by any other display of power. See Acts 2:22. He chose to exhibit the proof of his Divine power, however, in such a way as to benefit mankind.

Infidels have objected to this whole narrative. They have said that this was a wanton and unauthorized violation of private rights in the destruction of property. They have said that the account of devils going into swine, and destroying them, was ridiculous. In regard to these objections, the narrative is easily vindicated.

1st. If Christ, as the Bible declares, be Divine as well as human--God as well as man--then he had an original right to that and all other property, and might dispose of it as he pleased, Ps 50:10-12. If God had destroyed them by pestilence, or by lightning, or by an inundation or earthquake, neither the owners, nor any one else, would have had reason to complain. No one now feels that he has a right to murmur if God destroys a thousand times the amount of this property, by overturning a city by an earthquake. Why, then, should complaints be brought against him if he should do the same thing in another way?

2nd. If this property was held by the Jews, it was a violation of their law, and it was right that they should suffer the loss;--if by the Gentiles, it was known also to be a violation of the law of the people among whom they lived; a temptation and a snare to them; and an abomination in their sight; and it was proper that the nuisance should be removed.

3rd. The cure of two men, one of whom was probably a man of distinction and property, was of far more consequence than the amount of property destroyed. To restore a deranged man now, of family and standing, would be an act for which property could not compensate, and which could not be measured in value by any pecuniary consideration. But,

4th. Jesus was not at all answerable for this destruction of property. He did not command, he only suffered or permitted the devils to go into the swine. He commanded them merely to come out of the man. They originated the purpose of destroying the property, doubtless for the sake of doing as much mischief as possible, and of destroying the effect of the miracle of Christ. In this they seem to have had most disastrous success; and they only are responsible.

5th. If it should be said that Christ permitted this, when he might have prevented it, we reply, that the difficulty does not stop there. He permits all the evil that exists, when he might prevent it. He permits men to do much evil, when he might prevent it. He permits one bad man to injure the person and property of another bad man. He permits the bad to injure the good. He often permits a wicked man to fire a city, or to plunder a dwelling, or to rob a traveller, destroying property of many times the amount that was lost at Gadara. Why is it any more absurd to suffer a wicked spirit to do injury, than a wicked man? or to suffer a legion of devils to destroy a herd of swine, than for legions of men to desolate nations, and cover fields and towns with ruin and slaughter?

The whole city came out. The people of the city probably came with a view of arresting him for the injury done to the property; but seeing him, and being awed by his presence, they only besought him to leave them.

1st. that the design of Satan is to prejudice men against the Saviour; and even to make what Christ does an occasion why they should desire him to leave them.

2nd. The power of avarice. These men preferred their property to the Saviour. They loved it so much, that they were blind to the evidence of the miracle, and to the good he had done to the miserable men that he had healed. It is no uncommon thing for men to love the world so much; to love property, even like that owned by the people of Gadara, so much as to see no beauty in religion, and no excellence in the Saviour; and, rather than part with it, to

beseech Jesus to withdraw from them. The most grovelling employment; the most abandoned sins; the most loathsome vices, are often loved more than the presence of Jesus, and more than all the blessings of his salvation.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts.

Matthew-9

Jesus Heals a Palsied Man

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.

The first words of this chapter oblige us to look back to the close of that which precedes it, where we find the Gadarenes so resenting the loss of their swine, that they were disgusted with Christ's company, and besought him to depart out of their coasts. Now here it follows, He entered into a ship, and passed over. They bid him begone, and he took them at their word, and we never read that he came into their coasts again. Now here observe, 1. His justice--that he left them. Note, Christ will not tarry long where he is not welcome. In righteous judgment, he forsakes those places and persons that are weary of him, but abides with those that covet and court his stay. If the unbeliever will depart from Christ, let him depart; it is at his peril, 1Co 7:15. 2. His patience--that he did not leave some destroying judgment behind him, to punish them, as they deserved, for their contempt and contumacy. How easily, how justly, might he have sent them after their swine, who were already so much under the devil's power. The provocation, indeed, was very great: but he put it up, and passed it by; and, without any angry resentments or upbraidings, he entered into a ship, and passed over. This was the

day of his patience; he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; not to kill, but to cure. Spiritual judgments agree more with the constitution of gospel times; yet some observe, that in those bloody wars which the Romans made upon the Jews, which began not many years after this, they first besieged the town of Gadara, where these Gadarenes dwelt. Note, Those that drive Christ from them, draw all miseries upon them. Woe unto us, if God depart from us.

He came into his own city, Capernaum, the principal place of his residence at present (Mk 2:1), and therefore called his own city. He had himself testified, that a prophet it least honoured in his own country and city, yet thither he came; for he sought not his own honour; but, being in a state of humiliation, he was content to be despised of the people. At Capernaum all the circumstances recorded in this chapter happened, and are, therefore, put together here, though, in the harmony of the evangelists, other events intervened. When the Gadarenes desired Christ to depart, they of Capernaum received him. If Christ be affronted by some, there are others in whom he will be glorious; if one will not, another will.

2 And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.

The moving and impulsive cause of this cure, Jesus seeing their faith: that is, their firm persuasion that he was clothed with a divine power, and able to help; together with their confidence in his goodness, that he was as willing as he was able; and no sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ did exert his divine power in healing. It was not the sick man's faith, but the faith of his friends: the faith of others may prevail for obtaining corporal benefits and temporal blessings for us; thus the centurion's faith healed his servant, and Jairus's faith raised his daughter. Little children cannot go to Christ themselves, but he will have an eye to the faith of those that bring them, and it shall not be in vain.

Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. It may seem remarkable that, since the man came only to be healed, Jesus should have at first

declared his sins forgiven. For this the following reasons may be suggested:

1st. The man might have brought on this affection of the palsy by a long course of vicious indulgence. Conscious of guilt, he may have feared that he was so great a sinner that Christ would not regard him. He therefore assured him that his offences were pardoned, and that he might lay aside his fears.

2nd. Jesus might be willing to show his power to forgive sins. Had he stated it without any miracle, the Jews would not have believed it, and even his disciples might have been staggered. In proof of it, he worked a miracle; and no one, therefore, could doubt that he had the power. The miracle was wrought in express attestation of the assertion that he had the power to forgive sins. As God would not work a miracle to confirm a falsehood, or to deceive men, the miracle was a solemn confirmation, on the part of God, that Jesus had the power to forgive sins.

3rd. The Jews regarded disease as the effect of sin, Jn 9:2; Jas 5:14,15. There is a real connexion between sin and suffering, as in the case of gluttony, intemperate drinking, lewdness, debauchery. Jesus might be willing to direct the minds of the spectators to this fact; and by pointing them to a manifest instance of the effect of sin, to lead them to hate and forsake it. Diseases are sometimes the direct judgment of God for sin, 1Cor 5:3-5, 11:30, 2Sam 24:10-14. This truth, also, Christ might have been desirous of impressing on the people.

The favour of Christ, in what he said to him; Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. This was a sovereign cordial to a sick man, and was enough to make all his bed in his sickness; and to make it easy to him. We read not of any thing said to Christ; probably the poor sick man could not speak for himself, and they that brought him chose rather to speak by actions than words; they set him before Christ; that was enough. Note, It is not in vain to present ourselves and our friends to Christ, as the objects of his pity. Misery cries as

well as sin, and mercy is no less quick of hearing than justice. Here is, in what Christ said,

1. A kind compellation; Son. Note, Exhortations and consolations to the afflicted speak to them as to sons, for afflictions are fatherly discipline, Heb 12:5.

2. A gracious encouragement; "Be of good cheer. Have a good heart on it; cheer up thy spirits." Probably the poor man, when let down among them all in his bed, was put out of countenance, was afraid of a rebuke for being brought in so rudely: but Christ does not stand upon ceremony; he bids him be of good cheer; all would be well, he should not be laid before Christ in vain. Christ bids him be of good cheer; and then cures him. He would have those to whom he deals his gifts, to be cheerful in seeking him, and in trusting in him; to be of good courage.

3. A good reason for that encouragement; Thy sins are forgiven thee. Now this may be considered,

(1.) as an introduction to the cure of his bodily distemper; "Thy sins are pardoned, and therefore thou shalt be healed." Note, As sin is the cause of sickness, so the remission of sin is the comfort of recovery from sickness; not but that sin may be pardoned, and yet the sickness not removed; not but that the sickness may be removed, and yet the sin not pardoned: but if we have the comfort of our reconciliation to God, with the comfort of our recovery from sickness, this makes it a mercy indeed to us, as to Hezekiah, Isa 38:17. Or,

(2.) As a reason of the command to be of good cheer, whether he were cured of his disease or not; "Though I should not heal thee, wilt thou not say thou hast not sought in vain, if I assure thee that thy sins are pardoned; and wilt thou not look upon that as a sufficient ground of comfort, though thou shouldst continue sick of the palsy?" Note, They who, through grace, have some evidence of the forgiveness of their sins, have reasons to be of good cheer, whatever outward troubles or afflictions they are under; see Isa 33:24.

3 And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This *man* blasphemeth.

This man blasphemeth. The word blaspheme originally means to speak evil of any one, to injure by words, to blame unjustly. When applied to God, it means to speak of him unjustly, to ascribe to him acts and attributes which he does not possess, or to speak impiously or profanely. It also means to say or do anything by which his name or honour is insulted, or which conveys an impress on unfavourable to God. It means, also, to attempt to do or say a thing which belongs to him alone, or which he only can do. This is its meaning here. Christ was charged with saying a thing in his own name, or attempting to do a thing which properly belonged to God; thus assuming the place of God, and doing him injury, as the scribes supposed, by an invasion of his prerogatives. "None," said they, (see Mark and Luke,) "can forgive sins but God only" In this they reasoned correctly. See Is 43:25, 44:22. None of the prophets had this power; and by saying that he forgave sins, Jesus was understood to affirm that he was Divine; and as he proved this by working a miracle expressly to confirm the claim, it follows that he is Divine, or equal with the Father.

See here, how the best of men are sometimes charged with saying and doing the worst of things; to do well and bear ill, was the portion of Christ himself, and may be the portion of the holiest of those that belong to Christ; the innocent Jesus was accused of blasphemy, of sorcery, and of the blackest crimes. Innocency itself can protect no man from slander and false accusations. See how the greatest instance of heaven's power and grace is branded with the blackest note of hell's enmity; Christ's pardoning sin is termed blasphemy; nor had it been less, if he had not had commission from God for it. They, therefore, are guilty of blasphemy, that have no such commission, and yet pretend to pardon sin.

4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?

Jesus knowing their thoughts. Mark says, "Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned". The power of searching the hearts, and knowing the thoughts of men, belongs only to God, 1Chr 28:9, Rom

8:27, Rev 2:23, Jer 17:10. In claiming this, as Jesus did here, and often elsewhere, he gave clear proofs of his omniscience, Jn 2:24,25.

He charged them with it. Though they did but say it within themselves, he knew their thoughts. Note, Our Lord Jesus has the perfect knowledge of all that we say within ourselves. Thoughts are secret and sudden, yet naked and open before Christ, the eternal Word (Heb 4:12,13), and he understands them afar off, Ps 139:2. He could say to them (which no mere man could), Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? Note, There is a great deal of evil in sinful thoughts, which is very offensive to the Lord Jesus. He being the Sovereign of the heart, sinful thoughts invade his right, and disturb his possession; therefore he takes notice of them, and is much displeased with them. In them lies the root of bitterness, Ge 6:5. The sins that begin and end in the heart, and go no further, are as dangerous as any other.

5 For whether is easier, to say, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?

Mic 7:18

(1.) How he asserts his authority in the kingdom of grace. He undertakes to make out, that the Son of man, the Mediator, has power on earth to forgive sins; for therefore the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, and has given him this authority, because he is the Son of man, Joh 5:22,27. If he has power to give eternal life, as he certainly has (Joh 17:2), he must have power to forgive sin; for guilt is a bar that must be removed, or we can never get to heaven. What an encouragement is this to poor sinners to repent, that the power of pardoning sin is put into the hands of the Son of man, who is bone of our bone! And if he had this power on earth, much more now that he is exalted to the Father's right hand, to give repentance and remission of sins, and so to be both a Prince and a Saviour, Ac 5:31.

(2.) How he proves it, by his power in the kingdom of nature; his power to cure diseases. Is it not as easy to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, as to say, Arise and walk? He that can cure the disease, whether

declaratively as a Prophet, or authoritatively as God, can, in like manner, forgive the sin. Now, [1.] This is a general argument to prove that Christ had a divine mission. His miracles, especially his miraculous cures, confirm what he said of himself, that he was the Son of God; the power that appeared in his cures proved him sent of God; and the pity that appeared in them proved him sent of God to heal and save. The God of truth would not set his seal to a lie. [2.] It had a particular cogency in this case. The palsy was but a symptom of the disease of sin; now he made it to appear, that he could effectually cure the original disease, by the immediate removal of that symptom; so close a connection was there between the sin and the sickness. He that had power to remove the punishment, no doubt, had power to remit the sin. The scribes stood much upon a legal righteousness, and placed their confidence in that, and made no great matter of the forgiveness of sin, the doctrine upon which Christ hereby designed to put honour, and to show that his great errand to the world was to save his people from their sins.

6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

7 And he arose, and departed to his house.

The immediate cure of the sick man. Christ turned from disputing with them, and spake healing to him. The most necessary arguings must not divert us from doing the good that our hand finds to do. He saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house; and a healing, quickening, strengthening power accompanied this word (Mt 9:7): he arose and departed to his house. Now, 1. Christ bid him take up his bed, to show that he was perfectly cured, and that not only he had no more occasion to be carried upon his bed, but that he had strength to carry it. 2. He sent him to his house, to be a blessing to his family, where he had been so long a burden; and did not take him along with him for a show, which those would do in such a case who seek the honour that comes from men.

8 But when the multitudes saw *it*, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The impression which this made upon the multitude (Mt 9:8); they marvelled, and glorified God. Note, All our wonder should help to

enlarge our hearts in glorifying God, who alone does marvellous things. They glorified God for what he had done for this poor man. Note, Others' mercies should be our praises, and we should give him thanks for them, for we are members one of another. Though few of this multitude were so convinced, as to be brought to believe in Christ, and to follow him, yet they admired him, not as God, or the Son of God, but as a man to whom God had given such power. Note, God must be glorified in all the power that is given to men to do good. For all power is originally his; it is in him, as the Fountain, in men, as the cisterns.

The Call of Matthew

9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

The call of Matthew, the penman of this gospel. Mark and Luke call him Levi; it was ordinary for the same person to have two names: perhaps Matthew was the name he was most known by as a publican, and, therefore, in his humility, he called himself by that name, rather than by the more honourable name of Levi. Some think Christ gave him the name of Matthew when he called him to be an apostle; as Simon, he surnamed Peter. Matthew signifies, the gift of God, Ministers are God's gifts to the church; their ministry, and their ability for it, are God's gifts to them. Now observe,

1 The posture that Christ's call found Matthew in. He was sitting at the receipt of custom, for he was a publican, Lu 5:27. He was a custom-house officer at the port of Capernaum, or an exciseman, or collector of the land-tax. Now, (1.) He was in his calling, as the rest of them whom Christ called, Mt 4:18. Note, As Satan chooses to come, with his temptations, to those that are idle, so Christ chooses to come, with his calls, to those that are employed. But, (2.) It was a calling of ill fame among serious people; because it was attended with so much corruption and temptation, and there were so few in that business that were honest men. Matthew himself owns what he was before his conversion, as does St. Paul (1Ti 1:13), that the grace of Christ in calling him might be the more magnified, and to show,

that God has his remnant among all sorts of people. None can justify themselves in their unbelief, by their calling in the world; for there is no sinful calling, but some have been saved out of it, and no lawful calling, but some have been saved in it.

2 The preventing power of this call. We find not that Matthew looked after Christ, or had any inclination to follow him, though some of his kindred were already disciples of Christ, but Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness. He is found of those that seek him not. Christ spoke first; we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us. He said, Follow me; and the same divine, almighty power accompanied this word to convert Matthew, which attended that word (Mt 9:6), Arise and walk, to cure the man sick of the palsy. Note, A saving change is wrought in the soul by Christ as the Author, and his word as the means. His gospel is the power of God unto salvation, Ro 1:16. The call was effectual, for he came at the call; he arose, and followed him immediately; neither denied, nor deferred his obedience. The power of divine grace soon answers and overcomes all objections. Neither his commission for his place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. He conferred not with flesh and blood, Ga 1:15,16. He quitted his post, and his hopes of preferment in that way; and, though we find the disciples that were fishers occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never find Matthew at the receipt of custom again.

Sitting at the receipt of custom. That is, at the place where custom, or tribute, was received; or, in other words, he was a publican, or tax-gatherer. Mt 5:47. This man was Matthew, the writer of this gospel. The same account is found in Mk 2:14, Lk 5:27,28. Both those evangelists call him Levi. That it was the same man is known by the circumstances in which he was called being the same in all the evangelists, and by all concurring in the statement that our Saviour was present at a feast soon after he called him, and by the fact that Levi is not mentioned in the catalogue of the apostles. The Jews were in the habit of giving several names to the same person. Thus Peter was also called Simon and Cephas. It is worthy of remark, that Luke has mentioned a circumstance favourable to Matthew, which Matthew himself has omitted. Luke says, "he left

all." Had Matthew said this, it would have been a commendation of himself, utterly unlike the evangelists. No men were ever farther from praising themselves than they were.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

Christ's converse with publicans and sinners upon this occasion; Christ called Matthew, to introduce himself into an acquaintance with the people of that profession. Jesus sat at meat in the house, Mt 9:10. The other evangelists tell us, that Matthew made a great feast, which the poor fishermen, when they were called, were not able to do. But when he comes to speak of this himself, he neither tells us that it was his own house, nor that it was a feast, but only that he sat at meat in the house; preserving the remembrance of Christ's favours to the publicans, rather than of the respect he had paid to Christ. Note, It well becomes us to speak sparingly of our own good deeds.

Now observe, 1. When Matthew invited Christ, he invited his disciples to come along with him. Note, They that welcome Christ, must welcome all that are his, for his sake, and let them have a room in their hearts. 2. He invited many publicans and sinners to meet him. This was the chief thing Matthew aimed at in this treat, that he might have an opportunity of bringing his old associates acquainted with Christ. He knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Note, They who are effectually brought to Christ themselves, cannot but be desirous that others also may be brought to him, and ambitious of contributing something towards it. True grace will not contentedly eat its morsels alone, but will invite others. When by the conversion of Matthew the fraternity was broken, presently his house was filled with publicans, and surely some of them will follow him, as he followed Christ. Thus did Andrew and Philip, Joh 1:41,45,4:29. See Jdg 14:9.

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house. This feast was given to him by Levi, or Matthew, Lk 5:29. This is another circumstance favourable to Matthew, but omitted by him, and recorded by Luke; showing, also, that the apostles were averse to praising themselves. To receive Christ hospitably and kindly was a commendable act, and it strongly evinces Matthew's freedom from

ostentation that he has supposed the fact. It thus illustrates the command of the Saviour, as recorded by himself, Mt 6:1-4.

11 And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners?

The displeasure of the Pharisees at this, Mt 9:11. They cavilled at it; why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? Here observe,

1. That Christ was quarrelled with. It was not the least of his sufferings, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. None was more quarrelled with by men, than he that came to take up the great quarrel between God and man. Thus he denied himself the honour due to an incarnate Deity, which was to be justified in what he spake, and to have all he said readily subscribed to: for though he never spoke or did anything amiss, every thing he said and did was found fault with. Thus he taught us to expect and prepare for reproach, and to bear it patiently.

2. They that quarrelled with him were the Pharisees; a proud generation of men, conceited of themselves, and censorious of others; of the same temper with those in the prophet's time, who said, Stand by thyself, come not near me; I am holier than thou: they were very strict in avoiding sinners, but not in avoiding sin; none greater zealots than they for the form of godliness, nor greater enemies to the power of it. They were for keeping up the traditions of the elders to a nicety, and so propagating the same spirit that they were themselves governed by.

3. They brought their cavil, not to Christ himself; they had not the courage to face him with it, but to his disciples. The disciples were in the same company, but the quarrel is with the Master: for they would not have done it, if he had not; and they thought it worse in him who was a prophet, than in them; his dignity, they thought, should set him at a greater distance from such company than others. Being offended at the Master, they quarrel with the disciples. Note, It concerns Christians to be able to vindicate and justify Christ, and his doctrines and laws, and to be ready always to give an answer to those that ask them a reason of the hope that is in them, 1Pe 3:15.

While he is an Advocate for us in heaven, let us be advocates for him on earth, and make his reproach our own.

4. The complaint was his eating with publicans and sinners: to be intimate with wicked people is against the law of God (Ps 119:115,Ps 1:1); to eat and drink with others denotes intimacy and familiarity. The Pharisees, by asking this question, accused him of seeking the society of such men, and of being the companion of the wicked. The inference which they would draw was, that he could not be himself righteous, since he delighted in the company of abandoned men.and perhaps by accusing Christ of this to his disciples, they hoped to tempt them from him, to put them out of conceit with him, and so to bring them over to themselves to be their disciples, who kept better company; for they compassed sea and land to make proselytes. To be intimate with publicans was against the tradition of the elders, and, therefore, they looked upon it as a heinous thing. They were angry with Christ for this,

(a) Because they wished ill to him, and sought occasion to misrepresent him. Note, It is an easy and very common thing to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions.

(b) Because they wished no good to publicans and sinners, but envied Christ's favour to them, and were grieved to see them brought to repentance. Note, It may justly be suspected, that they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace, who are not pleased with it.

12 But when Jesus heard *that,* he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

The defence that Christ made for himself and his disciples, in justification of their converse with publicans and sinners. They that be whole, etc. Jesus, in reply, said that the whole needed not a physician. Sick persons only needed his aid. A physician would not commonly be found with those that were in health. His proper place was among the sick. So, says he, "If you Pharisees are such as you think yourselves, already pure and holy, you do not need my aid. It would be of no use to you, and you would not thank me for it. With

those persons who fed that they are sinners I may be useful; and there is my proper place." Or, the expression may mean, "I came on purpose to save sinners. My business is with them. There are none righteous; and as a physician is in his proper place with the sick, so am I with guilty and miserable sinners."

The disciples, it should seem, being yet weak, had to seek for an answer to the Pharisees' cavil, and, therefore, bring it to Christ, and he heard it (Mt 9:12), or perhaps overheard them whispering it to his disciples. Let him alone to vindicate himself and to plead his own cause, to answer for himself and for us too. Two things he urges in his defence,

1 The necessity and exigence of the case of the publicans, which called aloud for his help, and therefore justified him in conversing with them for their good. It was the extreme necessity of poor, lost sinners, that brought Christ from the pure regions above, to these impure ones; and the same was it, that brought him into this company which was thought impure. Now,

(a) He proves the necessity of the case of the publicans: they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The publicans are sick, and they need one to help and heal them, which the Pharisees think they do not. Note,

[1.] Sin is the sickness of the soul; sinners are spiritually sick. Original corruptions are the diseases of the soul, actual transgressions are its wounds, or the eruptions of the disease. It is deforming, weakening, disquieting, wasting, killing, but, blessed be God, not incurable.

[2.] Jesus Christ is the great Physician of souls. His curing of bodily diseases signified this, that he arose with healing under his wings. He is a skilful, faithful, compassionate Physician, and it is his office and business to heal the sick. Wise and good men should be as physicians to all about them; Christ was so. Hunc affectum versus omnes habet sapiens, quem versus ægros suos medicus--A wise man

cherishes towards all around him the feelings of a physician for his patient. Seneca De Const.

[3.] Sin-sick souls have need of this Physician, for their disease is dangerous; nature will not help itself; no man can help us; such need have we of Christ, that we are undone, eternally undone, without him. Sensible sinners see their need, and apply themselves to him accordingly.

[4.] There are multitudes who fancy themselves to be sound and whole, who think they have no need of Christ, but that they can shift for themselves well enough without him, as Laodicea, Re 3:17. Thus the Pharisees desired not the knowledge of Christ's word and ways, not because they had no need of him, but because they thought they had none. See Joh 9:40,41.

(b) He proves, that their necessity did sufficiently justify his conduct, in conversing familiarly with them, and that he ought not to be blamed for it; for that necessity made it an act of charity, which ought always to be preferred before the formalities of a religious profession, in which beneficence and munificence are far better than magnificence, as much as substance is better than shows or shadows. Those duties, which are of moral and natural obligation, are to take place even of those divine laws which are positive and ritual, much more of those impositions of men, and traditions of the elders, which make God's law stricter than he has made it. This he proves (Mt 9:13) by a passage quoted out of Ho 6:6, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. That morose separation from the society of publicans, which the Pharisees enjoined, was less than sacrifice; but Christ's conversing with them was more than an act of common mercy, and therefore to be preferred before it. If to do well ourselves is better than sacrifice, as Samuel shows (1Sa 15:22,23), much more to do good to others. Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy: to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy imaginable; it is saving a soul from death, Jam 5:20. Observe how Christ quotes this, Go ye and learn what that meaneth. Note, It is not enough to be acquainted with the letter of scripture, but we must

learn to understand the meaning of it. And they have best learned the meaning of the scriptures, that have learned how to apply them as a reproof to their own faults, and a rule for their own practice. This scripture which Christ quoted, served not only to vindicate him, but,

[1.] To show wherein true religion consists; not in external observances: not in meats and drinks and shows of sanctity, not in little particular opinions and doubtful disputations, but in doing all the good we can to the bodies and souls of others; in righteousness and peace; in visiting the fatherless and widows.

[2.] To condemn the Pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals, more than in morals, Mt 23:23. They espouse those forms of godliness which may be made consistent with, and perhaps subservient to, their pride, covetousness, ambition, and malice, while they hate that power of it which is mortifying to those lusts.

2. He urges the nature and end of his own commission. He must keep to his orders, and prosecute that for which he was appointed to be the great Teacher; now, says he, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, and therefore must converse with publicans." Observe,

(a) What his errand was; it was to call to repentance. This was his first text (Mt 4:17), and it was the tendency of all his sermons. Note, The gospel call is a call to repentance; a call to us to change our mind and to change our way.

(b) With whom his errand lay; not with the righteous, but with sinners. That is,

[1.] If the children of men had not been sinners, there had been no occasion for Christ's coming among them. He is the Saviour, not of man as man, but of man as fallen. Had the first Adam continued in his original righteousness, we had not needed a second Adam.

[2.] Therefore his greatest business lies with the greatest sinners; the more dangerous the sick man's case is, the more occasion there is for the physician's help. Christ came into the world to save sinners, but especially the chief (1Ti 1:15); to call not those so much, who, though sinners, are comparatively righteous, but the worst of sinners.

[3.] The more sensible any sinners are of their sinfulness, the more welcome will Christ and his gospel be to them; and every one chooses to go where his company is desired, not to those who would rather have his room. Christ came not with an expectation of succeeding among the righteous, those who conceit themselves so, and therefore will sooner be sick of their Saviour, than sick of their sins, but among the convinced humble sinners; to them Christ will come, for to them he will be welcome.

13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:
for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The Question about Fasting

14 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees
fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?
15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as
long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the
bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.
16 No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment; for that which is
put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.

The objections which were made against Christ and his disciples gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses; thus are the interests of truth often served, even by the opposition it meets with from gainsayers, and thus the wisdom of Christ brings good out of evil. This is the third instance of it in this chapter; his discourse of his power to forgive sin, and his readiness to receive sinners, was occasioned by the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees; so here, from a reflection upon the conduct of his family, arose a discourse concerning his tenderness for it. Observe,

I The objection which the disciples of John made against Christ's disciples, for not fasting so often as they did; which they are charged with, as another instance of the looseness of their profession, besides that of eating with publicans and sinners; and it is therefore suggested to them, that they should change that profession for another more strict. It appears by the other evangelists (Mk 2:18,Lu 5:33) that the disciples of the Pharisees joined with them, and we have reason to suspect that they instigated them, making use of John's disciples as their spokesmen, because they, being more in favour with Christ and his disciples, could do it more plausibly. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to set good men together by the ears; if the people of God differ in their sentiments, designing men will take that occasion to sow discord, and to incense them one against another, and alienate them one from another, and so make an easy prey of them. If the disciples of John and of Jesus clash, we have reason to suspect the Pharisees have been at work underhand, blowing the coals. Now the complaint is, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not? It is pity the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasions of strife and contention; but they often are so, as here; where we may observe,

1. How they boasted of their own fasting. We and the Pharisees fast often. Fasting has in all ages of the church been consecrated, upon special occasions, to the service of religion; the Pharisees were much in it; many of them kept two fast-days in a week, and yet the generality of them were hypocrites and bad men. Note, False and formal professors often excel others in outward acts of devotion, and even of mortification. The disciples of John fasted often, partly in compliance with their master's practice, for he came neither eating nor drinking (Mt 11:18); and people are apt to imitate their leaders, though not always from the same inward principle; partly in compliance with their master's doctrine of repentance. Note, The severer part of religion is often most minded by those that are yet under the discipline of the Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage, whereas, though these are good in their place, we must pass through them to that life of delight in God and dependence on him, to which these

should lead. Now they come to Christ to tell him that they fasted often, at least they thought it often. Note, Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness, Pr 20:6. There is a proneness in professors to brag of their own performance in religion, especially if there by any thing extraordinary in them; nay, and not only to boast of them before men, but to plead them before God, and confide in them as a righteousness.

2. How they blamed Christ's disciples for not fasting so often as they did. Thy disciples fast not. They could not but know, that Christ had instructed his disciples to keep their fasts private, and to manage themselves so as that they might not appear unto men to fast; and, therefore, it was very uncharitable in them to conclude they did not fast, because they did not proclaim their fasts. Note, We must not judge of people's religion by that which falls under the eye and observation of the world. But suppose it was so, that Christ's disciples did not fast so often or so long as they did, why truly, they would therefore have it thought, that they had more religion in them than Christ's disciples had. Note, It is common for vain professors to make themselves a standard in religion, by which to try and measure persons and things, as if all who differed from them were so far in the wrong; as if all that did less than they, did too little, and all that did more than they, did too much, which is a plain evidence of their want of humility and charity.

3. How they brought this complaint to Christ. Note, If Christ's disciples, either by omission or commission, give offence, Christ himself will be sure to hear of it, and be reflected upon for it. O, Jesus, are these thy Christians? Therefore, as we tender the honour of Christ, we are concerned to conduct ourselves well. Observe, The quarrel with Christ was brought to the disciples (Mt 9:11), the quarrel with the disciples was brought to Christ (Mt 9:14), this is the way of sowing discord and killing love, to set people against ministers, ministers against people, and one friend against another.

II The apology which Christ made for his disciples in this matter. Christ might have upbraided John's disciples with the former part of their question, Why do ye fast often? "Nay, you know best why you do it; but the truth is, many abound in external instances of devotion, that scarcely do themselves know why and wherefore." But he only vindicates the practice of his disciples; whey they had nothing to say for themselves, he had something ready to say for them. Note, As it is wisdom's honour to be justified of all her children, so it is her children's happiness to be all justified of wisdom. What we do according to the precept and pattern of Christ, he will be sure to bear us out in, and we may with confidence leave it to him to clear up our integrity.

But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.
Herbert.

Two things Christ pleads in defence of their not fasting.

1. That it was not a season proper for that duty (Mt 9:15): Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? Observe, Christ's answer is so framed, as that it might sufficiently justify the practice of his own disciples, and yet not condemn the institution of John, or the practice of his disciples. When the Pharisees fomented this dispute, they hoped Christ would cast blame, either on his own disciples, or on John's, but he did neither. Note, When at any time we are unjustly censured, our care must be only to clear ourselves, not to recriminate, or throw dirt upon others; and such a variety may there be of circumstances, as may justify us in our practice, without condemning those that practise otherwise.

Now his argument is taken from the common usage of joy and rejoicing during the continuance of marriage solemnities; when all instances of melancholy and sorrow are looked upon as improper and absurd, as it was at Samson's wedding, Jdg 14:17. Now,

(a) The disciples of Christ were the children of the bride-chamber, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcome there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but children of the bond-woman (Ga 4:25,31), continuing under a dispensation of darkness and terror. Note, The faithful followers of Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption, have a continual feast, while they who have the spirit of bondage and fear, cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, Ho 9:1.

(b) The disciples of Christ had the bridegroom with them, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to fast often. Such a day would come upon the disciples of Christ, when the bridegroom should be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and then should they fast. The thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, Joh 16:6. Tribulation and affliction befel them when he was gone, and gave them occasion of mourning and praying, that is, of religious fasting. Note,

[1.] Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of his Church, and his disciples are the children of the bride-chamber. Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom, Joh 3:29. And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves.

[2.] The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is liable to many changes and alterations in this world; they sing of mercy and judgment.

[3.] It is merry or melancholy with the children of the bride-chamber, according as they have more or less of the bridegroom's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their head, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, they are troubled, and walk heavily; the presence and nearness of the sun makes day and summer, his absence and distance, night and winter. Christ is all in all to the church's joy.

[4.] Every duty is to be done in its proper season. See Ec 7:14,Jam 5:13. There is a time to mourn and a time to laugh, to each of which we should accommodate ourselves, and bring forth fruit in due season. In fasts, regard is to be had to the methods of God's grace towards us; when he mourns to us, we must lament; and also to the dispensations of his providence concerning us; there are times when the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning; regard is likewise to be had to any special work before us, Mt 17:21,Ac 13:2.

2. That they had not strength sufficient for that duty. This is set forth in two similitudes, one of putting new cloth into an old garment, which does but pull the old to pieces (Mt 9:16); the other of putting new wine into old bottles, which does but burst the bottles, Mt 9:17. Christ's disciples were not able to bear these severe exercises so well as those of John and of the Pharisees, which the learned Dr. Whitby gives this reason for: There were among the Jews not only sects of the Pharisees and Essenes, who led an austere life, but also schools of the prophets, who frequently lived in mountains and deserts, and were many of them Nazarites; they had also private academies to train men up in a strict discipline; and possibly from these many of John's disciples might come, and many of the Pharisees; whereas Christ's disciples, being taken immediately from their callings, had not been used to such religious austerities, and were unfit for them, and would by them be rather unfitted for their other work. Note,

(a) Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others, like new cloth and new wine, which require most intenseness of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood; such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it.

(b) The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy; all the trees in Christ's garden are not of a growth, nor all his scholars in the same form; there are babes in Christ and grown men.

(c) In the enjoining of religious exercises, the weakness and infirmity of young Christians ought to be considered: as the food provided for them must be such as is proper for their age (1Co 3:2,Heb 5:12), so must the work be that is cut out for them. Christ would not speak to his disciples that which they could not then bear, Joh 16:12. Young beginners in religion must not be put upon the hardest duties at first, lest they be discouraged. Such as was God's care of his Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, not to lead them by the way of the Philistines (Ex 13:17,18), and such as was Jacob's care of his children and cattle, not to overdrive them (Ge 33:13), such is Christ's care of the little ones of his family, and the lambs of his flock: he gently leads them. For want of this care, many times, the bottles break, and the wine is spilled; the profession of many miscarries and comes to nothing, through indiscretion at first. Note, There may be over--doing even in well--doing, a being righteous over-much; and such an over--doing as may prove an undoing through the subtlety of Satan.

17 Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

The Ruler's Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment

18 While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.

18-26. The account contained in these verses is also recorded, with some additional circumstances, in Mk 5:22-43, Lk 8:41-56.

My daughter is even now dead. Luke says that this was his only daughter, and that she was twelve years of age. Mark and Luke say that she was at the point of death, and that information of her actual death was brought to him by one who was sent by the ruler of the synagogue, while Jesus was going. Matthew combined the two facts, and stated the representation which was made to Jesus, without stopping particularly to exhibit the manner in which it was done. In a summary way he says that the ruler communicated the information.

Luke and Mark, dwelling more particularly on the circumstances, state at length the way in which it was done; that is, by himself stating, in a hurry, that she was about to die, or dying, and then in a few moments sending word that she was dead. The Greek word, rendered is even now dead, does not of necessity mean, as our translation would express, that she had actually expired, but only that she was dying or about to die. Compare Gen 48:21. It is likely that a father, in these circumstances, would use a word as nearly expressing actual death as would be consistent with the fact that she was alive. The passage may be expressed thus: "My daughter was so sick that she must be, by this time, dead."

We have here two passages of history put together; that of the raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and that of the curing of the woman that had the bloody issue, as he was going to Jairus's house, which is introduced in a parenthesis, in the midst of the other; for Christ's miracles were thick sown, and interwoven; the work of him that sent him was his daily work. He was called to do these good works from speaking the things foregoing, in answer to the cavils of the Pharisees, Mt 9:18: While he spake these things; and we may suppose it is a pleasing interruption given to that unpleasant work of disputation, which, though sometimes needful, a good man will gladly leave, to go about a work of devotion or charity. Here is,

I The ruler's address to Christ, Mt 9:18. A certain ruler, a ruler of the synagogue, came and worshipped him. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Yes, here was one, a church ruler, whose faith condemned the unbelief of the rest of the rulers. This ruler had a little daughter, of twelve years old, just dead, and this breach made upon his family comforts was the occasion of his coming to Christ. Note, In trouble we should visit God: the death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life; it is well if any thing will do it. When affliction is in our families, we must not sit down astonished, but, as Job, fall down and worship. Now observe,

1. His humility in this address to Christ. He came with his errand to Christ himself, and did not send his servant. Note, It is no

disparagement to the greatest rulers, personally to attend on the Lord Jesus. He worshipped him, bowed the knee to him, and gave him all imaginable respect. Note, They that would receive mercy from Christ must give honour to Christ.

2. His faith in this address; "My daughter is even now dead," and though any other physician would now come too late (nothing more absurd than post mortem medicina--medicine after death), yet Christ comes not too late; he is a Physician after death, for he is the resurrection and the life; "O come then, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." This was quite above the power of nature (a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus--life once lost cannot be restored), yet within the power of Christ, who has life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will. Now Christ works in an ordinary, by nature and not against it, and, therefore, we cannot in faith bring him such a request as this; while there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer; but when our friends are dead, the case is determined; we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us. But while Christ was here upon earth working miracles, such a confidence as this was not only allowable but very commendable.

II The readiness of Christ to comply with his address, Mt 9:19. Jesus immediately arose, left his company, and followed him; he was not only willing to grant him what he desired, in raising his daughter to life, but to gratify him so far as to come to his house to do it. Surely he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. He denied to go along with the nobleman, who said, Sir, come down, ere my child die (Joh 4:48-50), yet he went along with the ruler of the synagogue, who said, Sir, come down, and my child shall live. The variety of methods which Christ took in working his miracles is perhaps to be attributed to the different frame and temper of mind which they were in who applied to him, which he who searcheth the heart perfectly knew, and accommodated himself to. He knows what is in man, and what course to take with him. And observe, when Jesus followed him, so did his disciples, whom he had chosen for his constant companions; it was not for state, or that he might come with observation, that he took his attendants with him, but that they might

be the witnesses of his miracles, who were hereafter to be the preachers of his doctrine.

19 And Jesus arose, and followed him, and *so did* his disciples.

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind *him*, and touched the hem of his garment:

21 for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

The healing of the poor woman's bloody issue. I call her a poor woman, not only because her case was piteous, but because, she had spent it all upon physicians, for the cure of her distemper, and was never the better; which was a double aggravation of the misery of her condition, that she had been full, but was now empty; and that she had impoverished herself for the recovery of her health, and yet had not her health neither. This woman was diseased with a constant issue of blood twelve years (Mt 9:20); a disease, which was not only weakening and wasting, and under which the body must needs languish; but which also rendered her ceremonially unclean, and shut her out from the courts of the Lord's house; but it did not cut her off from approaching to Christ. She applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him, by the way, as he followed the ruler, whose daughter was dead, to whom it would be a great encouragement, and a help to keep up his faith in the power of Christ. So graciously does Christ consider the frame, and consult the case, of weak believers. Observe,

1 The woman's great faith in Christ, and in his power. Her disease was of such a nature, that her modesty would not suffer her to speak openly to Christ for a cure, as others did, but by a peculiar impulse of the Spirit of faith, she believed him to have such an overflowing fulness of healing virtue, that the very touch of his garment would be her cure. This, perhaps, had something of fancy mixed with faith; for she had no precedent for this way of application to Christ, unless, as some think, she had an eye to the raising of the dead man by the touch of Elisha's bones, 2Ki 13:21. But what weakness of understanding there was in it, Christ was pleased to overlook, and to accept the sincerity and strength of her faith; for he eateth the honey-comb with the honey, So 4:11. She believed she should be healed if she did but touch the very hem of his garment, the very extremity of

it. Note, There is virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ. The holy oil with which the high priest was anointed, ran down to the skirts of his garments, Ps 133:2. Such a fulness of grace is there in Christ, that from it we may all receive, Joh 1:16.

2. Christ's great favour to this woman. He did not suspend (as he might have done) his healing influences, but suffered this bashful patient to steal a cure unknown to any one else, though she could not think to do it unknown to him. And now she was well content to be gone, for she had what she came for, but Christ was not willing to let he to so; he will not only have his power magnified in her cure, but his grace magnified in her comfort and commendation: the triumphs of her faith must be to her praise and honour. He turned about to see for her (Mt 9:22), and soon discovered her. Note, It is great encouragement to humble Christians, that they who hide themselves from men are known to Christ, who sees in secret their applications to heaven when most private. Now here,

(1.) He puts gladness into her heart, by that word, Daughter, be of good comfort. She feared being chidden for coming clandestinely, but she is encouraged. [1.] He calls her daughter, for he spoke to her with the tenderness of a father, as he did to the man sick of the palsy (Mt 9:2), whom he called son. Note, Christ has comforts ready for the daughters of Zion, that are of a sorrowful spirit, as Hannah was, 1Sa 1:15. Believing women are Christ's daughters, and he will own them as such. [2.] He bids her be of good comfort: she has reason to be so, if Christ own her for a daughter. Note, The saints' consolation is founded in their adoption. His bidding her be comforted, brought comfort with it, as his saying, Be ye whole, brought health with it. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and it is his prerogative to command comfort to troubled spirits. He creates the fruit of the lips, peace, Isa 57:19.

(2.) He puts honour upon her faith. That grace of all others gives most honour to Christ, and therefore he puts most honour upon it; Thy faith has made thee whole. Thus by faith she obtained a good report. And as of all graces Christ puts the greatest honour upon faith, so of all believers he puts the greatest honour upon those that are most humble; as here on this woman, who had more faith than she thought she had. She had reason to be of good comfort, not only

because she was made whole, but because her faith had made her whole; that is, [1.] She was spiritually healed; that cure was wrought in her which is the proper fruit and effect of faith, the pardon of sin and the work of grace. Note, We may then be abundantly comforted in our temporal mercies when they are accompanied with those spiritual blessings that resemble them; our food and raiment will be comfortable, when by faith we are fed with the bread of life, and clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ; our rest and sleep will be comfortable, when by faith we repose in God, and dwell at ease in him; our health and prosperity will be comfortable, when by faith our souls prosper, and are in health. See Isa 38:16,17. [2.] Her bodily cure was the fruit of faith, of her faith, and that made it a happy, comfortable cure indeed. They out of whom the devils were cast, were helped by Christ's sovereign power; some by the faith of others (as Mt 9:2); but it is thy faith that has made thee whole. Note, Temporal mercies are then comforts indeed to us, when they are received by faith. If, when in pursuit of mercy, we prayed for it in faith, with an eye to the promise, and in dependence upon that, if we desired it for the sake of God's glory, and with a resignation to God's will, and have our hearts enlarged by it in faith, love, and obedience, we may then say, it was received by faith.

And behold a woman, etc. This disease was by the Jews reckoned unclean, (Lev 15:25) and she was unwilling to make personal application to Jesus, or even to touch his person. The disease was regarded as incurable. She had expended all her property, and grew worse, Mk 5:26.

Touched the hem of his garment. This garment was probably the square garment which was thrown over the shoulders. Mt 5:40. This was surrounded by a border, or fringe; and this fringe, or the loose threads hanging down, is what is meant by the hem. The Jews were commanded to wear this ill order to distinguish them from other nations. See Nu 15:38,39, De 22:12.

Mark says that the woman, fearing and trembling, came and told him all the truth. Perhaps she feared that, from the impure nature of her disease, he would be offended that she touched him.

Be of good comfort. Jesus silenced her fears, commended her faith, and sent her away in peace. He used an endearing appellation, calling her daughter, a word of tenderness and affection, and dismissed her who had been twelve long and tedious years labouring under a weakening and offensive disease, now in an instant made whole. Her faith, her strong confidence in Jesus, had been the means of her restoration. It was the power of Jesus that cured her; but that power would not have been exerted but in connexion with faith. So in the salvation of a sinner. No one is saved who does not believe; but faith is the instrument, and not the power, that saves.

22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

23 And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,

And when Jesus came in, etc. Jesus admitted only three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and the father and mother of the damsel, to go in with him where the corpse lay, Mk 5:37-40. It was important that there should be witnesses of the miracle, and he chose a sufficient number. Five witnesses were enough to establish the fact. The witnesses were impartial. The fact that she was dead was established beyond a doubt. Of this the mourners, the parents, the messengers, the people were satisfied. If she was presented to the people alive, the proof of the miracle was complete. The presence of more than the five witnesses would have made the scene tumultuous, and have been less satisfactory evidence of the fact of the restoration of the child. Five sober witnesses are always better than the confused voices of a rabble. These were the same disciples that were with him in the mount of transfiguration and garden of Gethsemane, Mk 9:2, 14:33, 2Pet 1:17,18.

He saw the minstrels and the people making a noise. Minstrels are persons who play on instruments of music. The people of the East

used to bewail the dead by cutting the flesh, tearing the hair, and crying bitterly. See Jer 9:17, 16:6,7, Eze 24:17. The expressions of grief at the death of a friend, in eastern countries, are extreme. As soon as a person dies, all the females in the family set up a loud and doleful cry. They continue it as long as they can without taking breath, and the shriek of wailing dies away in a low sob. Nor do the relatives satisfy themselves with these expressions of violent grief: they hire persons of both sexes, whose employment it is to mourn for the dead in the like frantic manner. See Amos 5:16, Jer 9:20. They sing the virtues of the deceased, recount his acts, dwell on his beauty, strength, or learning; on the comforts of his family and home, and in doleful strains ask him why he left his family and friends. To all this they add soft and melancholy music. They employ minstrels to aid their grief, and increase the expression of their sorrow. This violent grief continues, commonly, eight days. In the case of a king, or other very distinguished personage, it is prolonged through an entire month. This grief does not cease at the house; it is exhibited in the procession to the grave; and the air is rent with the wailings of real and of hired mourners.

The Jews were forbidden to tear their hair and cut their flesh. See Lev 19:28, De 14:1. They showed their grief by howling, by music, by concealing the chin with their garment, by rending the outer garment, by refusing to wash or anoint themselves, or to converse with people, by scattering ashes or dust in the air, or by lying down in them, Job 1:20, 2:12, 2Sam 1:2-4, 14:2, 15:30, Mk 14:63. The expressions of grief, therefore, mentioned on this occasion, though excessive and foolish, were yet strictly in accordance with eastern customs.

The posture in which he found the ruler's house, Mt 9:23. --He saw the people and the minstrels, or musicians, making a noise. The house was in a hurry: such work does death make, when it comes into a family; and, perhaps, the necessary cares that arise at such a time, when our dead is to be decently buried out of our sight, give some useful diversion to that grief which is apt to prevail and play the tyrant. The people in the neighbourhood came together to

condole on account of the loss, to comfort the parents, to prepare for, and attend on, the funeral, which the Jews were not wont to defer long. The musicians were among them, according to the custom of the Gentiles, with their doleful, melancholy tunes, to increase the grief, and stir up the lamentations of those that attended on this occasion; as (they say) is usual among the Irish, with their Ahone, Ahone. Thus they indulged a passion that is apt enough of itself to grow intemperate, and affected to sorrow as those that had no hope. See how religion provides cordials, where irreligion administers corrosives. Heathenism aggravates that grief which Christianity studies to assuage. Or perhaps these musicians endeavoured on the other hand to divert the grief and exhilarate the family; but, as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart. Observe, The parents, who were immediately touched with the affliction, were silent, while the people and minstrels, whose lamentations were forced, made such a noise. Note, The loudest grief is not always the greatest; rivers are most noisy where they run shallow. Ille dolet vere, qui sine teste dolet--That grief is most sincere, which shuns observation. But notice is taken of this, to show that the girl was really dead, in the undoubted apprehension of all about her.

24 he said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.

The maid is not dead, but sleepeth. It cannot be supposed that our Lord means literally to say that the child was not dead. Every possible evidence of her death had been given, and he acted on that himself, and conveyed to the people the idea that he raised her from the dead. He meant to speak in opposition to their opinions. It is not unlikely that Jarius and the people favoured the opinions of the Sadducees; and that they understood by her being dead that she had ceased to be, and that she would never be raised up again. In opposition to this he used the expression she sleepeth; affirming mildly both that the body was dead, and implying that her spirit still lived, and that she would be raised up again. A similar mode of speaking is seen in Jn 11:11: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The sacred writers, who hold the doctrine of the resurrection, often spoke of the dead as sleeping, 2Pet 3:4, Acts 7:60, 1Cor 15:6,18 1Thes 4:13-15. The meaning of this passage then is--the maid has not

ceased to exist; but though her body is dead, yet her spirit lives, and she sleeps in the hope of the resurrection.

The rebuke that Christ gave to this hurry and noise, Mt 9:24. He said, Give place. Note, Sometimes, when the sorrow of the world prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. They that harden themselves in sorrow, and, like Rachel, refuse to be comforted, should think they hear Christ saying to their disquieting thoughts, Give place: "Make room for him who is the Consolation of Israel, and brings with him strong consolations, strong enough to overcome the confusion and tyranny of these worldly griefs, if he may but be admitted into the soul." He gives a good reason why they should not thus disquiet themselves and one another; The maid is not dead but sleepeth. 1. This was eminently true of this maid, that was immediately to be raised to life; she was really dead, but not so to Christ, who knew within himself what he would do, and could do, and who had determined to make her death but as a sleep. There is little more difference between sleep and death, but in continuance; whatever other difference there is, it is but a dream. This death must be but of short continuance, and therefore is but a sleep, like one night's rest. He that quickens the dead, may well call the things which be not as though they were, Ro 4:17. 2. It is in a sense true of all that die, chiefly of them that die in the Lord. Note, (1.) Death is a sleep. All nations and languages, for the softening of that which is so dreadful, and withal so unavoidable, and the reconciling of themselves to it, have agreed to call it so. It is said, even of the wicked kings, that they slept with their fathers; and of those that shall arise to everlasting contempt, that they sleep in the dust, Da 12:2. It is not the sleep of the soul; its activity ceases not; but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, regardless and disregarded, wrapt up in darkness and obscurity. Sleep is a short death, and death a long sleep. But the death of the righteous is in a special manner to be looked upon as a sleep, Isa 57:2. They sleep in Jesus (1Th 4:14); they not only rest from the toils and labours of the day, but rest in hope of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection, when they shall wake refreshed, wake to a new life, wake to be richly dressed and crowned, and wake to sleep no more. (2.) The consideration of this should moderate our grief at the death

of our dear relations: "say not, They are lost; no, they are but gone before: say not, They are slain; no, they are but fallen asleep; and the apostle speaks of it as an absurd thing to imagine that they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished (1Co 15:18); give place, therefore, to those comforts which the covenant of grace ministers, fetched from the future state, and the glory to be revealed."

Now could it be thought that such a comfortable word as this, from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, should be ridiculed as it was? They laughed him to scorn. These people lived in Capernaum, knew Christ's character, that he never spake a rash or foolish word; they knew how many mighty works he had done; so that if they did not understand what he meant by this, they might at least have been silent in expectation of the issue. Note, The words and works of Christ which cannot be understood, yet are not therefore to be despised. We must adore the mystery of divine sayings, even when they seem to contradict what we think ourselves most confident of. Yet even this tended to the confirmation of the miracle: for it seems she was so apparently dead, that it was thought a very ridiculous thing to say otherwise.

25 But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

The raising of the damsel to life by the power of Christ, Mt 9:25. The people were put forth. Note, Scorners that laugh at what they see and hear that is above their capacity, are not proper witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ, the glory of which lies not in pomp, but in power. The widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus, were raised from the dead openly, but this damsel privately; for Capernaum, that had slighted the lesser miracles of restoring health, was unworthy to see the greater, of restoring life; these pearls were not to be cast before those that would trample them under their feet.

Christ went in and took her by the hand, as it were to awake her, and to help her up, prosecuting his own metaphor of her being asleep. The high priest, that typified Christ, was not to come near the dead (Le 21:10,11), but Christ touched the dead. The Levitical priesthood leaves the dead in their uncleanness, and therefore keeps at a distance from them, because it cannot remedy them; but Christ, having power to raise the dead, is above the infection, and therefore

is not shy of touching them. He took her by the hand, and the maid arose. So easily, so effectually was the miracle wrought; not by prayer, as Elijah did (1kI 17:21), and Elisha (2kI 4:33), but by a touch. They did it as servants, he as a Son, as a God, to whom belong the issues from death. Note, Jesus Christ is the Lord of souls, he commands them forth, and commands them back, when and as he pleases. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ take them by the hand: it is done in the day of his power. He helps us up, or we lie still.

26 And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

The general notice that was taken of this miracle, though it was wrought privately; Mt 9:26. The fame thereof went abroad into all that land: it was the common subject of discourse. Note, Christ's works are more talked of than considered and improved. And doubtless, they that heard only the report of Christ's miracles, were accountable for that as well as they that were eye-witnesses of them. Though we at this distance have not seen Christ's miracles, yet having an authentic history of them, we are bound, upon the credit of that, to receive his doctrine; and blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed, Joh 20:29.

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

27 And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on us.

28 And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.

29 Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.

In these verses we have an account of two more miracles wrought together by our Saviour.

I The giving of sight to two blind men, Mt 9:27-31. Christ is the Fountain of light as well as life; and as, by raising the dead, he showed himself to be the same that at first breathed into man the breath of life, so, by giving sight to the blind, he showed himself to

be the same that at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Observe,

1 The importunate address of the blind men to Christ. He was returning from the ruler's house to his own lodgings, and these blind men followed him, as beggars do, with their incessant cries, Mt 9:27. He that cured diseases so easily, so effectually, and, withal, at so cheap a rate, shall have patients enough. As for other things, so he is famed for an Oculist. Observe,

(a) The title which these blind men gave to Christ; Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. The promise made to David, that of his loins the Messiah should come, was well known, and the Messiah was therefore commonly called the Son of David. At this time there was a general expectation of his appearing; these blind men know, and own, and proclaim it in the streets of Capernaum, that he is come, and that this is he; which aggravates the folly and sin of the chief priests and Pharisees who denied and opposed him. They could not see him and his miracles, but faith comes by hearing. Note, They who, by the providence of God, are deprived of bodily sight, may yet, by the grace of God, have the eyes of their understanding so enlightened, as to discern those great things of God, which are hid from the wise and prudent.

(b) Their petition, Have mercy on us. It was foretold that the Son of David should be merciful (Ps 72:12,13), and in him shines the tender mercy of our God, Lu 1:78. Note, Whatever our necessities and burthens are, we need no more for supply and support, than a share in the mercy of our Lord Jesus. Whether he heal us or no, if he have mercy on us, we have enough; as to the particular instances and methods of mercy, we may safely and wisely refer ourselves to the wisdom of Christ. They did not each of them say for himself, Have mercy on me, but both for one another, Have mercy on us. Note, It becomes those that are under the same affliction, to concur in the same prayers for relief. Fellow-sufferers should be joint-petitioners. In Christ there is enough for all.

(c) Their importunity in this request; they followed him, crying. It seems, he did not take notice of them at first, for he would try their faith, which he knew to be strong; would quicken their prayers, and make his cures the more valued, when they did not always come at the first word; and would teach us to continue instant in prayer, always to pray, and not to faint: and, though the answer do not come presently, yet to wait for it, and to follow providence, even in those steps and out goings of it which seem to neglect or contradict our prayers. Christ would not heal them publicly in the streets, for this was a cure he would have kept private (Mt 9:30), but when he came into the house, they followed him thither, and came to him. Note, Christ's doors are always open to believing and importunate petitioners; it seemed rude in them to rush into the house after him, when he desired to retire; but, such is the tenderness of our Lord Jesus, that they were not more bold than welcome.

2 The confession of faith, which Christ drew from them upon this occasion. When they came to him for mercy, he asked them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? Note, Faith is the great condition of Christ's favours. They who would receive the mercy of Christ, must firmly believe the power of Christ. What we would have him do for us, we must be fully assured that he is able to do. They followed Christ, and followed him crying, but the great question is, Do ye believe? Nature may work fervency, but it is only grace that can work faith; spiritual blessings are obtained only by faith. They had intimated their faith in the office of Christ as Son of David, and in his mercy; but Christ demands likewise a profession of faith in his power. Believe ye that I am able to do this; to bestow this favour; to give sight to the blind, as well as to cure the palsy and raise the dead? Note, It is good to be particular in the exercise of faith, to apply the general assurances of God's power and good will, and the general promises, to our particular exigencies. All shall work for good, and if all, then this. "Believe ye that I am able, not only to prevail with God for it, as a prophet, but that I am able to do it by my own power?" This will amount to their belief of his being not only the Son of David, but the Son of God; for it is God's prerogative to open the eyes of the blind (Ps 146:8); he makes the seeing eye, Ex 4:11.

Job was eyes to the blind (Job 29:15); was to them instead of eyes, but he could not give eyes to the blind. Still it is put to us, Believe we that Christ is able to do for us, by the power of his merit and intercession in heaven, of his Spirit and grace in the heart, and of his providence and dominion in the world? To believe the power of Christ is not only to assure ourselves of it, but to commit ourselves to it, and encourage ourselves in it.

To this question they give an immediate answer, without hesitation: they said, Yea, Lord. Though he had kept them in suspense awhile, and had not helped them at first, they honestly imputed that to his wisdom, not to his weakness, and were still confident of his ability. Note, The treasures of mercy that are laid up in the power of Christ, are laid out and wrought for those that trust in him, Ps 31:19.

3. The cure that Christ wrought on them; he touched their eyes, Mt 9:29. This he did to encourage their faith, which, by his delay, he had tried, and to show that he gives sight to blind souls by the operations of his grace accompanying the word, anointing the eyes with eye-salve: and he put the cure upon their faith, According to your faith be it unto you. When they begged for a cure, he enquired into their faith (Mt 9:28), Believe ye that I am able? He did not enquire into their wealth, whether they were able to pay him for a cure; nor into their reputation, should he get credit by curing them; but into their faith; and now they had professed their faith he referred the matter to that: "I know you do believe, and the power you believe in shall be exerted for you; According to your faith be it unto you." This speaks,

(a) His knowledge of the sincerity of their faith, and his acceptance and approbation of it. Note, It is a great comfort to true believers, that Jesus Christ knows their faith, and is well pleased with it. Though it be weak, though others do not discern it, though they themselves are ready to question it, it is known to him.

(b) His insisting upon their faith as necessary; "If you believe, take what you come for." Note, They who apply themselves to Jesus

Christ, shall be dealt with according to their faith; not according to their fancies, nor according to their profession, but according to their faith; that is, unbelievers cannot expect to find any favour with God, but true believers may be sure to find all that favour which is offered in the gospel; and our comforts ebb or flow, according as our faith is stronger or weaker; we are not straitened in Christ, let us not then be straitened in ourselves.

4. The charge he gave them to keep it private (Mt 9:30), See that no man know it. He gave them this charge,

(a) To set us an example of that humility and lowliness of mind, which he would have us to learn of him. Note, In the good we do, we must not seek our own praise, but only the glory of God. It must be more our care and endeavour to be useful, than to be known and observed to be so, Pr 20:6,25:27 Thus Christ seconded the rule he had given, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.

(b) Some think that Christ, in keeping it private, showed his displeasure against the people of Capernaum, who had seen so many miracles, and yet believed not. Note, The silencing of those who should proclaim the works of Christ is a judgment to any place or people: and it is just in Christ to deny the means of conviction to those that are obstinate in their infidelity; and to shroud the light from those that shut their eyes against it.

(c) He did it in discretion, for his own preservation; because the more he was proclaimed, the more jealous would the rulers of the Jews be of his growing interest among the people.

(d) Dr. Whitby gives another reason, which is very considerable, why Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, and afterwards forbid the publishing of his transfiguration; because he would not indulge that pernicious conceit which obtained among the Jews, that their Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt the setting up of his kingdom, by tumults and seditions, as they offered to do, Joh 6:15. But when, after his

resurrection (which was the full proof of his mission), his spiritual kingdom was set up, then that danger was over, and they must be published to all nations. And he observes, that the miracles which Christ wrought among the Gentiles and the Gadarenes, were ordered to be published, because with them there was not that danger.

But honour is like the shadow, which, as it flees from those that follow it, so it follows those that flee from it (Mt 9:31); They spread abroad his fame. This was more an act of zeal, than of prudence; and though it may be excused as honestly meant for the honour of Christ, yet it cannot be justified, being done against a particular charge. Whenever we profess to direct our intention to the glory of God, we must see to it that the action be according to the will of God.

30 And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*.

31 But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

A Dumb Man Speaks

32 As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.

33 And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.

The healing of a dumb man, that was possessed with a devil. And here observe,

1. His case, which was very sad. He was under the power of the devil in this particular instance, that he was disabled from speaking, Mt 9:32. See the calamitous state of this world, and how various the afflictions of the afflicted are! We have no sooner dismissed two blind men, but we meet with a dumb man. How thankful should we be to God for our sight and speech! See the malice of Satan against mankind, and in how many ways he shows it. This man's dumbness was the effect of his being possessed with a devil; but it was better he should be unable to say any thing, than be forced to say, as those demoniacs did (Mt 8:29), What have we to do with thee? Of the two,

better a dumb devil than a blaspheming one. When the devil gets possession of a soul, it is made silent as to any thing that is good; dumb in prayers and praises, which the devil is a sworn enemy to. This poor creature they brought to Christ, who entertained not only those that came of themselves in their own faith, but those that were brought to him by their friends in the faith of others. Though the just shall live eternally by his faith, yet temporal mercies may be bestowed on us with an eye to their faith who are intercessors on our behalf. They brought him in just as the blind man went out. See how unwearied Christ was in doing good; how closely one good work followed another! Treasures of mercy, wondrous mercy, are hid in him; which may be continually communicated, but can never be exhausted.

2. His cure, which was very sudden (Mt 9:33), When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake. Note, Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. In sanctification he heals the waters by casting salt into the spring. When Christ, by his grace, casts the devil out of a soul, presently the dumb speaks. When Paul was converted, behold, he prays; then the dumb spake.

3. The consequences of this cure.

(a) The multitudes marvelled; and well they might; though few believed, many wondered. The admiration of the common people is sooner raised than any other affection. It was foretold, that the new song, the New-Testament song, should be sung for marvellous works, Ps 98:1. They said, It was never so seen in Israel, and therefore never so seen any where; for no people experienced such wonders of mercy as Israel did. There had been those in Israel that were famous for working miracles, but Christ excelled them all. The miracles Moses wrought had reference to Israel as a people, but Christ's were brought home to particular persons.

(b) The Pharisees blasphemed, Mt 9:34. When they could not gainsay the convincing evidence of these miracles, they fathered

them upon the devil, as if they had been wrought by compact and collusion: he casteth out devils (say they) by the prince of the devils--a suggestion horrid beyond expression; we shall hear more of it afterwards, and Christ's answer to it (Mt 12:25); only observe here, how evil men and seducers wax worse and worse (2Ti 3:13), and it is both their sin and their punishment. Their quarrels with Christ for taking upon him to forgive sin (Mt 9:3), for conversing with publicans and sinners, (Mt 9:11), for not fasting (Mt 9:14), though spiteful enough, yet had some colour of piety, purity, and devotion in them; but this (which they are left to, to punish them for those) breathes nothing but malice and falsehood, and hellish enmity in the highest degree; it is diabolism all over, and was therefore justly pronounced unpardonable. Because the people marvelled, they must say something to diminish the miracle, and this was all they could say.

34 But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.

The Harvest Is Plenteous

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Observe how Christ in his preaching had respect,

1. To the private towns. He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; there he preached, there he healed. The souls of those that are meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be to us, as the souls of those that make the greatest figure. Rich and poor meet together in him, citizens and boors: his righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages must be rehearsed, Jdg 5:11.

2. To the public worship. He taught in their synagogues,

(1.) That he might bear a testimony to solemn assemblies, even then when there were corruptions in them. We must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

(2.) That he might have an opportunity of preaching there, where people were gathered together, with an expectation to hear. Thus, even where the gospel church was founded, and Christian meetings erected, the apostles often preached in the synagogues of the Jews. It is the wisdom of the prudent, to make the best of that which is.

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the laborers *are* few;

38 pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.

II. A preface, or introduction, to the account in the following chapter, of his sending forth his apostles. He took notice of the multitude (Mt 9:36); not only of the crowds that followed him, but of the vast numbers of people with whom (as he passed along) he observed the country to be replenished; he noticed what nests of souls the towns and cities were, and how thick of inhabitants; what abundance of people there were in every synagogue, and what places of concourse the openings of the gates were: so very populous was that nation now grown; and it was the effect of God's blessing on Abraham. Seeing this,

1. He pities them, and was concerned for them (Mt 9:36); He was moved with compassion on them; not upon a temporal account, as he pities the blind, and lame, and sick; but upon a spiritual account; he was concerned to see them ignorant and careless, and ready to perish for lack of vision. Note, Jesus Christ is a very compassionate friend to precious souls; here his bowels do in a special manner yearn. It was pity to souls that brought him from heaven to earth, and there to the cross. Misery is the object of mercy; and the miseries of sinful, self-destroying souls, are the greatest miseries: Christ pities those most that pity themselves least; so should we. The most Christian compassion is compassion to souls; it is most Christ-like. See what moved this pity.

(a) They fainted; they were destitute, vexed, wearied. They strayed, so some; were loosed one from another; The staff of bands was broken, Zec 11:14. They wanted help for their souls, and had none at hand that was good for any thing. The scribes and Pharisees filled them with vain notions, burthened them with the traditions of the elders, deluded them into many mistakes, while they were not instructed in their duty, nor acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law; therefore they fainted; for what spiritual health, and life, and vigour can there be in those souls, that are fed with husks and ashes, instead of the bread of life? Precious souls faint when duty is to be done, temptations to be resisted, afflictions to be borne, being not nourished up with the word of truth.

(b) They were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. That expression is borrowed from 1Ki 22:17, and it sets forth the sad condition of those that are destitute of faithful guides to go before them in the things of God. No creature is more apt to go astray than a sheep, and when gone astray more helpless, shiftless, and exposed, or more unapt to find the way home again: sinful souls are as lost sheep; they need the care of shepherds to bring them back. The teachers the Jews then had pretended to be shepherds, yet Christ says they had not shepherds, for they were worse than none; idle shepherds that led them away, instead of leading them back, and fleeced the flock, instead of feeding it: such shepherds as were described, Jer 23:1,Eze 34:2, &c. Note, The case of those people is very pitiable, who either have no ministers at all, or those that are as bad as none; that seek their own things, not the things of Christ and souls.

2. He excited his disciples to pray for them. His pity put him upon devising means for the good of these people. It appears (Lu 6:12,13) that upon this occasion, before he sent out his apostles, he did himself spend a great deal of time in prayer. Note, Those we pity we should pray for. Having spoken to God for them he turns to his disciples, and tells them,

(a) How the case stood; The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. People desired good preaching, but there were few good preachers. There was a great deal of work to be done, and a great deal of good likely to be done, but there wanted hands to do it.

[1.] It was an encouragement, that the harvest was so plenteous. It was not strange, that there were multitudes that needed instruction, but it was what does not often happen, that they who needed it, desired it, and were forward to receive it. They that were ill taught were desirous to be better taught; people's expectations were raised, and there was such a moving of affections, as promised well. Note, It is a blessed thing, to see people in love with good preaching. The valleys are then covered over with corn, and there are hopes it may be well gathered in. That is a gale of opportunity, that calls for a double care and diligence in the improvement of it; a harvest-day should be a busy day.

[2.] It was a pity when it was so that the labourers should be so few; that the corn should shed and spoil, and rot upon the ground for want of reapers; loiterers many, but labourers very few. Note, It is ill with the church, when good work stands still, or goes slowly on, for want of good workmen; when it is so, the labourers that there are have need to be very busy.

(b) What was their duty in this case (Mt 9:38); Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest. Note, The melancholy aspect of the times and the deplorable state of precious souls, should much excite and quicken prayer. When things look discouraging, we should pray more, and then we should complain and fear less. And we should adapt our prayers to the present exigencies of the church; such an understanding we ought to have of the times, as to know, not only what Israel ought to do, but what Israel ought to pray for. Note,

[1.] God is the Lord of the harvest; my Father is the Husbandman, Joh 15:1. It is the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, Isa 5:7. It is for him

and to him, and to his service and honour, that the harvest is gathered in. Ye are God's husbandry (1Co 3:9); his threshing, and the corn of his floor, Isa 21:10. He orders every thing concerning the harvest as he pleases; when and where the labourers shall work, and how long; and it is very comfortable to those who wish well to the harvest-work, that God himself presides in it, who will be sure to order all for the best.

[2.] Ministers are and should be labourers in God's harvest; the ministry is a work and must be attended to accordingly; it is harvest-work, which is needful work; work that requires every thing to be done in its season, and diligence to do it thoroughly; but it is pleasant work; they reap in joy, and the joy of the preachers of the gospel is likened to the joy of harvest (Isa 9:2,3); and he that reapeth receiveth wages; the hire of the labourers that reap down God's field, shall not be kept back, as theirs was, Jam 5:4.

[3.] It is God's work to send forth labourers; Christ makes ministers (Eph 4:11); the office is of his appointing, the qualifications of his working, the call of his giving. They will not be owned nor paid as labourers, that run without their errand, unqualified, uncalled. How shall they preach except they be sent?

[4.] All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especially when the harvest is plenteous, that he would send forth more skillful, faithful, wise, and industrious labourers into his harvest; that he would raise up such as he will own in the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints; would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it; that he would give them wisdom to win souls; that he would thrust forth labourers, so some; intimating unwillingness to go forth, because of their own weakness and the people's badness, and opposition from men, that endeavour to thrust them out of the harvest; but we should pray that all contradiction from within and from without, may be conquered and got over. Christ puts his friends upon praying this, just before he sends apostles forth to labour in the harvest. Note, It is a good sign God is about to bestow some special

mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those that have an interest at the throne of grace, to pray for it, Ps 10:17. Further observe, that Christ said this to his disciples, who were to be employed as labourers. They must pray, First, That God would send them forth. Here am I, send me, Isa 6:8. Note, Commissions, given in answer to prayer, are most likely to be successful; Paul is a chosen vessel, for behold he prays, Ac 9:11,15. Secondly, That he would send others forth. Note, Not the people only, but those who are themselves ministers, should pray for the increase of ministers. Though self-interest makes those that seek their own things desirous to be placed alone (the fewer ministers the more preferments), yet those that seek the things of Christ, desire more workmen, that more work may be done, though they be eclipsed by it.

Matthew-10

Jesus Chooses the Twelve

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 And when he had called unto *him* his twelve disciples, he gave them power *against* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, etc. This account of sending the apostles forth is recorded also in Mk 6:7-11, Lk 9:1-6. Mark says that he sent them out two and two. This was a kind arrangement, that each one might have a companion; and that they might visit more places, and accomplish more labour, than if they were all together. These twelve were the original number of apostles. The word apostle means one that is sent, and was given to them because they were sent forth to preach the gospel. They were ambassadors of Christ. To this number Matthias was afterwards added, to supply the place of Judas, Acts 1:26. And Paul was specially called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, Rom 1:1, 1Cor 15:8,9, Gal 1:1. So that there were in all fourteen apostles.

In selecting twelve at first, it is probable that he was somewhat guided by the number of the tribes of Israel. Twelve was, with them, a well-known number, and it was natural that he should select one for every tribe. Their office was clearly made known. They were to heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the gospel, etc. They were to be with him, receive his instructions, learn the nature of his religion, be witnesses of his resurrection, and bear his gospel then around the globe. The number twelve was the best for these purposes that could be selected. It was sufficiently large to answer the purpose of testimony; and it was so small as not to be disorderly, or easily divided into parties or factions. They were not learned men, and could not be supposed to spread their religion by art or talents. They were not men of wealth, and could not bribe men to follow them. They were not men of rank and office, and could not compel men to believe. They were just such men as are always found the best witnesses in courts of justice--plain men, of good sense, of fair character, of great honesty, and with favourable opportunities of ascertaining the facts to which they bore witness. Such men everybody believes, and especially when they are willing to lay down their lives to prove their sincerity.

It was important that ho should choose them early in his ministry, that they might be fully acquainted with him; might treasure up his instructions, and observe his manner of life and his person, that by having been long acquainted with him they might be able to testify to his identity, and be competent witnesses of his resurrection. No witnesses were ever so well qualified to give testimony as they; and none ever gave so much evidence of their sincerity as they did. See Acts 1:21,22.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is
called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his
brother;
3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the*
son of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus;
4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not:

Into the way of the Gentiles. That is, among the Gentiles, or nowhere but among the Jews. The full time for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was not come. It was proper that it should be first preached to the Jews, the ancient covenant people of God, and the people among whom the Messiah was born. He afterwards gave them a charge to go into all the world, Mt 28:19.

And into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, The Samaritans occupied the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. This region was situated between Jerusalem and Galilee; so that in passing from the one to the other, it was a direct course to pass through Samaria; so that they could not avoid going into the way of the Samaritans, but they must not enter into any of their cities. The capital of the country was Samaria, formerly a large and splendid city; It was situated about fifteen miles to the north-west of the city of Shechem or Sychar, Jn 4:6, and about forty miles to the north of Jerusalem. For a description of this city, Is 28:1. Sychar or Shechem was also a city in the limits of Samaria.

This people was formerly composed of a few of the ten tribes, and a mixture of foreigners. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Babylon, the king of Assyria sent people from Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, to inhabit their country, 2Kgs 17:24, Ezr 4:2-11. These people at first worshipped the idols of their own nations. But being troubled with lions, which had increased greatly while the country remained uninhabited, they supposed it was because they had not honoured the God of the country. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Babylon, to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed partially from the books of Moses; but still retained many of their old rites and idolatrous customs, and embraced a religion made up of Judaism and idolatry, 2Kgs 17:26-28.

The grounds of difference between the two nations were the following :--

(1.) The Jews, after their return from Babylon, set about rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to aid them. The Jews, however, perceiving that it was not from a love of true religion, but that they might obtain a part of the favors granted to the Jews by Cyrus, rejected their offer. The consequence was, that a state of long and bitter animosity arose between them and the Jews.

(2.) While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans used every art to thwart him in his undertaking, Neh 6:1-14.

(3.) The Samaritans at length obtained leave of the Persian monarch to build a temple for themselves. This was erected on Mount Gerizim, and they strenuously contended that that was the place designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, constituted his son-in-law, Manasses, high priest. The religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated, and an irreconcilable hatred arose between them and the Jews. Jn 4:20.

(4.) Afterwards Samaria became a place of resort for all the outlaws of Judea. They received willingly all the Jewish criminals, and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, betook themselves for safety to Samaria, and greatly increased their numbers and the hatred which subsisted between the two nations.

(5.) The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses, and rejected the writings of the prophets, and all the Jewish traditions. From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded them as the worst of the human race, (Jn 8:48) and had no dealings with them, Jn 4:9.

Our Saviour, however, preached the gospel to them afterwards, (Jn 4:6-26) and the apostles imitated his example, Acts 8:25. The gospel was, however, first preached to the Jews.

6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. To them Christ appropriated his own ministry (Mt 15:24), for he was a minister of the circumcision (Ro 15:8): and, therefore, to them the apostles, who were but his attendants and agents, must be confined. The first offer of salvation must be made to the Jews, Ac 3:26. Note, Christ had a particular and very tender concern for the house of Israel; they were beloved for the fathers' sakes, Ro 11:28. He looked with compassion upon them as lost sheep, whom he, as a shepherd, was to gather out of the by-paths of sin and error, into which they were gone astray, and in which, if not brought back, they would wander endlessly; see Jer 2:6.

7 And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The preaching work which he appointed them. He did not send them forth without an errand; no, As ye go, preach, Mt 10:7. They were to be itinerant preachers: wherever they come they must proclaim the beginning of the gospel, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Not that they must say nothing else, but this must be their text; on this subject they must enlarge: let people know, that the kingdom of the Messiah, who is the Lord from heaven, is now to be set up according to the scriptures; from whence it follows, that men must repent of their sins and forsake them, that they might be admitted to the privileges of that kingdom. It is said (Mk 6:12), they went out, and preached that men should repent; which was the proper use and application of this doctrine, concerning the approach of the kingdom of heaven. They must, therefore, expect to hear more of this long-looked-for Messiah shortly, and must be ready to receive his doctrine, to believe in him, and to submit to his yoke. The preaching of this was like the morning light, to give notice of the approach of the rising sun. How unlike was this to the preaching of Jonah, which proclaimed ruin at hand! Jon 3:4. This proclaims salvation at hand, nigh them that fear God; mercy and truth meet together (Ps 85:9,10), that is, the kingdom of heaven at hand: not so much the personal presence of the king; that must not be doated upon; but a spiritual

kingdom which is to be set up, when his bodily presence is removed, in the hearts of men.

Now this was the same that John the Baptist and Christ had preached before. Note, People need to have good truths pressed again and again upon them, and if they be preached and heard with new affections, they are as if they were fresh to us. Christ, in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb 13:8. Afterwards, indeed, when the Spirit was poured out, and the Christian church was formed, this kingdom of heaven came, which was now spoken of as at hand; but the kingdom of heaven must still be the subject of our preaching: now it is come, we must tell people it is come to them, and must lay before them the precepts and privileges of it; and there is a kingdom of glory yet to come, which we must speak of as at hand, and quicken people to diligence from the consideration of that.

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils:
freely ye have received, freely give.

The power he gave them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, Mt 10:8. When he- sent them to preach the same doctrine that he had preached, he empowered them to confirm it, by the same divine seals, which could never be set to a lie. This is not necessary now the kingdom of God is come; to call for miracles now is to lay again the foundation when the building is reared. The point being settled, and the doctrine of Christ sufficiently attested, by the miracles which Christ and his apostles wrought, it is tempting God to ask for more signs. They are directed here,

1. To use their power in doing good: not "Go and remove mountains," or "fetch fire from heaven," but, Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers. They are sent abroad as public blessings, to intimate to the world, that love and goodness were the spirit and genius of that gospel which they came to preach, and of that kingdom which they were employed to set up. By this it would appear, that they were the servants of that God who is good and does good, and whose mercy is over all his works; and that the intention of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to raise those that were dead in sin; and therefore, perhaps, that of raising the dead is mentioned; for

though we read not of their raising any to life before the resurrection of Christ, yet they were instrumental to raise many to spiritual life.

2. In doing good freely; Freely ye heave received, freely give. Those that had power to heal all diseases, had an opportunity to enrich themselves; who would not purchase such easy certain cures at any rate? Therefore they are cautioned not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles: they must cure gratis, further to exemplify the nature and complexion of the gospel kingdom, which is made up, not only of grace, but of free grace. Gratia gratis data (Ro 3:24), freely by his grace, Buy medicines without money, and without price, Isa 55:1. And the reason is, because freely you have received. Their power to heal the sick cost them nothing, and, therefore, they must not make any secular advantage to themselves of it. Simon Magus would not have offered money for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, if he had not hoped to get money by them; Ac 8:18. Note, The consideration of Christ's freeness in doing good to us, should make us free in doing good to others.

9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses;
10 nor scrip for *your* journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves:
for the workman is worthy of his meat.

The provision that must be made for them in this expedition; it is a thing to be considered in sending an ambassador, who must bear the charge of the embassy. As to that,

1. They must make no provision for it themselves, Mt 10:9,10. Provide neither gold nor silver. As, on the one hand, they shall not raise estates by their work, so, on the other hand, they shall not spend what little they have of their own upon it. This was confined to the present mission, and Christ would teach them, (1.) To act under the conduct of human prudence. They were now to make but a short excursion, and were soon to return to their Master, and to their head-quarters again, and, therefore, why should they burthen themselves with that which they would have no occasion for? (2.) To act in dependence upon Divine Providence. They must be taught to live, without taking thought for life, Mt 6:25, &c. Note, They who go upon Christ's errand, have, of all people, most reason to trust him for food convenient. Doubtless he will not be wanting to

those that are working for him. Those whom he employs, as they are taken under special protection, so they are entitled to special provisions. Christ's hired servants shall have bread enough and to spare; while we abide faithful to God and our duty, and are in care to do our work well, we may cast all our other care upon God; Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide for us and ours as he thinks fit.

2. They might expect that those to whom they were sent would provide for them what was necessary, Mt 10:10. The workman is worthy of his meat. They must not expect to be fed by miracles, as Elijah was: but they might depend upon God to incline the hearts of those they went among, to be kind to them, and provide for them. Though they who serve at the altar may not expect to grow rich by the altar, yet they may expect to live, and to live comfortably upon it, 1Co 9:13,14. It is fit they should have their maintenance from their work. Ministers are, and must be, workmen, labourers, and they that are so are worthy of their meat, so as not to be forced to any other labour for the earning of it. Christ would have his disciples, as not to distrust their God, so not to distrust their countrymen, so far as to doubt of a comfortable subsistence among them. If you preach to them, and endeavour to do good among them, surely they will give you meat and drink enough for your necessities: and if they do, never desire dainties; God will pay you your wages hereafter, and it will be running on in the mean time.

11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when ye come into a house, salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

The proceedings they were to observe in dealing with any place, Mt 10:11-15. They went abroad they knew not whither, uninvited, unexpected, knowing none, and known of none; the land of their nativity was to them a strange land; what rule must they go by? what course must they take? Christ would not send them out without full instructions, and here they are.

1. They are here directed how to conduct themselves toward those that were strangers to them; How to do,

(a) In strange towns and cities: when you come to a town, enquire who in it is worthy.

[1.] It is supposed that there were some such in every place, as were better disposed than others to receive the gospel, and the preachers of it; though it was a time of general corruption and apostasy. Note, In the worst of times and places, we may charitably hope that there are some who distinguish themselves, and are better than their neighbours; some who swim against the stream, and are as wheat among the chaff. There were saints in Nero's household. Enquire who is worthy, who there are that have some fear of God before their eyes, and have made a good improvement of the light and knowledge they have. The best are far from meriting the favour of a gospel offer; but some would be more likely than others to give the apostles and their message a favourable entertainment, and would not trample these pearls under their feet. Note, Previous dispositions to that which is good, are both directions and encouragements to ministers, in dealing with people. There is most hope of the word being profitable to those who are already so well inclined, as that it is acceptable to them; and there is here and there one such.

[2.] They must enquire out such; not enquire for the best inns; public houses were no proper places for them that neither took money with them (Mt 10:9), nor expected to receive any (Mt 10:8); but they must look out for accommodations in private houses, with those that would entertain them well, and expect no other recompence for it but a prophet's reward, an apostle's reward, their praying and preaching. Note, They that entertain the gospel, must neither grudge the expense of it, nor promise themselves to get by it in this world. They must enquire, not who is rich, but who is worthy; not who is the best gentleman, but who is the best man. Note, Christ's disciples, wherever they come, should ask for the good people of the place, and be acquainted with them; when we took God for our God, we took his people for our people, and like will rejoice in its like. Paul in all his travels found out the brethren,

if there were any, Ac 28:14. It is implied, that if they did enquire who was worthy, they might discover them. They that were better than their neighbours would be taken notice of, and any one could tell them, there lives an honest, sober, good man; for this is a character which, like the ointment of the right hand, betrays itself and fills the house with its odours. Every body knew where the seer's house was, 1Sa 9:18.

[3.] In the house of those they found worthy, they must continue; which intimates that they were to make so short a stay at each town, that they needed not change their lodging, but whatever house providence brought them to at first, there they must continue till they left that town. They are justly suspected, as having no good design, that are often changing their quarters. Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to make the best of that which is, to abide by it, and not be for shifting upon every dislike or inconvenience.

(b) In strange houses. When they had found the house of one they thought worthy, they must at their entrance salute it. "In those common civilities, be beforehand with people, in token of your humility. Think it not a disparagement, to invite yourselves into a house, nor stand upon the punctilio of being invited. Salute the family,

[1.] To draw on further discourse, and so to introduce your message." (From matters of common conversation, we may insensibly pass into that communication which is good to the use of edifying.)

[2.] "To try whether you are welcome or not; you will take notice whether the salutation be received with shyness and coldness, or with a ready return. He that will not receive your salutation kindly, will not receive your message kindly; for he that is unskilful and unfaithful in a little, will also be in much, Lu 16:10.

[3.] To insinuate yourselves into their good opinion. Salute the family, that they may see that though you are serious, you are not

morose." Note, Religion teaches us to be courteous and civil, and obliging to all with whom we have to do. Though the apostles went out backed with the authority of the Son of God himself, yet their instructions were, when they came into a house, not to command it, but to salute it; for love's sake rather to beseech, is the evangelical way, Phile 1:8,9. Souls are first drawn to Christ with the cords of a man, and kept to him by the bands of love, Ho 11:4. When Peter made the first offer of the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter was first saluted; see Ac 10:25, for the Gentiles courted that which the Jews were courted to.

When they had saluted the family after a godly sort, they must by the return, judge concerning the family, and proceed accordingly. Note, The eye of God is upon us, to observe what entertainment we give to good people and good ministers; if the house be worthy, let your peace come and rest upon it; if not, let it return to you, Mt 10:13. It seems then, that after they had enquired for the most worthy (Mt 10:11), it was possible they might light upon those that were unworthy. Note, Though it is wisdom to hearken to, yet it is folly to rely upon, common report and opinion; we ought to use a judgment of discretion, and to see with our own eyes. The wisdom of the prudent is himself to understand his own way. Now this rule is intended,

First, For satisfaction to the apostles. The common salutation was, Peace be unto you; this, as they used it, was turned into gospel; it was the peace of God, the peace of the kingdom of heaven, that they wished. Now lest they should make a scruple of pronouncing this blessing upon all promiscuously, because many were utterly unworthy of it, this is to clear them of that scruple; Christ tells them that this gospel prayer (for so it was now become) should be put up for all, as the gospel proffer was made to all indefinitely, and that they should leave it to God who knows the heart, and every man's true character, to determine the issue of it. If the house be worthy, it will reap the benefit of your blessing; if now, there is no harm done, you will not lose the benefit of it; it shall return to you, as David's prayers for his ungrateful enemies did, Ps 35:13. Note, It

becomes us to judge charitably of all, to pray heartily for all, and to conduct ourselves courteously to all, for that is our part, and then to leave it with God to determine what effect it shall have upon them, for that is his part.

Secondly, For direction to them. "If, upon your salutation, it appear that they are indeed worthy, let them have more of your company, and so let your peace come upon them; preach the gospel to them, peace by Jesus Christ; but if otherwise, if they carry it rudely to you, and shut their doors against you, let your peace, as much as in you lies, return to you. Retract what you have said, and turn your backs upon them; by slighting this, they have made themselves unworthy of the rest of your favours, and cut themselves short of them." Note, Great blessings are often lost by a neglect seemingly small and inconsiderable, when men are in their probation and upon their behaviour. Thus Esau lost his birthright (Ge 25:34), and Saul his kingdom, 1Sa 13:13,14.

2. They are here directed how to carry it towards those that were refusers of them. The case is put (Mt 10:14) of those that would not receive them, nor hear their words. The apostles might think, that now they had such a doctrine to preach, and such a power to work miracles for the confirmation of it, no doubt but they should be universally entertained and made welcome: they are, therefore, told before, that there would be those that would slight them, and put contempt on them and their message. Note, The best and most powerful preachers of the gospel must expect to meet with some, that will not so much as give them the hearing, nor show them any token of respect. Many turn a deaf ear, even to the joyful sound, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmers, charm they never so wisely. Observe, "They will not receive you, and they will not hear your words." Note, Contempt of the gospel, and contempt of gospel ministers, commonly go together, and they will either of them be construed into a contempt of Christ, and will be reckoned for accordingly. Now in this case we have here,

(a) The directions given to the apostles what to do. They must depart out of that house or city. Note, The gospel will not tarry long with those that put it away from them. At their departure they must shake off the dust of their feet,

[1.] In detestation of their wickedness; it was so abominable, that it did even pollute the ground they went upon, which must therefore be shaken off as a filthy thing. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them. The work of them that turn aside shall not cleave to me, Ps 101:3. The prophet was not to eat or drink in Bethel, 1Ki 13:9.

[2.] As a denunciation of wrath against them. It was to signify, that they were base and vile as dust, and that God would shake them off. The dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them, Mk 6:11,Jam 5:3. See this practised, Ac 13:51,18:6. Note, They who despise God and his gospel shall be lightly esteemed.

(b) The doom passed upon such wilful recusants, Mt 10:15. It shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom, as wicked a place as it was. Note,

[1.] There is a day of judgment coming, when all those that refused the gospel will certainly be called to account for it; however they now make a jest of it. They that would not hear the doctrine that would save them, shall be made to hear the sentence that will ruin them. Their judgment is respited till that day.

[2.] There are different degrees of punishment in that day. All the pains of hell will be intolerable; but some will be more so than others. Some sinners sink deeper into hell than others, and are beaten with more stripes.

[3.] The condemnation of those that reject the gospel, will in that day be severer and heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom is said to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 1:7. But that vengeance will come with an aggravation upon those that despise the great salvation. Sodom and Gomorrah were exceedingly wicked (Ge 13:13), and that which filled up the measure of their iniquity was, that they received not the angels that were sent to them, but abused them (Ge 19:4,5), and hearkened not to their words, Mt 10:14. And yet it will be more tolerable for them than for those who receive not Christ's ministers and hearken not to their words. God's wrath against them will be more flaming, and their own reflections upon themselves more cutting. Son, remember I will sound most dreadfully in the ears of such as had a fair offer made them of eternal life, and chose death rather. The iniquity of Israel, when God sent them his servants the prophets, is represented as, upon that account, more heinous than the iniquity of Sodom (Eze 16:48,49), much more now he sent them his Son, the great Prophet.

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Coming Persecutions

16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Our Lord warned his disciples to prepare for persecution. They were to avoid all things which gave advantage to their enemies, all meddling with worldly or political concerns, all appearance of evil or selfishness, and all underhand measures. Christ foretold troubles, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise, but that they might confirm their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom. Thus Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost. Persecutors are worse than beasts, in that they prey upon those

of their own kind. The strongest bonds of love and duty, have often been broken through from enmity against Christ. Sufferings from friends and relations are very grievous; nothing cuts more. It appears plainly, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution; and we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations. With these predictions of trouble, are counsels and comforts for a time of trial. The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and they need the serpent's wisdom. Be ye harmless as doves. Not only, do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill-will. Prudent care there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing thought; let this care be cast upon God. The disciples of Christ must think more how to do well, than how to speak well. In case of great peril, the disciples of Christ may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. No sinful, unlawful means may be used to escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. The fear of man brings a snare, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be striven and prayed against. Tribulation, distress, and persecution cannot take away God's love to them, or theirs to him. Fear Him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They must deliver their message publicly, for all are deeply concerned in the doctrine of the gospel. The whole counsel of God must be made known, Act_20:27. Christ shows them why they should be of good cheer. Their sufferings witnessed against those who oppose his gospel. When God calls us to speak for him, we may depend on him to teach us what to say. A believing prospect of the end of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. They may be borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them. The strength shall be according to the day. And it is great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. See how the care of Providence extends to all creatures, even to the sparrows. This should silence all the fears of God's people; Ye are of more value than many sparrows. And the very hairs of your head are all numbered. This denotes the account God takes and keeps of his people. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as

in serving him. That denial of Christ only is here meant which is persisted in, and that confession only can have the blessed recompence here promised, which is the real and constant language of faith and love. Religion is worth every thing; all who believe the truth of it, will come up to the price, and make every thing else yield to it. Christ will lead us through sufferings, to glory with him. Those are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life. Though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be ever so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted. Christ does not say that they deserve a reward; for we cannot merit any thing from the hand of God; but they shall receive a reward from the free gift of God. Let us boldly confess Christ, and show love to him in all things.

(1.) Be ye wise as serpents, Mt 10:16. "You may be so" (so some take it, only as a permission); "you may be as wary as you please, provided you be harmless as doves." But it is rather to be taken as a precept, recommending to us that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, as useful at all times, but especially in suffering times. "Therefore, because you are exposed, as sheep among wolves; be ye wise as serpents; not wise as foxes, whose cunning is to deceive others; but as serpents, whose policy is only to defend themselves, and to shift for their own safety." The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and, therefore, they need the serpent's wisdom. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people and ministers, being so much exposed to troubles in this world, as they usually are, should not needlessly expose themselves, but use all fair and lawful means for their own preservation. Christ gave us an example of this wisdom, Mt 21:24,25,22:17,18,19,Joh 7:6,7; besides the many escapes he made out of the hands of his enemies, till his hour was come. See an instance of Paul's wisdom, Ac 23:6,7. In the cause of Christ we must sit loose to life and all its comforts, but must not be prodigal of them. It is the wisdom of the serpent to secure his head, that it may not be broken, to stop his ear to the voice of the charmer (Ps 58:4,5), and to take shelter in the clefts of the rocks; and herein we may be wise as serpents. We must be wise, not to pull trouble upon

our own heads; wise to keep silence in an evil time, and not to give offence, if we can help it.

(2.) Be ye harmless as doves. "Be mild, and meek, and dispassionate; not only do nobody any hurt, but bear nobody any ill will; be without gall, as doves are; this must always go along with the former." They are sent forth among wolves, therefore must be as wise as serpents, but they are sent forth as sheep, therefore must be harmless as doves. We must be wise, not to wrong ourselves, but rather so than wrong any one else; must use the harmlessness of the dove to bear twenty injuries, rather than the subtlety of the serpent to offer or to return one. Note, It must be the continual care of all Christ's disciples, to be innocent and inoffensive in word and deed, especially in consideration of the enemies they are in the midst of. We have need of a dove-like spirit, when we are beset with birds of prey, that we may neither provoke them nor be provoked by them: David coveted the wings of a dove, on which to fly away and be at rest, rather than the wings of a hawk. The Spirit descended on Christ as a dove, and all believers partake of the Spirit of Christ, a dove-like spirit, made for love, not for war.

17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

All these verses relate to the sufferings of Christ's ministers in their work, which they are here taught to expect, and prepare for; they are directed also how to bear them, and how to go on with their work in the midst of them. This part of the sermon looks further than to their present mission; for we find not that they met with any great hardships or persecutions while Christ was with them, nor were they well able to bear them; but they are here forewarned of the troubles they should meet with, when after Christ's resurrection, their commission should be enlarged, and the kingdom of heaven, which was not at hand, should be actually set up; they dreamed of nothing then, but outward pomp and power; but Christ tells them, they must expect greater sufferings than they were yet called to; that they should then be made prisoners, when they expected to be made princes. It is good to be told what troubles we may hereafter

meet with, that we may provide accordingly, and may not boast, as if we had put off the harness, when we are yet but girding it on.

We have here intermixed, I. Predictions of trouble: and, II. Prescriptions of counsel and comfort, with reference to it.

I. We have here predictions of trouble; which the disciples should meet with in their work: Christ foresaw their sufferings as well as his own, and yet will have them go on, as he went on himself; and he foretold them, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise to them, and so a shock to their faith, but that, being the accomplishment of a prediction, they might be a confirmation to their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom.

1. What they should suffer: hard things to be sure; for, Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, Mt 10:16. And what may a flock of poor, helpless, unguarded sheep expect, in the midst of a herd of ravenous wolves, but to be worried and torn? Note, Wicked men are like wolves, in whose nature it is to devour and destroy. God's people, and especially his ministers, are like sheep among them, of a contrary nature and disposition, exposed to them, and commonly an easy prey to them. It looked unkind in Christ to expose them to so much danger, who had left all to follow him; but he knew that the glory reserved for his sheep, when in the great day they shall be set on his right hand, would be a recompence sufficient for sufferings as well as services. They are as sheep among wolves, that is frightful; but Christ sends them forth, that is comfortable; for he that sends them forth will protect them, and bear them out. But that they might know the worst, he tells them particularly what they must expect.

(a) They must expect to be hated, Mt 10:22. Ye shall be hated for my name's sake: that is the root of all the rest, and a bitter root it is. Note, Those whom Christ loves, the world hates; as whom the court blesses the country curses. If the world hated Christ without a cause (Joh 15:25), no marvel if it hated those that bore his image and served his interests. We hate what is nauseous, and they are counted

as the offscouring of all things, 1Co 4:13. We hate what is noxious, and they are counted the troublers of the land (1Ki 18:17), and the tormentors of their neighbours, Re 11:10. It is grievous to be hated, and to be the object of so much ill-will, but it is for thy name's sake; which, as it speaks the true reason of the hatred, whatever is pretended, so it speaks comfort to them who are thus hated; it is for a good cause, and they have a good friend that shares with them in it, and takes it to himself.

(b) They must expect to be apprehended and arraigned as malefactors. Their restless malice is resistless malice, and they will not only attempt, but will prevail, to deliver you up to the councils (Mt 10:17,18), to the bench of aldermen or justices, that take care of the public peace. Note, A deal of mischief is often done to good men, under colour of law and justice. In the place of judgment there is wickedness, persecuting wickedness, Ec 3:16. They must look for trouble, not only from inferior magistrates in the councils, but from governors and kings, the supreme magistrates. To be brought before them, under such black representations as were commonly made of Christ's disciples, was dreadful and dangerous; for the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion. We find this often fulfilled in the acts of the apostles.

(c) They must expect to be put to death (Mt 10:21); They shall deliver them to death, to death in state, with pomp and solemnity, when it shows itself most as the king of terrors. The malice of the enemies rages so high as to inflict this; it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after: the faith and patience of the saints stand so firm as to expect this; Neither count I my life dear to myself: the wisdom of Christ permits it, knowing how to make the blood of the martyrs the seal of the truth, and the seed of the church. By this noble army's not loving their lives to the death, Satan has been vanquished, and the kingdom of Christ and its interests greatly advanced, Re 11:11. They were put to death as criminals, so the enemies meant it, but really as sacrifices (Php 2:17,2Ti 4:6); as burnt offerings, sacrifices of acknowledgement to the honour of God, and in his truth and cause.

(d) They must expect, in the midst of these sufferings, to be branded with the most odious and ignominious names and characters that could be. Persecutors would be ashamed in this world, if they did not first dress up those in bear-skins whom they thus bait, and represent them in such colours as may serve to justify such cruelties. The blackest of all the ill characters they give them is here stated; they call them Beelzebub, the name of the prince of the devils, Mt 10:25. They represent them as ringleaders of the interest of the kingdom of darkness, and since every one thinks he hates the devil, thus they endeavour to make them odious to all mankind. See, and be amazed to see, how this world is imposed upon: [1.] Satan's sworn enemies are represented as his friends; the apostles, who pulled down the devil's kingdom, were called devils. Thus men laid to their charge, not only things which they knew not, but things which they abhorred, and were directly contrary to, and the reverse of. [2.] Satan's sworn servants would be thought to be his enemies, and they never more effectually do his work, than when they pretend to be fighting against him. Many times they who themselves are nearest akin to the devil, are most apt to father others upon him; and those that paint him on others' clothes have him reigning in their own hearts. It is well there is a day coming, when (as it follows here, Mt 10:26) that which is hid will be brought to light.

(e) These sufferings are here represented by a sword and division, Mt 10:34,35. Think not that I am come to send peace, temporal peace and outward prosperity; they thought Christ came to give all his followers wealth and power in the world; "no," says Christ, "I did not come with a view to give them peace; peace in heaven they may be sure of, but not peace on earth." Christ came to give us peace with God, peace in our consciences, peace with our brethren, but in the world ye shall have tribulation. Note, They mistake the design of the gospel, who think their profession of it will secure them from, for it will certainly expose them to, trouble in this world. If all the world would receive Christ, there would then follow a universal peace, but while there are and will be so many

that reject him (and those not only the children of this world, but the seed of the serpent), the children of God, that are called out of the world, must expect to feel the fruits of their enmity.

[1.] Look not for peace, but a sword, Christ came to give the sword of the word, with which his disciples fight against the world, and conquering work this sword has made and the sword of persecution, with which the world fights against the disciples, being cut to the heart with the sword of the word (Ac 7:54), and tormented by the testimony of Christ's witnesses and cruel work this sword made. Christ sent that gospel, which gives occasion for the drawing of this sword, and so may be said to send this sword; he orders his church into a suffering state for the trial and praise of his people's graces, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' sins.

[2.] Look not for peace, but division (Mt 10:35), I am come to set men at variance. This effect of the preaching of the gospel is not the fault of the gospel, but of those who do not receive it. When some believe the things that are spoken, and others believe them not, the faith of those that believe condemns those that believe not, and, therefore, they have an enmity against them that believe. Note, the most violent and implacable feuds have ever been those that have arisen from difference in religion; no enmity like that of the persecutors, no resolution like that of the persecuted. Thus Christ tells his disciples what they should suffer, and these were hard sayings; if they could bear these, they could bear any thing. Note, Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we can meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost.

2. They are here told from whom, and by whom, they should suffer these hard things. Surely hell itself must be let loose, and devils, those desperate and despairing spirits, that have no part nor lot in the great salvation, must become incarnate, ere such spiteful enemies could be found to a doctrine, the substance of which was good will toward men, and the reconciling of the world to God; no, would you think it? all this mischief arises to the preachers of the

gospel, from those to whom they came to preach salvation. Thus the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul (Pr 29:10), and therefore heaven is so much opposed on earth, because earth is so much under the power of hell, Eph 2:2. These hard things Christ's disciples must suffer,

(a) From men (Mt 10:17). "Beware of men; you will have need to stand upon your guard, even against those who are of the same nature with you"--such is the depravity and degeneracy of that nature (homo homini lupus,--man is a wolf to man), crafty and politic as men, but cruel and barbarous as beasts, and wholly divested of the thing called humanity. Note, Persecuting rage and enmity turn men into brutes, into devils. Paul at Ephesus fought with beasts in the shape of men, 1Co 15:32. It is a sad pass that the world is come to, when the best friends it has, have need to beware of men. It aggravates the troubles of Christ's suffering servants, that they arise from those who are bone of their bone, made of the same blood. Persecutors are, in this respect, worse than beasts, that they prey upon those of their own kind: Sævis inter se convenit ursis--Even savage bears agree among themselves. It is very grievous to have men rise up against us (Ps 124:1-8), from whom we might expect protection and sympathy; men, and no more: mere men; men, and not saints; natural men (1Co 2:14); men of this world, Ps 17:14. Saints are more than men, and are redeemed from among men, and therefore are hated by them. The nature of man, if it be not sanctified, is the worst nature in the world next to that of devils. They are men, and therefore subordinate, dependent, dying creatures; they are men, but they are but men (Ps 9:20), and who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa 51:12. Beware of the men, so Dr. Hammond; those you are acquainted with, the men of the Jewish sanhedrim, which disallowed Christ, 1Pe 2:4.

(b) From professing men, men that have a form of godliness, and make a show of religion. They will scourge you in their synagogues, their places of meeting for the worship of God, and for the exercise of their church-discipline: so that they looked upon the

scourging of Christ's ministers to be a branch of their religion. Paul was five times scourged in the synagogues, 2Co 11:24. The Jews, under colour of zeal for Moses, were the most bitter persecutors of Christ and Christianity, and placed those outrages to the score of their religion. Note, Christ's disciples have suffered much from conscientious persecutors, that scourge them in their synagogues, cast them out and kill them, and think they do God good service (Joh 16:2), and say, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5,Zec 11:4,5. But the synagogue will be so far from consecrating the persecution, that the persecution, doubtless, profanes and desecrates the synagogue.

(c) From great men, and men in authority. The Jews did not only scourge them, which was the utmost their remaining power extended to, but when they could go no further themselves, they delivered them up to the Roman powers, as they did Christ, Joh 18:30. Ye shall be brought before governors and kings (Mt 10:18), who, having more power, are in a capacity of doing the more mischief. Governors and kings receive their power from Christ (Pr 8:15), and should be his servants, and his church's protectors and nursing-fathers, but they often use their power against him, and are rebels to Christ, and oppressors of his church. The kings of the earth set themselves against his kingdom, Ps 2:1,2,Ac 4:25,26. Note, It has often been the lot of good men to have great men for their enemies.

(d) From all men (Mt 10:22). Ye shall be hated of all men, of all wicked men, and these are the generality of men, for the whole world lies in wickedness. So few are there that love, and own, and countenance Christ's righteous cause, that we may say, the friends of it are hated of all men; they are all gone astray, and, therefore, eat up my people, Ps 14:3. As far as the apostasy from God goes, so far the enmity against the saints goes; sometimes it appears more general than at other times, but there is something of this poison lurking in the hearts of all the children of disobedience. The world hates you, for it wonders after the beast, Re 13:3. Every man is a liar, and therefore a hater of truth.

(e) From those of their own kindred. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, Mt 10:21. A man shall be, upon this account, at variance with his own father; nay, and those of the weaker and tenderer sex too shall become persecutors and persecuted; the persecuting daughter will be against the believing mother, where natural affection and filial duty, one would think, should prevent or soon extinguish the quarrel; and then, no marvel if the daughter-in-law be against the mother-in-law; where, too often, the coldness of love seeks occasion of contention, Mt 10:35. In general, a man's foes shall be they of his own household (Mt 10:36). They who should be his friends will be incensed against him for embracing Christianity, and especially for adhering to it when it comes to be persecuted, and will join with his persecutors against him. Note, The strongest bonds of relative love and duty have often been broken through, by an enmity against Christ and his doctrine. Such has been the power of prejudice against the true religion, and zeal for a false one, that all other regards, the most natural and sacred, the most engaging and endearing, have been sacrificed to these Molochs. They who rage against the Lord, and his anointed ones, break even these bonds in sunder, and cast away even these cords from them, Ps 2:2,3. Christian's spouse suffers hard things from the anger of her own mother's children, So 1:6. Sufferings from such are more grievous; nothing cuts more than this, It was thou, a man, mine equal (Ps 55:12,13); and the enmity of such is commonly most implacable; a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, Pr 18:19. The martyrologies, both ancient and modern, are full of instances of this. Upon the whole matter, it appears, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution; and through many tribulations we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God.

18 and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

Beware of men, Mt 10:17. "Be always upon your guard, and avoid dangerous company; take heed what you say and do, and presume not too far upon any man's fidelity; be jealous of the most plausible pretensions; trust not in a friend, no, not in the wife of thy bosom,"

Mic 7:5. Note, It becomes those who are gracious to be cautious, for we are taught to cease from man. Such a wretched world do we live in, that we know not whom to trust. Ever since our Master was betrayed with a kiss, by one of his own disciples, we have need to beware of men, of false brethren.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

Take no thought. That is, be not anxious, or unduly solicitous. Mt 6:26. God would inspire them. This was a full promise that they should be inspired, and was a most seasonable consolation. Poor, and ignorant, and obscure fishermen would naturally be solicitous what they should say before the great men of the earth. Eastern people regarded kings as raised far above common mortals: as approaching to divinity. How consoling, then, the assurance that God would aid them, and speak within them!

When you are brought before magistrates, conduct yourselves decently, but afflict not yourselves with care how you shall come off. A prudent thought there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing, disquieting thought; let this care be cast upon God, as well as that--what you shall eat and what you shall drink. Do not study to make fine speeches, ad captandam benevolentiam--to ingratiate yourselves; affect not quaint expressions, flourishes of wit, and laboured periods, which only serve to gild a bad cause; the gold of a good one needs it not. It argues a diffidence of your cause, to be solicitous in this matter, as if it were not sufficient to speak for itself. You know upon what grounds you go, and then verbaque prævisam rem non invita sequentur--suitable expressions will readily occur." Never any spoke better before governors and kings than those three champions, who took no thought before, what they should speak: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter, Da 3:16. See Ps 119:46. Note, The disciples of Christ must be more thoughtful how to do well than how to speak well; how to keep their integrity than how to vindicate it. Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus--Our lives, not boasting words, form the best apology.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death.

History assures us that this has been done. If this be so, then how inexpressibly awful must be the malignity of the human heart by nature against religion! Nothing else but this dreadful opposition to God, and his gospel, ever has induced, or ever can induce men to violate the most tender relations, and consign the best friends to torture, racks, and flames. It adds to the horrors of this, that those who were put to death in persecution were tormented in the most awful modes that human ingenuity could devise. They were crucified; were thrown into boiling oil; were burnt at the stake; were roasted slowly over coals; were compelled to drink melted lead; were torn in pieces by beasts of prey; were covered with pitch, and burned, to give light in the gardens of Nero. Yet dreadful as this prediction was, it was fulfilled; and incredible as it seems, parents and children, and husbands and wives, were found wicked enough to deliver up each other to these cruel modes of death on account of their attachment to the gospel. Such is the opposition of the heart of man to the gospel! That hostility which will overcome the strong ties of natural affection, and which will be satisfied with nothing else to show its power, can be no slight opposition to to the gospel of God.

22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Ye shall be hated of all men. That is, of all kinds of men. The human heart would be opposed to them, because it is opposed to Christ. But he that endureth to the end, etc. That is, to the end of life, be it longer or shorter. He that bears all these unspeakable sufferings, and who does not shrink and apostatize, will give decisive evidence of attachment to me, and shall enter into heaven. See Rev 3:21,22.

That he that endures to the end shall be saved, Mt 10:22. Here it is very comfortable to consider, First, that there will be an end of these troubles; they may last long, but will not last always. Christ

comforted himself with this, and so may his followers; The things concerning me have an end, Lu 22:37. Dabit Deus his quoque finem--These also will God bring to a termination. Note, A believing prospect of the period of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. The weary will be at rest, when the wicked cease from troubling, Job 3:17. God will give an expected end, Jer 29:11. The troubles may seem tedious, like the days of a hireling, but, blessed be God, they are not everlasting. Secondly, That while they continue, they may be endured; as they are not eternal, so they are not intolerable; they may be borne, and borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them, in everlasting arms: The strength shall be according to the day, 1Co 10:13. Thirdly, Salvation will be the eternal recompence of all those that endure to the end. The weather stormy, and the way foul, but the pleasure of home will make amends for all. A believing regard to the crown of glory has been in all ages the cordial and support of suffering saints, 2Co 4:16,17,18,Heb 10:34. This is not only an encouragement to us to endure, but an engagement to endure to the end. They who endure but awhile, and in time of temptation fall away, have run in vain, and lose all that they have attained; but they who persevere, are sure of the prize, and they only. Be faithful unto death, and then thou shalt have the crown of life.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

When they persecute, etc. They were not permitted to throw away their lives. Where they could preserve them, without denying their Lord, they were to do it. Yet all the commands of Christ, as well as their conduct, show that they were rather to lay down their lives than deny their Saviour. We are to preserve our lives by all proper means; but rather die than save ourselves by doing anything wrong. Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, etc. That is, in fleeing from persecutors, from one city to another, you shall not have gone to every city in Judea, till the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish economy. Mt 24:28-30. By the coming of the Son of man, that is, of Christ, is probably meant the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about thirty years after

this was spoken. The words axe often used in this sense. See Mt 24:30, Mk 13:26, Lk 21:27-32.

When they persecute you in this city, flee to another, Mt 10:23. "Thus reject them who reject you and your doctrine, and try whether others will not receive you and it. Thus shift for your own safety." Note, In case of imminent peril, the disciples of Christ may and must secure themselves by flight, when God, in his providence, opens to them a door of escape. He that flies may fight again. It is no inglorious thing for Christ's soldiers to quit their ground, provided they do not quit their colours: they may go out of the way of danger, though they must not go out of the way of duty. Observe Christ's care of his disciples, in providing places of retreat and shelter for them; ordering it so, that persecution rages not in all places at the same time; but when one city is made too hot for them, another is reserved for a cooler shade, and a little sanctuary; a favour to be used and not to be slighted; yet always with this proviso, that no sinful, unlawful means be used to make the escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. We have many examples to this rule in the history both of Christ and his apostles, in the application of all which to particular cases wisdom and integrity are profitable to direct.

24 The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household?

The disciple is not above his Master, etc. That is, you must expect the same treatment which I have received. They have called me, your Master and Teacher, Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, Mt 12:24, Lk 11:15, Jn 8:48) and you must expect that they will call all of the family by the same name. Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, was a god of the Eckronites. See 2Kgs 1:2 The word literally means the god of flies, so called because this idol was supposed to protect them from the numerous swarms of flies with which that country is supposed to have abounded. The word also signified, among the Jews, the god of filth, and was esteemed as the most low and offensive of all the idol gods. Hence the name was given to the

leader, or prince, of all the devils, Lk 11:15, Mk 3:22. By giving the name to Christ, they poured upon him the greatest possible abuse and contempt.

That whatever hard usage the disciples of Christ meet with, it is no more than what their Master met with before (Mt 10:24,25). The disciple is not above his master. We find this given them as a reason, why they should not hesitate to perform the meanest duties, no, not washing one another's feet. Joh 13:16. Here it is given as a reason, why they should not stumble at the hardest sufferings. They are reminded of this saying, Joh 15:20. It is a proverbial expression, The servant is not better than his master, and, therefore, let him not expect to fare better. Note, First, Jesus Christ is our Master, our teaching Master, and we are his disciples, to learn of him; our ruling master, and we are his servants to obey him: He is Master of the house, oikodespotes, has a despotic power in the church, which is his family. Secondly, Jesus Christ our Lord and Master met with very hard usage from the world; they called him Beelzebub, the god of flies, the name of the chief of the devils, with whom they said he was in league. It is hard to say which is here more to be wondered at, the wickedness of men who thus abused Christ, or the patience of Christ, who suffered himself to be thus abused; that he who was the God of glory should be stigmatized as the god of flies; the King of Israel, as the god of Ekron; the Prince of light and life, as the prince of the powers of death and darkness; that Satan's greatest Enemy and Destroyer should be run down as his confederate, and yet endure such contradiction of sinners. Thirdly, The consideration of the ill treatment which Christ met with in the world, should engage us to expect and prepare for the like, and to bear it patiently. Let us not think it strange, if they who hated him hate his followers, for his sake; nor think it hard if they who are shortly to be made like him in glory, be now made like him in sufferings. Christ began in the bitter cup, let us be willing to pledge him; his bearing the cross made it easy for us.

Whom to Fear

26 Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.

That there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, Mt 10:26. We understand this, First, Of the revealing of the gospel to all the world. "Do you publish it (Mt 10:27), for it shall be published. The truths which are now, as mysteries, hid from the children of men, shall all be made known, to all nations, in their own language," Ac 2:11. The ends of the earth must see this salvation. Note, It is a great encouragement to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. It is a plough which God will speed. Or, Secondly, Of the clearing up of the innocency of Christ's suffering servants, that are called Beelzebub; their true character is now invidiously disguised with false colours, but however their innocency and excellency are now covered, they shall be revealed; sometimes it is in a great measure done in this world, when the righteousness of the saints is made, by subsequent events, to shine forth as the light: however it will be done at the great day, when their glory shall be manifested to all the world, angels and men, to whom they are now made spectacles, 1Co 4:9. All their reproach shall be rolled away, and their graces and services, that are now covered, shall be revealed, 1Co 4:5. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God, under all the calumnies and censures of men, that there will be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies, at the last day, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun. Let Christ's ministers faithfully reveal his truths, and then leave it to him, in due time, to reveal their integrity.

27 What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the housetops.

Fear them not (Mt 10:26), because they can but kill the body (Mt 10:28). Note, it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples, not to fear the greatest of their adversaries. They who truly fear God, need not fear man; and they who are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble. The fear of man brings a snare, a

perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be carefully watched, and striven, and prayed against. Be the times never so difficult, enemies never so outrageous, and events never so threatening, yet need we not fear, yet will we not fear, though the earth be removed, while we have so good a God, so good a cause, and so good a hope through grace.

Yes, this is soon said; but when it comes to the trial, racks and tortures, dungeons and galleys, axes and gibbets, fire and faggot, are terrible things, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble, and to start back, especially when it is plain, that they may be avoided by a few declining steps; and therefore, to fortify us against this temptation, we have here,

[1.] A good reason against this fear, taken from the limited power of the enemies; they kill the body, that is the utmost their rage can extend to; hitherto they can go, if God permit them, but no further; they are not able to kill the soul, nor to do it any hurt, and the soul is the man. By this it appears, that the soul does not (as some dream) fall asleep at death, nor is deprived of thought and perception; for then the killing of the body would not be the killing of the soul too. The soul is killed when it is separated from God and his love, which is its life, and is made a vessel of his wrath; now this is out of the reach of their power. Tribulation, distress, and persecution may separate us from all the world, but cannot part between us and God, cannot make us either not to love him, or not to be loved by him, Ro 8:35,37. If, therefore, we were more concerned about our souls, as our jewels, we should be less afraid of men, whose power cannot rob us of them; they can but kill the body, which would quickly die of itself, not the soul, which will enjoy itself and its God in spite of them. They can but crush the cabinet: a heathen set the tyrant at defiance with this, Tunde capsam Anaxarchi, Anaxarchum nom lædis--you may abuse the case of Anaxarchus, you cannot injure Anaxarchus himself. The pearl of price is untouched. Seneca undertakes to make it out, that you cannot hurt a wise and good man, because death itself is no real evil to him. Si maximum illud ultra

quod nihil habent iratæ leges, aut sævissimi domini minantur, in quo imperium suum fortuna consumit, æquo placidoque animo accipimus, et scimus mortem malum non esse ob hoc, ne injuriam quidem--If with calmness and composure we meet that last extremity, beyond which injured laws and merciless tyrants have nothing to inflict, and in which fortune terminates her dominion, we know that death is not an evil, because it does not occasion the slightest injury. Seneca De Constantid.

[2.] A good remedy against it, and that is, to fear God. Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Note, First, Hell is the destruction both of soul and body; not of the being of either, but the well--being of both; it is the ruin of the whole man; if the soul be lost, the body is lost too. They sinned together; the body was the soul's tempter to sin, and its tool in sin, and they must eternally suffer together. Secondly, This destruction comes from the power of God: he is able to destroy; it is a destruction from his glorious power (2Th 1:9); he will in it make his power known; not only his authority to sentence, but his ability to execute the sentence, Ro 9:22. Thirdly, God is therefore to be feared, even by the best saints in this world. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to stand in awe of him. If according to his fear so is his wrath, then according to his wrath so should his fear be, especially because none knows the power of his anger, Ps 90:11. When Adam, in innocency, was awed by a threatening, let none of Christ's disciples think that they need not the restraint of a holy fear. Happy is the man that fears always. The God of Abraham, who was then dead, is called the Fear of Isaac, who was yet alive, Ge 31:42,53. Fourthly, The fear of God, and of his power reigning in the soul, will be a sovereign antidote against the fear of man. It is better to fall under the frowns of all the world, than under God's frowns, and therefore, as it is most right in itself, so it is most safe for us, to obey God rather than men, Ac 4:19. They who are afraid of a man that shall die, forget the Lord their Maker, Isa 51:12,13,Ne 4:14.

What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light (Mt 10:27); "whatever hazards you run, go on with your work, publishing and

proclaiming the everlasting gospel to all the world; that is your business, mind that. The design of the enemies is not merely to destroy you, but to suppress that, and, therefore, whatever be the consequence, publish that." What I tell you, that speak ye. Note, That which the apostles have delivered to us is the same that they received from Jesus Christ, Heb 2:3. They spake what he told them--that, all that, and nothing but that. Those ambassadors received their instructions in private, in darkness, in the ear, in corners, in parables. Many things Christ spake openly, and nothing in secret varying from what he preached in public, Joh 18:20. But the particular instructions which he gave his disciples after his resurrection, concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were whispered in the ear (Ac 1:3), for then he never showed himself openly. But they must deliver their embassy publicly, in the light, and upon the house-tops; for the doctrine of the gospel is what all are concerned in (Pr 1:20,21,8:2,3), therefore he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The first indication of the reception of the Gentiles into the church, was upon a house-top, Ac 10:9. Note, There is no part of Christ's gospel that needs, upon any account, to be concealed; the whole counsel of God must be revealed, Ac 20:27. In never so mixed a multitude let it be plainly and fully delivered.

28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

The general extent of providence to all the creatures, even the least, and least considerable, to the sparrows, Mt 10:29. These little animals are of so small account, that one of them is not valued; there must go two to be worth a farthing (nay, you shall have five for a halfpenny, Lu 12:6), and yet they are not shut out of the divine care; One of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father: That is, 1. They do not light on the ground for food, to pick up a grain of corn, but your heavenly Father, by his providence, laid it ready for them. In the parallel place, Lu 12:6, it is thus expressed, Not one of them is forgotten before God, forgotten to be provided for; he feedeth them, Mt 6:26. Now he that feeds the sparrows, will not starve the saints. 2. They do not fall to the ground by death, either a natural or a violent death, without the notice of God: though they are

so small a part of the creation, yet even their death comes within the notice of the divine providence; much more does the death of his disciples. Observe, The birds that soar above, when they die, fall to the ground; death brings the highest to the earth. Some think that Christ here alludes to the two sparrows that were used in cleansing the leper (Le 14:4-6); the two birds in the margin are called sparrows; of these one was killed, and so fell to the ground, the other was let go. Now it seemed a casual thing which of the two was killed; the persons employed took which they pleased, but God's providence designed, and determined which. Now this God, who has such an eye to the sparrows, because they are his creatures, much more will have an eye to you, who are his children. If a sparrow die not without your Father, surely a man does not,--a Christian,--a minister,--my friend, my child. A bird falls not into the fowler's net, nor by the fowler's shot, and so comes not to be sold in the market, but according to the direction of providence; your enemies, like subtle fowlers, lay snares for you, and privily shoot at you, but they cannot take you, they cannot hit you, unless God give them leave. Therefore be not afraid of death, for your enemies have no power against you, but what is given them from above. God can break their bows and snares (Ps 38:12-15,64:4,7), and make our souls to escape as a bird (Ps 124:7); Fear ye not, therefore, Mt 10:31. Note, There is enough in the doctrine of God's providence to silence all the fears of God's people: Ye are of more value than many sparrows. All men are so, for the other creatures were made for man, and put under his feet (Ps 8:6-8); much more the disciples of Jesus Christ, who are the excellent ones of the earth, however contemned, as if not worth one sparrow.

30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

The particular cognizance which providence takes of the disciples of Christ, especially in their sufferings (Mt 10:30), But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. This is a proverbial expression, denoting the account which God takes and keeps of all the concernments of his people, even of those that are most minute, and least regarded. This is not to be made a matter of curious enquiry, but of encouragement to live in a continual dependence upon God's providential care, which extends itself to all occurrences, yet without disparagement to the infinite glory, or disturbance to the infinite rest,

of the Eternal Mind. If God numbers their hairs, much more does he number their heads, and take care of their lives, their comforts, their souls. It intimates, that God takes more care of them, than they do of themselves. They who are solicitous to number their money, and goods, and cattle, yet were never careful to number their hairs, which fall and are lost, and they never miss them: but God numbers the hairs of his people, and not a hair of their head shall perish (Lu 21:18); not the least hurt shall be done them, but upon a valuable consideration: so precious to God are his saints, and their lives and deaths!

31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.
32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I
confess also before my Father which is in heaven.
33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my
Father which is in heaven.

That he will shortly, in the day of triumph, own those who now own him, in the day of trial, when those who deny him shall be for ever disowned and rejected by him, Mt 10:32,33.

Note,

First, It is our duty, and if we do it, it will hereafter be our unspeakable honour and happiness, to confess Christ before men.

1. It is our duty, not only to believe in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him, when we are called to it, as well as in serving him. We must never be ashamed of our relation to Christ, our attendance on him, and our expectations from him: hereby the sincerity of our faith, is evidenced, his name glorified, and others edified.

2. However this may expose us to reproach and trouble now, we shall be abundantly recompensed for that, in the resurrection of the just, when it will be our unspeakable honour and happiness to hear Christ say (what would we more?) "Him will I confess, though a poor worthless worm of the earth; this is one of mine, one of my friends and favourites, who loved me and was beloved by me; the

purchase of my blood, the workmanship of my Spirit; I will confess him before my Father, when it will do him the most service; I will speak a good word for him, when he appears before my Father to receive his doom; I will present him, will represent him to my Father." Those who honour Christ he will thus honour. They honour him before men; that is a poor thing: he will honour them before his Father; that is a great thing.

Secondly, It is a dangerous thing for any to deny and disown Christ before men; for they who so do will be disowned by him in the great day, when they have most need of him: he will not own them for his servants who would not own him for their master: I tell you, I know you not, Mt 7:23. In the first ages of Christianity, when for a man to confess Christ was to venture all that was dear to him in this world, it was more a trial of sincerity, than it was afterwards, when it had secular advantages attending it.

Not Peace, but a Sword

34 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. Christ has to conquer a peace by overcoming the evil that is in the way of peace. Hence, to preach the gospel of purity and peace always arouses the opposition of the evil doer. Evil has to be put down before peace can prevail. Hence, while the great end that Christ proposes is peace, the immediate result of his coming, and of the preaching of the gospel, was opposition and bloodshed.

But a sword. The only sword that Christ or his followers use in the conflict is the Sword of the Spirit, but the persecutor has in every age turned upon them the carnal sword. The sword is sent because persecutors use it upon the church.

We must distinguish here betwixt the intentional aim of Christ's coming, and the accidental event of it. His intentional aim was to propagate and promote peace in the world; but through the

corruption of man's nature, the accidental event of his coming is war and division: not that these are the genuine and natural fruits of the gospel, but occasional and accidental only.

Note, That the preaching of the gospel, and setting up the kingdom of Christ in the world, though it be not the natural cause, yet it is the accidental occasion, of much of that war and tumult, of much of that distraction and confusion, which the world abounds with.

35 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

First, Before our nearest and dearest relations; father or mother, son or daughter. Between these relations, because there is little room left for envy, there is commonly more room for love, and, therefore, these are instanced, as relations which are most likely to affect us. Children must love their parents, and parents must love their children; but if they love them better than Christ, they are unworthy of him. As we must not be deterred from Christ by the hatred of our relations which he spoke of (Mt 10:21,35,36), so we must not be drawn from him, by their love. Christians must be as Levi, who said to his father, I have not seen him, De 33:9.

Secondly, Before our ease and safety. We must take up our cross and follow him, else we are not worthy of him. Here observe, 1. They who would follow Christ, must expect their cross and take it up. 2. In taking up the cross, we must follow Christ's example, and bear it as he did. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we meet with crosses, that in bearing them we follow Christ, who has showed us the way; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings like him, to glory with him.

Thirdly, Before life itself, Mt 10:39. He that findeth his life shall lose it; he that thinks he had found it when he has saved it, and kept it, by denying Christ, shall lose it in an eternal death; but he that loseth his life for Christ's sake, that will part with it rather than deny Christ, shall find it, to his unspeakable advantage, an eternal life.

They are best prepared for the life to come, that sit most loose to this present life.

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Rewards

40 He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

That Christ himself would so heartily espouse their cause, as to show himself a friend to all their friends, and to repay all the kindnesses that should at any time be bestowed upon them, Mt 10:40-42. He that receiveth you, receiveth me.

First, It is here implied, that though the generality would reject them, yet they should meet with some who would receive and entertain them, would bid the message welcome to their hearts, and the messengers to their houses, for the sake of it. Why was the gospel market made, but that if some will not, others will. In the worst of times there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Christ's ministers shall not labour in vain.

Secondly, Jesus Christ takes what is done to his faithful ministers, whether in kindness or in unkindness, as done to himself, and reckons himself treated as they are treated. He that receiveth you, receiveth me. Honour or contempt put upon an ambassador reflects honour or contempt upon the prince that sends him, and ministers are ambassadors for Christ. See how Christ may still be entertained by those who would testify their respects to him; his people and ministers we have always with us; and he is with them always, even to the end of the world. Nay, the honour rises higher, He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. Not only Christ takes it as done to himself, but through Christ God does so too. By entertaining Christ's ministers, they entertain not angels unawares, but Christ, nay, and God himself, and unawares too, as appears, Mt 25:37. When saw we thee an hungered?

Thirdly, That though the kindness done to Christ's disciples be never so small, yet if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted, though it be but a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones, Mt 10:42. They are little ones, poor and weak, and often stand in need of refreshment, and glad of the least. The extremity may be such, that a cup of cold water may be a great favour. Note, Kindnesses shown to Christ's disciples are valued in Christ's books, not according to the cost of the gift, but according to the love and affection of the giver. On that score the widow's mite not only passed current, but was stamped high, Lu 21:3,4. Thus they who are truly rich in graces may be rich in good works, though poor in the world.

Fourthly, That kindness to Christ's disciples which he will accept, must b done with an eye to Christ, and for his sake. A prophet must be received in the name of a prophet, and a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, and one of those little ones in the name of a disciple; not because they are learned, or witty, nor because they are our relations or neighbours, but because they are righteous, and so bear Christ's image; because they are prophets and disciples, and so are sent on Christ's errand. It is a believing regard to Christ that puts an acceptable value upon the kindnesses done to his ministers. Christ does not interest himself in the matter, unless we first interest him in it. Ut tibi debeam aliquid pro eo quod præstas, debes non tantum mihi præstare, sed tanquam mihi--If you wish me to feel an obligation to you for any service you render, you must not only perform the service, but you must convince me that you do it for my sake. Seneca.

42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

Matthew-11

The Messengers from John the Baptist

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.

1. The ordination sermon which Christ preached to his disciples in the foregoing chapter is here called his commanding them. Note, Christ's commissions imply commands. Their preaching of the gospel was not only permitted them, but it was enjoined them. It was not a thing respecting which they were left at their liberty, but necessity was laid upon them, 1Co 9:16. The promises he made them are included in these commands, for the covenant of grace is a word which he hath commanded, Ps 105:8. He made an end of commanding, etelesendiatasson. Note, The instructions Christ gives are full instructions. He goes through with his work.

2. When Christ had said what he had to say to his disciples, he departed thence. It should seem they were very loth to leave their Master, till he departed and separated himself from them; as the nurse withdraws the hand, that the child may learn to go by itself. Christ would now teach them how to live, and how to work, without his bodily presence. It was expedient for them, that Christ should thus go away for awhile, that they might be prepared for his long departure, and that, by the help of the Spirit, their own hands might be sufficient for them (De 33:7), and they might not be always children. We have little account of what they did now pursuant to their commission. They went abroad, no doubt; probably into Judea (for in Galilee the gospel had been mostly preached hitherto), publishing the doctrine of Christ, and working miracles in his name: but still in a more immediate dependence upon him, and not being long from him; and thus they were trained up, by degrees, for their great work.

3. Christ departed, to teach and preach in the cities whither he sent his disciples before him to work miracles (Mt 10:1-8), and so to raise people's expectations, and to make way for his entertainment. Thus was the way of the Lord prepared; John prepared it by bringing people to repentance, but he did no miracles. The disciples go further, they work miracles for confirmation. Note, Repentance and faith prepare people for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ gives. Observe, When Christ empowered them to work miracles, he employed himself in teaching and preaching, as if that were the more honourable of the two. That was but in order to do this. Healing the sick was the saving of bodies, but preaching the gospel was to the saving of souls. Christ had directed his disciples to preach (Mt 10:7), yet he did not leave off preaching himself. He set them to work, not for his own ease, but for the ease of the country, and was not the less busy for employing them. How unlike are they to Christ, who yoke others only that they may themselves be idle! Note, the increase and multitude of labourers in the Lord's work should be made not an excuse for our negligence, but an encouragement to our diligence. The more busy others are, the more busy we should be, and all little enough, so much work is there to be done. Observe, he went to preach in their cities, which were populous places; he cast the net of the gospel where there were most fish to be enclosed. Wisdom cries in the cities (Pr 1:21), at the entry of the city (Pr 8:3), in the cities of the Jews, even of them who made light of him, who notwithstanding had the first offer.

2 Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

3 and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Now John Baptist, hearing of Christ's works, sent two of his disciples to him; and what passed between them and him we have here an account of. Here is,

I The question they had to propose to him: Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? This was a serious and important question; Art thou the Messiah promised, or not? Art thou the Christ? Tell us.

1. It is taken for granted that the Messiah should come. It was one of the names by which he was known to the Old-Testament saints, he that cometh or shall come, Ps 118:26. He is now come, but there is another coming of his which we still expect.

2. They intimate, that if this be not he, they would look for another. Note, We must not be weary of looking for him that is to come, nor ever say, we will not more expect him till we come to enjoy him. Though he tarry, wait for him, for he that shall come will come, though not in our time.

3. They intimate likewise, that if they be convinced that this is he, they will not be sceptics, they will be satisfied, and will look for no other. 4. They therefore ask, Art thou he? John had said for his part, I am not the Christ, Joh 1:20. Now,

(a) Some think that John sent this question for his own satisfaction. It is true he had borne a noble testimony to Christ; he had declared him to be the Son of God (Joh 1:34), the Lamb of God (Joh 1:29), and he that should baptize with the Holy Ghost (Joh 1:33), and sent of God (Joh 3:34), which were great things. But he desired to be further and more fully assured, that he was the Messiah that had been so long promised and expected. Note, In matters relating to Christ and our salvation by him, it is good to be sure. Christ appeared not in that external pomp and power in which it was expected he should appear; his own disciples stumbled at this, and perhaps John did so; Christ saw something of this at the bottom of this enquiry, when he said, blessed is he who shall not be offended in me. Note, It is hard, even for good men, to bear up against vulgar errors.

(b) John's doubt might arise from his own present circumstances. He was a prisoner, and might be tempted to think, if Jesus be indeed the Messiah, whence is it that I, his friend and forerunner, am brought into this trouble, and am left to be so long in it, and he never looks after me, never visits me, nor sends to me, enquires not after me, does nothing either to sweeten my imprisonment or hasten my enlargement? Doubtless there was a good reason why our Lord Jesus

did not go to John in prison, lest there should seem to have been a compact between them: but John construed it into a neglect, and it was perhaps a shock to his faith in Christ. Note,

[1.] Where there is true faith, yet there may be a mixture of unbelief. The best are not always alike strong.

[2.] Troubles for Christ, especially when they continue long unrelieved, are such trials of faith as sometimes prove too hard to be borne up against.

[3.] The remaining unbelief of good men may sometimes, in an hour of temptation, strike at the root, and call in question the most fundamental truths which were thought to be well settled. Will the Lord cast off for ever? But we will hope that John's faith did not fail in this matter, only he desired to have it strengthened and confirmed. Note, The best saints have need of the best helps they can get for the strengthening of their faith, and the arming of themselves against temptations to infidelity. Abraham believed, and yet desired a sign (Ge 15:6,8), so did Gideon, Jdg 6:36. But,

(c) Others think that John sent his disciples to Christ with this question, not so much for his own satisfaction as for theirs. Observe, Though he was a prisoner they adhered to him, attended on him, and were ready to receive instructions from him; they loved him, and would not leave him. Now,

[1.] They were weak in knowledge, and wavering in their faith, and needed instruction and confirmation; and in this matter they were somewhat prejudiced; being jealous for their master, they were jealous of our Master; they were loth to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, because he eclipsed John, and are loth to believe their own master when they think he speaks against himself and them. Good men are apt to have their judgments blessed by their interest. Now John would have their mistakes rectified, and wished them to be as well satisfied as he himself was. Note, The strong ought to consider the infirmities of the weak, and to do what they can to help them:

and such as we cannot help ourselves we should send to those that can. When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

[2.] John was all along industrious to turn over his disciples to Christ, as from the grammar-school to the academy. Perhaps he foresaw his death approaching, and therefore would bring his disciples to be better acquainted with Christ, under whose guardianship he must leave them. Note, Ministers' business is to direct every body to Christ. And those who would know the certainty of the doctrine of Christ, must apply themselves to him, who is come to give an understanding. They who would grow in grace must be inquisitive.

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see:

5 the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Here is Christ's answer to this question, Mt 11:4-6. It was not so direct and express, as when he said, I that speak unto thee am he; but it was a real answer, an answer in fact. Christ will have us to spell out the convincing evidences of gospel truths, and to take pains in digging for knowledge.

1. He points them to what they heard and saw, which they must tell John, that he might from thence take occasion the more fully to instruct and convince them out of their own mouths. Go and tell him what you hear and see. Note, Our senses may and ought to be appealed to in those things that are their proper objects. Therefore the popish doctrine of the real presence agrees not with the truth as it is in Jesus; for Christ refers us to the things we hear and see. Go and tell John,

(a) What you see of the power of Christ's miracles; you see how, by the word of Jesus, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c. Christ's miracles were done openly, and in the view of all; for they feared not the strongest and most impartial scrutiny. Veritas no

quærit angulos--Truth seeks not concealment. They are to be considered,

[1.] As the acts of a divine power. None but the God of nature could thus overrule and outdo the power of nature. It is particularly spoken of as God's prerogative to open the eyes of the blind, Ps 146:8. Miracles are therefore the broad seal of heaven, and the doctrine they are affixed to must be of God, for his power will never contradict his truth; nor can it be imagined that he should set his seal to a lie; however lying wonders may be vouched for in proof of false doctrines, true miracles evince a divine commission; such Christ's were, and they leave no room to doubt that he was sent of God, and that his doctrine was his that sent him.

[2.] As the accomplishment of a divine prediction. It was foretold (Isa 35:5,6), that our God should come, and that then the eyes of the blind should be opened. Now if the works of Christ agree with the words of the prophet, as it is plain they do, then no doubt but this is our God whom we have waited for, who shall come with a recompence; this is he who is so much wanted.

(b) Tell him what you hear of the preaching of his gospel, which accompanies his miracles. Faith, though confirmed by seeing, comes by hearing. Tell him,

[1.] That the poor preach the gospel; so some read it. It proves Christ's divine mission, that those whom he employed in founding his kingdom were poor men, destitute of all secular advantages, who, therefore, could never have carried their point, if they had not been carried on by a divine power.

[2.] That the poor have the gospel preached to them. Christ's auditory is made up of such as the scribes and Pharisees despised, and looked upon with contempt, and the rabbies would not instruct, because they were notable to pay them. The Old-Testament prophets were sent mostly to kings and princes, but Christ preached to the congregations of the poor. It was foretold that the poor of the flock

should wait upon him, Zec 11:11. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions and compassions to the poor, are an evidence that it was he that should bring to the world the tender mercies of our God. It was foretold that the Son of David should be the poor man's King, Ps 72:2,4,12,13. Or we may understand it, not so much of the poor of the world, as the poor in spirit, and so that scripture is fulfilled, Isa 61:1, He hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek. Note, It is a proof of Christ's divine mission that his doctrine is gospel indeed; good news to those who are truly humbled in sorrow for their sins, and truly humble in the denial of self; to them it is accommodated, for whom God always declared he had mercy in store.

It was predicted of the Messiah, that he would preach good tidings to the meek, Is 41:1; or, as it is rendered in the New Testament, preach the gospel to the poor, Lk 4:18. By this therefore, also, John might infer that he was truly the Messiah. It adds to the force of this testimony, that the poor have always been overlooked by Pharisees and philosophers. No sect of philosophers had condescended to notice them before Christ; and no system of religion had attempted to instruct them, before the Christian religion. In all other schemes, the poor have been passed by as unworthy of notice.

[3.] That the poor receive the gospel, and are wrought upon by it, they are evangelized, they receive and entertain the gospel, are leavened by it, and delivered into it as into a mould. Note, The wonderful efficacy of the gospel is a proof of its divine original. The poor are wrought upon by it. The prophets complained of the poor, that they knew not the way of the Lord, Jer 5:4. They could do no good upon them; but the gospel of Christ made its way into their untutored minds.

2. He pronounces a blessing on those that were not offended in him, Mt 11:6. So clear are these evidences of Christ's mission, that they who are not wilfully prejudiced against him, and scandalized in him (so the word is), cannot but receive his doctrine, and so be blessed in him. Note,

(a) There are many things in Christ which they who are ignorant and unthinking are apt to be offended at, some circumstances for the sake of which they reject the substance of his gospel. The meanness of his appearance, his education at Nazareth, the poverty of his life, the despicableness of his followers, the slights which the great men put upon him, the strictness of his doctrine, the contradiction it gives to flesh and blood, and the sufferings that attend the profession of his name; these are things that keep many from him, who otherwise cannot but see much of God in him. Thus he is set for the fall of many, even in Israel (Lu 2:34), a Rock of offence, 1Pe 2:8.

(b) They are happy who get over these offences. Blessed are they. The expression intimates, that it is a difficult thing to conquer these prejudices, and a dangerous thing not to conquer them; but as to those, who, notwithstanding this opposition, to believe in Christ, their faith will be found so much the more, to praise, and honour, and glory.

6 And blessed is *he*, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

We have here the high encomium which our Lord Jesus gave of John the Baptist; not only to revive his honour, but to revive his work. Some of Christ's disciples might perhaps take occasion from the question John sent, to reflect upon him, as weak and wavering, and inconsistent with himself, to prevent which Christ gives him this character. Note, It is our duty to consult the reputation of our brethren, and not only to remove, but to obviate and prevent, jealousies and ill thoughts of them; and we must take all occasions, especially such as discover any thing of infirmity, to speak well of those who are praiseworthy, and to give them that fruit of their hands. John the Baptist, when he was upon the stage, and Christ in privacy and retirement, bore testimony to Christ; and now that Christ appeared publicly, and John was under a cloud, he bore testimony to John. Note, They who have a confirmed interest themselves, should

improve it for the helping of the credit and reputation of others, whose character claims it, but whose temper or present circumstances put them out of the way of it. This is giving honour to whom honour is due. John had abased himself to honour Christ (Joh 3:20,30,Mt 3:11), had made himself nothing, that Christ might be All, and now Christ dignifies him with this character. Note, They who humble themselves shall be exalted, and those that honour Christ he will honour; those that confess him before men, he will confess, and sometimes before men too, even in this world. John had now finished his testimony, and now Christ commends him. Note, Christ reserves honour for his servants when they have done their work, Joh 12:26. Now concerning this commendation of John, observe,

I. That Christ spoke thus honourably of John, not in the hearing of John's disciples, but as they departed, just after they were gone, Lu 7:24. He would not so much as seem to flatter John, nor have these praises of him reported to him. Note, Though we must be forward to give to all their due praise for their encouragement, yet we must avoid every thing that looks like flattery, or may be in danger of puffing them up. They who in other things are mortified to the world, yet cannot well bear their own praise. Pride is a corrupt humour, which we must not feed either in others or in ourselves.

II. That what Christ said concerning John, was intended not only for his praise, but for the people's profit, to revive the remembrance of John's ministry, which had been well attended, but which was now (as other such things used to be) strangely forgotten: they did for a season, and but for a season, rejoice in his light, Joh 5:35. "Now, consider, what went ye out into the wilderness to see? Put this question to yourselves."

1 John preached in the wilderness, and thither people flocked in crowds to him, though in a remote place, and an inconvenient one. If teachers be removed into corners, it is better to go after them than to be without them. Now if his preaching was worth taking so much pains to hear it, surely it was worth taking some care to recollect it.

The greater the difficulties we have broken through to hear the word, the more we are concerned to profit by it.

2. They went out to him to see him; rather to feed their eyes with the unusual appearance of his person, than to feed their souls with his wholesome instructions; rather for curiosity than for conscience. Note, Many that attend on the word come rather to see and be seen, than to learn and be taught, to have something to talk of, than to be made wise to salvation. Christ puts it to them, what went ye out to see? Note, They who attend on the word will be called to an account, what their intentions and what their improvements were. We think when the sermon is done, the care is over; no, then the greatest of the care begins. It will shortly be asked, "What business had you such a time at such an ordinance? What brought you thither? Was it custom or company, or was it a desire to honour God and get good? What have you brought thence? What knowledge, and grace, and comfort? What went you to see?" Note, When we go to read and hear the word, we should see that we aim right in what we do.

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?
behold, they that wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses.
9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more
than a prophet.
10 For this is he, of whom it is written,
Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way
before thee.
11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not
risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the
kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Let us see what the commendation of John was. They know not what answer to make to Christ's question; well, says Christ, "I will tell you what a man John the Baptist was."

1. "He was a firm, resolute man, and not a reed shaken with the wind; you have been so in your thoughts of him, but he was not so. He was not wavering in his principles, nor uneven in his conversation; but was remarkable for his steadiness and constant consistency with himself." They who are weak as reeds will be

shaken as reeds; but John was strong in spirit, Eph 4:14. When the wind of popular applause on the one hand blew fresh and fair, when the storm of Herod's rage on the other hand grew fierce and blustering, John was still the same, the same in all weathers. The testimony he had borne to Christ was not the testimony of a reed, of a man who was of one mind to-day, and of another to-morrow; it was not a weather-cock testimony; no, his constancy in it is intimated (Joh 1:20); he confessed and denied not, but confessed, and stood to it afterwards, Joh 3:28. And therefore this question sent by his disciples was not to be construed into any suspicion of the truth of what he had formerly said: therefore the people flocked to him, because he was not as a reed. Note, There is nothing lost in the long run by an unshaken resolution to go on with our work, neither courting the smiles, nor fearing the frowns of men.

2. He was a self-denying man, and mortified to this world. "Was he a man clothed in soft raiment? If so, you would not have gone into the wilderness to see him, but to the court. You went to see one that had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; his mien and habit showed that he was dead to all the pomps of the world and the pleasures of sense; his clothing agreed with the wilderness he lived in, and the doctrine he preached there, that of repentance. Now you cannot think that he who was such a stranger to the pleasures of a court, should be brought to change his mind by the terrors of a prison, and now to question whether Jesus be the Messiah or not!" Note, they who have lived a life of mortification, are least likely to be driven off from their religion by persecution. He was not a man clothed in soft raiment; such there are, but they are in kings' houses. Note, It becomes people in all their appearances to be consistent with their character and their situation. They who are preachers must not affect to look like courtiers; nor must they whose lot is cast in common dwellings, be ambitious of the soft clothing which they wear who are in kings' houses. Prudence teaches us to be of a piece. John appeared rough and unpleasant, yet they flocked after him. Note, The remembrance of our former zeal in attending on the word of God, should quicken us to, and in, our present work: let it not be said that we have done and

suffered so many things in vain, have run in vain and laboured in vain.

3. His greatest commendation of all was his office and ministry, which was more his honour than any personal endowments or qualifications could be; and therefore this is most enlarged upon in a full encomium.

(a) He was a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet (Mt 11:9); so he said of him who was the great Prophet, to whom all the prophets bear witness. John said of himself, he was not that prophet, that great prophet, the Messiah himself; and now Christ (a very competent Judge) says of him, that he was more than a prophet. He owned himself inferior to Christ, and Christ owned him superior to all other prophets. Observe, The forerunner of Christ was not a king, but a prophet, lest it should seem that the kingdom of the Messiah had been laid in earthly power; but his immediate forerunner was, as such, a transcendent prophet, more than an Old-Testament prophet; they all did virtuously, but John excelled them all; they saw Christ's day at a distance, and their vision was yet for a great while to come; but John saw the day dawn, he saw the sun rise, and told the people of the Messiah, as one that stood among them. They spake of Christ, but he pointed to him; they said, A virgin shall conceive: he said, Behold the Lamb of God!

(b) He was the same that was predicted to be Christ's forerunner (Mt 11:10); This is he of whom it is written. He was prophesied of by the other prophets, and therefore was greater than they. Malachi prophesied concerning John, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Herein some of Christ's honour was put upon him, that the Old-Testament prophets spake and wrote of him; and this honour have all the saints, that their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. It was great preferment to John above all the prophets, that he was Christ's harbinger. He was a messenger sent on a great errand; a messenger, one among a thousand, deriving his honour from his whose messenger he was: he is my messenger sent of God. His business was to prepare Christ's way, to dispose people to

receive the Saviour, by discovering to them their sin and misery, and their need of a Saviour. This he had said of himself (Joh 1:23) and now Christ said it of him; intending hereby not only to put an honour upon John's ministry, but to revive people's regard to it, as making way for the Messiah. Note, Much of the beauty of God's dispensations lies in their mutual connection and coherence, and the reference they have one to another. That which advanced John above the Old-Testament prophets was, that he went immediately before Christ. Note, The nearer any are to Christ, the more truly honourable they are.

(c) There was not a greater born of women than John the Baptist, Mt 11:11. Christ knew how to value persons according to the degrees of their worth, and he prefers John before all that went before him, before all that were born of women by ordinary generation. Of all that God had raised up and called to any service in his church, John is the most eminent, even beyond Moses himself; for he began to preach the gospel doctrine of remission of sins to those who are truly penitent; and he had more signal revelations from heaven than any of them had; for he saw heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost descend. He also had great success in his ministry; almost the whole nation flocked to him: none rose on so great a design, or came on so noble an errand, as John did, or had such claims to a welcome reception. Many had been born of women that made a great figure in the world, but Christ prefers John before them. Note, Greatness is not to be measured by appearances and outward splendour, but they are the greatest men who are the greatest saints, and the greatest blessings, who are, as John was, great in the sight of the Lord, Lu 1:15.

Yet this high encomium of John has a surprising limitation, notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

[1.] In the kingdom of glory. John was a great and good man, but he was yet in a state of infirmity and imperfection, and therefore came short of glorified saints, and the spirits of just men made

perfect. Note, First, There are degrees of glory in heaven, some that are less than others there; though every vessel is alike full, all are not alike large and capacious. Secondly, The least saint in heaven is greater, and knows more, and loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. The saints on earth are excellent ones (Ps 16:3), but those in heaven are much more excellent; the best in this world are lower than the angels (Ps 8:5), the least there are equal with the angels, which should make us long for that blessed state, where the weak shall be as David, Zec 12:8.

[2.] By the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the kingdom of grace, the gospel dispensation in the perfection of its power and purity; and ho mikroteros--he that is less in that is greater than John. Some understand it of Christ himself, who was younger than John, and, in the opinion of some, less than John, who always spoke diminishingly of himself; I am a worm, and no man, yet greater than John; so it agrees with what John the Baptist said (Joh 1:15), He that cometh after me is preferred before me. But it is rather to be understood of the apostles and ministers of the New Testament, the evangelical prophets; and the comparison between them and John is not with respect to their personal sanctity, but to their office; John preached Christ coming, but they preached Christ not only come, but crucified and glorified. John came to the dawning of the gospel-day, and therein excelled the foregoing prophets, but he was taken off before the noon of that day, before the rending of the veil, before Christ's death and resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit; so that the least of the apostles and evangelists, having greater discoveries made to them, and being employed in a greater embassy, is greater than John. John did no miracles; the apostles wrought many. The ground of this preference is laid in the preference of the New-Testament dispensation to that of the Old Testament. Ministers of the New Testament therefore excel, because their ministration does so, 2Co 3:6, &c. John was a maximum quod sic--the greatest of his order; he went to the utmost that the dispensation he was under would allow; but minimum maximi est majus maximo minimi--the least of the highest order is superior to the first of the lowest; a dwarf upon a mountain sees

further than a giant in the valley. Note, All the true greatness of men is derived from, and denominated by, the gracious manifestation of Christ to them. The best men are no better than he is pleased to make them. What reason have we to be thankful that our lot is cast in the days of the kingdom of heaven, under such advantages of light and love! And the greater the advantages, the greater will the account be, if we receive the grace of God in vain.

(d) The great commendation of John the Baptist was, that God owned his ministry, and made it wonderfully successful for the breaking of the ice, and the preparing of people for the kingdom of heaven. From the days of the first appearing of John the Baptist, until now (which was not much above two years), a great deal of good was done; so quick was the motion when it came near to Christ the Centre; The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence--biazetai-vim patitur, like the violence of an army taking a city by storm, or of a crowd bursting into a house, so the violent take it by force. The meaning of this we have in the parallel place, Lu 16:16. Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. Multitudes are wrought upon by the ministry of John, and become his disciples. And it is

[1.] An improbable multitude. Those strove for a place in this kingdom, that one would think had no right nor title to it, and so seemed to be intruders, and to make a tortuous entry, as our law calls it, a wrongful and forcible one. When the children of the kingdom are excluded out of it, and many come into it from the east and the west, then it suffers violence. Compare this with Mt 21:31,32. The publicans and harlots believed John, whom the scribes and Pharisees rejected, and so went into the kingdom of God before them, took it over their heads, while they trifled. Note, It is no breach of good manners to go to heaven before our betters: and it is a great commendation of the gospel from the days of its infancy, that it has brought many to holiness that were very unlikely.

[2.] An importunate multitude. This violence denotes a strength, and vigour, and earnestness of desire and endeavour, in those who followed John's ministry, else they would not have come so far to attend upon it. It shows us also, what fervency and zeal are required of all those who design to make heaven of their religion. Note, They who would enter into the kingdom of heaven must strive to enter; that kingdom suffers a holy violence; self must be denied, the bent and bias, the frame and temper, of the mind must be altered; there are hard sufferings to be undergone, a force to be put upon the corrupt nature; we must run, and wrestle, and fight, and be in an agony, and all little enough to win such a prize, and to get over such opposition from without and from within. The violent take it by force. They who will have an interest in the great salvation are carried out towards it with a strong desire, will have it upon any terms, and not think them hard, nor quit their hold without a blessing, Ge 32:26. They who will make their calling and election sure must give diligence. The kingdom of heaven was never intended to indulge the ease of triflers, but to be the rest of them that labour. It is a blessed sight; Oh that we could see a greater number, not with an angry contention thrusting others out of the kingdom of heaven, but with a holy contention thrusting themselves into it!

(e) The ministry of John was the beginning of the gospel, as it is reckoned, Mk 1:1,Ac 1:22. This is shown here in two things:

[1.] In John the Old Testament dispensation began to die, Mt 11:13. So long that ministration continued in full force and virtue, but then it began to decline. Though the obligation of the law of Moses was not removed till Christ's death, yet the discoveries of the Old Testament began to be superseded by the more clear manifestation of the kingdom of heaven as at hand. Because the light of the gospel (as that of nature) was to precede and make way for its law, therefore the prophecies of the Old Testament came to an end (finis perficiens, not interficiens--an end of completion, not of duration), before the precepts of it; so that when Christ says, all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, he shows us, First, How the light

of the Old Testament was set up; it was set up in the law and the prophets, who spoke, though darkly, of Christ and his kingdom. Observe, The law is said to prophesy, as well as the prophets, concerning him that was to come. Christ began at Moses (Lu 24:27); Christ was foretold by the dumb signs of the Mosaic work, as well as by the more articulate voices of the prophets, and was exhibited, not only in the verbal predictions, but in the personal and real types. Blessed be God that we have both the New-Testament doctrine to explain the Old-Testament prophecies, and the Old-Testament prophecies to confirm and illustrate the New-Testament doctrine (Heb 1:1); like the two cherubim, they look at each other. The law was given by Moses long ago, and there had been no prophets for three hundred years before John, and yet they are both said to prophecy until John, because the law was still observed, and Moses and the prophets still read. Note, The scripture is teaching to this day, though the penmen of it are gone. Moses and the prophets are dead; the apostles and evangelists are dead (Zec 1:5), but the word of the Lord endures for ever (1Pe 1:25); the scripture is speaking expressly, though the writers are silent in the dust. Secondly, How this light was laid aside: when he says, they prophesied until John, he intimates, that their glory was eclipsed by the glory which excelled; their predictions superseded by John's testimony, Behold the Lamb of God! Even before the sun rises, the morning light makes candles to shine dim. Their prophecies of a Christ to come became out of date, when John said, He is come.

[2.] In him the New-Testament day began to dawn; for (Mt 11:14) This is Elias, that was for to come. John was as the loop that coupled the two Testaments; as Noah was Fibula utriusque mundi--the link connecting both worlds, so was he utriusque Testamenti--the link connecting both Testaments. The concluding prophecy of the Old Testament was, Behold, I will send you Elijah, Mal 4:5,6. Those words prophesied until John, and then, being turned into a history, they ceased to prophecy. First, Christ speaks of it as a great truth, that John the Baptist is the Elias of the New Testament; not Elias in propria persona--in his own person, as the carnal Jews expected; he denied that (Joh 1:21), but one that should come in the spirit and power of Elias (Lu 1:17), like him in temper and

conversation, that should press repentance with terrors, and especially as it is in the prophecy, that should turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. Secondly, He speaks of it as a truth, which would not be easily apprehended by those whose expectations fastened upon the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and introductions to it agreeable. Christ suspects the welcome of it, if ye will receive it. Not but that it was true, whether they would receive it or not, but he upbraids them with their prejudices, that they were backward to receive the greatest truths that were opposed to their sentiments, though never so favourable to their interests. Or, "If you will receive him, or if you will receive the ministry of John as that of the promised Elias, he will be an Elias to you, to turn you and prepare you for the Lord," Note, Gospel truths are as they are received, a savour of life or death. Christ is a Saviour, and John an Elias, to those who will receive the truth concerning them.

Lastly, Our Lord Jesus closes this discourse with a solemn demand of attention (Mt 11:15): He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; which intimates, that those things were dark and hard to be understood, and therefore needed attention, but of great concern and consequence, and therefore well deserved it. "Let all people take notice of this, if John be the Elias prophesied of, then certainly here is a great revolution on foot, the Messiah's kingdom is at the door, and the world will shortly be surprised into a happy change. These are things which require your serious consideration, and therefore you are all concerned to hearken to what I say." Note, The things of God are of great and common concern: every one that has ears to hear any thing, is concerned to hear this. It intimates, that God requires no more from us but the right use and improvement of the faculties he has already given us. He requires those to hear that have ears, those to use their reason that have reason. Therefore people are ignorant, not because they want power, but because they want will; therefore they do not hear, because, like the deaf adder, they stop their ears.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven
suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
14 And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elijah, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting
in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
17 and saying,
We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;
we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.
18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

The parable will be best explained by opening it and the illustration of it together in these five observations.

Note, 1 The God of heaven uses a variety of proper means and methods for the conversion and salvation of poor souls; he would have all men to be saved, and therefore leaves no stone unturned in order to it. The great thing he aims at, is the melting of our wills into a compliance with the will of God, and in order to this the affecting of us with the discoveries he has made of himself. Having various affections to be wrought upon, he uses various ways of working upon them, which though differing one from another, all tend to the same thing, and God is in them all carrying on the same design. In the parable, this is called his piping to us, and his mourning to us; he hath piped to us in the precious promises of the gospel, proper to work upon hope, and mourned to us in the dreadful threatenings of the law, proper to work upon fear, that he might frighten us out of our sins and allure us to himself. He had piped to us in gracious and merciful providences, mourned to us in calamitous, afflicting providences, and has set the one over against the other. He has taught his ministers to change their voice (Ga 4:20); sometimes to speak in thunder from mount Sinai, sometimes in a still small voice from mount Sion.

In the explanation of the parable is set forth the different temper of John's ministry and of Christ's, who were the two great lights of that generation.

(a) On the one hand, John came mourning to them, neither eating nor drinking; not conversing familiarly with people, nor ordinarily eating in company, but alone, in his cell in the wilderness, where his

meat was locusts and wild honey. Now this, one would think, should work upon them; for such an austere, mortified life as this, was very agreeable to the doctrine he preached: and that minister is most likely to do good, whose conversation is according to his doctrine; and yet the preaching even of such a minister is not always effectual.

(b) On the other hand, the Son of man came eating and drinking, and so he piped unto them. Christ conversed familiarly with all sorts of people, not affecting any peculiar strictness or austerity; he was affable and easy of access, not shy of any company, was often at feasts, both with Pharisees and publicans, to try if this would win upon those who were not wrought upon by John's reservedness: those who were not awed by John's frowns, would be allured by Christ's smiles; from whom St. Paul learned to be come all things to all men, 1Co 9:22. Now our Lord Jesus, by his freedom, did not at all condemn John, any more than John did condemn him, though their deportment was so very different. Note, Though we are never so clear in the goodness of our own practice, yet we must not judge of others by it. There may be a great diversity of operations, where it is the same God that worketh all in all (1Co 12:6), and this various manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, Mt 11:7. Observe especially, that God's ministers are variously gifted: the ability and genius of some lie one way, of others, another way: some are Boanerges--sons of thunder; others, Barnabeses--sons of consolation; yet all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit (1Co 12:11), and therefore we ought not to condemn either, but to praise both, and praise God for both, who thus tries various ways of dealing with persons of various tempers, that sinners may be either made pliable or left inexcusable, so that, whatever the issue is, God will be glorified.

Note, 2 The various methods which God takes for the conversion of sinners, are with many fruitless and ineffectual: "Ye have not danced, ye have not lamented; you have not been suitably affected either with the one or with the other." Particular means have, as in medicine, their particular intentions, which must be answered, particular impressions, which must be submitted to, in order to the

success of the great and general design; now if people will be neither bound by laws, nor invited by promises, nor frightened by threatenings, will neither be awakened by the greatest things, nor allured by the sweetest things, nor startled by the most terrible things, nor be made sensible by the plainest things; if they will hearken to the voice neither of scripture, nor reason, nor experience, nor providence, nor conscience, nor interest, what more can be done? The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed, the founder melteth in vain; reprobate silver shall men call them, Jer 6:29. Ministers' labour is bestowed in vain (Isa 49:4), and, which is a much greater loss, the grace of God received in vain, 2Co 6:1. Note, It is some comfort to faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, that it is no new thing for the best preachers and the best preaching in the world to come short of the desired end. Who has believed our report? If from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of those great commanders, Christ and john, returned so often empty (2Sa 1:22), no marvel if ours do so, and we prophecy to so little purpose upon dry bones.

Note, 3. That commonly those persons who do not profit by the means of grace, are perverse, and reflect upon the ministers by whom they enjoy those means; and because they do not get good themselves, they do all the hurt they can to others, by raising and propagating prejudices against the word, and the faithful preachers of it. Those who will not comply with God, and walk after him, confront him, and walk contrary to him. So this generation did; because they were resolved not to believe Christ and John, and to own them, as they ought to have done, for the best of men, they set themselves to abuse them, and to represent them as the worst.

(a) As for John the Baptist, they say, He has a devil. They imputed his strictness and reservedness to melancholy, and some kind or degree of a possession of Satan. "Why should we heed him? he is a poor hypochondriacal man, full of fancies, and under the power of a crazed imagination."

(b) As for Jesus Christ, they imputed his free and obliging conversation to the more vicious habit of luxury and flesh-pleasing: Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. No reflection could be more foul and invidious; it is the charge against the rebellious son (De 21:20), He is a glutton and a drunkard; yet none could be more false and unjust; for Christ pleased not himself (Ro 15:3), nor did ever any man live such a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world, as Christ lived: he that was undefiled, and separate from sinners, is here represented as in league with them, and polluted by them. Note, The most unspotted innocency, and the most unparalleled excellency, will not always be a fence against the reproach of tongues: nay, a man's best gifts and best actions, which are both well intended and well calculated for edification, may be made the matter of his reproach. The best of our actions may become the worst of our accusations, as David's fasting, Ps 69:10. It was true in some sense, that Christ was a Friend to publicans and sinners, the best Friend they ever had, for he came into the world to save sinners, great sinners, even the chief; so he said very feelingly, who had been himself not a publican and sinner, but a Pharisee and sinner; but this is, and will be to eternity, Christ's praise, and they forfeited the benefit of it who thus turned it to his reproach.

Note, 4. That the cause of this great unfruitfulness and perverseness of people under the means of grace, is that they are like children sitting in the markets; they are foolish as children, froward as children, mindless and playful as children; would they but show themselves men in understanding, there would be some hopes of them. The market-place they sit in is to some a place of idleness (Mt 20:3); to others a place of worldly business (Jam 4:13); to all a place of noise or diversion; so that if you ask the reason why people get so little good by the means of grace, you will find it is because they are slothful and trifling, and do not love to take pains; or because their heads, and hands, and hearts are full of the world, the cares of which choke the word, and choke their souls at last (Eze 33:31,Am 8:5); and they study to divert their own thoughts from every thing that is serious. Thus in the markets they are, and there they sit; in these things their hearts rest, and by them they resolve to abide.

Note, 5. Though the means of grace be thus slighted and abused by many, by the most, yet there is a remnant that through grace do improve them, and answer the designs of them, to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls. But wisdom is justified of her children. Christ is Wisdom; in him are hid treasures of wisdom; the saints are the children God has given him, Heb 2:13. The gospel is wisdom, it is the wisdom from above: true believers are begotten again by it, and born from above too; they are wise children, wise for themselves, and their true interests; not like the foolish children that sat in the markets. These children of wisdom justify wisdom; they comply with the designs of Christ's grace, answer the intentions of it, and are suitably affected with, and impressed by, the various methods it takes, and so evidence the wisdom of Christ in taking these methods. This is explained, Lu 7:29. The publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John, and afterwards embracing the gospel of Christ. Note, The success of the means of grace justifies the wisdom of God in the choice of these means, against those who charge him with folly therein. The cure of every patient, that observes the physician's orders, justifies the wisdom of the physician: and therefore Paul is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because, whatever it is to others, to them that believe it is the power of God unto salvation, Ro 1:16. When the cross of Christ, which to others is foolishness and a stumbling-block, is to them that are called the wisdom of God and the power of God (1Co 1:23,24), so that they make the knowledge of that the summit of their ambition (1Co 2:2), and the efficacy of that the crown of their glorying (Ga 6:14), here is wisdom justified of her children. Wisdom's children are wisdom's witnesses in the world (Isa 43:10), and shall be produced as witnesses in that day, when wisdom, that is now justified by the saints, shall be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe, 2Th 1:10. If the unbelief of some reproach Christ by giving him the lie, the faith of others shall honour him by setting to its seal that he is true, and that he also is wise, 1Co 1:25. Whether we do it or not, it will be done; not only God's equity, but his wisdom, will be justified when he speaks, when he judges.

Well, this is the account Christ gives of that generation, and that generation is not passed away, but remains in a succession of the like; for as it was then, it has been since and is still; some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe not, Ac 28:24.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

As to the particular places in which Christ was most conversant. What he said in general of that generation, he applied in particular to those places, to affect them. Then began he to upbraid them, Mt 11:20. He began to preach to them long before (Mt 4:17), but he did not begin to upbraid till now. Note, Rough and unpleasing methods must not be taken, till gentler means have first been used. Christ is not apt to upbraid; he gives liberally, and upbraideth not, till sinners by their obstinacy extort it from him. Wisdom first invites, but when her invitations are slighted, then she upbraids, Pr 1:20,24. Those do not go in Christ's method, who begin with upbraidings. Now observe,

1 The sin charged upon them; not any against the moral law, then an appeal would have lain to the gospel, which would have relieved, but a sin against the gospel, the remedial law, and that is impenitency: this was it he upbraided them with, or reproached them for, as the most shameful, ungrateful thing that could be, that they repented not. Note, Wilful impenitency is the great damning sin of multitudes that enjoy the gospel, and which (more than any other) sinners will be upbraided with to eternity. The great doctrine that

both John the Baptist, and Christ, and the apostles preached, was repentance; the great thing designed, both in the piping and in the mourning, was to prevail with people to change their minds and ways, to leave their sins and turn to God; and this they would not be brought to. He does not say, because they believed not (for some king of faith many of them had) that Christ was a Teacher come from God; but because they repented not: their faith did not prevail to the transforming of their hearts, and the reforming of their lives. Christ reproved them for their other sins, that he might lead them to repentance; but when they repented not, He upbraided them with that, as their refusal to be healed: He upbraided them with it, that they might upbraid themselves, and might at length see the folly of it, as that which alone makes the sad case a desperate one, and the wound incurable.

2 The aggravation of the sin; they were the cities in which most of his mighty works were done; for thereabouts his principal residence had been for some time. Note, Some places enjoy the means of grace in greater plenty, power, and purity, than other places. God is a free agent, and acts so in all his disposals, both as the God of nature and as the God of grace, common and distinguishing grace. By Christ's mighty works they should have been prevailed with, not only to receive his doctrine, but to obey his law; the curing of bodily diseases should have been the healing of their souls, but it had not that effect. Note, The stronger inducements we have to repent, the more heinous is the impenitency and the severer will the reckoning be, for Christ keeps account of the mighty works done among us, and of the gracious works done for us too, by which also we should be led to repentance, Ro 2:4.

(a) Chorazin and Bethsaida are here instanced (Mt 11:21,22), they have each of them their woe: Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida. Christ came into the world to bless us; but if that blessing be slighted, he has woes in reserve, and his woes are of all others the most terrible. These two cities were situate upon the sea of Galilee, the former on the east side, and the latter on the west, rich and populous places; Bethsaida was lately advanced to a city by

Philip the tetrarch; out of it Christ took at least three of his apostles: thus highly were these places favoured! Yet because they knew not the day of their visitation, they fell under these woes, which stuck so close to them, that soon after this they decayed, and dwindled into mean, obscure villages. So fatally does sin ruin cities, and so certainly does the word of Christ take place!

Now Chorazin and Bethsaida are here compared with Tyre and Sidon, two maritime cities we read much of in the Old Testament, that had been brought to ruin, but began to flourish again; these cities bordered upon Galilee, but were in a very ill name among the Jews for idolatry and other wickedness. Christ sometimes went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon (Mt 15:21), but never thither; the Jews would have taken it very heinously if he had; therefore Christ, to convince and humble them, here shows,

[1.] That Tyre and Sidon would not have been so bad as Chorazin and Bethsaida. If they had had the same word preached, and the same miracles wrought among them, they would have repented, and that long ago, as Nineveh did, in sackcloth and ashes. Christ, who knows the hearts of all, knew that if he had gone and lived among them, and preached among them, he should have done more good there than where he was; yet he continued where he was for some time, to encourage his ministers to do so, though they see not the success they desire. Note, Among the children of disobedience, some are more easily wrought upon than others; and it is a great aggravation of the impenitency of those who plentifully enjoy the means of grace, not only that there are many who sit under the same means that are wrought upon, but that there are many more that would have been wrought upon, if they had enjoyed the same means. See Eze 3:6,7. Our repentance is slow and delayed, but theirs would have been speedy; they would have repented long ago. Ours has been slight and superficial; theirs would have been deep and serious, in sackcloth and ashes. Yet we must observe, with an awful adoration of the divine sovereignty, that the Tyrians and Sidonians will justly perish in their sin, though, if they had had the means of grace, they would have repented; for God is a debtor to no man.

[2.] That therefore Tyre and Sidon shall not be so miserable as Chorazin and Bethsaida, but it shall be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment, Mt 11:22. Note, First, At the day of judgment the everlasting state of the children of men will, by an unerring and unalterable doom, be determined; happiness or misery, and the several degrees of each. Therefore it is called the eternal judgment (Heb 6:2), because decisive of the eternal state. Secondly, In that judgment, all the means of grace that were enjoyed in the state of probation will certainly come into the account, and it will be enquired, not only how bad we were, but how much better we might have been, had it not been our own fault, Isa 5:3,4. Thirdly, Though the damnation of all that perish will be intolerable, yet the damnation of those who had the fullest and clearest discoveries made them of the power and grace of Christ, and yet repented not, will be of all others the most intolerable. The gospel light and sound open the faculties, and enlarge the capacities of all that see and hear it, either to receive the riches of divine grace, or (if that grace be slighted) to take in the more plentiful effusions of divine wrath. If self-reproach be the torture of hell, it must needs be hell indeed to those who had such a fair opportunity of getting to heaven. Son, remember that.

(b) Capernaum is here condemned with an emphasis (Mt 11:23), "And thou, Capernaum, hold up thy hand, and hear they doom," Capernaum, above all the cities of Israel, was dignified with Christ's most usual residence; it was like Shiloh of old, the place which he chose, to put his name there, and it fared with it as with Shiloh, Jer 7:12,14. Christ's miracles here were daily bread, and therefore, as the manna of old, were despised and called light bread. Many a sweet and comfortable lecture of grace Christ had read them to little purpose, and therefore he reads them a dreadful lecture of wrath: those who will not hear the former shall be made to feel the latter. We have here Capernaum's doom,

[1.] Put absolutely; Thou which art exalted to heaven shalt be brought down to hell Note, First, Those who enjoy the gospel in power and purity, are thereby exalted to heaven; they have therein a

great honour for the present, and a great advantage for eternity; they are lifted up toward heaven; but if, notwithstanding, they still cleave to the earth, they may thank themselves that they are not lifted up into heaven. Secondly, Gospel advantages and advancements abused will sink sinners so much lower into hell. Our external privileges will be so far from saving us, that if our hearts and lives be not agreeable to them, they will but inflame the reckoning: the higher the precipice is, the more fatal is the fall from it: Let us not therefore be high-minded, but fear; not slothful, but diligent. See Job 20:6,7.

[2.] We have it here put in comparison with the doom of Sodom--a place more remarkable, both for sin and ruin, than perhaps any other; and yet Christ here tells us,

First, That Capernaum's means would have saved Sodom. If these miracles had been done among the Sodomites, as bad as they were, they would have repented, and their city would have remained unto this day a monument of sparing mercy, as now it is of destroying justice, Jude 1:7. Note, Upon true repentance through Christ, even the greatest sin shall be pardoned and the greatest ruin prevented, that of Sodom not excepted. Angels were sent to Sodom, and yet it remained not; but if Christ had been sent thither, it would have remained; how well is it for us, then, that the world to come is put in subjection to Christ, and not to angels! Heb 2:5. Lot would not have seemed as one that mocked, if he had wrought miracles.

Secondly, That Sodom's ruin will therefore be less at the great day than Capernaum's. Sodom will have many things to answer for, but not the sin of neglecting Christ, as Capernaum will. If the gospel prove a savour of death, a killing savour, it is doubly so; it is of death unto death, so great a death (2Co 2:16); Christ had said the same of all other places that receive not his ministers nor bid his gospel welcome (Mt 10:15); It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for that city. We that have now the written word in our hands, the gospel preached, and the gospel ordinances administered to us, and live under the dispensation of the Spirit, have advantages not

inferior to those of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and the account in the great day will be accordingly. It has therefore been justly said, that the professors of this age, whether they go to heaven or hell, will be the greatest debtors in either of these places; if to heaven, the greatest debtors to divine mercy for those rich means that brought them thither; if to hell, the greatest debtors to divine justice, for those rich means that would have kept them from thence.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Come unto Me and Rest

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

In these verses we have Christ looking up to heaven, with thanksgiving to his Father for the sovereignty and security of the covenant of redemption; and looking around him upon this earth, with an offer to all the children of men, to whom these presents shall come, of the privileges and benefits of the covenant of grace.

I. Christ here returns thanks to God for his favour to those babes who had the mysteries of the gospel revealed to them (Mt 11:25,26). Jesus answered and said. It is called an answer, though no other words are before recorded but his own, because it is so comfortable a reply to the melancholy considerations preceding, and is aptly set in the balance against them. The sin and ruin of those woeful cities, no doubt, was a grief to the Lord Jesus; he could not but weep over them, as he did over Jerusalem (Lu 19:41); with this thought therefore he refreshes himself; and to make it the more refreshing, he puts it into a thanksgiving; that for all this, there is a remnant, though but babes, to whom the things of the gospel are revealed. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious. Note, We may take great encouragement in looking upward to God, when

round about us we see nothing but what is discouraging. It is sad to see how regardless most men are of their own happiness, but it is comfortable to think that the wise and faithful God will, however, effectually secure the interests of his own glory. Jesus answered and said, I thank thee. Note, Thanksgiving is a proper answer to dark and disquieting thoughts, and may be an effectual means to silence them. Songs of praise are sovereign cordials to drooping souls, and will help to cure melancholy. When we have no other answer ready to the suggestions of grief and fear, we may have recourse to this, I thank thee, O Father; let us bless God that it is not worse with us than it is.

Now in this thanksgiving of Christ, we may observe,

1 The titles he gives to God; O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Note,

(a) In all our approaches to God, by praise as well as by prayer, it is good for us to eye him as a Father, and to fasten on that relation, not only when we ask for the mercies we want, but when we give thanks for the mercies we have received. Mercies are then doubly sweet, and powerful to enlarge the heart in praise, when they are received as tokens of a Father's love, and gifts of a Father's hand; Giving thanks to the Father, Col 1:12. It becomes children to be grateful, and to say, Thank you, father, as readily as, Pray, father.

(b) When we come to God as a Father, we must withal remember, that he is Lord of heaven and earth; which obliges us to come to him with reverence, as to the sovereign Lord of all, and yet with confidence, as one able to do for us whatever we need or can desire; to defend us from all evil and to supply us with all good. Christ, in Melchizedec, had long since blessed God as the Possessor, or Lord of heaven and earth; and in all our thanksgivings for mercies in the stream, we must give him the glory of the all-sufficiency that is in the fountain.

2 The thing he gives thanks for: Because thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and yet revealed them to babes. These things; he does not say what things, but means the great things of the gospel, the things that belong to our peace, Lu 19:42. He spoke thus emphatically of them, these things, because they were things that filled him, and should fill us: all other things are as nothing to these things.

Note (a) The great things of the everlasting gospel have been and are hid from many that were wise and prudent, that were eminent for learning and worldly policy; some of the greatest scholars and the greatest statesmen have been the greatest strangers to gospel mysteries. The world by wisdom knew not God, 1Co 1:21. Nay, there is an opposition given to the gospel, by a science falsely so called, 1Ti 6:20. Those who are most expert in things sensible and secular, are commonly least experienced in spiritual things. Men may dive deeply into the mysteries of nature and into the mysteries of state, and yet be ignorant of, and mistake about, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, for want of an experience of the power of them.

Note (b) While the wise and prudent men of the world are in the dark about gospel mysteries, even the babes in Christ have the sanctifying saving knowledge of them: Thou hast revealed them unto babes. Such the disciples of Christ were; men of mean birth and education; no scholars, no artists, no politicians, unlearned and ignorant men, Ac 4:13. Thus are the secrets of wisdom, which are double to that which is (Job 11:6), made known to babes and sucklings, that out of their mouth strength might be ordained (Ps 8:2), and God's praise thereby perfected. The learned men of the world were not made choice of to be the preachers of the gospel, but the foolish things of the world (1Co 2:6,8,10).

Note (c) This difference between the prudent and the babes is of God's own making.

[1.] It is he that has hid these things from the wise and prudent; he gave them parts, and learning, and much of human understanding above others, and they were proud of that, and rested in it, and looked no further; and therefore God justly denies them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and then, though they hear the sound of the gospel tidings, they are to them as a strange thing. God is not the Author of their ignorance and error, but he leaves them to themselves, and their sin becomes their punishment, and the Lord is righteous in it. See Joh 12:39,40, Ro 8:29, Ro 11:7,8, Act 28:26,27. Had they honoured God with the wisdom and prudence they had, he would have given them the knowledge of these better things; but because they served their lusts with them, he has hid their hearts from this understanding. Eze 18:29-32.

[2.] It is he that has revealed them unto babes. Things revealed belong to our children (De 29:29), and to them he gives an understanding to receive these things, and the impressions of them. Thus he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble, Jam 4:6.

Note (d) This dispensation must be resolved into the divine sovereignty. Christ himself referred it to that; Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Christ here subscribes to the will of his Father in this matter; Even so. Let God take what ways he pleases to glorify himself, and make us of what instruments he pleases for the carrying on of his own work; his grace is his own, and he may give or withhold it as he pleases. We can give no reason why Peter, a fisherman, should be made an apostle, and not Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews, though he also believed in Christ; but so it seemed good in God's sight. Christ said this in the hearing of his disciples, to show them that it was not for any merit of their own that they were thus dignified and distinguished, but purely from God's good pleasure; he made them to differ.

Note (e) This way of dispensing divine grace is to be acknowledged by us, as it was by our Lord Jesus, with all thankfulness. We must thank God,

[1.] That these things are revealed; the mystery hid from ages and generations is manifested; that they are revealed, not to a few, but to be published to all the world.

[2.] That they are revealed to babes; that the meek and humble are beautified with this salvation; and this honour put upon those whom the world pours contempt upon.

[3.] It magnifies the mercy to them, that these things are hid from the wise and prudent: distinguishing favours are the most obliging. As Job adored the name of the Lord in taking away as well as in giving, so may we in hiding these things from the wise and prudent, as well as in revealing them unto babes; not as it is their misery, but as it is a method by which self is abased, proud thoughts brought down, all flesh silenced, and divine power and wisdom made to shine the more bright. See 1Co 1:27,31.

26 Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

His commission from the Father: All things are delivered unto me of my Father. Christ, as God, is equal in power and glory with the Father; but as Mediator he receives his power and glory from the Father; has all judgment committed to him. He is authorized to settle a new covenant between God and man, and to offer peace and happiness to the apostate world, upon such terms as he should think fit: he was sanctified and sealed to be the sole Plenipotentiary, to concert and establish this great affair. In order to this, he has all power both in heaven and in earth, (Mt 28:18); power over all flesh (Joh 17:2); authority to execute judgment, Joh 5:22,27. This encourages us to come to Christ, that he is commissioned to receive us, and to give us what we come for, and has all things delivered to him for that purpose, by him who is Lord of all. All powers, all treasures are in his hand. Observe, The Father has delivered his all into the hands of the Lord Jesus; let us but deliver our all into his hand and the work is done; God has made him the great Referee, the blessed Daysman, to lay his hand upon us both; that which we

have to do is to agree to the reference, to submit to the arbitration of the Lord Jesus, for the taking up of this unhappy controversy, and to enter into bonds to stand to his award.

28 Come unto me, all *ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Here is the offer itself that is made to us, and an invitation to accept of it. After so solemn a preface, we may well expect something very great; and it is a faithful saying, and well worthy of all acceptation; words whereby we may be saved. We are here invited to Christ as our Priest, Prince, and Prophet, to be saved, and, in order to that, to be ruled and taught by him.

(a) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Rest, and repose ourselves in him (Mt 11:28), Come unto me all ye that labour.

Observe, [1.] The character of the persons invited; all that labour, and are heavy laden. This is a word in season to him that is weary, Isa 50:4. Those who complain of the burthen of the ceremonial law, which was an intolerable yoke, and was made much more so by the tradition of the elders (Lu 11:46), let them come to Christ, and they shall be made easy; he came to free his church from this yoke, to cancel the imposition of those carnal ordinances, and to introduce a purer and more spiritual way of worship; but it is rather to be understood of the burthen of sin, both the guilt and the power of it. Note, All those, and those only, are invited to rest in Christ, that are sensible of sin as a burthen, and groan under it; that are not only convinced of the evil of sin, of their own sin, but are contrite in soul for it; that are really sick of their sins, weary of the service of the world and of the flesh; that see their state sad and dangerous by reason of sin, and are in pain and fear about it, as Ephraim (Jer 31:18-20), the prodigal (Lu 15:17), the publican (Lu 18:13), Peter's hearers (Ac 2:37), Paul (Ac 9:4,6,9), the jailor (Ac 16:29,30). This is a necessary preparative for pardon and peace. The Comforter must first convince (Joh 16:8); I have torn and then will heal.

Observe, [2.] The invitation itself: Come unto me. That glorious display of Christ's greatness which we had (Mt 11:27), as Lord of all, might frighten us from him, but see here how he holds out the golden sceptre, that we may touch the top of it and may live. Note, It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy laden sinners to come to Jesus Christ. Renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to him, or in competition with him, we must accept of him, as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to his conduct and government; freely willing to be saved by him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. Come and cast that burden upon him, under which thou art heavy laden. This is the gospel call, The Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that is athirst come; Whoever will, let him come.

Observe, [3.] The blessing promised to those that do come: I will give you rest. Christ is our Noah, whose name signifies rest, for this same shall give us rest. Ge 5:29,8:9. Truly rest is good (Ge 49:15), especially to those that labour and are heavy laden, Ec 5:12. Note, Jesus Christ will give assured rest to those weary souls, that by a lively faith come to him for it; rest from the terror of sin, in a well-grounded peace of conscience; rest from the power of sin, in a regular order of the soul, and its due government of itself; a rest in God, and a complacency of soul, in his love. Ps 11:6,7. This is that rest which remains for the people of God (Heb 4:9), begun in grace, and perfected in glory.

(b) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Ruler, and submit ourselves to him (Mt 11:29). Take my yoke upon you. This must go along with the former, for Christ is exalted to be both a Prince and a Saviour, a Priest upon his throne. The rest he promises is a release from the drudgery of sin, not from the service of God, but an obligation to the duty we owe to him. Note, Christ has a yoke for our necks, as well as a crown for our heads, and this yoke he expects we should take upon us and draw in. To call those who are weary and heavy laden, to take a yoke upon them, looks like adding affliction to the afflicted; but the pertinency of it lies in the word my: "You are under a yoke which makes you weary: shake that off and try mine, which will

make you easy." Servants are said to be under the yoke (1Ti 6:1), and subjects, 1Ki 12:10. To take Christ's yoke upon us, is to put ourselves into the relation to servants and subjects to him, and then of conduct ourselves accordingly, in a conscientious obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful submission to all his disposals: it is to obey the gospel of Christ, to yield ourselves to the Lord: it is Christ's yoke; the yoke he has appointed; a yoke he has himself drawn in before us, for he learned obedience, and which he does by his Spirit draw in with us, for he helpeth our infirmities, Ro 8:26. A yoke speaks some hardship, but if the beast must draw, the yoke helps him. Christ's commands are all in our favour: we must take this yoke upon us to draw in it. We are yoked to work, and therefore must be diligent; we are yoked to submit, and therefore must be humble and patient: we are yoked together with our fellow-servants, and therefore must keep up the communion of saints: and the words of the wise are as goads, to those who are thus yoked.

30 For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

Now this is the hardest part of our lesson, and therefore it is qualified (Mt 11:30). My yoke is easy and my burden is light; you need not be afraid of it.

[1.] The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke; it is chrestos, not only easy, but gracious, so the word signifies; it is sweet and pleasant; there is nothing in it to gall the yielding neck, nothing to hurt us, but, on the contrary, must to refresh us. It is a yoke that is lined with love. Such is the nature of all Christ's commands, so reasonable in themselves, so profitable to us, and all summed up in one word, and that a sweet word, love. So powerful are the assistances he gives us, so suitable the encouragements, and so strong the consolations, that are to be found in the way of duty, that we may truly say, it is a yoke of pleasantness. It is easy to the new nature, very easy to him that understandeth, Pr 14:6. It may be a little hard at first, but it is easy afterwards; the love of God and the hope of heaven will make it easy.

[2.] The burden of Christ's cross is a light burden, very light: afflictions from Christ, which befal us as men; afflictions for Christ,

which befal us as Christians; the latter are especially meant. This burden in itself is not joyous, but grievous; yet as it is Christ's, it is light. Paul knew as much of it as any man, and he calls it a light affliction, 2Co 4:17. God's presence (Isa 43:2), Christ's sympathy (Isa 73:9,Da 3:25), and especially the Spirit's aids and comforts (2Co 1:5), make suffering for Christ light and easy. As afflictions abound, and are prolonged, consolations abound, and are prolonged too. Let this therefore reconcile us to the difficulties, and help us over the discouragements, we may meet with, both in doing work and suffering work; though we may lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him.

We must come to Jesus Christ as our Teacher, and set ourselves to learn of him, Mt 11:29. Christ has erected a great school, and has invited us to be his scholars. We must enter ourselves, associate with his scholars, and daily attend the instructions he gives by his word and Spirit. We must converse much with what he said, and have it ready to use upon all occasions; we must conform to what he did, and follow his steps, 1Pe 2:21. Some make the following words, for I am meek and lowly in heart, to be the particular lesson we are required to learn from the example of Christ. We must learn of him to be meek and lowly, and must mortify our pride and passion, which render us so unlike to him. We must so learn of Christ as to learn Christ (Eph 4:20), for he is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way, and All in All. Two reasons are given why we must learn of Christ.

[1.] I am meek and lowly in heart, and therefore fit to teach you.

First, He is meek, and can have compassion on the ignorant, whom others would be in a passion with. Many able teachers are hot and hasty, which is a great discouragement to those who are dull and slow; but Christ knows how to bear with such, and to open their understandings. His carriage towards his twelve disciples was a specimen of this; he was mild and gentle with them, and made the best of them; though they were heedless and forgetful, he was not extreme to mark their follies.

Secondly, He is lowly in heart. He condescends to teach poor scholars, to teach novices; he chose disciples, not from the court, nor the schools, but from the seaside. He teaches the first principles, such things as are milk for babes; he stoops to the meanest capacities; he taught Ephraim to go, Ho 11:3. Who teaches like him? It is an encouragement to us to put ourselves to school to such a Teacher. This humility and meekness, as it qualifies him to be a Teacher, so it will be the best qualification of those who are to be taught by him; for the meek will he guide in judgment, Ps 25:9.

[2.] You shall find rest to your souls. This promise is borrowed from Jer 6:16, for Christ delighted to express himself in the language of the prophets, to show the harmony between the two Testaments. Note, First, Rest for the soul is the most desirable rest; to have the soul to dwell at ease. Secondly, The only way, and a sure way to find rest for our souls is, to sit at Christ's feet and hear his word. The way of duty is the way of rest. The understanding finds rest in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and is there abundantly satisfied, finding that wisdom in the gospel which has been sought for in vain throughout the whole creation, Job 28:12. The truths Christ teaches are such as we may venture our souls upon. The affections find rest in the love of God and Jesus Christ, and meet with that in them which gives them an abundant satisfaction; quietness and assurance for ever. And those satisfactions will be perfected and perpetuated in heaven, where we shall see and enjoy God immediately, shall see him as he is, and enjoy him as he is ours. This rest is to be had with Christ for all those who learn of him.

Well, this is the sum and substance of the gospel call and offer: we are here told, in a few words, what the Lord Jesus requires of us, and it agrees with what God said of him once and again. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.

Matthew-12

The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples
were ahungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

What was the offence that the Pharisees took at this. It was but a dry breakfast, yet the Pharisees would not let them eat that in quietness. They did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn (they were no great zealots for justice), but for doing it on the sabbath day; for plucking and rubbing the ears of corn of that day was expressly forbidden by the tradition of the elders, for this reason, because it was a kind of reaping.

Note, It is no new thing for the most harmless and innocent actions of Christ's disciples to be evil spoken of, and reflected upon as unlawful, especially by those who are zealous for their own inventions and impositions. The Pharisees complained of them to their Master for doing that which it was not lawful to do. Note, Those are no friends to Christ and his disciples, who make that to be unlawful which God has not made to be so.

When the Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples for picking a few pieces of corn to eat on the Sabbath, Jesus defended his disciples by referring to two examples from the Old Testament.

First, when David and his men were very hungry and urgently needed food, they were rightly allowed to eat the holy bread of the tabernacle, which normally only priests were allowed to eat (Mat_12:1-4; cf. 1Sa_21:1-6). What it was that the disciples did. They were following their Master one sabbath day through a corn-field; it is likely they were going to the synagogue (Mt 12:9), for it becomes not Christ's disciples to take idle walks on that day, and they were hungry; let it be no disparagement to our Master's house-keeping. t is most holy to Aaron and his sons; and (Ex 29:33) a stranger shall not eat of it; yet the priest gave it to David and his

men; for though the exception of a case of necessity was not expressed, yet it was implied in that and all other ritual institutions. That which bore out David in eating the show-bread was not his dignity (Uzziah, that invaded the priest's office in the pride of his heart, though a king, was struck with a leprosy for it, 2Ch 26:16, &c.), but his hunger. The greatest shall not have their lusts indulged, but the meanest shall have their wants considered. Hunger is a natural desire which cannot be mortified, but must be gratified, and cannot be put off with any thing but meat; therefore we say, It will break through stone walls. Now the Lord is for the body, and allowed his own appointment to be dispensed with in a case of distress; much more might the tradition of the elders be dispensed with. Note, That may be done in a case of necessity which may not be done at another time; there are laws which necessity has not, but it is a law to itself. Men do not despise, but pity, a thief that steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry, Pr 6:30.

Second, even the Levitical priests worked on the Sabbath, for they had to prepare and offer the sacrifices (Mat_12:5; cf. Num_28:9-10).

These two examples show that in a case of necessity the legal requirement of the law may be overruled. Life is more important than ritual. To exercise mercy is more important than to offer sacrifices. Jesus is more important than the temple. People are more important than the Sabbath. The Sabbath was given for people's benefit, not for their discomfort; and since Jesus is the messianic Son of man, he has authority to decide how the Sabbath can best be used (Mat_12:6-8; Mar_2:27-28)

2 But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do
that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.
3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was
ahungered, and they that were with him;
4 how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which
was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but
only for the priests?
5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in
the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

He justifies them by arguments, three cogent ones.

[1.] In this place is one greater than the temple, Mt 12:6. If the temple-service would justify what the priests did in their ministration, the service of Christ would much more justify the disciples in what they did in their attendance upon him. The Jews had an extreme veneration for the temple: it sanctified the gold; Stephen was accused for blaspheming that holy place (Ac 6:13); but Christ, in a corn-field, was greater than the temple, for in him dwelt not the presence of God symbolically, but all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Note, If whatever we do, we do it in the name of Christ, and as unto him, it shall be graciously accepted of God, however it may be censured and cavilled at by men.

[2.] God will have mercy and not sacrifice, Mt 12:7. Ceremonial duties must give way to moral, and the natural, royal law of love and self-preservation must take place of ritual observances. This is quoted from Ho 6:6. It was used before, Mt 9:13, in vindication of mercy to the souls of men; here, of mercy to their bodies. The rest of the sabbath was ordained for man's good, in favour of the body, De 5:14. Now no law must be construed so as to contradict its own end. If you had known what this means, had known what it is to be of a merciful disposition, you would have been sorry that they were forced to do this to satisfy their hunger, and would not have condemned the guiltless. Note, First, Ignorance is the cause of our rash and uncharitable censures of our brethren. Secondly, It is not enough for us to know the scriptures, but we must labour to know the meaning of them. Let him that readeth understand. Thirdly, Ignorance of the meaning of the scripture is especially shameful in those who take upon them to teach others.

[3.] The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day, Mt 12:8. That law, as all the rest, is put into the hand of Christ, to be altered, enforced, or dispensed with, as he sees good. It was by the Son that God made the world, and by him he instituted the sabbath in innocency; by him he gave the ten commandments at mount Sinai, and as Mediator he is entrusted with the institution of ordinances,

and to make what changes he thought fit; and particularly, as being Lord of the sabbath, he was authorized to make such an alteration of that day, as that it should become the Lord's day, the Lord Christ's day. And if Christ be the Lord of the sabbath, it is fit the day and all the work of it should be dedicated to him. By virtue of this power Christ here enacts, that works of necessity, if they be really such, and not a pretended and self-created necessity, are lawful on the sabbath day; and this explication of the law plainly shows that it was to be perpetual. Exceptio firmat regulam--The exception confirms the rule.

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.
7 But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.
8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

The Man with a Withered Hand

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:
10 and, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.
11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out?

Christ having thus silenced the Pharisees, and got clear of them (Mt 12:9), departed, and went into their synagogue, the synagogue of these Pharisees, in which they presided, and toward which he was going, when they picked this quarrel with him. Note, First, We must take heed lest any thing that occurs in our way to holy ordinances unfit us for, or divert us from, our due attendance on them. Let us proceed in the way of our duty, notwithstanding the artifices of Satan, who endeavours, by the perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and many other ways, to ruffle and discompose us. Secondly, We must not, for the sake of private feuds and personal piques, draw back from public worship. Though the Pharisees had thus maliciously cavilled at Christ, yet he went into their synagogue. Satan gains this point, if, by sowing discord among

brethren, he prevail to drive them, or any of them, from the synagogue, and the communion of the faithful.

Christ, by healing the man that had the withered hand on the sabbath day, shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on that day. The work of necessity was done by the disciples, and justified by him; the work of mercy was done by himself; the works of mercy were his works of necessity; it was his meat and drink to do good. I must preach, says he, Lu 4:43. This cure is recorded for the sake of the time when it was wrought, on the sabbath.

The affliction that this poor man was in; his hand was withered so that he was utterly disabled to get his living by working with his hands. St. Jerome says, that the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, used by the Nazarenes and Ebionites, adds this circumstance to this story of the man with the withered hand, that he was Cæmentarius--a bricklayer, and applied himself to Christ thus; "Lord, I am a bricklayer, and have got my living by my labour (manibus victum quæritans); I beseech thee, O Jesus, restore me the use of my hand, that I may not be obliged to beg my bread" (ne turpiter mendicem cibos). Hieron. in loc. This poor man was in the synagogue. Note, Those who can do but little, or have but little to do for the world, must do so much the more for their souls; as the rich, the aged, and the infirm.

A spiteful question which the Pharisees put to Christ upon the sight of this man. They asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal? We read not here of any address this poor man made to Christ for a cure, but they observed Christ began to take notice of him, and knew it was usual for him to be found of those that sought him not, and therefore with their badness they anticipated his goodness, and started this case as a stumbling-block in the way of doing good; Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? Whether it was lawful for physicians to heal on that day or not, which was the thing disputed in their books, one would think it past dispute, that it is lawful for prophets to heal, for him to heal who discovered a divine power and goodness in all

he did of this kind, and manifested himself to be sent of God. Did ever any ask, whether it is lawful for God to heal, to send his word and heal? It is true, Christ was now made under the law, by a voluntary submission to it, but he was never made under the precepts of the elders. Is it lawful to heal? To enquire into the lawfulness and unlawfulness of actions is very good, and we cannot apply ourselves to any with such enquiries more fitly than to Christ; but they asked here, not that they might be instructed by him, but that they might accuse him. If he should say that it was lawful to heal on the sabbath day, they would accuse him of a contradiction to the fourth commandment; to so great a degree of superstition had the Pharisees brought the sabbath rest, that, unless in peril of life, they allowed not any medicinal operations on the sabbath day. If he should say that it was not lawful, they would accuse him of partiality, having lately justified his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on that day.

How much then is a man better than a sheep?—Resistless appeal! "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Pr 12:10), and would instinctively rescue it from death or suffering on the sabbath day; how much more his nobler fellow man! But the reasoning, as given in the other two Gospels, is singularly striking: "But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life or to destroy it?" (Lu 6:8,9), or as in Mark (Mk 3:4), "to kill?" He thus shuts them up to this startling alternative: "Not to do good, when it is in the power of our hand to do it, is to do evil; not to save life, when we can, is to kill"—and must the letter of the sabbath rest be kept at this expense? This unexpected thrust shut their mouths. By this great ethical principle our Lord, we see, held Himself bound, as man. But here we must turn to Mark, whose graphic details make the second Gospel so exceedingly precious. "When He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man" (Mk 3:5). This is one of the very few passages in the Gospel history which reveal our Lord's

feelings. How holy this anger was appears from the "grief" which mingled with it at "the hardness of their hearts."

If an animal fell into a pit on the Sabbath day, the Jews would not hesitate to rescue it the same day. Yet they criticized Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath. Although no list of rules sets out all that a person should or should not do to keep the Sabbath holy, it is always right to do good on the Sabbath. To save life is better than to kill, and in this case Jesus was helping to save life. The Pharisees, by contrast, were looking for ways to kill him (Mat_12:9-14; Mar_3:1-6).

The cursed malice of the Pharisees against Christ (Mt 12:14); being enraged at the convincing evidence of his miracles, they went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. That which vexed them was, not only that by his miracles his honour eclipsed theirs, but that the doctrine he preached was directly opposite to their pride, and hypocrisy, and worldly interest; but they pretended to be displeased at his breaking the sabbath day, which was by the law a capital crime, Ex 35:2. Note, it is no new thing to see the vilest practices cloaked with the most specious pretences. Observe their policy; they took counsel about it, considered with themselves which way to do it effectually; they took counsel together in a close cabal about it, that they might both animate and assist one another. Observe their cruelty; they took counsel, not to imprison or banish him, but to destroy him, to be the death of him who came that we might have life. What an indignity was hereby put upon our Lord Jesus, to run him down as an outlaw (qui caput gerit lupinum--carries a wolf's head), and the plague of his country, who was the greatest blessing of it, the Glory of his people Israel!

Christ shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on the Lord's day. There are more ways of doing well upon sabbath days, than by the duties of worship: attending the sick, relieving the poor, helping those who need speedy relief, teaching the young to care for their souls; these are doing good: and these must be done

from love and charity, with humility and self-denial, and shall be accepted, Gen_4:7. This, like other cures which Christ wrought, had a spiritual meaning. By nature our hands are withered, and we are unable of ourselves to do any thing that is good. Christ only, by the power of his grace, cures us; he heals the withered hand by putting life into the dead soul, works in us both to will and to do: for, with the command, there is a promise of grace given by the word.

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do
well on the sabbath days.
13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched *it* forth;
and it was restored whole, like as the other.
14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might
destroy him.

The Chosen Servant

15 But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence: and great
multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;
16 and charged them that they should not make him known:

Christ's absconding upon this occasion, and the privacy he chose, to decline, not his work, but his danger; because his hour was not yet come (Mt 12:15), he withdrew himself from thence. He could have secured himself by miracle, but chose to do it in the ordinary way of flight and retirement; because in this, as in other things, he would submit to the sinless infirmities of our nature. Herein he humbled himself, that he was driven to the common shift of those who are most helpless; thus also he would give an example to his own rule, When they persecute you in one city, flee to another. Christ had said and done enough to convince those Pharisees, if reason or miracles would have done it; but instead of yielding to the conviction, they were hardened and enraged, and therefore he left them as incurable, Jer 51:9.

Christ did not retire for his own ease, nor seek an excuse to leave off his work; no, his retirements were filled up with business, and he was even then doing good, when he was forced to flee for the same. Thus he gave an example to his ministers, to do what they

can, when they cannot do what they would, and to continue teaching, even when they are removed into corners. When the Pharisees, the great dons and doctors of the nation, drove Christ from then, and forced him to withdraw himself, yet the common people crowded after him; great multitudes followed him and found him out. This some would turn to his reproach, and call him the ring-leader of the mob; but it was really his honour, that all who were unbiased and unprejudiced, and not blinded by the pomp of the world, were so hearty, so zealous for him, that they would follow him whithersoever he went, and whatever hazards they ran with him; as it was also the honour of his grace, that the poor were evangelized; that when they received him, he received them and healed them all. Christ came into the world to be a Physician-general, as the sun to the lower world, with healing under his wings. Though the Pharisees persecuted Christ for doing good, yet he went on in it, and did not let the people fare the worse for the wickedness of their rulers. Note, Though some are unkind to us, we must not on that account be unkind to others.

Christ studied to reconcile usefulness and privacy; he healed them all, and yet (Mt 12:16), charged them that they should not make him known; which may be looked upon, 1. As an act of prudence; it was not so much the miracles themselves, as the public discourse concerning them, that enraged the Pharisees (Mt 12:23,24); therefore Christ, though he would not omit doing good, yet would do it with as little noise as possible, to avoid offence to them and peril to himself. Note, Wise and good men, though they covet to do good, yet are far from coveting to have it talked of when it is done; because it is God's acceptance, not men's applause, that they aim at. And in suffering times, though we must boldly go on in the way of duty, yet we must contrive the circumstances of it so as not to exasperate, more than is necessary, those who seek occasion against us; Be ye wise as serpents, Mt 10:16. 2. It may be looked upon as an act of righteous judgment upon the Pharisees, who were unworthy to hear of any more of his miracles, having made so light of those they had seen. By shutting their eyes against the light, they had forfeited the benefit of it. 3. As an act of humility and self-denial. Though Christ's intention in his miracles was to prove himself the Messiah, and so to bring men to believe on him,

in order to which it was requisite that they should be known, yet sometimes he charged the people to conceal them, to set us an example of humility, and to teach us not to proclaim our own goodness or usefulness, or to desire to have it proclaimed. Christ would have his disciples to be the reverse of those who did all their works to be seen of men.

17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,
18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen;
my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

The fulfilling of the scriptures in all this, Mt 12:17. Christ retired into privacy and obscurity, that though he was eclipsed, the word of God might be fulfilled, and so illustrated and glorified, which was the thing his heart was upon. The scripture here said to be fulfilled is Isa 42:1-4, which is quoted at large, Mt 12:18-21. The scope of it is to show how mild and quiet, and yet how successful, our Lord Jesus should be in his undertaking; instances of both which we have in the foregoing passages. Observe here,

1 The pleasure of the Father in Christ (Mt 12:18); Behold, my Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased. Hence we may learn,

(a) That our Saviour was God's Servant in the great work of our redemption. He therein submitted himself to the Father's will (Heb 10:7), and set himself to serve the design of his grace and the interests of his glory, in repairing the breaches that had been made by man's apostasy. As a Servant, he had a great work appointed him, and a great trust reposed in him. This was a part of his humiliation, that though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet that in the work of our salvation he took upon him the form of a servant, received a law, and came into bonds. Though he were a son, yet learned he this obedience, Heb 5:8. The motto of this Prince is, Ich dien--I serve.

(b) That Jesus Christ was chosen of God, as the only fit and proper person for the management of the great work of our redemption.

He is my Servant whom I have chosen, as par negotio--equal to the undertaking. None but he was able to do the Redeemer's work, or fit to wear the Redeemer's crown. He was one chosen out of the people (Ps 89:19), chosen by Infinite Wisdom to that post of service and honour, for which neither man nor angel was qualified; none but Christ, that he might in all things have the pre-eminence. Christ did not thrust himself upon this work, but was duly chosen into it; Christ was so God's Chosen as to be the head of election, and of all other the Elect, for we are chosen in him, Eph 1:4.

(c) That Jesus Christ is God's Beloved, his beloved Son; as God, he lay from eternity in his bosom (Joh 1:18); he was daily his delight, (Pr 8:30). Between the Father and the Son there was before all time an eternal and inconceivable intercourse and interchanging of love, and thus the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, Pr 8:22. As Mediator, the Father loved him; then when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he submitted to it, therefore did the Father love him, Joh 10:17.

(d) That Jesus Christ is one in whom the Father is well pleased, in whom his soul is pleased; which denotes the highest complacency imaginable. God declared, by a voice from heaven, that he was his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; well pleased in him, because he was the ready and cheerful Undertaker of that work of wonder which God's heart was so much upon, and he is well pleased with us in him; for he had made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph 1:6. All the interest which fallen man has or can have in God is grounded upon and owing to God's well-pleasedness in Jesus Christ; for there is no coming to the Father but by him, Joh 14:6.

2 The promise of the Father to him in two things.

(a) That he should be every way well qualified for his undertaking; I will put my Spirit upon him, as a Spirit of wisdom and counsel, Isa 11:2,3. Those whom God calls to any service, he will be sure to fit and qualify for it; and by that it will appear that he called them to it, as Moses, Ex 4:12. Christ, as God, was equal in power and

glory with the Father; as Mediator, he received from the Father power and glory, and received that he might give: and all that the Father gave him, to qualify him for his undertaking, was summed up in this, he put his Spirit upon him: this was that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows, Heb 1:9. He received the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, Joh 3:34. Note, Whoever they be that God has chosen, and in whim he is well pleased, he will be sure to put his Spirit upon them. Wherever he confers his love, he confers somewhat of his likeness.

(b) That he should be abundantly successful in his understanding. Those whom God sends he will certainly own. It was long since secured by promise to our Lord Jesus, that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand, Isa 53:10. And here we have an account of that prospering good pleasure.

[1.] He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. Christ in his own person preached to those who bordered upon the heathen nations (see Mk 3:6-8), and by his apostle showed his gospel, called here his judgment, to the Gentile world. The way and method of salvation, the judgment which is committed to the Son, is not only wrought out by him as our great High Priest, but showed and published by him as our great Prophet. The gospel, as it is a rule of practice and conversation, which has a direct tendency to the reforming and bettering of men's hearts and lives, shall be showed to the Gentiles. God's judgments had been the Jews' peculiar (Ps 147:19), but it was often foretold, by the Old-Testament prophets, that they should be showed to the Gentiles, which therefore ought not to have been such a surprise as it was to the unbelieving Jews, much less a vexation.

[2.] In his name shall the Gentiles trust, Mt 12:21. He shall so show judgment to them, that they shall heed and observe what he shows them, and be influenced by it to depend upon him, to devote themselves to him, and conform to that judgment. Note, The great design of the gospel, is to bring people to trust in the name of Jesus Christ; his name Jesus, a Saviour, that precious name whereby he

is called, and which is as ointment poured forth; The Lord our Righteousness. The evangelist here follows the Septuagint (or perhaps the latter editions of the Septuagint follow the evangelist); the Hebrew (Isa 42:4) is, The isles shall wait for his law. The isles of the Gentiles are spoken of (Ge 10:5), as peopled by the sons of Japhet, of whom it was said (Ge 9:27), God shall persuade Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem; which was now to be fulfilled, when the isles (says the prophet), the Gentiles (says the evangelist), shall wait for his law, and trust in his name: compare these together, and observe, that they, and they only, can with confidence trust in Christ's name, that wait for his law with a resolution to be ruled by it. Observe also, that the law we wait for is the law of faith, the law of trusting in his name. This is now his great commandment, that we believe in Christ, 1Jo 3:23.

3. The prediction concerning him, and his mild and quiet management of his undertaking, Mt 12:19,20. It is chiefly for the sake of this that it is here quoted, upon occasion of Christ's affected privacy and concealment.

(a) That he should carry on his undertaking without noise or ostentation. He shall not strive, or make an outcry. Christ and his kingdom come not with observation, Lu 17:20,21. When the First-begotten was brought into the world, it was not with state and ceremony; he made no public entry, had no harbingers to proclaim him King. He was in the world and the world knew him not. Those were mistaken who fed themselves with hopes of a pompous Saviour. His voice was not heard in the streets; "Lo, here is Christ;" or, "Lo, he is there:" he spake in a still small voice, which was alluring to all, but terrifying to none; he did not affect to make a noise, but came down silently like the dew. What he spake and did was with the greatest possible humility and self-denial. His kingdom was spiritual, and therefore not to be advanced by force or violence, or by high pretensions. No, the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

(b) That he should carry on his undertaking without severity and rigour (Mt 12:20). A bruised reed shall he not break. Some understand this of his patience in bearing with the wicked; he could as easily have broken these Pharisees as a bruised reed, and have quenched them as soon as smoking flax; but he will not do it till the judgment-day, when all his enemies shall be made his footstool. Others rather understand it of his power and grace in bearing up the weak. In general, the design of his gospel is to establish such a method of salvation as encourages sincerity, though there be much infirmity; it does not insist upon a sinless obedience, but accepts an upright, willing mind. As to particular persons, that follow Christ in meekness, and in fear, and in much trembling, observe,

[1.] How their case is here described--they are like a bruised reed, and smoking flax. Young beginners in religion are weak as a bruised reed, and their weakness offensive like smoking flax; some little life they have, but it is like that of a bruised reed; some little heat, but like that of smoking flax. Christ's disciples were as yet but weak, and many are so that have a place in his family. The grace and goodness in them are as a bruised reed, the corruption and badness in them are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle when it is put out and is yet smoking.

[2.] What is the compassion of our Lord Jesus toward them? He will not discourage them, much less reject them or cast them off; the reed that is bruised shall not be broken and trodden down, but shall be supported, and made as strong as a cedar or flourishing palm-tree. The candle newly lighted, though it only smokes and does not flame, shall not be blown out, but blown up. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and therefore he will not despise it, but make it the day of great things, Zec 4:10. Note, Our Lord Jesus deals very tenderly with those who have true grace, though they be weak in it, Isa 40:11,Heb 5:2. He remembers not only that we are dust, but that we are flesh.

[3.] The good issue and success of this, intimated in that, till he send forth judgment unto victory. That judgment which he showed

to the Gentiles shall be victorious, he will go on conquering and to conquer, Re 6:2. Both the preaching of the gospel in the world, and the power of the gospel in the heart, shall prevail. Grace shall get the upper hand of corruption, and shall at length be perfected in glory. Christ's judgment will be brought forth to victory, for when he judges he will overcome. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth; so it is, Isa 42:3. Truth and victory are much the same, for great is the truth, and will prevail.

19 He shall not strive, nor cry;
neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed shall he not break,
and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory—"unto truth," says the Hebrew original, and the Septuagint also. But our Evangelist merely seizes the spirit, instead of the letter of the prediction in this point. The grandeur and completeness of Messiah's victories would prove, it seems, not more wonderful than the unobtrusive noiselessness with which they were to be achieved. And whereas one rough touch will break a bruised reed, and quench the flickering, smoking flax, His it should be, with matchless tenderness, love, and skill, to lift up the meek, to strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, to comfort all that mourn, to say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

A Divided House Cannot Stand

22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb:
and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.
23 And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David ?

And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?—The form of the interrogative requires this to be rendered, "Is this the Son of David?" And as questions put in this form (in Greek) suppose doubt, and expect rather a negative answer, the

meaning is, "Can it possibly be?"—the people thus indicating their secret impression that this must be He; yet saving themselves from the wrath of the ecclesiastics, which a direct assertion of it would have brought upon them. (On a similar question, see on Joh 4:29; and on the phrase, "Son of David," see on Mt 9:27).

24 But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

Two things are here implied—first, that the bitterest enemies of our Lord were unable to deny the reality of His miracles; and next, that they believed in an organized infernal kingdom of evil, under one chief. This belief would be of small consequence, had not our Lord set His seal to it; but this He immediately does. Stung by the unsophisticated testimony of "all the people," they had no way of holding out against His claims but by the desperate shift of ascribing His miracles to Satan.

The blasphemous cavil of the Pharisees, Mt 12:24. The Pharisees were a sort of men that pretended to more knowledge in, and zeal for, the divine law, than other people; yet they were the most inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine. They were proud of the reputation they had among the people; that fed their pride, supported their power, and filled their purses; and when they heard the people say, Is not this the Son of David? they were extremely irritated, more at that than at the miracle itself; this made them jealous of our Lord Jesus, and apprehensive, that as his interest in the people's esteem increased, theirs must of course be eclipsed and diminished; therefore they envied him, as Saul did his father David, because of what the women sang of him, 1Sa 18:7,8. Note, Those who bind up their happiness in the praise and applause of men, expose themselves to a perpetual uneasiness upon every favourable word that they hear said of any other. The shadow of honour followed Christ, who fled from it, and fled from the Pharisees, who were eager in the pursuit of it. They said, "This fellow does not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, and therefore is not the Son of David." Observe,

1. How scornfully they speak of Christ, this fellow; as if that precious name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, were not

worthy to be taken into their lips. It is an instance of their pride and superciliousness, and their diabolical envy, that the more people magnified Christ, the more industrious they were to vilify him. It is a bad thing to speak of good men with disdain because they are poor.

2. How blasphemously they speak of his miracles; they could not deny the matter of fact; it was as plain as the sun, that devils were cast out by the word of Christ; nor could they deny that it was an extraordinary thing, and supernatural. Being thus forced to grant the premises, they had no other way to avoid the conclusion, that this is the Son of David, than by suggesting that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub; that there was a compact between Christ and the devil; pursuant to that, the devil was not cast out, but did voluntarily retire, and give back by consent and with design: or as if, by an agreement with the ruling devil, he had power to cast out the inferior devils. No surmise could be more palpably false and vile than this; that he, who is Truth itself, should be in combination with the father of lies, to cheat the world. This was the last refuge, or subterfuge rather, or an obstinate infidelity, that was resolved to stand it out against the clearest conviction. Observe, Among the devils there is a prince, the ringleader of the apostasy from God and rebellion against him; but this prince is Beelzebub--the god of a fly, or a dunghill god. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! from an anger of light, to be a lord of flies! Yet this is the prince of the devils too, the chief of the gang of infernal spirits.

25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

26 and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?

27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.

Christ's reply to this base insinuation, Mt 12:25-30. Jesus knew their thoughts. Note, Jesus Christ knows what we are thinking at any time, knows what is in man; he understands our thoughts afar

off. It should seem that the Pharisees could not for shame speak it out, but kept it in their minds; they could not expect to satisfy the people with it; they therefore reserved it for the silencing of the convictions of their own consciences. Note, Many are kept off from their duty by that which they are ashamed to own, but which they cannot hide from Jesus Christ: yet it is probable that the Pharisees had whispered what they thought among themselves, to help to harden one another; but Christ's reply is said to be to their thoughts, because he knew with what mind, and from what principle, they said it; that they did not say it in their haste, but that it was the product of a rooted malignity.

Christ's reply to this imputation is copious and cogent, that every mouth may be stopped with sense and reason, before it be stopped with fire and brimstone. Here are three arguments by which he demonstrates the unreasonableness of this suggestion.

1. It would be very strange, and highly improbably, that Satan should be cast out by such a compact, because then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself; which, considering his subtlety, is not a thing to be imagined, Mt 12:25,26.

(a) Here is a known rule laid down, that in all societies a common ruin is the consequence of mutual quarrels: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every family too: Quæ enim domus tam stabilis est, quæ tam firma civitas, quæ non odiis atque dissidiis funditus everti possit?--For what family is so strong, what community so firm, as not to be overturned by enmity and dissension? Cic. Læl. 7. Divisions commonly end in desolations; if we clash, we break; if we divide one from another, we become an easy prey to a common enemy; much more if we bite and devour one another, shall we be consumed one of another, Ga 5:15. Churches and nations have known this by sad experience.

(b) The application of it to the case in hand (Mt 12:26), If Satan cast out Satan; if the prince of the devils should be at variance with the inferior devils, the whole kingdom and interest would soon be

broken; nay, if Satan should come into a compact with Christ, it must be to his own ruin; for the manifest design and tendency of Christ's preaching and miracles was to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, as a kingdom of darkness, wickedness, and enmity to God; and to set up, upon the ruins of it, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love. The works of the devil, as a rebel against God, and a tyrant over the souls of men, were destroyed by Christ; and therefore it was the most absurd thing imaginable, to think that Beelzebub should at all countenance such a design, or come into it: if he should fall in with Christ, how should then his kingdom stand? He would himself contribute to the overthrow of it. Note, The devil has a kingdom, a common interest, in opposition to God and Christ, which, to the utmost of his power, he will make to stand, and he will never come into Christ's interests; he must be conquered and broken by Christ, and therefore cannot submit and bend to him. What concord or communion can there be between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, Christ and Beelzebub? Christ will destroy the devil's kingdom, but he needs not do it by any such little arts and projects as that of a secret compact with Beelzebub; no, this victory must be obtained by nobler methods. Let the prince of the devils muster up all his forces, let him make use of all his powers and politics, and keep his interests in the closest confederacy, yet Christ will be too hard for his united force, and his kingdom shall not stand.

2. It was not at all strange, or improbable, that devils should be cast out by the Spirit of God; for,

(a) How otherwise do your children cast them out? There were those among the Jews who, by invocation of the name of the most high God, or the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did sometimes cast out devils. Josephus speaks of some in his time that did it; we read of Jewish exorcists (Ac 19:13), and of some that in Christ's name cast out devils, though they did not follow him (Mk 9:38), or were not faithful to him, Mt 7:22. These the Pharisees condemned not, but imputed what they did to the Spirit of God, and valued themselves and their nation upon it. It was therefore merely from

spite and envy to Christ, that they would own that others cast out devils by the Spirit of God, but suggest that he did it by compact with Beelzebub. Note, It is the way of malicious people, especially the malicious persecutors of Christ and Christianity, to condemn the same thing in those they hate, which they approve of and applaud in those they have a kindness for: the judgments of envy are made, not by things, but persons; not by reason, but prejudice. But those were very unfit to sit in Moses's seat, who knew faces, and knew nothing else in judgment: Therefore they shall be your judges; "This contradicting of yourselves will rise up in judgment against you at the last great day, and will condemn you." Note, In the last judgment, not only every sin, but every aggravation of it, will be brought into the account, and some of our notions that were right and good will be brought in evidence against us, to convict us of partiality.

(b) This casting out of devils was a certain token and indication of the approach and appearance of the kingdom of God (Mt 12:28); "But if it be indeed that I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, as certainly I do, then you must conclude, that though you are unwilling to receive it, yet the kingdom of the Messiah is now about to be set up among you." Other miracles that Christ wrought proved him sent of God, but this proved him sent of God to destroy the devil's kingdom and his works. Now that great promise was evidently fulfilled, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, Ge 3:15. "Therefore that glorious dispensation of the kingdom of God, which has been long expected, is now commenced; slight it at your peril." Note, [1.] The destruction of the devil's power is wrought by the Spirit of God; that Spirit who works to the obedience of faith, overthrows the interest of that spirit who works in the children of unbelief and disobedience. [2.] The casting out of devils is a certain introduction to the kingdom of God. If the devil's interest in a soul be not only checked by custom or external restraints, but sunk and broken by the Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, no doubt but the kingdom of God is come to that soul, the kingdom of grace, a blessed earnest of the kingdom of the glory.

3. The comparing of Christ's miracles, particularly this of casting out devils, with his doctrine, and the design and tendency of his holy religion, evidenced that he was so far from being in league with Satan, that he was at open enmity and hostility against him (Mt 12:29); How can one enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, and carry them away, except he first bind the strong man? And then he may do what he pleases with his goods. The world, that sat in darkness, and lay in wickedness, was in Satan's possession, and under his power, as a house in the possession and under the power of a strong man; so is every unregenerate soul; there Satan resides, there he rules. Now, (1.) The design of Christ's gospel was to spoil the devil's house, which, as a strong man, he kept in the world; to turn the people from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from this world to a better, from the power of Satan unto God (Ac 26:18); to alter the property of souls. (2.) Pursuant to this design, he bound the strong man, when he cast out unclean spirits by his word: thus he wrested the sword out of the devil's hand, that he might wrest the sceptre out of it. The doctrine of Christ teaches us how to construe his miracles, and when he showed how easily and effectually he could cast the devil out of people's bodies, he encouraged all believers to hope that, whatever power Satan might usurp and exercise in the souls of men, Christ by his grace would break it: he will spoil him, for it appears that he can bind him. When nations were turned from the service of idols to serve the living God, when some of the worst of sinners were sanctified and justified, and became the best of saints, then Christ spoiled the devil's house, and will spoil it more and more.

4. It is here intimated, that this holy war, which Christ was carrying on with vigour against the devil and his kingdom, was such as would not admit of a neutrality (Mt 12:30), He that is not with me is against me. In the little differences that may arise between the disciples of Christ among themselves, we are taught to lessen the matters in variance, and to seek peace, by accounting those who are not against us, to be with us (Lu 9:50); but in the great quarrel between Christ and the devil, no peace is to be sought, nor any such favourable construction to be made of any indifference in the

matter; he that is not hearty for Christ, will be reckoned with as really against him: he that is cold in the cause, is looked upon as an enemy. When the dispute is between God and Baal, there is no halting between two (1Ki 18:21), there is no trimming between Christ and Belial; for the kingdom of Christ, as it is eternally opposite to, so it will be eternally victorious over, the devil's kingdom; and therefore in this cause there is no sitting still with Gilead beyond Jordan, or Asher on the sea-shore, (Jdg 4:16,17), we must be entirely, faithfully, and immovably, on Christ's side; it is the right side, and will at last be the rising side. See Ex 32:26.

The latter clause is to the same purport: He that gathereth not with me scattereth. Note,

(a) Christ's errand into the world was to gather, to gather in his harvest, to gather in those whom the Father had given him, Joh 11:52,Eph 1:10.

(b) Christ expects and requires from those who are with him, that they gather with him; that they not only gather to him themselves, but do all they can in their places to gather others to him, and so to strengthen his interest.

(c) Those who will not appear, and act, as furtherers of Christ's kingdom, will be looked upon, and dealt with, as hinderers of it; if we gather not with Christ, we scatter; it is not enough, not to do hurt, but we must do good. Thus is the breach widened between Christ and Satan, to show that there was no such compact between them as the Pharisees whispered.

29 Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.

30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

31 Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

32 And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Christ speaks here concerning other wicked words, the products of corruption reigning in the heart, and breaking out thence, Mt 12:33-35. It was said (Mt 12:25) that Jesus knew their thoughts, and here he spoke with an eye to them, showing that it was not strange that they should speak so ill, when their hearts were so full of enmity and malice; which yet they often endeavoured to cloak and cover, by feigning themselves just men. Our Lord Jesus therefore points to the springs and heals them; let the heart be sanctified and it will appear in our words.

(a) The heart is the root, the language is the fruit (Mt 12:33); if the nature of the tree be good, it will bring forth fruit accordingly. Where grace is the reigning principle in the heart, the language will be the language of Canaan; and, on the contrary, whatever lust reigns in the heart it will break out; diseased lungs make an offensive breath: men's language discovers what country they are of, so likewise what manner of spirit they are of: "Either make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good; get pure hearts and then you will have pure lips and pure lives; or else the tree will be corrupt, and the fruit accordingly. You may make a crab-stock to become a good tree, by grafting into it a shoot from a good tree, and then the fruit will be good; but if the tree be still the same, plant it where you will, and water it how you will, the fruit will be still corrupt." Note, Unless the heart be transformed, the life will never be thoroughly reformed. These Pharisees were shy of speaking out their wicked thoughts of Jesus Christ; but Christ here intimates, how vain it was for them to seek to hide that root of bitterness in them, that bore this gall and wormwood, when they never sought to mortify it. Note, It should be more our care to be good really, than to seem good outwardly.

(b) The heart is the fountain, the words are the streams (Mt 12:34); Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, as the streams are the overflowings of the spring. A wicked heart is said to send forth wickedness, as a fountain casts forth her waters, Jer 6:7. A troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring, such as Solomon speaks of (Pr 25:26), must needs send forth muddy and unpleasant streams. Evil words are the natural, genuine product of an evil heart. Nothing but the salt of grace, cast into the spring, will heal the waters, season the speech, and purify the corrupt communications. This they wanted, they were evil; and how can ye, being evil, speak good things? They were a generation of vipers; John Baptist had called them so (Mt 3:7), and they were still the same; for can the Ethiopian change his skin? The people looked upon the Pharisees as a generation of saints, but Christ calls them a generation of vipers, the seed of the serpent, that had an enmity to Christ and his gospel. Now what could be expected from a generation of vipers, but that which is poisonous and malignant? Can the viper be otherwise than venomous? Note, Bad things may be expected from bad people, as said the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, 1Sa 24:13. The vile person will speak villany, Isa 32:6. Those who are themselves evil, have neither skill nor will to speak good things, as they should be spoken. Christ would have his disciples know what sort of men they were to live among, that they might know what to look for. They are as Ezekiel among scorpions (Eze 2:6), and must not think it strange if they be stung and bitten.

(c) The heart is the treasury, the words are the things brought out of that treasury (Mt 12:35); and from hence men's characters may be drawn, and may be judged of.

[1.] It is the character of a good man, that he has a good treasure in his heart, and from thence brings forth good things, as there is occasion. Graces, comforts, experiences, good knowledge, good affections, good resolutions, these are a good treasure in the heart; the word of God hidden there, the law of God written there, divine

truths dwelling and ruling thee, are a treasure there, valuable and suitable, kept safe and kept secret, as the stores of the good householder, but ready for use upon all occasions. A good man, thus furnished, will bring forth, as Joseph out of his stores; will be speaking and doing that which is good, for God's glory, and the edification of others. See Pr 10:11,13,14,20,21,31,32. This is bringing forth good things. Some pretend to good expenses that have not a good treasure--such will soon be bankrupts: some pretend to have a good treasure within, but give no proof of it: they hope they have it in them, and thank God, whatever their words and actions are, they have good hearts; but faith without works is dead: and some have a good treasure of wisdom and knowledge, but they are not communicative, they do not bring forth out of it: they have a talent, but know not how to trade with it. The complete Christian in this bears the image of God, that he both is good, and does good.

[2.] It is the character of an evil man, that he has an evil treasure in his heart, and out of it bringeth forth evil things. Lusts and corruptions dwelling and reigning in the heart are an evil treasure, out of which the sinner brings forth bad words and actions, to the dishonour of God, and the hurt of others. See Ge 6:5,12,Mt 15:18-20,Jam 1:15. But treasures of wickedness (Pr 10:2) will be treasures of wrath.

3. Christ speaks here concerning idle words, and shows what evil there is in them (Mt 12:36,37); much more is there in such wicked words as the Pharisees spoke. It concerns us to think much of the day of judgment, that that may be a check upon our tongues; and let us consider,

(a) How particular the account will be of tongue-sins in that day: even for every idle words, or discourse, that men speak, they shall give account. This intimates,

[1.] That God takes notice of every word we say, even that which we ourselves do not notice. See Ps 139:4. Not a word in my tongue

but thou knowest it: though spoken without regard or design, God takes cognizance of it.

[2.] That vain, idle, impertinent talk is displeasing to God, which tends not to any good purpose, is not good to any use of edifying; it is the product of a vain and trifling heart. These idle words are the same with that foolish talking and jesting which is forbidden, Eph 5:4. This is that sin which is seldom wanting in the multitude of words, unprofitable talk, Job 15:3.

[3.] We must shortly account for these idle words; they will be produced in evidence against us, to prove us unprofitable servants, that have not improved the faculties of reason and speech, which are part of the talents we are entrusted with. If we repent not of our idle words, and our account for them be not balanced by the blood of Christ, we are undone.

(b) How strict the judgment will be upon that account (Mt 12:37); By thy words thou shall be justified or condemned; a common rule in men's judgments, and here applied to God's. Note, The constant tenour of our discourse, according as it is gracious or not gracious, will be an evidence for us, or against us, at the great day. Those who seemed to be religious, but bridled not their tongue, will then be found to have put a cheat upon themselves with a vain religion, Jam 1:26. Some think that Christ here refers to that of Eliphaz (Job 15:6), Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I; or, rather, to that of Solomon (Pr 18:21), Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things:
and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.
36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall
give account thereof in the day of judgment.
37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be
condemned.

An Evil Generation Seeks a Sign

38 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

39 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah:

> Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet those who ask amiss, ask and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them to confirm their faith, as Abraham and Gideon; but denied to those who demanded them to excuse their unbelief.

40 for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah *is* here.

> It is probable that these Pharisees with whom Christ is here in discourse were not the same that cavilled at him (Mt 12:24), and would not credit the signs he gave; but another set of them, who saw that there was no reason to discredit them, but would not content themselves with the signs he gave, nor admit the evidence of them, unless he would give them such further proof as they should demand. Here is,
>
> I. Their address to him, Mt 12:38. They compliment him with the title of Master, pretending respect for him, when they intended to abuse him; all are not indeed Christ's servants, who call him Master. Their request is, We would see a sign from thee. It was highly reasonable that they should see a sign, that he should by miracles prove his divine mission: see Ex 4:8,9. He came to take down a model of religion that was set up by miracles, and therefore it was requisite he should produce the same credentials; but it was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when he had given so many signs already, that did abundantly prove him sent of God. Note, It is natural to proud men to prescribe to God, and then to make that

an excuse for not subscribing to him; but a man's offence will never be his defence.

II. His answer to this address, this insolent demand,

1. He condemns the demand, as the language of an evil and adulterous generation, Mt 12:39. He fastens the charge, not only on the scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers: they were an evil generation indeed, that not only hardened themselves against the conviction of Christ's miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles. They were an adulterous generation,

(a) As an adulterous brood; so miserably degenerated from the faith and obedience of their ancestors, that Abraham and Israel acknowledged them not. See Isa 57:3. Or,

(b) As an adulterous wife; they departed from that God, to whom by covenant they had been espoused: they were not guilty of the whoredom of idolatry, as they had been before the captivity, but they were guilty of infidelity, and all iniquity, and that is whoredom too: they did not look after gods of their own making, but they looked for signs of their own devising; and that was adultery.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign than he has already given them, but that of the prophet Jonas. Note, Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and humours. Those who ask amiss, ask, and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as to Abraham and Gideon; but were denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief.

Justly might Christ have said, They shall never see another miracle: but see his wonderful goodness;

(a) They shall have the same signs still repeated, for their further benefit, and more abundant conviction.

(b) They shall have one sign of a different kind from all these, and that is, the resurrection of Christ from the dead by his own power, called here the sign of the prophet Jonas this was yet reserved for their conviction, and was intended to be the great proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for by that he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Ro 1:4. That was such a sign as surpassed all the rest, completed and crowned them. "If they will not believe the former signs, they will believe this (Ex 4:9), and if this will not convince them, nothing will." And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift off that too, by saying, His disciples came and stole him away; for none are so incurably blind as those who are resolved they will not see.

Now this sign of the prophet Jonas he further explains here; (Mt 12:40) As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, and then came out again safe and well, thus Christ shall be so long in the grave, and then shall rise again.

[1.] The grave was to Christ as the belly of the fish was to Jonah; thither he was thrown, as a Ransom for lives ready to be lost in a storm; there he lay, as in the belly of hell (Jon 2:2), and seemed to be cast out of God's sight.

[2.] He continued in the grave just as long as Jonah continued in the fish's belly, three days and three nights; not three whole days and nights: it is probable, Jonah did not lie so long in the whale's belly, but part of three natural days (nychthemerai, the Greeks called them); he was buried in the afternoon of the sixth day of the week, and rose again in the morning of the first day; it is a manner of speech very usual; see 1Ki 20:29,Es 4:16,5:1,Lu 2:21. So long Jonah was a prisoner for his own sins, so long Christ was a Prisoner for ours. [3.] As Jonah in the whale's belly comforted himself with an assurance that yet he should look again toward God's holy temple (Jon 2:4), so Christ when he lay in the grave, is expressly

said to rest in hope, as one assured he should not see corruption, Ac 2:26,27. [4.] As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison, and came to the land of the living again, from the congregation of the dead (for dead things are said to be formed from under the waters, Job 26:5), so Christ on the third day should return to life, and rise out of his grave to send abroad the gospel to the Gentiles.

3. Christ takes this occasion to represent the sad character and condition of that generation in which he lived, a generation that would not be reformed, and therefore could not but be ruined; and he gives them their character, as it would stand in the day of judgment, under the full discoveries and final sentences of that day. Persons and things now appear under false colours; characters and conditions are here changeable: if therefore we would make a right estimate, we must take our measures from the last judgment; things are really, what they are eternally. Now Christ represents the people of the Jews,

(a) As a generation that would be condemned by the men of Nineveh, whose repenting at the preaching of Jonas would rise up in judgment against them, Mt 12:41. Christ's resurrection will be the sign of the prophet Jonas to them: but it will not have so happy an effect upon them, as that of Jonas had upon the Ninevites, for they were by it brought to such a repentance as prevented their ruin; but the Jews will be hardened in an unbelief that shall hasten their ruin; and in the day of judgment, the repentance of the Ninevites will be mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, and consequently the condemnation of those to whom Christ preached then, and of those to whom Christ is preached now; for this reason, because Christ is greater than Jonah.

[1.] Jonah was but a man, subject to like passions, to like sinful passions, as we are; but Christ is the Son of God.

[2.] Jonah was a stranger in Nineveh, he came among the strangers that were prejudiced against his country; but Christ came to his

own, when he preached to the Jews, and much more when he is preached among professing Christians, that are called by his name.

[3.] Jonah preached but one short sermon, and that with no great solemnity, but as he passed along the streets; Christ renews his calls, sat and taught, taught in the synagogues.

[4.] Jonah preached nothing but wrath and ruin within forty days, gave no instructions, directions, or encouragements, to repent: but Christ, besides the warning given us of our danger, has shown wherein we must repent, and assured us of acceptance upon our repentance, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[5.] Jonah wrought no miracle to confirm his doctrine, showed no good will to the Ninevites; but Christ wrought abundance of miracles, and all miracles of mercy: yet the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but the Jews were not wrought upon by Christ's preaching. Note, The goodness of some, who have less helps and advantages for their souls, will aggravate the badness of those who have much greater. Those who by the twilight discover the things that belong to their peace, will shame those who grope at noon-day.

(b) As a generation that would be condemned by the queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, Mt 12:42. The Ninevites would shame them for not repenting, the queen of Sheba for not believing in Christ. She came from a far country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet people will not be persuaded to come and hear the wisdom of Christ, though he is in every thing greater than Solomon.

[1.] The queen of Sheba had no invitation to come to Solomon, nor any promise of being welcome; but we are invited to Christ, to sit at his feet and hear his word.

[2.] Solomon was but a wise man, but Christ is wisdom itself, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom.

[3.] The queen of Sheba had many difficulties to break through; she was a woman, unfit for travel, the journey long and perilous; she was a queen, and what would become of her own country in her absence? We have no such cares to hinder us.

[4.] She could not be sure that it would be worth her while to go so far on this errand; fame uses to flatter men, and perhaps she might have in her own country or court wise men sufficient to instruct her; yet, having heard of Solomon's fame, she would see him; but we come not to Christ upon such uncertainties.

[5.] She came from the uttermost parts of the earth, but we have Christ among us, and his word nigh us: Behold he stands at the door, and knocks.

[6.] It should seem the wisdom the queen of Sheba came for was only philosophy and politics; but the wisdom that is to be had with Christ is wisdom to salvation.

[7.] She could only hear Solomon's wisdom; he could not give her wisdom: but Christ will give wisdom to those who come to him; nay, he will himself be made of God to them Wisdom; so that, upon all these accounts, if we do not hear the wisdom of Christ, the forwardness of the queen of Sheba to come and hear the wisdom of Solomon will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon.

(c) As a generation that were resolved to continue in the possession, and under the power, of Satan, notwithstanding all the methods that were used to dispossess him and rescue them. They are compared to one out of whom the devil is gone, but returns with double force, Mt 12:43-45. The devil is here called the unclean spirit, for he has lost all his purity, and delights in and promotes all manner of impurity among men. Now,

[1.] The parable represents his possessing men's bodies: Christ having lately cast out a devil, and they having said he had a devil, gave occasion to show how much they were under the power of Satan. This is a further proof that Christ did not cast out devils by compact with the devil, for then he would soon have returned again; but Christ's ejectment of him was final, and such as barred a re-entry: we find him charging the evil spirit to go out, and enter no more, Mk 9:25. Probably the devil was wont sometimes thus to sport with those he had possession of; he would go out, and then return again with more fury; hence the lucid intervals of those in that condition were commonly followed with the more violent fits. When the devil is gone out, he is uneasy, for he sleeps not except he have done mischief (Pr 4:16); he walks in dry places, like one that is very melancholy; he seeks rest but finds none, till he returns again. When Christ cast the legion out of the man, they begged leave to enter into the swine, where they went not long in dry places, but into the lake presently.

[2.] The application of the parable makes it to represent the case of the body of the Jewish church and nation: So shall it be with this wicked generation, that now resist, and will finally reject, the gospel of Christ. The devil, who by the labours of Christ and his disciples had been cast out of many of the Jews, sought for rest among the heathen, from whose persons and temples the Christians would every where expel him: so Dr. Whitby: or finding no where else in the heathen world such pleasant, desirable habitations, to his satisfaction, as here in the heart of the Jews: so Dr. Hammond: he shall therefore enter again into them, for Christ had not found admission among them, and they, by their prodigious wickedness and obstinate unbelief, were still more ready than ever to receive him; and then he shall take a durable possession here, and the state of this people is likely to be more desperately damnable (so Dr. Hammond) than it was before Christ came among them, or would have been if Satan had never been cast out.

The body of that nation is here represented, First, As an apostate people. After the captivity in Babylon, they began to reform, left

their idols, and appeared with some face of religion; but they soon corrupted themselves again: though they never relapsed into idolatry, they fell into all manner of impiety and profaneness, grew worse and worse, and added to all the rest of their wickedness a wilful contempt of, and opposition to, Christ and his gospel. Secondly, As a people marked for ruin. A new commission was passing the seals against that hypocritical nation, the people of God's wrath (like that, Isa 10:6), and their destruction by the Romans was likely to be greater than any other, as their sins had been more flagrant: then it was that wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:15,16. Let this be a warning to all nations and churches, to take heed of leaving their first love, of letting fall a good work of reformation begun among them, and returning to that wickedness which they seemed to have forsaken; for the last state of such will be worse than the first.

42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished.

45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Jesus' Mother and Brethren

46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

Christ's preaching was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to his hearers. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. Frequently, those who are nearest to the means of

knowledge and grace are most negligent. We are apt to neglect that which we think we may have any day, forgetting that to-morrow is not ours. We often meet with hinderances in our work from friends about us, and are taken off by care for the things of this life, from the concerns of our souls. Christ was so intent on his work, that no natural or other duty took him from it. Not that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents, or unkind to relations; but the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done. Let us cease from men, and cleave to Christ; let us look upon every Christian, in whatever condition of life, as the brother, sister, or mother of the Lord of glory; let us love, respect, and be kind to them, for his sake, and after his example.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

Many excellent, useful sayings came from the mouth of our Lord Jesus upon particular occasions; even his digressions were instructive, as well as his set discourses: as here,

Observe, I. How Christ was interrupted in his preaching by his mother and his brethren, that stood without, desiring to speak with him (Mt 12:40,47); which desire of theirs was conveyed to him through the crowd. It is needless to enquire which of his brethren they were that came along with his mother (perhaps they were those who did not believe in him, Joh 7:5); or what their business was; perhaps it was only designed to oblige him to break off, for fear he should fatigue himself, or to caution him to take heed of giving offence by his discourse to the Pharisees, and or involving himself in a difficulty; as if they could teach him wisdom.

1. He was as yet talking to the people. Note, Christ's preaching was talking; it was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to their capacity and case. What Christ had delivered had been cavilled at, and yet he went on. Note, The opposition we meet within our work, must not drive us from it. He left off talking with the Pharisees, for he saw he could do no good with them; but continued to talk to the common people, who, not having such a conceit of their knowledge as the Pharisees had, were willing to learn.

2. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. They had the advantage of his daily converse in private, and therefore were less mindful to attend upon his public preaching. Note, Frequently those who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace, are most negligent. Familiarity and easiness of access breed some degree of contempt. We are apt to neglect that this day, which we think we may have any day, for getting that it is only the present time we can be sure of; tomorrow is none of ours. There is too much truth in that common proverb, "The nearer the church, the further from God;" it is pity it should be so.

3. They not only would not hear him themselves, but they interrupted others that heard him gladly. The devil was a sworn enemy to our Saviour's preaching. He had sought to baffle his discourse by the unreasonable cavils of the scribes and Pharisees, and when he could not gain his point that way, he endeavoured to break it off by the unseasonable visits of relations. Note, We often meet with hindrances and obstructions in our work, by our friends that are about us, and are taken off by civil respects from our spiritual concerns. Those who really wish well to us and to our work, may sometimes, by their indiscretion, prove our back-friends, and impediments to us in our duty; as Peter was offensive to Christ, with his, "Master, spare thyself," when he thought himself very officious. The mother of our Lord desired to speak with him; it seemed she had not then learned to command her Son, as the iniquity and idolatry of the church of Rome has since pretended to teach her: nor was she so free from fault and folly as they would make her. It was Christ's prerogative, and not his mother's, to do every thing wisely, and well, and in its season. Christ once said to his mother, How is it that ye sought me? Wist he not, that I must be about my Father's business? And it was then said, she laid up that saying in her heart (Lu 2:49); but if she had remembered it now, she would not have given him this interruption when he was about his Father's business. Note, There is many a good truth that we thought was well laid up when we heard it, which yet is out of the way when we have occasion to use it.

II. How he resented this interruption, Mt 12:48-50.

1. He would not hearken to it; he was so intent upon his work, that no natural or civil respects should take him off from it. Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Not that natural affection is to be put off, or that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents, or unkind to other relations; but every thing is beautiful in its season, and the less duty must stand by, while the greater is done. When our regard to our relations comes in competition with the service of God, and the improving of an opportunity to do good, in such a case, we must say to our Father, I have not seen him, as Levi did, De 33:9. The nearest relations must be comparatively hated, that is, we must love them less than Christ (Lu 14:26), and our duty to God must have the preference. This Christ has here given us an example of; the zeal of God's house did so far eat him up, that it made him not only forget himself, but forget his dearest relations. And we must not take it ill of our friends, nor put it upon the score of their wickedness, if they prefer the pleasing of God before the pleasing of us; but we must readily forgive those neglects which may be easily imputed to a pious zeal for God's glory and others' good. Nay, we must deny ourselves and our own satisfaction, rather than do that which may any way divert our friends from, or distract them in, their duty to God.

2. He took that occasion to prefer his disciples, who were his spiritual kindred, before his natural relations as such: which was a good reason why he would not leave preaching to speak with his brethren. He would rather be profiting his disciples, than pleasing his relations. Observe,

(1.) The description of Christ's disciples. They are such as do the will of his Father; not only hear it, and know it, and talk of it, but do it; for doing the will of God is the best preparative for discipleship (Joh 7:17), and the best proof of it (Mt 7:21); that denominates us his disciples indeed. Christ does not say, "Whosoever shall do my will," for he came not to seek or do his own will distinct from his Father's: his will and his Father's are the same; but he refers us to his Father's will, because now in his present state and work he referred himself to it, Joh 6:38.

(2.) The dignity of Christ's disciples: The same is my brother, and sister, and mother. His disciples, that had left all to follow him,

and embraced his doctrine, were dearer to him than any that were akin to him according to the flesh. They had preferred Christ before their relations; they left their father (Mt 4:22,10:37); and now to make them amends, and to show that there was no love lost, he preferred them before his relations. Did not they hereby receive, in point of honour, a hundred fold? Mt 19:29. It was very endearing and very encouraging for Christ to say, Behold my mother and my brethren; yet it was not their privilege alone, this honour have all the saints. Note, All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, bear his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them, converses freely with them as his relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing that is fit for them: when he died he left them rich legacies, now he is in heaven he keeps up a correspondence with them, and will have them all with him at last, and will in nothing fail to do the kinsman's part (Ru 3:13), nor will ever be ashamed of his poor relations, but will confess them before men, before the angels, and before his Father.

49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Matthew-13

The Parable of the Sower

1 The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

When Christ preached this sermon; it was the same day that he preached the sermon in the foregoing chapter: so unwearied was he in doing good, and working the works of him that sent him. Note, Christ was for preaching both ends of the day, and has by his example recommended that practice to his church; we must in the morning sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand, Ec 11:6. An afternoon sermon well heard, will be so far from driving out the morning sermon, that it will rather clench it, and fasten the nail in a sure place. Though Christ had been in the morning opposed

and cavilled at by his enemies, disturbed and interrupted by his friends, yet he went on with his work; and in the latter part of the day, we do not find that he met with such discouragements. Those who with courage and zeal break through difficulties in God's service, will perhaps find them not so apt to recur as they fear. Resist them, and they will flee.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

To whom he preached; there were great multitudes gathered together to him, and they were the auditors; we do not find that any of the scribes or Pharisees were present. They were willing to hear him when he preached in the synagogue (Mt 12:9,14), but they thought it below them to hear a sermon by the sea-side, though Christ himself was the preacher: and truly he had better have their room than their company, for now they were absent, he went on quietly and without contradiction. Note, Sometimes there is most of the power of religion where there is least of the pomp of it: the poor receive the gospel. When Christ went to the sea-side, multitudes were presently gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court; where Christ is, there is the church, though it be by the sea-side. Note, Those who would get good by the word, must be willing to follow it in all its removes; when the ark shifts, shift after it. The Pharisees had been labouring, by base calumnies and suggestions, to drive the people off from following Christ, but they still flocked after him as much as ever. Note, Christ will be glorified in spite of all opposition; he will be followed.

Where he preached this sermon.

(1.) His meeting-place was the sea-side. He went out of the house (because there was no room for the auditory) into the open air. It was pity but such a Preacher should have had the most spacious, sumptuous, and convenient place to preach in, that could be devised, like one of the Roman theatres; but he was now in his state of humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he denied himself the honours due to him; as he had not a house of his own to live in, so

he had not a chapel of his own to preach in. By this he teaches us in the external circumstances of worship not to covet that which is stately, but to make the best of the conveniences which God in his providence allots to us. When Christ was born, he was crowded into the stable, and now to the sea-side, upon the strand, where all persons might come to him with freedom. He that was truth itself sought no corners (no adyta), as the pagan mysteries did. Wisdom crieth without, Pr 1:20,Joh 13:20.

(2.) His pulpit was a ship; not like Ezra's pulpit, that was made for the purpose (Ne 8:4); but converted to this use for want of a better. No place amiss for such a Preacher, whose presence dignified and consecrated any place: let not those who preach Christ be ashamed, though they have mean and inconvenient places to preach in. Some observe, that the people stood upon dry ground and firm ground, while the Preacher was upon the water in more hazard. Ministers are most exposed to trouble.

3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower
went forth to sow;
4 and when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and
devoured them up:

The parable of the sower draws its lessons from the four different kinds of soil rather than from the work of the sower. The preacher puts the message of the kingdom into people's hearts as a farmer puts seed into the ground. But people's hearts vary just as the soil in different places varies. Some people hear the message but do not understand it because they are not interested. Others show early interest but soon give up because they have no deep spiritual concern. Others are too worried about the affairs of everyday life. Only a few respond to the message in faith, but when they do their lives are changed and a spiritual harvest results (Mat_13:3b-9, 18-23; Mar_4:3-9, 13-20).

So it is with the hearts of men, whose different characters are here described by four sorts of ground. Careless, trifling hearers, are an easy prey to Satan; who, as he is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word,

if we take not care to keep it. Hypocrites, like the stony ground, often get the start of true Christians in the shows of profession. Many are glad to hear a good sermon, who do not profit by it. They are told of free salvation, of the believer's privileges, and the happiness of heaven; and, without any change of heart, without any abiding conviction of their own depravity, their need of a Saviour, or the excellence of holiness, they soon profess an unwarranted assurance. But when some heavy trial threatens them, or some sinful advantage may be had, they give up or disguise their profession, or turn to some easier system.

Worldly cares are fitly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse; they are good in their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that has much to do with them; they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, Heb_6:8. Worldly cares are great hinderances to our profiting by the word of God. The deceitfulness of riches does the mischief; they cannot be said to deceive us unless we put our trust in them, then they choke the good seed.

What distinguished the good ground was fruitfulness. By this true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites. Christ does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but none that could hinder its fruitfulness. All are not alike; we should aim at the highest, to bring forth most fruit. The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing God's word; and let us look to ourselves that we may know what sort of hearers we are.

5 some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith
they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:
6 and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root,
they withered away.
7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
8 but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold,
some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.
9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The Purpose of the Parables

10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

We have here the general reason why Christ taught in parables. The disciples were a little surprised at it, for hitherto, in his preaching, he had not much used them, and therefore they ask, Why speakest thou to them in parables? Because they were truly desirous that the people might hear with understanding. They do not say, Why speakest thou to us? (they knew how to get the parables explained) but to them. Note, We ought to be concerned for the edification of others, as well as for our own, by the word preached; and if ourselves be strong, yet to bear the infirmities of the weak.

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

To this question Christ answers largely, Mt 13:11-17, where he tells them, that therefore he preached by parables, because thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to them who were willingly ignorant; and thus the gospel would be a savour of life to some, and of death to others. A parable, like the pillar of cloud and fire, turns a dark side towards Egyptians, which confounds them, but a light side towards Israelites, which comforts them, and so answers a double intention. The same light directs the eyes of some, but dazzles the eyes of others.

This reason is laid down (Mt 13:11): Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. That is,

(a) The disciples had knowledge, but the people had not. You know already something of these mysteries, and need not in this familiar way to be instructed; but the people are ignorant, are yet but babes, and must be taught as such by plain similitudes, being yet incapable of receiving instruction in any other way: for though they have eyes, they know not how to use them; so some. Or,

(b) The disciples were well inclined to the knowledge of gospel mysteries, and would search into the parables, and by them would be led into a more intimate acquaintance with those mysteries; but the carnal hearers that rested in bare hearing, and would not be at the pains to look further, nor to ask the meaning of the parables, would be never the wiser, and so would justly suffer for their remissions. A parable is a shell that keeps good fruit for the diligent, but keeps it from the slothful. Note, There are mysteries in the kingdom of heaven, and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: Christ's incarnation, satisfaction, intercession, our justification and sanctification by union with Christ, and indeed the whole work of redemption, from first to last, are mysteries, which could never have been discovered but by divine revelation (1Co 15:51), were at this time discovered but in part to the disciples, and will never be fully discovered till the veil shall be rent; but the mysteriousness of gospel truth should not discourage us from, but quicken us in, our enquiries after it and searches into it.

[1.] It is graciously given to the disciples of Christ to be acquainted with these mysteries. Knowledge is the first gift of God, and it is a distinguishing gift (Pr 2:6); it was given to the apostles, because they were Christ's constant followers and attendants. Note, The nearer we draw to Christ, and the more we converse with him, the better acquainted we shall be with gospel mysteries.

[2.] It is given to all true believers, who have an experimental knowledge of the gospel mysteries, and that is without doubt the best knowledge: a principle of grace in the heart, is that which makes men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and in the faith of Christ, and so in the meaning of parables; and for want of that, Nicodemus, a master in Israel, talked of the new birth as a blind man of colours.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

that is, keeps; as a thing which he values. He will be rewarded by an increase of what he so much prizes.

who lets this go or lie unused, as a thing on which he sets no value.or as it is in Luke (Lu 8:18), "what he seemeth to have," or, thinketh he hath. This is a principle of immense importance, and, like other weighty sayings, appears to have been uttered by our Lord on more than one occasion, and in different connections. (See on Mt2 5:9). As a great ethical principle, we see it in operation everywhere, under the general law of habit; in virtue of which moral principles become stronger by exercise, while by disuse, or the exercise of their contraries, they wax weaker, and at length expire. The same principle reigns in the intellectual world, and even in the animal—if not in the vegetable also—as the facts of physiology sufficiently prove. Here, however, it is viewed as a divine ordination, as a judicial retribution in continual operation under the divine administration.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not;
and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

Some were willingly ignorant; and such were amused by the parables (Mt 13:13); because they seeing, see not. They had shut their eyes against the clear light of Christ's plainer preaching, and therefore were now left in the dark. Seeing Christ's person, they see not his glory, see no difference between him and another man; seeing his miracles, and hearing his preaching, they see not, they hear not with any concern or application; they understand neither. Note,

[1.] There are many that see the gospel light, and hear the gospel sound, but it never reaches their hearts, nor has it any place in them.

[2.] It is just with God to take away the light from those who shut their eyes against it; that such as will be ignorant, may be so; and God's dealing thus with them magnifies his distinguishing grace to his disciples.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;
and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:
15 for this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing,

and their eyes they have closed;
lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart,
and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Now in this the scripture would be fulfilled, Mt 13:14,15. It is quoted from Isa 6:9,10. The evangelical prophet that spoke most plainly of gospel grace, foretold the contempt of it, and the consequences of that contempt. It is referred to no less than six times in the New Testament, which intimates, that in gospel times spiritual judgments would be most common, which make least noise, but are most dreadful. That which was spoken of the sinners in Isaiah's time was fulfilled in those in Christ's time, and it is still fulfilling every day; for while the wicked heart of man keeps up the same sin, the righteous hand of God inflicts the same punishment. Here is,

First. A description of sinners' wilful blindness and hardness, which is their sin. This people's heart is waxed gross; it is fattened, so the word is; which denotes both sensuality and senselessness (Ps 119:70); secure under the word and rod of God, and scornful as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, De 32:15. And when the heart is thus heavy, no wonder that the ears are dull of hearing; the whispers of the Spirit they hear not at all; the loud calls of the word, though the word be nigh them, they regard not, nor are at all affected by them: they stop their ears, Ps 58:4,5. And because they are resolved to be ignorant, they shut both the learning senses; for their eyes also they have closed, resolved that they would not see light come into the world, when the Son of Righteousness arose, but they shut their windows, because they loved darkness rather than light, Joh 3:19,2Pe 3:5.

Secondly, A description of that judicial blindness, which is the just punishment of this. "By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; what means of grace you have, shall be to no purpose to you; though, in mercy to others, they are continued, yet in judgment to you, the blessing upon them is denied." The saddest condition a man can be in on this side hell, is to sit under the most lively ordinances with a dead, stupid, untouched heart. To hear God's

word, and see his providences, and yet not to understand and perceive his will, either in the one or in the other, is the greatest sin and the greatest judgment that can be. Observe, It is God's work to give an understanding heart, and he often, in a way of righteous judgment, denies it to those to whom he has given the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, in vain. Thus does God choose sinners' delusions (Isa 66:4), and bind them over to the greatest ruin, by giving them up to their own hearts' lusts (Ps 81:11,12); let them alone (Ho 4:17); my Spirit shall not always strive, Ge 6:3.

Thirdly, The woeful effect and consequence of this; Lest at any time they should see. They will not see because they will not turn; and God says that they shall not see, because they shall not turn: lest they should be converted, and I should heal them. Note,

1. That seeing, hearing, and understanding, are necessary to conversion; for God, in working grace, deals with men as men, as rational agents; he draws with the cords of a man, changes the heart by opening the eyes, and turns from the power of Satan unto God, by turning first from darkness to light, (Ac 26:18).

2. All those who are truly converted to God, shall certainly be healed by him. "If they be converted I shall heal them, I shall save them:" so that if sinners perish, it is not to be imputed to God, but to themselves; they foolishly expected to be healed, without being converted.

3. It is just with God to deny his grace to those who have long and often refused the proposals of it, and resisted the power of it. Pharaoh, for a good while, hardened his own heart (Ex 8:15,32), and afterwards God hardened it, Mt 9:12,10:20. Let us therefore fear, lest by sinning against the divine grace, we sin it away.

16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them;* and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

Others were effectually called to be the disciples of Christ, and were truly desirous to be taught of him; and they were instructed, and made to improve greatly in knowledge, by these parables, especially when they were expounded; and by them the things of God were made more plain and easy, more intelligible and familiar, and more apt to be remembered (Mt 13:16,17). Your eyes see, your ears hear. They saw the glory of God in Christ's person; they heard the mind of God in Christ's doctrine; they saw much, and were desirous to see more, and thereby were prepared to receive further instruction; they had opportunity for it, by being constant attendants on Christ, and they should have it from day to day, and grace with it. Now this Christ speaks of,

[1.] As a blessing; "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; it is your happiness, and it is a happiness for which you are indebted to the peculiar favour and blessing of God." It is a promised blessing, that in the days of the Messiah the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, Isa 32:3. The eyes of the meanest believer that knows experimentally the grace of Christ, are more blessed than those of the greatest scholars, the greatest masters in experimental philosophy, that are strangers to God; who, like the other gods they serve, have eyes, and see not. Blessed are your eyes. Note, True blessedness is entailed upon the right understanding and due improvement of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The hearing ear and the seeing eye are God's work in those who are sanctified; they are the work of his grace (Pr 20:12), and they are a blessed work, which shall be fulfilled with power, when those who now see through a glass darkly, shall see face to face. It was to illustrate this blessedness that Christ said so much of the misery of those who are left in ignorance; they have eyes and see not; but blessed are your eyes. Note, The knowledge of Christ is a distinguishing favour to those who have it, and upon that account it lays under the greater obligations; see Joh 14:22. The apostles were to teach others, and therefore were themselves blessed with the clearest discoveries of divine truth. The watchmen shall see eye to eye, Isa 52:8.

[2.] As a transcendent blessing, desired by, but not granted to, many prophets and righteous men, Mt 13:17. The Old-Testament saints, who had some glimpses, some glimmerings of gospel light, coveted earnestly further discoveries. They had the types, shadows, and prophecies, of those things but longed to see the Substance, that glorious end of those things which they could not steadfastly look unto; that glorious inside of those things which they could not look into. They desired to see the great Salvation, the Consolation of Israel, but did not see it, because the fulness of time was not yet come. Note, First, Those who know something of Christ, cannot but covet to know more. Secondly, The discoveries of divine grace are made, even to prophets and righteous men, but according to the dispensation they are under. Though they were the favourites of heaven, with whom God's secret was, yet they have not seen the things which they desired to see, because God had determined not to bring them to light yet; and his favours shall not anticipate his counsels. There was then, as there is still, a glory to be revealed; something in reserve, that they without us should not be made perfect, Heb 11:40. Thirdly, For the exciting of our thankfulness, and the quickening of our diligence, it is good for us to consider what means we enjoy, and what discoveries are made to us, now under the gospel, above what they had, and enjoyed, who lived under the Old-Testament dispensation, especially in the revelation of the atonement for sin; see what are the advantages of the New Testament above the Old (2Co 3:7,Heb 12:18); and see that our improvements be proportionable to our advantages.

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Sower

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it;* which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

> This well expresses the surprise, disappointment, and anxiety of Christ's faithful servants and people at the discovery of "false brethren" among the members of the Church.

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

> Compare with this the question of James and John (Lu 9:54), "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume" those Samaritans? In this kind of zeal there is usually a large mixture of carnal heat. (See Jam 1:20).

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

> Nothing could more clearly or forcibly teach the difficulty of distinguishing the two classes, and the high probability that in the attempt to do so these will be confounded/so confusing/.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

> In the present world those who are in the kingdom of God live alongside those who are not. This was contrary to popular Jewish thinking, which expected the kingdom to come in one mighty act

that would destroy all enemies and set up God's universal rule of righteousness and peace. Jesus points out that his kingdom is in the world already, but it will have its climax at the end of world history.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is
like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:
32 which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest
among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and
lodge in the branches thereof.

Here is the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, Mt 13:31,32. The scope of this parable is to show, that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase. In this way the gospel church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world; in this way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on in particular persons.

Now concerning the work of the gospel, observe,

1. That it is commonly very weak and small at first, like a grain of mustard-seed, which is one of the least of all seeds. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up, made but a small figure; Christ and the apostles, compared with the grandees of the world, appeared like a grain of mustard-seed, the weak things of the world. In particular places, the first breaking out of the gospel light is but as the dawning of the day; and in particular souls, it is at first the day of small things, like a bruised reed. Young converts are like lambs that must be carried in his arms, Isa 40:11. There is a little faith, but there is much lacking in it (1Th 3:10), and the groanings such as cannot be uttered, they are so small; a principle of spiritual life, and some motion, but scarcely discernible.

2. That yet it is growing and coming on. Christ's kingdom strangely got ground; great accessions were made to it; nations were born at once, in spite of all the oppositions it met with from hell and earth.

In the soul where grace is true it will grow really, though perhaps insensibly. A grain of mustard-seed is small, but however it is seed, and has in it a disposition to grow. Grace will be getting ground, shining more and more, Pr 4:18. Gracious habits confirmed, actings quickened, and knowledge more clear, faith more confirmed, love more inflamed; here is the seed growing.

3. That it will at last come to a great degree of strength and usefulness; when it is grown to some maturity, it becomes a tree, much larger in those countries than in ours. The church, like the vine brought out of Egypt, has taken root, and filled the earth, Ps 80:9-11. The church is like a great tree, in which the fowls of the air do lodge; God's people have recourse to it for food and rest, shade and shelter. In particular persons, the principle of grace, if true, will persevere and be perfected at last: growing grace will be strong grace, and will bring much to pass. Grown Christians must covet to be useful to others, as the mustard-seed when grown is to the birds; that those who dwell near or under their shadow may be the better for them, Ho 14:7.

The Parable of the Leaven

33 Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

The scope of this is much the same with that of the foregoing parable, to show that the gospel should prevail and be successful by degrees, but silently and insensibly; the preaching of the gospel is like leaven, and works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it.

1. A woman took this leaven; it was her work. Ministers are employed in leavening places, in leavening souls, with the gospel. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we have this treasure in such vessels.

2 The leaven was hid in three measures of meal. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumbled and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is three measures of meal, a great quantity, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The meal must be kneaded, before it receive the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it. The leaven must be hid in the heart (Ps 119:11), not so much for secrecy (for it will show itself) as for safety; our inward thought must be upon it, we must lay it up, as Mary laid up the sayings of Christ, Lu 2:51. When the woman hides the leaven in the meal, it is with an intention that it should communicate its taste and relish to it; so we must treasure up the word in our souls, that we may be sanctified by it, Joh 17:17.

3. The leaven thus hid in the dough, works there, it ferments; the word is quick and powerful, Heb 4:12. The leaven works speedily, so does the word, and yet gradually. What a sudden change did Elijah's mantle make upon Elisha! 1Ki 19:20. It works silently and insensibly (Mk 4:26), yet strongly and irresistibly: it does its work without noise, for so is the way of the Spirit, but does it without fail. Hide but the leaven in the dough, and all the world cannot hinder it from communicating its taste and relish to it, and yet none sees how it is done, but by degrees the whole is leavened.

(a) Thus it was in the world. The apostles, by their preaching, hid a handful of leaven in the great mass of mankind, and it had a strange effect; it put the world into a ferment, and in a sense turned it upside down (Ac 17:6), and by degrees made a wonderful change in the taste and relish of it: the savour of the gospel was manifested in every place, 2Co 2:14,Ro 15:19. It was thus effectual, not by outward force, and therefore not by any such force resistible and conquerable, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, who works, and none can hinder.

(b) Thus it is in the heart. When the gospel comes into the soul,

[1.] It works a change, not in the substance; the dough is the same, but in the quality; it makes us to savour otherwise than we have done, and other things to savour with us otherwise than they used to do, Ro 8:5.

[2.] It works a universal change; it diffuses itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul, and alters the property even of the members of the body, Ro 6:13.

[3.] This change is such as makes the soul to partake of the nature of the word, as the dough does of the leaven. We are delivered into it as into a mould (Ro 6:17), changed into the same image (2Co 3:18), like the impression of the seal upon the wax. The gospel savours of God, and Christ, and free grace, and another world, and these things now relish with the soul. It is a word of faith and repentance, holiness and love, and these are wrought in the soul by it. This savour is communicated insensibly, for our life is hid; but inseparably, for grace is a good part that shall never be taken away from those who have it. When the dough is leavened, then to the oven with it; trials and afflictions commonly attend this change; but thus saints are fitted to be bread for our Master's table.

This parable, while it teaches the same general truth as the foregoing one, holds forth, perhaps, rather the inward growth of the kingdom, while "the Mustard Seed" seems to point chiefly to the outward. It being a woman's work to knead, it seems a refinement to say that "the woman" here represents the Church, as the instrument of depositing the leaven. Nor does it yield much satisfaction to understand the "three measures of meal" of that threefold division of our nature into "spirit, soul, and body," alluded to in 1Th 5:23, or of the threefold partition of the world among the three sons of Noah (Ge 10:32), as some do. It yields more real satisfaction to see in this brief parable just the all-penetrating and assimilating quality of the Gospel, by virtue of which it will yet

mould all institutions and tribes of men, and exhibit over the whole earth one "kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

Jesus' Use of Parables

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

The disciples' request to their Master to have this parable expounded to them (Mt 13:36); Jesus sent the multitude away; and it is to be feared many of them went away no wiser than they came; they had heard a sound of words, and that was all. It is sad to think how many go away from sermons without the word of grace in their hearts. Christ went into the house, not so much for his own repose, as for particular converse with his disciples, whose instruction he chiefly intended in all his preaching. He was ready to do good in all places; the disciples laid hold on the opportunity, and they came to him. Note, Those who would be wise for every thing else, must be wise to discern and improve their opportunities, especially of converse with Christ, of converse with him alone, in secret meditation and prayer. It is very good, when we return from the solemn assembly, to talk over what we have heard there, and by familiar discourse to help one another to understand and remember it, and to be affected with it; for we lose the benefit of many a sermon by vain and unprofitable discourse after it. See Lu 24:32,De 6:6,7. It is especially good, if it may be, to ask of the ministers of the word the meaning of the word, for their lips should keep knowledge, Mal 2:7. Private conference would contribute much to

our profiting by public preaching. Nathan's Thou art the man, was that which touched David to the heart.

The disciples' request to their Master was, Declare unto us the parable of the tares. This implied an acknowledgement of their ignorance, which they were not ashamed to make. It is probable they apprehended the general scope of the parable, but they desired to understand it more particularly, and to be assured that they took it right. Note, Those are rightly disposed for Christ's teaching, that are sensible of their ignorance, and sincerely desirous to be taught. He will teach the humble (Ps 25:8,9), but will for this be enquired of. If any man lack instruction, let him ask it of God. Christ had expounded the foregoing parable unasked, but for the exposition of this they ask him. Note, The mercies we have received must be improved, both for direction what to pray for, and for our encouragement in prayer. The first light and the first grace are given in a preventing way, further degrees of both which must be daily prayed for.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

In the parable of the Sower, "the seed is the word of God" (Lu 8:11). But here that word has been received into the heart, and has converted him that received it into a new creature, a "child of the kingdom," according to that saying of James (Jam 1:18), "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." It is worthy of notice that this vast field of the world is here said to be Christ's own—"His field," says the parable. (See Ps 2:8).

The enemy, after sowing his "tares," "went his way"—his dark work soon done, but taking time to develop its true character.

The harvest is the end of the world—the period of Christ's second coming, and of the judicial separation of the righteous and the

wicked. Till then, no attempt is to be made to effect such separation. But to stretch this so far as to justify allowing openly scandalous persons to remain in the communion of the Church, is to wrest the teaching of this parable to other than its proper design, and go in the teeth of apostolic injunctions (1Co 5:1-13).

The tares are the children of the wicked one. Here is the character of sinners, hypocrites, and all profane and wicked people. [1.] They are the children of the devil, as a wicked one. Though they do not own his name, yet they bear his image, do his lusts, and from him they have their education; he rules over them, he works in them, Eph 2:2,Joh 8:44. [2.] They are tares in the field of this world; they do no good, they do hurt; unprofitable in themselves, and hurtful to the good seed, both by temptation and persecution: they are weeds in the garden, have the same rain, and sunshine, and soil, with the good plants, but are good for nothing: the tares are among the wheat. Note, God has so ordered it, that good and bad should be mixed together in this world, that the good may be exercised, the bad left inexcusable, and a difference made between earth and heaven.

39 the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

(5.) The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil; a sworn enemy to Christ and all that is good, to the glory of the good God, and the comfort and happiness of all good men. He is an enemy to the field of the world, which he endeavors to make his own, by sowing his tares in it. Ever since he became a wicked spirit himself, he has been industrious to promote wickedness, and has made it his business, aiming therein to counter-work Christ.

Now concerning the sowing of the tares, observe in the parable,

[1.] That they were sown while men slept. Magistrates slept, who by their power, ministers slept, who by their preaching, should have prevented this mischief. Note, Satan watches all opportunities, and lays hold of all advantages, to propagate vice and profaneness. The prejudice he does to particular persons is when reason and

conscience sleep, when they are off their guard; we have therefore need to be sober, and vigilant. It was in the night, for that is the sleeping time. Note, Satan rules in the darkness of this world; that gives him an opportunity to sow tares, Ps 104:20. It was while men slept; and there is no remedy but men must have some sleeping time. Note, It is as impossible for us to prevent hypocrites being in the church, as it is for the husbandman, when he is asleep, to hinder an enemy from spoiling his field.

[2.] The enemy, when he had sown the tares, went his way (Mt 13:25), that it might not be known who did it. Note, When Satan is doing the greatest mischief, he studies most to conceal himself; for his design is in danger of being spoiled if he be seen in it; and therefore, when he comes to sow tares, he transforms himself into an angel of light, 2Co 11:13,14. He went his way, as if he had done no harm; such is the way of the adulterous woman, Pr 30:20. Observe, Such is the proneness of fallen man to sin, that if the enemy sow the tares, he may even go his way, they will spring up of themselves and do hurt; whereas, when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced, or it will come to nothing.

[3.] The tares appeared not till the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit, Mt 13:26. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the hearts of men, which is long hid under the cloak of a plausible profession, but breaks out at last. As the good seed, so the tares, lie a great while under the clods, and at first springing up, it is hard to distinguish them; but when a trying time comes, when fruit is to be brought forth, when good is to be done that has difficulty and hazard attending it, then you will return and discern between the sincere and the hypocrite: then you may say, This is wheat, and that is tares.

[4.] The servants, when they were aware of it, complained to their master (Mt 13:27); Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? No doubt he did; whatever is amiss in the church, we are sure it is not of Christ: considering the seed which Christ sows, we may well ask, with wonder, Whence should these tares come? Note, The rise

of errors, the breaking out of scandals, and the growth of profaneness, are matter of great grief to all the servants of Christ; especially to his faithful ministers, who are directed to complain of it to him whose the field is. It is sad to see such tares, such weeds, in the garden of the Lord; to see the good soil wasted, the good seed choked, and such a reflection cast on the name and honour of Christ, as if his field were no better than the field of the slothful, all grown over with thorns.

[5.] The Master was soon aware whence it was (Mt 13:28); An enemy has done this. He does not lay the blame upon the servants; they could not help it, but had done what was in their power to prevent it. Note, The ministers of Christ, that are faithful and diligent, shall not be judged of Christ, and therefore should not be reproached by men, for the mixtures of bad with good, hypocrites with the sincere, in the field of the church. It must needs be that such offences will come; and they shall not be laid to our charge, if we do our duty, though it have not the desired success. Though they sleep, if they do not love sleep; though tares be sown, if they do not sow them nor water them, nor allow of them, the blame shall not lie at their door.

[6.] The servants were very forward to have these tares rooted up. "Wilt thou that we go and do it presently?" Note, The over-hasty and inconsiderate zeal of Christ's servants, before they have consulted with their Master, is sometimes ready, with the hazard of the church, to root out all that they presume to be tares: Lord, wilt thou that we call for fire from heaven?

[7.] The Master very wisely prevented this (Mt 13:29); Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Note, It is not possible for any man infallibly to distinguish between tares and wheat, but he may be mistaken; and therefore such is the wisdom and grace of Christ, that he will rather permit the tares, than any way endanger the wheat. It is certain, scandalous offenders are to be censured, and we are to withdraw from them; those who are openly the children of the wicked one, are not to be admitted to

special ordinances; yet it is possible there may be a discipline, either so mistaken in its rules, or so over-nice in the application of them, as may prove vexatious to many that are truly godly and conscientious. Great caution and moderation must be used in inflicting and continuing church censures, lest the wheat be trodden down, if not plucked up. The wisdom from above, as it is pure, so it is peaceable, and those who oppose themselves must not be cut off, but instructed, and with meekness, 2Ti 2:25. The tares, if continued under the means of grace, may become good corn; therefore have patience with them.

(6.) The harvest is the end of the world, Mt 13:39. This world will have an end; though it continue long, it will not continue always; time will shortly be swallowed up in eternity. At the end of the world, there will be a great harvest-day, a day of judgment; at harvest all is ripe and ready to be cut down: both good and bad are ripe at the great-day, Re 6:11. It is the harvest of the earth, Re 14:15. At harvest the reapers cut down all before them; not a field, not a corner, is left behind; so at the great day all must be judged (Re 20:12,13); God has set a harvest (Ho 6:11), and it shall not fail, Ge 8:22. At harvest every man reaps as he sowed; every man's ground, and seed, and skill, and industry, will be manifested: see Ga 6:7,8. Then they who sowed precious seed, will come again with rejoicing (Ps 126:5,6), with the joy of harvest (Isa 9:3); when the sluggard, who would not plough by reason of cold, shall beg, and have nothing (Pr 20:4); shall cry, Lord, Lord, but in vain; when the harvest of those who sowed to the flesh, shall be a day of grief, and of desperate sorrow, Isa 17:11.

(7.) The reapers are the angels: they shall be employed, in the great day, in executing Christ's righteous sentences, both of approbation and condemnation, as ministers of his justice, Mt 25:31. The angels are skilful, strong, and swift, obedient servants to Christ, holy enemies to the wicked, and faithful friends to all the saints, and therefore fit to be thus employed. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and the angels will not be unpaid for their attendance; for he that

soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together (Joh 4:36); that is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God.

(8.) Hell-torments are the fire, into which the tares shall then be cast, and in which they shall be burned. At the great day a distinction will be made, and with it a vast difference; it will be a notable day indeed.

[1.] The tares will then be gathered out: The reapers (whose primary work it is to gather in the corn) shall be charged first to gather out the tares. Note, Though good and bad are together in this world undistinguished, yet at the great day they shall be parted; no tares shall then be among the wheat; no sinners among the saints: then you shall plainly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here sometimes it is hard to do, Mal 3:18,4:1. Christ will not bear always, Ps 50:1, &c. They shall gather out of his kingdom all wicked things that offend, and all wicked persons that do iniquity: when he begins, he will make a full end. All those corrupt doctrines, worships, and practices, which have offended, have been scandals to the church, and stumbling-blocks to men's consciences, shall be condemned by the righteous Judge in that day, and consumed by the brightness of his coming; all the wood, hay, and stubble (1Co 3:12); and then woe to them that do iniquity, that make a trade of it, and persist in it; not only those in the last age of Christ's kingdom upon earth, but those in every age. Perhaps here is an allusion to Zep 1:3, I will consume the stumbling-blocks with the wicked.

[2.] They will then be bound in bundles, Mt 13:30. Sinners of the same sort will be bundled together in the great day: a bundle of atheists, a bundle of epicures, a bundle of persecutors, and a great bundle of hypocrites. Those who have been associates in sin, will be so in shame and sorrow; and it will be an aggravation of their misery, as the society of glorified saints will add to their bliss. Let us pray, as David, Lord, gather not my soul with sinners (Ps 26:9), but let it be bound in the bundle of life, with the Lord our God, 1Sa 25:29.

[3.] They will be cast into a furnace of fire; such will be the end of wicked, mischievous people, that are in the church as tares in the field; they are fit for nothing but fire; to it they shall go, it is the fittest place for them. Note, Hell is a furnace of fire, kindled by the wrath of God, and kept burning by the bundles of tares cast into it, who will be ever in the consuming, but never consumed. But he slides out of the metaphor into a description of those torments that are designed to be set forth by it: There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth; comfortless sorrow, and an incurable indignation at God, themselves, and one another, will be the endless torture of damned souls. Let us therefore, knowing these terrors of the Lord, be persuaded not to do iniquity.

(9.) Heaven is the barn into which all God's wheat shall be gathered in that harvest-day. But gather the wheat into my barn: so it is in the parable, Mt 13:30. Note,

[1.] In the field of this world good people are the wheat, the most precious grain, and the valuable part of the field.

[2.] This wheat shall shortly be gathered, gathered from among the tares and weeds: all gathered together in a general assembly, all the Old-Testament saints, all the New-Testament saints, not one missing. Gather my saints together unto me, Ps 50:5.

[3.] All God's wheat shall be lodged together in God's barn: particular souls are housed at death as a shock of corn (Job 5:26), but the general in-gathering will be at the end of time: God's wheat will then be put together, and no longer scattered; there will be sheaves of corn, as well as bundles of tares: they will then be secured, and no longer exposed to wind and weather, sin and sorrow: no longer afar off, and at a great distance, in the field, but near, in the barn. Nay, heaven is a garner (Mt 3:12), in which the wheat will not only be separated from the tares of ill companions, but sifted from the chaff of their own corruptions.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
42 and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

as if they had been under a cloud during the present association with ungodly pretenders to their character, and claimants of their privileges, and obstructors of their course.

In the explanation of the parable, this is gloriously represented (Mt 13:43); Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. First, It is their present honour, that God is their Father. Now are we the sons of God (1Jo 3:2); our Father in heaven is King there. Christ, when he went to heaven, went to his Father, and our Father, Joh 20:17. It is our Father's house, nay, it is our Father's palace, his throne, Re 3:21. Secondly, The honour in reserve for them is, that they shall shine forth as the sun in that kingdom. Here they are obscure and hidden (Col 3:3), their beauty is eclipsed by their poverty, and the meanness of their outward condition; their own weaknesses and infirmities, and the reproach and disgrace cast upon them, cloud them; but then they shall shine forth as the sun from behind a dark cloud; at death they shall shine forth to themselves; at the great day they will shine forth publicly before all the world, their bodies will be made like Christ's glorious body: they shall shine by reflection, with a light borrowed from the Fountain of light; their sanctification will be perfected, and their justification published; God will own them for his children, and will produce the record of all their services and sufferings for his name: they shall shine as the sun, the most glorious of all visible beings. The glory of the saints is in the Old Testament compared to that of the firmament and the stars, but here to that of the sun; for life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the gospel, than under the law. Those who shine as lights in this world, that God may be glorified, shall shine as the sun in the other world, that they may be glorified. Our Saviour concludes, as before, with a demand of attention; Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. These

are things which it is our happiness to hear of, and our duty to hearken to.

The Hidden Treasure

44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

That of the treasure hid in the field. Hitherto he had compared the kingdom of heaven to small things, because its beginning was small; but, lest any should thence take occasion to think meanly of it, in this parable and the next he represents it as of great value in itself, and of great advantage to those who embrace it, and are willing to come up to its terms; it is here likened to a treasure hid in the field, which, if we will, we may make our own.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Treasure; in him there is an abundance of all that which is rich and useful, and will be a portion for us: all fulness (Col 1:19,Joh 1:16): treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), of righteousness, grace, and peace; these are laid up for us in Christ; and, if we have an interest in him, it is all our own.

2 The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid: it is hid in the word of the gospel, both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament gospel. In gospel ordinances it is hid as the milk in the breast, the marrow in the bone, the manna in the dew, the water in the well (Isa 12:3), the honey in the honey-comb. It is hid, not in a garden enclosed, or a spring shut up, but in a field, an open field; whoever will, let him come, and search the scriptures; let him dig in this field (Pr 2:4); and whatever royal mines we find, they are all our own, if we take the right course.

3. It is a great thing to discover the treasure hid in this field, and the unspeakable value of it. The reason why so many slight the gospel, and will not be at the expense, and run the hazard, of entertaining it, is because they look only upon the surface of the field, and judge

by that, and so see no excellency in the Christian institutes above those of the philosophers; nay, the richest mines are often in grounds that appear most barren; and therefore they will not so much as bid for the field, much less come up to the price. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? What is the Bible more than other good books? The gospel of Christ more than Plato's philosophy, or Confucius's morals: but those who have searched the scriptures, so as in them to find Christ and eternal life (Joh 5:39), have discovered such a treasure in this field as makes it infinitely more valuable.

4. Those who discern this treasure in the field, and value it aright, will never be easy till they have made it their own upon any terms. He that has found this treasure, hides it, which denotes a holy jealousy, lest we come short (Heb 4:1), looking diligently (Heb 12:15), lest Satan come between us and it. He rejoices in it, though as yet the bargain be not made; he is glad there is such a bargain to be had, and that he is in a fair way to have an interest in Christ; that the matter is in treaty: their hearts may rejoice, who are yet but seeking the Lord, Ps 105:3. He resolves to buy this field: they who embrace gospel offers, upon gospel terms, buy this field; they make it their own, for the sake of the unseen treasure in it. It is Christ in the gospel that we are to have an eye to; we need not go up to heaven, but Christ in the word is nigh us. And so intent he is upon it, that he sells all to buy this field: they who would have saving benefit by Christ, must be willing to part with all, that they may make it sure to themselves; must count every thing but loss, that they may win Christ, and be found in him.

The Pearl of Great Price

45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls:
46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

That of the pearl of price (Mt 13:45,46), which is to the same purport with the former, of the treasure. The dream is thus doubled, for the thing is certain. Note,

1. All the children of men are busy, seeking goodly pearls: one would be rich, another would be honourable, another would be learned; but the most are imposed upon, and take up with counterfeits for pearls.

2. Jesus Christ is a Pearl of great price, a Jewel of inestimable value, which will make those who have it rich, truly rich, rich toward God; in having him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever.

3. A true Christian is a spiritual merchant, that seeks and finds this pearl of price; that does not take up with any thing short of an interest in Christ, and, as one that is resolved to be spiritually rich, trades high: He went and bought that pearl; did not only bid for it, but purchased it. What will it avail us to know Christ, if we do not know him as ours, made to us wisdom? 1Co 1:30.

4. Those who would have a saving interest in Christ, must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though ever so dear to us.

The Net

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea,
and gathered of every kind:
48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the
good into vessels, but cast the bad away.
49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever
the wicked from among the just,
50 and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and
gnashing of teeth.

1. Here is the parable itself. Where note,

(a) The world is a vast sea, and the children of men are things creeping innumerable, both small and great, in that sea, Ps 104:25. Men in their natural state are like the fishes of the sea that have no ruler over them, Hab 1:14.

(b) The preaching of the gospel is the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for his glory who has the sovereignty of the sea. Ministers are fishers of men, employed in casting and drawing this net; and then they speed, when at Christ's word they let down the net; otherwise, they toil and catch nothing.

(c) This net gathers of every kind, as large dragnets do. In the visible church there is a deal of trash and rubbish, dirt and weeds and vermin, as well as fish.

(d) There is a time coming when this net will be full, and drawn to the shore; a set time when the gospel shall have fulfilled that for which it was sent, and we are sure it shall not return void, Isa 55:10,11. The net is now filling; sometimes it fills faster than at other times, but still it fills, and will be drawn to shore, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

(e) When the net is full and drawn to the shore, there shall be a separation between the good and bad that were gathered in it. Hypocrites and true Christians shall then be parted; the good shall be gathered into vessels, as valuable, and therefore to be carefully kept, but the bad shall be cast away, as vile and unprofitable; and miserable is the condition of those who are cast away in that day. While the net is in the sea, it is not known what is in it, the fishermen themselves cannot distinguish; but they carefully draw it, and all that is in it, to the shore, for the sake of the good that is in it. Such is God's care for the visible church, and such should ministers' concern be for those under their charge, though they are mixed.

2. Here is the explanation of the latter part of the parable, the former is obvious and plain enough: we see gathered in the visible church, some of every kind: but the latter part refers to that which is yet to come, and is therefore more particularly explained, Mt 13:49,50. So shall it be at the end of the world; then, and not till then, will the dividing, discovering day be. We must not look for the net full of all good fish; the vessels will be so, but in the net they are mixed. See here,

(a) The distinguishing of the wicked from the righteous. The angels of heaven shall come forth to do that which the angels of the churches could never do; they shall sever the wicked from among the just; and we need not ask how they will distinguish them when they have both their commission and their instructions from him that knows all men, and particularly knows them that are his, and them that are not, and we may be sure there shall be no mistake or blunder either way.

(b) The doom of the wicked when they are thus severed. They shall be cast into the furnace, Note, Everlasting misery and sorrow will certainly be the portion of those who live among sanctified ones, but themselves die unsanctified. This is the same with what we had before, Mt 13:42. Note, Christ himself preached often of hell-torments, as the everlasting punishment of hypocrites; and it is good for us to be often reminded of this awakening, quickening truth.

Treasures New and Old

51 Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.

52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man *that is* a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure *things* new and old.

He compares them to a good householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old; fruits of last year's growth and this year's gathering, abundance and variety, for the entertainment of his friends, So 7:13. See here,

[1.] What should be a minister's furniture, a treasure of things new and old. Those who have so many and various occasions, have need to stock themselves well in their gathering days with truths new and old, out of the Old Testament and out of the new; with ancient and modern improvements, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished, 2Ti 3:16,17. Old experiences, and new observations, all have their use; and we must not content ourselves with old discoveries, but must be adding new. Live and learn.

[2.] What use he should make of this furniture; he should bring forth: laying up is in order to laying out, for the benefit of others. Sic vox non vobis--You are to lay up, but not for yourselves. Many are full, but they have no vent (Job 32:19); have a talent, but they bury it; such are unprofitable servants; Christ himself received that he might give; so must we, and we shall have more. In bringing forth, things new and old do best together; old truths, but new methods and expressions, especially new affections.

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

53 And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

54 And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this *man* this wisdom, and *these* mighty works?

How they expressed their contempt of him. When he taught them in their synagogue, they were astonished; not that they were taken with his preaching, or admired his doctrine in itself, but only that it should be his; looking upon him as unlikely to be such a teacher. Two things they upbraided him with.

1. His want of academical education. They owned that he had wisdom, and did mighty works; but the question was, Whence he

had them: for they knew that he was not brought up at the feet of the rabbin: he had never been at the university, nor taken his degree, nor was called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. Note, Mean and prejudiced spirits are apt to judge of men by their education, and to enquire more into their rise than into their reasons. "Whence has this man these mighty works? Did he come honestly by them? Has he not been studying the black art?" Thus they turned that against him which was really for him; for if they had not been wilfully blind, they must have concluded him to be divinely assisted and commissioned, who without the help of education gave such proofs of extraordinary wisdom and power.

2 The meanness and poverty of his relations, Mt 13:55,56.

(1.) They upbraid him with his father. Is not this the carpenter's son? Yes, it is true he was reputed so: and what harm in that? No disparagement to him to be the son of an honest tradesman. They remember not (though they might have known it) that this carpenter was of the house of David (Lu 1:27), a son of David (Mt 1:20); though a carpenter, yet a person of honour. Those who are willing to pick quarrels will overlook that which is worthy and deserving, and fasten upon that only which seems mean. Some sordid spirits regard no branch, no not the Branch from the stem of Jesse (Isa 11:1), if it be not the top branch.

(2.) They upbraid him with his mother; and what quarrel have they with her? Why, truly, his mother is called Mary, and that was a very common name, and they all knew her, and knew her to be an ordinary person; she was called Mary, not Queen Mary, nor Lady Mary, nor so much as Mistress Mary, but plain Mary; and this is turned to his reproach, as if men had nothing to be valued by but foreign extraction, noble birth, or splendid titles; poor things to measure worth by.

(3.) They upbraid him with his brethren, whose names they knew, and had them ready enough to serve this turn; James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, good men but poor men, and therefore despised; and Christ for their sakes. These brethren, it is probable, were Joseph's children by a former wife; or whatever their relation was to him, they seem to have been brought up with him in the same family. And therefore of the calling of three of these, who

were of the twelve, to that honour (James, Simon, and Jude, the same with Thaddeus), we read not particularly, because they needed not such an express call into acquaintance with Christ who had been the companions of his youth.

(4.) His sisters too are all with us; they should therefore have loved him and respected him the more, because he was one of themselves, but therefore they despised him. They were offended in him: they stumbled at these stumbling-stones, for he was set for a sign that should be spoken against, Lu 2:34,Isa 8:14.

55 Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

56 And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things?

57 And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house.

58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

1. It did not trouble his heart. It appears he was not much concerned at it; he despised the shame, Heb 12:2. Instead of aggravating the affront, or expressing an offence at it, or returning such an answer to their foolish suggestions as they deserved, he mildly imputes it to the common humour of the children of men, to undervalue excellences that are cheap, and common, and home-bred. It is usually so. A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country. Note,

(a) Prophets should have honour paid them, and commonly have; men of God are great men, and men of honour, and challenge respect. It is strange indeed if prophets have not honour.

(b) Notwithstanding this, they are commonly least regarded and reverenced in their own country, nay, and sometimes are most envied. Familiarity breeds contempt.

2. It did for the present (to speak with reverence), in effect, tie his hands: He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Note, Unbelief is the great obstruction to Christ's favours. All things are in general possible to God (Mt 19:26), but then it is

to him that believes as to the particulars, Mk 9:23. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, but then it is to every one that believes, Ro 1:16. So that if mighty works be not wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in Christ, but for want of faith in us. By grace ye are saved, and that is a mighty work, but it is through faith, Eph 2:8.

Matthew-14

The Death of John the Baptist

1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,
2 and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead;
and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

1 The account brought to Herod of the miracles which Christ wrought. Herod the tetrarch or chief governor of Galilee heard of the fame of Jesus. At that time, when his countrymen slighted him, upon the account of his meanness and obscurity, he began to be famous at court. Note, God will honour those that are despised for his sake. And the gospel, like the sea, gets in one place what it loses in another. Christ had now been preaching and working miracles above two years; yet, it should seem, Herod had not heard of him till now, and now only heard the fame of him. Note, It is the unhappiness of the great ones of the world, that they are most out of the way of hearing the best things (1Co 2:8). Which none of the princes of this world knew, 1Co 1:26. Christ's disciples were now sent abroad to preach, and to work miracles in his name, and this spread the fame of him more than ever; which was an indication of the spreading of the gospel by their means after his ascension.

2 The construction he puts upon this (Mt 14:2); He said to his servants that told him of the fame of Jesus, as sure as we are here, this is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead. Either the leaven of Herod was not Sadducism, for the Sadducees say, There is no resurrection (Ac 23:8); or else Herod's guilty conscience (as is usual with atheists) did at this time get the mastery of his opinion,

and now he concludes, whether there be a general resurrection or no, that John Baptist is certainly risen, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. John, while he lived, did no miracle (Joh 10:41); but Herod concludes, that, being risen from the dead, he is clothed with a greater power than he had while he was living. And he very well calls the miracles he supposed him to work, not his mighty works, but mighty works showing forth themselves in him. Observe here concerning Herod,

(a) How he was disappointed in what he intended by beheading John. He thought if he could get that troublesome fellow out of the way, he might go on in his sins, undisturbed and uncontrolled; yet no sooner is that effected, than he hears of Jesus and his disciples preaching the same pure doctrine that John preached; and, which is more, even the disciples confirming it by miracles in their Master's name. Note, Ministers may be silenced, and imprisoned, and banished, and slain, but the word of God cannot be run down. The prophets live not for ever, but the word takes hold, Zec 1:5,6. See 2Ti 2:9. Sometimes God raises up many faithful ministers out of the ashes of one. This hope there is of God's trees, though they be cut down, Job 14:7-9.

(b) How he was filled with causeless fears, merely from the guilt of his own conscience. Thus blood cries, not only from the earth on which it was shed, but from the heart of him that shed it, and makes him Magor-missabib--A terror round about, a terror to himself. A guilty conscience suggests every thing that is frightful, and, like a whirlpool, gathers all to itself that comes near it. Thus the wicked flee when none pursue (Pr 28:1); are in great fear, where no fear is, Ps 14:5. Herod, by a little enquiry, might have found out that this Jesus was in being long before John Baptist's death, and therefore could not be Johannes redivivus--John restored to life; and so he might have undeceived himself; but God justly left him to this infatuation.

(c) How, notwithstanding this, he was hardened in his wickedness; for though he was convinced that John was a prophet, and one

owned of God, yet he does not express the least remorse or sorrow for his sin in putting him to death. The devils believe and tremble, but they never believe and repent. Note, There may be the terror of strong convictions, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion.

3 For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put *him* in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.

The story itself of the imprisonment and martyrdom of John. These extraordinary sufferings of him who was the first preacher of the gospel, plainly show that bonds and afflictions will abide the professors of it. As the first Old-Testament saint, so the first New-Testament minister, died a martyr. And if Christ's forerunner was thus treated, let not his followers expect to be caressed by the world. Observe here,

1 John's faithfulness in reproving Herod, Mt 14:3,4. Herod was one of John's hearers (Mk 6:20), and therefore John might be the more bold with him. Note, Ministers, who are reprovers by office, are especially obliged to reprove those that are under their charge, and not to suffer sin upon them; they have the fairest opportunity of dealing with them, and with them may expect the most favourable acceptance.

The particular sin he reproved him for was, marrying his brother Philip's wife, not his widow (that had not been so criminal), but his wife. Philip was now living, and Herod inveigled his wife from him, and kept here for his own. Here was a complication of wickedness, adultery, incest, besides the wrong done to Philip, who had had a child by this woman; and it was an aggravation of the wrong, that he was his brother, his half-brother, by the father, but not by the mother. See Ps 50:20. For this sin John reproved him; not by tacit and oblique allusions, but in plain terms, It is not lawful for thee to have her. He charges it upon him as a sin; not, It is not honourable, or, It is not safe, but, It is not lawful; the sinfulness of sin, as it is the transgression of the law, is the worst thing in it. This was Herod's own iniquity, his beloved sin, and therefore John Baptist tells him of this particularly. Note,

(a) That which by the law of God is unlawful to other people, is by the same law unlawful to princes and the greatest of men. They who rule over men must not forget that they are themselves but men, and subject to God. "It is not lawful for thee, any more than for the meanest subject thou hast, to debauch another man's wife." There is no prerogative, no, not for the greatest and most arbitrary kings, to break the laws of God.

(b) If princes and great men break the law of God, it is very fit they should be told of it by proper persons, and in a proper manner. As they are not above the commands of God's word, so they are not above the reproofs of his ministers. It is not fit indeed, to say to a king, Thou art Belial (Job 34:18), any more than to call a brother Raca, or, Thou fool: it is not fit, while they keep within the sphere of their own authority, to arraign them. But it is fit that, by those whose office it is, they should be told what is unlawful, and told with application, Thou art the man; for it follows there (Job 34:19), that God (whose agents and ambassadors faithful ministers are) accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.

2 The imprisonment of John for his faithfulness, Mt 14:3. Herod laid hold on John when he was going on to preach and baptize, put an end to his work, bound him, and put him in prison; partly to gratify his own revenge, and partly to please Herodias, who of the two seemed to be most incensed against him; it was for her sake that he did it. Note, (1.) Faithful reproofs, if they do not profit, usually provoke; if they do not do good, they are resented as affronts, and they that will not bow to the reproof, will fly in the face of the reprover and hate him, as Ahab hated Micaiah, 1Ki 22:8. See Pr 9:8,15:10,12. Veritas odium parit--Truth produces hatred. (2.) It is no new thing for God's ministers to suffer ill for doing well. Troubles abide those most that are most diligent and faithful in doing their duty, Ac 20:20.

4 For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

5 And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.
6 But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.
7 Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.
8 And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.
9 And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given *her.*
10 And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.
11 And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel:
and she brought it to her mother.
12 And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

The disposal of the poor remains of this blessed saint and martyr. The head and body being separated,

(a) The damsel brought the head in triumph to her mother, as a trophy of the victories of her malice and revenge, Mt 14:11. Jerome ad Rufin, relates, that when Herodias had John the Baptist's head brought her, she gave herself the barbarous diversion of pricking the tongue with a needle, as Fulvia did Tully's. Note, Bloody minds are pleased with bloody sights, which those of tender spirits shrink and tremble at. Sometimes the insatiable rage of bloody persecutors has fallen upon the dead bodies of the saints, and made sport with them, Ps 79:2. When the witnesses are slain, they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry, Re 11:10,Ps 14:4,5.

(b) The disciples buried the body, and brought the news in tears to our Lord Jesus. The disciples of John had fasted often whole their master was in prison, their bridegroom was taken away from them, and they prayed earnestly for his deliverance, as the church did for Peter's, Ac 12:5. They had free access to him in prison, which was a comfort to them, but they wished to see him at liberty, that he might preach to others; but now on a sudden all their hopes are

dashed. Disciples weep and lament, when the world rejoices. Let us see what they did.

[1.] They buried the body. Note, There is a respect owing to the servants of Christ, not only while they live, but in their bodies and memories when they are dead. Concerning the first two New-Testament martyrs, it is particularly taken notice of, that they were decently buried, John the Baptist by his disciples, and Stephen by devout men (Ac 8:2);

[2.] They went and told Jesus; not so much that he might shift for his own safety (no doubt he heard it from others, the country rang of it), as they might receive comfort from him, and be taken in among his disciples. Note, First, When any thing ails us at any time, it is our duty and privilege to make Christ acquainted with it. It will be a relief to our burthened spirits to unbosom ourselves to a friend we may be free with. Such a relation dead or unkind, such a comfort lost or embittered, go and tell Jesus who knows already, but will know from us, the trouble of our souls in adversity. Secondly, We must take heed, lest our religion and the profession of it die with our ministers; when John was dead, they did not return every man to his own, but resolved to abide by it still. When the shepherds are smitten, the sheep need not be scattered while they have the great Shepherd of the sheep to go to, who is still the same, Heb 13:8,20. The removal of ministers should bring us nearer to Christ, into a more immediate communion with him. Thirdly, Comforts otherwise highly valuable, are sometimes therefore taken from us, because they come between us and Christ, and are apt to carry away that love and esteem which are due to him only: John had long since directed his disciples to Christ, and turned them over to him, but they could not leave their old master while he lived; therefore he is removed that they may go to Jesus, whom they had sometimes emulated and envied for John's sake. It is better to be drawn to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all. If our masters be taken from our head, this is our comfort, we have a Master in heaven, who himself is our Head.

Josephus mentions this story of the death of John the Baptist (Antiq. 18. 116-119), and adds, that a fatal destruction of Herod's army in his war with Aretas, king of Petrea (whose daughter was Herod's wife, whom he put away to make room for Herodias), was generally considered by the Jews to be a just judgment upon him, for putting John the Baptist to death. Herod having, at the instigation of Herodias, disobliged the emperor, was deprived of his government, and they were both banished to Lyons in France; which, says Josephus, was his just punishment for hearkening to her solicitations. And, lastly, it is storied of this daughter of Herodias, that going over the ice in winter, the ice broke, and she slipt in up to her neck, which was cut through by the sharpness of the ice. God requiring her head (says Dr. Whitby) for that of the Baptist; which, if true, was a remarkable providence.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

13 When Jesus heard *of it*, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard *thereof*, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

This passage of story, concerning Christ's feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the four Evangelists, which very few, if any, of Christ's miracles are: this intimates that there is something in it worthy of special remark. Observe,

The great resort of people to Christ, when he was retired into a desert place, Mt 14:13. He withdrew into privacy when he heard, not of John's death, but of the thoughts Herod had concerning him, that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and therefore so feared by Herod as to be hated; he departed further off, to get out of Herod's jurisdiction. Note, In times of peril, when God opens a door of escape, it is lawful to flee for our own preservation, unless we have some special call to expose ourselves. Christ's hour was not yet come, and therefore he would not thrust himself upon suffering. He could have secured himself by divine power, but

because his life was intended for an example, he did it by human prudence; he departed by ship. But a city on a hill cannot be hid; when the people heard it, they followed him on foot from all parts. Such an interest Christ had in the affections of the multitude, that his withdrawing from them did but draw them after him with so much the more eagerness. Here, as often, the scripture was fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be. It should seem, there was more crowding to Christ after John's martyrdom than before. Sometimes the suffering of the saints are made to further the gospel (Php 1:12), and "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." Now John's testimony was finished, it was recollected, and more improved than ever. Note,

1. When Christ and his word withdraw from us, it is best for us (whatever flesh and blood may object to the contrary) to follow it, preferring opportunities for our souls before any secular advantages whatsoever. When the ark removes, ye shall remove, and go after it, Jos 3:3.

2. Those that truly desire the sincere milk of the word, will not stick at the difficulties they may meet with in their attendance on it. The presence of Christ and his gospel makes a desert place not only tolerable, but desirable; it makes the wilderness an Eden, Isa 51:3,Isa 41:19,20.

14 And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

The tender compassion of our Lord Jesus towards those who thus followed him, Mt 14:14. 1. He went forth, and appeared publicly among them. Though he retired for his own security, and his own repose, yet he went forth from his retirement, when he saw people desirous to hear him, as one willing both to toil himself, and to expose himself, for the good of souls; for even Christ pleased not himself. 2. When he saw the multitude, he had compassion on them. Note, The sight of a great multitude may justly move compassion. To see a great multitude, and to think how many precious, immortal souls here are, the greatest part of which, we have reason to fear, are neglected and ready to perish, would grieve one to the heart.

None like Christ for pity to souls; his compassions fails not. 3. He did not only pity them, but he helped them; many of them were sick, and he, in compassion to them, healed them; for he came into the world to be the great Healer. After awhile, they were all hungry, and he, in compassion to them, fed them. Note, In all the favours Christ shows to us, he is moved with compassion, Isa 63:9.

15 And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

The motion which the disciples made for the dismissing of the congregation, and Christ's setting aside the motion. 1 The evening drawing on, the disciples moved it to Christ to send the multitude away; they thought there was a good day's work done, and it was time to disperse. Note, Christ's disciples are often more careful to show their discretion, than to show their zeal; and their abundant affection in the things of God. 2. Christ would not dismiss them hungry as they were, nor detain them longer without meat, nor put them upon the trouble and charge of buying meat for themselves, but orders his disciples to provide for them. Christ all along expressed more tenderness toward the people than his disciples did; for what are the compassions of the most merciful men, compared with the tender mercies of God in Christ? See how loth Christ is to part with those who are resolved to cleave to him! They need not depart. Note, Those who have Christ have enough, and need not depart to seek a happiness and livelihood in the creature; they that have made sure of the one thing needful, need not be cumbered about much serving: nor will Christ put his willing followers upon a needless expense, but will make their attendance cheap to them.

But if they be hungry, they have need to depart, for that is a necessity which has no law, therefore, give you them to eat. Note, The Lord is for the body; it is the work of his hands, it is part of his purchase; he was himself clothed with a body, that he might encourage us to depend upon him for the supply of our bodily wants. But he takes a particular care of the body, when it is employed to serve the soul in his more immediate service. If we seek first the kingdom of God, and make that our chief care, we may depend upon God to add other things to us, as far as he sees

fit, and may cast all care of them upon him. These followed Christ but for a trial, in a present fit of zeal, and yet Christ took this care of them; much more will he provide for those who follow him fully.

16 But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.

17 And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

The slender provision that was made for this great multitude; and here we must compare the number of invited guests with the bill of fare.

1 The number of the guests was five thousand of men, besides women and children; and it is probable the women and children might be as many as the men, if not more. This was a vast auditory that Christ preached to, and we have reason to think an attentive auditory; and, yet it should seem, far the greater part, notwithstanding all this seeming zeal and forwardness, came to nothing; they went off and followed him no more; for many are called, but few are chosen. We would rather perceive the acceptableness of the word by the conversion, than by the crowds, of its hearers; though that also is a good sight and a good sign.

2 The bill of fare was very disproportionable to the number of the guests, but five loaves and two fishes. This provision the disciples carried about with them for the use of the family, now they were retired into the desert. Christ could have fed them by miracle, but to set us an example of providing for those of our own households, he will have their own camp victualled in an ordinary way. Here is neither plenty, nor variety, nor dainty; a dish of fish was no rarity to them that were fishermen, but it was food convenient for the twelve; two fishes for their supper, and bread to serve them perhaps for a day or two: here was no wine or strong drink; fair water from the rivers in the desert was the best they had to drink with their meat; and yet out of this Christ will have the multitude fed. Note, Those who have but a little, yet when the necessity is urgent, must relieve others out of that little, and that is the way to make it more. Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Yes, he can, when he pleases, a plentiful table.

18 He said, Bring them hither to me.

The liberal distribution of this provision among the multitude (Mt 14:18,19); Bring them hither to me. Note, The way to have our creature-like comforts, comforts indeed to us, is to bring them to Christ; for every thing is sanctified by his word, and by prayer to him: that is likely to prosper and do well with us, which we put into the hands of our Lord Jesus, that he may dispose of it as he pleases, and that we may take it back from his hand, and then it will be doubly sweet to us. What we give in charity, we should bring to Christ first, that he may graciously accept it from us, and graciously bless it to those to whom it is given; this is doing it as unto the Lord. Now at this miraculous meal we may observe,

1 The seating of the guests (Mt 14:19); He commanded them to sit down; which intimates, that while he was preaching to them, they were standing, which is a posture of reverence, and readiness for motion. But what shall we do for chairs for them all? Let them sit down on the grass. When Ahasuerus would show the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, in a royal feast for the great men of all his provinces, the beds or couches they sat on were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble, Es 1:6. Our Lord Jesus did now show, in a divine feast, the riches of a more glorious kingdom than that, and the honour of a more excellent majesty, even a dominion over nature itself; but here is not so much as a cloth spread, no plates or napkins laid, no knives or forks, nor so much as a bench to sit down on; but, as if Christ intended indeed to reduce the world to the plainness and simplicity, and so to the innocency and happiness, of Adam in paradise, he commanded them to sit down on the grass. By doing every thing thus, without any pomp or splendour, he plainly showed that his kingdom was not of this world, nor cometh with observation.

2 The craving of a blessing. He did not appoint one of his disciples to be his chaplain, but he himself looked up to heaven, and blessed, and gave thanks; he praised God for the provision they had, and prayed to God to bless it to them. His craving a blessing, was commanding a blessing; for as he preached, so he prayed, like one

having authority; and in this prayer and thanksgiving, we may suppose, he had special reference to the multiplying of this food; but herein he has taught us that good duty of craving a blessing and giving thanks at our meals: God's good creatures must be received with thanksgiving, 1Ti 4:4. Samuel blessed the feast, 1Sa 9:13,Ac 2:46,47,27:24,35. This is eating and drinking to the glory of God (1Co 10:31); giving God thanks (Ro 14:6); eating before God, as Moses, and his father-in-law, Ex 18:12,15. When Christ blessed, he looked up to heaven, to teach us, in prayer, to eye God as a Father in heaven; and when we receive our creature-comforts to look thitherward, as taking them from God's hand, and depending on him for a blessing.

3. The carving of the meat. The Master of the feast was himself head-carver, for he brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. Christ intended hereby to put honour upon his disciples, that they might be respected as workers together with him; as also to signify in what way the spiritual food of the word should be dispensed to the world; from Christ, as the original Author, by his ministers. What Christ designed for the churches he signified to his servant John (Re 1:1,4); they delivered all that, and that only, which they received from the Lord, 1Co 11:23. Ministers can never fill the people's hearts, unless Christ first fill their hands: and what he has given to the disciples, they must give to the multitude; for they are stewards, to give to every one his portion of meat, Mt 24:45. And, blessed be God, be the multitude ever so great, there is enough for all, enough for each.

4. The increase of the meat. This is taken notice of only in the effect, not in the cause or manner of it; here is no mention of any word that Christ spoke, by which the food was multiplied; the purposes and intentions of his mind and will shall take effect, though they be not spoken out: but this is observable, that the meat was multiplied, not in the heap at first, but in the distribution of it. As the widow's oil increased in the pouring out, so here the bread in the breaking. Thus grace grows by being acted, and, while other things perish in the using, spiritual gifts increase in the using. God

ministers seed to the sower, and multiplies not the seed hoarded up, but the seed sown, 2Co 9:10. Thus there is that scattereth and yet increaseth; that scattereth, and so increaseth.

19 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to *his* disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
20 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

The plentiful satisfaction of all the guests with this provision. Though the disproportion was so great, yet there was enough and to spare.

1. There was enough: They did all eat, and were filled. Note, Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; so runs the promise (Ps 37:19), They shall be satisfied. As there was enough for all, they did all eat, so there was enough for each, they were filled; though there was but little, there was enough, and that is as good as a feast. Note, The blessing of God can make a little go a great way; as, if God blasts what we have, we eat, and have not enough, Hag 1:6.

2. There was to spare; They took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full, one basket for each apostle: thus what they gave they had again, and a great deal more with it; and they were so far from being nice, that they could make this broken meat serve another time, and be thankful. This was to manifest and magnify the miracle, and to show that the provision Christ makes for those who are his is not bare and scanty, but rich and plenteous; bread enough, and to spare (Lu 15:17), an overflowing fulness. Elisha's multiplying the loaves was somewhat like this, but far short of it; and then it was said, They shall eat and leave, 2Ki 4:43.

It is the same divine power, though exerted in an ordinary way, which multiplies the seed sown in the ground every year, and makes the earth yield her increase; so that what was brought out by handfuls, is brought home in sheaves. This is the Lord's doing; it is by Christ that all natural things consist, and by the word of his power that they are upheld.

21 And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

Christ's dismissing of his disciples and the multitude, after he had fed them miraculously. He constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, Mt 14:22. St. John gives a particular reason for the hasty breaking up of this assembly, because the people were so affected with the miracle of the loaves, that they were about to take him by force, and make him a king (Joh 6:15); to avoid which, he immediately scattered the people, sent away the disciples, lest they should join with them, and he himself withdrew, Joh 6:15.

When they had sat down to eat and drink, they did not rise up to play, but each went to his business.

1. Christ sent the people away. It intimates somewhat of solemnity in the dismissing of them; he sent them away with a blessing, with some parting words of caution, counsel, and comfort, which might abide with them.

2. He constrained the disciples to go into a ship first, for till they were gone the people would not stir. The disciples were loth to go, and would not have gone, if he had not constrained them. They were loth to go to sea without him. If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence. Ex 33:15. They were loth to leave him alone, without any attendance, or any ship to wait for him; but they did it in pure obedience.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

Christ's retirement hereupon (Mt 14:23); He went up into a mountain apart to pray. Observe here,

1. That he was alone; he went apart into a solitary place, and was there all alone. Though he had so much work to do with others, yet he chose sometimes to be alone, to set us an example. Those are not Christ's followers that do not care for being alone; that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, when they have none else to converse with, none else to enjoy, but God and their own hearts.

2. That he was alone at prayer; that was his business in this solitude, to pray. Though Christ, as God, was Lord of all, and was prayed to, yet Christ, as Man, had the form of a servant, of a beggar, and prayed. Christ has herein set before us an example of secret prayer, and the performance of it secretly, according to the rule he gave, Mt 6:6. Perhaps in this mountain there was some private oratory or convenience, provided for such an occasion; it was usual among the Jews to have such. Observe, When the disciples went to sea, their Master went to prayer; when Peter was to be sifted as wheat, Christ prayed for him.

3. That he was long alone; there he was when the evening was come, and, for aught that appears, there he was till towards morning, the fourth watch of the night. The night came on, and it was a stormy, tempestuous night, yet he continued instant in prayer. Note, It is good, at least sometimes, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and to take full scope in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. We must not restrain prayer, Job 15:4.

The condition that the poor disciples were in at this time: Their ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, Mt 14:24. We may observe here,

1. That they were got into the midst of the sea when the storm rose. We may have fair weather at the beginning of our voyage, and yet meet with storms before we arrive at the port we are bound for.

Therefore, let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that puts it off, but after a long calm expect some storm or other.

2 The disciples were now where Christ sent them, and yet met with this storm. Had they been flying from their Master, and their work, as Jonah was, when he was arrested by the storm, it had been a dreadful one indeed; but they had a special command from their Master to go to sea at this time, and were going about their work. Note, It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of their duty, and to be sent to sea then when their Master foresees a storm; but let them not take it unkindly; what he does they know not now, but they shall know hereafter, that Christ designs hereby to manifest himself with the more wonderful grace to them and for them. 3. It was a great discouragement to them now that they had not Christ with them, as they had formerly when they were in a storm; though he was then asleep indeed, yet he was soon awaked (Mt 8:24), but now he was not with them at all. Thus Christ used his disciples first to less difficulties, and then to greater, and so trains them up by degrees to live by faith, and not by sense.

4. Though the wind was contrary, and they were tossed with waves, yet being ordered by their Master to the other side, they did not tack about and come back again, but made the best of their way forward. Note, Though troubles and difficulties may disturb us in our duty, they must not drive us from it; but through the midst of them we must press forwards.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

Christ's approach to them in this condition (Mt 14:25); and in this we have an instance,

1. Of his goodness, that he went unto them, as one that took cognizance of their case, and was under a concern about them, as a father about his children. Note, The extremity of the church and people of God is Christ's opportunity to visit them and appear for them: but he came not till the fourth watch, toward three o'clock in the morning, for then the fourth watch began. It was in the morning-watch that the Lord appeared for Israel in the Red sea (Ex 14:24),

so was this. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, but, when there is occasion, walks in darkness for their succour; helps, and that right early.

2. Of his power, that he went unto them, walking on the sea. This is a great instance of Christ's sovereign dominion over all the creatures; they are all under his feet, and at his command; they forget their natures, and change the qualities that we call essential. We need not enquire how this was done, whether by condensing the surface of the water (when God pleases, the depths are congealed in the heart of the sea, Ex 15:8), or by suspending the gravitation of his body, which was transfigured as he pleased; it is sufficient that it proves his divine power, for it is God's prerogative to tread upon the waves of the sea (Job 9:8), as it is to ride upon the wings of the wind. He that made the waters of the sea a wall for the redeemed of the Lord (Isa 51:10), here makes them a walk for the Redeemer himself, who, as Lord of all, appears with one foot on the sea and the other on dry land, Re 10:2 The same power that made iron to swim (2Ki 6:6), did this. What ailed thee, O thou sea? Ps 114:5. It was at the presence of the Lord. Thy way, O God, is in the sea, (Ps 77:19). Note, Christ can take what way he pleases to save his people.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

How their fears were raised (Mt 14:26); When they saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; phantasma esti--It is an apparition; so it might much better be rendered. It seems, the existence and appearance of spirits were generally believed in by all except the Sadducees, whose doctrine Christ had warned his disciples against; yet, doubtless, many supposed apparitions have been merely the creatures of men's own fear and fancy. These disciples said, It is the Lord; it can be no other. Note,

[1.] Even the appearances and approaches of deliverance are sometimes the occasions of trouble and perplexity to God's people, who are sometimes most frightened when they are least hurt; nay, when they are most favoured, as the Virgin Mary, Lu 1:29,Ex 3:6,7.

The comforts of the Spirit of adoption are introduced by the terrors of the spirit of bondage, Ro 8:15.

[2.] The appearance of a spirit, or the fancy of it, cannot but be frightful, and strike a terror upon us, because of the distance of the world of spirits from us, the just quarrel good spirits have with us, and the inveterate enmity evil spirits have against us: see Job 4:14,15. The more acquaintance we have with God, the Father of spirits, and the more careful we are to keep ourselves in his love, the better able we shall be to deal with those fears.

[3.] The perplexing, disquieting fears of good people, arise from their mistakes and misapprehensions concerning Christ, his person, offices, and undertaking; the more clearly and fully we know his name, with the more assurance we shall trust in him, Ps 9:10.

[4.] A little thing frightens us in a storm. When without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears. Perhaps the disciples fancied it was some evil spirit that raised the storm. Note, Most of our danger from outward troubles arises from the occasion they give for inward trouble.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

How these fears were silenced, Mt 14:27. He straightway relieved them, by showing them their mistake; when they were wrestling with the waves, he delayed his succour for some time; but he hastened his succour against their fright, as much the more dangerous; he straightway laid that storm with his word, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

[1.] He rectified their mistake, by making himself known to them, as Joseph to his brethren; It is I. He does not name himself, as he did to Paul, I am Jesus; for Paul as yet knew him not: but to these disciples it was enough to say, It is I; they knew his voice, as his sheep (Joh 10:4), as Mary Magdalene, Joh 20:16. They need not ask, Who art thou, Lord? Art thou for us or for our adversaries? They could say with the spouse, It is the voice of my beloved, So

2:8,. True believers know it by a good token. It was enough to make them easy, to understand who it was they saw. Note, A right knowledge opens the door to true comfort, especially the knowledge of Christ.

[2.] He encouraged them against their fright; It is I, and therefore, First, Be of good cheer; tharseite--"Be courageous; pluck up your spirits, and be courageous." If Christ's disciples be not cheerful in a storm, it is their own fault, he would have them so. Secondly, Be not afraid;

1. "Be not afraid of me, now that you know it is I; surely you will not fear, for you know I mean you no hurt." Note, Christ will not be a terror to those to whom he manifests himself; when they come to understand him aright, the terror will be over.

2. "Be not afraid of the tempest, of the winds and waves, though noisy and very threatening; fear them not, while I am so near you. I am he that concerns himself for you, and will not stand by and see you perish." Note, Nothing needs be a terror to those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; no, not death itself.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Between him and Peter, Mt 14:28-31, where observe,

(A) Peter's courage, and Christ's countenancing that.

[1.] It was very bold in Peter, that he would venture to come to Christ upon the water (Mt 14:28); Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee. Courage was Peter's master grace; and that made him so forward above the rest to express his love to Christ, though others perhaps loved him as well.

First, It is an instance of Peter's affection to Christ, that he desired to come to him. When he sees Christ, whom, doubtless, during the storm, he had many a time wished for, he is impatient to be with him. He does not say, Bid me walk on the waters, as desiring it for the miracle sake; but, Bid me come to thee, as desiring it for Christ's sake; "Let me come to thee, no matter how." Note, True love will break through fire and water, if duly called to it, to come to Christ. Christ was coming to them, to succour and deliver them. Lord, said Peter, bid me come to thee. Note, When Christ is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty; and herein we must be willing and bold to venture with him and venture for him. Those that would have benefit by Christ as a Saviour, must thus by faith come to him. Christ had been now, for some time, absent, and hereby it appears why he absented himself; it was to endear himself so much the more to his disciples at his return, to make it highly seasonable and doubly acceptable. Note, When, for a small amount, Christ has forsaken his people, his returns are welcome, and most affectionately embraced; when gracious souls, after long seeking, find their Beloved at last, they hold him, and will not let him go, So 3:4.

Secondly, It is an instance of Peter's caution and due observance of the will of Christ, that he would not come without a warrant. Not, "If it be thou, I will come;" but If it be thou, bid me come. Note, The boldest spirits must wait for a call to hazardous enterprizes, and we must not rashly and presumptuously thrust ourselves upon them. Our will to services and sufferings is interpreted, not willingness, but wilfulness, if it have not a regard to the will of Christ, and be not regulated by his call and command. Such extraordinary warrants as this to Peter we are not now to expect, but must have recourse to the general rules of the word, in the application of which to particular cases, with the help of providential hints, wisdom is profitable to direct.

Thirdly, It is an instance of Peter's faith and resolution, that he ventured upon the water when Christ bid him. To quit the safety of the ship, and throw himself into the jaws of death, to despise the

threatening waves he so lately dreaded, argued a very strong dependence upon the power and word of Christ. What difficulty or danger could stand before such a faith and such a zeal?

[2.] It was very kind and condescending in Christ, that he was pleased to own him in it, Mt 14:29. He might have condemned the proposal as foolish and rash; nay, and as proud and assuming; "Shall Peter pretend to do as his Master does?" But Christ knew that it came from a sincere and zealous affection to him, and graciously accepted of it. Note, Christ is well pleased with the expressions of his people's love, though mixed with manifold infirmities, and makes the best of them.

First, He bid him come. When the Pharisees asked a sign, they had not only a repulse, but a reproof, for it, because they did it with a design to tempt Christ; when Peter asked a sign, he had it, because he did it with a resolution to trust Christ. The gospel call is, "Come, come, to Christ; venture all in his hand, and commit the keeping of your souls to him; venture through a stormy sea, a troublesome world, to Jesus Christ."

Secondly, He bore him out when he did come; Peter walked upon the water. The communion of true believers with Christ is represented by their being quickened with him, raised up with him, made to sit with him, (Eph 2:5,6), and being crucified with him, Ga 2:20. Now, methinks, it is represented in this story by their walking with him on the water. Through the strength of Christ we are borne up above the world, enabled to trample upon it, kept from sinking into it, from being overwhelmed by it, obtain a victory over it (1Jo 5:4), by faith in Christ's victory (Joh 16:33), and with him are crucified to it, Ga 6:14. See blessed Paul walking upon the water with Jesus, and more than a conqueror through him, and treading upon all the threatening waves, as not able to separate him from the love of Christ, Ro 8:35, &c. Thus the sea of the world is become like a sea of glass, congealed so as to bear; and they that have gotten the victory, stand upon it and sing, Re 15:2,3.

He walked upon the water, not for diversion or ostentation, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Note, When our souls are following hard after God, then it is that his right hand upholds us; it was David's experience, Ps 63:8. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, only in spiritual pursuits. When God bears his Israel upon eagles' wings, it is to bring them to himself (Ex 19:4); nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we be upheld by his power; it is in his own strength that we wrestle with him, that we reach after him, that we press forward toward the mark, being kept by the power of God, which power we must depend upon, as Peter when he walked upon the water: and there is no danger of sinking while underneath are the everlasting arms.

(B) Here is Peter's cowardice, and Christ's reproving him and succouring him. Christ bid him come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know Christ's power, but that he might sink, and so know his own weakness; for as he would encourage his faith, so he would check his confidence, and make him ashamed of it. Observe then,

[1.] Peter's great fear (Mt 14:30); He was afraid. The strongest faith and the greatest courage have a mixture of fear. Those that can say, Lord, I believe; must say, Lord, help my unbelief. Nothing but perfect love will quite cast out fear. Good men often fail in those graces which they are most eminent for, and which they have then in exercise; to show that they have not yet attained. Peter was very stout at first, but afterwards his heart failed him. The lengthening out of a trial discovers the weakness of faith. Here is,

First, The cause of this fear; He saw the wind boisterous. While Peter kept his eye fixed upon Christ, and upon his word and power, he walked upon the water well enough; but when he took notice withal of the danger he was in, and observed how the floods lift up their waves, then he feared. Note, Looking at difficulties with an eye of sense more than at precepts and promises with an eye of faith is at the bottom of all our inordinate fears, both as to public and

personal concerns. Abraham was strong in faith, because he considered not his own body (Ro 4:19); he minded not the discouraging improbabilities which the promise lay under, but kept his eye on God's power; and so, against hope, believed in hope, Mt 14:18. Peter, when he saw the wind boisterous, should have remembered what he had seen (Mt 8:27), when the winds and the sea obeyed Christ; but therefore we fear continually every day, because we forget the Lord our Maker, Isa 51:12,13.

Secondly, The effect of this fear; He began to sink. While faith kept up, he kept up above water: but when faith staggered, he began to sink. Note, The sinking of our spirits is owing to the weakness of our faith; we are upheld (but it is as we are saved) through faith (1Pe 1:5); and therefore, when our souls are cast down and disquieted, the sovereign remedy is, to hope in God, Ps 43:5. It is probable that Peter, being bred a fisherman, could swim very well (Joh 21:7); and perhaps he trusted in part to that, when he cast himself into the sea; if he could not walk, he could swim; but Christ let him begin to sink, to show him that it was Christ's right hand and his holy arm, not any skill of his own, that was his security. It was Christ's great mercy to him, that, upon the failing of his faith, he did not leave him to sink outright, to sink to the bottom as a stone (Ex 15:5), but gave him time to cry, Lord, save me. Such is the care of Christ concerning true believers; though weak, they do but begin to sink! A man is never sunk, never undone, till he is in hell. Peter walked as he believed; to him, as to others, the rule held good, According to your faith be it unto you.

Thirdly, The remedy he had recourse to in this distress, the old, tried, approved remedy, and that was prayer: he cried, Lord, save me. Observe, 1 The manner of his praying; it is fervent and importunate; He cried. Note, When faith is weak, prayer should be strong. Our Lord Jesus has taught us in the day of our fear to offer up strong cries, Heb 5:7. Sense of danger will make us cry, sense of duty and dependence on God should make us cry to him. 2 The matter of his prayer was pertinent and to the purpose; He cried, Lord, save me. Christ is the great Saviour, he came to save; those

that would be saved, must not only come to him, but cry to him for salvation; but we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking; sense of need will drive us to him.

[2.] Christ's great favour to Peter, in this fright. Though there was a mixture of presumption with Peter's faith in his first adventure, and of unbelief with his faith in his after-fainting, yet Christ did not cast him off; for,

First, He saved him; he answered him with the saving strength of his right hand (Ps 20:6), for immediately he stretched forth his hand, and caught him. Note, Christ's time to save is, when we sink (Ps 18:4-7): he helps at a dead lift. Christ's hand is still stretched out to all believers, to keep them from sinking. Those whom he hath once apprehended as his own, and hath snatched as brands out of the burning, he will catch out of the water too. Though he may seem to have left his hold, he doth but seem to do so, for they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand, Joh 10:28. Never fear, he will hold his own. Our deliverance from our own fears, which else would overwhelm us, is owing to the hand of his power and grace, Ps 34:4.

Secondly, He rebuked him; for as many as he loves and saves, he reproves and chides; O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Note, 1. Faith may be true, and yet weak; at first, like a grain of mustard-seed. Peter had faith enough to bring him upon the water, yet, because not enough to carry him through, Christ tells him he had but little. 2. Our discouraging doubts and fears are all owing to the weakness of our faith: therefore we doubt, because we are but of little faith. It is the business of faith to resolve doubts, the doubts of sense, in a stormy day, so as even then to keep the head above water. Could we but believe more, we should doubt less. 3. The weakness of our faith, and the prevalence of our doubts, are very displeasing to our Lord Jesus. It is true, he doth not cast off weak believers, but it is as true, that he is not pleased with weak faith, no, not in those that are nearest to him. Wherefore didst thou doubt? What reason was there for it? Note, Our doubts and fears

would soon vanish before a strict enquiry into the cause of them; for, all things considered, there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtful mind, no, not in a stormy day, because he is ready to them a very present Help.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

The ceasing of the storm, Mt 14:32. When Christ was come into the ship, they were presently at the shore. Christ walked upon the water till he came to the ship, and then went into that, when he could easily have walked to the shore; but when ordinary means are to be had, miracles are not to be expected. Though Christ needs not instruments for the doing of his work, he is pleased to use them. Observe, when Christ came into the ship, Peter came in with him. Companions with Christ in his patience, shall be companions in his kingdoms, Re 1:9. Those that walk with him shall reign with him; those that are exposed, and that suffer with him, shall triumph with him.

When they were come into the ship, immediately the storm ceased, for it had done its work, its trying work. He that has gathered the winds into his fists, and bound the waters in a garment, is the same that ascended and descended; and his word even stormy winds fulfil, Ps 148:8. When Christ comes into a soul, he makes winds and storms to cease there, and commands peace. Welcome Christ, and the noise of her waves will soon be quelled. The way to be still is, to know that he is God, that he is the Lord with us.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

The adoration paid to Christ hereupon (Mt 14:33); They that were in the ship came and worshipped him, and said, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God. Two good uses they made of this distress, and this deliverance.

1. It was a confirmation of their faith in Christ, and abundantly convinced them that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him; for none but the world's Creator could multiply the loaves, none but its Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea; they therefore

yield to the evidence, and make confession of their faith; Thou truly art the Son of God. They knew before that he was the Son of God, but now they know it better. Faith, after a conflict with unbelief, is sometimes the more active, and gets to greater degrees of strength by being exercised. Now they know it of a truth. Note, It is good for us to know more and more of the certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed, Lu 1:4. Faith then grows, when it arrives at a full assurance, when it sees clearly, and saith, Of a truth.

2. They took occasion from it to give him the glory due unto his name. They not only owned that great truth, but were suitable affected by it; they worshiped Christ. Note, When Christ manifests his glory for us, we ought to return it to him (Ps 50:15); I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Their worship and adoration of Christ were thus expressed, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. Note, The matter of our creed may and must be made the matter of our praise. Faith is the proper principle of worship, and worship the genuine product of faith. He that comes to God must believe; and he that believes in God, will come, Heb 9:6.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;

36 and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

We have here an account of miracles by wholesale, which Christ wrought on the other side of the water, in the land of Gennesaret. Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. Gennesaret was a tract of land that lay between Bethsaida and Capernaum, and either gave the name to, or took the name from, this sea, which is called (Lu 5:1) The Lake of Gennesaret; it signifies the valley of branches. Observe here,

I The forwardness and faith of the men of that place. These were more noble than the Gergesenes, their neighbours, who were borderers upon the same lake. Those besought Christ to depart from them, they had no occasion for him; these besought him to help them, they had need of him. Christ reckons it the greatest honour we can do him, to make use of him. Now here we are told,

1. How the men of that place were brought to Christ; they had knowledge of him. It is probable that his miraculous passage over the sea, which they that were in the ship would industriously spread the report of, might help to make way for his entertainment in those parts; and perhaps it was one thing Christ intended in it, for he has great reaches in what he does. This they had knowledge of, and of the other miracles Christ had wrought, and therefore they flocked to him. Note, They that know Christ's name, will make their application to him: if Christ were better known, he would not be neglected as he is; he is trusted as far as he is known.

They had knowledge of him, that is, of his being among them, and that he would be put awhile among them. Note, The discerning of the day of our opportunities is a good step toward the improvement of it. This was the condemnation of the world, that Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not (Joh 1:10); Jerusalem knew him not (Lu 19:42), but there were some who, when he was among them, had knowledge of him. It is better to know that there is a prophet among us than that there has been one, Eze 2:5.

2. How they brought others to Christ, by giving notice to their neighbours of Christ's being come into those parts; They sent out into all that country. Note, those that have got the knowledge of Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him too. We must not eat these spiritual morsels alone; there is in Christ enough for us all, so that there is nothing got by monopolizing. When we have opportunities of getting good to our souls, we should bring as many as we can to share with us.

More than we think of would close with opportunities, if they were but called upon and invited to them. They sent into their own country, because it was their own, and they desired the welfare of it. Note, We can no better testify our love to our country than by promoting and propagating the knowledge of Christ in it. Neighbourhood is an advantage of doing good which must be improved. Those that are near to us, we should contrive to do something for, at least by our example, to bring them near to Christ.

3. What their business was with Christ; not only, perhaps not chiefly, if at all, to be taught, but to have their sick healed; They brought unto him all that were diseased. If love to Christ and his doctrine will not bring them to him, yet self-love would. Did we but rightly seek our own things, the things of our own peace and welfare, we should seek the things of Christ. We should do him honour, and please him, by deriving grace and righteousness from him. Note, Christ is the proper Person to bring the diseased to; whither should they go but to the Physician, to the Sun of Righteousness, that hath healing under his wings?

4. How they made their application to him; They besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment, Mt 14:36. They applied themselves to him,

(a) With great importunity; they besought him. Well may we beseech to be healed, when God by his ministers beseecheth us that we will be healed. Note, The greatest favours and blessings are to be obtained from Christ by entreaty; Ask, and it shall be given.

(b) With great humility; they came to him as those that were sensible of their distance, humbly beseeching him to help them; and their desiring to touch the hem of his garment, intimates that they thought themselves unworthy that he should take any particular notice of them, that he should so much as speak to their case, much less touch them for their cure; but they will look upon it as a great favour, if he will give them leave to touch the hem of

his garment. The eastern nations show respect to their princes, by kissing their sleeve, or skirt.

(c) With great assurance of the all-sufficiency of his power, not doubting but that they should be healed, even by touching the hem of his garment; that they should receive abundant communications from him by the smallest token of symbol of communion with him. They did not expect the formality of striking his hand over the place or persons diseased, as Naaman did (2Ki 5:11); but they were sure that there was in him such an overflowing fulness of healing virtue, that they could not fail of a cure, who were but admitted near him. It was in this country and neighbourhood that the woman with the bloody issue was cured by touching the hem of his garment, and was commended for her faith (Mt 9:20-22); and thence, probably, they took occasion to ask this. Note, The experiences of others in their attendance upon Christ may be of use both to direct and to encourage us in our attendance on him. It is good using those means and methods which others before us have sped well in the use of.

II The fruit and success of this their application to Christ. It was not in vain that these seed of Jacob sought him, for as many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Note,

1. Christ's cures are perfect cures. Those that he heals, he heals perfectly. He doth not do his work by halves. Though spiritual healing be not perfected at first, yet, doubtless, he that has begun the good work will perform it, Php 1:6.

2. There is an abundance of healing virtue in Christ for all that apply themselves to him, be they ever so many. That precious ointment which was poured on his head, ran down to the skirts of his garment, Ps 133:2 The least of Christ's institutions, like the hem of his garment, is replenished with the overflowing fulness of his grace, and he is able to save to the uttermost.

3. The healing virtue that is in Christ, is put forth for the benefit of those that by a true and lively faith touch him. Christ is in heaven, but his word is nigh us, and he himself in that word. When we mix faith with the word, apply it to ourselves, depend upon it, and submit to its influences and commands, then we touch the hem of Christ's garment. It is but thus touching, and we are made whole. On such easy terms are spiritual cures offered by him, that he may truly be said to heal freely; so that if our souls die of their wounds, it is not owing to our Physician, it is not for want of skill or will in him; but it is purely owing to ourselves. He could have healed us, he would have healed us, but we would not be healed; so that our blood will lie upon our own heads.

Matthew-15

The Things That Defile

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws. The intemperate heat of the Jewish teachers for the support of their hierarchy, occasioned many excellent discourses of our Saviour's for the settling of the truth, as here.

By putting the commandments of men on a level with the divine requirements, their whole worship was rendered vain—a principle of deep moment in the service of God. "For," it is added in Mk 7:8, "laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do." The drivelling nature of their multitudinous observances is here pointedly exposed, in contrast with the manly observance of "the commandment of God"; and when our Lord says, "Many other such like things ye do," it is implied that He had but given a specimen of the hideous treatment which the divine law

received, and the grasping disposition which, under the mask of piety, was manifested by the ecclesiastics of that day.

Here, is the cavil of the scribes and Pharisees at Christ's disciples, for eating with unwashen hands. The scribes and Pharisees were the great men of the Jewish church, men whose gain was godliness, great enemies to the gospel of Christ, but colouring their opposition with a pretence of zeal for the law of Moses, when really nothing was intended but the support of their own tyranny over the consciences of men. They were men of learning and men of business. These scribes and Pharisees here introduced were of Jerusalem, the holy city, the head city, whither the tribes went up, and where were set the thrones of judgment; they should therefore have been better than others, but they were worse. Note, External privileges, if they be not duly improved, commonly swell men up the more with pride and malignity. Jerusalem, which should have been a pure spring, was now become a poisoned sink. How is the faithful city become a harlot!

Now if these great men be the accusers, pray what is the accusation? What articles do they exhibit against the disciples of Christ? Why, truly, the thing laid to their charge, is, nonconformity to the canons of their church (Mt 15:2); Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? This charge they make good in a particular instance; They wash not their hands when they eat bread. A very high misdemeanor! It was a sign that Christ's disciples conducted themselves inoffensively, when this was the worst thing they could charge them with.

Observe, 1. What was the tradition of the elders--That people should often wash their hands, and always at meat. This they placed a great deal of religion in, supposing that the meat they touched with unwashen hands would be defiling to them. The Pharisees practiced this themselves, and with a great deal of strictness imposed it upon others, not under civil penalties, but as matter of conscience, and making it a sin against God if they did not do it. Rabbi Joses determined, "that to eat with unwashen hands is as great a sin as

adultery." And Rabbi Akiba being kept a close prisoner, having water sent him both to wash his hands with, and to drink with his meat, the greatest part being accidentally shed, he washed his hands with the remainder, though he left himself none to drink, saying he would rather die than transgress the tradition of the elders. Nay, they would not eat meat with one that did not wash before meat. This mighty zeal in so small a matter would appear very strange, if we did not still see it incident to church-oppressors, not only to be fond of practising their own inventions, but to be furious in pressing their own impositions.

Additions to God's laws reflect upon his wisdom, as if he had left out something which was needed, and which man could supply; in one way or other they always lead men to disobey God. How thankful ought we to be for the written word of God! Never let us think that the religion of the Bible can be improved by any human addition, either in doctrine or practice. Our blessed Lord spoke of their traditions as inventions of their own, and pointed out one instance in which this was very clear, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment. When a parent's wants called for assistance, they pleaded, that they had devoted to the temple all they could spare, even though they did not part with it, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them. This was making the command of God of no effect. The doom of hypocrites is put in a little compass; "In vain do they worship me." It will neither please God, nor profit themselves; they trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence.

2. A common practice of the Jews in Jesus' time was the ceremonial washing of hands. They believed that those who came in contact with 'unclean' people or things had to pour water over their hands to cleanse themselves. This was not a command of the law of Moses but a tradition of the Pharisees (Mar_7:1-5). Jesus argued that such traditions not only caused people to misunderstand the law, but stopped them from doing the more important things that the law required (Mar_7:6-8). "And when they come from the market" (Mk 7:4) —"And after market": after any common business, or attending

a court of justice, where the Jews, as WEBSTER and WILKINSON remark, after their subjection to the Romans, were especially exposed to intercourse and contact with heathens—"except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables"—rather, "couches," such as were used at meals, which probably were merely sprinkled for ceremonial purposes. "Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him,"

What was the transgression of this tradition or injunction by the disciples; it seems, they did not wash their hands when they ate bread, which was the more offensive to the Pharisees, because they were men who in other things were strict and conscientious. The custom was innocent enough, and had a decency in its civil use. We read of the water for purifying at the marriage where Christ was present (Joh 2:6), though Christ turned it into wine, and so put an end to that use of it. But when it came to be practised and imposed as a religious rite and ceremony, and such a stress laid upon it, the disciples, though weak in knowledge, yet were so well taught as not to comply with it, or observe it; no not when the scribes and Pharisees had their eye upon them. They had already learned St. Paul's lesson, All things are lawful for me; no doubt, it is lawful to wash before meat; but I will not be brought under the power of any; especially not those who said to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over. 1Co 6:12.

3. What was the complaint of the scribes and Pharisees against them. They quarrel with Christ about it, supposing that he allowed them in it, as he did, no doubt, by his own example; "Why do thy disciples transgress the canons of the church? And why dost thou suffer them to do it?" It was well that the complaint was made to Christ; for the disciples themselves, though they knew their duty in this case, were perhaps not so well able to give a reason for what they did as were to be wished.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and,

He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to *his* father or *his* mother, *It is* a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 and honor not his father or his mother, *he shall be free.* Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

Here is Christ's answer to this cavil, and his justification of the disciples in that which was charged upon them as a transgression. Note, While we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, he will be sure to bear us out in it.

Two ways Christ replies upon them;

By way of recrimination, Mt 15:3-6. They were spying motes in the eyes of his disciples, but Christ shows them a beam in their own. But that which he charges upon them is not barely a recrimination, for it will be no vindication of ourselves to condemn our reprovers; but it is such a censure of their tradition (and the authority of that was what they built their charge upon) as makes not only a non-compliance lawful, but an opposition a duty. That human authority must never be submitted to, which sets up in competition with divine authority.

1 The charge in general is, You transgress the commandment of God by your tradition. They called it the tradition of the elders, laying stress upon the antiquity of the usage, and the authority of them that imposed it, as the church of Rome does upon fathers and councils; but Christ calls it their tradition. Note, Illegal impositions will be laid to the charge of those who support and maintain them, and keep them up, as well of those who first invented and enjoined them. You transgress the commandment of God. Note, Those who are most zealous of their own impositions, are commonly most careless of God's commands; which is a good reason why Christ's disciples should stand upon their guard against such impositions, lest, though at first they seem only to infringe the liberty of Christians, they come at length to confront the authority of Christ. Though the Pharisees, in this command of washing before meat, did not entrench upon any command of God; yet, because in other instances they did, he justifies his disciples' disobedience to this.

2 The proof of this charge is in particular instance, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment.

[1.] Let us see what the command of God is (Mt 15:4), what the precept, and what the sanction of the law is.

The precept is, Honour thy father and thy mother; this is enjoined by the common Father of mankind, and by paying respect to them whom Providence has made the instruments of our being, we give honour to him who is the Author of it, who has thereby, as to us, put some of his image upon them. The whole of children's duty to their parents is included in this of honouring them, which is the spring and foundation of all the rest, If I be a father, where is my honour? Our Saviour here supposes it to mean the duty of children's maintaining their parents, and ministering to their wants, if there be occasion, and being every way serviceable to their comfort. Honour widows, that is, maintain them, 1Ti 5:3.

The sanction of this law in the fifth commandment, is, a promise, that thy days may be long; but our Saviour waives that, lest any should thence infer it to be only a thing commendable and profitable, and insists upon the penalty annexed to the breach of this commandment in another scripture, which denotes the duty to be highly and indispensably necessary; He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death: this law we have, Ex 21:17. The sin of cursing parents is here opposed to the duty of honouring them. Those who speak ill of their parents, or wish ill to them, who mock at them, or give them taunting and opprobrious language, break this law. If to call a brother Raca be so penal, what is it to call a father so? By our Saviour's application of this law, it appears, that denying service or relief to parents is included in cursing them. Though the language be respectful enough, and nothing abusive in it, yet what will that avail, if the deeds be not agreeable? it is but like him that said, I go, Sir, and went not, Mt 21:30.

[2.] Let us see what was the contradiction which the tradition of the elders gave to this command. It was not direct and downright, but implicit; their casuists gave them such rules as furnished them with an easy evasion from the obligation of this command, Mt 15:5,6. You hear what God saith, but ye say so and so. Note, That which men say, even great men, and learned men, and men in authority, must be examined by that which God saith; and if it be found either contrary or inconsistent, it may and must be rejected, Ac 4:19. Observe,

First, What their tradition was; That a man could not in any case bestow his worldly estate better than to give it to the priests, and devote it to the service of the temple: and that when any thing was so devoted, it was not only unlawful to alienate it, but all other obligations, though ever so just and sacred, were thereby superseded, and a man was thereby discharged from them. And this proceeded partly from their ceremoniousness, and the superstitious regard they had to the temple, and partly from their covetousness, and love of money: for what was given to the temple they were gainers by. The former was, in pretence, the latter was, in truth, at the bottom of this tradition.

Secondly, How they allowed the application of this to the case of children. When their parents' necessities called for their assistance, they pleaded, that all they could spare from themselves and their children, they had devoted to the treasury of the temple; It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them; suggesting withal, that the spiritual advantage of what was so devoted, would redound to the parents, who must live upon that air. This, they taught, was a good and valid plea, and many undutiful, unnatural children made use of it, and they justified them in it, and said, He shall be free; so we supply the sense. Some go further, and supply it thus, "He doth well, his days shall be long in the land, and he shall be looked upon as having duly observed the fifth commandment." The pretence of religion would make his refusal to provide for his parents not only passable but plausible. But the absurdity and impiety of this tradition

were very evident: for revealed religion was intended to improve, not to overthrow, natural religion; one of the fundamental laws of which is this of honouring our parents; and had they known what that meant, I will have justice, and mercy, and not sacrifice, they had not thus made the most arbitrary rituals destructive of the most necessary morals. This was making the command of God of no effect. Note, Whatever leads to, or countenances, disobedience, does, in effect, make void the command; and they that take upon them to dispense with God's law, do, in Christ's account, repeal and disannul it. To break the law is bad, but to teach men so, as the scribes and Pharisees did, is much worse, Mt 5:19. To what purpose is the command given, if it be not obeyed? The rule is, as to us, of none effect, if we be not ruled by it. It is time for thee, Lord, to work; high time for the great Reformer, the great Refiner, to appear; for they have made void thy law (Ps 119:126); not only sinned against the commandment, but, as far as in them lay, sinned away the commandment. But, thanks be to God, in spite of them and all their traditions, the command stands in full force, power, and virtue.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

The other part of Christ's answer is by way of reprehension; and that which he here charges them with, is hypocrisy; Ye hypocrites, Mt 15:7. Note, It is the prerogative of him who searcheth the heart, and knows what is in man, to pronounce who are hypocrites. The eye of man can perceive open profaneness, but it is only the eye of Christ that can discern hypocrisy, Lu 16:15. And as it is a sin which his eye discovers, so it is a sin which of all others his soul hates.

Now Christ fetches his reproof from Isa 29:13. Well did Esaias prophesy of you. Isaiah spoke it of the men of that generation to which he prophesied, yet Christ applies it to these scribes and Pharisees. Note, The reproofs of sin and sinners, which we find in scripture, were designed to reach the like persons and practices to the end of the world; for they are not of private interpretation, 2Pe 1:20. The sinners of the latter days are prophesied of, 1Ti 4:1,2Ti 3:1,2,3:3. Threatenings directed against others, belong to us, if we

be guilty of the same sins. Isaiah prophesied not of them only, but of all other hypocrites, against whom that word of his is still levelled, and stands in force. The prophecies of scripture are every day in the fulfilling.

This prophecy exactly deciphers a hypocritical nation, Isa 9:17,10:6. Here is,

(a) The description of hypocrites, in two things.

[1.] In their own performances of religious worship, v. 8, when they draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, their heart is far from him. Observe,

First, How far a hypocrite goes; he draws nigh to God, and honours him; he is, in profession, a worshipper of God. The Pharisee went up to the temple, to pray; he does not stand at that distance which those are at, who live without God in the world, but has a name among the people near unto him. They honour him; that is, they take on them to honour God, they join with those that do so. Some honour God has even from the services of hypocrites, as they help to keep up the face and form of godliness in the world, whence God fetches honour to himself, though they intend it not to him. When God's enemies submit themselves but feignedly, when they lie unto him, so the word is (Ps 66:3), it redounds to his honour, and he gets himself a name.

Secondly, Where he rests and takes up; this is done gut with his mouth and with his lips. It is piety but from the teeth outwards; he shows much love, and that is all, there is in his heart no true love; they make their voices to be heard (Isa 58:4), mention the name of the Lord, Isa 48:1. Hypocrites are those that only make a lip-labour of religion and religious worship. In word and tongue, the worst hypocrites may do as well as the best saints, and speak as fair with Jacob's voice.

Thirdly, What that is wherein he comes short; it is in the main matter; Their heart is far from me, habitually alienated and estranged (Eph 4:18), actually wandering and dwelling upon something else; no serious thoughts of God, no pious affections toward him, no concern about the soul and eternity, no thoughts agreeable to the service. God is near in their mouth, but far from their reins, Jer 12:2,Eze 33:31. The heart, with the fool's eyes, is in the ends of the earth. It is a silly dove that is without a heart, and so it is a silly duty, Ho 7:11. A hypocrite says one thing, but thinks another. The great thing that God looks at and requires is the heart (Pr 23:26); if that be far from him, it is not a reasonable service and therefore not an acceptable one; it is the sacrifice of fools, Ec 5:1.

[2.] In their prescriptions to others. This is an instance of their hypocrisy, that they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The Jews then, as the papists since, paid the same respect to oral tradition that they did to the word of God, receiving it pari pietatis affectu ac reverentiâ--with the same pious affection and reverence. Conc. Trident. Sess. 4. Decr. 1. When men's inventions are tacked to God's institutions, and imposed accordingly, this is hypocrisy, a mere human religion. The commandments of men are properly conversant about the things of men, but God will have his own work done by his own rules, and accepts not that which he did not himself appoint. That only cones to him, that comes from him.

(b) The doom of hypocrites; it is put in a little compass; In vain do they worship me. Their worship does not attain the end for which it was appointed; it will neither please God, nor profit themselves. If it be not in spirit, it is not in truth, and so it is all nothing. That man who only seems to be religious, but is not so, his religion is vain (Jam 1:26); and if our religion be a vain oblation, a vain religion, how great is that vanity! How sad is it to live in an age of prayers and sermons, and sabbaths and sacraments, in vain, to beat the air in all these; it is so, if the heart be not with God in them. Lip-labour is lost labour, Isa 1:11. Hypocrites sow the wind and reap the whirlwind; they trust in vanity, and vanity will be their recompence.

Thus Christ justified his disciples in their disobedience to the traditions of the elders; and this the scribes and Pharisees got by their cavilling. We read not of any reply they made; if they were not satisfied, yet they were silenced, and could not resist the power wherewith Christ spake.

9 But in vain they do worship me,
teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

The solemn introduction to this discourse (Mt 15:10); He called the multitude. They were withdrawn while Christ discoursed with the scribes and Pharisees; probably those proud men ordered them to withdraw, as not willing to talk with Christ in their hearing; Christ must favour them at their pleasure with a discourse in private. But Christ had a regard to the multitude; he soon despatched the scribes and Pharisees, and then turned them off, invited the mob, the multitude, to be his hearers: thus the poor are evangelized; and the foolish things of the world, and things that are despised hath Christ chosen. The humble Jesus embraced those whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, and to them he designed it for a mortification. He turns from them as wilful and unteachable, and turns to the multitude, who, though weak, were humble, and willing to be taught. To them he said, Hear and understand. Note, What we hear from the mouth of Christ, we must give all diligence to understand. Not only scholars, but even the multitude, the ordinary people, must apply their minds to understand the words of Christ. He therefore calls upon them to understand, because the lesson he was now about to teach them, was contrary to the notions which they had sucked in with their milk from their teachers; and overturned many of the customs and usages which they were wedded to, and laid stress upon. Note, There is need of a great attention of mind and clearness of understanding to free men from those corrupt principles and practices which they have been bred up in and long accustomed to; for in that case the understanding is commonly bribed and biassed by prejudice.

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Not that which goes into the mouth defileth the man. It is not the kind or quality of our food, nor the condition of our hands, that affects the soul with any moral pollution or defilement. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, Ro 14:17. That defiles the man, by which guilt is contracted before God, and the man is rendered offensive to him, and disfitted for communion with him; now what we eat, if we do not eat unreasonably and immoderately, does not this; for to the pure all things are pure, Tit 1:15. The Pharisees carried the ceremonial pollutions, by eating such and such meats, much further than the law intended, and burdened it with additions of their own, which our Saviour witnesses against; intending hereby to pave the way to a repeal of the ceremonial law in that matter. He was now beginning to teach his followers to call nothing common or unclean; and if Peter, when he was bid to kill and eat, had remembered this word, he would not have said, Not so, Lord, Ac 10:13-15,28.

2. But that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. We are polluted, not by the meat we eat with unwashen hands, but by the words we speak from an unsanctified heart; thus it is that the mouth causeth the flesh to sin, Ec 5:6. Christ, in a former discourse, had laid a great stress upon our words (Mt 12:36,37); and that was intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at him; this here is intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at the disciples, and censured them. It is not the disciples that defile themselves with what they eat, but the Pharisees that defile themselves with what they speak spitefully and censoriously of them. Note, Those who charge guilt upon others for transgressing the commandments of men, many times bring greater guilt upon themselves, by transgressing the law of God against rash judging. Those most defile themselves, who are most forward to censure the defilements of others.

12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying ?

The offence that was taken at this truth and the account brought to Christ of that offence (Mt 15:12); "The disciples said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, and didst thou not foresee that they would be so, at this saying, and would think the

worse of thee and of thy doctrine for it, and be the more enraged at thee?"

1. It was not strange that the Pharisees should be offended at this plain truth, for they were men made up of error and enmity, mistakes and malice. Sore eyes cannot bear clear light; and nothing is more provoking to proud imposers than the undeceiving of those whom they have first blindfolded, and then enslaved. It should seem that the Pharisees, who were strict observers of the traditions, were more offended than the scribes, who were the teachers of them; and perhaps they were as much galled with the latter part of Christ's doctrine, which taught a strictness in the government of our tongue, as with the former part, which taught an indifference about washing our hands; great contenders for the formalities of religion, being commonly as great contemners of the substantials of it.

2 The disciples thought it strange that their Master should say that which he knew would give so much offence; he did not use to do so: surely, they think, if he had considered how provoking it would be, he would not have said it. But he knew what he said, and to whom he said it, and what would be the effect of it; and would teach us, that though in indifferent things we must be tender of giving offence, yet we must not, for fear of that, evade any truth or duty. Truth must be owned, and duty done; and if any be offended, it is his own fault; it is scandal, not given, but taken.

Perhaps the disciples themselves stumbled at the word Christ said, which they thought bold, and scarcely reconcileable with the difference that was put by the law of God between clean and unclean meats; and therefore objected this to Christ, that they might themselves be better informed. They seem likewise to have a concern upon them for the Pharisees, though they had quarrelled with them; which teaches us to forgive, and seek the good, especially the spiritual good, of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. They would not have the Pharisees go away displeased at any thing Christ had said; and therefore, though they do not desire him to retract it, they hope he will explain, correct, and modify it. Weak hearers are sometimes more solicitous than they should be not to have wicked hearers offended. But if we please men with the concealment of

truth, and the indulgence of their errors and corruptions, we are not the servants of Christ.

13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

The doom passed upon the Pharisees and their corrupt traditions; which comes in as a reason why Christ cared not though he offended them, and therefore why the disciples should not care; because they were a generation of men that hated to be reformed, and were marked out for destruction. Their corrupt teaching is already doomed: the garden of the Lord upon earth, too long cumbered with their presence, shall yet be purged of them and their accursed system: yea, and whatsoever is not of the planting of My heavenly Father, the great Husbandman (Joh 15:1), shall share the same fate.

Two things Christ here foretels concerning them.

1. The rooting out of them and their traditions (Mt 15:13); Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Not only the corrupt opinions and superstitious practices of the Pharisees, but their sect, and way, and constitution, were plants not of God's planting. The rules of their profession were no institutions of his, but owed their origin to pride and formality. The people of the Jews were planted a noble vine; but now that they are become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, God disowned them, as not of his planting. Note,

(a) In the visible church, it is no strange thing to find plants that our heavenly Father has not planted. It is implied, that whatever is good in the church is of God's planting, Isa 41:19. But let the husbandman be ever so careful, his ground will cast forth weeds of itself, more or less, and there is an enemy busy sowing tares. What is corrupt, though of God's permitting, is not of his planting; he sows nothing but good seed in his field. Let us not therefore be deceived, as if all must needs be right that we find in the church, and all those persons and things our Father's plants that we find in our Father's garden. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits; see Jer 19:5,23:31,32.

(b) Those that are of the spirit of the Pharisees, proud, formal, and imposing, what figure soever they make, and of what denomination soever they be, God will not own them as of his planting. By their fruit you shall know them.

(c) Those plants that are not of God's planting, shall not be of his protecting, but shall undoubtedly be rooted up. What is not of God shall not stand, Ac 5:38. What things are unscriptural, will wither and die of themselves, or be justly exploded by the churches; however in the great day these tares that offend will be bundled for the fire. What is become of the Pharisees and their traditions? They are long since abandoned; but the gospel of truth is great, and will remain. It cannot be rooted up.

2 The ruin of them; and their followers, who had their persons and principles in admiration, Mt 15:14. Where,

(a) Christ bids his disciples let them alone. "Have no converse with them or concern for them; neither court their favour, nor dread their displeasure; care not though they be offended, they will take their course, and let them take the issue of it. They are wedded to their own fancies, and will have every thing their own way; let them alone. Seek not to please a generation of men that please not God (1Th 2:15), and will be pleased with nothing less than absolute dominion over your consciences. They are joined to idols, as Ephraim (Ho 4:17), the idols of their own fancy; let them alone, let them be filthy still," Re 22:11. The case of those sinners is sad indeed, whom Christ orders his ministers to let alone.

(b) He gives them two reasons for it. Let them alone; for,

[1.] They are proud and ignorant; two bad qualities that often meet, and render a man incurable in his folly, Pr 26:12. They are blind leaders of the blind. They are grossly ignorant in the things of God, and strangers to the spiritual nature of the divine law; and yet so proud, that they think they see better and further than any, and

therefore undertake to be leaders of others, to show others the way to heaven, when they themselves know not one step of the way; and, accordingly, they prescribe to all, and proscribe those who will not follow them. Though they were blind, if they had owned it, and come to Christ for eye-salve, they might have seen, but they disdained the intimation of such a thing (Joh 9:40); Are we blind also? They were confident that they themselves were guides of the blind (Ro 2:19,20), were appointed to be so, and fit to be so; that every thing they said was an oracle and a law; "Therefore let them alone, their case is desperate; do not meddle with them; you may soon provoke them, but never convince them." How miserable was the case of the Jewish Church now when their leaders were blind, so self-conceitedly foolish, as to be peremptory in their conduct, while the people were so sottishly foolish as to follow them with an implicit faith and obedience, and willingly walk after the commandment, Ho 5:11. Now the prophecy was fulfilled, Isa 29:10,14. And it is easy to imagine what will be in the end hereof, when the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so, Jer 5:31.

[2.] They are posting to destruction, and will shortly be plunged into it; Both shall fall into the ditch. This must needs be the end of it, if both be so blind, and yet both so bold, venturing forward, and yet not aware of danger. Both will be involved in the general desolation coming upon the Jews, and both drowned in eternal destruction and perdition. The blind leaders and the blind followers will perish together. We find (Re 22:15), that hell is the portion of those that make a lie, and of those that love it when it is made. The deceived and the deceiver are obnoxious to the judgment of God, Job 12:16. Note, First, Those that by their cunning craftiness draw others to sin and error, shall not, with all their craft and cunning, escape ruin themselves. If both fall together into the ditch, the blind leaders will fall undermost, and have the worst of it; see Jer 14:15,16. The prophets shall be consumed first, and then the people to whom they prophesy, Jer 20:6,27:15,16. Secondly, The sin and ruin of the deceivers will be no security to those that are deceived by them. Though the leaders of this people cause them to err, yet they that are led of them are destroyed (Isa 9:16), because they shut their eyes

against the light which would have rectified their mistake. Seneca, complaining of most people's being led by common opinion and practice (Unusquisque mavult credere quam judicare--Things are taken upon trust, and never examined), concludes, Indeista tanta coacervatio aliorum super alios ruentium--Hence crowds fall upon crowds, in vast confusion. De Vitâ Beatâ. The falling of both together will aggravate the fall of both; for they that have thus mutually increased each other's sin, will mutually exasperate each other's ruin.

14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.

16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?

17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?

Instruction given to the disciples concerning the truth Christ had laid down, Mt 15:10. Though Christ rejects the wilfully ignorant who care not to be taught, he can have compassion on the ignorant who are willing to learn, Heb 5:2. If the Pharisees, who made void the law, be offended, let them be offended: but this great peace have they who love the law, that nothing shall offend them, but, some way or other, the offence shall be taken off, Ps 119:165. Here is,

1. Their desire to be better instructed in this matter (Mt 15:15); in this request as in many others, Peter was their speaker; the rest, it is probable, putting him on to speak, or intimating their concurrence; Declare unto us this parable. What Christ said was plain, but, because it agreed not with the notions they had imbibed, though they would not contradict it, yet they call it a parable, and cannot understand it. Note, (1.) Weak understandings are apt to turn plain truths into parables, and to seek for a knot in a bulrush. The disciples often did so, as Joh 16:17. Even the grasshopper is a burthen to a weak stomach, and babes in understanding cannot bear and digest strong meat. (2.) Where a weak head doubts concerning any word of Christ, an upright heart and a willing mind will seek for instruction. The Pharisees were offended, but kept it to themselves; hating to be reformed, they hated to be informed; but the disciples, though

offended, sought for satisfaction, imputing the offence, not to the doctrine delivered, but to the shallowness of their own capacity.

2 The reproof Christ gave them for their weakness and ignorance (Mt 15:16); Are ye also yet without understanding? As many as Christ loves and teaches, he thus rebukes. Note, They are very ignorant indeed, who understand not that moral pollutions are abundantly worse and more dangerous than ceremonial ones. Two things aggravate their dulness and darkness.

(1.) That they were the disciples of Christ; "Are ye also without understanding? Ye whom I have admitted into so great a degree of familiarity with me, are ye so unskilful in the word of righteousness?" Note, The ignorance and mistakes of those that profess religion, and enjoy the privileges of church-membership, are justly a grief to the Lord Jesus. "No wonder that the Pharisees understand not this doctrine, who know nothing of the Messiah's kingdom: but ye that have heard of it, and embraced it yourselves, and preached it to others, are ye also such strangers to the spirit and genius of it?"

(2.) That they had been a great while Christ's scholars; "Are ye yet so, after ye have been so long under my teaching?" Had they been but of yesterday in Christ's school, it had been another matter, but to have been for so many months Christ's constant hearers, and yet to be without understanding, was a great reproach to them. Note, Christ expects from us some proportion of knowledge, and grace, and wisdom, according to the time and means we have had. See Joh 14:9,Heb 5:12,2Ti 3:7,8.

3. The explication Christ gave them of this doctrine of pollutions. Though he chid them for their dulness, he did not cast them off, but pitied them, and taught them, as Lu 24:25-27. He here shows us,

(1.) What little danger we are in of pollution from that which entereth in at the mouth, Mt 15:17. An inordinate appetite,

intemperance, and excess in eating, come out of the heart, and are defiling; but meat in itself is not so, as the Pharisees supposed. What there is of dregs and defilement in our meat, nature (or rather God of nature) has provided a way to clear us of it; it goes in at the belly, and is cast out into the draught, and nothing remains to us but pure nourishment. So fearfully and wonderfully are we made and preserved, and our souls held in life. The expulsive faculty is as necessary in the body as any other, for the discharge of that which is superfluous, or noxious; so happily is nature enabled to help itself, and shift for its own good: by this means nothing defiles; if we eat with unwashen hands, and so any thing unclean mix with our food, nature will separate it, and cast it out, and it will be no defilement to us. It may be a piece of cleanliness, but it is not point of conscience, to wash before meat; and we go upon a great mistake if we place religion in it. It is not the practice itself, but the opinion it is built upon, that Christ condemns, as if meat commended us to God (1Co 8:8); whereas Christianity stands not in such observances.

(2.) What great danger we are in of pollution from that which proceeds out of the mouth (Mt 15:18), out of the abundance of the heart: compare Mt 12:34. There is no defilement in the products of God's bounty; the defilement arises from the products of out corruption. Now here we have,

[1.] The corrupt fountain of that which proceeds out of the mouth; it comes from the heart; that is the spring and source of all sin, Jer 8:7. It is the heart that is so desperately wicked (Jer 17:9); for there is no sin in a word or deed, which was not first in the heart. There is the root of bitterness, which bears gall and wormwood. It is the inward part of a sinner, that is very wickedness, Ps 5:9. All evil speakings come forth from the heart, and are defiling; from the corrupt heart comes the corrupt communication.

[2.] Some of the corrupt streams which flow from this fountain, specified; though they do not all come out of the mouth, yet they all come out of the man, and are the fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart, and is wrought there, Ps 58:2.

First, Evil thoughts, sins against all the commandments. Therefore David puts vain thoughts in opposition to the whole law, Ps 119:113. These are the first-born of the corrupt nature, the beginning of its strength, and do most resemble it. These, as the son and heir, abide in the house, and lodge within us. There is a great deal of sin that begins and ends in the heart, and goes no further. Carnal fancies and imaginations are evil thoughts, wickedness in the contrivance (Dialogismoi poneroi), wicked plots, purposes, and devices of mischief to others, Mic 2:1.

Secondly, Murders, sins against the sixth commandment; these come from a malice in the heart against our brother's life, or a contempt of it. Hence he that hates his brother, is said to be a murderer; he is so at God's bar, 1Jo 3:15. War is in the heart, Ps 4:21,Jam 4:1.

Thirdly, Adulteries and fornications, sins against the seventh commandment; these come from the wanton, unclean, carnal heart; and the lust that reigns there, is conceived there, and brings forth these sins, Jam 1:15. There is adultery in the heart first, and then in the act, Mt 5:28.

Fourthly, Thefts, sins against the eighth commandment; cheats, wrongs, rapines, and all injurious contracts; the fountain of all these is in the heart, that is it that is exercised in these covetous practices (2Pe 2:14), that is set upon riches, Ps 62:10. Achan coveted, and then took, Jos 7:20,21.

Fifthly, False witness, against the ninth commandment; this comes from a complication of falsehood and covetousness, or falsehood and covetousness, or falsehood and malice in the heart. If truth, holiness, and love, which God requires in the inward parts, reigned as they ought, there would be no false witness bearing, Ps 64:6,Jer 9:8.

Sixthly, Blasphemies, speaking evil of God, against the third commandment; speaking evil of our neighbour, against the ninth commandment; these come from a contempt and disesteem of both in the heart; thence the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost proceeds (Mt 12:31,32); these are the overflowing of the gall within.

Now these are the things which defile a man, Mt 15:20. Note, Sin is defiling to the soul, renders it unlovely and abominable in the eyes of a pure and holy God; unfit for communion with him, and for the enjoyment of him in the new Jerusalem, into which nothing shall enter that defileth or worketh iniquity. The mind and conscience are defiled by sin, and that makes every thing else so, Tit 1:15. This defilement by sin was signified by the ceremonial pollutions which the Jewish doctors added to, but understood not. See Heb 9:13,14,1Jo 1:7.

These therefore are the things we must carefully avoid, and all approaches toward them, and not lay stress upon the washing of the hands. Christ doth not yet repeal the law of the distinction of meats (that was not done till Ac 10:9-16), but the tradition of the elders, which was tacked to that law; and therefore he concludes, To eat with unwashen hands (which was the matter now in question), this defileth not a man. If he wash, he is not the better before God; if he wash not, he is not the worse.

18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

Familiar though these sayings have now become, what freedom from bondage to outward things do they proclaim, on the one hand; and on the other, how searching is the truth which they express—that nothing which enters from without can really defile us; and that only the evil that is in the heart, that is allowed to stir there, to rise up in thought and affection, and to flow forth in voluntary action, really defiles a man!

It is the heart that is desperately wicked, Jer_17:9, for there is no sin in word or deed, which was not first in the heart. They all come out of the man, and are fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart,

and is wrought there. When Christ teaches, he will show men the deceitfulness and wickedness of their own hearts; he will teach them to humble themselves, and to seek to be cleansed in the Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.

"evil reasonings"; referring here more immediately to those corrupt reasonings which had stealthily introduced and gradually reared up that hideous fabric of tradition which at length practically nullified the unchangeable principles of the moral law. But the statement is far broader than this; namely that the first shape which the evil that is in the heart takes, when it begins actively to stir, is that of "considerations" or "reasonings" on certain suggested actions.

murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies—detractions, whether directed against God or man; here the reference seems to be to the latter. Mark (Mk 7:22) adds, "covetousnesses"—or desires after more; "wickednesses"—here meaning, perhaps, malignities of various forms; "deceit, lasciviousness"—meaning, excess or enormity of any kind, though by later writers restricted to lewdness; "an evil eye"—meaning, all looks or glances of envy, jealousy, or ill will towards a neighbor; "pride, foolishness"—in the Old Testament sense of "folly"; that is, criminal senselessness, the folly of the heart. How appalling is this black catalogue!

19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,
thefts, false witness, blasphemies:
20 these are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands
defileth not a man.

The Canaanite Woman's Faith

21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and
Sidon.

22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.
23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.
24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

We have here that famous story of Christ's casting the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter; it has something in it singular and very surprising, and which looks favourably upon the poor Gentiles, and is an earnest of the mercy which Christ had in store for them. Here is a gleam of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles, Lu 2:32. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not; but many of them quarrelled with him, and were offended in him; and observe what follows, Mt 15:21.

I. Jesus went thence. Note, Justly is the light taken from those that either play by it, or rebel against it. When Christ and his disciples could not be quiet among them, he left them, and so left an example to his own rule (Mt 10:14), Shake off the dust of your feet. Though Christ endure long, he will not always endure, the contradiction of sinners against himself. He had said (Mt 15:14), Let them alone, and he did so. Note, Wilful prejudices against the gospel, and cavils at it, often provoke Christ to withdraw, and to remove the candlestick out of its place. Ac 13:46,51.

II. When he went thence, he departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; not to those cities (they were excluded from any share in Christ's mighty works, Mt 11:21,22), but into that part of the land of Israel which lay that way: thither he went, as Elias to Sarepta, a city of Sidon (Lu 4:26); thither he went to look after this poor woman, whom he had mercy in reserve for. While he went about doing good, he was never out of his way. The dark corners of the country, which lay most remote, shall have their share of his benign influences; and as now the ends of the land, so afterward the ends of the earth, shall see his salvation, Isa 49:6. Here it was, that this miracle was wrought, in the story of which we may observe,

1 The address of the woman of Canaan to Christ, Mt 15:22. She was a Gentile, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; probably one of the posterity of those accursed nations that were devoted by that word, Cursed be Canaan. Note, The doom of political bodies doth not always reach every individual member of them. God will have his remnant out of all nations, chosen vessels in all coasts, even the most unlikely: she came out of the same coasts. If Christ had not now made a visit to these coasts, though the mercy was worth travelling far for, it is probable that she had never come to him. Note, It is often an excitement to a dormant faith and zeal, to have opportunities of acquaintance with Christ brought to our doors, to have the word nigh us.

Her address was very importunate, she cried to Christ, as one in earnest; cried, as being at some distance from him, not daring to approach too near, being a Canaanite, lest she should give offence. In her address,

(a) She relates her misery; My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil, kakos daimonizetai--She is ill-bewitched, or possessed. There were degrees of that misery, and this was the worst sort. It was common case at that time, and very calamitous. Note, The vexations of children are the trouble of parents, and nothing should be more so than their being under the power of Satan. Tender parents very sensibly feel the miseries of those that are pieces of themselves. "Though vexed with the devil, yet she is my daughter still." The greatest afflictions of our relations do not dissolve our obligations to them, and therefore ought not to alienate our affections from them. It was the distress and trouble of her family, that now brought her to Christ; she came to him, not for teaching, but for healing; yet, because she came in faith, he did not reject her. Though it is need that drives us to Christ, yet we shall not therefore be driven from him. It was the affliction o her daughter, that gave her this occasion of applying to Christ. It is good to make the afflictions of others our own, in sense and sympathy, that we may make them our own, in improvement and advantage.

(b) She requests for mercy; Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, she owns him to be the Messiah: that is the great thing which faith should fasten upon, and fetch comfort from. From the Lord we may expect acts of power: he can command deliverances; from the Son of David we may expect all the mercy and grace which were foretold concerning him. Though a Gentile, she owns the promise made to the fathers of the Jews, and the honour of the house of David. The Gentiles must receive Christianity, not only as an improvement of natural religion, but as the perfection of the Jewish religion, with an eye to the Old Testament.

Her petition is, Have mercy on me. She does not limit Christ to this or that particular instance of mercy, but mercy, mercy is the thing she begs: she pleads not merit, but depends upon mercy; Have mercy upon me. Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents; favours to ours are favours to us, and are so to be accounted. Note, It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to be earnest in prayer for them, especially for their souls; "I have a son, a daughter, grievously vexed with a proud will, an unclean devil, a malicious devil, led captive by him at his will; Lord, help them." This is a case more deplorable than that of a bodily possession. Bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, who alone is able to heal them. Parents should look upon it as a great mercy to themselves, to have Satan's power broken in the souls of their children.

2 The discouragement she met with in this address; in all the story of Christ's ministry we do not meet with the like. He was wont to countenance and encourage all that came to him, and either to answer before they called, or to hear while they were yet speaking; but here was one otherwise treated: and what could be the reason of it?

(a) Some think that Christ showed himself backward to gratify this poor woman, because he would not give offence to the Jews, by being as free and forward in his favour to the Gentiles as to them. He had bid his disciples not go into the way of the Gentiles (Mt

10:5), and therefore would not himself seem so inclinable to them as to others, but rather more shy. Or rather,

(b) Christ treated her thus, to try her; he knows what is in the heart, knew the strength of her faith, and how well able she was, by his grace, to break through such discouragements; he therefore met her with them, that the trial of her faith might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1Pe 1:6,7. This was like God's tempting Abraham (Ge 22:1), like the angel's wrestling with Jacob, only to put him upon wrestling, Ge 32:24. Many of the methods of Christ's providence, and especially of his grace, in dealing with his people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained with the key of this story, which is for that end left upon record, to teach us that there may be love in his face, and to encourage us, therefore, though he slay us, yet to trust in him.

Observe the particular discouragements given her:

[1.] When she cried after him, he answered her not a word, Mt 15:23. His ear was wont to be always open and attentive to the cries of poor supplicants, and his lips, which dropped as the honeycomb, always ready to give an answer of peace; but to this poor woman he turned a deaf ear, and she could get neither an alms nor an answer. It was a wonder that she did not fly off in a fret, and say, "Is this he that is so famed for clemency and tenderness? Have so many been heard and answered by him, as they talk, and must I be the first rejected suitor? Why so distant to me, if it be true that he hath stooped to so many?" But Christ knew what he did, and therefore did not answer, that she might be the more earnest in prayer. He heard her, and was pleased with her, and strengthened her with strength in her soul to prosecute her request (Ps 138:3,Job 23:6), though he did not immediately give her the answer she expected. By seeming to draw away the desired mercy from her, he drew her on to be so much the more importunate for it. Note, Every accepted prayer is not immediately an answered prayer. Sometimes God seems not to regard his people's prayers, like a man asleep or astonished (Ps 44:23,Jer 14:9,Ps 22:1,2); nay, to be

angry at them (Ps 80:4,La 3:8,44); but it is to prove, and so to improve, their faith, and to make his after-appearances for them the more glorious to himself, and the more welcome to them; for the vision, at the end, shall speak, and shall not lie, Heb 2:3. See Job 35:14.

[2.] When the disciples spake a good word for her, he gave a reason why he refused her, which was yet more discouraging.

First, It was some little relief, that the disciples interposed on her behalf; they said, Send her away, for she crieth after us. It is desirable to have an interest in the prayers of good people, and we should be desirous of it. But the disciples, though wishing she might have what she came for, yet therein consulted rather their own ease than the poor woman's satisfaction; "Send her away with a cure, for she cries, and is in good earnest; she cries after us, and is troublesome to us, and shames us." Continued importunity may be uneasy to men, even to good men; but Christ loves to be cried after.

Secondly, Christ's answer to the disciples quite dashed her expectations; "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; you know I am not, she is none of them, and would you have me go beyond by commission?" Importunity seldom conquers the settled reason of a wise man; and those refusals are most silencing, which are so backed. He doth not only not answer her, but he argues against her, and stops her mouth with a reason. It is true, she is a lost sheep, and hath as much need of his care as any, but she is not of the house of Israel, to whom he was first sent (Ac 3:26), and therefore not immediately interested in it, and entitled to it. Christ was a Minister of the circumcision (Ro 15:8); and though he was intended for a Light to the Gentiles, yet the fulness of time for that was not now come, the veil was not yet rent, nor the partition-wall taken down. Christ's personal ministry was to be the glory of his people Israel; "If I am sent to them, what have I to do with those that are none of them." Note, It is a great trial, when we have occasion given us to question whether we be of those to whom Christ was sent. But, blessed be God, no room is left for that doubt; the distinction

between Jew and Gentile is taken away; we are sure that he gave his life a ransom for many, and if for many, why not for me?

Thirdly, When she continued her importunity, he insisted upon the unfitness of the thing, and gave her not only a repulse, but a seeming reproach too (Mt 15:26); It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs. This seems to cut her off from all hope, and might have driven her to despair, if she had not had a very strong faith indeed. Gospel grace and miraculous cures (the appurtenances of it), were children's bread; they belonged to them to whom pertained the adoption (Ro 9:4), and lay not upon the same level with that rain from heaven, and those fruitful seasons, which God gave to the nations whom he suffered to walk in their own ways (Ac 14:16,17); no, these were peculiar favours, appropriated to the peculiar people, the garden enclosed. Christ preached to the Samaritans (Joh 4:41), but we read not of any cures he wrought among them; that salvation was of the Jews: it is not meet therefore to alienate these. The Gentiles were looked upon by the Jews with great contempt, were called and counted dogs; and, in comparison with the house of Israel, who were so dignified and privileged, Christ here seems to allow it, and therefore thinks it not meet that the Gentiles should share in the favours bestowed on the Jews. But see how the tables are turned; after the bringing of the Gentiles into the church, the Jewish zealots for the law are called dogs, Php 3:2.

Now this Christ urgeth against this woman of Canaan; "How can she expect to eat of the children's bread, who is not of the family?" Note,

1. Those whom Christ intends most signally to honour, he first humbles and lays low in a sense of their own meanness and unworthiness. We must first see ourselves to be as dogs, less than the least of all God's mercies, before we are fit to be dignified and privileged with them.

2. Christ delights to exercise great faith with great trials, and sometimes reserves the sharpest for the last, that, being tried, we may come forth like gold. This general rule is applicable to other

cases for direction, though here used only for trial. Special ordinances and church-privileges are children's bread, and must not be prostituted to the grossly ignorant and profane. Common charity must be extended to all, but spiritual dignities are appropriated to the household of faith; and therefore promiscuous admission to them, without distinction, wastes the children's bread, and is the giving of that which is holy to the dogs, Mt 7:6. Procul hinc, procul inde, profani--Off, ye profane.

3. Here is the strength of her faith and resolution, in breaking through all these discouragements. Many a one, thus tried, would either have sunk into silence, or broken out into passion. "Here is cold comfort," might she have said, "for a poor distressed creature; as good for me to have staid at home, as come hither to be taunted at and abused at this rate; not only to have a piteous case slighted, but to be called a dog!" A proud, unhumbled heart would not have borne it. The reputation of the house of Israel was not now so great in the world, but that this slight put upon the Gentiles was capable of being retorted, had the poor woman been so minded. It might have occasioned a reflection upon Christ, and might have been a blemish upon his reputation, as well as a shock to the good opinion, she had entertained of him; for we re apt to judge of persons as we ourselves find them; and think that they are what they are to us. "Is this the Son of David?" (might she have said): "Is this he that has such a reputation for kindness, tenderness, and compassion? I am sure I have no reason to give him that character, for I was never treated so roughly in my life; he might have done as much for me as for others; or, if not, he needed not to have set me with the dogs of his flock. I am not a dog, I am a woman, and an honest woman, and a woman in misery; and I am sure it is not meet to call me a dog." No, here is not a word of this. Note, A humble, believing soul, that truly loves Christ, takes every thing in good part that he saith and doeth, and puts the best construction upon it.

She breaks through all these discouragements,

(a) With a holy earnestness of desire in prosecuting her petition. This appeared upon the former repulse (Mt 15:25); Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

[1.] She continued to pray. What Christ said, silenced the disciples; you hear no more of them; they took the answer, but the woman did not. Note, The more sensibly we feel the burthen, the more resolutely we should pray for the removal of it. And it is the will of God that we should continue instant in prayer, should always pray, and not faint.

[2.] She improved in prayer. Instead of blaming Christ, or charging him with unkindness, she seems rather to suspect herself, and lay the fault upon herself. She fears lest, in her first address, she had not been humble and reverent enough, and therefore now she came, and worshipped him, and paid him more respect than she had done; or she fears that she had not been earnest enough, and therefore now she cries, Lord, help me. Note, When the answers of prayer are deferred, God is thereby teaching us to pray more, and pray better. It is then time to enquire wherein we have come short in our former prayers, that what has been amiss may be amended for the future. Disappointments in the success of prayer, must be excitements to the duty of prayer. Christ, in his agony, prayed more earnestly.

[3.] She waives the question, whether she was of those to whom Christ was sent or no; she will not argue that with him, though perhaps she might have claimed some kindred to the house of Israel; but, "Whether an Israelite or no, I come to the Son of David for mercy, and I will not let him go, except he bless me." Many weak Christians perplex themselves with questions and doubts about their election, whether they are of the house of Israel or no; such had better mind their errand to God, and continue instant in prayer for mercy and grace; throw themselves by faith at the feet of Christ, and say, If I perish, I will perish here; and then that matter will by degrees clear itself. If we cannot reason down our unbelief, let us pray it down. A fervent, affectionate Lord, help me, will help us over many

of the discouragements which are sometimes ready to bear us down and overwhelm us.

[4.] Her prayer is very short, but comprehensive and fervent, Lord, help me. Take this, First, As lamenting her case; "If the Messiah be sent only to the house of Israel, the Lord help me, what will become of me and mine," Note, It is not in vain for broken hearts to bemoan themselves; God looks upon them then, Jer 31:18. Or, Secondly, As begging grace to insist her in this hour of temptation. She found it hard to keep up her faith when it was thus frowned upon, and therefore prays, "Lord, help me; Lord, strengthen my faith now; Lord, let thy right hand uphold me, while my soul is following hard after thee," Ps 63:8. Or, Thirdly, As enforcing her original request, "Lord, help me; Lord, give me what I come for." She believed that Christ could and would help her, though she was not of the house of Israel; else she would have dropt her petition. Still she keeps up good thoughts of Christ, and will not quit her hold. Lord, help me, is a good prayer, if well put up; and it is pity that it should be turned into a byword, and that we should take God's name in vain in it.

(b) With a holy skilfulness of faith, suggesting a very surprising plea. Christ had placed the Jews with the children, as olive-plants round about God's table, and had put the Gentiles with the dogs, under the table; and she doth not deny the aptness of the similitude. Note, There is nothing got by contradicting any word of Christ, though it bear ever so hard upon us. But this poor woman, since she cannot object against it, resolves to make the best of it (Mt 15:27); Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. Now, here,

[1.] Her acknowledgment was very humble: Truth, Lord. Note, You cannot speak so meanly and slightly of a humble believer, but he is ready to speak as meanly and slightly of himself. Some that seem to dispraise and disparage themselves, will yet take it as an affront if others do so too; but one that is humbled aright, will subscribe to the most abasing challenges, and not call them abusing ones. "Truth, Lord; I cannot deny it; I am a dog, and have no right to the children's bread." David, Thou hast done foolishly, very foolishly; Truth, Lord.

Asaph, Thou hast been as a beast before God; Truth, Lord. Agur, Thou art more brutish than any man; Truth, Lord. Paul, Thou hast been the chief of sinners, art less than the least of saints, not meet to be called an apostle; Truth, Lord.

[2.] Her improvement of this into a plea was very ingenious; Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. It was by a singular acumen, and spiritual quickness and sagacity, that she discerned matter of argument in that which looked like a slight. Note, A lively, active faith will make that to be for us, which seems to be against us; will fetch meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. Unbelief is apt to mistake recruits for enemies, and to draw dismal conclusions even from comfortable premises (Jdg 13:22,23); but faith can find encouragement even in that which is discouraging, and get nearer to God by taking hold on that hand which is stretched out to push it away. So good a thing it is to be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa 11:3.

Her plea is, Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. It is true, the full and regular provision is intended for the children only, but the small, casual, neglected crumbs are allowed to the dogs, and are not grudged them; that is to the dogs under the table, that attend there expecting them. We poor Gentiles cannot expect the stated ministry and miracles of the Son of David, that belongs to the Jews; but they begin now to be weary of their meat, and to play with it, they find fault with it, and crumble it away; surely then some of the broken meat may fall to a poor Gentile; "I beg a cure by the by, which is but a crumb, though of the same precious bread, yet but a small inconsiderable piece, compared with the loaves which they have." Note, When we are ready to surfeit on the children's bread, we should remember how many there are, that would be glad of the crumbs. Our broken meat in spiritual privileges, would be a feast to many a soul; Ac 13:42. Observe here,

First, Her humility and necessity made her glad of crumbs. Those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve nothing, will be thankful for any thing; and then we are prepared for the greatest of

God's mercies, when we see ourselves less than the least of them. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, and the very crumbs of the bread of life.

Secondly, Her faith encouraged her to expect these crumbs. Why should it not be at Christ's table as at a great man's, where the dogs are fed as sure as the children? Observe, She calls it their master's table; if she were a dog, she was his dog, and it cannot be ill with us, if we stand but in the meanest relation to Christ; "Though unworthy to be called children, yet make me as one of thy hired servants: nay, rather let me be set with the dogs than turned out of the house; for in my Father's house there is not only bread enough, but to spare," Lu 15:17-19. It is good lying in God's house, though we lie at the threshold there.

4. The happy issue and success of all this. She came off with credit and comfort from this struggle; and, though a Canaanite, approved herself a true daughter of Israel, who, like a prince, had power with God, and prevailed. Hitherto Christ hid his face from her, but now gathers her with everlasting kindness, Mt 15:28. Then Jesus said, O woman, great is thy faith. This was like Joseph's making himself know to his brethren, I am Joseph; so here, in effect, I am Jesus. Now he begins to speak like himself, and to put on his own countenance. He will not contend for ever.

(a) He commended her faith. O woman, great is thy faith. Observe,

[1.] It is her faith that he commends. There were several other graces that shone bright in her conduct of this affair-wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, perseverance in prayer; but these were the product of her faith, and therefore Christ fastens upon that as most commendable; because of all graces faith honours Christ most, therefore of all graces Christ honours faith most.

[2.] It is the greatness of her faith. Note, First, Though the faith of all the saints is alike precious, yet it is not in all alike strong; all believers are not of the same size and stature. Secondly, The

greatness of faith consists much in a resolute adherence to Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, even in the face of discouragements; to love him, and trust him, as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an Enemy. This is great faith! Thirdly, Though weak faith, if true, shall not be rejected, yet great faith shall be commended, and shall appear greatly well-pleasing to Christ; for in them that thus believe he is most admired. Thus Christ commended the faith of the centurion, and he was a Gentile too, he had a strong faith in the power of Christ, this woman in the good-will of Christ; both were acceptable.

(b) He cured her daughter; "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt: I can deny thee nothing, take what thou camest for." Note, Great believers may have what they will for the asking. When our will conforms to the will of Christ's precept, his will concurs with the will of our desire. Those that will deny Christ nothing, shall find that he will deny them nothing at last, though for a time he seems to hide his face from them. "Thou wouldst have thy sins pardoned, thy corruptions mortified, thy nature sanctified; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And what canst thou desire more?" When we come, as this poor woman did, to pray against Satan and his kingdom, we concur with the intercession of Christ, and it shall be accordingly. Though Satan may sift Peter, and buffet Paul, yet, through Christ's prayer and the sufficiency of his grace, we shall be more than conquerors, Lu 22:31,32,2Co 12:7-9,Ro 16:20.

The event was answerable to the word of Christ; Her daughter was made whole from that very hour; from thenceforward was never vexed with the devil any more; the mother's faith prevailed for the daughter's cure. Though the patient was at a distance, that was no hindrance to the efficacy of Christ's word. He spake, and it was done.

25 Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.

28 Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy

faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Jesus Heals Many People

29 And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.

Here is, a general account of Christ's cures, his curing by wholesale. The tokens of Christ's power and goodness are neither scarce nor scanty; for there is in him an overflowing fulness. Now observe,

The place where these cures were wrought; it was near the sea of Galilee, a part of the country Christ was much conversant with. We read not of any thing he did in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but the casting of the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter, as if he took that journey on purpose, with that in prospect. Let not ministers grudge their pains to do good, though but to few. He that knows the worth of souls, would go a great way to help to save one from death and Satan's power.

But Jesus departed thence. Having let fall that crumb under table, he here returns to make a full feast for the children. We may do that occasionally for one, which we may not make a constant practice of. Christ steps into the coast of Tyre and Sidon, but he sits down by the sea of Galilee (Mt 15:29), sits down not on a stately throne, or tribunal of judgment, but on a mountain: so mean and homely were his most solemn appearances in the days of his flesh! He sat down on a mountain, that all might see him, and have free access to him; for he is an open Saviour. He sat down there, as one tired with his journey, and willing to have a little rest; or rather, as one waiting to be gracious. He sat, expecting patients, as Abraham at his tent-door, ready to entertain strangers. He settled himself to this good work.

30 And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:

Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief, is to lay it at Christ's feet, to submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal.

Those who would have spiritual healing from Christ, must be ruled as he pleases. See what work sin has made; what various diseases human bodies are subject to. Here were such diseases as fancy could neither guess the cause nor the cure of, yet these were subject to the command of Christ. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the maimed and the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at.

The multitudes and maladies that were healed by him (Mt 15:30); Great multitudes came to him; that the scripture might be fulfilled, Unto him shall the gathering of the people be, Ge 49:10. If Christ's ministers could cure bodily diseases as Christ did, there would be more flocking to them than there is; we are soon sensible of bodily pain and sickness, but few are concerned about their souls and their spiritual diseases. Now,

(a) Such was the goodness of Christ, that he admitted all sorts of people; the poor as well as the rich are welcome to Christ, and with him there is room enough for all comers. He never complained of crowds or throngs of seekers, or looked with contempt upon the vulgar, the herd, as they are called; for the souls of peasants are as precious with him as the souls of princes.

(b) Such was the power of Christ, that he healed all sorts of diseases; those that came to him, brought their sick relations and friends along with them, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, Mt 15:30. We read not of any thing they said to him, but they laid them down before him as objects of pity, to be looked upon by him. Their calamities spake more for them than the tongue of the most eloquent orator could. David showed before God his trouble, that was enough, he then left it with him, Ps 142:2. Whatever our case is, the only way to find ease and relief, is, to lay it at Christ's feet, to spread it before him, and refer it to his cognizance, and then submit it to him, and refer it to his disposal. Those that would have spiritual healing from Christ,

must lay themselves at his feet, to be ruled and ordered as he pleaseth.

Here were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, brought to Christ. See what work sin has made! It has turned the world into a hospital: what various diseases are human bodies subject to! See what work the Saviour makes! He conquers those hosts of enemies to mankind. Here were such diseases as a flame of fancy could contribute neither to the cause of nor to the cure of; as lying not in the humours, but in the members of the body; and yet these were subject to the commands of Christ. He sent his word, and healed them. Note, All diseases are at the command of Christ, to go and come as he bids them. This is an instance of Christ's power, which may comfort us in all our weaknesses; and of his pity, which may comfort us in all our miseries.

31 insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

The influence that this had upon the people, Mt 15:31.

(1.) They wondered, and well they might. Christ's works should be our wonder. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous, Ps 118:23. The spiritual cures that Christ works are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. Sing unto the Lord a new song, for thus he has done marvellous things.

(2.) They glorified the God of Israel, whom the Pharisees, when they saw these things, blasphemed. Miracles, which are the matter of our wonder, must be the matter of our praise; and mercies, which are the matter of our rejoicing, must be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those that were healed, glorified God; if he heal our diseases, all that is within us must bless his holy name; and if we have been graciously preserved from blindness, and lameness, and dumbness, we have as much reason to bless God as if we had been cured of them; nay, and the standers-by glorified God. Note, God must be acknowledged with praise and thankfulness in the mercies of others

as in our own. They glorified him as the God of Israel, his church's God, a God in covenant with his people, who hath sent the Messiah promised; and this is he. See Lu 1:68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. This was done by the power of the God of Israel, and no other could do it.

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

32 Then Jesus called his disciples *unto him,* and said, I have compassion on the
multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing
to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.
33 And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in
the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?

On the previous occasion the crowd consisted largely of Jews (see Joh_6:14-15), but on this occasion it probably consisted largely of Gentiles. That may have been why the disciples doubted whether Jesus would use his power to feed them (Mat_15:32-33; Mar_8:1-4). But he fed them as miraculously as he had the Jews (Mat_15:34-39; Mar_8:5-10).

34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven,
and a few little fishes.
35 And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.
36 And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake
them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
37 And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken *meat*
that was left seven baskets full.
38 And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.
39 And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of
Magdala.

Christ sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not look for miracles to find their daily bread. Let them go home to their callings and their own tables. Lord, increase our faith, and pardon our unbelief, teaching us to live upon thy fulness and bounty, for all things pertaining to this life, and that which is to come.

Matthew-16

The Demand for a Sign

1 The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that
he would show them a sign from heaven.

We have here Christ's discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, men at variance among themselves, as appears Ac 23:7,8, and yet unanimous in their opposition to Christ; because his doctrine did equally overthrow the errors and heresies of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits and a future state; and the pride, tyranny, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were the great imposters of the traditions of the elders. Christ and Christianity meet with opposition on all hands. Observe,

Their demand, and the design of it.

1 The demand was of a sign from heaven; this they desired him to show them; pretending they were very willing to be satisfied and convinced, when really they were far from being so, but sought excuses from an obstinate infidelity. That which they pretended to desire was,

(a) Some other sign than what they had yet had. They had great plenty of signs; every miracle Christ wrought was a sign, for no man could do what he did unless God were with him. But this will not serve, they must have a sign of their own choosing; they despised those signs which relieved the necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and insisted upon some sign which gratify the curiosity of the proud. It is fit that the proofs of divine revelation should be chosen by the wisdom of God, not by the follies and fancies of men. The evidence that is given is sufficient to satisfy an unprejudiced understanding, but was not intended to please a vain humour. Ant it is an instance of the deceitfulness of the heart, to think that we should be wrought upon by the means and advantages which we have not, while we

slight those which we have. If we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would we be wrought upon though one rose from the dead.

(b) It must be a sign from heaven. They would have such miracles to prove his commission, as were wrought at the giving of the law upon mount Sinai: thunder, and lightening, and the voice of words, were the sign from heaven they required. Whereas the sensible signs and terrible ones were not agreeable to the spiritual and comfortable dispensation of the gospel. Now the word comes more nigh us (Ro 10:8), and therefore the miracles do so, and do not oblige us to keep such a distance as these did, Heb 12:18.

2 The design was to tempt him; not to be taught by him, but to ensnare him. If he should show them a sign from heaven, they would attribute it to a confederacy with the prince of the power of the air; if he should not, as they supposed he would not, they would have that to say for themselves, why they did not believe on him. They now tempted Christ as Israel did, 1Co 10:9. And observe their perverseness; then, when they had signs from heaven, they tempted Christ, saying, Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Now that he had furnished a table in the wilderness, they tempted him, saying, Can he give us a sign from heaven?

2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red.

3 And in the morning, *It will be* foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering. O *ye* hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times?

Christ's reply to this demand; lest they should be wise in their own conceit, he answered these fools according to their folly, Pr 26:5. In his answer,

1. He condemns their overlooking of the signs they had, Mt 16:2,3. They were seeking for the signs of the kingdom of God, when it was already among them. The Lord was in this place, and they knew it not. Thus their unbelieving ancestors, when miracles were their daily bread, asked, Is the Lord among us, or is he not?

To expose this, he observes to them,

(a) Their skilfulness and sagacity in other things, particularly in natural prognostications of the weather; "You know that a red sky over-night is a presage of fair weather, and a red sky in the morning of foul weather." There are common rules drawn from observation and experience, by which it is easy to foretel very probably what weather it will be. When second causes have begun to work, we may easily guess at their issue, so uniform is nature in its motions, and so consistent with itself. We know not the balancing of the clouds (Job 37:16), but we may spell something from the faces of them. This gives no countenance at all to the wild and ridiculous predictions of the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators (Isa 47:13) concerning the weather long before, with which weak and foolish people are imposed upon; we are sure, in general, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease. But as to the particulars, till, by the weather-glasses, or otherwise, we perceive the immediate signs and harbingers of the change of weather, it is not for us to know, no, not that concerning the times and seasons. Let it suffice, that it shall be what weather pleases God; and that which pleases God, should not displease us.

(b) Their sottishness and stupidity in the concerns of their souls; Can ye not discern the signs of the times?

[1.] "Do you not see that the Messiah is come?" The sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were just expiring, and yet they regarded not. The miracles Christ wrought, and the gathering of the people to him, were plain indications that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, that this was the day of their visitation. Note, First, There are signs of the times, by which wise and upright men are enabled to make moral prognostications, and so far to understand the motions and methods of Providence, as from thence to take their measures, and to know what Israel ought to do, as the men of Issachar, as the physician from some certain symptoms finds a crisis formed. Secondly, There are many who are skilful enough in other things, and yet cannot or will not discern the day of their

opportunities, are not aware of the wind when it is fair for them, and so let slip the gale. See Jer 8:7,Isa 1:3. Thirdly, It is great hypocrisy, when we slight the signs of God's ordaining, to seek for signs of our own prescribing.

[2.] "Do not you foresee your own ruin coming for rejecting him? You will not entertain the gospel of peace, and can you not evidently discern that hereby you pull an inevitable destruction upon your own heads?" Note, It is the undoing of multitudes, that they are not aware what will be the end of their refusing Christ.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign (Mt 16:4), as he had done before in the same words, Mt 12:39. Those that persist in the same iniquities, must expect to meet with the same reproofs. Here, as there,

(a) He calls them an adulterous generation; because, while they professed themselves of the true church and spouse of God, they treacherously departed from him, and brake their covenants with him. The Pharisees were a generation pure in their own eyes, having the way of the adulterous woman, that thinks she has done no wickedness, Pr 30:20.

(b) He refuses to gratify their desire. Christ will not be prescribed to; we ask, and have not, because we ask amiss.

(c) He refers them to the sign of the prophet Jonas, which should yet be given them; his resurrection from the dead, and his preaching by his apostles to the Gentiles; these were reserved for the last and highest evidences of his divine mission. Note, Though the fancies of proud men shall not be humoured, yet the faith of the humble shall be supported, and the unbelief of them that perish left for ever inexcusable, and every mouth shall be stopped.

This discourse broke off abruptly; he left them and departed. Christ will not tarry long with those that tempt him, but justly withdraws from those that are disposed to quarrel with him. He left them as

irreclaimable; Let them alone. He left them to themselves, left them in the hand of their own counsels; so he gave them up to their own hearts' lust.

4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. And he left them, and departed.

The Leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees

5 And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread.

8 *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?

9 Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

10 neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

12 Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

The rectifying of the mistake by this reproof (Mt 16:12); Then understood they what he meant. Note, Christ therefore shows us our folly and weakness, that we may stir up ourselves to take things right. He did not tell them expressly what he meant, but repeated what he had said, that they should beware of the leaven; and so obliged them, by comparing this with his other discourses, to arrive at the sense of it in their own thoughts. Thus Christ teaches by the Spirit of wisdom in the heart, opening the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in the word. And those truths are most precious, which we have thus digged for, and have found out after some mistakes. Though Christ did not tell them plainly, yet now they were aware

that by the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, he meant their doctrine and way, which were corrupt and vicious, but, as they managed them, very apt to insinuate themselves into the minds of men like leaven, and to eat like a canker. They were leading men, and were had in reputation, which made the danger of infection by their errors the greater. In our age, we may reckon atheism and deism to be the leaven of the Sadducees, and popery to be the leaven of the Pharisees, against both which it concerns all Christians to stand upon their guard.

Peter's Confession

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked
his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?

It lay at the foot of Mount Lebanon, near the sources of the Jordan, in the territory of Dan, and at the northeast extremity of Palestine. It was originally called Panium (from a cavern in its neighborhood dedicated to the god Pan) and Paneas. Philip, the tetrarch, the only good son of Herod the Great, in whose dominions Paneas lay, having beautified and enlarged it, changed its name to C泡rea, in honor of the Roman emperor, and added Philippi after his own name, to distinguish it from the other C泡rea (Ac 10:1) on the northeast coast of the Mediterranean Sea. [JOSEPHUS, Antiquities, 15.10,3; 18.2,1].

He enquires what the opinions of others were concerning him; Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?

1. He calls himself the Son of man; which may be taken either,

(a) As a title common to him with others. He was called, and justly, the Son of God, for so he was (Lu 1:35); but he called himself the Son of man; for he is really and truly "Man, made of a woman." In courts of honour, it is a rule to distinguish men by their highest titles; but Christ, having now emptied himself, though he was the Son of God, will be known by the style and title of the Son of man. Ezekiel

was often so called to keep him humble; Christ called himself so, to show that he was humble. Or,

(b) As a title peculiar to him as Mediator. He is made known, in Daniel's vision, as the Son of man, Da 7:13. I am the Messiah, that Son of man that was promised. But,

2. He enquires what people's sentiments were concerning him: "Who do men say that I am? The Son of man?" (So I think it might better be read). "Do they own me for the Messiah?" He asks not, "Who do the scribes and Pharisees say that I am?" They were prejudiced against him, and said that he was a deceiver and in league with Satan; but, "Who do men say that I am?" He referred to the common people, whom the Pharisees despised. Christ asked this question, not as one that knew not; for if he knows what men think, much more what they say; nor as one desirous to hear his own praises, but to make the disciples solicitous concerning the success of their preaching, by showing that he himself was so. The common people conversed more familiarly with the disciples than they did with their Master, and therefore from them he might better know what they said. Christ had not plainly said who he was, but left people to infer it from his works, Joh 10:24,25. Now he would know what inferences the people drew from them, and from the miracles which his apostles wrought in his name.

14 And they said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

To this question the disciples have him an answer (Mt 16:14), Some say, thou art John the Baptist, &c. There were some that said, he was the Son of David (Mt 12:23), and the great Prophet, Joh 6:14. The disciples, however, do not mention that opinion, but only such opinions as were wide of the truth, which they gathered up from their countrymen. Observe,

(a) They are different opinions; some say one thing, and others another. Truth is one; but those who vary from that commonly vary one from another. Thus Christ came eventually to send division, Lu 12:51. Being so noted a Person, every one would be ready to pass

his verdict upon him, and, "Many men, many minds;" those that were not willing to own him to be the Christ, wandered in endless mazes, and followed the chase of every uncertain guess and wild hypothesis.

(b) They are honourable opinions, and bespeak the respect they had for him, according to the best of their judgment. These were not the sentiments of his enemies, but the sober thoughts of those that followed him with love and wonder. Note, It is possible for men to have good thoughts of Christ, and yet not right ones, a high opinion of him, and yet not high enough.

(c) They all suppose him to be one risen from the dead; which perhaps arose from a confused notion they had of the resurrection of the Messiah, before his public preaching, as of Jonas. Or their notions arose from an excessive value for antiquity; as if it were not possible for an excellent man to be produced in their own age, but it must be one of the ancients returned to life again.

(d) They are all false opinions, built upon mistakes, and wilful mistakes. Christ's doctrines and miracles bespoke him to be an extraordinary Person; but because of the meanness of his appearance, so different from what they expected, they would not own him to be the Messiah, but will grant him to be any thing rather than that.

[1.] Some say, thou art John the Baptist. Herod said so (Mt 14:2), and those about him would be apt to say as he said. This notion might be strengthened by an opinion they had, that those who died as martyrs, should rise again before others; which some think the second of the seven sons refers to, in his answer to Antiochus, 2 Macc. vii. 9, The King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.

[2.] Some Elias; taking occasion, no doubt, from the prophecy of Malachi (Mt 4:5), Behold, I will send you Elijah. And the rather,

because Elijah (as Christ) did many miracles, and was himself, in his translation, the greatest miracle of all.

[3.] Others Jeremias: they fasten upon him, either because he was the weeping prophet, and Christ was often in tears; or because God had set him over the kingdoms and nations (Jer 1:10), which they thought agreed with their notion of the Messiah.

[4.] Or, one of the prophets. This shows what an honourable idea they entertained of the prophets; and yet they were the children of them that persecuted and slew them, Mt 23:29. Rather than they would allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own country, to be such an extraordinary Person as his works bespoke him to be, they would say, "It was not he, but one of the old prophets."

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

He enquires what their thoughts were concerning him; "But who say ye that I am? Mt 16:15. Ye tell me what other people say of me; can ye say better?" 1 The disciples had themselves been better taught than others; had, by their intimacy with Christ, greater advantages of getting knowledge than others had. Note, It is justly expected that those who enjoy greater plenty of the means of knowledge and grace than others, should have a more clear and distinct knowledge of the things of God than others. Those who have more acquaintance with Christ than others, should have truer sentiments concerning him, and be able to give a better account of him than others. 2 The disciples were trained up to teach others, and therefore it was highly requisite that they should understand the truth themselves: "Ye that are to preach the gospel of the kingdom, what are your notions of him that sent you?" Note, Ministers must be examined before they be sent forth, especially what their sentiments are of Christ, and who they say that he is; for how can they be owned as ministers of Christ, that are either ignorant or erroneous concerning Christ? This is a question we should every one of us be frequently putting to ourselves, "Who do we say, what kind of one do we say, that the Lord Jesus is? Is he precious to us? Is he in our eyes the chief of ten thousand? Is he the Beloved of our

souls?" It is well or ill with us, according as our thoughts are right or wrong concerning Jesus Christ.

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

He does not say, "Scribes and Pharisees, rulers and people, are all perplexed; and shall we, unlettered fishermen, presume to decide?" But feeling the light of his Master's glory shining in his soul, he breaks forth—not in a tame, prosaic acknowledgment, "I believe that Thou art," &c.—but in the language of adoration—such as one uses in worship, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD!" He first owns Him the promised Messiah (see on Mt 1:16); then he rises higher, echoing the voice from heaven—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; and in the important addition—"Son of the LIVING GOD"—he recognizes the essential and eternal life of God as in this His Son—though doubtless without that distinct perception afterwards vouchsafed.

Peter's answer to this question, Mt 16:16. To the former question concerning the opinion others had of Christ, several of the disciples answered, according as they had heard people talk; but to this Peter answers in the name of all the rest, they all consenting to it, and concurring in it. Peter's temper led him to be forward in speaking upon all such occasions, and sometimes he spoke well, sometimes amiss; in all companies there are found some warm, bold men, to whom a precedency of speech falls of course; Peter was such a one: yet we find other of the apostles sometimes speaking as the mouth of the rest; as John (Mk 9:38), Thomas, Philip, and Jude, Joh 14:5,8,22. So that this is far from being a proof of such primacy and superiority of Peter above the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome ascribes to him. They will needs advance him to be a judge, when the utmost they can make of him, is, that he was but foreman of the jury, to speak for the rest, and that only pro hâc vice--for this once; not the perpetual dictator or speaker of the house, only chairman upon this occasion.

Peter's answer is short, but it is full, and true, and to the purpose; Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Here is a confession

of the Christian faith, addressed to Christ, and so made an act of devotion. Here is a confession of the true God as the living God, in opposition to dumb and dead idols, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal. This is the conclusion of the whole matter.

[1.] The people called him a Prophet, that Prophet (Joh 6:14); but the disciples own him to be the Christ, the anointed One; the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church; the true Messiah promised to the fathers, and depended on by them as He that shall come. It was a great thing to believe this concerning one whose outward appearance was so contrary to the general idea the Jews had of the Messiah.

[2.] He called himself the Son of Man; but they owned him to be the Son of the living God. The people's notion of him was, that he was the ghost of a dead man, Elias, or Jeremias; but they know and believe him to be the Son of the living God, who has life in himself, and has given to his Son to have life in himself, and to be the Life of the world. If he be the Son of the living God, he is of the same nature with him: and though his divine nature was now veiled with the cloud of flesh, yet there were those who looked through it, and saw his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now can we with an assurance of faith subscribe to this confession? Let us then, with a fervency of affection and adoration, go to Christ, and tell him so; Lord Jesus, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Though it is not to be doubted that Peter, in this noble testimony to Christ, only expressed the conviction of all the Twelve, yet since he alone seems to have had clear enough apprehensions to put that conviction in proper and suitable words, and courage enough to speak them out, and readiness enough to do this at the right time—so he only, of all the Twelve, seems to have met the present want, and communicated to the saddened soul of the Redeemer at the

critical moment that balm which was needed to cheer and refresh it. Nor is Jesus above giving indication of the deep satisfaction which this speech yielded Him, and hastening to respond to it by a signal acknowledgment of Peter in return.

As a believer, Mt 16:17. Christ shows himself well pleased with Peter's confession, that it was so clear and express, without ifs or ands, as we say. Note, The proficiency of Christ's disciples in knowledge and grace is very acceptable to him; and Christ shows him whence he received the knowledge of this truth. At the first discovery of this truth in the dawning of the gospel day, it was a mighty thing to believe it; all men had not this knowledge, had not this faith. But,

First, Peter had the happiness of it; Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona. He reminds him of his rise and original, the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his extraction; he was Bar-jonas--The son of a dove; so some. Let him remember the rock out of which he was hewn, that he may see he was not born to this dignity, but preferred to it by the divine favour; it was free grace that made him to differ. Those that have received the Spirit must remember who is their Father, 1Sa 10:12. Having reminded him of this, he makes him sensible of his great happiness as a believer; Blessed art thou. Note, True believers are truly blessed, and those are blessed indeed whom Christ pronounces blessed; his saying they are so, makes them so. "Peter, thou art a happy man, who thus knowest the joyful sound," Ps 89:15. Blessed are your eyes, Mt 13:16. All happiness attends the right knowledge of Christ.

Secondly, God must have the glory of it; "For flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee. Thou hadst this neither by the invention of thy own wit and reason, nor by the instruction and information of others; this light sprang neither from nature nor from education, but from my Father who is in heaven." Note, 1 The Christian religion is a revealed religion, has its rise in heaven; it is a religion from above, given by inspiration of God, not the learning of philosophers, nor the politics of statesmen. 2. Saving faith is the

gift of God, and, wherever it is, is wrought by him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, and upon the score of his mediation, Php 1:29. Therefore thou art blessed, because my Father has revealed it to thee. Note, The revealing of Christ to us and in us is a distinguishing token of God's good will, and a firm foundation of true happiness; and blessed are they that are thus highly favoured.

Perhaps Christ discerned something of pride and vain-glory in Peter's confession; a subtle sin, and which is apt to mingle itself even with our good duties. It is hard for good men to compare themselves with others, and not to have too great a conceit of themselves; to prevent which, we should consider that our preference to others is no achievement of our own, but the free gift of God's grace too us, and not to others; so that we have nothing to boast of, Ps 115:1,1Co 4:7.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Christ replies to him as an apostle or minister, Mt 16:18,19. Peter, in the name of the church, had confessed Christ, and to him therefore the promise intended for the church is directed. Note, There is nothing lost by being forward to confess Christ; for those who honour him, he will honour.

Upon occasion of this great confession made of Christ, which is the church's homage and allegiance, he signed and published this royal, this divine charter, by which that body politic is incorporated. Such is the communion between Christ and the church, the Bridegroom and the spouse. God had a church in the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the rock of the promised Seed, Ge 3:15. But now, that promised Seed being come, it was requisite that the church should have a new charter, as Christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that charter; and a thousand pities it is, that this word, which is the great support of the kingdom of Christ, should be wrested and pressed into the service of antichrist. But the devil has employed his subtlety to pervert it, as he did that promise, Ps 91:11, which he perverted to

his own purpose, Mt 4:6, and perhaps both that scripture and this he thus perverted because they stood in his way, and therefore he owed them a spite. Now the purport of this charter is,

First, To establish the being of the church; I say also unto thee. It is Christ that makes the grant, he who is the church's Head, and Ruler, to whom all judgment is committed, and from whom all power is derived; he who makes it pursuant to the authority received from the Father, and his undertaking for the salvation of the elect. The grant is put into Peter's hand; "I say it to thee." The Old Testament promises relating to the church were given immediately to particular persons, eminent for faith and holiness, as to Abraham and David; which yet gave no supremacy to them, much less to any of their successors; so the New-Testament charter is here delivered to Peter as an agent, but to the use and behoof of the church in all ages, according to the purposes therein specified and contained. Now it is here promised,

1. That Christ would build his church upon a rock. This body politic is incorporated by the style and title of Christ's church. It is a number o the children of men called out of the world, and set apart from it, and dedicated to Christ. It is not thy church, but mine. Peter remembered this, when he cautioned ministers not to lord it over God's heritage. The church is Christ's peculiar, appropriated to him. The world is God's, and they that dwell therein; but the church is a chosen remnant, that stands in relation to God through Christ as Mediator. It bears him image and superscription.

(a) The Builder and Maker of the church is Christ himself; I will build it. The church is a temple which Christ is the Builder of, Zec 6:11-13. Herein Solomon was a type of Christ, and Cyrus, Isa 44:28. The materials and workmanship are his. By the working of his Spirit with the preaching of his word he adds souls to his church, and so builds it up with living stones, 1Pe 2:5. Ye are God's building; and building is a progressive work; the church in this world is but in fieri--in the forming, like a house in the building. It

is a comfort to all those who wish well to the church, that Christ, who has divine wisdom and power, undertakes to build it.

(b) The foundation on which it is built is, this Rock. Let the architect do his part ever so well, if the foundation be rotten, the building will not stand; let us therefore see what the foundation is, and it must be meant of Christ, for other foundation can no man lay. See Isa 28:16.

[1.] The church is built upon a rock; a firm, strong, and lasting foundation, which time will not waste, nor will it sink under the weight of the building. Christ would not build his house upon the sand, for he knew that storms would arise. A rock is high, Ps 61:2. Christ's church does not stand upon a level with this world; a rock is large, and extends far, so does the church's foundation; and the more large, the more firm; those are not the church's friends that narrow its foundation.

[2.] It is built upon this rock; thou art Peter, which signifies a stone or rock; Christ gave him that name when he first called him (Joh 1:42), and here he confirms it; "Peter, thou dost answer thy name, thou art a solid, substantial disciple, fixed and stayed, and one that there is some hold of. Peter is thy name, and strength and stability are with thee. Thou art not shaken with the waves of men's fluctuating opinions concerning me, but established in the present truth," 2Pe 1:12. From the mention of this significant name, occasion is taken for this metaphor of building upon a rock.

First, Some by this rock understand Peter himself as an apostle, the chief, though not the prince, of the twelve, senior among them, but not superior over them. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, Eph 2:20. The first stones of that building were laid in and by their ministry; hence their names are said to be written in the foundations of the new Jerusalem, Re 21:14. Now Peter being that apostle by whose hand the first stones of the church were laid, both in Jewish converts (Ac 2:1-47), and in the Gentile converts (Ac 10:1-48), he might in some sense be said to be the rock on

which it was built. Cephas was one that seemed to be a pillar, Ga 2:9. But it sounds very harsh, to call a man that only lays the first stone of a building, which is a transient act, the foundation on which it is built, which is an abiding thing. Yet if it were so, this would not serve to support the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome; for Peter had no such headship as he claims, much less could he derive it to his successors, least of all to the Bishops of Rome, who, whether they are so in place or no, is a question, but that they are not so in the truth of Christianity, is past all question.

Secondly, Others, by this rock, understand Christ; "Thou art Peter, thou hast the name of a stone, but upon this rock, pointing to himself, I will build my church." Perhaps he laid his hand on his breast, as when he said, Destroy this temple (Joh 2:19), when he spoke of the temple of his body. Then he took occasion from the temple, where he was, so to speak of himself, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of that; so here he took occasion from Peter, to speak of himself as the Rock, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of Peter. But this must be explained by those many scriptures which speak of Christ as the only Foundation of the church; see 1Co 3:11,1Pe 2:6. Christ is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence.

Thirdly, Others by this rock understand this confession which Peter made of Christ, and this comes all to one with understanding it of Christ himself. It was a good confession which Peter witnessed, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God; the rest concurred with him in it. "Now," saith Christ, "this is that great truth upon which I will build my church." 1. Take away this truth itself, and the universal church falls to the ground. If Christ be not the Son of God, Christianity is a cheat, and the church is a mere chimera; our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and you are yet in your sins, 1Co 15:14-17. If Jesus be not the Christ, those that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived. 2. Take away the faith and confession of this truth from any particular church, and it ceases to be a part of Christ's church, and relapses to the state and

character of infidelity. This is articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesia--that article, with the admission or the denial of which the church either rises or falls; "the main hinge on which the door of salvation turns;" those who let go this, do not hold the foundation; and though they may call themselves Christians, they give themselves the lie; for the church is a sacred society, incorporated upon the certainty and assurance of this great truth; and great it is, and has prevailed.

2. Christ here promises to preserve and secure his church, when it is built; The gates of hell shall not prevail against it; neither against this truth, nor against the church which is built upon it.

(a) This implies that the church has enemies that fight against it, and endeavour its ruin overthrow, here represented by the gates of hell, that is, the city of hell; (which is directly opposite to this heavenly city, this city of the living God), the devil's interest among the children of men. The gates of hell are the powers and policies of the devil's kingdom, the dragon's head and horns, by which he makes war with the Lamb; all that comes out of hell-gates, as being hatched and contrived there. These fight against the church by opposing gospel truths, corrupting gospel ordinances, persecuting good ministers and good Christians; drawing or driving, persuading by craft or forcing by cruelty, to that which is inconsistent with the purity of religion; this is the design of the gates of hell, to root out the name of Christianity (Ps 83:4), to devour the man-child (Re 12:9), to raze this city to the ground.

(b) This assures us that the enemies of the church shall not gain their point. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, in which his truths and ordinances shall be owned and kept up, in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness; They shall not prevail against it, Ps 129:1,2. This gives no security to any particular church, or church-governors that they shall never err, never apostatize or be destroyed; but that somewhere or other the Christian religion shall have a being, though not always in the same degree of purity and splendour, yet so as that the entail of it shall never be quite cut off. The woman lives, though in a wilderness (Re

12:14), cast down but not destroyed (2Co 4:9). Corruptions grieving, persecutions grievous, but neither fatal. The church may be foiled in particular encounters, but in the main battle it shall come off more than a conqueror. Particular believers are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, 1Pe 1:5.

Secondly, The other part of this charter is, to settle the order and government of the church, Mt 16:19. When a city or society is incorporated, officers are appointed and empowered to act for the common good. A city without government is a chaos. Now this constituting of the government of the church, is here expressed by the delivering of the keys, and, with them, a power to bind and loose. This is not to be understood of any peculiar power that Peter was invested with, as if he were sole door-keeper of the kingdom of heaven, and had that key of David which belongs only to the Son of David; no, this invests all the apostles and their successors with a ministerial power to guide and govern the church of Christ, as it exists in particular congregations or churches, according to the rules of the gospel. Claves regni cælorum in B. Petro apostolo cuncti suscepimus sacerdotes--All we that are priests, received, in the person of the blessed apostle Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven; so Ambrose De Dignit. Sacerd. Only the keys were first put into Peter's hand, because he was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, Ac 10:28. As the king, in giving a charter to a corporation, empowers the magistrates to hold courts in his name, to try matters of fact, and determine therein according to law, confirming what is so done regularly as if done in any of the superior courts; so Christ, having incorporated his church, hath appointed the office of the ministry for the keeping up of order and government, and to see that his laws be duly served; I will give thee the keys. He doth not say, "I have given them," or "I do now;" but "I will do it," meaning after his resurrection; when he ascended on high, he gave those gifts, Eph 4:8; then this power was actually given, not to Peter only, but to all the rest, Mt 28:19,20,Joh 20:21. He doth not say, The keys shall be given, but, I will give them; for ministers derive their authority from Christ, and all their power is to be used in his name, 1Co 5:4.

Now, 1 The power here delegated is a spiritual power; it is a power pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, that is, to the church, that part of it which is militant here on earth, to the gospel dispensation; that is it about which the apostolical and ministerial power is wholly conversant. It is not any civil, secular power that is hereby conveyed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; their instructions afterward were in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Ac 1:3.

2. It is the power of the keys that is given, alluding to the custom of investing men with authority in such a place, by delivering to them the keys of the place. Or as the master of the house gives the keys to the steward, the keys of the stores where the provisions are kept, that he may give to every one in the house his portion of meat in due season (Lu 12:42), and deny it as there is occasion, according to the rules of the family. Ministers are stewards, 1Co 4:1,Tit 1:7. Eliakim, who had the key of the house of David, was over the household, Isa 22:22.

3. It is a power to bind and loose, that is (following the metaphor of the keys), to shut and open. Joseph, who was lord of Pharaoh's house, and steward of the stores, had power to bind his princes, and to teach his senators wisdom, Ps 105:21,22. When the stores and treasures of the house are shut up from any, they are bound, interdico tibi aqu&acric; et igne--I forbid thee the use of fire and water; when they are opened to them again, they are loosed from that bond, are discharged from the censure, and restored to their liberty.

4. It is a power which Christ has promised to own the due administration of; he will ratify the sentences of his stewards with his own approbation; It shall be bound in heaven, and loosed in heaven: not that Christ hath hereby obliged himself to confirm all church-censures, right or wrong; but such as are duly passed according to the word, clave non errante--the key turning the right way, such are sealed in heaven; that is, the word of the gospel, in the mouth of faithful ministers, is to be looked upon, not as the

word of man, but as the word of God, and to be received accordingly, 1Th 2:13.Joh 12:20. Now the keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

(a) The key of doctrine, called the key of knowledge. "Your business shall be to explain to the world the will of God, both as to truth and duty; and for this you shall have your commissions, credentials, and full instructions to bind and loose:" these, in the common speech of the Jews, at that time, signified to prohibit and permit; to teach or declare a thing to be unlawful was to bind; to be lawful, was to loose. Now the apostles had an extraordinary power of this kind; some things forbidden by the law of Moses were now to be allowed, as the eating of such and such meats; some things allowed there were now to be forbidden, as divorce; and the apostles were empowered to declare this to the world, and men might take it upon their words. When Peter was first taught himself, and then taught others, to call nothing common or unclean, this power was exercised. There is also an ordinary power hereby conveyed to all ministers, to preach the gospel as appointed officers; to tell people, in God's name, and according to the scriptures, what is good, and what the Lord requires of them: and they who declare the whole counsel of God, use these keys well, Ac 20:27.

Some make the giving of the keys to allude to the custom of the Jews in creating a doctor of the law, which was to put into his hand the keys of the chest where the book of the law was kept, denoting his being authorized to take and read it; and the binding and loosing, to allude to the fashion about their books, which were in rolls; they shut them by binding them up with a string, which they untied when they opened them. Christ gives his apostles power to shut or open the book of the gospel to people, as the case required. See the exercise of this power, Ac 13:46,18:6. When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent, wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they act then pursuant to this authority of binding and loosing.

(b) The key of discipline, which is but the application of the former to particular persons, upon a right estimate of their characters and actions. It is not legislative power that is hereby conferred, but judicial; the judge doth not make the law, but only declares what is law, and upon an impartial enquiry into the merits of the cause, gives sentence accordingly. Such is the power of the keys, wherever it is lodged, with reference to church-membership and the privileges thereof.

[1.] Christ's ministers have a power to admit into the church; "Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them; those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, admit them and their seed members of the church by baptism." Ministers are to let in to the wedding-feast those that are bidden; and to keep out such as are apparently unfit for so holy a communion.

[2.] They have a power to expel and cast out such as have forfeited their church-membership, that is binding; refusing to unbelievers the application of gospel promises and the seals of them; and declaring to such as appear to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, that they have no part or lot in the matter, as Peter did to Simon Magus, though he had been baptized; and this is a binding over to the judgment of God.

[3.] They have a power to restore and to receive in again, upon their repentance, such as had been thrown out; to loose those whom they had bound; declaring to them, that, if their repentance be sincere, the promise of pardon belongs to them. The apostles had a miraculous gift of discerning spirits; yet even they went by the rule of outward appearances (as Ac 8:21,1Co 5:1,2Co 2:7,1Ti 1:20), which ministers may still make a judgment upon, if they be skilful and faithful.

Whatever this mean, it was soon expressly extended to all the apostles (Mt 18:18); so that the claim of supreme authority in the Church, made for Peter by the Church of Rome, and then arrogated to themselves by the popes as the legitimate successors of St. Peter,

is baseless and impudent. As first in confessing Christ, Peter got this commission before the rest; and with these "keys," on the day of Pentecost, he first "opened the door of faith" to the Jews, and then, in the person of Cornelius, he was honored to do the same to the Gentiles. Hence, in the lists of the apostles, Peter is always first named. See on Mt1 8:18. One thing is clear, that not in all the New Testament is there the vestige of any authority either claimed or exercised by Peter, or conceded to him, above the rest of the apostles—a thing conclusive against the Romish claims in behalf of that apostle. In such matters their decision was right, and it was confirmed in heaven. But all pretensions of any man, either to absolve or retain men's sins, are blasphemous and absurd. None can forgive sins but God only. And this binding and loosing, in the common language of the Jews, signified to forbid and to allow, or to teach what is lawful or unlawful.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

Lastly, Here is the charge which Christ gave his disciples, to keep this private for the present (Mt 16:20); They must tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. What they had professed to him, they must not yet publish to the world, for several reasons;

1. Because this was the time of preparation for his kingdom: the great thing now preached, was, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and therefore those things were now to be insisted on, which were proper to make way for Christ; as the doctrine of repentance; not this great truth, in and with which the kingdom of heaven was to be actually set up. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and it is good advice, Prepare thy work, and afterwards build, Pr 24:27.

2. Christ would have his Messiahship proved by his works, and would rather they should testify of him than that his disciples should, because their testimony was but as his own, which he insisted not

on. See Joh 5:31,34. He was so secure of the demonstration of his miracles, that he waived other witnesses, Joh 10:25,38.

3. If they had known that he was Jesus the Christ, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1Co 2:8.

4. Christ would not have the apostles preach this, till they had the most convincing evidence ready to allege in confirmation of it. Great truths may suffer damage by being asserted before they can be sufficiently proved. Now the great proof of Jesus being the Christ was his resurrection: by that he was declared to be the Son of God, with power; and therefore the divine wisdom would not have this truth preached, till that could be alleged for proof of it. 5. It was requisite that the preachers of so great a truth should be furnished with greater measures of the Spirit than the apostles as yet had; therefore the open asserting of it was adjourned till the Spirit should be poured out upon them. But when Christ was glorified and the Spirit poured out, we find Peter proclaiming upon the house-tops what was here spoken in a corner (Ac 2:36), That God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ; for, as there is a time to keep silence, so there is a time to speak.

Jesus Foretells His Death

21 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Christ's foretelling of his sufferings. Now he began to do it, and from this time he frequently spake of them. Some hints he had already given of his sufferings, as when he said, Destroy this temple: when he spake of the Son of man being lifted up, and of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood: but now he began to show it, to speak plainly and expressly of it. Hitherto he had not touched upon this, because the disciples were weak, and could not well bear the notice of a thing so very strange, and so very melancholy; but now that they were more ripe in knowledge, and strong in faith, he began to tell them

this. Note, Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually, and lets in light as they can bear it, and are fit to receive it.

From that time, when they had made that full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, then he began to show them this. When he found them knowing in one truth, he taught them another; for to him that has, shall be given. Let them first be established in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and then go on to perfection, Heb 6:1. If they had not been well grounded in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, it would have been a great shaking to their faith. All truths are not to be spoken to all persons at all times, but such as are proper and suitable to their present state. Now observe,

1. What he foretold concerning his sufferings, the particulars and circumstances of them, and all surprising.

(a) The place where he should suffer. He must go to Jerusalem, the head city, the holy city, and suffer there. Though he lived most of his time in Galilee, he must die at Jerusalem; there all the sacrifices were offered, there therefore he must die, who is the great sacrifice.

(b) The persons by whom he should suffer; the elders, and chief priests, and scribes; these made up the great sanhedrim, which sat at Jerusalem, and was had in veneration by the people. Those that should have been most forward in owning and admiring Christ, were the most bitter in persecuting him. It was strange that men of knowledge in the scripture, who professed to expect the Messiah's coming, and pretended to have something sacred in their character, should use him thus barbarously when he did come. It was the Roman power that condemned and crucified Christ, but he lays it at the door of the chief priests and scribes, who were the first movers.

(c) What he should suffer; he must suffer many things, and be killed. His enemies' insatiable malice, and his own invincible patience, appear in the variety and multiplicity of his sufferings (he suffered many things) and in the extremity of them; nothing less than his death would satisfy them, he must be killed. The suffering of many

things, if not unto death, is more tolerable; for while there is life, there is hope; and death, without such prefaces, would be less terrible; but he must first suffer many things, and then be killed.

(d) What should be the happy issue of all his sufferings; he shall be raised again the third day. As the prophets, so Christ himself, when he testified beforehand his sufferings, testified withal the glory that should follow, 1Pe 1:11. His rising again the third day proved him to be the Son of God, notwithstanding his sufferings; and therefore he mentions that, to keep up their faith. When he spoke of the cross and the shame, he spoke in the same breath of the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. Thus we must look upon Christ's suffering for us, trace in it the way to his glory; and thus we must look upon our suffering for Christ, look through it to the recompence of reward. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.

2. Why he foretold his sufferings.

(a) To show that they were the product of an eternal counsel and consent; were agreed upon between the Father and the Son from eternity; Thus is behoved Christ to suffer. The matter was settled in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge, in pursuance of his own voluntary susception and undertaking for our salvation; his sufferings were no surprise to him, did not come upon him as a snare, but he had a distinct and certain foresight of them, which greatly magnifies his love, Joh 18:4.

(b) To rectify the mistakes which his disciples had imbibed concerning the external pomp and power of his kingdom. Believing him to be the Messiah, they counted upon nothing but dignity and authority in the world; but here Christ reads them another lesson, tells them of the cross and sufferings; nay, that the chief priests and the elders, whom, it is likely, they expected to be the supports of the Messiah's kingdom, should be its great enemies and persecutors; this would give them quite another idea of that kingdom which they themselves had preached the approach of; and it was requisite that

this mistake should be rectified. Those that follow Christ must be dealt plainly with, and warned not to expect great things in this world.

(c) It was to prepare them for the share, at least, of sorrow and fear, which they must have in his sufferings. When he suffered many things, the disciples could not but suffer some; if their Master be killed, they will be seized with terror; let them know it before, that they may provide accordingly, and, being fore-warned, may be fore-armed.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

The offence which Peter took at this he said, Be it far from thee, Lord: probably he spake the sense of the rest of the disciples, as before, for he was chief speaker. He took him, and began to rebuke him. Perhaps Peter was a little elevated with the great things Christ had how said unto him, which made him more bold with Christ than did become him; so hard is it to keep the spirit low and humble in the midst of great advancements!

1. It did not become Peter to contradict his Master, or take upon him to advise him; he might have wished, that, if it were possible, this cup might pass away, without saying so peremptorily, This shall not be, when Christ had said, It must be. Shall any teach God knowledge? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Note, When God's dispensations are either intricate or cross to us, it becomes us silently to acquiesce in, and not to prescribe to, the divine will; God knows what he has to do, without our teaching. Unless we know the mind of the Lord, it is not for us to be his counsellors, Ro 11:34.

2. It savoured much of fleshly wisdom, for him to appear so warmly against suffering, and to startle thus at the offence of the cross. It is the corrupt part of us, that is thus solicitous to sleep in a whole skin. We are apt to look upon sufferings as they relate to this present life, to which they are uneasy; but there are other rules to measure them by, which, if duly observed, will enable us cheerfully to bear them, Ro 8:18. See how passionately Peter speaks: "Be it far from thee,

Lord. God forbid, that thou shouldst suffer and be killed; we cannot bear the thoughts of it." Master, spare thyself: so it might be read; hileos soi, kyrie--"Be merciful to thyself, and then no one else can be cruel to thee; pity thyself, and then this shall not be to thee." He would have Christ to dread suffering as much as he did; but we mistake, if we measure Christ's love and patience by our own. He intimates, likewise, the improbability of the thing, humanly speaking; "This shall not be unto thee. It is impossible that one who hath so great an interest in the people as thou hast, should be crushed by the elders, who fear the people: this can never be; we that have followed thee, will fight for thee, if occasion be; and there are thousands that will stand by us."

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Christ's displeasure against Peter for this suggestion of his, Mt 16:23. We do not read of any thing said or done by any of his disciples, at any time, that he resented so much as this, though they often offended.

Observe, 1. How he expressed his displeasure: He turned upon Peter, and (we may suppose) with a frown said, Get thee behind me, Satan. He did not so much as take time to deliberate upon it, but gave an immediate reply to the temptation, which was such as made it to appear how ill he took it. Just now, he had said, Blessed art thou, Simon, and had even laid him in his bosom; but here, Get thee behind me, Satan; and there was cause for both. Note, A good man may by a surprise of temptation soon grow very unlike himself. He answered him as he did Satan himself, Mt 4:10. Note,

(a) It is the subtlety of Satan, to send temptations to us by the unsuspected hands of our best and dearest friends. Thus he assaulted Adam by Eve, Job by his wife, and here Christ by his beloved Peter. It concerns us therefore not to be ignorant of his devices, but to stand against his wiles and depths, by standing always upon our guard against sin, whoever moves us to it. Even the kindnesses of our

friends are often abused by Satan, and made use of as temptations to us.

(b) Those who have their spiritual senses exercised, will be aware of the voice of Satan, even in a friend, a disciple, a minister, that dissuades them from their duty. We must not regard who speaks, so much as what is spoken; we should learn to know the devil's voice when he speaks in a saint as well as when he speaks in a serpent. Whoever takes us off from that which is good, and would have us afraid of doing too much for God, speaks Satan's language.

(c) We must be free and faithful in reproving the dearest friend we have, that saith or doth amiss, though it may be under colour of kindness to us. We must not compliment, but rebuke, mistaken courtesies. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Such smitings must be accounted kindnesses, Ps 141:5.

(d) Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not parleyed with.

2. What was the ground of this displeasure; why did Christ thus resent a motion that seemed not only harmless, but kind? Two reasons are given:

(a) Thou art an offence to me--Skandalon mou ei--Thou art my hindrance (so it may be read); "thou standest in my way." Christ was hastening on in the work of our salvation, and his heart was so much upon it, that he took it ill to be hindered, or tempted to start back from the hardest and most discouraging part of his undertaking. So strongly was he engaged for our redemption, that they who but indirectly endeavoured to divert him from it, touched him in a very tender and sensible part. Peter was not so sharply reproved for disowning and denying his Master in his sufferings as he was for dissuading him from them; though that was the defect, this the excess, of kindness. It argues a very great firmness and resolution of mind in any business, when it is an offence to be dissuaded, and a man will not endure to hear any thing to the contrary; like that of

Ruth, Entreat me not to leave thee. Note, Our Lord Jesus preferred our salvation before his own ease and safety; for even Christ pleased not himself (Ro 15:3); he came into the world, not to spare himself, as Peter advised, but to spend himself.

See why he called Peter Satan, when he suggested this to him; because, whatever stood in the way of our salvation, he looked upon as coming from the devil, who is a sworn enemy to it. The same Satan that afterward entered into Judas, maliciously to destroy him in his undertaking, here prompted Peter plausibly to divert him from it. Thus he changes himself into an angel of light.

Thou art an offence to me. Note,

[1.] Those that engage in any great good work must expect to meet with hindrance and opposition from friends and foes, from within and from without.

[2.] Those that obstruct our progress in any duty must be looked upon as an offence to us. Then we do the will of God as Christ did, whose meat and drink it was to do it, when it is a trouble to us to be solicited from our duty. Those that hinder us from doing or suffering for God, when we are called to it, whatever they are in other things in that they are Satans, adversaries to us.

(b) Thou savourest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men. Note,

[1.] The things that are of God, that is, the concerns of his will and glory, often clash and interfere with the things that are of men, that is, with our own wealth, pleasure, and reputation. While we mind Christian duty as out way and work, and the divine favour as our end and portion, we savour the things of God; but if these be minded, the flesh must be denied, hazards must be run and hardships borne; and here is the trial which of the two we savour.

[2.] Those that inordinately fear, and industriously decline suffering for Christ, when they are called to it, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God; they relish those things more themselves, and make it appear to others that they do so.

the same words as He had addressed to the Tempter (Lu 4:8); for He felt in it a satanic lure, a whisper from hell, to move Him from His purpose to suffer. So He shook off the Serpent, then coiling around Him, and "felt no harm" (Ac 28:5). How quickly has the "rock" turned to a devil! The fruit of divine teaching the Lord delighted to honor in Peter; but the mouthpiece of hell, which he had in a moment of forgetfulness become, the Lord shook off with horror.

"Thou playest the Tempter, casting a stumbling-block in My way to the Cross. Could it succeed, where wert thou? and how should the Serpent's head be bruised?"

"Thou art carried away by human views of the way of setting up Messiah's kingdom, quite contrary to those of God." This was kindly said, not to take off the sharp edge of the rebuke, but to explain and justify it, as it was evident Peter knew not what was in the bosom of his rash speech.

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Here is the law of discipleship laid down, and the terms fixed, upon which we may have the honour and benefit of it, Mt 16:24. He said this to his disciples, not only that they might instruct others concerning it, but that by this rule they might examine their own security. Observe,

1. What it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after him. When Christ called his disciples, this was the word of command, Follow me. A true disciple of Christ is one that doth follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him, as Peter now undertook to do, forgetting his place. A disciple of Christ comes after him, as the sheep after the

shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of heaven: and one that walks in the same way that he walked in, is led by his Spirit, treads in his steps, submits to his conduct, and follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes, Re 14:4.

2. What are the great things required of those that will be Christ's disciples; If any man will come, ei tis thelei--If any man be willing to come. It denotes a deliberate choice, and cheerfulness and resolution in that choice. Many are disciples more by chance or the will of others than by any act of their own will; but Christ will have his people volunteers, Ps 110:3. It is as if Christ had said, "If any of the people that are not my disciples, be steadfastly minded to come to me, and if you that are, be in like manner minded to adhere to me, it is upon these terms, these and no other; you must follow me in sufferings as well as in other things, and therefore when you sit down to count the cost, reckon upon it."

Now what are these terms?

(a) Let him deny himself. Peter had advised Christ to spare himself, and would be ready, in the like case, to take the advice; but Christ tells them all, they must be so far from sparing themselves, that they must deny themselves. Herein they must come after Christ, for his birth, and life, and death, were all a continued act of self-denial, a self-emptying, Php 2:7,8. If self-denial be a hard lesson, and against the grain to flesh and blood, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction; and the servant is not above his lord. Note, All the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ must deny themselves. It is the fundamental law of admission into Christ's school, and the first and great lesson to be learned in this school, to deny ourselves; it is both the strait gate, and the narrow way; it is necessary in order to our learning all the other good lessons that are there taught. We must deny ourselves absolutely, we must not admire our own shadow, nor gratify our own humour; we must not lean to our own understanding, nor seek our own things, nor be our own end. We must deny ourselves comparatively; we must deny ourselves for

Christ, and his will and glory, and the service of his interest in the world; we must deny ourselves for our brethren, and for their good; and we must deny ourselves for ourselves, deny the appetites of the body for the benefit of the soul.

(b) Let him take up his cross. The cross is here put for all sufferings, as men or Christians; providential afflictions, persecutions for righteousness' sake, every trouble that befals us, either for doing well or for not doing ill. The troubles of Christians are fitly called crosses, in allusion to the death of the cross, which Christ was obedient to; and it should reconcile us to troubles, and take off the terror of them, that they are what we bear in common with Christ, and such as he hath borne before us. Note,

[1.] Every disciple of Christ hath his cross, and must count upon it; as each hath his special duty to be done, so each hath his special trouble to be borne, and every one feels most from his own burthen. Crosses are the common lot of God's children, but of this common lot of God's children, but of this common lot each hath his particular share. That is our cross which Infinite Wisdom has appointed for us, and a Sovereign Providence has laid on us, as fittest for us. It is good for us to call the cross we are under our own, and entertain it accordingly. We are apt to think we could bear such a one's cross better than our own; but that is best which is, and we ought to make the best of it.

[2.] Every disciple of Christ must take up that which the wise God hath made his cross. It is an allusion to the Roman custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross: when Simon carried Christ's cross after him, this phrase was illustrated. First, It is supposed that the cross lies in our way, and is prepared for us. We must not make crosses to ourselves, but must accommodate ourselves to those which God has made for us. Our rule is, not to go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet a cross, or to miss one. We must not by our rashness and indiscretion pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are laid in our way. We must so manage an affliction, that it may not

be a stumbling-block or hindrance to us in any service we have to do for God. We must take it up out of our way, by getting over the offence of the cross; None of these things move me; and we must then go on with it in our way, though it lie heavy. Secondly, That which we have to do, is, not only to bear the cross (that a stock, or a stone, or a stick may do), not only to be silent under it, but we must take up the cross, must improve it to some good advantage. We should not say, "This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it;" but, "This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it shall work for my good." When we rejoice in our afflictions, and glory in them, then we take up the cross. This fitly follows upon denying ourselves; for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world for Christ, when it comes to the push, will never have the heart to take up his cross. "He that cannot take up the resolution to live a saint, has a demonstration within himself, that he is never likely to die a martyr;" so Archbishop Tillotson.

(c) Let him follow me, in this particular of taking up the cross. Suffering saints must look unto Jesus, and take from him both direction and encouragement in suffering. Do we bear the cross? We therein follow Christ, who bears it before us, bears it for us, and so bears it from us. He bore the heavy end of the cross, the end that had the curse upon it, that was a heavy end, and so made the other light and easy for us. Or, we may take it in general, we must follow Christ in all instances of holiness and obedience. Note, The disciples of Christ must study to imitate their Master, and conform themselves in every thing to his example, and continue in well-doing, whatever crosses lie in their way. To do well and to suffer ill, is to follow Christ. If any man will come after me, let him follow me; that seems to be idem per idem--the same thing over again. What is the difference? Surely it is this, "If any man will come after me, in profession, and so have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow me in truth, and so do the work and duty of a disciple." Or thus, "If any man will set out after me, in good beginnings, let him continue to follow me with all perseverance." That is following the

Lord fully, as Caleb did. Those that come after Christ, must follow after him.

"When He had called the people unto Him, with His disciples also, He said unto them"—turning the rebuke of one into a warning to all.

but what if His servants shall meet the same fate? They may not; but who follows Me must be prepared for the worst."

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Instead of these weighty words, which we find in Mk 8:36 also, it is thus expressed in Lu 9:25: "If he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away," or better, "If he gain the whole world, and destroy or forfeit himself." How awful is the stake as here set forth! If a man makes the present world—in its various forms of riches, honors, pleasures, and such like—the object of supreme pursuit, be it that he gains the world; yet along with it he forfeits his own soul. Not that any ever did, or ever will gain the whole world—a very small portion of it, indeed, falls to the lot of the most successful of the world's votaries—but to make the extravagant concession, that by giving himself entirely up to it, a man gains the whole world; yet, setting over against this gain the forfeiture of his soul—necessarily following the surrender of his whole heart to the world—what is he profited? But, if not the whole world, yet possibly something else may be conceived as an equivalent for the soul. Well, what is it?—"Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Thus, in language the weightiest, because the simplest, does our Lord shut up His hearers, and all who shall read these words to the end of the world, to the priceless value to every man of his own soul. In Mark and Luke (Mk 8:38,Lu 9:26) the following words are added: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words [shall be ashamed of belonging to Me, and ashamed of My Gospel] in this adulterous and sinful generation" (see on Mt1 2:39), "of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." He will render back to that man his own treatment, disowning him before the most august of all assemblies, and putting him to "shame and everlasting contempt"

(Da 12:2). "O shame," exclaims BENGEL, "to be put to shame before God, Christ, and angels!" The sense of shame is founded on our love of reputation, which causes instinctive aversion to what is fitted to lower it, and was given us as a preservative from all that is properly shameful. To be lost to shame is to be nearly past hope. (Zep 3:5,Jer 6:15,Jer 3:3). But when Christ and "His words" are unpopular, the same instinctive desire to stand well with others begets that temptation to be ashamed of Him which only the expulsive power of a higher affection can effectually counteract.

Whatever is the object for which men forsake Christ, that is the price at which Satan buys their souls. Yet one soul is worth more than all the world. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter; he knew the price of souls, for he redeemed them; nor would he underrate the world, for he made it.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Here are arguments to persuade us to submit to these laws, and come up to these terms. Self-denial, and patient suffering, are hard lessons, which will never be learned if we consult with flesh and blood; let us therefore consult with our Lord Jesus, and see what advice he gives us; and here he gives us,

1. Some considerations proper to engage us to these duties of self-denial and suffering for Christ. Consider,

(a) The weight of that eternity which depends upon our present choice (Mt 16:25); Whosoever will save his life, by denying Christ, shall lose it: and whosoever is content to lose his life, for owning Christ, shall find it. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, set before us. Observe,

[1.] The misery that attends the most plausible apostasy. Whosoever will save his life in this world, if it be by sin, he shall lose it in another; he that forsakes Christ, to preserve a temporal life and avoid a temporal death, will certainly come short of eternal life, and will be hurt of the second death, and eternally held by it. There cannot be

a fairer pretence for apostasy and iniquity than saving the life by it, so cogent is the law of self-preservation; and yet even that is folly, for it will prove in the end self-destruction; the life saved is but for a moment, the death shunned is but as a sleep; but the life lost is everlasting, and the death run upon is the depth and complement of all misery, and an endless separation from all good. Now, let any rational man consider of it, take advice and speak his mind, whether there is any thing got, at long run, by apostasy, though a man save his estate, preferment, or life, by it.

[2.] The advantage that attends the most perilous and expensive constancy; Whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake in this world, shall find it in a better, infinitely to his advantage. Note, First, Many a life is lost, for Christ's sake, in doing his work, by labouring fervently for his name; in suffering work, by choosing rather to die than to deny him or his truths and ways. Christ's holy religion is handed down to us, sealed with the blood of thousands, that have not known their own souls, but have despised their lives (as Job speaks in another case), though very valuable ones, when they have stood in competition with their duty and the testimony of Jesus, Re 20:4. Secondly, Though many have been losers for Christ, even of life itself, yet never any one was, or will be, a loser by him in the end. The loss of other comforts, for Christ, may possibly be made up in this world (Mk 10:30); the loss of life cannot, but it shall be made up in the other world, in an eternal life; the believing prospect of which hath been the great support of suffering saints in all ages. An assurance of the life they should find, in lieu of the life they hazarded, hath enabled them to triumph over death in all its terrors; to go smiling to a scaffold, and stand singing at a stake, and to call the utmost instances of their enemies' rage but a light affliction.

[3.] The worth of the soul which lies at stake, and the worthlessness of the world in comparison of it (Mt 16:26). What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? ten psychen autou; the same word which is translated his life (Mt 16:25), for the soul is the life, Ge 2:7. This alludes to that common principle, that, whatever a man gets, if he lose his life, it will do him no good, he

cannot enjoy his gains. But it looks higher, and speaks of the soul as immortal, and a loss of it beyond death, which cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world. Note, First, Every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, has a power of reflection and prospect, which actuates the body now, and will shortly act in a separation from the body. Our souls are our own not in respect of dominion and property (for we are not our own, All souls are mine, saith God), but in respect of nearness and concern; our souls are our own, for they are ourselves. Secondly, It is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that a soul is capable of; when it dies as far as a soul can die; when it is separated from the favour of God, and sunk under his wrath and curse. A man is never undone till he is in hell. Thirdly, If the soul be lost, it is of the sinner's own losing. The man loses his own soul, for he does that which is certainly destroying to it, and neglects that which alone would be saving, Ho 13:9. The sinner dies because he will die; his blood is on his own head. Fourthly, One soul is worth more than all the world; our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honour, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is the whole world set in the scale against one soul, and Tekel written upon it; it is weighed in the balance, and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter, and he is a competent Judge; he had reason to know the price of souls, for he redeemed them; nor would he under-rate the world, for he made it. Fifthly, The winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interest by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal ones. It is the love of the world, and the eager pursuit of it, that drowns men in destruction and perdition. Sixthly, The loss of the soul is so great a loss, that the gain of the whole world will not countervail it, or make it up. He that loses his soul, though it be to gain the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself, and will sit down at last an unspeakable loser. When he comes to balance the account, and to compare profit and loss, he will find that, instead of the advantage he promised himself, he is ruined to all intents and purposes, is irreparably broken.

What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Note, If once the soul be lost, it is lost for ever. There is no antallagma--counter-price, that can be paid, or will be accepted. It is a loss that can never be repaired, never be retrieved. If, after that great price which Christ laid down to redeem our souls, and to restore us to the possession of them, they be so neglected for the world, that they come to be lost, that new mortgage will never be taken off; there remains no more sacrifice for sins, nor price for souls, but the equity of redemption is eternally precluded. Therefore it is good to be wise in time, and do well for ourselves.

2. Here are some considerations proper to encourage us in self-denial and suffering for Christ.

(a) The assurance we have of Christ's glory, at his second coming to judge the world, Mt 16:27. If we look to the end of all these things, the period of the world, and the posture of souls then, we shall thence form a very different idea of the present state of things. If we see things as the will appear then, we shall see them as they should appear now. The great encouragement to steadfastness in religion is taken from the second coming of Christ, considering it,

[1.] As his honour; The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels. To look upon Christ in his state of humiliation, so abased, so abused, a reproach of men, and despised of the people, would discourage his followers from taking any pains, or running any hazards for him; but with an eye of faith to see the Captain of our salvation coming in his glory, in all the pomp and power of the upper world, will animate us, and make us think nothing too much to do, or too hard to suffer, for him. The Son of man shall come. He here gives himself the title of his humble state (he is the Son of man), to show that he is not ashamed to own it. His first coming was in the meanness of his children, who being partakers of flesh, he took part of the same; but his second coming will be in the glory of his Father. At his first coming, he was attended with poor disciples; at his second coming, he will be attended with

glorious angels; and if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him, 2Ti 2:12.

[2.] As our concern; Then he shall reward every man according to his works. Observe, First, Jesus Christ will come as a Judge, to dispense rewards and punishments, infinitely exceeding the greatest that any earthly potentate has the dispensing of. The terror of men's tribunal (Mt 10:18) will be taken off by a believing prospect of the glory of Christ's tribunal. Secondly, Men will then be rewarded, not according to their gains in this world, but according to their works, according to what they were and did. In that day, the treachery of backsliders will be punished with eternal destruction, and the constancy of faithful souls recompensed with a crown of life. Thirdly, The best preparative for that day is to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ; for so we shall make the Judge our Friend, and these things will then pass well in the account. Fourthly, The rewarding of men according to their works is deferred till that day. Here good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously; we see not apostasy punished with immediate strokes, nor fidelity encouraged with immediate smiles, from heaven; but in that day all will be set to rights. Therefore judge nothing before the time, 2Ti 4:6-8.

(b) Son of man coming in his kingdom. Mark and Luke have explained this. Mk 9:1, "Until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Lk 9:27, "Till they see the kingdom of God." The meaning evidently is, till they should see my kingdom, that is, my church, now small, feeble, and despised, greatly enlarged, established, and spreading with great rapidity and extent. All this was accomplished. All these apostles, except Judas, lived to see the wonders of the day of Pentecost; some of them, John particularly, saw the Jewish nation scattered, the temple destroyed, the gospel established in Asia, Rome, Greece, and in a large part of the known world.

The near approach of his kingdom in this world, Mt 16:28. It was so near, that there were some attending him who should live to see it.

As Simeon was assured that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ come in the flesh; so some here are assured that they shall not taste death (death is a sensible thing, its terrors are seen, its bitterness is tasted) till they had seen the Lord's Christ coming in his kingdom. At the end of time, he shall come in his Father's glory; but now, in the fulness of time, he was to come in his own kingdom, his mediatorial kingdom. Some little specimen was given of his glory a few days after this, in his transfiguration (Mt 17:1); then he tried his robes. But this points at Christ's coming by the pouring out of his Spirit, the planting of the gospel church, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the taking away of the place and nation of the Jews, who were the most bitter enemies to Christianity. Here was the Son of man coming in his kingdom. Many then present lived to see it, particularly John, who lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and saw Christianity planted in the world. Let this encourage the followers of Christ to suffer for him,

[1.] That their undertaking shall be succeeded; the apostles were employed in setting up Christ's kingdom; let them know, for their comfort, that whatever opposition they meet with, yet they shall carry their point, shall see of the travail of their soul. Note, It is a great encouragement to suffering saints to be assured, not only of the safety, but of the advancement of Christ's kingdom among men; not only notwithstanding their sufferings, but by their sufferings. A believing prospect of the success of the kingdom of grace, as well as of our share in the kingdom of glory, may carry us cheerfully through our sufferings.

[2.] That their cause shall be pleaded; their deaths shall be revenged, and their persecutors reckoned with.

[3.] That this shall be done shortly, in the present age. Note, The nearer the church's deliverances are, the more cheerful should we be in our sufferings for Christ. Behold the Judge standeth before the door. It is spoken as a favour to those that should survive the present cloudy time, that they should see better days. Note, It is desirable to share with the church in her joys, Da 12:12. Observe, Christ saith,

Some shall live to see those glorious days, not all; some shall enter into the promised land, but others shall fall in the wilderness. He does not tell them who shall live to see this kingdom, lest if they had known, they should have put off the thoughts of dying, but some of them shall; Behold, the Lord is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door; be patient, therefore, brethren.

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

28 Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Matthew-17

The Transfiguration

1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart,

The witnesses of it. He took with him Peter and James and John.

(1.) He took three, a competent number to testify what they should see; for out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Christ makes his appearances certain enough, but not too common; not to all the people, but to witnesses (Ac 10:41), that they might be blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.

(2.) He took these three because they were the chief of his disciples, the first three of the worthies of the Son of David; probably they excelled in gifts and graces; they were Christ's favourites, singled out to be the witnesses of his retirements. They were present when he raised the damsel to life, Mk 5:37. They were afterward to be the witnesses of his agony, and this was to prepare them for that. Note, A sight of Christ's glory, while we are here in this world, is a good preparative for our sufferings with him, as these are preparatives for the sight of his glory in the other world. Paul, who had abundance of trouble, had abundance of revelations.

2 and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

The place; it was on top of a high mountain apart. Christ chose a mountain,

(1.) As a secret place. He went apart; for though a city upon a hill can hardly be hid, two or three persons upon a hill can hardly be found; therefore their private oratories were commonly on mountains. Christ chose a retired place to be transfigured in, because his appearing publicly in his glory was not agreeable to his present state; and thus he would show his humility, and teach us that privacy much befriends our communion with God. Those that would maintain intercourse with Heaven, must frequently withdraw from the converse and business of this world; and they will find themselves never less alone than when alone, for the Father is with them.

(2.) Though a sublime place, elevated above things below. Note, Those that would have a transforming fellowship with God, must not only retire, but ascend; lift up their hearts, and seek things above. The call is, Come up hither, Re 4:1.

The manner of it (Mt 17:2); He was transfigured before them. The substance of his body remained the same, but the accidents and appearances of it were greatly altered; he was not turned into a spirit, but his body, which had appeared in weakness and dishonour, now appeared in power and glory. He was transfigured, metamorphothe--he was metamorphosed. The profane poets amused and abused the world with idle extravagant stories of metamorphoses, especially the metamorphoses of their gods, such as were disparaging and diminishing to them, equally false and ridiculous; to these some think Peter has an eye, when, being about to mention this transfiguration of Christ, he saith, We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made it known unto you, 2Pe 1:16. Christ was both God and man; but, in the days of his flesh, he took on him the form of a servant--morphen doulou, Php 2:7. He drew a veil over the glory of his godhead; but now, in his transfiguration, he put by

that veil, appeared en morphe theou--in the form of God (Php 2:6), and gave his disciples a glimpse of his glory, which could not but change his form.

The great truth which we declare, is, that God is light (1Jo 1:5), dwells in the light (1Ti 6:16), covers himself with light, Ps 104:2. And therefore when Christ would appear in the form of God, he appeared in light, the most glorious of all visible beings, the first-born of the creation, and most nearly resembling the eternal Parent. Christ is the Light; while he was in the world, he shined in darkness, and therefore the world knew him not (Joh 1:5,10); but, at this time, that Light shined out of the darkness.

Now his transfiguration appeared in two things:

1. His face did shine as the sun. The face is the principal part of the body, by which we are known; therefore such a brightness was put on Christ's face, that face which afterward he hid not from shame and spitting. It shone as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, so clear, so bright; for he is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world. The face of Moses shone but as the moon, with a borrowed reflected light, but Christ's shone as the sun, with an innate inherent light, which was the more sensibly glorious, because it suddenly broke out, as it were, from behind a black cloud.

2. His raiment was white as the light. All his body was altered, as his face was; so that beams of light, darting from every part through his clothes, made them white and glittering. The shining of the face of Moses was so weak, that it could easily be concealed by a thin veil; but such was the glory of Christ's body, that his clothes were enlightened by it.

3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with him.

Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus during his transfiguration, possibly to symbolize that the law and the prophets found their fulfilment in him. He was the one to whom the entire Old Testament pointed. They talked with Jesus about his coming death, confirming

what Jesus had recently told the apostles. The Messiah had to die before he could enter his glory (Mat_17:3; Luk_9:30-31).

The companions of it. He will come, at last, with ten thousands of his saints; and, as a specimen of that, there now appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him, Mt 17:3. Observe,

1. There were glorified saints attending him, that, when there were three to bear record on earth, Peter, James, and John, there might be some to bear record from heaven too. Thus here was a lively resemblance of Christ's kingdom, which is made up of saints in heaven and saints on earth, and to which belong the spirits of just men made perfect. We see here, that they who are fallen asleep in Christ are not perished, but exist in a separate state, and shall be forthcoming when there is occasion.

2. These two were Moses and Elias, men very eminent in their day. They had both fasted forty days and forty nights, as Christ did, and wrought other miracles, and were both remarkable at their going out of the world as well as in their living in the world. Elias was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot, and died not. The body of Moses was never found, possibly it was preserved from corruption, and reserved for this appearance. The Jews had great respect for the memory of Moses and Elias, and therefore they came to witness of him, they came to carry tidings concerning him to the upper world. In them the law and the prophets honoured Christ, and bore testimony to him. Moses and Elias appeared to the disciples; they saw them, and heard them talk, and, either by their discourse or by information from Christ, they knew them to be Moses and Elias; glorified saints shall know one another in heaven. They talked with Christ. Note, Christ has communion with the blessed, and will be no stranger to any of the members of that glorified corporation. Christ was now to be sealed in his prophetic office, and therefore these two great prophets were fittest to attend him, as transferring all their honour and interest to him; for in these last days God speaks to us by his Son, Heb 1:1.

4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

The great pleasure and satisfaction that the disciples took in the sight of Christ's glory. Peter, as usual, spoke or the rest; Lord, it is good for us to be here. Peter here expresses,

1 The delight they had in this converse; Lord, it is good to be here. Though upon a high mountain, which we may suppose rough and unpleasant, bleak and cold, yet it is good to be here. He speaks the sense of his fellow-disciples; It is good not only for me, but for us. He did not covet to monopolize this favour, but gladly takes them in. He saith this to Christ. Pious and devout affections love to pour out themselves before the Lord Jesus. The soul that loves Christ, and loves to be with him, loves to go and tell him so; Lord, it is good for us to be here. This intimates a thankful acknowledgment of his kindness in admitting them to this favour. Note, Communion with Christ is the delight of Christians. All the disciples of the Lord Jesus reckon it is good for them to be with him in the holy mount. It is good to be here where Christ is, and whither he brings us along with him by his appointment; it is good to be here, retired and alone with Christ; to be here, where we may behold the beauty of the Lord Jesus, Ps 27:4. It is pleasant to hear Christ compare notes with Moses and the prophets, to see how all the institutions of the law, and all the predictions of the prophets, pointed at Christ, and were fulfilled in him.

2 The desire they had of the continuance of it; Let us make here three tabernacles. There was in this, as in many other of Peter's sayings, a mixture of weakness and of goodwill, more zeal than discretion.

(a) Here was a zeal for this converse with heavenly things, a laudable complacency in the sight they had of Christ's glory. Note, Those that by faith behold the beauty of the Lord in his house, cannot but desire to dwell there all the days of their life. It is good having a nail in God's holy place (Ezr 9:8), a constant abode; to be in holy ordinances as a man at home, not as a wayfaring man. Peter thought this

mountain was a fine spot of ground to build upon, and he was for making tabernacles there; as Moses in the wilderness made a tabernacle for the Shechinah, or divine glory.

It argued great respect for his Master and the heavenly guests, with some commendable forgetfulness of himself and his fellow-disciples, that he would have tabernacles for Christ, and Moses, and Elias, but none for himself. He would be content to lie in the open air, on the cold ground, in such good company; if his Master have but where to lay his head, no matter whether he himself has or no.

(b) Yet in this zeal he betrayed a great deal of weakness and ignorance. What need had Moses and Elias of tabernacles? They belonged to that blessed world, where they hunger no more, nor doth the sun light upon them. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and bidden his disciples expect the like; Peter forgets this, or, to prevent it, will needs be building tabernacles in the mount of glory, out of the way of trouble. Still he harps upon, Master, spare thyself, though he had been so lately checked for it. Note, There is a proneness in good men to expect the crown without the cross. Peter was for laying hold of this as the prize, though he had not yet fought his fight, nor finished his course, as those other disciples, Mt 20:21. We are out in our aim, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. It is not for strangers and pilgrims (such as we are in our best circumstances in this world), to talk of building, or to expect a continuing city.

Yet it is some excuse for the incongruity of Peter's proposal, not only that he knew not what he said (Lu 9:33), but also that he submitted the proposal to the wisdom of Christ; If thou wilt, let us make tabernacles. Note, Whatever tabernacles we propose to make to ourselves in this world, we must always remember to ask Christ's leave.

Now to this which Peter said, there was no reply made; the disappearing of the glory would soon answer it. They that promise themselves great things on earth will soon be undeceived by their own experience.

5 While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

The glorious testimony which God the Father gave to our Lord Jesus, in which he received from him honour and glory (2Pe 1:17), when there came this voice from the excellent glory. This was like proclaiming the titles of honour or the royal style of a prince, when, at his coronation, he appears in his robes of state; and be it known, to the comfort of mankind, the royal style of Christ is taken from his mediation. Thus, in vision, he appeared with a rainbow, the seal of the covenant, about his throne (Re 4:3); for it is his glory to be our Redeemer.

Now concerning this testimony from heaven to Christ, observe.

1. How it came, and in what manner it was introduced.

(a) There was a cloud. We find often in the Old Testament, that a cloud was the visible token of God's presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud (Ex 19:9), and so to Moses, Ex 34:5,nu 11:25. He took possession of the tabernacle in a cloud, and afterwards of the temple; where Christ was in his glory, the temple was, and there God showed himself present. We know not the balancing of the clouds, but we know that much of the intercourse and communication between heaven and earth is maintained by them. By the clouds vapours ascend, and rains descend; therefore God is said to make the clouds his chariots; so he did here when he descended upon this mount.

(b) It was a bright cloud. Under the law it was commonly a thick and dark cloud that God made the token of his presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a thick cloud (Ex 19:16), and said he would dwell in thick darkness; see 1Ki 8:12. But we are now come, not to the mount that was covered with thick blackness and darkness (Heb 12:18), but to the mount that is crowned with a bright cloud. Both the Old-Testament and the New-Testament dispensation had tokens of God's presence; but that was a

dispensation of darkness, and terror, and bondage, this of light, love, and liberty.

(c) It overshadowed them. This cloud was intended to break the force of that great light which otherwise would have overcome the disciples, and have been intolerable; it was like the veil which Moses put upon his face when it shone. God, in manifesting himself to his people, considers their frame. This cloud was to their eyes as parables to their understandings, to convey spiritual things by things sensible, as they were able to bear them.

(d) There came a voice out of the cloud, and it was the voice of God, who now, as of old, spake in the cloudy pillar, Ps 99:7. Here was no thunder, or lightning, or voice of a trumpet, as there was when the law was given by Moses, but only a voice, a still small voice, and that not ushered in with a strong wind, or an earthquake, or fire, as when God spake to Elias, 1Ki 19:11,12. Moses then and Elias were witnesses, that in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son, in another way than he spoke formerly to them. This voice came from the excellent glory (2Pe 1:17), the glory which excelleth, in comparison of which the former had no glory; though the excellent glory was clouded, yet thence came a voice, for faith comes by hearing.

2. What this testimony from heaven was; This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. Here we have,

(a) The great gospel mystery revealed; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This was the very same that was spoken from heaven at his baptism (Mt 3:17); and it was the best news that ever came from heaven to earth since man sinned. It is to the same purport with that great doctrine (2Co 5:19), That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Moses and Elias were great men, and favourites of Heaven, yet they were but servants, and servants that God was not always well pleased in; for Moses spoke unadvisedly, and Elias was a man subject to passions; but Christ is a Son, and in him God was always well pleased. Moses and Elias

were sometimes instruments of reconciliation between God and Israel; Moses was a great intercessor, and Elias a great reformer; but in Christ God is reconciling the world; his intercession is more prevalent than that of Moses, and his reformation more effectual than that of Elias.

This repetition of the same voice that came from heaven at his baptism was no vain repetition; but, like the doubling of Pharaoh's dream, was to show the thing was established. What God hath thus spoken once, yea twice, no doubt he will stand to, and he expects we should take notice of it. It was spoken at his baptism, because then he was entering upon his temptation, and his public ministry; and now it was repeated, because he was entering upon his sufferings, which are to be dated from hence; for now, and not before, he began to foretel them, and immediately after his transfiguration it is said (Lu 9:51), that the time was come that he should be received up; this therefore was then repeated, to arm him against the terror, and his disciples against the offence, of the cross. When sufferings begin to abound, consolations are given in more abundantly, 2Co 1:5.

(b) The great gospel duty required, and it is the condition of our benefit by Christ; Hear ye him. God is well pleased with none in Christ but those that hear him. It is not enough to give him the hearing (what will that avail us?) but we must hear him and believe him, as the great Prophet and Teacher; hear him, and be ruled by him, as the great Prince and Lawgiver; hear him, and heed him. Whoever would know the mind of God, must hearken to Jesus Christ; for by him God has in these last days spoken to us. This voice from heaven has made all the sayings of Christ as authentic as if they had been thus spoken out of a cloud. God does here, as it were, turn us over to Christ for all the revelations of his mind; and it refers to that prediction concerning the Prophet God would raise up like unto Moses (De 18:18); him shall ye hear.

Christ now appeared in glory; and the more we see of Christ's glory, the more cause we shall see to hearken to him: but the disciples

were gazing on that glory of his which they saw; they are therefore bid not to look at him, but to hear him. Their sight of his glory was soon intercepted by the cloud, but their business was to hear him. We walk by faith, which comes by hearing, not by sight, 2Co 5:7.

Moses and Elias were now with him; the law and the prophets; hitherto it was said, Hear them, Lu 16:29. The disciples were ready to equal them with Christ, when they must have tabernacles for them as well as for him. They had been talking with Christ, and probably the disciples were very desirous to know what they said, and to hear something more from them; No, saith God, hear him, and that is enough; him, and not Moses and Elias, who were present, and whose silence gave consent to this voice; they had nothing to say to the contrary; whatever interest they had in the world as prophets, they were willing to see it all transferred to Christ, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Be not troubled that Moses and Elias make so short a stay with you; hear Christ, and you will not want them.

6 And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

The fright which the disciples were put into by this voice, and the encouragement Christ gave them.

1 The disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. The greatness of the light, and the surprise of it, might have a natural influence upon them, to dispirit them. But that was not all, ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, extraordinary appearances of God have ever been terrible to man, who, knowing he has no reason to expect any good, has been afraid to hear any thing immediately from God. Note, even then when fair weather comes out of the secret place, yet with God is terrible majesty, Job 37:22. See what dreadful work the voice of the Lord makes, Ps 29:4. It is well for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

2. Christ graciously raised them up with abundance of tenderness. Note, The glories and advancements of our Lord Jesus do not at all lessen his regard to, and concern for, his people that are compassed

about with infirmity. It is comfortable to think, that now, in his exalted state, he has a compassion for, and condescends to, the meanest true believer. Observe here,

(a). What he did; he came, and touched them. His approaches banished their fears; and when they apprehended that they were apprehended of Christ, there needed no more to make them easy. Christ laid his right hand upon John is a like case, and upon Daniel, Re 1:17,Da 8:18,10:18. Christ's touches were often healing, and here they were strengthening and comforting.

(b) What he said; Arise, and be not afraid. Note, Though a fear of reverence in our converse with Heaven is pleasing to Christ, yet a fear of amazement is not so, but must be striven against. Christ said, Arise. Note, It is Christ by his word, and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises up good men from their dejections, and silences their fears; and none but Christ can do it; Arise, be not afraid. Note, causeless fears would soon vanish, if we would not yield to them, and lie down under them, but get up, and do what we can against them. Considering what they had seen and heard, they had more reason to rejoice than to fear, and yet, it seems, they needed this caution. Note, Through the infirmity of the flesh, we often frighten ourselves with that wherewith we should encourage ourselves. Observe, After they had an express command from heaven to hear Christ, the first word they had from him was, Be not afraid, hear that. Note, Christ's errand into the world was to give comfort to good people, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might serve God without fear, Lu 1:74,75.

7 And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.

8 And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

The disappearing of the vision (Mt 17:8); They lift up themselves, and then lift up their eyes, and saw no man, save Jesus only. Moses and Elias were gone, the rays of Christ's glory were laid aside, or veiled again. They hoped this had been the day of Christ's entrance into his kingdom, and his public appearance in that external splendour which they dreamed of; but see how they are disappointed. Note, It is not wisdom to raise our expectations high

in this world, for the most valuable of our glories and joys here are vanishing, even those of near communion with God are so, not a continual feast, but a running banquet. If sometimes we are favoured with special manifestations of divine grace, glimpses and pledges of future glory, yet they are withdrawn presently; two heavens are too much for those to expect that never deserve one. Now they saw no man, save Jesus only. Note, Christ will tarry with us when Moses and Elias are gone. The prophets do not live for ever (Zec 1:5), and we see the period of our ministers' conversation; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb 13:7,8.

9 And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

When the transfiguration was over and Jesus' appearance returned to normal, he again told the apostles that they were not yet to reveal what they had learnt (Mat_17:6-9; Luk_9:36). The vision of Elijah prompted the apostles to ask if Elijah would come before the Messiah. If Jesus was the Messiah, why had Elijah not come? Jesus replied that John the Baptist was the promised Elijah, but just as people rejected the Messiah's forerunner so would they reject the Messiah (Mat_17:10-13).

The discourse between Christ and his disciples as they came down from the mountain, Mt 17:9-13. Observe,

1. They came down from the mountain. Note, We must come down from the holy mountains, where we have communion with God, and complacency in that communion, and of which we are saying. It is good to be here; even there we have no continuing city. Blessed be God, there is a mountain of glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down. But observe, When the disciples came down, Jesus came with them. Note, When we return to the world again after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be our comfort that he is with us.

2. As they came down, they talked of Christ. Note, When we are returning from holy ordinance, it is good to entertain ourselves and one another with discourse suitable to the work we have been about. That communication which is good to the use of edifying is then in a special manner seasonable; as, on the contrary, that which is corrupt, is worse then than at another time. Here is,

(a) The charge that Christ gave the disciples to keep the vision very private for the present (Mt 17:9); Tell it to no man till the Son of man is risen. If they had proclaimed it, the credibility of it would have been shocked by his sufferings, which were now hastening on. But let the publication of it be adjourned till after his resurrection, and then that and his subsequent glory will be a great confirmation of it. Note, Christ observed a method in the manifestation of himself; he would have his works put together, mutually to explain and illustrate each other, that they might appear in their full strength and convincing evidence. Every thing is beautiful in its season. Christ's resurrection was properly the beginning of the gospel state and kingdom, to which all before was but preparatory and by way of preface; and therefore, though this was transacted before, it must not be produced as evidence till then (and then it appears to have been much insisted on by 2Pe 1:16-18), when the religion it was designed for the confirmation of was brought to its full consistence and maturity. Christ's time is the best and fittest for the manifesting of himself and must be attended to by us.

(b) An objection which the disciples made against something Christ had said (Mt 17:10); "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? If Elias make so short a stay, and is gone so suddenly, and we must say nothing of him; why have we been taught out of the law to expect his public appearance in the world immediately before the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom? Must the coming of Elias be a secret, which every body looks for?" or thus; "If the resurrection of the Messiah, and with it the beginning of his kingdom, be at hand, what becomes of that glorious preface and introduction to it, which we expect in the coming of Elias?" The scribes, who were the public expositors of the law, said this

according to the scripture (Mal 4:5); Behold I send you Elijah the prophet. The disciples spoke the common language of the Jews, who made that the saying of the scribes which was the saying of the scripture, whereas of that which ministers speak to us according to the word of God, we should say, "God speaks to us, not the ministers;" for we must not receive it as the word of men, 1Th 2:13. Observe, When the disciples could not reconcile what Christ said with what they had heard out of the Old Testament, they desired him to explain it to them. Note, When we are puzzled with scripture difficulties, we must apply ourselves to Christ by prayer for his Spirit to open our understandings and to lead us into all truth.

(c) The solving of this objection. Ask, and it shall be given, ask instruction, and it shall be given.

[1.] Christ allows the prediction (Mt 17:11); "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things; so far you are in the right." Christ did not come to alter or invalidate any thing foretold in the Old Testament. Note, Corrupt and mistaken glosses may be sufficiently rejected and exploded, without diminishing or derogating from the authority or dignity of the sacred text. New-Testament prophecies are true and good, and are to be received and improved, though some hot foolish men may have misinterpreted them and drawn wrong inferences from them. He shall come, and restore all things; not restore them to their former state (John Baptist went not about to do that), but he shall accomplish all things (so it may be read), all things that were written of him, all the predictions of the coming of Elias. John Baptist came to restore things spiritually, to revive the decays of religion, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; which means the same with this, he shall restore all things. John preached repentance, and that restores all things.

[2.] He asserts the accomplishment. The scribes say true, that Elias is come, Mt 17:12. Note, God's promises are often fulfilled, and men perceive it not, but enquire, Where is the promise? when it is already performed. Elias is come, and they knew him not; they knew him not to be the Elias promised, the forerunner of the

Messiah. The scribes busied themselves in criticizing upon the scripture, but understood not by the signs of the times the fulfilling of the scripture. Note, It is easier to explain the word of God than to apply it and make a right use of it. But it is no wonder that the morning star was not observed, when he who is the Sun itself, was in the world, and the world knew him not.

Because they knew him not, they have done to him whatsoever they listed; if they had known, they would not have crucified Christ, or beheaded John, 1Co 2:8. They ridiculed John, persecuted him, and at last put him to death; which was Herod's doing, but is here charged upon the whole generation of unbelieving Jews, and particularly the scribes, who, though they could not prosecute John themselves, were pleased with what Herod did. He adds, Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Marvel not that Elias should be abused and killed by those who pretended, with a great deal of reverence, to expect him, when the Messiah himself will be in like manner treated. Note, The sufferings of Christ took off the strangeness of all other sufferings (Joh 15:18); when they had imbrued their hands in the blood of John Baptist, they were ready to do the like to Christ. Note, As men deal with Christ's servants, so they would deal with him himself; and they that are drunk with the blood of the martyrs still cry, Give, give, Ac 12:1-3.

(d) The disciples' satisfaction in Christ's reply to their objection (Mt 17:13); They understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. He did not name John, but gives them such a description of him as would put them in mind of what he had said to them formerly concerning him; This is Elias. This is a profitable way of teaching; it engages the learners' own thoughts, and makes them, if not their own teachers, yet their own remembrancers; and thus knowledge becomes easy to him that understands. When we diligently use the means of knowledge, how strangely are mists scattered and mistakes rectified!

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things.

12 But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

14 And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

15 Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

Two things the father of the child complains of.

1 The distress of his child (Mt 17:15); Lord have mercy on my son. The affliction of the children cannot but affect the tender parents, for they are pieces of themselves. And the case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. This child's distemper, probably, disabled him to pray for himself. Note, Parents are doubly concerned to pray for their children, not only that are weak and cannot, but much more that are wicked and will not, pray for themselves. Now,

(a). The nature of this child's disease was very sad; He was lunatic and sore vexed. A lunatic is properly one whose distemper lies in the brain, and returns with the change of the moon. The devil, by the divine permission, either caused this distemper, or at least concurred with it, to heighten and aggravate it. The child had the falling-sickness, and the hand of Satan was in it; by it he tormented then, and made it much more grievous than ordinarily it is. Those whom Satan got possession of, he afflicted by those diseases of the body which do most affect the mind; for it is the soul that he aims to do mischief to. The father, in his complain, saith, He is lunatic, taking notice of the effect; but Christ, in the cure, rebuked the devil, and so struck at the cause. Thus he doth in spiritual cures.

(b) The effects of the disease were very deplorable; He oft falls into the fire, and into the water. If the force of the disease made him to fall, the malice of the devil made him to fall into the fire or water; so mischievous is he where he gains possession and power in any soul. He seeks to devour, 1Pe 5:8.

2 The disappointment of his expectation from the disciples (Mt 17:16); I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cured him. Christ gave his disciples power to cast out devils (Mt 10:1,8), and therein they were successful (Lu 10:17); yet at this time they failed in the operation, though there were nine of them together, and before a great multitude. Christ permitted this,

(a) To keep them humble, and to show their dependence upon him, that without him they could do nothing.

(b) To glorify himself and his own power. It is for the honour of Christ to come in with help at a dead-lift, when other helpers cannot help. Elisha's staff in Gehazi's hand will not raise the child: he must come himself. Note, There are some special favours which Christ reserves the bestowment of to himself; and sometimes he keeps the cistern empty; that he may bring us to himself, the Fountain. But the failures of instruments shall not hinder the operations of his grace, which will work, if not by them, yet without them.

16 And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him hither to me.

He chid those about him (Mt 17:17); O faithless and perverse generation! This is not spoken to the disciples, but to the people, and perhaps especially to the scribes, who are mentioned in Mk 9:14, and who, as it should seem, insulted over the disciples, because they had now met with a case that was too hard for them. Christ himself could not do many mighty works among a people in whom unbelief reigned. It was here owing to the faithlessness of this generation, that they could not obtain those blessings from God, which otherwise they might have had; as it was owing to the weakness of the disciples' faith, that they could not do those works for God, which otherwise they

might have done. They were faithless and perverse. Note, Those that are faithless will be perverse; and perverseness is sin in its worst colours. Faith is compliance with God, unbelief is opposition and contradiction to God. Israel of old was perverse, because faithless (Ps 95:9), froward, for in them is no faith, De 32:20.

Two things he upbraids them with.

(1.) His presence with them so long; "How long shall I be with you? Will you always need my bodily presence, and never come to such maturity as to be fit to be left, the people to the conduct of the disciples, and the disciples to the conduct of the Spirit and of their commission? Must the child be always carried, and will it never learn to go alone?"

(2.) His patience with them so long; How long shall I suffer you? Note,

[1.] The faithlessness and perverseness of those who enjoy the means of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus. Thus did he suffer the manners of Israel of old, Ac 13:18.

[2.] The longer Christ has borne with a perverse and faithless people, the more he is displeased with their perverseness and unbelief; and he is God, and not man, else he would not suffer so long, nor bear so much, as he doth.

18 And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

He cured the child, and set him to-rights again. He called, Bring him hither to me. Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child. Note, Though Christ may be angry, he is never unkind, nor doth he, in the greatest of his displeasure, shut up the bowels of his compassion from the miserable; Bring him to me. Note, When all other helps and succours fail, we are welcome to Christ, and may be confident in him and in his power and goodness.

See here an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer.

(1.) He breaks the power of Satan (Mt 17:18); Jesus rebuked the devil, as one having authority, who could back with force his word of command. Note, Christ's victories over Satan are obtained by the power of his word, the sword that comes out of his mouth, Re 19:21. Satan cannot stand before the rebukes of Christ, though his possession has been ever so long. It is comfortable to those who are wrestling with principalities and powers, that Christ hath spoiled them, Col 2:15. The lion of the tribe of Judah will be too hard for the roaring lion that seeks to devour.

(2.) He redresses the grievances of the children of men; The child was cured from that very hour. It was an immediate cure, and a perfect one. This is an encouragement to parents to bring their children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring them to the word of Christ, the ordinary means by which Satan's strongholds are demolished in the soul. Christ's rebukes, brought home to the heart, will ruin Satan's power there.

19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?
20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove: and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

1. They ask the reason why they could not cast out the devil at this time (Mt 17:19); They came to Jesus apart. Note, Ministers, who are to deal for Christ in public, have need to keep up a private communion with him, that they may in secret, where no eye sees, bewail their weakness and straitness, their follies and infirmities, in their public performances, and enquire into the cause of them. We should make use of the liberty of access we have to Jesus apart, where we may be free and particular with him. Such questions as the disciples put to Christ, we should put to ourselves, in communing with our own hearts upon our beds; Why were we so dull and careless at such a time? Why came we so much short in such a duty? That which is amiss may, when found out, be amended.

2. Christ gives them two reasons why they failed.

(a) It was because of their unbelief, Mt 17:20. When he spake to the father of the child and to the people, he charged it upon their unbelief; when he spake to his disciples, he charged it upon theirs; for the truth was, there were faults on both sides; but we are more concerned to hear of our own faults than of other people's, and to impute what is amiss to ourselves than to others. When the preaching of the word seems not to be so successful as sometimes it has been, the people are apt to lay all the fault upon the ministers, and the ministers upon the people; whereas, it is more becoming for each to own his own faultiness, and to say, "It is owing to me." Ministers, in reproving, must learn thus to give to each his portion of the word; and to take people off from judging others, by teaching all to judge themselves; It is because of your unbelief. Though they had faith, yet that faith was weak and ineffectual. Note,

[1.] As far as faith falls short of its due strength, vigour, and activity, it may truly be said, "There is unbelief." Many are chargeable with unbelief, who yet are not to be called unbelievers.

[2.] It is because of our unbelief, that we bring so little to pass in religion, and so often miscarry, and come short, in that which is good.

Our Lord Jesus takes this occasion to show them the power of faith, that they might not be defective in that, another time, as they were now; If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall do wonders, Mt 17:20. Some make the comparison to refer to the quality of the mustard-seed, which is, when bruised, sharp and penetrating; "If you have an active growing faith, not dead, flat, or insipid, you will not be baffled thus." But it rather refers to the quantity; "If you had but a grain of true faith, though so little that it were like that which is the least of all seeds, you would do wonders." Faith in general is a firm assent to, a compliance with, and a confidence in, all divine revelation. The faith here required, is that which had for its object that particular revelation by which Christ gave his disciples power to work miracles in his name, for the confirmation of the doctrine

they preached. It was a faith in this revelation that they were defective in; either doubting the validity of their commission, or fearing that it expired with their first mission, and was not to continue when they were returning to their Master; or that it was some way or other forfeited or withdrawn. Perhaps their Master's absence with the three chief of his disciples, with a charge to the rest not to follow them, might occasion some doubts concerning their power, or rather the power of the Lord with them, to do this; however, there were not, at present, such a strong actual dependence upon, and confidence in, the promise of Christ's presence with them, as there should have been. It is good for us to be diffident of ourselves and of our own strength; but it is displeasing to Christ, when we distrust any power derived from him or granted by him.

If ye have ever so little of this faith in sincerity, if ye truly rely upon the powers committed to you, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove. This is a proverbial expression, denoting that which follows, and no more, Nothing shall be impossible to you. They had a full commission, among other things, to cast out devils without exception; but, this devil being more than ordinarily malicious and inveterate, they distrusted the power they had received, and so failed. To convince them of this, Christ shows them what they might have done. Note, An active faith can remove mountains, not of itself, but in the virtue of a divine power engaged by a divine promise, both which faith fastens upon.

(b) Because there was something in the kind of the malady, which rendered the cure more than ordinarily difficult (Mt 17:21); "This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting. This possession, which works by a falling-sickness, or this kind of devils that are thus furious, is not cast out ordinarily but by great acts of devotion, and wherein ye were defective." Note,

[1.] Though the adversaries we wrestle, be all principalities and powers, yet some are stronger than others, and their power more hardly broken.

[2.] The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to a greater intenseness in the acting of it, and more earnestness in praying to God for the increase of it; so some understand it here; "This kind of faith (which removeth mountains) doth not proceed, is not obtained, from God, nor is it carried up to its full growth, nor drawn out into act and exercise, but by earnest prayer."

[3.] Fasting and prayer are proper means for the bringing down of Satan's power against us, and the fetching in of divine power to our assistance. Fasting is of use to put an edge upon prayer; it is an evidence and instance of humiliation which is necessary in prayer, and is a means of mortifying some corrupt habits, and of disposing the body to serve the soul in prayer. When the devil's interest in the soul is confirmed by the temper and constitution of the body, fasting must be joined with prayer, to keep under the body.

21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:
23 and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.
And they were exceeding sorry.

Christ here foretels his own sufferings; he began to do it before (Mt 16:21); and, finding that it was to his disciples a hard saying, he saw it necessary to repeat it. There are some things which God speaketh once, yea twice, and yet man perceiveth it not. Observe here,

1. What he foretold concerning himself--that he should be betrayed and killed. He perfectly knew, before, all things that should come to him, and yet undertook the work of our redemption, which greatly commends his love; nay, his clear foresight of them was a kind of ante-passion, had not his love to man made all easy to him.

(a) He tells them that he should be betrayed into the hands of men. He shall be delivered up (so it might be read and understood of his

Father's delivering him up by his determined counsel and fore-knowledge, Ac 2:23,Ro 8:32); but as we render it, it refers to Judas's betraying him into the hands of the priests, and their betraying him into the hands of the Romans. He was betrayed into the hands of men; men to whom he was allied by nature, and from whom therefore he might expect pity and tenderness; men whom he had undertaken to save, and from whom therefore he might expect honour and gratitude; yet these are his persecutors and murderers.

(b) That they should kill him; nothing less than that would satisfy their rage; it was his blood, his precious blood, that they thirsted after. This is the heir, come, let us kill him. Nothing less would satisfy God's justice, and answer his undertaking; if he be a Sacrifice of atonement, he must be killed; without blood no remission.

(c) That he shall be raised again the third day. Still, when he spoke of his death, he gave a hint of his resurrection, the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. This was an encouragement, not only to him, but to his disciples; for if he rise the third day, his absence from them will not be long, and his return to them will be glorious.

2. How the disciples received this; They were exceedingly sorry. Herein appeared their love to their Master's person, but with all their ignorance and mistake concerning his undertaking. Peter indeed durst not say any thing against it, as he had done before (Mt 16:22), having then been severely chidden for it; but he, and the rest of them, greatly lamented it, as it would be their own loss, their Master's grief, and the sin and ruin of them that did it.

Payment of the Tribute Money

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?

Observe how it was demanded, Mt 17:24. Christ was now at Capernaum, his headquarters, where he mostly resided; he did not

keep from thence, to decline being called upon for his dues, but rather came thither, to be ready to pay them.

1 The tribute demanded was not any civil payment to the Roman powers, that was strictly exacted by the publicans, but the church-duties, the half shekel, about fifteen pence, which were required from every person or the service of the temple, and the defraying of the expenses of the worship there; it is called a ransom for the soul, Ex 30:12, &c. This was not so strictly exacted now as sometimes it had been, especially not in Galilee.

2 The demand was very modest; the collectors stood in such awe of Christ, because of his mighty works, that they durst not speak to him about it, but applied themselves to Peter, whose house was in Capernaum, and probably in his house Christ lodged; he therefore was fittest to be spoken to as the housekeeper, and they presumed he knew his Master's mind. Their question is, Doth not your master pay tribute? Some think that they sought an occasion against him, designing, if he refused, to represent him as disaffected to the temple-service, and his followers as lawless people, that would pay neither toll, tribute, nor custom, Ezr 4:13. It should rather seem, they asked this with respect, intimating, that if he had any privilege to exempt him from this payment, they would not insist upon it.

Peter presently his word for his Master; "Yes, certainly; my Master pays tribute; it is his principle and practice; you need not fear moving it to him."

(a) He was made under the law (Ga 4:4); therefore under this law he was paid for at forty days old (Lu 2:22), and now he paid for himself, as one who, in his state of humiliation, had taken upon him the form of a servant, Php 2:7,8.

(b) He was made sin for us, and was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, Ro 8:3. Now this tax paid to the temple is called an atonement for the soul, Ex 30:15. Christ, that in every thing he might

appear in the likeness of sinners, paid it though he had no sin to atone for.

(c) Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness, Mt 3:15. He did this to set an example,

[1.] Of rendering to all their due, tribute to whom tribute is due, Ro 13:7. The kingdom of Christ not being of this world, the favourites and officers of it are so far from having a power granted them, as such, to tax other people's purses, that theirs are made liable to the powers that are.

[2.] Of contributing to the support of the public worship of God in the places where we are. If we reap spiritual things, it is fit that we should return carnal things. The temple was now made a den of thieves, and the temple-worship a pretence for the opposition which the chief priests gave to Christ and his doctrine; and yet Christ paid this tribute. Note, Church-duties, legally imposed, are to be paid, notwithstanding church-corruptions. We must take care not to use our liberty as a cloak of covetousness or maliciousness, 1Pe 2:16. If Christ pay tribute, who can pretend an exemption?

25 He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

How it was disputed (Mt 17:25), not with the collectors themselves, lest they should be irritated, but with Peter, that he might be satisfied in the reason why Christ paid tribute, and might not mistake about it. He brought the collectors into the house; but Christ anticipated him, to give him a proof of his omniscience, and that no thought can be withholden from him. The disciples of Christ are never attacked without his knowledge.

Now,

1. He appeals to the way of the kings of the earth, which is, to take tribute of strangers, of the subjects of their kingdom, or foreigners that deal with them, but not of their own children that are of their families; there is such a community of goods between parents and

children, and a joint-interest in what they have, that it would be absurd for the parents to levy taxes upon the children, or demand any thing from them; it is like one hand taxing the other.

2. He applies this to himself; Then are the children free. Christ is the Son of God, and Heir of all things; the temple is his temple (Mal 3:1), his Father's house (Joh 2:16), in it he is faithful as a Son in his own house (Heb 3:6), and therefore not obliged to pay this tax for the service of the temple. Thus Christ asserts his right, lest his paying this tribute should be misimproved to the weakening of his title as the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and should have looked like a disowning of it himself. These immunities of the children are to be extended no further than our Lord Jesus himself. God's children are freed by grace and adoption from the slavery of sin and Satan, but not from their subjection to civil magistrates in civil things; here the law of Christ is express; Let every soul (sanctified souls not excepted) be subject to the higher powers. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

26 Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.

27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

1. For what reason Christ waived his privilege, and paid this tribute, though he was entitled to an exemption--Lest we should offend them. Few knew, as Peter did, that he was the Son of God; and it would have been a diminution to the honour of that great truth, which was yet a secret, to advance it now, to serve such a purpose as this. Therefore Christ drops that argument, and considers, that if he should refuse this payment, it would increase people's prejudice against him and his doctrine, and alienate their affections from him, and therefore he resolves to pay it. Note, Christian prudence and humility teach us, in many cases, to recede from our right, rather than give offence by insisting upon it. We must never decline our duty for fear of giving offence (Christ's preaching and miracles

offended them, yet he went on with him, Mt 15:12,13, better offend men than God); but we must sometimes deny ourselves in that which is our secular interest, rather than give offence; as Paul, 1Co 8:13,Ro 14:13.

2. What course he took for the payment of this tax; he furnished himself with money for it out of the mouth of a fish (Mt 17:27), wherein appears,

(a) The poverty of Christ; he had not fifteen pence at command to pay his tax with, though he cured so many that were diseased; it seems, he did all gratis; for our sakes he became poor, 2Co 8:9. In his ordinary expenses, he lived upon alms (Lu 8:3), and in extraordinary ones, he lived upon miracles. He did not order Judas to pay this out of the bag which he carried; that was for subsistence, and he would not order that for his particular use, which was intended for the benefit of the community.

(b) The power of Christ, in fetching money out of a fish's mouth for this purpose. Whether his omnipotence put it there, or his omniscience knew that it was there, it comes all to one; it was an evidence of his divinity, and that he is Lord of hosts. Those creatures that are most remote from man are at the command of Christ, even the fishes of the sea are under his feet (Ps 8:5); and to evidence his dominion in this lower world, and to accommodate himself to his present state of humiliation, he chose to take it out of a fish's mouth, when he could have taken it out of an angel's hand. Now observe,

[1.] Peter must catch the fish by angling. Even in miracles he would use means to encourage industry and endeavour. Peter has something to do, and it is in the way of his own calling too; to teach us diligence in the employment we are called to, and called in. Do we expect that Christ should give to us? Let us be ready to work for him.

[2.] The fish came up, with money in the mouth of it, which represents to us the reward of obedience in obedience. What work we do at Christ's command brings its own pay along with it: In keeping God's commands, as well as after keeping them, there is great reward, Ps 19:11. Peter was made a fisher of men, and those that he caught thus, came up; where the heart is opened to entertain Christ's word, the hand is open to encourage his ministers.

[3.] The piece of money was just enough to pay the tax for Christ and Peter. Thou shalt find a stater, the value of a Jewish shekel, which would pay the poll-tax for two, for it was half a shekel, Ex 30:13. Christ could as easily have commanded a bag of money as a piece of money; but he would teach us not to covet superfluities, but, having enough for our present occasions, therewith to be content, and not to distrust God, though we live but from hand to mouth. Christ made the fish his cash-keeper; and why may not we make God's providence our storehouse and treasury? If we have a competency for today, let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Christ paid for himself and Peter, because it is probable that here he only was assessed, and of him it was at this time demanded; perhaps the rest had paid already, or were to pay elsewhere. The papists make a great mystery of Christ's paying for Peter, as if this made him the head and representative of the whole church; whereas the payment of tribute for him was rather a sign of subjection than of superiority. His pretended successors pay no tribute, but exact it. Peter fished for this money, and therefore part of it went for his use. Those that are workers together with Christ in winning souls shall shine with him. Give it for thee and me. What Christ paid for himself was looked upon as a debt; what he paid for Peter was a courtesy to him. Note, it is a desirable thing, if God so please, to have wherewithal of this world's goods, not only to be just, but to be kind; not only to be charitable to the poor, but obliging to our friends. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good?

Lastly, Observe, The evangelist records here the orders Christ gave to Peter, the warrant; the effect is not particularly mentioned, but

taken for granted, and justly; for, with Christ, saying and doing are the same thing.

Matthew-18

Who Is the Greatest?

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

As there never was a greater pattern of humility, so there never was a greater preacher of it, than Christ; he took all occasions to command it, to commend it, to his disciples and followers.

The occasion of this discourse concerning humility was an unbecoming contest among the disciples for precedency; they came to him, saying, among themselves (for they were ashamed to ask him, Mk 9:34), Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? They mean not, who by character (then the question had been good, that they might know what graces and duties to excel in), but who by name. They had heard much, and preached much, of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, his church in this world; but ass yet they were so far from having any clear notion of it, that they dreamt of a temporal kingdom, and the external pomp and power of it. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, that he should rise again, from whence they expected his kingdom would commence; and now they thought it was time to put in for their places in it; it is good, in such cases, to speak early. Upon other discourses of Christ to that purport, debates of this kind arose (Mt 20:19,20,Lu 22:22,24); he spoke many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet they fasten upon that, and overlook the other; and, instead of asking how they might have strength and grace to suffer with him, they ask him, "Who shall be highest in reigning with him." Note, Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble. They look so much at the crown, that

they forget the yoke and the cross. So the disciples here did, when they asked, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

1. They suppose that all who have a place in that kingdom are great, for it is a kingdom of priests. Note, Those are truly great who are truly good; and they will appear so at last, when Christ shall own them as his, though ever so mean and poor in the world.

2. They suppose that there are degrees in this greatness. All the saints are honourable, but not all alike so; one star differs from another star in glory. All David's officers were not worthies, nor all his worthies of the first three.

3. They suppose it must be some of them, that must be prime ministers of state. To whom should King Jesus delight to do honour, but to them who had left all for him, and were now his companions in patience and tribulation?

4. They strive who it should be, each having some pretence or other to it. Peter was always the chief speaker, and already had the keys given him; he expects to be lord-chancellor, or lord-chamberlain of the household, and so to be the greatest. Judas had the bag, and therefore he expects to be lord-treasurer, which, though now he come last, he hopes, will then denominate him the greatest. Simon and Jude are nearly related to Christ, and they hope to take place of all the great officers of state, as princes of the blood. John is the beloved disciple, the favourite of the Prince, and therefore hopes to be the greatest. Andrew was first called, and why should not he be first preferred? Note, We are very apt to amuse and humour ourselves with foolish fancies of things that will never be.

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

The discourse itself, which is a just rebuke to the question, Who shall be greatest? We have abundant reason to think, that if Christ ever intended that Peter and his successors at Rome should be heads of the church, and his chief vicars on earth, having so fair an occasion given him, he would now have let his disciples know it; but so far is he from this, that his answer disallows and condemns

the thing itself. Christ will not lodge such an authority or supremacy any where in his church; whoever pretend to it are usurpers; instead of settling any of the disciples in this dignity, he warns them all not to put in for it.

Christ here teacheth them to be humble,

By a sign (Mt 18:2); He called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them. Christ often taught by signs or sensible representations (comparisons to the eye), as the prophets of old. Note, Humility is a lesson so hardly learned, that we have need by all ways and means to be taught it. When we look upon a little child, we should be put in mind of the use Christ made of this child. Sensible things must be improved to spiritual purposes. He set him in the midst of them; not that they might play with him, but that they might learn by him. Grown men, and great men, should not disdain the company of little children, or think it below them to take notice of them. They may either speak to them, and give instruction to them; or look upon them, and receive instruction from them. Christ himself, when a child, was in the midst of the doctors, Lu 2:46.

3 and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

By as sermon upon this sign; in which he shows them and us,

The necessity of humility, Mt 18:3. His preface is solemn, and commands both attention and assent; Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, say it, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Here observe,

[1.] What it is that he requires and insists upon.

First, "You must be converted, you must be of another mind, and in another frame and temper, must have other thoughts, both of yourselves and of the kingdom of heaven, before you be fit for a place in it. The pride, ambition, and affectation of honour and dominion, which appear in you, must be repented of, mortified, and

reformed, and you must come to yourselves." Note, Besides the first conversion of a soul from a state of nature to a state of grace, there are after-conversions from particular paths of backsliding, which are equally necessary to salvation. Every step out of the way by sin, must be a step into it again by repentance. When Peter repented of his denying his Master, he was converted.

Secondly, You must become as little children. Note, Converting grace makes us like little children, not foolish as children (1Co 14:20), nor fickle (Eph 4:14), nor playful (Mt 11:16); but, as children, we must desire the sincere milk of the word (1Pe 2:2); as children, we must be careful for nothing, but leave it to our heavenly Father to care for us (Mt 6:31); we must, as children, be harmless and inoffensive, and void of malice (1Co 14:20), governable, and under command (Ga 4:2); and (which is here chiefly intended) we must be humble as little children, who do not take state upon them, nor stand upon the punctilios of honour; the child of a gentleman will play with the child of a beggar (Ro 12:16), the child in rags, if it have the breast, is well enough pleased, and envies not the gaiety of the child in silk; little children have no great aims at great places, or projects to raise themselves in the world; they exercise not themselves in things too high for them; and we should in like manner behave, and quiet ourselves, Ps 131:1,2. As children are little in body and low in stature, so we must be little and low in spirit, and in our thoughts of ourselves. This is a temper which leads to other good dispositions; the age of childhood is the learning age.

[2.] What stress he lays upon this; Without this, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Note, Disciples of Christ have need to be kept in awe by threatenings, that they may fear lest they seem to come short, Heb 4:1 The disciples, when they put that question (Mt 18:1), thought themselves sure of the kingdom of heaven; but Christ awakens them to be jealous of themselves. They were ambitious of being greatest in the kingdom of heaven; Christ tells them, that, except they came to a better temper, they should never come thither. Note, many that set up for great ones in the church,

prove not only little, but nothing, and are found to have no part or lot in the matter. Our Lord designs here to show the great danger of pride and ambition; whatever profession men make, if they allow themselves in this sin, they will be rejected both from God's tabernacle and from his holy hill. Pride threw the angels that sinned out of heaven, and will keep us out, if we be not converted from it. They that are lifted up with pride, fall into the condemnation of the devil; to prevent this, we must become as little children, and, in order to do that, must be born again, must put on the new man, must be like the holy child Jesus; so he is called, even after his ascension, Ac 4:27.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

He shows the honour and advancement that attend humility (Mt 18:4), thus furnishing a direct but surprising answer to their question. He that humbles himself as a little child, though he may fear that hereby he will render himself contemptible, as men of timid minds, who thereby throw themselves out of the way of preferment, yet the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Note, The humblest Christians are the best Christians, and most like to Christ, and highest in his favour; are best disposed for the communications of divine grace, and fittest to serve God in this world, and enjoy him in another. They are great, for God overlooks heaven and earth, to look on such; and certainly those are to be most respected and honoured in the church that are most humble and self-denying; for, though they least seek it, they best deserve it.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Those that thus humble themselves will be afraid,

[1.] That nobody will receive them; but (Mt 18:5), Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. Whatever kindnesses are done to such, Christ takes as done to himself. Whoso entertains a meek and humble Christian, keeps him in countenance, will not let him lose by his modesty, takes him into his love and friendship, and society and care, and studies to do him a kindness; and doth this in Christ's name, for his sake, because he bears the image of Christ, serves Christ, and because Christ has received

him; this shall be accepted and recompensed as an acceptable piece of respect to Christ. Observe, Though it be but one such little child that is received in Christ's name, it shall be accepted. Note, The tender regard Christ has to his church extends itself to every particular member, even the meanest; not only to the whole family, but to every child of the family; the less they are in themselves, to whom we show kindness, the more there is of good will in it to Christ; the less it is for their sakes, the more it is for his; and he takes it accordingly. If Christ were personally among us, we think we should never do enough to welcome him; the poor, the poor in spirit, we have always with us, and they are his receivers. See Mt 25:35-40.

[2.] They will be afraid that every body will abuse them; the basest men delight to trample upon the humble; Vexat censura columbas--Censure pounces on doves. This objection he obviates (Mt 18:6), where he warns all people, as they will answer it at their utmost peril, not to offer any injury to one of Christ's little ones. This word makes a wall of fire about them; he that touches them, touches the apple of God's eye.

Observe, First, The crime supposed; offending one of these little ones that believe in Christ. Their believing in Christ, though they be little ones, unites them to him, and interests him in their cause, so that, as they partake of the benefit of his sufferings, he also partakes in the wrong of theirs. Even the little ones that believe have the same privileges with the great ones, for they have all obtained like precious faith. There are those that offend these little ones, by drawing them to sin (1Co 8:10,11), grieving and vexing their righteous souls, discouraging them, taking occasion from their mildness to make a prey of them in their persons, families, goods, or good name. Thus the best men have often met with the worst treatment in this world.

Observe, Secondly, The punishment of this crime; intimated in that word, Better for him that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. The sin is so heinous, and the ruin proportionably so great, that he

had better undergo the sorest punishments inflicted on the worst of malefactors, which can only kill the body. Note,

1. Hell is worse than the depth of the sea; for it is a bottomless pit, and it is a burning lake. The depth of the sea is only killing, but hell is tormenting. We meet with one that had comfort in the depth of the sea, it was Jonah (Mt 2:2,4,9); but never any had the least grain or glimpse of comfort in hell, nor will have to eternity.

2 The irresistible irrevocable doom of the great Judge will sink sooner and surer, and bind faster, than a mill-stone hanged about the neck. It fixes a great gulf, which can never be broken through, Lu 16:26. Offending Christ's little ones, though by omission, is assigned as the reason of that dreadful sentence, Go ye cursed, which will at last be the doom of proud persecutors.

Temptations to Sin

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

If people want to be disciples of Jesus, they should not despise those who appear weak and insignificant. Indeed, they should take severe action against themselves to remove from their lives anything that might cause them to follow their own desires instead of submitting to Jesus. Wrong desires prevent people from receiving Jesus and lead only to hell (Mat_18:6-9; Mar_9:42-48). God will test and cleanse the disciples, but if they want to be useful for him in leading people to Jesus, they must cease their quarrelling and make sure that they themselves are pure in heart (Mar_9:49-50).

Jesus' disciples should have a loving concern for the weak, the helpless and the lost. They should not want any to miss out on his salvation (Mat_18:10-14). They must love others, and not act like those who tried to stop a man from casting out demons in Jesus' name because he did not belong to Jesus' apostolic group. The man

feared God, and God used him to deliver people from the power of evil. He was not an enemy of Jesus, and the apostles were not to despise him or hinder him in his work. If people do acts of kindness to others, and do them with the right motives, God will reward them no matter how insignificant those acts may appear to be (Mar_9:38-41; Luk_9:49-50).

It were better for him that a millstone, etc. Mills anciently were either turned by hand, Mt 24:41 or by beasts, chiefly by mules. These were of the larger kind; and the original words denote that it was this kind that was intended. This was one mode of capital punishment practised by the Greeks, Syrians, Romans, and by some other surrounding nations. The meaning is, it would be better for him to die before he had committed the sin. To injure, or to cause to sin, the feeblest Christian, will be regarded as a most serious offence, and will be punished accordingly.

7 Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!

Our Savior here speaks of offences, or scandals,

In general, Mt 18:7. Having mentioned the offending of little ones, he takes occasion to speak more generally of offences. That is an offence,

1. Which occasions guilt, which by enticement or affrightment tends to draw men from that which is good to that which is evil.

2. Which occasions grief, which makes the heart of the righteous sad. Now, concerning offences, Christ here tells them,

(a) That they were certain things; It must needs be, that offences come. When we are sure there is danger, we should be the better armed. Not that Christ's word necessitates any man to offend, but it is a prediction upon a view of the causes; considering the subtlety and malice of Satan, the weakness and depravity of men's hearts, and the foolishness that is found there, it is morally impossible but

that there should be offences; and God has determined to permit them for wise and holy ends, that both they which are perfect, and they which are not, may be made manifest. See 1Co 11:19,Da 11:35. Being told, before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and many bad examples, let us stand upon our guard, Mt 24:24,Ac 20:29,30.

(b) That they would be woeful things, and the consequence of them fatal. Here is a dou

[1.] A woe to the careless and unguarded, to whom the offence is given; Woe to the world because of offences. The obstructions and oppositions given to faith and holiness in all places are the bane and plague of mankind, and the ruin of thousands. This present world is an evil world, it is so full of offences, of sins, and snares, and sorrows; a dangerous road we travel, full of stumbling-blocks, precipices, and false guides. Woe to the world. As for those whom God hath chosen and called out of the world, and delivered from it, they are preserved by the power of God from the prejudice of these offences, are helped over all these stones of stumbling. They that love God's law have great peace, and nothing shall offend them, Ps 119:165.

[2.] A woe to the wicked, who wilfully give the offence; But woe to that man by whom the offence comes. Though it must needs be, that the offence will come, that will be no excuse for the offenders. Note, Though God makes the sins of sinners to serve his purposes, that will not secure them from his wrath; and the guilt will be laid at the door of those who give the offence, though they also fall under a woe who take it. Note, They who any way hinder the salvation of others, will find their own condemnation the more intolerable, like Jeroboam, who sinned, and made Israel to sin. This woe is the moral of that judicial law (Ex 21:33-22:6), that he who opened the pit, and kindled the fire, was accountable for all the damage that ensued. The antichristian generation, by whom came

the great offence, will fall under this woe, for their delusion of sinners (2Th 2:11,12), and their persecutions of saints (Re 17:1,2,6), for the righteous God will reckon with those who ruin the eternal interests of precious souls, and the temporal interests of precious saints; for precious in the sight of the Lord is the blood of souls and the blood of saints; and men will be reckoned with, not only for their doings, but for the fruit of their doings, the mischief done by them.

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

In particular, Christ here speaks of offences given,

1. By us to ourselves, which is expressed by our hand or foot offending us; in such a case, it must be cut off, Mt 18:8,9. This Christ had said before (Mt 5:29,30), where it especially refers to seventh-commandment sins; here it is taken more generally. Note, Those hard sayings of Christ, which are displeasing to flesh and blood, need to be repeated to us again and again, and all little enough. Now observe,

(a) What it is that is here enjoined. We must part with an eye, or a hand, or a foot, that is, that, whatever it is, which is dear to us, when it proves unavoidably an occasion of sin to us. Note,

[1.] Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; our own eyes and hands offend us; if there were never a devil to tempt us, we should be drawn away of our own lust: nay, those things which in themselves are good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, prove snares to us, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty.

[2.] In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled in sin by it. First, It is certain, the inward lust must be mortified, though it be dear to us as an eye, or a hand. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be mortified, Ga 5:24. The body of sin must be destroyed; corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; the beloved lust, that has been rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be abandoned with abhorrence. Secondly, The outward occasions of sin must be avoided, though we thereby put as great a violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye. When Abraham quitted his native country, for fear of being ensnared in the idolatry of it, and when Moses quitted Pharaoh's court, for fear of being entangled in the sinful pleasures of it, there was a right hand cut off. We must think nothing too dear to part with, for the keeping of a good conscience.

(b) Upon what inducement this is required; It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to be cast into hell. The argument is taken from the future state, from heaven and hell; thence are fetched the most cogent dissuasives from sin. The argument is the same with that of the apostle, Ro 8:13.

[1.] If we live after the flesh, we shall die; having two eyes, no breaches made upon the body of sin, inbred corruption like Adonijah never displeased, we shall be cast into hell-fire.

[2.] If we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live; that is meant by our entering into life maimed, that is, the body of sin maimed; and it is but maimed at the best, while we are in this world. If the right hand of the old man be cut off, and its right eye be plucked out, its chief policies blasted and powers broken, it is well; but there is still an eye and a hand remaining, with which it will struggle. They that are Christ's have nailed the flesh to the cross, but it is not yet dead; its life is prolonged, but its dominion taken away (Da 7:12), and the deadly wound given it, that shall not be healed.

1. Concerning offences given by us to others, especially Christ's little ones, which we are here charged to take heed of, pursuant to what he had said, Mt 18:6. Observe,

The caution itself; Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones. This is spoken to the disciples. As Christ will be displeased with enemies of his church, if they wrong any of the members of it, even the least, so he will be displeased with the great ones of the church, if they despise the little ones of it. "You that are striving who shall be greatest, take heed lest in this contest you despise the little ones." We may understand it literally of little children; of them Christ was speaking, Mt 18:2,4. The infant seed of the faithful belong to the family of Christ, and are not to be despised. Or, figuratively; true but weak believers are these little ones, who in their outward condition, or the frame of their spirits, are like little children, the lambs of Christ's flock.

[1.] We must not despise them, not think meanly of them, as lambs despised, Job 12:5. We must not make a jest of their infirmities, not look upon them with contempt, not conduct ourselves scornfully or disdainfully toward them, as if we cared not what became of them; we must not say, "Though they be offended, and grieved, and stumble, what is that to us?" Nor should we make a slight matter of doing that which will entangle and perplex them. This despising of the little ones is what we are largely cautioned against, Ro 14:3,10,15,20,21. We must not impose upon the consciences of others, nor bring them into subjection to our humours, as they do who say to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over. There is a respect owing to the conscience of every man who appears to be conscientious.

[2.] We must take heed that we do not despise them; we must be afraid of the sin, and be very cautious what we say and do, lest we should through inadvertency give offence to Christ's little ones, lest we put contempt upon them, without being aware of it. There were those that hated them, and cast them out, and yet said, Let the Lord

be glorified. And we must be afraid of the punishment; "Take heed of despising them, for it is at your peril if you do."

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

MHC commentary:
The reasons to enforce the caution. We must not look upon these little ones as contemptible, because really they are considerable. Let not earth despise those whom heaven respects; let not those be looked upon by us with respect, as his favourites. To prove that the little ones which believe in Christ are worthy to be respected, consider,

[1.] The ministration of the good angels about them; In heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father. This Christ saith to us, and we may take it upon his word, who came from heaven to let us know what is done there by the world of angels. Two things he lets us know concerning them,

First, That they are the little ones' angels. God's angels are theirs; for all his is ours, if we be Christ's. 1Co 3:22. They are theirs; for they have a charge concerning them to minister for their good (Heb 1:14), to pitch their tents about them, and bear them up in their arms. Some have imagined that every particular saint has a guardian angel; but why should we suppose this, when we are sure that every particular saint, when there is occasion, has a guard of angels? This is particularly applied here to the little ones, because they are most despised and most exposed. They have but little that they can call their own, but they can look by faith on the heavenly hosts, and call them theirs. While the great ones of the world have honourable men for their retinue and guards, the little ones of the church are attended with glorious angels; which bespeaks not only their dignity, but the danger those run themselves upon, who

despise and abuse them. It is bad being enemies to those who are so guarded; and it is good having God for our God, for then we have his angels for our angels.

Secondly, That they always behold the face of the Father in heaven. This bespeaks,

1 The angels' continual felicity and honour. The happiness of heaven consists in the vision of God, seeing him face to face as he is, beholding his beauty; this the angels have without interruption; when they are ministering to us on earth, yet even then by contemplation they behold the face of God, for they are full of eyes within. Gabriel, when speaking to Zecharias, yet stands in the presence of God, Re 4:8,Lu 1:19. The expression intimates, as some think, the special dignity and honour of the little ones' angels; the prime ministers of state are said to see the king's face (Es 1:14), as if the strongest angels had the charge of the weakest saints.

2. It bespeaks their continual readiness to minister to the saints. They behold the face of God, expecting to receive orders from him what to do for the good of the saints. As the eyes of the servant are to the hand of his master, ready to go or come upon the least beck, so the eyes of the angels are upon the face of God, waiting for the intimations of his will, which those winged messengers fly swiftly to fulfil; they go and return like a flash of lightning, Eze 1:14. If we would behold the face of God in glory hereafter, as the angels do (Lu 20:36), we must behold the face of God now, in readiness to our duty, as they do, Ac 9:6.

JFB commentary:
A difficult verse; but perhaps the following may be more than an illustration:—Among men, those who nurse and rear the royal children, however humble in themselves, are allowed free entrance with their charge, and a degree of familiarity which even the highest state ministers dare not assume. Probably our Lord means that, in virtue of their charge over His disciples (Heb 1:13; Joh 1:51), the angels have errands to the throne, a welcome there, and a dear

familiarity in dealing with "His Father which is in heaven," which on their own matters they could not assume.

PNT commentary:

In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father. The doctrine of guardian angels is emphatically taught in the Scriptures. See 1Ki 19:5-8 Ps 91:11 Heb 1:13 Ac 27:23. Who can afford to despise the children who have representatives right at the throne of God?

Wesley Commentary:

See that ye despise not one of these little ones - As if they were beneath your notice. Be careful to receive and not to offend, the very weakest believer in Christ: for as inconsiderable as some of these may appear to thee, the very angels of God have a peculiar charge over them: even those of the highest order, who continually appear at the throne of the Most High. To behold the face of God seems to signify the waiting near his throne; and to be an allusion to the office of chief ministers in earthly courts, who daily converse with their princes.

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

The gracious design of Christ concerning them (Mt 18:11); For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. This is a reason, First, Why the little ones' angels have such a charge concerning them, and attend upon them; it is in pursuance of Christ's design to save them. Note, The ministration of angels is founded in the mediation of Christ; through him angels are reconciled to us; and, when they celebrated God's goodwill toward men, to it they annexed their own. Secondly, Why they are not to be despised; because Christ came to save them, to save them that are lost, the little ones that are lost in their own eyes (Isa 66:3), that are at a loss within themselves. Or rather, the children of men. Note,

1. Our souls by nature are lost souls; as a traveller is lost, that is out of his way, as a convicted prisoner is lost. God lost the service of fallen man, lost the honour he should have had from him.

2. Christ's errand into the world was to save that which was lost, to reduce us to our allegiance, restore us to our work, reinstate us in our privileges, and so to put us into the right way that leads to our great end; to save those that are spiritually lost from being eternally so.

3. This is a good reason why the least and weakest believers should not be despised or offended. If Christ put such a value upon them, let us not undervalue them. If he denied himself so much for their salvation, surely we should deny ourselves for their edification and consolation. See this argument urged, Ro 14:15,1Co 8:11,12. Nay, if Christ came into the world to save souls, and his heart is so much upon that work, he will reckon severely with those that obstruct and hinder it, by obstructing the progress of those that are setting their faces heavenward, and so thwart his great design.

12 How think ye? if a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone
astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains,
and seeketh that which is gone astray?
13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that
sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

The tender regard which our heavenly Father has to these little ones, and his concern for their welfare. This is illustrated by a comparison, Mt 18:12-14. Observe the gradation of the argument; the angels of God are their servants, the Son of God is their Saviour, and, to complete their honour, God himself is their Friend. None shall pluck them out of my Father's hand, Joh 10:28. Here is,

The comparison, Mt 18:12,13. The owner that had lost one sheep out of a hundred, does not slight it, but diligently enquires after it, is greatly pleased when he has found it, and has in that a sensible and affecting joy, more than in the ninety and nine that wandered not. The fear he was in of losing that one, and the surprise of finding it, add to the joy. Now this is applicable,

1. To the state of fallen man in general; he is strayed like a lost sheep, the angels that stood were as the ninety-nine that never went astray; wandering man is sought upon the mountains, which Christ, in great fatigue, traversed in pursuit of him, and he is found; which is a matter of joy. Greater joy there is in heaven for returning sinners than for remaining angels.

2. To particular believers, who are offended and put out of their way by the stumbling-blocks that are laid in their way, or the wiles of those who seduce them out of the way. Now though but one of a hundred should hereby be driven off, as sheep easily are, yet that one shall be looked after with a great deal of care, the return of it welcomed with a great deal of pleasure; and therefore the wrong done to it, no doubt, will be reckoned for with a great deal of displeasure. If there be joy in heaven for the finding of one of these little ones, there is wrath in heaven for the offending of them. Note, God is graciously concerned, not only for his flock in general, but for every lamb, or sheep, that belongs to it. Though they are many, yet out of those many he can easily miss one, for he is a great Shepherd, but not so easily lose it, for he is a good Shepherd, and takes a more particular cognizance of his flock than ever any did; for he calls his own sheep by name, Joh 10:3. See a full exposition of this parable, Eze 34:2,10,16,19.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

The application of this comparison (Mt 18:14); It is not the will of your Father, that one of these little ones should perish. More is implied than is expressed. It is not his will that any should perish, but,

1. It is his will, that these little ones should be saved; it is the will of his design and delight: he has designed it, and set his heart upon it, and he will effect it; it is the will of his precept, that all should do what they can to further it, and nothing to hinder it.

2. This care extends itself to every particular member of the flock, even the meanest. We think if but one or two be offended and ensnared, it is no great matter, we need not mind it; but God's thoughts of love and tenderness are above ours.

3. It is intimated that those who do any thing by which any of these little ones are brought into danger of perishing, contradict the will of God, and highly provoke him; and though they cannot prevail in it, yet they will be reckoned with for it by him, who, in his saints, as in other things, is jealous of his honour, and will not bear to have it trampled on. See Isa 3:15, What mean ye, that ye beat my people? Ps 76:8,9.

Observe, Christ called God, Mt 18:19, my Father which is in heaven; he calls him, Mt 18:14, your Father which is in heaven; intimating that he is not ashamed to call his poor disciples brethren; for have not he and they one Father? I ascend to my Father and your Father (Joh 20:17); therefore ours because his. This intimates likewise the ground of the safety of his little ones; that God is their Father, and is therefore inclined to succour them. A father takes care of all his children, but is particularly tender of the little ones, Ge 33:13. He is their Father in heaven, a place of prospect, and therefore he sees all the indignities offered them; and a place of power, therefore he is able to avenge them. This comforts offended little ones, that their Witness is in heaven (Job 16:19), their Judge is there, Ps 68:5.

How, then, can He but visit for those "offenses" which endanger the souls of these little ones?

A Brother Who Sins

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

Christ, having cautioned his disciples not to give offence, comes next to direct them what they must do in case of offences given them; which may be understood either of personal injuries, and then these

directions are intended for the preserving of the peace of the church; or of public scandals, and then they are intended for the preserving of the purity and beauty of the church. Let us consider it both ways.

Let us apply it to the quarrels that happen, upon any account, among Christians. If thy brother trespass against thee, by grieving thy soul (1Co 8:12), by affronting thee, or putting contempt or abuse upon thee; if he blemish thy good name by false reports or tale-bearing; if he encroach on thy rights, or be any way injurious to thee in thy estate; if he be guilty of any of those trespasses that are specified, Le 6:2,3; if he transgress the laws of justice, charity, or relative duties; these are trespasses against us, and often happen among Christ's disciples, and sometimes, for want of prudence, are of very mischievous consequence. Now observe what is the rule prescribed in this case,

1. Go, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Let this be compared with, and explained by, Le 19:17, Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; that is, "If thou hast conceived a displeasure at thy brother for any injury he hath done thee, do not suffer thy resentments to ripen into a secret malice (like a wound, which is most dangerous when it bleed inwardly), but give vent to them in a mild and grave admonition, let them so spend themselves, and they will expire the sooner; do not go and rail against him behind his back, but thou shalt in any ways reprove him. If he has indeed done thee a considerable wrong, endeavour to make him sensible of it, but let the rebuke be private, between thee and him alone; if thou wouldest convince him, do not expose him, for that will but exasperate him, and make the reproof look like a revenge." this agrees with Pr 25:8,9, "Go not forth hastily to strive, but debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, argue it calmly and amicably; and if he shall hear thee, well and good, thou hast gained thy brother, there is an end of the controversy, and it is a happy end; let no more be said of it, but let the falling out of friends be the renewing of friendship."

2. "If he will not hear thee, if he will not own himself in a fault, nor come to an agreement, yet do not despair, but try what he will say to it, if thou take one or two or more, not only to be witnesses of what passes, but to reason the case further with him; he will be the more likely to hearken to them because they are disinterested; and if reason will rule him, the word of reason in the mouth of two or three witnesses will be better spoken to him" (Plus vident oculi quam oculus--Many eyes see more than one), "and more regarded by him, and perhaps it will influence him to acknowledge his error, and to say, I repent."

3. "If he shall neglect to hear them, and will not refer the matter to their arbitration, then tell it to the church, to the ministers, elders, or other officers, or the most considerable persons in the congregation you belong to, make them the referees to accommodate the matter, and do not presently appeal to the magistrate, or fetch a writ for him." This is fully explained by the apostle (1Co 6:1-20), where he reproves those that went to law before the unjust, and not before the saints (Mt 18:1), and would have the saints to judge those small matters (Mt 18:2) that pertain to this life, Mt 18:3. If you ask, "Who is the church that must be told?" the apostle directs there (Mt 18:5), Is there not a wise man among you? Those of the church that are presumed to be most capable of determining such matters; and he speaks ironically, when he says (Mt 18:4), "Set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church; those, if there be no better, those, rather than suffer an irreconcileable breach between two church members." This rule was then in a special manner requisite, when the civil government was in the hands of such as were not only aliens, but enemies.

4. "If he will not hear the church, will not stand to their award, but persists in the wrong he has done thee, and proceeds to do thee further wrong, let him be to thee as a heathen man, and a publican; take the benefit of the law against him, but let that always be the last remedy; appeal not to the courts of justice till thou hast first tried all other means to compromise the matter in variance. Or thou mayest, if thou wilt, break off thy friendship and familiarity with him; though

thou must by no means study revenge, yet thou mayest choose whether thou wilt have any dealings with him, at least, in such a way as may give him an opportunity of doing the like again. Thou wouldest have healed him, wouldest have preserved his friendship, but he would not, and so has forfeited it." If a man cheat and abuse me once, it is his fault; if twice, it is my own.

If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practised every where, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples!

16 But if he will not hear *thee, then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Let us apply it to scandalous sins, which are an offence to the little ones, of bad example to those that are weak and pliable, and of great grief to those that are weak and timorous. Christ, having taught us to indulge the weakness of our brethren, here cautions us not to indulge their wickedness under pretence of that. Christ, designing to erect a church for himself in the world, here took care for the preservation, 1. Of its purity, that it might have an expulsive faculty, a power to cleanse and clear itself, like a fountain of living waters, which is necessary as long as the net of the gospel brings up both good fish and bad. 2. Of its peace and order, that every member may know his place and duty, and the purity of it may be preserved in a regular way and not tumultuously. Now let us see,

(1.) What is the case supposed? If thy brother trespass against thee.

[1.] "The offender is a brother, one that is in Christian communion, that is baptized, that hears the word, and prays with thee, with whom thou joinest in the worship of God, statedly or occasionally." Note,

Church discipline is for church members. Them that are without God judges, 1Co 5:12,13. When any trespass is done against us, it is good to remember that the trespasser is a brother, which furnishes us with qualifying consideration.

[2.] "The offense is a trespass against thee; if thy brother sin against thee (so the word is), if he do any thing which is offensive to thee as a Christian." Note, A gross sin against God is a trespass against his people, who have a true concern for his honour. Christ and believers have twisted interests; what is done against them Christ takes as done against himself, and what is done against him they cannot but take as done against themselves. The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me, Ps 69:9.

(2.) What is to be done in this case. We have here,

[1.] The rules prescribed, Mt 18:15-17. Proceed in this method:

First, "Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Do not stay till he comes to thee, but go to him, as the physician visits the patient, and the shepherd goes after the lost sheep." Note, We should think no pains too much to take for the recovering of a sinner to repentance. "Tell him his fault, remind him of what he has done, and of the evil of it, show him his abominations." Note, People are loth to see their faults, and have need to be told of them. Though the fact is plain, and the fault too, yet they must be put together with application. Great sins often amuse conscience, and for the present stupify and silence it; and there is need of help to awaken it. David's own heart smote him, when he had cut off Saul's skirt, and when he had numbered the people; but (which is very strange) we do not find that it smote him in the matter of Uriah, till Nathan told him, Thou art the man.

"Tell him his fault, elenxon auton--argue the case with him" (so the word signifies); "and do it with reason and argument, not with passion." Where the fault is plain and great, the person proper for us to deal with, and we have an opportunity for it, and there is no apparent danger of doing more hurt than good, we must with meekness and faithfulness tell people of what is amiss in them. Christian reproof is an ordinance of Christ for the bringing of sinners to repentance, and must be managed as an ordinance. "Let the reproof be private, between thee and him alone; that it may appear you seek not his reproach, but his repentance." Note, It is a good rule, which should ordinarily be observed among Christians, not to speak of our brethren's faults to others, till we have first spoken of them to themselves, this would make less reproaching and more reproving; that is, less sin committed, and more duty done. It will be likely to work upon an offender, when he sees his reprover concerned not only for his salvation, in telling him his fault, but for his reputation in telling him of it privately.

"If he shall hear thee" --that is, "heed thee--if he be wrought upon by the reproof, it is well, thou hast gained thy brother; thou hast helped to save him from sin and ruin, and it will be thy credit and comfort," Jam 5:19,20. Note, The converting of a soul is the winning of that soul (Pr 11:30); and we should covet it, and labour after it, as gain to us; and, if the loss of a soul be a great loss, the gain of a soul is sure no small gain.

Secondly, If that doth not prevail, then take with thee one or two more, Mt 18:16. Note, We must not be weary of well-doing, though we see not presently the good success of it. "If he will not hear thee, yet do not give him up as in a desperate case; say not, It will be to no purpose to deal with him any further; but go on in the use of other means; even those that harden their necks must be often reproved, and those that oppose themselves instructed in meekness." In work of this kind we must travail in birth again (Ga 4:19); and it is after many pains and throes that the child is born.

"Take with thee one or two more; 1. To assist thee; they may speak some pertinent convincing word which thou didst not think of, and may manage the matter with more prudence than thou didst." note, Christians should see their need of help in doing good, and pray in the aid one of another; as in other things, so in giving reproofs, that the duty may be done, and may be done well. 2. "To affect him; he will be the more likely to be humbled for his fault, when he sees it witnessed against by two or three." De 19:15. Note, Those should think it high time to repent and reform, who see their misconduct become a general offence and scandal. Though in such a world as this it is rare to find one good whom all men speak well of, yet it is more rare to find one good whom all men speak ill of. 3. "To be witnesses of his conduct, in case the matter should afterward be brought before the church." None should come under the censure of the church as obstinate and contumacious, till it be very well proved that they are so.

Thirdly, If he neglect to hear them, and will not be humbled, then tell it to the church, Mt 18:17. There are some stubborn spirits to whom the likeliest means of conviction prove ineffectual; yet such must not be given over as incurable, but let the matter be made more public, and further help called in. Note, 1. Private admonitions must always go before public censures; if gentler methods will do the work, those that are more rough and severe must not be used, Tit 3:10. Those that will be reasoned out of their sins, need not be shamed out of them. Let God's work be done effectually, but with as little noise as may be; his kingdom comes with power, but not with observation. But, 2. Where private admonition does not prevail, there public censure must take place. The church must receive the complaints of the offended, and rebuke the sins of the offenders, and judge between them, after an impartial enquiry made into the merits of the cause.

Tell it to the church. It is a thousand pities that this appointment of Christ, which was designed to end differences, and remove offences, should itself be so much a matter of debate, and occasion differences

and offences, through the corruption of men's hearts. What church must be told--is the great question. The civil magistrate, say some; The Jewish sanhedrim then in being, say others; but by what follows, Mt 18:18, it is plain that he means a Christian church, which, though not yet formed, was now in the embryo. "Tell it to the church, that particular church in the communion of which the offender lives; make the matter known to those of that congregation who are by consent appointed to receive informations of that kind. Tell it to the guides and governors of the church, the minister or ministers, the elders or deacons, or (if such the constitution of the society be) tell it to the representatives or heads of the congregation, or to all the members of it; let them examine the matter and, if they find the complaint frivolous and groundless, let them rebuke the complainant; if they find it just, let them rebuke the offender, and call him to repentance, and this will be likely to put an edge and an efficacy upon the reproof, because given," 1. "With greater solemnity," and, 2. "With greater authority." It is an awful thing to receive a reproof from a church, from a minister, a reprover by office; and therefore it is the more regarded by such as pay any deference to an institution of Christ and his ambassadors.

Fourthly, "If he neglect to hear the church, if he slight the admonition, and will neither be ashamed of his faults, nor amend them, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and publican; let him be cast out of the communion of the church, secluded from special ordinances, degraded from the dignity of a church member, let him be put under disgrace, and let the members of the society be warned to withdraw from him, that he may be ashamed of his sin, and they may not be infected by it, or made chargeable with it." Those who put contempt on the orders and rules of a society, and bring reproach upon it, forfeit the honours and privileges of it, and are justly laid aside till they repent and submit, and reconcile themselves to it again. Christ has appointed this method for the vindicating of the church's honour, the preserving of its purity, and the conviction and reformation of those that are scandalous. But observe, he doth not

say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The directions given to the church of Corinth concerning the incestuous person, agree with the rules here; he must be taken away from among them (1Co 5:2), must be delivered to Satan; for if he be cast out of Christ's kingdom, he is looked upon as belonging to Satan's kingdom; they must not keep company with him, Mt 18:11,13. But when by this he is humbled and reclaimed, he must be welcomed into communion again, and all shall be well.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect
to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.
18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in
heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Here is a warrant signed for the ratification of all the church's proceedings according to these rules, Mt 18:18. What was said before to Peter is here said to all the disciples, and in them to all the faithful office-bearers in the church, to the world's end. While ministers preach the word of Christ faithfully, and in their government of the church strictly adhere to his laws (clave non errante--the key not turning the wrong way), they may be assured that he will own them, and stand by them, and will ratify what they say and do, so that it shall be taken as said and done by himself. He will own them,

First, In their sentence of suspension; Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. If the censures of the church duly follow the institution of Christ, his judgments will follow the censures of the church, his spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all other, such as the rejected Jews fell under (Ro 11:8), a spirit of slumber; for Christ will not suffer his own ordinances to be trampled upon, but will say amen to the righteous sentences which the church passes on obstinate offenders. How light soever proud scorners may make of the censures of the church, let them know that they are confirmed in the court of heaven; and it is in vain for them to appeal to that court, for judgment is there already given against them. They that are shut out from the congregation of the righteous now shall

not stand in it in the great day, Ps 1:5. Christ will not own those as his, nor receive them to himself, whom the church has duly delivered to Satan; but, if through error or envy the censures of the church be unjust, Christ will graciously find those who are so cast out, Joh 9:34,35.

Secondly, In their sentence of absolution; Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Note, 1. No church censures bind so fast, but that, upon the sinner's repentance and reformation, they may and must be loosed again. Sufficient is the punishment which has attained its end, and the offender must then be forgiven and comforted, 2Co 2:6. There is no unpassable gulf fixed but that between hell and heaven. 2. Those who, upon their repentance, are received by the church into communion again may take the comfort of their absolution in heaven, if their hearts be upright with God. As suspension is for the terror of the obstinate, so absolution is for the encouragement of the penitent. St. Paul speaks in the person of Christ, when he saith, To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also, 2Co 2:10.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Now it is a great honour which Christ here puts upon the church, that he will condescend not only to take cognizance of their sentences, but to confirm them; and in the following verses we have two things laid down as ground of this.

(a) God's readiness to answer the church's prayers (Mt 18:19); If two of you shall agree harmoniously, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them. Apply this,

[1.] In general, to all the requests of the faithful praying seed of Jacob; they shall not seek God's face in vain. Many promises we have in scripture of a gracious answer to the prayers of faith, but this gives a particular encouragement to the joint-prayer; "the requests which two of you agree in, much more which many agree in." No law of heaven limits the number of petitioners. Note, Christ has been pleased to put an honour upon, and to allow a special

efficacy in, the joint-prayers of the faithful, and the common supplications they make to God. If they join in the same prayer, if they meet by appointment to come together to the throne of grace on some special errand, or, though at a distance, agree in some particular matter of prayer, they shall speed well. Besides the general regard God has to the prayers of the saints, he is particularly pleased with their union and communion in those prayers. See 2Ch 5:13,Ac 4:31.

[2.] In particular, to those requests that are put up to God about binding and loosing; to which this promise seems more especially to refer. Observe, First, That the power of church discipline is not here lodged in the hand of a single person, but two, at least, are supposed to be concerned in it. When the incestuous Corinthian was to be cast out, the church was gathered together (1Co 5:4), and it was a punishment inflicted of many, 2Co 2:6. In an affair of such importance, two are better than one, and in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. Secondly, It is good to see those who have the management of church discipline, agreeing in it. Heats and animosities, among those whose work it is to remove offences, will be the greatest offence of all. Thirdly, Prayer must evermore go along with church discipline. Pass no sentence, which you cannot in faith ask God to confirm. The binding and loosing spoken of (Mt 16:19) was done by preaching, this by praying. Thus the whole power of gospel ministers is resolved into the word and prayer, to which they must wholly give themselves. He doth not say, "If you shall agree to sentence and decree a thing, it shall be done" (as if ministers were judges and lords); but, "If you agree to ask it of God, from him you shall obtain it." Prayer must go along with all our endeavours for the conversion of sinners; see Jam 5:16. Fourthly, The unanimous petitions of the church of God, for the ratification of their just censures, shall be heard in heaven, and obtain an answer; "It shall be done, it shall be bound and loosed in heaven; God will set his fiat to the appeals and applications you make to him." If Christ (who here speaks as one having authority) say, "It shall be done," we may be assured that it is done, though we see not the effect in the way that we look for it. God doth especially own and accept us, when we are praying for those that have

offended him and us. The Lord turned the captivity of Job, not when he prayed for himself, but when he prayed for his friends who had trespassed against him.

(b) The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians, Mt 18:20. Every believer has the presence of Christ with him; but the promise here refers to the meetings where two or three are gathered in his name, not only for discipline, but for religious worship, or any act of Christian communion. Assemblies of Christians for holy purposes are hereby appointed, directed, and encouraged.

[1.] They are hereby appointed; the church of Christ in the world exists most visibly in religious assemblies; it is the will of Christ that these should be set up, and kept up, for the honour of God, the edification of men, and the preserving of a face of religion upon the world. When God intends special answers to prayer, he calls for a solemn assembly, Joe 2:15,16. If there be no liberty and opportunity for large and numerous assemblies, yet then it is the will of God that two or three should gather together, to show their good-will to the great congregation. Note, When we cannot do what we would in religion, we must do as we can, and God will accept us.

[2.] They are hereby directed to gather together in Christ's name. In the exercise of church discipline, they must come together in the name of Christ, 1Co 5:4. That name gives to what they do an authority on earth, and an acceptableness in heaven. In meeting or worship, we must have an eye to Christ; must come together by virtue of his warrant and appointment, in token of our relation to him, professing faith in him, and in communion with all that in every place call upon him. When we come together, to worship God in a dependence upon the Spirit and grace of Christ as Mediator for assistance, and upon his merit and righteousness as Mediator for acceptance, having an actual regard to him as our Way to the Father, and our Advocate with the Father, then we are met together in his name.

[3.] They are hereby encouraged with an assurance of the presence of Christ; There am I in the midst of them. By his common presence he is in all places, as God; but this is a promise of his special presence. Where his saints are, his sanctuary is, and there he will dwell; it is his rest (Ps 132:14), it is his walk (Re 2:1); he is in the midst of them, to quicken and strengthen them, to refresh and comfort them, as the sun in the midst of the universe. He is in the midst of them, that is, in their hearts; it is a spiritual presence, the presence of Christ's Spirit with their spirits, that is here intended. There am I, not only I will be there, but I am there; as if he came first, is ready before them, they shall find him there; he repeated this promise at parting (Mt 28:20), Lo, I am with you always. Note, The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians is promised, and may in faith be prayed for and depended on; There am I. This is equivalent to the Shechinah, or special presence of God in the tabernacle and temple of old, Ex 40:34,2Ch 5:14.

Though but two or three are met together, Christ is among them; this is an encouragement to the meeting of a few, when it is either, First, of choice. Besides the secret worship performed by particular persons, and the public services of the whole congregation, there may be occasion sometimes for two or three to come together, either for mutual assistance in conference or joint assistance in prayer, not in contempt of public worship, but in concurrence with it; there Christ will be present. Or, Secondly, By constraint; when there are not more than two or three to come together, or, if there be, they dare not, for fear of the Jews, yet Christ will be in the midst of them, for it is not the multitude, but the faith and sincere devotion, of the worshippers, that invites the presence of Christ; and though there be but two or three, the smallest number that can be, yet, it Christ make one among them, who is the principal one, their meeting is as honourable and comfortable as if they were two or three thousand.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

On this passage—so full of sublime encouragement to Christian union in action and prayer—observe, first, the connection in which

it stands. Our Lord had been speaking of church meetings before which the obstinate perversity of a brother was in the last resort to be brought, and whose decision was to be final—such honor does the Lord of the Church put upon its lawful assemblies. But not these assemblies only does He deign to countenance and honor. For even two uniting to bring any matter before Him shall find that they are not alone, for My Father is with them, says Jesus. Next, observe the premium here put upon union in prayer. As this cannot exist with fewer than two, so by letting it down so low as that number, He gives the utmost conceivable encouragement to union in this exercise. But what kind of union? Not an agreement merely to pray in concert, but to pray for some definite thing. "As touching anything which they shall ask," says our Lord—anything they shall agree to ask in concert. At the same time, it is plain He had certain things at that moment in His eye, as most fitting and needful subjects for such concerted prayer. The Twelve had been "falling out by the way" about the miserable question of precedence in their Master's kingdom, and this, as it stirred their corruptions, had given rise—or at least was in danger of giving rise—to "offenses" perilous to their souls. The Lord Himself had been directing them how to deal with one another about such matters. "But now shows He unto them a more excellent way." Let them bring all such matters—yea, and everything whatsoever by which either their own loving relationship to each other, or the good of His kingdom at large, might be affected—to their Father in heaven; and if they be but agreed in petitioning Him about that thing, it shall be done for them of His Father which is in heaven. But further, it is not merely union in prayer for the same thing—for that might be with very jarring ideas of the thing to be desired—but it is to symphonious prayer, the prayer by kindred spirits, members of one family, servants of one Lord, constrained by the same love, fighting under one banner, cheered by assurances of the same victory; a living and loving union, whose voice in the divine ear is as the sound of many waters. Accordingly, what they ask "on earth" is done for them, says Jesus, "of My Father which is in heaven." Not for nothing does He say, "of MY FATHER"—not "YOUR FATHER"; as is evident from what follows: "For where two or three are gathered together unto My name"—the "My" is emphatic, "there am I in the midst of

them." As His name would prove a spell to draw together many clusters of His dear disciples, so if there should be but two or three, that will attract Himself down into the midst of them; and related as He is to both the parties, the petitioners and the Petitioned—to the one on earth by the tie of His assumed flesh, and to the other in heaven by the tie of His eternal Spirit—their symphonious prayers on earth would thrill upward through Him to heaven, be carried by Him into the holiest of all, and so reach the Throne. Thus will He be the living Conductor of the prayer upward, and the answer downward.

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

Peter asked how many times Jesus' followers should forgive before taking the severe action that Jesus had just outlined. Jesus' reply shows that the severe action was not intended to be an alternative to forgiveness. Believers do not take action against offenders out of spite, but out of a concern for the offenders' spiritual good. Regardless of how many times offenders do them wrong, believers must still forgive them (Mat_18:21-22).

Peter's question concerning this matter (Mt 18:21); Lord, how oft shall my brother trespass against me, and I forgive him? Will it suffice to do it seven times?

1. He takes it for granted that he must forgive; Christ had before taught his disciples this lesson (Mt 6:14,15), and Peter has not forgotten it. He knows that he must not only not bear a grudge against his brother, or meditate revenge, but be as good a friend as ever, and forget the injury.

2. He thinks it is a great matter to forgive till seven times; he means not seven times a day, as Christ said (Lu 17:4), but seven times in

his life; supposing that if a man had any way abused him seven times, though he were ever so desirous to be reconciled, he might then abandon his society, and have no more to do with him. Perhaps Peter had an eye to Pr 24:16. A just man falleth seven times; or to the mention of three transgressions, and four, which God would no more pass by, Am 2:1. Note, There is a proneness in our corrupt nature to stint ourselves in that which is good, and to be afraid of doing too much in religion, particularly of forgiving too much, though we have so much forgiven us.

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

that is, so long as it shall be needed and sought: you are never to come to the point of refusing forgiveness sincerely asked. (See on Lu1 7:3).

Christ's direct answer to Peter's question; I say not unto thee, Until seven times (he never intended to set up any such bounds), but, Until seventy times seven; a certain number for an indefinite one, but a great one. Note, It does not look well for us to keep count of the offences done against us by our brethren. There is something of ill-nature in scoring up the injuries we forgive, as if we would allow ourselves to be revenged when the measure is full. God keeps an account (De 32:34), because he is the Judge, and vengeance is his; but we must not, lest we be found stepping into his throne. It is necessary to the preservation of peace, both within and without, to pass by injuries, without reckoning how often; to forgive, and forget. God multiplies his pardons, and so should we, Ps 77:38,40. It intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive injuries, and should accustom ourselves to it till it becomes habitual.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

I. Christ's direct answer to Peter's question; I say not unto thee, Until seven times (he never intended to set up any such bounds), but, Until seventy times seven; a certain number for an indefinite one, but a great one. Note, It does not look well for us to keep count of the offences done against us by our brethren. There is something of ill-nature in scoring up the injuries we forgive, as if we would allow ourselves to be revenged when the measure is full. God keeps an account (De 32:34), because he is the Judge, and vengeance is his; but we must not, lest we be found stepping into his throne. It is necessary to the preservation of peace, both within and without, to pass by injuries, without reckoning how often; to forgive, and forget. God multiplies his pardons, and so should we, Ps 77:38,40. It intimates that we should make it our constant practice to forgive injuries, and should accustom ourselves to it till it becomes habitual.

II. A further discourse of our Saviour's, by way of parable, to show the necessity of forgiving the injuries that are done to us. Parables are of use, not only for the pressing of Christian duties; for they make and leave an impression. The parable is a comment upon the fifth petition of the Lord's prayer, Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Those, and those only, may expect to be forgiven of God, who forgive their brethren. The parable represents the kingdom of heaven, that is, the church, and the administration of the gospel dispensation in it. The church is God's family, it is his court; there he dwells, there he rules. God is our master; his servants we are, at least in profession and obligation. In general, the parable intimates how much provocation God has from his family on earth, and how untoward his servants are.

There are three things in the parable.

1 The master's wonderful clemency to his servant who was indebted to him; he forgave him ten thousand talents, out of pure compassion to him, Mt 18:23-27. Where observe,

(a) Every sin we commit is a debt to God; not like a debt to an equal, contracted by buying or borrowing, but to a superior; like a debt to a prince when a recognizance is forfeited, or a penalty incurred by a breech of the law or a breach of the peace; like the debt of a servant to his master, by withholding his service, wasting his lord's goods, breaking his indentures, and incurring the penalty. We are all debtors; we owe satisfaction, and are liable to the process of the law.

(b) There is an account kept of these debts, and we must shortly be reckoned with for them. This king would take account of his servants. God now reckons with us by our own consciences; conscience is an auditor for God in the soul, to call us to account, and to account with us. One of the first questions that an awakened Christian asks, is, How much owest thou unto my Lord? And unless it be bribed, it will tell the truth, and not write fifty for a hundred. There is another day of reckoning coming, when these accounts will be called over, and either passed or disallowed, and nothing but the blood of Christ will balance the account.

(c) The debt of sin is a very great debt; and some are more in debt, by reason of sin, than others. When he began to reckon, one of the first defaulters appeared to owe ten thousand talents. There is no evading the enquiries of divine justice; your sin will be sure to find you out. The debt was ten thousand talents, a vast sum, amounting by computation to one million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds sterling; a king's ransom or a kingdom's subsidy, more likely than a servant's debt; see what our sins are, [1.] For the heinousness of their nature; they are talents, the greatest denomination that ever was used in the account of money or weight. Every sin is the load of a talent, a talent of lead, this is wickedness, Zec 5:7,8. The trusts committed to us, as stewards of the grace of God, are each of them a talent (Mt 25:15), a talent of gold, and for every one of them buried, much more for every one of them wasted, we are a talent in debt, and this raises the account. [2.] For the vastness of their number; they are ten thousand, a myriad, more than the hairs on our head, Ps 40:12. Who can understand the number of his errors, or tell how oft he offends? Ps 19:12.

(d) The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able to pay it; He had not to pay. Sinners are insolvent debtors; the scripture, which concludes all under sin, is a statute of bankruptcy against us all. Silver and gold would not pay our debt, Ps 49:6,7. Sacrifice and offering would not do it; our good works are but God's work in us, and cannot make satisfaction; we are without strength, and cannot help ourselves.

(e) If God should deal with us in strict justice; we should be condemned as insolvent debtors, and God might exact the debt by glorifying himself in our utter ruin. Justice demands satisfaction, Currat, lex--Let the sentence of the law be executed. The servant had contracted this debt by his wastefulness and wilfulness, and therefore might justly be left to lie by it. His lord commanded him to be sold, as a bond-slave into the galleys, sold to grind in the prison-house; his wife and children to be sold, and all that he had, and payment to be made. See here what every sin deserves; this is the wages of sin.

[1.] To be sold. Those that sell themselves to work wickedness, must be sold, to make satisfaction. Captives to sin are captives to wrath. He that is sold for a bond-slave is deprived of all his comforts, and has nothing left him but his life, that he may be sensible of his miseries; which is the case of damned sinners.

[2.] Thus he would have payment to be made, that is, something done towards it; though it is impossible that the sale of one so worthless should amount to the payment of so great a debt. By the damnation of sinners divine justice will be to eternity in the satisfying, but never satisfied.

(f) Convinced sinners cannot but humble themselves before God, and pray for mercy. The servant, under this charge, and this doom, fell down at the feet of his royal master, and worshipped him; or, as some copies read it, he besought him; his address was very

submissive and very importunate; Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all, Mt 18:26. The servant knew before that he was so much in debt, and yet was under no concern about it, till he was called to an account. Sinners are commonly careless about the pardon of their sins, till they come under the arrests of some awakening word, some startling providence, or approaching death, and then, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Mic 6:6. How easily, how quickly, can God bring the proudest sinner to his feet; Ahab to his sackcloth, Manasseh to his prayers, Pharaoh to his confessions, Judas to his restitution, Simon Magus to his supplication, Belshazzar and Felix to their tremblings. The stoutest heart will fail, when God sets the sins in order before it. This servant doth not deny the debt, nor seek evasions, nor go about to abscond.

But,

[1.] He begs time; Have patience with me. Patience and forbearance are a great favour, but it is folly to think that these alone will save us; reprieves are not pardons. Many are borne with, who are not thereby brought to repentance (Ro 2:4), and then their being borne with does them no kindness.

[2.] He promises payment; Have patience awhile, and I will pay thee all. Note, It is the folly of many who are under convictions of sin, to imagine that they can make God satisfaction for the wrong they have done him; as those who, like a compounding bankrupt, would discharge the debt, by giving their first-born for their transgressions (Mic 6:7), who go about to establish their own righteousness, Ro 10:3. He that had nothing to pay with (Mt 18:25) fancied he could pay all. See how close pride sticks, even to awakened sinners; they are convinced, but not humbled.

(g) The God of infinite mercy is very ready, out of pure compassion, to forgive the sins of those that humble themselves before him (Mt 18:27); The lord of that servant, when he might justly have ruined him, mercifully released him; and, since he could not be satisfied by

the payment of the debt, he would be glorified by the pardon of it. The servant's prayer was, Have patience with me; the master's grant is a discharge in full. Note,

[1.] The pardon of sin is owing to the mercy of God, to his tender mercy (Lu 1:77,78); He was moved with compassion. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself; he has mercy because he will have mercy. God looked with pity on mankind in general, because miserable, and sent his Son to be a Surety for them; he looks with pity on particular penitents, because sensible of their misery (their hearts broken and contrite), and accepts them in the Beloved.

[2.] There is forgiveness with God for the greatest sins, if they be repented of. Though the debt was vastly great, he forgave it all, Mt 18:32. Though our sins be very numerous and very heinous, yet, upon gospel terms, they may be pardoned.

[3.] The forgiving of the debt is the loosing of the debtor; He loosed him. The obligation is cancelled, the judgment vacated; we never walk at liberty till our sins are forgiven. But observe, Though he discharged him from the penalty as a debtor, he did not discharge him from his duty as a servant. The pardon of sin doth not slacken, but strengthen, our obligations to obedience; and we must reckon it a favour that God is pleased to continue such wasteful servants as we have been in such a gainful service as his is, and should therefore deliver us, that we might serve him, Lu 1:74. I am thy servant, for thou hast loosed my bonds.

2 The servant's unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord's clemency toward him, Mt 18:28-30. This represents the sin of those who, though they are not unjust in demanding that which is not their own, yet are rigorous and unmerciful in demanding that which is their own, to the utmost of right, which sometimes proves a real wrong. Summum jus summa injuria--Push a claim to an extremity, and it becomes a wrong. To exact satisfaction for debts of injury, which tends neither to

reparation nor to the public good, but purely for revenge, though the law may allow it, in terrorem--in order to strike terror, and for the hardness of men's hearts, yet savours not of a Christian spirit. To sue for money-debts, when the debt or cannot possibly pay them, and so let him perish in prison, argues a greater love of money, and a less love of our neighbour, than we ought to have, Ne 5:7.

See here,

(a) How small the debt was, how very small, compared with the ten thousand talents which his lord forgave him; He owed him a hundred pence, about three pounds and half a crown of our money. Note, Offences done to men are nothing to those which are committed against God. Dishonours done to a man like ourselves are but as peace, motes, gnats; but dishonours done to God are as talents, beams, camels. Not that therefore we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but therefore we should make light of our neighbour's wronging us, and not aggravate it, or study revenge. David was unconcerned as the indignities done to him; I, as a deaf man, heard not; but laid much to heart the sins committed against God; for them, rivers of tears ran down his eyes.

(b) How severe the demand was; He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat. Proud and angry men think, if the matter of their demand be just, that will bear them out, though the manner of it be ever so cruel and unmerciful; but it will not hold. What needed all this violence? The debt might have been demanded without taking the debtor by the throat; without sending for a writ, or setting the bailiff upon him. How lordly is this man's carriage, and yet how base and servile is his spirit! If he had been himself going to prison for his debt to his lord, his occasions would have been so pressing, that he might have had some pretence for going to this extremity in requiring his own; but frequently pride and malice prevail more to make men severe than the most urgent necessity would do.

(c) How submissive the debtor was; His fellow servant, though his equal, yet knowing how much he lay at his mercy, fell down at his

feet, and humbled himself to him for this trifling debt, as much as he did to his lord for that great debt; for the borrower is servant to the lender, Pr 22:7. Note, Those who cannot pay their debts ought to be very respectful to their creditors, and not only give them good words, but do them all the good offices they possibly can: they must not be angry at those who claim their own, nor speak ill of them for it, no, not though they do it in a rigorous manner, but in that case leave it to God to plead their cause. The poor man's request is, Have patience with me; he honestly confesses the debt, and puts not his creditor to the charge of proving it, only begs time. Note, Forbearance, though it be no acquittance, is sometimes a piece of needful and laudable charity. As we must not be hard, so we must not be hasty, in our demands, but think how long God bears with us.

(d) How implacable and furious the creditor was (Mt 18:30); He would not have patience with him, would not hearken to his fair promise, but without mercy cast him into prison. How insolently did he trample upon one as good as himself, that submitted to him! How cruelly did he use one that had done him no harm, and though it would be no advantage to himself! In this, as in a glass, unmerciful creditors may see their own faces, who take pleasure in nothing more than to swallow up and destroy (2Sa 20:19), and glory in having their poor debtors' bones.

(e) How much concerned the rest of the servants were; They were very sorry (Mt 18:31), sorry for the creditor's cruelty, and for the debtor's calamity. Note, The sins and sufferings of our fellow-servants should be a matter of grief and trouble to us. It is sad that any of our brethren should either make themselves beast of prey, by cruelty and barbarity; or be made beasts of slavery, by the inhuman usage of those who have power over them. To see a fellow-servant, either raging like a bear or trampled on like a worm, cannot but occasion great regret to all that have any jealousy for the honour either of their nature of their religion. See with what eye Solomon looked both upon the tears of the oppressed, and the power of the oppressors, Ec 4:1.

(f) How notice of it was brought to the master; They came, and told their lord. They durst not reprove their fellow-servant for it, he was so unreasonable and outrageous (let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than such a fool in his folly); but they went to their lord, and besought him to appear for the oppressed against the oppressor. Note, That which gives us occasion for sorrow, should give us occasion for prayer. Let our complaints both of the wickedness of the wicked and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him.

3. The master's just resentment of the cruelty his servant was guilty of. If the servants took it so ill, much more would the master, whose compassions are infinitely above ours. Now observe here,

(a) How he reproved his servant's cruelty (Mt 18:32,33); O thou wicked servant. Note, Unmercifulness is wickedness, it is great wickedness.

[1.] He upbraids him with the mercy he had found with his master; I forgive thee all that debt. Those that will use God's favours, shall never be upbraided with them, but those that abuse them, may expect it, Mt 11:20. Consider, It was all that debt, that great debt. Note, The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy: we should think how much has been forgiven us, Lu 7:47.

[2.] He thence shows him the obligation he was under to be merciful to his fellow-servant; Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? Note, It is justly expected, that such as have received mercy, should show mercy. Dat ille veniam facile, cui venia est opus--He who needs forgiveness, easily bestows it. Senec. Agamemn. He shows him, First, That he should have been more compassionate to the distress of his fellow servant, because he had himself experienced the same distress. What we have had the feeling of ourselves, we can the better have the fellow feeling of with our brethren. The Israelites knew the heart of a stranger, for they were strangers; and this servant should have better known the heart of an arrested debtor, than to have been thus hard upon such a one. Secondly, That he should have been more

conformable to the example of his master's tenderness, having himself experienced it, so much to his advantage. Note, The comfortable sense of pardoning mercy tends much to the disposing of our hearts to forgive our brethren. It was in the close of the day o atonement that the jubilee trumpet sounded a release of debts (Le 25:9); for we must have compassion on our brethren, as God has on us.

(b) How he revoked his pardon and cancelled the acquittance, so that the judgment against him revived (Mt 18:34); He delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. Though the wickedness was very great, his lord laid upon him no other punishment than the payment of his own debt. Note, Those that will not come up to the terms of the gospel need be no more miserable than to be left open to the law, and to let that have its course against them. See how the punishment answers the sin; he that would not forgive shall not be forgiven; He delivered him to the tormentors; the utmost he could do to his fellow servant was but to cast him into prison, but he was himself delivered to the tormentors. Note, The power of God's wrath to ruin us, goes far beyond the utmost extent of any creature's strength and wrath. The reproaches and terrors of his own conscience would be his tormentors, for that is a worm that dies not; devils, the executioners of God's wrath, that are sinners' tempters now, will be their tormentors for ever. He was sent to Bridewell till he should pay all. Note, Our debts to God are never compounded; either all is forgiven or all is exacted; glorified saints in heaven are pardoned all, through Christ's complete satisfaction; damned sinners in hell are paying all, that is, are punished for all. The offence done to God by sin is in point of honour, which cannot be compounded for without such a diminution as the case will by no means admit, and therefore, some way or other, by the sinner or by his surety, it must be satisfied.

Lastly, Here is the application of the whole parable, (Mt 18:35); So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you. The title Christ here gives to God was made use of, Mt 18:19, in a comfortable promise; It shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;

here it is made use of in a terrible threatening. If God's governing be fatherly, it follows thence, that it is righteous, but it does not therefore follow that it is not rigorous, or that under his government we must not be kept in awe by the fear of the divine wrath. When we pray to God as our Father in heaven, we are taught to ask for the forgiveness of sins, as we forgive our debtors. Observe here,

1 The duty of forgiving; we must from our hearts forgive. Note, We do not forgive our offending brother aright, nor acceptably, if we do not forgive from the heart; for that is it that God looks at. No malice must be harboured there, nor ill will to any person, one or another; no projects of revenge must be hatched there, nor desires of it, as there are in many who outwardly appear peaceable and reconciled. Yet this is not enough; we must from the heart desire and seek the welfare even of those that have offended us.

2 The danger of not forgiving; So shall your heavenly Father do.

(a) This is not intended to teach us that God reverses his pardons to any, but that he denies them to those that are unqualified for them, according to the tenour of the gospel; though having seemed to be humbled, like Ahab, they thought themselves, and others thought them, in a pardoned state, and they made bold with the comfort of it. Intimations enough we have in scripture of the forfeiture of pardons, for caution to the presumptuous; and yet we have security enough of the continuance of them, for comfort to those that are sincere, but timorous; that the one may fear, and the other may hope. Those that do not forgive their brother's trespasses, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore that which is taken away is only what they seemed to have, Lu 8:18.

(b) This is intended to teach us, that they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy, Jam 2:13. It is indispensably necessary to pardon and peace, that we not only do justly, but love mercy. It is an essential part of that religion which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father, of that wisdom from above, which is gentle, and easy to be entreated. Look how they will

answer it another day, who, though they bear the Christian name, persist in the most rigorous and unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the strictest laws of Christ might be dispensed with for the gratifying of their unbridled passions; and so they curse themselves every time they say the Lord's prayer.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.
29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.
30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.
31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.
32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:
33 shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?
34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.
35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matthew-19

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

1 And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan;
2 and great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

He left Galilee. There he had been brought up, and had spent the greatest part of his life in that remote despicable part of the country; it was only upon occasion of the feasts, that he came up to Jerusalem, and manifested himself there; and, we may suppose, that, having no constant residence there when he did come, his preaching and miracles were the more observable and acceptable.

But it was an instance of his humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he appeared in a mean state, that he would go under the character of a Galilean, a north-countryman, the least polite and refined part of the nation. Most of Christ's sermons hitherto had been preached, and most of his miracles wrought, in Galilee; but now, having finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and it was his final farewell; for (unless his passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee, Lu 17:11, was after this, which yet was but a visit in transitu--as he passed through the country) he never came to Galilee again till after his resurrection, which makes this transition very remarkable. Christ did not take his leave of Galilee till he had done his work there, and then he departed thence. Note, As Christ's faithful ministers are not taken out of the world, so they are not removed from any place, till they have finished their testimony in that place, Re 11:7. This is very comfortable to those that follow not their own humours, but God's providence, in their removals, that their sayings shall be finished before they depart. And who would desire to continue any where longer than he has work to do for God there?

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?
4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female,
5 and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife:
and they twain shall be one flesh?

hrist's answer to this question; though it was proposed to tempt him, yet, being a case of conscience, and a weighty one, he gave a full answer to it, not a direct one, but an effectual one; laying down such principles as undeniably prove that such arbitrary divorces as were then in use, which made the matrimonial bond so very precarious, were by no means lawful. Christ himself would not give the rule without a reason, nor lay down his judgment without scripture proof to support it. Now his argument is this; "If husband and wife are by the will and appointment of God joined together in the strictest and closest union, then they are not to be lightly, and upon every occasion, separated; if the know be sacred, it cannot be

easily untied." Now, to prove that there is such a union between man and wife, he urges three things.

The creation of Adam and Eve, concerning which he appeals to their own knowledge of the scriptures; Have ye not read? It is some advantage in arguing, to deal with those that own, and have read, the scriptures; Ye have read (but have not considered) that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, Ge 1:27,5:2. Note, It will be of great use to us often to think of our creation, how and by whom, what and for what, we were created. He made them male and female, one female for one male; so that Adam could not divorce his wife, and take another, for there was no other to take. It likewise intimated an inseparable union between them; Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself, and contradict the manifest indications of her creation. Christ hints briefly at this, but, in appealing to what they had read, he refers them to the original record, where it is observable, that, though the rest of the living creatures were made male and female, yet it is not said so concerning any of them, but only concerning mankind; because between man and woman the conjunction is rational, and intended for nobler purposes than merely the pleasing of sense and the preserving of a seed; and it is therefore more close and firm than that between male and female among the brutes, who were not capable of being such help--meets for one another as Adam and Ever were. Hence the manner of expression is somewhat singular (Ge 1:27), In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them; him and them are used promiscuously; being one by creation before they were two, when they became one again by marriage-covenant, that oneness could not but be closer and indissoluble.

The fundamental law of marriage, which is, that a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, Mt 19:5. The relation between husband and wife is nearer than that between parents and children; now, if the filial relation may not easily be violated, much less may the marriage union be broken. May a child desert his parents, or may a parent abandon his children, for any cause, for every cause? No, by no means. Much less may a husband put away his wife, betwixt whom, though not by nature, yet by divine appointment, the relation is nearer, and the bond of union stronger, than between parents and children; for that is in a great

measure superseded by marriage, when a man must leave his parents, to cleave to his wife. See here the power of a divine institution, that the result of it is a union stronger than that which results from the highest obligations of nature.

. The nature of the marriage contract; it is a union of persons; They twain shall be one flesh, so that (Mt 19:6) they are no more twain, but one flesh. A man's children are pieces of himself, but his wife is himself. As the conjugal union is closer than that between parents and children, so it is in a manner equivalent to that between one member and another in the natural body. As this is a reason why husbands should love their wives, so it is a reason why they should not put away their wives, for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, or cut it off, but nourishes and cherishes it, and does all he can to preserve it. They two shall be one, therefore there must be but one wife, for God made but one Eve for one Adam, Mal 2:15.

rom hence he infers, What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Note,

a) Husband and wife are of God's joining together; synezeuxen--he hath yoked them together, so the word is, and it is very significant. God himself instituted the relation between husband and wife in the state of innocence. Marriage and the sabbath are the most ancient of divine ordinances. Though marriage be not peculiar to the church, but common to the world, yet, being stamped with a divine institution, and here ratified by our Lord Jesus, it ought to be managed after a godly sort, and sanctified by the word of God, and prayer. A conscientious regard to God in this ordinance would have a good influence upon the duty, and consequently upon the comfort, of the relation.

b) Husband and wife, being joined together by the ordinance of God, are not to be put asunder by any ordinance of man. Let not man put them asunder; not the husband himself, nor any one for him; not the magistrate, God never gave him authority to do it. The God of Israel hath said, that he hateth putting away, Mal 2:16. It is a general rule that man must not go about to put asunder what God hath joined together.

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore

God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

An objection started by the Pharisees against this; an objection not destitute of colour and plausibility (Mt 19:7); "Why did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, in case a man did put away his wife?" He urged scripture reason against divorce; they allege scripture authority for it. Note, The seeming contradictions that are in the word of God are great stumbling-blocks to men of corrupt minds. It is true, Moses was faithful to him that appointed him, and commanded nothing but what he received from the Lord; but as to the thing itself, what they call a command was only as allowance (De 24:1), and designed rather to restrain the exorbitances of it than to give countenance to the thing itself. The Jewish doctors themselves observe such limitations in that law, that it could not be done without great deliberation. A particular reason must be assigned, the bill of divorce must be written, and, as a judicial act, must have all the solemnities of a deed, executed and enrolled. It must be given into the hands of the wife herself, and (which would oblige men, if they had any consideration in them, to consider) they were expressly forbidden ever to come together again.

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

tolerated a relaxation of the strictness of the marriage bond—not as approving of it, but to prevent still greater evils.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Christ's answer to this objection, in which,

1. He rectifies their mistake concerning the law of Moses; they called it a command, Christ calls it but a permission, a toleration. Carnal hearts will take an ell if but an inch be given them. The law of Moses, in this case, was a political law, which God gave, as the Governor of that people; and it was for reasons of state, that divorces were tolerated. The strictness of the marriage union being

the result, not of a natural, but of a positive law, the wisdom of God dispensed with divorces in some cases, without any impeachment of his holiness.

But Christ tells them there was a reason for this toleration, not at all for their credit; It was because of the hardness of your hearts, that you were permitted to put away your wives. Moses complained of the people of Israel in his time, that their hearts were hardened (De 9:6,31:27), hardened against God; this is here meant of their being hardened against their relations; they were generally violent and outrageous, which way soever they took, both in their appetites and in their passions; and therefore if they had not been allowed to put away their wives, when they had conceived a dislike of them, they would have used them cruelly, would have beaten and abused them, and perhaps have murdered them. Note, There is not a greater piece of hard-heartedness in the world, than for a man to be harsh and severe with his own wife. The Jews, it seems, were infamous for this, and therefore were allowed to put them away; better divorce them than do worse, than that the altar of the Lord should be covered with tears, Mal 2:13. A little compliance, to humour a madman, or a man in a frenzy, may prevent a greater mischief. Positive laws may be dispensed with for the preservation of the law of nature, for God will have mercy and not sacrifice; but then those are hard-hearted wretches, who have made it necessary; and none can wish to have the liberty of divorce, without virtually owning the hardness of their hearts. Observe, He saith, It is for the hardness of your hearts, not only theirs who lived then, but all their seed. Note, God not only sees, but foresees, the hardness of men's hearts; he suited both the ordinances and providences of the Old Testament to the temper of that people, both in terror. Further observe, The law of Moses considered the hardness of men's hearts, but the gospel of Christ cures it; and his grace takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. By the law was the knowledge of sin, but by the gospel was the conquest of it.

2. He reduces them to the original institution; But from the beginning it was not so. Note, Corruptions that are crept into any

ordinance of God must be purged out by having recourse to the primitive institution. If the copy be vicious, it must be examined and corrected by the original. Thus, when St. Paul would redress the grievances in the church of Corinth about the Lord's supper, he appealed to the appointment (1Co 11:23), So and so I received from the Lord. Truth was from the beginning; we must therefore enquire for the good old way (Jer 6:16), and must reform, not by later patterns, but by ancient rules.

3. He settles the point by an express law; I say unto you (Mt 19:9); and it agrees with what he said before (Mt 5:32); there it was said in preaching, here in dispute, but it is the same, for Christ is constant to himself. Now, in both these places,

(a) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, They two shall be one flesh. If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, De 22:22. Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty. Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery, but (because our Saviour uses the word porneia--fornication) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce.

(b) He disallows it in all other cases: Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. This is a direct answer to their query, that it is not lawful. In this, as in other things, gospel times are times of reformation, Heb 9:10. The law of Christ tends to reinstate man in his primitive integrity; the law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment, but was from the beginning. If we consider what mischiefs to families and states, what confusions and disorders, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend Christianity is to our secular interests.

The law of Moses allowing divorce for the hardness of men's hearts, and the law of Christ forbidding it, intimate, that Christians being under a dispensation of love and liberty, tenderness of heart may justly be expected among them, that they will not be hard-hearted, like Jews, for God has called us to peace. There will be no occasion for divorces, if we forbear one another, and forgive one another, in love, as those that are, and hope to be, forgiven, and have found God not forward to put us away, Isa 50:1. No need of divorces, if husbands love their wives, and wives be obedient to their husbands, and they live together as heirs of the grace of life: and these are the laws of Christ, such as we find not in all the law of Moses.

10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

Here is a suggestion of the disciples against this law of Christ (Mt 19:10); If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is better not to marry. It seems, the disciples themselves were loth to give up the liberty of divorce, thinking it a good expedient for preserving comfort in the married state; and therefore, like sullen children, if they have not what they would have, they will throw away what they have. If they may not be allowed to put away their wives when they please, they will have no wives at all; though, from the beginning, when no divorce was allowed, God said, It is not good for man to be alone, and blessed them, pronounced them blessed who were thus strictly joined together; yet, unless they may have a liberty of divorce, they think it is good for a man not to marry. Note,

1. Corrupt nature is impatient of restraint, and would fain break Christ's bonds in sunder, and have a liberty for its own lusts.

2. It is a foolish, peevish thing for men to abandon the comforts of this life, because of the crosses that are commonly woven in with them, as if we must needs go out of the world, because we have not every thing to our mind in the world; or must enter into no useful calling or condition, because it is made our duty to abide in it. No, whatever our condition is, we must bring our minds to it, be thankful for its comforts, submissive to its crosses, and, as God has

done, set the one over against the other, and make the best of that which is, Ec 7:14. If the yoke of marriage may not be thrown off at pleasure, it does not follow that therefore we must not come under it; but therefore, when we do come under it, we must resolve to comport with it, by love, and meekness, and patience, which will make divorce the most unnecessary undesirable thing that can be.

11 But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

1. He allows it good for some not to marry; He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Christ allowed what the disciples said, It is good not to marry; not as an objection against the prohibition of divorce, as they intended it, but as giving them a rule (perhaps no less unpleasing to them), that they who have the gift of continence, and are not under any necessity of marrying, do best if they continue single (1Co 7:1); for they that are unmarried have opportunity, if they have but a heart, to care more for the things of the Lord, how they may please the Lord (1Co 7:32-34), being less encumbered with the cares of this life, and having a greater vacancy of thought and time to mind better things. The increase of grace is better than the increase of the family, and fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ is to be preferred before any other fellowship.

2. He disallows it, as utterly mischievous, to forbid marriage, because all men cannot receive this saying; indeed few can, and therefore the crosses of the married state must be borne, rather than that men should run themselves into temptation, to avoid them; better marry than burn.

Christ speaks here of a twofold unaptness to marriage.

(a) That which is a calamity by the providence of God; such as those labour under who are born eunuchs, or made so by men, who, being incapable of answering one great end of marriage, ought not to marry. But to that calamity let them oppose the opportunity that there is in the single state of serving God better, to balance it.

(b) That which is a virtue by the grace of God; such is theirs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. This is meant of an unaptness for marriage, not in body (which some, through mistake of this scripture, have foolishly and wickedly brought upon themselves), but in mind. Those have thus made themselves eunuchs who have attained a holy indifference to all the delights of the married state, have a fixed resolution, in the strength of God's grace, wholly to abstain from them; and by fasting, and other instances of mortification, have subdued all desires toward them. These are they that can receive this saying; and yet these are not to bind themselves by a vow that they will never marry, only that, in the mind they are now in, they purpose not to marry.

Now,

[1.] This affection to the single state must be given of God; for none can receive it, save they to whom it is given. Note, Continence is a special gift of God to some, and not to others; and when a man, in the single state, finds by experience that he has this gift, he may determine with himself, and (as the apostle speaks, 1Co 7:37), stand steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, that he will keep himself so. But men, in this case, must take heed lest they boast of a false gift, Pr 25:14.

[2.] The single state must be chosen for the kingdom of heaven's sake; in those who resolve never to marry, only that they may save charges, or may gratify a morose selfish humour, or have a greater liberty to serve other lusts and pleasures, it is so far from being a virtue, that it is an ill-natured vice; but when it is for religion's sake,

not as in itself a meritorious act (which papists make it), but only as a means to keep our minds more entire for, and more intent upon, the services of religion, and that, having no families to provide for, we may do the more works of charity, then it is approved and accepted of God. Note, That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and stuck to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to the preparing of us for, and the preserving of us to, the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

The faith of those that brought them. How many they were, that were brought, we are not told; but they were so little as to be taken up in arms, a year old, it may be, or two at most. The account here given of it, is, that there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray, Mt 19:13. Probably they were their parents, guardians, or nurses, that brought them; and herein,

1. They testified their respect to Christ, and the value they had for his favour and blessing. Note, Those who glorify Christ by coming to him themselves, should further glorify him by bringing all they have, or have influence upon, to him likewise. Thus give him the honour of his unsearchable riches of grace, his overflowing, never-failing, fulness. We cannot better honour Christ than by making use of him.

2. They did a kindness to their children, not doubting but they would fare the better, in this world and the other, for the blessing and prayers of the Lord Jesus, whom they looked upon at least as an extraordinary person, as a prophet, if not as a priest and king; and the blessings of such were valued and desired. Others brought their children to Christ, to be healed when they were sick; but these children were under no present malady, only they desired a blessing for them. Note, It is a good thing when we come to Christ ourselves,

and bring our children to him, before we are driven to him (as we say) by woe-need; not only to visit him when we are in trouble, but to address ourselves to him in a sense of our general dependence on him, and of the benefit we expect by him, this is pleasing to him.

They desired that he would put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a ceremony used especially in paternal blessings; Jacob used it when he blessed and adopted the sons of Joseph, Ge 48:14. It intimates something of love and familiarity mixed with power and authority, and bespeaks an efficacy in the blessing. Whom Christ prays for in heaven, he puts his hand upon by his Spirit. Note,

(a) Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving, blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession.

(b) Therefore they should be brought to him. We cannot do better for our children than to commit them to the Lord Jesus, to be wrought upon, and prayed for, by him. We can but beg a blessing for them, it is Christ only that can command the blessing.

The fault of the disciples in rebuking them. They discountenanced the address as vain and frivolous, and reproved them that made it as impertinent and troublesome. Either they thought it below their Master to take notice of little children, except any thing in particular ailed them; or, they thought he had toil enough with his other work, and would not have him diverted from it; or, they thought if such an address as this were encouraged, all the country would bring their children to him, and they should never see an end of it. Note, It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discountenance any willing well-meaning souls in their enquiries after Christ, though they are but weak. If he do not break the bruised reed, we should not. Those that seek unto Christ, must not think it strange if they meet with opposition and rebuke, even from good men, who think they know the mind of Christ better than they do.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Many people thought that they could gain entrance into the kingdom of God through their own efforts. Jesus referred to the children gathered around him to illustrate that this was not so (Mar_10:13-14). People must realize that in relation to entering his kingdom they are as helpless and dependent as children. There is no room in his kingdom for those who hold high opinions of themselves, or who think they will gain eternal life through their wisdom or good works (Mar_10:15-16).

He rebuked the disciples (Mt 19:14); Suffer little children, and forbid them not; and he rectifies the mistake they went upon, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. Note,

(a) The children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are members of the visible church. Of such, not only of such in disposition and affection (that might have served for a reason why doves or lambs should be brought to him), but of such, in age, is the kingdom of heaven; to them pertain the privileges of visible church-membership, as among the Jews of old. The promise is to you, and to your children. I will be a God to thee and thy seed.

(b) That for this reason they are welcome to Christ, who is ready to entertain those who, when they cannot come themselves, are brought to him. And this,

[1.] In respect to the little children themselves, whom he has upon all occasions expressed a concern for; and who, having participated in the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace, else what would become of the apostle's parallel? 1Co 15:22,Ro 5:14,15, &c. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out.

[2.] With an eye to the faith of the parents who brought them, and presented them as living sacrifices. Parents are trustees of their children's wills, are empowered by nature to transact for their

benefit; and therefore Christ accepts their dedication of them as their act and deed, and will own these dedicated things in the day he makes up his jewels.

[3.] Therefore he takes it ill of those who forbid them, and exclude those whom he has received: who cast them out from the inheritance of the Lord, and say, Ye have no part in the Lord (see Jos 22:27); and who forbid water, that they should be baptized, who, if that promise be fulfilled (Isa 44:3), have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, for aught we know.

2. He received the little children, and did as he was desired; he laid his hands on them, that is, he blessed them. The strongest believer lives not so much by apprehending Christ as by being apprehended of him (Php 3:12), not so much by knowing God as by being known of him (Ga 4:9); and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.

15 And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

The Rich Young Ruler

16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

The gentleman's serious address to Jesus Christ (Mt 19:16); Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Not a better question could be asked, not more gravely.

(a) He gives Christ an honourable title, Good Master--Didaskale agathe. It signifies not a ruling, but a teaching Master. His calling him Master, bespeaks his submissiveness, and willingness to be taught; and good Master, his affection and peculiar respect to the Teacher, like that of Nicodemus, Thou art a Teacher come from God. We read not of any that addressed themselves to Christ more respectfully than that Master in Israel and this ruler. It is a good thing

when men's quality and dignity increase their civility and courtesy. It was gentleman-like to give this title of respect to Christ, notwithstanding the present meanness of his appearance. It was not usual among the Jews to accost their teachers with the title of good; and therefore this bespeaks the uncommon respect he had for Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is a good Master, the best of teachers; none teaches like him; he is distinguished for his goodness, for he can have compassion on the ignorant; he is meek and lowly in heart.

(b) He comes to him upon an errand of importance (none could be more so), and he came not to tempt him, but sincerely desiring to be taught by him. His question is, What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? By this it appears,

[1.] That he had a firm belief of eternal life; he was no Sadducee. He was convinced that there is a happiness prepared for those in the other world, who are prepared for it in this world.

[2.] That he was concerned to make it sure to himself that he should live eternally, and was desirous of that life more than any of the delights of this life. It was a rare thing for one of his age and quality to appear so much in care about another world. The rich are apt to think it below them to make such an enquiry as this; and young people think it time enough yet; but here was a young man, and a rich man, solicitous about his soul and eternity.

[3.] That he was sensible something must be done, some good thing, for the attainment of this happiness. It is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for immortality, Ro 2:7. We must be doing, and doing that which is good. The blood of Christ is the only purchase of eternal life (he merited it for us), but obedience to Christ is the appointed way to it, Heb 5:9.

[4.] That he was, or at least thought himself, willing to do what was to be done for the obtaining of this eternal life. Those that know what it is to have eternal life, and what it is to come short of it, will be

glad to accept of it upon any terms. Such a holy violence does the kingdom of heaven suffer. Note, While there are many that say, Who will show us any good? our great enquiry should be, What shall we do, that we may have eternal life? What shall we do, to be for ever happy, happy in another world? For this world has not that in it that will make us happy.

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

The encouragement that Jesus Christ gave to this address. It is not his manner to send any away without an answer, that come to him on such an errand, for nothing pleases him more, Mt 19:17. In his answer,

(1.) He tenderly assists his faith; for, doubtless, he did not mean it for a reproof, when he said, Why callest thou me good? But he would seem to find that faith in what he said, when he called him good Master, which the gentleman perhaps was not conscious to himself of; he intended no more than to own and honour him as a good man, but Christ would lead him to own and honour him as a good God; for there is none good but one, that is God. Note, As Christ is graciously ready to make the best that he can of what is said or done amiss; so he is ready to make the most that can be of what is well said and well done. His constructions are often better than our intentions; as in that, "I was hungry, and you gave me meat, though you little thought it was to me." Christ will have this young man either know him to be God, or not call him good; to teach us to transfer to God all the praise that is at any time given to us. Do any call us good? Let us tell them all goodness is from God, and therefore not to us, but to him give glory. All crowns must lie before his throne. Note, God only is good, and there is none essentially, originally, and unchangeably, good, but God only. His goodness is of and from himself, and all the goodness in the creature is from him; he is the Fountain of goodness, and whatever the streams are, all the springs are in him, Jam 1:17. He is the great Pattern and Sample of goodness; by him all goodness is to be measured; that is good which

is like him, and agreeable to his mind. We in our language call him God, because he is good. In this, as in other things, our Lord Jesus was the Brightness of his glory (and his goodness is his glory), and the express image of his person, and therefore fitly called good Master.

(2.) He plainly directs his practice, in answer to his question. He started that thought of his being good, and therefore God, but did not stay upon it, lest he should seem to divert from, and so to drop, the main question, as many do in needless disputes and strifes of words. Now Christ's answer is, in short, this, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

[1.] The end proposed is, entering into life. The young man, in his question, spoke of eternal life. Christ, in his answer, speaks of life; to teach us, that eternal life is the only true life. The words concerning that are the words of this life, Ac 5:20. The present life scarcely deserves the name of life, for in the midst of life we are in death. Or into life, that spiritual life which is the beginning and earnest of eternal life. He desired to know how he might have eternal life; Christ tells him how he might enter into it; we have it by the merit of Christ, a mystery which was not as yet fully revealed, and therefore Christ waives that; but the way of entering into it, is, by obedience, and Christ directs us in that. By the former we make our title, by this, as by our evidence, we prove it; it is by adding to faith virtue, that an entrance (the word here used) is ministered to us into the everlasting kingdom, 2Pe 1:5,11. Christ, who is our Life, is the Way to the Father, and to the vision and fruition of him; he is the only Way, but duty, and the obedience of faith, are the way to Christ. There is an entrance into life hereafter, at death, at the great day, a complete entrance, and those only shall then enter into life, that do their duty; it is the diligent faithful servant that shall then enter into the joy of his Lord, and that joy will be his eternal life. There is an entrance into life now; we who have believed, do enter into rest, Heb 4:3. We have peace, and comfort, and joy, in the believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, and to this also sincere obedience is indispensably necessary.

[2.] The way prescribed is, keeping the commandments. Note, Keeping the commandments of God, according as they are revealed and made known to us, is the only way to life and salvation; and sincerity herein is accepted through Christ as our gospel perfection, provision being made of pardon, upon repentance, wherein we come short. Through Christ we are delivered from the condemning power of the law, but the commanding power of it is lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and under that, in that hand, we still are under the law to Christ (1Co 9:21), under it as a rule, though not as a covenant. Keeping the commandments includes faith in Jesus Christ, for that is the great commandment (1Jo 3:23), and it was one of the laws of Moses, that, when the great Prophet should be raised up, they should hear him. Observe, In order to our happiness here and for ever, it is not enough for us to know the commandments of God, but we must keep them, keep in them as our way, keep to them as our rule, keep them as our treasure, and with care, as the apple of our eye.

[3.] At his further instance and request, he mentions some particular commandments which he must keep (Mt 19:18,19); The young man saith unto him, Which? Note, Those that would do the commandments of God, must seek them diligently, and enquire after them, what they are. Ezra set himself to seek the law, and to do it, Ezr 7:10. "There were many commandments in the law of Moses; good Master, let me know which those are, the keeping o which is necessary to salvation."

In answer to this, Christ specifies several, especially the commandments of the second table. First, That which concerns our own and our neighbour's life; Thou shalt do no murder. Secondly, Our own and our neighbour's chastity, which should be as dear to us as life itself; Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thirdly, Our own and our neighbour's wealth and outward estate, as hedged about by the law of property; Thou shalt not steal. Fourthly, That which concerns truth, and our own and our neighbour's good name; Thou shalt not bear false witness, neither for thyself, nor against thy neighbour; for so it is here left at large. Fifthly, That which concerns the duties of

particular relations; Honour thy father and mother. Sixthly, That comprehensive law of love, which is the spring and summary of all these duties, whence they all flow, on which they are all founded, and in which they are all fulfilled; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Ga 5:14,Ro 13:9), that royal law, Jam 2:8. Some think this comes in here, not as the sum of the second table, but as the particular import of the tenth commandment; Thou shalt not covet, which Mark is, Defraud not; intimating that it is not lawful for me to design advantage or gain to myself by the diminution or loss of another; for that is to covet, and to love myself better than my neighbour, whom I ought to love a myself, and to treat as I would myself be treated.

Our Saviour here specifies second-table duties only; not as if the first were of less account, but, 1. Because they that now sat in Moses's seat, either wholly neglected, or greatly corrupted, these precepts in their preaching. While they pressed the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin,--judgment, and mercy, and faith, the summary of second-table duties, were overlooked, Mt 23:23. Their preaching ran out all in rituals and nothing in morals; and therefore Christ pressed that most, which they least insisted on. As one truth, so one duty, must not jostle out another, but each must know its place, and be kept in it; but equity requires that that be helped up, which is most in danger of being thrust out. That is the present truth which we are called to bear our testimony to, not only which is opposed, but which is neglected. 2. Because he would teach him, and us all, that moral honesty is a necessary branch of true Christianity, and to be minded accordingly. Though a mere moral man comes short of being a complete Christian, yet an immoral man is certainly no true Christian; for the grace of God teaches us to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly. Nay, though first-table duties have in them more of the essence of religion, yet second-table duties have in them more of the evidence of it. Our light burns in love to God, but it shines in love to our neighbour.

19 Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

1. By pride, and a vain conceit of his own merit and strength; this is the ruin of thousands, who keep themselves miserable by fancying themselves happy. When Christ told him what commandments he must keep, he answered very scornfully, All these things have I kept from my youth up, Mt 19:20. Now,

(a) According as he understood the law, as prohibiting only the outward acts of sin, I am apt to think that he said true, and Christ knew it, for he did not contradict him; nay, it is said in Mark, He loved him; so far was very good and pleasing to Christ. St. Paul reckons it a privilege, not contemptible in itself, though it was dross in comparison with Christ, that he was, as touching righteousness that is in the law, blameless, Php 3:6. His observance of these commands was universal; All these have I kept: it was early and constant; from my youth up. Note, A man may be free from gross sin, and yet come short of grace and glory. His hands may be clean from external pollutions, and yet he may perish eternally in his heart-wickedness. What shall we think then of those who do not attain to this; whose fraud and injustice, drunkenness and uncleanness, witness against them, that all these they have broken from their youth up, though they have named the name of Christ? Well, it is sad to come short of those that come short of heaven.

It was commendable also, that he desired to know further what his duty was; What lack I yet? He was convinced that he wanted something to fill up his works before God, and was therefore desirous to know it, because, if he was not mistaken in himself, he was willing to do it. Having not yet attained, he thus seemed to press forward. And he applied himself to Christ, whose doctrine was supposed to improve and perfect the Mosaic institution. He desired to know what were the peculiar precepts of his religion, that he might have all that was in them to polish and accomplish him. Who could bid fairer?

But,

(b) Even in this that he said, he discovered his ignorance and folly.

[1.] Taking the law in its spiritual sense, as Christ expounded it, no doubt, in many things he had offended against all these commands. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual meaning of the law, instead of saying, All these have I kept; what lack I yet? he would have said, with shame and sorrow, "All these have I broken, what shall I do to get my sins pardoned?"

[2.] Take it how you will, what he said savoured of pride and vain-glory, and had in it too much of that boasting which is excluded by the law of faith (Ro 3:27), and which excludes from justification, Lu 18:11,14. He valued himself too much, as the Pharisees did, upon the plausibleness of his profession before men, and was proud of that, which spoiled the acceptableness of it. That word, What lack I yet? perhaps was not so much a desire of further instruction as a demand of the praise of his present fancied perfection, and a challenge to Christ himself to show him any one instance wherein he was deficient.

2. He came short by an inordinate love of the world, and his enjoyments in it. This was the fatal rock on which he split. Observe,

(a) How he was tried in this matter (Mt 19:21); Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast. Christ waived the matter of his boasted obedience to the law, and let that drop, because this would be a more effectual way of discovering him than a dispute of the extent of the law. "Come," saith Christ, "if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt approve thyself sincere in thine obedience" (for sincerity is our gospel perfection), "if thou wilt come up to that which Christ has added to the law of Moses, if thou wilt be perfect, if thou wilt enter into life, and so be perfectly happy;" for that which Christ here prescribes, is not a thing of supererogation, or a perfection we may be saved without; but, in the main scope and intendment of it, it is our necessary and indispensable duty. What Christ said to him, he

thus far said to us all, that, if we would approve ourselves Christians indeed, and would be found at last the heirs of eternal life, we must do these two things:

[1.] We must practically prefer the heavenly treasures before all the wealth and riches in this world. That glory must have the pre-eminence in our judgment and esteem before this glory. No thanks to us to prefer heaven before hell, the worst man in the world would be glad of that Jerusalem for a refuge when he can stay no longer here, and to have it in reserve; but to make it our choice, and to prefer it before this earth--that is to be a Christian indeed. Now, as an evidence of this, First, We must dispose of what we have in this world, for the honour of God, and in his service: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor. If the occasions of charity be very pressing, sell thy possessions that thou mayest have to give to them that need; as the first Christians did, with an eye to this precept, Ac 4:34. Sell what thou canst spare for pious uses, all thy superfluities; if thou canst not otherwise do good with it, sell it. Sit loose to it, be willing to part with it for the honour of God, and the relief of the poor." A gracious contempt of the world, and compassion of the poor and afflicted ones in it, are in all a necessary condition of salvation; and in those that have wherewithal, giving of alms is as necessary an evidence of that contempt of the world, and compassion to our brethren; by this the trial will be at the great day, Mt 25:35. Though many that call themselves Christians, do not act as if they believed it; it is certain, that, when we embrace Christ, we must let go the world, for we cannot serve God and mammon. Christ knew that covetousness was the sin that did most easily beset this young man, that, though what he had he had got honestly, yet he could not cheerfully part with it, and by this he discovered his insincerity. This command was like the call to Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, to a land that I will show thee. As God tries believers by their strongest graces, so hypocrites by their strongest corruptions. Secondly, We must depend upon what we hope for in the other world as an abundant recompence for all we have left, or lost, or laid out, for God in this world; Thou shalt have treasure in heaven. We must, in the way of chargeable duty, trust God for a happiness out of sight, which will make us rich amends for all our expenses in God's

service. The precept sounded hard and harsh; "Sell that thou hast, and give it away;" and the objection against it would soon arise, that "Charity begins at home;" therefore Christ immediately annexes this assurance of a treasure in heaven. Note, Christ's promises make his precepts easy, and his yoke not only tolerable, but pleasant, and sweet, and very comfortable; yet this promise was as much a trial of this young man's faith as the precept was of his charity, and contempt of the world.

[2.] We must devote ourselves entirely to the conduct and government of our Lord Jesus; Come, and follow me. It seems here to be meant of a close and constant attendance upon his person, such as the selling of what he had in the world was as necessary to as it was to the other disciples to quit their callings; but of us it is required that we follow Christ, that we duly attend upon his ordinances, strictly conform to his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals, and by upright and universal obedience observe his statutes, and keep his laws, and all this from a principle of love to him, and dependence on him, and with a holy contempt of every thing else in comparison of him, and much more in competition with him. This is to follow Christ fully. To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, unless we come, and follow Christ. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Well, on these terms, and on no lower, is salvation to be had; and they are very easy and reasonable terms, and will appear so to those who are brought to be glad of it upon any terms.

(b) See how he was discovered. This touched him in a tender part (Mt 19:22); When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

[1.] He was a rich man, and loved his riches, and therefore went away. He did not like eternal life upon these terms. Note, First, Those who have much in the world are in the greatest temptation to love it, and to set their hearts upon it. Such is the bewitching nature of worldly wealth, that those who want it least desire most; when

riches increase, then is the danger of setting the heart upon them, Ps 62:10. If he had had but two mites in all the world, and had been commanded to give them to the poor, or but one handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, and had been bidden to make a cake of that for a poor prophet, the trial, one would think, had been much greater, yet those trials have been overcome (Lu 21:4,1Ki 17:14); which shows that the love of the world draws stronger than the most pressing necessities. Secondly, The reigning love of this world keeps many from Christ, who seem to have some good desires toward him. A great estate, as to those who are got above it, is a great furtherance, so to those who are entangled in the love of it, it is a great hindrance, in the way to heaven.

Yet something of honesty there was in it, that, when he did not like the terms, he went away, and would not pretend to that, which he could not find in his heart to come up to the strictness of; better so than do as Demas did, who, having known the way of righteousness, afterward turned aside, out of love to this present world, to the greater scandal of his profession; since he could not be a complete Christian, he would not be a hypocrite.

[2.] Yet he was a thinking man, and well-inclined, and therefore went away sorrowful. He had a leaning toward Christ, and was loth to part with him. Note, Many a one is ruined by the sin he commits with reluctance; leaves Christ sorrowfully, and yet is never truly sorry for leaving him, for, if he were, he would return to him. Thus this man's wealth was vexation of spirit to him, then when it was his temptation. What then would the sorrow be afterward, when his possessions would be gone, and all hopes of eternal life gone too?

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Though Christ spoke so strongly, few that have riches do not trust in them. How few that are poor are not tempted to envy! But men's earnestness in this matter is like their toiling to build a high wall to shut themselves and their children out of heaven. It should be

satisfaction to those who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition. If they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. Christ's words show that it is hard for a rich man to be a good Christian, and to be saved. The way to heaven is a narrow way to all, and the gate that leads into it, a strait gate; particularly so to rich people. More duties are expected from them than from others, and more sins easily beset them. It is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world. Rich people have a great account to make up for their opportunities above others. It is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches, to get to heaven. Christ used an expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the power of man. Nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. Who then can be saved? If riches hinder rich people, are not pride and sinful lusts found in those not rich, and as dangerous to them? Who can be saved? say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. The beginning, progress, and perfecting the work of salvation, depend wholly on the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Not that rich people can be saved in their worldliness, but that they should be saved from it. Peter said, We have forsaken all. Alas! it was but a poor all, only a few boats and nets; yet observe how Peter speaks, as if it had been some mighty thing. We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, our expenses and losses, for Christ. However, Christ does not upbraid them; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their all, and as dear to them as if it had been more. Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; he accepts according to what a man hath. Our Lord's promise to the apostles is, that when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, he will make all things new, and they shall sit with him in judgement on those who will be judged according to their doctrine. This sets forth the honour, dignity, and authority of their office and ministry. Our Lord added, that every one who had forsaken possessions or comforts, for his sake and the gospel, would be recompensed at last.

Wealth makes people independent of others, and for this reason the rich often find it difficult to acknowledge that they are not

independent of God. Their wealth makes them no better in God's sight than anyone else. As a result few of the rich enter the kingdom of God. Actually, no one at all could enter that kingdom apart from the work of God. By his grace he accepts those who humble themselves before him (Mat_19:23-26).

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

We have here Christ's promises to them, and to all others that tread in the steps of their faith and obedience. What there was either of vain-glory or of vain hopes in that which Peter said, Christ overlooks, and is not extreme to mark it, but takes this occasion to give the bond of a promise,

(a) To his immediate followers, Mt 19:28. They had signalized their respect to him, as the first that followed him, and to them he promises not only treasure, but honour, in heaven; and here they have a grant or patent for it from him who is the fountain of honour in that kingdom; Ye which have followed me in the regeneration shall sit upon twelve thrones. Observe,

[1.] The preamble to the patent, or the consideration of the grant, which, as usual, is a recital of their services; "You have followed me in the regeneration, and therefore this will I do for you." The time of Christ's appearing in this world was a time of regeneration, of reformation (Heb 9:10), when old things began to pass away, and all things to look new. The disciples had followed Christ when the church was yet in the embryo state, when the gospel temple was but

in the framing, when they had more of the work and service of the apostles than of the dignity and power that belonged to their office. Now they followed Christ with constant fatigue, when few did; and therefore on them he will put particular marks of honour. Note, Christ hath special favour for those who begin early with him, who trust him further than they can see him, as they did who followed him in the regeneration. Observe, Peter spoke of their forsaking all, to follow him, Christ only speaks of their following him, which was the main matter.

[2.] The date of their honour, which fixes the time when it should commence; not immediately from the day of the date of these presents, no, they must continue a while in obscurity, as they were. But when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory; and to this some refer that, in the regeneration; "You who now have followed me, shall, in the regeneration, be thus dignified." Christ's second coming will be a regeneration, when there shall be new heavens, and a new earth, and the restitution of all things. All that partake of the regeneration in grace (Joh 3:3) shall partake of the regeneration in glory; for as grace is the first resurrection (Re 20:6), so glory is the second regeneration.

Now their honour being adjourned till the Son of man's sitting in the throne of his glory, intimates, First, That they must stay for their advancement till then. Note, As long as our Master's glory is delayed, it is fit that ours should be so too, and that we should wait for it with an earnest expectation, as of a hope not seen. Ro 8:19. We must live, and work, and suffer, in faith, and hope, and patience, which therefore must be tried by these delays. Secondly, That they must share with Christ in his advancement; their honour must be a communion with him in his honour. They, having suffered with a suffering Jesus, must reign with a reigning Jesus, for both here and hereafter Christ will be all in all; we must be where he is (Joh 12:26), must appear with him (Col 3:4); and this will be an abundant recompence not only for our loss, but for the delay; and when our Lord comes, we shall receive not only our own, but our own with usury. The longest voyages make the richest returns.

[3.] The honour itself hereby granted; Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is hard to determine the particular sense of this promise, and whether it was not to have many accomplishments, which I see no harm in admitting. First, When Christ is ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sits on the throne of his glory, then the apostles shall receive power by the Holy Ghost (Ac 1:8); shall be so much advanced above themselves as they are now, that they shall think themselves upon thrones, in promoting the gospel; they shall deliver it with authority, as a judge from the bench; they shall then have their commission enlarged, and shall publish the laws of Christ, by which the church, God's spiritual Israel (Ga 6:16), shall be governed, and Israel according to the flesh, that continues in infidelity, with all others that do likewise, shall be condemned. The honour and power given them, may be explained by Jer 1:19, See, I have set thee over the nations; and Eze 20:4, Wilt thou judge them? and Da 7:18, The saints shall take the kingdom; and Re 12:1, where the doctrine of Christ is called a crown of twelve stars. Secondly, When Christ appears for the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24:31), then shall he send the apostles to judge the Jewish nation, because in that destruction their predictions, according to the word of Christ, would be accomplished. Thirdly, Some think it has reference to the conversion of the Jews, which is yet to come, at the latter end of the world, after the fall of antichrist; so Dr. Whitby; and that "it respects the apostles' government or the twelve tribes of Israel, not by a resurrection of their persons, but by a reviviscence of that Spirit which resided in them, and of that purity and knowledge which they delivered to the world, and, chiefly, by admission of their gospel to be the standard of their faith and the direction of their lives." Fourthly, It is certainly to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints in general shall judge the world, and the twelve apostles especially, as assessors with Christ, in the judgment of the great day, when all the world shall receive their final doom, and they shall ratify and applaud the sentence. But the tribe of Israel are named, partly because the number of the apostles was designedly the same with the number of the tribes; partly because the apostles were Jews, befriended them most, but were most spitefully persecuted by them;

and it intimates that the saints will judge their acquaintance and kindred according to the flesh, and will, in the great day, judge those they had a kindness for; will judge their persecutors, who in this world judged them.

But the general intendment of this promise is, to show the glory and dignity reserved for the saints in heaven, which will be an abundant recompence for the disgrace they suffered here in Christ's cause. There are higher degrees of glory for those that have done and suffered most. The apostles in this world were hurried and tossed, there they shall sit down at rest and ease; here bonds, and afflictions, and deaths, did abide them, but there they shall sit on thrones of glory; here they were dragged to the bar, there they shall be advanced to the bench; here the twelve tribes of Israel trampled upon them, there they shall tremble before them. And will not this be recompence enough to make up all their losses and expenses for Christ? Lu 22:29.

[4.] The ratification of this grant; it is firm, it is inviolably immutably sure; for Christ hath said, "Verily I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, who am empowered to make this grant, I have said it, and it cannot be disannulled."

(b) Here is a promise to all others that should in like manner leave all to follow Christ. It was not peculiar to the apostles, to be thus preferred, but this honour have all his saints. Christ will take care they shall none of them lose by him (Mt 19:29); Every one that has forsaken any thing for Christ, shall receive.

[1.] Losses for Christ are here supposed. Christ had told them that his disciples must deny themselves in all that is done to them in this world; now here he specifies particulars; for it is good to count upon the worst. If they have not forsaken all, as the apostles did, yet they have forsaken a great deal, houses suppose, and have turned themselves out, to wander in deserts; or dear relations, that would not go with them, to follow Christ; these are particularly mentioned,

as hardest for a tender gracious spirit to part with; brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children; and lands are added in the close; the profits of which were the support of the family.

Now, First, the loss of these things is supposed to be for Christ's name's sake; else he doth not oblige himself to make it up. Many forsake brethren, and wife, and children, in humour and passion, as the bird that wanders from her nest; that is a sinful desertion. But if we forsake them for Christ's sake, because we cannot keep them and keep a good conscience, we must either quit them, or quit our interest in Christ; if we do not quit our concern for them, or our duty to them, but our comfort in them, and will do it rather than deny Christ, and this with an eye to him, and to his will and glory, this is that which shall be thus recompensed. It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes both the martyr and the confessor.

Secondly, It is supposed to be a great loss; and yet Christ undertakes to make up, for he is able to do it, be it ever so great. See the barbarity of the persecutors, that they stripped innocent people of all they had, for no other crime than their adherence to Christ! See the patience of the persecuted; and the strength of their love to Christ, which was such as all these waters could not quench!

[2.] A recompence of these losses is here secured. Thousands have dealt with Christ, and have trusted him far; but never any one lost by him, never any one but was an unspeakable gainer by him, when the account came to be balanced. Christ here gives his word for it, that he will not only indemnify his suffering servants, and save them harmless, but will abundantly reward them. Let them make a schedule of their losses for Christ, and they shall be sure to receive,

First, A hundred-fold in this life; sometimes in kind, in the things themselves which they have parted with. God will raise up for his suffering servants more friends, that will be so to them for Christ's sake, than they have left that were so for their own sakes. The apostles, wherever they came, met with those that were kind to them, and entertained them, and opened their hearts and doors to them.

However, they shall receive a hundred-fold, in kindness, in those things that are abundantly better and more valuable. Their graces shall increase, their comforts abound, they shall have tokens of God's love, more free communion with him, more full communications from him, clearer foresights, and sweeter foretastes, of the glory to be revealed; and then they may truly say, they have received a hundred times more comfort in God and Christ than they could have had in wife, or children.

Secondly, Eternal life at last. The former is reward enough, if there were no more; cent. per cent. is great profit; what then is a hundred to one? But this comes in over and above, as it were, into the bargain. The life here promised includes in it all the comforts of life in the highest degree, and all eternal. Now if we could but mix faith with the promise, and trust Christ for the performance of it, surely we should think nothing too much to do, nothing too hard to suffer, nothing too dear to part with, for him.

Our Saviour, in the last verse, obviates a mistake of some, as if pre-eminence in glory went by precedence in time, rather than the measure and degree of grace. No; Many that are first, shall be last, and the last, first, Mt 19:30. God will cross his hands; will reveal that to babes, which he hid from the wise and prudent; will reject unbelieving Jews and receive believing Gentiles. The heavenly inheritance is not given as earthly inheritances commonly are, by seniority of age, and priority of birth, but according to God's pleasure. This is the text of another sermon, which we shall meet with in the next chapter.

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

Barnes Commentary:

This verse should have been connected with the following chapter. The parable there spoken is expressly to illustrate this sentiment. See its meaning, Mt 20:16.

Burkitt commentary:
A twofold sense and interpretation is given of these words: the first respects the Jews and Gentiles in general the second, all professors of Christianity in particular, "The Jews (as if Christ had said) look upon themselves as first and nearest to the kingdom of heaven, but for their infidelity they shall be last in it; that is, never shall come there. And the Gentiles, who were looked upon as dogs, and farthest from heaven, shall be first there, upon their conversion to me, and faith in me."
As the words respect all professors, the sense is, "Many that are first in their own esteem, and in opinion of others, and forward in a profession of religion, yet at the day of judgment they will be last, and least in mine and my Father's estimation and account. And many that were little in their own, and less in the esteem of others, who had a less name and vogue in the world, shall yet be first and highest in my favour."
Learn hence, That the day of judgment will frustrate a great many persons expectations, both as touching others, and concerning themselves. Many will miss of heaven, and be last, who looked upon themselves to be first. And many will find others in heaven, whom they least expected there. The Lord judgeth not as man judgeth: We judge of man by outward appearances, but we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth. He can neither be deceived, nor yet deceive.

Matthew-20

Laborers in the Vineyard

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* a householder, which
went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard.
2 And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into
his vineyard.

For what term are they hired? For a day. It is but a day's work that is here done. The time of life is the day, in which we must work the

works of him that sent us into the world. It is a short time; the reward is for eternity, the work is but for a day; man is said to accomplish, as a hireling, his day, Job 14:6. This should quicken us to expedition and diligence in our work, that we have but a little time to work in, and the night is hastening on, when no man can work; and if our great work be undone when our day is done, we are undone for ever. It should also encourage us in reference to the hardships and difficulties of our work, that it is but for a day; the approaching shadow, which the servant earnestly desireth, will bring with it both rest, and the reward of our work, Job 7:2. Hold out, faith, and patience, yet a little while.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market place,

4 and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

Whence they are hired? Out of the market-place, where, till they are hired into God's service, they stand idle (Mt 20:3), all the day idle (Mt 20:6). Note, First, The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was (as all the creatures were) created to work, and is either a servant to iniquity, or a servant to righteousness, Ro 6:19. The devil, by his temptations, is hiring labourers into his field, to feed swine. God, by his gospel, is hiring labourers into his vineyard, to dress it, and keep it, paradise-work. We are put to our choice; for hired we must be (Jos 24:15); Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. Secondly, Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may really be called a state of idleness; sinners are doing nothing, nothing to the purpose, nothing of the great work they were sent into the world about, nothing that will pass well in the account. Thirdly, The gospel call is given to those that stand idle in the market-place. The market-place is a place of concourse, and there Wisdom cries (Pr 1:20,21); it is a place of sport, there the children are playing (Mt 11:16); and the gospel calls us from vanity to seriousness; it is a place of business, of noise and hurry; and from that we are called to retire. "Come, come from this market-place."

Of course they had not been there, or not been disposed to offer themselves at the proper time; but as they were now willing, and the day was not over, and "yet there was room," they also are engaged, and on similar terms with all the rest.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

Notice is taken of the several hours of the day, at which the labourers were hired. The apostles were sent forth at the first and third hour of the gospel day; they had a first and a second mission, while Christ was on earth, and their business was to call in the Jews; after Christ's ascension, about the sixth and ninth hour, they went out again on the same errand, preaching the gospel to the Jews only, to them in Judea first, and afterward to them of the dispersion; but, at length, as it were about the eleventh hour, they called the Gentiles to the same work and privilege with the Jews, and told them that in Christ Jesus there should be no difference made between Jew and Greek.

But this may be, and commonly is, applied to the several ages of life, in which souls are converted to Christ. The common call is promiscuous, to come and work in the vineyard; but the effectual call is particular, and it is then effectual when we come at the call.

First, Some are effectually called, and begin to work in the vineyard when they are very young; are sent in early in the morning, whose tender years are seasoned with grace, and the remembrance of their Creator. John the Baptist was sanctified from the womb, and therefore great (Lu 1:15); Timothy from a child (2Ti 3:15); Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth. Those that have such a journey to go, had need set out betimes, the sooner the better.

Secondly, Others are savingly wrought upon in middle age; Go work in the vineyard, at the third, sixth, or ninth hour. The power of divine grace is magnified in the conversion of some, when they are in the midst of their pleasures and worldly pursuits, as Paul. God has work for all ages; no time amiss to turn to God; none can say, "It is all in good time;" for, whatever hour of the day it is with

us, the time past of our life may suffice that we have served sin; Go ye also into the vineyard. God turns away none that are willing to be hired, for yet there is room.

Thirdly, Others are hired into the vineyard in old age, at the eleventh hour, when the day of life is far spent, and there is but one hour of the twelve remaining. None are hired at the twelfth hour; when life is done, opportunity is done; but "while there is life, there is hope." 1. There is hope for old sinners; for if, in sincerity, they turn to God, they shall doubtless be accepted; true repentance is never too late. And, 2. There is hope of old sinners, that they may be brought to true repentance; nothing is too hard for Almighty grace to do, it can change the Ethiopian's skin, and the leopard's spots; can set those to work, who have contracted a habit of idleness. Nicodemus may be born again when he is old, and the old man may be put off, which is corrupt.

Yet let none, upon this presumption, put off their repentance till they are old. These were sent into the vineyard, it is true, at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them, or offered to hire them, before. The Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour, but it was because the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel offers made them at the third, or sixth hour, and have resisted and refused them, will not have that to say for themselves at the eleventh hour, that these had; No man has hired us; nor can they be sure that any man will hire them at the ninth or eleventh hour; and therefore not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time; if we will hear his voice, it must be to-day.

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

A two-fold sense and interpretation is given of this parable; but both analogical.

One of which relates to the calling of the Gentiles. The Jews were the first people that God had in the world: they were hired into the vineyard betimes in the morning, the Gentiles not till the day was far spent; yet shall the Gentiles, by the favour and bounty of God,

receive the same reward of eternal life, which was promised to the Jews who bore the heat of the day, while the Gentiles stood idle.

In the other analogical sense we may understand all persons indefinitely called by the gospel into the visible church, those that are called last, shall be rewarded together with the first; and accordingly the design and scope of this parable, is to shew the freeness of divine grace, in the distribution of those rewards which the hand of mercy confers upon God's faithful servants.

The vineyard is the church of God, the husbandman is God himself; the labourers are particular persons.

God's going at diverse times into his vineyard, imports the several ages of man's life; some are called early in the morning, some at noon, others at night. Now when God comes to dispense his rewards, those that entered first into the vineyard and did most service for God, shall be plentifully rewarded by him; and such as came in later, but did faithful service, shall not miss of a merciful reward.

Learn,

1. That so long as a person keeps out of Christ's vineyard and service, he is idle. Every unregenerate man is an idle man.

2. That persons are called by the preaching of the gospel at several ages and periods of life into God's vineyard; that is, into the communion of the visible church.

3.That such as do come, though late, into God's vineyard, and work diligently and faithfully, shall not miss of a reward of grace at the hand of free mercy.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

When the account was taken; when the evening was come, then, as usual, the day-labourers were called and paid. Note, Evening time is the reckoning time; the particular account must be given up in the evening of our life; for after death cometh the judgment.

Faithful labourers shall receive their reward when they die; it is deferred till then, that they may wait with patience for it, but no longer; for God will observe his own rule, The hire of the labourers shall not abide with thee all night, until the morning. See De 24:15. When Paul, that faithful labourer, departs, he is with Christ presently. The payment shall not be wholly deferred till the morning of the resurrection; but then, in the evening of the world, will be the general account, when every one shall receive according to the things done in the body. When time ends, and with it the world of work and opportunity, then the state of retribution commences; then call the labourers, and give them their hire. Ministers call them into the vineyard, to do their work; death calls them out of the vineyard, to receive their penny: and those to whom the call into the vineyard is effectual, the call out of it will be joyful. Observe, They did not come for their pay till they were called; we must with patience wait God's time for our rest and recompence; go by our master's clock. The last trumpet, at the great day, shall call the labourers, 1Th 4:16. Then shalt thou call, saith the good and faithful servant, and I will answer. In calling the labourers, they must begin from the last, and so to the first. Let not those that come in at the eleventh hour, be put behind the rest, but, lest they should be discouraged, call them first. At the great day, though the dead in Christ shall rise first, yet they which are alive and remain, on whom the ends of the world (the eleventh hour of its day) comes, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds; no preference shall be given to seniority, but every man shall stand in his own lot at the end of the days.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

First, The general pay (Mt 20:9,10); They received every man a penny. Note, All that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, shall undoubtedly obtain eternal life (Ro 2:7), not as wages for the value of their work, but as the gift of God. Though there be degrees of glory in heaven, yet it will be to all a complete happiness. They that come from the east and west, and so come in late, that are picked up out of the highways and the hedges, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the same feast, Mt 7:11. In heaven, every vessel will be full,

brimful, though every vessel is not alike large and capacious. In the distribution of future joys, as it was in the gathering of the manna, he that shall gather much, will have nothing over, and he that shall gather little, will have no lack, Ex 16:18. Those whom Christ fed miraculously, though of different sizes, men, women, and children, did all eat, and were filled.

The giving of a whole day's wages to those that had not done the tenth part of a day's work, is designed to show that God distributes his rewards by grace and sovereignty, and not of debt. The best of the labourers, and those that begin soonest, having so many empty spaces in their time, and their works not being filled up before God, may truly be said to labour in the vineyard scarcely one hour of their twelve; but because we are under grace, and not under the law, even such defective services, done in sincerity, shall not only be accepted, but by free grace richly rewarded. Compare Lu 17:7,8,12:37.

Secondly, The particular pleading with those that were offended with this distribution in gavel-kind. The circumstances of this serve to adorn the parable; but the general scope is plain, that the last shall be first.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

We have here, the offence taken (Mt 20:11,12); They murmured at the good man of the house; not that there is, or can be, any discontent or murmuring in heaven, for that is both guilt and grief, and in heaven there is neither; but there may be, and often are, discontent and murmuring concerning heaven and heavenly things, while they are in prospect and promise in this world. This signifies the jealousy which the Jews were provoked to by the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. As the elder brother, in

the parable of the prodigal, repined at the reception of his younger brother, and complained of his father's generosity to him; so these labourers quarrelled with their master, and found fault, not because they had not enough, so much as because others were made equal with them. They boast, as the prodigal's elder brother did, of their good services; We have borne the burthen and heat of the day; that was the most they could make of it. Sinners are said to labour in the very fire (Hab 2:13), whereas God's servants, at the worst, do but labour in the sun; not in the heat of the iron furnace, but only in the heat of the day. Now these last have worked but one hour, and that too in the cool of the day; and yet thou hast made them equal with us. The Gentiles, who are newly called in, have as much of the privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah as the Jews have, who have so long been labouring in the vineyard of the Old-Testament church, under the yoke of the ceremonial law, in expectation of that kingdom. Note, There is a great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and other too much, of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little, in the work of God. Very apt we all are to undervalue the deserts of others, and to overvalue our own. Perhaps, Christ here gives an intimation to Peter, not to boast too much, as he seemed to do, of his having left all to follow Christ; as if, because he and the rest of them had borne the burthen and heat of the day thus, they must have a heaven by themselves. It is hard for those that do or suffer more than ordinary for God, not to be elevated too much with the thought of it, and to expect to merit by it. Blessed Paul guarded against this, when, though the chief of the apostles, he owned himself to be nothing, to be less than the least of all saints.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong:
didst not thou agree with me for a penny ?
14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

The offence removed. Three things the master of the house urges, in answer to this ill-natured surmise.

(a) That the complainant had no reason at all to say he had any wrong done to him, Mt 20:13,14. Here he asserts his own justice; Friend, I do thee no wrong. He calls him friend, for in reasoning

with others we should use soft words and hard arguments; if our inferiors are peevish and provoking, yet we should not thereby be put into a passion, but speak calmly to them.

[1.] It is incontestably true, that God can do no wrong. This is the prerogative of the King of kings. Is there unrighteousness with God? The apostle startles at the thought of it; God forbid! Ro 3:5,6. His word should silence all our murmurings, that, whatever God does to us, or withholds from us, he does us no wrong.

[2.] If God gives that grace to others, which he denies to us, it is kindness to them, but no injustice to us; and bounty to another, while it is no injustice to us, we ought not to find fault with. Because it is free grace, that is given to those that have it, boasting is for ever excluded; and because it is free grace, that is withheld from those that have it not, murmuring is for ever excluded. Thus shall every mouth be stopped, and all flesh be silent before God.

To convince the murmurer that he did no wrong, he refers him to the bargain: "Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? And if thou hast what thou didst agree for, thou hast no reason to cry out of wrong; thou shalt have what we agreed for." Though God is a debtor to none, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself a debtor by his own promise, for the benefit of which, through Christ, believers agree with him, and he will stand to his part of the agreement. Note, It is good for us often to consider what it was that we agreed with God for. First, Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; they choose their portion in this life (Ps 17:14); in these things they are willing to have their reward (Mt 6:2,5), their consolation (Lu 6:24), their good things (Lu 16:25); and with these they shall be put off, shall be cut off from spiritual and eternal blessings; and herein God does them no wrong; they have what they chose, the penny they agreed for; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it; it is conclusive against them. Secondly, Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and they must remember that they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take God's word for it? Thou didst; and wilt

thou go and agree with the world? Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all, and to take up with nothing short of it? And wilt thou seek for a happiness in the creature, or think from thence to make up the deficiencies of thy happiness in God?

He therefore,

1. Ties him to his bargain (Mt 20:14); Take that thine is, and go thy way. If we understand it of that which is ours by debt or absolute propriety, it would be a dreadful word; we are all undone, if we be put off with that only which we can call our own. The highest creature must go away into nothing, if he must go away with that only which is his own: but if we understand it of that which is ours by gift, the free gift of God, it teaches us to be content with such things as we have. Instead of repining that we have no more, let us take what we have, and be thankful. If God be better in any respect to others than to us, yet we have no reason to complain while he is so much better to us than we deserve, in giving us our penny, though we are unprofitable servants.

2. He tells him that those he envied should fare as well as he did; "I will give unto this last, even as unto thee; I am resolved I will." Note, The unchangeableness of God's purposes in dispensing his gifts should silence our murmurings. If he will do it, it is not for us to gainsay; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Neither giveth he an account of any of his matters; nor is it fit he should.

(b) He had no reason to quarrel with the master; for what he gave was absolutely his own, Mt 20:15. As before he asserted his justice, so here his sovereignty; Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Note,

[1.] God is the Owner of all good; his propriety in it is absolute, sovereign, and unlimited.

[2.] He may therefore give or withhold his blessings, as he pleases. What we have, is not our own, and therefore it is not lawful for us to do what we will with it; but what God has, is his own; and this will justify him, First, In all the disposals of his providence; when God takes from us that which was dear to us, and which we could ill spare, we must silence our discontents with this; May he not do what he will with his own? Abstulit, sed et dedit--He hath taken away; but he originally gave. It is not for such depending creatures as we are to quarrel with our Sovereign. Secondly, In all the dispensations of his grace, God gives or withholds the means of grace, and the Spirit of grace, as he pleases. Not but that there is a counsel in every will of God, and what seems to us to be done arbitrarily, will appear at length to have been done wisely, and for holy ends. But this is enough to silence all murmurs and objectors, that God is sovereign Lord of all, and may do what he will with his own. We are in his hand, as clay in the hands of a potter; and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or strive with him.

(c) He had no reason to envy his fellow servant, or to grudge at him; or to be angry that he came into the vineyard no sooner; for he was not sooner called; he had no reason to be angry that the master had given him wages for the whole day, when he had idled away the greatest part of it; for Is thine eye evil, because I am good? See here,

[1.] The nature of envy; It is an evil eye. The eye is often both the inlet and the outlet of this sin. Saul saw that David prospered, and he eyed him, 1Sa 18:9,15. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. What can have more evil in it? It is grief to ourselves, anger to God, and ill-will to our neighbour; and it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour, in it; it is an evil, an only evil.

[2.] The aggravation of it; "It is because I am good." Envy is unlikeness to God, who is good, and doeth good, and delighteth in

doing good; nay, it is an opposition and contradiction to God; it is a dislike of his proceedings, and a displeasure at what he does, and is pleased with. It is a direct violation of both the two great commandments at once; both that of love to God, in whose will we should acquiesce, and love to our neighbour, in whose welfare we should rejoice. Thus man's badness takes occasion from God's goodness to be more exceedingly sinful.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good ?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

"Take heed lest by indulging the spirit of these murmurers at the penny given to the last hired, ye miss your own penny, though first in the vineyard; while the consciousness of having come in so late may inspire these last with such a humble frame, and such admiration of the grace that has hired and rewarded them at all, as will put them into the foremost place in the end."

he therefore does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some. See here the nature of envy. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. It is a grief to ourselves, displeasing to God, and hurtful to our neighbours: it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour. Let us forego every proud claim, and seek for salvation as a free gift. Let us never envy or grudge, but rejoice and praise God for his mercy to others as well as to ourselves.

Lastly, Here is the application of the parable (Mt 20:16), in that observation which occasioned it (Mt 19:30); So the first shall be last, and the last first. There were many that followed Christ now in the regeneration, when the gospel kingdom was first set up, and these Jewish converts seemed to have got the start of others; but Christ, to obviate and silence their boasting, here tells them,

1. That they might possibly be outstripped by their successors in profession, and, though they were before others in profession, might be found inferior to them in knowledge, grace, and holiness. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world,

which as yet stood idle in the market-place, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful Christians, than were found among the Jews. More and more excellent shall be the children of the desolate than those of the married wife, Isa 54:1. Who knows but that the church, in its old age, may be more fat and flourishing than ever, to show that the Lord is upright? Though primitive Christianity had more of the purity and power of that holy religion than is to be found in the degenerate age wherein we live, yet what labourers may be sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day, in the Philadelphian period, and what plentiful effusions of the Spirit may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?

2. That they had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for many are called but few chosen. This is applied to the Jews (Mt 22:14); it was so then, it is too true still; many are called with a common call, that are not chosen with a saving choice. All that are chosen from eternity, are effectually called, in the fulness of time (Ro 8:30), so that in making our effectual calling sure we make sure our election (2Pe 1:10); but it is not so as to the outward call; many are called, and yet refuse (Pr 1:24), nay, as they are called to God, so they go from him (Ho 11:2,7), by which it appears that they were not chosen, for the election will obtain, Ro 11:7. Note, There are but few chosen Christians, in comparison with the many that are only called Christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an external call; and we should fear lest we be found but seeming Christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blemished Christians, and so should seem to come short, Heb 4:1.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19 and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

This is the third time that Christ gave his disciples notice of his approaching sufferings; he was not going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and to offer up himself the great Passover; both must be done at Jerusalem: there the passover must be kept (De 12:5), and there a prophet must perish, because there the great Sanhedrim sat, who were judges in that case, Lu 13:33. Observe,

I The privacy of this prediction; He took the twelve disciples apart in the way. This was one of those things which were told to them in darkness, but which they were afterward to speak in the light, Mt 10:27. His secret was with them, as his friends, and this particularly. It was a hard saying, and, if any could bear it, they could. They would be more immediately exposed to peril with him, and therefore it was requisite that they should know of it, that, being fore-warned, they might be fore-armed. It was not fit to be spoken publicly as yet,

1. Because many that were cool toward him, would hereby have been driven to turn their backs upon him; the scandal of the cross would have frightened them from following him any longer.

2. Because many that were hot for him, would hereby be driven to take up arms in his defense, and it might have occasioned an uproar among the people (Mt 26:5), which would have been laid to his charge, if he had told them of it publicly before: and, besides that such methods are utterly disagreeable to the genius of his kingdom, which is not of this world, he never countenanced any thing which had a tendency to prevent his sufferings. This discourse was not in the synagogue, or in the house, but in the way, as they travelled along; which teaches us, in our walks or travels with our friends, to keep up such discourse as is good, and to the use of edifying. See De 16:7.

II The prediction itself, Mt 20:18,19. Observe,

1. It is but a repetition of what he had once and again said before, Mt 16:21,17:22,23. This intimates that he not only saw clearly what troubles lay before him, but that his heart was upon his suffering-work; it filled him, not with fear, then he would have studied to avoid it, and could have done it, but with desire and expectation; he spoke thus frequently of his sufferings, because through them he was to enter into his glory. Note, It is good for us to be often thinking and speaking of our death, and of the sufferings which, it is likely, we may meet with betwixt this and the grave; and thus, by making them more familiar, they would become less formidable. This is one way of dying daily, and of taking up our cross daily, to be daily speaking of the cross, and of dying; which would come neither the sooner nor the surer, but much the better, for our thoughts and discourses of them.

2. He is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than any time before. He had said (Mt 16:21), that he should suffer many things, and be killed; and (Mt 17:22), that he should be betrayed into the hands of men, and they should kill him; but here he adds; that he shall be condemned, and delivered to the Gentiles, that they shall mock him, and scourge him, and crucify him. These are frightful things, and the certain foresight of them was enough to damp an ordinary resolution, yet (as was foretold concerning him, Isa 42:4) he did not fail, nor was discouraged; but the more clearly he foresaw his sufferings, the more cheerfully he went forth to meet them. He foretels by whom he should suffer, by the chief priests and the scribes; so he had said before, but here he adds, They shall deliver him to the Gentiles, that he might be the better understood; for the chief priests and scribes had no power to put him to death, nor was crucifying a manner of death in use among the Jews. Christ suffered from the malice both of Jews and Gentiles, because he was to suffer for the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles; both had a hand in his death, because he was to reconcile both by his cross, Eph 2:16.

3. Here, as before, he annexes the mention of his resurrection and his glory to that of his death and sufferings; The third day he shall rise again. He still brings this in,

(a) To encourage himself in his sufferings, and to carry him cheerfully through them. He endured the cross for the joy set before him; he foresaw he should rise again, and rise quickly, the third day. He shall be straightway glorified, Joh 13:32. The reward is not only sure, but very near.

(b) To encourage his disciples, and comfort them, who would be overwhelmed and greatly terrified by his sufferings.

(c) To direct us, under all the sufferings of this present time, to keep up a believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, to look at the things that are not seen, that are eternal, which will enable us to call the present afflictions light, and but for a moment.

The Request of James and John

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou ? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

Here, is first, the request of the two disciples to Christ, and the rectifying of the mistake upon which that was grounded, Mt 20:20-23. The sons of Zebedee were James and John, two of the first three of Christ's disciples; Peter and they were his favourites; John was the disciple whom Jesus loved; yet none were so often reproved as they; whom Christ loves best he reproves most, Re 3:19.

Here is the ambitious address they made to Christ--that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, Mt 20:20,21. It was a great degree of faith, that they were confident of his kingdom, though now he appeared in meanness; but a great degree of ignorance, that they still expected a temporal

kingdom, with worldly pomp and power, when Christ had so often told them of sufferings and self-denial. In this they expected to be grandees. They ask not for employment in this kingdom, but for honour only; and no place would serve them in this imaginary kingdom, but the highest, next to Christ, and above every body else. It is probable that the last word in Christ's foregoing discourse gave occasion to this request, that the third day he should rise again. They concluded that his resurrection would be his entrance upon his kingdom, and therefore were resolved to put in betimes for the best place; nor would they lose it for want of speaking early. What Christ said to comfort them, they thus abused, and were puffed up with. Some cannot bear comforts, but they turn them to a wrong purpose; as sweetmeats in a foul stomach produce bile. Now observe,

1. There was policy in the management of this address, that they put their mother on to present it, that it might be looked upon as her request, and not theirs. Though proud people think well of themselves, they would not be thought to do so, and therefore affect nothing more than a show of humility (Col 2:18), and others must be put on to court that honour for them, which they are ashamed to court for themselves. The mother of James and John was Salome, as appears by comparing Mt 27:61,Mk 15:40. Some think she was daughter of Cleophas or Alpheus, and sister or cousin german to Mary the mother of our Lord. She was one of those women that attended Christ, and ministered to him; and they thought she had such an interest in him, that he could deny her nothing, and therefore they made her their advocate. Thus when Adonijah had reasonable request to make to Solomon, he put Bathsheba on to speak for him. It was their mother's weakness thus to become that tool of their ambition, which she should have given a check to. Those that are wise and good, would not be seen in an ill-favoured thing. In gracious requests, we should learn this wisdom, to desire the prayers of those that have an interest at the throne of grace; we should beg of our praying friends to pray for us, and reckon it a real kindness.

It was likewise policy to ask first for a general grant, that he would do a certain thing for them, not in faith, but in presumption, upon

that general promise; Ask, and it shall be given you; in which is implied this qualification of our request, that it be according to the revealed will of God, otherwise we ask and have not, if we ask to consume it upon our lusts, Jam 4:3.

2. There was pride at the bottom of it, a proud conceit of their own merit, a proud contempt of their brethren, and a proud desire of honour and preferment; pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is a holy ambition to strive to excel others in grace and holiness; but it is a sinful ambition to covet to exceed others in pomp and grandeur. Seekest thou great things for thyself, when thou hast just now heard of thy Master's being mocked, and scourged, and crucified? For shame! Seek them not, Jer 45:5.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

Christ's answer to this address (Mt 20:22,23), directed not to the mother, but to the sons that set her on. Though others be our mouth in prayer, the answer will be given to us according as we stand effected. Christ's answer is very mild; they were overtaken in the fault of ambition, but Christ restored them with the spirit of meekness. Observe,

1. How he reproved the ignorance and error of their petition; Ye know not what ye ask.

(a) They were much in the dark concerning the kingdom they had their eye upon; they dreamed of a temporal kingdom, whereas Christ's kingdom is not of this world. They knew not what it was to sit on his right hand, and on his left; they talked of it as blind men do of colours. Our apprehensions of that glory which is yet to be revealed, are like the apprehensions which a child has of the preferments of grown men. If at length, through grace, we arrive at perfection, we shall then put away such childish fancies: when we come to see face to face, we shall know what we enjoy; but now, alas, we know not what we ask; we can but ask for the good as it lies

in the promise, Tit 1:2. What it will be in the performance, eye has not seen, nor ear heard.

(b) They were much in the dark concerning the way to that kingdom. They know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has joined together. The disciples thought, when they had left what little all they had for Christ, and had gone about the country awhile preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and sufferings were over, and it was now time to ask, What shall we have? As if nothing were now to be looked for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had yet met with. They imagined their warfare was accomplished when it was scarcely begun, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan. Note,

[1.] We are all apt, when we are but girding on the harness, to boast as though we had put it off.

[2.] We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in our way to it.

2. How he repressed the vanity and ambition of their request. They were pleasing themselves with the fancy of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in great state; now, to check this, he leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, and leaves them in the dark about their glory.

(a) He leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, which they were not so mindful of as they ought to have been. They looked so earnestly upon the crown, the prize, that they were ready to plunge headlong and unprepared into the foul way that led to it; and therefore he thinks it necessary to put them in mind of the hardships that were before them, that they might be no surprise or terror to them. Observe,

[1.] How fairly he puts the matter to them, concerning these difficulties (Mt 20:22); "You would stand candidates for the first post of honour in the kingdom; but are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? You talk of what great things you must have when you have done your work; but are you able to hold out to the end of it?" Put the matter seriously to yourselves. These same two disciples once knew not what manner of spirit they were of, when they were disturbed with anger, Lu 9:55; and now they were not aware what was amiss in their spirits when they were lifted up with ambition. Christ sees that pride in us which we discern not in ourselves.

Note,

First, That to suffer for Christ is to drink of a cup, and to be baptized with a baptism. In this description of sufferings, 1. It is true, that affliction doth abound. It is supposed to be a bitter cup, that is drunk of, wormwood and gall, those waters of a full cup, that are wrung out to God's people (Ps 43:10); a cup of trembling indeed, but not of fire and brimstone, the portion of the cup of wicked men, Ps 11:6. It is supposed to be a baptism, a washing with the waters of affliction; some are dipped in them; the waters compass them about even to the soul (Jon 2:5); others have but a sprinkling of them; both are baptism, some are overwhelmed in them, as in a deluge, others ill wet, as in a sharp shower. But, 2. Even in this, consolation doth more abound. It is but a cup, not an ocean; it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but we shall see the bottom of it; it is a cup in the hand of a Father (Joh 18:11); and it is full of mixture, Ps 75:8. It is but a baptism; if dipped, that is the worst of it, not drowned; perplexed, but not in despair. Baptism is an ordinance by which we join ourselves to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Eze 20:37,Isa 48:10. Baptism is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, Php 1:29.

Secondly, It is to drink of the same cup that Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the same baptism that he was baptized with. Christ is beforehand with us in suffering, and in that as in other things left us an example. 1. It bespeaks the condescension of a suffering Christ, that he would drink of such a cup (Joh 18:11), nay, and such a brook (Ps 110:7), and drink so deep, and yet so cheerfully; that he would be baptized with such a baptism, and was so forward to it, Lu 12:50. It was much that he would be baptized with water as a common sinner, much more with blood as an uncommon malefactor. But in all this he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was made sin for us. 2. It bespeaks the consolation of suffering Christians, that they do but pledge Christ in the bitter cup, are partakers of his sufferings, and fill up that which is behind of them; we must therefore arm ourselves with the same mind, and go to him without the camp.

Thirdly, It is good for us to be often putting it to ourselves, whether we are able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism. We must expect suffering, and not look upon it as a hard thing to suffer well and as becomes us. Are we able to suffer cheerfully, and in the worst of times still to hold fast our integrity? What can we afford to part with for Christ? How far will we give him credit? Could I find in my heart to drink of a bitter cup, and to be baptized with a bloody baptism, rather than let go my hold of Christ? The truth is, Religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing; but it is worth little, if it be not worth suffering for. Now let us sit down, and count the cost of dying for Christ rather than denying him, and ask, Can we take him upon these terms?

[2.] See how boldly they engage for themselves; they said, We are able, in hopes of sitting on his right hand, and on his left; but at the same time they fondly hoped that they should never be tried. As before they knew not what they asked, so now they knew not what they answered. We are able; they would have done well to put in, "Lord, by thy strength, and in thy grace, we are able, otherwise we

are not." But the same that was Peter's temptation, to be confident of his own sufficiency, and presume upon his own strength, was here the temptation of James and John; and it is a sin we are all prone to. They knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism, and therefore they were thus bold in promising for themselves. But those are commonly most confident, that are least acquainted with the cross.

[3.] See how plainly and positively their sufferings are here foretold (Mt 20:23); Ye shall drink of my cup. Sufferings foreseen will be the more easily borne, especially if looked upon under a right notion, as drinking of his cup, and being baptized with his baptism. Christ began in suffering for us, and expects we should pledge him in suffering for him. Christ will have us know the worst, that we may make the best of our way to heaven; Ye shall drink; that is, ye shall suffer. James drank the bloody cup first of all the apostles, Ac 12:2 John, though at last he died in his bed, if we may credit the ecclesiastical historians, yet often drank of this bitter cup, as when he was banished into the isle of Patmos (Re 1:9), and when (as they say) at Ephesus he was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but was miraculously preserved. He was, as the rest of the apostles, in deaths often. He took the cup, offered himself to the baptism, and it was accepted.

(b) He leaves them in the dark about the degrees of their glory. To carry them cheerfully through their sufferings, it was enough to be assured that they should have a place in his kingdom. The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompence for the greatest sufferings on earth. But as to the preferments there, it was not fit there should be any intimation given for whom they were intended; for the infirmity of their present state could not bear such a discovery with any evenness; "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, and therefore it is not for you to ask it or to know it; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

Note,

[1.] It is very probable that there are degrees of glory in heaven; for our Saviour seems to allow that there are some that shall sit on his right hand and on his left, in the highest places.

[2.] As the future glory itself, so the degrees of it, are purposed and prepared in the eternal counsel of God; as the common salvation, so the more peculiar honours, are appointed, the whole affair is long since settled, and there is a certain measure of the stature, both in grace and glory, Eph 4:13.

[3.] Christ, in dispensing the fruits of his own purchase, goes exactly by the measures of his Father's purpose; It is not mine to give, save to them (so it may be read) for whom it is prepared. Christ has the sole power of giving eternal life, but then it is to as many as were given him, Joh 17:2. It is not mine to give, that is, to promise now; that matter is already settled and concerted, and the Father and Son understand one another perfectly well in this matter. "It is not mine to give to those that seek and are ambitious of it, but to those that by great humility and self-denial are prepared for it."

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here are the reproof and instruction which Christ gave to the other ten disciples for their displeasure at the request of James and John.

He had much to bear with in them all, they were so weak in knowledge and grace, yet he bore their manners.

1 The fret that the ten disciples were in (Mt 20:24). They were moved with indignation against the two brethren; not because they were desirous to be preferred, which was their sin, and for which Christ was displeased with them, but because they were desirous to be preferred before them, which was a reflection upon them. Many seem to have indignation at sin; but it is not because it is sin, but because it touches them. They will inform against a man that swears; but it is only if he swear at them, and affront them, not because he dishonours God. These disciples were angry at their brethren's ambition, though they themselves, bay because they themselves, were as ambitious. Note, It is common for people to be angry at those sins in others which they allow of and indulge in themselves. Those that are proud and covetous themselves do not care to see others so. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, or is the cause of more indignation and contention, than ambition, and desire of greatness. We never find Christ's disciples quarreling, but something of this was at the bottom of it.

2 The check that Christ gave them, which was very gentle, rather by way of instruction what they should be, than by way of reprehension for what they were. He had reproved this very sin before (Mt 18:3), and told them they must be humble as little children; yet they relapsed into it, and yet he reproved them for it thus mildly.

He called them unto him, which intimates great tenderness and familiarity. He did not, in anger, bid them get out of his presence, but called them, in love, to come into his presence: for therefore he is fit to teach, and we are invited to learn of him, because he is meek and lowly in heart. What he had to say concerned both the two disciples and the ten, and therefore he will have them all together. And he tells them, that, whereas they were asking which of them should have dominion a temporal kingdom, there was really no such dominion reserved for any of them. For,

(a) They must not be like the princes of the Gentiles. Christ's disciples must not be like Gentiles, no not like princes of the Gentiles. Principality doth no more become ministers than Gentilism doth Christians.

Observe,

[1.] What is the way of the princes of the Gentiles (Mt 20:25); to exercise dominion and authority over their subjects, and (if they can but win the upper hand with a strong hand) over one another too. That which bears them up in it is, that they are great, and great men think they may do any thing. Dominion and authority are the great things which the princes of the Gentiles pursue, and pride themselves in; they would bear sway, would carry all before them, have every body truckle to them, and every sheaf bow to theirs. They would have it cried before them, Bow the knee; like Nebuchadnezzar, who slew, and kept alive, at pleasure.

[2.] What is the will of Christ concerning his apostles and ministers, in this matter.

First, "It shall not be so among you. The constitution of the spiritual kingdom is quite different from this. You are to teach the subjects of this kingdom, to instruct and beseech them, to counsel and comfort them, to take pains with them, and suffer with them, not to exercise dominion or authority over them; you are not to lord it over God's heritage (1Pe 5:3), but to labour in it." This forbids not only tyranny, and abuse of power, but the claim or use of any such secular authority as the princes of the Gentiles lawfully exercise. So hard is it for vain men, even good men, to have such authority, and not to be puffed up with it, and do more hurt than good with it, that our Lord Jesus saw fit wholly to banish it out of his church. Paul himself disowns dominion over the faith of any, 2Co 1:24. The pomp and grandeur of the princes of the Gentiles ill become Christ's disciples. Now, if there were no such power and honour intended

to be in the church, it was nonsense for them to be striving who should have it. They knew not what they asked.

Secondly, How then shall it be among the disciples of Christ? Something of greatness among them Christ himself had intimated, and here he explains it; "He that will be great among you, that will be chief, that would really be so, and would be found to be so at last, let him be your minister, your servant," Mt 20:26,27. Here observe,

1. That it is the duty of Christ's disciples to serve one another, for mutual edification. This includes both humility and usefulness. The followers of Christ must be ready to stoop to the meanest offices of love for the good one of another, must submit one to another (1Pe 5:5,Eph 5:21), and edify one another (Ro 14:19), please one another for good, Ro 15:2 The great apostle made himself every one's servant; see 1Co 9:19.

2. It is the dignity of Christ's disciples faithfully to discharge this duty. The way to be great and chief is to be humble and serviceable. Those are to be best accounted of, and most respected, in the church, and will be so by all that understand things aright; not those that are dignified with high and mighty names, like the names of the great ones of the earth, that appear in pomp, and assume to themselves a power proportionable, but those that are most humble and self-denying, and lay out themselves most to do good, though to the diminishing of themselves. These honour God most, and those he will honour. As he must become a fool that would be wise, so he must become a servant that would be chief. St. Paul was a great example of this; he laboured more abundantly than they all, made himself (as some would call it) a drudge to his work; and is not he chief? Do we not by consent call him the great apostle, though he called himself less than the least? And perhaps our Lord Jesus had an eye to him, when he said, There were last that should be first; for Paul was one born out of due time (1Co 15:8); not only the youngest child of the family of the apostles, but a posthumous one, yet he became greatest. And perhaps he it was for whom the

first post of honour in Christ's kingdom was reserved and prepared of his Father, not for James who sought it; and therefore just before Paul began to be famous as an apostle, Providence ordered it so that James was cut off (Ac 12:2), that in the college of the twelve Paul might be substituted in his room.

(b) They must be like the Master himself; and it is very fit that they should, that, while they were in the world, they should be as he was when he was in the world; for to both the present state is a state of humiliation, the crown and glory were reserved for both in the future state. Let them consider that the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, Mt 20:28. Our Lord Jesus here sets himself before his disciples as a pattern of those two things before recommended, humility, and usefulness.

[1.] Never was there such an example of humility and condescension as there was in the life of Christ, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. When the Son of God came into the world, his Ambassador to the children of men, one would think he should have been ministered to, should have appeared in an equipage agreeable to his person and character; but he did not so; he made no figure, had no pompous train of state-servants to attend him, nor was he clad in robes of honour, for he took upon him the form of a servant. He was indeed ministered to as a poor man, which was a part of his humiliation; there were those that ministered to him of their substance (Lu 8:2,3); but he was never ministered to as a great man; he never took state upon him, was not waited on at table; he once washed his disciples' feet, but we never read that they washed his feet. He came to minister help to all that were in distress; he made himself a servant to the sick and diseased; was as ready to their requests as ever any servant was at the beck of his master, and took as much pains to serve them; he attended continually to this very thing, and denied himself both food and rest to attend to it.

[2.] Never was there such an example of beneficence and usefulness as there was in the death of Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many. He lived as a servant, and went about doing good; but he died as a sacrifice, and in that he did the greatest good of all. He came into the world on purpose to give his life a ransom; it was first in his intention. The aspiring princes of the Gentiles make the lives of many a ransom for their own honour, and perhaps a sacrifice to their own humour. Christ doth not do so; his subjects' blood is precious to him, and he is not prodigal of it (Ps 72:14); but on the contrary, he gives his honour and life too ransom for his subjects. Note, First, Jesus Christ laid down his life for a ransom. Our lives were forfeited into the hands of divine justice by sin. Christ, by parting with his life, made atonement for sin, and so rescued ours; he was made sin, and a curse for us, and died, not only for our good, but in our stead, Ac 20:28,1Pe 1:18,19. Secondly, It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many; and, if for many, then, saith the poor doubting soul, "Why not for me?" It was for many, that by him many may be made righteous. These many were his seed, for which his soul travailed (Isa 53:10,11); for many, so they will be when they come all together, though now they appear but a little flock.

Now this is a good reason why we should not strive for precedency, because the cross is our banner, and our Master's death is our life. It is a good reason why we should study to do good, and, in consideration of the love of Christ in dying for us, not hesitate to lay down our lives for the brethren, 1Jo 3:16. Ministers should be more forward than others to serve and suffer for the good of souls, as blessed Paul was, Ac 20:24,Php 2:17. The nearer we are all concerned in, and the more we are advantaged by, the humility and humiliation of Christ, the more ready and careful we should be to imitate it.

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

29 And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
30 And, behold, two blind men sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

We have here an account of the cure of two poor blind beggars; in which we may observe,

Their address to Christ, Mt 20:29,30. And in this,

1 The circumstances of it are observable. It was as Christ and his disciples departed from Jericho; of that devoted place, which was rebuilt under a curse, Christ took his leave with this blessing, for he received gifts even for the rebellious. It was in the presence of a great multitude that followed him; Christ had a numerous, though not a pompous, attendance, and did good to them, though he did not take state to himself. This multitude that followed him for loaves, and some for love, some for curiosity, and some in expectation of his temporal reign, which the disciples themselves dreamed of, very few with desire to be taught their duty; yet, for the sake of those few, he confirmed his doctrine by miracles wrought in the presence of great multitudes; who, if they were not convinced by them, would be the more inexcusable. Two blind men concurred in their request; for joint-prayer is pleasing to Christ, Mt 18:19. These joint-sufferers were joint-suitors; being companions in the same tribulation, they were partners in the same supplication. Note, It is good for those that are labouring under the same calamity, or infirmity of body or mind, to join together in the same prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken one another's fervency, and encourage one another's faith. There is mercy enough in Christ for all the petitioners. These blind men were sitting by the way-side, as blind beggars used to do. Note, Those that would receive mercy from Christ, must place themselves there where his out-goings are; where he manifests himself to those that seek him. It is good thus to way-lay Christ, to be in his road.

They heard that Jesus passed by. Though they were blind, they were not deaf. Seeing and hearing are the learning senses. It is a great calamity to want either; but the defect of one may be, and often is, made up in the acuteness of the other; and therefore it has been observed by some as an instance of the goodness of Providence, that none were ever known to be born both blind and deaf; but that,

one way or other, all are in a capacity of receiving knowledge. These blind men had heard of Christ by the hearing of the ear, but they desired that their eyes might see him. When they heard that Jesus passed by, they asked no further questions, who were with him, or whether he was in haste, but immediately cried out. Note, It is good to improve the present opportunity, to make the best of the price now in the hand, because, if once let slip, it may never return; these blind men did so, and did wisely; for we do not find that Christ ever came to Jericho again. Now is the accepted time.

2 The address itself is more observable; Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David, repeated again, Mt 20:31. Four things are recommended to us for an example in this address; for, though the eye of the body was dark, the eye of the mind was enlightened concerning truth, duty, and interest.

(a) Here is an example of importunity in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest; men in want are earnest, of course. Cold desires do but beg denials. Those that would prevail in prayer, must stir up themselves to take hold on God in duty. When they were discountenanced in it, they cried the more. The stream of fervency, if it be stopped, will rise and swell the higher. This wrestling with God in prayer, and makes us the fitter to receive mercy; for the more it is striven for, the more it will be prized and thankfully acknowledged.

(b) Of humility in prayer; in that word, Have mercy on us, not specifying the favour, or prescribing what, much less pleading merit, but casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy, in what way he pleases; "Only have mercy." They ask not for silver and gold, though they were poor, but mercy, mercy. This is that which our hearts must be upon, when we come to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, Heb 4:16,Ps 130:7.

(c) Of faith in prayer; in the title they gave to Christ, which was in the nature of a plea; O Lord, thou Son o David; they confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord, and therefore had authority to command deliverance for them. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Christ Lord, 1Co 12:3. Thus they take their encouragement in prayer from his power, as in calling him the Son of David they take encouragement from his goodness, as Messiah, of whom so many kind and tender things had been foretold, particularly his compassion to the poor and needy, Ps 72:12,13. It is of excellent use, in prayer, to eye Christ in the grace and glory of his Messiahship; to remember that he is the Son of David, whose office it is to help, and save, and to plead it with him.

(d) Of perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding discouragement. The multitude rebuked them, as noisy, clamorous, and impertinent, and bid them hold their peace, and not disturb the Master, who perhaps at first himself seemed not to regard them. In following Christ with our prayers, we must expect to meet with hindrances and manifold discouragements from within and from without, something or other that bids us hold our peace. Such rebuke are permitted, that faith and fervency, patience and perseverance, may be tried. These poor blind men were rebuked by the multitude that followed Christ. Note, the sincere and serious beggars at Christ's door commonly meet with the worst rebukes from those that follow him but in pretence and hypocrisy. But they would not be beaten off so; when they were in pursuit of such a mercy, it was no time to compliment, or to practise a timid delicacy; no, they cried the more. Note, Men ought always to pray, and not to faint; to pray with all perseverance (Lu 18:1); to continue in prayer with resolution, and not to yield to opposition.

31 And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

32 And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?

33 They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

The answer of Christ to this address of theirs. The multitude rebuked them; but Christ encouraged them. It were sad for us, if the Master were not more kind and tender than the multitude; but he loves to countenance those with special favour, that are under

frowns, and rebukes, and contempts from men. He will not suffer his humble supplicants to be run down, and put out of countenance.

1. He stood still, and called them, Mt 20:32. He was now going up to Jerusalem, and was straitened till his work there was accomplished; and yet he stood still to cure these blind men. Note, When we are ever so much in haste about any business, yet we should be willing to stand still to do good. He called them, not because he could not cure them at a distance, but because he would do it in the most obliging and instructive way, and would countenance weak but willing patients and petitioners. Christ not only enjoins us to pray, but invites us; holds out the golden sceptre to us, and bids us come touch the top of it.

2. He enquired further into their case; What will ye that I shall do unto you? This implies,

(a) A very fair offer; "Here I am; let me know what you would have, and you shall have it." What would we more? He is able to do for us, and as willing as he is able; Ask, and it shall be given you.

(b) A condition annexed to this offer, which is a very easy and reasonable one--that they should tell him what they would have him do for them. One would think this a strange question, any one might tell what they would have. Christ knew well enough; but he would know it from them, whether they begged only for alms, as from a common person, or for a cure, as from the Messiah. Note, It is the will of God that we should in every thing make our requests known to him by prayer and supplication; not to inform or move him, but to qualify ourselves for the mercy. The waterman in the boat, who with his hook takes hold of the shore, does not thereby pull the shore to the boat, but the boat to the shore. So in prayer we do not draw the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy.

They soon made known their request to him, such a one as they never made to any one else; Lord, that our eyes may be opened. The wants and burthens of the body we are soon sensible of, and

can readily relate; Ubi dolor, ubi digitus--The finger promptly points to the seat of pain. O that we were but as apprehensive of our spiritual maladies, and could as feelingly complain of them, especially our spiritual blindness! Lord, that the eyes of our mind may be opened! Many are spiritually blind, and yet say they see, Joh 9:41. Were we but sensible of our darkness, we should soon apply ourselves to him, who alone has the eye-salve, with this request, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.

3. He cured them; when he encouraged them to seek him, he did not say, Seek in vain. What he did was an instance,

(a) Of his pity; He had compassion on them. Misery is the object of mercy. They that are poor and blind are wretched and miserable (Re 3:17), and the objects of compassion. It was the tender mercy of our God, that gave light and sight to them that sat in darkness, Lu 1:78,79. We cannot help those that are under such calamities, as Christ did; but we may and must pity them, as Christ did, and draw out our soul to them.

(b) Of his power; He that formed the eye, can he not heal it? Yes, he can, he did, he did it easily, he touched their eyes; he did it effectually, Immediately their eyes received sight. Thus he not only proved that he was sent of God, but showed on what errand he was sent--to give sight to those that are spiritually blind, to turn them from darkness to light.

Lastly, These blind men, when they had received sight, followed him. Note, None follow Christ blindfold. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. They followed Christ, as his disciples, to learn of him, and as his witnesses, eye-witnesses, to bear their testimony to him and to his power and goodness. The best evidence of spiritual illumination is a constant inseparable adherence to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Leader.

34 So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Matthew-21

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

1 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to
Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,
2 saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall
find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.

All the four evangelists take notice of this passage of Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, five days before his death. The passover was on the fourteenth day of the month, and this was the tenth; on which day the law appointed that the paschal lamb should be taken up (Ex 12:3), and set apart for that service; on that day therefore Christ our Passover, who was to be sacrificed for us, was publicly showed. So that this was the prelude to his passion. He had lodged at Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, for some time; at a supper there the night before Mary had anointed his feet, Joh 12:3. But, as usual with ambassadors, he deferred his public entry till some time after his arrival. Our Lord Jesus travelled much, and his custom was to travel on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem, some scores of miles, which was both humbling and toilsome; many a dirty weary step he had when he went about doing good. How ill does it become Christians to be inordinately solicitous about their own ease and state, when their Master had so little of either! Yet once in his life he rode in triumph; and it was now when he went into Jerusalem, to suffer and die, as if that were the pleasure and preferment he courted; and then he thought himself begin to look great.

Now here we have,

The provision that was made for this solemnity; and it was very poor and ordinary, and such as bespoke his kingdom to be not of this world. Here were no heralds at arms provided, no trumpet sounded before him, no chariots of state, no liveries; such things as these were not agreeable to his present state of humiliation, but will

be far outdone at his second coming, to which his magnificent appearance is reserved, when the last trumpet shall sound, the glorious angels shall be his heralds and attendants, and the clouds his chariots. But in this public appearance,

1 The preparation was sudden and offhand. For his glory in the other world, and ours with him, preparation was made before the foundation of the world, for that was the glory his heart was upon; his glory in this world he was dead to, and therefore, though he had it in prospect, did not forecast for it, but took what came next. They were come to Bethphage, which was the suburb of Jerusalem, and was accounted (say the Jewish doctors) in all things, as Jerusalem, a long scattering street that lay toward the mount of Olives; when he entered upon that, he sent two of his disciples, some think Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, for he had none ready for him.

2. It was very mean. He sent only for an ass and her colt, Mt 21:2. Asses were much used in that country for travel; horses were kept only by great men, and for war. Christ could have summoned a cherub to carry him (Ps 18:10); but though by his name Jah, which speaks him God, he rides upon the heavens, yet now by his name Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, in his state of humiliation, he rides upon an ass. Yet some think that he had herein an eye to the custom in Israel for the judges to ride upon white asses (Jdg 5:10), and their sons on ass-colts, Jdg 12:14. And Christ would thus enter, not as a Conqueror, but as the Judge of Israel, who for judgment came into this world.

3. It was not his own, but borrowed. Though he had not a house of his own, yet, one would think, like some wayfaring men that live upon their friends, he might have had an ass of his own, to carry him about; but for our sakes he became in all respects poor, 1Co 8:9. It is commonly said, "They that live on borrowing, live on sorrowing;" in this therefore, as in other things, Christ was a man of sorrows--that he had nothing of this world's goods but what was given him or lent him.

The disciples who were sent to borrow this ass are directed to say, The Lord has need of him. Those that are in need, must not be ashamed to own their need, nor say, as the unjust steward, To beg I am ashamed, Lu 16:3. On the other hand, none ought to impose upon the kindness of their friends, by going to beg or borrow when they have not need. In the borrowing of this ass,

(a) We have an instance of Christ's knowledge. Though the thing was altogether contingent, yet Christ could tell his disciples where they should find an ass tied, and a colt with her. His omniscience extends itself to the meanest of his creatures; asses and their colts, and their being bound or loosed. Doth God take care for oxen? (1Co 9:9) No doubt he doth, and would not see Balaam's ass abused. He knows all the creatures, so as to make them serve his own purpose.

(b) We have an instance of his power over the spirits of men. The hearts of the meanest subjects, as well as of kings, are in the hand of the Lord. Christ asserts his right to use the ass, in bidding them bring it to him; the fulness of the earth is the Lord Christ's; but he foresees some hindrance which disciples might meet with in this service; they must not take them clam et secreto--privily, but in the sight of the owner, much less vi et armis--with force and arms, but with the consent of the owner, which he undertakes they shall have; If any man say aught to you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of him. Note, What Christ sets us to do, he will bear us out in the doing of, and furnish us with answers tot he objections we may be assaulted with, and make them prevalent; as here, Straightway he will send them. Christ, in commanding the ass into his service, showed that he is Lord of hosts; and, in inclining the owner to send him without further security, showed that he is the God of the spirits of all flesh, and can bow men's hearts.

(c) We have an example of justice and honesty, in not using the ass, though for so small a piece of service as riding the length of a street or two, without the owner's consent. As some read the latter clause, it gives us a further rule of justice; "You shall say the Lord hath need of them, and he" (that is, the Lord) "will presently send them

back, and take care that they be safely delivered to the owner, as soon as he has done with them." Note, What we borrow we must restore in due time and in good order; for the wicked borrows and pays not again. Care must be taken of borrowed goods, that they be not damaged. Alas, Master, for it was borrowed!

3 And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion,
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass,
and a colt the foal of an ass.

The prediction that was fulfilled in this, Mt 21:4,5. Our Lord Jesus, in all that he did and suffered, had very much his eye upon this, That the scriptures might be fulfilled. As the prophets looked forward to him (to him they all bare witness), so he looked upon them, that all things which were written of the Messiah, might be punctually accomplished in him. This particularly which was written of him, Zec 9:9, where it ushers in a large prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh, must be accomplished. Now observe here,

1. How the coming of Christ is foretold; Tell ye the daughter of Sion, the church, the holy mountain, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. Note,

(a) Jesus Christ is the church's King, one of our brethren like unto us, according to the law of the kingdom, De 17:15. He is appointed King over the church, Ps 2:6. He is accepted King by the church; the daughter of Sion swears allegiance to him, Ho 1:11.

(b) Christ, the King of his church, came to his church, even in this lower world; he comes to thee, to rule thee, to rule in thee, to rule for thee; he is Head over all things to the church. He came to Sion (Ro 11:26), that out of Sion the law might go forth; for the church and its interests were all in all with the Redeemer.

(c) Notice was given to the church beforehand of the coming of her King; Tell the daughter of Sion. Note, Christ will have his coming looked for, and waited for, and his subjects big with expectation of it; Tell the daughters of Sion, that they may go forth, and behold King Solomon, So 3:11. Notices of Christ's coming are usually ushered in with a Behold! A note commanding both attention and admiration; Behold thy King cometh; behold, and wonder at him, behold, and welcome him. Here is a royal progress truly admirable. Pilate, like Caiaphas, said he knew not what, in that great word (Joh 19:14), Behold your King.

2. How his coming is described. When a king comes, something great and magnificent is expected, especially when he comes to take possession of his kingdom. The King, the Lord of hosts, was seen upon a throne, high and lifted up (Isa 6:1); but there is nothing of that here; Behold, he cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty.

(a) His temper is very mild. He comes not in wrath to take vengeance, but in mercy to work salvation. He is meek to suffer the greatest injuries and indignities for Sion's cause, meek to bear with the follies and unkindness of Sion's own children. He is easy of access, easy to be entreated. He is meek not only as a Teacher, but as a Ruler; he rules by love. His government is mild and gentle, and his laws not written in the blood of his subjects, but in his own. His yoke is easy.

(b) As an evidence of this, his appearance is very mean, sitting upon an ass, as creature made not for state, but service, not for battles, but for burthens; slow in its motions, but sure, and safe, and constant. The foretelling of this so long before, and the care taken that it should be exactly fulfilled, intimate it to have a peculiar significancy, for the encouragement of poor souls to apply themselves to Christ. Sion's King comes riding, not on a prancing horse, which the timorous petitioner dares not come near, or a running horse, which the slow-footed petitioner cannot keep pace

with, but on a quiet ass, that the poorest of his subjects may not be discouraged in their access to him. Mention is made in the prophecy of a colt, the foal of an ass; and therefore Christ sent for the colt with the ass, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

6 And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

7 and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

1-11 This coming of Christ was described by the prophet Zechariah, Zec_9:9. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty, in mercy to work salvation. As meekness and outward poverty were fully seen in Zion's King, and marked his triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, how wrong covetousness, ambition, and the pride of life must be in Zion's citizens!

8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.

9 And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying,
Hosanna to the Son of David:
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna signifies, Save now, we beseech thee! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! But of how little value is the applause of the people! The changing multitude join the cry of the day, whether it be Hosanna, or Crucify him. Multitudes often seem to approve the gospel, but few become consistent disciples. When Jesus was come into Jerusalem all the city was moved; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel; others, of the Pharisees, were moved with envy. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom.

As the messianic king, the son of David, Jesus then entered his royal city of Zion. He came not riding a horse as a conquering warlord, but sitting on a donkey as a king of peace, as the Scriptures foretold (see Zec_9:9). People who were in Jerusalem for the Passover, along with local residents, welcomed him as the Messiah. They may not have understood the nature of his messiahship, but they were enthusiastic in their acceptance of him (Mat_21:4-11;

Luk_19:35-38; Joh_12:12-16. (The word 'Hosanna', meaning 'Save us, O Lord', came from two Hebrew words found in Psa 118, where Israel's victorious king was welcomed with the words, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'; Psa_118:25-26. By New Testament times the two expressions, used together, had become a declaration of praise to God for the promised Messiah.)

The Pharisees were annoyed at the welcome Jesus received and unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to silence the people (Luk_19:39-40). As the news of Jesus' raising of Lazarus spread, more and more people flocked to see him. The thing the Pharisees most feared was happening before their eyes (Joh_12:17-19).

10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ?

11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The Cleansing of the Temple

12 And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

If Christ came now into many parts of his visible church, how many secret evils he would discover and cleanse! And how many things daily practised under the cloak of religion, would he show to be more suitable to a den of thieves than to a house of prayer!

At the beginning of his public ministry Jesus had cleansed the temple (see Joh_2:13-25), but old practices had returned. Now that he had come to his messianic city he cleansed it again. By his action he showed God's judgment on those who had forgotten the real purpose of religious exercises and used them chiefly to make money (Mat_21:12-13)

When Christ came into Jerusalem, he did not go up to the court or the palace, though he came in as a King, but into the temple; for his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; it is in holy things that he rules, in the temple of God that he exercises authority. Now, what did he do there?

Thence he drove the buyers and sellers. Abuses must first be purged out, and the plants not of God's planting be plucked up, before that which is right can be established. The great Redeemer appear as a great Reformer, that turns away ungodliness, Ro 11:26. Here we are told,

1. What he did (Mt 21:12); He cast out all them that sold and bought; he had done this once before (Joh 2:14,15), but there was occasion to do it again. Note, Buyers and sellers driven out of the temple, will return and nestle there again, if there be not a continual care and oversight to prevent it, and if the blow be not followed, and often repeated.

(a) The abuse was, buying and selling, and changing money, in the temple. Note, Lawful things, ill timed and ill placed, may become sinful things. That which was decent enough in another place, and not only lawful, but laudable, on another day, defiles the sanctuary, and profanes the sabbath. This buying and selling, and changing money, though secular employments, yet had the pretence of being in ordine ad spiritualia--for spiritual purposes. They sold beasts for sacrifice, for the convenience of those that could more easily bring their money with them than their beast; and they changed money for those that wanted the half shekel, which was their yearly poll, or redemption-money; or, upon the bills of return; so that this might pass for the outward business of the house of God; and yet Christ will not allow of it. Note, Great corruptions and abuses come into the church by the practices of those whose gain is godliness, that is, who make worldly gain the end of their godliness, and counterfeit godliness their way to worldly gain (1Ti 6:5); from such withdraw thyself.

(b) The purging out of this abuse. Christ cast them out that sold. He did it before with a scourge of small cords (Joh 2:15); now he did it with a look, with a frown, with a word of command. Some reckon this none of the least of Christ's miracles, that he should himself thus clear the temple, and not be opposed in it by them who by this craft got their living, and were backed in it by the priests and elders. It is an instance of his power over the spirits of men, and the hold he has of them by their own consciences. This was the only act of regal authority and coercive power that Christ did in the days of his flesh; he began with it, Joh 2:12-25 and here ended with it. Tradition says, that his face shone, and beams of light darted from his blessed eyes, which astonished these market-people, and compelled them to yield to his command; if so, the scripture was fulfilled, Pr 20:8, A King that sitteth in the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes. He overthrew the tables of the money-changers; he did not take the money to himself, but scattered it, threw it to the ground, the fittest place for it. The Jews, in Esther's time, on the spoil laid not their hand, Es 9:10.

2. What he said, to justify himself, and to convict them (Mt 21:13); It is written. Note, In the reformation of the church, the eye must be upon the scripture, and that must be adhered to as the rule, the pattern in the mount; and we must go no further than we can justify ourselves with, It is written. Reformation is then right, when corrupted ordinances are reduced to their primitive institution.

(a) He shows, from a scripture prophecy, what the temple should be, and was designed to be; My house shall be called the house of prayer; which is quoted from Isa 56:7. Note, All the ceremonial institutions were intended to be subservient to moral duties; the house of sacrifices was to be a house of prayer, for that was the substance and soul of all those services; the temple was in a special manner sanctified to be a house of prayer, for it was not only the place of that worship, but the medium of it, so that the prayers made in or toward that house had a particular promise of acceptance (2Ch 6:21), as it was a type of Christ; therefore Daniel looked that way in prayer; and in this sense no house or place is now, or can be, a

house of prayer, for Christ is our Temple; yet in some sense the appointed places of our religious assemblies may be so called, as places where prayer is wont to be made, Ac 16:13.

(b) He shows, from a scripture reproof, how they had abused the temple, and perverted the intention of it; Ye have made it a den of thieves. This is quoted from Jer 7:11, Is this house become a den of robbers in your eyes? When dissembled piety is made the cloak and cover of iniquity, it may be said that the house of prayer is become a den of thieves, in which they lurk, and shelter themselves. Markets are too often dens of thieves, so many are the corrupt and cheating practices in buying and selling; but markets in the temple are certainly so, for they rob God of his honour, the worst of thieves, Mal 3:8. The priests lived, and lived plentifully, upon the altar; but, not content with that, they found other ways and means to squeeze money out of the people; and therefore Christ here calls them thieves, for they exacted that which did not belong to them.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,

There, in the temple, he healed the blind and the lame, Mt 21:14. When he had driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, he invited the blind and lame into it; for he fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away. Christ, in the temple, by his word there preached, and in answer to the prayers there made, heals those that are spiritually blind and lame. It is good coming to the temple, when Christ is there, who, as he shows himself jealous for the honour of his temple, in expelling those who profane it, so he shows himself gracious to those who humbly seek him. The blind and the lame were debarred David's palace (2Sa 5:8), but were admitted into God's house; for the state and honour of his temple lie not in those things wherein the magnificence of princes' palaces is supposed to consist; from them blind and lame must keep their distance, but from God's temple only the wicked and profane. The temple was profane and abused when it was made a market-place, but it was graced and honoured when it was made an

hospital; to be doing good in God's, is more honourable, and better becomes it, than to be getting money there. Christ's healing was a real answer to that question, Who is this? His works testified of him more than the hosannas; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling of the promise, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former.

There also he silenced the offence which the chief priests and scribes took at the acclamations with which he was attended, Mt 21:15,16. They that should have been most forward to give him honour, were his worst enemies.

1. They were inwardly vexed at the wonderful things that he did; they could not deny them to be true miracles, and therefore were cut to the heart with indignation at them, as Ac 4:16,5:33. The works that Christ did, recommended themselves to every man's conscience. If they had any sense, they could not but own the miracle of them; and if any good nature, could not but be in love with the mercy of them: yet, because they were resolved to oppose him, for these they envied him, and bore him a grudge.

2. They openly quarrelled at the children's hosannas; they thought that hereby an honour was given him, which did not belong to him, and that it looked like ostentation. Proud men cannot bear that honour should be done to any but to themselves, and are uneasy at nothing more than at the just praises of deserving men. Thus Saul envied David the women's songs; and "Who can stand before envy?" When Christ is most honoured, his enemies are most displeased.

Just now we had Christ preferring the blind and the lame before the buyers and sellers; now here we have him (Mt 21:16), taking part with the children against priests and scribes. Observe,

(a) The children were in the temple, perhaps playing there; no wonder, when the rulers make it a market-place, that the children make it a place of pastime; but we are willing to hope that many of

them were worshipping there. Note, It is good to bring children betimes to the house of prayer, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Let children be taught to keep up the form of godliness, it will help to lead them to the power of it. Christ has a tenderness for the lambs of his flock.

(b) They were there crying Hosanna to the Son of David. This they learned from those that were grown up. Little children say and do as they hear others say, and see others do; so easily do they imitate; and therefore great care must be taken to set them good examples, and no bad ones. Maxima debetur puero reverentia--Our intercourse with the young should be conducted with the most scrupulous care. Children will learn of those that are with them, either to curse and swear, or to pray and praise. The Jews did betimes teach their children to carry branches at the feast of tabernacles, and to cry Hosanna; but God taught them here to apply it to Christ. Note, Hosanna to the Son of David well becomes the mouths of little children, who should learn young the language of Canaan.

(c) Our Lord Jesus not only allowed it, but was very well pleased with it, and quoted a scripture which was fulfilled in it (Ps 8:2), or, at least, may be accommodated to it; Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise; which, some think, refers to the children's joining in the acclamations of the people, and the women's songs with which David was honoured when he returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, and therefore is very fitly applied here to the hosannas with which the Son of David was saluted, now that he was entering upon his conflict with Satan, that Goliath. Note,

[1.] Christ is so far from being ashamed of the services of little children, that he takes particular notice of them (and children love to be taken notice of), and is well pleased with them. If God may be honoured by babes and sucklings, who are made to hope at the best, much more by children who are grown up to maturity and some capacity.

[2.] Praise is perfected out of the mouth of such; it has a peculiar tendency to the honour and glory of God for little children to join in his praises; the praise would be accounted defective and imperfect, if they had not their share in it; which is an encouragement for children to be good betimes, and to parents to teach them to be so; the labour neither of the one nor of the other shall be in vain. In the psalm it is, Thou hast ordained strength. Note, God perfecteth praise, by ordaining strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. When great things are brought about by weak and unlikely instruments, God is thereby much honoured, for his strength is perfected in weakness, and the infirmities of the babes and sucklings serve for a foil to the divine power. That which follows in the psalm, That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger, was very applicable to the priests and scribes; but Christ did not apply it to them, but left it to them to apply it.

16 and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read,
Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?
17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

Christ returned in the morning to Jerusalem, Mt 21:18. Some think that he went out of the city over-night, because none of his friends there durst entertain him, for fear of the great men; yet, having work to do there, he returned. Note, We must never be driven off from our duty either by the malice of our foes, or the unkindness of our friends. Though he knew that in this city bonds and afflictions did abide him, yet none of these things moved him. Paul followed him when he went bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, Ac 20:22.

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

18 Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered.
19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow
on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

This cursing of the barren fig-tree represents the state of hypocrites in general, and so teaches us that Christ looks for the power of religion in those who profess it, and the savour of it from those that have the show of it. His just expectations from flourishing professors are often disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only. A false profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse. The fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. This represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular. Our Lord Jesus found among them nothing but leaves. And after they rejected Christ, blindness and hardness grew upon them, till they were undone, and their place and nation rooted up. The Lord was righteous in it. Let us greatly fear the doom denounced on the barren fig-tree.

As he went, he hungered. He was a Man, and submitted to the infirmities of nature; he was an active Man, and was so intent upon his work, that he neglected his food, and came out, fasting; for the zeal of God's house did even eat him up, and his meat and drink was to do his Father's will. He was a poor Man, and had no present supply; he was a Man that pleased not himself, for he would willingly have taken up with green raw figs for his breakfast, when it was fit that he should have had something warm.

Christ therefore hungered, that he might have occasion to work this miracle, in cursing and so withering the barren fig-tree, and therein might give us an instance of his justice and his power, and both instructive.

1. See his justice, Mt 21:19. He went to it, expecting fruit, because it had leaves; but, finding none, he sentenced it to a perpetual barrenness. The miracle had its significance, as well as others of his miracles. All Christ's miracles hitherto were wrought for the good of men, and proved the power of his grace and blessing (the sending the devils into the herd of swine was but a permission); all he did was for the benefit and comfort of his friends, none for the terror or punishment of his enemies; but now, at last, to show that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is able not only to save,

but to destroy, he would give a specimen of the power of his wrath and curse; yet this not on any man, woman, or child, because the great day of his wrath is not yet come, but on an inanimate tree; that is set forth for an example; Come, learn a parable of the fig-tree, Mt 24:32. The scope of it is the same with the parable of the fig-tree, Lu 13:6.

(a) This cursing of the barren fig-tree, represents the state of hypocrites in general; and so it teaches us,

[1.] That the fruit of fig-trees may justly be expected from those that have the leaves. Christ looks for the power of religion from those that make profession of it; the favour of it from those that have the show of it; grapes from the vineyard that is planted in a fruitful hill: he hungers after it, his soul desires the first ripe fruits.

[2.] Christ's just expectations from flourishing professors are often frustrated and disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only, and he discovers it. Many have a name to live, and are not alive indeed; dote on the form of godliness, and yet deny the power of it.

[3.] The sin of barrenness is justly punished with the curse and plague of barrenness; Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. As one of the chiefest blessings, and which was the first, is, Be fruitful; so one of the saddest curses is, Be no more fruitful. Thus the sin of hypocrites is made their punishment; they would not do good, and therefore they shall do none; he that is fruitless, let him be fruitless still, and lose his honour and comfort.

[4.] A false and hypocritical profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse; the fig-tree that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. Hypocrites may look plausible for a time, but, having no principle, no root in themselves, their profession will soon come to nothing; the gifts wither, common graces decay, the credit of the profession declines and sinks, and the falseness and folly of the pretender are manifested to all men.

(b) It represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular; they were a fig-tree planted in Christ's way, as a church. Now observe,

[1.] The disappointment they gave to our Lord Jesus. He came among them, expecting to find some fruit, something that would be pleasing to him; he hungered after it; not that he desired a gift, he needed it not, but fruit that might abound to a good account. But his expectations were frustrated; he found nothing but leaves; they called Abraham their father, but did not do the works of Abraham; they professed themselves expectants of the promised Messiah, but, when he came, they did not receive and entertain him.

[2.] The doom he passed upon them, that never any fruit should grow upon them or be gathered from them, as a church or as a people, from henceforward for ever. Never any good came from them (except the particular persons among them that believe), after they rejected Christ; they became worse and worse; blindness and hardness happened to them, and grew upon them, till they were unchurched, unpeopled, and undone, and their place and nation rooted up; their beauty was defaced, their privileges and ornaments, their temple, and priesthood, and sacrifices, and festivals, and all the glories of their church and state, fell like leaves in autumn. How soon did their fig-tree wither away, after they said, His blood be on us, and our children! And the Lord was righteous in it.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

See the power of Christ; the former is wrapped up in the figure, but this more fully discoursed of; Christ intending thereby to direct his disciples in the use of their powers.

(1.) The disciples admired the effect of Christ's curse (Mt 21:20); They marvelled; no power could do it but his, who spake, and it was done. They marvelled at the suddenness of the thing; How soon is the fig-tree withered away! There was no visible cause of the fig-tree's withering, but it was a secret blast, a worm at the root; it was not only the leaves of it that withered, but the body of the tree; it withered away in an instant and became like a dry stick. Gospel curses are, upon this account, the most dreadful--that they work insensibly and silently, by a fire not blown, but effectually.

(2.) Christ empowered them by faith to do the like (Mt 21:21,22); as he said (Joh 14:12), Greater works than these shall ye do. Observe,

[1.] The description of this wonder-working faith; If ye have faith, and doubt not. Note, Doubting of the power and promise of God is the great thing that spoils the efficacy and success of faith. "If you have faith, and dispute not" (so some read it), "dispute not with yourselves, dispute not with the promise of God; if you stagger not at the promise" (Ro 4:20); for, as far as we do so, our faith is deficient; as certain as the promise is, so confident our faith should be.

[2.] The power and prevalence of it expressed figuratively; If ye shall say to this mountain, meaning the mount of Olives, Be thou removed, it shall be done. There might be a particular reason for his saying so of this mountain, for there was a prophecy, that the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem, should cleave in the midst, and then remove, Zec 14:4. Whatever was the intent of that word, the same must be the expectation of faith, how impossible soever it might appear to sense. But this is a proverbial expression; intimating that we are to believe that nothing is impossible with God, and therefore that what he has promised shall certainly be performed, though to us it seem impossible. It was among the Jews a usual commendation of their learned Rabbin, that they were removers of mountains, that is, could solve the greatest difficulties;

now this may be done by faith acted on the word of God, which will bring great and strange things to pass.

[3.] The way and means of exercising this faith, and of doing that which is to be done by it; All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Faith is the soul, prayer is the body; both together make a complete man for any service. Faith, if it be right, will excite prayer; and prayer is not right, if it do not spring from faith. This is the condition of our receiving--we must ask in prayer, believing. The requests of prayer shall not be denied; the expectations of faith shall not be frustrated. We have many promises to this purport from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, and all to encourage faith, the principal grace, and prayer, the principal duty, of a Christian. It is but ask and have, believe and receive; and what would we more? Observe, How comprehensive the promise is--all things whatsoever ye shall ask; this is like all and every the premises in a conveyance. All things, in general; whatsoever, brings it to particulars; though generals include particulars, yet such is the folly of our unbelief, that, though we think we assent to promises in the general, yet we fly off when it comes to particulars, and therefore, that we might have strong consolation, it is thus copiously expressed, All things whatsoever.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Jesus' Authority Questioned

23 And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Our Lord Jesus (like St. Paul after him) preached his gospel with much contention; his first appearance was in a dispute with the doctors in the temple, when he was twelve years old; and here, just before he died, we have him engaged in controversy. In this sense, he was like Jeremiah, a man of contention; not striving, but striven with. The great contenders with him, were, the chief priests and the elders, the judges of two distinct courts: the chief priests presided in the ecclesiastical court, in all matters of the Lord, as they are called;

the elders of the people were judges of the civil courts, in temporal matters. See an idea of both, 2Ch 19:5,8,11. These joined to attack Christ thinking they should find or make him obnoxious either to the one or to the other. See how woefully degenerate that generation was, when the governors both in church and state, who should have been the great promoters of the Messiah's kingdom, were the great opposers of it! Here we have them disturbing him when he was preaching, Mt 21:23. They would neither receive his instructions themselves, nor let others receive them. Observe,

I. As soon as he came into Jerusalem, he went to the temple, though he had been affronted there the day before, was there in the midst of enemies and in the mouth of danger; yet thither he went, for there he had a fairer opportunity of doing good to souls than any where else in Jerusalem. Though he came hungry to the city, and was disappointed of a breakfast at the barren fig-tree, yet, for aught that appears, he went straight to the temple, as one that esteemed the words of God's mouth, the preaching of them, more than his necessary food.

II. In the temple he was teaching; he had called it a house of prayer (Mt 21:13), and here we have him preaching there. Note, In the solemn assemblies of Christians, praying and preaching must go together, and neither must encroach upon, or jostle out, the other. To make up communion with God, we must not only speak to him in prayer, but hear what he has to say to us by his word; ministers must give themselves both to the word and to prayer, Ac 6:4. Now that Christ taught in the temple, that scripture was fulfilled (Isa 2:3), Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways. The priests of old often taught there the good knowledge of the Lord; but they never had such a teacher as this.

III. When Christ was teaching the people, the priests and elders came upon him, and challenged him to produce his orders; the hand of Satan was in this, to hinder him in his work. Note, It cannot but be a trouble to a faithful minister, to be taken off, or diverted from, plain and practical preaching, by an unavoidable necessity of engaging in

controversies, yet good was brought out of this evil, for hereby occasion was given to Christ to dispel the objections that were advanced against him, to the greater satisfaction of his followers; and, while his adversaries thought by their power to have silenced him, he by his wisdom silenced them.

Now, in this dispute with them, we may observe,

1. How he was assaulted by their insolent demand; By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority? Had they duly considered his miracles, and the power by which he wrought them, they needed not to have asked this question; but they must have something to say for the shelter of an obstinate infidelity. "Thou ridest in triumph into Jerusalem, receivest the hosannas of the people, controllest in the temple, drivest out such as had license to be there, from the rulers of the temple, and paid them rent; thou are here preaching a new doctrine; whence hadst thou a commission to do all this? Was it from Cæsar, or from the high priest, or from God? Produce thy warrant, thy credentials. Dost not thou take too much upon thee?" Note, It is good for all that take upon them to act with authority, to put this question to themselves, "Who gave us that authority?" For, unless a man be clear in his own conscience concerning that, he cannot act with any comfort or hope of success. They who run before their warrant, run without their blessing, Jer 23:21,22.

Christ had often said it, and proved it beyond contradiction, and Nicodemus, a master in Israel, had owned it, that he was a teacher sent of God (Joh 3:2); yet, at this time of day, when that point had been so fully cleared and settled, they come to him with this question.

In the ostentation of their own power, as chief priests and elders, which they thought authorized them to call him to an account in this manner. How haughtily do they ask, Who gave thee this authority? Intimating that he could have no authority, because he had none from them, 1Ki 22:24,Jer 20:1. Note, It is common for the greatest

abusers of their power to be the most rigorous assertors of it, and to take a pride and pleasure in any thing that looks like the exercise of it. (2.) It was to ensnare and entangle him. Should he refuse to answer this question, they would enter judgment against him upon Nihil dicit--He says nothing; would condemn him as standing mute; and would insinuate to the people, that his silence was a tacit confessing of himself to be a usurper: should he plead an authority from God, they would, as formerly, demand a sign from heaven, or make his defence his offence, and accuse him of blasphemy for it.

24 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.

How he answered this demand with another, which would help them to answer it themselves (Mt 21:24,25); I also will ask you one thing. He declined giving them a direct answer, lest they should take advantage against him; but answers them with a question. Those that are as sheep in the midst of wolves, have need to be wise as serpents: the heart of the wise studieth to answer. We must give a reason of the hope that is in us, not only with meekness, but with fear (1Pe 3:15), with prudent caution, lest truth be damaged, or ourselves endangered.

Now this question is concerning John's baptism, here put for his whole ministry, preaching as well as baptizing; "Was this from heaven, or of men? One of the two it must be; either what he did was of his own head, or he was sent of God to do it." Gamaliel's argument turned upon this hinge (Ac 5:38,39); either this counsel is of men or of God. Though that which is manifestly bad cannot be of God, yet that which is seemingly good may be of men, nay of Satan, when he transforms himself into an angel of light. This question was not at all shuffling, to evade theirs; but,

(A) If they answered this question, it would answer theirs: should they say, against their consciences, that John's baptism was of men, yet it would be easy to answer, John did no miracle (Joh 10:41), Christ did many; but should they say, as they could not but own, that John's baptism was from heaven (which was supposed in the questions sent him, Joh 1:21, Art thou Elias, or that prophet?) then

their demand was answered, for he bare testimony to Christ. Note, Truths appear in the clearest light when they are taken in their due order; the resolving of the previous questions will be a key to the main question.

(B) If they refused to answer it, that would be a good reason why he should not offer proofs of his authority to men that were obstinately prejudiced against the strongest conviction; it was but to cast pearls before swine. Thus he taketh the wise in their own craftiness (1Co 3:19); and those that would not be convinced of the plainest truths, shall be convicted of the vilest malice, against John first, then against Christ, and in both against God.

How they were hereby baffled and run aground; they knew the truth, but would not own it, and so were taken in the snare they laid for our Lord Jesus. Observe,

How they reasoned with themselves, not concerning the merits of the cause, what proofs there were of the divine original of John's baptism; no, their care was, how to make their part good against Christ. Two things they considered and consulted, in this reasoning with themselves--their credit, and their safety; the same things which they principally aim at, who seek their own things.

[1.] They consider their own credit, which they would endanger if they should own John's baptism to be of God; for then Christ would ask them, before all the people. Why did ye not believe him? And to acknowledge that a doctrine is from God, and yet not to receive and entertain it, is the greatest absurdity and iniquity that a man can be charged with. Many that will not be kept by the fear of sin from neglecting and opposing that which they know to be true and good are kept by the fear of shame from owning that to be true and good which they neglect and oppose. Thus they reject the counsel of God against themselves, in not submitting to John's baptism, and are left without excuse.

[2.] They consider their own safety, that they would expose themselves to the resentments of the people, if they should say that John's baptism was of men; We fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. It seems, then, First, That the people had truer sentiments of John than the chief priests and the elders had, or, at least, were more free and faithful in declaring their sentiments. This people, of whom they said in their pride that they knew not the law, and were cursed (Joh 7:49), it seems, knew the gospel, and were blessed. Secondly, That the chief priests and elders stood in awe of the common people, which is an evidence that things were in disorder among them, and that mutual jealousies were at a great height; that the government was become obnoxious to the hatred and scorn of the people, and the scripture was fulfilled, I have made you contemptible and base, Mal 2:8,9. If they had kept their integrity, and done their duty, they had kept up their authority, and needed not to fear the people. We find sometimes that the people feared them, and it served them for a reason why they did not confess Christ, Joh 9:22,12:42. Note, Those could not but fear the people, who studied only how to make the people fear them. Thirdly, That it is usually the temper even of common people to be zealous for the honour of that which they account sacred and divine. If they account John as a prophet, they will not endure that it should be said, His baptism was of men; hence the hottest contests have been about holy things. Fourthly, That the chief priests and elders were kept from an open denial of the truth, even against the conviction of their own minds, not by the fear of God, but purely by the fear of the people; as the fear of man may bring good people into a snare (Pr 29:25), so sometimes it may keep bad people from being overmuch wicked, lest they should die before their time, Ec 7:17. Many bad people would be much worse than they are, if they durst.

25 The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?

"Why did ye not believe the testimony which he bore to Me, as the promised and expected Messiah?" for that was the burden of John's whole testimony.

26 But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.

How they replied to our Saviour, and so dropped the question. They fairly confessed We cannot tell; that is, "We will not;" ouk oi damen--We never knew. The more shame for them, while they pretended to be leaders of the people, and by their office were obliged to take cognizance of such things; when they would not confess their knowledge, they were constrained to confess their ignorance. And observe, by the way, when they said, We cannot tell, they told a lie, for they knew that John's baptism was of God. Note, There are many who are more afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and therefore scruple not to speak that which they know to be false concerning their own thoughts and apprehensions, their affections and intentions, or their remembering or forgetting of things, because in those things they know nobody can disprove them.

Thus Christ avoided the snare they laid for him, and justified himself in refusing to gratify them; Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. If they be so wicked and base as either not to believe, or not to confess, that the baptism of John was from heaven (though it obliged to repentance, that great duty, and sealed the kingdom of God at hand, that great promise), they were not fit to be discoursed with concerning Christ's authority; for men of such a disposition could not be convinced of the truth, nay, they could not but be provoked by it, and therefore he that is thus ignorant, let him be ignorant still. Note, Those that imprison the truths they know, in unrighteousness (either by not professing them, or by not practising according to them), are justly denied the further truths they enquire after, Ro 1:18,19. Take away the talent from him that buried it; those that will not see, shall not see.

27 And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Evidently their difficulty was, how to answer, so as neither to shake their determination to reject the claims of Christ nor damage their reputation with the people. For the truth itself they cared nothing whatever.

The Parable of the Two Sons

28 But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard.

As Christ instructed his disciples by parables, which made the instructions the more easy, so sometimes he convinced his adversaries by parables, which bring reproofs more close, and make men, or ever they are aware, to reprove themselves. Thus Nathan convinced David by a parable (2Sa 22:1), and the woman of Tekoa surprised him in like manner, 2Sa 14:2: Reproving parables are appeals to the offenders themselves, and judge them out of their own mouths. This Christ designs here, as appears by the first words (Mt 21:28), But what think you?

In these verses we have the parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard, the scope of which is to show that they who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were shamed even by the publicans and harlots, who knew it, and owned it. Here is,

The parable itself, which represents two sorts of persons; some that prove better than they promise, represented by the first of those sons; others that promise better than they prove represented by the second.

1. They had both one and the same father, which signifies that God is a common Father to all mankind. There are favours which all alike receive from him, and obligations which all alike lie under to him; Have we not all one Father? Yes, and yet there is a vast difference between men's characters.

2. They had both the same command given them; Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. Parents should not breed up their children in idleness; nothing is more pleasing, and yet nothing more pernicious, to youth than that. La 3:27. God sets his children to work, though they are all heirs. This command is given to every one of us. Note,

(a) The work of religion, which we are called to engage in, is vineyard work, creditable, profitable, and pleasant. By the sin of Adam we were turned out to work upon the common, and to eat the herb of the field; but by the grace of our Lord Jesus we are called to work again in the vineyard.

(b) The gospel call to work in the vineyard, requires present obedience; Son, go work to-day, while it is called to-day, because the night comes when no man can work. We were not sent into the world to be idle, nor had we daylight given us to play by; and therefore, if ever we mean to do any thing for God and our souls, why not now? Why not to-day?

(c) The exhortation to go work to-day in the vineyard, speaketh unto us as unto children (Heb 12:5); Son, go work. It is the command of a Father, which carries with it both authority and affection, a Father that pities his children, and considers their frame, and will not overtask them (Ps 103:13,14), a Father that is very tender of his Son that serves him, Mal 3:17. If we work in our Father's vineyard, we work for ourselves.

3. Their conduct was very different.

(a) One of the sons did better than he said, proved better than he promised. His answer was bad, but his actions were good.

[1.] Here is the untoward answer that he gave to his father; he said, flat and plain I will not. See to what a degree of impudence the corrupt nature of man rises, to say, I will not, to the command of a Father; such a command of such a Father; they are impudent children, and stiff-hearted. Those that will not bend, surely they cannot blush; if they had any degree of modesty left them, they could not say, We will not. Jer 2:25. Excuses are bad, but downright denials are worse; yet such peremptory refusals do the calls of the gospel often meet with. First, Some love their ease, and will not work; they would live in the world as leviathan in the waters, to

play therein (Ps 104:26); they do not love working. Secondly, Their hearts are so much upon their own fields, that they are not for working in God's vineyard. They love the business of the world better than the business of their religion. Thus some by the delights of sense, and others by the employments of the world, are kept from doing that great work which they were sent into the world about, and so stand all the day idle.

[2.] Here is the happy change of his mind, and of his way, upon second thought; Afterward he repented, and went. Note, There are many who in the beginning are wicked and wilful, and very unpromising, who afterward repent and mend, and come to something. Some that God hath chosen, are suffered for a great while to run to a great excess of riot; Such were some of you, 1Co 6:11. These are set forth for patterns of long-suffering, 1Ti 1:16. Afterward he repented. Repentance is metanoia--an after-wit: and metameleia--an after-care. Better late than never. Observe, When he repented he went; that was the fruit meet for repentance. The only evidence of our repentance for our former resistance, is, immediately to comply, and set to work; and then what is past, shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. See what a kind Father God is; he resents not the affront of our refusals, as justly he might. He that told his father to his face, that he would not do as he bid him, deserved to be turned out of doors, and disinherited; but our God waits to be gracious, and, not withstanding our former follies, if we repent and mend, will favourably accept of us; blessed be God, we are under a covenant that leaves room for such a repentance.

(b) The other son said better than he did, promised better than he proved; his answer was good but his actions bad. To him the father said likewise, Mt 21:30. The gospel call, though very different, is, in effect, the same to all, and is carried on with an even tenour. We have all the same commands, engagements, encouragements, though to some they are a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. Observe,

[1.] How fairly this other son promised; He said, I go, sir. He gives his father a title of respect, sir. Note, It becomes children to speak respectfully to their parents. It is one branch of that honour which the fifth commandment requires. He professes a ready obedience, I go; not, "I will go by and by," but, "Ready, sir, you may depend upon it, I go just now." This answer we should give from the heart heartily to all the calls and commands of the word of God. See Jer 3:22,Ps 27:8.

[2.] How he failed in the performance; He went not. Note, There are many that give good words, and make fair promises, in religion, and those from some good motions for the present, that rest there, and go no further, and so come to nothing. Saying and doing are two things; and many there are that say, and do not; it is particularly charged upon the Pharisees, Mt 23:3. Many with their mouth show much love, but their heart goes another way. They had a good mind to be religious, but they met with something to be done, that was too hard, or something to be parted with, that was too dear, and so their purposes are to no purpose. Buds and blossoms are not fruit.

29 He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went.

TRENCH notices the rudeness of this answer, and the total absence of any attempt to excuse such disobedience, both characteristic; representing careless, reckless sinners resisting God to His face.The whole human race are like children whom the Lord has brought up, but they have rebelled against him, only some are more plausible in their disobedience than others. And it often happens, that the daring rebel is brought to repentance and becomes the Lord's servant, while the formalist grows hardened in pride and enmity.

30 And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.

"I, sir." The emphatic "I," here, denotes the self-righteous complacency which says, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men" (Lu 18:11).

He did not "afterward repent" and refuse to go; for there was here no intention to go. It is the class that "say and do not" (Mt 23:3) —

a falseness more abominable to God, says STIER, than any "I will not."

31 Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

The publicans and the harlots were the first son, who, when told to work in the Lord's vineyard, said, I will not; but afterwards repented and went. Their early life was a flat and flagrant refusal to do what they were commanded; it was one continued rebellion against the authority of God. The chief priests and the elders of the people, with whom our Lord was now speaking, were the second son, who said, I go, sir, but went not. They were early called, and all their life long professed obedience to God, but never rendered it; their life was one of continued disobedience.

A general appeal upon the parable; Whether of them twain did the will of his father? Mt 21:31. They both had their faults, one was rude and the other was false, such variety of exercises parents sometimes have in the different humours of their children, and they have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to know what is the best way of managing them. But the question is, Which was the better of the two, and the less faulty? And it was soon resolved; the first, because his actions were better than his words, and his latter end than his beginning. This they had learned from the common sense of mankind, who would much rather deal with one that will be better than his word, than with one that will be false to his word. And, in the intention of it, they had learned from the account God gives of the rule of his judgment (Eze 18:21-24), that if the sinner turn from his wickedness, he shall be pardoned; andif the righteous man turn from his righteousness, he shall be rejected. The tenour of the whole scripture gives us to understand that those are accepted as doing their Father's will, who, wherein they have missed it, are sorry for it, and do better.

A particular application of it to the matter in hand, Mt 21:31,32. The primary scope of the parable is, to show how the publicans and harlots, who never talked of the Messiah and his kingdom, yet

entertained the doctrine, and submitted to the discipline, of John the Baptist, his forerunner, when the priests and elders, who were big with expectations of the Messiah, and seemed very ready to go into his measures, slighted John the Baptist, and ran counter to the designs of his mission. But it has a further reach; the Gentiles were sometimes disobedient, had been long so, children of disobedience, like the elder son (Tit 3:3,4); yet, when the gospel was preached to them, they became obedient to the faith; whereas the Jews who said, I go, sir, promised fair (Ex 24:7,Jos 24:24); yet went not; they did but flatter God with their mouth. Ps 78:36.

In Christ's application of this parable, observe.

1. How he proves that John's baptism was from heaven, and not of men. "If you cannot tell," saith Christ, "you might tell,"

(a) By the scope of his ministry; John came unto you in the way of righteousness. Would you know whether John had his commission from heaven, remember the rule of trial, By their fruits ye shall know them; the fruits of their doctrines, the fruits of their doings. Observe but their way, and you may trace out both their rise and their tendency. Now it was evident that John came in the way of righteousness. In his ministry, he taught people to repent, and to work the works of righteousness. In his conversation, he was a great example of strictness, and seriousness, and contempt of the world, denying himself, and doing good to every body else. Christ therefore submitted to the baptism of John, because it became him to fulfil all righteousness. Now, if John thus came in the way of righteousness, could they be ignorant that his baptism was from heaven, or make any doubt of it?

(b) By the success of his ministry; The publicans and the harlots believed him; he did abundance of good among the worst sort of people. St. Paul proves his apostleship by the seals of his ministry, 1Co 9:2. If God had not sent John the Baptist, he would not have crowned his labours with such wonderful success, nor have made him so instrumental as he was for the conversion f souls. If

publicans and harlots believe his report, surely the arm of the Lord is with him. The people's profiting is the minister's best testimonial.

2. How he reproves them for their contempt of John's baptism, which yet, for fear of the people, they were not willing to own. To shame them for it, he sets before them the faith, repentance, and obedience, of the publicans and harlots, which aggravated their unbelief and impenitence. As he shows, Mt 11:21, that the less likely would have repented, so here that the less likely did repent.

(a) The publicans and harlots were like the first son in the parable, from whom little of religion was expected. They promised little good, and those that knew them promised themselves little good from them. Their disposition was generally rude, and their conversation profligate and debauched; and yet many of them were wrought upon the by the ministry of John, who came in the spirit and power of Elias. See Lu 7:29. These fitly represented the Gentile world; for, as Dr. Whitby observes, the Jews generally ranked the publicans with the heathen; nay, and the heathen were represented by the Jews as harlots, and born of harlots, Joh 8:41.

(b) The scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and elders, and indeed the Jewish nation in general, were like the other son that gave good words; they made a specious profession of religion, and yet, when the kingdom of the Messiah was brought among them by the baptism of John, they slighted it, they turned their back upon it, nay they lifted up the heel against it. A hypocrite is more hardly convinced and converted than a gross sinner; the form of godliness, if that be rested in, becomes one of Satan's strongholds, by which he opposes the power of godliness. It was an aggravation of their unbelief,

[1.] That John was such an excellent person, that he came, and came to them, in the way of righteousness. The better the means are, the greater will the account be, if not improved.

[2.] That, when they saw the publicans and harlots go before them into the kingdom of heaven, they did not afterward repent and believe; were not thereby provoked to a holy emulation, Ro 11:14. Shall publicans and harlots go away with grace and glory; and shall not we put in for a share? Shall our inferiors be more holy and more happy than we? They had not the wit and grace that Esau had, who was moved to take other measures than he had done, by the example of his younger brother, Ge 28:6. These proud priests, that set up for leaders, scorned to follow, though it were into the kingdom of heaven, especially to follow publicans; through the pride of their countenance, they would not seek after God, after Christ, Ps 10:4.

32 For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

that is, calling you to repentance; as Noah is styled "a preacher of righteousness" (2Pe 2:5), when like the Baptist he warned the old world to "flee from the wrath to come."

They did not reject him; nay, they "were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (Joh 5:35); but they would not receive his testimony to Jesus.

Of the publicans this is twice expressly recorded, Lu 3:12,7:29. Of the harlots, then, the same may be taken for granted, though the fact is not expressly recorded. These outcasts gladly believed the testimony of John to the coming Saviour, and so hastened to Jesus when He came. See Lu 7:37,15:1, &c.

Instead of being "provoked to jealousy" by their example, ye have seen them flocking to the Saviour and getting to heaven, unmoved.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

33 Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; they and their leaders are the husbandmen here; and what is spoken for conviction to them, is spoken for caution to all that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, not to be high-minded, but fear.

We have here the privileges of the Jewish church, represented by the letting out of a vineyard to the husbandmen; they were as tenants holding by, from, and under, God the great Householder. Observe,

1. How God established a church for himself in the world. The kingdom of God upon earth is here compared to a vineyard, furnished with all things requisite to an advantageous management and improvement of it.

(a) He planted this vineyard. The church is the planting of the Lord, Isa 61:3. The forming of a church is a work by itself, like the planting of a vineyard, which requires a great deal of cost and care. It is the vineyard which his right hand has planted (Ps 80:15), planted with the choicest vine (Isa 5:2), a noble vine, Jer 2:21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briars; but vines must be planted. The being of a church is owing to God's distinguishing favour, and his manifesting himself to some, and not to others.

(b) He hedged it round about. Note, God's church in the world is taken under his special protection. It is a hedge round about, like that about Job on every side (Job 1:10), a wall of fire, Zec 2:5. Wherever God has a church, it is, and will always be, his peculiar care. The covenant of circumcision and the ceremonial law were a hedge or a wall of partition about the Jewish church, which is taken down by Christ; who yet has appointed a gospel order and discipline to be the hedge of his church. He will not have his vineyard to lie in common, that those who are without, may thrust in at pleasure; not to lie at large, that those who are within, may lash out at pleasure; but care is taken to set bounds about this holy mountain.

(c) He digged a wine-press and built a tower. The altar of burnt-offerings was the wine-press, to which all the offerings were brought. God instituted ordinances in his church, for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way convenient?

2. How he entrusted these visible church-privileges with the nation and people of the Jews, especially their chief priests and elders; he let it out to them as husbandmen, not because he had need of them as landlords have of their tenants, but because he would try them, and be honoured by them. When in Judah God was known, and his name was great, when they were taken to be to God for a people, and for a name, and for a praise (Jer 13:11), when he revealed his word unto Jacob (Ps 147:19), when the covenant of life and peace was made with Levi (Mal 2:4,5), then this vineyard was let out. See an abstract of the lease, So 8:11,12. The Lord of the vineyard was to have a thousand pieces of silver (compare Isa 7:13); the main profit was to be his, but the keepers were to have two hundred, a competent and comfortable encouragement. And then he went into a far country. When God had in a visible appearance settled the Jewish church at mount Sinai, he did in a manner withdraw; they had no more such open vision, but were left to the written word. Or, they imagined that he was gone into a far country, as Israel, when they made the calf, fancied that Moses was gone. They put far from them the evil day.

34 and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

God's expectation of rent from these husbandmen, Mt 21:34. It was a reasonable expectation; for who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Note, From those that enjoy church-privileges, both ministers and people, God looks for fruit accordingly. 1. His expectations were not hasty; he did not demand a fore-rent, though he had been at such expense upon it; but staid till the time of the fruit drew near, as it did now that John preached the kingdom of heaven is at hand. God waits to be gracious, that he may give us time. 2. They were not high; he did not require them to come at

their peril, upon penalty of forfeiting their lease if they ran behind-hand; but he sent his servants to them, to remind them of their duty, and of the rent-day, and to help them in gathering in the fruit, and making return of it. These servants were the prophets of the Old Testament, who were sent, and sometimes directly, to the people of the Jews, to reprove and instruct them. 3. They were not hard; it was only to receive the fruits. He did not demand more than they could make of it, but some fruit of that which he himself planted--an observance of the laws and statutes he gave them. What could have been done more reasonable? Israel was an empty vine, nay it was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and brought forth wild grapes.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

The husbandmen's baseness in abusing the messengers that were sent to them.

1. When he sent them his servants, they abused them, though they represented the master himself, and spoke in his name. Note, The calls and reproofs of the word, if they do not engage, will but exasperate. See here what hath all along been the lot of God's faithful messengers, more or less;

(a) To suffer; so persecuted they the prophets, who were hated with a cruel hatred. They not only despised and reproached them, but treated them as the worst of malefactors--they beat them, and killed them, and stoned them. They beat Jeremiah, killed Isaiah, stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the temple. If they that live godly in Christ Jesus themselves shall suffer persecution, much more they that press others to it. This was God's old quarrel with the Jews, misusing his prophets, 2Ch 36:16.

(b) It has been their lot to suffer from their Master's own tenants; they were the husbandmen that treated them thus, the chief priests

and elders that sat in Moses's chair, that professed religion and relation to God; these were the most bitter enemies of the Lord's prophets, that cast them out, and killed them, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. See Jer 20:1,2,26:11.

Now see,

[1.] How God persevered in his goodness to them. He sent other servants, more than the first; though the first sped not, but were abused. He had sent them John the Baptist, and him they had beheaded; and yet he sent them his disciples, to prepare his way. O the riches of the patience and forbearance of God, in keeping up in his church a despised, persecuted ministry!

[2.] How they persisted in their wickedness. They did unto them likewise. One sin makes way for another of the same kind. They that are drunk with the blood of the saints, add drunkenness to thirst, and still cry, Give, give.

2. At length, he sent them his Son; we have seen God's goodness in sending, and their badness in abusing, the servants; but in the latter instance both these exceed themselves.

(a) Never did grace appear more gracious than in sending the Son. This was done last of all. Note, All the prophets were harbingers and forerunners to Christ. He was sent last; for if nothing else would work upon them, surely this would; it was therefore served for the ratio ultima--the last expedient. Surely they will reverence my Son, and therefore I will send him. Note, It might reasonably be expected that the Son of God, when he came to his own, should be reverenced; and reverence to Christ would be a powerful and effectual principle of fruitfulness and obedience, to the glory of God; if they will but reverence the Son, the point is gained. Surely they will reverence my Son, for he comes with more authority than the servants could; judgment is committed to him, that all men should honour him. There is greater danger in refusing him than in despising Moses's law.

(b) Never did sin appear more sinful than in the abusing of him, which was now to be done in two or three days. Observe,

[1.] How it was plotted (Mt 21:38); When they saw the Son: when he came, whom the people owned and followed as the Messiah, who would either have the rent paid, or distrain for it; this touched their copyhold, and they were resolved to make one bold push for it, and to preserve their wealth and grandeur by taking him out of the way, who was the only hindrance to it, and rival with them. This is the heir, come, let us kill him. Pilate and Herod, the princes of this world, knew not; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1Co 2:8. But the chief priests and elders knew that this was the heir, at least some of them; and therefore Come, let us kill him. Many are killed for what they have. The chief thing they envied him, and for which they hated and feared him, was his interest in the people, and their hosannas, which, if he was taken off, they hope to engross securely to themselves. They pretended that he must die, to save the people from the Romans (Joh 11:50); but really he must die, to save their hypocrisy and tyranny from that reformation which the expected kingdom of the Messiah would certainly bring along with it. He drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and therefore let us kill him; and then, as if the premises must of course go to the occupant, let us seize on his inheritance. They thought, if they could but get rid of this Jesus, they should carry all before them in the church without control, might impose what traditions, and force the people to what submissions, they pleased. Thus they take counsel against the Lord and his Anointed; but he that sits in heaven, laughs to see them outshot in their own bow; for, while they thought to kill him, and so to seize on his inheritance, he went by his cross to his crown, and they were broken pieces with a rod of iron, and their inheritance seized. Ps 2:2,3,6,9.

[2.] How this plot was executed, Mt 21:39. While they were so set upon killing him, in pursuance of their design to secure their own pomp and power, and while he was so set upon dying, in pursuance

of his design to subdue Satan, and save his chosen, no wonder if they soon caught him, and slew him, when his hour was come. Though the Roman power condemned him, yet it is still charged upon the chief priests and elders; for they were not only the prosecutors, but the principal agents, and had the greater sin. Ye have taken, Ac 2:23. Nay looking upon him to be as unworthy to live, as they were unwilling he should, they cast him out of the vineyard, out of the holy church, which they supposed themselves to have the key of, and out of the holy city for he was crucified without the gate, Heb 13:12. As if He had been the shame and reproach, who was the greatest glory of his people Israel. Thus they who persecuted the servants, persecuted the Son; as men treat God's ministers, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

that so, from mere servants, we may become lords. This is the deep aim of the depraved heart; this is emphatically "the root of all evil."

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

Here is their doom read out of their own mouths, Mt 21:40,41. He puts it to them, When the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen? He puts it to themselves, for their stronger conviction, that knowing the judgment of God against them which do such things, they might be the more inexcusable. Note, God's proceedings are so unexceptionable, that there needs but an appeal to sinners themselves concerning the equity of them. God will be justified when he speaks. They could readily answer, He will miserably destroy those wicked men. Note, Many can easily prognosticate the dismal consequences of other people's sins, that see not what will be the end of their own.

1. Our Saviour, in his question, supposes that the lord of the vineyard will come, and reckon with them. God is the Lord of the vineyard; the property is his, and he will make them know it, who now lord it over his heritage, as if it were all their own. The Lord of the vineyard will come. Persecutors say in their hearts, He delays his coming, he doth not see, he will not require; but they shall find, though he bear long with them, he will not bear always. It is comfort to abused saints and ministers, that the Lord is at hand, the Judge stands before the door. When he comes, what will he do to carnal professors? What will he do to cruel persecutors? They must be called to account, they have their day now; but he sees that his day is coming.

2. They, in their answer, suppose that it will be a terrible reckoning; the crime appearing so very black, you may be sure,

(a) That he will miserably destroy those wicked men; it is destruction that is their doom. Kakous kakos apolesei--Malos male perdet. Let men never expect to do ill, and fare well. This was fulfilled upon the Jews, in that miserable destruction which was brought upon them by the Romans, and was completed about forty years after this; and unparalleled ruin, attended with all the most dismal aggravating circumstances. It will be fulfilled upon all that tread in the steps of their wickedness; hell is everlasting destruction, and it will be the most miserable destruction to them of all others, that have enjoyed the greatest share of church privileges, and have not improved them. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites and persecutors.

(b) That he will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. Note, God will have a church in the world, notwithstanding the unworthiness and opposition of many that abuse the privileges of it. The unbelief and frowardness of man shall not make the word of God of no effect. If one will not, another will. The Jews' leavings were the Gentiles' feast. Persecutors may destroy the ministers, but cannot destroy the church. The Jews imagined that no doubt they were the people, and wisdom and holiness must die with them; and

if they were cut off, what would God do for a church in the world? But when God makes use of any to bear up his name, it is not because he needs them, nor is he at all beholden to them. If we were made a desolation and an astonishment, God could build a flourishing church upon our ruins; for he is never at a loss what to do for his great name, whatever becomes of us, and of our place and nation.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

The further illustration and application of this by Christ himself, telling them, in effect, that they had rightly judged.

1. He illustrates it by referring to a scripture fulfilled in this (Mt 21:42); Did ye never read in the scriptures? Yes, no doubt, they had often read and sung it, but had not considered it. We lose the benefit of what we read for want of meditation. The scripture he quotes is Ps 118:22,23, the same context out of which the children fetched their hosannas. The same word yields matter of praise and comfort to Christ's friends and followers, which speaks conviction and terror to his enemies. Such a two-edged sword is the word of God. That scripture, the Stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner, illustrates the preceding parable, especially that part of it which refers to Christ.

(a) The builders' rejecting of the stone is the same with the husbandmen's abusing of the son that was sent to them. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, had the oversight of the Jewish church, which was God's building: and they would not allow Christ a place in their building, would not admit his doctrine or laws into their constitution; they threw him aside as a despised broken vessel, a stone that would serve only for a stepping-stone, to be trampled upon.

(b) The advancing of this stone to be the head of the corner is the same with letting out the vineyard to other husbandmen. He who was rejected by the Jews was embraced by the Gentiles; and to that

church where there is no difference of circumcision or uncircumcision, Christ is all, and in all. His authority over the gospel church, and influence upon it, his ruling it as the Head, and uniting it as the Corner-stone, are the great tokens of his exhaltation. Thus, in spite of the malice of the priests and elders, he divided a portion with the great, and received his kingdom, though they would not have him to reign over them.

(c) The hand of God was in all this; This is the Lord's doing. Even the rejecting of him by the Jewish builders was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; he permitted and overruled it; much more was his advancement to the Head of the corner; his right hand and his holy arm brought it about; it was God himself that highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name; and it is marvellous in our eyes. The wickedness of the Jews that rejected him is marvellous,; that men should be so prejudiced against their own interest! See Isa 29:9,10,14. The honour done him by the Gentile world, notwithstanding the abuses done him by his own people, is marvellous; that he whom men despised and abhorred, should be adored by kings! Isa 49:7. But it is the Lord's doing.

2. He applies it to them, and application is the life of preaching.

He applies the sentence which they had passed (Mt 21:41), and turns it upon themselves; not the former part of it, concerning the miserable destruction of the husbandmen (he could not bear to speak of that), but the latter part, of letting out the vineyard to others; because though it looked black upon the Jews, it spoke good to the Gentiles. Know then,

[1.] That the Jews shall be unchurched; The kingdom of God shall be taken from you. This turning out of the husbandmen speaks the same doom with that of dismantling the vineyard, and laying it common. Isa 5:5. To the Jews had long pertained the adoption and the glory (Ro 9:4); to them were committed the oracles of God (Ro 3:2), and the sacred trust of revealed religion, and bearing up of God's name in the world (Ps 76:1,2); but now it shall be so no

longer. They were not only unfruitful in the use of their privileges, but, under pretence of them, opposed the gospel of Christ, and so forfeited them, and it was not long ere the forfeiture was taken. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to remove church privileges from those that not only sin against them, but sin with them, Re 2:4,5. The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, not only by the temporal judgments that befel them, but by the spiritual judgments they lay under, their blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and indignation at the gospel, Ro 11:8-10,1Th 2:15.

[2.] That the Gentiles shall be taken in. God needs not ask us leave whether he shall have a church in the world; though his vine be plucked up in one place, he will find another to plant it in. He will give it ethnei--to the Gentile world, that will bring forth the fruit of it. They who had been not a people, and had not obtained mercy, became favourites of Heaven. This is the mystery which blessed Paul was so much affected with (Ro 11:30,33), and which the Jews were so much affronted by, Ac 22:21,22. At the first planting of Israel in Canaan, the fall of the Gentiles was the riches of Israel (Ps 135:10,11), so, at their extirpation, the fall of Israel was the riches of the Gentiles, Ro 11:12. It shall go to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Note, Christ knows beforehand who will bring forth gospel fruits in the use of gospel means; because our fruitfulness is all the work of his own hands, and known unto God are all his works. They shall bring forth the fruits better than the Jews had done; God has had more glory from the New Testament church than from that of the Old Testament; for, when he changes, it shall not be to his loss.

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; and what is spoken to convict them, is spoken to caution all that enjoy the privileges of the outward church. As men treat God's people, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them. How can we, if faithful to his cause, expect a favourable reception from a wicked world, or from ungodly professors of Christianity! And let us ask ourselves, whether we who have the vineyard and all its

advantages, render fruits in due season, as a people, as a family, or as separate persons. Our Saviour, in his question, declares that the Lord of the vineyard will come, and when he comes he will surely destroy the wicked.

the great evangelical community of the faithful, which, after the extrusion of the Jewish nation, would consist chiefly of Gentiles, until "all Israel should be saved" (Ro 11:25,26). This vastly important statement is given by Matthew only.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

He applies the scripture which he had quoted (Mt 21:42), to their terror, Mt 21:44. This Stone, which the builders refused, is set for the fall of many in Israel; and we have here the doom of two sorts of people, for whose fall it proves that Christ is set.

[1.] Some, through ignorance, stumble at Christ in his estate of humiliation; when this Stone lies on the earth, where the builders threw it, they, through their blindness and carelessness, fall on it, fall over it, and they shall be broken. The offence they take at Christ, will not hurt him, any more than he that stumbles, hurts the stone he stumbles at; but it will hurt themselves; they will fall, and be broken, and snared, Isa 8:14,1Pe 2:7,8. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin.

[2.] Others, through malice, oppose Christ, and bid defiance to him in his estate of exaltation, when this Stone is advanced to the head of the corner; and on them it shall fall, for they pull it on their own heads, as the Jews did by that challenge, His blood be upon us and upon our children, and it will grind them to powder. The former seems to bespeak the sin and ruin of all unbelievers; this is the greater sin, and sorer ruin, of persecutors, that kick against the pricks, and persist in it. Christ's kingdom will be a burthensome stone to all those that attempt to overthrow it, or heave it out of its place; see Zec 12:3. This Stone cut out of the mountain without hands, will break in pieces all opposing power, Da 2:34,35. Some

make this an allusion to the manner of stoning to death among the Jews. The malefactors were first thrown down violently from a high scaffold upon a great stone, which would much bruise them; but then they threw another great stone upon them, which would crush them to pieces: one way or other, Christ will utterly destroy all those that fight against him. If they be so stout-hearted, that they are not destroyed by falling on this stone, yet it shall fall on them, and so destroy them. He will strike through kings, he will fill the places with dead bodies, Ps 110:5,6. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

Matthew-22

The Parable of the Marriage Feast

1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

We have here the parable of the guests invited to the wedding-feast. In this it is said (Mt 22:1), Jesus answered, not to what his opposers said (for they were put to silence), but to what they thought, when they were wishing for an opportunity to lay hands on him, Mt 21:46. Note, Christ knows how to answer men's thoughts, for he is a Discerner of them. Or, He answered, that is, he continued his discourse to the same purport; for this parable represents the gospel offer, and the entertainment it meets with, as the former, but under another similitude. The parable of the vineyard represents the sin of the rulers that persecuted the prophets; it shows also the sin of the people, who generally neglected the message, while their great ones were persecuting the messengers.

Gospel preparations are here represented by a feast which a king made at the marriage of his son; such is the kingdom of heaven,

such the provision made for precious souls, in and by the new covenant. The King is God, a great King, King of kings. Now,

1. Here is a marriage made for his son, Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel-day is the day of his espousals, So 3:11. Behold by faith the church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, and were given to Christ by him whose they were; and in them you see the bride, the Lamb's wife, Re 21:9. The gospel covenant is a marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here.

2. Here is a dinner prepared for this marriage, Mt 22:4. All the privileges of church-membership, and all the blessings of the new covenant, pardon of sin, the favour of God, peace of conscience, the promises of the gospel, and all the riches contained in them, access to the throne of grace, the comforts of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. These are the preparations for this feast, a heaven upon earth now, and a heaven in heaven shortly. God has prepared it in his counsel, in his covenant. It is a dinner, denoting present privileges in the midst of our day, beside the supper at night in glory.

(a) It is a feast. Gospel preparations were prophesied of as a feast (Isa 25:6), a feast of fat things, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law (1Co 5:8); Let us keep the feast. A feast is a good day (Es 7:17); so is the gospel; it is a continual feast. Oxen and fatlings are killed for this feast; no niceties, but substantial food; enough, and enough of the best. The day of a feast is a day of slaughter, or sacrifice, Jam 5:5. Gospel preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice of himself. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's goodwill toward men. It was made for laughter (Ec 10:19), it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fulness; the design of the gospel was to fill every hungry soul with good things. It was made for fellowship, to maintain an intercourse between heaven and earth.

We are sent for to the banquet of wine, that we may tell what is our petition, and what is our request.

(b) It is a wedding feast. Wedding feasts are usually rich, free, and joyful. The first miracle Christ wrought, was, to make plentiful provision for a wedding feast (Joh 2:7); and surely then he will not be wanting in provision for his own wedding feast, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready, a victorious triumphant feast, Re 19:7,17,18.

(c) It is a royal wedding feast; it is the feast of a king (1Sa 25:36), at the marriage, not of a servant, but of a son; and then, if ever, he will, like Ahasuerus, show the riches of his glorious kingdom, Es 1:4. The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect, but such as it becomes the King of glory to give. He gives like himself; for he gives himself to be to them El shaddai--a God that is enough, a feast indeed for a soul.

2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

3 and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

Gospel calls and offers are represented by an invitation to this feast. Those that make a feast will have guests to grace the feast with. God's guests are the children of men. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus dignified! The guests that were first invited were the Jews; wherever the gospel is preached, this invitation is given; ministers are the servants that are sent to invite, Pr 9:4,5.

Now,

1 The guests are called, bidden to the wedding. All that are within hearing of the joyful sound of the gospel, to them is the word of this invitation sent. The servants that bring the invitation do not set

down their names in a paper; there is no occasion for that, since none are excluded but those that exclude themselves. Those that are bidden to the dinner are bidden to the wedding; for all that partake of gospel privileges are to give a due and respectful attendance on the Lord Jesus, as the faithful friends and humble servants of the Bridegroom. They are bidden to the wedding, that they may go forth to meet the bridegroom; for it is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son.

2 The guests are called upon; for in the gospel there are not only gracious proposals made, but gracious persuasives. We persuade men, we beseech them in Christ's stead, 2Co 5:11,20. See how much Christ's heart is set upon the happiness of poor souls! He not only provides for them, in consideration of their want, but sends to them, in consideration of their weakness and forgetfulness. When the invited guests were slack in coming, the king sent forth other servants, Mt 22:4. When the prophets of the Old Testament prevailed not, nor John the Baptist, nor Christ himself, who told them the entertainment was almost ready (the kingdom of God was at hand), the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, it was quite ready; and to persuade them to accept the offer. One would think it had been enough to give men an intimation that they had leave to come, and should be welcome; that, during the solemnity of the wedding, the king kept open house; but, because the natural man discerns not, and therefore desires not, the things of the Spirit of God, we are pressed to accept the call by the most powerful inducements, drawn with the cords of a man, and all the bonds of love. If the repetition of the call will move us, Behold, the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that heareth say, Come; let him that is athirst come, Re 22:17. If the reason of the call will work upon us, Behold, the dinner is prepared, the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; the Father is ready to accept of us, the Son to intercede for us, the Spirit to sanctify us; pardon is ready; peace is ready, comfort is ready; the promises are ready, as wells of living water for supply; ordinances are ready, as golden pipes for conveyance; angels are ready to attend us, creatures are ready to be in league with us, providences are ready to work for our good, and

heaven, at last, is ready to receive us; it is a kingdom prepared, ready to be revealed in the last time. Is all this ready; and shall we be unready? Is all this preparation made for us; and is there any room to doubt of our welcome, if we come in a right manner? Come, therefore, O come to the marriage; we beseech you, receive not all this grace of God in vain, 2Co 6:1.

This points to those Gospel calls after Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and effusion of the Spirit, to which the parable could not directly allude, but when only it could be said, with strict propriety, "that all things were ready." Compare 1Co 5:7,8, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, let us keep the feast"; also Joh 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

The cold treatment which the gospel of Christ often meets with among the children of men, represented by the cold treatment that this message met with and the hot treatment that the messengers met with, in both which the king himself and the royal bridegroom are affronted. This reflects primarily upon the Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves; but it looks further, to the contempt that would, by many in all ages, be put upon, and the opposition that would be given to, the gospel of Christ.

1 The message was basely slighted (Mt 22:3); They would not come. Note, The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him is, not because they cannot, but because they will not (Joh 5:40); Ye will not come to me. This will aggravate the misery of sinners, that they might have had happiness for the coming for, but it was their own act and deed to refuse it. I would, and ye would not. But this was not all (Mt 22:5); they made light of it; they thought it not worth coming for; thought the messengers made more ado than needs; let them magnify the preparations ever so much, they could feast as well at home. Note, Making light of Christ, and of the great

salvation wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. Amelesantes--They were careless. Note, Multitudes perish eternally through mere carelessness, who have not any direct aversion, but a prevailing indifference, to the matters of their souls, and an unconcernedness about them.

And the reason why they made light of the marriage feast was, because they had other things that they minded more, and had more mind to; they went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. Note, The business and profit of worldly employments prove to many a great hindrance in closing with Christ: none turn their back on the feast, but with some plausible excuse or other, Lu 14:18. The country people have their farms to look after, about which there is always something or other to do; the town's people must tend their shops, and be constant upon the exchange; they must buy, and sell, and get gain. It is true, that both farmers and merchants must be diligent in their business but not so as to keep them from making religion their main business. Licitis perimus omnes--These lawful things undo us, when they are unlawfully managed, when we are so careful and troubled about many things as to neglect the one thing needful. Observe, Both the city and the country have their temptations, the merchandise in the one, and the farms in the other; so that, whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

2 The messengers were basely abused; The remnant, or the rest of them, that is, those who did not go the farms, or merchandise, were neither husbandmen nor tradesmen, but ecclesiastics, the scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests; these were the persecutors, these took the servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them. This, in the parable, is unaccountable, never any could be so rude and barbarous as this, to servants that came to invite them to a feast; but, in the application of the parable, it was matter of fact; they whose feet should have been beautiful, because they brought the glad tidings of the solemn feasts (Na 1:15), were treated as the offscouring of all things, 1Co 4:13. The prophets and John the Baptist had been thus abused already, and the apostles and ministers

of Christ must count upon the same. The Jews were, either directly or indirectly, agents in most of the persecutions of the first preachers of the gospel; witness the history of the Acts, that is, the sufferings of the apostles.

6 and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.

The utter ruin that was coming upon the Jewish church and nation is here represented by the revenge which the king, in wrath, took on these insolent recusants (Mt 22:7); He was wroth. The Jews, who had been the people of God's love and blessing, by rejecting the gospel became the generation of his wrath and curse. Wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1Th 2:16. Now observe here,

1. What was the crying sin that brought the ruin; it was their being murderers. He does not say, he destroyed those despisers of his call, but those murderers of his servants; as if God were more jealous for the lives of his ministers than for the honour of his gospel; he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. Note, Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers fills the measure of guilt more than any thing. Filling Jerusalem with innocent blood was that sin of Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, 2Ki 24:4.

2. What was the ruin itself, that was coming; He sent forth his armies. The Roman armies were his armies, of his raising, of his sending against the people of his wrath; and he gave them a charge to tread them down, Isa 10:6. God is the Lord of men's host, and makes what use he pleases of them, to serve his own purposes, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa 10:7. See Mic 4:11,12. His armies destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. This points out very plainly the destruction of the Jews, and the burning of Jerusalem, by the Romans, forty years after this. No age ever saw a greater desolation than that, nor more of the direful effects of fire and sword. Though Jerusalem had been a holy city, the city that God had chosen, to put his name there, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; yet that city being now become a harlot, righteousness being no longer lodged in it, but

murderers, the worst of murderers (as the prophet speaks, Isa 1:21), judgment came upon it, and ruin without remedy; and it is set forth for an example to all that should oppose Christ and his gospel. It was the Lord's doing, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant.

8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

The replenishing of the church again, by the bringing in of the Gentiles, is here represented by the furnishing of the feast with guests out of the high-ways, Mt 22:8-10.

Here is,

1 The complaint of the master of the feast concerning those that were first bidden (Mt 22:8), The wedding is ready, the covenant of grace ready to be sealed, a church ready to be founded; but they which were bidden, that is, the Jews, to whom pertained the covenant and the promises, by which they were of old invited to the feast of fat things, they were not worthy, they were utterly unworthy, and, by their contempt of Christ, had forfeited all the privileges they were invited to. Note, It is not owing to God, that sinners perish, but to themselves. Thus, when Israel of old was within sight of Canaan, the land of promise was ready, the milk and honey ready, but their unbelief and murmuring, and contempt of that pleasant land, shut them out, and their carcases were left to perish in the wilderness; and these things happened to them for ensamples. See 1Co 10:11,Heb 3:16-4:1.

2 The commission he gave to the servants, to invite other guests. The inhabitants of the city (Mt 22:7) had refused; Go into the high-ways then; into the way of the Gentiles, which at first they were to decline, Mt 10:5. Thus by the fall of the Jews salvation is come to the Gentiles, Ro 11:11,12,Eph 3:8. Note, Christ will have a kingdom in the world, though many reject the grace, and resist the power, of that

kingdom. Though Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious. The offer of Christ and salvation to the Gentiles was,

(1.) Unlooked for and unexpected; such a surprise as it would be to wayfaring men upon the road to be met with an invitation to a wedding feast. The Jews had notice of the gospel, long before, and expected the Messiah and his kingdom; but to the Gentiles it was all new, what they had never heard of before (Ac 17:19,20), and, consequently, what they could not conceive of as belonging to them. See Isa 65:1,2.

(2.) It was universal and undistinguishing; Go, and bid as many as you find. The highways are public places, and there Wisdom cries, Pr 1:20. "Ask them that go by the way, ask any body (Job 21:29), high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, young and old, Jew and Gentile; tell them all, that they shall be welcome to gospel-privileges upon gospel-terms; whoever will, let him come, without exception."

3. The success of this second invitation; if some will not come, others will (Mt 22:10); They gathered together all, as many as they found. The servants obeyed their orders. Jonah was sent into the high-ways, but was so tender of the honour of his country, that he avoided the errand; but Christ's apostles, though Jews, preferred the service of Christ before their respect to their nation; and St. Paul, though sorrowing for the Jews, yet magnifies his office as the apostle of Gentiles. They gathered together all. The design of the gospel is, (1.) To gather souls together; not the nation of the Jews only, but all the children of God who were scattered abroad (Joh 11:52), the other sheep that were not of that fold, Joh 10:16. They were gathered into one body, one family, one corporation. (2.) To gather them together to the wedding-feast, to pay their respect to Christ, and to partake of the privileges of the new covenant. Where the dole is, there will the poor be gathered together.

Now the guests that were gathered were,

[1.] A multitude, all, as many as they found; so many, that the guest-chamber was filled. The sealed ones of the Jews were numbered, but those of other nations were without number, a very great multitude, Re 7:9. See Isa 60:4,8.

[2.] A mixed multitude, both bad and good; some that before their conversion were sober and well-inclined, as the devout Greeks (Ac 17:4) and Cornelius; others that had run to an excess of riot, as the Corinthians (1Co 6:11); Such were some of you; or, some that after their conversion proved bad, that turned not to the Lord with all their heart, but feignedly; others that were upright and sincere, and proved of the right class. Ministers, in casting the net of the gospel, enclose both good fish and bad; but the Lord knows them that are his.

10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

that is, without making any distinction between open sinners and the morally correct. The Gospel call fetched in Jews, Samaritans, and outlying heathen alike.

11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

The language here is drawn from the following remarkable passage in Zep 1:7,8: —"Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, He hath bid His guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel." The custom in the East of presenting festival garments (see Ge 45:22,2Ki 5:22), even though nor clearly proved, Is certainly presupposed here. It undoubtedly means something which they bring not of their own—for how could they have any such dress who were gathered in from the highways indiscriminately?—but which they receive as their appropriate dress. And what can that be but what is meant by "putting on the Lord Jesus," as "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?" (See Ps 45:13,14). Nor could such language be strange to those in whose ears had so long resounded those words of prophetic joy: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be

joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa 61:10).

It concerns all to prepare for the scrutiny; and those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, who have a Christian temper of mind, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding-garment. The imputed righteousness of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit, are both alike necessary. No man has the wedding-garment by nature, or can form it for himself. The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to account for all their presumptuous intruding into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges. Take him away. Those that walk unworthy of Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously claimed. Our Saviour here passes out of the parable into that which it teaches. Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness. Many are called to the wedding-feast, that is, to salvation, but few have the wedding-garment, the righteousness of Christ, the sanctification of the Spirit. Then let us examine ourselves whether we are in the faith, and seek to be approved by the King.

However, not all the people who responded to the invitation were genuine. Some were like the man who thought he would like to go to the feast, but was either too lazy or too busy with his own affairs to prepare himself properly. The king had issued an invitation to all, but he denied entrance to those who wanted to gain the benefits of his feast without changing their self-centred ways. Jesus invited all to enter his kingdom, but there was no place for those who said they believed but showed no change in their attitudes and behaviour (Mat_22:11-14; cf._7:21-23; 11:29; 13:20-21; 16:24).

The case of hypocrites, who are in the church, but not of it, who have a name to live, but are not alive indeed, is represented by the guest that had not on a wedding garment; one of the bad that were gathered in. Those come short of salvation by Christ, not only who refuse to

take upon them the profession of religion, but who are not sound at heart in that profession. Concerning this hypocrite observe,

1. His discovery, how he was found out, Mt 22:11.

(a) The king came in to see the guests, to bid those welcome who came prepared, and to turn those out who came otherwise. Note, The God of heaven takes particular notice of those who profess religion, and have a place and name in the visible church. Our Lord Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks and therefore knows their works. See Re 2:1,2,So 7:12. Let this be a warning to us against hypocrisy, that disguises will shortly be stripped off, and every man will appear in his own colours; and an encouragement to us in our sincerity, that God is a witness to it.

Observe, This hypocrite was never discovered to be without a wedding garment, till the king himself came in to see the guests. Note, It is God's prerogative to know who are sound at heart in their profession, and who are not. We may be deceived in men, either one way or other; but He cannot. The day of judgment will be the great discovering day, when all the guests will be presented to the King: then he will separate between the precious and the vile (Mt 25:32), the secrets of all hearts will then be made manifest, and we shall infallibly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which now it is not easy to do. It concerns all the guests, to prepare for the scrutiny, and to consider how they will pass the piercing eye of the heart-searching God.

(b) As soon as he came in, he presently espied the hypocrite; He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; though but one, he soon had his eye upon him; there is no hope of being hid in a crowd from the arrests of divine justice; he had not on a wedding garment; he was not dressed as became a nuptial solemnity; he had not his best clothes on. Note, Many come to the wedding feast without a wedding garment. If the gospel be the wedding feast, then the wedding garment is a frame of heart, and a course of life agreeable to the gospel and our profession of it, worthy of the

vocation wherewith we are called (Eph 4:1), as becomes the gospel of Christ, Php 1:27. The righteousness of saints, their real holiness and sanctification, and Christ, made Righteousness to them, is the clean linen, Re 19:8. This man was not naked, or in rags; some raiment he had, but not a wedding garment. Those, and those only, who put on the Lord Jesus, that have a Christian temper of mind, and are adorned with Christian graces, who live by faith in Christ, and to whom he is all in all, have the wedding garment.

12 and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

His trial (Mt 22:12); and here we may observe,

(1.) How he was arraigned (Mt 22:12); Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? A startling question to one that was priding himself in the place he securely possessed at the feast. Friend! That was a cutting word; a seeming friend, a pretended friend, a friend in profession, under manifold ties and obligations to be a friend. Note, There are many in the church who are false friends to Jesus Christ, who say that they love him while their hearts are not with him. How camest thou in hither? He does not chide the servants for letting him in (the wedding garment is an inward thing, ministers must go according to that which falls within their cognizance); but he checks his presumption in crowding in, when he knew that his heart was not upright; "How durst thou claim a share in gospel benefits, when thou hadst no regard to gospel rules? What has thou to do to declare my statutes?" Ps 50:16,17. Such are spots in the feast, dishonour the bridegroom, affront the company, and disgrace themselves; and therefore, How camest thou in hither? Note, The day is coming, when hypocrites will be called to an account for all their presumptuous intrusion into gospel ordinances, and usurpation of gospel privileges. Who hath required this at your hand? Isa 1:12. Despised sabbaths and abused sacraments must be reckoned for, and judgment taken out upon an action of waste against all those who received the grace of God in vain. "How camest thou to the Lord's table, at such a time, unhumbled and unsanctified? What brought thee to sit before God's prophets, as his people do, when thy heart went after thy covetousness? How camest thou in? Not by the door,

but some other way, as a thief and a robber. It was a tortuous entry, a possession without colour of a title." Note, It is good for those that have a place in the church, often to put it to themselves, "How came I in hither? Have I a wedding-garment?" If we would thus judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

(2.) How he was convicted; he was speechless: ephimothe--he was muzzled (so the word is used, 1Co 9:9); the man stood mute, upon his arraignment, being convicted and condemned by his own conscience. They who live within the church, and die without Christ, will not have one word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day, they will be without excuse; should they plead, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, as they do, Lu 13:26, that is to plead guilty; for the crime they are charged with, is thrusting themselves into the presence of Christ, and to his table, before they were called. They who never heard a word of this wedding feast will have more to say for themselves; their sin will be more excusable, and their condemnation more tolerable, than theirs who came to the feast without the wedding garment, and so sin against the clearest light and dearest love.

13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

His sentence (Mt 22:13); Bind him hand and foot, &c.

(1.) He is ordered to be pinioned, as condemned malefactors are, to be manacled and shackled. Those that will not work and walk as they should, may expect to be bound hand and foot. There is a binding in this world by the servants, the ministers, whose suspending of persons that walk disorderly, to the scandal of religion, is called binding of them, Mt 18:18. "Bind them up from partaking of special ordinances, and the peculiar privileges of their church-membership; bind them over to the righteous judgment of god." In the day of judgment, hypocrites will be bound; the angels shall bind up these tares in bundles for the fire, Mt 13:41. Damned sinners are bound hand and foot by an irreversible sentence; this signifies the same with the fixing of the great gulf; they can neither resist nor outrun their punishment.

(2.) He is ordered to be carried off from the wedding feast; Take him away. When the wickedness of hypocrites appears, they are to be taken away from the communion of the faithful, to be cut of as withered branches. This bespeaks the punishment of loss in the other world; they shall be taken away from the king, from the kingdom, from the wedding feast, Depart from me, ye cursed. It will aggravate their misery, that (like the unbelieving lord, 2Ki 7:2), they shall see all this plenty with their eyes, but shall not taste of it. Note, Those that walk unworthy of their Christianity, forfeit all the happiness they presumptuously laid claim to, and complimented themselves with a groundless expectation of.

(3.) He is ordered into a doleful dungeon; Cast him into utter darkness. Our Saviour here insensibly slides out of this parable into that which it intimates--the damnation of hypocrites in the other world. Hell is utter darkness, it is darkness out of heaven, the land of light; or it is extreme darkness, darkness to the last degree, without the least ray or spark of light, or hope of it, like that of Egypt; darkness which might be felt; the blackness of darkness, as darkness itself, Job 10:22. Note, Hypocrites go by the light of the gospel itself down to utter darkness; and hell will be hell indeed to such, a condemnation more intolerable; there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth. This our Saviour often uses as part of the description of hell-torments, which are hereby represented, not so much by the misery itself, as by the resentment sinners will have of it; there shall be weeping, an expression of great sorrow and anguish; not a gush of tears, which gives present ease, but constant weeping, which is constant torment; and the gnashing of teeth is an expression of the greatest rage and indignation; they will be like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord, Isa 51:20,Isa 8:21,22. Let us therefore hear and fear.

Lastly, The parable is concluded with that remarkable saying which we had before (Mt 20:16), Many are called, but few are chosen, Mt 22:14. Of the many that are called to the wedding feast, if you set aside all those as unchosen that make light of it, and avowedly prefer other things before it; if then you set aside all that make a profession of religion, but the temper of whose spirits and the tenour of whose conversation are a constant contradiction to it;

if you set aside all the profane, and all the hypocritical, you will find that they are few, very few, that are chosen; many called to the wedding feast, but few chosen to the wedding garment, that is, to salvation, by sanctification of the Spirit. This is the strait gate, and narrow way, which few find.

14 For many are called, but few are chosen.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

15 Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

It was not the least grievous of the sufferings of Christ, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and had snares laid for him by those that sought how to take him off with some pretence. In these verses, we have him attacked by the Pharisees and Herodians with a question about paying tribute to Cæsar. Observe,

What the design was, which they proposed to themselves; They took counsel to entangle him in his talk. Hitherto, his encounters had been mostly with the chief priests and the elders, men in authority, who trusted more to their power than to their policy, and examined him concerning his commission (Mt 21:23); but now he is set upon from another quarter; the Pharisees will try whether they can deal with him by their learning in the law, and in casuistical divinity, and they have a tentamen novum--a new trial for him. Note, It is in vain for the best and wisest of men to think that, by their ingenuity, or interest, or industry, or even by their innocence and integrity, they can escape the hatred and ill will of bad men, or screen themselves from the strife of tongues. See how unwearied the enemies of Christ and his kingdom are in their opposition!

1. They took counsel. It was foretold concerning him, that the rulers would take counsel against him (Ps 2:2); and so persecuted they the prophets. Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. See Jer 18:18,20:10. Note, The more there is of contrivance and consultation about sin, the worse it is. There is a particular woe to them that devise iniquity, Mic 2:1 The more there is of the wicked wit in the

contrivance of a sin, the more there is of the wicked will in the commission of it.

2. That which they aimed at was to entangle him in his talk. They saw him free and bold in speaking his mind, and hoped by that, if they could bring him to some nice and tender point, to get an advantage against him. It has been the old practice of Satan's agents and emissaries, to make a man an offender for a word, a word misplaced, or mistaken, or misunderstood; a word, though innocently designed, yet perverted by strained inuendos: thus they lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate (Isa 29:21), and represent the greatest teachers as the greatest troublers of Israel: thus the wicked plotteth against the just, Ps 37:12,13.

There are two ways by which the enemies of Christ might be revenged on him, and be rid of him; either by law or by force. By law they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the civil government; for it was not lawful for them to put any man to death (Joh 18:31); and the Roman powers were not apt to concern themselves about questions of words, and names, and their law, Ac 18:15. By force they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the people, who were always the hands, whoever were the heads, in such acts of violence, which they call the beating of the rebels; but the people took Christ for a Prophet, and therefore his enemies could not raise the mob against him. Now (as the old serpent was from the beginning more subtle than any beast of the field), the design was, to bring him into such a dilemma, that he must make himself liable to the displeasure either of the Jewish multitude, or of the Roman magistrates; let him take which side of the question he will, he shall run himself into a premunire; and so they will gain their point, and make his own tongue to fall upon him.

16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.

The question which they put to him pursuant to this design, Mt 22:16,17. Having devised this iniquity in secret, in a close cabal,

behind the curtain, when they went abroad without loss of time they practised it. Observe,

1 The persons they employed; they did not go themselves, lest the design should be suspected and Christ should stand the more upon his guard; but they sent their disciples, who would look less like tempters, and more like learners. Note, Wicked men will never want wicked instruments to be employed in carrying on their wicked counsels. Pharisees have their disciples at their beck, who will go any errand for them, and say as they say; and they have this in their eyes, when they are so industrious to make proselytes.

With them they sent the Herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for a cheerful and entire subjection to the Roman emperor, and to Herod his deputy; and who made it their business to reconcile people to that government, and pressed all to pay their tribute. Some think that they were the collectors of the land tax, as the publicans were of the customs, and that they went with the Pharisees to Christ, with this blind upon their plot, that while the Herodians demanded the tax, and the Pharisees denied it, they were both willing to refer it to Christ, as a proper Judge to decide the quarrel. Herod being obliged, by the charter of the sovereignty, to take care of the tribute, these Herodians, by assisting him in that, helped to endear him to his great friends at Rome. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous for the liberty of the Jews, and did what they could to make them impatient of the Roman yoke. Now, if he should countenance the paying of tribute, the Pharisees would incense the people against him; if he should discountenance or disallow it, the Herodians would incense the government against him. Note, It is common for those that oppose one another, to continue in an opposition to Christ and his kingdom. Samson's foxes looked several ways, but met in one firebrand. See Ps 83:3,5,7,8. If they are unanimous in opposing, should not we be so in maintaining, the interests of the gospel?

2 The preface, with which they were plausibly to introduce the question; it was highly complimentary to our Saviour (Mt 22:16); Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in

truth. Note, It is a common thing for the most spiteful projects to be covered with the most specious pretences. Had they come to Christ with the most serious enquiry, and the most sincere intention, they could not have expressed themselves better. Here is hatred covered with deceit, and a wicked heart with burning lips (Pr 26:23); as Judas, who kissed, and betrayed, as Joab, who kissed, and killed.

Now,

(a) What they said of Christ was right, and whether they knew it or no, blessed be God, we know it.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher; Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. For himself, he is true, the Amen, the faithful Witness; he is the Truth itself. As for his doctrine, the matter of his teaching was the way of God, the way that God requires us to walk in, the way of duty, that leads to happiness; that is the way of God. The manner of it was in truth; he showed people the right way, the way in which they should go. He was a skilful Teacher, and knew the way of God; and a faithful Teacher, that would be sure to let us know it. See Pr 8:6-9. This is the character of a good teacher, to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and not to suppress, pervert, or stretch, any truth, for favour or affection, hatred or good will, either out of a desire to please, or a fear to offend, any man.

[2.] That he was a bold Reprover. In preaching, he cared not for any; he valued no man's frowns or smiles, he did not court, he did not dread, either the great or the many, for he regarded not the person of man. In his evangelical judgment, he did not know faces; that Lion of the tribe of Judah, turned not away for any (Pr 30:30), turned not a step from the truth, nor from his work, for fear of the most formidable. He reproved with equity (11:4), and never with partiality.

(b) Though what they said was true for the matter of it, yet there was nothing but flattery and treachery in the intention of it. They called him Master, when they were contriving to treat him as the worst of

malefactors; they pretended respect for him, when they intended mischief against him; and they affronted his wisdom as Man, much more his omniscience as God, of which he had so often given undeniable proofs, when they imagined that they could impose upon him with these pretences, and that he could not see through them. It is the grossest atheism, that is the greatest folly in the world, to think to put a cheat upon Christ, who searches the heart, Re 2:23. Those that mock God do but deceive themselves. Ga 6:7.

3. The proposal of the case; What thinkest thou? As if they had said, "Many men are of many minds in this matter; it is a case which relates to practice, and occurs daily; let us have thy thought freely in the matter, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" This implies a further question; Has Cæsar a right to demand it? The nation of the Jews was lately, about a hundred years before this, conquered by the Roman sword, and so, as other nations, made subject to the Roman yoke, and became a province of the empire; accordingly, toll, tribute, and custom, were demanded from them, and sometimes poll-money. By this it appeared that the sceptre was departed from Judah (Ge 49:10); and therefore, if they had understood the signs of the times, they must have concluded that Shiloh was come, and either that this was he, or they must find out another more likely to be so.

Now the question was, Whether it was lawful to pay these taxes voluntarily, or, Whether they should not insist upon the ancient liberty of their nation, and rather suffer themselves to be distrained upon? The ground of the doubt was, that they were Abraham's seed, and should not by consent be in bondage to any man, Joh 8:33. God had given them a law, that they should not set a stranger over them. Did not that imply, that they were not to yield any willing subjection to any prince, state, or potentate, that was not of their own nation and religion? This was an old mistake, arising from that pride and thathaughty spirit which bring destruction and a fall. Jeremiah, in his time, though he spoke in God's name, could not possibly beat them off it, nor persuade them to submit to the king of Babylon; and their obstinacy in that matter was then their ruin (Jer 27:12,13): and now again they stumbled at the same stone; and it was the very thing

which, in a few years after, brought final destruction upon them by the Romans. They quite mistook the sense both of the precept and of the privilege, and, under colour of God's word, contended with his providence, when they should have kissed the rod, and accepted the punishment of their iniquity.

However, by this question they hoped to entangle Christ, and, which way soever he resolved it, to expose him to the fury either of the jealous Jews, or of the jealous Romans; they were ready to triumph, as Pharaoh did over Israel, that the wilderness had shut him in, and his doctrine would be concluded either injurious to the rights of the church, or hurtful to kings and provinces.

17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

The breaking of this snare by the wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

1. He discovered it (Mt 22:18); He perceived their wickedness; for, surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird, Pr 1:17. A temptation perceived is half conquered, for our greatest danger lies from snakes under the green grass; and he said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Note, Whatever vizard the hypocrite puts on, our Lord Jesus sees through it; he perceives all the wickedness that is in the hearts of pretenders, and can easily convict them of it, and set it in order before them. He cannot be imposed upon, as we often are, by flatteries and fair pretences. He that searches the heart can call hypocrites by their own name, as Ahijah did the wife of Jeroboam (1Ki 14:6), Why feignest thou thyself to be another? Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Note, Hypocrites tempt Jesus Christ; they try his knowledge, whether he can discover them through their disguises; they try his holiness and truth, whether he will allow of them in this church; but if they that of old tempted Christ, when he was but darkly revealed, were destroyed of serpents, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who tempt him now in the midst of gospel light and love! Those that presume to tempt Christ will certainly find him too hard for them, and that he is of more

piercing eyes than not to see, and more pure eyes than not to hate, the disguised wickedness of hypocrites, that dig deep to hide their counsel from him.

2. He evaded it; his convicting them of hypocrisy might have served for an answer (such captious malicious questions deserve a reproof, not a reply): but our Lord Jesus gave a full answer to their question, and introduced it by an argument sufficient to support it, so as to lay down a rule for his church in this matter, and yet to avoid giving offence, and to break the snare.

He forced them, ere they were aware, to confess Cæsar's authority over them, Mt 22:19,20. In dealing with those that are captious, it is good to give our reasons, and, if possible, reasons of confessed cogency, before we give our resolutions. Thus the evidence of truth may silence gainsayers by surprise, while they only stood upon their guard against the truth itself, not against the reason of it; Show me the tribute-money. He had none of his own to convince them by; it should seem, he had not so much as one piece of money about him, for for our sakes he emptied himself, and became poor; he despised the wealth of this world, and thereby taught us not to over-value it; silver and gold he had none; why then should we covet to load ourselves with the thick clay? The Romans demanded their tribute in their own money, which was current among the Jews at that time: that therefore is called the tribute-money; he does not name what piece but the tribute money, to show that he did not mind things of that nature, nor concern himself about them; his heart was upon better things, the kingdom of God and the riches and righteousness thereof, and ours should be so too.

19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.
20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?
21 They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.

Christ asked them, Whose image is this? They owned it to be Cæsar's, and thereby convicted those of falsehood who said, We were never in bondage to any; and confirmed what afterward they said, We have no king but Cæsar. It is a rule in the Jewish Talmud,

that "he is the king of the country whose coin is current in the country." Some think that the superscription upon this coin was a memorandum of the conquest of Judea by the Romans, anno post captam Judæam--the year after that event; and that they admitted that too.

From thence he inferred the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar (Mt 22:21); Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; not, "Give it him" (as they expressed it, Mt 22:17), but, "Render it; Return," or "Restore it; if Cæsar fill the purses, let Cæsar command them. It is too late now to dispute paying tribute to Cæsar; for you are become a province of the empire, and, when once a relation is admitted, the duty of it must be performed. Render to all their due, and particularly tribute to whom tribute is due." Now by this answer,

[1.] No offence was given. It was much to the honour of Christ and his doctrine, that he did not interpose as a Judge or a Divider in matters of this nature, but left them as he found them, for his kingdom is not of this world; and in this he hath given an example to his ministers, who deal in sacred things, not to meddle with disputes about things secular, not to wade far into controversies relating to them, but to leave that to those whose proper business it is. Ministers that would mind their business, and please their master, must not entangle themselves in the affairs of this life: they forfeit the guidance of God's Spirit, and the convoy of his providence when they thus to out of their way. Christ discusses not the emperor's title, but enjoins a peaceable subjection to the powers that be. The government therefore had no reason to take offence at his determination, but to thank him, for it would strengthen Cæsar's interest with the people, who held him for a Prophet; and yet such was the impudence of his prosecutors, that, though he had expressly charged them to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, they laid the direct contrary in his indictment, that he forbade to give tribute to Cæsar, Lu 23:2. As to the people, the Pharisees could not accuse him to them, because they themselves had, before they were aware, yielded the premises, and then it was too late to evade the conclusion. Note, Though truth seeks not a fraudulent concealment,

yet it sometimes needs a prudent management, to prevent the offence which may be taken at it.

[2.] His adversaries were reproved. First, Some of them would have had him make it unlawful to give tribute to Cæsar, that they might have a pretence to save their money. Thus many excuse themselves from that which they must do, by arguing whether they may do it or no. Secondly, They all withheld from God his dues, and are reproved for that: while they were vainly contending about their civil liberties, they had lost the life and power of religion, and needed to be put in mind of their duty to God, with that to Cæsar.

[3.] His disciples were instructed, and standing rules left to the church.

First, That the Christian religion is no enemy to civil government, but a friend to it. Christ's kingdom doth not clash or interfere with the kingdoms of the earth, in any thing that pertains to their jurisdiction. By Christ kings reign.

Secondly, It is the duty of subjects to render to magistrates that which, according to the laws of their country, is their due. The higher powers, being entrusted with the public welfare, the protection of the subject, and the conservation of the peace, are entitled, in consideration thereof, to a just proportion of the public wealth, and the revenue of the nation. For this cause pay we tribute, because they attend continually to this very thing (Ro 13:6); and it is doubtless a greater sin to cheat the government than to cheat a private person. Though it is the constitution that determines what is Cæsar's, yet, when that is determined, Christ bids us render it to him; my coat is my coat, by the law of man; but he is a thief, by the law of God, that takes it from me.

Thirdly, When we render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, we must remember withal to render to God the things that are God's. If our purses be Cæsar's, our consciences are God's; he hath said, My son, give me thy heart: he must have the innermost and uppermost

place there; we must render to God that which is his due, out of our time and out of our estates; from them he must have his share as well as Cæsar his; and if Cæsar's commands interfere with God's we must obey God rather than men.

22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way.

Lastly, Observe how they were nonplussed by this answer; they marvelled, and left him, and went their way, Mt 22:22. They admired his sagacity in discovering and evading a snare which they thought so craftily laid. Christ is, and will be, the Wonder, not only of his beloved friends, but of his baffled enemies. One would think they should have marvelled and followed him, marvelled and submitted to him; no, they marvelled and left him. Note, There are many in whose eyes Christ is marvellous, and yet not precious. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it, his power, but will not submit to it. They went their way, as persons ashamed, and made an inglorious retreat. The stratagem being defeated, they quitted the field. Note, There is nothing got by contending with Christ.

The Question about the Resurrection

23 The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

We have here Christ's dispute with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection; it was the same day on which he was attacked by the Pharisees about paying tribute. Satan was now more busy than ever to ruffle and disturb him; it was an hour of temptation, Re 3:10. The truth as it is in Jesus will still meet with contradiction, in some branch or other of it. Observe here,

The opposition which the Sadducees made to a very great truth of religion; they say, There is no resurrection, as there are some fools who say, There is no God. These heretics were called Sadducees from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus Sochæus, who flourished about two hundred and eighty-four years before our Saviour's birth. They lie under heavy censures among the writers of their own nation, as men of base and debauched conversations, which their

principles led them to. They were the fewest in number of all the sects among the Jews, but generally persons of some rank. As the Pharisees and Essenes seemed to follow Plato and Pythagoras, so the Sadducees were much of the genius of the Epicureans; they denied the resurrection, they said, There is no future state, no life after this; that, when the body dies, the soul is annihilated, and dies with it; that there is no state of rewards or punishments in the other world; no judgment to come in heaven or hell. They maintained, that, except God, there is not spirit (Ac 23:8), nothing but matter and motion. They would not own the divine inspiration of the prophets, nor any revelation from heaven, but what God himself spoke upon mount Sinai. Now the doctrine of Christ carried that great truth of the resurrection and a future state much further than it had yet been revealed, and therefore the Sadducees in a particular manner set themselves against it. The Pharisees and Sadducees were contrary to each other, and yet confederates against Christ. Christ's gospel hath always suffered between superstitious ceremonious hypocrites and bigots on the one hand, and profane deists and infidels on the other. The former abusing, the latter despising, the form of godliness, but both denying the power of it.

24 saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

25 Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:

26 likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.

27 And last of all the woman died also.

28 Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

Christ's answer to this objection; by reproving their ignorance, and rectifying their mistake, he shows the objection to be fallacious and unconcluding.

1. He reproves their ignorance (Mt 22:29); Ye do err. Note, Those do greatly err, in the judgment of Christ, who deny the resurrection and

a future state. Here Christ reproves with the meekness of wisdom, and is not so sharp upon them (whatever was the reason) as sometimes he was upon the chief priests and elders; Ye do err, not knowing. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error; those that are in the dark, miss their way. The patrons of error do therefore resist the light, and do what they can to take away the key of knowledge; Ye do err in this matter, not knowing. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error about the resurrection and the future state. What it is in its particular instances, the wisest and best know not; it doth not yet appear what we shall be, it is a glory that is to be revealed: when we speak of the state of separate souls, the resurrection of the body, and of eternal happiness and misery, we are soon at a loss; we cannot order our speech, by reason of darkness, but that it is a thing about which we are not left in the dark; blessed be God, we are not; and those who deny it are guilty of a willing and affected ignorance. It seems, there were some Sadducees, some such monsters, among professing Christians, some among you, that say, There is no resurrection of the dead (1Co 15:12) and some that did in effect deny it, by turning it into an allegory, saying, The resurrection is past already. Now observe,

(a) They know not the power of God; which would lead men to infer that there may be a resurrection and a future state. Note, The ignorance, disbelief, or weak belief, of God's power, is at the bottom of many errors, particularly theirs who deny the resurrection. When we are told of the soul's existence and agency in a state of separation from the body, and especially that a dead body, which had lain many ages in the grave, and is turned into common and indistinguished dust, that this shall be raised the same body that it was, and live, move, and act, again; we are ready to say, How can these things be? Nature allows it for a maxim, A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus--The habits attaching to a state of existence vanish irrecoverably with the state itself. If a man die, shall he live again? And vain men, because they cannot comprehend the way of it, question the truth of it; whereas, if we firmly believe in God the Father Almighty, that nothing is impossible with God, all these difficulties vanish. This therefore we must fasten upon, in the first place, that God is omnipotent, and can do what he will; and then no room is left for doubting but that he will do what he has promised;

and, if so, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? Ac 26:8. His power far exceeds the power of nature.

(b) They know not the scriptures, which decidedly affirm that there shall be a resurrection and a future state. The power of God, determined and engaged by his promise, is the foundation for faith to build upon. Now the scriptures speak plainly, that the soul is immortal, and there is another life after this; it is the scope both of the law and of the prophets, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, Ac 24:14,15. Job knew it (Job 19:26), Ezekiel foresaw it (Eze 37:1-28), and Daniel plainly foretold it, Da 12:2. Christ rose again according to the scriptures (1Co 15:3); and so shall we. Those therefore who deny it, either have not conversed with the Scriptures, or do not believe them, or do not take the true sense and meaning of them. Note, Ignorance of the scripture is the rise of abundance of mischief.

30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.

He rectifies their mistake, and (Mt 22:30) corrects those gross ideas which they had of the resurrection and a future state, and fixes these doctrines upon a true and lasting basis. Concerning that state, observe,

(1.) It is not like the state we are now in upon earth; They neither marry, nor are given in marriage. In our present state marriage is necessary; it was instituted in innocency; whatever intermission or neglect there has been of other institutions, this was never laid aside, nor will be till the end of time. In the old world, they were marrying, and giving in marriage; the Jews in Babylon, when cut off from other ordinances, yet were bid to take them wives, Jer 29:6. All civilized nations have had a sense of the obligation of the marriage covenant; and it is requisite for the gratifying of the desires, and recruiting the deficiencies, of the human nature. But, in the resurrection, there is no occasion for marriage; whether in glorified bodies there will be any distinction of sexes some too curiously dispute (the ancients are divided in their opinions about it); but, whether there will be a

distinction or not, it is certain that there will be no conjunction; where God will be all in all, there needs no other meet-help; the body will be spiritual, and there will be in it no carnal desires to be gratified: when the mystical body is completed, there will be no further occasion to seek a godly seed, which was one end of the institution of marriage, Mal 2:15. In heaven there will be no decay of the individuals, and therefore no eating and drinking; no decay of the species, and therefore no marrying; where there shall be no more deaths (Re 21:4), there need be no more births. The married state is a composition of joys and cares; those that enter upon it are taught to look upon it as subject to changes, richer and poorer, sickness and health; and therefore it is fit for this mixed, changing world; but as in hell, where there is no joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride shall be heard no more at all, so in heaven, where there is all joy, and no care or pain or trouble, there will be no marrying. The joys of that state are pure and spiritual, and arise from the marriage of all of them to the Lamb, not of any of them to one another.

(2.) It is like the state angels are now in in heaven; They are as the angels of God in heaven; they are so, that is, undoubtedly they shall be so. They are so already in Christ their Head, who has made them sit with him in heavenly places, Eph 2:6. The spirits of just men already made perfect are of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:22,23. Man in his creation was made a little lower than the angels (Ps 8:5); but in his complete redemption and renovation will be as the angels; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, like the uncompounded vehicles of those pure and holy spirits (1Co 15:42, &c.), swift and strong, like them. We should therefore desire and endeavour to do the will of God now as the angels do it in heaven, because we hope shortly to be like the angels who always behold our Father's face. He saith nothing of the state of the wicked in the resurrection; but, by consequence, they shall be like the devils, whose lusts they have done.

31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,

32 I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob ? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Christ's argument to confirm this great truth of the resurrection and a future state; the matters being of great concern, he did not think it enough (as in some other disputes) to discover the fallacy and sophistry of the objection, but backed the truth with a solid argument; for Christ brings forth judgment to truth as well as victory, and enables his followers to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Now observe,

1. Whence he fetched his argument--from the scripture; that is the great magazine or armoury whence we may be furnished with spiritual weapons, offensive and defensive. It is written is Goliath's sword. Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God? Note,

(a) What the scripture speaks God speaks.

(b) What was spoken to Moses was spoken to us; it was spoken and written for our learning.

(c) It concerns us to read and hear what God hath spoken, because it is spoken to us. It was spoken to you Jews in the first place, for to them were committed the oracles of God. The argument is fetched from the books of Moses, because the Sadducees received them only, as some think, or, at least, them chiefly, for canonical scriptures; Christ therefore fetched his proof from the most indisputable fountain. The latter prophets have more express proofs of a future state than the law of Moses has; for though the law of Moses supposes the immortality of the soul and a future state, as principles of what is called natural religion, yet no express revelation of it is made by the law of Moses; because so much of that law was peculiar to that people, and was therefore guarded as municipal laws used to be with temporal promises and threatenings, and the more express revelation of a future state was reserved for the latter days; but our Saviour finds a very solid argument for the resurrection even in the writings of Moses. Much scripture lies under ground, that must be digged for.

2. What his argument was (Mt 22:32); I am the God of Abraham. This was not an express proof, totidem verbis--in so many words; and yet it was really a conclusive argument. Consequences from scripture, if rightly deduced, must be received as scripture; for it was written for those that have the use of reason.

Now the drift of the argument is to prove,

(a) That there is a future state, another life after this, in which the righteous shall be truly and constantly happy. This is proved from what God said; I am the God of Abraham.

[1.] For God to be any one's God supposes some very extraordinary privilege and happiness; unless we know fully what God is, we could not comprehend the riches of that word, I will be to thee a God, that is, a Benefactor like myself. The God of Israel is a God to Israel (1Ch 17:24), a spiritual Benefactor; for he is the Father of spirits, and blesseth with spiritual blessings: it is to be an all-sufficient Benefactor, a God that is enough, a complete Good, and an eternal Benefactor; for he is himself an everlasting God, and will be to those that are in covenant with him an everlasting Good. This great word God had often said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it was intended as a recompence for their singular faith and obedience, in quitting the country at God's call. The Jews had a profound veneration for those three patriarchs, and would extend the promise God made them to the uttermost.

[2.] It is manifest that these good men had no such extraordinary happiness, in this life, as might look any thing like the accomplishment of so great a word as that. They were strangers in the land of promise, wandering, pinched with famine; they had not a foot of ground of their own but a burying-place, which directed them to look for something beyond this life. In present enjoyments they came far short of their neighbours that were strangers to this covenant. What was there in this world to distinguish them and the heirs of their faith from other people, any whit proportionable to the dignity and distinction of this covenant? If no happiness had been reserved for these great and good men on the other side of death, that melancholy

word of poor Jacob's, when he was old (Ge 47:9), Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, would have been an eternal reproach to the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, of that God who had so often called himself the God of Jacob.

[3.] Therefore there must certainly be a future state, in which, as God will ever live to be eternally rewarding, so Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will ever live to be eternally rewarded. That of the apostle (Heb 11:16), is a key to this argument, where, when he had been speaking of the faith and obedience of the patriarchs in the land of their pilgrimage, he adds, Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; because he has provided for them a city, a heavenly city; implying, that if he had not provided so well for them in the other world, considering how they sped in this, he would have been ashamed to have called himself their God; but now he is not, having done that for them which answers it in its true intent and full extent.

(b) That the soul is immortal, and the body shall rise again, to be united; if the former point be gained, these will follow; but they are likewise proved by considering the time when God spoke this; it was to Moses at the bush, long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were dead and buried; and yet God saith, not, "I was," or "have been," but I am the God of Abraham. Now God is not God of the dead, but of the living. He is a living God, and communicates vital influences to those to whom he is a God. If, when Abraham died, there had been an end of him, there had been an end likewise of God's relation to him as his God; but at that time, when God spoke to Moses, he was the God of Abraham, and therefore Abraham must be then alive; which proves the immortality of the soul in a state of bliss; and that, by consequence, infers the resurrection of the body; for there is such an inclination in the human soul to its body, as would make a final and eternal separation inconsistent with the bliss of those that have God for their God. The Sadducees' notion was, that the union between body and soul is so close, that, when the body dies, the soul dies with it. Now, upon the same hypothesis, if the soul lives, as it certainly does, the body must some time or other live with it. And besides, the Lord is for the body, it is an essential part of the man; there is a

covenant with the dust, which will be remembered, otherwise the man would not be happy. The charge which the dying patriarchs gave concerning their bones, and that in faith, was an evidence that they had some expectation of the resurrection of their bodies. But this doctrine was reserved for a more full revelation after the resurrection of Christ, who was the first-fruits of them that slept.

33 And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

Lastly, We have the issue of this dispute. The Sadducees were put to silence (Mt 22:34), and so put to shame. They thought by their subtlety to put Christ to shame, when they were preparing shame for themselves. But the multitude were astonished at this doctrine, Mt 22:33. 1. Because it was new to them. See to what a sad pass the exposition of scripture was come among them, when people were astonished at it as a miracle to hear the fundamental promise applied to this great truth; they had sorry scribes, or this had been no news to them. 2. Because it had something in it very good and great. Truth often shows the brighter, and is the more admired, for its being opposed. Observe, Many gainsayers are silenced, and many hearers astonished, without being savingly converted; yet even in the silence and astonishment of unsanctified souls God magnifies his law, magnifies his gospel, and makes both honourable.

The Great Commandment

34 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

Here is a discourse which Christ had with a Pharisee-lawyer, about the great commandment of the law. Observe,

The combination of the Pharisees against Christ, Mt 22:34. They heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, had stopped their mouths, though their understandings were not opened; and they were gathered together, not to return him the thanks of their party, as they ought to have done, for his effectually asserting and confirming of the truth against the Sadducees, the common enemies of their religion, but to tempt him, in hopes to get the reputation of puzzling

him who had puzzled the Sadducees. They were more vexed that Christ was honoured, than pleased that the Sadducees were silenced; being more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the Sadducees opposed. Note, It is an instance of Pharisaical envy and malice, to be displeased at the maintaining of a confessed truth, when it is done by those we do not like; to sacrifice a public good to private piques and prejudices. Blessed Paul was otherwise minded, Php 1:18.

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question,
tempting him, and saying,
36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
37 Jesus said unto him,
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
38 This is the first and great commandment.

Christ's answer to this question; it is well for us that such a question was asked him, that we might have his answer. It is no disparagement to great men to answer plain questions. Now Christ recommends to us those as the great commandments, not which are so exclusive of others, but which are therefore great because inclusive of others. Observe,

1. Which these great commandments are (Mt 22:37-39); not the judicial laws, those could not be the greatest now that the people of the Jews, to whom they pertained, were so little; not the ceremonial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that they were waxen old, and were ready to vanish away; nor any particular moral precept; but the love of God and our neighbour, which are the spring and foundation of all the rest, which (these being supposed) will follow of course.

(a) All the law is fulfilled in one word, and that is, love. See Ro 13:10. All obedience begins in the affections, and nothing in religion is done right, that is not done there first. Love is the leading affection, which gives law, and gives ground, to the rest; and therefore that, as the main fort, is to be first secured and garrisoned

for God. Man is a creature cut out for love; thus therefore is the law written in the heart, that it is a law of love. Love is a short and sweet word; and, if that be the fulfilling of the law, surely the yoke of the command is very easy. Love is the rest and satisfaction of the soul; if we walk in this good old way, we shall find rest.

(b) The love of God is the first and great commandment of all, and the summary of all the commands of the first table. The proper act of love being complacency, good is the proper object of it. Now God, being good infinitely, originally, and eternally, is to be loved in the first place, and nothing loved beside him, but what is loved for him. Love is the first and great thing that God demands from us, and therefore the first and great thing that we should devote to him.

Now here we are directed,

[1.] To love God as ours; Thou shalt love the Lord they God as thine. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other God; which implies that we must have him for our God, and that will engage our love to him. Those that made the sun and moon their gods, loved them, Jer 8:2,Jdg 18:24. To love God as ours is to love him because he is ours, our Creator, Owner, and Ruler, and to conduct ourselves to him as ours, with obedience to him, and dependence on him. We must love God as reconciled to us, and made ours by covenant; that is the foundation of this, Thy God.

[2.] To love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind. Some make these to signify one and the same thing, to love him with all our powers; others distinguish them; the heart, soul, and mind, are the will, affections, and understanding; or the vital, sensitive, and intellectual faculties. Our love of God must be a sincere love, and not in word and tongue only, as theirs is who say they love him, but their hearts are not with him. It must be a strong love, we must love him in the most intense degree; as we must praise him, so we must love him, with all that is within us, Ps 103:1. It must be a singular and superlative love, we must love him more than any thing else; this way the stream of our affections must entirely run. The heart

must be united to love God, in opposition to a divided heart. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, and therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. This is the first and great commandment; for obedience to this is the spring of obedience to all the rest; which is then only acceptable, when it flows from love.

(c) To love our neighbour as ourselves is the second great commandment (Mt 22:39); It is like unto that first; it is inclusive of all the precepts of the second table, as that is of the first. It is like it, for it is founded upon it, and flows from it; and a right love to our brother, whom we have seen, is both an instance and an evidence of our love to God, whom we have not seen, 1Jo 4:20.

[1.] It is implied, that we do, and should, love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified: but there is a self-love which is natural, and the rule of the greatest duty, and it must be preserved and sanctified. We must love ourselves, that is, we must have a due regard to the dignity of our own natures, and a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies.

[2.] It is prescribed, that we love our neighbour as ourselves. We must honour and esteem all men, and must wrong and injure none; must have a good will to all, and good wishes for all, and, as we have opportunity, must do good to all. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances; nay, in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, and must make ourselves servants to the true welfare of others, and be willing to spend and be spent for them, to lay down our lives for the brethren.

2. Observe what the weight and greatness of these commandments is (Mt 22:40); On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets; that is, This is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion which were written in men's hearts by nature, revived by Moses, and backed and enforced by the preaching

and writing of the prophets. All hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all falls to the ground, and comes to nothing. Rituals and ceremonials must give way to these, as must all spiritual gifts, for love is the more excellent way. This is the spirit of the law, which animates it, the cement of the law, which joins it; it is the root and spring of all other duties, the compendium of the whole Bible, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the gospel too, only supposing this love to be the fruit of faith, and that we love God in Christ, and our neighbour for his sake. All hangs on these two commandments, as the effect doth both on its efficient and on its final cause; for the fulfilling of the law is love (Ro 13:10) and the end of the law is love, 1Ti 1:5. The law of love is the nail, is the nail in the sure place, fastened by the masters of assemblies (Ec 12:11), on which is hung all the glory of the law and the prophets (Isa 22:24), a nail that shall never be drawn; for on this nail all the glory of the new Jerusalem shall eternally hang. Love never faileth. Into these two great commandments therefore let our hearts be delivered as into a mould; in the defence and evidence of these let us spend our zeal, and not in notions, names, and strifes of words, as if those were the mighty things on which the law and the prophets hung, and to them the love of God and our neighbour must be sacrificed; but to the commanding power of these let every thing else be made to bow.

39 And the second is like unto it,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

The Question about David's Son

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 saying, What think ye of Christ ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

Many questions the Pharisees had asked Christ, by which, though they thought to pose him, they did but expose themselves; but now let him ask them a question; and he will do it when they are gathered together, Mt 22:41. He did not take some one of them apart from the rest (ne Hercules contra duos--Hercules himself may be overmatched), but, to shame them the more, he took them all together, when they were in confederacy and consulting against him,

and yet puzzled them. Note, God delights to baffle his enemies when they most strengthen themselves; he gives them all the advantages they can wish for, and yet conquers them. Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces, Isa 3:9,10. Now here,

I. Christ proposes a question to them, which they could easily answer; it was a question in their own catechism; "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? Whose Son do you expect the Messiah to be, who was promised to the fathers?" This they could easily answer, The Son of David. It was the common periphrasis of the Messiah; they called him the Son of David. So the scribes, who expounded the scripture, had taught them, from Ps 89:35,36, I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever (Isa 9:7), upon the throne of David. And Isa 11:1, A rod out of the stem of Jesse. The covenant of royalty made with David was a figure of the covenant of redemption made with Christ, who as David, was made King with an oath, and was first humbled and then advanced. If Christ was the Son of David, he was really and truly Man. Israel said, We have ten parts in David; and Judah said, He is our bone and our flesh; what part have we then in the Son of David, who took our nature upon him?

What think ye of Christ? They had put questions to him, one after another, out of the law; but he comes and puts a question to them upon the promise. Many are so full of the law, that they forget Christ, as if their duties would save them without his merit and grace. It concerns each of us seriously to ask ourselves, What think we of Christ? Some think not of him at all, he is not in all, not in any, of their thoughts; some think meanly, and some think hardly, of him; but to them that believe he is precious; and how precious then are the thoughts of him! While the daughters of Jerusalem think no more of Christ than of another beloved; the spouse thinks of him as the Chief of ten thousands.

II. He starts a difficulty upon their answer, which they could not easily solve, Mt 22:43-45. Many can so readily affirm the truth, that they think they have knowledge enough to be proud of, who, when

they are called to confirm the truth, and to vindicate and defend it, show they have ignorance enough to be ashamed of. The objection Christ raised was, If Christ be David's son, how then doth David, in spirit, call him Lord? He did not hereby design to ensnare them, as they did him, but to instruct them in a truth they were loth to believe--that the expected Messiah is God.

1. It is easy to see that David calls Christ Lord, and this in spirit being divinely inspired, and actuated therein by a spirit of prophecy; for it was the Spirit of the Lord that spoke by him, 2Sa 23:1,2. David was one of those holy men that spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, especially in calling Christ Lord; for it was then, as it is still (1Co 12:3) that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now, to prove that David, in spirit, called Christ Lord, he quotes Ps 110:1, which psalm the scribes themselves understood of Christ; of him, it is certain, the prophet there speaks, of him and of no other man; and it is a prophetical summary of the doctrine of Christ, it describes him executing the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, both in his humiliation and also in his exaltation.

Christ quotes the whole verse, which shows the Redeemer in his exaltation;

(1.) Sitting at the right hand of God. His sitting denotes both rest and rule; his sitting at God's right hand denotes superlative honour and sovereign power. See in what great words this is expressed (Heb 8:1); He is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty. See Php 2:9,Eph 1:20. He did not take this honour to himself, but was entitled to it by covenant with his Father, and invested in it by commission from him, and here is that commission.

(2.) Subduing his enemies. There he shall sit, till they be all made either his friends or his footstool. The carnal mind, wherever it is, is enmity to Christ; and that is subdued in the conversion of the willing people that are called to his foot (as the expression is, Isa 41:2), and in the confusion of his impenitent adversaries, who shall be brought under his foot, as the kings of Canaan were under the feet of Joshua.

But that which this verse is quoted for is, that David calls the Messiah his Lord; the Lord, Jehovah, said unto my Lord. This intimates to us, that in expounding scripture we must take notice of, and improve, not only that which is the main scope and sense of a verse, but of the words and phrases, by which they Spirit chooses to express that sense, which have often a very useful and instructive significance. Here is a good note from that word, My Lord.

2. It is not so easy for those who believe not the Godhead of the Messiah, to clear this from an absurdity, if Christ b David's son. It is incongruous for the father to speak of his son, the predecessor of his successor, as his Lord. If David call him Lord, that is laid down (Mt 22:45) as the magis notum--the more evident truth; for whatever is said of Christ's humanity and humiliation must be construed and understood in consistency with the truth of his divine nature and dominion. We must hold this fast, that he is David's Lord, and by that explain his being David's son. The seeming differences of scripture, as here, may not only be accommodated, but contribute to the beauty and harmony of the whole. Amicæ scripturarum lites, utinam et nostræ--The differences observable in the scriptures are of a friendly kind; would to God that our differences were of the same kind!

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
till I make thine enemies thy footstool ?
45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son ?
46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man
from that day forth ask him any more questions.

We have here the success of this gentle trial which Christ made of the Pharisees' knowledge, in two things.

1. It puzzled them (Mt 22:46); No man was able to answer him a word. Either it was their ignorance that they did not know, or their impiety that they would not own, the Messiah to be God; which truth was the only key to unlock this difficulty. What those Rabbies could not then answer, blessed be God, the plainest Christian that is led

into the understanding of the gospel of Christ, can now account for; that Christ, as God, was David's Lord; and Christ, as Man, was David's son. This he did not now himself explain, but reserved it till the proof of it was completed by his resurrection; but we have it fully explained by him in his glory (Re 22:16); I am the root and the offspring of David. Christ, as God, was David's Root; Christ, as Man, was David's Offspring. If we hold not fast this truth, that Jesus Christ is over all God blessed for ever, we run ourselves into inextricable difficulties. And well might David, his remote ancestor, call him Lord, when Mary, his immediate mother, after she had conceived him, called him, Lord and God, her Saviour, Lu 1:46,47.

2. It silenced them, and all others that sought occasion against him; Neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more such captious, tempting, ensnaring questions. Note, God will glorify himself in the silencing of many whom he will not glorify himself in the salvation of. Many are convinced, that are not converted, by the word. Had these been converted, they would have asked him more questions, especially that great question, What must we do to be saved? But since they could not gain their point, they would have no more to do with him. But, thus all that strive with their Master shall be convinced, as these Pharisees and lawyers here were, of the inequality of the match.

Matthew-23

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

Jesus Denounces the Scribes and Pharisees

1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
2 saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

We find not Christ, in all his preaching, so severe upon any sort of people as upon these scribes and Pharisees; for the truth is, nothing is more directly opposite to the spirit of the gospel than the temper and practice of that generation of men, who were made up of pride, worldliness, and tyranny, under a cloak and pretence of religion; yet these were the idols and darlings of the people, who thought, if but two men went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee. Now Christ directs his discourse here to the multitude, and to his disciples (Mt 23:1) to rectify their mistakes concerning these scribes and Pharisees, by painting them out in their true colours, and so to take off the prejudice which some of the multitude had conceived against Christ and his doctrine, because it was opposed by those men of their church, that called themselves the people's guides. Note, It is good to know the true characters of men, that we may not be imposed upon by great and mighty names, titles, and pretensions to power. People must be told of the wolves (Ac 20:29,30), the dogs (Php 3:2), the deceitful workers (2Co 11:13), that they may know here to stand upon their guard. And not only the mixed multitude, but even the disciples, need these cautions; for good men are apt to have their eyes dazzled with worldly pomp.

Now, in this discourse,

Christ allows their office as expositors of the law; The scribes and Pharisees (that is, the whole Sanhedrim, who sat at the helm of church government, who were all called scribes, and were some of them Pharisees), they sit in Moses' seat (Mt 23:2), as public teachers and interpreters of the law; and, the law of Moses being the

municipal law of their state, they were as judges, or a bench of justices; teaching and judging seem to be equivalent, comparing 2Ch 17:7,9,19:5,6,8. They were not the itinerant judges that rode the circuit, but the standing bench, that determined on appeals, special verdicts, or writs of error by the law; they sat in Moses's seat, not as he was Mediator between God and Israel, but only as he was chief justice, Ex 18:26. Or, we may apply it, not to the Sanhedrim, but to the other Pharisees and scribes, that expounded the law, and taught the people how to apply it to particular cases. The pulpit of wood, such as was made for Ezra, that ready scribe in the law of God (Ne 8:4), is here called Moses's seat, because Moses had those in every city (so the expression is, Ac 15:21), who in those pulpits preached him; this was their office, and it was just and honourable; it was requisite that there should be some at whose mouth the people might enquire the law, Mal 2:7. Note, 1. Many a good place is filled with bad men; it is no new thing for the vilest men to be exalted even to Moses's seat (Ps 12:8); and, when it is so, the men are not so much honoured by the seat as the seat is dishonoured by the men. Now they that sat in Moses's seat were so wretchedly degenerated, that it was time for the great Prophet to arise, like unto Moses, to erect another seat. 2. Good and useful offices and powers are not therefore to be condemned and abolished, because they fall sometimes into the hands of bad men, who abuse them. We must not therefore pull down Moses's seat, because scribes and Pharisees have got possession of it; rather than so, let both grow together until the harvest, Mt 13:30.

3 all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do;
but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

The word "therefore" is thus, it will be seen, of great importance, as limiting those injunctions which He would have them obey to what they fetched from the law itself. In requiring implicit obedience to such injunctions, He would have them to recognize the authority with which they taught over and above the obligations of the law itself—an important principle truly; but He who denounced the traditions of such teachers (Mt 15:3) cannot have meant here to throw His shield over these. It is remarked by WEBSTER and WILKINSON that the warning to beware of the scribes is given by Mark and Luke (Mk 12:38,Lu 20:46) without any qualification: the

charge to respect and obey them being reported by Matthew alone, indicating for whom this Gospel was especially written, and the writer's desire to conciliate the Jews.

Hence he infers (Mt 23:3), "Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do As far as they sit in Moses's seat, that is, read and preach the law that was given by Moses" (which, as yet, continued in full force, power, and virtue), "and judge according to that law, so far you must hearken to them, as remembrances to you of the written word." The scribes and Pharisees made it their business to study the scripture, and were well acquainted with the language, history, and customs of it, and its style and phraseology. Now Christ would have the people to make use of the helps they gave them for the understanding of the scripture, and do accordingly. As long as their comments did illustrate the text and not pervert it; did make plain, and not make void, the commandment of God; so far they must be observed and obeyed, but with caution and a judgment of discretion. Note, We must not think the worse of good truths for their being preached by bad ministers; nor of good laws for their being executed by bad magistrates. Though it is most desirable to have our food brought by angels, yet, if God send it to us by ravens, if it be good and wholesome, we must take it, and thank God for it. Our Lord Jesus promiseth this, to prevent the cavil which some would be apt to make at this following discourse; as if, by condemning the scribes and Pharisees, he designed to bring the law of Moses into contempt, and to draw people off from it; whereas he came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Note, It is wisdom to obviate the exceptions which may be taken at just reproofs, especially when there is occasion to distinguish between officers and their offices, that the ministry be not blamed when the ministers are.

He condemns the men. He had ordered the multitude to do as they taught; but here he annexeth a caution not to do as they did, to beware of their leaven; Do not ye after their works. Their traditions were their works, were their idols, the works of their fancy. Or, "Do not according to their example." Doctrines and practices are spirits that must be tried, and where there is occasion, must be carefully

separated and distinguished; and as we must not swallow corrupt doctrines for the sake of any laudable practices of those that teach them, so we must not imitate any bad examples for the sake of the plausible doctrines of those that set them. The scribes and Pharisees boasted as much of the goodness of their works as of the orthodoxy of their teaching, and hoped to be justified by them; it was the plea they put in (Lu 18:11,12); and yet these things, which they valued themselves so much upon, were an abomination in the sight of God.

Our Saviour Mt 23:3-32, specifies divers particulars of their works, wherein we must not imitate them. In general, they are charged with hypocrisy, dissimulation, or double-dealing in religion; a crime which cannot be enquired of at men's bar, because we can only judge according to outward appearance; but God, who searcheth the heart, can convict of hypocrisy; and nothing is more displeasing to him, for he desireth truth.

4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

1. Their saying and doing were two things. Their practice was no way agreeable either to their preaching or to their profession; for they say, and do not; they teach out of the law that which is good, but their conversation gives them the lie; and they seem to have found another way to heaven for themselves than what they show to others. See this illustrated and charged home upon them, Ro 2:17-24. Those are of all sinners most inexcusable that allow themselves in the sins they condemn in others, or in worse. This doth especially touch wicked ministers, who will be sure to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites (Mt 24:51); for what greater hypocrisy can there be, than to press that upon others, to be believed and done, which they themselves disbelieve and disobey; pulling down in their practice what they build up in their preaching; when in the pulpit, preaching so well that it is a pity they should ever come out; but, when out of the pulpit, living so ill that it is a pity they should ever come in; like bells, that call others to church, but hang out of it themselves; or Mercurial posts, that point the way to others, but stand still themselves? Such will be judged out of their own mouths. It is applicable to all others that say, and do not; that make

a plausible profession of religion, but do not live up to that profession; that make fair promises, but do not perform their promises; are full of good discourse, and can lay down the law to all about them, but are empty of good works; great talkers, but little doers; the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. Vox et præterea nihil--mere sound. They speak fair, I go, sir; but there is no trusting them, for there are seven abominations in their heart.

2. They were very severe in imposing upon others those things which they were not themselves willing to submit to the burthen of (Mt 23:4); They bind heavy burthens, and grievous to be borne; not only insisting upon the minute circumstances of the law, which is called a yoke (Ac 15:10), and pressing the observation of them with more strictness and severity than God himself did (whereas the maxim of the lawyers, is Apices juris son sunt jura--Mere points of law are not law), but by adding to his words, and imposing their own inventions and traditions, under the highest penalties. They loved to show their authority and to exercise their domineering faculty, lording it over God's heritage, and saying to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over; witness their many additions to the law of the fourth commandment, by which they made the sabbath a burthen on men's shoulders, which was designed to be the joy of their hearts. Thus with force and cruelty did those shepherds rule the flock, as of old, Eze 34:4.

But see their hypocrisy; They themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

(1.) They would not exercise themselves in those things which they imposed upon others; they pressed upon the people a strictness in religion which they themselves would not be bound by; but secretly transgressed their own traditions, which they publicly enforced. They indulged their pride in giving law to others; but consulted their

ease in their own practice. Thus it has been said, to the reproach of the popish priests, that they fast with wine and sweetmeats, while they force the people to fast with bread and water; and decline the penances they enjoin the laity.

(2.) They would not ease the people in these things, nor put a finger to lighten their burthen, when they saw it pinched them. They could find out loose constructions to put upon God's law, and could dispense with that, but would not bate an ace of their own impositions, nor dispense with a failure in the least punctilio of them. They allowed no chancery to relieve the extremity of their common law. How contrary to this was the practice of Christ's apostles, who would allow to others that use of Christian liberty which, for the peace and edification of the church, they would deny themselves in! They would lay no other burthen than necessary things, and those easy, Ac 15:28. How carefully doth Paul spare those to whom he writes! 1Co 7:28,9:12.

5 But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,

They were all for show, and nothing for substance, in religion (Mt 23:5); All their works they do, to be seen of men. We must do such good works, that they who see them may glorify God; but we must not proclaim our good works, with design that others may see them, and glorify us; which our Saviour here chargeth upon the Pharisees in general, as he had done before in the particular instances of prayer and giving of alms. All their end was to be praised of men, and therefore all their endeavour was to be seen of men, to make a fair show in the flesh. In those duties of religion which fall under the eye of men, none ere so constant and abundant as they; but in what lies between God and their souls, in the retirement of their closets, and the recesses of their hearts, they desire to be excused. The form of godliness will get them a name to live, which is all they aim at, and therefore they trouble not themselves with the power of it, which is essential to a life indeed. He that does all to be seen does nothing to the purpose.

He specifies two things which they did to be seen of men.

(a) They made broad their phylacteries. Those were little scrolls of paper or parchment, wherein were written, with great niceness, these four paragraphs of the law, Ex 13:2-11,13:11-16,De 6:4-9,11:13-21. These were sewn up in leather, and worn upon their foreheads and left arms. It was a tradition of the elders, which had reference to Ex 13:9, and Pr 7:3, where the expressions seem to be figurative, intimating no more than that we should bear the things of God in our minds as carefully as if we had them bound between our eyes. Now the Pharisees made broad these phylacteries, that they might be thought more holy, and strict, and zealous for the law, than others. It is a gracious ambition to covet to be really more holy than others, but it is a proud ambition to covet to appear so. It is good to excel in real piety, but not to exceed in outward shows; for overdoing is justly suspected of design, Pr 27:14. It is the guise of hypocrisy to make more ado than needs in external service, more than is needful either to prove, or to improve, the good affections and dispositions of the soul.

(b) They enlarged the borders of their garments. God appointed the Jews to make borders or fringes upon their garments (Nu 15:38), to distinguish them from other nations, and to be a memorandum to them of their being a peculiar people; but the Pharisees were not content to have these borders like other people's, which might serve God's design in appointing them; but they must be larger than ordinary, to answer their design of making themselves to be taken notice of; as if they were more religious than others. But those who thus enlarge their phylacteries, and the borders of their garments, while their hearts are straitened, and destitute of the love of God and their neighbour, though they may now deceive others, will in the end deceive themselves.

6 and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,

They much affected pre-eminence and superiority, and prided themselves extremely in it. Pride was the darling reigning sin of the Pharisees, the sin that did most easily beset them and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to witness against.

He describes their pride, Mt 23:6,7. They courted, and coveted,

[1.] Places of honour and respect. In all public appearances, as at feasts, and in the synagogues, they expected, and had, to their hearts' delight, the uppermost rooms, and the chief seats. They took place of all others, and precedency was adjudged to them, as persons of the greatest note and merit; and it is easy to imagine what a complacency they took in it; they loved to have the preeminence, 3John 1:9. It is not possessing the uppermost rooms, nor sitting in the chief seats, that is condemned (somebody must sit uppermost), but loving them; for men to value such a little piece of ceremony as sitting highest, going first, taking the wall, or the better hand, and to value themselves upon it, to seek it, and to feel resentment if they have it not; what is that but making an idol of ourselves, and then falling down and worshipping it--the worst kind of idolatry! It is bad any where, but especially in the synagogues. There to seek honour to ourselves, where we appear in order to give glory to God, and to humble ourselves before him, is indeed to mock God instead of serving him. David would willingly lie at the threshold in God's house; so far was he from coveting the chief seat there, Ps 84:10. It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to church, unless they can look fine and make a figure there.

[2.] Titles of honour and respect. They loved greetings in the markets, loved to have people put off their hats to them, and show them respect when they met them in the streets. O how it pleased them, and fed their vain humour, digito monstrari et dicier, Hic est--to be pointed out, and to have it said, This be he, to have way made for them in the crowd of market people; "Stand off, here is a Pharisee coming!" and to be complimented with the high and pompous title of Rabbi, Rabbi! This was meat and drink and dainties to them; and they took as great a satisfaction in it as Nebuchadnezzar did in his palace, when he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? The greetings would not have done them half so much good, if they had not been in the markets, where every body might see how much they were respected, and how high they stood in the opinion of the

people. It was but a little before Christ's time, that the Jewish teachers, the masters of Israel, had assumed the title of Rabbi, Rab, or Rabban, which signifies great or much; and was construed as Doctor, or My lord. And they laid such a stress upon it, that they gave it for a maxim that "he who salutes his teacher, and does not call him Rabbi, provokes the divine Majesty to depart from Israel;" so much religion did they place in that which was but a piece of good manners! For him that is taught in the word to give respect to him that teaches is commendable enough in him that gives it; but for him that teaches to love it, and demand it, and affect it, to be puffed up with it, and to be displeased if it be omitted, is sinful and abominable; and, instead of teaching, he has need to learn the first lesson in the school of Christ, which is humility.

7 and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

He cautions his disciples against being herein like them; herein they must not do after their works; "But be not ye called so, for ye shall not be of such a spirit," Mt 23:8, &c. Here is,

A prohibition of pride. They are here forbidden,

First, To challenge titles of honour and dominion to themselves, Mt 23:8-10. It is repeated twice; Be not called Rabbi, neither be ye called Master or Guide: not that it is unlawful to give civil respect to those that are over us in the Lord, nay, it is an instance of the honour and esteem which it is our duty to show them; but,

1. Christ's ministers must not affect the name of Rabbi or Master, by way of distinction from other people; it is not agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel, for them to covet or accept the honour which they have that are in kings' palaces.

2. They must not assume the authority and dominion implied in those names; they must not be magisterial, nor domineer over their

brethren, or over God's heritage, as if they had dominion over the faith of Christians: what they received of the Lord, all must receive from them; but in other things they must not make their opinions and wills a rule and standard to all other people, to be admitted with an implicit obedience. The reasons for this prohibition are,

(a) One is your Master, even Christ, Mt 23:8,10. Note, [1.] Christ is our Master, our Teacher, our Guide. Mr. George Herbert, when he named the name of Christ, usually added, My Master. [2.] Christ only is our Master, ministers are but ushers in the school. Christ only is the Master, the great Prophet, whom we must hear, and be ruled and overruled by; whose word must be an oracle and a law to us; Verily I say unto you, must be enough to us. And if he only be our Master, then for his ministers to set up for dictators, and to pretend to a supremacy and an infallibility, is a daring usurpation of that honour of Christ which he will not give to another.

(b) All ye are brethren. Ministers are brethren not only to one another, but to the people; and therefore it ill becomes them to be masters, when there are none for them to master it over but their brethren; yea, and we are all younger brethren, otherwise the eldest might claim an excellency of dignity and power, Ge 49:3. But, to preclude that, Christ himself is the first-born among many brethren, Ro 8:29. Ye are brethren, as ye are all disciples of the same Master. School-fellows are brethren, and, as such, should help one another in getting their lesson; but it will by no means be allowed that one of the scholars step into the master's seat, and give law to the school. If we are all brethren, we must not be many masters. Jam 3:1.

Secondly, They are forbidden to ascribe such titles to others (Mt 23:9); "Call no man your father upon the earth; constitute no man the father of your religion, that is, the founder, author, director, and governor, of it." The fathers of our flesh must be called fathers, and as such we must give them reverence; but God only must be allowed as the Father of our spirits, Heb 12:9. Our religion must not be derived from, or made to depend upon, any man. We are

born again to the spiritual and divine life, not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God; not of the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God. Now the will of man, not being the rise of our religion, must not be the rule of it. We must not jurare in verba magistri--swear to the dictates of any creature, not the wisest or best, nor pin our faith on any man's sleeve, because we know not whither he will carry it. St. Paul calls himself a Father to those whose conversion he had been an instrument of (1Co 4:15,Philem 1:10); but he pretends to no dominion over them, and uses that title to denote, not authority, but affection: therefore he calls them not his obliged, but his beloved, sons, 1Co 4:14.

The reason given is, One is your Father, who is in heaven. God is our Father, and is All in all in our religion. He is the Fountain of it, and its Founder; the Life of it, and its Lord; from whom alone, as the Original, our spiritual life is derived, and on whom it depends. He is the Father of all lights (Jam 1:17), that one Father, from whom are all things, and we in him, Eph 4:6. Christ having taught us to say, Our Father, who art in heaven; let us call no man Father upon earth; no man, because man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, hewn out of the same rock with us; especially not upon earth, for man upon earth is a sinful worm; there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, and therefore no one is fit to be called Father.

10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

[2.] Here is a precept of humility and mutual subjection (Mt 23:11); He that is greatest among you shall be your servant; not only call himself so (we know of one who styles himself Servus servorum Dei--Servant of the servants of God, but acts as Rabbi, and father, and master, and Dominus Deus noster--The Lord our God, and what not), but he shall be so. Take it as a promise; "He shall be accounted greatest, and stand highest in the favour of God, that is most submissive and serviceable;" or as a precept; "He that is advanced to any place of dignity, trust, and honour, in the church,

let him be your servant" (some copies read esto for estai), "let him not think that his patent of honour is a writ of ease; no; he that is greatest is not a lord, but a minister." St. Paul, who knew his privilege as well as duty, though free from all, yet made himself servant unto all (1Co 9:19); and our Master frequently pressed it upon his disciples to be humble and self-denying, mild and condescending, and to abound in all offices of Christian love, though mean, and to the meanest; and of this he hath set us an example.

[3.] Here is a good reason for all this, Mt 23:12. Consider,

First, The punishment intended for the proud; Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased. If God give them repentance, they will be abased in their own eyes, and will abhor themselves for it; if they repent not, sooner or later they will be abased before the world. Nebuchadnezzar, in the height of his pride, was turned to be a fellow-commoner with the beasts; Herod, to be a feast for the worms; and Babylon, that sat as a queen, to be the scorn of nations. God made the proud and aspiring priests contemptible and base (Mal 2:9), and the lying prophet to be the tail, Isa 9:15. But if proud men have not marks of humiliation set upon them in this world, there is a day coming, when they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt (Da 12:2); so plentifully will he reward the proud doer! Ps 31:23.

Secondly, The preferment intended for the humble; He that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Humility is that ornament which is in the sight of God of great price. In this world the humble have the honour of being accepted with the holy God, and respected by all wise and good men; of being qualified for, and often called out to, the most honourable services; for honour is like the shadow, which flees from those that pursue it, and grasp at it, but follows those that flee from it. However, in the other world, they that have humbled themselves in contrition for their sin, in compliance with their God, and in condescension to their brethren, shall be exalted

to inherit the throne of glory; shall be not only owned, but crowned, before angels and men.

13 But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

In these verses we have eight woes levelled directly against the scribes and Pharisees by our Lord Jesus Christ, like so many claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning, from mount Sinai. Three woes are made to look very dreadful (Re 8:13,9:12); but here are eight woes, in opposition to the eight beatitudes, Mt 5:3. The gospel has its woes as well as the law, and gospel curses are of all curses the heaviest. These woes are the more remarkable, not only because of the authority, but because of the meekness and gentleness, of him that denounced them. He came to bless, and loved to bless; but, if his wrath be kindled, there is surely cause for it: and who shall entreat for him that the great Intercessor pleads against? A woe from Christ is a remediless woe.

This is here the burthen of the song, and it is a heavy burthen; Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Note, 1 The scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites; that is it in which all the rest of their bad characters are summed up; it was the leaven which gave the relish to all they said and did. A hypocrite is a stage-player in religion (that is the primary signification of the word); he personates or acts the part of one that he neither is nor may be, or perhaps the he neither is nor would be. 2. That hypocrites are in a woeful state and condition. Woe to hypocrites; so he said whose saying that their case is miserable makes it so: while they live, their religion is vain; when they die, their ruin is great.

Now each of these woes against the scribes and Pharisees has a reason annexed to it containing a separate crime charged upon them, proving their hypocrisy, and justifying the judgment of Christ upon them; for his woes, his curses, are never causeless.

They were sworn enemies to the gospel of Christ, and consequently to the salvation of the souls of men (Mt 23:13); They shut up the

kingdom of heaven against men, that is, they did all they could to keep people from believing in Christ, and so entering into his kingdom. Christ came to open the kingdom of heaven, that is, to lay open for us a new and living way into it, to bring men to be subjects of that kingdom. Now the scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's seat, and pretended to the key of knowledge, ought to have contributed their assistance herein, by opening those scriptures of the Old Testament which pointed at the Messiah and his kingdom, in their true and proper sense; they that undertook to expound Moses and the prophets should have showed the people how they testified of Christ; that Daniel's weeks were expiring, the sceptre was departed from Judah, and therefore now was the time for the Messiah's appearing. Thus they might have facilitated that great work, and have helped thousands to heaven; but, instead of this, they shut up the kingdom of heaven; they made it their business to press the ceremonial law, which was now in the vanishing, to suppress the prophecies, which were now in the accomplishing, and to beget and nourish up in the minds of the people prejudices against Christ and his doctrine.

1. They would not go in themselves; Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? Joh 7:48. No; they were to proud to stoop to his meanness, too formal to be reconciled to his plainness; they did not like a religion which insisted so much on humility, self-denial, contempt of the world, and spiritual worship. Repentance was the door of admission into this kingdom, and nothing could be more disagreeable to the Pharisees, who justified and admired themselves, than to repent, that is, to accuse and abase and abhor themselves; therefore they went not in themselves; but that was not all.

2. They would not suffer them that were entering to go in. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but it is worse to keep others from him; yet that is commonly the way of hypocrites; they do not love that any should go beyond them in religion, or be better than they. Their not going in themselves was a hindrance to many; for, they having so great an interest in the people, multitudes rejected

the gospel only because their leaders did; but, besides that, they opposed both Christ's entertaining of sinners (Lu 7:39), and sinners' entertaining of Christ; they perverted his doctrine, confronted his miracles, quarrelled with his disciples, and represented him, and his institutes and economy, to the people in the most disingenuous, disadvantageous manner imaginable; they thundered out their excommunications against those that confessed him, and used all their wit and power to serve their malice against him; and thus they shut up the kingdom of heaven, so that they who would enter into it must suffer violence (Mt 11:12), and press into it (Lu 16:16), through a crowd of scribes and Pharisees, and all the obstructions and difficulties they could contrive to lay in their way. How well is it for us that our salvation is not entrusted in the hands of any man or company of men in the world! If it were, we should be undone. They that shut out of the church would shut out of heaven if they could; but the malice of men cannot make the promise of God to his chosen of no effect; blessed be God, it cannot.

14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

They made religion and the form of godliness a cloak and stalking-horse to their covetous practices and desires, Mt 23:14. Observe here,

1. What their wicked practices were; they devoured widows' houses, either by quartering themselves and their attendants upon them for entertainment, which must be of the best for men of their figure; or by insinuating themselves into their affections, and so getting to be the trustees of their estates, which they could make an easy prey of; for who could presume to call such as they were to an account? The thing they aimed at was to enrich themselves; and, this being their chief and highest end, all considerations of justice and equity were laid aside, and even widows' houses were sacrificed to this. Widows are of the weaker sex in its weakest state, easily imposed upon; and therefore they fastened on them, to make a prey of. They devoured those whom, by the law of God, they were particularly obliged to protect, patronise, and relieve. There is a

woe in the Old Testament to those that made widows their prey (Isa 10:1,2); and Christ here seconded it with his woe. God is the judge of the widows; they are his peculiar care, he establisheth their border (Pr 15:25), and espouseth their cause (Ex 22:22,23); yet these were they whose houses the Pharisees devoured by wholesale; so greedy were they to get their bellies filled with the treasures of wickedness! Their devouring denotes not only covetousness, but cruelty in their oppression, described Mic 3:3, They eat the flesh, and flay off the skin. And doubtless they did all this under colour of law; for they did it so artfully that it passed uncensured, and did not at all lessen the people's veneration for them.

2. What was the cloak with which they covered this wicked practice; For a pretence they made long prayers; very long indeed, if it be true which some of the Jewish writers tell us, that they spent three hours at a time in the formalities of meditation and prayer, and did it thrice every day, which is more than an upright soul, that makes a conscience of being inward with God in the duty, dares pretend ordinarily to do; but to the Pharisees it was easy enough, who never made a business of the duty, and always made a trade of the outside of it. By this craft they got their wealth, and maintained their grandeur. It is not probable that these long prayers were extemporary, for then (as Mr. Baxter observes) the Pharisees had much more the gift of prayer than Christ's disciples had; but rather that they were stated forms of words in use among them, which they said over by tale, as the papists drop their beads. Christ doth not here condemn long prayers, as in themselves hypocritical; nay if there were not a great appearance of good in them, they would not have been used for a pretence; and the cloak must be very thick which was used to cover such wicked practices. Christ himself continued all night in prayer to God, and we are commanded to pray without ceasing too soon; where there are many sins to be confessed, and many wants to pray for the supply of, and many mercies to give thanks for, there is occasion for long prayers. But the Pharisees' long prayers were made up of vain repetitions, and (which was the end of them) they were for a pretence; by them they got the reputation of pious devout men, that loved prayer, and were

the favourites of Heaven; and by this means people were made to believe it was not possible that such men as they should cheat them;, and, therefore, happy the widow that could get a Pharisee for her trustee, and guardian to her children! Thus, while they seemed to soar heaven-ward, upon the wings of prayer, their eye, like the kite's, was all the while upon their prey on the earth, some widow's house or other that lay convenient for them. Thus circumcision was the cloak of the Shechemites' covetousness (Ge 34:22,23), the payment of a vow in Hebron the cover of Absalom's rebellion (2Sa 15:7), a fast in Jezreel must patronise Naboth's murder, and the extirpation of Baal is the footstool of Jehu's ambition. Popish priests, under pretence of long prayers for the dead, masses and dirges, and I know not what, enrich themselves by devouring the house of the widows and fatherless. Note, It is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety, however it passeth now, will be reckoned for as double iniquity, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men.

3. The doom passed upon them for this; Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Note,

(a) There are degrees of damnation; there are some whose sin is more inexcusable, and whose ruin will therefore be more intolerable.

(b) The pretences of religion, with which hypocrites disguise or excuse their sin now, will aggravate their condemnation shortly. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that the very thing by which sinners hope to expiate and atone for their sins will come against them, and make their sins more exceedingly sinful. But it is sad for the criminal, when his defence proves his offence, and his pleas (We have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name made long prayers) heightens the charge against him.

15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

While they were such enemies to the conversion of souls to Christianity, they were very industrious in the perversion of them to their faction. They shut up the kingdom of heaven against those that would turn to Christ, but at the same time compassed sea and land to make proselytes to themselves, Mt 23:15. Observe here,

1. Their commendable industry in making proselytes to the Jewish religion, not only proselytes of the gate, who obliged themselves to no more than the observance of the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, but proselytes of righteousness, who addicted themselves wholly to all the rites of the Jewish religion, for that was the game they flew at; for this, for one such, though but one, they compass sea and land, had many a cunning reach, and laid many a plot, rode and run, and sent and wrote, and laboured unweariedly. And what did they aim at? Not the glory of God, and the good of souls; but that they might have the credit of making them proselytes, and the advantage of making a prey of them when they were made. Note,

(a) The making of proselytes, if it be to the truth and serious godliness, and be done with a good design, is a good work, well worthy of the utmost care and pains. Such is the value of souls, that nothing must be thought too much to do, to save a soul from death. The industry of the Pharisees herein may show the negligence of many who would be thought to act from better principles, but will be at no pains or cost to propagate the gospel.

(b) To make a proselyte, sea and land must be compassed; all ways and means must be tried; first one way, and then another, must be tried, all little enough; but all well paid, if the point be gained.

(c) Carnal hearts seldom shrink from the pains necessary to carry on their carnal purposes; when a proselyte is to be made to serve a turn for themselves, they will compass sea and land to make him, rather than be disappointed.

2. Their cursed impiety in abusing their proselytes when they were made; "Ye make him the disciple of a Pharisee presently, and he

sucks in all a Pharisee's notions; and so ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Note,

(a) Hypocrites, while they fancy themselves heirs of heaven, are, in the judgment of Christ, the children of hell. The rise of their hypocrisy is from hell, for the devil is the father of lies; and the tendency of their hypocrisy is toward hell, that is the country they belong to, the inheritance they are heirs to; they are called children of hell, because of their rooted enmity to the kingdom of heaven, which was the principle and genius of Pharisaism.

(b) Though all that maliciously oppose the gospel are children of hell, yet some are twofold more so than others, more furious and bigoted and malignant.

(c) Perverted proselytes are commonly the greatest bigots; the scholars outdid their masters,

[1.] In fondness of ceremony; the Pharisees themselves saw the folly of their own impositions, and in their hearts smiled at the obsequiousness of those that conformed to them; but their proselytes were eager for them. Note, Weak heads commonly admire those shows and ceremonies which wise men (however for public ends they countenance them) cannot but think meanly of.

[2.] In fury against Christianity; the proselytes readily imbibed the principles which their crafty leaders were not wanting to possess them with, and so became extremely hot against the truth. The most bitter enemies the apostles met with in all places were the Hellenist Jews, who were mostly proselytes, Ac 13:45,14:2-19,17:5,18:6. Paul, a disciple of the Pharisees, was exceedingly mad against the Christians (Ac 26:11), when his master, Gamaliel, seems to have been more moderate.

16 Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!

17 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ?

Their seeking their own worldly gain and honour more than God's glory put them upon coining false and unwarrantable distinction, with which they led the people into dangerous mistakes, particularly in the matter of oaths; which, as an evidence of a universal sense of religion, have been by all nations accounted sacred (Mt 23:16); Ye blind guides. Note, 1. It is sad to think how many are under the guidance of such as are themselves blind, who undertake to show others that way which they are themselves willingly ignorant of. His watchmen are blind (Isa 56:10); and too often the people love to have it so, and say to the seers, See not. But the case is bad, when the leaders of the people cause them to err, Isa 9:16. 2. Though the condition of those whose guides are blind is very sad, yet that of the blind guides themselves is yet more woeful. Christ denounces a woe to the blind guides that have the blood of so many souls to answer for.

Now, to prove their blindness, he specifies the matter of swearing, and shows what corrupt casuists they were.

(a) He lays down the doctrine they taught.

[1.] They allowed swearing by creatures, provided they were consecrated to the service of God, and stood in any special relation to him. They allowed swearing by the temple and the altar, though they were the work of men's hands, intended to be the servants of God's honour, not sharers in it. An oath is an appeal to God, to his omniscience and justice; and to make this appeal to any creature is to put that creature in the place of God. See De 6:13.

[2.] They distinguished between an oath by the temple and an oath by the gold of the temple; an oath by the altar and an oath by the gift upon the altar; making the latter binding, but not the former. Here was a double wickedness; First, That there were some oaths which they dispensed with, and made light of, and reckoned a man was not bound by to assert the truth, or perform a promise. They

ought not to have sworn by the temple or the altar; but, when they had so sworn, they were taken in the words of their mouth. That doctrine cannot be of the God of truth which gives countenance to the breach of faith in any case whatsoever. Oaths are edge-tools and are not to be jested with. Secondly, That they preferred the gold before the temple, and the gift before the altar, to encourage people to bring gifts to the altar, and gold to the treasures of the temple, which they hoped to be gainers by. Those who had made gold their hope, and whose eyes were blinded by gifts in secret, were great friends to the Corban; and, gain being their godliness, by a thousand artifices they made religion truckle to their worldly interests. Corrupt church-guides make things to be sin or not sin as it serves their purposes, and lay a much greater stress on that which concerns their own gain than on that which is for God's glory and the good of souls.

(b) He shows the folly and absurdity of this distinction (Mt 23:17-19); Ye fools, and blind. It was in the way of a necessary reproof, not an angry reproach, that Christ called them fools. Let it suffice us from the word of wisdom to show the folly of sinful opinions and practices: but, for the fastening of the character upon particular persons, leave that to Christ, who knows what is in man, and has forbidden us to say, Thou fool.

To convict them of folly, he appeals to themselves, Whether is greater, the gold (the golden vessels and ornaments, or the gold in the treasury) or the temple that sanctifies the gold; the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Any one will own, Propter quod aliquid est tale, id est magis tale--That, on account of which any thing is qualified in a particular way, must itself be much more qualified in the same way. They that sware by the gold of the temple had an eye to it as holy; but what was it that made it holy but the holiness of the temple, to the service of which it was appropriated? And therefore the temple cannot be less holy than the gold, but must be more so; for the less is blessed and sanctified of the better, Heb 7:7. The temple and altar were dedicated to God fixedly, the gold and gift but secondarily. Christ is our altar (Heb 13:10), our temple (Joh

2:21); for it is he that sanctifies all our gifts, and puts an acceptableness in them, 1Pe 2:5. Those that put their own works into the place of Christ's righteousness in justification are guilty of the Pharisees' absurdity, who preferred the gift before the altar. Every true Christian is a living temple; and by virtue thereof common things are sanctified to him; unto the pure all things are pure (Tit 1:15), and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, 1Co 7:14.

18 And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

19 Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ?

20 Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.

21 And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

He rectifies the mistake (Mt 23:20-22), by reducing all the oaths they had invented to the true intent of an oath, which is, By the name of the Lord: so that though an oath by the temple, or the altar, or heaven, be formally bad, yet it is binding. Quod fieri non debuit, factum valet--Engagements which ought not to have been made, are yet, when made, binding. A man shall never take advantage of his own fault.

[1.] He that swears by the altar, let him not think to shake off the obligation of it by saying, "The altar is but wood, and stone, and brass;" for his oath shall be construed most strongly against himself; because he was culpable, and so as that the obligation of it may be preserved, ut res potius valeat quam pereat--the obligation being hereby strengthened rather than destroyed. And therefore an oath by the altar shall be interpreted by it and by all things thereon; for the appurtenances pass with the principal. And, the things thereon being offered up to God, to swear by it and them was, in effect, to call God himself to witness: for it was the altar of God; and he that went to that, went to God, Ps 43:4,Ps 26:6.

[2.] He that swears by the temple, if he understand what he does, cannot but apprehend that the ground of such a respect to it, is, not because it is a fine house, but because it is the house of God, dedicated to his service, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; and therefore he swears by it, and by him that dwells therein; there he was pleased in a peculiar manner to manifest himself, and give tokens of his presence; so that whoso swears by it, swears by him who had said, This is my rest, here will I dwell. Good Christians are God's temples, and the Spirit of God dwells in them (1Co 3:16,6:19), and God takes what is done to them as done to himself; he that grieves a gracious soul, grieves it and the Spirit that dwells in it. Eph 4:30.

[3.] If a man swears by heaven, he sins (Mt 5:34); yet he shall not therefore be discharged from the obligation of his oath; no, God will make him know that the heaven he swears by, is his throne (Isa 66:1); and he that swears by the throne, appeals to him that sits upon it; who, as he resents the affront done to him in the form of the oath, so he will certainly revenge the greater affront done to him by the violation of it. Christ will not countenance the evasion of a solemn oath, though ever so plausible.

22 And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier
matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

In Luke (Lu 11:42) it is "and rue, and all manner of herbs." They grounded this practice on Le 27:30, which they interpreted rigidly. Our Lord purposely names the most trifling products of the earth as examples of what they punctiliously exacted the tenth of.

In Luke (Lu 11:42) it is "judgment, mercy, and the love of God"—the expression being probably varied by our Lord Himself on the two different occasions. In both His reference is to Mic 6:6-8, where the prophet makes all acceptable religion to consist of three elements—"doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with

our God"; which third element presupposes and comprehends both the "faith" of Matthew and the "love" of Luke. See on Mr1 2:29; Mr1 2:32. The same tendency to merge greater duties in less besets even the children of God; but it is the characteristic of hypocrites.

There is no need for one set of duties to jostle out another; but it is to be carefully noted that of the greater duties our Lord says, "Ye ought to have done" them, while of the lesser He merely says, "Ye ought not to leave them undone."

They were very strict and precise in the smaller matters of the law, but as careless and loose in the weightier matters, Mt 23:23,24. They were partial in the law (Mal 2:9), would pick and choose their duty, according as they were interested or stood affected. Sincere obedience is universal, and he that from a right principle obeys any of God's precepts, will have respect to them all, Ps 119:6. But hypocrites, who act in religion for themselves, and not for God, will do no more in religion than they can serve a turn by for themselves. The partiality of the scribes and Pharisees appears here, in two instances.

1. They observed smaller duties, but omitted greater; they were very exact in paying tithes, till it came to mint, anise, and cummin, their exactness in tithing of which would not cost them much, but would be cried up, and they should buy reputation cheap. The Pharisee boasted of this, I give tithes of all that I possess, Lu 18:12. But it is probable that they had ends of their own to serve, and would find their own account in it; for the priests and Levites, to whom the tithes were paid, were in their interests, and knew how to return their kindness. Paying tithes was their duty, and what the law required; Christ tells them they ought not to leave it undone. Note, All ought in their places to contribute to the support and maintenance of a standing ministry: withholding tithes is called robbing God, Mal 2:8-10. They that are taught in the word, and do not communicate to them that teach them that love a cheap gospel, come short of the Pharisee.

But that which Christ here condemns them for, is, that they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; and their niceness in paying tithes, was, if not to atone before God, yet at least to excuse end palliate to men the omission of those. All the things of God's law are weighty, but those are most weighty, which are most expressive of inward holiness in the heart; the instances of self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation to God, in which lies the life of religion. Judgment and mercy toward men, and faith toward God, are the weightier matters of the law, the good things which the Lord our God requires (Mic 6:8); to do justly, and love mercy, and humble ourselves by faith to walk with God. This is the obedience which is better than sacrifice or tithe; judgment is preferred before sacrifice, Isa 1:11. To be just to the priests in their tithe, and yet to cheat and defraud every body else, is but to mock God, and deceive ourselves. Mercy also is preferred before sacrifice, Ho 6:6. To feed those who made themselves fat with the offering of the Lord, and at the same time to shut up the bowels of compassion from a brother or a sister that is naked, and destitute of daily food, to pay tithe-mint to the priest, and to deny a crumb to Lazarus, is to lie open to that judgment without mercy, which is awarded to those who pretended to judgment, and showed no mercy; nor will judgment and mercy serve without faith in divine revelation; for God will be honoured in his truths as well as in his laws.

2. They avoided lesser sins, but committed greater (Mt 23:24); Ye blind guides; so he had called them before (Mt 23:16), for their corrupt teaching; here he calls them so for their corrupt living, for their example was leading as well as their doctrine; and in this also they were blind and partial; they strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. In their doctrine they strained at gnats, warned people against every the least violation of the tradition of the elders. In their practice they strained at gnats, heaved at them, with a seeming dread, as if they had a great abhorrence of sin, and were afraid of it in the least instance; but they made no difficulty of those sins which, in comparison with them, were as a camel to a gnat; when they devoured widows' houses, they did indeed swallow a camel; when they gave Judas the price of innocent blood, and yet scrupled to put

the returned money into the treasury (Mt 27:6); when they would not go into the judgment-hall, for fear of being defiled, and yet would stand at the door, and cry out against the holy Jesus (Joh 18:28); when they quarrelled with the disciples for eating with unwashen hands, and yet, for the filling of the Corban, taught people to break the fifth commandment, they strained at gnats, or lesser things, and yet swallowed camels. It is not the scrupling of a little sin that Christ here reproves; if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained at, but the doing of that, and then swallowing a camel. In the smaller matters of the law to be superstitious, and to be profane in the greater, is the hypocrisy here condemned.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

The proper rendering—as in the older English translations, and perhaps our own as it came from the translators' hands—evidently is, "strain out." It was the custom, says TRENCH, of the stricter Jews to strain their wine, vinegar, and other potables through linen or gauze, lest unawares they should drink down some little unclean insect therein and thus transgress (Le 11:20,23,41,42) —just as the Buddhists do now in Ceylon and Hindustan—and to this custom of theirs our Lord here refers.

the largest animal the Jews knew, as the "gnat" was the smallest; both were by the law unclean.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

They were all for the outside, and not at all for the inside, of religion. They were more desirous and solicitous to appear pious to men than to approve themselves so toward God. This is illustrated by two similitudes.

1. They are compared to a vessel that is clean washed on the outside, but all dirt within, Mt 23:25,26. The Pharisees placed religion in that which at best was but a point of decency--the washing of cups, Mk 7:4. They were in care to eat their meat in clean cups and platters, but made no conscience of getting their meat by extortion, and using it to excess. Now what a foolish thing would it be for a man to wash only the outside of a cup, which is to be looked at, and to leave the

inside dirty, which is to be used; so they do who only avoid scandalous sins, that would spoil their reputation with men, but allow themselves in heart-wickedness, which renders them odious to the pure and holy God. In reference to his, observe,

(a) The practice of the Pharisees; they made clean the outside. In those things which fell under the observation of their neighbours, they seemed very exact, and carried on their wicked intrigues with so much artifice, that their wickedness was not suspected; people generally took them for very good men. But within, in the recesses of their hearts and the close retirements of their lives, they were full of extortion and excess; of violence and incontinence (so Dr. Hammond); that is, of injustice and intemperance. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. Their inward part was very wickedness (Ps 5:9); and that we are really, which we are inwardly.

(b) The rule Christ gives, in opposition to this practice, Mt 23:26. It is addressed to the blind Pharisees. They thought themselves the seers of the land, but (Joh 9:39) Christ calls them blind. Note, those are blind, in Christ's account who (how quick-sighted soever they are in other things) are strangers, and no enemies, to the wickedness of their own hearts; who see not, and hate not, the secret sin that lodgeth there. Self-ignorance is the most shameful and hurtful ignorance, Re 3:17. The rule is, Cleanse first that which is within. Note, the principal care of every one of us should be to wash our hearts from wickedness, Jer 4:14. The main business of a Christian lies within, to get cleansed from the filthiness of the spirit. Corrupt affections and inclinations, the secret lusts that lurk in the soul, unseen and unobserved, these must first be mortified and subdued. Those sins must be conscientiously abstained from, which the eye of God only is a witness to, who searcheth the heart.

Observe the method prescribed; Cleanse first that which is within not that only, but that first; because, if due care be taken concerning that, the outside will be clean also. External motives and inducements may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy;

but if renewing, sanctifying grace make clean the inside, that will have an influence upon the outside, for the commanding principle is within. If the heart be well kept, all is well, for out of it are the issues of life; the eruptions will vanish of course. If the heart and spirit be made new, there will be a newness of life; here therefore we must begin with ourselves; first cleanse that which is within; we then make sure work, when this is our first work.

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

In Luke (Lu 11:40) it is, "Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?"—"He to whom belongs the outer life, and of right demands its subjection to Himself, is the inner man less His?" A remarkable example this of our Lord's power of drawing the most striking illustrations of great truths from the most familiar objects and incidents in life. To these words, recorded by Luke, He adds the following, involving a principle of immense value: "But rather give alms of such things as ye have, and behold, all things are clean unto you" (Lu 11:41). As the greed of these hypocrites was one of the most prominent features of their character (Lu 16:14), our Lord bids them exemplify the opposite character, and then their outside, ruled by this, would be beautiful in the eye of God, and their meals would be eaten with clean hands, though much fouled with the business of this everyday world. (See Ec 9:7).

27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

They are compared to whited sepulchres, Mt 23:27,28.

(1.) They were fair without, like sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward. Some make it to refer to the custom of the Jews to whiten graves, only for the notifying of them, especially if they were in unusual places, that people might avoid them, because of the ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a grave, Nu 19:16. And it was part of the charge of the overseers of the highways, to repair that whitening when it was decayed. Sepulchres were thus made remarkable, 2Ki 23:16,17. The formality of hypocrites, by which they study to recommend themselves to the world, doth but

make all wise and good men the more careful to avoid them, for fear of being defiled by them. Beware of the scribes, Lu 20:46. It rather alludes to the custom of whitening the sepulchres of eminent persons, for the beautifying of them. It is said here (Mt 23:29), that they garnished the sepulchres of the righteous; as it is usual with us to erect monuments upon the graves of great persons, and to strew flowers on the graves of dear friends. Now the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was like the ornaments of a grave, or the dressing up of a dead body, only for show. The top of their ambition was to appear righteous before men, and to be applauded and had in admiration by them. But,

(2.) They were foul within, like sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness: so vile are our bodies, when the soul has deserted them! Thus were they full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Hypocrisy is the worst iniquity of all other. Note, It is possible for those that have their hearts full of sin, to have their lives free from blame, and to appear very good. But what will it avail us, to have the good word of our fellow-servants, if our Master doth not say, Well done? When all other graves are opened, these whited sepulchres will be looked into, and the dead men's bones, and all the uncleanness, shall be brought out, and be spread before all the host of heaven, Jer 8:1,2. For it is the day when God shall judge, not the shows, but the secrets, of men. And it will then be small comfort to them who shall have their portion with hypocrites, to remember how creditably and plausibly they went to hell, applauded by all their neighbours.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

What a powerful way of conveying the charge, that with all their fair show their hearts were full of corruption! (Compare Ps 5:9,Ro 3:13). But our Lord, stripping off the figure, next holds up their iniquity in naked colors.

"Ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." As one might unconsciously walk over a grave concealed from view, and thus contract ceremonial

defilement, so the plausible exterior of the Pharisees kept people from perceiving the pollution they contracted from coming in contact with such corrupt characters.

29 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,

They pretended a deal of kindness for the memory of the prophets that were dead and gone, while they hated and persecuted those that were present with them. This is put last, because it was the blackest part of their character. God is jealous for his honour in his laws and ordinances, and resents it if they be profaned and abused; but he has often expressed an equal jealousy for his honour in his prophets and ministers, and resents it worse if they be wronged and persecuted: and therefore, when our Lord Jesus comes to this head, he speaks more fully than upon any of the other (Mt 23:29-37); for that toucheth his ministers, toucheth his Anointed, and toucheth the apple of his eye. Observe here,

1 The respect which the scribes and Pharisees pretend for the prophets that were gone, Mt 23:29,30. This was the varnish, and that in which they outwardly appeared righteous.

(a) They honoured the relics of the prophets, they built their tombs, and garnished their sepulchres. It seems, the places of their burial were known, David's sepulchre was with them, Ac 2:29. There was a title upon the sepulchre of the man of God (2Ki 23:17), and Josiah thought it respect enough not to move his bones, Mt 23:18. But they would do more, rebuild and beautify them. Now consider this,

[1.] As an instance of honour done to deceased prophets, who, while they lived, were counted as the off-scouring of all things, and had all manner of evil spoken against them falsely. Note, God can extort, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the honour of piety and holiness. Them that honour God he will honour, and sometimes with those from whom contempt is expected, 2Sa 6:22. The memory of the just is blessed, when the names of those that hated and persecuted them shall be covered with shame. The honour of constancy and resolution in the way of duty will be a lasting honour; and those that

are manifest to God, will be manifest in the consciences of those about them.

[2.] As an instance of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, who paid their respect to them. Note, Carnal people can easily honour the memories of faithful ministers that are dead and gone, because they do not reprove them, nor disturb them, in their sins. Dead prophets are seers that see not, and those they can bear well enough; they do not torment them, as the living witnesses do, that bear their testimony viva voce--with a living voice, Re 11:10. They can pay respect to the writings of the dead prophets, which tell them what they should be; but not the reproofs of the living prophets, which tell them what they are. Sit divus, modo non sit vivus--Let there be saints; but let them not be living here. The extravagant respect which the church of Rome pays to the memory of saints departed, especially the martyrs, dedicating days and places to their names, enshrining their relics, praying to them, and offering to their images, while they make themselves drunk with the blood of the saints of their own day, is a manifest proof that they not only succeed, but exceed, the scribes and Pharisees in a counterfeit hypocritical religion, which builds the prophets' tombs, but hates the prophets' doctrine.

(b) They protested against the murder of them (Mt 23:30); If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them. They would never have consented to the silencing of Amos, and the imprisonment of Micaiah, to the putting of Hanani in the stocks, and Jeremiah in the dungeon, to the stoning of Zechariah, the mocking of all the messengers of the Lord, and the abuses put upon his prophets; no, not they, they would sooner have lost their right hands than have done any such thing. What, is thy servant a dog? And yet they were at this time plotting to murder Christ, to whom all the prophets bore witness. They think, if they had lived in the days of the prophets, they would have heard them gladly and obeyed; and yet they rebelled against the light that Christ brought into the world. But it is certain, a Herod and an Herodias to John the Baptist, would have been an Ahab and a Jezebel to Elijah. Note, The

deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears very much in this, that, while they go down the stream of the sins of their own day, they fancy they should have swum against the stream of the sins of the former days; that, if they had had other people's opportunities, they should have improved them more faithfully; if they had been in other people's temptations, they should have resisted them more vigorously; when yet they improve not the opportunities they have, nor resist the temptations they are in. We are sometimes thinking, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, how constantly we would have followed him; we would not have despised and rejected him, as they then did; and yet Christ in his Spirit, in his word, in his ministers, is still no better treated.

30 and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

31 Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

In thus, at the end of His ministry, recalling the words of the Baptist at the outset of his, our Lord would seem to intimate that the only difference between their condemnation now and then was, that now they were ripe for their doom, which they were not then.

Their enmity and opposition to Christ and his gospel, notwithstanding, and the ruin they were bringing upon themselves and upon that generation thereby, Mt 23:31-33. Observe here,

(a) The indictment proved; Ye are witnesses against yourselves. Note, Sinners cannot hope to escape the judgment of Christ for want of proof against them, when it is easy to find them witnesses against themselves; and their very pleas will not only be overruled, but turned to their conviction, and their own tongues shall be made to fall upon them, Ps 64:8.

[1.] By their own confession, it was the great wickedness of their forefathers, to kill the prophets; so that they knew the fault of it, and yet were themselves guilty of the same fact. Note, They who condemn sin in others, and yet allow the same or worse in themselves, are of all others most inexcusable, Ro 1:32-2:1. They

knew they ought not to have been partakers with persecutors, and yet were the followers of them. Such self-contradictions now will amount to self-condemnations in the great day. Christ puts another construction upon their building of the tombs of the prophets than what they intended; as if by beautifying their graves they justified their murderers (Lu 11:48), for they persisted in the sin.

[2.] By their own confession, these notorious persecutors were their ancestors; Ye are the children of them. They meant no more than that they were their children by blood and nature; but Christ turns it upon them;, that they were so by spirit and disposition; You are of those fathers, and their lusts you will do. They are, as you say, your fathers, and you patrizare--take after your fathers; it is the sin that runs in the blood among you. As your fathers did, so do ye, Ac 7:51. They came of a persecuting race, were a seed of evil doers (Isa 1:4), risen up in their fathers' stead, Nu 32:14. Malice, envy, and cruelty, were bred in the bone with them, and they had formerly espoused it for a principle, to do as their fathers did, Jer 44:17. And it is observable here (Mt 23:30) how careful they are to mention the relation; "They were our fathers, that killed the prophets, and they were men in honour and power, whose sons and successors we are." If they had detested the wickedness of their ancestors, as they ought to have done, they would not have been so fond to call them their fathers; for it is no credit to be akin to persecutors, though they have ever so much dignity and dominion.

(b) The sentence passed upon them. Christ here proceeds,

[1.] To give them up to sin as irreclaimable (Mt 23:32); Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. If Ephraim be joined to idols, and hate to be reformed, let him alone. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Christ knew they were now contriving his death, and in a few days would accomplish it; "Well," saith he, "go on with your plot, take your curse, walk in the way of your heart and in the sight of your eyes, and see what will come of it. What thou doest, do quickly. You will but fill up the measure of guilt, which will then overflow in a deluge of wrath." Note,

First, There is a measure of sin to be filled up, before utter ruin comes upon persons and families, churches and nations. God will bear long, but the time will come when he can no longer forbear, Jer 44:22. We read of the measure of the Amorites that was to be filled (Ge 15:16), of the harvest of the earth being ripe for the sickle (Re 14:15-19), and of sinners making an end to deal treacherously, arriving at a full stature in treachery, Isa 33:1.

Secondly, Children fill up the measure of their fathers' sins whey they are gone, if they persist in the same or the like. That national guilt which brings national ruin is made up of the sin of many in several ages, and in the successions of societies there is a score going on; for God justly visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children that tread in the steps of it.

Thirdly, Persecuting Christ, and his people and ministers, is a sin that fills the measure of a nation's guilt sooner than any other. This was it that brought wrath without remedy upon the fathers (2Ch 36:16), and wrath to the utmost upon the children too, 1Th 2:16. This was that fourth transgression, of which, when added to the other three, the Lord would not turn away the punishment, Am 1:3,6,9,11,13.

Fourthly, It is just with God to give those up to their own heart's lusts, who obstinately persist in the gratification of them. Those who will run headlong to ruin, let the reins be laid on their neck, and it is the saddest condition a man can be in on this side hell.

[2.] He proceeds to give them up to ruin as irrecoverable, to a personal ruin in the other world (Mt 23:33); Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? These are strange words to come from the mouth of Christ, into whose lips grace was poured. But he can and will speak terror, and in these words he explains and sums up the eight woes he had denounced against the scribes and Pharisees.

Here is,

First, Their description; Ye serpents. Doth Christ call names? Yes, but this doth not warrant us to do so. He infallibly knew what was in man, and knew them to be subtle as serpents, cleaving to the earth, feeding on dust; they had a specious outside, but were within malignant, had poison under their tongues, the seed of the old serpent. They were a generation of vipers; they and those that went before them, they and those that joined with them, were a generation of envenomed, enraged, spiteful adversaries to Christ and his gospel. They loved to be called of men, Rabbi, rabbi, but Christ calls them serpents and vipers; for he gives men their true characters, and delights to put contempt upon the proud.

Secondly, Their doom. He represents their condition as very sad, and in a manner desperate; How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Christ himself preached hell and damnation, for which his ministers have often been reproached by those that care not to hear of it. Note,

1 The damnation of hell will be the fearful end of all impenitent sinners. This doom coming from Christ, was more terrible than coming from all the prophets and ministers that ever were, for he is the Judge, into whose hands the keys of hell and death are put, and his saying they were damned, made them so.

2. There is a way of escaping this damnation, this is implied here; some are delivered from the wrath to come.

3. Of all sinners, those who are of the spirit of the scribes and Pharisees, are least likely to escape this damnation; for repentance and faith are necessary to that escape; and how will they be brought to these, who are so conceited of themselves, and so prejudiced against Christ and his gospel, as they were? How could they be healed and saved, who could not bear to have their wound searched, nor the balm of Gilead applied to it? Publicans and harlots, who were sensible of their disease and applied themselves to the Physician,

were more likely to escape the damnation of hell than those who, though they were in the high road to it, were confident they were in the way to heaven.

32 Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

33 Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:

We have left the blind leaders fallen into the ditch, under Christ's sentence, into the damnation of hell; let us see what will become of the blind followers, of the body of the Jewish church, and particularly Jerusalem.

I. Jesus Christ designs yet to try them with the means of grace; I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes. The connection is strange; "You are a generation of vipers, not likely to escape the damnation of hell;" one would think it should follow, "Therefore you shall never have a prophet sent to you any more;" but no, "Therefore I will send unto you prophets, to see if you will yet at length be wrought upon, or else to leave you inexcusable, and to justify God in your ruin." It is therefore ushered in with a note of admiration, behold! Observe,

1. It is Christ that sends them; I send. By this he avows himself to be God, having power to gift and commission prophets. It is an act of kingly office; he sends them as ambassadors to treat with us about the concerns of our souls. After his resurrection, he made this word good, when he said, So send I you, Joh 20:21. Though now he appeared mean, yet he was entrusted with this great authority.

2. He sends them to the Jews first; "I send them to you." They began at Jerusalem; and, wherever they went, they observed this rule, to make the first tender of gospel grace to the Jews, Ac 13:46.

3. Those he sends are called prophets, wise men, and scribes, Old-Testament names for New-Testament officers; to show that the

ministers sent to them now should not be inferior to the prophets of the Old Testament, to Solomon the wise, or Ezra the scribe. The extraordinary ministers, who in the first ages were divinely inspired, were as the prophets commissioned immediately from heaven; the ordinary settled ministers, who were then, and continue in the church still, and will do to the end of time, are as the wise men and scribes, to guide and instruct the people in the things of God. Or, we may take the apostles and evangelists for the prophets and wise men, and the pastors and teachers for the scribes, instructed to the kingdom of heaven (Mt 13:52); for the office of a scribe was honourable till the men dishonoured it.

II. He foresees and foretels the ill usage that his messengers would meet with among them; "Some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and yet I will send them." Christ knows beforehand how ill his servants will be treated, and yet sends them, and appoints them their measure of sufferings; yet he loves them never the less for his thus exposing them, for he designs to glorify himself by their sufferings, and them after them; he will counter-balance them, though not prevent them. Observe,

1 The cruelty of these persecutors; Ye shall kill and crucify them. It is no less than the blood, the life-blood, that they thirst after; their lust is not satisfied with any thing short of their destruction, Ex 15:9. They killed the two James's, crucified Simon the son of Cleophas, and scourged Peter and John; thus did the members partake of the sufferings of the Head, he was killed and crucified, and so were they. Christians must expect to resist unto blood.

2. Their unwearied industry; Ye shall persecute them from city to city. As the apostles went from city to city, to preach the gospel, the Jews dodged them, and haunted them, and stirred up persecution against them, Ac 14:19,17:13. They that did not believe in Judea were more bitter enemies to the gospel than any other unbelievers, Ro 15:31.

3. The pretence of religion in this; they scourged them in their synagogues, their place of worship, where they kept their ecclesiastical courts; so that they did it as a piece of service to the church; cast them out, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5,Joh 16:2.

35 that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of
Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.
36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

As it was only in the last generation of them that "the iniquity of the Amorites was full" (Ge 15:16), and then the abominations of ages were at once completely and awfully avenged, so the iniquity of Israel was allowed to accumulate from age to age till in that generation it came to the full, and the whole collected vengeance of heaven broke at once over its devoted head. In the first French Revolution the same awful principle was exemplified, and Christendom has not done with it yet.

37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

How ineffably grand and melting is this apostrophe! It is the very heart of God pouring itself forth through human flesh and speech. It is this incarnation of the innermost life and love of Deity, pleading with men, bleeding for them, and ascending only to open His arms to them and win them back by the power of this story of matchless love, that has conquered the world, that will yet "draw all men unto Him," and beautify and ennoble Humanity itself! "Jerusalem" here does not mean the mere city or its inhabitants; nor is it to be viewed merely as the metropolis of the nation, but as the center of their religious life—"the city of their solemnities, whither the tribes went up, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord"; and at this moment it was full of them. It is the whole family of God, then, which is here apostrophized by a name dear to every Jew, recalling to him all that was distinctive and precious in his religion. The intense feeling that sought vent in this utterance comes out first in the redoubling of the opening word—"Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"

but, next, in the picture of it which He draws—"that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee!"—not content with spurning God's messages of mercy, that canst not suffer even the messengers to live!

When He adds, "How often would I have gathered thee!" He refers surely to something beyond the six or seven times that He visited and taught in Jerusalem while on earth. No doubt it points to "the prophets," whom they "killed," to "them that were sent unto her," whom they "stoned." But whom would He have gathered so often? "Thee," truth-hating, mercy-spurning, prophet-killing Jerusalem—how often would I have gathered thee!

Compare with this that affecting clause in the great ministerial commission, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem!" (Lu 24:47). What encouragement to the heartbroken at their own long-continued and obstinate rebellion! But we have not yet got at the whole heart of this outburst. I would have gathered thee, He says, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Was ever imagery so homely invested with such grace and such sublimity as this, at our Lord's touch? And yet how exquisite the figure itself—of protection, rest, warmth, and all manner of conscious well-being in those poor, defenseless, dependent little creatures, as they creep under and feel themselves overshadowed by the capacious and kindly wing of the mother bird! If, wandering beyond hearing of her peculiar call, they are overtaken by a storm or attacked by an enemy, what can they do but in the one case droop and die, and in the other submit to be torn in pieces? But if they can reach in time their place of safety, under the mother's wing, in vain will any enemy try to drag them thence.

For rising into strength, kindling into fury, and forgetting herself entirely in her young, she will let the last drop of her blood be shed out and perish in defense of her precious charge, rather than yield them to an enemy's talons. How significant all this of what Jesus is and does for men! Under His great Mediatorial wing would He

have "gathered" Israel. For the figure, see De 32:10-12,Ru 2:12,Ps 17:8,36:7,61:4,63:7,91:4,Isa 31:5,Mal 4:2. The ancient rabbins had a beautiful expression for proselytes from the heathen—that they had "come under the wings of the Shekinah." For this last word, see on Mt2 3:38. But what was the result of all this tender and mighty love? The answer is, "And ye would not." O mysterious word! mysterious the resistance of such patient Love—mysterious the liberty of self-undoing! The awful dignity of the will, as here expressed, might make the ears to tingle.

He laments the wickedness of Jerusalem, and justly upbraids them with the many kind offers he had made them, Mt 23:37. See with what concern he speaks of that city; O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! The repetition is emphatical, and bespeaks abundance of commiseration. A day or two before Christ had wept over Jerusalem, now he sighed and groaned over it. Jerusalem, the vision of peace (so it signifies), must now be the seat of war and confusion. Jerusalem, that had been the joy of the whole earth, must now be a hissing, and an astonishment, and a by-word; Jerusalem, that has been a city compact together, shall now be shattered and ruined by its own intestine broils. Jerusalem, the place that God has chosen to put his name there, shall now be abandoned to the spoil and the robbers, La 1:1,4:1. But wherefore will the Lord do all this to Jerusalem? Why? Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, La 1:8.

1. She persecuted God's messengers; Thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee. This sin is especially charged upon Jerusalem; because there the Sanhedrim, or great council, sat, who took cognizance of church matters, and therefore a prophet could not perish but in Jerusalem, Lu 13:33. It is true, they had not now a power to put any man to death, but they killed the prophets in popular tumults, mobbed them, as Stephen, and put the Roman powers on to kill them. At Jerusalem, where the gospel was first preached, it was first persecuted (Ac 8:1), and that place was the head-quarters of the persecutors; thence warrants were issued out to other cities, and thither the saints were brought bound, Ac 9:2. Thou stonest them: that was a capital punishment, in use

only among the Jews. By the law, false prophets and seducers were to be stoned (De 13:10), under colour of which law, they put the true prophets to death. Note, It has often been the artifice of Satan, to turn that artillery against the church, which was originally planted in the defence of it. Brand the true prophets as seducers, and the true professors of religion as heretics and schismatics, and then it will be easy to persecute them. There was abundance of other wickedness in Jerusalem; but this was the sin that made the loudest cry, and which God had an eye to more than any other, in bringing that ruin upon them, as 2Ki 24:4,2Ch 36:16. Observe, Christ speaks in the present tense; Thou killest, and stonest; for all they had done, and all they would do, was present to Christ's notice.

2. She refused and rejected Christ, and gospel offers. The former was a sin without remedy, this against the remedy. Here is,

The wonderful grace and favour of Jesus Christ toward them; How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! Thus kind and condescending are the offers of gospel grace, even to Jerusalem's children, bad as she is, the inhabitants, the little ones not excepted.

[1.] The favour proposed was the gathering of them. Christ's design is to gather poor souls, gather them in from their wanderings, gather them home to himself, as the Centre of unity; for to him must the gathering of the people be. He would have taken the whole body of the Jewish nation into the church, and so gathered them all (as the Jews used to speak of proselytes) under the wings of the Divine Majesty. It is here illustrated by a humble similitude; as a hen clucks her chickens together. Christ would have gathered them, First, With such a tenderness of affection as the hen does, which has, by instinct, a peculiar concern for her young ones. Christ's gathering of souls, comes from his love, Jer 31:3. Secondly, For the same end. The hen gathered her chickens under her wings, for protection and safety, and for warmth and comfort; poor souls have in Christ both refuge and refreshment. The chickens naturally run to the hen for shelter, when they are threatened by the birds of prey;

perhaps Christ refers to that promise (Ps 91:4), He shall cover thee with his feathers. There is healing under Christ's wings (Mal 4:2); that is more than the hen has for her chickens.

[2.] The forwardness of Christ to confer this favour. His offers are, First, Very free; I would have done it. Jesus Christ is truly willing to receive and save poor souls that come to him. He desires not their ruin, he delights in their repentance. Secondly, Very frequent; How often! Christ often came up to Jerusalem, preached, and wrought miracles there; and the meaning of all this, was, he would have gathered them. He keeps account how often his calls have been repeated. As often as we have heard the sound of the gospel, as often as we have felt the strivings of the Spirit, so often Christ would have gathered us.

[3.] Their wilful refusal of this grace and favour; Ye would not. How emphatically is their obstinacy opposed to Christ's mercy! I would, and ye would not. He was willing to save them, but they were not willing to be saved by him. Note, It is wholly owing to the wicked wills of sinners, that they are not gathered under the wings of the Lord Jesus. They did not like the terms upon which Christ proposed to gather them; they loved their sins, and yet trusted to their righteousness; they would not submit either to the grace of Christ or to his government, and so the bargain broke off.

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

and these were His last words to the impenitent nation, see on Mr1 3:1, opening remarks.What? Does Jesus mean that He was Himself the Lord of the temple, and that it became "deserted" when HE finally left it? It is even so. Now is thy fate sealed, O Jerusalem, for the glory is departed from thee! That glory, once visible in the holy of holies, over the mercy seat, when on the day of atonement the blood of typical expiation was sprinkled on it and in front of it—called by the Jews the Shekinah, or the Dwelling, as being the visible pavilion of Jehovah—that glory, which Isaiah (Isa 6:1-13) saw in vision, the beloved disciple says was the glory of Christ (Joh

12:41). Though it was never visible in the second temple, Haggai foretold that "the glory of that latter house should be greater than of the former" (Hag 2:9) because "the Lord whom they sought was suddenly to come to His temple" (Mal 3:1), not in a mere bright cloud, but enshrined in living humanity! Yet brief as well as "sudden" was the manifestation to be: for the words He was now uttering were to be HIS VERY LAST within its precincts.

that is, till those "Hosannas to the Son of David" with which the multitude had welcomed Him into the city—instead of "sore displeasing the chief priests and scribes" (Mt 21:15) —should break forth from the whole nation, as their glad acclaim to their once pierced, but now acknowledged, Messiah. That such a time will come is clear from Zec 12:10,Ro 11:26,2Co 3:15,16, &c. In what sense they shall then "see Him" may be gathered from Zec 2:10-13,Eze 37:23-28,39:28,29, &c.

The present dispersion and unbelief of the Jews, and their future conversion to Christ, were here foretold. Jerusalem and her children had a large share of guilt, and their punishment has been signal. But ere long, deserved vengeance will fall on every church which is Christian in name only. In the mean time the Saviour stands ready to receive all who come to him. There is nothing between sinners and eternal happiness, but their proud and unbelieving unwillingness.

In rejecting the Messiah who had come among them, the Jews were rejecting their only hope. They would not experience God's blessing till they turned and welcomed Jesus as their Messiah and Saviour (Mat_23:37-39; see notes on Luk_13:31-35).

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

He reads Jerusalem's doom (Mt 23:38,39); Therefore behold your house is left unto you desolate. Both the city and the temple, God's house and their own, all shall be laid waste. But it is especially

meant of the temple, which they boasted of, and trusted to; that holy mountain because of which they were so haughty. Note, they that will not be gathered by the love and grace of Christ shall be consumed and scattered by his wrath; I would, and you would not. Israel would none of me, so I gave them up, Ps 81:11,12.

1. Their house shall be deserted; It is left unto you. Christ was now departing from the temple, and never came into it again, but by this word abandoned it to ruin. They doated on it, would have it to themselves; Christ must have no room or interest there. "Well," saith Christ, "it is left to you; take it, and make your best of it; I will never have any thing more to do with it." They had made it a house of merchandise, and a den of thieves, and so it is left to them. Not long after this, the voice was heard in the temple, "Let us depart hence." When Christ went, Ichabod, the glory departed. Their city also was left to them, destitute of God's presence and grace; he was no longer a wall of fire about them, nor the glory in the midst of them.

2. It shall be desolate; It is left unto you desolate; it is left eremos--a wilderness.

(a) It was immediately, when Christ left it, in the eyes of all that understood themselves, a very dismal melancholy place. Christ's departure makes the best furnished, best replenished place a wilderness, though it be the temple, the chief place of concourse; for what comfort can there be where Christ is not? Though there may be a crowd of other contentments, yet, if Christ's special spiritual presence be withdrawn, that soul, that place, is become a wilderness, a land of darkness, as darkness itself. This comes of men's rejecting Christ, and driving him away from them.

(b) It was, not long after, destroyed and ruined, and not one stone left upon another. The lot of Jerusalem's enemies will now become Jerusalem's lot, to be made of a city a heap, of a defenced city a ruin (Isa 25:2), a lofty city laid low, even to the ground, Isa 26:5.

The temple, that holy and beautiful house, became desolate. When God goes out, all enemies break in.

Lastly, Here is the final farewell that Christ took of them and their temple; Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh. This bespeaks,

1. His departure from them. The time was at hand, when he should leave the world, to go to his Father, and be seen no more. After his resurrection, he was seen only by a few chosen witnesses, and they saw him not long, but he soon removed to the invisible world, and there will be till the time of the restitution of all things, when his welcome at his first coming will be repeated with loud acclamations; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Christ will not be seen again till he come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him (Re 1:7); and then, even they, who, when time was, rejected and pierced him, will be glad to come in among his adorers; then every knee shall bow to him, even those that had bowed to Baal; and even the workers of iniquity will then cry, Lord, Lord, and will own, when his wrath is kindled, that blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Would we have our lot in that day with those that say, Blessed is he that cometh? let us be with them now, with them that truly worship, and truly welcome, Jesus Christ.

2. Their continued blindness and obstinacy; Ye shall not see me, that is, not see me to be the Messiah (for otherwise they did see him upon the cross), not see the light of the truth concerning me, nor the things that belong to your peace, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh. They will never be convinced, till Christ's second coming convince them, when it will be too late to make an interest in him, and nothing will remain but a fearful looking for of judgment. Note,

(a) Wilful blindness is often punished with judicial blindness. If they will not see, they shall not see. With this word he concludes his public preaching. After his resurrection, which was the sign of the prophet Jonas, they should have no other sign given them, till they should see the sign of the Son of man, Mt 24:30.

(b) When the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, he will convince all, and will force acknowledgments from the proudest of his enemies, of his being the Messiah, and even they shall be found liars to him. They that would not now come at his call, shall then be forced to depart with his curse. The chief priests and scribes were displeased with the children for crying hosanna to Christ; but the day is coming, when proud persecutors would gladly be found in the condition of the meanest and poorest they now trample upon. They who now reproach and ridicule the hosannas of the saints will be of another mind shortly; it were therefore better to be of that mind now. Some make this to refer to the conversion of the Jews to the faith of Christ; then they shall see him, and own him, and say, Blessed is he that cometh; but it seems rather to look further, for the complete manifestation of Christ, and conviction of sinners, are reserved to be the glory of the last day.

Matthew-24

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs before the End

1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.

2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Here is,

I. Christ's quitting the temple, and his public work there. He had said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, Your house is left unto you desolate; and here he made his words good; He went out, and departed from the temple. The manner of expression is observable; he not only went out of the temple, but departed from it, took his final farewell of it; he departed from it, never to return to it any more; and then immediately follows a prediction of its ruin. Note, That house is left desolate indeed, which Christ leaves. Woe unto them

when I depart, Ho 9:12,Jer 6:8. It was now time to groan out their Ichabod, The glory is departed, their defence is departed. Three days after this, the veil of the temple was rent; when Christ left it, all became common and unclean; but Christ departed not till they drove him away; did not reject them, till they first rejected him.

II. His private discourse with his disciples; he left the temple, but he did not leave the twelve, who were the seed of the gospel church, which the casting off of the Jews was the enriching of. When he left the temple, his disciples left it too, and came to him. Note, It is good being where Christ is, and leaving that which he leaves. They came to him, to be instructed in private, when his public preaching was over; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He had spoken of the destruction of the Jewish church to the multitude in parables, which here, as usual, he explains to his disciples. Observe,

1. His disciples came to him, to show him the buildings of the temple, It was a stately and beautiful structure, one of the wonders of the world; no cost was spared, no art left untried, to make it sumptuous. Though it came short of Solomon's temple, and its beginning was small, yet its latter end did greatly increase. It was richly furnished with gifts and offerings, to which there were continual additions made. They showed Christ these things, and desired him to take notice of them, either,

(a) As being greatly pleased with them themselves, and expecting he should be so too. They had lived mostly in Galilee, at a distance from the temple, had seldom seen it, and therefore were the more struck with admiration at it, and thought he should admire as much as they did all this glory (Ge 31:1); and they would have him divert himself (after his preaching, and from his sorrow which they saw him perhaps almost overwhelmed with) with looking about him. Note, Even good men are apt to be too much enamoured with outward pomp and gaiety, and to overvalue it, even in the things of God; whereas we should be, as Christ was, dead to it, and look upon it with contempt. The temple was indeed glorious, but, [1.] Its glory was sullied and stained with the sin of the priests and people; that

wicked doctrine of the Pharisees, which preferred the gold before the temple that sanctified it, was enough to deface the beauty of all the ornaments of the temple. [2.] Its glory was eclipsed and outdone by the presence of Christ in it, who was the glory of this latter house (Hag 2:9), so that the buildings had no glory, in comparison with that glory which excelled.

Or,

(b) As grieving that this house should be left desolate; they showed him the buildings, as if they would move him to reverse the sentence; "Lord, let not this holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, be made a desolation." They forgot how many providences, concerning Solomon's temple, had manifested how little God cared for that outward glory which they had so much admired, when the people were wicked, 2Ch 7:21. This house, which is high, sin will bring low. Christ had lately looked upon the precious souls, and wept for them, Lu 19:41. The disciples look upon the pompous buildings, and are ready to weep for them. In this, as in other things, his thoughts are not like ours. It was weakness, and meanness of spirit, in the disciples, to be so fond of fine buildings; it was a childish thing. Animo magno nihil magnum--To a great mind nothing is great. Seneca.

2. Christ, hereupon, foretels the utter ruin and destruction that were coming upon this place, Mt 24:2. Note, A believing foresight of the defacing of all worldly glory will help to take us off from admiring it, and overvaluing it. The most beautiful body will be shortly worms' meat, and the most beautiful building a ruinous heap. And shall we then set our eyes upon that which so soon is not, and look upon that with so much admiration which ere long we shall certainly look upon with so much contempt? See ye not all these things? They would have Christ look upon them, and be as much in love with them as they were; he would have them look upon them, and be as dead to them as he was. There is such a sight of these things as will do us good; so to see them as to see through them and see to the end of them.

Christ, instead of reversing the decree, ratifies it; Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another.

(a) He speaks of it as a certain ruin; "I say unto you. I, that know what I say, and know how to make good what I say; take my word for it, it shall be so; I, the Amen, the true Witness, say it to you." All judgment being committed to the Son, the threatenings, as well as the promises, are all yea, and amen, in him. Heb 6:17,18.

(b) He speaks of it as an utter ruin. The temple shall not only be stripped, and plundered, and defaced, but utterly demolished and laid waste; Not one stone shall be left upon another. Notice is taken, in the building of the second temple, of the laying of one stone upon another (Hag 2:15); and here, in the ruin, of not leaving one stone upon another. History tells us, that this was fulfilled in the latter; for though Titus, when he took the city, did all he could to preserve the temple, yet he could not restrain the enraged soldiers from destroying it utterly; and it was done to that degree, that Turnus Rufus ploughed up the ground on which it had stood: thus that scripture was fulfilled (Mic 3:12), Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field. And afterward, in Julian the Apostate's time, when the Jews were encouraged by him to rebuild their temple, in opposition to the Christian religion, what remained of the ruins was quite pulled down, to level the ground for a new foundation; but the attempt was defeated by the miraculous eruption of fire out of the ground, which destroyed the foundation they laid, and frightened away the builders. Now this prediction of the final and irreparable ruin of the temple includes a prediction of the period of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law.

3. The disciples, not disputing either the truth or the equity of this sentence, nor doubting of the accomplishment of it, enquire more particularly of the time when it should come to pass, and the signs of its approach, Mt 24:3. Observe,

(a) Where they made this enquiry; privately, as he sat upon the mount of Olives; probably, he was returning to Bethany, and there sat down by the way, to rest him; the mount of Olives directly faced the temple, and from thence he might have a full prospect of it at some distance; there he sat as a Judge upon the bench, the temple and city being before him as at the bar, and thus he passed sentence on them. We read (Eze 11:23) of the removing of the glory of the Lord from the temple to the mountain; so Christ, the great Shechinah, here removes to this mountain.

(b) What the enquiry itself was; When shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? Here are three questions.

[1.] Some think, these questions do all point at one and the same thing--the destruction of the temple, and the period of the Jewish church and nation, which Christ had himself spoken of as his coming (Mt 16:28), and which would be the consummation of the age (for so it may be read), the finishing of that dispensation. Or, they thought the destruction of the temple must needs be the end of the world. If that house be laid waste, the world cannot stand; for the Rabbin used to say that the house of the sanctuary was one of the seven things for the sake of which the world was made; and they think, if so, the world will not survive the temple.

[2.] Others think their question, When shall these things be? refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other two to the end of the world; or Christ's coming may refer to his setting up his gospel kingdom, and the end of the world to the day of judgment. I rather incline to think that their question looked no further than the event Christ now foretold; but it appears by other passages, that they had very confused thoughts of future events; so that perhaps it is not possible to put any certain construction upon this question of theirs.

But Christ, in his answer, though he does not expressly rectify the mistakes of his disciples (that must be done by the pouring out of the Spirit), yet looks further than their question, and instructs his church,

not only concerning the great events of that age, the destruction of Jerusalem, but concerning his second coming at the end of time, which here he insensibly slides into a discourse of, and of that it is plain he speaks in the next chapter, which is a continuation of this sermon.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ?

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

The disciples had asked concerning the times, When shall these things be? Christ gives them no answer to that, after what number of days and years his prediction should be accomplished, for it is not for us to know the times (Ac 1:7); but they had asked, What shall be the sign? That question he answers fully, for we are concerned to understand the signs of the times, Mt 16:3. Now the prophecy primarily respects the events near at hand--the destruction of Jerusalem, the period of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; but as the prophecies of the Old Testament, which have an immediate reference to the affairs of the Jews and the revolutions of their state, under the figure of them do certainly look further, to the gospel church and the kingdom of the Messiah, and are so expounded in the New Testament, and such expressions are found in those predictions as are peculiar thereto and not applicable otherwise; so this prophecy, under the type of Jerusalem's destruction, looks as far forward as the general judgment; and, as is usual in prophecies, some passages are most applicable to the type, and others to the antitype; and toward the close, as usual, it points more particularly to the latter. It is observable, that what Christ here saith to his disciples tends more to engage their caution than to satisfy their curiosity; more to prepare them for the events that should happen than to give them a distinct idea of the events themselves. This is that good understanding of the time which we should all covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do: and so this prophecy is of standing lasting use to the church, and will be so to the end of time; for the thing that hath been, is that which shall be (Ec 1:5,6,7,9), and the series, connection, and presages, of events, are much the same still that they were then; so that upon the prophecy of this chapter, pointing at that

event, moral prognostications may be made, and such constructions of the signs of the times as the wise man's heart will know how to improve.

5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

He foretels wars and great commotions among the nations, Mt 24:6,7. When Christ was born, there was a universal peace in the empire, the temple of Janus was shut; but think not that Christ came to send, or continue such a peace (Lu 12:51); no, his city and his wall are to be built even in troublesome times, and even wars shall forward his work. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he left their house desolate, the sword did never depart from their house, the sword of the Lord was never quiet, because he had given it a charge against a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath, and by it brought ruin upon them.

Here is,

1. A prediction of the event of the day; You will now shortly hear of wars, and rumours of wars. When wars are, they will be heard; for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa 9:5. See how terrible it is (Jer 4:19), Thou hast heard, O my soul, the alarm of war! Even the quiet in the land, and the least inquisitive after new things, cannot but hear the rumours of war. See what comes of refusing the gospel! Those that will not hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war. God has a sword ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, his new covenant. Nation shall rise up against nation, that is, one part or province of the Jewish nation against another, one city against another (2Ch 15:5,6); and in the same province and city one party or faction shall rise up against another, so that they shall be devoured by, and dashed in pieces against one another, Isa 9:19-21.

2. A prescription of the duty of the day; See that ye be not troubled. Is it possible to hear such sad news, and not be troubled? Yet, where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid,

no not of the evil tidings of wars, and rumours of wars; no not the noise of Arm, arm. Be not troubled; Me throeithe--Be not put into confusion or commotion; not put into throes, as a woman with child by a fright; see that ye be not orate. Note, There is need of constant care and watchfulness to keep trouble from the heart when there are wars abroad; and it is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts even in troublous times.

We must not be troubled, for two reasons.

(a) Because we are bid to expect this: the Jews must be punished, ruin must be brought upon them; by this the justice of God and the honour of the Redeemer must be asserted; and therefore all those things must come to pass; the word is gone out of God's mouth, and it shall be accomplished in its season. Note, The consideration of the unchangeableness of the divine counsels, which govern all events, should compose and quiet our spirits, whatever happens. God is but performing the thing that is appointed for us, and our inordinate trouble is an interpretative quarrel with that appointment. Let us therefore acquiesce, because these things must come to pass; not only necessitate decreti--as the product of the divine counsel, but necessitate medii--as a means in order to a further end. The old house must be taken down (though it cannot be done without noise, and dust, and danger), ere the new fabric can be erected: the things that are shaken (and ill shaken they were) must be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain, Heb 12:27.

(b) Because we are still to expect worse; The end is not yet; the end of time is not, and, while time lasts, we must expect trouble, and that the end of one affliction will be but the beginning of another; or, "The end of these troubles is not yet; there must be more judgments that one made use of to bring down the Jewish power; more vials of wrath must yet be poured out; there is but one woe past, more woes are yet to come, more arrows are yet to be spent upon them out of God's quiver; therefore be not troubled, do not give way to fear and trouble, sink not under the present burthen, but rather gather in all the strength and spirit you have, to encounter what is yet before you.

Be not troubled to hear of wars and rumours of wars; for then what will become of you when the famines and pestilences come?" If it be to us a vexation but to understand the report (Isa 28:19), what will it be to feel the stroke when it toucheth the bone and the flesh? If running with the footmen weary us, how shall we contend with horses? And if we be frightened at a little brook in our way, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? Jer 12:5.

7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.
9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:
and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,)
16 then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:
17 let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
18 neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.
19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:
21 for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.
23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there;
believe it not.
24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they
shall deceive the very elect.

Christ here foretels the going forth of deceivers; he begins with a caution, Take heed that no man deceive you. They expected to be told when these things should be, to be let into that secret; but this caution is a check to their curiosity, "What is that to you? Mind you your duty, follow me, and be not seduced from following me." Those that are most inquisitive concerning the secret things which belong not to them are most easily imposed upon by seducers, 2Th 2:3. The disciples, when they heard that the Jews, their most inveterate enemies, should be destroyed, might be in danger of falling into security; "Nay," saith Christ, "you are more exposed other ways." Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors.

Three times in this discourse he mentions the appearing of false prophets, which was, 1. A presage of Jerusalem's ruin. Justly were they who killed the true prophets, left to be ensnared by false prophets; and they who crucified the true Messiah, left to be deceived and broken by false Christs and pretended Messiahs. The appearing of these was the occasion of dividing that people into parties and factions, which made their ruin the more easy and speedy; and the sin of the many that were led aside by them, helped to fill the measure. 2. It was a trial to the disciples of Christ, and therefore agreeable to their state of probation, that they which are perfect, may be made manifest.

Now concerning these deceivers, observe here,

(a) The pretences they should come under. Satan acts most mischievously, when he appears as an angel of light: the colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil.

[1.] There should appear false prophets (Mt 24:11-24); the deceivers would pretend to divine inspiration, an immediate mission, and a spirit of prophecy, when it was all a lie. Such they had been formerly (Jer 23:16,Eze 13:6), as was foretold, De 13:3. Some think, the seducers here pointed to were such as had been settled teachers in the church, and had gained reputation as such, but afterward

betrayed the truth they had taught, and revolted to error; and from such the danger is the greater, because least suspected. One false traitor in the garrison may do more mischief than a thousand avowed enemies without.

[2.] There should appear false Christs, coming in Christ's name (Mt 24:5), assuming to themselves the name peculiar to him, and saying, I am Christ, pseudo-christs, Mt 24:24. There was at that time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messiah; they spoke of him; as he that should come; but when he did come, the body of the nation rejected him; which those who were ambitious of making themselves a name, took advantage of, and set up for Christ. Josephus speaks of several such impostors between this and the destruction of Jerusalem; one Theudas, that was defeated by Cospius Fadus; another by Felix, another by Festus. Dosetheus said he was the Christ foretold by Moses. Origen adversus Celsum. See Ac 5:36,37. Simon Magus pretended to be the great power of God, Ac 8:10. In after-ages there have been such pretenders; one about a hundred years after Christ, that called himself Bar-cochobas--The son of a star, but proved Bar-cosba--The son of a lie. About fifty years ago Sabbati-Levi set up for a Messiah in the Turkish empire, and was greatly caressed by the Jews; but in a short time his folly was made manifest. See Sir Paul Rycaut's History. The popish religion doth, in effect, set up a false Christ; the Pope comes, in Christ's name, as his vicar, but invades and usurps all his offices, and so is a rival with him, and, as such, an enemy to him, a deceiver, and an antichrist.

[3.] These false Christs and false prophets would have their agents and emissaries busy in all places to draw people in to them, Mt 24:23. Then when public troubles are great and threatening, and people will be catching at any thing that looks like deliverance, then Satan will take the advantage of imposing on them; they will say, Lo, here is a Christ, or there is one; but do not mind them: the true Christ did not strive, nor cry; nor was it said of him, Lo, here! or Lo, there! (Lu 17:21), therefore if any man say so concerning him, look upon it as a temptation. The hermits, who place religion in a

monastical life, say, He is in the desert; the priests, who made the consecrated wafer to be Christ, say, "He is en tois tameiois--in the cupboards, in the secret chambers: lo, he is in this shrine, in that image." Thus some appropriate Christ's spiritual presence to one party or persuasion, as if they had the monopoly of Christ and Christianity; and the kingdom of Christ must stand and fall, must live and die, with them; "Lo, he is in this church, in that council:" whereas Christ is All in all, not here or there, but meets his people with a blessing in every place where he records his name.

(b) The proof they should offer for the making good of these pretences; They shall show great signs and wonders (Mt 24:24), not true miracles, those are a divine seal, and with those the doctrine of Christ stands confirmed; and therefore if any offer to draw us from that by signs and wonders, we must have recourse to that rule given of old (De 13:1-3), If the sign or wonder come to pass, yet follow not him that would draw you to serve other gods, or believe in other Christs, for the Lord your God proveth you. But these were lying wonders (2Th 2:9), wrought by Satan (God permitting him), who is the prince of the power of the air. It is not said, They shall work miracles, but, They shall show great signs; they are but a show; either they impose upon men's credulity by false narratives, or deceive their senses by tricks of legerdemain, or arts of divination, as the magicians of Egypt by their enchantments.

(c) The success they should have in these attempts,

[1.] They shall deceive many (Mt 24:5), and again, Mt 24:11. Note, The devil and his instruments may prevail far in deceiving poor souls; few find the strait gate, but many are drawn into the broad way; many will be imposed upon by their signs and wonders, and many drawn in by the hopes of deliverance from their oppressions. Note, Neither miracles nor multitudes are certain signs of a true church; for all the world wonders after the beast, Re 13:3.

[2.] They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, Mt 24:24. This bespeaks, First, The strength of the delusion; it is such as many

shall be carried away by (so strong shall the stream be), even those that were thought to stand fast. Men's knowledge, gifts, learning, eminent station, and long profession, will not secure them; but, notwithstanding these, many will be deceived; nothing but the almighty grace of God, pursuant to his eternal purpose, will be a protection. Secondly, The safety of the elect in the midst of this danger, which is taken for granted in that parenthesis, If it were possible, plainly implying that it is not possible, for they are kept by the power of God, that the purpose of God, according to the election, may stand. It is possible for those that have been enlightened to fall away (Heb 6:4,5,6), but not for those that were elected. If God's chosen ones should be deceived, God's choice would be defeated, which is not to be imagined, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate [to be] conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified., Ro 8:29,30. They were given to Christ; and of all that were given to him, he will lose none, Joh 10:28. Grotius will have this to be meant of the great difficulty of drawing the primitive Christians from their religion, and quotes it as used proverbially by Galen; when he would express a thing very difficult and morally impossible, he saith, "You may sooner draw away a Christian from Christ."

(d) The repeated cautions which our Saviour gives to his disciples to stand upon their guard against them; therefore he gave them warning, that they might watch (Mt 24:25); Behold, I have told you before. He that is told before where he will be assaulted, may save himself, as the king of Israel did, 2Ki 6:9,10. Note, Christ's warnings are designed to engage our watchfulness; and though the elect shall be preserved from delusion, yet they shall be preserved by the use of appointed means, and a due regard to the cautions of the word; we are kept through faith, faith in Christ's word, which he has told us before.

[1.] We must not believe those who say, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there, Mt 24:23. We believe that the true Christ is at the right hand of God, and that his spiritual presence is where two or three are gathered together in his name; believe not those therefore who would draw you off from a Christ in heaven, by telling you he is any where on earth; or by telling you he is here, or he is there; believe it not. Note, There is not a greater enemy to true faith than vain credulity. The simple believeth every word, and runs after every cry. Memneso apistein--Beware of believing.

[2.] We must not go forth after those that say, He is in the desert, or, He is in the secret chambers, Mt 24:26. We must not hearken to every empiric and pretender, nor follow every one that puts up the finger to point us to a new Christ, and a new gospel; "Go not forth, for if you do, you are in danger of being taken by them; therefore keep out of harm's way, be not carried about with every wind; many a man's vain curiosity to go forth hath led him into a fatal apostasy; your strength at such a time is to sit still, to have the heart established with grace."

25 Behold, I have told you before.

26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.

27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

The Coming of the Son of Man

29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

We must expect them; "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree, Mt 24:32,33. Now learn what use to make of the things you have heard; so observe and understand the signs of the times, and compare them with the predictions of the word, as from thence to foresee what is at the door, that you may provide accordingly." The parable of the fig-tree is no more than this, that its budding and blossoming are a presage of summer; for as the stork in the heaven, so the trees of the field, know their appointed time. The beginning of the working of second causes assures us of the progress and perfection of it. Thus when God begins to fulfil prophecies, he will make an end. There is a certain series in the works of providence, as there is in the works of nature. The signs of the times are compared with the prognostics of the face of the sky (Mt 16:3), so here with those of the face of the earth; when that is renewed, we foresee that summer is coming, not immediately, but at some distance; after the branch grows tender, we expect the March winds, and the April showers, before the summer comes; however, we are sure it is coming; "so likewise ye, when the gospel day shall dawn, count upon it, that through this variety of events which I have told you of, the perfect day will come. The things revealed must shortly come to pass (Re 1:1); they must come in their own order, in the order appointed for them. Know that it is near." He does not here say what, but it is that which the hearts of his disciples are upon, and which they are inquisitive after, and long for; the kingdom of God is near, so it is expressed in the parallel place, Lu 21:31. Note, When the trees of righteousness begin to bud and blossom, when God's people promise faithfulness, it is a happy presage of good times. In them God begins his work, first prepares their heart, and then he will go on with it; for, as for God, his work is perfect; and he will revive it in the midst of their years.

33 so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Christ here assures us of the certainty of them (Mt 24:35); Heaven and earth shall pass away; they continue this day indeed, according to God's ordinance, but they shall not continue for ever (Ps 102:25,26,2Pe 3:10); but my words shall not pass away. Note, The word of Christ is more sure and lasting than heaven and earth. Hath he spoken? And shall he not do it? We may build with more assurance upon the word of Christ than we can upon the pillars of heaven, or the strong foundations of the earth; for, when they shall be made to tremble and totter, and shall be no more, the word of Christ shall remain, and be in full force, power, and virtue. See 1Pe 1:24,25. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than the word of Christ; so it is expressed, Lu 16:17. Compare Isa 54:10. The accomplishment of these prophecies might seem to be delayed, and intervening events might seem to disagree with them, but do not think that therefore the word of Christ is fallen to the ground, for that shall never pass away: though it be not fulfilled, either in the time or in the way that we have prescribed; yet, in God's time, which is the best time, and in God's way, which is the best way, it shall certainly be fulfilled. Every word of Christ is very pure, and therefore very sure.

He here instructs us as to the time of them, Mt 24:34,36. As to this, it is well observed by the learned Grotius, that there is a manifest distinction made between the tauta (Mt 24:34), and the ekeine (Mt 24:36), these things, and that day and hour; which will help to clear this prophecy.

(a) As to these things, the wars, seductions, and persecutions, here foretold, and especially the ruin of the Jewish nation; "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled (Mt 24:34); there are those now alive, that shall see Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jewish church brought to an end." Because it might seem strange, he backs it with a solemn asseveration; "Verily, I say unto you. You may take my word for it, these things are at the door." Christ often speaks of the nearness of that desolation, the more to affect people, and quicken them to prepare for it. Note, There may be greater trials and troubles yet before us, in our own day, than we

are aware of. They that are old, know not what sons of Anak may be reserved for their last encounters.

(b) But as to that day and hour which will put a period to time, that knoweth no man, Mt 24:36. Therefore take heed of confounding these two, as they did, who, from the words of Christ and the apostles; letters, inferred that the day of Christ was at hand, 2Th 2:2. No, it was not; this generation, and many another, shall pass, before that day and hour come. Note,

[1.] There is a certain day and hour fixed for the judgment to come; it is called the day of the Lord, because so unalterably fixed. None of God's judgments are adjourned sine die--without the appointment of a certain day.

[2.] That day and hour are a great secret.
Prudens futuri temporis exitum Caliginosa nocte premit Deus. But Heaven has wisely hid from human sight The dark decrees of future fate, And sown their seeds in depth of nights.--HORACE.

No man knows it; not the wisest by their sagacity, not the best by any divine discovery. We all know that there shall be such a day; but none knows when it shall be, no, not the angels; though their capacities for knowledge are great, and their opportunities of knowing this advantageous (they dwell at the fountain-head of light), and though they are to be employed in the solemnity of that day, yet they are not told when it shall be: none knows but my Father only. This is one of those secret things which belong to the Lord our God. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming, is, to those who are watchful, a savour of life unto life, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless, it is a savour of death unto death, and makes them more careless.

No Man Knoweth the Day and Hour

36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

37 But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
38 For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

To this end we must expect these events, that we may prepare for them; and here we have a caution against security and sensuality, which will make it a dismal day indeed to us, Mt 24:37-41. In these verses we have such an idea given us of the judgment day, as may serve to startle and awaken us, that we may not sleep as others do.

It will be a surprising day, and a separating day.

1. It will be a surprising day, as the deluge was to the old world, Mt 24:37-39. That which he here intends to describe, is, the posture of the world at the coming of the Son of man; besides his first coming, to save, he has other comings to judge. He saith (Joh 9:39), For judgment I am come; and for judgment he will come; for all judgment is committed to him, both that of the word, and that of the sword.

Now this here is applicable,

(a) To temporal judgments, particularly that which was now hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews; though they had fair warning given them of it, and there were many prodigies that were presages of it, yet it found them secure, crying, Peace and safety, 1Th 5:3. The siege was laid to Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, when they were met at the passover in the midst of their mirth; like the men of Laish, they dwelt careless when the ruin arrested them, Jdg 18:7,27. The destruction of Babylon, both that in the Old Testament and that in the New, comes when she saith, I shall be a lady for ever, Isa 47:7-9,Re 18:7. Therefore the plagues come in a moment, in one day. Note, Men's unbelief shall not make God's threatenings of no effect.

(b) To the eternal judgment; so the judgment of the great day is called, Heb 6:2. Though notice has been given of it from Enoch, yet, when it comes, it will be unlooked for by the most of men; the latter

days, which are nearest to that day, will produce scoffers, that say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2Pe 3:3,4,Lu 18:8. Thus it will be when the world that now is shall be destroyed by fire; for thus it was when the old world, being overflowed by water, perished, 2Pe 3:6,7. Now Christ here shows what were the temper and posture of the old world when the deluge came.

[1.] They were sensual and worldly; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. It is not said, They were killing and stealing, and whoring and swearing (these were indeed the horrid crimes of some of the worst of them; the earth was full of violence); but they were all of them, except Noah, over head and ears in the world, and regardless of the word of God, and this ruined them. Note, Universal neglect of religion is a more dangerous symptom to any people than particular instances here and there of daring irreligion. Eating and drinking are necessary to the preservation of man's life; marrying and giving in marriage are necessary to the preservation of mankind; but, Licitus perimus omnes--These lawful things undo us, unlawfully managed. First, They were unreasonable in it, inordinate and entire in the pursuit of the delights of sense, and the gains of the world; they were wholly taken up with these things, esan trogontes--they were eating; they were in these things as in their element, as if they had their being for no other end than to eat and drink, Isa 56:12. Secondly, They were unreasonable in it; they were entire and intent upon the world and the flesh, when the destruction was at the door, which they had had such fair warning of. They were eating and drinking, when they should have been repenting and praying; when God, by the ministry of Noah, called to weeping and mourning, then joy and gladness. This was to them, as it was to Israel afterwards, the unpardonable sin (Isa 22:12,14), especially, because it was in defiance of those warnings by which they should have been awakened. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; if it must be a short life, let it be a merry one." The apostle James speaks of this as the general practice of the wealthy Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem; when they should have been weeping for the miseries that were coming upon them, they were living in pleasure, and nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter, Jam 5:1,5.

39 and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

They were secure and careless; they knew not, until the flood came, Mt 24:39. Knew not! Surely they could not but know. Did not God, by Noah, give them fair warning of it? Did he not call them to repentance, while his long-suffering waited? 1Pe 3:19,20. But they knew not, that is, they believed not; they might have known, but would not know. Note, What we know of the things that belong to our everlasting peace, if we do not mix faith with it, and improve it, is all one as if we did not know it at all. Their not knowing is joined with their eating, and drinking, and marrying; for,

First, Therefore they were sensual, because they were secure. Note, the reason why people are so eager in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures of this world, is, because they do not know, and believe, and consider, the eternity which they are upon the brink of. Did we know aright that all these things must shortly be dissolved, and we must certainly survive them, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do.

Secondly, Therefore they were secure, because they were sensual; therefore they knew not that the flood was coming, because they were eating and drinking; were so taken up with things seen and present, that they had neither time nor heart to mind the things not seen as yet, which they were warned of. Note, As security bolsters men up in their brutal sensuality; so sensuality rocks them asleep in their carnal security. The knew not, until the flood came.

1 The flood did come, though they would not foresee it. Note, Those that will not know by faith, shall be made to know by feeling, the wrath of God revealed from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness. The evil day is never the further off for men's putting it far off from them.

2. They did not know it till it was too late to prevent it, as they might have done if they had known it in time, which made it so much the

more grievous. Judgments are most terrible and amazing to the secure, and those that have made a jest of them.

The application of this, concerning the old world, we have in these words; So shall the coming of the Son of man be; that is,

(a) In such a posture shall he find people, eating and drinking, and not expecting him. Note, Security and sensuality are likely to be the epidemical diseases of the latter days. All slumber and sleep, and at midnight the bridegroom comes. All are off their watch, and at their ease.

(b) With such a power, and for such a purpose, will he come upon them. As the flood took away the sinners of the old world, irresistibly and irrecoverably; so shall secure sinners, that mocked at Christ and his coming, be taken away by the wrath of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath comes, which will be like the coming of the deluge, a destruction which there is no fleeing from.

40 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

It will be a separating day (Mt 24:40,41); Then shall two be in the field. Two ways this may be applied.

(a) We may apply it to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching of it; it divided the world; some believed the things which were spoken, and were taken to Christ; others believed not, and were left to perish in their unbelief. Those of the same age, place, capacity, employment, and condition, in the world, grinding in the same mill, those of the same family, nay, those that were joined in the same bond of marriage, were, one effectually called, the other passed by, and left in the gall of bitterness. This is that division, that separating fire, which Christ came to send, Lu 12:49,51. This renders free grace the more obliging, that it is distinguishing; to us, and not to the world (Joh 14:22), nay to us, and not to those in the same field, the same mill, the same house.

When ruin came upon Jerusalem, a distinction was made by Divine Providence, according to that which had been before made by divine

grace; for all the Christians among them were saved from perishing in that calamity, by the special care of Heaven. If two were at work in the field together, and one of them was a Christian, he was taken into a place of shelter, and had his life given him for a prey, while the other was left to the sword of the enemy. Nay, if but two women were grinding at the mill, if one of them belonged to Christ, though but a woman, a poor woman, a servant, she was taken to a place of safety, and the other abandoned. Thus the meek of the earth are hid in the day of the Lord's anger (Zep 2:3), either in heaven, or under heaven. Note, Distinguishing preservations, in times of general destruction, are special tokens of God's favour, and ought so to be acknowledged. If we are safe when thousands fall on our right hand and our left, are not consumed when others are consumed round about us, so that we are as brands plucked out of the fire, we have reason to say, It is of the Lord's mercies, and it is a great mercy.

(b) We may apply it to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made in that day. He had said before (Mt 24:31), that the elect will be gathered together. Here he tells us, that, in order to that, they will be distinguished from those who were nearest to them in this world; the choice and chosen ones taken to glory, the other left to perish eternally. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth, two in the same grave, their ashed mixed, shall yet arise, one to be taken to everlasting life, the other left to shame and everlasting contempt, Da 12:2. Here it is applied to them who shall be found alive. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, in the field, at the mill; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with them; the one taken to meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be for ever with him and them; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord's people.

[1.] Are they mean and despised in the world, as the man-servant in the field, or the maid at the mill (Ex 11:5)? Yet they shall not be forgotten or overlooked in that day. The poor in the world, if rich in faith, are heirs of the kingdom.

[2.] Are they dispersed in distant and unlikely places, where one would not expect to find the heirs of glory, in the field, at the mill? Yet the angels will find them there (hidden as Saul among the stuff, when they are to be enthroned), and fetch them thence; and well may they be said to be changed, for a very great change it will be to go to heaven from ploughing and grinding.

[3.] Are they weak, and unable of themselves to move heavenward? They shall be taken, or laid hold of, as Lot was taken out of Sodom by a gracious violence, Ge 19:16. Those whom Christ has once apprehended and laid hold on, he will never lose his hold of.

[4.] Are they intermixed with others, linked with them in the same habitations, societies, employments? Let not that discourage any true Christian; God knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and dross in the same lump, the wheat and chaff in the same floor.

41 Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

42 Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Here is a general exhortation to us, to watch, and be ready against that day comes, enforced by divers weighty considerations, Mt 24:42, &c. Observe,

1 The duty required; Watch, and be ready, Mt 24:42,44.

(a) Watch therefore, Mt 24:42. Note, It is the great duty and interest of all the disciples of Christ to watch, to be awake and keep awake, that they may mind their business. As a sinful state or way is

compared to sleep, senseless and inactive (1Th 5:6), so a gracious state or way is compared to watching and waking. We must watch for our Lord's coming, to us in particular at our death, after which is the judgment, that is the great day with us, the end of our time; and his coming at the end of all time to judge the world, the great day with all mankind. To watch implies not only to believe that our Lord will come, but to desire that he would come, to be often thinking of his coming, and always looking for it as sure and near, and the time of it uncertain. To watch for Christ's coming, is to maintain that gracious temper and disposition of mind which we should be willing that our Lord, when he comes, should find us in. To watch is to be aware of the first notices of his approach, that we may immediately attend his motions, and address ourselves to the duty of meeting him. Watching is supposed to be in the night, which is sleeping time; while we are in this world, it is night with us, and we must take pains to keep ourselves awake.

(b) Be ye also ready. We wake in vain, if we do not get ready. It is not enough to look for such things; but we must therefore give diligence, 2Pe 3:11,14. We have then our Lord to attend upon, and we must have our lamps ready trimmed; a cause to be tried, and we must have our plea ready drawn and signed by our Advocate; a reckoning to make up, and we must have our accounts ready stated and balanced; there is an inheritance which we then hope to enter upon, and we must have ourselves ready, made meet to partake of it, Col 1:12.

2 The reasons to induce us to this watchfulness and diligent preparation for that day; which are two.

Because the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain. This is the reason immediately annexed to the double exhortation (Mt 24:42,44); and it is illustrated by a comparison, Mt 24:43. Let us consider then,

[1.] That we know not what hour he will come, Mt 24:42. We know not the day of our death, Ge 27:2. We may know that we have but a

little time to live (The time of my departure is at hand, 2Ti 4:6); but we cannot know that we have a long time to live, for our souls are continually in our hands; nor can we know how little a time we have to live, for it may prove less than we expect; much less do we know the time fixed for the general judgment. Concerning both we are kept at uncertainty, that we may, every day, expect that which may come any day; may never boast of a year's continuance (Jam 4:13), no, nor of tomorrow's return, as if it were ours, Pr 27:1,Lu 12:20.

[2.] That he may come at such an hour as we think not, Mt 24:44. Though there be such uncertainty in the time, there is none in the thing itself: though we know not when he will come, we are sure he will come. His parting word was, Surely I come quickly; his saying, "I come surely," obliges us to expect him: his saying "I come quickly." obliges us to be always expecting him; for it keeps us in a state of expectancy. In such an hour as you think not, that is, such an hour as they who are unready and unprepared, think not (Mt 24:50); nay, such an hour as the most lively expectants perhaps thought least likely. The bridegroom came when the wise were slumbering. It is agreeable to our present state, that we should be under the influence of a constant and general expectation, rather than that of particular presages and prognostications, which we are sometimes tempted vainly to desire and wish for.

[3.] That the children of this world are thus wise in their generation, that, when they know of a danger approaching, they will keep awake, and stand on their guard against it. This he shows in a particular instance, Mt 24:43. If the master of a house had notice that a thief would come such a night, and such a watch of the night (for they divided the night into four watches, allowing three hours to each), and would make an attempt upon his house, though it were the midnight-watch, when he was most sleepy, yet he would be up, and listen to every noise in every corner, and be ready to give him a warm reception. Now, though we know not just when our Lord will come, yet, knowing that he will come, and come quickly, and without any other warning than what he hath given in his word, it concerns us to watch always. Note,

First, We have every one of us a house to keep, which lies exposed, in which all we are worth is laid up: that house is our own souls, which we must keep with all diligence.

Secondly, The day of the Lord comes by surprise, as a thief in the night. Christ chooses to come when he is least expected, that the triumphs of his enemies may be turned into the greater shame, and the fears of his friends into the greater joy.

Thirdly, If Christ, when he comes, finds us asleep and unready, our house will be broken up, and we shall lose all we are worth, not as by a thief unjustly, but as by a just and legal process; death and judgment will seize upon all we have, to our irreparable damage and utter undoing. Therefore be ready, be ye also ready; as ready at all times as the good man of the house would be at the hour when he expected the thief: we must put on the armour of God, that we may not only stand in that evil day, but, as more than conquerors, may divide the spoil.

44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the
Son of man cometh.

The Unfaithful Servant

45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over
his household, to give them meat in due season?

Because the issue of our Lord's coming will be very happy and comfortable to those that shall be found ready, but very dismal and dreadful to those that shall not, Mt 24:45, &c. This is represented by the different state of good and bad servants, when their lord comes to reckon with them. It is likely to be well or ill with us to eternity, according as we are found ready or unready at that day; for Christ comes to render to every man according to his works. Now this parable, with which the chapter closes, is applicable to all Christians, who are in profession and obligation God's servants; but it seems especially intended as a warning to ministers; for the servant spoken of is a steward. Now observe what Christ here saith,

Concerning the good servant; he shows here what he is--a ruler of the household; what, being so, he should be--faithful and wise; and what, if he be so, he shall be eternally-blessed. Here are good instructions and encouragements to the ministers of Christ.

First, We have here his place and office. He is one whom the Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. Note,

1.The church of Christ is his household, or family, standing in relation to him as the Father and Master of it. It is the household of God, a family named from Christ, Eph 3:15.

2. Gospel ministers are appointed rulers in this household; not at princes (Christ has entered a caveat against that), but as stewards, or other subordinate officers; not as lords, but as guides; not to prescribe new ways, but to show and lead in the ways that Christ has appointed: that is the signification of the hegoumenoi, which we translate, having rule over you (Heb 13:17); as overseers, not to cut out new work, but to direct in, and quicken to, the work which Christ has ordered; that is the signification of episkopoi--bishops. They are rulers by Christ; what power they have is derived from him, and none may take it from them, or abridge it to them; he is one whom the Lord has made ruler; Christ has the making of ministers. They are rulers under Christ, and act in subordination to him; and rulers for Christ, for the advancement of his kingdom. 3. The work of gospel ministers is to give to Christ's household their meat in due season, as stewards, and therefore they have the keys delivered to them.

(a) Their work is to give, not take to themselves (Eze 34:8), but give to the family what the Master has bought, to dispense what Christ has purchased. And to ministers it is said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35.

(b) It is to give meat; not to give law (that is Christ's work), but to deliver those doctrines to the church which, if duly digested, will be nourishment to souls. They must give, not the poison of false doctrines, not the stones of hard and unprofitable doctrines, but the meat that is sound and wholesome.

(c) It must be given in due season, en kairo--while there is time for it; when eternity comes, it will be too late; we must work while it is day: or in time, that is, whenever any opportunity offers itself; or in the stated time, time after time, according as the duty of every day requires.

Secondly, His right discharge of this office. The good servant, if thus preferred, will be a good steward; for,

1. He is faithful; stewards must be so, 1Co 4:2. He that is trusted, must be trusty; and the greater the trust is, the more is expected from them. It is a great good thing that is committed to ministers (2Ti 1:14); and they must be faithful, as Moses was, Heb 3:2. Christ counts those ministers, and those only, that are faithful, 1Ti 1:12. A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is one that sincerely designs his master's honour, not his own; delivers the whole counsel of God, not his own fancies and conceits; follows Christ's institutions and adheres to them; regards the meanest, reproves the greatest, and doth not respect persons.

2. He is wise to understand his duty and the proper season of it; and in guiding of the flock there is need, not only of the integrity of the heart, but the skilfulness of the hands. Honesty may suffice for a good servant, but wisdom is necessary to a good steward; for it is profitable to direct.

3. He is doing; so doing as his office requires. The ministry is a good work, and they whose office it is, have always something to do; they must not indulge themselves in ease, nor leave the work undone, or carelessly turn it off to others, but be doing, and doing to the purpose--so doing, giving meat to the household, minding their own

business, and not meddling with that which is foreign; so doing as the Master has appointed, as the office imports, and as the case of the family requires; not talking, but doing. It was the motto Mr. Perkins used, Minister verbi es--You are a minister of the word. Not only Age--Be doing; but Hoc age--Be so doing.

4. He is found doing when his Master comes; which intimates,

(a) Constancy at his work. At what hour soever his Master comes, he is found busy at the work of the day. Ministers should not leave empty spaces in their time, lest their Lord should come in one of those empty spaces. As with a good God the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so with a good man, a good minister, the end of one duty is the beginning of another. When Calvin was persuaded to remit his ministerial labours, he answered, with some resentment, "What, would you have my Master find me idle?"

(b) Perseverance in his work till the Lord come. Hold fast till then, Re 2:25. Continue in these things, 1Ti 4:16,6:14. Endure to the end.

Thirdly, The recompense of reward intended him for this, in three things.

1. He shall be taken notice of. This is intimated in these words, Who then is that faithful and wise servant? Which supposes that there are but few who answer this character; such an interpreter is one of a thousand, such a faithful and wise steward. Those who thus distinguish themselves now by humility, diligence, and sincerity in their work, Christ will in the great day both dignify and distinguish by the glory conferred on them.

2. He shall be blessed? Blessed is that servant; and Christ's pronouncing him blessed makes him so. All the dead that die n the Lord are blessed, Re 14:13. But there is a peculiar blessedness secured to them that approve themselves faithful stewards, and are found so doing. Next to the honour of those who die in the field of battle, suffering for Christ as the martyrs, is the honour of those that

die in the field of service, ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, for Christ.

3. He shall be preferred (Mt 24:47); He shall make him ruler over all his goods. The allusion is to the way of great men, who, if the stewards of their house conduct themselves well in that place, commonly prefer them to be the managers of their estates; thus Joseph was preferred in the house of Potiphar, Ge 29:4,6. But the greatest honour which the kindest master ever did to his most tried servants in this world, is nothing to that weight of glory which the Lord Jesus will confer upon his faithful watchful servants in the world to come. What is here said by a similitude, is the same that is said more plainly, Joh 11:26, Him will my Father honour. And God's servants, when thus preferred; shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness to bear that weight of glory, so that there is no danger from these servants when they reign.

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.
48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;
49 and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

Concerning the evil servant. Here we have,

First, His description given (Mt 24:48,49); where we have the wretch drawn in his own colours. The vilest of creatures is a wicked man, the vilest of men is a wicked Christian, and the vilest of them a wicked minister. Corruptio optimi est pessima--What is best, when corrupted, becomes the worst. Wickedness in the prophets of Jerusalem is a horrible thing indeed, Jer 23:14. Here is,

1 The cause of his wickedness; and that is, a practical disbelief of Christ's second coming; He hath said in his heart, My Lord delays his coming; and therefore he begins to think he will never come, but has quite forsaken his church. Observe,

(a) Christ knows that they say in their hearts, who with their lips cry, Lord, Lord, as this servant here.

(b) The delay of Christ's coming, though it is a gracious instance of his patience, is greatly abused by wicked people, whose hearts are thereby hardened in their wicked ways. When Christ's coming is looked upon as doubtful, or a thing at an immense distance, the hearts of men are fully set to do evil, Ec 8:11. See Eze 12:27. They that walk by sense, are ready to say of the unseen Jesus, as the people did of Moses when he tarried in the mount upon their errand, We wot not what is become of him, and therefore up, make us gods, the world a god, the belly a god, any thing but him that should be.

2 The particulars of his wickedness; and they are sins of the first magnitude; he is a slave to his passions and his appetites.

(a) Persecution is here charged upon him. He begins to smite his fellow servants. Note,

[1.] Even the stewards of the house are to look upon all the servants of the house as their fellow servants, and therefore are forbidden to lord it over them. If the angel call himself fellow servant to John (Re 19:10), no marvel if John have learned to call himself brother to the Christians of the churches of Asia, Re 1:9.

[2.] It is no new thing to see evil servants smiting their fellow servants; both private Christians and faithful ministers. He smites them, either because they reprove him, or because they will not bow, and do him reverence; will not say as he saith, and do as he doeth, against their consciences: he smites them with the tongue, as they smote the prophet, Jer 18:18. And if he get power into his hand, or can press those into his service that have, as the ten horns upon the head of the beast, it goes further. Pashur the priest smote Jeremiah, and put him in the stocks, Jer 20:2 The revolters have often been of all others most profound to make slaughter, Ho 5:2 The steward, when he smites his fellow servants, does it under colour of his Master's authority, and in his name; he says, Let the Lord be glorified (Isa 66:5); but he shall know that he could not put a greater affront upon his Master.

(b) Profaneness and immorality; He begins to eat and drink with the drunken.

[1.] He associates with the worst of sinners, has fellowship with them, is intimate with them; he walks in their counsel, stands in their way, sits in their seat, and sings their songs. The drunken are the merry and jovial company, and those he is for, and thus he hardens them in their wickedness.

[2.] He does like them; eats, and drinks, and is drunken; so it is in Luke. This is an inlet to all manner of sin. Drunkenness is a leading wickedness; they who are slaves to that, are never masters of themselves in any thing else. The persecutors of God's people have commonly been the most vicious and immoral men. Persecuting consciences, whatever the pretensions be, are commonly the most profligate and debauched consciences. What will not they be drunk with, that will be drunk with the blood of the saints? Well, this is the description of a wicked minister, who yet may have the common gifts of learning and utterance above others; and, as hath been said of some, may preach so well in the pulpit, that it is a pity he should ever come out, and yet live so ill out of the pulpit, that it is a pity he should ever come in.

Secondly, His doom read, Mt 24:50,51. The coat and character of wicked ministers will not only not secure them from condemnation, but will greatly aggravate it. They can plead no exemption from Christ's jurisdiction, whatever they pretend to, in the church of Rome, from that of the civil magistrate; there is no benefit of clergy at Christ's bar. Observe,

1 The surprise that will accompany his doom (Mt 24:50); The Lord of that servant will come. Note,

(a) Our putting off the thoughts of Christ's coming will not put off his coming. Whatever fancy he deludes himself with, his Lord will

come. The unbelief of man shall not make that great promise, or threatening (call it which you will), of no effect.

(b) The coming of Christ will be a most dreadful surprise to secure and careless sinners, especially to wicked ministers; He shall come in a day when he looketh not for him. Note, Those that have slighted the warnings of the word, and silenced those of their own consciences concerning the judgment to come, cannot expect any other warnings; these will be adjudged sufficient legal notice given, whether taken or no; and no unfairness can be charged on Christ, if he come suddenly, without giving other notice. Behold, he has told us before.

2 The severity of his doom, Mt 24:51. It is not more severe than righteous, but it is a doom that carries in it utter ruin, wrapt up in two dreadful words, death and damnation.

Death. His Lord shall cut him asunder, dikotomesei auton, "he shall cut him off from the land of the living," from the congregation of the righteous, shall separate him unto evil; which is the definition of a curse (De 29:21), shall cut him down, as a tree that cumbers the ground; perhaps it alludes to the sentence often used in the law, That soul shall be cut off from his people; denoting an utter extirpation. Death cuts off a good man, as a choice imp is cut off to be grafted in a better stock; but it cuts off a wicked man, as a withered branch is cut off for the fire-cuts him off from this world, which he set his heart so much upon, and was, as it were, one with. Or, as we read it, shall cut him asunder, that is, part body and soul, send the body to the grave to be a prey for worms, and the soul to hell to be a prey for devils, and there is the sinner cut asunder. The soul and body of a godly man at death part fairly, the one cheerfully lifted up to God, the other left to the dust; but the soul and body of a wicked man at death are cut asunder, torn asunder, for to them death is the king of terrors, Job 18:14. The wicked servant divided himself between God and the world, Christ and Belial, his profession and his lusts, justly therefore will he thus be divided.

him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,
51 and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew-25

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

That in general which is to be illustrated is, the kingdom of heaven, the state of things under the gospel, the external kingdom of Christ, and the administration and success of it. Some of Christ's parables had shown us what it is like now in the present reception of it, as Mt 13:1-52 This tells us what it shall be like, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and that kingdom delivered up to the Father. The administration of Christ's government, towards the ready and the unready in the great day, may be illustrated by this similitude; or the kingdom is put for the subjects of the kingdom. The professors of Christianity shall then be likened to these ten virgins, and shall be thus distinguished.

The virgins are the professors of religion, members of the church; but here represented as her companions (Ps 45:14), as elsewhere her children (Isa 54:1), her ornaments, Isa 49:18. They that follow the Lamb, are said to be virgins (Re 14:4); this denotes their beauty and purity; they are to be presented as chaste virgins to Christ, 2Co 11:2 The bridegroom is a king; so these virgins are maids of honour, virgins without number (So 6:8), yet here said to be ten.

The office of these virgins is to meet the bridegroom, which is as much their happiness as their duty. They come to wait upon the bridegroom when he appears, and in the mean time to wait for him. See here the nature of Christianity. As Christians, we profess ourselves to be,

(1.) Attendants upon Christ, to do him honour, as the glorious Bridegroom, to be to him for a name and a praise, especially then when he shall come to be glorified in his saints. We must follow him as honorary servants do their masters, Joh 12:26. Hold up the name, and hold forth the praise of the exalted Jesus; this is our business.

(2.) Expectants of Christ, and of his second coming. As Christians, we profess, not only to believe and look for, but to love and long for, the appearing of Christ, and to act in our whole conversation with a regard to it. The second coming of Christ is the centre in which all the lines of our religion meet, and to which the whole of the divine life hath a constant reference and tendency.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

They are not distinguished into good and bad, as TRENCH observes, but into "wise" and "foolish"—just as in Mt 7:25-27 those who reared their house for eternity are distinguished into "wise" and "foolish builders"; because in both cases a certain degree of goodwill towards the truth is assumed. To make anything of the equal number of both classes would, we think, be precarious, save to warn us how large a portion of those who, up to the last, so nearly resemble those that love Christ's appearing will be disowned by Him when He comes.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Their chief concern is to have lights in their hands, when they attend the bridegroom, thus to do him honour and do him service. Note, Christians are children of light. The gospel is light, and they who receive it must not only be enlightened by it themselves, but must shine as lights, must hold it forth, Php 2:15,16. This in general.

Now concerning these ten virgins, we may observe,

(1.) Their different character, with the proof and evidence of it.

[1.] Their character was that five were wise, and five foolish (Mt 25:2); and wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness;

so saith Solomon, a competent judge, Ec 2:13. Note, Those of the same profession and denomination among men, may yet be of characters vastly different in the sight of God. Sincere Christians are the wise virgins, and hypocrites the foolish ones, as in another parable they are represented by wise and foolish builders. Note, Those are wise or foolish indeed, that are so in the affairs of their souls. True religion is true wisdom; sin is folly, but especially the sin of hypocrisy, for those are the greatest fools, that are wise in their own conceit, and those the worst of sinners, that feign themselves just men. Some observe from the equal number of the wise and foolish, what a charitable decorum (it is Archbishop Tillotson's expression) Christ observes, as if he would hope that the number of true believers was nearly equal to that of hypocrites, or, at least, would teach us to hope the best concerning those that profess religion, and to think of them with a bias to the charitable side. Though, in judging of ourselves, we ought to remember that the gate is strait, and few find it; yet, in judging of others, we ought to remember that the Captain of our salvation brings many sons to glory.

[2.] The evidence of this character was in the very thing which they were to attend to; by that they are judged of.

First, It was the folly of the foolish virgins, that they took their lamps, and took no oil with them, Mt 25:3. They had just the oil enough to make their lamps burn for the present, to make a show with, as if they intended to meet the bridegroom; but no cruse or bottle of oil with them for a recruit if the bridegroom tarried; thus hypocrites,

1. They have no principle within. They have a lamp of profession in their hands, but have not in their hearts that stock of sound knowledge, rooted dispositions, and settled resolutions, which is necessary to carry them through the services and trials of the present state. They act under the influence of external inducements, but are void of spiritual life; like a tradesman, that sets up without a stock, or the seed on the stony ground, that wanted root.

2. They have no prospect of, nor make provision for, what is to come. They took lamps for a present show, but not oil for after use. This incogitancy is the ruin of many professors; all their care is to recommend themselves to their neighbours, whom they now converse with, not to approve themselves to Christ, whom they must hereafter appear before; as if any thing will serve, provide it will but serve for the present. Tell them of things not seen as yet, and you are like Lot to his sons-in-law, as one that mocked. They do not provide for hereafter, as the ant does, nor lay up for the time to come, 1Ti 6:19.

Secondly, It was the wisdom of the wise virgins, that they took oil in their vessels with their lamps, Mt 25:4. They had a good principle within, which would maintain and keep up their profession.

1 The heart is the vessel, which it is our wisdom to get furnished; for, out of a good treasure there, good things must be brought; but if that root be rottenness, the blossom will be dust.

2. Grace is the oil which we must have in this vessel; in the tabernacle there was constant provision made of oil for the light, Ex 35:14. Our light must shine before men in good works, but this cannot be, or not long, unless there be a fixed active principle in the heart, of faith in Christ, and love to God and our brethren, from which we must act in every thing we do in religion, with an eye to what is before us. They that took oil in their vessels, did it upon supposition that perhaps the bridegroom might tarry. Note, In looking forward it is good to prepare for the worst, to lay in for a long siege. But remember that this oil which keeps the lamps burning, is derived to the candlestick from Jesus Christ, the great and good Olive, by the golden pipes of the ordinances, as it is represented in that vision (Zec 4:2,3,12), which is explained Joh 1:16, Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

What are these "lamps" and this "oil"? Many answers have been given. But since the foolish as well as the wise took their lamps and went forth with them to meet the Bridegroom, these lighted lamps

and this advance a certain way in company with the wise, must denote that Christian profession which is common to all who bear the Christian name; while the insufficiency of this without something else, of which they never possessed themselves, shows that "the foolish" mean those who, with all that is common to them with real Christians, lack the essential preparation for meeting Christ. Then, since the wisdom of "the wise" consisted in their taking with their lamps a supply of oil in their vessels, keeping their lamps burning till the Bridegroom came, and so fitting them to go in with Him to the marriage, this supply of oil must mean that inward reality of grace which alone will stand when He appears whose eyes are as a flame of fire. But this is too general; for it cannot be for nothing that this inward grace is here set forth by the familiar symbol of oil, by which the Spirit of all grace is so constantly represented in Scripture. Beyond all doubt, this was what was symbolized by that precious anointing oil with which Aaron and his sons were consecrated to the priestly office (Ex 30:23-25,30); by "the oil of gladness above His fellows" with which Messiah was to be anointed (Ps 45:7,Heb 1:9), even as it is expressly said, that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Joh 3:34); and by the bowl full of golden oil, in Zechariah's vision, which, receiving its supplies from the two olive trees on either side of it, poured it through seven golden pipes into the golden lamp-stand to keep it continually burning bright (Zec 4:1-14) —for the prophet is expressly told that it was to proclaim the great truth, "Not by might, nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts [shall this temple be built]. Who art thou, O great mountain [of opposition to this issue]? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain [or, be swept out of the way], and he shall bring forth the head stone [of the temple], with shoutings [crying], GRACE, GRACE unto it." This supply of oil, then, representing that inward grace which distinguishes the wise, must denote, more particularly, that "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," which, as it is the source of the new spiritual life at the first, is the secret of its enduring character. Everything short of this may be possessed by "the foolish"; while it is the possession of this that makes "the wise" to be "ready" when the Bridegroom appears, and fit to "go in with Him to the marriage." Just so in the parable of the Sower, the stony-

ground hearers, "having no deepness of earth" and "no root in themselves" Mt 13:5,Mk 4:17), though they spring up and get even into ear, never ripen, while they in the good ground bear the precious grain.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Christ "tarries," among other reasons, to try the faith and patience of His people.

Such was the state alike of the wise and the foolish virgins, even till the cry of the Bridegroom's approach awoke them. So likewise in the parable of the Importunate Widow: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Lu 18:8).

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

And at midnight—that is, the time when the Bridegroom will be least expected; for "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1Th 5:2).

The surprising summons given them, to attend the bridegroom (Mt 25:6); At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Note,

[1.] Though Christ tarry long, he will come at last; though he seem slow, he is sure. In his first coming, he was thought long by those that waited for the consolation of Israel; yet in the fulness of time he came; so his second coming, though long deferred, is not forgotten; his enemies shall find, to their cost, that forbearance is no acquittance; and his friends shall find, to their comfort, that the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. The year of the redeemed is fixed, and it will come.

[2.] Christ's coming will be at our midnight, when we least look for him, and are most disposed to take our rest. His coming for the relief and comfort of his people, often is when the good intended seems to be at the greatest distance; and his coming to reckon with his enemies, is when they put the evil day furthest from them. It was at midnight that the first-born of Egypt were destroyed, and

Israel delivered, Ex 12:29. Death often comes when it is least expected; the soul is required this night, Lu 12:20. Christ will come when he pleases, to show his sovereignty, and will not let us know when, to teach us our duty.

[3.] When Christ comes, we must go forth to meet him. As Christians we are bound to attend all the motions of the Lord Jesus, and meet him in all his out-goings. When he comes to us at death, we must go forth out of the body, out of the world, to meet him with affections and workings of soul suitable to the discoveries we then expect him to make of himself. Go ye forth to meet him, is a call to those who are habitually prepared, to be actually ready.

[4.] The notice given of Christ's approach, and the call to meet him, will be awakening; There was a cry made. His first coming was not with any observation at all, nor did they say, Lo, here is Christ, or Lo, he is there; he was in the world, and the world knew him not; but his second coming will be with the observation of all the world; Every eye shall see him. There will be a cry from heaven, for he shall descend with a shout, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment; and a cry from the earth too, a cry to rocks and mountains, Re 6:16.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

the foolish virgins as well as the wise. How very long do both parties seem the same—almost to the moment of decision! Looking at the mere form of the parable, it is evident that the folly of "the foolish" consisted not in having no oil at all; for they must have had oil enough in their lamps to keep them burning up to this moment: their folly consisted in not making provision against its exhaustion, by taking with their lamp an oil-vessel wherewith to replenish their lamp from time to time, and so have it burning until the Bridegroom should come. Are we, then—with some even superior expositors—to conclude that the foolish virgins must represent true Christians as well as do the wise, since only true Christians have the Spirit, and that the difference between the two classes consists only in the one having the necessary watchfulness which the other wants? Certainly not. Since the parable was designed to hold forth the prepared and the unprepared to meet Christ at His coming, and how

the unprepared might, up to the very last, be confounded with the prepared—the structure of the parable behooved to accommodate itself to this, by making the lamps of the foolish to burn, as well as those of the wise, up to a certain point of time, and only then to discover their inability to burn on for want of a fresh supply of oil. But this is evidently just a structural device; and the real difference between the two classes who profess to love the Lord's appearing is a radical one—the possession by the one class of an enduring principle of spiritual life, and the want of it by the other.

The address they all made to answer this summons (Mt 25:7); They all arose, and trimmed their lamps, snuffed them and supplied them with oil and went about with all expedition to put themselves in a posture to receive the bridegroom. Now,

[1.] This, in the wise virgins, bespeaks an actual preparation for the Bridegroom's coming. Note, even those that are best prepared for death, have, upon the immediate arrests of it, work to do, to get themselves actually ready, that they may be found in peace (2Pe 3:14), found doing (Mt 24:46), and not found naked, 2Co 5:3. It will be a day of search and enquiry; and it concerns us to think how we shall then be found. When we see the day approaching, we must address ourselves to our dying work with all seriousness, renewing our repentance for sin, our consent to the covenant, our farewells to the world; and our souls must be carried out toward God in suitable breathings.

[2.] In the foolish virgins, it denotes a vain confidence, and conceit of the goodness of their state, and their readiness for another world. Note, Even counterfeit graces will serve a man to make a show of when he comes to die, as well as they have done all his life long; the hypocrite's hopes blaze when they are just expiring, like a lightening before death.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

The distress which the foolish virgins were in, for want of oil, Mt 25:8,9. This bespeaks,

[1.] The apprehensions which some hypocrites have of the misery of their state, even on this side death, when God opens their eyes to see their folly, and themselves perishing with a lie in their right hand. Or, however,

[2.] The real misery of their state on the other side death, and in the judgment; how far their fair, but false, profession of religion will be from availing them any thing in the great day; see what comes of it.

First, Their lamps are gone out. The lamps of hypocrites often go out in this life; when they who have begun in the spirit, end in the flesh, and the hypocrisy breaks out in an open apostasy, 2Pe 2:20. The profession withers, and the credit of it is lost; the hopes fail, and the comfort of them is gone; how often is the candle of the wicked thus put out? Job 21:17. Yet many a hypocrite keeps up his credit, and the comfort of his profession, such as it is, to the last; but what is it when God taketh away his soul? Job 27:8. If his candle be not put out before him, it is put out with him, Job 18:5,6. He shall lie down in sorrow, Isa 50:11. The gains of a hypocritical profession will not follow a man to judgment, Mt 7:22,23. The lamps are gone out, when the hypocrite's hope proves like the spider's web (Job 8:11, &c.), and like the giving up of the ghost (Job 11:20), like Absalom's mule that left him in the oak.

Secondly, They wanted oil to supply them when they were going out. Note, Those that take up short of true grace, will certainly find the want of it one time or other. An external profession well humoured may carry a man far, but it will not carry him through; it may light him along this world, but the damps of the valley of the shadow of death will put it out.

Thirdly, They would gladly be beholden to the wise virgins for a supply out of their vessels; Give us of your oil. Note, The day is coming, when carnal hypocrites would gladly be found in the condition of true Christians. Those who now hate the strictness of

religion, will, at death and judgment, wish for the solid comforts of it. Those who care not to live the life, yet would die the death, of the righteous. The day is coming when those who now look with contempt upon humble contrite saints, would gladly get an interest in them, and would value those as their best friends and benefactors, whom now they set with the dogs of their flock. Give us of your oil; that is, "Speak a good word for us;" so some; but there is no occasion for vouchers in the great day, the Judge knows what is every man's true character. But is it not well that they are brought to say, Give us of your oil? It is so; but, 1. This request was extorted by sensible necessity. Note, Those will see their need of grace hereafter, when it should save them, who will not see their need of grace now, when it should sanctify and rule them. (2.) It comes too late. God would have given them oil, had they asked in time; but there is no buying when the market is over, no bidding when the inch of candle is dropped.

Fourthly, They were denied a share in their companions' oil. It is a sad presage of a repulse with God, when they were thus repulsed by good people. The wise answered, Not so; that peremptory denial is not in the original, but supplied by the translators: these wise virgins would rather give a reason without a positive refusal, than (as many do) give a positive refusal without a reason. They were well inclined to help their neighbours in distress; but, We must not, we cannot, we dare not, do it, lest there be not enough for us and you; charity begins at home; but go, and buy for yourselves. Note,

1. Those that would be saved, must have grace of their own. Though we have benefit by the communion of saints, and the faith and prayers of others may now redound to our advantage, yet our own sanctification is indispensably necessary to our own salvation. The just shall live by his faith. Every man shall give account of himself, and therefore let every man prove his own work; for he cannot get another to muster for him in that day.

2. Those that have most grace, have none to spare; all we have, is little enough for ourselves to appear before God in. The best have

need to borrow from Christ, but they have none to lend to any of their neighbours. The church of Rome, which dreams of works of supererogation and the imputation of the righteousness of saints, forgets that it was the wisdom of the wise virgins to understand that they had but oil enough for themselves, and none for others. But observe, These wise virgins do not upbraid the foolish with their neglect, nor boast of their own forecast, nor torment them with suggestions tending to despair, but give them the best advice the case will bear, Go ye rather to them that sell. Note, Those that deal foolishly in the affairs of their souls, are to be pitied, and not insulted over; for who made thee to differ? When ministers attend such as have been mindless of God and their souls all their days, but are under death-bed convictions; and, because true repentance is never too late, direct them to repent, and turn to God, and close with Christ; yet, because late repentance is seldom true, they do but as these wise virgins did by the foolish, even made the best of bad. They can but tell them what is to be done, if it be not too late, but whether the door may not be shut before it is done, is an unspeakable hazard. It is good advice now, if it be taken in time, Go to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Note, Those that would have grace, must have recourse to, and attend upon, the means of grace. See Isa 55:1.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

"In case there be not enough for us and you." A truly wise answer this. "And what, then, if we shall share it with you? Why, both will be undone."

Here again it would be straining the parable beyond its legitimate design to make it teach that men may get salvation even after they are supposed and required to have it already gotten. It is merely a friendly way of reminding them of the proper way of obtaining the needed and precious article, with a certain reflection on them for having it now to seek. Also, when the parable speaks of "selling" and "buying" that valuable article, it means simply, "Go, get it in the only legitimate way." And yet the word "buy" is significant; for we are elsewhere bidden, "buy wine and milk without money and

without price," and "buy of Christ gold tried in the fire," &c. (Isa 55:1,Re 3:18). Now, since what we pay the demanded price for becomes thereby our own property, the salvation which we thus take gratuitously at God's hands, being bought in His own sense of that word, becomes ours thereby in inalienable possession. (Compare for the language, Pr 23:23,Mt 13:44).

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

The coming of the bridegroom, and the issue of all this different character of the wise and foolish virgins. See what came of it.

[1.] While they went out to buy, the bridegroom came. Note, With regard to those that put off their great work to the last, it is a thousand to one, that they have not time to do it then. Getting grace is a work of time, and cannot be done in a hurry. While the poor awakened soul addresses itself, upon a sick bed, to repentance and prayer, in awful confusion, it scarcely knows which end to begin at, or what to do first; and presently death comes, judgment comes, and the work is undone, and the poor sinner undone for ever. This comes of having oil to buy when we should burn it, and grace to get when we should use it.

The bridegroom came. Note, Our Lord Jesus will come to his people, at the great day, as a Bridegroom; will come in pomp and rich attire, attended with his friends: now that the Bridegroom is taken away from us, we fast (Mt 9:15), but then will be an everlasting feast. Then the Bridegroom will fetch home his bride, to be where he is (Joh 17:24), and will rejoice over his bride, Isa 62:5.

[2.] They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage. Note, First, To be eternally glorified is to go in with Christ to the marriage, to be in his immediate presence, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with him in a state of eternal rest, joy, and plenty. Secondly, Those, and those only, shall go to heaven hereafter, that are made ready for heaven here, that are wrought to the self-same thing, 2Co 5:5. Thirdly, The suddenness of death, and

of Christ's coming to us then, will be no obstruction to our happiness, if we have been habitually prepared.

[3.] The door was shut, as is usual when all the company is come, that are to be admitted. The door was shut, First, To secure those that were within; that, being now made pillars in the house of our God, they may go no more out, Re 3:12. Adam was put into paradise, but the door was left open and so he went out again; but when glorified saints are put into the heavenly paradise, they are shut in. Secondly, To exclude those that were out. The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed, and those that are shut out then, will be shut out for ever. Now the gate is strait, yet it is open; but then it will be shut and bolted, and a great gulf fixed. This was like the shutting of the door of the ark when Noah was in; as he was thereby preserved, so all the rest were finally abandoned.

[4.] The foolish virgins came when it was too late (Mt 25:11); Afterward came also the other virgins. Note, First, There are many that will seek admission into heaven when it is too late; as profane Esau, who afterward would have inherited the blessing. God and religion will be glorified by those late solicitations, though sinners will not be saved by them; it is for the honour of Lord, Lord, that, of fervent and importunate prayer, that those who slight it now, will flee to it shortly, and it will not be called whining and canting then. Secondly, The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them very far in their expectations of happiness. They go to heaven-gate, and demand entrance, and yet are shut out; lifted up to heaven in a fond conceit of the goodness of their state, and yet thrust down to hell.

[5.] They were rejected, as Esau was (Mt 25:12); I know you not. Note, We are all concerned to seek the Lord while he may be found; for there is a time coming when he will not be found. Time was, when, Lord, Lord, open to us, would have sped well, by virtue of that promise, Knock, and it shall be opened to you; but now it comes too late. The sentence is solemnly bound on with, Verily I say unto you, which amounts to no less than swearing in his wrath,

that they shall never enter into his rest. It bespeaks him resolved, and them silenced by it.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from this parable (Mt 25:13); Watch therefore, We had it before (Mt 24:42), and here it is repeated as the most needful caution. Note, 1. Our great duty is to watch, to attend to the business of our souls with the utmost diligence and circumspection. Be awake, and be wakeful. 2. It is a good reason for our watching, that the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain; we know neither the day nor the hour. Therefore every day and every hour we must be ready, and not off our watch any day in the year, or any hour in the day. Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day and all the day long.

They are sensible of their past folly; they have taken good advice: they are in the act of getting what alone they lacked: a very little more, and they also are ready. But the Bridegroom comes; the ready are admitted; "the door is shut," and they are undone. How graphic and appalling this picture of one almost saved—but lost!

The suddenness of death and of Christ's coming to us then, will not hinder our happiness, if we have been prepared. The door was shut. Many will seek admission into heaven when it is too late. The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them far in expectations of happiness. The unexpected summons of death may alarm the Christian; but, proceeding without delay to trim his lamp, his graces often shine more bright; while the mere professor's conduct shows that his lamp is going out. Watch therefore, attend to the business of your souls. Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

this reiteration of the name was an exclamation rather of surprise; here it is a piteous cry of urgency, bordering on despair. Ah! now at length their eyes are wide open, and they realize all the consequences of their past folly.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The Parable of the Talents

14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

Between master and slaves this was not uncommon in ancient times. Christ's "servants" here mean all who, by their Christian profession, stand in the relation to Him of entire subjection. His "goods" mean all their gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. As all that slaves have belongs to their master, so Christ has a claim to everything which belongs to His people, everything which, may be turned to good, and He demands its appropriation to His service, or, viewing it otherwise, they first offer it up to Him; as being "not their own, but bought with a price" (1Co 6:19,20), and He "delivers it to them" again to be put to use in His service.

We have three things, in general, in this parable.

The trust committed to these servants; Their master delivered to them his goods: having appointed them to work (for Christ keeps no servants to be idle), he left them something to work upon. Note,

1. Christ's servants have and receive their all from him; for they are of themselves worth nothing, nor have any thing they can call their own but sin.

2. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. Our privileges are intended to find us with business. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 3. Whatever we receive to be made use of for Christ, still the property is vested in him; we are but tenants upon his land, stewards of his manifold grace, 1Pe 4:10. Now observe here,

(a) On what occasion this trust was committed to these servants: The master was travelling into a far country. This is explained, Eph 4:8. When he ascended on high, he gave gifts to men. Note,

[1.] When Christ went to heaven, he was as a man travelling into a far country; that is, he went with a purpose to be away a great while.

[2.] When he went, he took care to furnish his church with all things necessary for it during his personal absence. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed to his church truths, laws, promises and powers; these were the parakatatheke--the great depositum (as it is called, 1Ti 6:20,2Ti 1:14), the good thing that is committed to us; and he sent his Spirit to enable his servants to teach and profess those truths, to press and observe those laws, to improve and apply those promises, and to exercise and employ those powers, ordinary or extraordinary. Thus Christ, at his ascension, left his goods to his church.

(b) In what proportion this trust was committed.

[1.] He gave talents; a talent of silver is computed to be in our money three hundred and fifty-three pounds eleven shillings and ten pence halfpenny; so the learned Bishop Cumberland. Note, Christ's gifts are rich and valuable, the purchases of his blood inestimable, and none of them mean.

[2.] He gave to some more, to others less; to one five talents, to another two, to another one; to every one according to his several ability. When Divine Providence has made a difference in men's ability, as to mind, body, estate, relation, and interest, divine grace dispenses spiritual gifts accordingly, but still the ability itself is from him. Observe, First, Every one had some one talent at least, and that is not a despicable stock for a poor servant to begin with. A soul of our own is the one talent we are every one of us entrusted with, and it will find us with work. Hoc nempe ab homine exigiture, ut prosit hominibus; si fieri potest, multis; si minus, paucis; si minus, proximis, si minus, sibi: nam cum se utilem cæteris efficit, commune

agit negotium. Et si quis bene de se meretur, hoc ipso aliis prodest quod aliis profuturum parat--It is the duty of a man to render himself beneficial to those around him; to a great number if possible; but if this is denied him, to a few; to his intimate connections; or, at least, to himself. He that is useful to others, may be reckoned a common good. And whoever entitles himself to his own approbation, is serviceable to others, as forming himself to those habits which will result in their favour. Seneca de Otio Sapient. Secondly, All had not alike, for they had not all alike abilities and opportunities. God is a free Agent, dividing to every man severally as he will; some are cut out for service in one kind, others in another, as the members of the natural body. When the householder had thus settled his affairs, he straightway took his journey. Our Lord Jesus, when he had given commandments to his apostles, as one in haste to be gone, went to heaven.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Compare Mt 21:33, where the same departure is ascribed to God, after setting up the ancient economy. In both cases, it denotes the leaving of men to the action of all those spiritual laws and influences of Heaven under which they have been graciously placed for their own salvation and the advancement of their Lord's kingdom.

16 Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

Two of the servants did well.

(1.) They were diligent and faithful; They went, and traded; they put the money they were entrusted with, to the use for which it was intended--laid it out in goods, and made returns of it; as soon as ever their master was gone, they immediately applied themselves to their business. Those that have so much work to do, as every Christian has, need to set about it quickly, and lose not time. They went, and traded. Note, A true Christian is a spiritual tradesman. Trades are called mysteries, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; it is a manufacture trade; there is something to be done by upon our own hearts, and for the good of others. It is a merchant-trade; things of less value to us are parted with for things of greater

value; wisdom's merchandize, Pr 3:15,Mt 13:45. A tradesman is one who, having made his trade his choice, and taken pains to learn it, makes it his business to follow it, lays out all he has for the advancement of it, makes all other affairs bend to it, and lives upon the gain of it. Thus does a true Christian act in the work of religion; we have no stock of our own to trade with, but trade as factors with our master's stock. The endowments of the mind--reason, wit, learning, must be used in subserviency to religion; the enjoyments of the world--estate, credit, interest, power, preferment, must be improved for the honour of Christ. The ordinances of the gospel, and our opportunities of attending them, bibles, ministers, sabbaths, sacraments, must be improved for the end for which they were instituted, and communion with God kept up by them, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit must be exercised; and this is trading with our talents.

(2.) They were successful; they doubled their stock, and in a little time made cent. per cent. of it: he that had five talents, soon made them other five. Trading with our talents is not alway successful with others, but, however, it shall be so to ourselves, Isa 49:4. Note, The hand of the diligent makes rich in graces, and comforts, and treasures of good works. There is a great deal to be got by industry in religion.

Observe, The returns were in proportion to the receivings.

[1.] From those to whom God hath given five talents, he expects the improvement of five, and to reap plentifully where he sows plentifully. The greater gifts any have, the more pains they ought to take, as those must that have a large stock to manage.

[2.] From those to whom he has given but two talents, he expects only the improvement of two, which may encourage those who are placed in a lower and narrower sphere of usefulness; if they lay out themselves to do good according to the best of their capacity and opportunity, they shall be accepted, though they do not so much good as others.

17 And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

18 But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

not misspending, but simply making no use of it. Nay, his action seems that of one anxious that the gift should not be misused or lost, but ready to be returned, just as he got it.

The third did ill (Mt 25:18); He that had received one talent, went, and hid his lord's money. Though the parable represents but one in three unfaithful, yet in a history that answers this parable, we find the disproportion quite the other way, when ten lepers were cleansed, nine of ten hid the talent, and only one returned to give thanks, Lu 17:17,18. The unfaithful servant was he that had but one talent: doubtless there are many that have five talents, and bury them all; great abilities, great advantages, and yet do no good with them: but Christ would hint to us,

(1.) That if he that had but one talent, be reckoned with thus for burying that one, much more will they be accounted offenders, that have more, that have many, and bury them. If he that was but of small capacity, was cast into utter darkness because he did not improve what he had as he might have done, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that tramples underfoot the greatest advantages?

(2.) That those who have least to do for God, frequently do least of what they have to do. Some make it an excuse for their laziness, that they have not the opportunities of serving God that others have; and because they have not wherewithal to do what they say they would, they will not do what we are sure they can, and so sit down and do nothing; it is really an aggravation of their sloth, that when they have but one talent to take care about, they neglect that one.

He digged in the earth, and hid the talent, for fear it should be stolen; he did not misspend or misemploy it, did not embezzle it or squander it away, but he hid it. Money is like manure (so my Lord Bacon used to say,) good for nothing in the heap, but it must be spread; yet it is an evil which we have often seen under the sun, treasure heaped

together (Jam 5:3,Ec 6:1,2), which does good to nobody; and so it is in spiritual gifts; many have them, and make no use of them for the end for which they were given them. Those that have estates, and do not lay them out in works of piety and charity; that have power and interest, and do not with it promote religion in the places where they live; ministers that have capacities and opportunities of doing good, but do not stir up the gift that is in them, are those slothful servants that seek their own things more than Christ's.

He hid his lord's money; had it been his own, he might have done as he pleased; but, whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our own, we are but stewards of them, and must give account to our Lord, whose goods they are. It was an aggravation of his slothfulness, that his fellow-servants were busy and successful in trading, and their zeal should have provoked his. Are others active, and shall we be idle?

19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20 And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

How beautifully does this illustrate what the beloved disciple says of "boldness in the day of judgment," and his desire that "when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming!" (1Jo 4:17,1Jo 2:28).

The account of this improvement, Mt 25:19. 1 The account is deferred; it is not till after a long time that they are reckoned with; not that the master neglects his affairs, or that God is slack concerning his promise (2Pe 3:9); no, he is ready to judge (1Pe 4:5); but every thing must be done in its time and order. 2. Yet the day of account comes at last; The lord of those servants reckoneth with them. Note, The stewards of the manifold grace of God must shortly give account of their stewardship. We must all be reckoned with--what good we have got to our own souls, and what good we have done to others by the advantages we have enjoyed. See Ro 14:10,11. Now here is,

The good account of the faithful servants; and here observe,

[1.] The servants giving up the account (Mt 25:20,22); "Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents, and to me two; behold, I have gained five talents, and I two talents more."

First, Christ's faithful servants acknowledge with thankfulness his vouchsafements to them; Lord, thou deliveredst to me such and such things. Note, 1. It is good to keep a particular account of our receivings from God, to remember what we have received, that we may know what is expected from us, and may render according to the benefit. 2. We must never look upon our improvements but with a general mention of God's favour to us, of the honour he has put upon us, in entrusting us with his goods, and of that grace which is the spring and fountain of all the good that is in us or is done by us. For the truth is, the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for making use of us, and enabling us, for his service.

Secondly, They produce, as an evidence of their faithfulness, what they have gained. Note, God's good stewards have something to show for their diligence; Show me thy faith by thy works. He that is a good man, let him show it, Jam 3:13. If we be careful in our spiritual trade, it will soon be seen by us, and our works will follow us, Re 14:13. Not that the saints will in the great day make mention of their own good deeds; no, Christ will do that for them (Mt 25:35); but it intimates that they who faithfully improve their talents, shall have boldness in the day of Christ, 1Jo 2:28-4:17. And it is observable that he who had but two talents, gave up his account as cheerfully as he who had five; for our comfort, in the day of account, will be according to our faithfulness, not according to our usefulness; our sincerity, not our success; according to the uprightness of our hearts, not according to the degree of our opportunities.

[2.] The master's acceptance and approbation of their account, Mt 25:21,23.

First, He commended them; Well done, good and faithful servant. Note, The diligence and integrity of those who approve themselves the good and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, will certainly be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at his appearing, 1Pe 1:7. Those that own and honour God now, he will own and honour shortly. 1. Their persons will be accepted; Thou good and faithful servant. He that knows the integrity of his servants now, will witness to it in the great day; and they that are found faithful, shall be called so. Perhaps they were censured by men, as righteous overmuch; but Christ will give them their just characters, of good and faithful. 2. Their performances will be accepted; Well done. Christ will call those, and those only, good servants, that have done well; for it is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for this glory and honour; and if we seek, we shall find; if we do that which is good, and do it well, we shall have praise of the same. Some masters are so morose, that they will not commend their servants, though they do their work ever so well; it is thought enough not to chide: but Christ will commend his servants that do well; whether their praise be of men or not, it is of him; and if we have the good word of our Master, the matter is not great what our fellow-servants say of us; if he saith, Well done, we are happy, and it should then be a small thing to us to be judged of men's judgment; as, on the contrary, not he who commendeth himself, or whom his neighbours commend, is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Secondly, He rewards them. The faithful servants of Christ shall not be put off with bare commendation; no, all their work and labour of love shall be rewarded.

Now this reward is here expressed two ways.

1. In one expression agreeable to the parable; Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. It is usual in the courts of princes, and families of great men, to advance those to higher offices, that have been faithful in lower. Note, Christ is a master that will prefer his servants who acquit themselves well. Christ has honour in store for those that honour him--a crown (2Ti

4:8), a throne (Re 3:21), a kingdom, Mt 25:34. Here they are beggars; in heaven they shall be rulers. The upright shall have dominion: Christ's servants are all princes.

Observe the disproportion between the work and the reward; there are but few things in which the saints are serviceable to the glory of God, but there are many things wherein they shall be glorified with God. What charge we receive from God, what work we do for God in this world, is but little, very little, compared with the joy set before us. Put together all our service, all our sufferings, all our improvements, all the good we do to others, all we get to ourselves, and they are but a few things, next to nothing, not worthy to be compared, not fit to be named the same day with the glory to be revealed.

2. In another expression, which slips out of the parable into the thing signified by it; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Note, (1.) The state of the blessed is a state of joy, not only because all tears shall then be wiped away, but all the springs of comfort shall be opened to them, and the fountains of joy broken up. Where there are the vision and fruition of God, a perfection of holiness, and the society of the blessed, there cannot but be a fulness of joy. (2.) This joy is the joy of their Lord; the joy which he himself has purchased and provided for them; the joy of the redeemed, bought with the sorrow of the Redeemer. It is the joy which he himself is in the possession of, and which he had his eye upon when he endured the cross, and despised the shame, Heb 12:2. It is the joy of which he himself is the fountain and centre. It is the joy of our Lord, for it is joy in the Lord, who is our exceeding joy. Abraham was not willing that the steward of his house, though faithful, should be his heir (Ge 15:3); but Christ admits his faithful stewards into his own joy, to be joint-heirs with him. (3.) Glorified saints shall enter into this joy, shall have a full and complete possession of it, as the heir when he comes of age enters upon his estate, or as they that were ready, went in to the marriage feast. Here the joy of our Lord enters into the saints, in the earnest of the Spirit; shortly they shall enter into it, shall be in it to eternity, as in their element.

21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
22 He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.
23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed:

The sense is obvious: "I knew thou wast one whom it was impossible to serve, one whom nothing would please: exacting what was impracticable, and dissatisfied with what was attainable." Thus do men secretly think of God as a hard Master, and virtually throw on Him the blame of their fruitlessness.

Those who think it impossible to please God, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion. They complain that He requires of them more than they are capable of, and punishes them for what they cannot help. Whatever they may pretend, the fact is, they dislike the character and work of the Lord.

The bad account of the slothful servant. Observe,

[1.] His apology for himself, Mt 25:24,25. Though he had received but one talent, for that one he is called to account. The smallness of our receiving will not excuse us from a reckoning. None shall be called to an account for more than they have received; but for what we have, we must all account.

Observe,

First, What he confides in. He comes to the account with a deal of assurance, relying on the plea he had to put in, that he was able to say, "Lo, there thou hast that is thine; if I have not made it more, as the others have done, yet this I can say, I have not made it less."

This, he thinks, may serve to bring him off, if not with praise, yet with safety.

Note, Many a one goes very securely to judgment, presuming upon the validity of a plea that will be overruled as vain and frivolous. Slothful professors, that are afraid of doing too much for God, yet hope to come off as well as those that take so much pains in religion. Thus the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason, Pr 26:16. This servant thought that his account would pass well enough, because he could say, There thou hast that is thine. "Lord, I was no spendthrift of my estate, no prodigal of my time, no profaner of my sabbaths, no opposer of good ministers and good preaching; Lord, I never ridiculed my bible, nor set my wits to work to banter religion, nor abused my power to persecute any good man; I never drowned my parts, nor wasted God's good creatures in drunkenness and gluttony, nor ever to my knowledge did I injury to any body." Many that are called Christians, build great hopes for heaven upon their being able to make such an account; yet all this amounts to no more than there thou hast that is thine; as if no more were required, or could be expected.

Secondly, What he confesses. He owns the burying of his talent; I hid thy talent in the earth. He speaks as if that were no great fault; nay, as if he deserved praise for his prudence in putting it in a safe place, and running no hazards with it. Note, It is common for people to make a very light matter of that which will be their condemnation in the great day. Or, if he was conscious to himself that it was his fault, it intimates how easily slothful servants will be convicted in the judgment; there will need no great search for proof, for their own tongues shall fall upon them.

Thirdly, What he makes his excuse; I knew that thou were a hard man, and I was afraid. Good thought of God would beget love, and that love would make us diligent and faithful; but hard thoughts of God beget fear, and that fear makes us slothful and unfaithful. His excuse bespeaks,

1 The sentiments of an enemy; I knew thee, that thou art a hard man. This was like that wicked saying of the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal, Eze 18:25. Thus his defence is his offence. The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then, as if that would mend the matter, his heart fretteth against the Lord. This is covering the transgression, as Adam, who implicitly laid the fault on God himself; The woman which thou gavest me. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to conceive false and wicked opinions concerning God, and with them to harden themselves in their evil ways. Observe how confidently he speaks; I knew thee to be so. How could he know him to be so? What iniquity have we or our fathers found in him? Jer 2:5. Wherein has he wearied us with his work, or deceived us in his wages? Mic 6:3. Has he been a wilderness to us, or a land of darkness? Thus long God has governed the world, and may ask with more reason than Samuel himself could, Whom have I defrauded? or whom have I oppressed? Does not all the world know the contrary, that he is so far from being a hard master, that the earth is full of his goodness, so far from reaping where he sowed not, that he sows a great deal where he reaps nothing? For he causes the sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful, and fills their hearts with food and gladness who say to the Almighty, Depart from us. This suggestion bespeaks the common reproach which wicked people cast upon God, as if all the blame of their sin and ruin lay at his door, for denying them his grace; whereas it is certain that never any who faithfully improved the common grace they had, perished for want of special grace; nor can any show what could in reason have been done more for an unfruitful vineyard than God has done in it. God does not demand brick, and deny straw; no, whatever is required in the covenant, is promised in the covenant; so that if we perish, it is owing to ourselves.

2 The spirit of a slave; I was afraid, This ill affection toward God arose from his false notions of him; and nothing is more unworthy of God, nor more hinders our duty to him, than slavish fear. This has bondage and torment, and is directly opposite to that entire love which the great commandment requires. Note, Hard thoughts of God drive us from, and cramp us in his service. Those who think it

impossible to please him, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion.

25 and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

This depicts the conduct of all those who shut up their gifts from the active service of Christ, without actually prostituting them to unworthy uses. Fitly, therefore, may it, at least, comprehend those, to whom TRENCH refers, who, in the early Church, pleaded that they had enough to do with their own souls, and were afraid of losing them in trying to save others; and so, instead of being the salt of the earth, thought rather of keeping their own saltness by withdrawing sometimes into caves and wildernesses, from all those active ministries of love by which they might have served their brethren.

"Wicked" or "bad" means "falsehearted," as opposed to the others, who are emphatically styled "good servants." The addition of "slothful" is to mark the precise nature of his wickedness: it consisted, it seems, not in his doing anything against, but simply nothing for his master.

26 His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed:

His Lord's answer to this apology. His plea will stand him in no stead, it is overruled, nay, it is made to turn against him, and he is struck speechless with it; for here we have his conviction and his condemnation.

First, His conviction, Mt 25:26,27. Two things he is convicted of.

1. Slothfulness; Thou wicked and slothful servant. Note, Slothful servants are wicked servants, and will be reckoned with as such by their master, for he that is slothful in his work, and neglects the good that God has commanded, is brother to him that is a great waster, by doing the evil that God has forbidden, Pr 18:9. He that is careless in God's work, is near akin to him that is busy in the devil's work. Satis est mali nihil fecisse boni--To do no good is to incur very serious

blame. Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment; slothfulness makes way for wickedness; all become filthy, for there is none that doeth good, Ps 14:3. When the house is empty, the unclean spirit takes possession. Those that are idle in the affairs of their souls, are not only idle, but something worse, 1Ti 5:13. When men sleep, the enemy sows tares.

2. Self-contradiction (Mt 25:26,27); Thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers. Note, The hard thoughts which sinners have of God, though false and unjust, will be so far from justifying their wickedness and slothfulness, that they will rather aggravate and add to their guilt. Three ways this may be taken;

(a) "Suppose I had been so hard a master, shouldest not thou therefore have been the more diligent and careful to please me, if not for love, yet for fear, and for that reason oughtest not thou to have minded thy work?" If our God is a consuming fire, in consideration of that let us study how to serve him. Or thus,

(b) "If thou didst think me to be a hard master, and therefore durst not trade with the money thyself, for fear of losing by it, and being made to stand to the loss, yet thou mightest have put it into the hands of the exchangers, or goldsmith, mightest have brought it into the bank, and then at my coming, if I could not have had the greater improvement, by trade and merchandize (as of the other talents), yet I might have had the less improvement, of bare interest, and should have received my own with usury;" which, it seems, was a common practice at that time, and not disallowed by our Saviour. Note, If we could not, or durst not, do what we would, yet that excuse will not serve, when it will be made to appear that we did not do what we could and durst. If we could not find in our hearts to venture upon more difficult and hazardous services, yet will that justify us in shrinking from those that were more safe and easy? Something is better than nothing; if we fail of showing our courage in bold enterprises, yet we must not fail to testify our good will in honest

endeavours; and our Master will not despise the day of small things. Or thus,

(c) "Suppose I did reap where I sowed not, yet that is nothing to thee, for I had sowed upon thee, and the talent was my money which thou wast entrusted with, not only to keep, but to improve." Note, In the day of account, wicked and slothful servants will be left quite without excuse; frivolous pleas will be overruled, and every mouth will be stopped; and those who now stand so much upon their own justification will not have one word to say for themselves.

27 thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

His condemnation. The slothful servant is sentenced,

1. To be deprived of his talent (Mt 25:28,29); Take therefore the talent from him. The talents were first disposed of by the Master, as an absolute Owner, but this was now disposed of by him as a Judge; he takes it from the unfaithful servant, to punish him, and gives it to him that was eminently faithful, to reward him. And the meaning of this part of the parable we have in the reason of the sentence (Mt 25:29), To every one that hath shall be given. This may be applied,

(a) To the blessings of this life--worldly wealth and possessions. These we are entrusted with, to be used for the glory of God, and the good of those about us. Now he that hath these things, and useth them for these ends, he shall have abundance; perhaps abundance of the things themselves, at least, abundance of comfort in them, and of better things; but from him that hath not, that is, that hath these things as if he had them not, had not power to eat of them, or to do good with (Avaro deest, tam quod habet, quam quod non habet--The miser may be considered as destitute of what he has, as well as of what he has not), they shall be taken away. Solomon explains this, Pr 11:24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. Giving to the poor is trading with what we have, and the returns will be rich; it will multiply the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse: but

those that are sordid, and niggardly, and uncharitable, will find that those riches which are so got, perish by evil travail, Ec 5:13,14. Sometimes Providence strangely transfers estates from those that do no good with them to those that do; they are gathered for him that will pity the poor, Pr 28:8. See Pr 13:22,Job 27:16,17,Ec 2:26.

(b) We may apply it to the means of grace. They who are diligent in improving the opportunities they have, God will enlarge them, will set before them an open door (Re 3:8); but they who know not the day of their visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace hid from their eyes. For proof of this, go see what God did to Shiloh, Jer 7:12.

(c) We may apply it to the common gifts of the Spirit. He that hath these, and doeth good with them, shall have abundance; these gifts improve by exercise, and brighten by being used; the more we do, the more we may do, in religion; but those who stir not up the gift that is in them, who do not exert themselves according to their capacity, their gifts rust, and decay, and go out like a neglected fire. From his that hath not a living principle of grace in his soul, shall be taken away the common gifts which he hath, as the lamps of the foolish virgins went out for want of oil, Mt 25:8. Thus the arm of the idle shepherd, which he had sluggishly folded up in his bosom, comes to be dried up, and his right eye, which he had carelessly or wilfully shut, becomes utterly darkened, as it is threatened, Zec 11:17.

29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

He is sentenced to be cast into outer darkness, Mt 25:30. Here,

(1.) His character is that of an unprofitable servant. Note, Slothful servants will be reckoned with as unprofitable servants, who do nothing to the purpose of their coming into the world, nothing to answer the end of their birth or baptism, who are no way serviceable to the glory of God, the good of others, or the salvation

of their own souls. A slothful servant is a withered member in the body, a barren tree in the vineyard, an idle drone in the hive, he is good for nothing. In one sense, we are all unprofitable servants (Lu 17:10); we cannot profit God, Job 22:2. But to others, and to ourselves, it is required that we be profitable; if we be not, Christ will not own us as his servants: it is not enough not to do hurt, but we must do good, must bring forth fruit, and though thereby God is not profited, yet he is glorified, Joh 15:8.

(2.) His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour slides insensibly out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and it serves as a key to the whole; for, outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, is, in Christ's discourses, the common periphrasis of the miseries of the damned in hell. Their state is,

[1.] Very dismal; it is outer darkness. Darkness is uncomfortable and frightful: it was one of the plagues of Egypt. In hell there are chains of darkness, 2Pe 2:4. In the dark no man can work, a fit punishment for a slothful servant. It is outer darkness, out from the light of heaven, out from the joy of their Lord, into which the faithful servants were admitted; out from the feast. Compare Mt 8:12,22:13.

[2.] Very doleful; there is weeping, which bespeaks great sorrow, and gnashing of teeth, which bespeaks great vexation and indignation. This will be the portion of the slothful servant.

The Judgment of the Nations

31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

We have here a description of the process of the last judgment in the great day. There are some passages in it that are parabolical; as the separating between the sheep and the goats, and the dialogues between the judge and the persons judged: but there is no thread of

similitude carried through the discourse, and therefore it is rather to be called a draught or delineation of the final judgment, than a parable; it is, as it were, the explanation of the former parables. And here we have,

The placing of the judge upon the judgment-seat (Mt 25:31); When the Son of man shall come. Observe here,

1. That there is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery, in the world of recompence or retribution, according to what he did in this world of trial and probation, which is to be judged of by the rule of the everlasting gospel.

2 The administration of the judgment of the great day is committed to the Son of man; for by him God will judge the world (Ac 17:31), and to him all judgment is committed, and therefore the judgment of that day, which is the centre of all. Here, as elsewhere, when the last judgment is spoken of, Christ is called the son of man, because he is to judge the sons of men (and, being himself of the same nature, he is the more unexceptionable); and because his wonderful condescension to take upon him our nature, and to become the son of man, will be recompensed by this exaltation in that day, and an honour put upon the human nature.

3. Christ's appearing to judge the world will be splendid and glorious. Agrippa and Bernice came to the judgment-seat with great pomp (Ac 25:23); but that was (as the original word is) great fancy. Christ will come to the judgment-seat in real glory: the Sun of righteousness shall then shine in his meridian lustre, and the Prince of the kings of the earth shall show the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honours of his excellent majesty; and all the world shall see what the saints only do now believe--that he is the brightness of his Father's glory. He shall come not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as mediator: his first coming was under a black cloud of obscurity; his second will be in a bright cloud of glory. The assurance Christ gave his disciples of his future glory,

might help to take off the offence of the cross, and his approaching disgrace and suffering.

4. When Christ comes in his glory to judge the world, he will bring all his holy angels with him. This glorious person will have a glorious retinue, his holy myriads, who will be not only his attendants, but ministers of his justice; they shall come with him both for state and service. They must come to call the court (1Th 4:16), to gather the elect (Mt 24:31), to bundle the tares (Mt 13:40), to be witnesses of the saints' glory (Lu 12:8), and of sinners' misery, Re 14:10.

5. He will then sit upon the throne of his glory. He is now set down with the Father upon his throne; and it is a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly; it is a throne of government, the throne of his father David; he is a priest upon that throne: but then he will sit upon the throne of glory, the throne of judgment. See Da 7:9,10. Solomon's throne, though there was not its like in any kingdom, was but a dunghill to it. Christ, in the days of his flesh, was arraigned as a prisoner at the bar; but at his second coming, he will sit as a judge upon the bench.

32 and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

The distinction that will then be made between the precious and the vile; He shall separate them one from another, as the tares and wheat are separated at the harvest, the good fish and the bad at the shore, the corn and chaff in the floor. Wicked and godly here dwell together in the same kingdoms, cities, churches, families, and are not certainly distinguishable one from another; such are the infirmities of saints, such the hypocrisies of sinners, and one event to both: but in that day they will be separated, and parted for ever; Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal 3:18. They cannot separate themselves one from another in this world (1Co 5:10), nor can any one else separate them (Mt 13:29); but the Lord knows them that are his, and he can separate them. This separation will be so exact, that the most inconsiderable saints shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, nor the most plausible sinner hid

in the crowd of saints (Ps 1:5), but every one shall go to his own place. This is compared to a shepherd's dividing between the sheep and the goats; it is taken from Eze 34:17, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle. Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he now feeds his flock like a shepherd, and will shortly distinguish between those that are his, and those that are not, as Laban divided his sheep from Jacob's, and set three days' journey between them, Ge 30:35,36. 2 The godly are like sheep--innocent, mild, patient, useful: the wicked are like goats, a baser kind of animal, unsavoury and unruly. The sheep and goats are here feeding all day in the same pasture, but will be coted at night in different folds. Being thus divided, he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left, Mt 25:33. Christ puts honour upon the godly, as we show respect to those we set on our right hand; but the wicked shall rise to everlasting shame, Da 12:2. It is not said that he shall put the rich on his right hand, and the poor on his left; the learned and noble on his right hand, and unlearned and despised on his left; but the godly on his right hand, and the wicked on his left. All other divisions and subdivisions will then be abolished; but the great distinction of men into saints and sinners, sanctified and unsanctified, will remain for ever, and men's eternal state will be determined by it. The wicked took up with left-handed blessings, riches and honour, and so shall their doom be.

33 and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

The process of the judgement concerning each of these.

1. Concerning the godly, on the right hand. Their cause must be first despatched, that they may be assessors with Christ in the judgement of the wicked, whose misery will be aggravated by their seeing Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, Lu 13:28. Observe here,

The glory conferred upon them; the sentence by which they shall be not only acquitted, but preferred and rewarded (Mt 25:34); The king shall say unto them. He that was the Shepherd (which bespeaks the care and tenderness wherewith he will make this disquisition), is here the King, which bespeaks the authority wherewith he will then

pronounce the sentence: where the word of this King is, there is power. Here are two things in this sentence:

[1.] The acknowledging of the saints to be the blessed of the Lord; Come, ye blessed of my Father. First, He pronounces them blessed; and his saying they are blessed, makes them so. The law curses them for their many discontinuances; but Christ having redeemed them from the curse of the law, and purchased a blessing for them, commands a blessing on them. Secondly, Blessed of his Father; reproached and cursed by the world, but blessed of God. As the Spirit glorifies the Son (Joh 16:14), so the Son glorifies the Father by referring the salvation of the saints to him as the First Cause; all our blessings in heavenly things flow to us from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph 1:3. Thirdly, He calls them to come: this come is, in effect, "Welcome, ten thousand welcomes, to the blessings of my father; come to me, come to be for ever with me; you that followed me bearing the cross, now come along with me wearing the crown. The blessed of my Father are the beloved of my soul, that have been too long at a distance from me; come, now, come into my bosom, come into my arms, come into my dearest embraces!" O with what joy will this fill the hearts of the saints in that day! We now come boldly to the throne of grace, but we shall then come boldly to the throne of glory; and this word holds out the golden sceptre, with an assurance that our requests shall be granted to more than the half of the kingdom. Now the Spirit saith, Come, in the word; and the bride saith, Come, in prayer; and the result hereof is a sweet communion: but the perfection of bliss will be, when the King shall say, Come.

[2.] The admission of the saints into the blessedness and kingdom of the Father; Inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

First, the happiness they shall be possessed of is very rich; we are told what it is by him who had reason to know it, having purchased it for them, and possessed it himself.

1. It is a kingdom; which is reckoned the most valuable possession on earth, and includes the greatest wealth and honour. Those that

inherit kingdoms, wear all the glories of the crown, enjoy all the pleasures of the court, and command the peculiar treasures of the provinces; yet this is but a faint resemblance of the felicities of the saints in heaven. They that here are beggars, prisoners, accounted as the off-scouring of all things, shall then inherit a kingdom, Ps 113:7,Re 2:26,27.

2. It is a kingdom prepared: the happiness must needs be great, for it is the product of the divine counsels. Note, There is great preparation made for the entertainment of the saints in the kingdom of glory. The Father designed it for them in his thoughts of love, and provided it for them in the greatness of his wisdom and power. The Son purchased it for them, and is entered as the fore-runner to prepare a place, Joh 14:2. And the blessed Spirit, in preparing them for the kingdom, in effect, is preparing it for them.

3. It is prepared for them. This bespeaks,

(a) The suitableness of this happiness; it is in all points adapted to the nature of a soul, and to the new nature of a a sanctified soul.

(b) Their property and interest in it. It is prepared on purpose for them; not only for such as you, but for you, you by name, you personally and particularly, who were chosen to salvation through sanctification.

4. It is prepared from the foundation of the world. This happiness was designed for the saints, and they for it, before time began, from all eternity, Eph 1:4. The end, which is last in execution, is first in intention. Infinite Wisdom had an eye to the eternal glorification of the saints, from the first founding of the creation: All things are for your sakes, 2Co 4:15. Or, it denotes the preparation of the place of this happiness, which is to be the seat and habitation of the blessed, in the very beginning of the work of creation, Ge 1:1. There in the heaven of heavens the morning stars were singing together, when the foundations of the earth were fastened, Job 38:4-7.

Secondly, The tenure by which they shall hold and possess it is very good, they shall come and inherit it. What we come to by inheritance, is not got by any procurement of our own, but purely, as the lawyers express it, by the act of God. It is God that makes heirs, heirs of heaven. We come to an inheritance by virtue of our sonship, our adoption; if children, then heirs. A title by inheritance is the sweetest and surest title; it alludes to possessions in the land of Canaan, which passed by inheritance, and would not be alienated longer than to the year of Jubilee. Thus is the heavenly inheritance indefeasible, and unalienable. Saints, in this world, are as heirs under age, tutored and governed till the time appointed of the Father (Ga 4:1,2); and then they shall be put in full possession of that which now through grace they have a title to; Come, and inherit it.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 for I was ahungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

The ground of this (Mt 25:35,36), For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat. We cannot hence infer that any good words of ours merit the happiness of heaven, by any intrinsic worth or excellency in them: our goodness extends not unto God; but it is plain that Jesus Christ will judge the world by the same rule by which he governs it, and therefore will reward those that have been obedient to that law; and mention will be made of their obedience, not as their title, but as their evidence of an interest in Christ, and his purchase. This happiness will be adjudged to obedient believers, not upon a quantum meruit--an estimate of merit, which supposes a proportion between the work and the reward, but upon the promise of God purchased by Jesus Christ, and the benefit of it secured under certain provisos and limitations; and it is the purchase and promise that give the title, the obedience is only the qualification of the person designed. An estate made by deed or will upon condition, when the condition is performed according to the true intent of the donor or testator, becomes absolute; and then, though the title be built purely upon the deed or will, yet the performing of the condition must be given in evidence: and so it

comes in here; for Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to those only that obey him, and who patiently continue in well doing.

Now the good works here mentioned are such as we commonly call works of charity to the poor: not but that many will be found on the right hand who never were in a capacity to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, but were themselves fed and clothed by the charity of others; but one instance of sincere obedience is put for all the rest, and it teaches us this in general, that faith working by love is all in all in Christianity; Show me thy faith by thy works; and nothing will abound to a good account hereafter, but the fruits of righteousness in a good conversation now. The good works here described imply three things, which must be found in all that are saved.

[1.] Self-denial, and contempt of the world; reckoning the things of the world no further good things, than as we are enabled to do good with them: and those who have not wherewithal to do good, must show the same disposition, by being contentedly and cheerfully poor. Those are fit for heaven that are mortified to the earth.

[2.] Love to our brethren; which is the second great commandment, the fulfilling of the law, and an excellent preparative for the world of everlasting love. We must give proof of this love by our readiness to do good, and to communicate; good wishes are but mockeries without good works, Jam 2:15,16,1Jo 3:17. Those that have not to give, must show the same disposition some other way.

[3.] A believing regard to Jesus Christ. That which is here rewarded is the relieving of the poor for Christ's sake, out of love to him, and with an eye to him. This puts an excellency upon the good work, when in it we serve the Lord Christ, which those may do that work for their own living, as well as those that help to keep others alive. See Eph 6:5-7. Those good works shall then be accepted which are done in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col 3:17.

I was hungry, that is, my disciples and followers were so, either by the persecutions of enemies for well-doing, or by the common dispensations of Providence; for in these things there is one event to the righteous and wicked: and you gave them meat. Note, First, Providence so variously orders and disposes of the circumstances of his people in this world, as that while some are in a condition to give relief, others need it. It is no new thing for those that are feasted with the dainties of heaven to be hungry and thirsty, and to want daily food; for those that are at home in God, to be strangers in a strange land; for those that have put on Christ, to want clothes to keep them warm; for those that have healthful souls, to have sickly bodies; and for those to be in prison, that Christ has made free. Secondly, Works of charity and beneficence, according as our ability is, are necessary to salvation; and there will be more stress laid upon them in the judgment of the great day, than is commonly imagined; these must be the proofs of our love, and of our professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, 2Co 9:13. But they that show no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy.

36 naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Now this reason is modestly excepted against by the righteous, but is explained by the Judge himself.

1. It is questioned by the righteous, Mt 25:37-39. Not as if they were loth to inherit the kingdom, or were ashamed of their good deeds, or had not the testimony of their own consciences concerning them: but,

(1.) The expressions are parabolical, designed to introduce and impress these great truths, that Christ has a mighty regard to works of charity, and is especially pleased with kindnesses done to his people for his sake. Or,

(2.) They bespeak the humble admiration which glorified saints will be filled with, to find such poor and worthless services, as

theirs are, so highly celebrated, and richly rewarded: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Note, Gracious souls are apt to think meanly of their own good deeds; especially as unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Far from this is the temper of those who said, Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Isa 58:3. Saints in heaven will wonder what brought them thither, and that God should so regard them and their services. It even put Nathanael to the blush, to hear Christ's encomium of him: Whence knowest thou me? Joh 1:47,48. See Eph 3:20. "When saw we thee an hungered? We have seen the poor in distress many a time; but when saw we thee?" Note, Christ is more among us than we think he is; surely the Lord is in this place, by his word, his ordinances, his ministers, his Spirit, yea, and his poor, and we know it not: When thou wert under the fig-tree, I saw thee, Joh 1:48.

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

It is explained by the Judge himself (Mt 25:40); Inasmuch as ye have done it to these my brethren, to the least, to one of the least of them, ye have done it unto me. The good works of the saints, when they are produced in the great day,

(1.) Shall all be remembered; and not the least, not one of the least, overlooked, no not a cup of cold water.

(2.) They shall be interpreted most to their advantage, and the best construction that can be put upon them. As Christ makes the best of their infirmities, so he makes the most of their services.

We see what recompences Christ has for those that feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; but what will become of the godly poor, that had not wherewithal to do so? Must they be shut out? No,

[1.] Christ will own them, even the least of them, as his brethren; he will not be ashamed, nor think it any disparagement to him, to call them brethren, Heb 2:11. In the height of his glory, he will not disown his poor relations; Lazarus is there laid in his bosom, as a friend, as a brother. Thus he will confess them, Mt 10:32.

[2.] He will take the kindness done to them, as done to himself; Ye have done it unto me; which shows a respect to the poor that were relieved, as well as to the rich that did relieve them. Note, Christ espouses his people's cause, and interests himself in their interests, and reckons himself received, and love, and owned in them. If Christ himself were among us in poverty, how readily would we relieve him? In prison, how frequently would we visit him? We are ready to envy the honour they had, who ministered to him of their substance, Lu 8:3. Wherever poor saints and poor ministers are, there Christ is ready to receive our kindnesses in them, and they shall be put to his account.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 for I was ahungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

Here is the process concerning the wicked, those on the left hand. And in that we have,

(a) The sentence passed upon them, Mt 5:41. It was a disgrace to be set on the left hand; but that is not the worst of it, he shall say to them, Depart from me, ye cursed. Every word has terror in it, like that of the trumpet at mount Sinai, waxing louder and louder, every accent more and more doleful, and exclusive of comfort.

[1.] To be so near to Christ was some satisfaction, though under his frowns; but that will not be allowed, Depart from me. In this world they were often called to come to Christ, to come for life and rest, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls; justly therefore are they bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. "Depart from me the Fountain of all good, from me the Saviour, and therefore

from all hope of salvation; I will never have any thing more to say to you, or do with you." Here they said to the Almighty, Depart from us; then he will choose their delusions, and say to them, Depart from me. Note, It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ.

[2.] If they must depart, and depart from Christ, might they not be dismissed with a blessing, with one kind and compassionate word at least? No, Depart, ye cursed, They that would not come to Christ, to inherit a blessing, must depart from him under the burthen of a curse, that curse of the law on every one that breaks it, Gal 3:10. As they loved cursing, so it shall come unto them. But observe, The righteous are called the blessed of my Father; for their blessedness is owing purely to the grace of God and his blessing, but the wicked are called only ye cursed, for their damnation is of themselves. Hath God sold them? No, they have sold themselves, have laid themselves under the curse, Isa 50:1.

[3.] If they must depart, and depart with a curse, may they not go into some place of ease and rest? Will it not be misery enough for them to bewail their loss? No, there is a punishment of sense as well as loss; they must depart into fire, into torment as grievous as that of fire is to the body, and much more. This fire is the wrath of the eternal God fastening upon the guilty souls and consciences of sinners that have made themselves fuel for it. Our God is a consuming fire, and sinners fall immediately into his hands, Heb 10:31,Ro 2:8,9.

[4.] If into fire, may it not be some light or gentle fire? No, it is prepared fire; it is a torment ordained of old, Isa 30:33. The damnation of sinners is often spoken of as an act of the divine power; he is able to cast into hell. In the vessels of wrath he makes his power known; it is a destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. In it shall be seen what a provoked God can do to make a provoking creature miserable.

[5.] If into fire, prepared fire, O let it be but of short continuance, let them but pass through fire; no, the fire of God's wrath will be an

everlasting fire; a fire, that, fastening and preying upon immortal souls, can never go out for want of fuel; and, being kindled and kept burning by the wrath of an immortal God, can never go out for want of being blown and stirred up; and, the streams of mercy and grace being for ever excluded, there is nothing to extinguish it. If a drop of water be denied to cool the tongue, buckets of water will never be granted to quench this flame.

[6.] If they must be doomed to such a state of endless misery, yet may they not have some good company there? No, none but the devil and his angels, their sworn enemies, that helped to bring them to this misery, and will triumph over them in it. They served the devil while they lived, and therefore are justly sentenced to be where he is, as those that served Christ, are taken to be with him where he is. It is terrible to lie in a house haunted with devils; what will it be then to be companions with them for ever? Observe here, First, Christ intimates that there is one that is the prince of the devils, the ring-leader of the rebellion, and that the rest are his angels, his messengers, by whose agency he supports his kingdom. Christ and his angels will in that day triumph over the dragon and his, Re 12:7,8. Secondly, The fire is said to be prepared, not primarily for the wicked, as the kingdom is prepared for the righteous; but it was originally intended for the devil and his angels. If sinners make themselves associates with Satan by indulging their lusts, they may thank themselves if they become sharers in that misery which was prepared for him and his associates. Calvin notes upon this, that therefore the torment of the damned is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, to cut off all hope of escaping it; the devil and his angels are already made prisoners in the pit, and can worms of the earth think to escape?

(b) The reason of this sentence assigned. God's judgments are all just, and he will be justified in them. He is Judge himself, and therefore the heavens shall declare his righteousness.

Now,

[1.] All that is charged upon them, on which the sentence is grounded, is, omission; as, before, the servant was condemned, not for wasting his talent, but for burying it; so here, he doth not say, "I was hungry and thirsty, for you took my meat and drink from me; I was a stranger, for you banished me; naked, for you stripped me; in prison, for you laid me there:" but, "When I was in these distresses, you were so selfish, so taken up with your own ease and pleasure, made so much of your labour, and were so loth to part with your money, that you did not minister as you might have done to my relief and succour. You were like those epicures that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Am 6:4-6. Note, Omissions are the ruin of thousands.

[2.] It is the omission of works of charity to the poor. They are not sentenced for omitting their sacrifices and burnt-offerings (they abounded in these, Ps 50:8), but for omitting the weightier matter of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. The Ammonites and Moabites were excluded the sanctuary, because they met not Israel with bread and water, De 23:3,4. Note, Uncharitableness to the poor is a damning sin. If we will not be brought to works of charity by the hope of reward, let us be influenced by fear of punishment; for they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy. Observe, He doth not say, "I was sick, and you did not cure me; in prison, and you did not release me" (perhaps that was more than they could do); but, "You visited me not, which you might have done." Note, Sinners will be condemned, at the great day, for the omission of that good which it was in the power of their hand to do. But if the doom of the uncharitable be so dreadful, how much more intolerable will the doom of the cruel be, the doom of persecutors! Now this reason of the sentence is.

First, Objected against by the prisoners (Mt 25:44); Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst? Condemned sinners, though they have no plea that will bear them out, will yet in vain offer at excuses. Now. 1 The manner of their pleading bespeaks their present precipitation. They cut it short, as men in haste; when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked? They care not to repeat the

charge, as conscious to themselves of their own guilt, and unable to bear the terrors of the judgment. Nor will they have time allowed them to insist upon such frivolous pleas; for it is all (as we say) but "trifling with the court." 2 The matter of their plea bespeaks their former inconsideration of that which they might have known, but would not till now that it was too late. They that had slighted and persecuted poor Christians, would not own that they had slighted and persecuted Christ: no, they never intended any affront to him, nor expected that so great a matter would have been made of it. They imagined it was only a company of poor, weak, silly, and contemptible people, who made more ado than needed about religion, that they put those slights upon; but they who do so, will be made to know, either in the day of their conversion, as Paul, or of their condemnation, as these here, that it was Jesus whom they persecuted. And, if they say, Behold, we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? Pr 24:11,12.

Secondly, Justified by the Judge, who will convince all the ungodly of the hard speeches spoken against him in those that are his, Jude 1:15. He goes by this rule (Mt 25:45); Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. Note, What is done against the faithful disciples and followers of Christ, even the least of them, he takes as done against himself. He is reproached and persecuted in them, for they are reproached and persecuted for his sake, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted. He that touches them, touches him in a part no less tender than the apple of his eye.

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee ahungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you,

Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Lastly, Here is the execution of both these sentences, Mt 25:46. Execution is the life of the law, and Christ will take care that that be done according to the sentence.

1. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. Sentence will then be executed speedily, and no reprieve granted, nor any time allowed to move in arrest of judgment. The execution of the wicked is first mentioned; for first the tares are gathered and burned. Note,

(a) The punishment of the wicked in the future state will be an everlasting punishment, for that state is an unalterable state. It can neither be thought that sinners should change their own natures, nor that God should give his grace to change them, when in this world the day of grace was misspent, the Spirit of grace resisted, and the means of grace abused and baffled.

(b) The wicked shall be made to go away into that punishment; not that they will go voluntarily, no, they are driven from light into darkness; but it bespeaks an irresistible conviction of guilt, and a final despair of mercy.

2. The righteous shall go away into life eternal; that is, they shall inherit the kingdom, Mt 25:34. Note,

(a) Heaven is life, it is all happiness. The life of the soul results from its union with God by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as that of the body from its union with the soul by the animal spirits. The heavenly life consists in the vision and fruition of God, in a perfect conformity to him, and an immediate uninterrupted communion with him.

(b) It is eternal life. There is no death to put a period to the life itself, nor old age to put a period to the comfort of it, or any sorrow to embitter it. Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way; and so shall our end be. Even the heathen had some notion of these different states of good and bad in the other world. Cicero in his Tusculan Questions, lib. 1, brings in Socrates thus speaking, Duæ sunt viæ,

duplicesque cursus è corpore exeuntium: nam qui se vitiis humanis contaminarunt, et libidinibus se tradiderunt, iis devium quoddam iter est, seclusum à consilio deorum; qui autem se integros castosque servarunt, quibusque fuerit minima cum corporibus contagio, suntque in corporibus humanis vitam imitati deorum, iis ad illos a quibus sunt profecti facile patet reditus--Two paths open before those who depart out of the body. Such as have contaminated themselves with human vices, and yielded to their lusts, occupy a path that conducts them far from the assembly and council of the gods; but the upright and chaste, such as have been least defiled by the flesh, and have imitated, while in the body, the gods, these find it easy to return to the sublime beings from whom they came.

Matthew-26

The Leaders Plot against Jesus

1 And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

Here is,

1 The notice Christ gave his disciples of the near approach of his sufferings, Mt 26:1,2. While his enemies were preparing trouble for him, he was preparing himself and his followers for it. He had often told them of his sufferings at a distance, now he speaks of them as at the door; after two days, Note, After many former notices of trouble we still have need of fresh ones. Observe,

(a) The time when he gave this alarm; when he had finished all these sayings.

[1.] Not till he had finished all he had to say. Note, Christ's witnesses die not till they have finished their testimony. When Christ had gone through his undertaking as a prophet, he entered upon the execution of his office as a priest.

[2.] After he had finished these sayings, which go immediately before; he had bid his disciples to expect sad times, bonds and afflictions, and then tells them, The Son of man is betrayed; to intimate that they should fare no worse than he should, and that his sufferings should take the sting out of theirs. Note, Thoughts of a suffering Christ are great supports to a suffering Christian, suffering with him and for him.

(b) The thing itself he gave them notice of; The Son of man is betrayed. The thing was not only so sure, but so near, that it was as good as done. Note, It is good to make sufferings that are yet to come, as present to us. He is betrayed, for Judas was then contriving and designing to betray him.

2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

God 'passed over' those houses where a lamb had been sacrificed in the place of those under judgment (Exo_12:1-13).

3 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

The plot of the chief priests, and scribes, and elders of the people, against the life of our Lord Jesus, Mt 5:3-5. Many consultations had been held against the life of Christ but this plot was laid deeper than any yet, for the grandees were all engaged in it. The chief priests, who presided in ecclesiastical affairs; the elders, who were judges in civil matters, and the scribes, who, as doctors of the law, were directors to both--these composed the sanhedrim, or great council that governed the nation, and these were confederate against Christ. Observe

(1.) The place where they met; in the palace of the high priest, who was the centre of their unity in this wicked project.

(2.) The plot itself; to take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him; nothing less than his blood, his life-blood, would serve their turn. So cruel and bloody have been the designs of Christ's and his church's enemies.

(3.) The policy of the plotters; Not on the feast-day. Why not? Was it in regard to the holiness of the time, or because they would not be disturbed in the religious services of the day? No, but lest there should be an uproar among the people. They knew Christ had a great interest in the common people, of whom there was a great concourse on the feast-day, and they would be in danger of taking up arms against their rulers, if they should offer to lay violent hands on Christ, whom all held for a prophet. They were awed, not by the fear of God, but by the fear of the people; all their concern was for their own safety, not God's honour. They would have it done at the feast; for it was a tradition of the Jews, that malefactors should be put to death at one of the three feasts, especially rebels and impostors, that all Israel might see and fear; but not on the feast-day.

4 and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.

People in Jerusalem were excited as the festival approached. The chief priests therefore planned to wait until it was finished before arresting Jesus, as they did not want to be responsible for a riot (Mat_26:3-5). But when Judas came to them and offered to betray Jesus to them, their task was made easier. Judas could advise them of Jesus' movements, so that they could arrest him quietly without the people knowing (Mat_26:14-16).

5 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Between the account of the Jews' plotting and Judas' treachery, Matthew and Mark have inserted the account of an anointing of Jesus at Bethany. This may have been the anointing recorded earlier by John, and could have been put into the story at this point to contrast the loving devotion of a true believer with the violence and

treachery of others. If the three accounts refer to the same occasion, Simon the leper must have been the owner of the house where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Possibly he was their father (Mat_26:6-13; see notes on Joh_12:1-8).

The singular kindness of a good woman to our Lord Jesus in anointing his head, Mt 26:6,7. It was in Bethany, a village hard by Jerusalem, and in the house of Simon the leper. Probably, he was one who had been miraculously cleansed from his leprosy by our Lord Jesus, and he would express his gratitude to Christ by entertaining him; nor did Christ disdain to converse with him, to come in to him, and sup with him. Though he was cleansed, yet he was called Simon the leper. Those who are guilty of scandalous sins, will find that, though the sin be pardoned, the reproach will cleave to them, and will hardly be wiped away. The woman that did this, is supposed to have been Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was the same that was called Mary Magdalene. She had a box of ointment very precious, which she poured upon the head of Christ as he sat at meat. This, among us, would be a strange sort of compliment. But it was then accounted the highest piece of respect; for the smell was very grateful, and the ointment itself refreshing to the head. David had his head anointed, Ps 23:5,Lu 7:46. Now this may be looked upon,

1. As an act of faith in our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed. To signify that she believed in him as God's anointed, whom he had set king, she anointed him, and made him her king. They shall appoint themselves one head, Ho 1:11. This is kissing the Son.

2. As an act of love and respect to him. Some think that this was he who loved much at first, and washed Christ's feet with her tears (Lu 7:38,47); and that she had not left her first love, but was now as affectionate in the devotions of a grown Christian as she was in those of a young beginner. Note, Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good, no, nor good enough, to bestow upon him.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

The offence which the disciples took at this. They had indignation (Mt 26:8,9), were vexed to see this ointment thus spent, which they thought might have been better bestowed.

1. See how they expressed their offence at it. They said, To what purpose is this waste? Now this bespeaks,

(1.) Want of tenderness toward this good woman, in interpreting her over-kindness (suppose it was so) to be wastefulness. Charity teaches us to put the best construction upon every thing that it will bear, especially upon the words and actions of those that are zealously affected in doing a good thing, though we may think them not altogether so discreet in it as they might be. It is true, there may be over-doing in well-doing; but thence we must learn to be cautious ourselves, lest we run into extremes, but not to be censorious of others; because that which we may impute to the want of prudence, God may accept as an instance of abundant love. We must not say, Those do too much in religion, that do more than we do, but rather aim to do as much as they.

(2.) Want of respect to their Master. The best we can make of it, is, that they knew their Master was perfectly dead to all the delights of sense; he that was so much grieved for the affliction of Joseph, cared not for being anointed with the chief ointments, Am 6:6. And therefore they thought such pleasures ill bestowed upon one who took so little pleasure in them. But supposing that, it did not become them to call it waste, when they perceived that he admitted and accepted it as a token of his friend's love. Note, We must take heed of thinking any thing waste, which is bestowed upon the Lord Jesus, either by others or by ourselves. We must not think that time waste, that is spent in the service of Christ, or that money waste, which is laid out in any work of piety; for, though it seem to be cast upon the waters, to be thrown down the river, we shall find it again, to advantage, after many days, Ec 11:1.

2. See how they excused their offence at it, and what pretence they made for it; This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. Note, It is no new thing for bad affections to shelter themselves under specious covers; for people to shift off works of piety under colour of works of charity.

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

The reproof Christ gave to his disciples for the offence at this good woman (Mt 26:10,11); Why trouble ye the woman? Note, It is a great trouble to good people to have their good works censured and misconstrued; and it is a thing that Jesus Christ takes very ill. He here took part with a good, honest, zealous, well-meaning woman, against all his disciples, though they seemed to have so much reason on their side; so heartily does he espouse the cause of the offended little ones, Mt 18:10.

Observe his reason; You have the poor always with you. Note,

1. There are some opportunities of doing and getting good which are constant, and which we must give constant attendance to the improvement of. Bibles we have always with us, sabbaths always with us, and so the poor, we have always with us. Note, Those who have a heart to do good, never need complain for want of opportunity. The poor never ceased even out of the land of Israel, De 15:11. We cannot but see some in this world, who call for our charitable assistance, who are as God's receivers, some poor members of Christ, to whom he will have kindness shown as to himself.

2. There are other opportunities of doing and getting good, which come but seldom, which are short and uncertain, and require more peculiar diligence in the improvement of them, and which ought to be preferred before the other; "Me ye have not always, therefore use me while ye have me." Note, (1.) Christ's constant bodily presence was not to be expected here in this world; it was expedient that he should go away; his real presence in the eucharist is a fond

and groundless conceit, and contradicts what he here said, Me ye have not always. (2.) Sometimes special works of piety and devotion should take place of common works of charity. The poor must not rob Christ; we must do good to all, but especially to the household of faith.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

Christ's approbation and commendation of the kindness of this good woman. The more his servants and their services are cavilled at by men, the more he manifests his acceptance of them. He calls it a good work (Mt 26:10), and says more in praise of it than could have been imagined; particularly,

1. That the meaning of it was mystical (Mt 26:12); She did it for my burial.

(a) Some think that she intended it so, and that the woman better understood Christ's frequent predictions of his death and sufferings than the apostles did; for which they were recompensed with the honour of being the first witnesses of his resurrection.

(b) However, Christ interpreted it so; and he is always willing to make the best, to make the most of his people's well-meant words and actions. This was as it were the embalming of his body; because the doing of that after his death would be prevented by his resurrection, it was therefore done before; for it was fit that it should be done some time, to show that he was still the Messiah, even when he seemed to be triumphed over by death. The disciples thought the ointment wasted, which was poured upon his head. "But," saith he, "If so much ointment were poured upon a dead body, according to the custom of your country, you would not grudge it, or think it waste. Now this is, in effect, so; the body she anoints is as good as dead, and her kindness is very seasonable for that purpose; therefore rather than call it waste, put it upon that score."

2. That the memorial of it should be honourable (Mt 26:13); This shall be told for a memorial. This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that the preachers of Christ crucified, and the inspired writers of the history of his passion, could not choose but take notice of this passage, proclaim the notice of it, and perpetuate the memorial of it. And being once enrolled in these records, it was graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever, and could not possibly be forgotten. None of all the trumpets of fame sound so loud and so long as the everlasting gospel. Note,

(a) The story of the death of Christ, though a tragical one, is gospel, glad-tidings, because he died for us.

(b) The gospel was to be preached in the whole world; not in Judea only, but in every nation, to every creature. Let the disciples take notice of this, for their encouragement, that their sound should go to the ends of the earth.

(c) Though the honour of Christ is principally designed in the gospel, yet the honour of his saints and servants is not altogether overlooked. The memorial of this woman was to be preserved, not by dedicating a church to her, or keeping an annual feast in honour of her, or preserving a piece of her broken box for a sacred relic; but by mentioning her faith and piety in the preaching of the gospel, for example to others, Heb 6:12. Hereby honour redounds to Christ himself, who in this world, as well as in that to come, will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

13 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
15 and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

Immediately after an instance of the greatness kindness done to Christ, follows an instance of the greatest unkindness; such mixture

is there of good and bad among the followers of Christ; he hath some faithful friends, and some false and feigned ones. What could be more base than this agreement which Judas here made with the chief priests, to betray Christ to them?

I The traitor was Judas Iscariot; he is said to be one of the twelve, as an aggravation of his villany. When the number of the disciples was multiplied (Ac 6:1), no marvel if there were some among them that were a shame and trouble to them; but when there were but twelve, and one of them was a devil, surely we must never expect any society perfectly pure on this side heaven. The twelve were Christ's chosen friends, that had the privilege of his special favour; they were his constant followers, that had the benefit of his most intimate converse, that upon all accounts had reason to love him and be true to him; and yet one of them betrayed him. Note, No bonds of duty or gratitude will hold those that have a devil, Mk 5:3,4.

II. Here is the proffer which he made to the chief priests; he went to them, and said, What will ye give me? Mt 26:15. They did not send for him, nor make the proposal to him; they could not have thought that one of Christ's own disciples should be false to him. Note, There are those, even among Christ's followers, that are worse than any one can imagine them to be, and want nothing but opportunity to show it.

Observe,

1. What Judas promised; "I will deliver him unto you; I will let you know where he is, and undertake to bring you to him, at such a convenient time and place that you may seize him without noise, or danger of an uproar." In their conspiracy against Christ, this was it they were at a loss about, Mt 26:4,5. They durst not meddle with him in public, and knew not where to find him in private. Here the matter rested, and the difficulty was insuperable; till Judas came, and offered them his service. Note, Those that give up themselves to be led by the devil, find him readier than they imagine to help

them at a dead lift, as Judas did the chief priests. Though the rulers, by their power and interest, could kill him when they had him in their hands, yet none but a disciple could betray him. Note, The greater profession men make of religion, and the more they are employed in the study and service of it, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God. If Judas had not been an apostle, he could not have been a traitor; if men had known the way of righteousness, they could not have abused it.

I will deliver him unto you. He did not offer himself, nor did they tamper with him, to be a witness against Christ, though they wanted evidence, Mt 26:59. And if there had been any thing to be alleged against him, which had but the colour of proof that he was an impostor, Judas was the likeliest person to have attested it; but this is an evidence of the innocency of our Lord Jesus, that his own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery.

2. What he asked in consideration of this undertaking; What will ye give me? This was the only thing that made Judas betray his Master; he hoped to get money by it: his Master had not given him any provocation, though he knew from the first that he had a devil; yet, for aught that appears, he showed the same kindness to him that he did to the rest, and put no mark of disgrace upon him that might disoblige him; he had placed him in a post that pleased him, had made him purse-bearer, and though he had embezzled the common stock (for he is called a thief, Joh 12:6), yet we do not find he was in any danger of being called to account for it; nor does it appear that he had any suspicion that the gospel was a cheat: no, it was not the hatred of his Master, nor any quarrel with him, but purely the love of money; that, and nothing else, made Judas a traitor.

What will ye give me? Why, what did he want? Neither bread to eat, nor raiment to put on; neither necessaries nor conveniences. Was not he welcome, wherever his Master was? Did he not fare as

he fared? Had he not been but just now nobly entertained at a supper in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and a little before at another, where no less a person than Martha herself waited at table? And yet this covetous wretch could not be content, but comes basely cringing to the priests with, What will ye give me? Note, It is not the lack of money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil, and particularly of apostasy from Christ; witness Demas, 2Ti 4:10. Satan tempted our Saviour with this bait, All these things will I give thee (Mt 4:9); but Judas offered himself to be tempted with it; he asks, What will ye give me? as if his Master was a commodity that stuck on his hands.

III. Here is the bargain which the chief priests made with him; they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; thirty shekels, which in our money is about three pounds eight shillings, so some; three pounds fifteen shillings, so others. It should seem, Judas referred himself to them, and was willing to take what they were willing to give; he catches at the first offer, lest the next should be worse. Judas had not been wont to trade high, and therefore a little money went a great way with him. By the law (Ex 21:32), thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave--a goodly price, at which Christ was valued! Zec 11:13. No wonder that Zion's sons, though comparable to fine gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, when Zion's King himself was thus undervalued. They covenanted with him; estesan--appenderunt--they paid it down, so some; gave him his wages in hand, to secure him and to encourage him.

IV. Here is the industry of Judas, in pursuance of his bargain (Mt 26:16); he sought opportunity to betray him, his head was still working to find out how he might do it effectually. Note, 1. It is a very wicked thing to seek opportunity to sin, and to devise mischief; for it argues the heart fully set in men to do evil, and a malice prepense. 2. Those that are in, think they must on, though the matter be ever so bad. After he had made that wicked bargain, he had time to repent, and to revoke it; but now by his covenant the devil has one hank more upon him than he had, and tells him that

he must be true to his word, though ever so false to his Master, as Herod must behead John for his oath's sake.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

After he had made that wicked bargain, Judas had time to repent, and to revoke it; but when lesser acts of dishonesty have hardened the conscience men do without hesitation that which is more shameful.

Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples

17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

We have here an account of Christ's keeping the passover. Being made under the law, he submitted to all the ordinances of it, and to this among the rest; it was kept in remembrance of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the birth-day of that people; it was a tradition of the Jews, that in the days of the Messiah they should be redeemed on the very day of their coming out of Egypt; and it was exactly fulfilled, for Christ died the day after the passover, in which day they began their march.

I The time when Christ ate the passover, was the usual time appointed by God, and observed by the Jews (Mt 26:17); the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, which that year happened on the fifth day of the week, which is our Thursday. Some have advanced a suggestion, that our Lord Jesus celebrated the passover at this time of day sooner than other people did; but the learned Dr. Whitby has largely disproved it.

II The place where, was particularly appointed by himself to the disciples, upon their enquiry (Mt 26:17); they asked, Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover? Perhaps Judas was one of those that asked this question (where he would eat the passover,) that he might know the better how to lay his train; but the rest of the disciples asked it as usual, that they might do their duty.

1. They took it for granted that their Master would eat the passover, though he was at this time persecuted by the chief priests, and his life sought; they knew that he would not be put by his duty, either by frightenings without or fears within. Those do not follow Christ's example who make it an excuse for their not attending on the Lord's supper, our gospel passover, that they have many troubles and many enemies, are full of care and fear; for, if so, they have the more need of that ordinance, to help to silence their fears, and comfort them under their troubles, to help them in forgiving their enemies, and casting all their cares on God.

2. They knew very well that there must be preparation made for it, and that it was their business, as his servants, to make preparation; Where wilt thou that we prepare? Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be solemn preparation.

3. They knew that he had no house of his own wherein to eat the passover; in this, as in other things, for our sakes he became poor. Among all Zion's palaces there was none for Zion's King; but his kingdom was not of this world. See Joh 1:11.

4. They would not pitch upon a place without direction from him, and from him they had direction; he sent them to such a man (Mt 26:18), who probably was a friend and follower of his, and to his house he invited himself and his disciples.

(a) Tell him, My time is at hand; he means the time of his death, elsewhere called his hour (Joh 8:20,13:1); the time, the hour, fixed in the counsel of God, which his heart was upon, and which he had so often spoken of. He knew when it was at hand, and was busy accordingly; we know not our time (Ec 9:12), and therefore must never be off our watch; our time is always ready (Joh 7:6), and therefore we must be always ready. Observe, Because his time was at hand, he would keep the passover Note, The consideration of the near approach of death should quicken us to a diligent improvement of all our opportunities for our souls. Is our time at hand, and an eternity just before us? Let us then keep the feast with the

unleavened bread of sincerity. Observe, When our Lord Jesus invited himself to this good man's house, he sent him this intelligence, that his time was at hand. Note, Christ's secret is with them that entertain him in their hearts. Compare Joh 14:21,Re 3:20.

(b) Tell him, I will keep the passover at thy house. This was an instance of his authority, as the Master, which it is likely this man acknowledged; he did not beg, but command, the use of his house for this purpose. Thus, when Christ by his Spirit comes into the heart, he demands admission, as one whose own the heart is and cannot be denied, and he gains admission as one who has all power in the heart and cannot be resisted; if he saith, "I will keep a feast in such a soul," he will do it; for he works, and none can hinder; his people shall be willing, for he makes them so. I will keep the passover with my disciples. Note, Wherever Christ is welcome, he expects that his disciples should be welcome too. When we take God for our God, we take his people for our people.

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

Observe, the place for their eating the passover was pointed out by Christ to the disciples. He knows those hidden ones who favour his cause, and will graciously visit all who are willing to receive him. The disciples did as Jesus had appointed.

Normally the Jews killed the sacrificial lamb on the afternoon of Passover day, and ate it together in a meal that night (cf. Exo_12:6, 8). Jesus knew he was to die as the sacrificial lamb on Passover day, and therefore he prepared the meal a day earlier. He would eat the meal with his disciples the evening before Passover, but probably without a lamb, since he himself was to be the lamb.

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

They ate the passover according to the law (Mt 26:20); He sat down, in the usual table-gesture, not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink, in that posture, but sitting upright, though perhaps sitting low. It is the same word that is used

for his posture at other meals, Mt 9:10,Lu 7:37,Mt 26:7. It was only the first passover in Egypt, as most think, that was eaten with their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand, though all that might be in a sitting posture. His sitting down, denotes the composedness of his mind, when he addressed himself to this solemnity; He sat down with the twelve, Judas not excepted. By the law, they were to take a lamb for a household (Ex 12:3,4), which were to be not less than ten, nor more than twenty; Christ's disciples were his household. Note, They whom God has charged with families, must have their houses with them in serving the Lord.

21 And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples at the passover-supper. The usual subject of discourse at that ordinance, was the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (Ex 12:26,27); but the great Passover is now ready to be offered, and the discourse of that swallows up all talk of the other, (Jer 16:14,15). Here is,

1 The general notice Christ gives his disciples of the treachery that should be among them (Mt 26:21); One of you shall betray me. Observe,

(a) Christ knew it. We know not what troubles will befal us, nor whence they will arise: but Christ knew all his, which, as it proves his omniscience, so it magnifies his love, that he knew all things that should befal him, and yet did not draw back. He foresaw the treachery and baseness of a disciple of his own, and yet went on; took care of those that were given him, though he knew there was a Judas among them; would pay the price of our redemption, though he foresaw some would deny the Lord that bought them; and shed his blood, though he knew it would be trodden under foot as an unholy thing.

(b) When there was occasion, he let those about him know it. He had often told them that the Son of man should be betrayed; now he tells them that one of them should do it, that when they saw it,

they might not only be the less surprised, but have their faith in him confirmed, Joh 13:19,14:29.

2 The disciples' feelings on this occasion, Mt 26:22. How did they take it?

(a) They were exceeding sorrowful.

[1.] It troubled them much to hear that their Master should be betrayed. When Peter was first told of it, he said, Be it far from thee; and therefore it must needs be a great trouble to him and the rest of them, to hear that it was very near to him.

[2.] It troubled them more to hear that one of them should do it. It would be a reproach to the fraternity, for an apostle to prove a traitor, and this grieved them; gracious souls grieve for the sins of others, especially of those that have made a more than ordinary profession of religion. 2Co 11:29.

[3.] It troubled them most of all, that they were left at uncertainty which of them it was, and each of them was afraid for himself, lest, as Hazael speaks (2Ki 8:13), he was the dog that should do this great thing. Those that know the strength and subtlety of the tempter, and their own weakness and folly, cannot but be in pain for themselves, when they hear that the love of many will wax cold.

(b) They began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?

[1.] They were not apt to suspect Judas. Though he was a thief, yet, it seems, he had carried it so plausibly, that those who were intimate with him, were not jealous of him: none of them so much as looked upon him, much less said, Lord, is it Judas? Note, It is possible for a hypocrite to go through the world, not only undiscovered, but unsuspected; like bad money so ingeniously counterfeited that nobody questions it.

[2.] They were apt to suspect themselves; Lord, is it I? Though they were not conscious to themselves of any inclination that way (no such thought had ever entered into their mind), yet they feared the worst, and asked Him who knows us better than we know ourselves, Lord, is it I? Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy, especially in trying times. We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, and therefore have reason, not to be high-minded, but fear. It is observable that our Lord Jesus, just before he instituted the Lord's supper, put his disciples upon this trial and suspicion of themselves, to teach us to examine and judge ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

3. Further information given them concerning this matter (Mt 26:23,24), where Christ tells them,

(a) That the traitor was a familiar friend; He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, that is, One of you that are now with me at the table. He mentions this, to make the treachery appear the more exceeding sinful. Note, External communion with Christ in holy ordinances is a great aggravation of our falseness to him. It is base ingratitude to dip with Christ in the dish, and yet betray him.

(b) That this was according to the scripture, which would take off the offence at it. Was Christ betrayed by a disciple? So it was written (Ps 61:9); He that did eat bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. The more we see of the fulfilling of the scripture in our troubles, the better we may bear them.

(c) That it would prove a very dear bargain to the traitor; Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. This he said, not only to awaken the conscience of Judas, and bring him to repent, and revoke his bargain, but for warning to all others to take heed of sinning like Judas; though God can serve his own purposes by the sins of men, that doth not make the sinner's condition the less

woeful; It had been good for that man, if he had not been born. Note, The ruin that attends those who betray Christ, is so great, that it were more eligible by far not be at all than to be thus miserable.

4. The conviction of Judas, Mt 26:25.

(a) He asked, Is it I? to avoid coming under the suspicion of guilt by his silence. He knew very well that it was he, and yet wished to appear a stranger to such a plot. Note, Many whose consciences condemn them are very industrious to justify themselves before men, and put a good face on it, with, Lord, is it I? He could not but know that Christ knew, and yet trusted so much to his courtesy, because he had hitherto concealed it, that he had the impudence to challenge him to tell: or, perhaps, he was so much under the power of infidelity, that he imagined Christ did not know it, as those who said, The Lord shall not see (Ps 94:7), and asked, Can he judge through the dark clouds?

(b) Christ soon answered this question; Thou hast said, that is, It is as thou hast said. This is not spoken out so plainly as Nathan's Thou art the man; but it was enough to convict him, and, if his heart had not been wretchedly hardened, to have broken the neck of his plot, when he saw it discovered to his Master, and discovered by him. Note, They who are contriving to betray Christ, will, some time or other, betray themselves, and their own tongues will fall upon them.

22 And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I ?

The apostles were surprised when Jesus announced that one of them would betray him, for they did not suspect treachery among them. Perhaps they thought that one of them might unintentionally betray him through speaking carelessly. But Judas knew what Jesus meant (Mat_26:20-22; Joh_13:21-25). When Jesus took a piece of bread, dipped it in the dish and gave it to Judas, he was giving Judas a special honour. It was as if Jesus was making a last appeal to him. But Judas' heart was set on doing evil. Jesus knew Judas' intentions, but the apostles still did not suspect him of being a traitor (Mat_26:23-25; Joh_13:26-30).

23 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.
24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.
25 Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.
26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

The institution itself. A sacrament must be instituted; it is no part of moral worship, nor is it dictated by natural light, but has both its being and significancy from the institution, from a divine institution; it is his prerogative who established the covenant, to appoint the seals of it. Hence the apostle (1Co 11:23, &c.), in that discourse of his concerning this ordinance, all along calls Jesus Christ the Lord, because, as Lord, as Lord of the covenant, Lord of the church, he appointed this ordinance. In which,

1 The body of Christ is signified and represented by bread; he had said formerly (Joh 6:35), I am the bread of life, upon which metaphor this sacrament is built; as the life of the body is supported by bread, which is therefore put for all bodily nourishment (Mt 4:4,6:11), so the life of the soul is supported and maintained by Christ's mediation.

(a) He took bread, ton apton--the loaf; some loaf that lay ready to hand, fit for the purpose; it was, probably, unleavened bread; but, that circumstance not being taken notice of, we are not to bind ourselves to that, as some of the Greek churches do. His taking the bread was a solemn action, and was, probably, done in such a manner as to be observed by them that sat with him, that they might expect something more than ordinary to be done with it. Thus was the Lord Jesus set apart in the counsels of divine love for the working out of our redemption.

(b) He blessed it; set it apart for this use by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words used by him upon this

occasion; but what he said, no doubt, was accommodated to the business in hand, that new testament which by this ordinance was to be sealed and ratified. This was like God's blessing the seventh day (Ge 2:3), by which it was separated to God's honour, and made to all that duly observe it, a blessed day: Christ could command the blessing, and we, in his name, are emboldened to beg the blessing.

(c) He brake it; which denotes,

[1.] The breaking of Christ's body for us, that it might be fitted for our use; He was bruised for our iniquities, as bread-corn is bruised (Isa 28:28); though a bone of him was not broken (for all his breaking did not weaken him), yet his flesh was broken with breach upon breach, and his wounds were multiplied (Job 9:17,16:14), and that pained him. God complains that he is broken with the whorish heart of sinners (Eze 6:9); his law broken, our covenants with him broken; now justice requires breach for breach (Le 24:20), and Christ was broken, to satisfy that demand.

[2.] The breaking of Christ's body to us, as the father of the family breaks the bread to the children. The breaking of Christ to us, is to facilitate the application; every thing is made ready for us by the grants of God's word and the operations of his grace.

(d) He gave it to his disciples, as the Master of the family, and the Master of this feast; it is not said, He gave it to the apostles, though they were so, and had been often called so before this, but to the disciples, because all the disciples of Christ have a right to this ordinance; and those shall have the benefit of it who are his disciples indeed; yet he gave it to them as he did the multiplied loaves, by them to be handed to all his other followers.

(e) He said, Take, eat; this is my body, Mt 26:26. He here tells them,

[1.] What they should do with it; "Take, eat; accept of Christ as he is offered to you, receive the atonement, approve of it, consent to it, come up to the terms on which the benefit of it is proposed to

you; submit to his grace and to his government." Believing on Christ is expressed by receiving him (Joh 1:12), and feeding upon him, Joh 6:57,58. Meat looked upon, or the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish us; it must be fed upon: so must the doctrine of Christ.

[2.] What they should have with it; This is my body, not outos--this bread, but touto--this eating and drinking. Believing carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. This is my body, spiritually and sacramentally; this signifies and represents my body. He employs sacramental language, like that, Ex 12:11. It is the Lord's passover. Upon a carnal and much--mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine; to make it a complete feast, here is not only bread to strengthen, but wine to make glad the heart (Mt 26:27,28); He took the cup, the grace-cup, which was set ready to be drank, after thanks returned, according to the custom of the Jews at the passover; this Christ took, and made the sacramental-cup, and so altered the property. It was intended for a cup of blessing (so the Jews called it), and therefore St. Paul studiously distinguished between the cup of blessing which we bless, and that which they bless. He gave thanks, to teach us, not only in every ordinance, but in every part of the ordinance, to have our eyes up to God.

This cup he gave to the disciples,

(a) With a command; Drink ye all of it. Thus he welcomes his guests to his table, obliges them all to drink of his cup. Why should he so expressly command them all to drink, and to see that none let it pass them, and press that more expressly in this than in the other part of the ordinance? Surely it was because he foresaw how in after-ages this ordinance would be dismembered by the prohibition of the cup to the laity, with an express non obstante--notwithstanding to the command.

(b) With an explication; For this is my blood of the New Testament. Therefore drink it with appetite, delight, because it is so rich a cordial. Hitherto the blood of Christ had been represented by the blood of beasts, real blood: but, after it was actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes, metaphorical blood; so wine is called in an Old-Testament prophecy of Christ, Ge 49:10,11.

Now observe what Christ saith of his blood represented in the sacrament.

[1.] It is my blood of the New Testament. The Old Testament was confirmed by the blood of bulls and goats (Heb 9:19,20,Ex 24:8); but the New Testament with the blood of Christ, which is here distinguished from that; It is my blood of the New Testament. The covenant God is pleased to make with us, and all the benefits and privileges of it, are owing to the merits of Christ's death.

[2.] It is shed; it was not shed till next day, but it was now upon the point of being shed, it is as good as done. "Before you come to repeat this ordinance yourselves, it will be shed." He was now ready to be offered, and his blood to be poured out, as the blood of the sacrifices which made atonement.

[3.] It is shed for many. Christ came to confirm a covenant with many (Da 9:27), and the intent of his death agreed. The blood of the Old Testament was shed for a few: it confirmed a covenant, which (saith Moses) the Lord has made with you, Ex 24:8. The atonement was made only for the children of Israel (Le 16:34): but

Jesus Christ is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1Jo 2:2.

[4.] It is shed for the remission of sins, that is, to purchase remission of sins for us. The redemption which we have through his blood, is the remission of sins, Eph 1:7. The new covenant which is procured and ratified by the blood of Christ, is a charter of pardon, an act of indemnity, in order to a reconciliation between God and man; for sin was the only thing that made the quarrel, and without shedding of blood is no remission, Heb 9:22. The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred upon all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings, and the spring of everlasting comfort, Mt 9:2,3. A farewell is now bidden to the fruit of the vine, Mt 26:29. Christ and his disciples had now feasted together with a deal of comfort, in both an Old Testament and a New Testament festival, fibula utriusque Testamenti--the connecting tie of both Testaments. How amiable were these tabernacles! How good to be here! Never such a heaven upon earth as was at this table; but it was not intended for a perpetuity; he now told them (Joh 16:16), that yet a little while and they should not see him: and again a little while and they should see him, which explains this here.

First, He takes leave of such communion; I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, that is, now that I am no more in the world (Joh 17:11); I have had enough of it, and am glad to think of leaving it, glad to think that this is the last meal. Farewell this fruit of the vine, this passover-cup, this sacramental wine. Dying saints take their leave of sacraments, and the other ordinances of communion which they enjoy in this world, with comfort, for the joy and glory they enter into supersede them all; when the sun rises, farewell the candles.

Secondly, He assures them of a happy meeting again at last. It is a long, but not an everlasting, farewell; until that day when I drink it new with you. 1. Some understand it of the interviews he had with them after his resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation

into the kingdom of his Father; and though during those forty days he did not converse with them so constantly as he had done, yet he did eat and drink with them (Ac 10:41), which, as it confirmed their faith, so doubtless it greatly comforted their hearts, for they were overjoyed at it, Lu 24:41. 2. Others understand it of the joys and glories of the future state, which the saints shall partake of in everlasting communion with the Lord Jesus, represented here by the pleasures of a banquet of wine. That will be the kingdom of his Father, for unto him shall the kingdom be then delivered up; the wine of consolation (Jer 16:7) will there be always new, never flat or sour, as wine with long keeping; never nauseous or unpleasant, as wine to those that have drank much; but ever fresh. Christ will himself partake of those pleasures; it was the joy set before him, which he had in his eye, and all his faithful friends and followers shall partake with him.

28 for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

By the time of Jesus, the Jewish Passover had developed into a set form with a number of added procedures. Among the additions was a cup of wine, for which the head of the household offered a prayer of thanks (or blessing; cf. 1Co_10:16). He filled this cup and passed it among the participants, both before and after the eating of unleavened bread. The participants also sang a collection of psalms known as the Hallel (Psa 113-118). They sang two of the psalms before eating the lamb, the other psalms after. Some of these features are evident in the Gospels' account of the Passover meal that Jesus had with his disciples the night before his crucifixion. It is sometimes called the Last Supper, and was the occasion on which Jesus instituted the communion meal later known as the Lord's Supper (cf. 1Co_11:23-26).

Jesus took some of the bread and wine on the table, gave thanks, and distributed it among his disciples as symbols of his body and blood to be offered in sacrifice. His blood sealed God's covenant, that unconditional promise of forgiveness and eternal life to all who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Israelites kept the Passover in remembrance of God's gracious work in saving them

through the Passover lamb; the disciples of the Lord Jesus keep the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the one through whose death they are saved from sin and given eternal life (Mat_26:26-27; Luk_22:17-20; cf. Jer_31:31-34).

29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Despite all that Jesus had shown and taught his disciples about humility, and in spite of the death he was about to die for them, they were still arguing about who was the greatest among them. Jesus reminded them again of the different standards in the earthly and heavenly kingdoms. He had given them an example in the way he lived among them, showing that true greatness lay in serving others (Luk_22:24-27). They had stood by him in all his trials, and he wanted them to maintain their loyalty through the time of his suffering and death. Their reward would be to share his rule in the triumphant kingdom (Luk_22:28-30).

Peter's Denial Foretold

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

31 Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon the way, as they were going to the mount of Olives. Observe,

A prediction of the trial which both he and his disciples were now to go through. He here foretels,

1. A dismal scattering storm just arising, Mt 26:31.

(a) That they should all be offended because of Christ that very night; that is, they would all be so frightened with the sufferings, that they would not have the courage to cleave to him in them, but would all basely desert him; Because of me this night, en emoi en te nykti

taute--because of me, even because of this night; so it might be read; that is, because of what happens to me this night. Note,

[1.] Offences will come among the disciples of Christ in an hour of trial and temptation; it cannot be but they should, for they are weak; Satan is busy; God permits offences; even they whose hearts are upright may sometimes be overtaken with an offence.

[2.] There are some temptations and offences, the effects of which are general and universal among Christ's disciples; All you shall be offended. Christ had lately discovered to them the treachery of Judas; but let not the rest be secure; though there will be but one traitor, they will be all deserters. This he saith, to alarm them all, that they might all watch.

[3.] We have need to prepare for sudden trials, which may come to extremity in a very little time. Christ and his disciples had eaten their supper well together in peace and quietness; yet that very night proved such a night of offence. How soon may a storm arise! We know not what a day, or a night, may bring forth, nor what great event may be in the teeming womb of a little time, Pr 27:1.

[4.] The cross of Christ is the great stumbling-block to many that pass for his disciples; both the cross he bore for us (1Co 1:23), and that which we are called out to bear for him, Mt 16:24.

(b) That herein the scripture would be fulfilled; I will smite the Shepherd. It is quoted from Zec 13:7.

[1.] Here is the smiting of the Shepherd in the sufferings of Christ. God awakens the sword of his wrath against the Son of his love, and he is smitten.

[2.] The scattering of the sheep, thereupon, in the flight of the disciples. When Christ fell into the hands of his enemies, his disciples ran, one one way and another another; it was each one's

care to shift for himself, and happy he that could get furthest from the cross.

2. He gives them the prospect of a comfortable gathering together again after this storm (Mt 26:32); "After I am risen again, I will go before you. Though you will forsake me, I will not forsake you; though you fall, I will take care you shall not fall finally: we shall have a meeting again in Galilee, I will go before you, as the shepherd before the sheep." Some make the last words of that prophecy (Zec 13:7), a promise equivalent to this here; and I will bring my hand again to the little ones. There is no bringing them back but by bringing his hand to them. Note, The captain of our salvation knows how to rally his troops, when, through their cowardice, they have been put into disorder.

32 But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

33 Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.

Improper self-confidence, like that of Peter, is the first step to a fall. There is a proneness in all of us to be over-confident. But those fall soonest and foulest, who are the most confident in themselves. Those are least safe, who think themselves most secure. Satan is active to lead such astray; they are most off their guard: God leaves them to themselves, to humble them.

The presumption of Peter, that he should keep his integrity, whatever happened (Mt 26:33); Though all men be offended, yet will I never be offended. Peter had a great stock of confidence, and was upon all occasions forward to speak, especially to speak for himself; sometimes it did him a kindness, but at other times it betrayed him, as it did here. Where observe,

1. How he bound himself with a promise, that he would never be offended in Christ; not only not this night, but at no time. If this promise had been made in a humble dependence upon the grace of Christ, it had been an excellent word. Before the Lord's supper, Christ's discourse led his disciples to examine themselves with, Lord, is it I? For that is our preparatory duty; after the ordinance, his

discourse leads them to an engaging of themselves to close walking, for that is the subsequent duty.

2. How he fancied himself better armed against temptation than any one else, and this was his weakness and folly; Though all men shall be offended yet will not I. This was worse than Hazael's, What! is thy servant a dog? For he supposed the thing to be so bad, that no man would do it. But Peter supposes it possible that some, nay that all, might be offended, and yet he escape better than any. Note, It argues a great degree of self-conceit and self-confidence, to think ourselves either safe from the temptations, or free from the corruptions, that are common to men. We should rather say, If it be possible that others may be offended, there is danger that I may be so. But it is common for those who think too well of themselves, easily to admit suspicions of others. See Ga 6:1.

34 Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

The particular warning Christ gave Peter of what he would do, Mt 26:34. He imagined that in the hour of temptation he should come off better than any of them, and Christ tells him that he should come off worse. The warning is introduced with a solemn asseveration; "Verily, I say unto thee; take my word for it, who know thee better than thou knowest thyself." He tells him,

1. That he should deny him. Peter promised that he would not be so much as offended in him, not desert him; but Christ tells him that he will go further, he will disown him. He said, "Though all men, yet not I;" and he did it sooner than any.

2. How quickly he should do it; this night, before to-morrow, nay, before cock-crowing. Satan's temptations are compared to darts (Eph 6:16), which wound ere we are aware; suddenly doth he shoot. As we know not how near we may be to trouble, so we know not how near we may be to sin; if God leave us to ourselves, we are always in danger.

3. How often he should do it; thrice. He thought that he should never once do such a thing; but Christ tells him that he would do it again and again; for, when once our feet begin to slip, it is hard to recover our standing again. The beginnings of sin are as the letting forth of water.

35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

Peter's repeated assurances of his fidelity (Mt 26:35); Though I should die with thee. He supposed the temptation strong, when he said, Though all men do it, yet will not I. But here he supposeth it stronger, when he puts it to the peril of life; Though I should die with thee. He knew what he should do--rather die with Christ than deny him, it was the condition of discipleship (Lu 14:26); and he thought what he would do--never be false to his Master whatever it cost him; yet, it proved, he was. It is easy to talk boldly and carelessly of death at a distance; "I will rather die than do such a thing:" but it is not so soon done as said, when it comes to the setting-to, and death shows itself in its own colours.

What Peter said the rest subscribed to; likewise also said all the disciples. Note, 1. There is a proneness in good men to be over-confident of their own strength and stability. We are ready to think ourselves able to grapple with the strongest temptations, to go through the hardest and most hazardous services, and to bear the greatest afflictions for Christ; but it is because we do not know ourselves. 2. Those often fall soonest and foulest that are most confident of themselves. Those are least safe that are most secure. Satan is most active to seduce such; they are most off their guard, and God leaves them to themselves, to humble them. See 1Co 10:12.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

Hitherto, we have seen the preparatives for Christ's sufferings; now, we enter upon the bloody scene. In these verses we have the story of his agony in the garden. This was the beginning of sorrows to our

Lord Jesus. Now the sword of the Lord began to awake against the man that was his Fellow; and how should it be quiet when the Lord had given it a charge? The clouds had been gathering a good while, and looked black. He had said, some days before, Now is my soul troubled, Joh 12:27. But now the storm began in good earnest. He put himself into this agony, before his enemies gave him any trouble, to show that he was a Freewill offering; that his life was not forced from him, but he laid it down of himself. Joh 10:18. Observe,

The place where he underwent this mighty agony; it was in a place called Gethsemane. The name signifies, torculus olei--an olive-mill, a press for olives, like a wine-press, where they trod the olives, Mic 6:15. And this was the proper place for such a thing, at the foot of the mount of Olives. There our Lord Jesus began his passion; there it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and crush him, that fresh oil might flow to all believers from him, that we might partake of the root and fatness of that good Olive. There he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and trod it alone.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

The company he had with him, when he was in this agony.

1. He took all the twelve disciples with him to the garden, except Judas, who was at this time otherwise employed. Though it was late in the night, near bed-time, yet they kept with him, and took this walk by moonlight with him, as Elisha, who, when he was told that his master should shortly be taken from his head, declared that he would not leave him, though he led him about; so these follow the Lamb, wheresoever he goes.

2. He took only Peter, and James, and John, with him into that corner of the garden where he suffered his agony. He left the rest at some distance, perhaps at the garden door, with this charge, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder; like that of Abraham to his young men (Ge 22:5), Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship.

(a) Christ went to pray alone, though he had lately prayed with his disciples, Joh 17:1. Note, Our prayers with our families must not excuse us from our secret devotions.

(b) He ordered them to sit here. Note, We must take heed of giving any disturbance or interruption to those who retire for secret communion with God. He took these three with him, because they had been the witnesses of his glory in his transfiguration (Mt 17:1,2), and that would prepare them to be the witnesses of his agony. Note, Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, that have by faith beheld his glory, and have conversed with the glorified saints upon the holy mount. If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him; and if we hope to reign with him, why should we not expect to suffer with him?

The agony itself that he was in; He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy. It is called an agony (Lu 22:44), a conflict. It was not any bodily pain or torment that he was in, nothing occurred to hurt him; but, whatever it was, it was from within; he troubled himself, Joh 11:33. The words here used are very emphatical; he began lupeisthai kai ademunein--to be sorrowful, and in a consternation. The latter word signifies such a sorrow as makes a man neither fit for company nor desirous of it. He had like a weight of lead upon his spirits. Physicians use a word near akin to it, to signify the disorder a man is in in a fit of an ague, or beginning of a fever. Now was fulfilled, Ps 22:14, I am poured out like water, my heart is like wax, it is melted; and all those passages in the Psalms where David complains of the sorrows of his soul, Ps 18:4,5,42:7,55:4,5,69:1-3.88:3,116:3, and Jonah's complaint, Jon 2:4,5.

But what was the cause of all this? What was it that put him into his agony? Why art thou cast down, blessed Jesus, and why disquieted? Certainly, it was nothing of despair or distrust of his Father, much less any conflict or struggle with him. As the Father loved him because he laid down his life for the sheep, so he was entirely subject to his Father's will in it. But,

1. He engaged in an encounter with the powers of darkness; so he intimates (Lu 22:53); This is your hour, and the power of darkness: and he spoke of it just before (Joh 14:30,31); "The prince of this world cometh. I see him rallying his forces, and preparing for a general assault; but he has nothing in me, no garrisons in his interest, none that secretly hold correspondence with him; and therefore his attempts, though fierce, will be fruitless: but as the Father gave me commandment, so I do; however it be, I must have a struggle with him, the field must be fairly fought; and therefore arise, let us go hence, let us hasten to the field of battle, and meet the enemy." Now is the close engagement in single combat between Michael and the dragon, hand to hand; now is the judgment of this world; the great cause is now to be determined, and the decisive battle fought, in which the prince of this world, will certainly be beaten and cast out, Joh 12:31. Christ, when he works salvation, is described like a champion taking the field, Isa 59:16-18. Now the serpent makes his fiercest onset on the seed of the woman, and directs his sting, the sting of death, to his very heart; animamque in vulnere ponit--and the wound is mortal.

2. He was now bearing the iniquities which the Father laid upon him, and, by his sorrow and amazement, he accommodated himself to his undertaking. The sufferings he was entering upon were for our sins; they were all made to meet upon him, and he knew it. As we are obliged to be sorry for our particular sins, so was he grieved for the sins of us all. So Bishop Pearson, p. 191. Now, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where Christ now was, God gathered all nations, and pleaded with them in his Son, Joe 3:2,12. He knew the malignity of the sins that were laid upon him, how provoking to God, how ruining to man; and these being all set in order before him, and charged upon him, he was sorrowful and very heavy. Now it was that iniquities took hold on him; so that he was not able to look up, as was foretold concerning him, Ps 40:7,12.

3. He had a full and clear prospect of all the sufferings that were before him. He foresaw the treachery of Judas, the unkindness of Peter, the malice of the Jews, and their base ingratitude. He knew

that he should now in a few hours be scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; death in its most dreadful appearances, death in pomp, attended with all its terrors, looked him in the face; and this made him sorrowful, especially because it was the wages of our sin, which he had undertaken to satisfy for. It is true, the martyrs that have suffered for Christ, have entertained the greatest torments, and the most terrible deaths, without any such sorrow and consternation; have called their prisons their delectable orchards, and a bed of flames a bed of roses: but then,

(a) Christ was now denied the supports and comforts which they had; that is, he denied them to himself, and his soul refused to be comforted, not in passion, but in justice to his undertaking. Their cheerfulness under the cross was owing to the divine favour, which, for the present, was suspended from the Lord Jesus.

(b) His sufferings were of another nature from theirs. St. Paul, when he is to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith, can joy and rejoice with them all; but to be offered a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin, is quite a different case. On the saints' cross there is a blessing pronounced, which enables them to rejoice under it (Mt 5:10,12); but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him sorrowful and very heavy under it. And his sorrow under the cross was the foundation of their joy under it.

38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

He who made atonement for the sins of mankind, submitted himself in a garden of suffering, to the will of God, from which man had revolted in a garden of pleasure. Christ took with him into that part of the garden where he suffered his agony, only those who had witnessed his glory in his transfiguration. Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, who have by faith beheld his glory. The words used denote the most entire dejection, amazement, anguish, and horror of mind; the state of one surrounded with sorrows, overwhelmed with miseries, and almost swallowed up with terror and dismay. He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished. He prayed that, if possible, the cup might

pass from him. But he also showed his perfect readiness to bear the load of his sufferings; he was willing to submit to all for our redemption and salvation. According to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitterest cup which God puts into our hands; though nature struggle, it must submit. It should be more our care to get troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of One who neither slumbers nor sleeps. All are tempted, but we should be much afraid of entering into temptation. To be secured from this, we should watch and pray, and continually look unto the Lord to hold us up that we may be safe. Doubtless our Lord had a clear and full view of the sufferings he was to endure, yet he spoke with the greatest calmness till this time. Christ was a Surety, who undertook to be answerable for our sins. Accordingly he was made sin for us, and suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust; and Scripture ascribes his heaviest sufferings to the hand of God. He had full knowledge of the infinite evil of sin, and of the immense extent of that guilt for which he was to atone; with awful views of the Divine justice and holiness, and the punishment deserved by the sins of men, such as no tongue can express, or mind conceive. At the same time, Christ suffered being tempted; probably horrible thoughts were suggested by Satan that tended to gloom and every dreadful conclusion: these would be the more hard to bear from his perfect holiness. And did the load of imputed guilt so weigh down the soul of Him of whom it is said, He upholdeth all things by the word of his power? into what misery then must those sink whose sins are left upon their own heads! How will those escape who neglect so great salvation?

The 'cup' of suffering that caused Jesus such distress was not just physical suffering, great though that was. Above all it was the inner agony as the sinless one, God's Son, took upon himself the sin of his human creatures and bore God's wrath on their behalf (cf. 2Co_5:21; Heb_2:9; 1Pe_2:24). It was an experience no one else could know, for no one else had Jesus' sinlessness or shared his relationship with the Father. Jesus had a real human will, and when he considered the ordeal that lay ahead, a conflict arose within him. As he fought against the temptation to avoid the cross, his agony of mind was so

intense that he perspired what appeared to be blood. But he won the battle, and determined that he would willingly submit to whatever his Father would have him go through (Mar_14:35-36; Luk_22:41-44). Perhaps the reason why the disciples were unable to stay awake was not simply that they were over-tired, but that they were unable to withstand the satanic forces at work in the garden. Jesus saw their weakness and urged them to be alert and pray for strength, because they too were going to be put to the test. They would face the temptation to deny Jesus in order to save themselves (Mar_14:37-40; Luk_22:45-46).Jesus, by contrast, would give himself without reservation, in order to save others. The decisive victory he won in the garden enabled him to meet his betrayal, trial and death with renewed courage and assurance (Mar_14:41-42).

His complaint of this agony. Finding himself under the arrest of his passion, he goes to his disciples (Mt 26:38), and,

1. He acquaints them with his condition; My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. It gives some little ease to a troubled spirit, to have a friend ready to unbosom itself to, and give vent to its sorrows. Christ here tells them,

(a) What was the seat of his sorrow; it was his soul that was now in an agony. This proves that Christ had a true human soul; for he suffered, not only in his body, but in his soul. We had sinned both against our own bodies, and against our souls; both had been used in sin, and both had been wronged by it; and therefore Christ suffered in soul as well as in body.

(b) What was the degree of his sorrow. He was exceedingly sorrowful, perilypos--compassed about with sorrow on all hands. It was sorrow in the highest degree, even unto death; it was a killing sorrow, such sorrow as no mortal man could bear and live. He was ready to die for grief; they were sorrows of death.

(c) The duration of it; it will continue even unto death. "My soul will be sorrowful as long as it is in this body; I see no outlet but death."

He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished; that grief is now finished, which began in the garden. It was prophesied of Christ, that he should be a Man of sorrows (Isa 53:3); he was so all along, we never read that he laughed; but all his sorrows hitherto were nothing to this.

2. He bespeaks their company and attendance; Tarry ye here, and watch with me. Surely he was destitute indeed of help, when he entreated theirs, who, he knew, would be but miserable comforters; but he would hereby teach us the benefit of the communion of saints. It is good to have, and therefore good to seek, the assistance of our brethren, when at any time we are in an agony; for two are better than one. What he said to them, he saith to all, Watch, Mk 13:37. Not only watch for him, in expectation of his future coming, but watch with him, in application to our present work.

39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

What passed between him and his Father when he was in this agony; Being in an agony, he prayed. Prayer is never out of season, but it is especially seasonable in an agony.

Observe,

1 The place where he prayed; He went a little further, withdrew from them, that the scripture might be fulfilled, I have trod the wine-press alone; he retired for prayer; a troubled soul finds most ease when it is alone with God, who understands the broken language of sighs and groans. Calvin's devout remark upon this is worth transcribing, Utile est seorsim orare, tunc enim magis familiariter sese denudat fidelis animus, et simplicius sua vota, gemitus, curas, pavores, spes, et gaudia in Dei sinum exonerat--It is useful to pray apart; for then the faithful soul develops itself more

familiarly, and with greater simplicity pours forth its petitions, groans, cares, fears, hopes and joys, into the bosom of God. Christ has hereby taught us that secret prayer must be made secretly. Yet some think that even the disciples whom he left at the garden door, overheard him; for it is said (Heb 5:7), they were strong cries.

2. His posture in prayer; He fell on his face; his lying prostrate denotes,

(a) The agony he was in, and the extremity of his sorrow. Job, in great grief, fell on the ground; and great anguish is expressed by rolling in the dust, Mic 1:10.

(b) His humility in prayer. This posture was an expression of his, eulabeia--his reverential fear (spoken of Heb 5:7), with which he offered up these prayers: and it was in the days of his flesh, in his estate of humiliation, to which hereby he accommodated himself.

3. The prayer itself; wherein we may observe three things.

(a) The title he gives to God; O my Father. Thick as the cloud was, he could see God as a Father through it. Note, In all our addresses to God we should eye him as a Father, as our Father; and it is in a special manner comfortable to do so, when we are in an agony. It is a pleasing string to harp upon at such a time, My Father; whither should the child go, when any thing grieves him, but to his father?

(b) The favour he begs; If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. He calls his sufferings a cup; not a river, not a sea, but a cup, which we shall soon see the bottom of. When we are under troubles, we should make the best, the least, of them, and not aggravate them. His sufferings might be called a cup, because allotted him, as at feasts a cup was set to every mess. He begs that this cup might pass from him, that is, that he might avoid the sufferings now at hand; or, at least, that they might be shortened. This intimates no more than that he was really and truly Man, and as a Man he could not but be averse to pain and suffering. This is the first and simple act

of man's will--to start back from that which is sensibly grievous to us, and to desire the prevention and removal of it. The law of self-preservation is impressed upon the innocent nature of man, and rules there till overruled by some other law; therefore Christ admitted and expressed a reluctance to suffer, to show that he was taken from among men (Heb 5:1), was touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15), and tempted as we are; yet without sin. Note, A prayer of faith against an affliction, may very well consist with the patience of hope under affliction. When David had said, I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it; his very next words were, Remove thy stroke away from me, Ps 39:9,10. But observe the proviso; If it be possible. If God may be glorified, man saved, and the ends of his undertaking answered, without his drinking of this bitter cup, he desires to be excused; otherwise not. What we cannot do with the securing of our great end, we must reckon to be in effect impossible; Christ did so. Id possumus quod jure possumus--We can do that which we can do lawfully. We can do nothing, not only we may do nothing, against the truth.

(c) His entire submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God; Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Not that the human will of Christ was adverse or averse to the divine will; it was only, in its first act, diverse from it; to which, in the second act of the will, which compares and chooses, he freely submits himself. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus, though he had a quick sense of the extreme bitterness of the sufferings he was to undergo, yet was freely willing to submit to them for our redemption and salvation, and offered himself, and gave himself, for us.

[2.] The reason of Christ's submission to his sufferings, was, his Father's will; as thou wilt, Mt 26:39. He grounds his own willingness upon the Father's will, and resolves the matter wholly into that; therefore he did what he did, and did it with delight, because it was the will of God, Ps 40:8. This he had often referred to, as that which put him upon, and carried him through, his whole

undertaking; This is the Father's will, Joh 6:39,40. This he sought (Joh 5:30); it was his meat and drink to do it, Joh 4:34.

[3.] In conformity to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitter cup which God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter; though nature struggle, grace must submit. We then are disposed as Christ was, when our wills are in every thing melted into the will of God, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood; The will of the Lord be done, Ac 21:14.

4. The repetition of the prayer; He went away again the second time, and prayed (Mt 26:42), and again the third time (Mt 26:44), and all to the same purport; only, as it is related here, he did not, in the second and third prayer, expressly ask that the cup might pass from him, as he had done in the first. Note, Though we may pray to God to prevent and remove an affliction, yet our chief errand, and that which we should most insist upon, must be, that he will give us grace to bear it well. It should be more our care to get our troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. He prayed, saying, Thy will be done. Note, Prayer is the offering up, not only of our desires, but of our resignations, to God. It amounts to an acceptable prayer, when at any time we are in distress, to refer ourselves to God, and to commit our way and work to him; Thy will be done. The third time he said the same words, ton auton logon--the same word, that is the same matter or argument; he spoke to the same purport. We have reason to think that this was not all he said, for it should seem by Mt 26:40 that he continued an hour in his agony and prayer; but, whatever more he said, it was to this effect, deprecating his approaching sufferings, and yet resigning himself to God's will in them, in the expressions of which we may be sure he was not straitened.

But what answer had he to this prayer? Certainly it was not made in vain; he that heard him always, did not deny him now. It is true, the cup did not pass from him, for he withdrew that petition, and

did not insist upon it (if he had, for aught I know, the cup had passed away); but he had an answer to his prayer; for,

(a) He was strengthened with strength in his soul, in the day when he cried (Ps 138:3); and that was a real answer, Lu 22:43.

(b) He was delivered from that which he feared, which was, lest by impatience and distrust he should offend his Father, and so disable himself to go on with his undertaking, Heb 5:7. In answer to his prayer, God provided that he should not fail or be discouraged.

42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

43 And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

45 Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

What passed between him and his three disciples at this time; and here we may observe,

1 The fault they were guilty of; that when he was in his agony, sorrowful and heavy, sweating and wrestling and praying, they were so little concerned, that they could not keep awake; he comes, and finds them asleep, Mt 26:40. The strangeness of the thing should have roused their spirits to turn aside now, and see this great sight--the bush burning, and yet not consumed; much more should their love to their Master, and their care concerning him, have obliged them to a more close and vigilant attendance on him; yet they were so dull, that they could not keep their eyes open. What had become of us, if Christ had been now as sleepy as his disciples were? It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Christ engaged them to watch with him, as if he expected some succour from them, and yet they slept; surely it was the unkindest thing that could be. When David wept at this mount of Olives, all his followers wept with him (2Sa 15:30); but when the Son of David was here in tears, his followers were

asleep. His enemies, who watched for him, were wakeful enough (Mk 14:43); but his disciples, who should have watched with him, were asleep. Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves! Note, Carelessness and carnal security, especially when Christ is in his agony, are great faults in any, but especially in those who profess to be nearest in relation to him. The church of Christ, which is his body, is often in an agony, fightings without and fears within; and shall we be asleep then, like Gallio, that cared for none of these things; or those (Am 6:6) that lay at ease, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph?

2. Christ's favour to them, notwithstanding. Persons in sorrow are too apt to be cross and peevish with those about them, and to lay it grievously to heart, if they but seem to neglect them; but Christ in his agony is as meek as ever, and carries it as patiently toward his followers as toward his Father, and is not apt to take things ill.

When Christ's disciples put this slight upon him,

(a) He came to them, as if he expected to receive some comfort from them; and if they had put him in mind of what they had heard from him concerning his resurrection and glory perhaps it might have been some help to him; but, instead of that, they added grief to his sorrow; and yet he came to them, more careful for them than they were for themselves; when he was most engaged, yet he came to look after them; for those that were given him, were upon his heart, living and dying.

(b) He gave them a gentle reproof, for as many as he loves he rebukes; he directed it to Peter, who used to speak for them; let him now hear for them. The reproof was very melting; What! could ye not watch with me one hour? He speaks as one amazed to see them so stupid; every word, when closely considered, shows the aggravated nature of the case. Consider,

[1.] Who they were; "Could not ye watch--ye, my disciples and followers? No wonder if others neglect me, if the earth sit still, and be at rest (Zec 1:11); but from you I expected better things."

[2.] Who he was; "Watch with me. If one of yourselves were ill and in an agony, it would be very unkind not to watch with him; but it is undutiful not to watch with your Master, who has long watched over you for good, has led you, and fed you, and taught you, borne you, and borne with you; do ye thus requite him?" He awoke out of his sleep, to help them when they were in distress (Mt 8:26); and could not they keep awake, at least to show their good-will to him, especially considering that he was now suffering for them, in an agony for them? Jam tua res agiture--I am suffering in your cause.

[3.] How small a thing it was that he expected from them--only to watch with him. If he had bid them do some great thing, had bid them be in an agony with him, or die with him, they thought they could have done it; and yet they could not do it, when he only desired them to watch with him, 2Ki 5:13. [4.] How short a time it was that he expected it--but one hour; they were not set upon the guard whole nights, as the prophet was (Isa 21:8), only one hour. Sometimes he continued all night in prayer to God, but did not then expect that his disciples should watch with him; only now, when he had but one hour to spend in prayer.

(c) He gave them good counsel; Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, Mt 26:41.

[1.] There was an hour of temptation drawing on, and very near; the troubles of Christ were temptations to his followers to disbelieve and distrust him, to deny and desert him, and renounce all relation to him.

[2.] There was danger of their entering into the temptation, as into a snare or trap; of their entering into a parley with it, or a good opinion of it, of their being influenced by it, and inclining to comply with it; which is the first step toward being overcome by it.

[3.] He therefore exhorts them to watch and pray; Watch with me, and pray with me. While they were sleeping, they lost the benefit of joining in Christ's prayer. "Watch yourselves, and pray yourselves. Watch and pray against this present temptation to drowsiness and security; pray that you may watch; beg of God by his grace to keep you awake, now that there is occasion." When we are drowsy in the worship of God, we should pray, as a good Christian once did, "The Lord deliver me from this sleepy devil!" Lord, quicken thou me in thy way, Or, "Watch and pray against the further temptation you may be assaulted with; watch and pray lest this sin prove the inlet of many more." Note, When we find ourselves entering into temptation, we have need to watch and pray.

(d) He kindly excused for them; The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. We do not read of one word they had to say for themselves (the sense of their own weakness stopped their mouth); but then he had a tender word to say on their behalf, for it is his office to be an Advocate; in this he sets us an example of the love which covers a multitude of sins. He considered their frame, and did not chide them, for he remembered that they were but flesh; and the flesh is weak, though the spirit be willing, Ps 78:38,39. Note,

[1.] Christ's disciples, as long as they are here in this world, have bodies as well as souls, and a principle of remaining corruption as well as of reigning grace, like Jacob and Esau in the same womb, Canaanites and Israelites in the same land, Ga 5:17,24.

[2.] It is the unhappiness and burthen of Christ's disciples, that their bodies cannot keep pace with their souls in works of piety and devotion, but are many a time a cloud and clog to them; that, when the spirit is free and disposed to that which is good, the flesh is averse and indisposed. This St. Paul laments (Ro 7:25); With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. Our impotency in the service of God is the great iniquity and infidelity of our nature, and it arises from these sad remainders of corruption, which are the constant grief and burthen of God's people.

[3.] Yet it is our comfort, that our Master graciously considers this, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, and pities and pardons the weakness and infirmity of the flesh; for we are under grace, and not under the law.

(e) Though they continued dull and sleepy, he did not any further rebuke them for it; for, though we daily offend, yet he will not always chide.

[1.] When he came to them the second time, we do not find that he said any thing to them (Mt 26:43); he findeth them asleep again. One would have thought that he had said enough to them to keep them awake; but it is hard to recover from a spirit of slumber. Carnal security, when once it prevails, is not easily shaken off. Their eyes were heavy, which intimates that they strove against it as much as they could, but were overcome by it, like the spouse; I sleep, but my heart waketh (So 5:2); and therefore their Master looked upon them with compassion.

[2.] When he came the third time, he left them to be alarmed with the approaching danger (Mt 26:45,46); Sleep on now, and take your rest. This is spoken ironically; "Now sleep if you can, sleep if you dare; I would not disturb you if Judas and his band of men would not." See here how Christ deals with those that suffer themselves to be overcome by security, and will not be awakened out of it. First, Sometimes he gives them up to the power of it; Sleep on now. He that will sleep, let him sleep still. The curse of spiritual slumber is the just punishment of the sin of it, Ro 11:8,Ho 4:17. Secondly, Many times he sends some startling judgment, to awaken those that would not be wrought upon by the word; and those who will not be alarmed by reasons and arguments, had better be alarmed by swords and spears than left to perish in their security. Let those that would not believe, be made to feel.

As to the disciples here,

1. Their Master gave them notice of the near approach of his enemies, who, it is likely, were now within sight or hearing, for they came with candles and torches, and, it is likely, made a great noise; The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. And again, He is at hand that doth betray me. Note, Christ's sufferings were no surprise to him; he knew what, and when, he was to suffer. By this time the extremity of his agony was pretty well over, or, at least, diverted; while with an undaunted courage he addresses himself to the next encounter, as a champion to the combat.

2. He called them to rise, and be going: not, "Rise, and let us flee from the danger;" but, "Rise, and let us go meet it;" before he had prayed, he feared his sufferings, but now he had got over his fears. But,

3. He intimates to them their folly, in sleeping away the time which they should have spent in preparation; now the event found them unready, and was a terror to them.

46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

No enemies are so much to be abhorred as those professed disciples that betray Christ with a kiss. God has no need of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was voluntary weakness; he submitted to death. If he had not been willing to suffer, they could not conquer him.

We are here told how the blessed Jesus was seized, and taken into custody; this followed immediately upon his agony, while he yet spake; for from the beginning to the close of his passion he had not the least intermission or breathing-time, but deep called unto deep. His trouble hitherto was raised within himself; but now the scene

is changed, now the Philistines are upon thee, thou blessed Samson; the Breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord is taken in their pits, La 4:20.

Now concerning the apprehension of the Lord Jesus, observe,

Who the persons were, that were employed in it.

1. Here was Judas, one of the twelve, at the head of this infamous guard: he was guide to them that took Jesus (Ac 1:16); without his help they could not have found him in this retirement. Behold, and wonder; the first that appears with his enemies, is one of his own disciples, who an hour or two ago was eating bread with him!

2. Here was with him a great multitude; that the scripture might be fulfilled, Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Ps 3:1. This multitude was made up partly of a detachment out of the guards, that were posted in the tower of Antonia by the Roman governor; these were Gentiles, sinners, as Christ calls them, Mt 26:45. The rest were the servants and officers of the High Priest, and they were Jews; they that were at variance with each other, agreed against Christ.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed him.

How they were armed for this enterprise.

1. What weapons they were armed with; They came with swords and staves. The Roman soldiers, no doubt, had swords; the servants of the priests, those of them that had not swords, brought staves or clubs. Furor arma ministrat--Their rage supplied their arms. They were not regular troops, but a tumultuous rabble. But wherefore is this ado? If they had been ten times as many, they could not have taken him had he not yielded; and, his hour being come for him to give up himself, all this force was needless. When a butcher goes into the field to take out a lamb for the slaughter, does he raise the

militia, and come armed? No, he needs not; yet is there all this force used to seize the Lamb of God.

2. What warrant they were armed with; They came from the chief priests, and elders of the people; this armed multitude was sent by them upon this errand. He was taken up by a warrant from the great sanhedrim, as a person obnoxious to them. Pilate, the Roman governor, gave them no warrant to search for him, he had no jealousy of him; but they were men who pretended to religion, and presided in the affairs of the church, that were active in this prosecution, and were the most spiteful enemies Christ had. It was a sign that he was supported by a divine power, for by all earthly powers he was not only deserted, but opposed; Pilate upbraided him with it; Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee to me, Joh 18:35.

III. The manner how it was done, and what passed at that time.

1. How Judas betrayed him; he did his business effectually, and his resolution in this wickedness may shame us who fail in that which is good. Observe,

(A) The instructions he gave to the soldiers (Mt 26:48); He gave them a sign; as commander of the party in this action, he gives the word or signal. He gave them a sign, lest by mistake they should seize one of the disciples instead of him, the disciples having so lately said, in Judas's hearing, that they would be willing to die for him. What abundance of caution was here, not to miss him--That same is he; and when they had him in their hands, not to lose him--Hold him fast; for he had sometimes escaped from those who thought to secure him; as Lu 6:30. Though the Jews, who frequented the temple, could not but know him, yet the Roman soldiers perhaps had never seen him, and the sign was to direct them; and Judas by his kiss intended not only to distinguish him, but to detain him, while they came behind him, and laid hands on him.

(B) The dissembling compliment he gave his Master. He came close up to Jesus; surely now, if ever, his wicked heart will relent; surely when he comes to look him in the face, he will either be awed by its majesty, or charmed by its beauty. Dares he to come into his very sight and presence, to betray him? Peter denied Christ, but when the Lord turned and looked upon him, he relented presently; but Judas comes up to his Master's face, and betrays him. Me mihi (perfide) prodis? me mihi prodis?--Perfidious man, betrayest thou me to thyself? He said, Hail, Master; and kissed him. It should seem, our Lord Jesus had been wont to admit his disciples to such a degree of familiarity with him, as to give them his cheek to kiss after they had been any while absent, which Judas villainously used to facilitate this treason. A kiss is a token of allegiance and friendship, Ps 2:12. But Judas, when he broke all the laws of love and duty, profaned this sacred sign to serve his purpose. Note, There are many that betray Christ with a kiss, and Hail, Master; who, under pretence of doing him honour, betray and undermine the interests of his kingdom. Mel in ore, fel in corde--Honey in the mouth, gall in the heart. Kataphilein ouk esti philein. To embrace is one thing, to love is another. Philo Judæus. Joab's kiss and Judas's were much alike.

(C) The entertainment his Master gave him, Mt 26:50.

[1.] He calls him friend. If he had called him villain, and traitor, raca, thou fool, and child of the devil, he had not mis--called him; but he would teach us under the greatest provocation to forbear bitterness and evil-speaking, and to show all meekness. Friend, for a friend he had been, and should have been, and seemed to be. Thus he upbraids him, as Abraham, when he called the rich man in hell, son. He calls him friend, because he furthered his sufferings, and so befriended him; whereas, he called Peter Satan for attempting to hinder them.

[2.] He asks him, "Wherefore art thou come? Is it peace, Judas? Explain thyself; if thou come as an enemy, what means this kiss? If as a friend, what mean these swords and staves? Wherefore art

thou come? What harm have I done thee? Wherein have I wearied thee? eph ho parei--Wherefore art thou present? Why hadst thou not so much shame left thee, as to keep out of sight, which thou mightest have done, and yet have given the officer notice where I was?" This was an instance of great impudence, for him to be so forward and barefaced in this wicked transaction. But it is usual for apostates from religion to be the most bitter enemies to it; witness Julian. Thus Judas did his part.

2. How the officers and soldiers secured him; Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him; they made him their prisoner. How were they not afraid to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's Anointed? We may well imagine what rude and cruel hands they were, which this barbarous multitude laid on Christ; and how, it is probable, they handled him the more roughly for their being so often disappointed when they sought to lay hands on him. They could not have taken him, if he had not surrendered himself, and been delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Ac 2:23. He who said concerning his anointed servants, Touch them not, and do them no harm (Ps 105:14,15), spared not his anointed Son, but delivered him up for us all; and again, gave his strength into captivity, his glory into the enemies' hands, Ps 78:61. See what was the complaint of Job (Mt 16:11), God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and apply that and other passages in that book of Job as a type of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus was made a prisoner, because he would in all things be treated as a malefactor, punished for our crime, and as a surety under arrest for our debt. The yoke of our transgressions was bound by the Father's hand upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, La 1:14. He became a prisoner, that he might set us at liberty; for he said, If ye seek me, let these go their way (Joh 18:8); and those are free indeed, whom he makes so.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear.

. How Peter fought for Christ, and was checked for his pains. It is here only said to be one of them that were with Jesus in the garden; but Joh 18:10, we are told that it was Peter who signalized himself upon this occasion. Observe,

(A) Peter's rashness (Mt 26:51); He drew his sword. They had but two swords among them all (Lu 22:38), and one of them, it seems, fell to Peter's share; and now he thought it was time to draw it, and he laid about him as if he would have done some great matter; but all the execution he did was the cutting off an ear from a servant of the High Priest; designing, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, because he saw him more forward than the rest in laying hands on Christ, he missed his blow. But if he would be striking, in my mind he should rather have aimed at Judas, and have marked him for a rogue. Peter had talked much of what he would do for his Master, he would lay down his life for him; yea, that he would; and now he would be as good as his word, and venture his life to rescue his Master: and thus far was commendable, that he had a great zeal for Christ, and his honour and safety; but it was not according to knowledge, nor guided by discretion; for

[1.] He did it without warrant; some of the disciples asked indeed, Shall we smite with the sword? (Lu 22:49) But Peter struck before they had an answer. We must see not only our cause good, but our call clear, before we draw the sword; we must show by what authority we do it, and who gave us that authority.

[2.] He indiscreetly exposed himself and his fellow-disciples to the rage of the multitude; for what could they with two swords do against a band of men?

(B) The rebuke which our Lord Jesus gave him (Mt 26:52); Put up again thy sword into its place. He does not command the officers and soldiers to put up their swords that were drawn against him, he left them to the judgment of God, who judges them that are without; but he commands Peter to put up his sword, does not chide him

indeed for what he had done, because done out of good will, but stops the progress of his arms, and provides that it should not be drawn into a precedent. Christ's errand into the world was to make peace. Note, The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; and Christ's ministers, though they are his soldiers, do not war after the flesh, 2Co 10:3,4. Not that the law of Christ overthrows either the law of nature of the law of nations, as far as those warrant subjects to stand up in defence of their civil rights and liberties, and their religion, when it is incorporated with them; but it provides for the preservation of public peace and order, by forbidding private persons, qua tales--as such, to resist the powers that are; nay, we have a general precept that we resist not evil (Mt 5:39), nor will Christ have his ministers propagate his religion by force of arms, Religio cogi non potest; et defendenda non occidendo, sed moriendo--Religion cannot be forced; and it should be defended, not by killing, but by dying. Lactantii Institut. As Christ forbade his disciples the sword of justice (Mt 20:25,26), so here the sword of war. Christ bade Peter put up his sword, and never bade him draw it again; yet that which Peter is here blamed for is his doing it unseasonably; the hour was come for Christ to suffer and die, he knew Peter knew it, the sword of the Lord was drawn against him (Zec 13:7), and for Peter to draw his sword for him, was like, Master, spare thyself.

Three reasons Christ give to Peter for this rebuke:

[1.] His drawing the sword would be dangerous to himself and to his fellow-disciples; They that take the sword, shall perish with the sword; they that use violence, fall by violence; and men hasten and increase their own troubles by blustering bloody methods of self-defence. They that take the sword before it is given them, that use it without warrant or call, expose themselves to the sword of war, or public justice. Had it not been for the special care and providence of the Lord Jesus, Peter and the rest of them had, for aught I know, been cut in pieces immediately. Grotius gives another, and a probable sense of this blow, making those that take the sword to be, not Peter, but the officers and soldiers that come with swords to

take Christ; They shall perish with the sword. "Peter, thou needest not draw they sword to punish them. God will certainly, shortly, and severely, reckon with them." They took the Roman sword to seize Christ with, and by the Roman sword, not long after, they and their place and nation were destroyed. Therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because God will repay (Ro 12:19); and therefore we must suffer with faith and patience, because persecutors will be paid in their own coin. See Re 13:10.

[2.] It was needless for him to draw his sword in defence of his Master, how, if he pleased, could summon into his service all the hosts of heaven (Mt 26:53); "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall send from heaven effectual succours? Peter, if I would put by these sufferings, I could easily do it without thy hand or thy sword." Note, God has no need of us, of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues our distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of our duty to serve his interests. God can do his work without us; if we look into the heavens, and see how he is attended there, we may easily infer, that, though we be righteous, he is not beholden to us, Job 35:5,7. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was a voluntary weakness; he submitted to death, not because he could not, but because he would not contend with it. This takes off the offence of the cross, and proves Christ crucified the power of God; even now in the depth of his sufferings he could call in the aid of legions of angels. Now, arti--yet; "Though the business is so far gone, I could yet with a word speaking turn the scale." Christ here lets us know,

First, What a great interest he had in his Father; I can pray to my Father, and he will send me help from the sanctuary. I can parakalesai--demand of my Father these succours. Christ prayer as one having authority. Note, It is a great comfort to God's people, when they are surrounded with enemies on all hands, that they have a way open heavenward; if they can do nothing else, they can pray to him that can do every thing. And they who are much in prayer at other times, have most comfort in praying when troublesome times

come. Observe, Christ saith, not only that God could send him such a number of angels, but that, if he insisted upon it, he would do it. Though he had undertaken the work of our redemption, yet, if he had desired to be released, it should seem by this that the Father would not have held him to it. He might yet have gone out free from the service, but he loved it, and would not; so that it was only with the cords of his own love that he was bound to the altar.

Secondly, What a great interest he had in the heavenly hosts; He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels, amounting to above seventy-two thousand. Observe here, 1. There is an innumerable company of angels, Heb 12:2. A detachment of more than twelve legions might be spared for our service, and yet there would be no miss of them about the throne. See Da 7:10. They are marshalled in exact order, like the well-disciplined legions; not a confused multitude, but regular troops; all know their post, and observe the word of command. 2. This innumerable company of angels are all at the disposal of our heavenly Father, and do his pleasure, Ps 103:20,21. 3. These angelic hosts were ready to come in to the assistance of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings, if he had needed or desired it. See Heb 1:6,14. They would have been to him as they were to Elisha, chariots of fire, and horses of fire, not only to secure him, but to consume those that set upon him. 4. Our heavenly Father is to be eyed and acknowledged in all the services of the heavenly hosts; He shall give them me: therefore angels are not to be prayed to, but the Lord of the angels, Ps 91:11. 5. It is matter of comfort to all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ, that there is a world of angels always at the service of the Lord Jesus, that can do wonders. He that has the armies of heaven at his beck, can do what he pleases among the inhabitants of the earth; He shall presently give them me. See how ready his Father was to hear his prayer, and how ready the angels were to observe his orders; they are willing servants, winged messengers, they fly swiftly. This is very encouraging to those that have the honour of Christ, and the welfare of his church, much at heart. Think they that they have more care and concern for Christ and his church, than God and the holy angels have?

52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.
53 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?
54 But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?
55 In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me ? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

It was no time to make any defence at all, or to offer to put by the stroke; For how then shall the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be? Mt 26:54. It was written, that Christ should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, Isa 53:7. Should he summon the angels to his assistance, he would not be led to the slaughter at all; should he permit his disciples to fight, he would not be led as a lamb quietly and without resistance; therefore he and his disciples must yield to the accomplishment of the predictions. Note, In all difficult cases, the word of God must be conclusive against our own counsels, and nothing must be done, nothing attempted, against the fulfilling of the scripture. If the easing of our pains, the breaking of our bonds, the saving of our lives, will not consist with the fulfilling of the scripture, we ought to say, "Let God's word and will take place, let his law be magnified and made honourable, whatever becomes of us." Thus Christ checked Peter, when he set up for his champion, and captain of his life-guard.

4. We are next told how Christ argued the case with them that came to take him (Mt 26:55); though he did not resist them, yet he did reason with them. Note, It will consist with Christian patience under our sufferings, calmly to expostulate with our enemies and persecutors, as David with Saul, 1Sa 24:14,26:18. Are ye come out,

(A) With rage and enmity, as against a thief, as if I were an enemy to the public safety, and deservedly suffered this? Thieves draw upon themselves the common odium; every one will lend a hand to stop a thief: and thus they fell upon Christ as the offscouring of all things. If he had been the plague of his country, he could not have been prosecuted with more heat and violence.

(B) With all this power and force, as against the worst of thieves, that dare the law, bid defiance to public justice, and add rebellion to their sin? You are come out as against a thief, with swords and staves, as if there were danger of resistance; whereas ye have killed the just One, and he doth not resist you, Jam 5:6. If he had not been willing to suffer, it was folly to come with swords and staves, for they could not conquer him; had he been minded to resist, he would have esteemed their iron as straw, and their swords and staves would have been as briars before a consuming fire; but, being willing to suffer, it was folly to come thus armed, for he would not contend with them.

He further expostulates with them, by reminding them how he had behaved himself hitherto toward them, and they toward him.

[1.] Of his public appearance; I sat daily with you in the temple teaching. And,

[2.] Of their public connivance; Ye laid no hold on me. How comes then this change? They were very unreasonable, in treating him as they did. First, He had given them no occasion to look upon him as a thief, for he had taught in the temple. And such were the matter, and such the manner of his teaching, that he was manifested in the consciences of all that heard him, not to be a bad man. Such gracious words as came from his mouth, were not the words of a thief, nor of one that had a devil. Secondly, Nor had he given them occasion to look upon him as one that absconded, or fled from justice, that they should come in the night to seize him; if they had any thing to say to him, they might find him every day in the temple, ready to answer all challenges, all charges, and there they might do as they pleased with him; for the chief priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus clandestinely, in the place of his retirement, was base and cowardly. Thus the greatest hero may be villainously assassinated in a corner, by one that in open field would tremble to look him in the face.

But all this was done (so it follows, Mt 26:56) that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. It is hard to say, whether these are the words of the sacred historian, as a comment upon this story, and a direction to the Christian reader to compare it with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at it; or, whether they are the words of Christ himself, as a reason why, though he could not but resent this base treatment, he yet submitted to it, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, to which he had just now referred himself, Mt 26:54. Note, The scripture are in the fulfilling every day; and all those scriptures which speak of the Messiah, had their full accomplishment in our Lord Jesus.

5. How he was, in the midst of this distress, shamefully deserted by his disciples; They all forsook him, and fled, Mt 26:56.

(A) This was their sin; and it was a great sin for them who had left all to follow him, now to leave him for they knew not what. There was unkindness in it, considering the relation they stood in to him, the favours they had received from him, and the melancholy circumstances he was now in. There was unfaithfulness in it, for they had solemnly promised to adhere to him, and never to forsake him. He had indented for their safe conduct (Joh 18:8); yet they could not rely upon that, but shifted for themselves by an inglorious flight. What folly was this, for fear of death to flee from him whom they themselves knew and had acknowledged to be the Fountain of life? Joh 6:67,68. Lord, what is man!

(B) It was a part of Christ's suffering, it added affliction to his bonds, to be thus deserted, as it did to Job (Mt 19:13), He hath put my brethren far from me; and to David (Ps 38:11), Lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore. They should have staid with him, to minister to him, to countenance him, and, if need were, to be

witnesses for him at his trial; but they treacherously deserted him, as, at St. Paul's first answer, no man stood with him. But there was a mystery in this.

[1.] Christ, as a sacrifice for sins, stood thus abandoned. The deer that by the keeper's arrow is marked out to be hunted and run down, is immediately deserted by the whole herd. In this he was made a curse for us, being left as one separated to evil.

[2.] Christ, as the Saviour of souls, stood thus alone; as he needed not, so he had not the assistance of any other in working out our salvation; he bore all, and did all himself. He trod the wine-press alone, and when there was none to uphold, then his own arm wrought salvation, Isa 63:3,5. So the Lord alone did lead his Israel, and they stand still, and only see this great salvation, De 32:12.

56 But all this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

It was a great sin for those who had left all to follow Jesus; now to leave him for they knew not what. What folly, for fear of death to flee from Him, whom they knew and acknowledged to be the Fountain of life!

Jesus before the Council

57 And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

The sitting of the court; the scribes and the elders were assembled, though it was in the dead time of the night, when other people were fast asleep in their beds; yet, to gratify their malice against Christ, they denied themselves that natural rest, and sat up all night, to be ready to fall upon the prey which Judas and his men, they hoped, would seize.

See,

1. Who they were, that were assembled; the scribes, the principal teachers, and elders, the principal rulers, of the Jewish church: these were the most bitter enemies to Christ our great teacher and ruler, on whom therefore they had a jealous eye, as one that eclipsed them; perhaps some of these scribes and elders were not so malicious at Christ as some others of them were; yet, in concurrence with the rest, they made themselves guilty. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Ps 22:16); The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. Jeremiah complains of an assembly of treacherous men; and David of his enemies gathering themselves together against him, Ps 35:15.

2. Where they were assembled; in the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest; there they assembled two days before, to lay the plot (Mt 26:3), and there they now convened again, to prosecute it. The High Priest was Ab-beth-din--the father of the house of judgment, but he is now the patron of wickedness; his house should have been the sanctuary of oppressed innocency, but it is become the throne of iniquity; and no wonder, when even God's house of prayer was made a den of thieves.

The setting of the prisoner to the bar; they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away, hurried him, no doubt, with violence, led him as a trophy of their victory, led him as a victim to the altar; he was brought into Jerusalem through that which was called the sheep-gate, for that was the way into town from the mount of Olives; and it was so called because the sheep appointed for sacrifice were brought that way to the temple; very fitly therefore is Christ led that way, who is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Christ was led first to the High Priest, for by the law all sacrifices were to be first presented to the priest, and delivered into his hand, Le 17:5.

58 But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

The cowardice and faint-heartedness of Peter (Mt 26:58); But Peter followed afar off. This comes in here, with an eye to the following story of his denying him. He forsook him as the rest did, when he was seized, and what is here said of his following him is easily reconcilable with his forsaking him; such following was no better than forsaking him; for,

1. He followed him, but it was afar off. Some sparks of love and concern for his Master there were in his breast, and therefore he followed him; but fear and concern for his own safety prevailed, and therefore he followed afar off. Note, It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those that are willing to be Christ's disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter's denying him; for to follow him afar off, is by little and little to go back from him. There is danger in drawing back, nay, in looking back.

2. He followed him, but he went in, and sat with the servants. He should have gone up to the court, and attended on his Master, and appeared for him; but he went in where there was a good fire, and sat with the servants, not to silence their reproaches, but to screen himself. It was presumption in Peter thus to thrust himself into temptation; he that does so, throws himself out of God's protection. Christ had told Peter that he could not follow him now, and had particularly warned him of his danger this night; and yet he would venture into the midst of this wicked crew. It helped David to walk in his integrity, that he hated the congregation of evil doers, and would not sit with the wicked.

3. He followed him, but it was only to see the end, led more by his curiosity than by his conscience; he attended as an idle spectator rather than as a disciple, a person concerned. He should have gone in, to do Christ some service, or to get some wisdom and grace to himself, by observing Christ's behaviour under his sufferings: but he went in, only to look about him; it is not unlikely that Peter went in, expecting that Christ would have made his escape miraculously out of the hands of his persecutors; that, having so lately struck them down, who came to seize him, he would now have struck them dead,

who sat to judge him; and this he had a mind to see: if so, it was folly for him to think of seeing any other end than what Christ had foretold, that he should be put to death. Note, It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to enquire what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is ours.

59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

60 but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

Now the Scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me. Christ was accused, that we might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, let us remember we cannot expect to fare better than our Master. When Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak. Hitherto Jesus had seldom professed expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenor of his doctrine spoke it, and his miracles proved it; but now he would not omit to make an open confession of it. He thus confessed, as an example and encouragement to his followers, to confess him before men, whatever hazard they ran. Disdain, cruel mocking, and abhorrence, are the sure portion of the disciple as they were of the Master, from such as would buffet and deride the Lord of glory. These things were exactly foretold in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah. Let us confess Christ's name, and bear the reproach, and he will confess us before his Father's throne.

Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas apparently lived in the same house. Annas had been the previous high priest and, though replaced by Caiaphas, was still well respected and influential. Jesus' captors took him to Annas first, while Peter and John, who had followed at a distance, waited in the courtyard. By now it was well past midnight and into the early hours of the morning (Joh_18:12-18; Luk_22:54).

When Annas asked Jesus questions about his teaching, Jesus replied that it was known to all. He had no need to testify on his own behalf (contrary to Jewish law) when many other witnesses could be called in. After being ill-treated for giving an honest and unanswerable reply, he was sent to Caiaphas (Joh_18:19-24).

Caiaphas had called the Sanhedrin together, determined to condemn Jesus without delay, even though it was illegal for the Sanhedrin to meet at night to judge an offence that carried the death sentence. The Jewish leaders' whole purpose was to get some statement from Jesus that they could use to charge him with blasphemy and so condemn him to death (Mat_26:57-63; Mar_14:53-61). They were soon satisfied when Jesus said he was the Messiah, the Son of God and the Son of man, and he was on the way to receiving the glorious kingdom given him by God (Mat_26:64; Mar_14:62; see earlier section, 'Jesus and the Kingdom'). With an outburst of violent abuse the Jewish leaders condemned him as worthy of death (Mat_26:65-68; Mar_14:63-65).

61 and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee ?

63 But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

The trial of our Lord Jesus in this court.

1. They examined witnesses against him, though they were resolved, right or wrong, to condemn him; yet, to put the better colour upon it, they would produce evidence against him. The crimes properly cognizable in their court, were, false doctrine and blasphemy; these they endeavoured to prove upon him. And observe here,

(a) Their search for proof; They sought false witness against him; they had seized him, bound him, abused him, and after all have to seek for something to lay to his charge, and can show no cause for his commitment. They tried if any of them could allege seemingly from their own knowledge any thing against him; and suggested one calumny and then another, which, if true, might touch his life. Thus evil men dig up mischief, Pr 16:27. Here they trod in the steps of their predecessors, who devised devices against Jeremiah, Jer 18:18,20:10. They made proclamation, that, if any one could give

information against the prisoner at the bar, they were ready to receive it, and presently many bore false witness against him (Mt 26:60); for is a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, and will carry false stories to him, Pr 29:12. This is an evil often seen under the sun, Ec 10:5. If Naboth must be taken off, there are sons of Belial to swear against him.

(b) Their success in this search; in several attempts they were baffled, they sought false testimonies among themselves, others came in to help them, and yet they found none; they could make nothing of it, could not take the evidence together, or give it any colour of truth or consistency with itself, no, not they themselves being judges. The matters alleged were such palpable lies, as carried their own confutation along with them. This redounded much to the honour of Christ now, when they were loading him with disgrace.

But at last they met with two witnesses, who, it seems, agreed in their evidence, and therefore were hearkened to, in hopes that now the point was gained. The words they swore against him, were, that he should say, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days, Mt 26:61. Now by this they designed to accuse him, [1.] As an enemy to the temple, and one that sought for the destruction of it, which they could not bear to hear of; for they valued themselves by the temple of the Lord (Jer 7:4), and, when they abandoned other idols, made a perfect idol of that. Stephen was accused for speaking against this holy place, Ac 6:13,14. [2.] As one that dealt in witchcraft, or some such unlawful arts, by the help of which he could rear such a building in three days: they had often suggested that he was in league with Beelzebub. Now, as to this, First, The words were mis-recited; he said, Destroy ye this temple (Joh 2:19), plainly intimating that he spoke of a temple which his enemies would seek to destroy; they come, and swear that he said, I am able to destroy this temple, as if the design against it were his. He said, In Three days I will raise it up-- egero auton, a word properly used of a living temple; I will raise it to life. They come, and swear that he said, I am able, oikodomesai--to build it; which is properly used of a house temple. Secondly, The words were

misunderstood; he spoke of the temple of his body (Joh 2:21), and perhaps when he said, this temple, pointed to, or laid his hand upon, his own body; but they swore that he said the temple of God, meaning this holy place. Note, There have been, and still are, such as wrest the sayings of Christ to their own destruction, 2Pe 3:16. Thirdly, Make the worst they could of it, it was no capital crime, even by their own law; if it had been, no question but he had been prosecuted for it, when he spoke the words in a public discourse some years ago; nay, the words were capable of a laudable construction, and such as bespoke a kindness for the temple; if it were destroyed, he would exert himself to the utmost to rebuild it. But any thing that looked criminal, would serve to give colour to their malicious prosecution. Now the scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me (Ps 27:12); and see Ps 35:11. Though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me, Ho 7:13. We stand justly accused, the law accuseth us, De 27:26,Joh 5:45. Satan and our own consciences accuse us, 1Jo 3:20. The creatures cry out against us. Now, to discharge us from all these just accusations, our Lord Jesus submitted to this, to be unjustly and falsely accused, that in the virtue of his sufferings we may be enabled to triumph over all challenges; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Ro 8:33,34. He was accused, that he might not be condemned; and if at any time we suffer thus, have all manner of evil, not only said, but sworn, against us falsely, let us remember that we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

(c) Christ's silence under all these accusations, to the amazement of the court, Mt 26:62. The High Priest, the judge of the court, arose in some heat, and said, "Answerest thou nothing? Come, you the prisoner at the bar; you hear what is sworn against you, what have you now to say for yourself? What defence can you make? Or what please have you to offer in answer to this charge?" But Jesus held his peace (Mt 26:63), not as one sullen, or as one self-condemned, or as one astonished and in confusion; not because he wanted something to say, or knew not how to say it, but that the scripture might be fulfilled (Isa 53:7); As the sheep is dumb before the shearer, and before the butcher, so he opened not his mouth; and that he might be the Son of David, who, when his enemies spoke

mischievous things against him, was as a deaf man that heard not, Ps 38:12-14. He was silent, because his hour was come; he would not deny the charge, because he was willing to submit to the sentence; otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence and shame now, as he had done many a time before. If God had entered into judgment with us, we had been speechless (Mt 22:12), not able to answer for one of a thousand, Job 9:3. Therefore, when Christ was made sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak, Heb 12:24. He stood mute at this bar, that we might have something to say at God's bar.

Well, this way will not do; aliâ aggrediendum est viâ--recourse must be had to some other expedient.

2. They examined our Lord Jesus himself upon an oath like that ex officio; and, since they could not accuse him, they will try, contrary to the law of equity, to make him accuse himself.

(a) Here is the interrogatory put to him by the High Priest.

Observe,

[1.] The question itself; Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? That is, Whether thou pretend to be so? For they will by no means admit it into consideration, whether he be really so or no; though the Messiah was to be the Consolation of Israel, and glorious things were spoken concerning him in the Old Testament, yet so strangely besotted were they with a jealousy of any thing that threatened their exorbitant power and grandeur, that they would never enter into the examination of the matter, whether Jesus was the Messiah or no; never once put the case, suppose he should be so; they only wished him to confess that he called himself so, that they might on that indict him as a deceiver. What will not pride and malice carry men to?

[2.] The solemnity of the proposal of it; I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us. Not that he had any regard to the living God,

but took his name in vain; only thus he hoped to gain his point with our Lord Jesus; "If thou hast any value for the blessed name of God, and reverence for his Majesty, tell us this." If he should refuse to answer when he was thus adjured, they would charge him with contempt of the blessed name of God. Thus the persecutors of good men often take advantage against them by their consciences, as Daniel's enemies did against him in the matter of his God.

(b) Christ's answer to this interrogatory (Mt 26:64), in which,

[1.] He owns himself to be The Christ the Son of God. Thou hast said; that is, "It is as thou hast said;" for in St. Mark it is, I am. Hitherto, he seldom professed himself expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenour of his doctrine bespoke it, and his miracles proved it: but now he would not omit to make a confession of it, First, Because that would have looked like a disowning of that truth which he came into the world to bear witness to. Secondly, It would have looked like declining his sufferings, when he knew the acknowledgment of this would give his enemies all the advantage they desired against him. He thus confessed himself, for example and encouragement to his followers, when they are called to it, to confess him before men, whatever hazards they run by it. And according to this pattern the martyrs readily confessed themselves Christians, though they knew they must die for it, as the martyrs at Thebais, Euseb. Hist. 50.8, 100.9. That Christ answered out of a regard to the adjuration which Caiaphas had profanely used by the living God, I cannot think, any more than that he had any regard to the like adjuration in the devil's mouth, Mk 5:7.

[2.] He refers himself, for the proof of this, to his second coming, and indeed to his whole estate of exaltation. It is probable that they looked upon him with a scornful disdainful smile, when he said, "I am;" "A likely fellow," thought they, "to be the Messiah, who is expected to come in so much pomp and power;" and to that this nevertheless refers. "Though now you see me in this low and abject state, and think it a ridiculous thing for me to call myself the Messiah, nevertheless the day is coming when I shall appear

otherwise." Hereafter, ap arti--à modo--shortly; for his exaltation began in a few days; now shortly his kingdom began to be set up; and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, to judge the world; of which his coming shortly to judge and destroy the Jewish nation would be a type and earnest. Note, The terrors of the judgment-day will be a sensible conviction to the most obstinate infidelity, not in order to conversion (that will be then too late), but in order to an eternal confusion. Observe, First, Whom they should see; the Son of man. Having owned himself the Son of God, even now in his estate of humiliation, he speaks of himself as the Son of man, even in his estate of exaltation; for he had these two distinct natures in one person. The incarnation of Christ has made him Son of God and Son of man; for he is Immanuel, God with us. Secondly, In what posture they should see him;

1. Sitting on the right hand of power, according to the prophecy of the Messiah (Ps 110:1); Sit thou at my right hand; which denotes both the dignity and the dominion he is exalted to. Though now he stood at the bar, they should shortly see him sit on the throne.

2. Coming in the clouds of heaven; this refers to another prophecy concerning the Son of man (Da 7:13,14), which is applied to Christ (Lu 1:33), when he came to destroy Jerusalem; so terrible was the judgment, and so sensible the indications of the wrath of the Lamb in it, that it might be called a visible appearance of Christ; but doubtless it has reference to the general judgment; to this day he appeals, and summons them to an appearance, then and there to answer for what they are now doing. He had spoken of this day to his disciples, awhile ago, for their comfort, and had bid them lift up their heads for joy in the prospect of it, Lu 21:27,28. Now he speaks of it to his enemies, for their terror; for nothing is more comfortable to the righteous, nor more terrible to the wicked, than Christ's judging the world at the last day.

64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.
66 What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.
67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

His sentence passed, upon this conviction, Mt 26:66.

Here is,

1. Caiaphas's appeal to the bench; What think ye? See his base hypocrisy and partiality; when he had already prejudged the cause, and pronounced him a blasphemer, then, as if he were willing to be advised, he asks the judgment of his brethren; but hide malice ever so cunningly under the robe of justice, some way or other it will break out. If he would have dealt fairly, he should have collected the votes of the bench seriatim--in order, and begun with the junior, and delivered his own opinion last; but he knew that by the authority of his place he could sway the rest, and therefore declares his judgment, and presumes they are all of his mind; he takes the crime, with regard to Christ, pro confesso--as a crime confessed; and the judgment, with regard to the court, pro concesso--as a judgment agreed to.

2. Their concurrence with him; they said, He is guilty of death; perhaps they did not all concur: it is certain that Joseph of Arimathea, if he was present, dissented (Lu 23:51); so did Nicodemus, and, it is likely, others with them; however, the majority carried it that way; but, perhaps, this being an extraordinary council, or cabal rather, none had notice to be present but such as they knew would concur, and so it might be voted nemine contradicente--unanimously. The judgment was, "He is guilty of death; by the law he deserves to die." Though they had not power now to put any man to death, yet by such a judgment as this they made a man an outlaw among his people (qui caput gerit lupinum--he carries a wolf's head; so our old law describes an outlaw), and so exposed him to the fury either of a popular tumult, as Stephen was, or to be clamoured against before the governor, as Christ was. Thus was the Lord of life

condemned to die, that through him there may be no condemnation to us.

68 saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee ?

The abuses and indignities done to him after sentence passed (Mt 26:67,68); Then, when he was found guilty, they spat in his face. Because they had not power to put him to death, and could not be sure that they should prevail with the governor to be their executioner, they would do him all the mischief they could, now that they had him in their hands. Condemned prisoners are taken under the special protection of the law, which they are to make satisfaction to, and by all civilized nations have been treated with tenderness; sufficient is this punishment. But when they had passed sentence upon our Lord Jesus, he was treated as if hell had broken loose upon him, as if he were not only worthy of death, but as if that were too good for him, and he were unworthy of the compassion shown to the worst malefactors. Thus he was made a curse for us. But who were they that were thus barbarous? It should seem, the very same that had passed sentence upon him. They said, He is guilty of death, and then did they spit in his face. The priests began, and then no wonder if the servants, who would do any thing to make sport to themselves, and curry favour with their wicked masters, carried on the humour. See how they abused him.

1. They spat in his face. Thus the scripture was fulfilled (Isa 50:6), He hid not his face from shame and spitting. Job complained of this indignity done to him, and herein was a type of Christ (Job 31:10); They spare not to spit in my face. It is an expression of the greatest contempt and indignation possible; looking upon him as more despicable than the very ground they spit upon. When Miriam was under the leprosy, it was looked upon as a disgrace to her, like that of her father spitting in her face, Nu 12:14. He that refused to raise up seed to his brother, was to undergo this dishonour, De 25:9. Yet Christ, when he was repairing the decays of the great family of mankind, submitted to it. That face which was fairer than the children of men, which was white and ruddy, and which angels reverence, was thus filthily abused by the basest and vilest of the children of men. Thus was confusion poured upon his face, that ours

might not be filled with everlasting shame and contempt. They who now profane his blessed name, abuse his word, and hate his image in his sanctified ones; what do they better than spit in his face? They would do that, if it were in their reach.

2. They buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands. This added pain to the shame, for both came in with sin. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Isa 50:6), I gave my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and (La 3:30), He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled with reproach, and yet keepeth silence (Mt 26:28); and (Mic 5:1), They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek; here the margin reads it, They smote him with rods; for so errapisan signifies, and this he submitted to.

3. They challenged him to tell who struck him, having first blindfolded him; Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?

(1.) They made sport of him, as the Philistines did with Samson; it is grievous to those that are in misery, for people to make merry about them, but much more to make merry with them and their misery. Here was an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy of the human nature that could be, to show that there was need of a religion that should recover men to humanity.

(2.) They made sport with his prophetical office. They had heard him called a prophet, and that he was famed for wonderful discoveries; this they upbraided him with, and pretended to make a trial of; as if the divine omniscience must stoop to a piece of children's play. They put a like affront upon Christ, who profanely jest with the scripture, and make themselves merry with holy things; like Belshazzar's revels in the temple bowls.

Peter Denies Jesus

69 Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.

We have here the story of Peter's denying his Master, and it comes in as a part of Christ's sufferings. Our Lord Jesus was now in the High Priest's hall, not to be tried, but baited rather; and then it would have been some comfort to him to see his friends near him. But we do not find any friend he had about the court, save Peter only, and it would have been better if he had been at a distance. Observe how he fell, and how he got up again by repentance.

I. His sin, which is here impartially related, to the honour of the penmen of scripture, who dealt faithfully. Observe,

1 The immediate occasion of Peter's sin. He sat without in the palace, among the servants of the High Priest. Note, Bad company is to many an occasion of sin; and those who needlessly thrust themselves into it, go upon the devil's ground, venture into his crowds, and may expect either to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter was, or to be ridiculed and abused, as his Master was; they scarcely can come out of such company, without guilt or grief, or both. He that would keep God's commandments and his own covenant, must say to evil-doers, Depart from me, Ps 119:115. Peter spoke from his own experience, when he warned his new converts to save themselves from that untoward generation; for he had like to have ruined himself by but going once among them.

2 The temptation to it. He was challenged as a retainer to Jesus of Galilee. First one maid, and then another, and then the rest of the servants, charged it upon him; Thou also wert with Jesus of Galilee, Mt 26:69. And again, This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth, Mt 26:71. And again (Mt 26:73), Thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee to be a Galilean; whose dialect and pronunciation differed from that of the other Jews. Happy he whose speech betrays him to be a disciple of Christ, by the holiness and seriousness of whose discourse it appears that he has been with Jesus! Observe how scornfully they speak of Christ-Jesus of Galilee, and of Nazareth, upbraiding him with the country he was of: and how disdainfully they speak of Peter--This fellow; as if they thought it a reproach to them to have such a man in their company, and he

was well enough served for coming among them; yet they had nothing to accuse him of, but that he was with Jesus, which, they thought, was enough to render him both a scandalous and a suspected person.

3. The sin itself. When he was charged as one of Christ's disciples, he denied it, was ashamed and afraid to own himself so, and would have all about him to believe that he had no knowledge of him, nor any kindness or concern for him.

(a) Upon the first mention of it, he said, I know not what thou sayest. This was a shuffling answer; he pretended that he did not understand the charge, that he knew not whom she meant by Jesus of Galilee, or what she meant by being with him; so making strange of that which his heart was now as full of as it could be.

[1.] It is a fault thus to misrepresent our own apprehensions, thoughts, and affections, to serve a turn; to pretend that we do not understand, or did not think of, or remember, that which yet we do apprehend, and did think of, and remember; this is a species of lying which we are more prone to than any other, because in this a man is not easily disproved; for who knows the spirit of a man, save himself? But God knows it, and we must be restrained from this wickedness by a fear of him, Pr 24:12.

[2.] It is yet a greater fault to be shy of Christ, to dissemble our knowledge of him, and to shift off a confession of him, when we are called to it; it is, in effect, to deny him.

(b) Upon the next attack, he said, flat and plain, I know not the man, and backed it with an oath, Mt 26:72. This was, in effect, to say, I will not own him, I am no Christian; for Christianity is the knowledge of Christ. Why, Peter? Canst thou look upon yonder Prisoner at the bar, and say thou dost not know him? Didst not thou quit all to follow him? And hast thou not been the man of his counsel? Hast thou not known him better than any one else? Didst thou not confess him to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Hast

thou forgotten all the kind and tender looks thou hast had from him, and all the intimate fellowship thou hast had with him? Canst thou look him in the face, and say that thou dost not know him?

(c) Upon the third assault, he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man, Mt 26:74. This was worst of all, for the way of sin is down-hill. He cursed and swore,

[1.] To back what he said, and to gain credit to it, that they might not any more call it in question; he did not only say it, but swear it; and yet what he said, was false. Note, We have reason to suspect the truth of that which is backed with rash oaths and imprecations. None but the devil's sayings need the devil's proofs. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother.

[2.] He designed it to be an evidence for him, that he was none of Christ's disciples, for this was none of their language. Cursing and swearing suffice to prove a man no disciple of Christ; for it is the language of his enemies thus to take his name in vain.

This is written for warning to us, that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ the Lord that bought us, by rejecting his offers, resisting his Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of him, and being ashamed of him and his words, or afraid of suffering for him and with his suffering people.

4. The aggravations of this sin, which it may be of use to take notice of, that we may observe the like transgressions in our own sins. Consider,

(a) Who he was: an apostle, one of the first three, that had been upon all occasions the most forward to speak to the honour of Christ. The greater profession we make of religion, the greater is our sin if in any thing we walk unworthily.

(b) What fair warning his Master had given him of his danger; if he had regarded this as he ought to have done, he would not have run himself into the temptation.

(c) How solemnly he had promised to adhere to Christ in this night of trial; he had said again and again, "I will never deny thee; no, I will die with thee first;" yet he broke these bonds in sunder, and his word was yea and nay.

(d) How soon he fell into this sin after the Lord's supper. There to receive such an inestimable pledge of redeeming love, and yet the same night, before morning, to disown his Redeemer, was indeed turning aside quickly.

(e) How weak comparatively the temptation was; it was not the judge, nor any of the officers of the court, that charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but a silly maid or two, that probably designed him no hurt, nor would have done him any if he had owned it. This was but running with the footmen, Jer 12:5.

(f.) How often he repeated it; even after the cock had crowed once he continued in the temptation, and a second and third time relapsed into the sin. Is this Peter? How art thou fallen!

Thus was his sin aggravated; but on the other hand there is this to extenuate it, that, what he said he said in his haste, Ps 116:11. He fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design; his heart was against it; he spoke very ill, but it was unadvisedly, and before he was aware.

70 But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

72 And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

73 And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.

74 Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.

And immediately the cock crew.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter's repentance for this sin, Mt 26:75. The former is written for our admonition, that we may not sin; but, if at any time we be overtaken, this is written for our imitation, that we may make haste to repent. Now observe,

1. What it was, that brought Peter to repentance.

(a) The cock crew (Mt 26:74); a common contingency; but, Christ having mentioned the crowing of the cock in the warning he gave him, that made it a means of bringing him to himself. The word of Christ can put a significancy upon whatever sign he shall please to choose, and by virtue of that word he can make it very beneficial to the souls of his people. The crowing of a cock is to Peter instead of a John Baptist, the voice of one calling to repentance. Conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of what we had forgotten. When David's heart smote him the cock crew. Where there is a living principle of grace in the soul, though for the present overpowered by temptation, a little hint will serve, only for a memorandum, when God sets in with it, to recover it from a by-path. Here was the crowing of a cock made a happy occasion of the conversion of a soul. Christ comes sometimes in mercy at cock-crowing.

(b) He remembered the words of the Lord; this was it that brought him to himself, and melted him into tears of godly sorrow; a sense of his ingratitude to Christ, and the slight regard he had had to the gracious warning Christ had given him. Note, A serious reflection upon the words of the Lord Jesus will be a powerful inducement to repentance, and will help to break the heart for sin. Nothing grieves a penitent more than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus and the tokens of his love.

2. How his repentance was expressed; He went out, and wept bitterly.

(a) His sorrow was secret; he went out, out of the High Priest's hall, vexed at himself that ever he came into it, now that he found what a snare he was in, and got out of it as fast as he could. He went out into the porch before (Mt 26:71); and if he had gone quite off then, his second and third denial had been prevented; but then he came in again, now he went out and came in no more. He went out to some place of solitude and retirement, where he might bemoan himself, like the doves of the valleys, Eze 7:16,Jer 9:1,2. He went out, that he might not be disturbed in his devotions on this sad occasion. We may then be most free in our communion with God, when we are most free from the converse and business of this world. In mourning for sin, we find the families apart, and their wives apart, Zec 12:11,12.

(b) His sorrow was serious; He wept bitterly. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep, like that for an only son. Those that have sinned sweetly, must weep bitterly; for, sooner or later, sin will be bitterness. This deep sorrow is requisite, not to satisfy divine justice (a sea of tears would not do that), but to evidence that there is a real change of mind, which is the essence of repentance, to make the pardon the more welcome, and sin for the future the more loathsome. Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often and openly, and in the mouth of danger; so far from ever saying, I know not the man, that he made all the house of Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus was Lord and Christ. True repentance for any sin will be best evidenced by our abounding in the contrary grace and duty; that is a sign of our weeping, not only bitterly, but sincerely. Some of the ancients say, that as long as Peter lived, he never heard a cock crow but it set him a weeping. Those that have truly sorrowed for sin, will sorrow upon every remembrance of it; yet not so as to hinder, but rather to increase, their joy in God and in his mercy and grace.

Matthew-27

Jesus Brought before Pilate

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took
counsel against Jesus to put him to death:
2 and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius
Pilate the governor.

We left Christ in the hands of the chief priests and elders, condemned to die, but they could only show their teeth; about two years before this the Romans had taken from the Jews the power of capital punishment; they could put no man to death, and therefore early in the morning another council is held, to consider what is to be done. And here we are told what was done in that morning-council, after they had been for two or three hours consulting with their pillows.

Christ is delivered up to Pilate, that he might execute the sentence they had passed upon him. Judea having been almost one hundred years before this conquered by Pompey, had ever since been tributary to Rome, and was lately made part of the province of Syria, and subject to the government of the president of Syria, under whom there were several procurators, who chiefly attended the business of the revenues, but sometimes, as Pilate particularly, had the whole power of the president lodged in them. This was a plain evidence that the sceptre was departed from Judah, and that therefore now the Shiloh must come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Ge 49:10. Pilate is characterized by the Roman writers of that time, as a man of a rough and haughty spirit, wilful and implacable, and extremely covetous and oppressive; the Jews had a great enmity to his person, and were weary of his government, and yet they made use of him as the tool of their malice against Christ.

1. They bound Jesus. He was bound when he was first seized; but either they took off these bonds when he was before the council, or now they added to them. Having found him guilty, they tied his hands behind him, as they usually do with convicted criminals. He was already bound with the bonds of love to man, and of his own undertaking, else he had soon broken these bonds, as Samson did his. We were fettered with the bond of iniquity, held in the cords of our sins (Pr 10:22); but God had bound the yoke of our transgressions upon the neck of the Lord Jesus (Isa 50:14), that we might be loosed by his bonds, as we are healed by his stripes.

2. They led him away in a sort of triumph, led him as a lamb to the slaughter; so was he taken from prison and from judgment, Isa 53:7,8. It was nearly a mile from Caiaphas's house to Pilate's. All that way they led him through the streets of Jerusalem, when in the morning they began to fill, to make him a spectacle to the world.

3. They delivered him to Pontius Pilate; according to that which Christ had often said, that he should be delivered to the Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles were obnoxious to the judgment of God, and concluded under sin, and Christ was to be the Saviour both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore Christ was brought into the judgment both of Jews and Gentiles, and both had a hand in his death. See how these corrupt church-rulers abused the civil magistrate, making use of him to execute their unrighteous decrees, and inflict the grievance which they had prescribed, Isa 10:1. Thus have the kings of the earth been wretchedly imposed upon by the papal powers, and condemned to the drudgery of extirpating with the sword of war, as well as that of justice, those whom they have marked for heretics, right or wrong, to the great prejudice of their own interests.

The Death of Judas

3 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

The money which they had paid to Judas for betraying Christ, is by him delivered back to them, and Judas, in despair, hangs himself. The chief priests and elders supported themselves with this, in prosecuting Christ, that his own disciple betrayed him to them; but now, in the midst of the prosecution, that string failed them, and even he is made to them a witness of Christ's innocency and a monument of God's justice; which served, 1. For glory to Christ in the midst of his sufferings, and a specimen of his victory over Satan who had entered into Judas. 2. For warning to his persecutors, and to leave them the more inexcusable. If their heart had not been fully set in them to do this evil, what Judas said and did, one would think, should have stopped the prosecution.

(a) See here how Judas repented: not like Peter, who repented, believed, and was pardoned: no, he repented, despaired, and was ruined. Now observe here,

[1.] What induced him to repent. It was when he saw that he was condemned. Judas, it is probable, expected that either Christ would have made his escape out of their hands, or would so have pleaded his own cause at their bar as to have come off, and then Christ would have had the honour, the Jews the shame, and he the money, and no harm done. This he had no reason to expect, because he had so often heard his Master say that he must be crucified; yet it is probable that he did expect it, and when the event did not answer his vain fancy, then he fell into this horror, when he saw the stream strong against Christ, and him yielding to it. Note, Those who measure actions by the consequences of them rather than by the divine law, will find themselves mistaken in their measures. The way of sin is down-hill; and if we cannot easily stop ourselves, much less can we stop others whom we have set a going in a sinful way. He repented himself; that is, he was filled with grief, anguish, and indignation, at himself, when reflecting upon what he had done. When he was tempted to betray his Master, the thirty pieces of silver looked very fine and glittering, like the wine, when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup. But when the thing was done, and the money paid, the silver was become dross, it bit like a serpent, and stung like an adder. Now

his conscience flew in his face; "What have I done! What a fool, what a wretch, am I, to sell my Master, and all my comfort and happiness in him, for such a trifle! All these abuses and indignities done him are chargeable upon me; it is owing to me, that he is bound and condemned, spit upon and buffeted. I little thought it would have come to this, when I made that wicked bargain; so foolish was I, and ignorant, and so like a beast." Now he curses the bag he carried, the money he coveted, the priests he dealt with, and the day that he was born. The remembrance of his Master's goodness to him, which he had so basely requited, the bowels of mercy he had spurned at, and the fair warnings he had slighted, steeled his convictions, and made them the more piercing. Now he found his Master's words true; It were better for that man, that he had never been born. Note, Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, in the bowels it will be turned into the gall of asps (Job 20:12-14), like John's book, Re 10:9.

[2.] What were the indications of his repentance.

First, He made restitution; He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, when they were all together publicly. Now the money burned in his conscience, and he was as sick of it as ever he had been fond of it. Note, That which is ill gotten, will never do good to those that get it, Jer 13:10,Job 20:15. If he had repented, and brought the money back before he had betrayed Christ, he might have done it with comfort, then he had agreed while yet in the way; but now it was too late, now he cannot do it without horror, wishing ten thousand times he had never meddled with it. See Jam 5:3. He brought it again. Note, what is unjustly gotten, must not be kept; for that is a continuance in the sin by which it was got, and such an avowing of it as is not consistent with repentance. He brought it to those from whom he had it, to let them know that he repented his bargain. Note, Those who have served and hardened others in their sin, when God gives them repentance, should let them know it whose sins they have been partakers in, that it may be a means to bring them to repentance.

Secondly, He made confession (Mt 27:4); I have sinner, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. 1. To the honour of Christ, he pronounces his blood innocent. If he had been guilty of any sinful practices, Judas, as his disciple, would certainly have know it, and, as his betrayer, would certainly have discovered it; but he, freely and without being urged to it, pronounces him innocent, to the face of those who had pronounced him guilty. 2. To his own shame, he confesses that he had sinned, in betraying this blood. He does not lay the blame on any one else; does not say, "You have sinned, in hiring me to do it;" but takes it all to himself; "I have sinned, in doing it." Thus far Judas went toward his repentance, yet it was not to salvation. He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money, which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas.

(b) See here how the chief priests and elders entertained Judas's penitential confession; they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. He made them his confessors, and that was the absolution they gave him; more like the priests of devils than like the priests of the holy living God.

[1.] See here how carelessly they speak of the betraying of Christ. Judas had told them that the blood of Christ was innocent blood; and they said, What is that to us? Was it nothing to them that they had thirsted after this blood, and hired Judas to betray it, and had now condemned it to be shed unjustly? Is this nothing to them? Does it give no check to the violence of their prosecution, no warning to take need what they do to this just man? Thus do fools make a mock at sin, as if no harm were done, no hazard run, by the commission of the greatest wickedness. Thus light do many make of Christ crucified; what is it to them, that he suffered such things?

[2.] See here how carelessly they speak of the sin of Judas; he said, I have sinned, and they said, "What is that to us? What are we concerned in thy sin, that thou tellest us of it?" Note, It is folly for

us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins that we are any way accessary to, or partakers in. Is it nothing to us, that God is dishonoured, souls wounded, Satan gratified and his interests served, and that we have aided and abetted it? If the elders of Jezreel, to please Jezebel, murder Naboth, is that nothing to Ahab? Yes, he has killed, for he has taken possession, 1Ki 21:19. The guilt of sin is not so easily transferred as some people think it is. If there were guilt in the matter, they tell Judas that he must look to it, he must bear it. First, Because he had betrayed him to them. His was indeed the greater sin (Joh 19:11); but it did not therefore follow, that theirs was no sin. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth, not according to comparison. Secondly, Because he knew and believed him to be innocent. "If he be innocent, see thou to it, that is more than we know; we have adjudged him guilty, and therefore may justly prosecute him as such," Wicked practices are buoyed up by wicked principles, and particularly by this, That sin is sin only to those that think it to be so; that it is no harm to persecute a good man, if we take him to be a bad man; but those who thus think to mock God, will but deceive and destroy themselves.

[3.] See how carelessly they speak of the conviction, terror, and remorse, that Judas was under. They were glad to make use of him in the sin, and were then very fond of him; none more welcome to them than Judas, when he said, What will ye give me, and I will betray him to you? They did not say, What is that to us? But now that his sin had put him into a fright, now they slighted him, had nothing to say to him, but turned him over to his own terrors; why did he come to trouble them with his melancholy fancies? They had something else to do than to heed him. But why so shy? First, Perhaps they were in some fear lest the sparks of his conviction, brought too near, should kindle a fire in their own consciences, and lest his moans, listened to, should give an alarm to their own convictions. Note, Obstinate sinners stand upon their guard against convictions; and those that are resolvedly impenitent, look with disdain upon the penitent. Secondly, However, they were in no concern to succour Judas; when they had brought him into the snare,

they not only left him, but laughed at him. Note, Sinners, under convictions, will find their old companions in sin but miserable comforters. It is usual for those that love the treason, to hate the traitor.

(c) Here is the utter despair that Judas was hereby driven into. If the chief priests had promised him to stay the prosecution, it would have been some comfort to him; but, seeing no hopes of that, he grew desperate, Mt 27:5.

[1.] He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple. The chief priests would not take the money, for fear of taking thereby the whole guilt to themselves, which they were willing that Judas should bear the load of; Judas would not keep it, it was too hot for him to hold, he therefore threw it down in the temple, that, whether they would or no, it might fall into the hands of the chief priests. See what a drug money was, when the guilt of sin was tacked to it, or was thought to be so.

[2.] He went, and hanged himself. First, He retired--anechorese; he withdrew into some solitary place, like the possessed man that was drawn by the devil into the wilderness, Lu 8:29. Woe to him that is in despair, and is alone. If Judas had gone to Christ, or to some of the disciples, perhaps he might have had relief, bad as the case was; but, missing of it with the chief priests, he abandoned himself to despair: and the same devil that with the help of the priests drew him to the sin, with their help drove him to despair. Secondly, He became his own executioner; He hanged himself; he was suffocated with grief, so Dr. Hammond: but Dr. Whitby is clear that our translation is right. Judas had a sight and sense of sin, but no apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and so he pined away in his iniquity. His sin, we may suppose, was not in its own nature unpardonable: there were some of those saved, that had been Christ's betrayers and murderers; but he concluded, as Cain, that his iniquity was greater than could be forgiven, and would rather throw himself on the devil's mercy than God's. And some have said, that Judas sinned more in despairing of the mercy of God, than in betraying his Master's blood.

Now the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him. All the curses written in God's book now came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, as was foretold concerning him (Ps 109:18,19), and drove him to this desperate shift, for the escaping of a hell within him, to leap into that before him, which was but the perfection and perpetuity of this horror and despair. He throws himself into the fire, to avoid the flame; but miserable is the case when a man must go to hell for ease.

Now, in this story, 1. We have an instance of the wretched end of those into whom Satan enters, and particularly those that are given up to the love of money. This is the destruction in which many are drowned by it, 1Ti 6:9,10. Remember what became of the swine into which, and of the traitor into whom, the devil enters; and give not place to the devil. 2. We have an instance of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Ro 1:18. As in the story of Peter we behold the goodness of God, and the triumphs of Christ's grace in the conversion of some sinners; so in the story of Judas we behold the severity of God, and the triumphs of Christ's power and justice in the confusion of other sinners. When Judas, into whom Satan entered, was thus hung up, Christ made an open show of the principalities and powers he undertook the spoiling of, Col 2:15. 3. We have an instance of the direful effects of despair; it often ends in self-murder. Sorrow, even that for sin, if not according to God, worketh death (2Co 7:10), the worst kind of death; for a wounded spirit, who can bear? Let us think as bad as we can of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable; let us despair of help in ourselves, but not of help in God. He that thinks to ease his conscience by destroying his life, doth, in effect, dare God Almighty to do his worst. And self-murder, though prescribed by some of the heathen moralists, is certainly a remedy worse than the disease, how bad soever the disease may be. Let us watch against the beginnings of melancholy, and pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

4 saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.
And they said, What is that to us ? see thou to that.

A remarkable illustration of the power of an awakened conscience. A short time before, the promise of this sordid pelf was temptation enough to his covetous heart to outweigh the most overwhelming obligations of duty and love; now, the possession of it so lashes him that he cannot use it, cannot even keep it!

What a testimony this to Jesus! Judas had been with Him in all circumstances for three years; his post, as treasurer to Him and the Twelve (Joh 12:6), gave him peculiar opportunity of watching the spirit, disposition, and habits of his Master; while his covetous nature and thievish practices would incline him to dark and suspicious, rather than frank and generous, interpretations of all that He said and did. If, then, he could have fastened on one questionable feature in all that he had so long witnessed, we may be sure that no such speech as this would ever have escaped his lips, nor would he have been so stung with remorse as not to be able to keep the money and survive his crime. "Guilty or innocent is nothing to us: We have Him now—begone!" Was ever speech more hellish uttered?
The sarcastic, diabolical reply which he had got, in place of the sympathy which perhaps he expected, would deepen his remorse into an agony. in the temple— commonly called "the sanctuary," or "the holy place," into which only the priests might enter. How is this to be explained? Perhaps he flung the money in after them. But thus were fulfilled the words of the prophet—"I cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord" (Zec 11:13).

5 And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

6 And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

The disposal of the money which Judas brought back, Mt 27:6-10. It was laid out in the purchase of a field, called the potter's field; because some potter had owned it, or occupied it, or lived near it, or because broken potters' vessels were thrown into it. And this field was to be a burying-place for strangers, that is, proselytes to the Jewish religion, who were of other nations, and, coming to Jerusalem to worship, happened to die there.

[1.] It looks like an instance of their humanity, that they took care for the burying of strangers; and it intimates that they themselves allowed (as St. Paul saith, Ac 24:15), that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust; for we therefore take care of the dead body, not only because it has been the habitation of a rational soul, but because it must be so again. But,

[2.] It was no instance of their humility that they would bury strangers in a place by themselves, as if they were not worthy to be laid in their burying-places; strangers must keep their distance, alive and dead, and that principle must go down to the grace, Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou, Isa 65:5. The sons of Seth were better affected towards Abraham, though a stranger among them, when they offered him the choicest of their own sepulchres, Ge 23:6. But the sons of the stranger, that have joined themselves to the Lord, though buried by themselves, shall rise with all that are dead in Christ.

This buying of the potter's field did not take place on the day that Christ died (they were then too busy to mind any thing else but hunting him down); but it took place not long after; for Peter speaks of it soon after Christ's ascension; yet it is here recorded.

First, To show the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. They were maliciously persecuting the blessed Jesus, and now,

1. They scruple to put that money into the treasury, or corban, of the temple, with which they had hired the traitor. Though perhaps they had taken it out of the treasury, pretending it was for the public good, and though they were great sticklers for the corban, and laboured to draw all the wealth of the nation into it, yet they would not put that money into it, which was the price of blood. The hire of a traitor they thought parallel to the hire of a whore, and the price of a malefactor (such a one they made Christ to be) equivalent to the price of a dog, neither of which was to be brought into the house of the Lord, De 23:18. They would thus save their credit with the people, by

possessing them with an opinion of their great reverence for the temple. Thus they that swallowed a camel, strained at a gnat.

2. They think to atone for what they had done, by this public good act of providing a burying-place for strangers, though not at their own charge. Thus in times of ignorance people were made to believe that building churches and endowing monasteries would make amends for immoralities.

Secondly, To signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles. Through the price of his blood, a resting place is provided for them after death. Thus many of the ancients apply this passage. The grave is the potter's field, where the bodies are thrown as despised broken vessels; but Christ by his blood purchased it for those who by confessing themselves strangers on earth seek the better country; he has altered the property of it (as a purchaser doth), so that now death is ours, the grave is ours, a bed of rest for us. The Germans, in their language, call burying-places God's fields; for in them God sows his people as a corn of wheat, Joh 12:24. See Ho 2:23,Isa 26:19.

Thirdly, To perpetuate the infamy of those that bought and sold the blood of Christ. This field was commonly called Aceldama--the field of blood; not by the chief priests, they hoped in this burying-place to bury the remembrance of their own crime; but by the people; who took notice of Judas's acknowledgment that he had betrayed the innocent blood, though the chief priests made nothing of it. They fastened this name upon the field in perpetuam rei memoriam--for a perpetual memorial. Note, Divine Providence has many ways of entailing disgrace upon the wicked practices even of great men, who, though they seek to cover their shame, are put to a perpetual reproach.

Fourthly, That we may see how the scripture was fulfilled (Mt 27:9,10); Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet. The words quoted are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, Mt 11:12. How they are here said to be spoken by Jeremy is a

difficult question; but the credit of Christ's doctrine does not depend upon it; for that proves itself perfectly divine, though there should appear something human as to small circumstances in the penmen of it. The Syriac version, which is ancient, reads only, It was spoken by the prophet, not naming any, whence some have thought that Jeremy was added by some scribe; some think that the whole volume of the prophets, being in one book, and the prophecy of Jeremiah put first, it might not be improper, currente calamo--for a transcriber to quote any passage out of that volume, under his name. The Jews used to say, The spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah, and so they were as one prophet. Some suggest that it was spoken by Jeremiah, but written by Zechariah; or that Jeremiah wrote the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Zechariah. Now this passage in the prophet is a representation of the great contempt of God, that was found among the Jews, and the poor returns they made to him for rich receivings from him. But here that is really acted, which was there but figuratively expressed. The sum of money is the same--thirty pieces of silver; this they weighed for his price, at this rate they valued him; a goodly price; and this was cast to the potter in the house of the Lord; which was here literally accomplished. Note, We should better understand the events of Providence, if we were better acquainted even with the language and expressions of scripture; for even those also are sometimes written upon the dispensations of Providence so plainly, that he who runs may read them. What David spoke figuratively (Ps 42:7), Jonah made a literal application of; All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me, Jon 3:3.

The giving of the price of him that was valued, not for him, but for the potter's field, bespeaks,

1 The high value that ought to be put upon Christ. The price was given, not for him; no, when it was given for him, it was soon brought back again with disdain, as infinitely below his worth; he cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, nor this unspeakable Gift brought with money.

2 The low value that was put upon him. They of the children of Israel did strangely undervalue him, when his price did but reach to buy a potter's field, a pitiful sorry spot of ground, not worth looking upon. It added to the reproach of his being bought and sold, that it was at so low a rate. Cast it to the potter, so it is in Zechariah; a contemptible petty chapman, not the merchant that deals in things of value. And observe, They of the children of Israel thus undervalued him; they who were his own people, that should have known better what estimate to put upon him, they to whom he was first sent, whose glory he was, and whom he had valued so highly, and bought so dear. He gave kings' ransoms for them, and the richest countries (so precious were they in his sight, Isa 43:3,4), Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba; but they gave a slave's ransom for him (see Ex 21:32), and valued him but at the rate of a potter's field; so was that blood trodden under foot, which bought the kingdom of heaven for us. But all this was as the Lord appointed; so the prophetic vision was, which typified this event, and so the event itself, as the other instances of Christ's sufferings, was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying,

And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued,

whom they of the children of Israel did value;

Never was a complicated prophecy, otherwise hopelessly dark, more marvellously fulfilled. Various conjectures have been formed to account for Matthew's ascribing to Jeremiah a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. But since with this book he was plainly familiar, having quoted one of its most remarkable prophecies of Christ but a few chapters before (Mt 21:4,5), the question is one more of critical interest than real importance. Perhaps the true explanation is the following, from LIGHTFOOT: "Jeremiah of old had the first place among the prophets, and hereby he comes to be mentioned above all the rest in Mt 16:14; because he stood first in the volume of the prophets (as he proves from the learned DAVID KIMCHI) therefore he is first named. When, therefore, Matthew produceth a text of

Zechariah under the name of Jeremy, he only cites the words of the volume of the prophets under his name who stood first in the volume of the prophets.

10 and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

Many apply this passage of the buying the piece of ground, with the money Judas brought back, to signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles.

Pilate Questions Jesus

11 And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

The Jews had charged Jesus with blasphemy for calling himself the Son of God, but when they took him to Pilate they twisted the charge. They emphasized not that he claimed to be God but that he claimed to be above Caesar. They suggested he was a political rebel trying to lead a messianic uprising that would overthrow Roman rule and set up an independent Jewish state Luk_23:2. Pilate tried to dismiss the case, but the Jews would not drop their charges (Joh_18:30-32).

Pilate, the governor of the area, usually lived in the provincial capital Caesarea, but he came to Jerusalem during Jewish festivals to help maintain order. His official residence and administration centre in Jerusalem was called the praetorium. The Jewish leaders, wanting to have Jesus dealt with and out of the way before the festival started, took him to Pilate early in the morning (Luk_23:1; Joh_18:28-29).

12 And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13 Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee ?

14 And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marveled greatly.

The trial Christ had before Pilate.

1. His arraignment; Jesus stood before the governor, as the prisoner before the judge. We could not stand before God because of our sins, nor lift up our face in his presence, if Christ had not been thus made

sin for us. He was arraigned that we might be discharged. Some think that this bespeaks his courage and boldness; he stood undaunted, unmoved by all their rage. He thus stood in this judgment, that we might stand in God's judgment. He stood for a spectacle, as Naboth, when he was arraigned, was set on high among the people.

2. His indictment; Art thou the king of the Jews? The Jews were now not only under the government, but under the very jealous inspection, of the Roman powers, which they were themselves to the highest degree disaffected to, and yet now pretended a concern for, to serve this turn; accusing Jesus as an Enemy to Cæsar (Lu 23:2), which they could produce no other proof of, than that he himself had newly owned he was the Christ. Now they thought that whoever was the Christ, must be the king of the Jews, and must deliver them from the Roman power, and restore to them a temporal dominion, and enable them to trample upon all their neighbours. According to this chimera of their own, they accused our Lord Jesus, as making himself king of the Jews, in opposition to the Roman yoke; whereas, though he said that he was the Christ, he meant not such a Christ as this. Note, Many oppose Christ's holy religion, upon a mistake of the nature of it; they dress it up in false colours, and then fight against it. They assuring the governor that, if he made himself Christ, he made himself king of the Jews, the governor takes it for granted, that he goes about to pervert the nation, and subvert the government. Art thou a king? It was plain that he was not so de facto--actually; "But dost thou lay any claim to the government, or pretend a right to rule the Jews?" Note, It has often been the hard fate of Christ's holy religion, unjustly to fall under the suspicions of the civil powers, as if it were hurtful to kings and provinces, whereas it tends mightily to the benefit of both.

3. His plea; Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest. It is as thou sayest, though not as thou meanest; I am a king, but not such a king as thou dost suspect me to be." Thus before Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and was not ashamed to own himself a king, though it looked ridiculous, nor afraid, though at this time it was dangerous.

4. The evidence (Mt 27:12); He was accused of the chief priests. Pilate found no fault in him; whatever was said, nothing was proved, and therefore what was wanting in matter they made up in noise and violence, and followed him with repeated accusations, the same as they had given in before; but by the repetition they thought to force a belief from the governor. They had learned, not only calumniari--to calumniate, but fortiter calumniari--to calumniate stoutly. The best men have often been accused of the worst crimes.

5. The prisoner's silence as to the prosecutors' accusations; He answered nothing,

(a) Because there was no occasion; nothing was alleged but what carried its own confutation along with it.

(b) He was now taken up with the great concern that lay between him and his Father, to whom he was offering up himself a Sacrifice, to answer the demands of his justice, which he was so intent upon, that he minded not what they said against him.

(c) His hour was come, and he submitted to his Father's will; Not as I will, but as thou wilt. He knew what his Father's will was, and therefore silently committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. We must not thus by our silence throw away our lives, because we are not lords of our lives, as Christ was of his; nor can we know, as he did, when our hour is come. But hence we must learn, not to render railing for railing, 1Pe 2:23.

Now,

[1.] Pilate pressed him to make some reply (Mt 27:13); Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? What these things were, may be gathered from Lu 23:3,5,Joh 19:7. Pilate, having no malice at all against him, was desirous he should clear himself, urges him to it, and believes he could do it; Hearest thou not? Yes, he did hear; and still he hears all that is witnessed unjustly against his truths

and ways; but he keeps silence, because it is the day of his patience, and doth not answer, as he will shortly, Ps 50:3.

[2.] He wondered at his silence; which was not interpreted so much into a contempt of the court, as a contempt of himself. And therefore Pilate is not said to be angry at it, but to have marvelled greatly at it, as a thing very unusual. He believed him to be innocent, and had heard perhaps that never man spake like him; and therefore he thought it strange that he had not one word to say for himself.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

15 Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.
16 And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.

The outrage and violence of the people, in pressing the governor to crucify Christ. The chief priests had a great interest in the people, they called them Rabbi, Rabbi, made idols of them, and oracles of all they said; and they made use of this to incense them against him, and by the power of the mob gained the point which they could not otherwise carry. Now here are two instances of their outrage.

1. Their preferring Barabbas before him, and choosing to have him released rather than Jesus.

(a) It seems it was grown into a custom with the Roman governors, for the honouring of the Jews, to grace the feast of the passover with the release of a prisoner, Mt 27:15. This, they thought, did honour to the feast, and was agreeable to the commemoration of their deliverance; but it was an invention of their own, and no divine institution; though some think that it was ancient, and kept up by the Jewish princes, before they became a province of the empire. However, it was a bad custom, an obstruction to justice, and an encouragement to wickedness. But our gospel-passover is celebrated with the release of prisoners, by him who hath power on earth to forgive sins.

(b) The prisoner put in competition with our Lord Jesus was Barabbas; he is here called a notable prisoner (Mt 27:16); either because by birth and breeding he was of some note and quality, or because he had signalized himself by something remarkable in his crimes; whether he was so notable as to recommend himself the more to the favours of the people, and so the more likely to be interceded for, or whether so notable as to make himself more liable to their age, is uncertain. Some think the latter, and therefore Pilate mentioned him, as taking it for granted that they would have desired any one's release rather than his. Treason, murder, and felony, are the three most enormous crimes that are usually punished by the sword of justice; and Barabbas was guilty of all three, Lu 23:19,Joh 18:40. A notable prisoner indeed, whose crimes were so complicated.

(c) The proposal was made by Pilate the governor (Mt 27:17); Whom will ye that I release unto you? It is probable that the judge had the nomination of two, one of which the people were to choose. Pilate proposed to them to have Jesus released; he was convinced of his innocency, and that the prosecution was malicious; yet had not the courage to acquit him, as he ought to have done, by his own power, but would have him released by the people's election, and so he hoped to satisfy both his own conscience, and the people too; whereas, finding no fault in him, he ought not to have put him upon the country, or brought him into peril of his life. But such little tricks and artifices as these, to trim the matter, and to keep in with conscience and the world too, are the common practice of those that seek more to please men than God. What shall I do then, saith Pilate, with Jesus, who is called Christ? He puts the people in mind of this, that this Jesus, whose release he proposed, was looked upon by some among them as the Messiah, and had given pregnant proofs of his being so; "Do not reject one of whom your nation has professed such an expectation."

The reason why Pilate laboured thus to get Jesus discharged was because he knew that for envy the chief priests had delivered him up (Mt 27:18); that it was not his guilt, but his goodness, that they were

provoked at; and for this reason he hoped to bring him off by the people's act, and that they would be for his release. When David was envied by Saul, he was the darling of the people; and any one that heard the hosannas with which Christ was but a few days ago brought into Jerusalem, would have thought that he had been so, and that Pilate might safely have referred this matter to the commonalty, especially when so notorious a rogue was set up as a rival with him for their favours. But it proved otherwise.

(d) While Pilate was thus labouring the matter, he was confirmed in his unwillingness to condemn Jesus, by a message sent him from his wife (Mt 27:19), by way of caution; Have thou nothing to do with that just man (together with the reason), for I have suffered many things this day in a cream because of him. Probably, this message was delivered to Pilate publicly, in the hearing of all that were present, for it was intended to be a warning not to him only, but to the prosecutors. Observe,

[1.] The special providence of God, in sending this dream to Pilate's wife; it is not likely that she had heard any thing, before, concerning Christ, at least not so as to occasion her dreaming of him, but it was immediately from God: perhaps she was one of the devout and honourable women, and had some sense of religion; yet God revealed himself by dreams to some that had not, as to Nebuchadnezzar. She suffered many things in this dream; whether she dreamed of the cruel usage of an innocent person, or of the judgments that would fall upon those that had any hand in his death, or both, it seems that it was a frightful dream, and her thoughts troubled her, as Da 2:1,4:5. Note, The Father of spirits has many ways of access to the spirits of men, and can seal their instruction in a dream, or vision of the night, Job 33:15,16. Yet to those who have the written word, God more ordinarily speaks by conscience on a waking bed, than by dreams, when deep sleep falls upon men.

[2.] The tenderness and care of Pilate's wife, in sending this caution, thereupon, to her husband; Have nothing to do with that just man. First, This was an honourable testimony to our Lord Jesus,

witnessing for him that he was a just man, even then when he was persecuted as the worst of malefactors: when his friends were afraid to appear in defence of him, God made even those that were strangers and enemies, to speak in his favour; when Peter denied him, Judas confessed him; when the chief priests pronounced him guilty of death, Pilate declared he found no fault in him; when the women that loved him stood afar off, Pilate's wife, who knew little of him, showed a concern for him. Note, God will not leave himself without witnesses to the truth and equity of his cause, even when it seems to be most spitefully run down by its enemies, and most shamefully deserted by its friends. Secondly, It was a fair warning to Pilate; Have nothing to do with him. Note, God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our great duty to hearken to them. O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates, is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Pilate's lady sent him this warning, out of the love she had to him; she feared not a rebuke from him for meddling with that which belonged not to her; but, let him take it how he would, she would give him the caution. Note, It is an instance of true love to our friends and relations, to do what we can to keep them from sin; and the nearer any are to us, and the greater affection we have for them, the more solicitous we should be not to suffer sin to come or lie upon them, Le 19:17. The best friendship is friendship to the soul. We are not told how Pilate turned this off, probably with a jest; but by his proceeding against the just man it appears that he did not regard it. Thus faithful admonitions are made light of, when they are given as warnings against sin, but will not be so easily made light of, when they shall be reflected upon as aggravations of sin.

(e) The chief priests and the elders were busy, all this while, to influence the people in favour of Barabbas, Mt 27:20. They persuaded the multitude, both by themselves and their emissaries, whom they sent abroad among them, that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus; suggesting that this Jesus was a deceiver, in league with Satan, an enemy to their church and temple; that, if he were let alone, the Romans would come, and take away their place

and nation; that Barabbas, though a bad man, yet, having not the interest that Jesus had, could not do so much mischief. Thus they managed the mob, who otherwise were well affected to Jesus, and, if they had not been so much at the beck of their priests, would never have done such a preposterous thing as to prefer Barabbas before Jesus. Here,

[1.] We cannot but look upon these wicked priests with indignation; by the law, in matters of controversy between blood and blood, the people were to be guided by the priests, and to do as they informed them, De 17:8,9. This great power put into their hands they wretchedly abused, and the leaders of the people caused them to err.

[2.] We cannot but look upon the deluded people with pity; I have compassion on the multitude, to see them hurried thus violently to so great wickedness, to see them thus priest-ridden, and falling in the ditch with their blind leaders.

(f) Being thus over-ruled by the priests, at length they made their choice, Mt 27:21. Whether of the twain (saith Pilate) will ye that I release unto you? He hoped that he had gained his point, to have Jesus released. But, to his great surprise, they said Barabbas; as if his crimes were less, and therefore he less deserved to die; or as if his merits were greater, and therefore he better deserved to live. The cry for Barabbas was so universal, one and all, that there was no colour to demand a poll between the candidates. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and, thou earth, be horribly afraid! Were ever men that pretended to reason or religion, guilty of such prodigious madness, such horrid wickedness! This was it that Peter charged so home upon them (Ac 3:14); Ye desired a murderer to be granted to you; yet multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions.

2. Their pressing earnestly to have Jesus crucified, Mt 27:22,23. Pilate, being amazed at their choice of Barabbas, was willing to hope that it was rather from a fondness for him than from an enmity to Jesus; and therefore he puts it to them, "What shall I do then with

Jesus? Shall I release him likewise, for the greater honour of your feast, or will you leave it to me?" No, they all said, Let him be crucified. That death they desired he might die, because it was looked upon as the most scandalous and ignominious; and they hoped thereby to make his followers ashamed to own him, and their relation to him. It was absurd for them to prescribe to the judge what sentence he should pass; but their malice and rage made them forget all rules of order and decency, and turned a court of justice into a riotous, tumultuous, and seditious assembly. Now was truth fallen in the street, and equity could not enter; where one looked for judgment, behold, oppression, the worst kind of oppression; for righteousness, behold, a cry, the worse cry that ever was, Crucify, crucify the Lord of glory. Though they that cried thus, perhaps, were not the same persons that the other day cried Hosanna, yet see what a change was made upon the mind of the populace in a little time: when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, so general were the acclamations of praise, that one would have thought he had no enemies; but now when he was led in triumph to Pilate's judgment-seat, so general were the outcries of enmity, that one would think he had no friends. Such revolutions are there in this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies, as our Master's did, by honour and dishonour, by evil report, and good report, counter-changed (2Co 6:8); that we may not be lifted up by honour, as if, when we were applauded and caressed, we had made our nest among the stars, and should die in that nest; nor yet be dejected or discouraged by dishonour, as if, when we were trodden to the lowest hell, from which there is no redemption. Bides tu istos qui te laudant; omnes aut sunt hostes, aut (quod in æquo est) esse possunt--You observe those who applaud you; either they are all your enemies, or, which is equivalent, they may become so. Seneca de Vita Beat.

Now, as to this demand, we are further told,

(a) How Pilate objected against it; Why, what evil hath he done? A proper question to ask before we censure any in common discourse, much more for a judge to ask before he pass a sentence of death. Note, It is much for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that, though he

suffered as an evil-doer, yet neither his judge nor his prosecutors could find that he had done any evil. Had he done any evil against God? No, he always did those things that pleased him. Had he done any evil against the civil government? No, as he did himself, so he taught others, to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's. Had he done any evil against the public peace? No, he did not strive or cry, nor did his kingdom come with observation. Had he done any evil to particular persons? Whose ox had he taken, or whom had he defrauded? No, so far from that, that he went about doing good. This repeated assertion of his unspotted innocency, plainly intimates that he died to satisfy for the sins of others; for if it had not been for our transgressions that he was thus wounded, and for our offences that he was delivered up, and that upon his own voluntary undertaking to atone for them, I see not how these extraordinary sufferings of a person that had never thought, said, or done, any thing amiss, could be reconciled with the justice and equity of that providence that governs the world, and at least permitted this to be done in it.

(b) How they insisted upon it; They cried out the more, Let him be crucified. They do not go about to show any evil he had done, but, right or wrong, he must be crucified. Quitting all pretensions to the proof of the premises, they resolve to hold the conclusion, and what was wanting in evidence to make up in clamour; this unjust judge was wearied by importunity into an unjust sentence, as he in the parable into a just one (Lu 18:4,5), and the cause carried purely by noise.

17 Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

18 For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.

When Pilate learnt that Jesus was from Galilee, which was not under his control, he tried to avoid the issue by sending Jesus to the Galilean governor Herod, who also was in Jerusalem for the festival (Luk_23:6-7). as a second way out, Pilate, unaware of the influence of the priests in the crowd and thinking that Jesus had widespread support, agreed to allow the crowd to choose between the two, no doubt thinking they would choose Jesus. As he waited for them to

make their choice, his wife sent him a warning not to condemn Jesus (Mat_27:19-20).

Having no malice against Jesus, Pilate urged him to clear himself, and laboured to get him discharged. The message from his wife was a warning. God has many ways of giving checks to sinners, in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences. O do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates! is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Being overruled by the priests, the people made choice of Barabbas. Multitudes who choose the world, rather than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions. The Jews were so bent upon the death of Christ, that Pilate thought it would be dangerous to refuse. And this struggle shows the power of conscience even on the worst men. Yet all was so ordered to make it evident that Christ suffered for no fault of his own, but for the sins of his people. How vain for Pilate to expect to free himself from the guilt of the innocent blood of a righteous person, whom he was by his office bound to protect! The Jews' curse upon themselves has been awfully answered in the sufferings of their nation. None could bear the sin of others, except Him that had no sin of his own to answer for. And are we not all concerned? Is not Barabbas preferred to Jesus, when sinners reject salvation that they may retain their darling sins, which rob God of his glory, and murder their souls? The blood of Christ is now upon us for good, through mercy, by the Jews' rejection of it. O let us flee to it for refuge!

19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21 The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.

22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24 When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.

Pilate showed this pitiful figure to the crowd, apparently hoping it might make them feel ashamed and change their minds; but it only increased their hatred (Joh_19:4-6). Pilate became more uneasy when he heard that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Maybe, thought Pilate, this man was one of the gods. He became even more anxious to set Jesus free when Jesus told him that God would hold him responsible for the way he used his authority. Pilate was guilty for condemning a man he knew was innocent, but Caiaphas and the other Jews who handed Jesus over to him were more guilty (Joh_19:7-11).

Again Pilate tried to release Jesus, but the Jews reminded him that he himself could be in danger if he released a person guilty of treason. This disturbed Pilate further, and after a final offer that the Jews rejected, he handed Jesus over to be crucified. The Jews' declaration of loyalty to Caesar demonstrated their hypocrisy and confirmed their rejection of God (Joh_19:12-16).

Here is the devolving of the guilt of Christ's blood upon the people and priests.

1. Pilate endeavours to transfer it from himself, Mt 27:24.

(1.) He sees it to no purpose to contend. What he said,

[1.] Would do no good; he could prevail nothing; he could not convince them what an unjust unreasonable thing it was for him to condemn a man whom he believed innocent, and whom they could not prove guilty. See how strong the stream of lust and rage sometimes is; neither authority nor reason will prevail to give check to it. Nay,

[2.] It was more likely to do hurt; he saw that rather a tumult was made. This rude and brutish people fell to high words, and began to threaten Pilate what they would do if he did not gratify them; and how great a matter might this fire kindle, especially when the priests, those great incendiaries, blew the coals! Now this turbulent tumultuous temper of the Jews, by which Pilate was awed to condemn Christ against his conscience, contributed more than any thing to the ruin of that nation not long after; for their frequent insurrections provoked the Romans to destroy them, though they had reduced them, and their inveterate quarrels among themselves made them an easy prey to the common enemy. Thus their sin was their ruin.

Observe how easily we may be mistaken in the inclination of the common people; the priests were apprehensive that their endeavours to seize Christ would have caused an uproar, especially on the feast day; but it proved that Pilate's endeavour to save him, caused an uproar, and that on the feast day; so uncertain are the sentiments of the crowd.

(2.) This puts him into a great strait, betwixt the peace of his own mind, and the peace of the city; he is loth to condemn an innocent man, and yet loth to disoblige the people, and raise a devil that would not be soon laid. Had he steadily and resolutely adhered to the sacred laws of justice, as a judge ought to do, he had not been in any perplexity; the matter was plain and past dispute, that a man in whom was found no faulty, ought not to be crucified, upon any pretence whatsoever, nor must an unjust thing be done, to gratify any man or company of men in the world; the cause is soon decided; Let justice be done, though heaven and earth come together--Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum. If wickedness proceed from the wicked, though they be priests, yet my hand shall not be upon him.

(3.) Pilate thinks to trim the matter, and to pacify both the people and his own conscience too, by doing it, and yet disowning it, acting the thing, and yet acquitting himself from it at the same time. Such absurdities and self-contradictions do they run upon, whose

convictions are strong, but their corruptions stronger. Happy is he (saith the apostle, Ro 14:22) that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth; or, which is all one, that allows not himself in that thing which he condemns.

Now Pilate endeavours to clear himself from the guilt,

[1.] By a sign; He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude; not as if he thought thereby to cleanse himself from any guilt contracted before God, but to acquit himself before the people, from so much as contracting any guilt in this matter; as if he had said, "If it be done, bear witness that it is none of my doing." He borrowed the ceremony from that law which appointed it to be used for the clearing of the country from the guilt of an undiscovered murder (De 21:6,7); and he used it the more to affect the people with the conviction he was under of the prisoner's innocency; and, probably, such was the noise of the rabble, that, if he had not used some such surprising sign, in the view of them all, he could not have been heard.

[2.] By a saying; in which, First, He clears himself; I am innocent of the blood of this just person. What nonsense was this, to condemn him, and yet protest that he was innocent of his blood! For men to protest against a thing, and yet to practise it, is only to proclaim that they sin against their consciences. Though Pilate professed his innocency, God charges him with guilt, Ac 4:27. Some think to justify themselves, by pleading that their hands were not in the sin; but David kills by the sword of the children of Ammon, and Ahab by the elders of Jezreel. Pilate here thinks to justify himself, by pleading that his heart was not in the action; but this is an averment which will never be admitted. Protestatio non valet contra factum--In vain does he protest against the deed which at the same time he perpetrates. Secondly, He casts it upon the priests and people; "See ye to it; if it must be done, I cannot help it, do you answer it before God and the world." Note, Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own; and many deceive themselves with this, that they shall bear no blame if they can but find any to lay the

blame upon; but it is not so easy a thing to transfer the guilt of sin as many think it is. The condition of him that is infected with the plague is not the less dangerous, either for his catching the infection from others, or his communicating the infection to others; we may be tempted to sin, but cannot be forced. The priests threw it upon Judas; See thou to it; and now Pilate throws it upon them; See ye to it; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.

2 The priests and people consented to take the guilt upon themselves; they all said, "His blood be on us, and one our children; we are so well assured that there is neither sin nor danger in putting him to death, that we are willing to run the hazard of it;" as if the guilt would do no harm to them or theirs. They saw that it was the dread of guilt that made Pilate hesitate, and that he was getting over this difficulty by a fancy of transferring it; to prevent the return of his hesitation, and to confirm him in that fancy, they, in the heat of their rage, agreed to it, rather than lose the prey they had in their hands, and cried, His blood be upon us. Now,

(1.) By this they designed to indemnify Pilate, that is, to make him think himself indemnified, by becoming bound to divine justice, to save him harmless. But those that are themselves bankrupts and beggars will never be admitted security for others, nor taken as a bail for them. None could bear the sin of others, except him that had none of his own to answer for; it is a bold undertaking, and too big for any creature, to become bound for a sinner to Almighty God.

(2.) But they did really imprecate wrath and vengeance upon themselves and their posterity. What a desperate word was this, and how little did they think what as the direful import of it, or to what an abyss of misery it would bring them and theirs! Christ had lately told them, that upon them would come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from that of the righteous Abel; but as if that were too little, they here imprecate upon themselves the guilt of that blood which was more precious than all the rest, and the guilt of which would lie heavier. O the daring presumption of wilful

sinners, that run upon God, upon his neck, and defy his justice! Job 15:25,26. Observe,

[1.] How cruel they were in their imprecation. They imprecated the punishment of this sin, not only upon themselves, but upon their children too, even those that were yet unborn, without so much as limiting the entail of the curse, as God himself had been pleased to limit it, to the third and fourth generation. It was madness to pull it upon themselves, but the height of barbarity to entail it on their posterity. Surely they were like the ostrich; they were hardened against their young ones, as though they were not theirs. What a dreadful conveyance was this of guilt and wrath to them and their heirs for ever, and this delivered by joint consent, nemine contradicents--unanimously, as their own act and deed; which certainly amounted to a forfeiture and defeasance of that ancient charter, I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed. Their entailing the curse of the Messiah's blood upon their nation, cut off the entail of the blessings of that blood from their families, that, according to another promise made to Abraham, in him all the families of the earth might be blessed. See what enemies wicked men are to their own children and families; those that damn their own souls, care not how many they take to hell with them.

[2.] How righteous God was, in his retribution according to this imprecation; they said, His blood be on us, and on our children; and God said Amen to it, so shall thy doom be; as they loved cursing, so it came upon them. The wretched remains of that abandoned people feel it to this day; from the time they imprecated this blood upon them, they were followed with one judgment after another, till they were quite laid waste, and made an astonishment, a hissing, and a byword; yet on some of them, and some of theirs, this blood came, not to condemn them, but to save them; divine mercy, upon their repenting and believing, cut off this entail, and then the promise was again to them, and to their children. God is better to us and ours than we are.

25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.
26 Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged

Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

In these verses we have the preparatives for, and prefaces to, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Here is,

The sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution; and this immediately, the same hour.

1. Barabbas was released, that notorious criminal: if he had not been put in competition with Christ for the favour of the people, it is probable that he had died for his crimes; but that proved the means of his escape; to intimate that Christ was condemned for this purpose, that sinners, even the chief of sinners, might be released; he was delivered up, that we might be delivered; whereas the common instance of divine Providence, is, that the wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright, Pr 21:18,Pr 11:18. In this unparalleled instance of divine grace, the upright is a ransom for the transgressors, the just for the unjust.

2. Jesus was scourged; this was an ignominious cruel punishment, especially as is was inflicted by the Romans, who were not under the moderation of the Jewish law, which forbade scourgings, above forty stripes; this punishment was most unreasonably inflicted on one that was sentenced to die: the rods were not to introduce the axes, but to supersede them. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, The ploughers ploughed upon my back (Ps 129:3), I gave my back to the smiters (Isa 50:6), and, By his stripes we are healed, Isa 53:5. He was chastised with whips, that we might not be for ever chastised with scorpions.

3. He was then delivered to be crucified; though his chastisement was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the blood of his cross (Col 1:20); therefore the scourging is not enough, he must be crucified; a kind of death used only among the Romans; the manner of it is such, that it seems to be the result of wit and cruelty in combination, each putting forth itself to the utmost, to make death in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed,

on which nails the weight of the body hung, till it died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned, that he might answer the type of the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It was a bloody death, a painful, shameful, cursed death; it was so miserable a death, that merciful princes appointed those who were condemned to it by the law, to be strangled first, and then nailed to the cross; so Julius Cæsar did by some pirates, Sueton. lib. 1. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, by an edict abolished the use of that punishment among the Romans, Sozomen, Hist. lib. 1. ch. 8. Ne salutare signum subserviret ad perniciem--That the symbol of salvation might not be subservient to the victim's destruction.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

28 And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

The barbarous treatment which the soldiers gave him, while things were getting ready for his execution. When he was condemned, he ought to have had some time allowed him to prepare for death. There was a law made by the Roman senate, in Tiberius's time, perhaps upon complaint of this and the like precipitation, that the execution of criminals should be deferred at least ten days after sentence. Sueton in Tiber. cap. 25. But there were scarcely allowed so many minutes to our Lord Jesus; nor had he any breathing-time during those minutes; it was a crisis, and there were no lucid intervals allowed him; deep called unto deep, and the storm continued without any intermission.

When he was delivered to be crucified, that was enough; they that kill the body, yield that there is no more that they can do, but Christ's enemies will do more, and, if it be possible, wrap up a thousand deaths in one. Though Pilate pronounced him innocent, yet his soldiers, his guards, set themselves to abuse him, being swayed more by the fury of the people against him, than by their master's testimony for him; the Jewish rabble infected the Roman soldiery, or perhaps it was not so much in spite to him, as to make sport for themselves, that they thus abused him. They understood that he pretended to a crown; to taunt him with that gave them some

diversion, and an opportunity to make themselves and one another merry. Note, It is an argument of a base, servile, sordid spirit, to insult over those that are in misery, and to make the calamities of any matter of sport and merriment.

Observe,

1. Where this was done--in the common hall. The governor's house, which should have been a shelter to the wronged and abused, is made the theatre of this barbarity. I wonder that the governor, who was so desirous to acquit himself from the blood of this just person, would suffer this to be done in his house. Perhaps he did not order it to be done, but he connived at it; and those in authority will be accountable, not only for the wickedness which they do, or appoint, but for that which they do not restrain, when it is in the power of their hands. Masters of families should not suffer their houses to be places of abuse to any, nor their servants to make sport with the sins, or miseries, or religion, of others.

2. Who were concerned in it. They gathered the whole band, the soldiers that were to attend the execution, would have the whole regiment (at least five hundred, some think twelve or thirteen hundred) to share in the diversion. If Christ was thus made a spectacle, let none of his followers think it strange to be so used, 1Co 4:9,Heb 10:33.

3. What particular indignities were done him.

(a) They stripped him, Mt 27:28. The shame of nakedness came in with sin (Ge 3:7); and therefore Christ, when he came to satisfy for sin, and take it away, was made naked, and submitted to that shame, that he might prepare for us white raiment, to cover us, Re 3:18.

(b) They put on him a scarlet robe, some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, in imitation of the scarlet robes which kings and emperors wore; thus upbraiding him with his being called a King. This sham of majesty they put upon him in his dress, when

nothing but meanness and misery appeared in his countenance, only to expose him to the spectators, as the more ridiculous; yet there was something of mystery in it; this was he that was red in his apparel (Isa 63:1,2), that washed his garments in wine (Ge 49:11); therefore he was dressed in a scarlet robe. Our sins were as scarlet and crimson. Christ being clad in a scarlet robe, signified his bearing our sins, to his shame, in his own body upon the tree; that we might wash our robes, and make them white, in the blood of the Lamb.

(c) They platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head, Mt 27:29. This was to carry on the humour of making him a mock-king; yet, had they intended it only for a reproach, they might have platted a crown of straw, or rushes, but they designed it to be painful to him, and to be literally, what crowns are said to be figuratively, lined with thorns; he that invented this abuse, it is likely, valued himself upon the wit of it; but there was a mystery in it.

[1.] Thorns came in with sin, and were part of the curse that was the product of sin, Ge 3:18. Therefore Christ, being made a curse for us, and dying to remove the curse from us, felt the pain and smart of those thorns, nay, and binds them as a crown to him (Job 31:36); for his sufferings for us were his glory.

[2.] Now he answered to the type of Abraham's ram that was caught in the thicket, and so offered up instead of Isaac, Ge 22:13.

[3.] Thorns signify afflictions, 2Ch 33:11. These Christ put into a crown; so much did he alter the property of them to them that are his, giving them cause to glory in tribulation, and making it to work for them a weight of glory.

[4.] Christ was crowned with thorns, to show that his kingdom was not of this world, nor the glory of it worldly glory, but is attended here with bonds and afflictions, while the glory of it is to be revealed.

[5.] It was the custom of some heathen nations, to bring their sacrifices to the altars, crowned with garlands; these thorns were the garlands with which this great Sacrifice was crowned.

[6.] these thorns, it is likely, fetched blood from his blessed head, which trickled down his face, like the previous ointment (typifying the blood of Christ with which he consecrated himself) upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, Ps 133:2. Thus, when he came to espouse to himself his love, his dove, his undefiled church, his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, So 5:2.

(d) They put a reed in his right hand; this was intended for a mock-sceptre, another of the insignia of the majesty they jeered him with; as if this were a sceptre good enough for such a King, as was like a reed shaken with the wind (Mt 11:7); like sceptre, like kingdom, both weak and wavering, and withering and worthless; but they were quite mistaken, for his throne is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre, Ps 45:6.

(e) They bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! Having made him a sham King, they thus make a jest of doing homage to him, thus ridiculing his pretensions to sovereignty, as Joseph's brethren (Ge 37:8); Shalt thou indeed reign over us? But as they were afterward compelled to do obeisance to him, and enrich his dreams, so these here bowed the knee, in scorn to him who was, soon after this, exalted to the right hand of God, that at his name every knee might bow, or break before him; it is ill jesting with that which, sooner or later, will come in earnest.

(f) They spit upon him; thus he had been abused in the High Priest's hall, Mt 26:67. In doing homage, the subject kissed the sovereign, in token of his allegiance; thus Samuel kissed Saul, and we are bid to kiss the Son: but they, in this mock-homage, instead of kissing him, spit in his face; that blessed face which outshines the sun, and before which the angels cover theirs, was thus polluted. It is strange that the

sons of men should ever do such a piece of villany, and that the Son of God should ever suffer such a piece of ignominy.

(g) They took the reed, and smote him on the head. That which they had made the mock-ensign of his royalty, they now make the real instrument of their cruelty, and his pain. They smote him, it is probable, upon the crown of thorns, and so struck them into his head, that they might wound it the deeper, which made the more sport for them, to whom his pain was the greatest pleasure. Thus was he despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. All this misery and shame he underwent, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

29 And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

The conveying of him to the place of execution. After they had mocked and abused him, as long as they thought fit, they then took the robe off from him; to signify their divesting him of all the kingly authority they had invested him with, by putting it on him; and they put his own raiment on him, because that was to fall to the soldiers' share, that were employed in the execution. They took off the robe, but no mention is made of their taking off the crown of thorns, whence it is commonly supposed (though there is no certainty of it) that he was crucified with that on his head; for as he is a Priest upon his throne, so he was a King upon his cross. Christ was led to be crucified in his own raiment, because he himself was to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree. And here,

1. They led him away to be crucified; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sacrifice to the altar. We may well imagine how they hurried him on, and dragged him along, with all the speed possible, lest any thing should intervene to prevent the glutting of their cruel rage with his precious blood. It is probable that they now loaded him with taunts and reproaches, and treated him as the off-scouring of all things. They led him away out of the city; for Christ, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the

gate (Heb 13:12), as if he that was the glory of them that waited for redemption in Jerusalem was not worthy to live among them. To this he himself had an eye, when in the parable he speaks of his being cast out of the vineyard, Mt 21:39.

2. They compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear his cross, Mt 27:32. It seems, at first he carried the cross himself, as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering, which was to burn him. And this was intended, as other things, both for pain and shame to him. But after a while they took the cross off from him, either,

(1.) In compassion to him, because they saw it was too great a load for him. We can hardly think that they had any consideration of that, yet it teaches us that God considers the frame of his people, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; he gives them some breathing-time, but they must expect that the cross will return, and the lucid intervals only give them space to prepare for the next fit. But,

(2.) Perhaps it was because he could not, with the cross on his back, go forward so fast as they would have him. Or,

(3.) They were afraid, lest he should faint away under the load of his cross, and die, and so prevent what their malice further intended to do against him: thus even the tender mercies of the wicked (which seem to be so) are really cruel. Taking the cross off from him, they compelled one Simon of Cyrene to bear it, pressing him to the service by the authority of the governor or the priests. It was a reproach, and none would do it but by compulsion. Some think that this Simon was a disciple of Christ, at least a well-wisher to him, and that they knew it, and therefore put this upon him. Note, All that will approve themselves disciples indeed, must follow Christ, bearing his cross (Mt 16:24), bearing his reproach, Heb 13:13. We must know the fellowship of his sufferings for us, and patiently submit to all the sufferings for him we are called out to; for those only shall reign with him, that suffer with him; shall sit

with him in his kingdom, that drink of his cup, and are baptized with his baptism.

31 And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Crucifixion was a death used only among the Romans; it was very terrible and miserable. A cross was laid on the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, it was then lifted up and fixed upright, so that the weight of the body hung on the nails, till the sufferer died in agony. Christ thus answered the type of the brazen serpent raised on a pole. Christ underwent all the misery and shame here related, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

We have here the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus.

The place where our Lord Jesus was put to death.

1. They came to a place called Golgotha, near adjoining to Jerusalem, probably the common place of execution. If he had had a house of his own in Jerusalem, probably, for his greater disgrace, they would have crucified him before his own door. But now in the same place where criminals were sacrificed to the justice of the government, was our Lord Jesus sacrificed to the justice of God. Some think that it was called the place of a skull, because it was the common charnel-house, where the bones and skulls of dead men were laid together out of the way, lest people should touch them, and be defiled thereby. Here lay the trophies of death's victory over multitudes of the children of men; and when by dying Christ would destroy death, he added this circumstance of honour to his victory, that he triumphed over death upon his own dunghill.

2. There they crucified him (Mt 27:35), nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and then reared it up, and him hanging on it; for so the manner of the Romans was to crucify. Let our hearts be touched with the feeling of that exquisite pain which our blessed Saviour now endured, and let us look upon him who was thus pierced, and mourn. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that behold with what manner of love he loved us.

34 they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Therefore, he refused the offer of drugged wine intended to deaden the pain and dull the mind Mat_27:34.

35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet,

They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

36 And sitting down they watched him there;

37 and set up over his head his accusation written, This is jesus the king of the jews.

It was usual to put shame upon malefactors, by a writing to notify the crime for which they suffered. So they set up one over Christ's head. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled it, that even his accusation was to his honour. There were crucified with him at the same time, two robbers. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints. The taunts and jeers he received are here recorded. The enemies of Christ labour to make others believe that of religion and of the people of God, which they themselves know to be false. The chief priests and scribes, and the elders, upbraid Jesus with being the King of Israel. Many people could like the King of Israel well enough, if he would but come down from the cross; if they could but have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him. Thus our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God, did it, by submitting to the punishment of the worst of men. And in every minute particular recorded about the sufferings of Christ, we find some prediction in the Prophets or the Psalms fulfilled

38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left.

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

The barbarous and abusive treatment they gave him, in which their wit and malice vied which should excel. As if death, so great a death, were not bad enough, they contrived to add to the bitterness and terror of it.

1. By the drink they provided for him before he was nailed to the cross, Mt 27:34. It was usual to have a cup of spiced wine for those to drink of, that were to be put to death, according to Solomon's direction (Pr 31:6,7), Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish; but with that cup which Christ was to drink of, they mingled vinegar and gall, to make it sour and bitter. This signified,

(a) The sin of man, which is a root of bitterness, bearing gall and wormwood, De 29:18. The sinner perhaps rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but to God it is grapes of gall, De 32:32. It was so to the Lord Jesus, when he bare our sins, and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner himself, bitterness at the latter end, more bitter than death, Ec 7:26.

(b) It signified the wrath of God, that cup which is Father put into his hand, a bitter cup indeed, like the bitter water which caused the curse, Nu 5:18. This drink they offered him, as was literally foretold, Ps 69:21. And,

[1.] He tasted thereof, and so had the worst of it, took the bitter taste into his mouth; he let no bitter cup go by him untasted, when he was making atonement for all our sinful tasting of forbidden fruit; now he was tasting death in its full bitterness.

[2.] He would not drink it, because he would not have the best of it; would have nothing like an opiate to lessen his sense of pain, for he would die so as to feel himself die, because he had so much work to do, as our High Priest, in his suffering work.

2. By the dividing of his garments, Mt 27:35. When they nailed him to the cross, they stripped him of his garments, at least his upper garments; for by sin we were made naked, to our shame, and thus he purchased for us white raiment to cover us. If we be at any time stripped of our comforts for Christ, let us bear it patiently; he was stripped for us. Enemies may strip us of our clothes, but cannot strip us of our best comforts; cannot take from us the garments of praise. The clothes of those that are executed are the executioner's fee: four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, and they must each of them have a share: his upper garment, if it were divided, would be of no use to any of them, and therefore they agreed to cast lots for it.

(a) Some think that the garment was so fine and rich, that it was worth contending for; but that agreed not with the poverty Christ appeared in.

(b) Perhaps they had heard of those that had been cured by touching the hem of his garment, and they thought it valuable for some magic virtue in it. Or,

(c) They hoped to get money of his friends for such a sacred relic. Or,

(d) Because, in derision, they would seem to put a value upon it, as royal clothing. Or,

(e) It was for diversion; to pass away the time while they waited for his death, they would play a game at dice for the clothes; but, whatever they designed, the word of God is herein accomplished. In that famous psalm, the first words of which Christ made use of upon the cross, it was said, They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture, Ps 22:18. This was never true of David, but looks primarily at Christ, of whom David, in spirit, spoke. Then is the offence of this part of the cross ceased; for it appears to have been by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Christ stripped himself of his glories, to divide them among us.

They now sat down, and watched him, Mt 27:36. The chief priests were careful, no doubt, in setting this guard, lest the people, whom they still stood in awe of, should rise, and rescue him. But Providence so ordered it, that those who were appointed to watch him, thereby became unexceptionable witnesses for him; having the opportunity to see and hear that which extorted from them that noble confession (Mt 27:54), Truly this was the Son of God.

3. By the title set up over his head, Mt 27:37. It was usual for the vindicating of public justice, and putting the greater shame upon malefactors that were executed, not only by a crier to proclaim before them, but by a writing also over their heads to notify what was the crime for which they suffered; so they set up over Christ's head his accusation written, to give public notice of the charge against him; This is Jesus the King of the Jews. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled it, that even his accusation redounded to his honour. For,

(a) Here was no crime alleged against him. It is not said that he was a pretended Saviour, or a usurping King, though they would have it thought so (Joh 19:21); but, This is Jesus, a Saviour; surely that was no crime; and, This is the King of the Jews; nor was that a crime; for they expected that the Messiah should be so: so that, his enemies themselves being judges, he did no evil. Nay,

(b) Here was a very glorious truth asserted concerning him--that he is Jesus the King of the Jews, that King whom the Jews expected and ought to have submitted to; so that his accusation amounts to this, That he was the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; as Balaam, when he was sent for to curse Israel, blessed them all together, and that three times (Nu 24:10), so Pilate, instead of accusing Christ as a Criminal, proclaimed him a King, and that three times, in three inscriptions. Thus God makes men to serve his purposes, quite beyond their own.

4. By his companions with him in suffering, Mt 27:38. There were two thieves crucified with him at the same time, in the same place,

under the same guard; two highway-men, or robbers upon the road, as the word properly signifies. It is probable that this was appointed to be execution-day; and therefore they hurried the prosecution of Christ in the morning, that they might have him ready to be executed with the other criminals. Some think that Pilate ordered it thus, that this piece of necessary justice, in executing these thieves, might atone for his injustice in condemning Christ; others, that the Jews contrived it, to add to the ignominy of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus; however it was, the scripture was fulfilled in it (Isa 53:12), He was numbered with the transgressors.

(a) It was a reproach to him, that he was crucified with them. Though, while he lived, he was separate from sinners, yet in their deaths they were not divided, but he was made to partake with the vilest malefactors in their plagues, as if he had been a partaker with them in their sins; for he was made sin for us, and took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, and had his lot with the wicked, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints, and have our lot among the chosen.

(b) It was an additional reproach, that he was crucified in the midst, between them, as if he had been the worst of the three, the principal malefactor; for among three the middle is the place for the chief. Every circumstance was contrived to his dishonour, as if the great Saviour were of all others the greatest sinner. It was also intended to ruffle and discompose him, in his last moments, with the shrieks, and groans, and blasphemies, of these malefactors, who, it is likely, made a hideous outcry when they were nailed to the cross; but thus would Christ affect himself with the miseries of sinners, when he was suffering for their salvation. Some of Christ's apostles were afterwards crucified, as Peter, and Andrew, but none of them were crucified with him, lest it should have looked as if they had been joint undertakers with him, in satisfying for man's sin, and joint purchasers of life and glory; therefore he was crucified between two malefactors, who could not be supposed to contribute any thing to the merit of his death; for he himself bare our sins in his own body.

5. By the blasphemies and revilings with which they loaded him when he was hanging upon the cross; though we read not that they cast any reflections on the thieves that were crucified with him. One would have thought that, when they had nailed him to the cross, they had done their worst, and malice itself had been exhausted: indeed if a criminal be put into the pillory, or carted, because it is a punishment less than death, it is usually attended with such expressions of abuse; but a dying man, though an infamous man, should be treated with compassion. It is an insatiable revenge indeed which will not be satisfied with death, so great a death. But, to complete the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, and to show that, when he was dying, he was bearing iniquity, he was then loaded with reproach, and, for aught that appears, not one of his friends, who the other day cried Hosanna to him, durst be seen to show him any respect.

(a) The common people, that passed by, reviled him. His extreme misery and exemplary patience under it, did not mollify them, or make them to relent; but they who by their outcries brought him to this, now think to justify themselves in it by their reproaches, as if they did well to condemn him. They reviled him: eblasphemoun--they blasphemed him; and blasphemy it was, in the strictest sense, speaking evil of him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Observe here,

[1.] The persons that reviled him; they that passed by, the travellers that went along the road, and it was a great road, leading from Jerusalem to Gibeon; they were possessed with prejudices against him by the reports and clamours of the High Priest's creatures. It is a hard thing, and requires more application and resolution than is ordinarily met with, to keep up a good opinion of persons and things that are every where run down, and spoken against. Every one is apt to say as the most say, and to throw a stone at that which is put into an ill name. Turba Remi sequitur fortunam semper et odit damnatos--The Roman rabble fluctuate with a man's fluctuating fortunes, and fail not to depress those that are sinking. Juvenal.

[2.] The gesture they used, in contempt of him--wagging their heads; which signifies their triumph in his fall, and their insulting over him, Isa 37:22,Jer 18:16,La 2:15. The language of it was, Aha, so would we have it, Ps 35:25. Thus they insulted over him that was the Saviour of their country, as the Philistines did over Samson the destroyer of their country. This very gesture was prophesied of (Ps 22:7); They shake the head at me. And Ps 109:25.

[3.] The taunts and jeers they uttered. These are here recorded.

First, They upbraided him with his destroying of the temple. Though the judges themselves were sensible that what he had said of that was misrepresented (as appears Mk 14:59), yet they industriously spread it among the people, to bring an odium upon him, that he had a design to destroy the temple; than which nothing would more incense the people against him. And this was not the only time that the enemies of Christ had laboured to make others believe that of religion and the people of God, which they themselves have known to be false, and the charge unjust "Thou that destroyest the temple, that vast and strong fabric, try thy strength now in plucking up that cross, and drawing those nails, and so save thyself; if thou hast the power thou hast boasted of, this is a proper time to exert it, and give proof of it; for it is supposed that every man will do his utmost to save himself." This made the cross of Christ such a stumbling-block to the Jews, that they looked upon it to be inconsistent with the power of the Messiah; he was crucified in weakness (2Co 13:4), so it seemed to them; but indeed Christ crucified is the Power of God.

Secondly, They upbraided him with his saying that he was the Son of God; If thou be so, say they, come down from the cross. Now they take the devil's words out of his mouth, with which he tempted him in the wilderness (Mt 4:3,6), and renew the same assault; If thou be the Son of God. They think that now, or never, he must prove himself to be the Son of God; forgetting that he had proved it by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising of the dead; and unwilling to wait for the complete proof of it by his own resurrection, to which he had so often referred himself and them; which, if they had observed it,

would have anticipated the offence of the cross. This comes of judging things by the present aspect of them, without a due remembrance of what is past, and a patient expectation of what may further be produced.

(b) The chief priests and scribes, the church rulers, and the elders, the state rulers, they mocked him, Mt 27:41. They did not think it enough to invite the rabble to do it, but gave Christ the dishonour, and themselves the diversion, or reproaching him in their own proper persons. They should have been in the temple at their devotion, for it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when there was to be a holy convocation (Le 23:7); but they were here at the place of execution, spitting their venom at the Lord Jesus. How much below the grandeur and gravity of their character was this! Could any thing tend more to make them contemptible and base before the people? One would have thought, that, though they neither feared God nor regarded man, yet common prudence should have taught them who had so great a hand in Christ's death, to keep as much as might be behind the curtain, and to play least in sight; but nothing is so mean as that malice may stick at it. Did they disparage themselves thus, to do despite to Christ, and shall we be afraid of disparaging ourselves, by joining with the multitude to do him honour, and not rather say, If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile?

Two things the priests and elders upbraided him with.

[1.] That he could not save himself, Mt 27:42. He had been before abused in his prophetical and kingly office, and now in his priestly office as a Saviour. First, They take it for granted that he could not save himself, and therefore had not the power he pretended to, when really he would not save himself, because he would die to save us. They should have argued, "He saved others, therefore he could save himself, and if he do not, it is for some good reason." But, Secondly, They would insinuate, that, because he did not now save himself, therefore all his pretence to save others was but sham and delusion, and was never really done; though the truth of his miracles was demonstrated beyond contradiction. Thirdly, They upbraid him with

being the King of Israel. They dreamed of the external pomp and power of the Messiah, and therefore thought the cross altogether disagreeable to the King of Israel, and inconsistent with that character. Many people would like the King of Israel well enough, if he would but come down from the cross, if they could have his kingdom without the tribulation through which they must enter into it. But the matter is settled; if no cross, then no Christ, no crown. Those that would reign with him, must be willing to suffer with him, for Christ and his cross are nailed together in this world. Fourthly, They challenged him to come down from the cross. And what had become of us then, and the work of our redemption and salvation? If he had been provoked by these scoffs to come down from the cross, and so to have left his undertaking unfinished, we had been for ever undone. But his unchangeable love and resolution set him above, and fortified him against, this temptation, so that he did not fail, nor was discouraged. Fifthly, They promised that, if he would come down from the cross, they would believe him. Let him give them that proof of his being the Messiah, and they will own him to be so. When they had formerly demanded a sign, he told them that the sign he would give them, should be not his coming down from the cross, but, which was a greater instance of his power, his coming up from the grave, which they had not patience to wait two or three days for. If he had come down from the cross, they might with as much reason have said that the soldiers had juggled in nailing him to it, as they said, when he was raised from the dead, that the disciples came by night, and stole him away. But to promise ourselves that we would believe, if we had such and such means and motives of faith as we ourselves would prescribe, when we do not improve what God has appointed, is not only a gross instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, but the sorry refuge, or subterfuge rather, of an obstinate destroying infidelity.

[2.] That God, his Father, would not save him (Mt 27:43); He trusted in God, that is, he pretended to do so; for he said, I am the Son of God. Those who call God Father, and themselves his children, thereby profess to put a confidence in him, Ps 9:10. Now they suggest, that he did but deceive himself and others, when he made himself so much the darling of heaven; for, if he had been the Son of God (as

Job's friends argued concerning him), he would not have been abandoned to all this misery, much less abandoned in it. This was a sword in his bones, as David complains of the like (Ps 42:10); and it was a two-edged sword, for it was intended, First, To vilify him, and to make the standers-by think him a deceiver and an impostor; as if his saying, that he was the Son of God, were now effectually disproved. Secondly, To terrify him, and drive him to distrust and despair of his Father's power and love; which some think, was the thing he feared, religiously feared, prayed against, and was delivered from, Heb 5:7. David complained more of the endeavours of his persecutors to shake his faith, and drive him from his hope in God, than of their attempts to shake his throne, and drive him from his kingdom; their saying, There is no help for him in God (Ps 3:2), and, God has forsaken him, Ps 71:11. In this, as in other things, he was a type of Christ. Nay, these very words David, in that famous prophecy of Christ, mentions, as spoken by his enemies (Ps 22:8); He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. Surely these priests and scribes had forgotten their psalter, or they would not have used the same words, so exactly to answer the type and prophecy: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

(c) To complete the reproach, the thieves also that were crucified with him were not only not reviled as he was, as if they had been saints compared with him, but, though fellow-sufferers with him, joined in with his prosecutors, and cast the same in his teeth; that is, one of them did, who said, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us, Lu 23:39. One would think that of all people this thief had least cause, and should have had least mind, to banter Christ. Partners in suffering, though for different causes, usually commiserate one another; and few, whatever they have done before, will breathe their last in revilings. But, it seems, the greatest mortifications of the body, and the most humbling rebukes of Providence, will not of themselves mortify the corruptions of the soul, nor suppress the wickedness of the wicked, without the grace of God.

Well, thus our Lord Jesus having undertaken to satisfy the justice of God for the wrong done him in his honour by sin, he did it by

suffering in his honour; not only by divesting himself of that which was due to him as the Son of God, but by submitting to the utmost indignity that could be done to the worst of men; because he was made sin for us, he was thus made a curse for us, to make reproach easy to us, if at any time we suffer it, and have all manner of evil said against us falsely, for righteousness' sake.

40 and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

All mocked with the same theme - he claimed to save others but he could not save himself. This was true, though not in the sense the mockers intended; for only by willingly sacrificing himself could he save guilty sinners (Mat_27:35-44; Luk_23:32-39; Joh_19:18-24). One of the criminals, realizing this, repented and experienced the saving power of Jesus that very day (Luk_23:40-43).

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

We have here the frowns of heaven, which our Lord Jesus was under, in the midst of all these injuries and indignities from men. Concerning which, observe,

1. How this was signified--by an extraordinary and miraculous eclipse of the sun, which continued for three hours, Mt 27:45. There was darkness epi pasan ten gen--over all the earth; so most interpreters understand it, though our translation confines it to that land. Some of the ancients appealed to the annals of the nation concerning this extraordinary eclipse at the death of Christ, as a thing well known, and which gave notice to those parts of the world of something great then in doing; as the sun's going back in Hezekiah's time did. It is reported that Dionysius, at Heliopolis in Egypt, took notice of this darkness, and said, Aut Deus naturæ patitur, aut mundi machina dissolvitur--Either the God of nature is suffering, or the

machine of the world is tumbling into ruin. An extraordinary light gave intelligence of the birth of Christ (Mt 2:2), and therefore it was proper that an extraordinary darkness should notify his death, for he is the Light of the world. The indignities done to our Lord Jesus, made the heavens astonished, and horribly afraid, and even put them into disorder and confusion; such wickedness as this the sun never saw before, and therefore withdrew, and would not see this. This surprising, amazing, darkness was designed to stop the mouths of those blasphemers, who were reviling Christ as he hung on the cross; and it should seem that, for the present, it struck such a terror upon them, that though their hearts were not changed, yet they were silent, and stood doubting what this should mean, till after three hours the darkness scattered, and then (as appears by Mt 27:47), like Pharaoh when the plague was over, they hardened their hearts. But that which was principally intended in this darkness, was,

(a) Christ's present conflict with the powers of darkness. Now the prince of this world, and his forces, the rulers of the darkness of this world, were to be cast out, to be spoiled and vanquished; and to make his victory the more illustrious, he fights them on their own ground; gives them all the advantage they could have against him by this darkness, lets them take the wind and sun, and yet baffles them, and so becomes more than a conqueror.

(b) His present want of heavenly comforts. This darkness signified that dark cloud which the human soul of our Lord Jesus was now under. God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust; but even the light of the sun was withheld from our Saviour, when he was made sin for us. A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but because now his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and the cup of divine displeasure was filled to him without mixture, even the light of the sun was suspended. When earth denied him a drop of cold water, heaven denied him a beam of light; having to deliver us from utter darkness, he did himself, in the depth of his sufferings, walk in darkness, and had no light, Isa 50:10. During the three hours that this darkness continued, we do not find that he said one word, but passed this time in a silent retirement into his own soul, which was now in

agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but the sin of man, which he was now making his soul an offering for. Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation.

2. How he complained of it (Mt 27:46); About the ninth hour, when it began to clear up, after a long and silent conflict. Jesus cried, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? The words are related in the Syriac tongue, in which they were spoken, because worthy of double remark, and for the sake of the perverse construction which his enemies put upon them, in putting Elias for Eli. Now observe here,

(a) Whence he borrowed this complaint--from Ps 22:1. It is not probable (as some have thought) that he repeated the whole psalm; yet hereby he intimated that the whole was to be applied to him, and that David, in spirit, there spoke of his humiliation and exaltation. This, and that other word, Into thy hands I commit my spirit, he fetched from David's psalms (though he could have expressed himself in his own words), to teach us of what use the word of God is to us, to direct us in prayer, and to recommend to us the use of scripture-expressions in prayer, which will help our infirmities.

(b) How he uttered it--with a loud voice; which bespeaks the extremity of his pain and anguish, the strength of nature remaining in him, and the great earnestness of his spirit in this expostulation. Now the scripture was fulfilled (Joe 3:15,16); The sun and the moon shall be darkened. The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter his voice form Jerusalem. David often speaks of his crying aloud in prayer, Ps 55:17.

(c) What the complaint was--My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? A strange complaint to come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, who, we are sure, was God's elect, in whom his soul delighted (Isa 42:1), and one in whom he was always well pleased. The Father now loved him, nay, he knew that therefore he loved him,

because he laid down his life for the sheep; what, and yet forsaken of him, and in the midst of his sufferings too! Surely never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which extorted such a complaint as this from one who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a terror to himself; but the heart knows its own bitterness. No wonder that such a complaint as this made the earth to quake, and rent the rocks; for it is enough to make both the ears of every one that hears it to tingle, and ought to be spoken of with great reverence.

Note,

[1.] That our Lord Jesus was, in his sufferings, for a time, forsaken by his Father. So he saith himself, who we are sure was under no mistake concerning his own case. Not that the union between the divine and human nature was in the least weakened or shocked; no, he was now by the eternal Spirit offering himself: nor as if there were any abatement of his Father's love to him, or his to his Father; we are sure that there was upon his mind no horror of God, or despair of his favour, nor any thing of the torments of hell; but his Father forsook him; that is, First, He delivered him up into the hands of his enemies, and did not appear to deliver him out of their hands. He let loose the powers of darkness against him, and suffered them to do their worst, worse than against Job. Now was that scripture fulfilled (Job 16:11), God hath turned me over into the hands of the wicked; and no angel is sent from heaven to deliver him, no friend on earth raised up to appear for him. Secondly, He withdrew from him the present comfortable sense of his complacency in him. When his soul was first troubled, he had a voice from heaven to comfort him (Joh 12:27); when he was in his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him; but now he had neither the one nor the other. God hid his face from him, and for awhile withdrew his rod and staff in the darksome valley. God forsook him, not as he forsook Saul, leaving him to an endless despair, but as sometimes he forsook David, leaving him to a present despondency. Thirdly, He let out upon his soul an afflicting sense of his wrath against man for sin. Christ was made Sin for us, a Curse for us; and therefore, though God loved him as a Son, he frowned upon him as a Surety. These

impressions he was pleased to admit, and to waive that resistance of them which he could have made; because he would accommodate himself to this part of his undertaking, as he had done to all the rest, when it was in his power to have avoided it.

[2.] That Christ's being forsaken of his Father was the most grievous of his sufferings, and that which he complained most of. Here he laid the most doleful accents; he did not say, "Why am I scourged? And why spit upon? And why nailed to the cross?" Nor did he say to his disciples, when they turned their back upon him, Why have ye forsaken me? But when his Father stood at a distance, he cried out thus; for this as it that put wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. This brought the waters into the soul, Ps 69:1-3.

[3.] That our Lord Jesus, even when he was thus forsaken of his Father, kept hold of him as his God, notwithstanding; My God, my God; though forsaking me, yet mine. Christ was God's servant in carrying on the work of redemption, to him he was to make satisfaction, and by him to be carried through and crowned, and upon that account he calls him his God; for he was now doing his will. See Isa 49:5-9. This supported him, and bore him up, that even in the depth of his sufferings God was his God, and this he resolves to keep fast hold of.

(d) See how his enemies impiously bantered and ridiculed this complaint (Mt 27:47); They said, This man calleth for Elias. Some think that this was the ignorant mistake of the Roman soldiers, who had heard talk of Elias, and of the Jews' expectation of the coming of Elias, but knew not the signification of Eli, Eli, and so made this blundering comment upon these words of Christ, perhaps not hearing the latter part of what he said, for the noise of the people. Note, Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God and the people of God, take rise from gross mistakes. Divine truths are often corrupted by ignorance of the language and style of the scripture. Those that hear by the halves, pervert what they hear. But others think that it was the wilful mistake of some of the Jews, who knew very well what he said, but were disposed to abuse him, and make themselves and their

companions merry, and to misrepresent him as one who, being forsaken of God, was driven to trust in creatures; perhaps hinting also, that he who had pretended to be himself the Messiah, would now be glad to be beholden to Elias, who was expected to be only the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah. Note, It is no new thing for the most pious devotions of the best men to be ridiculed and abused by profane scoffers; nor are we to think it strange if what is well said in praying and preaching be misconstrued, and turned to our reproach; Christ's words were so, though he spoke as never man spoke.

Nevertheless, at the very time he suffered such desolation, Jesus was in harmony with his Father's will. He wanted his final words to his Father to be loud enough for all to hear, and therefore he asked for something to moisten his dry mouth. The words he spoke made known to all that he was placing his spirit in his Father's hands. His final cry of triumph, 'It is finished', confirmed that even in his death he was still in control. No one took his life from him; he gave it up in a voluntary, unique act. He had completed the work that his Father sent him to do (Mat_27:50; Luk_23:46; Joh_19:28-30).

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Jesus uttered a complaint from Psa_22:1. Hereby he teaches of what use the word of God is to direct us in prayer, and recommends the use of Scripture expressions in prayer. The believer may have tasted some drops of bitterness, but he can only form a very feeble idea of the greatness of Christ's sufferings. Yet, hence he learns something of the Saviour's love to sinners; hence he gets deeper conviction of the vileness and evil of sin, and of what he owes to Christ, who delivers him from the wrath to come.

Let us, with an eye of faith, behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But his friends could give no more than a look; they beheld him, but could not help him. Never were the horrid nature and effects of sin so tremendously displayed, as on that day when the beloved Son of the Father hung

upon the cross, suffering for sin, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Let us yield ourselves willingly to his service.

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elijah.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

1. Some gave him vinegar to drink (Mt 27:48); instead of some cordial-water to revive and refresh him under this heavy burthen, they tantalized him with that which did not only add to the reproach they were loading him with, but did too sensibly represent that cup of trembling which his Father had put into his hand. One of them ran to fetch it, seeming to be officious to him, but really glad of an opportunity to abuse and affront him, and afraid lest any one should take it out of his hands.

2. Others, which the same purpose of disturbing and abusing him, refer him to Elias (Mt 27:49); "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Come, let him alone, his case is desperate, neither heaven nor earth can help him; let us do nothing either to hasten his death, or to retard it; he has appealed to Elias, and to Elias let him go."

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

We have here, at length, an account of the death of Christ, and several remarkable passages that attended it.

The manner how he breathed his last (Mt 27:50); between the third and the sixth hour, that is, between nine and twelve o'clock, as we reckon, he was nailed to the cross, and soon after the ninth hour, that is, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he died. That was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and the time when the paschal lamb was killed; and Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us and offered himself in the evening of the world a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. It was at that time of the day, that the angel Gabriel delivered to Daniel that glorious prediction of the Messiah, Da 9:21,24, &c. And some think that from that very time when the angel spoke it, to this time when Christ died, was just

seventy weeks, that is, four hundred and ninety years to a day, to an hour; as the departure of Israel out of Egypt was at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day, Ex 12:41.

Two things are here noted concerning the manner of Christ's dying.

1. That he cried with a loud voice, as before, Mt 27:46. Now,

(a) This was a sign, that, after all his pains and fatigues, his life was whole in him, and nature strong. The voice of dying men is one of the first things that fails; with a panting breath and a faltering tongue, a few broken words are hardly spoken, and more hardly heard. But Christ, just before he expired, spoke like a man in his full strength, to show that his life was not forced from him, but was freely delivered by him into his Father's hands, as his own act and deed. He that had strength to cry thus when he died, could have got loose from the arrest he was under, and have bid defiance to the powers of death; but to show that by the eternal Spirit he offered himself, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, he cried with a loud voice.

(b) It was significant. This loud voice shows that he attacked our spiritual enemies with an undaunted courage, and such a bravery of resolution as bespeaks him hearty in the cause and daring in the encounter. He was now spoiling principalities and powers, and in this loud voice he did, as it were, shout for mastery, as one mighty to save, Isa 63:1. Compare with this, Isa 62:13,14. He now bowed himself with all his might, as Samson did, when he said, Let me die with the Philistines, Jdg 16:30. Animamque in vulnere ponit--And lays down his life. His crying with a loud voice when he died, signified that his death should be published and proclaimed to all the world; all mankind being concerned in it, and obliged to take notice of it. Christ's loud cry was like a trumpet blown over the sacrifices.

2. That then he yielded up the ghost. This is the usual periphrasis of dying; to show that the Son of God upon the cross did truly and properly die by the violence of the pain he was put to. His soul was separated from his body, and so his body was left really and truly

dead. It was certain that he did die, for it was requisite that he should die; thus it was written, both in the close rolls of the divine counsels, and in the letters patent of the divine predictions, and therefore thus it behoved him to suffer. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant (Thou shalt surely die), the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise no remission, Heb 9:15. He had undertaken to make his soul an offering for sin; and he did it, when he yielded up the ghost, and voluntarily resigned it.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

The miracles that attended his death. So many miracles being wrought by him in his life, we might well expect some to be wrought concerning him at his death, for his name was called Wonderful. Had he been fetched away as Elijah in a fiery chariot, that had itself been miracle enough; but, being sent for away by an ignominious cross, it was requisite that his humiliation should be attended with some signal emanations of the divine glory.

1. Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain. This relation is ushered in with Behold; "Turn aside, and see this great sight, and be astonished at it." Just as our Lord Jesus expired, at the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice, and upon a solemn day, when the priests were officiating in the temple, and might themselves be eyewitnesses of it, the veil of the temple was rent by an invisible power; that veil which parted between the holy place and the most holy. They had condemned him for saying, I will destroy this temple, understanding it literally; now by this specimen of his power he let them know that, if he had pleased, he could have made his words good. In this, as in others of Christ's miracles, there was a mystery.

(a) It was in correspondence with the temple of Christ's body, which was now in the dissolving. This was the true temple, in which dwelt the fulness of the Godhead; when Christ cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost, and so dissolved that temple, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to that cry, and answer the stroke, by rending its veil. Note, Death is the rending of the veil of flesh which

interposes between us and the holy of holies; the death of Christ was so, the death of true Christians is so.

(b) It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The veil of the temple was for concealment, as was that on the face of Moses, therefore it was called the veil of the covering; for it was highly penal for any person to see the furniture of the most holy place, except the High-Priest, and he but once a year, with great ceremony and through a cloud of smoke; all which signified the darkness of that dispensation; 2Co 3:13. But now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries were unveiled, so that now he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see that the mercy-seat signified Christ the great Propitiation; the pot of manna signified Christ the Break of life. Thus we all with open face behold, as in a glass (which helps the sight, as the veil hindered it), the glory of the Lord. Our eyes see the salvation.

(c) It signified the uniting of Jew and Gentile, by the removing of the partition wall between them, which was the ceremonial law, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people (as a garden enclosed), were brought near to God, while others were made to keep their distance. Christ, in his death, repealed the ceremonial law, cancelled that hand-writing of ordinances, took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross, and so broke down the middle wall of partition; and by abolishing those institutions abolished the enmity, and made in himself of twain one new man (as two rooms are made one, and that large and lightsome, by taking down the partition), so making peace, Eph 2:14-16. Christ died, to rend all dividing veils, and to make all his one, Joh 17:21.

(d) It signified the consecrating and laying open of a new and living way to God. The veil kept people off from drawing near to the most holy place, where the Shechinah was. But the rending of it signified that Christ by his death opened a way to God,

[1.] For himself. This was the great day of atonement, when our Lord Jesus, as the great High-Priest, not by the blood of goats and calves,

but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holy place; in token of which the veil was rent, Heb 9:7, &c. Having offered his sacrifice in the outer court, the blood of it was now to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat within the veil; wherefore lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; for the King of glory, the Priest of glory, shall come in. Now was he caused to draw near, and made to approach, Jer 30:21. Though he did not personally ascend into the holy place not made with hands till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission.

[2.] For us in him: so the apostle applies it, Heb 10:19,20. We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by that new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil. He died, to bring us to God, and, in order thereunto, to rend that veil of guilt and wrath which interposed between us and him, to take away the cherubim and flaming sword, and to open the way to the tree of life. We have free access through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, now, and to the throne of glory hereafter, Heb 4:16,6:20. The rending of the veil signified (as that ancient hymn excellently expresses it), that, when Christ had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to heaven, for the veil is rent; a door is opened in heaven, Re 4:1.

2 The earth did quake; not only mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, but the whole land, and the adjacent countries. This earthquake signified two things.

(a) The horrible wickedness of Christ's crucifiers. The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore its testimony to the innocency of him that was persecuted, and against the impiety of those that persecuted him. Never did the whole creation, before, groan under such a burthen as the Son of God crucified, and the guilty wretches that crucified him. The earth quaked, as if it feared to open its mouth to receive the blood of Christ, so much more precious than that of Abel, which it had received, and was cursed for it (Ge 4:11,12); and

as if it fain would open its mouth, to swallow up those rebels that put him to death, as it had swallowed up Dathan and Abiram for a much less crime. When the prophet would express God's great displeasure against the wickedness of the wicked, he asks, Shall not the land tremble for this? Am 8:8.

(b) The glorious achievements of Christ's cross. This earthquake signified the mighty shock, nay, the fatal blow, now given to the devil's kingdom. So vigorous was the assault Christ now made upon the infernal powers, that (as of old, when he went out of Seir, when he marched through the field of Edom) the earth trembled, Jdg 5:4,Ps 68:7,8. God shakes all nations, when the Desire of all nations is to come; and there is a yet once more, which perhaps refers to this shaking, Hag 2:6,21.

3. The rocks rent; the hardest and firmest part of the earth was made to feel this mighty shock. Christ had said, that if the children should cease to cry Hosanna, the stones would immediately cry out; and now, in effect, they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him than the hard-hearted Jews were, who yet will shortly be glad to find a hole in the rocks, and a cleft in the ragged rocks, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne. See Re 6:16,Isa 2:21. But when God's fury is poured out like fire, the rocks are thrown down by him, Na 1:6. Jesus Christ is the Rock; and the rending of these rocks, signified the rending of that rock,

(a) That in the clefts of it was may be hid, as Moses in the cleft of the rock at Horeb, that there we may behold the glory of the Lord, as he did, Ex 33:22. Christ's dove is said to be hid in the clefts of the rock (So 2:14), that is, as some make the allusion, sheltered in the wounds of our Lord Jesus, the Rock rent.

(b) That from the cleft of it rivers of living water may flow, and follow us in this wilderness, as from the rock which Moses smote (Ex 17:6), and which God clave (Ps 78:15); and that rock was Christ, 1Co 10:4. When we celebrate the memorial of Christ's death, our

hard and rocky hearts must be rent--the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock, that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified.

4. The graves were opened. This matter is not related so fully as our curiosity would wish; for the scripture was not intended to gratify that; it should seem, that same earthquake that rent the rocks, opened the graves, and many bodies of saints which slept, arose. Death to the saints is but the sleep of the body, and the grave the bed it sleeps in; they awoke by the power of the Lord Jesus, and (Mt 27:53) came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now here,

(a) We may raise many enquiries concerning it, which we cannot resolve: as,

[1.] Who these saints were, that did arise. Some think, the ancient patriarchs, that were in such care to be buried in the land of Canaan, perhaps in the believing foresight of the advantage of this early resurrection. Christ had lately proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the instance of the patriarchs (Mt 22:32), and here was a speedy confirmation of his argument. Others think, these that arose were modern saints, such as had been Christ in the flesh, but died before him; as his father Joseph, Zecharias, Simeon, John Baptist, and others, that had been known to the disciples, while they lived, and therefore were the fitter to be witnesses to them in an apparition after. What if we should suppose that they were the martyrs, who in the Old-Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, that were thus dignified and distinguished? Christ particularly points at them as his forerunners, Mt 23:35. And we find (Re 20:4,5), that those who were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, arose before the rest of the dead. Sufferers with Christ shall first reign with him.

[2.] It is uncertain whether (as some think) they arose to life, now at the death of Christ, and disposed of themselves elsewhere, but did not go into the city till after his resurrection; or whether (as others

think), though their sepulchres (which the Pharisees had built and varnished, Mt 23:29), and so made remarkable, were shattered now by the earthquake (so little did God regard that hypocritical respect), yet they did not revive and rise till after the resurrection; only, for brevity-sake, it is mentioned here, upon the mention of the opening of the graves, which seems more probable.

[3.] Some think that they arose only to bear witness of Christ's resurrection to those to whom they appeared, and, having finished their testimony, retired to their graves again. But it is more agreeable, both to Christ's honour and theirs, to suppose, though we cannot prove, that they arose as Christ did, to die no more, and therefore ascended with him to glory. Surely on them who did partake of his first resurrection, a second death had no power.

[4.] To whom they appeared (not to all the people it is certain, but to many), whether enemies or friends, in what manner they appeared, how often, what they said and did, and how they disappeared, are secret things which belong not to us; we must not covet to be wise above what is written. The relating of this matter so briefly, is a plain intimation to us, that we must not look that way for a confirmation of our faith; we have a more sure word of prophecy. See Lu 16:31.

(b) Yet we may learn many good lessons from it.

[1.] That even those who lived and died before the death and resurrection of Christ, had saving benefit thereby, as well as those who have lived since; for he was the same yesterday that he is to-day, and will be for ever, Heb 13:8.

[2.] That Jesus Christ, by dying, conquered, disarmed, and disabled, death. These saints that arose, were the present trophies of the victory of Christ's cross over the powers of death, which he thus made a show of openly. Having by death destroyed him that had the power of death, he thus led captivity captive, and gloried in these re-taken prizes, in them fulfilling that scripture, I will ransom them from the power of the grave.

[3.] That, in virtue of Christ's resurrection, the bodies of all the saints shall, in the fulness of time, rise again. This was an earnest of the general resurrection at the last day, when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And perhaps Jerusalem is therefore called here the holy city, because the saints, at the general resurrection, shall enter into the new Jerusalem; which will be indeed what the other was in name and type only, the holy city, Re 21:2.

[4.] That all the saints do, by the influence of Christ's death, and in conformity to it, rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. They are raised up with him to a divine and spiritual life; they go into the holy city, become citizens of it, have their conversation in it, and appear to many, as persons not of this world.

The rending of the veil signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God. We have an open way through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat now, and to the throne of glory hereafter. When we duly consider Christ's death, our hard and rocky hearts should be rent; the heart, and not the garments. That heart is harder than a rock that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is plainly set forth crucified.

52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

These sleeping saints (see on 1Th 4:14) were Old Testament believers, who—according to the usual punctuation in our version—were quickened into resurrection life at the moment of their Lord's death, but lay in their graves till His resurrection, when they came forth. But it is far more natural, as we think, and consonant with other Scriptures, to understand that only the graves were opened, probably by the earthquake, at our Lord's death, and this only in preparation for the subsequent exit of those who slept in them, when the Spirit of life should enter into them from their risen Lord, and along with Him they should come forth, trophies of His victory over the grave. Thus, in the opening of the graves at the moment of the Redeemer's expiring, there was a glorious symbolical proclamation that the death which had just taken place had "swallowed up death

in victory"; and whereas the saints that slept in them were awakened only by their risen Lord, to accompany Him out of the tomb, it was fitting that "the Prince of Life . . . should be the First that should rise from the dead" (Ac 26:23,1Co 15:20,23,Col 1:18,Re 1:5).

that there might be undeniable evidence of their own resurrection first, and through it of their Lord's. Thus, while it was not deemed fitting that He Himself should appear again in Jerusalem, save to the disciples, provision was made that the fact of His resurrection should be left in no doubt. It must be observed, however, that the resurrection of these sleeping saints was not like those of the widow of Nain's son, of Jairus' daughter, of Lazarus, and of the man who "revived and stood upon his feet," on his dead body touching the bones of Elisha (2Ki 13:21) —which were mere temporary recallings of the departed spirit to the mortal body, to be followed by a final departure of it "till the trumpet shall sound." But this was a resurrection once for all, to life everlasting; and so there is no room to doubt that they went to glory with their Lord, as bright trophies of His victory over death.

53 and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

The conviction of his enemies that were employed in the execution (Mt 27:54), which some make no less than another miracle, all things considered. Observe,

1 The persons convinced; the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus; a captain and his company, that were set on the guard on this occasion.

(a) They were soldiers, whose profession is commonly hardening, and whose breasts are commonly not so susceptible as some others of the impressions either of fear or pity. But there is no spirit too big, too bold, for the power of Christ to break and humble.

(b) They ware Romans, Gentiles, who knew not the scriptures which were now fulfilled; yet they only were convinced. A sad presage of the blindness that should happen to Israel, when the gospel should be sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes. Here were the Gentiles softened, and the Jews hardened.

(c) They were the persecutors of Christ, and those that but just before had reviled him, as appears Lu 23:36. How soon can God, by the power he has over men's consciences, alter their language, and fetch confessions of his truths, to his own glory, out of the mouths of those that have breathed nothing but threatenings, and slaughter, and blasphemies!

2 The means of their conviction; they perceived the earthquake, which frightened them, and saw the other things that were done. These were designed to assert the honour of Christ in his sufferings, and had their end on these soldiers, whatever they had on others. Note, The dreadful appearances of God in his providence sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners.

3. The expressions of this conviction, in two things.

(a) The terror that was struck upon them; they feared greatly; feared lest they should have been buried in the darkness, or swallowed up in the earthquake. Note, God can easily frighten the most daring of his adversaries, and make them know themselves to be but men. Guilt puts men into fear. He that, when iniquity abounds, doth not fear always, with a fear of caution, when judgments are abroad, cannot but fear greatly, with a fear of amazement; whereas there are those who will not fear, though the earth be removed, Ps 46:1,2.

(b) The testimony that was extorted from them; they said, Truly this was the Son of God; a noble confession; Peter was blessed for it, Mt 16:16,17. It was the great matter now in dispute, the point upon which he and his enemies had joined issue, mt 26:63,64. His disciples believed it, but at this time durst not confess it; our Saviour

himself was tempted to question it, when he said, Why hast thou forsaken me? The Jews, now that he was dying upon the cross, looked upon it as plainly determined against him, that he was not the Son of God, because he did not come down from the cross. And yet now this centurion and the soldiers make this voluntary confession of the Christian faith, Truly this was the Son of God. The best of his disciples could not have said more at any time, and at this time they had not faith and courage enough to say thus much. Note, God can maintain and assert the honour of a truth then when it seems to be crushed, and run down; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

There cannot be a reasonable doubt that this expression was used in the Jewish sense, and that it points to the claim which Jesus made to be the Son of God, and on which His condemnation expressly turned. The meaning, then, clearly is that He must have been what He professed to be; in other words, that He was no impostor. There was no medium between those two. See, on the similar testimony of the penitent thief—"This man hath done nothing amiss"—Lu2 3:41.

55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

56 among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

The attendance of his friends, that were witnesses of his death, Mt 27:55,56. Observe,

1. Who they were; many women who followed him from Galilee. Not his apostles (only elsewhere we find John by the cross, Joh 19:26), their hearts failed them, they durst not appear, for fear of coming under the same condemnation. But here were a company of women, some would have called them silly women, that boldly stuck to Christ, when the rest of his disciples had basely deserted him. Note, Even those of the weaker sex are often, by the grace of God, made strong in faith, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. There have been women martyrs, famous for courage and resolution in Christ's cause. Now of these women it is said,

(a) That they had followed Jesus from Galilee, out of the great love they had to him, and a desire to hear him preach; otherwise, the males only were obliged to come up, to worship at the feast. Now having followed him such a long journey as from Galilee to Jerusalem, eighty or a hundred miles, they resolved not to forsake him now. Note, Our former services and sufferings for Christ should be an argument with us, faithfully to persevere to the end in our attendance on him. Have we followed him so far and so long, done so much, and laid out so much for him, and shall we forsake him now? Ga 3:3,4.

(b) That they ministered to him of their substance, for his necessary subsistence. How gladly would they have ministered to him now, if they might have been admitted! But, being forbidden that, they resolved to follow him. Note, When we are restrained from doing what we would, we must do what we can, in the service of Christ. Now that he is in heaven, though he is out of the reach of our ministration, he is not out of the reach of our believing views.

(c) Some of them are particularly named; for God will honour those that honour Christ. They were such as we have several times met with before, and it was their praise, that we meet with them to the last.

2. What they did; they were beholding afar off.

(a) They stood afar off. Whether their own fear or their enemies' fury kept them at a distance, is not certain; however, it was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that his lovers and friends stood aloof from his sore, Ps 38:11,Job 19:13. Perhaps they might have come nearer, if they would; but good people, when they are in sufferings, must not think it strange, if some of their best friends be shy of them. When Paul's danger was imminent, no man stood by him, 2Ti 4:16. If we be thus looked strangely upon, remember, our Master was so before us.

(b) They were there beholding, in which they showed a concern and kindness for Christ; when they were debarred from doing any other office of love to him, they looked a look of love toward him.

[1.] It was a sorrowful look; they looked unto him who was now pierced, and mourned; and no doubt, were in bitterness for him. We may well imagine how it cut them to the heart, to see him in this torment; and what floods of tears it fetched from their eyes. Let us with an eye of faith behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love wherewith he loved us. But,

[2.] It was no more than a look; they beheld him, but they could not help him. Note, When Christ was in his sufferings, the best of his friends were but spectators and lookers on, even the angelic guards stood trembling by, saith Mr. Norris, for he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him; so his own arm wrought salvation.

The Burial of Jesus

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

58 he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

We have here an account of Christ's burial, and the manner and circumstances of it, concerning which observe,

1 The kindness and good will of his friends that laid him in the grave.

2 The malice and ill will of his enemies that were very solicitous to keep him there.

His friends gave him a decent burial. Observe,

1. In general, that Jesus Christ was buried; when his precious soul was gone to paradise, his blessed body was deposited in the chambers of the grave, that he might answer the type of Jonas, and

fulfil the prophecy of Isaias; he made his grave with the wicked. Thus in all things he must be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, and, like us, unto dust he must return. He was buried, to make his death the more certain, and his resurrection the more illustrious. Pilate would not deliver his body to be buried, till he was well assured that he was really dead; while the witnesses lay unburied, there were some hopes concerning them, Re 11:8. But Christ, the great Witness, is as one free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave. He was buried, that he might take off the terror of the grave, and make it easy to us, might warm and perfume that cold noisome bed for us, and that we might be buried with him.

2 The particular circumstances of his burial here related.

(a) The time when he was buried; when the evening was come; the same evening that he died, before sun-set, as is usual in burying malefactors. It was not deferred till the next day, because it was the sabbath; for burying the dead is not proper work either for a day of rest or for a day of rejoicing, as the sabbath is.

(b) The person that took care of the funeral was Joseph of Arimathea. The apostles had all fled, and none of them appeared to show this respect to their Master, which the disciples of John showed to him after he was beheaded, who took up his body, and buried it, Mt 14:12. The women that followed him durst not move in it; then did God stir up this good man to do it; for what work God has to do, he will find out instruments to do it. Joseph was a fit man, for,

[1.] He had wherewithal to do it, being a rich man. Most of Christ's disciples were poor men, such were most fit to go about the country to preach the gospel; but here was one that was a rich man, ready to be employed in a piece of service which required a man of estate. Note, Worldly wealth, though it is to many an objection in religion's way, yet, in some services to be done for Christ, it is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if withal they have a heart to use it for God's glory.

[2.] He was well affected to our Lord Jesus, for he was himself his disciple, believed in him, though he did not openly profess it. Note, Christ has more secret disciples than we are aware of; seven thousand in Israel, Ro 11:4.

(c) The grant of the dead body procured from Pilate, Mt 27:58. Joseph went to Pilate, the proper person to be applied to on this occasion, who had the disposal of the body; for in things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned, due regard must be had to that power, and nothing done to break in upon it. What we do that is good, must be done peaceably, and not tumultuously. Pilate was willing to give the body to one that would inter it decently, that he might do something towards atoning for the guilt his conscience charged him with in condemning an innocent person. In Joseph's petition, and Pilate's ready grant of it, honour was done to Christ, and a testimony borne to his integrity.

(d The dressing of the body in its grave-clothes (Mt 27:59); though he was an honourable counsellor, yet he himself took the body, as it should seem, into his own arms, from the infamous and accursed tree (Ac 13:29); for where there is true love to Christ, no service will be thought too mean to stoop to for him. Having taken it, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth; for burying in linen was then the common usage, which Joseph complied with. Note, Care is to be taken of the dead bodies of good men, for there is a glory intended for them at the resurrection, which we must hereby testify our belief of, and wind up the dead body as designed for a better place. This common act of humanity, if done after a godly sort, may be made an acceptable piece of Christianity.

(e) The depositing of it in the sepulchre, Mt 27:60. Here there was nothing of that pomp and solemnity with which the grandees of the world are brought to the grave, and laid in the tomb, Job 21:32. A private funeral did best befit him whose kingdom came not with observation.

[1.] He was laid in a borrowed tomb, in Joseph's burying place; as he had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body when he was dead, which was an instance of his poverty; yet in this there might be somewhat of a mystery. The grave is the peculiar heritage of a sinner, Job 24:19. There is nothing we can truly call our own but our sins and our graves; he returneth to his earth, Ps 146:4. When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own; dying under imputed sin, it was fit that he should be buried in a borrowed grave; the Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God over-ruled it, so as that he should make it with the rich in his death, Isa 53:9.

[2.] He was laid in a new tomb, which Joseph, it is likely, designed for himself; it would, however, be never the worse for his lying in it, who was to rise so quickly, but a great deal the better for his lying in it, who has altered the property of the grave, and made it anew indeed, by turning it into a bed of rest, nay into a bed of spices, for all the saints.

[3.] In a tomb that was hewn out of a rock; the ground about Jerusalem was generally rocky. Shebna had his sepulchre hewn out thereabouts in a rock, Isa 22:16. Providence ordered it that Christ's sepulchre should be in a solid entire rock, that no room might be left to suspect his disciples had access to it by some underground passage, or broke through the back wall of it, to steal the body; for there was no access to it but by the door, which was watched.

[4.] A great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulchre; this also was according to the custom of the Jews in burying their dead, as appears by the description of the grave of Lazarus (Joh 11:38), signifying that those who are dead, are separated and cut off from all the living; if the grave were his prison, now was the prison-door locked and bolted. The rolling of the stone to the grave's mouth, was with them as filling up the grave is with us, it completed the funeral.

Having thus in silence and sorrow deposited the previous body of our Lord Jesus in the grave, the house appointed for all living, they departed without any further ceremony. It is the most melancholy circumstance in the funerals of our Christian friends, when we have laid their bodies in the dark and silent grave, to go home, and leave them behind; but alas, it is not we that go home, and leave them behind, no, it is they that are gone to the better home, and have left us behind.

(f) The company that attended the funeral; and that was very small and mean. Here were none of the relations in mourning, to follow the corpse, no formalities to grace the solemnity, but some good women that were true mourners--Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, Mt 27:56. These, as they had attended him to the cross, so they followed him to the grave; as if they composed themselves to sorrow, they sat over against the sepulchre, not so much to fill their eyes with the sight of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears. Note, True love to Christ will carry us through, to the utmost, in following him. Death itself cannot quench that divine fire, So 8:6,7.

59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

In the burial of Christ was nothing of pomp or solemnity. As Christ had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head, while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body, when he was dead. Our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own. The Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God overruled it, so that he should make it with the rich in his death, Isa_53:9.

61 And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.

The Guard at the Tomb

62 Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

On the Jewish sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre. This was permitted that there might be certain proof of our Lord's resurrection. Pilate told them that they might secure the sepulchre as carefully as they could. They sealed the stone, and set a guard, and were satisfied that all needful care was taken. But to guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples was folly, because needless; while to think to guard it against the power of God, was folly, because fruitless, and to no purpose; yet they thought they dealt wisely. But the Lord took the wise in their own craftiness. Thus shall all the rage and the plans of Christ's enemies be made to promote his glory.

63 saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

His enemies did what they could to prevent his resurrection; what they did herein was the next day that followed the day of the preparation, Mt 27:62. That was the seventh day of the week, the Jewish sabbath, yet not expressly called so, but described by this periphrasis, because it was now shortly to give way to the Christian sabbath, which began the day after. Now,

1. All that day, Christ lay dead in the grave; having for six days laboured and done all his work, on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

2. On that day, the chief priests and Pharisees, when they should have been at their devotions, asking pardon for the sins of the week past, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre, and so adding rebellion to their sin. They that had so often quarrelled with Christ for works of the greatest mercy on that day, were themselves busied in a work of the greatest malice. Observe here,

(a) Their address to Pilate; they were vexed that the body was given to one that would bury it decently; but, since it must be so, they desire a guard may be set on the sepulchre.

[1.] Their petition sets forth, that that deceiver (so they call him who is truth itself) had said, After three days I will rise again. He had said so, and his disciples remembered those very words for the confirmation of their faith, but his persecutors remember them for the provocation of their rage and malice. Thus the same word of Christ to the one was a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death. See how they compliment Pilate with the title of Sir, while they reproach Christ with the title of Deceiver. Thus the most malicious slanderers of good men are commonly the most sordid flatterers of great men.

[2.] It further sets forth their jealousy; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say, He is risen.

First, That which really they were afraid of, was, his resurrection; that which is most Christ's honour and his people's joy, is most the terror of his enemies. That which exasperated Joseph's brethren against him, was the presage of his rise, and of his having dominion over them (Ge 37:8); and all they aimed at, in what they did against him, was, to prevent that. Come, say they, let us slay him, and see what will become of his dreams. So the chief priests and Pharisees laboured to defeat the predictions of Christ's resurrection, saying, as David's enemies of him (Ps 41:8), Now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more; if he should rise, that would break all their measures. Note, Christ's enemies, even when they have gained their point, are still in fear of losing it again. Perhaps the priests were surprised at the respect shown to Christ's dead body by Joseph and Nicodemus, two honourable counsellors, and looked upon it as an ill presage; nor can they forget his raising Lazarus from the dead, which so confounded them.

Secondly, That which they took on them to be afraid of, was, lest his disciples should come by night, and steal him away, which was a very improbable thing; for,

1. They had not the courage to own him while he lived, when they might have done him and themselves real service; and it was not likely that his death should put courage into such cowards.

2. What could they promise themselves by stealing away his body, and making people believe he was risen; when, if he should not rise, and so prove himself a deceiver, his disciples, who had left all for him in this world, in dependence upon a recompence in the other world, would of all others suffer most by the imposture, and would have had reason to throw the first stone at his name? What good would it do them, to carry on a cheat upon themselves, to steal away his body, and say, He is risen; when, if he were not risen, their faith was vain, and they were of all men the most miserable? The chief priests apprehend that if the doctrine of Christ's resurrection be once preached and believed, the last error will be worse than the first; a proverbial expression, intimating no more than this, that we shall all be routed, all undone. They think it was their error, that they had so long connived at his preaching and miracles, which error they thought they had rectified by putting him to death; but if people should be persuaded of his resurrection, that would spoil all again, his interest would revive with him, and theirs must needs sink, who had so barbarously murdered him. Note, Those that opposed Christ and his kingdom, will see not only their attempts baffled, but themselves miserably plunged and embarrassed, their errors each worse than other, and the last worst of all, Ps 2:4,5.

[3.] In consideration hereof, they humbly move to have a guard set upon the sepulchre till the third day; Command that the sepulchre be made sure. Pilate must still be their drudge, his civil and military power must both be engaged to serve their malice; one would think that death's prisoners needed no other guard, and that the grave were security enough to itself; but what will not those fear, who are conscious to themselves both of guilt and impotency, in opposing the Lord and his anointed?

(b) Pilate's answer to this address (Mt 27:65); He have a watch, make it sure, as sure as you can. He was ready to gratify Christ's friends,

in allowing them the body, and his enemies, in setting a guard upon it, being desirous to please all sides, while perhaps he laughed in his sleeve at both for making such ado, pro and con, about the dead body of a man, looking upon the hopes of one side and the fears of the other to be alike ridiculous. Ye have a watch; he means the constant guard that was kept in the tower of Antonia, out of which the allows them to detach as many as they pleased for that purpose, but, as if ashamed to be himself seen in such a thing, he leaves the management of it wholly to them. Methinks that word, Make it as sure as you can, looks like a banter, either,

[1.] Of their fears; "Be sure to set a strong guard upon the dead man;" or rather,

[2.] Of their hopes; "Do your worst, try your wit and strength to the utmost; but if he be of God, he will rise, in spite of you and all your guards." I am apt to think, that by this time Pilate had had some talk with the centurion, his own officer, of whom he would be apt to enquire how that just man died, whom he had condemned with such reluctance; and that he gave him such an account of those things as made him conclude that truly he was the Son of God; and Pilate would give more credit to him than to a thousand of those spiteful priests that called him a Deceiver; and if so, no marvel that he tacitly derides their project, in thinking to secure the sepulchre upon him who had so lately rent the rocks, and made the earth to quake. Tertullion, speaking of Pilate, saith, Ipse jam pro suâ conscientiâ Christianus--In his conscience he was a Christian; and it is possible that he might be under such convictions at this time, upon the centurion's report, and yet never be thoroughly persuaded, any more than Agrippa or Felix was, to be a Christian.

(c) The wonderful care they took, hereupon, to secure the sepulchre (Mt 27:66); They sealed the stone; probably with the great seal of their sanhedrim, whereby they interposed their authority, for who durst break the public seal? But not trusting too much to that, withal they set a watch, to keep his disciples from coming to steal him away, and, if possible, to hinder him from coming out of the grave.

So they intended, but God brought this good out of it, that they who were set to oppose his resurrection, thereby had an opportunity to observe it, and did so, and told the chief priests what they observed, who were thereby rendered the more inexcusable. Here was all the power of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but all in vain, when his hour was come; death, and all those sons and heirs of death, could then no longer hold him, no longer have dominion over him. To guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples, was folly, because needless; but to think to guard it against the power of God was folly, because fruitless and to no purpose; and yet they thought they had dealt wisely.

64 Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.

65 Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

66 So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

Matthew-28

The Resurrection

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

The coming of the good women to the sepulchre.

Observe,

1. When they came; in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mt 28:1. This fixes the time of Christ's resurrection.

(1.) He arose the third day after his death; that was the time which he had often prefixed, and he kept within it. He was buried in the evening of the sixth day of the week, and arose in the morning of

the first day of the following week, so that he lay in the grave about thirty-six or thirty-eight hours. He lay so long, to show that he was really and truly dead; and no longer, that he might not see corruption. He arose the third day, to answer the type of the prophet Jonas (Mt 12:40), and to accomplish that prediction (Ho 6:2), The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

(2.) He arose after the Jewish sabbath, and it was the passover-sabbath; all that day he lay in the grave, to signify the abolishing of the Jewish feasts and the other parts of the ceremonial law, and that his people must be dead to such observances, and take no more notice of them than he did when he lay in the grave. Christ on the sixth day finished his work; he said, It is finished; on the seventh day he rested, and then on the first day of the next week did as it were begin a new world, and enter upon new work. Let no man therefore judge us now in respect of the new moons, or of the Jewish sabbaths, which were indeed a shadow of good things to come, but the substance if of Christ. We may further observe, that the time of the saints' lying in the grave, is a sabbath to them (such as the Jewish sabbath was, which consisted chiefly in bodily rest), for there they rest from their labours (Job 3:17); and it is owing to Christ.

(3.) He arose upon the first day of the week; on the first day of the first week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness; on this day therefore did he who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and the seventh-day sabbath being buried with Christ, it arose again in the first-day sabbath, called the Lord's day (Re 1:10), and no other day of the week is from henceforward mentioned in all the New Testament than this, and this often, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ, Joh 20:19,26,Ac 20:7,1Co 16:2. If the deliverance of Israel out of the land of the north superseded the remembrance of that out of Egypt (Jer 23:7,8), much more doth our redemption by Christ eclipse the glory of God's former works. The sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the perfecting of the work of creation, Ge 2:1. Man by his revolt

made a breach upon that perfect work, which was never perfectly repaired till Christ arose from the dead, and the heavens and the earth were again finished, and the disordered hosts of them modelled anew, and the day on which this was done was justly blessed and sanctified, and the seventh day from that. He who on that day arose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now anew created.

(4.) He arose as it began to dawn toward that day; as soon as it could be said that the third day was come, the time prefixed for his resurrection, he arose; after his withdrawings from his people, he returns with all convenient speed, and cuts the work as short in righteousness as may be. He had said to his disciples, that though within a little while they should not see him, yet again a little while, and they should see him, and accordingly he made it as little a while as possible, Isa 54:7,8. Christ arose when the day began to dawn, because then the day-spring from on high did again visit us, Lu 1:78. His passion began in the night; when he hung on the cross the sun was darkened; he was laid in the grave in the dusk of the evening; but he arose from the grave when the sun was near rising, for he is the bright and morning Star (Re 22:16), the true Light. Those who address themselves early in the morning to the religious services of the Christian sabbath, that they may take the day before them, therein follow this example of Christ, and that of David, Early will I seek thee.

2. Who they were, that came to the sepulchre; Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the same that attended the funeral, and sat over against the sepulchre, as before they sat over against the cross; still they studied to express their love to Christ; still they were inquiring after him. Then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know. No mention is made of the Virgin Mary being with them; it is probable that the beloved disciple, who had taken her to his own home, hindered her from going to the grave to weep there. Their attendance on Christ not only to the grave, but in the grave, represents his like care for those that are his, when they have made their bed in the darkness. As Christ in the grave was beloved of the

saints, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ; for death and the grave cannot slacken that bond of love which is between them.

3. What they came to do: the other evangelists say that they came to anoint the body; Matthew saith that they came to see the sepulchre, whether it was as they left it; hearing perhaps, but not being sure, that the chief priests had set a guard upon it. They went, to show their good-will in another visit to the dear remains of their beloved Master, and perhaps not without some thoughts of his resurrection, for they could not have quite forgotten all he had said of it.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

The appearance of an angel of the Lord to them, Mt 28:2-4. We have here an account of the manner of the resurrection of Christ, as far as it was fit that we should know.

1. There was a great earthquake. When he died, the earth that received him, shook for fear; now that he arose, the earth that resigned him, leaped for joy in his exaltation. This earthquake did as it were loose the bond of death, and shake off the fetters of the grave, and introduce the Desire of all nations, Hag 2:6,7. It was the signal of Christ's victory; notice was hereby given of it, that, when the heavens rejoiced, the earth also might be glad. It was a specimen of the shake that will be given to the earth at the general resurrection, when mountains and islands shall be removed, that the earth may no longer cover her slain. There was a noise and a shaking in the valley, when the bones were to come together, bone to his bone, Eze 37:7. The kingdom of Christ, which was now to be set up, made the earth to quake, and terribly shook it. Those who are sanctified, and thereby raised to a spiritual life, while it is in the doing find an earthquake in their own bosoms, as Paul, who trembled and was astonished.

2 The angel of the Lord descended from heaven. The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus, at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony; but upon the cross we find no angel attending him:

when his Father forsook him, the angels withdrew from him; but now that he is resuming the glory he had before the foundation of the world, now, behold, the angels of God worship him.

3. He came, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. Our Lord Jesus could have rolled back the stone himself by his own power, but he chose to have it done by an angel, to signify that having undertaken to make satisfaction for our sin, imputed to him, and being under arrest pursuant to that imputation, he did not break prison, but had a fair and legal discharge, obtained from heaven; he did not break prison, but an officer was sent on purpose to roll away the stone, and so to open the prison door, which would never have been done, if he had not made a full satisfaction. But being delivered for our offences, to complete the deliverance, he was raised again for our justification; he died to pay our debt, and rose again to take out our acquittance. The stone of our sins was rolled to the door of the grave of our Lord Jesus (and we find the rolling of a great stone to signify the contracting of guilt, 1Sa 14:33); but to demonstrate that divine justice was satisfied, an angel was commissioned to roll back the stone; not that the angel raised him from the dead, any more than those that took away the stone from Lazarus's grave raised him, but thus he intimated the consent of Heaven to his release, and the joy of Heaven in it. The enemies of Christ had sealed the stone, resolving, like Babylon, not to open the house of his prisoners; shall the prey be taken from the mighty? For this was their hour; but all the powers of death and darkness are under the control of the God of light and life. An angel from heaven has power to break the seal, though it were the great seal of Israel, and is able to roll away the stone, though ever so great. Thus the captives of the mighty are taken away. The angel's sitting upon the stone, when he had rolled it away, is very observable, and bespeaks a secure triumph over all the obstructions of Christ's resurrection. There he sat, defying all the powers of hell to roll the stone to the grave again. Christ erects his seat of rest and seat of judgment upon the opposition of his enemies; the Lord sitteth upon the floods. The angel sat as a guard to the grave, having frightened away the enemies' black guard; he sat, expecting the women, and ready to give them an account of his resurrection.

4. That his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, Mt 28:3. This was a visible representation, by that which we call splendid and illustrious, of the glories of the invisible world, which know no difference of colours. His look upon the keepers was like flashes of lightning; he cast forth lightning, and scattered them, Ps 144:6. The whiteness of his raiment was an emblem not only of purity, but of joy and triumph. When Christ died, the court of heaven went into keep mourning, signified by the darkening of the sun; but when he arose, they again put on the garments of praise. The glory of this angel represented the glory of Christ, to which he was now risen, for it is the same description that was given of him in his transfiguration (Mt 17:2); but when he conversed with his disciples after his resurrection, he drew a veil over it, and it bespoke the glory of the saints in their resurrection, when they shall be as the angels of God in heaven.

5. That for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men, Mt 28:4. They were soldiers, that thought themselves hardened against fear, yet the very sight of an angel struck them with terror. Thus when the Son of God arose to judgment, the stout-hearted were spoiled, Ps 76:5,9. Note, The resurrection of Christ, as it is the joy of his friends, so it is the terror and confusion of his enemies. They did shake; the word eseisthesan is the same with that which was used for the earthquake, Mt 28:2, seismos. When the earth shook, these children of the earth, that had their portion in it, shook too; whereas, those that have their happiness in things above, though the earth be removed, yet are without fear. The keepers became as dead men, when he whom they kept guard upon became alive, and they whom they kept guard against revived with him. It struck a terror upon them, to see themselves baffled in that which was their business here. They were posted here, to keep a dead man in his grave--as easy a piece of service surely as was ever assigned them, and yet it proves too hard for them. They were told that they must expect to be assaulted by a company of feeble faint-hearted disciples, who for fear of them would soon shake and become as dead men, but are amazed when they find themselves attacked by a

mighty angel, whom they dare not look in the face. Thus doth God frustrate his enemies by frightening them, Ps 9:20.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
4 and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for
I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

The message which this angel delivered to the women, Mt 28:5-7.

1. He encourages them against their fears, Mt 28:5. To come near to graves and tombs, especially in silence and solitude, has something in it frightful, much more was it so to those women, to find an angel at the sepulchre; but he soon makes them easy with the word, Fear not ye. The keepers shook, and became as dead men, but, Fear not ye. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, for there is cause for it; but, Fear not, Abraham, nor any of the faithful seed of Abraham; why should the daughters of Sarah, that do well, be afraid with any amazement? 1Pe 3:6. "Fear not ye. Let not the news I have to tell you, be any surprise to you, for you were told before that your Master would rise; let it be no terror to you, for his resurrection will be your consolation; fear not any hurt, that I will do you, nor nay evil tidings I have to tell you. Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus. I know you are friends to the cause. I do not come to frighten you, but to encourage you." Note, Those that seek Jesus, have no reason to be afraid; for, if they seek him diligently they shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder. All our believing enquiries after the Lord Jesus are observed, and taken notice of, in heaven; I know that ye seek Jesus; and shall certainly be answered, as these were, with good words, and comfortable words. Ye seek Jesus that was crucified. He mentions his being crucified, the more to commend their love to him; "You seek him still, though he was crucified; you retain your kindness for him notwithstanding." Note, True believers love and seek Christ, not only though he was crucified, but because he was so.

2. He assures them of the resurrection of Christ; and there was enough in that to silence their fears (Mt 28:6); He is not here, for

he is risen. To be told He is not here, would have been no welcome news to those who sought him, if it had not been added, He is risen. Note, It is matter of comfort to those who seek Christ, and miss of finding him where they expected, that he is risen: if we find him not in sensible comfort, yet he is risen. We must not hearken to those who say, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there, for he is not here, he is not there, he is risen. In all our enquiries after Christ, we must remember that he is risen; and we must seek him as one risen.

(a) Not with any gross carnal thoughts of him. There were those that knew Christ after the flesh; but now henceforth know we him so no more, 2Co 5:16. It is true, he had a body; but it is now a glorified body. They that make pictures and images of Christ, forget that he is not here, he is risen; our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word, Ro 10:6-9.

(b) We must seek him with great reverence and humility, and an awful regard to his glory, for he is risen. God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, and therefore every knee and every soul must bow before him.

(c) We must seek him with a heavenly mind; when we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, It is good to be here, let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen, and therefore let not our hearts be here, but let them rise too, and seek the things that are above, Col 3:1-3,Php 3:20.

Two things the angel refers these women to, for the confirmation of their faith, touching Christ's resurrection.

[1.] To his word now fulfilled, which they might remember; He is risen, as he said. This he vouches as the proper object of faith; "He said that he would rise, and you know that he is the Truth itself, and therefore have reason to expect that he should rise; why should you be backward to believe that which he told you would be?" Let us never think that strange, of which the word of Christ has raised our expectations, whether the sufferings of this present time, or the

glory that is to be revealed. If we remember what Christ hath said to us, we shall be the less surprised at what he does with us. This angel, when he said. He is not here, he is risen, makes it to appear that he preaches no other gospel than what they had already received, for he refers himself to the word of Christ as sufficient to bear him out; He is risen, as he said.

[2.] To his grave now empty, which they might look into; "Come, see the place where the Lord lay. Compare what you have heard, with what you see, and, putting both together, you will believe. You see that he is not here, and, remembering what he said, you may be satisfied that he is risen; come, see the place, and you will see that he is not there, you will see that he could not be stolen thence, and therefore must conclude that he is risen." Note, It may be of use to affect us, and may have a good influence upon us, to come, and with an eye of faith see the place where the Lord lay. See the marks he has there left of his love in condescending so low for us; see how easy he has made that bed, and how lightsome, for us, by lying in it himself; when we look into the grave, where we expect we must lie, to take off the terror of it, let us look into the grave where the Lord lay; the place where our Lord lay, so the Syriac. The angels own him for their Lord, as well as we; for the whole family, both in heaven and earth, is named from him.

3. He directs them to go carry the tidings of it to his disciples (Mt 28:7); Go quickly, and tell his disciples. It is probable that they were for entertaining themselves with the sight of the sepulchre and discourse with the angels. It was good to be here, but they have other work appointed them; this is a day of good tidings, and though they have the premier seisin of the comfort, the first taste of it, yet they must not have the monopoly of it, must not hold their peace, any more than those lepers, 2Ki 7:9. They must go tell the disciples. Note, Public usefulness to others must be preferred before the pleasure of secret communion with God ourselves; for it is more blessed to give than to receive. Observe,

(a) The disciples of Christ must first be told the news; not, Go, tell the chief priests and the Pharisees, that they may be confounded; but, Tell the disciples, that they may be comforted. God anticipates the joy of his friends more than the shame of his enemies, though the perfection of both is reserved for hereafter. Tell his disciples; it may be they will believe your report, however tell them,

[1.] That they may encourage themselves under their present sorrows and dispersions. It was a dismal time with them, between grief and fear; what a cordial would this be to them now, to hear, their Master is risen!

[2.] That they may enquire further into it themselves. This alarm was sent them, to awaken them from that strange stupidity which had seized them, and to raise their expectations. This was to set them on seeking him, and to prepare them for his appearance to them. General hints excite to closer searches. They shall now hear of him, but shall very shortly see him. Christ discovers himself gradually.

(b) The women are sent to tell it to them, and so are made, as it were, the apostles of the apostles. This was an honour put upon them, and a recompence for their constant affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebuke to the disciples who forsook him. Still God chooses the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty, and puts the treasure, not only into earthen vessels, but here into the weaker vessels; as the woman, being deceived by the suggestions of an evil angel, was first in the transgression (1Ti 2:14), so these women, being duly informed by the instructions of a good angel, were first in the belief of the redemption from transgression by Christ's resurrection, that that reproach of their sex might be rolled away, by putting this in the balance against it, which is their perpetual praise.

(c) They were bid to go quickly upon this errand. Why, what haste was there? Would not the news keep cold, and be welcome to them at any time? Yes, but they were now overwhelmed with grief, and

Christ would have this cordial hastened to them; when Daniel was humbling himself before God for sin, the angel Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly with a message of comfort, Da 9:21. We must always be ready and forward;

[1.] To obey the commands of God, Ps 119:60.

[2.] To do good to our brethren, and to carry comfort to them, as those that felt from their afflictions; Say not, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; but now quickly.

(4.) They were directed to appoint the disciples to meet him in Galilee. There were other appearances of Christ to them before that in Galilee, which were sudden and surprising; but he would have one to be solemn and public, and gave them notice of it before. Now this general rendezvous was appointed in Galilee, eighty or a hundred miles from Jerusalem;

[1.] In kindness to those of his disciples that remained in Galilee, and did not (perhaps they could not) come up to Jerusalem; into that country therefore he would go, to manifest himself to his friends there. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest. Christ knows where his disciples dwell, and will visit there. Note, The exaltation of Christ doth not make him forget the meaner and poorer sort of his disciples, but even to them that are at a distance from the plenty of the means of grave he will graciously manifest himself.

[2.] In consideration of the weakness of his disciples that were now at Jerusalem, who as yet were afraid of the Jews, and durst not appear publicly, and therefore this meeting was adjourned to Galilee. Christ knows our fears, and considers our frame, and made his appointment where there was least danger of disturbance.

Lastly, The angel solemnly affirms upon his word the truth of what he had related to them; "Lo, I have told you, you may be assured of

it, and depend upon it; I have told you, who dare not tell a lie." The word spoken by angels was stedfast, Heb 2:2. God had been wont formerly to make known his mind to his people by the ministration of angels, as at the giving of the law; but as he intended in gospel times to lay aside that way of communication (for unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, nor appointed them to be the preachers of the gospel), this angel was now sent to certify the resurrection of Christ to the disciples, and so leave it in their hands to be published to the world, 2Co 4:7. In saying, Lo, I have told you, he doth, as it were, discharge himself from the blame of their unbelief, if they should not receive this record, and throw it upon them; "I have done my errand, I have faithfully delivered my message, now look you to it, believe it at your peril; whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I have told you." Note, Those messengers from God, that discharge their trust faithfully, may take the comfort of that, whatever the success be, Ac 20:26,27.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

When we are ready to make this world our home, and to say, It is good to be here, then let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen; therefore let our hearts rise, and seek the things that are above.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

The women's departure from the sepulchre, to bring notice to the disciples, Mt 28:8. And observe,

1. What frame and temper of spirit they were in; They departed with fear and great joy; a strange mixture, fear and joy at the same time, in the same soul. To hear that Christ was risen, was matter of joy; but to be led into his grave, and to see an angel, and talk with him about it, could not but cause fear. It was good news, but they were afraid that it was too good to be true. But observe, it is said of their joy, I was great joy; it is not said so of their fear. Note,

(1.) Holy fear has joy attending it. They that serve the Lord with reverence, serve him with gladness.

(2.) Spiritual joy is mixed with trembling, Ps 2:11. It is only perfect love and joy that will cast out all fear.

2. What haste they made; They did run. The fear and joy together quickened their pace, and added wings to their motion; the angel bid them go quickly, and they ran. Those that are sent on God's errand must not loiter, or lose time; where the heart is enlarged with the glad tidings of the gospel, the feet will run the way of God's commandments.

3. What errand they went upon; They ran, to bring his disciples word. Not doubting but it would be joyful news to them, they ran, to comfort them with the same comforts wherewith they themselves were comforted of God. Note, The disciples of Christ should be forward to communicate to each other their experiences of sweet communion with heaven; should tell others what God has done for their souls, and spoken to them. Joy in Christ Jesus, like the ointment of the right hand, will betray itself, and fill all places within the lines of its communication with its odours. When Samson found honey, he brought it to his parents.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Christ's appearing to the women, to confirm the testimony of the angel, Mt 28:9,10. These zealous good women not only heard the first tidings of him, but had the first sight of him, after his resurrection. The angel directed those that would see him, to go to Galilee, but before that time came, even here also, they looked after him that lives, and sees them. Note, Jesus Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often anticipates, but never frustrates, the believing expectations of his people.

Here is,

1. Christ's surprising appearance to the women; As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them. Note, God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty, and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected, or ever they were aware, So 6:12. Note, Christ is nearer to his people than they imagine. They needed not descend into the deep, to fetch Christ thence; he was not there, he was risen; nor go up to heaven, for he was not yet ascended: but Christ was high them, and still in the word is nigh us.

2 The salutation wherewith he accosted them; All hail--chairete. We use the old English form of salutation, wishing all health to those we meet; for so All hail signifies, and is expressive of the Greek form of salutation here used, answering to that of the Hebrew, Peace be unto you. And it bespeaks, (1.) The good-will of Christ to us and our happiness, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. Though he is advanced, he wishes us as well as ever, and is as much concerned for our comfort. (2.) The freedom and holy familiarity which he used in his fellowship with his disciples; for he called them friends. But the Greek word signifies, Rejoice ye. They were affected both with fear and joy; what he said to them tended to encourage their joy (Mt 28:9), Rejoice ye, and to silence their fear (Mt 28:10), Be not afraid. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes them with abundant matter for joy.

3. The affectionate respect they paid him; They came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Thus they expressed,

(a) The reverence and honour they had for him; they threw themselves at his feet, put themselves into a posture of adoration, and worshipped him with humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, and now exalted.

(b) The love and affection they had to him; they held him, and would not let him go, So 3:4. How beautiful were the feet of the Lord Jesus to them! Isa 52:7. (3.) The transport of joy they were in, now that

they had this further assurance of his resurrection; they welcomed it with both arms. Thus we must embrace Jesus Christ offered us in the gospel, with reverence cast ourselves at his feet, by faith take hold of him, and with love and joy lay him near our hearts.

4. The encouraging words Christ said to them, Mt 28:10. We do not find that they said any thing to him, their affectionate embraces and adorations spoke plainly enough; and what he said to them was no more than what the angel had said (Mt 28:5,6); for he will confirm the word of his messengers (Isa 44:26); and his way of comforting his people, is, by his Spirit to speak over again to their hearts the same that they had heard before from his angels, the ministers. Now observe here,

(a) How he rebukes their fear; Be not afraid. They must not fear being imposed upon by these repeated notices of his resurrection, nor fear any hurt from the appearance of one from the dead; for the news, though strange, was both true and good. Note, Christ arose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them.

(b) How he repeats their message; "Go, tell my brethren, that they must prepare for a journey into Galilee, and there they shall see me." If there be any communion between our souls and Christ, it is he that appoints the meeting, and he will observe the appointment. Jerusalem had forfeited the honour of Christ's presence, it was a tumultuous city, therefore he adjourns the meeting to Galilee. Come, my beloved, let us go forth, So 7:11. But that which is especially observable here, is, that he calls his disciples his brethren. Go, tell my brethren, not only those of them that were akin to him, but all the rest, for they are all his brethren (Mt 12:50), but he never called them so till after his resurrection, here and Joh 20:17. Being by the resurrection himself declared to be the Son of God with power, all the children of God were thereby declared to be his brethren. Being the First-begotten from the dead, he is become the First-born among many brethren, even of all that are planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. Christ did not now converse so constantly and

familiarly with his disciples as he had done before his death; but, lest they should think him grown strange to them, he gives them this endearing title, Go to my brethren, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which, speaking of his entrance upon his exalted state, saith, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. They had shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to meet them, but calls them brethren. Being all his brethren, they were brethren one to another, and must love as brethren. His owning them for his brethren put a great honour upon them, but withal gave them an example of humility in the midst of that honour.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people's fears, and there is enough in that to silence them. The disciples had just before shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to show that he could forgive, and to teach us to do so, he calls them brethren. Notwithstanding his majesty and purity, and our meanness and unworthiness, he still condescends to call believers his brethren.

The Report of the Guard

11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

How it was baffled and stifled by them. They called an assembly, and considered what was to be done. For their own parts, they were resolved not to believe that Jesus was risen; but their care was, to keep others from believing, and themselves from being quite ashamed from their disbelief of it. They had put him to death, and there was no way of standing to what they had done, but by confronting the evidence of his resurrection. Thus they who have sold themselves to work wickedness, find that one sin draws on another, and that they have plunged themselves into a wretched necessity of adding iniquity to iniquity, which is part of the curse of Christ's persecutors, Ps 69:27.

The result of their debate was, that those soldiers must by all means be bribed off, and hired not to tell tales.

1. They put money into their hands; and what wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money? They gave large money, probably a great deal more than they gave to Judas, unto the soldiers. These chief priests loved their money as well as most people did, and were as loth to part with it; and yet, to carry on a malicious design against the gospel of Christ, they were very prodigal of it; they gave the soldiers, it is likely, as much as they asked, and they knew how to improve their advantages. Here was large money given for the advancing of that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be the truth, though they have a promise of being reimbursed in the resurrection of the just. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see a bad one so liberally supported.

2. They put a lie into their mouths (Mt 28:13); Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; a sorry shift is better than none, but this is a sorry one indeed.

(a) The sham was ridiculous, and carried along with it its own confutation. If they slept, how could they know any thing of the matter, or say who came? If any one of them was awake to observe it, no doubt, he would awake them all to oppose it; for that was the only thing they had in charge. It was altogether improbable that a company of poor, weak, cowardly, dispirited men should expose themselves for so inconsiderable an achievement as the rescue of the dead body. Why were not the houses where they lodged diligently searched, and other means used to discover the dead body; but this was so thin a lie as one might easily see through. But had it been ever so plausible,

(b) It was a wicked thing for these priests and elders to hire those soldiers to tell a deliberate lie (if it had been in a matter of ever so small importance), against their consciences. Those know not what they do, who draw others to commit one wilful sin; for that may

debauch conscience, and be an inlet to many. But, (3.) Considering this as intended to overthrow the great doctrine of Christ's resurrection, this was a sin against the last remedy, and was, in effect, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, imputing that to the roguery of the disciples, which was done by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But lest the soldiers should object the penalty they incurred by the Roman law for sleeping upon the guard, which was very severe (Ac 12:19), they promised to interpose with the governor; "We will persuade him, and secure you. We will use our own interest in him, to get him not to take notice of it;" and they had lately found how easily they could manage him. If really these soldiers had slept, and so suffered the disciples to steal him away, as they would have the world believe, the priests and elders would certainly have been the forwardest to solicit the governor to punish them for their treachery; so that their care for the soldiers' safety plainly gives the lie to the story. They undertook to secure them from the sword of Pilate's justice, but could not secure them from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the head of those that love and make a lie. They promise more than they can perform who undertake to save a man harmless in the commission of a wilful sin.

Well, thus was the plot laid; now what success had it?

[1.] Those that were willing to deceive, took the money, and did as they were taught. They cared as little for Christ and his religion as the chief priests and elders did; and men that have no religion at all, can be very well pleased to see Christianity run down, and lend a hand to it, if need be, to serve a turn. They took the money; that was it they aimed at, and nothing else. Note, Money is a bait for the blackest temptation; mercenary tongues will sell the truth for it.

The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is, his resurrection, and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers had; they saw the angel descend

from heaven, saw the stone rolled away, saw the body of Christ come out of the grave, unless the consternation they felt hindered them; and yet they were so far from being convinced by it themselves, that they were hired to belie him, and to hinder others from believing in him. Note, The most sensible evidence will not convince men, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Those that were willing to be deceived, not only credited, but propagated, the story; This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. The sham took well enough, and answered the end. The Jews, who persisted in their infidelity, when they were pressed with the argument of Christ's resurrection, had this still ready to reply, His disciples came, and stole him away. To this purport was the solemn narrative, which (as Justin Martyr relates in his dialogue with Typho the Jew) the great sanhedrim sent to all the Jews of the dispersion concerning this affair, exciting them to a vigorous resistance of Christianity--that, when they had crucified, and buried him, the disciples came by night, and stole him out of the sepulchre, designing thereby not only to overthrow the truth of Christ's resurrection, but to render his disciples odious to the world, as the greatest villains in nature. When once a lie is raised, none knows how far it will spread, nor how long it will last, nor what mischief it will do. Some give another sense of this passage, This saying is commonly reported, that is, "Notwithstanding the artifice of the chief priests, thus to impose upon the people, the collusion that was between them and the soldiers, and the money that was given to support the cheat, were commonly reported and whispered among the Jews;" for one way or other truth will out.

12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

13 saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.

which, as we have observed, was a capital offense for soldiers on guard.

14 And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

rather, "If this come before the governor"; that is, not in the way of mere report, but for judicial investigation. The "we" and the "you"

are emphatic here—"we shall [take care to] persuade him and keep you from trouble," or "save you harmless." The grammatical form of this clause implies that the thing supposed was expected to happen. The meaning then is, "If this come before the governor—as it likely will—we shall see to it that," &c. The "persuasion" of Pilate meant, doubtless, quieting him by a bribe, which we know otherwise he was by no means above taking (like Felix afterwards, Ac 24:26).

The priests undertook to secure them from the sword of Pilate, but could not secure these soldiers from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the heads of those that love and make a lie. Those men promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in doing a wilful sin.But this falsehood disproved itself. Had the soldiers been all asleep, they could not have known what passed. If any had been awake, they would have roused the others and prevented the removal; and certainly if they had been asleep, they never would have dared to confess it; while the Jewish rulers would have been the first to call for their punishment. Again, had there been any truth in the report, the rulers would have prosecuted the apostles with severity for it. The whole shows that the story was entirely false. And we must not charge such things to the weakness of the understanding, but to the wickedness of the heart. God left them to expose their own course. The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is his resurrection; and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers; yet they took bribes to hinder others from believing. The plainest evidence will not affect men, without the work of the Holy Spirit.

15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

thus consenting to brand themselves with infamy. to the date of the publication of this Gospel. The wonder is that so clumsy and incredible a story lasted so long. But those who are resolved not to come to the light will catch at straws. JUSTIN MARTYR, who flourished about A.D. 170, says, in his Dialogue with Trypho the

Jew, that the Jews dispersed the story by means of special messengers sent to every country.

Jesus Commissions the Eleven

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

This evangelist passes over several other appearances of Christ, recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to this, which was of all other the most solemn, as being promised and appointed again and again before his death, and after his resurrection. Observe,

How the disciples attended his appearance, according to the appointment (Mt 28:16); They went into Galilee, a long journey to go for one sight of Christ, but it was worth while. They had seen him several times at Jerusalem, and yet they went into Galilee, to see him there.

1. Because he appointed them to do so. Though it seemed a needless thing to go into Galilee, to see him whom they might see at Jerusalem, especially when they must so soon come back again to Jerusalem, before his ascension, yet they had learned to obey Christ's commands and not object against them. Note, Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed. Those who have met him in one ordinance, must attend him in another; those who have seen him at Jerusalem, must go to Galilee.

2. Because that was to be a public and general meeting. They had seen him themselves, and conversed with him in private, but that should not excuse their attendance in a solemn assembly, where many were to be gathered together to see him. Note, Our communion with God in secret must not supersede our attendance on public worship, as we have opportunity; for God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we. The place was a mountain in Galilee, probably the same mountain on which he was transfigured. There

they met, for privacy, and perhaps to signify the exalted state into which he was entered, and his advances toward the upper world.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

How they were affected with the appearance of Christ to them, Mt 28:17. Now was the time that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, 1Co 15:6. Some think that they saw him, at first, at some distance, above in the air, ephthe epano--He was seen above, of five hundred brethren (so they read it); which gave occasion to some to doubt, till he came nearer (Mt 28:18), and then they were satisfied. We are told,

1. That they worshipped him; many of them did so, nay, it should seem, they all did that, they gave divine honour to him, which was signified by some outward expressions of adoration. Note, All that see the Lord Jesus with an eye of faith are obliged to worship him.

2. But some doubted, some of those that were then present. Note, Even among those that worship there are some that doubt. The faith of those that are sincere, may yet be very weak and wavering. They doubted, edistasan--they hung in suspense, as the scales of the balance, when it is hard to say which preponderates. These doubts were afterward removed, and their faith grew up to a full assurance, and it tended much to the honour of Christ, that the disciples doubted before they believed; so that they cannot be said to be credulous, and willing to be imposed upon; for they first questioned, and proved all things, and then held fast that which was true, and which they found to be so.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

What Jesus Christ said to them (Mt 28:18-20); Jesus came, and spoke unto them. Though there were those that doubted, yet, he did not therefore reject them; for he will not break the bruised reed. He did not stand at a distance, but came near, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, as turned the wavering scale, and made their faith to triumph over their doubts. He came, and

spoke familiarly to them, as one friend speaks to another, that they might be fully satisfied in the commission he was about to give them. He that drew near to God, to speak for us to him, draws near to us, to speak from him to us. Christ now delivered to his apostles the great charter of his kingdom in the world, was sending them out as his ambassadors, and here gives them their credentials.

In opening this great charter, we may observe two things.

1 The commission which our Lord Jesus received himself from the Father. Being about to authorize his apostles, if any ask by what authority he doeth it, and who gave him that authority, here he tells us, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; a very great word, and which none but he could say. Hereby he asserts his universal dominion as Mediator, which is the great foundation of the Christian religion. He has all power. Observe,

(a) Whence he hath this power. He did not assume it, or usurp it, but it was given him, he was legally entitled to it, and invested in it, by a grant from him who is the Fountain of all being, and consequently of all power. God set him King (Ps 2:6), inaugurated and enthroned him, Lu 1:32. As God, equal with the Father, all power was originally and essentially his; but as Mediator, as God-man, all power was given him; partly in recompence of his work (because he humbled himself, therefore God thus exalted him), and partly in pursuance of his design; he had this power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him (Joh 17:2), for the more effectual carrying on and completing our salvation. This power he was now more signally invested in, upon his resurrection, Ac 13:3. He had power before, power to forgive sins (Mt 9:6); but now all power is given him. He is now going to receive for himself a kingdom (Lu 19:12), to sit down at the right hand, Ps 110:1. Having purchased it, nothing remains but to take possession; it is his own for ever.

(b) Where he has this power; in heaven and earth, comprehending the universe. Christ is the sole universal Monarch, he is Lord of all,

Ac 10:36. He has all power in heaven. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants, Eph 1:20,21. He has power of intercession with his Father, in the virtue of his satisfaction and atonement; he intercedes, not as a suppliant, but as a demandant; Father, I will. He has all power on earth too; having prevailed with God, by the sacrifice of atonement, he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. By him kings reign. All souls are his, and to him every heart and knee must bow, and every tongue confess him to be the Lord. This our Lord Jesus tells them, not only to satisfy them of the authority he had to commission them, and to bring them out in the execution of their commission, but to take off the offence of the cross; they had no reason to be ashamed of Christ crucified, when they saw him thus glorified.

2 The commission he gives to those whom he sent forth; Go ye therefore. This commission is given,

(a) To the apostles primarily, the chief ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, the architects that laid the foundation of the church. Now those that had followed Christ in the regeneration, were set on thrones (Lu 22:30); Go ye. It is not only a word of command, like that, Son, go work, but a word of encouragement, Go, and fear not, have I not sent you? Go, and make a business of this work. They must not take state, and issue out summons to the nations to attend upon them; but they must go, and bring the gospel to their doors, Go ye. They had doted on Christ's bodily presence, and hung upon that, and built all their joys and hopes upon that; but now Christ discharges them from further attendance on his person, and sends them abroad about other work. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly (De 32:11), so Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves over all the world.

(b) It is given to their successors, the ministers of the gospel, whose business it is to transmit the gospel from age to age, to the end of the world in time, as it was theirs to transmit it from nation to

nation, to the end of the world in place, and no less necessary. The Old-Testament promise of a gospel ministry is made to a succession (Isa 59:21); and this must be so understood, otherwise how could Christ be with them always to the consummation of the world? Christ, at his ascension, gave not only apostles and prophets, but pastors and teachers, Eph 4:11. Now observe,

[1.] How far his commission is extended; to all nations. Go, and disciples all nations. Not that they must go all together into every place, but by consent disperse themselves in such manner as might best diffuse the light of the gospel. Now this plainly signifies it to be the will of Christ, First, That the covenant of peculiarity, made with the Jews, should now be cancelled and disannulled. This word broke down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles from a visible church-state; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to all nations. Secondly, That salvation by Christ should be offered to all, and none excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a common salvation; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the act of indemnity; for there is no difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, That Christianity should be twisted in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ's kingdoms, and their kings the church's nursing-fathers.

[2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to disciple all nations. Matheteusate--"Admit them disciples; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations;" not, "Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Nineveh, and as the other Old-Testament prophets" (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness), "but go, and disciple them." Christ the Mediator is setting up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was,

to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.

[3.] Their instructions for executing this commission.

First, They must admit disciples by the sacred rite of baptism; "Go into all nations, preach the gospel to them, work miracles among them, and persuade them to come in themselves, and bring their children with them, into the church of Christ, and then admit them and theirs into the church, by washing them with water;" either dipping them in the water, or pouring or sprinkling water upon them, which seems the more proper, because the thing is most frequently expressed so, as Isa 44:3, I will pour my Spirit on thy seed. And, Tit 3:5,6, Which he shed on us abundantly. And, Eze 36:25, I will sprinkle clean water upon you. And, Isa 52:15, So shall he sprinkle many nations; which seems a prophecy of this commission to baptize the nations.

Secondly, This baptism must be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Thirdly, Those that are thus baptized, and enrolled among the disciples of Christ, must be taught (Mt 28:20); Teaching them to observe all thing, whatsoever I have commanded you. This denotes two things.

1 The duty of disciples, of all baptized Christians; they must observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, and, in order to that, must submit to the teaching of those whom he sends. Our admission into the visible church is in order to something further; when Christ hath discipled us, he hath not done with us; he enlist soldiers that he may train them up for his service.

All that are baptized, are thereby obliged,

(a) To make the command of Christ their rule. There is a law of faith, and we are said to be under the law to Christ; we are by baptism bound, and must obey.

(b) To observe what Christ has commanded. Due obedience to the commands of Christ requires a diligent observation; we are in danger of missing, if we take not good heed: and in all our obedience, we must have an eye to the command, and do what we do as unto the Lord.

(c) To observe all things, that he has commanded, without exception; all the moral duties, and all the instituted ordinances. Our obedience to the laws of Christ is not sincere, if it be not universal; we must stand complete in his whole will.

(d) To confine themselves to the commands of Christ, and as not to diminish from them, so not to add to them.

(e) To learn their duty according to the law of Christ, from those whom he has appointed to be teachers in his school, for therefore we were entered into his school.

2 The duty of the apostles of Christ, and his ministers; and that is, to beach the commands of Christ, to expound them to his disciples, to press upon them the necessity of obedience, and to assist them in applying the general commands of Christ to particular cases. They must teach them, not their own inventions, but the institutions of Christ; to them they must religiously adhere, and in the knowledge of them Christians must be trained up. A standing ministry is hereby settled in the church, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the perfect man, Eph 4:11-13. The heirs of heaven, till they come to age, must be under tutors and governors.

3. Here is the assurance he gives them of his spiritual presence with them in the execution of this commission; And lo, I am with you

always, even unto the end of the world. This exceeding great and precious promise is ushered in with a behold, to strengthen their faith, and engage their observation of it. "Take notice of this; it is what you may assure yourselves of and venture upon." Observe,

(a) The favour promised them; I am with you. Not, I will be with you, but I am--ego eimi. As God sent Moses, so Christ sent his apostles, by this name, I am; for he is God, to whom past, present, and to come, are the same. See Re 1:8. He was now about to leave them; his bodily presence was now to be removed from them, and this grieved them; but he assures them of his spiritual presence, which was more expedient for them than his bodily presence could be; I am with you; that is, "My Spirit is with you, the Comforter shall abide with you, Joh 16:7. I am with you, and not against you: with you to take your part, to be on your side, and to hold with you, as Michael our prince is said to do, Da 10:21. I am with you, and not absent from you, not at a distance; I am a very present help," Ps 46:1. Christ was now sending them to set up his kingdom in the world, which was a great undertaking. And then doth he seasonably promise them his presence with them,

[1.] To carry them on through the difficulties they were likely to meet with. "I am with you, to bear you up, to plead your cause; with you in all your services, in all your sufferings, to bring you through them with comfort and honour. When you go through the fire or water, I will be with you. In the pulpit, in the prison, lo, I am with you."

[2.] To succeed this great undertaking; "Lo, I am with you, to make your ministry effectual for the discipling of the nations, for the pulling down of the strong holds of Satan, and the setting up of stronger for the Lord Jesus." It was an unlikely thing that they should unhinge national constitutions in religion, and turn the stream of so long a usage; that they should establish a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a crucified Jesus; but lo, I am with you, and therefore you shall gain your point.

(b) The continuance of the favour, always, even unto the end of the world.

[1.] They shall have his constant presence; Always, pasas tas hemeras--all days, every day. "I will be with you on sabbath days and week days, fair days and foul days, winter days and summer days." There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, that day, that hour, they were undone. Since his resurrection he had appeared to them now and then, once a week it may be, and scarcely that. But he assures them that they shall have his spiritual presence continued to them without intermission. Wherever we are the word of Christ is nigh us, even in our mouth, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even in our hearts. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself (Isa 45:15), but never a God that absenteth himself; sometimes in the dark, but never at a distance.

[2.] They shall have his perpetual presence, even to the end of the world. There is a world before us, that will never have an end, but this is hastening towards its period; and even till then the Christian religion shall, in one part of the world or other, be kept up, and the presence of Christ continued with his ministers. I am with you to the end of the world, not with your persons, they died quickly, but, First, With you and your writings. There is a divine power going along with the scripture of the New Testament, not only preserving them in being, but producing strange effects by them, which will continue to the end of time. Secondly, With you and your successors; with you and all the ministers of the gospel in the several ages of the church; with all to whom this commission extends, with all who, being duly called and sent, thus baptize and thus teach. When the end of the world is come, and the kingdom delivered up to God, even the Father, there will then be no further need of ministers and their ministration; but till then they shall continue, and the great intentions of the institution shall be answered. This is an encouraging word to all the faithful ministers

of Christ, that what was said to the apostles, was said to them all, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Two solemn farewells we find our Lord Jesus giving to his church, and his parting word at both of them is very encouraging; one was here, when he closed up his personal converse with them, and then his parting word was, "Lo, I am with you always; I leave you, and yet still I am with you;" the other was, when he closed up the canon of the scripture by the pen of his beloved disciple, and then his parting word was, "Surely, I come quickly. I leave you for awhile, but I will be with you again shortly," Re 22:20. By this it appears that he did not part in anger, but in love, and that it is his will we should keep up both our communion with him and our expectation of him.

There is one word more remaining, which must not be overlooked, and that is Amen; which is not a cipher, intended only for a concluding word, like finis at the end of a book, but it has its significancy.

1. It bespeaks Christ's confirmation of this promise, Lo, I am with you. It is his Amen, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen, "Verily I am, and will be, with you; I the Amen, the faithful Witness, do assure you of it." Or,

2. It bespeaks the church's concurrence with it, in their desire, and prayer, and expectation. It is the evangelist's Amen--So be it, blessed Lord. Our Amen to Christ's promises turns them into prayers. Hath Christ promised to be present with his ministers, present in his word, present in the assemblies of his people, though but two or three are gathered together in his name, and this always, even to the end of the world? Let us heartily say Amen to it; believe that it shall be so, and pray that it may be so: Lord, Remember this word unto thy servants, upon which thou hast caused us to hope.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Christianity is the religion of a sinner who applies for salvation from deserved wrath and from sin; he applies to the mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the incarnate Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and gives up himself to be the worshipper and servant of God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons but one God, in all his ordinances and commandments. Baptism is an outward sign of that inward washing, or sanctification of the Spirit, which seals and evidences the believer's justification. Let us examine ourselves, whether we really possess the inward and spiritual grace of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, by which those who were the children of wrath become the children of God. Believers shall have the constant presence of their Lord always; all days, every day. There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were, in that day, that hour, they would be undone. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, but never a God at a distance. To these precious words Amen is added. Even so, Lord Jesus, be thou with us and all thy people; cause thy face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

The Gospel According To St. Mark
[Mark]

Mark-1
The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

> The beginning of the Gospel. The word gospel literally signifies good tidings, and particularly the good tidings respecting the way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have understood the word gospel here to mean, history or life--the beginning of the history, etc. But Mark says nothing of the early life of the Saviour. It has reference rather to the preaching of John, an account of which immediately follows, and means the beginning of the good news, or annunciation, respecting the Messiah. It was very customary thus to prefix a title to a book.
>
> The Son of God. This title was used here to attract attention, and secure the respect of those who should read this gospel. It is no common history. It does not recount the deeds of man--of a hero, or philosopher-- but the doctrines and doings of THE SON OF GOD. The history, therefore, commands respect.

2 As it is written in the prophets,
Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

> As it is written in the prophets. He mentions prophets, here, without specifying which. The places are found in Mal 3:1; and in Isa 40:3. Mt 3:3.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

> "John did" Mt 3:1, Lk 3:3, Jn 3:23 (1) "baptism of repentance" or, "unto repentance"

A twofold account is here given of St. John's execution of his ministry and office: First, his baptising; secondly, his preaching.

John did baptise; that is, admit persons into the church, by washing them with water: John baptised into the name of Christ, who was to come; the apostles baptised into the name of Christ, already come.

The second part of his office was preaching.

Where note, That preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments, are to go together, and belong only to the ministers of the word, lawfully called. John did baptise and preach; but where and what did he preach? The place where, was the wilderness; a place not much frequented, though not altogether uninhabited; a solitary, mean, and obscure place. Thither God had called him, and there he contents himself.

Learn hence, That the ministers of God must be content to execute their ministry where God calls them, be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous: John was a preacher of great note and fame; Jerusalem the chief city might seem more fit for him; but God had called him to preach in the wilderness, and he would not leave it.

We must not leave our place because it is mean and obscure, nor desert our people, thinking them too base to instruct; but where God has called us we must there abide, till he that called us thither remove us thence.

Observe farther, As the place where the Baptist preached, in the wilderness, so the doctrine which he preached, namely, the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; that is, the doctrine of Baptism, which sealeth the remission of sins to the party baptized.

Learn hence, The the preaching of the doctrine of repentance is absolutely necessary, and the indespensable duty of every gospel-minister. John Baptist preached it, our Saviour preached it, his apostles preached it: They went out preaching every where that men should repent. The baptism of repentance (says the learned Lightfoot) belongs to children, though they know not what

repentance means, because it engages them to repentance when they come to years to understand that engagement. For thus it was with children circumcised, they became debtors to observe that whole law, though they came to years of discretion.

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

Here we have an account of the success of St. John's ministry; 1. In the general concourse and resort of the people to it, All Judea and Jerusalem; that is, a great many of all degrees and ranks, of all ages and sexes. John was famed for a prophet, and a prophet was now a great rarity. Malachi was the last prophet before John, and he lived about five hundred years before John. Now the excellency of his person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, that the Messias was come, and the austerity of his life and conversation, all these caused the people to flock unto him.

Learn hence, That it is a great encouragement to the ministers of Christ when people show themselves ready and forward to repair unto the places where the word and sacraments are dispensed to them: All Judea and Jerusalem attended upon John's ministry.

The second fruit of John's ministry was, that the people were ready to receive at his hand the sacrament of baptism: They were all baptised of him in Jordan.
Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ ought not only to preach the word, but also to dispense the sacraments to their people, even to all that do desire them, and are fit to be partakers of them.

A third fruit of John's ministry was, his hearers' profession of repentance is requisite in all that are baptized, so a free and voluntary, and ingenuous and impartial, confession of sin, is a good evidence and testimony of the truth and sincerity of our repentance.

"confessing their sins." Lev 26:40-42, Ps 32:5, Prov 28:13 1Jn 1:8-10

6 And John was clothed with camel’s hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

This verse acquaints us with the strictness and austerity of St. John's life in the wilderness; which is laid down in two things; in his mean and frugal apparel, and in his sober and temperate diet.

His apparel was rough and hairy, and his girdle of leather; as Elijah his forerunner was clad before him, 2Kgs 1:8.

His diet was coarse and ordinary, locusts and wild honey; that is, such plain and ordinary food as the wilderness afforded.

His example teaches us, That the ministers of the gospel are not to effect either bravery in apparel, or delicacy in diet; but both by their habit and diet set an example of gravity and sobriety before their people; being in these, as well as in other things, an example unto their flocks.

7 and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Observe here, 1. The high opinion that the Baptist had of Christ. He is mightier than I; that is, a Person of greater dignity and excellency by far than myself: whence may be gathered, that though Christ was Man, he was not mere man, but more than man: even very God, equal with his Father; for John Baptist was the greatest of them that were born of woman, Matt 11:11 yet, says he, Christ is mightier and greater than I. How so, but in regard to the dignity of his person, being both God and Man in two distinct natures and one person.

Observe, 2. The humble and low estimation that the Baptist had of himself; His shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose: a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the basest and meanest service for Christ. O how well doth humility of mind, an humble apprehension, a low esteem and opinion of themselves and their own gifts and abilities, become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe, or do the meanest office for him.

"There cometh" Mt 3:11, Jn 1:27, Acts 13:25

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

John showed the dignity of Christ's person above his own, in the former verse; in this he declares the excellency of Christ's office, and the meanness of his own; I wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit.

Thence learn, That though the ministers of Christ do by Christ's command dispense the outward ordinance of baptism, yet it is Christ himself, that by the inward work of his Spirit doth make it effectual to such as receive it. I baptize with water; but he with the Holy Ghost.

Mt 3:3, also Mt 3:4-6,11.

The Baptism of Jesus

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Observe here, 1. The great condescension of Christ, in seeking and submitting to the baptism of John: Christ, though he was John's Lord and Master, yea, Lord of heaven and earth, yet cometh to hear John preach, and will be baptized of his messenger.

Thence learn, That the greatest persons should neither think themselves too great, nor too good, to come unto the ministers of God, to hear the word from their mouth, or to receive the sacrament at their hand. Christ the Son of God was content to be baptized of John, a mean person in comparsion of himself. How dare then the greatest upon earth despise the ministry of man, being appointed by God?

Observe, 2. The solemn investing of Christ with the office of Mediator, by a threefold miracle; namely, the opening of the heavens, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and God the Father's voice or testimony concerning his Son; the heavens were opened, to show, that heaven, which was closed and shut against us for our

sins, is now opened to us by Christ's undertaking for us. As Christ opened heaven by his meritorious passion, so he keeps it open by his prevailing intercession.

Next, the Holy Ghost descends like a dove upon our Saviour. Here we have a proof and evidence of the Blessed Trinity. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son comes out of the water, and the Holy Ghost descends in the likeness of a dove. But why did the Holy Ghost now descend upon Christ?

First, for the designation of his person, to show that he was the Person set apart for his word and office of a mediator.

Secondly, for the sanctification of his person for the performance of that office. This was Christ's unction, the day on which he was anointed above his fellows to be the King, Priest, and Prophet, of his church: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath anointed me, Isa 61:1, &c.

Observe, 3. the voice of God the Father pronounced,
(1.) The nearness of Christ's relation to himself: This is my Son.
(2.) The endearedness of his person: This is my beloved Son.
(3.) The fruit and benefit of his near and dear relation unto us: In whom I am well pleased.

Hence learn, That there is no possibility for a person to please God out of Christ; neither our persons nor our performances can find acceptance but through him, and for his sake;--that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ground and Cause of all that love which God the Father showeth to the sons of men. In Christ, God is well pleased with us, as a reconciled Father; out of him, a consuming Fire.

"baptized of John" Mt 3:13, Lk 3:21.

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

11 and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

The Temptation of Jesus

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

Mark here relates concisely what Matthew has recorded, more at length in Mt 4.

The spirit driveth. The word driveth does not mean that he was compelled forcibly against his will to go there, but that he was inclined to go there by the Spirit, or was led there. The Spirit of God, for important purposes, caused him to go. Comp. Mt 9:25, where the same word is used in the original: "But when the people were put forth"-- in Greek, all driven out.

And was with the wild beasts. This is added to show the desolation and danger of his dwelling there. In this place, surrounded by such dangers, the temptations offered by Satan were the stronger. Amidst want, and perils, Satan might suppose he would be more easily seduced from God. But he trusted in his Father, and was alike delivered from dangers, from the wild beasts, and from the power of temptation: thus teaching us what to do in the day of danger and trial.

And the angels ministered unto him. From Lk 4:2, we learn that in those days he did eat nothing. When Mark says, therefore, that the angels ministered to him, it means after the days of temptation had expired, as is said by Matthew, Mt 4:11.

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan;
and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Immediately, That is, 1. After his baptism. Christ is no sooner out of the water of baptism, but he is in the fire of temptation: such as are baptized with Christ, and entered into the profession of christianity, must look to be assaulted with Satan's temptations.

Again, immediately, that is, 2. After the Father had declared his complacency in him, and being well pleased with him.

Learn thence, That great manifestations of love from God are usually followed with great temptations from God. The Spirit driveth him, that is, the Holy Spirit of God. For the devil is seldom, if ever, called the Spirit, but usually some brand of reproach is annexed, as the evil spirit, or the unclean spirit and the like.

Christ was led by the Spirit, says Matt 4:1. He was driven by the Spirit, says St. Mark; that is, he was carried by a strong impulse of the Spirit of God to be tempted by Satan, and did not go of his own private motion to enter the lists with Satan. Teaching us our duty, not to run into or rush upon temptations, without a warrant and call from God.

Observe next, The place where Satan assaulted Christ with his temptations: it was a solitary wilderness. No place can privilege us from temptations, or be a sanctuary from Satan's assaults. The solitary wilderness has a tempter in it: yea, Satan oftentimes makes use of men's solitariness to further his temptations; and such as separate themselves from human society, and give themselves up to solitude and retirement, give great advantage to the tempter to tempt them.

Observe next, the time and continuance of our holy Lord's temptations; not for an hour, a day, a week, or a month, but for forty days and forty nights; not all the time, but very often in that time. Teaching us what we are to expect from Satan; temptations not a few; he will not solicit us once, but often to resist him.

Observe farther, A special aggravation of our Lord's temptations in the wilderness. He was with the wild beasts, having no comfort from man, but only wild beasts for his companions, which were more likely to annoy and hurt him, than any way to help and comfort him. Here we have an evidence of the divine power of Christ; who, as Lord of the creatures, can alter and change the nature of the creature at his pleasure; restraining the most savage and hurtful beasts from hurting either himself or any of his people.

Observe lastly, The supply sent in to Christ in the hour of temptation: The angels came and ministered unto him; food to his hungry body, and comfort to his tempted soul.

Learn thence, that those who in the hour of temptation do hold out in resisting Satan, shall find that the power and faithfulness of God will not be wanting to them to send in succour and relief at last; Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

Barnes:

Now after that John, etc. John was imprisoned by Herod, Mt 14:3. Jesus came into Galilee. He left Judea, and went into the more retired country of Galilee. He supposed that if he remained in Judea, Herod would also persecute him, and attempt his life. His time of death had not come; and he therefore prudently sought safety in retirement, hence we may learn, that when we have great duties to perform for the church of God, we are not wantonly to endanger our lives. When we can secure them without a sacrifice of principle, we are to do it. See Mt 24:16.

Mk 1:15 Verse 15. The time is fulfilled. That is, the time for the appearance of the Messiah. The time, so long foretold, has come. The kingdom of God is at hand. Mt 3:2. Repent ye. Exercise sorrow for sins, and turn from them. And believe the Gospel. Literally, trust in the gospel, or believe the good tidings--to wit, respecting salvation. Mt 4:17. (q) "time is" Dan 2:44, 9:25, Gal 4:4, Eph 1:10 (r) "repent ye" Acts 2:38 (s) "believe" Rom 16:26

Burkitt:

In this our Saviour's first beginning to preach the gospel, we have an account of the time when, the place where, and the sum of what, he preached.

Observe, 1. The time when our Lord began to preach, and that was after John the Baptist was cast into prison,

Where note, 1. The undue reward which the ministers of God do sometimes meet with from a wicked world; they are hated, persecuted, and imprisoned, for their courage in reproving sin: John for reproving Herod's incest was put in prison.

Note, 2. John was no sooner in prison, and stopped and hindered from preaching, but Christ began to preach. See the care and kindness of God towards his church, in that he never leaves it wholly destitute of the means of instruction: when some of his faithful ministers are restrained from preaching, he stirreth up others in their room, not suffering all their mouths to be stopped at once.

Observe, 2. The place where our Lord first preached, in Galilee. The land of Canaan, in our Saviour's time, was divided into three principal provinces: on the south, Judea; on the north, Galilee; in the midst, Samaria.

Galilee was divided into the upper and lower Galilee; the higher was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because it was the utmost part of the land, and so next unto the Gentiles. In this upper Galilee, Capernaum was the metropolis, or chief; and Chorazin a lesser city.

Now much of our Saviour's time was spent in Galilee; he was conceived and brought up at Nazareth, a city in Galilee; he first preached at Capernaum in Galilee; he wrought his first miracle at Cana in Galilee; his transfiguration was upon mount Tabor in Galilee; and our Saviour's ordinary residence was in Galilee. He came into Judea, and up to Jerusalem, only at the feasts: and after his resurrection he appoints his disciples to meet him in Galilee. Only his nativity, his passion, and ascension, were proper to Judea.

His nativity at Bethlehem, his passion at Jerusalem,and his ascension upon mount Olivet, hard by Jerusalem.

Now all this demonstrates Christ to be the true and promised Messias; for according to prophecy, the Messias was to have his presence and principal abode in the province of Galilee, Isa 9:1,2,3, &c. Yet because he was of Galilee, the Jews would not believe him to be the Messiah, saying in scorn, Can any good thing come out of Galilee? Whereas our Saviour's habitation and free conversation there, was a proof unto them, and ought to have persuaded them, that according to the prophecy he was the very Christ.

Observe, 3. The sum of what our Lord preached, namely, a doctrine, and an exhortation. His doctrine is, That the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; that is, that the time foretold by the prophets, when the kingdom of the Messiah should begin, was now come. The exhortation is, Therefore repent, and believe the gospel.

From the former note, That the Messiah's coming, or our Saviour's appearing in the flesh, was exactly at the time foretold by the holy prophets: The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of the Messiah is at hand.

Note, 2. That the great doctrines of repentance and faith are taught only in and by the gospel, and accordingly ought in a special manner to be preached and insisted upon by the ministers of the gospel. The doctrine of Christ, and his ambassadors, is and ought to be the same; they both teach the great doctrines of faith and repentance to a lost world: Repent, and believe the gospel.

15 and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Jesus Calls Four Fishermen

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

Mt 4:18, Lk 5:4

In this history of our Saviour's calling the four disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, observe these particulars. 1. The meanness of the persons whom he calls, illiterate fishermen: Christ took hereby effectual care that his gospel should be known to be the power of God, and not the wisdom and device of man; and that the instruments should not carry away the glory of the work.

Observe, 2. Christ called his apostles by couples, two and two; first Peter and Andrew, then James and John: thereby signifying to us, that the work of the ministry requires the concurrence of all hands that are called to it. All the ministers of God should join their hearts and hands, and set their shoulders as on man to this great work; and all little enough, God knows, to carry it on with advantage and success.

Observe, 3. The work which they are called from, and called to: from being fishermen, to be fishers of men; from catching fish with the labour of their tongues.

Observe, 4. Our Saviour's command, first to follow him, before they be sent out by him: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. We must be Christ's disciples before we are his ministers; his followers, before we are his ambassadors: we must learn Christ before we preach him; otherwise we may fish for a livelihood, but not for souls.

Observe, 5. The gracious promise which Christ gives his apostles for their encouragement; namely, to qualify them for, and to succeed them in, their office: I will make you fishers of men. Faithfulness and care, diligence and endeavour, is our part; but the blessing and success is Christ's: our labour is only in the cast; Christ's power is wholly in the draught.

Some fish cleave to the rocks, others play upon the sands, more wallow in mud; and verily we shall labour all our days and catch

nothing, if Christ do not bring our fish to the net, and enclose them in it, as well as asist us in the throwing and casting of it.

Observe, 6. The apostles' ready compliance with our Saviour's call. Straightway they forsook their father and friends, ship and nets, and followed Jesus. Whom Christ calls, he calls effectually: and draws whom he calls and works their hearts to a ready compliance with their duty.

Observe, 7. That upon their call to the ministry they leave off their trade, they forsake their ship and nets, and lie close to their ministerial employment. Teaching us, That the ministers of the gospel should wholly give themselves up to their great work, and not encumber themselves with secular affairs and worldly business. Nothing but an indispensable necessity, in providing for a family, can excuse a minister's incumbering himself with worldly concerns and business.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

A Man with an Unclean Spirit

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.

Our Saviour having called his disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, to follow him, in order to their preaching of the gospel; here we may observe how he went himself along with them, teaching personally in the synagogues wherever he came: he did not send his apostles forth as his curates, and lie at home himself upon his couch of ease. What shall we say to those lazy fishermen that set others to the drag, but care only to feed themselves with the fish; not willing to wet their hands with the net, or take any pains

themselves? Our Saviour did not thus; but when he sent forth his apostles, he still preached himself: he went into their synagogues and taught.

Observe farther, the success of his preaching; the people were astonished at his doctrine, struck with admiration, apprehending and believing him to be an extraordinary prophet sent from God.

22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

There was a man with an unclean spirit; That is, an unclean spirit did enter into him, and bodily possess him. Amongst the many calamities which sin has brought upon our bodies, this is one, that we are liable to be bodily possessed by Satan. The devil has an inveterate malice against mankind, seeking to ruin our souls by his suggestions and temptations, and to destroy our bodies by some means or other: but, blessed be God, though his malice be infinite, yet his power is limited and bounded; as he cannot do all he can.

O how much is it our interest, as well as our duty, by prayer to put ourselves morning and evening under the divine protection, that we may be preserved from the power and malice of evil spirits!

Observe, 2. The attribute or title given to the devil, he is called an unclean spirit. The devils, those wicked spirits of hell, are most impure and filthy creatures; impure by means of their original apostasy; impure by means of their actual and daily sins, such as murder, malice, lying, and the like, by which they continually pollute themselves; impure by means of their continual desire and endeavour to pollute mankind with the contagion of their own sin. Lord, how foul is the nature of sin, which makes the devil such a foul and unclean creature!

Observe, 3. This unclean spirit no sooner saw Christ, but he cried out.

Whence note, That the greatness of Christ's power (being the Son of God) over devils and wicked spirits is such, that it is very terrible

and tormenting to them; it was terrible to them in his state of humiliation on earth, and made them cry out. But oh, how terrible will his power be to them at the great day, when Christ shall come in flaming fire, to render vengenance both to men and devils!

Observe, 4. The substance of the devil's outcry; Let us alone, what have we to do with thee? Art thou come to destroy us?
Where note, that though the devils are now as full of sin and discontent as they can be, yet are they not so full of misery and torment as they shall be. Art thou come to torment us before the time? says St. Matthew. Matt 8:29 and Art thou come to destroy us? says St. Mark: that is to bring upon us our full and final destruction.

Implying, that the devil has not yet his full judgment and complete damnation. Therefore there is certainly a day of judgment to come, and the devils are in chains of darkness, reserved to the judgment of that great day. But some by these words, Art thou come to destroy us? understand as much as, "Art thou come to restrain us from the exercise of our power?"
Learn we thence, That the devil thinks himself destroyed when he is restrained from doing mischief.

Observe, 5. The title which the devil put upon our Saviour; Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God. Although there was ground for the common people's calling Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, because he was bred and brought up there, and lived there during his private life, till about thirty years of age; though he was not born there, but at Bethlehem; yet it is conceived that the devil gave this title to our Saviour in policy, to disguise the place of Christ's nativity, that so the Jews might not believe him to be the true Messiah, because he was of Nazareth, whereas the Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem, but Jesus of Nazareth. But how comes the next title out of the devil's mouth; The Holy One of God? Could an apostle, could Peter himself, make a profession beyond this? But how comes the devil to make it? For no good end or purpose, we may be sure; for he never speaks truth for truth's sake, but for advantage.

Probably,

(1.) He made this profession, that so he might bring the truth professes into suspicion, hoping that a truth which received testimony from the father of lies would be suspected.

(2.) It might perhaps be done that the people might believe that our Saviour had some familiarity with Satan, and did work miracles by his help, because he did confess him, and seem so much to honour him.

From this instance and example learn, That it is possible for a person to own and acknowledge Christ to be the true and only Saviour, and yet to miss of salvation by him. If a speculative knowledge, and a verbal profession, of Christ, were sufficient to salvation, the devil himself would not miss of happiness.

Observe, 6. How our Saviour rebukes the devil for his confession, and commands him silence; And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace. But why was this rebuke given the devil when he spake the truth?

Ans. 1. Because Christ knew that the devil confessed this truth on purpose to disgrace the truth.

2. Because the devil was not fit person to make this profession. A testimony of truth from the father of lies is enough to render truth itself suspected. Yet the devil's evidence, that Christ was the holy One of God, will rise up in judgment against the wicked Pharisees, who shut their eyes against the miracles, and stop their ears against the doctrine, of the Holy One of God.

Observe lastly, How the unclean spirit obeys the voice of Christ, though with great reluctance and regret. When the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out. Christ is Lord over the wicked angels, and has an absolute power and

authority to overrule them, and command them at his pleasure; if Christ says to the evil spirit, Come out, out he must come.

Yet observe the devil's spite at parting, he tears the man, tortures his body, throws him violently from place to place, showing how loth he was to be dispossessed. Where Satan has once gotten an hold, and settled himself for a time, how unwilling is he to be cast out of possession! yea, it is a torture and vexation to him to be cast out: it is much easier to keep him out than to cast him out. Satan may possess the body by God's permission, but he cannot possess our hearts without our own consent and approgbation: it will be our wisdom to deny him entrance into our souls at first, by rejecting his wicked motions and suggestions; for when once entered, he will, like the strong man armed, keep the house till a stronger than he casts him out.

24 saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this ? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

Jesus Heals Simon’s Mother-in-Law

29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

30 But Simon’s wife’s mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her.

The second miracle which our Saviour wrought in this chapter, to confirm the truth and authority of his doctrine was his raising up of Peter's wife's mother from her bed of sickness.

Where note,

1. that St. Peter, now a disciple, and afterwards an apostle, was a married person. Neither the prophets of the Old Testament, nor the ministers of the New, did abhor the marriage-bed, nor think themselves too pure for an institution of their Maker. The church of Rome, by denying the lawfulness of priests' marriage, makes herself wiser than God, who says, Marriage is honourable amongst all men. Heb 13:4.

Observe, 2. Peter, though a good man, and his wife's mother probably a gracious woman, yet is his family visited with sickness; strength of grace, and dearness of respect even from Christ himself, cannot prevail against diseases. God's own children are visited with bodily sickness as well as others.

Observe, 3. The charitable care of St. Peter, and the other disciples, forthwith to acquaint Christ with the condition of this sick person, Anon they tell him of her. The care of our fellow-christians, especially when of the number of our near and dear relations, in a time of sickness, is not to be deferred or delayed. Outward help for their bodies, and the spiritual help of our prayers for their souls, are both straightway to be afforded them.

Observe, 4. Christ's divine power manifested in this miraculous cure: He no sooner took her by the hand but the fever left her. The miracle was not in curing an incurable distemper, but in curing an ordinary distemper after a miraculous manner; namely,

1. By a touch of the hand.
2. The recovery was instantaneous and sudden: Immediately the fever left her.
3. The visible effects of her recovery instantly appeared: She arose and ministered unto Christ and his disciples.

That she could arise, argued her cure miraculous; that she did arise, and did minister to Christ, argued her thankfulness.

Learn thence, That after Christ hath graciously healed any of us, it ought to be our first work and care to administer unto Christ; that

is, to employ our recovered health in the service of Christ, and to improve our renewed strength to the honour and glory of Christ.

31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Jesus Heals Many at Evening

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils.

The evangelist here declares sundry other miracles wrought by our Saviour before the door of St. Peter's house, where he now was; he healed all the diseased that were brought unto him, and cast devils out of them that were possessed with them.

But how comes it to pass, that we read of so many possessed with devils in our Saviour's time, and so few either before or since?

Ans. 1. Probably Satan, perceiving that the Messiah was come in the flesh to destroy his kingdom, did rage the more, and discover great malice and enmity against mankind.

2. Perhaps Almighty God permitted Satan at that time to possess so many, that Christ might have occasion to manifest his divine power by casting Satan out: and accordingly we find our Saviour dispossessing all that were possessed by Satan.

It is added, that he suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. That is, Christ would not be made known to be the Son of God by the preaching of the devil, to whom it belonged not to publish the gospel, lest the world should take from thence an occasion to think that our Saviour held a correspondence with those wicked spirits, and that the miracles he wrought were performed by the devil's assistance, as being one in combination with him. Possibly the devil's owning Christ to be the Holy One of God, the Pharisees concluded that there was a compact and agreement betwixt them, and thereupon their affirmation was grounded, He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, &c.

33 And all the city was gathered together at the door.

34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus Departs on a Preaching Tour

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

Observe here, 1. The duty performed by our Saviour, Namely, prayer, solitary and private prayer. He went by himself alone, out of the hearing of his disciples. The company of our best friends is not always seasonable, nor acceptable; there are times and cases when a Christian would not be willing that his dearest relations upon earth should hear that conversation which passes betwixt him and his God.

Observe, 2. Christ chooses the opportunity of the morning for prayer, he rises a great while before day to set about this work. Teaching us, that the morning is a fit season, yea, the best season, for private duties: now our spirits are freshest and our minds freest, before the distractions of the day break in upon us. It is better to go from prayer to business, than from business to prayer.

36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

Observe here two things: First, the great end of Christ in his incarnation and coming into the world, namely, as a Prophet sent from God to reveal his will, and to publish the doctrine of the gospel. Therefore came I forth; that is, to preach and plant the gospel.

Secondly, It being Christ's design not only to plant but to propagate the gospel, he would not confine his ministry to any particular places, no, not to the great city of Capernaum, but resolves to preach the word in the smallest towns and villages. Leaving his ministers herein an instructive example, to be as willing to preach

the gospel in the smallest villages, as in the largest cities, if God calls them thereunto.

Let the place be never so obscure and mean, and the congregation never so small and little, if God sends us thither, the greatest of us must not think it beneath us to go and instruct a handful of people.

38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

The last miracle of our Saviour's recorded in this chapter, is the healing of a leper; he came, beseeching Christ to heal him, saying, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Where observe, 1. He doth not question Christ's power, but distrusts Christ's willingness to heal him; Lord if thou wilt, thou canst. Christ's divine power must be fully assented to, and firmly believed, by all those that expect benefit by him, and healing from him.

Observe, 2. The great readiness of Christ to help and heal this distressed person. Jesus touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. By the ceremonial law, the leper was forbidden to be touched, therefore Christ's touching the leper showed him to be above the law, and that he was the Lord of it, and might dispense with it; and his healing the leper by the word of his mouth, and touch of his hand, showed him to be truly and really God. Leprosy among the Jews was an incurable distemper, called the finger of God, a disease of his sending, and of his removing.

Our Saviour therefore, as a proof of his being the true Messiah, tells John's disciples, that the lepers were cleansed, and the dead raised Matt 11:5 by him; which two being joined together, do imply, that the cleansing of lepers is as much an act of divine power as the raising of the dead.

And accordingly, it is said, Am I God, that this man sends to me to cure a man of his leprosy? 2Kgs 5:7

Observe, 3. The certainty and suddenness of the cure was a proof of Christ's divine power; immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Christ not only cured him without means, but without the ordinary time required for such a cure. Thus Christ showed both power and will to cure him miraculously, who believed his power, but questioned his willingness.

Observe, 4. The cause, moving our Saviour to cure this leper; his bowels were moved with tender pity and compassion towards him. Christ's exercising acts of mercy and compassion, with such condolency and sympathizing pity, should by way of example teach us to be inwardly moved with tender compassion and mercy towards such as are in misery. We are not only to draw out our bread, but to draw out our soul, to the hungry.

Observe, 5. A twofold charge and command given by Christ to the leper after his cure.

First, to conceal and tell it to no man. Where the great modesty, humility, and piety, of Christ, is discovered, together with the care of his own safety. His modesty, in not desiring his good deeds should be published and proclaimed; his humility, in shunning vain-glorious applause and commendation; his piety, in desiring all honour and glory should redound entirely to God. And the care of his own safety appeared, lest the publishing of his miracles should create him untimely danger from the Pharisees.

The second part of the charge given to the recovered leper, was to show himself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them; that is, to testify to the Jews, that he did not oppose the ceremonial law, which required a thank-offering at his hand, and that he was the true and promised Messiah.

Learn thence, That our Saviour would have the ceremonial law punctually observed so long as the time for its continuance did endure; though he came to destroy that law, yet, whilst it stood, he would have it punctually observed.

Observe, 6. Notwithstanding our Saviour's strict prohibition, the leper publishes the fame of this miracle. It is likely his intention might be good, in extolling his great Benefactor; but his acting contrary to Christ's command was a fault, and shows the corruption of human nature, in being most forward to that which is most forbidden. It is a sin to do any thing against the command of Christ, though with never so good a meaning, purpose, and intention, to exalt and honour Christ.

Observe lastly, The inconveniences which attended our Saviour upon this indiscreet publication of the miracle; and they were two:

1. Our Saviour could no more enter into Capernaum, and other cities, to preach in an open manner, as he had done, by reason of the great concourse of people after him.

2. The fame of this miracle brought the people about him from all quarters; not so much to hear as to see; not so much to hear his holy and heavenly doctrine which he taught, as to gratify their curiosity with the sight of the miracles which he wrought.
O how many thronged after Christ, more to have their bodily diseases cured, than their souls healed! Christ desired not their flocking after him upon this account; therefore he retires from the breath of popular applause: he would not openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places. O how great humility! How little

did our blessed Redeemer regard the applause and commendation of men!

Constantly we find him, as soon as his public preaching and working of miracles was over, withdrawing himself from the multitude into some private place apart: he doth not stay in the crowd with his ear open to listen how men admire the preacher, and applaud the sermon. Plainly showing, that he sought his Father's glory, not his own praise or the people's commendation; leaving his example as an instructive pattern to all his ministers and ambassadors, to take heed of vain-glory; not to affect popularity, or to seek the applause and commendation of men in what they do, resolving that man's opinion shall be nothing with them, but that the pleasing of God, and doing their duty to the souls of their people, shall always be their whole scope.

42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

44 and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

45 But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Mark-2

Jesus Heals a Palsied Man

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

In the last verse of the foregoing chapter we find how industriously our blessed Saviour withdrew himself from the concourse and throng of people which flocked after him from every quarter; and to

show how little he affected the applause and commendation of the multitude, he left the cities and was without in desert places. Hereby giving his ministers an instructive example to decline vain-glory, and to shun popular applause. But now the words before us show that our Saviour having entered (privately, as is probable) into the city of Capernaum, it is presently, noised and reported that he was in the house, and a mighty concourse and throng of people are after him; insomuch that neither the house, nor hardly the streets, could contain them.

Thence learn, That such as least seek after honour and applause from men, are oft-times most famous and renowned. Our Saviour was so far from seeking the people's praise and commendation, that he came into Capernaum without observation, and betook himself to his dwelling-house there; but the more he sought to lie hid, the more he was taken notice of.

Honour flies from them that pursue it, and pursues those that fly from it. The way to be honoured, is to be humble. God seldom honours a proud man, by making him either eminently serviceable or successful.

Observe farther, The people being come together, our Saviour takes the opportunity to preach; And he preached the word unto them. Teaching his ministers by his example, to embrace all opportunities, in season and out of season, on the Lord's day and on the week day, to edify our people by our ministry, by our public exhortations, by our private instructions, prudent admonitions, and holy examples.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

As the grievousness of the disease, so the greatness of their faith. The man and his friends had a firm persuasion that Christ was clothed with a divine power, and able to help him, and they hoped in his goodness that he was also willing to help him. Accordingly, the roof of the Jewish houses being flat, they uncovered some part

of it, and let the bed down with the sick man in it into the room where Christ was.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

No sooner did they exercise their faith in believing, but Christ exerts his divine power in healing. And see the marvellous efficacy of faith; it obtained not only what was desired, but more than was expected. They desired only the healing of the body, but Christ heals body and soul too. Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

Thereby our Saviour shows them, that sin is the original cause of all bodily diseases; and consequently, that in sickness, the best way to find ease and deliverance from pain, is first to seek for pardon. The sense of pardon in some degree will take away the sense of pain.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies ? who can forgive sins but God only?

The exception which the scribes took against our Saviour for pronouncing that this man's sins were forgiven him. They accuse him of the sin of blasphemy: urging, that it is God's peculiar prerogative to pardon sin. Their doctrine was true, but their application false. Nothing more true, than that it is the greatest degree of blasphemy for any mere man to arrogate to himself the incommunicable prerogative of God, which consists, in an absolute and authoritative power to forgive sin. But then their denying this power to Christ of forgiving sin, which he had as God from all eternity, and as Mediator, God and man in one person, when here upon earth; this was blasphemy in them; the challenging of it, none in him.

8 And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts ?

Our Saviour gives these scribes a twofold demonstration of his Godhead,

(1.) By letting them understand that he knew their thoughts: Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they reasoned within themselves. To

search the hearts, and to know the thoughts and reasonings of men, but the prerogative of God only.

(2.) By assuming to himself a power to forgive sin; for our Saviour here, by assuming to himself a power to forgive sins in his own name, and by his own authority, doth give the world an undeniable proof and convincing evidence of his Godhead. For who can forgive sins but God only?

9 whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

The effect of this miracle upon the minds of the people; they marvelled and were amazed, but did not believe. They admire our Saviour for an extraordinary man, but did not believe him to be God.

Learn thence, That the sight of Christ's miracles is not sufficient to work faith in the soul, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit. The one may make us marvel, the other must make us believe.

The Call of Levi

13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

The unwearied pains and diligence which our Saviour used in the execution of his ministerial office and calling; no sooner had he done preaching in Capernaum, and healing the sick of the palsy; but he goeth out thence to the sea-side to preach there.

O blessed Saviour! How perpetually wert thou employed in the labours of thy calling, in the service of thy Father, and for the good of mankind! Thou wentest about doing good, setting a pattern for

all thy ministers to follow. How doth the example of thy laborious diligence at once instruct and shame us!

14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alpheus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

The number of our Lord's disciples not being filled up, observe what a free and gracious, unexpected and undeserved, choice he makes. Levi, that is, Matthew, (for he hath both names,) a grinding publican, who gathered the taxes for the Romans, and was probably guilty, as others were, of the sins of covetousness, extortion, and oppression; yet he is called to follow Christ as a special disciple.

Learn thence, That such is the freeness of God's grace, that it calls and converts sinners unto Christ when they think not of him, nor seek unto him. Little did Levi now think of a Saviour, much less seek after him, yet he is at this time called by him.

Matthew, a publican, Zaccheus, an extortioner, Saul, a persecutor, all these are brought home to God, as instances and evidences of the mighty power of converting grace.

Matthew's ready compliance with Christ's call; he arose, and followed him. When the inward call of the Holy Spirit accompanieth the outward call of the word, the soul readily complies, and presently yields obedience to the voice of Christ. Christ oft-times speaks by his word to our ears, and we hear not, we stir not; but when he speaks by his Spirit efficaciously to our hearts, Satan shall not hold us down, the world shall not keep us back, but we shall with Levi instantly arise and follow our Saviour.

15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many, and they followed him.

Levi, or Matthew, to show his thankfulness to Christ, makes him a great feast. Christ invited Matthew to a discipleship, Matthew invites Christ to a dinner. The servant invites his Master, a sinner invites his Saviour. We do not find, that when Christ was invited to any table, that he ever refused to go: if a publican, if a Pharisee invited him, he constantly went; not so much for the pleasure of

eating, as for the opportunity of conversing and doing good. Christ feasts us when we feast him.

Learn hence, That new converts are full of affection towards Christ, and very expressive in their love unto him. Matthew, touched with a sense of Christ's rich love, makes him a royal feast.

16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The cavil and exception which the scribes and Pharisees made at our Lord's free conversation. They censure him for conversing with sinners; he justifies himself, telling them, that he conversed with them as their physician, not as their companion. They that are whole need no physician, says Christ, but they that are sick.

As if our Lord had said, "With whom should a physician converse, but with his sick patients? Now I am come into the world to do the office of a kind physician unto men, surely then I am to take all opportunities of conversing with them, that I may help and heal them, for they that are sick need the physician: but as for you scribes and Pharisees, who are well and whole in your own opinion and conceit, I have no hopes of doing good upon you: for such as think themselves whole desire no physician's help."

From this assertion of our Saviour these truths are suggested to us,

1. That sin is the soul's malady, its spiritual disease and sickness.

2. That Christ is the Physician appointed by God for the cure and healing of this disease.

3. That there are multitudes of sinners spiritually sick, whole yet think themselves sound and whole.

4. That such, and only such, as find and feel themselves spiritually sick, are the subjects capable of Christ's healing.

They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the (opiniatively) righteous, but the (sensible) sinner to repentance.

The Question about Fasting

18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

A great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in the matter of fasting. John's disciples imitated him, who was a man of an austere life, and much given to fasting; therefore he is said to come neither eating nor drinking, Matt 11:18.

On the other side, Christ's disciples follow him, who came eating and drinking, as other men did; and yet, though there was a great difference betwixt John's disciples and Christ's in matters of practice, they were all of one faith and religion.

Thence learn, That there may be unity of faith and religion among those who do not maintain an uniformity in practice. Men may differ in some outward religious observances and customs, and yet agree in the fundamentals of faith and religion. Thus did John's disciples and Christ's; the one fasted often, the other fasted not.

In that the disciples of the Pharisees used to fast as well as John's disciples, we may learn, That hypocrites and wicked men may be, and sometimes are, as strict and forward in the outward duties of religion, as the holiest and best of christians; they pray, they fast, they hear the word, they receive the sacraments: they do, yea, it may be, they outdo and go beyond, the sincere christian in external duties and outward performances.

19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

The defensative plea which our blessed Saviour makes for the not fasting of his disciples; he declares that it was neither suitable to them, nor tolerable for them, thus to fast at present. Not suitable, in regard of Christ's bodily presence with them. This made it a time of joy and rejoicing, not of mourning and fasting.

Christ is the Bridegroom, and his church the bride; whilst therefore his spouse did enjoy his bodily presence with her, it was a day of joy and rejoicing to her, and mourning and fasting were improper for her. But when Christ's bodily presence shall be removed, there will be cause enough to fast and mourn.

20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

Again, this discipline of fasting was not at present tolerable for the disciples; for they were raw, green, and tender, not fit for austerities; nor could bear as yet the severities of religion, no more than an old garment could bear a piece of new stiff cloth to be set into it, which will make the rent worse, if the garment comes to a stretch; or no more than old bottles can keep new wine.

As if our Saviour had said, "My disciples at present are tender and weak, newly called and converted; they cannot therefore bear the severities of religion presently; but ere long I shall leave them, and go to heaven, from whence I will send down the Holy Spirit upon them, which shall enable them to do all the duties which the gospel enjoins.

Now the intended lesson of instruction from hence is this, That it is hurtful and dangerous for young converts, for weak christians, to be put upon the severer exercises of religion, or to be urged to the performance of such duties as are above their strength. But they

ought to be handled with that tenderness which becomes the mild and gentle dispensation of the gospel. Our Saviour here commends prudence to his ministers in treating their people according to their strength, and putting them upon duties according to their time and standing.

22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

The poverty, the low estate and condition, of Christ's own disciples in this world; they wanted bread, and are forced to pluck the ears of corn to satisfy their hunger. God may, and sometimes doth, suffer his dearest children to fall in streights, to taste of want, for the trial of their faith, and dependence upon his power and providence.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful ?

How the Pharisees (who accompanied our Saviour only with a design to cavil at, and quarrel with, every thing that either he or his disciples did) blame this action of the disciples, namely, the plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day.

Yet note, 1. It was not any theft which the disciples were charged with; for to take in our necessity so much of our neighbour's goods as we may reasonably suppose that, if he were present, and knew our circumstances, he would give us, is no theft. But it is the servile labour on the sabbath, in gathering the ears of corn, which the Pharisees scruple.

Whence observe, How zealous hypocrites are for the lesser things of the law, whilst they neglect the greater, and are superstitiously

addicted to outward ceremonies, placing all holiness in the observation of them, neglecting moral duties.

25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was ahungered, he, and they that were with him?

How our Saviour defends the action of his disciples in gathering the ears of corn in their necessity, by the practice and example of David. Necessity freed him from fault and blame in eating the consecrated bread, which none but the priests might lawfully eat. For in cases of necessity a ceremonial precept must give way to a moral duty. Works of mercy and necessity for preserving our lives, and for the better fitting us for sabbath-services, are certainly lawful for the sabbath-day.

26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

A double argument which our Saviour uses, to prove that the sabbath's observation may be dispensed with in a case of absolute necessity;

1. Drawn from the end of the sabbath's institution: the sabbath was made for man; that is, instituted of God for the good and benefit of mankind, both with respect to their souls and to their bodies. The outward observing and keeping of the sabbath is subordinate to the good of man, and therefore the good of man is to be preferred before the outward keeping of the sabbath.

2. Argument is drawn from the authority which Christ, the Institutor of the sabbath, has over it. The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath; that is, he has authority and power, both as God and as Mediator, to institute and appoint a sabbath, to alter and change the sabbath, to dispense with the breach of it upon a just and great occasion; and consequently, acts of mercy, which tend to fit us for works of piety, not only may, but ought to be done upon the sabbath-day: which was the proposition which our Saviour undertook to prove.

28 therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Mark-3

The Man with a Withered Hand

1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.
2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.
3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.
4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

Or to do evil? to saw life, or to kill?. It seems to have been a maxim with the Jews, that not to do good, when we have an opportunity, was to do evil; not to save life was to kill, or to be guilty of murder. If a man has an opportunity of saving a man's life when he is in danger, and does not do it, he is evidently guilty of his death. On this principle our Saviour puts this question to the Jews, whether it was better for him, having the power to heal this man, to do it, or to suffer him to remain in this suffering condition. And he illustrates it by an example, showing that in a matter of much less importance--that respecting their cattle--they would do on the Sabbath just as he would if he should heal this man. The same remark may apply to all opportunities of doing good. "The ability to do good imposes an obligation to do it."--Cotton Mather. He that has the means of feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant, and sending the gospel to the destitute, and that does it not, is guilty; for he is practically doing evil; he is suffering evils to exist which he might remove, So the wicked will be condemned in the day of judgment, because "they did it not," Mt 25:45. If this be true, what an obligation rests on the rich to do good!

Learn thence, That the unjust censures and malicious cavils of wicked men against us for well-doing, must not discourage us from doing our duty either towards God, or towards our neighbour. Though the Pharisees watched our Saviour, and when their envy

and malice could find no occasion of quarrel, they could invent and make one; yet such was our Lord's courage and resolution, that he bids the man which had the withered hand, stand forth: to show that he was resolved to heal him, notwithstanding their malicious purpose to accuse him for it as a breaker of the sabbath. Opposition met with in doing our duty, must not discourage us from doing good, if we will follow the example of our blessed Redeemer.

5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

With anger. With a severe and stern countenance; with indignation at their hypocrisy and hardness of heart. This was not, however, a spiteful or revengeful passion; it was caused by excessive grief at their state. It was not sudden and tumultuous hatred of the men whose hearts were so hard; it was hatred of the sin which they exhibited, joined with the extreme grief that neither his teaching, nor the law of God, nor any means which could be used, overcame their confirmed wickedness. Such anger is not unlawful, Eph 4:26. And, in this instance, our Lord has taught us that anger is never lawful, except when it is tempered with grief or compassion for those who have offended.

Hardness of their hearts. The heart--figuratively the seat of feeling, or affection is said to be tender when it is easily affected by the sufferings of others; by our own sin and danger; by the love and commands of God;--when we are easily made to feel on the great subjects pertaining to our interest, Eze 11:19,20. It is hard, when nothing moves it; when a man is alike insensible to the sufferings of others, the dangers of his own condition, and the commands, the love, and the threatenings of God. It is most tender in youth, or when we have committed fewest crimes. It is made hard by indulgence in sin; by long resisting the offers of life; or by opposing any great and affecting appeals which God may make to us by his Spirit or Providence, by affliction, or by a revival of religion. Hence it is that the most favourable period for securing an interest in Christ, or for becoming a Christian, is in youth; the first, the tenderest, and the best days of life. Nay, in the days of childhood--

in the Sabbath-school--God may be found, and the soul prepared to die.

6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

How they might destroy him. They hated him for his holiness; because he reproved them; because he laid open their hypocrisy; and because he won the hearts of the people, and lessened their influence. They therefore determined to remove him, if possible, and thus avoid his reproofs. Sinners would often rather put to death the man that reproves them, than to forsake their sins. The Pharisees had rather commit any crime, even to the murder of the Messiah, than forsake the sins of which he rebuked them.

A Multitude at the Seaside

7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea,

8 and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

11 And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

12 And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve

13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

15 and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

16 and Simon he surnamed Peter;

17 and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite,
19 and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.
And they went into a house.

A Divided House Cannot Stand

20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

They could not so much as eat bread. Their time and attention were so occupied, that they were obliged to forego their regular meals. The affairs of religion may so occupy the attention of ministers, and others, as to destroy their relish for the ordinary comforts and employments of life, and prevent their engaging in their customary pursuits. Religion is all-important--far more important than the ordinary business of this life; and there is nothing unreasonable if our temporal affairs sometimes give way to the higher interests of our own souls, and the souls of others. At the same time, it is true that religion is ordinarily consistent with a close attention to worldly business, It promotes industry, economy, order, neatness, and punctuality--all indispensable to worldly prosperity. Of these there has been no more illustrious example than that of our Saviour himself.

21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him:
for they said, He is beside himself.

He is beside himself. He is delirious, or deranged, The reason why this report gained any belief was, probably, that our Lord had lived among them as a carpenter; that he was poor, and unknown; and that now, at thirty years of age, he broke off from his occupations, abandoned his common employment, spent much time in the deserts, denied himself the common comforts of life, and set up his claims to be the Messiah, who was expected by all the people to come with great pomp and splendour. The charge of derangement on account of attention to religion has not been confined to our Saviour. Let a man be made deeply sensible of his sins, and spend much of his time in prayer, and have no relish for the ordinary amusements or business of life; or let a Christian be much impressed with his obligation to devote himself to God, and act as if he believed there was an eternity, and warn his neighbours of

their danger; or let a minister show uncommon zeal, and waste his strength in the service of his Master, and the world is not slow to call it derangement. And none will be more ready to originate or believe the charge than an ungodly and infidel parent or brother; a self-righteous Pharisee or professor in the church. At the same time, men may endanger themselves on the bosom of the deep, or in the bowels of the earth, for wealth; or may plunge into the vortex of fashion, and folly, and vice, and break in upon the hours of repose, and neglect their duties to their family, and the demands of business, and in the view of the world it is wisdom, and proof of a sane mind! Such is the consistency of boasted reason; such the wisdom and prudence of worldly men!

When his friends in Capernaum heard how he was followed, and what pains he took, they went out, to lay hold on him, and fetch him home, for they said, He is beside himself.

1. Some understand it of an absurd preposterous care, which had more in it of reproach to him than of respect; and so we must take it as we read it, He is beside himself; either they suspected it themselves, or it was suggested to them, and they gave credit to the suggestion, that he was gone distracted, and therefore his friends ought to bind him, and put him in a dark room, to bring him to his right mind again. His kindred, many of them, had mean thoughts of him (Joh 7:5), and were willing to hearken to this ill construction which some put upon his great zeal, and to conclude him crazed in his intellects, and under that pretence to take him off from his work. The prophets were called mad fellows, 2Ki 9:11.

2. Others understand it of a well-meaning care; and then they read exeste--"He fainteth, he has no time to eat bread, and therefore his strength will fail him; he will be stifled with the crowd of people, and will have his spirits quite exhausted with constant speaking, and the virtue that goes out of him in his miracles; and therefore let us use a friendly violence with him, and get him a little breathing-

time." In his preaching-work, as well as his suffering-work, he was attacked with, Master, spare thyself. Note, They who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hindrances, both from the groundless disaffection of their enemies, and the mistaken affections of their friends, and they have need to stand upon their guard against both.

22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

29 but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

30 because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Jesus' Mother and Brethren

31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

He looked upon those that at about him, and pronounced those of them that not only heard, but did, the will of God, to be to him as his brother, and sister, and mother; as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations, Mk 3:33-35. This is a good reason why we should honour those that fear the Lord, and choose them for our people; why we should be not hearers of the word only, but doers of the work, that we may share with the saints in

this honour, Surely it is good to be akin to those who are thus nearly allied to Christ, and to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with Christ; and woe to those that hate and persecute Christ's kindred, that are his bone and his flesh, every one resembling the children of a king (see Jdg 8:18,19); for he will with jealously plead their cause, and avenge their blood.

35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Mark-4

The Parable of the Sower

1 And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat
in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.
2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

This is the first recorded teaching in parables. For notes on the parable of the Sower, see Mt 13:1-23. Compare Lu 8:4-15. Mark's report is nearly that of Matthew, word for word, as well as of the explanation that follows. Matthew gives much the fullest account of this day's teaching, reporting a number of parables not found elsewhere.

3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:
4 and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.
5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:
6 but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.
7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.
8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred.
9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.
11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these
things are done in parables:
12 that seeing they may see, and not perceive;
and hearing they may hear, and not understand;
lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.
13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?
14 The sower soweth the word.
15 And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.
16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;
17 and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.
18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,
19 and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.
20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

A Candle under a Bushel

21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed ? and not to be set on a candlestick ?

Is a candle brought, etc. A candle is not lit up to be put immediately under a measure, or a bed, where it can give no light. Its design is to give light. So my preaching by parables is not designed to obscure the truth, but to throw light on it. You should understand those parables; and, understanding them, should impart the truth to others also, as a candle throws its beams upon a dark world.

The end and design of Christ in revealing his word and will to his disciples, and in communicating to them the light of spiritual

knowledge; namely that they may communicate it to others, and not keep it close unto themselves. Even as the candle in a house diffuses and disperses its light to all that come within the reach of it; in like manner ought all Christians, and particularly Christ's ministers, by the light of life and doctrine, to direct persons in their way towards heaven. Such as are enlightened by God in any measure, with the knowledge and understanding of his word, ought not to conceal and hide this knowledge within themselves, but communicate it to others, and employ it for the good and benefit of others.

22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

There is nothing hid, etc. Mt 10:26.

23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear. With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given.

Let him give the gospel of Christ a fair hearing; but that is not enough, it is added (Mk 4:24), Take heed what ye hear, and give a due regard to that which ye do hear; Consider what ye hear, so Dr. Hammond reads it. Note, What we hear, doth us no good, unless we consider it; those especially that are to teach others must themselves be very observant of the things of God; must take notice of the message they are to deliver, that they may be exact. We must likewise take heed what we hear, by proving all things, that we may hold fast that which is good. We must be cautious, and stand upon our guard, lest we be imposed upon. To enforce this caution, consider,

1. As we deal with God, God will deal with us, so Dr. Hammond explains these words, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. If ye be faithful servants to him, he will be a faithful Master to you: with the upright he will show himself upright."

2. As we improve the talents we are entrusted with, we shall increase them; if we make use of the knowledge we have, for the glory of God and the benefit of others, it shall sensibly grow, as

stock in trade doth by being turned; Unto you that hear, shall more be given; to you that have, it shall be given, Mk 4:25. If the disciples deliver that to the church, which they have received of the Lord, they shall be led more into the secret of the Lord. Gifts and graces multiply by being exercised; and God has promised to bless the hand of the diligent.

3. If we do not use, we lose, what we have; From him that hath not, that doeth no good with what he hath, and so hath it in vain, is as if he had it not, shall be taken even that which he hath. Burying a talent is the betraying of a trust, and amounts to a forfeiture; and gifts and graces rust for want of wearing.

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

The Parable of the Growing Seed

26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

27 and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

This parable of our Saviour's is an instructive lesson to the ministers of the gospel, faithfully to do their parts in sowing the seed of the word amongst their people, and then not to be over-solicitous about the event, but to leave the issue to God; not to be discouraged, though the fruit of their labour doth not presently appear.

Accordingly Christ propounds the laborious husbandman to his ministers' imitation. As the husbandman, when he has prudently and painfully cast his seed into the ground, is not anxiously disquieted, but goes to bed, and rests in hope, and at length the corn springs up; first the blade, then the ear, then the grain.

In like manner let the ministers of God do their duty without discouragement; in the morning sow their seed, and in the evening not withhold their hand. And although the seed sown doth not appear presently, (it may be in in our days,) but seems rotting

among the clods; yet may it appear afterwards with a plentiful increase, when our own heads are laid among the clods; verifying that saying of our Saviour, One soweth, and another reapeth.

Learn hence,

1. That the ministry of the word is the ordinary, the necessary and the principal means which God has appointed for sowing the seed of grace in the hearts of his people: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground.

2. That the virtue and efficacy of the word preached doth not depend upon the parts of a man, but upon the power of God; The seed springeth up, he knoweth not how.
Learn, 3. That the word of God sincerely preached may be successful, though it be not presently successful; the seed sown in one minister's days, may spring up in another's.

Happy we, if as God's husbandmen we be employed in plowing, sowing, or reaping; our Lord will reward us secundum laborem, non fructum; not according to our success, but according to our endeavours. The care and endeavour is ours, but the blessing and success is God's.

28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God ? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

32 but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Mt 13:31,32, Lk 13:18,19

Jesus' Use of Parables

33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.
34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Jesus Calms a Storm

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

See Mt 8:18-27.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.
37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.
38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?
39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.
40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?
41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ?

Mark-5

The Gadarene Demoniac Healed

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

See notes on Mt 8:28-34.

3 who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

An account of the conduct of the poor man after his deliverance. 1. He desired that he might go along with Christ (Mk 5:18), perhaps for fear lest the evil spirit should again seize him; or, rather, that he might receive instruction from him, being unwilling to stay among those heathenish people that desired him to depart. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, cannot but covet acquaintance and fellowship with Christ. 2. Christ would not suffer him to go with him, lest it should savour of ostentation, and to let him know that he could both protect and instruct him at a distance. And besides, he had other work for him to do; he must go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him, the Lord Jesus had done; that Christ might be honoured, and his neighbours and friends might be edified, and invited to believe in Christ. He must take particular notice rather of Christ's pity than of his power, for that is it which especially he glories in; he must tell them what compassion the Lord had had on him in his misery. 3. The man, in a transport of joy, proclaimed, all the country over, what great things Jesus had done for him, Mk 5:20. This is a debt we owe both to Christ and to our brethren, that he may be glorified and they edified. And see what was the effect of it; All men did marvel, but few went any further. Many that cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, wonder after him.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea.

See the account of the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, fully explained Mt 9:18 and Mt 9:19-26.

22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

23 and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

24 And Jesus went with him.

And much people followed him, and thronged him.
25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,
26 and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,
27 when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.
28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.
29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.
30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes ?
31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?
32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.
33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.
34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole;
go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.
35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any further?
36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.
37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and
John the brother of James.
38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.
39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.
40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.
41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee,) arise.
42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.
43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Mark-6

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

See this passage explained Mt 13:54 and Mt 13:55-58.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things ? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he went round about the villages, teaching.

The Mission of the Twelve

7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;

See notes on Mt 10:5-18

they were commanded not to go among the Gentiles or Samaritans. Mark omits that direction, perhaps, because he was writing for the Gentiles, and the direction might create unnecessary difficulty or offence. Perhaps he omits it also because the command was given for a temporary purpose, and was not in force at tile time of his writing.

8 and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:

9 but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.

10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart from that place.

11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.
12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent.
13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad;) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.

See this account of the death of John the Baptist fully explained in Mt 14:1-12.

15 Others said, That it is Elijah. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets.
16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.
17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her.
18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.
19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:
20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.
21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee;
22 and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee.
23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.
24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist.
25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist.

26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her.
27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison,
28 and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother.
29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

> And the apostles gathered themselves together. That is, those whom he had sent out two and two, Mk 6:7. Having travelled around the country, they returned and met the Saviour at Capernaum.

31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.
32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.
33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him.
34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

> They had no one to teach them, and guide them. The priests and scribes were proud, corrupt, and despised the common people and neglected them.

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed:

> See notes on Mt 13:14-21

36 send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.
37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?
38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass.
40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.
41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all.
42 And they did all eat, and were filled.
43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes.
44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

See notes on Mt 14:22-33

46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.
47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.
48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.
49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:
50 for they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.
51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.
52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened.

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

See notes on Mt 14:34-36

54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,
55 and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Mark-7

The Things That Defile

1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem.

See notes on Mt 15:1-20

2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault.
3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders.
4 And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables.
5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands?
6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written,
This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me,
teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.
9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of
God, that ye may keep your own tradition.
10 For Moses said,
Honor thy father and thy mother;
and,
Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:
11 but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.
12 And ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or his mother;
13 making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:
15 there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.
16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.
18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;
19 because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats ?
20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.
21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,
22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:
23 all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid.

See this miracle explained in Mt 15:21-28.

25 For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet:
26 the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.
27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.
28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs.
29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.
30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Jesus Heals a Deaf and Dumb Man

31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.

See here, 1. The bitter fruits and sad effects of sin, which has brought deafness, dumbness, and blindness, upon the human nature. As death, so all diseases entered into the world by sin; sin first brought infirmitities and mortality into our natures, and the wages of sin are diseases and death.

Observe, 2. That the blessing of bodily health and healing is from Christ; who by his divine power, as he was God, miraculously and immediately healed them that were brought unto him.

Observe, 3. The actions and gestures which our Saviour used in healing this deaf person. He puts his finger into his ears, he spit, and touched his tongue. Not that these were means or natural causes effecting the cures for there was no healing virtue in the spittle; but only outward signs, testimonies, and pledges, of Christ's divine power and gracious readiness to cure the person in distress.

Observe, 4. How Christ withdrew the person from the multitude, whom he was about to help and heal. Teaching us, In all our good works to avoid all shew and appearance of ostentation and vain-glory: to set God's glory before our eyes, and not to seek our own praise.

Observe, 5. The effect which this miracle had upon the multitude; it occasioned their astonishment and applause: They were astonished, and said, He hath done all things well. It becomes us both to take notice of the wonderful works of God, and also to magnify and extol the author of them. This is one way of glorifying our Creator.

32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him.
33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue;
34 and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened.
35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.
36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;
37 and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Mark-8

The Feeding of the Four Thousand

1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

See notes on Mt 15:32-39.

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:
3 and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far.
4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?
5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye ? And they said, Seven.
6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.
7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them.
8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets.
9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.
10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

The Demand for a Sign

11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

See this passage explained in Mt 16:1-12.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign ? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

The Leaven of the Pharisees

14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread.

17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread ? perceive ye not yet, neither understand ? have ye your heart yet hardened ?

18 Having eyes, see ye not ? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember ?

19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve.

20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.

21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

A Blind Man Healed at Bethsaida

22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him.

Here is a blind man brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would touch him, Mk 8:22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him--they doubted not but that one touch of Christ's hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not

that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them.

23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught.

Here is Christ leading this blind man, Mk 8:23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which bespeaks his wonderful condescension) he himself took him by the hand, and led him, to teach us to be as Job was, eyes to the blind, Job 29:15. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him out of the town. Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, into an inner chamber, and have cured him there; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida with the mighty works that had in vain been done in her (Mt 11:21), and was telling her, in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man out of the town, that he might have a larger prospect in the open fields, to try his sight with, than he could have in the close streets.

24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.

25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up; and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.

Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world to preach the recovering of sight to the blind (Lu 4:18), and to give what he preached. In this cure we may observe,

1. That Christ used a sign; he spat on his eyes (spat into them, so some), and put his hand upon him. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith which was very weak, and to help him against his unbelief. And this spittle signified the eye-salve wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, Re 3:18.

2. That the cure was wrought gradually, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He asked him if he saw aught, Mk 8:23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him. And he looked up; so far he recovered his sight, that he could

open his eyes, and he said, I see men as trees walking; he could not distinguish men from trees, otherwise than he could discern them to move. He had some glimmerings of sight, and betwixt him and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but could not discern the form thereof, Job 4:16. But,

3. It was soon completed; Christ never doeth his work by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, It is finished. He put his hands again upon his eyes, to disperse the remaining darkness, and then bade him look up again, and he saw every man clearly, Mk 8:25. Now Christ took this way,

(a) Because he would not tie himself to a method, but would show with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by rote, as I may say, and in a road, but varied as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an implicit faith.

(b) Because it should be to the patient according to his faith; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebuke upon those who came to him, doubting.

(c) Thus Christ would show how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are spiritually blind; at first, their knowledge is confused, they see men as trees walking; but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly, Pr 4:18. Let us enquire then, if we see aught of those things which faith is the substance and evidence of; and if through grace we see any thing of them, we may hope that we shall see yet more and more, for Jesus Christ will perfect for ever those that are sanctified.

26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

The directions Christ gave the man he had cured, not to tell it to any in the town of Bethsaida, nor so much as to go into the town, where

probably there were some expecting him to come back, who had seen Christ lead him out of the town, but, having been eyewitnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him: let not those be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, who would not show so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of the town, to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell it to any in the town. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethsaida, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are hid from her eyes. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

Peter's Confession

27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

See this passage illustrated in Mt 16:13-28.

28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elijah; and others, One of the prophets.

29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.

30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

Jesus Foretells His Death

31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.
36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Mark-9

1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The Transfiguration

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

See this passage explained; Mt 17:1-13

3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.
4 And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.
5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.
6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.
7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.
8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.
9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them
that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.

10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.
11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come?
12 And he answered and told them, Elijah verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought.
13 But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

See notes on Mt 17:14-21

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.
16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?
17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;
18 and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.
19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him unto me.
20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.
21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him ? And he said, Of a child.
22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.
23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.
24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.
25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.
27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.
28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?
29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it.

See notes on Mt 17:22,23

31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.
32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

See notes on Mt 18:2-6

34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.
35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.
36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them,
37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

He That Is Not against Us Is for Us

38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us; and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.

He rebukes them for vilifying all but themselves; while they are striving which of them should be greatest, they will not allow those who are not in communion with them to be any thing. Observe,

1 The account which John gave him, of the restraint they had laid upon one from making use of the name of Christ, because he was not of their society. Though they were ashamed to own their contests for preferment, they seem to boast of this exercise of their authority, and expected their Master would not only justify them in it, but commend them for it; and hoped he would not blame them for desiring to be great, when they would thus use their power for maintaining the honour of the sacred college. Master, saith John, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, but he followeth not us, Mk 9:38.

(a) It was strange that the one who was not a professed disciple and follower of Christ, should yet have power to cast out devils, in his name, for that seemed to be peculiar to those whom he called, Mk 6:7. But some think that he was a disciple of John, who made use of the name of the Messiah, not as come, but as near at hand, not knowing that Jesus was he. It should rather seem that he made use of the name of Jesus, believing him to be the Christ, as the other disciples did. And why not he receive that power from Christ, whose Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth, without such an outward call as the apostles had? And perhaps there were many more such. Christ's grace is not tied to the visible church.

(b) It was strange that one who cast out devils in the name of Christ, did not join himself to the apostles, and follow Christ with them, but should continue to act in separation from them. I know of nothing that could hinder him from following them, unless because he was loth to leave all to follow them; and if so, that was an ill principle. The thing did not look well, and therefore the disciples forbade him to make use of Christ's name as they did, unless he would follow him as they did. This was like the motion Joshua made concerning Eldad and Medad, that prophesied in the camp, and went not up with the rest to the door of the tabernacle; "My lord Moses, forbid them

(Nu 11:28); restrain them, silence them, for it is a schism." Thus apt are we to imagine that those do not follow Christ at all, who do not follow him with us, and that those do nothing well, who do not just as we do. But the Lord knows them that are his, however they are dispersed; and this instance gives us a needful caution, to take heed lest we be carried, by an excess of zeal for the unity of the church, and for that which we are sure is right and good, to oppose that which yet may tend to the enlargement of the church, and the advancement of its true interests another way.

2 The rebuke he gave to them for this (Mk 9:39); Jesus said, "Forbid him not, nor any other that does likewise." This was like the check Moses gave to Joshua; Enviest thou for my sake? Note, That which is good, and doeth good, must not be prohibited, though there be some defect or irregularity in the manner of doing it. Casting out devils, and so destroying Satan's kingdom, doing this in Christ's name, and so owning him to be sent of God, and giving honour to him as the Fountain of grace, preaching down sin, and preaching up Christ, are good things, very good things, which ought not to be forbidden to any, merely because they follow not with us. If Christ be preached, Paul therein doth, and will rejoice, though he be eclipsed by it, Php 1:18. Two reasons Christ gives why such should not be forbidden.

(a) Because we cannot suppose that any man who makes use of Christ's name in working miracles, should blaspheme his name, as the scribes and Pharisees did. There were those indeed that did in Christ's name cast out devils, and yet in other respects were workers of iniquity; but they did not speak evil of Christ.

(b) Because those that differed in communion, while they agreed to fight against Satan under the banner of Christ, ought to look upon one another as on the same side, notwithstanding that difference. He that is not against us is on our part. As to the great controversy between Christ an Beelzebub, he had said, He that is not with me is against me, Mt 12:30. He that will not own Christ, owns Satan. But as to those that own Christ, though not in the same circumstances, that follow him, though not with us, we must reckon that though

these differ from us, they are not against us, and therefore are on our part, and we must not be any hindrance to their usefulness.

39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.

40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Temptations to Sin

42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

See Mt 18:7-9.

He threatens those that offend his little ones, that wilfully are the occasion of sin or trouble to them, Mk 9:42. Whosoever shall grieve any true Christians, though they be of the weakest, shall oppose their entrance into the ways of God, or discourage and obstruct their progress in those ways, shall either restrain them from doing good, or draw them in to commit sin, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea: his punishment will be very great, and the death and ruin of his soul more terrible than such a death and ruin of his body would be. See Mt 18:6.

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

He warns all his followers to take heed of ruining their own souls. This charity must begin at home; if we must take heed of doing any thing to hinder others from good, and to occasion their sin, much more careful must we be to avoid every thing that will take us off from our duty, or lead us to sin; and that which doth so we must part with, though it be ever so dear to us. This we had twice in Matthew, Mt 5:29,30,18:8,9. It is here urged somewhat more largely and pressingly; certainly this requires our serious regard, which is so much insisted upon. Observe,

1 The case supposed, that our own hand, or eye, or foot, offend us; that the impure corruption we indulge is as dear to us as an eye or a hand, or that that which is to us as an eye or a hand, is become an invisible temptation to sin, or occasion of it. Suppose the beloved is become a sin, or the sin a beloved. Suppose we cannot keep that which is dear to us, but it will be a snare and a stumbling-block; suppose we must part with it, or part with Christ and a good conscience.

2 The duty prescribed in that case; Pluck out the eye, cut off the hand and foot, mortify the darling lust, kill it, crucify it, starve it, make no provision for it. Let the idols that have been delectable things, be cast away as detestable things; keep at a distance from that which is a temptation, though ever so pleasing. It is necessary that the part which is gangrened, should be taken off for the preservation of the whole. Immedicabile vulnus ense recidendum est, ne pars sincera trahatur--The part that is incurably wounded must be cut off, lest the parts that are sound be corrupted. We must put ourselves to pain, that we may not bring ourselves to ruin; self must be denied, that it may not be destroyed.

3. The necessity of doing this. The flesh must be mortified, that we may enter into life (Mk 9:43,45), into the kingdom of God, Mk 9:47. Though, by abandoning sin, we may, for the present, feel ourselves as if we were halt and maimed (it may seem to be a force put upon ourselves, and may create us some uneasiness), yet it is for life; and all that men have, they will give for their lives: it is for a kingdom, the kingdom of God, which we cannot otherwise obtain; these halts and maims will be the marks of the Lord Jesus, will be in that kingdom scars of honour.

4. The danger of not doing this. The matter is brought to this issue, that either sin must die, or we must die. If we will lay this Delilah in our bosom, it will betray us; if we be ruled by sin, we shall inevitably be ruined by it; if we must keep our two hands, and two eyes, and two feet, we must with them be cast into hell. Our Saviour often

pressed our duty upon us, from the consideration of the torments of hell, which we run ourselves into if we continue in sin. With what an emphasis of terror are those words repeated three times here, Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched! The words are quoted from Isa 66:24.

(a) The reflections and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the worm that dieth not; which will cleave to the damned soul as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it till it is quite devoured. Son, remember, will set this worm gnawing; and how terrible will it bite that word (Pr 5:12,23), How have I hated instruction! The soul that is food to this worm, dies not; and the worm is bred in it, and one with it, and therefore neither doth that die. Damned sinners will be to eternity accusing, condemning, and upbraiding, themselves with their own follies, which, how much soever they are now in love with them, will at the last bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

(b) The wrath of God fastening upon a guilty and polluted conscience, is the fire that is not quenched; for it is the wrath of the living God, the eternal God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall. There are no operations of the Spirit of grace upon the souls of the damned sinners, and therefore there is nothing to alter the nature of the fuel, which must remain for ever combustible; nor is there any application of the merit of Christ to them, and therefore there is nothing to appease or quench the violence of the fire. Dr. Whitby shows that the eternity of the torments of hell was not only the constant faith of the Christian church, but had been so of the Jewish church. Josephus saith, The Pharisees held that the souls of the wicked were to be punished with perpetual punishment; and that there was appointed for them a perpetual prison. And Philo saith, The punishment of the wicked is to live for ever dying, and to be for ever in pains and griefs that never cease.

44 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life,
than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:
46 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:
48 where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.

The Mk 9:49,50 are somewhat difficult, and interpreters agree not in the sense of them; for every one in general, or rather every one of them that are cast into hell, shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Therefore have salt in yourselves.

[1.] It was appointed by the law of Moses, that every sacrifice should be salted with salt, not to preserve it (for it was to be immediately consumed), but because it was the food of God's table, and no flesh is eaten without salt; it was therefore particularly required in the meat-offerings, Le 2:13.

[2.] The nature of man, being corrupt, and as such being called flesh (Ge 6:3,Ps 78:39), some way or other must be salted, in order to its being a sacrifice to God. The salting of fish (and I think of other things) they call the curing of it.

[3.] Our chief concern is, to present ourselves living sacrifices to the grace of God (Ro 12:1), and, in order to our acceptableness, we must be salted with salt, our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Thus the offering up or sacrificing of the Gentiles is said to be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, as the sacrifices were salted, Ro 15:16.

[4.] Those that have the salt of grace, must make it appear that they have it; that they have salt in themselves, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out all corrupt dispositions, and every thing in the soul that tends to putrefaction, and would offend our God, or our own consciences, as unsavoury meat doth. Our speech must be always with grace seasoned with this salt, that no corrupt communication may proceed out of our mouth, but we may loathe it as much as we would to put putrid meat into our mouths.

[5.] As this gracious salt will keep our own consciences void of offence, so it will keep our conversation with others so, that we may not offend any of Christ's little ones, but may be at peace one with another.

[6.] We must not only have this salt of grace, but we must always retain the relish and savour of it; for if this salt lose its saltiness, if a Christian revolt from his Christianity, if he loses the savour of it, and be no longer under the power and influence of it, what can recover him, or wherewith will ye season him? This was said Mt 5:13.

[7.] Those that present not themselves living sacrifices to God's grace, shall be made for ever dying sacrifices to his justice, and since they would not give honour to him, he will get him honour upon them; they would not be salted with the salt of divine grace, would not admit that to subdue their corrupt affections, no, they would not submit to the operation, could not bear the corrosives that were necessary to eat out the proud flesh, it was to them like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye; and therefore in hell they shall be salted with fire; coals of fire shall be scattered upon them (Eze 10:2), as salt upon the meat, and brimstone (Job 18:15), as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom; the pleasures they have lived in, shall eat their flesh, as it were with fire, Jam 5:3. The pain of mortifying the flesh now is no more to be compared with the punishment for not mortifying it, than salting with burning. And since he had said, that the fire of hell shall not be quenched, but it might be objected, that the fuel will not last always, he here intimates, that by the power of God it shall be made to last always; for those that are cast into hell, will find the fire to have not only the corroding quality of salt, but its preserving quality; whence it is used to signify that which is lasting: a covenant of salt is a perpetual covenant, and Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt, made her a remaining monument of divine vengeance. Now since this will certainly be the doom of those that do not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, let us, knowing this terror of the Lord, be persuaded to do it.

50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?
Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Every one shall be salted with fire. PERHAPS NO PASSAGE IN THE New Testament has given more perplexity to commentators than this; and it may be impossible now to fix its precise meaning. The common meaning affixed to it has been, that as salt preserves from putrefaction, so fire, applied to the wicked in hell, shall have the property of preserving them in existence, or they shall be preserved amidst the sprinkling of fire, to be continually, in their sufferings, a sacrifice to the justice of God. But this meaning is not quite satisfactory. Another opinion has been, that as salt is sprinkled on the victim preparatory to its being devoted to God, (Lev 2:13) so should the apostles, by trials, calamities, etc., represented here by fire be prepared as a sacrifice and offering to God. Probably the passage has not reference at all to future punishment; and the difficulty of interpreting it has arisen from supposing it connected with the 48th verse, or given as a reason for what is said in that verse, rather than considering it as designed to illustrate the general design of the passage. The main scope of the passage was not to discourse of future punishment. That is brought in incidentally. The chief object of the passage was,

(1st) to teach them that other men, not with them, might be true Christians, Mk 9:38,39.

(2nd.) That they should be disposed to look favourably upon the slightest evidence that they might be, Mk 9:41

(3rd.) That they ought to avoid giving offence to such feeble and obscure Christians, Mk 9:42.

(4th.) That everything calculated to give offence, or to dishonour religion, should be removed, Mk 9:43. And,

(5th.) that everything which would endanger their salvation should be sacrificed; that they should deny themselves and practise all self-

denials, in order to obtain eternal life. In this way they would be preserved to eternal life. The word "fire" here, therefore, denotes self-denials, sacrifices, trials, in keeping ourselves from the gratification of the flesh. As if he had said: "Look at the sacrifice on the altar. It is an offering to God, about to be presented to him. It is sprinkled with salt, emblematic of PURITY, of PRESERVATION, and of fitting it, therefore, for a sacrifice. So you are devoted to God. YOU are sacrifices, victims, offerings, to him in his service. To make you acceptable offerings, everything must be done to preserve you from sin, to purify you, and to make you fit offerings. Self-denials, subduing the lusts, enduring trials, removing offences, are the proper preservatives in the service of God. Doing this, you will be acceptable offerings, and be saved; without this, you will be unfit for his eternal service, and will be lost."

Mark-10

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.

See notes on Mt 19:3-12

3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.
12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

13 And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.

Mt 19:13-15

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.
15 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.
16 And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

The Rich Young Ruler

17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

See notes on Mt 19:16-30.

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.
19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.
20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.
21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.
22 And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.
23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

24 And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God !
25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved ?
27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.
28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.
29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,
30 but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.
31 But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

32 And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him,

See notes on Mt 20:17-19

33 saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:
34 and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again.

The Request of James and John

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

See notes on Mt 20:20-28.

36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ?
37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.

38 But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of ? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?
39 And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized:
40 but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give;
but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.
41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with
James and John.
42 But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that
they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.
43 But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:
44 and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.
45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Blind Bartimeus Receives Sight

46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side begging.

Blind Bartimaeus. Matthew says there were two. Mark mentions but one, though he does not deny that there was another. He mentions this man because he was well known--Bartimaeus, THE blind man.

See notes on Mt 20:29-34.

47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.
48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.
49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.
50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.
51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.

52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Mark-11

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

See this passage illustrated in Mt 21:1-16

2 and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.

3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him;
and he sat upon him.

8 And many spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way.

9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

See notes on Mt 21:18-22

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13 and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.
14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

The Cleansing of the Temple

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and
overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves;
16 and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.
17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.
18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.
19 And when even was come, he went out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.
21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.
22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.
23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.
24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.
26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Jesus' Authority Questioned

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders,
28 and say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things?

See notes on Mt 21:23-27

29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.
30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.
31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?
32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.
33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mark-12

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the winevat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

See this parable explained in Notes on Mt 21:33-46

2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.
3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.
4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled.
5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some.
6 Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.
7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.
8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.
9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

10 And have ye not read this Scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner:
11 this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?
12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.

See notes on Mt 22:16-22

14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man; for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?
15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.
16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.
17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him.

The Question about the Resurrection

18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying,

See this passage fully explained in Mt 22:23-33.

19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.
20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed.
21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise.
22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also.
23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them ? for the seven had her to wife.
24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God ?

25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven.
26 And as touching the dead, that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?
27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The Great Commandment

28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all ?

See notes on Mt 22:34-40

29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is,
Hear, O Israel;
The Lord our God is one Lord:
30 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:
this is the first commandment.
31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
There is none other commandment greater than these.
32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:
33 and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

The Question about David's Son

35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?

See notes on Mt 22:41-46

36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.

37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places,

See notes on Mt 23

39 and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts:

40 which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

The Widow's Offering

41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

This passage of story was not in Matthew, but is here and in Luke; it is Christ's commendation of the poor widow, that cast two mites into the treasury, which our Saviour, busy as he was in preaching, found leisure to take notice of. Observe,

I. There was a public fund for charity, into which contributions were brought, and out of which distributions were made; a poor's-box, and this in the temple; for works of charity and works of piety very fitly go together; where God is honoured by our worship, it is proper he should be honoured by the relief of his poor; and we often find prayers and alms in conjunction, as Ac 10:2,4. It is good to erect public receptacles of charity for the inviting and directing of private hands in giving to the poor; nay it is good for those who are of ability to have funds of their own, to lay by as God has prospered them (1Co 16:2), that they might have something ready to give when an object of charity offers itself, which is before dedicated to such uses.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye upon it; He sat over against the treasury, and beheld now the people cast money into it; not grudging either that he had none to cast in, or had not the disposal of that which

was cast in, but observing what was cast in. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of what we contribute to pious and charitable uses; whether we give liberally or sparingly; whether cheerfully or with reluctance and ill-will; nay, he looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men.

III. He saw many that were rich cast in much: and it was a good sight to see rich people charitable, to see many rich people so, and to see them not only cast in, but cast in much. Note, Those that are rich, ought to give richly; if God give abundantly to us, he expects we should give abundantly to the poor; and it is not enough for those that are rich, to say, that they give as much as others do, who perhaps have much less of the world than they have, but they must give in proportion to their estates; and if objects of charity do not present themselves, that require so much, they ought to enquire them out, and to devise liberal things.

IV. There was a poor widow that cast in two mites, which make a farthing (Mk 12:42); and our Lord Jesus highly commended her; called his disciples to him, and bid them take notice of it (Mk 12:43); told them that she could very ill spare that which she gave, she had scarcely enough for herself, it was all her living, all she had to live upon for that day, and perhaps a great part of what she had earned by her labour the day before; and that forasmuch as he knew she did it from a truly charitable disposition, he reckoned it more than all that put together, which the rich people threw in; for they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want, Mk 12:44. Now many would have been ready to censure this poor widow, and to think she did ill; why should she give to others, when she had little enough for herself? Charity begins at home; or, if she would give it, why did she not bestow it upon some poor body that she knew? What occasion was there for her bringing it to the treasury to be disposed of by the chief priests, who, we have reason to fear, were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her; and yet our Saviour commends her, and therefore

we are sure that she did very well and wisely. If Christ saith, Well-done, no matter who saith otherwise; and we must hence learn,

1. That giving alms, is an excellent good thing, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus; and if we be humble and sincere in it, he will graciously accept of it, though in some circumstances there may not be all the discretion in the world.

2. Those that have but a little, ought to give alms out of their little. Those that live by their labour, from hand to mouth, must give to those that need, Eph 4:28.

3. It is very good for us to straiten and deny ourselves, that we may be able to give the more to the poor; to deny ourselves not only superfluities, but even conveniences, for the sake of charity. We should in many cases pinch ourselves, that we may supply the necessities of others; this is loving our neighbours as ourselves.

4. Public charities should be encouraged, for they bring upon a nation public blessings; and though there may be some mismanagement of them, yet that is not a good reason why we should not bring in our quota to them.

5. Though we can give but a little in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not; two mites shall be put upon the score, and brought to account, if given in a right manner, as if they had been two pounds.

6. It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only to our power, but beyond our power, as the Macedonian churches, whose deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality, 2Co 8:2,3. When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision, as the widow of Sarepta for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, this is thank-worthy.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.
43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:
44 for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Mark-13

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs before the End

1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here !

The principal things in this chapter are fully explained in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew.

2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings ? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,
4 Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled ?
5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:
6 for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.
8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.
9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.
10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations.
11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.
13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains:
15 and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:
16 and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.
17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days !
18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.
19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.
20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.
21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:
22 for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.
23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Coming of the Son of Man

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,
25 and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.
26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.
27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.
28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:
29 so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.
31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.
32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.
33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.
34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.
35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:
36 lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.
37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Mark-14

The Leaders Plot against Jesus

1 After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death.

See this passage explained in Mt 26:1-16

2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

3 And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.
4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?
5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.
6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.
8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.
9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.
11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples

12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

See notes on Mt 16:17-19

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.
14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?
15 And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared:
there make ready for us.
16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

See notes on Mt 26:20-35.

18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.
19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is
it I? and another said, Is it I?
20 And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.

21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed ! good were it for that man if he had never been born.
22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it,
and gave to them, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.
23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.
24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.
25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Peter's Denial Foretold

26 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written,
I will smite the shepherd,
and the sheep shall be scattered.
28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.
29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not
I.
30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even
in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.
31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

See notes on Mt 26:36-46

33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;
34 and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death:
tarry ye here, and watch.
35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

36 And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.
37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou ? couldest not thou watch one hour ?
38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.
39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.
40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.
41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.
44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely.
45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, Master; and kissed him.
46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

See notes on Mat 26:49-75

47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.
48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?
49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.
50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

The Young Man Who Fled

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:
52 and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Jesus before the Council

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.
54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.
55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.
56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.
57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,
58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.
59 But neither so did their witness agree together.
60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?
61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?
62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.
63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses?
64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye ? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.
65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Peter Denies Jesus

66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest:
67 and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.
68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.
69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.
71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.
72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Mark-15

Jesus before Pilate

1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate.

See the principal events in this chapter explained in Mt 27.

2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.
3 And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing.
4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing?
behold how many things they witness against thee.
5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

6 Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.
7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in
the insurrection.
8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.
9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?
10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.
11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?
13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.
14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.
15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.
16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Pretorium;
and they call together the whole band.
17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,
18 and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews !
19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him.
20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.
22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.
23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.
24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.
25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.
26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The king of the jews.
27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.
28 And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.
29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,
30 save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.
32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.
33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.
34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elijah.
36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.
37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.
38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.
39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.
40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;
41 who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

The Burial of Jesus

42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,
43 Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.
44 And Pilate marveled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead.
45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.
46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

Mark-16

The Resurrection

1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

See this passage explained on Mt 28:1-8

2 And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

And Peter. It is remarkable that Peter is singled out for special notice. It was proof of the kindness and mercy of the Lord Jesus. Peter, just before the death of Jesus, had denied him. He had brought dishonour on his profession of attachment to him. He had been brought to see the crime, and to weep bitterly. It would have been right if the Lord Jesus had from that moment cast him off, and noticed him no more. But he loved him still. Having loved him once, he loved unto the end, Jn 13:1. As a proof that he forgave him, and still loved him, he sent him this special message---the assurance that though he had denied him, and had done much to aggravate his sufferings, yet he had risen, and was still his Lord and Redeemer. We are not to infer, because the

angel said, "Tell his disciples and Peter," that Peter was not still a disciple. The meaning is, "Tell his disciples, and especially Peter:" sending to him a particular message. Peter was still a disciple. Before his fall, Jesus had prayed for him that his faith should not fail, (Lk 22:32;) and as the prayer of Jesus was always heard, Jn 11:42, so it follows that Peter still retained faith sufficient to be a disciple though, like other disciples, he was suffered to fall into sin.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.
10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.
11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.
13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

Jesus Commissions the Eleven

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

See notes on Mt 28:17-20.

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.
16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
18 they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

19 So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The Gospel According To St. Luke

[Luke]

Luke-1

Dedication to Theophilus

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
2 even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
3 it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
4 that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Complimental prefaces and dedications, the language of flattery and the food and fuel of pride, are justly condemned by the wise and good; but it doth not therefore follow, that such as are useful and instructive are to be run down; such is this, in which St. Luke dedicates his gospel to his friend Theophilus, not as to his patron, though he was a man of honour, to protect it, but as to his pupil, to learn it, and hold it fast. It is not certain who this Theophilus was; the name signifies a friend of God; some think that it does not mean any particular person, but every one that is a lover of God; Dr. Hammond quotes some of the ancients understanding it so: and then it teaches us, that those who are truly lovers of God, will heartily welcome the gospel of Christ, the design and tendency of which are, to bring us to God. But it is rather to be understood of some particular person, probably a magistrate; because Luke gives him here the same title of respect which St. Paul gave to Festus the governor, kratiste (Ac 26:25), which we there translate most noble Festus, and here most excellent Theophilus. Note, Religion does not destroy civility and good manners, but teaches us, according to the usages of our country, to give honour to them to whom honour is due.

Now observe here,

I. Why St. Luke wrote this gospel. It is certain that he was moved by the Holy Ghost, not only to the writing, but in the writing of it; but in both he was moved as a reasonable creature, and not as a mere machine; and he was made to consider,

1. That the things he wrote of were things that were most surely believed among all Christians, and therefore things which they ought to be instructed in, that they may know what they believe, and things which ought to be transmitted to posterity (who are as much concerned in them as we are); and, in order to that, to be committed to writing, which is the surest way of conveyance to the ages to come. He will not write about things of doubtful disputation, things about which Christians may safely differ from one another and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be, most surely believed, pragmata peplerophoremena--the things which were performed (so some), which Christ and his apostles did, and did with such circumstances as gave a full assurance that they were really done, so that they have gained an established lasting credit. Note, Though it is not the foundation of our faith, yet it is a support to it, that the articles of our creed are things that have been long most surely believed. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men have ventured their souls upon with the greatest assurance and satisfaction.

2. That it was requisite there should be a declaration made in order of those things; that the history of the life of Christ should be methodized, and committed to writing, for the greater certainty of the conveyance. When things are put in order, we know the better where to find them for our own use, and how to keep them for the benefit of others.

3. That there were many who had undertaken to publish narratives of the life of Christ, many well-meaning people, who designed well, and did well, and what they published had done good, though not done by divine inspiration, nor so well done as might be, nor intended for perpetuity. Note,

(a) The labours of others in the gospel of Christ, if faithful and honest, we ought to commend and encourage, and not to despise, though chargeable with many deficiencies.

(b) Others' services to Christ must not be reckoned to supersede ours, but rather to quicken them.

4. That the truth of the things he had to write was confirmed by the concurring testimony of those who were competent and unexceptionable witnesses of them; what had been published in writing already, and what he was now about to publish, agreed with that which had been delivered by word of mouth, over and over, by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, Lu 1:2. Note,

(a) The apostles were ministers of the word of Christ, who is the Word (so some understand it), or of the doctrine of Christ; they, having received it themselves, ministered it to others, 1Jo 1:1. They had not a gospel to make as masters, but a gospel to preach as ministers.

(b) The ministers of the word were eye-witnesses of the things which they preached, and, which is also included, ear-witnesses. They did themselves hear the doctrine of Christ, and see his miracles, and had them not by report, at second hand; and therefore they could not but speak, with the greatest assurance, the things which they had seen and heard, Ac 4:20.

(c) They were so from the beginning of Christ's ministry, Lu 1:2. He had his disciples with him when he wrought his first miracle, Joh 2:11. They companied with him all the time he went in and out among them (Ac 1:21), so that they not only heard and saw all that which was sufficient to confirm their faith, but, if there had been any thing to shock it, they had opportunity to discover it.

(d) The written gospel, which we have to this day, exactly agrees with the gospel which was preached in the first days of the church.

(e) That he himself had a perfect understanding of the things he wrote of, from the first, Lu 1:3. Some think that here is a tacit reflection upon those who had written before him, that they had not a perfect understanding of what they wrote, and therefore, Here am I, send me (--facit indignatio versum--my wrath impels my pen); or rather, without reflecting on them, he asserts his own ability for this undertaking: "It seemed good to me, having attained to the exact knowledge of all things, anothen--from above;" so I think it should be rendered; for if he meant the same with from the beginning (Lu 1:2), as our translation intimates, he would have used the same word.

[1.] He had diligently searched into these things, had followed after them (so the word is), as the Old-Testament prophets are said to have enquired and searched diligently, 1Pe 1:10. He had not taken things so easily and superficially as others who had written before him, but made it his business to inform himself concerning particulars.

[2.] He had received his intelligence, not only by tradition, as others had done, but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from any error or mistake in the recording of it. He sought it from above (so the word intimates), and from thence he had it; thus, like Elihu, he fetched his knowledge from afar. He wrote his history as Moses wrote his, of things reported by tradition, but ratified by inspiration.

[3.] He could therefore say that he had a perfect understanding of these things. He knew them, akribos--accurately, exactly. "Now, having received this from above, it seemed good to me to communicate it;" for such a talent as this ought not to be buried.

II. Observe why he sent it to Theophilus: "I wrote unto thee these things in order, not that thou mayest give reputation to the work, but that thou mayest be edified by it (Lu 1:4); that thou mayest know the certainty of those things wherein thou has been instructed."

1. It is implied, that he had been instructed in these things either before his baptism, or since, or both, according to the rule, Mt 28:19,20.

Probably, Luke had baptized him, and knew how well instructed he was; peri hon katechethes--concerning which thou hast been catechized; so the word is; the most knowing Christians began with being catechized. Theophilus was a person of quality, perhaps of noble birth; and so much the more pains should be taken with such when they are young, to teach them the principles of the oracles of God, that they may be fortified against temptations, and furnished for the opportunities, of a high condition in the world.

2. It was intended that he should know the certainty of those things, should understand them more clearly and believe more firmly. There is a certainty in the gospel of Christ, there is that therein which we may build upon; and those who have been well instructed in the things of God when they were young should afterwards give diligence to know the certainty of those things, to know not only what we believe, but why we believe it, that we may be able to give a reason of the hope that is in us.

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

The two preceding evangelists had agreed to begin the gospel with the baptism of John and his ministry, which commenced about six months before our Saviour's public ministry (and now, things being near a crisis, six months was a deal of time, which before was but a little), and therefore this evangelist, designing to give a more particular account than had been given of our Saviour's conception and birth, determines to do so of John Baptist, who in both was his harbinger and forerunner, the morning-star to the Sun of righteousness. The evangelist determines thus, not only because it is commonly reckoned a satisfaction and entertainment to know something of the original extraction and early days of those who afterwards prove great men, but because in the beginning of these there were many things miraculous, and presages of what they afterwards proved. In these verses our inspired historian begins as early as the conception of John Baptist. Now observe here,

The account given of his parents (Lu 1:5): They lived in the days of Herod the king, who was a foreigner, and a deputy for the Romans, who had lately made Judea a province of the empire. This is taken notice of to show that the sceptre was quite departed from Judah, and therefore that now was the time for Shiloh to come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Ge 49:10. The family of David was now sunk, when it was to rise, and flourish again, in the Messiah. Note, None ought to despair of the reviving and flourishing of religion, even when civil liberties are lost. Israel enslaved, yet then comes the glory of Israel.

Now the father of John Baptist was a priest, a son of Aaron; his name Zacharias. No families in the world were ever so honoured of God as those of Aaron and David; with one was made the covenant of priesthood, with the other that of royalty; they had both forfeited their honour, yet the gospel again puts honour upon both in their latter days, on that of Aaron in John Baptist, on that of David in Christ, and then they were both extinguished and lost. Christ was of David's house, his forerunner of Aaron's; for his priestly agency and influence opened the way to his kingly authority and dignity. This Zacharias was of the course of Abia. When in David's time the family of Aaron was multiplied, he divided them into twenty-four courses, for the more regular performances of their office, that it might never be either neglected for want of hands or engrossed by a few. The eighth of those was that of Abia (1Ch 24:10), who was descended from Eleazar, Aaron's eldest son; but Dr. Lightfoot suggests that many of the families of the priests were lost in the captivity, so that after their return they took in those of other families, retaining the names of the heads of the respective courses. The wife of this Zacharias was of the daughters of Aaron too, and her name was Elisabeth, the very same name with Elisheba the wife of Aaron, Ex 6:23. The priests (Josephus saith) was very careful to marry within their own family, that they might maintain the dignity of the priesthood and keep it without mixture.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

That they were a very religious couple (Lu 1:6): They were both righteous before God; they were so in his sight whose judgment, we are

sure, is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. They are righteous indeed that are so before God, as Noah in his generation, Ge 7:1. They approved themselves to him, and he was graciously pleased to accept them. It is a happy thing when those who are joined to each other in marriage are both joined to the Lord; and it is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord's ministers, should with their yoke-fellows be righteous before God, that they may be examples to the flock, and rejoice their hearts. They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.

(1.) Their being righteous before God was evidenced by the course and tenour of their conversations; they showed it, not by their talk, but by their works; by the way they walked in and the rule they walked by.

(2.) They were of a piece with themselves; for their devotions and their conversations agreed. They walked not only in the ordinances of the Lord, which related to divine worship, but in the commandments of the Lord, which have reference to all the instances of a good conversation, and must be regarded.

(3.) They were universal in their obedience; not that they never did in any thing come short of their duty, but it was their constant care and endeavor to come up to it.

(4.) Herein, though they were not sinless, yet they were blameless; nobody could charge them with any open scandalous sin; they lived honestly and inoffensively, as ministers and their families are in a special manner concerned to do, that the ministry be not blamed in their blame.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years.

That they had been long childless, Lu 1:7. Children are a heritage of the Lord. But there are many of his heirs in a married state, that yet are denied this heritage; they are valuable desirable blessings; yet many there are, who are righteous before God, and, if they had children, would bring them up in his fear, who yet are not thus blessed, while the men of this world are full of children (Ps 17:14), and send forth their little ones like a flock, Job 21:11. Elisabeth was barren, and they began to despair of

ever having children, for they were both now well stricken in years, when the women that have been most fruitful leave off bearing. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been long childless, as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, and so here John Baptist, to make their birth the more remarkable and the blessing of it the more valuable to their parents, and to show that when God keeps his people long waiting for mercy he sometimes is pleased to recompense them for their patience by doubling the worth of it when it comes.

8 And it came to pass, that, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

9 according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

The appearing of an angel to his father Zacharias, as he was ministering in the temple, Lu 1:8-11. Zechariah the prophet was the last of the Old Testament that was conversant with angels, and Zacharias the priest the first in the New Testament. Observe,

1. How Zacharias was employed in the service of God (Lu 1:8): He executed the priest's office, before God, in the order of his course; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though his family was not built up, or made to grow, yet he made conscience of doing the work of his own place and day. Though we have not desired mercies, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and, in our diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope that mercy and comfort will come at last. Now it fell to Zacharias's lot to burn incense morning and evening for that week of his waiting, as other services fell to other priests by lot likewise. The services were directed by lot, that some might not decline them and others engross them, and that, the disposal of the lot being from the Lord, they might have the satisfaction of a divine call to the work. This was not the high priest burning incense on the day of atonement, as some have fondly imagined, who have thought by that to find out the time of our Saviour's birth; but it is plain that it was the burning of the daily incense at the altar of incense (Lu 1:11), which was in the temple (Lu 1:9), not in the most holy place, into which the high priest entered. The Jews say that one and the same priest burned not incense twice in all his days (there were such a multitude of them), at least never more than one week. It is very probable that this was upon the sabbath day, because

there was a multitude of people attending (Lu 1:10), which ordinarily was not on a week day; and thus God usually puts honour upon his own day. And then if Dr. Lightfoot reckon, with the help of the Jewish calendars, that this course of Abia fell on the seventeenth day of the third month, the month Sivan, answering to part of May and part of June, it is worth observing that the portions of the law and the prophets which were read this day in synagogues were very agreeable to that which was doing in the temple; namely, the law of the Nazarites (Nu 6:1-27), and the conception of Samson, Jdg 13:1-25

While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, Lu 1:10. Dr. Lightfoot says that there were constantly in the temple, at the hour of prayer, the priests of the course that then served, and, if it were the sabbath day, those of that course also that had been in waiting the week before, and the Levites that served under the priests, and the men of the station, as the Rabbin call them, who were the representatives of the people, in putting their hands upon the head of the sacrifices, and many besides, who, moved by devotion, left their employments, for that time, to be present at the service of God; and those would make up a great multitude, especially on sabbaths and feast-days: now these all addressed themselves to their devotions (in mental prayer, for their voice was not heard), when by the tinkling of a bell they had notice that the priest was gone in to burn incense.

Now observe here,

(1.) That the true Israel of God always were a praying people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of service by which we give honour to God, fetch in favours from him, and keep up our communion with him.

(2.) That then, when ritual and ceremonial appointments were in full force, as this of burning incense, yet moral and spiritual duties were required to go along with them, and were principally looked at. David knew that when he was at a distance from the altar his prayer might be heard without incense, for it might be directed before God as incense, Ps

141:2. But, when he was compassing the altar, the incense could not be accepted without prayer, any more than the shell without the kernel.

(3.) That is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go along with the minister, in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense ever so well, in the most pertinent, judicious, lively prayer, if we be not at the same time praying in concurrence with him, what will it avail us?

(4.) All the prayers we offer up to God here in his courts are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. To this usage in the temple-service there seems to be an allusion (Re 8:1,3,4), where we find that there was silence in heaven, as there was in the temple, for half an hour, while the people were silently lifting up their hearts to God in prayer; and that there was an angel, the angel of the covenant, who offered up much incense with the prayers of all saints before the throne. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayers should gain acceptance, and bring in an answer of peace, but through the mediation of Christ, who ever lives, making intercession.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

What impression this made upon Zacharias (Lu 1:12): When Zacharias saw him, it was a surprise upon him, even to a degree of terror, for he was troubled, and fear fell upon him, Lu 1:12. Though he was righteous before God, and blameless in his conversation, yet he could not be without some apprehensions at the sight of one whose visage and surrounding lustre bespoke him more than human. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations and his conscience afraid of evil tidings brought by them; even Daniel himself could not bear it, Da 10:8. And for this reason God chooses to speak to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

The message which the angel had to deliver to him, Lu 1:13. He began his message, as angels generally did, with, Fear not. Perhaps it had never been Zacharias's lot to burn incense before; and, being a very serious conscientious man, we may suppose him full of care to do it well, and perhaps when he saw the angel he was afraid lest he came to rebuke him for some mistake or miscarriage; "No," saith the angel, "fear not; I have no ill tidings to bring thee from heaven. Fear not, but compose thyself, that thou mayest with a sedate and even spirit receive the message I have to deliver thee." Let us see what that is.

1 The prayers he has often made shall now receive an answer of peace: Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard.

(a) If he means his particular prayer for a son to build up his family, it must be the prayers he had formerly made for that mercy, when he was likely to have children; but we may suppose, now that he and his wife were both well stricken in years, as they had done expecting it, so they had done praying for it: like Moses, it sufficeth them, and they speak no more to God of that matter, De 3:26. But God will now, in giving this mercy, look a great way back to the prayers that he had made long since for and with his wife, as Isaac for and with his, Ge 25:21. Note, Prayers of faith are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten, though the thing prayed for is not presently given in. Prayers made when we were young and coming into the world may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. But,

(b) If he means the prayers he was now making, and offering up with his incense, we may suppose that those were according to the duty of his place, for the Israel of God and their welfare, and the performance of the promises made to them concerning the Messiah and the coming of his kingdom: "This prayer of thine is now heard: for thy wife shall shortly conceive him that is to be the Messiah's forerunner." Some of the Jewish

writers themselves say that the priest, when he burnt incense, prayed for the salvation of the whole world; and now that prayer shall be heard. Or,

(c) In general, "The prayers thou now makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and come up for a memorial before him" (as the angel said to Cornelius, when he visited him at prayer, Ac 10:30,31); "and this shall be the sign that thou are accepted of God, Elisabeth shall bear thee a son." Note, it is very comfortable to praying people to know that their prayers are heard; and those mercies are doubly sweet that are given in answer to prayer.

He shall have a son in his old age, by Elisabeth his wife, who had been long barren, that by his birth, which was next to miraculous, people might be prepared to receive and believe a virgin's bringing forth of a son, which was perfectly miraculous. He is directed what name to give his son: Call him John, in Hebrew Johanan, a name we often meet in the Old Testament: it signifies gracious. The priests must beseech God that he will be gracious (Mal 1:9), and must so bless the people, Nu 6:25. Zacharias was now praying thus, and the angel tells him that his prayer is heard, and he shall have a son, whom, in token of an answer to his prayer, he shall call Gracious, or, The Lord will be gracious, Isa 30:18,19.

This son shall be the joy of his family and of all his relations, Lu 1:14. He shall be another Isaac, thy laughter; and some think that is partly intended in his name, John. He shall be a welcome child. Thou for thy part shall have joy and gladness. Note, Mercies that have been long waited for, when they come at last, are the more acceptable. "He shall be such a son as thou shalt have reason to rejoice in; many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of rejoicing at their birth, would wish they had never been; but I will tell thee what thy son will be, and then thou wilt not need to rejoice with trembling at his birth, as the best must do, but mayest rejoice with triumph at it." Nay, and many shall rejoice at his birth; all the relations of the family will rejoice in it, and all its well-wishers, because it is for the honour and comfort of the family, Lu 1:58. All good people will rejoice that such a religious couple as Zacharias and Elisabeth have a son, because they will give him a good education, such as, it may be hoped, will make him a public blessing to

his generation. Yea, and perhaps many shall rejoice by an unaccountable instinct, as a presage of the joyous days the gospel will introduce.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

This son shall be a distinguished favourite of Heaven, and a distinguished blessing to the earth. The honour of having a son is nothing to the honour of having such a son.

(a) He shall be great in the sight of the Lord; those are great indeed that are so in God's sight, not those that are so in the eye of a vain and carnal world. God will set him before his face continually, will employ him in his work and send him on his errands; and that shall make him truly great and honourable. He shall be a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and upon that account as great as any that every were born of women, Mt 11:11. He shall live very much retired from the world, out of men's sight, and, when he makes a public appearance, it will be very mean; but he shall be much, he shall be great, in the sight of the Lord.

(b) He shall be a Nazarite, set apart to God from every thing that is polluting; in token of this, according to the law of Nazariteship, he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink,--or, rather, neither old wine nor new; for most think that the word here translated strong drink signifies some sort of wine, perhaps those that we call made wines, or any thing that is intoxicating. He shall be, as Samson was by the divine precept (Jdg 13:7), and Samuel by his mother's vow (1Sa 1:11), a Nazarite for life. It is spoken of as a great instance of God's favour to his people that he raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites (Am 2:11), as if those that were designed for prophets were trained up under the discipline of the Nazarites; Samuel and John Baptist were; which intimates that those that would be eminent servants of God, and employed in eminent services, must learn to live a life of self-denial and mortification,

must be dead to the pleasures of sense, and keep their minds from every thing that is darkening and disturbing to them.

(c) He shall be abundantly fitted and qualified for those great and eminent services to which in due time he shall be called: He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and as soon as it is possible he shall appear to have been so. Observe,

[1.] Those that would be filled with the Holy Ghost must be sober and temperate, and very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for that is it that fits him for this. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, with which that is not consistent, Eph 5:18.

[2.] It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb; for John Baptist even then was filled with the Holy Ghost, who took possession of his heart betimes; and an early specimen was given of it, when he leaped in his mother's womb for joy, at the approach of the Saviour; and afterwards it appeared very early that he was sanctified. God had promised to pour out his Spirit upon the seed of believers (Isa 44:3), and their first springing up in a dedication of themselves betimes to God is the fruit of it, Lu 1:4,5. Who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized who for aught we know (and we can say no more of the adult, witness Simon Magus) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and have the seeds of grace sown in their hearts? Ac 10:47.

(d) He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and the preparing of them to receive and entertain the gospel of Christ, Lu 1:16,17.

[1.] He shall be sent to the children of Israel, to the nation of the Jews, to whom the Messiah also was first sent, and not to the Gentiles; to the whole nation, and not the family of the priests only, with which, though he was himself of that family, we do not find he had any particular intimacy or influence.

[2.] He shall go before the Lord their God, that is, before the Messiah, whom they must expect to be, not their king, in the sense wherein they commonly take it, a temporal prince to their nation, but their Lord and their God, to rule and defend, and serve them in a spiritual way by his influence on their hearts. Thomas knew this, when he said to Christ, My Lord and my God, better than Nathanael did, when he said, Rabbi, thou are the king of Israel. John shall go before him, a little before him, to give notice of his approach, and to prepare people to receive him.

[3.] He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias. That is, First, He shall be such a man as Elias was, and do such work as Elias did,--shall, like him, preach the necessity of repentance and reformation to a very corrupt and degenerate age,--shall, like him, be bold and zealous in reproving sin and witnessing against it even in the greatest, and be hated and persecuted for it by a Herod and his Herodias, as Elijah was by an Ahab and his Jezebel. He shall be carried on in his work, as Elijah was, by a divine spirit and power, which shall crown his ministry with wonderful success. As Elias went before the writing prophets of the Old Testament, and did as it were usher in that signal period of the Old-Testament dispensation by a little writing of his own (2Ch 21:12), so John Baptist went before Christ and his apostles, and introduced the gospel dispensation by preaching the substance of the gospel doctrine and duty, Repent, with an eye to the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, He shall be that very person who was prophesied of by Malachi under the name of Elijah (Mal 4:5), who should be sent before the coming of the day of the Lord. Behold, I send you a prophet, even Elias, not Elias the Tishbite (as the LXX. has corruptly read it, to favour the Jews' traditions), but a prophet in the spirit and power of Elias, as the angel here expounds it.

[4.] He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, shall incline their hearts to receive the Messiah, and bid him welcome, by awakening them to a sense of sin and a desire of righteousness. Whatever has a tendency to turn us from iniquity, as John's preaching and baptism had, will turn us to Christ as our Lord and our God; for those who through grace are wrought upon to shake off the yoke of sin, that is, the dominion of the world and the flesh, will soon be persuaded to take upon them the yoke of the Lord Jesus.

[5.] Hereby he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is, of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices which the Jews have against the Gentiles, which was done by the gospel, as far as it prevailed, and was begun to be done by John Baptist, who came for a witness, that all through him might believe, who baptized and taught Roman soldiers as well as Jewish Pharisees, and who cured the pride and confidence of those Jews who gloried in their having Abraham to their father, and told them that God would out of stones raise up children unto Abraham (Mt 3:9), which would tend to cure their enmity to the Gentiles. Dr. Lightfoot observes, It is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles as children to the Jewish church, Isa 54:5,6,13,60:4,9,62:5,66:12. When the Jews that embraced the faith of Christ were brought to join in communion with the Gentiles that did so too, then the heart of the fathers was turned to the children. And he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that is, he shall introduce the gospel, by which the Gentiles, who are now disobedient, shall be turned, no so much to their fathers the Jews, but to the faith of Christ, here called the wisdom of the just, in communion with the believing Jews; or thus, He shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, that is, the hearts of old and young, shall be instrumental to bring some of every age to be religious, to work a great reformation in the Jewish nation, to bring them off from a ritual traditional religion which that had rested in, and to bring them up to substantial serious godliness: and the effect of this will be, that enmities will be slain and discord made to cease; and they are at variance, being united in his baptism, will be better reconciled one to another. This agrees with the account Josephus gives of John Baptist, Antiq. 18. 117-118. "That he was a good man, and taught the Jews the exercise of virtue, in piety towards God, and righteous towards one another, and that they should convene and knit together in baptism." And he saith, "The people flocked after him, and were exceedingly delighted in his doctrine." Thus he turned the hearts of fathers and children to God and to one another, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Observe, First, True religion is the wisdom of just men, in distinction from the wisdom of the world. It is both our wisdom and our duty to be religious; there is both equity and prudence in it. Secondly, It is not possible but that those who have been unbelieving and disobedient may be

turned to the wisdom of the just; divine grace can conquer the greatest ignorance and prejudice. Thirdly, The great design of the gospel is to bring people home to God, and to bring them nearer to one another; and on this errand John Baptist is sent. In the mention that is twice made of his turning people, there seems to be an allusion to the name of the Tishbite, which is given to Elijah, which, some think, does not denote the country or city he was of, but has an appellative signification, and therefore the render it Elijah the converter, one that was much employed, and very successful, in conversion-work. The Elias of the New Testament is therefore said to turn or convert many to the Lord their God.

[6.] Hereby he shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord, shall dispose the minds of people to receive the doctrine of Christ, that thereby they may be prepared for the comforts of his coming. Note, First, All that are to be devoted to the Lord, and made happy in him, must first be prepared and made ready for him. We must be prepared by grace in this world for the glory in the other, by the terrors of the law for the comforts of the gospel, by the spirit of bondage for the Spirit of adoption. Secondly, Nothing has a more direct tendency to prepare people for Christ than the doctrine of repentance received and submitted to. When sin is thereby made grievous, Christ will become very precious.

18 And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zechariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple.

Zacharias's unbelief of the angel's prediction, and the rebuke he was laid under for that unbelief. He heard all that the angel had to say, and should have bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, Be it unto thy servant according to the word which thou hast spoken; but it was not so. We are here told,

1. What his unbelief spoke, Lu 1:18. He said to the angel, Whereby shall I know this? This was not a humble petition for the confirming of his faith, but a peevish objection against what was said to him as altogether incredible; as if he should say, "I can never be made to believe this." He could not but perceive that it was an angel that spoke to him; the message delivered, having reference to the Old-Testament prophecies, carried much of its own evidence along with it. There are many instances in the Old Testament of those that had children when they were old, yet he cannot believe that he shall have this child of promise: "For I am an old man, and my wife hath not only been all her days barren, but is now well stricken in years, and not likely ever to have children." Therefore he must have a sign given him, or he will not believe. Though the appearance of an angel, which had long been disused in the church, was sign enough,--though he had this notice given him in the temple, the place of God's oracles, where he had reason to think no evil angel would be permitted to come,--though it was given him when he was praying, and burning incense,--and though a firm belief of that great principle of religion that God has an almighty power, and with him nothing is impossible, which we ought not only to know, but to teach others, was enough to silence all objections,--yet, considering his own body and his wife's too much, unlike a son of Abraham, he staggered at the promise, Ro 4:19,20.

2. How his unbelief was silenced, and he silenced for it.

(1.) The angel stops his mouth, by asserting his authority. Doth he ask, Whereby shall I know this? Let him know it by this, I am Gabriel, Lu 1:19. He puts his name to his prophecy, doth as it were sign it with his own hand, teste meipso--take my word for it. Angels have sometimes refused to tell their names, as to Manoah and his wife; but his angel readily saith, I am Gabriel, which signifies the power of God, or the mighty one of God, intimating that the God who bade him say this was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming sent to Daniel by the man Gabriel, Da 8:16,9:21. "I am the same that was sent then, and am sent now in pursuance of the same intention." He is Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, an immediate attendant upon the throne of God. The prime ministers of state in the Persian court are described by this,

that they saw the king's face, Es 1:14. "Though I am now talking with thee here, yet I stand in the presence of God. I know his eye is upon me, and I dare not say any more than I have warrant to say. But I declare I am sent to speak to thee, sent on purpose to show thee these glad tidings, which, being so well worthy of all acceptation, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully."

(2.) The angel stops his mouth indeed, by exerting his power: "That thou mayest object no more, behold thou shalt be dumb, Lu 1:20. If thou wilt have a sign for the support of thy faith, it shall be such a one as shall be also the punishment of thine unbelief; thou shalt not be able to speak till the day that these things shall be performed," Lu 1:20. Thou shalt be both dumb and deaf; the same word signifies both, and it is plain that he lost his hearing as well as his speech, for his friends made signs to him (Lu 1:62), as well as he to them, Lu 1:22. Now, in striking him dumb,

[1.] God dealt justly with him, because he had objected against God's word. Hence we may take occasion to admire the patience of God and his forbearance toward us, that we, who have often spoken to his dishonour, have not been struck dumb, as Zacharias was, and as we had been if God had dealt with us according to our sins.

[2.] God dealt kindly with him, and very tenderly and graciously. For,

First, Thus he prevented his speaking any more such distrustful unbelieving words. If he has thought evil, and will not himself lay his hands upon his mouth, nor keep it as with a bridle, God will. It is better not to speak at all than to speak wickedly.

Secondly, Thus he confirmed his faith; and, by his being disabled to speak, he is enabled to think the better. If by the rebukes we are under for our sin we be brought to give more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain of them.

Thirdly, Thus he was kept from divulging the vision, and boasting of it, which otherwise he would have been apt to do, whereas it was designed for the present to be lodged as a secret with him.

Fourthly, It was a great mercy that God's words should be fulfilled in their season, notwithstanding his sinful distrust. The unbelief of man shall not make the promises of God of no effect, they shall be fulfilled in their season, and he shall not be for ever dumb, but only till the day that these things shall be performed, and then thy lips shall be opened, that thy mouth may show forth God's praise. Thus, though God chastens the iniquity of his people with the rod, yet his loving kindness he will not take away.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

Jesus' Birth Foretold

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.
36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.
37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.
38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Mary Visits Elisabeth

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah;
40 and entered into the house of Zechariah, and saluted Elisabeth.
41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:
42 and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.
43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.
45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.
46 And Mary said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
47 and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:

for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
51 He hath showed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
53 He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
55 as he spake to our fathers,
to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.
56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.
58 And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.
59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zechariah, after the name of his father.
60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called
John.
61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.
62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.
63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is
John. And they marveled all.
64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.
65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea.

66 And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Zechariah's Prophecy

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

How he was qualified for this: He was filled with the Holy Ghost, was endued with more than ordinary measures and degrees of it, for this purpose; he was divinely inspired. God not only forgave him his unbelief and distrust (which was signified by discharging him from the punishment of it), but, as a specimen of the abounding of grace towards believers, he filled him with the Holy Ghost, and put this honour upon him, to employ him for his honour.

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;
for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

What the matter of his song was. Here is nothing said of the private concerns of his own family, the rolling away of the reproach from it and putting of a reputation upon it, by the birth of this child, though, no doubt, he found a time to give thanks to God for this, with his family; but in this song he is wholly taken up with the kingdom of the Messiah, and the public blessings to be introduced by it. He could have little pleasure in this fruitfulness of his vine, and the hopefulness of his olive-plant, if herein he had not foreseen the good of Jerusalem, peace upon Israel, and blessings on both out of Zion, Ps 128:3,5,6. The Old-Testament prophesies are often expressed in praises and new songs, so is the beginning of New-Testament prophecy: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall he be called; yet Zacharias, speaking of the work of redemption, called him the Lord God of Israel, because to Israel the prophecies, promises, and types, of the redemption had hitherto been given, and to them the first proffers and proposals of it were now to be made. Israel, as a chosen people, was a type of the elect of God out of all nations, whom God had a particular eye to, in sending the Saviour; and therefore he is therein called the Lord God of Israel.

Now Zacharias here blesses God,

1. For the work of salvation that was to be wrought out by the Messiah himself, Lu 1:68-75. This it is that fills him, when he is filled with the Holy Ghost, and it is that which all who have the Spirit of Christ are full of.

(a) In sending the Messiah, God has made a gracious visit to his people, whom for many ages he had seemed to neglect, and to be estranged from; he hath visited them as a friend, to take cognizance of their case. God is said to have visited his people in bondage when he delivered them (Ex 3:16,4:31), to have visited his people in famine when he gave them bread, Ru 1:6. He had often sent to them by his prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them; but now he himself made them a visit.

(b) He has wrought out redemption for them: He has redeemed his people. This was the errand on which Christ came into the world, to redeem those that were sold for sin, and sold under sin; even God's own people, his Israel, his son, his first-born, his free-born, need to be redeemed, and are undone if they be not. Christ redeems them by price out of the hands of God's justice, and redeems them by power out of the hands of Satan's tyranny, as Israel out of Egypt.

(c) He has fulfilled the covenant of royalty made with the most famous Old-Testament prince, that is, David. Glorious things had been said of his family, that on him, as a mighty one, help should be laid, that his horn should be exalted, and his seed perpetuated, Ps 89:19,20,24,29. But that family had been long in a manner cast off and abhorred, Ps 89:38. Now here it is glorified in, that, according to the promise, the horn of David should again be made to bud; for, Ps 132:17, he hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (Lu 1:69), there, where it was promised and expected to arise. David is called God's servant, not only as a good man, but as a king that ruled for God; and he was an instrument of the salvation of Israel, by being employed in the government of Israel; so Christ is the author of eternal redemption to those only that obey him. There is in Christ, and in him only, salvation for us, and it is a horn of salvation; for,

[1.] It is an honourable salvation. It is raised up above all other salvations, none of which are to be compared with it: in it the glory both of the Redeemer and of the redeemed are advanced, and their horn exalted with honour.

[2.] It is a plentiful salvation. It is a cornucopia--a horn of plenty, a salvation in which we are blessed with spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, abundantly.

[3.] It is a powerful salvation: the strength of the beast is in his horn. He has raised up such a salvation as shall pull down our spiritual enemies, and protect us from them. In the chariots of this salvation the Redeemer shall go forth, and go on, conquering and to conquer.

(d) He has fulfilled all the precious promises made to the church by the most famous Old-Testament prophets (Lu 1:70): As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets. His doctrine of salvation by the Messiah is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, and the greatness and importance of that salvation thereby evidenced and magnified; it is the same that they spoke of, which therefore ought to be expected and welcomed; it is what they enquired and searched diligently after (1Pe 1:10,11), which therefore ought not to be slighted or thought meanly of. God is now doing that which he has long ago spoken of; and therefore be silent, O all flesh, before him, and attend to him. See,

[1.] How sacred the prophecies of this salvation were. The prophets who delivered them were holy prophets, who durst not deceive and who aimed at promoting holiness among men; and it was the holy God himself that spoke by them.

[2.] How ancient they were: ever since the world began. God having promised, when the world began, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, that promise was echoed to when Adam called his wife's name Eve-Life, for the sake of that Seed of hers; when Eve called her first son Cain, saying, I have gotten a man from the Lord, and

another son, Seth, settled; when Noah was called rest, and foretold that God should dwell in the tents of Shem. And it was not long after the new world began in Noah that the promise was made to Abraham that in his Seed the nations of the earth should be blessed.

[3.] What a wonderful harmony and concert we perceive among them. God spoke the same thing by them all, and therefore it is said to be dia stomatos, not by the mouths, but by the mouth, of the prophets, for they all speak of Christ as it were with one mouth.

69 and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David;

70 as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

Now what is this salvation which was prophesied of?

First, It is a rescue from the malice of our enemies; it is soterian ex echthron hemon--a salvation out of our enemies, from among them, and out of the power of them that hate us (Lu 1:71); it is a salvation from sin, and the dominion of Satan over us, both by corruptions within and temptations without. The carnal Jews expected to be delivered from under the Roman yoke, but intimation was betimes given that it should be a redemption of another nature. He shall save his people from their sins, that they may not have dominion over them, Mt 1:21.

Secondly, It is a restoration to the favour of God; it is to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, Lu 1:72. The Redeemer shall not only break the head of the serpent that was the author of our ruin, but he shall re-instate us in the mercy of God and re-establish us in his covenant; he shall bring us as it were into a paradise again, which was signified by the promises made to the patriarchs, and the holy covenant made with them, the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, Lu 1:73. Observe,

1. That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to us, is mercy, pure mercy; nothing in it is owing to our merit (we deserve wrath

and the curse), but all to the mercy of God, which designed us grace and life: ex mero motu--of his own good pleasure, he loved us because he would love us.

2. God herein had an eye to his covenant, his holy covenant, that covenant with Abraham: I will be a God to thee and thy seed. This his seed had really forfeited by their transgressions; this he seemed to have forgotten in the calamities brought upon them; but he will now remember it, will make it appear that he remembers it, for upon that are grounded all his returns of mercy: Le 26:42, Then will I remember my covenant.

Thirdly, It is a qualification for, and an encouragement to, the service of God. Thus was the oath he sware to our Father Abraham, That he would give us power and grace to serve him, in an acceptable manner to him and a comfortable manner to ourselves, Lu 1:74,75. Here seems to be an allusion to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which, God tells Moses, was in pursuance of the covenant he made with Abraham (Ex 3:6-8), and that this was the design of his bringing them out of Egypt, that they might serve God upon this mountain, Ex 3:12. Note, The great design of gospel grace is not to discharge us from, but to engage us to, and encourage us in, the service of God. Under this notion Christianity was always to be looked upon, as intended to make us truly religious, to admit us into the service of God, to bind us to it, and to quicken us in it. We are therefore delivered from the iron yoke of sin, that our necks may be put under the sweet and easy yoke of the Lord Jesus. The very bonds which he has loosed do bind us faster unto him, Ps 116:16. We are hereby enabled,

1. To serve God without fear--aphobos. We are therefore put into a state of holy safety that we might serve God with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that are quiet from the fears of evil. God must be served with a filial fear, a reverent obedient fear, an awakening quickening fear, but not with a slavish fear, like that of the slothful servant, who represented him to himself as a hard master, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has torment and amazement in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit; a spirit of bondage, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a spirit of adoption.

2. To serve him in holiness and righteousness, which includes the whole duty of man towards God and our neighbour. It is both the intention and the direct tendency of the gospel to renew upon us that image of God in which man was at first made, which consisted in righteousness and true holiness, Ps 50:14.

3. To serve him, before him, in the duties of his immediate worship, wherein we present ourselves before the Lord, to serve him as those that have an eye always upon him, and see his eye always upon us, upon our inward man, that is serving him before him.

4. To serve him all the days of our life. The design of the gospel is to engage us in constancy and perseverance in the service of God, by showing us how much depends upon our not drawing back, and by showing us how Christ loved us to the end, and thereby engaged us to love him to the end.

He blessed God for the work of preparation for this salvation, which was to be done by John Baptist (Lu 1:76): Thou child, though now but a child of eight days' old, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest. Jesus Christ is the Highest, for he is God over all, blessed for evermore (Ro 9:5), equal with the Father. John Baptist was his prophet, as Aaron was Moses's prophet (Ex 7:1); what he said was as his mouth, what he did was as his harbinger. Prophecy had now long ceased, but in John it revived, as it had done in Samuel, who was born of an aged mother, as John was, after a long cessation. John's business was,

(a) To prepare people for the salvation, by preaching repentance and reformation as great gospel duties: Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, and but a little before him, to prepare his ways, to call people to make room for him, and get ready for his entertainment. Let every thing that may obstruct his progress, or embarrass it, or hinder people from coming to him, be taken away: see Isa 40:3,4. Let valleys be filled, and hills be brought low.

(b) To give people a general idea of the salvation, that they might know, not only what to do, but what to expect; for the doctrine he preached was that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. There are two things in which you must know that this salvation consists:--

[1.] The forgiveness of what we have done amiss. It is salvation by the remission of sins, those sins which stand in the way of the salvation, and by which we are all become liable to ruin and condemnation, Lu 1:77. John Baptist gave people to understand that, though their case was sad, by reason of sin, it was not desperate, for pardon might be obtained through the tender mercy of our God (the bowels of mercy, so the word is): there was nothing in us but a piteous case to recommend us to the divine compassion.

[2.] Direction to do better for the time to come. The gospel salvation not only encourages us to hope that the works of darkness shall be forgiven us, but sets up a clear and true light, by which we may order our steps aright. In it the day-spring hath visited us from on high (Lu 1:78); and this also is owing to the tender mercy of our God. Christ is anatole--the morning Light, the rising Sun, Mal 4:2 The gospel brings light with it (Joh 3:19), leaves us not to wander in the darkness of Pagan ignorance, or in the moonlight of the Old-Testament types or figures, but in it the day dawns; in John Baptist it began to break, but increased apace, and shone more and more to the perfect day. We have as much reason to welcome the gospel day who enjoy it as those have to welcome the morning who had long waited for it. First, The gospel is discovering; it shows us that which before we were utterly in the dark about (Lu 1:79); it is to give light to them that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the day-spring visited this dark world to lighten the Gentiles, Ac 26:18. Secondly, It is reviving; it brings light to them that sit in the shadow of death, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon, to bring them the tidings of a pardon, at least of a reprieve and opportunity of procuring a pardon; it proclaims the opening of the prison (Isa 61:1), brings the light of life. How pleasant is that light! Thirdly, It is directing; it is to guide our feet in the way of peace, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to our eyes, but a light to our feet (Ps 119:105); it guides us into the

way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communion; that way of peace which as sinners we have wandered from and have not known (Ro 3:17), nor could ever have known of ourselves.

72 to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 the oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74 that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies,

might serve him without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest:

for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

77 to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

78 through the tender mercy of our God;

whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

79 to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace.

80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

In the Lu 1:80, we have short account of the younger years of John Baptist. Though he was the son of a priest, he did not, like Samuel, go up, when he was a child, to minister before the Lord; for he was to prepare the way for a better priesthood. But we are here told,

1. Of his eminence as to the inward man: The child grew in the capacities of his mind, much more than other children; so that he waxed strong in the spirit; had a strong judgment and strong resolution. Reason and conscience (both which are the candle of the Lord) were so strong in him that he had the inferior faculties of appetite and passion in complete subjection betimes. By this it appeared that he was betimes filled with the Holy Ghost; for those that are strong in the Lord are strong in spirit.

2. Of his obscurity as to the outward man: He was in the deserts; not that he lived a hermit; cut off from the society of men. No, we have reason to think that he went up to Jerusalem at the feasts, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wilderness of Zuph or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time, in contemplation and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbin. Note, Many a one is qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are so long buried who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting, for so much greater usefulness at last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert only till the day of his showing to Israel, when he was in the thirtieth year of his age. Note, There is a time fixed for the showing of those favours to Israel which are reserved; the vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

Luke-2

The Birth of Jesus

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

The fulness of time was now come, when God would send forth his Son, made of a woman, and made under the law; and it was foretold that he should be born at Bethlehem. Now here we have an account of the time, place, and manner of it.

The time when our Lord Jesus was born. Several things may be gathered out of these verses which intimate to us that it was the proper time.

1. He was born at the time when the fourth monarchy was in its height, just when it was become, more than any of the three before it, a universal monarchy. He was born in the days of Augustus Cæsar, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was then called Terraram orbis imperium--The empire of the whole earth; and here that empire is

called all the world (Lu 2:1), for there was scarcely any part of the civilized world, but what was dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy (Da 2:44): In the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

2. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus, but not the government of the state; by degrees it was more and more reduced, till now at length it was quite subdued; for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius the Roman governor of Syria (Lu 2:2): the Roman writers call him Sulpitius Quirinus. Now just at this juncture, the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, that Shiloh should come when the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, Ge 49:10. This was the first taxing that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance, as to the time, implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire, which is, that there was now universal peace in the empire. The temple of Janus was now shut, which it never used to be if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of peace to be born, in whose days swords should be beaten into plough-shares.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,)

The place where our Lord Jesus was born is very observable. He was born at Bethlehem; so it was foretold (Mic 5:2), the scribes so understood it (Mt 2:5,6), so did the common people, Joh 7:42. The name of the place was significant. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread; a proper place for him to be born in who is the Bread of life, the Bread that came down

from heaven. But that was not all; Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there he must be born who was the Son of David. Zion was also called the city of David (2Sa 5:7), yet Christ was not born there; for Bethlehem was that city of David where he was born in meanness, to be a shepherd; and this our Saviour, when he humbled himself, chose for the place of his birth; not Zion, where he ruled in power and prosperity, that was to be a type of the church of Christ, that mount Zion. Now when the virgin Mary was with child, and near her time, Providence so ordered it that, by order from the emperor, all the subjects of the Roman empire were to be taxed; that is, they were to give in their names to the proper officers, and they were to be registered and enrolled, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used; their being taxed was but secondary. It is supposed that they made profession of subjection to the Roman empire, either by some set form of words, or at least by payment of some small tribute, a penny suppose, in token of their allegiance, like a man's atturning tenant. Thus are they vassals upon record, and may thank themselves.

According to this decree, the Jews (who were now nice in distinguishing their tribes and families) provided that in their enrolments particular care should be had to preserve the memory of them. Thus foolishly are they solicitous to save the shadow, when they had lost the substance.

That which Augustus designed was either to gratify his pride in knowing the numbers of his people, and proclaiming it to the world, or he did it in policy, to strengthen his interest, and make his government appear the more formidable; but Providence had another reach in it. All the world shall be at the trouble of being enrolled, only that Joseph and Mary may. This brought them up from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, because they were of the stock and lineage of David (Lu 2:4,5); and perhaps, being poor and low, they thought the royalty of their extraction rather than a burden and expense to them than a matter of pride. Because it is difficult to suppose that every Jew (women as well as men) was obliged to repair to the city of which their ancestors were, and there be enrolled, now, at a time when they kept not to the bounds of their tribes, as formerly, it may be offered as a conjecture that this great exactness was used only with the family of David, concerning which, it is probable,

the emperor gave particular orders, it having been the royal family, and still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength. Divers ends of Providence were served by this.

1. Hereby the virgin Mary was brought, great with child, to Bethlehem, to be delivered there, according to the prediction; whereas she had designed to lie in at Nazareth. See how man purposes and God disposes; and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the scripture, and makes use of the projects men have for serving their own purposes, quite beyond their intention, to serve his.

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David; for what brings his mother to Bethlehem now, but because she was of the stock and lineage of David? This was a material thing to be proved, and required such an authentic proof as this. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the earliest advocates for the Christian religion, appeal to these rolls or records of the Roman empire, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was made under the law; for he became a subject of the Roman empire as soon as he was born, a servant of rulers, Isa 49:7. Many suppose that, being born during the time of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant. Instead of having kings tributaries to him, when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

The circumstances of his birth, which were very mean, and under all possible marks of contempt. He was indeed a first-born son; but it was a poor honour to be the first-born of such a poor woman as Mary was, who had no inheritance to which he might be entitled as first-born, but what was in nativity.

1. He was under some abasements in common with other children; he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, as other children are when they are new-born, as if he could be bound, or needed to be kept straight. He that makes darkness a swaddling band for the sea was himself wrapped in

swaddling bands, Job 38:9. The everlasting Father became a child of time, and men said to him whose out-goings were of old from everlasting, We know this man, whence he is, Joh 7:27. The Ancient of days became an infant of a span long.

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself.

(a) He was born at an inn. That son of David that was the glory of his father's house had no inheritance that he could command, no not in the city of David, no nor a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress with lodgings to be brought to bed in. Christ was born in an inn, to intimate that he came into the world but to sojourn here for awhile, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise. An inn receives all comers, and so does Christ. He hangs out the banner of love for his sign, and whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out; only, unlike other inns, he welcomes those that come without money and without price. All is on free cost.

(b) He was born in a stable; so some think the word signifies which we translate a manger, a place for cattle to stand to be fed in. Because there was no room in the inn, and for want of conveniences, nay for want of necessaries, he was laid in a manger, instead of a cradle. The word which we render swaddling clothes some derive from a word that signifies to rend, or tear, and these infer that he was so far from having a good suit of child-bed linen, that his very swaddles were ragged and torn. His being born in a stable and laid in a manger was an instance,

[1.] Of the poverty of his parents. Had they been rich, room would have been made for them; but, being poor, they must shift as they could.

[2.] Of the corruption and degeneracy of manners in that age; that a woman in reputation for virtue and honour should be used so barbarously. If there had been any common humanity among them, they would not have turned a woman in travail into a stable.

[3.] It was an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. We were become by sin like an out-cast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses, the great prophet and lawgiver of the Old Testament, who was in his infancy cast out in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ in a manger. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and teach us to slight it. Since his own received him not, let us not think it strange if they receive us not.

5 to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

The meanest circumstances of Christ's humiliation were all along attended with some discoveries of his glory, to balance them, and take off the offence of them; for even when he humbled himself God did in some measure exalt him and give him earnests of his future exaltation. When we saw him wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, we were tempted to say, "Surely this cannot be the Son of God." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely this cannot be the Son of God." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely it can be no other than the Son of God, concerning whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb 1:6.

We had in Matthew an account of the notice given of the arrival of this ambassador, this prince from heaven, to the wise men, who were Gentiles, by a star; here we are told of the notice given of it to the shepherds, who were Jews, by an angel: to each God chose to speak in the language they were most conversant with.

See here how the shepherds were employed; they were abiding in the fields adjoining to Bethlehem, and keeping watch over their flocks by night, Lu 2:8. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders (they were not prepared to receive these tidings), but to a company of poor shepherds, who were like Jacob, plain men dwelling in tents, not like Esau, cunning hunters. The patriarchs were shepherds. Moses and David particularly were called from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by this instance God would show that he had still a favour for those of that innocent employment. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout pious men, the tidings were brought of a greater salvation. Observe,

1. They were not sleeping in their beds, when this news was brought them (though many had very acceptable intelligence from heaven in slumbering upon the bed), but abiding in the fields, and watching. Those that would hear from God must stir up themselves. They were broad awake, and therefore could not be deceived in what they saw and heard, so as those may be who are half asleep.

2. They were employed now, not in acts of devotion, but in the business of their calling; they were keeping watch over their flock, to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it being probably in the summer time, when they kept their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not house them. Note, We are not out of the way of divine visits when we are sensibly employed in an honest calling, and abide with God in it.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

What the message was which the angel had to deliver to the shepherds, Lu 2:10-12.

1. He gives a supersedeas to their fears: "Fear not, for we have nothing to say to you that needs be a terror to you; you need not fear your enemies, and should not fear your friends."

2. He furnishes them with abundant matter for joy: "Behold, I evangelize to you great joy; I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to bid it welcome, for it shall bring joy to all people, and not to the people of the Jews only; that unto you is born this day, at this time, a Saviour, the Saviour that has been so long expected, which is Christ the Lord, in the city of David," Lu 2:11. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed; he is the Lord, Lord of all; he is a sovereign prince; nay, he is God, for the Lord, in the Old Testament, answers to Jehovah. He is a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those only that accept him for their Lord. "The Saviour is born, he is born this day; and, since it is matter of great joy to all people, it is not to be kept secret, you may proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is born in the place where it was foretold he should be born, in the city of David; and he is born to you; to you Jews he is sent in the first place, to bless you, to you shepherds, though poor and mean in the world." This refers to Isa 9:6, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. To you men, not to us angels; he took not on him the nature of angels. This is matter of joy indeed to all people, great joy. Long-looked for is come at last. Let heaven and earth rejoice before this Lord, for he cometh.

3. He gives them a sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter. "How shall we find out this child in Bethlehem, which is now full of the descendants from David?" "You will find him by this token: he is lying in a manger, where surely never any new-born infant was laid before." They expected to be told, "You shall find him, though a babe, dressed up in robes, and lying in the best house in the town, lying in state, with a numerous train of attendants in rich liveries." "No, you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." When Christ was here upon earth, he distinguished himself, and made himself remarkable, by nothing so much as the instances of his humiliation.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

The angels' doxology to God, and congratulations of men, upon this solemn occasion, Lu 2:13,14. The message was no sooner delivered by one angel (that was sufficient to go express) than suddenly there was with that angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts; sufficient, we may be sure, to make a chorus, that were heard by the shepherds, praising God; and certainly their song was not like that (Re 14:3) which no man could learn, for it was designed that we should all learn it.

1. Let God have the honour of this work: Glory to God in the highest. God's good-will to men, manifested in sending the Messiah, redounds very much to his praise; and angels in the highest heavens, though not immediately interested in it themselves, will celebrate it to his honour, Re 5:11,12. Glory to God, whose kindness and love designed this favour, and whose wisdom contrived it in such a way as that one divine attribute should not be glorified at the expense of another, but the honour of all effectually secured and advanced. Other works of God are for his glory, but the redemption of the world is for his glory in the highest.

2. Let men have the joy of it: On earth peace, good-will toward men. God's good-will in sending the Messiah introduced peace in this lower world, slew the enmity that sin had raised between God and man, and resettled a peaceable correspondence. If God be at peace with us, all peace results from it: peace of conscience, peace with angels, peace between Jew and Gentile. Peace is here put for all good, all that good which flows to us from the incarnation of Christ. All the good we have, or hope, is owing to God's good-will; and, if we have the comfort of it, he must have the glory of it. Nor must any peace, and good, be expected in a way inconsistent with the glory of God; therefore not in any way of sin, nor in any way but by a Mediator. Here was the peace proclaimed with great solemnity; whoever will, let them come and take the benefit of it. It is on earth peace, to men of good-will (so some copies read it), en anthropois eudokias; to men who have a good-will to God, and are willing to be reconciled; or to men whom God has a good-will to, though vessels of his mercy. See how well affected the angels are to man, and to his welfare and happiness; how well pleased they were in the incarnation of the Son of God, though he passed by their nature; and ought not we much more to be affected with it? This is a faithful saying, attested by an innumerable company of angels, and well

worthy of all acceptation, That the good-will of God toward men is glory to God in the highest, and peace on the earth.

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the
Lord hath made known unto us.

The visit which the shepherds made to the new-born Saviour.

1. They consulted about it, Lu 2:15. While the angels were singing their hymn, they could attend to that only; but, when they were gone away from them into heaven (for angels, when they appeared, never made any long stay, but returned as soon as they had despatched their business), the shepherds said one to another, Let us go to Bethlehem. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must set ourselves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflection upon the testimony of angels, no nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. But observe, These shepherds do not speak doubtfully, "Let us go see whether it be so or no;" but with assurance, Let us go see this thing which is come to pass; for what room was left to doubt of it, when the Lord had thus made it known to them? The word spoken by angels was stedfast and unquestionably true.

2. They immediately made the visit, Lu 2:16. They lost no time, but came with haste to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to more particularly than is recorded ("Go to the stable of such an inn"); and there they found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. The poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord were no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angels they had seen, and the song of the angels they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made

them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable that Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so, by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The care which the shepherds took to spread the report of this (Lu 2:17): When they had seen it, though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and as the lepers argued (2Ki 12:9, This being a day of good tidings, we dare not hold our peace), so they made known abroad the whole story of what was told them, both by the angels, and by Joseph and Mary, concerning this child, that he was the Saviour, even Christ the Lord, that in him there is peace on earth, and that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. This they told every body, and agreed in their testimony concerning it. And now if, when he is in the world, the world knows him not, it is their own fault, for they have sufficient notice given them. What impression did it make upon people? Why truly, All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds, Lu 2:18. The shepherds were plain, downright, honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them; what they had said therefore was likely to be true, and, if true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born in a stable and not in a palace, that angels should bring news of it to poor shepherds and not to the chief priests. They wondered, but never enquired any further about the Saviour, their duty to him, or advantages by him, but let the thing drop as a nine days' wonder. O the amazing stupidity of the men of that generation! Justly were the things which belonged to their peace hid from their eyes, when they thus wilfully shut their eyes against them.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

The use which those made of these things, who did believe them.

1 The virgin Mary made them the matter of her private meditation. She said little, but kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart, Lu 2:19. She laid the evidences together, and kept them in reserve, to be compared with the discoveries that should afterwards be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was veiled; and it is satisfaction enough to find that, if no one else takes notice of the birth of her child, angels do. Note, The truths of Christ are worth keeping; and the way to keep them safe is to ponder them. Meditation is the best help to memory.

2 The shepherds made them the matter of their more public praises. If others were not affected with those things, yet they themselves were (Lu 2:20): They returned, glorifying and praising God, in concurrence with the holy angels. If others would not regard the report they made to them, God would accept the thanksgivings they offered to him. They praised God for what they had heard from the angel, and for what they had seen, the babe in the manger, and just then in the swaddling, when they came in, as it had been spoken to them. They thanked God that they had seen Christ, though in the depth of his humiliation. As afterwards the cross of Christ, so now his manger, was to some foolishness and a stumbling-block, but others saw in it, and admired, and praised, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Our Lord Jesus, being made of a woman, was made under the law, Ga 4:4. He was not only, as the son of a daughter of Adam, made under the law of nature, but as the son of a daughter of Abraham was made under the law of Moses; he put his neck under that yoke, though it was a heavy yoke, and a shadow of good things to come. Though its institutions were

beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us.

Now here we have two instances of his being made under that law, and submitting to it.

He was circumcised on the very day that the law appointed (Lu 2:21): When eight days were accomplished, that day seven-night that he was born, they circumcised him.

1. Though it was a painful operation (Surely a bloody husband thou has been, said Zipporah to Moses, because of the circumcision, Ex 4:25), yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, therefore he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterwards he poured out in purple streams.

2. Though it supposed him a stranger, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his beloved Son; nay, though it supposed him a sinner, that needed to have his filthiness taken away, whereas he had no impurity or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness, not only of flesh, but of sinful flesh, Ro 8:3.

3. Though thereby he made himself a debtor to the whole law (Ga 5:3), yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would take upon him the form of a servant, though he was free-born. Christ was circumcised,

(a) That he might own himself of the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and who was to take on him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16.

(b) That he might own himself a surety for our sins, and an undertaker for our safety. Circumcision (saith Dr. Goodwin) was our bond, whereby we

acknowledged ourselves debtors to the law; and Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being made sin for us. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices; Christ hereby obliged himself to offer, not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised before could oblige themselves to.

(c) That he might justify, and put an honour upon, the dedication of the infant seed of the church to God, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was (Ro 4:11), and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism in their infancy than his being baptized at thirty years old doth for the deferring of it till they are grown up. The change of the ceremony alters not the substance.

At his circumcision, according to the custom, he had his name given him; he was called Jesus or Joshua, for he was so named of the angel to his mother Mary before he was conceived in the womb (Lu 1:31), and to his supposed father Joseph after, Mt 1:21.

[1.] It was a common name among the Jews, as John was (Col 4:11), and in this he would be made like unto his brethren.

[2.] It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament, Joshua, the success or of Moses, who was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan; and Joshua, the high priest, who was therefore purposely crowned, that he might prefigure Christ as a priest upon his throne, Zec 6:11,13.

[3.] It was very significant of his undertaking. Jesus signifies a Saviour. He would be denominated, not from the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as Mediator; he brings salvation.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

23 (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)

24 and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

Even when he humbles himself, still Christ has honour done him to balance the offence of it. That we might not be stumbled at the meanness of his birth, angels then did him honour; and now, that we may not be offended at his being presented in the temple, like other children born in sin, and without any manner of solemnity peculiar to him, but silently, and in the crowd of other children, Simeon and Anna now do him honour, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

A very honourable testimony is borne to him by Simeon, which was both a reputation to the child and an encouragement to the parents, and might have been a happy introduction of the priests into an acquaintance with the Saviour, if those watchmen had not been blind. Now observe here,

The account that is given us concerning this Simeon, or Simon. He dwelt now in Jerusalem, and was eminent for his piety and communion with God. Some learned men, who have been conversant with the Jewish writers, find that there was at this time one Simeon, a man of great note in Jerusalem, the son of Hillel, and the first to whom they gave the title of Rabban, the highest title that they gave to their doctors, and which was never given but to seven of them. He succeeded his father Hillel, as president of the college which his father founded, and of the great Sanhedrim. The Jews say that he was endued with a prophetical spirit, and that he was turned out of his place because he witnessed against the common opinion of the Jews concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messiah; and they likewise observe that there is no mention of him in their Mishna, or book of traditions, which intimates that he was no patron of those fooleries. One thing objected against this conjecture is that at this time his father Hillel was living, and that he himself lived many years after this, as appears by the Jewish histories; but, as to that, he is not here said to be old; and his saying, Now let thy servant depart intimates that he was

willing to die now, but does not conclude that therefore he did die quickly. St. Paul lived many years after he had spoken of his death as near, Ac 20:25. Another thing objected is that the son of Simeon was Gamaliel, a Pharisee, and an enemy to Christianity; but, as to that, it is no new thing for a faithful lover of Christ to have a son a bigoted Pharisee.

The account given of him here is,

(a) That he was just and devout, just towards men and devout towards God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other, but neither will atone for the defect of the other.

(b) That he waited for the consolation of Israel, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harassed and oppressed, would find consolation. Christ is not only the author of his people's comfort, but the matter and ground of it, the consolation of Israel. He was long a coming, and they who believed he would come continued waiting, desiring his coming, and hoping for it with patience; I had almost said, with some degree of impatience waiting till it came. He understood by books, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be very welcome to those who have waited for it, and continue waiting.

(c) The Holy Ghost was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and enabled to speak things above himself.

(d) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, Lu 2:26. He was searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets did signify, and whether it were not now at hand; and he received this oracle (for so the word signifies), that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed. Note, Those, and those only, can with

courage see death, and look it in the face without terror, that have had by faith a sight of Christ.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

The seasonable coming of Simeon into the temple, at the time when Christ was presented there, Lu 2:27. Just then, when Joseph and Mary brought in the child, to be registered as it were in the church-book, among the first-born, Simeon came, by direction of the Spirit, into the temple. The same Spirit that had provided for the support of his hope now provided for the transport of his joy. It was whispered in his ear, "Go to the temple now, and you shall see what you have longed to see." Note, Those that would see Christ must go to his temple; for there The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to meet you, and there you must be ready to meet him.

28 then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

The abundant satisfaction wherewith he welcomed this sight: He took him up in his arms (Lu 2:28), he embraced him with the greatest affection imaginable, laid him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could, which was as full of joy as it could hold. He took him up in his arms, to present him to the Lord (so some think), to do either the parent's part or the priest's part; for divers of the ancients say that he was himself a priest. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ with love and resignation, then we take Christ in our arms. It was promised him that he should have a sight of Christ; but more is performed than was promised: he has him in his arms.

30 for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

He has a pleasant prospect concerning himself, and (which is a great attainment) is got quite above the love of life and fear of death; nay, he is arrived at a holy contempt of life, and desire of death: "Lord, now let thou thy servant depart, for mine eyes have seen the salvation I was promised a sight of before I died." Here is,

[1.] An acknowledgment that God had been as good as his word; there has not failed one tittle of his good promises, as Solomon owns, 1Ki 8:56. Note, Never any that hoped in God's word were made ashamed of their hope.

[2.] A thanksgiving for it. He blessed God that he saw that salvation in his arms which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not.

[3.] A confession of his faith, that the child in his arms was the saviour, the Salvation itself; thy salvation, the salvation of thine appointing, the salvation which thou has prepared with a great deal of contrivance. And, while it has been thus long in the coming, it hath still been in the preparing.

[4.] It is a farewell to this world: "Now let thy servant depart; now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world." The eye is not satisfied with seeing (Ec 1:8), till it hath seen Christ, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look to one that hath Christ in his arms and salvation in his eye! Now adieu to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself.

[5.] It is a welcome to death: Now let thy servant depart. Note, Death is a departure, the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God give us our discharge, for we are his servants and must not quit his service till we have accomplished our time. Moses was promised that he should see Canaan, and then die; but he prayed that this word might be altered, De 3:24,25. Simeon is promised that he should not see death till he had seen Christ; and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation that, when he had seen Christ, he should die: Lord, be it so, saith he, now let me depart. See here, First, How comfortable the death of a good man is; he departs as God's servant from the place of his toil to that of his rest. He departs in peace, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; in peace with death, well-reconciled to it, well-acquainted with it. He departs according to God's word, as Moses at the word of the Lord (De 34:5): the word of precept, Go up and die; the word of promise, I will come again and receive you to myself. Secondly, What is the ground of this comfort?

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. This bespeaks more than a great complacency in the sight, like that of Jacob (Ge 46:30), Now let me die, since I have seen thy face. It bespeaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it gain, Php 1:21. Note, Those that have welcomed Christ may welcome death.

32 a light to lighten the Gentiles,
and the glory of thy people Israel.

He has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. This salvation shall be,

[1.] A blessing to the world. It is prepared before the face of all people, not to be hid in a corner, but to be made known; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles that now sit in darkness: they shall have the knowledge of him, and of God, and another world through him. This has reference to Isa 49:6, I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles; for Christ came to be the light of the world, not a candle in the Jewish candlestick, but the Sun of righteousness.

[2.] A blessing to the church: the glory of thy people Israel. It was an honour to the Jewish nation that the Messiah sprang out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died, among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed the glory, and will be so to eternity, Isa 60:19. They shall glory in him. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory, Isa 45:25. When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, therein he made himself a light to lighten the Gentiles; and when he added, beginning at Jerusalem, he made himself the glory of his people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

The prediction concerning this child, which he delivered, with his blessing, to Joseph and Mary. They marvelled at those things which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this child, Lu 2:33. And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by, that which was said to them, here is more said to them.

(a) Simeon shows them what reason they had to rejoice; for he blessed them (Lu 2:34), he pronounced them blessed who had the honour to be related to this child, and were entrusted with the bringing him up. He prayed for them, that God would bless them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this child should be, not only a comfort and honour to them, but a public blessing. He is set for the rising again of many in Israel, that is, for the conversion of many to God that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those whom he is set for the fall of may be the same with those whom he is set for the rising again of. He is set eis ptosin kai anastasin--for their fall, in order to their rising again; to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Christ; he wounds and then heals, Paul falls, and rises again.

(b) He shows them likewise what reason they had to rejoice with trembling, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, Ps 2:11. Lest Joseph, and Mary especially, should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, here is a thorn in the flesh for them, an allay to their joy; and it is what we sometimes need.

[1.] It is true, Christ shall be a blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel whom he is set for the fall of, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and split their souls on the Rock of salvation, to whom this precious Foundation-stone will be a stone of stumbling. This refers to that prophecy (Isa 8:14,15), He shall be for a sanctuary to some, and yet for a snare to others, 1Pe 2:7,8. Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there

are to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is set for a sign, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had many eyes upon him, during the time of his public ministry, he was a sign, but he had many tongues against him, the contradiction and reproach of sinners, he was continually cavilled at and abused; and the effects of this will be that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed (Lu 2:35), that is, upon this occasion, men will show themselves, will discover, and so distinguish, themselves. The secret good affections and dispositions in the minds of some will be revealed by their embracing Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ and their rage against him. Men will be judged of by the thoughts of their hearts, their thoughts concerning Christ; are they for him, or are they for his adversaries? The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and by it we are discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter.

[2.] It is true, Christ shall be a comfort to his mother; but be not thou too proud of it, for a sword shall pass through thine own soul also. He shall be a suffering Jesus; and, First, "Thou shalt suffer with him, by sympathy, more than any other of his friends, because of the nearness of thy relation, and strength of affection, to him." When he was abused, it was a sword in her bones. When she stood by his cross, and saw him dying, we may well think her inward grief was such that it might truly be said, A sword pierced through her soul, it cut her to the heart. Secondly, Thou shalt suffer for him. Many understand it as a prediction of her martyrdom; and some of the ancients say that it had its accomplishment in that. Note, In the midst of our greatest delights and advancements in this world, it is good for us to know that bonds and afflictions abide us.

35 (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also;) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;

He is taken notice of by one Anna, or Ann, a prophetess, that one of each sex might bear witness to him in whom both men and women are invited to believe, that they may be saved. Observe,

1 The account here given of this Anna, who she was. She was,

(1.) A prophetess; the Spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more is meant than that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the younger women in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God left not himself without witness.

(2.) She was the daughter of Phanuel; her father's name (says Grotius) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's Phanuel, or Penuel (Ge 32:30), that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should as it were see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies gracious.

(3.) She was of the tribe of Asher, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of to refute those who said, Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet, when no sooner did prophecy revive but it appeared from Galilee.

(4.) She was of a great age, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think she had now been eighty-four years a widow, and then she must be considerably above a hundred years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman so very old should be capable of fasting and praying as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise.

(5.) She was a constant resident in or at least attendant on the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an alms-house, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess, she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted and advised with by those that desired to know the mind of God; others think her not

departing from the temple means no more, than that she was constantly there at the time of divine service: when any good work was to be done, she was ready to join in it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the public worship, abounded in private devotions, for she served God with fastings and prayers night and day: having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only fasted twice in the week, but always lived a mortified life, and spent that time in religious exercises which others spent in eating and drinking and sleeping; she not only observed the hours of prayer, but prayed night and day; was always in a praying frame, lived a life of prayer, gave herself to prayer, was frequent in ejaculations, large in solemn prayers, and very particular in her intercessions. And in these she served God; that was it that put a value upon them and an excellency in to them. The Pharisees fasted often, and made long prayers, but they served themselves, and their own pride and covetousness, in their fastings and prayers; but this good woman not only did that which was good, but did it from a good principle, and with a good end; she served God, and aimed at his honour, in fasting and praying. Note,

[1.] Devotion is a thing we ought to be constant in; other duties are in season now and then, but we must pray always.

[2.] It is a pleasant sight to see aged Christians abounding in acts of devotion, as those that are not weary of well-doing, that do not think themselves above these exercises, or past them, but that take more and more pleasure in them, and see more and more need of them, till they come to heaven.

[3.] Those that are diligent and faithful in improving the light and means they have shall have further discoveries made them. Anna is now at length abundantly recompensed for her attendance so many years in the temple.

2 The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus (Lu 2:38): She came in at that instant when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning

him; she, who was so constant to the temple, could not miss the opportunity.

Now,

(1.) She gave thanks likewise to the Lord, just as Simeon, perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, Those to whom Christ is made known have reason enough to give thanks to the Lord for so great a favour; and we should be excited to that duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should not we give thanks likewise, as well as they? Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. She confessed unto the Lord (so it may be read); she made an open profession of her faith concerning this child.

(2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him: She spoke of him to all them that believed the Messiah would come, and with him looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; redemption in Jerusalem, for thence the word of the Lord was to go forth, Isa 2:3. Some there were in Jerusalem that looked for redemption; yet but a few, for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with all them that were joint-expectants with her of the Messiah; she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord; and it was great news, this of his birth now, as afterwards that of his resurrection. Note, Those that have an acquaintance with Christ themselves should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him.

37 and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

Where he spent it, Lu 2:39. When the ceremony of presenting the child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they returned into Galilee. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were returned into Galilee; but it appears by St. Matthew's gospel (Mt 2:1-23) that from Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem, where the wise men of the east found them, and there they continued till they were directed to flee into Egypt, to escape the malice and rage of Herod; and, returning thence when Herod was dead, they were directed to go to their old quarters in Nazareth, whence they had been perhaps some years absent. It is here called their own city, because there they had lived a great while, and their relations were there. He was ordered further from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood were to have no affinity with the present government of the Jewish church or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach; for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself and make himself of no reputation.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

How he spent it, Lu 2:40. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, and therefore he passed through infancy and childhood as other children did, yet without sin; nay, with manifest indications of a divine nature in him. As other children, he grew in stature of body, and the improvement of understanding in his human soul, that his natural body might be a figure of his mystical body, which, though animated by a perfect spirit, yet maketh increase of itself till it comes to the perfect man, Eph 4:13,16. But,

(1.) Whereas other children are weak in understanding and resolution, he was strong in spirit. By the Spirit of God his human soul was endued with extraordinary vigour, and all his faculties performed their offices in an extraordinary manner. He reasoned strongly, and his judgment was penetrating.

(2.) Whereas other children have foolishness bound in their hearts, which appears in what they say or do, he was filled with wisdom, not by any advantages of instruction and education, but by the operation of the Holy Ghost; every thing he said and did was wisely said, and wisely done, above his years.

(3.) Whereas other children show that the corruption of nature is in them, and the tares of sin grow up with the wheat of reason, he made it appear that nothing but the grace of God was upon him (the wheat sprang up without tares), and that, whereas other children are by nature children of wrath, he was greatly beloved, and high in the favour of God; that God loved him, and cherished him, and took a particular care of him.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

We have here the only passage of story recorded concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy to the day of his showing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are concerned to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more. Here is,

Christ's going up with his parents to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, Lu 2:41,42.

1. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor, and perhaps not well able, without straitening themselves, to bear the expenses of it. Note, Public ordinances must be frequented, and we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns. Joseph and Mary had a son in the house with them, that was able to teach them better than all the rabbin at Jerusalem; yet they went up thither, after the custom of the feast. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so should we. We have reason to suppose that Joseph went up likewise at the feasts of pentecost and tabernacles; for all the males were to appear there thrice a year, but Mary only at the passover, which was the greatest of the three feasts, and had most gospel in it.

2 The child Jesus, at twelve years old, went up with them. The Jewish doctors say that at twelve years old children must begin to fast from time

to time, that they may learn to fast on the day of atonement; and that at thirteen years old a child begins to be a son of the commandment, that is, obliged to the duties of adult church-membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, a son of the covenant. It is not said that this was the first time that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast: probably he had done it for some years before, having spirit and wisdom above his years; and all should attend on public worship that can hear with understanding, Ne 8:2. Those children that are forward in other things should be put forward in religion. It is for the honour of Christ that children should attend on public worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas; and those children that were in their infancy dedicated to God should be called upon, when they are grown up, to come to the gospel passover, to the Lord's supper, that they make it their own act and deed to join themselves to the Lord.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

The child tarried behind in Jerusalem, not because he was loth to go home, or shy of his parents' company, but because he had business to do there, and would let his parents know that he had a Father in heaven, whom he was to be observant of more than of them; and respect to him must not be construed disrespect to them. Some conjecture that he tarried behind in the temple, for it was the custom of the pious Jews, on the morning that they were to go home, to go first to the temple, to worship God; there he staid behind, and found entertainment there till they found him again. Or, perhaps, he staid at the house where they lodged, or some other friend's house (and such a child as he was could not but be the darling of all that knew him, and every one would court his company), and went up to the temple only at church-time; but so it was that he staid behind. It is good to see young people willing to dwell in the house of the Lord; they are then like Christ.

His parents went the first day's journey without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they supposed him to have been in the company, Lu 2:44.

On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people; and they concluded that he came along with some of their neighbours, and they sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, that were upon the road, going down. Pray did you see our Son? or, Did you see him? Like the spouses's inquiry, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? This was a jewel worth seeking after. They knew that every one would be desirous of his company, and that he would be willing to do good among his kinsfolk and acquaintance, but among them they found him not, Lu 2:45. There are many, too many, who are our kinsfolk and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid conversing with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night; but there they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with Job 23:8,9.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

The third day they found him in the temple, in some of the apartments belonging to the temple, where the doctors of the law kept, not their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation; and there they found him sitting in the midst of them (Lu 2:46), not standing as a catechumen to be examined or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was filled with wisdom (Lu 2:40), but that he had both a desire to increase it and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and choose to sit in the midst of the doctors rather than in the midst of the players. Let them begin at twelve years old, and sooner, to enquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising presage in youth to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now would have been playing with the children in the temple, but he was sitting with the doctors in the temple.

(a) He heard them. Those that would learn must be swift to hear.

(b) He asked them questions; whether, as a teacher (he had authority so to ask) or as a learner (he had humility so to ask) I know not, or whether as an associate, or joint-searcher after truth, which must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions.

(c) He returned answers to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, Lu 2:47. And his wisdom and understanding appeared as much in the questions he asked as in the answers he gave, so that all who heard him were astonished: they never heard one so young, no indeed any of their greatest doctors, talk sense at the rate that he did; like David, he had more understanding than all his teachers, yea, than the ancients, Ps 119:99,100. Now Christ showed forth some rays of his glory, which were presently drawn in again. He gave them a taste (says Calvin) of his divine wisdom and knowledge. Methinks this public appearance of Christ in the temple, as a teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen put this construction upon, that he supposed his brethren would have understood, by that, how God by his hand would deliver them, Ac 7:24,25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then, but they understood not; so they here might have had Christ (for aught I know) to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understood not the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

His mother talked with him privately about it. When the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it with a deal of tenderness and affection, Lu 2:48. Joseph and Mary were both amazed to find him there, and to find that he had so much respect showed him as to be admitted to sit among the doctors, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But,

(a) His mother told him how ill they took it: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Why didst thou put us into such a fright?" They were ready to say, as Jacob of Joseph, "A wild beast has devoured him; or, He is fallen into the hands of some more cruel enemy, who has at length found

out that he was the young child whose life Herod had sought some years ago." A thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than another. "Now, why hast thou given us occasion for these fears? Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, to bring thee along with us." Note, Those may have leave to complain of their losses that think they have lost Christ. But their weeping did not hinder sowing; they did not sorrow and sit down in despair, but sorrowed and sought. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow shall find him, at length, with so much the greater joy.

(b) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him (Lu 2:49): "How is it that you sought me? You might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I had to do here. I could not be lost in Jerusalem. Wist ye not that I ought to be, en tois tou patros mou;--in my Father's house?" so some read it; "where else should the Son be, who abideth in the house for ever? I ought to be,"

[1.] "Under my Father's care and protection; and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burdened yourselves with it." Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, Isa 49:2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let us never despair of its safety.

[2.] "At my Father's work" (so we take it): "I must be about my Father's business, and therefore could not go home as soon as you might. Wist ye not? Have you not already perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it?" Herein he hath left us an example; for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend their heavenly Father's business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done and said. It was his errand into the world, and his meat and drink in the world, to do his Father's will, and finish his work: and yet at that time his parents understood not this saying,

Lu 2:50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple for his Father. They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David; but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace than to the temple. They understood not his prophetical office; and he was to do much of his work in that.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

Lastly, Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short. It was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem or to settle him there (though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of showing his wisdom), but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where for many years he was, as it were, buried alive. Doubtless, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, three times a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told; it is not improbable but he might. But here we are told,

1. That he was subject to his parents. Though once, to show that he was more than a man, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father's business, yet he did not, as yet, make that his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was subject to them, observed their order, and went and came as they directed, and, as it should seem, worked with his father at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being made of a woman, he was made under the law of the fifth commandment, to teach the seed of the faithful thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only his supposed father, yet he was subject

to them; though he was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom nay though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will they answer it who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?

2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand her son's sayings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men's sayings because they are obscure (Si non vis intelligi debes negligi--If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable), yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That which at first is dark, so that we know not what to make of it, may afterwards become plain and easy; we should therefore lay it up for hereafter. See Joh 2:22. We may find use for that another time which now we see not how to make useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar rules in memory which at present he understands not the use of, because he is told that they will hereafter be of use to him; so we must do by Christ's sayings.

3. That he improved, and came on, to admiration (Lu 2:52): He increased in wisdom and stature. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, his body increased in stature and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the divinity that dwelt in him manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, ad modum recipientis--in proportion to his capacity; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in favour with God and man, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an infant and a child. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom, and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

Luke-3

The Preaching of John the Baptist

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

Now in the fifteenth year. This was the thirteenth year of his being sole emperor. He was two years joint emperor with Augustus, and Luke reckons from the time when he was admitted to share the empire with Augustus Caesar. See Lardner's Credibility, vol. i.

Tiberius Caesar. Tiberius succeeded Augustus in the empire, and began his sole reign Aug. 19, A.D. 14. He was a most infamous character -- a scourge to the Roman people. He reigned twenty-three years, and was succeeded by Caius Caligula, whom he appointed his successor on account of his notorious wickedness, and that he might be, as he expressed it, a serpent to the Romans.

Pontius Pilate. Herod the Great left his kingdom to three sons. Mt 2:22. To Archelaus he left Judea. Archelaus reigned nine years, when, on account of his crimes, he was banished into Vienne, and Judea was made a Roman province, and placed entirely under Roman governors or procurators, and became completely tributary to Rome. Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor that had been sent, and of course had been in Judea but a short time. See the chronological table at the end of the volume.

Herod being tetrarch of Galilee. This was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, to whom Galilee had been left as his part of his father's kingdom. The word tetrarch properly denotes one who presides over a fourth part of a country or province; but it also came to be a general title, denoting one who reigned over any part--a, third, a half, &c. In this case

Herod had a third of the dominions of his father, but he was called tetrarch. It was this Herod who imprisoned John the Baptist, and to whom our Saviour, when arraigned, was sent by Pilate.

And his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea. Iturea was so called from Jetur, one of the sons of Ishmael, Gen 25:15, 1Chr 1:31. It was situated on the east side of the Jordan, and was taken from the descendants of Jetur by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, 1Chr 5:19.

Region of Trachonitis. This region was also on the east of the Jordan, and extended northward to the district of Damascus and eastward to the deserts of Arabia. It was bounded on the west by Gaulonitis and south by the city of Bostra. Philip had obtained this region from the Romans on condition that he would extirpate the robbers.

Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene. Abilene was so called from Abila, its chief city. It was situated in Syria, north-west of Damascus and south-east of Mount Lebanon, and was adjacent to Galilee.

2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

By the government of the Jews among themselves, to show that they were a corrupt people, and that therefore it was time that the Messiah should come, to reform them, Lu 3:2. Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. God had appointed that there should be but one high priest at a time, but here were two, to serve some ill turn or other: one served one year and the other the other year; so some. One was the high priest, and the other the sagan, as the Jews called him, to officiate for him when he was disabled; or, as others say, one was high priest, and represented Aaron, and that was Caiaphas; Annas, the other, was nasi, or head of the sanhedrim, and represented Moses. But to us there is but one high priest, one Lord of all, to whom all judgment is committed.

The origin of it was from heaven: The word of God came unto John, Lu 3:2. He received full commission and full instructions from God to do what he did. It is the same expression that is used concerning the Old-Testament prophets (Jer 1:2); for John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended.

We are not told how the word of the Lord came to John, whether by an angel, as to his father, or by dream, or vision, or voice, but it was to his satisfaction, and ought to be to ours. John is here called the son of Zacharias, to refer us to what the angel said to his father, when he assured him that he should have this son. The word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness; for those whom God fits he will find out, wherever they are. As the word of the Lord is not bound in a prison, so it is not lost in a wilderness. The word of the Lord made its way to Ezekiel among the captives by the river of Chebar, and to John in the isle of Patmos. John was the son of a priest, now entering upon the thirtieth year of his age; and therefore, according to the custom of the temple, he was now to be admitted into the temple-service, where he should have attended as a candidate five years before. But God had called him to a more honourable ministry, and therefore the Holy Ghost enrols him here, since he was not enrolled in the archives of the temple: John the son of Zacharias began his ministration such a time.

3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

The scope and design of it were to bring all the people of his country off from their sins and home to their God, Lu 3:3. He came first into all the country about Jordan, the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country which Israel took possession of first, when they entered the land of promise under Joshua's conduct; there was the banner of the gospel first displayed. John resided in the most solitary part of the country: but, when the word of the Lord came to him, he quitted his deserts, and came into the inhabited country. Those that are best pleased in their retirements must cheerfully exchange them, when God calls them into places of concourse. He came out of the wilderness into all the country, with some marks of distinction, preaching a new baptism; not a sect, or party, but a profession, or distinguishing badge. The sign, or ceremony, was such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, washing with water, by which proselytes were sometimes admitted, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, repentance for the remission of sins: that is, all that submitted to his baptism,

(1.) Were thereby obliged to repent of their sins, to be sorry for what they had done amiss, and to do so no more. The former they professed, and

were concerned to be sincere in their professions; the latter they promised, and were concerned to make good what they promised. He bound them, not to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way, to cast away from them all their transgressions, and to make them new hearts and to live new lives. The design of the gospel, which now began, was to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and honest, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, who had been much otherwise; and this is to repent.

(2.) They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism he administered bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious and pleadable discharge from the guilt of sin. Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin; agreeing with the word of the Lord, by the Old-Testament prophets, Eze 18:30.

4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying,
The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

The fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of Esaias, Isa 40:3. It is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, which he heard from God, which he spoke for God, those words of his which were written for the generations to come. Among them it is found that there should be the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and John is that voice, a clear distinct voice, a loud voice, an articulate one; he cries, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. John's business is to make way for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of the people, to bring them into such a frame and temper as that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John's ministry (Lu 3:5,6), Every valley shall be filled. Dr. Hammond understands this as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity: the land should be made plain by the pioneers for the Roman army, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side and the receivers of the

gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant of the gospel of Christ, of which that was the introduction.

1 The humble shall by it be enriched with grace: Every valley that lies low and moist shall be filled and be exalted.

2 The proud shall by it be humbled; the self-confident that stand upon their own bottom, and the self-conceited that lift up their own top, shall have contempt put upon them: Every mountain and hill shall be brought low. If they repent, they are brought to the dust; if not, to the lowest hell.

3. Sinners shall be converted to God: The crooked ways and the crooked spirits shall be made straight; for, though none can make that straight which God hath made crooked (Ec 7:13), yet God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked.

4. Difficulties that were hindering and discouraging in the way to heaven shall be removed: The rough ways shall be made smooth; and they that love God's law shall have great peace, and nothing shall offend them. The gospel has made the way to heaven plain and easy to be found, smooth and easy to be walked in.

5. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further (Lu 3:6): All flesh shall see the salvation of God; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall see it; they shall have it set before them and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall see it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel into the heart, by the captivation of high thoughts and bringing them into obedience to Christ, by the leveling of the soul and the removing of all obstructions that stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

5 Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be brought low;
and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

The general warnings and exhortations which he gave to those who submitted to his baptism, Lu 3:7-9. In Matthew he is said to have preached these same things to many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that came to his baptism (Mt 3:7-10); but here he is said to have spoken them to the multitude, that came forth to be baptized of him, Lu 3:7. This was the purport of his preaching to all that came to him, and he did not alter it in compliment to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came, but dealt as plainly with them as with any other of his hearers. And as he did not flatter the great, so neither did he compliment the many, or make his court to them, but gave the same reproofs of sin and warnings of wrath to the multitude that he did to the Sadducees and Pharisees; for, if they had not the same faults, they had others as bad. Now observe here,

1. That the guilty corrupted race of mankind is become a generation of vipers; not only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing the race of mankind upon the earth, and not destroying that nest of vipers. He did it once by water, and will again by fire.

2. This generation of vipers is fairly warned to flee from the wrath to come, which is certainly before them if they continue such; and their being a multitude will not be at all their security, for it will be neither reproach nor loss to God to cut them off. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it, if we look about us in time.

3. There is no way of fleeing from the wrath to come, but by repentance. They that submitted to the baptism of repentance thereby evidenced that they were warned to flee from the wrath to come and took the warning; and we by our baptism profess to have fled out of Sodom, for fear of what is coming upon it.

4. Those that profess repentance are highly concerned to live like penitents (Lu 3:8): "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, else, notwithstanding your professions of repentance, you cannot escape the

wrath to come." By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or no. By the change of our way must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we be not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church will stand us in no stead at all: Begin not now to frame excuses from this great duty of repentance, by saying within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. What will it avail us to be the children of godly parents if we be not godly, to be within the pale of the Church if we be not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion, because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure by his own honour and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely,--children to Abraham even out of stones.

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, and the greater assistances and encouragements are given us to repentance, the nearer and the sorer will our destruction be if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Now that the gospel begins to be preached, now that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, now that the axe is laid to the root of the tree, threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragements to the penitent are now more comfortable. "Now that you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves."

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length; it is the fittest place for them: Every tree that doth not bring forth fruit, good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice.

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then ?

11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

The particular instructions he gave to several sorts of persons, that enquired of him concerning their duty: the people, the publicans, and the soldiers. Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism; but we do not find them asking, What shall we do? They thought they knew what they had to do as well as he could tell them, or were determined to do what they pleased, whatever he told them. But the people, the publicans, and the soldiers, who knew that they had done amiss, and that they ought to do better, and were conscious to themselves of great ignorance and unacquaintedness with the divine law, were particularly inquisitive: What shall we do? Note,

1. Those that are baptized must be taught, and those that have baptized them are concerned, as they have opportunity, to teach them, Mt 28:19,20.

2. Those that profess and promise repentance in general must evidence it by particular instances of reformation, according as their place and condition are.

3. They that would do their duty must desire to know their duty, and enquire concerning it. The first good word Paul said, when he was converted, was, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? These here enquire, not, What shall this man do? but, What shall we do? What fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth? Now John gives answer to each, according to their place and station.

(a) He tells the people their duty, and that is to be charitable (Lu 3:11): He that has two coats, and, consequently, one to spare, let him give, or lend at least, to him that has none, to keep him warm. Perhaps he saw among his hearers some that were overloaded with clothes, while others were ready to perish in rags, and he puts those who had superfluities upon contributing to the relief of those that had not necessaries. The gospel requires mercy, and not sacrifice; and the design of it is to engage us to do all the good we can. Food and raiment are the two supports of life; he that hath meat to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of daily food,

as well as he that hath clothes to spare: what we have we are but stewards of, and must use it, accordingly, as our Master directs.

(b) He tells the publicans their duty, the collectors of the emperor's revenue (Lu 3:13): Exact no more than that which is appointed you. They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor any way make them heavier or more burdensome than the law had made them. They must not think that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince they might therefore, by the power they had, bear hard upon the people; as those that have ever so little a branch of power are apt to abuse it: "No, keep to your book of rates, and reckon it enough that you collect for Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and do not enrich yourselves by taking more." The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and not to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He does not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of custom; the employment is in itself lawful and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

(c) He tells the soldiers their duty, Lu 3:14. Some think that these soldiers were of the Jewish nation and religion: others think that they were Romans; for it was not likely either that the Jews would serve the Romans or that the Romans would trust the Jews in their garrisons in their own nation; and then it is an early instance of Gentiles embracing the gospel and submitting to it. Military men seldom seem inclined to religion; yet these submitted even to the Baptist's strict profession, and desired to receive the word of command from him: What must we do? Those who more than other men have their lives in their hands, and are in deaths often, are concerned to enquire what they shall do that they may be found in peace. In answer to this enquiry, John does not bid them lay down their arms, and desert the service, but cautions them against the sins that soldiers were commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance, to keep ourselves from our iniquity.

[1.] They must not be injurious to the people among whom they were quartered, and over whom indeed they were set: "Do violence to no man.

Your business is to keep the peace, and prevent men's doing violence to one another; but do not you do violence to any. Shake no man" (so the word signifies); "do not put people into fear; for the sword of war, as well as that of justice, is to be a terror only to evil doers, but a protection to those that do well. Be not rude in your quarters; force not money from people by frightening them. Shed not the blood of war in peace; offer no incivility either to man or woman, nor have any hand in the barbarous devastations that armies sometimes make." Nor must they accuse any falsely to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and get bribes.

[2.] They must not be injurious to their fellow-soldiers; for some think that caution, not to accuse falsely, has special reference to them: "Be not forward to complain one of another to your superior officers, that you may be revenged on those whom you have a pique against, or undermine those above you, and get into their places." Do not oppress any; so some think the word here signifies as used by the LXX. in several passages of the Old Testament.

[3.] They must not be given to mutiny, or contend with their generals about their pay: "Be content with your wages. While you have what you agreed for, do not murmur that it is not more." It is discontent with what they have that makes men oppressive and injurious; they that never think they have enough themselves will not scruple at any the most irregular practices to make it more, by defrauding others. It is a rule to all servants that they be content with their wages; for they that indulge themselves in discontents expose themselves to many temptations, and it is wisdom to make the best of that which is.

12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do ?

13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do ? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;

16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy
Ghost and with fire:

Observe here, 1. How the extraordinariness of John the Baptist's person, the earnestness of his preaching, the acceptableness of his doctrine, and the exemplariness of his conversation, drew all persons to an admiration of him; insomuch that they began to think within themselves, whether here were not the Messiah himself. He plainly tells them he was not, but only his servant, his harbinger and forerunner.

Observe 2. The high opinion which John had of Christ, He is mightier than I; that is, a person of greater authority, dignity, and excellency, than myself.

From whence may be gathered, that though Christ was man, he was more than man, even very God, equal with the Father: for John himself was the greatest of them that were born of women. Matt 11:11 Yet, says John, Christ is mightier than I. How so? In regard of the dignity of his person, being both God and man? He that cometh after me is mightier than I.

Observe, 3. The humble and low estimation that the holy Baptist had of himself: His shoe-latchet I am not worthy to unloose: a proverbial speech, implying that he was unworthy to do the lowest offices, and meanest services for Christ.

Lord, how well does humility of mind, an humble apprehension, and a low opinion of themselves, become the messengers and ministers of Christ! John was a man of eminent abilities, yet of exemplary humility; he thought himself unworthy to unloose Christ's shoe.

Observe, 4. John does not only declare the dignity of Christ's person, but the excellency of his office; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. As if he had said, "I only wash the body with water, but Christ cleanses the soul by the operation of his Holy Spirit, which is as fire in the effects of it, purifying the hearts of his people from sin, and

consuming their lusts and corruptions; yet at the same time having fiery indignation, and flaming judgments, to destroy and burn up impenitent sinners like dry stubble."

Observable it is in scripture, that Christ is represented by one and the same metaphor of fire, in a way of comfort to his children, and in a way of terror to his enemies; he is fire unto both. He sits in the hearts of his people as a refiner's fire; he is amongst his enemies as a consuming fire: a fire for his church to take comfort in, a fire for his enemies to perish by.

Observe, lastly, how the holy Baptist compares our Saviour to an husbandman, and the Jewish church to a barn floor; the office of an husbandman is to thresh, fan, and winnow, his corn, separating it from the chaff, preserving the one, and consuming the other.

Observe,

1. That the church is Christ's floor.

2. That this floor Christ will purge, and that thoroughly.

3. That the word of Christ is the fan in his hand, by and with which he will thoroughly purge his floor.

The church is compared to a floor, upon the account of that mixture which is in the church. In a floor there is straw as well as grain, chaff as well as corn, tares as well as wheat, cockle and darnel as well as good seed. Thus in the church there has been, there is, and ever will be, a mixture of good and bad, saints and sinners, hypocrites and sincere Christians: but this floor Christ will purge; purge it, but not break it up; purge out its corruptions, but not destroy its essence and existence: and the fan in Christ's hand, with which he will purge his floor, is his holy word, accompanied with the wing of discipline. The fan detects and discovers the chaff, and the wing dissipates and scatters it; and by the help of both the floor is purged: His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge.

17 whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor,
and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.
18 And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.
19 But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,
20 added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

See notes on Mt 14:1-13

Added this above all, To all his former crimes he added this; not implying that this was the worst of his acts, but that this was one of his deeds, of like character as the others. The event here mentioned did not take place until some time after this, but it is mentioned here to show what was the end of John's preaching, or to fill out the account concerning him.

The Baptism of Jesus

21 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,
22 and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

See notes on Mt 3:13-17

The Genealogy of Jesus

23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,
24 which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Janna, which was the son of Joseph,
25 which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Nahum, which was the son of Esli, which was the son of Naggai,

26 which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Semei, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah,

27 which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zerubbabel, which was the son of Shealtiel, which was the son of Neri,

28 which was the son of Melchi, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Elmodam, which was the son of Er,

29 which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Eliezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthat, which was the son of Levi,

30 which was the son of Simeon, which was the son of Judah, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Jonan, which was the son of Eliakim,

31 which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menan, which was the son of Mattatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David,

32 which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Obed, which was the son of Boaz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Nahshon,

33 which was the son of Amminadab, which was the son of Ram, which was the son of Hezron, which was the son of Pharez, which was the son of Judah,

34 which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Terah, which was the son of Nahor,

35 which was the son of Serug, which was the son of Reu, which was the son of Peleg, which was the son of Eber, which was the son of Salah,

36 which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Shem, which was the son of Noah, which was the son of Lamech,

37 which was the son of Methuselah, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Mahalaleel, which was the son of Cainan,

38 which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

Luke-4

The Temptation of Jesus

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

2 being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

See notes on Mt 4:1-11

3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.

4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

5 And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan:

for it is written,

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

10 for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

11 and in their hands they shall bear thee up,

lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

After Christ had vanquished the evil spirit, he made it appear how much he was under the influence of the good Spirit; and, having defended himself against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act offensively, and to make those attacks upon him, by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe,

What is here said in general of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with in Galilee, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem; it was a part of Christ's humiliation that he began his ministry there.

But,

1. Thither he came in the power of the Spirit. The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetical office strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself.

2. There he taught in their synagogues, their places of public worship, where they met, not, as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the moral acts of devotion, to read, expound, and apply, the word, to pray and praise, and for church-discipline; these came to be more frequent since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring.

3. This he did so as that he gained a great reputation. A fame of him went through all that region (Lu 4:14), and it was a good fame; for (Lu 4:15) he was glorified of all. Every body admired him, and cried him up; they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now, at first, he met with no contempt or contradiction; all glorified him, and there were none as yet that vilified him.

Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Of his preaching at Nazareth, the city where he was brought up; and the entertainment it met with there. And here we are told how he preached there, and how he was persecuted.

1. How he preached there. In that observe,

(a) The opportunity he had for it: He came to Nazareth when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something at least of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach,

[1.] In the synagogue, the proper place, where it had been his custom to attend when he was a private person, Lu 4:16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But, now that he was entered upon his public ministry, there he preached. Where the multitudes of fish were, there this wise Fisherman would cast his net.

[2.] On the sabbath day, the proper time which the pious Jews spent, not in a mere ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in the duties of God's worship, as of old they frequented the schools of the prophets on the new moons and the sabbaths. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths in solemn assemblies.

(b) The call he had to it.

[1.] He stood up to read. They had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, the first a priest, the second a Levite, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. We often find Christ preaching in other synagogues, but never reading, except in this synagogue at Nazareth, of which he had been many years a member. Now he offered his service as

he had perhaps often done; he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, Ac 13:15. Note, The reading of the scripture is very proper work to be done in religious assemblies; and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to him to be employed in it.

[2.] The book of the prophet Esaias was delivered to him, either by the ruler of the synagogue or by the minister mentioned (Lu 4:20), so that he was no intruder, but duly authorized pro hac vice--on this occasion. The second lesson for that day being in the prophecy of Esaias, they gave him that volume to read in.

(c) The text he preached upon. He stood up to read, to teach us reverence in reading and hearing the word of God. When Ezra opened the book of the law, all the people stood up (Ne 8:5); so did Christ here, when he read in the book of the prophets. Now the book being delivered to him,

[1.] He opened it. The books of the Old Testament were in a manner shut up till Christ opened them, Isa 29:11. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to take the book, and open the seals; for he can open, not the book only, but the understanding.

[2.] He found the place which was appointed to be read that day in course, which he needed not to be directed to; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his text. Now his text was taken out of Isa 61:1,2, which is here quoted at large, Lu 4:18,19. There was a providence in it that that portion of scripture should be read that day, which speaks so very plainly of the Messiah, that they might be left inexcusable who knew him not, though they heard the voices of the prophets read every sabbath day, which bore witness of him, Ac 13:27. This text gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do. Observe,

First, How he was qualified for the work: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit were conferred upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but without measure, Joh 3:34. He now came in the power of the Spirit, Lu 4:14.

Secondly, How he was commissioned: Because he had anointed me, and sent me. His extraordinary qualification amounted to a commission; his being anointed signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking and called to it. Those whom God appoints to any service he anoints for it: "Because he hath sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me."

Thirdly, What his work was. He was qualified and commissioned,

1. To be a great prophet. He was anointed to preach; that is three times mentioned here, for that was the work he was now entering upon. Observe,

(a) To whom he was to preach: to the poor; to those that were poor in the world, whom the Jewish doctors disdained to undertake the teaching of and spoke of with contempt; to those that were poor in spirit, to the meek and humble, and to those that were truly sorrowful for sin: to them the gospel and the grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, Mt 11:5.

(b) What he was to preach. In general, he must preach the gospel. He is sent euangelizesthai--to evangelize them; not only to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual; to bring it, not only to their ears, but to their hearts, and deliver them into the mould of it. Three things he is to preach:--

[1.] Deliverance to the captives, The gospel is a proclamation of liberty, like that to Israel in Egypt and in Babylon. By the merit of Christ sinners may be loosed from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is a deliverance from the worst of thraldoms, which all those shall have the benefit of that are willing to make Christ their Head, and are willing to be ruled by him.

[2.] Recovering of sight to the blind. He came not only by the word of his gospel to bring light to them that sat in the dark, but by the power of his grace to give sight to them that were blind; not only the Gentile world,

but every unregenerate soul, that is not only in bondage, but in blindness, like Samson and Zedekiah. Christ came to tell us that he has eye-salve for us, which we may have for the asking; that, if our prayer be, Lord, that our eyes may be opened, his answer shall be, Receive your sight.

[3.] The acceptable year of the Lord, Lu 4:19. He came to let the world know that the God whom they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them, and to accept of them upon new terms; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him; that there is now a time of good will toward men. It alludes to the year of release, or that of jubilee, which was an acceptable year to servants, who were then set at liberty; to debtors, against whom all actions then dropped; and to those who had mortgaged their lands, for then they returned to them again. Christ came to sound the jubilee-trumpet; and blessed were they that heard the joyful sound, Ps 89:15. It was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation.

2. Christ came to be a great Physician; for he was sent to heal the broken-hearted, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, to give peace to those that were troubled and humbled for sins, and under a dread of God's wrath against them for them, and to bring them to rest who were weary and heavy-laden, under the burden of guilt and corruption.

3. To be a great Redeemer. He not only proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in Babylon (Whoever will, may go up), but he sets at liberty them that are bruised; he doth by his Spirit incline and enable them to make use of the liberty granted, as then none did but those whose spirit God stirred up, Ezr 1:5. He came in God's name to discharge poor sinners that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice. The prophets could but proclaim liberty, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had power on earth to forgive sins, came to set at liberty; and therefore this clause is added here. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, according to a liberty the Jew allowed their readers, to compare scripture with scripture, in their reading, for the explication of the text, Christ added it from Isa 58:6, where it is made the duty of the acceptable year to let the oppressed go free, where the phrase the LXX. uses is the same with this here.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah.

And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;

he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

Here is Christ's application of this text to himself (Lu 4:21): When he had read it, he rolled up the book, and gave it again to the minister, or clerk, that attended, and sat down, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers; he sat daily in the temple, teaching, Mt 26:55. Now he began his discourse thus, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This, which Isaiah wrote by way of prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history." It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry; now, in the report they heard of his preaching and miracles in other places; now, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning the kingdom of heaven at hand; that it was preaching liberty, and sight, and healing, and all the blessings of the acceptable year of the Lord. Many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which these were but the beginning of; for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal: This day is this scripture fulfilled.

Note,

[1.] All the scriptures of the Old Testament that were to be fulfilled in the Messiah had their full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was he that should come.

[2.] In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the fulfilling of the scriptures. The works of God are the accomplishment not only of his secret word, but of his word revealed; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures and the providences of God to compare them one with another.

Here is the attention and admiration of the auditors.

[1.] Their attention (Lu 4:20): The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue (and, probably, there were a great many) were fastened on him, big with expectation what he would say, having heard so much of late concerning him. Note, It is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister by whom God is speaking to us; for, as the eye effects the heart, so, usually, the heart follows the eye, and is wandering, or fixed, as that is. Or, rather, let us learn hence to keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister. What saith my Lord unto his servants?

[2.] Their admiration (Lu 4:22): They all bore him witness that he spoke admirably well, and to the purpose. They all commended him, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not believe in him. Note, It is possible that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching may yet be themselves not true Christians. Observe, First, What it was they admired: The gracious words which proceedeth out of his mouth. The words of grace; good words, and spoken in a winning melting way. Note, Christ's words are words of grace, for, grace being poured into his lips (Ps 45:2), words of grace poured from them. And these words of grace are to be wondered at; Christ's name was Wonderful, and in nothing was he more so than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace to such graceless wretches as we are. Secondly, What it was that increased their wonder

and that was the consideration of his original: They said, Is not this Joseph's son, and therefore his extraction mean and his education mean? Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his gracious words, concluding he must needs be taught of God, for they knew no one else had taught him; while others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing really admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the Son of Joseph. Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

Christ's anticipating an objection which he knew to be in the minds of many of his hearers. Observe,

[1.] What the objection was (Lu 4:23): "You will surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself. Because you know that I am the Son of Joseph, your neighbour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I have done in other places; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal, not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity." Most of Christ's miracles were cures;--"Now why should not the sick in thine own city be healed as well as those in other cities?" They were designed to cure people of their unbelief;--"Now why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city as well as in those of others? Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, that has been so much talked of, do here also in thine own country." They were pleased with Christ's gracious words, only because they hoped they were but the introduction to some wondrous works of his. They wanted to have their lame, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any other; and why should not he rather draw company to that than to any other? And why should not his neighbours and acquaintances have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other?

[2.] How he answers this objection against the course he took.

First, By a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his headquarters (Lu 4:24), because it generally holds true that no prophet is accepted in his own country, at least not so well, nor with such probability of doing good, as in some other country; experience seals this. When prophets have been sent with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own country-men, that have known their extraction and education, have been fit to receive them. So Dr. Hammond. Familiarity breeds contempt; and we are apt to think meanly of those whose conversation we have been accustomed to; and they will scarcely be duly honoured as prophets who were well known when they were in the rank of private men. That is most esteemed that is far-fetched and dear-bought, above what is home-bred, though really more excellent. This arises likewise from the envy which neighbours commonly have towards one another, so that they cannot endure to see him their superior whom awhile ago they took to be every way their inferior. For this reason, Christ declined working miracles, or doing any thing extraordinary, at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there.

Secondly, By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners rather than among their own countrymen, and that, no doubt, by divine direction.

1. Elijah maintained a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a famine in the land, Lu 4:25,26. The story we have 1Ki 17:9, &c. It is said there that the heaven was shut up three years and six months; whereas it is said, 1Ki 18:1, that in the third year Elijah showed himself to Ahab, and there was rain; but that was not the third year of the drought, but the third year of Elijah's sojourning with the widow of Sarepta. As God would hereby show himself a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles.

2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy, though he was a Syrian, and not only a foreigner, but an enemy to Israel (Lu 4:27); Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Eliseus, four particularly, that brought

the news of the Syrians' raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Elisha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the accomplishment of his prophecy too; see 2Ki 7:1,3, &c. And yet we do not find that Elisha cleansed them, no not for a reward of their service, and the good tidings they brought, but only the Syrian; for none besides had faith to apply himself to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often met with greater faith among Gentiles than in Israel. And here he mentions both these instances, to show that he did not dispense the favour of his miracles by private respect, but according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah, or Elisha, as the Nazarenes to Christ, Physician, heal thyself. Nay, Christ wrought his miracles, though not among his townsmen, yet among Israelites, whereas these great prophets wrought theirs among Gentiles. The examples of the saints, though they will not make a bad action good, yet will help to free a good action from the blame of exceptious people.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

How he was persecuted at Nazareth.

(a) That which provoked them was his taking notice of the favour which God by Elijah and Elisha showed to the Gentiles: When they heard these things, they were filled with wrath (Lu 4:28), they were all so; a great change since Lu 4:22, when they wondered at the gracious words that

proceeded out of his mouth; thus uncertain are the opinions and affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If they had mixed faith with those gracious words of Christ which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but those only pleased the ear, and went no further, and therefore these grated on the ear, and irritated their corruptions. They were angry that he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the son of Joseph, with those great prophets, and compare them with the men of that corrupt age, when all had bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially exasperated them was that he intimated some kindness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, Ac 22:21. Their pious ancestors pleased themselves with the hopes of adding the Gentiles to the church (witness many of David's psalms and Isaiah's prophecies); but this degenerate race, when they had forfeited the covenant themselves, hated to think that any others should be taken in.

(b) They were provoked to that degree that they made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the usage he met with when he came to his own, and they received him not.

[1.] They rose up in a tumultuous manner against him, interrupted him in his discourse, and themselves in their devotions, for they could not stay until their synagogue-worship was over.

[2.] They thrust him out of the city, as one not worthy to have a residence among them, though there he had had a settlement so long. They thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as if he had been the offscouring of all things. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven upon them! But this was the day of his patience.

[3.] They led him to the brow of the hill, with a purpose to throw him down headlong, as one not fit to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he had for so many years lived among them, how shining his conversation had been,--though they had heard such a fame of him and had but just now themselves admired his gracious words,--though in

justice he ought to have been allowed a fair hearing and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried him away in a popular fury, or frenzy rather, to put him to death in a most barbarous manner. Sometimes they were ready to stone him for the good works he did (Joh 10:32), here for not doing the good works they expected from him. To such a height of wickedness was violence sprung up.

(c) Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet come: He passed through the midst of them unhurt. Either he blinded their eyes, as God did those of the Sodomites and Syrians, or he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do what they designed; for his work was not done, it was but just begun; his hour was not yet come, when it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They drove him from them, and he went his way. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they would not, and therefore their house is left to them desolate. This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of Nazareth, that not only it was a place whence no good thing was expected, but that it was such a wicked, rude place, and so unkind to him. Yet there was a providence in it, that he should not be much respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would have looked like a collusion between him and his old acquaintance; but now, though they received him not, there were those that did.

30 But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way,

31 and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days.

32 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

A Man with an Unclean Spirit

33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice,

34 saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

See notes on Mr 1:21-27. Matthew omits this account.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

36 And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this ! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

37 And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

Jesus Heals Simon's Mother-in-Law

38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.

39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

See notes on Mt 8:14-17

Jesus Heals Many at Evening

40 Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

41 And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ.

Jesus Departs on a Preaching Tour

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

43 And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

44 And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

See notes on Mt 4:23-25

Luke-5

The Great Catch of Fish

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,
2 and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

This passage of story fell, in order of time, before the two miracles we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be fishers of men, Mt 4:18,Mk 1:16. They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only in view the calling of his disciples; but Luke gives us that story as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had not been written in the foregoing books, Joh 20:30,31. Observe here,

I. What vast crowds attended Christ's preaching: The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God (Lu 5:1), insomuch that no house would contain them, but he was forced to draw them out to the strand, that they might be reminded of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand upon the sea shore (Ge 22:17), and yet of them but a remnant shall be saved, Ro 9:27. The people flocked about him (so the word signifies); they showed respect to his preaching, though not without some rudeness to his person, which was very excusable, for they pressed upon him. Some would reckon this a discredit to him, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the grandees, and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the many sons to God. It was foretold concerning him that to him shall the gathering of the people be. Christ was a popular preacher; and though he was able, at twelve, to dispute with the doctors, yet he chose, at thirty, to preach to the capacity of the vulgar. See how the people relished good preaching, though under all external disadvantages: they pressed to hear the word of God; they could perceive

it to be the word of God, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it.

II. What poor conveniences Christ had for preaching: He stood by the lake of Gennesareth (Lu 5:1), upon a level with the crowd, so that they could neither see him nor hear him; he was lost among them, and, every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water: what must he do? It does not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but there were two ships, or fishing boats, brought ashore, one belonging to Simon and Andrew, the other to Zebedee and his sons, Lu 5:2. At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance (so Matthew tells us, Lu 4:18); but he waited till they came to land, and till the fishermen, that is, the servants, were gone out of them having washed their nets, and thrown them by for that time: so Christ entered into that ship that belonged to Simon, and begged of him that he would lend it him for a pulpit; and, though he might have commanded him, yet, for love's sake, he rather prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land, which would be the worse for his being heard, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be seen; and it is his being lifted up that draws men to him. Wisdom cries in the top of high places, Pr 8:2. It intimates that Christ had a strong voice (strong indeed, for he made the dead to hear it), and that he did not desire to favour himself. There he sat down, and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

What a particular acquaintance Christ, hereupon, fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism (Joh 1:40,41); they were with him at Cana of Galilee (Joh 2:2), and in Judea (Joh 4:3); but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore here we have them at their calling, and now it was that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

1. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply himself to the business of his calling again: Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets, Lu 5:4. It was not the sabbath day, and therefore, as soon as the lecture was over, he set them to work. Time spent on week-days in the public exercises of religion may be but little hindrance to us in time, and a great furtherance to us in temper of mind, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling when we have been in the mount with God, and from thence fetch a double blessing into our worldly employments, and thus have them sanctified to us by the word and prayer! It is our wisdom and duty so to manage our religious exercises as that they may befriend our worldly business, and so to manage our worldly business as that it may be no enemy to our religious exercises.

2 Peter having attended upon Christ in his preaching, Christ will accompany him in his fishing. He staid with Christ at the shore, and now Christ will launch out with him into the deep. Note, Those that will be constant followers of Christ shall have him a constant guide to them.

3. Christ ordered Peter and his ship's crew to cast their nets into the sea, which they did, in obedience to him, though they had been hard at it all night, and had caught nothing, Lu 5:4,5. We may observe here,

(a) How melancholy their business had now been: "Master, we have toiled all the night, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have taken nothing, but have had our labour for our pains." One would have thought that this should have excused them from hearing the sermon; but such a love had they to the word of God that it was more refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night, than the softest slumbers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again.

Note,

[1.] Some callings are much more toilsome than others are, and more perilous; yet Providence has so ordered it for the common good that there

is no useful calling so discouraging but some or other have a genius for it. Those who follow their business, and get abundance by it with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who cannot follow theirs but with a great fatigue, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have rested all night, let us not forget those who have toiled all night, as Jacob, when he kept Laban's sheep.

[2.] Be the calling ever so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it; these fishermen, that were thus industrious, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were fit to be preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ who had thus learned to endure hardness.

[3.] Even those who are most diligent in their business often meet with disappointments; they who toiled all night yet caught nothing; for the race is not always to the swift. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command and dependence upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of worldly success. We must do our duty, and then leave the event to God. [4.] When we are tired with our worldly business, and crossed in our worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ, and spread our case before him, who will take cognizance of it.

(b) How ready their obedience was to the command of Christ: Nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.

[1.] Though they had toiled all night, yet, if Christ bid them, they will renew their toil, for they know that they who wait on him shall renew their strength, as work is renewed upon their hands; for every fresh service they shall have a fresh supply of grace sufficient.

[2.] Though they have taken nothing, yet, if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. Note, We must not abruptly quit the callings wherein we are called because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves. The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down that net, though they have perhaps toiled long and caught nothing; and this is thank-worthy, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them.

[3.] In this they have an eye to the word of Christ, and a dependence upon that: "At thy word, I will let down the net, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it." We are then likely to speed well when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

4. The draught of fish they caught was so much beyond what was ever known that it amounted to a miracle (Lu 5:6): They enclosed a great multitude of fishes, so that their net broke, and yet, which is strange, they did not lose their draught. It was so great a draught that they had not hands sufficient to draw it up; but they were obliged to beckon to their partners, who were at a distance, out of call, to come and help them, Lu 5:7. But the greatest evidence of the vastness of the draught was that they filled both the ships with fish, to such a degree that they overloaded them, and they began to sink, so that the fish had like to have been lost again with their own weight. Thus many an overgrown estate, raised out of the water, returns to the place whence it came. Suppose these ships were but five or six tons a piece, what a vast quantity of fish must there be to load, nay to over-load, them both!

Now by this vast draught of fishes,

(a) Christ intended to show his dominion in the seas as well as on the dry land, over its wealth as over its waves. Thus he would show that he was that Son of man under whose feet all things were put, and particularly the fish of the sea and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, Ps 8:8.

(b) He intended hereby to confirm the doctrine he had just now preached out of Peter's ship. We may suppose that the people on shore, who heard the sermon, having a notion that the preacher was a prophet sent of God, carefully attended his motions afterward, and staid halting about there, to see what he would do next; and this miracle immediately following would be a confirmation to their faith, of his being at least a teacher come from God.

(c) He intended hereby to repay Peter for the loan of his boat; for Christ's gospel now, as his ark formerly in the house of Obed-edom, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for its kind entertainment. None shall shut a door or kindle a fire in God's house for nought, Mal 1:10. Christ's recompences for services done to his name are abundant, they are superabundant.

(d) He intended hereby to give a specimen, to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world, of the success of their embassy, that though they might for a time, and in one particular place, toil and catch nothing, yet they should be instrumental to bring in many to Christ, and enclose many in the gospel net.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter was very remarkable.

(a) All concerned were astonished, and the more astonished for their being concerned. All the boat's crew were astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken (Lu 5:9); they were all surprised; and the more they considered it, and all the circumstances of it, the more they were wonder-struck, I had almost said thunder-struck, at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, who were partners with Simon (Lu 5:10), and who, for aught that appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ, before this, as Peter and Andrew were. Now they were the more affected with it,

[1.] Because they understood it better than others did. They that were well acquainted with this sea, and it is probable had plied upon it many years,

had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor any thing like it, any thing near it; and therefore they could not be tempted to diminish it, as others might, by suggesting that it was accidental at this time, and what might as well have happened at any time. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles that those who were best acquainted with them most admired them.

[2.] Because they were most interested in it, and benefited by it. Peter and his part-owners were gainers by this great draught of fishes; it was a rich booty for them and therefore it transported them, and their joy was a helper to their faith. Note, When Christ's works of wonder are to us, in particular, works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

(b) Peter, above all the rest, was astonished to such a degree that he fell down at Jesus's knees, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy or transport, that knew not where he was or what he said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, Lu 5:8. Not that he feared the weight of the fish would sink him because he was a sinful man, but that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat, and worthy that it should be to him a matter rather of terror than of comfort. This word of Peter's came from the same principle with theirs who, under the Old-Testament, so often said that they did exceedingly fear and quake at the extraordinary display of the divine glory and majesty. It was the language of Peter's humility and self-denial, and had not the least tincture of the devils' dialect, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?

[1.] His acknowledgment was very just, and what it becomes us all to make: I am a sinful man, O Lord. Note, Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves?

[2.] His inference from it was what might have been just, though really it was not so. If I be a sinful man, as indeed I am, I ought to say, "Come to

me, O Lord, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, for ever undone." But, considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God and to dread his wrath, Peter may well be excused, if, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, he cried out on a sudden, Depart from me. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. We must all own ourselves sinful men, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us; but we must therefore fall down at his knees, to pray him that he would not depart; for woe unto us if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from the sinful man.

6. The occasion which Christ took from this to intimate to Peter (Lu 5:10), and soon after to James and John (Mt 4:21), his purpose to make them his apostles, and instruments of planting his religion in the world. He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprise of any of them at this prodigious draught of fishes, "Thou shalt both see and do greater things than these; fear not; let not this astonish thee; be not afraid that, after having done thee this honour, it is so great that I shall never do thee more; no, henceforth thou shalt catch men, by enclosing them in the gospel net, and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is; that shall be a more astonishing miracle, and infinitely more advantageous than this." When by Peter's preaching three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Lastly, The fishermen's farewell to their calling, in order to their constant attendance on Christ (Lu 5:11): When they had brought their ships to land, instead of going to seek for a market for their fish, that they might make the best hand they could of this miracle, they forsook all and followed him, being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable that they

left all to follow Christ, when their calling prospered in their hands more than ever it had done and they had had uncommon success in it. When riches increase, and we are therefore most in temptation to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ, this is thank-worthy.

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

See notes on Mt 8:2-4

13 And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.

14 And he charged him to tell no man: But go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15 But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

16 And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Jesus Heals a Palsied Man

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

See notes on Mt 9:2-8

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies ? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts ?

23 whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.

The Call of Levi

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

See notes on Mt 9:9-17

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?

31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The Question about Fasting

33 And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

Mt 9:15-17.

34 And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?
35 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.
36 And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.
37 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.
38 But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.
39 No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.

Luke-6

The Disciples Pluck Grain on the Sabbath

1 And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

see Mt 12:1-15

2 And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?
3 And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was ahungered, and they which were with him;
4 how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?
5 And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

The Man with a Withered Hand

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

8 But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil ? to save life, or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11 And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

Jesus Chooses the Twelve

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes,

16 and Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases;

18 and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed.

19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

given much more fully in Mt 5:1-12:29

Blessings and Woes

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

24 But woe unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation.

25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

26 Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you ! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Woes denounced against prospering sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them. These we had not in Matthew. It should seem, the best exposition of these woes, compared with the foregoing blessings, is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus had the blessedness of those that are poor, and hunger, and weep, now, for in Abraham's bosom all the promises made to them who did so were made good to him; but the rich man had the woes that follow here, as he had the character of those on whom these woes are entailed.

1. Here is a woe to them that are rich, that is, that trust in riches, that have abundance of this world's wealth, and, instead of serving God with it, serve their lusts with it; woe to them, for they have received their consolation, that which they placed their happiness in, and were willing to take up with for a portion, Lu 6:24. They in their life-time received their good things, which, in their account, were the best things, and all the good things they are ever likely to receive from God. "You that are rich are in temptation to set your hearts upon a smiling world, and to say, Soul, take thine ease in the embraces of it, This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and then woe unto you."

(a) It is the folly of carnal worldlings that they make the things of this world their consolation, which were intended only for their convenience. They please themselves with them, pride themselves in them, and make them their heaven upon earth; and to them the consolations of God are small, and of no account.

(b) It is their misery that they are put off with them as their consolation. Let them know it, to their terror, when they are parted from these things, there is an end of all their comfort, a final end of it, and nothing remains to them but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a woe to them that are full (Lu 6:25), that are fed to the full, and have more than heart could wish (Ps 73:7), that have their bellies filled with the hid treasures of this world (Ps 17:14), that, when they have abundance of these, are full, and think they have enough, they need no more, they desire no more, Re 3:17. Now ye are full, now ye are rich, 1Co 4:8. They are full of themselves, without God and Christ. Woe to such, for they shall hunger, they shall shortly be stripped and emptied of all the things they are so proud of; and, when they shall have left behind them in the world all those things which are their fulness, they shall carry away with them such appetites and desires as the world they remove to will afford them no gratifications of; for all the delights of sense, which they are now so full of, will in hell be denied, and in heaven superseded.

3. Here is a woe to them that laugh now, that have always a disposition to be merry, and always something to make merry with; that know no other joy than that which is carnal and sensual, and know no other use of this world's good than purely to indulge that carnal sensual joy that banishes sorrow, even godly sorrow, from their minds, and are always entertaining themselves with the laughter of the fool. Woe unto such, for it is but now, for a little time, that they laugh; they shall mourn and weep shortly, shall mourn and weep eternally, in a world where there is nothing but weeping and wailing, endless, easeless, and remediless sorrow.

4. Here is a woe to them whom all men speak well of, that is, who make it their great and only care to gain the praise and applause of men, who

value themselves upon that more than upon the favour of God and his acceptance (Lu 6:26): "Woe unto you; that is, it would be a bad sign that you were not faithful to your trust, and to the souls of men, if you preached so as that nobody would be disgusted; for your business is to tell people of their faults, and, if you do that as you ought, you will get that ill will which never speaks well. The false prophets indeed, that flattered your father in their wicked ways, that prophesied smooth things to them, were caressed and spoken well of; and, if you be in like manner cried up, you will be justly suspected to deal deceitfully as they did." We should desire to have the approbation of those that are wise and good, and not be indifferent to what people say of us; but, as we should despise the reproaches, so we should also despise the praises, of the fools in Israel.

Love for Enemies

27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

See notes on Mt 5:39-48

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Judging Others

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

See notes on Mt 7:1-2.

38 give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

I think there is not one text of scripture that declares the bounty of God more fully in rewarding acts of charity and mercy than this before us. O how liberal a paymaster is God! How sure and bountiful are the returns Christ makes to us for the relief given to him in his members!

He promises us here,

1. Not bare measure but good measure.

2. Pressed down, shaken together, and running over; nothing adds more to the measure than the shaking of the bushel, the crowding and pressing of the corn, and heaping till the measure runs over: now a measure will run over as long as you will pour.

Learn hence, that charities done in faith, in obedience to God, and with an eye to the glory of God, will produce a certain and plentiful increase. Liberality is the way to riches; giving is the best and surest way of thriving.

A little charity from us, if we have but a little, is looked upon by God as a great deal. But it is the greatest imprudence as well as impiety, to do but a little when we have the ability to do much; for he that sows bountifully shall reap bountifully: good measure, pressed down, and running over.

39 And he spake a parable unto them; Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?

See notes on "Mt 15:14".

40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

See Mt 10:24.

41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

42 Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

See notes on Mt 7:3-5.

A Tree Is Known by Its Fruit

43 For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

See notes on Mt 7:15-20.

44 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

The House Built on a Rock

46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

See notes on Mt 7:21-27.

47 Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like:

48 he is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat

vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock.

49 But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Luke-7

A Centurion's Servant Healed

1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

For notes on the healing of the centurion's servant, see Mt 8:5-13.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

5 for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:

7 wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

8 For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

11 And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

We have here the story of Christ's raising to life a widow's son at Nain, that was dead and in the carrying out to be buried, which Matthew and Mark had made no mention of; only, in the general, Matthew had recorded it, in Christ's answer to the disciples of John, that the dead were raised up, Mt 11:5. Observe,

Where, and when, this miracle was wrought. It was the next day after he had cured the centurion's servant, Lu 7:11. Christ was doing good every day, and never had cause to complain that he had lost a day. It was done at the gate of a small city, or town, called Nain, not far from Capernaum, probably the same with a city called Nais, which Jerome speaks of.

12 Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

Who were the witnesses of it. It is as well attested as can be, for it was done in the sight of two crowds that met in or near the gate of the city. There was a crowd of disciples and other people attending Christ (Lu 7:11), and a crowd of relations and neighbours attending the funeral of the young man, Lu 7:12. Thus there was a sufficient number to attest the truth of this miracle, which furnished greater proof of Christ's divine authority than his healing diseases; for by no power of nature, or any means, can the dead be raised.

13 And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

See how tender his compassions are towards the afflicted (Lu 7:13): When the Lord saw the poor widow following her son to the grave, he had compassion on her. Here was not application made to him for her, not so much as that he would speak some words of comfort to her, but, ex mero motu--purely from the goodness of his nature, he was troubled for her. The case was piteous, and he looked upon it with pity. His eye affected his heart; and he said unto her, Weep not. Note, Christ has a concern for the mourners, for the miserable, and often prevents them with the blessing of his goodness. He undertook the work of our redemption and salvation, in his love and in his pity, Isa 63:9. What a pleasing idea does this give us of the compassions of the Lord Jesus, and the multitude

of his tender mercies, which may be very comfortable to us when at any time we are in sorrow! Let poor widows comfort themselves in their sorrows with this, that Christ pities them and knows their souls in adversity; and, if others despise their grief, he does not. Christ said, Weep not; and he could give her a reason for it which no one else could: "Weep not for a dead son, for he shall presently become a living one." This was a reason peculiar to her case; yet there is a reason common to all that sleep in Jesus, which is of equal force against inordinate and excessive grief for their death--that they shall rise again, shall rise in glory; and therefore we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, 1Th 4:13. Let Rachel, that weeps for her children, refrain her eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border, Jer 31:17. And let our passion at such a time be checked and claimed by the consideration of Christ's compassion.

14 And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15 And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

See how triumphant his commands are over even death itself (Lu 7:14): He came, and touched the bier, or coffin, in or upon which the dead body lay; for to him it would be no pollution. Hereby he intimated to the bearers that they should not proceed; he had something to say to the dead young man. Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom, Job 33:24. Hereupon they that bore him stood still, and probably let down the bier from their shoulders to the ground, and opened the coffin, it if was closed up; and then with solemnity, as one that had authority, and to whom belonged the issues from death, he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. The young man was dead, and could not arise by any power of his own (no more can those that are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins); yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him arise, when a power went along with that word to put life into him. The gospel call to all people, to young people particularly, is, "Arise, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life." Christ's dominion over death was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word (Lu 7:15): He that was dead sat up. Have we grace from Christ? Let us show it. Another evidence of life was that he began to speak; for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life he opens the lips in prayer and praise. And, lastly,

he would not oblige this young man, to whom he had given a new life, to go along with him as his disciple, to minister to him (though he owed him even his own self), much less as a trophy or show to get honour by him, but delivered him to his mother, to attend her as became a dutiful son; for Christ's miracles were miracles of mercy, and a great act of mercy this was to this widow; now she was comforted, according to the time in which she had been afflicted and much more, for she could now look upon this son as a particular favourite of Heaven, with more pleasure than if he had not died.

16 And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

17 And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

What influence it had upon the people (Lu 7:16): There came a fear on all; it frightened them all, to see a dead man start up alive out of his coffin in the open street, at the command of a man; they were all struck with wonder at his miracle, and glorified God. The Lord and his goodness, as well as the Lord and his greatness, are to be feared. The inference they drew from it was, "A great prophet is risen up among us, the great prophet that we have been long looking for; doubtless, he is one divinely inspired who can thus breathe life into the dead, and in him God hath visited his people, to redeem them, as was expected," Lu 1:68. This would be life from the dead indeed to all them that waited for the consolation of Israel. When dead souls are thus raised to spiritual life, by a divine power going along with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. The report of this miracle was carried, 1. In general, all the country over (Lu 7:17): This rumour of him, that he was the great prophet, went forth upon the wings of fame through all Judea, which lay a great way off, and throughout all Galilee, which was the region round about. Most had this notice of him, yet few believed in him, and gave up themselves to him. Many have the rumour of Christ's gospel in their ears that have not the savour and relish of it in their souls. 2. In particular, it was carefully brought to John Baptist, who was now in prison (Lu 7:18): His disciples came, and gave him an account of all things, that he might know that though he was bound yet the word of the Lord was not bound; God's work was going on, though he was laid aside.

The Messengers from John the Baptist

see Mt 11:2-19.

18 And the disciples of John showed him of all these things.

19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

20 When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

21 And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight.

22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?

Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27 This is he, of whom it is written,

Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

29 And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

30 But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

32 They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying,
We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced;
we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.
33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine;
and ye say, He hath a devil.
34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners !
35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Jesus at the Home of Simon the Pharisee

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him.
And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.
37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,
38 and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Observe here, 1. The Pharisee's civility and our Saviour's courtesy: the Pharisee invites Christ to eat with him; Christ readily accepts the invitation, never refusing any opportunity for doing good. There is a duty of civil courtesy which we owe to the worst of men: none are so bad but we may soberly eat and drink with them; only let us take care, that if our converse do not make them better, their example may not make us worse.

Observe, 2. What an opportunity our Saviour lays hold upon in the Pharisee's house of doing good to a sinful woman; who coming to Christ bowed down in a sorrowful sight and sense of her sins, finds an hearty welcome to him, and is dismissed with comfort from him. The history runs thus: Behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, that is, a Gentile, say some; a remarkable, notorious, and infamous sinner, say others; probably, a lewd, unclean woman: she is led in with a note of admiration, Behold a woman that was a sinner!

Learn, that to see a sensual and notorious sinner, out of true remorse of conscience to seek unto a Saviour, is a rare and wonderful sight.

Observe farther, it is not said, "behold, a woman that sinned," but, Behold, a woman that was a sinner. One action does not denominate a person a sinner, but a habit and trade of sin.

Again, it is said, Behold, a woman in the city: the place where she acted her lewdness added to the heinousness of her sin, it was in the city; the more public the offence, the greater the scandal. Sin is sin, though in the desert, where no eye sees it; but the offence is aggravated by the number and multitude of beholders.

Yet observable it is, that there is no mention made, either of the woman's name, or of the city's name; and it is both presumption and injuriousness for any to name her, whose name God has been pleased to conceal; for this is not the same woman that anointed Christ's feet. Matt 26:6-12; Mr 14:1-9; Joh 12:1-7

That was in Bethany, this in Galilee; that in the house of Simon the leper, this of Simon the Pharisee.

Observe, 3. The behavior and demeanor of this poor woman; she appears in the poster of a penitent: She stood at Christ's feet behind him, weeping.

Where note, 1. The great change wrought in this sinful woman, and the evident effects of it: her eyes, which had been formerly lamps of fire by lust, are now a holy fountain of penitential tears; her hair, which she had used as a net to catch her fond and foolish lovers, does now become a towel for her Saviour's feet.

Verily, such a heart, as has once felt the sting and smart of sin, will make plentiful expressions of the greatness of its sorrow.

Again, 2. She sits behind Christ and weeps: this proceeded, no doubt, from a holy bashfulness; she that was wont to look boldly in the face of her lovers, dares not now behold the face of her Saviour; she that was

wont to end her alluring beams forth into the eyes of her wanton lovers, now casts her dejected eyes down upon the earth.

And behold the plenty of her tears, they flow in such abundance that she washes Christ's feet with them. She began to wash his feet, says the text, but we read not when she ended; never were our Saviour's feet bedewed with more precious liquor than this of remorseful tears. Thus does a holy penitent account no office too mean that is done to the honor of its Saviour.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.

Observe here, 1. How unreasonably the Pharisee was offended with Christ, for permitting this poor woman to come near him, and touch him. Admit she had been the greatest of sinners, might not such come to Christ, when he was come from heaven to them?

Oh, blessed Saviour! There is merit enough in thy blood, and mercy enough in thy bowels, to justify and save the vilest sinners, which by repentance and faith do make a timely application to thee.

Observe, 2. The parable which Christ makes use of, for the Pharisee's conviction, and the woman's comfort: namely, the parable of the two debtors, one of whom owed a greater sum, and the other a less, who both having nothing to pay, were both freely forgiven; and both upon their forgiveness loved their creditor much, but he most to whom most was forgiven.

Now from this parable we gather these lessons of instruction;

1. That great is the debt which all mankind have contracted, and lie under to the justice of God: 'tis here expressed by five hundred pence. Our debt is infinite; and, had not miraculous mercy interposed, divine justice could never have been satisfied, but by undergoing an infinite punishment.

2. That yet all sinners stand not alike indebted to the justice of God; some owe more, and others less; all are guilty, but not all alike; some owe five hundred talents, others fifty pence.

3. That be men's debt greater or less, their sins more or fewer, 'tis utterly impossible for any person of himself to clear his debt, and make satisfaction, but they that owe least stand in need of mercy and forgiveness; He forgave them both.

4. That the forgiveness that is in God is a free, gratuitous, and gracious forgiveness: he frankly forgave them both: Gracious art thou, O Lord, in thy doings towards thy children, and thy tender mercy is over all thy works.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.

Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Observe here, 1. How our Saviour recounts and sums up the several particular instances of this woman's love and respect towards himself: she washed, wiped, kissed, and anointed his feet, according to the custom of those eastern countries. Love will creep where it cannot go, it will stoop to the meanest offices, and is ambitous of the highest services for, and towards the persons we sincerely love.

Observe, 2. The words of comfort given by our Saviour to this poor woman: Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee.

Thence learn, that the pardoning mercy of God is boundless and unlimited; it is not limited to any degree of sins or sinners; Thy sins, that are many, are forgiven thee: and thy sins, which are heinous, are forgiven also.

Observe, 3. What is the effect and fruit, of great pardoning mercy; it is great love; her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. Her love to Christ was the effect of his pardoning love to her, and not the cause of it; she did not first love much, and then Christ forgave her, and then she loved much. Her love was a love of gratitude, because she was pardoned, and not a love of merit to purchase and procure her pardon.

The Papists interpret this word (for) as if it were the antecedent cause of her forgiveness; whereas it is a consequential sign and evidence, that the free grace and mercy of Christ had forgiven her; her many and great sins were forgiven her, and therefore she loved much. The debt is not forgiven, because the debtor loves his creditor; but the debtor therefore loves, because the debt is forgiven. Forgiveness goes before, and love follows after.

Hence learn, that much love will follow great forgiveness. Love will work in the heart towards God, in some proportion to that love which we have experienced from God.

Observe lastly, the very gracious dismission which this woman meets with from our blessed Saviour: what could she desire that is not here granted to her? Here is remission, safety, faith, and peace; all these here meet to make a contrite soul happy: remission is the ground of her safety, faith the ground of her peace, peace the fruit of her faith, and salvation the issue of her remission.

O woman! Great was thy sin, great was Christ's pardoning grace, and great was thy joy and comfort: Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Luke-8

Some Women Accompany Jesus

1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

Observe, here, the great work and business, which not only the apostles, but Christ himself was engaged in, and employed about, namely, preaching the gospel, those glad tidings of salvation to a lost world.

Where note, that Christ himself labored in this work of public preaching; he did not send forth his apostles as his curates to work and sweat in the vineyard, while he himself took his ease at home; but he accompanies them himself, yea, he goes before them himself in this great and excellent work: Jesus went preaching the glad tidings of the gospel, and the twelve were with him.

Learn thence, that preaching of the gospel is a great and necessary work, incumbent upon all the ministers of Christ, let their dignity and pre-eminence in the church be what it will. Surely none of the servants are above their Lord and Master! Did he labor in the word and doctrine?

Observe, 2. The places where Christ and his apostles preached, not only in the populous cities, but in the poor country villages: They went through every city and village preaching the gospel. Some will preach the gospel,

provided they may preach at court, or in the capital cities of the nation; but the poor country villages are overlooked by them.

Our Saviour and his apostles were not of this mind: 'tis true, they were itinerary preachers, we are settled; but be the place never so mean and obscure, and the people never so rude and barbarous, we must not think it beneath the greatest of us to exercise our ministry there, if God calls us thither: Christ went through the villages, as well as cities, preaching.

2 and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Amongst the number of those that did accompany our Saviour and his apostles, mention is here made of a certain woman, who had been healed by Christ of evil spirits and infirmities; that is, of spiritual and corporeal diseases, for the Jews were wont to call vices and evil habits by the name of devils, as the devil of pride, the devil of malice, etc.

Now as concerning these women's following of Christ, and administering to him, several circumstances are observable; as,

1. That women did make up a considerable number of Christ's followers, yes, and of his apostles' followers too: The devout women not a few. Acts 17:4

And verily it is no disgrace or shame, but matter of glory, and cause of thankfulness, if our ministry be attended by, and blest unto, the weaker sex. I believe in many of our congregations, and at most of our communions, are found two women for one man; God grant them knowledge answerable to their zeal, and obedience proportionable to their devotion.

Observe, 2. One of these women that followed Christ was Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward. What! One of Herod's family transplanted into Christ's household!

Oh the freeness of the grace of God! Even in the worst societies and places God has a number to stand up for his name, and bear witness to his truth:

we read of a Joseph in Pharaoh's court; of an Obadiah in Ahab's court; of a Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court; of a church in Nero's house; and of a Joanna here in bloody Herod's family, who had put John the Baptist to death.

Observe, 3. The holy courage and resolution of our Saviour's female followers. No doubt they met with taunts and jeers, with scoffs and scorns enough, and perhaps from their husbands too, of following the carpenter's son, and a few fishermen: but this does not damp but inflame, their zeal.

The Holy Ghost acquaints us with several instances of masculine courage and manly resolution in the women that followed Christ as his female disciples. At our Saviour's trail, the women clave to him, when his disciples fed from him; they accompanied him to his cross, they assisted at his funeral, they attended his hearse to the grave, they watched his sepulchre, fearing neither the darkness of the night nor the rudeness of the soldiers. These feeble women had more courage than all the apostles.

Learn, that courage is the special and peculiar gift of God; and where he gives courage, it s not in man to make afraid.

Observe, 4. The pious and charitable care of these holy women, to supply the wants and outward necessities of our Saviour: They ministered unto him of their substance.

Where note, 1. The great poverty of Christ: he lived upon the basket, he would not honor the world so far as to have any part of it in his own hand, but was beholden to others for what he ate and drank; yet must we not suppose that either Christ or his apostles were common beggars, but it is probable there was a bag or common purse amongst them, which upon occasion supplied their necessities; and there were certain sisters, or Christian women as the learned Dr. Hammond observes, who accompanied Christ and his apostles in their travels, and provided necessaries for them, when they went up and down, preaching the gospel.

Note also, 2. The condescending grace and humility of Christ; he was not ashamed either of these women's following of him, or administering to him, because of their former vicious course of life; it is not what we formerly were, but what we now are, that Christ considers; it is a glory to him, to have great and notorious sinners brought to a closure and compliance with him. The reproach is not that they have been sinners, for Christ did not give himself for a people that were pure and holy, without spot or wrinkle, but to make them so by his word and Spirit, Eph 5:26 Christ is only ashamed of those that eat of his bread, and lift up the heel against him.

The Parable of the Sower

4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

See notes on Mt 13:3-23

5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

9 And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be ?

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables;

that seeing they might not see,

and hearing they might not understand.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

A Light under a Vessel

16 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.

See notes on Mt 5:15

17 For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.

See notes on Mt 10:26-28

18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Jesus' Mother and Brethren

See notes on Mt 13:12

19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.

See notes on Mt 12:46-50

20 And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee.

21 And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

Jesus Calms a Storm

22 Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

see Mt 8:23-27

23 But as they sailed, he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy.

24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

25 And he said unto them, Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.

The Gadarene Demoniac Healed

26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

see Mt 8:28-34

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

Jairus' Daughter and the Woman Who Touched Jesus' Garment

40 And it came to pass, that, when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him.

see notes on Mt 9:18-26

41 And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue; and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house:

42 for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying.

But as he went the people thronged him.

43 And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,

44 came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched.

45 And Jesus said, Who touched me ? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

46 And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.

47 And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people

for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately.

48 And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.

49 While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master.

50 But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole.

51 And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden.

52 And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

53 And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead.

54 And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise.

55 And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat.

56 And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Luke-9

The Mission of the Twelve

1 Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

See notes on Mt 10:2-15

2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.

3 And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.

4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

5 And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

6 And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing every where.

The Death of John the Baptist

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead;

8 and of some, that Elijah had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

see notes on Mt 14:1-12

9 And Herod said, John have I beheaded; but who is this, of whom I hear such things ? And he desired to see him.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

10 And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

see notes on Mt 14:13-27

11 And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

12 And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.

13 But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.

14 For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.

15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

16 Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.

17 And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

Peter’s Declaration

18 And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

See notes on Peter's confession of faith, Mt 16:13-20

19 They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

20 He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.

Jesus Foretells His Death

21 And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing;

see notes on Mt 16:21-28

22 saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

25 For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.

27 But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.

The Transfiguration

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

see notes on Mt 17:1-9

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah:

31 who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

33 And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said.

34 While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

36 And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

37 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

see Mt 17:14-21

38 And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child.

39 And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him, hardly departeth from him.

40 And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

41 And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

42 And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

43 And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

see notes on Mt 17:22-23

Jesus Again Foretells His Death

But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

44 Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

45 But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Who Is the Greatest?

46 Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.

See notes on Mt 18:1-6

47 And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him,

48 and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

He That Is Not against Us Is for Us

49 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.

See notes on Mk 9:38-41

50 And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Jesus Rebukes James and John

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

This passage of story we have not in any other of the evangelists, and it seems to come in here for the sake of its affinity with that next before, for in this also Christ rebuked his disciples, because they envied for his sake. There, under colour of zeal for Christ, they were for silencing and restraining separatists: here, under the same colour, they were for putting infidels to death; and, as for that, so for this also, Christ reprimanded them, for a spirit of bigotry and persecution is directly contrary to the spirit of Christ and Christianity. Observe here,

The readiness and resolution of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, Lu 9:51: When the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

Observe 1. There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain foresight of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short.

2. When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be received up into glory (1Ti 3:16), received up into the highest heavens, to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spoke of his death as his departure out of this world, which made it not formidable; but he went further, and looked upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very desirable. All good Christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being received up, to be with Christ where he is; and, when the time of their being received up is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh.

3. On this prospect of the joy set before him, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully determined to go, and would not be dissuaded; he went directly to Jerusalem, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and courageously thither, though he knew the things that should befal him there. He did not fail nor was discouraged, but set his face as a flint, knowing that he should be not only justified, but glorified (Isa 50:7), not only not run down, but received up. How should this shame us for, and shame us out of, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ! We draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service who stedfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

The rudeness of the Samaritans in a certain village (not named, nor deserving to be so) who would not receive him, nor suffer him to bait in their town, though his way lay through it.

Observe here,

1. How civil he was to them: He sent messengers before his face, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his company among them; for he would not come to give offence, or if they took any umbrage at the number of his followers. He sent some to make ready for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprise.

2. How uncivil they were to him, Lu 9:53. They did not receive him, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out. He would have paid for all he bespoke, and been a generous guest among them, would have done them good, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, Joh 4:41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the

reason was because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem; they observed, by his motions, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship--whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sychar; see Joh 4:20. And so hot was the controversy between them that the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans, nor they with them, Joh 4:9. Yet we may suppose that they did not deny other Jews lodgings among them, no, not when they went up to the feast; for if that had been their constant practice Christ would not have attempted it, and it would have been a great way about for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem any other way than through Samaria. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated teacher, for owning and adhering to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which, they hoped, would have driven him to come and worship at their temple, and bring that into reputation; but when they saw that he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not show him the common civility which probably they used formerly to show him in his journey thither.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did ?

The resentment which James and John expressed of this affront, Lu 9:54. When these two heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village: "Lord," say they, "give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to frighten them only, but to consume them."

1. Here indeed was something commendable, for they showed,

(a) A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned in their commission, yet they could with a word's speaking fetch fire from heaven. Theleis eipomen--Wilt thou that we speak the word, and the thing will be done.

(b) A great zeal for the honour of their Master. They took it very ill that he who did good wherever he came and found a hearty welcome should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of paltry Samaritans; they

could not think of it without indignation that their Master should be thus slighted.

(c) A submission, notwithstanding, to their Master's good will and pleasure. They will not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave: Wilt thou that we do it?

(d) A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them. It is doing as Elias did? they would not have thought of such a thing if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, 2Ki 1:10,12. They thought that this precedent would be their warrant; so apt are we to misapply the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel.

2. But though there was something right in what they said, yet there was much more amiss, for

(a) This was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been thus affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast; and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up with the injury.

(b) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected, and perhaps they had heard that Christ had forbidden his disciples to enter into any of the cities of the Samaritans (Mt 10:5), and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others who knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him.

(c) Perhaps it was only some few of the town that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while, for aught they knew, there were many in the town who, if they had heard of Christ's being so near them, would have gone to meet him and welcomed him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked?

(d) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for fire from heaven, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any sign from heaven when they demanded it (Mt 16:1,2); and why should they think to introduce it? James and John were the two disciples whom Christ had called Boanerges--sons of thunder (Mk 3:17); and will not that serve them, but they must be sons of lightning too?

(e) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to display the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a bold reprover against the idolatries and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved; but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests that their being now near Samaria, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but, though the place was the same, the times were altered.

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

The reproof he gave to James and John for their fiery, furious zeal (Lu 9:55): He turned with a just displeasure, and rebuked them; for as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens, particularly for what they do, that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

1. He shows them in particular their mistake: Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; that is,

(a) "You are not aware what an evil spirit and disposition you are of; how much there is of pride, and passion, and personal revenge, covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master." Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too, in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it.

(b) "You do not consider what a good spirit, directly contrary to this, you should be of. Surely you have yet to learn, though you have been so long

learning, what the spirit of Christ and Christianity is. Have you not been taught to love your enemies, and to bless them that curse you, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them? You know not how contrary your disposition herein is to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be delivered into. You are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in with a proclamation of peace on earth and good will toward men, to which you ought to accommodate yourselves, and not by such imprecations as these oppose yourselves."

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

He shows them the general design and tendency of his religion (Lu 9:56): The Son of man is not himself come, and therefore does not send you abroad to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He designed to propagate his holy religion by love and sweetness, and every thing that is inviting and endearing, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to slay all enmities, not to foster them. Those are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel that are for anathematizing and rooting out by violence and persecution all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came, not only to save men's souls, but to save their lives too--witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been mortal, by which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples do good to all, to the utmost of their power, but hurt to none, to draw men into his church with the cords of a man and the bands of love, but not think to drive men into it with a rod of violence or the scourge of the tongue.

His retreat from this village. Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road (which was as free to him as to his neighbours), would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably went to another village, where they were not so stingy and bigoted, and there refreshed himself, and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is

wisdom to get out of the way of it, rather than to contend with it. If some be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

The Would-be Followers of Jesus

57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

see notes on Mt 8:18-22

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke-10

The Mission of the Seventy

1 After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

2 Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.

3 Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.

See notes on Mt 10:5-42

4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way.

Salute no man by the way. The Jewish salutations were very formal, hypocritical, and consumed much time. It is said that it often required from one to three hours to complete these formal salutations. The disciples were not to consume thus their precious time, nor did the Savior wish them to go through with foolish and insincere forms.

5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

6 And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.

7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

8 And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:

9 and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

10 But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say,

11 Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

12 But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.

Woes to Unrepentant Cities

13 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

See notes on Mt 11:21-24

14 But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.

15 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.

16 He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

See Mt 10:40

The Return of the Seventy

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.

18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.

He confirmed what they said, as agreeing with his own observation (Lu 10:18): "My heart and eye went along with you; I took notice of the success you had, and I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven." Note, Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel. "I see how it is," saith Christ, "as you get ground the devil loseth ground." He falls as lightning falls from heaven, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, "See how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles." They triumphed in casting devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoices in the fall of the devil from the interest he has in the souls of men, which is called his power in high places, Eph 6:12. He foresees this to be but an earnest of what should now be shortly done and was already begun--the destroying of Satan's kingdom in the world by the extirpating of idolatry and the turning of the nations to the faith of Christ. Satan falls from heaven when he falls from the throne in men's hearts, Ac 26:18. And Christ foresaw that the preaching of the gospel, which would fly like lightning through the world, would wherever it went pull down Satan's kingdom. Now is the prince of this world cast out. Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with pride: "I saw angels turned into devils by pride: that was the sin for which Satan was cast down from heaven, where he had been an angel of light I saw it, and give you an intimation of it lest you, being lifted up with pride should fall into that condemnation of the devil, who fell by pride," 1Ti 3:6.

19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

He repeated, ratified, and enlarged their commission: Behold I give you power to tread on serpents, Lu 10:19. Note, To him that hath, and useth well what he hath, more shall be given. They had employed their power vigorously against Satan, and now Christ entrusts them with greater power.

(1.) An offensive power, power to tread on serpents and scorpions, devils and malignant spirits, the old serpent: "You shall bruise their heads in my name," according to the first promise, Ge 3:15. Come, set your feet on the necks of these enemies; you shall tread upon these lions and adders wherever you meet with them; you shall trample them under foot, Ps 91:13. You shall tread upon all the power of the enemy, and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be every where set up upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. As the devils have now been subject to you, so they shall still be.

(2.) A defensive power: "Nothing shall by any means hurt you; not serpents nor scorpions, if you should be chastised with them or thrown into prisons and dungeons among them; you shall be unhurt by the most venomous creatures," as St. Paul was (Ac 28:5), and as is promised in Mk 16:18. "If wicked men be as serpents to you, and you dwell among those scorpions (as Eze 2:6), you may despise their rage, and tread upon it; it need not disturb you, for they have no power against you but what is given them from above; they may hiss, but they cannot hurt." You may play upon the hole of the asp, for death itself shall not hurt nor destroy, Isa 11:8,19,25:8.

20 Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

He directed them to turn their joy into the right channel (Lu 10:20): "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, that they have been so, and shall be still so. Do not rejoice in this merely as it is your honour, and a confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people; do not rejoice in this only, or in this chiefly, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven, because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith." Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could tell them that their names were written in heaven, for it is the Lamb's book of life that they are written in. All believers are through grace, entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance and so are enrolled among his family; now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God is to be valued more

than a power to work miracles; for we read of those who did in Christ's name cast out devils, as Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day. But they whose names are written in heaven shall never perish; they are Christ's sheep, to whom he will give eternal life. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a more excellent way than speaking with tongues.

Jesus Rejoices

21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

See notes on Mt 11:25-27

22 All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

23 And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see:

24 for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

See Mt 13:16-17

The Good Samaritan

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in and are so here from Christ though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

We are concerned to know what that good is which we should do in this life, in order to our attaining eternal life. A question to this purport was proposed to our Saviour by a certain lawyer, or scribe, only with a design

to try him, not with a desire to be instructed by him, Lu 10:25. The lawyer stood up, and asked him, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps, he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question: What shall I do to inherit eternal life? But it lost all its goodness when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note, It is not enough to speak of the things of God, and to enquire about them, but we must do it with a suitable concern. If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, merely as matter of discourse, especially as matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did. Now this question being started, observe,

How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and bade him follow the direction of that. Though he knew the thoughts and intents of his heart, he did not answer him according to the folly of that, but according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question: What is written in the law? How readest thou? Lu 10:26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him; but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in the law: the studies of his profession would inform him; let him practise according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of eternal life. Note, It will be of great use to us, in our way to heaven, to consider what is written in the law, and what we read there. We must have recourse to our bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ and walk in the way that is shown us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law written, that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the further, and lasting the longer. Having it written, it is our duty to read it, to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that when there is occasion, we may be able to tell what is written in the law, and how we read. To this we must appeal; by this we must try doctrines and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our

touchstone, our rule, our guide. What is written in the law? How do we read? if there be light in us, it will have regard to this light.

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law ? how readest thou ?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,
and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;
and thy neighbor as thyself.

What a good account he gave of the law, of the principal commandments of the law, to the observance of which we must bind ourselves if we would inherit eternal life. He did not, like a Pharisee, refer himself to the tradition of the elders, but, like a good textuary, fastened upon the two first and great commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most strictly observed in order to the obtaining of eternal life, and which included all the rest, Lu 10:27. (1.) We must love God with all our hearts, must look upon him as the best of beings, in himself most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent; as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our elation to him; must please ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love to him must be sincere, hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlative love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an entire love; he must have our whole souls, and must be served with all that is within us. We must love nothing besides him, but what we love for him and in subordination to him. (2.) We must love our neighbours as ourselves, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God better than ourselves. We must wish well to all and ill to none; must do all the good we can in the world and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves to do to others as we would they should do to us; and this is to love our neighbour as ourselves.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

Christ's approbation of what he said, Lu 10:28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good Christ commended: Thou hast answered right. Christ himself fastened upon these as the two great commandments of the law (Mt 22:37): both sides agreed in this. Those who do well shall have praise of the same, and so should those have that

speak well. So far is right; but the hardest part of this work yet remains: "This do, and thou shalt live; thou shalt inherit eternal life."

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, This do, and thou shalt live, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he had not done this, and therefore an enquiry what he should do, which way he should look, to get his sins pardoned; an acknowledgment also that he could not do this perfectly for the future by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it: but he was willing to justify himself, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but saith, in effect, as another did (Mt 19:20), All these things have I kept from my youth up. Note, Many ask good questions with a design rather to justify themselves than to inform themselves, rather proudly to show what is good in them than humbly to see what is bad in them.

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

We are concerned to know who is our neighbour, whom by the second great commandment we are obliged to love. This is another of this lawyer's queries, which he started only that he might drop the former, lest Christ should have forced him, in the prosecution of it, to condemn himself, when he was resolved to justify himself. As to loving God, he was willing to say no more of it; but, as to his neighbour, he was sure that there he had come up to the rule, for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter. Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words to this purport: "Where he saith, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, he excepts all Gentiles, for they are not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion." They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not his neighbour: they indeed say that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but, if they saw a Gentile in danger of death, they thought themselves under no obligation to help to save his life. Such

wicked inferences did they draw from that holy covenant of peculiarity by which God had distinguished them, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it; God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant-favours to the Gentile world, to whom they brutishly denied common favours.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and showed, by a parable, that whomsoever we have need to receive kindness from, and find ready to show us the kindness we need, we cannot but look upon as our neighbour; and therefore ought to look upon all those as such who need our kindness, and to show them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

The parable itself, which represents to us a poor Jew in distressed circumstances, succoured and relieved by a good Samaritan. Let us see here,

How he was abused by his enemies. The honest man was traveling peaceably upon his lawful business in the road, and it was a great road that led from Jerusalem to Jericho, Lu 10:30. The mentioning of those places intimates that it was matter of fact, and not a parable; probably it happened lately, just as it is here related. The occurrences of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more affecting. This poor man fell among thieves. Whether they were Arabians, plunderers, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Roman soldiers, who, notwithstanding the strict discipline of their army, did this villany, does not appear; but they were very barbarous; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition (for otherwise what profit was there in his blood?) they wounded him, and left him half dead, ready to die of his wounds. We may here conceive a just indignation at highwaymen, that have divested themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be taken and destroyed; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on those that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our

power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers!

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

How he was slighted by those who should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest and the other a Levite, men of a public character and station; nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion (Heb 5:2), who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to deliver them that were drawn unto death; yet they would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of passing and repassing of priests that way, and Levites their attendants. They came this way, and saw the poor wounded man. It is probable that they heard his groans, and could not but perceive that if he were not helped he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but came and looked on him Lu 10:32. But they passed by on the other side; when they saw his case, they got as far off him as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, Behold, we knew it not. It is sad when those who should be examples of charity are prodigies of cruelty, and when those who should by displaying the mercies of God, open the bowels of compassion in others, shut up their own.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

How he was succoured and relieved by a stranger, a certain Samaritan, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested and would have no dealings with. This man had some humanity in him, Lu 10:33. The priest had his heart hardened against one of his own people, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of another people. When he saw him he had compassion on him, and never took into consideration what country he was of. Though he was a Jew, he was a man, and a man

in misery, and the Samaritan has learned to honour all men; he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That such great love should be found in a Samaritan was perhaps thought as wonderful as that great faith which Christ admired in a Roman, and in a woman of Canaan; but really it was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine grace. The compassion of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion; he did not think it enough to say, "Be healed, be helped" (Jam 2:16); but, when he drew out his soul, he reached forth his hand also to this poor needy creature, Isa 58:7,Pr 31:20. See how friendly this good Samaritan was.

First, He went to the poor man, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he enquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condoled with him.

Secondly, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better. He bound up his wounds, making use of his own linen, it is likely, for that purpose; and poured in oil and wine, which perhaps he had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up. He did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with him.

Thirdly, He set him on his own beast, and went on foot himself, and brought him to an inn. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all the conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hindrance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose the Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this.

Fourthly, He took care of him in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, prayed with him. Nay,

Fifthly, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to be laid out for his use, and passed his word for what he should spend more. Twopence of their money was about fifteen pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way; however, here it was an earnest of satisfaction to the full of all demands. All this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and foreigner.

Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than that for which it was intended; and does excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards sinful miserable man. We were like this poor distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had robbed us, stripped us, wounded us; such is the mischief that sin had done us. We were by nature more than half dead, twice dead, in trespasses and sins; utterly unable to help ourselves, for we were without strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law, looks upon us, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief, passes by on the other side, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan (and they said of him, by way of reproach, he is a Samaritan), he has compassion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds (Ps 147:3,Isa 61:1), pours in, not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, his own blood. He takes care of us, and bids us put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this though he was none of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to make himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obliges us all to say, "How much are we indebted, and what shall we render?"

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

The application of the parable.

[1.] The truth contained in it is extorted from the lawyer's own mouth. "Now tell me," saith Christ, "which of these three was neighbour to him

that fell among thieves (Lu 10:36), the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? Which of these did the neighbour's part?" To this the lawyer would not answer, as he ought to have done, "Doubtless, the Samaritan was;" but, "He that showed mercy on him; doubtless, he was a good neighbour to him, and very neighbourly, and I cannot but say that it was a good work thus to save an honest Jew from perishing."

[2.] The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own conscience: Go, and do thou likewise. The duty of relations is mutual and reciprocal; the titles of friends, brethren, neighbours, are, as Grotius here speaks ton pros ti--equally binding on both sides: if one side be bound, the other cannot be loose, as is agreed in all contracts. If a Samaritan does well that helps a distressed Jew, certainly a Jew does not well if he refuses in like manner to help a distressed Samaritan. Petimusque damusque vicissim--These kind offices are to be reciprocated. "And therefore go thou and do as the Samaritan did, whenever occasion offers: show mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they be not of thy own nation and thy own profession, or of thy own opinion and communion in religion. Let thy charity be thus extensive, before thou boastest of having conformed thyself to that great commandment of loving thy neighbour." This lawyer valued himself much upon his learning and his knowledge of the laws, and in that he thought to have puzzled Christ himself; but Christ sends him to school to a Samaritan, to learn his duty: "Go, and do like him." Note, It is the duty of every one of us, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity, and of lawyers particularly; and herein we must study to excel many that are proud of their being priests and Levites.

37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary

38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

The entertainment which Martha gave to Christ and his disciples at her house, Lu 10:38. Observe,

1. Christ's coming to the village where Martha lived: As they went (Christ and his disciples together), he and they with him entered into a certain village. This village was Bethany, nigh to Jerusalem, whither Christ was now going up, and he took this in his way. Note

(a) Our Lord Jesus went about doing good (Ac 10:38), scattering his benign beams and influences as the true light of the world.

(b) Wherever Christ went his disciples went along with him.

(c) Christ honoured the country-villages with his presence and favour, and not the great and populous cities only; for, as he chose privacy, so he countenanced poverty.

2. His reception at Martha's house: A certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house, and made him welcome, for she was the housekeeper. Note,

(a) Our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, was so poor that he was necessitated to be beholden to his friends for a subsistence. Though he was Zion's King, he had no house of his own either in Jerusalem or near it.

(b) There were some who were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than his other friends, and them he visited most frequently. He loved this family (Joh 11:5), and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the tokens of his love, Joh 14:23.

(c) There were those who kindly received Christ into their houses when he was here upon earth. It is called Martha's house, for, probably, she was a widow, and was the housekeeper. Though it was expensive to entertain Christ for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not regard the cost of it. (How can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service!) Nay, though at this time it was grown dangerous to entertain him especially so near Jerusalem, yet she cared not what hazard she ran for his name's sake. Though there were many that

rejected him, and would not entertain him, yet there was one that would bid him welcome. Though Christ is every where spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and who are dear to him.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, Lu 10:39.

1. She heard his word. It seems, our Lord Jesus, as soon as he came into Martha's house, even before entertainment was made for him, addressed himself to his great work of preaching the gospel. He presently took the chair with solemnity; for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse. Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary, having this price put into her hands, sat herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be swift to hear.

2. She sat to hear, which denotes a close attention. Her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it: not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. She sat at his feet, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures; hence Paul is said to be brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Our sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, signifies a readiness to receive it, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet or be made his footstool; but, if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

The care of Martha about her domestic affairs: But Martha was cumbered about much serving (Lu 10:40), and that was the reason why she was not where Mary was--sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment of Christ and those that came with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsome upon this occasion; she had

not such guests every day. Housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be when a great entertainment is to be made. Observe here,

1. Something commendable, which must not be overlooked.

(a) Here was a commendable respect to our Lord Jesus; for we have reason to think it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify her good-will to him, that she made this entertainment. Note, Those who truly love Christ will think that well bestowed that is laid out for his honour.

(b) Here was a commendable care of her household affairs. It appears, from the respect shown to this family among the Jews (Joh 11:19), that they were persons of some quality and distinction; and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her to lay her hand even to the service of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note, It is the duty of those who have the charge of families to look well to the ways of their household. The affectation of state and the love of ease make many families neglected.

2. Here was something culpable, which we must take notice of too.

(a) She was for much serving. Her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, peri pollen diakonian--concerning much attendance. Note, It does not become the disciples of Christ to affect much serving, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities in eating and drinking; what need is there of much serving, when much less will serve?

(b) She was cumbered about it; periespato--she was just distracted with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us we must not be cumbered with them, nor be disquieted and perplexed by them. Care is good and duty; but cumber is sin and folly.

(c) She was then cumbered about much serving when she should have been with her sister, sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word. Note, Worldly

business is then a snare to us when it hinders us from serving God and getting good to our souls.

The complaint which Martha made to Christ against her sister Mary, for not assisting her, upon this occasion, in the business of the house (Lu 10:40): "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister, who is concerned as well as I in having things done well, has left me to serve alone? Therefore dismiss her from attending thee, and bid her come and help me." Now,

1. This complaint of Martha's may be considered as a discovery of her worldliness: it was the language of her inordinate care and cumber. She speaks as one in a mighty passion with her sister, else she would not have troubled Christ with the matter. Note, The inordinacy of worldly cares and pursuits is often the occasion of disturbance in families and of strife and contention among relations. Moreover, those that are eager upon the world themselves are apt to blame and censure those that are not so too; and while they justify themselves in their worldliness, and judge of others by their serviceableness to them in their worldly pursuits, they are ready to condemn those that addict themselves to the exercises of religion, as if they neglected the main chance, as they call it. Martha, being angry at her sister, appealed to Christ, and would have him say that she did well to be angry. Lord, doest not thou care that my sister has let me to serve alone? It should seem as if Christ had sometimes expressed himself tenderly concerned for her, and her ease and comfort, and would not have her go through so much toil and trouble, and she expected that he should now bid her sister take her share in it. When Martha was caring, she must have Mary, and Christ and all, to care too, or else she is not pleased. Note, Those are not always in the right that are most forward to appeal to God; we must therefore take heed, lest at any time we expect that Christ should espouse our unjust and groundless quarrels. The cares which he cast upon us we may cheerfully cast upon him, but not those which we foolishly draw upon ourselves. He will be the patron of the poor and injured, but not of the turbulent and injurious.

2. It may be considered as a discouragement of Mary's piety and devotion. Her sister should have commended her for it, should have told her that she was in the right; but, instead of this, she condemns her as wanting in her

duty. Note, It is no strange thing for those that are zealous in religion to meet with hindrances and discouragements from those that are about them; not only with opposition from enemies, but with blame and censure from their friends. David's fasting, and his dancing before the ark, were turned to his reproach.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

The reproof which Christ gave to Martha for her inordinate care, Lu 10:41. She appealed to him, and he gives judgment against her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, whereas but one thing is needful.

1. He reproved her, though he was at this time her guest. Her fault was her over-solicitude to entertain him, and she expected he should justify her in it, yet he publicly checked her for it. Note, As many as Christ loves he rebukes and chastens. Even those that are dear to Christ, if any thing be amiss in them, shall be sure to hear of it. Nevertheless I have something against thee.

2. When he reproved her, he called her by her name, Martha; for reproofs are then most likely to do good when they are particular, applied to particular persons and cases, as Nathan's to David, Thou art the man. He repeated her name, Martha, Martha; he speaks as one in earnest, and deeply concerned for her welfare. Those that are entangled in the cares of this life are not easily disentangled. To them we must call again and again, O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.

3. That which he reproved her for was her being careful and troubled about many things. He was not pleased that she should think to please him with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be sensual in using such things, so not to be selfish in being willing that others should be troubled, no matter who or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproves her, both for the intenseness of her care ("Thou art careful and troubled, divided and disturbed by thy care"), and for the extensiveness of it, "about many things; thou dost grasp at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many disappointments. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and this

puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve." Note, Inordinate care or trouble about many things in this world is a common fault among Christ's disciples; it is very displeasing to Christ, and that for which they often come under the rebukes of Providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order them something to fret at.

4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was that but one thing is needful. It is a low construction which some put upon this, that, whereas Martha was in care to provide many dishes of meat, there was occasion but for one, one would be enough. There is need but of one thing--henos de esti chreia. If we take it so, it furnishes us with a rule of temperance, not to affect varieties and dainties, but to be content to sit down to one dish of meat, to half on one, Pr 23:1-3. It is a forced construction which some of the ancients put upon it: But oneness is needful, in opposition to distractions. There is need of one heart to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. The one thing needful is certainly meant of that which Mary made her choice--sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was troubled about many things, when she should have applied herself to one; godliness unites the heart, which the world had divided. The many things she was troubled about were needless, while the one thing she neglected was needful. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was unspeakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ to have blamed Mary for not doing as she did, but he blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the judgment of Christ is according to truth. The day will come when Martha will wish she had set where Mary did.

42 but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary for her serious piety: Mary hath chosen the good part. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but, since Martha has appealed to the Master, to him she is willing to refer it, and will abide by his award; and here we have it.

1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it; for one thing is needful, this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to

the guidance of Christ, and receive the law from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world.

2. She had herein wisely done well for herself. Christ justified Mary against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part: But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Let us not then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ against us; and let us never be discouraged if we be censured for our pious zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; he applauded her for her wisdom: She hath chosen the good part; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took a better way of honouring Christ and of pleasing him, by receiving his word into her heart, than Martha did by providing for his entertainment in her house.

Note,

(a) A part with Christ is a good part; it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites (Joh 13:38), who are partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), and partakers with Christ, Ro 8:17.

(b) It is a part that shall never be taken away from those that have it. A portion in this life will certainly be taken away from us, at the furthest, when we shall be taken away from it; but nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ, and our part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from us, and God and Christ will not.

(c) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this good part, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must choose that which has a tendency to religion, and reckon that best for us that is best for our souls. Mary was at her choice whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and get the reputation of a fine

housekeeper, or sit at the feet of Christ and approve herself a zealous disciple; and, by her choice in this particular, Christ judges of her general choice.

(d) Those who choose this good part shall not only have what they choose, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.

Luke-11

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer

1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

See notes on Mt 6:9-13

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,
as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

He stirs up and encourages importunity, fervency, and constancy, in prayer, by showing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, Lu 11:5-8. Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loaf or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbour will be loth to accommodate him, for he has wakened him with his knocking, and put him out of humour, and he has a great deal to say in his excuse. The door is shut and locked, his children are asleep in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he make a noise, he shall disturb them. His servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and, for his own part, he shall catch cold if he rise to give him. But his neighbour will have no nay, and therefore he continues knocking still, and tells him he will do so till he has

what he comes for; so that he must give it to him, to be rid of him: He will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that in Lu 18:1: That men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity; we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity because they are displeased with it, but with God because he is pleased with it. Now this similitude may be of use to us,

(a) To direct us in prayer.

[1.] We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him.

[2.] We must come for bread, for that which is needful, and which we cannot be without.

[3.] We must come to him by prayer for others as well as for ourselves. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord accepted Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42:10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to feed many with our lips, to entertain and edify those that come to us.

[4.] We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait that we have not brought ourselves into by our own folly and carelessness, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread if his friend had not come in unexpectedly. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence. [5.] We ought to continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

(b) To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man who was angry at it, much more with a God who is infinitely more kind

and ready to do good to us than we are to one another, and is not angry at our importunity, but accepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mercies that we are importunate. If he do not answer our prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we continue to pray.

2. That God has promised to give us what we ask of him. We have not only the goodness of nature to take comfort from, but the word which he has spoken (Lu 11:9,10): "Ask, and it shall be given you; either the thing itself you shall ask or that which is equivalent; either the thorn in the flesh removed, or grace sufficient given in."--We had this before, Mt 7:7,8. I say unto you. We have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen. We must not only ask, but we must seek, in the use of means, must second our prayers with our endeavours; and, in asking and seeking, we must continue pressing, still knocking at the same door, and we shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in concert, but by our particular prayers: Every one that asketh receiveth, even the meanest saint that asks in faith. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, Ps 34:6. When we ask of God those things which Christ has here directed us to ask, that his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may come, and his will be done, in these requests we must be importunate, must never hold our peace day or night; we must not keep silence, nor give God any rest, until he establish, until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, Isa 62:6,7.

6 for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him ?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

See notes on Mt 7:7-11

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ?

A Divided House Cannot Stand

14 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.

See notes on Mt 12:22-29,43-45

15 But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.

16 And others, tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.

17 But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.

18 If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand ? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.

19 And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.

20 But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

21 When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace:

22 but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

23 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

The Return of the Unclean Spirit

24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

25 And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.

26 Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

True Blessedness

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we tack it, as Dr. Hammond does, to that of Christ's mother and brethren desiring to speak with him (for this evangelist also has related that in Lu 8:19), but it contains an interruption much like that, and, like that, occasion is taken from it for instruction.

1 The applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses. While the scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman (and probably she was a person of some quality) admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spoke: As he spoke these things (Lu 11:27), with a convincing force and evidence, a certain woman of the company was so pleased to hear how he had confounded the Pharisees, and conquered them, and put them to shame, and cleared himself from their vile insinuations, that she could not forbear crying out, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee. What an admirable, what an excellent man is this! Surely never was there a greater or better born of a woman: happy the woman that has him for her son. I should have thought myself very happy to have been the mother of one that speaks as never man spoke, that has so much of the grace of heaven in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth." This was well said, as it expressed her high esteem of Christ, and that for the sake of his doctrine; and it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she herself had said (Lu 1:48), All generations shall call me blessed; some even of this generation, bad as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is an honour, 1Pe 2:7. Yet we must be careful, lest, as this good woman, we too much magnify

the honour of his natural kindred, and so know him after the flesh, whereas we must now henceforth know him so no more.

2 The occasion which Christ took from this to pronounce them more happy who are his faithful and obedient followers than she was who bore and nursed him. He does not deny what this woman said, nor refuse her respect to him and his mother; but leads her from this to that which was of higher consideration, and which more concerned her: Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it, Lu 11:28. He thinks them so; and his saying that they are so makes them so, and should make us of his mind. This is intended partly as a check to her, for doting so much upon his bodily presence and his human nature, partly as an encouragement to her to hope that she might be as happy as his own mother, whose happiness she was ready to envy, if she would hear the word of God and keep it. Note, Though it is a great privilege to hear the word of God, yet those only are truly blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it and keep it, that keep it in memory, and keep to it as their way and rule.

28 But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

An Evil Generation Seeks a Sign

29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.

See notes on Mt 12:38-42

30 For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.

31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

32 The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

The Light of the Body

33 No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.

See notes on Mt 5:15 6:22,23.

34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

35 Take heed therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Jesus Denounces the Pharisees and Lawyers

37 And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat.

See notes on mat 23

38 And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed before dinner.

39 And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

40 Ye fools, did not he, that made that which is without, make that which is within also?

41 But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

42 But woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

43 Woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.
44 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.
45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.
46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers ! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.
47 Woe unto you ! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.
48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.
49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute:
50 that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation;
51 from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.
52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.
53 And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things:
54 laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Luke-12

A Warning against Hypocrisy

1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

see Mt 10:26-28

3 Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

Whom to Fear

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

Confessing Christ before Men

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

9 but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

The application that was made to Christ, very unseasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose between him and his brother in a matter that concerned the estate of the family (Lu 12:13): "Master, speak to my brother; speak as a prophet, speak as a king, speak with authority; he is one that will have regard to what thou sayest; speak to him, that he divide the inheritance with me."

Now,

1. Some think that his brother did him wrong, and that he appealed to Christ to right him, because he knew the law was costly. His brother was such a one as the Jews called Ben-hamesen--a son of violence, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all either of natural equity or natural affection, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They who are so wronged have God to go to, who will execute judgment and justice for those that are oppressed.

2. Others think that he had a mind to do his brother wrong, and would have Christ to assist him; that, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule (De 21:16,17), he would have Christ to alter that law, and oblige his brother, who perhaps was a follower of Christ at large, to divide the inheritance equally with him, in gavel-kind, share and share alike, and to allot him as much as his elder brother. I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against covetousness, pleonexia--a desire of having more, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a sinful desire of getting more than his own.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter (Lu 12:14): Man, who made me a judge or divider over you? In matters of this nature, Christ will not assume either a legislative power to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a judicial power to determine controversies concerning them. He could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the

physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission: Who made me a judge? Probably he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, with which Stephen upbraided the Jews, Ac 7:27,35. "If I should offer to do this, you would taunt me as you did Moses, Who made thee a judge or a divider?" He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal (it was coram non judice--not before the proper judge), and so dismisses his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuit of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do: Who made me a judge? Note, Jesus Christ was no usurper; he took no honour, no power, to himself, but what was given him, Heb 5:5. Whatever he did, he could tell by what authority he did it, and who gave him that authority. Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world.

1. It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power.

2. It does not intermeddle with civil rights; it obliges all to do justly, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not founded in grace.

3. It does not encourage our expectations of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that in consideration of this Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature.

4. It does not encourage our contests with our brethren, and our being rigorous and high in our demands, but rather, for peace' sake, to recede from our right.

5. It does not allow ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life (2Ti 2:4), to leave the word of God to serve tables. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, Tractent fabrilia fabri--Each workman to his proper craft.

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from this to give to his hearers. Though he came not to be a divider of men's estates, he came to be a director of their consciences about them, and would have all take heed of harbouring that corrupt principle which they saw to be in others the root of so much evil. Here is,

1 The caution itself (Lu 12:15): Take heed and beware of covetousness; horate--"Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them; and phylassesthe--preserve yourselves, keep a strict band upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them." Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against.

2 The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution: For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth; that is, "our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world."

(1.) The life of the soul, undoubtedly, does not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last so long as it will last. Nay,

(2.) Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an abundance of these things; for many live very contentedly and easily, and get through the world very comfortably, who have but a little of the wealth of it (a dinner of herbs with holy love is better than a feast of fat things); and, on the other hand, many live very miserably who have a great deal of the things of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they bereave their souls of good, Ec 4:8. Many who have abundance are discontented and fretful, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good does their abundance do them?

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

The illustration of this by a parable, the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul and another world, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to take heed of covetousness. The parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man.

(1.) Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance (Lu 12:16): The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully, chora--regio--the country. He had a whole country to himself, a lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is served by the field, Ec 5:9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plentifully to wicked men, to whom it is a snare, that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us.

(2.) Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, Lu 12:17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for it. He is both a discerner and judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are hid and thoughts are free. Let us here observe,

What his cares and concerns were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. What shall I do now? The poorest beggar in the country, that did not know where to get a meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the

more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have and to add to it, how to spare and how to spend; so that even the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep, for thinking what they shall do with what they have and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak it with a sigh, What shall I do? And if you ask, Why, what is the matter? Truly he had abundance of wealth, and wants a place to put it in, that is all.

17 and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

What his projects and purposes were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish like them (Lu 12:18): "This will I do, and it is the wisest course I can take, I will pull down my barns, for they are too little, and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and then I shall be at ease."

Now here,

First, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground his fruits and his goods. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, my fruits and my goods; whereas what we have is but lent us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is my corn (saith God) and my wine, Ho 2:8,9.

Secondly, It was folly for him to hoard up what he had, and then to think it well bestowed. There will I bestow it all; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn.

Thirdly, It was folly for him to let his mind rise with his condition; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty,

as they did in Egypt; and therefore it were better to stack some of his corn for this once.

Fourthly, It was folly for him to think to ease his care by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; those know this who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care is certainly successful, but the way of the world does but increase it. Besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that would still attend him; the greater the barns, still the greater the cares, Ec 5:10.

Fifthly, It was folly for him to contrive and resolve all this absolutely and without reserve. This I will do: I will pull down my barns and will build greater, yea, that I will; without so much as that necessary proviso, If the Lord will, I shall live, Jam 4:13-15. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

What his pleasing hopes and expectations were, when he should have made good these projects. "Then I will say to my soul, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, Soul, mark what I say, thou hast much goods laid up for many years in these barns; now take thine ease, enjoy thyself, eat, drink, and be merry," Lu 12:19. Here also appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it.

First, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them (which will be a work of time), then he will take his ease; and might he not as well have done that now? Grotius here quotes the story of Pyrrhus, who was projecting to make himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places, in the prosecution of his victories. Well, says his friend Cyneas, and what must we do then? Postea vivemus, says he, Then we will live; At hoc jam licet, says Cyneas, We may live now if we please.

Secondly, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years, as if his bigger barns would be safer than those he had; whereas in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground and all that was laid up in them, perhaps by lightning, against which there is no defence. A few years may make a great change; moth and rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal.

Thirdly, It was folly for him to count upon certain ease, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of their greatest abundance. One dead fly may spoil a whole pot of precious ointment; and one thorn a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world.

Fourthly, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to eat and drink, and to be merry; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, and being put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation: as if we lived to eat, and did not eat to live, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness.

Fifthly, It was the greatest folly of all to say all this to his soul. if he had said, Body, take thine ease, for thou hast goods laid up for many years, there had been sense in it; but the soul, considered as an immortal spirit, separable from the body, was no way interested in a barn full of corn or a bag full of gold. If he had had the soul of a swine, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of eating and drinking; but what is this to the soul of a man, that has exigencies and desires which these things will be no ways suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. He said to himself, said to his soul, Take thine ease. If

God had said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses with the spirit of believers to make them easy. But God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 1Co 4:3,4. His neighbours blessed him (Ps 10:3), praised him as doing well for himself (Ps 49:18); but God said he did ill for himself: Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, Lu 12:20. God said to him, that is, decreed this concerning him, and let him know it, either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was in the fulness of his sufficiency (Job 20:22), when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to answer the end, but by pulling them down and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought it to an issue, and then lulled himself asleep again with a pleasing dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said,

[1.] The character he gave him: Thou fool, thou Nabal, alluding to the story of Nabal, that fool (Nabal is his name, and folly is with him) whose heart was struck dead as a stone while he was regaling himself in the abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, Thou fool, and they will call themselves so.

[2.] The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death: This night thy soul shall be required of thee; they shall require thy soul (so the words are), and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? He thought he had goods that should be his for many years, but he must part from them this night; he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

First, It is a force, an arrest; it is the requiring of the soul, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who canst use it no better? Thy soul shall be required; this intimates that he is

loth to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has it torn from him with violence; it is a terror to him to think of leaving this world. They shall require thy soul. God shall require it; he shall require an account of it. "Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul. Give an account of that stewardship." They shall; that is, evil angels as the messengers of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall require it as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires thy soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

Secondly, It is a surprize, an unexpected force. It is in the night, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man; it is his morning. But it is night to a worldling, a dark night; he lies down in sorrow. It is this night, this present night, without delay; there is no giving bail, or begging a day. This pleasant night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment. Thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast; but, in the midst of all, here is an end of all, Isa 21:4.

Thirdly, It is the leaving of all those things behind which they have provided, which they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. Their pomp shall not descend after them (Ps 49:17), but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no benefit at all by what they have hoarded up either in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

Fourthly, It is leaving them to they know not who: "Then whose shall those things be? Not thine to be sure, and thou knowest not what they will prove for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be wise or fools (Ec 2:18,19), whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or a blemish, do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it or spend it; nay, thou

knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may be turned to somebody else thou little thinkest of; nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, or into whose hand it will come at last." If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it than beautified it.

Fifthly, It is a demonstration of his folly. Carnal worldlings are fools while they live: this their way is their folly (Ps 49:13); but their folly is made most evident when they die: at his end he shall be a fool (Jer 17:11); for then it will appear that he took pains to lay up treasure in a world he was hastening from, but took no care to lay it up in the world he was hastening to.

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Lastly, Here is the application of this parable (Lu 12:21): So is he, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. This is the way and this is the end of such a man. Observe here,

1 The description of a worldly man: He lays up treasure for himself, for the body, for the world, for himself in opposition to God, for that self that is to be denied.

(a) It is his error that he counts his flesh himself, as if the body were the man. If self be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true Christian that lays up treasure for himself, and is wise for himself, Pr 9:12.

(b) It is his error that he makes it his business to lay up for the flesh, which he calls laying up for himself. All his labour is for his mouth (Ec 6:7), making provision for the flesh.

(c) It is his error that he counts those things his treasure which are thus laid up for the world, and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections toward.

(d) The greatest error of all is that he is in no care to be rich towards God, rich in the account of God, whose accounting us rich makes us so (Re 2:9), rich in the things of God, rich in faith (Jam 2:5), rich in good works, in the fruits of righteousness (1Ti 6:18), rich in graces, and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich towards God, rich for eternity.

2 The folly and misery of a worldly man: So is he. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men to mind and pursue the wealth of this world more than the wealth of the other world, that which is merely for the body and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

Care and Anxiety

22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

These verses are found in almost the same words in Mt 6:24-34. See notes there.

23 The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

24 Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls ?

25 And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

26 If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest ?

27 Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

28 If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Treasure in Heaven

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

They have better things to expect and hope for: Fear not, little flock, Lu 12:32. For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed. When we frighten ourselves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination. Therefore fear not, little flock, but hope to the end; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This comfortable word we had not in Matthew.

Note,

[1.] Christ's flock in this world is a little flock; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard, a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel (1Ki 20:27), who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country.

[2.] Though it be a little flock, quite over-numbered, and therefore in danger of being overpowered, by its enemies, yet it is the will of Christ that they should not be afraid: "Fear not, little flock, but see yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy."

[3.] God has a kingdom in store for all that belong to Christ's little flock, a crown of glory (1Pe 5:4), a throne of power (Re 3:21), unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. The

sheep on the right hand are called to come and inherit the kingdom; it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each.

[4.] The kingdom is given according to the good pleasure of the Father; It is your Father's good pleasure; it is given not of debt, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace; even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee. The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own?

[5.] The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. "Fear no trouble; for, though it should come, it shall not come between you and the kingdom, that is sure, it is near." (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of which cannot separate us from the love of God). "Fear not the want of any thing that is good for you; for, if it be your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, you need not question but he will bear your charges thither."

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, Lu 12:33,34. Those who have done this may be very easy as to all the events of time.

1. "Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it: Sell that ye have, and give alms," that is, "rather than want wherewith to relieve those that are truly necessitous, sell what you have that is superfluous, all that you can spare from the support of yourselves and families, and give it to the poor. Sell what you have, if you find it a hindrance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, thought they be the inheritance of your fathers. Do not sell to hoard up the money, or because you can make more of it by usury, but sell and give alms; what is given in alms, in a right manner, is put out to the best interest, upon the best security."

2. "Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not

of gold, but of grace in the heart and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last." Grace will go with us into another world, for it is woven in the soul; and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget them. These will be treasures in heaven, that will enrich us to eternity.

(a) It is treasure that will not be exhausted; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be at all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it.

(b) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for no thief approaches near it; what is laid up in heaven is out of reach of enemies.

(c) It is treasure that will not spoil with keeping, any more than it will waste with spending; the moth does not corrupt it, as it does our garments which we now wear. Now by this it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven if our hearts be there while we are here (Lu 12:34), if we think much of heaven and keep our eye upon it, if we quicken ourselves with the hopes of it and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But, if your hearts be set upon the earth and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it.

34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Watchful Servants

35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

36 and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

See notes on Mt 24:42-51.

37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

The Unfaithful Servant

41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

43 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

46 the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Jesus the Cause of Division

49 I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

See notes on Mt 10:34-37

50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

52 for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Discerning the Times

54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

See notes on Mt 16:2,3.

55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

Agree with Your Adversary

57 Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

See notes on Mt 5:25,26.

58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Luke-13

Repent or Perish

1 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some Galileans lately, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, Lu 13:1. Let us consider,

1. What this tragical story was. It is briefly related here, and is not met with in any of the historians of those times. Josephus indeed mentions Pilate's killing some Samaritans, who, under the conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tumultuous manner to mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans' temple was; but we can by no means allow that story to be the same with this. Some think that these Galileans were of the faction of Judas Gaulonita, called also Judas of Galilee (Ac 5:37), who disowned Cæsar's authority and refused to pay tribute to him: or perhaps these, being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered, because those who were in league with that pretender were out of his reach. The Galileans being Herod's subjects, it is probable that this outrage committed upon them by Pilate occasioned the quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which we read of in Lu 23:12. We are not told what number they were, perhaps but a few, whom Pilate had some particular pique against (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus); but the circumstance remarked is that he mingled their blood with their sacrifices in the court of the temple. Though perhaps they had reason to fear Pilate's malice, yet they would not, under pretence of that fear, keep away from Jerusalem, whither the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr Lightfoot thinks it probable that they were themselves killing their sacrifices (which was allowed, for the priest's work, they said, began with the sprinkling of the blood), and that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at the time when they were off their guard (for otherwise the Galileans were mettled men, and generally went well-armed), and mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices, as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the

holiness of the place nor of the work would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, who neither feared God nor regarded man. The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, a place of danger and slaughter.

2. Why it was related at this season to our Lord Jesus.

(a) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them.

(b) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we be delivered to the officer, that is, to death, and so cast into prison, and then it will be too late to make agreements: "Now," say they, "Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly delivered to the officer, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be ready." Note, It will be of good use to us both to explain the word of God and to enforce it upon ourselves by observing the providences of God.

(c) Perhaps they would stir him up, being himself of Galilee, and a prophet, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod. If they had any thoughts of this kind, they were quite mistaken; for Christ was now going up to Jerusalem, to be delivered into the hands of Pilate, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice.

(d) Perhaps this was told Christ to deter him from going up to Jerusalem, to worship (Lu 13:22), lest Pilate should serve him as he had served those Galileans, and should suggest against him, as probably he had insinuated against those Galileans, in vindication of his cruelty, that they came to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a seditious design, under colour of sacrificing, to raise rebellion. Now, lest Pilate, when his hand was in,

should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way.

(e) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful innuendo, that, though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet without doubt they were secretly bad men, else God would not have permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very invidious; rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they would, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason than because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them. This fate of theirs, which was capable not only of a favourable, but an honourable construction, shall be called a just judgment of God upon them, though they know not for what.

2 And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Christ's reply to this report, in which,

1. He seconded it with another story, which, like it, gave an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since the tower of Siloam fell, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr Lightfoot's conjecture is that this tower adjoined to the pool of Siloam, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and that it belonged to those porches which were by the pool, in which the impotent folks lay, that waited for the stirring of the water (Joh 5:3), and that they who were killed were some of them, or some of those who in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Whoever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, Ec 9:12. Towers, that were built for safety, often prove men's destruction.

2. He cautioned his hearers not to make an ill use of these and similar events, nor take occasion thence to censure great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners: Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the

Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, Lu 13:2,3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans were Jews, and were glad of any thing that furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them the story of the men of Jerusalem, that came to an untimely end; for, with what measure of that kind we mete, it shall be measured to us again. "Now suppose ye that those eighteen who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were debtors to divine justice above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you nay." Whether it make for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold to be purified, not as dross and chaff to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censures of him, lest we condemn the generation of the righteous, Ps 72:14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we know love or hatred by all that is before us, because all things come alike to all, Ec 9:1,2. And we might as justly conclude that the oppressors, and Pilate among the rest, on whose side are power and success, are the greatest saints, as that the oppressed, and those Galileans among the rest, who are all in tears and have no comforter, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the greatest sinners. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by; for as we do we shall be done by: Judge not, that ye be not judged, Mt 7:1.

4 Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem ?

On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, Lu 13:3-5.

(1.) This intimates that we all deserve to perish as much as they did, and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the iniquity of our holy things, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censure, not only that we are sinners, but that we are as great sinners as they, have as much sin to repent of as they had to suffer for.

(2.) That therefore we are all concerned to repent, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do so no more. The judgments of God upon others are loud calls to us to repent. See how Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to gain room for, and give hopes to, but to enjoin upon us--and that is, to repent.

(3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way: so iniquity shall not be your ruin, but upon no other terms.

(4.) That, if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word likewise, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had their blood mingled with their sacrifices; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Siloam. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perished out of this world. The same Jesus that calls us to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bids us repent because otherwise we shall perish; so that he has set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice.

(5.) The perishing of those in their impenitency who have been most harsh and severe in judging others will be in a particular manner aggravated.

5 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

6 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; except you be reformed, you will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down."

This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and obedience from them, which, turning to his praise and honour, he would have accounted fruit; but they disappointed his expectations: they did not do their duty; they were a reproach instead of being a credit to their profession. Upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's intercession, as of old upon that of Moses, he graciously gave them further time and further mercy; tried them, as it were, another year, by sending his apostles among them, to call them to repentance, and in Christ's name to offer them pardon, upon repentance. Some of them were wrought upon to repent, and bring forth fruit, and with them all was well; but the body of the nation continued impenitent and unfruitful, and ruin without remedy came upon them; about forty years after they were cut down, and cast into the fire, as John Baptist had told them (Mt 3:10), which saying of his this parable enlarges upon.

7 Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground ?

1. The doom passed upon it; Cut it down. He saith this to the dresser of the vineyard, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed, to the ministers who are in his name to declare this doom. Note, No other can be expected concerning barren trees than that they should be cut down. As the unfruitful vineyard is dismantled, and thrown open to the common (Isa 5:5,6), so the unfruitful trees in the vineyard are cast out of it, and wither, Joh 15:6. It is cut down by the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, Isa 6:9,10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for why cumbers it the ground? What reason is there why it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose?

2. The dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor; he ever lives, interceding. Ministers are intercessors; they that dress the vineyard should intercede for it; those we preach to we should pray for, for we must give ourselves to the word of God and to prayer. Now observe,

(a) What it is he prays for, and that is a reprieve: Lord, let it alone this year also. He doth not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down," but, "Lord, not now. Lord, do not remove the dresser, do not withhold the dews, do not pluck up the tree."

Note,

[1.] It is desirable to have a barren tree reprieved. Some have not yet grace to repent, yet it is a mercy to them to have space to repent, as it was to the old world to have 120 years allowed them to make their peace with God.

[2.] We owe it to Christ, the great Intercessor, that barren trees are not cut down immediately: had it not been for his interposition, the whole world had been cut down, upon the sin of Adam; but he said, Lord, let it alone; and it is he that upholds all things.

[3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reprieve of barren fig-trees: "Lord, let them alone; continue them yet awhile in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious." Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath.

[4.] Reprieves of mercy are but for a time; Let it alone this year also, a short time, but a sufficient time to make trial. When God has borne long, we may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always.

[5.] Reprieves may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not pardons; there must be our own faith, and repentance, and prayers, else no pardon.

(b) How he promises to improve this reprieve, if it be obtained: Till I shall dig about it, and dung it, Note,

[1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The dresser seems to say, "Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that

which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness." Thus in all our prayers we must request God's grace, with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for.

[2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The dresser of the vineyard engages to do his part, and therein teaches ministers to do theirs. He will dig about the tree and will dung it. Unfruitful Christians must be awakened by the terrors of the law, which break up the fallow ground, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warming and fattening, as manure to the tree. Both methods must be tried; the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

(c) Upon what foot he leaves the matter: "Let us try it, and try what we can do with it one year more, and, if it bear fruit, well, Lu 13:9. It is possible, nay, there is hope, that yet it may be fruitful." In this hope the owner will have patience with it, and the dresser will take pains with it, and, if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word well is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt: If it bear fruit!--supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the owner and dresser will be. If it bear fruit, there will be cause of rejoicing; we have what we would have. But it cannot be better expressed than as we do: well. Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if after long unfruitfulness they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find all is well. God will be pleased, for he will be praised; ministers' hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is well for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall receive blessing from God (Heb 6:7); it shall be purged, and shall bring forth more fruit, for the Father is its husbandman (Joh 15:2); and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the

visible church, to see to it that the temper of their minds and the tenour of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the fruit required. Now observe here,

1 The advantages which this fig-tree had. It was planted in a vineyard, in better soil, and where it had more care taken of it and more pains taken with it, than other fig-trees had, that commonly grew, not in vineyards (Those are for vines), but by the way-side, Mt 21:19. This fig-tree belonged to a certain man, that owned it, and was at expense upon it. Note, The church of God is his vineyard, distinguished from the common, and fenced about, Isa 5:1,2. We are fig-trees planted in this vineyard by our baptism; we have a place and a name in the visible church, and this is our privilege and happiness. It is a distinguishing favour: he has not dealt so with other nations.

2 The owner's expectation from it: He came, and sought fruit thereon, and he had reason to expect it. He did not send, but came himself, intimating his desire to find fruit. Christ came into this world, came to his own, to the Jews, seeking fruit. Note, The God of heaven requires and expects fruit from those that have a place in his vineyard. He has his eye upon those that enjoy the gospel, to see whether they live up to it; he seeks evidences of their getting good by the means of grace they enjoy. Leaves will not serve, crying, Lord, Lord; blossoms will not serve, beginning well and promising fair; there must be fruit. Our thoughts, words, and actions must be according to the gospel, light and love.

3. The disappointment of his expectation: He found none, none at all, not one fig. Note, It is sad to think how many enjoy the privileges of the gospel, and yet do nothing at all to the honour of God, nor to answer the end of his entrusting them with those privileges; and it is a disappointment to him and a grief to the Spirit of his grace.

(A) He here complains of it to the dresser of the vineyard: I come, seeking fruit, but am disappointed--I find none, looking for grapes, but behold wild grapes. He is grieved with such a generation.

(B) He aggravates it, with two considerations:--

[1.] That he had waited long, and yet was disappointed. As he was not high in his expectations, he only expected fruit, not much fruit, so he was not hasty, he came three years, year after year: applying it to the Jews, he came one space of time before the captivity, another after that, and another in the preaching of John Baptist and of Christ himself; or it may allude to the three years of Christ's public ministry, which were now expiring. In general, it teaches us that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. How many times three years has God come to many of us, seeking fruit, but has found none, or next to none, or worse than none!

[2.] That this fig-tree did not only not bring forth fruit, but did hurt; it cumbered the ground; it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note, Those who do not do good commonly do hurt by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good; they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the mischief is the greater, and the ground the more cumbered, if it be a high, large, spreading tree, and if it be an old tree of long standing.

8 And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:

Yet it has, without doubt, a further reference, and is designed for the awakening of all that enjoy the means of grace, and the privileges of the visible church, to see to it that the temper of their minds and the tenour of their lives be answerable to their professions and opportunities, for that is the fruit required. Now observe here,

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9 and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

But he adds, If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. Observe here,

[1.] That, though God bear long, he will not bear always with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be cut down at last, and cast into the fire.

[2.] The longer God has waited, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be: to be cut down after that, after all these expectations from it, these debates concerning it, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation.

[3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God does not take pleasure in: for observe here, the owner said to the dresser, "Do thou cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground." "Nay," said the dresser, "if it must be done at last, thou shalt cut it down; let not my hand be upon it."

[4.] Those that now intercede for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, nay, they will approve and applaud, the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, Re 15:3,4.

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.

Observe here, 1. The afflicted person, a woman which had a sore disease inflicted upon her by the devil for eighteen years, which almost bowed her together. There is nothing that the devil delights more in, than the miseries and calamities of mankind. Satan is not satisfied barely to infect the mind, and poison the souls of men; but he delights to afflict and hurt the body, where and when he can obtain leave.

Observe, 2. Christ's compassion towards her, and his miraculous healing of her; Jesus called her to him, and with a word speaking, healed her.

Where note, that the inveterateness of the disease, and the instantaneousness of the cure, made the miracle evident. She that had been bowed down eighteen years, in an instant is made straight, and only by a word of Christ's mouth. Such a miraculous operation was an evident testimony of his divine mission, that he was the Son of God.

Observe, 3. How the heart of the poor woman is affected with Christ's hand: she glorified God; that is, she gave thanks to God, and attributed the miracle to him. As the chief end of all God's extraordinary works, either of power or mercy, is the exaltation of his own glory; so the only way that we can set forth his glory, is by celebrating his praises, and expressing our own thankfulness: He that offereth me praises and thanks, glorifies me, Ps 50:23.

11 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.

12 And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.

13 And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people,

There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.

Observe, 4. The unreasonable anger and unjust indignation, which was found with the ruler of the synagogue against our holy Lord for working this miraculous cure on the sabbath day. There is no person so holy, no action so innocent, but may fall under unjust censure, especially where malice and ignorance are combined. What a severe reflection does this man make upon our blessed Lord for performing a work of mercy on the sabbath day!

Observe, 5. Our Lord's vindication of himself from calumny and false accusation;

1. He charges his accusers with hyprocrisy. Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you loose his ox or his ass from the stall on the sabbath day, and water him? It is one note of an hypocrite, to condemn that in another which he does himself: the Jews held it lawful to loose and lead a beast to watering on the sabbath day, which was a work of servile labor; and yet would condemn Christ for healing a poor woman only with a word speaking.

2. Christ vindicates his own action, by comparing it with theirs, which they judged lawful on the sabbath day: Was their loosing and watering the beast a work of necessity? Much more was his. Was theirs a work of mercy? His much more. Their compassion was to a brute beast, his to a rational creature, to a woman, and that not a stranger, an heathen woman; but one of their own, a Jewish woman, a daughter of Abraham. No, farther, Christ's act was an act of far greater necessity, and more special mercy, than theirs. The beast might live a day without water; the beast might not be sick: but this woman was in sore distress, and had been so for eighteen years; no, she was in the hands of the enemy of mankind, bound by Satan. Was it not then a greater act of mercy and compassion to loose her, than to lead a beast?

Observe, 6. What effect our Lord's vindication of himself had upon the hearers of it: His adversaries were ashamed, and the people rejoiced, verse 17. His accusers were ashamed, and probably convinced, perhaps

silenced; but we read not that they confessed their error, or acknowledged their unjust censure, or craved Christ's pardon.

When persons judgments are under conviction of an error or mistake, it is very hard to bring themselves to confess and own their mistake, because all men stand very much upon the credit and reputation of their understandings, and look upon it as a reproach to own themselves mistaken; though it is really otherwise. But though our Saviour's adversaries were only ashamed, others rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

15 The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?

16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day ?

17 And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

18 Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

19 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.

For notes on the parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven, see Mt 13:31-33.

The Parable of the Leaven

20 And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God ?

21 It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

The Narrow Gate

22 And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Strait gate. Mt 7:13,14

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

See notes on Mt 25:1-13

26 then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

[1] What grounds they had for this confidence. Let us see what their plea is, Lu 13:26. First, They had been Christ's guests, had had an intimate converse with him, and had shared in his favours: We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, at thy table. Judas ate bread with Christ, dipped with him in the dish. Hypocrites, under the disguise of their external profession, receive the Lord's supper, and in it partake of the children's bread, as if they were children. Secondly, They had been Christ's hearers, had received instruction from him, and were well acquainted with his doctrine and law: "Thou hast taught in our streets--a distinguishing favour, which few had, and surely it might be taken as a pledge of distinguishing favour now; for wouldest thou teach us, and not save us?"

[2] How their confidence will fail them, and all their pleas be rejected as frivolous. Christ will say to them, I know you not whence you are, Lu 13:25. And again (Lu 13:27), I tell you, I know you not, depart from me. He does not deny that what they pleaded was true; they had eaten and drunk in his presence, by the same token that they had no sooner eaten of his bread than they lifted up the heel against him. He had taught in their streets, by the same token that they had despised his instruction and

would not submit to it. And therefore, First, He disowns them: "I know you not; you do not belong to my family." The Lord knows them that are his, but them that are not he does not know, he has nothing to do with them: "I know you not whence you are. You are not of me, you are not from above, you are not branches of my house, of my vine." Secondly, He discards them: Depart from me. It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ, the principal part of the misery of the damned. "Depart from my door, here is nothing for you, no, not a drop of water." Thirdly, He gives them such a character as is the reason of this doom: You are workers of iniquity. This is their ruin, that, under a pretence of piety, they kept up secret haunts of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

How terrible their punishment will be (Lu 13:28): There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, the utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved: You shall see the patriarchs and prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. Observe here, First, That the Old-Testament saints are in the kingdom of God; those had benefit by the Messiah who died before his coming, for they saw his day at a distance and it reflected comfort upon them. Secondly, That New-Testament sinners will be thrust out of the kingdom of God. It intimates that they will be thrusting in, and will presume upon admission, but in vain; they shall be thrust out with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. Thirdly, That the sight of the saint's glory will be a great aggravation of sinner's misery; they shall thus far see the kingdom of God that they shall see the prophets in it, whom they hated and despised, and themselves, though they thought themselves sure of it, thrust out. This is that at which they will gnash their teeth, Ps 112:10.

Think who are they that shall be saved, notwithstanding: They shall come from the east and the west; and the last shall be first, Lu 13:29,30.

[1.] By what Christ said, it appears that but few shall be saved of those whom we think most likely, and who bid fairest for it. Yet do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain; for, though Israel be not gathered, Christ will be glorious. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly thus, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there whom we little thought to have met there, and miss a great many thence whom we verily expected to have found there.

[2.] Those who sit down in the kingdom of God are such as had taken pains to get thither, for they came from far--from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south; they had passed through different climates, had broken through many difficulties and discouragements. This shows that they who would enter into that kingdom must strive, as the queen of Sheba, who came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They who travel now in the service of God and religion shall shortly sit down to rest in the kingdom of God.

[3.] Many who stood fair for heaven came short, and others who seemed cast behind, and thrown quite out of the way, will win and wear this prize, and therefore it concerns us to strive to enter. Let us be provoked, as Paul desires the Jews might be, to a holy emulation, by the zest an forwardness of the Gentiles, Ro 11:14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I, who started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others, less likely, enter into it? If it be got by striving, why should not I strive?

29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first; and there are first which shall be last.

Jesus Laments over Jerusalem

31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence; for Herod will kill thee.

A suggestion to Christ of his danger from Herod, now that he was in Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction (Lu 13:31): Certain of the Pharisees (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) came to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, Get thee out of this country, and depart hence, for otherwise Herod will kill thee, as he did John. Some think that these Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purport, but that they framed this lie, to drive him out of Galilee, where he had a great and growing interest, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But, Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was enraged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance which John preached. Herod was willing to get rid of Christ out of his dominions; and, when he durst not put him to death, he hoped to frighten him away by sending him this threatening message.

32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

His defiance of Herod's rage and the Pharisees' too; he fears neither the one nor the other: Go you, and tell that fox so, Lu 13:32. In calling him a fox, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craft, and treachery, and baseness, and preying (as they say of a fox) furthest from his own den. And, though it is a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it to him, nor was it in him a violation of that law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. For Christ was a prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men. Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a king, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men were accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. "Go, and tell that fox, yea, and this fox too" (for so it is in the original, te alopeki taute); "that Pharisee, whoever he is, that whispers this in my ear, let him know that I do not fear him, nor regard his menaces. For,"

1. "I know that I must die, and must die shortly; I expect it, and count upon it, the third day," that is, "very shortly; my hour is at hand." Note,

It will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. "If Herod should kill me, he will not surprise me."

2. "I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but that it will be my preferment; and therefore tell him I do not fear him; when I die, I shall be perfected. I shall then have finished the hardest part of my undertaking; I shall have completed my business;" teleioumai--I shall be consecrated. When Christ dies, he is said to have sanctified himself; he consecrated himself to his priestly office with his own blood.

3. "I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me till I have done my work. Go, and tell him that I value not his impotent rage. I will cast out devils, and do cures, to-day and to-morrow," that is, "now and for some little space of time yet to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I must walk, I must go on in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me. I must go about, as I do, preaching and healing, to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following." Note, It is good for us to look upon the time we have before us as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the utmost, that we may thereby be quickened to do the work of the day in its day. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not slain till they had finished their testimony.

4. "I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction: It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," that is, "any where but at Jerusalem." If a true prophet was put to death, he was prosecuted as a false prophet. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great sanhedrim, which always sat at Jerusalem; it was a cause which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore, if a prophet be put to death, it must be at Jerusalem.

33 Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.

34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!

His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, Lu 13:34,35. This we had Mt 23:37-39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not designing to bring it in in its proper place, inserts it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning his being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note,

1 The wickedness of persons and places that more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God is in a particular manner provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How pathetically does he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city! O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God had sent to them, killed them, and stoned them. If men's corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ has shown himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that come to him, and put themselves under his protection: How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, with such care and tenderness!

4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is because they will not: I would, I often would, and ye would not. Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.

5. The house that Christ leaves is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though greatly frequented, is yet desolate if Christ has deserted

it. He leaves it to them; they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make their best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.

6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be gathered by him, and therefore, saith he, "You shall not see me, you shall not hear me, any more," as Moses said to Pharaoh, when he forbade him his presence, Ex 10:28,29. 7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced: "Then you will say, Blessed is he that cometh," that is, "you will be glad to be among those that say so, and will not see me to be the Messiah till then when it is too late."

35 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Luke-14

Jesus Heals the Man Who Had Dropsy

1 And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.

2 And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.

3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?

4 And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go;

5 and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?

6 And they could not answer him again to these things.

See notes on Mt 12:11.

A Lesson to Guests and a Host

7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go

up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

He applied this generally, and would have us all learn not to mind high things, but to content ourselves with mean things, as for other reasons, so for this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men: for whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; but humility and self-denial are really honourable: he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, Lu 14:11. We see in other instances that a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit, and before honour is humility.

12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither

thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

He takes occasion to reprove the master of the feast for inviting so many rich people, who had wherewithal to dine very well at home, when he should rather have invited the poor, or, which was all one, have sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared, and who could not afford themselves a good meal's meat. See Ne 8:10. Our Saviour here teaches us that the using of what we have in works of charity is better, and will turn to a better account, than using it in works of generosity and in magnificent house-keeping.

1. "Covet not to treat the rich; invite not thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours, that are rich," Lu 14:12. This does not prohibit the entertaining of such; there may be occasion for it, for the cultivating of friendship among relations and neighbours. But,

(a) "Do not make a common custom of it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayest not disable thyself to lay out in a much better way, in almsgiving. Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich will make a great many meals for the poor." Solomon saith, He that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want, Pr 22:16. "Give" (saith Pliny, Epist.) "to thy friends, but let it be to thy poor friends, not to those that need thee not."

(b) "Be not proud of it." Many make feasts only to make a show, as Ahasuerus did (Es 1:3,4), and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families, to please their fancies.

(c) "Aim not at being paid again in your own coin." This is that which our Saviour blames in making such entertainments: "You commonly do it in hopes that you will be invited by them, and so a recompence will be made you; you will be gratified with such dainties and varieties as you treat your friends with, and this will feed your sensuality and luxury, and you will be no real gainer at last."

2. "Be forward to relieve the poor (Lu 14:13,14): When thou makest a feast, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite the poor and maimed, such as have nothing to live upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity; they want necessaries; furnish them, and they will recompense thee with their prayers; they will commend thy provisions, which the rich, it may be, will despise. They will go away, and thank God for thee, when the rich will go away and reproach thee. Say not that thou art a loser, because they cannot recompense thee, thou art so much out of pocket; no, it is so much set out to the best interest, on the best security, for thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." There will be a resurrection of the just, a future state of the just. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world; and we may be sure that the charitable will be remembered in the resurrection of the just, for alms are righteousness.

Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in this world, for the things of this world are not the best things, and therefore God does not pay the best men in those things; but they shall in no wise lose their reward; they shall be recompensed in the resurrection. It will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and that the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompense adjourned till the resurrection.

13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:

14 and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

The Parable of the Great Supper

15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Compare it with Mt 22:1-14.

16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

The Cost of Discipleship

25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

See notes on Mt 10:37-39.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Tasteless Salt

34 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?

35 It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

See notes on Mt 5:13

Luke-15

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

See notes on Mt 9:10-13

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

See notes on Mt 18:12,13.

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

9 And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

I The parable represents God as a common Father to all mankind, to the whole family of Adam. We are all his offspring, have all one Father, and one God created us, Mal 2:10. From him we had our being, in him we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance. He is our Father, for he has the educating and portioning of us, and will put us in his testament, or leave us out, according as we are, or are not, dutiful children to him. Our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees that these publicans and sinners, whom they thus despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, (Ro 3:29): the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

II. It represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related to God as their common Father. He had two sons, one of them a solid grave youth, reserved and austere, sober himself, but not at all good-humoured to those about him; such a one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other volatile and mercurial, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to be sent forth to preach repentance. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The younger son is the prodigal, whose character and case are here designed to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some. Now we are to observe concerning him,

1. His riot and ramble when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into. We are told,

(1.) What his request to his father was (Lu 15:12): He said to his father, proudly and pertly enough, "Father, give me"--he might have put a little more in his mouth, and have said, Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me, but he makes an imperious demand--"give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; not so much as you think fit to allot to me, but that which falls to me as my due." Note, It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as debts. "Give me the portion, all my child's part, that falls to me;" not, "Try me with a little, and see how I can manage that, and accordingly trust me with more;" but, "Give it me all at present in possession, and I will never expect any thing in reversion, any thing hereafter." Note, The great folly of sinners, and that which ruins them, is being content to have their portion in hand, now in this lifetime to receive their good things. They look only at the things that are seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present gratification, but have no care for a future felicity, when that is spent and gone. And why did he desire to have his portion in his own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to business, and trade with it, and so make it more? No, he had no thought of that.

But,

[1.] He was weary of his father's government, of the good order and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of liberty falsely so called, but indeed the greatest slavery, for such a liberty to sin is. See the folly of many young men, who are religiously educated, but are impatient of the confinement of their education, and never think themselves their own masters, their own men, till they have broken all God's bands in sunder, and cast away his cords from them, and, instead of them, bound themselves with the cords of their own lust. Here is the original of the apostasy of sinners from God; they will not be tied up to the rules of God's government; they will themselves be as gods, knowing no other good and evil than what themselves please.

[2.] He was willing to get from under his father's eye, for that was always a check upon him, and often gave a check to him. A shyness of God, and a willingness to disbelieve his omniscience, are at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked.

[3.] He was distrustful of his father's management. He would have his portion of goods himself, for he thought that his father would be laying up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that, would limit him in his present expenses, and that he did not like.

[4.] He was proud of himself, and had a great conceit of his own sufficiency. He thought that if he had but his portion in his own hands he could manage it better than his father did, and make a better figure with it. There are more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves and all theirs by a foolish ambition to be independent, and not to be beholden even to God himself; and this is at the bottom of sinners' persisting in their sin--they will be for themselves.

(2.) How kind his father was to him: He divided unto them his living. He computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son his share, and offered the elder his, which ought to be a double portion; but, it should seem, he desired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and we may see what he got by it (Lu 15:31): All that I have is thine. He got all by staying for something in reserve. He gave the younger son what he asked, and the son had no reason to complain that he did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as he expected, and perhaps more.

[1.] Thus he might now see his father's kindness, how willing he was to please him and make him easy, and that he was not such an unkind father as he was willing to represent him when he wanted an excuse to be gone.

[2.] Thus he would in a little time be made to see his own folly, and that he was not such a wise manager for himself as he would be thought to be. Note, God is a kind Father to all his children, and gives to them all life, and breath, and all things, even to the evil and unthankful, dieilen autois ton bion--He divided to them life. God's giving us life is putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him.

12 and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

How he managed himself when he had got his portion in his own hands. He set himself to spend it as fast as he could, and, as prodigals generally do, in a little time he made himself a beggar: not many days after, Lu 15:13. Note, if God leave us ever so little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we depart from him. When the bridle of restraining grace is taken off we are soon gone. That which the younger son determined was to be gone presently, and, in order to that, he gathered all together. Sinners, that go astray from God, venture their all.

Now the condition of the prodigal in this ramble of his represents to us a sinful state, that miserable state into which man is fallen.

[1.] A sinful state is a state of departure and distance from God. First, It is the sinfulness of sin that it is an apostasy from God. He took his journey from his father's house. Sinners are fled from God; they go a whoring from him; they revolt from their allegiance to him, as a servant that runs from his service, or a wife that treacherously departs from her husband, and they say unto God, Depart. They get as far off him as they can. The world is the far country in which they take up their residence, and are as at home; and in the service and enjoyment of it they spend their all. Secondly. It is the misery of sinners that they are afar off from God, from him who is the Fountain of all good, and are going further and further from him. What is hell itself, but being afar off from God?

[2.] A sinful state is a spending state: There he wasted his substance with riotous living (Lu 15:13), devoured it with harlots (Lu 15:30), and in a little time he had spent all, Lu 15:14. He bought fine clothes, spent a great deal in meat and drink, treated high, associated with those that helped him to make an end of what he had in a little time. As to this world, they that live riotously waste what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend that upon their lusts which should be for the necessary substance of themselves and their families. But this is to be applied spiritually. Wilful sinners waste their patrimony; for they misemploy their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, misspend their

time and all their opportunities, do not only bury, but embezzle, the talents they are entrusted to trade with for their Master's honour; and the gifts of Providence, which were intended to enable them to serve God and to do good with, are made the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is made a drudge, either to the world or to the flesh, wastes its substance, and lives riotously. One sinner destroys much good, Ec 9:18. The good he destroys is valuable, and it is none of his own; they are his Lord's goods that he wastes, which must be accounted for.

[3.] A sinful state is a wanting state: When he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to seek such another prey; and there arose a mighty famine in that land, every thing was scarce and dear, and he began to be in want, Lu 15:14. Note, Wilful waste brings woeful want. Riotous living in time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a morsel of bread, especially when bad times hasten on the consequences of bad husbandry, which good husbandry would have provided for. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their own mercies, the favour of God, their interest in Christ, the strivings of the Spirit, and admonitions of conscience; these they gave away for the pleasure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessaries for their souls; they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where famine reigns, a mighty famine; for the heaven is as brass (the dews of God's favour and blessing are withheld, and we must needs want good things if God deny them to us), and the earth is as iron (the sinner's heart, that should bring forth good things, is dry and barren, and has no good in it). Sinners are wretchedly and miserably poor, and, what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it by refusing the supplies offered.

[4.] A sinful state is a vile servile state. When this young man's riot had brought him to want his want brought him to servitude. He went, and joined himself to a citizen of that country, Lu 15:15. The same wicked life that before was represented by riotous living is here represented by servile living; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the citizen of that country; for he is both in city and country. Sinners join themselves to him, hire themselves into his service, to do his work, to be at his beck,

and to depend upon him for maintenance and a portion. They that commit sin are the servants of sin, Joh 8:34. How did this young gentleman debase and disparage himself, when he hired himself into such a service and under such a master as this! He sent him into the fields, not to feed sheep (there had been some credit in that employment; Jacob, and Moses, and David, kept sheep), but to feed swine. The business of the devil's servants is to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine; and how can rational immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

[5.] A sinful state is a state of perpetual dissatisfaction. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by going to service; and he must be content with the provision which not the house, but the field, afforded; but it is poor provision: He would fain have filled his belly, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, with the husks which the swine did eat, lu 15:16. A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-commoner with the swine! Note, That which sinners, when they depart from God, promise themselves satisfaction in, will certainly disappoint them; they are labouring for that which satisfieth not, Isa 55:2. That which is the stumbling-block of their iniquity will never satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels, Eze 7:19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are these to precious souls? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that takes up with them feeds on wind (Ho 12:1), feeds on ashes, Isa 44:20.

[6.] A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature. This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by working, took to begging; but no man gave unto him, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was rakish, and provoking to every body; such poor are least pitied. This, in the application of the parable, intimates that those who depart from God cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh (those gods which we have served); they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give it which will feed and nourish it. If thou refuse God's help, whence shall any creature help thee?

[7.] A sinful state is a state of death: This my son was dead, Lu 15:24,32. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, and therefore dead. The prodigal in the far country was dead to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body or a branch from the tree, and therefore dead, and it is his own doing.

[8.] A sinful state is a lost state: This my son was lost--lost to every thing that was good--lost to all virtue and honour--lost to his father's house; they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God are lost souls; lost as a traveller that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably.

[9.] A sinful state is a state of madness and frenzy. This is intimated in that expression (Lu 15:17), when he came to himself, which intimates that he had been beside himself. Surely he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. Madness is said to be in the heart of sinners, Ec 9:3. Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are mad, destroy themselves with foolish lusts, and yet at the same time deceive themselves with foolish hopes; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

We have here his return from this ramble, his penitent return to his father again. When he was brought to the last extremity, then he bethought himself how much it was his interest to go home. Note, We must not

despair of the worst; for while there is life there is hope. The grace of God can soften the hardest heart, and give a happy turn to the strongest stream of corruption. Now observe here,

(a) What was the occasion of his return and repentance. It was his affliction; when he was in want, then he came to himself. Note, Afflictions, when they are sanctified by divine grace, prove happy means of turning sinners from the error of their ways. By them the ear is opened to discipline and the heart disposed to receive instructions; and they are sensible proofs both of the vanity of the world and of the mischievousness of sin. Apply it spiritually. When we find the insufficiency of creatures to make us happy, and have tried all other ways of relief for our poor souls in vain, then it is time to think of returning to God. When we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value, all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and no man gives unto us what we need, then surely we shall apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

(b) What was the preparative for it; it was consideration. He said within himself, he reasoned with himself, when he recovered his right mind, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough! Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion, Eze 18:28. He considers, and turns. To consider is to retire into ourselves, to reflect upon ourselves, to compare one thing with another, and determine accordingly. Now observe what it was that he considered.

[1.] He considered how bad his condition was: I perish with hunger. Not only, "I am hungry," but, "I perish with hunger, for I see not what way to expect relief." Note, Sinners will not come to the service of Christ till they are brought to see themselves just ready to perish in the service of sin; and the consideration of that should drive us to Christ. Master, save us, we perish. And though we be thus driven to Christ he will not therefore reject us, nor think himself dishonoured by our being forced to him, but rather honoured by his being applied to in a desperate case.

[2.] He considered how much better it might be made if he would but return: How many hired servants of my father's, the meanest in his

family, the very day-labourers, have bread enough, and to spare, such a good house does he keep!

Note,

First, In our Father's house there is bread for all his family. This was taught by the twelve loaves of showbread, that were constantly upon the holy table in the sanctuary, a loaf for every tribe.

Secondly, There is enough and to spare, enough for all, enough for each, enough to spare for such as will join themselves to his domestics, enough and to spare for charity. Yet there is room; there are crumbs that fall from his table, which many would be glad of, and thankful for.

Thirdly, Even the hired servants in God's family are well provided for; the meanest that will but hire themselves into his family, to do his work, and depend upon his rewards, shall be well provided for.

Fourthly, The consideration of this should encourage sinners, that have gone astray from God, to think of returning to him. Thus the adulteress reasons with herself, when she is disappointed in her new lovers: I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now, Ho 2:7.

(c) What was the purpose of it. Since it is so, that his condition is so bad, and may be bettered by returning to his father, his consideration issues, at length, in this conclusion: I will arise, and go to my father. Note, Good purposes are good things, but still good performances are all in all.

[1.] He determined what to do: I will arise and go to my father. He will not take any longer time to consider of it, but will forthwith arise and go. Though he be in a far country, a great way off from his father's house, yet, far as it is, he will return; every step of backsliding from God must be a step back again in return to him. Though he be joined to a citizen of this country, he makes no difficulty of breaking his bargain with him. We are not debtors to the flesh; we are under no obligation at all to our

Egyptian task-masters to give them warning, but are at liberty to quit the service when we will. Observe with what resolution he speaks: "I will arise, and go to my father: I am resolved I will, whatever the issue be, rather than stay here and starve."

[2.] He determined what to say. True repentance is a rising, and coming to God: Behold, we come unto thee. But what words shall we take with us? He here considers what to say. Note, In all our addresses to God, it is good to deliberate with ourselves beforehand what we shall say, that we may order our cause before him, and fill our mouth with arguments. We have liberty of speech, and we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, how we may use that liberty to the utmost, and yet not abuse it. Let us observe what he purposed to say.

First, He would confess his fault and folly: I have sinned. Note, Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us, and well becomes us, to own that we have sinned. The confession of sin is required and insisted upon, as a necessary condition of peace and pardon. If we plead not guilty, we put ourselves upon a trial by the covenant of innocency, which will certainly condemn us. If guilty, with a contrite, penitent, and obedient heart, we refer ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that confess their sins.

Secondly, He would aggravate it, and would be so far from extenuating the matter that he would lay a load upon himself for it: I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee. Let those that are undutiful to their earthly parents think of this; they sin against heaven, and before God. Offences against them are offences against God. Let us all think of this, as that which renders our sin exceedingly sinful, and should render us exceedingly sorrowful for it.

1. Sin is committed in contempt of God's authority over us: We have sinned against Heaven. God is here called Heaven, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us, for the Heavens do rule. The malignity of sin aims high; it is against Heaven. The daring sinner is said to have set his mouth against the heavens, Ps 63:9. Yet it is impotent malice, for we cannot hurt the heavens. Nay, it is foolish malice;

what is shot against the heavens will return upon the head of him that shoots it, Ps 7:16. Sin is an affront to the God of heaven, it is a forfeiture of the glories and joys of heaven, and a contradiction to the designs of the kingdom of heaven.

2. It is committed in contempt of God's eye upon us: "I have sinned against Heaven and yet before thee, and under thine eye," than which there could not be a greater affront put upon him.

Thirdly, He would judge and condemn himself for it, and acknowledge himself to have forfeited all the privileges of the family: I am no more worthy to be called thy son, Lu 15:19. He does not deny the relation (for that was all he had to trust to), but he owns that his father might justly deny the relation, and shut his doors against him. He had, at his own demand, the portion of goods that belonged to him, and had reason to expect no more. Note, It becomes sinners to acknowledge themselves unworthy to receive any favour from God, and to humble and abase themselves before him.

Fourthly, He would nevertheless sue for admission into the family, though it were into the meanest post there: "Make me as one of thy hired servants: that is good enough, and too good for me." Note, True penitents have a high value for God's house, and the privileges of it, and will be glad of any place, so they may but be in it, though it be but as door-keepers, Ps 84:10. If it be imposed on him as a mortification to sit with the servants, he will not only submit to it, but count it a preferment, in comparison with his present state. Those that return to God, from whom they have revolted, cannot but be desirous some way or other to be employed for him, and put into a capacity of serving and honouring him: "Make me as a hired servant, that I may show I love my father's house as much as ever I slighted it."

Fifthly, In all this he would have an eye to his father as a father: "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father." Note, Eyeing God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance and return to him. It will make our sorrow for sin genuine, our resolutions

against it strong, and encourage us to hope for pardon. God delights to be called Father both by penitents and petitioners. Is not Ephraim a dear son?

(d) What was the performance of this purpose: He arose, and came to his father. His good resolve he put in execution without delay; he struck while the iron was hot, and did not adjourn the thought to some more convenient season. Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions. Have we said that we will arise and go? Let us immediately arise and come. He did not come halfway, and then pretend that he was tired and could get no further, but, weak and weary as he was, he made a thorough business of it. If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, and do thy first works.

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

We have here his reception and entertainment with his father: He came to his father; but was he welcome? Yes, heartily welcome. And, by the way, it is an example to parents whose children have been foolish and disobedient, if they repent, and submit themselves, not to be harsh and severe with them, but to be governed in such a case by the wisdom that is from above, which is gentle and easy to be entreated; herein let them be followers of God, and merciful, as he is. But it is chiefly designed to set forth the grace and mercy of God to poor sinners that repent and return to him, and his readiness to forgive them. Now here observe,

(a) The great love and affection wherewith the father received the son: When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, Lu 15:20. He expressed his kindness before the son expressed his repentance; for God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness. Even before we call he answers; for he knows what is in our hearts. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. How lively are the images presented here!

[1.] Here were eyes of mercy, and those eyes quick-sighted: When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, before any other of the family were aware of him, as if from the top of some high tower he had been looking that way which his son was gone, with such a thought as this, "O that I could see yonder wretched son of mine coming home!" This intimates God's desire of the conversion of sinners, and his readiness to meet them that are coming towards him. He looketh on men, when they are gone astray from him, to see whether they will return to him, and he is aware of the first inclination towards him.

[2.] Here were bowels of mercy, and those bowels turning within him, and yearning at the sight of his son: He had compassion. Misery is the object of pity, even the misery of a sinner; though he has brought it upon himself, yet God compassionates. His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, Ho 11:8,Jdg 10:16.

[3.] Here were feet of mercy, and those feet quick-paced: He ran. This denotes how swift God is to show mercy. The prodigal son came slowly, under a burden of shame and fear; but the tender father ran to meet him with his encouragements.

[4.] Here were arms of mercy, and those arms stretched out to embrace him: He fell on his neck. Though guilty and deserving to be beaten, though dirty and newly come from feeding swine, so that any one who had not the strongest and tenderest compassions of a father would have loathed to touch him, yet he thus takes him in his arms, and lays him in his bosom. Thus dear are true penitents to God, thus welcome to the Lord Jesus.

[5.] Here were lips of mercy, and those lips dropping as a honey-comb: He kissed him. This kiss not only assured him of his welcome, but sealed his pardon; his former follies shall be all forgiven, and not mentioned against him, nor is one word said by way of upbraiding. This was like David's kissing Absalom, 2Sa 14:33. And this intimates how ready, and free, and forward the Lord Jesus is to receive and entertain poor returning repenting sinners, according to his Father's will.

(b) The penitent submission which the poor prodigal made to his father (Lu 15:21): He said unto him, Father, I have sinned. As it commends the good father's kindness that he showed it before the prodigal expressed his repentance, so it commends the prodigal's repentance that he expressed it after his father had shown him so much kindness. When he had received the kiss which sealed his pardon, yet he said, Father, I have sinned. Note, Even those that have received the pardon of their sins, and the comfortable sense of their pardon, must have in their hearts a sincere contrition for it, and with their mouths must make a penitent confession of it, even of those sins which they have reason to hope are pardoned. David penned the Ps 51:1-19 after Nathan had said, The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shall not die. Nay, the comfortable sense of the pardon of sin should increase our sorrow for it; and that is ingenuous evangelical sorrow which is increased by such a consideration. See Eze 16:63, Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, when I am pacified towards thee. The more we see of God's readiness to forgive us, the more difficult it should be to us to forgive ourselves.

(c) The splendid provision which this kind father made for the returning prodigal. He was going on in his submission, but one word we find in his purpose to say (Lu 15:19) which we do not find that he did say (Lu 15:21), and that was, Make me as one of thy hired servants. We cannot think that he forgot it, much less that he changed his mind, and was now either less desirous to be in the family or less willing to be a hired servant there than when he made that purpose; but his father interrupted him, prevented his saying it: "Hold, son, talk no more of thy unworthiness, thou art heartily welcome, and, though not worthy to be called a son, shalt be treated as a dear son, as a pleasant child." He who is thus entertained at first needs not ask to be made as a hired servant. Thus when Ephraim bemoaned himself God comforted him, Jer 31:18-20. It is strange that here is not one word of rebuke: "Why did you not stay with your harlots and your swine? You could never find the way home till beaten hither with your own rod." No, here is nothing like this; which intimates that, when God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more, they shall not be mentioned against them, Eze 18:22. But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did or could expect. He would have thought it sufficient,

and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen, and get his dinner with his servants; but God does for those who return to their duty, and cast themselves upon his mercy, abundantly above what they are able to ask or think. The prodigal came home between hope and fear, fear of being rejected and hope of being received; but his father was not only better to him than his fears, but better to him than his hopes--not only received him, but received him with respect.

[1.] He came home in rags, and his father not only clothed him, but adorned him. He said to the servants, who all attended their master, upon notice that his son was come, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him. The worst old clothes in the house might have served, and these had been good enough for him; but the father calls not for a coat, but for a robe, the garment of princes and great men, the best robe--ten stolen ten proten. There is a double emphasis: "that robe, that principal robe, you know which I mean;" the first robe (so it may be read); the robe he wore before he ran his ramble. When backsliders repent and do their first works, they shall be received and dressed in their first robes. "Bring hither that robe, and put it on him; he will be ashamed to wear it, and think that it ill becomes him who comes home in such a dirty pickle, but put it on him, and do not merely offer it to him: and put a ring on his hand, a signet-ring, with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family." Rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified that though he had spent one portion, yet, upon his repentance, he intended him another. He came home barefoot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and therefore, "Put shoes on his feet, to make him easy." Thus does the grace of God provide for true penitents. First, The righteousness of Christ is the robe, that principal robe, with which they are clothed; they put on the Lord Jesus Christ, are clothed with that Sun. The robe of righteousness is the garment of salvation, Isa 61:10. A new nature is this best robe; true penitents are clothed with this, being sanctified throughout. Secondly, The earnest of the Spirit, by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption, is the ring on the hand. After you believed you were sealed. They that are sanctified are adorned and dignified, are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh's giving him a ring: "Put a ring on his hand, to be before him a constant memorial of his father's kindness, that he may never forget it."

Thirdly, The preparation of the gospel of peace is as shoes for our feet (Eph 6:15), so that, compared with this here, signifies (saith Grotius) that God, when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and converting of others by their instructions, at least by their examples. David, when pardoned, will teach transgressors God's ways, and Peter, when converted, will strengthen his brethren. Or it intimates that they shall go on cheerfully, and with resolution, in the way of religion, as a man does when he has shoes on his feet, above what he does when he is barefoot.

[2.] He came home hungry, and his father not only fed him, but feasted him (Lu 15:23): "Bring hither the fatted calf, that has been stall-fed, and long reserved for some special occasion, and kill it, that my son may be satisfied with the best we have." Cold meat might have served, or the leavings of the last meal; but he shall have fresh meat and hot meat, and the fatted calf can never be better bestowed. Note, There is excellent food provided by our heavenly Father for all those that arise and come to him. Christ himself is the Bread of Life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; in him there is a feast for souls, a feast for fat things. It was a great change with the prodigal, who just before would fain have filled his belly with husks. How sweet will the supplies of the new covenant be, and the relishes of its comforts, to those who have been labouring in vain for satisfaction in the creature! Now he found his own words made good, In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare.

(d) The great joy and rejoicing occasioned by his return. The bringing of the fatted calf was designed to be not only a feast for him, but a festival for the family: "Let us all eat, and be merry, for it is a good day; for this my son was dead, when he was in his ramble, but his return is as life from the dead, he is alive again; we thought that he was dead, having heard nothing from him of a long time, but behold he lives; he was lost, we gave him up for lost, we despaired of hearing of him, but he is found."

Note,

[1.] The conversion of a soul from sin to God is the raising of that soul from death to life, and the finding of that which seemed to be lost: it is a

great, and wonderful, and happy change. What was in itself dead is made alive, what was lost to God and his church is found, and what was unprofitable becomes profitable, Philem 1:11. It is such a change as that upon the face of the earth when the spring returns.

[2.] The conversion of sinners is greatly pleasing to the God of heaven, and all that belong to his family ought to rejoice in it; those in heaven do, and those on earth should. Observe, It was the father that began the joy, and set all the rest on rejoicing. Therefore we should be glad of the repentance of sinners, because it accomplishes God's design; it is the bringing of those to Christ whom the Father had given him, and in whom he will be for ever glorified. We joy for your sakes before our God, with an eye to him (1Th 3:9), and ye are our rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Master of the family, 1Th 2:19. The family complied with the master: They began to be merry. Note, God's children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

We have here the repining and envying of the elder brother, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to show them the folly and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ showed them; and he represents it so as not to aggravate the matter, but as allowing them still the privileges of elder brethren: the Jews had those privileges (though the Gentiles were favoured), for the preaching of the gospel must begin at Jerusalem. Christ, when he reproved them for their faults, yet accosted them mildly, to smooth them into a good temper towards the poor publicans. But by the elder brother here we may understand those who are really good, and have been so from their youth up, and never went astray into any vicious course of living, who comparatively need no repentance;

and to such these words in the close, Son, thou art ever with me, are applicable without any difficulty, but not to the scribes and Pharisees. Now concerning the elder brother, observe,

(a) How foolish and fretful he was upon occasion of his brother's reception, and how he was disgusted at it. It seems he was abroad in the field, in the country, when his brother came, and by the time he had returned home the mirth was begun; When he drew nigh to the house he heard music and dancing, either while the dinner was getting ready, or rather after they had eaten and were full, Lu 15:25. He enquired what these things meant (Lu 15:26), and was informed that his brother was come, and his father had made him a feast for his welcome home, and great joy there was because he had received him safe and sound, Lu 15:27. It is but one word in the original, he had received him hygiainonta--in health, well both in body and mind. He received him not only well in body, but a penitent, returned to his right mind, and well reconciled to his father's house, cured of his vices and his rakish disposition, else he had not been received safe and sound. Now this offended him to the highest degree: He was angry, and would not go in (Lu 15:28), not only because he was resolved he would not himself join in the mirth, but because he would show his displeasure at it, and would intimate to his father that he should have kept out his younger brother. This shows what is a common fault,

[1.] In men's families. Those who have always been a comfort to their parents think they should have the monopoly of their parents' favours, and are apt to be too sharp upon those who have transgressed, and to grudge their parents' kindness to them.

[2.] In God's family. Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents. The language of such we have here, in what the elder brother said (Lu 15:29,30), and it is written for warning to those who by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and sobriety, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression. Let us observe the particulars of it. First, He boasted of himself and his own virtue and obedience. He had not only not run from his father's house, as his brother did, but had made himself as a servant in it, and had long done so: Lo,

these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment. Note, It is too common for those that are better than their neighbours to boast of it, yea, and to make their boast of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it. I am apt to think that this elder brother said more than was true, when he gloried that he had never transgressed his father's commands, for them I believe he would not have been so obstinate as now he was to his father's entreaties. However, we will admit it comparatively; he had not been so disobedient as his brother had been. O what need have good men to take heed of pride, a corruption that arises out of the ashes of other corruptions! Those that have long served God, and been kept from gross sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for, but nothing proudly to boast of. Secondly, He complained of his father, as if he had not been so kind as he ought to have been to him, who had been so dutiful: Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. He was out of humour now, else he would not have made this complaint; for, no questions, if he had asked such a thing at any time, he might have had it at the first word; and we have reason to think that he did not desire it, but the killing of the fatted calf put him upon making this peevish reflection. When men are in a passion they are apt to reflect in a way they would not if they were in their right mind. He had been fed at his father's table, and had many a time been merry with him and the family; but his father had never given him so much as a kid, which was but a small token of love compared with the fatted calf. Note, Those that think highly of themselves and their services are apt to think hardly of their master and meanly of his favours. We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of those mercies which God has thought fit to give us, much more of those that he has not thought fit to give us, and therefore we must not complain. He would have had a kid, to make merry with his friends abroad, whereas the fatted calf he grudged so much was given to his brother, not to make merry with his friends abroad, but with the family at home: the mirth of God's children should be with their father and his family, in communion with God and his saints, and not with any other friends. Thirdly, He was very ill-humoured towards his younger brother, and harsh in what he thought and said concerning him. Some good people are apt to be overtaken in this fault, nay, and to indulge themselves too much in it, to look with disdain upon those who have not preserved their reputation so clean as they have done, and to be sour and morose towards them, yea, though they have given very good evidence of their repentance

and reformation. This is not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees. Let us observe the instances of it.

1. He would not go in, except his brother were turned out; one house shall not hold him and his own brother, no, not his father's house. The language of this was that of the Pharisee (Isa 65:5): Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou; and (Lu 18:11) I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican. Note, Though we are to shun the society of those sinners by whom we are in danger of being infected, yet we must not be shy of the company of penitent sinners, by whom we may get good. He saw that his father had taken him in, and yet he would not go in to him. Note, We think too well of ourselves, if we cannot find in our hearts to receive those whom God hath received, and to admit those into favour, and friendship, and fellowship with us, whom we have reason to think God has a favour for, and who are taken into friendship and fellowship with him.

2. He would not call him brother; but this thy son, which sounds arrogantly, and not without reflection upon his father, as if his indulgence had made him a prodigal: "He is thy son, thy darling." Note, Forgetting the relation we stand in to our brethren, as brethren, and disowning that, are at the bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them and our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the titles that belong to them. Let the rich call the poor brethren, and let the innocents call the penitents so.

3. He aggravated his brother's faults, and made the worst of them, endeavouring to incense his father against him: He is thy son, who hath devoured thy living with harlots. It is true, he had spent his own portion foolishly enough (whether upon harlots or no we are not told before, perhaps that was only the language of the elder brother's jealousy and ill will), but that he had devoured all his father's living was false; the father had still a good estate. Now this shows how apt we are, in censuring our brethren, to make the worst of every thing, and to set it out in the blackest colours, which is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our heavenly Father does by us, who is not extreme to mark iniquities.

4. He grudged him the kindness that his father showed him: Thou hast killed for him the fatted calf, as if he were such a son as he should be. Note, It is a wrong thing to envy penitents the grace of God, and to have our eye evil because he is good. As we must not envy those that are the worst of sinners the gifts of common providence (Let not thine heart envy sinners), so we must not envy those that have been the worst of sinners the gifts of covenant love upon their repentance; we must not envy them their pardon, and peace, and comfort, no, nor any extraordinary gift which God bestows upon them, which makes them eminently acceptable or useful. Paul, before his conversion, had been a prodigal, had devoured his heavenly Father's living by the havoc he made of the church; yet when after his conversion he had greater measures of grace given him, and more honour put upon him, than the other apostles, they who were the elder brethren, who had been serving Christ when he was persecuting him, and had not transgressed at any time his commandment, did not envy him his visions and revelations, nor his more extensive usefulness, but glorified God in him, which ought to be an example to us, as the reverse of this elder brother.

(b) Let us now see how favourable and friendly his father was in his carriage towards him when he was thus sour and ill-humoured. This is as surprising as the former. Methinks the mercy and grace of our God in Christ shine almost as brightly in his tender and gentle bearing with peevish saints, represented by the elder brother here, as before in his reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance, represented by the younger brother. The disciples of Christ themselves had many infirmities, and were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ bore with them, as a nurse with her children. See 1Th 2:7.

[1.] When he would not come in, his father came out, and entreated him, accosted him mildly, gave him good words, and desired him to come in. He might justly have said, "If he will not come in, let him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send him to seek a lodging where he can find it. Is not the house my own? and may I not do what I please in it? Is not the fatted calf my own? and may I not do what I please with it?" No, as he to meet the younger son, so now he goes to court the elder, did not send a servant out with a kind message to him, but went himself. Now, First, This

is designed to represent to us the goodness of God; how strangely gentle and winning he has been towards those that were strangely froward and provoking. He reasoned with Cain: Why art thou wroth? He bore Israel's manners in the wilderness, Ac 13:18. How mildly did God reason with Elijah, when he was upon the fret (1Ki 19:46), and especially with Jonah, whose case was very parallel with this here, for he was there disquieted at the repentance of Nineveh, and the mercy shown to it, as the elder brother here; and those questions, Dost thou well to be angry? and, Should not I spare Nineveh? are not unlike these expostulations of the father with the elder brother here. Secondly, It is to teach all superiors to be mild and gentle with their inferiors, even when they are in a fault and passionately justify themselves in it, than which nothing can be more provoking; and yet even in that case let fathers not provoke their children to more wrath, and let masters forbear threatening, and both show all meekness.

[2.] His father assured him that the kind entertainment he gave his younger brother was neither any reflection upon him nor should be any prejudice to him (Lu 15:31): "Thou shalt fare never the worse for it, nor have ever the less for it. Son, thou art ever with me; the reception of him is no rejection of thee, nor what is laid out on him any sensible diminution of what I design for thee; thou shalt still remain entitled to the pars enitia (so our law calls it), the double portion (so the Jewish law called it); thou shalt be hæres ex asse (so the Roman law called it): all that I have is thine, by an indefeasible title." If he had not given him a kid to make merry with his friends, he had allowed him to eat bread at his table continually; and it is better to be happy with our Father in heaven than merry with any friend we have in this world. Note, First, It is the unspeakable happiness of all the children of God, who keep close to their Father's house, that they are, and shall be, ever with him. They are so in this world by faith; they shall be so in the other world by fruition; and all that he has is theirs; for, if children, then heirs, Ro 8:17. Secondly, Therefore we ought not to envy others God's grace to them because we shall have never the less for their sharing in it. If we be true believers, all that God is, all that he has, is ours; and, if others come to be true believers, all that he is, and all that he has, is theirs too, and yet we have not the less, as they that walk in the light and warmth of the sun have all the benefit they can have by it, and yet not the less for others having as much; for Christ in his church is like what is said

of the soul in the body: it is tota in toto--the whole in the whole, and yet tota in qualibet parte--the whole in each part.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Luke-16

The Parable of the Dishonest Steward

1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as stewards of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards. Whatever we have, the property of it is God's; we have only the use of it, and that according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. Rabbi Kimchi, quoted by Dr. Lightfoot, says, "This world is a house; heaven the roof; the stars the lights; the earth, with its fruits, a table spread; the Master of the house is the holy and blessed God; man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered; if he behave himself well, he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship." Now,

1. Here is the dishonesty of this steward. He wasted his lord's goods, embezzled them, misapplied them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was accused to his lord, Lu 16:1. We are all liable to the same charge. We have not made a due improvement of what God has entrusted us with in this world, but have perverted his purpose; and, that we may not be for this judged of our Lord, it concerns us to judge ourselves.

2. His discharge out of his place. His lord called for him, and said, "How is it that I hear this of thee? I expected better things from thee." He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: it troubles him to hear it; but the steward cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy, he must make up his accounts; and be gone in a little time, Lu 16:2. Now this is designed to teach us,

(1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from our stewardship in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy. Death will come, and dismiss us from our stewardship, will deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places and have the same.

(2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death is just, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us.

(3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us we must give an account of it to our Lord: After death the judgment. We are fairly warned both of our discharge and our account, and ought to be frequently thinking of them.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

His after-wisdom. Now he began to consider, What shall I do? Lu 16:3. He would have done well to have considered this before he had so

foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to consider late than never. Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then. He must live; which way shall he have a livelihood?

(1.) He knows that he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work: "I cannot dig; I cannot earn by bread by my labour." But why can he not dig? It does not appear that he is either old or lame; but the truth is, he is lazy. His cannot is a will not; it is not a natural but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He cannot dig, for he was never used to it. Now this intimates that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls by any labour for this world, nor indeed do any thing to purpose for our souls by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows that he has not such a degree of humility as to get his bread by begging: To beg I am ashamed. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness. Those whom God, in his providence, has disabled to help themselves, should not be ashamed to ask relief of others. This steward had more reason to be ashamed of cheating his master than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind with their rent, and had given notes under their hands for it: "I am resolved what to do, Lu 16:4. My lord turns me out of his house. I have none of my own to go to. I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many a good turn, and now I will do them one more, which will so oblige them that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another." Now the way he would take to make them his friends was by striking off a considerable part of their debt to his lord, and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly, he sent for one, who owed his lord a hundred measures of oil (in that commodity he paid his rent): Take thy bill, said he, here it is, and sit down

quickly, and write fifty (Lu 16:6); so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, he was in haste to have it done: "Sit down quickly, and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected." He took another, who owed his lord a hundred measures of wheat, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and bade him write fourscore (Lu 16:7); probably he did the like by others, abating more or less according as he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; they are most so to those who have most of them, who devolve upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to cheat them, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found even among those in whom trust is reposed. How hard is it to find one that confidence can be reposed in! Let God be true, but every man a liar. Though this steward is turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he does so. So rare is it for men to mend of a fault, though they smart for it.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord ?

6 And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Barnes commentary:

The lord commended. Praised, or expressed admiration at his wisdom. These are not the words of Jesus, as commending him, but a part of the narrative or parable. His master commended him--saw that he was wise and considerate, though he was dishonest.

The unjust steward. It is not said that his master commended him because he was unjust, but because he was wise. This is the only thing in his conduct of which there is any approbation expressed, and this approbation

was expressed by his master. This passage cannot be brought, therefore, to prove that Jesus meant to commend his dishonesty It was a commendation of his shrewdness or forethought; but the master could no more approve of his conduct as a moral act than he could the first act of cheating him.

The children of this world. Those who are devoted to this world; who live for this world only; who are careful only to obtain property, and to provide for their temporal necessities. It does not mean that they are peculiarly wicked and profligate, but only that they are worldly, and anxious about earthly things. See Mt 13:22, 2Ti 4:10.

Are wiser. More prudent, cunning, and anxious about their particular business. They show more skill, study more plans, contrive more ways to provide for themselves, than the children of light do to promote the interests of religion.

In their generation. Some have thought that this means in their manner of living, or in managing their affairs. The word generation sometimes denotes the manner of life, Gen 6:9, 37:2. Others suppose that it means toward or among the men of their own age. They are more prudent and wise than Christians in regard to the people of their own time; they turn their connection with them to good account, and make it subserve their worldly interests, while Christians fail much more to use the world in such a manner as to subserve their spiritual interests.

Children of light. Those who have been enlightened from above--who are Christians. This may be considered as the application of the parable. It does not mean that it is more wise to be a worldly man than to be a child of light, but that those who are worldly show much prudence in providing for themselves; seize occasions for making good bargains; are active and industrious; try to turn everything to the best account, and thus exert themselves to the utmost to advance their interests; while Christians often suffer opportunities of doing good to pass unimproved; are less steady, firm, and anxious about eternal things, and thus show less wisdom. Alas! this is too true; and we cannot but reflect here how different the world would be if all Christians were as anxious, and diligent, and prudent in

religious matters as others are in worldly things. (b) "children of light" Jn 12:36, Eph 5:8

MHC COMMENTARY:

The approbation of this: The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely, Lu 16:8. It may be meant of his lord, the lord of that servant, who, though he could not but be angry at his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but, taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of our Lord, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, "Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity." He does not commend him because he had done falsely to his master, but because he had done wisely for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what hard bargains he had set them, so that they could not pay their rent, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown behindhand, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; in consideration of this, he now, at going off, did as he ought to do both in justice and charity, not only easing them of part of their arrears, but abating their rent for the future. How much owest thou? may mean, "What rent dost thou sit upon? Come, I will set thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou oughtest to have." He had been all for his lord, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have their favour when he had lost his lord's. The abating of their rent would be a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only. Now this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world: The children of this world, who choose and have their portions in it, are wiser for their generation, act more considerately, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage, than the children of light, who enjoy the gospel, in their generation, that is, in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note,

(1.) The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world is to be imitated by us in the concerns of our souls: it is their principle to improve their opportunities, to do that first which is most needful, in summer and

harvest to lay up for winter, to take a good bargain when it is offered them, to trust the faithful and not the false. O that we were thus wise in our spiritual affairs!

(2.) The children of light are commonly outdone by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are truly wise; it is only in their generation. But in that they are wiser than the children of light in theirs; for, though we are told that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, yet we do not provide as we were to be here always and as if there were not another life after this, and are not so solicitous as this steward was to provide for hereafter. Though as children of the light, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see another world before us, yet we do not prepare for it, do not send our best effects and best affections thither, as we should.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Barnes Commentary:

Make to yourselves friends. Some have understood the word friends, here, as referring to the poor; others, to holy angels; and others, to God. Perhaps, however, the word should not be considered as referring to any particular persons, but is used in accordance with the preceding parable; for in the application our Saviour uses the language appropriated to the conduct of the steward to express the general truth that we are to make a proper use of riches. The steward had so managed his pecuniary affairs as to secure future comfort for himself, or so as to find friends that would take care of him beyond the time when he was put out of the office. That is, he would not be destitute, or cast off, or without comfort, when he was removed from his office. So, says our Saviour to the publicans and those who had property, so use your property as to secure happiness and comfort beyond the time when you shall be removed from the present life. Have reference, in the use of your money, to the future. Do not use it so that it shall not avail you anything hereafter; but so employ it that, as the steward found friends, comfort, and a home by his wisdom in the use of it, so you may, after you are removed to another world, find friends, comfort, and a home--that is, may be happy in heaven. Jesus, here, does not say that we should

do it in the same way that the steward did, for that was unjust; but only that we should secure the result. This may be done by using our riches as we should do; that is, by not suffering them to entangle us in cares and perplexities dangerous to the soul, engrossing the time, and stealing away the affections; by employing them in works of mercy and benevolence, aiding the poor, contributing to the advance of the gospel, bestowing them where they will do good, and in such a manner that God will approve the deed, and will bless us for it. Commonly riches are a hindrance to piety. To many they are snares; and, instead of positively benefitting the possessor, they are an injury, as they engross the time and the affections, and do not contribute at all to the eternal welfare of the soul. Everything may, by a proper use, be made to contribute to our welfare in heaven. Health, wealth, talents, and influence may be so employed; and this is what our Saviour doubtless means here.

Of unrighteousness. These words are an Hebrew expression for unrighteous mammon, the noun being used for an adjective, as is common in the New Testament. The word unrighteous, here, stands opposed to "the true riches" in Lk 16:11, and means deceitful, false, not to be trusted. It has this meaning often. See 1Timm 6:17, Lk 12:33, Mt 6:19, 19:21. It does not signify, therefore, that they had acquired the property unjustly, but that property was deceitful and not to be trusted. The wealth of the steward was deceitful; he could not rely on its continuance; it was liable to be taken away at any moment. So the wealth of the world is deceitful. We cannot calculate on its continuance. It may give us support or comfort now, but it may be soon removed, or we taken from it, and we should therefore so use it as to derive benefit from it hereafter.

When ye fail. When ye are left, or when ye die. The expression is derived from the parable as referring to the discharge of the steward; but it refers to death, as if God then discharged his people, or took them from their stewardship and called them to account.

They may receive you. This is a form of expression denoting merely that you may be received. The plural form is used because it was used in the corresponding place in the parable, Lk 16:4. The direction is, so to use our worldly goods that we may be received into heaven when we die. God will

receive us there, and we are to employ our property so that he will not cast us off for abusing it.

Everlasting habitations. Heaven, the eternal home of the righteous, where all our wants will be supplied, and where there can be no more anxiety, and no more removal from enjoyments, 2Cor 5:1.

MHC COMMENTARY:

The application of this parable, and the inferences drawn from it (Lu 16:9): "I say unto you, you my disciples" (for to them this parable is directed, Lu 16:1), "though you have but little in this world, consider how you may do good with that little." Observe,

1. What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to; to provide for our comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants his friends." It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it out to interest, buy land with it, put it into this or the other fund. Now we should learn of them to make use of our money so as that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so cast it upon the waters as that we may find it again after many days, Ec 11:1. And in our case, though whatever we have are our Lord's goods, yet, as long as we dispose of them among our Lord's tenants and for their advantage, it is so far from being reckoned a wrong to our Lord, that it is a duty to him as well as policy for ourselves.

Note,

(a) The things of this world are the mammon of unrighteousness, or the false mammon, not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness will

certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint those that raise their expectations from them.

(b) Though this mammon of unrighteousness is not to be trusted to for a happiness, yet it may and must be made use of in subserviency to our pursuit of that which is our happiness. Though we cannot find true satisfaction in it, yet we may make to ourselves friends with it, not by way of purchase or merit, but recommendation; so we may make God and Christ our friends, the good angels and saints our friends, and the poor our friends; and it is a desirable thing to be befriended in the account and state to come.

(c) At death we must all fail, hotan eklipete--when ye suffer an eclipse. Death eclipses us. A tradesman is said to fail when he becomes a bankrupt. We must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will all fail us; flesh and heart fail.

(d) It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that when we fail at death we may be received into everlasting habitations in heaven. The habitations in heaven are everlasting, not made with hands, but eternal, 2Co 5:1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to receive them; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and, when a guard of angels carries them thither, a choir of angels is ready to receive them there. The poor saints that are gone before to glory will receive those that in this world distributed to their necessities.

(e) This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them lay up in store a good bond, a good security, a good foundation for the time to come, for an eternity to come. See 1Ti 6:17-19, which explains this here.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much:
and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

With what arguments he presses this exhortation to abound in works of piety and charity.

(a) If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God's providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the gifts of his spiritual grace? Our Saviour here compares these, and shows that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit any favour at the hand of God, yet our unfaithfulness in the use of them may be justly reckoned a forfeiture of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that is it which our Saviour here shows, Lu 16:10-14.

[1.] The riches of this world are the less; grace and glory are the greater. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things of this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared that we should be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we should receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us: He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. He that serves God, and does good, with his money, will serve God, and do good, with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and spiritual gifts, and the earnests of heaven; but he that buries the one talent of this world's wealth will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware of.

[2.] The riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain; they are the unrighteous mammon, which is hastening from us apace, and, if we would make any advantage of it, we must bestir ourselves quickly; if we do not, how can we expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only true riches? Lu 16:11. Let us be convinced of this, that those are truly rich, and very rich, who are rich in faith, and rich towards God, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnests of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, and then, if other things be added to us, use them in ordine ad spiritualia--with a spiritual reference, so that by using them well we may take the faster hold of the true riches, and may be qualified to receive yet more grace from God; for God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, that is, to a free-hearted charitable man, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy (Ec 2:26); that

is, to a man that is faithful in the unrighteous mammon, he gives the true riches.

[3.] The riches of this world are another man's. They are ta allotria, not our own; for they are foreign to the soul and its nature and interest. They are not our own; for they are God's; his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in him, we are but usufructuaries. They are another man's; we have them from others; we use them for others, and what good has the owner from his goods that increase, save the beholding of them with his eyes, while still they are increased that eat them; and we must shortly leave them to others, and we know not to whom? But spiritual and eternal riches are our own (they enter into the soul that becomes possessed of them) and inseparably; they are a good part that will never be taken away from us. If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call our own. But how can we expect God should enrich us with these if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, of which we are but stewards?

(b) We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make mammon, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service (Lu 16:13): No servant can serve two masters, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of God and mammon are. If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God and despise him. He will make all his pretensions of religion truckle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world. But, on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world (whenever God and the world come in competition) and will despise it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to his furtherance in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us: Ye cannot serve God and mammon. So divided are their interests that their services can never be compounded. If therefore we be determined to serve God, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

14 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him.

We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them.

(a) They wickedly ridiculed him, Lu 16:14. The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and could not contradict him, but they derided him. Let us consider this, [1.] As their sin, and the fruit of their covetousness, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercise of devotion, are yet ruined by the love of the world; nor does any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear to have that touched, which was their Delilah, their darling lust; for this they derided him, exemykterizon auton--they snuffled up their noses at him, or blew their noses on him. It is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, Jer 6:10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to make a jest of the word of God who are resolved that they will not be ruled by it; but they will find at last that it cannot be turned off so. [2.] As his suffering. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the contradiction of sinners, but their contempt; they had him in derision all the day. He that spoke as never man spoke was bantered and ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, whose preaching is unjustly derided, may not be disheartened at it. It is no disgrace to a man to be laughed at, but to deserve to be laughed at. Christ's apostles were mocked, and no wonder; the disciple is not greater than his Lord.

(b) He justly reproved them; not for deriding him (he knew how to despise the shame), but for deceiving themselves with the shows and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, Lu 16:15. Here is,

[1.] Their specious outside; nay, it was a splendid one. First, They justified themselves before men; they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself. They claimed to be looked upon as men of singular sanctity and devotion, and justified themselves in that claim: "You are they that do that, so as none ever did, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and, right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world; you are notorious for this." Secondly, They were highly esteemed among men. Men did not only acquit them from any blame they were under, but applauded them, and had them in veneration, not only as good men, but as the best of men. Their sentiments were esteemed as oracles, their directions as laws, and their practices as inviolable prescriptions.

[2.] Their odious inside, which was under the eye of God: "He knows your heart, and it is in his sight an abomination; for it is full of all manner of wickedness." Note, First, It is folly to justify ourselves before men, and to think this enough to bear us out, and bring us off, in the judgment of the great day, that men know no ill of us; for God, who knows our hearts, knows that ill of us which no one else can know. This ought to check our value for ourselves, and our confidence in ourselves, that God knows our hearts, and how much deceit is there, for we have reason to abase and distrust ourselves. Secondly, It is folly to judge of persons and things by the opinion of men concerning them, and to go down with the stream of vulgar estimate; for that which is highly esteemed among men, who judge according to outward appearance, is perhaps an abomination in the sight of God, who sees things as they are, and whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. On the contrary, there are those whom men despise and condemn who yet are accepted and approved of God, 2Co 10:18.

(c) He turned from them to the publicans and sinners, as more likely to be wrought upon by his gospel than those covetous conceited Pharisees (Lu 16:16): "The law and the prophets were indeed until John; the Old-Testament dispensation, which was confined to you Jews, continued till John Baptist appeared, and you seemed to have the monopoly of righteousness and salvation; and you are puffed up with this, and this gains you esteem among men, that you are students in the law and the prophets; but since John Baptist appeared the kingdom of God is preached, a New-

Testament dispensation, which does not value men at all for their being doctors of the law, but every man presses into the gospel kingdom, Gentiles as well as Jews, and no man thinks himself bound in good manners to let his betters go before him into it, or to stay till the rulers and the Pharisees have led him that way. It is not so much a political national constitution as the Jewish economy was, when salvation was of the Jews; but it is made a particular personal concern, and therefore every man that is convinced he has a soul to save, and an eternity to provide for, thrusts to get in, lest he should come short by trifling and complimenting." Some give this sense of it; they derided Christ or speaking in contempt of riches, for, thought they, were there not many promises of riches and other temporal good things in the law and the prophets? And were not many of the best of God's servants very rich, as Abraham and David? "It is true," saith Christ, "so it was, but now that the kingdom of God is begun to be preached things take a new turn; now blessed are the poor, and the mourners, and the persecuted." The Pharisees, to requite the people for their high opinion of them, allowed them in a cheap, easy, formal religion. "But," saith Christ, "now that the gospel is preached the eyes of the people are opened, and as they cannot now have a veneration for the Pharisees, as they have had, so they cannot content themselves with such an indifferency in religion as they have been trained up in, but they press with a holy violence into the kingdom of God." Note, Those that would go to heaven must take pains, must strive against the stream, must press against the crowd that are going the contrary way.

(d) Yet still he protests against any design to invalidate the law (Lu 16:17): It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, parelthein--to pass by, to pass away, though the foundations of the earth and the pillars of heaven are so firmly established, than for one tittle of the law to fail. The moral law is confirmed and ratified, and not one tittle of that fails; the duties enjoined by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still. Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel colours; not one tittle of that fails, for it is found printed off in the gospel, where, though the force of it is as a law taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very brightly, witness the epistle to the Hebrews. There were some things which were connived at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischiefs, the

permission of which the gospel has indeed taken away, but without any detriment or disparagement to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive intention of the law, as in the case of divorce (Lu 16:18), which we had before, Mt 5:32,19:9. Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men's corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them, and pluck them up; and therefore they must not be so far indulged as that permission did indulge them, for the more they are indulged the more impetuous and headstrong they grow.

15 And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

The Law and the Kingdom of God

16 The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

Was carried by the angels. The Jews held the opinion that the spirits of the righteous were conveyed by angels to heaven at their death. Our Saviour

speaks in accordance with this opinion; and as he expressly affirms the fact, it seems as proper that it should be taken literally, as when it is said the rich man died and was buried. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation (He 1:14), and there is no more improbability in the supposition that they attend departing spirits to heaven, than that they attend them while on earth.

Abraham's bosom. This is a phrase taken from the practice of reclining at meals, where the head of one lay on the bosom of another, and the phrase therefore denotes intimacy and friendship. Mt 23:6. Jn 13:23. Jn 21:20. The Jews had no doubt that Abraham was in paradise. To say that Lazarus was in his bosom was therefore the same as to say that he was admitted to heaven and made happy there. The Jews, moreover, boasted very much of being the friends of Abraham and of being his descendants, Mt 3:9. To be his friend was, in their view, the highest honour and happiness. Our Saviour therefore showed them that this poor and afflicted man might be raised to the highest happiness, while the rich, who prided themselves on their being descended from Abraham, might be cast away and lost for ever.

Was buried. This is not said of the poor man. Burial was thought to be an honour, and funerals were, as they are now, often expensive, splendid, and ostentatious. This is said of the rich man to show that he had every earthly honour, and all that the world calls happy and desirable.

23 and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

In hell. The word here translated hell (Hades) means literally a dark, obscure place; the place where departed spirits go, but especially the place where wicked spirits go. Job 10:21 also Job 10:22, Isa 14:9. The following circumstances are related of it in this parable:

1st. It is far off from the abodes of the righteous. Lazarus was seen afar off.

2nd. It is a place of torment.

3rd. There is a great gulf fixed between that and heaven, Lk 16:26.

4th. The suffering is great. It is represented by torment in a flame, Lk 16:24.

5th. There will be no escape from it, Lk 16:26. The word hell here means, therefore, that dark, obscure, and miserable place, far from heaven, where the wicked shall be punished for ever.

He lifted up his eyes. A phrase in common use among the Hebrews, meaning he looked, Gen 13:10, 18:2, 31:10, Dan 8:3, Lk 6:20.

Being in torment. The word torment means pain, anguish (Mt 4:24); particularly the pain inflicted by the ancients in order to induce men to make confession of their crimes. These torments or tortures were the keenest that they could inflict, such as the rack, or scourging, or burning; and the use of the word here denotes that the sufferings of the wicked can be represented only by the extremest forms of human suffering.

And seeth Abraham, &c. This was an aggravation of his misery. One of the first things that occurred in hell was to look up, and see the poor man that lay at his gate completely happy. What a contrast! Just now he was rolling in wealth, and the poor man was at his gate. He had no expectation of these sufferings' now they have come upon him, and Lazarus is happy and for ever fixed in the paradise of God.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Father Abraham. The Jews considered it a signal honour that Abraham was their father--that is, that they were descendants from him. Though this man was now in misery, yet he seems not to have abandoned the idea of his relation to the father of the faithful. The Jews supposed that departed spirits might know and converse with each other. See Lightfoot on this place. Our Saviour speaks in conformity with that prevailing opinion; and as it was not easy to convey ideas about the spiritual world without some such representation, he therefore speaks in the language which was usual in his time. We are not, however, to suppose that this

was literally true, but only that it was designed to represent more clearly the sufferings of the rich man in hell.

Have mercy on me. Pity me. The rich man is not represented as calling on God. The mercy of God will be at an end when the soul is lost. Nor did he ask to be released from that place. Lost spirits know that their sufferings will have no end, and that it would be in vain to ask to escape the place of torment. Nor does he ask to be admitted where Lazarus was. He had no desire to be in a holy place, and he well knew that there was no restoration to those who once sink down to hell.

Send Lazarus. This shows how low he was reduced, and how the circumstances of men change when they die. Just before, Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores; now he is happy in heaven. Just before, he had nothing to give, and the rich man could expect to derive no benefit from him; now he asks, as the highest favour, that he might come and render him relief. Soon the poorest man on earth, if he is a friend of God, will have mercies which the rich, if unprepared to die, can never obtain. The rich will no longer despise such men; they would then be glad of their friendship, and would beg for the slightest favour at their hands.

Dip the tip, &c. This was a small favour to ask, and it shows the greatness of his distress when so small a thing would be considered a great relief.

Cool my tongue. The effect of great heat on the body is to produce almost insupportable thirst. Those who travel in burning deserts thus suffer inexpressibly when they are deprived of water. So pain of any kind produces thirst, and particularly of connected with fever. The sufferings of the rich man are therefore represented as producing burning thirst, so much that even a drop of water would be refreshing to his tongue. We can scarce form an idea of more distress and misery than where this is continued from one day to another without relief. We are not to suppose that he had been guilty of any particular wickedness with his tongue as the cause of this. It is simply an idea to represent the natural effect of great suffering, and especially suffering in the midst of great heat.

I am tormented. I am in anguish--in insupportable distress.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Son. This is a representation designed to correspond with the word father. He was a descendant of Abraham--a Jew--and Abraham is represented as calling this thing to his remembrance. It would not lessen his sorrows to remember that he was a son of Abraham, and that he ought to have lived worthy of that relation to him.

Remember. This is a cutting word in this place. One of the chief torments of hell will be the remembrance of what was enjoyed and of what was done in this world. Nor will it be any mitigation of the suffering to spend an eternity where there will be nothing else to do, day or night, but to remember what urns done, and what might have been, if the life had been right.

But now, &c. How changed the scene! How different the condition! And how much better was the portion of Lazarus, after all, than that of the rich man! It is probable that Lazarus had the most real happiness in the land of the living, for riches without the love of God can never confer happiness like the favour of God, even in poverty. But the comforts of the rich man are now gone for ever, and the joys of Lazarus have just commenced. One is to be comforted, and the other to be tormented, to all eternity. How much better, therefore, is poverty, with the friendship of God, than riches, with all that the world can bestow! And how foolish to seek our chief pleasures only in this life!

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

Neither can they pass to us, &c. There can be no doubt that the wicked will desire to pass the gulf that divides them from heaven. They would be glad to be in a state of happiness; but all such wishes will be vain. How, in the face of the solemn statement of the Saviour here, can men believe that there will be a restoration of all the wicked to heaven? He solemnly assures us that there can be no passage from that world of woe to the abodes of the blessed; yet, in the face of this, many Universalists hold that hell will yet be vacated of its guilty millions, and that all its

miserable inhabitants will be received to heaven! Who shall conduct them across this gulf, when Jesus Christ says it cannot be passed? Who shall build a bridge over that yawning chasm which he says is "fixed?" No: if there is anything certain from the Scripture, it is that they who enter hell return no more; they who sink there sink for ever.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

May testify unto them. May bear witness to them, or may inform them of what is my situation, and the dreadful consequences of the life that I have led. It is remarkable that he did not ask to go himself. He knew that he could not be released, even for so short a time. His condition was fixed. Yet he had no wish that his friends should suffer, and he supposed that if one went from the dead they would hear him.

29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

They have Moses. The writings of Moses. The first five books of the Bible.

The prophets. The remainder of the Old Testament. What the prophets had written.

Hear them. Hear them speak in the Scriptures. Read them, or hear them read in the synagogues, and attend to what they have delivered.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

Nay. No. They will not hear Moses and the prophets. They have heard them so long in vain, that there is no prospect now that they will attend to the message; but if one should go to them directly from the eternal world they would hear him. The novelty of the message would attract their attention, and they would listen to what he would say.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

A very awakening text this is, which speaks dreadfully to persons sitting all their days under the ministry of the gospel, and yet find not their

understandings enlightened, their judgments convinced, their wills subdued, and their lives reformded by it. Were it possible for such persons to see one come from the dead, yea, from the damned, with the flames of hell about his ears, wringing his hands, and gnashing his teeth, bewailing his misery, and beseeching them to take warning by his example, and in time to acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace; all this would have no farther effect upon them, than to move their passions a little for the present, while the dreadful sound is in their ears: the ordinances of God and not his providences, are the instituted and appointed means for men's conversion and salvation.

Note then, 1. That no visions or apparitions, no new revelations concerning eternal rewards and punishments, are to be expected from the other world, in order to men's conversion and salvation.

Note, 2. That the word of God dispensed to us, and the ordinary means of grace enjoyed by us, are more conducible and effectual means to persuade men to repentance, than if one should arise from the dead, and preach unto us. A messenger from the dead cannot bring with him either a more necessary doctrine, or a more certain and infallible doctrine, nor bring with him better arguments for our conviction, than what the scriptures do propound for our consideration; nor can we expect a greater co-operation of the Holy Spirit, or a greater concurrence of divine power, to render a message from the dead more effectual, than does ordinarily attend the ministry of the word.

Henceforward then, let us not wonder, if when a drunkard drops down dead upon the spot, the companions say one to another, Drink on; if sinners daily tumble one another into the grave, without considering the operation of God's hand; this, to those that consider this text, will not seem strange; For if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be converted, though hundreds of sinners before their eyes drop down dead: nay, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

From this impressive and instructive parable we may learn - - -

1st. That the souls of men do not die with their bodies.

2nd. That the soul is conscious after death; that it does not sleep, as some have supposed, till the morning of the resurrection.

3rd. That the righteous are taken to a place of happiness immediately at death, and the wicked consigned at once to misery.

4th. That wealth does not secure from death.

"How vain are riches to secure Their haughty owners from the grave !"

The rich, the beautiful, the gay, as well as the poor, go down to the grave. All their pomp and apparel, all their honours, their palaces, and their gold cannot save them. Death can as easily find his way into the splendid mansions of the rich as into the cottages of the poor; and the rich shall turn to the same corruption, and soon, like the poor, be undistinguished from common dust and be unknown.

5th. We should not envy the condition of the rich.

"On slippery rocks I see them stand, And fiery billows roll below. "Now let them boast how tall they rise, I'll never envy them again; There they may stand with haughty eyes, Till they plunge deep in endless pain. "Their fancied joys how fast they flee! Like dreams, as fleeting and as vain; Their songs of softest harmony Are but a prelude to their pain."

6th. We should strive for a better inheritance than can be possessed in this life.

"Now I esteem their mirth and wine Too dear to purchase with my blood: Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine-- My life, my portion, and my God."

7th. The sufferings of the wicked in hell will be indescribably great. Think what is represented by torment; by burning flame; by insupportable thirst; by that state where a single drop of water would afford relief. Remember that all this is but a representation of the pains of the damned, and that this will have no intermission day or night, but will continue from year to year, and age to age, without any end, and you have a faint view of the sufferings of those who are in hell.

8th. There is a place of sufferings beyond the grave--a hell. If there is not, then this parable has no meaning. It is impossible to make anything of it unless it be designed to teach that.

9th. There will never be any escape from those gloomy regions. There is a gulf fixed-:fixed, not movable. Nor can any of the damned beat a pathway across this gulf to the world of holiness.

10th. We see the amazing folly of those who suppose there may be an end to the sufferings of the wicked, and who, on that supposition, seem willing to go down to hell to suffer a long time, rather than go at once to heaven. If man were to suffer but a thousand years, or even one year, why should he be so foolish as to choose that suffering rather than go at once to heaven, and be happy at once when he dies?

11th. God gives us sufficient warning to prepare for death. He has sent his Word, his servants, his Son; he warns us by his Spirit and his providence; by the entreaties of our friends and by the death of sinners; he offers us heaven, and he threatens hell. If all this will not move sinners, what would do it? There is nothing that would.

12th. God will give us nothing farther to warn us. No dead man will come to life to tell us of what he has seen. If he did, we would not believe him. Religion appeals to man not by ghosts and frightful apparitions. It appeals to their reason, their conscience, their hopes, their fears. It sets life and death soberly before men, and if they will not choose the former, they must die. If you will not hear the Son of God and the warnings of the

Scriptures, there is nothing which you will or can hear. You will never be persuaded, and will never escape the place of torment.

Luke-17

Causing to Sin

1 Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!

See notes on Mt 18:6-7.

2 It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.

3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

See notes on Mt 18:15-22.

4 And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Increase Our Faith

5 And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.

See notes on Mt 17:20.

6 And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

The Servant's Duty

7 But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?

That, whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a

debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think that they had thereby made him their debtor.

1. We are all God's servants (his apostles and ministers are in a special manner so), and, as servants, are bound to do all we can for his honour. Our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him; for we are not our own, nor at our own disposal, but at our Master's.

2. As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do; we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been ploughing, or feeding cattle, in the field, when he comes home at night has work to do still; he must wait at table, Lu 17:7,8. When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation, that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion; when we have been working for God, still we must be waiting on God, waiting on him continually.

3. Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our relation, and leave it to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, Go and sit down to meat; it is time enough to do that when we have done our day's work. Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time.

4. It is fit that Christ should be served before us: Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink. Doubting Christians say that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong.

First let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our praises, and then we shall eat and drink in the comfort of that love, and in this there is a feast.

5. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must gird themselves, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind to go

on, and go through, with their work; they must gird up the loins of their mind. When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have made ready wherewith he may sup, we must then gird ourselves, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was among his disciples as one that served, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and to be ministered unto, but to minister; witness his washing his disciples' feet.

6. Christ's servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him: "Does he thank that servant? Does he reckon himself indebted to him for it? No, by no means." No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God's favour, not because we have by our services made him a debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a debtor to his own honour, and this we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a quantum meruit--according to merit.

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some others do, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should do all things that are commanded us, and alas! in many things we come short of this, yet there is no work of supererogation; it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment of loving God with all our heart and soul, which includes the utmost.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into utter darkness, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are unprofitable; our goodness extendeth not unto God, nor if we are righteous is he the better, Ps 16:2,Job 22:2,35:7. God cannot be a gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections. It becomes us therefore to call ourselves unprofitable servants, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

8 and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?

9 Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him ? I trow not.

10 So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God's displeasure; and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took particular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had little acquaintance in comparison with what he had either at Jerusalem or in Galilee. He was now in the frontier-country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee. He went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them; for he is found of them that sought him not. Observe,

The address of these lepers to Christ. They were ten in a company; for, though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to condole with one another. Now observe,

1. They met Christ as he entered into a certain village. They did not stay till he had refreshed himself for some time after the fatigue of his journey, but met him as he entered the town, weary as he was; and yet he did not put them off, nor adjourn their cause.

2. They stood afar off, knowing that by the law their disease obliged them to keep their distance. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. Who are we, that we should

draw near to him that is infinitely pure? We are impure. 3. Their request was unanimous, and very importunate (Lu 17:13): They lifted up their voices, being at a distance, and cried, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. those that expect help from Christ must take him for their Master, and be at his command. If he be Master, he will be Jesus, a Saviour, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but, Have mercy on us; and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they fail not. They heard the fame of this Jesus (though he had not been much conversant in that country), and that was such as encouraged them to make application to him; and, if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

Christ sent them to the priest, to be inspected by him, who was the judge of the leprosy. He did not tell them positively that they should be cured, but bade them go show themselves to the priests, Lu 17:14. This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit that it should be so tried, as Naaman's in a like case: Go wash in Jordan. Note, Those that expect Christ's favours must take them in his way and method. Some of these lepers perhaps would be ready to quarrel with the prescription: "Let him either cure or say that he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool's errand;" but, over-ruled by the rest, they all went to the priest. As the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but, probably, he had here a further design, which was to have the priest's judgment of, and testimony to, the perfectness of the cure; and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to enquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

One of them, and but one, returned, to give thanks, Lu 17:15. When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him

declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he turned back towards him who was the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory of it, before he received the benefit of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings: With a loud voice he glorified God, acknowledging it to come originally from him; and he lifted up his voice in his praises, as he had done in his prayers, Lu 17:13. Those that have received mercy from God should publish it to others, that they may praise God too, and may be encouraged by their experiences to trust in him. But he also made a particular address of thanks to Christ (Lu 17:16): He fell down at his feet, put himself into the most humble reverent posture he could, and gave him thanks. Note, We ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness; and we ought to be speedy in our returns of praise, and not defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. It becomes us also to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes the seed of Jacob, like him, to own themselves less than the least of God's mercies, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

16 and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself; for, it seems, he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, Lu 17:16. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had, and yet it was one of them that glorified God, when the Jews forgot, or, when it was moved to them, refused, to do it. Now observe here,

1 The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercy--that he who was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel was the only one that returned to give glory to God, Lu 17:17,18. See here,

(1.) How rich Christ is in doing good: Were there not ten cleansed? Here was a cure by wholesale, a whole hospital healed with one word's speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though ever so many. Here

are ten at a time cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others sharing it.

(2.) How poor we are in our returns: "Where are the nine? Why did not they return to give thanks?" This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin. Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that return to give thanks in a right manner (scarcely one in ten), that render according to the benefit done to them.

(3.) How those often prove most grateful from whom it was least expected. A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew does not. Thus many who profess revealed religion are out-done, and quite shamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral value, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those Jews of whom Christ speaks, as taking it very ill that his kindness was so slighted. And it intimates how justly he resents the ingratitude of the world of mankind, for whom he had done so much, and from whom he has received so little.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed ? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

The great encouragement Christ gave him, Lu 17:19. The rest had their cure, and had it not revoked, as justly it might have been, for their ingratitude, though they had such a good example of gratitude set before them; but he had his cure confirmed particularly with an encomium: Thy faith hath made thee whole. The rest were made whole by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole by his faith, by which Christ saw him distinguished from the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubled and sweetened to us when they are fetched in by the prayers of faith, and returned by the praises of faith.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the kingdom of God, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now shortly to be set up, and of which there was great expectation.

I. Here is the demand of the Pharisees concerning it, which occasioned this discourse. They asked when the kingdom of God should come, forming a notion of it as a temporal kingdom, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth. They were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was at hand. "Now," say the Pharisees, "when will that glorious view open? When shall we see this long-looked-for kingdom?"

II. Christ's reply to this demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterwards to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it (Lu 17:22); what he said to both, he saith to us.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a spiritual kingdom, and not temporal and external. They asked when it would come. "You know not what you ask," saith Christ; "it may come, and you not be aware of it." For it has not an external show, as other kingdoms have, the advancements and revolutions of which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the newspapers; so they expected this kingdom of God would do. "No," saith Christ,

(1.) "It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise; it cometh not with observation," meta paratereseos--with outward show. They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the time of it, to which Christ does not give them any answer, but will have their mistakes rectified concerning the nature of it: "It is not for you to know the times of this kingdom, these are secret things, which belong not to you; but the great intentions of this kingdom, these are things revealed." When Messiah the Prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, Lo

here, or Lo there, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories it is in every body's mouth, he is here, or he is there; for where the king is there is the court. Christ will not come with all this talk; it will not be set up in this or that particular place; nor will the court of that kingdom be here or there; nor will it be here or there as it respects the country men are of, or the place they dwell in, as if that would place them nearer to, or further from, that kingdom. Those who confine Christianity and the church to this place or that party, cry, Lo here, or Lo there, than which nothing is more contrary to the designs of catholic Christianity; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church.

(2.) "It has a spiritual influence: The kingdom of God is within you." It is not of this world, Joh 18:36. Its glory does not strike men's fancies, but affects their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences; from them it receives homage, and not from their bodies only. The kingdom of God will not change men's outward condition, but their hearts and lives. Then it comes when it makes those humble, and serious, and heavenly, that were proud, and vain, and carnal,--when it weans those from the world that were wedded to the world; and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is among you; so some read it. "You enquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up in the midst of you. The gospel is preached, it is confirmed by miracles, it is embraced by multitudes, so that it is in your nation, though not in your hearts." Note, It is the folly of many curious enquirers concerning the times to come that they look for that before them which is already among them.

21 neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of opposition and interruption, Lu 17:22. The disciples thought they should carry all before them, and expected a constant series of success in their work; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise: "The days will come, before you have finished your testimony and done your work, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man"

(one such a day as we now have), "of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and shall not see it. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success" (so they had, when thousands were added to the church in a day); "but do not think it will be always so; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned, so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel without fear, as you now have; people will grow cool to it, when they have enjoyed it awhile, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered in to Christ afterwards as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him as doves to their windows." This looks forward to his disciples in after-ages; they must expect much disappointment; the gospel will not be always preached with equal liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes be under outward restraints. Teachers will be removed into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered. Then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath days, sacrament days, preaching days, praying days; these are days of the Son of man, in which we hear from him, and converse with him. The time may come when we may in vain wish for such days. God teaches us to know the worth of such mercies by the want of them. It concerns us, while they are continued, to improve them, and in the years of plenty to lay up in store for the years of famine. Sometimes they will be under inward restraints, will not have such tokens of the presence of the Son of man with them as they have had. The Spirit is withdrawn from them; they see not their signs; the angel comes not down to stir the waters; there is a great stupidity among the children of men, and a great lukewarmness among the children of God; then they shall wish to see such victorious triumphant days of the Son of man as they have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer, but they will not see them. Note, We must not think that Christ's church and cause are lost because not always alike visible and prevailing.

23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in this or that particular place, but his appearance will be general in all places at once (Lu 17:23,24): "They will say to you, See here, or, See there; here is one that will deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the

oppressing Jews; here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet; here in this mountain, or there at Jerusalem, you will find the true church. Go not after them, nor follow them; do not heed such suggestions. The kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to give light to the Gentiles; for as the lightning that lightens out of one part under heaven, and shines all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day."

(1.) "The judgments that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the Christians from them, shall fly like lightning through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another; and those that are marked for this destruction can no more avoid it, nor oppose it, than they can a flash of lightning."

(2.) "The gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world shall fly like lightning through the nations. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a local thing, but is to be dispersed far and wide over the face of the whole earth; it shall shine from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that in a moment. The kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel ere they are aware of it." The trophies of Christ's victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil's kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued to the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up of Christ's kingdom was not to make one nation great, but to make all nations good--some, at least, of all nations; and this point shall be gained, though the nations rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves with all their might against it.

24 For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

That the Messiah must suffer before he must reign (Lu 17:25): "First must he suffer many things, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation; and, if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no other than to suffer and be rejected too for his sake." They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendour: "No," saith Christ, "we must go by the cross to the crown. The Son of man must suffer many things. Pain, and shame, and death, are those many things.

He must be rejected by this generation of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles, that his gospel may have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the power will appear to be of God, and not of man; for, though Israel be not gathered, yet he will be glorious to the ends of the earth."

26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

That the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah would introduce the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of security, and drowned in sensuality, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, Lu 17:26, &c. Observe,

How it had been with sinners formerly, and in what posture the judgments of God, of which they had been fairly warned, did at length find them. Look as far back as the old world, when all flesh had corrupted their way, and the earth was filled with violence. Come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, who were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. Now observe concerning both these,

[1.] That they had fair warning given them of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the old world; so was Lot to the Sodomites. They gave them timely notice of what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off.

[2.] That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it. They were very secure, went on in their business as unconcerned as you could imagine; they did eat, they drank, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to make provision for the flesh, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and were given in marriage, that their families might be built up. They were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too: they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. These were lawful things, but the fault was that they minded these inordinately, and their hearts were entirely set upon them, as that they had no heart at all to prepare against the

threatened judgments. When they should have been, as the men of Nineveh, fasting and praying, repenting and reforming, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment, they were going on securely, eating flesh, and drinking wine, when God called to weeping and to mourning, Isa 22:12,13.

[3.] That they continued in their security and sensuality, till the threatened judgment came. Until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and Lot went out of Sodom, nothing said or done to them served to alarm or awaken them. Note, Though the stupidity of sinners in a sinful way is as strange as it is without excuse, yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the old way that wicked men have trodden, that have gone slumbering to hell, as if their damnation slumbered while they did.

[4.] That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the warning themselves which they gave to others. Noah entered into the ark, and there he was safe; Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on heedless and headlong into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of those that believe.

[5.] That they were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. The flood came, and destroyed all the sinners of the old world; fire and brimstone came, and destroyed all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and uses which he will in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here is to show what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

How it will be with sinners still (Lu 17:30): Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. When Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation, by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such a reigning security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now, and will have it repeated to them by the apostles after him, as they had by Noah and Lot; but it will be all in vain. They will continue secure, will go on in their neglect and opposition of Christ and his gospel, till all the Christians are withdrawn from among them and gone to the place of refuge. God will provide for them on the other side Jordan, and then a deluge of judgments shall flow in upon them, which will destroy all the unbelieving Jews. One would have thought that this discourse of our Saviour's, which was public, and not long after published to the world, should have awakened them; but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened, to their destruction. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end, nor the account that they must give. Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and, leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to flee at the signal given, according to the direction that should be given. Let them retire, as Noah to his ark, and Lot to his Zoar. You would have healed Jerusalem, as of old Babylon, but she is not healed, and therefore forsake her, flee out of the midst of her, and deliver every man his soul, Jer 51:6,9. This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be expeditious, and must not be retarded by any concern about their worldly affairs (Lu 17:31): "He that shall be on the house-top, when the alarm is given, let him not come down, to take his stuff away, both because he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects will but encumber him and retard his flight." Let him not regard his stuff at such a time, when it will be next to a miracle of mercy if he have his life

given him for a prey. It will be better to leave his stuff behind him than to stay to look after it, and perish with them that believe not. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do: Escape for thy life. Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning (Lu 17:32): "Remember Lot's wife; and take warning by her not only to flee from this Sodom (for so Jerusalem is become, Isa 1:10), but to persevere in your flight, and do not look back, as she did; be not loth to leave a place marked for destruction, whomsoever or whatsoever you leave behind you, that is ever so dear to you." Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look towards it again. Let them not look back, lest they should be tempted to go back; nay, lest that be construed a going back in heart, or an evidence that the heart was left behind. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, that she might remain a lasting monument of God's displeasure against apostates, who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. (3.) There would be no other way of saving their lives than by quitting the Jews, and, if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken (Lu 17:33): "Whosoever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his Christianity and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them and perish in the common calamity; but whosoever is willing to venture his life with the Christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure of eternal life, and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a Jewish bottom, or ensure upon their securities." Note, Those do best themselves that trust God in the way of duty.

32 Remember Lot’s wife.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

That all good Christians should certainly escape, but many of them very narrowly, from that destruction, Lu 17:34-36. When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable providences distinguishing between them and others

that were nearest to them: two in a bed, one taken and the other left; one snatched out of the burning and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword devours one as well as another, and all things seem to come alike to all, yet sooner or later it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not, and how to take out the precious from the vile. We are sure that the Judge of all the earth will do right; and therefore, when he sends a judgment on purpose to avenge the death of his Son upon those that crucified him, he will take care that none of those who glorified him, and gloried in his cross, shall be taken away by that judgment.

35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37 And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, Lu 17:37. Where, Lord? They had enquired concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity with any information concerning that; they therefore tried him with another question: "Where, Lord? Where shall those be safe that are taken? Where shall those perish that are left?" The answer is proverbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question: Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

(1.) Wherever the wicked are, who are marked for perdition, they shall be found out by the judgments of God; as wherever a dead carcase is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews having made themselves a dead and putrefied carcase, odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation is, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the eagles do upon the prey: Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies (Ps 21:8), though they set their nests among the stars, Ob 1:4. The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape.

(2.) Wherever the godly are, who are marked for preservation, they shall be found happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the Jewish church shall be extended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the Christian church. Wherever Christ is, believers will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or shown the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel, and his ordinances, and his church are: For where two or three are gathered in his name there is he in the midst of them, and thither therefore others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of the Messiah is not to have one particular place for its metropolis, such as Jerusalem was to the Jewish church, to which all Jews were to resort; but, wherever the body is, wherever the gospel is preached and ordinances are ministered, thither will pious souls resort, there they will find Christ, and by faith feast upon him. Wherever Christ records his name he will meet his people, and bless them, Joh 4:21,1Ti 2:8. Many good interpreters understand it of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory: "Ask not where the carcase will be, and how they shall find the way to it, for they shall be under infallible direction; to him who is their living, quickening Head, and the centre of their unity, to him shall the gathering of the people be."

Luke-18

The Parable of the Widow and the Judge

1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the drift and design of it are prefixed. Christ spoke it with this intent, to teach us that men ought always to pray and not to faint, Lu 18:1. It supposes that all God's people are praying people; all God's children keep up both a constant and an occasional correspondence with him, send to him statedly, and upon every emergency. It is our privilege and honour that we may pray. It is our duty; we ought to pray, we sin if we neglect it. It is to be our constant work; we ought always to pray, it is that which the duty of every day requires. We must pray, and never grow weary of praying, nor think of leaving it off till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting praise. But

that which seems particularly designed here is to teach us constancy and perseverance in our requests for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves or to the church of God. When we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies, we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we shall not seek God's face in vain. So we must likewise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

Christ shows, by a parable, the power of importunity among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence, to do what is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause that succeeded before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by dint of importunity.

Observe here, 1 The bad character of the judge that was in a certain city. He neither feared God nor regarded man; he had no manner of concern either for his conscience or for his reputation; he stood in no awe either of the wrath of God against him or of the censures of men concerning him: or, he took no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honour, and had no notion of either. It is not strange if those that have cast off the fear of their Creator be altogether regardless of their fellow-creatures; where no fear of God is no good is to be expected. Such a prevalency of irreligion and inhumanity is bad in any, but very bad in a judge, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and, if he be not, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt. Wickedness in the place of judgment was one of the sorest evils Solomon saw under the sun, Ec 3:16.

2 The distressed case of a poor widow that was necessitated to make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror. She had manifestly right on her side; but, it should seem, in soliciting to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his own house, still crying, Avenge me of mine adversary; that is, Do me justice against mine adversary; not that she desired to be

revenged on him for any thing he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of hers in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magistrates are particularly charged, not only not to do violence to the widow (Jer 21:3), but to judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow (Isa 1:17), to be their patrons and protectors; then they are as gods, for God is so, Ps 68:5.

3. The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause: He would not for awhile. According to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but connived at all the wrong her adversary did her; for she had no bribe to give him, no great man whom he stood in any awe of to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to redress her grievances; and he himself was conscience of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself that he neither feared God nor regarded man. It is sad that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it.

4. The gaining of her point by continually dunning this unjust judge (Lu 18:5): "Because this widow troubleth me, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice; not so much lest by her clamour against me she bring me into an ill name, as lest by her clamour to me she weary me; for she is resolved that she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last." Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, Avenge me of mine adversary, which he was forced to do, to get rid of her; for his conscience, bad as he was, would not suffer him to send her to prison for an affront upon the court.

2 saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

He applies this for the encouragement of God's praying people to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein.

He assures them that God will at length be gracious to them (Lu 18:6): Hear what the unjust judge saith, how he owns himself quite overcome by a constant importunity, and shall not God avenge his own elect? Observe,

(a) What it is that they desire and expect: that God would avenge his own elect. Note,

[1.] There are a people in the world that are God's people, his elect, his own elect, a choice people, a chosen people. And this he has an eye to in all he does for them; it is because they are his chosen, and in pursuance of the choice he has made of them.

[2.] God's own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world; there are many adversaries that fight against them; Satan is their great adversary.

[3.] That which is wanted and waited for is God's preserving and protecting them, and the work of his hands in them; his securing the interest of the church in the world and his grace in the heart.

(b) What it is that is required of God's people in order to the obtaining of this: they must cry day and night to him; not that he needs their remonstrances, or can be moved by their pleadings, but this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. We ought to be particular in praying against our spiritual enemies, as St. Paul was: For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; like this importunate widow. Lord, mortify this corruption. Lord, arm me against this temptation. We ought to concern ourselves for the persecuted and oppressed churches, and to pray that God would do them justice, and set

them in safety. And herein we must be very urgent; we must cry with earnestness: we must cry day and night, as those that believe prayer will be heard at last; we must wrestle with God, as those that know how to value the blessing, and will have no nay. God's praying people are told to give him no rest, Isa 62:6,7.

(c) What discouragements they may perhaps meet with in their prayers and expectations. He may bear long with them, and may not presently appear for them, in answer to their prayers. He is makrothymon ep autois--he exercises patience towards the adversaries of his people, and does not take vengeance on them; and he exercises the patience of his people, and does not plead for them. He bore long with the cry of the sin of the Egyptians that oppressed Israel, and with the cry of the sorrows of those that were oppressed.

(4.) What assurance they have that mercy will come at last, though it be delayed, and how it is supported by what the unjust judge saith: If this widow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God's elect prevail. For,

[1.] This widow was a stranger, nothing related to the judge; but God's praying people are his own elect, whom he knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for.

[2.] She was but one, but the praying people of God are many, all of whom come to him on the same errand, and agree to ask what they need, Mt 18:19. As the saints of heaven surround the throne of glory with their united praises, so saints on earth besiege the throne of grace with their united prayers.

[3.] She came to a judge that bade her keep her distance; we come to a Father that bids us come boldly to him, and teaches us to cry, Abba, Father.

[4.] She came to an unjust judge; we come to a righteous Father (Joh 17:25), one that regards his own glory and the comforts of his poor creatures, especially those in distress, as widows and fatherless.

[5.] She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause; and what wilt thou do to thy great name?

[6.] She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her more than her own; but we have an Advocate with the Father, his own Son, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven.

[7.] She had no promise off speeding, no, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are told to ask, with a promise that it shall be given to us.

[8.] She could have access to the judge only at some certain times; but we may cry to God day and night, at all hours, and therefore may the rather hope to prevail by importunity.

[9.] Her importunity was provoking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is his delight, and therefore, we may hope, shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

He intimates to them that, notwithstanding this, they will begin to be weary of waiting for him (Lu 18:8): "Nevertheless, though such assurances are given that God will avenge his own elect, yet, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The Son of man will come to avenge his own elect, to plead the cause of persecuted Christians against the persecuting Jews; he will come in his providence

to plead the cause of his injured people in every age, and at the great day he will come finally to determine the controversies of Zion. Now, when he comes, will he find faith on the earth? The question implies a strong negation: No, he will not; he himself foresees it.

(a) This supposes that it is on earth only that there is occasion for faith; for sinners in hell are feeling that which they would not believe, and saints in heaven are enjoying that which they did believe.

(b) It supposes that faith is the great thing that Jesus Christ looks for. He looks down upon the children of men, and does not ask, Is there innocency? but, Is there faith? He enquired concerning the faith of those who applied themselves to him for cures.

(c) It supposes that if there were faith, though ever so little, he would discover it, and find it out. His eye is upon the weakest and most obscure believer.

(d) It is foretold that, when Christ comes to plead his people's cause, he will find but little faith in comparison with what one might expect. That is,

[1.] In general, he will find but few good people, few that are really and truly good. Many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith, that are sincere and honest: nay, he will find little fidelity among men; the faithful fail, Ps 12:1,2. Even to the end of time there will still be occasion for the same complaint. The world will grow no better, no, not when it is drawing towards its period. Bad it is, and bad it will be, and worst of all just before Christ's coming; the last times will be the most perilous.

[2.] In particular, he will find few that have faith concerning his coming. When he comes to avenge his own elect he looks if there be any faith to help and to uphold, and wonders that there is none, Isa 59:16,63:5. It intimates that Christ, both in his particular comings for the relief of his people, and in his general coming at the end of time, may, and will, delay

his coming so long as that, First, Wicked people will begin to defy it, and to say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2Pe 3:4. They will challenge him to come (Isa 5:10,Am 5:19); and his delay will harden them in their wickedness, Mt 24:48. Secondly, Even his own people will begin to despair of it, and to conclude he will never come, because he has passed their reckoning. God's time to appear for his people is when things are brought to the last extremity, and when Zion begins to say, The Lord has forsaken me. See Isa 49:14,Isa 40:27. But this is our comfort, that, when the time appointed comes, it will appear that the unbelief of man has not made the promise of God of no effect.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told (Lu 18:9) who they were whom it was levelled at, and for whom it was calculated. He designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They were such as had,

1. A great conceit of themselves, and of their own goodness; they thought themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all;

2. They had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed God, as their plea: They trusted in themselves as being righteous; they thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand any thing from him; and,

3. They despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would

show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a parable, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but it is rather a description of the different temper and language of those that proudly justify themselves, and those that humbly condemn themselves; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day.

Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time (Lu 18:10): Two men went up into the temple (for the temple stood upon a hill) to pray. It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up their personal devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that, whatever prayer was made in a right manner in or towards that house, it should therefore the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God. The Pharisees and the publican both went to the temple to pray.

Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself above prayer; nor could the publican, humble as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

1 The Pharisee went to the temple to pray because it was a public place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, which perhaps was more than was expected. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that all their works they did to be seen of men, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. There are many whom we see every day at the temple, whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2 The publican went to the temple because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people, Isa 56:7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a compliment, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Here is the Pharisee's address to God (for a prayer I cannot call it): He stood and prayed thus with himself (Lu 18:11,12): standing by himself, he prayed thus, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but self, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or, setting himself with a great deal of state and formality, he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to say is that which shows,

1. That he trusted to himself that he was righteous. A great many good things he said of himself, which we will suppose to be true. He was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an extortioner, not a usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him. He was not unjust in any of his dealings; he did no man any wrong; he could say, as Samuel, Whose ox or whose ass have I taken? He was no adulterer, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, as an act partly of temperature, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday. Thus he glorified God with his body: yet that was not all; he gave tithes of all that he possessed, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate. Now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee: yet he was not accepted; and why was he not?

(a) His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, By the grace of God I am what I am, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, God, I thank thee, which

is intended but for a plausible introduction to a proud vainglorious ostentation of himself.

(b) He makes his boast of this, and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if all his business to the temple was to tell God Almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say, with those hypocrites that we read of (Isa 58:3), Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?

(c) He trusted to it as a righteousness, and not only mentioned it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, and made him his debtor. (4.) Here is not one word of prayer in all he saith. He went up to the temple to pray, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favour and grace of God, which, it would seem, he did not think worth asking.

2. That he despised others.

(a) He thought meanly of all mankind but himself: I thank thee that I am not as other men are. He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as some men are, that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if we only were good, and all besides us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale.

(b) He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom he had left behind, it is probable, in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an extortioner, unjust, and all that is naught. Suppose it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he say his prayers (and that was all that the Pharisees did) without reproaching his neighbours? Or was this a part of his God, I thank thee? And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence, not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of humility and humiliation as his was of pride and ostentation; as full of repentance for sin, and desire towards God, as his was of confidence in himself and his own righteousness and sufficiency.

1. He expressed his repentance and humility in what he did; and his gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, was expressive of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of a broken, penitent, and obedient heart.

(a) He stood afar off. The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican kept at a distance under a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, and perhaps for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Hereby he owned that God might justly behold him afar off, and send him into a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him thus nigh.

(b) He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did lift up his heart to God in the heavens, in holy desires, but, through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence and courage. His iniquities are gone over his head, as a heavy burden, so that he is not able to look up, Ps 40:12. The dejection of his looks is an indication of the dejection of his mind at the thought of sin.

(c) He smote upon his breast, in a holy indignation at himself for sin: "Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come at it." The sinner's heart first smites him in a penitent rebuke, 2Sa 24:10. David's heart smote him. Sinner, what hast thou done? And then he smites his heart with penitent remorse: O wretched man that I am? Ephraim is said to smite

upon his thigh, Jer 31:19. Great mourners are represented tabouring upon their breasts, Na 2:7.

2. He expressed it in what he said. His prayer was short. Fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words; but what he said was to the purpose: God, be merciful to me a sinner. And blessed be God that we have this prayer upon record as an answered prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it went to his house justified; and so shall we, if we pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ: "God, be merciful to me a sinner; the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for, if he be not, I am for ever undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me, for I have been cruel to myself."

(a) He owns himself a sinner by nature, by practice, guilty before God. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? The Pharisee denies himself to be a sinner; none of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees no reason to charge himself, with any thing amiss; he is clean, he is pure from sin. But the publican gives himself no other character than that of a sinner, a convicted criminal at God's bar.

(b) He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God, that, and that only, he relies upon. The Pharisee had insisted upon the merit of his fastings and tithes; but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy, mercy."

(c) He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy: "O God, be merciful, be propitious, to me; forgive my sins; be reconciled to me; take me into thy favour; receive me graciously; love me freely." He comes as a beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for hunger. Probably he repeated this prayer with renewed affections, and perhaps said more to the same purport, made a particular confession of his sins, and mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and waited upon God for; but still this was the burden of the song: God, be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Here is the publican's acceptance with God. We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God; it is now worth while to enquire how they sped. There were those who would cry up the Pharisee, by whom he would go to his house applauded, and who would look with contempt upon this sneaking whining publican. But our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent, broken-hearted publican went to his house justified, rather than the other. The Pharisee thought that if one of them must be justified, and not the other, certainly it must be he rather than the publican. "No," saith Christ, "I tell you, I affirm it with the utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the utmost concern, I tell you, it is the publican rather than the Pharisee." The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God; his thanksgivings are so far from being accepted that they are an abomination; he is not justified, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation: he is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to Heaven, obtains the remission of his sins, and he whom the Pharisee would not set with the dogs of his flock God sets with the children of his family. The reason given for this is because God's glory is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble.

1. Proud men, who exalt themselves, are rivals with God, and therefore they shall certainly be abased. God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof that he is God, that he looks upon every one that is proud, and brings him low, Job 40:12.

2. Humble men, who abase themselves, are subject to God, and they shall be exalted. God has preferment in store for those that will take it as a favour, not for those that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into the love of God, and communion with him, shall be exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at last as high as heaven. See how the punishment answers the sin: He that exalteth himself shall be abased. See how the recompence answers the duty: He that humbles himself shall be exalted. See also the power of God's grace in bringing good out of evil; the publican had been a great sinner, and out of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness of his repentance; out of the eater came forth meat.

See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in bringing evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee was no extortioner, nor unjust; but the devil made him proud of this, to his ruin.

Jesus Blesses Little Children

15 And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

See notes on Mt 19:13-15

16 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

The Rich Young Ruler

18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.

see notes on Mt 19:16-30

20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother.

21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved?

27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

30 who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

31 Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

See notes on Mt 20:17-19

32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

33 and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again.

34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

A Blind Beggar Healed near Jericho

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging:

36 and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

See notes on Mt 20:29-34

37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

41 saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Luke-19

Jesus and Zaccheus

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of Christ of whom no account is kept in the gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zaccheus. Christ passed through Jericho, Lu 19:1. This city was build under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with his presence, for the gospel takes away the curse. Though it ought not to have been built, yet it was not therefore a sin to live in it when it was built. Christ was now going from the other side Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus to life; when he was going to do one good work he contrived to do many by the way. He did good both to the souls and to the bodies of people; we have here an instance of the former. Observe,

Who, and what, this Zaccheus was. His name bespeaks him a Jew. Zaccai was a common name among the Jews; they had a famous rabbi, much about this time, of that name. Observe,

1. His calling, and the post he was in: He was the chief among the publicans, receiver-general; other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs. We often read of publicans coming to Christ; but here was one that was chief of the publicans, was in authority, that enquired after him. God has his remnant among all sorts. Christ came to save even the chief of publicans.

2. His circumstances in the world were very considerable: He was rich. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and low in the world; but he that was chief of the publicans had raised a good estate. Christ had lately shown how hard it is for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God, yet presently produces an instance on one rich man

that had been lost, and was found, and that not as the prodigal by being reduced to want.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.

How he came in Christ's way, and what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him.

1. He had a great curiosity to see Jesus, what kind of a man he was, having heard great talk of him, Lu 19:3. It is natural to us to come in sight, if we can, of those whose fame has filled our ears, as being apt to imagine there is something extraordinary in their countenances; at least, we shall be able to say hereafter that we have seen such and such great men. But the eye is not satisfied with seeing. We should now seek to see Jesus with an eye of faith, to see who he is; we should address ourselves in holy ordinances with this in our eye, We would see Jesus.

2. He could not get his curiosity gratified in this matter because he was little, and the crowd was great. Christ did not study to show himself, was not carried on men's shoulders (as the pope is in procession), that all men might see him; neither he nor his kingdom came with observation. He did not ride in an open chariot, as princes do, but, as one of us, he was lost in a crowd; for that was the day of his humiliation. Zaccheus was low of stature, and over-topped by all about him, so that he could not get a sight of Jesus. Many that are little of stature have large souls, and are lively in spirit. Who would not rather be a Zaccheus than a Saul, though he was higher by head and shoulders than all about him? Let not those that are little of stature take thought of adding cubits to it.

3. Because he would not disappoint his curiosity he forgot his gravity, as chief of the publicans, and ran before, like a boy, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree, to see him. Note, Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ will use the proper means for gaining a sight of him, and will break

through a deal of difficulty and opposition, and be willing to take pains to see him. Those that find themselves little must take all the advantages they can get to raise themselves to a sight of Christ, and not be ashamed to own that they need them, and all little enough. Let not dwarfs despair, with good help, by aiming high to reach high.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.

The notice Christ took of him, the call he gave him to a further acquaintance (Lu 19:5), and the efficacy of that call, Lu 19:6.

1. Christ invited himself to Zaccheus's house, not doubting of his hearty welcome there; nay, wherever Christ comes, as he brings his own entertainment along with him, so he brings his own welcome; he opens the heart, and inclines it to receive him. Christ looked up into the tree, and saw Zaccheus. He came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being taken notice of by Christ. That was an honour too great, and too far above his merit, for him to have any thought of. See how Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness, and outdid his expectations; and see how he encouraged very weak beginnings, and helped them forward. He that had a mind to know Christ shall be known of him; he that only courted to see him shall be admitted to converse with him. Note, Those that are faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more. And sometimes those that come to hear the word of Christ, as Zaccheus did, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened, and their hearts changed. Christ called him by name, Zaccheus, for he knows his chosen by name; are they not in his book? He might ask, as Nathanael did (Joh 1:48), Whence knowest thou me? But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bade him make haste, and come down. Those that Christ calls must come down, must humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any righteousness of their own; and they must make haste and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but hasten; he knows it is not a matter that needs consideration whether he should welcome such a guest to his house. He must come down, for Christ intends this day to bait at his house, and stay an hour or two with him. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks.

2. Zaccheus was overjoyed to have such an honour put upon his house (Lu 19:6): He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully; and his receiving him into his house was an indication and token of his receiving him into his heart. Note, When Christ calls to us we must make haste to answer his calls; and when he comes to us we must receive him joyfully. Lift up your heads, O ye gates. We may well receive him joyfully who brings all good along with him, and, when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there which shall flow to eternity. How often has Christ said to us, Open to me, when we have, with the spouse, made excuses! So 5:2,

3. Zaccheus's forwardness to receive Christ will shame us. We have not now Christ to entertain in our houses, but we have his disciples, and what is done to them he takes as done to himself.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

The offence which the people took at this kind greeting between Christ and Zaccheus. Those narrow-souled censorious Jews murmured, saying that he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner, para hamartolo andri--with a sinful man; and were not they themselves sinful men? Was it not Christ's errand into the world to seek and save men that are sinners? But Zaccheus they think to be a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho, such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with. Now this was very unjust to blame Christ for going to his house; for,

1. Though he was a publican, and many of the publicans were bad men, it did not therefore follow that they were all so. We must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by common fame, for at God's bar every man will be judged as he is.

2. Though he had been a sinner, it did not therefore follow that he was now as bad as he had been; though they knew his past life to be bad, Christ might know his present frame to be good. God allows room for repentance, and so must we.

3. Though he was now a sinner, they ought not to blame Christ for going to him, because he was in no danger of getting hurt by a sinner, but in great hopes of doing good to a sinner; whither should the physician go but to the sick? Yet see how that which is well done may be ill construed.

8 And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

The proofs which Zaccheus gave publicly that, though he had been a sinner, he was now a penitent, and a true convert, Lu 19:8. He does not expect to be justified by his works as the Pharisee who boasted of what he had done, but by his good works he will, through the grace of God, evidence the sincerity of his faith and repentance; and here he declares what his determination was. He made this declaration standing, that he might be seen and heard by those who murmured at Christ for coming to his house; with the mouth confession is made of repentance as well as faith. He stood, which denotes his saying it deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people (they were not to be his judges), but to the Lord, and he stood as it were at his bar. What we do that is good we must do as unto him; we must appeal to him, and approve ourselves to him, in our integrity, in all our good purposes and resolutions. He makes it appear that there is a change in his heart (and that is repentance), for there is a change in his way. His resolutions are of second-table duties; for Christ, upon all occasions, laid great stress on them: and they are such as are suited to his condition and character; for in them will best appear the truth of our repentance.

1. Zaccheus had a good estate, and, whereas he had been in it hitherto laying up treasure for himself, and doing hurt to himself, now he resolves that for the future he will be all towards God, and do good to others with

it: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. Not, "I will give it by my will when I die," but, "I do give it now." Probably he had heard of the command of trial which Christ gave to another rich man to sell what he had, and give to the poor (Mt 19:21), and how he broke with Christ upon it. "But so will not I," saith Zaccheus; "I agree to it at the first word; though hitherto I have been uncharitable to the poor, now I will relieve them, and give so much the more for having neglected the duty so long, even the half of my goods." This is a very large proportion to be set apart for works of piety and charity. The Jews used to say that a fifth part of a man's income yearly was very fair to be given to pious uses, and about that share the law directed; but Zaccheus would go much further, and give one moiety to the poor, which would oblige him to retrench all his extravagant expenses, as his retrenching these would enable him to relieve many with his superfluities. If we were but more temperate and self-denying, we should be more charitable; and, were we content with less ourselves, we should have the more to give to them that need. This he mentions here as a fruit of his repentance. Note, It well becomes converts to God to be charitable to the poor.

2. Zaccheus was conscious to himself that he had not gotten all he had honestly and fairly, but some by indirect and unlawful means, and of what he had gotten by such means he promises to make restitution: "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, or if I have wronged any man in the way of my business as a publican, exacting more than was appointed, I promise to restore him four-fold." This was the restitution that a thief was to make, Ex 22:1.

(a) He seems plainly to own that he had done wrong; his office, as a publican, gave him opportunity to do wrong, imposing upon the merchants to curry favour with the government. True penitents will own themselves not only in general guilty before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them.

(b) That he had done wrong by false accusation; this was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly, Lu

3:14. They had the ear of the government, and every thing would be stretched in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge if they bore a man an ill will.

(c) He promises to restore four-fold, as far as he could recollect or find by his books that he had wronged any man. He does not say, "If I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution" (some are honest when they cannot help it); but he will do it voluntarily: It shall be my own act and deed. Note, Those who are convinced of having done wrong cannot evidence the sincerity of their repentance but by making restitution. Observe, He does not think that his giving half his estate to the poor will atone for the wrong he has done. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and we must first do justly and then love mercy. It is no charity, but hypocrisy, to give that which is none of our own; and we are not to reckon that our own which we have not come honestly by, nor that our own which is not so when all our debts are paid, and restitution made for wrong done.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

Christ's approbation and acceptance of Zaccheus's conversion, by which also he cleared himself from any imputation in going to be a guest with him, Lu 19:9,10.

1. Zaccheus is declared to be now a happy man. Now he is turned from sin to God; now he has bidden Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest, charitable, good man: This day is salvation come to this house. Now that he is converted he is in effect saved, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his. Christ is come to his house, and, where Christ comes, he brings salvation along with him. He is, and will be, the Author of eternal salvation to all that own him as Zaccheus did. Yet this is not all. Salvation this day comes to his house.

(a) When Zaccheus becomes a convert, he will be, more than he had been, a blessing to his house. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is a son of Abraham indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, will teach his household to keep the way of the Lord. He that is

greedy of gain troubles his own house, and brings a curse upon it (Hab 2:9), but he that is charitable to the poor does a kindness to his own house, and brings a blessing upon it and salvation to it, temporal at least, Ps 112:3.

(b) When Zaccheus is brought to Christ himself his family also become related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so salvation comes to his house, for that he is a son of Abraham, and therefore interested in God's covenant with Abraham, that blessing of Abraham which comes upon the publicans, upon the Gentiles, through faith, that God will be a God to them and to their children; and therefore, when he believes, salvation comes to his house, as the gaoler's to whom it was said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house, Ac 16:31. Zaccheus is by birth a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen; they are put upon a level, Mt 18:17. And as such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ should be so; but he shows that, being a true penitent, he is become rectus in curia--upright in court, as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been an publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

2. What Christ had done to make him, in particular, a happy man, was consonant to the great design and intention of his coming into the world, Lu 19:10. With the same argument he had before justified his conversing with publicans, Mt 9:13. There he pleaded that he came to call sinners to repentance; now that he came to seek and save that which was lost, to apololos--the lost thing. Observe,

(a) The deplorable case of the sons of men: they were lost; and here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as one body. Note, The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a lost world: lost as a city is lost when it has revolted to the rebels, as a traveller is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness, as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable, or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him.

(b) The gracious design of the Son of God: he came to seek and save, to seek in order to saving. He came from heaven to earth (a long journey), to seek that which was lost (which had wandered and gone astray), and to

bring it back (Mt 18:11,12), and to save that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause when it was given up for lost: undertook to bring those to themselves that were lost to God and all goodness. Observe, Christ came into this lost world to seek and save it. His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. In prosecution of that design, he sought, took all probable means to effect that salvation. He seeks those that were not worth seeking to; he seeks those that sought him not, and asked not for him, as Zaccheus here.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Parable of the Ten Pounds

11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

From fifteen to twenty miles away. The crowd thought that when he reached Jerusalem "his kingdom would immediately appear"; an earthly kingdom like that of David. The parable that follows was spoken, in part, to correct that idea.

12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

While this parable is much like that of the Talents (Mt 25:14-30 Mr 13:34-36), it is a different one in many particulars; spoken elsewhere, for a different purpose.

To receive for himself a kingdom. As Christ would leave the earth and ascend to heaven before he would receive his kingdom.

13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to

whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

17 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

21 for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

23 wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

> The ascent begins at Jericho, and about 3,000 feet has to be climbed before the city is reached. The account of the royal entrance into Jerusalem is given in Mt 21:1-16 Mr 11:1-11 Joh 12:12-19. See the notes on Matthew.

29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

30 saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

38 saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord:

peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

42 saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

The great Ambassador from heaven is here making his public entry into Jerusalem, not to be respected there, but to be rejected; he knew what a nest of vipers he was throwing himself into, and yet see here two instances of his love to that place and his concern for it.

The tears he shed for the approaching ruin of the city (Lu 19:41): When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it. Probably, it was when he was coming down the descent of the hill from the mount of Olives, where he had a full view of the city, the large extent of it, and the many stately structures in it, and his eye affected his heart, and his heart his eye again. See here,

1. What a tender spirit Christ was of; we never read that he laughed, but we often find him in tears. In this very place his father David wept, and those that were with him, though he and they were men of war. There are cases in which it is no disparagement to the stoutest of men to melt into tears.

2. That Jesus Christ wept in the midst of his triumphs, wept when all about him were rejoicing, to show how little he was elevated with the applause and acclamation of the people. Thus he would teach us to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. If Providence do not stain the beauty of our triumphs, we may ourselves see cause to sully it with our sorrows.

3. That he wept over Jerusalem. Note, There are cities to be wept over, and none to be more lamented than Jerusalem, that had been the holy city, and the joy of the whole earth, if it be degenerated. But why did Christ weep at the sight of Jerusalem? Was it because "Yonder is the city in which I must be betrayed and bound, scourged and spit upon, condemned and crucified?" No, he himself gives us the reason of his tears.

(a) Jerusalem has not improved the day of her opportunities. He wept, and said, If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, if thou wouldst but yet know, while the gospel is preached to thee, and salvation offered thee by it; if thou wouldest at length bethink thyself, and understand the things that belong to thy peace, the making of thy peace with God, and the securing of thine own spiritual and eternal welfare--but thou dost not know the day of thy visitation, Lu 19:44. The manner of speaking is abrupt: If thou hadst known! O that thou hadst, so some take it; like that O that my people had hearkened unto me, Ps 81:13,Isa 48:18. Or, If thou hadst known, well; like that of the fig-tree, Lu 13:9. How happy had it been for thee! Or, "If thou hadst known, thou wouldest have wept for thyself, and I should have no occasion to weep for thee, but should have rejoiced rather." What he says lays all the blame of Jerusalem's impending ruin upon herself.

Note,

[1.] There are things which belong to our peace, which we are all concerned to know and understand; the way how peace is made, the offers made of peace, the terms on which we may have the benefit of peace. The things that belong to our peace are those things that relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application.

[2.] There is a time of visitation when those things which belong to our peace may be known by us, and known to good purpose. When we enjoy the means of grace in great plenty, and have the word of God powerfully preached to us--when the Spirit strives with us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened--then is the time of visitation, which we are concerned to improve.

[3.] With those that have long neglected the time of their visitation, if at length, if at last, in this their day, their eyes be opened, and they bethink themselves, all will be well yet. Those shall not be refused that come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour.

[4.] It is the amazing folly of multitudes that enjoy the means of grace, and it will be of fatal consequence to them, that they do not improve the day of their opportunities. The things of their peace are revealed to them, but are not minded or regarded by them; they hide their eyes from them, as if they were not worth taking notice of. They are not aware of the accepted time and the day of salvation, and to let it slip and perish through mere carelessness. None are so blind as those that will not see; nor have any the things of their peace more certainly hidden from their eyes than those that turn their back upon them.

[5.] The sin and folly of those that persist in a contempt of gospel grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should be so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent, and run headlong upon their own ruin; he had rather that they would turn and live than go on and die, for he is not willing that any should perish.

(b) Jerusalem cannot escape the day of her desolation. The things of her peace are now in a manner hidden from her eyes; they will be shortly. Not but that after this the gospel was preached to them by the apostles; all the house of Israel were called to know assuredly that Christ was their peace (Ac 2:36), and multitudes were convinced and converted. But as to the body of the nation, and the leading part of it, they were sealed up under unbelief; God had given them the spirit of slumber, Ro 11:8. They were so prejudiced and enraged against the gospel, and those few that did embrace it then, that nothing less than a miracle of divine grace (like that which converted Paul) would work upon them; and it could not be expected that such a miracle should be wrought, and so they were justly given up to judicial blindness and hardness. The peaceful things are not hidden from the eyes of particular persons; but it is too late to think now of the nation of the Jews, as such, becoming a Christian nation, by embracing Christ. And therefore they are marked for ruin, which Christ here foresees and foretels, as the certain consequence of their rejecting Christ. Note, Neglecting the great salvation of ten brings temporal judgments upon a people; it did so upon Jerusalem in less than forty years after this, when all that Christ here foretold was exactly fulfilled.

[1.] The Romans besieged the city, cast a trench about it, compassed it round, and kept their inhabitants in on every side. Josephus relates that Titus ran up a wall in a very short time, which surrounded the city, and cut off all hopes of escaping.

[2.] They laid it even with the ground. Titus commanded his soldiers to dig up the city, and the whole compass of it was levelled, except three towers; see Josephus's history of the wars of the Jews, 5. 356-360; 7. 1. Not only the city, but the citizens were laid even with the ground (thy children within thee), by the cruel slaughters that were made of them: and there was scarcely one stone left upon another. This was for their crucifying Christ; this was because they knew not the day of their visitation. Let other cities and nations take warning.

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

44 and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The Cleansing of the Temple

45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;

46 saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

See notes on Mt 21:12-15

47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,

48 and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

Luke-20

Jesus' Authority Questioned

1 And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders,

2 and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things ? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

See notes on Mt 21:23-27

3 And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me:

4 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

5 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not ?

6 But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.

8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

9 Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

See notes on Mt 21:33-46

10 And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty.

11 And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.

12 And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

13 Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

14 But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

15 So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

16 He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

17 And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected,
the same is become the head of the corner?

18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

19 And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

20 And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

see notes on Mt 22:15-22

21 And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no ?

23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?

24 Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's.

25 And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

26 And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marveled at his answer, and held their peace.

The Question about the Resurrection

27 Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him,

28 saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

see notes on Mt 22:23-33

29 There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children.

30 And the second took her to wife, and he died childless.

31 And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died.

32 Last of all the woman died also.

33 Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.

34 And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

35 but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

36 neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels;
and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.
37 Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
38 For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.
39 Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said.
40 And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.

The Question about David's Son

41 And he said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son?
42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
43 till I make thine enemies thy footstool.
44 David therefore calleth him Lord, how is he then his son?

See notes on Mt 22:41-46

Jesus Denounces the Scribes

45 Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples,

See notes on Mt 23

46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;
47 which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers:
the same shall receive greater damnation.

Luke-21

The Widow's Offering

1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.

see Mr 12:41-44.

2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.

3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all:

4 for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs before the End

5 And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

6 As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

See notes on Math 24

7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?

8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified : for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:

11 and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

14 Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:

15 for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

See notes on Math 24

17 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

18 But there shall not a hair of your head perish.

19 In your patience possess ye your souls.

20 And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.

21 Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

22 For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

23 But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.

24 And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

The Coming of the Son of Man

25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

26 men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30 when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

See notes on Math 24

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.

33 Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away.

34 And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

35 For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

37 And in the daytime he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

38 And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Luke-22

The Plot against Jesus

1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover.

See Mt 26:1-5.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him;
for they feared the people.

3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

See notes on Mt 26:14-16.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

Jesus Eats the Passover with His Disciples

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.

8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.

9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare ?

10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

see notes on Mt 26:17-19.

11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

There are four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper: Mt 26:26-30 Mr 14:22-25 1Co 11:23-25. See notes on Matthew.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

The incident concerning the betrayal mentioned in these verses occurred before the Lord's Supper was eaten (Mt 26:21). It seems probable, from Joh 13:21-35, that Judas left before the supper On this passage, see notes on Mt 26:21-25.

22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!

23 And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

The Dispute about Greatness

24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

This contention probably arose while they were taking seats for the paschal meal, each seeking the chief place. It was rebuked by the Lord washing their feet (Joh 13:3-5). See notes on Mt 18:1-4.

25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth ? is not he that sitteth at meat ? but I am among you as he that serveth.

28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.

29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

30 that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Peter’s Denial Foretold

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Simon, Simon. For the warning to Peter of his Denial of the Lord, see Mt 26:31-35.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

Purse, Scrip, and Sword

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

See Mt 10:9-15

Concerning the condition of all the disciples.

He appeals to them concerning what had been, Lu 22:35. He had owned that they had been faithful servants to him, Lu 22:28. Now he expects, at parting, that they should acknowledge that he had been a kind and careful Master to them ever since they left all to follow him: When I sent you without purse, lacked you any thing?

(a) He owns that he had sent them out in a very poor and bare condition, barefoot, and with no money in their purses, because they were not to go far, nor be out long; and he would thus teach them to depend upon the providence of God, and, under that, upon the kindness of their friends. If God thus send us out into the world, let us remember that better than we have thus begun low.

(b) Yet ye will have them own that, notwithstanding this, they had lacked nothing; they then lived as plentifully and comfortably as ever; and they readily acknowledged it: "Nothing, Lord; I have all, and abound."

Note,

[1.] It is good for us often to review the providences of God that have been concerning us all our days, and to observe how we have got through the straits and difficulties we have met with.

[2.] Christ is a good Master, and his service a good service; for though his servants may sometimes be brought low, yet he will help them; and though he try them, yet will he not leave them. Jehovah-jireh.

[3.] We must reckon ourselves well done by, and must not complain, but be thankful, if we have had the necessary supports of life, though we have had neither dainties nor superfluities, though we have lived from hand to mouth, and lived upon the kindness of our friends. The disciples lived upon contribution, and yet did not complain that their maintenance was precarious, but owned, to their Master's honour, that it was sufficient; they had wanted nothing.

2. He gives them notice of a very great change of their circumstances now approaching.

For,

(a) He that was their Master was now entering upon his sufferings, which he had often foretold (Lu 22:37): "Now that which is written must be fulfilled in me, and this among the rest, He was numbered among the transgressors-- he must suffer and die as a malefactor, and in company with some of the vilest of malefactors. This is that which is yet to be accomplished, after all the rest, and then the things concerning me, the things written concerning me, will have an end; then I shall say, It is finished." Note, It may be the comfort of suffering Christians, as it was of a suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold, and determined in the counsels of heaven, and will shortly determine in the joys of heaven. They were written concerning them, and they will have an end, and will end well, everlastingly well.

(b) They must therefore expect troubles, and must not think now to have such an easy and comfortable life as they had had; no, the scene will alter.

They must now in some degree suffer with their Master; and, when he is gone, they must expect to suffer like him. The servant is not better than his Lord.

[1.] They must not now expect that their friends would be so kind and generous to them as they had been; and therefore, He that has a purse, let him take it, for he may have occasion for it, and for all the good husbandry he can use.

[2.] They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce upon them than they had been, and they would need magazines as well as stores: He that has no sword wherewith to defend himself against robbers and assassins (2Co 11:26) will find a great want of it, and will be ready to wish, some time or other, that he had sold his garment and bought one. This is intended only to show that the times would be very perilous, so that no man would think himself safe if he had not a sword by his side. But the sword of the Spirit is the sword which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with. Christ having suffered for us, we must arm ourselves with the same mind (1Pe 4:1), arm ourselves with an expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprise to us, and with a holy resignation to the will of God in it, that there may be no opposition in us to it: and then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples hereupon enquire what strength they had, and find they had among them two swords (Lu 22:38), of which one was Peter's. The Galileans generally travelled with swords. Christ wore none himself, but he was not against his disciples' wearing them. But he intimates how little he would have them depend upon this when he saith, It is enough, which some think is spoken ironically: "Two swords among twelve men! you are bravely armed indeed when our enemies are now coming out against us in great multitudes, and every one with a sword!" Yet two swords are sufficient for those who need none, having God himself to be the shield of their help and the sword of their excellency, De 33:29.

36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

Jesus Prays in the Garden

39 And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him.

see notes on Mt 26:36-46

40 And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

42 saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,

46 and said unto them, Why sleep ye ? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him.

see notes on Mt 26:47-56

48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss ?

49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword ?

50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves?

53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Peter Denies Jesus

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off.

See notes on Mt 26:69-75

55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean.

60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

Jesus Mocked and Beaten

63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.

64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee ?

65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

Jesus before the Council

66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying,

67 Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe:

68 and if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.

See notes on Mt 26:57-68.

69 Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

70 Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God ? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

71 And they said, What need we any further witness ? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

Luke-23

Jesus before Pilate

1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king.

See notes on Mt 27:1-10.

3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

Jesus before Herod

6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean.

7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

15 no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:

19 (who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

See notes on Mt 27:15-26

22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified: and the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

The Crucifixion

26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

See notes on Mt 27:32-56

27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

32 And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

37 and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the king of the jews.

39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

The Burial of Jesus

50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor; and he was a good man, and a just:

51 (the same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them:) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

see notes on Mt 27:57-61

52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

Luke-24

The Resurrection

1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

See notes on Mt 28:1-10.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

7 saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

8 And they remembered his words,

9 and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The Walk to Emmaus

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

This appearance of Christ to the two disciples going to Emmaus was mentioned, and but just mentioned, before (Mk 16:12); here it is largely related. It happened the same day that Christ rose, the first day of the new world that rose with him. One of these two disciples was Cleopas or Alpheus, said by the ancients to be the brother of Joseph, Christ's supposed father; who the other was is not certain. Some think it was Peter; it should seem indeed that Christ did appear particularly to Peter that day, which the eleven spoke of among themselves (Lu 24:34), and Paul mentions, 1Co 15:5. But it could not be Peter that was one of the two, for he was one of the eleven to whom the two returned; and, besides, we know Peter so well as to think that if he had been one of the two he would have been the chief speaker, and not Cleopas. It was one of those that were associated with the eleven, mentioned Lu 24:9. Now in this passage of story we may observe,

The walk and talk of these two disciples: They went to a village called Emmaus, which is reckoned to be about two hours' walk from Jerusalem; it is here said to be about sixty furlongs, seven measured miles, Lu 24:13. Whether they went thither upon business, or to see some friend, does not appear. I suspect that they were going homewards to Galilee, with an intention not to enquire more after this Jesus; that they were meditating a retreat, and stole away from their company without asking leave or taking leave; for the accounts brought them that morning of their Master's resurrection seemed to them as idle tales; and, if so, no wonder that they began to think of making the best of their way home. But as they travelled

they talked together of all those things which had happened, Lu 24:14. They had not courage to confer of these things, and consult what was to be done in the present juncture at Jerusalem, for fear of the Jews; but, when they were got out of the hearing of the Jews, they could talk it over with more freedom. They talked over these things, reasoning with themselves concerning the probabilities of Christ's resurrection; for, according as these appeared, they would either go forward or return back to Jerusalem. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are together, to talk of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up one another's devout affections.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

The good company they met with upon the road, when Jesus himself came, and joined himself to them (Lu 24:15): They communed together, and reasoned, and perhaps were warm at the argument, one hoping that their Master was risen, and would set up his kingdom, the other despairing. Jesus himself drew near, as a stranger who, seeing them travel the same way that he went, told them that he should be glad of their company. We may observe it, for our encouragement to keep up Christian conference and edifying discourse among us, that where but two together are well employed in work of that kind Christ will come to them, and make a third. When they that fear the Lord speak one to another the Lord hearkens and hears, and is with them of a truth; so that two thus twisted in faith and love become a threefold cord, not easily broken, Ec 4:12. They in their communings and reasonings together were searching for Christ, comparing notes concerning him, that they might come to more knowledge of him; and now Christ comes to them. Note, They who seek Christ shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that enquire after him, and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. When the spouse enquired of the watchman concerning her beloved, it was but a little that she passed from them, but she found him. So 3:4. But, though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it (Lu 24:16): Their eyes were held, that they should not know him. It should seem, there were both an alteration of the object (for it is said in Mark that now he appeared in another form) and a restraint upon

the organ (for here it is said that their eyes were held by a divine power); or, as some think, there was a confusion in the medium; the air was so disposed that they could not discern who it was. No matter how it was, but so it was they did not know him, Christ so ordering it that they might the more freely discourse with him and he with them, and that it might appear that his word, and the influence of it, did not depend upon his bodily presence, which the disciples had too much doted upon, and must be weaned from; but he could teach them, and warm their hearts, by others, who should have his spiritual presence with them, and should have his grace going along with them unseen.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

The conference that was between Christ and them, when he knew them, and they knew not him. Now Christ and his disciples, as is usual when friends meet incognito, or in a disguise, are here crossing questions.

1. Christ's first question to them is concerning their present sadness, which plainly appeared in their countenances: What manner of communications are those that you have one with another as you walk, and are sad? Lu 24:17. It is a very kind and friendly enquiry. Observe,

(a) They were sad; it appeared to a stranger that they were so.

[1.] They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. They had given up the cause, and knew not what course to take to retrieve it. Note, Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them, to fast when the Bridegroom is taken from them.

[2.] Though he was risen from the dead, yet either they did not know it or did not believe it, and so they were still in sorrow. Note, Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful even when they have reason to rejoice, but through the weakness of their faith they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them.

[3.] Being sad, they had communications one with another concerning Christ. Note, First, It becomes Christians to talk of Christ. Were our hearts as full of him, and of what he has done and suffered for us, as they should be, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak, not only of God and his providence, but of Christ and his grace and love. Secondly, Good company and good converse are an excellent antidote against prevailing melancholy. When Christ's disciples were sad they did not each one get by himself, but continued as he sent them out, two and two, for two are better than one, especially in times of sorrow. Giving vent to the grief may perhaps give ease to the grieved; and by talking it over we may talk ourselves or our friends may talk us into a better frame. Joint mourners should be mutual comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

(b) Christ came up to them, and enquired into the matter of their talk, and the cause of their grief: What manner of communications are these? Though Christ had now entered into his state of exaltation, yet he continued tender of his disciples, and concerned for their comfort. He speaks as one troubled to see their melancholy: Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? Ge 40:7. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Christ has hereby taught us,

[1.] To be conversable. Christ here fell into discourse with two grave serious persons, though he was a stranger to them and they knew him not, and they readily embraced him. It does not become Christians to be morose and shy, but to take pleasure in good society.

[2.] We are hereby taught to be compassionate. When we see our friends in sorrow and sadness, we should, like Christ here, take cognizance of their grief, and give them the best counsel and comfort we can: Weep with them that weep.

2. In answer to this, they put a question to him concerning his strangeness. Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that are come to pass there in these days? Observe,

(a) Cleopas gave him a civil answer. He does not rudely ask him. "As for what we are talking of, what is that to you?" and bid him go about his business. Note, We ought to be civil to those who are civil to us, and to conduct ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. It was a dangerous time now with Christ's disciples; yet he was not jealous of this stranger, that he had any design upon them, to inform against them, or bring them into trouble. Charity is not forward to think evil, no, not of strangers.

(b) He is full of Christ himself and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too: "What! art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem as not to know what has been done to our Master there?" Note, Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. What! are they daughters of Jerusalem, and yet so little acquainted with Christ as to ask, What is thy beloved more than another beloved?

(c) He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ, and to draw on further discourse with him upon this subject. He would not have any one that had the face of a man to be ignorant of Christ. Note, Those who have themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified should do what they can to spread that knowledge, and lead others into an acquaintance with him. And it is observable that these disciples, who were so forward to instruct the stranger, were instructed by him; for to him that has, and uses what he has, shall be given.

(d) It appears, by what Cleopas says, that the death of Christ made a great noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined that any man should be such a stranger in the city as not to know of it; it was all the talk of the town, and discoursed of in all companies. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally known, which, after the pouring out of the Spirit, was to be explained.

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

Christ, by way of reply, asked concerning their knowledge (Lu 24:19): He said unto them, What things? thus making himself yet more a stranger. Observe,

(a) Jesus Christ made light of his own sufferings, in comparison with the joy set before him, which was the recompence of it. Now that he was entering upon his glory, see with what unconcernedness he looks back upon his sufferings: What things? He had reason to know what things; for to him they were bitter things, and heavy things, and yet he asks, What things? The sorrow was forgotten, for joy that the man-child of our salvation was born. He took pleasure in infirmities for our sakes, to teach us to do so for his sake.

(b) Those whom Christ will teach he will first examine how far they have learned; they must tell him what things they know, and then he will tell them what was the meaning of these things. and lead them into the mystery of them.

4. They, hereupon, gave him a particular account concerning Christ, and the present posture of his affairs. Observe the story they tell, Lu 24:19, &c.

(a) Here is a summary of Christ's life and character. The things they are full of are concerning Jesus of Nazareth (so he was commonly called), who was a prophet, a teacher come from God. He preached a true and excellent doctrine, which had manifestly its rise from heaven, and its tendency towards heaven. He confirmed it by many glorious miracles, miracles of mercy, so that he was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; that is, he was both a great favourite of heaven and a great blessing to this earth. He was, and appeared to be, greatly beloved of God, and much the darling of his people. He had great acceptance with God, and a great reputation in the country. Many are great before all the

people, and are caressed by them, who are not so before God, as the scribes and Pharisees; but Christ was mighty both in his doctrine and in his doings, before God and all the people. Those were strangers in Jerusalem that did not know this.

(b) Here is a modest narrative of his sufferings and death, Lu 24:20. "Though he was so dear both to God and man, yet the chief priests and our rulers, in contempt of both, delivered him to the Roman power, to be condemned to death, and they have crucified him." It is strange that they did not aggravate the matter more, and lay a greater load upon those that had been guilty of crucifying Christ; but perhaps because they spoke to one that was a stranger they thought it prudent to avoid all reflections upon the chief priests and their rulers, how just soever.

(c) Here is an intimation of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness: "We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel, Lu 24:21. We are of those who not only looked upon him to be a prophet, like Moses, but, like him, a redeemer too." He was depended upon, and great things expected from him, by them that looked for redemption, and in it for the consolation of Israel. Now, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart. But see how they made that the ground of their despair which if they had understood it aright was the surest ground of their hope, and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus: We trusted (say they) that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel. And is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? Sop that now, since that most difficult part of his undertaking was got over, they had more reason than ever to trust that this was he that should deliver Israel; yet now they are ready to give up the cause.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

Here is an account of their present amazement with reference to his resurrection.

[1.] "This is the third day since he was crucified and died, and that was the day when it was expected, if ever, that he should rise again, and rise in glory and outward pomp, and show himself as publicly in honour as he had been shown three days before in disgrace; but we see no sign of it; nothing appears, as we expected, to the conviction and confusion of his prosecutors, and the consolation of his disciples, but all is silent."

[2.] They own that there was a report among them that he was risen, but they seem to speak of it very slightly, and as what they gave no credit at all to (Lu 24:22,23): "Certain women also of our company made us astonished (and that was all), who were early at the sepulchre, and found the body gone, and they said that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive; but we are ready to think it was only their fancy, and no real thing, for angels would have been sent to the apostles, not to the women, and women are easily imposed upon."

[3.] They acknowledge that some of the apostles had visited the sepulchre, and found it empty, Lu 24:24. "But him they saw not, and therefore we have reason to fear that he is not risen, for, if he be, surely he would have shown himself to them; so that, upon the whole matter, we have no great reason to think that he is risen, and therefore have no expectations from him now; our hopes were all nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave."

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Our Lord Jesus, though not known by face to them, makes himself known to them by his word.

He reproves them for their incogitancy, and the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament: O fools, and slow of heart to believe, Lu 24:25. When Christ forbade us to say to our brother, Thou fool, it was

intended to restrain us from giving unreasonable reproaches, not from giving just reproofs. Christ called them fools, not as it signifies wicked men, in which sense he forbade it to us, but as it signifies weak men. He might call them fools, for he knows our foolishness, the foolishness that is bound in our hearts. Those are fools that act against their own interest; so they did who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their foolishness is, First, Their slowness to believe. Believers are branded as fools by atheists, and infidels, and free-thinkers, and their most holy faith is censured as a fond credulity; but Christ tells us that those are fools who are slow of heart to believe, and are kept from it by prejudices never impartially examined. Secondly, Their slowness to believe the writings of the prophets. He does not so much blame them for their slowness to believe the testimony of the women and of the angels, but for that which was the cause thereof, their slowness to believe the prophets; for, if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament their due weight and consideration, they would have been as sure of Christ's rising from the dead that morning (being the third day after his death) as they were of the rising of the sun; for the series and succession of events as settled by prophecy are no less certain and inviolable than as settled by providence. Were we but more conversant with the scripture, and the divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not be subject to such perplexities as we often entangle ourselves in.

26 ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

He shows them that the sufferings of Christ, which were such a stumbling-block to them, and made them unapt to believe his glory, were really the appointed way to his glory, and he could not go to it any other way (Lu 24:26): "Ought not the Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Was it not decreed, and was not that decree declared, that the promised Messiah must first suffer and then reign, that he must go by his cross to his crown?" Had they never read the fifty-third of Isaiah and the ninth of Daniel, where the prophets speak so very plainly of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow? 1Pe 1:11. The cross of Christ was that to which they could not reconcile themselves; now here he shows them two things which take off

the offence of the cross:--First, That the Messiah ought to suffer these things; and therefore his sufferings were not only no objection against his being the Messiah, but really a proof of it, as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship; and they were so far from ruining their expectations that really they were the foundation of their hopes. He could not have been a Saviour, if he had not been a sufferer. Christ's undertaking our salvation was voluntary; but, having undertaken it, it was necessary that he should suffer and die. Secondly, That, when he had suffered these things, he should enter into his glory, which he did at his resurrection; that was his first step upward. Observe, It is called his glory, because he was duly entitled to it, and it was the glory he had before the world was; he ought to enter into it, for in that, as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He ought to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; and thus the reproach of the cross is for ever rolled away, and we are directed to expect the crown of thorns and then that of glory.

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

He expounded to them the scriptures of the Old Testament, which spoke of the Messiah, and showed them how they were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and now can tell them more concerning him than they could before tell him (Lu 24:27): Beginning at Moses, the first inspired writer of the Old Testament, he went in order through all the prophets, and expounded to them the things concerning himself, showing that the sufferings he had now gone through were so far from defeating the prophecies of the scripture concerning him that they were the accomplishment of them. He began at Moses, who recorded the first promise, in which it was plainly foretold that the Messiah should have his heel bruised, but that by it the serpent's head should be incurably broken.

Note,

First, There are things dispersed throughout all the scriptures concerning Christ, which it is of great advantage to have collected and put together. You cannot go far in any part of scripture but you meet with something that has reference to Christ, some prophecy, some promise, some prayer, some type or other; for he is the true treasure his in the field of the Old

Testament. A golden thread of gospel grace runs through the whole web of the Old Testament. There is an eye of that white to be discerned in every place.

Secondly, The things concerning Christ need to be expounded. The eunuch, though a scholar, would not pretend to understand them, except some man should guide him (Ac 8:31); for they were delivered darkly, according to that dispensation: but now that the veil is taken away the New Testament expounds the Old.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is himself the best expositor of scripture, particularly the scriptures concerning himself; and even after his resurrection it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions independent upon the scripture, but by showing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them over to the study of it. Even the Apocalypse itself is but a second part of the Old-Testament prophecies, and has continually an eye to them. If men believe not Moses and the prophets, they are incurable. Fourthly, In studying the scriptures, it is good to be methodical, and to take them in order; for the Old-Testament light shone gradually to the perfect day, and it is good to observe how at sundry times, and in divers manners (subsequent predictions improving and giving light to the preceding ones), God spoke to the fathers concerning his Son, by whom he has now spoken to us. Some begin their bible at the wrong end, who study the Revelation first; but Christ has here taught us to begin at Moses. Thus far the conference between them.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

Here is the discovery which Christ at length made of himself to them. One would have given a great deal for a copy of the sermon Christ preached to them by the way, of that exposition of the bible which he gave them; but it is not thought fit that we should have it, we have the substance of it in other scriptures. The disciples are so charmed with it, that they think they are come too soon to their journey's end; but so it is: They drew nigh to the village whither they went (Lu 24:28), where, it should seem, they determined to take up for that night. And now,

They courted his stay with them: He made as though he would have gone further; he did not say that he would, but he seemed to them to be going further, and did not readily turn into their friend's house, which it would not be decent for a stranger to do unless he were invited. He would have gone further if they had not courted his stay; so that here was nothing like dissimulation in the case. If a stranger be shy, every one knows the meaning of it; he will not thrust himself rudely upon your house or company; but, if you make it appear that you are freely desirous of him for your guest or companion, he knows not but he may accept your invitation, and this was all that Christ did when he made as though he would have gone further. Note, Those that would have Christ dwell with them must invite him, and be importunate with him; though he is often found of those that seek him not, yet those only that seek can be sure to find; and, if he seem to draw off from us, it is but to draw out our importunity; as here, they constrained him; both of them laid hold on him, with a kind and friendly violence, saying, Abide with us. Note, Those that have experienced the pleasure and profit of communion with Christ cannot but covet more of his company, and beg of him, not only to walk with them all day, but to abide with them at night. When the day is far spent, and it is towards evening, we begin to think of retiring for our repose, and then it is proper to have our eye to Christ, and to beg of him to abide with us, to manifest himself to us and to fill our minds with good thoughts of him and good affections to him. Christ yielded to their importunity: He went in, to tarry with them. Thus ready is Christ to give further instructions and comforts to those who improve what they have received. He has promised that if any man open the door, to bid him welcome, he will come in to him, Re 3:20.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

He manifested himself to them, Lu 24:30,31. We may suppose that he continued his discourse with them, which he began upon the road; for thou must talk of the things of God when thou sittest in the house as well as when thou walkest by the way. While supper was getting ready (which perhaps was soon done, the provision was so small and mean), it is probable that he entertained them with such communications as were

good and to the use of edifying; and so likewise as they sat at meat his lips fed them. But still they little thought that it was Jesus himself that was all this while talking with them, till at length he was pleased to throw off his disguise, and then to withdraw.

(a) They began to suspect it was he, when, as they sat down to meat, he undertook the office of the Master of the feast, which he performed so like himself, and like what he used to do among his disciples, that by it they discerned him: He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. This he did with his usual air both of authority and affection, with the same gestures and mien, with the same expressions perhaps in craving a blessing and in giving the bread to them. This was not a miraculous meal like that of the five loaves, nor a sacramental meal like that of the eucharist, but a common meal; yet Christ here did the same as he did in those, to teach us to keep up our communion with God through Christ in common providences as well as in special ordinances, and to crave a blessing and give thanks at every meal, and to see our daily bread provided for us and broken to us by the hand of Jesus Christ, the Master, not only of the great family, but of all our families. Wherever we sit down to eat, let us set Christ at the upper end of the table, take our meat as blessed to us by him, and eat and drink to his glory, and receive contentedly and thankfully what he is pleased to carve out to us, be the fare ever so coarse and mean. We may well receive it cheerfully, if we can by faith see it coming to us from Christ's hand, and with his blessing.

(b) Presently their eyes were opened, and then they saw who it was, and knew him well enough. Whatever it was which had hitherto concealed him from them, it was now taken out of the way; the mists were scattered, the veil was taken off, and then they made no question but it was their Master. He might, for wise and holy ends, put on the shape of another, but no other could put on his; and therefore it must be he. See how Christ by his Spirit and grace makes himself known to the souls of his people.

[1.] He opens the scriptures to them, for they are they which testify of him to those who search them, and search for him in them.

[2.] He meets them at his table, in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and commonly there makes further discoveries of himself to them, is known to them in the breaking of bread. But,

[3.] The work is completed by the opening of the eyes of their mind, and causing the scales to fall off from them, as from Paul's in his conversion. If he that gives the revelation do not give the understanding, we are in the dark still.

He immediately disappeared: He vanished out of their sight. Aphantos egeneto--He withdrew himself from them, slipped away of a sudden, and went out of sight. Or, he became not visible by them, was made inconspicuous by them. It should seem that though Christ's body, after his resurrection, was the very same body in which he suffered and died, as appeared by the marks in it, yet it was so far changed as to become either visible or not visible as he thought fit to make it, which was a step towards its being made a glorious body. As soon as he had given his disciples one glimpse of him he was gone presently. Such short and transient views have we of Christ in this world; we see him, but in a little while lose the sight of him again. When we come to heaven the vision of him will have no interruptions.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

Here is the reflection which these disciples made upon this conference, and the report which they made of it to their brethren at Jerusalem.

1 The reflection they each of them made upon the influence which Christ's discourse had upon them (Lu 24:32): They said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us? "I am sure mine did," saith one; "And so did mine," saith the other, "I never was so affected with any discourse in all my life." Thus do they not so much compare notes as compare hearts, in the review of the sermon Christ had preached to them. They found the preaching powerful, even when they knew not the preacher. It

made things very plain and clear to them; and, which was more, brought a divine heat with a divine light into their souls, such as put their hearts into a glow, and kindled a holy fire of pious and devout affections in them. Now this they take notice of, for the confirming of their belief, that it was indeed, as at last they saw, Jesus himself that had been talking with them all along. "What fools were we, that we were not sooner aware who it was! For none but he, no word but his, could make our hearts burn within us as they did; it must be he that has the key of the heart; it could be no other."

See here,

(a) What preaching is likely to do good--such as Christ's was, plain preaching, and that which is familiar and level to our capacity--he talked with us by the way; and scriptural preaching--he opened to us the scriptures, the scriptures relating to himself. Ministers should show people their religion in their bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine to them than what is there; they must show that they make that the fountain of their knowledge and the foundation of their faith. Note, The expounding of those scriptures which speak of Christ has a direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples, both to quicken and to comfort them.

(b) What hearing is likely to do good--that which makes the heart burn; when we are much affected with the things of God, especially with the love of Christ in dying for us, and have our hearts thereby drawn out in love to him, and drawn up in holy desires and devotions, then our hearts burn within us; when our hearts are raised and elevated, and are as the sparks which fly upwards towards God, and when they are kindled and carried out with a holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, and we are in some measure refined and purified from it by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then we may say, "Through grace our hearts are thus inflamed."

2 The report they brought of this to their brethren at Jerusalem (Lu 24:33): They rose up the same hour, so transported with joy at the

discovery Christ had made of himself to them that they could not stay to make an end of their supper, but returned with all speed to Jerusalem, though it was towards evening. If they had had any thoughts of quitting their relation to Christ, this soon banished all such thoughts out of their mind, and there needed no more to send them back to his flock. It should seem that they intended at least to take up their quarters to-night at Emmaus; but now that they had seen Christ they could not rest till they had brought the good news to the disciples, both for the confirmation of their trembling faith and for the comfort of their sorrowful spirits, with the same comforts wherewith they were comforted of God. Note, It is the duty of those to whom Christ has manifested himself to let others know what he has done for their souls. When thou art converted, instructed, comforted, strengthen thy brethren. These disciples were full of this matter themselves, and must go to their brethren, to give vent to their joys, as well as to give them satisfaction that their Master was risen.

Observe,

(a) How they found them, just when they came in among them, discoursing on the same subject, and relating another proof of the resurrection of Christ. They found the eleven, and those that were their usual companions, gathered together late in the night, to pray together, it may be, and to consider what was to be done in this juncture; and they found them saying among themselves (legontas it is the saying of the eleven, not of the two, as is plain by the original), and when these two came in, they repeated to them with joy and triumph, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon, Lu 24:34. That Peter had a sight of him before the rest of the disciples had appears 1Co 15:5, where it is said, He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. The angel having ordered the women to tell Peter of it particularly (Mk 16:7), for his comfort, it is highly probable that our Lord Jesus did himself presently the same day appear to Peter, though we have no particular narrative of it, to confirm the word of his messengers. This he had related to his brethren; but, observe, Peter does not here proclaim it, and boast of it, himself (he thought this did not become a penitent), but the other disciples speak of it with exultation, The Lord is risen indeed, ontos--really; it is now past

dispute, no room is left to doubt it, for he has appeared not only to the women, but to Simon.

(b) How they seconded their evidence with an account of what they had seen (Lu 24:35): They told what things were done in the way. The words that were spoken by Christ to them in the way, having a wonderful effect and influence upon them, are here called the things that were done in the way; for the words that Christ speaks are not an empty sound, but they are spirit and they are life, and wondrous things are done by them, done by the way, by the by as it were, where it is not expected. They told also how he was at length known to them in the breaking of bread; then, when he was carving out blessings to them, God opened their eyes to discern who it was. Note, It would be of great use for the discovery and confirmation of truth if the disciples of Christ would compare their observations and experiences, and communicate to each other what they know and have felt in themselves.

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

34 saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

Five times Christ was seen the same day that he rose: by Mary Magdalene alone in the garden (Joh 20:14), by the women as they were going to tell the disciples (Mt 28:9), by Peter alone, by the two disciples going to Emmaus, and now at night by the eleven, of which we have an account in these verses, as also Joh 20:19. Observe,

The great surprise which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very seasonably, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection: As they thus spoke, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence

sufficient of their Master's resurrection or no, and how they should proceed, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and put it out of question.

Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort may expect further assurances, and that the Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and confirmed their testimony) that they are the children of God, and risen with Christ.

Observe,

1 The comfort Christ spoke to them: Peace be unto you. This intimates in general that it was a kind visit which Christ now paid them, a visit of love and friendship. Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals not with us as we deserve. They did not credit those who had seen him; therefore he comes himself, that they might not continue in their disconsolate incredulity. He had promised that after his resurrection he would see them in Galilee; but so desirous was he to see them, and satisfy them, that he anticipated the appointment and sees them at Jerusalem.

Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, Peace be to you; not in a way of compliment, but of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he had now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their old friends and take state upon them; but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to them that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him and the rest for running away from him; no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them, and was reconciled to them.

2 The fright which they put themselves into upon it (Lu 24:37): They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they

were aware. The word used (Mt 14:26), when they said It is a spirit, is phantasma, it is a spectre, an apparition; but the word here used is pneuma, the word that properly signifies a spirit; they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it, yet while we are here in this world of sense and matter it is a terror to us to have a spirit so far change its own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodes something, very extraordinary.

37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled ? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

The great satisfaction which his discourse gave them, wherein we have,

The reproof he gave them for their causeless fears: Why are you troubled, and why do frightful thoughts arise in your hearts? Lu 24:38.

Observe here,

(1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts; our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy. Sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart are the effect of the trouble, without are fightings and then within are fears. Those that are melancholy and troubled in mind have thoughts arising in their hearts which reflect dishonour upon God, and create disquiet to themselves. I am cut off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me.

(2.) That many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are disquieted arise from our mistakes concerning Christ. They here thought that they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright. We forget that Christ is our elder brother, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit

convincing and humbling us, when he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and this troubles us.

(3.) That all the troublesome thoughts which rise in our hearts at any time are known to the Lord Jesus, even at the first rise of them, and they are displeasing to him. He chid his disciples for such thoughts, to teach us to chide ourselves for them. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou troubled? Why do thoughts arise that are neither true nor good, that have neither foundation nor fruit, but hinder our joy in God, unfit us for our duty, give advantage to Satan, and deprive us of the comforts laid up for us?

39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the silencing of their fears by convincing them that he was not a spirit, and for the strengthening of their faith in that doctrine which they were to preach to the world by giving them full satisfaction concerning his resurrection. Two proofs he gives them:--

He shows them his body, particularly his hands and his feet. They saw that he had the shape, and features, and exact resemblance, of their Master; but is it not his ghost? "No," saith Christ, "behold my hands and my feet; you see I have hands and feet, and therefore have a true body; you see I can move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body; and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one." He lays down this principle--that a spirit has not flesh and bones; it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are. He does not tell us what a spirit is (it is time enough to know that when we go to the world of spirits), but what it is not: It has not flesh and bones. Now hence he infers, "It is I myself, whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is I myself, whom you have reason to rejoice in, and not to be afraid of." Those who know Christ aright, and know him as theirs, will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches.

[1.] He appeals to their sight, shows them his hands and his feet, which were pierced with the nails. Christ retained the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself; and he was willing that they should be seen. He afterwards showed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then have we to be ashamed of them, or of ours for him. As he showed his wounds here to his disciples, for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he showed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain (Re 5:6); his blood speaks, Heb 12:24. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction; he says to the Father, as here to the disciples, Behold my hands and my feet, Zec 13:6,7.

[2.] He appeals to their touch: Handle me, and see. He would not let Mary Magdalene touch him at that time, Joh 20:17. But the disciples here are entrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bade them handle him, that they might be convinced that he was not a spirit. If there were really no spirits, or apparitions of spirits (as by this and other instances it is plain that the disciples did believe there were), this had been a proper time for Christ to have undeceived them, by telling them there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted that there have been and may be apparitions of spirits, else what need was there of so much pains to prove that he was not one? There were many heretics in the primitive times, atheists I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a mere phantasm, which was neither really born nor truly suffered. Such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichees had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called Doketai and Phantysiastai. Blessed be God, these heresies have long since been buried; and we know and are sure that Jesus Christ was no spirit or apparition, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb.

He eats with them, to show that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend with another. Peter lays a great stress upon this (Ac 10:41): We did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

[1.] When they saw his hands and his feet, yet they knew not what to say, They believed not for joy, and wondered, Lu 24:41. It was their infirmity that they believed not, that yet they believed not, eti apistounton auton--they as yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the truth of Christ's resurrection that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, He is risen, when he is not, as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, He is not risen, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it, show that when afterwards they did believe it, and venture their all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be. But, though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; for it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them that they believed not: but, First, They believed not for joy, as Jacob, when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore weak because the love and desires are strong, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. Secondly, They wondered; they thought it not only too good, but too great, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

[2.] For their further conviction and encouragement, he called for some meat. He sat down to meat with the two disciples at Emmaus, but it is not said that he did eat with them; now, lest that should be made an objection, he here did actually eat with them and the rest, to show that his body was really and truly returned to life, though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly, with them, as he had done (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life, and to die again), because it was not agreeable to the economy of the state he was risen to. They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a

honey-comb, Lu 24:42. The honey-comb, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land flowing with honey. This was mean fare; yet, if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do, because in the kingdom of our Father they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

The insight he gave them into the word of God, which they had heard and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the difficulties are cleared.

(a) He refers them to the word which they had heard from him when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that as the angel had done (Lu 24:44): These are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you. We should better understand what Christ does, if we did but better remember what he hath said, and had but the art of comparing them together.

(b) He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, to which the word they had heard from him directed them: All things must be fulfilled which were written. Christ had given them this general hint for the regulating of their expectations--that whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him, what was written concerning his sufferings as well as what was written concerning his kingdom; these God had joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought that they should be put asunder in the event. All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar; he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, It is finished. The several parts of the Old Testament are here mentioned, as containing each of them things concerning Christ: The law of Moses, that is, the Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses,--the prophets, containing not only the books that are purely prophetical, but those historical books that were written by prophetical men,--the Psalms, containing the other writings, which they called the

Hagiographa. See in what various ways of writing God did of old reveal his will; but all proceeded from one and the self-same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for to him bore all the prophets witness.

(c) By an immediate present work upon their minds, of which they themselves could not but be sensible, he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old-Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him: Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, Lu 24:45. In his discourse with the two disciples he took the veil from off the text, by opening the scriptures; here he took the veil from off the heart, by opening the mind.

Observe here,

[1.] That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that are his. He has access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable how he did now after his resurrection give a specimen of those two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men, his enlightening the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigorating the active powers with a divine heat, when he made their hearts burn within them.

[2.] Even good men need to have their understandings opened; for though they are not darkness, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark. David prays, Open mine eyes. Give me understanding. And Paul, who knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more.

[3.] Christ's way of working faith in the soul, and gaining the throne there, is by opening the understanding to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan, as a thief and a robber, climbs up some other way.

[4.] The design of opening the understanding is that we may understand the scriptures; not that we may be wise above what is written, but that we

may be wiser in what is written, and may be made wise to salvation by it. The Spirit in the word and the Spirit in the heart say the same thing. Christ's scholars never learn above their bibles in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more out of their bibles, and to grow more ready and mighty in the scriptures. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and have our mistakes concerning him rectified, there needs no more than to be made to understand the scriptures.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,

46 and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

The instructions he gave them as apostles, who were to be employed in setting up his kingdom in the world. They expected, while their Master was with them, that they should be preferred to posts of honour, of which they thought themselves quite disappointed when he was dead. "No," saith, he, "you are now to enter upon them; you are to be witnesses of these things (Lu 24:48), to carry the notice of them to all the world; not only to report them as matter of news, but to assert them as evidence given upon the trial of the great cause that has been so long depending between God and Satan, the issue of which must be the casting down and casting out of the prince of this world. You are fully assured of these things yourselves, you are eye and ear-witnesses of them; go, and assure the world of them; and the same Spirit that has enlightened you shall go along with you for the enlightening of others." Now here they are told,

What they must preach. They must preach the gospel, must preach the New Testament as the full accomplishment of the Old, as the continuation and conclusion of divine revelation. They must take their bibles along with them (especially when they preached to the Jews; nay, and Peter, in his first sermon to the Gentiles, directed them to consult the prophets, Ac 10:43), and must show people how it was written of old concerning the Messiah, and the glories and graces of his kingdom, and then must tell them how, upon their certain knowledge, all this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

The great gospel truth concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be published to the children of men (Lu 24:46): Thus it was

written in the sealed book of the divine counsels from eternity, the volume of that book of the covenant of redemption; and thus it was written in the open book of the Old Testament, among the things revealed; and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer, for the divine counsels must be performed, and care taken that no word of God fall to the ground. "Go, and tell the world," First, "That Christ suffered, as it was written of him. Go, preach Christ crucified; be not ashamed of his cross, not ashamed of a suffering Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, and why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it behoved him to suffer, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin: nay, it became him to be perfected through sufferings," Heb 2:10. Secondly, "That he rose from the dead on the third day, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this also the scriptures were fulfilled (see 1Co 15:3,4); go, tell the world how often you saw him after he rose from the dead, and how intimately you conversed with him. Your eyes see" (as Joseph said to his brethren, when his discovering himself to them was as life from the dead) "that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you, Ge 45:12. Go, and tell them, then, that he that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave,"

47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The great gospel duty of repentance must be pressed upon the children of men. Repentance for sin must be preached in Christ's name, and by his authority, Lu 24:47. All men every where must be called and commanded to repent, Ac 17:30. "Go, and tell all people that the God that made them, and the Lord that bought them, expects and requires that, immediately upon this notice given, they turn from the worship of the gods that they have made to the worship of the God that made them; and not only so, but from serving the interests of the world and the flesh; they must turn to the service of God in Christ, must mortify all sinful habits, and forsake all sinful practices. Their hearts and lives must be changed, and they must be universally renewed and reformed."

The great gospel privilege of the remission of sins must be proposed to all, and assured to all that repent, and believe the gospel. "Go, tell a guilty world, that stands convicted and condemned at God's bar, that an act of indemnity has passed the royal assent, which all that repent and believe shall have the benefit of, and not only be pardoned, but preferred by. Tell them that there is hope concerning them."

To whom they must preach. Whither must they carry these proposals, and how far does their commission extend? They are here told,

[1.] That they must preach this among all nations. They must disperse themselves, like the sons of Noah after the flood, some one way and some another, and carry this light along with them wherever they go. The prophets had preached repentance and remission to the Jews, but the apostles must preach them to all the world. None are exempted from the obligations the gospel lays upon men to repent, nor are any excluded from those inestimable benefits which are included in the remission of sins, but those that by their unbelief and impenitency put a bar in their own door.

[2.] That they must begin at Jerusalem There they must preach their first gospel sermon; there the gospel church must be first formed; there the gospel day must dawn, and thence that light shall go forth which must take hold on the ends of the earth. And why must they begin there? First, Because thus it was written, and therefore it behoved them to take this method. The word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem, Isa 2:3. And see Joe 2:32,3:16,Ob 1:21,Zec 14:8. Secondly, Because there the matters of fact on which the gospel was founded were transacted; and therefore there they were first attested, where, if there had been any just cause for it, they might be best contested and disproved. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer that it dares face those daring enemies of his that had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. "Begin at Jerusalem, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may rage to see themselves disappointed." Thirdly, Because he would give us a further example of forgiving enemies. Jerusalem had put the greatest affronts imaginable upon him (both the rulers and the multitude), for which that city might

justly have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity; but no, so far from that, the first offer of gospel grace is made to Jerusalem, and thousands there are in a little time brought to partake of that grace.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

What assistance they should have in preaching. It is a vast undertaking that they are here called to, a very large and difficult province, especially considering the opposition this service would meet with, and the sufferings it would be attended with. If therefore they ask, Who is sufficient for these things? here is an answer ready: Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and you shall be endued with power from on high, Lu 24:49. He here assures them that in a little time the Spirit should be poured out upon them in greater measures than ever, and they should thereby be furnished with all those gifts and graces which were necessary to their discharge of this great trust; and therefore they must tarry at Jerusalem, and not enter upon it till this be done.

Note,

[1.] Those who receive the Holy Ghost are thereby endued with a power from on high, a supernatural power, a power above any of their own; it is from on high, and therefore draws the soul upward, and makes it to aim high.

[2.] Christ's apostles could never have planted his gospel, and set up his kingdom in the world, as they did, if they had not been endued with such a power; and their admirable achievements prove that there was an excellency of power going along with them.

[3.] This power from on high was the promise of the Father, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ was of the Old Testament. And, if it be the promise of the Father, we may be sure that the promise is inviolable and the thing promised invaluable.

[4.] Christ would not leave his disciples till the time was just at hand for the performing of this promise. It was but ten days after the ascension of Christ that there came the descent of the Spirit.

[5.] Christ's ambassadors must stay till they have their powers, and not venture upon their embassy till they have received full instructions and credentials. Though, one would think, never was such haste as now for the preaching of the gospel, yet the preachers must tarry till they be endued with power from on high, and tarry at Jerusalem, though a place of danger, because there this promise of the Father was to find them, Joe 2:28.

The Ascension

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

Amen.

The Gospel According To St. John

[John]

John-1

The Word Made Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In the beginning. This expression is used also in Gen 1:1. To that place John evidently has allusion here, and means to apply to "the Word" an expression which is there applied to God. In both places it clearly means "before creation," "before the world was made," "when as yet there was nothing." The meaning is, that the Word had an existence before the world was created. This is not spoken of the man Jesus, but of that which became a man, or was incarnate, Jn 1:14. The Hebrews, by expressions like this, commonly denoted eternity. Thus the eternity of God is described (Ps 90:2): Before the mountains were brought forth, &c.; and eternity is commonly expressed by the phrase, before the foundation of the world. Whatever is meant by the term "Word," it is clear that it had an existence before creations. It is not, then, a creature or created being, and must be, therefore, uncreated and eternal. There is but one Being that is uncreated, and Jesus must be therefore divine. Compare the Saviour's own declarations respecting himself in the following places: Jn 8:58, 17:5, 6:62, 3:13, 6:46, 8:14, 16:28.

Was the Word. Greek, "was the Logos." This name is given to him who afterward became flesh, or was incarnate (Jn 1:14)--that is, to the Messiah. Whatever is meant by it, therefore, is applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been many opinions about the reason why this name was given to the Son of God. Those opinions it is unnecessary to repeat. The opinion which seems most plausible may be expressed as follows:

1st. A word is that by which we communicate our will; by which we convey our thoughts;

2nd. The Son of God may be called "the Word," because he is the medium by which God promulgates his will and issues his commandments. See Heb 1:1-3.

3rd. This term was in use before the time of John.

(a) It was used in the Chaldee translation of the Old Testament, as, e.g., Is 45:12: "I have made the earth, and created man upon it." In the Chaldee it is, "I, by my word, have made," &c. Isa 48:13: "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth." In the Chaldee, "By my word I have founded the earth." And so in many other places.

(b) This term was used by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. In their writings he was commonly known by the term "Mimra "--that is, "Word;" and no small part of the interpositions of God in defence of the Jewish nation were declared to be by "the Word of God." Thus, in their Targum on De 26:17,18, it is said, "Ye have appointed THE WORD OF GOD a king over you this day, that he may be your God."

(c) The term was used by the Jews who were scattered among the Gentiles, and especially those who were conversant with the Greek philosophy.

(d) It is possible that the doctrines of the Gnostics had begun to spread in the time of John. They were an Oriental sect, and held that the Logos or Word was one of the AEons that had been created, and that this one had been united to the man Jesus. If that doctrine had begun then to prevail, it was of the more importance for John to settle the truth in regard to the rank of the Logos or Word. This he has done in such a way that there need be no doubt about its meaning.

Was with God. This expression denotes friendship or intimacy. Comp. Mk 9:19. John affirms that he was with God in the beginning-- that is, before the world was made. It implies, therefore, that he was partaker of the divine glory; that he was blessed and happy with God. It proves that he was intimately united with the Father, so as to partake of his glory and to be

appropriately called by the name God. He has himself explained it. See Jn 17:5: And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. See also Jn 1:18: No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, which IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, he hath declared him. See also Jn 3:13: The Son of man, which is in heaven. Comp. Php 2:6,7.

Was God. In the previous phrase John had said that the Word was with God. Lest it should be supposed that he was a different and inferior being, he here states that he was God. There is no more unequivocal declaration in the Bible than this, and there could be no stronger proof that the sacred writer meant to affirm that the Son of God was equal with the Father; for,

1st. There is no doubt that by the Logos is meant Jesus Christ.

2nd. This is not an attribute or quality of God, but is a real subsistence, for it is said that the Logos was made flesh--that is, became a man.

3rd. There is no variation here in the manuscripts, and critics have observed that the Greek will bear no other construction than what is expressed in our translation-that the Word was God.

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Was in the beginning with God. This seems to be a repetition of what was said in the first verse; but it is stated over again to guard the doctrine, and to prevent the possibility of a mistake. John had said that he existed before the creation, and that he was with God; but he had not said in the first verse that the union with God existed in the beginning. He now expresses that idea, and assures us that that union was not one which was commenced in time, and which might be, therefore, a mere union of feeling, or a compact, like that between any other beings, but was one which existed in eternity, and which was therefore a union of nature or essence.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

All things. The universe. The expression cannot be limited to any part of the universe. It appropriately expresses everything which exists--all the vast

masses of material worlds, and all the animals and things, great or small, that compose those worlds. See Rev 4:11, Heb 1:2, Col 1:16.

By him. In this place it is affirmed that creation was effected by the Word, or the Son of God. In Gen 1:1, it is said that the Being who created the heavens and the earth was God. In Ps 102:25-28, this work is ascribed to Jehovah. The Word, or the Son of God, is therefore appropriately called God. The work of creation is uniformly ascribed in the Scriptures to the second person of the Trinity. See Col 1:16, Heb 1:2. By this is meant, evidently, that he was the agent, or the efficient cause, by which the universe was made. There is no higher proof of omnipotence than the work of creation; and hence God often appeals to that work to prove that he is the true God, in opposition to idols. See Isa 40:18-28 Jer 10:3-16, Ps 24:2, 39:11, Prov 3:19. It is absurd to say that God can invest a creature with omnipotence. If he can make a creature omnipotent, he can make him omniscient, and can in the same way make him omnipresent, and infinitely wise and good; that is, he can invest a creature with all his own attributes, or make another being like himself, or, which is the same thing, there could be two Gods, or as many Gods as he should choose to make. But this is absurd. The Being, therefore, that created all things must be divine; and as this work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, and as it is uniformly in the Scriptures declared to be the work of God, Jesus Christ is therefore equal with the Father.

Without him. Without his agency; his notice; the exertion of his power. Comp. Mt 10:29. This is a strong way of speaking, designed to confirm, beyond the possibility of doubt, what he had just said. He says, therefore, in general, that all things were made by Christ. In this part of the verse he shuts out all doubt, and affirms that there was no exceptions; that there was not a single thing, however minute or unimportant, which was not made by him. In this way he confirms what he said in the first verse. Christ was not merely called God, but he did the works of God, and therefore the name is used in its proper sense as implying supreme divinity. To this same test Jesus himself appealed as proving that he was divine. Jn 10:37: If I do not THE WORKS of my Father, believe me not. Jn 5:17: MY FATHER worketh hitherto, and I work.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

In him was life. The evangelist had just affirmed Jn 1:3 that by the Logos or Word the world was originally created. One part of that creation consisted in breathing into man the breath of life, Gen 2:7. God is declared to be life, or the living God, because he is the source or fountain of life. This attribute is here ascribed to Jesus Christ. He not merely made the material worlds, but he also gave life. He was the agent by which the vegetable world became animated; by which brutes live; and by which man became a living soul, or was endowed with immortality. This was a higher proof that the "Word was God," than the creation of the material worlds; but there is another sense in which he was life. The new creation, or the renovation of man and his restoration from a state of sin, is often compared with the first creation; and as the Logos was the source of life then, so, in a similar but higher sense, he is the source of life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins, Eph 2:1. And it is probably in reference to this that he is so often called life in the writings of John. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," Jn 5:26; "He giveth life unto the world," Jn 6:33; "I am the resurrection and the life," Jn 11:25; "This is the true God and eternal life," 1Jn 5:20. See also 1Jn 1:1,2, 5:11, Acts 3:15, Col 3:4. The meaning is, that he is the source or the fountain of both natural and spiritual life. Of course he has the attributes of God.

The life was the light of men. Light is that by which we see objects distinctly. The light of the sun enables us to discern the form, the distance, the magnitude, and the relation of objects, and prevents the perplexities and dangers which result from a state of darkness. Light is in all languages, therefore, put for knowledge --for whatever enables us to discern our duty, and that saves us from the evils of ignorance and error. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light," Eph 5:13. See Isa 8:20, 9:2 The Messiah was predicted as the light of the world, Isa 9:2, compared with Mt 4:15,16; Isa 60:1. See Jn 8:12, "I am the light of the world;" Jn 12:35, 36, 46 "I am come a light into the world." The meaning is, that the Logos or Word of God is the instructor or teacher of man-kind. This was done before his advent by his direct agency in giving man reason or understanding, and in giving his law, for the "law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal 3:19); after his advent by his personal ministry when on earth, by his Spirit (Jn 14:16,26), and by his ministers since, Eph 4:11, 1Cor 12:28.

The original of life and light that is in him: In him was life, Joh 1:4. This further proves that he is God, and every way qualified for his undertaking; for,

(1.) He has life in himself; not only the true God, but the living God. God is life; he swears by himself when he saith, As I live.

(2.) All living creatures have their life in him; not only all the matter of the creation was made by him, but all the life too that is in the creation is derived from him and supported by him. It was the Word of God that produced the moving creatures that had life, Ge 1:20,Ac 17:25. He is that Word by which man lives more than by bread, Mt 4:4.

(3.) Reasonable creatures have their light from him; that life which is the light of men comes from him. Life in man is something greater and nobler than it is in other creatures; it is rational, and not merely animal. When man became a living soul, his life was light, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above, the beasts that perish. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him fit to undertake our salvation; for life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man, who lies so much under the power of death and darkness, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him who gave us the light of human reason? And if, when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how readily should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us eternal life, and that life too is in his Son!

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

Barnes Commentary:

The light shineth in darkness. Darkness, in the Bible, commonly denotes ignorance, guilt, or misery. See Is 9:1, 2, Mt 4:16, Acts 26:18, Eph 5:8, 11, Rev 13:12. It refers here to a wicked and ignorant people. When it is said that "the light shineth in darkness," it is meant that the Lord Jesus came to

teach an ignorant, benighted, and wicked world: This has always been the case. It was so when he sent his prophets; so during his own ministry; and so in every age since. His efforts to enlighten and save men have been like light struggling to penetrate a thick, dense cloud; and though a few rays may pierce the gloom, yet the great mass is still an impenetrable shade.

Comprehended it not. This word means admitted it not, or received it not. The word comprehend, with us, means to understand. This is not the meaning of the original. The darkness did not receive or admit the rays of light; the shades were so thick that the light could not penetrate them; or, to drop the figure, men were so ignorant, so guilty, so debased, that they did not appreciate the value of his instructions; they despised and rejected him. And so it is still. The great mass of men, sunk in sin, will not receive his teachings, and be enlightened and saved by him. Sin always blinds the mind to the beauty and excellency of the character of the Lord Jesus. It indisposes the mind to receive his instructions, just as darkness has no affinity for light; and if the one exists, the other must be displaced.

MH commentary:

The manifestation of him to the children of men. It might be objected, If this eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little taken notice of and regarded? To this he answers (Joh 1:5), The light shines, but the darkness comprehends it not. Observe,

(a) The discovery of the eternal Word to the lapsed world, even before he was manifested in the flesh: The light shineth in darkness. Light is self-evidencing, and will make itself known; this light, whence the light of men comes, hath shone, and doth shine. [1.] The eternal Word, as God, shines in the darkness of natural conscience. Though men by the fall are become darkness, yet that which may be known of God is manifested in them; see Ro 1:19,20. The light of nature is this light shining in darkness. Something of the power of the divine Word, both as creating and as commanding, all mankind have an innate sense of; were it not for this, earth would be a hell, a place of utter darkness; blessed be God, it is not so yet. [2.] The eternal Word, as Mediator, shone in the darkness of the Old-Testament types and

figures, and the prophecies and promises which were of the Messiah from the beginning. He that had commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness was himself long a light shining in darkness; there was a veil upon this light, 2Co 3:13.

(b) The disability of the degenerate world to receive this discovery: The darkness comprehended it not; the most of men received the grace of God in these discoveries in vain.

[1.] The world of mankind comprehended not the natural light that was in their understandings, but became vain in their imaginations concerning the eternal God and the eternal Word, Ro 1:21,28. The darkness of error and sin overpowered and quite eclipsed this light. God spoke once, yea twice, but man perceived it not, Job 33:14.

[2.] The Jews, who had the light of the Old Testament, yet comprehended not Christ in it. As there was a veil upon Moses's face, so there was upon the people's hearts. In the darkness of the types and shadows the light shone; but such as the darkness of their understandings that they could not see it. It was therefore requisite that Christ should come, both to rectify the errors of the Gentile world and to improve the truths of the Jewish church.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

That all men, &c. It was the object of John's testimony that all men might believe. He designed to prepare them for it; to announce that the Messiah was about to come, to direct the minds of men to him, and thus to fit them to believe on him when he came. Thus he baptized them, saying "That they should believe on him who should come after him" (Acts 19:4), and thus he produced a very general expectation that the Messiah was about to come. The testimony of John was peculiarly valuable on the following accounts:

1st. It was made when he had no personal acquaintance with Jesus of Nazareth, and of course there could have been no collusion or agreement to deceive them,

2nd. It was sufficiently long before he came to excite general attention, and to fix the mind on it.

3rd. It was that of a man acknowledged by all to be a prophet of God--"for all men held John to be a prophet," Mt 21:26.

4th. It was for the express purpose of declaring beforehand that he was about to appear.

5th. It was disinterested. He was himself extremely popular. Many were disposed to receive him as the Messiah. It was evidently in his power to form a large party, and to be regarded extensively as the Christ. This was the highest honour to which a Jew could aspire; and it shows the value of John's testimony, that he was willing to lay all his honours at the feet of Jesus, and to acknowledge that he was unworthy to perform for him the office of the humblest servant, Mt 3:11.

Was not that Light. Was not the Messiah. This is an explicit declaration designed to satisfy the disciples of John. The evidence that he was not the Messiah he states in the following verses.

From the conduct of John here we may learn,

1st. The duty of laying all our honours at the feet of Jesus.

2nd. As John came that all might believe, so it is no less true of the ministry of Jesus himself. He came for a similar purpose, and we may ALL, therefore, trust in him for salvation.

3rd. We should not rely too much on ministers of the gospel. They cannot save us any more than John could; and their office, as his was, is simply to direct men to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Christ was the true Light (Joh 1:9); not as if John Baptist were a false light, but, in comparison with Christ, he was a very small light. Christ is the great light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called so: Christ is the true light. The fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true light. He is the true light, for proof of which we are not referred to the emanations of his glory in the invisible world (the beams with which he enlightens that), but to those rays of his light which are darted downwards, and with which this dark world of ours is enlightened. But how does Christ enlighten every man that comes into the world?

(1.) By his creating power he enlightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the comfort it gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ.

(2.) By the publication of his gospel to all nations he does in effect enlighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true light, for he is a light to enlighten the Gentiles. His everlasting gospel is to be preached to every nation and language, Re 14:6. Like the sun which enlightens every man that will open his eyes, and receive its light (Ps 19:6), to which the preaching of the gospel is compared. See Ro 10:18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined, as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people, Mt 5:15.

(3.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace he enlightens all those that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him perish in darkness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is said to be in the face of Jesus Christ, and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commanded to shine out of darkness, and which enlightens every man that comes into the world. Whatever light any man has, he is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He was in the world. This refers, probably, not to his pre-existence, but to the fact that he became incarnate; that he dwelt among men.

And the world was made by him. This is a repetition of what is said in Jn 1:3. Not only men, but all material things, were made by him. These facts are mentioned here to make what is said immediately after more striking, to wit, that men did not receive him. The proofs which he furnished that they ought to receive him were,

1st. Those given while he was in the world--the miracles that he wrought and his instructions; and,

2nd. The fact that the world was made by him, It was remarkable that the world did not know or approve its own maker.

The world knew him not. The word knew is sometimes used in the sense of approving or loving, Ps 1:6, Mt 7:23. In this sense it may be used here. The world did not love or approve him, but rejected him and put him to death. Or it may mean that they did not understand or know that he was the Messiah; for had the Jews known and believed that he was the Messiah, they would not have put him to death, 1Cor 2:8: "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Yet they might have known it, and therefore they were not the less to blame.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

He came unto his own. His own land or country. It was called his land because it was the place of his birth, and also because it was the chosen land where God delighted to dwell and to manifest his favour. See Isa 5:1-7. Over that land the laws of God had been extended, and that land had been regarded as peculiarly his, Ps 147:19,20.

His own. His own people. There is a distinction here in the original words which is not preserved in the translation. It may be thus expressed: "He came to his own land and his own people received him not." They were his people, because God had chosen them to be his above all other nations; had given to them his laws; and had signally protected and favoured them, De 7:6, 14:2.

Received him not. Did not acknowledge him to be the Messiah. They rejected him and put him to death, agreeably to the prophecy, Isa 53:3,4. From this we learn,

1st. That it is reasonable to expect that those who have been peculiarly favoured should welcome the message of God. God had a right to expect, after all that had been done for the Jews, that they would receive the message of eternal life. So he has a right to expect that we should embrace him and be saved. Yet,

2nd. It is not the abundance of mercies that incline men to seek God. The Jews had been signally favoured, but they rejected him. So, many in Christian lands live and die rejecting the Lord Jesus.

3rd. Men are alike in every age. All would reject the Saviour if left to themselves. All men are by nature wicked. There is no more certain and universal proof of this than the universal rejection of the Lord Jesus.

13 which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

That yet there was a remnant who owned him, and were faithful to him. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that received him (Joh 1:12): But as many as received him. Though Israel were not gathered, yet Christ was glorious. Though the body of that nation persisted and perished in unbelief, yet there were many of them that were wrought upon to submit to Christ, and many more that were not of that fold. Observe here,

[1.] The true Christian's description and property; and that is, that he receives Christ, and believes on his name; the latter explains the former. Note, First, To be a Christian indeed is to believe on Christ's name; it is to assent to the gospel discovery, and consent to the gospel proposal, concerning him. His name is the Word of God; the King of kings, the Lord our righteousness; Jesus a Saviour. Now to believe on his name is to acknowledge that he is what these great names bespeak him to be, and to acquiesce in it, that he may be so to us. Secondly, Believing in Christ's name is receiving him as a gift from God. We must receive his doctrine as true

and good; receive his law as just and holy; receive his offers as kind and advantageous; and we must receive the image of his grace, and impressions of his love, as the governing principle of our affections and actions.

[2.] The true Christian's dignity and privilege are twofold:--

First, The privilege of adoption, which takes them into the number of God's children: To them gave he power to become the sons of God. Hitherto, the adoption pertained to the Jews only (Israel is my son, my first-born); but now, by faith in Christ, Gentiles are the children of God, Ga 3:26. They have power, exousian--authority; for no man taketh this power to himself, but he who is authorized by the gospel charter. To them gave he a right; to them gave he this pre-eminence. This power have all the saints. Note, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all good Christians, that they are become the children of God. They were by nature children of wrath, children of this world. If they be the children of God, they become so, are made so Fiunt, non nascuntur Christiani--Persons are not born Christians, but made such.--Tertullian. Behold what manner of love is this, 1Jo 3:1. God calls them his children, they call him Father, and are entitled to all the privileges of children, those of their way and those of their home. 2 The privilege of adoption is entirely owing to Jesus Christ; he gave this power to them that believe on his name. God is his Father, and so ours; and it is by virtue of our espousals to him, and union with him, that we stand related to God as a Father. It was in Christ that we were predestinated to the adoption; from him we receive both the character and the Spirit of adoption, and he is the first-born among many brethren. The Son of God became a Son of man, that the sons and daughters of men might become the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

Secondly, The privilege of regeneration (Joh 1:13): Which were born. Note, All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted are regenerated. This real change evermore attends that relative one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children. Men cannot do so when they adopt. Now here we have an account of the original of this new birth.

1. Negatively.

(a) It is not propagated by natural generation from our parents. It is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of corruptible seed, 1Pe 1:23. Man is called flesh and blood, because thence he has his original: but we do not become the children of God as we become the children of our natural parents. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, as corruption does. Man polluted begat a son in his own likeness (Ge 5:3); but man sanctified and renewed does not beget a son in that likeness. The Jews gloried much in their parentage, and the noble blood that ran in their veins: We are Abraham's seed; and therefore to them pertained the adoption because they were born of that blood; but this New-Testament adoption is not founded in any such natural relation.

(b) It is not produced by the natural power of our own will. As it is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, so neither is it of the will of man, which labours under a moral impotency of determining itself to that which is good; so that the principles of the divine life are not of our own planting, it is the grace of God that makes us willing to be his. Nor can human laws or writings prevail to sanctify and regenerate a soul; if they could, the new birth would be by the will of man.

But,

2. Positively:

it is of God. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means (1Pe 1:23), and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole author. True believers are born of God, 1Jo 3:9,5:1. And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the love of God if we have not something of his likeness, nor claim the privileges of adoption if we be not under the power of regeneration.

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me.

ohn bare witness of him. The evangelist now returns to the testimony of John the Baptist. He had stated that the Word became incarnate, and he now appeals to the testimony of John to show that, thus incarnate, he was the Messiah.

Is preferred before me. Is superior to me. Most critics have supposed that the words translated "is preferred" relate to time, and not to dignity; meaning that though he came after him publicly, being six months younger than John, as well as entering on his work after John, yet that he had existed long before him. Most, however, have understood it more correctly, as our translators seem to have done, as meaning, He was worthy of more honour than I am.

He was before me. This can refer to nothing but his preexistence, and can be explained only on the supposition that he existed before John, or, as the evangelist had before shown, from the beginning. He came after John in his public ministry and in his human nature, but in his divine nature he had existed long before John had a being--from eternity. We may learn here that it is one mark of the true spirit of a minister of Christ to desire and feel that Christ is always to be preferred to ourselves. We should keep ourselves out of view. The great object is to hold up the Saviour; and however much ministers may be honoured or blessed, yet they should lay all at the feet of Jesus, and direct all men to him as the undivided object of affection and honour. It is the business of every Christian, as well as of every Christian minister, to be a witness for Christ, and to endeavour to convince the world that he is worthy of confidence and love.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

Of his fullness. In Jn 1:14 the evangelist has said that Christ was full of grace and truth. Of that fulness he now says that all the disciples had received; that is, they derived from his abundant truth and mercy grace to understand the plan of salvation, to preach the gospel, to live lives of holiness; they partook of the numerous blessings which he came to impart by his instructions and his death. These are undoubtedly not the words of John the Baptist, but of the evangelist John, the writer of this gospel. They are a continuation of what he was saying in the 14th verse, the 15th verse being evidently thrown in as a

parenthesis. The declaration had not exclusive reference, probably, to the apostles, but it is extended to all Christians, for all believers have received of the fulness of grace and truth that is in Christ. Comp. Eph 1:23, 3:19, Col 1:19, 2:9. In all these places our Saviour is represented as the fulness of God--as abounding in mercy, as exhibiting the divine attributes, and as possessing in himself all that is necessary to fill his people with truth, and grace, and love.

Grace for grace. Many interpretations of this phrase have been proposed. The chief are briefly the following:

1st. "We have received, under the gospel, grace or favour, instead of those granted under the law; and God has added by the gospel important favours to those which he gave under the law." This was first proposed by Chrysostom.

2nd. "We, Christians, have received grace answering to, or corresponding to that which is in Jesus Christ. We are like him in meekness, humility," &c.

3rd. "We have received grace as grace--that is, freely. We have not purchased it nor deserved it, but God has conferred it on us freely" (Grotius).

4th. The meaning is, probably, simply that we have received through him abundance of grace or favour. The Hebrews, in expressing the him. He knew him intima superlative degree of comparison, used simply to repeat the word--thus, "pits, pits," meaning many pits (Hebrew in Gen 14:10). So here grace for grace may mean much grace; superlative favours bestowed on man; favours superior to all that had been under the law --superior to all other things that God can confer on men. These favours consist in pardon, redemption, protection, sanctification, peace here, and heaven hereafter.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

es. By Moses, as the servant of God. He was the great legislator of the Jews, by whom, under God, their polity was formed. The law worketh wrath (Rom 4:15); it was attended with many burdensome rites and ceremonies (Acts 15:10); it was preparatory to another state of things. The gospel succeeded

that and took its place, and thus showed the greatness of the gospel economy, as well as its grace and truth.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. A system of religion full of favours, and the true system, was revealed by him. The old system was one of law, and shadows, and burdensome rites; this was full of mercy to mankind, and was true in all things. We may learn from these verses--

1st. That all our mercies come from Jesus Christ.

2nd. "All true believers receive from Christ's fulness the best and greatest saints cannot live without him, the meanest and weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting that we have nothing but we have received it, and silenceth perplexing fears that we want nothing but we may receive it."

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

No man hath seen God at any time. This declaration is probably made to show the superiority of the revelation of Jesus above that of any previous dispensation. It is said, therefore, that Jesus had an intimate knowledge of God, which neither Moses nor any of the ancient prophets had possessed. God is invisible; no human eyes have seen him; but Christ had a knowledge of God which might be expressed to our apprehension by saying that he saw him intimately and completely, and was therefore fitted to make a fuller manifestation of him. See Jn 5:37, 6:46, 1Jn 4:12, Ex 33:20, Jn 14:9. This passage is not meant to deny that men had witnessed manifestations of God, as when he appeared to Moses and the prophets (comp. Nu 12:8, Is 6:1-13); but it is meant that no one has seen the essence of God, or has fully known God. The prophets delivered what they heard God speak; Jesus what he knew of God as his equal, and as understanding fully his nature.

The only-begotten Son. Jn 1:14. This verse shows John's sense of the meaning of that phrase, as denoting an intimate and full knowledge of God.

In the bosom of the Father. This expression is taken from the custom among the Orientals of reclining at their meals. Mt 23:6. It denotes intimacy, friendship, affection. Here it means that Jesus had a knowledge of God such

as one friend has of another-- knowledge of his character, designs, and nature which no other one possesses, and which renders him, therefore, qualified above all others to make him known.

Hath declared him. Hath fully revealed him or made him known. Comp. Heb 1:1,4. This verse proves that, Jesus had a knowledge of God above that which any of the ancient prophets had, and that the fullest revelations of his character are to be expected in the gospel. By his Word and Spirit he can enlighten and guide us, and lead us to the true knowledge of God; and there is no true and full knowledge of God which is not obtained through his Son. Comp. Jn 14:6, 1Jn 2:22,23.

The Testimony of John the Baptist

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

When the Jews sent. John's fame was great. See Mt 3:5. It spread from the region of Galilee to Jerusalem, and the nation seemed to suppose, from the character of his preaching, that he was the Messiah, Lk 3:15. The great council of the nation, or the Sanhedrim, had, among other things, the charge of religion. They felt it to be their duty, therefore, to inquire into the character and claims of John, and to learn whether he was the Messiah. It is not improbable that they wished that he might be the long-expected Christ, and were prepared to regard him as such.

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No.

What was the answer he gave them, and his account, both concerning himself and concerning his baptism, in both which he witnessed to Christ.

Concerning himself, and what he professed himself to be. They asked him, Sy tis ei--Thou, who art thou? John's appearing in the world was surprising. He was in the wilderness till the day of his showing unto Israel. His spirit, his converse, he doctrine, had something in them which commanded and gained respect; but he did not, as seducers do, give out himself to be some

great one. He was more industrious to do good than to appear great; and therefore waived saying any thing of himself till he was legally interrogated. Those speak best for Christ that say least of themselves, whose own works praise them, not their own lips. He answers their interrogatory,

Negatively. He was not that great one whom some took him to be. God's faithful witnesses stand more upon their guard against undue respect than against unjust contempt. Paul writes as warmly against those that overvalued him, and said, I am of Paul, as against those that undervalued him, and said that his bodily presence was weak; and he rent his clothes when he was called a god.

[1.] John disowns himself to be the Christ (Joh 1:20): He said, I am not the Christ, who was now expected and waited for. Note, The ministers of Christ must remember that they are not Christ, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. They are not Christ, and therefore must not lord it over God's heritage, nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of Christians. They cannot created grace and peace; they cannot enlighten, convert, quicken, comfort; for they are not Christ. Observe how emphatically this is here expressed concerning John: He confessed, and denied not, but confessed; it denotes his vehemence and constancy in making this protestation. Note, Temptations to pride, and assuming that honour to ourselves which does not belong to us, ought to be resisted with a great deal of vigour and earnestness. When John was taken to be the Messiah, he did not connive at it with a Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur--If the people will be deceived, let them; but openly and solemnly, without any ambiguities, confessed, I am not the Christ; hoti ouk eimi ego ho Christos--I am not the Christ, not I; another is at hand, who is he, but I am not. His disowning himself to be the Christ is called his confessing and not denying Christ. Note, Those that humble and abase themselves thereby confess Christ, and give honour to him; but those that will not deny themselves do in effect deny Christ,

[2.] He disowns himself to be Elias, Joh 1:21. The Jews expected the person of Elias to return from heaven, and to live among them, and promised themselves great things from it. Hearing of John's character, doctrine, and baptism, and observing that he appeared as one dropped from heaven, in the

same part of the country from which Elijah was carried to heaven, it is no wonder that they were ready to take him for this Elijah; but he disowned this honour too. He was indeed prophesied of under the name of Elijah (Mal 4:5), and he came in the spirit and power of Elias (Lu 1:17), and was the Elias that was to come (Mt 11:14); but he was not the person of Elias, not that Elias that went to heaven in the fiery chariot, as he was that met Christ in his transfiguration. He was the Elias that God had promised, not the Elias that they foolishly dreamed of. Elias did come, and they knew him not (Mt 17:12); nor did he make himself known to them as the Elias, because they had promised themselves such an Elias as God never promised them.

[3.] He disowns himself to be that prophet, or the prophet. First, He was not that prophet which Moses said the Lord would raise up to them of their brethren, like unto him. If they meant this, they needed not ask that question, for that prophet was no other than the Messiah, and he had said already, I am not the Christ. Secondly, He was not such a prophet as they expected and wished for, who, like Samuel and Elijah, and some other of the prophets, would interpose in public affairs, and rescue them from under the Roman yoke. Thirdly, He was not one of the old prophets raised from the dead, as they expected one to come before Elias, as Elias before the Messiah. Fourthly, Though John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, yet he had his revelation, not by dreams and visions, as the Old-Testament prophets had theirs; his commission and work were of another nature, and belonged to another dispensation. If John had said that he was Elias, and was a prophet, he might have made his words good; but ministers must, upon all occasions, express themselves with the utmost caution, both that they may not confirm people in any mistakes, and particularly that they may not give occasion to any to think of them above what is meet.

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.

Affirmatively. The committee that was sent to examine him pressed for a positive answer (Joh 1:22), urging the authority of those that sent them, which they expected he should pay a deference to: "Tell us, What art thou? not that we may believe thee, and be baptized by three, but that we may give

an answer to those that sent us, and that it may not be said we were sent on a fool's errand." John was looked upon as a man of sincerity, and therefore they believed he would not give an evasive ambiguous answer; but would be fair and above-board, and give a plain answer to a plain question: What sayest thou of thyself? And he did so, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Observe,

[1.] He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to show that the scripture was fulfilled in him, and that his office was supported by a divine authority. What the scripture saith of the office of the ministry should be often thought of by those of that high calling, who must look upon themselves as that, and that only, which the word of God makes them.

[2.] He gives in his answer in very humble, modest, self-denying expressions. He chooses to apply that scripture to himself which denotes not his dignity, but his duty and dependence, which bespeaks him little: I am the voice, as if he were vox et præterea nihil--mere voice.

[3.] He gives such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him; for he was the voice (see Isa 40:3), a voice to alarm, an articulate voice to instruct. Ministers are but the voice, the vehicle, by which God is pleased to communicate his mind. What are Paul and Apollos but messengers? Observe, First, He was a human voice. The people were prepared to receive the law by the voice of thunders, and a trumpet exceedingly loud, such as made them tremble; but they were prepared for the gospel by the voice of a man like ourselves, a still small voice, such as that in which God came to Elijah, 1Ki 19:12. Secondly, He was the voice of one crying, which denotes,

1. His earnestness and importunity in calling people to repentance; he cried aloud, and did not spare. Ministers must preach as those that are in earnest, and are themselves affected with those things with which they desire to affect others. Those words are not likely to thaw the hearers' hearts that freeze between the speaker's lips.

2. His open publication of the doctrine he preached; he was the voice of one crying, that all manner of persons might hear and take notice. Doth not

wisdom cry? Pr 8:1. Thirdly, It was in the wilderness that this voice was crying; in a place of silence and solitude, out of the noise of the world and the hurry of its business; the more retired we are from the tumult of secular affairs the better prepared we are to hear from God. Fourthly, That which he cried was, Make straight the way of the Lord; that is,

a. He came to rectify the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God; it is certain that they are right ways, but the scribes and Pharisees, with their corrupt glosses upon the law, had made them crooked. Now John Baptist calls people to return to the original rule.

b. He came to prepare and dispose people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. It is an allusion to the harbingers of a prince or great man, that cry, Make room. Note, When God is coming towards us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the word of the Lord have free course. See Ps 24:7.

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elijah, neither that Prophet?

The enquiry which the committee made about it: Why baptizest thou, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet? Joh 1:25.

[1.] They readily apprehended baptism to be fitly and properly used as a sacred rite or ceremony, for the Jewish church had used it with circumcision in the admission of proselytes, to signify the cleansing of them from the pollutions of their former state. That sign was made use of in the Christian church, that it might be the more passable. Christ did not affect novelty, nor should his ministers.

[2.] They expected it would be used in the days of the Messiah, because it was promised that then there should be a fountain opened (Zec 13:1), and clean water sprinkled, Eze 36:25. It is taken for granted that Christ, and Elias, and that prophet, would baptize, when they came to purify a polluted world. Divine justice drowned the old world in its filth, but divine grace has provided for the cleansing of this new world from its filth.

[3.] They would therefore know by what authority John baptized. His denying himself to be Elias, or that prophet, subjected him to this further question, Why baptizest thou? Note, It is no new thing for a man's modesty to be turned against him, and improved to his prejudice; but it is better that men should take advantage of our low thoughts of ourselves, to trample upon us, than the devil take advantage of our high thoughts of ourselves, to tempt us to pride and draw us into his condemnation.

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoelatchet I am not worthy to unloose.

The account he gave of it, Joh 1:26,27.

[1.] He owned himself to be only the minister of the outward sign: "I baptize with water, and that is all; I am no more, and do no more, than what you see; I have no other title than John the Baptist; I cannot confer the spiritual grace signified by it." Paul was in care that none should think of him above what they saw him to be (2Co 12:6); so was John Baptist. Ministers must not set up for masters.

[2.] He directed them to one who was greater than himself, and would do that for them, if they pleased, which he could not do: "I baptize with water, and that is the utmost of my commission; I have nothing to do but by this to lead you to one that comes after me, and consign you to him." Note, The great business of Christ's ministers is to direct all people to him; we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. John gave the same account to this committee that he had given to the people (Joh 1:15): This as he of whom I spoke. John was constant and uniform in his testimony, not as a reed shaken with the wind. The sanhedrim were jealous of his interest in the people, but he is not afraid to tell them that there is one at the door that will go beyond him. First, He tells them of Christ's presence among them now at this time: There stands one among you, at this time, whom you know not. Christ stood among the common people, and was as one of them.

Note,

1. Much true worth lies hid in this world; obscurity is often the lot of real excellency. Saints are God's hidden ones, therefore the world knows them not.

2. God himself is often nearer to us than we are aware of. The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. They were gazing, in expectation of the messiah: Lo he is here, or he is there, when the kingdom of God was abroad and already among them, Lu 17:21. Secondly, He tells them of Christ's preference above himself: He comes after me, and yet is preferred before me. This he had said before; he adds here, "Whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to loose; I am not fit to be named the same day with him; it is an honour too great for me to pretend to be in the meanest office about him," 1Sa 25:41. Those to whom Christ is precious reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them. See Ps 84:10. If so great a man as John accounted himself unworthy of the honour of being near Christ, how unworthy then should we account ourselves! Now, one would think, these chief priests and Pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, should presently have asked who, and where, this excellent person was; and who more likely to tell them than he who had given them this general notice? No, they did not think this any part of their business or concern; they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him: so that their ignorance was wilful; they might have known Christ, and would not.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the place where all this was done: In Bethabara beyond Jordan, Joh 1:28. Bethabara signifies the house of passage; some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel state by Jesus Christ. It was at a great distance from Jerusalem, beyond Jordan; probably because what he did there would be least offensive to the government. Amos must go prophesy in the country, not near the court; but it was sad that Jerusalem should put so far from her the things that belonged to her peace. He made this confession in the same place where he was baptizing, that all those who attended his baptism might be witnesses of it, and none might say that they knew not what to make of him.

Behold the Lamb of God

29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world !

Behold the Lamb of God. A lamb, among the Jews, was killed and eaten at the Passover to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt, Ex 12:3-11. A lamb was offered in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, every morning and evening, as a part of the daily worship, Ex 29:38,39. The Messiah was predicted as a lamb led to the slaughter, to show his patience in his sufferings, and readiness to die for man, Isa 53:7. A lamb, among the Jews, was also an emblem of patience, meekness, gentleness. On all these accounts, rather than on any one of them alone, Jesus was called the Lamb. He was innocent (1Pet 2:23-25); he was a sacrifice for sin--the substance represented by the daily offering of the lamb, and slain at the usual time of the evening sacrifice (Lk 23:44-46); and he was what was represented by the Passover, turning away the anger of God, and saving sinners by his blood from vengeance and eternal death, 1Cor 5:7.

Which taketh away. This denotes his bearing the sins of the world, or the sufferings which made an atonement for sin. Comp. Isa 53:4, 1Jn 3:5, 1Pet 2:24. He takes away sin by bearing in his own body the sufferings which God appointed to show his sense of the evil of sin, thus magnifying the law, and rendering it consistent for him to pardon. Rom 3:24, Rom 3:25.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

I knew him not. John was not personally acquainted with Jesus. Though they were remotely related to each other, yet it seems that they had had heretofore no personal acquaintance. John had lived chiefly in the hill country of Judea. Jesus had been employed with Joseph at Nazareth. Until Jesus came to be baptized (Mt 3:13,14), it seems that John had no

acquaintance with him. He understood that he was to announce that the Messiah was about to appear. He was sent to proclaim his coming, but he did not personally know Jesus, or that he was to be the Messiah. This proves that there could have been no collusion or agreement between them to impose on the people.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

The same said, &c. This was the sign by which he was to know the Messiah. He was to see the Spirit descending like a dove and abiding on him. It does not follow, however, that he had no intimation before this that Jesus was the Christ, but it means that by this he should infallibly know it. From Mt 3:13,14, it seems that John supposed, before the baptism of Jesus, that he claimed to be the Messiah, and that he believed it; but the infallible, certain, testimony in the case was the descent of the Holy Spirit on him at his baptism.

That this is the Son of God. This was distinctly declared by a voice from heaven at his baptism, Mt 3:17. This John heard, and he testified that he had heard it.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

The First Disciples

35 Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God !

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

They followed Jesus. They had been the disciples of John. His office was to point out the Messiah. When that was done, they left at once their master and teacher, John, and followed the long-expected Messiah. This shows that John was sincere; that he was not desirous of forming a party or of building up a sect; that he was willing that all those whom he had attracted to himself

by his ministry should become followers of Christ. The object of ministers should not be to build up their own interests or to extend their own fame. It is to point men to the Saviour. Ministers, however popular or successful, should be willing that their disciples should look to Christ rather than to them; nay, should forget them and look away from them, to tread in the footsteps of the Son of God; and the conduct of these disciples shows us that we should forsake all and follow Jesus when he is pointed out to us as the Messiah. We should not delay nor debate the matter, but leave at once all our old teachers, guides and companions, and follow the Lamb of God. And we should do that, too, though to the world the Lord Jesus may appear, as he did to the multitude of the Jews, as poor, unknown, and despised. Reader, have you left all and followed him? Have you forsaken the guides of false philosophy and deceit, of sin and infidelity, and committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

What seek ye? This was not asked to obtain information. Comp. Jn 1:48. It was not a harsh reproof, forbidding them to follow him. Comp. Mt 11:28-30. It was a kind inquiry respecting their desires; an invitation to lay open their minds, to state their wishes, and to express all their feelings respecting the Messiah and their own salvation. We may learn,

1st. That Jesus regards the first inclinations of the soul to follow him. He turned toward these disciples, and he will incline his ear to all who begin to approach him for salvation.

2nd. Jesus is ready to hear their requests and to answer them.

3rd. Ministers of the gospel, and all other Christians, should be accessible, kind, and tender toward all who are inquiring the way to life. In conformity with their Master, they should be willing to aid all those who look to them for guidance and help in the great work of their salvation. Rabbi. This was a Jewish title conferred somewhat as literary degrees now are, and meaning literally a great one, and was applied to a teacher or master in the Jewish schools. It corresponded with the title Doctor. Our Saviour solemnly forbade his disciples to wear that title. Mt 23:8. The fact that John

interpreted this word shows that he wrote his gospel not for the Jews only, but for those who did not understand the Hebrew language. It is supposed to have been written at Ephesus.

Where dwellest thou? This question they probably asked him in order to signify their wish to be with him and to be instructed by him. They desired more fully to listen to him than they could now by the wayside. They were unwilling to interrupt him in his travelling. Religion teaches men true politeness, or a disposition to consult the convenience of others, and not improperly to molest them, or to break in upon them when engaged. It also teaches us to desire to be with Christ; to seek every opportunity of coremration with him, and chiefly to desire to be with him where he is when we leave this world. Comp. Php 1:23.

39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ [the anointed].

We have found the Messias. They had learned from the testimony of John, and now had been more fully convinced from conversation with Jesus, that he was the Messiah. The word Messiah, or Messias, is Hebrew, and means the same as the Greek word Christ, anointed. Mt 1:1. From the conduct of Andrew we may learn that it is the nature of religion to desire that others may possess it. It does not lead us to monopolize it or to hide it under a bushel, but it seeks that others also may be brought to the Saviour. It does not wait for them to come, but it goes for them; it seeks them out, and tells them that a Saviour is found. Young converts should seek their friends and neighbours, and tell them of a Saviour; and not only their relatives, but all others as far as possible, that all may come to Jesus and be saved.

42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone [or, Peter].

Cephas. This is a Syriac word, meaning the same as the Greek word Peter, a stone. Mt 16:17. The stone, or rock, is a symbol of firmness and steadiness of character--a trait in Peter's character after the ascension of Jesus that was

very remarkable. Before the death of Jesus he was rash, headlong, variable; and it is one proof of the omniscience of Jesus that he saw that Peter would possess a character that would be expressed appropriately by the word stone or rock. The word Jonas is a Hebrew word, whose original signification is a dove. It may be that Jesus had respect to that when he gave Simon the name Peter. "You now bear a name emblematic of timidity and inconstancy. You shall be called by a name denoting firmness and constancy."

MH Commentary:

The entertainment which Jesus Christ gave to Peter, who was never the less welcome for his being influenced by his brother to come, Joh 1:42. Observe,

(a) Christ called him by his name: When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona. It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ, and if so,

[1.] It was a proof of Christ's omniscience that upon the first sight, without any enquiry, he could tell the name both of him and of his father. The Lord knows them that are his, and their whole case. However,

[2.] It was an instance of his condescending grace and favour, that he did thus freely and affably call him by his name, though he was of mean extraction, and vir mullius nominis--a man of no name. It was an instance of God's favour to Moses that he knew him by name, Ex 33:17. Some observe the signification of these names: Simon--obedient, Jona--a dove. An obedient dove-like spirit qualifies us to be the disciples of Christ.

(b) He gave him a new name: Cephas.

[1.] His giving him a name intimates Christ's favour to him. A new name denotes some great dignity, Re 2:17,Isa 62:2. By this Christ not only wiped off the reproach of his mean and obscure parentage, but adopted him into his family as one of his own.

[2.] The name which he gave him bespeaks his fidelity to Christ: Thou shalt be called Cephas (that is Hebrew for a stone), which is by interpretation Peter; so it should be rendered, as Ac 9:36. Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; the former Hebrew, the latter Greek, for a young roe. Peter's natural temper was stiff, and hardy, and resolute, which I take to be the principal reason why Christ called him Cephas--a stone. When Christ afterwards prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, that so he might be firm to Christ himself, and at the same time bade him strengthen his brethren, and lay out himself for the support of others, then he made him what he here called him, Cephas--a stone. Those that come to Christ must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, like a stone, solid and stedfast; and it is by his grace that they are so. His saying, Be thou steady, makes them so. Now this does no more prove that Peter was the singular or only rock upon which the church is built than the calling of James and John Boanerges proves them the only sons of thunder, or the calling of Joses Barnabas proves him the only son of consolation.

The Call of Philip and Nathanael

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth
Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.
44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

The last person mentioned in this chapter, who was called to own and embrace Christ for the Messiah, is Nathanael: who this Nathanael was, doth not certainly appear; but it is evident, he was a sincere, good man, though prejudiced for the present against Christ, because of the place of his supposed birth and residence, Nazareth: Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? That is, can any worthy or excellent person, much less the promsied and long-expected Messias, come out of such an obscure place as Nazareth is? Whereas Almighty God, whenever he pleases, can raise worthy persons out of contemptible places.

Observe farther, How mercifully and meekly Christ passes over the mistakes and failings, the prepossessions and prejudices, of Nathanael; but takes notice of and publicly proclaims his sincerity: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile! that is, no guile imputed, no guile concealed, no prevailing guile. It being only true of Christ, in a strict and

absolute sense, that there was no guile found in his lips; but, in a qualified sense, it is true of Nathanael, and every upright man: they are true Israelites, like their father Jacob, plain men; men of great sincerity and uprightness of heart, both in the sight of God and man. And whereas our Saviour speaks of him with a sort of admiration, Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile!

We learn, 1. That a person of great sincerity and uprightness of heart towards God and man, a true Nathanael, an Israelite indeed, is a rare and worthy sight, Behold an Israelite indeed!

Learn, 2. That such indeed as are Nathanaels, need not commend themselves; Christ will be sure to do it for them. Nathanael conceals his own worth: Christ publishes and proclaims it, and calls upon others to take notice of it. Behold, &c.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

The joyful news that Philip brought to Nathanael, Joh 1:45. As Andrew before, so Philip here, having got some knowledge of Christ himself, rests not till he has made manifest the savour of that knowledge. Philip, though newly come to an acquaintance with Christ himself, yet steps aside to seek Nathanael.

Note, When we have the fairest opportunities of getting good to our own souls, yet ever then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others, remembering the words of Christ, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Ac 20:35. O, saith Philip, we have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write,

Observe here,

[1.] What a transport of joy Philip was in, upon this new acquaintance with Christ: "We have found him whom we have so often talked of, so long wished and waited for; at last, he is come he is come, and we have found him!"

[2.] What an advantage it was to him that he was so well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which prepared his mind for the reception of evangelical light, and made the entrance of it much the more easy: Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write. What was written entirely and from eternity in the book of the divine counsels was in part, at sundry times and in divers manners, copied out into the book of the divine revelations. Glorious things were written there concerning the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, Shiloh, the prophet like Moses, the Son of David, Emmanuel, the Man, the Branch, Messiah the Prince. Philip had studied these things, and was full of them, which made him readily welcome Christ.

[3.] What mistakes and weaknesses he laboured under: he called Christ Jesus of Nazareth, whereas he was of Bethlehem; and the Son of Joseph, whereas he as but his supposed Son. Young beginners in religion are subject to mistakes, which time and the grace of God will rectify. It was his weakness to say, We have found him, for Christ found them before they found Christ. He did not yet apprehend, as Paul did, how he was apprehended of Christ Jesus, Php 3:12.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

(a) The objection which Nathanael made against this, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Joh 1:46. Here,

[1] His caution was commendable, that he did not lightly assent to every thing that was said, but took it into examination; our rule is, Prove all things.

But,

[2.] His objection arose from Ignorance. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth it was owing to his ignorance of the divine grace, as if that were less affected to one place than another, or tied itself to men's foolish and ill-natured observations. If he meant that the Messiah, that great good king, could not come out of Nazareth, so far he was right (Moses, in the law, said that he should come out of Judah, and the prophets had assigned Bethlehem for the place of his nativity); but then he was ignorant of the matter of fact, that this Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so that the blunder Philip made, in calling him Jesus of Nazareth, occasioned this

objection. Note, The mistakes of preachers often give rise to the prejudices of hearers.

(b) The short reply which Philip gave to this objection: Come and see.

[1.] It was his weakness that he could not give a satisfactory answer to it; yet it is the common case of young beginners in religion. We may know enough to satisfy ourselves, and yet not be able to say enough to silence the cavils of a subtle adversary.

[2.] It was his wisdom and zeal that, when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could: Come and see. Let us not stand arguing here, and raising difficulties to ourselves which we cannot get over; let us go and converse with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. Note, It is folly to spend that time in doubtful disputation which might be better spent, and to much better purpose, in the exercises of piety and devotion. Come and see; not, Go and see, but, "Come, and I will go along with thee;" as Isa 2:3,Jer 1:5. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, First, That many people are kept from the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived against religion, upon the account of some foreign circumstances which do not at all touch the merits of the case. Secondly, The best way to remove the prejudices they have entertained against religion is to prove themselves, and make trial of it. Let us not answer this matter before we hear it.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

What passed between Nathanael and our Lord Jesus. He came and saw, not in vain.

Our Lord Jesus bore a very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity: Jesus saw him coming, and met him with favourable encouragement; he said of him to those about him, Nathanael himself being within hearing, Behold an Israelite indeed. Observe,

[1.] That he commended him; not to flatter him, or puff him up with a good conceit of himself, but perhaps because he knew him to be a modest man, if not a melancholy man, one that had hard and mean thoughts of himself, was ready to doubt his own sincerity; and Christ by this testimony put the matter out of doubt. Nathanael had, more than any of the candidates, objected against Christ; but Christ hereby showed that he excused it, and was not extreme to mark what he had said amiss, because he knew his heart was upright. He did not retort upon him, Can any good thing come out of Cana (Joh 21:2), an obscure town in Galilee? But kindly gives him this character, to encourage us to hope for acceptance with Christ, notwithstanding our weakness, and to teach us to speak honourably of those who without cause have spoken slightly of us, and to give them their due praise.

[2.] That he commended him for his integrity. First, Behold an Israelite indeed. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are indeed; we can but hope the best. The whole nation were Israelites in name, but all are not Israel that are of Israel (Ro 9:6); here, however, was an Israelite indeed. A sincere professor of the faith of Israel; he was true to the religion he professed, and lived up to it: he was really as good as he seemed, and his practice was of a piece with his profession. He is the Jew that is one inwardly (Ro 2:29), so is he the Christian.

Secondly, He is one in whom is no guile--that is the character of an Israelite indeed, a Christian indeed: no guile towards men; a man without trick or design; a man that one may trust; no guile towards God, that is, sincere in his repentance for sin; sincere in his covenanting with God; in whose spirit is no guile, Ps 32:2. He does not say without guilt, but without guile. Though in many things he is foolish and forgetful, yet in nothing false, nor wickedly departing from God: there is no allowed approved guilt in him; not painted, though he have his spots: "Behold this Israelite indeed."

1. "Take notice of him, that you may learn his way, and do like him."

2. "Admire him; behold, and wonder." The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had so leavened the Jewish church and nation, and their religion

was so degenerated into formality or state-policy, that an Israelite indeed was a man wondered at, a miracle of divine grace, like Job, Joh 1:8.

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Whence knowest thou me? Nathanael was not yet acquainted with the divinity of Christ, and supposed that he had been a stranger to him. Hearing him express a favourable opinion of him, he naturally inquired by what means he had any knowledge of him. His conscience testified to the truth of what Jesus said--that he had no guile, and he was anxious to know whence he had learned his character.

When thou wast under the fig tree. It is evident that it was from something that had occurred under the fig-tree that Jesus judged of his character. What that was is not recorded. It is not improbable that Nathanael was accustomed to retire to the shade of a certain tree, perhaps in his garden or in a grove, for the purpose of meditation and prayer. The Jews were much in the habit of selecting such places for private devotion, and in such scenes of stillness and retirement there is something peculiarly favourable for meditation and prayer. Our Saviour also worshipped in such places. Comp. Jn 18:2, Lk 6:12. In that place of retirement it is not improbable that Nathanael was engaged in private devotion.

I saw thee. It is clear, from the narrative, that Jesus did not mean to say that he was bodily present with Nathanael and saw him; but he knew his thoughts, his desires, his secret feelings and wishes. In this sense Nathanael understood him. We may learn--

1st. That Jesus sees what is done in secret, and is therefore divine.

2nd. That he sees us when we little think of it.

3rd. That he sees us especially in our private devotions, hears our prayers, and marks our meditations. And

4th. That he judges of our character chiefly by our private devotions. Those are secret; the world sees them not; and in our closets we show what we are. How does it become us, therefore, that our secret prayers and meditations should be without guile and hypocrisy, and such as Jesus will approve!

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

The King of Israel. This was one of the titles by which the Messiah was expected, and this was the title which was affixed to his cross, Jn 19:18. This case of Nathanael John adduces as another evidence that Jesus was the Christ. The great object he had in view in writing this gospel was to collect the evidence that he was the Messiah, Mt 20:31. A case, therefore, where Jesus searched the heart, and where his knowledge of the heart convinced a pious Jew that he was the Christ, is very properly adduced as important testimony.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou ? thou shalt see greater things than these.

51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Verily, verily. In the Greek, Amen, amen. The word amen means truly, certainly, so be it--from the verb to confirm, to establish, to be true. It is often used in this gospel. When repeated it expresses the speaker's sense of the importance of what he is saying, and the certainty that it is as he affirms.

Ye shall see. Not, perhaps, with the bodily eyes, but you shall have evidence that it is so. The thing shall take place, and you shall be a witness of it.

Heaven open. This is a figurative expression, denoting the conferring of favours. Ps 78:23,24: "He opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna." It also denotes that God was about to work a miracle in attestation of a particular thing. See Mt 3:16. In the language, here, there is an evident allusion to the ladder that Jacob saw in a dream, and to the

angels ascending and descending on it, Gen 18:12. It is not probable that Jesus referred to any particular instance in which Nathanael should literally see the heavens opened, The baptism of Jesus had taken place, and no other instance occurred in his life in which it is said that the heavens were opened.

Angels of God. Those pure and holy beings that dwell in heaven, and that are employed as ministering spirits to our world, Heb 1:14. Good men are represented in the Scriptures as being under their protection, Ps 91:11,12, Gen 28:12. They are the agents by which God often expressed his will to men, Heb 2:2, Gal 3:19. They are represented as strengthening the Lord Jesus, and ministering unto him. Thus they aided him in the wilderness (Mk 1:13), and in the garden (Lk 22:43), and they were present when he rose from the dead, Mt 28:2-4, Jn 20:12,13. By their ascending and descending upon him it is probable that he meant that Nathanael would have evidence that they came to his aid, and that he would have the KIND of protection and assistance from God which would show more fully that he was the Messiah. Thus his life, his many deliverances from dangers, his wisdom to confute his skilled and cunning adversaries, the scenes of his death, and the attendance of angels at his resurrection, may all be represented by the angels descending upon him, and all would show to Nathanael and the other disciples most clearly that he was the Son of God.

The Son of man. A term by which he often describes himself. It shows his humility, his love for man, his willingness to be esteemed as a man, Php 2:6,7. From this interview with Nathanael we may learn,

1st. That Jesus searches the heart.

2nd. That he was truly the Messiah.

3rd. That he was under the protection of God.

4th. That if we have faith in Jesus, it will be continually strengthened--the evidence will grow brighter and brighter.

5th. That if we believe his word, we shall yet see full proof that his word is true.

6th. As Jesus was under the protection of God, so will all his friends be. God will defend and save us also if we put our trust in him.

7th. Jesus applied to himself terms expressive of humility. He was not solicitous even to be called by titles which he might claim. So we should not be ambitious of titles and honours. Ministers of the gospel must resemble him when they seek for the fewest titles, and do not aim at distinctions from each other or their brethren. Mt 23:8.

John-2

The Wedding at Cana

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:
2 and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.
3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.
4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.
5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.
6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

In this miracle of our Saviour's turning water into wine, Observe, 1. The reality of the miracle, and the sincerity of Christ in the working of it. The evidencce there was no deceit in the miracle, not wine-casks, but water-pots, are called for; wine-vessels, in which some lees were remaining might have given both a vinous colour and taste to the water; but stonepots could contribute nothing of this nature; and being open pots, there was not stealing wine into them without observation.

Again, our Saviour's employing the servants, and not his disciples, takes off any suspicion of collusion; and his sending it to the ruler or governor of the feast, was an evidence that the miracle would bear examination. Our Saviour's miracles were real and beneficial; they were obvious to sense, not lying wonders, nor fictitious miracles, which the jugglers in the church of Rome cheat the people with. The greatest miracle which they boast of, transubstantiation, is so far from being obvious to sense, that it conrtradicts the sense and reason of mankind, and is the greatest affront to human nature that ever the world was acquainted with.

Observe, 2. Though Christ wrought a real miracle, yet he would not work more of miracle than needed; he would not create wine out of nothing, but turned water into wine. Thus he multiplied the bread, changed the water, restored withered limbs, raised dead bodies, still working upon that which was, and not creating that which was not: Christ never wrought a miracle but when needful, and then wrought no more of miracles than he needed.

Observe, 3. The liberality and bounty of Christ in the miracle here wrought; six water-pots are filled with wine! Enough, says some writers, for an hundred and fifty men; had he turned but one of those large vessels into wine, it had been a sufficient proof of his power; but to fill so many, was an instance both of his power and mercy.

The Lord of the family furnishes his household not barely for necessity, but for delight, giving richly all things to enjoy. And as the bounty of Christ appeared in quantity, so in the excellency, of the wine; Thou hast kept the best wine until now, says the governor of the feast. It was fit that Christ's miraculous wine should be more perfect than the natural.

Observe, 4. The double effects of this miracle; Christ hereby manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.

The first effect of this miracle was that He manifested forth his glory; that is, the glory of his godhead, as doing this by his own power. Here shined

forth his omnipotence, his bounty and liberality, every thing that might bespeak him both a great and good God.

The second effect of this miracle was, that the disciples believed on him. The great end of miracles is the confirmation of faith; God never sets the seals of his omnipotence to a lie; all the miracles then that Christ and his apostles did, were as so many seals that the doctrine of the gospel is true. If you believe not me, says Christ, believe the works which I do, for they bear witness of me, Joh 5:36

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

With water. This was done by the servants employed at the feast. It was done by them, so that there might be no opportunity of saying that the disciples of Jesus had filled them with wine to produce the appearance of a miracle. In this case there could be no deception. The quantity was very considerable. The servants would know whether the wine or water had been put in these vessels. It could not be believed that they had either the power or the disposition to impose on others in this manner, and the way was therefore clear for the proof that Jesus had really changed what was known to be water into wine.

To the brim. To the top. So full that no wine could be poured in to give the appearance of a mixture. Farther, vessels were used for this miracle in which wine had not been kept. These pots were never used to put wine in, but simply to keep water in for the various purposes of ablution. A large number was used on this occasion, because there were many guests.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

Draw out now. This command was given to the servants. It showed that the miracle had been immediately wrought. As soon as they were filled the servants were directed to take to the governor of the feast. Jesus made no parade about it, and it does not even appear that he approached the water-pots. He willed it, and it was done. This was a clear exertion of divine power, and made in such a manner as to leave no doubt of its reality.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

And knew not whence it was. This is said, probably, to indicate that his judgment was not biased by any favour, or any want of favour, toward Jesus. Had he known what was done, he would have been less likely to have judged impartially. As it is, we have his testimony that this was real wine, and of so fine a body and flavour as to surpass that which had been provided for the occasion. Everything in this miracle shows that there was no collusion or understanding between Jesus and any of the persons at the feast.

10 and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

When men have well drunk. This word does not of necessity mean that they were intoxicated, though it is usually employed in that sense. It may mean when they have drunk sufficient, or to satiety; or have drunk so much as to produce hilarity, and to destroy the keenness of their taste, so that they could not readily distinguish the good from that which was worse. But this cannot be adduced in favour of drunkenness, even if it means to be intoxicated; for,

1st. It is not said of those who were present at that feast, but of what generally occurred. For anything that appears, at that feast all were perfectly temperate and sober.

2nd. It is not the saying of Jesus that is here recorded, but of the governor of the feast, who is declaring what usually occurred as a fact.

3rd. There is not any expression of opinion in regard to its propriety, or in approval of it, even by that governor.

4th. It does not appear that our Saviour even heard the observation.

5th. Still less is there any evidence that he approved such a state of things, or that he designed that it should take place here. Farther, the word translated "well drunk" cannot be shown to mean intoxication; but it may mean when they had drunk as much as they judged proper or as they desired, then the other was presented. It is clear that neither our Saviour, nor the sacred writer, nor the speaker here expresses any approbation of intemperance, nor is there the least evidence that anything of the kind occurred here. It is not proof that

we approve of intemperance when we mention, as this man did, what occurs usually among men at feasts.

The good wine. This shows that this had all the qualities of real wine. We should not be deceived by the phrase "good wine." We often use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength and its power to intoxicate; but no such sense is to be attached to the word here. Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace describe wine as good, or mention that as the best wine, which was harmless or innocent--poculo vini innocentis. The most useful wine -- utilissimum vinum-- was that which had little strength; and the most wholesome wine-- saluberrimum vinum-- was that which had not been adulterated by "the addition of anything to the must or juice." Pliny expressly says that a "good wine" was one that was destitute of spirit (lib. iv. c. 13). It should not be assumed, therefore, that the "good wine" was stronger than the other: it is rather to be presumed that it was milder. The wine referred to here was doubtless such as was commonly drunk in Palestine. That was the pure juice of the grape. It was not brandied wine, nor drugged wine, nor wine compounded of various substances, such as we drink in this land. The common wine drunk in Palestine was that which was the simple juice of the grape. We use the word wine now to denote the kind of liquid which passes under that name in this country--always containing a considerable portion of alcohol --not only the alcohol produced by fermentation, but alcohol added to keep it or make it stronger. But we have no right to take that sense of the word, and go with it to the interpretation of the Scriptures. We should endeavour to place ourselves in the exact circumstances of those times, ascertain precisely what idea the word would convey to those who used it then, and apply that sense to the word in the interpretation of the Bible; and there is not the slightest evidence that the word so used would have conveyed any idea but that of the pure juice of the grape, nor the slightest circumstance mentioned in this account that would not be fully met by such a supposition. No man should adduce this instance in favour of drinking wine unless he can prove that the wine made in the" water-pots" of Cana was just like the wine which he proposes to drink. The Saviour's example may be always pleaded JUST AS IT WAS; but it is a matter of obvious and simple justice that we should find out exactly what the example was before we plead it. There is, moreover, no evidence that any other part of the water was converted into wine than that which was

drawn out of the water-casks for the use of the guests. On this supposition, certainly, all the circumstances of the case are met, and the miracle would be more striking. All that was needed was to furnish a supply when the wine that had been prepared was nearly exhausted. The object was not to furnish a large quantity for future use. The miracle, too, would in this way be more apparent and impressive. On this supposition, the casks would appear to be filled with water only; as it was drawn out, it was pure wine. Who could doubt, then, that there was the exertion of miraculous power? All, therefore, that has been said about the Redeemer's furnishing a large quantity of wine for the newly-married pair, and about his benevolence in doing it, is wholly gratuitous. There is no evidence of it whatever; and it is not necessary to suppose it in order to an explanation of the circumstances of the case.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

This beginning of miracles. This his first public miracle. This is declared by the sacred writer to be a miracle-- that is, an exertion of divine power, producing a change of the substance of water into wine, which no human power could do.

His glory. His power, and proper character as the Messiah; showed that he had divine power, and that God had certainly commissioned him. This is shown to be a real miracle by the following considerations:

1st. Real water was placed in the vessels. This the servants believed, and there was no possibility of deception.

2nd. The water was placed where it was not customary to keep wine. It could not be pretended that it was merely a mixture of water and wine.

3rd. It was judged to be wine without knowing whence it came. There was no agreement between Jesus and the governor of the feast to impose on the guests.

4th. It was a change which nothing but divine power could effect. He that can change water into a substance like the juice of the grape must be clothed with divine power.

Believed on him. This does not mean that they did not before believe on him, but that their faith was confirmed or strengthened. They saw a miracle, and it satisfied them that he was the Messiah. Before this they believed on the testimony of John, and from conversation with Jesus (Jn 1:35-51); now they saw that he was invested with almighty power, and their faith was established. From this narrative we may learn,

1st. That marriage is honourable, and that Jesus, if sought, will not refuse his presence and blessing on such an occasion.

2nd. On such an occasion the presence and approbation of Christ should be sought. No compact formed on earth is more important; none enters so deeply into our comfort in this world; perhaps none will so much affect our destiny in the world to come. It should be entered into, then, in the fear of God.

3rd. On all such occasions our conduct should be such that the presence of Jesus would be no interruption or disturbance. He is holy. He is always present in every place; and on all festival occasions our deportment should be such as that we should welcome the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is not a proper state of feeling or employment which would be interrupted by the presence of the Saviour.

4th. Jesus delighted to do good. In the very beginning of his ministry he worked a miracle to show his benevolence. This was the appropriate commencement of a life in which he was to go about doing good. He seized every opportunity of doing it; and at a marriage feast, as well as among the sick and poor, he showed the character which he always sustained --that of a benefactor of mankind.

5th. An argument cannot be drawn from this instance in favour of intemperate drinking. There is no evidence that any who were present on that occasion drank too freely.

6th. Nor can an argument be drawn from this case in favour even of drinking wine such as we have. The common wine of Judea was the pure juice of the grape, without any mixture of alcohol, and was harmless. It was the common drink of the people, and did not tend to produce intoxication. Our wines are a mixture of the juice of the grape and of brandy, and often of infusions of various substances to give it colour and taste, and the appearance of wine. Those wines are little less injurious than brandy, and the habit of drinking them should be classed with the drinking of all other liquid fires.

It follows that a man who drinks two glasses of most of the wines used has taken as much alcohol as if he had taken one glass of brandy or whisky, and why should he not as well drink the alcohol in the brandy as in the Wine? What difference can it make in morals? What difference in its effects on his system? The experience of the world has shown that water, pure water, is the most wholesome, safe, and invigorating drink for man.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples; and they continued there not many days.

The Cleansing of the Temple

13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Every male among the Jews was required to appear at this feast. Jesus, in obedience to the law, went up to observe it. This is the first Passover on which he attended after he entered on the work of the ministry. It is commonly supposed that he observed three others-- one recorded Lk 6:1, another Jn 6:4, and the last one on the night before he was crucified, Jn 11:55. As his baptism when he entered on his ministry had taken place some time before this --probably not far from six months-- it follows that the period of his ministry was not far from three years and a half, agreeably to the prophecy in Dan 9:27.

14 and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

Found in the temple, &c. The transaction here recorded is in almost all respects similar to that which has been explained in the Mt 21:12. This took

place at the commencement of his public ministry; that at the close. On each occasion he showed that his great regard was for the pure worship of his Father; and one great design of his coming was to reform the abuses which had crept into that worship, and to bring man to a proper regard for the glory of God. If it be asked how it was that those engaged in this traffic so readily yielded to Jesus of Nazareth, and that they left their gains and their property, and fled from the temple at the command of one so obscure as he was, it may be replied,

1st. That their consciences reproved them for their impiety, and they could not set up the appearance of self-defence.

2nd. It was customary in the nation to cherish a profound regard for the authority of a prophet; and the appearance and manner of Jesus--so fearless, so decided, so authoritative--led them to suppose he was a prophet, and they were afraid to resist him.

3rd. He had even then a wide reputation among the people, and it is not improbable that many supposed him to be the Messiah.

4th. Jesus on all occasions had a most wonderful control over men. None could resist him. There was something in his manner, as well as in his doctrine, that awed men, and made them tremble at his presence. Comp. Jn 18:5,6. On this occasion he had the manner of a prophet, the authority of God, and the testimony of their own consciences, and they could not, therefore, resist the authority by which he spoke.

Though Jesus thus purified the temple at the commencement of his ministry, yet in three years the same scene was to be repeated. See Mt 21:12. And from this we may learn,

1st. How soon men forget the most solemn reproofs, and return to evil practices.

2nd. That no sacredness of time or place will guard them from sin. In the very temple, under the very eye of God, these men soon returned to practices

for which their consciences reproved them, and which they knew God disapproved.

3rd. We see here how strong is the love of gain--the ruling passion of mankind. Not even the sacredness of the temple, the presence of God, the awful ceremonials of religion, deterred them from this unholy traffic. So wicked men and hypocrites will always turn religion, if possible, into gain; and not even the sanctuary, the Sabbath, or the most awful and sacred scenes, will deter them from schemes of gain. Comp. Amos 8:5. So strong is this grovelling passion, and so deep is that depravity which fears not God, and regards not his Sabbaths, his sanctuary, or his law.

15 and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

Of small cords. This whip was made as an emblem of authority, and also for the purpose of driving from the temple the cattle which had been brought there for sale. There is no evidence that he used any violence to the men engaged in that unhallowed traffic. The original word implies that these cords were made of twisted rushes or reeds-- probably the ancient material for making ropes.

16 and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

It was written, &c. This is recorded in Ps 69:9. Its meaning is, that he was affected with great zeal or concern for the pure worship of God.

The zeal of thine house. Zeal is intense ardour in reference to any object. The zeal of thine house means extraordinary concern for the temple of God; intense solicitude that the worship there should be pure, and such as God would approve.

Hath eaten me up. Hath absorbed me, or engaged my entire attention and affection; hath surpassed all other feelings, so that it may be said to be the one great absorbing affection and desire of the mind. Here is an example set for ministers and for all Christians. In Jesus this was the great commanding

sentiment of his life. In us it should be also. In this manifestation of zeal he began and ended his ministry. In this we should begin and end our lives. We learn, also, that ministers of religion should aim to purify the church of God. Wicked men, conscience-smitten, will tremble when they see proper zeal in the ministers of Jesus Christ; and there is no combination of wicked men, and no form of depravity, that can stand before the faithful, zealous, pure preaching of the gospel. The preaching of every minister should be such that wicked men will feel that they must either become Christians or leave the house of God, or spend their lives there in the consciousness of guilt and the fear of hell.

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

What sign, &c. What miracle dost thou work? He assumed the character of a prophet. He was reforming, by his authority, the temple. It was natural to ask by what authority this was done; and as they had been accustomed to miracles in the life of Moses, and Elijah, and the other prophets, so they demanded evidence that he had authority thus to cleanse the house of God.

Seeing that thou doest. Rather "by what title or authority thou doest these things." Our translation is ambiguous. They wished to know by what miracle he had shown, or could show, his right to do those things.

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Destroy this temple. The evangelist informs us (Jn 2:21) that by temple, here, he meant his body. It is not improbable that he pointed with his finger to his body as he spoke. The word destroy, used here in the imperative, has rather the force of the future. Its meaning may thus be expressed:

"You are now profaners of the temple of God. You have defiled the sanctuary; you have made it a place of traffic. You have also despised my authority, and been unmoved by the miracles which I have already wrought. But your wickedness will not end here. You will oppose me more and more; you will reject and despise me, until in your wickedness you will take my life and destroy my body."

Here was therefore a distinct prediction both of his death and the cause of it. The word temple, or dwelling, was not unfrequently used by the Jews to denote the body as being the residence of the spirit, 2Cor 5:1. Christians are not unfrequently called the temple of God, as being those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells on earth, 1Cor 3:16,17; 1Cor 6:19, 2Cor 6:16. Our Saviour called his body a temple in accordance with the common use of language, and more particularly because in him the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, Col 2:9. The temple at Jerusalem was the appropriate dwelling-place of God. His visible presence was there peculiarly manifested, 2Chr 36:15, Ps 76:2. As the Lord Jesus was divine--as the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him--so his body might be called a temple.

In three days I will raise it up. The Jews had asked a miracle of him in proof of his authority--that is, a proof that he was the Messiah. He tells them that a full and decided proof of that would be his resurrection from the dead. Though they would not be satisfied by any other miracle, yet by this they ought to be convinced that he came from heaven, and was the long-expected Messiah. To the same evidence that he was the Christ he refers them on other occasions. See Mt 12:38,39. Thus early did he foretell his death and resurrection, for at the beginning of his work he had a clear foresight of all that was to take place. This knowledge shows clearly that he came from heaven, and it evinces, also, the extent of his love--that he was willing to come to save us, knowing clearly what it would cost him. Had he come without such an expectation of suffering, his love might have been far less; but when he fully knew all that was before him, when he saw that it would involve him in contempt and death, it shows compassion "worthy of a God" that he was willing to endure the load of all our sorrows, and die to save us from death everlasting. When Jesus says, "I will raise it up," it is proof, also, of divine power. A mere man could not say this. No deceased man can have such power over his body; and there must have been, therefore, in the person of Jesus a nature superior to human to which the term "I" could be applied, and which had power to raise the dead--that is, which was divine.

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days ?

Then said the Jews, &c. The Jews, either from the ambiguity of his language, or more probably from a design to cavil, understood him as speaking of the temple at Jerusalem. What he said here is all the evidence

that they could adduce on his trial (Mt 26:61, Mk 14:58), and they reproached him with it when on the cross, Mt 27:40. The Jews frequently perverted our Saviour's meaning. The language which he used was often that of parables or metaphor; and as they sought to misunderstand him and pervert his language, so he often left them to their own delusions, as he himself says, "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand," Mt 13:13. This was a case which they might, if they had been disposed, have easily understood. They were in the temple; the conversation was about the temple; and though he probably pointed to his body, or designated it in some plain way, yet they chose to understand him as referring to the temple itself; and as it appeared so improbable that he could raise up that in three days, they sought to pervert his words and pour ridicule on his pretensions.

Forty and six years, &c. The temple in which they then were was that which was commonly called the second temple, built after the return of the Jews from Babylon. Mt 21:12. This temple Herod the Great commenced repairing, or began to rebuild, in the eighteenth year of his reign--that is, sixteen years before the birth of Christ (Jos. Ant., b. xv. 1). The main body of the temple he completed in nine years and a half (Jos. Ant., xv. 5, 6), yet the temple, with its outbuildings, was not entirely complete in the time of our Saviour. Herod continued to ornament it and to perfect it even till the time of Agrippa (Jos. Ant., b. xx. ch. viii. 11). As Herod began to rebuild the temple sixteen years before the birth of Jesus, and as what is here mentioned happened in the thirtieth year of the age of Jesus, so the time which had been occupied in it was forty-six years. This circumstance is one of the many in the New Testament which show the accuracy of the evangelists, and which prove that they were well acquainted with what they recorded. It demonstrates that their narration is true. Impostors do not trouble themselves to be very accurate about names and dates, and there is nothing in which they are more liable to make mistakes.

Wilt thou, &c. This is an expression of contempt. Herod, with all his wealth and power, had been engaged in this work almost half a century. Can you, an obscure and unknown Galilean, accomplish it in three days? The thing, in their judgment, was ridiculous, and showed, as they supposed, that he had no authority to do what he had done in the temple.

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

When he was risen from the dead, &c. This saying of our Saviour at that time seemed obscure and difficult. The disciples did not understand it, but they treasured it up in their memory, and the event showed what was its true meaning. Many prophecies are obscure when spoken which are perfectly plain when the event takes place. We learn from this, also, the importance of treasuring up the truths of the Bible now, though we may not perfectly understand them. Hereafter they may be plain to us. It is therefore important that children should learn the truths of the sacred Scriptures. Treasured up in their memory, they may not be understood now, but hereafter they may be clear to them. Every one engaged in teaching a Sunday-school, therefore, may be imparting instruction which may be understood, and may impart comfort, long after the teacher has gone to eternity.

Jesus Knows All Men

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

Observe here, What influence the sight of our Saviour's miracles had upon many of the common people, They believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did; that is, they were convinced by the works which our Saviour wrought that he came from God, and what he said and did was really true, and no imposture. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. Our Saviour did not, and would not trust them who yet believed on his name.

Thence note, That a naked assent to the history of the gospel is not sufficient to entitle us to saving faith. We may assent to the truth of all that we find there, and yet be far from the kingdom of God.

Saving faith implies more than the assent of the understanding to the truths of the gospel. We cannot believe or disbelieve what we please, but must needs assent to what is evident to our understanding; so that it is possible for a man to assent to the truth of Christianity and yet remain in a state of of damnation.

If he doth not embrace it as good, as well as assent to it as true; if our faith be not the parent and principle of obedience; if our belief doth not influence our practice; though we pass for believers amongst men, we are no better than unbelievers in the account of Christ.

If we believe Jesus to be the true Messiah, and do not receive him in all his office; if we commit ourselves to his saving mercy, but do not submit ourselves to his ruling power; if we desire him for our Saviour, but disown him for our sovereign; if we expect salvation by him, and do not yield subjection to him; we put a cheat upon ourselves: for he only believes as he should, that lives as he does believe.

St. John's design in writing of this gospel being to assert the divinity of Christ, he scatters evidences of it in almost every chapter. Here he declares his omniscience, He knew what was in man; that is, being God blessed for ever, he had an exact knowledge of the hearts of men, not by any revelation of men's hearts from God, but by immediate intuition from himself. He knows all men, and all that is in men. See here an ample testimony of the divinity of Christ, his knowledge of the secrets of the hearts of all men, which is declared to be the undoubted property of God alone, Thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men. 1Kgs 8:39

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

25 and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man.

John-3

Jesus and Nicodemus

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. One of the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation. He is twice mentioned after this as being friendly to our Saviour; in

the first instance as advocating his cause, and defending him against the unjust suspicion of the Jews Jn 7:50, and in the second instance as one who came to aid in embalming his body, Jn 19:39. It will be recollected that the design of John in writing this gUospel was to show that Jesus was the Messiah. To do this he here adduces the testimony of one of the rulers of the Jews, who early became convinced of it, and who retained the belief of it until the death of Jesus.

2 the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

The same came to Jesus. The design of his coming seems to have been to inquire more fully of Jesus what was the doctrine which he came to teach. He seems to have been convinced that he was the Messiah, and desired to be farther instructed in private respecting his doctrine. It was not usual for a man of rank, power, and riches to come to inquire of Jesus in this manner; yet we may learn that the most favourable opportunity for teaching such men the nature of personal religion is when they are alone. Scarcely any man, of any rank, will refuse to converse on this subject when addressed respectfully and tenderly in private. In the midst of their companions, or engaged in business, they may refuse to listen or may cavil. When alone, they will hear the voice of entreaty and persuasion, and be willing to converse on the great subjects of judgment and eternity. Thus Paul says (Gal 2:2), "privately to them which are of reputations;" evincing his consummate prudence, and his profound knowledge of human nature.

Consider him, secondly, as a ruler of the Jews, as a person of place and power, making a figure in the world. Though they were generally the poor which followed Christ, yet some of the great and rich men of the world, as Nicodemus, a master of Israel, and Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, are called to Christ, and received by him: lest, if he had admitted illiterate and simple men only, the world might have thought that they were deceived through their simplicity.

By night. It is not mentioned why he came by night. It might have been that, being a member of the Sanhedrim, he was engaged all the day; or it may have been because the Lord Jesus was occupied all the day in teaching publicly and in working miracles, and that there was no opportunity for conversing

with him as freely as he desired; or it may have been that he was afraid of the ridicule and contempt of those in power, and fearful that it might involve him in danger if publicly known; or it may have been that he was afraid that if it were publicly known that he was disposed to favour the Lord Jesus, it might provoke more opposition against him and endanger his life. As no bad motive is imputed to him, it is most in accordance with Christian charity to suppose that his motives were such as God would approve, especially as the Saviour did not reprove him. We should not be disposed to blame men where Jesus did not, and we should desire to find goodness in every man rather than be ever on the search for evil motives. 1Cor 13:4-7.

We may learn here,

1st. That our Saviour, though engaged during the day, did not refuse to converse with an inquiring sinner at night. Ministers of the gospel at all times should welcome those who are asking the way to life.

2nd. That it is proper for men, even those of elevated rank, to inquire on the subject of religion. Nothing is so important as religion, and no temper of mind is more lovely than a disposition to ask the way to heaven. At all times men should seek the way of salvation, and especially in times of great religious excitement they should make inquiry. At Jerusalem, at the time referred to here, there was great solicitude. Many believed on Jesus. He wrought miracles, and preached, and many were converted. There was what would now be called a revival off religion, having all the features of a work of grace. At such a season it was proper, as it is now, that not only the poor, but the rich and great, should inquire the path to life.

Rabbi. This was a title of respect conferred on distinguished Jewish teachers, somewhat in the way that the title doctor of divinity is now conferred. Jn 1:38. Our Saviour forbade his disciples to wear that title (Jn 1:38), though it was proper for him to do it, as being the great Teacher of mankind. It literally signifies great, and was given by Nicodemus, doubtless, because Jesus gave distinguished proofs that he came as a teacher from God.

We know. I know, and those with whom I am connected. Perhaps he was acquainted with some of the Pharisees who entertained the same opinion about Jesus that he did, and he came to be more fully confirmed in the belief.

Come from God. Sent by God. This implies his readiness to hear him, and his desire to be instructed. He acknowledges the divine mission of Jesus, and delicately asks him to instruct him in the truth of religion. When we read the words of Jesus in the Bible, it should be with a belief that he came from God, and was therefore qualified and authorized to teach us the way of life.

Except God be with him. Except God aid him, and except his instructions are approved by God. Miracles show that a prophet or religious teacher comes from God, because God would not work a miracle in attestation of a falsehood or to give countenance to a false teacher. If God gives a man power to work a miracle, it is proof that he approves the teaching of that man, and the miracle is the proof or the credential that he came from God.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Verily, verily. An expression of strong affirmation, denoting the certainty and the importance of what he was about to say. Jesus proceeds to state one of the fundamental and indispensable doctrines of his religion. It may seem remarkable that he should introduce this subject in this manner; but it should be remembered that Nicodemus acknowledged that he was a teacher come from God; that he implied by that his readiness and desire to receive instruction; and that it is not wonderful, therefore, that Jesus should commence with one of the fundamental truths of his religion. It is no part of Christianity to conceal anything. Jesus declared to every man, high or low, rich or poor, the most humbling truths of the gospel. Nothing was kept back for fear of offending men of wealth or power; and for them, as well as the most poor and lowly, it was declared to be indispensable to experience, as the first thing in religion, a change of heart and of life.

Except a man. This is a universal form of expression designed to include all mankind. Of each and every man it is certain that unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. It includes, therefore, men of every character and rank, and nation, moral and immoral, rich and poor, in office and out of office, old and young, bond and free, the slave and his master, Jew and

Gentile. It is clear that our Saviour intended to convey to Nicodemus the idea, also, that he must be born again. It was not sufficient to be a Jew, or to acknowledge him to be a teacher sent by God--that is, the Messiah; it was necessary, in addition to this, to experience in his own soul that great change called the new birth or regeneration.

Be born again. The word translated here again means also from above, and is so rendered in the margin. It is evident, however, that Nicodemus understood it not as referring to a birth from above, for if he had he would not have asked the question in Jn 3:4. It is probable that in the language which he used there was not the same ambiguity that there is in the Greek. The ancient versions all understood it as meaning again, or the second time. Our natural birth introduces us to light, is the commencement of life, throws us amid the works of God, and is the beginning of our existence; but it also introduces us to a world of sin. We early go astray. All men transgress. The imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil from the youth up. We are conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and there is none that doeth good, no, not one. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, Gen 8:21, Ps 14:2,3; Ps 51:5, Rom 1:29-32, 3:10-20, 8:7. All sin exposes men to misery here and hereafter. To escape from sin, to be happy in the world to come, it is necessary that man should be changed in his principles, his feelings, and his manner of life. This change, or the beginning of this new life, is called the new birth, or regeneration. It is so called because in many respects it has a striking analogy to the natural birth. It is the beginning of spiritual life. It introduces us to the light of the gospel. It is the moment when we really begin to live to any purpose. It is the moment when God reveals himself to us as our reconciled Father, and we are adopted into his family as his sons. And as every man is a sinner, it is necessary that each one should experience this change, or he cannot be happy or saved. This doctrine was not unknown to the Jews, and was particularly predicted as a doctrine that would be taught in the times of the Messiah. See De 10:16, Jer 4:4, 31:4,33, Eze 11:19, 36:25 Ps 51:12. The change in the New Testament is elsewhere called the new creation (2Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15), and life from the dead, or a resurrection, Eph 2:1, Jn 5:21,24.

The kingdom of God. Either in this world or in that which is to come--that is, heaven. Mt 3:2 The meaning is, that the kingdom which Jesus was about to

set up was so pure and holy that it was indispensable that every man should experience this change, or he could not partake of its blessings. This is solemnly declared by the Son of God by an affirmation equivalent to an oath, and there can be no possibility, therefore, of entering heaven without experiencing the change which the Saviour contemplated by the new birth. And it becomes every man, as in the presence of a holy God before whom he must soon appear, to ask himself whether he has experienced this change, and if he has not, to give no rest to his eyes until he has sought the mercy of God, and implored the aid of his Spirit that his heart may be renewed.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old ?
can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

How can a man, &c. It may seem remarkable that Nicodemus understood the Saviour literally, when the expression to be born again was in common use among the Jews to denote a change from Gentilism to Judaism by becoming a proselyte by baptism. The word with them meant a change from the state of a heathen to that of a Jew. But they never used it as applicable to a Jew, because they supposed that by his birth every Jew was entitled to all the privileges of the people of God. When, therefore, our Saviour used it of a Jew, when he affirmed its necessity of every man, Nicodemus supposed that there was an absurdity in the doctrine, or something that surpassed his comprehension, and he therefore asked whether it was possible that Jesus could teach so absurd a doctrine--as he could conceive no other sense as applicable to a Jew--as that he should, when old, enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. And we may learn from this--

1st. That prejudice leads men to misunderstand the plainest doctrines of religion.

2nd. That things which are at first incomprehensible or apparently absurd, may, when explained, become clear. The doctrine of regeneration, so difficult to Nicodemus, is plain to a child that is born of the Spirit.

3rd. Those in high rank in life, and who are learned, are often most ignorant about the plainest matters of religion. It is often wonderful that they exhibit so little acquaintance with the most simple subjects pertaining to the soul, and so much absurdity in their views.

4th. A doctrine is not to be rejected because the rich and the great do not believe or understand it. The doctrine of regeneration was not false because Nicodemus did not comprehend it.

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Be born of water. By water, here, is evidently signified baptism. Thus the word is used in Eph 5:26, Tit 3:5. Baptism was practised by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practised by John among the Jews; and Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of his religion, and the sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said (Mk 16:16), "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is clear from these places, and from the example of the apostles (Acts 2:38,41, 8:12, 13, 36, 38, 9:18 Acts 10:47, 48, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 22:16, Gal 3:27), that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus. And though it cannot be said that none who are not baptized can be saved, yet Jesus meant, undoubtedly, to be understood as affirming that this was to be the regular and uniform way of entering into his church; that it was the appropriate mode of making a profession of religion; and that a man who neglected this, when the duty was made known to him, neglected a plain command of God. It is clear, also, that any other command of God might as well be neglected or violated as this, and that it is the duty of everyone not only to love the Saviour, but to make an acknowledgment of that love by being baptized, and by devoting himself thus to his service. But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, he added that it was necessary that he should be born of the Spirit also. This was predicted of the Saviour, that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, Mt 3:11. By this is clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit; that the love of sin must be abandoned; that man must repent of crime and turn to God; that he must renounce all his evil propensities, and give himself to a life of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence. This great change is in the Scripture ascribed uniformly to the Holy Spirit, Tit 3:5, 1Thes 1:6 Ro 5:5 1Pe 1:22.

Cannot enter into. This is the way, the appropriate way, of entering into the kingdom of the Messiah here and hereafter. He cannot enter into the true church here, or into heaven in the world to come, except in connection with

a change of heart, and by the proper expression of that change in the ordinances appointed by the Saviour.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

That which is born of the flesh. To show the necessity of this change, the Saviour directs the attention of Nicodemus to the natural condition of man. By that which is born of the flesh he evidently intends man as he is by nature, in the circumstances of his natural birth. Perhaps, also, he alludes to the question asked by Nicodemus, whether a man could be born when he was old? Jesus tells him that if this could be, it would not answer any valuable purpose; he would still have the same propensities and passions. Another change was therefore indispensable.

Is flesh. Partakes of the nature of the parent. Comp. Gen 5:3. As the parents are corrupt and sinful, so will be their descendants. See Job 14:4. And as the parents are wholly corrupt by nature, so their children will be the same. The word flesh here is used as meaning corrupt, defiled, sinful. The flesh in the Scriptures is often used to denote the sinful propensities and passions of our nature, as those propensities are supposed to have their seat in the animal nature.

"The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," &c.,
Gal 5:19,20. See also Eph 2:3, 1Pet 3:21, 2:18, 1Jn 2:16, Rev 8:5

Is born of the Spirit. Of the Spirit of God, or by the agency of the Holy Ghost.

Is spirit. Is spiritual, like the spirit, that is, holy, pure. Here we learn,

1st. That all men are by nature sinful.

2nd. That none are renewed but by the Spirit of God. If man did the work himself, it would be still carnal and impure.

3rd. That the effect of the new birth is to make men holy. And,

4th. That no man can have evidence that he is born again who is not holy, and just in proportion as he becomes pure in his life will be the evidence that he is born of the Spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

The wind bloweth, &c. Nicodemus had objected to the doctrine because he did not understand how it could be. Jesus shows him that he ought not to reject it on that account, for he constantly believed things quite as difficult. It might appear incomprehensible, but it was to be judged of by its effects. As in this case of the wind, the effects were seen, the sound was heard, important changes were produced by it, trees and clouds were moved, yet the wind is not seen, nor do we know whence it comes, nor by what laws it is governed; so it is with the operations of the Spirit. We see the changes produced, Men just now sinful become holy; the thoughtless become serious; the licentious become pure; the vicious, moral; the moral, religious; the prayerless, prayerful; the rebellious and obstinate, meek, and mild, and gentle. When we see such changes, we ought no more to doubt that they are produced by some cause--by some mighty agent, than when we see the trees moved, or the waters of the ocean piled on heaps, or feel the cooling effects of a summer's breeze. In those cases we attribute it to the wind, though we see it not, and though we do not understand its operations. We may learn, hence, 1st. That the proper evidence of conversion is the effect on the life.

2nd. That we are not too curiously to search for the cause or manner of the change.

3rd. That God has power over the most hardened sinner to change him, as he has power over the loftiest oak, to bring it down by a sweeping blast.

4th. That there may be great variety in the modes of the operation of the Spirit. As the wind sometimes sweeps with a tempest, and prostrates all before it, and sometimes breathes upon us in a mild evening zephyr, so it is with the operations of the Spirit. The sinner sometimes trembles and is

prostrate before the truth, and sometimes is sweetly and gently drawn to the cross of Jesus.

Where it listeth. Where it wills or pleases. So is every one, &c. Every one that is born of the Spirit is, in some respects, like the effects of the wind. You see it not, you cannot discern its laws, but you see its effects, and you know therefore that it does exist and operate. Nicodemus's objection was, that he could not see this change, or perceive how it could be. Jesus tells him that he should not reject a doctrine merely because he could not understand it. Neither could the wind be seen, but its effects were well known, and no one doubted the existence or the power of the agent. Comp. Eccl 11:5.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

How can these things be? Nicodemus was still unwilling to admit the doctrine unless he understood it; and we have here an instance of a man of rank stumbling at one of the plainest doctrines of religion, and unwilling to admit a truth because he could not understand how it could be, when he daily admitted the truth of facts in other things which he could as little comprehend. And we may learn,

1st. That men will often admit facts on other subjects, and be greatly perplexed by similar facts in religion.

2nd. That no small part of men's difficulties are because they cannot understand how or why a thing is.

3rd. That men of rank and learning are as likely to be perplexed by these things as those in the obscurest and humblest walks of life.

4th. That this is one reason why such men, particularly, so often reject the truths of the gospel. And,

5th. That this is a very unwise treatment of truth, and a way which they do not apply to other things. If the wind cools and refreshes me in summer--if it prostrates the oak or lashes the sea into foam--if it destroys my house or my grain, it matters little how it does this; and so of the Spirit. If it renews my

heart, humbles my pride, subdues my sin, and comforts my soul, it is a matter of little importance how it does all this. Sufficient for me is it to know that it is done, and to taste the blessings which flow from the renewing and sanctifying grace of God.

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things ?

A master of Israel. A teacher of Israel; the same word that in the second verse is translated teacher. As such a teacher he ought to have understood this doctrine. It was not new, but was clearly taught in the Old Testament. See particularly Ps 51:10, 16, 17, Eze 11:19, 36:26. It may seem surprising that a man whose business it was to teach the people should be a stranger to so plain and important a doctrine; but when worldly-minded men are placed in offices of religion--when they seek those offices for the sake of ease or reputation, it is no wonder that they are strangers to the plain truths of the Bible; and there have been many, and there are still, who are in the ministry itself, to whom the plainest doctrines of the gospel are obscure. No man can understand the Bible fully unless he is a humble Christian, and the easiest way to comprehend the truths of religion is to give the heart to God and live to his glory. A child thus may have more real knowledge of the way of salvation than many who are pretended masters and teachers of Israel, Jn 7:17, Mt 11:25, Ps 8:2 compared with Mt 21:16.

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

We speak. Jesus here speaks in the plural number, including himself and those engaged with him in preaching the gospel. Nicodemus had said (Jn 3:2), "We know that thou art," &c., including himself and those with whom he acted. Jesus in reply said, We, who are engaged in spreading the new doctrines about which you have come to inquire, speak what we know. We do not deliver doctrines which we do not practically understand. This is a positive affirmation of Jesus, which he had a right to make about his new doctrine. He knew its truth, and those who came into his kingdom knew it also.

That we have seen. Jesus had seen by his omniscient eye all the operations of the Spirit on the hearts of men. His ministers have seen its effects as we see the effects of the wind, and, having seen men changed from sin to holiness, they are qualified to bear witness to the truth and reality of the

change. Every successful minister of the gospel thus becomes a witness of the saving power of the gospel.

Ye receive not. Ye Pharisees. Though we give evidence of the truth of the new religion; though miracles axe wrought, and proof is given that this doctrine came from heaven, yet you reject it. Our witness. Our testimony. The evidence which is furnished by miracles and by the saving power of the gospel. Men reject revelation though it is attested by the strongest evidence, and though it is constantly producing the most desirable changes in the hearts and lives of men.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ?

If I have told you earthly things. Things which occur on earth. Not sensual or worldly things, for Jesus had said nothing of these; but he had told him of operations of the Spirit which had occurred on earth, whose effects were visible, and which might be, therefore, believed. These were the plainest and most obvious of the doctrines of religion.

Heavenly things. Things pertaining to the government of God and his doings in the heavens; things which are removed from human view, and which cannot be subjected to human sight; the more profound and inscrutable things pertaining to the redemption of men.

Learn hence,

1st. The height and depth of the doctrines of religion. There is much that we cannot yet understand.

2nd. The feebleness of our understandings and the corruptions of our hearts are the real causes why doctrines of religion are so little understood by us.

3rd. There is before us a vast eternity, and there are profound wonders of God's government, to be the study of the righteous, and to be seen and admired by them for ever and ever.

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

KJV "13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, [even] the Son of man which is in heaven."

And no man hath ascended into heaven. No man, therefore, is qualified to speak of heavenly things, Jn 3:12. To speak of those things requires intimate acquaintance with them--demands that we have seen them; and as no one has ascended into heaven and returned, so no one is qualified to speak of them but He who came down from heaven. This does not mean that no one had gone to heaven or had been saved, for Enoch and Elijah had been borne there (Gen 5:24; comp. Heb 11:5, 2Kgs 2:11), and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others were there; but it means that no one had ascended and returned, so as to be qualified to speak of the things there.

But he that came down, &c. The Lord Jesus. He is represented as coming down, because, being equal with God, he took upon himself our nature, Jn 1:14, Php 2:6,7. He is represented as sent by the Father, Jn 3:17, 34, Gal 4:4, 1Jn 4:9, 10.

The Son of man. Called thus from his being a man; from his interest in man; and as expressive of his regard for man. It is a favourite title which the Lord Jesus gives to himself.

Which is in heaven. This is a very remarkable expression. Jesus, the Son of man, was then bodily on earth conversing with Nicodemus; yet he declares that he is at the same time in heaven. This can be understood only as referring to the fact that he had two natures--that his divine nature was in heaven, and his human nature on earth. Our Saviour is frequently spoken of in this manner. Comp. Jn 6:62; Jn 6:62, 17:5, 2Cor 8:9. As Jesus was in heaven--as his proper abode was there--he was fitted to speak of heavenly things, and to declare the will of God to man.

And we may learn,

1st. That the truth about the deep things of God is not to be learned of men. No one has ascended to heaven and returned to tell us what is there; and no infidel, no mere man, no prophet, is qualified of himself to speak of them.

2nd. That all the light which we are to expect on those subjects is to be sought in the Scriptures. It is only Jesus and his inspired apostles and evangelists that can speak of those things.

3rd. It is not wonderful that some things in the Scriptures are mysterious. They are about things which we have not seen, and we must receive them on the testimony of one who has seen them.

4th. The Lord Jesus is divine. He was in heaven while on earth. He had, therefore, a nature far above the human, and is equal with the Father, Jn 1:1.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

And as Moses. Jesus proceeds in this and the following verses to state the reason why he came into the world; and, in order to this, he illustrates his design, and the efficacy of his coming, by a reference to the case of the brazen serpent, recorded in Nu 21:8,9. The people were bitten by flying fiery serpents. There was no cure for the bite. Moses was directed to make an image of the serpent, and place it in sight of the people, that they might look on it and be healed. There is no evidence that this was intended to be a type of the Messiah, but it is used by Jesus as strikingly illustrating his work. Men are sinners. There is no cure by human means for the maladies of the soul; and as the people who were bitten might look on the image of the serpent and be healed, so may sinners look to the Saviour and be cured of the moral maladies of our nature.

Lifted up. Erected on a pole. Placed on high, so that it might be seen by the people.

The serpent. The image of a serpent made of brass.

In the wilderness. Near the land of Edom. In the desert and desolate country to the south of Mount Hor, Nu 21:4.

Even so. In a similar manner and with a similar design. He here refers, doubtless, to his own death. Comp. Jn 12:32, 8:28. The points of

resemblance between his being lifted up and that of the brazen serpent seem to be these:

1st. In each case those who are to/be benefited can be aided in no other way. The bite of the serpent was deadly, and could be healed only by looking on the brazen serpent; and sin is deadly in its nature, and can be removed only by looking on the cross.

2nd. The mode of their being lifted up. The brazen serpent was in the sight of the people, So Jesus was exalted from the earth--raised on a tree or cross.

3rd. The design was similar. The one was to save the life, the other the soul; the one to save from temporal, the other from eternal death.

4th. The manner of the cure was similar. The people of Israel were to look on the serpent and be healed, and so sinners are to look on the Lord Jesus that they may be saved.

Must. It is proper; necessary; indispensable, if men are saved. Comp. Lk 24:26, 22:42.

15 that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

That whosoever. This shows the fulness and freeness of the gospel. All may come and be saved.

Believeth in him. Whosoever puts confidence in him as able and willing to save. All who feel that they are sinners, that they have no righteousness of their own, and are willing to look to him as their only Saviour.

Should not perish. They are in danger, by nature, of perishing--that is, of sinking down to the pains of hell; of "being punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power," 2Thes 1:9. All who believe on Jesus shall be saved from this condemnation and be raised up to eternal life. And from this we learn,

1st. That there is salvation in no other.

2nd. That salvation is here full and free for all who will come.

3rd. That it is easy. What was more easy for a poor, wounded, dying Israelite, bitten by a poisonous serpent, than to look up to a brazen serpent? So with the poor, lost, dying sinner. And what more foolish than for such a wounded, dying man to refuse to look on a remedy so easy and effectual? So nothing is more foolish than for a lost and dying sinner to refuse to look on God's only Son, exalted on a cross to die for the sins of men, and able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

God So Loved the World

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God so loved. This does not mean that God approved the conduct of men, but that he had benevolent feelings toward them, or was earnestly desirous of their happiness. God hates wickedness, but he still desires the happiness of those sinners. He hates the sin, but loves the sinner. A parent may love his child and desire his welfare, and yet be strongly opposed to the conduct of that child. When we approve the conduct of another, this is the love of complacency; when we desire simply their happiness, this is the love of benevolence.

The world. All mankind. It does not mean any particular part of the world, but man as man--the race that had rebelled and that deserved to die. See Jn 6:33, 17:21. His love for the world, or for all mankind, in giving his Son, was shown by these circumstances:

1st. All the world was in ruin, and exposed to the wrath of God.

2nd. All men were in a hopeless condition.

3rd. God gave his Son. Man had no claim on him; it was a gift--an undeserved gift.

4th. He gave him up to extreme sufferings, even the bitter pains of death on the cross.

5th. It was for all the world. He tasted "death for every man," He 2:9. He "died for all," 2Cor 5:15. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," 1Jn 2:2.

That he gave. It was a free and unmerited gift. Man had no claim; and when there was no eye to pity or arm to save, it pleased God to give his Son into the hands of men to die in their stead, Gal 1:4; Rom 8:32, Lk 22:19. It was the mere movement of love; the expression of eternal compassion, and of a desire that sinners should not perish forever.

His only-begotten Son. Jn 1:14. This is the highest expression of love of which we can conceive. A parent who should give up his only son to die for others who are guilty--if this could or might be done--would show higher love than could be manifested in any other way. So it shows the depth of the love of God, that he was willing to give his only Son into the hands of sinful men that he might be slain, and thus redeem them from eternal sorrow.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Observe here, That the salvation of sinners was the intentional end, and the condemnation of them only the accidental event, of Christ's coming into the world. The design of Christ's first coming into the world. The design of Christ's first coming into the world was to save it. The end of his second coming will be to judge the unbelieving part of it.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

He that believeth. He that has confidence in him; that relies on him; that trusts to his merits and promises for salvation. To believe on him is to feel and act according to truth--that is, to go as lost sinners, and act toward him as a Saviour from sins; relying on him, and looking to him only for salvation. Mk 16:16.

Is not condemned. God pardons sin, and delivers us from deserved punishment, because we believe on him. Jesus died in our stead; he suffered for us, and by his sufferings our sins are expiated, and it is consistent for God to forgive. When a sinner, therefore, believes on Jesus, he trusts in him as having died in his place, and God having accepted the offering which Christ made in our stead, as being an equivalent for our sufferings in hell, there is now no farther condemnation, Rom 8:1.

He that believeth not. All who do not believe, whether the gospel has come to them or not. All men by nature.

Is condemned already. By conscience, by law, and in the judgment of God. God disapproves of their character, and this feeling of disapprobation, and the expression of it, is the condemnation. There is no condemnation so terrible as this--that God disapproves our conduct, and that he will express his disapprobation. He will judge according to truth, and woe to that man whose conduct God cannot approve.

Because. This word does not imply that the ground or reason of their condemnation is that they have not believed, or that they are condemned because they do not believe on him, for there are millions of sinners who have never heard of him; but the meaning is this: There is but one way by which men can be freed from condemnation. All men without the gospel are condemned. They who do not believe are still under this condemnation, not having embraced the only way by which they can be delivered from it. The verse may be thus paraphrased:

"All men are by nature condemned. There is but one way of being delivered from this state--by believing on the Son of God. They who do not believe or remain in that state are still condemned, FOR they have not embraced the only way in which they can be freed from it."

Nevertheless, those to whom the gospel comes greatly heighten their guilt and condemnation by rejecting the offers of mercy, and trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, Lk 12:47, Mt 11:23, Heb 10:29 Prov 1:24-30. And there are thousands going to eternity under this double condemnation--

1st. For positive, open sin; and,

2nd. For rejecting God's mercy, and despising the gospel of his Son. This it is which will make the doom of sinners in Christian lands so terrible.

Observe, That unbelief is the cause of the sinner's damnation; it is that sin which doth bind all other sins upon the sinner, and consigns him over to damnation; it is that sin which doth not only procure damnation, but no damnation like it; which is intimated in the next verse.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

This is the condemnation. This is the cause of condemnation; or this is the reason why men are punished.

That light is come. Light often denotes instruction, teaching, doctrine, as that by which we see clearly the path of duty. All the instruction that God gives us by conscience, reason, or revelation may thus be called light; but this word is used peculiarly to denote the Messiah or the Christ, who is often spoken of as the light. See Isa 60:1, 9:2. Compare Mt 4:16; also Jn 1:4. It was doubtless this light to which Jesus had particular reference here.

Men loved darkness. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, iniquity, error, superstition--whatever is opposite to truth and piety. Men are said to love darkness more than they do light when they are better pleased with error than truth, with sin than holiness, with Belial than Christ.

Because their deeds are evil. Men who commit crime commonly choose to do it in the night, so as to escape detection. So men who are wicked prefer false doctrine and error to the truth. Thus the Pharisees cloaked their crimes under the errors of their system; and, amid their false doctrines and superstitions, they attempted to convince others that they had great zeal for God.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

Hateth the light. This is true of all wicked men. They choose to practise their deeds of wickedness in darkness. They are afraid of the light, because they could be easily detected. Hence most crimes are committed in the night. So with the sinner against God. He hates the gospel, for it condemns his conduct, and his conscience would trouble him if it were enlightened.

His deeds should be reproved. To reprove here means not only to detect or make manifest, but also includes the idea of condemnation when his deeds are detected. The gospel would make his wickedness manifest, and his conscience would condemn him. We learn from this verse,

1st. That one design of the gospel is to reprove men. It convicts them of sin in order that it may afford consolation.

2nd. That men by nature hate the gospel. No man who is a sinner loves it; and no man by nature is disposed to come to it, any more than an adulterer or thief is disposed to come to the daylight, and do his deeds of wickedness there.

3rd. The reason why the gospel is hated is that men are sinners. "Christ is hated because sin is loved."

4th. The sinner must be convicted or convinced of sin. If it be not in this world, it will be in the next. There is no escape for him; and the only way to avoid condemnation in the world to come is to come humbly and acknowledge sin here, and seek for pardon.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

He that doeth truth. He who does right, or he that obeys the truth. Truth here is opposed to error and to evil. The sinner acts from falsehood and error. The good man acts according to truth. The sinner believes a lie that God will not punish, or that there is no God, or that there is no eternity and no hell. The Christian believes all these, and acts as if they were true. This is the difference between a Christian and a sinner.

Cometh to the light. Loves the truth, and seeks it more and more. By prayer and searching the Scriptures he endeavours to as certain the truth, and yield his mind to it.

May be made manifest. May be made clear or plain; or that it may be made plain that his deeds are wrought in God. He searches for truth and light that he may have evidence that his actions are right.

Wrought in God. That they are performed according to the will of God, or perhaps by the assistance of God, and are such as God will approve. The actions of good men are performed by the influence and aid of God, Php 2:12. Of course, if they are performed by his aid, they are such as he will approve. Here is presented the character of a good man and a sincere Christian.

We learn respecting that character,

1st. He does truth. He loves it, seeks it, follows it.

2nd. He comes to the light. He does not attempt to deceive himself or others.

3rd. He is willing to know himself, and aims to do it. He desires to know the true state of his heart before God.

4th. An especial object of his efforts is that his deeds may be wrought in God. He desires to be a good man; to receive continual aid from God, and to perform such actions as he will approve. This is the close of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus--a discourse condensing the gospel, giving the most striking exhibition and illustration of truth, and representing especially the fundamental doctrine of regeneration and the evidence of the change. It is clear that the Saviour regarded this as lying at the foundation of religion. Without it we cannot possibly be saved. And now it becomes every reader, as in the presence of God, and in view of the judgment-seat of Christ, solemnly to ask himself whether he has experienced this change? whether he knows by experience what it is to be

born of that Spirit? If he does he will be saved. If not, he is in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and should give no sleep to his eyes till he has made his peace with God.

He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.

23 And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

24 For John was not yet cast into prison.

For John was not yet cast into prison. See Lk 3:20. The mention of this shows that John was not imprisoned till some time after our Lord entered on his ministry. The design of John was to call men to repentance, and to prepare them for the Messiah, and this he continued to do after our Saviour commenced his work. It shows that a minister of religion should be industrious to the day of his death. John still toiled in his work not the less because the Messiah had come. So ministers should not labour less when Christ appears by his Spirit, and takes the work into his own hands, and turns many to himself.

25 Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying.

John's disciples. Those who had been baptized by him, and who attached great efficacy and importance to the teaching of their master. Comp. Acts 19:1, also Acts 19:2-5.

And the Jews. Many manuscripts, some of the fathers, and the ancient Syriac version, read this in the singular number-- "with a Jew," one who, it is commonly supposed, had been baptized by the disciples of Jesus.

About purifying. What the precise subject of this dispute was we do not know. From what follows, it would seem probable that it was about the comparative value and efficacy of the baptism performed by John and by the disciples of Jesus. The word purifying may be applied to baptism, as it was an emblem of repentance and purity, and was thus used by the Jews, by John, and by Jesus. About this subject it seems that a dispute arose, and was

carried to such a length that complaint was made to John. From this we may learn,

1st. That even in the time of Jesus, when the gospel began to be preached, there was witnessed--what has been ever since --unhappy disputings on the subject of religion. Even young converts may, by overheated zeal and ignorance, fall into angry discussion.

2nd. That such discussions are commonly about some unimportant matter of religion--something which they may not yet be qualified to understand, and which does not materially affect them if they could.

3rd. That such disputes are often connected with a spirit of proselytism--with boasting of the superior excellence of the sect with which we are connected, or in connection with whom we have been converted, and often with a desire to persuade others to join with us.

4th. That such a spirit is eminently improper on such occasions. Love should characterize the feelings of young converts; a disposition to inquire and not to dispute; a willingness that all should follow the dictates of their own consciences, and not a desire to proselyte them to our way of thinking or to our church. It may be added that there is scarcely anything which so certainly and effectually arrests a revival of religion as such a disposition to dispute, and to make proselytes to particular modes of faith, and of administering the ordinances of the gospel.

26 And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.

Came unto John. Came to him with their complaint; envious and jealous at the success of Jesus, and evidently irritated from the discussion, as if their master was about to lose his popularity.

Rabbi. Master. Mt 23:7. Acknowledging him as their master and teacher.

That was with thee. Who was baptized by thee.

Thou barest witness. See Jn 1:29-35.

All men come to him. This was the source of their difficulty. It was that Jesus was gaining popularity; that the people flocked to him; that they feared that John would be forsaken, and his followers be diminished in numbers and influence. Thus many love their sect more than they do Christ, and would be more rejoiced that a man became a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist, than that he became a sincere and humble Christian. This is not the spirit of the gospel. True piety teaches us to rejoice that sinners turn to Christ and become holy, whether they follow us or not. See Mk 9:38,39. Let Jesus be exalted, and let men turn to him, is the language of religion, whatever denomination they may feel it their duty to follow.

27 John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

John answered, &c. John did not enter into their feelings or sympathize with their love of party. He came to honour Jesus, not to build up a sect. He rejoiced at the success of the Messiah, and began to teach them to rejoice in it also.

A man can receive nothing, &c. All success is from heaven. All my success was from God. All the success of Jesus is from God. As success comes from the same source, we ought not to be envious. It is designed to answer the same end, and, by whomsoever accomplished, the hand of God is in it, and we should rejoice. If Jesus and his disciples are successful, if all men flee to him, it is proof that God favours him, and you should rejoice.

28 Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

Bear me witness. You remember that at first I told you I was not the Messiah. As he had been witness to Jesus--as he came for no other end but to point him out to the Jews, they ought not to suppose that he was his superior. It was but reasonable to expect that Christ himself would be more successful than his forerunner. "I came, not to form a separate party, a peculiar sect, but to prepare the way that he might be more successful, and that the people might be ready for his coming, and that he might have the success which he has actually met with. You should rejoice, therefore, at that success, and not enter it, for his success is the best proof of the greatness of my word, and of its success also."

29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

He that hath the bride, &c. This is an illustration drawn from marriage. The bride belongs to her husband. So the church, the bride of the Messiah, belongs to him. It is to be expected, therefore, and desired, that the people should flock to him.

But the friend of the bridegroom. He whose office it is to attend him on the marriage occasion. This was commonly the nearest friend, and was a high honour.

Rejoiceth greatly. Esteems himself highly honoured by the proof of friendship.

The bridegroom's voice. His commands, requests, or conversation.

This is my joy, &c.

"I sustain to the Messiah the relation which a groomsman does to the groom. The chief honour and the chief joy is not mine, but his. It is to be expected, therefore, that the people will come to him, and that his success will be great."

The relation of Christ to the church is often compared with the marriage relation, denoting the tenderness of the union, and his great love for his people. Comp. Isa 62:5, Rev 21:2,9, 22:17, Eph 5:26,27,32 2Cor 11:2.

30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

He must increase. His authority and influence among the people must grow. His doctrine shall continue to spread till it extends through all the earth.

I must decrease.

"The purpose of my ministry is to point men to him. When that is done my work is done. I came not to form a party of my own, nor to set up a religion of my own; and my teaching must cease when he is fully established, as the

light of the morning star fades away and is lost in the beams of the rising sun."

This evinced John's humility and willingness to be esteemed as nothing if he could honour Christ. It shows us, also, that it is sufficient honour for man if he may be permitted to point sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ. No work is so honourable and joyful as the ministry of the gospel; none are so highly honoured as those who are permitted to stand near the Son of God, to hear his voice, and to lead perishing men to his cross. Comp. Dan 12:3.

The Testimony from Heaven

31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

He that cometh from above. The Messiah, represented as coming down from heaven. See Jn 3:13, 6:33, 8:23. It has been doubted whether the remainder of this chapter contains the words of John the Baptist or of the evangelist. The former is the more probable opinion, but it is difficult to decide it, and it is of very little consequence.

Is above all. In nature, rank, and authority. Is superior to all prophets (Heb 1:1,2); to all angels (Heb 1:4-14), and is over all the universe as its sovereign Lord, Rev 9:5; Eph 1:21, 22, Col 1:15-19, 1Cor 15:25.

He that is of the earth. He who has no higher nature than the human nature. The prophets, apostles, and John were men like others, born in the same way, and sinking, like others, to the dust. See Acts 14:15. Jesus had a nature superior to man, and ought, therefore, to be exalted above all.

Is earthly. Is human. Is inferior to him who comes from heaven. Partakes of his origin, which is inferior and corrupt.

Speaketh of the earth. His teaching is inferior to that of him who comes from heaven. It is comparatively obscure and imperfect, not full and clear, like the

teaching of him who is from above. This was the case with all the prophets, and even with John the Baptist, as compared with the teaching of Christ.

32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

No man receiveth his testimony. The words no man are here to be under stood in the sense of few. Though his doctrine is pure, plain, sublime, yet few, comparatively, received it in faith. Though multitudes came to him, drawn by various motives (Jn 6:26), yet few became his real disciples, Mt 26:56, 7:22.

His testimony. His doctrine. The truth to which he bears witness as having seen and known it, Jn 3:11. Often many persons appear for a time to become the followers of Christ, who in the end are seen to have known nothing of religion, Mt 13:6; Lk 8:13.

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

He that hath received his testimony. Hath received and fully believed his doctrine. Hath yielded his heart to its influence.

Hath set to his seal. To seal an instrument is to make it sure; to acknowledge it as ours; to pledge our veracity that it is true and binding, as when a man seals a bond, a deed, or a will. Believing a doctrine, therefore, in the heart, is expressed by sealing it, or by believing it we express our firm conviction that it is true, and that God who has spoken it is true. We vouch for the veracity of God, and assume as our own the proposition that it is the truth of God.

God is true. Is faithful; is the author of the system of doctrines, and will fulfil all that he has promised. We learn here,

1st. That to be a true believer is something more than to hold a mere speculative belief of the truth.

2nd. That to be a believer is to pledge ourselves for the truth, to seal it as our own, to adopt it, to choose it, and solemnly assent to it, as a man does in regard to an instrument of writing that is to convey his property, or that is to dispose of it when he dies.

3rd. Every Christian is a witness for God, and it is his business to show by his life that he believes that God is true to his threatenings and to his promises. Barnes "Is 43:10".

4th. It is a solemn act to become a Christian. It is a surrender of all to God, or giving away body, soul, and spirit to him, with a belief that he is true, and alone is able to save.

5th. The man that does not do this-- that is not willing to pledge his belief that God is true, sets to his seal that God is a liar and unworthy of confidence, 1Jn 5:10.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

It is recommended to us as a divine doctrine; not his own, but his that sent him (Joh 3:34): For he whom God hath sent speaketh the word of God, which he was sent to speak, and enabled to speak; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The prophets were as messengers that brought letters from heaven; but Christ came under the character of an ambassador, and treats with us as such;

for,

1. He spoke the words of God, and nothing he said savoured of human infirmity; both substance and language were divine. He proved himself sent of God (Joh 3:2), and therefore his words are to be received as the words of God. By this rule we may try the spirits: those that speak as the oracles of God, and prophesy according to the proportion of faith, are to be received as sent of God.

2. He spoke as no other prophet did; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him. None can speak the words of God without the Spirit of God, 1Co 2:10,11. The Old-Testament prophets had the Spirit, and in different degrees, 2Ki 2:9,10. But, whereas God gave them the Spirit by measure (1Co 12:4), he gave him to Christ without measure; all fulness dwelt in him, the fulness of the Godhead, an immeasurable fulness. The Spirit was not in

Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain, as in a bottomless ocean. "The prophets that had the Spirit in a limited manner, only with respect to some particular revelation, sometimes spoke of themselves; but he that had the Spirit always residing in him, without stint, always spoke the words of God." So Dr. Whitby.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

[1.] He is the beloved Son of the Father (Joh 3:35): The Father loveth the Son. The prophets were faithful as servants, but Christ as a Son; they were employed as servants, but Christ beloved as a son, always his delight, Pr 8:30. The Father was well pleased in him; not only he did love him, but he doth love him; he continued his love to him even in his estate of humiliation, loved him never the less for his poverty and sufferings.

[2.] He is Lord of all. The Father, as an evidence of his love for him, hath given all things into his hand. Love is generous. The Father took such a complacency and had such a confidence in him that he constituted him the great feoffee in trust for mankind. Having given him the Spirit without measure, he gave him all things; for he was hereby qualified to be master and manager of all. Note, It is the honour of Christ, and the unspeakable comfort of all Christians, that the Father hath given all things into the hands of the Mediator. First, All power; so it is explained, Mt 28:18. All the works of creation being put under his feet, all the affairs of redemption are put into his hand; he is Lord of all. Angels are his servants; devils are his captives. He has power over all flesh, the heathen given him for his inheritance. The kingdom of providence is committed to his administration. He has power to settle the terms of the covenant of peace as the great plenipotentiary, to govern his church as the great lawgiver, to dispense divine favours as the great almoner, and to call all to account as the great Judge. Both the golden sceptre and the iron rod are given into his hand. Secondly, All grace is given into his hand as the channel of conveyance; all things, all those good things which God intended to give to the children of men; eternal life, and all its preliminaries. We are unworthy that the Father should give those things into our hands, for we have made ourselves the children of his wrath; he hath therefore appointed the Son of his love to be trustee for us, and the things he intended for us he gives into his hands, who is worthy, and has merited both honours for himself and favours for us. They are given into his hands, by him to be given into ours. This is a great encouragement to faith, that the

riches of the new covenant are deposited in so sure, so kind, so good a hand, the hand of him that purchased them for us, and us for himself, who is able to keep all that which both God and believers have agreed to commit to him.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

He is the object of that faith which is made the great condition of eternal happiness, and herein he has the pre-eminence above all others: He that believeth on the Son, hath life, Joh 3:36. We have here the application of what he had said concerning Christ and his doctrine; and it is the conclusion of the whole matter. If God has put this honour upon the Son, we must by faith give honour to him. As God offers and conveys good things to us by the testimony of Jesus Christ, whose word is the vehicle of divine favours, so we receive and partake of those favours by believing the testimony, and entertaining that word as true and good; this way of receiving fitly answers that way of giving. We have here the sum of that gospel which is to be preached to every creature, Mk 16:16. Here is,

The blessed state of all true Christians: He that believes on the Son hath everlasting life.

Note,

1. It is the character of every true Christian that he believes on the Son of God; not only believes him, that what he saith is true, but believes on him, consents to him, and confides in him. The benefit of true Christianity is no less than everlasting life; this is what Christ came to purchase for us and confer upon us; it can be no less than the happiness of an immortal soul in an immortal God.

2. True believers, even now, have everlasting life; not only they shall have it hereafter, but they have it now.

For,

(1.) They have very good security for it. The deed by which it passeth is sealed and delivered to them, and so they have it; it is put into the hands of

their guardian for them, and so they have it, though the use be not yet transferred into possession. They have the Son of God, and in him they have life; and the Spirit of God, the earnest of this life.

(2.) They have the comfortable foretastes of it, in present communion with God and the tokens of his love. Grace is glory begun.

John-4

Jesus and the Woman of Samaria

1 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that
Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

The Lord knew. When Jesus knew. How he knew this we are not informed; whether by that power of omniscience by which he knew all things, or whether some person had informed him of it.

How the Pharisees had heard. The Pharisees, here, seem to denote either the members of the Sanhedrim or those who were in authority. They claimed the authority to regulate the rites and ceremonies of religion, and hence they supposed they had a right to inquire into the conduct of both John and our Lord. They had on a former occasion sent to inquire of John to know by what authority he had introduced such a rite into the religion of the Jewish people. Jn 1:25.

More disciples than John. Though many of the Pharisees came to his baptism-(Matthew Chapter 3.), yet those who were in authority were displeased with the success of John, Jn 1:25. The reasons of this were, probably, the severity and justness of his reproofs Mt 3:7, and the fact that by drawing many after him he weakened their authority and influence. As they were displeased with John, so they were with Jesus, who was doing the same thing on a larger scale--not only making disciples, but baptizing also without their authority, and drawing away the people after him.

2 (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

He left Judea. The envy and malice of the Pharisees he might have known were growing so rapidly as to endanger his life. As his time to die had not yet come, he retired to Galilee, a country farther from Jerusalem, and much less under their control than Judea. See Mk 2:22, Lk 3:1. Though he feared not death and did not shrink from suffering, yet he did not needlessly throw himself into danger or provoke opposition. He could do as much good in Galilee, probably, as in Judea, and he therefore withdrew himself from immediate danger.

3 he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

And he must needs go through Samaria. Samaria was between Judea and Galilee. The direct and usual way was to pass through Samaria. Sometimes, however, the Jews took a circuitous route on the east side of the Jordan, Mt 2:22.

4 And he must needs go through Samaria.

5 Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Sychar. This city stood about eight miles south-east of the city called Samaria, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It was one of the oldest cities of Palestine, and was formerly known by the name of Shechem, or Sichem, Gen 33:18, 12:6. The city was in the tribe of Ephraim, Josh 21:21. It was at this place that Joshua assembled the people before his death, and here they renewed their covenant with the Lord, Joshua chapter 24. After the death of Gideon it became a place of idolatrous worship, the people worshipping Baal-berith, Jud 9:46. It was destroyed by Abimelech, who beat down the city and sowed it with salt, Jud 9:45. It was afterward rebuilt, and became the residence of Jeroboam, the King of Israel, 1Kgs 12:25. It was called by the Romans Flavia Neapolis, and this has been corrupted by the Arabs into Nablus, its present name. It is still a considerable place, and its site is remarkably pleasant and productive.

That Jacob gave, &c. Jacob bought one piece of ground near to Shalem, a city of Shechem, of the children of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver, Gen 33:19. In this place the bones of Joseph were buried when they were brought up from Egypt, Josh 24:32. He also gave to Joseph an additional piece of ground which he took from the hand of the Arnorite by his own valour, "with his sword and his bow," as a portion above that which was given to his brethren, Gen 48:22. Possibly these pieces

of ground lay near together, and were a part of the homestead of Jacob. The well was "near" to this. There is now, the Rev. E. Smith mentioned to me in conversation, a place near this well called Shalem.

6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

Jacob's well. This is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was called Jacob's well, probably, either because it was handed down by tradition that he dug it, or because it was near to the land which he gave to Joseph. There is still a well a few miles to the east of Nablus, which is said by the people there to be the same. The Rev. Eli Smith, missionary to Syria, stated that he had visited this well. It is about 100 feet deep. It is cut through solid rock of limestone. It is now dry, probably from having been partly filled with rubbish, or perhaps because the water has been diverted by earthquakes. The well is covered with a large stone, which has a hole in the centre large enough to admit a man. It is at the foot of Mount Gerizim, and has a plain on the east.

7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

Of Samaria. Not of the city of Samaria, for this was at a distance of 8 miles, but a woman who was a Samaritan, and doubtless from the city of Sychar.

Give me to drink. This was in the heat of the day, and when Jesus was weary with his journey. The request was also made that it might give him occasion to discourse with her on the subject of religion, and in this instance we have a specimen of the remarkably happy manner in which he could lead on a conversation so as to introduce the subject of religion.

8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

The woman, though she does not deny his request, yet quarrels with him because he did not carry on the humour of his own nation (Joh 4:9): How is it? Observe, First, What a mortal feud there was between the Jews and the Samaritans: The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were the adversaries of Judah (Ezr 4:1), were upon all occasions mischievous to them. The Jews were extremely malicious against the Samaritans, "looked upon them as having no part in the resurrection,

excommunicated and cursed them by the sacred name of God, by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment, with this law, That no Israelite eat of any thing that is a Samaritan's, for it is as if he should eat swine's flesh." So Dr. Lightfoot, out of Rabbi Tanchum. Note, Quarrels about religion are usually the most implacable of all quarrels. Men were made to have dealing one with another; but if men, because one worships at one temple and another at another, will deny the offices of humanity, and charity, and common civility, will be morose and unnatural, scornful and censorious, and this under colour of zeal for religion, they plainly show that however their religion may be true they are not truly religious; but, pretending to stickle for religion, subvert the design of it. Secondly, How ready the woman was to upbraid Christ with the haughtiness and ill nature of the Jewish nation: How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me? By his dress or dialect, or both, she knew him to be a Jew, and thinks it strange that he runs not to the same excess of riot against the Samaritans with other Jews. Note, Moderate men of all sides are, like Joshua and his fellows (Zec 3:8), men wondered at. Two things this woman wonders at, 1. That he should ask this kindness; for it was the pride of the Jews that they would endure any hardship rather than be beholden to a Samaritan. It was part of Christ's humiliation that he was born of the Jewish nation, which was now not only in an ill state, subject to the Romans, but in an ill name among the nations. With what disdain did Pilate ask, Am I a Jew? Thus he made himself not only of no reputation, but of ill reputation; but herein he has set us an example of swimming against the stream of common corruptions. We must, like our master, put on goodness and kindness, though it should be ever so much the genius of our country, or the humour of our party, to be morose and ill-natured. This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person even the common faults of the community: no rule but has some exceptions. 2. She wonders that he should expect to receive this kindness from her that was a Samaritan: "You Jews could deny it to one of our nation, and why should we grant it to one of yours?" Thus quarrels are propagated endlessly by revenge and retaliation.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things: If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked, Joh 4:10. Observe,

First, He waives her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best healed by being slighted, and by avoiding all occasions of entering into dispute about them. Christ will convert this woman, not by showing her that the Samaritan worship was schismatical (though really it was so), but by showing her her own ignorance and immoralities, and her need of a Saviour.

Secondly, He fills her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she was aware of) of gaining that which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had to discern the signs of the times, and therefore Christ tells her expressly that she had now a season of grace; this was the day of her visitation.

1. He hints to her what she should know, but was ignorant of: If thou knewest the gift of God, that is, as the next words explain it, who it is that saith, Give me to drink. If thou knewest who I am. She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary traveller; but he would have her know something more concerning him that did yet appear.

Note,

(a.) Jesus Christ is the gift of God, the richest token of God's love to us, and the richest treasure of all good for us; a gift, not a debt which we could demand from God; not a loan, which he will demand from us again, but a gift, a free gift, Joh 3:16.

(b.) It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of God proposed and offered to us; to have an opportunity of embracing it: "He who is the gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to thee; it is he that saith, Give me to drink; this gift comes a begging to thee."

(c.) Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that know him not. They know not who it is that speaks

to them in the gospel, that saith, Give me to drink; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them.

2. He hopes concerning her, what she would have done if she had known him; to be sure she would not have given him such a rude and uncivil answer; nay, she would have been so far from affronting him that she would have made her addresses to him: Thou wouldest have asked.

Note,

(a.) Those that would have any benefit by Christ must ask for it, must be earnest in prayer to God for it.

(b.) Those that have a right knowledge of Christ will seek to him, and if we do not seek unto him it is a sign that we do not know him, Ps 9:10.

(c.) Christ knows what they that want the means of knowledge would have done if they had had them, Mt 11:21.

3. He assures her what he would have done for her if she had applied to him: "He would have given thee (and not have upbraided thee as thou doest me) living water." By this living water is meant the Spirit, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, for some of which he asked, but like living or running water, which was much more valuable.

Note,

(a.) The Spirit of grace is as living water; see Joh 7:38. Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament, Isa 12:3,35:7,44:4,55:1,Zec 14:8. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity.

(b.) Jesus Christ can and will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; for he received that he might give.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water ?

The woman objects against and cavils at the gracious intimation which Chri her (Joh 4:11,12): Thou hast nothing to draw with; and besides, Art thou than our father Jacob? What he spoke figuratively, she took literally; Nico did so too. See what confused notions they have of spiritual things who are taken up with the things that are sensible. Some respect she pays to this per calling him Sir, or Lord; but little respect to what he said, which she does but

First, She does not think him capable of furnishing her with any water, no, not this in the well that is just at hand: Thou has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. This she said, not knowing the power of Christ, for he who causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth needs nothing to draw. But there are those who will trust Christ no further than they can see him, and will not believe his promise, unless the means of the performance of it be visible; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. She asks scornfully, "Whence hast thou this living water? I see not whence thou canst have it." Note, The springs of that living water which Christ has for those that come to him are secret and undiscovered. The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it.

Secondly, She does not think it possible that he should furnish her with any better water than this which she could come at, but he could not: Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?

1. We will suppose the tradition true, that Jacob himself, and his children, and cattle, did drink of this well. And we may observe from it,

(a.) The power and providence of God, in the continuance of the fountains of water from generation to generation, by the constant circulation of the rivers, like the blood in the body (Ec 1:7), to which circulation perhaps the flux and reflux of the sea, like the pulses of the heart, contribute.

(b.) The plainness of the patriarch Jacob; his drink was water, and he and his children drank of the same well with his cattle.

2. Yet, allowing that to be true, she was out in several things; as,

(a.) In calling Jacob father. What authority had the Samaritans to reckon themselves of the seed of Jacob? They were descended from that mixed multitude which the king of Assyria had placed in the cities of Samaria; what have they to do then with Jacob? Because they were the invaders of Israel's rights, and the unjust possessors of Israel's lands, were they therefore the inheritors of Israel's blood and honour? How absurd were those pretensions!

(b.) She is out in claiming this well as Jacob's gift, whereas he did no more give it than Moses gave the manna, Joh 6:32. But thus we are apt to call the messengers of God's gifts the donors of them, and to look so much at the hands they pass through as to forget the hand they come from. Jacob gave it to his sons, not to them. Yet thus the church's enemies not only usurp, but monopolize, the church's privileges.

(c.) She was out in speaking of Christ as not worthy to be compared with our father Jacob. An over-fond veneration for antiquity makes God's graces, in the good people of our own day, to be slighted.

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle ?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

Christ answers this cavil, and makes it out that the living water he had to give was far better than that of Jacob's well, Joh 4:13,14. Though she spoke perversely, Christ did not cast her off, but instructed and encouraged her. He shows her,

First, That the water of Jacob's well yielded but a transient satisfaction and supply: "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again. It is no better than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much need, and as much desire, of water as ever he had."

This intimates,

1 The infirmities of our bodies in this present state; they are still necessitous, and ever craving. Life is a fire, a lamp, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil. The natural heat preys upon itself.

2 The imperfections of all our comforts in this world; they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall thirst again. Yesterday's meat and drink will not do to-day's work.

Secondly, That the living waters he would give should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, Joh 4:14. Christ's gifts appear most valuable when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between them. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel,

1. He shall never thirst, he shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires; they are longing, but not languishing. A desiring thirst he has, nothing more than God, still more and more of God; but not a despairing thirst.

2. Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives shall be in him a well of water. He can never be reduced to extremity that has in himself a fountain of supply and satisfaction.

(a.) Ever ready, for it shall be in him. The principle of grace planted in him is the spring of his comfort; see Joh 7:38. A good man is satisfied from himself, for Christ dwells in his heart. The anointing abides in him; he needs not sneak to the world for comfort; the work and the witness of the Spirit in the heart furnish him with a firm foundation of hope and an overflowing fountain of joy.

(b.) Never failing, for it shall be in him a well of water. He that has at hand only a bucket of water needs not thirst as long as this lasts, but it will soon be exhausted; but believers have in them a well of water, overflowing, ever flowing. The principles and affections which Christ's holy religion forms in

the souls of those that are brought under the power of it are this well of water.

[1.] It is springing up, ever in motion, which bespeaks the actings of grace strong and vigorous. If good truths stagnate in our souls, like standing water, they do not answer the end of our receiving them. If there be a good treasure in the heart, we must thence bring forth good things.

[2.] It is springing up unto everlasting life; which intimates, First, The aims of gracious actings. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven, means this, designs this, does all for this, will take up with nothing short of this. Spiritual life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. Secondly, The constancy of those actings; it will continue springing up till it come to perfection. Thirdly, The crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water rises from heaven, and therefore rises towards heaven; see Ec 1:7. And now is not this water better than that of Jacob's well?

14 but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

The woman (whether in jest or earnest is hard to say) begs of him to give her some of this water (Joh 4:15): Give me this water, that I thirst not. First, Some think that she speaks tauntingly, and ridicules what Christ had said as mere stuff; and, in derision of it, not desires, but challenges him to give her some of this water: "A rare invention; it will save me a great deal of pains if I never come hither to draw." But, Secondly, Others think that it was a well-meant but weak and ignorant desire. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful, and therefore saith Amen, at a venture. Whatever it be, let me have it; who will show me any good? Ease, or saving of labour, is a valuable good to poor labouring people.

Note,

1. Even those that are weak and ignorant may yet have some faint and fluctuating desires towards Christ and his gifts, and some good wishes of grace and glory.

2. Carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. "Give it to me," saith she, "not that I may have everlasting life" (which Christ proposed), "but that I come not hither to draw."

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

The next subject of discourse with this woman in concerning her husband, Joh 4:16-18. It was not to let fall the discourse of the water of life that Christ started this, as many who will bring in any impertinence in conversation that they may drop a serious subject; but it was with a gracious design that Christ mentioned it. What he had said concerning his grace and eternal life he found had made little impression upon her, because she had not been convinced of sin: therefore, waiving the discourse about the living water, he sets himself to awaken her conscience, to open the wound of guilt, and then she would more easily apprehend the remedy by grace. And this is the method of dealing with souls; they must first be made weary and heavy-laden under the burden of sin, and then brought to Christ for rest; first pricked to the heart, and then healed. This is the course of spiritual physic; and if we proceed not in this order we begin at the wrong end.

Observe,

(a.) How discreetly and decently Christ introduces this discourse (Joh 4:16): Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

Now,

[1.] The order Christ gave her had a very good colour: "Call thy husband, that he may teach thee, and help thee to understand these things, which thou art so ignorant of" The wives that will learn must ask their husbands (1Co 14:35), who must dwell with them as men of knowledge, 1Pe 3:7. "Call thy husband, that he may learn with thee; that then you may be heirs together of

the grace of life. Call thy husband, that he may be witness to what passes between us." Christ would thus teach us to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and to study that which is of good report.

[2.] As it had a good colour, so it had a good design; for hence he would take occasion to call her sin to remembrance. There is need of art and prudence in giving reproofs; to fetch a compass, as the woman of Tekoa, 2Sa 14:20.

(b.) How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction, and yet insensibly convicts herself, and, ere she is aware, owns her fault; she said, I have no husband. Her saying this intimated no more than that she did not care to have her husband spoken of, nor that matter mentioned any more. She would not have her husband come thither, lest, in further discourse, the truth of the matter should come out, to her shame; and therefore, "Pray go on to talk of something else, I have no husband;" she would be thought a maid or a widow, whereas, though she had no husband, she was neither. The carnal mind is very ingenious to shift off convictions, and to keep them from fastening, careful to cover the sin.

(c.) How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience. It is probable that he said more than is here recorded, for she thought that he told her all that ever she did (Joh 4:29), but that which is here recorded is concerning her husbands.

Here is,

[1.] A surprising narrative of her past conversation: Thou has had five husbands. Doubtless, it was not her affliction (the burying of so many husbands), but her sin, that Christ intended to upbraid her with; either she had eloped (as the law speaks), had run away from her husbands, and married others, or by her undutiful, unclean, disloyal conduct, had provoked them to divorce her, or by indirect means had, contrary to law, divorced them. Those who make light of such scandalous practices as these, as no

more than nine days' wonder, and as if the guilt were over as soon as the talk is over, should remember that Christ keeps account of all.

[2.] A severe reproof of her present state of life: He whom thou now hast is not thy husband. Either she was never married to him at all, or he had some other wife, or, which is most probable, her former husband or husbands were living: so that, in short, she lived in adultery. Yet observe how mildly Christ tells her of it; he doth not call her strumpet, but tells her, He with whom thou livest is not thy husband: and then leaves it to her own conscience to say the rest. Note, Reproofs are ordinarily most profitable when they are least provoking.

[3.] Yet in this he puts a better construction than it would well bear upon what she said by way of shuffle and evasion: Thou has well said I have no husband; and again, In that saidst thou truly. What she intended as a denial of the fact (that she had none with whom she lived as a husband) he favourably interpreted, or at least turned upon her, as a confession of the fault. Note, Those who would win souls should make the best of them, whereby they may hope to work upon their good-nature; for, if they make the worst of them, they certainly exasperate their ill-nature.

18 for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

A case of conscience proposed to Christ by the woman, concerning the place of worship, Joh 4:19,20.

[1.] The inducement she had to put this case: Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. She does not deny the truth of what he had charged her with, but by her silence owns the justice of the reproof; nor is she put into a passion by it, as many are when they are touched in a sore place, does not impute his censure to the general disgust the Jews had to the Samaritans, but (which is a rare thing) can bear to be told of a fault.

But this is not all; she goes further:

First, She speaks respectfully to him, calls him Sir. Thus should we honour those that deal faithfully with us. This was the effect of Christ's meekness in reproving her; he gave her no ill language, and then she gave him none.

Secondly, She acknowledges him to be a prophet, one that had a correspondence with Heaven. Note, The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins, is a great proof of its divine authority, 1Co 14:24,25.

Thirdly, She desires some further instruction from him. Many that are not angry at their reprovers, nor fly in their faces, yet are afraid of them and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have some more discourse with him that told her of her faults.

[2.] The case itself that she propounded concerning the place of religious worship in public. Some think that she started this to shift off further discourse concerning her sin. Controversies in religion often prove great prejudices to serious godliness; but, it should seem, she proposed it with a good design; she knew she must worship God, and desired to do it aright; and therefore, meeting with a prophet, begs his direction.

Note, It is our wisdom to improve all opportunities of getting knowledge in the things of God. When we are in company with those that are fit to teach, let us be forward to learn, and have a good question ready to put to those who are able to give a good answer. It was agreed between the Jews and the Samaritans that God is to be worshipped (even those who were such fools as to worship false gods were not such brutes as to worship none), and that religious worship is an affair of great importance: men would not contend about it if they were not concerned about it. But the matter in variance was where they should worship God. Observe how she states the case:--

First, As for the Samaritans: Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, near to this city and this well; there the Samaritan temple was built by Sanballat, in favour of which she insinuates,

1. That whatever the temple was the place was holy; it was mount Gerizim, the mount in which the blessings were pronounced; and some think the same on which Abraham built his altar (Ge 12:6,7), and Jacob his, Ge 33:18-20.

2. That it might plead prescription: Our fathers worshipped here. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition, and succession, on their side. A vain conversation often supports itself with this, that it was received by tradition from our fathers. But she had little reason to boast of their fathers; for, when Antiochus persecuted the Jews, the Samaritans, for fear of sharing with them in their sufferings, not only renounced all relation to the Jews, but surrendered their temple to Antiochus, with a request that it might be dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, and called by his name. Joseph. Antiq. 12. 257-264.

Secondly, As to the Jews: You say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. The Samaritans governed themselves by the five books of Moses, and (some think) received only them as canonical. Now, though they found frequent mention there of the place God would choose, yet they did not find it named there; and they saw the temple at Jerusalem stripped of many of its ancient glories, and therefore thought themselves at liberty to set up another place, altar against altar.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

Christ's answer to this case of conscience, Joh 4:21, &c. Those that apply themselves to Christ for instruction shall find him meek, to teach the meek his way. Now here,

He puts a slight upon the question, as she had proposed it, concerning the place of worship (Joh 4:21): "Woman, believe me as a prophet, and mark what I say. Thou art expecting the hour to come when either by some divine revelation, or some signal providence, this matter shall be decided in favour either of Jerusalem or of Mount Gerizim; but I tell thee the hour

is at hand when it shall be no more a question; that which thou has been taught to lay so much weight on shall be set aside as a thing indifferent."

Note, It should cool us in our contests to think that those things which now fill us, and which we make such a noise about, shall shortly vanish, and be no more: the very things we are striving about are passing away: The hour comes when you shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.

First, The object of worship is supposed to continue still the same--God, as a Father; under this notion the very heathen worshipped God, the Jews did so, and probably the Samaritans.

Secondly, But a period shall be put to all niceness and all differences about the place of worship. The approaching dissolution of the Jewish economy, and the erecting of the evangelical state, shall set this matter at large, and lay all in common, so that it shall be a thing perfectly indifferent whether in either of these places or any other men worship God, for they shall not be tied to any place; neither here nor there, but both, and any where, and every where.

Note, The worship of God is not now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place, as it was under the law, but it is God's will that men pray every where. 1Ti 2:8,Mal 1:11. Our reason teaches us to consult decency and convenience in the places of our worship: but our religion gives no preference to one place above another, in respect to holiness and acceptableness to God. Those who prefer any worship merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed (though it were as magnificent and as solemnly consecrated as ever Solomon's temple was) forget that the hour is come when there shall be no difference put in God's account: no, not between Jerusalem, which had been so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which had been so infamous for impiety.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews.

He lays a stress upon other things, in the matter of religious worship. When he made so light of the place of worship he did not intend to lessen our

concern about the thing itself, of which therefore he takes occasion to discourse more fully.

As to the present state of the controversy, he determines against the Samaritan worship, and in favour of the Jews, Joh 4:22. He tells here,

1. That the Samaritans were certainly in the wrong; not merely because they worshipped in this mountain, though, while Jerusalem's choice was in force, that was sinful, but because they were out in the object of their worship. If the worship itself had been as it should have been, its separation from Jerusalem might have been connived at, as the high places were in the best reigns: But you worship you know not what, or that which you do not know. They worshipped the God of Israel, the true God (Ezr 4:2,2Ki 17:32); but they were sunk into gross ignorance; they worshipped him as the God of that land (2Ki 17:27,33), as a local deity, like the gods of the nations, whereas God must be served as God, as the universal cause and Lord.

Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion that it is the murderer of it. Those that worship God ignorantly offer the blind for sacrifice, and it is the sacrifice of fools.

2. That the Jews were certainly in the right. For,

(a) "We know what we worship. We go upon sure grounds in our worship, for our people are catechised and trained up in the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in the scripture." Note, Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God (a certain though not a perfect knowledge) may worship him comfortably to themselves, and acceptably to him, for they know what they worship. Christ elsewhere condemns the corruptions of the Jews' worship (Mt 15:9), and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be true where yet it is not pure and entire. Observe, Our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the worshippers of God: We worship. Though he was a Son (and then are the children free), yet learned he this obedience, in the days of his humiliation. Let not the greatest of men think the worship of God below them, when the Son of God himself did not.

(b) Salvation is of the Jews; and therefore they know what they worship, and what grounds they go upon in their worship. Not that all the Jews were saved, nor that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him; but,

[1.] The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them (Ro 9:5), and is sent first to bless them.

[2.] The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The word of salvation (Ac 13:26) was of the Jews. It was delivered to them, and other nations derived it through them. This was a sure guide to them in their devotions, and they followed it, and therefore knew what they worshipped. To them were committed the oracles of God (Ro 3:2), and the service of God, (Ro 9:4). The Jews therefore being thus privileged and advanced, it was presumption for the Samaritans to vie with them.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

He describes the evangelical worship which alone God would accept and be well pleased with. Having shown that the place is indifferent, he comes to show what is necessary and essential--that we worship God in spirit and in truth, Joh 4:23,24. The stress is not to be laid upon the place where we worship God, but upon the state of mind in which we worship him.

Note, The most effectual way to take up differences in the minor matters of religion is to be more zealous in the greater. Those who daily make it the matter of their care to worship in the spirit, one would think, should not make it the matter of their strife whether he should be worshipped here or there. Christ had justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the imperfection of that. The worship was ceremonial, Heb 9:1,10. The worshippers were generally carnal, and strangers to the inward part of divine worship. Note, It is possible that we may be better than our neighbours, and yet not so good as we should be. It concerns us to be right, not only in the object of our worship, but in the manner of it; and it is this which Christ here instructs us in. Observe,

1. The great and glorious revolution which should introduce this change: The hour cometh, and now is--the fixed stated time, concerning which it was of old determined when it should come, and how long it should last. The time of its appearance if fixed to an hour, so punctual and exact are the divine counsels; the time of its continuance is limited to an hour, so close and pressing is the opportunity of divine grace, 2Co 6:2. This hour cometh, it is coming in its full strength, lustre, and perfection, it now is in the embryo and infancy. The perfect day is coming, and now it dawns.

2. The blessed change itself. In gospel times the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. As creatures, we worship the Father of all: as Christians, we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus. Now the change shall be,

(a.) In the nature of the worship. Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in spiritual ordinances, consisting less in bodily exercise, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy. The way of worship which Christ has instituted is rational and intellectual, and refined from those external rites and ceremonies with which the Old-Testament worship was both clouded and clogged. This is called true worship, in opposition to that which was typical. The legal services were figures of the true, Heb 9:3,24. Those that revolted from Christianity to Judaism are said to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, Ga 3:3. Such was the difference between Old-Testament and New-Testament institutions.

(b.) In the temper and disposition of the worshippers; and so the true worshippers are good Christians, distinguished from hypocrites; all should, and they will, worship God in spirit and in truth. It is spoken of (Joh 4:23) as their character, and (Joh 4:24) as their duty. Note, It is required of all that worship God that they worship him in spirit and in truth. We must worship God,

[1] In spirit, Php 3:3. We must depend upon God's Spirit for strength and assistance, laying our souls under his influences and operations; we must devote our own spirits to, and employ them in, the service of God (Ro 1:9),

must worship him with fixedness of thought and a flame of affection, with all that is within us. Spirit is sometimes put for the new nature, in opposition to the flesh, which is the corrupt nature; and so to worship God with our spirits is to worship him with our graces, Heb 12:28.

[2] In truth, that is, in sincerity. God requires not only the inward part in our worship, but truth in the inward part, Ps 51:6. We must mind the power more than the form, must aim at God's glory, and not to be seen of men; draw near with a true heart, Heb 10:22.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

He intimates the reasons why God must be thus worshipped.

1. Because in gospel times they, and they only, are accounted the true worshippers. The gospel erects a spiritual way of worship, so that the professors of the gospel are not true in their profession, do not live up to gospel light and laws, if they do not worship God in spirit and in truth.

2. Because the Father seeketh such worshippers of him. This intimates,

(a.) That such worshippers are very rare, and seldom met with, Jer 30:21. The gate of spiritual worshipping is strait.

(b.) That such worship is necessary, and what the God of heaven insists upon. When God comes to enquire for worshippers, the question will not be, "Who worshipped at Jerusalem?" but, "Who worshipped in spirit?" That will be the touchstone.

(c.) That God is greatly well pleased with and graciously accepts such worship and such worshippers. I have desired it, Ps 132:13,14,So 2:14.

(d.) That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshippers; his seeking such worshippers implies his making them such. God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshippers.

3. Because God is a spirit. Christ came to declare God to us (Joh 1:18), and this he has declared concerning him; he declared it to this poor Samaritan woman, for the meanest are concerned to know God; and with this design, to rectify her mistakes concerning religious worship, to which nothing would contribute more than the right knowledge of God.

Note,

(a.) God is a spirit, for he is an infinite and eternal mind, an intelligent being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. It is easier to say what God is not than what he is; a spirit has not flesh and bones, but who knows the way of a spirit? If God were not a spirit, he could not be perfect, nor infinite, nor eternal, nor independent, nor the Father of spirits.

(b.) The spirituality of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God, who is a spirit, in the spirit, we neither give him the glory due to his name, and so do not perform the act of worship, nor can we hope to obtain his favour and acceptance, and so we miss of the end of worship, Mt 15:8,9.

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

The last subject of discourse with this woman is concerning the Messiah, Joh 4:25,26. Observe here,

The faith of the woman, by which she expected the Messiah: I know that Messias cometh--and he will tell us all things. She had nothing to object against what Christ had said; his discourse was, for aught she knew, what might become the Messiah then expected; but from him she would receive it, and in the mean time she thinks it best to suspend her belief. Thus many have no heart to the price in their hand (Pr 17:16), because they think they have a better in their eye, and deceive themselves with a promise that they will learn that hereafter which they neglect now. Observe here,

[1.] Whom she expects: I know that Messias cometh. The Jews and Samaritans, though so much at variance, agreed in the expectation of the messiah and his kingdom. The Samaritans received the writings of Moses,

and were no strangers to the prophets, nor to the hopes of the Jewish nation; those who knew least knew this, that Messias was to come; so general and uncontested was the expectation of him, and at this time more raised than ever (for the sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were near expiring), so that she concludes not only, He will come, but erchetai--"He comes, he is just at hand:" Messias, who is called Christ. The evangelist, though he retains the Hebrew word Messias (which the woman used) in honour to the holy language, and to the Jewish church, that used it familiarly, yet, writing for the use of the Gentiles, he takes care to render it by a Greek word of the same signification, who is called Christ-Anointed, giving an example to the apostle's rule, that whatever is spoken in an unknown or less vulgar tongue should be interpreted, 1Co 14:27,28.

[2.] What she expects from him: "He will tell us all things relating to the service of God which it is needful for us to know, will tell us that which will supply our defects, rectify our mistakes, and put an end to all our disputes. He will tell us the mind of God fully and clearly, and keep back nothing." Now this implies an acknowledgement, First, Of the deficiency and imperfection of the discovery they now had of the divine will, and the rule they had of the divine worship; it could not make the comers thereunto perfect, and therefore they expected some great advance and improvement in matters of religion, a time of reformation. Secondly, Of the sufficiency of the Messiah to make this change: "He will tell us all things which we want to know, and about which we wrangle in the dark. He will introduce peace, by leading us into all truth, and dispelling the mists of error." It seems, this was the comfort of good people in those dark times that light would arise; if they found themselves at a loss, and run aground, it was a satisfaction to them to say, When Messias comes, he will tell us all things; as it may be to us now with reference to his second coming: now we see through a glass, but then face to face.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marveled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou ? or, Why talkest thou with her?

Marvelled. Wondered. They wondered because the Jews had no intercourse with the Samaritans, and they were surprised that Jesus was engaged with her in conversation.

Yet no man said. No one of the disciples. They had such respect and reverence for him that they did not dare to ask him the reason of his conduct, or even to appear to reprove him. We should be confident that Jesus is right, even if we cannot fully understand all that he does.

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

Left her water-pot. Her mind was greatly excited. She was disturbed, and hastened to the city in great agitation to make this known. She seems to have been convinced that he was the Messiah, and went immediately to make it known to others. Our first business, when we have found the Saviour, should be to make him known also to others.

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Is not this the Christ? Though she probably believed it, yet she proposed it modestly, lest she should appear to dictate in a case which was so important, and which demanded so much attention. The evidence on which she was satisfied that he was the Messiah was that he had told her all things that she had done--perhaps much more than is here recorded. The question which she submitted to them was whether this was not satisfactory proof that he was the Messiah.

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

My meat, &c. Jesus here explains what he said in Jn 4:32. His great object--the great design of his life--was to do the will of God. He came to that place weary and thirsty, and at the usual time of meals, probably an hungered; yet an opportunity of doing good presented itself, and he forgot his fatigue and hunger, and found comfort and joy in doing good--in seeking to save a soul. This one great object absorbed all his powers, and made him forget his weariness and the wants of nature. The mind may be so absorbed in doing the will of God as to forget all other things. Intent on

this, we may rise above fatigue, and hardship, and want, and bear all with pleasure in seeing the work of God advance. See Job 23:12: "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." We may learn, also, that the main business of life is not to avoid fatigue or to seek the supply of our temporal wants, but to do the will of God. The mere supply of our temporal necessities, though most men make it an object of their chief solicitude, is a small consideration in the sight of him who has just views of the great design of human life.

The will of him that sent me. The will of God in regard to the salvation of men. See Jn 6:38.

To finish his work. To complete or fully to do the work which he has commanded in regard to the salvation of men. It is his work to provide salvation, and his to redeem, and his to apply the salvation to the heart. Jesus came to do it by teaching, by his example, and by his death as an expiation for sin. And he shows us that we should be diligent. If he was so diligent for our welfare, if he bore fatigue and want to benefit us, then we should be diligent, also, in regard to our own salvation, and also in seeking the salvation of others.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

Four months and, &c. The common time from sowing the seed to the harvest, in Judea, was about four months. The meaning of this passage may be thus expressed:

"The husband-man, when he sows his seed, is compelled to wait a considerable period before it produces a crop. He is encouraged in sowing it; he expects fruit; his labour is lightened by that expectation; but it is not immediate--it is remote. But it is not so with my preaching. The seed has already sprung up. Scarce was it sown before it produced an abundant harvest. The gospel was just preached to a woman, and see how many of the Samaritans come to hear it also. There is therefore more encouragement to labour in this field than the farmer has to sow his grain."

Lift your eyes. See the Samaritans coming to hear the gospel.

They are white. Grain, when ripe, turns from a green to a yellow or light colour, indicating that it is time to reap it. So here were indications that the gospel was effectual, and that the harvest was to be gathered in.

Hence we may learn,

1st. That there is as much encouragement to attempt to save souls as the farmer has to raise a crop.

2nd. That the gospel is fitted to make an immediate impression on the minds of men. We are to expect that it will. We are not to wait to some future period, as if we could not expect immediate results. This wicked and ignorant people--little likely, apparently, to be affected--turned to God, heard the voice of the Saviour, and came in multitudes to him.

3rd. We are to expect revivals of religion. Here was one instance of it under the Saviour's own preaching. Multitudes were excited, moved, and came to learn the way of life.

4th. We know not how much good may be done by conversation with even a single individual. This conversation with a woman resulted in a deep interest felt throughout the city, and in the conversion of many of them to God. So a single individual may often be the means, in the hand of God, of leading many to the cross of Jesus.

5th. What evils may follow from neglecting to do our duty! How easily might Jesus have alleged, if he had been like many of his professed disciples, that he was weary, that he was hungry, that it was esteemed improper to converse with a woman alone, that she was an abandoned character, and there could be little hope of doing her good! How many consciences of ministers and Christians would have been satisfied with reasoning like this? Yet Jesus, in spite of his fatigue and thirst, and all the difficulties of the case, seriously set about seeking the conversion of this woman. And behold what a glorious result! The city was moved, and a great

harvest was found ready to be gathered in! Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

He that reapeth. He that gathers the harvest, or he who so preaches that souls are converted to Christ.

Receiveth wages. The labourer in the harvest receives his hire. Jesus says it shall be thus with those who labour in the ministry--he will not suffer them to go unrewarded. See Dan 12:3, Mt 19:28.

Gathereth fruit unto life eternal. Converts souls, who shall inherit eternal life. The harvest is not temporary, like gathering grain, but shall result in eternal life.

That both he that soweth, &c. It is a united work. It matters little whether we sow the seed or whether we reap the harvest. It is part of the same work, and whatever part we may do, we should rejoice. God gives the increase, while Paul may plant and Apollos water. The teacher in the Sunday-school, who sows the seed in early life, shall rejoice with the minister of the gospel who may gather in the harvest, and both join in giving all the praise to God.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

That saying. That proverb. This proverb is found in some of the Greek writers (Grotius). Similar proverbs were in use among the Jews. See Isa 65:21, 22, Lev 26:16, Mic 6:15.

38 I sent you to reap that whereupon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors.

I sent you. In the commission given you to preach the gospel. You have not labored or toiled in preparing the way for the great harvest which is now to be gathered in.

Other men labored.

(1.) The prophets, who long labored to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

(2.) The teachers among the Jews, who have read and explained the law and taught the people.

(3.) John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way. And,

(4.) The Saviour himself, who by his personal ministry taught the people, and prepared them for the success which was to attend the preaching of the apostles. Especially did Jesus lay the foundation for the rapid and extensive spread of the gospel. He saw comparatively little fruit of his ministry. He confined his labours to Judea, and even there he was occupied in sowing seed which chiefly sprang up after his death. From this we may learn,

1st. That the man who is crowned with eminent success has no cause of boasting over others, any more than the man who reaps a field of grain should boast over the man who sowed it. The labour of both is equally necessary, and the labour of both would be useless if GOD did not give the increase. Comp. 1Cor 3:6.

2nd. We should not be discouraged if we do not meet with immediate success. The man that sows is not disheartened because he does not see the harvest immediately spring up. We are to sow our seed in the morning, and in the evening we are not to withhold our hand, for we know not whether shall prosper, this or that; and we are to go forth bearing precious seed, though weeping, knowing that we shall come again rejoicing, bearing our sheaves with us, Eccl 11:4, Ps 126:6

3rd. Every part of the work of the ministry and of teaching men is needful, and we should rejoice that we are permitted to bear any part, however humble, in bringing sinners to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 1Cor 12:21-24.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

Verses 39-42

Here an account is given of the conversion of more of the Samaritans from the city of Sichar. Some believed on him, upon the full report which the woman had made, That, He had told her all that ever she did; but others were brought to believe by his own word.

Now from the woman's being an instrument to bring her acquaintance to Christ by her own experience of what she had heard from him:

Learn, 1. That very weak instruments, when they employ themselves for Christ, desiring to extol his praise, and set forth his glory, are sometimes richly blessed with great success. Many of the Samaritans believed for the saying of this poor woman.

Learn, 2. That when a person can say but little of Christ, yet if it be spoken from experience and sensible feeling, it will be more successful and persuasive, than much more that which is spoken from notional knowledge. Such was this woman's testimony concerning Christ, Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? She spake what she found, yea, what she felt within herself, and speaking her own experience, many believed on him for her saying.

But farther, These Samaritans believed Christ to be a prophet upon the testimony of this woman: but they believed him afterwards to be the Messias, or the Saviour of the world, upon the credit and authority of his own word, ver, 41. And many more believed because of his own word.

Thence learn, That although instruments speaking may be a mean to draw persons to give some assent to truth, yet it is Christ himself that must work a full persuasion, and his own word is the surest foundation for faith to build and depend upon: Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;

42 and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Jesus Heals a Nobleman's Son

43 Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee.

44 For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.

> For Jesus himself testified, &c. Mt 13:57. The connection of this verse with the preceding may be thus explained: "Jesus went to Galilee, but not to Nazareth, for he testified," &c. Or, "Jesus went to Galilee, although he had said that a prophet had no honour in his own country; yet, because he foreknew that the Galileans would many of them believe on him, he went at this time."

45 Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.

46 So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.

> A certain nobleman. One who was of the royal family, connected by birth with Herod Antipas; or one of the officers of the court, whether by birth allied to him or not. It seems that his ordinary residence was at Capernaum. Capernaum was about a day's journey from Cana, where Jesus then was.

47 When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.

> He went unto him. Though high in office, yet he did not refuse to go personally to Jesus to ask his aid. He felt as a father; and believing, after all that Jesus had done, that he could cure his son, he travelled to meet him. If men receive benefits of Christ, they must come in the same manner. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, must come personally as humble suppliants, and must be willing to bear all the reproach that may be cast on them for thus coming to him. This man showed strong faith in being willing

thus to go to Jesus, but he erred in supposing that Jesus could heal only by his being present with his son.

Would come down. It is probable that the miracles of Jesus heretofore had been performed only on those who were present with him, and this nobleman seems to have thought that this was necessary. One design of Jesus in working this miracle was to show him that this was not necessary. Hence he did not go down to Capernaum, but healed him where he was.

48 Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

Except ye see signs, &c. This was spoken not to the nobleman only, but to the Galileans generally. The Samaritans had believed without any miracle. The Galileans, he said, were less disposed to believe him than even they were; and though he had wrought miracles enough to convince them, yet, unless they continually saw them, they would not believe.

49 The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

Come down, &c. The earnestness of the nobleman evinces the deep and tender anxiety of a father. So anxious was he for his son that he was not willing that Jesus should delay a moment --not even to address the people. He still seems to have supposed that Jesus had no power to heal his son except he was present with him.

50 Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.

The man believed. The manner in which Jesus spoke it, and the assurance which he gave, convinced the man that he could heal him there as well as to go to Capernaum to do it. This is an instance of the power of Jesus to convince the mind, to soothe doubts, to confirm faith, and to meet our desires. He blesses not always in the manner in which we ask, but he grants us our main wish. The father wished his son healed by Jesus going down to Capernaum. Jesus healed him, but not in the way in which he asked it to be done. God will hear our prayers and grant our requests, but often not in the precise manner in which we ask it. It is his to judge of the best way of doing us good.

51 And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.

52 Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.

53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

The same hour. The very time when Jesus spoke. The fever left him. It seems that it left him suddenly and entirely; so much so that his friends went to inform the father, and to comfort him, and also, doubtless, to apprise him that it was not necessary to ask aid from Jesus.

From this miracle we may learn,

1st. That Jesus has an intimate knowledge of all things. He knew the case of this son-the extent of his disease--where he was--and thus had power to heal him.

2nd. That Jesus has almighty power. Nothing else could have healed this child. Nor could it be pretended that he did it by any natural means. He was far away from him, and the child knew not the source of the power that healed him. It could not be pretended that there was any collusion or jugglery. The father came in deep anxiety. The servants saw the cure. Jesus was at a distance. Everything in the case bears the mark of being the simple energy of God--put forth with equal ease to heal, whether far or near. Thus he can save the sinner.

3rd. We see the benevolence of Jesus. Ever ready to aid, to heal, or to save, he may be called on at all times, and will never be called on in vain.

Himself believed. This miracle removed all his doubts, and he became a real disciple and friend of Jesus.

His whole house. His whole family. We may learn from this,

1st. That sickness or any deep affliction is often the means of great good. Here the sickness of the son resulted in the faith of all the family. God often takes away earthly blessings that he may impart rich spiritual mercies.

2nd. The father of a family may be the means of the salvation of his children. Here the effort of a parent resulted in their conversion to Christ.

3rd. There is great beauty and propriety when sickness thus results in piety. For that it is sent. God does not willingly grieve or afflict the children of men; and when afflictions thus terminate, it will be cause of eternal joy, of ceaseless praise.

54 This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

John-5

The Healing at the Pool

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

A feast. Probably the Passover, though it is not certain. There were two other feasts--the Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles--at which all the males were required to be present, and it might have been one of them. It is of no consequence, however, which of them is intended.

2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

The sheep-market. This might have been rendered the sheep-gate, or the gate through which the sheep were taken into the city for sacrifice. The marginal rendering is gate, and the word "market" is not in the original, nor is a "sheep-market" mentioned in the Scriptures or in any of the Jewish writings. A sheep-gate is repeatedly mentioned by Nehemiah (Neh 3:1,32, 12:39) being that by which sheep and oxen were brought into the city. As these were brought mainly for sacrifice, the gate was doubtless near the temple, and near the present place which is shown as the pool of Bethesda.

Bethesda. The house of mercy. It was so called on account of its strong healing properties--the property of restoring health to the sick and infirm.

Five porches. The word porch commonly means a covered place surrounding a building, in which people can walk or sit in hot or wet weather. Here it probably means that there were five covered places, or apartments, in which the sick could remain, from each one of which they could have access to the water. This "pool" is thus described by Professor Hackett (Illustrations of Scripture, p. 291, 292)

"Just to the east of the Turkish garrison, and under the northern wall of the mosque, is a deep excavation, supposed by many to be the ancient pool of Bethesda, into which the sick descended `after the troubling of the water,' and were healed, Jn 5:1, sq. It is 360 feet long, 130 feet wide, and 75 deep. The evangelist says that this pool was near the sheep-gate, as the Greek probably signifies, rather than sheep-market, as rendered in the English version. That gate, according to Neh 3:1, sq., was on the north side of the temple, and hence the situation of this reservoir would agree with that of Bethesda. The present name, Birket Israil, Pool of Israil, indicates the opinion of the native inhabitants in regard to the object of the excavation. The general opinion of the most accurate travellers is that the so-called pool was originally part of a trench or fosse which protected the temple on the north. Though it contains no water at present except a little which trickles through the stones at the west end, it has evidently been used at some period as a reservoir. It is lined with cement, and adapted in other respects to hold water."

Dr. Robinson established by personal inspection the fact of the subterranean connection of the pool of Siloam with the Fountain of the Virgin, and made it probable that the fountain under the mosque of Omar is connected with them. This spring is, as he himself witnessed, an intermittent one, and there may have been some artificially constructed basin in connection with this spring to which was given the name of Bethesda. He supposes, however, that there is not the slightest evidence that the place or reservoir now pointed out as Bethesda was the Bethesda of the New Testament (Bib. Res., i. 501,506, 509). In the time of Sandys (1611) the spring was found running, but in small quantities; in the time of Maundrell (1697) the stream did not run. Probably in his time, as now, the water which had formerly filtered through the rocks was dammed up by the rubbish.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

Rise, take up, &c. Jesus not only restored him to health, but he gave evidence to those around him that this was a real miracle, and that he was really healed. For almost forty years he had been afflicted. He was not even able to walk. Jesus commanded him not only to walk, but to take up his bed also, and carry that as proof that he was truly made whole.

In regard to this we may observe,

1st. That it was a remarkable command. The poor man had been long infirm, and it does not appear that he expected to be healed except by being put into the waters. Yet Jesus, when he gives a commandment, can give strength to obey it.

2nd. It is our business to obey the commands of Jesus, however feeble we feel ourselves to be. His grace will be sufficient for us, and his burden will be light.

3rd. The weak and helpless sinner should put forth his efforts in obedience to the command of Jesus. Never was a sinner more helpless than was this man. If God gave him strength to do his will, so he can all others; and the

plea that we can do nothing could have been urged with far more propriety by this man than it can be by any impenitent sinner.

4th. This narrative should not be abused. It should not be supposed as intended to teach that a sinner should delay repentance, as if waiting for God. The narrative neither teaches nor implies any such thing. It is a simple record of a fact in regard to a man who had no power to heal himself, and who was under no obligation to heal himself. There is no reference in the narrative to the difficulties of a sinner-- no intimation that it was intended to refer to his condition; and to make this example an excuse for delay, or an argument for waiting, is to abuse and pervert the Bible. Seldom is more mischief done than by attempting to draw from the Bible what it was not intended to teach, and by an effort to make that convey spiritual instruction which God has not declared designed for that purpose.

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

The Sabbath. To carry burdens on the Sabbath was forbidden in the Old Testament, Jer 17:21, Neh 13:15, Ex 20:8-10. If it be asked, then, why Jesus commanded a man to do on the Sabbath what was understood to be a violation of the day, it may be answered,

1st. That the Son of man was Lord of the Sabbath, and had a right to declare what might be done, and even to dispense with a positive law of the Jews, Mt 12:8, Jn 5:17.

2nd. This was a poor man, and Jesus directed him to secure his property.

3rd. The Jews extended the obligation of the Sabbath beyond what was intended by the appointment. They observed it superstitiously, and Jesus took every opportunity to convince them of their error, and to restore the day to its proper observance, Mt 12:6-11, Lk 6:9; Lk 13:14, 14:5. This method he took to show them what the law of God really permitted on that day, and that works of necessity and mercy were lawful. How unjustly the Jews tax the cripple that was healed with the breach of the sabbath, for taking up his bed, and walking on the sabbath-day? whereas the law only forbade carrying burthens on the sabbath-day for profit, in way of trade:

but this man's carrying his bed, was a testimony of God's goodness and mercy towards him, and of his gratitude and thankfulness towards God.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

The man justified himself in what he did by a warrant that would bear him out, Joh 5:11. "I do not do it in contempt of the law and the sabbath, but in obedience to one who, by making me whole, has given me an undeniable proof that he is greater than either. He that could work such a miracle as to make me whole no doubt might give me such a command as to carry my bed; he that could overrule the powers of nature no doubt might overrule a positive law, especially in an instance not of the essence of the law. He that was so kind as to make me whole would not be so unkind as to bid me do what is sinful." Christ, by curing another paralytic, proved his power to forgive sin, here to give law; if his pardons are valid, his edicts are so, and his miracles prove both.

The man reasoned correctly. If Jesus had power to work so signal a miracle, he had a right to explain the law. If he had conferred so great a favour on him, he had a right to expect obedience; and we may learn that the mercy of God in pardoning our sins, or in bestowing any signal blessing, imposes the obligation to obey him. We should yield obedience to him according to what we know to be his will, whatever may be the opinions of men, or whatever interpretation they may put on the law of God. Our business is a simple, hearty, child-like obedience, let the men of the world say or think of us as they choose.

12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

What man is he, &c. In this verse there is a remarkable instance of the perverseness of men, of their want of candour, and of the manner in which they often look at a subject. Instead of looking at the miracle, and at the man's statement of the manner in which he was healed, they look only at what they thought to be a violation of the law. They assumed it as certain that nothing could make his conduct, in carrying his bed on the Sabbath-day, proper; and they meditated vengeance, not only on the man who was carrying his bed, but on him, also, who had told him to do it. Thus men often assume that a certain course or opinion is proper, and when anyone differs from them they look only at the difference, but not at the reasons

for it. One great source of dispute among men is that they look only at the points in which they differ, but are unwilling to listen to the reasons why others do not believe as they do. It is always enough to condemn one in the eyes of a bigot that he differs from him, and he looks upon him who holds a different opinion, as the Jews did at this man, as certainly wrong; and such a bigot looks at the reasons why others differ from him just as the Jews did at the reason why this man bore his bed on the Sabbath--as not worth regarding or hearing, or as if they could not possibly be right.

13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Had conveyed himself away. Was lost in the crowd. He had silently mingled with the multitude, or had passed on with the crowd unobserved, and the man had been so rejoiced at his cure that he had not even inquired the name of his benefactor.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

In the temple. The man seems to have gone at once to the temple--perhaps a privilege of which he had been long deprived. They who are healed from sickness should seek the sanctuary of God and give him thanks for his mercy. Comp. Is 38:20. There is nothing more improper, when we are raised up from a bed of pain, than to forget God our benefactor, and neglect to praise him for his mercies.

What he said to him. When Christ has cured us, he has not done with us; he now applies himself to the healing of his soul, and this by the word too.

[1.] He gives him a memento of his cure: Behold thou art made whole. He found himself made whole, yet Christ calls his attention to it. Behold, consider it seriously, how sudden, how strange, how cheap, how easy, the cure was: admire it; behold, and wonder: Remember it; let the impressions of it abide, and never be lost, Isa 38:9.

[2.] He gives him a caution against sin, in consideration hereof, Being made whole, sin no more. This implies that his disease was the punishment of sin; whether of some remarkably flagrant sin, or only of sin in general, we cannot tell, but we know that sin is the procuring cause of sickness, Ps

107:17,18. Some observe that Christ did not make mention of sin to any of his patients, except to this impotent man, and another who was in like manner diseased, Mk 2:5. While those chronical diseases lasted, they prevented the outward acts of many sins, and therefore watchfulness was the more necessary when the disability was removed.

Christ intimates that those who are made whole, who are eased of the present sensible punishment of sin, are in danger of returning to sin when the terror and restraint are over, unless divine grace dry up the fountain. When the trouble which only dammed up the current is over, the waters will return to their old course; and therefore there is great need of watchfulness, lest after healing mercy we return again to folly. The misery we were made whole from warns us to sin no more, having felt the smart of sin; the mercy we were made whole by is an engagement upon us not to offend him who healed us. This is the voice of every providence, Go and sin no more. This man began his new life very hopefully in the temple, yet Christ saw it necessary to give him this caution; for it is common for people, when they are sick, to promise much, when newly recovered to perform something, but after awhile to forget all.

[3.] He gives him warning of his danger, in case he should return to his former sinful course: Lest a worse thing come to thee. Christ, who knows all men's hearts, knew that he was one of those that must be frightened from sin. Thirty-eight years' lameness, one would think, was a thing bad enough; yet there is something worse that will come to him if he relapse into sin after God has given him such a deliverance as this, Ezr 9:13,14. The hospital where he lay was a melancholy place, but hell is much more so: the doom of apostates is a worse thing than thirty-eight years' lameness.

15 The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

Now, after this interview between Christ and his patient, observe in the Joh 5:15,16, 1 The notice which the poor simple man gave to the Jews concerning Christ, Joh 5:15. He told them it was Jesus that had made him whole. We have reason to think that he intended this for the honour of Christ and the benefit of the Jews, little thinking that he who had so much power and goodness could have any enemies; but those who wish well to Christ's kingdom must have the wisdom of the serpent, lest they do more hurt than

good with their zeal, and must not cast pearls before swine. 2 The rage and enmity of the Jews against him: Therefore did the rulers of the Jews persecute Jesus.

See,

(1.) How absurd and unreasonable their enmity to Christ was. Therefore, because he had made a poor sick man well, and so eased the public charge, upon which, it is likely, he had subsisted; therefore they persecuted him, because he did good in Israel.

(2.) How bloody and cruel it was: They sought to slay him; nothing less than his blood, his life, would satisfy them.

(3.) How it was varnished over with a colour of zeal for the honour of the sabbath; for this was the pretended crime, Because he had done these things on the sabbath day, as if that circumstance were enough to vitiate the best and most divine actions, and to render him obnoxious whose deeds were otherwise most meritorious. Thus hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the power of godliness with a pretended zeal for the form of it.

16 And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

Barnes commentary:

Worketh hitherto. Worketh until now, or till this time. God has not ceased to work on the Sabbath. He makes the sun to rise; he rolls the stars; he causes the grass, the tree, the flower to grow. He has not suspended his operations on the Sabbath, and the obligation to rest on the Sabbath does not extend to him. He created the world in six days, and ceased the work of creations; but he has not ceased to govern it, and to carry forward, by his providence, his great plans on the Sabbath.

And I work. "As God does good on that day; as he is not bound by the law which requires his creatures to rest on that day, so I do the same. The law

on that subject may be dispensed with, also, in my case, for the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."

In this reply it is implied that he was equal with God from two circumstances:

1st. Because he called God his Father, Jn 5:18.

2nd. Because he claimed the same exemption from law which God did, asserting that the law of the Sabbath did not bind him or his Father, thus showing that he had a right to impose and repeal laws in the same manner as God. He that has a right to do this must be God.

Burkitt commentary:

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have our Saviour's apology for his working the foregoing cure on the impotent man on the sabbath day. And the chief argument he insists upon, is drawn from his unity and eqaulity in nature and operation with his Father; As the Father worketh, says he, so I work. Here he speaks of himself, not as a servant, or instrument in the Father's hand, but as the fellow-worker with the Father, both in the works of creation, and in the works of providence, and preservation also.

Learn hence, 1. That though Almighty God has long since ceased from the work of creation, yet not from the work of preservation. My father worketh hitherto; not by creating new kinds of creatures but by upholding and preserving what he has already created.

Learn, 2. That Christ the Son of God, is joined with, and undivided from the Father, in working. As the Father created all things by him (not as a man, and as an instrument in his Father's hand; for then he was not such) but as his fellow-worker, being equal in nature and power with the Father: in like manner as the Father preserveth, sustaineth, governeth, and

upholdeth all things, so doth Christ; the Father's actions and his being the same, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

MHC:

The doctrine laid down, by which he justified what he did on the sabbath day (Joh 5:17): He answered them. This supposes that he had something laid to his charge: or what they suggested one to another, when they sought to slay him (Joh 5:16), he knew, and gave this reply to, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. At other times, in answer to the like charge, he had pleaded the example of David's eating the show-bread, of the priests' slaying the sacrifices, and of the people's watering their cattle on the sabbath day; but here he goes higher and alleges the example of his Father and his divine authority; waiving all other pleas, he insists upon that which was instar omnium--equivalent to the whole, and abides by it, which he had mentioned, Mt 12:8. The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day; but he here enlarges on it.

1. He pleads that he was the Son of God, plainly intimated in his calling God his Father; and, if so, his holiness was unquestionable and his sovereignty incontestable; and he might make what alterations he pleased of the divine law. Surely they will reverence the Son, the heir of all things.

2. That he was a worker together with God.

(1.) My Father worketh hitherto. The example of God's resting on the seventh day from all his work is, in the fourth commandment, made the ground of our observing it as a sabbath or day of rest. Now God rested only from such work as he had done the six days before; otherwise he worketh hitherto, he is every day working, sabbath days and week-days, upholding and governing all the creatures, and concurring by his common providence to all the motions and operations of nature, to his own glory; therefore, when we are appointed to rest on the sabbath day, yet we are not restrained from doing that which has a direct tendency to the glory of God, as the man's carrying his bed had.

(2.) I work; not only therefore I may work, like him, in doing good on sabbath days as well as other days, but I also work with him. As God created all things by Christ, so he supports and governs all by him, Heb 1:3. This sets what he does above all exception; he that is so great a worker must needs be an uncontrollable governor; he that does all is Lord of all, and therefore Lord of the sabbath, which particular branch of his authority he would now assert, because he was shortly to show it further, in the change of the day from the seventh to the first.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Barnes:

The more to kill him. The answer of Jesus was fitted greatly to irritate them. He did not deny what he had done, but he added to that what he well knew would highly, offend them. That he should claim the right of dispensing with the law, and affirm that, in regard to its observance, he was in the same condition with God, was eminently fitted to enrage them, and he doubtless knew that it might endanger his life. We may learn from his answer, That we are not to keep back truth because it may endanger us.

2nd. That we are not to keep back truth because it will irritate and enrage sinners. The fault is not in the truth, but in the sinner.

3rd. That when any one portion of truth enrages hypocrites, they will be enraged the more they hear.

Making himself equal with God. This shows that, in the view of the Jews, the name Son of God, or that calling God his Father, implied equality with God. The Jews were the best interpreters of their own language, and as Jesus did not deny the correctness of their interpretations, it follows that he meant to be so understood. See Jn 10:29-38. The interpretation of the Jews was a very natural and just one. He not only said that God was his Father, but he said that he had the same right to work on the Sabbath that God had; that by

the same authority, and in the same manner, he could dispense with the obligation of the day. They had now two pretences for seeking to kill him--one for making himself equal with God, which they considered blasphemy, and the other for violating the Sabbath. For each of these the law denounced death, Nu 15:35, Lev 24:11-14.

Burkitt:

Observe here, The Jews instead of being satisfied, were the more enraged; not only because he had violated the sabbath (as they pretended) by healing the cripple on the sabbath-day, but because Christ had asserted that God was his Father in a peculiar manner, and made himself equal with God, our Saviour therefore goes on to assert his equality and conjunction with the Father in his operations and workings; which doth at once justify his work on the Sabbath-day, and prove him to be truly and really God. Now our holy Lord, to prove himself equal with God the Father produces first many arguments, to verse 31, and then alledges the testimony of many witnesses to the end of the chapter.

Our Saviour's first argument to prove himself equal with the Father in essence and nature, is this, that the Father and he are equal in operation, in will and consent for working; that the Son doth all that the Father doth, and the Father doth nothing without the Son, ver 19. The Son can do nothing of himself; that is, as man, as the Messias, and as Mediator, he could do nothing of himself. His perfect obedience to, and compliance with, the will of his Father that sent him, would not suffer him to do any thing without him: but as God, he could do all things of himself.

Learn hence, That it is an undeniable proof that the Father and Son are one in nature, essence, and being; in that they are inseparable in operation and working; What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise; and the Son doth nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: therefore Father and Son being equal in operation and working, are equal in nature and being; and consequently, both essentially, truly and really, God: Therefore the Arians of old, and the Socinians at this day, are wide when they produce this text? The Son can do nothing of himself, to prove that Christ is not equal with God the Father, They forget or neglect to

distinguish between his divine nature, which could do all things, and his mediatorial office: which could not do, but what the Father that sent him had appointed him to do.

MHC:

The offence that was taken at his doctrine (Joh 5:18): The Jews sought the more to kill him. His defence was made his offence, as if by justifying himself he had made bad worse. Note, Those that will not be enlightened by the word of Christ will be enraged and exasperated by it, and nothing more vexes the enemies of Christ than his asserting his authority; see Ps 2:3-5. They sought to kill him,

1. Because he had broken the sabbath; for, let him say what he would in his own justification, they are resolved, right or wrong, to find him guilty of sabbath breaking. When malice and envy sit upon the bench, reason and justice may even be silent at the bar, for whatever they can say will undoubtedly be over-ruled.

2. Not only so, but he had said also that God was his Father. Now they pretend a jealousy for God's honour, as before for the sabbath day, and charge Christ with it as a heinous crime that he made himself equal with God; and a heinous crime it had been if he had not really been so. It was the sin of Lucifer, I will be like the Most High. Now,

(a) This was justly inferred from what he said, that he was the Son of God, and that God was his Father, patera idion--his own Father; his, so as he was no one's else. He had said that he worked with his Father, by the same authority and power, and hereby he made himself equal with God. Ecce intelligunt Judæi, quod non intelligunt Ariani--Behold, the Jews understand what the Arians do not.

(b) Yet it was unjustly imputed to him as an offence that he equalled himself with God, for he was and is God, equal with the Father (Php 2:6); and therefore Christ, in answer to this charge, does not except against the

innuendo as strained or forced, makes out his claim and proves that he is equal with God in power and glory.

The Authority of the Son

19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

The Son can do nothing of himself. Jesus, having stated the extent of his authority, proceeds here to show its source and nature, and to prove to them that what he had said was true. The first explanation which he gives is in these words: The Son--whom he had just impliedly affirmed to be equal with God-- did nothing of himself; that is, nothing without the appointment of the Father; nothing contrary to the Father, as he immediately explains it. When it is said that he CAN do nothing OF HIMSELF, it is meant that such is the union subsisting between the Father and the Son that he can do nothing independently or separate from the Father. Such is the nature of this union that he can do nothing which has not the concurrence of the Father, and which he does not command. In all things he must, from the necessity of his nature, act in accordance with the nature and will of God. Such is the intimacy of the union, that the fact that he does anything is proof that it is by the concurring agency of God. There is no separate action--no separate existence; but, alike in being and in action, there is the most perfect oneness between him and the Father. Comp. Jn 10:30; 17:21.

What he seeth the Father do. In the works of creation and providence, in making laws, and in the government of the universe. There is a peculiar force in the word seeth here. No man can see God acting in his works; but the word here implies that the Son sees him act, as we see our fellow-men act, and that he has a knowledge of him, therefore, which no mere mortal could possess.

What things soever. In the works of creation and of providence, and in the government of the worlds. The word is without limit--ALL that the Father does the Son likewise does. This is as high an assertion as possible of his being equal with God. If one does all that another does or can do, then there

must be equality. If the Son does all that the Father does, then, like him, he must be almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and infinite in every perfection; or, in other words, he must be God. If he had this power, then he had authority, also, to do on the Sabbath-day what God did.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

The Father loveth the Son. This authority he traces to the love which the Father has for him--that peculiar, ineffable, infinite love which God has for his only-begotten Son, feebly and dimly illustrated by the love which an earthly parent has for an only child.

Showeth him. Makes him acquainted with. Conceals nothing from him. From apostles, and prophets no small part of the doings of God are concealed i.e. He showeth only little part of His doings or He showeth almost nothing. From the Son nothing is Concealed. And as God shows him all that he does, he must be possessed of omniscience, for to no finite mind could be imparted a knowledge of all the works of God.

Will show Him. Will appoint and direct him to do greater works than these.

Greater works than these. Than healing the impotent man, and commanding him to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day. The greater works to which he refers are those which he proceeds to specify--he will raise the dead and judge the world, &c.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

As the Father raiseth up the dead. God has power to raise the dead. By his power it had been done in at least two instances--by the prophet Elijah, in the case of the son of the widow of Sarepta (1Kgs 17:22), and by the prophet Elisha, in the case of the Shunamite's son, 2Kgs 4:32-35. The Jews did not doubt that God had power to raise the dead. Jesus here expressly affirms it, and says he has the same power.

Even so. In the same manner. By the same authority and power. The power of raising the dead must be one of the highest attributes of the divinity. As

Jesus affirms that he has the power to do this in the same manner as the Father, so it follows that he must be equal with God.

The Son quickeneth. Gives life to. This may either refer to his raising the dead from their graves, or to his giving spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The former he did in the case of Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain, Jn 11:43,44; Lk 7:14,15. The latter he did in the case of all those who were converted by his power, and still does it in any instance of conversion. Whom he will. It was in the power of Jesus to raise up any of the dead as well as Lazarus. It depended on his will whether Lazarus and the widow's son should come to life. So it depends on his will whether sinners shall live. He has power to renew them, and the renewing of the heart is as much the result of his will as the raising of the dead.

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

Judgeth no man. Jesus in these verses is showing his equality with God. He affirmed (Jn 5:17) that he had the same power over the Sabbath that his Father had; in Jn 5:19 that he did the same things as the Father; in Jn 5:21 particularly that he had the same power to raise the dead. He now adds that God has given him the authority to judge men. The Father pronounces judgment on no one. This office he has committed to the Son. The power of judging the world implies ability to search the heart, and omniscience to understand the motives of all actions. This is a work which none but a divine being can do, and it shows, therefore, that the Son is equal to the Father.

Hath committed, Hath appointed him to be the judge of the world. In the previous verse he had said that he had power to raise the dead; he here adds that it will be his, also, to judge them when they are raised. See Mt 25:31-46, Acts 17:31.

That all men should honour, &c. To honour is to esteem, reverence, praise, do homage to. We honour one when we ascribe to him in our hearts, and words, and actions the praise and obedience which are due to him. We honour God when we obey him and worship him aright. We honour the Son when we esteem him to be as he is; when we have right views and feelings toward him. As he is declared to be God (Jn 1:1), as he here says he has power and authority equal with God, so we honour him when we regard him

as such. The primitive Christians are described by Pliny, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, as meeting together to sing hymns to Christ as God. So we honour him aright when we regard him as possessed of wisdom, goodness, power, eternity, omniscience -- equal with God.

Even as. To the same extent; in the same manner. Since the Son is to be honoured EVEN AS the Father, it follows that he must be equal with the Father. To honour the Father must denote religious homage, or the rendering of that honour which is due to God; so to honour the Son must also denote religious homage. If our Saviour here did not intend to teach that he ought to be worshipped, and to be esteemed as equal with God, it would be difficult to teach it by any language which we could use.

He that honoureth not the Son. He that does not believe on him, and render to him the homage which is his due as the equal of God.

Honoureth not the Father. Does not worship and obey the Father, the first person of the Trinity--that is, does not worship God. He may imagine that he worships God, but there is no God but the God subsisting as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He that withholds proper homage from one, withholds it from all. He that should refuse to honour the Father, could not be said to honour God; and in the like manner, he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father. This appears farther from the following considerations:--

1st. The Father wills that the Son should be honoured. He that refuses to do it disobeys the Father.

2nd. They are equal. He that denies the one denies also the other.

3rd. The same feeling that leads us to honour the Father will also lead us to honour the Son, for he is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb 1:3.

4th. The evidence of the existence of the Son is the same as that of the Father. He has the same wisdom, goodness, omnipresence, truth, power.

And from these verses we may learn --

1st. That those who do not render proper homage to Jesus Christ do not worship the true God.

2nd. There is no such God as the infidel professes to believe in. There can be but one God; and if the God of the Bible be the true God, then all other gods are false gods.

3rd. Those who withhold proper homage from Jesus Christ, who do not honour him EVEN AS they honour the Father, cannot be Christians.

4th. One evidence of piety is when we are willing to render proper praise and homage to Jesus Christ --to love him, and serve and obey him, with all our hearts.

5th. As a matter of fact, it may be added that they who do not honour the Son do not worship God at all. The infidel has no form of worship; he has no place of secret prayer, no temple of worship, no family altar. Who ever yet heard of an infidel that prayed? Where do such men build houses of worship? Where do they meet to praise God? Nowhere. As certainly as we hear the name infidel, we are certain at once that we hear the name of a man who has no form of religion in his family, who never prays in secret, and who will do nothing to maintain the public worship of God. Account for it as men may, it is a fact that no one can dispute, that it is only they who do honour to the Lord Jesus that have any form of the worship of God, or that honour him; and their veneration for God is just in proportion to their love for the Redeemer--just as they honour him.

23 that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.
He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

He that heareth my word. To hear, in this place, evidently denotes not the outward act of hearing, but to receive in a proper manner; to suffer it to

make its proper impression on the mind; to obey. The word hear is often used in this sense, Mt 11:15, Jn 8:47, Acts 3:23. Many persons outwardly hear the gospel who neither understand nor obey it.

My word. My doctrine, my teaching. All that Jesus taught about himself, as well as about the Father.

On him that sent me. On the Father, who, in the plan of redemption, is represented as sending his Son to save men. See Jn 3:17. Faith in God, who sent his Son, is here represented as being connected with everlasting life; but there can be no faith in him who sent his Son, without faith also in him who is sent. The belief of one of the true doctrines of religion is connected with, and will lead to, the belief of all.

Hath everlasting life. The state of man by nature is represented as death in sin, Eph 2:1. Religion is the opposite of this, or is life. The dead regard not anything. They are unaffected by the cares, pleasures, amusements of the world. They hear neither the voice of merriment nor the tread of the living over their graves. So with sinners. They are unmoved with the things of religion. They hear not the voice of God; they see not his loveliness; they care not for his threatenings. But religion is life. The Christian lives with God, and feels and acts as if there was a God. Religion, and its blessings here and hereafter, are one and the same. The happiness of heaven is living unto God--being sensible of his presence, and glory, and power--and rejoicing in that. There shall be no more death there, Rev 21:4. This life, or this religion, whether on earth or in heaven, is the same--the same joys extended and expanded for ever. Hence, when a man is converted, it is said that he has everlasting life; not merely shall have, but is already in possession of that life or happiness which shall be everlasting. It is life begun, expanded, ripening for the skies. He has already entered on his inheritance--that inheritance which is everlasting.

Shall not come into condemnation. He was by nature under condemnation. See Jn 3:18. Here it is declared that he shall not return to that state, or he will not be again condemned. This promise is sure; it is made by the Son of God, and there is no one that can pluck them out of his hand, Jn 10:28. Comp. Rev 8:1.

But is passed from death unto life. Has passed over from a state of spiritual death to the life of the Christian. The word translated is passed would be better expressed by has passed. It implies that he has done it voluntarily; that none compelled him; and that the passage is made unto everlasting life. Because Christ is the author of this life in the soul, he is called the life (Jn 1:4); and as he has always existed, and is the source of all life, he is called the eternal life, 1Jn 5:20.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

the spiritually dead, as is clear from Joh 5:28. Here He rises from the calmer phrase "hearing his word" (Joh 5:24), to the grander expression, "hearing the voice of the Son of God," to signify that as it finds men in a dead condition, so it carries with it a resurrection-power.

The voice of the Son of God. The voice is that by which we give command. Jesus raised up the dead by his command, or by his authority. When he did it he spoke, or, commanded it to be done. Mk 5:41, "He took the damsel by the hand, and said, `Talitha cumi.'" Lk 7:14: "And he came and touched the bier, and said, `Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.'" Jn 11:43: "He cried with a loud voice, `Lazarus, come forth.'" So it is by his command that those who are dead in sins are quickened or made alive, Jn 5:21. And so at the day of judgment the dead will be raised by his command or voice, though there is no reason to think that his voice will be audibly heard, Jn 5:28.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Hath given him authority. Hath appointed him to do this. Has made him to be judge of all. This is represented as being the appointment of the Father, Acts 17:31. The word authority here (commonly rendered power) implies all that is necessary to execute judgment--all the physical power to raise the dead, and to investigate the actions and thoughts of the life; and all the moral right or authority to sit in judgment on the creatures of God, and to pronounce their doom.

To execute judgment. To do judgment--that is, to judge. He has appointment to do justice; to see that the universe suffers no wrong, either by the escape of the guilty or by the punishment of the innocent.

Because he is the Son of man. The phrase Son of man here seems to be used in the sense of "because he is a man," or because he has human nature. The term is one which Jesus often gives to himself, to show his union with man and his interest in man. Mt 8:19,20. It is to be remarked here that the word son has not the article before it in the original: "Because he is a Son of man"--that is, because he is a man. It would seem from this that there is a propriety that one in our nature should judge us. What this propriety is we do not certainly know. It may be,

1st. Because one who has experienced our infirmities, and who possesses our nature, may be supposed by those who are judged to be better qualified than one in a different nature.

2nd. Because he is to decide between man and God, and it is proper that our feelings, and nature, and views should be represented in the judge, as well as those of God.

3rd. Because Jesus has all the feelings of compassion we could ask--all the benevolence we could desire in a judge; because he has shown his disposition to defend us by giving his life, and it can never be alleged by those who are condemned that their judge was a distant, cold, and unfriendly being. Some have supposed that the expression Son of man here means the same as Messiah Dan 7:13,14, and that the meaning is that God hath made him judge because he was the Messiah. Some of the ancient versions and fathers connected this with the following verse, thus: "Marvel not because I am a man, or because this great work is committed to a man apparently in humble life. You shall see greater things than these." Thus the Syriac version reads it, and Chrysostom, Theophylact, and some others among the fathers.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

Our Saviour, finding the Jews amazed and astonished at his declaring his sovereign and supreme authority and power to quicken and raise whom he pleased from the dead, doth in these verses assure them that there should be a general resurrection, and an universal day of judgment both of the righteous and the wicked, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments in another life, according to men's actions here in this life. All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

Here observe, 1. The certainty and universality of the resurrection of the dead declared: The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall come forth.

Observe, 2. The powerful and efficacious means, by which this great and sudden change shall be effected and accomplished in the morning of the resurrection; namely, the omnipotent voice of Christ: All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.

3. Here are the different ends of the resurrection declared, according to the difference of persons which shall then be raised, good and bad; Those that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.

Learn, 1. That there shall certainly be a resurrection of the body.

2. That all in the graves shall be raised, though not all alike: the wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ, as their judge; the righteous shall be raised by virtue of their union with Christ, as their head.

3. According as men live in this world, and go out of it, so will they be found at the resurrection, without any change of their estate; there will be then only two sorts of persons, good and bad. All that have done good, how small soever the degree of their goodness hath been, shall be rewarded: and all that have done evil, shall be everlastingly punished; for all persons shall be eternally happy, or intolerably miserable in the other world, accordingly as

they manage their deportment and behaviour in this life; They that have done good, shall go, &c.

Resurrection of life. Religion is often called life, and everlasting life. Jn 5:24. In the resurrection the righteous will be raised up to the full enjoyment and perpetual security of that life. It is also called the resurrection of life, because there shall be no more death, Rev 21:4. The enjoyment of God himself and of his works; of the society of the angels and of the redeemed; freedom from sickness, and sin, and dying, will constitute the life of the just in the resurrection. The resurrection is also called the resurrection of the just (Lk 14:14), and the first resurrection, Rev 20:5,6.

The resurrection of damnation. The word damnation means the sentence passed on one by a judge--judgment or condemnation. The word, as we use it, applies only to the judgment pronounced by God on the wicked; but this is not its meaning always in the Bible. Here it has, however, that meaning. Those who have done evil will be raised up to be condemned or damned. This will be the object in raising them up--this the sole design. It is elsewhere said that they shall then be condemned to everlasting punishment (Mt 25:46), and that they shall be punished with everlasting destruction (2Thes 1:8,9); and it is said of the unjust that they are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished, 2Pet 2:9. That this refers to the future judgment--to the resurrection then, and not to anything that takes place in this life-- is clear from the following considerations:

1st. Jesus had just spoken of what would be done in this life--of the power of the gospel, Jn 5:25. He adds here that something still more wonderful--something beyond this--would take place. All that are in the graves shall hear his voice.

2nd. He speaks of those who are in their graves, evidently referring to the dead. Sinners are sometimes said to be dead in sin. This is applied in the Scriptures only to those who are deceased.

3rd. The language used here of the righteous cannot be applied to anything in this life. When God converts men, it is not because they have been good.

4th. Nor is the language employed of the evil applicable to anything here. In what condition among men can it be said, with any appearance of sense, that they are brought forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation? The doctrine of those Universalists who hold that all men will be saved immediately at death, therefore, cannot be true. This passage proves that at the day of judgment the wicked will be condemned. Let it be added that if then condemned they will be lost for ever. Thus (Mt 25:46) it is said to be everlasting punishment; 2Thes 1:8,9, it is called everlasting destruction. There is no account of redemption in hell--no Saviour, no Holy Spirit, no offer of mercy there.

29 and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Witnesses to Jesus

30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

Of mine own self. See Jn 5:19. The Messiah, the Mediator, does nothing without the concurrence and the authority of God. Whatever he does, he does according to the will of God.

As I hear I judge. To hear expresses the condition of one who is commissioned or instructed. Thus (Jn 8:26), "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him;" Jn 8:18, "As the father hath taught me, I speak those things." Jesus here represents himself as commissioned, taught, or sent of God. When he says, "as I hear," he refers to those things which the Father had showed him Jn 5:20--that is, he came to communicate the will of God; to show to man what God wished man to know.

I judge. I determine or decide. This was true respecting the institutions and doctrines of religion, and it will be true respecting the sentence which he will

pass on mankind at the day of judgment. He will decide their destiny according to what the Father will and wishes--that is, according to justice.

Because I seek, &c. This does not imply that his own judgment would be wrong if he sought his own will, but that he had no private ends, no selfish views, no improper bias. He came not to aggrandize himself, or to promote his own views, but he came to do the will of God. Of course his decision would be impartial and unbiased, and there is every security that it will be according to truth. See Lk 22:42 where he gave a memorable instance, in the agony of the garden, of his submission to his Father's will.

31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.

32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true.

If I bear witness of myself. If I have no other evidence than my own testimony about myself. My witness. My testimony; my evidence, The proof would not be decisive.

Is not true. The word true. here, means worthy of belief, or established by suitable evidence. See Mt 22:16: "We know that thou art true"--that is, worthy of confidence, or that thou hast been truly sent from God, Lk 20:21; Jn 8:13,17. The law did not admit a man to testify in his own case, but required two witnesses, De 17:6. Though what Jesus said true Jn 8:13,17, yet he admitted it was not sufficient testimony alone to claim their belief. They had a right to expect that his statement that he came from God would be confirmed by other evidence. This evidence he gave in the miracles which he wrought as proof that God had sent him.

33 Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.

He bare witness, &c. This testimony of John ought to have satisfied them. John was an eminent man; many of the Pharisees believed on him; he was candid, unambitious, sincere, and his evidence was impartial. On this Jesus might have rested the proof that he was the Messiah, but he was willing, also, to adduce evidence of a higher order.

34 But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.

I receive not testimony from men. I do not depend for proof of my Messiahship on the testimony of men, nor do I pride myself on the commendations or flattery of men.

But these thing, &c. "This testimony of John I adduce that you might be convinced. It was evidence of your own seeking. It was clear, full, explicit. You sent to make inquiry, and he gave you a candid and satisfactory answer. Had you believed that, you would have believed in the Messiah and been saved."

Men are often dissatisfied with the very evidence of the truth of religion which they sought, and on which they professed themselves willing to rely.

35 He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

He was. It is probable that John had been cast into prison before this, Hence his public ministry had ceased, and our Saviour says he was such a light.

Light. The word in the original properly means a lamp, and is not the same which in Jn 1:4,5 is translated light. That is a word commonly applied to the sun, the fountain of light; this means a lamp, or a light that is lit up or kindled artificially from oil or tallow. A teacher is often called a light, because he guides or illuminates the minds of others. Rom 2:19. "Thou art confident that thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them that sit in darkness;" Jn 8:12, 12:46, Mt 5:14.

A burning. A lamp lit up that burns with a steady lustre.

Shining. Not dim, not indistinct. The expression means that he was an eminent teacher; that his doctrines were clear, distinct, consistent.

Ye were willing. You willed, or you chose; you went out voluntarily. This shows that some of those whom Jesus was now addressing were among the great multitudes of Pharisees that came unto John in the wilderness, Mt 3:7. As they had at one time admitted John to be a prophet, so Jesus might with great propriety adduce his testimony in his favour.

For a season. In the original, for an hour--denoting only a short time. They did it, as many others do, while he was popular, and it was the fashion to follow him.

To rejoice in his light. To rejoice in his doctrines, and in admitting that he was a distinguished prophet; perhaps, also, to rejoice that he professed to be sent to introduce the Messiah, until they found that he bore testimony to Jesus of Nazareth.

36 But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.

The works. The miracles--healing the sick and raising the dead. Hath given me. Hath committed to me, or appointed me to do. Certain things he intrusted in his hands to accomplish.

To finish. To do or to perform until the task is completed. the word is applied to the termination of anything, as we say a task is ended or a work is completed. So Jesus said, when he expired, It is "finished," Jn 19:30. From this it appears that Jesus came to accomplish a certain work; and hence we see the reason why he so often guarded his life and sought his safety until the task was fully completed. These works or miracles bore witness of him; that is, they showed that he was sent from god, because none but God could perform them, and because God would not give such power to any whose life and doctrines he did not approve. They were more decisive proof than the testimony of John, because,

1st. John worked no miracles Jn 10:41

2nd. It was possible that a man might be deceived or be an imposter. It was not possible for God to deceive.

3rd. The miracles which Jesus wrought were such as no man could work, and no angel. He that could raise the dead must have all power, and he who commissioned Jesus, therefore, must be God

37 And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

The Father himself--hath borne witness of me. This God had done,

1st. By the miracles which Jesus had wrought, and of which he was conversing.

2nd. At the baptism of Jesus, where he said, "This is my beloved Son," Mt 3:17.

3rd. In the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is not easy to say here to which of these he refers. Perhaps he has reference to all.

Ye have neither heard his voice. This difficult passage has been interpreted in various ways. The main design of it seems to be clear--to reprove the Jews for not believing the evidence that he was the Messiah. In doing this he says that they were indisposed to listen to the testimony of God. He affirmed that God had given sufficient evidence of his divine mission, but they had disregarded it. The first thing that he notices is that they had not heard his voice. The word hear, in this place, is to be understood in the sense of obey or listen to. Jn 5:25. The voice of God means his commands or his declarations, however made; and the Saviour said that it had been the characteristic of the Jews that they had not listened to the voice or command of God. As this had been their general characteristic, it was not wonderful that they disregarded now his testimony in regard to the Messiah. The voice of God had been literally heard on the mount. See De 4:12: "Ye heard the voice of the words." At any time. This has been the uniform characteristic of the nation that they have disregarded and perverted the testimony of God, and it was as true of that generation as of their fathers.

Nor seen his shape. No man hath seen God at any time, Jn 1:18. But the word shape, here, does not mean God himself. It refers to the visible manifestation of himself; to the appearance which he assumed. It is applied in the Septuagint to his manifesting himself to Moses, Nu 12:8: "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently;" in Greek, in a form or shape--the word used here. It is applied to the visible symbol of God that appeared in the cloud and that rested on the tabernacle, Nu 9:15,16. It is the same word that is applied to the Holy Spirit appearing in bodily shape like a dove,

Lk 3:22. Jesus does not here deny that God had appeared in this manner, but he says they had not seen--that is, had not paid attention to, or regarded, the appearance of God. He had manifested himself, but they disregarded it, and, in particular, they had disregarded his manifestations in attestation of the Messiah. As the word hear means to obey, to listen to, so the word see means to pay attention to, to regard (2Jn 1:8, 1Jn 3:6), and thus throws light on Jn 14:9: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I am a manifestation of God--God appearing in human flesh, as he appeared formerly in the symbol of the cloud; and he that regards me, or attends to me, regards the Father."

38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

His word abiding in you. His law does not abide in you--that is, you do not regard or obey it. This was the third thing that he charged them with.

1st. They had not obeyed the command of God.

2nd. They had not regarded his manifestations, either in the times of the old dispensation, or now through the Messiah.

3rd. They did not yield to what he had said in the revelation of the Old Testament.

For whom he hath sent. God had foretold that the Messiah would come. He had now given evidence that Jesus was he; but now they rejected him, and this was proof that they did not regard the word of God.

39 Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

The last witness he calls is the Old Testament, which witnessed of him, and to it he appeals (Joh 5:39, &c.): Search the scriptures, ereunate.

(a) This may be read, either,

[1.] "You search the scriptures, and you do well to do so; you read them daily in your synagogues, you have rabbies, and doctors, and scribes, that make it their business to study them, and criticize upon them." The Jews boasted of the flourishing of scripture-learning in the days of Hillel, who

died about twelve years after Christ's birth, and reckoned some of those who were then members of the sanhedrim the beauties of their wisdom and the glories of their law; and Christ owns that they did indeed search the scriptures, but it was in search of their own glory: "You search the scriptures, and therefore, if you were not wilfully blind, you would believe in me."

Note, It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the scripture, and yet to be strangers to the power and influence of it. Or,

[2.] As we read it: Search the scriptures; and so, First, It was spoken to them in the nature of an appeal: "You profess to receive and believe the scripture; here I will join issue with you, let this be the judge, provided you will not rest in the letter" (hærere in cortice), "but will search into it."

Note, when appeals are made to the scriptures, they must be searched. Search the whole book of scripture throughout, compare one passage with another, and explain one by another. We must likewise search particular passages to the bottom, and see not what they seem to say prima facie--at the first appearance, but what they say indeed. Secondly, It is spoken to us in the nature of an advice, or a command to all Christians to search the scriptures.

Note, All those who would find Christ must search the scriptures; not only read them, and hear them, but search them, which denotes,

1. Diligence in seeking, labour, and study, and close application of mind.

2. Desire and design of finding. We must aim at some spiritual benefit and advantage in reading and studying the scripture, and often ask, "What am I now searching for?" We must search as for hidden treasures (Pr 2:4), as those that sink for gold or silver, or that dive for pearl, Job 28:1-11. This ennobled the Bereans, Ac 17:11.

(b) Now there are two things which we are here directed to have in our eye, in our searching the scripture: heaven our end, and Christ our way.

[1.] We must search the scriptures for heaven as our great end: For in them you think you have eternal life. The scripture assures us of an eternal state set before us, and offers to us an eternal life in that state: it contains the chart that describes it, the charter that conveys it, the direction in the way that leads to it, and the foundation upon which the hope of it is built; and this is worth searching for where we are sure to find it. But to the Jews Christ saith only, You think you have eternal life in the scriptures, because, though they did retain the belief and hope of eternal life, and grounded their expectations of it upon the scriptures, yet herein they missed it, that they looked for it by the bare reading and studying of the scripture. It was a common but corrupt saying among them, He that has the words of the law has eternal life; they thought they were sure of heaven if they could say by heart, or rather by rote, such and such passages of scripture as they were directed to by the tradition of the elders; as they thought all the vulgar cursed because they did not thus know the law (Joh 7:49), so they concluded all the learned undoubtedly blessed.

[2.] We must search the scriptures for Christ, as the new and living way that leads to this end. These are they, the great and principal witnesses, that testify of me.

Note,

First, The scriptures, even those of the Old Testament, testify of Christ, and by them God bears witness to him. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand of him (1Pe 1:11), the purposes and promises of God concerning him, and the previous notices of him. The Jews knew very well that the Old Testament testified of the Messiah, and were critical in their remarks upon the passages that looked that way; and yet were careless, and wretchedly overseen, in the application of them.

Secondly, Therefore we must search the scriptures, and may hope to find eternal life in that search, because they testify of Christ; for this is life eternal, to know him; see 1Jo 5:11. Christ is the treasure hid in the field of the scriptures, the water in those wells, the milk in those breasts.

40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

41 I receive not honor from men.

To this testimony he annexes a reproof of their infidelity and wickedness in four instances; particularly,

[1.] Their neglect of him and his doctrine: "You will not come tome, that you might have life, Joh 5:40. You search the scriptures, you believe the prophets, who you cannot but see testify of me; and yet you will not come to me, to whom they direct you." Their estrangement from Christ was the fault not so much of their understandings as of their wills. This is expressed as a complaint; Christ offered life, and it was not accepted.

Note,

First, There is life to be had with Jesus Christ for poor souls; we may have life, the life of pardon and grace, and comfort and glory: life is the perfection of our being, and inclusive of all happiness; and Christ is our life.

Secondly, Those that would have this life must come to Jesus Christ for it; we may have it for the coming for. It supposes an assent of the understanding to the doctrine of Christ and the record given concerning him; it lies in the consent of the will to his government and grace, and it produces an answerable compliance in the affections and actions.

Thirdly, The only reason why sinners die is because they will not come to Christ for life and happiness; it is not because they cannot, but because they will not. They will neither accept the life offered, because spiritual and divine, nor will they agree to the terms on which it is offered, nor apply themselves to the use of the appointed means: they will not be cured, for they will not observe the methods of cure.

Fourthly, The wilfulness and obstinacy of sinners in rejecting the tenders of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and what he complains of. Those words (Joh 5:41), I receive not honour from men, come in a parenthesis, to obviate an objection against him, as if he sought his own glory, and made himself the head of a party, in obliging all to come to him, and applaud him.

Note,

1. He did not covet nor court the applause of men, did not in the least affect that worldly pomp and splendour in which the carnal Jews expected their Messiah to appear. He charged those whom he cured not to make him known, and withdrew from those that would have made him king.

2. He had not the applause of men. Instead of receiving honour from men, he received a great deal of dishonour and disgrace from men, for he made himself of no reputation.

3. He needed not the applause of men; it was no addition to his glory whom all the angels of God worship, nor was he any otherwise pleased with it than as it was according to his Father's will, and for the happiness of those who, in giving honour to him, received much greater honour from him.

Their want of the love of God (Joh 5:42): "I know you very well, that you have not the love of God in you. Why should I wonder that you do not come to me, when you want even the first principle of natural religion, which is the love of God?"

Note, The reason why people slight Christ is because they do not love God; for, if we did indeed love God, we should love him who is his express image, and hasten to him by whom only we may be restored to the favour of God. He charged them (Joh 5:37) with ignorance of God, and here with want of love to him; therefore men have not the love of God because they desire not the knowledge of him.

Observe,

First, The crime charged upon them: You have not the love of God in you. They pretended a great love to God, and thought they proved it by their zeal for the law, the temple, and the sabbath; and yet they were really without the love of God.

Note, There are many who make a great profession of religion who yet show they want the love of God by their neglect of Christ and their contempt of his commandments; they hate his holiness and undervalue his goodness. It is the love of God in us, that love seated in the heart, a living active principle there, that God will accept; the love shed abroad there, Ro 5:5.

Secondly, The proof of this charge, by the personal knowledge of Christ, who searches the heart (Re 2:23) and knows what is in man: I know you. Christ sees through all our disguises, and can say to each of us, I know thee.

1. Christ knows men better than their neighbours know them. The people thought that the scribes and Pharisees were very devout and good men, but Christ knew that they had not the love of God in them.

2. Christ knows men better than they know themselves. These Jews had a very good opinion of themselves, but Christ knew how corrupt their inside was, notwithstanding the speciousness of their outside; we may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive him.

3. Christ knows men who do not, and will not, know him; he looks on those who industriously look off from him, and calls by their own name, their true name, those who have not known him.

42 But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

43 I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

I am come in my Father's name. By the authority of God; or giving proof that I am sent by him. If another shall come in his own name. A false teacher setting up himself, and not even pretending to have a divine commission. The Jews were much accustomed to receive and follow particular teachers. In the time of Christ they were greatly divided between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, two famous teachers. Ye will receive. You will follow, or obey him as a teacher.

Another crime charged upon them is their readiness to entertain false Christs and false prophets, while they obstinately opposed him who was the true Messias (Joh 5:43): I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me

not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. Be astonished, O heavens, at this (Jer 2:12,13); for my people have committed two evils, great evils indeed.

First, They have forsaken the fountain of living waters, for they would not receive Christ, who came in his Father's name, had his commission from his Father, and did all for his glory.

Secondly, They have hewn out broken cisterns, they hearken to every one that will set up in his own name. They forsake their own mercies, which is bad enough; and it is for lying vanities, which is worse.

Observe here,

1. Those are false prophets who come in their own name, who run without being sent, and set up for themselves only.

2. It is just with God to suffer those to be deceived with false prophets who receive not the truth in the love of it. 2Th 2:10,11. The errors of antichrist are the just punishment of those who obey not the doctrine of Christ. They that shut their eyes against the true light are by the judgment of God given up to wander endlessly after false lights, and to be led aside after every ignis fatuus.

3. It is the gross folly of many that, while they nauseate ancient truths, they are fond of upstart errors; they loathe manna, and at the same time feed upon ashes. After the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they were continually haunted with spectres, with false Christs and false prophets (Mt 24:24), and their proneness to follow such occasioned those distractions and seditions that hastened their ruin.

44 How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

They are here charged with pride and vain-glory, and unbelief, the effect of them, Joh 5:44. Having sharply reproved their unbelief, like a wise physician, he here searches into the cause, lays the axe to the root. They

therefore slighted and undervalued Christ because they admired and overvalued themselves. Here is,

First, Their ambition of worldly honour. Christ despised it, Joh 5:41. They set their hearts upon it: You receive honour one of another; that is, "You look for a Messiah in outward pomp, and promise yourselves worldly honour by him." You receive honour:--

1. "You desire to receive it, and aim at this in all you do."

2. "You give honour to others, and applaud them, only that they may return it, and may applaud you." Petimus dabimusque vicissim--We ask and we bestow. It is the proud man's art to throw honour upon others only that it may rebound upon himself.

3. "You are very careful to keep all the honours to yourselves, and confine them to your own party, as if you had the monopoly of that which is honourable."

4. "What respect is shown to you you receive yourselves, and do not transmit to God, as Herod." Idolizing men and their sentiments, and affecting to be idolized by them and their applauses, are pieces of idolatry as directly contrary to Christianity as any other.

Secondly, Their neglect of spiritual honour, called here the honour that comes from God only; this they sought not, nor minded.

Note,

1. True honour is that which comes from God only, that is real and lasting honour; those are honourable indeed whom he takes into covenant and communion with himself.

2. This honour have all the saints. All that believe in Christ, through him receive the honour that comes from God. He is not partial, but will give glory wherever he gives grace.

3. This honour that comes from God we must seek, must aim at it, and act for it, and take up with nothing short of it (Ro 2:29); we must account it our reward, as the Pharisees accounted the praise of men.

4. Those that will not come to Christ, and those that are ambitious of worldly honour, make it appear that they seek not the honour that comes from God, and it is their folly and ruin.

Thirdly, The influence this had upon their infidelity. How can you believe who are thus affected?

Observe here,

1 The difficulty of believing arises from ourselves and our own corruption; we make our work hard to ourselves, and then complain it is impracticable.

2 The ambition and affectation of worldly honour are a great hindrance to faith in Christ. How can they believe who make the praise and applause of men their idol? When the profession and practice of serious godliness are unfashionable, are every where spoken against,--when Christ and his followers are men wondered at, and to be a Christian is to be like a speckled bird (and this is the common case),--how can they believe the summit of whose ambition is to make a fair show in the flesh?

45 Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.

Do not think that I will accuse you. Do not suppose that I intend to follow your example. They had accused Jesus of breaking the law of God, Jn 5:16. He says that he will not imitate their example, though he implies that he might accuse them.

There is one that accuseth you. Moses might be said to accuse or reprove them. He wrote of the Messiah, clearly foretold his coming, and commanded them to hear him. As they did not do it, it might be said that

they had disregarded his command; and as Moses was divinely commissioned and had a right to be obeyed, so his command reproved them: they were disobedient and rebellious.

46 For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.

47 But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

If ye believe not his writings. If you do not credit what he has written which you profess to believe, it is not to be expected that you will believe my declarations.

And from this we may learn,

1st. That many men who profess to believe the Bible have really no regard for it when it crosses their own views and inclinations.

2nd. It is our duty to study the Bible, that we may be established in the belief that Jesus is the Messiah.

3rd. The prophecies of the Old Testament are conclusive proofs of the truth of the Christian religion.

4th. He that rejects one part of the Bible, will, for the same reason, reject all.

5th. The Saviour acknowledged the truth of the writings of Moses, built his religion upon them, appealed to them to prove that he was the Messiah, and commanded men to search them. We have the testimony of Jesus, therefore, that the Old Testament is a revelation from God. He that rejects his testimony on this subject must reject his authority altogether; and it is vain for any man to profess to believe in the New Testament, or in the Lord Jesus, without also acknowledging the authority of the Old Testament and of Moses.

John-6

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.

See notes on Mt 14:13-21

2 And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

3 And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

4 And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5 When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

7 Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,

9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?

10 And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

11 And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

13 Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Jesus Walks on the Sea

16 And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea,

See notes on Mt 14:22-31

17 and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum.
And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.
18 And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.
19 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.
20 But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.
21 Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

The People Seek Jesus

22 The day following, when the people, which stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone;

The people which stood on the other side of the sea. That is, on the east side, or on the same side with Jesus. The country was called the region beyond or on the other side of the sea, because the writer and the people lived on the west side.

23 (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:)
24 when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

Jesus the Bread of Life

25 And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?
26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

Ye seek me, not because, &c. The miracles which Jesus wrought were proofs that he came from God. To seek him because they had seen them, and were convinced by them that he was the Messiah, would have been proper; but to follow him simply because their wants were supplied was mere selfishness of a gross kind. Yet, alas! many seek religion from no better motive than this. They suppose that it will add to their earthly happiness, or they seek only to escape from suffering or from the convictions of conscience, or they seek for heaven only as a place of enjoyment, and regard religion as valuable only for this. All this is mere selfishness. Religion does not forbid our regarding our own happiness, or seeking it in any proper way; but when this is the only or the prevailing motive, it is evident that we have never yet sought God aright. We are aiming at the loaves and fishes, and not at the honour of God and the good of his kingdom; and if this is the only or the main motive of our entering the church, we cannot be Christians.

27 Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

Labour not. This does not mean that we are to make no effort for the supply of our wants (comp. 1Timm 5:1, 2Thes 3:10), but that we are not to manifest anxiety, we are not to make this the main or supreme object of our desire. Mt 6:25.

The meat that perisheth. The food for the supply of your natural wants. It perishes. The strength you derive from it is soon exhausted, and your wasted powers need to be reinvigorated.

That meat which endureth. The supply of your spiritual wants; that which supports, and nourishes, and strengthens the soul; the doctrines of the gospel, that are to a weak and guilty soul what needful food is to the weary and decaying body.

To everlastingly life. The strength derived from the doctrines of the gospel is not exhausted. It endures without wasting away. It nourishes the soul to everlasting life. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint," Isa 40:31.

Him hath God the Father sealed. To seal is to confirm or approve as ours. This is done when we set our seal to a compact, or deed, or testament, by which we ratify it as our act. So God the Father, by the miracles which had been wrought by Jesus, had shown that he had sent him, that he approved his doctrines, and ratified his works. The miracles were to his doctrine what a seal is to a written instrument. Jn 3:33.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

Verses 28 & 29:

What shall we do, that we might work the work's of God? That is, such things as God will approve. This was the earnest inquiry of men who were seeking to be saved. They had crossed the Sea of Tiberias to seek him; they supposed him to be the Messiah, and they sincerely desired to be taught the way of life; yet it is observable that they expected to find that way as other sinners commonly do--by their works. The idea of doing something. to merit salvation is one of the last that the sinner ever surrenders.

Here the Jews, who were strict observers of the ceremonial law of Moses, and rested thereupon for salvation, inquire of our Saviour what they should do that they might please God? Christ directs them to the great duty of believing on himself to own and acknowledge him to be the true Messiah, and as such to rely upon him alone for salvation; This is the work of God, that ye believe, &c.

Learn hence, That for a penitent humble sinner to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a work highly pleasing and acceptable unto God. Christ calls faith the work of God, upon a threefold account; it is the work of his efficiency and operation; it is the work of his commanding; and it is the work of his approbation and acceptation, a work that God is highly pleased with, and greatly delighted in; This is the work of God.

This is the work of God. This is the thing that will be acceptable to God, or which you are to do in order to be saved. Jesus did not tell them they had nothing to do, or that they were to sit down and wait, but that there was a

work to perform, and that was a duty that was imperative. It was to believe on the Messiah. This is the work which sinners are to do; and doing this they will be saved, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom 10:4.

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

What sign showest thou? On the word sign compare Is 7:14. What miracle dost thou work to prove that thou art the Messiah? They had just seen the miracle of the loaves in the desert, which was sufficient to show that he was the Messiah, and it would seem from the preceding narrative that those who crossed the lake to see him supposed that he was the Christ. It seems wonderful that they should so soon ask for farther evidence that he was sent from God. As Jesus claimed the right of teaching them, and as it was manifest that he would teach them differently from what they supposed Moses to teach, it was natural to ask him by what authority he claimed the right to be heard.

Did eat manna. This was the name given by the Jews to the food which was furnished to them by God in their journey. It means literally, "What is this?" and was the question which they asked when they first saw it, Ex 16:14,15. It was small like frost, and of the size of coriander-seed, and had a sweetish taste like honey. It fell in great quantities, and was regarded by the Jews as proof of a continued miracle during forty years, and was incontestable evidence of the interposition of God in favour of their fathers. The manna which is sold in the shops of druggists is a different substance from this. It is obtained from the bark of certain trees in Armenia, Georgia, Persia, and Arabia. It is procured, as resin is, by making an incision in the bark, and it flows out or distils from the tree.

Here the Jews tell our Saviour, that, before they will believe in him, they must see some sign from him, to confirm his doctrine, and prove him to be the Messias; they acknowledge Christ had wrought a great miracle in feeding five thousand persons with five barley loaves; but Moses fed their fathers in the wilderness, who were no less than six hundred thousand persons, with excellent manna from heaven, and this for forty years

together; from whence they would seem to conclude, that they had more reason to believe Moses than Christ: not considering that Moses was but an instrument to obtain, by prayer the manna at the hands of God: but Christ was an agent, and that, by a creating power inherent in himself, he multiplied the five loaves to the feeding of five thousand.

Note, here, From the Jews requring a sign before they would believe, that he who publishes a new doctrine to the world, ought to confirm his mission by some miraculous operation.

2. That God honoured moses, his messenger, very much, and Christ his minister much more, in that both of them wrought great and special miracles for the confirmation of their mission.

3. That the Jews not believing Christ to be the true Messias, upon so many attestations, and after his divine mission was confirmed by such miraculous operations, rendered their infidelity inexcusable, and their obstinacy invincible.

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

Moses gave you not that bread from heaven. This might be translated, "Moses gave you not the bread of heaven." The word "that," which makes some difference in the sense, is not necessary to express the meaning of the original. It does not appear that Jesus intended to call in question the fact that their fathers were fed by the instrumentality of Moses, but to state that he did not give them the true bread that was adapted to the wants of the soul. He fed the body, although his food did not keep the body alive (Jn 6:59), but he did not give that which would preserve the soul from death. God gave, in his Son Jesus, the true bread from heaven which was fitted to man, and of far more value than any supply of their temporal wants, He tells them, therefore, that they are not to seek from him any such supply of their temporal wants as they had supposed. A better gift had been furnished in his being given for the life of the world.

My father giveth you. In the gospel; in the gift of his Son.

The true bread. The true or real support which is needed to keep the soul from death. It is not false, deceitful, or perishing. Christ is called bread, because, as bread supports life, so his doctrine supports, preserves, and saves the soul from death. He is the true support, not only in opposition to the mere supply of temporal wants such as Moses furnished, but also in opposition to all false religion which deceives and destroys the soul.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

He here defines the marks of the true bread: (1) It comes from heaven; (2) it bestows life upon the soul and sustains it; (3) it is for the world, not for a single race.

Our Lord does not yet say, I am that bread; else the Jews would not have given him so respectful an answer, John 6:34.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Observe here, 1. How the carnal Jews hearing of the bread which Christ had commended so highly, and conceiving of it carnally, desire they may partake of it constantly; Lord, evermore give us this bread. The commendation of spiritual things may move the affections, and quicken the desires, of natural persons: but if their desires be not spiritual and serious, diligent and laborious, constant and abiding, they are no evidence of the truth of grace.

Observe, 2. Christ discovers another excellent effect of this bread of life, which he had been recommending; that such as feed of it shall never hunger more; that is, inordinately; after the perishing satisfactions of this world; but shall find an all-sufficient fulness in him, and complete refreshment from him, for the preserving and perpetuating of their spiritual life: He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, &c.

Observe, 3. How justly Christ upbraids the Jews for their obstinate infidelity: Ye have seen me, says our Saviour, yet ye believe not. Ye have seen me in the flesh, you have heard my doctrine, you have seen my miracles: I have done amongst you those works which never any man did, to convince you that I am the Messiah, yet you will not own me to be such, nor believe on me; Oh the strength of infidelity to be such, nor believe on me; Oh the strength of infidelity and unbelief! The devil has as great an advantage upon men by making them strong in unbelief, as God hath by making his people strong in faith.

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Our blessed Saviour having lamented the obstinate infidelity of the Jews in the foregoing verse, who, though they had seen him, would not believe on him; he doth in this verse comfort himself with the assured expectation, that there would be a number, which should certainly and infallibly come unto him; All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, &c.

Here observe,

1. An account of the persons that shall come to Christ: All that the Father hath given him. There is a double gift of us to Christ.

a. In God's eternal purpose and counsel.

b. In our effectual vocation and calling, when our hearts are by the Holy Spirit of God persuaded and enabled to accept of Christ, as he is freely tendered to us in the gospel.

2. The gracious entertainment which Christ gives to those that come unto him: He will in no wise cast them out; that is, I will kindly receive, and graciously entertain them.

Learn hence,

a. That both God the Father, and Christ his Son, are unfeignedly willing, and cordially desirous of the salvation of lost sinners. The federal

transaction which was betwixt the Father and the Son from everlasting about the salvation of lost sinners, evidently declares this.

b. That the merciful and compassionate Jesus will in no wise cast out or reject, but kindly entertain and receive, every penitent sinner that doth believingly apply unto him for pardon of sin and eternal life; I will in no wise cast out; that is, I will not cast them out of my pity and compassion, out of my love and affection, out of my prayer and intercession, out of my care and protection; I will not cast them out of my covenant; I will never cast them out of my kingdom: for my nature inclines me, my promise binds me, and my office, as Mediator, engages me, to the contrary.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Jn 6:38

In these words our Saviour gives us the confirmation of the foregoing promise, that he will in no wise cast out those that come unto him, by assuring us, that it was the great end for which he came into the world. His Father sent him to do his will, and not his own: that is, not to do his own will without his Father's, but to do his own will and his Father's. For Christ, as God, had a co-ordinate will with his Father's, and as man, a will subordinate to the will of his Father. Now, it is the will of both Father and Son, that such as believe in him should be preserved from perishing, and be raised up by Christ at the last day.

Learn hence,

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ stands not only inclined by his own mercy and goodness to save repenting and believing sinners, but doth also stand obliged thereunto by virtue of a trust, committed to him from the Father. Therefore Christ mentions the will of him that sent him, as a reason of his fidelity in this matter.

2. That the Father's will and good pleasure is the original source the fountain and first spring, from whence the salvation of believers doth proceed and

flow. It is the Father's will that sent me, that every one that seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.

3. That such as are given to Christ by the Father, and put as his trust into his keeping, he looks upon them as his charge, and stands engaged for the preservation of them. This is my Father's will, that of all which he hath given me, I shall lose nothing. Yet hath the Father so committed the care of believers to his Son, as that he keeps them still in his own hand. My Father which gave them to me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. Joh 10:28,29

4. From those words, I will raise him up at the last day, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly, essentially, and really God. That person who can by his own almighty power raise the dead, must certainly be God. And this power Christ had. He raised others from the dead, and his own dead body from the grave also, by his own power; and therefore Christ says, I am the resurrection and the life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Doubtless he that spake these words and made these promises, knew his own power to perform them; and that power must be omnipotent, and that act of omnipotence doth prove him to be God. It is true, the disciples raised the dead, who yet were no God, by with this difference, they raised the dead by Christ's power; but Christ raised others and himself also by his own power.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.

42 And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven ?

Although Christ had in the foregoing verses plainly asserted himself to be the true bread that came down from heaven, for the benefit of the world; yet the Jews understanding his words carnally, are offended with him, for pretending to come down from heaven, when they knew him to be the son of Joseph and Mary. They understood nothing of his divine nature, nor of his miraculous conception by the over-shadowing of the Holy Ghost, and therefore were highly offended at him.

Thence learn, That ignorance of Christ's divine nature was the ground and occasion of that contempt which was cast upon his person.

Observe farther, The proof which Christ gave of his divine nature, in his knowing the hearts and thoughts of these murmuring Jews; Jesus said, Murmur not among yourselves. Christ knows and observes the most secret murmurings and repinings that are found in the breasts of the children of men: and this his knowledge is an evidence and proof of his divinity, that he is truly and really God.

43 Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

In which words we have something necessarily implied, and something positively expressed. The misery of man in his natural and unsanctified state is here implied; he is far distant from Christ, and unable of himself to come unto him. By nature we are strangers, yea, enemies, unto God; enemies to the holiness of his nature, and to the righteousness of his laws; and as the state of unregeneracy is a state of enmity, so consequently must it be a state of impotency; Without me, therefore says Christ, ye can do nothing, that is, without interest in me, and influences of grace derived from me. Joh 15:5

Again, the truth we have expressed are these:

1. That all those who come unto Christ are drawn unto him.

2. That the drawing of sinful souls unto Jesus Christ is the special and peculiar work of God. This drawing is a powerful act, but not a compulsory act; God doth not draw any against their wills to Christ, but he inclines the wills of sinners to come unto him. He draws by effectual persuasion, and not by violent compulsion.

3. That all those who are drawn to Christ here, shall be raised up gloriously by him hereafter: I will raise him up at the last day. Such as are brought to Christ by the Father, Christ shall never abandon them, till he has raised them up at the last day, and presented them blameless and complete before his Father; where they shall ever be with the Lord.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

In these words our blessed Saviour confirms his former assertion, concerning his Father's drawing, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, which, speaking of the days of the Messias, foretold, that persons should be taught of God to embrace the Messias; whence Christ inferreth, that every one who is thus taught, shall come upon him, and believe in him.

Learn hence,

1. That the teachings of God are absolutely necessary to every man that cometh unto Christ in the way of faith,

2. That such shall not miscarry in the way of faith, who are under the special teachings and instructions of God; They shall be all taught of God, and he teacheth to profit, and that not only authoritatively, but efficaciously and effectually. Those whom God undertakes to teach, receive from him both an ear to hear, and an heart to understand. They shall be all taught of God, and they that are taught, have heard and learned of the Father.

46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.

Not that any man hath seen the Father. Jesus added this, evidently, to guard against mistake. He had said that all who came to him were taught of God. The teacher was commonly seen and heard by the pupil; but, lest it should be supposed that he meant to say that a man to come to him must see and hear God, visibly and audibly, he adds that he did not intend to affirm this. It was still true that no man had seen God at any time. They were not, therefore, to expect to see God, and his words were not to be perverted as if he meant to teach that.

Save he which is of God. Jesus here evidently refers to himself as the Son of God. He had just said that no man had seen the Father. When he affirms that he has seen the Father, it implies that he is more than man. He is the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, Jn 1:18; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb 1:3; God over all, blessed for ever, Rev 9:5. By his being of God is meant that he is the only-begotten Son of God, and sent as the Messiah into the world.

Hath seen. Hath intimately known or perceived him. He knows his nature, character, plans. This is a claim to knowledge superior to what man possesses, and it cannot be understood except by supposing that Jesus is equal with God.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

I am that bread of life. My doctrines and the benefits of my mediation are that real support of spiritual life of which the manna in the wilderness was the faint emblem. See Jn 6:32, 33.

In these verses our blessed Saviour resumes his former doctrine, namely, that he is the object of saving faith, and the bread of life, which he compares with the manna, the bread of Israel. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, which manna was an illustrious type of Christ. Thus both came down from heaven; both were freely given of God without any merit or desert of men; both in a miraculous manner; both at first unknown what they were, and whence they came; both equally belonging to all: both sufficient for all, poor and rich.

The manna, white in colour, so clear is our Lord's innocence; pleasant like honey, so sweet are his benefits: beaten and broken before eaten, Christ on his cross, bleeding and dying; giving only in the wilderness, and ceasing as soon as they came in to the land of promise, as sacraments shall vanish, when

we enjoy the substance, in heaven. But though manna was thus excellent, yet the eaters of it were dead; but such as feed upon Christ, the bread of life, shall live eternally in bliss and glory. I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man may eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.

Here we learn,

1. What a miserable creature man naturally is, in a pining and starved condition, under the want of soul food.

2. That Jesus Christ is the food of souls, which quickens them that are dead, and is unto the needy soul all that it can need; such spiritual food as will prove a remedy and preservative against death, both spiritual and eternal. I am the living bread.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

Observe the degrees: the Jews are tried here; the disciples, John 6:60 - 66, the apostles, John 6:67.

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Observe here, How the Jews, understanding Christ after a carnal manner, were offended at what he had said: for they thought it was inhuman to eat man's flesh, and could not understand how the body of Christ could in such a sense be food to all the world.

Hence note, That carnal persons put a carnal sense upon Christ's spiritual words, and so occasion their own stumbling. But yet notwithstanding the Jews stumbling at our Saviour's expression, he doth not alter his words, but presseth more and more the necessity of feeding upon him by faith, in order to eternal life; Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Learn from hence,

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the true spiritual food of all believers.

2. That those, and only those, who do by faith feed upon him, shall obtain a life of grace, and glory from him; if we do not by faith feed upon him, we can have no evidence for a life of grace, no title to a life of glory. This place some papists produce to countenance the doctrine of transubstantiation, a bodily eating and drinking of Christ's flesh and blood in the sacrament. But it is evident that Christ treats not of the sacrament in this chapter, for the sacrament was not now instituted; therefore it is not a sacramental, but a spiritual, feeding upon Christ by faith, that is here meant. For this eating gives life to the eater; all that eat are saved, and all that do not eat are damned; but this is not true of a sacramental eating; besides, this eating which Christ speaks of, he makes absolutely necessary to salvation; but some are saved that never fed upon Christ in the sacrament, as John the Baptist, and the thief on the cross.

Lastly, If it be understood of the sacramental eating and drinking, woe be to the church of Rome, for denying the cup to the laity; because drinking of Christ's blood is here made as necessary, as eating of his flesh, in order to eternal life. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

Observe farther, The close and intimate union which is betwixt Christ himself, and those that feed upon him: He that eateth me, dwelleth within me, and I in him. As meat is turned into the eater's substance, so believers and Christ become one; and by feeding on him, that is, by believing in him, there followeth a mutual inhabitation; Christ dwelling in them, and they in him: this is true of a spiritual feeding upon Christ, but not of a sacramental eating. Nay, Christ carries it higher still, and tells us, that as there is a real union

between the Father and him, and as the Father lives who sent him, having an eternal fountain of life in himself: and the Son lives by the Father, having the same life communicated to him with his essence from the Father: in like manner, says Christ, he that eateth me, the same shall live by me. All which is certainly true of our spiritual feeding upon Christ by faith; but cannot be applied to a corporal feeding on him in the sacrament, as the papists would have it.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?

Many of his disciples. The word disciple means learner. It was applied to the followers of Christ because they were taught by him. It does not imply, of necessity, that those to whom it was given were real Christians, but simply that they were under his teaching, and were professed learners in his school. See Mt 17:16; Mk 2:18, Jn 9:28, Mt 10:24. It is doubtless used in this sense here. It is, however, often applied to those who are real Christians.

This is an hard saying. The word hard here means offensive, disagreeable -- that which they could not bear. Some have understood it to mean "difficult to be understood," but this meaning does not suit the connection. The doctrine which he delivered was opposed to their prejudices; it seemed to be absurd, and they therefore rejected it.

Saying. Rather doctrine or speech--Greek, logos. It does not refer to any particular part of the discourse, but includes the whole.

Who can hear it? That is, who can hear it patiently--who can stay and listen to such doctrine or believe it. The effect of this is stated in Jn 6:66. The doctrines which Jesus taught that were so offensive appear to have been,

1st. That he was superior to Moses.

2nd. That God would save all that he had chosen, and those only.

3rd. That he said he was the bread that came from heaven.

4th. That it was necessary to partake of that; or that it was necessary that an atonement should be made, and that they should be saved by that. These doctrines have always been among the most offensive that men have been called on to believe, and many, rather than trust in them, have chosen to draw back to perdition.

61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you ?

62 What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

What and if, &c. Jesus does not say that those who were then present would see him ascend, but he implies that he would ascend. They had taken offence because he said he came down from heaven. Instead of explaining that away, he proceeds to state another doctrine quite as offensive to them--that he would reascend to heaven. The apostles only were present at his ascension, Acts 1:9. As Jesus was to ascend to heaven, it was clear that he could not have intended literally that they should eat his flesh.

63 It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

It is the Spirit that quickeneth. These words have been understood in different ways. The word "Spirit," here, evidently does not refer to the Holy Ghost, for he adds, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit." He refers here, probably, to the doctrine which he had been teaching in opposition to their notions and desires. "My doctrine is spiritual; it is fitted to quicken and nourish the soul. It is from heaven. Your doctrine or your views are earthly, and may be called flesh, or fleshly, as pertaining only to the support of the body. You place a great value on the doctrine that Moses fed the body; yet

that did not permanently profit, for your fathers are dead. You seek also food from me, but your views and desires are gross and earthly."

The flesh. Your carnal views and desires, and the literal understanding of my doctrine. By this Jesus shows them that he did not intend that his words should be taken literally. Profiteth nothing. Would not avail to the real wants of man. The bread that Moses gave, the food which you seek, would not be of real value to man's highest wants.

They are spirit. They are spiritual. They are not to be understood literally, as if you were really to eat my flesh, but they are to be understood as denoting the need of that provision for the soul which God has made by my coming into the world. Are life. Are fitted to produce or give life to the soul dead in sins.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Our blessed Saviour having thus cleared his doctrine, that he was the bread of life which came down from heaven, and that he is not to be carnally, but spiritually, fed upon: he plainly tells the Jews, That the true cause of their stumbling at his doctrine, was their ignorance and unbelief; There are some of you that believe not. Upon which plain dealing of our blessed Saviour's, many unsound professors did wholly forsake him, and accompanied no longer with him.

Learn hence,

1. That multitudes, who have long professed Christ and his holy religion, may draw back, and fall from their profession, and finally revolt from him.

2. That it is an evil heart of unbelief, which causes men to depart from Christ, and to make shipwreck of their profession.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

Will ye also go away? Many apostatized, and it was natural now for Jesus to submit the question to the twelve. "Will you, whom I have chosen, on whom I have bestowed the apostleship, and who have seen the evidence of my Messiahship, will you now also leave me?" This was the time to try them; and it is always a time to try real Christians when many professed disciples become cold and turn back; and then we may suppose Jesus addressing us, and saying, Will ye ALSO go away? Observe here, it was submitted to their choice. God compels none to remain with him against their will, and the question in such trying times is submitted to every man whether he will or will not go away.

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Simon Peter answered him. With characteristic ardour and promptness. Peter was probably one of the oldest of the apostles, and it was his character to be first and most ardent in his professions.

To whom shall we go? This implied their firm conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he alone was able to save them. It is one of Peter's noble confessions--the instinctive promptings of a pious heart and of ardent love. There was no one else who could teach them. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes were corrupt, and unable to guide them aright; and, though the doctrines of Jesus were mysterious, yet they were the only doctrines that could instruct and save them.

Thou hast, &c. The meaning of this is, thou teachest the doctrines which lead to eternal life. And from this we may learn,

1st. That we are to expect that some of the doctrines of the Bible will be mysterious.

2nd. That, though they are difficult to be understood, yet we should not therefore reject them.

3rd. That nothing would be gained by rejecting them. The atheist, the infidel--nay, the philosopher, believes, or professes to believe, propositions quite as mysterious as any in the Bible.

4th. That poor, lost, sinful man has nowhere else to go but to Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and if the sinner betakes himself to any other way he will wander and die.

5th. We should, therefore, on no account forsake the teachings of the Son of God. The words that he speaks are spirit and are life.

We are sure, &c. See a similar confession of Peter in Mt 16:16. Peter says we are sure, in the name of the whole of the apostles. Jesus immediately cautions him, as he did on other occasions, not to be too confident, for one of them actually had no such feelings, but was a traitor.

70 Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

Have not I chosen you twelve? There is much emphasis in these words. Have not I--I, the Saviour, the Messiah, chosen you in mercy and in love, and therefore it will be a greater sin to betray me? Chosen. Chosen to the apostolic office; conferred on you marks of peculiar favour, and treason is therefore the greater sin. You twelve. So small a number. Out of such a multitude as follow for the loaves and fishes, it is to be expected there should be apostates; but when the number is so small, chosen in such a manner, then it becomes every one, however confident he. may be, to be on his guard and examine his heart.

Is a devil. Has the spirit, the envy, the malice, and the treasonable designs of a devil. The word devil here is used in the sense of an enemy, or one hostile to him.

71 He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

He spake of Judas, &c. There is no evidence that Jesus designated Judas so that the disciples then understood that it was he. It does not appear that the apostles even suspected Judas, as they continued to treat him afterward with the same confidence, for he carried the bag, or the purse containing their little

property (Jn 12:6, 13:29); and at the table, when Jesus said that one of them would betray him, the rest did not suspect Judas until Jesus pointed him out particularly, Jn 13:26. Jesus spoke of one, to put them on their guard, to check their confidence, and to lead them to self-examination. So in every church, or company of professing Christians, we may know that it is probable that there may be some one or more deceived; but we may not know who it may be, and should therefore inquire prayerfully and honestly, "Lord, is it I?"

Should betray. Would betray. If it be asked why Jesus called a man to be an apostle who he knew had no love for him, who would betray him, and who had from the beginning the spirit of a "devil," we may reply,

1st. It was that Judas might be an important witness for the innocence of Jesus, and for the fact that he was not an impostor. Judas was with him more than three years. He was treated with the same confidence as the others, and in some respects even with superior confidence, as he had "the bag" (Jn 12:6), or was the treasurer. He saw the Saviour in public and in private, heard his public discourses and his private conversation, and he would have been just the witness which the high-priests and Pharisees would have desired, if he had known any reason why he should be condemned. Yet he alleged nothing against him. Though he betrayed him, yet he afterward said that he was innocent, and, under the convictions of conscience, committed suicide. If Judas had known anything against the Saviour he would have alleged it. If he had known that he was an impostor, and had alleged it, he would have saved his own life and been rewarded. If Jesus was an impostor, he ought to have made it known, and to have been rewarded for it.

2nd. It may have been, also, with a foresight of the necessity of having such a man among his disciples, in order that his own death might be brought about in the manner in which it was predicted. There were several prophecies which would have been unfulfilled had there been no such man among the apostles.

3rd. It showed the knowledge which the Saviour had of the human heart, that he could thus discern character before it was developed, and was able so distinctly to predict that he would betray him.

4th. We may add, what benevolence did the Saviour evince--what patience and forbearance-that he had with him for more than three years a man who he knew hated him at heart, and who would yet betray him to be put to death on a cross, and that during all that time he treated him with the utmost kindness!

John-7

The Unbelief of Jesus' Brethren

1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.

2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

The Jews' feast of tabernacles. Or the feast of tents. This feast was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the month Tisri, answering to the last half of our month September and the first half of October, Nu 29:12, De 16:13-15. It was so called from the tents or tabernacles which on that occasion were erected in and about Jerusalem, and was designed to commemorate their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, Neh 8:16-18. During the continuance of this feast they dwelt in booths or tents, as their fathers did in the wilderness, Lev 23:42,43. The feast was continued eight days, and the eighth or last day was the most distinguished, and was called the great day of the feast, Jn 7:37, Nu 29:35. The Jews on this occasion not only dwelt in booths, but they carried about the branches of palms, willows, and other trees which bore a thick foliage, and also branches of the olive-tree, myrtle, &c., Neh 8:15. Many sacrifices were offered on this occasion (Nu 29:12-39, De 16:14-16), and it was a time of general joy. It is called by Josephus and Philo the greatest feast, and was one of the three feasts which every male among the Jews was obliged to attend.

3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.

Their ambition and vain-glory in urging him to make a more public appearance than he did: "Depart hence," said they, "and go into Judea (Joh 7:3), where thou wilt make a better figure than thou canst here."

(1.) They give two reasons for this advice:

[1.] That it would be an encouragement to those in and about Jerusalem who had a respect for him; for, expecting his temporal kingdom, the royal seat of which they concluded must be at Jerusalem, they would have had the disciples there particularly countenanced, and thought the time he spent among his Galilean disciples wasted and thrown away, and his miracles turning to no account unless those at Jerusalem saw them. Or, "That thy disciples, all of them in general, who will be gathered at Jerusalem to keep the feast, may see thy works, and not, as here, a few at one time and a few at another."

[2.] That it would be for the advancement of his name and honour: There is no man that does any thing in secret if he himself seeks to be known openly. They took it for granted that Christ sought to make himself known, and therefore thought it absurd for him to conceal his miracles: "If thou do these things, if thou be so well able to gain the applause of the people and the approbation of the rulers by thy miracles, venture abroad, and show thyself to the world. Supported with these credentials, thou canst not fail of acceptance, and therefore it is high time to set up for an interest, and to think of being great."

4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.

5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

One would not think there was any harm in this advice, and yet the evangelist noted it is an evidence of their infidelity: For neither did his brethren believe in him (Joh 7:5), if they had, they would not have said this.

Observe,

[1.] It was an honour to be of the kindred of Christ, but no saving honour; they that hear his word and keep it are the kindred he values. Surely grace runs in no blood in the world, when not in that of Christ's family.

[2.] It was a sign that Christ did not aim at any secular interest, for then his kindred would have struck in with him, and he would have secured them first.

[3.] There were those who were akin to Christ according to the flesh who did believe in him (three of the twelve were his brethren), and yet others, as nearly allied to him as they, did not believe in him. Many that have the same external privileges and advantages do not make the same use of them.

6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.

My time, &c. The proper time for my going up to the feast. We know not why it was not yet a proper time for him to go. It might be because if he went then, in their company, while multitudes were going, it would have too much the appearance of parade and ostentation; it might excite too much notice, and be more likely to expose him to the envy and opposition of the rulers.

Your time, &c. It makes no difference to you when you go up. Your going will excite no tumult or opposition; it will not attract attention, and will not endanger your lives. Jesus therefore chose to go up more privately, and to remain until the multitude had gone. They commonly travelled to those feasts in large companies, made up of most of the families in the neighbourhood. Lk 2:44.

Here we have Christ's answer and refusal returned to his brethren's desire: he tells them, That they might go up to the feast of Jerusalem, when they pleased, and as publicly; but it was not fit for him to appear so publicly, because the doctrine which he taught was odious to the pharisees, and the prevailing power at Jerusalem: he therefore resolves to go up privately, that he might not stir up the jealousy of the sanhedrim: but for them, they were out of danger of the world's hatred: for, being the children of it, the world would love its own; but him it hated because he reproved its sins.

Where we may remark, That though our Lord Jesus Christ was most freely willing, and ready, to lay down his life for sinners, when the time was come that God the Father called for it; yet he would not expose his life to hazard and danger unseasonalby. Teaching us by his example, as not to decline sufferings when God calls us to them: so not to tempt God by running into them, when we may inoffensively avoid them. Your time is always ready, mine is not yet come.

7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

> The world cannot hate you. You profess no principles in opposition to the world. You do not excite its envy, or rouse against you the civil rulers. As you possess the same spirit and principles with the men of the world, they cannot be expected to hate you.
>
> I testify of it. I bear witness against it. This was the main cause of the opposition which was made to him. He proclaimed that men were depraved, and the result was that they hated him. We may expect that all who preach faith- fully against the wickedness of men will excite opposition. Yet this is not to deter us from doing our duty, and, after the example of Jesus, from proclaiming to men their sins, whatever may be the result.

8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.

> I go not up yet. Jesus remained until about the middle of the feast, Jn 7:14. That is, he remained about four days after his brethren had departed, or until the mass of the people had gone up, so that his going might excite no attention, and that it might not be said he chose such a time to excite a tumult. We have here a signal instance of our Lord's prudence and opposition to parade. Though it would have been lawful for him to go up at that time, and though it would have been a favourable period to make himself known, yet he chose to forego these advantages rather than to afford an occasion of envy and jealousy to the rulers, or to appear even to excite a tumult among the people.

9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

> How our blessed Saviour, who came to fulfil the law, goes to Jerusalem at the Jewish feast, according to the command of God, Three times a year shall all thy males appear before me. Exod 23:17 Christ being made under the law, sheweth a punctual obedience to the law, and fulfilled it in his own person.

11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?

12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.

The people differed much in their sentiments concerning him (Joh 7:12): There was much murmuring, or muttering rather, among the people concerning him. The enmity of the rulers against Christ, and their enquiries after him, caused him to be so much the more talked of and observed among the people. This ground the gospel of Christ has got by the opposition made to it, that it has been the more enquired into, and, by being every where spoken against, it has come to be every where spoken of, and by this means has been spread the further, and the merits of his cause have been the more searched into. This murmuring was not against Christ, but concerning him; some murmured at the rulers, because they did not countenance and encourage him: others murmured at them, because they did not silence and restrain him. Some murmured that he had so great an interest in Galilee; others, that he had so little interest in Jerusalem. Note, Christ and his religion have been, and will be, the subject of much controversy and debate, Lu 12:51,52. If all would agree to entertain Christ as they ought, there would be perfect peace; but, when some receive the light and others resolve against it, there will be murmuring. The bones in the valley, while they were dead and dry, lay quiet; but when it was said unto them, Live, there was a noise and a shaking, Eze 37:7. But the noise and rencounter of liberty and business are preferable, surely, to the silence and agreement of a prison. Now what were the sentiments of the people concerning him?

[1.] Some said, he is a good man. This was a truth, but it was far short of being the whole truth. He was not only a good man, but more than a man, he was the Son of God. Many who have no ill thoughts of Christ have yet low thoughts of him, and scarcely honour him, even when they speak well of him, because they do not say enough; yet indeed it was his honour, and the reproach of those who persecuted him, that even those who would not believe him to be the Messiah could not but own he was a good man.

[2.] Others said, Nay, but he deceiveth the people; if this had been true, he had been a very bad man. The doctrine he preached was sound, and could not be contested; his miracles were real, and could not be disproved; his conversation was manifestly holy and good; and yet it must be taken for

granted, notwithstanding, that there was some undiscovered cheat at the bottom, because it was the interest of the chief priests to oppose him and run him down. Such murmuring as there was among the Jews concerning Christ there is still among us: the Socinians say, He is a good man, and further they say not; the deists will not allow this, but say, He deceived the people. Thus some depreciate him, others abuse him, but great is the truth.

13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

They were frightened by their superiors from speaking much of him (Joh 7:13): No man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews. Either, First, They durst not openly speak well of him. While any one was at liberty to censure and reproach him, none durst vindicate him. Or, Secondly, They durst not speak at all of him openly. Because nothing could justly be said against him, they would not suffer any thing to be said of him. It was a crime to name him. Thus many have aimed to suppress truth, under colour of silencing disputes about it, and would have all talk of religion hushed, in hopes thereby to bury in oblivion religion itself.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

Christ's public preaching in the temple (Joh 7:14): He went up into the temple, and taught, according to his custom when he was at Jerusalem. His business was to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and he did it in every place of concourse. His sermon is not recorded, because, probably, it was to the same purport with the sermons he had preached in Galilee, which were recorded by the other evangelists. For the gospel is the same to the plain and to the polite. But that which is observable here is that it was about the midst of the feast; the fourth or fifth day of the eight.

But why did he appear thus publicly now? Surely it was to shame his persecutors, the chief priests and elders. (1.) By showing that, though they were very bitter against him, yet he did not fear them, nor their power. See Isa 50:7,8. (2.) By taking their work out of their hands. Their office was to teach the people in the temple, and particularly at the feast of tabernacles, Ne 8:17,18. But they either did not teach them at all or taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and therefore he goes up to the temple and teaches the people. When the shepherds of Israel made a prey of the flock it was time for the chief Shepherd to appear, as was promised. Eze 34:22,23,Mal 3:1.

15 And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?

Knoweth this man letters. The Jewish letters or science consisted in the knowledge of their Scriptures and traditions. Jesus exhibited in his discourses such a profound acquaintance with the Old Testament as to excite their amazement and admiration.

Having never learned. The Jews taught their law and tradition in celebrated schools. As Jesus had not been instructed in those schools, they were amazed at his learning. What early human teaching the Saviour had we have no means of ascertaining, farther than that it was customary for the Jews to teach their children to read the Scriptures. 2Ti 3:15: "From a child thou (Timothy) hast known the holy scriptures."

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

My doctrine. My teaching, or what I teach. This is the proper meaning of the word doctrine. It is what is taught us, and, as applied to religion, it is what is taught us by God in the holy Scriptures.

Is not mine. It is not originated by me. Though I have not learned in your schools, yet you are not to infer that the doctrine which I teach is devised or invented by me. I teach nothing that is contrary to the will of God, and which he has not ap- pointed me to teach.

His that sent me. God's. It is such as he approves, and such as he has commissioned me to teach. The doctrine is divine in its origin and in its nature.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

That the most competent judges of the truth and divine authority of Christ's doctrine are those that with a sincere and upright heart desire and endeavour to do the will of God (Joh 7:17): If any man be willing to do the will of God, have his will melted into the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself. Observe here, First, What the question is, concerning the doctrine of Christ, whether it be of God or no; whether the gospel be a divine revelation or an imposture. Christ himself was willing to have his doctrine enquired into, whether it were of God or no, much

more should his ministers; and we are concerned to examine what grounds we go upon, for, if we be deceived, we are miserably deceived. Secondly, Who are likely to succeed in this search: those that do the will of God, at least are desirous to do it.

Now see,

1. Who they are that will do the will of God. They are such as are impartial in their enquiries concerning the will of God, and are not biassed by any lust or interest, and such as are resolved by the grace of God, when they find out what the will of God is, to conform to it. They are such as have an honest principle of regard to God, and are truly desirous to glorify and please him.

2. Whence it is that such a one shall know of the truth of Christ's doctrine.

(a) Christ has promised to give knowledge to such; he hath said, He shall know, and he can give an understanding. Those who improve the light they have, and carefully live up to it, shall be secured by divine grace from destructive mistakes.

(b) They are disposed and prepared to receive that knowledge. He that is inclined to submit to the rules of the divine law is disposed to admit the rays of divine light. To him that has shall be given; those have a good understanding that do his commandments, Ps 111:10. Those who resemble God are most likely to understand him.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

That hereby it appeared that Christ, as a teacher, did not speak of himself, because he did not seek himself, Joh 7:18.

First, See here the character of a deceiver: he seeketh his own glory, which is a sign that he speaks of himself, as the false Christs and false prophets did. Here is the description of the cheat: they speak of themselves, and have no commission nor instructions from God; no warrant but their own will, no inspiration but their own imagination, their own policy and artifice.

Ambassadors speak not of themselves; those ministers disclaim that character who glory in this that they speak of themselves. But see the discovery of the cheat; by this their pretensions are disproved, they consult purely their own glory; self-seekers are self-speakers. Those who speak from God will speak for God, and for his glory; those who aim at their own preferment and interest make it to appear that they had no commission from God.

Secondly, See the contrary character Christ gives of himself and his doctrine: He that seeks his glory that sent him, as I do, makes it to appear that he is true.

1. He was sent of God. Those teachers, and those only, who are sent of God, are to be received and entertained by us. Those who bring a divine message must prove a divine mission, either by special revelation or by regular institution.

2. He sought the glory of God. It was both the tendency of his doctrine and the tenour of his whole conversation to glorify God.

3. This was a proof that he was true, and there was no unrighteousness in him. False teachers are most unrighteous; they are unjust to God whose name they abuse, and unjust to the souls of men whom they impose upon. There cannot be a greater piece of unrighteousness than this. But Christ made it appear that he was true, that he was really what he said he was, that there was no unrighteousness in him, no falsehood in his doctrine, no fallacy nor fraud in his dealings with us.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law
? Why go ye about to kill me?

He argues against them by way of recrimination, convicting them of far worse practices, Joh 7:19. How could they for shame censure him for a breach of the law of Moses, when they themselves were such notorious breakers of it? Did not Moses give you the law? And it was their privilege that they had the law, no nation had such a law; but it was their wickedness that none of them kept the law, that they rebelled against it, and lived

contrary to it. Many that have the law given them, when they have it do not keep it. Their neglect of the law was universal: None of you keepeth it: neither those of them that were in posts of honour, who should have been most knowing, nor those who were in posts of subjection, who should have been most obedient. They boasted of the law, and pretended a zeal for it, and were enraged at Christ for seeming to transgress it, and yet none of them kept it; like those who say that they are for the church, and yet never go to church. It was an aggravation of their wickedness, in persecuting Christ for breaking the law, that they themselves did not keep it: "None of you keepeth the law, why then go ye about to kill me for not keeping it?"

Note, Those are commonly most censorious of others who are most faulty themselves. Thus hypocrites, who are forward to pull a mote out of their brother's eye, are not aware of a beam in their own. Why go ye about to kill me? Some take this as the evidence of their not keeping the law: "You keep not the law; if you did, you would understand yourselves better than to go about to kill me for doing a good work." Those that support themselves and their interest by persecution and violence, whatever they pretend (though they may call themselves custodes utriusque tabulæ--the guardians of both tables), are not keepers of the law of God. Chemnitius understands this as a reason why it was time to supersede the law of Moses by the gospel, because the law was found insufficient to restrain sin: "Moses gave you the law, but you do not keep it, nor are kept by it from the greatest wickedness; there is therefore need of a clearer light and better law to be brought in; why then do you aim to kill me for introducing it?"

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

Here the people rudely interrupted him in his discourse, and contradicted what he said (Joh 7:20): Thou has a devil; who goes about to kill thee?

This intimates,

[1.] The good opinion they had of their rulers, who, they think, would never attempt so atrocious a thing as to kill him; no, such a veneration they had for their elders and chief priests that they would swear for them they would do no harm to an innocent man. Probably the rulers had their little emissaries

among the people who suggested this to them; many deny that wickedness which at the same time they are contriving.

[2.] The ill opinion they had of our Lord Jesus: "Thou hast a devil, thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and art a bad man for saying so;" so some: or rather, "Thou art melancholy, and art a weak man; thou frightenest thyself with causeless fears, as hypochondriacal people are apt to do." Not only open frenzies, but silent melancholies, were then commonly imputed to the power of Satan. "Thou art crazed, has a distempered brain." Let us not think it strange if the best of men are put under the worst of characters. To this vile calumny our Saviour returns no direct answer, but seems as if he took no notice of it.

Note, Those who would be like Christ must put up with affronts, and pass by the indignities and injuries done them; must not regard them, much less resent them, and least of all revenge them. I, as a deaf man, heard not. When Christ was reviled, he reviled not again, He argues by way of appeal and vindication.

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

[1.] He appeals to their own sentiments of this miracle: "I have done one work, and you all marvel, Joh 7:21. You cannot choose but marvel at it as truly great, and altogether supernatural; you must all own it to be marvellous." Or, "Though I have done but one work that you have any colour to find fault with, yet you marvel, you are offended and displeased as if I had been guilty of some heinous or enormous crime."

[2.] He appeals to their own practice in other instances: "I have done one work on the sabbath, and it was done easily, with a word's speaking, and you all marvel, you make a mighty strange thing of it, that a religious man should dare do such a thing, whereas you yourselves many a time do that which is a much more servile work on the sabbath day, in the case of circumcision; if it be lawful for you, nay, and your duty, to circumcise a child on the sabbath day, when it happens to be the eighth day, as no doubt

it is, much more was it lawful and good for me to heal a diseased man on that day." Observe,

First, The rise and origin of circumcision: Moses gave you circumcision, gave you the law concerning it.

Here,

1. Circumcision is said to be given, and (Joh 7:23) they are said to receive it; it was not imposed upon them as a yoke, but conferred upon them as a favour. Note, The ordinances of God, and particularly those which are seals of the covenant, are gifts given to men, and are to be received as such.

2. Moses is said to give it, because it was a part of that law which was given by Moses; yet, as Christ said of the manna (Joh 6:32), Moses did not give it them, but God; nay, and it was not of Moses first, but of the fathers, Joh 7:22. Though it was incorporated into the Mosaic institution, yet it was ordained long before, for it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and therefore commenced with the promise four hundred and thirty years before, Ga 3:17. The church membership of believers and their seed was not of Moses or his law, and therefore did not fall with it; but was of the fathers, belonged to the patriarchal church, and was part of that blessing of Abraham which was to come upon the Gentiles, Ga 3:14.

Secondly, The respect paid to the law of circumcision above that of the sabbath, in the constant practice of the Jewish church. The Jewish casuists frequently take notice of it, Circumcisio et ejus sanatio pellit sabbbatum--Circumcision and its cure drive away the sabbath; so that if a child was born one sabbath day it was without fail circumcised the next. If then, when the sabbath rest was more strictly insisted on, yet those works were allowed which were in ordine ad spiritualia--for the keeping up of religion, much more are they allowed now under the gospel, when the stress is laid more upon the sabbath work.

Thirdly, The inference Christ draws hence in justification of himself, and of what he had done (Joh 7:23): A man-child on the sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law of circumcision might not be broken; or, as the margin reads it, without breaking the law, namely, of the sabbath. Divine commands must be construed so as to agree with each other. "Now, if this be allowed by yourselves, how unreasonable are you, who are angry with me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day!" emoi cholate. The word is used only here, from choge--fel, gall. They were angry at him with the greatest indignation; it was a spiteful anger, anger with gall in it. Note, It is very absurd and unreasonable for us to condemn others for that in which we justify ourselves. Observe the comparison Christ here makes between their circumcising a child and his healing a man on the sabbath day.

1. Circumcision was but a ceremonial institution; it was of the fathers indeed, but not from the beginning; but what Christ did was a good work by the law of nature, a more excellent law than that which made circumcision a good work.

2. Circumcision was a bloody ordinance, and made sore; but what Christ did was healing, and made whole. The law works pain, and, if that work may be done on the sabbath day, much more a gospel work, which produces peace.

3. Especially considering that whereas, when they had circumcised a child, their care was only to heal up that part which was circumcised, which might be done and yet the child remain under other illnesses, Christ had made this man every whit whole, holon anthropon hygie--I have made the whole man healthful and sound. The whole body was healed, for the disease affected the whole body; and it was a perfect cure, such as left no relics of the disease behind; nay, Christ not only healed his body, but his soul too, by that admonition, Go, and sin no more, and so indeed made the whole man sound, for the soul is the man. Circumcision indeed was intended for the good of the soul, and to make the whole man as it should be; but they had perverted it, and turned it into a mere carnal ordinance; but Christ accompanied his

outward cures with inward grace, and so made them sacramental, and healed the whole man.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

He concludes this argument with that rule (Joh 7:24): Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. This may be applied,

either,

First, In particular, to this work which they quarrelled with as a violation of the law. Be not partial in your judgment; judge not, kat opsin--with respect of persons; knowing faces, as the Hebrew phrase is, De 1:17. It is contrary to the law of justice, as well as charity, to censure those who differ in opinion from us as transgressors, in taking that liberty which yet in those of our own party, and way, and opinion, we allow of; as it is also to commend that in some as necessary strictness and severity which in others we condemn as imposition and persecution.

Or,

Secondly, In general, to Christ's person and preaching, which they were offended at and prejudiced against. Those things that are false, and designed to impose upon men, commonly appear best when they are judged of according to the outward appearance, they appear most plausible prima facie--at the first glance. It was this that gained the Pharisees such an interest and reputation, that they appeared right unto men (Mt 23:27,28), and men judged of them by that appearance, and so were sadly mistaken in them. "But," saith Christ, "be not too confident that all are real saints who are seeming ones." With reference to himself, his outward appearance was far short of his real dignity and excellency, for he took upon him the form of a servant (Php 2:7), was in the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro 8:3), had no form nor comeliness, Isa 53:2. So that those who undertook to judge whether he was the Son of God or no by his outward appearance were not likely to judge righteous judgment.

The Jews expected the outward appearance of the Messiah to be pompous and magnificent, and attended with all the ceremonies of secular grandeur; and, judging of Christ by that rule, their judgment was from first to last a continual mistake, for the kingdom of Christ was not to be of this world, nor to come with observation. If a divine power accompanied him, and God bore him witness, and the scriptures were fulfilled in him, though his appearance was ever so mean, they ought to receive him, and to judge by faith, and not by the sight of the eye. See Isa 11:3,1Sa 16:7.

Christ and his doctrine and doings desire nothing but righteous judgment; if truth and justice may but pass the sentence, Christ and his cause will carry the day. We must not judge concerning any by their outward appearance, not by their titles, the figure they make in the world, and their fluttering show, but by their intrinsic worth, and the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in them.

Is This the Christ?

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

The objection concerning this stated by some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who seem to have been of all others most prejudiced against him, Joh 7:25. One would think that those who lived at the fountain-head of knowledge and religion should have been most ready to receive the Messiah: but it proved quite contrary. Those that have plenty of the means of knowledge and grace, if they are not made better by them, are commonly made worse; and our Lord Jesus has often met with the least welcome from those that one would expect the best from. But it was not without some just cause that it came into a proverb, The nearer the church the further from God.

26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ, by their reflecting on the rulers, because they let him alone: Is not this he whom they seek to kill? The multitude of the people that came up out of the country to the feast did not suspect there was any design on foot against him, and therefore they said, Who goes about to kill thee? Joh 7:20. But those of Jerusalem knew

the plot, and irritated their rulers to put it into execution: "Is not this he whom they seek to kill? Why do they not do it then? Who hinders them? They say that they have a mind to get him out of the way, and yet, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" Joh 7:26. Here they slyly and maliciously insinuate two things, to exasperate the rulers against Christ, when indeed they needed to spur.

1. That by conniving at his preaching they brought their authority into contempt. "Must a man that is condemned by the sanhedrim as a deceiver be permitted to speak boldly, without any check or contradiction? This makes their sentence to be but brutem fulmen--a vain menace; if our rulers will suffer themselves to be thus trampled upon, they may thank themselves if none stand in awe of them and their laws." Note, The worst of persecutions have often been carried on under colour of the necessary support of authority and government.

2. That hereby they brought their judgment into suspicion. Do they know that this is the Christ? It is spoken ironically, "How came they to change their mind? What new discovery have they lighted on? They give people occasion to think that they believe him to be the Christ, and it behoves them to act vigorously against him to clear themselves from the suspicion." Thus the rulers, who had made the people enemies to Christ, made them seven times more the children of hell than themselves, Mt 23:15. When religion and the profession of Christ's name are out of fashion, and consequently out of repute, many are strongly tempted to persecute and oppose them, only that they may not be thought to favour them and incline to them. And for this reason apostates, and the degenerate offspring of good parents, have been sometimes worse than others, as it were to wipe off the stain of their profession. It was strange that the rulers, thus irritated, did not seize Christ; but his hour was not yet come; and God can tie men's hands to admiration, though he should not turn their hearts.

27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.

These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ, by their exception against his being the Christ, in which appeared more malice than matter, Joh 7:27. "If the rulers think him to be the Christ, we neither can

nor will believe him to be so, for we have this argument against it, that we know this man, whence he is; but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is." Here is a fallacy in the argument, for the propositions are not body ad idem--adapted to the same view of the subject.

1. If they speak of his divine nature, it is true that when Christ comes no man knows whence he is, for he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was without descent, and his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, Mic 5:2. But then it is not true that as for this man they knew whence he was, for they knew not his divine nature, nor how the Word was made flesh.

2. If they speak of his human nature, it is true that they knew whence he was, who was his mother, and where he was bred up; but then it is false that ever it was said of the Messiah that none should know whence he was, for it was known before where he should be born, Mt 2:4,5.

Observe,

(a) How they despised him, because they knew whence he was. Familiarity breeds contempt, and we are apt to disdain the use of those whom we know the rise of. Christ's own received him not, because he was their own, for which very reason they should the rather have loved him, and been thankful that their nation and their age were honoured with his appearance.

(b) How they endeavoured unjustly to fasten the ground of their prejudice upon the scriptures, as if they countenanced them, when there was no such thing. Therefore people err concerning Christ, because they know not the scripture.

28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.

Christ's answer to this objection, Joh 7:28,29.

First, He spoke freely and boldly, he cried in the temple, as he taught, he spoke this louder than the rest of his discourse,

1. To express his earnestness, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. There may be a vehemency in contending for the truth where yet there is no intemperate heat nor passion. We may instruct gainsayers with warmth, and yet with meekness.

2 The priests and those that were prejudiced against him, did not come near enough to hear his preaching, and therefore he must speak louder than ordinary what he will have them to hear. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear this.

Secondly, His answer to their cavil is,

1. By way of concession, granting that they did or might know his origin as to the flesh: "You both know me, and you know whence I am. You know I am of your own nation, and one of yourselves." It is no disparagement to the doctrine of Christ that there is that in it which is level to the capacities of the meanest, plain truths, discovered even by nature's light, of which we may say, We know whence they are. "You know me, you think you know me; but you are mistaken; you take me to be the carpenter's son, and born at Nazareth, but it is not so."

2. By way of negation, denying that that which they did see in him, and know of him, was all that was to be known; and therefore, if they looked no further, they judged by the outward appearance only. They knew whence he came perhaps, and where he had his birth, but he will tell them what they knew not, from whom he came.

(1.) That he did not come of himself; that he did not run without sending, nor come as a private person, but with a public character.

(2.) That he was sent of his Father; this is twice mentioned: He hath sent me. And again, "He hath sent me, to say what I say, and do what I do." This he was himself well assured of, and therefore knew that his Father would bear him out; and it is well for us that we are assured of it too, that we may with holy confidence go to God by him.

(3.) That he was from his Father, par autou eimi--I am from him; not only sent from him as a servant from his master, but from him by eternal generation, as a son from his father, by essential emanation, as the beams from the sun.

(4.) That the Father who sent him is true; he had promised to give the Messiah, and, though the Jews had forfeited the promise, yet he that made the promise is true, and has performed it. He had promised that the Messiah should see his seed, and be successful in his undertaking; and, though the generality of the Jews reject him and his gospel, yet he is true, and will fulfil the promise in the calling of the Gentiles.

(5.) That these unbelieving Jews did not know the Father: He that sent me, whom you know not. There is much ignorance of God even with many that have a form of knowledge; and the true reason why people reject Christ is because they do not know God; for there is such a harmony of the divine attributes in the work of redemption, and such an admirable agreement between natural and revealed religion, that the right knowledge of the former would not only admit, but introduce, the latter.

(6.) Our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with the Father that sent him: but I know him. He knew him so well that he was not at all in doubt concerning his mission from him, but perfectly assured of it; nor at all in the dark concerning the work he had to do, but perfectly apprized of it, Mt 11:27.

29 But I know him; for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.

The provocation which this gave to his enemies, who hated him because he told them the truth, Joh 7:30. They sought therefore to take him, to lay violent hands on him, not only to do him a mischief, but some way or other to be the death of him; but by the restraint of an invisible power it was prevented; nobody touched him, because his hour was not yet come; this was not their reason why they did it not, but God's reason why he hindered them from doing it. Note,

First, The faithful preachers of the truths of God, though they behave themselves with ever so much prudence and meekness, must expect to be hated and persecuted by those who think themselves tormented by their testimony, Re 11:10.

Secondly, God has wicked men in a chain, and, whatever mischief they would do, they can do no more than God will suffer them to do. The malice of persecutors is impotent even when it is most impetuous, and, when Satan fills their hearts, yet God ties their hands.

Thirdly, God's servants are sometimes wonderfully protected by indiscernible unaccountable means. Their enemies do not do the mischief they designed, and yet neither they themselves nor any one else can tell why they do not.

Fourthly, Christ had his hour set, which was to put a period to his day and work on earth; so have all his people and all his ministers, and, till that hour comes, the attempts of their enemies against them are ineffectual, and their day shall be lengthened as long as their Master has any work for them to do; nor can all the powers of hell and earth prevail against them, until they have finished their testimony.

31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?

The good effect which Christ's discourse had, notwithstanding this, upon some of his hearers (Joh 7:31): Many of the people believed on him. As he was set for the fall of some, so for the rising again of others. Even where the gospel meets with opposition there may yet be a great deal of good done, 1Th 2:2.

Observe here,

First, Who they were that believed; not a few, but many, more than one would have expected when the stream ran so strongly the other way. But these many were of the people, ek tou ochlou--of the multitude, the crowd, the inferior sort, the mob, the rabble, some would have called them. We

must not measure the prosperity of the gospel by its success among the great ones; nor much ministers say that they labour in vain, though none but the poor, and those of no figure, receive the gospel, 1Co 1:26.

Secondly, What induced them to believe: the miracles which he did, which were not only the accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies (Isa 35:5,6), but an argument of a divine power. He that had an ability to do that which none but God can do, to control and overrule the powers of nature, no doubt had authority to enact that which none but God can enact, a law that shall bind conscience, and a covenant that shall give life.

Thirdly, How weak their faith was: they do not positively assert, as the Samaritans did, This is indeed the Christ, but they only argue, When Christ comes will he do more miracles than these? They take it for granted that Christ will come, and, when he comes, will do many miracles. "Is not this he then? In him we see, though not all the worldly pomp we have fancied, yet all the divine power we have believed the Messiah should appear in; and therefore why may not this be he?" They believe it, but have not courage to own it. Note, Even weak faith may be true faith, and so accounted, so accepted, by the Lord Jesus, who despises not the day of small things.

Officers Sent to Arrest Jesus

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

The design of the Pharisees and chief priests against him, Joh 7:32.

First, The provocation given them was that they had information brought them by their spies, who insinuated themselves into the conversation of the people, and gathered stories to carry to their jealous masters, that the people murmured such things concerning him, that there were many who had a respect and value for him, notwithstanding all they had done to render him odious. Though the people did but whisper these things, and had not courage to speak out, yet the Pharisees were enraged at it. The

equity of that government is justly suspected by others which is so suspicious of itself as to take notice of, or be influenced by, the secret, various, uncertain mutterings of the common people. The Pharisees valued themselves very much upon the respect of the people, and were sensible that if Christ did thus increase they must decrease.

Secondly, The project they laid hereupon was to seize Jesus, and take him into custody: They sent officers to take him, not to take up those who murmured concerning him and frighten them; no, the most effectual way to disperse the flock is to smite the shepherd. The Pharisees seem to have been the ringleaders in this prosecution, but they, as such, had no power, and therefore they god the chief priests, the judges of the ecclesiastical court, to join with them, who were ready enough to do so. The Pharisees were the great pretenders to learning, and the chief priests to sanctify. As the world by wisdom knew not God, but the greatest philosophers were guilty of the greatest blunders in natural religion, so the Jewish church by their wisdom knew not Christ, but their greatest rabbin were the greatest fools concerning him, nay, they were the most inveterate enemies to him. Those wicked rulers had their officers, officers of their court, church-officers, whom they employed to take Christ, and who were ready to go on their errand, though it was an ill errand. If Saul's footmen will not turn and fall upon the priests of the Lord, he has a herdsman that will, 1Sa 22:17,18.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.

The discourse of our Lord Jesus hereupon (Joh 7:33,34): Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me; you shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither you cannot come. These words, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a bright side and a dark side.

First, They have a bright side towards our Lord Jesus himself, and speak abundance of comfort to him and all his faithful followers that are exposed to difficulties and dangers for his sake. Three things Christ here comforted himself with:--

1. That he had but a little time to continue here in this troublesome world. He sees that he is never likely to have a quiet day among them; but the best of it is his warfare will shortly be accomplished, and then he shall be no more in this world, Joh 17:11. Whomsoever we are with in this world, friends or foes, it is but a little while that we shall be with them; and it is a matter of comfort to those who are in the world, but not of it, and therefore are hated by it and sick of it, that they shall not be in it always, they shall not be in it long. We must be awhile with those that are pricking briars and grieving thorns; but thanks be to God, it is but a little while, and we shall be out of their reach. Our days being evil, it is well they are few.

2. That, when he should quit this troublesome world, he should go to him that sent him; I go. Not, "I am driven away by force," but, "I voluntarily go; having finished my embassy, I return to him on whose errand I came. When I have done my work with you, then, and not till then, I go to him that sent me, and will receive me, will prefer me, as ambassadors are preferred when they return." Their rage against him would not only not hinder him from, but would hasten him to the glory and joy that were set before him. Let those who suffer for Christ comfort themselves with this, that they have a God to go to, and are going to him, going apace, to be for ever with him.

3. That, though they persecuted him here, wherever he went, yet none of their persecutions could follow him to heaven: You shall seek me, and shall not find me. It appears, by their enmity to his followers when he was gone, that if they could have reached him they would have persecuted him: "But you cannot enter into that temple as you do into this." Where I am, that is, where I then shall be; but he expressed it thus because, even when he was on earth, by his divine nature and divine affections he was in heaven, Joh 3:13. Or it denotes that he should be so soon there that he was as good as there already. Note, It adds to the happiness of glorified saints that they are out of the reach of the devil and all his wicked instruments.

Secondly, These words have a black and dark side towards those wicked Jews that hated and persecuted Christ. They now longed to be rid of him, Away with him from the earth; but let them know,

1. That according to their choice so shall their doom be. They were industrious to drive him from them, and their sin shall be their punishment; he will not trouble them long, yet a little while and he will depart from them. It is just with God to forsake those that think his presence a burden. They that are weary of Christ need no more to make them miserable than to have their wish.

2. That they would certainly repent their choice when it was too late.

(a) They should in vain seek the presence of the Messiah: "You shall seek me, and shall not find me. You shall expect the Christ to come, but your eyes shall fail with looking for him, and you shall never find him." Those who rejected the true Messiah when he did come were justly abandoned to a miserable and endless expectation of one that should never come. Or, it may refer to the final rejection of sinners from the favours and grace of Christ at the great day: those who now seek Christ shall find him, but the day is coming when those who now refuse him shall seek him, and shall not find him. See Pr 1:28. They will in vain cry, Lord, Lord, open to us. Or, perhaps, these words might be fulfilled in the despair of some of the Jews, who possibly might be convinced and not converted, who would wish in vain to see Christ, and to hear him preach again; but the day of grace is over (Lu 17:22); yet this is not all.

(b) They should in vain expect a place in heaven: Where I am, and where all believers shall be with me, thither ye cannot come. Not only because they are excluded by the just and irreversible sentence of the judge, and the sword of the angel at every gate of the new Jerusalem, to keep the way of the tree of life against those who have no right to enter, but because they are disabled by their own iniquity and infidelity: You cannot come, because you will not. Those who hate to be where Christ is, in his word and ordinances on earth, are very unfit to be where he is in his glory in heaven; for indeed heaven would be no heaven to them, such are the antipathies of an unsanctified soul to the felicities of that state.

35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles [Greeks], and teach the Gentiles [Greeks]?

36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?

Rivers of Living Water

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

That great day. The day of the holy convocation or solemn assembly, Lev 23:36. This seems to have been called the great day,

1st. Because of the solemn assembly, and because it was the closing scene.

2nd. Because, according to their traditions, on the previous days they offered sacrifices for the heathen nations as well as for themselves, but on this day for the Jews only (Lightfoot).

3rd. Because on this day they abstained from all servile labour (Lev 23:39), and regarded it as a holy day.

4th. On this day they finished the reading of the law, which they commenced at the beginning of the feast.

5th. Because on this day probably occurred the ceremony of drawing water from the pool of Siloam. On the last day of the feast it was customary to perform a solemn ceremony in this manner: The priest filled a golden vial with water from the fount of Siloam (Jn 9:7), which was borne with great solemnity, attended with the clangour of trumpets, through the gate of the temple, and being mixed with wine, was poured on the sacrifice on the altar. What was the origin of this custom is unknown. Some suppose, and not improbably, that it arose from an improper understanding of the passage in Isa 12:3: "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is certain that no such ceremony is commanded by Moses. It is supposed to be probable that Jesus stood and cried while they were performing this ceremony, that he might,

1st. illustrate the nature of his doctrine by this; and

2nd. call off their attention from a rite that was uncommanded, and that could not confer eternal life.

If any man thirst. Spiritually. If any man feels his need of salvation. See Jn 4:13,14, Mt 5:6, Rev 22:17. The invitation is full and free to all.

Let him come unto me, &c. Instead of depending on this ceremony of drawing water let him come to me, the Messiah, and he shall find an ever-abundant supply for all the wants of his soul.

38 He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

As the scripture hath said. This is a difficult expression, from the fact that no such expression as follows is to be found literally in the Old Testament. Some have proposed to connect it with what precedes--"He that believeth on me, as the Old Testament has commanded or required"-- but to this there are many objections. The natural and obvious meaning here is, doubtless, the true one; and Jesus probably intended to say, not that there was any particular place in the Old Testament that affirmed this in so many words, but that this was the substance of what the Scriptures taught, or this was the spirit of their declarations. Hence the Syriac translates it in the plural--the Scriptures. Probably there is a reference more particularly to Isa 58:11, than to any other single passage: "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." See also Isa 44:3,4, Joel 3:18.

Out of his belly. Out of his midst, or out of his heart. The word belly is often put for the midst of a thing, the centre, and the heart, Mt 12:40. It means here that from the man shall flow; that is, his piety shall be of such a nature that it will extend its blessings to others. It shall be like a running fountain-- perhaps in allusion to statues or ornamented reservoirs in gardens, in which pipes were placed from which water was continually flowing. The Jews used the same figure: "His two reins are like fountains of water, from which the law flows." And again: "When a man turns himself to the Lord, he shall be as a fountain filled with living water, and his streams shall flow to all the nations and tribes of men" (Kuinoel).

Rivers. This word is used to express abundance, or a full supply. It means here that those who are Christians shall diffuse large, and liberal, and constant blessings on their fellow-men; or, as Jesus immediately explains it, that they shall be the instruments by which the Holy Spirit shall be poured down on the world.

Living water. Fountains, ever-flowing streams. That is, the gospel shall be constant and life-giving in its blessings. We learn here, 1st. That it is the nature of Christian piety to be diffusive.

2nd. That no man can believe on Jesus who does not desire that others should also, and who will not seek it.

3rd. That the desire is large and liberal--that the Christian desires the salvation of all the world.

4th. That the faith of the believer is to be connected with the influence of the Holy Spirit, and in that way Christians are to be like rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Of the Spirit. Of the Holy Spirit, that should be sent down to attend their preaching and to convert sinners.

For the Holy Ghost was not yet given. Was not given in such full and large measures as should be after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Certain measures of the influences of the Spirit had been always given in the conversion and sanctification of the ancient saints and prophets; but that abundant and full effusion which the apostles were permitted afterward to behold had not yet been given. See Acts 2:1-12, 10:44,45.

Jesus was not yet glorified. Jesus had not yet ascended to heaven--to the glory and honour that awaited him there. It was a part of the arrangement in the work of redemption that the influences of the Holy Spirit should descend chiefly after the death of Jesus, as that death was the procuring cause of this

great blessing. Hence he said (Jn 16:7), "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." See also Jn 16:8-12, 14:15,16,26. Comp. Eph 4:8-11.

Division among the People

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

In these verses an account is given of the various effects which our Lord's foregoing sermon had upon his hearers hearts: some were so affected with it, that they believed him to be the great prophet promised to Israel, Deut 18:18. Others apprehended him to be the Christ: others contradict both, supposing him to be born not at Bethlehem, but in Galilee. And upon this diversity of opinions, there arose a division amongst them: and some had a mind to have apprehended him, but, by an over-ruling providence, they were restrained from the doing of it at present.

Learn hence, That diversity of opinions in matters of religion, even concerning Christ himself, have been even from the beginning. Some accounted him a prophet, others the Messiah: some thought him neither; but a grand impostor and deceiver. Our dear Lord when here on earth, passed through evil report and good report; let his followers expect and prepare for the same: for innocence itself cannot protect him from slander and false accusation.

42 Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him.

44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

The Unbelief of Those in Authority

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

Observe here, 1. How God restrained the rage and malice of Christ's enemies, till his hour was come: the officers of the chief priests, who were sent forth with a commission to apprehend him, returned without him: but with this honourable mention of him in their mouths, Never man spake like this man. Such is the power of Christ's doctrine, that even those that come unto it with prejudice and with a persecuting purpose, may be surprized by it, and though not converted, yet bridled and restrained: the preaching of the gospel doth sometimes restrain the violence of the hand, when it works no change in or upon the heart. Thus it was with these poor officers.

Observe, 2. That the Pharisees being more enraged at the reason which the officers gave for neglecting their office, than for the neglect itself, upbraid them, that they should suffer themselves to be so deceived, whereas none of the grandees, or learned rabbies, had owned him: only an accursed crew of ignorant people followed him, and doated on him.

Here note, That when Christ came into the world, the great ones of the world not only refused to believe on him, but boasted of their unbelief, as an argument of their wisdom. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Oh no, they were too wise to believe! Faith is left to fools, and accounted folly by those wise men. Nay, farther, they count the common people cursed, who did believe on Christ. Oh prodigious stupidity! to account them accursed who receive Jesus Christ, the chiefest blessing: great men have not always the wisdom of a man, but more seldom have they the wisdom of a real Christian. Great in honour, and wise in understanding, are a sweet couple, but seldom seen together.

48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him ?

49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

Who it was that appeared against them; it was Nicodemus, he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them, Joh 7:50.

Observe, concerning him,

[1.] That, though he had been with Jesus, and taken him for his teacher, yet he retained his place in the council, and his vote among them. Some impute this to his weakness and cowardice, and think it was his fault that he did not quit his place, but Christ had never said to him, Follow me, else he would have done as others that left all to follow him; therefore it seems rather to have been his wisdom not immediately to throw up his place, because there he might have opportunity of serving Christ and his interest, and stemming the tide of the Jewish rage, which perhaps he did more than we are aware of. He might there be as Hushai among Absalom's counsellors, instrumental to turn their counsels into foolishness. Though we must in no case deny our Master, yet we may wait for an opportunity of confessing him to the best advantage. God has his remnant among all sorts, and many times finds, or puts, or makes, some good in the worst places and societies. There was Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and Nehemiah in Artaxerxes's.

[2.] That though at first he came to Jesus by night, for fear of being known, and still continued in his post; yet, when there was occasion, he boldly appeared in defence of Christ, and opposed the whole council that were set against him. Thus many believers who at first were timorous, and ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf, have at length, by divine grace, grown courageous, and able to laugh at the shaking of a spear. Let none justify the disguising of their faith by the example of Nicodemus, unless, like him, they be ready upon the first occasion openly to appear in the cause of Christ, though they stand alone in it; for so Nicodemus did here, and Joh 19:39.

51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth ?

What he alleged against their proceedings (Joh 7:51): Doth our law judge any man before it hear him (akouse par autou--hear from himself) and know what he doeth? By no means, nor doth the law of any civilized nation allow it. Observe,

[1.] He prudently argues from the principles of their own law, and an incontestable rule of justice, that no man is to be condemned unheard. Had he urged the excellency of Christ's doctrine or the evidence of his miracles,

or repeated to them his divine discourse with him (Joh 3:1-21), it had been but to cast pearls before swine, who would trample them under their feet, and would turn again and rend him; therefore he waives them.

[2.] Whereas they had reproached the people, especially the followers of Christ, as ignorant of the law, he here tacitly retorts the charge upon themselves, and shows how ignorant they were of some of the first principles of the law, so unfit were they to give law to others.

[3.] The law is here said to judge, and hear, and know, when magistrates that govern and are governed by it judge, and hear, and know; for they are the mouth of the law, and whatsoever they bind and loose according to the law is justly said to be bound and loosed by the law.

[4.] It is highly fit that none should come under the sentence of the law, till they have first by a fair trial undergone the scrutiny of it. Judges, when they receive the complaints of the accuser, must always reserve in their minds room for the defence of the accused, for they have two ears, to remind them to hear both sides; this is said to be the manner of the Romans, Ac 25:18. The method of our law is Oyer and Terminer, first to hear and then to determine.

[5.] Persons are to be judged, not by what is said of them, but by what they do. Our law will not ask what men's opinions are of them, or out-cries against them, but, What have they done? What overt-acts can they be convicted of? Sentence must be given, secundum allegata et probata--according to what is alleged and proved. Facts, and not faces, must be known in judgment; and the scale of justice must be used before the sword of justice.

Now we may suppose that the motion Nicodemus made in the house upon this was, That Jesus should be desired to come and give them an account of himself and his doctrine, and that they should favour him with an impartial and unprejudiced hearing; but, though none of them could gainsay his maxim, none of them would second his motion.

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

What was said to this objection. Here is no direct reply given to it; but, when they could not resist the force of his argument, they fell foul upon him, and what was to seek in reason they made up in railing and reproach.

Note, It is a sign of a bad cause when men cannot bear to hear reason, and take it as an affront to be reminded of its maxims. Whoever are against reason give cause to suspect that reason is against them. See how they taunt him: Art thou also of Galilee? Joh 7:52. Some think he was well enough served for continuing among those whom he knew to be enemies to Christ, and for his speaking no more on the behalf of Christ than what he might have said on behalf of the greatest criminal-that he should not be condemned unheard. Had he said, "As for this Jesus, I have heard him myself, and know he is a teacher come from God, and you in opposing him fight against God," as he ought to have said, he could not have been more abused than he was for this feeble effort of his tenderness for Christ. As to what they said to Nicodemus, we may observe,

(a) How false the grounds of their arguing were, for,

[1.] They suppose that Christ was of Galilee, and this was false, and if they would have been at the pains of an impartial enquiry they would have found it so.

[2.] They suppose that because most of his disciples were Galileans they were all such, whereas he had abundance of disciples in Judea.

[3.] They suppose that out of Galilee no prophet had risen, and for this appeal to Nicodemus's search; yet this was false too: Jonah was of Gath-hepher, Nahum an Elkoshite, both of Galilee. Thus do they make lies their refuge.

(b) How absurd their arguings were upon these grounds, such as were a shame to rulers and Pharisees.

[1.] Is any man of worth and virtue ever the worse for the poverty and obscurity of his country? The Galileans were the seed of Abraham; barbarians and Scythians are the seed of Adam; and have we not all one Father?

[2.] Supposing no prophet had risen out of Galilee, yet it is not impossible that any should arise thence. If Elijah was the first prophet of Gilead (as perhaps he was), and if the Gileadites were called fugitives, must it therefore be questioned whether he was a prophet or no?

The Woman Caught in Adultery

53 And every man went unto his own house.

The hasty adjournment of the court hereupon. They broke up the assembly in confusion, and with precipitation, and every man went to his own house. They met to take counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed, but they imagined a vain think; and not only he that sits in heaven laughed at them, but we may sit on earth and laugh at them too, to see all the policy of the close cabal broken to pieces with one plain honest word. They were not willing to hear Nicodemus, because they could not answer him. As soon as they perceived they had one such among them, they saw it was to no purpose to go on with their design, and therefore put off the debate to a more convenient season, when he was absent. Thus the counsel of the Lord is made to stand, in spite of the devices in the hearts of men.

John-8

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

His retirement in the evening out of the town (Joh 8:1): He went unto the mount of olives; whether to some friend's house, or to some booth pitched there, now at the feast of tabernacles, is not certain; whether he rested there, or, as some think, continued all night in prayer to God, we are not told. But he went out of Jerusalem, perhaps because he had no friend there that had either kindness or courage enough to give him a night's lodging; while his

persecutors had houses of their own to go to (Joh 7:53), he could not so much as borrow a place to lay his head on, but what he must go a mile or two out of town for. He retired (as some think) because he would not expose himself to the peril of a popular tumult in the night. It is prudent to go out of the way of danger whenever we can do it without going out of the way of duty. In the day-time, when he had work to do in the temple, he willingly exposed himself, and was under special protection, Isa 49:2. But in the night, when he had not work to do, he withdrew into the country, and sheltered himself there.

2 And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

His return in the morning to the temple, and to his work there, Joh 8:2. Observe,

1. What a diligent preacher Christ was: Early in the morning he came again, and taught. Though he had been teaching the day before, he taught again to-day. Christ was a constant preacher, in season and out of season. Three things were taken notice of here concerning Christ's preaching.

(a) The time: Early in the morning. Though he lodged out of town, and perhaps had spent much of the night in secret prayer, yet he came early. When a day's work is to be done for God and souls it is good to begin betimes, and take the day before us.

(b) The place: In the temple; not so much because it was a consecrated place (for then he would have chosen it at other times) as because it was now a place of concourse; and he would hereby countenance solemn assemblies for religious worship, and encourage people to come up to the temple, for he had not yet left it desolate.

(c) His posture: He sat down, and taught, as one having authority, and as one that intended to abide by it for some time.

2. How diligently his preaching was attended upon: All the people came unto him; and perhaps many of them were the country-people, who were this day to return home from the feast, and were desirous to hear one sermon

more from the mouth of Christ before they returned. They came to him, though he came early. They that seek him early shall find him. Though the rulers were displeased at those that came to hear him, yet they would come; and he taught them, though they were angry at him too. Though there were few or none among them that were persons of any figure, yet Christ bade them welcome, and taught them.

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,

They set the prisoner to the bar (Joh 8:3): they brought him a woman taken in adultery, perhaps now lately taken, during the time of the feast of tabernacles, when, it may be, their dwelling in booths, and their feasting and joy, might, by wicked minds, which corrupt the best things, be made occasions of sin. Those that were taken in adultery were by the Jewish law to be put to death, which the Roman powers allowed them the execution of, and therefore she was brought before the ecclesiastical court. Observe, She was taken in her adultery. Though adultery is a work of darkness, which the criminals commonly take all the care they can to conceal, yet sometimes it is strangely brought to light. Those that promise themselves secrecy in sin deceive themselves. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Christ, and set her in the midst of the assembly, as if they would leave her wholly to the judgment of Christ, he having sat down, as a judge upon the bench.

4 they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

Burkitt commentary:

Our Saviour early in the morning entering upon the work of preaching;

Observe, 1. What a mixed auditory he had, of scribes, and Pharisees, and common people. All sorts of persons came to hear him, but not all with the same intentions. The common people came to learn, but the scribes and Pharisees came to cavil and carp; the latter came to tempt and ensnare him, the former to be taught and instructed by him.

It is not our bare attendance upon ordinances, but the purity of our aim, and the sincerity of our intentions, in waiting upon God in them, that is an evidence of our sincerity.

Observe, 2. How the hypocrisy of these Pharisees was gilded over with an appearance of sanctity: as if they were great lovers of chastity, and haters of uncleanness, they bring to Christ a woman taken in adultery, to be censured by him. One that had not known these Pharisees, would have concluded them very holy and honest, very conscionable and conscientious persons; but Christ, who saw into their bosoms, soon found that all this was done only to tempt him. Thus a smooth tongue and a false heart often accompany one another: when we see a glittering appearance, we have reason to suspect the inside.

Observe, 3. The punishment which the Pharisees sought to have inflicted on this adulteress: it is death: Let her be stoned. Sometimes the punishment of adultery was burning, sometimes stoning, always death.

Lord! how ought Christians to blush, who have slight thoughts of the sin of adultery, which both Jews and pagans held ever deadly!

Observe, 4. Their ensnaring question: Moses commanded that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? The Pharisees desire no better advantage against Christ, than a contradiction to Moses their lawgiver: it has been an old strategem to set Moses and Christ at variance; but they are fast friends; they are subordinate one to another, not opposed one against another. Moses brings us to Christ, and Christ to glory; fain would these colleaguing adversasries draw Christ to contradict Moses, that they might take advantage of the contradiction to condemn Christ.

Observe, 5. The wisdom and caution of our Lord's answer: he doth not excuse her crime, but bids her accusers look at home, and examine their own consciences, whether they were not guilty of the like, or as great a sin. He doth not say, "Let her be stoned;" this had been against the course of his mercy: he doth not say, "Let her not be stoned;" this had been against the law of Moses; but he so answers, that both his justice and his mercy are entire; she dismissed, and they ashamed. It is a false zeal that is eagle-eyed abroad, and blind at home. Such as are most wicked themselves, are oft-times most ready and skillful to spy out the faults and failings of others: we

stand too near ourselves to discern our own miscarriages. The eye that sees every thing, sees not itself.

Observe, 6. Though Christ abhorred the sin, yet he does not condemn the sinner. Hath no man condemned thee? neither do I condemn thee, says Christ. This Christ said, not to excuse the woman, or to connive at her offence; but to show that he declined the office of a civil judge, which was to pass sentencce on criminals. He therefore doth not say, No man ought to condemn thee, but Hath no man condemned thee? Christ doth not execute the office of a magistrate in judging her to death; but of a minister in calling her to repentance and reformation.

How ought every one of us to keep within the bounds of our calling, when our Saviour himself will not entrench upon the office and functions of others!

Observe, lastly, our Saviour's cautionary direction to this adulteress: Go, and sin no more.

Where note, Christ doth not say, Go, and commit adultery no more; but, Go, and sin no more. It is not a partial repentance, or a turning away from this or that particular sin, which will denominate us true penitents, or entitle us to the pardoning mercy of God, but a leaving off all sin of what kind soever; therefore says Christ, Go, and sin no more.

5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned:
but what sayest thou ?

Matthew Hennery Bible Commentary (MHC):

(a) They prefer an indictment against her: Master, this woman was taken in adultery, Joh 8:4. Here they call him Master whom but the day before they had called a deceiver, in hopes with their flatteries to have ensnared him, as those, Lu 20:20. But, though men may be imposed upon with compliments, he that searches the heart cannot.

[1.] The crime for which the prisoner stands indicted is no less than adultery, which even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses, was looked upon

as an iniquity to be punished by the judges, Job 31:9-11,Ge 38:24. The Pharisees, by their vigorous prosecution of this offender, seemed to have a great zeal against the sin, when it appeared afterwards that they themselves were not free from it; nay, they were within full of all uncleanness, Mt 23:27,28. Note, It is common for those that are indulgent to their own sin to be severe against the sins of others.

[2.] The proof of the crime was from the notorious evidence of the fact, an incontestable proof; she was taken in the act, so that there was no room left to plead not guilty. Had she not been taken in this act, she might have gone on to another, till her heart had been perfectly hardened; but sometimes it proves a mercy to sinners to have their sin brought to light, that they may do no more presumptuously. Better our sin should shame us than damn us, and be set in order before us for our conviction than for our condemnation.

(b) They produce the statute in this case made and provided, and upon which she was indicted, Joh 8:5. Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned. Moses commanded that they should be put to death (Le 20:10,De 22:22), but not that they should be stoned, unless the adulteress was espoused, not married, or was a priest's daughter, De 22:21. Note, Adultery is an exceedingly sinful sin, for it is the rebellion of a vile lust, not only against the command, but against the covenant, of our God. It is the violation of a divine institution in innocency, by the indulgence of one of the basest lusts of man in his degeneracy.

(c) They pray his judgment in the case: "But what sayest thou, who pretendest to be a teacher come from God to repeal old laws and enact new ones? What hast thou to say in this case?" If they had asked this question in sincerity, with a humble desire to know his mind, it had been very commendable. Those that are entrusted with the administration of justice should look up to Christ for direction; but this they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him, Joh 8:6.

[1.] If he should confirm the sentence of the law, and let it take its course, they would censure him as inconsistent with himself (he having received publicans and harlots) and with the character of the Messiah, who should be meek, and have salvation, and proclaim a year of release; and perhaps they

would accuse him to the Roman governor, for countenancing the Jews in the exercise of a judicial power. But,

[2.] If he should acquit her, and give his opinion that the sentence should not be executed (as they expected he would), they would represent him, First, As an enemy to the law of Moses, and as one that usurped an authority to correct and control it, and would confirm that prejudice against him which his enemies were so industrious to propagate, that he came to destroy the law and the prophets. Secondly, As a friend to sinners, and, consequently, a favourer of sin; if he should seem to connive at such wickedness, and let it go unpunished, they would represent him as countenancing it, and being a patron of offences, if he was a protector of offenders, than which no reflection could be more invidious upon one that professed the strictness, purity, and business of a prophet.

6 This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.
But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground,
as though he heard them not.

He seemed to slight it, and turned a deaf ear to it: He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote; but this is the only mention made in the gospels of Christ's writing. Eusebius indeed speaks of his writing to Abgarus, king of Edessa. Some think they have a liberty of conjecture as to what he wrote here. Grotius says, It was some grave weighty saying, and that it was usual for wise men, when they were very thoughtful concerning any thing, to do so. Jerome and Ambrose suppose he wrote, Let the names of these wicked men be written in the dust. Others this, The earth accuses the earth, but the judgment is mine. Christ by this teaches us to be slow to speak when difficult cases are proposed to us, not quickly to shoot our bolt; and when provocations are given us, or we are bantered, to pause and consider before we reply; think twice before we speak once: The heart of the wise studies to answer. Our translation from some Greek copies, which add, me prospoioumenos (though most copies have it not), give this account of the reason of his writing on the ground, as though he heard them not. He did as it were look another way, to show that he was not willing to take notice of their address, saying, in effect, Who made me a judge or a divider? It is safe in many cases to be deaf to that which it is not safe to answer, Ps 38:13. Christ would not have his ministers to be entangled in secular affairs. Let them rather employ themselves in any lawful

studies, and fill up their time in writing on the ground (which nobody will heed), than busy themselves in that which does not belong to them. But, when Christ seemed as though he heard them not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

The method he took to resolve this case, and so to break this snare.

(I) He seemed to slight it, and turned a deaf ear to it: He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote; but this is the only mention made in the gospels of Christ's writing. Eusebius indeed speaks of his writing to Abgarus, king of Edessa. Some think they have a liberty of conjecture as to what he wrote here. Grotius says, It was some grave weighty saying, and that it was usual for wise men, when they were very thoughtful concerning any thing, to do so. Jerome and Ambrose suppose he wrote, Let the names of these wicked men be written in the dust. Others this, The earth accuses the earth, but the judgment is mine. Christ by this teaches us to be slow to speak when difficult cases are proposed to us, not quickly to shoot our bolt; and when provocations are given us, or we are bantered, to pause and consider before we reply; think twice before we speak once: The heart of the wise studies to answer. Our translation from some Greek copies, which add, me prospoioumenos (though most copies have it not), give this account of the reason of his writing on the ground, as though he heard them not. He did as it were look another way, to show that he was not willing to take notice of their address, saying, in effect, Who made me a judge or a divider? It is safe in many cases to be deaf to that which it is not safe to answer, Ps 38:13. Christ would not have his ministers to be entangled in secular affairs. Let them rather employ themselves in any lawful studies, and fill up their time in writing on the ground (which nobody will heed), than busy themselves in that which does not belong to them. But, when Christ seemed as though he heard them not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

(II) When they importunately, or rather impertinently, pressed him for an answer, he turned the conviction of the prisoner upon the prosecutors, Joh 8:7.

[1.] They continued asking him, and his seeming not to take notice of them made them the more vehement; for now they thought sure enough that they had run him aground, and that he could not avoid the imputation of contradicting either the law of Moses, if he should acquit the prisoner, or his own doctrine of mercy and pardon, if he should condemn her; and therefore they pushed on their appeal to him with vigour; whereas they should have construed his disregard of them as a check to their design, and an intimation to them to desist, as they tendered their own reputation.

[2.] At last he put them all to shame and silence with one word: He lifted up himself, awaking as one out of sleep (Ps 78:65), and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

First, Here Christ avoided the snare which they had laid for him, and effectually saved his own reputation. He neither reflected upon the law nor excused the prisoner's guilt, nor did he on the other hand encourage the prosecution or countenance their heat; see the good effect of consideration. When we cannot make our point by steering a direct course, it is good to fetch a compass.

Secondly, In the net which they spread is their own foot taken. They came with design to accuse him, but they were forced to accuse themselves. Christ owns it was fit the prisoner should be prosecuted, but appeals to their consciences whether they were fit to be the prosecutors.

1. He here refers to that rule which the law of Moses prescribed in the execution of criminals, that the hand of the witnesses must be first upon them (De 17:7), as in the stoning of Stephen, Ac 7:58. The scribes and Pharisees were the witnesses against this woman. Now Christ puts it to them whether, according to their own law, they would dare to be the executioners. Durst they take away that life with their hands which they were now taking away with their tongues? would not their own consciences fly in their faces if they did?

2. He builds upon an uncontested maxim in morality, that it is very absurd for men to be zealous in punishing the offences of others, while they are every

whit as guilty themselves, and they are not better than self-condemned who judge others, and yet themselves do the same thing: "If there be any of you who is without sin, without sin of this nature, that has not some time or other been guilty of fornication or adultery, let him cast the first stone at her." Not that magistrates, who are conscious of guilt themselves, should therefore connive at others' guilt. But therefore,

(a.) Whenever we find fault with others, we ought to reflect upon ourselves, and to be more severe against sin in ourselves than in others.

(b.) We ought to be favourable, though not to the sins, yet to the persons, of those that offend, and to restore them with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves and our own corrupt nature. Aut sumus, aut fuimus, vel possumus esse quod hic est--We either are, or have been, or may be, what he is. Let this restrain us from throwing stones at our brethren, and proclaiming their faults. Let him that is without sin begin such discourse as this, and then those that are truly humbled for their own sins will blush at it, and be glad to let it drop.

(c.) Those that are any way obliged to animadvert upon the faults of others are concerned to look well to themselves, and keep themselves pure (Mt 7:5), Qui alterum incusat probri, ipsum se intueri oportet. The snuffers of the tabernacle were of pure gold.

3. Perhaps he refers to the trial of the suspected wife by the jealous husband with the waters of jealousy. The man was to bring her to the priest (Nu 5:15), as the scribes and Pharisees brought this woman to Christ. Now it was a received opinion among the Jews, and confirmed by experience, that if the husband who brought his wife to that trial had himself been at any time guilty of adultery, Aquæ non explorant ejus uxorem--The bitter water had no effect upon the wife. "Come then," saith Christ, "according to your own tradition will I judge you; if you are without sin, stand to the charge, and let the adulteress be executed; but if not, though she be guilty, while you that present her are equally so, according to your own rule she shall be free."

4. In this he attended to the great work which he came into the world about, and that was to bring sinners to repentance; not to destroy, but to save. He aimed to bring, not only the prisoner to repentance, by showing her his mercy,

but the prosecutors too, by showing them their sins. They sought to ensnare him; he sought to convince and convert them. Thus the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.

8 And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

Having given them this startling word, he left them to consider of it, and again stooped down, and wrote on the ground, Joh 8:8. As when they made their address he seemed to slight their question, so now that he had given them an answer he slighted their resentment of it, not caring what they said to it; nay, they needed not to make any reply; the matter was lodged in their own breasts, let them make the best of it there. Or, he would not seem to wait for an answer, lest they should on a sudden justify themselves, and then think themselves bound in honour to persist in it; but gives them time to pause, and to commune with their own hearts. God saith, I hearkened and heard, Jer 8:6. Some Greek copies here read, He wrote on the ground, enos hekastou auton tas hamartias--the sins of every one of them; this he could do, for he sets our iniquities before him; and this he will do, for he will set them in order before us too; he seals up our transgressions, Job 14:17. But he does not write men's sins in the sand; no, they are written as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond (Jer 17:1), never to be forgotten till they are forgiven.

9 And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

The scribes and Pharisees were so strangely thunderstruck with the words of Christ that they let fall their persecution of Christ, whom they durst no further tempt, and their prosecution of the woman, whom they durst no longer accuse (Joh 8:9): They went out one by one.

First, Perhaps his writing on the ground frightened them, as the hand-writing on the wall frightened Belshazzar. They concluded he was writing bitter things against them, writing their doom. Happy they who have no reason to be afraid of Christ's writing!

Secondly, What he said frightened them by sending them to their own consciences; he had shown them to themselves, and they were afraid if they should stay till he lifted up himself again his next word would show them to the world, and shame them before men, and therefore they thought it best to withdraw. They went out one by one, that they might go out softly, and not

by a noisy flight disturb Christ; they went away by stealth, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle, 2Sa 19:3. The order of their departure is taken notice of, beginning at the eldest, either because they were most guilty, or first aware of the danger they were in of being put to the blush; and if the eldest quit the field, and retreat ingloriously, no marvel if the younger follow them.

Now see here,

1 The force of the word of Christ for the conviction of sinners: They who heard it were convicted by their own consciences. Conscience is God's deputy in the soul, and one word from him will set it on work, Heb 4:12. Those that had been old in adulteries, and long fixed in a proud opinion of themselves, were here, even the oldest of them, startled by the word of Christ; even scribes and Pharisees, who were most conceited of themselves, are by the power of Christ's word made to retire with shame.

2 The folly of sinners under these convictions, which appears in these scribes and Pharisees.

(a) It is folly for those that are under convictions to make it their principal care to avoid shame, as Judah (Ge 38:23), lest we be shamed. Our care should be more to save our souls than to save our credit. Saul evidenced his hypocrisy when he said, I have sinned, yet now honour me, I pray thee. There is no way to get the honour and comfort of penitents, but by taking the shame of penitents.

(b) It is folly for those that are under convictions to contrive how to shift off their convictions, and to get rid of them. The scribes and Pharisees had the wound opened, and now they should have been desirous to have it searched, and then it might have been healed, but this was the thing they dreaded and declined.

(c) It is folly for those that are under convictions to get away from Jesus Christ, as these here did, for he is the only one that can heal the wounds of conscience, and speak peace to us. Those that are convicted by their

consciences will be condemned by their Judge, if they be not justified by their Redeemer; and will they then go from him? To whom will they go?

10 When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee?

When the self-conceited prosecutors quitted the field, and fled for the same, the self-condemned prisoner stood her ground, with a resolution to abide by the judgment of our Lord Jesus: Jesus was left alone from the company of the scribes and Pharisees, free from their molestations, and the woman standing in the midst of the assembly that were attending on Christ's preaching, where they set her, Joh 8:3. She did not seek to make her escape, though she had opportunity for it; but her prosecutors had appealed unto Jesus, and to him she would go, on him she would wait for her doom. Note, Those whose cause is brought before our Lord Jesus will never have occasion to remove it into any other court, for he is the refuge of penitents. The law which accuses us, and calls for judgment against us, is by the gospel of Christ made to withdraw; its demands are answered, and its clamours silenced, by the blood of Jesus. Our cause is lodged in the gospel court; we are left with Jesus alone, it is with him only that we have now to deal, for to him all judgment is committed; let us therefore secure our interest in him, and we are made for ever. Let his gospel rule us, and it will infallibly save us.

Here is the conclusion of the trial, and the issue it was brought to: Jesus lifted up himself, and he saw none but the woman, Joh 8:10,11. Though Christ may seem to take no notice of what is said and done, but leave it to the contending sons of men to deal it out among themselves, yet, when the hour of his judgment is come, he will no longer keep silence. When David had appealed to God, he prayed, Lift up thyself, Ps 7:6,94:2 The woman, it is likely, stood trembling at the bar, as one doubtful of the issue. Christ was without sin, and might cast the first stone; but though none more severe than he against sin, for he is infinitely just and holy, none more compassionate than he to sinners, for he is infinitely gracious and merciful, and this poor malefactor finds him so, now that she stands upon her deliverance. Here is the method of courts of judicature observed.

First, The prosecutors are called: Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? Not but that Christ knew where they were; but he

asked, that he might shame them, who declined his judgment, and encourage her who resolved to abide by it. St. Paul's challenge is like this, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Where are those their accusers? The accuser of the brethren shall be fairly cast out, and all indictments legally and regularly quashed.

Secondly, They do not appear when the question is asked: Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. She speaks respectfully to Christ, calls him Lord, but is silent concerning her prosecutors, says nothing in answer to that question which concerned them, Where are those thine accusers? She does not triumph in their retreat nor insult over them as witnesses against themselves, not against her. If we hope to be forgiven by our Judge, we must forgive our accusers; and if their accusations, how invidious soever, were the happy occasion of awakening our consciences, we may easily forgive them this wrong. But she answered the question which concerned herself, Has no man condemned thee? True penitents find it enough to give an account of themselves to God, and will not undertake to give an account of other people.

Thirdly, The prisoner is therefore discharged: Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more. Consider this,

1. As her discharge from the temporal punishment: "If they do not condemn thee to be stoned to death, neither do I." Not that Christ came to disarm the magistrate of his sword of justice, nor that it is his will that capital punishments should not be inflicted on malefactors; so far from this, the administration of public justice is established by the gospel, and made subservient to Christ's kingdom: By me kings reign. But Christ would not condemn this woman,

(a.) Because it was none of his business; he was no judge nor divider, and therefore would not intermeddle in secular affairs. His kingdom was not of this world. Tractent fabrilia fabri--Let every one act in his own province.

(b.) Because she was prosecuted by those that were more guilty than she and could not for shame insist upon their demand of justice against her. The law appointed the hands of the witnesses to be first upon the criminal, and

afterwards the hands of all the people, so that if they fly off, and do not condemn her, the prosecution drops. The justice of God, in inflicting temporal judgments, sometimes takes notice of a comparative righteousness, and spares those who are otherwise obnoxious when the punishing of them would gratify those that are worse than they, De 32:26,27. But, when Christ dismissed her, it was with this caution, Go, and sin no more. Impunity emboldens malefactors, and therefore those who are guilty, and yet have found means to escape the edge of the law, need to double their watch, lest Satan get advantage; for the fairer the escape was, the fairer the warning was to go and sin no more. Those who help to save the life of a criminal should, as Christ here, help to save the soul with this caution.

2. As her discharge from the eternal punishment. For Christ to say, I do not condemn thee is, in effect, to say, I do forgive thee; and the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, and could upon good grounds give this absolution; for as he knew the hardness and impenitent hearts of the prosecutors, and therefore said that which would confound them, so he knew the tenderness and sincere repentance of the prisoner, and therefore said that which would comfort her, as he did to that woman who was a sinner, such a sinner as this, who was likewise looked upon with disdain by a Pharisee (Lu 7:48,50): Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace. So here, Neither do I condemn thee. Note,

(a.) Those are truly happy whom Christ doth not condemn, for his discharge is a sufficient answer to all other challenges; they are all coram non judice--before an unauthorized judge.

(b.) Christ will not condemn those who, though they have sinned, will go and sin no more, Ps 85:8,Isa 55:7. He will not take the advantage he has against us for our former rebellions, if we will but lay down our arms and return to our allegiance.

(c.) Christ's favour to us in the remission of the sins that are past should be a prevailing argument with us to go and sin no more, Ro 6:1,2. Will not Christ condemn thee? Go then and sin no more.

11 She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Jesus the Light of the World

12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

The rest of the chapter is taken up with debates between Christ and contradicting sinners, who cavilled at the most gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. It is not certain whether these disputes were the same day that the adulteress was discharged; it is probable they were, for the evangelist mentions no other day, and takes notice (Joh 8:2) how early Christ began that day's work. Though those Pharisees that accused the woman had absconded, yet there were other Pharisees (Joh 8:13) to confront Christ, who had brass enough in their foreheads to keep them in countenance, though some of their party were put to such a shameful retreat; nay perhaps that made them the more industrious to pick quarrels with him, to retrieve, if possible, the reputation of their baffled party.

A great doctrine laid down, with the application of it.

1 The doctrine is, That Christ is the light of the world (Joh 8:12): Then spoke Jesus again unto them; though he had spoken a great deal to them to little purpose, and what he had said was opposed, yet he spoke again, for he speaketh once, yea, twice. They had turned a deaf ear to what he said, and yet he spoke again to them, saying, I am the light of the world. Note, Jesus Christ is the light of the world. One of the rabbies saith, Light is the name of the Messiah, as it is written, Da 2:22, And light dwelleth with him. God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God; God of gods, Light of lights. He was expected to be a light to enlighten the Gentiles (Lu 2:32), and so the light of the world, and not of the Jewish church only. The visible light of the world is the sun, and Christ is the Sun of righteousness. One sun enlightens the whole world, so does one Christ, and there needs no more.

Christ in calling himself the light expresses,

(a) What he is in himself--most excellent and glorious.

(b) What he is to the world--the fountain of light, enlightening every man. What a dungeon would the world be without the sun! So would it be without Christ by whom light came into the world, Joh 3:19.

2 The inference from this doctrine is, He that followeth me, as a traveller follows the light in a dark night, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. If Christ be the light, then,

(a) It is our duty to follow him, to submit ourselves to his guidance, and in every thing take directions from him, in the way that leads to happiness. Many follow false lights--ignes fatui, that lead them to destruction; but Christ is the true light. It is not enough to look at this light, and to gaze upon it, but we must follow it, believe in it, and walk in it, for it is a light to our feet, not our eyes only.

(b) It is the happiness of those who follow Christ that they shall not walk in darkness. They shall not be left destitute of those instructions in the way of truth which are necessary to keep them from destroying error, and those directions in the way of duty which are necessary to keep them from damning sin. They shall have the light of life, that knowledge and enjoyment of God which will be to them the light of spiritual life in this world and of everlasting life in the other world, where there will be no death nor darkness. Follow Christ, and we shall undoubtedly be happy in both worlds. Follow Christ, and we shall follow him to heaven.

13 The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true.

The objection which the Pharisees made against this doctrine, and it was very trifling and frivolous: Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true, Joh 8:13. In this objection they went upon the suspicion which we commonly have of men's self-condemnation, which is concluded to be the native language of self-love, such as we are all ready to condemn in others, but few are willing to own in themselves.

But in this case the objection was very unjust, for,

1. They made that his crime, and a diminution to the credibility of his doctrine, which in the case of one who introduced a divine revelation was necessary and unavoidable. Did not Moses and all the prophets bear witness of themselves when they avouched themselves to be God's messengers? Did not the Pharisees ask John Baptist, What sayest thou of thyself?

2. They overlooked the testimony of all the other witnesses, which corroborated the testimony he bore of himself. Had he only borne record of himself, his testimony had indeed been suspicious, and the belief of it might have been suspended; but his doctrine was attested by more than two or three credible witnesses, enough to establish every word of it.

14 Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.

That he was conscious to himself of his own authority, and abundantly satisfied in himself concerning it. He did not speak as one at uncertainty, nor propose a disputable notion, about which he himself hesitated, but declared a decree, and gave such an account of himself as he would abide by: I know whence I came, and whither I go. He was fully apprised of his own undertaking from first to last; knew whose errand he went upon, and what his success would be. He knew what he was before his manifestation to the world, and what he should be after; that he came from the Father, and was going to him (Joh 16:28), came from glory, and was going to glory, (Joh 17:5). This is the satisfaction of all good Christians, that though the world know them not, as it knew him not, yet they know whence their spiritual life comes, and whither it tends, and go upon sure grounds.

15 Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.

That they are very incompetent judges of him, and of his doctrine, and not to be regarded.

(1.) Because they were ignorant, willingly and resolvedly ignorant: You cannot tell whence I came, and whither I go. To what purpose is it to talk with those who know nothing of the matter, nor desire to know? He had told them of his coming from heaven and returning to heaven, but it was foolishness to them, they received it not; it was what the brutish man knows not, Ps 92:6. They took upon them to judge of that which they did not understand, which lay quite out of the road of their acquaintance. Those that

despise Christ's dominions and dignities speak evil of what they know not, Jude 1:8,10.

(2.) Because they were partial (Joh 8:15): You judge after the flesh. When fleshly wisdom gives the rule of judgment, and outward appearances only are given in evidence, and the case decided according to them, then men judge after the flesh; and when the consideration of a secular interest turns the scale in judging of spiritual matters, when we judge in favour of that which pleases the carnal mind, and recommends us to a carnal world, we judge after the flesh; and the judgment cannot be right when the rule is wrong. The Jews judged of Christ and his gospel by outward appearances, and, because he appeared so mean, thought it impossible he should be the light of the world; as if the sun under a cloud were no sun.

(3.) Because they were unjust and unfair towards him, intimated in this: "I judge no man; I neither make nor meddle with your political affairs, nor does my doctrine or practice at all intrench upon, or interfere with, your civil rights or secular powers." He thus judged no man. Now, if he did not war after the flesh, it was very unreasonable for them to judge him after the flesh, and to treat him as an offender against the civil government. Or, "I judge no man," that is, "not now in my first coming, that is deferred till I come again," Joh 3:17. Prima dispensatio Christi medicinalis est, non judicialis--The first coming of Christ was for the purpose of administering, not justice, but medicine.

16 And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

As a judge, and his own judgment was valid: "If I judge, I who have authority to execute judgments, I to whom all things are delivered, I who am the Son of God, and have the Spirit of God, if I judge, my judgment is true, of incontestable rectitude and uncontrollable authority, Ro 2:2. If I should judge, my judgment must be true, and then you would be condemned; but the judgment-day is not yet come, you are not yet to be condemned, but spared, and therefore now I judge no man;" so Chrysostom. Now that which makes his judgment unexceptionable is,

[1.] His Father's concurrence with him: I am not alone, but I and the Father. He has the Father's concurring counsels to direct; as he was with the Father

before the world in forming the counsels, so the Father was with him in the world in prosecuting and executing those counsels, and never left him inops consilii--without advice, Isa 11:2. All the counsels of peace (and of war too) were between them both, Zec 6:13. He had also the Father's concurring power to authorize and confirm what he did; see Ps 89:21,Isa 42:1. He did not act separately, but in his own name and his Father's, and by the authority aforesaid, Joh 5:17,14:9,10.

[2.] His Father's commission to him: "It is the Father that sent me." Note, God will go along with those that he sends; see Ex 3:10,12: Come, and I will send thee, and certainly I will be with thee. Now, if Christ had a commission from the Father, and the Father's presence with him in all his administrations, no doubt his judgment was true and valid; no exception lay against it, no appeal lay from it.

17 It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.

He quotes a maxim of the Jewish law, Joh 8:17. That the testimony of two men is true. Not as if it were always true in itself, for many a time hand has been joined in hand to bear a false testimony, 1Ki 21:10. But it is allowed as sufficient evidence upon which to ground a verdict (verum dictum), and if nothing appear to the contrary it is taken for granted to be true. Reference is here had to that law (De 17:6), At the mouth of two witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death. And see De 9:15,Nu 35:30. It was in favour of life that in capital cases two witnesses were required, as with us in case of treason. See Heb 6:18.

18 I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

He applies this to the case in hand (Joh 8:18): I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me. Behold two witnesses! Though in human courts, where two witnesses are required, the criminal or candidate is not admitted to be a witness for himself; yet in a matter purely divine, which can be proved only by a divine testimony, and God himself must be the witness, if the formality of two or three witnesses be insisted on, there can be no other than the eternal Father, the eternal Son of the Father, and the eternal Spirit. Now if the testimony of two distinct persons, that are men, and therefore may deceive or be deceived, is conclusive, much more ought the testimony of the Son of God concerning

himself, backed with the testimony of his Father concerning him, to command assent; see 1Jo 5:7,9-11.

19 Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

How their tongues were let loose (such was the malice of hell) to cavil at his discourse, Joh 8:19. Though in what he said there appeared nothing of human policy or artifice, but a divine security, yet they set themselves to cross questions with him. None so incurably blind as those that resolve they will not see. Observe,

1. How they evaded the conviction with a cavil: Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? They might easily have understood, by the tenour of this and his other discourses, that when he spoke of his Father he meant no other than God himself; yet they pretend to understand him of a common person, and, since he appeals to his testimony, they bid him call his witness, and challenge him, if he can, to produce him: Where is thy Father? Thus, as Christ said of them (Joh 8:15), they judge after the flesh. Perhaps they hereby intend a reflection upon the meanness and obscurity of his family: Where is thy Father, that he should be fit to give evidence in such a case as this? Thus they turned it off with a taunt, when they could not resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke.

2. How he evaded the cavil with a further conviction; he did not tell them where his Father was, but charged them with wilful ignorance: "You neither know me nor my Father. It is to no purpose to discourse to you about divine things, who talk of them as blind men do of colours. Poor creatures! you know nothing of the matter."

(a.) He charges them with ignorance of God: "You know not my Father." In Judah was God known (Ps 76:1); they had some knowledge of him as the God that made the world, but their eyes were darkened that they could not see the light of his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. The little children of the Christian church know the Father, know him as a Father (1Jo 2:13); but these rulers of the Jews did not, because they would not so know him.

(b.) He shows them the true cause of their ignorance of God: If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. The reason why men are ignorant of God is because they are unacquainted with Jesus Christ. Did we know Christ,

[1.] In knowing him we should know the Father, of whose person he is the express image, Joh 14:9. Chrysostom proves hence the Godhead of Christ, and his equality with his Father. We cannot say, "He that knows a man knows an angel," or, "He that knows a creature knows the Creator;" but he that knows Christ knows the Father.

[2.] By him we should be instructed in the knowledge of God, and introduced into an acquaintance with him. If we knew Christ better, we should know the Father better; but, where the Christian religion is slighted and opposed, natural religion will soon be lost and laid aside. Deism makes way for atheism. Those become vain in their imaginations concerning God that will not learn of Christ.

20 These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple:
and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

See how their hands were tied, though their tongues were thus let loose; such was the power of Heaven to restrain the malice of hell. These words spoke Jesus, these bold words, these words of conviction and reproof, in the treasury, an apartment of the temple, where, to be sure, the chief priests, whose gain was their godliness, were mostly resident, attending the business of the revenue. Christ taught in the temple, sometimes in one part, sometimes in another, as he saw occasion. Now the priests who had so great a concern in the temple, and looked upon it as their demesne, might easily, with the assistance of the janizaries that were at their beck, either have seized him and exposed him to the rage of the mob, and that punishment which they called the beating of the rebels; or, at least, have silenced him, and stopped his mouth there, as Amos, though tolerated in the land of Judah, was forbidden to prophesy in the king's chapel, Am 7:12,13. Yet even in the temple, where they had him in their reach, no man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come.

See here,

1 The restraint laid upon his persecutors by an invisible power; none of them durst meddle with him. God can set bounds to the wrath of men, as he does to the waves of the sea. Let us not therefore fear danger in the way of duty; for God hath Satan and all his instruments in a chain.

2 The reason of this restraint: His hour was not yet come. The frequent mention of this intimates how much the time of our departure out of the world depends upon the fixed counsel and decree of God. It will come, it is coming; not yet come, but it is at hand. Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor our friends delay it any longer, than the time appointed of the Father, which is very comfortable to every good man, who can look up and say with pleasure, My times are in thy hands; and better there than in our own. His hour was not yet come, because his work was not done, nor his testimony finished. To all God's purposes there is a time.

Whither I Go Ye Cannot Come

21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

The wrath threatened (Joh 8:21): Jesus said again unto them that which might be likely to do them good. He continued to teach, in kindness to those few who received his doctrine, though there were many that resisted it, which is an example to ministers to go on with their work, notwithstanding opposition, because a remnant shall be saved. Here Christ changes his voice; he had piped to them in the offers of his grace, and they had not danced; now he mourns to them in the denunciations of his wrath, to try if they would lament. He said, I go my way, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go you cannot come. Every word is terrible, and bespeaks spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all judgments; worse than war, pestilence, and captivity, which the Old-Testament prophets denounced. Four things are here threatened against the Jews.

1. Christ's departure from them: I go my way, that is, "It shall not be long before I go; you need not take so much pains to drive me from you, I shall go of myself." They said to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; and he takes them at their word; but woe to those from whom Christ departs. Ichabod, the glory is gone, our defence is departed, when Christ goes. Christ frequently warned them of his departure before he left them: he bade often farewell, as one loth to depart, and willing to be invited, and that would have them stir up themselves to take hold on him.

2. Their enmity to the true Messiah, and their fruitless and infatuated enquiries after another Messiah when he was gone away, which were both their sin and their punishment: You shall seek me, which intimates either,

(a) Their enmity to the true Christ: "You shall seek to ruin my interest, by persecuting my doctrine and followers, with a fruitless design to root them out." This was a continual vexation and torment to themselves, made them incurably ill-natured, and brought wrath upon them (God's and their own) to the uttermost. Or,

(b) Their enquiries after false Christs: "You shall continue your expectations of the Messiah, and be the self-perplexing seekers of a Christ to come, when he is already come;" like the Sodomites, who, being struck with blindness, wearied themselves to find the door. See Ro 9:31,32.

3. Their final impenitency: You shall die in your sins. Here is an error in all our English Bibles, even the old bishops' translation, and that of Geneva (the Rhemists only excepted), for all the Greek copies have it in the singular number, en te hamartia hymon--in your sin, so all the Latin versions; and Calvin has a note upon the difference between this and Joh 8:24, where it is plural, tais hamartiais, that here it is meant especially of the sin of unbelief, in hoc peccato vestro--in this sin of yours. Note, Those that live in unbelief are for ever undone if they die in unbelief. Or, it may be understood in general, You shall die in your iniquity, as Eze 3:19,33:9. Many that have long lived in sin are, through grace, saved by a timely repentance from dying in sin; but for those who go out of this world of

probation into that of retribution under the guilt of sin unpardoned, and the power of sin unbroken, there remaineth no relief: salvation itself cannot save them, Job 20:11,Eze 32:27.

4. Their eternal separation from Christ and all happiness in him: Whither I go you cannot come. When Christ left the world, he went to a state of perfect happiness; he went to paradise. Thither he took the penitent thief with him, that did not die in his sins; but the impenitent not only shall not come to him, but they cannot; it is morally impossible, for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified and unmeet for it. You cannot come, because you have no right to enter into that Jerusalem, Re 22:14. Whither I go you cannot come, to fetch me thence, so Dr. Whitby; and the same is the comfort of all good Christians, that, when they get to heaven, they will be out of the reach of their enemies' malice.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

The jest they made of this threatening. Instead of trembling at this word, they bantered it, and turned it into ridicule (Joh 8:22): Will he kill himself?

See here,

1. What slight thoughts they had of Christ's threatenings; they could make themselves and one another merry with them, as those that mocked the messengers of the Lord, and turned the burden of the word of the Lord into a by-word, and precept upon precept, line upon line, into a merry song, Isa 28:13. But be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.

2. What ill thoughts they had of Christ's meaning, as if he had an inhuman design upon his own life, to avoid the indignities done him, like Saul. This is indeed (say they) to go whither we cannot follow him, for we will never kill ourselves. Thus they make him not only such a one as themselves, but worse; yet in the calamities brought by the Romans upon the Jews many of them in discontent and despair did kill themselves. They had put a much more favourable construction upon this word of his (Joh 7:34,35): Will he go to the dispersed among the Gentiles? But see how indulged malice grows more and more malicious.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

He had said, Whither I go you cannot come, and here he gives the reason for this (Joh 8:23): You are from beneath, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. You are ek ton kato--of those things which are beneath; noting, not so much their rise from beneath as their affection to these lower things: "You are in with these things, as those that belong to them; how can you come where I go, when your spirit and disposition are so directly contrary to mine?"

See here,

(1.) What the spirit of the Lord Jesus was--not of this world, but from above. He was perfectly dead to the wealth of the world, the ease of the body, and the praise of men, and was wholly taken up with divine and heavenly things; and none shall be with him but those who are born from above and have their conversation in heaven.

(2.) How contrary to this their spirit was: "You are from beneath, and of this world." The Pharisees were of a carnal worldly spirit; and what communion could Christ have with them?

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

He had said, You shall die in your sins, and here he stand to it: "Therefore I said, You shall die in your sins, because you are from beneath;" and he gives this further reason for it, If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sins, Joh 8:24.

See here,

(a) What we are required to believe: that I am he, hoti ego eimi--that I am, which is one of God's names, Ex 3:14. It was the Son of God that there said, Ehejeh asher Ehejeh--I will be what I will be; for the deliverance of Israel was but a figure of good things to come, but now he saith, "I am he; he that should come, he that you expect the Messias to be, that you would have me to be to you. I am more than the bare name of the Messiah; I do

not only call myself so, but I am he." True faith does not amuse the soul with an empty sound of words, but affects it with the doctrine of Christ's mediation, as a real thing that has real effects.

(b) How necessary it is that we believe this. If we have not this faith, we shall die in our sins; for the matter is so settled that without this faith,

[1.] We cannot be saved from the power of sin while we live, and therefore shall certainly continue in it to the last. Nothing but the doctrine of Christ's grace will be an argument powerful enough, and none but the Spirit of Christ's grace will be an agent powerful enough, to turn us from sin to God; and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine given, to be effectual to those only who believe in Christ: so that, if Satan be not by faith dispossessed, he has a lease of the soul for its life; if Christ do not cure us, our case is desperate, and we shall die in our sins.

[2.] Without faith we cannot be saved from the punishment of sin when we die, for the wrath of God remains upon them that believe not, Mk 16:16. Unbelief is the damning sin; it is a sin against the remedy. Now this implies the great gospel promise: If we believe that Christ is he, and receive him accordingly, we shall not die in our sins. The law saith absolutely to all, as Christ said (Joh 8:21), You shall die in your sins, for we are all guilty before God; but the gospel is a defeasance of the obligation upon condition of believing. The curse of the law is vacated and annulled to all that submit to the grace of the gospel. Believers die in Christ, in his love, in his arms, and so are saved from dying in their sins.

25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou ? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

The question which the Jews put to him (Joh 8:25): Who art thou? This they asked tauntingly, and not with any desire to be instructed. He had said, You must believe that I am he. By his not saying expressly who he was, he plainly intimated that in his person he was such a one as could not be described by any, and in his office such a one as was expected by all that looked for redemption in Israel; yet this awful manner of speaking, which had so much significancy in it, they turned to his reproach, as if he knew not what to say of himself: "Who art thou, that we must with an implicit

faith believe in thee, that thou art some mighty HE, we know not who or what, nor are worthy to know?"

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

(a) He refers them to what he had said all along: "Do you ask who I am? Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." The original here is a little intricate, ten archen ho ti kai lalo hymin which some read thus: I am the beginning, which also I speak unto you. So Austin takes it. Christ is called Arche--the beginning (Col 1:18,Re 1:8,21:6,Re 3:14), and so it agrees with Joh 8:24, I am he. Compare Isa 41:4: I am the first, I am he. Those who object that it is the accusative case, and therefore not properly answering to tis ei, must undertake to construe by grammar rules that parallel expression, Re 1:8, ho en. But most interpreters agree with our version, Do you ask who I am?

[1.] I am the same that I said to you from the beginning of time in the scriptures of the Old-Testament, the same that from the beginning was said to be the Seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, the same that in all the ages of the church was the Mediator of the covenant, and the faith of the patriarchs.

[2.] From the beginning of my public ministry. The account he had already given of himself he resolved to abide by; he had declared himself to be the Son of God (Joh 5:17), to be the Christ (Joh 4:26), and the bread of life, and had proposed himself as the object of that faith which is necessary to salvation, and to this he refers them for an answer to their question. Christ is one with himself; what he had said from the beginning, he saith still. His is an everlasting gospel.

(b) He refers them to his Father's judgment, and the instructions he had from him (Joh 8:26): "I have many things, more than you think of, to say, and in them to judge of you. But why should I trouble myself any further with you? I know very well that he who sent me is true, and will stand by me, and bear me out, for I speak to the world (to which I am sent as an ambassador) those things, all those and those only, which I have heard of him." Here,

[1.] He suppresses his accusation of them. He had many things to charge them with, and many evidences to produce against them; but for the present he had said enough. Note, Whatever discoveries of sin are made to us, he that searches the heart has still more to judge of us, 1Jo 3:20. How much soever God reckons with sinners in this world there is still a further reckoning yet behind, De 32:34. Let us learn hence not to be forward to say all we can say, even against the worst of men; we may have many things to say, by way of censure, which yet it is better to leave unsaid, for what is it to us?

[2.] He enters his appeal against them to his Father: He that sent me. Here two things comfort him:--First, That he had been true to his Father, and to the trust reposed in him: I speak to the world (for his gospel was to be preached to every creature) those things which I have heard of him. Being given for a witness to the people (Isa 55:4), he was Amen, a faithful witness, Re 3:14. He did not conceal his doctrine, but spoke it to the world (being of common concern, it was to be of common notice); nor did he change or alter it, nor vary from the instructions he received from him that sent him. Secondly, That his Father would be true to him; true to the promise that he would make his mouth like a sharp sword; true to his purpose concerning him, which was a decree (Ps 2:7); true to the threatenings of his wrath against those that should reject him. Though he should not accuse them to his Father, yet the Father, who sent him, would undoubtedly reckon with them, and would be true to what he had said (De 18:19), that whosoever would not hearken to that prophet whom God would raise up he would require it of him. Christ would not accuse them; "for," saith he, "he that sent me is true, and will pass judgment on them, though I should not demand judgment against them." Thus, when he lets fall the present prosecution, he binds them over to the judgment-day, when it will be too late to dispute what they will not now be persuaded to believe. I, as a deaf man, heard not; for thou wilt hear, Ps 38:13,15. Upon this part of our Saviour's discourse the evangelist has a melancholy remark (Joh 8:27): They understood not that he spoke to them of the Father.

See here,

1 The power of Satan to blind the minds of those who believe not. Though Christ spoke so plainly of God as his Father in heaven, yet they did not understand whom he meant, but thought he spoke of some father he had in Galilee. Thus the plainest things are riddles and parables to those who are resolved to hold fast their prejudices; day and night are alike to the blind.

2 The reason why the threatenings of the word make so little impression upon the minds of sinners; it is because they understand not whose the wrath is that is revealed in them. When Christ told them of the truth of him that sent him, as a warning to them to prepare for his judgment, which is according to truth, they slighted the warning, because they understood not to whose judgment it was that they made themselves obnoxious.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

He refers them to their own convictions hereafter, Joh 8:28,29. He finds they will not understand him, and therefore adjourns the trial till further evidence should come in; they that will not see shall see, Isa 26:11. Now observe here,

[1.] What they should ere long be convinced of: "You shall know that I am he, that Jesus is the true Messiah. Whether you will own it or no before men, you shall be made to know it in your own consciences, the convictions of which, though you may stifle, yet you cannot baffle: that I am he, not that you represent me to be, but he that I preach myself to be, he that should come!" Two things they should be convinced of, in order to this:--First, That he did nothing of himself, not of himself as man, of himself alone, of himself without the Father, with whom he was one. He does not hereby derogate from his own inherent power, but only denies their charge against him as a false prophet; for of false prophets it is said that they prophesied out of their own hearts, and followed their own spirits. Secondly, That as his Father taught him so he spoke these things, that he was not autodidaktos--self-taught, but Theodidaktos--taught of God. The doctrine he preached was the counterpart of the counsels of God, with which he was intimately acquainted; kathos edidaxe, tauta lalo--I speak

those things, not only which he taught me, but as he taught me, with the same divine power and authority.

[2.] When they should be convinced of this: When you have lifted up the Son of man, lifted him up upon the cross, as the brazen serpent upon the pole (Joh 3:14), as the sacrifices under the law (for Christ is the great sacrifice), which, when they were offered, were said to be elevated, or lifted up; hence the burnt-offerings, the most ancient and honourable of all, were called elevations (Gnoloth from Gnolah, asendit--he ascended), and in many other offerings they used the significant ceremony of heaving the sacrifice up, and moving it before the Lord; thus was Christ lifted up. Or the expression denotes that his death was his exaltation. They that put him to death thought thereby for ever to have sunk him and his interest, but it proved to be the advancement of both, Joh 12:24. When the Son of man was crucified, the Son of man was glorified. Christ had called his dying his going away; here he calls it his being lifted up; thus the death of the saints, as it is their departure out of this world, so it is their advancement to a better.

Observe, He speaks of those he is now talking with as the instruments of his death: when you have lifted up the Son of man; not that they were to be the priests to offer him up (no, that was his own act, he offered up himself), but they would be his betrayers and murderers; see Ac 2:23. They lifted him up to the cross, but then he lifted up himself to his Father. Observe with what tenderness and mildness Christ here speaks to those who he certainly knew would put him to death, to teach us not to hate or seek the hurt of any, though we may have reason to think they hate us and seek our hurt. Now, Christ speaks of his death as that which would be a powerful conviction of the infidelity of the Jews. When you have lifted up the Son of man, then shall you know this. And why then?

First, Because careless and unthinking people are often taught the worth of mercies by the want of them, Lu 17:22.

Secondly, The guilt of their sin in putting Christ to death would so awaken their consciences that they would be put upon serious enquiries after a Saviour, and then would know that Jesus was he who alone could save

them. And so it proved, when, being told that with wicked hands they had crucified and slain the Son of God, they cried out, What shall we do? and were made to know assuredly that this Jesus was Lord and Christ, Ac 2:36.

Thirdly, There would be such signs and wonders attending his death, and the lifting of him up from death in his resurrection, as would give a stronger proof of his being the Messiah than any that had been yet given: and multitudes were hereby brought to believe that Jesus is the Christ, who had before contradicted and opposed him.

Fourthly, By the death of Christ the pouring out of the Spirit was purchased, who would convince the world that Jesus is he, Joh 16:7,8.

Fifthly, The judgments which the Jews brought upon themselves, by putting Christ to death, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, were a sensible conviction to the most hardened among them that Jesus was he. Christ had often foretold that desolation as the just punishment of their invincible unbelief, and when it came to pass (lo, it did come) they could not but know that the great prophet had been among them, Eze 33:33.

29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone;
for I do always those things that please him.

What supported our Lord Jesus in the mean time (Joh 8:29): He that sent me is with me, in my whole undertaking; for the Father (the fountain and first spring of this affair, from whom as its great cause and author it is derived) hath not left me alone, to manage it myself, hath not deserted the business nor me in the prosecution of it, for do I always those things that please him. Here is,

First, The assurance which Christ had of his Father's presence with him, which includes both a divine power going along with him to enable him for his work, and a divine favour manifested to him to encourage him in it. He that sent me is with me, Isa 42:1,Ps 89:21. This greatly emboldens our faith in Christ and our reliance upon his word that he had, and knew he had, his Father with him, to confirm the word of his servant, Isa 44:26. The King of kings accompanied his own ambassador, to attest his mission and assist his management, and never left him alone, either solitary or weak; it

also aggravated the wickedness of those that opposed him, and was an intimation to them of the premunire they ran themselves into by resisting him, for thereby they were found fighters against God. How easily soever they might think to crush him and run him down, let them know he had one to back him with whom it is the greatest madness that can be to contend.

Secondly, The ground of this assurance: For I do always those things that please him. That is,

1. That great affair in which our Lord Jesus was continually engaged was an affair which the Father that sent him was highly well pleased with. His whole undertaking is called the pleasure of the Lord (Isa 53:10), because of the counsels of the eternal mind about it, and the complacency of the eternal mind in it.

2. His management of that affair was in nothing displeasing to his Father; in executing his commission he punctually observed all his instructions, and did in nothing vary from them. No mere man since the fall could say such a word as this (for in many things we offend all) but our Lord Jesus never offended his Father in any thing, but, as became him, he fulfilled all righteousness. This was necessary to the validity and value of the sacrifice he was to offer up; for if he had in any thing displeased the Father himself, and so had had any sin of his own to answer for, the Father could not have been pleased with him as a propitiation for our sins; but such a priest and such a sacrifice became us as was perfectly pure and spotless. We may likewise learn hence that God's servants may then expect God's presence with them when they choose and do those things that please him, Isa 66:4,5.

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

Here is the good effect which this discourse of Christ's had upon some of his hearers (Joh 8:30): As he spoke these words many believed on him.

Note,

1. Though multitudes perish in their unbelief, yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace, who believe to the saving of the soul. If Israel, the whole body of the people, be not gathered, yet there are those of them in whom Christ will be glorious, Isa 49:5. This the apostle insists upon, to reconcile the Jews' rejection with the promises made unto their fathers. There is a remnant, Ro 11:5.

2 The words of Christ, and particularly his threatening words, are made effectual by the grace of God to bring in poor souls to believe in him. When Christ told them that if they believed not they should die in their sins, and never get to heaven, they thought it was time to look about them, Ro 1:16,18.

3. Sometimes there is a wide door opened, and an effectual one, even where they are many adversaries. Christ will carry on his work, though the heathen rage. The gospel sometimes gains great victories where it meets with great opposition. Let this encourage God's ministers to preach the gospel, though it be with much contention, for they shall not labour in vain. Many may be secretly brought home to God by those endeavours which are openly contradicted and cavilled at by men of corrupt minds.

The Truth Shall Make You Free

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

A comfortable doctrine laid down concerning the spiritual liberty of Christ's disciples, intended for the encouragement of those Jews that believed. Christ, knowing that his doctrine began to work upon some of his hearers, and perceiving that virtue had gone out of him, turned his discourse from the proud Pharisees, and addressed himself to those weak believers. When he had denounced wrath against those that were hardened in unbelief, then he spoke comfort to those few feeble Jews that believed in him. See here,

1. How graciously the Lord Jesus looks to those that tremble at his word, and are ready to receive it; he has something to say to those who have

hearing ears, and will not pass by those who set themselves in his way, without speaking to them.

2. How carefully he cherishes the beginnings of grace, and meets those that are coming towards him. These Jews that believed were yet but weak; but Christ did not therefore cast them off, for he gathers the lambs in his arms. When faith is in its infancy, he has knees to prevent it, breasts for it to suck, that it may not die from the womb. In what he said to them, we have two things, which he saith to all that should at any time believe:--

The character of a true disciple of Christ: If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed. When they believed on him, as the great prophet, they gave up themselves to be his disciples. Now, at their entrance into his school, he lays down this for a settled rule, that he would own none for his disciples but those that continued in his word.

[1.] It is implied that there are many who profess themselves Christ's disciples who are not his disciples indeed, but only in show and name.

[2.] It highly concerns those that are not strong in faith to see to it that they be sound in the faith, that, though not disciples of the highest form, they are nevertheless disciples indeed.

[3.] Those who seem willing to be Christ's disciples ought to be told that they had as good never come to him, unless they come with a resolution by his grace to abide by him. Let those who have thoughts of covenanting with Christ have no thoughts of reserving a power of revocation. Children are sent to school, and bound apprentices, only for a few years; but those only are Christ's who are willing to be bound to him for the term of life.

[4.] Those only that continue in Christ's word shall be accepted as his disciples indeed, that adhere to his word in every instance without partiality, and abide by it to the end without apostasy. It is menein--to dwell in Christ's word, as a man does at home, which is his centre, and rest, and refuge. Our converse with the word and conformity to it must be constant.

If we continue disciples to the last, then, and not otherwise, we approve ourselves disciples indeed.

32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

The privilege of a true disciple of Christ. Here are two precious promises made to those who thus approve themselves disciples indeed, Joh 8:32.

[1.] "You shall know the truth, shall know all that truth which it is needful and profitable for you to know, and shall be more confirmed in the belief of it, shall know the certainty of it."

Note, First, Even those who are true believers, and disciples indeed, yet may be, and are, much in the dark concerning many things which they should know. God's children are but children, and understand and speak as children. Did we not need to be taught, we should not need to be disciples.

Secondly, It is a very great privilege to know the truth, to know the particular truths which we are to believe, in their mutual dependences and connections, and the grounds and reasons of our belief,--to know what is truth and what proves it to be so. Thirdly, It is a gracious promise of Christ, to all who continue in his word, that they shall know the truth as far as is needful and profitable for them. Christ's scholars are sure to be well taught.

[2.] The truth shall make you free; that is,

First, The truth which Christ teaches tends to make men free, Isa 61:1. Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God, and bound under amazing fears; sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we were restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and constrained to that which is perfect slavery. Gospel truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burdens of the traditions of the elders. It makes us free from our spiritual enemies, free in the service of God, free to the privileges of sons, and free of the Jerusalem which is from above, which is free.

Secondly, The knowing, entertaining, and believing, of this truth does actually make us free, free from prejudices, mistakes, and false notions, than which nothing more enslaves and entangles the soul, free from the dominion of lust and passion; and restores the soul to the government of itself, by reducing it into obedience to its Creator. The mind, by admitting the truth of Christ in the light and power, is vastly enlarged, and has scope and compass given it, is greatly elevated and raised above things of sense, and never acts with so true a liberty as when it acts under a divine command, 2Co 3:17. The enemies of Christianity pretend to free thinking, whereas really those are the freest reasonings that are guided by faith, and those are men of free thought whose thoughts are captivated and brought into obedience to Christ.

JFB:

They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man, &c.—Who said this? Not surely the very class just spoken of as won over by His divine words, and exhorted to continue in them. Most interpreters seem to think so; but it is hard to ascribe such a petulant speech to the newly gained disciples, even in the lowest sense, much less persons so gained as they were. It came, probably, from persons mixed up with them in the same part of the crowd, but of a very different spirit. The pride of the Jewish nation, even now after centuries of humiliation, is the most striking feature of their character. "Talk of freedom to us? Pray when or to whom were we ever in bondage?" This bluster sounds almost ludicrous from such a nation. Had they forgotten their long and bitter bondage in Egypt? their dreary captivity in Babylon? their present bondage to the Roman yoke, and their restless eagerness to throw it off? But probably they saw that our Lord pointed to something else—freedom, perhaps, from the leaders of sects or parties—and were not willing to allow their subjection even to these. Our Lord, therefore, though He knew what slaves they were in this sense, drives the ploughshare somewhat deeper than this, to a bondage they little dreamt of.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

Matthew Hennery Bible Commentary (MHC):

The offence which the carnal Jews took at this doctrine, and their objection against it. Though it was a doctrine that brought glad tidings of liberty to the captives, yet they cavilled at it, Joh 8:33. The Pharisees grudged this comfortable word to those that believed, the standers by, who had no part nor lot in this matter; they thought themselves reflected upon and affronted by the gracious charter of liberty granted to those that believed, and therefore with a great deal of pride and envy they answered him, "We Jews are Abraham's seed, and therefore are free-born, and have not lost our birthright-freedom; we were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou then, to us Jews, You shall be made free?" See here,

1. What it was that they were grieved at; it was an innuendo in those words, You shall be made free, as if the Jewish church and nation were in some sort of bondage, which reflected on the Jews in general, and as if all that did not believe in Christ continued in that bondage, which reflected on the Pharisees in particular. Note, The privileges of the faithful are the envy and vexation of unbelievers, Ps 112:10.

2. What it was that they alleged against it; whereas Christ intimated that they needed to be made free, they urge, (1.) "We are Abraham's seed, and Abraham was a prince and a great man; though we live in Canaan, we are not descended from Canaan, nor under his doom, a servant of servants shall he be; we hold in frank-almoign--free alms, and not in villenage--by a servile tenure." It is common for a sinking decaying family to boast of the glory and dignity of its ancestors, and to borrow honour from that name to which they repay disgrace; so the Jews here did. But this was not all. Abraham was in covenant with God, and his children by his right, Ro 11:28. Now that covenant, no doubt, was a free charter, and invested them with privileges not consistent with a state of slavery, Ro 9:4. And therefore they thought they had no occasion with so great a sum as they reckoned faith in Christ to be to obtain this freedom, when they were thus free-born. Note, It is the common fault and folly of those that have pious parentage and education to trust to their privilege and boast of it, as if it would atone for the want of real holiness. They were Abraham's seed, but what would this avail them, when we find one in hell that could call Abraham father? Saving benefits are not, like common privileges, conveyed by entail to us and our issue, nor can a title to heaven be made by descent, nor may we claim as heirs at law, by making out our pedigree; our title is purely by purchase, not our own but our Redeemer's for us, under certain provisos

and limitations, which if we do not observe it will not avail us to be Abraham's seed. Thus many, when they are pressed with the necessity of regeneration, turn it off with this, We are the church's children; but they are not all Israel that are of Israel. (2.) We were never in bondage to any man. Now observe, [1.] How false this allegation was. I wonder how they could have the assurance to say a thing in the face of a congregation which was so notoriously untrue. Were not the seed of Abraham in bondage to the Egyptians? Were they not often in bondage to the neighbouring nations in the time of the judges? Were they not seventy years captives in Babylon? Nay, were they not at this time tributaries to the Romans, and, though not in a personal, yet in a national bondage to them, and groaning to be made free? And yet, to confront Christ, they have the impudence to say, We were never in bondage. Thus they would expose Christ to the ill-will both of the Jews, who were very jealous for the honour of their liberty, and of the Romans, who would not be thought to enslave the nations they conquered. [2.] How foolish the application was. Christ had spoken of a liberty wherewith the truth would make them free, which must be meant of a spiritual liberty, for truth as it is the enriching, so it is the enfranchising of the mind, and the enlarging of that from the captivity of error and prejudice; and yet they plead against the offer of spiritual liberty that they were never in corporal thraldom, as if, because they were never in bondage to any man, they were never in bondage to any lust. Note, Carnal hearts are sensible of no other grievances than those that molest the body and injure their secular affairs. Talk to them of encroachments upon their civil liberty and property,--tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses,--and they understand you very well, and can give you a sensible answer; the thing touches them and affects them. But discourse to them of the bondage of sin, a captivity to Satan, and a liberty by Christ,--tell them of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare,--and you bring certain strange things to their ears; they say of it (as those did, Eze 20:49), Doth he not speak parables? This was much like the blunder Nicodemus made about being born again.

They answered him. Not those who believed on him, but some who stood by and heard him.

We be Abraham's seed. We are the children or descendants of Abraham. Abraham was not a slave, and they pretended that they were his real descendants, inheriting his freedom as well as his spirit. They meant that they were the direct descendants of Abraham by Isaac, his heir. Ishmael, also Abraham's son, was the son of a bond-woman (Gal 4:21-23), but they were descended in a direct line from the acknowledged heir of Abraham.

Were never in bondage to any man. This is a most remarkable declaration, and one evidently false. Their fathers had been slaves in Egypt; their nation had been enslaved in Babylon; it had repeatedly been subject to the Assyrians; it was enslaved by Herod the Great; and was, at the very time they spoke, groaning under the grievous and insupportable bondage of the Romans. But we see here,

1st. That Jesus was right when he said (Jn 8:44), "Ye are of your father the devil; he is a liar, and the father of it."

2nd. Men will say anything, however false or ridiculous, to avoid and oppose the truth.

3rd. Men groaning under the most oppressive bondage are often unwilling to acknowledge it in any manner, and are indignant at being charged with it. This is the case with all sinners.

4th. Sin, and the bondage to sin, produces passion, irritation, and a troubled soul; and a man under the influence of passion regards little what he says, and is often a liar.

5th. There is need of the gospel. That only can make men free, calm, collected, meek, and lovers of truth; and as every man is by nature the servant of sin, he should without delay seek an interest in that gospel which can alone make him free.

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

He shows that, notwithstanding their civil liberties and their visible church-membership, yet it was possible that they might be in a state of bondage

(Joh 8:34): Whosoever commits sin, though he be of Abraham's seed, and was never in bondage to any man, is the servant of sin. Observe, Christ does not upbraid them with the falsehood of their plea, or their present bondage, but further explains what he had said for their edification. Thus ministers should with meekness instruct those that oppose them, that they may recover themselves, not with passion provoke them to entangle themselves yet more. Now here,

(1.) The preface is very solemn: Verily, verily, I say unto you; an awful asseveration, which our Saviour often used, to command a reverent attention and a ready assent. The style of the prophets was, Thus saith the Lord, for they were faithful as servants; but Christ, being a Son, speaks in his own name: I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful witness; he pawns his veracity upon it. "I say it to you, who boast of your relation to Abraham, as if that would save you."

(2.) The truth is of universal concern, though here delivered upon a particular occasion: Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin, and sadly needs to be made free. A state of sin is a state of bondage.

[1.] See who it is on whom this brand is fastened--on him that commits sin, pas ho poion hamartian--every one that makes sin. There is not a just man upon earth, that lives, and sins not; yet every one that sins is not a servant of sin, for then God would have no servants; but he that makes sin, that makes choice of sin, prefers the way of wickedness before the way of holiness (Jer 44:16,17),-- that makes a covenant with sin, enters into league with it, and makes a marriage with it,--that makes contrivances of sin, makes provision for the flesh, and devises iniquity,--and that makes a custom of sin, who walks after the flesh, and makes a trade of sin.

[2.] See what the brand is which Christ fastens upon those that thus commit sin. He stigmatizes them, gives them a mark of servitude. They are servants of sin, imprisoned under the guilt of sin, under an arrest, in hold for it, concluded under sin, and they are subject to the power of sin. He is a servant of sin, that is, he makes himself so, and is so accounted; he has sold himself to work wickedness; his lusts give law to him, he is at their beck,

and is not his own master. He does the work of sin, supports its interest, and accepts its wages, Ro 6:16.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

He shows them that, being in a state of bondage, their having a place in the house of God would not entitle them to the inheritance of sons; for (Joh 8:35) the servant, though he be in the house for awhile, yet, being but a servant, abideth not in the house for ever. Services (we say) are no inheritances, they are but temporary, and not for a perpetuity; but the son of the family abideth ever.

Now,

(1.) This points primarily at the rejection of the Jewish church and nation. Israel had been God's son, his first-born; but they wretchedly degenerated into a servile disposition, were enslaved to the world and the flesh, and therefore, though by virtue of their birthright they thought themselves secure of their church membership, Christ tells them that having thus made themselves servants they should not abide in the house for ever. Jerusalem, by opposing the gospel of Christ, which proclaimed liberty, and adhering to the Sinai-covenant, which gendered to bondage, after its term was expired came to be in bondage with her children (Ga 4:24,25), and therefore was unchurched and disfranchised, her charter seized and taken away, and she was cast out as the son of the bond-woman, Ge 21:14. Chrysostom gives this sense of this place: "Think not to be made free from sin by the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, for Moses was but a servant, and had not that perpetual authority in the church which the Son had; but, if the Son make you free, it is well," Joh 8:36. But,

(2.) It looks further, to the rejection of all that are the servants of sin, and receive not the adoption of the sons of God; though those unprofitable servants may be in God's house awhile, as retainers to his family, yet there is a day coming when the children of the bond-woman and of the free shall be distinguished. True believers only, who are the children of the promise and of the covenant, are accounted free, and shall abide for ever in the house, as Isaac: they shall have a nail in the holy place on earth (Ezr 9:8) and mansions in the holy place in heaven, Joh 14:2.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

He shows them the way of deliverance out of the state of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Ro 8:21. The case of those that are the servants of sin is sad, but thanks be to God it is not helpless, it is not hopeless. As it is the privilege of all the sons of the family, and their dignity above the servants, that they abide in the house for ever; so he who is the Son, the first-born among many brethren, and the heir of all things, has a power both of manumission and of adoption (Joh 8:36): If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. Note,

(a) Jesus Christ in the gospel offers us our freedom; he has authority and power to make free.

[1.] To discharge prisoners; this he does in justification, by making satisfaction for our guilt (on which the gospel offer is grounded, which is to all a conditional act of indemnity, and to all true believers, upon their believing, an absolute charter of pardon), and for our debts, for which we were by the law arrested and in execution. Christ, as our surety, or rather our bail (for he was not originally bound with us, but upon our insolvency bound for us), compounds with the creditor, answers the demands of injured justice with more than an equivalent, takes the bond and judgment into his own hands, and gives them up cancelled to all that by faith and repentance give him (if I may so say) a counter-security to save his honour harmless, and so they are made free; and from the debt, and every part thereof, they are for ever acquitted, exonerated, and discharged, and a general release is sealed of all actions and claims; while against those who refuse to come up to these terms the securities lie still in the Redeemer's hands, in full force.

[2.] He has a power to rescue bond-slaves, and this he does in sanctification; by the powerful arguments of his gospel, and the powerful operations of his Spirit, he breaks the power of corruption in the soul, rallies the scattered forces of reason and virtue, and fortifies God's interest against sin and Satan, and so the soul is made free.

[3.] He has a power to naturalize strangers and foreigners, and this he does in adoption. This is a further act of grace; we are not only forgiven and healed, but preferred; there is a charter of privileges as well as pardon; and thus the Son makes us free denizens of the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the new Jerusalem.

(b) Those whom Christ makes free are free indeed. It is not alethos, the word used (Joh 8:31) for disciples indeed, but ontos--really.

It denotes,

[1.] The truth and certainty of the promise, the liberty which the Jews boasted of was an imaginary liberty; they boasted of a false gift; but the liberty which Christ gives is a certain thing, it is real, and has real effects. The servants of sin promise themselves liberty, and fancy themselves free, when they have broken religion's bands asunder; but they cheat themselves. None are free indeed but those whom Christ makes free.

[2.] It denotes the singular excellency of the freedom promised; it is a freedom that deserves the name, in comparison with which all other liberties are no better than slaveries, so much does it turn to the honour and advantage of those that are made free by it. It is a glorious liberty. It is that which is (so ontos signifies); it is substance (Pr 8:21); while the things of the world are shadows, things that are not.

37 I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.

He applies this to these unbelieving cavilling Jews, in answer to their boasts of relation to Abraham (Joh 8:37): "I know very well that you are Abraham's seed, but now you seek to kill me, and therefore have forfeited the honour of your relation to Abraham, because my word hath no place in you." Observe here,

(a) The dignity of their extraction admitted: "I know that you are Abraham's seed, every one knows it, and it is your honour." He grants them

what was true, and in what they said that was false (that they were never in bondage to any) he does not contradict them, for he studied to profit them, and not to provoke them, and therefore said that which would please them: I know that you are Abraham's seed. They boasted of their descent from Abraham, as that which aggrandized their names, and made them exceedingly honourable; whereas really it did but aggravate their crimes, and make them exceedingly sinful. Out of their own mouths will he judge vain-glorious hypocrites, who boast of their parentage and education: "Are you Abraham's seed? Why then did you not tread in the steps of his faith and obedience?"

(b) The inconsistency of their practice with this dignity: But you seek to kill me. They had attempted it several times, and were now designing it, which quickly appeared (Joh 8:59), when they took up stones to cast at him. Christ knows all the wickedness, not only which men do, but which they seek, and design, and endeavour to do. To seek to kill any innocent man is a crime black enough, but to compass and imagine the death of him that was King of kings was a crime the heinousness of which we want words to express.

(c) The reason of this inconsistency. Why were they that were Abraham's seed so very inveterate against Abraham's promised seed, in whom they and all the families of the earth should be blessed? Our Saviour here tells them, It is because my word hath no place in you, ou chorei en hymin, Non capit in vobis, so the Vulgate. "My word does not take with you, you have no inclination to it, no relish of it, other things are more taking, more pleasing." Or, "It does not take hold of you, it has no power over you, makes no impression upon you." Some of the critics read it, My word does not penetrate into you; it descended as the rain, but it came upon them as the rain upon the rock, which it runs off, and did not soak into their hearts, as the rain upon the ploughed ground. The Syriac reads it, "Because you do not acquiesce in my word; you are not persuaded of the truth of it, nor pleased with the goodness of it." Our translation is very significant: It has no place in you. They sought to kill him, and so effectually to silence him, not because he had done they any harm, but because they could not bear the convincing, commanding power of his word.

Note,

[1.] The words of Christ ought to have a place in us, the innermost and uppermost place,--a dwelling place, as a man at home, and not as a stranger or sojourner,--a working place; it must have room to operate, to work sin out of us, and to work grace in us; it must have a ruling place, its place must be upon the throne, it must dwell in us richly.

[2.] There are many that make a profession of religion in whom the word of Christ has no place; they will not allow it a place, for they do not like it; Satan does all he can to displace it; and other things possess the place it should have in us. [3.] Where the word of God has no place no good is to be expected, for room is left there for all wickedness. If the unclean spirit find the heart empty of Christ's word, he enters in, and dwells there.

Your Father the Devil

39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.

He here traces the difference between his sentiments and theirs to a different rise and origin (Joh 8:38): I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have seen with your father. Here are two fathers spoken of, according to the two families into which the sons of men are divided--God and the devil, and without controversy these are contrary the one to the other.

1. Christ's doctrine was from heaven; it was copied out of the counsels of infinite wisdom, and the kind intentions of eternal love.

(1.) I speak that which I have seen. The discoveries Christ has made to us of God and another world are not grounded upon guess and hearsay, but upon ocular inspection; so that he was thoroughly apprized of the nature, and assured of the truth, of all he said. He that is given to be a witness to the people is an eye-witness, and therefore unexceptionable.

(2.) It is what I have seen with my Father. The doctrine of Christ is not a plausible hypothesis, supported by probable arguments, but it is an exact counterpart of the incontestable truths lodged in the eternal mind. It was not only what he had heard from his Father, but what he had seen with him when the counsel of peace was between them both. Moses spoke what he heard from God, but he might not see the face of God; Paul had been in the third heaven, but what he had seen there he could not, he must not, utter; for it was Christ's prerogative to have seen what he spoke, and to speak what he had seen.

2. Their doings were from hell: "You do that which you have seen with your father. You do, by your own works, father yourselves, for it is evident whom you resemble, and therefore easy to find out your origin." As a child that is trained up with his father learns his father's words and fashions, and grows like him by an affected imitation as well as by a natural image, so these Jews, by their malicious opposition to Christ and the gospel, made themselves as like the devil as if they had industriously set him before them for their pattern.

They pleaded relation to Abraham, and he replies to this plea. They said, Abraham is our father, Joh 8:39.

In this they intended,

(1.) To do honour to themselves, and to make themselves look great. They had forgotten the mortification given them by that acknowledgement prescribed them (De 26:5), A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and

the charge exhibited against their degenerate ancestors (whose steps they trod in, and not those of the first founder of the family), Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite, Eze 16:3. As it is common for those families that are sinking and going to decay to boast most of their pedigree, so it is common for those churches that are corrupt and depraved to value themselves upon their antiquity and the eminence of their first planters. Fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium--We have been Trojans, and there once was Troy.

(2.) They designed to cast an odium upon Christ as if he reflected upon the patriarch Abraham, in speaking of their father as one they had learned evil from. See how they sought an occasion to quarrel with him. Now Christ overthrows this plea, and exposes the vanity of it by a plain and cogent argument: "Abraham's children will do the works of Abraham, but you do not do Abraham's works, therefore you are not Abraham's children."

The proposition is plain: "If you were Abraham's children, such children of Abraham as could claim an interest in the covenant made with him and his seed, which would indeed put an honour upon you, then you would do the works of Abraham, for to those only of Abraham's house who kept the way of the Lord, as Abraham did, would God perform what he had spoken," Ge 18:19. Those only are reckoned the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise belongs, who tread in the steps of his faith and obedience, Ro 4:12. Though the Jews had their genealogies, and kept them exact, yet they could not by them make out their relation to Abraham, so as to take the benefit of the old entail (performam doni--according to the form of the gift), unless they walked in the same spirit; good women's relation to Sarah is proved only by this--whose daughters you are as long as you do well, and no longer, 1Pe 3:6. Note, Those who would approve themselves Abraham's seed must not only be of Abraham's faith, but do Abraham's works (Jam 2:21,22),-- must come at God's call, as he did,--must resign their dearest comforts to him,--must be strangers and sojourners in this world,--must keep up the worship of God in their families, and always walk before God in their uprightness; for these were the works of Abraham.

40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

The assumption is evident likewise: But you do not do the works of Abraham, for you seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham, Joh 8:40.

First, He shows them what their work was, their present work, which they were now about; they sought to kill him; and three things are intimated as an aggravation of their intention:--

1. They were so unnatural as to seek the life of a man, a man like themselves, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, who had done them no harm, nor given them any provocation. You imagine mischief against a man, Ps 62:3.

2. They were so ungrateful as to seek the life of one who had told them the truth, had not only done them no injury, but had done them the greatest kindness that could be; had not only not imposed upon them with a lie, but had instructed them in the most necessary and important truths; was he therefore become their enemy?

3. They were so ungodly as to seek the life of one who told them the truth which he had heard from God, who was a messenger sent from God to them, so that their attempt against him was quasi deicidium--an act of malice against God. This was their work, and they persisted in it.

Secondly, He shows them that this did not become the children of Abraham; for this did not Abraham.

1. "He did nothing like this." He was famous for his humanity, witness his rescue of the captives; and for his piety, witness his obedience to the heavenly vision in many instances, and some tender ones. Abraham believed God; they were obstinate in unbelief: Abraham followed God; they fought against him; so that he would be ignorant of them, and would not acknowledge them, they were so unlike him, Isa 63:16. See Jer 22:15-17.

2. "He would not have done thus if he had lived now, or I had lived then." Hoc Abraham non fecisset--He would not have done this; so some read it. We should thus reason ourselves out of any way of wickedness; would Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob have done so? We cannot expect to be ever with them, if we be never like them.

41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

The conclusion follows of course (Joh 8:41): "Whatever your boasts and pretensions be, you are not Abraham's children, but father yourselves upon another family (Joh 8:41); there is a father whose deeds you do, whose spirit you are of, and whom you resemble." He does not yet say plainly that he means the devil, till they by their continued cavils forced him so to explain himself, which teaches us to treat even bad men with civility and respect, and not to be forward to say that of them, or to them, which, though true, sounds harsh. He tried whether they would suffer their own consciences to infer from what he said that they were the devil's children; and it is better to hear it from them now that we are called to repent, that is, to change our father and change our family, by changing our spirit and way, than to hear it from Christ in the great day.

So far were they from owning their unworthiness of relation to Abraham that they pleaded relation to God himself as their Father: "We are not born of fornication, we are not bastards, but legitimate sons; we have one Father, even God."

(1.) Some understand this literally. They were not the sons of the bondwoman, as the Ishmaelites were; nor begotten in incest, as the Moabites and Ammonites were (De 23:3); nor were they a spurious brood in Abraham's family, but Hebrews of the Hebrews; and, being born in lawful wedlock, they might call God Father, who instituted that honourable estate in innocency; for a legitimate seed, not tainted with divorces nor the plurality of wives, is called a seed of God, Mal 2:15.

(2.) Others take it figuratively. They begin to be aware now that Christ spoke of a spiritual not a carnal father, of the father of their religion; and so,

[1.] They deny themselves to be a generation of idolaters: "We are not born of fornication, are not the children of idolatrous parents, nor have been bred up in idolatrous worships." Idolatry is often spoken of as spiritual whoredom, and idolaters as children of whoredoms, Ho 2:4,Isa 57:3. Now, if they meant that they were not the posterity of idolaters, the allegation was false, for no nation was more addicted to idolatry than the Jews before the captivity; if they meant no more than that they themselves were not idolaters, what then? A man may be free from idolatry, and yet perish in another iniquity, and be shut out of Abraham's covenant. If thou commit no idolatry (apply it to this spiritual fornication), yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressor of the covenant. A rebellious prodigal son will be disinherited, though he be not born of fornication.

[2.] They boast themselves to be true worshippers of the true God. We have not many fathers, as the heathens had, gods many and lords many, and yet were without God, as filius populi--a son of the people, has many fathers and yet none certain; no, the Lord our God is one Lord and one Father, and therefore it is well with us. Note, Those flatter themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls, who imagine that their professing the true religion and worshipping the true God will save them, though they worship not God in spirit and in truth, nor are true to their profession. Now our Saviour gives a full answer to this fallacious plea (Joh 8:42,43), and proves, by two arguments, that they had no right to call God Father.

They did not love Christ: If God were your Father, you would love me. He had disproved their relation to Abraham by their going about to kill him (Joh 8:40), but here he disproves their relation to God by their not loving and owning him. A man may pass for a child of Abraham if he do not appear an enemy to Christ by gross sin; but he cannot approve himself a child of God unless he be a faithful friend and follower of Christ. Note, All that have God for their Father have a true love to Jesus Christ, and esteem of his person, a grateful sense of his love, a sincere affection to his cause and kingdom, a complacency in the salvation wrought out by him and in

the method and terms of it, and a care to keep his commandments, which is the surest evidence of our love to him. We are here in a state of probation, upon our trial how we will conduct ourselves towards our Maker, and accordingly it will be with us in the state of retribution. God has taken various methods to prove us, and this was one: he sent his Son into the world, with sufficient proofs of his sonship and mission, concluding that all that called him Father would kiss his Son, and bid him welcome who was the first-born among many brethren; see 1Jo 5:1. By this our adoption will be proved or disproved--Did we love Christ, or no? If any man do not, he is so far from being a child of God that he is anathema, accursed, 1Co 16:22. Now our Saviour proves that if they were God's children they would love him; for, saith he, I proceeded forth and came from God.

They will love him; for,

1. He was the Son of God: I proceeded forth from God. Exelthon this means his divine exeleusis, or origin from the Father, by the communication of the divine essence, and also the union of the divine logos to his human nature; so Dr. Whitby. Now this could not but recommend him to the affections of all that were born of God. Christ is called the beloved, because, being the beloved of the Father, he is certainly the beloved of all the saints, Eph 1:6.

2. He was sent of God, came from him as an ambassador to the world of mankind. He did not come of himself, as the false prophets, who had not either their mission or their message from God, Jer 23:21. Observe the emphasis he lays upon this: I came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. He had both his credentials and his instructions from God; he came to gather together in one the children of God (Joh 11:51), to bring many sons to glory, Heb 2:10. And would not all God's children embrace with both arms a messenger sent from their Father on such errands? But these Jews made it appear that they were nothing akin to God, by their want of affection to Jesus Christ.

43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

They did not understand him. It was a sign they did not belong to God's family that they did not understand the language and dialect of the family:

You do not understand my speech (Joh 8:43), ten lalian ten emen. Christ's speech was divine and heavenly, but intelligible enough to those that were acquainted with the voice of Christ in the Old Testament. Those that had made the word of the Creator familiar to them needed no other key to the dialect of the Redeemer; and yet these Jews make strange of the doctrine of Christ, and find knots in it, and I know not what stumbling stones. Could a Galilean be known by his speech? An Ephraimite by his sibboleth? And would any have the confidence to call God Father to whom the Son of God was a barbarian, even when he spoke the will of God in the words of the Spirit of God? Note, Those who are not acquainted with the divine speech have reason to fear that they are strangers to the divine nature.

Christ spoke the words of God (Joh 3:34) in the dialect of the kingdom of God; and yet they, who pretended to belong to the kingdom, understood not the idioms and properties of it, but like strangers, and rude ones too, ridiculed it. And the reason why they did not understand Christ's speech made the matter much worse: Even because you cannot hear my word, that is, "You cannot persuade yourselves to hear it attentively, impartially, and without prejudice, as it should be heard." The meaning of this cannot is an obstinate will not; as the Jews could not hear Stephen (Ac 7:57) nor Paul, Ac 23:22.

Note, The rooted antipathy of men's corrupt hearts to the doctrine of Christ is the true reason of their ignorance of it, and of their errors and mistakes about it. They do not like it nor love it, and therefore they will not understand it; like Peter, who pretended he knew not what the damsel said (Mt 26:70), when in truth he knew not what to say to it. You cannot hear my words, for you have stopped your ears (Ps 58:4,5), and God, in a way of righteous judgment, has made your ears heavy, Isa 6:10.

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Having thus disproved their relation both to Abraham and to God, he comes next to tell them plainly whose children they were: You are of your father the devil, Joh 8:44. If they were not God's children, they were the devil's, for God and Satan divide the world of mankind; the devil is

therefore said to work in the children of disobedience, Eph 2:2. All wicked people are the devil's children, children of Belial (2Co 6:15), the serpent's seed (Ge 3:15), children of the wicked one, Mt 13:38. They partake of his nature, bear his image, obey his commands, and follow his example. Idolaters said to a stock, Thou art our father, Jer 2:27.

This is a high charge, and sounds very harsh and horrid, that any of the children of men, especially the church's children, should be called children of the devil, and therefore our Saviour fully proves it.

1. By a general argument: The lusts of your father you will do, thelete poiein.

(a) "You do the devil's lusts, the lusts which he would have you to fulfil; you gratify and please him, and comply with his temptation, and are led captive by him at his will: nay, you do those lusts which the devil himself fulfils." Fleshly lusts and worldly lusts the devil tempts men to; but, being a spirit, he cannot fulfil them himself. The peculiar lusts of the devil are spiritual wickedness; the lusts of the intellectual powers, and their corrupt reasonings; pride and envy, and wrath and malice; enmity to that which is good, and enticing others to that which is evil; these are lusts which the devil fulfils, and those who are under the dominion of these lusts resemble the devil, as the child does the parent. The more there is of contemplation, and contrivance, and secret complacency, in sin, the more it resembles the lusts of the devil.

(b) You will do the devil's lusts. The more there is of the will in these lusts, the more there is of the devil in them. When sin is committed of choice and not by surprise, with pleasure and not with reluctancy, when it is persisted in with a daring presumption and a desperate resolution, like theirs that said, We have loved strangers and after them we will go, then the sinner will do the devil's lusts. "The lusts of your father you delight to do;" so Dr. Hammond; they are rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.

2. By two particular instances, wherein they manifestly resembled the devil--murder and lying. The devil is an enemy to life, because God is the

God of life and life is the happiness of man; and an enemy to truth, because God is the God of truth and truth is the bond of human society.

(a) He was a murderer from the beginning, not from his own beginning, for he was created an angel of light, and had a first estate which was pure and good, but from the beginning of his apostasy, which was soon after the creation of man. He was anthropoktonos--homicida, a man-slayer.

[1.] He was a hater of man, and so in affection an disposition a murderer of him. He has his name, Satan, from sitnah--hatred. He maligned God's image upon man, envied his happiness, and earnestly desired his ruin, was an avowed enemy to the whole race.

[2.] He was man's tempter to that sin which brought death into the world, and so he was effectually the murderer of all mankind, which in Adam had but one neck. He was a murderer of souls, deceived them into sin, and by it slew them (Ro 7:11), poisoned man with the forbidden fruit, and, to aggravate the matter, made him his own murderer. Thus he was not only at the beginning, but from the beginning, which intimates that thus he has been ever since; as he began, so he continues, the murderer of men by his temptations. The great tempter is the great destroyer. The Jews called the devil the angel of death.

[3.] He was the first wheel in the first murder that ever was committed by Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, 1Jo 3:12. If the devil had not been very strong in Cain, he could not have done such an unnatural thing as to kill his own brother. Cain killing his brother by the instigation of the devil, the devil is called the murderer, which does not speak Cain's personal guilt the less, but the devil's the more, whose torments, we have reason to think, will be the greater, when the time comes, for all that wickedness into which he has drawn men. See what reason we have to stand upon our guard against the wiles of the devil, and never to hearken to him (for he is a murderer, and certainly aims to do us mischief, even when he speaks fair), and to wonder that he who is the murderer of the children of men should yet be, by their own consent, so much their master. Now herein these Jews were followers of him, and were murderers, like him; murderers of souls, which they led blindfold into the

ditch, and made the children of hell; sworn enemies of Christ, and now ready to be his betrayers and murderers, for the same reason that Cain killed Abel. These Jews were that seed of the serpent that were to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman; Now you seek to kill me.

(b) He was a liar. A lie is opposed to truth (1Jo 2:21), and accordingly the devil is here described to be,

[1.] An enemy to truth, and therefore to Christ. First, He is a deserter, from the truth; he abode not in the truth, did not continue in the purity and rectitude of his nature wherein he was created, but left his first state; when he degenerated from goodness, he departed from truth, for his apostasy was founded in a lie. The angels were the hosts of the Lord; those that fell were not true to their commander and sovereign, they were not to be trusted, being charged with folly and defection, Job 4:18. By the truth here we may understand the revealed will of God concerning the salvation of man by Jesus Christ, the truth which Christ was now preaching, and which the Jews opposed; herein they did like their father the devil, who, seeing the honour put upon the human nature in the first Adam, and foreseeing the much greater honour intended in the second Adam, would not be reconciled to that counsel of God, nor stand in the truth concerning it, but, from a spirit of pride and envy, set himself to resist it, and to thwart the designs of it; and so did these Jews here, as his children and agents. Secondly, He is destitute of the truth: There is no truth in him. His interest in the world is supported by lies and falsehoods, and there is no truth, nothing you can confide in, in him, nor in any thing he says or does. The notions he propagates concerning good and evil are false and erroneous, his proofs are lying wonders, his temptations are all cheats; he has great knowledge of the truth, but having no affection to it, but on the contrary being a sworn enemy to it, he is said to have no truth in him.

[2.] He is a friend and patron of lying: When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own. Three things are here said of the devil with reference to the sin of lying:--

First, That he is a liar; his oracles were lying oracles, his prophets lying prophets, and the images in which he was worshipped teachers of lies. He tempted our first parents with a downright lie. All his temptations are carried on by lies, calling evil good and good evil, and promising impunity in sin; he knows them to be lies, and suggests them with an intention to deceive, and so to destroy. When he now contradicted the gospel, in the scribes and Pharisees, it was by lies; and when afterwards he corrupted it, in the man of sin, it was by strong delusions, and a great complicated lie.

Secondly, That when he speaks a lie he speaks of his own, ek ton idion. It is the proper idiom of his language; of his own, not of God; his Creator never put it into him. When men speak a lie they borrow it from the devil, Satan fills their hearts to lie (Ac 5:3); but when the devil speaks a lie the model of it is of his own framing, the motives to it are from himself, which bespeaks the desperate depth of wickedness into which those apostate spirits are sunk; as in their first defection they had no tempter, so their sinfulness is still their own.

Thirdly, That he is the father of it, autou.

1. He is the father of every lie; not only of the lies which he himself suggests, but of those which others speak; he is the author and founder of all lies. When men speak lies, they speak from him, and as his mouth; they come originally from him, and bear his image.

2. He is the father of every liar; so it may be understood. God made men with a disposition to truth. It is congruous to reason and natural light, to the order of our faculties and the laws of society, that we should speak truth; but the devil, the author of sin, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, has so corrupted the nature of man that the wicked are said to be estranged from the womb, speaking lies (Ps 58:3); he has taught them with their tongues to use deceit, Ro 3:13. He is the father of liars, who begat them, who trained them up in the way of lying, whom they resemble and obey, and with whom all liars shall have their portion for ever.

45 And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.

Christ, having thus proved all murderers and all liars to be the devil's children, leaves it to the consciences of his hearers to say, Thou art the man. But he comes in the Joh 8:45-58 to assist them in the application of it to themselves; he does not call them liars, but shows them that they were no friends to truth, and therein resembled him who abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Two things he charges upon them:--

1. That they would not believe the word of truth (Joh 8:45), hoti ten aletheian lego, ou pisteuete moi.

Two ways it may be taken;--

[1.] "Though I tell you the truth, yet you will not believe me (hoti), that I do so." Though he gave abundant proof of his commission from God, and his affection to the children of men, yet they would not believe that he told them the truth. Now was truth fallen in the street, Isa 59:14,15. The greatest truths with some gained not the least credit; for they rebelled against the light, Job 24:13. Or,

[2.] Because I tell you the truth (so we read it) therefore you believe me not. They would not receive him, nor entertain him as a prophet, because he told them some unpleasing truths which they did not care to hear, told them the truth concerning themselves and their own case, showed them their faces in a glass that would not flatter them; therefore they would not believe a word he said. Miserable is the case of those to whom the light of divine truth is become a torment.

46 Which of you convinceth me of sin ? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

Now, to show them the unreasonableness of their infidelity, he condescends to put the matter to this fair issue, Joh 8:46. He and they being contrary, either he was in an error or they were. Now take it either way.

[1.] If he were in an error, why did they not convince him? The falsehood of pretended prophets was discovered either by the ill tendency of their doctrines (De 13:2), or by the ill tenour of their conversation: You shall

know them by their fruits; but (saith Christ) which of you, you of the sanhedrim, that take upon you to judge of prophets, which of you convinceth me of sin? They accused him of some of the worst of crimes--gluttony, drunkenness, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, confederacy with Satan, and what not. But their accusations were malicious groundless calumnies, and such as every one that knew him knew to be utterly false. When they had done their utmost by trick and artifice, subornation and perjury, to prove some crime upon him, the very judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him. The sin he here challenges them to convict him of is, First, An inconsistent doctrine. They had heard his testimony; could they show any thing in it absurd or unworthy to be believed, any contradiction either of himself or of the scriptures, or any corruption of truth or manners insinuated by his doctrine? Joh 18:20. Or, Secondly, An incongruous conversation: "Which of you can justly charge me with any thing, in word or deed, unbecoming a prophet?" See the wonderful condescension of our Lord Jesus, that he demanded not credit any further than the allowed motives of credibility supported his demands. See Jer 2:5,31,Mic 6:3. Ministers may hence learn,

1. To walk so circumspectly as that it may not be in the power of their most strict observers to convince them of sin, that the ministry be not blamed. The only way not to be convicted of sin is not to sin.

2. To be willing to admit a scrutiny; though we are confident in many things that we are in the right, yet we should be willing to have it tried whether we be not in the wrong. See Job 6:24.

[2.] If they were in an error, why were they not convinced by him? "If I say the truth, why do you not believe me? If you cannot convince me of error, you must own that I say the truth, and why do you not then give me credit? Why will you not deal with me upon trust?" Note, If men would but enquire into the reason of their infidelity, and examine why they do not believe that which they cannot gainsay, they would find themselves reduced to such absurdities as they could not but be ashamed of; for it will be found that the reason why we believe not in Jesus Christ is because we are not willing to part with our sins, and deny ourselves, and serve God faithfully; that we are

not of the Christian religion, because we would not indeed be of any, and unbelief of our Redeemer resolves itself into a downright rebellion against our Creator.

47 He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Another thing charged upon them is that they would not hear the words of God (Joh 8:47), which further shows how groundless their claim of relation to God was. Here is,

(1.) A doctrine laid down: He that is of God heareth God's words; that is,

[1.] He is willing and ready to hear them, is sincerely desirous to know what the mind of God is, and cheerfully embraces whatever he knows to be so. God's words have such an authority over, and such an agreeableness with all that are born of God, that they meet them, as the child Samuel did, with, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Let the word of the Lord come.

[2.] He apprehends and discerns them, he so hears them as to perceive the voice of God in them, which the natural man does not, 1Co 2:14. He that is of God is soon aware of the discoveries he makes of himself of the nearness of his name (Ps 75:1), as they of the family know the master's tread, and the master's knock, and open to him immediately (Lu 12:36), as the sheep know the voice of their shepherd from that of a stranger, Joh 10:4,5,So 2:8.

(2.) The application of this doctrine, for the conviction of these unbelieving Jews: You therefore hear them not; that is, "You heed not, you understand not, you believe not, the words of God, nor care to hear them, because you are not of God. Your being thus deaf and dead to the words of God is a plain evidence that you are not of God." It is in his word that God manifests himself and is present among us; we are therefore reckoned to be well or ill affected to his word; see 2Co 4:4,1Jo 4:6. Or, their not being of God was the reason why they did not profitably hear the words of God, which Christ spoke; they did not understand and believe him, not because the things themselves were obscure or wanted evidence, but because the hearers were

not of God, were not born again. If the word of the kingdom do not bring forth fruit, the blame is to be laid upon the soil, not upon the seed, as appears by the parable of the sower, Mt 13:3.

Before Abraham Was, I Am

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

The malice of hell breaking out in the base language which the unbelieving Jews gave to our Lord Jesus. Hitherto they had cavilled at his doctrine, and had made invidious remarks upon it; but, having shown themselves uneasy when he complained (Joh 8:43,47) that they would not hear him, now at length they fall to downright railing, Joh 8:48. They were not the common people, but, as it should seem, the scribes and Pharisees, the men of consequence, who, when they saw themselves convicted of an obstinate infidelity, scornfully turned off the conviction with this: Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? See here, see it and wonder, see it and tremble,

1. What was the blasphemous character commonly given of our Lord Jesus among the wicked Jews, to which they refer.

(a) That he was a Samaritan, that is, that he was an enemy to their church and nation, one that they hated and could not endure. Thus they exposed him to the ill will of the people, with whom you could not put a man into a worse name than to call him a Samaritan. If he had been a Samaritan, he had been punishable, by the beating of the rebels (as they called it), for coming into the temple. They had often enough called him a Galilean--a mean man; but as if that were not enough, though it contradicted the other, they will have him a Samaritan--a bad man. The Jews to this day call the Christians, in reproach, Cuthæi-Samaritans. Note, Great endeavours have in all ages been used to make good people odious by putting them under black characters, and it is easy to run that down with a crowd and a cry which is once put into an ill name. Perhaps because Christ justly inveighed against the pride and tyranny of the priests and elders, they hereby suggest that he aimed at the ruin of their church, in aiming at its reformation, and was falling away to the Samaritans.

(b) That he had a devil. Either,

[1.] That he was in league with the devil. Having reproached his doctrine as tending to Samaritanism, here they reflect upon his miracles as done in combination with Beelzebub. Or, rather

[2.] That he was possessed with a devil, that he was a melancholy man, whose brain was clouded, or a mad man, whose brain was heated, and that which he said was no more to be believed than the extravagant rambles of a distracted man, or one in a delirium. Thus the divine revelation of those things which are above the discovery of reason have been often branded with the charge of enthusiasm, and the prophet was called a mad fellow, 2Ki 9:11,Ho 9:7. The inspiration of the Pagan oracles and prophets was indeed a frenzy, and those that had it were for the time beside themselves; but that which was truly divine was not so. Wisdom is justified of her children, as wisdom indeed.

2. How they undertook to justify this character, and applied it to the present occasion: Say we not well that thou art so? One would think that his excellent discourses should have altered their opinion of him, and have made them recant; but, instead of this, their hearts were more hardened and their prejudices confirmed. They value themselves on their enmity to Christ, as if they had never spoken better than when they spoke the worst they could of Jesus Christ. Those have arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness who avow their impiety, repeat what they should retract, and justify themselves in that for which they ought to condemn themselves. It is bad to say and do ill, but it is worse to stand to it; I do well to be angry. When Christ spoke with so much boldness against the sins of the great men, and thereby incensed them against him, those who were sensible of no interest but what is secular and sensual concluded him beside himself, for they thought none but a madman would lose his preferment, and hazard his life, for his religion and conscience.

49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me.

1. He denies their charge against him: I have not a devil; as Paul (Ac 26:25), I am not mad. The imputation is unjust; "I am neither actuated by a devil,

nor in compact with one;" and this he evidenced by what he did against the devil's kingdom. He takes no notice of their calling him a Samaritan, because it was a calumny that disproved itself, it was a personal reflection, and not worth taking notice of: but saying he had a devil reflected on his commission, and therefore he answered that. St. Augustine gives this gloss upon his not saying any thing to their calling him a Samaritan--that he was indeed that good Samaritan spoken of in the parable, Lu 10:33.

2. He asserts the sincerity of his own intentions: But I honour my Father. They suggested that he took undue honours to himself, and derogated from the honour due to God only, both which he denies here, in saying that he made it his business to honour his Father, and him only. It also proves that he had not a devil; for, if he had, he would not honour God. Note, Those who can truly way that they make it their constant care to honour God are sufficiently armed against the censures and reproaches of men.

3. He complains of the wrong they did him by their calumnies: You do dishonour me. By this it appears that, as man, he had a tender sense of the disgrace and indignity done him; reproach was a sword in his bones, and yet he underwent it for our salvation. It is the will of God that all men should honour the Son, yet there are many that dishonour him; such a contradiction is there in the carnal mind to the will of God. Christ honoured his Father so as never man did, and yet was himself dishonoured so as never man was; for, though God has promised that those who honour him he will honour, he never promised that men should honour them.

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

He clears himself from the imputation of vain glory, in saying this concerning himself, Joh 8:50.

See here,

(a) His contempt of worldly honour: I seek not mine own glory. He did not aim at this in what he had said of himself or against his persecutors; he did not court the applause of men, nor covet preferment in the world, but industriously declined both. He did not seek his own glory distinct from his Father's, nor had any separate interest of his own. For men to search their own glory is not glory indeed (Pr 25:27), but rather their shame to be so

much out in their aim. This comes in here as a reason why Christ made so light of their reproaches: "You do dishonour me, but cannot disturb me, shall not disquiet me, for I seek not my own glory." Note, Those who are dead to men's praise can safely bear their contempt.

(b) His comfort under worldly dishonour: There is one that seeketh and judgeth. In two things Christ made it appear that he sought not his own glory; and here he tells us what satisfied him as to both.

[1.] He did not court men's respect, but was indifferent to it, and in reference to this he saith, "There is one that seeketh, that will secure and advance, my interest in the esteem and affections of the people, while I am in no care about it." Note, God will seek their honour that do not seek their own; for before honour is humility.

[2.] He did not revenge men's affronts, but was unconcerned at them, and in reference to this he saith, "There is one that judgeth, that will vindicate my honour, and severely reckon with those that trample upon it." Probably he refers here to the judgments that were coming upon the nation of the Jews for the indignities they did to the Lord Jesus. See Ps 37:13-15. I heard not, for thou wilt hear. If we undertake to judge for ourselves, whatever damage we sustain, our recompence is in our own hands; but if we be, as we ought to be, humble appellants and patient expectants, we shall find, to our comfort, there is one that judgeth.

51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

The doctrine of the immortality of believers laid down, Joh 8:51. It is ushered in with the usual solemn preface, Verily, verily, I say unto you, which commands both attention and assent, and this is what he says, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.

Here we have,

1 The character of a believer: he is one that keeps the sayings of the Lord Jesus, ton logon ton emon--my word; that word of mine which I have delivered to you; this we must not only receive, but keep; not only have, but

hold. We must keep it in mind and memory, keep it in love and affection, so keep it as in nothing to violate it or go contrary to it, keep it without spot (1Ti 6:14), keep it as a trust committed to us, keep in it as our way, keep to it as our rule.

2 The privilege of a believer: He shall by no means see death for ever; so it is in the original. Not as if the bodies of believers were secured from the stroke of death. No, even the children of the Most High must die like men, and the followers of Christ have been, more than other men, in deaths often, and killed all the day long; how then is this promise made good that they shall not see death?

Answer,

(1.) The property of death is so altered to them that they do not see it as death, they do not see the terror of death, it is quite taken off; their sight does not terminate in death, as theirs does who live by sense; no, they look so clearly, so comfortably, through death, and beyond death, and are so taken up with their state on the other side death, that they overlook death, and see it not.

(2.) The power of death is so broken that though there is no remedy, but they must see death, yet they shall not see death for ever, shall not be always shut up under its arrests, the day will come when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

(3.) They are perfectly delivered from eternal death, shall not be hurt of the second death. That is the death especially meant here, that death which is for ever, which is opposed to everlasting life; this they shall never see, for they shall never come into condemnation; they shall have their everlasting lot where there will be no more death, where they cannot die any more, Lu 20:36. Though now they cannot avoid seeing death, and tasting it too, yet they shall shortly be there where it will be seen no more for ever, Ex 14:13.

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil.
Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my
saying, he shall never taste of death.

"Thou art now self-convicted; only a demoniac could speak so; the most illustrious of our fathers are dead, and Thou promisest exemption from death to anyone who will keep Thy saying! pray, who art Thou?"

53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?

54 Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

55 yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

In his answer he insists not upon his own testimony concerning himself, but waives it as not sufficient nor conclusive (Joh 8:54): If I honour myself, my honour is nothing, ean ego doxazo--if I glorify myself. Note, Self-honour is no honour; and the affectation of glory is both the forfeiture and the defeasance of it: it is not glory (Pr 25:27), but so great a reproach that there is no sin which men are more industrious to hide than this; even he that most affects praise would not be thought to do it. Honour of our own creating is a mere chimera, has nothing in it, and therefore is called vain-glory. Self-admirers are self-deceivers. Our Lord Jesus was not one that honoured himself, as they represented him; he was crowned by him who is the fountain of honour, and glorified not himself to be made a high priest, Heb 5:4,5.

He refers himself to his Father, God; and to their father, Abraham.

To his Father, God: It is my Father that honoureth me. By this he means,

[1.] That he derived from his Father all the honour he now claimed; he had commanded them to believe in him, to follow him, and to keep his word, all which put an honour upon him; but it was the Father that laid help upon him, that lodged all fulness in him, that sanctified him, and sealed him, and sent him into the world to receive all the honours due to the Messiah, and this justified him in all these demands of respect.

[2.] That he depended upon his Father for all the honour he further looked for. He courted not the applauses of the age, but despised them; for his eye

and heart were upon the glory which the Father had promised him, and which he had with the Father before the world was.

First, He here takes occasion to show the reason of their incredulity, notwithstanding this testimony--and this was their unacquaintedness with God; as if he had said, "But why should I talk to you of my Father's honouring me, when he is one you know nothing of? You say of him that he is your God, yet you have not known him." Here observe,

a. The profession they made of relation to God: "You say that he is your God, the God you have chosen, and are in covenant with; you say that you are Israel; but all are not so indeed that are of Israel," Ro 9:6. Note, Many pretend to have an interest in God, and say that he is theirs, who yet have no just cause to say so. Those who called themselves the temple of the Lord, having profaned the excellency of Jacob, did but trust in lying words. What will it avail us to say, He is our God, if we be not in sincerity his people, nor such as he will own? Christ mentions here their profession of relation to God, as that which was an aggravation of their unbelief. All people will honour those whom their God honours; but these Jews, who said that the Lord was their God, studied how to put the utmost disgrace upon one upon whom their God put honour. Note, The Profession we make of a covenant relation to God, and an interest in him, if it be not improved by us will be improved against us.

b. Their ignorance of him, and estrangement from him, notwithstanding this profession: Yet you have not known him.

(1) You know him not at all. These Pharisees were so taken up with the study of their traditions concerning things foreign and trifling that they never minded the most needful and useful knowledge; like the false prophets of old, who caused people to forget God's name by their dreams, Jer 23:27.

(2) You know him not aright, but mistake concerning him; and this is as bad as not knowing him at all, or worse. Men may be able to dispute subtly concerning God, and yet may think him such a one as themselves, and not know him. You say that he is yours, and it is natural to us to desire to know

our own, yet you know him not. Note, There are many who claim-kindred to God who yet have no acquaintance with him. It is only the name of God which they have learned to talk of, and to hector with; but for the nature of God, his attributes and perfections, and relations to his creatures, they know nothing of the matter; we speak this to their shame, 1Co 15:34. Multitudes satisfy themselves, but deceive themselves, with a titular relation to an unknown God. This Christ charges upon the Jews here,

[a.] To show how vain and groundless their pretensions of relation to God were. "You say that he is yours, but you give yourselves the lie, for it is plain that you do not know him;" and we reckon that a cheat is effectually convicted if it be found that he is ignorant of the persons he pretends alliance to.

[b.] To show the true reason why they were not wrought upon by Christ's doctrine and miracles. They knew not God; and therefore perceived not the image of God, nor the voice of God in Christ. Note, The reason why men receive not the gospel of Christ is because they have not the knowledge of God. Men submit not to the righteousness of Christ because they are ignorant of God's righteousness, Ro 10:3. They that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, are put together, 2Th 1:8.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

That is, "Abraham having received a promise, that the Messias should come of his seed, he exceedingly rejoiced to see the day of my coming in the flesh, though afar off, with the eye of his faith, and in a figure, in his sacrificed son Isaac: and this sight of his faith was so transporting, that he leaped for joy."

Learn hence, That a strong faith gives such a clear sight of Christ (though at a distance) as produceth an holy delight and rejoicing in him.

Christ refers them to their father, whom they boasted so much of a relation to, and that was Abraham, and this closes the discourse.

Christ asserts Abraham's prospect of him, and respect to him: Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad, Joh 8:56. And

by this he proves that he was not at all out of the way when he made himself greater than Abraham. Two things he here speaks of as instances of that patriarch's respect to the promised Messiah:--

First, The ambition he had to see his day: He rejoiced, egalliasto--he leaped at it. The word, though it commonly signifies rejoicing, must here signify a transport of desire rather than of joy, for otherwise the latter part of Joh 8:56 would be a tautology; he saw it, and was glad. He reached out, or stretched himself forth, that he might see my day; as Zaccheus, that ran before, and climbed the tree, to see Jesus. The notices he had received of the Messiah to come had raised in him an expectation of something great, which he earnestly longed to know more of. The dark intimation of that which is considerable puts men upon enquiry, and makes them earnestly ask Who? and What? and Where? and When? and How? And thus the prophets of the Old Testament, having a general idea of a grace that should come, searched diligently (1Pe 1:10), and Abraham was as industrious herein as any of them. God told him of a land that he would give his posterity, and of the wealth and honour he designed them (Ge 15:14); but he never leaped thus to see that day, as he did to see the day of the Son of man. He could not look with so much indifferency upon the promised seed as he did upon the promised land; in that he was, but to the other he could not be, contentedly a stranger.

Note, Those who rightly know any thing of Christ cannot but be earnestly desirous to know more of him. Those who discern the dawning of the light of the Sun of righteousness cannot but wish to see his rising. The mystery of redemption is that which angels desire to look into, much more should we, who are more immediately concerned in it. Abraham desired to see Christ's day, though it was at a great distance; but this degenerate seed of his discerned not his day, nor bade it welcome when it came. The appearing of Christ, which gracious souls love and long for, carnal hearts dread and loathe.

Secondly, The satisfaction he had in what he did see of it: He saw it, and was glad. Observe here,

1. How God gratified the pious desire of Abraham; he longed to see Christ's day, and he saw it. Though he saw it not so plainly, and fully, and distinctly as we now see it under the gospel, yet he saw something of it, more afterwards than he did at first. Note, To him that has, and to him that asks, shall be given; to him that uses and improves what he has, and that desires and prays for more of the knowledge of Christ, God will give more. But how did Abraham see Christ's day?

(a.) Some understand it of the sight he had of it in the other world. The separate soul of Abraham, when the veil of flesh was rent, saw the mysteries of the kingdom of God in heaven. Calvin mentions this sense of it, and does not much disallow it. Note, The longings of gracious souls after Jesus Christ will be fully satisfied when they come to heaven, and not till then. But,

(b.) It is more commonly understood of some sight he had of Christ's day in this world. They that received not the promises, yet saw them afar off, Heb 11:13. Balaam saw Christ, but not now, not nigh. There is room to conjecture that Abraham had some vision of Christ and his day, for his own private satisfaction, which is not, nor must be, recorded in his story, like that of Daniel's, which must be shut up, and sealed unto the time of the end, Da 12:4. Christ knew what Abraham saw better than Moses did. But there are divers things recorded in which Abraham saw more of that which he longed to see than he did when the promise was first made to him. He saw in Melchizedek one made like unto the Son of God, and a priest for ever; he saw an appearance of Jehovah, attended with two angels, in the plains of Mamre. In the prevalency of his intercession for Sodom he saw a specimen of Christ's intercession; in the casting out of Ishmael, and the establishment of the covenant with Isaac, he saw a figure of the gospel day, which is Christ's day; for these things were an allegory. In offering Isaac, and the ram instead of Isaac, he saw a double type of the great sacrifice; and his calling the place Jehovah-jireh--It shall be seen, intimates that he saw something more in it than others did, which time would produce; and in making his servant put his hand under his thigh, when he swore, he had a regard to the Messiah.

2. How Abraham entertained these discoveries of Christ's day, and bade them welcome: He saw, and was glad. He was glad of what he saw of God's

favour to himself, and glad of what he foresaw of the mercy God had in store for the world. Perhaps this refers to Abraham's laughing when God assured him of a son by Sarah (Ge 17:16,17), for that was not a laughter of distrust as Sarah's but of joy; in that promise he saw Christ's day, and it filled him with joy unspeakable. Thus he embraced the promises. Note, A believing sight of Christ and his day will put gladness into the heart. No joy like the joy of faith; we are never acquainted with true pleasure till we are acquainted with Christ.

57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

The Jews cavil at this, and reproach him for it (Joh 8:57): Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Here, First, They suppose that if Abraham saw him and his day he also had seen Abraham, which yet was not a necessary innuendo, but this turn of his words would best serve to expose him; yet it was true that Christ had seen Abraham, and had talked with him as a man talks with his friend. Secondly, They suppose it a very absurd thing for him to pretend to have seen Abraham, who was dead so many ages before he was born. The state of the dead is an invisible state; but here they ran upon the old mistake, understanding that corporally which Christ spoke spiritually. Now this gave them occasion to despise his youth, and to upbraid him with it, as if he were but of yesterday, and knew nothing: Thou art not yet fifty years old. They might as well have said, Thou art not forty; for he was now but thirty-two or thirty-three years old. As to this, Irenæus, one of the first fathers, with this passage supports the tradition which he says he had from some that had conversed with St. John, that our Saviour lived to be fifty years old, which he contends for, Advers. Hæres. lib. 2, cap. 39, 40. See what little credit is to be given to tradition; and, as to this here, the Jews spoke at random; some year they would mention, and therefore pitched upon one that they thought he was far enough short of; he did not look to be forty, but they were sure he could not be fifty, much less contemporary with Abraham. Old age is reckoned to begin at fifty (Nu 4:47), so that they meant no more than this, "Thou art not to be reckoned an old man; many of us are much thy seniors, and yet pretend not to have seen Abraham." Some think that his countenance was so altered, with grief and watching, that, together with the gravity of his aspect, it made him look like a man of fifty years old: his visage was so marred, Isa 52:14.

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Verily, verily. This is an expression used only in John. It is a strong affirmation denoting particularly the great importance of what was about to be affirmed. Jn 3:5.

Before Abraham was. Before Abraham lived.

I am. In Ps 90:2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Applied to God, it denotes continued existence without respect to time, so far as he is concerned. We divide time into the past, the present, and the future. The expression, applied to God, denotes that he does not measure his existence in this manner, but that the word by which we express the present denotes his continued and unchanging existence. Hence he assumes it as his name, "I AM," and "I AM THAT I AM," Ex 3:14. Comp. Isa 44:6, 47:8. There is a remarkable similarity between the expression employed by Jesus in this place and that used in Exodus to denote the name of God. The manner in which Jesus used it would strikingly suggest the application of the same language to God. The question here was about his pre-existence.

The objection of the Jews was that he was not fifty years old, and could not, therefore, have seen Abraham. Jesus replied to that that he existed before Abraham. As in his human nature he was not yet fifty years old, and could not, as a man, have existed before Abraham, this declaration must be referred to another nature; and the passage proves that, while he was a man, he was also endowed with another nature existing before Abraham, and to which he applied the term (familiar to the Jews as expressive of the existence of God) I AM; and this declaration corresponds to the affirmation of John (Jn 1:1), that he was in the beginning with God, and was God. This affirmation of Jesus is one of the proofs on which John relies to prove that he was the Messiah (Jn 20:31), to establish which was the design of writing this book.

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

This great word ended the dispute abruptly, and put a period to it: they could bear to hear no more from him, and he needed to say no more to them,

having witnessed this good confession, which was sufficient to support all his claims. One would think that Christ's discourse, in which shone so much both of grace and glory, should have captivated them all; but their inveterate prejudice against the holy spiritual doctrine and law of Christ, which were so contrary to their pride and worldliness, baffled all the methods of conviction. Now was fulfilled that prophecy (Mal 3:1,2), that when the messenger of the covenant should come to his temple they would not abide the day of his coming, because he would be like a refiner's fire. Observe here,

First, How they were enraged at Christ for what he said: They took up stones to cast at him, Joh 8:59. Perhaps they looked upon him as a blasphemer, and such were indeed to be stoned (Le 24:16); but they must be first legally tried and convicted. Farewell justice and order if every man pretend to execute a law at his pleasure. Besides, they had said but just now that he was a distracted crack-brained man, and if so it was against all reason and equity to punish him as a malefactor for what he said. They took up stones. Dr. Lightfoot will tell you how they came to have stones so ready in the temple; they had workmen at this time repairing the temple, or making some additions, and the pieces of stone which they hewed off served for this purpose. See here the desperate power of sin and Satan in and over the children of disobedience. Who would think that ever there should be such wickedness as this in men, such an open and daring rebellion against one that undeniably proved himself to be the Son of God? Thus every one has a stone to throw at his holy religion, Ac 28:22.

Secondly, How he made his escape out of their hands. 1. He absconded; Jesus hid himself; ekrybe--he was hid, either by the crowd of those that wished well to him, to shelter him (he that ought to have been upon a throne, high and lifted up, is content to be lost in a crowd); or perhaps he concealed himself behind some of the walls or pillars of the temple (in the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me, Ps 27:5); or by a divine power, casting a mist before their eyes, he made himself invisible to them. When the wicked rise a man is hidden, a wise and good man, Pr 28:12,28. Not that Christ was afraid or ashamed to stand by what he had said, but his hour was not yet

come, and he would countenance the flight of his ministers and people in times of persecution, when they are called to it. The Lord hid Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer 36:26. 2. He departed, he went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, undiscovered, and so passed by. This was not a cowardly inglorious flight, nor such as argued either guilt or fear. It was foretold concerning him that he should not fail nor be discouraged, Isa 42:4. But,

(1.) It was an instance of his power over his enemies, and that they could do no more against him than he gave them leave to do; by which it appears that when afterwards he was taken in their pits he offered himself, Joh 10:18. They now thought they had made sure of him and yet he passed through the midst of them, either their eyes being blinded or their hands tied, and thus he left them to fume, like a lion disappointed of his prey.

(2.) It was an instance of his prudent provision for his own safety, when he knew that his work was not done, nor his testimony finished; thus he gave an example to his own rule, When they persecute you in one city flee to another; nay, if occasion be, to a wilderness, for so Elijah did (1Ki 19:3,4), and the woman, Re 12:6. When they took up loose stones to throw at Christ, he could have commanded the fixed stones, which did cry out of the wall against them, to avenge his cause, or the earth to open and swallow them up; but he chose to accommodate himself to the state he was in, to make the example imitable by the prudence of his followers, without a miracle.

(3.) It was a righteous deserting of those who (worse than the Gadarenes, who prayed him to depart) stoned him from among them. Christ will not long stay with those who bid him be gone. Christ did again visit the temple after this; as one loth to depart, he bade oft farewell; but at last he abandoned it for ever, and left it desolate. Christ now went through the midst of the Jews, and none of them courted his stay, nor stirred up himself to take hold of him, but were even content to let him go.

Note, God never forsakes any till they have first provoked him to withdraw, and will have none of him.

Note, Christ's departures from a church, or a particular soul, are often secret, and not soon taken notice of. As the kingdom of God comes not, so it goes

not, with observation. See Jdg 16:20. Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Thus it was with these forsaken Jews, God left them, and they never missed him.

John-9

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind

1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

The notice which our Lord Jesus took of the piteous case of this poor blind man (Joh 9:1): As Jesus passed by he saw a man which was blind from his birth. The first words seem to refer to the last of the foregoing chapter, and countenance the opinion of those who in the harmony place this story immediately after that. There it was said, paregen--he passed by, and here, without so much as repeating him name (though our translators supply it) kai parago--and as he passed by.

1. Though the Jews had so basely abused him, both by word and deed gave him the highest provocation imaginable, yet he did not miss any opportunity of doing good among them, nor take up a resolution, as justly he might have done, never to have favoured them with any good offices. The cure of this blind man was a kindness to the public, enabling him to work for his living who before was a charge and burden to the neighbourhood. It is noble, and generous, and Christ-like, to be willing to serve the public, even when we are slighted and disobliged by them, or think ourselves so. Though he was in his flight from a threatening danger, and escaping for his life, yet he willingly halted and staid awhile to show mercy to this poor man. We make more haste than good speed when we out-run opportunities of doing good.

3. When the Pharisees drove Christ from them, he went to this poor blind beggar. Some of the ancients make this a figure of the bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, who sat in darkness, when the Jews had rejected it, and driven it from them.

4. Christ took this poor blind man in his way, and cured him in transitu--as he passed by. Thus should we take occasions of doing good, even as we pass by, wherever we are.

Now,

(a) The condition of this poor man was very sad. He was blind, and had been so from his birth. If the light is sweet, how melancholy must it needs be for a man, all his days, to eat in darkness! He that is blind has no enjoyment of the light, but he that is born blind has no idea of it. Methinks such a one would give a great deal to have his curiosity satisfied with but one day's sight of light and colours, shapes and figures, though he were never to see them more. Why is the light of life given to one that is in this misery, that is deprived of the light of the sun, whose way is thus hid, and whom God hath thus hedged in? Job 3:20. Let us bless God that it was not our case. The eye is one of the most curious parts of the body, its structure exceedingly nice and fine. In the formation of animals, it is said to be the first part that appears distinctly discernible. What a mercy is it that there was no miscarriage in the making of ours! Christ cured many that were blind by disease or accident, but here he cured one that was born blind.

[1.] That he might give an instance of his power to help in the most desperate cases, and to relieve when none else can.

[2.] That he might give a specimen of the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those that were by nature blind.

(b) The compassions of our Lord Jesus towards him were very tender. He saw him; that is, he took cognizance of his case, and looked upon him with concern. When God is about to work deliverance, he is said to see the affliction; so Christ saw this poor man. Others saw him, but not as he did. This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him, and anticipated both his prayers and expectations with a surprising cure. Christ is often found of those that seek him not, nor see him, Isa 65:1. And, if we know or apprehend

any thing of Christ, it is because we were first known of him (Ga 4:9) and apprehended by him.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

The discourse between Christ and his disciples concerning this man. When he departed out of the temple they went along with him: for these were they that continued with him in his temptations, and followed him whithersoever he went; and they lost nothing by their adherence to him, but gained experience abundantly. Observe,

1 The question which the disciples put to their Master upon this blind man's case, Joh 9:2. When Christ looked upon him, they had an eye to him too; Christ's compassion should kindle ours. It is probable that Christ told them this poor man was born blind, or they knew it by common fame; but they did not move Christ to heal him. Instead of this, they started a very odd question concerning him: Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Now this question of theirs was,

(a) Uncharitably censorious. They take it for granted that this extraordinary calamity was the punishment of some uncommon wickedness, and that this man was a sinner above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem, Lu 13:4. For the barbarous people to infer, Surely this man is a murderer, was not so strange; but it was inexcusable in them, who knew the scriptures, who had read that all things come alike to all, and knew that it was adjudged in Job's case that the greatest sufferers are not therefore to be looked upon as the greatest sinners. The grace of repentance calls our own afflictions punishments, but the grace of charity calls the afflictions of others trials, unless the contrary is very evident.

(b) It was unnecessarily curious. Concluding this calamity to be inflicted for some very heinous crime, they ask, Who were the criminals, this man or his parents? And what was this to them? Or what good would it do them to know it? We are apt to be more inquisitive concerning other people's sins than concerning our own; whereas, it is more our concern to know wherefore God contends with us than wherefore he contends with others; for to judge ourselves is our sin. They enquire,

[1.] Whether this man was punished thus for some sin of his own, either committed or foreseen before his birth. Some think that the disciples were tainted with the Pythagorean notion of the pre-existence of souls, and their transmigration from one body to another. Was this man's soul condemned to the dungeon of this blind body to punish it for some great sin committed in another body which it had before animated? The Pharisees seem to have had the same opinion of his case when they said, Thou wast altogether born in sin (Joh 9:34), as if all those, and those only, were born in sin whom nature had stigmatized. Or,

[2.] Whether he was punished for the wickedness of his parents, which God sometimes visits upon the children. It is a good reason why parents should take heed of sin, lest their children smart for it when they are gone. Let not us thus be cruel to our own, as the ostrich in the wilderness. Perhaps the disciples asked this, not as believing that this was the punishment of some actual sin of his own or his parents, but Christ having intimated to another patient that his sin was the cause of this impotency (Joh 5:14), "Master," say they, "whose sin is the cause of this impotency?" Being at a loss what construction to put upon this providence, they desire to be informed. The equity of God's dispensations is always certain, for his righteousness is as the great mountains, but not always to be accounted for, for his judgments are a great deep.

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Christ's answer to this question. He was always apt to teach, and to rectify his disciples' mistakes.

He gives the reason of this poor man's blindness: "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but he was born blind, and has continued so to this day, that now at last the works of God should be made manifest in him," Joh 9:3. Here Christ, who perfectly knew the secret springs of the divine counsels, told them two things concerning such uncommon calamities:--

[1.] That they are not always inflicted as punishments of sin. The sinfulness of the whole race of mankind does indeed justify God in all the miseries of human life; so that those who have the least share of them must say that God is kind, and those who have the largest share must not

say that he is unjust; but many are made much more miserable than others in this life who are not at all more sinful. Not but that this man was a sinner, and his parents sinners, but is was not any uncommon guilt that God had an eye to in inflicting this upon him. Note, We must take heed of judging any to be great sinners merely because they are great sufferers, lest we be found, not only persecuting those whom God has smitten (Ps 69:26), but accusing those whom he has justified, and condemning those for whom Christ died, which is daring and dangerous, Ro 8:33,34.

[2.] That they are sometimes intended purely for the glory of God, and the manifesting of his works. God has a sovereignty over all his creatures and an exclusive right in them, and may make them serviceable to his glory in such a way as he thinks fit, in doing or suffering; and if God be glorified, either by us or in us, we were not made in vain. This man was born blind, and it was worth while for him to be so, and to continue thus long dark, that the works of God might be manifest in him.

That is, First, That the attributes of God might be made manifest in him: his justice in making sinful man liable to such grievous calamities; his ordinary power and goodness in supporting a poor man under such a grievous and tedious affliction, especially that his extraordinary power and goodness might be manifested in curing him. Note, The difficulties of providence, otherwise unaccountable, may be resolved into this--God intends in them to show himself, to declare his glory, to make himself to be taken notice of. Those who regard him not in the ordinary course of things are sometimes alarmed by things extraordinary. How contentedly then may a good man be a loser in his comforts, while he is sure that thereby God will be one way or other a gainer in his glory!

Secondly, That the counsels of God concerning the Redeemer might be manifested in him. He was born blind that our Lord Jesus might have the honour of curing him, and might therein prove himself sent of God to be the true light to the world. Thus the fall of man was permitted, and the blindness that followed it, that the works of God might be manifest in opening the eyes of the blind. It was now a great while since this man was born blind, and yet it never appeared till now why he was so.

Note, The intentions of Providence commonly do not appear till a great while after the event, perhaps many years after. The sentences in the book of providence are sometimes long, and you must read a great way before you can apprehend the sense of them.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

He gives the reason of his own forwardness and readiness to help and heal him, Joh 9:4,5. It was not for ostentation, but in pursuance of his undertaking: I must work the works of him that sent me (of which this is one), while it is day, and working time; the night cometh, the period of that day, when no man can work. This is not only a reason shy Christ was constant in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, but why particularly he did this, though it was the sabbath day, on which works of necessity might be done, and he proves this to be a work of necessity.

[1.] It was his Father's will: I must work the works of him that sent me. Note, First, The Father, when he sent his Son into the world, gave him work to do; he did not come into the world to take state, but to do business; whom God sends he employs, for he sends none to be idle. Secondly, The works Christ had to do were the works of him that sent him, not only appointed by him, but done for him; he was a worker together with God. Thirdly, He was pleased to lay himself under the strongest obligations to do the business he was sent about: I must work. He engaged his heart, in the covenant of redemption, to draw near, and approach to God as Mediator, Jer 30:21. Shall we be willing to be loose, when Christ was willing to be bound? Fourthly, Christ, having laid himself under obligations to do his work, laid out himself with the utmost vigour and industry in his work. He worked the works he had to do; did ergazesthai ta erga--made a business of that which was his business. It is not enough to look at our work, and talk over it, but we must work it.

[2.] Now was his opportunity: I must work while it is day, while the time lasts which is appointed to work in, and while the light lasts which is given to work by. Christ himself had his day. First, All the business of the mediatorial kingdom was to be done within the limits of time, and in this world; for at the end of the world, when time shall be no more, the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, and the mystery

of God finished. Secondly, all the work he had to do in his own person here on earth was to be done before his death; the time of his living in this world is the day here spoken of. Note, The time of our life is our day, in which it concerns us to do the work of the day. Day-time is the proper season for work (Ps 104:22,23); during the day of life we must be busy, not waste day-time, nor play by day-light; it will be time enough to rest when our day is done, for it is but a day.

[3.] The period of his opportunity was at hand, and therefore he would be busy; The night comes when no man can work. Note, The consideration of our death approaching should quicken us to improve all the opportunities of life, both for doing and getting good. The night comes, it will come certainly, may come suddenly, is coming nearer and nearer. We cannot compute how nigh our sun is, it may go down at noon; nor can we promise ourselves a twilight between the day of life and the night of death. When the night comes we cannot work, because the light afforded us to work by is extinguished; the grave is a land of darkness, and our work cannot be done in the dark. And, besides, our time allotted us for our work will then have expired; when our Master tied us to duty he tied us to time too; when night comes, call the labourers; we must then show our work, and receive according to the things done. In the world of retribution we are no longer probationers; it is too late to bid when the inch of candle is dropped. Christ uses this as an argument with himself to be diligent, though he had no opposition from within to struggle with; much more need have we to work upon our hearts these and the like considerations to quicken us.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

His business in the world was to enlighten it (Joh 9:5): As long as I am in the world, and that will not be long, I am the light of the world. He had said this before, Joh 8:12. He is the Sun of righteousness, that has not only light in his wings for those that can see, but healing in his wings, or beams, for those that are blind and cannot see, therein far exceeding in virtue that great light which rules by day. Christ would cure this blind man, the representative of a blind world, because he came to be the light of the world, not only to give light, but to give sight. Now this gives us,

First, A great encouragement to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing light. To whom should we look but to him? Which way should we turn our eyes, but to the light? We partake of the sun's light, and so we may of Christ's grace, without money and without price.

Secondly, A good example of usefulness in the world. What Christ saith of himself, he saith of his disciples: You are lights in the world, and, if so, Let your light shine. What were candles made for but to burn?

6 When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

The manner of the cure of the blind man, Joh 9:6,7. The circumstances of the miracle are singular, and no doubt significant. When he had thus spoken for the instruction of his disciples, and the opening of their understandings, he addressed himself to the opening of the blind man's eyes. He did not defer it till he could do it either more privately, for his greater safety, or more publicly, for his greater honour, or till the sabbath was past, when it would give less offence. What good we have opportunity of doing we should do quickly; he that will never do a good work till there is nothing to be objected against it will leave many a good work for ever undone, Ec 11:4. In the cure observe,

1 The preparation of the eye-salve. Christ spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle. He could have cured him with a word, as he did others, but he chose to do it in this way to show that he is not tied to any method. He made clay of his own spittle, because there was no water near; and he would teach us not to be nice or curious, but, when we have at any time occasion, to be willing to take up with that which is next hand, if it will but serve the turn. Why should we go about for that which may as well be had and done a nearer way? Christ's making use of his own spittle intimates that there is healing virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ; clay made of Christ's spittle was much more precious than the balm of Gilead.

2 The application of it to the place: He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. Or, as the margin reads it, He spread (epechrise), he daubed the clay upon the eyes of the blind man, like a tender physician; he did it himself with his own hand, though the patient was a beggar. Now Christ did this,

(a) To magnify his power in making a blind man to see by that method which one would think more likely to make a seeing man blind. Daubing clay on the eyes would close them up, but never open them. Note, The power of God often works by contraries; and he makes men feel their own blindness before he gives them sight.

(b) To give an intimation that it was his mighty hand, the very same that at first made man out of the clay; for by him God made the worlds, both the great world, and man the little world. Man was formed out of the clay, and moulded like the clay, and here Christ used the same materials to give sight to the body that at first he used to give being to it.

(c) To represent and typify the healing and opening of the eyes of the mind by the grace of Jesus Christ. The design of the gospel is to open men's eyes, Ac 26:18. Now the eye-salve that does the work is of Christ's preparing; it is made up, not as this, of his spittle, but of his blood, the blood and water that came out of his pierced side; we must come to Christ for the eye-salve, Re 3:18. He only is able, and he only is appointed, to make it up, Lu 4:18. The means used in this work are very weak and unlikely, and are made effectual only by the power of Christ; when a dark world was to be enlightened, and nations of blind souls were to have their eyes opened, God chose the foolish things, and weak, and despised, for the doing of it. And the method Christ takes is first to make men feel themselves blind, as this poor man did whose eyes were daubed with clay, and then to give them sight. Paul in his conversion was struck blind for three days, and then the scales fell from his eyes. The way prescribed for getting spiritual wisdom is, Let a man become a fool, that he may be wise, 1Co 3:18. We must be made uneasy with our blindness, as this man here, and then healed.

7 and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The directions given to the patient, Joh 9:7. His physician said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. Not that this washing was needful to effect the cure; but,

(a) Christ would hereby try his obedience, and whether he would with an implicit faith obey the orders of one he was so much a stranger to.

(b) He would likewise try how he stood affected to the tradition of the elders, which taught, and perhaps had taught him (for many that are blind are very knowing), that it was not lawful to wash the eyes, no not with spittle medicinally, on the sabbath day, much less to go to a pool of water to wash them.

(c) He would hereby represent the method of spiritual healing, in which, though the effect is owing purely to his power and grace, there is duty to be done by us. Go, search the scriptures, attend upon the ministry, converse with the wise; this is like washing in the pool of Siloam. Promised graces must be expected in the way of instituted ordinances. The waters of baptism were to those who had been trained up in darkness like the pool of Siloam, in which they might not only wash and be clean, but wash, and have their eyes opened. Hence they that were baptized are said to be photisthentes--enlightened; and the ancients called baptism photismos--illumination. Concerning the pool of Siloam observe,

[1.] That it was supplied with water from mount Zion, so that these were the waters of the sanctuary (Ps 46:4), living waters, which were healing, Eze 47:9.

[2.] That the waters of Siloam had of old signified the throne and kingdom of the house of David, pointing at the Messiah (Isa 8:6), and the Jews who refused the waters of Shiloa, Christ's doctrine and law, and rejoiced in the tradition of the elders. Christ would try this man, whether he would cleave to the waters of Siloam or no.

[3.] The evangelist takes notice of the signification of the name, its being interpreted sent. Christ is often called the sent of God, the Messenger of the covenant (Mal 3:1); so that when Christ sent him to the pool of Siloam he did in effect send him to himself; for Christ is all in all to the healing of souls. Christ as a prophet directs us to himself as a priest. Go, wash in the fountain opened, a fountain of life, not a pool.

The cure effected: He came seeing. There is more glory in this concise narrative, He went and washed, and came seeing, than in Cæsar's Veni, vidi, vici--I came, I saw, I conquered. When the clay was washed off from his eyes, all the other impediments were removed with it; so when the pangs and struggles of the new birth are over, and the pains and terrors of conviction past, the bands of sin fly off with them, and a glorious light and liberty succeed. See here an instance,

(1.) Of the power of Christ. What cannot he do who could not only do this, but do it thus? With a lump of clay laid on either eye, and washed off again, he couched those cataracts immediately which the most skilful oculist, with the finest instrument and the most curious hand, could not remove. No doubt this is he that should come, for by him the blind receive their sight.

(2.) It is an instance of the virtue of faith and obedience. This man let Christ do what he pleased, and did what he appointed him to do, and so was cured. Those that would be healed by Christ must be ruled by him. He came back from the pool to his neighbours and acquaintance, wondering and wondered at; he came seeing. This represents the benefit gracious souls find in attending on instituted ordinances, according to Christ's appointment; they have gone to the pool of Siloam weak, and have come away strengthened; have gone doubting, and come away satisfied; have gone mourning, and come away rejoicing; have gone trembling, and come away triumphing; have gone blind, and come away seeing, come away singing, Isa 52:8.

8 The neighbors therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged?

9 Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.

This controversy was soon decided by the man himself: He said, I am he, the very man that so lately sat and begged; "I am he that was blind, and was an object of the charity of men, but now see, and am a monument of the mercy and grace of God." We do not find that the neighbours appealed to him in this matter, but he, hearing the debate, interposed, and put an end to it. It is a piece of justice we owe to our neighbours to rectify their mistakes, and to set things before them, as far as we are able, in a true light. Applying it spiritually, it teaches us that those who are savingly

enlightened by the grace of God should be ready to own what they were before that blessed change was wrought, 1Ti 1:13,14.

10 Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened ?

11 He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.

The manner of the cure: How were thine eyes opened? The works of the Lord being great, they ought to be sought out, Ps 111:2. It is good to observe the way and method of God's works, and they will appear the more wonderful. We may apply it spiritually; it is strange that blind eyes should be opened, but more strange when we consider how they are opened; how weak the means are that are used, and how strong the opposition that is conquered. In answer to this enquiry the poor man gives them a plain and full account of the matter: A man that is called Jesus made clay,--and I received sight. Joh 9:11. Note, Those who have experienced special instances of God's power and goodness, in temporal or spiritual things, should be ready upon all occasions to communicate their experiences, for the glory of God and the instruction and encouragement of others. See David's collection of his experiences, his own and others', Ps 34:4-6. It is a debt we owe to our benefactor, and to our brethren. God's favours are lost upon us, when they are lost with us, and go no further.

12 Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not.

The author of it (Joh 9:12): Where is he? Some perhaps asked this question out of curiosity. "Where is he, that we may see him?" A man that did such cures as these might well be a show, which one would go a good way for the sight of. Others, perhaps, asked out of ill-will. "Where is he, that we may seize him?" There was a proclamation out for the discovering and apprehending of him (Joh 11:57); and the unthinking crowd, in spite of all reason and equity, will have ill thoughts of those that are put into an ill name. Some, we hope, asked this question out of good-will. "Where is he, that we may be acquainted with him? Where is he, that we may come to him, and share in the favours he is so free of?" In answer to this, he could say nothing: I know not. As soon as Christ had sent him to the pool of Siloam, it should seem, he withdrew immediately (as he did, Joh 5:13), and did not stay till the man returned, as if he either doubted of the effect or waited for the man's thanks. Humble souls take more pleasure in doing

good than in hearing of it again; it will be time enough to hear of it in the resurrection of the just. The man had never seen Jesus, for by the time that he had gained his sight he had lost his Physician; and he asked, it is probable, Where is he? None of all the new and surprising objects that presented themselves could be so grateful to him as one sight of Christ, but as yet he knew no more of him than that he was called, and rightly called, Jesus--a Saviour. Thus in the work of grace wrought upon the soul we see the change, but see not the hand that makes it; for the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind, which thou hearest the sound of, but canst not tell whence it comes nor whither it goes.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

13 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.

Here is the information that was given in to the Pharisees concerning this matter: They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind, Joh 9:13. They brought him to the great sanhedrim, which consisted chiefly of Pharisees, at least the Pharisees in the sanhedrim were most active against Christ. 1. Some think that those who brought this man to the Pharisees did it with a good design, to show them that this Jesus, whom they persecuted, was not what they represented him, but really a great man, and one that gave considerable proofs of a divine mission. What hath convinced us of the truth and excellency of religion, and hath removed our prejudices against it, we should be forward, as we have opportunity, to offer to others for their conviction. 2. It should seem, rather, that they did it with an ill design, to exasperate the Pharisees the more against Christ, and there was no need of this, for they were bitter enough of themselves. They brought him with such a suggestion as that in Joh 11:47,48, If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. Note, Those rulers that are of a persecuting spirit shall never want ill instruments about them, that will blow the coals, and make them worse.

14 And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.

The ground which was pretended for this information, and the colour given to it. That which is good was never maligned but under the imputation of something evil. And the crime objected here (Joh 9:14) was that it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. The

profanation of the sabbath day is certainly wicked, and gives a man a very ill character; but the traditions of the Jews had made that to be a violation of the law of the sabbath which was far from being so. Many a time this matter was contested between Christ and the Jews, that it might be settled for the benefit of the church in all ages. But it may be asked, "Why would Christ not only work miracles on the sabbath day, but work them in such a manner as he knew would give offence to the Jews? When he had healed the impotent man, why should he bid him carry his bed? Could he not have cured this blind man without making clay?" I answer, He would not seem to yield to the usurped power of the scribes and Pharisees. Their government was illegal, their impositions were arbitrary, and their zeal for the rituals consumed the substantials of religion; and therefore Christ would not give place to them, by subjection, no not for an hour. Christ was made under the law of God, but not under their law.

15 Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.

The trial and examination of this matter by the Pharisees, Joh 9:15. So much passion, prejudice, and ill-humour, and so little reason, appear here, that the discourse is nothing but crossing questions. One would think, when a man in these circumstances was brought before them, they would have been so taken up in admiring the miracle, and congratulating the happiness of the poor man, that they could not have been peevish with him. But their enmity to Christ had divested them of all manner of humanity, and divinity too. Let us see how they teased this man.

16 Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles ? And there was a division among them.

This man is not of God. Is not sent by God, or cannot be a friend of God.

Because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. They assumed that their views of the Sabbath were correct, and by those views they judged others. It did not occur to them to inquire whether the interpretation which they put on the law might not be erroneous. Men often assume their own interpretations of the Scriptures to be infallible, and then judge and condemn all others by those interpretations.

A sinner. A deceiver; an impostor. They reasoned conclusively that God would not give the power of working such miracles to an impostor. The miracles were such as could not be denied, nor did even the enemies of Jesus attempt to deny them or to explain them away. They were open, public, frequent. And this shows that they could not deny their reality. Had it been possible, they would have done it; but the reality and power of those miracles had already made a party in favour of Jesus, even in the Sanhedrim (Jn 7:50, 12:42), and those opposed to them could not deny their reality. It may be added that the early opponents of Christianity never denied the reality of the miracles performed by the Saviour and his apostles. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julianas acute foes of the gospel as perhaps have ever lived--never call this in question. They attempted to show that it was by some evil influence, or to account for the miracles in some other way than by admitting the divine origin of the Christian religion, but about the facts they had no question. Were they not as well qualified to judge about those facts as men are now? They lived near the time; had every opportunity to examine the evidence; were skilful and talented disputants; and if they could have denied the reality of the miracles they would have done it. It is scarcely possible to conceive of more conclusive proof that those miracles were really performed, and, if so, then the Lord Jesus was sent by God.

Others spoke in his favour, and very pertinently urged, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? It seems that even in this council of the ungodly there were some that were capable of a free thought, and were witnesses for Christ, even in the midst of his enemies. The matter of fact was plain, that this was a true miracle, the more it was searched into the more it was cleared; and this brought his former similar works to mind, and gave occasion to speak magnificently of them, toiauta semeia--such great signs, so many, so evident. And the inference from it is very natural: Such things as these could never be done by a man that is a sinner, that is, not by any mere man, in his own name, and by his own power; or, rather, not by one that is a cheat or an imposter, and in that sense a a sinner; such a one may indeed show some signs and lying wonders, but not such signs and true wonders as Christ wrought. How could a man produce such divine credentials, if he had not a divine commission? Thus there was a division among them, a schism, so the word is; they clashed in their opinion, a warm

debate arose, and the house divided upon it. Thus God defeats the counsels of his enemies by dividing them; and by such testimonies as these given against the malice of persecutors, and the rubs they meet with, their designs against the church are sometimes rendered ineffectual and always inexcusable.

17 They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.

Matthew Hennery Bible Commentary(MHC):

What the man said of him, in answer to their enquiry. They ask him (Joh 9:17), "What sayest thou of him, seeing that he has opened thine eyes? What dost thou think of his doing this? And what idea hast thou of him that did it?" If he should speak slightly of Christ, in answer to this, as he might be tempted to do, to please them, now that he was in their hands, as his parents had done--if he should say, "I know not what to make of him; he may be a conjuror for aught I know, or some mountebank"--they would have triumphed in it. Nothing confirms Christ's enemies in their enmity to him so much as the slights put upon him by those that have passed for his friends. But, if he should speak honourably of Christ, they would prosecute him upon their new law, which did not except, no, not his own patient; they would make him an example, and so deter others from applying to Christ for cures, for which, though they came cheap from Christ, yet they would make them pay dearly. Or perhaps Christ's friends proposed to have the man's own sentiments concerning his physician, and were willing to know, since he appeared to be a sensible man, what he thought of him. Note, Those whose eyes Christ has opened know best what to say of him, and have great reason, upon all occasions, to say well of him. What think we of Christ? To this question the poor man makes a short, plain, and direct answer: "He is a prophet, he is one inspired and sent of God to preach, and work miracles, and deliver to the world a divine message." There had been no prophets among the Jews for three hundred years; yet they did not conclude that they should have no more, for they knew that he was yet to come who should seal up vision and prophecy, Da 9:24. It should seem, this man had not any thoughts that Christ was the Messiah, the great prophet, but one of the same rank with the other prophets. The woman of Samaria concluded he was a prophet before she had any thought of his being the Messiah (Joh 4:19); so this blind man thought well of Christ

according to the light he had, though he did not think well enough of him; but, being faithful in what he had already attained to, God revealed even that unto him. This poor blind beggar had a clearer judgment of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and saw further into the proofs of a divine mission, than the masters in Israel, that assumed an authority to judge of prophets.

Barnes Commentary:
What sayest thou of him? &c. The translation here expresses the sense obscurely. The meaning is, "What sayest thou of him for giving thee sight ?" (Campbell); or, "What opinion of him hath this work of power and mercy to thee wrought in thee?" (Hammond). He is a prophet. That is, "I think that the power to work such a miracle proves that he is sent from God. And though this has been done on the Sabbath, yet it proves that he must have been sent by God, for such a power could never have proceeded from man."

We see here,

1st. A noble confession made by the man who was healed, in the face of the rulers of the people, and when he doubtless knew that they were opposed to Jesus. We should never be ashamed, before any class of men, to acknowledge the favours which we have received from Christ, and to express our belief of his power and of the truth of his doctrine.

2nd. The works of Jesus were such as to prove that he came from God, however much he may have appeared to oppose the previous notions of men, the interpretation of the law by the Pharisees, or the deductions of reason. Men should yield their own views of religion to the teachings of God, and believe that he that could open the eyes of the blind and raise the dead was fitted to declare his will.

18 But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

They doubted whether he had indeed been born blind, and demanded proof of that which even the prosecutors had acknowledged (Joh 9:18): They did

not believe, that is, they would not, that he was born blind. Men that seek occasion to quarrel with the clearest truths may find it if they please; and they that resolve to hold fast deceit will never want a handle to hold it by. This was not a prudent caution, but a prejudiced infidelity. However, it was a good way that they took for the clearing of this: They called the parents of the man who had received his sight. This they did in hopes to disprove the miracle. These parents were poor and timorous, and if they had said that they could not be sure that this was their son, or that it was only some weakness or dimness in his sight that he had been born with, which if they had been able to get help for him might have been cured long since, or had otherwise prevaricated, for fear of the court, the Pharisees had gained their point, had robbed Christ of the honour of this miracle, which would have lessened the reputation of all the rest. But God so ordered and overruled this counsel of theirs that it turned to the more effectual proof of the miracle, and left them under a necessity of being either convinced or confounded.

19 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind ? how then doth he now see?

They asked them in an imperious threatening way, "Is this your son? Dare you swear to it? Do you say he was born blind? Are you sure of it? Or did he but pretend to be so, to have an excuse for his begging? How then doth he now see? That is impossible, and therefore you had better unsay it." Those who cannot bear the light of truth do all they can to eclipse it, and hinder the discovery of it. Thus the managers of evidence, or mismanagers rather, lead witnesses out of the way, and teach them how to conceal or disguise the truth, and so involve themselves in a double guilt, like that of Jeroboam, who sinned, and made Israel to sin.

Observe, how far they go to attempt to disgrace Jesus. Had they been searching for truth, they could call the family of Jesus, particularly His mother Marry, and prudently search out about his birth; how, when and where He was born.

20 His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:

They fully attest that which they could safely say in this matter; safely, that is, upon their own knowledge, and safely, that is, without running themselves into a premunire (Joh 9:20): We know that this is our son (for they were daily conversant with him, and had such a natural affection to

him as the true mother had, 1Ki 3:26, which made them know it was their own); and we know that he was born blind. They had reason to know it, inasmuch as it had cost them many a sad thought, and many a careful troublesome hour, about him. How often had they looked upon him with grief, and lamented their child's blindness more than all the burdens and inconveniences of their poverty, and wished he had never been born, rather than be born to such an uncomfortable life! Those who are ashamed of their children, or any of their relations, because of their bodily infirmities, may take a reproof from these parents, who freely owned, This is our son, though he was born blind, and lived upon alms.

21 but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

They cautiously decline giving any evidence concerning his cure; partly because they were not themselves eye-witnesses of it, and could say nothing to it of their own knowledge; and partly because they found it was a tender point, and would not bear to be meddled with. And therefore, having owned that he was their son and was born blind, further these deponents say not.

a. Observe how warily they express themselves (Joh 9:21): "By what means he now seeth we know not, or who has opened his eyes we know not, otherwise than by hearsay; we can give no account either by what means or by whose hand it was done." See how the wisdom of this world teaches men to trim the matter in critical junctures. Christ was accused as a sabbath-breaker, and as an imposter. Now these parents of the blind man, though they were not eye-witnesses of the cure, were yet fully assured of it, and were bound in gratitude to have borne their testimony to the honour of the Lord Jesus, who had done their son so great a kindness; but they had not courage to do it, and then thought it might serve to atone for their not appearing in favour of him that they said nothing to his prejudice; whereas, in the day of trial, he that is not apparently for Christ is justly looked upon as really against him, Lu 11:23,Mk 8:38. That they might not be further urged in this matter, they refer themselves and the court to him: He is of age, ask him, he shall speak for himself. This implies that while children are not of age (while they are infants, such as cannot speak) it is incumbent upon their parents to speak for them, speak to God for them in prayer, speak to the church for them in baptism; but, when they are of age, it is fit that they should be asked whether they be willing to stand to that which

their parents did for them, and let them speak for themselves. This man, though he was born blind, seems to have been of quick understanding above many, which enabled him to speak for himself better than his friends could speak for him. Thus God often by a kind providence makes up in the mind what is wanting in the body, 1Co 12:23,24. His parents turning them over to him was only to save themselves from trouble, and expose him; whereas they that had so great an interest in his mercies had reason to embark with him in his hazards for the honour of that Jesus who had done so much for them.

22 These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

See the reason why they were so cautious (Joh 9:22,23): Because they feared the Jews. It was not because they would put an honour upon their son, by making him his own advocate, or because they would have the matter cleared by the best hand, but because they would shift trouble off from themselves, as most people are in care to do, no matter on whom they throw it. Near is my friend, and near is my child, and perhaps near is my religion, but nearer is myself--Proximus egomet mihi. But Christianity teaches another lesson, 1Co 10:24,Es 8:6. Here is,

The late law which the sanhedrim had made. It was agreed and enacted by their authority that, if any man within their jurisdiction did confess that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Observe,

The crime designed to be punished, and so prevented, by this statute, and that was embracing Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and manifesting this by any overt-act, which amounted to a confessing of him. They themselves did expect a Messiah, but they could by no means bear to think that this Jesus should be he, nor admit the question whether he were or no, for two reasons:--

First, Because his precepts were all so contrary to their traditional laws. The spiritual worship he prescribed overthrew their formalities; nor did any thing more effectually destroy their singularity and narrow-spiritedness than that universal charity which he taught; humility and

mortification, repentance and self-denial, were lessons new to them, and sounded harsh and strange in their ears.

Secondly, Because him promises and appearances were so contrary to their traditional hopes. They expected a Messiah in outward pomp and splendour, that should not only free the nation from the Roman yoke, but advance the grandeur of the sanhedrim, and make all the members of it princes and peers: and now to hear of a Messiah whose outward circumstances were all mean and poor, whose first appearance and principal residence were in Galilee, a despised province, who never made his court to them, nor sought their favour, whose followers were neither sword-men nor gown-men, nor any men of honour, but contemptible fishermen, who proposed and promised no redemption but from sin, no consolation of Israel but what is spiritual and divine, and at the same time bade his followers expect the cross, and count upon persecution; this was such a reproach to all the ideas they had formed and filled the minds of their people with, such a blow to their power and interest, and such a disappointment to all their hopes, that they could never be reconciled to it, nor so much as give it a fair or patient hearing, but, right or wrong, it must be crushed.

23 Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

The penalty to be inflicted for this crime. If any should own himself a disciple of Jesus, he should be deemed and taken as an apostate from the faith of the Jewish church, and a rebel and traitor against the government of it, and should therefore be put out of the synagogue, as one that had rendered himself unworthy of the honours, and incapable of the privileges, of their church; he should be excommunicated, and expelled the commonwealth of Israel. Nor was this merely an ecclesiastical censure, which a man that made no conscience of their authority might slight, but it was, in effect, an outlawry, which excluded a man from civil commerce and deprived him of his liberty and property. Note,

First, Christ's holy religion, from its first rise, has been opposed by penal laws made against the professors of it; as if men's consciences would otherwise naturally embrace it, this unnatural force has been put upon them.

Secondly, The church's artillery, when the command of it has fallen into ill hands, has often been turned against itself, and ecclesiastical censures have been made to serve a carnal secular interest. It is no new thing to see those cast out of the synagogue that were the greatest ornaments and blessings of it, and to hear those that expelled them say, The Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. Now of this edict it is said,

1. That the Jews had agreed it, or conspired it. Their consultation and communion herein were a perfect conspiracy against the crown and dignity of the Redeemer, against the Lord and his Anointed.

2. That they had already agreed it. Though he had been but a few months in any public character among them, and, one would think, in so short a time could not have made them jealous of him, yet thus early were they aware of his growing interest, and already agreed to do their utmost to suppress it. He had lately made his escape out of the temple, and, when they saw themselves baffled in their attempts to take him, they presently took this course, to make it penal for any body to own him. Thus unanimous and thus expeditious are the enemies of the church, and their counsels; but he that sits in heaven laughs at them, and has them in derision, and so may we.

The influence which this law had upon the parents of the blind man. They declined saying any thing of Christ, and shuffled it off to their son, because they feared the Jews. Christ had incurred the frowns of the government to do their son a kindness, but they would not incur them to do him any honour. Note, The fear of man brings a snare (Pr 29:25), and often makes people deny and disown Christ, and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. Well, the parents have thus disentangled themselves, and are discharged from any further attendance; let us now go on with the examination of the man himself; the doubt of the Pharisees, whether he was born blind, was put out of doubt by them;

24 Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.

What they said of him, in reply to the man's testimony. Having in vain attempted to invalidate the evidence of the fact, and finding that indeed a notable miracle was wrought, and they could not deny it, they renew their

attempt to banter it, and run it down, and do all they can to shake the good opinion the man had of him that opened his eyes, and to convince him that Christ was a bad man (Joh 9:24): Give God the praise, we know that this man is a sinner. Two ways this is understood: [1.] By way of advice, to take heed of ascribing the praise of his cure to a sinful man, but to give it all to God, to whom it was due. Thus, under colour of zeal for the honour of God, they rob Christ of his honour, as those do who will not worship Christ as God, under pretence of zeal for this great truth, that there is but one God to be worshipped; whereas this is his declared will, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father; and in confessing that Christ is Lord we give glory to God the Father. When God makes use of men that are sinners as instruments of good to us, we must give God the glory, for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be; and yet there is gratitude owing to the instruments. It was a good word, Give God the praise, but here it was ill used; and there seems to be this further in it, "This man is a sinner, a bad man, and therefore give the praise so much the more to God, who could work by such an instrument." [2.] By way of adjuration; so some take it. "We know (though thou dost not, who hast but lately come, as it were, into a new world) that this man is a sinner, a great impostor, and cheats the country; this we are sure of, therefore give God praise" (as Joshua said to Achan) "by making an ingenuous confession of the fraud and collusion which we are confident there is in this matter; in God's name, man, tell the truth." Thus is God's name abused in papal inquisitions, when by oaths, ex officio, they extort accusations of themselves from the innocent, and of others from the ignorant. See how basely they speak of the Lord Jesus: We know that this man is a sinner, is a man of sin. In which we may observe, First, Their insolence and pride. They would not have it thought, when they asked the man what he thought of him, that they needed information; nay, they know very well that he is a sinner, and nobody can convince them of the contrary. He had challenged them to their faces (Joh 8:46) to convince him of sin, and they had nothing to say; but now behind his back they speak of him as a malefactor, convicted upon the notorious evidence of the fact. Thus false accusers make up in confidence what is wanting in proof. Secondly, The injury and indignity hereby done to the Lord Jesus. When he became man, he took upon him the form not only of a servant, but of a sinner (Ro 8:3), and passed for a sinner in common with the rest of mankind. Nay, he was represented as a sinner of the first

magnitude, a sinner above all men; and, being made sin for us, he despised even this shame.

25 He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

The debate that arose between the Pharisees and this poor man concerning Christ. They say, He is a sinner; he says, He is a prophet. As it is an encouragement to those who are concerned for the cause of Christ to hope that it shall never be lost for want of witnesses, when they find a poor blind beggar picked up from the way-side, and made a witness for Christ, to the faces of his most impudent enemies; so it is an encouragement to those who are called out to witness for Christ to find with what prudence and courage this man managed his defence, according to the promise, It shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. Though he had never seen Jesus, he had felt his grace. Now in the parley between the Pharisees and this poor man we may observe three steps:--

He sticks to the certain matter of fact the evidence of which they endeavour to shake. That which is doubtful is best resolved into that which is plain, and therefore,

[1.] He adheres to that which to himself at least, and to his own satisfaction, was past dispute (Joh 9:25): "Whether he be a sinner or no I know not, I will not now stand to dispute, nor need I, the matter is plain, and though I should altogether hold my peace would speak for itself;" or, as it might better be rendered, "If he be a sinner, I know it not, I see no reason to say so, but the contrary; for this one thing I know, and can be more sure of than you can be of that of which you are so confident, that whereas I was blind, now I see, and therefore must not only say that he has been a good friend to me, but that he is a prophet; I am both able and bound to speak well of him." Now here, First, He tacitly reproves their great assurance of the ill character they gave of the blessed Jesus: "You say that you know him to be a sinner; I, who know him as well as you do, cannot give any such character." Secondly, He boldly relies upon his own experience of the power and goodness of the holy Jesus, and resolves to abide by it. There is no disputing against experience, nor arguing a man out of his senses; here is one that is properly an eyewitness of the power and grace of Christ, though he had never seen him. Note, As Christ's mercies are most valued

by those that have felt the want of them, that have been blind and now see, so the most powerful and durable affections to Christ are those that arise from an experimental knowledge of him, 1Jo 1:1,Ac 4:20. The poor man does not here give a nice account of the method of the cure, nor pretend to describe it philosophically, but in short, Whereas I was blind, now I see. Thus in the work of grace in the soul, though we cannot tell when and how, by what instruments and by what steps and advances, the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort of it if we can say, through grace, "Whereas I was blind, now I see. I did live a carnal, worldly, sensual life, but, thanks be to God, it is now otherwise with me," Eph 5:8.

[2.] They endeavour to baffle and stifle the evidence by a needless repetition of their enquiries into it (Joh 9:26): What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes? They asked these questions, First, Because they wanted something to say, and would rather speak impertinently than seem to be silenced or run a-ground. Thus eager disputants, that resolve they will have the last word, by such vain repetitions, to avoid the shame of being silenced, make themselves accountable for many idle words. Secondly, Because they hoped, by putting the man upon repeating his evidence, to catch him tripping in it, or wavering, and then they would think they had gained a good point.

26 Then said they to him again, What did he to thee ? how opened he thine eyes?

The man boldly upbraids them with their wilful and unreasonable opposition to the evidence of this miracle, Joh 9:27. He would not gratify them with a repetition of the story, but bravely replied, I have told you already, and you did not hear, wherefore would you hear it again, will you also be his disciples? Some think that he spoke seriously, and really expecting that they would be convinced. "He had many disciples, I will be one, will you also come in among them?" Some zealous young Christians see so much reason for religion that they are ready to think every one will presently be on their mind. But it rather seems to be spoken ironically: "Will you be his disciples? No, I know you abhor the thoughts of it; why then should you desire to hear that which will either make you his disciples or leave you inexcusable if you be not?" Those that wilfully shut their eyes against the light, as these Pharisees here did, First, Make themselves contemptible and base, as these here did, who were justly exposed by this

poor man for denying the conclusion, when they had nothing to object against either of the premises. Secondly, They forfeit all the benefit of further instructions and means of knowledge and conviction: they that have been told once, and would not hear, why should they be told it again? Jer 51:9. See Mt 10:14. Thirdly, They hereby receive the grace of God in vain. This implied in that, "Will you be his disciples? No, you resolve you will not; why then would you hear it again, only that you may be his accusers and persecutors?" Those who will not see cause to embrace Christ, and join with his followers, yet, one would think, should see cause enough not to hate and persecute him and them.

27 He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?

For this they scorn and revile him, Joh 9:28. When they could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spoke, they broke out into a passion, and scolded him, began to call names, and give him ill language. See what Christ's faithful witnesses must expect from the adversaries of his truth and cause; let them count upon all manner of evil to be said of them, Mt 5:11. The method commonly taken by unreasonable man is to make out with railing what is wanting in truth and reason.

First, They taunted this man for his affection to Christ; they said, Thou art his disciple, as if that were reproach enough, and they could not say worse of him. "We scorn to be his disciples, and will leave that preferment to thee, and such scoundrels as thou art." They do what they can to put Christ's religion in an ill name, and to represent the profession of it as a contemptible scandalous thing. They reviled him. The Vulgate reads it, maledixerunt eum--they cursed him; and what was their curse? It was this, Be thou his disciple. "May such a curse" (saith St. Augustine here) "ever be on us and on our children!" If we take our measures of credit and disgrace from the sentiment or rather clamours of a blind deluded world, we shall glory in our shame, and be ashamed of our glory. They had no reason to call this man a disciple of Christ, he had neither seen him nor heard him preach, only he had spoken favourably of a kindness Christ had done him, and this they could not bear.

Secondly, They gloried in their relation to Moses as their Master: "We are Moses's disciples, and do not either need or desire any other teacher."

Note, 1. Carnal professors of religion are very apt to trust to, and be proud of, the dignities and privileges of their profession, while they are strangers to the principles and powers of their religion. These Pharisees had before boasted of their good parentage: We are Abraham's seed; here they boast of their good education, We are Moses's disciples; as if these would save them.

2. It is sad to see how much one part of religion is opposed, under colour of zeal for another part. There was a perfect harmony between Christ and Moses; Moses prepared for Christ, and Christ perfected Moses, so that they might be disciples of Moses, and become the disciples of Christ too; and yet they here put them in opposition, nor could they have persecuted Christ but under the shelter of the abused name of Moses. Thus those who gainsay the doctrine of free grace value themselves as promoters of man's duty, We are Moses's disciples; while, on the other hand, those that cancel the obligation of the law value themselves as the assertors of free grace, and as if none were the disciples of Jesus but they; whereas, if we rightly understand the matter, we shall see God's grace and man's duty meet together and kiss and befriend each other.

28 Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples.

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29 We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.

They gave some sort of reason for their adhering to Moses against Christ (Joh 9:29): We know that God spoke unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not whence he is. But did they not know that among other things which God spoke unto Moses this was one, that they must expect another prophet, and further revelation of the mind of God? yet, when our Lord

Jesus, pursuant to what God said to Moses, did appear, and gave sufficient proofs of his being that prophet, under pretence of sticking to the old religion, and the established church, they not only forfeited, but forsook, their own mercies. In this argument of their observe,

1. How impertinently they allege, in defence of their enmity to Christ, that which none of his followers ever denied: We know that God spoke unto Moses, and, thanks be to God, we know it too, more plainly to Moses than to any other of the prophets; but what then? God spoke to Moses, and does it therefore follow that Jesus is an impostor? Moses was a prophet also? Moses spoke honourably of Jesus (Joh 5:46), and Jesus spoke honourably of Moses (Lu 16:29); they were both faithful in the same house of God, Moses as a servant, Christ as a Son; therefore their pleading Moses' divine warrant in opposition to Christ's was an artifice, to make unthinking people believe it was as certain that Jesus was a false prophet as that Moses was a true one; whereas they were both true.

2. How absurdly they urge their ignorance of Christ as a reason to justify their contempt of him: As for this fellow. Thus scornfully do they speak of the blessed Jesus, as if they did not think it worth while to charge their memories with a name so inconsiderable; they express themselves with as much disdain of the Shepherd of Israel as if he had not been worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock: As for this fellow, this sorry fellow, we know not whence he is. They looked upon themselves to have the key of knowledge, that none must preach without a license first had and obtained from them, under the seal of their court. They expected that all who set up for teachers should apply to them, and give them satisfaction, which this Jesus had never done, never so far owned their power as to ask their leave, and therefore they concluded him an intruder, and one that came not in by the door: They knew not whence nor what he was, and therefore concluded him a sinner; whereas those we know little of we should judge charitably of; but proud and narrow souls will think none good but themselves, and those that are in their interest. It was not long ago that the Jews had made the contrary to this an objection against Christ (Joh 7:27): We know this man whence he is, but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is. Thus they could with the greatest assurance either affirm or deny the same

thing, according as they saw it would serve their turn. They knew not whence he was; and whose fault was that?

(a) It is certain that they ought to have enquired. The Messiah was to appear about this time, and it concerned them to look about them, and examine every indication; but these priests, like those, Jer 2:6, said not, Where is the Lord?

(b) It is certain that they might have known whence he was, might not only have known, by searching the register, that he was born in Bethlehem; but by enquiring into his doctrine, miracles, and conversation, they might have known that he was sent of God, and had better orders, a better commission, and far better instructions, than any they could give him. See the absurdity of infidelity. Men will not know the doctrine of Christ because they are resolved they will not believe it, and then pretend they do not believe it because they do not know it. Such ignorance and unbelief, which support one another, aggravate one another.

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

He wonders at their obstinate infidelity (Joh 9:30); not at all daunted by their frowns, nor shaken by their confidence, he bravely answered, "Why, herein is a marvelous thing, the strangest instance of wilful ignorance that ever was heard of among men that pretend to sense, that you know not whence he is, and yet he has opened mine eyes." Two things he wonders at:--

1. That they should be strangers to a man so famous. He that could open the eyes of the blind must certainly be a considerable man, and worth taking notice of. The Pharisees were inquisitive men, had a large correspondence and acquaintance, thought themselves the eyes of the church and its watchmen, and yet that they should talk as if they thought it below them to take cognizance of such a man as this, and have conversation with him, this is a strange thing indeed. There are many who pass for learned and knowing men, who understand business, and can talk sensibly in other things, who yet are ignorant, to a wonder, of the doctrine of Christ, who have no concern, no, not so much as a curiosity, to acquaint themselves with that which the angels desire to look into.

2. That they should question the divine mission of one that had undoubtedly wrought a divine miracle. When they said, We know not whence he is, they meant, "We know not any proof that his doctrine and ministry are from heaven." "Now this is strange," saith the poor man, "that the miracle wrought upon me has not convinced you, and put the matter out of doubt,--that you, whose education and studies give you advantages above others of discerning the things of God, should thus shut your eyes against the light." It is a marvelous work and wonder, when the wisdom of the wise thus perisheth (Isa 29:14), that they deny the truth of that of which they cannot gainsay the evidence. Note,

(a) The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction is indeed a marvelous thing, Mk 6:6.

(b) Those who have themselves experienced the power and grace of the Lord Jesus do especially wonder at the wilfulness of those who reject him, and, having such good thoughts of him themselves, are amazed that others have not. Had Christ opened the eyes of the Pharisees, they would not have doubted his being a prophet.

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

He argues strongly against them, Joh 9:31-33. They had determined concerning Jesus that he was not of God (Joh 9:16), but was a sinner (Joh 9:24), in answer to which the man here proves not only that he was not a sinner (Joh 9:31), but that he was of God, Joh 9:33.

1. He argues here,

(a.) With great knowledge. Though he could not read a letter of the book, he was well acquainted with the scripture and the things of God; he had wanted the sense of seeing, yet had well improved that of hearing, by which faith cometh; yet this would not have served him if he had not had an

extraordinary presence of God with him, and special aids of his Spirit, upon this occasion.

(b.) With great zeal for the honour of Christ, whom he could not endure to hear run down, and evil spoken of.

(c.) With great boldness, and courage, and undauntedness, not terrified by the proudest of his adversaries. Those that are ambitious of the favours of God must not be afraid of the frowns of men. "See here," saith Dr. Whitby, "a blind man and unlearned judging more rightly of divine things than the whole learned council of the Pharisees, whence we learn that we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops; and that it is not absurd for laymen sometimes to vary from their opinions, these overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights."

2. His argument may be reduced into form, somewhat like that of David, Ps 66:18-20. The proposition in David's argument is, If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me; here it is to the same purport, God heareth not sinners: the assumption there is, But verily God hath heard me; here it is, Verily God hath heard Jesus, he hath been honoured with the doing of that which was never done before: the conclusion there is to the honour, Blessed be God; here to the honour of the Lord Jesus, He is of God.

(a.) He lays it down for an undoubted truth that none but good men are the favourites of heaven (Joh 9:31): Now we know, you know it as well as I, that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth. Here,

[1.] The assertions, rightly understood, are true. First, Be it spoken to the terror of the wicked, God heareth not sinners, that is, such sinners as the Pharisees meant when they said of Christ, He is a sinner, one that, under the shelter of God's name, advanced the devil's interest. This bespeaks no discouragement to repenting returning sinners, but to those that go on still in their trespasses, that make their prayers not only consistent with, but subservient to, their sins, as the hypocrites do; God will not hear them, he will not own them, nor give an answer of peace to their prayers. Secondly, Be it spoken to the comfort of the righteous, If any man be a worshipper of

God, and does his will, him he heareth. Here is, 1 The complete character of a good man: he is one that worships God, and does his will; he is constant in his devotions at set times, and regular in his conversation at all times. He is one that makes it his business to glorify his Creator by the solemn adoration of his name and a sincere obedience to his will and law; both must go together. 2 The unspeakable comfort of such a man: him God hears; hears his complaints, and relieves him; hears his appeals, and rights him; hears his praises, and accepts them; hears his prayers, and answers them, Ps 34:15.

[2.] The application of these truths is very pertinent to prove that he, at whose word such a divine power was put forth as cured one born blind, was not a bad man, but, having manifestly such an interest in the holy God as that he heard him always (Joh 9:31,32), was certainly a holy one.

(b.) He magnifies the miracles which Christ had wrought, to strengthen the argument the more (Joh 9:32): Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. This is to show either,

[1.] That it was a true miracle, and above the power of nature; it was never heard that any man, by the use of natural means, had cured one that was born blind; no doubt, this man and his parents had been very inquisitive into cases of this nature, whether any such had been helped, and could hear of none, which enabled him to speak this with the more assurance. Or,

[2.] That it was an extraordinary miracle, and beyond the precedents of former miracles; neither Moses nor any of the prophets, though they did great things, ever did such things as this, wherein divine power and divine goodness seem to strive which should outshine. Moses wrought miraculous plagues, but Christ wrought miraculous cures. Note, First, The wondrous works of the Lord Jesus were such as the like had never been done before. Secondly, It becomes those who have received mercy from God to magnify the mercies they have received, and to speak honourably of them; not that thereby glory may redound to themselves, and they may seem to be extraordinary favourites of Heaven, but that God may have so much the more glory.

(c.) He therefore concludes, If this man were not of God, he could do nothing, that is, nothing extraordinary, no such thing as this; and therefore, no doubt, he is of God, notwithstanding his nonconformity to your traditions in the business of the sabbath day. Note, What Christ did on earth sufficiently demonstrated what he was in heaven; for, if he had not been sent of God, he could not have wrought such miracles. It is true the man of sin comes with lying wonders, but not with real miracles; it is likewise supposed that a false prophet might, by divine permission, give a sign or a wonder (De 13:1,2), yet the case is so put as that it would carry with it its own confutation, for it is to enforce a temptation to serve other gods, which was to set God against himself. It is true, likewise, that many wicked people have in Christ's name done many wonderful works, which did not prove those that wrought them to be of God, but him in whose name they were wrought. We may each of us know by this whether we are of God or no: What do we? What do we for God, for our souls, in working out our salvation? What do we more than others?

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

The Pharisees, finding themselves unable either to answer his reasonings or to bear them, fell foul upon him, and with a great deal of pride and passion broke off the discourse, Joh 9:34. Here we are told,

What they said. Having nothing to reply to his argument, they reflected upon his person: Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us? They take that amiss which they had reason to take kindly, and are cut to the heart with rage by that which should have pricked them to the heart with penitence. Observe,

1. How they despised him, and what a severe censure they passed upon him: "Thou wast not only born in sin, as every man is, but altogether so, wholly corrupt, and bearing about with thee in thy body as well as in thy soul the marks of that corruption; thou wast one whom nature stigmatized." Had he still continued blind, it had been barbarous to upbraid him with it, and thence to gather that he was more deeply tainted with sin than other people; but it was most unjust to take notice of it now that the cure had not only rolled away the reproach of his blindness, but had signalized him as

a favourite of Heaven. Some take it thus: "Thou hast been a common beggar, and such are too often common sinners, and thou hast, no doubt, been as bad as any of them;" whereas by his discourse he had proved the contrary, and had evinced a deep tincture of piety. But when proud imperious Pharisees resolve to run a man down, any thing shall serve for a pretence.

2. How they disdain to learn of him, or to receive instruction from him: Dost thou teach us? A mighty emphasis must be laid here upon thou and us. "What! wilt thou, a silly sorry fellow, ignorant and illiterate, that hast not seen the light of the sun a day to an end, a beggar by the way-side, of the very dregs and refuse of the town, wilt thou pretend to teach us, that are the sages of the law and grandees of the church, that sit in Moses's chair and are masters in Israel?"

Note, Proud men scorn to be taught, especially by their inferiors, whereas we should never think ourselves too old, nor too wise, nor too good, to learn. Those that have much wealth would have more; and why not those that have much knowledge? And those are to be valued by whom we may improve in learning. What a poor excuse was this for the Pharisees' infidelity, that it would be a disparagement to them to be instructed, and informed, and convinced, by such a silly fellow as this!

Spiritual Blindness

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?

The tender care which our Lord Jesus took of this poor man (Joh 9:35): When Jesus heard that they had cast him out (for it is likely the town rang of it, and everybody cried out shame upon them for it), then he found him, which implies his seeking him and looking after him, that he might encourage and comfort him,

1. Because he had, to the best of his knowledge, spoken so very well, so bravely, so boldly, in defence of the Lord Jesus. Note, Jesus Christ will be sure to stand by his witnesses, and own those that own him and his truth

and ways. Earthly princes neither do, nor can, take cognizance of all that vindicate them and their government and administration; but our Lord Jesus knows and observes all the faithful testimonies we bear to him at any time, and a book of remembrance is written, and it shall redound not only to our credit hereafter, but our comfort now.

2. Because the Pharisees had cast him out and abused him. Besides the common regard which the righteous Judge of the world has to those who suffer wrongfully (Ps 103:6), there is a particular notice taken of those that suffer in the cause of Christ and for the testimony of a good conscience. Here was one poor man suffering for Christ, and he took care that as his afflictions abounded his consolations should much more abound. Note,

(1.) Though persecutors may exclude good men from their communion, yet they cannot exclude them from communion with Christ, nor put them out of the way of his visits. Happy are they who have a friend from whom men cannot debar them.

(2.) Jesus Christ will graciously find and receive those who for his sake are unjustly rejected and cast out by men. He will be a hiding place to his outcasts, and appear, to the joy of those whom their brethren hated and cast out.

36 He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him ?

The comfortable converse Christ had with him, wherein he brings him acquainted with the consolation of Israel. He had well improved the knowledge he had, and now Christ gives him further instruction; for he that is faithful in a little shall be entrusted with more, Mt 13:12.

1. Our Lord Jesus examines his faith: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Dost thou give credit to the promises of the Messiah? Dost thou expect his coming, and art thou ready to receive and embrace him when he is manifested to thee?" This was that faith of the Son of God by which the saints lived before his manifestation. Observe,

(1.) The Messiah is here called the Son of God, and so the Jews had learned to call him from the prophecies, Ps 2:7,89:27. See Joh Joh 1:49, Thou art the Son of God, that is, the true Messiah. Those that expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah delighted rather in calling him the Son of David, which gave more countenance to that expectation, Mt 22:42. But Christ, that he might give us an idea of his kingdom, as purely spiritual and divine, calls himself the Son of God, and rather Son of man in general than of David in particular.

(2.) The desires and expectations of the Messiah, which the Old-Testament saints had, guided by and grounded upon the promise, were graciously interpreted and accepted as their believing on the Son of God. This faith Christ here enquires after: Dost thou believe? Note, The great thing which is now required of us (1Jo 3:23), and which will shortly be enquired after concerning us, is our believing on the Son of God, and by this we must stand or fall for ever.

2 The poor man solicitously enquires concerning the Messiah he was to believe in, professing his readiness to embrace him and close with him (Joh 9:36): Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?

(1.) Some think he did know that Jesus, who cured him, was the Son of God, but did not know which was Jesus, and therefore, supposing this person that talked with him to be a follower of Jesus, desired him to do him the favour to direct him to his master; not that he might satisfy his curiosity with the sight of him, but that he might the more firmly believe in him, and profess his faith, and know whom he had believed. See So 5:6,7,So 3:2,3. It is Christ only that can direct us to himself.

(2.) Others think he did know that this person who talked with him was Jesus, the same that cured him, whom he believed a great and good man and a prophet, but did not yet know that he was the Son of God and the true Messiah. "Lord, I believe there is a Christ to come; thou who hast given me bodily sight, tell me, O tell me, who and where this Son of God is." Christ's question intimated that the Messiah was come, and was now among them, which he presently takes the hint of, and asks, Where is he, Lord? The question was rational and just: Who is he, Lord, that I may

believe on him? For how could he believe in one of whom he had not heard; the work of ministers is to tell us who the Son of God is, that we may believe on him, Joh 20:31.

37 And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.

Our Lord Jesus graciously reveals himself to him as that Son of God on whom he must believe: Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee, Joh 9:37. Thou needest not go far to find out the Son of God, Behold the Word is nigh thee. We do not find that Christ did thus expressly, and in so many words, reveal himself to any other as to this man here and to the woman of Samaria: I that speak unto thee am he. He left others to find out by arguments who he was, but to these weak and foolish things of the world he chose to manifest himself, so as not to the wise and prudent. Christ here describes himself to this man by two things, which express his great favour to him:--

(1.) Thou hast seen him; and he was much indebted to the Lord Jesus for opening his eyes, that he might see him. Now he was made sensible, more than ever, what an unspeakable mercy it was to be cured of his blindness, that he might see the Son of God, a sight which rejoiced his heart more than that of the light of this world. Note, The Greatest comfort of bodily eyesight is its serviceableness to our faith and the interests of our souls. How contentedly might this man have returned to his former blindness, like old Simeon, now that his eyes had seen God's salvation! If we apply this to the opening of the eyes of the mind, it intimates that spiritual sight is given principally for this end, that we may see Christ, 2Co 4:6. Can we say that by faith we have seen Christ, seen him in his beauty and glory, in his ability and willingness to save, so seen him as to be satisfied concerning him, to be satisfied in him? Let us give him the praise, who opened our eyes.

(2.) It is he that talketh with thee; and he was indebted to Christ for condescending to do this. He was not only favoured with a sight of Christ, but was admitted into fellowship and communion with him. Great princes are willing to be seen by those whom yet they will not vouchsafe to talk with. But Christ, by his word and Spirit, talks with those whose desires are towards him, and in talking with them manifests himself to them, as he did

to the two disciples, when he talked their hearts warm, Lu 24:32. Observe, This poor man was solicitously enquiring after the Saviour, when at the same time he saw him, and was talking with him. Note, Jesus Christ is often nearer the souls that seek him than they themselves are aware of. Doubting Christians are sometimes saying, Where is the Lord? and fearing that they are cast out from his sight when at the same time it is he that talks with them, and puts strength into them.

38 And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

The poor man readily entertains this surprising revelation, and, in a transport of joy and wonder, he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. (1.) He professed his faith in Christ: Lord, I believe thee to be the Son of God. He would not dispute any thing that he said who had shown such mercy to him, and wrought such a miracle for him, nor doubt of the truth of a doctrine which was confirmed by such signs. Believing with the heart, he thus confesses with the mouth; and now the bruised reed was become a cedar. (2.) He paid his homage to him: He worshipped him, not only gave him the civil respect due to a great man, and the acknowledgments owing to a kind benefactor, but herein gave him divine honour, and worshipped him as the Son of God manifested in the flesh. None but God is to be worshipped; so that in worshipping Jesus he owned him to be God. Note, True faith will show itself in a humble adoration of the Lord Jesus. Those who believe in him will see all the reason in the world to worship him. We never read any more of this man; but, it is very likely, from henceforth he became a constant follower of Christ.

39 And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

Christ, having spoken comfort to the poor man that was persecuted, here speaks conviction to his persecutors, a specimen of the distributions of trouble and rest at the great day, 2Th 1:6,7. Probably this was not immediately after his discourse with the man, but he took the next opportunity that offered itself to address the Pharisees. Here is,

The account Christ gives of his design in coming into the world (Joh 9:39): "For judgment I am come to order and administer the great affairs of the kingdom of God among men, and am invested with a judicial power in order thereunto, to be executed in conformity to the wise counsels of God, and in pursuance of them." What Christ spoke, he spoke not as a preacher in the pulpit, but as a king upon the throne, and a judge upon the bench.

1. His business into the world was great; he came to keep the assizes and general goal-delivery. He came for judgment, that is,

(a) To preach a doctrine and a law which would try men, and effectually discover and distinguish them, and would be completely fitted, in all respects, to be the rule of government now and of judgment shortly.

(b) To put a difference between men, by revealing the thoughts of many hearts, and laying open men's true characters, by this one test, whether they were well or ill affected to him.

(c) To change the face of government in his church, to abolish the Jewish economy, to take down that fabric, which, though erected for the time by the hand of God himself, yet by lapse of time was antiquated, and by the incurable corruptions of the managers of it was become rotten and dangerous, and to erect a new building by another model, to institute new ordinances and offices, to abrogate Judaism and enact Christianity; for this judgment he came into the world, and it was a great revolution.

2. This great truth he explains by a metaphor borrowed from the miracle which he had lately wrought. That those who see not might see, and that those who see might be made blind. Such a difference of Christ's coming is often spoken of; to some his gospel is a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

(a) This is applicable to nations and people, that the Gentiles, who had long been destitute of the light of divine revelation, might see it; and the Jews, who had long enjoyed it, might have the things of their peace hid from their eyes, Ho 1:10,2:23. The Gentiles see a great light, while blindness is happened unto Israel, and their eyes are darkened.

(b) To particular sons. Christ came into the world,

[1.] Intentionally and designedly to give sight to those that were spiritually blind; by his word to reveal the object, and by his Spirit to heal the organ,

that many precious souls might be turned from darkness to light. He came for judgment, that is, to set those at liberty from their dark prison that were willing to be released, Isa 61:1.

[2.] Eventually, and in the issue, that those who see might be made blind; that those who have a high conceit of their own wisdom, and set up that in contradiction to divine revelation, might be sealed up in ignorance and infidelity. The preaching of the cross was foolishness, and an infatuating think, to those who by wisdom knew not God. Christ came into the world for this judgment, to administer the affairs of a spiritual kingdom, seated in men's minds. Whereas, in the Jewish church, the blessings and judgments of God's government were mostly temporal, now the method of administration should be changed; and as the good subjects of his kingdom should be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly things, such as arise from a due illumination of the mind, so the rebels should be punished with spiritual plagues, not war, famine, and pestilence, as formerly, but such as arise from a judicial infatuation, hardness of heart, terror of conscience, strong delusions, vile affections. In this way Christ will judge between cattle and cattle, Eze 34:17,22.

40 And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

The Pharisees' cavil at this. They were with him, not desirous to learn any good from him, but to form evil against him; and they said, Are we blind also? When Christ said that those who saw should by his coming be made blind, they apprehended that he meant them, who were the seers of the people, and valued themselves on their insight and foresight. "Now," say they, "we know that the common people are blind; but are we blind also? What we? The rabbin, the doctors, the learned in the laws, the graduates in the schools, are we blind too?" This is scandalum magnatum--a libel on the great. Note, Frequently those that need reproof most, and deserve it best, though they have wit enough to discern a tacit one, have not grace enough to bear a just one. These Pharisees took this reproof for a reproach, as those lawyers (Lu 11:45): "Are we blind also? Darest thou say that we are blind, whose judgment every one has such a veneration for, values, and yields to?" Note, Nothing fortifies men's corrupt hearts more against the convictions of the word, nor more effectually repels them, than the good opinion, especially if it be a high opinion, which others have of them; as if

all that had gained applause with men must needs obtain acceptance with God, than which nothing is more false and deceitful, for God sees not as man sees.

41 Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.

Christ's answer to this cavil, which, if it did not convince them, yet silenced them: If you were blind you should have no sin; but now you say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth. They gloried that they were not blind, as the common people, were not so credulous and manageable as they, but would see with their own eyes, having abilities, as they thought, sufficient for their own guidance, so that they needed not any body to lead them. This very thing which they gloried in, Christ here tells them, was their shame and ruin. For,

1. If you were blind, you would have no sin.

(a) "If you had been really ignorant, your sin had not been so deeply aggravated, nor would you have had so much sin to answer for as now you have. If you were blind, as the poor Gentiles are, and many of your own poor subjects, from whom you have taken the key of knowledge, you would have had comparatively no sin." The times of ignorance God winked at; invincible ignorance, though it does not justify sin, excuses it, and lessens the guilt. It will be more tolerable with those that perish for lack of vision than with those that rebel against the light.

(b) "If you had been sensible of your own blindness, if when you would see nothing else you could have seen the need of one to lead you, you would soon have accepted Christ as your guide, and then you would have had no sin, you would have submitted to an evangelical righteousness, and have been put into a justified state." Note, Those that are convinced of their disease are in a fair way to be cured, for there is not a greater hindrance to the salvation of souls than self-sufficiency.

2. "But now you say, We see; now that you have knowledge, and are instructed out of the law, your sin is highly aggravated; and now that you have a conceit of that knowledge, and think you see your way better than any body can show it you, therefore your sin remains, your case is

desperate, and your disease incurable." And as those are most blind who will not see, so their blindness is most dangerous who fancy they do see. No patients are so hardly managed as those in a frenzy who say that they are well, and nothing ails them. The sin of those who are self-conceited and self-confident remains, for they reject the gospel of grace, and therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned; and they forfeit the Spirit of grace, and therefore the power of their sin remains unbroken. Seest thou a wise man in his own conceit? Hearest thou the Pharisees say, We see? There is more hope of a fool, of a publican and a harlot, than of such.

John-10

The Parable of the Sheepfold

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

The Pharisees supported themselves in their opposition to Christ with this principle, that they were the pastors of the church, and that Jesus, having no commission from them, was an intruder and an impostor, and therefore the people were bound in duty to stick to then, against him. In opposition to this, Christ here describes who were the false shepherds, and who the true, leaving them to infer what they were.

The church of God in the world is a sheepfold, into which the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together (Joh 11:52), and in which they are united and incorporated; it is a good fold, Eze 34:14. See

Mic 2:12. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a wall of fire about it, Zec 2:5

The evidence of a thief and robber, that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner, Joh 10:1. He enters not by the door, as having no lawful cause of entry, but climbs up some other way, at a window, or some breach in the wall. How industrious are wicked people to do mischief! What plots will they lay, what pains will they take, what hazards will they run, in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God.

This sheepfold lies much exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that debauch and deceive, and cruel persecutors that destroy and devour; grievous wolves (Ac 20:29); thieves that would steal Christ's sheep from him, to sacrifice them to devils, or steal their food from them, that they might perish for lack of it; wolves in sheep's clothing, Mt 7:15.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

The character that distinguishes the rightful owner, who has a property in the sheep, and a care for them: He enters in by the door, as one having authority (Joh 10:2), and he comes to do them some good office or other, to bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick, Eze 34:16. Sheep need man's care, and, in return for it, are serviceable to man (1Co 9:7); they clothe and feed those by whom they are coted and fed.

That good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called the sheep of his pasture. Good men, as new creatures, have the good qualities of sheep, harmless and inoffensive as sheep; meek and quiet, without noise; patient as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; useful and profitable, tame and tractable, to the shepherd, and sociable one with another, and much used in sacrifices.

The great Shepherd of the sheep takes wonderful care of the flock and of all that belong to it. God is the great Shepherd, Ps 23:1. He knows those that are his calls them by name, marks them for himself, leads them out to fat pastures, makes them both feed and rest there, speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, to set them in the way of his steps.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

The ready entrance that the shepherd finds: To him the porter openeth, Joh 10:3. Anciently they had their sheepfolds within the outer gates of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to or the master of the house gave the keys to.

The under-shepherds, who are entrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust; magistrates must defend them, and protect and advance all their secular interests; ministers must serve them in their spiritual interests, must feed their souls with the word of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel ordinances duly administered, taking the oversight of them. They must enter by the door of a regular ordination, and to such the porter will open; the Spirit of Christ will set before them an open door, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flocks by name, and watch over them; must lead them into the pastures of public ordinances, preside among them, be their mouth to God and God's to them; and in their conversation must be examples to the believers.

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

The care he takes and the provision he makes for his sheep. The sheep hear his voice, when he speaks familiarly to them, when they come into the fold, as men now do to their dogs and horses; and, which is more, he calls his own sheep by name, so exact is the notice he takes of them, the account he keeps of them; and he leads them our from the fold to the green pastures; and (Joh 10:4,5) when he turns them out to graze he does not drive them, but (such was the custom in those times) he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they, being used to it, follow him, and are safe.

Those who are truly the sheep of Christ will be very observant of their Shepherd, and very cautious and shy of strangers. They follow their Shepherd, for they know his voice, having both a discerning ear, and an obedient heart.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.

The strange attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd: They know his voice, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger (for the ox knows his owner, Isa 1:3), and a stranger will they not follow, but, as suspecting some ill design, will flee from him, not knowing his voice, but that it is not the voice of their own shepherd. This is the parable; we have the key to it, Eze 34:31: You my flock are men, and I am your God.

They flee from a stranger, and dread following him, because they know not his voice. It is dangerous following those in whom we discern not the voice of Christ, and who would draw us from faith in him to fancies concerning him. And those who have experienced the power and efficacy of divine truths upon their souls, and have the savour and relish of them, have a wonderful sagacity to discover Satan's wiles, and to discern between good and evil.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.

The Jew's ignorance of the drift and meaning of this discourse (Joh 10:6): Jesus spoke this parable to them, this figurative, but wise, elegant, and instructive discourse, but they understood not what the things were which he spoke unto them, were not aware whom he meant by the thieves and robbers and whom by the good Shepherd. It is the sin and shame of many who hear the word of Christ that they do not understand it, and they do not because they will not, and because they will mis-understand it. They have no acquaintance with, nor taste of, the things themselves, and therefore do not understand the parables and comparisons with which they are illustrated. The Pharisees had a great conceit of their own knowledge, and could not bear that it should be questioned, and yet they had not sense enough to understand the things that Jesus spoke of; they were above their capacity. Frequently the greatest pretenders to knowledge are most ignorant in the things of God.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I

am the door of the sheep.

Christ's explication of this parable, opening the particulars of it fully. Whatever difficulties there may be in the sayings of the Lord Jesus, we shall find him ready to explain himself, if we be but willing to understand him. We shall find one scripture expounding another, and the blessed Spirit interpreter to the blessed Jesus. Christ, in the parable, had distinguished the shepherd from the robber by this, that he enters in by the door. Now, in the explication of the parable, he makes himself to be both the door by which the shepherd enters and the shepherd that enters in by the door. Though it may be a solecism in rhetoric to make the same person to be both the door and the shepherd, it is no solecism in divinity to make Christ to have his authority from himself, as he has life in himself; and himself to enter by his own blood, as the door, into the holy place.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

1. Christ is the door. This he saith to those who pretended to seek for righteousness, but, like the Sodomites, wearied themselves to find the door, where it was not to be found. He saith it to the Jews, who would be thought God's only sheep, and to the Pharisees, who would be thought their only shepherds: I am the door of the sheepfold; the door of the church.

(a) In general,

[1.] He is as a door shut, to keep out thieves and robbers, and such as are not fit to be admitted. The shutting of the door is the securing of the house; and what greater security has the church of God than the interposal of the Lord Jesus, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, betwixt it and all its enemies?

[2.] He is as a door open for passage and communication.

First, By Christ, as the door, we have our first admission into the flock of God, Joh 14:6.

Secondly, We go in and out in a religious conversation, assisted by him, accepted in him; walking up and down in his name, Zec 10:12. Thirdly, By him God comes to his church, visits it, and communicates himself to it.

Fourthly, By him, as the door, the sheep are at last admitted into the heavenly kingdom, Mt 25:34.

(b) More particularly,

Christ is the door of the shepherds, so that none who come not in by him are to be accounted pastors, but (according to the rule laid down, Joh 10:1) thieves and robbers (though they pretended to be shepherds); but the sheep did not hear them. This refers to all those that had the character of shepherds in Israel, whether magistrates or ministers, that exercised their office without any regard to the Messiah, or any other expectations of him than what were suggested by their own carnal interest. Observe,

First, The character given of them: they are thieves and robbers (Joh 10:8); all that went before him, not in time, many of them were faithful shepherds, but all that anticipated his commission, and went before he sent them (Jer 23:21), that assumed a precedency and superiority above him, as the antichrist is said to exalt himself, 2Th 2:4. "The scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, all, even as many as have come before me, that have endeavoured to forestal my interest, and to prevent my gaining any room in the minds of people, by prepossessing them with prejudices against me, they are thieves and robbers, and steal those hearts which they have no title to, defrauding the right owner of his property." They condemned our Saviour as a thief and a robber, because he did not come in by them as the door, nor take out a license from them; but he shows that they ought to have received their commission from him, to have been admitted by him, and to have come after him, and because they did not, but stepped before him, they were thieves and robbers. They would not come in as his disciples, and therefore were condemned as usurpers, and their pretended commissions vacated and superseded. Note, Rivals with Christ are robbers of his church, however they pretend to be shepherds, nay, shepherds of shepherds.

Secondly, The care taken to preserve the sheep from them: But the sheep did not hear them. Those that had a true savour of piety, that were spiritual and heavenly, and sincerely devoted to God and godliness, could by no means approve of the traditions of the elders, nor relish their formalities. Christ's disciples, without any particular instructions from their Master,

made no conscience of eating with unwashen hands, or plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath day; for nothing is more opposite to true Christianity than Pharisaism is, nor any thing more disrelishing to a soul truly devout than their hypocritical devotions.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Christ is the door of the sheep (Joh 10:9): By me (di emou--through me as the door) if any man enter into the sheepfold, as one of the flock, he shall be saved; shall not only by safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy, he shall go in and out. Here are, First, Plain directions how to come into the fold: we must come in by Jesus Christ as the door. By faith in him, as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. There is no entering into God's church but by coming into Christ's church; nor are any looked upon as members of the kingdom of God among men but those that are willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer. We must now enter by the door of faith (Ac 14:27), since the door of innocency is shut against us, and that pass become unpassable, Ge 3:24. Secondly, Precious promises to those who observe this direction. 1. They shall be saved hereafter; this is the privilege of their home. These sheep shall be saved from being distrained and impounded by divine justice for trespass done, satisfaction being made for the damage by their great Shepherd, saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be for ever happy. 2. In the mean time they shall go in and out and find pasture; this is the privilege of their way. They shall have their conversation in the world by the grace of Christ, shall be in his fold as a man at his own house, where he has free ingress, egress, and regress. True believers are at home in Christ; when they go out, they are not shut out as strangers, but have liberty to come in again; when they come in, they are not shut in as trespassers, but have liberty to go out. They go out to the field in the morning, they come into the fold at night; and in both the Shepherd leads and keeps them, and they find pasture in both: grass in the field, fodder in the fold. In public, in private, they have the word of God to converse with, by which their spiritual life is supported and nourished, and out of which their gracious desires are satisfied; they are replenished with the goodness of God's house.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Christ is the shepherd, Joh 10:11, &c. He was prophesied of under the Old Testament as a shepherd, Isa 40:11,Eze 34:23,37:24,Zec 13:7. In the New Testament he is spoken of as the great Shepherd (Heb 13:20), the chief Shepherd (1Pe 5:4), the Shepherd and bishop of our souls, 1Pe 2:25. God, our great owner, the sheep of whose pasture we are by creation, has constituted his Son Jesus to be our shepherd; and here again and again he owns the relation. He has all that care of his church, and every believer, that a good shepherd has of his flock; and expects all that attendance and observance from the church, and every believer, which the shepherds in those countries had from their flocks.

Christ is a shepherd, and not as the thief, not as those that came not in by the door. Observe,

[1.] The mischievous design of the thief (Joh 10:10): The thief cometh not with any good intent, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. First, Those whom they steal, whose hearts and affections they steal from Christ and his pastures, they kill and destroy spiritually; for the heresies they privily bring in are damnable. Deceivers of souls are murderers of souls. Those that steal away the scripture by keeping it in an unknown tongue, that steal away the sacraments by maiming them and altering the property of them, that steal away Christ's ordinances to put their own inventions in the room of them, they kill and destroy; ignorance and idolatry are destructive things. Secondly, Those whom they cannot steal, whom they can neither lead, drive, nor carry away, from the flock of Christ, they aim by persecutions and massacres to kill and destroy corporally. He that will not suffer himself to be robbed is in danger of being slain.

[2.] The gracious design of the shepherd; he is come,

To give life to the sheep. In opposition to the design of the thief, which is to kill and destroy (which was the design of the scribes and Pharisees) Christ saith, I am come among men,

1. That they might have life. He came to put life into the flock, the church in general, which had seemed rather like a valley full of dry bones than like

a pasture covered over with flocks. Christ came to vindicate divine truths, to purify divine ordinances, to redress grievances, and to revive dying zeal, to seek those of his flock that were lost, to bind up that which was broken (Eze 34:16), and this to his church is as life from the dead. He came to give life to particular believers. Life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened (Ge 2:17); that we might have life, as a criminal has when he is pardoned, as a sick man when he is cured, a dead man when he is raised; that we might be justified, sanctified, and at last glorified.

2. That they might have it more abundantly, kai perisson echosin. As we read it, it is comparative, that they might have a life more abundant than that which was lost and forfeited by sin, more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan, more abundant than could have been expected or than we are able to ask or think. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, that they might have abundance, or might have it abundantly. Christ came to give life and perisson ti--something more, something better, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice. Life in abundance is eternal life, life without death or fear of death, life and much more.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

To give his life for the sheep, and this that he might give life to them (Joh 10:11): The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

It is the property of every good shepherd to hazard and expose his life for the sheep. Jacob did so, when he would go through such a fatigue to attend them, Ge 31:40. So did David, when he slew the lion and the bear. Such a shepherd of souls was St. Paul, who would gladly spend, and be spent, for their service, and counted not his life dear to him, in comparison with their salvation. But, 2. It was the prerogative of the great Shepherd to give his life to purchase his flock (Ac 20:28), to satisfy for their trespass, and to shed his blood to wash and cleanse them.

Christ is a good shepherd, and not as a hireling. There were many that were not thieves, aiming to kill and destroy the sheep, but passed for shepherds,

yet were very careless in the discharge of their duty, and through their neglect the flock was greatly damaged; foolish shepherds, idle shepherds, Zec 11:15,17. In opposition to these,

Christ here calls himself the good shepherd (Joh 10:11), and again (Joh 10:14) ho poimen ho kalos--that shepherd, that good Shepherd, whom God had promised. Note, Jesus Christ is the best of shepherds, the best in the world to take the over-sight of souls, none so skilful, so faithful, so tender, as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he.

12 But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

He proves himself so, in opposition to all hirelings, Joh 10:12-14. Where observe,

The carelessness of the unfaithful shepherd described (Joh 10:12,13); he that is a hireling, that is employed as a servant and is paid for his pains, whose own the sheep are not, who has neither profit nor loss by them, sees the wolf coming, or some other danger threatening, and leaves the sheep to the wolf, for in truth he careth not for them. Here is plain reference to that of the idol-shepherd, Zec 11:17. Evil shepherds, magistrates and ministers, are here described both by their bad principles and their bad practices.

1. Their bad principles, the root of their bad practices. What makes those that have the charge of souls in trying times to betray their trust, and in quiet times not to mind it? What makes them false, and trifling, and self-seeking? It is because they are hirelings, and care not for the sheep. That is,

(a.) The wealth of the world is the chief of their good; it is because they are hirelings. They undertook the shepherds' office, as a trade to live and grow rich by, not as an opportunity of serving Christ and doing good. It is the love of money, and of their own bellies, that carries them on in it. Not that those are hirelings who, while they serve at the altar, live, and live comfortably, upon the altar. The labourer is worthy of his meat; and a scandalous maintenance will soon make a scandalous ministry. But those are hirelings that love the wages more than the work, and set their hearts upon that, as the hireling is said to do, De 24:15. See 1Sa 2:29,Isa 56:11,Mic 3:5,11.

(b.) The work of their place is the least of their care. They value not the sheep, are unconcerned in the souls of others; their business is to be their brothers' lords, not their brothers' keepers or helpers; they seek their own things, and do not, like Timothy, naturally care for the state of souls. What can be expected but that they will flee when the wolf comes. He careth not for the sheep, for he is one whose own the sheep are not. In one respect we may say of the best of the under-shepherds that the sheep are not their own, they have not dominion over them not property in them (feed my sheep and my lambs, saith Christ); but in respect of dearness and affection they should be their own. Paul looked upon those as his own whom he called his dearly beloved and longed for. Those who do not cordially espouse the church's interests, and make them their own, will not long be faithful to them.

2. Their bad practices, the effect of these bad principles, Joh 10:12. See here,

(a.) How basely the hireling deserts his post; when he sees the wolf coming, though then there is most need of him, he leaves the sheep and flees. Note, Those who mind their safety more than their duty are an easy prey to Satan's temptations.

(b.) How fatal the consequences are! the hireling fancies the sheep may look to themselves, but it does not prove so: the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep, and woeful havoc is made of the flock, which will all be charged upon the treacherous shepherd. The blood of perishing souls is required at the hand of the careless watchmen.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

See here the grace and tenderness of the good Shepherd set over against the former, as it was in the prophecy (Eze 34:21,22, &c.): I am the good Shepherd. It is matter of comfort to the church, and all her friends, that, however she may be damaged and endangered by the treachery and mismanagement of her under-officers, the Lord Jesus is, and will be, as he ever has been, the good Shepherd. Here are two great instances of the shepherd's goodness.

His acquainting himself with his flock, with all that belong or in any wise appertain to his flock, which are of two sorts, both known to him:--

(a.) He is acquainted with all that are now of his flock (Joh 10:14,15), as the good Shepherd (Joh 10:3,4): I know my sheep and am known of mine. Note, There is a mutual acquaintance between Christ and true believers; they know one another very well, and knowledge notes affection.

[1] Christ knows his sheep. He knows with a distinguishing eye who are his sheep, and who are not; he knows the sheep under their many infirmities, and the goats under their most plausible disguises. He knows with a favourable eye those that in truth are his own sheep; he takes cognizance of their state, concerns himself for them, has a tender and affectionate regard to them, and is continually mindful of them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; he visits them graciously by his Spirit, and has communion with them; he knows them, that is, he approves and accepts of them, as Ps 1:6,37:18,Ex 33:17.

[2] He is known of them. He observes them with an eye of favour, and they observe him with an eye of faith. Christ's knowing his sheep is put before their knowing him, for he knew and loved us first (1Jo 4:19), and it is not so much our knowing him as our being known of him that is our happiness, Ga 4:9. Yet it is the character of Christ's sheep that they know him; know him from all pretenders and intruders; they know his mind, know his voice, know by experience the power of his death. Christ speaks here as if he gloried in being known by his sheep, and thought their respect an honour to him. Upon this occasion Christ mentions (Joh 10:15) the mutual acquaintance between his Father and himself: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father. Now this may be considered, either, First, As the ground of that intimate acquaintance and relation which subsist between Christ and believers. The covenant of grace, which is the bond of this relation, is founded in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, which, we may be sure, stands firm; for the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter, and there could be no mistake, which might leave the matter at any uncertainty, or bring it into any hazard. The Lord Jesus knows whom he hath chosen, and is sure of

them (Joh 13:18), and they also know whom they have trusted, and are sure of him (2Ti 1:12), and the ground of both is the perfect knowledge which the Father and the Son had of one another's mind, when the counsel of peace was between them both. Or, Secondly, As an apt similitude, illustrating the intimacy that is between Christ and believers. It may be connected with the foregoing words, thus: I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; compare Joh 17:21.

1. As the Father knew the Son, and loved him, and owned him in his sufferings, when he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, so Christ knows his sheep, and has a watchful tender eye upon them, will be with them when they are left alone, as his Father was with him.

2. As the Son knew the Father, loved and obeyed him, and always did those things that pleased him, confiding in him as his God even when he seemed to forsake him, so believers know Christ with an obediential fiducial regard.

He declares his purpose of dying for his flock (Joh 10:15): I lay down my life for the sheep. He not only ventured his life for them (in such a case, the hope of saving it might balance the fear of losing it), but he actually deposited it, and submitted to a necessity of dying for our redemption; tithemi--I put it as a pawn or pledge; as purchase-money paid down. Sheep appointed for the slaughter, ready to be sacrificed, were ransomed with the blood of the shepherd. He laid down his life, hyper ton probaton, not only for the good of the sheep, but in their stead. Thousands of sheep had been offered in sacrifice for their shepherds, as sin-offerings, but here, by a surprising reverse, the shepherd is sacrificed for the sheep. When David, the shepherd of Israel, was himself guilty, and the destroying angel drew his sword against the flock for his sake, with good reason did he plead, These sheep, what evil have they done? Let thy hand be against me, 2Sa 24:17. But the Son of David was sinless and spotless; and his sheep, what evil have they not done? Yet he saith, Let thine hand be against me. Christ here seems to refer to that prophecy, Zec 13:17, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd; and, though the smiting of the shepherd be for the present the scattering of the flock, it is in order to the gathering of them in.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

He is acquainted with those that are hereafter to be of this flock (Joh 10:16): Other sheep I have, have a right to and an interest in, which are not of this fold, of the Jewish church; them also I must bring. Observe,

[a.] The eye that Christ had to the poor Gentiles. He had sometimes intimated his special concern for the lost sheep of the house of Israel; to them indeed his personal ministry was confined; but, saith he, I have other sheep. Those who in process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called sheep, and he is said to have them, though as yet they were uncalled, and many of them unborn, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ in the counsels of divine love from eternity. Christ has a right, by virtue of the Father's donation and his own purchase, to many a soul of which he has not yet the possession; thus he had much people in Corinth, when as yet it lay in wickedness, Ac 18:10. "Those other sheep I have," saith Christ, "I have them on my heart, have them in my eye, am as sure to have them as if I had them already." Now Christ speaks of those other sheep, First, To take off the contempt that was put upon him, as having few followers, as having but a little flock, and therefore, if a good shepherd, yet a poor shepherd: "But," saith he, "I have more sheep than you see." Secondly, To take down the pride and vain-glory of the Jews, who thought the Messiah must gather all his sheep from among them. "No," saith Christ, "I have others whom I will set with the lambs of my flock, though you disdain to set them with the dogs of your flock."

[b.] The purposes and resolves of his grace concerning them: "Them also I must bring, bring home to God, bring into the church, and, in order to this, bring off from their vain conversation, bring them back from their wanderings, as that lost sheep," Lu 15:5. But why must he bring them? What was the necessity? First, The necessity of their case required it: "I must bring, or they must be left to wander endlessly, for, like sheep, they will never come back of themselves, and no other can or will bring them." Secondly, The necessity of his own engagements required it; he must bring them, or he would not be faithful to his trust, and true to his

undertaking. "They are my own, bought and paid for, and therefore I must not neglect them nor leave them to perish." He must in honour bring those with whom he was entrusted.

[c.] The happy effect and consequence of this, in two things:--First, "They shall hear my voice. Not only my voice shall be heard among them (whereas they have not heard, and therefore could not believe, now the sound of the gospel shall go to the ends of the earth), but it shall be heard by them; I will speak, and give to them to hear." Faith comes by hearing, and our diligent observance of the voice of Christ is both a means and an evidence of our being brought to Christ, and to God by him. Secondly, There shall be one fold and one shepherd. As there is one shepherd, so there shall be one fold. Both Jews and Gentiles, upon their turning to the faith of Christ, shall be incorporated in one church, be joint and equal sharers in the privileges of it, without distinction. Being united to Christ, they shall unite in him; two sticks shall become one in the hand of the Lord. Note, One shepherd makes one fold; one Christ makes one church. As the church is one in its constitution, subject to one head, animated by one Spirit, and guided by one rule, so the members of it ought to be one in love and affection, Eph 4:3-6.

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

That his laying down his life for the sheep was the condition, the performance of which entitled him to the honours and powers of his exalted state (Joh 10:17): "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. Upon these terms I am, as Mediator, to expect my Father's acceptance and approbation, and the glory designed me--that I become a sacrifice for the chosen remnant." Not but that, as the Son of God, he was beloved of his Father from eternity, but as God-man, as Immanuel, he was therefore beloved of the Father because he undertook to die for the sheep; therefore God's soul delighted in him as his elect because herein he was his faithful servant (Isa 42:1); therefore he said, This is my beloved Son. What an instance is this of God's love to man, that he loved his Son the more for loving us! See what a value Christ puts upon his Father's love, that, to recommend himself to that, he would lay down his life for the sheep. Did he think God's love recompence sufficient for all his services and sufferings, and shall we think it too little for ours,

and court the smiles of the world to make it up? Therefore doth my Father love me, that is, me, and all that by faith become one with me; me, and the mystical body, because I lay down my life.

That his laying down his life was in order to his resuming it: I lay down my life, that I may receive it again. First, This was the effect of his Father's love, and the first step of his exaltation, the fruit of that love. Because he was God's holy one, he must not see corruption, Ps 16:10. God loved him too well to leave him in the grave. Secondly, This he had in his eye, in laying down his life, that he might have an opportunity of declaring himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection, Ro 1:4. By a divine stratagem (like that before Ai, Jos 8:15) he yielded to death, as if he were smitten before it, that he might the more gloriously conquer death, and triumph over the grave. He laid down a vilified body, that he might assume a glorified one, fit to ascend to the world of spirits; laid down a life adapted to this world, but assumed one adapted to the other, like a corn of wheat, Joh 12:24.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

That he was perfectly voluntary in his sufferings and death (Joh 10:18): "No one doth or can force my life from me against my will, but I freely lay it down of myself, I deliver it as my own act and deed, for I have (which no man has) power to lay it down, and to take it again."

1st, See here the power of Christ, as the Lord of life, particularly of his own life, which he had in himself. 1. He had power to keep his life against all the world, so that it could not be wrested from him without his own consent. Though Christ's life seemed to be taken by storm, yet really it was surrendered, otherwise it had been impregnable, and never taken. The Lord Jesus did not fall into the hands of his persecutors because he could not avoid it, but threw himself into their hands because his hour was come. No man taketh my life from me. This was such a challenge as was never given by the most daring hero. 2. He had power to lay down his life.

(a) He had ability to do it. He could, when he pleased, slip the knot of union between soul and body, and, without any act of violence done to himself, could disengage them from each other: having voluntarily taken up a body, he could voluntarily lay it down again, which appeared when he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

(b) He had authority to do it, exousian. Though we could find instruments of cruelty, wherewith to make an end of our own lives, yet Id possumus quod jure possumus--we can do that, and that only, which we can do lawfully. We are not at liberty to do it; but Christ had a sovereign authority to dispose of his own life as he pleased. He was no debtor (as we are) either to life or death, but perfectly sui juris.

(c) He had power to take it again; we have not. Our life, once laid down, is as water spilt upon the ground; but Christ, when he laid down his life, still had it within reach, within call, and could resume it. Parting with it by a voluntary conveyance, he might limit the surrender at pleasure, and he did it with a power of revocation, which was necessary to preserve the intentions of the surrender.

2ndly, See here the grace of Christ; since none could demand his life of him by law, or extort it by force, he laid it down of himself, for our redemption. He offered himself to be the Saviour: Lo, I come; and then, the necessity of our case calling for it, he offered himself to be a sacrifice: Here am I, let these go their way; by which will we are sanctified, Heb 10:10. He was both the offerer and the offering, so that his laying down his life was his offering up himself.

19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him ?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?

Not the words, &c. His words are sober, grave, pious, full of wisdom. The preaching of Jesus always produced effect. It made bitter enemies or decided friends. So will all faithful preaching. It is not the fault of the gospel that there are divisions, but of the unbelief and mad passions of men.

22 And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.

The feast of the dedication. Literally, the feast of the renewing, or of the renovation. This feast was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus, in the year 164 B.C. The temple and city were taken by Antiochus Epiphanes in the year 167 B.C. He slew forty thousand inhabitants, and sold forty thousand more as slaves. In addition to this, he sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt-offerings, and a broth being made of this, he sprinkled it all over the temple. The city and temple were recovered three years afterward by Judas Maccabaeus, and the temple was purified with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of purification continued through eight days, during which Judas presented magnificent victims, and celebrated the praise of God with hymns and psalms (Josephus, Ant., b. xii. ch. 11). "They decked, also, the forefront of the temple with crowns of gold and with shields, and the gates and chambers they renewed and hanged doors upon them," 1 Mac. iv. 52-59. On this account it was called the feast of renovation or dedication. Josephus calls it the feast of lights, because the city was illuminated, as expressive of joy. The feast began on the twenty-fifth day of Chisleu, answering to the fifteenth day of December. The festival continued for eight days, with continued demonstrations of joy.

It was winter. The feast was celebrated in the winter. The word here implies that it was cold and inclement, and it is given as a reason why he walked in Solomon's porch.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

A weighty question put to him by the Jews, Joh 10:24. They came round about him, to tease him; he was waiting for an opportunity to do them a kindness, and they took the opportunity to do him a mischief. Ill-will for good-will is no rare and uncommon return. He could not enjoy himself, no, not in the temple, his Father's house, without disturbance. They came about him, as it were, to lay siege to him: encompassed him about like bees. They came about him as if they had a joint and unanimous desire to be satisfied; came as one man, pretending an impartial and importunate

enquiry after truth, but intending a general assault upon our Lord Jesus; and they seemed to speak the sense of their nation, as if they were the mouth of all the Jews: How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us.

(1.) They quarrel with him, as if he had unfairly held them in suspense hitherto. Ten psychen hemon aireis--How long dost thou steal away our hearts? Or, take away our souls? So some read it; basely intimating that what share he had of the people's love and respect he did not obtain fairly, but by indirect methods, as Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; and as seducers deceive the hearts of the simple, and so draw away disciples after them, Ro 16:18,Ac 20:30. But most interpreters understand it as we do: "How long dost thou keep us in suspense? How long are we kept debating whether thou be the Christ or no, and not able to determine the question?" Now,

[1.] It was the effect of their infidelity, and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had so fully proved himself to be the Christ they were still in doubt concerning it; this they willingly hesitated about, when they might easily have been satisfied. The struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ, and their corruptions, which said, No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. Those who choose to be sceptics may, if they please, hold the balance so that the most cogent arguments may not weigh down the most trifling objections, but scales may still hang even.

[2.] It was an instance of their impudence and presumption that they laid the blame of their doubting upon Christ himself, as if he made them to doubt by inconsistency with himself, whereas in truth they made themselves doubt by indulging their prejudices. If Wisdom's sayings appear doubtful, the fault is not in the object, but in the eye; they are all plain to him that understands. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves to doubt.

(2.) They challenge him to give a direct and categorical answer whether he was the Messiah or no: "If thou be the Christ, as many believe thou

art, tell us plainly, not by parables, as, I am the light of the world, and the good Shepherd, and the like, but totidem verbis--in so many words, either that thou art the Christ, or, as John Baptist, that thou art not," Joh 1:20. Now this pressing query of theirs was seemingly good; they pretended to be desirous to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was really bad, and put with an ill design; for, if he should tell them plainly that he was the Christ, there needed no more to make him obnoxious to the jealousy and severity of the Roman government. Every one knew the Messiah was to be a king, and therefore whoever pretended to be the Messiah would be prosecuted as a traitor, which was the thing they would have been at; for, let him tell them ever so plainly that he was the Christ, they would have this to say presently, Thou bearest witness of thyself, as they had said, Joh 8:13.

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.

He justifies himself as not at all accessary to their infidelity and skepticism, referring them,

[1.] To what he had said: I have told you. He had told them that he was the Son of God, the Son of man, that he had life in himself, that he had authority to execute judgment, &c. And is not this the Christ then? These things he had told them, and they believed not; why then should they be told them again, merely to gratify their curiosity? You believed not. They pretended that they only doubted, but Christ tells them that they did not believe. Skepticism in religion is no better than downright infidelity. It is now for us to teach God how he should teach us, nor prescribe to him how plainly he should tell us his mind, but to be thankful for divine revelation as we have it. If we do not believe this, neither should we be persuaded if it were ever so much adapted to our humour.

[2.] He refers them to his works, to the example of his life, which was not only perfectly pure, but highly beneficent, and of a piece with his doctrine; and especially to his miracles, which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. It was certain that no man could do those miracles except God were with him, and God would not be with him to attest a forgery.

He condemns them for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding all the most plain and powerful arguments used to convince them: "You believed not; and again, You believed not. You still are what you always were, obstinate in your unbelief." But the reason he gives is very surprising: "You believed not, because you are not of my sheep: you believe not in me, because you belong not to me."

[1.] "You are not disposed to be my followers, are not of a tractable teachable temper, have no inclination to receive the doctrine and law of the Messiah; you will not herd yourselves with my sheep, will not come and see, come and hear my voice." Rooted antipathies to the gospel of Christ are the bonds of iniquity and infidelity.

[2.] "You are not designed to be my followers; you are not of those that were given me by my Father, to be brought to grace and glory. You are not of the number of the elect; and your unbelief, if you persist in it, will be a certain evidence that you are not." Note, Those to whom God never gives the grace of faith were never designed for heaven and happiness. What Solomon saith of immorality is true of infidelity, It is a deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein, Pr 22:14. Non esse electum, non est causa incredulitatis propriè dicta, sed causa per accidens. Fides autem est donum Dei et effectus prædestinationis--The not being included among the elect is not the proper cause of infidelity, but merely the accidental cause. But faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination. So Jansenius distinguishes well here.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

He takes this occasion to describe both the gracious disposition and the happy state of those that are his sheep; for such there are, though they be not.

[1.] To convince them that they were not his sheep, he tells them what were the characters of his sheep.

First, They hear his voice (Joh 10:27), for they know it to be his (Joh 10:4), and he has undertaken that they shall hear it, Joh 10:16. They

discern it, It is the voice of my beloved, So 2:8. They delight in it, are in their element when they are sitting at his feet to hear his word. They do according to it, and make his word their rule. Christ will not account those his sheep that are deaf to his calls, deaf to his charms, Ps 58:5.

Secondly, They follow him; they submit to his guidance by a willing obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful conformity to his spirit and pattern. The word of command has always been, Follow me. We must eye him as our leader and captain, and tread in his steps, and walk as he walked--follow the prescriptions of his word, the intimations of his providence, and the directions of his Spirit--follow the Lamb (the dux gregis--the leader of the flock) whithersoever he goes. In vain do we hear his voice if we do not follow him.

[2.] To convince them that it was their great unhappiness and misery not to be of Christ's sheep, he here describes the blessed state and case of those that are, which would likewise serve for the support and comfort of his poor despised followers, and keep them from envying the power and grandeur of those that were not of his sheep.

Our Lord Jesus takes cognizance of his sheep: They hear my voice, and I know them. He distinguishes them from others (2Ti 2:19), has a particular regard to every individual (Ps 34:6); he knows their wants and desires, knows their souls in adversity, where to find them, and what to do for them. He knows others afar off, but knows them near at hand.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

He has provided a happiness for them, suited to them: I give unto them eternal life, Joh 10:28.

1 The estate settled upon them is rich and valuable; it is life, eternal life. Man has a living soul; therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul: therefore the happiness provided is eternal life, running parallel with his duration. Life eternal is the felicity and chief good of a soul immortal.

2 The manner of conveyance is free: I give it to them; it is not bargained and sold upon a valuable consideration, but given by the free grace of Jesus Christ. The donor has power to give it. He who is the fountain of life, and Father of eternity, has authorized Christ to give eternal life, Joh 17:2. Not I will give it, but I do give it; it is a present gift. He gives the assurance of it, the pledge and earnest of it, the first-fruits and foretastes of it, that spiritual life which is eternal life begun, heaven in the seed, in the bud, in the embryo.

He has undertaken for their security and preservation to this happiness.

1. They shall be saved from everlasting perdition. They shall by no means perish for ever; so the words are. As there is an eternal life, so there is an eternal destruction; the soul not annihilated, but ruined; its being continued, but its comfort and happiness irrecoverably lost. All believers are saved from this; whatever cross they may come under, they shall not come into condemnation. A man is never undone till he is in hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, not one.

2. They cannot be kept from their everlasting happiness; it is in reserve, but he that gives it to them will preserve them to it.

(a.) His own power is engaged for them: Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare that he has them not only within his fold, and under his eye, but in his hand, interested in his special love and taken under his special protection (all his saints are in thy hand, De 33:3); yet their enemies are so daring that they attempt to pluck them out of his hand--his whose own they are, whose care they are; but they cannot, they shall not, do it. Note, Those are safe who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus: and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of

Christ from following him, reproving and threatening them, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail.

(b.) His Father's power is likewise engaged for their preservation, Joh 10:29. He now appeared in weakness, and, lest his security should therefore be thought insufficient, he brings in his Father as a further security. Observe,

[1] The power of the Father: My Father is greater than all; greater than all the other friends of the church, all the other shepherds, magistrates or ministers, and able to do that for them which they cannot do. Those shepherds slumber and sleep, and it will be easy to pluck the sheep out of their hands; but he keeps his flock day and night. He is greater than all the enemies of the church, all the opposition given to her interests, and able to secure his own against all their insults; he is greater than all the combined force of hell and earth. He is greater in wisdom than the old serpent, though noted for subtlety; greater in strength than the great red dragon, though his name be legion, and his title principalities and powers. The devil and his angels have had many a push, many a pluck for the mastery, but have never yet prevailed, Re 12:7,8. The Lord on high is mightier.

[2] The interest of the Father in the sheep, for the sake of which this power is engaged for them: "It is my Father that gave them to me, and he is concerned in honour to uphold his gift." They were given to the Son as a trust to be managed by him, and therefore God will still look after them. All the divine power is engaged for the accomplishment of all the divine counsels.

[3] The safety of the saints inferred from these two. If this be so, then none (neither man nor devil) is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand, not able to deprive them of the grace they have, nor to hinder them from the glory that is designed them; not able to put them out of God's protection, nor get them into their own power. Christ had himself experienced the power of his Father upholding and strengthening him, and therefore puts all his followers into his hand too.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

Christ's tender expostulation with them upon occasion of this outrage (Joh 10:32): Jesus answered what they did, for we do not find that they said any thing, unless perhaps they stirred up the crown that they had gathered about him to join with them, crying, Stone him, stone him, as afterwards, Crucify him, crucify him. When he could have answered them with fire from heaven, he mildly replied, Many good works have I shown you from my Father: for which of those works do you stone me? Words so very tender that one would think they should have melted a heart of stone. In dealing with his enemies he still argued from his works (men evidence what they are by what they do), his good works--kala erga excellent, eminent works. Opera eximia vel præclara; the expression signifies both great works and good works.

1 The divine power of his works convicted them of the most obstinate infidelity. They were works from his Father, so far above the reach and course of nature as to prove him who did them sent of God, and acting by commission from him. These works he showed them; he did them openly before the people, and not in a corner. His works would bear the test, and refer themselves to the testimony of the most inquisitive and impartial spectators. He did not show his works by candle-light, as those that are concerned only for show, but he showed them at noon-day before the world, Joh 18:20. See Ps 111:6. His works so undeniably demonstrated that they were an incontestable demonstration of the validity of his commission.

2 The divine grace of his works convicted them of the most base ingratitude. The works he did among them were not only miracles, but mercies; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endear himself to them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these

he had repeated, and multiplied: "Now for which of these do you stone me? You cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore you will pick a quarrel with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which." Note,

(1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceedingly sinful. See how God argues to this purpose, De 32:6,Jer 2:5,Mic 6:3.

(2.) We must not think it strange if we meet with those who not only hate us without cause, but are our adversaries for our love, Ps 35:12,41:9. When he asks, For which of these do you stone me? as he intimates the abundant satisfaction he had in his own innocency, which gives a man courage in a suffering day, so he puts his persecutors upon considering what was the true reason of their enmity, and asking, as all those should do that create trouble to their neighbour, Why persecute we him? As Job advises his friends to do, Job 19:28.

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

Their vindication of the attempt they made upon Christ, and the cause upon which they grounded their prosecution, Joh 10:33. What sin will want fig-leaves with which to cover itself, when even the bloody persecutors of the Son of God could find something to say for themselves?

1. They would not be thought such enemies to their country as to persecute him for a good work: For a good work we stone thee not. For indeed they would scarcely allow any of his works to be so. His curing the impotent man (Joh 5:1-46) and the blind man (Joh 9:1-41) were so far from being acknowledged good services to the town, and meritorious, that they were put upon the score of his crimes, because done on the sabbath day. But, if he had done any good works, they would not own that they stoned him for them, though these were really the things that did most exasperate them, Joh 11:47. Thus, though most absurd, they could not be brought to own their absurdities.

2. They would be thought such friends to God and his glory as to prosecute him for blasphemy: Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Here is,

(1.) A pretended zeal for the law. They seem mightily concerned for the honour of the divine majesty, and to be seized with a religious horror at that which they imagined to be a reproach to it. A blasphemer was to be stoned, Le 24:16. This law, they thought, did not only justify, but sanctify, what they attempted, as Ac 26:9. Note, The vilest practices are often varnished with plausible pretences. As nothing is more courageous than a well-informed conscience, so nothing is more outrageous than a mistaken one. See Isa 66:5,Joh 16:2.

(2.) A real enmity to the gospel, on which they could not put a greater affront than by representing Christ as a blasphemer. It is no new thing for the worst of characters to be put upon the best of men, by those that resolve to give them the worst of treatment.

[1.] The crime laid to his charge is blasphemy, speaking reproachfully and despitefully of God. God himself is out of the sinner's reach, and not capable of receiving any real injury; and therefore enmity to God spits its venom at his name, and so shows its ill-will.

[2.] The proof of the crime: Thou, being a man, makest thyself God. As it is God's glory that he is God, which we rob him of when we make him altogether such a one as ourselves, so it is his glory that besides him there is no other, which we rob him of when we make ourselves, or any creature, altogether like him. Now,

First, Thus far they were in the right, that what Christ said of himself amounted to this--that he was God, for he had said that he was one with the Father and that he would give eternal life; and Christ does not deny it, which he would have done if it had been a mistaken inference from his words. But,

secondly, They were much mistaken when they looked upon him as a mere man, and that the Godhead he claimed was a usurpation, and of his own making. They thought it absurd and impious that such a one as he, who appeared in the fashion of a poor, mean, despicable man, should profess himself the Messiah, and entitle himself to the honours confessedly due to the Son of God. Note,

1. Those who say that Jesus is a mere man, and only a made God, as the Socinians say, do in effect charge him with blasphemy, but do effectually prove it upon themselves.

2. He who, being a man, a sinful man, makes himself a god as the Pope does, who claims divine powers and prerogatives, is unquestionably a blasphemer, and that antichrist.

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

Christ's reply to their accusation of him (for such their vindication of themselves was), and his making good those claims which they imputed to him as blasphemous (Joh 10:34, &c.), where he proves himself to be no blasphemer, by two arguments:--

By an argument taken from God's word. He appeals to what was written in their law, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture on his side. It is written (Ps 82:6), I have said, You are gods. It is an argument a minore ad majus--from the less to the greater. If they were gods, much more am I.

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken;

How he explains the text (Joh 10:35): He called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and therefore they are called gods, Ex 22:28. To some the word of God came immediately, as to Moses; to others in the way of an instituted ordinance. Magistracy is a divine institution; and magistrates are God's delegates, and therefore the scripture calleth them gods; and we are sure that the scripture cannot be broken, or broken in upon, or found fault with.

Every word of God is right; the very style and language of scripture are unexceptionable, and not to be corrected, Mt 5:18.

36 say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

How he applies it. Thus much in general is easily inferred, that those were very rash and unreasonable who condemned Christ as a blasphemer, only for calling himself the Son of God, when yet they themselves called their rulers so, and therein the scripture warranted them. But the argument goes further (Joh 10:36): If magistrates were called Gods, because they were commissioned to administer justice in the nation, say you of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest? We have here two things concerning the Lord Jesus:--

[1.] The honour done him by the Father, which he justly glories in: He sanctified him, and sent him into the world. Magistrates were called the sons of God, though the word of God only came to them, and the spirit of government came upon them by measure, as upon Saul; but our Lord Jesus was himself the Word, and had the Spirit without measure. They were constituted for a particular country, city, or nation; but he was sent into the world, vested with a universal authority, as Lord of all. They were sent to, as persons at a distance; he was sent forth, as having been from eternity with God. The Father sanctified him, that is, designed him and set him apart to the office of Mediator, and qualified and fitted him for that office. Sanctifying him is the same with sealing him, Joh 6:27.

Note, Whom the Father sends he sanctifies; whom he designs for holy purposes he prepares with holy principles and dispositions. The holy God will reward, and therefore will employ, none but such as he finds or makes holy. The Father's sanctifying and sending him is here vouched as a sufficient warrant for his calling himself the Son of God; for because he was a holy thing he was called the Son of God, Lu 1:35. See Ro 1:4.

[2.] The dishonour done him by the Jews, which he justly complains of--that they impiously said of him, whom the Father had thus dignified, that he was a blasphemer, because he called himself the Son of God: "Say you of him so and so? Dare you say so? Dare you thus set your mouths against the heavens? Have you brow and brass enough to tell the God of truth

that he lies, or to condemn him that is most just? Look me in the face, and say it if you can. What! say you of the Son of God that he is a blasphemer?" If devils, whom he came to condemn, had said so of him, it had not been so strange; but that men, whom he came to teach and save, should say so of him, be astonished, O heavens! at this. See what is the language of an obstinate unbelief; it does, in effect, call the holy Jesus a blasphemer. It is hard to say which is more to be wondered at, that men who breathe in God's air should yet speak such things, or that men who have spoken such things should still be suffered to breathe in God's air. The wickedness of man, and the patience of God, as it were, contend which shall be most wonderful.

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

By an argument taken from his own works, Joh 10:37,38. In the former he only answered the charge of blasphemy by an argument ad hominem--turning a man's own argument against himself; but he here makes out his own claims, and proves that he and the Father are one (Joh 10:37,38): If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. Though he might justly have abandoned such blasphemous wretches as incurable, yet he vouchsafes to reason with them. Observe,

From what he argues--from his works, which he had often vouched as his credentials, and the proofs of his mission. As he proved himself sent of God by the divinity of his works, so we must prove ourselves allied to Christ by the Christianity of ours.

The argument is very cogent; for the works he did were the works of his Father, which the Father only could do, and which could not be done in the ordinary course of nature, but only by the sovereign over-ruling power of the God of nature. Opera Deo propria--works peculiar to God, and Opera Deo Digna--works worthy of God--the works of a divine power. He that can dispense with the laws of nature, repeal, altar, and overrule them at his pleasure, by his own power, is certainly the sovereign prince who first instituted and enacted those laws. The miracles which the apostles wrought in his name, by his power, and for the confirmation of his doctrine, corroborated this argument, and continued the evidence of it when he was gone.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

It is proposed as fairly as can be desired, and put to a short issue. First, If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. He does not demand a blind and implicit faith, nor an assent to his divine mission further than he gave proof of it. He did not wind himself into the affections of the people, nor wheedle them by sly insinuations, nor impose upon their credulity by bold assertions, but with the greatest fairness imaginable quitted all demands of their faith, further than he produced warrants for these demands. Christ is no hard master, who expects to reap in assents where he has not sown in arguments. None shall perish for the disbelief of that which was not proposed to them with sufficient motives of credibility, Infinite Wisdom itself being judge. Secondly, "But if I do the works of my Father, if I work undeniable miracles for the confirmation of a holy doctrine, though you believe not me, though you are so scrupulous as not to take my word, yet believe the works: believe your own eyes, your own reason; the thing speaks itself plainly enough." As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and common providence (Ro 1:20), so the invisible things of the Redeemer were seen by his miracles, and by all his works both of power and mercy; so that those who were not convinced by these works were without excuse.

For what he argues--that you may know and believe, may believe it intelligently, and with an entire satisfaction, that the Father is in me and I in him; which is the same with what he had said (Joh 10:30): I and my Father are one. The Father was so in the Son as that in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, and it was by a divine power that he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father as that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of his mind, not by communication, but by consciousness, having lain in his bosom.

39 Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand,

How they attacked him by force. Therefore they sought again to take him, Joh 10:39. Therefore, 1. Because he had fully answered their charge of blasphemy, and wiped off that imputation, so that they could not for shame go on with their attempts to stone him, therefore they contrived to

seize him, and prosecute him as an offender against the state. When they were constrained to drop their attempt by a popular tumult, they would try what they could do under colour of a legal process. See Re 12:13. Or, 2. Because he persevered in the same testimony concerning himself, they persisted in their malice against him. What he had said before he did in effect say again, for the faithful witness never departs from what he has once said; and therefore, having the same provocation, they express the same resentment, and justify their attempt to stone him by another attempt to take him. Such is the temper of a persecuting spirit, and such its policy, malè facta malè factis tegere ne perpluant--to cover one set of bad deeds with another, lest the former should fall through.

40 and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

How he disposed of himself in his retirement: He went away again beyond Jordan, Joh 10:40. The bishop of our souls came not to be fixed in one see, but to go about from place to place, doing good. This great benefactor was never out of his way, for wherever he came there was work to be done. Though Jerusalem was the royal city, yet he made many a kind visit to the country, not only to his own country Galilee, but to other parts, even those that lay most remote beyond Jordan. Now observe,

1. What shelter he found there. He went into a private part of the country, and there he abode; there he found some rest and quietness, when in Jerusalem he could find none. Note, Though persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, they cannot drive him or it out of the world. Though Jerusalem was not gathered, nor would be, yet Christ was glorious, and would be. Christ's going now beyond Jordan was a figure of the taking of the kingdom of God from the Jews, and bringing it to the Gentiles. Christ and his gospel have often found better entertainment among the plain country-people than among the wise, the mighty, the noble, 1Co 1:26,27.

2. What success he found there. He did not go thither merely for his own security, but to do good there; and he chose to go thither, where John at first baptized (Joh 1:28), because there could not but remain some impressions of John's ministry and baptism thereabouts, which would dispose them to receive Christ and his doctrine; for it was not three years

since John was baptizing, and Christ was himself baptized here at Bethabara. Christ came hither now to see what fruit there was of all the pains John Baptist had taken among them, and what they retained of the things they then heard and received.

41 And many resorted unto him and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

The event in some measure answered expectation; for we are told,

(a) That they flocked after him (Joh 10:41): Many resorted to him. The return of the means of grace to a place, after they have been for some time intermitted, commonly occasions a great stirring of affections. Some think Christ chose to abide at Bethabara, the house of passage, where the ferry-boats lay by which they crossed the river Jordan, that the confluence of people thither might give an opportunity of teaching many who would come to hear him when it lay in their way, but who would scarcely go a step out of the road for an opportunity of attending on his word.

(b) That they reasoned in his favour, and sought arguments to induce them to close with him as much as those at Jerusalem sought objections against him. They said very judiciously, John did no miracle, but all things that John spoke of this man were true. Two things they considered, upon recollecting what they had seen and heard from John, and comparing it with Christ's ministry.

[1.] That Christ far exceeded John Baptist's power, for John did no miracle, but Jesus does many; whence it is easy to infer that Jesus is greater than John. And, if John was so great a prophet, how great then is this Jesus! Christ is best known and acknowledged by such a comparison with others as sets him superlatively above others. Though John came in the spirit and power of Elias, yet he did not work miracles, as Elias did, lest the minds of people should be made to hesitate between him and Jesus; therefore the honour of working miracles was reserved for Jesus as a flower of his crown, that there might be a sensible demonstration, and undeniable one, that though he came after John, yet he was preferred far before him.

[2.] That Christ exactly answered John Baptist's testimony. John not only did no miracle to divert people from Christ, but he said a great deal to direct them to Christ, and to turn them over as apprentices to him, and this came to their minds now: all things that John said of this man were true, that he should be the Lamb of God, should baptize with Holy Ghost and with fire. Great things John had said of him, which raised their expectations; so that though they had not zeal enough to carry them into his country to enquire after him, yet, when he came into theirs, and brought his gospel to their doors, they acknowledged him as great as John had said he would be. When we get acquainted with Christ, and come to know him experimentally, we find all things that the scripture saith of him to be true; nay, and that the reality exceeds the report, 1Ki 10:6,7. John Baptist was now dead and gone, and yet his hearers profited by what they had heard formerly, and, by comparing what they heard then with what they saw now, they gained a double advantage; for,

First, They were confirmed in their belief that John was a prophet, who foretold such things, and spoke of the eminency to which this Jesus would arrive, though his beginning was so small.

Secondly, They were prepared to believe that Jesus was the Christ, in whom they saw those things accomplished which John foretold. By this we see that the success and efficacy of the word preached are not confined to the life of the preacher, nor do they expire with his breath, but that which seemed as water spilt upon the ground may afterwards be gathered up again. See Zec 1:5,6.

(c) That many believed on him there. Believing that he who wrought such miracles, and in whom John's predictions were fulfilled, was what he declared himself to be, the Son of God, they gave up themselves to him as his disciples, Joh 10:42. An emphasis is here to be laid,

[1.] Upon the persons that believed on him; they were many. While those that received and embraced his doctrine at Jerusalem were but as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, those that believed on him in the country, beyond the Jordan, were a full harvest gathered in to him.

[2.] Upon the place where this was; it was where John had been preaching and baptizing and had had great success; there many believed on the Lord Jesus. Where the preaching of the doctrine of repentance has had success, as desired, there the preaching of the doctrine of reconciliation and gospel grace is most likely to be prosperous. Where John has been acceptable, Jesus will not be unacceptable.

42 And many believed on him there.

John-11

The Death of Lazarus

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

A certain man was sick. The resurrection of Lazarus has been recorded only by John. Various reasons have been conjectured why the other evangelists did not mention so signal a miracle. The most probable is, that at the time they wrote Lazarus was still living. The miracle was well known, and yet to have recorded it might have exposed Lazarus to opposition and persecution from the Jews. See Jn 12:10,11. Besides, John wrote for Christians who were out of Palestine. The other gospels were written chiefly for those who were in Judea. There was the more need, therefore, that he should enter minutely into the account of the miracle, while the others did not deem it necessary or proper to record an event so well known.

Bethany. A village on the eastern declivity of the Mount of Olives. Mt 21:1.

The town of Mary. The place where she lived. At that place also lived Simon the leper (Mt 26:6), and there our Lord spent considerable part of his time when he was in Judea. The transaction recorded in this chapter occurred nearly four months after those mentioned in the previous chapter. Those occurred in December, and these at the approach of the Passover in April.

2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

Whom thou lovest, Jn 11:5. The members of this family were among the few peculiar and intimate friends of our Lord. He was much with them, and showed them marks of special friendship Lk 10:38-42, and they bestowed upon him peculiar proof of affection in return. This shows that special attachments are lawful for Christians, and that those friendships are peculiarly lovely which are tempered and sweetened with the spirit of Christ. Friendships should always be cemented by religion, and one main end of those attachments should be to aid one another in the great business of preparing to die.

Sent unto him. They believed that he had power to heal him (Jn 11:21), though they did not then seem to suppose that he could raise him if he died. Perhaps there were two reasons why they sent for him; one, because they supposed he would be desirous of seeing his friend; the other, because they supposed he could restore him. In sickness we should implore the aid and presence of Jesus. He only can restore us and our friends; he only can perform for us the office of a friend when all other friends fail; and he only can cheer us with the hope of a blessed resurrection.

4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

This sickness is not unto death. The word death here is equivalent to remaining render death, Rom 6:23: "The wages of sin is death"---

permanent or unchanging death, opposed to eternal life. Jesus evidently did not intend to deny that he would die. The words which he immediately adds show that he would expire, and that he would raise him up to show forth the power and glory of God. Comp. Jn 11:11. Those words cannot be understood on any other supposition than that he expected to raise him up. The Saviour often used expressions similar to this to fix the attention on what he was about to say in explanation. The sense may be thus expressed: "His sickness is not fatal. It is not designed for his death, but to furnish an opportunity for a signal display of the glory of God, and to furnish a standing proof of the truth of religion. It is intended to exhibit the power of the Son of God, and to be a proof at once of the truth of his mission; of his friendship for this family; of his mild, tender, peculiar love as a man; of his power and glory as the Messiah; and of the great doctrine that the dead will rise."

For the glory of God. That God may be honoured See Jn 9:3.

That the Son of God, &c. The glory of God and of his Son is the same. That which promotes the one promotes also the other. Few things could do it more than the miracle which follows, evincing at once the lovely and tender character of Jesus as a man and a friend, and his power as the equal with God.

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

He deferred visiting his patient, Joh 11:5,6. They had pleaded, Lord, it is he whom thou lovest, and the plea is allowed (Joh 11:5): Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Thus the claims of faith are ratified in the court of heaven. Now one would think it should follow, When he heard therefore that he was sick he made all the haste that he could to him; if he loved them, now was a time to show it by hastening to them, for he knew they impatiently expected him. But he took the contrary way to show his love: it is not said, He loved them and yet he lingered; but he loved them and therefore he lingered; when he heard that his friend was sick, instead of coming post to him, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

(1.) He loved them, that is, had a great opinion of Martha and Mary, of their wisdom and grace, of their faith and patience, above others of his disciples, and therefore he deferred coming to them, that he might try them, that their trial might at last be found to praise and honour.

(2.) He loved them, that is, he designed to do something great and extraordinary for them, to work such a miracle for their relief as he had not wrought for any of his friends; and therefore he delayed coming to them, that Lazarus might be dead and buried before he came. If Christ had come presently, and cured the sickness of Lazarus, he had done no more than he did for many; if he had raised him to life when newly dead, no more than he had done for some: but, deferring his relief so long, he had an opportunity of doing more for him than for any. Note, God hath gracious intentions even in seeming delays, Isa 54:7,8,49:14, &c. Christ's friends at Bethany were not out of his thoughts, though, when he heard of their distress, he made no haste to them. When the work of deliverance, temporal or spiritual, public or personal, stands at a stay, it does but stay the time, and every thing is beautiful in its season.

7 Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

Here is the notice which Christ gave his disciples of his purpose to go into Judea towards Jerusalem. His disciples were the men of his counsel, and to them he saith (Joh 11:7), "Let us go into Judea again, though those of Judea are unworthy of such a favour." Thus Christ repeats the tenders of his mercy to those who have often rejected them. Now this may be considered, [1.] As a purpose of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whose affliction, and all the aggravating circumstances of it, he knew very well, though no more expresses were sent to him; for he was present in spirit, though absent in body. When he knew they were brought to the last extremity, when the brother and sisters had given and taken a final farewell, "Now," saith he, "let us go to Judea." Christ will arise in favour of his people when the time to favour them, yea, the set time, is come; and the worst time is commonly the set time--when our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts; then they shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened the graves, Eze 37:11,13. In the depths of affliction, let this therefore keep us out of the depths of despair, that man's extremity is God's opportunity, Jehovah-jireh. Or, [2.] As a trial of the courage of the disciples, whether they would venture to follow him thither, where they

had so lately been frightened by an attempt upon their Master's life, which they looked upon as an attempt upon theirs too. To go to Judea, which was so lately made too hot for them, was a saying that proved them. But Christ did not say, "Go you into Judea, and I will stay and take shelter here;" no, Let us go. Note, Christ never brings his people into any peril but he accompanies them in it, and is with them even when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

8 His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?

Their objection against this journey (Joh 11:8): Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Here,

[1.] They remind him of the danger he had been in there not long since. Christ's disciples are apt to make a greater matter of sufferings than their Master does, and to remember injuries longer. He had put up with the affront, it was over and gone, and forgotten, but his disciples could not forget it; of late, nyn--now, as if it were this very day, they sought to stone thee. Though it was at least two months ago, the remembrance of the fright was fresh in their minds.

[2.] They marvel that he will go thither again. "Wilt thou favour those with thy presence that have expelled thee out of their coasts?" Christ's ways in passing by offences are above our ways. "Wilt thou expose thyself among a people that are so desperately enraged against thee? Goest thou thither again, where thou hast been so ill used?" Here they showed great care for their Master's safety, as Peter did, when he said, Master, spare thyself; had Christ been inclined to shift off suffering, he did not want friends to persuade him to it, but he had opened his mouth to the Lord, and he would not, he could not, go back. Yet, while the disciples show a concern for his safety, they discover at the same time,

First, A distrust of his power; as if he could not secure both himself and them now in Judea as well as he had done formerly. Is his arm shortened? When we are solicitous for the interests of Christ's church and kingdom in the world, we must yet rest satisfied in the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus, who knows how to secure a flock of sheep in the midst of a herd of wolves.

Secondly, A secret fear of suffering themselves; for they count upon this if he suffer. When our own private interests happen to run in the same channel with those of the public, we are apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord of hosts, when really we are only zealous for our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, and seek our own things, under colour of seeking the things of Christ; we have therefore need to distinguish upon our principles.

9 Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day ? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

This Christ applies to his case, and shows why he must go to Judea, because he had a clear call to go. For the opening of this,

He shows the comfort and satisfaction which a man has in his own mind while he keeps in the way of his duty, as it is in general prescribed by the word of God, and particularly determined by the providence of God: If any man walk in the day, he stumbles not; that is, If a man keep close to his duty, and mind that, and set the will of God before him as his rule, with an impartial respect to all God's commandments, he does not hesitate in his own mind, but, walking uprightly, walks surely, and with a holy confidence. As he that walks in the day stumbles not, but goes on steadily and cheerfully in his way, because he sees the light of this world, and by it sees his way before him; so a good man, without any collateral security or sinister aims, relies upon the word of God as his rule, and regards the glory of God as his end, because he sees those two great lights, and keeps his eye upon them; thus he is furnished with a faithful guide in all his doubts, and a powerful guard in all his dangers, Ga 6:4,Ps 119:6. Christ, wherever he went, walked in the day, and so shall we, if we follow his steps.

10 But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

He shows the pain and peril a man is in who walks not according to this rule (Joh 11:10): If a man walk in the night, he stumbles; that is, If a man walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and according to the course of this world,--if he consult his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God,--he falls into temptations and snares, is liable to great uneasiness and frightful apprehensions, trembles at the

shaking of a leaf, and flees when none pursues; while an upright man laughs at the shaking of the spear, and stands undaunted when ten thousand invade. See Isa 33:14-16, he stumbles, because there is no light in him, for light in us is that to our moral actions which light about us is to our natural actions. He has not a good principle within; he is not sincere; his eye is evil. Thus Christ not only justifies his purpose of going into Judea, but encourages his disciples to go along with him, and fear no evil.

11 These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.

The notice Christ gave his disciples of death of Lazarus, and an intimation that his business into Judea was to look after him, Joh 11:11. After he had prepared his disciples for this dangerous march into an enemy's country, he then gives them,

[1.] Plain intelligence of the death of Lazarus, though he had received no advice of it: Our friend Lazarus sleepeth. See here how Christ calls a believer and a believer's death.

First, He calls a believer his friend: Our friend Lazarus. Note, 1. There is a covenant of friendship between Christ and believers, and a friendly affection and communion pursuant to it, which our Lord Jesus will own and not be ashamed of. His secret is with the righteous. 2. Those whom Christ is pleased to own as his friends all his disciples should take for theirs. Christ speaks of Lazarus as their common friend: Our friend. 3. Death itself does not break the bond of friendship between Christ and a believer. Lazarus is dead, and yet he is still our friend.

Secondly, He calls the death of a believer a sleep: he sleepeth. It is good to call death by such names and titles as will help to make it more familiar and less formidable to us. The death of Lazarus was in a peculiar sense a sleep, as that of Jairus's daughter, because he was to be raised again speedily; and, since we are sure to rise again at last, why should that make any great difference? And why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life make it as easy to us to put off the body and die as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A good Christian, when he dies, does but sleep: he rests from the labours of the day past, and is

refreshing himself for the next morning. Nay, herein death has the advantage of sleep, that sleep is only the parenthesis, but death is the period, of our cares and toils. The soul does not sleep, but becomes more active; but the body sleeps without any toss, without any terror; not distempered nor disturbed. The grave to the wicked is a prison, and its grave-clothes as the shackles of a criminal reserved for execution; but to the godly it is a bed, and all its bands as the soft and downy fetters of an easy quiet sleep. Though the body corrupt, it will rise in the morning as if it had never seen corruption; it is but putting off our clothes to be mended and trimmed up for the marriage day, the coronation day, to which we must rise. See Isa 57:2,1Th 4:14. The Greeks called their burying-places dormitories--koimeteria.

[2.] Particular intimations of his favourable intentions concerning Lazarus: but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. He could have done it, and yet have staid where he was: he that restored at a distance one that was dying (Joh 4:50) could have raised at a distance one that was dead; but he would put this honour upon the miracle, to work it by the grave side: I go, to awake him. As sleep is a resemblance of death, so a man's awaking out of sleep when he is called, especially when he is called by his own name, is an emblem of the resurrection (Job 14:15): Then shalt thou call. Christ had no sooner said, Our friend sleeps, but presently he adds, I go, that I may awake him. When Christ tells his people at any time how bad the case is he lets them know in the same breath how easily, how quickly, he can mend it. Christ's telling his disciples that this was his business to Judea might help to take off their fear of going with him thither; he did not go up on a public errand to the temple, but a private visit, which would not so much expose him and them; and, besides, it was to do a kindness to a family to which they were all obliged.

12 Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.

They said, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. This intimates,

[1.] Some concern they had for their friend Lazarus; they hoped he would recover; sothesetai--he shall be saved from dying at this time. Probably they had understood, by the messenger who brought news of his illness, that one of the most threatening symptoms he was under was that he was restless, and could get no sleep; and now that they heard he slept they

concluded the fever was going off, and the worst was past. Sleep is often nature's physic, and reviving to its weak and weary powers. This is true of the sleep of death; if a good Christian so sleep, he shall do well, better than he did here.

[2.] A greater concern for themselves; for hereby they insinuate that it was now needless for Christ to go to him, and expose himself and them. "If he sleep, he will be quickly well, and we may stay where we are." Thus we are willing to hope that the good work which we are called to do will do itself, or will be done by some other hand, if there be peril in the doing of it.

13 Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.

This mistake of theirs rectified (Joh 11:13): Jesus spoke of his death. See here,

[1.] How dull of understanding Christ's disciples as yet were. Let us not therefore condemn all those as heretics who mistake the sense of some of Christ's sayings. It is not good to aggravate our brethren's mistakes; yet this was a gross one, for it had easily been prevented if they had remembered how frequently death is called a sleep in the Old Testament. They should have understood Christ when he spoke scripture language. Besides, it would sound oddly for their Master to undertake a journey of two or three days only to awake a friend out of a natural sleep, which any one else might do. What Christ undertakes to do, we may be sure, is something great and uncommon, and a work worthy of himself.

[2.] How carefully the evangelist corrects this error: Jesus spoke of his death. Those that speak in an unknown tongue, or use similitudes, should learn hence to explain themselves, and pray that they may interpret, to prevent mistakes.

14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.

The plain and express declaration which Jesus made to them of the death of Lazarus, and his resolution to go to Bethany, Joh 11:14,15.

[1.] He gives them notice of the death of Lazarus; what he had before said darkly he now says plainly, and without a figure: Lazarus is dead, Joh 11:14. Christ takes cognizance of the death of his saints, for it is precious in his sight (Ps 116:15), and he is not pleased if we do not consider it, and lay it to heart. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how he condescends to those that are out of the way, and by his subsequent sayings and doings explains the difficulties of what went before.

[2.] He gives them the reason why he had delayed so long to go and see him: I am glad for your sakes that I was not there. If he had been there time enough, he would have healed his disease and prevented his death, which would have been much for the comfort of Lazarus's friends, but then his disciples would have seen no further proof of his power than what they had often seen, and, consequently, their faith had received no improvement; but now that he went and raised him from the dead, as there were many brought to believe on him who before did no (Joh 11:45), so there was much done towards the perfecting of what was lacking in the faith of those that did, which Christ aimed at: To the intent that you may believe.

[3.] He resolves now to go to Bethany, and take his disciples along with him: Let us go unto him. Not, "Let us go to his sisters, to comfort them" (which is the utmost we can do), but, Let us go to him; for Christ can show wonders to the dead. Death, which will separate us from all our other friends, and cut us off from correspondence with them, cannot separate us from the love of Christ, nor put us out of the reach of his calls; as he will maintain his covenant with the dust, so he can make visits to the dust. Lazarus is dead, but let us go to him; though perhaps those who said, If he sleep there is no need to go, were ready to say, If he be dead it is to no purpose to go.

15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.

16 Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

Thomas exciting his fellow-disciples cheerfully to attend their Master's motions (Joh 11:16): Thomas, who is called Didymus. Thomas in Hebrew and Didymus in Greek signify a twin; it is said of Rebekah (Ge 25:24) that there were twins in her womb; the word is Thomim. Probably Thomas was

a twin. He said to his fellow-disciples (who probably looked with fear and concern upon one another when Christ had said so positively, Let us go to him), very courageously, Let us also go that we may die with him; with him, that is,

[1.] "Let us go and die with our Master, who is now exposing himself to death by venturing into Judea;" and so I rather think it is meant. "If he will go into danger, let us also go and take our lot with him, according to the command we received, Follow me." Thomas knew so much of the malice of the Jews against Christ, and the counsels of God concerning him, which he had often told them of, that it was no foreign supposition that he was now going to die. And now Thomas manifests, First, A gracious readiness to die with Christ himself, flowing from strong affections to him, though his faith was weak, as appeared afterwards, Joh 14:5,20:25. Where thou diest I will die, Ru 1:17. Secondly, A zealous desire to help his fellow-disciples into the same frame: "Let us go, one and all, and die with him; if they stone him, let them stone us; who would desire to survive such a Master?" Thus, in difficult times, Christians should animate one another. We may each of us say, Let us die with him. Note, The consideration of the dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls for us.

[2.] With Lazarus, who was now dead; so some take it. Lazarus was a dear and loving friend both to Christ and his disciples, and perhaps Thomas had a particular intimacy with him. Now if he be dead, saith he, let us even go and die with him. For,

First, "If we survive, we know not how to live without him." Probably Lazarus had done them many good offices, sheltered them, and provided for them, and been to them instead of eyes; and now that he was gone they had no man like-minded, and "Therefore," saith he, "we had as good die with him." Thus we are sometimes ready to think our lives bound up in the lives of some that were dear to us: but God will teach us to live, and to live comfortably, upon himself, when those are gone without whom we thought we could not live. But this is not all.

Secondly, "If we die, we hope to be happy with him." Such a firm belief he has of a happiness on the other side death, and such good hope through grace of their own and Lazarus's interest in it, that he is willing they should all go and die with him. It is better to die, and go along with our Christian friends to that world which is enriched by their removal to it, than stay behind in a world that is impoverished by their departure out of it. The more of our friends are translated hence, the fewer cords we have to bind us to this earth, and the more to draw our hearts heavenwards. How pleasantly does the good man speak of dying, as if it were but undressing and going to bed!

Resurrection and the Life

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

The matter being determined, that Christ will go to Judea, and his disciples with him, they address themselves to their journey; in this journey some circumstances happened which the other evangelists record, as the healing of the blind man at Jericho, and the conversion of Zaccheus. We must not reckon ourselves out of our way, while we are in the way of doing good; nor be so intent upon one good office as to neglect another.

At length, he comes near to Bethany, which is said to be about fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem, about two measured miles or about three and half kilometers, Joh 11:18. Notice is taken of this, that this miracle was in effect wrought in Jerusalem, and so was put to her score. Christ's miracles in Galilee were more numerous, but those in or near Jerusalem were more illustrious; there he healed one that had been diseased thirty-eight years, another that had been blind from his birth, and raised one that had been dead four days. To Bethany Christ came, and observe,

What posture he found his friends there in. When he had been last with them it is probable that he left them well, in health and joy; but when we part from our friends (though Christ knew) we know not what changes may affect us or them before we meet again.

He found his friend Lazarus in the grave, Joh 11:17. When he came near the town, probably by the burying-place belonging to the town, he was told by the neighbours, or some persons whom he met, that Lazarus had been four days buried. Some think that Lazarus died the same day that the messenger came to Jesus with the tidings of his sickness, and so reckon two days for his abode in the same place and two days for his journey. I rather think that Lazarus died at the very instant that Jesus, "Our friend sleepeth, he is now newly fallen asleep;" and that the time between his death and burial (which among the Jews was but short), with the four days of his lying in the grave, was taken up in this journey; for Christ travelled publicly, as appears by his passing through Jericho, and his abode at Zaccheus's house took up some time. Promised salvations, though they always come surely, yet often come slowly.

18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs [or, about two miles] off:

19 and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

He found his friends that survived in grief. Martha and Mary were almost swallowed up with sorrow for the death of their brother, which is intimated where it is said that many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them. Note,

(1.) Ordinarily, where death is there are mourners, especially when those that were agreeable and amiable to their relations, and serviceable to their generation, are taken away. The house where death is called the house of mourning, Ec 7:2. When man goes to his long home the mourners go about the streets (Ec 12:5), or rather sit alone, and keep silence. Here was Martha's house, a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested, yet made a house of mourning. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart (Joh 14:1), not from the house.

(2.) Where there are mourners there ought to be comforters. It is a duty we owe to those that are in sorrow to mourn with them, and to comfort them; and our mourning with them will be some comfort to them. When we are under the present impressions of grief, we are apt to forget those things which would minister comfort to us, and therefore have need of remembrancers. It is a mercy to have remembrancers when we are in

sorrow, and our duty to be remembrancers to those who are in sorrow. The Jewish doctors laid great stress upon this, obliging their disciples to make conscience of comforting the mourners after the burial of the dead. They comforted them concerning their brother, that is, by speaking to them of him, not only of the good name he left behind, but of the happy state he was gone to. When godly relations and friends are taken from us, whatever occasion we have to be afflicted concerning ourselves, who are left behind and miss them, we have reason to be comforted concerning those who are gone before us to a happiness where they have no need of us. This visit which the Jews made to Martha and Mary is an evidence that they were persons of distinction, and made a figure; as also that they behaved obligingly to all; so that though they were followers of Christ, yet those who had no respect for him were civil to them. There was also a providence in it, that so many Jews, Jewish ladies it is probable, should come together, just at this time, to comfort the mourners, that they might be unexceptionable witnesses of the miracle, and see what miserable comforters they were, in comparison with Christ. Christ did not usually send for witnesses to his miracles, and yet had none been by but relations this would have been excepted against; therefore God's counsel so ordered it that these should come together accidentally, to bear their testimony to it, that infidelity might stop her mouth.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

We are told that she went and met him, Joh 11:20.

[1.] It should seem that Martha was earnestly expecting Christ's arrival, and enquiring for it. Either she had sent out messengers, to bring her tidings of his first approach, or she had often asked, Saw you him whom my soul loveth? so that the first who discovered him ran to her with the welcome news. However it was, she heard of his coming before he arrived. She had waited long, and often asked, Is he come? and could hear no tidings of him; but long-looked-for came at last. At the end the vision will speak, and not lie.

[2.] Martha, when the good news was brought that Jesus was coming, threw all aside, and went and met him, in token of a most affectionate welcome. She waived all ceremony and compliment to the Jews who came

to visit her, and hastened to go and meet Jesus. Note, When God by his grace or providence is coming towards us in ways of mercy and comfort, we should go forth by faith, hope, and prayer to meet him. Some suggest that Martha went out of the town to meet Jesus, to let him know that there were several Jews in the house, who were no friends to him, that if he pleased he might keep out of the way of them.

[3.] When Martha went to meet Jesus, Mary sat still in the house. Some think she did not hear the tidings, being in her drawing-room, receiving visits of condolence, while Martha who was busied in the household-affairs had early notice of it. Perhaps Martha would not tell her sister that Christ was coming, being ambitious of the honour of receiving him first. Sancta est prudentia clam fratribus clam parentibus ad Christum esse conferre--Holy prudence conducts us to Christ, while brethren and parents know not what we are doing.--Maldonat. in locum. Others think she did hear that Christ was come, but was so overwhelmed with sorrow that she did not care to stir, choosing rather to indulge her sorrow, and to sit poring upon her affliction, and saying, I do well to mourn. Comparing this story with that in Lu 10:38, &c., we may observe the different tempers of these two sisters, and the temptations and advantages of each. Martha's natural temper was active and busy; she loved to be here and there, and at the end of every thing; and this had been a snare to her when by it she was not only careful and cumbered about many things, but hindered from the exercises of devotion: but now in a day of affliction this active temper did her a kindness, kept the grief from her heart, and made her forward to meet Christ, and so she received comfort from him the sooner. On the other hand, Mary's natural temper was contemplative and reserved. This had been formerly an advantage to her, when it placed her Christ's feet, to hear his word, and enabled her there to attend upon him without those distractions with which Martha was cumbered; but now in the day of affliction that same temper proved a snare to her, made her less able to grapple with her grief, and disposed her to melancholy: But Mary sat still in the house. See here how much it will be our wisdom carefully to watch against the temptations, and improve the advantages, of our natural temper.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

Here is fully related the discourse between Christ and Martha.

Martha's address to Christ, Joh 11:21,22.

First, She complains of Christ's long absence and delay. She said it, not only with grief for the death of her brother, but with some resentment of the seeming unkindness of the Master: Lord if you hadst been here, my brother had not died. Here is,

1. Some evidence of faith. She believed Christ's power, that, though her brother's sickness was very grievous, yet he could have cured it, and so have prevented his death. She believed his pity, that if he had but seen Lazarus in his extreme illness, and his dear relations all in tears about him, he would have had compassion, and have prevented so sad a breach, for his compassions fail not. But,

2. Here are sad instances of unbelief. Her faith was true, but weak as a bruised reed, for she limits the power of Christ, in saying, If thou hadst been here; whereas she ought to have known that Christ could cure at a distance, and that his gracious operations were not limited to his bodily presence. She reflects likewise upon the wisdom and kindness of Christ, that he did not hasten to them when they sent for him, as if he had not timed his business well, and now might as well have staid away, and not have come at all, as to come too late; and, as for any help now, she can scarcely entertain the thought of it.

Secondly, Yet she corrects and comforts herself with the thoughts of the prevailing interest Christ had in heaven; at least, she blames herself for blaming her Master, and for suggesting that he comes too late: for I know that even now, desperate as the case is, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee. Observe,

1. How willing her hope was. Though she had not courage to ask of Jesus that he should raise him to life again, there having been no precedent as

yet of any one raised to life that had been so long dead, yet, like a modest petitioner, she humbly recommends the case to the wise and compassionate consideration of the Lord Jesus. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us in general refer ourselves to God, let him do as seemeth him good. Judicii tui est, non præsumptionis meæ--I leave it to thy judgment, not to my presumption.--Aug. in locum. When we know not what to pray for, it is our comfort that the great Intercessor knows what to ask for us, and is always heard.

2. How weak her faith was. She should have said, "Lord, thou canst do whatsoever thou wilt;" but she only says, "Thou canst obtain whatsoever thou prayest for." She had forgotten that the Son had life in himself, that he wrought miracles by his own power. Yet both these considerations must be taken in for the encouragement of our faith and hope, and neither excluded: the dominion Christ has on earth and his interest and intercession in heaven. He has in the one hand the golden sceptre, and in the other the golden censer; his power is always predominant, his intercession always prevalent.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

The comfortable word which Christ gave to Martha, in an answer to her pathetic address (Joh 11:23): Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha, in her complaint, looked back, reflecting with regret that Christ was not there, for then, thinks she, my brother had been now alive. We are apt, in such cases, to add to our own trouble, by fancying what might have been. "If such a method had been taken, such a physician employed, my friend had not died;" which is more than we know: but what good does this do? When God's will is done, our business is to submit to him. Christ directs Martha, and us in her, to look forward, and to think what shall be, for that is a certainty, and yields sure comfort: Thy brother shall rise again.

First, This was true of Lazarus in a sense peculiar to him: he was now presently to be raised; but Christ speaks of it in general as a thing to be done, not which he himself would do, so humbly did our Lord Jesus speak of what he did. He also expresses it ambiguously, leaving her uncertain at first whether he would raise him presently or not till the last day, that he might try her faith and patience.

Secondly, It is applicable to all the saints, and their resurrection at the last day. Note, It is a matter of comfort to us, when we have buried our godly friends and relations, to think that they shall rise again. As the soul at death is not lost, but gone before, so the body is not lost, but laid up. Think you hear Christ saying, "Thy parent, thy child, thy yoke-fellow, shall rise again; these dry bones shall live."

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

The faith which Martha mixed with this word, and the unbelief mixed with this faith, Joh 11:24.

First, She accounts it a faithful saying that he shall rise again at the last day. Though the doctrine of the resurrection was to have its full proof from Christ's resurrection, yet, as it was already revealed, she firmly believed it, Ac 24:15. 1. That there shall be a last day, with which all the days of time shall be numbered and finished. 2. That there shall be a general resurrection at that day, when the earth and sea shall give up their dead. 3. That there shall be a particular resurrection of each one: "I know that I shall rise again, and this and the other relation that was dear to me." As bone shall return to his bone in that day, so friend to his friend.

Secondly, Yet she seems to think this saying not so well worthy of all acceptation as really it was: "I know he shall rise again at the last day; but what are we the better for that now?" As if the comforts of the resurrection to eternal life were not worth speaking of, or yielded not satisfaction sufficient to balance her affliction. See our weakness and folly, that we suffer present sensible things to make a deeper impression upon us, both of grief and joy, than those things which are the objects of faith. I know that he shall rise again at the last day; and is not this enough? She seems to think it is not. Thus, by our discontent under present crosses, we greatly undervalue our future hopes, and put a slight upon them, as if not worth regarding.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

What the promises are (Joh 11:25): Though he die, yet shall he live, nay, he shall never die, Joh 11:26. Man consists of body and soul, and provision is made for the happiness of both.

(a.) For the body; here is the promise of a blessed resurrection. Though the body be dead because of sin (there is no remedy but it will die), yet it shall live again. All the difficulties that attend the state of the dead are here overlooked, and made nothing of. Though the sentence of death was just, though the effects of death be dismal, though the bands of death be strong, though he be dead and buried, dead and putrefied, though the scattered dust be so mixed with common dust that no art of man can distinguish, much less separate them, put the case as strongly as you will on that side, yet we are sure that he shall live again: the body shall be raised a glorious body.

(b.) For the soul; here is the promise of a blessed immortality. He that liveth and believeth, who, being united to Christ by faith, lives spiritually by virtue of that union, he shall never die. That spiritual life shall never be extinguished, but perfected in eternal life. As the soul, being in its nature spiritual, is therefore immortal; so if by faith it live a spiritual life, consonant to its nature, its felicity shall be immortal too. It shall never die, shall never be otherwise than easy and happy, and there is not any intermission or interruption of its life, as there is of the life of the body. The mortality of the body shall at length be swallowed up of life; but the life of the soul, the believing soul, shall be immediately at death swallowed up of immortality. He shall not die, eis ton aiona, for ever--Non morietur in æternum; so Cyprian quotes it. The body shall not be for ever dead in the grave; it dies (like the two witnesses) but for a time, times, and the dividing of time; and when time shall be no more, and all the divisions of it shall be numbered and finished, a spirit of life from God shall enter into it. But this is not all; the souls shall not die that death which is for ever, shall not die eternally, Blessed and holy, that is, blessed and happy, is he that by faith has part in the first resurrection, has part in Christ, who is that resurrection; for on such the second death, which is a death for ever, shall have no power; see Joh 6:40. Christ asks her, "Believest thou this? Canst thou assent to it with application? Canst thou take my word for it?" Note, When we have read or heard the word of Christ, concerning the great things of the other world, we should seriously put it to ourselves, "Do we

believe this, this truth in particular, this which is attended with so many difficulties, this which is suited to my case? Does my belief of it realize it to me, and give my soul an assurance of it, so that I can say not only this I believe, but thus I believe it?" Martha was doting upon her brother's being raised in this world; before Christ gave her hopes of this, he directed her thoughts to another life, another world: "No matter for that, but believest thou this that I tell thee concerning the future state?" The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make such an impression upon us as they do if we did but believe the things of eternity as we ought.

26 and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Martha's unfeigned assent yielded to what Christ said, Joh 11:27. We have here Martha's creed, the good confession she witnessed, the same with that for which Peter was commended (Mt 16:16,17), and it is the conclusion of the whole matter.

First, Here is the guide of her faith, and that is the word of Christ; without any alteration, exception, or proviso, she takes it entire as Christ had said it: Yea, Lord, whereby she subscribes to the truth of all and every part of that which Christ had promised, in his own sense: Even so. Faith is an echo to divine revelation, returns the same words, and resolves to abide by them: Yea, Lord, As the word did make it so I believe and take it, said queen Elizabeth.

Secondly, The ground of her faith, and that is the authority of Christ; she believes this because she believes that he who saith it is Christ. She has recourse to the foundation for the support of the superstructure. I believe, pepisteuka, "I have believed that thou art Christ, and therefore I do believe this." Observe here,

1. What she believed and confessed concerning Jesus; three things, all to the same effect:--

(a.) That he was the Christ, or Messiah, promised and expected under this name and notion, the anointed one.

(b.) That he was the Son of God; so the Messiah was called (Ps 2:7), not by office only, but by nature.

(c.) That it was he who should come into the world, the ho erchomenos. That blessing of blessings which the church had for so many ages waited for as future, she embraced as present.

2. What she inferred hence, and what she alleged this for. If she admits this, that Jesus is the Christ, there is no difficulty in believing that he is the resurrection and the life; for if he be the Christ, then,

(a.) He is the fountain of light and truth, and we may take all his sayings for faithful and divine, upon his own word. If he be the Christ, he is that prophet whom we are to hear in all things.

(b.) He is the fountain of life and blessedness, and we may therefore depend upon his ability as well as upon his veracity. How shall bodies, turned to dust, live again? How shall souls, clogged and clouded as ours are, live for ever? We could not believe this, but that we believe him that undertakes it to be the Son of God, who has life in himself, and has it for us.

Jesus Weeps

28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

The notice which Martha gave her of Christ's coming (Joh 11:28): When she had so said, as one that needed to say no more, she went her way, easy in her mind, and called Mary her sister.

[1.] Martha, having received instruction and comfort from Christ herself, called her sister to share with her. Time was when Martha would have drawn Mary from Christ, to come and help her in much serving (Lu

10:40); but, to make her amends for this, here she is industrious to draw her to Christ.

[2.] She called her secretly, and whispered it in her ear, because there was company by, Jews, who were no friends to Christ. The saints are called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ by an invitation that is secret and distinguishing, given to them and not to others; they have meat to eat that the world knows not of, joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with.

[3.] She called her by order from Christ; he bade her go call her sister. This call that is effectual, whoever brings it, is sent by Christ. The Master is come, and calleth for thee. First, She calls Christ the Master, didaskalos, a teaching master; by that title he was commonly called and known among them. Mr. George Herbert took pleasure in calling Christ, my Master. Secondly, She triumphs in his arrival: The Master is come. He whom we have long wished and waited for, he is come, he is come; this was the best cordial in the present distress. "Lazarus is gone, and our comfort in him is gone; but the Master is come, who is better than the dearest friend, and has that in him which will abundantly make up all our losses. He is come who is our teacher, who will teach us how to get good by our sorrow (Ps 94:12), who will teach, and so comfort." Thirdly, She invites her sister to go and meet him: "He calls for thee, enquires what is become of thee, and would have thee sent for."

Note, When Christ our Master comes, he calls for us. He comes in his word and ordinances, calls us to them, calls us by them, calls us to himself. He calls for thee in particular, for thee by name (Ps 27:8); and, if he call thee, he will cure thee, he will comfort thee.

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.

The haste which Mary made to Christ upon this notice given her (Joh 11:29): As soon as she heard this good news, that the Master was come, she arose quickly, and came to him. She little thought how near he was to her, for he is often nearer to them that mourn in Zion than they are aware of; but, when she knew how near he was, she started up, and in a transport of joy ran to meet him. The least intimation of Christ's gracious approaches is enough to a lively faith, which stands ready to take the hint, and answer the first call. When Christ was come,

[1.] She did not consult the decorum of her mourning, but, forgetting ceremony, and the common usage in such cases, she ran through the town, to meet Christ. Let no nice punctilios of decency and honour deprive us at any time of opportunities of conversing with Christ.

[2.] She did not consult her neighbours, the Jews that were with her, comforting her; she left them all, to come to him, and did not only not ask their advice, but not so much as ask their leave, or beg their pardon for her rudeness.

30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.

We are told (Joh 11:30) where she found the Master; he was not yet come into Bethany, but was at the town's end, in that place where Martha met him. See here,

[1.] Christ's love to his work. He staid near the place where the grave was, that he might be ready to go to it. He would not go into the town, to refresh himself after the fatigue of his journey, till he had done the work he came to do; nor would he go into the town, lest it should look like ostentation, and a design to levy a crowd to be spectators of the miracle.

[2.] Mary's love to Christ; still she loved much. Though Christ had seemed unkind in his delays, yet she could take nothing amiss from him. Let us go thus to Christ without the camp, Heb 13:13.

31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

The misconstruction which the Jews that were with Mary made of her going away so hastily (Joh 11:31): They said, She goes to the grave, to weep there. Martha bore up better under this affliction than Mary did, who was a woman of a tender and sorrowful spirit; such was her natural temper. Those that are so have need to watch against melancholy, and ought to be pitied and helped. These comforters found that their formalities did her no service, but that she hardened herself in sorrow:

and therefore concluded when she went out, and turned that way, it was to go to the grave and weep there. See,

[1.] What often is the folly and fault of mourners; they contrive how to aggravate their own grief, and to make bad worse. We are apt in such cases to take a strange pleasure in our own pain, and to say, We do well to be passionate in our grief, even unto death; we are apt to fasten upon those things that aggravate the affliction, and what good does this do us, when it is our duty to reconcile ourselves to the will of God in it? Why should mourners go to the grave to weep there, when they sorrow not as those that have no hope? Affliction of itself is grievous; why should we make it more so?

[2.] What is the wisdom and duty of comforters; and that is, to prevent as much as may be, in those who grieve inordinately, the revival of the sorrow, and to divert it. Those Jews that followed Mary were thereby led to Christ, and became the witnesses of one of his most glorious miracles. It is good cleaving to Christ's friends in their sorrows, for thereby we may come to know him better.

32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Mary's address to our Lord Jesus (Joh 11:32): She came, attended with her train of comforters, and fell down at his feet, as one overwhelmed with a passionate sorrow, and said with many tears (as appears Joh 11:33), Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, as Martha said before, for they had often said it to one another. Now here,

[1.] Her posture is very humble and submissive: She fell down at his feet, which was more than Martha did, who had a greater command of her passions. She fell down not as a sinking mourner, but fell down at his feet as a humble petitioner. This Mary had sat at Christ's feet to hear his word (Lu 10:39), and here we find her there on another errand.

Note, Those that in a day of peace place themselves at Christ's feet, to receive instructions from him, may with comfort and confidence in a day of trouble cast themselves at his feet with hope to find favour with

him. She fell at his feet, as one submitting to his will in what was done, and referring herself to his good-will in what was now to be done. When we are in affliction we must cast ourselves at Christ's feet in a penitent sorrow and self-abasement for sin, and a patient resignation of ourselves to the divine disposal. Mary's casting herself at Christ's feet was in token of the profound respect and veneration she had for him. Thus subjects were wont to give honour to their kings and princes; but, our Lord Jesus not appearing in secular glory as an earthly prince, those who by this posture of adoration gave honour to him certainly looked upon him as more than man, and intended hereby to give him divine honour. Mary hereby made profession of the Christian faith as truly as Martha did, and in effect said, I believe that thou art the Christ; bowing the knee to Christ, and confessing him with the tongue, are put together as equivalent, Ro 14:11,Php 2:10,11. This she did in presence of the Jews that attended her, who, though friends to her and her family, yet were bitter enemies to Christ; yet in their sight she fell at Christ's feet, as one that was neither ashamed to own the veneration she had for Christ nor afraid of disobliging her friends and neighbours by it. Let them resent it as they pleased, she falls at his feet; and, if this be to be vile, she will be yet more vile; see So 8:1. We serve a Master of whom we have no reason to be ashamed, and whose acceptance of our services is sufficient to balance the reproach of men and all their revilings.

[2.] Her address is very pathetic: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Christ's delay was designed for the best, and proved so; yet both the sisters very indecently cast the same in his teeth, and in effect charge him with the death of their brother. This repeated challenge he might justly have resented, might have told them he had something else to do than to be at their beck and to attend them; he must come when his business would permit him: but not a word of this; he considered the circumstances of their affliction, and that losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore overlooked the rudeness of this welcome, and gave us an example of mildness and meekness in such cases. Mary added no more, as Martha did; but it appears, by what follows, that what she fell short in words she made up in tears; she said less than Martha, but wept more; and tears of devout affection have a voice, a loud prevailing voice, in the ears of Christ; no rhetoric like this.

33 When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

By the inward groans and troubles of his spirit (Joh 11:33): Jesus saw Mary weeping for the loss of a loving brother, and the Jews that came with her weeping for the loss of a good neighbour and friend; when he saw what a place of weepers, a bochim, this was, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. See here,

(1.) The griefs of the sons of men represented in the tears of Mary and her friends. What an emblem was here of this world, this vale of tears! Nature itself teaches us to weep over our dear relations, when they are removed by death; Providence thereby calls to weeping and mourning. It is probable that Lazarus's estate devolved upon his sisters, and was a considerable addition to their fortunes; and in such a case people say, now-a-days, though they cannot wish their relations dead (that is, they do not say they do), yet, if they were dead, they would not wish them alive again; but these sisters, whatever they got by their brother's death, heartily wished him alive again. Religion teaches us likewise to weep with them that weep, as these Jews wept with Mary, considering that we ourselves also are in the body. Those that truly love their friends will share with them in their joys and griefs; for what is friendship but a communication of affections? Job 16:5.

(2.) The grace of the Son of God and his compassion towards those that are in misery. In all their afflictions he is afflicted, Isa 63:9,Jdg 10:16. When Christ saw them all in tears,

[1.] He groaned in the spirit. He suffered himself to be tempted (as we are when we are disturbed by some great affliction), yet without sin. This was an expression, either,

First, Of his displeasure at the inordinate grief of those about him, as Mk 5:39: "Why make ye this ado and weep? What a hurry is here! does this become those that believe in a God, a heaven, and another world?" Or,

Secondly, Of his feeling sense of the calamitous state of human life, and the power of death, to which fallen man is subject. Having now to make a vigorous attack upon death and the grave, he thus stirred up himself to the encounter, put on the garments of vengeance, and his fury it upheld him; and that he might the more resolutely undertake the redress of our grievances, and the cure of our griefs, he was pleased to make himself sensible of the weight of them, and under the burden of them he now groaned in spirit. Or,

Thirdly, It was an expression of his kind sympathy with his friends that were in sorrow. Here was the sounding of the bowels, the mercies which the afflicted church so earnestly solicits, Isa 63:15. Christ not only seemed concerned, but he groaned in the spirit; he was inwardly and sincerely affected with the case. David's pretended friends counterfeited sympathy, to disguise their enmity (Ps 41:6); but we must learn of Christ to have our love and sympathy without dissimulation. Christ's was a deep and hearty sigh.

[2.] He was troubled. He troubled himself; so the phrase is, very significantly. He had all the passions and affections of the human nature, for in all things he must be like to his brethren; but he had a perfect command of them, so that they were never up, but when and as they were called; he was never troubled, but when he troubled himself, as he saw cause. He often composed himself to trouble, but was never discomposed or disordered by it. He was voluntary both in his passion and in his compassion. He had power to lay down his grief, and power to take it again.

34 and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see.

His concern for them appeared by his kind enquiry after the poor remains of his deceased friend (Joh 11:34): Where have you laid him? He knew where he was laid, and yet asks, because,

(1.) He would thus express himself as a man, even when he was going to exert the power of a God. Being found in fashion as a man, he accommodates himself to the way and manner of the sons of men: Non

nescit, sed quasi nescit--He is not ignorant, but he makes as if he were, saith Austin here.

(2.) He enquired where the grave was, lest, if he had gone straight to it of his own knowledge, the unbelieving Jews should have thence taken occasion to suspect a collusion between him and Lazarus, and a trick in the case. Many expositors observe this from Chrysostom.

(3.) He would thus divert the grief of his mourning friends, by raising their expectations of something great; as if he had said, "I did not come hither with an address of condolence, to mingle a few fruitless insignificant tears with yours; no, I have other work to do; come, let us adjourn to the grave, and go about our business there."

Note, A serious address to our work is the best remedy against inordinate grief.

(4.) He would hereby intimate to us the special care he takes of the bodies of the saints while they lie in the grave; he takes notice where they are laid, and will look after them. There is not only a covenant with the dust, but a guard upon it.

35 Jesus wept.

As he was going to the grave, as if he had been following the corpse thither, Jesus wept, Joh 11:35. A very short verse, but it affords many useful instructions.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was really and truly man, and partook with the children, not only of flesh and blood, but of a human soul, susceptible of the impressions of joy, and grief, and other affections. Christ gave this proof of his humanity, in both senses of the word; that, as a man, he could weep, and, as a merciful man, he would weep, before he gave this proof of his divinity.

[2.] That he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as was foretold, Isa 53:3. We never read that he laughed, but more than once we have him in tears. Thus he shows not only that a mournful state will

consist with the love of God, but that those who sow to the Spirit must sow in tears.

[3.] Tears of compassion well become Christians, and make them most to resemble Christ. It is a relief to those who are in sorrow to have their friends sympathize with them, especially such a friend as their Lord Jesus.

36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

Some made a kind and candid interpretation of it, and what was very natural (Joh 11:36): Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! They seem to wonder that he should have so strong an affection for one to whom he was not related, and with whom he had not had any long acquaintance, for Christ spent most of his time in Galilee, a great way from Bethany. It becomes us, according to this example of Christ, to show our love to our friends, both living and dying. We must sorrow for our brethren that sleep in Jesus as those that are full of love, though not void of hope; as the devout men that buried Stephen, Ac 8:2. Though our tears profit not the dead, they embalm their memory. These tears were indications of his particular love to Lazarus, but he has given proofs no less evident of his love to all the saints, in that he died for them. When he only dropped a tear over Lazarus, they said, See how he loved him! Much more reason have we to say so, for whom he hath laid down his life: See how he loved us! Greater love has no man than this

37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

Others made a peevish unfair reflection upon it, as if these tears bespoke his inability to help his friend (Joh 11:37): Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have prevented the death of Lazarus? Here it is slyly insinuated,

First, That the death of Lazarus being (as it seemed by his tears) a great grief to him, if he could have prevented it he would, and therefore because he did not they incline to think that he could not; as, when he was dying, they concluded that he could not, because he did not, save himself, and come down from the cross; not considering that divine power is always directed in its operations by divine wisdom, not merely according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, wherein it becomes us to acquiesce. If Christ's friends, whom he loves, die,--if his church, whom

he loves, be persecuted and afflicted,--we must not impute it to any defect either in his power or love, but conclude that it is because he sees it for the best.

Secondly, That therefore it might justly be questioned whether he did indeed open the eyes of the blind, that is, whether it was not a sham. His not working this miracle they thought enough to invalidate the former; at least, it should seem that he had limited power, and therefore not a divine one. Christ soon convinced these whisperers, by raising Lazarus from the dead, which was the greater work, that he could have prevented his death, but therefore did not because he would glorify himself the more

Lazarus Brought to Life

38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.

1. Christ repeats his groans upon his coming near the grave (Joh 11:38): Again groaning in himself, he comes to the grave: he groaned,

(1.) Being displeased at the unbelief of those who spoke doubtingly of his power, and blamed him for not preventing the death of Lazarus; he was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men, particularly Jerusalem's, Mt 23:37.

(2.) Being affected with the fresh lamentations which, it is likely, the mourning sisters made when they came near the grave, more passionately and pathetically than before, his tender spirit was sensibly touched with their wailings.

(3.) Some think that he groaned in spirit because, to gratify the desire of his friends, he was to bring Lazarus again into this sinful troublesome world, from that rest into which he was newly entered; it would be a kindness to Martha and Mary, but it would be to him like thrusting one out to a stormy sea again who was newly got into a safe and quiet harbour.

If Lazarus had been let alone, Christ would quickly have gone to him into the other world; but, being restored to life, Christ quickly left him behind in this world.

(4.) Christ groaned as one that would affect himself with the calamitous state of the human nature, as subject to death, from which he was now about to redeem Lazarus. Thus he stirred up himself to take hold on God in the prayer he was to make, that he might offer it up with strong crying, Heb 5:7. Ministers, when they are sent by the preaching of the gospel to raise dead souls, should be much affected with the deplorable condition of those they preach to and pray for, and groan in themselves to think of it.

2 The grave wherein Lazarus lay is here described: It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. The graves of the common people, probably, were dug as ours are; but persons of distinction were, as with us, interred in vaults, so Lazarus was, and such was the sepulchre in which Christ was buried. Probably this fashion was kept up among the Jews, in imitation of the patriarchs, who buried their dead in the cave of Machpelah, Ge 23:19. This care taken of the dead bodies of their friends intimates their expectation of their resurrection; they reckoned the solemnity of the funeral ended when the stone was rolled to the grave, or, as here, laid upon it, like that on the mouth of the den into which Daniel was cast (Da 6:17), that the purpose might not be changed; intimating that the dead are separated from the living, and gone the way whence they shall not return. This stone was probably a gravestone, with an inscription upon it, which the Greeks called mnemeion--a memorandum, because it is both a memorial of the dead and a memento to the living, putting them in remembrance of that which we are all concerned to remember. It is called by the Latins, Monumentum, à monendo, because it gives warning.

39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

1. Orders are given to remove the stone (Joh 11:39): Take away the stone. He would have this stone removed that all the standersby might see the body lie dead in the sepulchre, and that way might be made for its coming out, and it might appear to be a true body, and not a ghost or spectre. He

would have some of the servants to remove it, that they might be witnesses, by the smell of the putrefaction of the body, and that therefore it was truly dead. It is a good step towards the raising of a soul to spiritual life when the stone is taken away, when prejudices are removed and got over, and way made for the word to the heart, that it may do its work there, and say what it has to say.

2. An objection made by Martha against the opening of the grave: Lord, by this time he stinketh, or is become noisome, for he has been dead four days, tetartaios gar esti, quatriduanus est; he is four days old in the other world; a citizen and inhabitant of the grave of four days' standing. Probably Martha perceived the body to smell, as they were removing the stone, and therefore cried out thus.

(a.) It is easy to observe hence the nature of human bodies: four days are but a little while, yet what a great change will this time make with the body of man, if it be but so long without food, much more if so long without life! Dead bodies (saith Dr. Hammond) after a revolution of the humours, which is completed in seventy-two hours, naturally tend to putrefaction; and the Jews say that by the fourth day after death the body is so altered that one cannot be sure it is such a person; so Maimonides in Lightfoot. Christ rose the third day because he was not to see corruption.

(b.) It is not so easy to say what was Martha's design in saying this.

[1.] Some think she said it in a due tenderness, and such as decency teaches to the dead body; now that it began to putrefy, she did not care it should be thus publicly shown and made a spectacle of.

[2.] Others think she said it out of a concern for Christ, lest the smell of the dead body should be offensive to him. That which is very noisome is compared to an open sepulchre, Ps 5:9. If there were any thing noisome she would not have her Master near it; but he was none of those tender and delicate ones that cannot bear as ill smell; if he had, he would not have visited the world of mankind, which sin had made a perfect dunghill, altogether noisome, Ps 14:3.

[3.] It should seem, by Christ's answer, that it was the language of her unbelief and distrust: "Lord, it is too late now to attempt any kindness to him; his body begins to rot, and it is impossible that this putrid carcase should live." She gives up his case as helpless and hopeless, there having been no instances, either of late or formerly, of any raised to life after they had begun to see corruption. When our bones are dried, we are ready to say, Our hope is lost. Yet this distrustful word of hers served to make the miracle both the more evident and the more illustrious; by this it appeared that he was truly dead, and not in a trance; for, though the posture of a dead body might be counterfeited, the smell could not. Her suggesting that it could not be done puts the more honour upon him that did it.

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

The gentle reproof Christ gave to Martha for the weakness of her faith (Joh 11:40): Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God? This word of his to her was not before recorded; it is probable that he said it to her when she had said (Joh 11:27), Lord, I believe: and it is enough that it is recorded here, where it is repeated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus has given us all the assurances imaginable that a sincere faith shall at length be crowned with a blessed vision: "If thou believe, thou shalt see God's glorious appearances for thee in this world, and to thee in the other world." If we will take Christ's word, and rely on his power and faithfulness, we shall see the glory of God, and be happy in the sight. (2.) We have need to be often reminded of these sure mercies with which our Lord Jesus hath encouraged us. Christ does not give a direct answer to what Martha had said, nor any particular promise of what he would do, but orders her to keep hold of the general assurances he had already given: Only believe. We are apt to forget what Christ has spoken, and need him to put us in mind of it by his Spirit: "Said I not unto thee so and so? And dost thou think that he will ever unsay it?"

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

The opening of the grave, in obedience to Christ's order, notwithstanding Martha's objection (Joh 11:41): Then they took away the stone. When Martha was satisfied, and had waived her objection, then they proceeded.

If we will see the glory of God, we must let Christ take his own way, and not prescribe but subscribe to him. They took away the stone, and this was all they could do; Christ only could give life. What man can do is but to prepare the way of the Lord, to fill the valleys, and level the hills, and, as here, to take away the stone.

(a) The gesture he used was very significant: He lifted up his eyes, an outward expression of the elevation of his mind, and to show those who stood by whence he derived his power; also to set us an example; this outward sign is hereby recommended to our practice; see Joh 17:1. Look how those will answer it who profanely ridicule it; but that which is especially charged upon us hereby is to lift up our hearts to God in the heavens; what is prayer, but the ascent of the soul to God, and the directing of its affections and motions heavenward? He lifted up his eyes, as looking above, looking beyond the grave where Lazarus lay, and overlooking all the difficulties that arose thence, that he might have his eyes fixed upon the divine omnipotence; to teach us to do as Abraham, who considered not his own body now dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, never took these into his thoughts, and so gained such a degree of faith as not to stagger at the promise, Ro 4:20.

(b) His address to God was with great assurance, and such a confidence as became him: Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

[1.] He has here taught us, by his own example, First, In prayer to call God Father, and to draw nigh to him as children to a father, with a humble reverence, and yet with a holy boldness. Secondly, In our prayers to praise him, and, when we come to beg for further mercy, thankfully to acknowledge former favours. Thanksgivings, which bespeak God's glory (not our own, like the Pharisee's God, I thank thee), are decent forms into which to put our supplications.

[2.] But our Saviour's thanksgiving here was intended to express the unshaken assurance he had of the effecting of this miracle, which he had in his own power to do in concurrence with his Father: "Father, I thank thee that my will and thine are in this matter, as always, the same." Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, as servants, by entreaty; but Christ, as a Son,

by authority, having life in himself, and power to quicken whom he would; and he speaks of this as his own act (Joh 11:11): I go, that I may awake him; yet he speaks of it as what he had obtained by prayer, for his Father heard him: probably he put up the prayer for it when he groaned in spirit once and again (Joh 11:33,38), in a mental prayer, with groanings which could not be uttered.

First, Christ speaks of this miracle as an answer to prayer, 1. Because he would thus humble himself; though he was a Son, yet learned he this obedience, to ask and receive. His mediatorial crown was granted him upon request, though it is of right, Ps 2:8,Joh 17:5. He prays for the glory he had before the world was, though, having never forfeited it, he might have demanded it. 2. Because he was pleased thus to honour prayer, making it the key wherewith even he unlocked the treasures of divine power and grace. Thus he would teach us in prayer, by the lively exercise of faith, to enter into the holiest.

Secondly, Christ, being assured that his prayer was answered, professes,

His thankful acceptance of this answer: I thank thee that thou hast heard me. Though the miracle was not yet wrought, yet the prayer was answered, and he triumphs before the victory. No other can pretend to such an assurance as Christ had; yet we may by faith in the promise have a prospect of mercy before it be actually given in, and may rejoice in that prospect, and give God thanks for it. In David's devotions, the same psalm which begins with prayer for a mercy closes with thanksgivings for it. Note,

(a.) Mercies in answer to prayer ought in a special manner to be acknowledged with thankfulness. Besides the grant of the mercy itself, we are to value it as a great favour to have our poor prayers taken notice of.

(b.) We ought to meet the first appearances of the return of prayer with early thanksgivings. As God answers us with mercy, even before we call, and hears while we are yet speaking, so we should answer him with praise

even before he grants, and give him thanks while he is yet speaking good words and comfortable words.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

His cheerful assurance of a ready answer at any time (Joh 11:42): And I know that thou hearest me always. Let none think that this was some uncommon favour granted him now, such as he never had before, nor should ever have again; no, he had the same divine power going along with him in his whole undertaking, and undertook nothing but what he knew to be agreeable to the counsel of God's will. "I gave thanks" (saith he) "for being heard in this, because I am sure to be heard in every thing." See here,

(a.) The interest our Lord Jesus had in heaven; the Father heard him always, he had access to the Father upon every occasion, and success with him in every errand. And we may be sure that his interest is not the less for his going to heaven, which may encourage us to depend upon his intercession, and put all our petitions into his hand, for we are sure that him the Father hears always.

(b.) The confidence he had of that interest: I knew it. He did not in the least hesitate or doubt concerning it, but had an entire satisfaction in his own mind of the Father's complacency in him and concurrence with him in every thing. We cannot have such a particular assurance as he had; but this we know, that whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us, 1Jo 5:14,15.

But why should Christ give this public intimation of his obtaining this miracle by prayer? He adds, It is because of the people who stand by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me; for prayer may preach.

1. It was to obviate the objections of his enemies, and their reflections. It was blasphemously suggested by the Pharisees, and their creatures, that he wrought his miracles by compact with the devil; now, to evidence the contrary, he openly made his address to God, using prayers, and not charms, not peeping and muttering as those did that used familiar spirits

(Isa 8:19), but, with elevated eyes and voice professing his communication with Heaven, and dependence on Heaven.

2. It was to corroborate the faith of those that were well inclined to him: That they may believe that thou hast sent me, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Moses, to show that God sent him, made the earth open and swallow men up (Nu 16:31); Elijah, to show that God sent him, made fire come from heaven and devour men; for the law was a dispensation of terror and death but Christ proves his mission by raising to life one that was dead. Some give this sense: had Christ declared his doing it freely by his own power, some of his weak disciples, who as yet understood not his divine nature, would have thought he took too much upon him, and have been stumbled at it. These babes could not bear that strong meat, therefore he chooses to speak of his power as received and derived he speaks self-denyingly of himself, that he might speak the more plainly to us. Non ita respexit ad swam dignitatem atque ad nostram salutem--In what he said, he consulted not so much his dignity as our salvation.--Jansenius.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

He now applies himself to his dead friend in the earth. He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth.

(a) He could have raised Lazarus by a silent exertion of his power and will, and the indiscernible operations of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a call, a loud call,

[1.] To be significant of the power then put forth for the raising of Lazarus, how he created this new thing; he spoke, and it was done. He cried aloud, to signify the greatness of the work, and of the power employed in it, and to excite himself as it were to this attack upon the gates of death, as soldiers engage with a shout. Speaking to Lazarus, it was proper to cry with a loud voice; for,

First, The soul of Lazarus, which was to be called back, was at a distance, not hovering about the grave, as the Jews fancied, but removed to Hades,

the world of spirits; now it is natural to speak loud when we call to those at a distance.

Secondly, The body of Lazarus, which was to be called up, was asleep, and we usually speak loud when we would awake any out of sleep. He cried with a loud voice that the scripture might be fulfilled (Isa 45:19), I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.

[2.] To be typical of other works of wonder, and particularly other resurrections, which the power of Christ was to effect. This loud call was a figure,

First, Of the gospel call, by which dead souls were to be brought out of the grave of sin, which resurrection Christ had formerly spoken of (Joh 5:25), and of his word as the means of it (Joh 6:63), and now he gives a specimen of it. By his word, he saith to souls, Live, yea, he saith to them, Live, Eze 16:6. Arise from the dead, Eph 5:14. The spirit of life from God entered into those that had been dead and dry bones, when Ezekiel prophesied over them, Eze 37:10. Those who infer from the commands of the word to turn and live that man has a power of his own to convert and regenerate himself might as well infer from this call to Lazarus that he had a power to raise himself to life.

Secondly, Of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which they that sleep in the dust shall be awakened and summoned before the great tribunal, when Christ shall descend with a shout, a call, or command, like this here, Come forth, Ps 50:4. He shall call both to the heavens for their souls, and to the earth for their bodies, that he may judge his people.

(b) This loud call was but short, yet mighty through God to the battering down of the strongholds of the grave.

[1.] He calls him by name, Lazarus, as we call those by their names whom we would awake out of a fast sleep. God said to Moses, as a mark of his favour, I know thee by name. The naming of him intimates that the same

individual person that died shall rise again at the last day. He that calls the stars by their names can distinguish by name his stars that are in the dust of the earth, and will lose none of them.

[2.] He calls him out of the grave, speaking to him as if he were already alive, and had nothing to do but to come out of his grave. He does not say unto him, Live; for he himself must give life; but he saith to him, Move, for when by the grace of Christ we live spiritually we must stir up ourselves to move; the grave of sin and this world is no place for those whom Christ has quickened, and therefore they must come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

The event was according to the intention: He that was dead came forth, Joh 11:44. Power went along with the word of Christ to reunite the soul and the body of Lazarus, and then he came forth. The miracle is described, not by its invisible springs, to satisfy our curiosity, but by its visible effects, to conform our faith. Do any ask where the soul of Lazarus was during the four days of its separation? We are not told, but have reason to think it was in paradise; in joy and felicity; but you will say, "Was it not then really an unkindness to it to cause it to return into the prison of the body?" And if it were, yet, being for the honour of Christ and the serving of the interests of his kingdom, it was no more an injury to him than it was to St. Paul to continue in the flesh when he knew that to depart to Christ was so much better. If any ask whether Lazarus, after he was raised, could give an account or description of his soul's removal out of the body or return to it, or what he saw in the other world, I suppose both those changes were so unaccountable to himself that he must say with Paul, Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; and of what he saw and heard, that it was not lawful nor possible to express it. In a world of sense we cannot frame to ourselves, much less communicate to others, any adequate ideas of the world of spirits and the affairs of that world. Let us not covet to be wise above what is written, and this is all that is written concerning the resurrection of that Lazarus, that he that was dead came forth. Some have observed that though we read of many who were raised from the dead, who no doubt conversed familiarly with men afterwards, yet the scripture has

not recorded one word spoken by any of them, except by our Lord Jesus only.

This miracle was wrought,

[1.] Speedily. Nothing intervenes between the command, Come forth, and the effect, He came forth; dictum factum--no sooner said than done; let there be life, and there was life. Thus the change in the resurrection will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1Co 15:52. The almighty power that can do it can do it in an instant: Then shalt thou call and I will answer; will come at the call, as Lazarus, Here am I.

[2.] Perfectly. He was so thoroughly revived that he got up out of his grave as strongly as ever he got up out of his bed, and returned not only to life, but health. He was not raised to serve a present turn, but to live as other men.

[3.] With this additional miracle, as some reckon it, that he came out of his grave, though he was fettered with his grave-clothes, with which he was bound hand and foot, and his face bound about with a napkin (for so the manner of the Jews was to bury); and he came forth in the same dress wherein he was buried, that it might appear that it was he himself and not another, and that he was not only alive, but strong, and able to walk, after a sort, even in his grave-clothes. The binding of his face with a napkin proved that he had been really dead, for otherwise, in less than so many days' time, that would have smothered him. And the standers-by, in unbinding him, would handle him, and see him, that it was he himself, and so be witnesses of the miracle. Now see here,

First, How little we carry away with us, when we leave the world--only a winding-sheet and a coffin; there is no change of raiment in the grave, nothing but a single suit of grave-clothes.

Secondly, What condition we shall be in in the grave. What wisdom or device can there be where the eyes are hoodwinked, or what working where the hands and feet are fettered? And so it will be in the grave,

whither we are going. Lazarus being come forth, hampered and embarrassed with his grave-clothes, we may well imagine that those about the grave were exceedingly surprised and frightened at it; we should be so if we should see a dead body rise; but Christ, to make the thing familiar, sets them to work: "Loose him, slacken his grave-clothes, that they may serve for day-clothes till he comes to his house, and then he will go himself, so clad, without guide or supporter to his own house." As, in the Old Testament, the translations of Enoch and Elias were sensible demonstrations of an invisible and future state, the one about the middle of the patriarchal age, the other of the Mosaic economy, so the resurrection of Lazarus, in the New Testament, was designed for the confirmation of the doctrine of the resurrection.

The Plot against Jesus

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

We have here an account of the consequences of this glorious miracle, which were as usual; to some it was a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

Some were invited by it, and induced to believe. Many of the Jews, when they saw the things that Jesus did, believed on him, and well they might, for it was an incontestable proof of his divine mission. They had often heard of his miracles, and yet evaded the conviction of them, by calling in question the matter of fact; but now that they had themselves seen this done their unbelief was conquered, and they yielded at last. But blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. The more we see of Christ the more cause we shall see to love him and confide in him. These were some of those Jews that came to Mary, to comfort her. When we are doing good offices to others we put ourselves in the way of receiving favours from God, and have opportunities of getting good when we are doing good.

46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

The informers were so (Joh 11:46): Some of them, who were eye-witnesses of the miracle, were so far from being convinced that they went to the Pharisees, whom they knew to be his implacable enemies, and told

them what things Jesus had done; not merely as a matter of news worthy their notice, much less as an inducement to them to think more favourably of Christ, but with a spiteful design to excite those who needed no spur the more vigorously to prosecute him. Here is a strange instance,

(1.) Of a most obstinate infidelity, refusing to yield to the most powerful means of conviction; and it is hard to imagine how they could evade the force of this evidence, but that the god of this world had blinded their minds.

(2.) Of a most inveterate enmity. If they would not be satisfied that he was to be believed in as the Christ, yet one would think they should have been mollified, and persuaded not to persecute him; but, if the water be not sufficient to quench the fire, it will inflame it. They told what Jesus had done, and told no more than what was true; but their malice gave a tincture of diabolism to their information equal to that of lying; perverting what is true is as bad as forging what is false. Doeg is called a false, lying, and deceitful tongue (Ps 52:2-4.120:2,3), though what he said was true.

47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we ? for this man doeth many miracles.

48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

The judges, the leaders, the blind leaders, of the people were no less exasperated by the report made to them, and here we are told what they did.

(1.) A special council is called and held (Joh 11:47): Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, as was foretold, Ps 2:2, The rulers take counsel together against the Lord. Consultations of the sanhedrim were intended for the public good; but here, under colour of this, the greatest injury and mischief are done to the people. The things that belong to the nation's peace were hid from the eyes of those that were entrusted with its counsels. This council was called, not only for joint advice, but for mutual irritation; that as iron sharpens iron, and as coals are to burning coals and wood to fire, so they might exasperate and inflame one another with enmity and rage against Christ and his doctrine.

(2.) The case is proposed, and shown to be weighty and of great consequence.

The matter to be debated was what course they should take with this Jesus, to stop the growth of his interest; they said What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. The information given about the raising of Lazarus was produced, and the men, brethren, and fathers were called in to help as solicitously as if a formidable enemy had been with an army in the heart of their country.

First, They own the truth of Christ's miracles, and that he had wrought many of them; they are therefore witnesses against themselves, for they acknowledge his credentials and yet deny his commission.

Secondly, They consider what is to be done, and chide themselves that they have not done something sooner effectually to crush him. They do not take it at all into their consideration whether they shall not receive him and own him as the Messiah, though they profess to expect him, and Jesus gave pregnant proofs of his being so; but they take it for granted that he is an enemy, and as such is to be run down: "What do we? Have we no care to support our church? Is it nothing to us that a doctrine so destructive to our interest spreads thus? Shall we tamely yield up the ground we have got in the affections of the people? Shall we see our authority brought into contempt, and the craft by which we get our living ruined, and not bestir ourselves? What have we been doing all this while? And what are we now thinking of? Shall we be always talking, and bring nothing to pass?"

That which made this matter weighty was the peril they apprehended their church and nation to be in from the Romans (Joh 11:48): "If we do not silence him, and take him off, all men will believe on him; and, this being the setting up of a new king, the Romans will take umbrage at it, and will come with an army, and take away our place and nation, and therefore it is no time to trifle." See what an opinion they have,

First, Of their own power. They speak as if they thought Christ's progress and success in his work depended upon their connivance; as if he could not go on to work miracles, and make disciples, unless they let him alone; as if it were in their power to conquer him who had conquered death, or as if they could fight against God, and prosper. But he that sits in heaven laughs at the fond conceit which impotent malice has of its own omnipotence.

Secondly, Of their own policy. They fancy themselves to be men of mighty insight and foresight, and great sagacity in their moral prognostications.

1. They take on them to prophecy that, in a little time, if he have liberty to go on, all men will believe on him, hereby owning, when it was to serve their purpose, that his doctrine and miracles had a very convincing power in them, such as could not be resisted, but that all men would become his proselytes and votaries. Thus do they now make his interest formidable, though, to serve another turn, these same men strove to make it contemptible, Joh 7:48, Have any of the rulers believed on him? This was the thing they were afraid of, that men would believe on him, and then all their measures were broken. Note, The success of the gospel is the dread of its adversaries; if souls be saved, they are undone.

2. They foretel that if the generality of the nation be drawn after him, the rage of the Romans will be drawn upon them. They will come and take away our place; the country in general, especially Jerusalem, or the temple, the holy place, and their place, their darling, their idol; or, their preferments in the temple, their places of power and trust. Now it was true that the Romans had a very jealous eye upon them, and knew they wanted nothing but power and opportunity to shake off their yoke. It was likewise true that if the Romans should pour an army in upon them it would be very hard for them to make any head against it; yet here appeared a cowardice which one would not have found in the priests of the Lord if they had not by their wickedness forfeited their interest in God and all good men. Had they kept their integrity, they needed not to have feared the Romans; but they speak like a dispirited people, as the men of Judah when they basely said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us? Jdg 15:11. When men lose their piety they lose their courage. But,

(a.) It was false that there was any danger of the Romans' being irritated against their nation by the progress of Christ's gospel, for it was no way hurtful to kings nor provinces, but highly beneficial. The Romans had no jealousy at all of his growing interest; for he taught men to give tribute to Cæsar, and not to resist evil, but to take up the cross. The Roman governor, at his trial, could find no fault in him. There was more danger of the Romans' being incensed against the Jewish nation by the priests than by Christ. Note, Pretended fears are often the colour of malicious designs.

(b.) Had there really been some danger of displeasing the Romans by tolerating Christ's preaching, yet this would not justify their hating and persecuting a good man. Note,

[1.] The enemies of Christ and his gospel have often coloured their enmity with a seeming care for the public good and the common safety, and, in order to this, have branded his prophets and ministers as troublers of Israel, and men that turn the world upside down.

[2.] Carnal policy commonly sets up reasons of state, in opposition to rules of justice. When men are concerned for their own wealth and safety more than for truth and duty, it is wisdom from beneath, which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. But see what was the issue; they pretended to be afraid that their tolerating Christ's gospel would bring desolation upon them by the Romans, and therefore, right or wrong, set themselves against it; but it proved that their persecuting the gospel brought upon them that which they feared, filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the Romans came and took away their place and nation, and their place knows them no more.

Note, That calamity, which we seek to escape by sin we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; and those who think by opposing Christ's kingdom to secure or advance their own secular interest will find Jerusalem a more burdensome stone than they think it is, Zec 12:3. The fear of the wicked it shall come upon them, Pr 10:24.

49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Caiaphas makes a malicious but mystical speech in the council on this occasion.

[1.] The malice of it appears evident at first view, Joh 11:49,50. He, being the high priest, and so president of the council, took upon him to decide the matter before it was debated: "You know nothing at all, your hesitating betrays your ignorance, for it is not a thing that will bear a dispute, it is soon determined, if you consider that received maxim, That it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people." Here,

First, The counsellor was Caiaphas, who was high priest that same year. The high priesthood was by divine appointment settled upon the heir male of the house of Aaron, for and during the term of his natural life, and then to his heir male; but in those degenerate times it was become, though not an annual office, like a consulship, yet frequently changed, as they could make an interest with the Roman powers. Now it happened that this year Caiaphas wore the mitre.

Secondly, The drift of the advice was, in short, this, That some way or other must be found out to put Jesus to death. We have reason to think that they strongly suspected him to be indeed the Messiah; but his doctrine was so contrary to their darling traditions and secular interest, and his design did so thwart their notions of the Messiah's kingdom, that they resolve, be he who he will, he must be put to death. Caiaphas does not say, Let him be silenced, imprisoned, banished, though amply sufficient for the restraint of one they thought dangerous; but die he must. Note, Those that have set themselves against Christianity have commonly divested themselves of humanity, and been infamous for cruelty.

Thirdly, This is plausibly insinuated, with all the subtlety as well as malice of the old serpent.

1. He suggests his own sagacity, which we must suppose him as high priest to excel in, though the Urim and Thummim were long since lost. How scornfully does he say, "You know nothing, who are but common priests; but you must give me leave to see further into things than you do!" Thus it

is common for those in authority to impose their corrupt dictates by virtue of that; and, because they should be the wisest and best, to expect that every body should believe they are so.

2. He takes it for granted that the case is plain and past dispute, and that those are very ignorant who do not see it to be so. Note, Reason and justice are often run down with a high hand. Truth is fallen in the streets, and, when it is down, down with it; and equity cannot enter, and, when it is out, out with it, Isa 59:14.

3. He insists upon a maxim in politics, That the welfare of communities is to be preferred before that of particular persons. It is expedient for us as priests, whose all lies at stake, that one man die for the people. Thus far it holds true, that it is expedient, and more than so, it is truly honourable, for a man to hazard his life in the service of his country (Php 2:17,1Jo 3:16); but to put an innocent man to death under colour of consulting the public safety is the devil's policy. Caiaphas craftily insinuates that the greatest and best man, though major singulis--greater than any one individual, is minor universis--less than the collected mass, and ought to think his life well spent, nay well lost, to save his country from ruin. But what is this to the murdering of one that was evidently a great blessing under pretence of preventing an imaginary mischief to the country? The case ought to have been put thus: Was it expedient for them to bring upon themselves and upon their nation the guilt of blood, a prophet's blood, for the securing of their civil interests from a danger which they had no just reason to be afraid of? Was it expedient for them to drive God and their glory from them, rather than venture the Romans' displeasure, who could do them no harm if they had God on their side?

Note, Carnal policy, which steers only by secular considerations, while it thinks to save all by sin, ruins all at last.

50 nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

The mystery that was in this counsel of Caiaphas does not appear at first view, but the evangelist leads us into it (Joh 11:51,52): This spoke he not

of himself, it was not only the language of his own enmity and policy, but in these words he prophesied, though he himself was not aware of it, that Jesus should die for that nation. Here is a precious comment upon a pernicious text; the counsel of cursed Caiaphas so construed as to fall in with the counsels of the blessed God. Charity teaches us to put the most favourable construction upon men's words and actions that they will fear; but piety teaches us to make a good improvement of them, even contrary to that for which they were intended. If wicked men, in what they do against us, are God's hand to humble and reform us, why may they not in what they say against us be God's mouth to instruct and convince us? But in this of Caiaphas there was an extraordinary direction of Heaven prompting him to say that which was capable of a very sublime sense. As the hearts of all men are in God's hand, so are their tongues. Those are deceived who say, "Our tongues are our own, so that either we may say what we will, and are not accountable to God's judgment, or we can say what we will, and are not restrainable by his providence and power." Balaam could not say what he would, when he came to curse Israel, nor Laban when he pursued Jacob.

The evangelist explains and enlarges upon Caiaphas's words.

[1.] He explains what he said, and shows how it not only was, but was intended to be, accommodated to an excellent purpose. He did not speak it of himself. As it was an artifice to stir up the council against Christ, he spoke it of himself, or of the devil rather; but as it was an oracle, declaring it the purpose and design of God by the death of Christ to save God's spiritual Israel from sin and wrath, he did not speak it of himself, for he knew nothing of the matter, he meant not so, neither did his heart think so, for nothing was in his heart but to destroy and cut off, Isa 10:7.

First, He prophesied, and those that prophesied did not, in their prophesying, speak of themselves. But is Caiaphas also among the prophets? He is so, pro hâc vice--this once, though a bad man, and an implacable enemy to Christ and his gospel. Note, 1. God can and often does make wicked men instruments to serve his own purposes, even contrary to their own intentions; for he has them not only in a chain, to restrain them from doing the mischief they would, but in a bridle, to lead

them to do the service they would not. 2. Words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? will be rejected as a frivolous plea.

Secondly, He prophesied, being high priest that year; not that his being high priest did at all dispose or qualify him to be a prophet; we cannot suppose the pontifical mitre to have first inspired with prophecy the basest head that ever wore it; but,

1. Being high priest, and therefore of note and eminence in the conclave, God was pleased to put this significant word into his mouth rather than into the mouth of any other, that it might be the more observed or the non-observance of it the more aggravated. The apophthegms of great men have been thought worthy of special regard: A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; therefore this divine sentence was put into the lips of the high priest, that even out of his mouth this word might be established, That Christ died for the good of the nation, and not for any iniquity in his hands. He happened to be high priest that year which was fixed to be the year of the redeemed, when Messiah the prince must be cut off, but not for himself (Da 9:26), and he must own it.

2. Being high priest that year, that famous year, in which there was to be such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, more than had ever been yet, according to the prophecy (Joe 2:28,29, compared with Ac 2:17), some drops of the blessed shower light upon Caiaphas, as the crumbs (says Dr. Lightfoot) of the children's bread, which fall from the table among the dogs. This year was the year of the expiration of the Levitical priesthood; and out of the mouth of him who was that year high priest was extorted an implicit resignation of it to him who should not (as they had done for many ages) offer beasts for that nation, but offer himself, and so make an end of the sin-offering. This resignation he made inwittingly, as Isaac gave the blessing to Jacob.

Thirdly, The matter of his prophecy was that Jesus should die for that nation, the very thing to which all the prophets bore witness, who testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ (1Pe 1:11), that the death of Christ must be the life and salvation of Israel; he meant by that nation those in it that

obstinately adhered to Judaism, but God meant those in it that would receive the doctrine of Christ, and become followers of him, all believers, the spiritual seed of Abraham. The death of Christ, which Caiaphas was now projecting, proved the ruin of that interest in the nation of which he intended it should be the security and establishment, for it brought wrath upon them to the uttermost; but it proved the advancement of that interest of which he hoped it would have been the ruin, for Christ, being lifted up from the earth, drew all men unto him. It is a great thing that is here prophesied: That Jesus should die, die for others, not only for their good, but in their stead, dies for that nation, for they had the first offer made them of salvation by his death. If the whole nation of the Jews had unanimously believed in Christ, and received his gospel, they had been not only saved eternally, but saved as a nation from their grievances. The fountain was first opened to the house of David, Zec 13:1. He so died for that nation as that the whole nation should not perish, but that a remnant should be saved, Ro 11:5.

52 and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

The evangelist enlarges upon this word of Caiaphas (Joh 11:52), not for that nation only, how much soever it thought itself the darling of Heaven, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Observe here,

First, The persons Christ died for: Not for the nation of the Jews only (it would have been comparatively but a light thing for the Son of God to go through so vast an undertaking only to restore the preserved of Jacob, and the outcasts of Israel); no, he must be salvation to the ends of the earth, Isa 49:6. He must die for the children of God that were scattered abroad.

1. Some understand it of the children of God that were then in being, scattered abroad in the Gentile world, devout men of every nation (Ac 2:5), that feared God (Ac 10:2), and worshipped him (Ac 17:4), proselytes of the gate, who served the God of Abraham, but submitted not to the ceremonial law of Moses, persons that had a savour of natural religion, but were dispersed in the nations, had no solemn assemblies of their own, nor any peculiar profession to unite in or distinguish themselves by. Now Christ died to incorporate these in one great society, to be denominated

from him and governed by him; and this was the setting up of a standard, to which all that had a regard to God and a concern for their souls might have recourse, and under which they might enlist themselves.

2. Others take in with these all that belong to the election of grace, who are called the children of God, though not yet born, because they are predestinated to the adoption of children, Eph 1:5. Now these are scattered abroad in several places of the earth, out of all kindreds and tongues (Re 7:9), and in several ages of the world, to the end of time; there are those that fear him throughout all generations, to all these he had an eye in the atonement he made by his blood; as he prayed, so he died, for all that should believe on him.

Secondly, The purpose and intention of his death concerning those persons; he died to gather in those who wandered, and to gather together in one those who were scattered; to invite those to him who were at a distance from him, and to unite those in him who were at a distance from each other. Christ's dying is,

1 The great attractive of our hearts; for this end he is lifted up, to draw men to him. The conversion of souls is the gathering to them in to Christ as their ruler and refuge, as the doves to their windows; and he died to effect this. By dying he purchased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them; his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love.

2 The great centre of our unity. He gathers them together in one, Eph 1:10. They are one with him, one body, one spirit, and one with each other in him. All the saints in all places and ages meet in Christ, as all the members in the head, and all the branches in the root. Christ by the merit of his death recommended all the saints in one to the grace and favour of God (Heb 2:11-13), and by the motive of his death recommends them all severally to the love and affection one of another, Joh 13:34.

53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

The result of this debate is a resolve of the council to put Jesus to death (Joh 11:53): From that day they took counsel together, to put him to death. They now understood one another's minds, and so each was fixed in his

own, that Jesus must die; and, it should seem, a committee was appointed to sit, de die in diem--daily, to consider of it, to consult about it, and to receive proposals for effecting it. Note, The wickedness of the wicked ripens by degrees, Jam 1:15,Eze 7:10. Two considerable advances were now made in their accursed design against Christ. [1.] What before they had thought of severally now they jointly concurred in, and so strengthened the hands one of another in this wickedness, and proceeded with the greater assurance. Evil men confirm and encourage themselves and one another in evil practices, by comparing notes; men of corrupt minds bless themselves when they find others of the same mind: then the wickedness which before seemed impracticable appears not only possible, but easy to be effected, vis unita fortior--energies, when united, become more efficient. [2.] What before they wished done, but wanted a colour for, now they are furnished with a plausible pretence to justify themselves in, which will serve, if not to take off the guilt (that is the least of their care), yet to take off the odium, and so satisfy, if not the personal, yet the political conscience, as some subtly distinguish. Many will go on very securely in doing an evil thing as long as they have but something to say in excuse for it. Now this resolution of theirs to put him to death, right or wrong, proves that all the formality of a trial, which he afterwards underwent, was but show and pretence; they were before determined what to do.

54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

Christ hereupon absconded, knowing very well what was the vote of their close cabal, Joh 11:54.

[1.] He suspended his public appearances: He walked no more openly among the Jews, among the inhabitants of Judea, who were properly called Jews, especially those at Jerusalem; ou periepatei--he did not walk up and down among them, did not go from place to place, preaching and working miracles with the freedom and openness that he had done, but while he staid in Judea, he was there incognito. Thus the chief priests put the light of Israel under a bushel.

[2.] He withdrew into an obscure part of the country, so obscure that the name of the town he retired to is scarcely met with any where else. He went to a country near the wilderness, as if he were driven out from among men, or rather wishing, with Jeremiah, that he might have in the wilderness a lodging place of way-faring men, Jer 9:2. He entered into a city called Ephraim, some think Ephratah, that is, Bethlehem, where he was born, and which bordered upon the wilderness of Judah; others think Ephron, or Ephraim, mentioned 2Ch 13:19. Thither his disciples went with him; neither would they leave him in solitude, nor would he leave them in danger. There he continued, dietribe, there he conversed, he knew how to improve this time of retirement in private conversation, when he had not an opportunity of preaching publicly. He conversed with his disciples, who were his family, when he was forced from the temple, and his diatribai, or discourses there, no doubt, were very edifying. We must do the good we can, when we cannot do the good we would. But why would Christ abscond now? It was not because he either feared the power of his enemies or distrusted his own power; he had many ways to save himself, and was neither averse to suffering nor unprepared for it; but he retired,

First, To put a mark of his displeasure upon Jerusalem and the people of the Jews. They rejected him and his gospel; justly therefore did he remove himself and his gospel from them. The prince of teachers was now removed into a corner (Isa 30:20); there was no open vision of him; and it was a sad presage of that thick darkness which was shortly to come upon Jerusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation.

Secondly, To render the cruelty of his enemies against him the more inexcusable. If that which was grievous to them, and thought dangerous to the public, was his public appearance, he would try whether their anger would be turned away by his retirement into privacy; when David had fled to Gath, Saul was satisfied, and sought no more for him, 1Sa 27:4. But it was the life, the precious life, that these wicked men hunted after.

Thirdly, His hour was not yet come, and therefore he declined danger, and did it in a way common to men, both to warrant and encourage the flight of his servants in time of persecution and to comfort those who are forced from their usefulness, and buried alive in privacy and obscurity; the

disciple is not better than his Lord. Fourthly, His retirement, for awhile, was to make his return into Jerusalem, when his hour was come, the more remarkable and illustrious. This swelled the acclamations of joy with which his well-wishers welcomed him at his next public appearance, when he rode triumphantly into the city.

55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

The occasion of it was the approach of the passover, at which they expected his presence, according to custom (Joh 11:55): The Jews' passover was nigh at hand; a festival which shone bright in their calendar, and which there was great expectation of for some time before. This was Christ's fourth and last passover, since he entered upon his public ministry, and it might truly be said (as, 2Ch 35:18), There never was such a passover in Israel, for in it Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. Now the passover being at hand, many went out of all parts of the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves. This was either,

First, A necessary purification of those who had contracted any ceremonial pollution; they came to be sprinkled with the water of purification, and to perform the other rites of cleansing according to the law, for they might not eat the passover in their uncleanness, Nu 9:6. Thus before our gospel passover we must renew our repentance, and by faith wash in the blood of Christ, and so compass God's altar. Or,

Secondly, A voluntary purification, or self-sequestration, by fasting and prayer, and other religious exercises, which many that were more devout than their neighbours spent some time in before the passover, and chose to do it at Jerusalem, because of the advantage of the temple-service. Thus must we by solemn preparation set bounds about the mount on which we expect to meet with God.

56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

The enquiry was very solicitous: They said, What think you, that he will not come to the feast? Joh 11:56.

First, Some think this was said by those who wished well to him, and expected his coming, that they might hear his doctrine and see his miracles. Those who came early out of the country, that they might purify themselves, were very desirous to meet with Christ, and perhaps came up the sooner with that expectation, and therefore as they stood in the temple, the place of their purification, they enquired what news of Christ? Could any body give them hopes of seeing him? If there were those, and those of the most devout people, and best affected to religion, who showed this respect to Christ, it was a check to the enmity of the chief priests, and a witness against them.

Secondly, It should rather seem that they were his enemies who made this enquiry after him, who wished for an opportunity to lay hands on him. They, seeing the town begin to fill with devout people out of the country, wondered they did not find him among them. When they should have been assisting those that came to purify themselves, according to the duty of their place, they were plotting against Christ. How miserably degenerate was the Jewish church, when the priests of the Lord were become like the priests of the calves, a snare upon Mizpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor, and were profound to make slaughter (Ho 5:1,2), --when, instead of keeping the feast with unleavened bread, they were themselves soured with the leaven of the worst malice! Their asking, What think you? Will he not come up to the feast? implies,

1. An invidious reflection upon Christ, as if he would omit his attendance on the feast of the Lord for fear of exposing himself. If others, through irreligion, be absent, they are not animadverted upon; but if Christ be absent, for his own preservation (for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice), it is turned to his reproach, as it was to David's that his seat was empty at the feast, though Saul wanted him only that he might have an opportunity of nailing him to the wall with his javelin, 1Sa 20:25-27, &c. It is sad to see holy ordinances prostituted to such unholy purposes.

2. A fearful apprehension that they had of missing their game: "Will he not come up to the feast? If he do not, our measures are broken, and we are all

undone; for there is no sending a pursuivant into the country, to fetch him up."

57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.

The orders issued out by the government for the apprehending of him were very strict, Joh 11:57. The great sanhedrim issued out a proclamation, strictly charging and requiring that if any person in city or country knew where he was (pretending that he was a criminal, and had fled from justice) they should show it, that he might be taken, probably promising a reward to any that would discover him, and imposing a penalty on such as harboured him; so that hereby he was represented to the people as an obnoxious dangerous man, an outlaw, whom any one might have a blow at. Saul issued out such a proclamation for the apprehending of David, and Ahab of Elijah. See, First, How intent they were upon this prosecution, and how indefatigably they laboured in it, now at a time when, if they had had any sense of religion and the duty of their function, they would have found something else to do. Secondly, How willing they were to involve others in the guilt with them; if any man were capable of betraying Christ, they would have him think himself bound to do it. Thus was the interest they had in the people abused to the worst purposes. Note, It is an aggravation of the sins of wicked rulers that they commonly make those that are under them instruments of their unrighteousness. But notwithstanding this proclamation, though doubtless many knew where he was, yet such was his interest in the affections of some, and such God's hold of the consciences of others, that he continued undiscovered, for the Lord hid him.

John-12

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

The latter end of the foregoing chapter acquainted us with the prudential care of Christ in withdrawing from the fury of his enemies in and about Jerusalem, who were consulting his destruction: his time not being fully

come, he gets out of the way of his persecutors: but now the passover being at hand, which was the time that this Lamb of God was to die as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, our Lord comes forth, first to Bethany, and then to Jerusalem, not fearing the teeth of his enemies, but with a fixed resolution to encounter death and danger for the salvation of his people.

His example teacheth us, That although we are bound by all lawful means and prudential methods to preserve ourselves from the unjust violence of our persecutors yet when God's time for our sufferings is come, and we evidently see that it is his will that we suffer for his sake, we ought to set our faces very cheerfully towards it, and resign up ourselves to the wisdom and will of God.

Thus did Christ here, Joh 11:54, we find he withdrew from suffering, his hour not being then come: but now when the passover was nigh at hand, which was the time when he was to suffer, he sets his face towards Jerusalem, and withdraws no more.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Verses 2-8. See this passage explained Mt 26:3, also Mt 26:4-16.

Lazarus was, &c. The names of Martha and Lazarus are mentioned because it was not in their own house, but in that of Simon. Lazarus is particularly mentioned, since it was so remarkable that one who had been once dead should be enjoying again the endearments of friendship. This shows, also, that his resurrection was no illusion--that he was really restored to the blessings of life and friendship. Calmet thinks that this was about two months after his resurrection, and it is the last that we hear of him. How long he lived is unknown, nor is it recorded that he made any communication about the world of spirits. It is remarkable that none who have been restored to life from the dead have made any communications respecting that world. See Lk 16:31, and 2Cor 12:4.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

The detection and discovery of Judas's hypocrisy herein, Joh 12:6. Here is the evangelist's remark upon it, by the direction of him who searches the heart: This he said, not that he cared for the poor, as he pretended, but because he was a thief, and had the bag.

(a.) It did not come from a principle of charity: Not that he cared for the poor. He had no compassion towards them, no concern for them: what were the poor to him any further than he might serve his own ends by being overseer of the poor? Thus some warmly contend for the power of the church, as others for its purity, when perhaps it may be said, Not that they care for the church; it is all one to them whether its true interest sink or swim, but under the pretence of this they are advancing themselves. Simeon and Levi pretended zeal for circumcision, not that they cared for the seal of the covenant, any more than Jehu for the Lord of hosts, when he said, Come see my zeal.

(b.) It did come from a principle of covetousness. The truth of the matter was, this ointment being designed for his Master, he would rather have had it in money, to be put in the common stock with which he was entrusted, and then he knew what to do with it. Observe,

[1.] Judas was treasurer of Christ's household, whence some think he was called Iscariot, the bag-bearer. First, See what estate Jesus and his disciples had to live upon. It was but little; they had neither farms nor merchandise, neither barns nor storehouses, only a bag; or, as some think the word signifies, a box, or coffer, wherein they kept just enough for their subsistence, giving the overplus, if any were, to the poor; this they carried about with them, wherever they went. Omnia mea mecum porto--I carry all my property about me. This bag was supplied by the contributions of good people, and the Master and his disciples had all in common; let this lessen our esteem of worldly wealth, and deaden us to the punctilios of state and ceremony, and reconcile us to a mean and despicable way of living, if this be our lot, that it was our Master's lot; for our sakes he became

poor. Secondly, See who was the steward of the little they had; it was Judas, he was purse-bearer. It was his office to receive and pay, and we do not find that he gave any account what markets he made. He was appointed to this office, either,

1. Because he was the least and lowest of all the disciples; it was not Peter nor John that was made steward (though it was a place of trust and profit), but Judas, the meanest of them. Note, Secular employments, as they are a digression, so they are a degradation to a minister of the gospel; see 1Co 6:4. The prime-ministers of state in Christ's kingdom refused to be concerned in the revenue, Ac 6:2.

2. Because he was desirous of the place. He loved in his heart to be fingering money, and therefore had the moneybag committed to him, either,

(a.) As a kindness, to please him, and thereby oblige him to be true to his Master. Subjects are sometimes disaffected to the government because disappointed of their preferment; but Judas had no cause to complain of this; the bag he chose, and the bag he had. Or,

(b.) In judgment upon him, to punish him for his secret wickedness; that was put into his hands which would be a snare and trap to him. Note, Strong inclinations to sin within are often justly punished with strong temptations to sin without. We have little reason to be fond of the bag, or proud of it, for at the best we are but stewards of it; and it was Judas, one of an ill character, and born to be hanged (pardon the expression), that was steward of the bag. The prosperity of fools destroys them.

[2.] Being trusted with the bag, he was a thief, that is, he had a thievish disposition. The reigning love of money is heart-theft as much as anger and revenge are heart-murder. Or perhaps he had been really guilty of embezzling his Master's stores, and converting to his own use what was given to the public stock. And some conjecture that he was now contriving to fill his pockets, and then run away and leave his Master, having heard him speak so much of troubles approaching, to which he could by no means reconcile himself.

Note, Those to whom the management and disposal of public money is committed have need to be governed by steady principles of justice and honesty, that no blot cleave to their hands; for though some make a jest of cheating the government, or the church, or the country, if cheating be thieving, and, communities being more considerable than particular persons, if robbing them be the greater sin, the guilt of theft and the portion of thieves will be found no jesting matter. Judas, who had betrayed his trust, soon after betrayed his Master.

7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

Christ's justification of what Mary did (Joh 12:7,8): Let her alone. Hereby he intimated his acceptance of her kindness (though he was perfectly mortified to all the delights of sense, yet, as it was a token of her goodwill, he signified himself well-pleased with it), and his care that she should not be molested in it: Pardon her, so it may be read; "excuse her this once, if it be an error it is an error of her love." Note, Christ would not have those censured nor discouraged who sincerely design to please him, though in their honest endeavours there be not all the discretion that may be, Ro 14:3. Though we would not do as they do, yet let them alone. For Mary's justification,

1. Christ puts a favourable construction upon what she did, which those that condemned it were not aware of: Against the day of my burying she has kept this. Or, She has reserved this for the day of my embalming; so Dr. Hammond. "You do not grudge the ointment used for the embalming of your dead friends, nor say that it should be sold, and given to the poor. Now this anointing either was so intended, or at least may be so interpreted; for the day of my burying is now at hand, and she has anointed a body that is already as good as dead." Note,

(a.) Our Lord Jesus thought much and often of his own death and burial; it would be good for us to do so too.

(b.) Providence does often so open a door of opportunity to good Christians, and the Spirit of grace does so open their hearts, that the expressions of their pious zeal prove to be more seasonable, and more beautiful, than any foresight of their own could make them.

(c.) The grace of Christ puts kind comments upon the pious words and actions of good people, and not only makes the best of what is amiss, but makes the most of what is good.

2. He gives a sufficient answer to Judas's objection, Joh 12:8.

(a.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of Providence that the poor we have always with us, some or other that are proper objects of charity (De 15:11); such there will be as long as there are in this lapsed state of mankind so much folly and so much affliction.

(b.) It is so ordered in the kingdom of grace that the church should not always have the bodily presence of Jesus Christ: "Me you have not always, but only nor for a little time." Note, We need wisdom, when two duties come in competition, to know which to give the preference to, which must be determined by the circumstances. Opportunities are to be improved, and those opportunities first and most vigorously which are likely to be of the shortest continuance, and which we see most speedily hastening away. That good duty which may be done at any time ought to give way to that which cannot be done but just now.

The Plot against Lazarus

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

The public notice which was taken of our Lord Jesus here at this supper in Bethany (Joh 12:9): Much people of the Jews knew that he was there, for he was the talk of the town, and they came flocking thither; the more because he had lately absconded, and now broke out as the sun from behind a dark cloud.

1. They came to see Jesus, whose name was very much magnified, and made considerable by the late miracle he had wrought in raising Lazarus. They came, not to hear him, but to gratify their curiosity with a sight of him here at Bethany, fearing he would not appear publicly, as he used to do, this passover. They came, not to seize him, or inform against him, though the government had prosecuted him to an outlawry, but to see him and show him respect. Note, There are some in whose affections Christ will have an interest, in spite of all the attempts of his enemies to misrepresent him. It being known where Christ was, multitudes came to him. Note, Where the king is there is the court; where Christ is there will the gathering of the people be, Lu 17:37.

2. They came to see Lazarus and Christ together, which was a very inviting sight. Some came for the confirmation of their faith in Christ, to have the story perhaps from Lazarus's own mouth. Others came only for the gratifying of their curiosity, that they might say they had seen a man who had been dead and buried, and yet lived again; so that Lazarus served for a show, these holy-days, to those who, like the Athenians, spent their time in telling and hearing new things. Perhaps some came to put curious questions to Lazarus about the state of the dead, to ask what news from the other world; we ourselves have sometimes said, it may be, We would have gone a great way for one hour's discourse with Lazarus. But if any came on this errand it is probable that Lazarus was silent, and gave them no account of his voyage; at least, the scripture is silent, and gives us no account of it; and we must not covet to be wise above what is written. But our Lord Jesus was present, who was a much fitter person for them to apply to than Lazarus; for if we hear not Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, if we heed not what they tell us concerning another world, neither should we be persuaded though Lazarus rose from the dead. We have a more sure word of prophecy.

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

The indignation of the chief priests at the growing interest of our Lord Jesus, and their plot to crush it (Joh 12:10,11): They consulted (or decreed) how they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him

(of what was done to him, not of any thing he said or did) many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus. Here observe,

1. How vain and unsuccessful their attempts against Christ had hitherto been. They had done all they could to alienate the people from him, and exasperate them against him, and yet many of the Jews, their neighbours, their creatures, their admirers, were so overcome by the convincing evidence of Christ's miracles that they went away from the interest and party of the priests, went off from obedience to their tyranny, and believed on Jesus; and it was by reason of Lazarus; his resurrection put life into their faith, and convinced them that this Jesus was undoubtedly the Messiah, and had life in himself, and power to give life. This miracle confirmed them in the belief of his other miracles, which they had heard he wrought in Galilee: what was impossible to him that could raise the dead?

2. How absurd and unreasonable this day's vote was--that Lazarus must be put to death. This is an instance of the most brutish rage that could be; they were like a wild bull in a net, full of fury, and laying about them without any consideration. It was a sign that they neither feared God nor regarded man. For,

(a.) If they had feared God, they would not have done such an act of defiance to him. God will have Lazarus to live by miracle, and they will have him to die by malice. They cry, Away with such a fellow, it is not fit he should live, when God had so lately sent him back to the earth, declaring it highly fit he should live; what was this but walking contrary to God? They would put Lazarus to death, and challenge almighty power to raise him again, as if they could contend with God, and try titles with the King of kings. Who has the keys of death and the grave, he or they? O cæca malitia! Christus qui suscitare potuit mortuum, non possit occisum.--Blind malice, to suppose that Christ, who could raise one that had died a natural death, could not raise one that had been slain!--Augustine in loc. Lazarus is singled out to be the object of their special hatred, because God has distinguished him by the tokens of his peculiar love, as if they had made a league offensive and defensive with death and hell, and resolved to be severe upon all deserters. One would think that they should rather have consulted how they might have joined in friendship with Lazarus and his

family, and by their mediation have reconciled themselves to this Jesus whom they had persecuted; but the god of this world had blinded their minds.

(b.) If they had regarded man, they would not have done such an act of injustice to Lazarus, an innocent man, to whose charge they could not pretend to lay any crime. What bands are strong enough to hold those who can so easily break through the most sacred ties of common justice, and violate the maxims which even nature itself teaches? But the support of their own tyranny and superstition was thought sufficient, as in the church of Rome, not only to justify, but to consecrate the greatest villanies, and make them meritorious.

11 because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

see Mt 21:1-11.

13 took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna:

Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

15 Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

The reason which induced the people to pay this respect to our Lord Jesus upon his coming into Jerusalem, though the government was so much set against him. It was because of the illustrious miracle he had lately wrought in raising Lazarus.

1. See here what account and what assurance they had of this miracle; no doubt, the city rang of it, the report of it was in all people's mouths. But those who considered it as a proof of Christ's mission, and a ground of their faith in him, that they might be well satisfied of the matter of fact, traced the report to those who were eye-witnesses of it, that they might know the certainty of it by the utmost evidence the thing was capable of: The people therefore that stood by when he called Lazarus out of his grave, being found out and examined, bore record, Joh 12:17. They unanimously averred the thing to be true, beyond dispute or contradiction, and were ready, if called to it, to depose it upon oath, for so much is implied in the word Emartyrei. Note, The truth of Christ's miracles was evidenced by incontestable proofs. It is probable that those who had seen this miracle did not only assert it to those who asked them, but published it unasked, that this might add to the triumphs of this solemn day; and Christ's coming in now from Bethany, where it was done, would put them in mind of it. Note, Those who wish well to Christ's kingdom should be forward to proclaim what they know that may redound to his honour.

2. What improvement they made of it, and what influence it had upon them (Joh 12:18): For this cause, as much as any other, the people met him.

(a.) Some, out of curiosity, were desirous to see one that had done such a wonderful work. Many a good sermon he had preached in Jerusalem, which drew not such crowds after him as this one miracle did. But,

(b.) Others, out of conscience, studied to do him honour, as one sent of God. This miracle was reserved for one of the last, that it might confirm those which went before, and might gain him this honour just before his sufferings; Christ's works were all not only well done (Mk 7:7) but well timed.

18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

The indignation of the Pharisees at all this; some of them, probably, saw, and they all soon heard of, Christ's public entry. The committee appointed to find out expedients to crush him thought they had gained their point when he had retired unto privacy, and that he would soon be forgotten in Jerusalem, but they now rage and fret when they see they imagined but a vain thing.

1. They own that they had got no ground against him; it was plainly to be perceived that they prevailed nothing. They could not, with all their insinuations, alienate the people's affections from him, nor with their menaces restrain them from showing their affection to him. Note, Those who oppose Christ, and fight against his kingdom, will be made to perceive that they prevail nothing. God will accomplish his own purposes in spite of them, and the little efforts of their impotent malice. You prevail nothing, ouk opheleite--you profit nothing. Note, There is nothing got by opposing Christ.

2. They own that he had got ground: The world is gone after him; there is a vast crowd attending him, a world of people: an hyperbole common in most languages. Yet here, like Caiaphas, ere they were aware, they prophesied that the world would go after him; some of all sorts, some from all parts; nations shall be discipled. But to what intent was this said?

(a.) Thus they express their own vexation at the growth of his interest; their envy makes them fret. If the horn of the righteous be exalted with honour, the wicked see it, and are grieved (Ps 112:9,10); considering how great these Pharisees were, and what abundance of respect was paid them, one would think they needed not grudge Christ so inconsiderable a piece of honour as was now done him; but proud men would monopolize honour, and have none share with them, like Haman.

(b.) Thus they excite themselves and one another, to a more vigorous carrying on of the war against Christ. As if they should say, "Dallying and delaying thus will never do. We must take some other and more effectual course, to put a stop to this infection; it is time to try our utmost skill and force, before the grievance grows past redress." Thus the enemies of religion are made more resolute and active by being baffled; and shall its

friends be disheartened with every disappointment, who know its cause is righteous and will at last be victorious?

Some Greeks Seek Jesus

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:

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21 the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.

22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

What was the honour they paid him: they desired to be acquainted with him, Joh 12:21. Having come to worship at the feast, they desired to make the best use they could of their time, and therefore applied to Philip, desiring that he would put them in a way to get some personal converse with the Lord Jesus.

1. Having a desire to see Christ, they were industrious in the use of proper means. They did not conclude it impossible, because he was so much crowded, to get to speak with him, nor rest in bare wishes, but resolved to try what could be done. Note, Those that would have the knowledge of Christ must seek it.

2. They made their application to Philip, one of his disciples. Some think that they had acquaintance with him formerly, and that they lived near Bethsaida in Galilee of the Gentiles; and then it teaches us that we should improve our acquaintance with good people, for our increase in the knowledge of Christ. It is good to know those who know the Lord. But if these Greeks had been near Galilee it is probable that they would have attended Christ there, where he mostly resided; therefore I think that they applied to him only because they saw him a close follower of Christ, and he was the first they could get to speak with. It was an instance of the veneration they had for Christ that they made an interest with one of his

disciples for an opportunity to converse with him, a sign that they looked upon him as some great one, though he appeared mean. Those that would see Jesus by faith now that he is in heaven must apply to his ministers, whom he had appointed for this purpose, to guide poor souls in their enquiries after him. Paul must send for Ananias, and Cornelius for Peter. The bringing of these Greeks to the knowledge of Christ by the means of Philip signified the agency of the apostles, and the use made of their ministry in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith and the discipling of the nations.

3. Their address to Philip was in short this: Sir, we would see Jesus. They gave him a title of respect, as one worthy of honour, because he was in relation to Christ. Their business is, they would see Jesus; not only see his face, that they might be able to say, when they came home, they had seen one that was so much talked of (it is probable they had seen him when he appeared publicly); but they would have some free conversation with him, and be taught by him, for which it was no easy thing to find him at leisure, his hands were so full of public work. Now that they were come to worship at the feast, they would see Jesus.

Note, In our attendance upon holy ordinances, and particularly the gospel passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to have our acquaintance with him increased, our dependence on him encouraged, our conformity to him carried on; to see him as ours, to keep up communion with him, and derive communications of grace from him: we miss of our end in coming if we do not see Jesus.

4. Here is the report which Philip made of this to his Master, Joh 12:22. He tells Andrew, who was of Bethsaida likewise, and was a senior fellow in the college of the apostles, contemporary with Peter, and consults him what was to be done, whether he thought the motion would be acceptable or no, because Christ had sometimes said that he was not sent but to the house of Israel. They agree that it must be made; but then he would have Andrew go along with him, remembering the favourable acceptance Christ had promised them, in case two of them should agree touching any thing they should ask, Mt 18:19.

Note, Christ's ministers should be helpful to one another and concur in helping souls to Christ: Two are better than one. It should seem that Andrew and Philip brought this message to Christ when he was teaching in public, for we read (Joh 12:29) of the people that stood by; but he was seldom alone.

23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

Christ's acceptance of this honour paid him, signified by what he said to the people hereupon, Joh 12:23, &c., where he foretels both the honour which he himself should have in being followed (Joh 12:23,24) and the honour which those should have that followed him, Joh 12:25,26. This was intended for the direction and encouragement of these Greeks, and all others that desired acquaintance with him.

He foresees that plentiful harvest, in the conversion of the Gentiles, of which this was as it were the first-fruits, Joh 12:23. Christ said to the two disciples who spoke a good word for these Greeks, but doubted whether they should speed or no, The hour is come when the Son of Man shall be glorified, by the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and in order to that he must be rejected of the Jews. Observe,

The end designed hereby, and that is the glorifying of the Redeemer: "And is it so? Do the Gentiles begin to enquire after me? Does the morning-star appear to them? and that blessed say-spring, which knows its place and time too, does that begin to take hold of the ends of the earth? Then the hour is come for the glorifying of the Son of man." This was no surprise to Christ, but a paradox to those about him. Note,

[1.] The calling, the effectual calling, of the Gentiles into the church of God greatly redounded to the glory of the Son of man. The multiplying of the redeemed was the magnifying of the Redeemer.

[2.] there was a time, a set time, an hour, a certain hour, for the glorifying of the Son of man, which did come at last, when the days of his humiliation were numbered and finished, and he speaks of the approach of it with exultation and triumph: The hour is come.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

The strange way in which this end was to be attained, and that was by the death of Christ, intimated in that similitude (Joh 12:24): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, you to whom I have spoken of my death and sufferings, except a corn of wheat fall not only to, but into, the ground, and die, and be buried and lost, it abideth alone, and you never see any more of it; but if it die according to the course of nature (otherwise it would be a miracle) it bringeth forth much fruit, God giving to every seed its own body." Christ is the corn of wheat, the most valuable and useful grain. Now here is,

[1.] The necessity of Christ's humiliation intimated. He would never have been the living quickening head and root of the church if he had not descended from heaven to this accursed earth and ascended from earth to the accursed tree, and so accomplished our redemption. He must pour out his soul unto death, else he cannot divide a portion with the great, Isa 53:12. He shall have a seed given him, but he must shed his blood to purchase them and purify, must win them and wear them. It was necessary likewise as a qualification for that glory which he was to have by the accession of multitudes to his church; for if he had not by his sufferings made satisfaction for sin, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness, he would not have been sufficiently provided for the entertainment of those that should come to him, and therefore must abide alone.

[2.] The advantage of Christ's humiliation illustrated. He fell to the ground in his incarnation, seemed to be buried alive in this earth, so much was his glory veiled; but this was not all: he died. This immortal seed submitted to the laws of mortality, he lay in the grave like seed under the clods; but as the seed comes up again green, and fresh, and flourishing, and with a great increase, so one dying Christ gathered to himself thousands of living Christians, and he became their root. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is all owing to the dying of this corn of wheat. Hereby the Father and the Son are glorified,

the church is replenished, the mystical body is kept up, and will at length be completed; and, when time shall be no more, the Captain of our salvation, bringing many sons to glory by the virtue of his death, and being so made perfect by sufferings, shall be celebrated for ever with the admiring praises of saints and angels, Heb 2:10,13.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

He foretels and promises an abundant recompence to those who should cordially embrace him and his gospel and interest, and should make it appear that they do so by their faithfulness in suffering for him or in serving him.

In suffering for him (Joh 12:25): He that loves his life better than Christ shall lose it; but he that hates his life in this world, and prefers the favour of God and an interest in Christ before it, shall keep it unto life eternal. This doctrine Christ much insisted on, it being the great design of his religion to wean us from this world, by setting before us another world.

[1.] See here the fatal consequences of an inordinate love of life; many a man hugs himself to death, and loses his life by over-loving it. He that so loves his animal life as to indulge his appetite, and make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, shall thereby shorten his days, shall lose the life he is so fond of, and another infinitely better. He that is so much in love with the life of the body, and the ornaments and delights of it, as, for fear of exposing it or them, to deny Christ, he shall lose it, that is, lose a real happiness in the other world, while he thinks to secure an imaginary one in this.

[2.] See also the blessed recompence of a holy contempt of life. He that so hates the life of the body as to venture it for the preserving of the life of his soul shall find both, with unspeakable advantage, in eternal life. Note,

First, It is required of the disciples of Christ that they hate their life in this world; a life in this world supposes a life in the other world, and this is hated when it is loved less than that. Our life in this world includes all the enjoyments of our present state, riches, honours, pleasures, and long life

in the possession of them; these we must hate, that is, despise them as vain and insufficient to make us happy, dread the temptations that are in them, and cheerfully part with them whenever they come in competition with the service of Christ, Ac 20:24,21:13,Re 12:11. See here much of the power of godliness--that it conquers the strongest natural affections; and much of the mystery of godliness--that it is the greatest wisdom, and yet makes men hate their own lives.

Secondly, Those who, in love to Christ, hate their own lives in this world, shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. He that hateth his life shall keep it; he puts it into the hands of one that will keep it to life eternal, and restore it with as great an improvement as the heavenly life can make of the earthly one.

26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor.

In serving him (Joh 12:26): If any man profess to serve me, let him follow me, as a servant follows his master; and where I am, ekei kai ho diakonos ho emos estai--there let my servant be; so some read it, as part of the duty, there let him be, to attend upon me; we read it as part of the promise, there shall he be in happiness with me. And, lest this should seem a small matter, he adds, If any man serve me, him will my Father honour; and that is enough, more than enough. The Greeks desired to see Jesus (Joh 12:21), but Christ lets them know that it was not enough to see him, they must serve him. He did not come into the world, to be a show for us to gaze at, but a king to be ruled by. And he says this for the encouragement of those who enquired after him to become his servants. In taking servants it is usual to fix both the work and the wages; Christ does both here.

[1.] Here is the work which Christ expects from his servants; and it is very easy and reasonable, and such as becomes them.

First, Let them attend their Master's movements: If any man serve me, let him follow me. Christians must follow Christ, follow his methods and prescriptions, do the things that he says, follow his example and pattern, walk as he also walked, follow his conduct by his providence and Spirit. We must go whither he leads us, and in the way he leads us; must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes before us. "If any man serve me, if he

put himself into that relation to me, let him apply himself to the business of my service, and be always ready at my call." Or, "If any man do indeed serve me, let him make an open and public profession of his relation to me, by following me, as the servant owns his Master by following him in the streets."

Secondly, Let them attend their Master's repose: Where I am, there let my servant be, to wait upon me. Christ is where his church is, in the assemblies of his saints, where his ordinances are administered; and there let his servants be, to present themselves before him, and receive instructions from him. Or, "Where I am to be in heaven, whither I am now going, there let the thoughts and affections of my servants be, there let their conversation be, where Christ sitteth." Col 3:1,2.

[2.] Here are the wages which Christ promises to his servants; and they are very rich and noble.

First, They shall be happy with him: Where I am, there shall also my servant be. To be with him, when he was here in poverty and disgrace, would seem but poor preferment, and therefore, doubtless, he means being with him in paradise, sitting with him at his table above, on his throne there; it is the happiness of heaven to be with Christ there, Joh 17:24. Christ speaks of heaven's happiness as if he were already in it: Where I am; because he was sure of it, and near to it, and it was still upon his heart, and in his eye. And the same joy and glory which he thought recompence enough for all his services and sufferings are proposed to his servants as the recompence of theirs. Those that follow him in the way shall be with him in the end.

Secondly, They shall be honoured by his Father; he will make them amends for all their pains and loss, by conferring an honour upon them, such as becomes a great God to give, but far beyond what such worthless worms of the earth could expect to receive. The rewarder is God himself, who takes the services done to the Lord Jesus as done to himself. The reward is honour, true lasting honour, the highest honour; it is the honour that comes from God. It is said (Pr 27:18), He that waits on his Master (humbly and diligently) shall be honoured. Those that wait on Christ God

will put honour upon, such as will be taken notice of another day, though now under a veil. Those that serve Christ must humble themselves, and are commonly vilified by the world, in recompence of both which they shall be exalted in due time.

Thus far Christ's discourse has reference to those Greeks who desired to see him, encouraging them to serve him. What became of those Greeks we are not told, but are willing to hope that those who thus asked the way to heaven with their faces thitherward, found it, and walked in it.

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.

Honour is here done to Christ by his Father in a voice from heaven, occasioned by the following part of his discourse, and which gave occasion to a further conference with the people. In these verses we have,

Christ's address to his Father, upon occasion of the trouble which seized his spirit at this time: Now is my soul troubled, Joh 12:27. A strange word to come from Christ's mouth, and at this time surprising, for it comes in the midst of divers pleasing prospects, in which, one would think, he should have said, Now is my soul pleased. Note, Trouble of soul sometimes follows after great enlargements of spirit. In this world of mixture and change we must expect damps upon our joy, and the highest degree of comfort to be the next degree to trouble. When Paul had been in the third heavens, he had a thorn in the flesh. Observe,

1. Christ's dread of his approaching sufferings: Now is my soul troubled. Now the black and dismal scene began, now were the first throes of the travail of his soul, now his agony began, his soul began to be exceedingly sorrowful. Note,

(a.) The sin of our soul was the trouble of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin.

(b.) The trouble of his soul was designed to ease the trouble of our souls; for, after this, he said to his disciples (Joh 14:1), "Let not your hearts be troubled; why should yours be troubled and mine too?" Our Lord Jesus went on cheerfully in his work, in prospect of the joy set before him, and yet submitted to a trouble of soul. Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy, and the way to eternal joy. Christ was now troubled, now in sorrow, now in fear, now for a season; but it would not be so always, it would not be so long. The same is the comfort of Christians in their troubles; they are but for a moment, and will be turned into joy.

2 The strait he seems to be in hereupon, intimated in those words, And what shall I say? This does not imply his consulting with any other, as if he needed advice, but considering with himself what was fit to be said now. When our souls are troubled we must take heed of speaking unadvisedly, but debate with ourselves what we shall say. Christ speaks like one at a loss, as if what he should choose he wot not. There was a struggle between the work he had taken upon him, which required sufferings, and the nature he had taken upon him, which dreaded them; between these two he here pauses with, What shall I say? He looked, and there was none to help, which put him to a stand. Calvin observes this as a great instance of Christ's humiliation, that he should speak thus like one at a loss. Quo se magis exinanivit gloriæ Dominus, eo luculentius habemus erga nos amoris specimen--The more entirely the Lord of glory emptied himself, the brighter is the proof of the love he bore us. Thus he was in all points tempted like as we are, to encourage us, when we know not what to do, to direct our eyes to him.

3. His prayer to God in this strait: Father, save me from this hour, ek tes oras tautes--out of this hour, praying, not so much that it might not come as that he might be brought through it. Save me from this hour; this was the language of innocent nature, and its feelings poured forth in prayer. Note, It is the duty and interest of troubled souls to have recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and in prayer to eye him as a Father. Christ

was voluntary in his sufferings, and yet prayed to be saved from them. Note, Prayer against a trouble may very well consist with patience under it and submission to the will of God in it. Observe, He calls his suffering this hour, meaning the expected events of the time now at hand. Hereby he intimates that the time of his suffering was,

(a.) A set time, set to an hour, and he knew it. It was said twice before that his hour was not yet come, but it was now so near that he might say it was come.

(b.) A short time. An hour is soon over, so were Christ's sufferings; he could see through them to the joy set before him.

4. His acquiescence in his Father's will, notwithstanding. He presently corrects himself, and, as it were, recalls what he had said: But for this cause came I to this hour. Innocent nature got the first word, but divine wisdom and love got the last. Note, those who would proceed regularly must go upon second thoughts. The complainant speaks first; but, if we would judge righteously, we must hear the other side. With the second thought he checked himself: For this cause came I to this hour; he does not silence himself with this, that he could not avoid it, there was no remedy; but satisfies himself with this, that he would not avoid it, for it was pursuant to his own voluntary engagement, and was to be the crown of his whole undertaking; should he now fly off, this would frustrate all that had been done hitherto. Reference is here had to the divine counsels concerning his sufferings, by virtue of which it behoved him thus to submit and suffer. Note, This should reconcile us to the darkest hours of our lives, that we were all along designed for them; see 1Th 3:3.

28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

His regard to his Father's honour herein. Upon the withdrawing of his former petition, he presents another, which he will abide by: Father, glorify thy name, to the same purport with Father, thy will be done; for God's will is for his own glory. This expresses more than barely a submission to the will of God; it is a consecration of his sufferings to the glory of God. It was a mediatorial word, and was spoken by him as our surety, who had undertaken to satisfy divine justice for our sin. The

wrong which by sin we have done to God is in his glory, his declarative glory; for in nothing else are we capable of doing him injury. We were never able to make him satisfaction for this wrong done him, nor any creature for us; nothing therefore remained but that God should get him honour upon us in our utter ruin. Here therefore our Lord Jesus interposed, undertook to satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by his humiliation; he denied himself in, and divested himself of, the honours due to the Son of God incarnate, and submitted to the greatest reproach. Now here he makes a tender of this satisfaction as an equivalent: "Father, glorify thy name; let thy justice be honoured upon the sacrifice, not upon the sinner; let the debt be levied upon me, I am solvent, the principal is not." Thus he restored that which he took not away.

29 The people therefore that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.

The Father's answer to this address; for he heard him always, and does still. Observe, 1. How this answer was given. By a voice from heaven. The Jews speak much of a Bath-kôl--the daughter of a voice, as one of those divers manners by which God in time past spoke to the prophets; but we do not find any instance of his speaking thus to any but to our Lord Jesus; it was an honour reserved for him (Mt 3:17,17:5), and here, probably, this audible voice was introduced by some visible appearance, either of light or darkness, for both have been used as vehicles of the divine glory. 2. What the answer was. It was an express return to that petition, Father, glorify thy name: I have glorified it already, and I will glorify it yet again. When we pray as we are taught, Our Father, hallowed be thy name, this is a comfort to us, that is it an answered prayer; answered to Christ here, and in him to all true believers.

(1.) The name of God had been glorified in the life of Christ, in his doctrine and miracles, and all the examples he gave of holiness and goodness.

(2.) It should be further glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. His wisdom and power, his justice and holiness, his truth and goodness, were greatly glorified; the demands of a broken law were fully answered; the affront done to God's government satisfied for; and God accepted the satisfaction, and declared himself well pleased. What God has done for

the glorifying of his own name is an encouragement to us to expect what he will yet further do. He that has secured the interests of his own glory will still secure them.

The opinion of the standers-by concerning this voice, Joh 12:29. We may hope there were some among them whose minds were so well prepared to receive a divine revelation that they understood what was said and bore record of it. But notice is here taken of the perverse suggestion of the multitude: some of them said that it thundered: others, who took notice that there was plainly an articulate intelligible voice, said that certainly an angel spoke to him. Now this shows,

1. That it was a real thing, even in the judgment of those that were not at all well affected to him.

2. That they were loth to admit so plain a proof of Christ's divine mission. They would rather say that it was this, or that, or any thing, than that God spoke to him in answer to his prayer; and yet, if it thundered with articulate sounds (as Re 10:3,4), was not that God's voice? Or, if angels spoke to him, are not they God's messengers? But thus God speaks once, yea twice, and man perceives it not.

30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.

Why it was sent (Joh 12:30): "It came not because of me, not merely for my encouragement and satisfaction" (then it might have been whispered in his ear privately), "but for your sakes."

(1.) "That all you who heard it may believe that the Father hath sent me." What is said from heaven concerning our Lord Jesus, and the glorifying of the Father in him, is said for our sakes, that we may be brought to submit to him and rest upon him.

(2.) "That you my disciples, who are to follow me in sufferings, may therein be comforted with the same comforts that carry me on." Let this encourage them to part with life itself for his sake, if they be called to it, that it will redound to the honour of God. Note, The promises and

supports granted to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings were intended for our sakes. For our sakes he sanctified himself, and comforted himself.

31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

What was the meaning of it. He that lay in the Father's bosom knew his voice, and what was the meaning of it; and two things God intended when he said that he would glorify his own name:--

(1.) That by the death of Christ Satan should be conquered (Joh 12:31): Now is the judgment. He speaks with a divine exultation and triumph. "Now the year of my redeemed is come, and the time prefixed for breaking the serpent's head, and giving a total rent to the powers of darkness; now for that glorious achievement: now, now, that great work is to be done which has been so long thought of in the divine counsels, so long talked of in the written word, which has been so much the hope of saints and the dread of devils." The matter of the triumph is,

[1.] That now is the judgment of the world; krisis, take it as a medical term: "Now is the crisis of this world." The sick and diseased world is now upon the turning point; this is the critical day upon which the trembling scale will turn for life or death, to all mankind; all that are not recovered by this will be left helpless and hopeless. Or, rather, it is a law term, as we take it: "Now, judgment is entered, in order to the taking out of execution against the prince of this world."

Note, The death of Christ was the judgment of this world.

First, It is a judgment of discovery and distinction--judicium discretionis; so Austin. Now is the trial of this world, for men shall have their character according as the cross of Christ is to them; to some it is foolishness and a stumbling-block, to others it is the wisdom and power of God; of which there was a figure in the two thieves that were crucified with him. By this men are judged, what they think of the death of Christ.

Secondly, It is a judgment of favour and absolution to the chosen ones that are in the world. Christ upon the cross interposed between a righteous

God and a guilty world as a sacrifice for sin and a surety for sinners, so that when he was judged, and iniquity laid upon him, and he was wounded for our transgressions, it was as it were the judgment of this world, for an everlasting righteousness was thereby brought in, not for Jews only, but the whole world, 1Jo 2:1,2,Da 9:24.

Thirdly, It is a judgment of condemnation given against the powers of darkness; see Joh 16:11. Judgment is put for vindication and deliverance, the asserting of an invaded right. At the death of Christ there was a famous trial between Christ and Satan, the serpent and the promised seed; the trial was for the world, and the lordship of it; the devil had long borne sway among the children of men, time out of mind; he now pleads prescription, grounding his claim also upon the forfeiture incurred by sin. We find him willing to have come to a composition (Lu 4:6,7); he would have given the kingdoms of this world to Christ, provided he would hold them by, from, and under him. But Christ would try it out with; by dying he takes off the forfeiture to divine justice, and then fairly disputes the title, and recovers it in the court of heaven. Satan's dominion is declared to be a usurpation, and the world adjudged to the Lord Jesus as his right, Ps 2:6,8. The judgment of this world is, that it belongs to Christ, and not to Satan; to Christ therefore let us all atturn tenants.

[2.] That now is the prince of this world cast out.

First, It is the devil that is here called the prince of this world, because he rules over the men of the world by the things of the world; he is the ruler of the darkness of this world, that is, of this dark world, of those in it that walk in darkness, 2Co 4:4,Eph 4:12.

Secondly, He is said to be cast out, to be now cast out; for, whatever had been done hitherto towards the weakening of the devil's kingdom was done in the virtue of a Christ to come, and therefore is said to be done now. Christ, reconciling the world to God by the merit of his death, broke the power of death, and cast out Satan as a destroyer; Christ, reducing the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver. The bruising of his heel was the breaking of the serpent's head, Ge 3:15. When his oracles were silenced, his temples

forsaken, his idols famished, and the kingdoms of the world became Christ's kingdoms, then was the prince of the world cast out, as appears by comparing this with John's vision (Re 12:8-11), where it is said to be done by the blood of the Lamb. Christ's frequent casting of devils out of the bodies of people was an indication of the great design of his whole undertaking. Observe, With what assurance Christ here speaks of the victory over Satan; it is as good as done, and even when he yields to death he triumphs over it.

32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

That by the death of Christ souls should be converted, and this would be the casting out of Satan (Joh 12:32): If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me. Here observe two things:--

The great design of our Lord Jesus, which was to draw all men to him, not the Jews only, who had been long in a profession a people near to God, but the Gentiles also, who had been afar off; for he was to be the desire of all nations (Hag 2:7), and to him must the gathering of the people be. That which his enemies dreaded was that the world would go after him; and he would draw them to him, notwithstanding their opposition. Observe here how Christ himself is all in all in the conversion of a soul. First, It is Christ that draws: I will draw. It is sometimes ascribed to the Father (Joh 6:44), but here to the Son, who is the arm of the Lord. He does not drive by force, but draws with the cords of a man (Ho 11:4,Jer 31:3), draws as the loadstone; the soul is made willing, but it is in a day of power. Secondly, It is to Christ that we are drawn: "I will draw them to me as the centre of their unity." The soul that was at a distance from Christ is brought into an acquaintance with him, he that was shy and distrustful of him is brought to love him and trust in him,--drawn up to his terms, into his arms. Christ was now going to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him thither.

The strange method he took to accomplish his design by being lifted up from the earth. What he meant by this, to prevent mistake, we are told (Joh 12:33): This he spoke signifying by what death he should die, the death of the cross, though they had designed and attempted to stone him to death. He that was crucified was first nailed to the cross, and then lifted up upon it. He was lifted up as a spectacle to the world; lifted up between

heaven and earth, as unworthy of either; yet the word here used signifies an honourable advancement, ean hypsotho--If I be exalted; he reckoned his sufferings his honour. Whatever death we die, if we die in Christ we shall be lifted up out of this dungeon, this den of lions, into the regions of light and love. We should learn of our Master to speak of dying with a holy pleasantness, and to say, "We shall then be lifted up." Now Christ's drawing all men to him followed his being lifted up from the earth.

First, It followed after it in time. The great increase of the church was after the death of Christ; while Christ lived, we read of thousands at a sermon miraculously fed, but after his death we read of thousands at a sermon added to the church. Israel began to multiply in Egypt after the death of Joseph.

Secondly, It followed upon it as a blessed consequence of it. Note, There is a powerful virtue and efficacy in the death of Christ to draw souls to him. The cross of Christ, though to some a stumbling-stone, is to others a loadstone. Some make it an allusion to the drawing of fish into a net; the lifting up of Christ was as the spreading of the net (Mt 13:47,48); or to the setting up of a standard, which draws soldiers together; or, rather, it refers to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which drew all those to it who were stung with fiery serpents, as soon as ever it was known that it was lifted up, and there was healing virtue in it. O what flocking was there to it! So there was to Christ, when salvation through him was preached to all nations; see Joh 3:14,15. Perhaps it has some reference to the posture in which Christ was crucified, with his arms stretched out, to invite all to him, and embrace all that come. Those that put Christ to that ignominious death thought thereby to drive all men from him; but the devil was outshot in his own bow. Out of the eater came forth meat.

33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34 The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

The people's exception against what he said, and their cavil at it, Joh 12:34. Though they had heard the voice from heaven, and the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, yet they object, and pick quarrels

with him. Christ had called himself the Son of man (Joh 12:23), which they knew to be one of the titles of the Messiah, Da 7:13. He had also said that the Son of man must be lifted up, which they understood of his dying, and probably he explained himself so, and some think he repeated what he said to Nicodemus (Joh 3:14), So must the Son of man be lifted up. Now against this,

1. They alleged those scriptures of the Old Testament which speak of the perpetuity of the Messiah, that he should be so far from being cut off in the midst of his days that he should be a priest for ever (Ps 110:4), and a king for ever (Ps 89:29, &c.), that he should have length of days for ever and ever, and his years as many generations (Ps 21:4,61:6), from all which they inferred that the Messiah should not die. Thus great knowledge in the letter of the scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is capable of being abused to serve the cause of infidelity, and to fight against Christianity with its own weapons. Their perverseness in opposing this to what Jesus had said will appear if we consider,

(a.) That, when they vouched the scripture to prove that the Messiah abideth for ever, they took no notice of those texts which speak of the Messiah's death and sufferings: they had heard out of the law that Messiah abideth for ever; and had they never heard out of the law that Messiah should be cut off (Da 9:26), and that he should pour out his soul unto death (Isa 53:12), and particularly that his hands and feet should be pierced? Why then do they make so strange of the lifting up of the Son of man? Note, We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with scripture arguments, by putting those things asunder which God in his word has put together, and opposing one truth under pretence of supporting another. We have heard out of the gospel that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty, and we just cordially embrace both, and not separate them, nor set them at variance.

(b.) That, when they opposed what Christ said concerning the sufferings of the Son of man, they took no notice of what he had said concerning his glory and exaltation. They had heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever; and had they not heard our Lord Jesus say that he should be glorified, that he should bring forth much fruit, and draw all men to him?

Had he not just now promised immortal honours to his followers, which supposed his abiding for ever? But this they overlooked. Thus unfair disputants oppose some parts of the opinion of an adversary, to which, if they would but take it entire, they could not but subscribe; and in the doctrine of Christ there are paradoxes, which to men of corrupt minds are stones of stumbling--as Christ crucified, and yet glorified; lifted up from the earth, and yet drawing all men to him.

2. They asked hereupon, Who is the Son of man? This they asked, not with a desire to be instructed, but tauntingly and insultingly, as if now they had baffled him, and run him down. "Thou sayest, The Son of man must die; we have proved the Messiah must not, and where is then thy Messiahship? This Son of man, as thou callest thyself, cannot be the Messiah, thou must therefore think of something else to pretend to." Now that which prejudiced them against Christ was his meanness and poverty; they would rather have no Christ than a suffering one.

35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.
Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

What Christ said to this exception, or rather what he said upon it. The objection was a perfect cavil; they might, if they pleased, answer it themselves: man dies, and yet is immortal, and abideth for ever, so the Son of man. Therefore, instead of answering these fools according to their folly, he gives them a serious caution to take heed of trifling away the day of their opportunities in such vain and fruitless cavils as these (Joh 12:35,36): "Yet a little while, and but a little while, is the light with you; therefore be wise for yourselves, and walk while you have the light."

1. In general, we may observe here,

(a.) The concern Christ has for the souls of men, and his desire of their welfare. With what tenderness does he here admonish those to look well to themselves who were contriving ill against him! Even when he endured the contradiction of sinners, he sought their conversion. See Pr 29:10.

(b.) The method he takes with these objectors, with meekness instructing those that opposed themselves, 2Ti 2:25. Were but men's consciences awakened with a due concern about their everlasting state, and did they consider how little time they have to spend, and none to spare, they would not waste precious thoughts and time in trifling cavils.

2. Particularly we have here,

(a.) The advantage they enjoyed in having Christ and his gospel among them, with the shortness and uncertainty of their enjoyment of it: Yet a little while is the light with you. Christ is this light; and some of the ancients suggest that, in calling himself the light, he gives a tacit answer to their objection. His dying upon the cross was as consistent with his abiding for ever as the setting of the sun every night is with his perpetuity. The duration of Christ's kingdom is compared to that of the sun and moon, Ps 72:17,89:36,37. The ordinances of heaven are unchangeably fixed, and yet the sun and moon set and are eclipsed; so Christ the Sun of righteousness abides for ever, and yet was eclipsed by his sufferings, and was but a little while within our horizon. Now,

[1.] The Jews at this time had the light with them; they had Christ's bodily presence, heard his preaching, saw his miracles. The scripture is to us a light shining in a dark place.

[2.] It was to be but a little while with them; Christ would shortly leave them, their visible church state would soon after be dissolved and the kingdom of God taken from them, and blindness and hardness would happen unto Israel. Note, It is good for us all to consider what a little while we are to have the light with us. Time is short, and perhaps opportunity not so long. The candlestick may be removed; at least, we must be removed shortly. Yet a little while is the light of life with us; yet a little while is the light of the gospel with us, the day of grace, the means of grace, the Spirit of grace, yet a very little while.

(b.) The warning given them to make the best of this privilege while they enjoyed it, because of the danger they were in of losing it: Walk while

you have the light; as travellers who make the best of their way forward, that they may not be benighted in their journey, because travelling in the night is uncomfortable and unsafe. "Come," say they, "let us mend our pace, and get forward, while we have day-light." Thus wise should we be for our souls who are journeying towards eternity. Note,

[1.] It is our business to walk, to press forward towards heaven, and to get nearer to it by being made fitter for it. Our life is but a day, and we have a day's journey to go.

[2.] The best time of walking is while we have the light. The day is the proper season for work, as the night is for rest. The proper time for getting grace is when we have the word of grace preached to us, and the Spirit of grace striving with us, and therefore then is the time to be busy.

[3.] We are highly concerned thus to improve our opportunities, for fear lest our day be finished before we have finished our day's work and our day's journey: "Lest darkness come upon you, lest you lose your opportunities, and can neither recover them nor despatch the business you have to do without them." Then darkness comes, that is, such an utter incapacity to make sure the great salvation as renders the state of the careless sinner quite deplorable; so that, if his work be undone then, it is likely to be undone for ever.

(c.) The sad condition of those who have sinned away the gospel, and are come to the period of their day of grace. They walk in darkness, and know neither where they go, nor whither they go; neither the way they are walking in, nor the end they are walking towards. He that is destitute of the light of the gospel, and is not acquainted with its discoveries and directions, wanders endlessly in mistakes and errors, and a thousand crooked paths, and is not aware of it. Set aside the instructions of the Christian doctrine, and we know little of the difference between good and evil. He is going to destruction, and knows not his danger, for he is either sleeping or dancing at the pit's brink.

36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

The great duty and interest of every one of us inferred from all this (Joh 12:36): While you have light, believe in the light. The Jews had now Christ's presence with them, let them improve it; afterwards they had the first offers of the gospel made to them by the apostles wherever they came; now this is an admonition to them not to out-stand their market, but to accept the offer when it was made to them: the same Christ saith to all who enjoy the gospel. Note,

[1.] It is the duty of every one of us to believe in the gospel light, to receive it as a divine light, to subscribe to the truths it discovers, for it is a light to our eyes, and to follow its guidance, for it is a light to our feet. Christ is the light, and we must believe in him as he is revealed to us; as a true light that will not deceive us, a sure light that will not misguide us.

[2.] We are concerned to do this while we have the light, to lay hold on Christ while we have the gospel to show us the way to him and direct us in that way. [3.] Those that believe in the light shall be the children of light; they shall be owned as Christians, who are called children of light (Lu 16:8,Eph 5:8) and of the day, 1Th 5:5. Those that have God for their Father are children of light, for God is light; they are born from above, and heirs of heaven, and children of light, for heaven is light.

Christ's retiring from them, hereupon: These things spoke Jesus, and said no more at this time, but left this to their consideration, and departed, and did hide himself from them. And this he did,

1. For their conviction and awakening. If they will not regard what he hath said, he will have nothing more to say to them. They are joined to their infidelity, as Ephraim to idols; let them alone. Note, Christ justly removes the means of grace from those that quarrel with him, and hides his face from a froward generation, De 32:20.

2. For his own preservation. He hid himself from their rage and fury, retreating, it is probable, to Bethany, where he lodged. By this it appears that what he said irritated and exasperated them, and they were made worse by that which should have made them better.

The Unbelief of the Jews

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

We have here the honour done to our Lord Jesus by the Old-Testament prophets, who foretold and lamented the infidelity of the many that believed not on him. It was indeed a dishonour and grief to Christ that his doctrine met with so little acceptance and so much opposition; but this takes off the wonder and reproach, makes the offence of it to cease, and made it no disappointment to Christ, that herein the scriptures were fulfilled. Two things are here said concerning this untractable people, and both were foretold by the evangelical prophet Isaiah, that they did not believe, and that they could not believe.

They did not believe (Joh 12:37): Though he had done so many miracles before them, which, one would think, should have convinced them, yet they believed not, but opposed him. Observe,

1 The abundance of the means of conviction which Christ afforded them: He did miracles, so many miracles; tosauta semeia signifying both so many and so great. This refers to all the miracles he had wrought formerly; nay, the blind and lame now came to him into the temple, and he healed them, Mt 21:14. His miracles were the great proof of his mission, and on the evidence of them he relied. Two things concerning them he here insists upon:-- (1.) The number of them; they were many,-- various and of divers kinds; numerous and often repeated; and every new miracle confirmed the reality of all that went before. The multitude of his miracles was not only a proof of his unexhausted power, but gave the greater opportunity to examine them; and, if there had been a cheat in them, it was morally impossible but that in some or other of them it would have been discovered; and, being all miracles of mercy, the more there were the more good was done. (2.) The notoriety of them. He wrought these miracles before them, not at a distance, not in a corner, but before many witnesses, appearing to their own eyes.

2 The inefficacy of these means: Yet they believed not on him. They could not gainsay the premises, and yet would not grant the conclusion. Note, The most plentiful and powerful means of conviction will not of themselves work faith in the depraved prejudiced hearts of men. These saw, and yet believed not.

3. The fulfilling of the scripture in this (Joh 12:38): That the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled. Not that these infidel Jews designed the fulfilling of the scripture (they rather fancied those scriptures which speak of the church's best sons to be fulfilled in themselves), but the event exactly answered the prediction, so that (ut for ita ut) this saying of Esaias was fulfilled. The more improbable any event is, the more does a divine foresight appear in the prediction of it. One could not have imagined that the kingdom of the Messiah, supported with such pregnant proofs, should have met with so much opposition among the Jews, and therefore their unbelief is called a marvellous work, and a wonder, Isa 29:14. Christ himself marvelled at it, but it was what Isaiah foretold (Isa 53:1), and now it is accomplished. Observe,

(a.) The gospel is here called their report: Who has believed, te akon hemon--our hearing, which we have heard from God, and which you have heard from us. Our report is the report that we bring, like the report of a matter of fact, or the report of a solemn resolution in the senate.

(b.) It is foretold that a few comparatively of those to whom this report is brought will be persuaded to give credit to it. Many hear it, but few heed it and embrace it: Who hath believed it? Here and there one, but none to speak of; not the wise, not the noble; it is to them but a report which wants confirmation.

(c.) It is spoken of as a thing to be greatly lamented that so few believe the report of the gospel. Lord is here prefixed from the LXX., but is not in the Hebrew, and intimates a sorrowful account brought to God by the messengers of the cold entertainment which they and their report had; as the servant came, and showed his lord all these things, Lu 14:21.

(d.) The reason why men believe not the report of the gospel is because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them, that is, because they do not acquaint themselves with, and submit themselves to, the grace of God; they do not experimentally know the virtue and fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, in which the arm of the Lord is revealed. They saw Christ's miracles, but did not see the arm of the Lord revealed in them.

38 that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake,

Lord, who hath believed our report?

and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart;

that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart,

and be converted, and I should heal them.

They could not believe. See Mk 6:5. "He could there do no mighty works," &c. The words can and could are often used in the Bible to denote the existence of such obstacles as to make a result certain, or as affirming that while one thing exists another thing cannot follow. Thus, Jn 5:44: "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another." That is, while this propensity to seek for honour exists, it will effectually prevent your believing. Thus (Gen 37:4) it is said of the brethren of Joseph that they "could not speak peaceably unto him." That is, while their hatred continued so strong, the other result would follow. See also Mt 12:34, Rom 8:7, Jn 6:60, Amos 3:3. In this case it means that there was some obstacle or difficulty that made it certain that while it existed they would not believe. What that was is stated in the next verse; and while that blindness of mind and that hardness of heart existed, it was impossible that they should believe, for the two things were incompatible. But this determines nothing about their power of removing that blindness, or of yielding their heart to the gospel. It simply affirms that while one exists the other cannot follow. Chrysostom and Augustine understand this of a moral inability, and not of any natural want of power. "They could not, because they would not" (Chrysostom in loco). So on Jer 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin," &c., he says, "he does not say it is impossible for a wicked man to do well, but, BECAUSE they will not, therefore they cannot." Augustine says on this place: "If I be asked why they could not

believe, I answer without hesitation, because they would not: because God foresaw their evil will, and he announced it beforehand by the prophet."

He hath blinded their eyes. The expression in Isaiah is, "Go, make the heart of this people fat, and shut their eyes." That is, go and proclaim truth to them--truth that will result in blinding their eyes. Go and proclaim the law and the will of God, and the effect will be, owing to the hardness of their heart, that their eyes will be blinded and their hearts hardened. As God knew that this would be the result--as it was to be the effect of the message, his commanding Isaiah to go and proclaim it was the same in effect, or in the result, as if he had commanded him to blind their eyes and harden their hearts. It is this effect or result to which the evangelist refers in this place. He states that God did it--that is, he did it in the manner mentioned in Isaiah, for we are limited to that in our interpretation of the passage. In that case it is clear that the mode specified is not a direct agency on the part of God in blinding the mind--which we cannot reconcile with any just notions of the divine character--but in suffering the truth to produce a regular effect on sinful minds, without putting forth any positive supernatural influence to prevent it. The effect of truth on such minds is to irritate, to enrage, and to harden, unless counteracted by the grace of God. See Rom 7:8,9,11; 2Cor 2:15, 16. And as God knew this, and, knowing it, still sent the message, and suffered it to produce the regular effect, the evangelist says "he hath blinded their minds," thus retaining the substance of the passage in Isaiah without quoting the precise language; but in proclaiming the truth there was nothing wrong on the part of God or of Isaiah, nor is there any indication that God was unwilling that they should believe and be saved.

41 These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

When he saw his glory, Isa 6:1-10. Isaiah saw the LORD (in Hebrew, JEHOVAH) sitting on a throne and surrounded with the seraphim. This is perhaps the only instance in the Bible in which Jehovah is said to have been seen by man, and for this the Jews affirm that Isaiah was put to death. God had said (Ex 33:20), "No man shall see me and live;" and as Isaiah affirmed that he had seen Jehovah, the Jews, for that and other reasons, put him to death by sawing him asunder. Is 1:1. In the prophecy Isaiah is said expressly to have seen JEHOVAH (Isa 6:1); and in Isa 6:5, "Mine eyes

have seen the King JEHOVAH of hosts." By his glory is meant the manifestation of him--the shechinah, or visible cloud that was a representation of God, and that rested over the mercy-seat. This was regarded as equivalent to seeing God, and John here expressly applies this to the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is not affirming that the people did not believe in God, but is assigning the reason why they believed not on Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The whole discourse has respect to the Lord Jesus, and the natural construction of the passage requires us to refer it to him. John affirms that it was the glory of the Messiah that Isaiah saw, and yet Isaiah affirms that it was JEHOVAH; and from this the inference is irresistible that John regarded Jesus as the Jehovah whom Isaiah saw. The name Jehovah is never, in the Scriptures, applied to a man, or an angel, or to any creature. It is the peculiar, incommunicable name of God. So great was the reverence of the Jews for that name that they would not even pronounce it. This passage is therefore conclusive proof that Christ is equal with the Father.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:

Some honour was done to Christ by these rulers: for they believed on him, were convinced that he was sent of God, and received his doctrine as divine; but they did not do him honour enough, for they had not courage to own their faith in him. Many professed more kindness for Christ than really they had; these had more kindness for him than they were willing to profess. See here what a struggle was in these rulers between their convictions and their corruptions.

See the power of the word in the convictions that many of them were under, who did not wilfully shut their eyes against the light. They believed on him as Nicodemus, received him as a teacher come from God. Note, The truth of the gospel has perhaps a better interest in the consciences of men than we are aware of. Many cannot but approve of that in their hearts which yet outwardly they are shy of. Perhaps these chief rulers were true believers, though very weak, and their faith like smoking flax. Note, It may be, there are more good people than we think there are. Elijah thought he was left alone, when God had seven thousand faithful worshippers in Israel. Some are really better than they seem to be. Their faults are known,

but their repentance is not; a man's goodness may be concealed by a culpable yet pardonable weakness, which he himself truly repents of. The kingdom of God comes not in all with a like observation; nor have all who are good the same faculty of appearing to be so.

43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

See the power of the world in the smothering of these convictions. They believed in Christ, but because of the Pharisees, who had it in their power to do them a diskindness, they durst not confess him for fear of being excommunicated. Observe here,

1. Wherein they failed and were defective; They did not confess Christ. Note, There is cause to question the sincerity of that faith which is either afraid or ashamed to show itself; for those who believe with the heart ought to confess with the mouth, Ro 10:9.

2. What they feared: being put out of the synagogue, which they thought would be a disgrace and damage to them; as if it would do them any harm to be expelled from a synagogue that had made itself a synagogue of Satan, and from which God was departing.

3. What was at the bottom of this fear: They loved the praise of men, chose it as a more valuable good, and pursued it as a more desirable end, than the praise of God; which was an implicit idolatry, like that (Ro 1:25) of worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. They set these two in the scale one against the other, and, having weighed them, they proceeded accordingly.

(a.) They set the praise of men in one scale, and considered how good it was to give praise to men, and to pay a deference to the opinion of the Pharisees, and receive praise from men, to be commended by the chief priests and applauded by the people as good sons of the church, the Jewish church; and they would not confess Christ, lest they should thereby derogate from the reputation of the Pharisees, and forfeit their own, and thus hinder their own preferment. And, besides, the followers of Christ were put into an ill name, and were looked upon with contempt, which those who had been used to honour could not bear. Yet perhaps if they had known one another's minds they would have had more courage; but each

one thought that if he should declare himself in favour of Christ he should stand alone, and have nobody to back him; whereas, if any one had had resolution to break the ice, he would have had more seconds than he thought of.

(b.) They put the praise of God in the other scale. They were sensible that by confessing Christ they should both give praise to God, and have praise from God, that he would be pleased with them, and say, Well done; but,

(c.) They gave the preference to the praise of men, and this turned the scale; sense prevailed above faith, and represented it as more desirable to stand right in the opinion of the Pharisees than to be accepted of God. Note, Love of the praise of men is a very great prejudice to the power and practice of religion and godliness. Many come short of the glory of God by having a regard to the applause of men, and a value for that. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that which is evil, will make a man an apostate when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it, as here. See Ro 2:29.

The Judgment of Jesus' Word

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

We have here the honour Christ not assumed, but asserted, to himself, in the account he gave of his mission and his errand into the world. Probably this discourse was not at the same time with that before (for them he departed, Joh 12:36), but some time after, when he made another public appearance; and, as this evangelist records it, it was Christ's farewell sermon to the Jews, and his last public discourse; all that follows was private with his disciples. Now observe how our Lord Jesus delivered this parting word: he cried and said. Doth not wisdom cry (Pr 8:1), cry without? Pr 1:20. The raising of his voice and crying intimate,

1. His boldness in speaking. Though they had not courage openly to profess faith in his doctrine, he had courage openly to publish it; if they were ashamed of it, he was not, but set his face as a flint, Isa 50:7.

2. His earnestness in speaking. He cried as one that was serious and importunate, and in good earnest in what he said, and was willing to impart to them, not only the gospel of God, but even his own soul. 3. It denotes his desire that all might take notice of it. This being the last time of the publication of his gospel by himself in person, he makes proclamation, "Whoever will hear me, let them come now." Now what is the conclusion of the whole matter, this closing summary of all Christ's discourses? It is much like that of Moses (De 30:15): See, I have set before you life and death. So Christ here takes leave of the temple, with a solemn declaration of three things:--

The privileges and dignities of those that believe; this gives great encouragement to us to believe in Christ and to profess that faith. It is a thing of such a nature that we need not be shy either of doing it or of owning it; for,

1. By believing in Christ we are brought into an honourable acquaintance with God (Joh 12:44,45): He that believes on me, and so sees me, believes on him that sent me, and so sees him. He that believes on Christ,

(a.) He does not believe in a mere man, such a one as he seemed to be, and was generally taken to be, but he believes in one that is the Son of God and equal in power and glory with the Father. Or rather,

(b.) His faith does not terminate in Christ, but through him it is carried out to the Father, that sent him, to whom, as our end, we come by Christ as our way. The doctrine of Christ is believed and received as the truth of God. The rest of a believing soul is in God through Christ as Mediator; for its resignation to Christ is in order to being presented to God. Christianity is made up, not of philosophy nor politics, but pure divinity. This is illustrated, Joh 12:45. He that sees me (which is the same with believing

in him, for faith is the eye of the soul) sees him that sent me; in getting an acquaintance with Christ, we come to the knowledge of God. For,

[1.] God makes himself known in the face of Christ (2Co 4:6), who is the express image of his person, Heb 1:3.

[2.] All that have a believing sight of Christ are led by him to the knowledge of God, whom Christ has revealed to us by his word and Spirit. Christ, as God, was the image of his Father's person; but Christ, as Mediator, was his Father's representative in his relation to man, the divine light, law, and love, being communicated to us in and through him; so that in seeing him (that is, in eying him as our Saviour, Prince, and Lord, in the right of redemption), we see and eye the Father as our owner, ruler, and benefactor, in the right of creation: for God is pleased to deal with fallen man by proxy.

45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

We are hereby brought into a comfortable enjoyment of ourselves (Joh 12:46): I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in me, Jew or Gentile, should not abide in darkness. Observe,

(a.) The character of Christ: I am come a light into the world, to be a light to it. This implies that he had a being, and a being as light, before he came into the world, as the sun is before it rises; the prophets and apostles were made lights to the world, but it was Christ only that came a light into this world, having before been a glorious light in the upper world, Joh 3:19.

(b.) The comfort of Christians: They do not abide in darkness.

[1.] They do not continue in that dark condition in which they were by nature; they are light in the Lord. They are without any true comfort, or joy, or hope, but do not continue in that condition; light is sown for them.

[2.] Whatever darkness of affliction, disquietment, or fear, they may afterwards be in, provision is made that they may not long abide in it. [3.]

They are delivered from that darkness which is perpetual, and which abideth for ever, that utter darkness where there is not the least gleam of light nor hope of it.

47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

The peril and danger of those that believe not, which gives fair warning to take heed of persisting in unbelief (Joh 12:47,48): "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not, not I only, or not now, lest I should be looked upon as unfair in being judge in my own cause; yet let not infidelity think therefore to go unpunished, though I judge him not, there is one that judgeth him." So that we have here the doom of unbelief. Observe,

1. Who they are whose unbelief is here condemned: those who hear Christ's words and yet believe them not. Those shall not be condemned for their infidelity that never had, nor could have, the gospel; every man shall be judged according to the dispensation of light he was under: Those that have sinned without law shall be judged without law. But those that have heard, or might have heard, and would not, lie open to this doom.

2. What is the constructive malignity of their unbelief: not receiving Christ's word; it is interpreted (Joh 12:48) a rejecting of Christ, ho atheton eme. It denotes a rejection with scorn and contempt. Where the banner of the gospel is displayed, no neutrality is admitted; every man is either a subject or an enemy.

3. The wonderful patience and forbearance of our Lord Jesus, exercised towards those who slighted him when he was come here upon earth: I judge him not, not now. Note, Christ was not quick or hasty to take advantage against those who refused the first offers of his grace, but continued waiting to be gracious. He did not strike those dumb or dead who contradicted him, never made intercession against Israel, as Elias did; though he had authority to judge, he suspended the execution of it, because he had work of another nature to do first, and that was to save the world.

(a.) To save effectually those that were given him before he came to judge the degenerate body of mankind.

(b.) To offer salvation to all the world, and thus far to save them that it is their own fault if they be not saved. He was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now the executing of the power of a judge was not congruous with that undertaking, Ac 8:33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, it was suspended for a time.

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

The certain and unavoidable judgment of unbelievers at the great day, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God: unbelief will certainly be a damning sin. Some think when Christ saith, I judge no man, he means that they are condemned already. There needs no process, they are self-judged; no execution, they are self-ruined; judgment goes against them of course, Heb 2:3. Christ needs not appear against them as their accuser, they are miserable if he do not appear for them as their advocate; however, he tells them plainly when and where they will be reckoned with.

(a.) There is one that judgeth them. Nothing is more dreadful than abused patience, and grace trampled on; though for awhile mercy rejoiceth against judgment, yet there will be judgment without mercy.

(b.) Their final judgment is reserved to the last day; to that day of judgment Christ here binds over all unbelievers, to answer then for all the contempts they have put upon him. Divine justice has appointed a day, and adjourns the sentence to that day, as Mt 26:64.

(c.) The word of Christ will judge them then: The words that I have spoken, how light soever you have made of them, the same shall judge the unbeliever in the last day; as the apostles, the preachers of Christ's word, are said to judge, Lu 22:30. Christ's words will judge unbelievers two ways:--

[1.] As the evidence of their crime, they will convict them. Every word Christ spoke, every sermon, every argument, every kind offer, will be produced as a testimony against those who slighted all he said.

[2.] As the rule of their doom, they will condemn them; they shall be judged according to the tenour of that covenant which Christ procured and published. That word of Christ, He that believes not shall be damned, will judge all unbelievers to eternal ruin; and there are many such like words.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

The commission which our Lord Jesus received from the Father to deliver his doctrine to the world (Joh 12:49): I have not spoken myself, as a mere man, much less as a common man; but the Father gave me a commandment what I should say. This is the same with what he said Joh 7:16. My doctrine is,

(a.) Not mine, for I have not spoken of myself. Christ, as Son of man, did not speak that which was of human contrivance or composure; as Son of God, he did not act separately, or by himself alone, but what he said was the result of the counsels of peace; as Mediator, his coming into the world was voluntary, and with his full consent, but not arbitrary, and of his own head. But,

(b.) It was his that sent him. God the Father gave him,

[1.] His commission. God sent him as his agent and plenipotentiary, to concert matters between him and man, to set a treaty of peace on foot, and to settle the articles.

[2.] His instructions, here called a commandment, for they were like those given to an ambassador, directing him not only what he may say, but what he must say. The messenger of the covenant was entrusted with an errand which he must deliver.

Note, Our Lord Jesus learned obedience himself, before he taught it to us, though he was a Son. The Lord God commanded the first Adam, and he

by his disobedience ruined us; he commanded the second Adam, and he by his obedience saved us. God commanded him what he should say and what he should speak, two words signifying the same thing, to denote that every word was divine.

The Old-Testament prophets sometimes spoke of themselves; but Christ spoke by the Spirit at all times. Some make this distinction: He was directed what he should say in his set sermons, and what he should speak in his familiar discourses. Others this: He was directed what he should say in his preaching now, and what he should speak in his judging at the last day; for he had commission and instruction for both.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

1. The scope, design, and tendency of this commission: I know that his commandment is life everlasting, Joh 12:50. The commission given to Christ had a reference to the everlasting state of the children of men, and was in order to their everlasting life and happiness in that state: the instructions given to Christ as a prophet were to reveal eternal life (1Jo 5:11); the power, given to Christ as a king was to give eternal life, Joh 17:2. Thus the command given him was life everlasting. This Christ says he knew: "I know it is so," which intimates how cheerfully and with what assurance Christ pursued his undertaking, knowing very well that he went upon a good errand, and that which would bring forth fruit unto life eternal. It intimates likewise how justly those will perish who reject Christ and his word. Those who disobey Christ despise everlasting life, and renounce it; so that not only Christ's words will judge them, but even their own; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it; and who can except against it?

2. Christ's exact observance of the commission and instructions given him, and his steady acting in pursuance of them: Whatsoever I speak, it is as the Father said unto me. Christ was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God, and was faithful in discovering so much of them to the children of men as it was agreed should be discovered, and kept back nothing that was profitable. As the faithful witness delivers souls, so did he, and spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Note,

(a.) This is a great encouragement to faith; the sayings of Christ, rightly understood, are what we may venture our souls upon.

(b.) It is a great example of obedience. Christ said as he was bidden, and so must we, communicated what the Father had said to him, and so must we. See Ac 4:20. In the midst of all the respect paid to him, this is the honour he values himself upon, that what the Father had said to him that he spoke, and in the manner as he was directed so he spoke. This was his glory, that, as a Son, he was faithful to him that appointed him; and, by an unfeigned belief of every word of Christ, and an entire subjection of soul to it, we must give him the glory due to his name.

John-13

Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet

In Joh 13:1-17 we have the story of Christ's washing his disciples' feet; it was an action of a singular nature; no miracle, unless we call it a miracle of humility. Mary had just anointed his head; now, lest his acceptance of this should look like taking state, he presently balances it with this act of abasement. But why would Christ do this? If the disciples' feet needed washing, they could wash them themselves; a wise man will not do a thing that looks odd and unusual, but for very good causes and considerations. We are sure that it was not in a humour or a frolic that this was done; no, the transaction was very solemn, and carried on with a great deal of seriousness; and four reasons are here intimated why Christ did this:--

1. That he might testify his love to his disciples, Joh 13:1,2.

2. That he might give an instance of his own voluntary humility and condescension, Joh 13:3-5.

3. That he might signify to them spiritual washing, which is referred to in his discourse with Peter, Joh 13:6-11.

4. That he might set them an example, Joh 13:12-17. And the opening of these four reasons will take in the exposition of the whole story.

1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might give a proof of that great love wherewith he loved them; loved them to the end, Joh 13:1,2.

1. It is here laid down as an undoubted truth that our Lord Jesus, having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end, Joh 13:1.

(a) This is true of the disciples that were his immediate followers, in particular the twelve. These were his own in the world, his family, his school, his bosom-friends. Children he had none to call his own, but he adopted them, and took them as his own. He had those that were his own in the other world, but he left them for a time, to look after his own in this world. These he loved, he called them into fellowship with himself, conversed familiarly with them, was always tender of them, and of their comfort and reputation. He allowed them to be very free with him, and bore with their infirmities. He loved them to the end, continued his love to them as long as he lived, and after his resurrection; he never took away his loving kindness. Though there were some persons of quality that espoused his cause, he did not lay aside his old friends, to make room for new ones, but still stuck to his poor fishermen. They were weak and defective in knowledge and grace, dull and forgetful; and yet, though he reproved them often, he never ceased to love them and take care of them.

(b) It is true of all believers, for these twelve patriarchs were the representatives of all the tribes of God's spiritual Israel. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus has a people in the world that are his own,--his own, for they were given him by the Father, he has purchased them, and paid dearly for them, and he has set them apart for himself,--his own, for they have devoted themselves to him as a peculiar people. His own; where his own were spoken of that received him not, it is tous idious--his own persons, as a man's wife and children are his own, to whom he stands in a constant relation.

[2.] Christ has a cordial love for his own that are in the world. He did love them with a love of goodwill when he gave himself for their redemption. He does love them with a love of complacency when he admits them into communion with himself. Though they are in this world, a world of darkness and distance, of sin and corruption, yet he loves them. He was now going to his own in heaven, the spirits of just men made perfect there; but he seems most concerned for his own on earth, because they most needed his care: the sickly child is most indulged.

[3.] Those whom Christ loves he loves to the end; he is constant in his love to his people; he rests in his love. He loves with an everlasting love (Jer 31:3), from everlasting in the counsels of it to everlasting in the consequences of it. Nothing can separate a believer from the love of Christ; he loves his own, eis telos--unto perfection, for he will perfect what concerns them, will bring them to that world where love is perfect.

2. Christ manifested his love to them by washing their feet, as that good woman (Lu 7:38) showed her love to Christ by washing his feet and wiping them. Thus he would show that as his love to them was constant so it was condescending,-- that in prosecution of the designs of it he was willing to humble himself,--and that the glories of his exalted state, which he was now entering upon, should be no obstruction at all to the favour he bore to his chosen; and thus he would confirm the promise he had made to all the saints that he would make them sit down to meat, and would come forth and serve them (Lu 12:37), would put honour upon them as great and surprising as for a lord to serve his servants. The disciples had just now betrayed the weakness of their love to him, in grudging the ointment that was poured upon his head (Mt 26:8), yet he presently gives this proof of

his love to them. Our infirmities are foils to Christ's kindnesses, and set them off.

3. He chose this time to do it, a little before his last passover, for two reasons:--

Because now he knew that his hour was come, which he had long expected, when he should depart out of this world to the Father. Observe here,

[1.] The change that was to pass over our Lord Jesus; he must depart. This began at his death, but was completed at his ascension. As Christ himself, so all believers, by virtue of their union with him, when they depart out of the world, are absent from the body, go to the Father, are present with the Lord. It is a departure out of the world, this unkind, injurious world, this faithless, treacherous world--this world of labour, toil, and temptation--this vale of tears; and it is a going to the Father, to the vision of the Father of spirits, and the fruition of him as ours.

[2.] The time of this change: His hour was come. It is sometimes called his enemies' hour (Lu 22:53), the hour of their triumph; sometimes his hour, the hour of his triumph, the hour he had had in his eye all along. The time of his sufferings was fixed to an hour, and the continuance of them but for an hour.

[3.] His foresight of it: He knew that his hour was come; he knew from the beginning that it would come, and when, but now he knew that it was come. We know not when our hour will come, and therefore what we have to do in habitual preparation for it ought never to be undone; but, when we know by the harbingers that our hour is come, we must vigorously apply ourselves to an actual preparation, as our Master did, 2Pe 3:14. Now it was in the immediate foresight of his departure that he washed his disciples' feet; that, as his own head was anointed just now against the day of his burial, so their feet might be washed against the day of their consecration by the descent of the Holy Ghost fifty days after, as the priests were washed, Le 8:6. When we see our day approaching, we should do what good we can to those we leave behind.

2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of

Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him;

Because the devil had now put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, Joh 13:2. These words in a parenthesis may be considered,

[1.] As tracing Judas's treason to its origin; it was a sin of such a nature that it evidently bore the devil's image and superscription. What way of access the devil has to men's hearts, and by what methods he darts in his suggestions, and mingles them undiscerned with those thoughts which are the natives of the heart, we cannot tell. But there are some sins in their own nature so exceedingly sinful, and to which there is so little temptation from the world and the flesh, that it is plain Satan lays the egg of them in a heart disposed to be the nest to hatch them in. For Judas to betray such a master, to betray him so cheaply and upon no provocation, was such downright enmity to God as could not be forged but by Satan himself, who thereby thought to ruin the Redeemer's kingdom, but did in fact ruin his own.

[2.] As intimating a reason why Christ now washed his disciples' feet.

First, Judas being now resolved to betray him, the time of his departure could not be far off; if this matter be determined, it is easy to infer with St. Paul, I am now ready to be offered. Note, The more malicious we perceive our enemies to be against us, the more industrious we should be to prepare for the worst that may come.

Secondly, Judas being now got into the snare, and the devil aiming at Peter and the rest of them (Lu 22:31), Christ would fortify his own against him. If the wolf has seized one of the flock, it is time for the shepherd to look well to the rest. Antidotes must be stirring, when the infection is begun. Dr. Lightfoot observes that the disciples had learned of Judas to murmur at the anointing of Christ; compare Joh 12:4,Mt 26:8. Now, lest those that had learned that of him should learn worse, he fortifies them by a lesson of humility against his most dangerous assaults. Thirdly, Judas, who was now plotting to betray him, was one of the twelve. Now Christ would hereby show that he did not design to cast them all off for the faults of one. Though one of their college had a devil, and was a traitor, yet they should fare never the worse for that. Christ loves his church though there are

hypocrites in it, and had still a kindness for his disciples though there was a Judas among them and he knew it.

3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

Christ washed his disciples' feet that he might give an instance of his own wonderful humility, and show how lowly and condescending he was, and let all the world know how low he could stoop in love to his own. This is intimated, Joh 13:3-5. Jesus knowing, and now actually considering, and perhaps discoursing of, his honours as Mediator, and telling his friends that the Father had given all things into his hand, rises from supper, and, to the great surprise of the company, who wondered what he was going to do, washed his disciples' feet.

Here is the rightful advancement of the Lord Jesus. Glorious things are here said of Christ as Mediator.

(a.) The Father had given all things into his hands; had given him a propriety in all, and a power over all, as possessor of heaven and earth, in pursuance of the great designs of his undertaking; see Mt 11:27. The accommodation and arbitration of all matters in variance between God and man were committed into his hands as the great umpire and referee; and the administration of the kingdom of God among men, in all the branches of it, was committed to him; so that all acts, both of government and judgment, were to pass through his hands; he is heir of all things.

(b.) He came from God. This implies that he was in the beginning with God, and had a being and glory, not only before he was born into this world, but before the world itself was born; and that when he came into the world he came as God's ambassador, with a commission from him. He came from God as the son of God, and the sent of God. The Old-Testament prophets were raised up and employed for God, but Christ came directly from him.

(c.) He went to God, to be glorified with him with the same glory which he had with God from eternity. That which comes from God shall go to God; those that are born from heaven are bound for heaven. As Christ came from God to be an agent for him on earth, so he went to God to be an agent

for us in heaven; and it is a comfort to us to think how welcome he was there: he was brought near to the Ancient of days, Da 7:13. And it was said to him, Sit thou at my right hand, Ps 110:1.

(d.) He knew all this; was not like a prince in the cradle, that knows nothing of the honour he is born to, or like Moses, who wist not that his face shone; no, he had a full view of all the honours of his exalted state, and yet stooped thus low. But how does this come in here?

[1.] As an inducement to him now quickly to leave what lessons and legacies he had to leave to his disciples, because his hour was now come when he must take his leave of them, and be exalted above that familiar converse which he now had with them, Joh 13:1.

[2.] It may come in as that which supported him under his sufferings, and carried him cheerfully through this sharp encounter. Judas was now betraying him, and he knew it, and knew what would be the consequence of it; yet, knowing also that he came from God and went to God, he did not draw back, but went on cheerfully.

[3.] It seems to come in as a foil to his condescension, to make it the more admirable. The reasons of divine grace are sometimes represented in scripture as strange and surprising (as Isa 57:17,18,Ho 2:13,14); so here, that is given as an inducement to Christ to stoop which should rather have been a reason for his taking state; for God's thoughts are not as ours. Compare with this those passages which preface the most signal instances of condescending grace with the displays of divine glory, as Ps 68:4,5,Isa 57:15,66:1,2.

4 he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Here is the voluntary abasement of our Lord Jesus notwithstanding this. Jesus knowing his own glory as God, and his own authority and power as Mediator, one would think it should follow, He rises from supper, lays

aside his ordinary garments, calls for robes, bids them keep their distance, and do him homage; but no, quite the contrary, when he considered this he gave the greatest instance of humility. Note, A well-grounded assurance of heaven and happiness, instead of puffing a man up with pride, will make and keep him very humble. Those that would be found conformable to Christ, and partakers of his Spirit, must study to keep their minds low in the midst of the greatest advancements. Now that which Christ humbled himself to was to wash his disciples' feet.

(a.) The action itself was mean and servile, and that which servants of the lowest rank were employed in. Let thine handmaid (saith Abigail) be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord; let me be in the meanest employment, 1Sa 25:41. If he had washed their hands or faces, it had been great condescension (Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah, 2Ki 3:11); but for Christ to stoop to such a piece of drudgery as this may well excite our admiration. Thus he would teach us to think nothing below us wherein we may be serviceable to God's glory and the good of our brethren.

(b.) The condescension was so much the greater that he did this for his own disciples, who in themselves were of a low and despicable condition, not curious about their bodies; their feet, it is likely, were seldom washed, and therefore very dirty. In relation to him, they were his scholars, his servants, and such as should have washed his feet, whose dependence was upon him, and their expectations from him. Many of great spirits otherwise will do a mean thing to curry favour with their superiors; they rise by stooping, and climb by cringing; but for Christ to do this to his disciples could be no act of policy nor complaisance, but pure humility.

(c.) He rose from supper to do it. Though we translate it (Joh 13:2) supper being ended, it might be better read, there being a supper made, or he being at supper, for he sat down again (Joh 13:12), and we find him dipping a sop (Joh 13:26), so that he did it in the midst of his meal, and thereby taught us, [1.] Not to reckon it a disturbance, nor any just cause of uneasiness, to be called from our meal to do God or our brother any real service, esteeming the discharge of our duty more than our necessary food, Joh 4:34. Christ would not leave his preaching to oblige his nearest relations

(Mk 3:33), but would leave his supper to show his love to his disciples. [2.] Not to be over nice about our meat. It would have turned many a squeamish stomach to wash dirty feet at supper-time; but Christ did it, not that we might learn to be rude and slovenly (cleanliness and godliness will do well together), but to teach us not to be curious, not to indulge, but mortify, the delicacy of the appetite, giving good manners their due place, and no more.

(d.) He put himself into the garb of a servant, to do it: he laid aside his loose and upper garments, that he might apply himself to this service the more expeditely. We must address ourselves to duty as those that are resolved not to take state, but to take pains; we must divest ourselves of every thing that would either feed our pride or hang in our way and hinder us in what we have to do, must gird up the loins of our mind, as those that in earnest buckle to business.

(e.) He did it with all the humble ceremony that could be, went through all the parts of the service distinctly, and passed by none of them; he did it as if he had been used thus to serve; did it himself alone, and had none to minister to him in it. He girded himself with the towel, as servants throw a napkin on their arm, or put an apron before them; he poured water into the basin out of the water-pots that stood by (Joh 2:6), and then washed their feet; and, to complete the service, wiped them. Some think that he did not wash the feet of them all, but only four or five of them, that being thought sufficient to answer the end; but I see nothing to countenance this conjecture, for in other places where he did make a difference it is taken notice of; and his washing the feet of them all, without exception, teaches us a catholic and extensive charity to all Christ's disciples, even the least.

(f.) Nothing appears to the contrary but that he washed the feet of Judas among the rest, for he was present, Joh 13:26. It is the character of a widow indeed that she had washed the saints' feet (1Ti 5:10), and there is some comfort in this; but the blessed Jesus here washed the feet of a sinner, the worst of sinners, the worst to him, who was at this time contriving to betray him.

Many interpreters consider Christ's washing his disciples' feet as a representation of his whole undertaking. He knew that he was equal with God, and all things were his; and yet he rose from his table in glory, laid aside his robes of light, girded himself with our nature, took upon him the form of a servant, came not to be ministered to, but to minister, poured out his blood, poured out his soul unto death, and thereby prepared a laver to wash us from our sins, Re 1:5.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

The surprise Peter was in when he saw his Master go about this mean service (Joh 13:6): Then cometh he to Simon Peter, with his towel and basin, and bids him put out his feet to be washed. Chrysostom conjectures that he first washed the feet of Judas, who readily admitted the honour, and was pleased to see his Master so disparage himself. It is most probable that when he went about this service (which is all that is meant by his beginning to wash, Joh 13:5) he took Peter first, and that the rest would not have suffered it, if they had not first heard it explained in what passed between Christ and Peter. Whether Christ came first to Peter or no, when he did come to him, Peter was startled at the proposal: Lord (saith he) dost thou wash my feet? Here is an emphasis to be laid upon the persons, thou and me; and the placing of the words is observable, sy mou--what, thou mine? Tu mihi lavas pedes? Quid est tu? Quid est mihi? Cogitanda sunt potius quam dicenda--Dost thou wash my feet? What is it thou? What to me? These things are rather to be contemplated than uttered.--Aug. in loc. What thou, our Lord and Master, whom we know and believe to be the Son of God, and Saviour and ruler of the world, do this for me, a worthless worm of the earth, a sinful man, O Lord? Shall those hands wash my feet which with a touch have cleansed lepers, given sight to the blind, and raised the dead? So Theophylact, and from him Dr. Taylor. Very willingly would Peter have taken the basin and towel, and washed his Master's feet, and been proud of the honour, Lu 17:7,8. "This had been natural and regular; for my Master to wash my feet is such a solecism as never was; such a paradox as I cannot understand. Is this the manner of men?" Note, Christ's condescensions, especially his condescensions to us, wherein we find ourselves taken notice of by his grace, are justly the matter of our admiration, Joh 14:22. Who am I, Lord God? And what is my father's house?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

The immediate satisfaction Christ gave to this question of surprise. This was at least sufficient to silence his objections (Joh 13:7): What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Here are two reasons why Peter must submit to what Christ was doing:--

(a.) Because he was at present in the dark concerning it, and ought not to oppose what he did not understand, but acquiesce in the will and wisdom of one who could give a good reason for all he said and did. Christ would teach Peter an implicit obedience: "What I do thou knowest not now, and therefore art no competent judge of it, but must believe it is well done because I do it." Note, Consciousness to ourselves of the darkness we labour under, and our inability to judge of what God does, should make us sparing and modest in our censures of his proceedings; see Heb 11:8.

(b.) Because there was something considerable in it, of which he should hereafter know the meaning: "Thou shalt know hereafter what need thou hast of being washed, when thou shalt be guilty of the heinous sin of denying me;" so some. "Thou shalt know, when, in the discharge of the office of an apostle, thou wilt be employed in washing off from those under thy charge the sins and defilements of their earthly affections;" so Dr. Hammond. Note,

[1.] Our Lord Jesus does many things the meaning of which even his own disciples do not for the present know, but they shall know afterwards. What he did when he became man for us and what he did when he became a worm and no man for us, what he did when he lived our life and what he did when he laid it down, could not be understood till afterwards, and then it appeared that it behoved him, Heb 2:17. Subsequent providences explain preceding ones; and we see afterwards what was the kind tendency of events that seemed most cross; and the way which we thought was about proved the right way.

[2.] Christ's washing his disciples' feet had a significancy in it, which they themselves did not understand till afterwards, when Christ explained it to be a specimen of the laver of regeneration, and till the Spirit was poured

out upon them from on high. We must let Christ take his own way, both in ordinances and providences, and we shall find in the issue it was the best way.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

1. Peter's peremptory refusal, notwithstanding this, to let Christ wash his feet (Joh 13:8): Thou shalt by no means wash my feet; no, never. So it is in the original. It is the language of a fixed resolution. Now,

(a.) Here was a show of humility and modesty. Peter herein seemed to have, and no doubt he really had, a great respect for his Master, as he had, Lu 5:8. Thus many are beguiled of their reward in a voluntary humility (Col 2:18,23), such a self-denial as Christ neither appoints nor accepts; for,

(b.) Under this show of humility there was a real contradiction to the will of the Lord Jesus: "I will wash thy feet," saith Christ; "But thou never shalt," saith Peter, "it is not a fitting thing;" so making himself wiser than Christ. It is not humility, but infidelity, to put away the offers of the gospel, as if too rich to be made to us or too good news to be true.

2. Christ's insisting upon his offer, and a good reason given to Peter why he should accept it: If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. This may be taken,

(a.) As a severe caution against disobedience: "If I wash thee not, if thou continue refractory, and wilt not comply with thy Master's will in so small a matter, thou shalt not be owned as one of my disciples, but be justly discarded and cashiered for not observing orders." Thus several of the ancients understand it; if Peter will make himself wiser than his Master, and dispute the commands he ought to obey, he does in effect renounce his allegiance, and say, as they did, What portion have we in David, in the Son of David? And so shall his doom be, he shall have no part in him. Let him use no more manners than will do him good, for to obey is better than sacrifice, 1Sa 15:22. Or,

(b.) As a declaration of the necessity of spiritual washing; and so I think it is to be understood: "If I wash not thy soul from the pollution of sin, thou hast no part with me, no interest in me, no communion with me, no benefit by me." Note, All those, and those only, that are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ.

[1.] To have a part in Christ, or with Christ, has all the happiness of a Christian bound up in it, to be partakers of Christ (Heb 3:14), to share in those inestimable privileges which result from a union with him and relation to him. It is that good part the having of which is the one thing needful.

[2.] It is necessary to our having a part in Christ that he wash us. All those whom Christ owns and saves he justifies and sanctifies, and both are included in his washing them. We cannot partake of his glory if we partake not of his merit and righteousness, and of his Spirit and grace.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

Peter's more than submission, his earnest request, to be washed by Christ, Joh 13:9. If this be the meaning of it, Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. How soon is Peter's mind changed! When the mistake of his understanding was rectified, the corrupt resolution of his will was soon altered. Let us therefore not be peremptory in any resolve (except in our resolve to follow Christ), because we may soon see cause to retract it, but cautious in taking up a purpose we will be tenacious of. Observe,

(a.) How ready Peter is to recede from what he had said: "Lord, what a fool was I to speak such a hasty word!" Now that the washing of him appeared to be an act of Christ's authority and grace he admits it; but disliked when it seemed only an act of humiliation. Note,

[1.] Good men, when they see their error, will not be loth to recant it.

[2.] Sooner or later, Christ will bring all to be of his mind.

(b.) How importunate he is for the purifying grace of the Lord Jesus, and the universal influence of it, even upon his hands and head. Note, A divorce from Christ, and an exclusion from having a part in him, is the most formidable evil in the eyes of all that are enlightened, for the fear of which they will be persuaded to any thing. And for fear of this we should be earnest with God in prayer, that he will wash us, will justify and sanctify us. "Lord, that I may not be cut off from thee, make me fit for thee, by the washing of regeneration. Lord, wash not my feet only from the gross pollutions that cleave to them, but also my hands and my head from the spots which they have contracted, and the undiscerned filth which proceeds by perspiration from the body itself." Note, Those who truly desire to be sanctified desire to be sanctified throughout, and to have the whole man, with all its parts and powers, purified, 1Th 5:23.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

With reference to his disciples that were faithful to him (Joh 13:10): He that is washed all over in the bath (as was frequently practised in those countries), when he returns to his house, needeth not save to wash his feet, his hands and head having been washed, and he having only dirtied his feet in walking home. Peter had gone from one extreme to the other. At first he would not let Christ wash his feet; and now he overlooks what Christ had done for him in his baptism, and what was signified thereby, and cries out to have his hands and head washed. Now Christ directs him into the meaning; he must have his feet washed, but not his hands and head.

[1.] See here what is the comfort and privilege of such as are in a justified state; they are washed by Christ, and are clean every whit, that is, they are graciously accepted of God, as if they were so; and, though they offend, yet they need not, upon their repentance, be again put into a justified state, for then should they often be baptized. The evidence of a justified state may be clouded, and the comfort of it suspended, when yet the charter of it is not vacated or taken away. Though we have occasion to repent daily, God's gifts and callings are without repentance. The heart may be swept and garnished, and yet still remain the devil's palace; but, if it be washed, it belongs to Christ, and he will not lose it.

[2.] See what ought to be the daily care of those who through grace are in a justified state, and that is to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from the guilt they contract daily through infirmity and inadvertence, by the renewed exercise of repentance, with a believing application of the virtue of Christ's blood. We must also wash our feet by constant watchfulness against every thing that is defiling, for we must cleanse our way, and cleanse our feet by taking heed thereto, Ps 119:9. The priests, when they were consecrated, were washed with water; and, though they did not need afterwards to be so washed all over, yet, whenever they went in to minister, they must wash their feet and hands at the laver, on pain of death, Ex 30:19,20. The provision made for our cleansing should not make us presumptuous, but the more cautious. I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? From yesterday's pardon, we should fetch an argument against this day's temptation.

With reflection upon Judas: And you are clean, but not all, Joh 13:10,11. He pronounces his disciples clean, clean through the word he had spoken to them, Joh 15:3. He washed them himself, and then said, You are clean; but he excepts Judas: not all; they were all baptized, even Judas, yet not all clean; many have the sign that have not the thing signified. Note,

[1.] Even among those who are called disciples of Christ, and profess relation to him, there are some who are not clean, Pr 30:12.

[2.] The Lord knows those that are his, and those that are not, 2Ti 2:19. The eye of Christ can separate between the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean.

[3.] When those that have called themselves disciples afterwards prove traitors, their apostasy at last is a certain evidence of their hypocrisy all along. [4.] Christ sees it necessary to let his disciples know that they are not all clean; that we may all be jealous over ourselves (Is it I? Lord, is it I that am among the clean, yet not clean?) and that, when hypocrites are discovered, it may be no surprise nor stumbling to us.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

12 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you ?

With what solemnity he gave an account of the meaning of what he had done (Joh 13:12): After he had washed their feet, he said, Know you what I have done?

(a.) He adjourned the explication till he had finished the transaction,

[1.] To try their submission and implicit obedience. What he did they should not know till afterwards, that they might learn to acquiesce in his will when they could not give a reason for it.

[2.] Because it was proper to finish the riddle before he unriddled it. Thus, as to his whole undertaking, when his sufferings were finished, when he had resumed the garments of his exalted state and was ready to sit down again, then he opened the understandings of his disciples, and poured out his Spirit, Lu 24:45,46.

(b.) Before he explained it, he asked them if they could construe it: Know you what I have done to you? He put this question to them, not only to make them sensible of their ignorance, and the need they had to be instructed (as Zec 4:5,13, Knowest thou not what these be? and I said, No, my Lord), but to raise their desires and expectations of instruction: "I would have you know, and, if you will give attention, I will tell you." Note, It is the will of Christ that sacramental signs should be explained, and that his people should be acquainted with the meaning of them; otherwise, though ever so significant, to those who know not the thing signified they are insignificant. Hence they are directed to ask, What mean you by this service? Ex 12:26.

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

Upon what he grounds that which he had to say (Joh 13:13): "You call me Master and Lord, you give me those titles, in speaking of me, in speaking to me, and you say well, for so I am; you are in the relation of scholars to me, and I do the part of a master to you." Note,

(1.) Jesus Christ is our Master and Lord; he that is our Redeemer and Saviour is, in order to that, our Lord and Master. He is our Master, didaskalos--our teacher and instructor in all necessary truths and rules, as a prophet revealing to us the will of God. He is our Lord, kyrios--our ruler and owner, that has authority over us and propriety in us.

(2.) It becomes the disciples of Christ to call him Master and Lord, not in compliment, but in reality; not by constraint, but with delight. Devout Mr. Herbert, when he mentioned the name of Christ, used to add, my Master; and thus expresses himself concerning it in one of his poems:

How sweetly doth my Master sound, my Master! As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster, So do these words a sweet content, an oriental fragrancy, my Master.

(3.) Our calling Christ Master and Lord is an obligation upon us to receive and observe the instruction he gives us. Christ would thus pre-engage their obedience to a command that was displeasing to flesh and blood. If Christ be our Master and Lord, be so by our own consent, and we have often called him so, we are bound in honour and honesty to be observant of him.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.

The lesson which he hereby taught: You also ought to wash one another's feet, Joh 13:14.

(a.) Some have understood this literally, and have thought these words amount to the institution of a standing ordinance in the church; that Christians should, in a solemn religious manner, wash one another's feet, in token of their condescending love to one another. St. Ambrose took it so, and practised it in the church of Milan. St. Austin saith that those Christians who did not do it with their hands, yet (he hoped) did it with their hearts in humility; but he saith, It is much better to do it with the hands also, when there is occasion, as 1Ti 5:10. What Christ has done Christians should not disdain to do. Calvin saith that the pope, in the

annual observance of this ceremony on Thursday in the passion week, is rather Christ's ape than his follower, for the duty enjoined, in conformity to Christ, was mutual: Wash one another's feet. And Jansenius saith, It is done, Frigidè et dissimiliter--Frigidly, and unlike the primitive model.

(b.) But doubtless it is to be understood figuratively; it is an instructive sign, but not sacramental, as the eucharist. This was a parable to the eye; and three things our Master hereby designed to teach us:--

[1.] A humble condescension. We must learn of our Master to be lowly in heart (Mt 11:29), and walk with all lowliness; we must think meanly of ourselves and respectfully of our brethren, and deem nothing below us but sin; we must say of that which seems mean, but has a tendency to the glory of God and our brethren's good, as David (2Sa 6:22), If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile. Christ had often taught his disciples humility, and they had forgotten the lesson; but now he teaches them in such a way as surely they could never forget.

[2.] A condescension to be serviceable. To wash one another's feet is to stoop to the meanest offices of love, for the real good and benefit one of another, as blessed Paul, who, though free from all, made himself servant of all; and the blessed Jesus, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We must not grudge to take care and pains, and to spend time, and to diminish ourselves for the good of those to whom we are not under any particular obligations, even of our inferiors, and such as are not in a capacity of making us any requital. Washing the feet after travelling contributes both to the decency of the person and to his ease, so that to wash one another's feet is to consult both the credit and the comfort one of another, to do what we can both to advance our brethren's reputation and to make their minds easy. See 1Co 10:24,Heb 6:10. The duty is mutual; we must both accept help from our brethren and afford help to our brethren.

[3.] A serviceableness to the sanctification one of another: You ought to wash one another's feet, from the pollutions of sin. Austin takes it in this sense, and many others. We cannot satisfy for one another's sins, this is peculiar to Christ, but we may help to purify one another from sin. We

must in the first place wash ourselves; this charity must begin at home (Mt 7:5), but it must not end there; we must sorrow for the failings and follies of our brethren, much more for their gross pollutions (1Co 5:2), must wash our brethren's polluted feet in tears. We must faithfully reprove them, and do what we can to bring them to repentance (Ga 6:1), and we must admonish them, to prevent their falling into the mire; this is washing their feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you ought to learn of me (Joh 13:15); for in this, as in other things, I have given you an example, that you should do to others as I have done to you. Observe,

[1.] What a good teacher Christ is. He teaches by example as well as doctrine, and for this end came into this world, and dwelt among us, that he might set us a copy of all those graces and duties which his holy religion teaches; and it is a copy without one false stroke. Hereby he made his own laws more intelligible and honourable. Christ is a commander like Gideon, who said to his soldiers, Look on me, and do likewise (Jdg 7:17); like Abimelech, who said, What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done (Jdg 9:48);

[2.] What good scholars we must be. We must do as he hath done; for therefore he gave us a copy, that we should write after it, that we might be as he was in this world (1Jo 4:17), and walk as he walked, 1Jo 2:6. Christ's example here in is to be followed by ministers in particular, in whom the graces of humility and holy love should especially appear, and by the exercise thereof they effectually serve the interests of their Master and the ends of their ministry. When Christ sent his apostles abroad as his agents, it was with this charge, that they should not take state upon them, nor carry things with a high hand, but become all things to all men, 1Co 9:22. What I have done to your dirty feet that do you to the polluted souls of sinners; wash them. Some who suppose this to have been done at the passover supper think it intimates a rule in admitting communicants to the Lord's-supper, to see that they be first washed and cleansed by reformation and a blameless conversation, and then take them in to compass God's altar. But all Christians likewise are here taught to

condescend to each other in love, and to do it as Christ did it, unasked, unpaid; we must not be mercenary in the services of love, nor do them with reluctancy.

16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you cannot think it below you to do that, how mean soever it may seem, which you have seen me do, for (Joh 13:16) the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent, though sent with all the pomp and power of an ambassador, greater than he that sent him. Christ had urged this (Mt 10:24,25) as a reason why they should not think it strange if they suffered as he did; here he urges it as a reason why they should not think it much to humble themselves as he did. What he did not think a disparagement to him, they must not think a disparagement to them. Perhaps the disciples were inwardly disgusted at this precept of washing one another's feet, as inconsistent with the dignity they expected shortly to be preferred to. To obviate such thoughts, Christ reminds them of their place as his servants; they were not better men than their Master, and what was consistent with his dignity was much more consistent with theirs. If he was humble and condescending, it ill became them to be proud and assuming. Note,

[1.] We must take good heed to ourselves, lest Christ's gracious condescensions to us, and advancements of us, through the corruption of nature occasion us to entertain high thoughts of ourselves or low thoughts of him. We need to be put in mind of this, that we are not greater than our Lord.

[2.] Whatever our Master was pleased to condescend to in favour to us, we should much more condescend to in conformity to him. Christ, by humbling himself, has dignified humility, and put an honour upon it, and obliged his followers to think nothing below them but sin.

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

He gives them a reason why he told them beforehand of the treachery of Judas (Joh 13:19): "Now I tell you before it come, before Judas has begun to put his wicked plot in execution, that when it is come to pass you may, instead of stumbling at it, be confirmed in your belief that I am he, he that should come."

1. By his clear and certain foresight of things to come, of which in this, as in other instances, he gave incontestable proof, he proved himself to be the true God, before whom all things are naked and open. Christ foretold that Judas would betray him when there was no ground to suspect such a thing, and so proved himself the eternal Word, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The prophecies of the New Testament concerning the apostasy of the latter times (which we have, 2Th 2:1-17,1Ti 4:1-16, and in the Apocalypse) being evidently accomplished is a proof that those writings were divinely inspired, and confirms our faith in the whole canon of scripture.

2. By this application of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament to himself, he proved himself to be the true Messiah, to whom all the prophets bore witness. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and he suffered just as it was written, Lu 24:25,26,Joh 8:28.

We have here the discovery of Judas's plot to betray his Master. Christ knew it from the beginning; but now first he discovered it to his disciples, who did not expect Christ should be betrayed, though he had often told them so, much less did they suspect that one of them should do it. Now here,

Christ gives them a general intimation of it (Joh 13:18): I speak not of you all, I cannot expect you will all do these things, for I know whom I have chosen, and whom I have passed by; but the scripture will be fulfilled (Ps 41:9), He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. He does not yet speak out, either of the crime or the criminal, but raises their expectations of a further discovery.

1. He intimates to them that they were not all right. He had said (Joh 13:10), You are clean, but not all. So here, I speak not of you all. Note, What is said of the excellencies of Christ's disciples cannot be said of all that are called so. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, which separates between cattle and cattle, and will distinguish thousands into hell who flattered themselves with hopes that they were going to heaven. I speak not of you all; you my disciples and followers. Note, There is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies, a Judas among the apostles; it will be so till we come to the blessed society into which shall enter nothing unclean or disguised.

2. That he himself knew who were right, and who were not: I know whom I have chosen, who the few are that are chosen among the many that are called with the common call. Note,

(a.) Those that are chosen, Christ himself had the choosing of them; he nominated the persons he undertook for.

(b.) Those that are chosen are known to Christ, for he never forgets any whom he has once had in his thoughts of love, 2Ti 2:19.

3. That in the treachery of him that proved false to him the scripture was fulfilled, which takes off very much both the surprise and offence of the thing. Christ took one into his family whom he foresaw to be a traitor, and did not by effectual grace prevent his being so, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Let it not therefore be a stumbling-block to any; for, though it do not at all lessen Judas's offence, it may lessen our offence at it. The scripture referred to is David's complaint of the treachery of some of his enemies; the Jewish expositors, and ours from them generally understand it of Ahithophel: Grotius thinks it intimates that the death of Judas would be like that of Ahithophel. But because that psalm speaks of David's sickness, of which we read nothing at the time of Ahithophel's deserting him, it may better be understood of some other friend of his, that proved false to him. This our Saviour applies to Judas.

(a.) Judas, as an apostle, was admitted to the highest privilege: he did eat bread with Christ. He was familiar with him, and favoured by him, was one of his family, one of those with whom he was intimately conversant. David saith of his treacherous friend, He did eat of my bread; but Christ, being poor, had no bread he could properly call his own. He saith, He did eat bread with me; such as he had by the kindness of his friends, that ministered to him, his disciples had their share of, Judas among the rest. Wherever he went, Judas was welcome with him, did not dine among servants, but sat at table with his Master, ate of the same dish, drank of the same cup, and in all respects fared as he fared. He ate miraculous bread with him, when the loaves were multiplied, ate the passover with him. Note, All that eat bread with Christ are not his disciples indeed. See 1Co 10:3-5.

(b.) Judas, as an apostate, was guilty of the basest treachery: he lifted up the heel against Christ.

[1.] He forsook him, turned his back upon him, went out from the society of his disciples, Joh 13:30.

[2.] He despised him, shook off the dust of his feet against him, in contempt of him and his gospel. Nay,

[3.] He became an enemy to him; spurned at him, as wrestlers do at their adversaries, whom they would overthrow. Note, It is no new thing for those that were Christ's seeming friends to prove his real enemies. Those who pretended to magnify him magnify themselves against him, and thereby prove themselves guilty, not only of the basest ingratitude, but the basest treachery and perfidiousness.

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

He gives a word of encouragement to his apostles, and all his ministers whom he employs in his service (Joh 13:20): He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me. The purport of these words is the same with what we have in other scriptures, but it is not easy to make out their coherence here. Christ had told his disciples that they must humble and

abase themselves. "Now," saith he, "though there may be those that will despise you for your condescension, yet there will be those that will do you honour, and shall be honoured for so doing." Those who know themselves dignified by Christ's commission may be content to be vilified in the world's opinion. Or, he intended to silence the scruples of those who, because there was a traitor among the apostles, would be shy of receiving any of them; for, if one of them was false to his Master, to whom would any of them be true? Ex uno disce omnes--They are all alike. No, as Christ will think never the worse of them for Judas's crime, so he will stand by them, and own them, and will raise up such as shall receive them. Those that had received Judas when he was a preacher, and perhaps were converted and edified by his preaching, were never the worse, nor should reflect upon it with any regret, though he afterwards proved a traitor; for he was one whom Christ sent. We cannot know what men are, much less what they will be, but those who appear to be sent of Christ we must receive, till the contrary appear. Though some, by entertaining strangers, have entertained robbers unawares, yet we must still be hospitable, for thereby some have entertained angels. The abuses put upon our charity, though ordered with ever so much discretion, will neither justify our uncharitableness, nor lose us the reward of our charity.

1. We are here encouraged to receive ministers as sent of Christ: "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, though weak and poor, and subject to like passions as others (for as the law, so the gospel, makes men priests that have infirmity), yet if he deliver my message, and be regularly called and appointed to do so, and as an officer give himself to the word and prayer, he that entertains him shall be owned as a friend of mine." Christ was now leaving the world, but he would leave an order of men to be his agents, to deliver his word, and those who receive this, in the light and love of it, receive him. To believe the doctrine of Christ, and obey his law, and accept the salvation offered upon the terms proposed; this is receiving those whom Christ sends, and it is receiving Christ Jesus the Lord himself.

2. We are here encouraged to receive Christ as sent of God: He that thus receiveth me, that receiveth Christ in his ministers, receiveth the Father also, for they come upon his errand likewise, baptizing in the name of the

Father, as well as of the Son. Or, in general, He that receiveth me as his prince and Saviour receiveth him that sent me as his portion and felicity. Christ was sent of God, and in embracing his religion we embrace the only true religion.

Jesus Foretells His Betrayal

21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Christ more particularly notifies to them the plot which one of their number was now hatching against him (Joh 13:21): When Jesus had thus said in general, to prepare them for a more particular discovery, he was troubled in spirit, and showed it by some gesture or sign, and he testified, he solemnly declared it (cum animo testandi--with the solemnity of a witness on oath), "One of you shall betray me; one of you my apostles and constant followers." None indeed could be said to betray him but those in whom he reposed a confidence, and who were the witnesses of his retirements. This did not determine Judas to the sin by any fatal necessity; for, though the event did follow according to the prediction, yet not from the prediction. Christ is not the author of sin; yet as to this heinous sin of Judas,

1. Christ foresaw it; for even that which is secret and future, and hidden from the eyes of all living, naked and open before the eyes of Christ. He knows what is in men better than they do themselves (2Ki 8:12), and therefore sees what will be done by them. I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, Isa 48:8.

2. He foretold it, not only for the sake of the rest of the disciples, but for the sake of Judas himself, that he might take warning, and recover himself out of the snare of the devil. Traitors proceed not in their plots when they find they are discovered; surely Judas, when he finds that his Master knows his design, will retreat in time; if not, it will aggravate his condemnation.

3. He spoke of it with a manifest concern; he was troubled in spirit when he mentioned it. He had often spoken of his own sufferings and death, without any such trouble of spirit as he here manifested when he spoke of the ingratitude and treachery of Judas. This touched him in a tender part. Note, The falls and miscarriages of the disciples of Christ are a great trouble of spirit to their Master; the sins of Christians are the grief of Christ. "What! One of you betray me? You that have received from me such distinguishing favours; you that I had reason to think would be firm to me, that have professed such a respect for me; what iniquity have you found in me that one of you should betray me?" This went to his heart, as the undutifulness of children grieves those who have nourished and brought them up, Isa 1:2. See Ps 95:10,Isa 63:10.

22 Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.

The disciples quickly take the alarm. They knew their Master would neither deceive them nor jest with them; and therefore looked one upon another, with a manifest concern, doubting of whom he spake. 1. By looking one upon another they evinced the trouble they were in upon this notice given them; it struck such a horror upon them that they knew not well which way to look, nor what to say. They saw their Master troubled, and therefore they were troubled. This was at a feast where they were cheerfully entertained; but hence we must be taught to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. When David wept for his son's rebellion, all his followers wept with him (2Sa 15:30); so Christ's disciples here. Note, That which grieves Christ is, and should be, a grief to all that are his, particularly the scandalous miscarriages of those that are called by his name: Who is offended, and I burn not? 2. Hereby they endeavoured to discover the traitor. They looked wistfully in one another's face, to see who blushed, or, by some disorder in the countenance, manifested guilt in the heart, upon this notice; but, while those who were faithful had their consciences so clear that they could lift up their faces without spot, he that was false had his conscience so seared that he was not ashamed, neither could he blush, and so no discovery could be made in this way. Christ thus perplexed his disciples for a time, and put them into confusion, that he might humble them, and prove them, might excite in them a jealousy of themselves, and an indignation at the

baseness of Judas. It is good for us sometimes to be put to a gaze, to be put to a pause.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

Of all the disciples John was most fit to ask, because he was the favourite, and sat next his Master (Joh 13:23): There was leaning on Jesus's bosom one of the disciples whom Jesus loved. It appears that this was John, by comparing Joh 21:20,24. Observe,

(1.) The particular kindness which Jesus had for him; he was known by this periphrasis, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He loved them all (Joh 13:1), but John was particularly dear to him. His name signifies gracious. Daniel, who was honoured with the revelations of the Old Testament, as John of the New, was a man greatly beloved, Da 9:23. Note, Among the disciples of Christ some are dearer to him than others.

(2.) His place and posture at this time: He was leaning on Jesus's bosom. Some say that it was the fashion in those countries to sit at meat in a leaning posture, so that the second lay in the bosom of the first, and so on, which does not seem probable to me, for in such a posture as this they could neither eat nor drink conveniently; but, whether this was the case or not, John now leaned on Christ's bosom, and it seems to be an extraordinary expression of endearment used at this time. Note, There are some of Christ's disciples whom he lays in his bosom, who have more free and intimate communion with him than others. The Father loved the Son, and laid him in his bosom (Joh 1:18), and believers are in like manner one with Christ, Joh 17:21. This honour all the saints shall have shortly in the bosom of Abraham. Those who lay themselves at Christ's feet, he will lay in his bosom.

(3.) Yet he conceals his name, because he himself was the penman of the story. He put this instead of his name, to show that he was pleased with it; it is his title of honour, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, as in David's and Solomon's court there was one that was the king's friend; yet he does not put his name down, to show that he was not proud of it, nor would seem to boast of it. Paul in a like case saith, I knew a man in Christ.

24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

25 He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

27 And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

Judas himself, instead of being convinced hereby of his wickedness, was the more confirmed in it, and the warning given him was to him a savour of death unto death; for it follows,

The devil hereupon took possession of him (Joh 13:27): After the sop, Satan entered into him: not to make him melancholy, nor drive him distracted, which was the effect of his possessing some; not to hurry him into the fire, nor into the water; happy had it been for him if that had been the worst of it, or if with the swine he had been choked in the sea; but Satan entered into him to possess him with a prevailing prejudice against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness and a resolution to stick at nothing for the obtaining of them. But,

(a.) Was not Satan in him before? How then is it said that now Satan entered into him? Judas was all along a devil (Joh 6:70), a son of perdition, but now Satan gained a more full possession of him, had a more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution; now he returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, Lu 11:26. Note,

[1.] Though the devil is in every wicked man that does his works (Eph 2:2), yet sometimes he enters more manifestly and more powerfully than at other times, when he puts them upon some enormous wickedness, which humanity and natural conscience startle at.

[2.] Betrayers of Christ have much of the devil in them. Christ speaks of the sin of Judas as greater than that of any of his persecutors.

(b.) How came Satan to enter into him after the sop? Perhaps he was presently aware that it was the discovery of him, and it made him desperate in his resolutions. Many are made worse by the gifts of Christ's bounty, and are confirmed in their impenitency by that which should have led them to repentance. The coals of fire heaped upon their heads, instead of melting them, harden them.

2. Christ hereupon dismissed him, and delivered him up to his own heart's lusts: Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly. This is not to be understood as either advising him to his wickedness or warranting him in it; but either,

(a.) As abandoning him to the conduct and power of Satan. Christ knew that Satan had entered into him, and had peaceable possession; and now he gives him up as hopeless. The various methods Christ had used for his conviction were ineffectual; and therefore, "What thou doest thou wilt do quickly; if thou art resolved to ruin thyself, go on, and take what comes." Note, When the evil spirit is willingly admitted, the good Spirit justly withdraws. Or,

(b.) As challenging him to do his worst: "Thou art plotting against me, put thy plot in execution and welcome, the sooner the better, I do not fear thee, I am ready for thee." Note, our Lord Jesus was very forward to suffer and die for us, and was impatient of delay in the perfecting of his undertaking. Christ speaks of Judas's betraying him as a thing he was now doing, though he was only purposing it. Those who are contriving and designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief. Judas himself, instead of being convinced hereby of his wickedness, was the more confirmed in it, and the warning given him was to him a savour of death unto death; for it follows,

The devil hereupon took possession of him (Joh 13:27): After the sop, Satan entered into him: not to make him melancholy, nor drive him distracted, which was the effect of his possessing some; not to hurry him into the fire, nor into the water; happy had it been for him if that had been the worst of it, or if with the swine he had been choked in the sea; but Satan entered into him to possess him with a prevailing prejudice against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness and a resolution to stick at nothing for the obtaining of them. But,

(a.) Was not Satan in him before? How then is it said that now Satan entered into him? Judas was all along a devil (Joh 6:70), a son of perdition, but now Satan gained a more full possession of him, had a more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution; now he returned with seven other spirits more wicked than himself, Lu 11:26. Note,

[1.] Though the devil is in every wicked man that does his works (Eph 2:2), yet sometimes he enters more manifestly and more powerfully than at other times, when he puts them upon some enormous wickedness, which humanity and natural conscience startle at.

[2.] Betrayers of Christ have much of the devil in them. Christ speaks of the sin of Judas as greater than that of any of his persecutors.

(b.) How came Satan to enter into him after the sop? Perhaps he was presently aware that it was the discovery of him, and it made him desperate in his resolutions. Many are made worse by the gifts of Christ's bounty, and are confirmed in their impenitency by that which should have led them to repentance. The coals of fire heaped upon their heads, instead of melting them, harden them.

2. Christ hereupon dismissed him, and delivered him up to his own heart's lusts: Then said Jesus unto him, What thou doest, do quickly. This is not

to be understood as either advising him to his wickedness or warranting him in it; but either,

(a.) As abandoning him to the conduct and power of Satan. Christ knew that Satan had entered into him, and had peaceable possession; and now he gives him up as hopeless. The various methods Christ had used for his conviction were ineffectual; and therefore, "What thou doest thou wilt do quickly; if thou art resolved to ruin thyself, go on, and take what comes." Note, When the evil spirit is willingly admitted, the good Spirit justly withdraws. Or,

(b.) As challenging him to do his worst: "Thou art plotting against me, put thy plot in execution and welcome, the sooner the better, I do not fear thee, I am ready for thee." Note, our Lord Jesus was very forward to suffer and die for us, and was impatient of delay in the perfecting of his undertaking. Christ speaks of Judas's betraying him as a thing he was now doing, though he was only purposing it. Those who are contriving and designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief.

28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

Those that were at table understood not what he meant, because they did not hear what he whispered to John (Joh 13:28,29): No man at table, neither the disciples nor any other of the guests, except John, knew for what intent he spoke this to him.

(a.) They did not suspect that Christ said it to Judas as a traitor, because it did not enter into their heads that Judas was such a one, or would prove so. Note, It is an excusable dulness in the disciples of Christ not to be quick-sighted in their censures. Most are ready enough to say, when they hear harsh things spoken in general, Now such a one is meant, and now such a one; but Christ's disciples were so well taught to love one another that they could not easily learn to suspect one another; charity thinks no evil.

(b.) They therefore took it for granted that he said it to him as a trustee, or treasurer of the household, giving him order for the laying out of some money. Their surmises in this case discover to us for what uses and purposes our Lord Jesus commonly directed payments out of that little

stock he had, and so teach us how to honour the Lord with our substance. They concluded something was to be laid out, either,

[1.] In works of piety: Buy those things that we have need of against the feast. Though he borrowed a room to eat the passover in, yet he bought in provision for it. That is to be reckoned well bestowed which is laid out upon those things we have need of for the maintenance of God's ordinances among us; and we have the less reason to grudge that expense now because our gospel-worship is far from being so chargeable as the legal worship was.

[2.] Or in works of charity: That he should give something to the poor. By this it appears, First, That our Lord Jesus, though he lived upon alms himself (Lu 8:3), yet gave alms to the poor, a little out of a little. Though he might very well be excused, not only because he was poor himself, but because he did so much good in other ways, curing so many gratis; yet, to set us an example, he gave, for the relief of the poor, out of that which he had for the subsistence of his family; see Eph 4:28. Secondly, That the time of a religious feast was thought a proper time for works of charity. When he celebrated the passover he ordered something for the poor. When we experience God's bounty to us, this should make us bountiful to the poor.

29 For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

30 He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it was night.

Judas hereupon sets himself vigorously to pursue his design against him: He went away. Notice is taken,

(a.) Of his speedy departure: He went out presently, and quitted the house,

[1.] For fear of being more plainly discovered to the company, for, if he were, he expected they would all fall upon him, and be the death of him, or at least of his project.

[2.] He went out as one weary of Christ's company and the society of his apostles. Christ needed not to expel him, he expelled himself. Note, Withdrawing from the communion of the faithful is commonly the first overt-act of a backslider, and the beginning of an apostasy.

[3.] He went out to prosecute his design, to look for those with whom he was to make his bargain, and to settle the agreement with them. Now that Satan had got into him he hurried him on with precipitation, lest he should see his error and repent of it.

(b.) Of the time of his departure: It was night.

[1.] Though it was night, an unseasonable time for business, yet, Satan having entered into him, he made no difficulty of the coldness and darkness of the night. This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of Christ, that the devil's servants are so earnest and venturous in his service.

[2.] Because it was night, and this gave him advantage of privacy and concealment. He was not willing to be seen treating with the chief priests, and therefore chose the dark night as the fittest time for such works of darkness. Those whose deeds are evil love darkness rather than light. See Job 24:13, &c.

The New Commandment

31 Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

This and what follows, to the end of Joh 13:31-14:33, was Christ's table-talk with his disciples. When supper was done, Judas went out; but what did the Master and his disciples do, whom he left sitting at table? They applied themselves to profitable discourse, to teach us as much as we can to make conversation with our friends at table serviceable to religion. Christ begins this discourse. The more forward we are humbly to promote that communication which is good, and to the use of edifying, the more like we are to Jesus Christ. Those especially that by their place,

reputation, and gifts, command the company, to whom men give ear, ought to use the interest they have in other respects as an opportunity of doing them good. Now our Lord Jesus discourses with them (and probably discourses much more largely than is here recorded),

Concerning the great mystery of his own death and sufferings, about which they were as yet so much in the dark that they could not persuade themselves to expect the thing itself, much less did they understand the meaning of it; and therefore Christ gives them such instructions concerning it as made the offence of the cross to cease. Christ did not begin this discourse till Judas was gone out, for he was a false brother. The presence of wicked people is often a hindrance to good discourse. When Judas was gone out, Christ said, now is the Son of man glorified; now that Judas is discovered and discarded, who was a spot in their love-feast and a scandal to their family, now is the Son of man glorified. Note, Christ is glorified by the purifying of Christian societies: corruptions in his church are a reproach to him; the purging out of those corruptions rolls away the reproach. Or, rather, now Judas was gone to set the wheels a-going, in order to his being put to death, and the thing was likely to be effected shortly: Now is the Son of man glorified, meaning, Now he is crucified.

1. Here is something which Christ instructs them in, concerning his sufferings, that was very comforting.

(a) That he should himself be glorified in them. Now the Son of man is to be exposed to the greatest ignominy and disgrace, to be despitefully used to the last degree, and dishonoured both by the cowardice of his friends and the insolence of his enemies; yet now he is glorified; For,

[1.] Now he is to obtain a glorious victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and triumph over them. He is now girding on the harness, to take the field against these adversaries of God and man, with as great an assurance as if he had put it off.

[2.] Now he is to work out a glorious deliverance for his people, by his death to reconcile them to God, and bring in an everlasting righteousness

and happiness for them; to shed that blood which is to be an inexhaustible fountain of joys and blessings to all believers. [3.] Now he is to give a glorious example of self-denial and patience under the cross, courage and contempt of the world, zeal for the glory of God, and love to the souls of men, such as will make him to be for ever admired and had in honour. Christ had been glorified in many miracles he had wrought, and yet he speaks of his being glorified now in his sufferings, as if that were more than all his other glories in his humble state.

(b) That God the Father should be glorified in them. The sufferings of Christ were,

[1.] The satisfaction of God's justice, and so God was glorified in them. Reparation was thereby made with great advantage for the wrong done him in his honour by the sin of man. The ends of the law were abundantly answered, and the glory of his government effectually asserted and maintained.

[2.] They were the manifestation of his holiness and mercy. The attributes of God shine brightly in creation and providence, but much more in the work of redemption; see 1Co 1:24,2Co 4:6. God is love, and herein he hath commended his love.

32 If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

That he should himself be greatly glorified after them, in consideration of God's being greatly glorified by them, Joh 13:32. Observe how he enlarges upon it.

[1.] He is sure that God will glorify him; and those whom God glorifies are glorious indeed. Hell and earth set themselves to vilify Christ, but God resolved to glorify him, and he did it. He glorified him in his sufferings by the amazing signs and wonders, both in heaven and earth, which attended them, and extorted even from his crucifiers an acknowledgment that he was the Son of God. But especially after his sufferings he glorified him, when he set him at his own right hand, gave him a name above every name.

[2.] That he will glorify him in himself--en heauto. Either, First, In Christ himself. He will glorify him in his own person, and not only in his kingdom among men. This supposes his speedy resurrection. A common person may be honoured after his death, in his memory or posterity, but Christ was honoured in himself. Or, secondly, in God himself. God will glorify him with himself, as it is explained, Joh 17:5. He shall sit down with the Father upon his throne, Re 3:21. This is true glory.

[3.] That he will glorify him straightway. He looked upon the joy and glory set before him, not only as great, but as near; and his sorrows and sufferings short and soon over. Good services done to earthly princes often remain long unrewarded; but Christ had his preferments presently. It was but forty hours (or not so much) from his death to his resurrection, and forty days thence to his ascension, so that it might well be said that he was straightway glorified, Ps 16:10.

[4.] All this in consideration of God's being glorified in and by his sufferings: Seeing God is glorified in him, and receives honour from his sufferings, God shall in like manner glorify him in himself, and give honour to him. Note, first, In the exaltation of Christ there was a regard had to his humiliation, and a reward given for it. Because he humbled himself, therefore God highly exalted him. If the Father be so great a gainer in his glory by the death of Christ, we may be sure that the Son shall be no loser in his. See the covenant between them, Isa 53:12. Secondly, Those who mind the business of glorifying God no doubt shall have the happiness of being glorified with him.

33 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

Here is something that Christ instructs them in, concerning his sufferings, which was awakening, for as yet they were slow of heart to understand it (Joh 13:33): Little children, yet a little while I am with you, &c. Two things Christ here suggests, to quicken his disciples to improve their present opportunities; two serious words:--

(a) That his stay in this world, to be with them here, they would find to be very short. Little children. This compellation does not bespeak so much their weakness as his tenderness and compassion; he speaks to them with the affection of a father, now that he is about to leaven them, and to leave blessings with them. Know this, then, that yet a little while I am with you. Whether we understand this as referring to his death or his ascension it comes much to one; he had but a little time to spend with them, and therefore,

[1.] Let them improve the advantage they now had. If they had any good question to ask, if they would have any advice, instruction, or comfort, let them speak quickly; for yet a little while I am with you. We must make the best of the helps we have for our souls while we have them, because we shall not have them long; they will be taken from us, or we from them.

[2.] Let them not doat upon his bodily presence, as if their happiness and comfort were bound up in that; no, they must think of living without it; not be always little children, but go alone, without their nurses. Ways and means are appointed but for a little while, and are not to be rested in, but pressed through to our rest, to which they have a reference.

(b) That their following him to the other world, to be with him there, they would find to be very difficult. What he had said to the Jews (Joh 7:34) he saith to his disciples; for they have need to be quickened by the same considerations that are propounded for the convincing and awakening of sinners. Christ tells them here,

[1.] That when he was gone they would feel the want of him; You shall seek me, that is "you shall wish you had me again with you." We are often taught the worth of mercies by the want of them. Though the presence of the Comforter yielded them real and effectual relief in straits and difficulties, yet it was not such a sensible satisfaction as his bodily presence would have been to those who had been used to it. But observe, Christ said to the Jews, You shall seek me and not find me; but to the disciples he only saith, You shall seek me, intimating that though they should not find his bodily presence any more than the Jews, yet they should find that which was tantamount, and should not seek in vain.

When they sought his body in the sepulchre, though they did not find it, yet they sought to good purpose.

[2.] That whither he went they could not come, which suggests to them high thoughts of him, who was going to an invisible inaccessible world, to dwell in that light which none can approach unto; and also low thoughts of themselves, and serious thoughts of their future state. Christ tells them that they could not follow him (as Joshua told the people that they could not serve the Lord) only to quicken them to so much the more diligence and care. They could not follow him to his cross, for they had not courage and resolution; it appeared that they could not when they all forsook him and fled. Nor could they follow him to his crown, for they had not a sufficiency of their own, nor were their work and warfare yet finished.

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

He discourses with them concerning the great duty of brotherly love (Joh 13:34,35): You shall love one another. Judas was now gone out, and had proved himself a false brother; but they must not therefore harbour such jealousies and suspicions one of another as would be the bane of love: though there was one Judas among them, yet they were not all Judases. Now that the enmity of the Jews against Christ and his followers was swelling to the height, and they must expect such treatment as their Master had, it concerned them by brotherly love to strengthen one another's hands. Three arguments for mutual love are here urged:--

1 The command of their Master (Joh 13:34): A new commandment I give unto you. He not only commends it as amiable and pleasant, not only counsels it as excellent and profitable, but commands it, and makes it one of the fundamental laws of his kingdom; it goes a-breast with the command of believing in Christ, 1Jo 3:23,1Pe 1:22. It is the command of our ruler, who has a right to give law to us; it is the command of our Redeemer, who gives us this law in order to the curing of our spiritual diseases and the preparing of us for our eternal bliss. It is a new commandment; that is,

(1.) It is a renewed commandment; it was a commandment from the beginning (1Jo 2:7), as old as the law of nature, it was the second great

commandment of the law of Moses; yet, because it is also one of the great commandments of the New Testament, of Christ the new Lawgiver, it is called a new commandment; it is like an old book in a new edition corrected and enlarged. This commandment has been so corrupted by the traditions of the Jewish church that when Christ revived it, and set it in a true light, it might well be called a new commandment. Laws of revenge and retaliation were so much in vogue, and self-love had so much the ascendant, that the law of brotherly love was forgotten as obsolete and out of date; so that as it came from Christ new, it was new to the people.

(2.) It is an excellent command, as a new song is an excellent song, that has an uncommon gratefulness in

(3.) It is an everlasting command; so strangely new as to be always so; as the new covenant, which shall never decay (Heb 8:13); it shall be new to eternity, when faith and hope are antiquated.

(4.) As Christ gives it, it is new. Before it was, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; now it is, You shall love one another; it is pressed in a more winning way when it is thus pressed as mutual duty owing to one another.

2 The example of their Saviour is another argument for brotherly love: As I have loved you. It is this that makes it a new commandment--that this rule and reason of love (as I have loved you) is perfectly new, and such as had been hidden from ages and generations. Understand this,

(1.) Of all the instances of Christ's love to his disciples, which they had already experienced during the time he went in and out among them. He spoke kindly to them, concerned himself heartily for them, and for their welfare, instructed, counselled, and comforted them, prayed with them and for them, vindicated them when they were accused, took their part when they were run down, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him that his mother, or sister, or brother. He reproved them for what was amiss, and yet compassionately bore with their failings, excused them, made the best of them, and passed by many an oversight. Thus he had loved them, and just now washed their feet; and thus they must love one another, and love to the end. Or,

(2.) It may be understood of the special instance of love to all his disciples which he was now about to give, in laying down his life for them. Greater love hath no man than this, Joh 15:13. Has he thus loved us all? Justly may he expect that we should be loving to one another. Not that we are capable of doing any thing of the same nature for each other (Ps 49:7), but we must love one another in some respects after the same manner; we must set this before us as our copy, and take directions from it. Our love to one another must be free and ready, laborious and expensive, constant and persevering; it must be love to the souls one of another. We must also love one another from this motive, and upon this consideration--because Christ has loved us. See Ro 15:1,3,Eph 5:2,25,Php 2:1-5.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The reputation of their profession (Joh 13:35): By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another. Observe, We must have love, not only show love, but have it in the root and habit of it, and have it when there is not any present occasion to show it; have it ready. "Hereby it will appear that you are indeed my followers by following me in this." Note, Brotherly love is the badge of Christ's disciples. By this he knows them, by this they may know themselves (1Jo 2:14), and by this others may know them. This is the livery of his family, the distinguishing character of his disciples; this he would have them noted for, as that wherein they excelled all others--their loving one another. This was what their Master was famous for; all that ever heard of him have heard of his love, his great love; and therefore, if you see any people more affectionate one to another than what is common, say, "Certainly these are the followers of Christ, they have been with Jesus." Now by this it appears,

(1.) That the heart of Christ was very much upon it, that his disciples should love one another. In this they must be singular; whereas the way of the world is to be every one for himself, they should be hearty for one another. He does not say, By this shall men know that you are my disciples--if you work miracles, for a worker of miracles is but a cypher without charity (1Co 13:1,2); but if you love one another from a principle

of self-denial and gratitude to Christ. This Christ would have to be the proprium of his religion, the principal note of the true church.

(2.) That it is the true honour of Christ's disciples to excel in brotherly love. Nothing will be more effectual than this to recommend them to the esteem and respect of others. See what a powerful attractive it was, Ac 2:46,47. Tertullian speaks of it as the glory of the primitive church that the Christians were known by their affection to one another. Their adversaries took notice of it, and said, See how these Christians love one another, Apol. cap. 39.

(3.) That, if the followers of Christ do not love one another, they not only cast an unjust reproach upon their profession, but give just cause to suspect their own sincerity. O Jesus! are these thy Christians, these passionate, malicious, spiteful, ill-natured people? Is this thy son's coat? When our brethren stand in need of help from us, and we have an opportunity of being service able to them, when they differ in opinion and practice from us, or are any ways rivals with or provoking to us, and so we have an occasion to condescend and forgive, in such cases as this it will be known whether we have this badge of Christ's disciples.

Peter’s Denial Foretold

36 Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward.

Christ's answer was instructive. He did not gratify him with any particular account of the world he was going to, nor ever foretold his glories and joys so distinctly as he did his sufferings, but said what he had said before (Joh 13:36): Let this suffice, thou canst not follow me now, but shalt follow me hereafter,

(1.) We may understand it of his following him to the cross: "Thou hast not yet strength enough of faith and resolution to drink of my cup;" and it appeared so by his cowardice when Christ was suffering. For this reason, when Christ was seized, he provided for the safety of his disciples.

Let these go their way, because they could not follow him now. Christ considers the frame of his disciples, and will not cut out for them that work and hardship which they are not as yet fit for; the day shall be as the strength is. Peter, though designed for martyrdom, cannot follow Christ now, not being come to his full growth, but he shall follow him hereafter; he shall be crucified at last, like his Master. Let him not think that because he escapes suffering now he shall never suffer. From our missing the cross once, we must not infer that we shall never meet it; we may be reserved for greater trials than we have yet known.

(2.) We may understand it of his following him to the crown. Christ was now going to his glory, and Peter was very desirous to go with him: "No," saith Christ, "thou canst not follow me now, thou art not yet ripe for heaven, nor hast thou finished thy work on earth. The forerunner must first enter to prepare a place for thee, but thou shalt follow me afterwards, after thou hast fought the good fight, and at the time appointed." Note, Believers must not expect to be glorified as soon as they are effectually called, for there is a wilderness between the Red Sea and Canaan.

37 Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.

Peter makes a daring protestation of his constancy. He is not content to be left behind, but asks, "Lord why cannot I follow thee now? Dost thou question my sincerity and resolution? I promise thee, if there be occasion, I will lay down my life for thy sake." Some think Peter had a conceit, as the Jews had in a like case (Joh 7:35), that Christ was designing a journey or voyage into some remote country, and that he declared his resolution to go along with him wherever he went; but, having heard his Master so often speak of his own sufferings, surely he could not understand him any otherwise than of his going away by death; and he resolves as Thomas did that he will go and die with him; and better die with him than live without him. See here,

(1.) What an affectionate love Peter had to our Lord Jesus: "I will lay down my life for thy sake, and I can do no more." I believe Peter spoke as he thought, and though he was inconsiderate he was not insincere, in his resolution. Note, Christ should be dearer to us than our own lives,

which therefore, when we are called to it, we should be willing to lay down for his sake, Ac 20:24.

(2.) How ill he took it to have it questioned, intimated in that expostulation, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? Dost thou suspect my fidelity to thee?" 1Sa 29:8. Note, It is with regret that true love hears its own sincerity arraigned, as Joh 21:17. Christ had indeed said that one of them was a devil, but he was discovered, and gone out, and therefore Peter thinks he may speak with the more assurance of his own sincerity; "Lord, I am resolved I will never leave thee, and therefore why cannot I follow thee?" We are apt to think that we can do any thing, and take it amiss to be told that this and the other we cannot do, whereas without Christ we can do nothing.

38 Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?
Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Christ gives him a surprising prediction of his inconstancy, Joh 13:38. Jesus Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves whom he loves, and will hide pride from.

(a) He upbraids Peter with his confidence: Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Me thinks, he seems to have said this with a smile: "Peter, thy promises are too large, too lavish to be relied on; thou dost not consider with what reluctancy and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die; not so soon done as said." Christ hereby puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, "Lord, thy grace enabling me, I will lay down my life for thy sake." "Wilt thou undertake to die for me? What! thou that trembledst to walk upon the water to me? What! thou that, when sufferings were spoken of, criedst out, Be it far from thee, Lord? It was an easy thing to leave thy boats and nets to follow me, but not so easy to lay down thy life." His Master himself struggled when it came to his, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Note, It is good for us to shame ourselves out of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a

pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool am I to talk so big.

(b) He plainly foretels his cowardice in the critical hour. To stop the mouth of his boasting, lest Peter should say it again, Yea Master, that I will, Christ solemnly asserts it with, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. He does not say as afterwards, This night, for it seems to have been two nights before the passover; but, "Shortly thou wilt have denied me thrice within the space of one night; nay, within so short a space as between the first and last crowing of the cock: The cock shall not crow, shall not have crowed his crowing out, till thou has again and again denied me, and that for fear of suffering." The crowing of the cock is mentioned,

[1.] To intimate that the trial in which he would miscarry thus should be in the night, which was an improbable circumstance, but Christ's foretelling it was an instance of his infallible foresight.

[2.] Because the crowing of the cock was to be the occasion of his repentance, which of itself would not have been if Christ had not put this into the prediction. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him though he only in heart designed it, but he foresaw that Peter would deny him though he did not design it, but the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. Christ told Peter,

First, That he would deny him, would renounce and abjure him: "Thou wilt not only not follow me still, but wilt be ashamed to own that ever thou didst follow me."

Secondly, That he would do this not once only by a hasty slip of the tongue, but after he had paused would repeat it a second and third time; and it proved too true. We commonly give it as a reason why the prophecies of scripture are expressed darkly and figuratively, because, if they did plainly describe the event, the accomplishment would thereby either be defeated or necessitated by a fatality inconsistent with human liberty; and yet this plain and express prophecy of Peter's denying Christ did neither, nor did in the least make Christ accessary to Peter's sin. But

we may well imagine what a mortification it was to Peter's confidence of his own courage to be told this, and to be told it in such a manner that he durst not contradict it, else he would have said as Hazael, What! is thy servant a dog? This could not but fill him with confusion.

Note, The most secure are commonly the least safe; and those most shamefully betray their own weakness that most confidently presume upon their own strength, 1Co 10:12. Christ gives him a surprising prediction of his inconstancy, Joh 13:38. Jesus Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves whom he loves, and will hide pride from.

(a) He upbraids Peter with his confidence: Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Me thinks, he seems to have said this with a smile: "Peter, thy promises are too large, too lavish to be relied on; thou dost not consider with what reluctancy and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die; not so soon done as said." Christ hereby puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, "Lord, thy grace enabling me, I will lay down my life for thy sake." "Wilt thou undertake to die for me? What! thou that trembledst to walk upon the water to me? What! thou that, when sufferings were spoken of, criedst out, Be it far from thee, Lord? It was an easy thing to leave thy boats and nets to follow me, but not so easy to lay down thy life." His Master himself struggled when it came to his, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Note, It is good for us to shame ourselves out of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool am I to talk so big.

(b) He plainly foretels his cowardice in the critical hour. To stop the mouth of his boasting, lest Peter should say it again, Yea Master, that I will, Christ solemnly asserts it with, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. He does not say as afterwards, This night, for it seems to have been two nights before the passover; but, "Shortly thou wilt have denied me thrice within the space of one night; nay, within so short a space as between the first and last

crowing of the cock: The cock shall not crow, shall not have crowed his crowing out, till thou has again and again denied me, and that for fear of suffering." The crowing of the cock is mentioned,

[1.] To intimate that the trial in which he would miscarry thus should be in the night, which was an improbable circumstance, but Christ's foretelling it was an instance of his infallible foresight.

[2.] Because the crowing of the cock was to be the occasion of his repentance, which of itself would not have been if Christ had not put this into the prediction. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him though he only in heart designed it, but he foresaw that Peter would deny him though he did not design it, but the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. Christ told Peter,

First, That he would deny him, would renounce and abjure him: "Thou wilt not only not follow me still, but wilt be ashamed to own that ever thou didst follow me."

Secondly, That he would do this not once only by a hasty slip of the tongue, but after he had paused would repeat it a second and third time; and it proved too true. We commonly give it as a reason why the prophecies of scripture are expressed darkly and figuratively, because, if they did plainly describe the event, the accomplishment would thereby either be defeated or necessitated by a fatality inconsistent with human liberty; and yet this plain and express prophecy of Peter's denying Christ did neither, nor did in the least make Christ accessary to Peter's sin. But we may well imagine what a mortification it was to Peter's confidence of his own courage to be told this, and to be told it in such a manner that he durst not contradict it, else he would have said as Hazael, What! is thy servant a dog? This could not but fill him with confusion.

Note, The most secure are commonly the least safe; and those most shamefully betray their own weakness that most confidently presume upon their own strength, 1Co 10:12.

John-14

Jesus the Way to the Father

1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

A general caution which Christ gives to his disciples against trouble of heart (Joh 14:1): Let not your heart be troubled. They now began to be troubled, were entering into this temptation. Now here see,

How Christ took notice of it. Perhaps it was apparent in their looks; it was said (Joh 13:22), They looked one upon another with anxiety and concern, and Christ looked upon them all, and observed it; at least, it was intelligible to the Lord Jesus, who is acquainted with all our secret undiscovered sorrows, with the wound that bleeds inwardly; he knows not only how we are afflicted, but how we stand affected under our afflictions, and how near they lie to our hearts; he takes cognizance of all the trouble which his people are at any time in danger of being overwhelmed with; he knows our souls in adversity. Many things concurred to trouble the disciples now.

(1.) Christ had just told them of the unkindness he should receive from some of them, and this troubled them all. Peter, no doubt, looked very sorrowful upon what Christ said to him, and all the rest were sorry for him and for themselves too, not knowing whose turn it should be to be told next of some ill thing or other they should do. As to this, Christ comforts them; though a godly jealousy over ourselves is of great use to keep us humble and watchful, yet it must not prevail to the disquieting of our spirits and the damping of our holy joy.

(2.) He had just told them of his own departure from them, that he should not only go away, but go away in a cloud of sufferings. They must shortly hear him loaded with reproaches, and these will be as a sword in their bones; they must see him barbarously abused and put to death, and this also will be a sword piercing through their own souls, for they had loved him, and chosen him, and left all to follow him. When we now look upon Christ pierced, we cannot but mourn and be in bitterness,

though we see the glorious issue and fruit of it; much more grievous must the sight be to them, who could then look no further. If Christ depart from them

[1.] They will think themselves shamefully disappointed; for they looked that this had been he that should have delivered Israel, and should have set upon his kingdom in secular power and glory, and, in expectation of this, had lost all to follow him. Now, if he leave the world in the same circumstances of meanness and poverty in which he had lived, and worse, they are quite defeated.

[2.] They will think themselves sadly deserted and exposed. They knew by experience what little presence of mind they had in difficult emergencies, that they could count upon nothing but being ruined and run down if they part with their Master. Now, in reference to all these, Let not your heart be troubled. Here are three words, upon any of which the emphasis may significantly be laid. First, Upon the word troubled, me tarassestho. Be not so troubled as to be put into a hurry and confusion, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. He does not say, "Let not your hearts be sensible of the griefs, or sad because of them" but, "Be not ruffled and discomposed, be not cast down and disquieted," Ps 42:5. Secondly, Upon the word heart: "Though the nation and city be troubled, though your little family and flock be troubled, yet let not your heart be troubled. Keep possession of your own souls when you can keep possession of nothing else." The heart is the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from this, keep this with all diligence. The spirit must sustain the infirmity, therefore, see that this be not wounded. Thirdly, Upon the word your: "You that are my disciples and followers, my redeemed, chosen, sanctified ones, however others are overwhelmed with the sorrows of this present time, be not you so, for you know better; let the sinners in Zion tremble, but let the sons of Zion be joyful in their king." Herein Christ's disciples should do more than others, should keep their minds quiet, when every thing else is unquiet.

The remedy he prescribes against this trouble of mind, which he saw ready to prevail over them; in general, believe--pisteuete.

(1.) Some read it in both parts imperatively, "Believe in God, and his perfections and providence, believe also in me, and my mediation. Build with confidence upon the great acknowledged principles of natural religion: that there is a God, that he is most holy, wise, powerful, and good; that he is the governor of the world, and has the sovereign disposal of all events; and comfort yourselves likewise with the peculiar doctrines of that holy religion which I have taught you." But,

(2.) We read the former as an acknowledgment that they did believe in God, for which he commends them: "But, if you would effectually provide against a stormy day, believe also in me." Through Christ we are brought into covenant with God, and become interested in his favour and promise, which otherwise as sinners we must despair of, and the remembrance of God would have been our trouble; but, by believing in Christ as the Mediator between God and man, our belief in God becomes comfortable; and this is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, by believing in the Son as they believe in the Father. Those that rightly believe in God will believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has made known to them; and believing in God through Jesus Christ is an excellent means of keeping trouble from the heart. The joy of faith is the best remedy against the griefs of sense; it is a remedy with a promise annexed to it; the just shall live by faith; a remedy with a probatum est annexed to it. I had fainted unless I had believed.

2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Believe and consider that really there is such a happiness: In my Father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, Joh 14:2.

(1.) See under what notion the happiness of heaven is here represented: as mansions, many mansions in Christ's Father's house.

[1.] Heaven is a house, not a tent or tabernacle; it is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

[2.] It is a Father's house: my Father's house; and his Father is our Father, to whom he was now ascending; so that in right of their elder brother all true believers shall be welcome to that happiness as to their home. It is his house who is King of kings and Lord of lords, dwells in light, and inhabits eternity.

[3.] There are mansions there; that is, First, Distinct dwellings, an apartment for each. Perhaps there is an allusion to the priests' chambers that were about the temple. In heaven there are accommodations for particular saints; though all shall be swallowed up in God, yet our individuality shall not be lost there; every Israelite had his lot in Canaan, and every elder a seat, Re 4:4. Secondly, Durable dwellings. Monai, from mneio, maneo, abiding places. The house itself is lasting; our estate in it is not for a term of years, but a perpetuity. Here we are as in an inn; in heaven we shall gain a settlement. The disciples had quitted their houses to attend Christ, who had not where to lay his head, but the mansions in heaven will make them amends.

[4.] There are many mansions, for there are many sons to be brought to glory, and Christ exactly knows their number, nor will be straitened for room by the coming of more company than he expects. He had told Peter that he should follow him (Joh 13:36), but let not the rest be discouraged, in heaven there are mansions for them all. Rehoboth, Ge 26:22.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

See what assurance we have of the reality of the happiness itself, and the sincerity of the proposal of it to us: "If it were not so, I would have told you. If you had deceived yourselves, when you quitted your livelihoods, and ventured your lives for me, in prospect of a happiness future and unseen, I would soon have undeceived you." The assurance is built,

[1.] Upon the veracity of his word. It is implied, "If there were not such a happiness, valuable and attainable, I would not have told you that there was."

[2.] Upon the sincerity of his affection to them. As he is true, and would not impose upon them himself, so he is kind, and would not suffer them to be imposed upon. If either there were no such mansions, or none designed for them, who had left all to follow him, he would have given them timely notice of the mistake, that they might have made an honourable retreat to the world again, and have made the best they could of it.

Note, Christ's good-will to us is a great encouragement to our hope in him. He loves us too well, and means us too well, to disappoint the expectations of his own raising, or to leave those to be of all men most miserable who have been of him most observant.

Believe and consider that the design of Christ's going away was to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples. "You are grieved to think of my going away, whereas I go on your errand, as the forerunner; I am to enter for you." He went to prepare a place for us; that is,

(a.) To take possession for us, as our advocate or attorney, and so to secure our title as indefeasible. Livery of seisin was given to Christ, for the use and behoof of all that should believe on him.

(b.) To make provision for us as our friend and father. The happiness of heaven, though prepared before the foundation of the world, yet must be further fitted up for man in his fallen state. It consisting much in the presence of Christ there, it was therefore necessary that he should go before, to enter into that glory which his disciples were to share in. Heaven would be an unready place for a Christian if Christ were not there. He went to prepare a table for them, to prepare thrones for them, Lu 22:30. Thus Christ declares the fitness of heaven's happiness for the saints, for whom it is prepared.

3. Believe and consider that therefore he would certainly come again in due time, to fetch them to that blessed place which he was now going to possess for himself and prepare for them (Joh 14:3): "If I go and prepare

a place for you, if this be the errand of my journey, you may be sure, when every thing is ready, I will come again, and receive you to myself, so that you shall follow me hereafter, that where I am there you may be also." Now these are comfortable words indeed.

(a.) That Jesus Christ will come again; erchomai--I do come, intimating the certainty of it, that he will come and that he is daily coming. We say, We are coming, when we are busy in preparing for our coming, and so he is; all he does has a reference and tendency to his second coming.

Note, The belief of Christ's second coming, of which he has given us the assurance, is an excellent preservative against trouble of heart, Php 4:5,Jam 5:8.

(b.) That he will come again to receive all his faithful followers to himself. He sends for them privately at death, and gathers them one by one; but they are to make their public entry in solemn state all together at the last day, and then Christ himself will come to receive them, to conduct them in the abundance of his grace, and to welcome them in the abundance of his love. He will hereby testify the utmost respect and endearment imaginable. The coming of Christ is in order to our gathering together unto him, 2Th 2:1.

(c.) That where he is there they shall be also. This intimates, what many other scriptures declare, that the quintessence of heaven's happiness is being with Christ there, Joh 17:24,Php 1:23,1Th 4:17. Christ speaks of his being there as now present, that where I am; where I am to be shortly, where I am to be eternally; there you shall be shortly, there you shall be eternally: not only there, in the same place; but here, in the same state: not only spectators of his glory, as the three disciples on the mount, but sharers in it.

(d.) That this may be inferred from his going to prepare a place for us, for his preparations shall not be in vain. He will not build and furnish lodgings, and let them stand empty. He will be the finisher of that of which he is the author. If he has prepared the place for us, he will prepare us for it, and in due time put us in possession of it. As the resurrection

of Christ is the assurance of our resurrection, so his ascension, victory, and glory, are an assurance of ours.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?

He said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, to what place or what state, and how can we know the way in which we must follow thee? We can neither guess at it, nor enquire it out, but must still be at a loss." Christ's testimony concerning their knowledge made them more sensible of their ignorance, and more inquisitive after further light. Thomas here shows more modesty than Peter, who thought he could follow Christ now. Peter was the more solicitous to know whither Christ went. Thomas here, though he complains that he did not know this, yet seems more solicitous to know the way. Now,

(1.) His confession of his ignorance was commendable enough. If good men be in the dark, and know but in part, yet they are willing to own their defects. But,

(2.) The cause of his ignorance was culpable. They knew not whither Christ went, because they dreamed of a temporal kingdom in external pomp and power, and doted upon this, notwithstanding what he had said again and again to the contrary. Hence it was that, when Christ spoke of going away and their following him, their fancy ran upon his going to some remarkable city or other, Bethlehem, or Nazareth, or Capernaum, or some of the cities of the Gentiles, as David to Hebron, there to be anointed king, and to restore the kingdom to Israel; and which way this place lay, where these castles in the air were to be built, east, west, north, or south, they could not tell, and therefore knew not the way. Thus still we think ourselves more in the dark than we need be concerning the future state of the church, because we expect its worldly prosperity, whereas it is spiritual advancement that the promise points at. Had Thomas understood, as he might have done, that Christ was going to the invisible world, the world of spirits, to which spiritual things only have a reference, he would not have said, Lord, we do not know the way.

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Now to this complaint of their ignorance, which included a desire to be taught, Christ gives a full answer, Joh 14:6,7. Thomas had enquired both whither he went and what was the way, and Christ answers both these enquiries and makes good what he had said, that they would have needed no answer if they had understood themselves aright; for they knew him, and he was the way; they knew the Father, and he was the end; and therefore, whither I go you know, and the way you know. Believe in God as the end, and in me as the way (Joh 14:1), and you do all you should do.

He speaks of himself as the way, Joh 14:6. Dost thou not know the way? I am the way, and I only, for no man comes to the Father but by me. Great things Christ here saith of himself, showing us,

[1.] The nature of his mediation: He is the way, the truth, and the life.

First, Let us consider these first distinctly.

1. Christ is the way, the highway spoken of, Isa 35:8. Christ was his own way, for by his own blood he entered into the holy place (Heb 9:12), and he is our way, for we enter by him. By his doctrine and example he teaches us our duty, by his merit and intercession he procures our happiness, and so he is the way. In him God and man meet, and are brought together. We could not get to the tree of life in the way of innocency; but Christ is another way to it. By Christ, as the way an intercourse is settled and kept up between heaven and earth; the angels of God ascend and descend; our prayers go to God, and his blessings come to us by him; this is the way that leads to rest, the good old way. The disciples followed him, and Christ tells them that they followed the road, and, while they continued following him, they would never be out of their way.

2. He is the truth.

(1.) As truth is opposed to figure and shadow. Christ is the substance of all the Old-Testament types, which are therefore said to be figures of the

true, Heb 9:24. Christ is the true manna (Joh 6:32), the true tabernacle, Heb 8:2.

(2.) As truth is opposed to falsehood and error; the doctrine of Christ is true doctrine. When we enquire for truth, we need learn no more than the truth as it is in Jesus.

(3.) As truth is opposed to fallacy and deceit; he is true to all that trust in him, as true as truth itself, 2Co 1:20. 3. He is the life; for we are alive unto God only in and through Jesus Christ, Ro 6:11. Christ formed in us is that to our souls which our souls are to our bodies. Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Secondly, Let us consider these jointly, and with reference to each other. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; that is, 1. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end. In him we must set out, go on, and finish. As the truth, he is the guide of our way; as the life, he is the end of it. 2. He is the true and living way (Heb 10:20); there are truth and life in the way, as well as at the end of it. 3. He is the true way to life, the only true way; other ways may seem right, but the end of them is the way of death.

[2.] The necessity of his mediation: No man cometh to the Father but by me. Fallen man must come to God as a Judge, but cannot come to him as a Father, otherwise than by Christ as Mediator. We cannot perform the duty of coming to God, by repentance and the acts of worship, without the Spirit and grace of Christ, nor obtain the happiness of coming to God as our Father without his merit and righteousness; he is the high priest of our profession, our advocate.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

He speaks of his Father as the end (Joh 14:7): "If you had known me aright, you would have known my Father also; and henceforth, by the glory you have seen in me and the doctrine you have heard from me, you know him and have seen him." Here is,

[1.] A tacit rebuke to them for their dulness and carelessness in not acquainting themselves with Jesus Christ, though they had been his constant followers and associates: If you had known me--. They knew him, and yet did not know him so well as they might and should have known him. They knew him to be the Christ, but did not follow on to know God in him. Christ had said to the Jews (Joh 8:19): If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; and here the same to his disciples; for it is hard to say which is more strange, the wilful ignorance of those that are enemies to the light, or the defects and mistakes of the children of light, that have had such opportunities of knowledge. If they had known Christ aright, they would have known that his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; that he came down from heaven, and therefore must return to heaven; and then they would have known his Father also, would have known whither he designed to go, when he said, I go to the Father, to a glory in the other world, not in this. If we knew Christianity better, we should better know natural religion.

[2.] A favourable intimation that he was well satisfied concerning their sincerity, notwithstanding the weakness of their understanding: "And henceforth, from my giving you this hint, which will serve as a key to all the instructions I have given you hitherto, let me tell you, you know him, and have seen him, inasmuch as you know me, and have seen me;" for in the face of Christ we see the glory of God, as we see a father in his son that resembles him. Christ tells his disciples that they were not so ignorant as they seemed to be; for, though little children, yet they had known the Father, 1Jo 2:13. Note, Many of the disciples of Christ have more knowledge and more grace than they think they have, and Christ takes notice of, and is well pleased with, that good in them which they themselves are not aware of; for those that know God do not all at once know that they know him, 1Jo 2:3.

8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Philip's request for some extraordinary discovery of the Father. He was not so forward to speak as some others of them were, and yet, from an earnest desire of further light, he cries out, Show us the Father. Philip listened to what Christ said to Thomas, and fastened upon the last words, You have seen him. "Nay," says Philip, "that is what we want, that is what we would have: Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

(a.) This supposes an earnest desire of acquaintance with God as a Father. The petition is, "Show us the Father; give us to know him in that relation to us;" and this he begs, not for himself only, but for the rest of the disciples. The plea is, It sufficeth us. He not only professes it himself, but will pass his word for his fellow-disciples. Grant us but one sight of the Father, and we have enough. Jansenius saith, "Though Philip did not mean it, yet the Holy Ghost, by his mouth, designed here to teach us that the satisfaction and happiness of a soul consist in the vision and fruition of God," Ps 16:11,17:15. In the knowledge of God the understanding rests, and is at the summit of its ambition; in the knowledge of God as our Father the soul is satisfied; a sight of the Father is a heaven upon earth, fills us with joy unspeakable.

(b.) As Philip speaks it here, it intimates that he was not satisfied with such a discovery of the Father as Christ thought fit to give them, but he would prescribe to him, and press upon him, something further and no less than some visible appearance of the glory of God, like that to Moses (Ex 33:22), and to the elders of Israel, Ex 24:9-11. "Let us see the Father with our bodily eyes, as we see thee, and it sufficeth us; we will trouble thee with no more questions, Whither goest thou?" And so it manifests not only the weakness of his faith, but his ignorance of the gospel way of manifesting the Father, which is spiritual, and not sensible. Such a sight of God, he thinks, would suffice them, and yet those who did thus see him were not sufficed, but soon corrupted themselves, and made a graven image. Christ's institutions have provided better for the confirmation of our faith than our own inventions would.

9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

He refers him to what he had seen, Joh 14:9. He upbraids him with his ignorance and inadvertency: "Have I been so long time with you, now above three years intimately conversant with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? Now, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Wilt thou ask for that which thou hast already?" Now here,

[1.] He reproves him for two things:

First, For not improving his acquaintance with Christ, as he might have done, to a clear and distinct knowledge of him: "Hast thou not known me, Philip, whom thou hast followed so long, and conversed with so much?" Philip, the first day he came to him, declared that he knew him to be the Messiah (Joh 1:45), and yet to this day did not know the Father in him. Many that have good knowledge in the scripture and divine things fall short of the attainments justly expected from them, for want of compounding the ideas they have, and going on to perfection. Many know Christ, who yet do not know what they might know of him, nor see what they should see in him. That which aggravated Philip's dulness was that he had so long an opportunity of improvement: I have been so long time with thee.

Note, The longer we enjoy the means of knowledge and grace, the more inexcusable we are if we be found defective in grace and knowledge. Christ expects that our proficiency should be in some measure according to our standing, that we should not be always babes. Let us thus reason with ourselves: "Have I been so long a hearer of sermons, a student in the scripture, a scholar in the school of Christ, and yet so weak in the knowledge of Christ, and so unskilful in the word of righteousness?"

Secondly, He reproves him for his infirmity in the prayer made, Show us the Father. Note, Herein appears much of the weakness of Christ's disciples that they know not what to pray for as they ought (Ro 8:26), but often ask amiss (Jam 4:3), for that which either is not promised or is already bestowed in the sense of the promise, as here.

[2.] He instructs him, and gives him a maxim which not only in general magnifies Christ and leads us to the knowledge of God in him, but justifies what Christ had said (Joh 14:7): You know the Father, and have seen him; and answered what Philip had asked, Show us the Father. Why, saith Christ, the difficulty is soon over, for he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

First, All that saw Christ in the flesh might have seen the Father in him, if Satan had not blinded their minds, and kept them from a sight of Christ, as the image of God, 2Co 4:4.

Secondly, All that saw Christ by faith did see the Father in him, though they were not suddenly aware that they did so. In the light of Christ's doctrine they saw God as the father of lights; in the miracles they saw God as the God of power, the finger of God. The holiness of God shone in the spotless purity of Christ's life, and his grace in all the acts of grace he did.

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

He refers him to what he had reason to believe (Joh 14:10,11): "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and therefore that in seeing me thou hast seen the Father? Hast thou not believed this? If not, take my word for it, and believe it now."

[1.] See here what it is which we are to believe: That I am in the Father, and the Father in me; that is, as he had said (Joh 10:30), I and my Father are one. He speaks of the Father and himself as two persons, and yet so one as never any two were or can be. In knowing Christ as God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, and as being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, we know the Father; and in seeing him thus we see the Father. In Christ we behold more of the glory of God than Moses did at Mount Horeb.

[2.] See here what inducements we have to believe this; and they are two:--We must believe it,

First, For his word's sake: The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself. See Joh 7:16, My doctrine is not mine. What he said seemed to them careless as the word of man, speaking his own thought at his own pleasure; but really it was the wisdom of God that indited it and the will of God that enforced it. He spoke not of himself only, but the mind of God according to the eternal counsels.

Secondly, For his works' sake: The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth them; and therefore believe me for their sake. Observe,

1 The Father is said to dwell in him ho en emoi menon--he abideth in me, by the inseparable union of the divine and human nature: never had God such a temple to dwell in on earth as the body of the Lord Jesus, Joh 2:21. Here was the true Shechinah, of which that in the tabernacle was but a type. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, Col 2:9. The Father so dwells in Christ that in him he may be found, as a man where he dwells. Seek ye the Lord, seek him in Christ, and he will be found, for in him he dwells.

2. He doeth the works. Many words of power, and works of mercy, Christ did, and the Father did them in him; and the work of redemption in general was God's own work. 3. We are bound to believe this, for the very works' sake. As we are to believe the being and perfections of God for the sake of the works of creation, which declare his glory; so we are to believe the revelation of God to man in Jesus Christ for the sake of the works of the Redeemer, those mighty works which, by showing forth themselves (Mt 14:2), Show forth him, and God in him. Note, Christ's miracles are proofs of his divine mission, not only for the conviction of infidels, but for the confirmation of the faith of his own disciples, Joh 2:11,5:36,10:37.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The disciples, as they were full of grief to think of parting with their Master, so they were full of care what would become of themselves when he was gone; while he was with them, he was a support to them, kept them in countenance, kept them in heart; but, if he leave them, they will be as sheep having no shepherd, an easy prey to those who seek to run them down. Now, to silence these fears, Christ here assures them that they should be clothed with powers sufficient to bear them out. As Christ has all power, they, in his name, should have great power, both in heaven and in earth.

Great power on earth (Joh 14:12): He that believeth on me (as I know you do), the works that I do shall he do also. This does not weaken the argument Christ had taken from his works, to prove himself one with the Father (that others should do as great works), but rather strengthens it; for the miracles which the apostles wrought were wrought in his name, and by faith in him; and this magnifies his power more than any thing, that he not only wrought miracles himself, but gave power to others to do so too.

1. Two things he assures them of:--

(a.) That they should be enabled to do such works as he had done, and that they should have a more ample power for the doing of them than they had had when he first sent them forth, Mt 10:8. Did Christ heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead? So should they. Did he convince and convert sinners, and draw multitudes to him? So should they. Though he should depart, the work should not cease, nor fall to the ground, but should be carried on as vigorously and successfully as ever; and it is still in the doing.

(b.) That they should do greater works than these.

[1.] In the kingdom of nature they should work greater miracles. No miracle is little, but some to our apprehension seem greater than others. Christ had healed with the hem of his garment, but Peter with his shadow (Ac 5:15), Paul by the handkerchief that had touched him, Ac 19:12. Christ wrought miracles for two or three years in one country, but his followers wrought miracles in his name for many ages in divers countries. You shall do greater works, if there be occasion, for the glory of God. The prayer of faith, if at any time it had been necessary, would have removed mountains.

[2.] In the kingdom of grace. They should obtain greater victories by the gospel than had been obtained while Christ was upon earth. The truth is, the captivating of so great a part of the world to Christ, under such outward disadvantages, was the miracle of all. I think this refers

especially to the gift of tongues; this was the immediate effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, which was a constant miracle upon the mind, in which words are framed, and which was made to serve so glorious an intention as that of spreading the gospel to all nations in their own language. This was a greater sign to them that believed not (1Co 14:22), and more powerful for their conviction, than any other miracle whatever.

2 The reason Christ gives for this is, Because I go unto my Father,

(a.) "Because I go, it will be requisite that you should have such a power, lest the work suffer damage by my absence."

(b.) "Because I go to the Father, I shall be in a capacity to furnish you with such a power, for I go to the Father, to send the Comforter, from whom you shall receive power," Ac 1:8. The wonderful works which they did in Christ's name were part of the glories of his exalted state, when he ascended on high, Eph 4:8. The disciples, as they were full of grief to think of parting with their Master, so they were full of care what would become of themselves when he was gone; while he was with them, he was a support to them, kept them in countenance, kept them in heart; but, if he leave them, they will be as sheep having no shepherd, an easy prey to those who seek to run them down. Now, to silence these fears, Christ here assures them that they should be clothed with powers sufficient to bear them out. As Christ has all power, they, in his name, should have great power, both in heaven and in earth.

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13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

Great power in heaven: "Whatsoever you shall ask, that will I do (Joh 14:13,14), as Israel, who was a prince with God. Therefore you shall do such mighty works, because you have such an interest in me, and I in my Father." Observe,

1. In what way they were to keep up communion with him, and derive power from him, when he was gone to the Father--by prayer. When dear friends are to be removed to a distance from each other, they provide for the settling of a correspondence; thus, when Christ was going to his Father, he tells his disciples how they might write to him upon every occasion, and send their epistles by a safe and ready way of conveyance, without danger of miscarrying, or lying by the way: "Let me hear from you by prayer, the prayer of faith, and you shall hear from me by the Spirit." This was the old way of intercourse with Heaven, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord; but Christ by his death has laid it more open, and it is still open to us. Here is,

(a.) Humility prescribed: You shall ask. Though they had quitted all for Christ, they could demand nothing of him as a debt, but must be humble supplicants, beg or starve, beg or perish.

(b.) Liberty allowed: "Ask any thing, any thing that is good and proper for you; any thing, provided you know what you ask, you may ask; you may ask for assistance in your work, for a mouth and wisdom, for preservation out of the hands of your enemies, for power to work miracles when there is occasion, for the success of the ministry in the conversion

of souls; ask to be informed, directed, vindicated." Occasions vary, but they shall be welcome to the throne of grace upon every occasion.

2. In what name they were to present their petitions: Ask in my name. To ask in Christ's name is,

(a.) To plead his merit and intercession, and to depend upon that plea. The Old-Testament saints had an eye to this when they prayed for the Lord's sake (Da 9:17), and for the sake of the anointed (Ps 84:9), but Christ's mediation is brought to a clearer light by the gospel, and so we are enabled more expressly to ask in his name. When Christ dictated the Lord's prayer, this was not inserted, because they did not then so fully understand this matter as they did afterwards, when the Spirit was poured out. If we ask in our own name, we cannot expect to speed, for, being strangers, we have no name in heaven; being sinners, we have an ill name there; but Christ's is a good name, well known in heaven, and very precious.

(b.) It is to aim at his glory and to seek this as our highest end in all our prayers.

3. What success they should have in their prayers: "What you ask, that will I do," Joh 14:13. And again (Joh 14:14), "I will do it. You may be sure I will: not only it shall be done, I will see it done, or give orders for the doing of it, but I will do it;" for he has not only the interest of an intercessor, but the power of a sovereign prince, who sits at the right hand of God, the hand of action, and has the doing of all in the kingdom of God. By faith in his name we may have what we will for the asking.

4. For what reason their prayers should speed so well: That the Father may be glorified in the Son. That is,

(a.) This they ought to aim at, and have their eye upon, in asking. In this all our desires and prayers should meet as in their centre; to this they must all be directed, that God in Christ may be honoured by our services, and in our salvation. Hallowed be thy name is an answered prayer, and is put

first, because, if the heart be sincere in this, it does in a manner consecrate all the other petitions.

(b.) This Christ will aim at in granting, and for the sake of this will do what they ask, that hereby the glory of the Father in the Son may be manifested. The wisdom, power, and goodness of God were magnified in the Redeemer when by a power derived from him, and exerted in his name and for his service, his apostles and ministers were enabled to do such great things, both in the proofs of their doctrine and in the successes of it.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

He premises to this a memento of duty (Joh 14:15): If you love me, keep my commandments. Keeping the commandments of Christ is here put for the practice of godliness in general, and for the faithful and diligent discharge of their office as apostles in particular. Now observe,

1. When Christ is comforting them, he bids them keep his commandments; for we must not expect comfort but in the way of duty. The same word (parakaleo) signifies both to exhort and to comfort.

2. When they were in care what they should do, now that their Master was leaving them, and what would become of them now, he bids them keep his commandments, and then nothing could come amiss to them. In difficult times our care concerning the events of the day should be swallowed up in a care concerning the duty of the day.

3. When they were showing their love to Christ by their grieving to think of his departure, and the sorrow which filled their hearts upon the foresight of that, he bids them, if they would show their love to him, do it, not by these weak and feminine passions, but by their conscientious care to perform their trust, and by a universal obedience to his commands; this is better than sacrifice, better than tears. Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs.

4. When Christ has given them precious promises, of the answer of their prayers and the coming of the Comforter, he lays down this as a limitation of the promises, "Provided you keep my commandments, from a principle of love to me." Christ will not be an advocate for any but those that will be ruled and advised by him as their counsel. Follow the conduct of the Spirit, and you shall have the comfort of the Spirit.

1. It is promised that they shall have another comforter. This is the great New-Testament promise (Ac 1:4), as that of the Messiah was of the Old Testament; a promise adapted to the present distress of the disciples, who were in sorrow, and needed a comforter. Observe here,

(1.) The blessing promised: allon parakleton. The word is used only here in these discourses of Christ's, and 1Jo 2:1, where we translate it an advocate. The Rhemists, and Dr. Hammond, are for retaining the Greek word Paraclete; we read, Ac 9:31, of the paraklesis tou hagiou pneumatos, the comfort of the Holy Ghost, including his whole office as a paraclete.

[1.] You shall have another advocate. The office of the Spirit was to be Christ's advocate with them and others, to plead his cause, and take care of his concerns, on earth; to be vicarius Christi--Christ's Vicar, as one of the ancients call him; and to be their advocate with their opposers. When Christ was with them he spoke for them as there was occasion; but now that he is leaving them they shall not be run down, the Spirit of the Father shall speak in them, Mt 10:19,20. And the cause cannot miscarry that is pleaded by such an advocate.

[2.] You shall have another master or teacher, another exhorter. While they had Christ with them he excited and exhorted them to their duty; but now that he is going he leaves one with them that shall do this as effectually, though silently. Jansenius thinks the most proper word to render it by is a patron, one that shall both instruct and protect you. [3.] Another comforter. Christ was expected as the consolation of Israel. One of the names of the Messiah among the Jews was Menahem--the Comforter. The Targum calls the days of the Messiah the years of consolation. Christ comforted his disciples when he was with them, and

now that he was leaving them in their greatest need he promises them another.

(2.) The giver of this blessing: The Father shall give him, my Father and your Father; it includes both. The same that gave the Son to be our Saviour will give his Spirit to be our comforter, pursuant to the same design. The Son is said to send the Comforter (Joh 15:26), but the Father is the prime agent.

(3.) How this blessing is procured--by the intercession of the Lord Jesus: I will pray the Father. He said (Joh 14:14) I will do it; here he saith, I will pray for it, to show not only that he is both God and man, but that he is both king and priest. As priest he is ordained for men to make intercession, as king he is authorized by the Father to execute judgment. When Christ saith, I will pray the Father, it does not suppose that the Father is unwilling, or must be importuned to it, but only that the gift of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's mediation, purchased by his merit, and taken out by his intercession.

(4.) The continuance of this blessing: That he may abide with you for ever. That is,

[1.] "With you, as long as you live. You shall never know the want of a comforter, nor lament his departure, as you are now lamenting mine."

Note, It should support us under the loss of those comforts which were designed us for a time that there are everlasting consolations provided for us. It was not expedient that Christ should be with them for ever, for they who were designed for public service, must not always live a college-life; they must disperse, and therefore a comforter that would be with them all, in all places alike, wheresoever dispersed and howsoever distressed, was alone fit to be with them for ever.

[2.] "With your successors, when you are gone, to the end of time; your successors in Christianity, in the ministry."

[3.] If we take for ever in its utmost extent, the promise will be accomplished in those consolations of God which will be the eternal joy of all the saints, pleasures for ever.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

This comforter is the Spirit of truth, whom you know, Joh 14:16,17. They might think it impossible to have a comforter equivalent to him who is the Son of God: "Yea," saith Christ, "you shall have the Spirit of God, who is equal in power and glory with the Son."

(a.) The comforter promised is the Spirit, one who should do his work in a spiritual way and manner, inwardly and invisibly, by working on men's spirits.

(b.) "He is the Spirit of truth." He will be true to you, and to his undertaking for you, which he will perform to the utmost. He will teach you the truth, will enlighten your minds with the knowledge of it, will strengthen and confirm your belief of it, and will increase your love to it. The Gentiles by their idolatries, and the Jews by their traditions, were led into gross errors and mistakes; but the Spirit of truth shall not only lead you into all truth, but others by your ministry. Christ is the truth, and he is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit that he was anointed with.

(c.) He is one whom the world cannot receive; but you know him. Therefore he abideth with you.

[1.] The disciples of Christ are here distinguished from the world, for they are chosen and called out of the world that lies in wickedness; they are the children and heirs of another world, not of this.

[2.] It is the misery of those that are invincibly devoted to the world that they cannot receive the Spirit of truth. The spirit of the world and of God are spoken of as directly contrary the one to the other (1Co 2:12); for

where the spirit of the world has the ascendant, the Spirit of God is excluded. Even the princes of this world, though, as princes, they had advantages of knowledge, yet, as princes of this world, they laboured under invincible prejudices, so that they knew not the things of the Spirit of God, 1Co 2:8.

[3.] Therefore men cannot receive the Spirit of truth because they see him not, neither know him. The comforts of the Spirit are foolishness to them, as much as ever the cross of Christ was, and the great things of the gospel, like those of the law, are counted as a strange thing. These are judgments far above out of their sight. Speak to the children of this world of the operations of the Spirit, and you are as a barbarian to them.

[4.] The best knowledge of the Spirit of truth is that which is got by experience: You know him, for he dwelleth with you. Christ had dwelt with them, and by their acquaintance with him they could not but know the Spirit of truth. They had themselves been endued with the Spirit in some measure. What enabled them to leave all to follow Christ, and to continue with him in his temptations? What enabled them to preach the gospel, and work miracles, but the Spirit dwelling in them? The experiences of the saints are the explications of the promises; paradoxes to others are axioms to them.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

When friends are parting, it is a common request they make to each other, "Pray let us hear from you as often as you can:" this Christ engaged to his disciples, that out of sight they should not be out of mind.

He promises that he would continue his care of them (Joh 14:18): "I will not leave you orphans, or fatherless; for, though I leave you, yet I leave you this comfort, I will come to you." His departure from them was that which grieved them; but it was not so bad as they apprehended, for it was neither total nor final.

1. Not total. "Though I leave you without my bodily presence, yet I do not leave you without comfort." Though children, and left little, yet they had received the adoption of sons, and his Father would be their Father, with whom those who otherwise would be fatherless find mercy. Note,

The case of true believers, though sometimes it may be sorrowful, is never comfortless, because they are never orphans: for God is their Father, who is an everlasting Father.

2. Not final: I will come to you, erchomai--I do come; that is,

(a.) "I will come speedily to you at my resurrection, I will not be long away, but will be with you again in a little time." He had often said, The third day I will rise again.

(b.) "I will be coming daily to you in my Spirit;" in the tokens of his love, and visits of his grace, he is still coming.

(c.) "I will come certainly at the end of time; surely I will come quickly to introduce you into the joy of your Lord." Note, The consideration of Christ's coming to us saves us from being comfortless in his removals from us; for, if he depart for a season, it is that we may receive him for ever. Let this moderate our grief, The Lord is at hand.

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

He promises that they should continue their acquaintance with him and interest in him (Joh 14:19,20): Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more, that is, Now I am no more in the world. After his death, the world saw him no more, for, though he rose to life, he never showed himself to all the people, Ac 10:41. The malignant world thought they had seen enough of him, and cried, Away with him; crucify him; and so shall their doom be; they shall see him no more. Those only that see Christ with an eye of faith shall see him for ever. The world sees him no more till his second coming; but his disciples have communion with him in his absence.

1. You see me, and shall continue to see me, when the world sees me no more. They saw him with their bodily eyes after his resurrection, for he showed himself to them by many infallible proofs, Ac 1:8. And then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. They saw him with an eye of

faith after his ascension, sitting at God's right hand, as Lord of all; saw that in him which the world saw not.

2. Because I live, you shall live also. That which grieved them was, that their Master was dying, and they counted upon nothing else but to die with him. No, saith Christ,

(a.) I live; this the great God glories in, I live, saith the Lord, and Christ saith the same; not only, I shall live, as he saith of them, but, I do live; for he has life in himself, and lives for evermore. We are not comfortless, while we know that our Redeemer lives.

(b.) Therefore you shall live also. Note, The life of Christians is bound up in the life of Christ; as sure and as long as he lives, those that by faith are united to him shall live also; they shall live spiritually, a divine life in communion with God. This life is hid with Christ; if the head and root live, the members and branches live also. They shall live eternally; their bodies shall rise in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; it will be well with them in the world to come. It cannot but be well with all that are his, Isa 26:19.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

You shall have the assurance of this (Joh 14:20): At that day, when I am glorified, when the Spirit is poured out, you shall know more clearly and certainly than you do now that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

(a.) These glorious mysteries will be fully known in heaven; At that day, when I shall receive you to myself, you shall know perfectly that which now you see through a glass darkly. Now it appears not what we shall be, but then it will appear what we were.

(b.) They were more fully known after the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles; at that day divine light should shine, and their eyes should see more clearly, their knowledge should greatly advance and increase then, would become more extensive and more distinct, and like the blind

man's at the second touch of Christ's hand, who at first only saw men as trees walking.

(c.) They are known by all that receive the Spirit of truth, to their abundant satisfaction, for in the knowledge of this is founded their fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. They know,

[1.] That Christ is in the Father, is one with the Father, by their experience of what he has wrought for them and in them; they find what an admirable consent and harmony there is between Christianity and natural religion, that that is grafted into this, and so they know that Christ is in the Father.

[2.] That Christ is in them; experienced Christians know by the Spirit that Christ abides in them, 1Jo 3:24.

[3.] That they are in Christ, for the relation is mutual, and equally near on both sides, Christ in them and they in Christ, which speaks an intimate and inseparable union; in the virtue of which it is that because he lives they shall live also. Note, First, Union with Christ is the life of believers; and their relation to him, and to God through him, is their felicity. Secondly, The knowledge of this union is their unspeakable joy and satisfaction; they were now in Christ, and he in them, but he speaks of it as a further act of grace that they should know it, and have the comfort of it. An interest in Christ and the knowledge of it are sometimes separated.

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Who they are whom Christ will look upon, and accept, as lovers of him; those that have his commandments, and keep them. By this Christ shows that the kind things he here said to his disciples were intended not for those only that were now his followers, but for all that should believe in him through their word. Here is,

(a.) The duty of those who claim the dignity of being disciples. Having Christ's commandments, we must keep them; as Christians in name and profession we have Christ's commandments, we have them sounding in our ears, written before our eyes, we have the knowledge of them; but this is not enough; would we approve ourselves Christians indeed, we must keep them. Having them in our heads, we must keep them in our hearts and lives.

(b.) The dignity of those that do the duty of disciples. They are looked upon by Christ to be such as love him. Not those that have the greatest wit and know how to talk for him, but those that keep his commandments. Note, The surest evidence of our love to Christ is obedience to the laws of Christ. Such is the love of a subject to his sovereign, a dutiful, respectful, obediential love, a conformity to his will, and satisfaction in his wisdom.

What returns he will make to them for their love; rich returns; there is no love lost upon Christ.

(a.) They shall have the Father's love: He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. We could not love God if he did not first, out of his good-will to us, give us his grace to love him; but there is a love of complacency promised to those that do love God, Pr 8:17. He loves them, and lets them know that he loves them, smiles upon them, and embraces them. God so loves the Son as to love all those that love him.

(b.) They shall have Christ's love: And I will love him, as God-man, as Mediator. God will love him as a Father, and I will love him as a brother, an elder brother. The Creator will love him, and be the felicity of his being; the Redeemer will love him, and be the protector of his well-being. In the nature of God, nothing shines more brightly than this, that God is love. And in the undertaking of Christ nothing appears more glorious than this, that he loved us. Now both these loves are the crown and comfort, the grace and glory, which shall be to all those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Christ was now leaving his disciples, but promises to continue his love to them; for he not only retains a kindness for believers,

though absent, but is doing them kindness while absent, for he bears them on his heart, and ever lives interceding for them.

(c.) They shall have the comfort of that love: I will manifest myself to him. Some understand it of Christ's showing himself alive to his disciples after his resurrection; but, being promised to all that love him and keep his commandments, it must be construed so as to extend to them. There is a spiritual manifestation of Christ and his love made to all believers. When he enlightens their minds to know his love, and the dimensions of it (Eph 3:18,19), enlivens their graces, and draws them into exercise, and thus enlarges their comforts in himself--when he clears up the evidences of their interest in him, and gives them tokens of his love, experience of his tenderness, and earnests of his kingdom and glory,--then he manifests himself to them; and Christ is manifested to none but those to whom he is pleased to manifest himself.

22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world ?

One of the disciples expresses his wonder and surprise at it, Joh 14:22. Observe,

[1.] Who it was that said this--Judas, not Iscariot. Judah, or Judas, was a famous name; the most famous tribe in Israel was that of Judah; two of Christ's disciples were of that name: one of them was the traitor, the other was the brother of James (Lu 6:16), one of those that were akin to Christ, Mt 13:55. He is called Lebbeus and Thaddeus, was the penman of the last of the epistles, which in our translation, for distinction's sake, we call the epistle of Jude. This was he that spoke here. Observe,

First, There was a very good man, and a very bad man, called by the same name; for names commend us not to God, nor do they make men worse. Judas the apostle was never the worse, nor Judas the apostate ever the better, for being namesakes. But,

Secondly, The evangelist carefully distinguishes between them; when he speaks of this pious Judas, he adds, not Iscariot. Take heed of mistaking; let us not confound the precious and the vile.

[2.] What he said--Lord how is it? which intimates either, First, the weakness of his understanding. So some take it. He expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, that it should appear in external pomp and power, such as all the world would wonder after. "How, then," thinks he, "should it be confined to us only?" ti gegonen--"what is the matter now, that thou wilt not show thyself openly as is expected, that the Gentiles may come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising?"

Note, We create difficulties to ourselves by mistaking the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world. Or, Secondly, as expressing the strength of his affections, and the humble and thankful sense he had of Christ's distinguishing favours to them: Lord, how is it? He is amazed at the condescensions of divine grace, as David, 2Sa 7:18. What is there in us to deserve so great a favour? Note,

1. Christ's manifesting himself to his disciples is done in a distinguishing way-to them, and not to the world that sits in darkness; to the base, and not to the mighty and noble; to babes, and not to the wise and prudent. Distinguishing favours are very obliging; considering who are passed by, and who are pitched upon.

2. It is justly marvellous in our eyes; for it is unaccountable, and must be resolved into free and sovereign grace. Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

[1.] He further explains the condition of the promise, which was loving him, and keeping his commandments. And, as to this, he shows what an inseparable connection there is between love and obedience; love is the root, obedience is the fruit.

First, Where a sincere love to Christ is in the heart, there will be obedience: "If a man love me indeed, that love will be such a commanding constraining principle in him, that, no question, he will keep

my words." Where there is true love to Christ there is a value for his favour, a veneration for his authority, and an entire surrender of the whole man to his direction and government. Where love is, duty follows of course, is easy and natural, and flows from a principle of gratitude.

Secondly, On the other hand, where there is no true love to Christ there will be no care to obey him: He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings, Joh 14:24. This comes in here as a discovery of those that do not love Christ; whatever they pretend, certainly those do not love him that believe not his truths, and obey not his laws, to whom Christ's sayings are but as idle tales, which he heeds not, or hard sayings, which he likes not. It is also a reason why Christ will not manifest himself to the world that doth not love him, because they put this affront upon him, not to keep his sayings; why should Christ be familiar with those that will be strange to him?

[2.] He further explains the promise (Joh 14:23): If a man thus love me, I will manifest myself to him.

First, My Father will love him; this he had said before (Joh 14:21), and here repeats it for the confirming of our faith; because it is hard to imagine that the great god should make those the objects of his love that had made themselves vessels of his wrath. Jude wondered that Christ should manifest himself to them; but this answers it, "If my Father love you, why should not I be free with you?"

Secondly, We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. This explains the meaning of Christ's manifesting himself to him, and magnifies the favour.

1. Not only,I will, but, We will, I and the Father, who, in this, are one. See Joh 14:9. The light and love of God are communicated to man in the light and love of the Redeemer, so that wherever Christ is formed the image of God is stamped.

2. Not only, "I will show myself to him at a distance," but, "We will come to him, to be near him, to be with him," such are the powerful influences of divine graces and comforts upon the souls of those that love Christ in sincerity.

3. Not only, "I will give him a transient view of me, or make him a short and running visit," but, We will take up our abode with him which denotes complacency in him and constancy to him. God will not only love obedient believers, but he will take a pleasure in loving them, will rest in love to them, Zep 3:17. He will be with them as at his home.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

He gives a good reason both to bind us to observe the condition and encourage us to depend upon the promise. The word which you hear is not mine, but his that sent me, Joh 14:24. To this purport he had often spoken (Joh 7:16,8:28,12:44), and here it comes in very pertinently.

First, the stress of duty is laid upon the precept of Christ as our rule, and justly, for that word of Christ which we are to keep is the Father's word, and his will the Father's will.

Secondly, The stress of our comfort is laid upon the promise of Christ. But forasmuch as, in dependence upon that promise, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and quit all, it concerns us to enquire whether the security be sufficient for us to venture our all upon; and this satisfies us that it is, that the promise is not Christ's bare word, but the Father's which sent him, which therefore we may rely upon.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

The reflection Christ would have them make upon the instructions he had given them: These things have I spoken unto you (referring to all the good lessons he had taught them, since they entered themselves into his school), being yet present with you. This intimates,

(1.) That what he had said he did not retract nor unsay, but ratify it, or stand to it. What he had spoken he had spoken, and would abide by it.

(2.) That he had improved the opportunity of his bodily presence with them to the utmost: "As long as I have been yet present with them, you know I have lost no time." Note, When our teachers are about to be removed from us we should call to mind what they have spoken, being yet present with us.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The encouragement given them to expect another teacher, and that Christ would find out a way of speaking to them after his departure from them, Joh 14:26. He had told them before that the Father would give them this other comforter (Joh 14:16), and here he returns to speak of it again; for as the promise of the Messiah had been, so the promise of the Spirit now was, the consolation of Israel. Two things he here tells them further concerning the sending of the Holy Ghost:--

(1.) On whose account he should be sent: "The Father will send him in my name; that is, for my sake, at my special instance and request:" or, "as my agent and representative." He came in his Father's name, as his ambassador: the Spirit comes in his name, as resident in his absence, to carry on his undertaking, and to ripen things for his second coming. Hence he is called the Spirit of Christ, for he pleads his cause, and does his work.

(2.) On what errand he should be sent; two things he shall do:--

[1.] He shall teach you all things, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation Christ was a teacher to his disciples; if he leave them now that they have made so little proficiency, what will become of them? Why, the Spirit shall teach them, shall be their standing tutor. He shall teach them all things necessary for them either to learn themselves, or to teach others. For those that would teach the things of God must first themselves be taught of God; this is the Spirit's work. See Isa 59:21.

[2.] He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. Many a good lesson Christ had taught them, which they had

forgotten, and which would be to seek when they had occasion for it. Many things they did not retain the remembrance of, because they did not rightly understand the meaning of them. The Spirit shall not teach them a new gospel, but bring to their minds that which they had been taught, by leading them into the understanding of it. The apostles were all of them to preach, and some of them to write, the things that Jesus did and taught, to transmit them to distant nations and future ages; now, if they had been left to themselves herein, some needful things might have been forgotten, others misrepresented, through the treachery of their memories; therefore the Spirit is promised to enable them truly to relate and record what Christ said unto them. And to all the saints the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him by faith and prayer we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

That they should be under the influence of his peace (Joh 14:27): Peace I leave with you. When Christ was about to leave the world he made his will. His soul he committed to his Father; his body he bequeathed to Joseph, to be decently interred; his clothes fell to the soldiers; his mother he left to the care of John: but what should he leave to his poor disciples, that had left all for him? Silver and gold he had none; but he left them that which was infinitely better, his peace. "I leave you, but I leave my peace with you. I not only give you a title to it, but put you in possession of it." He did not part in anger, but in love; for this was his farewell, Peace I leave with you, as a dying father leaves portions to his children; and this is a worthy portion. Observe,

1 The legacy that is here bequeathed Peace, my peace. Peace is put for all good, and Christ has left us all needful good, all that is really and truly good, as all the purchased promised good. Peace is put for reconciliation and love; the peace bequeathed is peace with God, peace with one another; peace in our own bosoms seems to be especially meant; a tranquillity of mind arising from a sense of our justification before God. It is the counterpart of our pardons, and the composure of our minds. This Christ calls his peace, for he is himself our peace, Eph 2:14. It is the peace

he purchased for us and preached to us, and on which the angels congratulated men at his birth, Lu 2:14.

2. To whom this legacy is bequeathed: "To you, my disciples and followers, that will be exposed to trouble, and have need of peace; to you that are the sons of peace, and are qualified to receive it." This legacy was left to them as the representatives of the church, to them and their successors, to them and all true Christians in all ages.

3. In what manner it is left: Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. That is,

(1.) "I do not compliment you with Peace be unto you; no, it is not a mere formality, but a real blessing."

(2.) "The peace I give is of such a nature that the smiles of the world cannot give it, nor the frowns of the world take it away." Or,

(3.) "The gifts I give to you are not such as this world gives to its children and votaries, to whom it is kind." The world's gifts concern only the body and time; Christ's gifts enrich the soul for eternity: the world gives lying vanities, and that which will cheat us; Christ gives substantial blessings, which will never fail us: the world gives and takes; Christ gives a good part that shall never be taken away.

(4.) The peace which Christ gives is infinitely more valuable than that which the world gives. The world's peace begins in ignorance, consists with sin, and ends in endless troubles; Christ's peace begins in grace, consists with no allowed sin, and ends at length in everlasting peace. As is the difference between a killing lethargy and a reviving refreshing sleep, such is the difference between Christ's peace and the world's.

4. What use they should make of it: Let not your heart be troubled, for any evils past or present, neither let it be afraid of any evil to come. Note, Those that are interested in the covenant of grace, and entitled to the peace

which Christ gives, ought not to yield to overwhelming griefs and fears. This comes in here as the conclusion of the whole matter; he had said (Joh 14:1), Let not your heart be troubled, and here he repeats it as that for which he had now given sufficient reason.

28 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

Christ here gives his disciples another reason why their hearts should not be troubled for his going away; and that is, because his heart was not. And here he tells them what it was that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame, that they might look unto him, and run with patience. He comforted himself,

I. That, though he went away, he should come again: "You have heard how I have said, and now I say it again, I go away, and come again." Note, What we have heard of the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning his second coming, we have need to be told again and again. When we are under the power of any transport of passion, grief, or fear, or care, we forget that Christ will come again. See Php 4:5. Christ encouraged himself with this, in his sufferings and death, that he should come again, and the same should comfort us in our departure at death; we go away to come again; the leave we take of our friends at that parting is only a good night, not a final farewell. See 1Th 4:13,14.

II. That he went to his Father: "If you loved me, as by your sorrow you say you do, you would rejoice instead of mourning, because, though I leave you, yet I said, I go unto the Father, not only mine, but yours, which will be my advancement and your advantage; for my Father is greater than I." Observe here,

1. It is matter of joy to Christ's disciples that he is gone to the Father, to take possession for orphans, and make intercession for transgressors. His departure had a bright side as well as a dark side. Therefore he sent this message after his resurrection (Joh 20:17), I ascend to my Father and your Father, as most comfortable.

2 The reason of this is, because the Father is greater than he, which, if it be a proper proof of that for which it is alleged (as no doubt it is), must be understood thus, that his state with his Father would be much more excellent and glorious than his present state; his returning to his Father (so Dr. Hammond) would be the advancing of him to a much higher condition than that which he was now in. Or thus, His going to the Father himself, and bringing all his followers to him there, was the ultimate end of his undertaking, and therefore greater than the means. Thus Christ raises the thoughts and expectations of his disciples to something greater than that in which now they thought all their happiness bound up. The kingdom of the Father, wherein he shall be all in all, will be greater than the mediatorial kingdom.

3. The disciples of Christ should show that they love him by their rejoicing in the glories of his exaltation, rather than by lamenting the sorrows of his humiliation, and rejoicing that he is gone to his Father, where he would be, and where we shall be shortly with him. Many that love Christ, let their love run out in a wrong channel; they think if they love him they must be continually in pain because of him; whereas those that love him should dwell at ease in him, should rejoice in Christ Jesus.

29 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

That his going away, compared with the prophecies which went before of it, would be a means of confirming the faith of his disciples (Joh 14:29): "I have told you before it come to pass that I must die and rise again, and ascend to the Father, and send the Comforter, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe." See this reason, Joh 13:19,16:4. Christ told his disciples of his death, though he knew it would both puzzle them and grieve them, because it would afterwards redound to the confirmation of their faith in two things:--

1. That he who foretold these things had a divine prescience, and knew beforehand what day would bring forth. When St. Paul was going to Jerusalem, he knew not the things that did abide him there, but Christ did.

2. That the things foretold were according to the divine purpose and designation, not sudden resolves, but the counterparts of an eternal

counsel. Let them therefore not be troubled at that which would be for the confirmation of their faith, and so would redound to their real benefit; for the trial of our faith is very precious, though it cost us present heaviness, through manifold temptations, 1Pe 1:6.

30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

That he was sure of a victory over Satan, with whom he knew he was to have a struggle in his departure (Joh 14:30): "Henceforth I will not talk much with you, having not much to say, but what may be adjourned to the pouring out of the Spirit." He had a great deal of good talk with them after this (Joh 15:1-16:33), but, in comparison with what he had said, it was not much. His time was now short, and he therefore spoke largely to them now, because the opportunity would soon be over.

Note, We should always endeavour to talk to the purpose, because perhaps we may not have time to talk much. We know not how soon our breath may be stopped, and therefore should be always breathing something that is good. When we come to be sick and die, perhaps we may not be capable of talking much to those about us; and therefore what good counsel we have to give them, let us give it while we are in health. One reason why he would not talk much with them was because he had now other work to apply himself to: The prince of this world comes. He called the devil the prince of this world, Joh 12:31. The disciples dreamed of their Master being the prince of this world, and they worldly princes under him. But Christ tells them that the prince of this world was his enemy, and so were the princes of this world, that were actuated and ruled by him, 1Co 2:8. But he has nothing in me. Observe here,

1 The prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. The devil had set upon him with his temptations (Mt 4:1-11), had offered him the kingdoms of this world, if he would hold them as tributary to him, with an eye to which Christ calls him, in disdain, the prince of this world. Then the devil departed from him for a season; "But now," says Christ, "I see him rallying again, preparing to make a furious onset, and so to gain by terrors that which he could not gain by allurements;" to frighten from his undertaking, when he could not entice from it. Note, The foresight of a temptation gives us

great advantage in our resistance of it; for, being fore-warned, we should be fore-armed. While we are here, we may see Satan continually coming against us, and ought therefore to be always upon our guard.

2 The assurance he had of good success in the conflict: He hath nothing in me, ouk echei ouden--He hath nothing at all.

(a.) There was no guilt in Christ to give authority to the prince of this world in his terrors. The devil is said to have the power of death (Heb 2:14); the Jews called him the angel of death, as an executioner. Now Christ having done no evil, Satan had no legal power against him, and therefore, though he prevailed to crucify him, he could not prevail to terrify him; though he hurried him to death, yet not to despair. When Satan comes to disquiet us, he has something in us to perplex us with, for we have all sinned; but, when he would disturb Christ, he found no occasion against him.

(b.) There was no corruption in Christ, to give advantage to the prince of this world in his temptations. He could not crush his undertaking by drawing him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in him, nothing irregular for his temptations to fasten upon, no tinder for him to strike fire into; such was the spotless purity of his nature that he was above the possibility of sinning. The more Satan's interest in us is crushed and decays, the more comfortably may we expect sufferings and death.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

That his departure was in compliance with, and obedience to, his Father. Satan could not force his life from him, and yet he would die: that the world may know that I love the Father, Joh 14:31. We may take this,

1. As confirming what he had often said, that his undertaking, as Mediator, was a demonstration to the world,

(a.) Of his compliance with the Father; hereby it appeared that he loved the Father. As it was an evidence of his love to man that he died for his salvation, so it was of his love to God that he died for his glory and the

accomplishing of his purposes. Let the world know that between the Father and the Son there is not love lost. As the Father loved the Son, and gave all things into his hands; so the Son loved the Father, and gave his spirit into his hand.

(b.) Of his obedience to his Father: "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I did--did the thing commanded me in the manner commanded." Note, The best evidence of our love to the Father is our doing as he hath given us commandment. As Christ loved the Father, and obeyed him, even to the death, so we must love Christ, and obey him. Christ's eye to the Father's commandment, obliging him to suffer and die, bore him up with cheerfulness, and overcame the reluctancies of nature; this took off the offence of the cross, that what he did was by order from the Father. The command of God is sufficient to bear us out in that which is most disputed by others, and therefore should be sufficient to bear us up in that which is most difficult to ourselves: This is the will of him that made me, that sent me.

2. As concluding what he had now said; having brought it to this, here he leaves it: that the world may know that I love the Father. You shall see how cheerfully I can meet the appointed cross: "Arise, let us go hence to the garden;" so some; or, to Jerusalem. When we talk of troubles at a distance, it is easy to say, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; but when it comes to the pinch, when an unavoidable cross lies in the way of duty, then to say, "Arise, let us go to meet it," instead of going out of our way to miss it, this lets the world know that we love the Father. If this discourse was at the close of the passover-supper, it should seem that at these words he arose from the table, and retired into the drawing-room, where he might the more freely carry on the discourse with his disciples in the following chapters, and pray with them. Dr. Goodwin's remark upon this is, that Christ mentioning the great motive of his sufferings, his Father's commandment, was in all haste to go forth to suffer and die, was afraid of slipping the time of Judas's meeting him: Arise, says he, let us go hence but he looks upon the glass, as it were, sees it not quite out, and therefore sits down again, and preaches another sermon. Now,

(a.) In these words he gives his disciples an encouragement to follow him. He does not say, I must go; but, Let us go. He calls them out to no hardships but what he himself goes before them in as their leader. They had promised they would not desert him: "Come," says he, "let us go then; let us see how you will make the words good."

(b.) He gives them an example, teaching them at all times, especially in suffering times, to sit loose to all things here below, and often to think and speak of leaving them. Though we sit easy, and in the midst of the delights of an agreeable conversation, yet we must not think of being here always: Arise, let us go hence. If it was at the close of the paschal and eucharistical supper, it teaches us that the solemnities of our communion with God are not to be constant in this world. When we sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and say, It is good to be here; yet we must think of rising and going hence; going down from the mount.

John-15

Jesus the True Vine

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

1. That Jesus Christ is the vine, the true vine. It is an instance of the humility of Christ that he is pleased to speak of himself under low and humble comparisons. He that is the Sun of righteousness, and the bright and morning Star, compares himself to a vine. The church, which is Christ mystical, is a vine (Ps 80:8), so is Christ, who is the church seminal. Christ and his church are thus set forth.

(a.) He is the vine, planted in the vineyard, and not a spontaneous product; planted in the earth, for his is the Word made flesh. The vine has an unsightly unpromising outside; and Christ had no form nor comeliness, Isa 53:2 The vine is a spreading plant, and Christ will be known as salvation to the ends of the earth. The fruit of the vine honours God and cheers man (Jdg 9:13), so does the fruit of Christ's mediation; it is better than gold, Pr 8:19.

(b.) He is the true vine, as truth is opposed to pretence and counterfeit; he is really a fruitful plant, a plant of renown. He is not like that wild vine which deceived those who gathered of it (2Ki 4:39), but a true vine. Unfruitful trees are said to lie (Hab 3:17. marg.), but Christ is a vine that will not deceive. Whatever excellency there is in any creature, serviceable to man, it is but a shadow of that grace which is in Christ for his people's good. He is that true vine typified by Judah's vine, which enriched him with the blood of the grape (Ge 49:11), by Joseph's vine, the branches of which ran over the wall (Ge 49:22), by Israel's vine, under which he dwelt safely, 1Ki 4:25.

2. That believers are branches of this vine, which supposes that Christ is the root of the vine. The root is unseen, and our life is hid with Christ; the root bears the tree (Ro 11:18), diffuses sap to it, and is all in all to its flourishing and fruitfulness; and in Christ are all supports and supplies. The branches of the vine are many, some on one side of the house or wall, others on the other side; yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all good Christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, yet meet in Christ, the centre of their unity. Believers, like the branches of the vine, are weak, and insufficient to stand of themselves, but as they are borne up. See Eze 15:2.

3. That the Father is the husbandman, georgos--the land-worker. Though the earth is the Lord's, it yields him no fruit unless he work it. God has not only a propriety in, but a care of, the vine and all the branches. He hath planted, and watered, and gives the increase; for we are God's husbandry, 1Co 3:9. See Isa 5:1,2,27:2,3. He had an eye upon Christ, the root, and upheld him, and made him to flourish out of a dry ground. He has an eye upon all the branches, and prunes them, and watches over them, that nothing hurt them. Never was any husbandman so wise, so watchful, about his vineyard, as God is about his church, which therefore must needs prosper.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

1. We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes (Isa 5:2), and from a Christian we look for Christianity; this is the fruit, a Christian temper and disposition, a Christian life and conversation, Christian devotions and

Christian designs. We must honour God, and do good, and exemplify the purity and power of the religion we profess; and this is bearing fruit. The disciples here must be fruitful, as Christians, in all the fruits of righteousness, and as apostles, in diffusing the savour of the knowledge of Christ. To persuade them to this, he urges,

(a.) The doom of the unfruitful (Joh 15:2): They are taken away.

[1.] It is here intimated that there are many who pass for branches in Christ who yet do not bear fruit. Were they really united to Christ by faith, they would bear fruit; but being only tied to him by the thread of an outward profession, though they seem to be branches, they will soon be seen to be dry ones. Unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more. It might be read, Every branch that beareth not fruit in me, and it comes much to one; for those that do not bear fruit in Christ, and in his Spirit and grace, are as if they bore no fruit at all, Ho 10:1.

[2.] It is here threatened that they shall be taken away, in justice to them and in kindness to the rest of the branches. From him that has not real union with Christ, and fruit produced thereby, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have, Lu 8:18. Some think this refers primarily to Judas.

(b.) The promise made to the fruitful: He purgeth them, that they may bring forth more fruit. Note,

[1.] Further fruitfulness is the blessed reward of forward fruitfulness. The first blessing was, Be fruitful; and it is still a great blessing.

[2.] Even fruitful branches, in order to their further fruitfulness, have need of purging or pruning; kathairei--he taketh away that which is superfluous and luxuriant, which hinders its growth and fruitfulness. The best have that in them which is peccant, aliquid amputandum--something which should be taken away; some notions, passions, or humours, that want to be purged away, which Christ has promised to do by his word, and Spirit,

and providence; and these shall be taken off by degrees in the proper season.

[3.] The purging of fruitful branches, in order to their greater fruitfulness, is the care and work of the great husbandman, for his own glory.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

The benefits which believers have by the doctrine of Christ, the power of which they should labour to exemplify in a fruitful conversation: Now you are clean, Joh 15:3.

[1.] Their society was clean, now that Judas was expelled by that word of Christ, What thou doest, do quickly; and till they were got clear of him they were not all clean. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, and separates between the precious and the vile; it will purify the church of the first-born in the great dividing day.

[2.] They were each of them clean, that is, sanctified, by the truth of Christ (Joh 17:17); that faith by which they received the word of Christ purified their hearts, Ac 15:9. The Spirit of grace by the word refined them from the dross of the world and the flesh, and purged out of them the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees, from which, when they saw their inveterate rage and enmity against their Master, they were now pretty well cleansed. Apply it to all believers. The word of Christ is spoken to them; there is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption. It cleanses as fire cleanses the gold from its dross, and as physic cleanses the body from its disease. We then evidence that we are cleansed by the word when we bring forth fruit unto holiness. Perhaps here is an allusion to the law concerning vineyards in Canaan; the fruit of them was as unclean, and uncircumcised, the first three years after it was planted, and the fourth year it was to be holiness of praise unto the Lord; and then it was clean, Le 19:23,24. The disciples had now been three years under Christ's instruction; and now you are clean.

The glory that will redound to God by our fruitfulness, with the comfort and honour that will come to ourselves by it, Joh 15:8. If we bear much fruit,

[1.] Herein our Father will be glorified. The fruitfulness of the apostles, as such, in the diligent discharge of their office, would be to the glory of God in the conversion of souls, and the offering of them up to him, Ro 15:9,16. The fruitfulness of all Christians, in a lower or narrower sphere, is to the glory of God. By the eminent good works of Christians many are brought to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

[2.] So shall we be Christ's disciples indeed, approving ourselves so, and making it to appear that we are really what we call ourselves. So shall we both evidence our discipleship and adorn it, and be to our Master for a name and a praise, and a glory, that is, disciples indeed, Jer 13:11. So shall we be owned by our Master in the great day, and have the reward of disciples, a share in the joy of our Lord. And the more fruit we bring forth, the more we abound in that which is good, the more he is glorified.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

The duty enjoined (Joh 15:4): Abide in me, and I in you. Note, It is the great concern of all Christ's disciples constantly to keep up a dependence upon Christ and communion with him, habitually to adhere to him, and actually to derive supplies from him. Those that are come to Christ must abide in him: "Abide in me, by faith; and I in you, by my Spirit; abide in me, and then fear not but I will abide in you;" for the communion between Christ and believers never fails on his side. We must abide in Christ's word by a regard to it, and it in us as a light to our feet. We must abide in Christ's merit as our righteousness and plea, and it in us as our support and comfort. The knot of the branch abides in the vine, and the sap of the vine abides in the branch, and so there is a constant communication between them.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

The necessity of our abiding in Christ, in order to our fruitfulness (Joh 15:4,5): "You cannot bring forth fruit, except you abide in me; but, if you do, you bring forth much fruit; for, in short, without me, or separate from me, you can do nothing." So necessary is it to our comfort and happiness that we be fruitful, that the best argument to engage us to abide in Christ is, that otherwise we cannot be fruitful.

[1.] Abiding in Christ is necessary in order to our doing much good. He that is constant in the exercise of faith in Christ and love to him, that lives upon his promises and is led by his Spirit, bringeth forth much fruit, he is very serviceable to God's glory, and his own account in the great day. Note, Union with Christ is a noble principle, productive of all good. A life of faith in the Son of God is incomparably the most excellent life a man can live in this world; it is regular and even, pure and heavenly; it is useful and comfortable, and all that answers the end of life.

[2.] It is necessary to our doing any good. It is not only a means of cultivating ad increasing what good there is already in us, but it is the root and spring of all good: "Without me you can do nothing: not only no great thing, heal the sick, or raise the dead, but nothing." Note, We have as necessary and constant a dependence upon the grace of the Mediator for all the actions of the spiritual and divine life as we have upon the providence of the Creator for all the actions of the natural life; for, as to both, it is in the divine power that we live, move, and have our being. Abstracted from the merit of Christ, we can do nothing towards our justification; and from the Spirit of Christ nothing towards our sanctification. Without Christ we can do nothing aright, nothing that will be fruit pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves, 2Co 3:5. We depend upon Christ, not only as the vine upon the wall, for support; but, as the branch on the root, for sap.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

The fatal consequences of forsaking Christ (Joh 15:6): If any man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch. This is a description of the fearful state of hypocrites that are not in Christ, and of apostates that abide not in Christ.

[1.] They are cast forth as dry and withered branches, which are plucked off because they cumber the tree. It is just that those should have no benefit by Christ who think they have no need of him; and that those who reject him should be rejected by him. Those that abide not in Christ shall be abandoned by him; they are left to themselves, to fall into scandalous sin, and then are justly cast out of the communion of the faithful.

[2.] They are withered, as a branch broken off from the tree. Those that abide not in Christ, though they may flourish awhile in a plausible, at least a passable profession, yet in a little time wither and come to nothing. Their parts and gifts wither; their zeal and devotion wither; their credit and reputation wither; their hopes and comforts wither, Job 8:11-13. Note, Those that bear no fruit, after while will bear no leaves. How soon is that fig-tree withered away which Christ has cursed!

[3.] Men gather them. Satan's agents and emissaries pick them up, and make an easy prey of them. Those that fall off from Christ presently fall in with sinners; and the sheep that wander from Christ's fold, the devil stands ready to seize them for himself. When the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, an evil spirit possessed him.

[4.] They cast them into the fire, that is, they are cast into the fire; and those who seduce them and draw them to sin do in effect cast them there; for they make them children of hell. Fire is the fittest place for withered branches, for they are good for nothing else, Eze 15:2-4.

[5.] They are burned; this follows of course, but it is here added very emphatically, and makes the threatening very terrible. They will not be consumed in a moment, like thorns under a pot (Ec 7:6), but kaietai, they are burning for ever in a fire, which not only cannot be quenched, but will never spend itself. This comes of quitting Christ, this is the end of barren trees. Apostates are twice dead (Jude 1:12), and when it is said, They are cast into the fire and are burned, it speaks as if they were twice damned. Some apply men's gathering them to the ministry of the angels in the great day, when they shall gather out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend, and shall bundle the tares for the fire.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

The blessed privilege which those have that abide in Christ (Joh 15:7): If my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will of my Father in my name, and it shall be done. See here,

[1.] How our union with Christ is maintained--by the word: If you abide in me; he had said before, and I in you; here he explains himself, and my words abide in you; for it is in the word that Christ is set before us, and offered to us, Ro 10:6-8. It is in the word that we receive and embrace him; and so where the word of Christ dwells richly there Christ dwells. If the word be our constant guide and monitor, if it be in us as at home, then we abide in Christ, and he in us.

[2.] How our communion with Christ is maintained--by prayer: You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done to you. And what can we desire more than to have what we will for the asking? Note, Those that abide in Christ as their heart's delight shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire. If we have Christ, we shall want nothing that is good for us. Two things are implied in this promise:--

First, That if we abide in Christ, and his word in us, we shall not ask any thing but what is proper to be done for us. The promises abiding in us lie ready to be turned into prayers; and the prayers so regulated cannot but speed.

Secondly, That if we abide in Christ and his word we shall have such an interest in God's favour and Christ's mediation that we shall have an answer of peace to all our prayers.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

Concerning the Father's love to him; and concerning this he here tells us,

1. That the Father did love him (Joh 15:9): As the Father hath loved me. He loved him as Mediator: This is my beloved Son. He was the Son of his love. He loved him, and gave all things into his hand; and yet so loved the world as to deliver him up for us all. When Christ was entering upon his sufferings he comforted himself with this, that his Father loved him. Those whom God loves as a Father may despise the hatred of all the world.

2. That he abode in his Father's love, Joh 15:10. He continually loved his Father, and was beloved of him. Even when he was made sin and a curse for us, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him, yet he abode in his Father's love. See Ps 89:33. Because he continued to love his Father, he went cheerfully through his sufferings, and therefore his Father continued to love him.

3. That therefore he abode in his Father's love because he kept his Father's law: I have kept my Father's commandments, as Mediator, and so abide in his love. Hereby he showed that he continued to love his Father, that he went on, and went through, with his undertaking, and therefore the Father continued to love him. His soul delighted in him, because he did not fail, nor was discouraged, Isa 42:1-4. We having broken the law of creation, and thereby thrown ourselves out of the love of God; Christ satisfied for us by obeying the law of redemption, and so he abode in his love, and restored

The pattern of this love: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. A strange expression of the condescending grace of Christ! As the Father loved him, who was most worthy, he loved them, who were most unworthy. The Father loved him as his Son, and he loves them as his children. The Father gave all things into his hand; so, with himself, he freely giveth us all things. The Father loved him as Mediator, as head of the church, and the great trustee of divine grace and favour, which he had not for himself only, but for the benefit of those for whom he was entrusted; and, says he, "I have been a faithful trustee. As the Father has committed his love to me, so I transmit it to you." Therefore the Father was well pleased with him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and loved him, that in him, as beloved, he might make us accepted, Eph 1:6.

To continue in his love, Joh 15:9. "Continue in your love to me, and in mine to you." Both may be taken in. We must place our happiness in the continuance of Christ's love to us, and make it our business to give continued proofs of our love to Christ, that nothing may tempt us to withdraw from him, or provoke him to withdraw from us. Note, All that

love Christ should continue in their love to him, that is, be always loving him, and taking all occasions to show it, and love to the end. The disciples were to go out upon service for Christ, in which they would meet with many troubles; but, says Christ, "Continue in my love. Keep up your love to me, and then all the troubles you meet with will be easy; love made seven years' hard service easy to Jacob. Let not the troubles you meet with for Christ's sake quench your love to Christ, but rather quicken it.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

To evidence their love to him by keeping his commandments: "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, Joh 15:10. This will be an evidence of the fidelity and constancy of your love to me, and then you may be sure of the continuance of my love to you." Observe here,

(1.) The promise "You shall abide in my love as in a dwelling place, at home in Christ's love; as in a resting place, at ease in Christ's love; as in a stronghold, safe in it. You shall abide in my love, you shall have grace and strength to persevere in loving me." If the same hand that first shed abroad the love of Christ in our hearts did not keep us in that love, we should not long abide in it, but, through the love of the world, should go out of love with Christ himself.

(2.) The condition of the promise: If you keep my commandments. The disciples were to keep Christ's commandments, not only by a constant conformity to them themselves, but by a faithful delivery of them to others; they were to keep them as trustees, in whose hands that great depositum was lodged, for they were to teach all things that Christ had commanded, Mt 28:20. This commandment they must keep without spot (1Ti 6:14), and thus they must show that they abide in his love.

To induce them to keep his commandments, he urges,

[1.] His own example: As I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Christ submitted to the law of mediation, and so preserved the honour and comfort of it, to teach us to submit to the laws

of the Mediator, for we cannot otherwise preserve the honour and comfort of our relation to him.

[2.] The necessity of it to their interest in him (Joh 15:14): "You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you and not otherwise." Note,

First, Those only will be accounted Christ's faithful friends that approve themselves his obedient servants; for those that will not have him to reign over them shall be treated as his enemies. Idem velle et idem nolle ea demum vera est amicitia--Friendship involves a fellowship of aversions and attachments.--Sallust.

Secondly, It is universal obedience to Christ that is the only acceptable obedience; to obey him in every thing that he commands us, not excepting, much less excepting against, any command.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

To let his joy remain in them, and fill them, Joh 15:11. This he designed in those precepts and promises given them.

(a.) That his joy might remain in them. The words are so placed, in the original, that they may be read either,

[1.] That my joy in you may remain. If they bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, he will continue to rejoice in them as he had done. Note, Fruitful and faithful disciples are the joy of the Lord Jesus; he rests in his love to them, Zep 3:17. As there is a transport of joy in heaven in the conversion of sinners, so there is a remaining joy in the perseverance of saints. Or,

[2.] That my joy, that is, your joy in me, may remain. It is the will of Christ that his disciples should constantly and continually rejoice in him, Php 4:4. The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, but the joy of those who abide in Christ's love is a continual feast. The word of the Lord enduring for ever, the joys that flow from it, and are founded on it, do so too.

(b.) That your joy might be full; not only that you might be full of joy, but that your joy in me and in my love may rise higher and higher, till it come to perfection, when you enter into the joy of your Lord." Note,

[1.] Those and those only that have Christ's joy remaining in them have their joy full; worldly joys are empty, soon surfeit but never satisfy. It is only wisdom's joy that will fill the soul, Ps 36:8.

[2.] The design of Christ in his world is to fill the joy of his people; see 1Jo 1:4. This and the other he hath said, that our joy might be fuller and fuller, and perfect at last.

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Concerning the disciples' love one to another, enjoined as an evidence of their love to Christ, and a grateful return for his love to them. We must keep his commandments, and this is his commandment, that we love one another, Joh 15:12,17. No one duty of religion is more frequently inculcated, nor more pathetically urged upon us, by our Lord Jesus, than that of mutual love, and for good reason.

1. It is here recommended by Christ's pattern (Joh 15:12): as I have loved you. Christ's love to us should direct and engage our love to each other; in this manner, and from this motive, we should love one another, as, and because, Christ has loved us. He here specifies some of the expressions of his love to them; he called them friends, communicated his mind to them, was ready to give them what they asked. Go you and do likewise.

2. It is required by his precept. He interposes his authority, has made it one of the statute-laws of his kingdom. Observe how differently it is expressed in Joh 15:12,17, and both very emphatic.

(a.) This is my commandment (Joh 15:12), as if this were the most necessary of all the commandments. As under the law the prohibition of idolatry was the commandment more insisted on than any other, foreseeing the people's addictedness to that sin, so Christ, foreseeing the

addictedness of the Christian church to uncharitableness, has laid most stress upon this precept.

(b.) These things I command you, Joh 15:17. He speaks as if he were about to give them many things in charge, and yet names this only, that you love one another; not only because this includes many duties, but because it will have a good influence upon all.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Christ loved his disciples, for he laid down his life for them (Joh 15:13): Greater proof of love hath no man to show than this, to lay down his life for his friend. And this is the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, he is our antipsychos--bail for us, body for body, life for life, though he knew our insolvency, and foresaw how much the engagement would cost him. Observe here,

[1.] The extent of the love of the children of men to one another. The highest proof of it is laying down one's life for a friend, to save his life, and perhaps there have been some such heroic achievements of love, more than plucking out one's own eyes, Ga 4:15. If all that a man has he will give for his life, he that gives this for his friend gives all, and can give no more; this may sometimes be our duty, 1Jo 3:16. Paul was ambitious of the honour (Php 2:17); and for a good man some will even dare to die, Ro 5:7. It is love in the highest degree, which is strong as death.

[2.] The excellency of the love of Christ beyond all other love. He has not only equaled, but exceeded, the most illustrious lovers. Others have laid down their lives, content that they should be taken from them; but Christ gave up his, was not merely passive, but made it his own act and deed. The life which others have laid down has been but of equal value with the life for which it was laid down, and perhaps less valuable; but Christ is infinitely more worth than ten thousand of us. Others have thus laid down their lives for their friends, but Christ laid down his for us when we were enemies, Ro 5:8,10. Plusquam ferrea aut lapidea corda esse oportet, quæ non emolliet tam incomparabilis divini amoris suavitas--Those hearts must be harder than iron or stone which are not softened by such incomparable sweetness of divine love.--Calvin.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Christ loved his disciples, for he took them into a covenant of friendship with himself, Joh 15:14,15. "If you approve yourselves by your obedience my disciples indeed, you are my friends, and shall be treated as friends." Note, The followers of Christ are the friends of Christ, and he is graciously pleased to call and account them so. Those that do the duty of his servants are admitted and advanced to the dignity of his friends. David had one servant in his court, and Solomon one in his, that was in a particular manner the king's friend (2Sa 15:37,1Ki 4:5); but this honour have all Christ's servants. We may in some particular instance befriend a stranger; but we espouse all the interests of a friend, and concern ourselves in all his cares: thus Christ takes believers to be his friends. He visits them and converses with them as his friends, bears with them and makes the best of them, is afflicted in their afflictions, and takes pleasure in their prosperity; he pleads for them in heaven and takes care of all their interests there. Have friends but one soul? He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1Co 6:17. Though they often show themselves unfriendly, he is a friend that loves at all times. Observe how endearingly this is expressed here.

[1.] He will not call them servants, though they call him Master and Lord. Those that would be like Christ in humility must not take a pride in insisting upon all occasions on their authority and superiority, but remember that their servants are their fellow-servants. But,

[2.] He will call them his friends; he will not only love them, but will let them know it; for in his tongue is the law of kindness. After his resurrection he seems to speak with more affectionate tenderness of and to his disciples than before. Go to my brethren, Joh 20:17. Children, have you any meat? Joh 21:5. But observe, though Christ called them his friends, they called themselves his servants: Peter, a servant of Christ (1Pe 1:1), and so James, Jam 1:1 The more honour Christ puts upon us, the more honour we should study to do him; the higher in his eyes, the lower in our own.

Christ loved his disciples, for he was very free in communicating his mind to them (Joh 15:15): "Henceforth you shall not be kept so much in the dark as you have been, like servants that are only told their present work; but, when the Spirit is poured out, you shall know your Master's designs as friends. All things that I have heard of my Father I have declared unto you." As to the secret will of God, there are many things which we must be content not to know; but, as to the revealed will of God, Jesus Christ has faithfully handed to us what he received of the Father, Joh 1:18,Mt 11:27. The great things relating to man's redemption Christ declared to his disciples, that they might declare them to others; they were the men of his counsel, Mt 13:11.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Christ loved his disciples, for he chose and ordained them to be the prime instruments of his glory and honour in the world (Joh 15:16): I have chosen you, and ordained you, His love to them appeared,

[1.] In their election, their election to their apostleship (Joh 6:70): I have chosen you twelve. It did not begin on their side: You have not chosen me, but I first chose you. Why were they admitted to such an intimacy with him, employed in such an embassy for him, and endued with such power from on high? It was not owing to their wisdom and goodness in choosing him for their Master, but to his favour and grace in choosing them for his disciples. It is fit that Christ should have the choosing of his own ministers; still he does it by his providence and Spirit. Though ministers make that holy calling their own choice, Christ's choice is prior to theirs and directs and determines it. Of all that are chosen to grace and glory it may be said, They have not chosen Christ, but he had chosen them, De 7:7,8.

[2.] In their ordination: I have ordained you; hetheka hymas--"I have put you into the ministry (1Ti 1:12), put you into commission." By this it appeared that he took them for his friends when he crowned their heads with such an honour, and filled their hands with such a trust. It was a mighty confidence he reposed in them, when he made them his ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom in this lower world,

and the prime ministers of state in the administration of it. The treasure of the gospel was committed to them,

First, That it might be propagated: that you should go, hina hymeis hypagete--"that you should go as under a yoke or burden, for the ministry is a work, and you that go about it must resolve to undergo a great deal; that you may go from place to place all the world over, and bring forth fruit." They were ordained, not to sit still, but to go about, to be diligent in their work, and to lay out themselves unweariedly in doing good. They were ordained, not to beat the air, but to be instrumental in God's hand for the bringing of nations into obedience to Christ, Ro 1:13.

Note, Those whom Christ ordains should and shall be fruitful; should labour, and shall not labour in vain.

Secondly, That it might be perpetuated; that the fruit may remain, that the good effect of their labours may continue in the world from generation to generation, to the end of time. The church of Christ was not to be a short-lived thing, as many of the sects of the philosophers, that were a nine days' wonder; it did not come up in a night, nor should it perish in a night, but be as the days of heaven. The sermons and writings of the apostles are transmitted to us, and we at this day are built upon that foundation, ever since the Christian church was first founded by the ministry of the apostles and seventy disciples; as one generation of ministers and Christians has passed away, still another has come. By virtue of that great charter (Mt 28:19), Christ has a church in the world, which, as our lawyers say of bodies corporate, does not die, but lives in a succession; and thus their fruit remains to this day, and shall do while the earth remains.

[3.] His love to them appeared in the interest they had at the throne of grace: Whatsoever you shall ask of my Father, in my name, he will give it you. Probably this refers in the first place to the power of working miracles which the apostles were clothed with, which was to be drawn out by prayer. "Whatever gifts are necessary to the furtherance of your labours, whatever help from heaven you have occasion for at any time, it is but ask and have." Three things are here hinted to us for our encouragement in prayer, and very encouraging they are.

First, That we have a God to go to who is a Father; Christ here calls him the Father, both mine and yours; and the Spirit in the word and in the heart teaches us to cry, Abba, Father.

Secondly, That we come in a good name. Whatever errand we come upon to the throne of grace according to God's will, we may with a humble boldness mention Christ's name in it, and plead that we are related to him, and he is concerned for us.

Thirdly, That an answer of peace is promised us. What you come for shall be given you. This great promise made to that great duty keeps up a comfortable and gainful intercourse between heaven and earth.

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

The World's Hatred

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

Who they are in whom this hatred is found--the world, the children of this world, as distinguished from the children of God; those who are in the interests of the god of this world, whose image they bear, and whose power they are subject to; all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who would not come into the church of Christ, which he audibly called, and visibly separates from this evil world. The calling of these the world intimates,

1. Their number; there were a world of people that opposed Christ and Christianity. Lord, how were they increased that troubled the Son of David! I fear, if we should put it to the vote between Christ and Satan, Satan would out-poll us quite.

2. Their confederacy and combination; these numerous hosts are embodied, and are as one, Ps 83:5. Jews and Gentiles, that could agree in nothing else, agreed to persecute Christ's minister.

3. Their spirit and disposition; they are men of the world (Ps 16:13,14), wholly devoted to this world and the things of it, and never thinking of another world. The people of God, though they are taught to hate the sins of sinners, yet not their persons, but to love and do good to all men. A malicious, spiteful, envious spirit, is not the spirit of Christ, but of the world.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

1 The world hates the disciples of Christ: The world hateth you (Joh 15:19); and he speaks of it as that which they must expect and count upon, Joh 15:18, as 1Jo 3:13.

(a.) Observe how this comes in here.

[1.] Christ had expressed the great kindness he had for them as friends; but, lest they should be puffed up with this, there was given them, as there was to Paul, a thorn in the flesh, that is, as it is explained there, reproaches and persecutions for Christ's sake, 2Co 12:7,10.

[2.] He had appointed them their work, but tells them what hardships they should meet with in it, that it might not be a surprise to them, and that they might prepare accordingly.

[3.] He had charged them to love one another, and need enough they had to love one another, for the world would hate them; to be kind to one another, for they would have a great deal of unkindness and ill-will from those that were without. "Keep peace among yourselves, and this will fortify you against the world's quarrels with you." Those that are in the midst of enemies are concerned to hold together.

(b.) Observe what is here included.

[1.] The world's enmity against the followers of Christ: it hateth them. Note, Whom Christ blesseth the world curseth. The favourites and heirs of heaven have never been the darlings of this world, since the old enmity

was put between the seed of the woman and of the serpent. Why did Cain hate Abel, but because his works were righteous? Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing; Joseph's brethren hated him because his father loved him; Saul hated David because the Lord was with him; Ahab hated Micaiah because of his prophecies; such are the causeless causes of the world's hatre

Because they do not belong to it (Joh 15:19): "If you were of the world, of its spirit, and in its interests, if you were carnal and worldly, the world would love you as its own; but, because you are called out of the world, it hates you, and ever will." Note,

1. We are not to wonder if those that are devoted to the world are caressed by it as its friends; most men bless the covetous, Ps 10:3,49:18.

2. Nor are we to wonder if those that are delivered from the world are maligned by it as its enemies; when Israel is rescued out of Egypt, the Egyptians will pursue them. Observe, The reason why Christ's disciples are not of the world is not because they have by their own wisdom and virtue distinguished themselves from the world, but because Christ hath chosen them out of it, to set them apart for himself; and this is the reason why the world hates them; for,

(a.) The glory which by virtue of this choice they are designed for sets them above the world, and so makes them the objects of its envy. The saints shall judge the world, and the upright have dominion, and therefore they are hated.

(b.) The grace which by virtue of this choice they are endued with sets them against the world; they swim against the stream of the world, and are not conformed to it; they witness against it, and are not conformed to it. This would support them under all the calamities which the world's hatred would bring upon them, that they were hated because they were the choice and the chosen ones of the Lord Jesus, and were not of the world. Now,

[1.] This was no just cause for the world's hatred of them. If we do any thing to make ourselves hateful, we have reason to lament it; but, if men hate us for that for which they should love and value us, we have reason to pity them, but no reason to perplex ourselves. Nay,

[2.] This was just cause for their own joy. He that is hated because he is rich and prospers cares not who has the vexation of it, while he has the satisfaction of it.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

The fruits of that enmity, two of which we have here, Joh 15:20.

First, They will persecute you, because they hate you, for hatred is a restless passion. It is the common lot of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus to suffer persecution, 2Ti 3:12. Christ foresaw what ill usage his ambassadors would meet with in the world, and yet, for the sake of those few that by their ministry were to be called out of the world, he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Secondly, Another fruit of their enmity is implied, that they would reject their doctrine. When Christ says, If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours, he means, They will keep yours, and regard yours, no more than they have regarded and kept mine.

Note, The preachers of the gospel cannot but take the despising of their message to be the greatest injury that can be done to themselves; as it was a great affront to Jeremiah to say, Let us not give heed to any of his words, Jer 18:18.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

[1] "Another cause of the world's hating you will be because you do belong to Christ (Joh 15:21): For my name's sake." Here is the core of the controversy; whatever is pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel, they hate Christ's disciples because they bear his name, and bear up his name in the world. Note,

1. It is the character of Christ's disciples that they stand up for his name. The name into which they were baptized is that which they will live and die by.

2. It has commonly been the lot of those that appear for Christ's name to suffer for so doing, to suffer many things, and hard things, all these things. It is matter of comfort to the greatest sufferers if they suffer for Christ's name's sake. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you (1Pe 4:14), happy indeed, considering not only the honour that is imprinted upon those sufferings (Ac 5:41), but the comfort that is infused into them, and especially the crown of glory which those sufferings lead to. If we suffer with Christ, and for Christ, we shall reign with him.

[2] After all, it is the world's ignorance that is the true cause of its enmity to the disciples of Christ (Joh 15:21): Because they know not him that sent me. 1. They know not God. If men had but a due acquaintance with the very first principles of natural religion, and did but know God, though they did not embrace Christianity, yet they could not hate and persecute it. Those have no knowledge who eat up God's people, Ps 14:4. 2. They know not God as he that sent our Lord Jesus, and authorized him to be the great Mediator of the peace. We do not rightly know God if we do not know him in Christ, and those who persecute those whom he sends make it to appear that they know not that he was sent of God. See 1Co 2:8.

2 The world hates Christ himself. And this is spoken of here for two ends:--

To mitigate the trouble of his followers, arising from the world's hatred, and to make it the less strange, and the less grievous (Joh 15:18): You know that it hated me before you, proton hymon. We read it as signifying priority of time; he began in the bitter cup of suffering, and then left us to pledge him; but it may be read as expressing his superiority over them: "You know that it hated me, your first, your chief and captain, your leader and commander."

[1.] If Christ, who excelled in goodness, and was perfectly innocent and universally beneficent, was hated, can we expect that any virtue or merit of ours should screen us from malice?

[2.] If our Master, the founder of our religion, met with so much opposition in the planting of it, his servants and followers can look for no other in propagating and professing it. For this he refers them (Joh 15:20) to his own word, at their admission into discipleship: Remember the word that I said unto you. It would help us to understand Christ's latter sayings to compare them with his former sayings. Nor would any thing contribute more to the making of us easy than remembering the words of Christ, which will expound his providences. Now in this word there is,

First, A plain truth: The servant is not greater than his Lord. This he had said to them. Mt 10:24. Christ is our Lord, and therefore we must diligently attend all his motions, and patiently acquiesce in all his disposals, for the servant is inferior to his lord. The plainest truths are sometimes the strongest arguments for the hardest duties; Elihu answers a multitude of Job's murmurings with this one self-evident truth, that God is greater than man, Job 33:12. So here is,

Secondly, A proper inference drawn from it: "If they have persecuted men, as you have seen, and are likely to see much more, they will also persecute you; you may expect it and count upon it: for,"

1. "You will do the same that I have done to provoke them; you will reprove them for their sins, and call them to repentance, and give them strict rules of holy living, which they will not bear."

2. "You cannot do more than I have done to oblige them; after so great an instance, let none wonder if they suffer ill for doing well." He adds, "If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also; as there have been a few, and but a few, that have been wrought upon by my preaching, so there will be by yours a few, and but a few." Some give another sense of this, making eteresan to be put for pareteresan. "If they have lain in wait for my

sayings, with a design to ensnare me, they will in like manner lie in wait to entangle you in your talk."

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.

To aggravate the wickedness of this unbelieving world, and to discover its exceeding sinfulness; to hate and persecute the apostles was bad enough, but in them to hate and persecute Christ himself was much worse. The world is generally in an ill name in scripture, and nothing can put it into a worse name than this, that it hated Jesus Christ. There is a world of people that are haters of Christ. Two things he insists upon to aggravate the wickedness of those that hated him:--

That there was the greatest reason imaginable why they should love him; men's good words and good works usually recommend them; now as to Christ,

First, His words were such as merited their love (Joh 15:22): "If I had not spoken unto them, to court their love, they had not had sin, their opposition had not amounted to a hatred of me, their sin had been comparatively no sin. But now that I have said so much to them to recommend myself to their best affections they have no pretence, no excuse for their sin." Observe here,

1 The advantage which those have that enjoy the gospel; Christ in it comes and speaks to them; he spoke in person to the men of that generation, and is still speaking to us by our Bibles and ministers, and as one that has the most unquestionable authority over us, and affection for us. Every word of his is pure, carries with it a commanding majesty, and yet a condescending tenderness, able, one would think, to charm the deafest adder.

2 The excuse which those have that enjoy not the gospel: "If I had not spoken to them, if they had ever heard of Christ and of salvation by him, they had not had sin."

(a.) Not this kind of sin. They had not been chargeable with a contempt of Christ if he had not come and made a tender of his grace to them. As sin is

not imputed where there is no law, so unbelief is not imputed where there is no gospel; and, where it is imputed, it is thus far the only damning sin, that, being a sin against the remedy, other sin would not damn if the guilt of them were not bound on with this.

(b.) Not such a degree of sin. If they had not had the gospel among them, their other sins had not been so bad; for the times of ignorance God winked at, Lu 12:47,48. 3. The aggravated guilt which those lie under to whom Christ has come and spoken in vain, whom he has called and invited in vain, with whom he has reasoned and pleaded in vain; They have no cloak for their sin; they are altogether inexcusable, and in the judgment day will be speechless, and will not have a word to say for themselves.

Note, The clearer and fuller the discoveries are which are made to us of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, the more is said to us that is convincing and endearing, the greater is our sin if we do not love him and believe in him. The word of Christ strips sin of its cloak, that it may appear sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

His works were such as merited their love, as well as his words (Joh 15:24): "If I had not done among them, in their country, and before their eyes, such works as no other man ever did, they had not had sin; their unbelief and enmity had been excusable, and they might have had some colour to say that my word was not to be credited, if not otherwise confirmed;" but he produced satisfactory proofs of his divine mission, works which no other man did. Note,

1. As the Creator demonstrates his power and Godhead by his works (Ro 1:20), so doth the Redeemer. His miracles, his mercies, works of wonder and works of grace, prove him sent of God, and sent on a kind errand.

2. Christ's works were such as no man ever did. No common person that had not a commission from heaven, and God with him, could work miracles, Joh 3:2. And no prophet ever wrought such miracles, so many,

so illustrious. Moses and Elias wrought miracles as servants, by a derived power; but Christ, as a Son, by his own power. This was it that amazed the people, that with authority he commanded diseases and devils (Mk 1:27); they owned they never saw the like, Mk 2:12. They were all good works, works of mercy; and this seems especially intended here, for he is upbraiding them with this, that they hated him. One that was so universally useful, more than ever any man was, one would think, should have been universally beloved, and yet even he is hated.

3. The works of Christ enhance the guilt of sinners' infidelity and enmity to him, to the last degree of wickedness and absurdity. If they had only heard his words, and not seen his works,--if we had only his sermons upon record, and not his miracles, unbelief might have pleaded want of proof; but now it has no excuse. Nay, the rejecting of Christ, both by them and us, has in it the sin, not only of obstinate unbelief, but of base ingratitude. They saw Christ to be most amiable, and studious to do them a kindness; yet they hated him, and studied to do him mischief. And we see in his word that great love wherewith he loved us, and yet are not wrought upon by it.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

That there was no reason at all why they should hate him. Some that at one time will say and do that which is recommending, yet at another time will say and do that which is provoking and disobliging; but our Lord Jesus not only did much to merit men's esteem and good-will, but never did any thing justly to incur their displeasure; this he pleads by quoting a scripture for it (Joh 15:25): "This comes to pass, this unreasonable hatred of me, and of my disciples for my sake, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law" (that is, in the Old Testament, which is a law, and was received by them as a law), "They hated me without a cause;" this David speaks of himself as a type of Christ, Ps 35:19,69:4. Not,

First, Those that hate Christ hate him without any just cause; enmity to Christ is unreasonable enmity. We think those deserve to be hated that are haughty and froward, but Christ is meek and lowly, compassionate and tender; those also that under colour of complaisance are malicious, envious, and revengeful, but Christ devoted himself to the service of those that used him, nay, and of those that abused him; toiled for others' ease,

and impoverished himself to enrich us. Those we think hateful that are hurtful to kings and provinces, and disturbers of the public peace; but Christ, on the contrary, was the greatest blessing imaginable to his country, and yet was hated. He testified indeed that their works were evil, with a design to make them good, but to hate him for this cause was to hate him without cause.

Secondly, Herein the scripture was fulfilled, and the antitype answered the type. Saul and his courtiers hated David without cause, for he had been serviceable to him with his harp, and with his sword; Absalom and his party hated him, though to him he had been an indulgent father, and to them a great benefactor. Thus was the Son of David hated, and hunted most unjustly. Those that hated Christ did not design there in to fulfil the scripture; but God, in permitting it, had that in his eye; and it confirms our faith in Christ as the Messiah that even this was foretold concerning him, and, being foretold, was accomplished in him. And we must not think it strange or hard if it have a further accomplishment in us. We are apt to justify our complaints of injuries done us with this, that they are causeless, whereas the more they are so the more they are like the sufferings of Christ, and may be the more easily borne.

In Christ the world hates God himself; this is twice said here (Joh 15:23): He that hateth me, though he thinks his hatred goes no further, yet really he hates my Father also. And again, Joh 15:24, They have seen and hated both me and my Father. Note,

(a.) There are those that hate God, notwithstanding the beauty of his nature and the bounty of his providence; they are enraged at his justice, as the devils that believe it and tremble, are vexed at his dominion, and would gladly break his bands asunder. Those who cannot bring themselves to deny that there is a God, and yet wish there were none, they see and hate him.

(b.) Hatred of Christ will be construed and adjudged hatred of God, for he is in his person his Father's express image, and in his office his great agent and ambassador. God will have all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father, and therefore what entertainment the Son has, that the Father

has. Hence it is easy to infer that those who are enemies to the Christian religion, however they may cry up natural religion, are really enemies to all religion. Deists are in effect atheists, and those that ridicule the light of the gospel would, if they could, extinguish even natural light, and shake off all obligations of conscience and the fear of God. Let an unbelieving malignant world know that their enmity to the gospel of Christ will be looked upon in the great day as an enmity to the blessed God himself; and let all that suffer for righteousness' sake, according to the will of God, take comfort from this; if God himself be hated in them, and struck at through him, they need not be either ashamed of their cause or afraid of the issue.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27 and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

It is here promised that the apostles also, by the Spirit's assistance, should have the honour of being Christ's witnesses (Joh 15:27): And you also shall bear witness of me, being competent witnesses, for you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry. Observe here,

1. That the apostles were appointed to be witnesses for Christ in the world. When he had said, The Spirit shall testify, he adds, And you also shall bear witness. Note, The Spirit's working is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage ours. Though the Spirit testify, ministers also must bear their testimony, and people attend to it; for the Spirit of grace witnesses and works by the means of grace. The apostles were the first witnesses that were called in the famous trial between Christ and the prince of this world, which issued in the ejectment of the intruder. This intimates,

(a.) The work cut out for them; they were to attest the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning Christ, for the recovering of his just right, and the maintaining of his crown and dignity. Though Christ's disciples fled when they should have been witnesses for him upon his trial before the high priest and Pilate, yet after the Spirit was poured out upon them they appeared courageous in vindication of the cause of Christ against the accusations it was loaded with. The truth of the Christian religion was to be proved very much by the evidence of matter of fact,

especially Christ's resurrection, of which the apostles were in a particular manner chosen witnesses (Ac 10:41), and they bore their testimony accordingly, Ac 3:15,5:32. Christ's ministers are his witnesses.

(b.) The honour put upon them hereby--that they should be workers together with God. "The Spirit shall testify of me, and you also, under the conduct of the Spirit, and in concurrence with the Spirit (who will preserve you from mistaking in that which you relate on your own knowledge, and will inform you of that which you cannot know but by revelation), shall bear witness." This might encourage them against the hatred and contempt of the world, that Christ had honoured them, and would own them.

2. That they were qualified to be so: You have been with me from the beginning. They not only heard his public sermons, but had constant private converse with him. He went about doing good, and, while others saw the wonderful and merciful works that he did in their own town and country only, those that went about with him were witnesses of them all. They had likewise opportunity of observing the unspotted purity of his conversation, and could witness for him that they never saw in him, nor heard from him, any thing that had the least tincture of human frailty. Note.

(a.) We have great reason to receive the record which the apostles gave of Christ, for they did not speak by hearsay, but what they had the greatest assurance of imaginable, 2Pe 1:16,1Jo 1:1,3.

(b.) Those are best able to bear witness for Christ that have themselves been with him, by faith, hope, and love, and by living a life of communion with God in him. Ministers must first learn Christ, and then preach him. Those speak best of the things of God that speak experimentally. It is particularly a great advantage to have been acquainted with Christ from the beginning, to understand all things from the very first, Lu 1:3. To have been with him from the beginning of our days. An early acquaintance and constant converse with the gospel of Christ will make a man like a good householder.

1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.

He gives them a reason why he alarmed them thus with the expectation of trouble: These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended, or scandalized, Joh 16:1.

1 The disciples of Christ are apt to be offended at the cross; and the offence of the cross is a dangerous temptation, even to good men, to turn back from the ways of God, or turn aside out of them, or drive on heavily in them; to quit either their integrity or their comfort. It is not for nothing that a suffering time is called an hour of temptation.

2. Our Lord Jesus, by giving us notice of trouble, designed to take off the terror of it, that it might not be a surprise to us. Of all the adversaries of our peace, in this world of troubles, none insult us more violently, nor put our troops more into disorder, than disappointment does; but we can easily welcome a guest we expect, and being fore-warned are fore-armed--Præmoniti, præmuniti.

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

He foretels particularly what they should suffer (Joh 16:2): "Those that have power to do it shall put you out of their synagogues; and this is not the worst, they shall kill you." Ecce duo-gladii--Behold two swords drawn against the followers of the Lord Jesus.

1 The sword of ecclesiastical censure; this is drawn against them by the Jews, for they were the only pretenders to church-power. They shall cast you out of their synagogues; aposynagogous poiesousin hymas--they shall make you excommunicates.

(a.) "They shall cast you out of the particular synagogues you were members of." At first, they scourged them in their synagogues as contemners of the law (Mt 10:17), and at length cast them out as incorrigible.

(b.) "They shall cast you out of the congregation of Israel in general, the national church of the Jews; shall debar you from the privileges of that, put you into the condition of an outlaw," qui caput gerit lupinum--to be knocked on the head, like another wolf; "they will look upon you as Samaritans, as heathen men and publicans." Interdico tibi aqua et igne--I forbid you the use of water and fire. And were it not for the penalties, forfeitures, and incapacities, incurred hereby, it would be no injury to be thus driven out of a house infected and falling. Note, It has often been the lot of Christ's disciples to be unjustly excommunicated. Many a good truth has been branded with an anathema, and many a child of God delivered to Satan.

2 The sword of civil power: "The time cometh, the hour is come; now things are likely to be worse with you than hitherto they have been; when you are expelled as heretics, they will kill you, and think they do God service, and others will think so too."

(a.) You will find them really cruel: They will kill you. Christ's sheep have been accounted as sheep for the slaughter; the twelve apostles (we are told) were all put to death, except John. Christ had said (Joh 15:27), You shall bear witness, martyreite--you shall be martyrs, shall seal the truth with your blood, your heart's blood.

(b.) You will find them seemingly conscientious; they will think they do God service; they will seem latreian prospherein--to offer a good sacrifice to God; as those that cast out God's servants of old, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa 66:5. Note,

[1.] It is possible for those that are real enemies to God's service to pretend a mighty zeal for it. The devil's work has many a time been done in God's livery, and one of the most mischievous enemies Christianity ever had sits in the temple of God. Nay,

[2.] It is common to patronise an enmity to religion with a color of duty to God, and service to his church. God's people have suffered the greatest hardships from conscientious persecutors. Paul verily thought he ought to

do what he did against the name of Jesus. This does not at all lessen the sin of the persecutors, for villanies will never be consecrated by putting the name of God to them; but it does enhance the sufferings of the persecuted, to die under the character of being enemies to God; but there will be a resurrection of names as well as of bodies at the great day.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

He gives them the true reason of the world's enmity and rage against them (Joh 16:3): "These things will they do unto you, not because you have done them any harm, but because they have not known the Father, nor me. Let this comfort you, that none will be your enemies but the worst of men." Note,

1. Many that pretend to know God are wretchedly ignorant of him. Those that pretend to do him service thought they knew him, but it was a wrong notion they had of him. Israel transgressed the covenant, and yet cried, My God, we know thee. Ho 8:1,2.

2. Those that are ignorant of Christ cannot have any right knowledge of God. In vain do men pretend to know God and religion, while they slight Christ and Christianity. 3. Those are very ignorant indeed of God and Christ that think it an acceptable piece of service to persecute good people. Those that know Christ know that he came not into the world to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that he rules by the power of truth and love, not of fire and sword. Never was such a persecuting church as that which makes ignorance the mother of devotion.

4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.

And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

1. Why he told them of it now (Joh 16:4), not to discourage them, or add to their present sorrow; nor did he tell them of their danger that they might contrive how to avoid it, but that "when the time shall come (and you may be sure it will come), you may remember that I told you." Note, When suffering times come it will be of use to us to remember what Christ has told us of sufferings.

(a.) That our belief of Christ's foresight and faithfulness may be confirmed; and,

(b.) That the trouble may be the less grievous, for we were told of it before, and we took up our profession in expectation of it, so that it ought not to be a surprise to us, nor looked upon as a wrong to us. As Christ in his sufferings, so his followers in theirs, should have an eye to the fulfilling of the scripture.

2. Why he did not tell them of it sooner: "I spoke not this to you from the beginning when you and I came to be first acquainted, because I was with you."

(a.) While he was with them, he bore the shock of the world's malice, and stood in the front of the battle; against him the powers of darkness levelled all their force, not against small or great, but only against the king of Israel, and therefore he did not need to say so much to them of suffering, because it did not fall much to their share; but we do find that from the beginning he bade them prepare for sufferings; and therefore,

(b.) It seems rather to be meant of the promise of another comforter. This he had said little of to them at the beginning, because he was himself with them to instruct, guide, and comfort them, and then they needed not the promise of the Spirit's extraordinary presence. The children of the bride-chamber would not have so much need of a comforter till the bridegroom should be taken away.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou ?

He expresses a very affectionate concern for the present sadness of his disciples, upon occasion of what he had said to them (Joh 16:5,6): "Now I am to be no longer with you, but go my way to him that sent me, to repose

there, after this fatigue; and none of you asketh me, with any courage, Whither goest thou? But, instead of enquiring after that which would comfort you, you pore upon that which looks melancholy, and sorrow has filled your heart."

1. He had told them that he was about to leave them: Now I go my way. He was not driven away by force, but voluntarily departed; his life was not extorted from him, but deposited by him. He went to him that sent him, to give an account of his negotiation. Thus, when we depart out of this world, we go to him that sent us into it, which should make us all solicitous to live to good purposes, remembering we have a commission to execute, which must be returned at a certain day.

2. He had told them what hard times they must suffer when he was gone, and that they must not expect such an easy quiet life as they had had. Now, if these were the legacies he had to leave to them, who had left all for him, they would be tempted to think they had made a sorry bargain of it, and were, for the present, in a consternation about it, in which their master sympathizes with them, yet blames them,

That they were careless of the means of comfort, and did not stir up themselves to seek it: None of you asks me, Whither goest thou? Peter had started this question (Joh 13:36), and Thomas had seconded it (Joh 14:5), but they did not pursue it, they did not take the answer; they were in the dark concerning it, and did not enquire further, nor seek for fuller satisfaction; they did not continue seeking, continue knocking. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how condescending to the weak and ignorant. Many a teacher will not endure that the learner should ask the same question twice; if he cannot take a thing quickly, let him go without it; but our Lord Jesus knows how to deal with babes, that must be taught with precept upon precept. If the disciples here would have found that his going away was for his advancement, and therefore his departure from them should not inordinately trouble them (for why should they be against his preferment?) and for their advantage, and therefore their sufferings for him should not inordinately trouble them; for a sight of Jesus at the right hand of God would be an effectual support to them, as it was to Stephen.

Note, A humble believing enquiry into the design and tendency of the darkest dispensations of Providence would help to reconcile us to them, and to grieve the less, and fear the less, because of them; it will silence us to ask, Whence came they? but will abundantly satisfy us to ask, Whither go they? for we know they work for good, Ro 8:28.

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

That they were too intent, and pored too much, upon the occasions of their grief: Sorrow has filled their hearts. Christ had said enough to fill them with joy (Joh 15:11); but by looking at that only which made against them, and overlooking that which made for them, they were so full of sorrow that there was no room left for joy. Note, It is the common fault and folly of melancholy Christians to dwell upon the dark side of the cloud, to meditate nothing but terror, and turn a deaf ear to the voice of joy and gladness. That which filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow, and hindered the operation of the cordials Christ administered, was too great an affection to this present life. They were big with hopes of their Master's external kingdom and glory, and that they should shine and reign with him: and now, instead of that, to hear of nothing but bonds and afflictions, this filled them with sorrow. Nothing is a greater prejudice to our joy in God than the love of the world; and the sorrow of the world, the consequence of it.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

As it was usual with the Old Testament prophets to comfort the church in its calamities with the promise of the Messiah (Isa 9:6,Mic 5:6,Zec 3:8); so, the Messiah being come, the promise of the Spirit was the great cordial, and is still.

Three things we have here concerning the Comforter's coming:--

That Christ's departure was absolutely necessary to the Comforter's coming, Joh 16:7. The disciples were so loth to believe this that Christ saw cause to assert it with a more than ordinary solemnity: I tell you the truth. We may be confident of the truth of everything that Christ told us; he has no design to impose upon us. Now, to make them easy, he here tells them,

1. In general, It was expedient for them that he should go away. This was strange doctrine, but if it was true it was comfortable enough, and showed them how absurd their sorrow was. It is expedient, not only for me, but for you also, that I go away; though they did not see it, and are loth to believe it, so it is. Note,

(a.) Those things often seem grievous to us that are really expedient for us; and particularly our going away when we have finished our course.

(b.) Our Lord Jesus is always for that which is most expedient for us, whether we think so or no. He deals not with us according to the folly of our own choice, but graciously over-rules it, and gives us the physic we are loth to take, because he knows it is good for us.

2. It was therefore expedient because it was in order to the sending of the Spirit. Now observe,

(A.) That Christ's going was in order to the Comforter's coming.

[1.] This is expressed negatively: If I go not away, the Comforter will not come. And why not?

First, So it was settled in the divine counsels concerning this affair, and the measure must not be altered; shall the earth be forsaken for them? He that gives freely may recall one gift before he bestows another, while we would fondly hold all.

Secondly, It is congruous enough that the ambassador extraordinary should be recalled, before the envoy come, that is constantly to reside.

Thirdly, The sending of the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ's purchase, and that purchase was to be made by his death, which was his going away.

Fourthly, It was to be an answer to his intercession within the veil. See Joh 14:16. Thus must this gift be both paid for, and prayed for, by our Lord Jesus, that we might learn to put the greater value upon it.

Fifthly, The great argument the Spirit was to use in convincing the world must be Christ's ascension into heaven, and his welcome here. See Joh 16:10,Joh 7:39. Lastly, The disciples must be weaned from his bodily presence, which they were too apt to dote upon, before they were duly prepared to receive the spiritual aids and comforts of a new dispensation.

[2.] It is expressed positively: If I depart I will send him to you; as though he had said, "Trust me to provide effectually that you shall be no loser by my departure." The glorified Redeemer is not unmindful of his church on earth, nor will ever leave it without its necessary supports. Though he departs, he sends the Comforter, nay, he departs on purpose to send him. Thus still, though one generation of ministers and Christians depart, another is raised up in their room, for Christ will maintain his own cause.

(B.) That the presence of Christ's Spirit in his church is so much better, and more desirable, than his bodily presence, that it was really expedient for us that he should go away, to send the Comforter. His corporal presence could be put in one place at one time, but his Spirit is every where, in all places, at all times, wherever two or three are gathered in his name. Christ's bodily presence draws men's eyes, his Spirit draws their hearts; that was the letter which kills, his Spirit gives life.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

3. That the coming of the Spirit was absolutely necessary to the carrying on of Christ's interests on earth (Joh 16:8): And when he is come, elthon ekeinos. He that is sent is willing of himself to come, and at his first coming he will do this, he will reprove, or, as the margin reads it, he will convince the world, by your ministry, concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. See here what the office of the Spirit is, and on what errand he is sent.

(a.) To reprove. The Spirit, by the word and conscience, is a reprover; ministers are reprovers by office, and by them the Spirit reproves.

(b.) To convince. It is a law-term, and speaks the office of the judge in summing up the evidence, and setting a matter that has been long canvassed in a clear and true light. He shall convince, that is, "He shall put to silence the adversaries of Christ and his cause, by discovering and demonstrating the falsehood and fallacy of that which they have maintained, and the truth and certainty of that which they have opposed."

Note, Convincing work is the Spirit's work; he can do it effectually, and none but he; man may open the cause, but it is the Spirit only that can open the heart. The Spirit is called the Comforter (Joh 16:7), and here it is said, He shall convince. One would think this were cold comfort, but it is the method the Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort; first to lay open the wound, and then to apply healing medicines. Or, taking conviction more generally, for a demonstration of what is right, it intimates that the Spirit's comforts are solid, and grounded upon truth.

2. See who they are whom he is to reprove and convince: The world, both Jew and Gentile.

(a.) He shall give the world the most powerful means of conviction, for the apostles shall go into all the world, backed by the Spirit, to preach the gospel, fully proved.

(b.) He shall sufficiently provide for the taking off and silencing of the objections and prejudices of the world against the gospel. Many an infidel was convinced of all and judged of all, 1Co 14:24.

(c.) He shall effectually and savingly convince many in the world, some in every age, in every place, in order to their conversion to the faith of Christ. Now this was an encouragement to the disciples, in reference to the difficulties they were likely to meet with,

[1.] That they should see good done, Satan's kingdom fall like lightning, which would be their joy, as it was his. Even this malignant world the Spirit shall work upon; and the conviction of sinners is the comfort of faithful ministers.

[2.] That this would be the fruit of their services and sufferings, these should contribute very much to this good work.

9 of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of sin (Joh 16:9), because they believe not on me.

[1.] The Spirit is sent to convince sinners of sin, not barely to tell them of it; in conviction there is more than this; it is to prove it upon them, and force them to own it, as they (Joh 8:9) that were convicted of their own consciences. Make them to know their abominations. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin, that we have done so and so; of the fault of sin, that we have done ill in doing so; of the folly of sin, that we have acted against right reason, and our true interest; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become odious to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Spirit demonstrates the depravity and degeneracy of the whole world, that all the world is guilty before God.

[2.] The Spirit, in conviction, fastens especially upon the sin of unbelief, their not believing in Christ,

First, As the great reigning sin. There was, and is, a world of people, that believe not in Jesus Christ, and they are not sensible that it is their sin. Natural conscience tells them that murder and theft are sin; but it is a supernatural work of the spirit to convince them that it is a sin to suspend their belief of the gospel, and to reject the salvation offered by it. Natural religion, after it has given us its best discoveries and directions, lays and leaves us under this further obligation, that whatever divine revelation shall be made to us at any time, with sufficient evidence to prove it divine, we accept it, and submit to it. This law those transgress who, when God speaketh to us by his Son, refuse him that speaketh; and therefore it is sin.

Secondly, As the great ruining sin. Every sin is so in its own nature; no sin is so to them that believe in Christ; so that it is unbelief that damns sinners. It is because of this that they cannot enter into rest, that they cannot escape the wrath of God; it is a sin against the remedy. Thirdly, As that which is at the bottom of all sin; so Calvin takes it. The Spirit shall convince the world that the true reason why sin reigns among them is because they are not by faith united to Christ.

10 of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and you see me no more, Joh 16:10. We may understand this,

[1.] Of Christ's personal righteousness. He shall convince the world that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous (1Jo 2:1), as the centurion owned (Lu 23:47), Certainly this was a righteous man. His enemies put him under the worst of characters, and multitudes were not or would not be convinced but that he was a bad man, which strengthened their prejudices against his doctrine; but he is justified by the spirit (1Ti 3:16), he is proved to be a righteous man, and not, a deceiver; and then the point is in effect gained; for he is either the great Redeemer or a great cheat; but a cheat we are sure he is not. Now by what medium or argument will the Spirit convince men of the sincerity of the Lord Jesus? Why,

First, Their seeing him no more will contribute something towards the removal of their prejudices; they shall see him no more in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the form of a servant, which made them slight him. Moses was more respected after his removal than before. But,

Secondly, His going to the Father would be a full conviction of it. The coming of the Spirit, according to the promise, was a proof of Christ's exaltation to God's right hand (Ac 2:33), and this was a demonstration of his righteousness; for the holy God would never set a deceiver at his right hand.

[2.] Of Christ's righteousness communicated to us for our justification and salvation; that everlasting righteousness which Messiah was to bring in, Da 9:24. Now,

First, The Spirit shall convince men of this righteousness. Having by convictions of sin shown them their need of a righteousness, lest this should drive them to despair he will show them where it is to be had, and how they may, upon their believing, be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. It was hard to convince those of this righteousness that went about to establish their own (Ro 10:3), but the Spirit will do it.

Secondly, Christ's ascension is the great argument proper to convince men of this righteousness: I go to the Father, and, as an evidence of my welcome with him, you shall see me no more. If Christ had left any part of his undertaking unfinished, he had been sent back again; but now that we are sure he is at the right hand of God, we are sure of being justified through him.

11 of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, Joh 16:11. Observe here,

[1.] The devil, the prince of this world, was judged, was discovered to be a great deceiver and destroyer, and as such judgment was entered against him, and execution in part done. He was cast out of the Gentile world when his oracles were silenced and his altars deserted, cast out of the bodies of many in Christ's name, which miraculous power continued long in the church; he was cast out of the souls of people by the grace of God working with the gospel of Christ; he fell as lightning from heaven.

[2.] This is a good argument wherewith the Spirit convinces the world of judgment, that is,

First, Of inherent holiness and sanctification, Mt 12:18. By the judgment of the prince of this world, it appears that Christ is stronger than Satan, and can disarm and dispossess him, and set up his throne upon the ruin of his.

Secondly, Of a new and better dispensation of things. He shall show that Christ's errand into the world was to set things to right in it, and to introduce times of reformation and regeneration; and he proves it by this, that the prince of this world, the great master of misrule, is judged and expelled. All will be well when his power is broken who made the mischief.

Thirdly, Of the power and dominion of the Lord Jesus. He shall convince the world that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is the Lord of all, which is evident by this, that he has judged the prince of this world, has broken the serpent's head, destroyed him that had the power of death, and spoiled principalities; if Satan be thus subdued by Christ, we may be sure no other power can stand before him.

Fourthly, Of the final day of judgment: all the obstinate enemies of Christ's gospel and kingdom shall certainly be reckoned with at last, for the devil, their ringleader, is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

That the coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples themselves. The Spirit has work to do, not only on the enemies of Christ, to convince and humble them, but upon his servants and agents, to instruct and comfort them; and therefore it was expedient for them that he should go away.

He intimates to them the tender sense he had of their present weakness (Joh 16:12): I have yet many things to say unto you (not which should have been said, but which he could and would have said), but you cannot bear them now. See what a teacher Christ is.

(1.) None like him for copiousness; when he has said much, he has still many things more to say; treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him, if we be not straitened in ourselves.

(2.) None like him for compassion; he would have told them more of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, particularly of the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, but they could not bear it, it would

have confounded and stumbled them, rather than have given them any satisfaction. When, after his resurrection, they spoke to him of restoring the kingdom to Israel, he referred them to the coming of the Holy Ghost, by which they should receive power to bear those discoveries which were so contrary to the notions they had received that they could not bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

Will guide you into all truth. That is, truth which pertained to the establishment of the Christian system, which they were not then prepared to hear. We may here remark that this is a full promise that they would be inspired and guided in founding the new church; and we may observe that the plan of the Saviour was replete with wisdom. Though they had been long with him, yet they were not prepared then to hear of the changes that were to occur; but his death would open their eyes, and the Holy Spirit, making use of the striking and impressive scenes of his death and ascension, would carry forward with vast rapidity their views of the nature of the Christian scheme. Perhaps in the few days that elapsed, of which we have a record in the first and second chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, they learned more of the true nature of the Christian plan than they would have done in months or years even under the teaching of Jesus himself. The more we study the plan of Christ, the more shall we admire the profound wisdom of the Christian scheme, and see that it was eminently fitted to the great design of its Founder --to introduce it in such a manner as to make on man the deepest impression of its wisdom and its truth.

Whatsoever he shall hear. What he shall receive of the Father and the Son; represented by hearing, because in this way instruction is commonly received. Jn 5:30.

Things to come. Probably this means the meaning of things which were to take place after the time when he was speaking to them --to wit, the design of his death, and the nature of the changes which were to take place in the Jewish nation. It is also true that the apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit to predict future events which would take place in the

church and the world. See Acts 11:28; Acts 20:29, 21:11, 1Timm 4:1-3; 2Ti 3:1, 2Pet 1:14; and the whole book of Revelation.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

The Spirit undertook to glorify Christ, Joh 16:14,15.

[1.] Even the sending of the Spirit was the glorifying of Christ. God the Father glorified him in heaven, and the Spirit glorified him on earth. It was the honour of the Redeemer that the Spirit was both sent in his name and sent on his errand, to carry on and perfect his undertaking. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ.

[2.] The Spirit glorified Christ by leading his followers into the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph 4:21. He assures them,

First, that the Spirit should communicate the things of Christ to them: He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. As in essence he proceeded from the Son, so in influence and operation he derived from him. He shall take ek tou emou--of that which is mine. All that the Spirit shows us, that is, applies to us, for our instruction and comfort, all that he gives us for our strength and quickening, and all that he secures and seals to us, did all belong to Christ, and was had and received from him. All was his, for he bought it, and paid dearly for it, and therefore he had reason to call it his own; his, for he first received it; it was given him as the head of the church, to be communicated by him to all his members. The Spirit came not to erect a new kingdom, but to advance and establish the same kingdom that Christ had erected, to maintain the same interest and pursue the same design; those therefore that pretend to the Spirit, and vilify Christ, give themselves the lie, for he came to glorify Christ.

Secondly, That herein the things of God should be communicated to us. Lest any should think that the receiving of this would not make them much the richer, he adds, All things that the Father hath are mine. As God, all that self-existent light and self-sufficient happiness which the Father

has, he has; as Mediator, all things are delivered to him of the Father (Mt 11:27); all that grace and truth which God designed to show us he lodged in the hands of the Lord Jesus, Col 1:19. Spiritual blessings in heavenly things are given by the Father to the Son for us, and the Son entrusts the Spirit to convey them to us. Some apply it to that which goes just before: He shall show you things to come, and so it is explained by Re 1:1. God gave it to Christ, and he signified it to John, who wrote what the Spirit said, Re 1:1.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

Sorrow to Turn into Joy

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

17 Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18 They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

Verse 16-22: In these words our holy Lord proceeds to comfort his disciples with a promise, that, however he was now to be removed from them, yet they should shortly see him again, namely, after his resurrection; it being impossible that he should be held by death, but must arise and go to his Father. His disciples, not understanding what he meant, but labouring under the prejudices of their national errors, concerning the temporal kingdom of the Messias, knew not what to make of those words. A little while and ye shall not see me.

Our Saviour therefore explains himself to his disciples, telling them that they shall have a time of sad sorrow and grief of heart, during the time of his sufferings and absence from them, but their sadness shall soon be turned into joy, when they shall see him alive again after his resurrection.

This he illustrates by the similitude of a travailing woman, who soon forgets her sorrow after she hath brought forth a child. Thus will their

revive upon the sight of him risen from the grave; and no man shall be able to take their joy away from them, because he shall die no more, but go to heaven, and there live for ever, to make intercession for them.

Learn hence,

1. From the apostles not understanding Christ's words concerning his departure, though so often inculcated upon them, A little while and ye shall not see me, because I go to the Father, hence note, how unreasonable it is to arrogate to man's understanding a power to comprehend spiritual mysteries, yea, to understand the plainest truth, till Christ enlightens the understanding; let the doctrine be delivered ever so plainly, and repeated ever so frequently, yet will men continue ignorant, without divine illumination.

How often had this plain doctrine of Christ's departure to the Father been preached to the disciples by Christ's own mouth! Yet still they say, What is it that he saith? We cannot tell what he saith.

Learn, 2. The different effects which Christ's absence should have upon the world, and upon his disciples; the world will rejoice but ye shall weep and lament.

Note,

1. That it is the wretched disposition of the world to rejoice in the absence and want of Christ out of the world. When I am gone, the world will rejoice.

2. That nothing is the cause of so much sorrow and sadness to sincere disciples, as Christ's absence and removal from them: such is their estimation of the worth of him, so great is the apprehension of the want of him, that there is no loss comparable to his absence and removal from them: ye shall weep and lament at my departure, though the world will rejoice.

Learn, 3. That the believer's sorrow for Christ's absence, though it be very great, yet it shall not be perpetual: Ye have now sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall no man take from you. The joy of the saints may be interrupted, it shall never be totally extinguished; it is a permanent joy, of which they shall never be totally deprived, till they enter into the ocean of eternal joy: Your joy no man taketh from you.

19 Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

By way of enquiry, they should not need to ask (Joh 16:23): "In that day you shall ask me nothing;" ouk erotesete ouden--you shall ask no questions; "you shall have such a clear knowledge of gospel mysteries, by the opening of your understandings, that you shall not need to enquire" (as Heb 8:11, they shall not teach); "you shall have more knowledge on a sudden than hitherto you have had by diligent attendance." They had asked some ignorant questions (as Joh 9:2), some ambitious questions (as Mt 18:1), some distrustful ones (as Mt 19:27), some impertinent ones, (as Joh 21:21), some curious ones (as Ac 1:6); but after the Spirit was poured out, nothing of all this. In the story of the apostles' Acts we seldom find them asking questions, as David, Shall I do this? Or, Shall I go thither? For they were constantly under a divine guidance. In that weighty case of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, Peter went, nothing doubting, Ac 10:20. Asking questions supposes us at a loss, or at least at a stand, and the best of us have need to ask questions; but we should aim at such a full assurance of understanding that we may not hesitate, but be constantly led in a plain path both of truth and duty.

Here is an express promise of a grant, Joh 16:23. The preface to this promise is such as makes it inviolably sure, and leaves no room to question it: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I pledge my veracity upon it." The promise itself is incomparably rich and sweet; the golden sceptre is here held out to us, with the word, What is thy petition, and it shall be granted? For he says, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you. We had it before, Joh 14:13. What would we more? The promise is as express as we can desire.

(a.) We are here taught how to seek; we must ask the Father in Christ's name; we must have an eye to God as a Father, and come as children to him; and to Christ as Mediator, and come as clients. Asking of the Father includes a sense of spiritual blessings, with a conviction that they are to be had from God only. It included also humility of address to him, with a believing confidence in him, as a Father able and ready to help us. Asking in Christ's name includes an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness to receive any favour from God, a complacency in the method God has taken of keeping up a correspondence with us by his Son, and an entire dependence upon Christ as the Lord our Righteousness.

(b.) We are here told how we shall speed: He will give it to you. What more can we wish for than to have what we want, nay, to have what we will, in conformity to God's will, for the asking? He will give it to you from whom proceedeth every good and perfect gift. What Christ purchased by the merit of his death, he needed not for himself, but intended it for, and consigned it to, his faithful followers; and having given a valuable consideration for it, which was accepted in full, by this promise he draws a bill as it were upon the treasury in heaven, which we are to present by prayer, and in his name to ask for that which is purchased and promised, according to the true intent of the new covenant. Christ had promised them great illumination by the Spirit, but they must pray for it, and did so, Ac 1:14. God will for this be enquired of. He had promised them perfection hereafter, but what shall they do in the mean time? They must continue praying. Perfect fruition is reserved for the land of our rest; asking and receiving are the comfort of the land of our pilgrimage.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Here is an invitation for them to petition. It is thought sufficient if great men permit addresses, but Christ calls upon us to petition, Joh 16:24.

(a.) He looks back upon their practice hitherto: Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name. This refers either

[1.] To the matter of their prayers: "You have asked nothing comparatively, nothing to what you might have asked, and will ask when the Spirit is poured out." See what a generous benefactor our Lord Jesus is, above all benefactors; he gives liberally, and is so far from upbraiding us with the frequency and largeness of his gifts that he rather upbraids us with the seldomness and straitness of our requests: "You have asked nothing in comparison of what you want, and what I have to give, and have promised to give." We are told to open our mouth wide. Or,

[2.] To the name in which they prayed. They prayed many a prayer, but never so expressly in the name of Christ as now he was directing them to do; for he had not as yet offered up that great sacrifice in the virtue of which our prayers were to be accepted, nor entered upon his intercession for us, the incense whereof was to perfume all our devotions, and so enable us to pray in his name. Hitherto they had cast out devils, and healed diseases, in the name of Christ, as a king and a prophet, but they could not as yet distinctly pray in his name as a priest.

(b.) He looks forward to their practice for the future: Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. Here,

[1.] He directs them to ask for all that they needed and he had promised.

[2.] He assures them that they shall receive. What we ask from a principle of grace God will graciously give: You shall receive it. There is something more in this than the promise that he will give it. He will not only give it, but give you to receive it, give you the comfort and benefit of it, a heart to eat of it, Ec 6:2.

[3.] That hereby their joy shall be full. This denotes,

First. The blessed effect of the prayer of faith; it helps to fill up the joy of faith. Would we have our joy full, as full as it is capable of being in this world, we must be much in prayer. When we are told to rejoice evermore, it follows immediately, Pray without ceasing. See how high we are to aim in prayer--not only at peace, but joy, a fulness of joy. Or,

Secondly, The blessed effects of the answer of peace: "Ask, and you shall receive that which will fill your joy." God's gifts, through Christ, fill the treasures of the soul, they fill its joy, Pr 8:21. "Ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and you shall receive it; and whereas other knowledge increaseth sorrow (Ec 1:18), the knowledge he gives will increase, will fill, your joy."

I Have Overcome the World

25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.

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26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

We have an advocate; as to this, Christ saw cause at present not to insist upon it, only to make the following encouragement shine the brighter: "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you. Suppose I should not tell you that I will intercede for you, should not undertake to solicit every particular cause you have depending there, yet it may be a general ground of comfort that I have settled a correspondence between you and God, have erected a throne of grace, and consecrated for you a new and living way into the holiest." He speaks as if they needed not any favours, when he had prevailed for the gift of the Holy Ghost to make intercession within them, as Spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father; as if they had no further need of him to pray for them now, but we shall find that he does more for us than he says he will. Men's performances often come short of their promises, but Christ's go beyond them.

27 for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

We have to do with a Father, which is so great an encouragement that it does in a manner supersede the other: "For the Father himself loveth you, philei hymas, he is a friend to you, and you cannot be better befriended." Note, The disciples of Christ are the beloved of God himself. Christ not only turned away God's wrath from us, and brought us into a covenant of peace and reconciliation, but purchased his favour for us, and brought us into a covenant of friendship. Observe what an emphasis is laid upon this "The Father himself loveth you, who is perfectly happy in the enjoyment of himself, whose self-love is both his infinite rectitude and his infinite blessedness; yet he is pleased to love you." The Father himself, whose favour you have forfeited, and whose wrath you have incurred, and with whom you need an advocate, he himself now loves you. Observe,

[1.] Why the Father loved the disciples of Christ: Because you have loved me, and have believed that I am come from God, that is, because you are my disciples indeed: not as if the love began on their side, but when by his grace he has wrought in us a love to him he is well pleased with the work of his own hands. See here,

First, What is the character of Christ's disciples; they love him, because they believe he came out from God, is the only-begotten of the Father, and his high-commissioner to the world. Note, Faith in Christ works by

love to him, Ga 5:6. If we believe him to be the Son of God, we cannot but love him as infinitely lovely in himself; and if we believe him to be our Saviour, we cannot but love him as the most kind to us. Observe with what respect Christ is pleased to speak of his disciples' love to him, and how kindly he took it; he speaks of it as that which recommended them to his Father's favour: "You have loved me and believed in me when the world has hated and rejected me; and you shall be distinguished yourselves."

Secondly, See what advantage Christ's faithful disciples have, the Father loves them, and that because they love Christ; so well pleased is he in him that he is well pleased with all his friends.

[2.] What encouragement this gave them in prayer. They need not fear speeding when they came to one that loved them, and wished them well. First, This cautions us against hard thoughts of God. When we are taught in prayer to plead Christ's merit and intercession, it is not as if all the kindness were in Christ only, and in God nothing but wrath and fury; no, the matter is not so, the Father's love and good-will appointed Christ to be the Mediator; so that we owe Christ's merit to God's mercy in giving him for us. Secondly, Let it cherish and confirm in us good thoughts of God. Believers, that love Christ, ought to know that God loves them, and therefore to come boldly to him as children to a loving Father.

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

If we ask concerning the Redeemer whence he came, and whither he went, we are told,

[1.] That he came from the Father, who sanctified and sealed him; and he came into this world, this lower world, this world of mankind, among whom by his incarnation he was pleased to incorporate himself. Here his business lay, and hither he came to attend it. He left his home for this strange country; his palace for this cottage; wonderful condescension!

[2.] That, when he had done his work on earth, he left the world, and went back to his Father at his ascension. He was not forced away, but made it

his own act and deed to leave the world, to return to it no more till he comes to put an end to it; yet still he is spiritually present with his church, and will be to the end.

29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

The gentle rebuke Christ gave the disciples for their confidence that they now understood him, Joh 16:31,32. Observing how they triumphed in their attainments, he said, "Do you now believe? Do you now look upon yourselves as advanced and confirmed disciples? Do you now think you shall make no more blunders? Alas! you know not your own weakness; you will very shortly be scattered every man to his own," &c. Here we have,

(a.) A question, designed to put them upon consideration: Do you now believe?

[1.] "If now, why not sooner? Have you not heard the same things many a time before?" Those who after many instructions and invitations are at last persuaded to believe have reason to be ashamed that they stood it out so long.

[2.] "If now, why not ever? When an hour of temptation comes, where will your faith be then?" As far as there is inconstancy in our faith there is cause to question the sincerity of it, and to ask, "Do we indeed believe?"

(b.) A prediction of their fall, that, how confident soever they were now of their own stability, in a little time they would all desert him, which was fulfilled that very night, when, upon his being seized by a party of the

guards, all his disciples forsook him and fled, Mt 26:56. They were scattered,

[1.] From one another; they shifted every one for his own safety, without any care or concern for each other. Troublous times are times of scattering to Christian societies; in the cloudy and dark day the flock of Christ is dispersed, Eze 34:12. So Christ, as a society, is not visible.

[2.] Scattered for him: You shall leave me alone. They should have been witnesses for him upon his trial, should have ministered to him in his sufferings; if they could have given him no comfort they might have done him some credit; but they were ashamed of his chain, and afraid of sharing with him in his sufferings, and left him alone. Note, Many a good cause, when it is distressed by its enemies, is deserted by its friends. The disciples had continued with Christ in his other temptations and yet turned their back upon him now; those that are tried, do not always prove trusty. If we at any time find our friends unkind to us, let us remember that Christ's were so to him. When they left him alone, they were scattered every man to his own; not to their own possessions or habitations, these were in Galilee; but to their own friends and acquaintance in Jerusalem; every one went his own way, where he fancied he should be most safe. Every man to secure his own; himself and his own life.

Note, Those will not dare to suffer for their religion that seek their own things more than the things of Christ, and that look upon the things of this world as their ta idia--their own property, and in which their happiness is bound up. Now observe here,

First, Christ knew before that his disciples would thus desert him in the critical moment, and yet he was still tender of them, and in nothing unkind. We are ready to say of some, "If we could have foreseen their ingratitude, we would not have been so prodigal of our favours to them;" Christ did foresee theirs, and yet was kind to them.

Secondly, He told them of it, to be a rebuke to their exultation in their present attainments: "Do you now believe? Be not high-minded, but fear;

for you will find your faith so sorely shaken as to make it questionable whether it be sincere or no, in a little time."

Note, even when we are taking the comfort of our graces, it is good to be reminded of our dangers from our corruptions. When our faith is strong, our love flaming, and our evidences are clear, yet we cannot infer thence that to-morrow shall be as this day. Even when we have most reason to think we stand, yet we have reason enough to take heed lest we fall.

Thirdly, He spoke of it as a thing very near. The hour was already come, in a manner, when they would be as shy of him as ever they had been fond of him.

Note, A little time may produce great changes, both concerning us and in us.

(c.) An assurance of his own comfort notwithstanding: Yet I am not alone. He would not be thought to complain of their deserting him, as if it were any real damage to him; for in their absence he should be sure of his Father's presence, which was instar omnium--every thing: The Father is with me. We may consider this,

[1.] As a privilege peculiar to the Lord Jesus; the Father was so with him in his sufferings as he never was with any, for still he was in the bosom of the Father. The divine nature did not desert the human nature, but supported it, and put an invincible comfort and an inestimable value into his sufferings. The Father had engaged to be with him in his whole undertaking (Ps 89:21, &c.), and to preserve him (Isa 49:8); this emboldened him, Isa 50:7. Even when he complained of his Father's forsaking him, yet he called him My God, and presently after was so well assured of his favourable presence with him as to commit his Spirit into his hand. This he had comforted himself with all along (Joh 8:29), He that sent me is with me, the Father hath not left me alone, and especially now at last. This assists our faith in the acceptableness of Christ's satisfaction;

no doubt, the Father was well pleased in him, for he went along with him in his undertaking from first to last.

[2.] As a privilege common to all believers, by virtue of their union with Christ; when they are alone, they are not alone, but the Father is with them. First, When solitude is their choice, when they are alone, as Isaac in the field, Nathanael under the fig-tree, Peter upon the house-top, meditating and praying, the Father is with them. Those that converse with God in solitude are never less alone than when alone. A good God and a good heart are good company at any time. Secondly, When solitude is their affliction, their enemies lay them alone, and their friends leave them so, their company, like Job's, is made desolate; yet they are not so much alone as they are thought to be, the Father is with them, as he was with Joseph in his bonds and with John in his banishment. In their greatest troubles they are as one whom his father pities, as one whom his mother comforts. And, while we have God's favourable presence with us, we are happy, and ought to be easy, though all the world forsake us. Non deo tribuimus justum honorem nisi solus ipse nobis sufficiat--We do not render due honour to God, unless we deem him alone all-sufficient.--Calvin.

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

He comforts them with a promise of peace in him, by virtue of his victory over the world, whatever troubles they might meet with in it (Joh 16:33): "These things have I spoken, that in me you might have peace; and if you have it not in me you will not have it at all, for in the world you shall have tribulation; you must expect no other, and yet may cheer up yourselves, for I have overcome the world." Observe,

1 The end Christ aimed at in preaching this farewell sermon to his disciples: That in him they might have peace. He did not hereby intend to give them a full view of that doctrine which they were shortly to be made masters of by the pouring out of the Spirit, but only to satisfy them for the present that his departure from them was really for the best. Or, we may take it more generally: Christ had said all this to them that by enjoying him they might have the best enjoyment of themselves. Note,

(a.) It is the will of Christ that his disciples should have peace within, whatever their troubles may be without.

(b.) Peace in Christ is the only true peace, and in him alone believers have it, for this man shall be the peace, Mic 5:5. Through him we have peace with God, and so in him we have peace in our own minds.

(c.) The word of Christ aims at this, that in him we may have peace. Peace is the fruit of the lips, and of his lips, Isa 57:19.

2 The entertainment they were likely to meet with in the world: "You shall not have outward peace, never expect it." Though they were sent to proclaim peace on earth, and good-will towards men, they must expect trouble on earth, and ill-will from men. Note, It has been the lot of Christ's disciples to have more or less tribulation in this world. Men persecute them because they are so good, and God corrects them because they are no better. Men design to cut them off from the earth, and God designs by affliction to make them meet for heaven; and so between both they shall have tribulation.

3. The encouragement Christ gives them with reference hereto: But be of good cheer, tharseite. "Not only be of good comfort, but be of good courage; have a good heart on it, all shall be well." Note, In the midst of the tribulations of this world it is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples to be of good cheer, to keep up their delight in God whatever is pressing, and their hope in God whatever is threatening; as sorrowful indeed, in compliance with the temper of the climate, and yet always rejoicing, always cheerful (2Co 6:10), even in tribulation, Ro 5:3.

4. The ground of that encouragement: I have overcome the world. Christ's victory is a Christian triumph. Christ overcame the prince of this world, disarmed him, and cast him out; and still treads Satan under our feet. He overcame the children of this world, by the conversion of many to the faith and obedience of his gospel, making them the children of his kingdom. When he sends his disciples to preach the gospel to all the

world, "Be of good cheer," says he, "I have overcome the world as far as I have gone, and so shall you; though you have tribulation in the world, yet you shall gain your point, and captivate the world," Re 6:2. He overcame the wicked of the world, for many a time he put his enemies to silence, to shame; "And be you of good cheer, for the Spirit will enable you to do so too." He overcame the evil things of the world by submitting to them; he endured the cross, despising it and the shame of it; and he overcame the good things of it by being wholly dead to them; its honours had no beauty in his eye, its pleasures no charms. Never was there such a conqueror of the world as Christ was, and we ought to be encouraged by it,

(a.) Because Christ has overcome the world before us; so that we may look upon it as a conquered enemy, that has many a time been baffled. Nay,

(b.) He has conquered it for us, as the captain of our salvation. We are interested in his victory; by his cross the world is crucified to us, which bespeaks it completely conquered and put into our possession; all is yours, even the world. Christ having overcome the world, believers have nothing to do but to pursue their victory, and divide the spoil; and this we do by faith, 1Jo 5:4. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

John-17

Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Here we have, I The circumstances of this prayer, Joh 17:1. Many a solemn prayer Christ made in the days of his flesh (sometimes he continued all night in prayer), but none of his prayers are recorded so fully as this. Observe,

1 The time when he prayed this prayer; when he had spoken these words, had given the foregoing farewell to his disciples, he prayed this prayer in their hearing; so that,

(a.) It was a prayer after a sermon; when he had spoken from God to them, he turned to speak to God for them. Note, Those we preach to we must pray for. He that was to prophesy upon the dry bones was also to pray, Come, O breath, and breathe upon them. And the word preached should be prayed over, for God gives the increase.

(b.) It was a prayer after sacrament; after Christ and his disciples had eaten the passover and the Lord's supper together, and he had given them a suitable exhortation, he closed the solemnity with this prayer, that God would preserve the good impressions of the ordinance upon them.

(c.) It was a family-prayer. Christ's disciples were his family, and, to set a good example before the masters of families, he not only, as the son of Abraham, taught his household (Ge 18:19), but, as a son of David, blessed his household (2Sa 6:20), prayed for them and with them.

(d.) It was a parting prayer. When we and our friends are parting, it is good to part with prayer, Ac 20:36. Christ was parting by death, and that parting should be sanctified and sweetened by prayer. Dying Jacob blessed the twelve patriarchs, dying Moses the twelve tribes, and so, here, dying Jesus the twelve apostles.

(e.) It was a prayer that was a preface to his sacrifice, which he was now about to offer on earth, specifying the favours and blessings designed to be purchased by the merit of his death for those that were his; like a deed leading the uses of a fine, and directing to what intents and purposes it shall be levied. Christ prayed then as a priest now offering sacrifice, in the virtue of which all prayers were to be made.

(f.) It was a prayer that was a specimen of his intercession, which he ever lives to make for us within the veil. Not that in his exalted state he addresses himself to his Father by way of humble petition, as when he

was on earth. No, his intercession in heaven is a presenting of his merit to his Father, with a suing out of the benefit of it for all his chosen ones.

He prayed for himself first. Though Christ, as God, was prayed to, Christ, as man, prayed; thus it became him to fulfill all righteousness. It was said to him, as it is said to us, Ask, and I will give thee, Ps 2:8. What he had purchased he must ask for; and shall we expect to have what we never merited, but have a thousand times forfeited, unless we pray for it? This puts an honour upon prayer, that it was the messenger Christ sent on his errands, the way in which even he corresponded with Heaven. It likewise gives great encouragement to praying people, and cause to hope that even the prayer of the destitute shall not be despised; time was when he that is advocate for us had a cause of his own to solicit, a great cause, on the success of which depended all his honour as Mediator; and this he was to solicit in the same method that is prescribed to us, by prayers and supplications (Heb 5:7), so that he knows the heart of a petitioner (Ex 23:9), he knows the way. Now observe, Christ began with prayer for himself, and afterwards prayed for his disciples; this charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. We must love and pray for our neighbor as ourselves, and therefore must in a right manner love and pray for ourselves first. Christ was much shorter in his prayer for himself than in his prayer for his disciples. Our prayers for the church must not be crowded into a corner of our prayers; in making supplication for all saints, we have room enough to enlarge, and should not straiten ourselves. Now here are two petitions which Christ puts up for himself, and these two are one--that he might be glorified. But this one petition, Glorify thou me, is twice put up, because it has a double reference. To the prosecution of his undertaking further: Glorify me, that I may glorify thee, in doing what is agreed upon to be yet done, Joh 17:1-3. And to the performance of his undertaking hitherto: "Glorify me, for I have glorified thee. I have done my part, and now, Lord, do thine," Joh 17:4,5.

Christ here prays to be glorified, in order to his glorifying God (Joh 17:1): Glorify thy Son according to thy promise, that thy Son may glorify thee according to his understanding. Here observe,

[1.] What he prays for--that he might be glorified in this world: "The hour is come when all the powers of darkness will combine to vilify thy Son; now, Father, glorify him." The Father glorified the Son upon earth,

First, Even in his sufferings, by the signs and wonders which attended them. When they that came to take him were thunder-struck with a word,--when Judas confessed him innocent, and sealed that confession with his own guilty blood,--when the judge's wife asleep, and the judge himself awake, pronounced him righteous,--when the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple rent, then the Father not only justified, but glorified the Son. Nay,

Secondly, Even by his sufferings; when he was crucified, he was magnified, he was glorified, Joh 13:31. It was in his cross that he conquered Satan and death; his thorns were a crown, and Pilate in the inscription over his head wrote more than he thought. But, Thirdly, Much more after his sufferings. The Father glorified the Son when he raised him from the dead, showed him openly to chosen witnesses, and poured out the Spirit to support and plead his cause, and to set up his kingdom among men, then he glorified him. This he here prays for, and insists upon.

[2.] What he pleads to enforce this request.

First, He pleads relation: Glorify thy Son; thy Son as God, as Mediator. It is in consideration of this that the heathen are given him for his inheritance; for thou art my Son, Ps 2:7,8. The devil had tempted him to renounce his sonship with an offer of the kingdoms of this world; but he rejected the offer with disdain, and depended upon his Father for his preferment, and here applies himself to him for it. Note, Those that have received the adoption of sons may in faith pray for the inheritance of sons; if sanctified, then glorified: Father, glorify thy Son.

Secondly, He pleads the time: The hour is come; the season prefixed to an hour. The hour of Christ's passion was determined in the counsel of God. He had often said his hour was not yet come; but now it was come, and he knew it. Man knows not his time (Ec 9:12), but the Son of man

did. He calls it this hour (Joh 12:27), and here, the hour; compare Mk 14:35,Joh 16:21. For the hour of the Redeemer's death, which was also the hour of the Redeemer's birth, was the most signal and remarkable hour, and, without doubt, the most critical, that ever was since the clock of time was first set a going. Never was there such an hour as that, nor did ever any hour challenge such expectations of it before, nor such reflections upon it after.

1. "The hour is come in the midst of which I need to be owned." Now is the hour when this grand affair is come to a crisis; after many a skirmish the decisive battle between heaven and hell is now to be fought, and that great cause in which God's honour and man's happiness are together embarked must now be either won or lost for ever. The two champions David and Goliath, Michael and the dragon, are now entering the lists; the trumpet sounds for an engagement that will be irretrievably fatal either to the one or to the other: "Now glorify thy Son, now give him victory over principalities and powers, now let the bruising of his heel be the breaking of the serpent's head, now let thy Son be so upheld as not to fail nor be discouraged." When Joshua went forth conquering and to conquer, it is said, The Lord magnified Joshua; so he glorified his Son when he made the cross his triumphant chariot.

2. "The hour is come in the close of which I expect to be crowned; the hour is come when I am to be glorified, and, set at thy right hand." Betwixt him and that glory there intervened a bloody scene of suffering; but, being short, he speaks as if he made little of it: The hour is come that I must be glorified; and he did not expect it till then. Good Christians in a trying hour, particularly a dying hour, may thus plead: "Now the hour is come, stand by me, appear for me, now or never: now the earthly tabernacle is to be dissolved, the hour is come that I should be glorified." 2Co 5:1.

Thirdly, He pleads the Father's own interest and concern herein: That thy Son may also glorify thee; for he had consecrated his whole undertaking to his Father's honour. He desired to be carried triumphantly through his sufferings to his glory, that he might glorify the Father two ways:--

1. By the death of the cross, which he was now to suffer. Father, glorify thy name, expressed the great intention of his sufferings, which was to retrieve his Father's injured honour among men, and, by his satisfaction, to come up to the glory of God, which man, by his sin, came short of: "Father, own me in my sufferings, that I may honour thee by them."

2. By the doctrine of the cross, which was now shortly to be published to the world, by which God's kingdom was to be re-established among men. He prays that his Father would so grace his sufferings, and crown them, as not only to take off the offence of the cross, but to make it, to those that are saved, the wisdom of God and the power of God. If God had not glorified Christ crucified, by raising him from the dead, his whole undertaking had been crushed; therefore glorify me, that I may glorify thee. Now thereby he hath taught us,

(a.) What to eye and aim at in our prayers, in all our designs and desires--and that is, the honour of God. It being our chief end to glorify God, other things must be sought and attended to in subordination and subserviency to the Lord. "Do this and the other for thy servant, that thy servant may glorify thee. Give me health, that I may glorify thee with my body; success, that I may glorify thee with my estate," &c. Hallowed be thy name must be our first petition, which must fix our end in all our other petitions, 1Pe 4:11.

(b.) He hath taught us what to expect and hope for. If we sincerely set ourselves to glorify our Father, he will not be wanting to do that for us which is requisite to put us into a capacity of glorifying him, to give us the grace he knows sufficient, and the opportunity he sees convenient. But, if we secretly honour ourselves more than him, it is just with him to leave us in the hand of our own counsels, and then, instead of honouring ourselves, we shall shame ourselves.

2 as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

He pleads his commission (Joh 17:2,3); he desires to glorify his Father, in conformity to, and in pursuance of, the commission given him: "Glorify thy Son, as thou hast given him power, glorify him in the execution of the powers thou hast given him," so it is connected with the

petition; or, that thy Son may glorify thee according to the power given him, so it is connected with the plea. Now see here the power of the Mediator.

1. The origin of his power: Thou hast given him power; he has it from God, to whom all power belongs. Man, in his fallen state, must, in order to his recovery, be taken under a new model of government, which could not be erected but by a special commission under the broad seal of heaven, directed to the undertaker of that glorious work, and constituting him sole arbitrator of the grand difference that was, and sole guarantee of the grand alliance that was to be, between God and man; so as to this office, he received his power, which was to be executed in a way distinct from his power and government as Creator. Note, The church's king is no usurper, as the prince of this world is; Christ's right to rule is incontestable.

2. The extent of his power: He has power over all flesh.

(a.) Over all mankind. He has power in and over the world of spirits, the powers of the upper and unseen world are subject to him (1Pe 3:22); but, being now mediating between God and man, he here pleads his power over all flesh. They were men whom he was to subdue and save; out of that race he had a remnant given him, and therefore all that rank of beings was put under his feet.

(b.) Over mankind considered as corrupt and fallen, for so he is called flesh, Ge 6:3. If he had not in this sense been flesh, he had not needed a Redeemer. Over this sinful race the Lord Jesus has all power; and all judgment, concerning them, is committed to him; power to bind or loose, acquit or condemn; power on earth to forgive sins or not. Christ, as Mediator, has the government of the whole world put into his hand; he is king of nations, has power even over those that know him not, nor obey his gospel; whom he does not rule, he over-rules, Ps 22:28,72:8,Mt 28:18,Joh 3:35.

3. The grand intention and design of this power: That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Here is the mystery of our salvation laid open.

(a.) Here is the Father making over the elect to the Redeemer, and giving them to him as his charge and trust; as the crown and recompence of his undertaking. He has a sovereign power over all the fallen race, but a peculiar interest in the chosen remnant; all things were put under his feet, but they were delivered into his hand.

(b.) Here is the Son undertaking to secure the happiness of those that were given him, that he would give eternal life to them. See how great the authority of the Redeemer is. He has lives and crowns to give, eternal lives that never die, immortal crowns that never fade. Now consider how great the Lord Jesus is, who has such preferments in his gift; and how gracious he is in giving eternal life to those whom he undertakes to save.

[1.] He sanctifies them in this world, gives them the spiritual life which is eternal life in the bud and embryo, Joh 4:14. Grace in the soul is heaven in that soul.

[2.] He will glorify them in the other world; their happiness shall be completed in the vision and fruition of God. This only is mentioned, because it supposes all the other parts of his undertaking, teaching them, satisfying for them, sanctifying them, and preparing them for that eternal life; and indeed all the other were in order to this; we are called to his kingdom and glory, and begotten to the inheritance. What is last in execution was first in intention, and that is eternal life.

(c.) Here is the subserviency of the Redeemer's universal dominion to this: He has power over all flesh, on purpose that he might give eternal life to the select number. Note, Christ's dominion over the children of men is in order to the salvation of the children of God. All things are for their sakes, 2Co 4:15. All Christ's laws, ordinances, and promises, which are given to all, are designed effectually to convey spiritual life, and

secure eternal life, to all that were given to Christ; he is head over all things to the church. The administration of the kingdoms of providence and grace are put into the same hand, that all things may be made to concur for good to the called.

Before the world was. There could not be a more distinct and clear declaration of the pre-existence of Christ than this. It means before the creation of the world; before there was any world. Of course, the speaker here must have existed then, and this is equivalent to saying that he existed from eternity. See Jn 1:1,2, 6:62, 3:13 Jn 16:28. The glory which he had then was that which was proper to the Son of God, represented by the expression being in the bosom of the Father (Jn 1:18), denoting intimacy, friendship, united felicity. The Son of God, by becoming incarnate, is represented as humbling himself (Greek, he "emptied himself"), Php 2:8. He laid aside for a time the external aspect of honour, and consented to become despised, and to assume the form of a servant. He now prays that God would raise him up to the dignity and honour which he had before his incarnation. This is the state to which he is now exalted, with the additional honour of having made atonement for sin, and having opened the way to save a race of rebels from eternal death. The lowest condition on earth is frequently connected with the highest honours of heaven. Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks to him that is humble and of a contrite spirit.

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Here is a further explication of this grand design (Joh 17:3): "This is life eternal, which I am empowered and have undertaken to give, this is the nature of it, and this the way leading to it, to know thee the only true God, and all the discoveries and principles of natural religion, and Jesus Christ whom, thou has sent, as Mediator, and the doctrines and laws of that holy religion which he instituted for the recovery of man out of his lapsed state." Here is,

(a.) The great end which the Christian religion sets before us, and that is, eternal life, the happiness of an immortal soul in the vision and fruition of an eternal God. This he was to reveal to all, and secure to all that were given him. By the gospel life and immortality are brought to light, are

brought to hand, a life which transcends this as much in excellency as it does in duration.

(b.) The sure way of attaining this blessed end, which is, by the right knowledge of God and Jesus Christ: "This is life eternal, to know thee," which may be taken two ways--

[1.] Life eternal lies in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ; the present principle of this life is the believing knowledge of God and Christ; the future perfection of that life will be the intuitive knowledge of God and Christ. Those that are brought into union with Christ, and live a life of communion with God in Christ, know, in some measure, by experience, what eternal life is, and will say, "If this be heaven, heaven is sweet." See Ps 17:15.

[2.] The knowledge of God and Christ leads to life eternal; this is the way in which Christ gives eternal life, by the knowledge of him that has called us (2Pe 1:3), and this is the way in which we come to receive it. The Christian religion shows us the way to heaven,

First, By directing us to God, as the author and felicity of our being; for Christ died to bring us to God. To know him as our Creator, and to love him, obey him, submit to him, and trust in him, as our owner ruler, and benefactor,--to devote ourselves to him as our sovereign Lord, depend upon him as our chief good, and direct all to his praise as our highest end,--this is life eternal. God is here called the only true God, to distinguish him from the false gods of the heathen, which were counterfeits and pretenders, not from the person of the Son, of whom it is expressly said that he is the true God and eternal life (1Jo 5:20), and who in this text is proposed as the object of the same religious regard with the Father. It is certain there is but one only living and true God and the God we adore is he. He is the true God, and not a mere name or notion; the only true God, and all that ever set up as rivals with him are vanity and a lie; the service of him is the only true religion.

Secondly, By directing us to Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man: Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. If man had continued

innocent, the knowledge of the only true God would have been life eternal to him; but now that he is fallen there must be something more; now that we are under guilt, to know God is to know him as a righteous Judge, whose curse we are under; and nothing is more killing than to know this. We are therefore concerned to know Christ as our Redeemer, by whom alone we can now have access to God; it is life eternal to believe in Christ; and this he has undertaken to give to as many as were given him. See Joh 6:39,40. Those that are acquainted with God and Christ are already in the suburbs of life eternal.

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

With what comfort Christ reflects on the life he had lived on earth: I have glorified thee, and finished my work; it is as good as finished. He does not complain of the poverty and disgrace he had lived in, what a weary life he had upon earth, as ever any man of sorrows had. He overlooks this, and pleases himself in reviewing the service he had done his Father, and the progress he had made in his understanding. This is here recorded,

First, For the honour of Christ, that his life upon earth did in all respects fully answer the end of his coming into the world. Note,

1. Our Lord Jesus had work given him to do by him that sent him; he came not into the world to live at ease, but to go about doing good, and to fulfill all righteousness. His Father gave him his work, his work in the vineyard, both appointed him to it and assisted him in it.

2. The work that was given him to do he finished. Though he had not, as yet, gone through the last part of his undertaking, yet he was so near being made perfect through sufferings that he might say, I have finished it; it was as good as done, he was giving it its finishing stroke eteleiosa--I have finished. The word signifies his performing every part of his undertaking in the most complete and perfect manner.

3. Herein he glorified his Father; he pleased him, he praised him. It is the glory of God that his work is perfect, and the same is the glory of the Redeemer; what he is the author of he will be the finisher of. It was a strange way for the Son to glorify the Father by abasing himself (this

looked more likely to disparage him), yet it was contrived that so he should glorify him: "I have glorified thee on the earth, in such a way as men on earth could bear the manifestation of thy glory."

Secondly, It is recorded for example to all, that we may follow his example.

1. We must make it our business to do the work God has appointed us to do, according to our capacity and the sphere of our activity; we must each of us do all the good we can in this world.

2. We must aim at the glory of God in all. We must glorify him on the earth, which he has given unto the children of men, demanding only this quit-rent; on the earth, where we are in a state of probation and preparation for eternity.

3. We must persevere herein to the end of our days; we must not sit down till we have finished our work, and accomplished as a hireling our day.

Thirdly, It is recorded for encouragement to all those that rest upon him. If he has finished the work that was given him to do, then he is a complete Saviour, and did not do his work by the halves. And he that finished his work for us will finish it in us to the day of Christ.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

With thine own self. In heaven, granting me a participation of the same honour which the Father has. He had just said that he had glorified God on the earth; he now prays that God would glorify him in heaven.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Have manifested thy name. The word name here includes the attributes or character of God. Jesus had made known his character, his law, his will, his plan of mercy--or, in other words, he had revealed GOD to them. The word name is often used to designate the person, Jn 15:21, Mt 10:22, Rom 2:24, 1Timm 6:1.

Which thou gavest me. God gave them to him in his purpose. He gave them by his providence. He so ordered affairs that they heard him preach and saw his miracles; and he gave them by disposing them to follow him when he called them.

Thine they were. All men are God's by creation and by preservation, and he has a right to do with them as seemeth good in his sight. These men he chose to designate to be the apostles of the Saviour; and he committed them to him to be taught, and then commissioned them to carry his gospel, though amid persecutions, to the ends of the world. God has a right to the services of all; and he has a right to appoint us to any labour, however humble, or hazardous, or wearisome, where we may promote his glory and honour his name.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

Observe here,

1. The faithfulness of Christ in revealing the whole will of his Father to his disciples.

2. The proficiency of his disciples in the school of Christ: They knew all the things which Christ had told them; namely, that whatsoever he had, was given him of the Father, and that he had these things from him to be a mediator.

1. Learn hence, that Christ hath approved himself a faithful prophet to his church; a faithful messenger from his Father to his people, in that he hath added nothing to his message, nor taken nothing from it.

2. That it is our duty to know and believe on Christ, as the only messenger and mediator sent of God: Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

As if Christ had said, "The message by thee my Father committed to me, I have communicated to them my disciples, and they have received it, and will communicate it from thee to the world; being sufficiently assured that my coming and preaching was all by commission from thee."

Hence learn,

1. That the doctrine of the gospel, which was revealed by Christ, was received from the Father.

2. That faith is a receiving of the word of Christ, and of Christ in and by the word. Receiving is a relative term, and presupposes an offer. God offers on his part, and we receive on our part, the whole word with the whole heart. That the ministers of the gospel are to preach that, and only that, which they have out of the word of God: I have given them the word which thou gavest me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

That is, "I now offer up a prayer particularly,

1. For my apostles, designed for so great a work as the preaching of the everlasting gospel to the obstinate Jews and obdurate Gentiles.

2. I intercede also for all believers at this time, for their perseverance in the faith, and constancy in persecution, but I do not now intercede for the wicked and impenitent world, they not being capable (whilst such) of these mercies and blessings;" though at other times we find him praying for the world, yea, for his very crucifiers: Father, forgive them, &c.

Nay, in this very prayer, at the 20th verse, he prays for the world; that is, for the Gentile world; all those that, by the preaching of the apostles and their successors, should be brought to believe on him to the end of the world.

Learn hence,

1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great and gracious intercessor.

2. That all believers, all the children of God in general, are under the fruit and benefit of Christ's intercession.

3. That as all the members of Christ in general, so the ministers and ambassadors of Christ in special, have a particular interest in Christ's intercession: and great are the advantages of his intercession for them.

1. From the person interceding, Christ: consider the dignity of his person, God-man: the dearness of his person, God's son.

2. From the manner of his intercession: not by way of entreaty, but meritorious claim.

3. From the sublimity of his office: our intercessor is near to God, even at his right hand.

4. From the fruits of his intercession: it procures the acceptance and justification of our persons, the hearing and answering of our prayers, the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, our preservation in grace, and our hopes of eternal glory.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

We may understand this two ways;

1. Of all persons; all my friends, all my disciples, are thine as well as mine.
Thence learn, that the Father and the Son have a like share and property in all believers.

2. The words in the original, being of the neuter gender, signify, all thy things are mine, and all my things are thine.

Christ and his Father are one, and they agree in one; they have the same essence and nature, the same attributes and will; Christ hath all things that the Father hath, willeth all things that the Father willeth, and doeth all things that the Father doeth; he is therefore really and essentially God. It followeth, And I am glorified in them: that is, I am made glorious by their owning and receiving me, by their believing in me, and accepting of me for their Lord and Saviour.

Thence note, that the Lord Jesus Christ is eminently glorified in and by all those that believe in him, and belong unto him.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Through thine own name. Our translators seem to have understood this expression as meaning "keep by thy power," but this probably is not its meaning. It is literally "keep in thy name." And if the term name be taken to denote God himself and his perfections (Jn 17:6), it means "keep in the knowledge of thyself. Preserve them in obedience to thee and to thy cause. Suffer them not to fall away from thee and to become apostates."

As we are. This refers not to a union of nature, but of feeling, plan, purpose. Any other union between Christians is impossible; but a union of affection is what the Saviour sought, and this he desired might be so strong as to be an illustration of the unchanging love between the Father and the Son. See Jn 17:21-23.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Those that thou gavest me, &c. The word "gavest" is evidently used by the Saviour to denote not only to give to him to be his real followers, but also as apostles, It is here used, probably, in the sense of giving as apostles. God had so ordered it by his providence that they had been given to him to be his apostles and followers; but the terms "thou gavest me" do not of necessity prove that they were true believers. Of Judas Jesus knew that he was a deceiver and a devil, Jn 6:70: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Judas is there represented as having been chosen by the Saviour to the apostleship, and this is equivalent to

saying that he was given to him for this work; yet at the same time he knew his character, and understood that he had never been renewed. None of them. None of those chosen to the apostolic office.

But the son of perdition. Mt 1:1 The term son was given by the Hebrews to those who possessed the character described by the word or name following. Thus, sons of Belial-those who possessed his character; children of wisdom -those who were wise, Mt 11:19. Thus Judas is called a son of perdition because he had the character of a destroyer. He was a traitor and a murderer. And this shows that he who knew the heart regarded his character as that of a wicked man--one whose appropriate name was that of a son of perdition.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

In these words our Saviour declares the great reason why he did at this time so publicly and solemnly pray for his disciples; it was to fill them with joy and comfort, that their joy might not be diminished by Christ's departure, but rather increased by the coming of the Comforter: That they may have my joy fulfilled in them: that is, the joy which they take in me, and the joy which they have from me.

There is a double care which Christ takes of his people; namely, a care of their graces, and a care of their joy and comfort; how solicitious was he to leave his disciples joyful before he departed from them! He delights to see his people cheerful; and he knows of what great use spiritual joy is in the Christian's course, both to enable us for doing, and to fit us for suffering.

Learn hence,

1. That Christ is the author and orignal of the joy of his people: My joy.

2. That it is Christ's will and desire, that his people might be full of holy joy: That my joy may be fulfilled in them.

3. That the great end of Christ's prayer and intercession was, and is, that his peoples' heart may be full of joy: These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

I have given them thy word, partly by external revelation, and partly by internal illumination; and for thy word's sake the world hates them, as also because they are not of the world.

Learn,

1. That Christians, especially ministers to whom Christ has given his word, must expect the world's hatred. Few of the prophets or apostles died a natural death: as their calling is eminent, so must their sufferings be exemplary. The best ministers, and the best men, are usually most hated. There is an antipathy against the power of godliness; or a cruel, causeless, implacable, and irreconcilable hatred against the saints, because of their strictness in religion, and contrariety to the world.

2. That it is to the honour of believers that they are like unto Christ, in being the object of the world's hatred: The world hates them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world.

This Christ adds both for information and consolation; for information, that they should look for such hatred, misery, and trouble, as they saw him grapple with; and for consolation, to think that the world can never hate us so bad as it hated Christ.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Sanctify them. This word means to render pure, or to cleanse from sins, 1Thes 5:20, 1Cor 6:11. Sanctification in the heart of a Christian is progressive. It consists in his becoming more like God and less attached to the world; in his getting the ascendancy over evil thoughts, and passions, and impure desires; and in his becoming more and more weaned

from earthly objects, and attached to those things which are unseen and eternal. The word also means to consecrate, to set apart to a holy office or purpose. See Jn 17:19; also Jn 10:36. When Jesus prayed here that God would sanctify them, he probably included both these ideas, that they might be made personally more holy, and might be truly consecrated to God as the ministers of his religion. Ministers of the gospel will be really devoted to the service of God just in proportion as they are personally pure.

Through thy truth. Truth is a representation of things as they are. The Saviour prayed that through those just views of God and of themselves they might be made holy. To see things as they are is to see God to be infinitely lovely and pure; his commands to be reasonable and just; heaven to be holy and desirable; his service to be easy, and religion pleasant, and sin odious; to see that life is short, that death is near; that the pride, pomp, pleasures, wealth, and honours of this world are of little value, and that it is of infinite importance to be prepared to enter on the eternal state of being. He that sees all this, or that looks on things as they are, will desire to be holy. He will make it his great object to live near to God and to glorify his name. In the sanctification of the soul God makes use of all truth, or of everything fitted to make a representation of things as they are to the mind. His Word states that and no more; his Spirit and his providence do it. The earth and the heavens, the seasons, the sunshine and the rain, are all fitted to teach us his goodness and power, and lead us to him. His daily mercies tend to the same end, and afflictions have the same design. Our own sickness teaches us that we are soon to die. The death of a friend teaches us the instability of all earthly comforts, and the necessity of seeking better joys. All these things are fitted to make just representations to the mind, and thus to sanctify the soul. As the Christian is constantly amid these objects, so he should be constantly growing in grace, and daily and hourly gaining new and deeper impressions of the great truths of religion.

Thy word is truth. All that thou hast spoken--that is, all that is contained in the Bible. All the commands and promises of God; his representations of his own character and that of man; his account of the mission and death of his Son; of the grave, the resurrection, judgment, and eternity, all tend

to represent things as they are, and are thus fitted to sanctify the soul. We have here also the testimony of the Saviour that the revelation which God has given is true. All that God has spoken is true, and the Christian should rejoice and the sinner should tremble. See Ps 19:7-14.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

I sanctify myself. I consecrate myself exclusively to the service of God. The word sanctify does not refer here to personal sanctification, for he had no sin, but to setting himself apart entirely to the work of redemption.

1st. That they might have an example of the proper manner of labouring in the ministry, and might learn of me how to discharge its duties. Ministers will understand their work best when they most faithfully study the example of their great model, the Son of God.

2nd. That they might be made pure by the effect of my sanctifying myself--that is, that they might be made pure by the shedding of that blood which cleanses from all sin. By this only can men be made holy; and it was because the Saviour so sanctified himself, or set himself to this work so unreservedly as to shed his own blood, that any soul can be made pure and fit for the kingdom of God.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Verses 20,21. Neither pray I for these alone, &c. Not for the apostles only, but for all who shall be converted under the preaching of the gospel. They will all need similar grace and be exposed to similar trials. It is a matter of unspeakable joy that each Christian, however humble or unknown to men--however poor, unlearned, or despised, can reflect that he was remembered in prayer by him whom God heareth always. We value the prayers of pious friends. How much more should we value this petition of the Son of God! To that single prayer we who are Christians owe infinitely more real benefits than the world can ever bestow; and in the midst of any trials we may remember that the Son of God prayed for us, and that the prayer was assuredly heard, and will be answered in reference to all who truly believe.

All may be one. May be united as brethren. Christians are all redeemed by the same blood, and are going to the same heaven. They have the same wants, the same enemies, the same joys. Though they are divided into different denominations, yet they will meet at last in the same abodes of glory. Hence they should feel that they belong to the same family, and are children of the same God and Father. There are no ties so tender as those which bind us in the gospel. There is no friendship so pure and enduring as that which results from having the same attachment to the Lord Jesus. Hence Christians, in the New Testament, are represented as being indissolubly united--parts of the same body, and members of the same family, Acts 4:32-35. 1Cor 12:4-31, Eph 2:20-22, Rom 12:5. On the ground of this union they are exhorted to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, and to study the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another, Eph 4:3, Rom 12:5-16.

As thou, Father, art in me. See Jn 14:10 This does not affirm that the union between Christians should be in all respects like that between the Father and the Son, but only in the points in which they are capable of being compared. It is not the union of nature which is referred to, but the union of plan, of counsel, of purpose--seeking the same objects, and manifesting attachment to the same things, and a desire to promote the same ends.

That they also may be one in us. To be in God and in Christ is to be united to God and Christ. The expression is common in the New Testament. The phrase here used denotes a union among all Christians founded on and resulting from a union to the same God and Saviour.

That the world may believe, &c. That the world, so full of animosities and fightings, may see the power of Christian principle in overcoming the sources of contention and producing love, and may thus see that a religion that could produce this must be from heaven. Jn 13:34. This was done. Such was the attachment of the early Christians to each other, that a heathen was constrained to say, "See how these Christians love one another!"

21 that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

And the glory, &c. The honour which thou hast conferred on me by admitting me to union with thee, the same honour I have conferred on them by admitting them to like union with me.

May be one, even as we are one. Not in nature, or in the mode of existence-for this was not the subject of discourse, and would be impossible--but in feeling, in principle, in purpose. Evincing, as the Father and the Son had always done, the same great aim and plan; not pursuing different interests, or counteracting each other's purposes, or forming parties, but seeking the same ends by the same means. This is the union between the Father and the Son. Always, in the creation, preservation, and redemption of the world, the Father and the Son have sought the same object, and this is to be the model on which Christians should act.

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

May be made perfect in one. That their union may be complete. That there may be no jars, discords, or contentions. A machine is perfect or complete when it has all its parts and is in good order--when there is no portion of it wanting. So the union of Christians, for which the Saviour prayed, would be complete or perfect if there were no controversies, no envyings, no contentions, and no heart-burnings and jealousies. It is worthy of remark here how entirely the union of his people occupied the mind of Jesus as he drew near to death. He saw the danger of strifes and contentions in the church. He knew the imperfections of even the best of men. He saw how prone they would be to passion and ambition; how ready to mistake love of sect or party for zeal for pure religion; how selfish and worldly men in the church might divide his followers, and produce unholy feeling and contention; and he saw, also, how much this would do to dishonour religion. Hence he took occasion, when he was about to die, to impress the importance of union on his disciples. By

solemn admonition, and by most tender and affecting appeals to God in supplication, he showed his sense of the value of this union. He used the most sublime and impressive illustration; he adverted to the eternal union between the Father and himself; he reminded them of his love, and of the effect that their union would have on the world, to fix it more deeply in their hearts. The effect has shown the infinite wisdom of the Saviour. The contentions and strifes of Christians have shown his knowledge in foreseeing it. The effect of all this on religion has shown that he understood the value of union. Christians have contended long enough. It is time that they should hear the parting admonitions of their Redeemer, and go unitedly against their common foe. The world still lies in wickedness; and the friends of Jesus, bound by the cords of eternal love, should advance together against the common enemy, and spread the triumphs of the gospel around the globe. All that is needful now, under the blessing of God, to convince the world that God sent the Lord Jesus, is that very union among all Christians for which he prayed; and when that union of feeling, and purpose, and action shall take place, the task of sending the gospel to all nations will be soon accomplished, and the morning of the millennial glory will dawn upon the world.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

I will. This expression, though it commonly denotes command, is here only expressive of desire. It is used in prayer, and it was not the custom of the Saviour to use language of command when addressing God. It is often used to express strong and earnest desire, or a pressing and importunate wish, such as we are exceedingly anxious should not be denied, Mk 6:25, 10:35; Mt 12:38, 15:28.

Where I am. In heaven. The Son of God was still in the bosom of the Father, Jn 1:18. Jn 7:34. Probably the expression here means where I shall be.

My glory. My honour and dignity when exalted to the right hand of God. The word "behold" implies more than simply seeing; it means also to participate, to enjoy. Jn 3:3, Mt 5:8.

Thou lovedst me, &c. This is another of the numerous passages which prove that the Lord Jesus existed before the creation of the world. It is not possible to explain it on any other supposition.

25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

The respect he had to his Father, Joh 17:25. Observe,

(a.) The title he gives to God: O righteous Father. When he prayed that they might be sanctified, he called him holy Father; when he prays that they may be glorified, he calls him righteous Father; for it is a crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give. God's righteousness was engaged for the giving out of all that good which the Father had promised and the Son had purchased.

(b.) The character he gives of the world that lay in wickedness: The world has not known thee. Note, Ignorance of God overspreads the world of mankind; this is the darkness they sit in. Now this is urged here,

[1.] To show that these disciples need the aids of special grace, both because of the necessity of their work--they were to bring a world that knew not God to the knowledge of him; and also, because of the difficulty of their work--they must bring light to those that rebelled against the light; therefore keep them.

[2.] To show that they were qualified for further peculiar favours, for they had that knowledge of God which the world had not.

(c.) The plea he insists upon for himself: But I have known thee. Christ knew the Father as no one else ever did; knew upon what grounds he went in his undertaking, knew his Father's mind in every thing, and therefore, in this prayer, came to him with confidence, as we do to one we know. Christ is here suing out blessings for those that were his; pursuing this petition, when he had said, The world has not known thee, one would expect it should follow, but they have known thee; no, their knowledge was not to be boasted of, but I have known thee, which intimates that there is nothing in us to recommend us to God's favour, but all our interest

in him, and intercourse with him, result from, and depend upon, Christ's interest and intercourse. We are unworthy, but he is worthy.

(d.) The plea he insists upon for his disciples: And they have known that thou hast sent me; and,

[1.] Hereby they are distinguished from the unbelieving world. When multitudes to whom Christ was sent, and his grace offered, would not believe that God had sent him, these knew it, and believed it, and were not ashamed to own it. Note, To know and believe in Jesus Christ, in the midst of a world that persists in ignorance and infidelity, is highly pleasing to God, and shall certainly be crowned with distinguishing glory. Singular faith qualifies for singular favours.

[2.] Hereby they are interested in the mediation of Christ, and partake of the benefit of his acquaintance with the Father: "I have known thee, immediately and perfectly; and these, though they have not so known thee, nor were capable of knowing thee so, yet have known that thou hast sent me, have known that which was required of them to know, have known the Creator in the Redeemer." Knowing Christ as sent of God, they have, in him, known the Father, and are introduced to an acquaintance with him; therefore, "Father, look after them for my sake."

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

I in them. By my doctrines and the influences of my Spirit. That my religion may show its power, and produce its proper fruits in their minds, Gal 4:19. The discourse in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters is the most tender and sublime that was ever pronounced in our world. No composition can be found anywhere so fitted to sustain the soul in trial or to support it in death. This sublime and beautiful discourse is appropriately closed by a solemn and most affecting prayer--a prayer at once expressive of the profoundest reverence for God and the tenderest love for men--simple, grave, tender, sublime, and full of consolation. It is the model for our prayers, and with like reverence, faith, and love we should come before God. This prayer for the church will yet be fully answered; and he who loves the church and the world cannot but cast his eyes onward to that time when all believers shall be one; when

contentions, bigotry, strife, and anger shall cease; and when, in perpetual union and love, Christians shall show forth the power and purity of that holy gospel with which the Saviour came to bless mankind. Soon may that happy day arise!

John-18

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples.

see Mt 26:47-58. Compare Mr 14:43-54 Lu 22:47-54.

3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

As soon as he said, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground - How amazing is it, that they should renew the assault, after so sensible an experience both of his power and mercy! But probably the priests among them might persuade themselves and their attendants, that this also was done by Beelzebub; and that it was through the providence of God, This statement of John is omitted by the other gospels. As Christ answers them, either his majesty and their own terror so impressed them, that, awed, they fell backward to the earth, or his divine power was exerted to prostrate them. Then the Lord submitted himself "as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa 53:7 Jer 11:19 Ac 8:32), and his power is not again exerted

until he rises from the tomb, except to heal the smitten servant of the high priest.

7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye ? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

9 that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it ?

Jesus Brought before the High Priest

12 Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,

13 and led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

14 Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

Peter in the High Priest's Court

15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

see notes on Mt 26:57-75. Compare Mr 14:53-72 Lu 22:54-71.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals, for it was cold; and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

The High Priest Questions Jesus

19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.
20 Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.
21 Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.
22 And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?
23 Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?
24 Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.

Peter Denies Jesus

25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.
26 One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?
27 Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crew.

Jesus before Pilate

28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

For notes on the trial before Pilate, see Mt 27:1-25. Compare Mr 15:1-15 Lu 23:1-25. The first examination was at the house of Annas (Joh 18:13),

where an officer had smitten Jesus (Joh 18:22). Then Annas sent him to Caiaphas (Joh 18:24). Still later he was tried before the Sanhedrin (Mt 27:1,2) and condemned. Then he was led from Caiaphas to Pilate's judgment hall (Joh 18:28). The judgment hall. The praetorium, or official hall of the Roman governor. Lest they should be defiled. These Jewish leaders, filled with the hate of Christ, and ready to secure his judicial murder by the foulest means, were yet so scrupulous that they would not enter the house of a Gentile lest "they should be defiled" (see De 16:4), so that they would not be able to eat the passover. The Pharisees held that contact with a Gentile, or to enter his house was a source of defilement. Hence, this deputation of the Sanhedrin waited without, and Pilate "went out unto them" to ascertain their business. Men can be very religious and yet great sinners.

29 Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

30 They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

31 Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:

The Jews being now under the power of the Romans, though they had a power of judging and censuring criminals in smaller matters, yet not in capital cases; they could not pronounce a sentence of death upon any person, say some; they might, and did, say others, punish blasphemers by stoning them to death; but then their sentence is to be ratified by the Roman power. Accordingly, here they had in their ecclessiastical court condemned Christ for blasphemy, now they bring him to Pilate the Roman governor, to confirm the sentence of death.

From hence it appears, that Christ was the true Messias, being sent into the world when the sceptre was departed from Judah, according to that ancient prophecy of Jacob, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come Gen 49:10.

The Jews had no power absolutely to condemn any man, or put him to death; but his power the Roman emperor reserved to his own deputy. This contributed towards the fulfilling of our Saviour's words, That he should

be delivered to the Gentiles, and should be crucified Matt 20:19: which was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment.

Had the Jews put him to death, they had stoned him. But Christ was to be made a curse for us by hanging upon a tree; and accordingly the Jews execute the counsel of God, though they knew it not, by refusing to put him to death themselves.

Learn hence, how willing Christ was to undergo a shameful, painful, and accursed death, that he might testify his love unto, and procure a blessing for, his people. Thus the saying of Jesus was fulfilled; when he spake, signifying what death he should die.

32 that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

That the saying of Jesus, &c. To wit, that he would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles and be crucified, Mt 20:19. Neither of these things would have happened if he had been put to death in the way that the Jews first contemplated, Mt 26:4. Though it should be admitted that they had the power, in religious cases, to do this, yet in such a case it would not have been done, as Jesus predicted, by the Gentiles; and even if it should be admitted that they had the right to take life, yet they had not the right to do it by crucifixion. This was particularly a Roman punishment. And thus it was ordered, in the providence of God, that the prediction of Jesus in both these respects was fulfilled.

33 Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews ?

34 Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?

36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

It would be hard for Pilate to form any conception of a kingdom not of this world, a kingdom of which the subjects did not fight with carnal weapons to defend its king, or to extend its borders. He was a soldier and the

representative of a monarch whose power rested on the sword. But such a kingdom was Christ's. It was not of this world, did not spring from it, was heavenly in its origin, and hence his servants would not fight that he should not be delivered to the Jews. (1) Christ's kingdom is supernatural, not of human origin. It is in the world, but not worldly. (2) It is maintained, not by carnal weapons, but by spiritual and moral means.

37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate asks him again directly and expressly, Art thou a king or not?

Our Saviour answers, "Thou sayest that I am a king, and so it is indeed as thou sayest, I am a king, and the king of the Jews too; but not a temporal king, to rule over them after the manner of earthly kings with temporal power, and worldly pomp and splendour: but I am a spiritual king, to rule and govern, not only the Jews, but my whole church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, after a spiritual manner."

Observe here, 1. The dominion and sovereignty of Jesus Christ; he has a kingdom: My kingdom.

Observe, 2. The condition and qualification of this kingdom, negatively expressed: My kingdom is not of this world.

Observe, 3. The use and end of this kingdom: that the truth may have place among the children of men for their salvation: To this end was I born, and came into the world, to bear witness unto the truth.

Observe, 4. The subjects of Christ's kingdom declared: Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice; that is, every one who is by divine grace disposed to believe and love the truth, will hear and obey Christ's doctrine.

38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Observe here, 1. The question Pilate put to Christ, What is truth? A most noble and important question, had it been put forth with an honest heart,

with a mind fairly disposed for information and satisfaction: but it is evident, Pilate's enquiry was not serious; nay, it is generally thought, that Pilate asked this question in scorn, contempt and derision: for he stays not for our Lord's answer but as soon as he started this query, went off the bench in haste.

Learn hence, that this question, what is truth? or how may we come to the knowledge of the truth? is of unspeakable use and importance, and a question, whereon the whole frame and constitution of religion depends: because truth is claimed by all parties of men, by all professors of religion.

Ask the different parties from the old gentleman at Rome to the poorest Quaker and Muggletonian, Where is truth? and they will all tell you.

They are in the possession of it: Every sect hath thus much of popery with it, that the professors of it think themselves infallible, and every one cries out, Here is truth.

But God has given us a two-fold light to search for truth: namely, the light of reason, and the light of scripture, or divine revelation.
The former Solomon calls the candle of the Lord, set up in our breasts by God, on purpose to discover truth unto us. God allows us, yea, enjoins us, the free and impartial use of our understandings and judgments, in order to the finding out of divine truth; but because nature's light or the light of natural reason is not clear and bright enough to give us a prospect of supernatural truths, (for nature and reason can never dictate those things which depend only upon God's free grace and good pleasure; such as the doctrines of a Saviour and Redeemer, and the method of man's salvation by the sufferings of the Son of God,) it had been blasphemy once to have supposed such things, had not God revealed them in scripture: therefore the second standard of divine truth, is the infallible word of God.

The gospel of Christ is the way, and the truth; Truth came by Jesus Christ. And would men be ruled and conducted by these unalterable standards of truth, namely, right reason and divine revelation, they would easily agree in their judgments what is to be believed, and all duties and controversies

would vanish. Right reason and inspired scriptures are the best judges of controversies; they being the fixed standards and measures of divine truth, can best resolve Pilate's question here, and tell us What is truth.

Observe, 2. How unwilling, how very unwilling Pilate was to be the instrument of our Saviour's death: he came forth three several times, and tells the Jews that he finds no fault in him; he bids them take him, and judge him according to their law. Pilate, a Pagan, absolves Christ, whilst the hypocritical Jews, that heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, do condemn him.

Observe, 3. Pilate having absolved Christ, I find no fault in him, endeavours next to release him, and takes occasion from their custom of having a prisoner released to them at their feast, to insinuate his desire that they should choose Christ: Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover.

Observe, lastly, how the Jews prefer Barabbas, a robber, before the holy and innocent Jesus: They all cried out, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas.

Learn hence, that no persons, how wicked and vile soever, are so odious in the eyes of the enemies of God, as Christ himself was, and his friends and followers now are: Christ did find it thus in his own person when on earth: Barabbas, a robber, was preferred before him: and now he is in heaven, he suffers in the members, the filth of the world being preferred before them.

Jesus Sentenced to Die

39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews ?

See Mt 27:15

40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

John-19

1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

see Mt 27:19-22

2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

3 and said, Hail, King of the Jews ! and they smote him with their hands.

4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

We have a law. The law respecting blasphemy, Lev 24:16; De 13:1-5. They had arraigned Jesus on that charge before the Sanhedrim, and condemned him for it, Mt 26:63-65. But this was not the charge on which they had arraigned him before Pilate. They had accused him of sedition, Lk 23:2. On this charge they were now convinced that they could not get Pilate to condemn him. He declared him innocent. Still bent on his ruin, and resolved to gain their purpose, they now, contrary to their first intention, adduced the original accusation on which they had already pronounced him guilty. If they could not obtain his condemnation as a rebel, they now sought it as a blasphemer, and they appealed to Pilate to sanction what they believed was required in their law. Thus to Pilate himself it became more manifest that he was innocent, that they had attempted to deceive HIM, and that the charge on which they had arraigned him was a mere pretence to obtain his sanction to their wicked design.

8 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;

When Pilate therefore heard that saying. That they had accused him of blasphemy. As this was not the charge on which they had arraigned him before his bar, he had not before heard it, and it now convinced him more of their malignity and wickedness.

He was the more afraid. What was the ground of his fear is not declared by the evangelist. It was probably, however, the alarm of his conscience, and the fear of vengeance if he suffered such an act of injustice to be done as to put an innocent man to death. He was convinced of his innocence. He saw more and more clearly the design of the Jews; and it is not improbable that a heathen, who believed that the gods often manifested themselves to men, dreaded their vengeance if he suffered one who claimed to be divine, and who might be, to be put to death. It is clear that Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent; and in this state of agitation between the convictions of his own conscience, and the clamours of the Jews, and the fear of vengeance, and the certainty that he would do wrong if he gave him up, he was thrown into this state of alarm, and resolved again to question Jesus, that he might obtain satisfaction on the subjects that agitated his mind.

9 and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou ? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Whence art thou? Jn 7:27. Pilate knew that he was a Galilean, but this question was asked to ascertain whether he claimed to be the Son of God--whether a mere man, or whether divine. Jesus gave him no answer. Probably for the following reasons:

1st. He had already told him his design, and the nature of his kingdom, Jn 18:36,37.

2nd. He had said enough to satisfy him of his innocence. Of that Pilate was convinced. His duty was clear, and if he had had firmness to do it, he would not have asked this. Jesus, by his silence, there- fore rebuked him for his want of firmness, and his unwillingness to do what his conscience told him was right.

3rd. It is not probable that Pilate would have understood him if he had declared to him the truth about his origin, and about his being the Son of God. 4th. After what had been done --after he had satisfied Pilate of his innocence, and then had been beaten and mocked by his permission--he had no reason to expect justice at his hands, and therefore properly declined to make any farther defence. By this the prophecy Isa 53:7 was remarkably fulfilled.

10 Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me ? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Speakest thou not, &c. This is the expression of a man of pride. He was not accustomed to be met with silence like this. He endeavoured, therefore, to address the fears of Jesus, and to appall him with the declaration that his life was at his disposal, and that his safety depended on his favour. This arrogance called forth the reply of the Saviour, and he told him that he had no power except what was given him from above. Jesus was not, therefore, to be intimidated by any claim of power in Pilate. His life was not in his hands, and he could not stoop to ask the favour of a man.

11 Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

Except it were given thee. It has been conceded or granted to you. God has ordered your life, your circumstances, and the extent of your dominion. This was a reproof of a proud man in office, who was forgetful of the great Source of his authority, and who supposed that by his own talents or fortune he had risen to his present place. Alas! how many men in office forget that God gives them their rank, and vainly think that it is owing to their own talents or merits that they have risen to such an elevation. Men of office and talent, as well as others, should remember that God gives them what they have, and that they have no influence except as it is conceded to them from on high.

From above. From God, or by his direction, and by the arrangements of his providence. Rom 13:1: "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." The words "from above" often refer to God or to heaven, Jas 1:17; 3:15,17, Jn 3:3 (in the Greek). The providence of God was remarkable in so ordering affairs that a man, flexible and yielding like Pilate, should be intrusted with power in Judea. Had it been a man firm and unyielding in his duty--one who could not be terrified or awed by the multitude-- Jesus would not have been delivered to be crucified, Acts 2:23. God thus brings about his wise ends; and while Pilate was free, and acted out his nature without compulsion, yet the purposes of God, long before predicted, were fulfilled, and Jesus made an atonement for the sins of the world. Thus God overrules the wickedness and folly of men. He so orders

affairs that the true character of men shall be brought out, and makes use of that character to advance his own great purposes.

This does not mean that their sin was greater than that of Pilate, though that was true; but their sin was greater on account of the fact that they perseveringly and malignantly endeavoured to obtain the sanction of the magistrate to their wicked proceedings. Nor does it mean, because God had purposed his death (Acts 2:23), and given power to Pilate, that therefore their sin was greater, for God's purpose in the case made it neither more nor less. It did not change the nature of their free acts. This passage teaches no such doctrine, but that their sin was aggravated by malignantly endeavouring to obtain the sanction of a magistrate who was invested with authority by God, and who wielded the power that God gave him. By this Pilate ought to have been convinced, and was convinced, of their wickedness, and hence he sought more and more to release him.

He that delivered me. The singular here is put for the plural, including Judas, the high-priests, and the Sanhedrim.

12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

Sought to release him. He was more and more convinced of his innocence, and more unwilling to yield him to mere malice and envy in the face of justice. But the Jews cried out, &c. This moved Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands. He feared that he would be accused of unfaithfulness to the interests of the Roman emperor if he did not condemn a man whom his own nation had accused of sedition. The Roman emperor then on the throne was exceedingly jealous and tyrannical, and the fear of losing his favour induced Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands. Caesar's friend. The friend of the Roman emperor. The name of the reigning emperor was Tiberius. After the time of Julius Caesar all the emperors were called Caesar, as all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh. This emperor was, during the latter part of his reign, the most cruel, jealous, and wicked that ever sat on the Roman throne.

13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.~~~

14 And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

15 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him.

Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

The Crucifixion

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

> See notes on Mt 27:33-66.

18 where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

19 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Naz areth the King of the Jews.

20 This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The

King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

> What I have written, &c. This declaration implied that he would make no change. He was impatient, and weary of their solicitations. He had yielded to them contrary to the convictions of his own conscience, and he now declared his purpose to yield no farther.

23 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

24 They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith,

They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

28 After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Jesus' Side Pierced

31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Another truth illustrated by the remarkable events connected with Jesus' death was that he was the true Passover lamb. He died on the afternoon of Passover day, at the same time as the Jews back in Jerusalem were killing their lambs in preparation for the meal that night. And because he was the true Passover lamb, not a bone in his body was broken. Normally, the soldiers broke the victims' legs to hasten their death, but they had no need to do this to Jesus, because he was already dead. Instead, one of the soldiers plunged his spear deep into Jesus' body (Joh_19:31-37).

A double Sabbath, both the weekly Sabbath and a passover Sabbath. It was usual Roman custom to leave crucified bodies on the cross, but out of deference to their wishes Pilate consents that the legs of the victims should be broken in order to hasten death, so that the bodies might be taken down and buried. The legs were crushed with a hammer like a sledge and the shock would bring speedy death.

32 Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

33 But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:

34 but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.

> Forthwith there came out blood and water - It was strange, seeing he was dead, that blood should come out; more strange, that water also; and most strange of all, that both should come out immediately, at one time, and yet distinctly. It was pure and true water, as well as pure and true blood. The asseveration of the beholder and testifier of it, shows both the truth and greatness of the miracle and mystery.

35 And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

36 For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

> That the scripture should be fulfilled. See Ex 12:46. John here regards the paschal lamb as an emblem of Christ; and as in the law it was commanded that a bone of that lamb should not be broken, so, in the providence of God, it was ordered that a bone of the Saviour should not be broken. The Scripture thus received a complete fulfillment respecting both the type and the antitype. Some have supposed, however, that John referred to Ps 34:20.

37 And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

> Another scripture, Zech 12:10. We must here be struck with the wonderful providence of God, that so many scriptures were fulfilled in his death. All these things happened without any such design on the part of the men engaged in these scenes; but whatever was done by Jew or Gentile tended to the fulfillment of prophecies long on record, and with which the Jews themselves ought to have been familiar. Little did they suppose, when delivering him to Pilate--when he was mocked--when they parted his garments--when they pierced him--that they were fulfilling ancient predictions, But in this way God had so ordered it that the firmest foundation should be laid for the belief that he was the true Messiah, and that the designs of wicked men should all be overruled to the fulfillment of the great plans which God had in sending his Son.

The Burial of Jesus

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

see Mt 27:57-66

Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate - And Nicodemus also came - Acknowledging Christ, when even his chosen disciples forsook him. In that extremity Joseph was no longer afraid, Nicodemus no longer ashamed.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight.

This is the third mention of him. See Joh 3:1 7:50. Both he and Joseph were members of the Sanhedrin. Only John mentions that he aided Joseph in the burial.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

John-20

The Resurrection

1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

For notes on the Resurrection, see Mt 28:1-8

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.
4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.
5 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.
6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
7 and the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.
8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.
9 For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.
10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,
12 and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.
13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.
14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.
15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.
17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

> The Lord showed his wounds to convince them beyond a doubt that it was not a fantasy or an apparition. A week later he shows his wounds to Thomas. The resurrected body still bore these proofs of his suffering and love. Sixty years later, when John, at Patmos, saw the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, he beheld "a Lamb as it had been slain" (Re 5:6). Perhaps our Lord in glory continues to bear the marks of the cross. Perhaps these will forever, as we gaze in glory, remind us of the story of our redemption.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

> This is the Great Commission, more fully developed in Galilee a little later (Mt 28:16-20), and finally completed on Mt. Olivet (Ac 1:4-9), just before the Lord ascended. The Lord had trained the apostles for three years in order to fit them for this important work.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

23 whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

> PNT Bilble Commentator:
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> Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, etc. It will be seen at once, by a comparison with Mt 16:19, that the keys they promised to Peter are now given to all the apostles, and all have similar power to open and shut, to remit sin, and to bind. The meaning is plain when we consider, first, the charge that the Savior was making, and, secondly, look forward and see how that charge was carried out; or, in other words,

observe the apostles "remitting sins" and retaining them. It is the Great Commission to preach the gospel that the Savior gives for the first time in Joh 20:21. It is with reference to carrying out that Commission that he speaks in Joh 20:23. It was in order that they might present the terms of that Commission infallibly to the world that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was imparted, of which there is a foreshadowing in Joh 20:22. The great end of that Commission was to declare to men "repentance and remission of sins" (Lu 24:47) in the name of Christ. The following facts are manifest: (1) The Savior gave to his apostles his Commission that they might make known his will. (2) He bade them preach "remission of sins" (Lu 24:47). (3) He gave them a measure of the Holy Spirit, and bade them wait until "endued with power from on high" (Lu 24:49). (4) When the Holy Spirit fell, they spoke as it "gave them utterance" (Ac 2:4). (5) They then declared, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the terms on which "sins could be remitted". To anxious sinners they answer, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, 'for the remission of sins'" (Ac 2:38). Here, then, they, directed by the Holy Spirit, "remit" and "retain" sins by declaring the terms on which Christ will pardon. Thus, also, they do in their preaching recorded through the Acts of the Apostles the very thing that the Savior gave them power to do. This power was not imparted to a hierarchy, nor to any ecclesiastical body, but to the apostles, and was fulfilled by them in declaring to the world the conditions of pardon and condemnation under the Commission of our Lord.

Barnes Bible Commentator:

Whose soever sins, &c. Mt 16:19 Mt 18:18. It is worthy of remark here that Jesus confers the same power on all the apostles. He gives to no one of them any peculiar authority. If Peter, as the Papists pretend, had been appointed to any peculiar authority, it is wonderful that the Saviour did not here hint at any such pre-eminence. This passage conclusively proves that they were invested with equal power in organizing and governing the church. The authority which he had given Peter to preach the gospel first to the Jews and the Gentiles, does not militate against this. Mt 16:18, Mt 16:19. This authority given them was full proof that they were inspired. The meaning of the passage is not that man can forgive sins--that belongs only to God (Isa 43:23), but that they should be inspired; that in founding

the church, and in declaring the will of God, they should be taught by the Holy Ghost to declare on what terms, to what characters, and to what temper of mind God would extend forgiveness of sins. It was not authority to forgive individuals, but to establish in all the churches the terms and conditions on which men might be pardoned, with a promise that God would confirm all that they taught; that all might have assurance of forgiveness who would comply with those terms; and that those who did not comply should not be forgiven, but that their sins should be retained. This commission is as far as possible from the authority which the Roman Catholic claims of remitting sin and of pronouncing pardon.

JFB Bible Commentator:

In any literal and authoritative sense this power was never exercised by one of the apostles, and plainly was never understood by themselves as possessed by them or conveyed to them. (See on Mt 16:19). The power to intrude upon the relation between men and God cannot have been given by Christ to His ministers in any but a ministerial or declarative sense—as the authorized interpreters of His word, while in the actings of His ministers, the real nature of the power committed to them is seen in the exercise of church discipline.

The Unbelief of Thomas

24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord.

But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Except I shall see, &c. It is not known what was the ground of the incredulity of Thomas. It is probable, however, that it was, in part, at least, the effect of deep grief, and of that despondency which fills the mind when a long-cherished hope is taken away. In such a case it requires proof of uncommon clearness and strength to over- come the despondency, and to convince us that we may obtain the object of our desires. Thomas has been

much blamed by expositors, but he asked only for proof that would be satisfactory in his circumstances. The testimony of ten disciples should have been indeed sufficient, but an opportunity was thus given to the Saviour to convince the last of them of the truth of his resurrection. This incident shows, what all the conduct of the apostles proves, that they had not conspired together to impose on the world. Even they were slow to believe, and one of them refused to rely even on the testimony of ten of his brethren. How unlike this to the conduct of men who agree to impose a story on mankind! Many are like Thomas. Many now are unwilling to believe because they do not see the Lord Jesus, and with just as little reason as Thomas had. The testimony of those eleven men--including Thomas--who saw him alive after he was crucified; who were willing to lay down their lives to attest that they had seen him alive; who had nothing to gain by imposture, and whose conduct was removed as far as possible from the appearance of imposture, should be regarded as ample proof of the fact that he rose from the dead.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.

Turning to the skeptical Thomas, he asks him to apply the tests that he had declared would be necessary before he could believe. His compassion for the unbelief of Thomas shows the patient tenderness of the Savior with the difficulties of an honest seeker.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

The judgment of Christ upon the whole (Joh 20:29): "Thomas because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, and it is well thou art brought to it at last upon any terms; but blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed." Here,

(a.) Christ owns Thomas a believer. Sound and sincere believers, though they be slow and weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. Those who have long stood it out, if at last they yield, shall find him ready

to forgive. No sooner did Thomas consent to Christ than Christ gives him the comfort of it, and lets him know that he believes.

(b.) He upbraids him with his former incredulity. He might well be ashamed to think,

[1.] That he had been so backward to believe, and came so slowly to his own comforts. Those that in sincerity have closed with Christ see a great deal of reason to lament that they did not do it sooner.

[2.] That it was not without much ado that he was brought to believe at last: "If thou hadst not seen me alive, thou wouldst not have believed;" but if no evidence must be admitted but that of our own senses, and we must believe nothing but what we ourselves are eye-witnesses of, farewell all commerce and conversation. If this must be the only method of proof, how must the world be converted to the faith of Christ? He is therefore justly blamed for laying so much stress upon this.

(c.) He commends the faith of those who believe upon easier terms. Thomas, as a believer, was truly blessed; but rather blessed are those that have not seen. It is not meant of not seeing the objects of faith (for these are invisible, Heb 11:1,2Co 4:18), but the motives of faith--Christ's miracles, and especially his resurrection; blessed are those that see not these, and yet believe in Christ. This may look, either backward, upon the Old-Testament saints, who had not seen the things which they saw, and yet believed the promise made unto the father, and lived by that faith; or forward, upon those who should afterwards believe, the Gentiles, who had never seen Christ in the flesh, as the Jews had. This faith is more laudable and praise-worthy than theirs who saw and believed; for,

[1.] It evidences a better temper of mind in those that do believe. Not to see and yet to believe argues greater industry in searching after truth, and greater ingenuousness of mind in embracing it. He that believes upon that sight has his resistance conquered by a sort of violence; but he that believes without it, like the Bereans, is more noble.

[2.] It is a greater instance of the power of divine grace. The less sensible the evidence is the more does the work of faith appear to be the Lord's doing. Peter is blessed in his faith, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to him, Mt 16:17. Flesh and blood contribute more to their faith that see and believe, than to theirs who see not and yet believe. Dr. Lightfoot quotes a saying of one of the rabbin, "That one proselyte is more acceptable to God than all the thousands of Israel that stood before mount Sinai; for they saw and received the law, but a proselyte sees not, and yet receives it."

The Purpose of the Book

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

He assures us that many other things occurred, which were all worthy to be recorded, but are not written in the book: many signs. Some refer this to all the signs that Jesus did during his whole life, all the wondrous words he spoke, and all the wondrous works he did. But it seems rather to be confined to the signs he did after his resurrection, for these were in the presence of the disciples only, who are here spoken of, Ac 10:41. Divers of his appearances are not recorded, as appears, 1Co 15:5-7. See Ac 1:3. Now,

(1.) We may here improve this general attestation, that there were other signs, many others, for the confirmation of our faith; and, being added to the particular narratives, they very much strengthen the evidence. Those that recorded the resurrection of Christ were not put to fish for evidence, to take up such short and scanty proofs as they could find, and make up the rest with conjecture. No, they had evidence enough and to spare, and more witnesses to produce than they had occasion for. The disciples, in whose presence these other signs were done, were to be preachers of Christ's resurrection to others, and therefore it was requisite they should have proofs of it ex abundanti--in abundance, that they might have a strong consolation, who ventured life and all upon it.

(2.) We need not ask why they were not all written, or why not more than these, or others than these; for it is enough for us that so it seemed good to

the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration this was given. Had this history been a mere human composition, it had been swelled with a multitude of depositions and affidavits, to prove the contested truth of Christ's resurrection and long argument drawn up for the demonstration of it; but, being a divine history, the penmen write with a noble security, relating what amounted to a competent proof, sufficient to convince those that were willing to be taught and to condemn those that were obstinate in their unbelief; and, if this satisfy not, more would not. Men produce all they have to say, that they may gain credit; but God does not, for he can give faith. Had this history been written for the entertainment of the curious, it would have been more copious, or every circumstance would have brightened and embellished the story; but it was written to bring men to believe, and enough is said to answer that intention, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

31 but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

He instructs us in the design of recording what we do find here (Joh 20:31): "These accounts are given in this and the following chapter, that you might believe upon these evidences; that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, declared with power to be so by his resurrection."

(a.) Here is the design of those that wrote the gospel. Some write books for their diversion, and publish them for their profit or applause, others to oblige the Athenian humour, others to instruct the world in arts and sciences for their secular advantage; but the evangelists wrote without any view of temporal benefit to themselves or others, but to bring men to Christ and heaven, and, in order to this, to persuade men to believe; and for this they took the most fitting methods, they brought to the world a divine revelation, supported with its due evidences.

(b.) The duty of those that read and hear the gospel. It is their duty to believe, to embrace, the doctrine of Christ, and that record given concerning him, 1Jo 5:11.

[1.] We are here told what the great gospel truth is which we are to believe--that Jesus is that Christ, that Son of God.

First, That he is the Christ, the person who, under the title of the Messiah, was promised to, and expected by, the Old-Testament saints, and who, according to the signification of the name, is anointed of God to be a prince and a Saviour.

Secondly, That he is the Son of God; not only as Mediator (for then he had not been greater than Moses, who was a prophet, intercessor, and lawgiver), but antecedent to his being the Mediator; for if he had not been a divine person, endued with the power of God and entitled to the glory of God, he had not been qualified for the undertaking-not fit either to do the Redeemer's work or to wear the Redeemer's crown.

[2.] What the great gospel blessedness is which we are to hope for--That believing we shall have life through his name. This is, First, To direct our faith; it must have an eye to the life, the crown of life, the tree of life set before us. Life through Christ's name, the life proposed in the covenant which is made with us in Christ, is what we must propose to ourselves as the fulness of our joy and the abundant recompence of all our services and sufferings. Secondly, To encourage our faith, and invite us to believe. Upon the prospect of some great advantage, men will venture far; and greater advantage there cannot be than that which is offered by the words of this life, as the gospel is called, Ac 5:20. It includes both spiritual life, in conformity to God and communion with him, and eternal life, in the vision and fruition of him. Both are through Christ's name, by his merit and power, and both indefeasibly sure to all true believers.

John-21

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

1 After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself.

The sea of Tiberias. Called also the Sea of Galilee, being situated in Galilee. Mt 4:18. In this place Jesus had promised to meet them, Mk 14:28, 16:7, Mt 26:32, 28:10. This interview of Jesus is but just mentioned by Matthew (Mt 28:16), and is omitted by both Mark and Luke. This is the

reason why John relates so particularly what occurred there. Galilee was a retired place where they would be free from danger, and was therefore a safe and convenient situation for Jesus to meet them, in order to give them his last instructions.

2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

There were together. Probably residing in the same place. While they were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, they still found it proper to be usefully employed. Their Master had been taken away by death, and the promised Spirit had not descended on them. In the interval---before the promised Spirit was poured upon them-- they chose not to be idle, and therefore returned to their former employment. It is to be remarked, also, that they had no other means of support. While with Jesus, they were commonly supplied by the kindness of the people; but now, when the Saviour had died, they were cut off from this means of support, and returned to the honest labour of their early lives. Moreover, they had been directed by the Saviour to repair to a mountain in Galilee, where he would meet them, Mt 28:10. This was probably not far from the Sea of Galilee, so that, until he came to them, they would naturally be engaged in their old employment. Ministers of the gospel should be willing to labour, if necessary, for their own support, and should not esteem such labour dishonourable. God has made employment indispensable to man, and if the field of labour is not open in one way, they should seek it in another. If at any time the people withhold the supply of their wants, they should be able and willing to seek support in some other honest occupation.

3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

4 But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

He showed himself to them by an instance of his pity, Joh 21:5. He called to them, Children, paidia--"Lads, have you any meat? Have you caught any fish?" Here,

(1.) The compellation is very familiar; he speaks unto them as unto his sons, with the care and tenderness of a father: Children. Though he had now entered upon his exalted state, he spoke to his disciples with as much kindness and affection as ever. They were not children in age, but they were his children, the children which God had given him.

(2.) The question is very kind: Have you any meat? He asks as a tender father concerning his children whether they be provided with that which is fit for them, that if they be not, he may take care for their supply. Note, The Lord is for the body, 1Co 6:13. Christ takes cognizance of the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. Verily they shall be fed, Ps 27:3. Christ looks into the cottages of the poor, and asks, Children, have you any meat? thereby inviting them to open their case before him, and by the prayer of faith to make their requests known to him: and then let them be careful for nothing; for Christ takes care of them, takes care for them. Christ has herein set us an example of compassionate concern for our brethren. There are many poor householders disabled for labour, or disappointed in it, that are reduced to straits, whom the rich should enquire after thus, Have you any meat? For the most necessitous are commonly the least clamorous. To this question the disciples gave a short answer, and, some think, with an air of discontent and peevishness. They said, No; not giving him any such friendly and respectful title as he had given them. So short do the best come in their returns of love to the Lord Jesus. Christ put the question to them, not because he did not know their wants, but because he would know them from them. Those that would have supplies from Christ must own themselves empty and needy.

6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

He showed himself to them by an instance of his power; and this perfected the discovery (Joh 21:6): he ordered them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, the contrary side to what they had been casting it on; and then they, who were going home empty-handed, were enriched with a great draught of fishes. Here we have,

(a.) The orders Christ gave them, and the promise annexed to those orders: Cast the net there in such a place, and you shall find. He from whom nothing is hid, no, not the inhabitants under the waters (Job 26:5), knew on what side of the ship the shoal of fishes was, and to that side he directs them. Note, Divine providence extends itself to things most minute and contingent; and they are happy that know how to take hints thence in the conduct of their affairs, and acknowledge it in all their ways.

(b.) Their obedience of these orders, and the good success of it. As yet they knew not that it was Jesus; however, they were willing to be advised by any body, and did not bid this supposed stranger mind his own business and not meddle with theirs, but took his counsel; in being thus observant of strangers, they were obedient to their Master unawares. And it sped wonderfully well; now they had a draught that paid them for all their pains. Note, Those that are humble, diligent, and patient (though their labours may be crossed) shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles and fruitless attempts. There is nothing lost by observing Christ's orders. Those are likely to speed well that follow the rule of the word, the guidances of the Spirit, and the intimations of Providence; for this is casting the net on the right side of the ship. Now the draught of fishes may be considered,

[1.] As a miracle in itself: and so it was designed to prove that Jesus Christ was raised in power, though sown in weakness, and that all things were put under his feet, the fishes of the sea not excepted. Christ manifests himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for.

[2.] As a mercy to them; for the seasonable and abundant supply of their necessities. When their ingenuity and industry failed them, the power of Christ came in opportunely for their relief; for he would take care that those who had left all for him should not want any good thing. When we are most at a loss, Jehovah--jireh.

[3.] As the memorial of a former mercy, with which Christ had formerly recompensed Peter for the loan of his boat, Lu 5:4, &c. This miracle nearly resembled that, and could not but put Peter in mind of it, which helped him

to improve this; for both that and this affected him much, as meeting him in his own element, in his own employment. Latter favours are designed to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten.

[4.] As a mystery, and very significant of that work to which Christ was now with an enlarged commission sending them forth. The prophets had been fishing for souls, and caught nothing, or very little; but the apostles, who let down the net at Christ's word, had wonderful success. Many were the children of the desolate, Ga 4:27. They themselves, in pursuance of their former mission, when they were first made fishers of men, had had small success in comparison with what they should now have. When, soon after this, three thousand were converted in one day, then the net was cast on the right side of the ship. It is an encouragement to Christ's ministers to continue their diligence in their work. One happy draught, at length, may be sufficient to repay many years of toil at the gospel net.

7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

It is the Lord. He was convinced, perhaps, by the apparent miracle, and by looking more attentively on the person of one who had been the means of such unexpected and remarkable success.

He was naked. He was undressed, with nothing on but the under garment or tunic. The word does not require us to suppose a greater degree of nakedness than this. Mk 14:51, 1Sam 19:24. Did cast himself into the sea. With characteristic ardour, desirous of meeting again his Lord, and showing his affection for him.

8 And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

They saw a fire, &c. We have no knowledge whence this was produced--whether it was, as Grotius supposes, by a miracle, or whether it was a place occupied by other fishermen, where they also might cook the fish which they had caught. As no miracle is mentioned, however, there is no reason for supposing that any existed in the case.

10 Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

> An hundred and fifty and three. The number is mentioned because it seems to have been a very unusual draught, and it was particularly gratifying and striking to them after they had spent the whole night and had caught nothing. This convinced them that it was no other than the same Saviour who had so often worked wonders before them that was now with them.

12 Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou ? knowing that it was the Lord.

> The disciples knew that it was the Lord, but there was something in his mien, his majesty, his altered appearance, that amazed them, filled them with awe, and prevented them from asking questions that they were curious to know.

13 Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

> Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, &c. It is not said that Jesus himself ate with them, but he gave them food. The design of this interview seems to have been to convince them that he had truly risen from the dead. Hence he performed a miracle before they suspected that it was he, that there might be no room to say that they had ascribed to him the power of the miracle through friendship and collusion with him. The miracle was such as to satisfy them of its truth, and was, in accordance with all his works, not for mere display, but for utility. He remained with them, was with them at their meal, conversed with them, and thus convinced them that he was the same Friend who had died.

14 This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

Feed My Sheep

15 So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

Lovest thou me more than these? There is a slight ambiguity here in the original, as there is in our translation. The word these may be in the neuter gender, and refer to these things--his boat, his fishing utensils, and his employments; or it may be in the masculine, and refer to the apostles. In the former sense it would mean, "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these objects? Art thou now willing, from love to me, to forsake all these, and go and preach my gospel to the nations of the earth?" In the other sense, which is probably the true sense, it would mean, "Lovest thou me more than these other apostles love me?" In this question Jesus refers to the profession of superior attachment to him which Peter had made before his death (Mt 26:33): "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Comp. Jn 13:37. Jesus here slightly reproves him for that confident assertion, reminds him of his sad and painful denial, and now puts this direct and pointed question to him to know what was the present state of his feelings. After all that Peter had had to humble him, the Saviour inquired of him what had been the effect on his mind, and whether it had tended to prepare him for the arduous toils in which he was about to engage. This question we should all put to ourselves. It is a matter of much importance that we should ourselves know what is the effect of the dealings of divine Providence on our hearts, and what is our present state of feeling toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thou knowest that I love thee. Peter now made no pretensions to love superior to his brethren. His sad denial had convinced him of the folly of that claim; but still he could appeal to the Searcher of the heart, and say that he knew that he loved him. Here is the expression of a humbled soul--a soul made sensible of its weakness and need of strength, yet with evidence of true attachment to the Saviour. It is not the most confident pretensions that constitute the highest proof of love to Christ; and the happiest and best state of feeling is when we can with humility, yet with confidence, look to the Lord Jesus and say, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

Feed my lambs. The word here rendered feed means the care afforded by furnishing nutriment for the flock. In the next verse there is a change in the Greek, and the word rendered feed denotes rather the care, guidance, and protection which a shepherd extends to his flock. By the use of both these

words, it is supposed that our Saviour intended that a shepherd was both to offer the proper food for his flock and to govern it; or, as we express it, to exercise the office of a pastor. The expression is taken from the office of a shepherd, with which the office of a minister of the gospel is frequently compared. It means, as a good shepherd provides for the wants of his flock, so the pastor in the church is to furnish food for the soul, or so to exhibit truth that the faith of believers may be strengthened and their hope confirmed

My lambs. The church is often compared to a flock. See Jn 10:1-16. Here the expression my lambs undoubtedly refers to the tender and the young in the Christian church; to those who are young in years and in Christian experience. The Lord Jesus saw, what has been confirmed in the experience of the church, that the success of the gospel among men depended on the care which the ministry would extend to those in early life. It is in obedience to this command that Sunday-schools have been established, and no means of fulfilling this command of the Saviour have been found so effectual as to extend patronage to those schools. It is not merely, therefore, the privilege, it is the solemn duty of ministers of the gospel to countenance and patronize those schools.

16 He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Feed my sheep. The word here rendered feed, as has been remarked, is different from the word in the previous verse. It has the sense of governing, caring for, guiding, protecting --the kind of faithful vigilance which a shepherd uses to guide his flock, and to make provision against their wants and dangers. It may be implied here that the care needed for the young in the church is to instruct them, and for those in advanced years both to instruct and govern them.

17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

The third time. It is probable that Jesus proposed this question three times because Peter had thrice denied him. Thus he tenderly admonished him of his fault and reminded him of his sin, while he solemnly charged him to be

faithful and vigilant in the discharge of the duties of the pastoral office. The reason why the Saviour addressed Peter in this manner was doubtless because he had just denied him--had given a most melancholy instance of the instability and weakness of his faith, and of his liability to fall. As he had thus been prominent in forsaking him, he took this occasion to give to him a special charge, and to secure his future obedience. Hence he so administered the charge as to remind him of his fault; and he made him so prominent as to show the solicitude of the Saviour that henceforward he might not be left to dishonour his high calling. This same charge, in substance, he had on other occasions given to the apostles (Mt 18:18), and there is not the slightest evidence here that Christ intended, as the Papists pretend, to give Peter any peculiar primacy or eminence in the church. The charge to Peter arose, manifestly, from his prominent and melancholy act in denying him, and was the kind and tender means used by a faithful Saviour to keep him from similar acts in the future dangers and trials of life. It is worthy of remark that the admonition was effectual. Henceforward Peter was one of the most firm and unwavering of all the apostles, and thus fully justified the appellation of a rock, which the Saviour by anticipation had given him. Jn 1:42.

18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

Peter had denied his Master to save his own life. Now that he is reinstated in the old confidence and charged with the Master's work, he is told that he will be called on to die for it. He will be girded, not with a girdle, but with bonds, and he shall be led where he would not, unto death.

19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

These two verses can only be understood as declaring that Peter should die the death of a martyr. John wrote after Peter's death, and may be understood as affirming that he did thus "glorify God". The universal testimony of the ancient Church is that he did thus die. It is asserted that Peter was crucified, a fact that is probable, as he was not a Roman citizen.

Follow me. He had once forsaken Christ through fear of death. Now, with a prospect of violent death before him, he is bidden to resume the Master's work and to follow him. He did this, from this time, faithfully.

The Beloved Disciple

20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

21 Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

What shall this man do? This question probably means, "What death shall he die?" But it is impossible to ascertain certainly why Peter asked this question. John was a favourite disciple, and perhaps Peter suspected that he would have a happier lot, and not be put to death in this manner. Peter was grieved at the question of Jesus; he was probably deeply affected with the account of his own approaching sufferings; and, with perhaps a mixture of grief and envy, he asked what would be his lot. But it is possible, also, that it was from kindness to John--a deep solicitude about him, and a wish that he might not die in the same manner as one who had denied his Lord. Whatever the motive was, it was a curiosity which the Lord Jesus did not choose to gratify.

22 Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Till I come. Some have supposed this to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem; others to the day of judgment; others to signify that he would not die a violent death; but the plain meaning is, "If I will that he should not die at all, it is nothing to thee." In this way the apostles evidently understood it, and hence raised a report that he would not die. It is remarkable that John was the last of the apostles; that he lived to nearly the close of the first century, and then died a peaceful death at Ephesus, being the only one, as is supposed, of the apostles who did not suffer martyrdom. The testimony of antiquity is clear on this point; and though there have been many idle conjectures about this passage and about the fate of John, yet no fact of history is better attested than that John died and was buried at Ephesus. What is that to thee? From this passage we learn, 1st. That our main business is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. 2nd. That there are many subjects of religion on which a vain and impertinent curiosity is exercised.

All such curiosity Jesus here reproves. 3rd. That Jesus will take care of all his true disciples, and that we should not be unduly solicitous about them. 4th. That we should go forward to whatever he calls us--to persecution or death--not envying the lot of any other man, and anxious only to do the will of God.

23 Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

Then went this saying, &c. This mistake arose very naturally-- 1st. From the words of Jesus, which might be easily misunderstood to mean that he should not die; and, 2nd. It was probably confirmed when it was seen that John survived all the other apostles, had escaped all the dangers of persecution, and was leading a peaceful life at Ephesus. This mistake John deemed it proper to correct before he died, and has thus left on record what Jesus said and what he meant.

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

We know. That is, it is known; it is universally admitted. It was so decidedly his character that he always declared the truth, that it had become known, and was unquestioned, so that he himself might appeal to the universal testimony in his behalf. In this case, therefore, we have the testimony of a man whose character for nearly a century was that of a man of truth---so much so that it had become, in a manner, proverbial, and was put beyond a doubt. It is impossible to believe that such a man would sit down deliberately to impose on mankind, or to write a book which was false; and if not, then this book is true, and that is the same as saying that Christianity is a religion from heaven.

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

John being about to conclude the history of our Saviour's life asserts, that there were many other miracles and special deeds done by Christ, both before and after his passion, which he had not recorded or set down; because, should all that Christ did and said be committed to writing, it would even fill the world, the volumes would be so many.

From hence we gather,

1. The wonderful activity, industry, and diligence, of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he was never idle, but that his whole life was spent in doing good; stances have been recorded, it would amount to an incredible bulk.

Learn, 2. That it is impossible to get all said, which might be said of Christ, and in his commendation: such is the transcendent excellency of his person, and the weakness of our apprehensions and judgments, that if all were written, which might be written concerning him, the world itself could not contain the books which should be written.

Learn lastly, that although many of Christ's sermons, conferences, miracles, and actions, be not recorded; yet it doth not follow, nor can it be inferred from thence, that any necessary doctrine is omitted, or not sufficiently confirmed: there being so much written as it pleased God we should know, and was necessary for us to know, in order to our improvement in faith and holiness. If then, after all the revelation and discovery which God hath made of his Son Christ Jesus, and of the way that leads to eternal salvation by him, persons remain willingly ignorant of him, and of their duty to him, "where shall they appear, and how shall they escape?"

Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: To him be glory and domination for ever and ever. Rev 1:5,6 Amen.

The Acts of the Apostles
[Acts]

Acts-1

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus
began both to do and teach,

referring to the charge recorded in Mt 28:18-20,Mk 16:15-18,Lu 24:44-49. It is worthy of notice that nowhere else are such communications of the risen Redeemer said to have been given "through the Holy Ghost." In general, this might have been said of all He uttered and all He did in His official character; for it was for this very end that God "gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Joh 3:34). But after His resurrection, as if to signify the new relation in which He now stood to the Church, He signalized His first meeting with the assembled disciples by breathing on them (immediately after dispensing to them His peace) and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (Joh 20:22) thus anticipating the donation of the Spirit from His hands (see on Joh2 0:21); and on the same principle His parting charges are here said to have been given "through the Holy Ghost," as if to mark that He was now all redolent with the Spirit; that what had been husbanded, during His suffering work, for His own necessary uses, had now been set free, was already overflowing from Himself to His disciples, and needed but His ascension and glorification to flow all forth. (See on Joh 7:39.)

2 until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the
Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he
had chosen:
3 to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many
infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the
things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

showed himself alive—As the author is about to tell us that "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" was the great burden of apostolic preaching, so the subject is here filly introduced by an allusion to the primary evidence on which that great fact rests, the repeated and undeniable manifestations of Himself in the body to the assembled disciples, who, instead of being predisposed to believe it, had to be overpowered by the resistless evidence of their own senses, and were slow of yielding even to this (Mk 16:14).

4 and, being assembled together with *them,* commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he,* ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

The Ascension

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

They were earnest in asking about that which their Master never had directed or encouraged them to seek. Our Lord knew that his ascension and the teaching of the Holy Spirit would soon end these expectations, and therefore only gave them a rebuke; but it is a caution to his church in all ages, to take heed of a desire of forbidden knowledge.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into

heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, &c.—"as if your now glorified Head were gone from you never to return: He is coming again; not another, but 'this same Jesus'; and 'as ye have seen Him go, in the like manner shall He come'—as personally, as visibly, as gloriously; and let the joyful expectation of this coming swallow up the sorrow of that departure."

Judas' Successor Chosen

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called
Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.
13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room,
where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew,
Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son*
of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.
14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and
supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of
Jesus, and with his brethren.

knit by a bond stronger than death,
for the promised baptism, the need of which in their orphan state would be increasingly felt.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples,
and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred
and twenty,)
16 Men *and* brethren, this Scripture must needs have been
fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake
before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took
Jesus.
17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of
this ministry.
18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity;
and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his
bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch
as that field is called, in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to
say, The field of blood.
20 For it is written in the book of
Psalms, Let his habitation be
desolate,
and let no man dwell therein:
and,
His bishopric let another take.
21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all
the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

How clearly is the primary office of the apostles here expressed: (1) to testify, from personal observation, to the one great fact of "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"; (2) to show how this glorified His whole previous life, of which they were constant observers, and established His divine claims.

22 beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he
was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with
us of his resurrection.
23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who
was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.
24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the
hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

"The word 'Lord,' placed absolutely, denotes in the New Testament almost universally THE SON; and the words, 'Show whom Thou hast chosen,' are decisive. The apostles are just Christ's messengers: It is He that sends them, and of Him they bear witness. Here, therefore, we have the first example of a prayer offered to the exalted Redeemer; furnishing indirectly the strongest proof of His divinity" [OLSHAUSEN].

25 that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from
which
Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own
place.
26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias;
and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts-2

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all
with one accord in one place.

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival held on the Sunday fifty days after Passover, when Israelites presented the first portion of their harvest to God (Lev_23:15-21). It was therefore a fitting day to mark the birth of the Christian church.

We cannot forget how often, while their Master was with them there were strifes among the disciples which should be the greatest; but now all these strifes were at an end. They had prayed more together of late. Would we have the Spirit poured out upon us from on high, let us be all of one accord. And notwithstanding differences of sentiments and interests, as there were among those disciples, let us agree to love one another; for where brethren dwell together in unity, there the Lord commands his blessing.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing
mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were
sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and
it sat upon each of them.

There was an appearance of something like flaming fire, lighting on every one of them, according to John Baptist's saying concerning Christ; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. The Spirit, like fire, melts the heart, burns up the dross, and kindles pious and devout affections in the soul; in which, as in the fire on the altar, the spiritual sacrifices are offered up.

they spoke words from God, and they did so in 'other tongues'. This means that their speech was in words that did not belong

to their own language and that they did not understand, unless someone interpreted them (2:1-4; cf. 1Co_14:13-19).

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to
speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out
of every nation under heaven.
6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together,
and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak
in his own language.
7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to
another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?
8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we
were born?
9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in
Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

not, it would seem, permanently settled there (see Ac 2:9), though the language seems to imply more than a temporary visit to keep this one feast.The thing uttered, probably the same by all, was "the wonderful works of God," perhaps in the inspired words of the Old Testament evangelical hymns; though it is next to certain that the speakers themselves understood nothing of what they uttered (see on 1Co1 4:1).

10 Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about
Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,
11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues
the wonderful works of God.
12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one
to another, What meaneth this?
13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Peter's Address at Pentecost

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and
said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all *ye* that dwell at
Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
15 for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the
third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith
God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:
and your sons and your daughters shall
prophesy, and your young men shall see
visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams:

meaning, the days of the Messiah (Isa 2:2); as closing all preparatory arrangements, and constituting the final dispensation of God's kingdom on earth; without to be confined to the seed of Abraham; without distinction of sex, age, or rank.

Though Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake with tongues as the Spirit gave him utterance, yet he did not think to set aside the Scriptures. Christ's scholars never learn above their Bible; and the Spirit is given, not to do away the Scriptures, but to enable us to understand, approve, and obey them.

18 and on my servants and on my handmaidens
I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy:
19 and I will show wonders in heaven
above, and signs in the earth beneath;
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:
20 the sun shall be turned into
darkness, and the moon into
blood,
before that great and notable day of the Lord come:
21 and it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name
of the Lord shall be saved.
22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man
approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and
signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye
yourselves also know:
23 him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and
foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands
have crucified and slain:

God's fixed plan and perfect foresight of all the steps involved in it. How strikingly is the criminality of Christ's murderers here presented in harmony with the eternal purpose to surrender Him into their hands!

24 whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death:
because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Glorious saying! It was indeed impossible that "the Living One" should remain "among the dead" (Lu 24:5); but here, the impossibility seems to refer to the prophetic assurance that He should not see corruption.

25 For David speaketh concerning him,
I foresaw the Lord always before my face;
for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:
26 therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad;
moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:
27 because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.
29 Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch
David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with
us unto this day.
30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with
an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh,
he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
31 he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that
his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see
corruption.

Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, sees in this sixteenth Psalm, one Holy Man, whose life of high devotedness and lofty spirituality is crowned with the assurance, that though He taste of death, He shall rise again without seeing corruption, and be admitted to the bliss of God's immediate presence. Now as this was palpably untrue of David, it could be meant only of One other, even of Him whom David was taught to expect as the final Occupant of the throne of Israel. The Psalm is then affirmed to have had its only proper fulfillment in JESUS, of whose

resurrection and ascension they were witnesses, while the glorious effusion of the Spirit by the hand of the ascended One, setting an infallible seal upon all, was even then witnessed by the thousands who stood listening to Him. A further illustration of Messiah's ascension and session at God's right hand is drawn from Ps 110:1, in which David cannot be thought to speak of himself, seeing he is still in his grave.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having
received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath
shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith
himself, The Lord said unto my Lord,
Sit thou on my right hand,
35 until I make thy foes thy footstool.
36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God
hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord
and Christ.

"The sting is at the close" [BENGEL]. To prove to them merely that Jesus was the Messiah might have left them all unchanged in heart. But to convince them that He whom they had crucified had been by the right hand of God exalted, and constituted the "LORD" whom David in spirit adored, to whom every knee shall bow, and the CHRIST of God, was to bring them to "look on Him whom they had pierced and mourn for Him."

Through Him, the ways of life are made known; and we are encouraged to expect God's presence, and his favour for evermore. All this springs from assured belief that Jesus is the Lord, and the anointed Saviour.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart,
and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and*
brethren, what shall we do?

neither Peter's words, nor the miracle they witnessed, could have produced such effects, had not the Holy Spirit been given. Sinners, when their eyes are opened, cannot but be pricked to the heart for sin, cannot but feel an inward uneasiness. The

apostle exhorted them to repent of their sins, and openly to avow their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, by being baptized in his name. This is that beautiful spirit of genuine compunction and childlike docility, which, discovering its whole past career to have been one frightful mistake, seeks only to be set right for the future, be the change involved and the sacrifices required what they may. So Saul of Tarsus (Ac 9:6).

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one
of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,
and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The word denotes change of mind, and here includes the reception of the Gospel as the proper issue of that revolution of mind which they were then undergoing; and be baptized as the visible seal of that remission.Repentance and remission of sins are still preached to the chief of sinners, in the Redeemer's name; still the Holy Spirit seals the blessing on the believer's heart; still the encouraging promises are to us and our children; and still the blessings are offered to all that are afar off.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all
that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.
40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying,
Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

as if Peter already foresaw the hopeless impenitence of the nation at large, and would have his hearers hasten in for themselves and secure their own salvation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the
same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand
souls.
42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine
and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Life among the Believers

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and
signs were done by the apostles.
44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
45 and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*,
as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple,
and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat
with gladness and singleness of heart,
47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the
Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED (KJV)—rather, "the saved," or "those who were being saved." "The young Church had but few peculiarities in its outward form, or even in its doctrine: the single discriminating principle of its few members was that they all recognized the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. This confession would have been a thing of no importance, if it had only presented itself as a naked declaration, and would never in such a case have been able to form a community that would spread itself over the whole Roman empire. It acquired its value only through the power of the Holy Ghost, passing from the apostles as they preached to the hearers; for He brought the confession from the very hearts of men (1Co 12:3), and like a burning flame made their souls glow with love. By the power of this Spirit, therefore, we behold the first Christians not only in a state of active fellowship, but also internally changed: the narrow views of the natural man are broken through; they have their possessions in common, and they regard themselves as one family" [OLSHAUSEN].

Acts-3

A Lame Man Healed at the Gate of the Temple

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the
hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour.*
2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was
carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple
which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered
into the temple;
3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked
an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.
5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.
6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give
I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

These words, uttered with supernatural power, doubtless begat in this poor man the faith that sent healing virtue through his diseased members.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.
8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

The man had been lying at the gate that led from the outer public court to the inner courts where only Jews were allowed, but as soon as he was healed he followed the apostles into the temple, jumping and praising God (3:1-10)

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:
10 and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

Peter's Address in Solomon's Porch

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.
12 And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

Neither the might nor the merit of the cure are due to us, observe the difference in the manner of working the miracles. Our Lord always spoke as having Almighty power, never

hesitated to receive the greatest honour that was given to him on account of his Divine miracles. But the apostles referred all to their Lord, and refused to receive any honour, except as his undeserving instruments. This shows that Jesus was one with the Father, and co-equal with Him; while the apostles knew that they were weak, sinful men, and dependent for every thing on Jesus, whose power effected the cure. Useful men must be very humble. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, give glory. Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ.calling on helpless sinners to arise and walk in the way of holiness, by faith in Him. How sweet the thought to our souls, that in respect to all the crippled faculties of our fallen nature, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth can make us whole! With what holy joy and rapture shall we tread the holy courts, when God the Spirit causes us to enter therein by his strength!

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of
our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered
up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was
determined to let *him* go.

With what heroic courage does Peter here charge his auditors with the heaviest of all conceivable crimes, and with what terrific strength of language are these charges clothed!

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer
to be granted unto you;
15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the
dead;
whereof we are witnesses.

killed the Prince of life—Glorious paradox, but how piercing to the conscience of the auditors.With what skill does the apostle use the miracle both to glorify his ascended Lord and bring the guilt of His blood more resistlessly home to his audience!

16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man
strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him
hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.
17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did*
also your rulers.

Our preacher, like his Master, "will not break the bruised reed." His heaviest charges are prompted by love, which now hastens to assuage the wounds it was necessary to inflict.

18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

The doctrine of a SUFFERING MESSIAH was totally at variance with the current views of the Jewish Church, and hard to digest even by the Twelve, up to the day of their Lord's resurrection. Our preacher himself revolted at it, and protested against it, when first nakedly announced, for which he received a terrible rebuke. Here he affirms it to be the fundamental truth of ancient prophecy realized unwittingly by the Jews themselves, yet by a glorious divine ordination. How great a change had the Pentecostal illumination wrought upon his views!

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers,
A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me;
him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Here is a powerful address to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequences of their unbelief, in the very words of Moses, their favourite prophet, out of pretended zeal for whom they were ready to reject Christianity, and to try to destroy it.

23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that Prophet,
shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

that is, "Hitherto we have all been looking too much for a Messiah who should shed outward blessings upon the nation generally, and through it upon the world. But we have learned other things, and now announce to you that the great blessing with which Messiah has come laden is the turning away of every one of you from his iniquities." With what divine skill does the apostle, founding on resistless facts, here drive home to the conscience of his auditors their guilt in crucifying the Lord of Glory; then soothe their awakened minds by assurances of forgiveness on turning to the Lord, and a glorious future as soon as this shall come to pass, to terminate with the Personal Return of Christ from the heavens whither He has ascended; ending all with warnings, from their own Scriptures, to submit to Him if they would not perish, and calls to receive from Him the blessings of salvation.

Acts-4

Peter and John before the Council

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

The Pharisees came mainly from the common people, and tried to preserve the Jewish way of life from the corruption of foreign ideas and political ambition. They were concerned with the outward show of religion, but not so concerned with correct attitudes of heart (Mat_12:1-2; 15:1-2; 23:5, 23-28). The Sadducees came mainly from the wealthy classes and were more concerned with exercising power in Jewish society than with following tradition. They were the high priestly party and had controlling power in the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council that sat in Jerusalem (Mat_16:11-12; 26:57, 59; Act_5:17). A

major difference of faith between the two parties was that the Pharisees believed in a physical resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees did not (Mat_22:23; Act_23:8).

irritated at the apostles "preaching through (rather, 'in') Jesus the resurrection from the dead"; for the resurrection of Christ, if a fact, effectually overthrew the Sadducean doctrine.

2 being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through
Jesus the resurrection from the dead.
3 And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the
next day: for it was now eventide.
4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and
the number of the men was about five thousand.
5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders,
and scribes,
6 and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and
Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest,
were
gathered together at Jerusalem.
7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By
what power, or by what name, have ye done this?
8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers
of the people, and elders of Israel,
9 if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the
impotent man, by what means he is made whole;
10 be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by
the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom
God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here
before you whole.
11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which
is become the head of the corner.
12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other
name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be
saved.

The name of Jesus is given to men of every age and nation, as that whereby alone believers are saved from the wrath to come. But when covetousness, pride, or any corrupt passion, rules

within, men shut their eyes, and close their hearts, in enmity against the light; considering all as ignorant and unlearned, who desire to know nothing in comparison with Christ crucified.

How sublimely does the apostle, in these closing words, shut up these rulers of Israel to Jesus for salvation, and in what universal and emphatic terms does he hold up his Lord as the only one Hope of men!

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Like Peter and John, the followers of Christ should act so that all who converse with them, may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus. That makes them holy, heavenly, spiritual, and cheerful, and raises them above this world.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*.

Why should ye wish to deny it, O ye rulers, but that ye hate the light, and will not come to the light lest your deeds should be reproved? All the care of the rulers is, that the doctrine of Christ spread not among the people, yet they cannot say it is false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency; and they are ashamed to own the true reason; that it testifies against their hypocrisy, wickedness, and tyranny.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

Impotent device! Little knew they the fire that was burning in the bones of those heroic disciples

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

There is here a wonderful union of sober, respectful appeal to the better reason of their judges, and calm, deep determination to abide the consequences of a constrained testimony, which betokens a power above their own resting upon them, according to promise. Those who know how to put a just value upon Christ's promises, know how to put just contempt upon the world's threatenings.

The apostles look with concern on perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, therefore they are faithful in warning, and showing the right way. None will enjoy peace of mind, nor act uprightly, till they have learned to guide their conduct by the fixed standard of truth, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Especially beware of a vain attempt to serve two masters, God and the world; the end will be, you can serve neither fully.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

The Believers Pray for Boldness

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;

25 who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage,

and the people imagine vain things?
26 The kings of the earth stood up,
and the rulers were gathered
together against the Lord, and
against his Christ.
27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast
anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles,
and the people of Israel, were gathered together,
28 for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined
before to be done.
29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto
thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy
word,
30 by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and
wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.
31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they
were assembled together; and they were all filled with the
Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, Isa 1. 7.

glorious token of the commotion which the Gospel was to make (Ac 17:6; compare Ac 16:26), and the overthrow of all opposing powers in which this was to issue. The Spirit rested upon the entire community, first, in the very way they had asked, so that they "spake the word with boldness" (Ac 4:29,31); next, in melting down all selfishness, and absorbing even the feeling of individuality in an intense and glowing realization of Christian unity.

All Things in Common

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

The disciples loved one another. This was the blessed fruit of Christ's dying precept to his disciples, and his dying prayer for them. Thus it was then, and it will be so again, when the Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high. The doctrine preached was the resurrection of Christ; a matter of fact, which being duly explained, was a summary of all the duties, privileges, and comforts of Christians. There were evident fruits of Christ's grace in all they said and did. They were dead to this world. This was a great evidence of the grace of God in them. They did not take away others' property, but they were indifferent to it. They did not call it their own; because they had, in affection, forsaken all for Christ, and were expecting to be stripped of all for cleaving to him. No marvel that they were of one heart and soul, when they sat so loose to the wealth of this world. In effect, they had all things common; for there was not any among them who lacked, care was taken for their supply.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 and laid *them* down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus,

37 having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

Acts-5

Ananias and Sapphira

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife,
sold a possession,
2 and kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*,
and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.
3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie
to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the
land?
4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold,
was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this
thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto
God.

There was no rule that forced people to sell their property. When Ananias and Sapphira sold some property, their sin was not that they kept part of the money for themselves, but that they lied through saying they had handed over all the money. After the unbroken triumphs of the weeks since Pentecost, this entrance of deliberate sin into the church must have shocked the apostles. As often happened when there was deliberate sin at the start of a new stage in God's unfolding plan for his people, God emphasized the seriousness of sin in a dramatic judgment (5:1-10). (Comparable judgments on deliberate sin occurred in the Garden of Eden, at the establishment of the Levitical priesthood and upon Israel's entrance into Canaan; Gen_3:1-24; Lev_10:1-7; Jos_7:1-26.)

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was, that they were ambitious of being thought eminent disciples, when they were not true disciples. Hypocrites may deny themselves, may forego their worldly advantage in one instance, with a prospect of finding their account in something else. They were covetous of the wealth of the world, and distrustful of God and his providence. They thought they might serve both God and mammon. They thought to deceive the apostles. The Spirit of God in Peter discerned the principle of unbelief reigning in the heart of

Ananias. But whatever Satan might suggest, he could not have filled the heart of Ananias with this wickedness had he not been consenting. The falsehood was an attempt to deceive the Spirit of truth, who so manifestly spoke and acted by the apostles. The crime of Ananias was not his retaining part of the price of the land; he might have kept it all, had he pleased; but his endeavouring to impose upon the apostles with an awful lie, from a desire to make a vain show, joined with covetousness. But if we think to put a cheat upon God, we shall put a fatal cheat upon our own souls. How sad to see those relations who should quicken one another to that which is good, hardening one another in that which is evil! And this punishment was in reality mercy to vast numbers. It would cause strict self-examination, prayer, and dread of hypocrisy, covetousness, and vain-glory, and it should still do so. It would prevent the increase of false professors. Let us learn hence how hateful falsehood is to the God of truth, and not only shun a direct lie, but all advantages from the use of doubtful expressions, and double meaning in our speech.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost:
and great fear came on all them that heard these things.
6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out,
and buried *him*.
7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his
wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land
for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together
to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which
have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee
out.
10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up
the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead,
and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.
11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many
as heard these things.

Many Signs and Wonders Performed

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders
wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord
in Solomon's porch.
13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the
people magnified them.
14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both
of men and women;)
15 insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and
laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of
Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.
16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about
unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were
vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

The Apostles Persecuted

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with
him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled
with indignation,
18 and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the
common prison.
19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors,
and brought them forth, and said,
20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of
this life.
21 And when they heard *that,* they entered into the temple early
in the morning, and taught.
But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called
the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel,
and sent to the prison to have them brought.
22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison,
they returned, and told,
23 saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and
the keepers standing without before the doors: but when
we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and
the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them
whereunto this would grow.
25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom
ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the
people.
26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them
without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should
have been stoned.

The apostles knew that, because of their widespread popular support, they could have successfully resisted arrest, but they chose not to. Instead they trusted in the overruling power of the sovereign God whom they served

27 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before
the council: and the high priest asked them,
28 saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not
teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with
your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

The Sadducees in particular were angry; for they, being the high priestly party, were the ones whom the apostles blamed for the death of Jesus (27-28; cf._4:6, 10; 5:17). Also this new movement was based on a belief in Jesus' physical resurrection, something that the Sadducees believed could not happen but that the apostles repeatedly claimed they had witnessed. The apostles refused to alter their message, but assured the Sanhedrin that forgiveness was available to the repentant (29-32). The Pharisees were pleased to see so many believing in the resurrection, for it gave support to their belief against the Sadducees'. They regarded the Christians as sincerely religious Jews who, though unusually enthusiastic, were orthodox enough to attend the temple daily to preach and pray (see_2:46; 3:1; 5:12, 25, 42). Gamaliel advised against opposing the new movement, in case it was from God. If it was not, it would collapse anyway (33-39).

They avoid naming Him whom Peter gloried in holding up [BENGEL]. In speaking thus, they seem to betray a disagreeable recollection of their own recent imprecation, His

blood be upon us," &c. (Mt 27:25), and of the traitor's words as he threw down the money, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Mt 27:4).

29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

How gloriously is Christ here exhibited; not, as in other places, as the Medium, but as the Dispenser of all spiritual blessings! Had Christ been exalted to give dominion to Israel, the chief priests would have welcomed him. But repentance and remission of sins are blessings they neither valued nor saw their need of; therefore they, by no means, admitted his doctrine.

Christ gives repentance, by his Spirit working with the word, to awaken the conscience, to work sorrow for sin, and an effectual change in the heart and life. The giving of the Holy Ghost, is plain evidence that it is the will of God that Christ should be obeyed. And He will surely destroy those who will not have Him to reign over them.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

They as competent human witnesses to facts, and the Holy Ghost as attesting them by undeniable miracles.

33 When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

How different this feeling and the effect of it from that "pricking of the heart" which drew from the first converts on the day of Pentecost the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Ac 2:37). The words used in the two places are strikingly different.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all

the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

in all probability one of that name celebrated in the Jewish writings for his wisdom, the son of Simeon (possibly the same who took the infant Saviour in his arms, Lu 2:25-35), and grandson of HILLEL, another celebrated rabbi. He died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem [LIGHTFOOT].

35 and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

This neutral policy was true wisdom, in the then temper of the council. But individual neutrality is hostility to Christ, as He Himself teaches (Lu 11:23).

39 but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Acts-6

The Appointment of the Seven

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

In the Jerusalem church there were two types of Jews, those brought up in Palestine who spoke Aramaic and those brought up in other places (such as Jews of the Dispersion) who spoke only Greek. The Greek-speaking Jews were known as Hellenists. Throughout Palestine there was tension between the two groups, and this tension carried over into the church. The Hellenists complained that, when widows were given their daily share from the common pool, the Hellenist widows were being neglected (6:1).

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them,* and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

the election was vested in the Christian people, the appointment lay with the apostles, as spiritual rulers.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch;

This was the crowning triumph of the Gospel, whose peaceful prosperity was now at its greatest height. After Stephen's teaching and trial made it clear that sacerdotal interests could not stand with the Gospel, such priestly accessions became rare indeed. Note

(1) how easily misunderstandings may arise among the most loving and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus: but

(2) How quickly and effectually such misunderstandings may be healed, where honest intentions, love, and wisdom reign:

(3) What a beautiful model for imitation is furnished by the class here complained of, who, though themselves the majority, chose the new office-bearers from amongst the complaining minority!

(4) How superior to the lust of power do the apostles here show themselves to be, in not only divesting themselves of the immediate superintendence of temporal affairs in the Christian community, but giving the choice of those who were to be entrusted with it to the disciples at large!

(5) How little of formal organization did the apostles give to the Church at first, and when an emergency arose which demanded something more, how entirely was the remedy suggested by the reason of the thing!

(6) Though the new office-bearers are not expressly called Deacons here, it is universally admitted that this was the first institution of that order in the Church; the success of the expedient securing its permanency, and the qualifications for "the office of a Deacon" being laid down in one of the apostolical Epistles immediately after those of "a Bishop" (1Ti 3:8-13).

As Stephen and the following names are all Greek, it is likely they were all of the "Grecian" class, which would effectually restore mutual confidence.

6 whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the
disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company
of the priests were obedient to the faith.

With the conversion of a large number of priests (not high priestly Sadducees, but ordinary temple officials), the Christians' ties with the temple might have become even stronger (7). But the preaching of Stephen quickly saw those ties broken decisively, at least in the case of the Hellenists.

The Arrest of Stephen

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders
and miracles among the people.
9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the*
synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians,
and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Jewish freedmen; manumitted Roman captives, or the children of such, expelled from Rome (as appears from JOSEPHUS and TACITUS), and now residing at Jerusalem.Jews of Cyrene, in Libya, on the coast of Africa. Cilicia—amongst whom may have been Saul of Tarsus (Ac 7:58,21:39).

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by
which he spake.
11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him
speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

blasphemous words against Moses—doubtless referring to the impending disappearance of the whole Mosaic system.

against God—This must refer to the supreme dignity and authority which he claimed for Christ, as the head of the new which was so speedily to supersede the old (compare Ac 7:56,59,60).

Wisdom and holiness make a man's face to shine, yet will not secure men from being treated badly. What shall we say of man, a rational being, yet attempting to uphold a religious system by false witness and murder! And this has been done in

numberless instances. But the blame rests not so much upon the understanding, as upon the heart of a fallen creature, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Yet the servant of the Lord, possessing a clear conscience, cheerful hope, and Divine consolations, may smile in the midst of danger and death.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes,
and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the
council,

Stephen saw that Christianity and Judaism could not go hand in hand. With Jesus' death and resurrection, Judaism was finished. The Jewish religious system, along with its laws, ceremonies, priests and temple, had fulfilled its purpose and was now replaced by something new. When the Jews heard Stephen preaching these things in one of the Hellenists' synagogues in Jerusalem, they reported him to the Sanhedrin for preaching against Judaism (9-15). The Sadducees were pleased at last to have an accusation against the Christians that was certain to win popular support. They knew that the people would not tolerate this threat to their national religion (see v. 12).

13 and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not
to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and
the law:
14 for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall
destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses
delivered us.
15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw
his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Acts-7

Stephen’s Defense

The defence that Stephen made before the Sanhedrin was not designed to win its approval. He outlined Israel's history to demonstrate two main points. First, God had never shown himself to be limited to one dwelling place, or even one locality (therefore the Jews were mistaken in attaching such importance to the temple in Jerusalem). Second, the people of Israel had always rejected the messengers of God (therefore their rejection of the Messiah Jesus was not surprising). Originally, God's symbolic dwelling place was a movable tent, something that could be set up anywhere at all, demonstrating that God was not limited to one place. When Solomon later built a permanent temple in Jerusalem, people developed the mistaken idea that this temple was the only place where God dwelt (44-50).

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?
2 And he said,
Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared
unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before
he dwelt in Haran,
3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from
thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show
thee.
4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in
Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he
removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.
5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set
his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a
possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no
child.
6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a
strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage,
and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge,
said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in
this place.
8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham*
begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac
begat Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.
9 And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but
God was with him,
10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor
and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made
him governor over Egypt and all his house.

Stephen reminds the Jews of their mean beginning as a check to priding themselves in the glories of that nation. Likewise of the wickedness of the patriarchs of their tribes, in envying their brother Joseph; and the same spirit was still working in them toward Christ and his ministers.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and
Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no
sustenance.
12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out
our fathers first.
13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren;
and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.
14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all
his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.
15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,
16 and were carried over into Shechem, and laid in the sepulchre
that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Hamor,
the father of Shechem.
17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God
had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in
Egypt,
18 till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
19 The same dealt subtilely with our kindred, and evil entreated our
fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end
they might not live.
20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair,
and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up,
and nourished him for her own son.
22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and
was mighty in words and in deeds.
23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart
to visit his brethren the children of Israel.
24 And seeing one *of them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and
avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:
25 for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that
God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.
26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove,
and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are
brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?
27 But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying,
Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?
28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?
29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of
Midian, where he begat two sons.
30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the
wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire
in a bush.
31 When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew
near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,
32 *saying*, I *am* the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and
the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses
trembled, and durst not behold.
33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for
the place where thou standest is holy ground.
34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is
in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come
down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into
Egypt.
35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler
and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer
by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.
36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and
signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the
wilderness forty years.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel,
A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of
your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.
38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the
angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and *with* our
fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:
39 to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from
them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,
40 saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for *as for* this
Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not
what is become of him.

Stephen was so far from blaspheming Moses, that really he honoured him, by showing how the prophecy of Moses was come to pass, which was so clear. God who gave them those customs by his servant Moses, might, no doubt, change the custom by his Son Jesus. But Israel thrust Moses from them, and would have returned to their bondage; so men in general will not obey Jesus, because they love this present evil world, and rejoice in their own works and devices.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto
the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.
42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of
heaven;
as it is written in the book of the
prophets, O ye house of Israel,
have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices
by the space of forty years in the wilderness?
43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of
Moloch, and the star of your god
Remphan,
figures which ye made to worship them:
and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

the well-known region of the captivity of Judah; while "Damascus" is used by the prophet (Am 5:27), whither the ten tribes were carried.

44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as
he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it
according to the fashion that he had seen.

Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness—which aggravated the guilt of that idolatry in which they indulged, with the tokens of the divine presence constantly in the midst of them.

Stephen upbraids the Jews with the idolatry of their fathers, to which God gave them up as a punishment for their early forsaking him. It was no dishonour, but an honour to God, that the tabernacle gave way to the temple; so it is now, that the earthly temple gives way to the spiritual one; and so it will be when, at last, the spiritual shall give way to the eternal one. The whole world is God's temple, in which he is every where present, and fills it with his glory; what occasion has he then for a temple to manifest himself in? And these things show his eternal power and Godhead. But as heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool, so none of our services can profit Him who made all things. Next to the human nature of Christ, the broken and spiritual heart is his most valued temple.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua
into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before
the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle
for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him a house.

48 Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
as saith the prophet,

But Stephen's object in mentioning David is to hasten from the tabernacle which he set up, to the temple which his son built, in Jerusalem; and this only to show, from their own Scripture (Isa 66:1,2), that even that temple, magnificent though it was, was not the proper resting-place of Jehovah upon earth; as his audience and the nations had all along been prone to imagine. (What that resting-place was, even "the contrite heart, that trembleth at God's word," he leaves to be gathered from the prophet referred to).

49 Heaven *is* my throne,

and earth *is* my footstool:
what house will ye build me? saith the Lord:
or what *is* the place of my rest?
50 Hath not my hand made all these things?
51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do
always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

It has been thought that symptoms of impatience and irritation in the audience induced Stephen to cut short his historical sketch. But as little farther light could have been thrown upon Israel's obstinacy from subsequent periods of the national history on the testimony of their own Scriptures, we should view this as the summing up, the brief import of the whole Israelitish history—grossness of heart, spiritual deafness, continuous resistance of the Holy Ghost, down to the very council before whom Stephen was pleading.

The gospel was offered now, not by angels, but from the Holy Ghost; yet they did not embrace it, for they were resolved not to comply with God, either in his law or in his gospel. Their guilt stung them to the heart, and they sought relief in murdering their reprover, instead of sorrow and supplication for mercy.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and
they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the
Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and
murderers:
53 who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and
have not kept *it*.

The Stoning of Stephen

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,
and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.
55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into
heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the
right hand of God,

Why "standing," and not sitting, the posture in which the glorified Saviour is elsewhere represented? Clearly, to express the eager interest with which He watched from the skies the scene in that council chamber, and the full tide of His Spirit which He was at that moment engaged in pouring into the heart of His heroical witness, till it beamed in radiance from his very countenance.

56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of
man standing on the right hand of God.

This is the only time that our Lord is by human lips called THE SON OF MAN after His ascension (Re 1:13,14:14 are not instances). And why here? Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, speaking now not of himself at all (Ac 7:55), but entirely by the Spirit, is led to repeat the very words in which Jesus Himself, before this same council, had foretold His glorification (Mt 26:64), assuring them that that exaltation of the SON OF MAN which they should hereafter witness to their dismay, was already begun and actual [ALFORD].

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears,
and ran upon him with one accord,

58 and cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him:* and the witnesses
laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was
Saul.

Saul—How thrilling is this our first introduction to one to whom Christianity—whether as developed in the New Testament or as established in the world—owes more perhaps than to all the other apostles together! Here he is, having perhaps already a seat in the Sanhedrim, some thirty years of age, in the thick of this tumultuous murder of a distinguished witness for Christ, not only "consenting unto his death" (Ac 8:1), but doing his own part of the dark deed.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God,* and saying, Lord
Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay
not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell
asleep.

In presenting to Jesus the identical prayer which He Himself had on the cross offered to His Father, Stephen renders to his glorified Lord absolute divine worship, in the most sublime form, and at the most solemn moment of his life. In this commitment of his spirit to Jesus, Paul afterwards followed his footsteps with a calm, exultant confidence that with Him it was safe for eternity (2Ti 1:12).

Acts-8

And Saul was consenting unto his death.

His hand did not throw one stone at the holy martyr's head, but his will concurred with others in that bloody act: and this denominated him guilty.

That God chiefly inspects the heart, and if the vote be passed there, he looks upon the man as guilty, though he proceeds no farther. 'Tis easy to murder another by silent wish, or passionate desire. In all moral actions God values the will for the deed, and reckons that man an actor, that is an applauder. Consent unto the sins of others makes their guilt our own: Saul was consenting unto his death.

Something more concerning Stephen and his death; how people stood affected to it--variously, as generally in such cases, according to men's different sentiments of things. Christ had said to his disciples, when he was parting with them (Joh 16:20), You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. Accordingly here is, 1. Stephen's death rejoiced in by one--by many, no doubt, but by one in particular, and that was Saul, who was afterwards called Paul; he was consenting to his death, syneudokon--he consented to it with delight (so the word signifies); he was pleased with it. He fed his eyes with this bloody spectacle, in hopes it would put a stop to the growth of Christianity. We have reason to think that Paul ordered Luke

to insert this, for shame to himself, and glory to free grace. Thus he owns himself guilty of the blood of Stephen.

Saul Persecutes the Church

1 And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

They had become so embittered by the zeal and success of the apostles, and by their frequent charges of murder in putting the Son of God to death, that they resolved at once to put a period to their progress and success. This was the first persecution against Christians; the first in a series that terminated only when the religion which they wished to destroy was fully established on the ruins of both Judaism and Paganism.

Good thus came out of evil; and the first persecution resulted, as all others have done, in advancing the cause which was intended to be destroyed.

2 And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial,* and made great lamentation over him.

The apostles - having been, however, more fully instructed than the others, and having been taught their duty by the example and teaching of the Saviour, they resolved, it seems, to remain and brave the fury of the persecutors. For them to have fled then would have exposed them, as leaders and founders of the new religion, to the charge of timidity and weakness. They therefore resolved to remain in the midst of their persecutors; and a merciful Providence watched over them, and defended them from harm.

And they were all dispersed - Not all the Church: if so, who would have remained for the apostles to teach, or Saul to

persecute? But all the teachers except the apostles, who, though in the most danger, stayed with the flock.

Observe here, 1. How the spite and cruelty of the church's adversaries was not quenched, but rather inflamed by the blood of Stephen: From whence arose a bitter persecution against the church at Jerusalem, upon which the multitude of believers fled from thence. Persecution scatters the professors of religion; but God makes scattering the way to increasing, and what was intended for the hindrance, God over-ruled for the furtherance of the gospel: As God overpowers the devil, so he outwits him too. This scattering persecution at Jerusalem, which was designed to another and suppress the gospel, did propagate and spread it more and more.

Observe, 2. How God sets bounds and limits to this sharp persecution: though the believers were scattered, yet the apostles continued at Jerusalem; They were all scattered, except the apostles. The twelve stay there untouched in the midst of the fiery furnace of persecution, to comfort and cherish the church in that sad and doleful day, maugre the malice of angry men, and of enraged devils; and those who were scattered, carried the light of the gospel among the Gentiles. Thus out of the darkness of persecution, God bringeth forth the light of the gospel, providing at once for the safety of some by their flight, and for the calling home of others by their dispersion: They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

He made havoc. ελυμαινετο /KJVPCE/. This word is commonly applied to wild beasts, to lions, wolves, etc., and denotes the devastations which they commit. Saul raged against the church like a wild beast--a strong expression,

denoting the zeal and fury with which he engaged in persecution.

Committed them to prison. The sanhedrim had not power to put them to death, Jn 18:31, but they had power to imprison; and they resolved, it seems, to exercise this power to the utmost.

Women in all ages have been exempted from the insults of tyranny, but not always freed from the persecutor's fury. And blessed be God for that masculine courage and constancy which the feebler sex have shewn, when they have been called forth to bear their testimony for Christ; out of weakness they have been made strong. With what wisdom and courage have they answered their examiners, convicted their accusers, confuted their opposers, kissing the stake, hugging the faggots, embracing the flame! Thus can God help the weak things of the world to confound the strong: and teach the foolish to confute the wise.

He committed them to prison, in order to their being tried and put to death, unless they would renounce Christ; and some, we find, were compelled by him to blaspheme, Ac 26:11.

The Gospel Preached in Samaria

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

But God over-ruled this scattering for his church's increasing: he brought good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of confusion. It is a great and certain truth, that the Holy God would suffer no sort of evil to be, did he not know how to bring some excellent good out of that evil.

Preaching the word. Greek, Evangelizing, or announcing the good news of the message of mercy, or the word of God. It is not the usual word which is rendered preach, but means simply announcing the good news of salvation. There is no evidence,

nor is there any probability, that all these persons were ordained to preach. They were manifestly common Christians who were scattered by the persecution; and the meaning is, that they communicated to their fellow-men in conversation, wherever they met them--and probably in the synagogues, where all Jews had a right to speak--the glad tidings that the Messiah had come. It is not said that they set themselves up for public teachers; or that they administered baptism; or that they founded churches; but they proclaimed everywhere the news that a Saviour had come. Their hearts were full of it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and they made the truth known to all whom they met. We may learn from this,

(1.) that persecution tends to promote the very thing which it would destroy.

(2.) That one of the best means to make Christians active and zealous is to persecute them.

(3.) That it is right for all Christians to make known the Paths of the gospel. When the heart is full, the lips will speak; and there is no more impropriety in their speaking of redemption than of anything else.

(4.) It should be the great object of all Christians to make the Saviour known everywhere. By their lives, conversation, and pious exhortations and entreaties, they should beseech dying sinners to be reconciled to God. And especially should this be done when they are travelling. Christians, when away from home, seem almost to imagine that they lay aside the obligations of religion. But the example of Christ and his early disciples has taught us that this is the very time to attempt to do good.

Samson's riddle is here again unriddled: Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness. The persecution that was designed to extirpate the church was by the overruling providence of God made an occasion of the enlargement of it.

Christ had said, I am come to send fire on the earth; and they thought, by scattering those who were kindled with that fire, to have put it out, but instead of this they did but help to spread it.

5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

Observe here, 1. Amongst the dispersed, who went to Samaria, Philip was one: not Philip the apostle, (for all of them remained at Jerusalem,) but Philip the deacon, who was the second in order after Stephen, among the seven deacons: He comes to Samaria, and preaches there.

Observe, 2. The doctrines which he preached: he preached Christ utno them; that is, Christianity, or the Christian religion; namely, The doctrine of Christ's incarnation, holy life and death, resurrection and ascension, together with remission of sins through faith in his name.

Observe, 3. The success of Philip's doctrine at Samaria; the people with one accord embrace the gospel, Giving heed to the things which he spake: The presence of the Holy Spirit accompanying his ministry, united his hearers' hearts, as well as their ears, to attend diligently to the doctrine of Christ delivered to them. This diligent attention was a blessed preparative to the Samaritans conversion, seeing faith comes by hearing: Yea, they did not only attend to, but acquiesce in all he spake.

Note thence, That were there a more reverent attention to the word, there would be more conversions by it than at this day there are.

Observe, 4. The external ground and reason of Philip's success in his ministry at Samaria; the miracles which he wrought. These were undeniable evidences of the truth of what he spake, and by which he shewed God's authority for what he did and said; he healed disease, and cast out devils, (called unclean spirits, because they delight in sin, that spiritual uncleanness of the soul,) who cried out with a loud voice, as very loath to leave

their lodgings, had they not been constrained to it. The miracles which Christ and his apostle wrought were heaven's broad-seal, to confirm the truth of what they taught: The people gave heed to what Philip spake, seeing the miracles which he did.

Observe, lastly, What joy and rejoicing there was among the Samaritans at their receiving and entertaining of the gospel: There was great joy in that city; not only for the cures wrought upon their bodies, but for the doctrine of reconciliation and salvation preached to their souls. As the gospel is in itself a message of joy and glad tidings, so it fills that soul with joy unspeakable, that cordially receives and entertains it. Joy in the Holy Ghost is one of the sweetest effects of the kingdom of God; that is, the gospel, The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost Rom 14:17.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which
Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

Preached that the Messiah had come, and made known his doctrines. The same truths had been before stated in Samaria by the Saviour himself, Jn 4 and this was doubtless one of the reasons why they so gladly now received the word of God. The field had been prepared by the Lord Jesus; and he had said that it was white for the harvest, Jn 4:35 and into that field Philip now entered, and was signally blessed. His coming was attended with a remarkable revival of religion.

The people not only gave heed to what he said, but at length believed it, were fully convinced that it was of God and not of men, and gave up themselves to the direction and government of it. As to this mountain, on which they had hitherto worshipped God, and placed a great deal of religion in it, they were now as much weaned from it as every they had been wedded to it, and become the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and in the name of Christ, the true temple, Joh 4:20-23. Preached that the Messiah had come,

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7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many
that were possessed *with them:* and many taken with palsies, and
that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

the way being prepared perhaps by the fruits of our Lord's sojourn, as He Himself seems to intimate (see on Joh 4:31-38). But "we may mark the providence of God in sending a Grecian, or a Hellenistic Jew, to a people who from national antipathy would have been unlikely to attend to a native of Judea" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, Ps 67:4,1Th 1:6. The gospel of Christ does not make men

9 But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime
in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of
Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

How strong the delusion of Satan was by which they were brought into the interests of this great deceiver. He had been for some time, nay, for a long time, in this city, using sorceries;

perhaps he came there by the instigation of the devil, soon after our Saviour had been there, to undo what he had been doing there; for it was always Satan's way to crush a good work in its bud and infancy

10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

He had no design to reform their lives, nor improve their worship and devotion, only to make them believe that he was, tis megas--some divine person. Justin Martyr says that he would be worshipped as proton theon--the chief god. He gave out himself to be the Son of God, the Messiah, so some think; or to be an angel, or a prophet. Perhaps he was uncertain within himself what title of honour to pretend to; but he would be thought some great one. Pride, ambition, and an affectation of grandeur, have always been the cause of abundance of mischief both to the world and to the church.

Secondly, The people ascribed to him what he pleased.

1. They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, both young and old, both poor and rich, both governors and governed. To him they had regard (Ac 8:10,11), and perhaps the more because the time fixed for the coming of the Messiah had now expired, which had raised a general expectation of the appearing of some great one about this time. Probably he was a native of their country, and therefore they embraced him the more cheerfully, that by giving honour to him they might reflect it upon themselves.

2. They said of him, This man is the great power of God--the power of God, that great power (so it might be read), that power which made the world. See how ignorant inconsiderate people mistake that which is done by the power of Satan, as if it were done by the power of God. Thus, in the Gentile world, devils pass for deities; and in the antichristian kingdom all the world wonders after a beast, to whom the dragon gives his power, and who opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, Re 13:2-5. 3.

They were brought to it by his sorceries: He bewitched the people of Samaria (Ac 8:9), bewitched them with sorceries (Ac 8:11), that is, either,

(1.) By his magic arts he bewitched the minds of the people, at least some of them, who drew in others. Satan, by God's permission, filled their hearts to follow Simon. O foolish Galatians, saith Paul, who hath bewitched you? Ga 3:1. These people are said to be bewitched by Simon, because they were so strangely infatuated to believe a lie. Or,

(2.) By his magic arts he did many signs and lying wonders, which seemed to be miracles, but really were not so: like those of the magicians of Egypt, and those of the man of sin, 2Th 2:9. When they knew no better, they were influenced by his sorceries; but, when they were acquainted with Philip's real miracles, they saw plainly that the one was real and the other a sham, and that there was as much difference as between Aaron's rod and those of the magicians. What is the chaff to the wheat? Jer 23:28.

Notorious for sorcery, for hypocrisy, for final apostacy, and avowed impiety. Ecclesiastical history informs us of the heresies he broached, of the divine honours he assumed, of the statues and images built to him and his strumpet Helen, which lewdly accompanied with him; of an altar erected to him with this blasphemous inscription, Simoni Deo sancto, "To Simon the holy God:" and of his tragical end, by breaking his neck, when attempting to fly up to heaven, because the people would no longer be cheated with his impostures here below.

From this example,

note, 1. That into the most eminent and populous cities do oft-times enter the greatest and vilest impostors, the most atheistical and diabolical sorcerers: There they lurk and lodge, there they seek to set up and play their prizes.

Note, 2. That the vilest impostors, and the worst seducers have yet many, very many followers: The silly multitude is soon deluded: To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest.

Note, 3. That such vile deceivers have the confidence to brag, and the deluded multitude have the weakness to believe, that they are very extraordinary persons, and can do extraordinary things. Simon gave it out himself, that he was some great one; and the people cry him up as the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Then Simon himself believed also. That is, he believed that Jesus had wrought miracles, and was raised from the dead, etc. All this he could believe in entire consistency with his own notions of the power of magic: and all that the connexion requires us to suppose is that he believed this--that Jesus had power of working miracles, etc.; and as he purposed to turn this to his own account, he was willing to profess himself to be his follower.

It might have injured his popularity, moreover, if he had taken a stand when so many were professing to become Christians. Men often profess religion because, if they do not, they fear they will lose their influence, and be left with the ungodly. That where the true knowledge of God comes, and the clear light of the gospel shines, their gross impieties and impostures, their cheats and delusions will be found out, detested and abhorred: When they believed Philip's preaching, they were baptized, both men and women. Where the light shines, Satan falls as lightning; magic vanishes. This Dragon cannot stand before the ark of God: When the people of Ephesus received the gospel; they soon made a bonfire of their magic books, Acts 19:19.

Simon was not a real Christian is apparent from the whole narrative, Acts 8:18,21-23. And when he was baptized. He was admitted to a profession of religion in the same way as the others. Philip did not pretend to know the heart; and Simon was admitted because he professed his belief. This is all the evidence that ministers can have; and it is no wonder that they, as well as Philip, are often deceived.Behold, the sorcerer is become a professor believer, a baptized person. The gospel preached may have a common operation upon a soul, where it never produced inward sanctification. All that are by the gospel proselyted are not savingly converted. All are not good fish that are enclosed in the gospel's net; but some fish, some trash. As there will be wheat and tares on the same field, chaff and corn on the same floor; so will there be some saints and some sinners in the purest earthly church. Upon a bare profession of faith, Simon Magus is baptized. Learn thence, that outward profession justly gains admission into the Christian congregation, and gives a person right to external ordinances; "The church's judgment is a judgment of charity, not of certainty;" of the outward, not of the inward man; of the life, not of the heart. The faith of Simon Magus was no other than a temporary, historical, yea, hypocritical faith: however, Philip baptizes him upon his making profession of it. An heart hypocrite is no hypocrite in the sight of the church, though most abominable in the sight of God. Simeon the unsound professor was more odious in the sight of God than Simon the sorcerer.

The reasons which influenced Simon to make a profession of religion seem to have been these:

(a.) An impression that Christianity was true. He seems to have been convinced of this by the miracles of Philip.

(b.) The fact that many others were becoming Christians; and he went in with the multitude. This is often the case in revivals of religion.

(c.) He had no religion; but it is clear Acts 8:20,21, that he was willing to make use of Christianity to advance his own power, influence, and popularity--a thing which multitudes of men of the same mind with Simon Magus have been willing since to do.

Simon himself believed also. He was convinced that Philip preached a true doctrine, because he saw it confirmed by real miracles, of which he was the better able to judge because he was conscious to himself of the trick of his own pretended ones.

[1.] The present conviction went so far that he was baptized, was admitted, as other believers were, into the church by baptism; and we have no reason to think that Philip did amiss in baptizing him, no, nor in baptizing him quickly. Though he had been a very wicked man, a sorcerer, a pretender to divine honours, yet, upon his solemn profession of repentance for his sin and faith in Jesus Christ, he was baptized. For, as great wickedness before conversion keeps not true penitents from the benefits of God's grace, so neither should it keep professing ones from church-fellowship. Prodigals, when they return, must be joyfully welcomed home, though we cannot be sure but that they will play the prodigal again. Nay, though he was now but a hypocrite, and really in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity all this while, and would soon have been found to be so if he had been tried awhile, yet Philip baptized him; for it is God's prerogative to know the heart. The church and its ministers must go by a judgment of charity, as far as there is room for it. It is a maxim in the law, Donec contrarium patet, semper præsumitur meliori parti--We must hope the best as long as we can. And it is a maxim in the discipline of the church, De secretis non judicat ecclesia--The secrets of the heart God only judges.

[2.] The present conviction lasted so long that he continued with Philip. Though afterwards he apostatized from Christianity, yet not quickly. He courted Philip's acquaintance, and now he that had given out himself to be some great one is content to sit at the

feet of a preacher of the gospel. Even bad men, very bad, may sometimes be in a good frame, very good; and those whose hearts still go after their covetousness may possibly not only come before God as his people come, but continue with them.

[3.] The present conviction was wrought and kept up by the miracles; he wondered to see himself so far outdone in signs and miracles. Many wonder at the proofs of divine truths who never experience the power of them.

Left without followers, he thinks it best to join the man who had fairly outstripped him, not without a touch of real conviction.

The wicked and the highly reprobate are often forced to taste the good gift of God, but they immediately spit it out again.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that
Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them
Peter and John:

They sent. That is, the apostles deputed two of their number. This shows conclusively that there was no chief or ruler among them.

Peter was ardent, bold, zealous, rash; John was mild, gentle, tender, persuasive. There was wisdom in uniting them in this work, as the talents of both were needed; and the excellencies in the character of the one would compensate for the defects of the other. It is observable that the apostles sent two together, as the Saviour had himself done. Mk 6:7. The reasons why this additional aid was sent to Samaria were probably these: (1.) To assist Philip in a great work--in the harvest which he was there collecting. (2.) To give the sanction of the authority of the apostles to what he was doing. (3.) To confer on the converts the gift of the Holy Ghost, Acts 8:17.

15 who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that
they might receive the Holy Ghost:
16 (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they
were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)
17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy

Ghost.

This was an act of prayer, expressing an invocation to God that he would impart the blessing to them. On how many they laid their hands is not said. It is evident that it was not on all, for they did not thus lay hands on Simon. Perhaps i.t was done on a few of the more prominent and leading persons, who were to be employed particularly in bearing witness to the truth of the gospel.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

From this act of Simon we have derived our word simony, to denote the buying and selling of ecclesiastical preferment, or church offices, where religion is supported by the state. This act of Simon shows conclusively that he was influenced by improper motives in becoming connected with the church.

19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

1 The wicked proposal that Simon made, by which his hypocrisy was discovered (Ac 8:18,19): When he saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given (which should have confirmed his faith in the doctrine of Christ, and increased his veneration for the apostles), it gave him a notion of Christianity as no other than an exalted piece of sorcery, in which he thought himself capable of being equal to the apostles, and therefore offered them money, saying, Give me also this power. He does not desire them to lay their hands on him, that he might receive the Holy Ghost himself (for he did not foresee that any thing was to be got by that), but that they would convey to him a power to bestow the gift upon others. He was ambitious to have the honour of an apostle, but not at all solicitous to have the spirit and disposition of a Christian. He was more desirous to gain honour to himself than to do good to others. Now, in making this motion,

(1.) He put a great affront upon the apostles, as if they were mercenary men, would do any thing for money, and loved it as

well as he did; whereas they had left what they had, for Christ, so far were they from aiming to make it more--

(2.) He put a great affront upon Christianity, as if the miracles that were wrought for the proof of it were done by magic arts, only of a different nature from what he himself had practised formerly.

(3.) He showed that, like Balaam, he aimed at the rewards of divination; for he would not have offered money for this power if he had not hoped to get money by it.

(4.) He showed that he had a very high conceit of himself, and that he had never his heart truly humbled. Such a wretch as he had been before his baptism should have asked, like the prodigal, to be made as one of the hired servants. But, as soon as he is admitted into the family, no less a place will serve him than to be one of the stewards of the household, and to be entrusted with a power which Philip himself had not, but the apostles only.

(1.) Peter shows him his crime (Ac 8:20): Thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money; and thus,

[1.] He had overvalued the wealth of this world, as if it were an equivalent for any thing, and as if, because, as Solomon saith, it answers all things, relating to the life that now is, it would answer all things relating to the other life, and would purchase the pardon of sin, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and eternal life.

[2.] He had undervalued the gift of the Holy Ghost and put it upon a level with the common gifts of nature and providence. He thought the power of an apostle might as well be had for a good fee as the advice of a physician or a lawyer, which was the greatest despite that could be done to the Spirit of grace. All the buying and selling of pardons and indulgences in the church of Rome is the product of this same wicked thought,

that the gift of God may be purchased with money, when the offer of divine grace so expressly runs, without money and without price.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

Our hearts can never rise too high in a just indignation against sin, and against all temptation unto sin; Thy money perish with thee; thou and thy money perish together. How plainly St. Peter deals with him; he searches him to the quick, to the heart, sounds the depths of sin: lays open the core of his hypocrisy before his face, and tells him to his teeth, that his heart was rotten and unsound; Thy heart is not right in the sight of God. The baptismal water had washed his outside, but his inwards were unclean. The heart is the worst part of man till it be mended, and then it is best: Where most evil lies, there we must first begin to be good; all will be good, if the heart, which the seat, the sink and seed-plot of all evil, be made good. The life would not be so bad, if the heart were not worse: All the obliquity of our lives proceeds from the impurity of our hearts and nature, as the muddiness of the stream form the foulness of the fountain.

How can we pay a price to God? All that we can give, the silver, and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills, belong to him already. We have nothing which we can present for his favours. And yet there are many who seek to purchase the favour of God. Some do it by alms and prayers; some by penance and fasting; some by attempting to make their own hearts better, and by self-righteousness; and some by penitence and tears. All these will not purchase his favour. Salvation, like every other blessing, will be his gift; and if ever received, we must be willing to accept it on his own terms, at his own time, and in his own way. We are without merit; and if saved, it will be by the sovereign grace of God.

They are the successors of Simon Magus, and not Simon Peter, who either buy or sell holy things.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is
not right in the sight of God.

Neither part. You have no portion of the grace of God; that is, you are destitute of it altogether. This word commonly denotes the part of an inheritance which falls to one when it is divided. Nor lot. This word means, properly, a portion which falls to one when an estate, or when spoil in war, is divided into portions, according to the number of those who are to be partakers, and the part of each one is determined by lot. The two words denote emphatically that he was in no sense a partaker of the favour of God. In this matter. Greek, In this word, i.e. thing. That which is referred to here is the religion of Christ. He was not a Christian. It is remarkable that Peter judged him so soon, and when he had seen but one act of his. But it was an act which satisfied him that he was a stranger to religion. One act may sometimes bring out the whole character; it may evince the governing motives; it may show traits of character utterly inconsistent with true religion; and then it is as certain a criterion as any long series of acts. Thy heart. Your affections, or governing motives; your principle of conduct. Comp. 2Kgs 10:15. You love gold and popularity, and not the gospel for what it is. There is no evidence here that Peter saw this in a miraculous manner, or by any supernatural influence. It was apparent and plain that Simon was not influenced by the pure, disinterested motives of the gospel, but by the love of power and of the world. In the sight of God. That is, God sees or judges that your heart is not sincere and pure. No external profession is acceptable without the heart. Reader, is your heart right with God? Are your motives pure--and does God see there the exercise of holy, sincere, and benevolent affections towards him? God knows the motives; and with unerring certainty he will judge; and with unerring justice he will fix our doom, according to the affections of the heart.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if
perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

Repent therefore. Here we may remark,

(1.) that Simon was at this time an unconverted sinner.

(2.) That the command was given to him as such.

(3.) That he was required to do the thing; not to wait or seek merely, but actually to repent.

(4.) That this was to be the first step in his conversion. He was not even directed to pray first; but his first indispensable work was to repent, that is, to exercise proper sorrow for this sin, and to abandon his plan or principle of action. And this shows,

(1.) that all sinners are to be exhorted to repent, as their first work. They are not to be told to wait, and read, and pray, in the expectation that repentance will be given them. With such helps they can obtain, they are to do the thing.

(2.) Prayer will not be acceptable, or heard, unless the sinner comes repenting, that is, unless he regrets his sin, and desires to forsake it. Then, and then only, will he be heard. When he comes loving his sins, and resolving still to practise them, God will not hear him. When he comes desirous of forsaking them, grieved that he is guilty, and feeling his need of help, God will hear his prayer. See Isa 1:15, Mic 3:4, Prov 1:28, Ps 66:18. And pray God. Having a desire to forsake the sin, and to be pardoned, then pray to God to forgive. It would be absurd to ask forgiveness until a man felt his need of it. This shows that a sinner ought to pray, and how he ought to do it. It should be with a desire and purpose to forsake sin, and in that state of mind God will hear the prayer. Comp. Dan 4:27. If perhaps. There was no certainty that God would forgive him; nor is there any evidence either that Simon prayed, or that he was forgiven. This direction of Peter presents another important principle in regard to the conduct of sinners. They are to be directed to repent, not because they have the promise of forgiveness, and

not because they hope to be forgiven, but because sin is a great evil, and because it is right and proper that they should repent, whether they are forgiven or not. That is to be left to the sovereign mercy of God. They are to repent of sin; and then they are to feel, not that they have any claim on God, but that they are dependent on him, and must be saved or lost at his will. They are not to suppose that their tears will purchase forgiveness, but that they lie at the foot of mercy, and that there is hope--not certainty--that God will forgive. The language of the humbled sinner is--

"Perhaps he will admit my plea, Perhaps will hear my prayer; But if I perish I will pray, And perish only there. "I can but perish if I go; I am resolved to try, For if I stay away, I know I shall for ever die."

The thought, etc. Your purpose, or wish. Thoughts may be, therefore, evil, and need forgiveness. It is not open sin only that needs to be pardoned; it is the secret purpose of the soul. (i) "if perhaps" Dan 4:27, 2Ti 2:25

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.

Observe here, 1. The odious character wherewith sin in general, hypocrisy in particular, is branded, it is bitterness and bondage; it is the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

Learn thence, 1. That sin is an exceeding bitter thing: It is bitter to God, it provokes him to bitter anger; it was bitter to Christ, it laid him under the bitter wrath of God; it was bitter to the angels, it turned them out of heaven, and banished them from the presence of God evermore; it is bitter to good men, it costs them bitter repentance, and it occasions them bitter chastisements: and it will be bitter, eternally bitter to the wicked and impenitent world. Now the bitterness of sin is not a medicinal and wholesome bitterness, but an intoxicating and stupifying bitterness, a poisonous and a baneful bitterness. Sin's bitter draught is a baneful draught.

Learn, 2. That not only bitterness, but bondage attends the service and servants of sin: As sin is the gall of bitterness, so it is the bond of iniquity, and the bondage of sin; it is a shameful and ignominious bondage, a fruitless and unprofitable bondage, a stupifying and insensible bondage, a restless and unwearied bondage, and endless and eternal bondage.

Learn, 3. That every soul before conversion is in and under this deplorable bondage; Thou art in the bond of iniquity.

Observe, 2. The means prescribed and directed to for the soul's delivery out of this deplorable bondage; namely, repentance and prayer. Repent of thy wickedness and pray to God.

1. Repent, Learn thence, That timely and sincere repentance is a special mean, prescribed and appointed by God, for the recovery of the worst sinners out of this deplorable bondage.

2. Pray. Here note,

1. A wicked man may pray, and ought to pray. As bad as Simon Magus was, St. Peter doth not drive him to despair, but directs him to his duty: Pray to God. Prayer is a part of natural worship, which we owe to God: it is the soul's motion Godward: therefore to say a wicked man should not pray, is to say, he should not turn to God.

Note, 2. That all the prayer in the world, without a man's own prayer to God for pardon and remission, will be ineffectual and unavailable to salvation. Simon Magus desired the apostles to pray for him, Acts 8:24. But St. Peter bids him to pray for himself, as ever he hopes for forgiveness with God: Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray to God.

3. The encouragement given to make use of the means prescribed; namely, a probability of forgiveness and acceptance with God. Repent and pray, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.

Learn thence, That the vilest and worst of sinners upon their repentance, accompanied with prayer and supplication unto God, have good ground of encouragement to hope for pardon of sin and acceptance with him.

Observe, 4. How St. Peter takes most notice of that, of which Simon Magus took least, and that was of the wickedness of his thoughts; That the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee. Thence learn, That wicked and evil thoughts, lodged and entertained in the heart, ought in a special manner to be repented of, and humbled for, by all that expect forgiveness with God; for sinful thoughts are radical and seminal evils; they were the root of the angels' apostacy and of Adam's apostacy also. A world of sin may be lodged in the thoughts

We must hope well even for the vilest sinners, as long as and as much as we can.

Peter calls the inward malice of the heart and the venomous and demonic wickedness with which the magician was wholly filled with the gall of bitterness: and he is said to be in the gall, as though he were wholly overwhelmed with gall, and buried in it. (h) Entangled in the bonds of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

For I perceive. That is, by the act which he had done. His offer had shown a state of mind that was wholly inconsistent with true religion. One single sin may as certainly show that there is

no true piety, as many acts of iniquity. It may be so decided, so malignant, so utterly inconsistent with just views, as at once to determine what the character is. The sin of Simon was of this character. Peter here does not appear to have claimed the power of judging the heart; but he judged, as all other men would, by the act. In the gall. This word denotes properly bile, or that bitter, yellowish-green fluid that is secreted in the liver. Hence it means anything very bitter; and also any bad passion of the mind, as anger, malice, etc. We speak of bitterness of mind, etc. Of bitterness. This is a Hebraism; the usual mode of expressing the superlative, and means excessive bitterness. The phrase is used respecting idolatry, De 29:18 "Lest there should be among, you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." A similar expression occurs in Heb 12:15, "Lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you," etc. Sin is thus represented as a bitter or poisonous thing; a thing not only unpleasant in its consequences, but ruinous in its character, as a poisonous plant would be in the midst of other plants. Jer 2:19, "It is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God;" Jer 4:18, Rom 3:14, "Whose mouth is full of cursings and bitterness;" Eph 4:31. The meaning here is, that the heart of Simon was full of dreadful, malignant sin. Bond of iniquity. Or, that thou art bound by iniquity. That is, that it has the rule over you, and binds you as a slave. Sin is often thus represented as bondage and captivity. Sinners are represented as chained to it, and kept in hard servitude, Ps 116:16, Prov 5:22, "He shall be holden with the cords of his sins;" Rom 7:23,24. These expressions prove conclusively that Simon was a stranger to religion. (a) "gall of bitterness" Jer 4:18, Heb 12:15 (b) "bond of iniquity" Ps 116:16, Prov 5:22, Isa 28:22

Pray ye, etc. Here remark, (1.) that Simon was directed to pray for himself, Acts 8:22, but he had no disposition to do that. Sinners will often ask others to pray for them, when they are too proud, or too much in love with sin, to pray for themselves. (2.) The main thing that Peter wished to impress on him was a sense of his sin. Simon did not regard this, but looked only to the punishment. He was terrified and alarmed; and he sought

to avoid future punishment; but he had no alarm about his sins. So it is often with sinners. So it was with Pharaoh, Ex 8:28,32 and with Jeroboam, 1Kgs 13:6. And so sinners often quiet their own consciences by asking ministers and Christian friends to pray for them, while they still purpose to persevere in iniquity. If men expect to be saved, they must pray for themselves; and pray, not chiefly to be freed from punishment, but from the sin which deserves hell. This is all that we hear of Simon in the New Testament; and the probability is, that, like many other sinners, he did not pray for himself, but continued to live in the gall of bitterness, and died in the bond of iniquity. The testimony of antiquity is decided on that point. Acts 8:9.

Peter had urged him to pray for himself: he asks those wonder-working men to do it for him; having no confidence in the prayer of faith, but thinking that those men possessed some peculiar interest with heaven. that none of these things dome upon me—not that the thought of his wicked heart might be forgiven him, but only that the evils threatened might be averted from him.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

The author or instrument converting, Philip, who was commanded by the angel in a vision to go to Gaza: but not the common way, or ordinary road, but by the way of the desert, a difficult, and perhaps a dangerous way, over mountains and through vallies: Philip knew not whither he was going; but God knew whither, and wherefore he sent him. O Philip! it was worth thy going many steps out of the way, to convert and save a soul: Happy for the eunuch that thou wentest out of the way, and that he as happily met with thee.

There was such a road, across Mount Hebron, which Philip might take without going to Jerusalem (as VON RAUMER'S'S Palæstina shows). The way; not Gaza itself, which was the southernmost city of Palestine, in the territory of the ancient Philistines. To go from a city, where his hands had been full of work, so far away on a desert road, could not but be staggering to the faith of Philip, especially as he was kept in ignorance of the object of the journey. But like Paul, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"; and like Abram, "he went out not knowing whither he went" (Ac 26:19; Heb 11:8).

A nobleman, a courtier, a treasurer to the queen; yet he concerns himself with religion, and, being a proselyte, travels in his chariot as far a Jerusalem, to worship God in a solemn manner. O how will this example rise up in judgment against ourfreat ones, who have more light, but less heat; more knowledge, but less love!

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

There were two Ethiopias, one in Arabia, but that lay east from Canaan; it should seem this was Ethiopia in Africa, which lay south, beyond Egypt, a great way off from Jerusalem; for in Christ those that were afar off were made nigh, according to the promise, that the ends of the earth should see the great salvation. The Ethiopians were looked upon as the meanest and most despicable of the nations, blackamoors, as if nature had stigmatized them; yet the gospel is sent to them, and divine grace looks upon them, though they are black, though the sun has looked upon them.

He was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, for he came to Jerusalem to worship. Some think that he was a proselyte of righteousness, who was circumcised, and kept the feasts; others that he was only a proselyte of the gate, a Gentile, but who had

renounced idolatry, and worshipped the God of Israel occasionally in the court of the Gentiles; but, if so, then Peter was not the first that preached the gospel to the Gentiles, as he says he was. Some think that there were remains of the knowledge of the true God in this country, ever since the queen of Sheba's time; and probably the ancestor of this eunuch was one of her attendants, who transmitted to his posterity what he learned at Jerusalem.

28 was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

And Philip ran, etc. Indicating his haste, and his desire to obey the suggestions of the Spirit. A thousand difficulties might have been started in the mind of Philip if he had reflected a little. The eunuch was a stranger; he had the appearance of a man of rank; he was engaged in reading; he might be indisposed to be interrupted or to converse, etc. But Philip obeyed without any hesitation the monitions of the Spirit, and ran to him. It is well to follow the first suggestions of the Spirit; to yield to the clear indications of duty, and to perform it at once. Especially in a deed of benevolence, and in conversing with others on the subject of religion, our first thoughts are commonly safest and best. If we do not follow them, the calculations of avarice, or fear, or some worldly prudence, are very apt to come in. We become alarmed; we are afraid of the rich and the great; and we suppose that our conversation and admonitions will be unacceptable. We may learn from this case, (1.) to do our duty at once, without hesitation or debate. (2.) We shall often be disappointed in regard to subjects of this kind. We shall find candid, humble, Christian conversation far more acceptable to strangers, to the rich, and to the great, than we commonly suppose. If, as in this case, they are alone; if we approach them kindly; if we do not rudely and harshly address them, we shall find most men willing to talk on the subject of religion.

He finds him reading in his Bible, as he sat in his chariot (Ac 8:28): He ran to him, and heard him read; he read out, for the benefit of those that were with him, Ac 8:30. He not only relieved the tediousness of the journey, but redeemed time by reading, not philosophy, history, nor politics, much less a romance or a play, but the scriptures, the book of Esaias;

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?
And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with
him.

The wonderful modesty and humility of this great man, he thankfully accepts Philip's offer to instruct and teach him, (some would have huffed at it as a rude affront) but he condescends to learn of one beneath him. Such as are modest and thoroughly humble, are also truly docile and teachable, willing to learn, knowledge, although from the mouth of an inferior: He desired Philip to come up and sit with him.

He read the scripture, though there were many things in it which he did not understand. Though there are many things in the scriptures which are dark and hard to be understood, nay, which are often misunderstood, yet we must not therefore throw them by, but study them for the sake of those things that are easy, which is the likeliest way to come by degrees to the understanding of those things that are difficult: for knowledge and grace grow gradually.

To one so engaged this would be deemed no rude question, while the eager appearance of the speaker, and the question itself, would indicate a readiness to supply any want of insight that might be felt.

32 The place of the Scripture which he read was
this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
and like a lamb dumb before his
shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

Here note, How wonderfully the divine providence did work in a concurring tendency towards the eunuch's conversion. God moves his heart to read, to read the scriptures, to read this scripture, which informed him of the sufferings of the Lord

Jesus, and sends Philip out of his way to meet him, and he meets him just as he was regarding that portion of scripture which most concerned him: He wanted to be informed concerning Christ.

1 The chapter he was reading was the fifty-third of Isaiah, two verses of which are here quoted (Isa 53:7,8;Ac 8:32,33), part of the seventh and eighth verses; they are set down according to the Septuagint version, which in some things differs from the original Hebrew. Grotius thinks the eunuch read it in the Hebrew, but that Luke takes the Septuagint translation, as readier to the language in which he wrote; and he supposes that the eunuch had learned from the many Jews that were in Ethiopia both their religion and language. But, considering that the Septuagint version was made in Egypt, which was the next country adjoining to Ethiopia, and lay between it and Jerusalem, I rather think that translation was most familiar to him: it appears by Isa 20:4 that there was much communication between those two nations--Egypt and Ethiopia. The greatest variation from the Hebrew is that what in the original is, He was taken from prison and from judgment (hurried with the utmost violence and precipitation from one judgment-seat to another; or, From force and from judgment he was taken away; that is, It was from the fury of the people, and their continual clamours, and the judgment of Pilate thereupon, that he was taken away), is here read, In his humiliation his judgment was taken away. He appeared so mean and despicable in their eyes that they denied him common justice, and against all the rules of equity, to the benefit of which every man is entitled, they declared him innocent, and yet condemned him to die; nothing criminal can be proved upon him, but he is down, and down with him. Thus in his humiliation his judgment was taken away; so, the sense is much the same with that of the Hebrew.

33 in his humiliation his judgment was taken away:
and who shall declare his generation?
for his life is taken from the earth.

Meyer, De Wette, Robinson and Hackett all agree that this refers to portraying the wickedness of the generation which

slew him. Others insist that it means Christ's spiritual posterity, his followers.

And who shall declare his generation? The word generation, used here, properly denotes posterity; then an age of mankind, comprehending about thirty years, as we speak of this and the next generation; then it denotes the men of a particular age or time. Very various interpretations have been given of this expression. Lowth translates it, "His manner of life, who would declare?" referring, as he supposes, to the fact that when a prisoner was condemned and led to execution, it was customary for a proclamation to be made by a crier in these words, "Whoever knows anything about his innocence, let him come and declare it." This passage is taken from the Gemara of Babylon.--Kennicott, as quoted by Lowth. The same Gemara of Babylon on this passage adds, that "before the death of Jesus, this proclamation was made forty days; but no defence could be found"--a manifest falsehood; and a story strikingly illustrative of the character of the Jewish writings. The Gemara was written some time after Christ, perhaps not far from the year 180, Lardher, and is a collection of commentaries on the traditional laws of the Jews. That this custom existed is very probable; but it is certain that no such thing was done on the trim of the Saviour. But instances are wanting where the word "generation" has this meaning.

The Chaldee paraphrase translates the passage in Isaiah, "He shall collect our captivity from infirmities and vengeance; and who can declare what wonderful things shall be done for us in his days?" Others have referred this question to his Deity, or Divine generation; intimating that no one could explain the mystery of his eternal generation. But the word in the Scriptures has no such signification; and such a sense would not suit the connexion. (See Calvin, in loco.) Others have referred it to his own spiritual posterity, his disciples, his family: "The number of his friends and followers who could enumerate?"--Calvin, Beza, etc. But this as little suits the connexion. Another sense which the word has, is to denote the

men of any particular age or time, Mt 11:16, 23:36, Lk 16:8, etc. And it has been supposed that the question here means, "Who can describe the character and wickedness of the generation when he shall breathe enormous crime of that age, in putting him to death?' This, perhaps, is the most probable interpretation of the question, for these reasons:

(1.) It is the most usual signification of the word, (see Schleusner,) and would be its obvious meaning in any other connexion.

(2.) It suits the connexion here. For the prophet immediately adds as a reason for the fact that no one can describe that generation, that he was put to death--a deed so enormous, as to make it impossible to describe the wickedness of the generation that would do it. This was the sum, the crowning act of human guilt--a deed so enormous as to defy all attempt at description. The murder of the Messiah; the crucifixion of the Son of God; the killing of the highest Messenger that heaven could send, was the consummation of all earthly wickedness. There was no other deed so enormous that could be performed; and there were no words to describe this. The same thing is implied in what the Saviour himself said, Mt 23:37,38, Lk 13:34,35, 19:42, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc. The idea in these places is, that notwithstanding their sin in killing the prophets, and stoning those who had been sent to them, he would still have been willing to receive and pardon them, but for this enormous act of wickedness in putting the Messiah to death--a deed which they were about to accomplish, and which should be attended with the destruction of their state and nation. The Hebrew word "declare" Isa 53:8 means, properly, to meditate, to think of, and then to speak, to declare. It means probably in that place," Who can think of, who can conceive the enormity of the crimes of that age, so as fully to publish or declare them?"

That yet he should live for ever, to ages which cannot be numbered; for so I understand those words, Who shall declare his generation? The Hebrew word properly signifies the duration of one life, Ec 1:4. Now who can conceive or express how long he shall continue, notwithstanding this; for his life is taken only from the earth; in heaven he shall live to endless and innumerable ages, as it follows in Isa 53:10, He shall prolong his days.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

The eunuch's question upon this is, Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Ac 8:34. He does not desire Philip to give him some critical remarks upon the words and phrases, and the idioms of the language, but to acquaint him with the general scope and design of the prophecy, to furnish him with a key, in the use of which he might, by comparing one thing with another, be led into the meaning of the particular passage. Prophecies had usually in them something of obscurity, till they were explained by the accomplishment of them, as this now was. It is a material question he asks, and a very sensible one: "Does the prophet speak this of himself, in expectation of being used, being misused, as the other prophets were? or does he speak it of some other man, in his own age, or in some age to come?" Though the modern Jews will not allow it to be spoken of the Messiah, yet their ancient doctors did so interpret it; and perhaps the eunuch knew this, and did partly understand it so himself, only he proposed this question, to draw on discourse with Philip; for the way to improve in learning is to consult the learned. As they must enquire the law at the mouth of the priests (Mal 2:7), so they must enquire the gospel, especially that part of the treasure which is hid in the field of the Old Testament, at the mouth of the ministers of Christ. The way to receive good instructions is to ask good questions.

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water:
and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to
be baptized?

The eunuch is instructed before baptized, and he desireth baptism of Philip; it was not forced upon him by Philip against his will, The eunuch said, What hinders me to be baptized? To drive men to baptism, as they drive beasts to watering, and force Christianity upon them against their wills, to send forth booted apostles with javelins in their hand, and crosses on their breasts, as the Romish church doth to dragon men into Christianity, is the way to make hypocrites, but not proselytes; for it is not whole armies that can besiege my reason, nor cannons batter my will. It is conviction, not compulsion, that must induce assent.

He does not demand baptism, does not say, "Here is water and here I am resolved I will be baptized;" for, if Philip have any thing to offer to the contrary, he is willing to waive it for the present. If he think him not fit to be baptized, or if there be any thing in the institution of the ordinance which will not admit such a speedy administration of it, he will not insist upon it. The most forward zeal must submit to order and rule. But,

He does desire it, and, unless Philip can show cause why not, he desires it now, and is not willing to defer it. Note, In the solemn dedicating and devoting of ourselves to God, it is good to make haste, and not to delay; for the present time is the best time, Ps 119:60. Those who have received the thing signified by baptism should not put off receiving the sign. The eunuch feared lest the good affections now working in him should cool and abate, and therefore was willing immediately to bind his soul with the baptismal bonds unto the Lord, that he might bring the matter to an issue.

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou
mayest.
And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of
God.

Observe, Though Philip had very lately been deceived in Simon Magus, and had admitted him to baptism, though he afterwards appeared to be no true convert, yet he did not therefore scruple to baptize the eunuch upon his profession of faith immediately, without putting him upon a longer trial than usual. If some hypocrites crowd into the church, who afterwards prove a grief and scandal to us, yet we must not therefore make the door of admission any straiter than Christ has made it; they shall answer for their apostasy, and not we.

And Philip said, etc. This was then stated to be the proper qualification for making a profession of religion. The terms are:

(1.) Faith, that is, a reception of Jesus as a Saviour; yielding the mind to the proper influences of the truths of redemption. Mk 16:16.

(2.) There is required not merely the assent of the understanding, but a surrender of the heart, the will, the affections, to the truth of the gospel. As these were the proper qualifications then, so they are now. Nothing less is required; and nothing but this can constitute a proper qualification for the Lord's Supper. I believe, etc. This profession is more than a professed belief that Jesus was the Messiah. The name Christ implies that. "I believe that Jesus the Messiah" is, etc. In addition to this, he professed his belief that he was the Son of God--showing either that he had before supposed that the Messiah would be the Son of God, or that Philip had instructed him on that point. It was natural for Philip, in discoursing on the humiliation and poverty of Jesus, to add also that he sustained a higher rank of being than a man, and was the Son of God. What precise ideas the eunuch attached to this expression cannot be now determined. This verse is wanting in a very large number of manuscripts, (Mill,) and has been rejected by many of the ablest critics. It is also omitted in the

Syriac and Ethiopic versions. It is not easy to conceive why it has been omitted in almost all the Greek Mss., unless it is spurious. If it was not in the original copy of the Acts, it was probably inserted by some early transcriber, and was deemed so important to the connexion, to show that the eunuch was not admitted hastily to baptism, that it was afterwards retained. It contains, however, an important truth, elsewhere abundantly taught in the Scriptures, that faith is necessary to a proper profession of religion.

Profession of faith is required of those being baptized, and therefore it is evident that we are not first ingrafted into Christ when we are baptized, but are already ingrafted, and then are baptized. (Ed.) (n) The sum of the confession which is necessary for baptism.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Observe lastly, Philip was found at Azotus, or Ashdod, thirty-four miles from Gaza, so far had the ministry of the angels carried him, and there safely set him down.

Learn, How good it is to obey God in the most difficult command. Philip had a hard and tiresome journey from Samaria to Gaza, footing it through a desert, in untrodden paths, and running as fast as the eunuch's chariot, to join himself unto it at the command of God. But now from Gaza to Azotus he has a swifter and easier passage, he rides in an angelical flying chariot. When we attend the execution of God's commands, the holy angels shall attend us, and take care of us, and administer necessary help unto us; like tender nurses, they keep us fast whilst we live, and bring us home in their arms to our Father's house when we die. Blessed be God for the ministry of his holy angels.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Acts-9

The Conversion of Saul

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

How restless and unwearied persecutors are in the prosecution of their bloody designs and purposes. Saul was now inquisitor haretica pravitatis: away he trots to the high priest for commission to bind heretics, who believed on Jesus, and opposed the traditions of the fathers; and having, as he thought, swept Jerusalem of saints, he resolved next to ransack Damascus, though it was five or six days journey from Jerusalem: However he spurs on, away he goes through fire and water to revenge his malice on the poor members of Jesus Christ. The high priest needed not to hire Saul to do his black work, he both offers himself, and sues for the office: No doubt the high priest and council highly applauded his zeal and towardness for extirpating heretics, commending the gallantry of his resolution, and the bravery of his mind; and having scaled his commission, sent him away with wishes of success.

2 and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Letters. Epistles; implying a commission to bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. From this, it seems that the sanhedrim at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction over all synagogues everywhere. They claimed the authority of regulating everywhere the Jewish religion.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

The Christians are here said to be those of this way; those of the way, so it is in the original. Perhaps the Christians sometimes called themselves so, from Christ the Way; or,

because they looked on themselves as but in the way, and not yet at home; or, the enemies thus represented it as away by itself, a by-way, a party, a faction.

It was a light from Heaven, the fountain of light, from the God of heaven, the Father of lights. It was a light above the brightness of the sun (Ac 26:13), for it was visible at mid-day, and outshone the sun in his meridian strength and lustre, Isa 24:23.

4 and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

why persecutest thou me?—No language can express the affecting character of this question, addressed from the right hand of the Majesty on high to an infuriated, persecuting mortal. (See Mt 25:45, and that whole judgment scene).

The doubling of it, Saul, Saul, intimates, First, The deep sleep that Saul was in; he needed to be called again and again, as Jer 22:29, O earth, earth, earth. Secondly, The tender concern that the blessed Jesus had for him, and for his recovery. He speaks as one in earnest; it is like Martha, Martha (Lu 10:41), or Simon, Simon (Lu 22:31), or O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Mt 23:37. He speaks to him as to one in imminent danger, at the pit's brink, and just ready to drop in: "Saul, Saul, dost thou know whither thou art going, or what thou art doing?

The charge exhibited against him is, Why persecutest thou me? Observe here, First, Before Saul was made a saint, he was made to see himself a sinner, a great sinner, a sinner against Christ. Now he was made to see that evil in himself which he never saw before; sin revived and he died.

Note, A humbling conviction of sin is the first step towards a saving conversion from sin. Secondly, He is convinced of one particular sin, which he was most notoriously guilty of, and had justified himself in, and thereby way is made for his conviction of all the rest. Thirdly, The sin he is convinced of is

persecution: Why persecutest thou me? It is a very affectionate expostulation, enough to melt a heart of stone. Observe,

1 The person sinning: "It is thou; thou, that art not one of the ignorant, rude, unthinking crowd, that will run down any thing they hear put into an ill name, but thou that hast had a liberal learned education, has good parts and accomplishments, hast the knowledge of the scriptures, which, if duly considered, would show thee the folly of it. It is worse in thee than in another."

2 The person sinned against: "It is I, who never did thee any harm, who came from heaven to earth to do thee good, who was not long since crucified for thee; and was not that enough, but must I afresh be crucified by thee?"

3. The kind and continuance of the sin. It was persecution, and he was at this time engaged in it: "Not only thou hast persecuted, but thou persecutest, thou persistest in it." He was not at this time hauling any to prison, nor killing them; but this was the errand he came upon to Damascus; he was now projecting it, and pleasing himself with the thought of it. Note, Those that are designing mischief are, in God's account, doing mischief.

4. The question put to him upon it: "Why dost thou do it?"

(1.) It is complaining language. "Why dealest thou thus unjustly, thus unkindly, with my disciples?" Christ never complained so much of those who persecuted him in his own person as he did here of those who persecuted him in his followers. He complains of it as it was Saul's sin: "Why art thou such an enemy to thyself, to thy God?" Note, The sins of sinners are a very grievous burden to the Lord Jesus. He is grieved for them (Mk 3:5), he is pressed under them, Am 2:13.

(2.) It is convincing language: "Why dost thou thus: Canst thou give any good reason for it?" Note, It is good for us often to ask ourselves why we do so and so, that we may discern what an unreasonable thing sin is: and of all sins none so unreasonable, so unaccountable, as the sin of persecuting the disciples of Christ, especially when it is discovered to be, as certainly it is, persecuting Christ. Those have no knowledge who eat up God's people, Ps 14:4. Why persecutest thou me? He thought he was persecuting only a company of poor, weak, silly people, that were an offence and eye-sore to the Pharisees, little imagining that is was one in heaven that he was all this while insulting; for surely, if he had known, he would not have persecuted the Lord of glory. Note, Those who persecute the saints persecute Christ himself, and he takes what is done against them as done against himself, and accordingly will be the judgment in the great day, Mt 25:45.

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

It is not said, "the Christ", but Jesus, the crucified one against whom Saul was raging. Had the answer been "the Christ", or the Son of God, Saul might still have doubted whether this was Jesus.

The wonderful power of the heart-changing grace of God. Saul cries out, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Saul is no longer a lion, but a lamb; the wolf that hunted before for his prey, now gently couches like a sheep; hears and obeys the voice of Christ the great Shepherd; and of a persecutor of the church, becomes the great doctor of the Gentiles.

Behold! the tare is become wheat; the child of wrath, a chosen vessel; the prodigy of nature, the miracle of grace.

Lord! who can enough admire and magnify the sovereignty and omnipotent prevalency of divine grace, which could refine and did extract very precious gold from so rough, so coarse, and so base a metal?

Conversion is a work of wonder in all men, but a miracle in this man, and extraordinarily strange, and instantaneously sudden; and therefore is by no means to be made the measure and standard of every man's conversion.

Shall we think no man converted, unless he be struck down with a light and power immediately from heaven, and be taken with a fit of trembling, and frighted almost out of his wits?

How many by the benefit of a good education, others by the blessing of God upon some affliction, and upon calm consideration, without any great terrors and amazement, have been visibly changed and converted?

The effects and fruits of conversion are very visible in all, but the manner of conversion is not alike in all. Things may be very visible in their effects, which yet are not visible in their cause. If the fruits of our conversion be visible, the certainty of it is unquestionable, and the advantage of it will be unspeakable, although we cannot tell the time when, or the manner how, the Holy Spirit wrought it in us.

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks—The metaphor of an ox, only driving the goad deeper by kicking against it, is a classic one, and here forcibly expresses, not only the vanity of all his measures for crushing the Gospel, but the deeper wound which every such effort inflicted upon himself.

The cruel edict and decree he had with him drew near to be put in execution; and now it was happily prevented, which may be considered,

[1.] As a great kindness to the poor saints at Damascus, who had notice of his coming, as appears by what Ananias said (Ac 9:13,14), and were apprehensive of their danger from him, and trembled as poor lambs at the approach of a ravening wolf; Saul's conversion was their security for the present. Christ has many ways of delivering the godly out of temptation, and sometimes does it by a change wrought in their persecutors, either restraining their wrathful spirits (Ps 76:10) and

mollifying them for a time, as the Old-Testament Saul, who relented towards David more than once (1Sa 24:16,26:21), or renewing their spirits, and fixing upon them durable impressions, as upon the New-Testament Saul here.

[2.] It was also a very great mercy to Saul himself to be hindered from executing his wicked design, in which if he had now proceeded, perhaps it had been the filling up of the measure of his iniquity. Note, It is to be valued as a signal token of the divine favour if God, either by the inward operations of his grace or the outward occurrences of his providence, prevent us from prosecuting and executing a sinful purpose, 1Sa 25:32.

(1.) He makes enquiry concerning Christ: Who art thou, Lord? He gives no direct answer to the charge preferred against him, being convicted by his own conscience, and self-condemned. If God contend with us for our sins, we are not able to answer for one of a thousand, especially such a one as the sin of persecution. Convictions of sin, when they are set home with power upon the conscience, will silence all excuses and self-justifications. Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer. But he desires to know who is his judge; the compellation is respectful: Lord. He who had been a blasphemer of Christ's name now speaks to him as his Lord. The question is proper: Who art thou? This implies his present unacquaintedness with Christ; he knew not his voice as his own sheep do, but he desired to be acquainted with him; he is convinced by this light which encloses him that it is one from heaven that speaks to him, and he has a veneration for every thing that appears to him to come from heaven; and therefore, Lord, who art thou? What is thy name? Jdg 13:17,Ge 32:29. Note, there is some hope of people when they begin to enquire after Jesus Christ.

(2.) He has an answer immediately, in which we have,

[1.] Christ's gracious revelation of himself to him. He is always ready to answer the serious enquiries of those who covet an

acquaintance with him: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. The name of Jesus was not unknown to him; his heart had risen against it many a time, and gladly would he bury it in oblivion. He knew it was the name that he persecuted, but little did he think to hear it from heaven, or from the midst of such a glory as now shone round about him. Note, Christ brings souls into fellowship with himself by manifesting himself to them. He said,

First, I am Jesus, a Saviour; I am Jesus of Nazareth, so it is, Ac 22:8. Saul used to call him so when he blasphemed him: "I am that very Jesus whom thou usedst to call in scorn Jesus of Nazareth." And he would show that now that he is in his glory he is not ashamed of his humiliation.

Secondly, "I am that Jesus whom thou persecutest, and therefore it will be at thy peril if thou persist in this wicked course." There is nothing more effectual to awaken and humble the soul than to see sin to be against Christ, an affront to him, and a contradiction to his designs.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

His address to Jesus Christ, when he was in this frame: Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? This may be taken,

[1.] As a serious request for Christ's teachings: "Lord, I see I have hitherto been out of the way; thou hast shown me my error, set me to rights; thou hast discovered sin to me, discover to me the way to pardon and peace." It is like that, Men and brethren, what must we do? Note, A serious desire to be instructed by Christ in the way of salvation is an evidence of a good work begun in the soul. Or,

[2.] As a sincere resignation of himself to the direction and government of the Lord Jesus. This was the first word that grace spoke in Paul, and with this began a spiritual life: Lord

Jesus, What wilt thou have me to do? Did not he know what he had to do? Had he not his commission in his pocket? And what had he to do but to execute it? No, he had done enough of this work already, and resolves now to change his master, and employ himself better. Now it is not, What will the high priest and the elders have me to do? What will my own wicked appetites and passions have me to do? But, What wilt thou have me to do? The great change in conversion is wrought upon the will, and consists in the resignation of that to the will of Christ.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? This indicates a subdued soul; a humbled spirit. Just before he had sought only to do his own will; now he inquired what was the will of the Saviour. Just before he was acting under a commission from the sanhedrim; now he renounced their supreme authority, and asked what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. Just before he had been engaged in a career of opposition to the Lord Jesus; now he sought at once to do his will. This indicates the usual change in the sinner. The great controversy between him and God is, whose will shall be followed. The sinner follows his own; the first act of the Christian is to surrender his own will to that of God, and to resolve to do that which he requires. We may further remark here, that this indicates the true nature of conversion. It is decided, prompt, immediate. Paul did not debate the matter, Gal 1:16; he did not inquire what the scribes and Pharisees would say; he did not consult his own reputation; he did not ask what the world would think. With characteristic promptness--with a readiness which showed what he would yet be--he gave himself up at once and entirely to the Lord Jesus; evidently with a purpose to do his will alone. This was the case also with the jailer, at Philippi, Acts 16:30. Nor can there be real conversion where the heart and will are not given to the Lord Jesus, to be directed and moulded by him at his pleasure. We may test our conversion, then, by the example of the apostle Paul. If our hearts have been given up as his was, we are true friends of Christ.

The general direction Christ gave him, in answer to this: Arise, go into the city of Damascus, which thou art now near to, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. It is encouragement enough to have further instruction promised him, but,

[1.] He must not have it yet; it shall be told him shortly what he must do, but, for the present, he must pause upon what has been said to him, and improve that. Let him consider awhile what he has done in persecuting Christ, and be deeply humbled for that, and then he shall be told what he has further to do.

[2.] He must not have it in this way, by a voice from heaven, for it is plain that he cannot bear it; he trembles, and is astonished. He shall be told therefore what he must do by a man like himself, whose terror shall not make him afraid, nor his hand be heavy upon him, which Israel desired at mount Sinai. Or, it is an intimation that Christ would take some other time to manifest himself further to him, when he was more composed, and this fright pretty well over. Christ manifests himself to his people by degrees; and both what he does and would he have them to do, though they know not now, they shall know hereafter.

It is remarkable that he was thus directed. But we may learn from it,

(1.) that even in the most striking and remarkable cases of conversion, there is not at once a clear view of duty. What course of life should be followed; what should be done; nay, what should be believed, is not at once apparent.

(2.) The aid of others, and especially of ministers, and of experienced Christians, is often very desirable to aid even those who are converted in the most remarkable manner. Saul was converted by a miracle: the Saviour appeared to him in his glory; of the truth of his Messiahship he had no doubt; but still

he was dependent on a humble disciple in Damascus to be instructed in what he should do.

(3.) Those who are converted, in however striking a manner it may be, should be willing to seek the counsel of those who are in the church and in the ministry before them. The most striking evidence of their conversion will not prevent their deriving important direction and benefit from the aged, the experienced, and the wise in the Christian church.

(4.) Such remarkable conversions are fitted to induce the subjects of the change to seek counsel and direction. They produce humility, a deep sense of sin and of unworthiness; and a willingness to be taught and directed by any one who can point out the way of duty and of life.

(a) "What will thou have me to do?" Acts 16:30

(1) Saul (who is also Paul), persecuting Christ most cruelly, who did as it were flee before him, falls into Christ's hands, and is overcome: and with a singular example of the goodness of God, in place of punishment which he justly deserved for his cruelty, is not only kindly received, but is also even by the mouth of God appointed an apostle, and is confirmed by the ministry and witness of Ananias.

(a) This is a sign that Saul's stomach boiled and cast out great threats to murder the disciples.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

How far his fellow travellers were affected with this, and what impression it made upon them. They fell to the earth, as he did, but rose without being bidden, which he did not, but lay still till it was said to him, Arise; for he lay under a heavier load than any of them did; but when they were up,

They stood speechless, as men in confusion, and that was all, Ac 9:7. They were going on the same wicked errand that Paul was, and perhaps, to the best of their power, were as spiteful as he; yet we do not find that any of them were converted, though they saw the light, and were struck down and struck dumb by it. No external means will of themselves work a change in the soul, without the Spirit and grace of God, which distinguish between some and others; among these that journeyed together, one is taken, and the others left. They stood speechless; none of them said, Who art thou, Lord? or, What wilt thou have me to do? as Paul did, but none of God's children are born dumb.

And the men which journeyed with him. Why these men attended him is unknown. They might have been appointed to aid him, or they may have been travellers with whom Saul had accidentally fallen in. Stood speechless. In Acts 26:14, it is said that they all fell to the earth at the appearance of the light. But there is no contradiction. The narrative in that place refers to the immediate effect of the appearance of the light. They were immediately smitten to the ground together. This was before the voice spake to Saul, Acts 26:14. In this place Acts 9:7 the historian is speaking of what occurred after the first alarm. There is no improbability that they rose fro the ground immediately, and surveyed the scene with silent amazement and alarm. The word speechless--εννεοι-- properly denotes those who are so astonished or so stupified as to be unable to speak. In the Greek writers it means those who are deaf and dumb. Hearing a voice. Hearing a sound or noise. The word here rendered "voice" is thus frequently used, as in Gen 3:8, 1Sam 12:18, Ps 29:3,4; Mt 24:31, (Greek;) 1Thes 4:16. In Acts 22:9, it is said, "They which were with me (Paul) saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." In this place the words "heard not the voice" must be understood in the sense of understanding the words, of hearing the address, the distinct articulation, which Paul heard. They heard a noise, they were amazed and alarmed, but they did not hear the distinct words addressed to Saul. A similar instance we have in Jn 12:28,29, when the voice of God came

from heaven to Jesus: "The people who stood by and heard it, said that it thundered." They heard the sound, the noise; they did not distinguish the words addressed to him. See also Dan 10:7, and 1Kgs 19:11-13.

Lord, how many are there that come under thine ordinances, who hear only (like Saul's companions) a confused noise and empty sound! They do not hear the distinct voice of Christ speaking to their hearts with a strong hand, inwardly and effectually, and so remanin under the power of unbelief, in an unconverted state.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus.

His blindness and loss of sight: When his eyes were opened, he waw no man. Christ taught him, by his bodily blindness, the blindness of his soul in spiritual things, which till now he was insensible of. As Saul was, so all naturally are, spiritually blind, before regeneration and conversion: True, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and was a great proficient in human learning, but after his conversion he counted that knowledge no better than blindness, Phil 3:7-8.

His manuduction or leading by the hand into the city; Damascus. Who led him? Doubtless his companions that came along with him upon his bloody design from Jerusalem. Here the blind lead the blind; those very hands lead him to Damascus which should have haled the saints from Damascus to Jerusalem.

those with him would have lost their sight too; but it was a sight of Christ, whom the rest saw not, that had this effect upon Saul only. Thus a believing sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ dazzles the eyes to all things here below. Christ, in order to the further discovery of himself and his gospel to Paul, took him off from the sight of other things, which he must look off, that he may look unto Jesus, and to him only.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

The awful crime of fighting murderously against God and Christ was pressing upon his soul, and as yet he knew not what to do that he might obtain pardon. His Jewish education, if not his natural instinct, prompted him to pray, and this he was doing with all fervor (#Ac 9:11|); but the hands he lifted up were stained with blood--the blood of martyrs; and how could he hope to be heard? No penitent ever had greater cause for sorrow, or wept more bitterly than he.

The duration and continuance of Saul's blindness; He was three days without sight. This was a long night to him who persecuted the children of the day; a just time for him to be in darkness, who so implacably attempted to blow out the light of the gospel: But perhaps no less time would have been sufficient to humble him for his rage and madness against Christ and his members. Besides, there are some that think that, in these three days of his continued blindness, he had that rapture into the third heaven, which is mentioned, 2Cor 12:2. But however that be, doubtless in this time his mind was filled with divine contemplations; and that glorious gospel was taught him in three days, which he taught to others all his days.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here,* Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

The Lord Jesus is alone mentioned in all this transaction. And as he had commenced the work of converting Saul, it is evident that he is intended here. Acts 1:24.

12 and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Beheld, he prayeth. This gives us a full indication of the manner in which Saul passed the three days mentioned in Acts

9:9. It is plain, from what follows, that Ananias regarded Saul as a foe to Christianity, and that he would have been apprehensive of danger if he were with him, Acts 9:13,14. This remark, "behold he prayeth," is made to him to silence his fears, and to indicate the change in the feelings and views of Saul. Before he was a persecutor; now his change is indicated by his giving himself to prayer. That Saul did not pray before, is not implied by this; for he fully accorded with the customs of the Jews, Php 3:4-6. But his prayers then were not the prayers of a saint. They were then the prayers of a Pharisee, (comp. Lk 18:10, etc.;) now they were the prayers of a broken-hearted sinner. Then he prayed depending on his own righteousness; now depending on the mercy of God in the Messiah. We may learn here,

(1,) that one indication of conversion to God is real prayer. A Christian may as well be characterized by that as by any single appellation--" a man of prayer."

(2.) It is always the attendant of true conviction for sin, that we pray. The convicted sinner feels his danger, and his need of forgiveness. Conscious that he has no righteousness himself, he now seeks that of another, and depends on the mercy of God. Before he was too proud to pray; now he is willing to humble himself through Jesus Christ, and ask for mercy.

(3.) It is a sufficient indication of the character of any man to say, "Behold, he prays." It at once tells us, better than volumes would without this, his real character. Knowing this, we know all about him. We at once confide in his piety, his honesty, his humility, his willingness to do good. It is at once the indication of his state with God, and the pledge that he will do his duty to men. We mean, of course, real prayer. Knowing that a man is sincere, and humble, and faithful in his private devotions, and in the devotions of his family, we confide in him, and are willing at once to trust to his readiness to do all that he is convinced that he ought to do. Ananias, apprized of this in

Saul, had full evidence of the change of his character, and was convinced that he ought to lay aside all his former views, and at once to seek him, and to acknowledge him as a brother.

Thus, as in the case of Cornelius and Peter afterwards, there was a mutual preparation of each for each.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

why does Ananias object this. Not, "Therefore I do not owe him so much service. Why should I do him a kindness who has done and designed us so much unkindness?" No, Christ has taught us another lesson, to render good for evil, and pray for our persecutors; but if he be such a persecutor of Christians, [1.] Will it be safe for Ananias to go to him? Will he not throw himself like a lamb into the mouth of a lion? And, if he thus bring himself into trouble, he will be blamed for his indiscretion. [2.] Will it be to any purpose to go to him? Can such a hard heart ever be softened, or such an Ethiopian ever change his skin?

14 and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Go thy way. This is often the only answer that we obtain to the suggestion of our doubts and hesitations about duty. God tells us still to do what he requires, with an assurance only that his commands are just, and that there are good reasons for them.

Before the Gentiles. The nations; all who were not Jews. This was the principal employment of Paul. He spent his life in this, and regarded himself as peculiarly called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, Rom 11.13, 15:16, Gal 2:8. And the children of Israel. The Jews. This was done. He immediately began to preach to them, @Ac 9:20-22. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel first to them, and then to the Gentiles, Acts 13:46, 28:17.

vessels are receptive instruments; they must take in before they can give out. What the ministers of the gospel have received of the Lord, that they deliver to their people; they give out what God gives in. like the oil in the widow's vessel, increased by pouring out. A minister, by communicating the treasure of his knowledge, enriches others without impoverishing himself.

16 for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Verse 16. For I will shew him, etc. This seems to be added to encourage Ananias. He had feared Saul. The Lord now informs him that Saul, hitherto his enemy, would ever after be his friend. He would not merely profess repentance, but would manifest the sincerity of it by encountering trials and reproaches for his sake. The prediction here was fully accomplished, Acts 20:23, 2Cor 11:23-27; 2Ti 1:11,12.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Ananias, though no apostle, no deacon, nor minister, that we read of, but an ordinary and private Christian only, yet he has power to heal Saul of his blindness, and to confer the Holy Ghost; Receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost: If so, undoubtedly he had an extraordinary warrant for this extraordinary work; for none but the apostles had power to confer the Holy ghost. No ordinary person ought to undertake any part of the ministrial functions without an extraordinary call and commission.

The title given by Anania to Saul, Brother Saul; they were now brethren by faith and profession, owning the same God, united to the same Saviour, animated by the same Spirit, encouraged by the same promises, partakers of the same hope, and heirs of the same glory. As the scripture speaks of a brotherhood betwixt Christ and his believers, He is not ashamed to call them

brethren; so it speaks of a brotherhood betwixt believers themselves, Love the brotherhood: that is, thw whole fraternity and society of Christians, who are sunguine Christi conglutinati, cemented by the blood of Christ, and united by the bond of love.

Saul came to lay violent hands upon the disciples at Damascus, but here a disciple lays a helping healing hand upon him. The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul. (2.) He called him brother, because he was made a partaker of the grace of God, though not yet baptized; and his readiness to own him as a brother intimated to him God's readiness to own him as a son, though he had been a blasphemer of God and a persecutor of his children.

Ananias might deliver his message to Saul very appositely in the prophet's words (Ho 6:1,2): Come and turn to the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal thee; he hath smitten, and he will bind thee up; now after two days he will revive thee, and the third day he will raise thee up, and thou shalt live in his sight.

Let not us then despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin; for Paul himself obtained mercy, that he might be a monument, 1Ti 1:13. He was in a wicked way, pursuing his design against the Christians at Damascus, and pleasing himself with the thought that he should devour this new-born child of Christianity there. Note, Sometimes the grace of God works upon sinners when they are at the worst, and hotly engaged in the most desperate sinful pursuits, which is much for the glory both of God's pity and of his power.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales:
and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.
19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

Saul Preaches at Damascus

Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

The time of his preaching, Straightaway: he fell presently to his Master's work, not consulting flesh and blood about the difficulties and dangers that might attend it; but performs his duty with such zeal and immediate application, as became a person of his holy character and profession.

21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Paul does not do battle only with his own authority, but also with the testimonies of the Prophets. (k) By conferring places of the Scripture together, as skilful craftsman do when they make something, they used to gather all parts together, to make them agree fitly one with another.

Saul Escapes from the Jews

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

And after that many days, etc. How long a time elapsed before this, is not recorded in this place; but it is evident that the writer means to signify that a considerable time intervened. There is, therefore, an interval here which Luke has not filled up; and if this were the only narrative which we had, we should be at a loss how to understand this. From all that we know now of the

usual conduct of the Jews towards the apostles, and especially towards Paul, it would seem highly improbable that this interval would be passed peaceably or quietly. Nay, it would be highly improbable that he would be allowed to remain in Damascus many days without violent persecution. Now it so happens that, by turning to another part of the New Testament, we are enabled to ascertain the manner which this interval was filled up. Turn then to Gal 1:17, and we learn from Paul himself that he went into Arabia, and spent some time there, and then returned again to Damascus. The precise time which would be occupied in such a journey is not specified; but it would not be performed under a period of some months. In Gal 1:18, we are informed that he did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion; and as there is reason to believe that he went up to Jerusalem directly after escaping from Damascus the second time, Acts 9:25,26 it seems probable that the three years were spent chiefly in Arabia. We have thus an account of the "many days" here referred to by Luke. And in this instance we have a striking example of the truth and honesty of the sacred writers. By comparing these two accounts together, we arrive at the whole state of the case. Neither seems to be complete without the other. Luke has left a chasm which he has nowhere else supplied. But that chasm we are enabled to fill up from the apostle himself, in a letter written long after, and without any design to amend or complete the history of Luke: for the introduction of this history into the epistle to the Galatians was for a very different purpose--to show that he received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus, and in a manner independent of the other apostles. The two accounts, therefore, are like the two parts of a tally; neither is complete without the other; and yet being brought together, they so exactly fit as to show that the one is precisely adjusted to the other. And as the two parts were made by different individuals, and without design of adapting them to each other, they show that the writers had formed no collusion or agreement to impose on the world; that they are separate and independent witnesses; that they are honest men; that their narratives are true records of what actually occurred; and the two narratives constitute,

therefore, a strong and very valuable proof of the correctness of the sacred narrative. If asked why Luke has omitted this in the Acts, it may be replied, that there are many circumstances and facts omitted in all histories from the necessity of the case. Comp. Jn 21:25. It is remarkable here, not that he has omitted this, but that he has left a chasm in his own history which can be so readily filled up. such a blank should occur in the Acts, and be filled up in Galatians, is not more remarkable than that the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, their stay there, and their return thence, recorded only by Matthew, should be so entirely passed over by Luke, that if we had only his Gospel, we should have supposed that they, Holy Family, returned to Nazareth immediately after the presentation in the temple.

24 but their laying wait was known of Saul. And they watched
the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the
wall in a basket.

In a basket. This word is used to denote commonly the basket in which food was carried, Mt 15:37, Mk 8:8,20. This conduct of Saul was in accordance with the direction of the Lord Jesus, Mt 10:23, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another," etc. Saul was certain of death if he remained; and as he could secure his life by flight without abandoning any principle of religion, or denying his Lord, it was his duty to do so. Christianity requires us to sacrifice our lives only when we cannot avoid it without denying the Saviour, or abandoning the principles of our holy religion.

Saul at Jerusalem

26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join
himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and
believed not that he was a disciple.

He desired to be acquainted with them, and to be admitted into communion with them; but they looked strange upon him, shut the door against him, and would not go about any of their religious exercises if he were by, for they were afraid of him.

Now might Paul be tempted to think himself in an ill case, when the Jews had abandoned and persecuted him, and the Christians would not receive and entertain him. Thus does he fall into divers temptations, and needs the armour of righteousness, as we all do, both on the right hand and on the left, that we may not be discouraged either by the unjust treatment of our enemies or the unkind treatment of our friends.

(1.) See what was the cause of their jealousy of him: They believed not that he was a disciple, but only pretended to be so, and came among them as a spy or an informer. They knew what a bitter persecutor he had been, with what fury he went to Damascus some time ago; they had heard nothing of him since, and therefore thought he was but a wolf in sheep's clothing. The disciples of Christ had need to be cautious whom they admit into communion with them. Believe not every spirit. There is need of the wisdom of the serpent, to keep the mean between the extremes of suspicion on the one hand and credulity on the other; yet methinks it is safer to err on the charitable side, because it is an adjudged case that it is better the tares should be found among the wheat than that the wheat should any of it be rooted up and thrown out of the field.

(2.) See how it was removed (Ac 9:27): Barnabas took him to the apostles themselves, who were not so scrupulous as the inferior disciples, to whom he first assayed to join himself, and he declared to them,

[1.] What Christ had done for him: He had shown himself to him in the way and spoken to him; and what he said.

[2.] What he had since done for Christ: He had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. How Barnabas came to know this, more than the rest of them, we are not told; whether he had himself been at Damascus, or had had letters thence, or discoursed with some of that city, by which he came to the knowledge of this; or whether he had formerly been acquainted

with Paul in the Grecian synagogues, or at the feet of Gamaliel, and had such an account of his conversion from himself as he saw cause enough to give credit to: but so it was that, being satisfied himself, he gave satisfaction to the apostles concerning him, he having brought no testimonials from the disciples at Damascus, thinking he needed not, as some others, epistles of commendation, 2Co 3:1. Note, The introducing of a young convert into the communion of the faithful is a very good work, and one which, as we have opportunity, we should be ready to do. He desired to be acquainted with them, and to be admitted into communion with them; but they looked strange upon him, shut the door against him, and would not go about any of their religious exercises if he were by, for they were afraid of him. Now might Paul be tempted to think himself in an ill case, when the Jews had abandoned and persecuted him, and the Christians would not receive and entertain him. Thus does he fall into divers temptations, and needs the armour of righteousness, as we all do, both on the right hand and on the left, that we may not be discouraged either by the unjust treatment of our enemies or the unkind treatment of our friends.

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good work, and one which, as we have opportunity, we should be ready to do.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

But Barnabas, To the apostles. To Peter and James, Gal 1:18,19. Probably the other apostles were at that time absent from Jerusalem. And declared unto them, etc. It may seem remarkable that the apostles at Jerusalem had not before heard of the conversion of Saul. The following considerations may serve in some degree to explain this:

(1.) It is certain that intercourse between different countries was then much more difficult than it is now. There were no posts; no public conveyances; nothing that corresponded with our modes of intercourse between one part of the world and another.

(2.) There was at this time a state of animosity, amounting to hostility, subsisting between Herod and Aretas. Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and had put her away.--Josephus, Antiq. b. xviii. chap. v. 1, 2 The result of this was a long misunderstanding between them, and a war; and the effects of that war might have been to interrupt the communication very much throughout all that country.

(3.) Though the Jews at Jerusalem might have heard of the conversion of Saul, yet it was for their interest to keep it a secret, and not to mention it to Christians. But,

(4.) though the Christians who were there had heard of it, yet it is probable that they were not fully informed on the subject; that they had not had all the evidence of his conversion which they desired; and that they looked with suspicion on him. It was therefore proper that they should have a full statement of the evidence of his conversion; and this was made by Barnabas.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.
29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

But why did these men rather seek to kill Paul than Peter, James, or Barnabas?

Answer, Because he was formerly one of their own company, of their own college; a persecutor like themselves, and a persecutor with themsleves. This enraged them; they looked not upon him as an apostle, but as an apostate; one that had revolted from them,. a renegado, and as such they meditate his destruction night and day; insomuch, that it is probable, that never were so many sufferings heaped upon the head of any minster of the gospel throughout the world, as upon St. Paul, (see them reckoned up, 2Cor 11:23 &c.) partly through the hatred of the Jews, and partly through the fury of the blind Gentiles; yet the Lord delivered him out of all. Till his work was done, and his race run, and he had finished the course of his ministry, neither the malice of men, nor the rage of devils, could take him off.

Blessed be God, our times are in his hands, not in our enemies, nor yet in our own.

30 *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

But Paul had another reason than his own apprehension for quitting Jerusalem so soon. "While he was praying in the temple, he was in a trance," and received express injunctions to this effect. (See on Ac 22:17-21).

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Then had the churches rest. That is, the persecutions against Christians ceased. Those persecutions had been excited by the opposition made to Stephen, Ac 11:19 they had been greatly promoted by Saul, Acts 8:3 and had extended, doubtless,

throughout the whole land of Palestine. The precise causes of this cessation of the persecution are not known. Probably they were the following:

(1.) It is not improbable that the great mass of Christians had been driven into other regions by these persecutions.

(2.) He who had been most active in exciting the persecution, who was, in a sort, its leader, and who was best adapted to carry it on, had been converted. He had ceased his opposition; and even he now was removed from Judea. All this would have some effect in causing the persecution to subside.

(3.) But it is not improbable that the civil state of things in Judea contributed much to turn the attention of the Jews to other matters. Dr. Lardner accounts for this in the following manner:

"Soon after Caligula's accession, the Jews at Alexandria suffered very much from the Egyptians in that city, and at length their oratories there were all destroyed. In the third year of Caligula, A.D. 39, Petronius was sent into Syria, with orders to set up the emperor's statue in the temple at Jerusalem. This order from Caligula was, to the Jews, a thunderstroke. The Jews must have been too much engaged after this to mind anything else, as may appear from the accounts which Philo and Josephus have given us of this affair. Josephus says, that 'Caligula ordered Perronius to go with an army to Jerusalem, to set up his statue in the temple there; enjoining him, if the Jews opposed it, to put to death all who made any resistance, and to make all the rest of-the nation slaves. Petronius, therefore, marched from Antioch into Judea, with three legions and a large body of auxiliaries raised in Syria. All were hereupon filled with consternation, the army being come as far as Ptolemais.'"

See Lardner's Works, vol. i. pp. 101, 102; Lond. Ed. 1829. Philo gives the same account of the consternation as Josephus. Philo de legat, ad Cal. pp. 1024,1025. He describes the Jews

"as abandoning their cities, villages, and open country, as going to Petronius in Phenicia, both men and women, the old, the young, the middle aged; as throwing themselves on the ground before Petronius with weeping and lamentation," etc.

The effect of this consternation in diverting their minds from the Christians can be easily conceived. The prospect that the images of the Roman emperor were about to be set up by violence in the temple, or that, in case of resistance, death or slavery was to be their portion; the advance of a large army to execute that purpose; all tended to throw the nation into alarm. By the providence of God, therefore, this event was permitted to occur to divert the attention of bloody-minded persecutors from a feeble and a bleeding church. Anxious for their own safety, the Jews would cease to persecute the Christians; and thus, by the conversion of the main instrument in persecution, and by the universal alarm for the welfare of the nation, the trembling and enfeebled church was permitted to obtain repose. Thus ended the first general persecution against Christians, and thus effectually did God show that he had power to guard and protect his chosen people. All Judea, etc. These three places included the land of Palestine. Mt 2:22. The formation of churches in Galilee is not expressly mentioned before this; but there is no improbability in supposing that Christians had travelled there, and had preached the gospel. Comp. Acts 11:19. The formation of churches in Samaria is expressly mentioned, Acts 8:5, etc. Were edified. Were built up, increased, and strengthened. See Rom 14:19, 15:2, 1Cor 8:1. And walking. Proceeding; living. The word is often used to denote Christian conduct, or manner of life, Col 1:10, Lk 1:6, 1Thes 4:1 1Jn 2:6. The idea is that of travellers who are going to any place, and who walk in the right path. Christians are thus travellers to another country, an heavenly. In the fear of the Lord. Fearing the Lord; with reverence for him and his commandments. This expression is often used to denote piety

in general, 2Chr 19:7, Job 28:28, Ps 19:9, 111:10, Prov 1:7, 9:10, 13:13. In the comfort of the Holy Ghost. In the consolations which the Holy Ghost produced, Jn 14:16,17, Rom 5:1-6. Were multiplied. Were increased. (b) "Then had the churches rest" Zech 9:1, Acts 8:1 (c) "throughout Judaea" Ps 94:13 (d) "were edified" Rom 14:19 (e) "walking in the fear" Jn 14:16,17 (f) "comfort of" Jn 14:16,17 (+) "Ghost" "Spirit" (g) "were multiplied" Zech 8:20,22

They made a good use of this lucid interval. Instead of growing more secure and wanton in the day of their prosperity, they abounded more in their duty, and made a good use of their tranquillity.

(1.) They were edified, were built up in their most holy faith; the more free and constant enjoyment they had of the means of knowledge and grace, the more they increased in knowledge and grace.

(2.) They walked in the fear of the Lord--were more exemplary themselves for a holy heavenly conversation. They so lived that all who conversed with them might say, Surely the fear of God reigns in those people.

(3.) They walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost--were not only faithful, but cheerful, in religion; they stuck to the ways of the Lord, and sang in those ways. The comfort of the Holy Ghost was their consolation, and that which they made their chief joy. They had recourse to the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and lived upon that, not only in days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity. The comforts of the earth, when they had the most free and full enjoyment of them, could not content them without the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Observe the connection of these two: when they walked in the fear of the Lord, then they walked in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Those are most likely to walk cheerfully that walk circumspectly.

God blessed it to them for their increase in number: They were multiplied. Sometimes the church multiplies the more for its being afflicted, as Israel in Egypt; yet if it were always so, the saints of the Most High would be worn out. At other times its rest contributes to its growth, as it enlarges the opportunity of ministers, and invites those in who at first are afraid of suffering. Or, then, when they walked in the fear of God and his comforts, they were multiplied. Thus those that will not be won by the word may be won by the conversation of professors.

Aeneas Healed

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the Lord.

The good influence this had upon many (Ac 9:35): All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord. We can scarcely think that every individual person in those countries took cognizance of the miracle, and was wrought upon by it; but many, the generality of the people in the town of Lydda and in the country of Saron, or Sharon, a fruitful plain or valley, of which it was foretold, Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, Isa 65:10. 1.

Dorcas Restored to Life

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which
by interpretation is called Dorcas [doe, *or* roe]: this woman was
full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

It is promised to those who consider the poor, not that they shall never be sick, but that the Lord will strengthen them upon the bed of languishing, at least with strength in their souls, and so will make all their bed in their sickness, will make it easy, Ps 41:1,3. They cannot hope that they shall never die (merciful men are taken away, and merciful women too, witness Tabitha), but they may hope that they shall find mercy of the Lord in that day, 2Ti 1:18. 5.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died:
whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.
38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples
had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men,
desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.
39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come,
they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows
stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments
which Dorcas made, while she was with them.
40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed;
and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she
opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

the one in imitation of his Master's way (Lu 8:54; and compare 2Ki 4:33); the other, in striking contrast with it. The kneeling became the lowly servant, but not the Lord Himself, of whom it is never once recorded that he knelt in the performance of a miracle.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he had
called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.
42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the
Lord.
43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one
Simon a tanner.

a trade regarded by the Jews as half unclean, and consequently disreputable, from the contact with dead animals and blood

which was connected with it. For this reason, even by other nations, it is usually carried on at some distance from towns; accordingly, Simon's house was "by the seaside" (Ac 10:6). Peter's lodging there shows him already to some extent above Jewish prejudice.

He tarried not in the house of Tabitha, though she was rich, lest he should seem to seek his own glory; but he took up his lodgings with one Simon a tanner, an ordinary tradesman, which is an instance of his condescension and humility: and hereby he has taught us not to mind high things, but to condescend to those of low estate, Ro 12:16. And, though Peter might seem to be buried in obscurity here in the house of a poor tanner by the sea-side, yet hence God fetched him to a noble piece of service, which is recorded in the next chapter; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted.

Acts-10

Peter and Cornelius

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a
centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,
2 *a* devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house,
which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God
always.

He was, according to the measure of the light he had, a religious man. It is a very good character that is given of him, Ac 10:2. He was no idolater, no worshipper of false gods or images, nor allowed himself in any of those immoralities to which the greater part of the Gentile world were given up, to punish them for their idolatry.

(1.) He was possessed with a principle of regard to the true and living God. He was a devout man and one that feared God. He believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and had

a reverence for his glory and authority, and a dread of offending him by sin; and, though he was a soldier, it was no diminution to the credit of his valour to tremble before God.

(2.) He kept up religion in his family. He feared God with all his house. He would not admit any idolaters under his roof, but took care that not himself only, but all his, should serve the Lord. Every good man will do what he can that those about him may be good too.

(3.) He was a very charitable man: He gave much alms to the people, the people of the Jews, notwithstanding the singularities of their religion. Though he was a Gentile, he was willing to contribute to the relief of one that was a real object of charity, without asking what religion he was of.

(4.) He was much in prayer: He prayed to God always. He kept up stated times for prayer, and was constant to them. Note, Wherever the fear of God rules in the heart, it will appear both in works of charity and of piety, and neither will excuse us from the other

3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day,
an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him,
Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is
it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are
come up for a memorial before God.

He is assured that God accepts him in walking according to the light he had (Ac 10:4): Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Observe, Prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the fast that God hath chosen is to draw out the soul to the hungry, Isa 58:6,7. It is not enough to pray that what we have may be sanctified to us, but we must give alms of such things as we have; and then, behold, all things are clean to us, Lu 11:41. And we must follow our alms with our prayers that God would graciously accept them, and that they may be blessed to those

to whom they are given. Cornelius prayed, and gave alms, not as the Pharisees, to be seen of men, but in sincerity, as unto God; and he is here told that they were come up for a memorial before God. They were upon record in heaven, in the book of remembrance that is written there for all that fear God, and shall be remembered to his advantage: "Thy prayers shall be answered, and thine alms recompensed." The sacrifices under the law are said to be for a memorial. See Le 2:9,16,5:12,6:15. And prayers and alms are our spiritual offerings, which God is pleased to take cognizance of, and have regard to.

Cornelius prays and gives alms in the fear of God, is religious himself and keeps up religion in his family, and all this so as to be accepted of God in it, and yet there is something further that he ought to do--he ought to embrace the Christian religion, now that God has established it among men. Not, He may do it if he pleases; it will be an improvement and entertainment to him. But, He must do it; it is indispensably necessary to his acceptance with God for the future, though he has been accepted in his services hitherto. He that believed the promise of the Messiah must now believe the performance of that promise. Now that God has given a further record concerning his Son than what had been given in the Old-Testament prophecies he requires that we receive this when it is brought to us; and now neither our prayers nor our alms can come up for a memorial before God unless we believe in Jesus Christ, for it is that further which we ought to do. This is his commandment, that we believe. Prayers and alms are accepted from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more; but, from those to whom it is preached that Jesus is Christ, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers, and alms, that they believe this, and rest upon him alone for acceptance. [He is assured that God accepts him in walking according to the light he had (Ac 10:4): Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Observe, Prayers and alms must go together. We must follow our prayers with alms; for the fast that God hath chosen is to draw out the soul to the hungry, Isa 58:6,7. It is not enough

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from those that believe that the Lord is God, and have not opportunity of knowing more; but, from those to whom it is preached that Jesus is Christ, it is necessary to the acceptance of their persons, prayers, and alms, that they believe this, and rest upon him alone for acceptance. [

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon,
whose surname is Peter:
6 he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side:
he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.
7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed,
he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of
them that waited on him continually;

Observe, When this centurion had to choose some of his soldiers to attend his person, and to be always about him, he pitched upon such of them as were devout; they shall be preferred and countenanced, to encourage others to be so. He went by David's rule (Ps 101:6), Mine eye shall be upon the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me. 3. What instructions he gave them (Ac 10:8): He declared all these things unto them, told them of the vision he had, and the orders given him to send for Peter, because Peter's coming was a thing in which they were concerned, for they had souls to save as well as he. Therefore he does not only tell them where to find Peter (which he might have thought it enough to do--the servant knows not what his Lord doeth), but he tells them on what errand he was to come, that they might importune him.

8 and when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent
them to Joppa.
9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew
nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray
about the sixth hour:
10 and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while
they made ready, he fell into a trance,
11 and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto
him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let
down to the earth:

12 wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and
wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.
13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.
14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing
that is common or unclean.

The reason he gives is, "For I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean; hitherto I have kept my integrity in this matter, and will still keep it." If God, by his grace, has preserved us from gross sin unto this day, we should use this as an argument with ourselves to abstain from all appearance of evil.

15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What
God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

No wonder then that Peter says it with so much pleasure, that his conscience could witness for him that he had never gratified his appetite with any forbidden food. 6. God, by a second voice from heaven, proclaimed the repeal of the law in this case (Ac 10:15): What God hath cleansed, that call thou not common. He that made the law might alter it when he pleased, and reduce the matter to its first state. God had, for reasons suited to the Old-Testament dispensation, restrained the Jews from eating such and such meats, to which, while that dispensation lasted, they were obliged in conscience to submit; but he has now, for reasons suited to the New-Testament dispensation, taken off that restraint, and set the matter at large--has cleansed that which was before polluted to us, and we ought to make use of, and stand fast in, the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and not call that common or unclean which God has now declared clean.

16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again
into heaven.

But at last the vessel was received up into heaven. Those who make this vessel to represent the church, including both Jews and Gentiles, as this did both clean and unclean creatures, make this very aptly to signify the admission of the believing Gentiles into the church, and into heaven too, into the Jerusalem above. Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to

all believers, and there we shall find, besides those that are sealed out of all the tribes of Israel, an innumerable company out of every nation (Re 7:9); but they are such as God has cleansed.

17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

What Christ did, Peter knew not just then (Joh 13:7): He doubted within himself what this vision which he had seen should mean. He had no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was a heavenly vision; all his doubt was concerning the meaning of it. Note, Christ reveals himself to his people by degrees, and not all at once; and leaves them to doubt awhile, to ruminate upon a thing, and debate it to and fro in their own minds, before he clears it up to them. 2. Yet he was made to know presently, for the men who were sent from Cornelius were just now come to the house, and were at the gate enquiring whether Peter lodged there; and by their errand it will appear what was the meaning of this vision.

18 and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*.
And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Note, It becomes Christians and ministers to be hospitable, and ready, according as their ability is, and there is occasion for it, to entertain strangers. Peter lodged them, though they were Gentiles, to show how readily he complied with the design of the vision in eating with Gentiles; for he immediately took them to eat with him. Though they were two of them servants, and the other a common soldier, yet Peter thought it not below him to take them into his house. Probably he did it that he might have some talk with them about Cornelius and his family; for the apostles, though they had instructions from the Spirit, yet made use of other information, as they had occasion for it.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And
Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen
and near friends.
25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down
at his feet, and worshipped *him*.

Here is the first interview between Peter and Cornelius, in which we have,

1 The profound and indeed undue respect and honour which Cornelius paid to Peter (Ac 10:25): He met him as he was coming in, and instead of taking him in his arms, and embracing him as a friend, which would have been very acceptable to Peter, he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him; some think, as a prince and a great man, according to the usage of the eastern countries; others think, as an incarnate deity, or as if he took him to be the Messiah himself. His worshipping a man was indeed culpable; but, considering his present ignorance, it was excusable, nay, and it was an evidence of something in him that was very commendable--and that was a great veneration for divine and heavenly things: no wonder if, till he was better informed, he took him to be the Messiah, and therefore worshipped him, whom he was ordered to send for by an angel from heaven. But the worshipping of his pretended successor, who is not only a man, but a sinful man, the man of sin himself, is altogether inexcusable, and such

an absurdity as would be incredible if we were not told before that all the world would worship the beast, Re 13:4.

2 Peter's modest and indeed just and pious refusal of this honour that was done him (Ac 10:26): He took him up into his arms, with his own hands (though time was when he little thought he should ever either receive so much respect from or show so much affection to an uncircumcised Gentile), saying, "Stand up, I myself also am a man, and therefore not to be worshipped thus." The good angels of the churches, like the good angels of heaven, cannot bear to have the least of that honour shown to them which is due to God only. See thou do it not, saith the angel to John (Re 19:10,22:9), and in like manner the apostle to Cornelius. How careful was Paul that no man should think of him above what he saw in him! 2Co 12:6. Christ's faithful servants could better bear to be vilified than to be deified. Peter did not entertain a surmise that his great respect for him, though excessive, might contribute to the success of his preaching, and therefore if he will be deceived let him be deceived; no, let him know that Peter is a man, that the treasure is in earthen vessels, that he may value the treasure for its own sake.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

Peter declares the direction God gave to him to come to those Gentiles, Ac 10:28,29. They knew it had never been allowed by the Jews, but always looked upon as an unlawful thing, athemiton--an abomination, for a man that is a Jew, a native

Jew as I am, to keep company or come unto one of another nation, a stranger, an uncircumcised Gentile. It was not made so by the law of God, but by the decree of their wise men, which they looked upon to be no less binding. They did not forbid them to converse or traffic with Gentiles in the street or shop, or upon the exchange, but to eat with them. Even in Joseph's time, the Egyptians and Hebrews could not eat together, Ge 43:32. The three children would not defile themselves with the king's meat, Da 1:8. They might not come into the house of a Gentile, for they looked upon it to be ceremonially polluted. Thus scornfully did the Jews look upon the Gentiles, who were not behindhand with them in contempt, as appears by many passages in the Latin poets. "But now," saith Peter, "God hath shown me, by a vision, that I should not call any man common or unclean, nor refuse to converse with any man for the sake of his country." Peter, who had taught his new converts to save themselves from the untoward generation of wicked men (Ac 2:40), is now himself taught to join himself with the towardly generation of devout Gentiles. Ceremonial characters were abolished, that more regard might be had to moral ones. Peter thought it necessary to let them know how he came to change his mind in this matter, and that it was by a divine revelation, lest he should be upbraided with it as having used lightness. God having thus taken down the partition-wall,

(1.) He assures them of his readiness to do them all the good offices he could; that, when he kept at a distance, it was not out of any personal disgust to them, but only because he wanted leave from heaven, and, having now received permission, he was at their service: "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for, ready to preach the same gospel to you that I have preached to the Jews." The disciples of Christ could not but have some notion of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, but they imagined it must be only to those Gentiles that were first proselyted to the Jewish religion, which mistake Peter acknowledges was not rectified.

(2.) He enquires wherein he might be serviceable to them: "I ask, therefore, for what intent you have sent for me? What do you expect from me, or what business have you with me?" Note, Those that desire the help of God's ministers ought to look well to it that they propose right ends to themselves in it, and do it with a good intention.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this
hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and,
behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,
31 and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had
in remembrance in the sight of God.
32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname
is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the
sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.
33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done
that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present
before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of
God.

Peter's Address in Cornelius' House

34 Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that
God is no respecter of persons:
35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and
worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.
36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel,
preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)
37 that word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout
all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which
John preached;
38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and
with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that
were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.
39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land
of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a
tree:
40 him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly;

41 not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even*
to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.
42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify
that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick
and dead.
43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his
name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission
of sins.

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Ghost

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all
them which heard the word.
45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished,
as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also
was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.
46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.
Then answered Peter,
47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be
baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we
?
48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.
Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts-11

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the
Gentiles had also received the word of God.

the apostles and the brethren there and in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God, that is, the gospel of Christ, which is not only a word of God, but the word of God; for it is the summary and centre of all divine revelation.

They received Christ; for his name is called the Word of God, Re 19:13.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

Contended with him. Disputed, or reproved him; charged him with being in fault. This is one of the circumstances which show conclusively that the apostles and early Christians did not regard Peter as having any particular supremacy over the church, or as being in any peculiar sense the vicar of Christ upon earth.

They charged it upon him as a crime that he went in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them; and thereby they think he has stained, if not forfeited, the honour of his apostleship, and ought to come under the censure of the church: so far were they from looking upon him as infallible, or as the supreme head of the church that all were accountable to, and he to none.

The imperfect state of human nature strongly appears, when godly persons are displeased even to hear that the word of God has been received, because their own system has not been attended to. And we are too apt to despair of doing good to those who yet, when tried, prove very teachable. It is the bane and damage of the church, to shut out those from it, and from the benefit of the means of grace, who are not in every thing as we are.

3 saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

The Gentiles of Caesarea were the first uncircumcised persons admitted, the Samaritans being a circumcised people. The apostles and church generally seemed to understand that Jesus was the world's Savior, but thought that all who came to him must accept Judaism also and be circumcised before baptism. How deep-rooted their ideas were is shown by Peter's own case. It took (1) a vision, (2) the command of the Lord, (3) the call of Cornelius, and (4) the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, to remove his and his brethren's scruples about

baptizing the Gentiles. It is, therefore, no wonder that his course was called in question.

4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded
it by order unto them, saying,

Peter stated the whole affair. We should at all times bear with the infirmities of our brethren; and instead of taking offence, or answering with warmth, we should explain our motives, and show the nature of our proceedings.

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

13 and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

Note the import of these words of the angel to Cornelius:

(1) Notwithstanding his prayers, alms, devotion, and justice, he was not yet saved. Only the gospel could save him. God's mercy was shown in bringing him the gospel.

(2) This is the first instance named in Acts of a household baptism.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?

God had indicated his will; He had showed his intention to save the Gentiles; and the prejudices of Peter were all overcome. One of the best means of destroying prejudice and false opinions, is a powerful revival of religion. More erroneous doctrines and unholy feelings are overcome in such scenes, than in all the angry controversies, and bigoted and fierce contentions, that have ever taken place. If men wish to root error out of the church, they should strive by all means to promote everywhere revivals of pure and undefiled religion. The Holy Spirit more easily and effectually silences false doctrine, and destroys heresy, than all the denunciations of fierce theologians; all the alarms of professed zeal for truth; and all the anathemas Which professed orthodoxy and love for the purity of the church ever uttered from the icebergs on which such champions usually seek their repose and their home.

While men are very zealous for their own regulations, they should take care that they do not withstand God; and those who love the Lord will glorify him, when made sure that he has given repentance to life to any fellow-sinners. Repentance is God's gift; not only his free grace accepts it, but his mighty grace works it in us, grace takes away the heart of stone, and gives us a heart of flesh. The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit.

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The Church at Antioch

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution
that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, and
Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the
Jews only.

That Antioch becomes the Jerusalem of the Gentile Christians: That is, the chief place whither the Gentile converts resorted; as Jerusalem, before the dispersion by persecution, was resorted to by the Jews, and made the principal seat of their residence.

How the joyful tidings of the success of the gospel at Antioch, being heard and understood by the apostles that remained at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to confirm the new converts at Antioch in the Christian faith.

Learn thence, That the news of any sinner's, much more of many sinners, conversion unto God, by the preaching of the gospel, is matter of great delight and rejoicing to the ministers of Christ.

Antioch. The capital of the whole province of Syria, including Palestine, situated on the Orontes a short distance from the sea, at this time next after Rome and Alexandria of the cities of the world in greatness, commerce and wealth.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which,
when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians,
preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great
number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The effect and evidence of this was that they turned unto the Lord. They could not be said to turn from the service of idols, for they were Jews, worshippers of the true God only; but they turned from a confidence in the righteousness of the law, to rely only upon the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness which is by faith; they turned from a loose, careless, carnal way of living, to live a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life; they

turned from worshipping God in show and ceremony, to worship him in spirit and in truth. They turned to the Lord Jesus, and he became all in all with them. This was the work of conversion wrought upon them, and it must be wrought upon every one of us. It was the fruit of their faith. All that sincerely believe will turn to the Lord; for, whatever we profess or pretend, we do not really believe the gospel if we do not cordially embrace Christ offered to us in the gospel.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the
church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth
Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.
23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad,
and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would
cleave unto the Lord.

A purpose, is a resolution of the mind, a plan, or intention, Rom 8:28, Eph 1:11, 3:11, 2Ti 1:9, 3:10. It is a resolution of the mind in regard to future conduct; and the doctrine of Barnabas here was, undoubtedly, that it should be a regular, fixed, determined plan, or design, in their minds, that they would henceforward adhere to God. This plan must be formed by all Christians in the beginning of their Christian life, and without such a plan there can be no evidence of piety. We may also remark that such a plan is one of the heart. It is not simply of the understanding, but is of the entire mind, including the will and affections. It is the leading principle; the strongest affection; the guiding purpose of the will to adhere to God. And unless this is the prevalent, governing desire of the heart, there can be no evidence of conversion.

To cleave to the Lord. Note, Those that have turned to the Lord are concerned to cleave unto the Lord, not to fall off from following him, not to flag and tire in following him. To cleave to the Lord Jesus is to live a life of dependence upon him and devotedness to him: not only to hold him fast, but to hold fast by him, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

[2.] To cleave to him with purpose of heart, with an intelligent, firm, and deliberate resolution, founded upon good grounds, and fixed upon that foundation, Ps 108:1. It is to bind our souls with a bond to be the Lord's, and to say as Ruth, Entreat me not to leave him, or to return from following after him. A purpose, is a resolution of the mind, a plan, or intention, Rom 8:28, Eph 1:11, 3:11, 2Ti 1:9, 3:10. It is a resolution of the mind in regard to future conduct; and the doctrine of Barnabas here was, undoubtedly, that it should be a regular, fixed, determined plan, or design, in their minds, that they would henceforward adhere to God. This plan must be formed by all Christians in the beginning of their Christian life, and without such a plan there can be no evidence of piety. We may also remark that such a plan is one of the heart. It is not simply of the understanding, but is of the entire mind, including the will and affections. It is the leading principle; the strongest affection; the guiding purpose of the will to adhere to God. And unless this is the prevalent, governing desire of the heart, there can be no evidence of conversion.

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24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

For he was a good man. This is given as a reason why he was so eminently successful. It is not said that he was a man of distinguished talents or learning; that he was a splendid or an

imposing preacher; but simply that he was a pious, humble man of God. He was honest, and devoted to his master's work. We should not undervalue talent, eloquence, or learning in the ministry; but we may remark, that humble piety will often do more in the conversion of souls than the most splendid talents. No endowments can be a substitute for this. The real power of a minister is concentrated in this; and without this his ministry will be barrenness and a curse. There is nothing on this earth so mighty as goodness. If a man wished to make-the most of his powers, the true secret would be found in employing them for a good object, and suffering them to be wholly under the direction of benevolence. John Howard's purpose to do good has made a more permanent impression on the interests of the world than the mad ambition of Alexander or Caesar. Perhaps the expression, "he was a good man," means that he was a man of a kind, amiable, and sweet disposition.

Full of the Holy Ghost. Was entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He was eminently a pious man. This is the second qualification here mentioned of a good minister. He was not merely exemplary for mildness and kindness of temper, but he was eminently a man of God. He was filled with the influences of the sacred Spirit, producing zeal, love, peace, joy, etc. See Gal 5:22,23. Comp. Acts 2:4.

And of faith. Confidence in the truth and promises of God. This is the third qualification mentioned; and this was another cause of his success. He confided in God. He trusted to his promises. He depended not on his own strength, but on the strength of the arm of God. With these qualifications he engaged in his work, and he was successful. These qualifications should be sought by the ministry of the gospel. Others should not indeed be neglected, but a man's ministry will usually be successful only as he seeks to possess those endowments which distinguished Barnabas--a kind, tender, benevolent heart; devoted piety; the fulness of the Spirit's influence; and strong, unwavering confidence in the promises and power of God.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

Barnabas went to fetch Saul, to join with him in the work of the gospel at Antioch. The last news we heard of him was that, when his life was sought at Jerusalem, he was sent away to Tarsus, the city where he was born, and, it should seem, he continued there ever since, doing good, no doubt. But now Barnabas takes a journey to Tarsus on purpose to see what had become of him, to tell him what a door of opportunity was opened at Antioch, and to desire him to come and spend some time with him there, Ac 11:25,26. And here also it appears that Barnabas was a good sort of a man in two things--

(1.) That he would take so much pains to bring an active useful man out of obscurity. It was he that introduced Saul to the disciples at Jerusalem, when they were shy of him; and it was he that brought him out of the corner into which he was driven, into a more public station. It is a very good work to fetch a candle from under a bushel, and to set it in a candlestick.

(2.) That he would bring in Saul at Antioch, who, being a chief speaker (Ac 14:12), and probably a more popular preacher, would be likely to eclipse him there, by outshining him; but Barnabas is very willing to be eclipsed when it is for the public service. If God by his grace inclines us to do what good we can, according to the ability we have, we ought to rejoice if others that have also larger capacities have larger opportunities, and do more good than we can do. Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, though it might be the lessening of himself, to teach us to seek the things of Christ more than our own things.

26 and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Thus those who before their conversion had been distinguished by the names of Jews and Gentiles might after their conversion be called by one and the same name, which would help them to forget their former dividing names, and prevent their bringing their former marks of distinction, and with them the

seeds of contention, into the church. Let not one say, "I was a Jew;" nor the other, "I was a Gentile;" when both the one and the other must now say, "I am a Christian." [3.]

They took their denomination not from the name of his person, Jesus, but of his office, Christ-anointed, so putting their creed into their names, that Jesus is the Christ; and they were willing all the world should know that this is the truth they will live and die by.

Thus they now owned their dependence upon Christ, and their receivings from him; not only that they believed in him who is the anointed, but that through him they themselves had the anointing, 1Jo 2:20,27. And God is said to have anointed us in Christ, 2Co 1:21.

Thus they laid upon themselves, and all that should ever profess that name, a strong and lasting obligation to submit to the laws of Christ, to follow the example of Christ, and to devote themselves entirely to the honour of Christ--to be to him for a name and a praise. Are we Christians? Then we ought to think, and speak, and act, in every thing as becomes Christians, and to do nothing to the reproach of that worthy name by which we are called; that that may not be said to us which Alexander said to a soldier of his own name that was noted for a coward, Aut nomen, aut mores muta--Either change thy name or mend thy manners. And as we must look upon ourselves as Christians, and carry ourselves accordingly, so we must look upon others as Christians, and carry ourselves towards them accordingly. A Christian, though not in every thing of our mind, should be loved and respected for his sake whose name he bears, because he belongs to Christ. [6.] Thus the scripture was fulfilled, for so it was written (Isa 62:2) concerning the gospel-church, Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. And it is said to the corrupt and degenerate assembly or synagogues, of the Jews, The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name, Isa 65:15.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.
29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:

The good use they made of this prediction. When they were told of a famine at hand, they did not do as the Egyptians, hoard up corn for themselves; but, as became Christians, laid by for charity to relieve others, which is the best preparative for our own sufferings and want. It is promised to those that consider the poor that God will preserve them, and keep them alive, and they shall be blessed upon the earth, Ps 41:1,2. And those who show mercy, and give to the poor, shall not be ashamed in the evil time, but in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, Ps 37:19,21. The best provision we can lay up against a dear time is to lay up an interest in these promises, by doing good, and communicating, Lu 12:33. Many give it as a reason why they should be sparing, but the scripture gives it as a reason why we should be liberal, to seven, and also to eight, because we know not what evil shall be upon the earth, Ec 11:2. Observe,

Determined to send relief. This arose not merely from their general sense of their obligation to aid the poor, but they felt themselves particularly bound to aid their Jewish brethren. The obligation to aid the temporal wants of those from whom they had received so important spiritual mercies, is repeatedly enforced in the New Testament. Comp. Rom 15:25-27, 1Cor 16:1,2, 2Cor 9:1,2, Gal 2:10.

30 which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts-12

James Killed and Peter Imprisoned

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands
to vex certain of the church.

Ever since the conversion of Paul, we have heard no more of the agency of the priests in persecuting the saints at Jerusalem; perhaps that wonderful change wrought upon him, and the disappointment it gave to their design upon the Christians at Damascus, had somewhat mollified them, and brought them under the check of Gamaliel's advice--to let those men alone, and see what would be the issue; but here the storm arises from another point. The civil power, not now, as usual (for aught that appears) stirred up by the ecclesiastics, acts by itself in the persecution. But Herod, though originally of an Edomite family, yet seems to have been a proselyte to the Jewish religion; for Josephus says he was zealous for the Mosaic rites, a bigot for the ceremonies. He was not only (as Herod Antipas was) tetrarch of Galilee, but had also the government of Judea committed to him by Claudius the emperor, and resided most at Jerusalem, where he was at this time.

This Herod was a grandson of that Herod by whom the infants of Bethlehem were slaughtered [#Mt 2:16|], and a nephew of "Herod the Tetrarch," by whom John the Immerser was beheaded [#Mt 14:10|]. He grew up in Rome, where he wasted what fortune he had inherited in princely extravagance; but while doing so he acquired an intimacy with Caius Caesar, afterward the famous Caligula of history. When the latter ascended the throne, at the death of Tiberius, he elevated his friend Agrippa, as this Herod was most usually called, to a kingdom, which was subsequently enlarged by Claudius until it embraced all the territory ruled by his grandfather Herod the Great. He was now in the zenith of his power, and living in the utmost magnificence.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

He was one of the twelve who were commissioned to disciple all nations; and to take him off now, before he had removed from Jerusalem, was like Cain's killing Abel when the world was to be peopled, and one man was then more than many at another time. To kill an apostle now was killing he knew not how many.he was one of those whom Christ called Boanerges--Sons of thunder; and perhaps by his powerful awakening preaching he had provoked Herod, or those about him, as John Baptist did the other Herod, and that was the occasion of his coming into this trouble. He was one of those sons of Zebedee whom Christ told that they should drink of the cup that he was to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was to be baptized with, Mt 20:23.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

He killed james Violently, his cause not being heard at all.He was ambitious, vain, and fawning; he sought, as his great principle, popularity; and he was willing to sacrifice, like many others, truth and justice to obtain this end. But there was also a particular reason for this in his case. He held his appointment under the Roman emperor. This foreign rule was always unpopular among the Jews. In order, therefore, to secure a peaceful reign, and to prevent insurrection and tumult, it was necessary for him to court their favour; to indulge their wishes, and to fall in with their prejudices. Alas! how many monarchs and rulers there have been, who were governed by no better principle, and whose sole aim has been to secure popularity, even at the expense of law, and truth and justice. That this was the character of Herod, is attested by Josephus, Ant., b. xix., chap. 8, 3:

"This king (Herod Agrippa) was by nature very beneficent, and liberal in his gifts, and very ambitious to please the people with such large donations; and he made himself very illustrious by the many expensive presents he made them. He took delight in giving, and rejoiced in living with good reputation."

He did this because he saw it pleased the Jews. Observe, The Jews made themselves guilty of the blood of James by showing themselves well pleased with it afterwards, though they had not excited Herod to it. There are accessaries ex post facto--after the fact; and those will be reckoned with as persecutors who take pleasure in others' persecuting, who delight to see good men ill used, and cry, Aha, so would we have it, or at least secretly approve of it. For bloody persecutors, when they perceive themselves applauded for that which every one ought to cry shame upon them for, are encouraged to go on, and have their hands strengthened and their hearts hardened, and the checks of their own consciences smothered; nay, it is as strong a temptation to them to do the like as it was here to Herod, because he saw it pleased the Jews.

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

To four quaternions of soldiers. A quaternion was a company of four; consequently the whole number employed here was sixteen. The Romans divided the night into four watches, so that the guards could be relieved; those who were on guard occupying three hours, and being then relieved. Of the four who were on guard, two were with Peter in the prison, Acts 12:6, and two kept watch before the door of the prison. The utmost precaution was thus taken that he should not escape; and Herod thus gave the most ample assurance to the Jews of his intention to secure Peter, and to bring him to trial.

Peter was bound to the two. His left hand was chained to the right hand of one of the soldiers, and his right hand to the left hand of the other. This was a common mode of securing prisoners among the Romans. See abundant authorities for this quoted in Lardner's Credibility, part i. chap. x. 9, Lond. ed. 1829, vol. i. pp. 242, 243, etc.

Intending after Easter. There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply after the Passover, μετατοπασχα. The word Easter now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that; nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the times of the apostles. The word Easter is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from Eostre, the goddess of love, or the Venus of the North, in honour of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April. (Webster.) As this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service-books the term Easter is used frequently to translate the word Passover. In the translation by Wicliffe, the word paske, i.e., passover, is used. But Tindal and Coverdale used the word Easter, and hence it has very improperly crept into our translation. (Clark.) To bring him forth to the people. That is, evidently, to put him publicly to death to gratify them. The providence of God, in regard to Peter, is thus remarkable. Instead of his being put suddenly to death, as was James, he was reserved for future trial; and thus an abundant opportunity was given for the prayers of the church, and for his consequent release.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

But prayer was made. The church was apprized of his imprisonment and danger; and had no resource but to apply to God by prayer. In scenes of danger there is no other refuge; and the result shows that, even in most discouraging circumstances, God can hear prayer. Without ceasing. Intense, steady, ardent prayer.

It should seem that now when the affair came near to a crisis, and the very next day was fixed for the determining of it, they were more fervent in prayer than before; and it was a good sign that God intended to deliver Peter when he thus stirred up a spirit of prayer for his deliverance, for he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.They gathered together for prayer on this occasion; though this would made them obnoxious to the government if they were discovered, yet they know what an encouragement Christ gave to joint-prayer, Mt 18:19,20.

Peter Delivered from Prison

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

Lord! how soft and secure a pillow is a good conscience, even in the confines of death, and in the very jaws of danger! That notwithstanding Peter's imminent and impending danger, he sleeps very soundly, resigning up himself into the hands of Christ, and resolving, if he may no longer live Christ's servant, that he will die his sacrifice. I question whether Herod that imprisoned him slept half so soundly.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals.

And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out
of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews.
12 And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

"must have had a house of some pretensions to receive a large number; and, accordingly, we read that her brother Barnabas (Col 4:10) was a person of substance (Ac 4:37). She must also have been distinguished for faith and courage to allow such a meeting in the face of persecution" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.
14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.
15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

When it was now announced to them that the object of their prayers was granted, they deemed the messenger that announced it insane. Christians are often surprised even when their prayers are answered. They are overwhelmed and amazed at the success of their own petitions, and are slow to believe that the very thing for which they have sought could be granted. It shows, perhaps, with how little faith, after all, they pray; and how slow they are to believe that God can hear and answer prayer. In a revival of religion, in answer to prayer, Christians are often overwhelmed, and astonished when even their own petitions are granted, and when God manifests his own power in his own way and time. Prayer should be persevered in, and we should place ourselves in a waiting posture to catch the first indications that God has heard us with joy.

It is his angel. Any way of accounting for it rather than to admit the simple fact, or to ascertain the simple truth. All this was produced by the little hope which they had of his release, and their earnest desire that it should be so. It was just such a state of mind as is indicated when we say, "the news is too good to be believed." The expression it is his angel may mean, that they supposed the tutelary guardian, or angel appointed to attend Peter, had come to announce something respecting him, and that he had assumed the voice and form of Peter, in order to render them certain that he came from him. This notion arose from the common belief of the Jews, that each individual had assigned to him, at birth, a celestial spirit, whose office it was to guard and defend him through life. Mt 18:10. That the Jews entertained this opinion is clear from their writings. (See Kuin﹟el.) Lightfoot thinks that they who were assembled supposed that this angel had assumed the voice and manner of Peter, in order to intimate to them that he was about to die, and to excite them to earnest prayer that he might die with constancy and firmness. Whatever their opinions were, however, it proves nothing on these points. There is no evidence that they were inspired in these opinions; nor are their notions countenanced by the Scriptures. They were the mere common traditions of the Jews, and prove nothing in regard to the truth of the opinion one way or the other.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door,*
and saw him, they were astonished.
17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their
peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out
of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James,
and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another
place.

But he beckoning, etc. To prevent the noise, and tumult, and transport which was likely to be produced. His wish was, not that there should be clamorous joy, but that they should listen in silence to what God had done. It was sufficient to awe the soul, and produce deep, grateful feeling. A noise might excite the neighbouring Jews, and produce danger. But religion is

calm and peaceful; and its great scenes and surprising deliverances are rather fitted to awe the soul, to produce calm, sober, and grateful contemplation, than the noise of rejoicing, and the shoutings of exultation. The consciousness of the presence of God, and of his mighty power, does not produce rapturous disorder and tumult, but holy, solemn, calm, grateful emotion. How Peter gives God, and not the angel, the glory of his deliverance,

He could not think himself safe whilst Herod was so near, no more than a lamb could be safe near the lion's den. He knew he should be hunted for, therefore escapes for his life. And besides his own danger, he was not willing to endanger his friends, who did now entertain and harbour him: but both for his own and their preservation, he departs to another place.

Learn, That a prudential use of all lawful means for our own and others preservation, in subserviency to the divine providence, is our duty, our wisdom and interest, both as men and Christians.

Not the apostle, but the brother of the Lord, so conspicuous after this as the pastor of the church at Jerusalem. Peter's message seems to recognize the fact that he was a leading man. Perhaps the apostles had retired from the city for fear of Herod. For notices of James, see Ac 15:13 21:18 Ga 1:19 2:9,12.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and *there* abode.

The guard was undoubtedly put to death; and thus Herod used all his power to create the impression that Peter had escaped by their negligence; and this would undoubtedly be believed by the Jews. See Mt 28:15. He might himself perhaps be convinced, however, that the escape was by miracle, and be afraid to attempt any further persecutions; or the affairs of his

government might have called off his attention to other things; and thus, as in the case of the "persecution that arose about Stephen," the political changes and dangers might divert the attention from putting Christians to death. Acts 9:31. Thus by the Providence of God this persecution, that had been commenced, not by popular tumult, but by royal authority and power, and that was aimed at the very pillars of the church, ceased. The prayers of the church prevailed; and the monarch was overcome, disappointed, humbled, and by Divine judgment soon put to death. It is the voice of a god, etc. It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives a similar account of their feelings and conduct.

But why were not the people punished as well as the prince, seeing they were equally guilty of robbing God of his honour. True, Herod was the receiver, but they were the thieves: why then fell not the punishment on the whole multitude?

Ans. Because more discretion is expected from a prince, than from the rabble: Besides, what in them was but a blasphemous compliment, was by his acceptance of it made a reality, and was usurped by him, and assumed to him as due to his deserts. From the whole note,

1. That flattery, either given or taken, is a very dangerous sin, a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin. If we flatter men, God will not flatter us, but deal plainly, yet severely, with us. One of the ancients said, he was afaid of praise and commendation as much as of a crack of thunder. When men give much glory to men, it is very hard for men to give that glory back again to God. Herod was so pleased and tickled with the glory which the people gave him, that he could not part with it; but by keeping that, he lost his life.

Note, 2. That though God bears long with many sorts of sinners, yet not with sinners of this sort: "Immediately the

angel of the Lord smote him:" Agreeably to that of Job 32:22. "I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." The great God will admit of no corrivals; he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; he will be a swift witness against the flatterer, as well as against the false-swearer, Mal 3:5. He can destroy both flatterer and flattered with the twinkling of an eye, or with the turning of a hand; and those that are cried up as gods today, are as dung tomorrow. It is the voice of a god, etc. It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives a similar account of their feelings and conduct.

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The Death of Herod

20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*.

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

It is the voice of a god, etc. It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives a similar account of their feelings and conduct.

But why were not the people punished as well as the prince, seeing they were equally guilty of robbing God of his honour. True, Herod was the receiver, but they were the thieves: why then fell not the punishment on the whole multitude?

Ans. Because more discretion is expected from a prince, than from the rabble: Besides, what in them was but a blasphemous compliment, was by his acceptance of it made a reality, and was usurped by him, and assumed to him as due to his deserts.

From the whole note,

1. That flattery, either given or taken, is a very dangerous sin, a God-provoking, and a wrath-procuring sin. If we flatter men, God will not flatter us, but deal plainly, yet severely, with us. One of the ancients said, he was afaid of praise and

commendation as much as of a crack of thunder. When men give much glory to men, it is very hard for men to give that glory back again to God. Herod was so pleased and tickled with the glory which the people gave him, that he could not part with it; but by keeping that, he lost his life.

Note, 2. That though God bears long with many sorts of sinners, yet not with sinners of this sort: "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him:" Agreeably to that of Job 32:22. "I know not how to give flattering titles, for in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." The great God will admit of no corrivals; he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; he will be a swift witness against the flatterer, as well as against the false-swearer, Mal 3:5. He can destroy both flatterer and flattered with the twinkling of an eye, or with the turning of a hand; and those that are cried up as gods today, are as dung tomorrow.

22 And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is* the voice of a god, and not of a man.

(1.) He made a speech to the men of Tyre and Sidon, a fine oration, in which, probably, after he had aggravated their fault, and commended their submission, he concluded with an assurance that he would pass by their offence and receive them into his favour again--proud enough that he had it in his power whom he would to keep alive, as well as whom he would to slay; and probably he kept them in suspense as to what their doom should be, till he made this oration to them, that the act of grace might come to them with the more pleasing surprise.

(2.) The people applauded him, the people that had a dependence upon him, and had benefit by his favour, they gave a shout; and this was what they shouted, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man, Ac 12:22. God is great and good, and they thought such was Herod's greatness in his apparel and throne, and such his goodness in forgiving them, that he was worthy to be called no less than a god; and perhaps his speech was

delivered with such an air of majesty, and a mixture of clemency with it, as affected the auditors thus. Or, it may be, it was not from any real impression made upon their minds, or any high or good thoughts they had indeed conceived of him; but, how meanly soever they thought of him, they were resolved thus to curry favour with him, and strengthen the new-made peace between him and them. Thus great men are made an easy prey to flatterers if they lend an ear to them, and encourage them. Grotius here observes that, though magistrates are called gods (Ps 82:1), yet kings or monarchs, that is, single persons, are not, lest countenance should thereby be given to the Gentiles, who gave divine honours to their kings alive and dead, as here; but they are a college of senators, or a bench of judges, that are called gods-

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts-13

Barnabas and Saul Begin Their First Missionary Journey

1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

This was a great work, and not to be undertaken without a special call from God; therefore says the Holy Ghost, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them:" Which words prove both the Deity and personality of the Holy Ghost: He who calls ministers to the office, and unto

whose service they are separated, is both God and a distinct person in the Godhead; but this the Holy Ghost did: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul."

Note lastly, Though the office of the ministry be an honourable office, yet withal it is laborious work. Separate them for the work whereunto I have called them. It is a work that requires attendance, and zealous application, both in season and out of season. Praying, preaching, administering sacraments; guiding and governing the flock by private admonition, and public censure: These are weighty works, found so now by those that perform them faithfully, and will be found so at the great day, by the slothful and negligent.

How can that be esteemed by any slight and inconsiderable work, unto the faithful performance thereof so great a reward is promised, and to the omission whereof so dreadful a woe is denounced?

If Satan destroy men's souls, he shall answer for them as a murderer only, not as an officer intrusted with the care of them; but if the watchmen doth not warn, if the shepherd doth not feet, if the prophet doth not only for the souls that have miscarried, but for an office neglected, for a talent hidden, and for a stewardship unfaithfully administered.

Lord! how unable shall we be at the making up our accounts, to endure the hideous outcries of distressed souls, saying, Parentes sensimus parricidas: Our guides have misled us, our watchmen have betrayed us, our stewards have defrauded us, and the following of their evil example has undone us.

Paul and Barnabas should go to the heathen, Ga 2:7-9. Barnabas, it is likely, knew himself designed for this service as well as Paul. Yet they would not thrust themselves into this harvest, though it appeared plenteous, till they received their orders from the Lord of the harvest: Thrust in thy sickle for the harvest is ripe, Re 14:15.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

This enterprise was a new one. The gospel had been preached to the Jews, to Cornelius, and to the Gentiles at Antioch. But there had been no solemn, and public, and concerted plan of sending it to the Gentiles, or of appointing a mission to the heathen. It was a new event, and was full of danger and hardships. The primitive church felt the need of Divine direction and aid in the great work. Two missionaries were to be sent forth amongst strangers, to be exposed to perils by sea and land; and the commencement of the enterprise demanded prayer. The church humbled itself; and this primitive missionary society sought, as all others should do, the Divine blessing, to attend the labours of those employed in this work. The result showed that the prayer was heard.

Observe, 1. They prayed for them. When good men are going forth about good work, they ought to be solemnly and particularly prayed for, especially by their brethren that are their fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers.

2. They joined fasting with their prayers, as they did in their other ministrations, Ac 13:3. Christ has taught us this by his abstaining from sleep (a night-fast, if I may so call it) the night before he sent forth his apostles, that he might spend it in prayer.

3. They laid their hands on them. Hereby,

(1.) They gave them their manumission, dismission, or discharge from the present service they were engaged in, in the church of Antioch, acknowledging that they went off not only fairly and with consent, but honourably and with a good report.

(2.) They implored a blessing upon them in their present undertaking, begged that God would be with them, and give them success; and, in order to this, that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost in their work. This very thing is explained Ac 14:26, where it is said, concerning Paul and Barnabas, that

from Antioch they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. As it was an instance of the humility of Barnabas and Saul that they submitted to the imposition of the hands of those that were their equals, or rather their inferiors; so it was of the good disposition of the other teachers that they did not envy Barnabas and Saul the honour to which they were preferred, but cheerfully committed it to them, with hearty prayers for them; and they sent them away with all expedition, out of a concern for those countries where they were to break up fallow ground.

The Apostles Preach in Cyprus

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

The apostles Barnabas and Saul having received their commission, set forth for their work to which they were designed; and their first journey was from Antioch to Cyprus, an island of the Gentiles, lewd and wicked; where Venus was worshipped: And much filthiness was committed by them in that abominable Pagan worship. Yet the free grace fo God cast a look of pity and love upon sinful Cyprus: The Holy Ghost directs these apostles thither, to reclaim them from sin, and reduce them to the obedience of the gospel.

Christ was the minister of circumcision, who was himself "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and accordingly sent his apostles out first, to feed and gather those poor scattered sheep; these were accounted the children of the house, and the Gentiles reckoned as dogs; but when those wanton and full-fed children began to waste their meat, and cast it under their table, then did the Gentile dogs gather up their leavings; Acts 13:46. "It was necessary," both by virtue of Christ's command and example also, "that the word of God should be first spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to *their* minister.

"Four reasons may have induced them to turn in first to this island:

(1) Its nearness to the mainland;

(2) It was the native place of Barnabas,

(3) It could not be unnatural to suppose that the truth would be welcomed in Cyprus when brought by Barnabas and his kinsman Mark, to their own connections or friends. The Jews were numerous in Salamis. By sailing to that city, they were following the track of the synagogues; and though their mission was chiefly to the Gentiles, their surest course for reaching them was through the proselytes and Hellenizing Jews.

(4) Some of the Cypriotes were already Christians. Indeed, no one place out of Palestine, except Antioch, had been so honorably associated with the work of successful evangelization" [HOWSON].

the Grecian capital of the island, on the eastern side, and not many hours' sail from Seleucia. At this busy mercantile port immense numbers of Jews were settled, which accounts for what is here said, that they had more than one synagogue, in which Barnabas and Saul preached, while other cities had one only.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name *was* Barjesus:

nto Paphos. Paphos was a city at the western extremity of the island. It was the residence of the proconsul, and was distinguished for a splendid temple erected to Venus, who was worshipped throughout the island. Cyprus was fabled to be the place of the birth of this goddess. It had, besides Paphos and

Salamis, several towns of note--Citium, the birth-place of Zeno; Amathus, sacred to Venus, etc. Its present capital is Nicosia. Bar-jesus. The word Bar is Syriac, and means son. Jesus, or Joshua, was not an uncommon name among the Jews. The name was given from his father --son of Jesus, or Joshua; as Bar-jonas, son of Jonas.

7 which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Withstood them. Resisted them. He was sensible that if the influence of Saul and Barnabas should be extended over the proconsul, that he would be seen to be an impostor, and his power be at an end. His interest, therefore, led him to oppose the gospel, His own popularity was at stake; and being governed by this, he opposed the gospel of God. The love of popularity and power, the desire of retaining some political influence, is often a strong reason why men oppose the gospel.

9 Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, *thou* child of the devil, *thou* enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord *is* upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there
fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

The hand of the Lord is upon thee. God shall punish thee. By this sudden and miraculous punishment, he would be awed and humbled; and the proconsul and others would be convinced that he was an impostor, and that the gospel was true. His wickedness deserved such a punishment; and at the same time that due punishment was inflicted, it was designed that the gospel should be extended by this means. In all this there was the highest evidence that Paul was under the

inspiration of God. He was full of the Holy Ghost; he detected the secret feelings and desires of the heart of Elymas, and he inflicted on him a punishment that could have proceeded from none but God. That the apostles had the power of inflicting punishment, in many cases, is apparent from various places in the New Testament, 1Cor 5:5, 1Timm 1:20. The punishment inflicted on Elymas, also, would be highly emblematic of the darkness and perverseness of his conduct.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia

13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Perga in Pamphylia was a noted place, especially for a temple there erected to the goddess Diana, yet nothing at all is related of what Paul and Barnabas did there, only that thither they came (Ac 13:13), and thence they departed, Ac 13:14.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

usually so called, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, from which they had started, though it actually lies in Phrygia, and almost due north from Perga. It was a long journey, and as it lay almost entirely through rugged mountain passes, while "rivers burst out at the base of huge cliffs, or dash down wildly through narrow ravines," it must have been a perilous one. The whole region was, and to this day is, infested by robbers, as ancient history and modern travels abundantly attest; and there can be but little doubt that to this very journey Paul many years after alludes, when he speaks amidst his "journeyings often," of his "perils of rivers" (as the word is), and his "perils of robbers" (2Co 11:26). If this journey were taken in May—and earlier than that the passes would have been blocked up with snow—it would account for their not staying at Perga, whose hot streets are then deserted; "men, women, and children,

flocks, herds, camels, and asses, all ascending at the beginning of the hot season from the plains to the cool basin-like hollows on the mountains, moving in the same direction with our missionaries" [HOWSON] and it seems that why Paul afterwards peremptorily refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey, because he "had departed [or 'fallen off'] from them and had not gone with them to the work" (Ac 15:38), there can be no doubt that he had either wearied of it or been deterred by the prospect of the dangers which lay before him. (But see on Ac 15:37, &c.)

They Went into the synagogue. Though Paul and Barnabas were on a special mission to the Gentiles, yet they availed themselves of every opportunity to offer the gospel to the Jews first.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, *Ye* men *and* brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

In the Synagogue of the Jews (according to the pattern of which Christian congregations were instituted) the Scriptures were read first, then those who were learned were licensed by the rulers of the Synagogue to speak and expound. (h) Literally, "If there is any word in you": this is a kind of speech taken from the Hebrews, by which is meant that the gifts of God's grace are in us, as it were in treasure houses, and that they are not ours, but God's. In the same way David says, "Thou hast put a new song in my mouth"; Ps 40:3.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said,
Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted
the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt,
and with a high arm brought he them out of it.

Ye that fear God /others who fear God/. Probably proselytes of the gate, who had not yet been circumcised, but who had renounced idolatry, and were accustomed to worship with them in their synagogues.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.
19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

Seven nations. The Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, De 7:1; Josh 3:10, Neh 9:8.

20 And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.
21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.
22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.
23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to *his* promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

(1.) How welcome should the preaching of the gospel of Christ be to the Jews, and how should they embrace it, as well worthy of all acceptation, when it brought them the tidings,

[1.] Of a Saviour, to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, as the judges of old, who were therefore called saviours; but this a Saviour to do that for them which, it appears by the history, those could not do--to save them from their sins, their worst enemies.

[2.] A Saviour of God's raising up, that has his commission from heaven.

[3.] Raised up to be a Saviour unto Israel, to them in the first place: He was sent to bless them; so far was the gospel from designing the gathering of them.

[4.] Raised up of the seed of David, that ancient royal family, which the people of Israel gloried so much in, and which at this

time, to the great disgrace of the whole nation, was buried in obscurity. It ought to be a great satisfaction to them that God had raised up this horn of salvation for them in the house of his servant David, Lu 1:69.

[5.] Raised up according to his promise, the promise to David (Ps 132:11), the promise to the Old-Testament church in the latter times of it: I will raise unto David a righteous branch, Jer 23:5. This promise was it to which the twelve tribes hoped to come (Ac 26:7); why then should they entertain it so coldly, now that it was brought to them?

24 when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am?
I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

Learn thence, That the gospel is the doctrine or word of salvation sent by God unto a lost world. The gospel is a message of glad tidings; the glad tidings which the gospel brings, is salvation: and the way and manner how the gospel brings salvation, is threefold;

1. By way of patefaction and discovery; the gospel makes a discovery of salvation exclusively to any other way; no angel in heaven could have discovered it, if God had not first declared it in and by the gospel.

2. By way of tender and offer: Oh this joyful message of salvation is sent to every man's door! free grace falls upon its knees, and begs of every sinner to accept it.

3. By way of efficacy and power. The gospel brings with it a convincing and converting power, to put men into a state of

salvation; and hath also an establishing and confirming power, to preserve them in that estate.

Blessed be God, that to us, even to every one of us, is the word of this salvation sent. What monsters then are they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel? they are enemies to our salvation: The only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the word. It cometh by hearing.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

Which are read every sabbath day. In the synagogues. Though the Scriptures were read so constantly, yet they were ignorant of their true meaning. They were blinded by pride, and prejudice, and preconceived opinions. Men may often m this way read the Bible a good part of their lives, and, for want of attention, or of 1a humble mind, never understand it.

28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

And though they found, etc. They found no crime which deserved death. This is conclusively shown by the trial itself. After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The sanhedrim condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate this charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavoured to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition. And though they found, etc. They found no crime which deserved death. This is conclusively shown by the trial itself. After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The sanhedrim condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate this charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavoured to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took
him down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.
30 But God raised him from the dead:
31 and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from
Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.
32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise
which was made unto the fathers,
33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he
hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second
psalm, Thou art my Son,
this day have I begotten thee.
34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now*
no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise,
I will give you the sure mercies of David.
35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*,
Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will
of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw
corruption:
37 but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.
38 Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that
through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of
sins:

Therefore, they ought to entertain and embrace the gospel, and not to adhere to the law in opposition to it, because the gospel is perfective, not destructive, of the law. Note,

1 The great concern of sinners it to be justified, to be acquitted from guilt and accepted as righteous in God's sight.

2. Those who are truly justified are acquitted from all their guilt; for if any be left charged upon the sinner he is undone.

3. It was impossible for a sinner to be justified by the law of Moses. Not by his moral law, for we have all broken it, and are

transgressing it daily, so that instead of justifying us it condemns us. Not by his remedial law, for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, should satisfy God's offended justice, or pacify the sinner's wounded conscience. It was but a ritual and typical institution. See Heb 9:9,10:1,4.

4. By Jesus Christ we obtain a complete justification; for by him a complete atonement was made for sin. We are justified, not only by him as our Judge, but by him as our righteousness, the Lord our righteousness. 5. All that believe in Christ, that rely upon him and give up themselves to be ruled by him, are justified by him, and none but they. 6. What the law could not do for us, in that it was weak, that the gospel of Christ does; and therefore it was folly, out of a jealousy for the law of Moses and the honour of that institution, to conceive a jealousy of the gospel of Christ and the designs of that more perfect institution.

39 and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

In the prophets. In that part of the Scriptures called "the prophets." The Jews divided the Old Testament into three parts, of which "the book of the prophets" was one. Lk 24:44. The place where this is recorded is Hab 1:5. It is not taken from the Hebrew, but substantially from the Septuagint. The original design of the threatening was to announce the destruction that would come upon the nation by the Chaldeans. The original threatening was fulfilled. But it was as applicable to the Jews in the time of Paul as in the time of Habakkuk. The principle of the passage is, that if they held in contempt the doings of God, they would perish. The work which God was to do by means of the Chaldeans was so fearful, so unusual, and so remarkable, that they would not believe it in time to avoid the calamity. In the same way, that which God did in giving a Messiah so little in accordance with their expectation, the manner of the introduction of his kingdom by miracles, and the gift of his Spirit, was so much at variance with their

expectations, that they might see it, yet disbelieve it; they might have the fullest proof, and yet despise it; they might wonder, and be amazed and astonished, and unable to account for it, and yet refuse to believe it, and be destroyed.

Which ye shall in no wise believe. Which you will not believe. So remarkable, so unusual, so surpassing anything which had occurred. The original reference in Habakkuk is to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans--a thing which the Jews would not suppose could happen. The temple was so splendid; it had been built by the direction of God; it had been so long under his protection, that they would suppose that it could not be given into the hands of their enemies to be demolished. And even though it were predicted by a prophet of God, still they would not believe it. The same feelings the Jews would have respecting the temple and city in the time of Paul. Though it was foretold by the Messiah, yet they were so confident that it was protected by God, that they would not believe that it could possibly be destroyed. The same infatuation seems to have possessed them during the siege of the city by the Romans. Though a man, etc. Though it be plainly predicted. We may learn,

(1.) that men may see, and be amazed at the works of God, and yet be destroyed.

(2.) There may be a prejudice so obstinate that even a Divine revelation will not remove it.

(3.) The fancied security of sinners will not save them.

(4.) There are men who will not believe in the possibility of their being lost, though it be declared by the prophets, by apostles, by the Saviour, and by God. They will still remain in fancied security, and suffer nothing to alarm or rouse them. But

(5.) the fancied security of the Jews furnished no safety against the Babylonians or the Romans. Nor will the indifference and unconcern of sinners furnish any security against the dreadful wrath of God. Yet there are multitudes who live amidst the displays of God's power and mercy in the redemption of sinners; who witness the effects of his goodness and truth in revivals of religion, who live to despise it all; who are amazed and confounded by it; and who shall yet perish.

Though it should be in the most solemn manner declared unto them, yet they would in no wise believe it, Isa 53:1, Who hath believed our report? Though it was of God's working, to whom nothing is impossible, and of his declaring, who cannot lie, yet they would not give credit to it. Those that had the honour and advantage to have this work wrought in their days had not the grace to believe it; or, of their destruction.

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish:
for I work a work in your days,
a work which ye shall in no wise
believe, though a man declare it unto
you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the
Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them
the next sabbath.

The Old Version gives a different sense: "When the Jews were gone out", they were asked to speak again the next Sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews
and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who,
speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of
God.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together
to hear the word of God.

There was a cheerful attendance upon the preaching of the gospel the next sabbath day (Ac 13:44): Almost the whole city (the generality of whom were Gentiles) came together to hear the word of God. 1. It is probable that Paul and Barnabas were not idle in the week-days, but took all opportunities in the week

between (as some think the Gentiles desired) to bring them acquainted with Christ, and to raise their expectations from him. They did a great deal of service to the gospel in private discourse and conversation, as well as in their public sermons. Wisdom cried in the chief places of concourse, and the opening of the gates, as well as in the synagogues, Pr 1:20,21. 2.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

When men attached to sect and party, in religion or politics, have no good arguments to employ, they attempt to overwhelm their adversaries by bitter and reproachful words. Men in the heat of strife, and in professed zeal for peculiar doctrines, and for sect and party, more frequently utter blasphemy than they are aware. Precious and pure doctrines are often thus vilified, because we do not believe them; and the heart of the Saviour is pierced anew, and his cause bleeds by the wrath and wickedness of his professed friends. Comp. Acts 18:6.

Learn thence, That the gospel is the doctrine or word of salvation sent by God unto a lost world. The gospel is a message of glad tidings; the glad tidings which the gospel brings, is salvation: and the way and manner how the gospel brings salvation, is threefold;

1. By way of patefaction and discovery; the gospel makes a discovery of salvation exclusively to any other way; no angel in heaven could have discovered it, if God had not first declared it in and by the gospel.

2. By way of tender and offer: Oh this joyful message of salvation is sent to every man's door! free grace falls upon its knees, and begs of every sinner to accept it.

3. By way of efficacy and power. The gospel brings with it a convincing and converting power, to put men into a state of

salvation; and hath also an establishing and confirming power, to preserve them in that estate.

Blessed be God, that to us, even to every one of us, is the word of this salvation sent. What monsters then are they who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel? they are enemies to our salvation: The only way to heaven is by Christ, the only way to Christ is by faith, and the only way to faith is by the word. It cometh by hearing.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

And judge yourselves. By your conduct, by your rejecting it, you declare this. The word judge here does not mean they expressed such an opinion, or that they regarded themselves as unworthy of eternal life; for they thought just the reverse; but that by their conduct they CONDEMNED themselves. By such conduct they did in fact pass sentence on themselves, and show that they were unworthy of eternal life, and of having the offer any farther made to them. Sinners by their conduct do in fact condemn themselves, and show that they are not only unfit to be saved, but that they have advanced so far in wickedness that there is no hope of their salvation, and no propriety in offering them, any farther, eternal life. Mt 7:6.

Unworthy, etc. Unfit to be saved. They had deliberately and solemnly rejected the gospel, and thus shown that they were not fitted to enter into everlasting life. When men, even but once, deliberately and solemnly reject the offers of God's mercy, it greatly endangers their salvation. The probability is, that they then put the cup of salvation for ever away from themselves. The gospel produces an effect wherever it is preached. And when sinners are hardened, and spurn the gospel, it may often be the duty of ministers to turn their efforts towards others, where they may have more prospect of success. A man will not long labour on a rocky, barren, sterile soil, when

there is near him a rich and fertile valley that will abundantly reward the pains of cultivation.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, *saying*,
I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles,
that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Paul, as usual, appeals to the Scriptures in order to justify his course. He here appeals to the Old Testament, rather than to the command of the Saviour, because the Jews recognized the authority of their own Scriptures, while they would have turned in scorn from the command of Jesus of Nazareth.

"For I have set thee, not only raised thee up, but established thee, to be a light of the Gentiles, not only a shining light for a time, but a standing light, set thee for a light, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." Note,

(1.) Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation, is himself our righteousness, and life, and strength.

(2.) Wherever Christ is designed to be salvation, he is set up to be a light; he enlightens the understanding, and so saves the soul.

(3.) He is, and is to be, light and salvation to the Gentiles, to the ends of the earth. Those of every nation shall be welcome to him, some of every nation have heard of him (Ro 10:18), and all nations shall at length become his kingdom. This prophecy has had its accomplishment in part in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in this island of ours, which lies, as it were, in the ends of the earth, a corner of the world, and shall be accomplished more and more when the time comes for the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles.

We read not any thing of their working miracles here, to confirm their doctrine, and to convince people of the truth of it; for, though God then did ordinarily make use of that method of conviction, yet he could, when he pleased, do his work

without it; and begetting faith by the immediate influence of his Spirit was itself the greatest miracle to those in whom it was wrought. Yet, it is probable that they did work miracles

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

And as many as were ordained. οσοιησαντεταγμενοι, Syriac, "Who were destined," or constituted. Vulgate, "As many as were foreordained (quotquot erant praeordinati) to eternal life believed." There has been much difference of opinion in regard to this expression. One class of commentators have supposed that it refers to the doctrine of election-- to God's ordaining men to eternal life; and another class, to their being disposed themselves to embrace the gospel--to those among them who did not reject and despise the gospel, but who were disposed and inclined to embrace it. The main inquiry is, what is the meaning of the word rendered ordained? The word is used but eight times in the New Testament. Mt 28:16, "Into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them," i.e., previously appointed, or commanded them--before his death. Lk 7:8. "For I also am a man set under authority"--appointed, or designated, as a soldier, to be under the authority of another. Acts 15:2. "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, etc., should go to Jerusalem." Acts 22:10, "It shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do;" Acts 28:23, "And when they had appointed him a day," etc. Rom 13:1, "The powers that be, are ordained of God." 1Cor 16:15, "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of saints." The word τασσω, or ταττω, properly means to place; to place in a certain rank or order. Its meaning is derived from arranging or disposing a body of soldiers in regular order; to arrange in military order. In the places which have been mentioned above, the word is used to denote the following things:

(1.) To command, or to designate, Mt 28:16, Acts 22:10, 28:23.

(2.) To institute, constitute, or appoint, Rom 13:1. Comp. 2Sam 7:11, 1Sam 22:7.

(3.) To determine, to take counsel, to resolve, Acts 15:2

(4.) To subject to the authority of another, Lk 7:8.

(5.) To addict to; to devote to, 1Cor 16:15. The meaning may be thus expressed:

(a.) The word is never used to denote an internal disposition or inclination arising from one's own self. It does not mean that they disposed themselves to embrace eternal life.

(b.) It has uniformly the notion of an ordering, disposing, or arrangement from without, i.e., from some other source than the individual himself; as of a soldier, who is arranged or classified according to the will of the proper officer. In relation to these persons it means, therefore, that they were disposed or inclined to this from some other source than themselves.

(c.) It does not properly refer to an eternal decree, or directly to the doctrine of election; though that may be inferred from it; but it refers to their being THEN IN FACT disposed to embrace eternal life. They were then inclined by an influence from without themselves, or so disposed as to embrace eternal life. It refers not to an eternal decree, but that then there was such an influence as to dispose them, or incline them, to lay hold on salvation. That this was done by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is clear from all parts of the New Testament, Tit 3:5,6, Jn 1:13. It was not a disposition or arrangement originating with themselves, but with God.

(d.) This implies the doctrine of election. It was in fact that doctrine expressed. It was nothing but God's disposing them to embrace eternal life. And that he does this according to a plan

in his own mind--a plan which is unchangeable as God himself is unchangeable--is clear from the Scriptures. Comp. Acts 18:10, Rom 8:28-30, 9:15,16,21,23 Eph 1:4,5,11. The meaning may be expressed in few words:-- who were THEN disposed, and in good earnest determined, to embrace eternal life, by the operation of the grace of God on their hearts.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

This passage has been used as a proof text for the extreme Calvinism that makes God arbitrarily select some for salvation and reject others, Wesley, on the other hand, says: ``The original word rendered "ordained" is not once used in the Scriptures to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sense if that those, and those only, now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest; it was his will that they also should be saved, but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were those who then believed "forced" to believe. Grace was offered to them and they did not thrust it away." It is God's ordination that those of humble, teachable, honest hearts, seeking the truth and life, shall come to life when it is offered, and such accepted the gospel on this occasion.

The controversy turns upon the meaning of the clause \~osoi hoan tetagmenoi eiv zwhn aiwniou\~, rendered, in the common version, "as many as were ordained to eternal life." The Calvinistic writers united in referring it to the eternal election and foreordination taught in their creeds. They contend, therefore, for the rendering "were ordained," or "were appointed." If their interpretation were admitted, it would involve the passage in some difficulties which none of them seem to have noticed. If it be true that "as many as were foreordained to eternal life believed," then there were some of the foreordained left in that community who did not believe. Hence, all those who did not then believe, whether adults or infants, were among the reprobate, who were predestinated to

everlasting punishment. Now it is certainly most singular that so complete a separation of the two parties should take place throughout a whole community at one time; and still more singular that Luke should so far depart from the custom of inspired writers as to state the fact. Again, the same statement implies that all who believed on that occasion were of the elect. For, if the parties who believed were those who had been foreordained to eternal life, then none of the non-elect could have been among the number. Here is another anomalous incident: that on this occasion all who believed were of the number who would finally be saved, and that Luke should be informed of the fact and make it known to his readers. Certainly we should not adopt an interpretation involving conclusions so anomalous, unless we are compelled to do so by the obvious force of the words employed. It is worthy of more that the efforts of Calvinistic writers to prove that this is the meaning of these words consist chiefly in strong assertions to that effect, and in attempts to answer the feebler class of the objections urged against it.

Thus Dr. Hackett asserts: "This is the only translation which the philology of the passage allows." But he makes no effort to prove that the New Testament usage of the principal word involved allows this translation. The word rendered ordained in this passage is \~tassw\~--a term which is not employed in a single instance in the New Testament in the sense of foreordained. Where that idea is to be expressed, other words are uniformly employed. The word in question is a generic term, having no single word in English to fully represent it. Its generic sense is best represented by our phrase, set in order. In its various specific applications, however, we have single terms which accurately represent it. Thus, when Jesus \~etaxato\~ set in order a certain mountain in Galilee as a place to meet his disciples (#Mt 28:16|), or the Jews in Rome \~taxamenoi\~ set in order a day to meet Paul (#Ac 28:23|), we best express the idea by appointed. (It expresses the same idea in #Lu 7:8 Ac 22:10|). But when Paul says of civil rulers that "the existing authorities \~tetagmenai eisin\~ were set in order by God" (#Ro

13:1|), he does not intend to affirm that God had appointed those rulers, but merely asserts his general providence in their existence and arrangement. The idea is best expressed in English by using the phrase set in order, or by saying they were arranged by God. When he asserts of the household of Stephanas, in Corinth, that \~etaxan eautouv\~ they set themselves in order for ministering to the saints (#1Co 16:15|), we would say they devoted themselves to ministering to the saints. But when the brethren in Antioch had been puzzled by the disputation between Paul and Barnabas and "certain men who came down from Judea," in reference to circumcision, and they finally \~etaxan\~, set in order, to send some of both parties to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for a decision, the common version very correctly renders it, "they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go" (#Ac 15:2|). In reference to the propriety of this last rendering, Dr. Hackett asserts that this term "was not used to denote an act of the mind";

{c} but the awkward translation of this passage to which the assertion forces him is evidence conclusive against it. He renders it, "They appointed that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem."

{d} This is an ungrammatical use of the word appointed. When a mission has been determined upon, we appoint the individuals who shall be sent, but we do not appoint that they shall go. Evidently, the state of the case was this: the brethren were at first undetermined what to do in reference to the question in dispute, but finally determined to send to Jerusalem for an authoritative decision of it. When a man is undetermined in reference to a pressing question, his mind is in confusion; but when he determines upon his course, it is no longer confusion, but is set in order. The term in question, therefore, meaning primarily to set in order, is most happily adapted to the expression of such a state of mind. Our English word dispose has a similar usage. It means to arrange in a certain order, and applies primarily to external objects; but when one's

mind is found arranged in accordance with a certain line of conduct, we say he is disposed to pursue it. We scarcely need observe, after the above remarks, that the specific meaning attached to the generic term in question, in any particular passage, is to be determined by the context. In the passage we are now considering, the context has no allusion to any thing like an appointment of one part, and a rejection of the other; but the writer draws a line of distinction between the conduct of certain Gentiles and that of the Jews addressed by Paul in the closing paragraph of his speech. To render the contrast between the two more conspicuous, he throws his words into antithesis with those of Paul. Paul had said to the Jews, "You put the word of God from you" [#Ac 13:46|]; Luke says of the Gentiles, "They glorified the word of the Lord." Paul said, "You judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life"; Luke says, many of the Gentiles "were determined for everlasting life." It is an act of the mind to which Paul objects on the part of the Jews, and it is as clearly an act of mind in the Gentiles which Luke puts in contrast with it. At some previous time in their history, these Gentiles, like all others, had been undetermined in reference to everlasting life, either because they were not convinced that there was such a state, or because they hesitated to seek for it. But now their minds were set in order upon the subject, by being determined to labor for the eternal life which Paul preached. It now remains, in order to full eludication of the passage, that we account for the connection indicated between their being determined for everlasting life, and their believing. The former stands as a cause which led to the latter. Let it be noted that everlasting life is not contemplated as the object of their belief, for, if it was, they would have had to believe in it, before they could determine for it; so that the order of the two mental acts would be reversed.

But, in common with the Jews, who had been their religious instructors, they already believed in a future state, and what they now learned to believe by Paul's preaching was the gospel of Christ. Those of them who had, either through previous

religious instruction, or through the influence of Paul's preaching, heartily determined for eternal life, were in a better frame of mind to appreciate the evidence in favor of that Christ through whom alone it could be obtained, than the others who were so undetermined upon the subject that they appeared to judge themselves unworthy of such a destiny. Such was the difference between the two classes in the audience, and Luke's object is to declare the result of the difference in the fact that the one class believed, and the other thrust the word of God from them. To say that the difference had been wrought in them exclusively by divine agency would be to rob them of responsibility. Or to say that the favorably-disposed party had become so exclusively by their own self-determining energy would be to deny the influence of divine truth. Neither of these positions can be true; but, while it was an act of their own minds to determine for eternal life, it was God who had induced them to do so; at the same time, the other party determined against eternal life, in despite of the same divine influence exerted upon them.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and
came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

The emblematical action performed by the apostles to signify God's rejection of this miserable people; They shook off the dust of their feet against them.

This signified, 1. That the very earth was polluted where such refusers of the precious gospel did inhabit, nad was therefore to be shaken off as a filthy thing.

2. That they were a base people, vile as the dust, and that, as such, God had now shaken them off.

3. That the dust of the apostles' feet there left, might be as a witness against them, that the gospel had been preached to them. This action of shaking off the dust of their feet, was a dismal signification of a forsaken people.

When they went out of the city they used this ceremony in the sight of those that sat in the gate; or, when they went out of the

borders of their country, in the sight of those that were sent to see the country rid of them. Hereby,

(1.) They declared that they would have no more to do with them, would take nothing that was theirs; for they sought not theirs, but them. Dust they are, and let them keep their dust to themselves, it shall not cleave to them.

(2.) They expressed their detestation of their infidelity, and that, though they were Jews by birth, yet, having rejected the gospel of Christ, they were in their eyes no better than heathen and profane. As Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, are equally acceptable to God and good men; so, if they do not, they are equally abominable.

(3.) Thus they set them at defiance, and expressed their contempt of them and their malice, which they looked upon as impotent. It was as much as to say, "Do your worst, we do not fear you; we know whom we serve and whom we have trusted."

(4.) Thus they left a testimony behind them that they had had a fair offer made them of the grace of the gospel, which shall be proved against them in the day of judgment. This dust will prove that the preachers of the gospel had been among them, but were expelled by them. Thus Christ had ordered them to do, and for this reason, Mt 10:14,Lu 9:5. When they left them, they came to Iconium, not so much for safety, as for work.

Acts-14

Paul and Barnabas at Iconium

1 And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

Though the Jews at Antioch had used them barbarously, yet they did not therefore decline preaching the gospel to the Jews at Iconium, who perhaps might be better disposed. Let not those of any denomination be condemned in the gross, nor some suffer for others' faults; but let us do good to those who have done evil to us. How the apostles concurred herein. Notice is taken of this, that they went both together into the synagogue, to testify their unanimity and mutual affection, that people might say, See how they love one another, and might think the better of Christianity, and that they might strengthen one another's hands and confirm one another's testimony, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established. They did not go one one day and another another, nor one go at the beginning and the other some time after; but they went in both together.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Observe here, 1. That the gospel was now preached to Jews and Gentiles together, and those of each denomination that believed came together into the church. In the close of the foregoing chapter it was preached first to the Jews, and some of them believed, and then to the Gentiles, and some of them believed; but here they are put together, being put upon the same level. The Jews have not so lost their preference as to be thrown behind, only the Gentiles are brought to stand upon even terms with them; both are reconciled to God in one body (Eph 2:16), and both together admitted into the church without distinction.

The opposition that their preaching met with there, and the trouble that was created them; lest they should be puffed up with the multitude of their converts, there was given them this thorn in the flesh. 1. Unbelieving Jews were the first spring of their trouble here, as elsewhere (Ac 14:2): they stirred up the Gentiles.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

1. The manner of the apostles' preaching at Iconium: They spake boldly: that is, openly in the synagogues: and there with great freedom and plainness of speech asserted truth, condemned error, reproved sin, and denounced judgments against impenitent sinners; and this with a wise, but convincing boldness; with a meek, but zealous boldness; knowing, that if they had not now been bold for Christ, they could not at the great day be bold before him. That minister that is afraid to speak and plead for Christ now, will certainly be ashamed to look him in the face then. A serious thought of this, when we are going to preach, will make us shut all base fear out of the pulpit.

Note, 2. The time of their preaching at Iconium: it was not a single sermon or two, in transitu, but long time they abode, speaking boldly in the Lord. A constant course of preaching is needful to root that word which one or two sermons oft leaveth loose; the end of the ministry is to build up, as well as to bring in, and this is done by our constancy in preaching, and exemplariness in holy living.

Note, 3. How God honoured his word in the mouth of his ministers, confirming their doctrine by miracles: He gave testimony by the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. The miracles, which the apostles wrought, were the convincing cause of the credibility of the apostles' testimony.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

1. How upon the preaching of the gospel there follow great divisions; The multitude was divided. Not that the gospel is the cause of division, but the occasion only, and that by accident

too. The sacred institutions and ordinances of Christ, are not to be quarrelled with, or objected against, because through man's corruption they breed differences, discords, and divisions.

Observe, 2. How this division was the cause of persecution: The city was divided, and an attempt was made to use the apostles despitefully, and to stone them.

Lord! what ill usage have thine ambassadors met with from the first publication of the gospel! The unkind world has treated them as if they were not fit to live, driving them from place to place, and persecuting them from city to city.

But observe, 3. The prudential care which the apostles use for their own preservation: They were ware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe: according to Christ's command, When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another. Christ allows his ministers a liberty of flight in time of persecution, that they may preserve their lives for future service. We must not expect safety by a miracle, when we may have it in the use of means; yet probably it might not be fear, or a desire to save their lives, which made the apostles flee; but because they were unwilling to lose time there, when their ministry was obstructed, and when they saw the gospel was rejected. Accordingly they fled to Derbe and Lystra, and there preached the gospel.

From whence note, How greatly persecution, by scattering, tends to the increasing of the gospel. Thousands had never heard of Jesus Christ, if persecution had not driven the ministers of the gospel unto them. The wisdom of God well knows how to order those things which are designed for the prejudice, to tend to the furtherance, of the gospel. Phil 1:12

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

6 they were ware of *it*, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 and there they preached the gospel.

Paul Stoned at Lystra

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet,
being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had
walked:
9 the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him,
and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,
10 said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped
and walked.
11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up
their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are
come down to us in the likeness of men.

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter. Jupiter was represented as the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients. He was represented as the son of Saturn and Ops, and was educated in a cave on Mount Ida, in the island of Crete. The worship of Jupiter was almost universal. He was the Ammon of Africa, the Belus of Babylon, the Osiris of Egypt. His common appellation was, the father of gods and men. He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a sceptre of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods; and everything was subservient to his will, except the fates. There is the most abundant proof that he was worshipped in the region of Lycaonia, and throughout Asia Minor. There was, besides, a fable among the inhabitants of Lycaonia that Jupiter and Mercury had once visited that place, and had been received by Philemon. The whole fable is related by Ovid, (Metam. 8, 611, etc.) And Paul, Mercarius. Mercury, called by the Greeks Hermes, was a celebrated god of antiquity. No less than five of this name are mentioned by Cicero. The most celebrated was the son of Jupiter and Msia. He was the messenger of the gods, and of Jupiter in particular; he was the patron of travellers and shepherds; he conducted the souls of the dead into the infernal regions; and he presided over orators, and declaimers, and merchants; and he was also the god of thieves, pickpockets, and all dishonest persons. He was regarded as the god of eloquence; and as light, rapid, and quick in his movements. The conjecture

of Chrysostom is, that Barnabas was a large, athletic man, and was hence taken for Jupiter; and Paul was small in his person, and was hence supposed to be Mercury. Because he was the chief speaker. The office of Mercury was to deliver the messages of the gods; and as Paul only had been discoursing, he was supposed to be Mercury.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because
he was the chief speaker.

The temple or image of Jupiter was in front of their city, or near the gates. Ancient cities were supposed to be under the protection of particular gods; and their image, or a temple for their worship, was placed commonly in a conspicuous place at the entrance of the city.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city,
brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have
done sacrifice with the people.

When Christ, the Son of God, came down, and appeared in the likeness of men, and did many, very many miracles, yet they were so far from doing sacrifice to him that they made him a sacrifice to their pride and malice: He was in the world, and the world knew him not; he came to his own, and his own received him not; but Paul and Barnabas, upon the working of one miracle, are immediately deified.

14 *Which* when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard *of*, they
rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,
15 and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of
like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should
turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made
heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

This is an expression of solemn remonstrance at the folly of their conduct in worshipping those who were men. The abhorrence which they evinced at this may throw strong light on the rank and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. When an offer was made to worship Paul and Barnabas, they shrank from it with strong expressions of indignation and abhorrence. Yet when similar worship was offered to the Lord Jesus, when he was addressed by Thomas in the language of worship, "My

Lord and my God," (Jn 20:28,) he commended the disciple. For this act he uttered not the slightest reproof. Nay, he approved it, and expressed his approbation of others who should also do it, Jn 20:29; comp. Jn 5:23. How can this difference be accounted for, except on the supposition that the Lord Jesus was Divine? Would he, if a mere man, receive homage as God, when his disciples rejected it with horror? Of like passions with you. We are men like yourselves. We have no claim, no pretensions to anything more. The word "passions" here means simply that they had the common feelings and propensities of men; we have the nature of men; the affections of men. It does not mean that they were subject to any improper passions, to ill temper, etc.,as some have supposed; but that they did not pretend to be gods, We need food and drink; we are exposed to pain and sickness, and death." The Latin Vulgate renders it, "We are mortal like yourselves." The expression stands opposed to the proper conception of God, who is not subject to these affections, who is most blessed and immortal. Such a Being only is to be worshipped; and the apostles remonstrated strongly with them on Comp. Jas 5:17, "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are," etc. That ye should turn from these vanities. That you should cease to worship idols. Idols are often called vanities, or vain things, De 32:21, 2Kgs 17:15, 1Kgs 16:13,26; Jer 2:5, 8:19, 10:8, Jonah 2:8. They are called vanities, and often a lie, or lying vanities, as opposed to the living and true God, because they are unreal, because they have no power to help, because confidence in them is vain. Unto the living God. 1Thes 1:9. He is called the living God to distinguish him from idols. Mt 16:16. Which made heaven, etc. Who thus showed that he was the only proper object of worship. This doctrine, that there was one God, who had made all things, was new to them. They worshipped multitudes of divinities; and though they regarded Jupiter as the father of gods and men, yet they had no conception that all things had been formed from nothing by the will of one Infinite Being.

16 who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Who in times past. Previous to the gospel; in past ages. Suffered all nations. Permitted all nations; that is, all Gentiles.

Acts 17:30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at." To walk in their own ways. To conduct themselves without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own reason and passions, and their own system of religion. He gave them no written laws, and sent to them no messengers. Why he did this, we cannot determine. It might have been, among other reasons, to show to the world conclusively,

(1.) the insufficiency of reason to guide men in the matters of religion. The experiment was made under the most favourable circumstances. The most enlightened nations, the Greeks and Romans, were left to pursue the inquiry, and failed no less than the most degraded tribes of men. The trial was made for four thousand years, and attended with the same results everywhere.

(2.) It showed the need of revelation to guide man.

(3.) It evinced, beyond the possibility of mistake, the depravity of man. In all nations, in all circumstances, men had shown the same alienation from God. By suffering them to walk in their own ways, it was seen that those ways were sin, and that some power more than human was necessary to bring men back to God. (a) "in times past" Ps 81:12, Acts 17:30 (*) "nations" "The Gentiles"

Yet not without guilt on their part was this privation (Ro 1:20) Observe, 1. How far Paganish superstition did transport and carry these men: they come to the gates of the house where the apostles had lodged, and bring oxen with them, trimmed with garlands of flowers, according to their heathenish rites, verily intending to offer sacrifice unto them.

Learn, How forward the devil is to put honour, much honour, yea, overmuch honour, upon the ministers of Christ, when it is to contradict their doctrine, and gain advantage to himself by it. The devil laughed to see the blind superstitious Lystrians

adore the apostles, and adorn them with the names of their heathen gods, hoping to make advantage thereby to himself.

Observe, 2. With what indignation and disdain, detestation and abhorrence, the apostles reject this vile idolatry: telling them that they were men of like passions, and in the same condition of mortality with themselves, and that their business was to turn them from their idols which were mere vanities and nothing, compared with the living and true God, who made them and all the world.

Learn hence, 1. That the worshipping of idols is the most senseless and irrational vanity that ever the devil put into the stupified heart of man.

2. That all good men hate idolatry in others, and abhor to be idolized themselves.

Observe, 3. The description which the holy apostle gives of the true God, to draw the people off from worshipping idols: he styles him the living God, that made the glorious fabric of heaven and earth, the sea, and all things therein. A good God, that giveth rain and fruitful seasons, filling his creatures' hearts with food and gladness.

Intimating, 1. That whatsoever concerns the happiness and felicity of man in this life, is wholly derived from God.

2. That there is no nation nor person under heaven, to whom God exhibits not the evident tokens of his goodness: The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

Observe, 4. The character which the apostles give of the former times, in which the heathen world lived: In times past they were suffered to walk in their own ways. That is, of old God suffered all nations, except the Jewish nation to walk in their own ways; the meaning is, he did not check them in their sinful ways and courses, as he did his own people the Jews.

Yet we must not understand the apostle absolutely, but comparatively only; there never was any man, much less any nation, whom God suffered to go on in a course of sin without any stop. Every person and every nation, has had the stop of the light of nature at least; but every nation has not had the stop of the light of the gospel, the stop of ordinances, the preaching of the word, the motions of the Holy Spirit; these the Jews had, but the Gentiles had not.

In this sense God suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; he did not give them his word, his statutes, or his judgments, to show them his ways, or to hinder them walking in their own ways; and this was a sore judgment. To suffer either nation or person to walk without control or check, from word or rod, from ordinances or providences, in the ways of sin and wickedness, is a very dreadful and tremendous judgment: In times past he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And gave us rain from heaven. Rain from above, from the clouds, Mk 8:11, Lk 9:54, 17:29, 21:11, Jn 6:31,32. Rain is one of the evidences of his goodness. Man could not cause it; and without it, regulated at proper intervals of time, and in proper quantities, the earth would soon be one wide scene of desolation. There is scarcely anything that more certainly indicates unceasing care and wisdom than the needful and refreshing showers of rain. The sun and stars move by fixed laws, whose operation we can see and anticipate. The falling of rain and dew is regulated by laws which we cannot trace, and seems therefore to be poured, as it were, directly from God's hollow hand. Ps 147:8, "Who covereth the heaven with clouds; who prepareth rain for the earth."

"He sends his showers of blessings down, To cheer the plains below; He makes the grass the mountains crown, And corn in valleys grow. "The cheering wind, the flying cloud, Obey his mighty word: with songs and honours sounding loud, Praise ye the sovereign Lord."--WATTS

And fruitful seasons. Seasons when the earth produces abundance. It is remarkable, and a shining proof of the Divine goodness, that so few seasons are unfruitful. The earth yields her increase; and the labours of the husbandman are crowned with success; and the goodness of God demands the expressions of praise. His ancient covenant God does not forget, Gen 8:22, though man forgets it, and disregards his great Benefactor. Filling our hearts with food. The word hearts is here used as a Hebraism, to denote persons themselves; filling us with food, etc. Comp. Mt 12:40. Gladness. Joy; comfort--the comfort arising from the supply of our constantly returning wants. This is proof of ever watchful goodness. It is demonstration at once that there is a God, and that he is good. It would be easy for God to withdraw these blessings, and leave us to want. A single word, or a single deviation from the fullness of benevolence, would blast all these comforts, and leave us to lamentation, woe, and death, Ps 145:15,16.

"The eyes of all wait upon thee, And thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest thine hand, And satisfiest the desire of all the living."

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

In spite of this,and Peter's repudiation of all such honor (Ac 10:26), how soon idolatrous tendencies began to show themselves in the Christian Church, at length to be systematized and enjoined in the Church of Rome.

kneeing down for the so-called pastors, prophets, and so on

19 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

"Our doctrine is directly against it. Must we be added to the number of your gods whose business it is to abolish the gods you have? We preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God. If we should suffer this, we should confirm you in that which it is our business to convert you from:" and so they take this occasion to show them how just and necessary it was that they should turn to God from idols, 1Th 1:9. When they preached to the Jews, who hated idolatry, they had nothing to do but to preach the grace of God in Christ, and needed not, as the prophets in dealing with their fathers, to preach against idolatry: but, when they had to do with the Gentiles, they must rectify their mistakes in natural religion, and bring them off from the gross corruptions of that. See here what they preached to the Gentiles.

First, That the gods which they and their fathers worshipped, and all the ceremonies of their worship of them were vanities, idle things, unreasonable, unprofitable, which no rational account could be given of, nor any real advantage gained from. Idols are often called vanities in the Old Testament, De 32:21,1Ki 10:13.Jer 14:22. An idol is nothing in the world (1Co 8:4): it is not at all what it is pretended to be, it is a cheat, it is a counterfeit; it deceives those that trust to it and expect relief from it.

Secondly, That the God to whom they would have them turn is the living God. They had hitherto worshipped dead images, that were utterly unable to help them (Isa 64:9), or (as they now attempted) dying men, that would soon be disabled to help them; but now they are persuaded to worship a living God, who has life in himself, and life for us, and lives for evermore.

Thirdly, That this God is the creator of the world, the fountain of all being and power: "He made heaven and earth, and the

sea, and all things therein, even those things which you worship as gods, so that he is the God of your gods. You worship gods which you made, the creatures of your own fancy, and the work of your own hands. We call you to worship the true God, and cheat not yourselves with pretenders; worship the Sovereign Lord of all, and disparage not yourselves in bowing down to his creatures and subjects."

Fourthly, That the world owed it to his patience that he had not destroyed them long ere this for their idolatry (Ac 14:16): In times past, for many ages, unto this day, he suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. These idolaters, that were called from the service of other gods, might think, "Have we not served these gods hitherto, and our fathers before us, time out of mind; and why may we not as well go on to serve them still?"--No, your serving them was a trial of God's patience, and it was a miracle of mercy that you were not cut off for it. But, though he did not destroy you for it while you were in ignorance, and knew no better (Ac 17:30) yet now that he has sent his gospel into the world, and by it has made a clear discovery of himself and his will to all nations, and not to the Jews only, if you still continue in your idolatry he will not bear with you as he has done. All the nations that had not the benefit of divine revelation, that is, all but the Jews, he suffered to walk in their own ways, for they had nothing to check them, or control them, but their own consciences, their own thoughts (Ro 2:15), no scriptures, no prophets; and then they were the more excusable if they mistook their way: but now that God has sent a revelation into the world which is to be published to all nations the case is altered. We may understand it as a judgment upon all nations that God suffered them to walk in their own ways, gave them up to their own hearts' lusts; but now the time is come when the veil of the covering spread over all nations should be taken off (Isa 25:7), and now you will no longer be excused in these vanities, but must turn from them. Note, 1. God's patience with us hitherto should lead us to repentance, and not encourage us to presume upon the continuance of it, while we continue to provoke him. 2. Our

having done ill while we were in ignorance will not bear us out in doing ill when we are better taught.

Fifthly, That even when they were not under the direction and correction of the word of God, yet they might have known, and should have known, to do better by the works of God, Ac 14:17. Though the Gentiles had not the statutes and judgments that the Jews had to witness for God against all pretenders, no tables of testimony or tabernacle of testimony, yet he left not himself without witness; besides the witness for God within them (the dictates of natural conscience), they had witnesses for God round about them--the bounty of common providence. Their having no scriptures did in part excuse them, and therefore God did not destroy them for their idolatry, as he did the Jewish nation. This however did not wholly excuse them, but that notwithstanding this they were highly criminal and deeply guilty before God; for there were other witnesses for God, sufficient to inform them that he and he only is to be worshipped, and that to him they owed all their services from whom they received all their comforts, and therefore that they were guilty of the highest injustice and ingratitude imaginable, in alienating them from him. God, having not left himself without witness, has not left us without a guide, and so has left us without excuse; for whatever is a witness for God is a witness against us, if we give that glory to any other which is due to him only. 1 The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God, for they are all dispensed wisely and with design. The rain and fruitful seasons could not come by chance, nor are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain, neither can the heavens of themselves give showers, Jer 14:22. All the powers of nature witness to us a sovereign power in the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. It is not the heaven that gives us rain, but God that gives us rain from heaven, he is the Father of the rain, Job 38:28. 2 The benefits we have by these bounties witness to us that we ought to make our acknowledgments not to the creatures who are made serviceable to us, but to the Creator who makes them so. He left not himself without

witness, in that he did good. God seems to reckon the instances of his goodness to be more pregnant, cogent proofs of his title to our homage and adoration than the evidences of his greatness; for his goodness is his glory. The earth is full of his goodness; his tender mercies are over all his works; and therefore they praise him, Ps 145:9,10. God does us good, in preserving to us his air to breathe in, his ground to go upon, the light of his sun to see by; but, because the most sensible instance of the goodness of Providence to each of us in particular is that of the daily provision made by it of meat and drink for us, the apostle chooses to insist upon that, and shows how God does us good, (1.) In preparing it for us, and that by a long train of causes which depend upon him as the first cause: The heavens hear the earth; the earth hears the corn, and wine, and oil; and they hear Jezreel. Ho 2:21,22. He does us good in giving us rain from heaven--rain for us to drink, for if there were no rain there would be no springs of water and we should soon die for thirst--rain for our land to drink, for our meat as well as drink we have from the rain; in giving us this, he gives us fruitful seasons. If the heavens be as iron, the earth will soon be as brass, Le 26:19. This is the river of God which greatly enriches the earth, and by it God prepares us corn, Ps 65:9-13. Of all the common operations of providence, the heathen chose to form their notion of the supreme God by that which bespeaks terror, and is proper to strike an awe of him upon us, and this was the thunder; and therefore they called Jupiter the thunderer, and represented him with a thunderbolt in his hand; and it appears by Ps 29:3 that this ought not to be overlooked; but the apostle here, to engage us to worship God, sets before us his beneficence, that we may have good thoughts of him in every thing wherein we have to do with him--may love him and delight in him, as one that does good, does good to us, does good to all, in giving rain from heaven and fruitful seasons; and if at any time rain be withheld, or the seasons be unfruitful, we may thank ourselves; it is our sin that turns away these good things from us which were coming to us, and stops the current of God's favours. (2.) In giving us the comforts of it. It is he that fills our hearts with food and gladness. God is rich in

mercy to all (Ro 10:12): he gives us richly all things to enjoy (1Ti 6:17), is not only a benefactor, but a bountiful one, not only gives us the things we need, but gives us to enjoy them (Ec 2:24): He fills our hearts with food, that is, he gives us food to our hearts' content, or according to our hearts' desire; not merely for necessity, but plenty, dainty, and variety. Even those nations that had lost the knowledge of him, and worshipped other gods, yet he filled their houses, filled their mouths, filled their bellies (Job 22:18,Ps 17:14) with good things. The Gentiles that lived without God in the world, yet lived upon God, which Christ urges as a reason why we should do good to those that hate us, Mt 5:44,45. Those heathen had their hearts filled with food; this was their felicity and satisfaction, they desired no more; but these things will not fill the soul (Eze 7:19), nor will those that know how to value their own souls be satisfied with them; but the apostles put themselves in as sharers in the divine beneficence. We must all own that God fills our hearts with food and gladness; not only food, that we may live, but gladness, that we may live cheerfully; to him we owe it that we do not all our days eat in sorrow. Note, We must thank God, not only for our food, but for our gladness--that he gives us leave to be cheerful, cause to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful. And, if our hearts be filled with food and gladness, they ought to be filled with love and thankfulness, and enlarged in duty and obedience, De 8:10,28:47.

The Jews stimulated this feeling by urging that Paul was an impostor, and that all the honorable women and chief men of Antioch and Iconium had united in driving him away from those cities. This enabled them to charge him with willful deception, and as their feelings were already keyed up to their utmost tension they were easily swayed to the opposite extreme, and at a nod from the Jews they were ready to dash him to pieces. That Paul, rather than Barnabas, was the victim of their wrath, resulted from the fact that both here and in the cities from which the Jews had come, he was the chief speaker. The same circumstance which had given him the inferior place in their idolatry, gave him, finally, the superior place in their

hatred. Barnabas they seem to have let alone; Paul, as the prominent actor and speaker, being the object of all their rage. The words seem to imply that it was the Jews who did this; and no doubt they took the lead (Ac 14:19), but it was the act of the instigated and fickle multitudes along with them.

And, having stoned Paul. Whom they were just before ready to worship as a god! What a striking instance of the fickleness and instability of idolaters! and what a striking instance of the instability and uselessness of mere popularity. Just before, they were ready to adore him; now they sought to put him to death. Nothing is more fickle than mere popular favour. The unbounded admiration of a man may soon be changed into unbounded indignation and contempt! It was well for Paul that he was not seeking this popularity, and that he did not depend on it for happiness. He had a good conscience; he was engaged in a good cause; he was under the protection of God; and his happiness was to be sought from a higher source than the applause of men, fluctuating and uncertain as the waves of the sea. To this transaction Paul referred when he enumerated his trials, in 2Cor 11:26, "Once was I stoned." Drew him out of the city. Probably in haste, and in popular rage, as if he was unfit to be in the city, and was unworthy of a decent burial; for it does not appear that they contemplated an interment, but indignantly dragged him beyond the walls of the city to leave him there. Such sufferings and trials it cost to establish that religion in the world which has shed so many blessings on man, and which now crowns us with comfort, and saves us from the abominations and degradations of idolatry here, and from the pains of hell hereafter.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Observe here, The great and good use which the apostle makes of his miraculous recovery: he is no sooner upon his legs, but he travels to Derbe, to preach the gospel. Nothing do the faithful ministers of Christ more fervently desire, and more

diligently endeavour, than to lay out their lives, their strength, their time, their all, for God, in his service, and to his glory.

Yet observe farther, That notwithstanding the apostles were persecuted at Lystra and Iconium, yet they returned thither again; having planted churches there, they go back to water their own plantations which they had newly made. It is not enough that the seed of the word be sown, it must be watered also, languish and die.

But what did the apostles do, when they returned to visit their newly-planted churches?

Ans. They confirmed and established them in the doctrine of the gospel; they exhorted them to steadfastness and perseverance in their holy religion, and armed them against their fears of affliction and persecution, for the sake of Christ and his holy religion; acquainting them, that they must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Afflictions like the waters of Marah, must be met with in their way to the heavenly Canaan; there is no coming at the crown but by the cross: the Head having been crowned with thorns, it is unsuitable that the feet should tread on roses.

Christianity is the doctrine of the cross, which the ministers of Christ ought to let their people understand and know, that they may not "think strange of the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had befallen them; but rather rejoice, inasmuch as they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1Pe 4:12,13

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and *to* Iconium, and Antioch,

And to Iconium, Acts 14:1. We have here a remarkable instance of the courage of the apostles. In these very places

they had been persecuted and stoned, and yet in the face of danger they ventured to return, The welfare of the infant churches they deemed of more consequence than their own safety; and they threw themselves again into the midst of danger, to comfort and strengthen those just converted to God. There are times when ministers should not count their own lives dear to them, Acts 20:24, but when they should fearlessly throw themselves into the midst of danger, confiding only in the protecting care of their God and Saviour.

Confirming. Strengthening--επιστηριζοντες. The expression, "to confirm," has in some churches a technical signification, denoting "to admit to the full privileges of a Christian, by the imposition of hands."--Johnson. It is scarcely necessary to say that the word here refers to no such rite. It has no reference to any imposition of hands, nor to the thing which is usually supposed to be denoted by the rite of "confirmation." It means simply, that they established, strengthened, made firm, or encouraged by the presentation of truth, and by the motives of the gospel. Whether the rite of confirmation, as practised by some churches, be founded on the authority of the New Testament or not, it is certain that it can receive no support from this passage. The truth was, that these were young converts; that they were surrounded by enemies, exposed to temptations and to dangers; that they had as yet but a slight acquaintance with the truths of the gospel, and that it was therefore important that they should be further instructed in the truth, and established in the faith of the gospel. This was what Paul and Barnabas returned to accomplish. There is not the slightest evidence that they had not been admitted to the full privileges of the church before, or that any ceremony was now performed in confirming or strengthening them.

22 confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

They returned, and went over their work again, watering what they had sown; and, having staid as long as they thought fit at Derbe, they came back to Lystra, to Iconium, and Antioch, the

cities where they had preached, Ac 14:21. Let us see what they did,

(a.) They confirmed the souls of the disciples; that is, they inculcated that upon them which was proper to confirm them, Ac 14:22. Young converts are apt to waver, and a little thing shocks them. Their old acquaintances beg they will not leave them. Those that they look upon to be wiser than themselves set before them the absurdity, indecency, and danger, of a change. They were allured, by the prospect of preferment, to stick to the traditions of their fathers; they are frightened with the danger of swimming against the stream. All this tempts them to think of making a retreat in time; but the apostles come and tell them that this is the true grace of God wherein they stand, and therefore they must stand to it that there is no danger like that of losing their part in Christ, no advantage like that of keeping their hold of him; that, whatever their trials may be, they shall have strength from Christ to pass through them; and, whatever their losses may be, they shall be abundantly recompensed. And this confirms the souls of the disciples; it fortifies their pious resolutions, in the strength of Christ, to adhere to Christ whatever it may cost them. Note,

[1.] Those that are converted need to be confirmed; those that are planted need to be rooted. Ministers' work is to establish saints as well as to awaken sinners. Non minor est virtus quam quoerere parta tueri--To retain is sometimes as difficult as to acquire. Those that were instructed in the truth must know the certainty of the things in which they have been instructed; and those that are resolved must be fixed in their resolutions.

[2.] True confirmation is confirmation of the soul; it is not binding the body by severe penalties on apostates, but binding the soul. The best ministers can do this only by pressing those things which are proper to bind the soul; it is the grace of God, and nothing less, that can effectually confirm the souls of the disciples, and prevent their apostasy.

(b.) They exhorted them to continue in the faith; or, as it may be read, they encouraged them. They told them it was both their duty and interest to persevere; to abide in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Note, Those that are in the faith are concerned to continue in the faith, notwithstanding all the temptations they may be under to desert it, from the smiles or frowns of this world. And it is requisite that they should often be exhorted to do so. Those that are continually surrounded with temptations to apostasy have need to be continually attended with pressing exhortations to perseverance.

(c.) That which they insisted most upon was that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Not only they must, but we must; it must be counted upon that all who will go to heaven must expect tribulation and persecution in their way thither. But is this the way to confirm the souls of the disciples, and to engage them to continue in the faith? One would think it would rather shock them, and make them weary. No, as the matter is fairly stated and taken entire, it will help to confirm them, and fix them for Christ. It is true they will meet with tribulation, with much tribulation; that is the worst of it: but then,

[1.] It is so appointed. They must undergo it, there is no remedy, the matter is already fixed, and cannot be altered. He that has the sovereign disposal of us has determined it to be our lot that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer persecution; and he that has the sovereign command over us has determined this to be our duty, that all that will be Christ's disciples must take up their cross. When we gave up our names to Jesus Christ it was what we agreed to; when we sat down and counted the cost, if we reckoned aright, it was what we counted upon; so that if tribulation and persecution arise

because of the word it is but what we had notice of before, it must be so: he performeth the thing that is appointed for us. The matter is fixed unalterably; and shall the rock be for us removed out of its place?

[2.] It is the lot of the leaders in Christ's army, as well as of the soldiers. It is not only you, but we, that (if it be thought a hardship) are subject to it; therefore, as your own sufferings must not be a stumbling-block to you, so neither must ours; see 1Th 3:3. Let none be moved by our afflictions, for you yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. As Christ did not put the apostles upon any harder service than what he underwent before them, so neither did the apostles put the ordinary Christians.

[3.] It is true we must count upon much tribulation, but this is encouraging, that we shall get through it; we shall not be lost and perish in it. It is a Red Sea, but the Lord has opened a way through it, for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. We must go down to trouble, but we shall come up again.

[4.] We shall not only get through it, but get through it into the kingdom of God; and the joy and glory of the end will make abundant amends for all the difficulties and hardships we may meet with in the way. It is true we must go by the cross, but it is as true that if we keep in the way, and do not turn aside nor turn back, we shall go to the crown, and the believing prospect of this will make the tribulation easy and pleasant.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

And had prayed with fasting. With the church. They were about to leave them. They had entrusted the interests of the church to a body of men chosen for this purpose; and they now commended the church and its elders together to God. Probably they had no prospect of seeing them again; and they parted as ministers and people should part, and as Christian friends

should part, with humble prayer, commending themselves to the protecting care of God. They commended them, etc. They committed the infant church to the guardianship of the Lord. They were feeble, inexperienced, and exposed to dangers; but in his hands they were safe. The greatest and best thing that the ministers of God can do, either present with, or absent from their people, is to commit and commend them to the power and care of Christ, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to
Pamphylia.
25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went
down into Attalia:
26 and thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had
been recommended to the grace of God for the work
which they fulfilled.
27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church
together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and
how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

The subject matter of that report which they joyfully made to the church of Antioch; namely, how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles; that is, given them an opportunity to know, nd ability to believe, the gospel, which like a door was formerly shut to them, but now mercifully opened; and which was the far greater mercy yet, Almighty God did not only open the door of the gospel to them, by bringing his word amongst them, but he opened the door of their hearts to receive it, and entertain it when brought. The opening the heart and mind of sinners effectually to receive the truths of the gospel, is the special work of the Holy Spirit of God.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Long time. How long is not intimated; but we hear no more of them until the council at Jerusalem, mentioned in the next

chapter. If the transactions recorded in this chapter occurred, as is supposed, about A.D. 45 or 46, and the council at Jerusalem assembled A.D. 51 or 53, as is supposed, then here is an interval of from five to eight years in which we have no account of them. Where they were, or what was their employment in this interval, the sacred historian has not informed as. It is certain, however, that Paul made several journeys, of which we have no particular record in the New Testament; and it is possible that some of those journeys occurred during this interval. Thus he preached the gospel as far as Illyricum, Rom 15:19. And in 2Cor 11:23-27, there is an account of trials and persecutions, of many of which we have no distinct record, and which might have occurred during this interval. We may be certain that these holy men were not idle. And we may learn from their example to fill up our time with usefulness; to bear all persecutions and trials without a murmur; and to acknowledge the good hand of God in our preservation in our travels; in our defence when we are persecuted; in all the opportunities which may be open before us to do good; and in all the success which may attend our efforts. Christians should remember that it is God who opens doors of usefulness; and they should regard it as a matter of much rejoicing and thanksgiving that such doors are opened, and that they are permitted to spread the gospel, whatever toil it may cost, whatever persecution they may endure, whatever perils they may encounter.

Acts-15

The Council at Jerusalem

1 And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, *and said,* Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Hitherto they had been struggling against external foes. Violent persecutions had raged, and had fully occupied the attention of Christians. But now the churches were at peace. They enjoyed

great external prosperity in Antioch. And the great enemy of souls took occasion then, as he has often done in similar circumstances since, to excite contentions in the church itself; so that when external violence could not destroy it, an effort was made to secure the same object by internal dissension and strife.

Except ye be circumcised. This was the leading or principal rite of the Jewish religion. It was indispensable to the name and privileges of a Jew. Proselytes to their religion were circumcised as well as native-born Jews, and they held it to be indispensable to salvation. It is evident, from this, that Paul and Barnabas had dispensed with this rite in regard to the Gentile converts, and that they intended to found the Christian church on the principle that the Jewish ceremonies were to cease. When, however, it was necessary to conciliate the minds of the Jews and to prevent contention, Paul did not hesitate to practise circumcision, Acts 16:3.

Ye cannot be saved. The Jews regarded this as indispensable to salvation. The grounds on which they would press it on the attention of Gentile converts would be very plausible, and such as would produce much embarrassment. For,

(1.) it would be maintained that the laws of Moses were the laws of God, and were therefore unchangeable; and,

(2.) it would doubtless be maintained that the religion of the Messiah was only a completing and perfecting of the Jewish religion; that it was designed simply to carry out its principles according to the promises, and not to subvert and destroy anything that had been established by Divine authority. It is usually not difficult to perplex and embarrass young converts with questions of modes, and rites, and forms of religion; and it is not uncommon that a revival is followed by some contention just like this. Opposing sects urge the claims of their peculiar rites, and seek to make proselytes, and introduce

contention and strife into an otherwise peaceful and happy Christian community.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Even when things go on very smoothly and pleasantly in a state or in a church, it is folly to be secure, and to think the mountain stands strong and cannot be moved; some uneasiness or other will arise, which is not foreseen, cannot be prevented, but must be prepared for. If ever there was a heaven upon earth, surely it was in the church at Antioch at this time, when there were so many excellent ministers there, and blessed Paul among them, building up that church in her most holy faith. But here we have their peace disturbed, and differences arising. Here is,

A new doctrine started among them, which occasioned this division, obliging the Gentile converts to submit to circumcision and the ceremonial law, Ac 15:1. Many that had been proselytes to the Jewish religion became Christians; and they would have such as were proselyted to the Christian religion to become Jews.

1 The persons that urged this were certain men who came down from Judea; some think such as had been of the Pharisees (Ac 15:5), or perhaps of those priests who were obedient to the faith, Ac 6:7. They came from Judea, pretending perhaps to be sent by the apostles at Jerusalem, at least to be countenanced by them. Having a design to spread their notions, they came to Antioch, because that was the head-quarters of those that preached to the Gentiles, and the rendezvous of the Gentile converts; and, if they could but make an interest there, this leaven would soon be diffused to all the churches of the Gentiles. They insinuated themselves into an acquaintance with the brethren, pretended to be very glad that they had embraced the Christian faith, and congratulated them on their conversion; but tell them that yet one thing they lack, they must

be circumcised. Note, Those that are ever so well taught have need to stand upon their guard that they be not untaught again, or ill taught.

2 The position they laid down, the thesis they gave, was this, that except the Gentiles who turned Christians were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and thereby bound themselves to all the observances of the ceremonial law, they could not be saved. As to this,

(1.) Many of the Jews who embraced the faith of Christ, yet continued very zealous for the law, Ac 21:20. They knew it was from God and its authority was sacred, valued it for its antiquity, had been bred up in the observance of it, and it is probable had been often devoutly affected in their attendance on these observances; they therefore kept them up after they were by baptism admitted into the Christian church, kept up the distinction of meats, and used the ceremonial purifyings from ceremonial pollutions, attend the temple service, and celebrated the feasts of the Jews. Herein they were connived at, because the prejudices of education are not to be overcome all at once, and in a few years the mistake would be effectually rectified by the destruction of the temple and the total dissolution of the Jewish church, by which the observance of the Mosaic ritual would become utterly impracticable. But it did not suffice them that they were herein indulged themselves, they must have the Gentile converts brought under the same obligations. Note, There is a strange proneness in us to make our opinion and practice a rule and a law to every body else, to judge of all about us by our standard, and to conclude that because we do well all do wrong that do not just as we do.

(2.) Those Jews who believed that Christ was the Messiah, as they could not get clear of their affection to the law, so they could not get clear of the notions they had of the Messiah, that he should set up a temporal kingdom in favour of the Jewish nation, should make this illustrious and victorious; it was a

disappointment to them that there was as yet nothing done towards this in the way they expected. But now that they hear the doctrine of Christ is received among the Gentiles, and his kingdom begins to be set up in the midst of them, if they can but persuade those that embrace Christ to embrace the law of Moses too they hope their point will be gained, the Jewish nation will be made as considerable as they can wish, though in another way; and "Therefore by all means let the brethren be pressed to be circumcised and keep the law, and then with our religion our dominion will be extended, and we shall in a little time be able to shake off the Roman yoke; and not only so, but to put it on the necks of our neighbours, and so shall have such a kingdom of the Messiah as we promised ourselves." Note, It is no wonder if those who have wrong notions of the kingdom of Christ take wrong measures for the advancement of it, and such as really tend to the destruction of it, as these do.

(3.) The controversy about the circumcising of the Gentile proselytes had been on foot among the Jews long before this. This is observed by Dr. Whitby out of Josephus--Antiq. 20. 38-45: "That when Izates, the son of Helen queen of Adiabene, embraced the Jews' religion, Ananias declared he might do it without circumcision; but Eleazar maintained that it was a great impiety to remain uncircumcised." And when two eminent Gentiles fled to Josephus (as he relates in the history of his own life) "the zealots among the Jews were urgent for their circumcision; but Josephus dissuaded them from insisting upon it." Such has been the difference in all ages between bigotry and moderation.

(4.) It is observable what a mighty stress they laid upon it; they do not only say, "You ought to be circumcised after the manner of Moses, and it will be good service to the kingdom of the Messiah if you be; it will best accommodate matters between you and the Jewish converts, and we shall take it very kindly if you will, and shall converse the more familiarly with you;" but, "Except you be circumcised you cannot be saved. If you be not herein of our mind and way, you will never go to heaven, and

therefore of course you must go to hell." Note, it is common for proud impostors to enforce their own inventions under pain of damnation; and to tell people that unless they believe just as they would have them believe, and do just as they would have them do, they cannot be saved, it is impossible they should; not only their case is hazardous, but it is desperate. Thus the Jews tell their brethren that except they be of their church, and come into their communion, and conform to the ceremonies of their worship, though otherwise good men and believers in Christ, yet they cannot be saved; salvation itself cannot save them. None are in Christ but those that are within their pale. We ought to see ourselves well warranted by the word of God before we say, "Except you do so and so, you cannot be saved."

Had no small dissension and disputation. The word rendered dissension (στασεως) denotes sometimes sedition or intestine war, and sometimes earnest and violent disputation or controversy, Acts 23:7,10. In this place it clearly denotes that there was earnest and warm discussion; but it is not implied that there was any improper heat or temper on the part of Paul and Barnabas. Important principles were to be settled in regard to the organization of the church. Doctrines were advanced by the Judaizing teachers which were false, and which tended to great strife and disorder in the church. Those doctrines were urged with great zeal, were declared to be essential to salvation, and would therefore tend greatly to distract the minds of Christians, and to produce great anxiety. It became therefore necessary to meet them with a determined purpose, and to establish the truth on an immovable basis. And the case shows that it is right to "contend earnestly for the faith," (Jude 1:3;) and when similar cases occur, it is proper to resist the approach of error with all the arguments which may be at our command, and with all the weapons which truth can furnish. It is further implied here, that it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to defend the truth and to oppose error. Paul and Barnabas regarded themselves as set for this purpose, (comp. Php 1:17, "Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel;") and Christian ministers should be qualified to defend the truth; and

should be willing, with a proper spirit and with great earnestness, to maintain the doctrines revealed.

Elders - As in the synagogue it was customary to determine questions by the advice of a bench of elders, there is no improbability in the supposition that the apostles would imitate that custom, and appoint a similar arrangement in the Christian church. (Grotius.) It is generally agreed that this is the journey to which Paul refers in Gall 2:1-10. If so, it happened fourteen years after his conversion, Gall 2:1. It was done in accordance with the Divine command, "by revelation," Gall 2:2. And among those who went with him was Titus, who was afterwards so much distinguished as his companion, Gall 2:3.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

How that great but humble apostle, St. Paul, who had learned of his Master to be meek and lowly in spirit, was willing and content to be a servant and messenger of the church to the apostles, though he was nothing inferior to the chiefest apostle: Paul and Barnabas went up to the apostles that were at Jerusalem. The more holiness a Christian has, the more humility he has. Humility is a great part of our holiness, it is an argument of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; it is the great design of the gospel to make us humble, and keep us humble.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and *of* the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while

ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth
should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.
8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness,
giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

Peter rose up, and said. Peter was probably the most aged, and was most accustomed to speak, Acts 2:14, 3:6,12. Besides, there was a particular reason for his speaking here, as he had been engaged in similar scenes, and understood the case, and had had evidence that God had converted sinners without the Mosaic rites, and knew that it would have been inexpedient to have imposed these rites on those who had thus been converted. God thus knew whether they were true converts or not, and gave a demonstration that he acknowledged them as his.

9 and put no difference between us and them, purifying their
hearts by faith.

And put no difference, etc. Though they had not been circumcised, and though they did not conform to the law of Moses. Thus God showed that the observance of these rites was not necessary in order to the true conversion of men, and to acceptance with him. He did not give us, who are Jews, any advantage over them, but justified and purified all in the same manner. Purifying their hearts. Thus giving the best evidence that he had renewed them, and admitted them to favour with him. By faith. By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. This showed that the plan on which God was now about to show favour to men, was not by external rites and ceremonies, but by a scheme which required faith as the only condition of acceptance. It is further implied here, that there is no true faith which does not purify the heart.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the
neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were
able to bear?

Why tempt ye God? Why provoke him to displeasure? Why, since he has shown his determination to accept them without such rites, do you provoke him by attempting to impose on his own people rites without his authority, and against his manifest will? The argument is, that God had already accepted them. To

attempt to impose these rites would be to provoke him to anger; to introduce observances which he had shown it was his purpose should now be abolished. To put a yoke. That which would be burdensome and oppressive, or which would infringe on their just freedom, as the children of God. It is, called in Gal 5:1, "a yoke of bondage." Mt 23:4. A yoke is an emblem of slavery or bondage, 1Timm 6:1 or of affliction, Lam 3:27; or of punishment, Lam 1:14; or of oppressive and burdensome ceremonies, as in this place; or of the restraints of Christianity, Mt 11:29,30. In this place they are called a yoke, because,

(1.) they were burdensome and oppressive; and,

(2.) because they would be an infringement of Christian freedom. One design of the gospel was to set men free from such rites and ceremonies. The yoke here referred to is not the moral law, and the just restraints of religion; but the ceremonial laws and customs of the Jews.

They offered a very great wrong to the disciples: Christ came to proclaim liberty to the captives, and they go about to enslave those whom he has made free. See Ne 5:8. The ceremonial law was a heavy yoke; they and their fathers found it difficult to be borne, so numerous, so various, so pompous, were the institutions of it. The distinction of meats was a heavy yoke, not only as it rendered conversation less pleasant, but as it embarrassed conscience with endless scruples. The ado that was made about even unavoidable touch of a grave or a dead body, the pollution contracted by it, and the many rules about purifying from that pollution, were a heavy burden. This yoke Christ came to ease us of, and called those that were weary and heavy laden under it to come and take his yoke upon them, his easy yoke. Now for these teachers to go about to lay that yoke upon the neck of the Gentiles from which he came to free even the Jews was the greatest injury imaginable to them.

Observe here, 1. The council assembled, the first and most famous council of councils. In other councils were holy bishops; in this, inspired apostles, who could not err in matters of faith.

Observe, 2. The grand debate, or matter in controversy; namely, whether faith in Christ were not sufficient to justification, unless circumcision, and an observation of the ceremonial law, were joined with it?

Observe, 3. The persons managing this debate: the three great apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. The first that speaks in the council is St. Peter; from whence the Papists would infer, that he, as head of the church, spake first; and consequently that the Pope, whom they will have to be St. Peter's successor, ought to have the first and chief voice in all general councils. But all this is but presumption: for we shall find at ver 13, St. James who was then bishop of Jerusalem, says, Hearken unto me; and at ver. 19, gives the definitive sentence, saying, My sentence is; or thus I judge and determine. Had St. Peter said this, it had been a better part of his pre-emminency, and made a louder noise, than Pasce Oves.

Observe, 4. St. Peter's argument to prove that the believing Gentiles might be justified and saved without circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law. The argument runs thus: "The way of justifucation for all men, both Jew and Gentile, is one and the same: but Cornelius, a Gentile, with his whole family, by the blessing of God upon my ministry, was converted and justified, without being circumcised; therefore circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law, ought not to be imposed as necessary to justification and salvation."

Observe, 5. How St. Peter strengthens his argument, by declaring that what was done to Cornelius and his family, was by the special command of God; that God gave testimony of his approbation of Cornelius, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles,

by sending down the Holy Ghost upon him and his, as well as upon us and ours, by purifying their hearts by faith.

Where note,

1. That purifying begins at the heart. The head may be purified from false principles, the hands from false practices, and yet the heart remain unpurified, and continue a sink of pollution and uncleanness; therefore we must purify our hearts, as well as cleanse our hands; yea, first, begin with our hearts: Having purified their hearts by faith.

Note, 2. That as purifying begins at the heart, but must not end there; so faith is the instrumental cause of our purification. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin meritoriously, the Spirit of Christ efficiently; but faith is the instrument in the hand of the Spirit, which apprehends and applies the merit of that blood for pardon and purification.

Observe, 6. The character given by St. Peter of the ceremonial law; he calls it a yoke, an intolerable yoke, too heavy to be borne by the Jews themselves, much more the Gentiles, whose neck God never designed this yoke for, but for the seed of Abraham only.

Now the law of ceremonies, imposed upon the Jews might well be called a yoke, if we consider,

1. Their number and variety: there were a multitude of legal observations.

2. Their burden and difficulty; the ceremonial law was a most laborious adminstration of a very painful service.

3. They were very costly and chargeable; so many bullocks, rams, and lambs for sacrifice, that the misers of this age would think themselves undone with the expense.

4. Their insufficiency: they were only shadows of good things to come, and could not make the observers of them perfect.

Thus was the ceremonial law in itself a yoke and a burden; and the imposing of it upon the Gentiles is called a tempting of God; that is, a dangerous provoking of him, because it never belonged to them, but to the Jews only, which yet were never able to bear it; that is, so to observe it, as to be justified and saved by it.

Learn thence, That it was never the intent or design of God, that his people should be justified by their obedience to the ceremonial law: but that, being pressed with the weight, and pinched with the uneasiness of the yoke, they should seek unto Christ for righteousness and life, who alone was the fulfiller of it.

There was this difference between the ceremonial and moral law: the ceremonial law was therefore good because God commanded it; the moral law was therefore commanded, because good. Christ, by his death, abrogated the former, but, by the obedience of his life, fulfilled the latter.

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

You know I, Peter, was questioned about it and cleared myself to the universal satisfaction; every body rejoiced that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life, and nobody said a word of circumcising them, nor was there any thought of such a thing. See Ac 11:18. "Why should the Gentiles who hear the word of the gospel by Paul's mouth be compelled to submit to circumcision, any more than those that heard it by my mouth? Or why should the terms of their admission now be made harder than they were then?"Through the grace, etc. By the grace or mercy of Christ alone, without any of the rites and ceremonies of the Jews. We shall be saved, even as they. In the same manner, by the mere grace of Christ. So far from being necessary to their salvation, they are really of no use in ours.

We are to be saved not by these ceremonies, but by the mere mercy of God in the Redeemer. They should not, therefore, be imposed on others.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to
Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God
had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men
and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles,
to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

James confirms this with a quotation out of the Old Testament: he could not prove the calling of the Gentiles by a vision, as Peter could, nor by miracles wrought by his hand, as Paul and Barnabas could, but he would prove that it was foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore it must be fulfilled, Ac 15:15.

The words of the prophets. Amos 9:11,12. It was a very material point with them, as Jews, to inquire whether this was in accordance with the predictions of the Scriptures. The most powerful revivals of religion, and the most striking demonstrations of the Divine Presence, will be in accordance with the Bible, and should be tested by it. This habit was always manifested by the apostles and early Christians, and should be followed by Christians at all times. Unless a supposed work of grace accords with the Bible, and can be defended by it, it must be false, and should be opposed. Comp. Isa 8:20.

16 After this I will return,
and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen
down;
and I will build again the ruins
thereof, and I will set it up:

After this. This quotation is not made literally either from the Hebrew or the Septuagint, which differs also from the Hebrew. The 17th verse is quoted literally from the Septuagint; but in

the 16th the general sense only of the passage is retained. The main point of the quotation, as made by James, was to show that, according to the prophets, it was contemplated that the Gentiles should be introduced to the privileges of the children of God; and on this point the passage has a direct bearing. The prophet Amos Amos 9:8-10 had described the calamities that should come upon the nation of the Jews, by their being scattered and driven away. This implied that the city of Jerusalem, and the temple, and the walls of the city, should be destroyed. But after that (Heb. "on that day," Amos 9:11; that is, the day when he should revisit them, and recover them) he would restore them to their former privileges; would rebuild their temple, their city, and their walls, Amos 9:11. And not only so--not only should the blessing descend on the Jews, but it should also be extended to others. The "remnant of Edom," "the heathen upon whom" his "name would be called," (Amos 9:12,) should also partake of the mercy of God, and be subject to the Jewish people; and the time of general prosperity and of permanent blessings should follow, Amos 9:13-15. James understands this as referring to the times of the Messiah, and to the introduction of the gospel to the Gentiles. And so the passage (Amos 9:12)is rendered in the Septuagint. See Acts 15:17.

That the residue of men. This verse is quoted literally from the Septuagint, and differs in some respects from the Hebrew. The phrase, "the residue of men," here is evidently understood, both by the Seventy and by James, as referring to others than the Jews-- to the Gentiles. The rest of the world--implying that many of them would be admitted to the friendship and favour of God. The Hebrew is, "that they may possess the remnant of Edom." This change is made in the Septuagint by a slight difference in the reading of two Hebrew words. The Seventy, instead of the Hebrew shall inherit, read , shall seek of thee; and instead of Edom they read , Man, or mankind, i.e. men. Why this variation occurred, cannot be explained; but the sense is not materially different. In the Hebrew, the word Edom has undoubted reference to another nation than the Jewish; and the

expression means, that in the great prosperity of the Jews, after their return, they should extend the influence of their religion to other nations; that is, as James applies it, the Gentiles might be brought to the privileges of the children of God.

17 that the residue of men might seek after the
Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name
is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these
things.
18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of
the world.
19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which
from among the Gentiles are turned to God:
20 but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions
of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and
from blood.

That we write unto them. Expressing our judgment, or our views of the case. This verse has greatly perplexed commentators. The main grounds of difficulty have been,

(1.) why fornication--an offence against the moral law, and about which there could be no dispute--should have been included; and,

(2.) whether the prohibition to abstain from blood is still binding. That they abstain. That they refrain from these things, or wholly avoid them. Pollutions of idols. The word rendered pollutions means any kind of defilement. But here it is evidently used to denote the flesh of those animals that were offered in sacrifice to idols. See Acts 15:29. That flesh, after being offered in sacrifice, was often exposed for sale in the markets, or was served up at feasts, 1Cor 10:25-29. It became a very important question whether it was right for Christians to partake of it. The Jews would contend that it was, in fact, partaking of idolatry. The Gentile converts would allege that they did not eat it as a sacrifice to idols, or lend their countenance in any way to the idolatrous worship where it had been offered. See this subject discussed at length in 1Cor 8:4-

13. As idolatry was forbidden to the Jews in every form, and as partaking even of the sacrifices to idols, in their feasts, might seem to countenance idolatry, the Jews would be utterly opposed to it; and for the sake of peace, James advised that they be recommended to abstain from this. To partake of that food might not be morally wrong, (1Cor 8:4,) but it would give occasion for scandal and offence; and, therefore, as a matter of expediency, it was advised that they should abstain from it. And from fornication, The word used here--πορνειας-- is applicable to all illicit intercourse; and may refer to adultery, incest, and licentiousness in any form. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to this expression.

Interpreters have been greatly perplexed to understand why this violation of the moral law has been introduced amidst the violations of the ceremonial law; and the question is naturally asked, whether this was a sin about which there could be any debate between the Jewish and Gentile converts? Were there any who would practise it, or plead that it was lawful? If not, why is it prohibited here? Various interpretations have been proposed. Some have supposed that James refers here to the offerings which harlots would make of their gains to the service of religion, and that James would prohibit the reception of it. Beza, Selden, and Schleusner, suppose the word is taken for idolatry, as it is often represented in the Scriptures as consisting in unfaithfulness to God, and as it is often called adultery. Heringius supposes that marriage between idolaters and Christians is here intended. But, after all, the usual interpretation of the word, as referring to illicit intercourse of the sexes of any kind, is undoubtedly here to be retained. There is no reason for departing from the ordinary and usual meaning of the word. If it be asked, then, why this was particularly forbidden, and was introduced in this connexion, we may reply,

(1.) that this vice prevailed everywhere among the Gentiles, and was that to which all were particularly exposed.

(2.) That it was not deemed by the Gentiles disgraceful. It was practised without shame, and without remorse.---Terence, Adelph. 1, 2, 21. See Grotius. It was important, therefore, that the pure laws of Christianity on this subject should be known, and that special pains should be taken to instruct the early converts from paganism in those laws. The same thing is necessary still in heathen lands.

(3.) This crime was connected with religion. It was the practice not only to introduce indecent pictures and emblems into their worship, but also for females to devote themselves to the service of particular temples, and to devote the avails of indiscriminate prostitution to the service of the god, or the goddess. The vice was connected with no small part of the pagan worship; and the images, the emblems, and the customs of idolatry, everywhere tended to sanction and promote it. A mass of evidence on this subject, which sickens the heart--but which would be too long and too indelicate to introduce here-may be seen in Tholuck's Nature and Moral Influence of Heathenism, in the Biblical Repository, for July, 1832, pp. 441--464. As this vice was almost universal; as it was practised without shame or disgrace; as there were no laws among the heathen to prevent it; as it was connected with all their views of idol worship and of religion, it, was important for the early Christians to frown upon and to oppose it, and to set a peculiar guard against it in all the churches. It was the sin to which, of all others, they were the most exposed, and which was most likely to bring scandal on the Christian religion. It is for this cause that it is so often and so pointedly forbidden in the New Testament, Rom 1:29, 1Cor 6:13,18, Gal 5:19, Eph 5:3, 1Thes 4:3. And from things strangled. That is, from animals or birds that were killed without shedding their brood. The reason why these were considered by the Jews unlawful to be eaten was, that thus they would be under a necessity of eating blood, which was positively forbidden by the law. Hence it was commanded in the law, that when any beast or fowl was taken in a snare, the blood should be poured out before it was lawful to be eaten, Lev 17:13. And from blood. The eating of blood

was strictly forbidden to the Jews. The reason of this was that it contained the life, Lev 17:11,14. Rom 3:25. The use of blood was common among the Gentiles. They drank it often at their sacrifices, and in making covenants or compacts. To separate the Jews from them in this respect was one design of the prohibition. See Spencer, De Leg. Hebrm. pp. 144, 145, 169, 235, 377, 381, 594, Ed. 1732. See also this whole passage examined at length in Spencer, pp. 588--626. The primary reason of the prohibition was, that it was thus used in the feasts and compacts of idolaters. That blood was thus drank by the heathens, particularly by the Sabians, in their sacrifices, is fully proved by Spencer, De Leg., pp. 377--380. But the prohibition specifies a higher reason, that the life is in the blood, and that therefore it should not be eaten. Rom 3:25. This reason existed before any ceremonial law; is founded in the nature of things; has no particular reference to any custom of the Jews; and therefore is as forcible in any other circumstances as in theirs. It was proper, therefore, to forbid it to the early Christian converts; and for the same reason its use should be abstained from everywhere. It adds to the force of these remarks, when we remember that the same principle was settled before the laws of Moses were given; and that God regarded the fact that the life was in the blood as of so much importance as to make the shedding of it worthy of death, Gen 9:4-6. It is supposed, therefore, that this law is still obligatory. Perhaps also there is no food more unwholesome than blood; and it is a further circumstance of some moment that all men naturally revolt from it as an article of food.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

For Moses hath of old those that preach him in every city, his writings (a considerable part of which is the ceremonial law) being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. "You cannot blame them if they have a great veneration for the law of Moses; for besides that they are very sure God spoke to Moses,"

(1.) "Moses is continually preached to them, and they are called upon to remember the law of Moses," Mal 4:4. Note, Even that word of God which is written to us should also be preached: those that have the scriptures have still need of ministers to help them to understand and apply the scriptures.

(2.) "His writings are read in a solemn religious manner, in their synagogues, and on the sabbath day, in the place and at the time of their meetings for the worship of God; so that from their childhood they have been trained up in a regard to the law of Moses; the observance of it is a part of their religion."

(3.) "This has been done of old time; they have received from their fathers an honour for Moses; they have antiquity for it."

(4.) "This had been done in every city, wherever there are any Jews, so that none of them can be ignorant what stress that law laid upon these things: and therefore, though the gospel has set us free from these things, yet they cannot be blamed if they are loth to part with them, and cannot of a sudden be persuaded to look upon those things as needless and indifferent which they, and their fathers before them, had been so long taught, and taught of God too, to place religion in. We must therefore give them time, must meet them half-way; they must be borne with awhile, and brought on gradually, and we must comply with them as far as we can without betraying our gospel liberty." Thus does this apostle show the spirit of a moderator, that is, a spirit of moderation, being careful to give no offence either to Jew or Gentile, and contriving, as much as may be, to please both sides and provoke neither.

Note, We are not to think it strange if people be wedded to customs which they have had transmitted to them from their fathers, and which they have been educated in an opinion of as sacred; and therefore allowances must be made in such cases, and not rigour used.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church,
to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul
and Barnabas; *namely*, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief
men among the brethren:

I The choice of the delegates that were to be sent with Paul and Barnabas on this errand; not as if they had any suspicion of the fidelity of these great men, and could not trust them with their letters, nor as if they thought that those to whom they sent them would suspect them to have altered any thing in their letter; no, their charity thought no such evil concerning men of such tried integrity; but,

1. They thought fit to send men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, Ac 15:22. This was agreed to by the apostles and elders, with the whole church, who, it is likely, undertook to bear their charges, 1Co 9:7. They sent these messengers,

(1.) To show their respect to the church at Antioch, as a sister-church, though a younger sister, and that they looked upon it as upon the same level with them; as also that they were desirous further to know their state.

(2.) To encourage Paul and Barnabas, and to make their journey home the more pleasant (for it is likely they travelled on foot) by sending such excellent men to bear them company; amicus pro vehiculo--a friend instead of a carriage.

(3.) To put a reputation upon the letters they carried, that it might appear a solemn embassy, and so much the more regard might be paid to the message, which was likely to meet with opposition from some.

(4.) To keep up the communion of the saints, and cultivate an acquaintance between churches and ministers that were at a distance from each other, and to show that, though they were many, yet they were one.

23 and they wrote *letters* by them after this manner; The apostles
and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which
are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:
24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from
us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying,
Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no
such commandment:
25 it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to
send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and
Paul,
26 men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ.

Men that have hazarded their lives, etc. See Acts 14. This was a noble testimony to the character of Barnabas and Paul. It was a commendation of them to the confidence of the churches, and an implied expression that they wished their authority to be regarded in the establishment and organization of the church.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell *you*
the same things by mouth.
28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you
no greater burden than these necessary things;

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost. This is a strong and undoubted claim to inspiration. It was with special reference to the organization of the church that the Holy Spirit had been promised to them by the Lord Jesus, Mt 18:18-20, Jn 14:26.

29 that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and
from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye
keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.
30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and
when they had gathered the multitude together, they
delivered the epistle:
31 *which* when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

They rejoiced for the consolation. They acquiesced in the decision of the apostles and elders, and rejoiced that they were not to be subjected to the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. This closes the account of the first Christian council. It was conducted throughout on Christian

principles, in a mild, kind, conciliatory spirit; and is a model for all similar assemblages. It came together, not to promote, but to silence disputation; not to persecute the people of God, but to promote their peace; not to be a scene of harsh and angry recrimination, but to be an example of all that was mild, and tender, and kind. Those who composed it came together, not to carry a point, not to overreach their adversaries, not to be party men; but to mingle their sober counsels to inquire what was right, and to express, in a Christian manner, that which was proper to be done. Great and important principles were to be established, in regard to the Christian church; and they engaged in their work evidently with a deep sense of their responsibility, and with a just view of their dependence on the aid of the Holy Spirit. How happy would it have been if this spirit had been possessed by all professedly Christian councils! How happy, if all had really sought the peace and harmony of the churches; and if none had ever been convened to kindle the fires of persecution, to evince the spirit of party, or to rend and destroy the church of God! This council has been usually appealed to as the authority for councils in the church, as a permanent arrangement; and especially as an authority for courts of appeal and control. But it establishes neither, and should be brought as an authority for neither. For,

(1.) it was not a court of appeal in any intelligible sense. It was an assembly convened for a special purpose; designed to settle an inquiry which arose in a particular part of the church, and which required the collected wisdom of the apostles and elders to settle.

(2.) It had none of the marks or appendages of a court. The term court, or judicature, is nowhere applied to it, nor to any assembly of Christian men, in the New Testament. Nor should these terms be used now in the churches. Courts of judicature imply a degree of authority, which cannot be proved from the New Testament to have been conceded to any ecclesiastical body of men.

(3.) There is not the slightest intimation that anything like permanency was to be attached to this council; or that it would be periodically or regularly repeated. It will prove, indeed, that when cases of difficulty occur, when Christians are perplexed and embarrassed, or when contentions arise, it will be proper to refer to Christian men for advice and direction. Such was the case here; and such a course is obviously proper. If it should be maintained that it is well that Christian ministers and laymen should assemble periodically, at stated intervals, on the supposition that such cases may arise, this is conceded; but the example of the apostles and elders should not be pleaded as making such assemblies of Divine right and authority, or as being essential to the existence of the church of God. Such an arrangement has been deemed to be so desirable by Christians, that it has been adopted by Episcopalians in their regular annual and triennial conventions; by Methodists in their conferences; by Presbyterians in their general assembly; by Friends in their yearly meetings; by Baptists and Congregationalists in their associations, etc.

But the example of the council summoned on a special emergency at Jerusalem should not be pleaded as giving Divine authority to all, or to any, of these periodical assemblages. They are wise and prudent arrangements, contributing to the peace of the church; and the example of the council at Jerusalem can be adduced as furnishing as much Divine authority for one as for another; that is, it does not make all or either of them of Divine authority, or as obligatory on the church of God.

(4.) It should be added, that a degree of authority (compare Acts 16:4) would, of course, be attached to the decision of the apostles and elders of that time, which cannot be to any body of ministers and laymen now. Besides, it should never be forgotten--what, alas, it seems to have been the pleasure and the interests of ecclesiastics to forget--that neither the apostles

nor elders asserted any jurisdiction over the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia; that they did not claim a right to have these cases referred to them; that they did not attempt "to lord it" over their faith or their consciences. The case was a single, specific, definite question, referred to them; and they decided it as such. They asserted no abstract right of such jurisdiction; they sought not to intermeddle with it; they enjoined no future reference to them, to their successors, or to any ecclesiastical tribunal. They evidently regarded the churches as blessed with the most ample freedom; and evidently contemplated no arrangement of a permanent character, asserting a right to legislate on articles of faith, or to make laws for the direction of the Lord's freemen.

From whence we learn, That liberty from toilsome ceremonies, though originally of divine institution, much more a freedom from superstitious ceremonies has the church of Rome imposed upon her blind votaries! When in their worship they would be thought truly zealous, they are really ridiculous. They please themselves perhaps, but cannot please their Maker: all the acceptance they will find with God will be signified to them in that chiding question, "Who hath required these things at your hands?"

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted
the brethren with many words, and confirmed *them*.
33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were let go in
peace from the brethren unto the apostles.
34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.
35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching
and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others
also.

Paul Separates from Barnabas and Begins the Second Missionary Journey

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and
visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word
of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

Observe here, The pious and prudential care which St. Paul, who had planted churches, takes to visit and inspect them; that he might see and understand how they did thrive and grow in the knowledge of Christ, and in their sincere obedience to him. This great apostle had been sowing the good seed of the word of God: his next care is, to examine and enquire whether the envious ones had not sowed tares in his absence.

A minister's work, and a husbandman's business, are never at an end, but run round in a circle: Redit labor actus in orbem; after ploughing and sowing, there must be weeding and watering, before reaping and ingathering.

Accordingly St. Paul resolves upon the visitation here mentioned; Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

Here note, 1. The visitors, Paul and Barnabas.

2. The visited, our brethren, both the elders and members of the church.

3. The action performed, visiting; the word imports a strict view, a most diligent and solicitous scrutiny, lest some errors in their absence might be crept into the doctrine and conversation of these new-planted churches.

4. The place where the visitation is to be held: In every city where they have preached the word of the Lord.

Where they had planted, they were obliged to water; and where they had begotten any to the Christian faith, they thought it their duty to nurture and nourish them: and therefore, though there were presbyters no doubt in every city, yet Paul and Barnabas challenged to themselves a power of visitation, where they had personally preached. The apostles who first

converted them, had a peculiar right to inspect and govern them. Converted souls, and planted churches, mist be farther visited, observed, and watered.

5. The end and design of the visitation: To see how they do, and what they do; to take an account of their faith and practice.

From the whole observe,

1. A disease which the churches of the apostles' own planting were supposed to be liable and obnoxious to: the purest of churches and best of men in this militant and mortal state, are apt to fall into distempers: witness this chapter. Where we find the Jews nauseating the bread of life, and making it their choice to pick and eat the rubbish off the partition-wall which Christ had demolished; I mean circumcision, and the legal ceremonies, which, though expired at the death of Christ, and by this time had an honourable burial, yet they attempt to pull out of their graves, and give a resurrection to them. Such distempers will be in the purest churches, if we consider the hereditary corruption which is in all by nature; the remains of it in those who are renewed by grace, and the endeavours of Satan to solicit these remains, and invite them forth into act and exercise.

Observe, 2. The remedy resolved upon for preventing and healing of this disease; namely, apostolical visitation, and episcopal inspection, as the word signifies. The constitution of the church is such, that it cannot continue long in repair, without inspection and government: for though the universal church is secure, being built upon a rock, yet particular churches are liable to dilapidations: and accordingly it is the duty of the governors of the church frequently to inspect the authority of those who preach, to examine their doctrines, to enquire into their lives, to give rules for preserving order, and to censure those who neglect those rules, and disturb that order.

In fine, we see the church of Christ must be governed; in that government there must be a superiority in some, and subordination in others: superiors must frequently visit, and narrowly inspect the doctrine, the lives, and manners, both of the ministers and members of the church, according to the practice and example of these two great apostles, Paul and Barnabas; who said, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word, and see how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

In regard to this unhappy contention between Paul and Barnabas, and their separation from each other, we may make the following remarks:

(1.) That no apology or vindication of it is offered by the sacred writer. It was undoubtedly improper and evil. It was a melancholy instance in which even apostles evinced an improper spirit, and engaged in improper strife.

(2.) In this contention it is probable that Paul was, in the main, right. Barnabas seems to have been influenced by attachment to a relative; Paul sought a helper who would not shrink from duty and danger. It is clear that Paul had the sympathies and prayers of the church in his favour, Acts 15:40, and it is more than probable that Barnabas departed without any such sympathy, Acts 15:39.

(3.) There is reason to think that this contention was overruled for the furtherance of the gospel. They went to different places, and preached to different people. It often happens that the unhappy and wicked strifes of Christians are the means of exciting their zeal, and of extending the gospel, and of establishing churches. But no thanks to their contention; nor is the guilt of their anger and strife mitigated by this.

(4.) This difference was afterwards reconciled, and Paul and Barnabas again became travelling companions, 1Cor 9:6, Gal 2:9.

(5.) There is evidence that Paul also became reconciled to John Mark, Col 4:10, Phm 1:24, 2Ti 4:11. How long this separation continued is not known; but perhaps in this journey with Barnabas, John gave such evidence of his courage and zeal as induced Paul again to admit him to his confidence as a travelling companion, and as to become a profitable fellow-labourer. See 2Ti 4:11, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

(6.) This account proves that there was no collusion or agreement among the apostles to impose upon mankind. Had there been such an agreement, and had the books of the New Testament been an imposture, the apostles would have been represented as perfectly harmonious, and as united in all their views and efforts. What impostor would have thought of the device of representing the early friends of the Christian religion as divided, and contending, and separating from each other? Such a statement has an air of candour and honesty, and at the same time is apparently so much again, st the truth of the system, that no impostor would have thought of resorting to it.

40 and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by
the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Acts-16

Timothy Accompanies Paul and Silas

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain
disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman,
which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father *was* a Greek:
2 which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra
and
Iconium.
3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and
circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those
quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

Him would Paul have, etc. This was an instance of Paul's selecting young men of piety for the holy ministry. It shows,

(1.) that he was disposed to look up and call forth the talent that might be in the church, that might be usefully employed. It is quite evident that Timothy would not have thought of this, had it not been suggested by Paul. The same thing education societies are attempting now to accomplish.

(2.) That Paul sought proper qualifications, and valued them. Those were,

(a.) that he had a good reputation for piety, etc., Acts 16:2 This he demanded as an indispensable qualification for a minister of the gospel. 1Timm 3:7. "Moreover he (a bishop) must have a good report of them which are without." Comp. Acts 22:12.

(b) Paul esteemed him to be a young man of talents and prudence. His admitting him to a partnership in his labours, and his entrusting to him the affairs of the church at Ephesus, prove this.

(c) He had been carefully trained in the Holy Scriptures. A foundation was thus laid for usefulness. And this qualification

seems to have been deemed by Paul of indispensable value for the right discharge of his duties in this holy office.

And he took and circumcised him. This was evidently done to avoid the opposition and reproaches of the Jews. It was a measure not binding in itself, (comp. Acts 15:1,28,29) but the neglect of which would expose to contention and opposition among the Jews, and greatly retard or destroy his usefulness. It was an act of expediency for the sake of peace, and was in accordance with Paul's uniform and avowed principle of conduct. 1Cor 9:20, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." Comp. Acts 21:23-26.

(g) "circumcised him, because" Gal 2:3-8, 5:1-3

(h) "Jews which were" 1Cor 9:20. But at the same time Titus, who was a Gentile, both by father and mother, him he would not circumcise; neither suffering the yoke of circumcision to be laid on the Gentiles, which God had never imposed, nor would be seen to countenance those who held circumcision necessary to salvation. O what an admirable pattern has this great and humble apostle left to posterity! he became all things to all men, and either used or refused indifferent things, according as the use or disuse of them tended to the church's education, and men's salvation.

From whence learn, That in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, Christians ought to act prudentially, and either do, or not do, some things of lesser moment, according as it may promote, and best conduce to the church's peace and edification.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

The sense is this, That as Paul and Silas passed through the cities in Syria and Cilicia, they delivered to the several churches, as they passed along, the decrees to observe, which

were ordained by the apostles and elders met in council at Jerusalem, whereby those churches were established in the faith, and many more every day converted unto Christ.

Here note, 1. The messengers which delivered these decrees, Paul and Silas, with a special regard unto the church's unity and peace. Behold here an excellent pattern for Christians in general, and the ministers of the gospel in particular; as to maintain truth, so to procure, promote, and preserve the church's peace. Truth and peace, which God hath joined together, Zech 8:19 let none dare to put asunder.

Note, 2. What it was that St. Paul here made the delivery of: the decrees made by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem; not the decrees made by the whole church, but by the ministers of the church only: none so fit to determine church-differences as church-officers.

Note, 3. To whom these decrees were delivered; namely, to the churches, as they passed along through the several cities; so many cities, so many churches: the whole company of Christians within a city and the adjacent territory, where wont to be framed into a Christian society or church, and several congregations made but one church. To set up churches in churches, and to gather churches out of churches, has no precedent, no warrant, no countenance from any phrase of scripture, or practice of the apostles' times.

Note, 4. The end for which these decrees were delivered; namely, to bring all the churches to unity and uniformity; to unity in judgment, and uniformity in practice, that they might be all of one heart, and one way.

Learn hence, That unity and uniformity among the churches of Christ is a thing to be earnestly desired and endeavoured; their unity is their strength and beauty both.

Note, lastly, The success and fruit of the delivery of these decrees to the churches, ver. 5. So were the churches established in the faith, and increasing in number daily.

Where observe, A double blessing accruing to the churches: the one of confirmation, So were the churches established: the other of augmentation. They increased in number daily.

Learn, 1. That as divisions do shake and unsettle, so unity and uniformity do establish, and confirm, the church of Christ: So were the churches established.

2. That it is a blessed thing to hear of the churches multiplying, by the number of converts increasing, is happy; but to multiply churches by breaking churches in pieces, is a sad multiplication.

The Lord keep his churches from such increases! and the Lord pardon those who for private interest have so increased churches by gathering churches out of churches, pretendedly for greater purity-sake, but really for advantage-sake!

Doctrines crying up purity to the ruin of unity, reject; for the gospel calls for unity as well as fo

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

Probably by a direct revelation. The reason of this was, doubtless, that it was the intention of God to extend the gospel farther into the regions of Greece than would have been done if they had remained in Asia Minor. This prohibition was the means of the first introduction of the gospel into Europe. In Asia. Acts 2:9. This was doubtless the region of proconsular Asia. This region was also called Ionia. Of this region Ephesus

was the capital; and here were situated also the cities of Smyrna, Thyatira, Philadelphia, etc., within which the seven churches, mentioned in Revelation chapters 1-3, were established. Cicero speaks of proconsular Asia as containing the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Carla, and Lydia. In all this region the gospel was afterwards preached with great success. But now a more important and wider field was opened before Paul and Barnabas, in the extensive country of Macedonia.

7 after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

It was the first region in Europe in which we have any record that the gospel was preached. And help us. That is, by preaching the gospel. This was a call to preach the gospel in an extensive heathen land, amidst many trials and dangers. To this call, notwithstanding all this prospect of danger, they cheerfully responded, and gave themselves to the work. Their conduct was thus an example to the church. From all portions of the earth a similar call is now coming to the churches. Openings of a similar character, for the introduction of the gospel, are presented in all lands. Appeals are coming from every quarter; and all that seems now necessary for the speedy conversion of the world, is for the church to enter into these vast fields with the self-denial, spirit, and zeal which characterized the apostle Paul.

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

The Imprisonment at Philippi

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis;

12 and from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither.*

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us:* whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

In this oratory, St. Paul preached to the women, they being both most numerous and most zealous; and God gives him the seal of his ministry in the conversion of Lydia.

In which famous conversion observe how particularly the Holy Ghost is in relating the several circumstances belonging to it; she is described by her person and sex, a certain woman; by her name Lydia; by her calling and employment, a seller of purple; by her city, Thyatira; by her pious disposition, she worshipped God.

Her conversion is described,

1. By the efficient cause of it; the Lord opened her heart.

2. By the instrumental cause of it; her attending to the things that were spoken of Paul.

Learn, 1. That the hearts of persons are naturally shut up and fast barred against Jesus Christ.

2. That the opening of the heart to receive Jesus Christ, is the peculiar effect of the sovereign power and omnipotent grace of God.

3. That till God opens the heart of a sinner, the preaching of the gospel little affecteth, though never so plainly and persuasuvely preached. That when once the heart is opened, the ear will not be shut, the person is truly attentive to the preaching of the gospel: The Lord opened Lydia's heart, and she attended. In this oratory, St. Paul preached to the women,

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15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

If ye have judged me to be faithful. If you deem me a Christian, or a believer. And she constrained us. She urged us. This was an instance of great hospitality, and also an evidence of her desire for further instruction in the doctrines of religion.

16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

Possessed with a spirit of divination. Greek, Python. See the margin. Python, or Pythios, was one of the names of Apollo, the Grecian god of the fine arts, of music, poetry, medicine, and eloquence. Of these he was esteemed to have been the inventor. He was reputed to be the third son of Jupiter and Latona. He had a celebrated temple and oracle at Delphi, which was resorted to from all parts of the world, and which was perhaps the only oracle that was in universal repute. The name Python is said to have been given him, because, as soon as he was born, he destroyed with arrows a serpent of that name, that had been seen by Juno to persecute Latona; hence his common name was the Pythian Apollo. He had temples on Mount Parnassus, at Delphi, Delos, Claros, Tenedos, etc., and his worship was almost universal In the celebrated oracle at Delphi, the priestess of Apollo pretended to be inspired; became violently agitated during the periods of pretended inspiration; and during those periods gave such responses to inquirers as were regarded as the oracles of the god. Others would also make pretensions to such inspiration; and the art of fortune-telling, or of jugglery, was extensively practised, and was the source of much gain. Acts 8:8-10. What was the cause of this extensive delusion in regard to the oracle at Delphi, it is not necessary now to inquire. It is plain that Paul regarded this as a case of demoniacal possession, and treated it accordingly.

17 the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

The same followed Paul, etc. Why she did this, or under what pretence, the sacred writer has not informed us. Various conjectures have been formed of the reason why this was done. It may have been,

(1.) that as she prophesied for gain, she supposed that Paul and Silas would reward her if she publicly proclaimed that they were the servants of God. Or,

(2.) because she was conscious that an evil spirit possessed her, and that she feared that Paul and Silas would expel that spirit; and that, by proclaiming them to be the servants of God, she hoped to conciliate their favour. Or,

(3.) more probably, it was because she saw evident tokens of their being sent from God, and that their doctrine would prevail; and by proclaiming this she hoped to acquire more authority, and a higher reputation for being herself inspired. Comp. Mk 5:7.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

But Paul, being grieved. Being molested, troubled, offended. Paul was grieved, probably,

(1.) because her presence was troublesome to him;

(2.) because it might be said that he was in alliance with her, and that his pretensions were just like hers;

(3) because what she did was for the sake of gain, and was a base imposition;

(4.) because her state was one of bondage and delusion, and it was proper to free her from this demoniacal possession; and,

(5.) because the system under which she was acting was a part of a vast scheme of delusion and imposture, which had spread over a large portion of the pagan world, and which was then holding it in bondage. Throughout the Roman empire, the inspiration of the priestesses of Apollo was believed in; and

temples were everywhere reared to perpetuate and celebrate the delusion. Against this extensive system of imposture and fraud, Christianity must oppose itself; and this was a favourable instance to expose the delusion, and to show the power of the Christian religion over all the arts and powers of imposture. The mere fact that in a very few instances--of which this was one--they spoke the truth, did not make it improper for Paul to interpose. That fact would only tend to perpetuate the delusion, and to make his interposition more proper and necessary. The expulsion of the evil spirit would also afford a signal proof of the fact that the apostles were really from God. A far better proof than her noisy and troublesome proclamation of it would furnish.

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the market place unto the rulers,

The hope of their gains was gone. It was this that troubled and enraged them. And this is as likely to enrage men as anything. Instead of regarding the act as proof of Divine power, they were intent only on their profits. And their indignation furnishes a remarkable illustration of the fixedness with which men will regard wealth; of the fact that the love of it will blind them to all the truths of religion, and all the proofs of the power and presence of God; and of the fact that any interposition of Divine power that destroys their hopes of gain, fills them with wrath and hatred and murmuring. Many a man has been opposed to God and his gospel, because, if religion should be extensively prevalent, the hopes of gain would be gone. Many a slave-dealer, and many a trafficker in ardent spirits, and many a man engaged in other unlawful modes of gain, have been unwilling to abandon their employments, simply because the hopes of their gain would be destroyed. No small part of the opposition to the gospel arises from the fact, that, if embraced, it would strike at so much of the dishonourable employments of men, and make them honest and conscientious.

20 and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither
to observe, being Romans.

Do exceedingly trouble our city. In what way they did it, they specify in the next verse. The charge which they wished to substantiate was that of being disturbers of the public peace. All at once they became conscientious. They forgot the subject of their gains, and were greatly distressed about the violation of the laws. There is nothing that will make men more hypocritically conscientious, than to denounce, and detect, and destroy their unlawful and dishonest practices. Men who are thus exposed become suddenly filled with reverence for the law, or for religion; and they, who have heretofore cared nothing for either, become greatly alarmed lest the public peace should be disturbed. Men slumber quietly in sin, and pursue their wicked gains; they hate or despise all law and all forms of religion; but the moment their course of life is attacked and exposed, they become full of zeal for laws that they would not themselves hesitate to violate, and for the customs of religion, which in their hearts they thoroughly despise. Worldly-minded men often thus complain that their towns, and cities, and villages, are disturbed by revivals of religion; and the preaching of the truth, and attacking vice, often arouses this hypocritical conscientiousness, and makes them alarmed for the laws, and for religion, and for order, which they at other times are the first to disturb and disregard.

And teach customs. The word customs here (εθη) refers to religious rites or forms of worship. Acts 6:14. They meant to charge the apostles with introducing a new mode of worship and a new religion, which was unauthorized by the Roman laws. This was a cunning and artful accusation. It is perfectly evident that they cared nothing either for the religion of the Romans or of the Jews. Nor were they really concerned about any change of religion. Paul had destroyed their hopes of gain; and as they could not prevent that except by securing his punishment or expulsion, and as they had no way of revenge except by endeavouring to excite indignation against him and Silas for violating the laws, they endeavoured to convict them

of such violation. This is one, among many instances, where wicked and unprincipled men will endeavour to make religion the means of promoting their Own interest. If they can make money by it, they will become its professed friends; or if they can annoy Christians, they will at once have remarkable zeal for the laws and for the purity of religion. Many a man opposes revivals of religion and the real progress of evangelical piety, from professed zeal for truth and order. Which are not lawful for us to receive, There were laws of the Roman empire under which they might shield themselves in this charge, though it is evident that their zeal was not because they loved the laws more, but because they loved Christianity less. Thus Servius on Virgil, AEnead, viii. 181, says, "Care was taken among the Athenians and the Romans, that no one should introduce new religions. It was on this account that Socrates was condemned, and the Chaldeans or Jews were banished from the city." Cicero (de Legibus ii. 8) says, "No person shall have any separate gods, or new ones; nor shall he privately worship any strange gods, unless they be publicly allowed." Wetstein (in loco) says, "The Romans would indeed allow foreigners to worship their own gods, but not unless it were done secretly, so that the worship of foreign gods would not interfere with the allowed worship of the Romans, and so that occasion for dissension and controversy might be avoided. Neither was it lawful among the Romans to recommend a new religion to the citizens, contrary to that which was confirmed and established by the public authority, and to call off the people from that. It was on this account that there was such a hatred of the Romans against the Jews." (Kuin﹟el.) Tertullian says, that "there was a decree that no god should be consecrated, unless approved by the senate." (Grotius.) See many other authorities quoted in Bishop Watsoh's "Apology for Christianity."

22 And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:

And when they had laid many stripes upon them. The Jews were by law prohibited from inflicting more than forty stripes, and usually inflicted but thirty-nine, 2Cor 11:24. But there was no such law among the Romans. They were unrestricted in regard to the number of lashes; and probably inflicted many more. Perhaps Paul refers to this when he says, (2Cor 11:23,) "In stripes above measure," i. e., beyond the usual measure among the Jews, or beyond moderation.

24 who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the
inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.
25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto
God: and the prisoners heard them.

Prayed. Though they had suffered much, yet they had reason to apprehend more. They sought, therefore, the sustaining grace of God. And sang praises. Nothing but religion would have enabled them to do this. They had endured much, but they had cause still for gratitude. A Christian may find more true joy in a prison, than the monarch on his throne. And the prisoners heard them. And doubtless with astonishment. Prayer and praise were not common in a prison. The song of rejoicing and the language of praise is not usual among men lying bound in a dungeon, From this narrative we may learn,

(1.) that the Christian has the sources of his happiness within him. External circumstances cannot destroy his peace and joy. In a dungeon he may find as real happiness as on a throne. On the cold earth, beaten and bruised, he may be as truly happy as on a bed of down.

(2.) The enemies of Christians cannot destroy their peace. They may incarcerate the body, but they cannot bind the spirit. They may exclude from earthly comforts, but they cannot shut them out from the presence and sustaining grace of God.

(3.) We see the value of a good conscience. Nothing else can give peace; and amidst the wakeful hours of the night, whether

in a dungeon or on a bed of sickness, it is of more value than all the wealth of the world.

(4.) We see the inestimable worth of the religion of Christ. It fits for all scenes; supports in all trims; upholds by day or by night; inspires the soul with confidence in God; and puts into the lips the songs of praise and thanksgiving.

(5.) We have here a sublime and holy scene, which sin and infidelity could never furnish. What more sublime spectacle has the earth witnessed than that of scourged and incarcerated men, suffering from unjust and cruel inflictions, and anticipating still greater sorrows; yet, with a calm mind, a pure conscience, a holy joy, pouring forth their desires and praises at midnight, into the ear of the God, who always hears prayer! The darkness, the stillness, the loneliness, all give sublimity to the scene, and teach us how invaluable is the privilege of access to the throne of mercy in this suffering world.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

For what purpose it was done is not recorded. Grotius supposes it was that they might know that the apostles might be useful to them and to others, and that by them their spiritual bonds might be loosed. Probably the design was to impress all the prisoners with the conviction of the presence and power of God, and thus to prepare them to receive the message of life from the lips of his servants Paul and Silas. They had just before heard them singing and praying; they were aware, doubtless, of the cause for which they were imprisoned; they saw evident tokens that they were the servants of the Most High, and under his protection; and their own minds were impressed and awed by the terrors of the earthquake, and by the fact of their own liberation. It renders this scene the more remarkable, that though the doors were opened, and the prisoners loosed, yet no one made any attempt to escape.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.
28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.
29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
30 and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

What must I do to be saved? Never was a more important question asked than this. It is evident that by this question he did not refer to any danger to which he might be exposed from what had happened. For,

(1.) the apostles evidently understood him as referring to his eternal salvation, as is manifest from their answer; since to believe on the Lord Jesus would have no effect in saving him from any danger of punishment to which he might be exposed from what had occurred.

(2.) He could scarcely consider himself as exposed to punishment by the Romans. The prisoners were all safe; none had escaped, or showed any disposition to escape: and besides, for the earthquake and its effects he could not be held responsible. It is not improbable that there was much confusion in his mind. There would be a rush of many thoughts; a state of agitation, and alarm, and fear; and in view of all he would naturally ask those whom he now saw to be men sent by God, and under his protection, what he should do to obtain the favour of that great Being under whose protection he saw that they manifestly were. Perhaps the following thoughts might have gone to produce this state of agitation and alarm:

(1.) They had been designated by the Pythoness Acts 16:17 as religious teachers sent from God, and appointed to "show the way of salvation;" and in her testimony he might have been

disposed to put confidence, or it might now be brought fresh to his recollection.

(2.) He manifestly saw that they were under the protection of God. A remarkable interposition--an earthquake--an event which all the heathen regarded as ominous of the presence of the Divinity--had showed this.

(3.) The guilt of their imprisonment might rush upon his mind; and he might suppose that he, the agent of the imprisonment of the servants of God, would be exposed to his displeasure.

(4.) His own guilt in attempting his own life might overwhelm him with alarm.

(5.) The whole scene was fitted to show him the need of the protection and friendship of the God that had thus interposed. In this state of agitation and alarm, the apostles directed him to the only source of peace and safety--the blood of the atonement. The feelings of an awakened sinner are often strikingly similar to those of this jailer. He is agitated, alarmed, and fearful; he sees that he is a sinner, and trembles; the sins of his life rush over his memory, and fill him with deep anxiety, and he inquires what he must do to be saved. Often too, as here, the Providence of God is the means of awakening the sinner, and of leading to this inquiry. Some alarming dispensation convinces him that God is near, and that the soul is in danger. The loss of health, property, or of a friend, may thus alarm the soul; or the presence of the pestilence, or any fearful judgment, may arrest the attention, and lead to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Reader, have you ever made this inquiry? Have you ever, like the heathen jailer at Philippi, seen yourself to be a lost sinner, and been willing to ask the way to life?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

And thy house. And thy family. That is, the same salvation is equally adapted to, and offered to your family. It does not mean

that his family would be saved simply by his believing; but that the offers had reference to them as well as to himself; that they might be saved as well as he. His attention was thus called at once, as every man's should be, to his family. He was reminded that they needed salvation; and he was presented with the assurance that they might unite with him in the peace and joy of redeeming mercy. Comp. Acts 2:39. It may be implied here that the faith of a father may be expected to be the means of the salvation of his family. It often is so, in fact. But the direct meaning of this is, that salvation was offered to his family as well as himself; implying that if they believed, they should also be saved.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

And washed their stripes. The wounds which had been inflicted by the severe scourging which they had received the night before. We have here a remarkable instance of the effect of religion in producing humanity and tenderness. This same man, a few hours before, had thrust them into the inner prison, and made them fast in the stocks. He evidently had then no concern about their stripes or their wounds. But no sooner was he converted, and his heart changed, than one of his first acts was an act of humanity. He saw them suffering; he pitied them, and hastened to minister to them, and to heal their wounds. Till the time of Christianity there never had been an hospital or an almshouse. Nearly all the hospitals for the sick since have been reared by Christians. They who are most ready to minister to the sick and dying are Christians. They who are willing to encounter the pestilential damps of dungeons to aid the prisoner, are, like Howard, Christians. Who ever saw an infidel attending a dying bed, if he could help it? and where has infidelity ever reared a hospital or an almshouse, or made provision for the widow and the fatherless? Often one of the most striking changes that occurs in conversion is seen in the disposition to be kind and humane to the suffering. Comp. Jas 1:27.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat
before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.
35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants,
saying, Let those men go.

And when it was day, etc. It is evident, from the narrative, that it was not contemplated at first to release them so soon, Acts 16:22-24. But it is not known what produced this change of purpose in the magistrates. It is probable, however, that they had been brought to reflection, somewhat as the jailer had, by the earthquake; and that their consciences had been troubled by the fact, that, in order to please the multitude, they had caused strangers to be beaten and imprisoned without trial, and contrary to the Roman laws. An earthquake is always fitted to alarm the guilty; and among the Romans it was regarded as an omen of the anger of the gods, and was therefore fitted to produce agitation and remorse. Their agitation and alarm were shown by the fact that they sent the officers as soon as it was day. The judgments of God are eminently adapted to alarm sinners. Two ancient Mss. read this, "The magistrates, who were alarmed by the earthquake, sent," etc.-- (Doddridge.) Whether this reading be genuine or not, it doubtless expresses the true cause of their sending to release the apostles.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The
magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go
in peace.
37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly
uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison;
and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let
them come themselves and fetch us out.

They have beaten us openly uncondemned. There are three aggravating circumstances mentioned, of which Paul complains.

(1.) That they had been beaten, contrary to the Roman laws.

(2.) That it had been public; the disgrace had been in the presence of the people, and the reparation ought to be as public. And

(3) that it had been done without a trial, and while they were uncondemned and therefore the magistrates ought themselves to come and release them, and thus publicly acknowledge their error. Paul knew the privileges of a Roman citizen; and at proper times, when the interests of justice and religion required it, he did not hesitate to assert them. In all this he understood and accorded with the Roman laws. The Valerian law declared, that if a citizen appealed from the magistrate to the people, it should not be lawful for the magistrate to beat him with rods, or to behead him. (Plutarch, Life of P. Valeflus Publicola. Livy, ii. 8.) By the Porcian law, it was expressly forbidden that a citizen should be beaten, (Livy, iv. 9.) Cicero (Pro. Rabir. chap. 4) says, that the body of every Roman citizen was inviolable. "The Porcian law," he adds, "has removed the rod from the body of every Roman citizen." And in his celebrated oration against Verres, he says, "A Roman citizen was beaten with rods in the forum, O judges; where, in the mean time, no groan, no other voice of this unhappy man was heard, except the cry, 'I am a Roman citizen'--Take away this hope," he says, "take away this defence from the Roman citizens--let there be no protection in the cry, I am a Roman citizen--and the praetor can with impunity inflict any punishment on him who declares himself a citizen of Rome," etc. Being Romans. Being Romans, or having the privilege of Roman citizens. They were born Jews, but they claimed that they were Roman citizens, and had a right to the privilege of citizenship. On the ground of this claim, and the reason why Paul claimed to be a Roman citizen, Acts 22:28. Privily. Privately. The release should be as public as the unjust act of imprisonment. As they have publicly attempted to disgrace us, so they should as publicly acquit us. This was a matter of mere justice; and as it was of great importance to their character and success, they insisted on it. Nay, verily; but let them come, etc. It was proper that they should be required to do this,

(1.) because they had been illegally imprisoned, and the injustice of the magistrates should be acknowledged.

(2.) Because the Roman laws had been violated, and the majesty of the Roman people thus insulted and honour should be done to the laws.

(3.) Injustice had been done to Paul and Silas, and they had a right to demand just treatment and protection.

(4.) Such a public act on the part of the magistrates would strengthen the young converts, and show them that the apostles were not guilty of a violation of the laws.

(5.) It would tend to the honour and to the furtherance of religion. It would be a public acknowledgment of their innocence; and would go far towards lending to them the sanction of the laws as religious teachers. We may learn from this also,

(1.) that though Christianity requires meekness in the reception of injuries, that there are occasions where Christians may insist on their rights according to the laws. Comp. Jn 18:23.

(2.) That this is to be done, particularly where the honour of religion is concerned, and where by it the gospel will be promoted. A Christian may bear much as a man in a private capacity, and may submit, without any effort to seek reparation; but where the honour of the gospel is concerned--where submission, without any effort to obtain justice, might be followed by disgrace to the cause of religion--a higher obligation may require him to seek a vindication of his character, and to claim the protection of the laws. His name, and character, and influence, belong to the church. The laws are designed as a protection to an injured name, or of violated

property and rights, and of an endangered life. And when that protection can be had only by an appeal to the laws, such an appeal, as in the case of Paul and Silas, is neither vindictive nor improper. My private interests I may sacrifice, if I choose; my public name, and character, and principles belong to the church and the world; and the laws, if necessary, may be called in for their protection.

38 And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

They feared, when they heard, etc. They were apprehensive of punishment for having imprisoned them in violation of the laws of the empire. To punish unjustly a Roman citizen was deemed an offence to the majesty of the Roman people, and was severely punished by the laws. Dionysius Hall. (Ant. Rom. ii.) says, that "the punishment appointed for those who abrogated or transgressed the Valerian law was death, and the confiscation of his property." The emperor Claudius deprived the inhabitants of Rhodes of freedom for having crucified some Roman citizens. Dio. Cuss. lib. 60. (See Kuin[illegible]el and Grotius.)

39 And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city.

And they came and besought them. A most humiliating act for Roman magistrates; but in this case it was unavoidable. The apostles had them completely in their power, and could easily effect their disgrace and ruin. Probably they besought them by declaring them innocent; by affirming that they were ignorant that they were Roman citizens, etc. And desired them to depart, etc. Probably,

(1.) to save their own character, and to secure from their taking any further steps to convict the magistrates of violating the laws; and;

(2.) to evade any further popular tumult on their account. This advice they saw fit to comply with, after they had seen and comforted the brethren, Acts 16:40. They had accomplished their main purpose in going to Philippi; they had preached the

gospel; had laid, the foundation of a flourishing church, (comp. the Epistle to the Philippians;) and they were now prepared to prosecute the purpose of their agency into surrounding regions. Thus the opposition of the people and the magistrates at Philippi was the occasion of the founding of the church there; and thus their unkind and inhospitable request that they should leave them, was the means of the extension of the gospel into adjacent regions.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into *the house of* Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Acts-17

The Uproar in Thessalonica

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
2 and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,
3 opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Jesus should suffer, this point, the Jews were unwilling to admit; but it was essential to his argument in proving that Jesus was the Messiah, to show that it was foretold that he should die for the sins of men. On the necessity of this, Lk 4:26. Have suffered. That he should die. And that this Jesus. And that this Jesus of Nazareth, who has thus suffered and risen, whom, said he, I preach to you, is the Messiah. The arguments by which Paul probably proved that Jesus was the Messiah were,

(1.) that he corresponded with the prophecies respecting him, in the following particulars:

(a.) He was born at Bethlehem, Mic 5.2

(b.) He was of the tribe of Judah, Gen 49:10

(c.) He was descended from Jesse, and of the royal line of David, Isa 11:1,10

(d.) He came at the time predicted Dan 9:24-27

(e.) His appearance, character, work, etc., corresponded with the predictions of Isa 53.

(2.) His miracles proved that he was the Messiah, for he professed to be, and God would not work a miracle to confirm the claims of an impostor.

(3.) For the same reason, his resurrection from the dead proved that he was the Messiah.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

And of the devout Greeks. Religious Greeks; or, of those who worshipped God. Those were so denoted who had renounced the worship of idols, and who attended on the worship of the synagogue, but who were not fully admitted to the privileges of Jewish proselytes. They were called, by the Jews, proselytes of the gate.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Thus afterwards, in the primitive times, whatever calamities came upon the state and kingdom, whatever commotions or tumults did arise in nations, presently Christianity was blamed, and instantly the Christians were cast to the lions; whereas it is not the gospel, but men's corruption, which breeds disturbances

Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort. This is an unhappy translation. The word lewd is not in the original. The Greek is, "And having taken certain wicked men of those who were about the forum," or market-place. The forum, or market-place, was the place where the idle assembled, and where those were gathered together that wished to be employed, Mt 20:3. Many of these would be of abandoned character --the idle, the dissipated, and the worthless; and, therefore, just the materials for a mob. It does not appear that they felt any particular interest in the subject; but they were, like other mobs, easily excited, and urged on to any acts of violence. The pretence on which the mob was excited was, that they had everywhere produced disturbance, and that they violated the laws of the Roman emperor, Acts 17:6,7. It may be observed, however, that a mob usually regards very little the cause in which they are engaged. They may be roused either for or against religion, and become as full of zeal for the insulted honour of religion as against it. The profane, the worthless, and the abandoned, thus often become violently enraged for the honour of religion, and fun of indignation and tumult against those who are accused of violating public peace and order.

These that have turned the world upside down. That have excited commotion and disturbance in other places. The charge has been often brought against the gospel, that it has been the occasion of confusion and disorder.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain
brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have
turned the world upside down are come hither also;
7 whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the
decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar. The charge against them was that of sedition and rebellion against the Roman emperor. Grotius on this verse remarks, that the Roman people, and after them the emperors, would not permit the name of king to be mentioned in any of the vanquished

provinces, except by their permission. Saying that there is another king. This was probably a charge of mere malignity. They probably understood, that when the apostles spoke of Jesus as a king, they did not do it as of a temporal prince. But it was easy to pervert their words, and to give plausibility to the accusation. The same thing had occurred in regard to the Lord Jesus himself, Lk 23:2.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when
they heard these things.
9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the others,
they let them go.

And when they had taken security of Jason. This is an expression taken from courts, and means that Jason and the other gave satisfaction to the magistrates for the good conduct of Paul and Silas, and became responsible for it. Whether it was by depositing a sum of money, and by thus giving bail, is not quite Clear. The sense is, that they did it in accordance with the Roman usages, and gave sufficient security for the good conduct of Paul and Silas. Heuman supposes that the pledge given was, that they should leave the city. Michaelis thinks that they gave a pledge that they would no more harbour them; but that if they returned again to them, they would deliver them to the magistrates.

The Apostles at Beroea

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by
night unto Beroea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue
of the Jews.
11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that
they received the word with all readiness of mind, and
searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Daily. Not only on the Sabbath, and in the synagogue; but they made it a daily employment. It is evident from this, that they had the Scriptures; and this is one proof that Jewish families would, if possible, obtain the oracles of God. Whether those things were so. Whether the doctrines stated by Paul and Silas

were in accordance with the Scriptures. The Old Testament they received as the standard of truth, and whatever could be shown to be in accordance with that they received. On this verse we may remark, (1.) that it is proof of true nobleness and liberality of mind to be willing to examine the proofs of the truth of religion. What the friends of Christianity have had most cause to lament and regret is, that so many are unwilling to examine its claims; that they spurn it as unworthy of serious thought, and condemn it without hearing. (2.) The Scriptures should be examined daily. If we wish to arrive at the truth, they should be the object of constant study. That man has very little reason to expect that he will grow in knowledge and grace, who does not peruse, with candour and With prayer, a portion of the Bible every day. (3.) The constant searching of the Scriptures is the best way to keep the mind from error. He who does not do it daily may expect to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine," and to have no settled opinions. (4) The preaching of ministers should be examined by the Scriptures. Their doctrines are of no value unless they accord with the Bible. Every preacher should expect his doctrines to be examined in this way, and to be rejected if they are not in accordance with the word of God. The church, in proportion to its increase in purity and knowledge, will feel this more and more; and it is an indication of advance in piety when men are increasingly disposed to examine everything by the Bible. How immensely important then is it, that the young should be trained up to diligent habits of searching the word of God. And how momentous is the duty of parents, and of Sabbath-school teachers, to inculcate just views of the interpretation of the Bible, and to form the habits of the rising generation so that they shall be disposed and enabled to examine every doctrine by the sacred oracles. The purity of the church depends on the extension of the spirit of the noble-minded Bereans; and that spirit is to be extended mainly by the instrumentality of Sabbath-schools.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Beroea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

As Christ sends his ministers, so the devil sends his messengers from place to place; and as the ministers of Christ are never weary of his service for the good of souls, so persecutors are restless, they will compass sea and land to harass and drive the faithful ambassadors of Christ from city to city, and if it were in their power, to banish them out of the world. Lord! help all thy faithful ministers to execute this piece of holy revenge upon Satan, that we may be even with him for all his malice and spite against us. O let us endeavour to do all the possible service, and the utmost good we can, wherever we come.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timothy abode there still.

It was good policy and great providence in the apostle and his friends to look one way and go another; to look towards the sea, and to go to Athens by land.

There is a wise and holy subtilty in foreseeing the evil, and hiding ourselves: a serpent's eye is a singular ornament in a dove's head.

Piety without policy, is too simple to be safe; and policy without piety, is too subtle to be good. The sagacity of the serpent, and the innocency of the dove, both may and ought to go together.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Athens was the most celebrated city of Greece, and was distinguished for the military talents, learning, eloquence, and politeness of its inhabitants. No city of Greece, or of the ancient world, was so much distinguished for philosophy, learning, and the arts. The most celebrated warriors, poets, statesmen, and philosophers, were either born or flourished there. The most celebrated models of architecture and statuary were there; and for ages it held its pre-eminence in civilization, arts, and arms.

Paul at Athens

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Now while Paul waited. How long he was there is not intimated; but doubtless some time would elapse before they could arrive. In the mean time, Paul had ample opportunity to observe the state of the city. His spirit was stirred in him. His mind was greatly excited. The word used here παρωξυνετο denotes any excitement, agitation, or paroxysm of mind, 1Cor 13:5. It here means that the mind of Paul was greatly concerned, or agitated, doubtless with pity and distress, at their folly and danger. The city wholly given to idolatry. Greek, κατειδωλον. It is well translated in the margin, "full of idols." The word is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. That this was the condition of the city is abundantly testified by profane writers. Thus Pausanias (in Attic. i. 24) says, "The Athenians greatly surpassed others in their zeal for religion" Lucian (T. i. Prometh. p. 180) says of the city of Athens," On every side there are altars, victims, temples, and festivals." Livy (45, 27) says, that Athens "was full of the images of gods and men, adorned with every variety of material, and with all the skill of art." And Petronius (Sat. xvii.) says humourously of the city, that "it was easier to find a god than a man there." See Kuin﹟el. In this verse we may see how a splendid, idolatrous city will strike a pious mind. Athens then had more that was splendid in architecture, more that was brilliant in science, and more that was beautiful in the arts, than any other city in the world; perhaps more than all the rest of the world united. Yet there is no account that the mind of Paul was filled with admiration; there is no record that he spent his time in examining the works of art; there is no evidence that he forgot his high purpose in an idle and useless contemplation of temples and statuary. His was a Christian mind; and he contemplated all this with a Christian heart. That heart was deeply affected in view of the amazing guilt of a people that were ignorant of the true God, and that had filled their city with idols reared to the honour of imaginary divinities; and who, in

the midst of all this splendour and luxury, were going down to the gates of death. So should every pious man feel who treads the streets of a splendid and guilty city. The Christian will not despise the productions of art; but he will feel, deeply feel, for the unhappy condition of those who, amidst wealth and splendour and adorning, are withholding their affections from the living God, bestowing them on the works of their own hands, or on objects degraded and polluting, and who are going unredeemed to eternal woe. Happy would it be if every Christian traveller who visits cities of wealth and splendour would, like Paul, be affected in view of their crimes and dangers; and happy if, like him, men could cease their unbounded admiration of magnificence and splendour in temples and palaces and statuary, to regard the condition of mind, not perishable like marble; and of the soul, more magnificent even in its ruins than all the works of Phidias or Praxiteles.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Verse 18. Then certain philosophers. Athens was distinguished, among all the cities of Greece and the world, for the cultivation of a subtle and refined philosophy. This was their boast, and the object of their constant search and study, 1Cor 1:22. Of the Epicureans. This sect of philosophers was so named from Epicurus, who lived about 300 years before the Christian era. They denied that the world was created by God, and that the gods exercised any care or providence over human affairs, and also the immortality of the soul. Against these positions of the sect, Paul directed his main argument, in proving that the world was created and governed by God. One of the distinguishing doctrines of Epicurus was, that pleasure was the summum bonum, or chief good, and that virtue was to be practised only as it contributed to pleasure. By pleasure,

however, Epicurus did not mean sensual and grovelling appetites, and degraded vices, but rational pleasure, properly regulated and governed. See Good's Book of Nature. But whatever his views were, it is certain that his followers had embraced the doctrine that voluptuousness and the pleasures of sense were to be practised without restraint. Both in principle and practice, therefore, they devoted themselves to a life of gaiety and sensuality, and sought happiness only in indolence, effeminacy, and voluptuousness. Confident in the belief that the world was not under the administration of a God of justice; they gave themselves up to the indulgence of every passion; the infidels of their time, and the exact example of the gay and fashionable multitudes of all times, that live without God, and that seek pleasure as their chief good. And of the Stoics. These were a sect of philosophers, so named from the Greek στοα, stoa, porch, or portico, because Zeno, the founder of the sect, held his school and taught in a porch, in the city of Athens. Zeno was born in the island of Cyprus, but the greater part of his life was spent at Athena in teaching philosophy. After having taught publicly forty-eight years, he died at the age of ninety-six, two hundred and-sixty-four years before Christ. The doctrines of the sect were, that the Universe was created by God; that all things were fixed by fate; that even God was under the dominion of fatal necessity; that the fates were to be submitted to; that the passions and affections were to be suppressed and restrained; that happiness consisted in the insensibility of the soul to pain; and that a man should gain an absolute mastery over all the passions and affections of his nature. They were stern in their views of virtue, and, like the Pharisees prided themselves on their own righteousness. They supposed that matter was eternal, and that God was either the animating principal or soul of the world, or that all things were a part of God. They fluctuated much in their views of a future state; some of then holding that the soul would exist only until the destruction of the universe, and others that it would finally be absorbed into the Divine Essence, and become a part of God. It will be readily seen, therefore, with what pertinency and address Paul discoursed to them. The leading doctrines of both

sects were met by him. Encountered him. Contended with him; opposed themselves to him. And some said. This was said in scorn and contempt. He had excited attention; but they scorned the doctrines that should be delivered by an unknown foreigner from Judea. What will this babbler say? Margin, base fellow. Greek, σπερμολογος. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means one who collects seeds; and was applied by the Greeks to the poor persons who collected the scattered grain in the fields after harvest, or to gleaners; and also to the poor, who obtained a precarious subsistence around the markets and in the streets. It was also applied to birds that picked up the scattered seeds of grain in the field, or in the markets. The word came hence to have a two-fold signification. (1.) It denoted the poor, needy, and vile; the refuse and offscouring of society; and, (2,) from the birds which were thus employed, and which were troublesome by their continual unmusical sounds, it came to denote those who were talkative, garrulous, and opinionated; those who collected the opinions of others, or scraps of knowledge, and retailed them fluently, without order or method, It was a word, therefore, expressive of their contempt for an unknown foreigner who should pretend to instruct the learned men and philosophers of Greece. Doddridge renders it, "retailer of scraps." Syriac, "collector of words." Other some. Others. He seemeth to be a setter forth. He announces or declares the existence of strange gods. The reason why they supposed this was, that he made the capital points of his preaching to be Jesus and the resurrection, which they mistook for the names of divinities. Of strange gods. Of foreign gods, or demons. They worshipped many gods themselves; and as they believed that every country had its own peculiar divinities, they supposed that Paul had come to announce the existence of some such foreign, and to them unknown divinities. The word translated gods δαιμονιων, denotes, properly, the genii, or spirits who were superior to men, but inferior to the gods. It is, however, often employed to denote the gods themselves; and is evidently so used here. The gods among the Greeks were such as were supposed to have that rank by nature. The demons were such as had been exalted

to divinity from being heroes and distinguished men. He preached unto them Jesus. He proclaimed him as the Messiah. The mistake which they made, by supposing that he was a foreign divinity, was one which was perfectly natural for minds degraded like theirs by idolatry. They had no idea of a pure God; they knew nothing of the doctrine of the Messiah; and they naturally supposed, therefore, that he of whom Paul spoke so much must be a god of some other nation, of a rank similar to their own divinities. And the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus, and through him the resurrection of the dead. It is evident, I think, that by the resurrection (τηναναστασιν) they understood him to refer to the name of some goddess. Such was the interpretation of Chrysostom. The Greeks had erected altars to Shame, and Famine, and Desire, (Paus. i. 17,) and it is probable that they supposed "the resurrection," or the Anastasis, to be the name also of some unknown goddess who presided over the resurrection. Thus they regarded him as a setter forth of two foreign or strange gods.--Jesus, and the Anastasis, or resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus [Mars hill. *It was the highest court in Athens*], saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, *is?*

And brought him unto Areopagus. Margin, or Mars' hill (so called because the temple of mars stood upon it). This was the place or court in which the Areopagites, the celebrated supreme judges of Athens, assembled. It was on a hill almost in the middle of the city; but nothing now remains by which we can determine the form or construction of the tribunal. The hill is almost entirely a mass of stone, and is not easily accessible, its sides being steep and abrupt. On many accounts this was the most celebrated tribunal in the world. Its decisions were distinguished for justice and correctness; nor was there any court in Greece in which so much confidence was placed. This court took cognizance of murders, impieties, and immoralities; they punished vices of all kinds, including idleness; they rewarded the virtuous; they were peculiarly attentive to blasphemies against the gods, and to the performance of the sacred mysteries of religion. It was, therefore, with the greatest

propriety that Paul was questioned before this tribunal, as being regarded as a setter forth of strange gods, and as being supposed to wish to introduce a new mode of worship. See Potter's Antiquities of Greece, b. i. chap. 19; and Travels of Anacharsis, vol. i. pp. 136, 185; ii. pp. 292--295. May we know. We would know. This seems to have been a respectful inquiry; and it does not appear that Paul was brought there for the sake of trial. There are no accusations; no witnesses; none of the forms of trial. They seem to have resorted thither because it was the place where the subject of religion was usually discussed, and because it was a place of confluence of the citizens and judges and wise men of Athens, and of foreigners. The design seems to have been not to try him, but fairly to canvass the claims of his doctrines. See Acts 17:21. It was just an instance of the inquisitive spirit of the people of Athens, willing to hear before they condemned, and to examine before they approved.

The temper of the men of Athens described to us: they were great and greedy newsmongers, they spent their time in telling and hearing news of any sort. All which was the effect of an itching curiosity; a disease which has descended from age to age, from place to place, from person to person, occasioning a sinful expense of time, which can never be recalled; the neglect of our necessary affairs, which can never be redeemed; spreading false stories of others, and provoking displeasure against ourselves.

O how wise and happy were it, if we enquired after news, not as Athenians, but as Christians; that we might know the better how to manage our prayers and praises for the church and nation.

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

How wonderfully the overruling providence of God concerned itself for the apostle's preservation here at Athens: they hauled him away to their high court of judicature, which sat upon Mars'-hill, (so called because the temple of mars stood upon it,)

where the most learned men assembled, and hear and determine what new god was to be worshipped.

Here note, 1. How the providence of God brought St. Paul to a public place to preach in, Mars'-hill, where was a confluence of all the people, and a congregation of the most learned Gentile philosphers. This gave the apostle a mighty opportunity for the service of preaching.

And, 2 note, How tenderly the apostle was treated in this cruel court: although this court had condemned Diagoras, Protagoras, and Socrates himself, for undervaluing their gods, and bringing in new deities; yet the apostle's life is not only spared by these judges, but they speak candidly and kindly to the apostle, and court him to gratify their curiosity, by informing them of this novelty, which they were so inquisitive after, and desired to hear more of his divine discourse.

Thus the Lord eminently shows, how the hearts of men are in his hand, and that without his permission all the bitter enemies of his church shall not move a tongue, nor lift up a finger, against any of his ministers and members.

21 (For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill [*or*, the court of the Areopagites], and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

In the midst of Mars' hill. Greek, Areopagus. This should have been retained in the translation. Ye men of Athens. This language was perfectly respectful, notwithstanding his heart had been deeply affected by their idolatry. Everything about this discourse is calm, grave, cool, and argumentative. Paul understood the character of his auditors, and did not commence his discourse by denouncing them, or suppose that they would be convinced by mere dogmatical assertion. No happier

instance can be found, of cool, collected argumentation, than is furnished in this discourse. I perceive. He perceived this by his observations of their forms of worship, in passing through their city, Acts 17:23. In all things. In respect to all events. Ye are too superstitious. δεισιδαιμονεστερους.

This is a most unhappy translation. We use the word superstitious always in a bad sense, to denote being over scrupulous and rigid in religious observances, particularly in smaller matters; or to a zealous devotion to rites and observances which are not commanded. But the word here is designed to convey no such idea. It properly means reverence for the gods or demons. It is used in the classic writers in a good sense, to denote piety towards the gods, or suitable fear and reverence for them; and also in a bad sense, to denote improper fear or excessive dread of their anger; and in this sense it accords with our word superstitious. But it is altogether improbable that Paul should have used it in a bad sense. For,

(1.) it was not his custom needlessly to blame or offend his auditors.

(2.) It is not probable that he would commence his discourse in a manner that would only excite their prejudice and opposition.

(3.) In the thing which he specifies, Acts 17:23, as proof on the subject, he does not introduce it as a matter of blame, but rather as a proof of their devotedness to the cause of religion, and of their regard for God.

(4.) The whole speech is calm, dignified, and argumentative--such as became such a place, such a speaker, and such an audience. The meaning of the expression is, therefore, "I perceive that you are greatly devoted to reverence for religion; that it is a characteristic of the people to honour the gods, to rear altars to them, and to recognize the Divine agency in times of trial." The proof of this was the altar reared to the unknown

God; its bearing on his purpose was, that such a state of public sentiment must be favourable to an inquiry into the truth of what he was about to state.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions [*or*, gods that ye worship], I found an altar with this inscription, To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

To the unknown God. αγνωστωθεω. Where this altar was reared, or on what occasion, has been a subject of much debate with expositors. That there was such an altar in Athens, though it may not have been specifically mentioned by the Greek writers, is rendered probable by the following circumstances:

(1.) It was customary to rear such altars. Minutius Felix says of the Romans, in his Philopatria, uses this form of an oath: "I swear by the unknown God at Athens"--the very expression used by the apostle. And again he says, (chap. xxix. 180,) "We have found out the unknown God at Athens, and worshipped him with our hands stretched up to heaven," etc.

(3.) There were altars at Athens inscribed to the unknown gods. Philostratus says, (in Vita. Apollo. vi. 3,) "And this at Athens, where there are even altars to the unknown gods," Thus Pausanina (in Attic. chap. 1) says, that at Athens there are altars of gods which are called the UNKNOWN ones." Jerome, in his commentary, (Epistle to Titus 1:12,) says that the whole inscription was, "to the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa; to the unknown and strange gods."

(4.) There was a remarkable altar reared in Athens in a time of pestilence, in honour of the unknown god which had granted them deliverance. Diogenes Laertius says that Epimenides restrained the pestilence in the following manner: "Taking white and black sheep, he led them to the Areopagus, and there permitted them to go where they would, commanding those who followed them to sacrifice (τωπροσηκοντιθεω) to the god to whom these things pertained, [or who had the power of

averting the plague, whoever he might be, without adding the name,] and thus to allay the pestilence. From which it has arisen, that at this day, through the villages of the Athenians, altars are found without any name. (Dioge. Laer. b. i. & 10.) This took place about 600 years before Christ, and it is not improbable that one or more of those altars remained until the time of Paul. It should be added, that the natural inscription on those altars would be, "To the unknown god." None of the gods to whom they usually sacrificed could deliver them from the pestilence. They therefore reared them to some unknown Being who had the power to free them from the plague. To the unknown God. αγνωστωθεω. Where this altar was reared, or on what occasion, has been a subject of much debate with expositors. That there was such an altar in Athens, though it may not have been specifically mentioned by the Greek writers, is rendered probable by the following circumstances:

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24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

God that made the world. The main object of this discourse of Paul is to convince them of the folly of idolatry, Acts 17:29, and thus to lead them to repentance. For this purpose he commences with a statement of the true doctrine respecting God as the Creator of all things. We may observe here,

(1.) that he speaks here of God as the Creator of the world--thus opposing indirectly their opinions that there were many gods.

(2.) He speaks of him as the Creator of the world, and thus opposes the opinion that matter was eternal; that all things were controlled by fate; and that he could be confined to temples. The Epicureans held that matter was eternal, and that the world was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms. To this opinion

Paul opposed the doctrine that all things were made by one God. Comp. Acts 14:15. Seeing that, etc. Gr., "He being Lord of heaven and earth." Lord of heaven and earth. Proprietor and Ruler of heaven and earth. It is highly absurd, therefore, to suppose that He who is present in heaven and in earth at the same time, and who rules over all, should be confined to a temple of an earthly structure, or dependent on man for anything.

25 neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed
any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Neither is worshipped with men's hands. The word here rendered worshipped--θεραπευεται--denotes to serve; to wait upon; and then to render religious service or homage. There is reference here, undoubtedly, to a notion prevalent among the heathen, that the gods were fed or nourished by the offerings made to them. The idea is prevalent among the Hindoos, that the sacrifices which are made, and which are offered in the temples, are consumed by the gods themselves. Perhaps, also, Paul had reference to the fact that so many persons were employed in their temples in serving them with their hands; that is, in preparing sacrifices and feasts in their honour. Paul affirms that the great Creator of all things cannot be thus dependent on his creatures for happiness; and consequently that that mode of worship must be highly absurd. The same idea occurs in Ps 50:10-12:

For every beast of the forest is mine; And the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain; And the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Seeing he giveth. Gr., He having given to all, etc. Life. He is the Source of life; and therefore he cannot be dependent on that life which he has himself imparted. And breath. The power of breathing, by which life is sustained. He not only originally

gave life, but he gives it at each moment; he gives the power of drawing each breath by which life is supported. It is possible that the phrase "life and breath" may be the figure hendyades, by which one thing is expressed by two words. And it is highly probable that Paul here had reference to Gen 2:7: "And the LORD God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The same idea occurs in Job 12:10:

In whose hand is the life (margin) of every living thing; And the breath of all mankind.

And all things. All things necessary to sustain life. We may see here how dependent man is on God. There can be no more absolute dependence than that for every breath. How easy it would be for God to suspend our breathing! How incessant the care, how unceasing the providence by which, whether we sleep or wake --whether we remember or forget him--he heaves our chest, fills our lungs, restores the vitality of our blood, and infuses rigour into our frame! Comp. Rom 11:36.

26 and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

And hath made of one blood. All the families of men are descended from one origin, or stock. However different their complexion, features, language, etc., yet they are derived from a common parent. The word blood is often used to denote race, stock, kindred. This passage completely proves that all the human family are descended from the same ancestor; and that, consequently, all the variety of complexion, etc., is to be traced to some other cause than that there were originally different races created. See Gen 1; comp. Mal 2:10.

The design of the apostle in this affirmation was, probably, to convince the Greeks that he regarded them all as brethren; and that, although he was a Jew, yet he was not enslaved to any narrow notions or prejudices in reference to other men. It follows also from this, that no one nation, and no individual,

can claim any pre-eminence over others in virtue of birth or blood. All are in this respect equal; and the whole human family, however they may differ in complexion, customs, and laws, are to be regarded and treated as brethren. It follows, also, that no one part of the race has a right to enslave or oppress any other part, on account of difference of complexion.

The times before appointed. This evidently refers to the dispersion and migration of nations. And it means that God had, in his plan, fixed the times when each country should be settled; the time of the location, the rise, the prosperity, and the fall of each nation. It implies,

(1.) that these times had been before appointed; and,

(2.) that it was done in wisdom. It was his plan; and the different continents and islands had not, therefore, been settled by chance, but by a wise rule, and in accordance with his arrangement and design. And the bounds of their habitation. Their limits and boundaries as a people. He has designated the black man to Africa; the white man to northern regions; the American savage he fixed in the wilds of the western continent, etc. By customs, laws, inclinations, and habits, he fixed the boundaries of their habitations, and disposed them to dwell there.

We may learn,

(1.) that the revolutions and changes of nations are under the direction of infinite wisdom;

(2.) that men should not be restless and dissatisfied with the place where God has located them;

(3.) that God has given sufficient limits to all, so that it is not needful to invade others; and,

(4.) that wars of conquest are evil. God has given to men their places of abode, and we have no right to disturb those abodes, or to attempt to displace them in a violent manner. This strain of remark by the apostle was also opposed to all the notions of the Epicurean philosophers; and yet so obviously true and just, that they could not gainsay or resist it.

27 that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

The design of thus placing them on the earth--of giving them their habitation among his works--was that they should contemplate his wisdom in his works, and thus come to a knowledge of his existence and character.

They might feel after him. The word used here--ψηλαφησειαν means, properly, to touch, to handle, Lk 24:39, Heb 12:18; and then to ascertain the qualities of an object by the sense of touch. And as the sense of touch is regarded as a certain way of ascertaining the existence and qualities of an object, the word means to search diligently, that we may know distinctly and certainly. The word has this sense here. It means to search diligently and accurately for God, to learn his existence and perfections. The Syriac renders it, "that they may seek for God, and find him from his creatures."

Though he be not far, etc. This seems to be stated by the apostle to show that it was possible to find him; and that even those who were without a revelation need not despair of becoming acquainted with his existence and perfections. He is near to us,

(1.) because the proofs of his existence and power are round about us everywhere, Ps 19:1-6.

(2.) Because he fills all things in heaven and earth by his essential presence, Ps 139:7-10, Jer 23:23,24, Amos 9:2-4, 1Kgs 8:27. We should learn then,

(a.) to be afraid to sin. God is present with us, and sees all.

(b.) He can protect the righteous. He is ever with them.

(c.) He can detect and punish the wicked. He sees all their plans and thoughts, and records all their doings.

(d.) We should seek him continually. It is the design for which he has made us; and he has given us abundant opportunities to learn his existence and perfections.

28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said,
For we are also his offspring.

For in him we live. The expression "in him" evidently means by him; by his originally forming us, and continually sustaining us. No words can better express our constant dependence on him. He is the original Fountain of life; and he upholds us each moment. A similar sentiment is found in Plautus, (5, 4, 14:) "O Jupiter, who dost cherish and nourish the race of man; by whom we live, and with whom is the hope of the life of all men."--(Kui﹟nel.) It does not appear, however, that Paul intended this as a quotation; yet he doubtless intended to state a sentiment with which they were familiar, and with which they would agree.

For we are also his offspring. This precise expression is found in Aratus, (Phaenom. v. 5,) and in Cleanthus in a hymn to Jupiter. Substantially the same sentiment is found in several other Greek poets. Aratus was a Greek poet of Cilicia, the native place of Paul, and flourished about 277 years before Christ. As Paul was a native of the same country, it is highly probable he was acquainted with his writings. Aratus passed much of his time at the court of Antigonus Gonatas, king of Macedonia. His principal work was the Phaenomena, which is here quoted, and was so highly esteemed in Greece that many learned men wrote commentaries on it. The sentiment here

quoted was directly at variance with the views of the Epicureans; and it is proof of Patti's address and skill, as well as his acquaintance with his auditors, and with the Greek poets, that he was able to adduce a sentiment so directly in point, and that had the concurrent testimony of so many of the Greeks themselves. It is one instance among thousands where an acquaintance with profane learning may be of use to a minister of the gospel.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

We ought not to think. It is absurd to suppose. The argument of the apostle is this: "Since we are formed by God; since we are like him, living and intelligent beings; since we are more excellent in our nature than the most precious and ingenious works of art, it is absurd to suppose that the original Source of our existence can be like gold, and silver, and stone. Man himself is far more excellent than an image of wood or stone; how much more excellent still must be the great Fountain and Source of all our wisdom and intelligence!" See this thought pursued at length in Isa 40:18-23.

That the sin of idolatry is not only a very great sin, but a very unreasonable and absurd sin; it is not only sacrilegious but silly for a man to worship his own workmanship, and to fall down upon his knees to the work of his own hands.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

God winked at. υπεριδων. Overlooked, connived at; did not come forth to punish. In Acts 14:16, it is expressed thus: "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." The sense is, he passed over those times without punishing them, as if he did not see them. For wise purposes he suffered them to walk in ignorance, and to make the fair experiment to show what men would do; and how much necessity there was for a revelation to instruct them in the true knowledge of God. We are not to suppose that God regarded idolatry as innocent,

or the crimes and vices to which idolatry led as of no importance; but their ignorance was a mitigating circumstance, and he suffered the nations to live without coming forth in direct judgment against them. Comp. Acts 3:17; Acts 14:16.

The duty of the present time declared: to repent. This is a commanded duty, and an universally commanded duty: Now he commands all men every where to repent.

From the whole note,

1. That the times of paganism were times of ignorance.

2. That it is an unspeakable misery to be born and brought up in such times.

3. That to live impenitently in times of knowledge, is a sin that God will by no means wink at.

4. That the great purpose and design of the gospel wheresoever it is sent and preached, is to invite men to repentance: Now he commandeth all men every where to repent.

31 because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

These words are an argument or motive to enforce the foregoing duty of repentance; God requires every man, every where, and that now immediately, to forsake their idols and sinful ways; because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Christ Jesus, of which he hath already given assurance, by raising him from the dead.

Where note,

1. A judgment to come asserted: He (that is, God) will judge the world; he that hath now an observing eye, will hereafter have a rewarding hand.

Note,

2. That there not only is a judgment to come, but the day or time of it is determined and fixed: He hath appointed a day. As the precise time of Christ's first coming was fixed by an unalterable, though unknown, decree, so is also the time of his second coming: that not knowing the hour, we may be upon our watch every hour.

Note, 3. That as the day of judgment is determined, so the person of the judge is also constituted and ordained: He will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained. This is an act of justice to our Saviour, that he, having humbled himself to take our nature, should, as the reward of his humiliation, judge that world which he died to save. And an act of kindness towards us, that he should be our judge, who took upon him our nature, and had so much love to choose our own judge, what choice could we make better for ourselves, than that man whom God hath ordained?

Observe, 4. The assurance which God hath given us of having Christ for our judge; namely, his raising him from the dead.

But how doth that assure us of Christ being our judge?

Answer. Our blessed Saviour, when he was in the world, often declared that he was appointed by God to judge the quick and the dead, and appealed to his resurrection as the great proof of what he said.

Now when Almighty God did accordingly raise him insuch a wonderful manner, (as we know he did,) what is it less than

God's setting his seal to his commission, and openly proclaiming him to be the judge of all the world?

Observe, 5. The manner of this judgment, or the measures which this judge will proceed by, at the great day; and that is, according to righteousness: He will judge the world in righteousness. Not in rigour and severity, taking all the advantages that power can give him; nor yet arbitrarily and upon prerogative, but according to known laws; nor yet partially with respect to persons; but every man's doom shall depend upon the holiness or unholiness of his heart and life.

Farther, Our Judge will candidly interpret men's actions, and make the very best of things that the case will bear; principally looking at the sincerity of men's intentions, and making all favourable allowances for their failings and infirmities that can consist with justice; and will distribute his rewards and happiness and glory to good men in the other world. Now having this high and full assurance of a judgment to come, let us seriously believe it, daily expect it, and duly prepare for it; let neither profit tempt us, nor pleasure allure us, nor power embolden us, nor privacy encourage us, to do that thing which we cannot answer at the great tribunal.

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter.*

Hath given assurance Has afforded evidence of this. That evidence consists,

(1.) in the fact that Jesus declared that he would judge the nations, Jn 5:25,26 Mt 25, and

(2.) God confirmed the truth of his declaration by raising him from the dead, or gave his sanction to what the Lord Jesus had said, for God would not work a miracle in favour of an imposter.

Some mocked. Some of the philosophers derided him. It was believed by none of the Greeks; it seemed incredible; and they regarded it as so absurd as not to admit of an argument. It has not been uncommon for even professed philosophers to mock at the doctrines of religion, and to meet the arguments of Christianity with a Sneer. The Epicureans particularly would be likely to deride this, as they denied altogether any future state. It is not improbable that this derision by the Epicureans produced such a disturbance as to break off Paul's discourse, as that of Stephen had been by the clamour of the Jews, Acts 7:54. And others said. Probably some of the Stoics. The doctrine of a future state was not denied by them; and the fact, affirmed by Paul, that one had been raised up from the dead, would appear more plausible to them, and it might be a matter worth inquiry to ascertain whether the alleged fact did not furnish a new argument for their views.

They, therefore, proposed to examine this further at some future time. That the inquiry was prosecuted any further does not appear probable; for,

(1.) no church was organized at Athens.

(2.) There is no account of any future interview with Paul.

(3.) He departed almost immediately from them, Acts 18:1. Men who defer inquiry on the subject of religion seldom find the favourable period arrive. Those who propose to examine its doctrines at a future time, often do it to avoid the inconvenience of becoming Christians now; and as a plausible and easy way of rejecting the gospel altogether, without appearing to be rude, or to give offence.

What reason can be assigned but this, That these grave philosophers, profound scholars, venerable senators and citizens, who had a name for wisdom throughout the world were too wise to be saved by the foolishness of preaching!

As the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, so the wisdom of God in the gospel is accounted foolishness by the wise men of the world; according to that of the apostle, 1Cor 1:21. "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.

We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The Areopagite. Connected with the court of Areopagus, but in what way is not known. It is probable that he was one of the judges. The conversion of one man was worth the labour of Paul; and the secret influence of that conversion might have had an extensive influence on others. In regard to this interesting account of the visit of Paul to Athens --probably the only one which he made to that splendid capital-- we may remark,

(1.) that he was indefatigable and constant in his great work.

(2.) Christians, amidst the splendour and gaieties of such cities, should have their hearts deeply affected in view of the moral desolations of the people.

(3.) They should be willing to do their duty, and to bear witness to the pure and simple gospel in the presence of the great and the noble.

(4.) They should not consider it their main business to admire splendid temples, and statues, and paintings--the works of art; but their main business should be, to do good as they may have opportunity.

(5.) A discourse, even in the midst of much wickedness and idolatry, may be calm and dignified; not an appeal merely to the passions, but to the understanding. Paul reasoned with the philosophers of Athens; he did not denounce them; he endeavoured calmly to convince them, not harshly to censure them.

(6.) The example of Paul is a good one for all Christians. In all places --cities, towns, or country; amidst all people--philosophers, and the rich, and the poor; among friends and countrymen, or among strangers and foreigners, the great object should be to do good, to instruct mankind, and to seek to elevate the human character, and promote human happiness, by diffusing the mild and pure precepts of the gospel of Christ.

Acts-18

Paul at Corinth

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;
2 and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.

Suetonius, in the life of Claudius, speaks of this decree in the ninth year of his reign, and says, The reason was because the Jews were a turbulent people--assiduo tumultuantes; and that it was impulsore Christo--upon the account of Christ; some zealous for him, others bitter against him, which occasioned great heats, such as gave umbrage to the government, and

provoked the emperor, who was a timorous jealous man, to order them all to be gone. If Jews persecute Christians, it is not strange if heathens persecute them both.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers.)

The apostle being now come to Corinth, where he was altogether a stranger, and wanting money for his subsistence, the providence of God directed him to the house of Aquila and Priscilla; who being of the same trade with himself, tent-makers, he works with his own hands to maintain himself, that he might not be burthensome to others.

Here observe,

1. The occasion of Aquila's and Priscilla's coming to Corinth, with whom St. Paul lodged. The Roman emperor Claudius had banished them from Italy and Rome, ver. 2. Claudius commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome.

Thence note, That a wicked world is soon weary of the saints of God, and longs to worm them oft of their cities and societies, never considering that their own preservation from ruin is for the saints' sake; as the alleys in a garden are watered for the sake of the flowers, which otherwise would lie dry.

Observe, 2. That the apostle had learned a trade, tent-making, before he was called to the ministry, and he wrought upon it occasionally after he was a minister. The most learned among the Jews did always learn some handicraft trade, it being a tradition amongst them, "That he that doth not learn his child a trade, teaches him to be a thief." And another says, "He that has a trade in his hand is as a vineyard that is fenced." See how humble Paul was, and wonder that so great a man could stoop so low; but he had learned condescension of his Master, who came not to be ministered to, but to minister. See how industrious he was, and how willing to take pains. He that had

so much excellent work to do with his mind, yet, when there was occasion, did not think it below him to work with his hands. Even those that are redeemed from the curse of the law are not exempt from that sentence, In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread. See how careful Paul was to recommend his ministry, and to prevent prejudices against it, even the most unjust and unreasonable; he therefore maintained himself with his own labour that he might not make the gospel of Christ burdensome, 2Co 11:7,2Th 3:8,9. 3.An honest trade, by which a man may get his bread, is not to be looked upon by any with contempt. So that although their children were designed for students, yet they did learn some trade.

Accordingly St. Paul having learned to make tents, (much used in those hot countries, by soldiers and others, to keep off the violence of the weather,) he works at Corinth, upon his trade for his own subsistence.

Men separated to the ministry of the gospel, may upon an exigency labour for their living; not but that the apostle had power and sufficient warrant to challenge maintenance for his preaching, as he often intimates in his epistle; but there was not yet any church at Corinth to maintain him; and when there was, they were mostly of the poorer and meaner sort of people, and he would give them a convincing demonstration that he sought not their's, but them.

He demands therefore no maintenance, lest it should hinder the success of his ministry; but being of the same trade with Aquila and Priscilla, he takes up his lodging with them at Corinth, and works at their trade.

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and
persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.
5 And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia,
Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that*
Jesus *was* Christ.

He was yet more earnest in this matter when his fellow-labourers, his seconds, came up with him (Ac 18:5): When

Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, and had brought him good tidings from the churches there, and were ready to assist him here, and strengthened his hands, then Paul was more than before pressed in spirit, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching. He was grieved for the obstinacy and infidelity of his countrymen the Jews, was more intent than ever upon their conversion, and the love of Christ constrained him to it (2Co 5:14): it is the word that is used here, it pressed him in spirit to it. And, being thus pressed, he testified to the Jews with all possible solemnity and seriousness, as that which he was perfectly well assured of himself, and attested to them as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the fathers and expected by them.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

How the holy apostle clears himself of the blood of those Jews, whom he had now preached the gospel unto: He said, your blood be upon your own hands; I am clean.

The faithful ministers of Christ shall never have the blood of a perishing people laid to their charge; they having warned them of their damnable state, and discovered the way of life and salvation to them, deliver their own souls; whilst the people which they preached to, die in their sins, and for their sins.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

And Crispus. He is mentioned, in 1Cor 1:14, as having been one of the few whom Paul baptized with his own hands. The conversion of such a man must have tended greatly to exasperate the other Jews, and to further the progress of the Christian faith among the Corinthians. And many of the Corinthians. Many even in this voluptuous and wicked city.

Perhaps the power of the gospel was never more signal than in converting sinners in Corinth, and rearing a Christian church in a place so dissolute and abandoned. If it was adapted to such a place as Corinth --if a church, under the power of Christian truth, could be organized there--it is adapted to any city; and there is none so corrupt that the gospel cannot change and purify it.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

Be not afraid. Perhaps Paul might have been intimidated by the learning, refinement, and splendour of Corinth; perhaps embarrassed in view of his duty of addressing the rich, the polite, and the great. To this he may allude in 1Cor 2:3: "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." In such circumstances it pleased God to meet him, and disarm his fears. This he did by assuring him of success. The fact that God had much people in that city, Acts 18:10, was employed to remove his apprehensions. The prospect of success in the ministry, and the certainty of the presence of God, will take away the fear of the rich, the learned, and the great.

No man shall set on thee. No one who shall rise up against thee shall be able to hurt thee. His life was in God's hands, and he would preserve him, in order that his people might be collected into the church. For I have. Greek, There is to me; i.e., I possess, or there belongs to me. Much people. Many who should be regarded as his true friends, and who should be saved. In this city. In that very city that was so voluptuous, so rich, so effeminate, and where there had been already so decided opposition shown to the gospel. This passage evidently means that God had a design or purpose to save many of that people; for it was given to Paul as all encouragement to him to labour there, evidently meaning that God would grant him success in his work. It cannot mean that the Lord meant to say that the great mass of the people, or that the moral and virtuous part, if there were any such, was then regarded as his people; but that he intended to convert many of those guilty and

profligate Corinthians to himself, and to gather a people for his own service there. We may learn from this,

(1.) that God has a purpose in regard to the salvation of sinners.

(2.) That that purpose is so fixed in the mind of God, that he can say that those in relation to whom it is formed are his. There is no chance; no hap-hazard; no doubt in regard to his gathering them to himself.

(3.) This is the ground of encouragement to the ministers of the gospel. Had God no purpose to save sinners, they could have no hope in their work.

(4.) This plan may have reference to the most gay, and guilty, and abandoned population; and ministers should not be deterred by the amount or the degree of wickedness from attempting to save them.

(5.) There may be more hope of success among a dissolute and profligate population, than among proud, and cold, and skeptical philosophers. Paul had little success in philosophic Athens; he had great success in dissolute Corinth. There is often more hope of converting a man openly dissolute and abandoned, than one who prides himself on his philosophy, and is confident in his own wisdom.

10 for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

That notwithstanding this good success which St. Paul had at Corinth, he seems, through human frailty, to be possessed with fear, and under an apprehension of danger from the Jews, and accordingly has thoughts of leaving the city; against which fears God antidotes him with a gracious promise of his presence with him: Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee.

Hence learn, 1. That the best and holiest of God's saints and servants are sometimes under sad and slavish fears, and prone to be discouraged, when they meet with difficulties in the way of their duty.

2. That the promise and assurance of God's gracious presence with them, will raise them up above their fears, and be a sufficient encouragement to them, for their abiding in any place, and amongst any people, let the difficulty or danger be what it will: Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and none shall hurt thee.

1. Learn hence, That although the ingratitude and perverseness of a people do sadly discourage their ministers, and tempt them to remove from them, yet God encourages them to their duty; that for the malice of some, the salvation of others may not be neglected.

2. That no opposition must discourage the ministers of God in the way of their duty; God's servants must not suffer themselves to be outdone by the devil's slaves, but bear down all opposition made against them, with patience and joyfulness. And notwithstanding all the malicious opposition made by the Jews against the apostle, yet did he continue a year and six months to preach at Corinth.

11 And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of
God among them.

And he continued. etc. Paul was not accustomed to remain long in a place. At Ephesus, indeed, he remained three years, Acts 20:31; and his stay at Corinth was caused by his success, and by the necessity of placing a church, collected out of such corrupt and dissolute materials, on a firm foundation.

12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made
insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to
the judgment seat,

13 saying, This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

They accuse the apostle before Gallio the deputy, for persuading men to worship God contrary to the law of Moses.

Who would not think but these men were truly pious, virtuous, and good, who were so zealous for the worship of God according to the law? and yet they were wicked men, and fiery persecutors. There is a noisy religion in the world? some men think, by crying the Church! the Church! and by pleading loud for the worship of God, as established by law, to atone for all their immoralities.

Praying is good, hearing and receiving the sacrament are good, if they be joined with holy walking; but if otherwise, the howling of wolves is as acceptable to Almighty God, as the prayers of those men who call Christ Master, and the church mother, but do not the things which they have commanded; yea, the very dogs which follow them to the public assemblies, shall as soon find acceptance as themselves, if they do not obey him whom they pretend to adore. It is no matter what church a wicked man is of, for it is certain he can be saved in none.

14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O *ye* Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 but if it be a question of words and names, and *of* your law, look ye *to it;* for I will be no judge of such *matters.*

Probably he had heard something of the nature of the controversy, and understood it to be a dispute about names; i.e., whether Jesus was to be called the Messiah or not. To him this would appear as a matter pertaining to the Jews alone, and to be ranked with their other disputes arising from the difference of sect and name. Of your law. A question respecting the proper interpretation of the law, or the rites and ceremonies which it commanded. The Jews had many such disputes, and Gallio did not regard them as coming under his cognizance as a magistrate. Look ye to it. Judge this among yourselves; settle

the difficulty as you can. Comp. Jn 18:31. For I will be no judge, etc. I do not regard such questions as pertaining to my office, or deem myself called on to settle them.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Probably while leaving the tribunal. Instead of "Greeks" in this verse, some Mss. read "Jews," but the former is probably the true reading. The Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic read it "the Gentiles." It is probable that this Sosthenes afterwards became a convert to the Christian faith, and a preacher of the gospel. See 1Cor 1:1,2: "Paul, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth."

18 And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn *his* head in Cenchreae: for he
had a vow.

For he had a vow. A vow is a solemn promise made to God respecting anything. The use of vows is observable throughout the Scripture. Jacob, going into Mesopotamia, vowed the tenth of his estate, and promised to offer it at Bethel to the honour of God, Gen 28:22. Moses made many regulations in regard to vows. A man might devote himself or his children to the Lord. He might devote any part of his time or property to his service. The vow they were required sacredly to observe, (De 23:21,22) except in certain specified cases they were permitted to redeem that which had been thus devoted. The most remarkable vow among the Jews was that of the Nazarite; by which a man made a solemn promise to God to abstain from wine and all intoxicating liquors, to let the hair grow, and not to enter any house polluted by having a dead body in it, or to attend any funeral. This vow generally lasted eight days, sometimes a month, sometimes during a definite period fixed by themselves, and sometimes during their whole lives. When the vow expired, the priest made an offering of a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a she-lamb for an expiatory sacrifice, and a ram

for a peace-offering. The priest then, or some other person, shaved the head of the Nazarite at the door of the tabernacle, and burnt the hair on the fire of the altar. Those who made the vow out of Palestine, and who could not come to the temple when the vow was expired, contented themselves with observing the abstinence required by the law, and cutting off the hair where they were. This I suppose to have been the case with Paul. His hair he cut off at the expiration of the vow at Cenchrea, though he delayed to perfect the vow by the proper ceremonies until he reached Jerusalem, Acts 21:23,24. Why Paul made this vow, or on what occasion, the sacred historian has not informed us, and conjecture perhaps is useless. We may observe, however,

(1,) that it was common for the Jews to make such vows to God, as an expression of gratitude or of devotedness to his service, when they had been raised up from sickness, or delivered from danger or calamity. See Josephus, b. i. 2, 15. Vows of this nature were also made by the Gentiles on occasions of deliverance from any signal calamity. Juvenal Sat. 12, 81. It is possible that Paul may have made such a vow in consequence of signal deliverance from some of the numerous perils to which he was exposed. But,

(2.) there is reason to think that it was mainly with a design to convince the Jews that he did not despise their law, and was not its enemy. See Acts 21:22-24. In accordance with the custom of the nation, and in compliance with the law which was not wrong in itself, he might have made this vow, not for a time-serving purpose, but in order to conciliate them, and to mitigate their anger against the gospel. But where nothing is recorded, conjecture is useless. Those who wish to see the subject discussed, may consult Grotius and Kuin?el in loco, and Spencer de Legibus Hebrae. p. 862, and Calmet's Dic. art. Nazarite.

But having now accompolished his vow, he shore his head, and returned to the common way of living; where the wisdom and moderation of this great apostle, in complying in indifferent things, is to be noted and imitated: To the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews.

He willingly compiled with their weakness, to show that he was no contemner of their law; for which reason he caused Timothy to be circumcised, and purified himself in the temple at Jerusalem: and behold the success of this his compliance; for, by gratifying the Jews in this condescension to the prescription of the law, he brought over very many of them to the faith of Christ.

Let not any suspect this for a sinful compliance with the Jews, in observing a ceremony which the gospel had abolished, nor censure it for a low and mean stoop in so great a man to the humour of the people; for though the ceremonial rites died with Christ, yet they were a long time in burying, and the Jews were indulged in the observation of them till they came to a clearer sight of their Christian liberty; accordingly the apostle yielded to them for the present in indifferent tings, without dissimulation or blame.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he
himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with
the Jews.
20 When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them,
he consented not;
21 but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this
feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you,
if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

Keep this feast. Probably the passover is here referred to. Why he was so anxious to celebrate that feast at Jerusalem, the historian has not informed us. It is probable, however, that he wished to meet as many of his countrymen as possible, and to remove, if practicable, the prejudices which had everywhere been raised against him, Acts 21:20,21. Perhaps, also, he

supposed that there would be many Christian converts present, whom he might meet also.

Our apostle stays not long at Ephesus, but hastens to Jerusalem to keep the feast there, namely, the feast of the passover; not that he took himself obliged to observe the feasts, or any of the antiquated ceremonies: but because of the vast concourse which he knew would be at Jerusalem at the time of the feast, from all quarters, and which would give him an opportunity to make Christ known to a great multitude. The ministers of the gospel, without the imputation of vain-glory, or seeking popular applause, may warrantably desire, and occasionally lay hold upon, an opportunity of dispensing the word to a numerous auditory, in hope that casting the net among many, they may inclose some.

Observe, lastly, The incessant care, indefatigable diligence, and unwearied pains, of this great apostle, in travelling from place to place, and at such great distances, to preach the everlasting gospel to lost sinners. From Ephesus he sails to Cesarea, from Cesarea to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Antioch, from Antioch to Galatia and Phrygia. See how the care of all the churches was upon him, and how he laboured more abundantly than they all.

Paul Returns to Antioch and Begins the Third Missionary Journey

22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

23 And after he had spent some time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Apollos Preaches at Ephesus

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Born at Alexandria. Alexandria was a celebrated city in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great. There were large numbers of Jews resident there. Acts 6:9. An eloquent man. Alexandria was famous for its schools; and it is probable that Apollos, in addition to his natural endowments, had enjoyed the benefit of these schools. Mighty in the Scriptures. Well instructed, or able in the Old Testament. The foundation was thus laid for future usefulness in the Christian church. Lk 24:19.

Hence learn, That scripture knowledge is the choicest qualification and highest commendation of a gospel minister. Apollos, an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures: without this, he can never truly and savingly make known and discover Jesus Christ: without this, he can never rightly divide the word of truth; without this, he can never convince gainsayers, either gainsayers in opinion, or gainsayers in practice; without this, he can never instruct the people fully in their duty, nor declare to them the whole council of God.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

In the right way of the Lord. The word way often refers to doctrine, Mt 21:32. It means here that he had been correctly taught in regard to the Messiah; yet his knowledge was imperfect, Acts 18:26. The amount of his knowledge seems to have been:

(1.) He had correct views of the Messiah to come--views which he had derived from the study of the Old Testament. He was expecting a Saviour that should be humble, obscure, and a sacrifice, in opposition to the prevailing notions of the Jews.

(2.) He had heard of John; had embraced his doctrine; and probably had been baptized with reference to him that was to

come. Comp. Mt 3:2, Acts 19:4. But it is clear that he had not heard that Jesus was the Messiah. With his correct views in regard to the coming of the Messiah, he was endeavouring to instruct and reform his countrymen. He was just in the state of mind to welcome the announcement that the Messiah had come, and to embrace Jesus of Nazareth as the hope of the nation.

Knowing only the baptism of John. Whether he had heard John, and been baptized by him, has been made a question, and cannot now be decided. It is not necessary, however, to suppose this, as it seems that the knowledge of John s preaching and baptism had been propagated extensively into other nations besides Judea, Acts 19:1-3. The Messiah was expected about that time. The foreign Jews would be waiting for him; and the news of John's ministry, doctrine, and success, would be rapidly propagated from synagogue to synagogue into the surrounding nations. John preached repentance, and baptized with reference to him that was to come after him, Acts 19:4; and this doctrine Apollos seems to have embraced.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them,* and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Finding him defective in his knowledge of Christianity, they took him to them, to lodge in the same house with them, and expounded to him the way of God, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, more perfectly. They did not take occasion from what they observed of his deficiency either to despise him themselves, or to disparage him to others; did not call him a young raw preacher, not fit to come into a pulpit, but considered the disadvantages he had laboured under, as knowing only the baptism of John; and, having themselves got great knowledge in the truths of the gospel by their long intimate conversation with Paul, they communicated what they knew to him, and gave him a clear, distinct, and methodical account of those things which before he had but confused notions of.

[1.] See here an instance of that which Christ has promised, that to him that hath shall be given; he that has, and uses what he has, shall have more. He that diligently traded with the talent he had doubled it quickly.

[2.] See an instance of truly Christian charity in Aquila and Priscilla; they did good according to their ability. Aquila, though a man of great knowledge, yet did no undertake to speak in the synagogue, because he had not such gifts for public work as Apollos had; but he furnished Apollos with matter, and then left him to clothe it with acceptable words. Instructing young Christians and young ministers privately in conversation, who mean well, and perform well, as far as they go, is a piece of very good service, both to them and to the church.

[3.] See an instance of great humility in Apollos. He was a very bright young man, of great parts and learning, newly come from the university, a popular preacher, and one mightily cried up and followed; and yet, finding that Aquila and Priscilla were judicious serious Christians, that could speak intelligently and experimentally of the things of God, though they were but mechanics, poor tent-makers, he was glad to receive instructions from them, to be shown by them his defects and mistakes, and to have his mistakes rectified by them, and his deficiencies made up. Young scholars may gain a great deal by converse with old Christians, as young students in the law may by old practitioners. Apollos, though he was instructed in the way of the Lord, did not rest in the knowledge he had attained, nor thought he understood Christianity as well as any man (which proud conceited young men are apt to do), but was willing to have it expounded to him more perfectly. Those that know much should covet to know more, and what they know to know it better, pressing forward towards perfection.

[4.] Here is an instance of a good woman, though not permitted to speak in the church or in the synagogue, yet doing good with the knowledge God had given her in private converse. Paul will have the aged women to be teachers of good things Tit 2:3,4.The great humility of Apollos: although he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, yet he did not disdain farther instruction. Those that are most knowing, if humble, are most sensible of their ignorance: the knowledge of the best, while they are on this side heaven, is capable of improvements. Apollos knew much, yet Aquila and Priscilla catechize the great Apollos, and add something to the treasure of his knowledge.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

The brethren wrote. The brethren at Ephesus. Why he went, the historian does not inform us. But he had heard of the success of Paul there; of the church which he had established; of the opposition of the Jews; and it was doubtless with a desire to establish that church, and with a wish to convince his unbelieving countrymen that their views of the Messiah were erroneous, and that Jesus of Nazareth corresponded with the predictions of the prophets. Many of the Greeks at Corinth were greatly captivated with his winning eloquence, 1Cor 1:12, 3:4,5 and his going there was the occasion of some unhappy divisions that sprung up in the church. But in all this, he retained the confidence and love of Paul, 1Cor 1 1Cor 3. It was thus shown that Paul was superior to envy, and that great success by one minister need not excite the envy, or alienate the confidence and good-will of another.

28 for he mightily convinced the Jews, *and that* publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Acts-19

Paul at Ephesus

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth,
Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to
Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,
2 he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye
believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as
heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost? Have ye received the extraordinary effusions and miraculo-us influences of the Holy Ghost Paul would not doubt that, if they had "believed," they had received the ordinary converting influences of the Holy Spirit--for it was one of his favourite doctrines, that the Holy Spirit renews the heart. But, besides this, the miraculous influences of the Spirit were conferred on most societies of believers. The power of speaking with tongues, or of working miracles, was imparted as an evidence of the presence of God, and of their acceptance with him, Acts 10:45,46 1Cor 15. It was natural for Paul to ask whether this evidence of the Divine favour had been granted to them.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized?
And they said, Unto John's baptism.
4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of
repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe
on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ
Jesus.

These are the words of Paul, explaining what John taught. He taught them to believe in the Messiah, and that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. The argument of Paul is, that it was highly proper for them now to profess publicly that Saviour to whom John had borne such explicit testimony. "Jesus is the Messiah for whom John came to prepare the way; and as you have embraced John's doctrine, you ought now publicly to acknowledge that Redeemer by baptism in his name."

5 When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord

Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

Separated the disciples. Removed them from the influence and society of those who were seeking to draw them away from the faith. This is often the best way to prevent the evil influence of others. Christians, if they wish to preserve their minds calm and peaceful; if they wish to avoid the agitations of conflict, and the temptations of those who would lead them astray, may often find it necessary to withdraw from their society, and should seek the fellowship of their Christian brethren.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

So that from his body. That is, these handkerchiefs which had been applied to his body, which he had used, or which he had touched. An instance somewhat similar to this occurs in the case of the woman who was healed by touching the hem of the Saviour's garment, Mt 9:20-22. Unto the sick. The sick who were at a distance, and who were unable to go where he was. If it be asked why this was done, it may be observed,

(1.) that the working of miracles in that region would greatly contribute to the spread of the gospel.

(2.) We are not to suppose that there was any efficacy in the aprons thus brought, or in the mere fact that they had touched the body of Paul, any more than there was in the hem of the Saviour's garment which the woman touched, or in the clay which he made use of to open the eyes of the blind man, Jn 8:6.

(3.) In this instance the fact, that the miracles were wrought in this manner by garments which had touched his body, was a mere sign, or an evidence to the persons concerned, that it was done by the instrumentality of Paul, as the fact that the Saviour put his fingers into the ears of a deaf man, and spit and touched his tongue, Mk 7:33, was an evidence to those who saw it, that the power of healing came from him. The bearing of these aprons to the sick was, therefore, a mere sign, or evidence to all concerned, that miraculous power was given to Paul. Handkerchiefs. The word used here--σουδαρια--is of Latin origin, and properly denotes a piece of linen with which sweat was wiped from the face; and then any piece of linen used for tying up, or containing anything, In Lk 19:20, it denotes the "napkin" in which the talent of the unprofitable servant was concealed; in Jn 11:44, 20:7, the "napkin" which was used to bind up the face of the dead, applied to Lazarus and to our Saviour. Or aprons. σιμικινθια. This also is a Latin word, and means, literally, a half-girdle--a piece of cloth which was girded round the waist to preserve the clothes of those who were engaged in any kind of work. The word aprons expresses the idea.

Thus, according to our Saviour's promise, his apostles did greater miracles than himself, Joh 14:12 not greater in regard of the manner, but in regard of the matter of them: Christ wrought his miracles in his own name, and by his own power; but the apostles wrought theirs in the name and by the power of Christ; yet it ought to be observed and considered, that although it pleased God, at the first plantation of the gospel by the apostles, to confirm Christianity by many special miracles,

(as new-set plants are well watered till they have taken fast rooting,) yet that church which wants miracles may be a true church: because,

1. There is no promise made in the scriptures to the church for her perpetual enjoying the gift of miracles. That promise, Mr 16:17 These signs shall follow them that believe, &c. was only a temporary promise.

2. We are forbidden to expect miracles, Joh 4:48 and forbidden to trust to miracles without scripture, or to regard such miracles as are wrought to confirm any doctrine that is contrary to scripture, Deut 13:3 because the miracles of the last times are declared to be the signs of Antichrist, 2Thess 3:9,10.

From all which it follows, that miracles are no infallible note of the true church, as the Papists would make it; who also produce St. Paul's handkerchiefs here, and St. Peter's shadow, Acts 5:15 as a warrant for their superstitious relics; but the text assures us, it was God that wrought the special miracles, not St. Paul, nor his handkerchiefs, but God by his hand. The miracles in the church of Rome, pretended to be wrought by the relics of saints and martyrs, are no better than lying wonders.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

The vagabond /itinerant/ Jews. Gr., Jews going about. περιερχομενων. The word vagabond with us is now commonly used in a bad sense, to denote a vagrant; a man who has no home; an idle, worthless fellow. The word, however, properly means one wandering from place to place, without any settled habitation, from whatever cause it may be. Here it denotes those Jews who wandered from place to place, practicing exorcism. Exorcists. εξορκιστων. This word properly denotes those who went about pretending to be able to expel evil spirits,

or to cure diseases by charms, incantations, etc, The word is derived from ορκος orkos, an oath, and from ορκιζω, to bind with an oath. It was applied in this sense, because those who pretended to be able to expel demons used the formula of an oath, or adjured them, to compel them to leave the possessed persons. Comp. Mt 12:27. They commonly used the name of God, or called on the demons in the name of God to leave the person. Here they used the name Jesus to command them to come out. To call over them. To name, or to use his name as sufficient to expel the evil spirit. The name of the Lord Jesus. The reasons why they attempted this were,

(1.) that Jesus had expelled many evil spirits; and,

(2.) that it was in his name that Paul had wrought his miracles. Perhaps they supposed there was some charm in this name to expel them. We adjure you. We bind you by an oath; we command you as under the solemnity of an oath, Mk 5:7, 1Thes 5:27. It is a form of putting one under oath, 1Kgs 2:43, Gen 24:37, 2Kgs 11:4, Neh 13:25. (Septuagint.) That this art was practised then, or attempted, is abundantly proved from Iraeneus, Origen, and Josephus. (Ant. b. viii. chap. 2, 5.) See Doddridge. The common name which was used was the incommunicable name of God, JEHOVAH, by pronouncing which, in a peculiar way, it was pretended they had the power of expelling demons.

The Jewish jugglers would by all means imitate the apostles in casting out devils; accordingly they use the name of Jesus as a charm; but saying the same word with the apostles signified nothing, without exercising the same faith and grace. These exorcists soon found that words without faith would not work to cast out devils, and that Christ would not give power to his name when used as a charm.

14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of
the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I

know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Verse 17. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Acquired increasing honour. The transaction showed that the miracles performed in the name of the Lord Jesus, by Paul, were real, and were wrought in attestation of the truth of the doctrine which he taught. Impostors could not work such miracles; and they who pretended to be able to do it only exposed themselves to the rage of the evil spirits. It was thus shown that there was a real, vital difference between Paul and these impostors; and their failure only served to extend his reputation and the power of the gospel.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

Their deeds. Their actions; their evil course of life. Their deeds of iniquity in their former state. The direct reference here is to the magical arts which had been used, but the word may also be designed to denote iniquity in general. They who make a profession of religion will be willing to confess their transgressions. And no man can have evidence that he is truly renewed who is not willing to confess as well as to forsake his sins, Rom 10:10, Prov 28:13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy."

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men:* and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.

Curious arts. Arts or practices requiring skill, address, cunning. The word used here--περιεργα--denotes, properly, those things that require care or skill; and was thus applied to the arts of magic and jugglery, and sleight of hand, that were practised so extensively in eastern countries. That such arts were practised

at Ephesus is well known. The Ephesian letters, by which incantations and charms were supposed to be produced, were much celebrated. They seem to have consisted of certain combinations of letters or words, which, by being pronounced with certain intonations of voice, were believed to be effectual in expelling diseases or evil spirits; or which, by being written on parchment and worn, were supposed to operate as amulets, or charms, to guard from evil spirits or from danger. Thus Plutarch (Sympos 7) says, "The magicians compel those who are possessed with a demon to recite and pronounce the Ephesian letters, in a certain order, by themselves." Thus Clemens Alex. (Strom. ii.) says, "Androcydes, a Pythagorean, says that the letters which are called Ephesian, and which are so celebrated, are symbols," etc. Erasmus says, (Adagg. Cent. 2,) that there were certain marks and magical words among the Ephesians, by using which they succeeded in every undertaking. Eustha. ad Homer. Odys. τ, says, "that those letters were incantations which Croesus used when on the funeral pile, and which greatly befriended him." He adds, that in the war between the Milesians and Ephesians, the latter were thirteen times saved from ruin by the use of these letters. See Grotius and Kuin﹟el in loco. And burned them before all men. Publicly. Their arts and offences had been public, and they sought now to undo the evil, as much as lay in their power, as extensively as they had done it.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

So mightily. So powerfully. It had such efficacy and power in this wicked city. The power must have been mighty that would thus make them willing, not only to cease to practise imposition, but to give up all hopes of future gains, and to destroy their property. On this instructive narrative, we may remark,

(1.) that religion has power to break the hold of sinners on unjust and dishonest means of living.

(2.) That those who have been engaged in an unchristian and dishonourable practice, will abandon it when they become Christians.

(3.) That their abhorrence of their former course will be, and ought to be, expressed as publicly as was the offence.

(4.) That the evil practice will be abandoned at any sacrifice, however great. The only question will be, what is right; not, what will it cost. Property, in the view of a converted man, is nothing When compared with a good conscience.

(5.) This conduct of those who had used curious arts shows us what ought to be done by those who have been engaged in any evil course of life, and who are then converted. If their conduct was right--and who can doubt it?--it settles a great principle on which young converts should act. If a man has been engaged in the slave-trade, he will abandon it; and his duty will not be to sell his ship to one who he knows will continue the traffic. His property should be withdrawn from the business publicly, either by being destroyed, or by being converted to a useful purpose. If a man has been a distiller of ardent spirits as a drink, his duty will be to forsake his evil course. Nor will it be his duty to sell his distillery to one who will continue the business; but to withdraw his property from it publicly, either by destroying it, or converting it to some useful purpose. If a man has been engaged in traffic in ardent spirits, his duty is not to sell his stock to those who will continue the sale of the poison, but to withdraw it from public use; converting it to some useful purpose, if he can; if not, by destroying it. All that has ever been said by money- loving distillers, or vendors of ardent spirits, about the loss which they would sustain by abandoning the business, might have been said by these practitioners of curious arts in Ephesus. And if the excuses of rum-selling men are valid, their conduct was folly; and they should either have continued the business of practicing "curious arts," after they were converted, or have sold their "books" to those who would

have continued it. For assuredly it was not worse to practise jugglery and fortune-telling than it is to destroy the bodies and souls of men by the traffic in ardent spirits. And yet how few men there are in Christian lands who practise on the principle of these honest, but comparatively unenlightened men at Ephesus!

21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when
he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to
Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.
22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto
him, Timothy and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a
season.

The Riot at Ephesus

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

How angry the devil grows at the success of the gospel, mentioned in the foregoing verses: there we read how the whole college of diabolical conjurors were brought over, by the apostles' preaching at Ephesus, to burn their books, and leave their wicked course of life.

Hereupon the devil bestirs him, and raises a persecution against the apostle. Those that will disturb Satan in the quiet and peaceable possession of his kingdom, shall be sure to meet with trouble and disquiet from him. Let not any of the saints of God in general, nor any of the faithful and zealous ministers of Christ in particular, expect any long continuance of their outward tranquility and peace in this world, where they are every day up in arms against Satan, and meditating the ruin of him and his kingdom; for which he will certainly seek revenge.

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24 For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

Silver shrines. ναους. Temples. The word shrine properly means a case, small chest, or box; particularly applied to a box in which sacred things are deposited. Hence we hear of the shrines for relics.--Webster. The word shrines here denotes small portable temples, or edifices, made of silver, so as to resemble the temple of Diana, and probably containing a silver image of the goddess. Such shrines would be purchased by devotees and by worshippers of the goddess, and by strangers, who would be desirous of possessing a representation of one of the seven wonders of the world. Acts 19:27. The great number of persons that came to Ephesus for her worship would constitute an ample sale for productions of this kind, and make the manufacture a profitable employment. It is well known that pagans everywhere are accustomed to carry with them small images, or representations of their gods, as an amulet, or charm. The Romans had such images in all their houses, called Penates, or household gods. A similar thing is mentioned as early as the time of Laban, Gen 31:19) whose images Rachel had stolen and taken with her. Comp. Jud 17:5, "The man Micah had an house of gods;" 1Sam 19:13, Hoss 3:4. These images were usually enclosed in a box, case, or chest, made of wood, iron, or silver; and probably, as here, usually made to resemble the temple where the idol was worshipped. Diana. This was a celebrated goddess of the heathen, and one of the twelve superior deities. In the heavens she was Luna, or Meni, (the moon;) on earth, Diana; and in hell, Hecate, She was sometimes represented with a crescent on her head, a bow in her hand, and dressed in a hunting-habit; at other times with a triple face, and with instruments of torture. She was commonly regarded as the goddess of hunting. She was also worshipped under the various names of Lucina, Proserpine, Trivia, etc. She

was also represented with a great number of breasts, to denote her being the fountain of blessings, or as distributing her benefits to each in their proper station. She was worshipped in Egypt, Athens, Cilicia, and among heathen nations generally; but the most celebrated place of her worship was Ephesus--a city peculiarly dedicated to her.

25 whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

27 so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

We may here remark,

(1.) that the extensive prevalence of the Christian religion would destroy many kinds of business in which men now engage. It would put an end to all that now ministers to the pride, vanity, luxury, vice, and ambition of men. Let religion prevail, and wars would cease, and all the preparations for war which now employ so many hearts and hands would be useless. Let religion prevail, and temperance would prevail also; and consequently all the capital and labour now employed in distilling and vending ardent spirits would be withdrawn, and the business be broken up. Let religion prevail, and luxury ceases, and the arts which minister to licentiousness would be useless. Let Christianity prevail, and all that goes now to minister to idolatry, and the corrupt passions of men, would be destroyed. No small part of the talent, also, that is now worse than wasted in corrupting others by ballads and songs, by fiction and licentious tales, would be withdrawn. A vast amount of capital and talent would thus be at once set at liberty, to be employed in nobler and better purposes.

(2.) The effect of religion is often to bring the employments of men into shame and contempt. A revival of religion often makes the business of distilling an object of abhorrence. It pours shame on those who are engaged in ministering to the vices and luxuries of the world. Religion reveals the evil of such a course of life, and those vices are banished by the mere prevalence of better principles. Yet,

(3.)the talent and capital thus disengaged is not rendered useless. It may be directed to other channels and other employments. Religion does not make men idle. It devotes talents to useful employments, and opens fields in which all may toil usefully to themselves and to their fellow-men. If all the capital, and genius, and learning which are now wasted, and worse than wasted, were to be at once withdrawn from their present pursuits, they might be profitably employed. There is not now a useless man who might not be useful; there is not a farthing wasted which might not be employed to advantage in the great work of making the world better and happier.

28 And when they heard *these sayings,* they were full of wrath,
and cried out, saying, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.
29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having
caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's
companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the
theater.
30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people,
the disciples suffered him not.
31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent
unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself
into the theater.
32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the
assembly was confused; and the more part knew not
wherefore they were come together.
33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews
putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand,
and would have made his defense unto the people.

And they drew Alexander. Who this Alexander was, is not known. Grotius supposes that it was "Alexander the coppersmith," who had in some way done Paul much harm, 2Ti 4:14; and whom, with Philetas, Paul had excommunicated. Paul told to Timothy that he did him much evil: if so, we find here he was first a proselyte, then a professor, next a confessor, almost a martyr; yet, after all, an apostate; making shipwreck of the faith, for which he was excommunicated by the apostle, of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan. 1Tim 1:19,20. This excommunication of the apostle probably was the provocation that occasioned him to do so much mischief to the apostle, of which he complains, Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; of whom be thou ware also. 2Tim 4:14He supposes that it was a device of the Jews to put forward one who had been of the Christian party, in order to accuse Paul, and to attempt to cast the odium of the tumult on him. But it is not clear that the Alexander whom Paul had excommunicated was the person concerned in this transaction. All that appears in this narrative is, that Alexander was one who was known to be a Jew; and who wished to defend the Jews from being regarded as the authors of this tumult. It would be supposed by the heathen that the Christians were only a sect of the Jews; and the Jews wished doubtless to show that they had not been concerned in giving occasion to this tumult, but that it was to be traced wholly to Paul and his friends. The Jews putting him forward. That he might have a convenient opportunity to speak to the people. Would have made his defence. Our translation, by the phrase "his defence," would seem to imply that he was personally accused. But it was not so. The Greek is simply, "was about to apologize to the people" that is, to make a defence, not of himself particularly, but of the Jews in general. The translation should have been "a defence."

Learn thence, 1. That it was possible for a glorious professor to turn a furious persecutor. This Alexander did not only withstand the apostle's person, but his doctrine also; for which being excommunicated, he sought revenge.

Learn, 2. That excommunication not only angers but enrages wicked and impenitent men; so that, instead of being reformed, they seek revenge: yet must the censures of the church be executed and inflicted without either fear or favour.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians.

That he was a Jew. There was a general prejudice against the Jews. They were disposed to charge the whole difficulty on Jews-- esteeming Christians to be but a sect of the Jews. They were, therefore, indignant and excited, and indiscriminate in their wrath, and unwilling to listen to any defence.

note: Jews generally are abhorrence before heathens because of their sins and stubbornness; they could not either belong to this world or God.

35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, *Ye* men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter?

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

To be called in question. By the government; by the Roman authority. Such a tumult, continued for so long a time, would be likely to attract the attention of the magistrates, and expose them to their displeasure. Popular commotions were justly dreaded by the Roman government; and such an assembly as

this, convened without any good cause, would not escape their notice. There was a Roman law which made it capital for any one to be engaged in promoting a riot. Qui caetum, et concursum fecerit, capite puniatur: "He who raises a mob, let him be punished with death."

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Acts-20

Paul's Journey to Macedonia and Greece

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and embraced *them*, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

Into Greece. Into Greece Proper, of which Athens was the capital. While in Macedonia, he had great anxiety and trouble, but was at length comforted by the coming of Titus, who brought him intelligence of the liberal disposition of the churches of Greece in regard to the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, 2Cor 7:5-7. It is probable that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written during this time in Macedonia, and sent to them by Titus.

3 and *there* abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Beroea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

Paul's Farewell Visit at Troas

7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came
together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to
depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until
midnight.
8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they
were gathered together.
9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named
Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long
preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the
third loft, and was taken up dead.
10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him*
said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.
11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread,
and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he
departed.
12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a
little comforted.

The Voyage from Troas to Miletus

13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there
intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding
himself to go afoot.
14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to
Mitylene.
15 And we sailed thence, and came the next *day* over against
Chios; and the next *day* we arrived at Samos, and tarried at
Trogyllium; and the next *day* we came to Miletus.
16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would
not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for
him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of
the church.
18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

And when they were come to him. The discourse which follows is one of the most tender, affectionate, and eloquent, which is anywhere to be found. It is strikingly descriptive of the apostle's manner of life while with them; evinces his deep concern for their welfare; is full of tender and kind admonition; expresses the firm purpose of his soul to live to the glory of God, and his expectation to be persecuted still; and is a most affectionate and solemn farewell. No man can read it without being convinced that it came from a heart full of love and kindness; and that it evinces a great and noble purpose to be entirely employed in one great aim and object --the promotion of the glory of God, in the face of danger and of death. Ye know. From your own observation. He had been with them three years, and could make this solemn appeal to themselves, that he had led a faithful and devoted life. How happy is it when a minister can thus appeal to those with whom he has laboured, in proof of his own sincerity and fidelity! How comforting to himself, and how full of demonstration to a surrounding world, of the truth and power of the gospel which is preached! We may further remark, that this appeal furnishes strong proof of the purity and holiness of Paul's life. The elders at Ephesus must have had abundant opportunity to know him. They had seen him, and heard him publicly, and in their private dwellings. A man does not make such an appeal unless he has a consciousness of integrity, nor unless there is conclusive proof of his integrity. It is strong evidence of the holiness of the character of the apostles, and proof that they were not impostors, that they could thus appeal with the utmost assurance to those who had every opportunity of knowing them. From the first day. He was with them three years, Acts 20:31. Into Asia. Asia Minor. They would probably know, not only how he had demeaned himself while with them, but also how he had conducted [himself] in other places near them. After what manner I have been with you. How I have lived and acted. What has been my manner of life. What had been his

mode of life, he specifies in the following verses. At all seasons. At all times.

19 serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

Serving the Lord. In the discharge of the appropriate duties of his apostolic office, and in private life. To discharge aright our duties in any vocation is serving the Lord. Religion is often represented in the Bible as a service rendered to the Lord. With all humility. Without arrogance, pride, or a spirit of dictation; without a desire to "lord it over God's heritage ;" without being elated with the authority of the apostolic office, the variety of the miracles which he was enabled to perform, or the success which attended his labours. What an admirable model for all who are in the ministry, for all who are endowed with talents and learning, and for all who meet with remarkable success in their work. The proper effect of such success, and of such talent, will be to produce true humility. Eminent success in the work of the ministry tends to produce lowliness and humbleness of mind; and the greatest endowments are usually connected with the most simple and childlike humility. And with many tears. Paul not unfrequently gives evidence of the tenderness of his heart, and his regard for the souls of men, and his deep solicitude for the salvation of sinners, Acts 20:31; Php 3:18, 2Cor 2:4. The particular thing, however, here specified as producing weeping, was the opposition of the Jews. But it cannot be supposed that those tears were shed from an apprehension of personal danger. It was rather because the opposition of the Jews impeded his work, and retarded his progress in winning souls to Christ. A minister of the gospel will

(1.) feel, and deeply feel, for the salvation of his people. He will weep over their condition when he sees them going astray, and in danger of perishing, He will

(2.) be especially affected with opposition, because it will retard his work, and prevent the progress and the triumph of the gospel. It is not because it is a personal concern, but because it is the cause of his Master. And temptations. Trials, arising from their opposition. We use the word temptation, in a more limited sense, to denote inducements offered to one to lead him into sin. The word in the Scriptures most commonly denotes trials of any kind.

20 *and* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you,* but
have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from
house to house,

I kept back nothing, etc. No doctrine, no admonition, no labour. Whatever he judged would promote their salvation, he had faithfully and fearlessly delivered. A minister of the gospel must be the judge of what will be profitable to the people of his charge. His aim should be to promote their real welfare--to preach that which will be profitable. His object will not be to please their fancy, to gratify their taste, to flatter their pride, or to promote his own popularity. "All Scripture is profitable," 2Ti 3:16; and it will be his aim to declare that only which will tend to promote their real welfare. Even if it be unpalatable; if it be the language of reproof and admonition; if it be doctrine to which the heart is by nature opposed; if it run counter to the native prejudices and passions of men; yet, by the grace of God, it should be, and will be delivered. No doctrine that will be profitable should be kept back; no plan, no labour, that may promote the welfare of the flock, should be withheld. But have shewed you. Have announced or declared to you. The word here used--αναγγειλαι--is most commonly applied to preaching in public assemblies, or in a public manner. Have taught you publicly. In the public assembly; by public preaching. And from house to house. Though Paul preached in public, and though his time was much occupied in manual labour for his own support, Acts 20:34, yet he did not esteem his public preaching to be all that was required of him; nor his daily occupation to be an excuse for not visiting from house to house. We may observe here,

(1.) that Paul's example is a warrant and an implied injunction for family visitation by a pastor. If proper in Ephesus, It is proper still. If practicable in that city, it is in other cities. If it was useful there, it will be elsewhere. If it furnished to him consolation in the retrospect when he came to look over his ministry, and if it was one of the things which enabled him to say, "I am pure from the blood of all men," it will be so in other cases.

(2.) The design for which ministers should visit, should be a religious design, Paul did not visit for mere ceremony, nor for idle gossip, or chit-chat; nor to converse on the mere news or politics of the day. His aim was to show the way of salvation, and to teach in private what he taught in public.

(3.) How much of this is to be done, is of course to be left to the discretion of every minister. Paul, in private visiting, did not neglect public instruction. The latter he evidently considered to be his main or chief business. His high views of the ministry are evinced in his life, and in his letters to Timothy and Titus. Yet, while public preaching is the main, the prime, the leading business of a minister, and while his first efforts should be directed to preparation for that, he may and should find time to enforce his public instructions by going from house to house; and often he will find that his most immediate and apparent success will result from such family instructions.

(4.) If it is his duty to visit, it is the duty of his people to receive him as becomes an ambassador of Christ. They should be willing to listen to his instructions; to treat him with kindness, and to aid his endeavours in bringing a family under the influence of religion.

Testifying. Bearing witness to the necessity of repentance towards God. Or teaching them the nature of repentance, etc., and exhorting them to repent and believe. Perhaps the word testifying includes both ideas of giving evidence, and of urging

with great earnestness and affection that repentance and faith were necessary. See 1Timm 5:21; 2Ti 2:14; where the word here used, and here translated testify, is there translated correctly charge, in the sense of strongly urging, or entreating with great earnestness.

21 testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks,
repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus
Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem,
not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

Not knowing the things that shall befall me there. He knew that calamities and trials of some kind awaited him, Acts 20:23, but he did not know

(1.) of what particular kind they would be; nor

(2.) their issue, whether it should be life or death. We should commit our way unto God, not knowing what trials may be before us in life; but knowing that, if we are found faithful at the post of duty, we have nothing to fear in the issue.

23 save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that
bonds and afflictions abide me.

In almost every city where Paul had been, he had been subjected to these trials. He had been persecuted, stoned, and scourged. So uniform was this, so constant had been his experience in this way, that he regarded it as his certain portion to be thus afflicted; and he approached Jerusalem, and every other city, with a confident expectation that such trials awaited him there.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life
dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy,
and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to
testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Neither count I my life. I do not consider my life as so valuable as to be retained by turning away from bonds and persecutions. I am certain of bonds and afflictions; I am willing also, if it be necessary, to lay down my life in the prosecution of the same

purpose. Dear unto myself. So precious or valuable as to be retained at the sacrifice of duty. I am willing to sacrifice it, if it be necessary. This was the spirit of the Saviour, and of all the early Christians. Duty is of more importance than life; and when either duty or life is to be sacrificed, life is to be cheerfully surrendered. So that. This is my main object, to finish my course with joy. It is implied here,

(1.) that this was the great purpose which Paul had in view.

(2.) That if he should even lay down his life in this cause, it would be a finishing his course with joy. In the faithful discharge of duty, he had nothing to fear. Life would be ended with peace, whenever God should require him to finish his course.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men.*

I take you to record. Greek, I call you to witness; I appeal to you to testify. If any of you are lost, if you prove unfaithful to God, I appeal to yourselves that the fault is not mine. It is well when a minister can make this appeal, and call his hearers to bear testimony to his own faithfulness. Ministers who preach the gospel with fidelity, may thus appeal to their hearers; and in the day of judgment may call on them to witness that the fault of the ruin of the soul is not to be charged to them. That I am pure. I am not to be charged with the guilt of your condemnation, as owing to my unfaithfulness. This does not mean that he set up a claim to absolute perfection; but that, in the matter under consideration, he had a conscience void of offence. The blood of all men. The word blood is used often in the sense of death, of blood shed; and hence of the guilt or crime of putting one to death, or condemnation for it, Mt 23:35, 27:25, Acts 5:28, 18:6. It here means, that if they should die the second death, if they should be lost for ever, he would not

be to blame. He had discharged his duty, in faithfully warning and teaching them; and now, if they were lost, the fault would be their own, not his. All men. All classes of men--Jews and Gentiles. He had warned and instructed all alike. Ministers may have many fears that their hearers will be lost. Their aim, however, should be

(1.) to save them, if possible; and

(2.) if they are lost, that it should be by no neglect or fault of theirs.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

For. This verse contains a reason for what had been said in the previous verse. It shows why Paul regarded himself as innocent if they should be lost. I have not shunned. I have not kept back; I have not been deterred by fear, by the desire of popularity, by the fact that the doctrines of the gospel are unpalatable to men, from declaring them fully. The proper meaning of the word translated here, "I have not shunned," υπεστειλαμην is to disguise any important truth; to withdraw it from public view; to decline publishing it from fear, or an apprehension of the consequences. Paul means that he had not disguised any truth; he had not withdrawn or kept it from open view, by any apprehension of the effect which it might have on their minds. Truth may be disguised or kept back,

(1.) by avoiding the subject altogether from timidity, or an apprehension of giving offence if it is openly proclaimed; or,

(2.) by giving it too little prominency, so that it shall be lost in the multitude of other truths; or,

(3.) by presenting it amidst a web of metaphysical speculations, by entangling it with other subjects; or,

(4.) by making use of other terms than the Bible does, for the purpose of involving it in a mist, so that it cannot be understood. Men may resort to this course,

(1.) because the truth itself will be unpalatable;

(2.) because they may apprehend the loss of reputation or support;

(3.) because they may not love the truth themselves, and choose to conceal its prominent and offensive points;

(4.) because they may be afraid of the rich, the great, and the gay, and apprehend that they shall excite their indignation; and,

(5.) by a love of metaphysical philosophy, and a constant effort to bring everything to the test of their own reason. Men often preach a philosophical explanation of a doctrine instead of the doctrine itself. They deserve the credit of ingenuity, but not that of being open and bold proclaimers of the truth of God. All the counsel, πασαντηνβουλην. The word counsel (βουλη), denotes, properly, consultation, deliberation; and then will or purpose, Lk 23:51, Acts 2:23. It means here the will or purpose of God, as revealed in regard to the salvation of men. Paul had made a full statement of that plan--of the guilt of men, of the claims of the law, of the need of a Saviour, of the provisions of mercy, and of the state of future rewards and punishments. Ministers ought to declare all that counsel, because God commands it; because it is needful for the salvation of men; and because the message is not theirs, but God's, and they have no right to change, to disguise, or to withhold it. And if it is the duty of ministers to declare that counsel, it is the duty of a people to listen to it with respect and candour, and with a desire to know the truth, and to be saved by it. Declaring the counsel of God will do no good, unless it is received into honest and humble hearts, and with a disposition to know what God has revealed for salvation.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Take heed therefore. Attend to; be on your guard against the dangers which beset you, and seek to discharge your duty with fidelity. To yourselves. To your own piety, opinions, and mode of life. This is the first duty of a minister; for, without this, all his preaching will be vain. Compare Col 4:17, 1Timm 4:14. Ministers are beset with peculiar dangers and temptations, and against them they should be on their guard. In addition to the temptations which they have in common with other men, they are exposed to those peculiar to their office-- arising from flattery, and ambition, and despondency, and worldly-mindedness. And just in proportion to the importance of their office, is the importance of the injunction of Paul, to take heed to themselves. And to all the flock. The church; the charge entrusted to them. The church of Christ is often compared to a flock. Jn 10:1; and Jn 10:2-20; also Jn 21:16; and Jn 21:17. The word flock here refers particularly to the church, and not to the congregation in general, for it is represented to be that which was purchased with the blood of the atonement. The command here is,

(1.) to take heed to the church; i.e., to instruct, teach, and guide it; to guard it from enemies, Acts 20:29 and to make it their special object to promote its welfare.

(2.) To take heed to ALL the flock--the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the old and the young. It is the duty of ministers to seek to promote the welfare of each individual of their charge--not to pass by the poor because they are poor; and not to be afraid of the rich because they are rich. A shepherd regards the interest of the tenderest of the fold as much as the strongest; and a faithful minister will seek to advance the interest of all. To do this, he should know all his people; should be acquainted, as far as possible, with their peculiar wants, character, and dangers, and should devote himself to their

welfare as his first and main employment. Over the which the Holy Ghost. Though they had been appointed, doubtless, by the church, or by the apostles, yet it is here represented as having been done by the Holy Ghost. It is by him,

(1.) because he had called and qualified them for their work; and,

(2.) because they had been set apart in accordance with his direction and will. Overseers. επισκοπους. Bishops. The word properly denotes those who are appointed to oversee, or inspect anything. This passage proves that the name was applicable to elders; and that in the time of the apostles, the name bishop and presbyter, or elder, was given to the same class of officers, and, of course, that there was no distinction between them. One term was originally used to denote office, the other age, and both were applied to the same persons in the church. The same thing occurs in Tit 1:5-7, where those who in Acts 20:5 are called elders, are in Acts 20:7 called bishops. See also 1Timm 3:1-10, Php 1:1. To feed. ποιμαινειν. This word is properly applied to the care which a shepherd exercises over his flock. Jn 21:15,16. It applies not only to the act of feeding a flock, but also to that of protecting, guiding, and guarding it. It here denotes not merely the duty of properly instructing the church, but also of governing it; of securing it from enemies, Acts 20:29 and of directing its affairs so as to promote its edification and peace. The Church of God. This is one of the three passages in the New Testament, in regard to which there has been a long controversy among critics, which is not yet determined. The controversy is, whether this is the correct and genuine reading. The other two passages are, 1Timm 3:16, 1Jn 5:7. The Mss. and versions exhibit three readings: the church of GOD, τουθεου; the church OF THE LORD, τουκυριου; and the church of THE LORD and GOD, κυριουκαιθεου. The Latin vulgate reads it God; the Syriac, the Lord; the Arabic, the Lord God; the Ethiopic, the Christian family of God. The reading which now occurs in our text is found in no ancient Mss., except the Vatican codex; and occurs nowhere among the

writings of the fathers, except in Athanasius, in regard to whom also there is a various reading. It is retained, however, by Beza, Mill, and Whitby, as the genuine reading. The most ancient Mss. and the best, read the church of the Lord, and this probably was the genuine text. It has been adopted by Griesbach and Wetstein; and many important reasons may be given why it should be retained. See those reasons stated at length in Kuin﹟el, in loco; see also Griesbach and Wetstein. It may be remarked, that a change from Lord to God might easily be made in the transcribing, for in ancient MSS. the words are not written at length, but are abbreviated. Thus, the name Christ χριστος is written χοε; the name God θεος is written θοε; the name Lord κυριος is written κοε; and a mistake, therefore, of a single letter, would lead to the variations observable in the manuscripts. Compare in this place the Note of Mill in his Greek Testament, who thinks that the name God should be retained. The authority, however, is so doubtful, that it should not be used as a proof-text on the divinity of Christ; and is not necessary, as there are so many undisputed passages on that subject. Which he hath purchased. The word here used περιεποιησατο occurs but in one other place in the New Testament: 1Timm 3:13, "For they that have used the office of deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith." The word properly means, to acquire or gain anything; or to make it ours. This may be done by a price, or by labour, etc. The noun περιποιησις derived from this verb, is several times used in the New Testament, and denotes acquisition. 1Thes 5:9: "God hath appointed us to obtain [unto the obtaining or acquisition of] salvation." 2Thes 2:14: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1Pet 2:9, Tit 2:14, Eph 1:14. In this place it means that Christ had acquired, gained, or procured the church for himself, by paying his own life as the price. The church is often represented as having thus been bought with a price, 1Cor 6:20, 7:23, 2Pet 2:1. With his own blood. With the sacrifice of his own life; for blood is often put for life, and to shed the blood is equivalent to taking the life. Rom 3:25. The doctrines taught here are,

(1.) that the death of Christ was an atoning sacrifice; that he offered himself to purchase a people to his own service.

(2.) That the church is, therefore, of peculiar value-- a value to be estimated by the worth of the price paid for it. Comp. 1Pet 1:18,19.

(3.) That this fact should make the purity and salvation of the church an object of special solicitude with the ministers of the gospel. They should be deeply affected in view of that blood which has been shed for the church; and they should guard and defend it as having been bought with the highest price in the universe. The chief consideration that will make ministers faithful and self-denying is, that the church has been bought with a price. If the Lord Jesus so loved it--if he gave himself for it--they should be willing to deny themselves; to watch, and toil, and pray, that the great object of his death--the purity and the salvation of that church--may be obtained.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

For I know this. By what he had seen in other places; by his knowledge of human nature, and of the dangers to which they were exposed; and by the guidance of inspiration. After my departing. His presence had been the means of guarding the church, and preserving it from these dangers. Now that the founder and guide of the church was to be removed, they would be exposed to dissensions and dangers. Grievous wolves. Heavy, βαρεις, strong, mighty, dangerous wolves--so strong that the feeble flock would not be able to resist them. The term wolves is used to denote the enemies of the flock--false, and hypocritical, and dangerous teachers. Compare Mt 10:16; Acts 7:15. Enter in among you. From abroad; doubtless referring particularly to the Jews, who might be expected to distract and divide them. Not sparing the flock. Seeking to destroy the church. The Jews would regard it with peculiar hostility, and would seek to destroy it in every way. Probably they would

approach them with great professed friendship for them, and expressing a desire only to defend the laws of Moses.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Crooked, perverted, distracting doctrines, διεστραμμενα. Acts 13:10. They would proclaim doctrines tending to distract and divide the church. The most dangerous enemies which the church has had, have been nurtured in its own bosom, and have consisted of those who have perverted the true. doctrines of the gospel. Among the Ephesians, as among the Corinthians, 1Cor 1:11-13, there might be parties formed; there might be men influenced by ambition, like Diotrephes, 3Jn 1:9, or like Phygellus or Hermogenes, 2Ti 1:15, or like Hymeneus and Alexander, 1Timm 1:20. Men under the influence of ambition, or from the love of power or popularity, form parties in the church, produce divisions and distractions, and greatly retard its internal prosperity, and mar its peace. The church of Christ would have little to fear from external enemies if it nurtured no foes in its own bosom; and all the power of persecutors is not so much to be dreaded as the counsels and plans, the parties, strifes, heart-burnings, and contentions which are produced by those who have power, among the professed friends of Christ.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

And now, brethren. About to leave them, probably to see them no more, he committed them to the faithful care and keeping of God. Amidst all the dangers of the church, when human strength fails or is withdrawn, we may commit that church to the safe keeping and tender care of God. I commend you. I commit you; I place you παρατιθεμαι in his hands, and under his protection. Acts 14:23. And to the word of his grace. That is, to his gracious word; to his merciful promise. To his doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, which has been conferred on us by grace. Paul refers, doubtless, to the gospel --including its promises of support, its consoling truths, and its directions

to seek all needful help and comfort in God. Which is able. Which has power. τωδυναμενω. Which word, or gospel, has power to build you up. Heb 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, [living, life-giving, ζων,] and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," etc. Comp. Isa 49:2, Jer 23:29. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It is implied here, that the gospel is not a dead letter; that it has power to accomplish a great work; and that it is adapted to the end in view, the conversion and sanctification of the soul. There is no danger in representing the gospel as mighty, and as fitted by infinite wisdom to secure the renovation and salvation of man. Comp. Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:18, 2Cor 10:4. To build you up. The word used here is properly applied to a house, which is reared and completed by slow degrees, and by toil. It here means to establish, make firm, or permanent; and hence to instruct, to establish in doctrine, and in hope. It here means that the word of God was able to confirm and establish them in the hopes of the gospel, amidst the dangers to which they would be exposed. And to give you an inheritance. To make you heirs; or to make you joint partakers with the saints of the blessings in reserve for the children of God. Those blessings are often represented as an inheritance, or heirship, which God will confer on his adopted children, Mt 19:29; Mt 25:34, Mk 10:17, Heb 6:12, Rev 21:7, Eph 1:11, 5:5, Col 1:12, 3:24 Rom 8:17, Gal 3:29.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

Yea, ye yourselves know. By your own acquaintance with my manner of life. In Corinth he had lived and laboured with Apollos, Acts 18:3; and he refers elsewhere to the fact that he had supported himself, in part at least, by his own labour, 1Cor 4:12 1Thes 2:9, 2Thes 3:8. We may hence learn that it is no discredit to a minister to labour. Whatever it may be to a people who put him under a necessity to toil for his support, yet the example of Paul shows that a man should rejoice in the privilege of preaching the gospel, even if it is done while he is obliged to resort to labour for his daily bread. It is well when a

minister of the gospel can make an appeal to his people like this of Paul, and say, "I have coveted no man's gold, or silver, or apparel." Every minister should so live that he can make this appeal to their own consciences of the sincerity and disinterestedness of his labours from the pulpit; or when called to separate from them as Paul did; or when on a dying bed. Every minister of the gospel, when he comes to lie down to die, will desire to be able to make this appeal, and to leave a solemn testimony there, that it was not for gold, or ease, or fame, that he toiled in the ministerial office. How much more influence can such a man have, than he who has been worldly-minded; who has sought to become rich; and the only memorials of whose life is, that he has sought "the fleece, not the flock," and that he has gained the property, not the souls of men. And every Christian, when he dies, should and will desire to leave a testimony as pure, that he has been disinterested, self-denying, and laborious in the cause of Jesus the Lord.

35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought
to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord
Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and
prayed with them all.
37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,
38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they
should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto
the ship.

Sorrowing most of all, etc. This was a most tender and affectionate parting scene. It can be more easily imagined than described. We may learn from it,

(1.) that the parting of ministers and people is a most solemn event, and should be one of much tenderness and affection.

(2.) The effect of true religion is to make the heart more tender; to make friendship more affectionate and sacred; and to unite more closely the bonds of love.

(3.) Ministers of the gospel should be prepared to leave their people with the same consciousness of fidelity, and the same kindness and love, which Paul evinced. They should live such lives as to be able to look back upon their whole ministry as pure and disinterested; and as having been employed in guarding the flock, and in making known to them the whole counsel of God. So parting, they may part in peace. And so living, and acting, they will be prepared to give up their account with joy, and not with grief. May God grant to every minister the spirit which Paul evinced at Ephesus, and enable each one, when called to leave his people by death or otherwise, to do it with the same consciousness of fidelity which Paul evinced, when he left his people to see their face no more!

Acts-21

Paul's Journey to Jerusalem

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:
2 and finding a ship sailing over unto Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.
3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.
4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

And finding disciples. Christians. This is the first mention of there being Christians at Tyre; but there is no improbability in supposing that the gospel had been preached there, though it is not expressly recorded by Luke. Who said to Paul. Comp. Acts 21:12. Their deep interest in his welfare, and their apprehension of his danger, was the reason why they admonished him not to go. Through the Spirit. There as some difficulty in understanding this. In solving this difficulty, we may remark,

(1.) that it is evident that the Holy Spirit is meant, and that Luke means to say that this was spoken by his inspiration. The Holy Spirit was bestowed on Christians at that time in large measures, and many appear to have been under his inspiring guidance.

(2.) It was not understood by Paul as a positive command that he should not go up to Jerusalem--for, had it been, it would not have been disobeyed. Paul evidently understood it as expressive of their earnest wish that he should not go, as apprizing him of danger, and as a kind expression in regard to his own welfare and safety. Comp. Acts 21:13. Paul was in better circumstances to understand this than we are, and his interpretation was doubtless correct.

(3.) It is to be understood, therefore, simply as an inspired prophetic warning, that if he went, he went at the risk of his life; a prophetic warning joined with their individual personal wishes, that he would not expose himself to this danger. The meaning evidently is, that they said by inspiration of the Spirit, that he should not go unless he was willing to encounter danger, and the hazard of life as a consequence, for they foresaw that the journey would be attended with this hazard. Grotius renders it, "that he should not go, unless he was willing to be bound." Michaelis and Stolzius, "They gave him prophetic warning, that he should not go to Jerusalem." Doddridge, "If he tendered his own liberty and safety, not to go up to Jerusalem, since it would certainly expose him to very great hazard." The inspiration in the case was that of admonition and warning, not of positive command. Paul was simply apprized of the danger; and then left to the free determination of his own will. He chose to encounter the danger of which he was thus apprized. He did not despise the intimations of the Spirit; but he judged that his duty to God called him thus to encounter the hazards of the journey. We may be apprized of danger in a certain course, either by our

friends or by the word of God, and still it may be our duty to meet it. Our duty is not to be measured by the fact that we shall experience dangers, in whatever way that may be made known to us. It is in following the will of God; and encountering whatever trials may be in our way.

It was happy for the apostle, and his great advantage, that the will of God was so plainly revealed to him, touching this his journey to Jerusalem; for no sooner did he prepare himself to obey the call of God, and to undertake the journey, but he is presently assaulted by many strong temptations to decline it. The first rub he met with in his way, was from the disciples at Tyre, who spake by the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

But did not the Spirit of God then contradict itself, in bidding the apostle go, and then speaking to him by those disciples not to go?

Not at all; St. Paul by extraordinary revelation was commanded to go to Jerusalem; these disciples by a spirit of prophecy, only foretold the difficulties and dangers that would attend him in his journey, and so, through kindness and human affection, they dissuaded him from undertaking it.

We must distinguish between the prediction of trouble, and the counsel of safety.

The prediction of trouble; so they said through the Spirit, that it would be dangerous for Paul to go to Jerusalem.

The counsel of safety proceeded from their private love and affection to him; whereby they dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem.

Learn from hence, 1. That divine precept, and not providence, is to rule our way to duty.

Learn, 2. That no discouragements or hindrances whatsoever will justify our neglect of a commanded duty. Whatever difficulties or discouragements lay in the way of the apostle's duty, he overcame them all with an heroic and truly Christian resolution, saying, ver. 13. I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of Jesus.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and
went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives
and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down
on the shore, and prayed.
6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship;
and they returned home again.

On the shore. Any place may be proper for prayer. Jn 4:21, also Jn 4:22-24. God is everywhere, and can as easily hear the prayer of the humble on the sea-shore as in the most magnificent temple. This is an instance, as well as that in Acts 20:36, where the apostle evidently prayed with the church without a form of prayer. No man can believe that he thus poured forth the desires of his heart at parting, and commended them to God, in a prescribed form of words. Besides that, there is not the least evidence that such a form was then used in the Christian church: scenes like this show more clearly than abstract arguments could do, that such a form was not needed, and would not be used. Paul and his fellow Christians, on the sand of the sea-shore, would pour forth the gushing emotions of their souls in language such as their circumstances would suggest, and such as such a scene would demand. And it is presumed to be impossible that any man can read this narrative in a dispassionate manner without believing that they offered an extempore prayer.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to
Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one
day.
8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed,
and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of
Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode
with him.

This Philip, who was driven out of his house by Paul, when a persecutor, gladly received him into his house, being now Paul a convert; and this without any upbraiding, yea, without the least mention of what he had formerly been or done. It is an ill office to rake in the filth which God has covered, and to reproach men with or for the sins which God has pardoned; it argues some degree of envy at the grace of God, to upbraid men with the sins committed before conversion.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which
did prophesy.
10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea
a certain prophet, named Agabus.
11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and
bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy
Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that
owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the
Gentiles.
12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that
place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.
13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break
mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to
die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

To afflict me, and distract my mind by alarms, and by the expressions of tenderness. His mind was fixed on going to Jerusalem; and he felt that he was prepared for whatever awaited him. Expressions of tenderness among friends are proper. Tears may be inevitable at parting from those whom we love; but such expressions of tenderness and love ought not to be allowed to interfere with the convictions of duty in their minds. If they have made up their minds that a certain course is proper, and have resolved to pursue it, we ought neither to attempt to divert them from it, nor to distract their minds by our remonstrances or our tears. We should resign them to their convictions of what is demanded of them, with affection and prayer, but with cheerfulness. We should lend them all the aid in our power, and then commend them to the blessing and protection of God. These remarks apply especially to those who are engaged in the missionary enterprise. It is trying to

part with a son, a daughter, or a beloved friend, in order that they may go to proclaim the gospel to the benighted and dying heathen. The act of parting--for life-- and the apprehension of the perils which they may encounter on the ocean, and in heathen lands, may be painful; but if they, like Paul, have looked at it calmly, candidly, and with much prayer--if they have come to the deliberate conclusion that it is the will of God that they should devote their lives to this service--we ought not to weep, and to break their hearts. We should cheerfully and confidently commit them to the protection of the God whom they serve, and remember that they are seeking his glory, and that the parting of Christians, though for life, will be short.

Get thee behind me, Satan, says Christ. It was Peter's tongue, but Satan tuned it. Who would have thought that Christ's disciples would have been Satan's instruments? We must not measure our friends' counsel by their good meaning, but by God's word; we must be deaf to all relations, that we may discharge our duty to God.

Learn hence, That no persuasions of friends, no apprehensions of danger, should ever be able to turn us out of the way of our duty. When Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering, our Saviour rebuked him with the same indignation as he did the devil tempting him to idolatry.

How the apostle lovingly and gently rebukes their fond and inordinate sorrow for his departure:

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The
will of the Lord be done.
15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to
Jerusalem.
16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea,
and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old
disciple, with whom we should lodge.

Paul Arrested in the Temple

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.
18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.
19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.
20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

They glorified the Lord. They gave praise to the Lord for what he had done. They saw new proofs of his goodness and mercy, and they rendered him thanks for all that had been accomplished. There was no jealousy that it had been done by the instrumentality of Paul. True piety will rejoice in the spread of the gospel, and in the conversion of sinners, by whatever instrumentality it may be effected.

and they are all zealous of the law. They still observe the law of Moses. The reference here is to the law respecting circumcision, sacrifices, distinctions of meats and days, festivals, etc. It may seem remarkable that they should still continue to observe those rites, since it was the manifest design of Christianity to abolish them. But we are to remember,

(1.) that those rites had been appointed by God, and that they were trained to their observance.

(2.) That the apostles conformed to them while they remained in Jerusalem, and did not deem it best to set themselves violently against them, Acts 3:1, Lk 24:53.

(3.) That the question about their observance had never been agitated at Jerusalem. It was only among the Gentile converts that the question had risen, and there it must arise, for if they

were to be observed, they must have been imposed upon them by authority.

(4.) The decision of the council Acts 15 related only to the Gentile converts. It did not touch the question, whether those rites were to be observed by the Jewish converts.

(5.) It was to be presumed, that as the Christian religion became better understood-- that as its large, free, and catholic nature became more and more developed, the peculiar institutions of Moses would be laid aside of course, without agitation and without tumult. Had the question been agitated at Jerusalem, it would have excited tenfold opposition to Christianity, and would have rent the Christian church into factions, and greatly retarded the advance of the Christian doctrine. We are to remember also,

(6.) that, in the arrangement of Divine Providence, the time was drawing near which was to destroy the temple, the city, and the nation; which was to put an end to sacrifices, and effectually to close for ever the observance of the Mosaic rites. As this destruction was so near, and as it would be so effectual an argument against the observance of the Mosaic rites, the Great Head of the church did not suffer the question of their obligation to be needlessly agitated among the disciples at Jerusalem.

21 and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought
not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

And they are informed of thee. Reports respecting the conduct of Paul would be likely to be in circulation among all at Jerusalem. His remarkable conversion; his distinguished zeal; his success among the Gentiles, would make his conduct a subject of special interest. Evil-minded men among the Jews, who came up to Jerusalem from different places where he had

been, would be likely to represent him as the decided enemy of the laws of Moses, and these reports would be likely to reach the ears of the Jewish converts. The reports, as they gained ground, would be greatly magnified, until suspicion might be excited among the Christians at Jerusalem, that he was, as he was reputed to be, the settled foe of the Jewish rites and customs. That thou teachest all the Jews, etc. From all the evidence which we have of his conduct, this report was incorrect and slanderous. The truth appears to have been, that he did not enjoin the observance of those laws on the Gentile converts; that the effect of his ministry on them was to lead them to suppose that their observance was not necessary--contrary to the doctrines of the Judaizing teachers, Acts 15 and that he argued with the Jews themselves, where it could be done, against the obligation of those laws and customs, since the Messiah had come. They depended on that observance for justification and salvation. This Paul strenuously opposed, and this he defended at length in the epistles which he wrote. See the epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and the Hebrews. Yet these facts might be easily misunderstood and perverted, so as to give rise to the slanderous report, that he was everywhere the enemy of Moses and the law.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together:
for they will hear that thou art come.

Must needs come together. There will be inevitably a tumultuous assemblage. It will be impossible to prevent that. The reasons were, because their minds were exceedingly agitated that one of their own countrymen had, as they understood, been advising apostasy from the religion of their fathers; because it had been extensively done in many parts of the world, and with great success; and because Paul, having, as they believed, himself apostatized from the national religion, had become very conspicuous, and his very presence in Jerusalem, as in other places, would be likely to excite a tumult. It was, therefore, the part of friendship to him, and to the cause, to devise some proper place to prevent, if possible, the anticipated excitement.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men
which have a vow on them;

Which have a vow on them. Which have made a vow. Acts 18:18. From the mention of shaving the head, Acts 21:24, it is evident that the vow which they had taken was that of the Nazarite; and that as the time of their vow was about expiring, they were about to be shaven, in accordance with the custom usual on such occasions. Acts 18:18. These persons Paul could join, and thus show decisively that he did not intend to undervalue or disparage the laws of Moses, when those laws were understood as mere ceremonial observances.

24 them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with
them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that
those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are
nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest
the law.

the advice given by the church at Jerusalem to St. Paul, concerning the Jews which did believe in that place. It seems the Jews, though they had received the gospel, yet thought that the ceremonial law must still be observed; therefore, in condescension to their weakness, and to prevent their taking offence, they advise the apostle, not as a thing necessary in itself, but as an expediency in reference to their weakness, and to conform himself to some of the Jewish ceremonies and purifications; for though they were not then needful, yet they were not then unlawful; they might then be used, when the use of them would any ways conduce to the gaining and bringing over the Jews to a love of Christianity. The synagogue was not hastily to be cast out of the church, like the Heathenish superstitions; but to die by degrees, and be decently interred.

Here note, That the law of Moses, as to its moral part, Christ continued as his law: the ceremonial part, as to the use os types and ceremonies, signifying him that was to come, this was abrogated at Christ's coming; and the political part ceased, when the Jewish polity was dissolved: but the abrogation of the

whole was not fully made known at the first, but by degrees; and the exercise of it long tolerated to the Jews.

Observe, lastly, The particular advise which they give the apostle, to go into the temple, and perform the legal ceremony of purification: We have four men which have a vow; them take, and purify thyself, that all may know that thou walkest orderly, and keepest the law. That is, "Seeing we have four men here which have a Nazarite's vow upon them, the time of which vow is now expired, and they are to shave themselves ceremoniously in the temple; go thou with them, and perform the legal ceremony of purification there, that the people may know that the report of thee is not true; but thou, being a Jew, dost thyself keep the law."

Here we may observe the truth of what St. Paul elsewhere declared, that to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, yea, become all things to all men, that he might gain some. A noble pattern for the ministers of the gospel to write after, in yielding, so far as we may without sin or scandal, to the weakness of others, in order to the furtherance of the great ends of our ministry among our people: To the Jews I became as a Jew.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

And purify thyself with them. Join them in observing the forms of purification prescribed by the law of Moses in the observance of the vow of the Nazarite. The purifying here refers to the vows of sanctity which the Nazarites were to observe. They were to abstain from wine and strong drink; they were to eat no grapes, moist or dried; they were to come near no dead body, nor to make themselves "unclean"--for their father, mother, brother, or sister, when they died, Nu 6:3-7; and

they were to present an offering when the days of the vow were completed, Nu 6:13-21. And be at charges with them. Share with them the expense of the sacrifices and offerings required when the vow is completed. Those offerings were a ram of a year old for a burnt-offering, a sheep of the same age for a sin-offering, a ram for a thank-offering, a basket of unleavened cakes, and a libation of wine. See Nu 6:13-20. That they may shave their heads. The shaving of the head, or the cutting of the hair which had been suffered to grow during the continuance of the vow, Nu 6:5, was an observance indicating that the vow had been performed. Paul was requested to join with them in the expense of the sacrifices and offerings, that thus the whole of the ceremonies having been observed, their heads might be shaved as an indication that every part of the vow had been complied with. And all may know. By the fact of your observance of one of the rites of the Mosaic religion, all may have evidence that it is not your purpose or practice to speak contemptuously of those rites, or to undervalue the authority of Moses. Are nothing. Are untrue, or without any foundation. Walkest orderly. That you live in accordance with the real requirements of the law of Moses. To walk, in the Scriptures, often denotes to live, to act, to conduct, in a certain manner. All, probably, that they wished Paul to show by this was, that he was not an enemy of Moses. They who gave this counsel were Christians, and they could not wish him to do anything which would imply that he was not a Christian.

The request of James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem to Paul, or their advice rather, that he would gratify the believing Jews by showing some compliance with the ceremonial law, and appearing publicly in the temple to offer sacrifice, which was not a thing in itself sinful; for the ceremonial law, though it was by no means to be imposed upon the Gentile converts (as the false teachers would have it, and thereby endeavoured to subvert the gospel), yet it was not become unlawful as yet to those that had been bred up in the observance of it, but were far from expecting justification by it. It was dead, but not buried; dead, but not yet deadly. And,

being not sinful, they thought it was a piece of prudence in Paul to conform thus far. Observe the counsel they give to Paul herein, not as having authority over him, but an affection for him.

1. They desired him to take notice of the great numbers there were of the Jewish converts: Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are who believe. They called him brother, for they looked upon him as a joint-commissioner with them in gospel-work. Though they were of the circumcision and he the apostle of the Gentiles, though they were conformists and he a nonconformist, yet they were brethren, and owned the relation. Thou hast been in some of our assemblies, and seest how numerous they are: how many myriads of Jews believe. The word signifies, not thousands, but ten thousands. Even among the Jews, who were most prejudiced against the gospel, yet there were great multitudes that received it; for the grace of God can break down the strongest holds of Satan. The number of the names at first was but one hundred and twenty, yet now many thousands. Let none therefore despise the day of small things; for, though the beginning be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase. Hereby it appeared that God had not quite cast away his people the Jews, for among them there was a remnant, an election, that obtained (see Ro 11:1,5,7): many thousands that believed. And this account which they could give to Paul of the success of the gospel among the Jews was, no doubt, as grateful to Paul as the account which he gave them of the conversion of the Gentiles was to them; for his heart's desire and prayer to God for the Jews was that they might be saved.

2. They informed him of a prevailing infirmity these believing Jews laboured under, of which they could not yet be cured: They are all zealous of the law. They believe in Christ as the true Messiah, they rest upon his righteousness and submit to his government; but they know the law of Moses was of God, they have found spiritual benefit in their attendance on the institutions of it, and therefore they can by no means think of

parting with it, no, nor of growing cold to it. And perhaps they urged Christ's being made under the law, and observing it (which was designed to be our deliverance from the law), as a reason for their continuance under it. This was a great weakness and mistake, to be so fond of the shadows when the substance was come, to keep their necks under a yoke of bondage when Christ had come to make them free. But see,

(a.) The power of education and long usage, and especially of a ceremonial law.

(b.) The charitable allowance that must be made in consideration of these. These Jews that believed were not therefore disowned and rejected as no Christians because they were for the law, nay, were zealous for it, while it was only in their own practice, and they did not impose it upon others. Their being zealous of the law was capable of a good construction, which charity would put upon it; and it was capable of a good excuse, considering what they were brought up in, and among whom they lived.

3. They gave him to understand that these Jews, who were so zealous of the law, were ill-affected to him, Ac 21:21. Paul himself, though as faithful a servant as any Christ ever had, yet could not get the good word of all that belonged to Christ's family: "They are informed of thee (and form their opinion of thee accordingly) that thou not only dost not teach the Gentiles to observe the law, as some would have had thee (we have prevailed with them to drop that), but dost teach all the Jews who are dispersed among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, not to circumcise their children nor to walk after the customs of our nation, which were of divine appointment, so far as they might be observed even among the Gentiles, at a distance from the temple,--not to observe the fasts and feasts of the church, not to wear their phylacteries, nor abstain from unclean meats." Now,

(a.) It was true that Paul preached the abrogation of the law of Moses, taught them that it was impossible to be justified by it, and therefore we are not bound up any longer to the observance of it. But,

(b.) It was false that he taught them to forsake Moses; for the religion he preached tended not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. He preached Christ (the end of the law for righteousness), and repentance and faith, in the exercise of which we are to make great use of the law. The Jews among the Gentiles whom Paul taught were so far from forsaking Moses that they never understood him better, nor ever embraced him so heartily as now when they were taught to make use of him as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. But even the believing Jews, having got this notion of Paul, that he was an enemy to Moses, and perhaps giving too much regard to the unbelieving Jews too, were much exasperated against him. Their ministers, the elders here present, loved and honoured him, and approved of what he did, and called him brother, but the people could hardly be induced to entertain a favourable thought of him; for it is certain the least judicious are the most censorious, the weak-headed are the hot-headed. They could not distinguish upon Paul's doctrine as they ought to have done, and therefore condemned it in the gross, through ignorance.

4. They therefore desired Paul that he would by some public act, now that he had come to Jerusalem, make it to appear that the charge against him was false, and that he did not teach people to forsake Moses and to break the customs of the Jewish church, for he himself retained the use of them.

(a.) They conclude that something of this kind must be done: "What is it therefore? What must be done? The multitude will hear that thou art come to town." This is an inconvenience that attends men of fame, that their coming and going are taken notice of more than other people's, and will be talked of, by some for good-will and by others for ill-will. "When they hear

thou art come, they must needs come together, they will expect that we call them together, to advise with them whether we should admit thee to preach among us as a brother or no; or, they will come together of themselves expecting to hear thee." Now something must be done to satisfy them that Paul does not teach the people to forsake Moses, and they think it necessary,

[1.] For Paul's sake, that his reputation should be cleared, and that so good a man may not lie under any blemish, nor so useful a man labour under any disadvantage which may obstruct his usefulness.

[2.] For the people's sake, that they may not continue prejudiced against so good a man, nor lose the benefit of his ministry by those prejudices.

[3.] For their own sake, that since they knew it was their duty to own Paul their doing it might not be turned to their reproach among those that were under their charge.

(b.) They produce a fair opportunity which Paul might take to clear himself: "Do this that we say unto thee, take our advice in this case. We have four men, Jews who believe, of our own churches, and they have a vow on them, a vow of Nazariteship for a certain time; their time has now expired (Ac 21:23), and they are to offer their offering according to the law, when they shave the head of their separation, a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a ewe-lamb for a sin-offering, and a ram for a peace-offering, with other offerings pertinent to them, Nu 6:13-20. Many used to do this together, when their vow expired about the same time, either for the greater expedition or for the greater solemnity. Now Paul having so far of late complied with the law as to take upon him the vow of a Nazarite, and to signify the expiration of it by shaving his head at Cenchrea (Ac 18:18), according to the custom of those who lived at a distance from the temple, they desire him but to go a little further, and to join with these four in offering the sacrifices of a Nazarite:

'Purify thyself with them according to the law; and be willing not only to take that trouble, but to be at charges with them, in buying sacrifices for this solemn occasion, and to join with them in the sacrifice." This, they think, will effectually stop the mouth of calumny, and every one will be convinced that the report was false, that Paul was not the man he was represented to be, did not teach the Jews to forsake Moses, but that he himself, being originally a Jew, walked orderly, and kept the law; and then all would be well.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

As touching the Gentiles. In regard to the Gentile converts. It might be expedient for Paul to do what could not be enjoined on the Gentiles. They could not command the Gentile converts to observe those ceremonies; while yet it might be proper, for the sake of peace, that the converts to Christianity from among the Jews should regard them. The conduct of the Christians at Jerusalem in giving this advice, and of Paul in following it, may be easily vindicated. If it be objected, as it has been by infidels, that it looks like double-dealing--that it was designed to deceive the Jews in Jerusalem, and to make them believe that Paul actually conformed to the ceremonial law, when his conduct among the Gentiles showed that he did not--we may reply,

(1.) that the observance of that law was not necessary in order to justification.

(2.) That it would have been improper to have enjoined its observance on the Gentile converts as necessary, and therefore it was never done.

(3.) That when the Jews urged its observance as necessary to justification and salvation, Paul strenuously opposed this view of it everywhere.

(4.) Yet, that as a matter of expediency, he did not oppose its being observed either by the Jews, or by the converts made among the Jews. In fact, there is other evidence besides the case before us, that Paul himself continued to observe some at least of the Jewish rites, and his conduct in public at Jerusalem, was in strict accordance with his conduct in other places. See Acts 18:18. The sum of the whole matter is this, that when the observance of the Jewish ceremonial law was urged as necessary to justification and acceptance with God, Paul resisted it; when it was demanded that its observance should be enjoined on the Gentiles, he opposed it; in all other cases he made no opposition to it, and was ready himself to comply with it, and willing that others should also.

As touching the Gentiles. The duties of the Gentiles had been settled in the council described in 15:23-29. The advice of James was no doubt given from the best of motives. His position was a difficult one. The fanaticism of the Jewish nation, which broke out in war a few years later, was growing intense. The national feeling in the church had to be handled with great care. It would not do for the church to believe that Paul had become a renegade from their race. Paul, aware of all these difficulties, generously complied for the sake of peace and unity. We cannot be certain that the advice was just right, or that Paul did just right to comply, but these grand men acted according to their knowledge, and the record of Acts portrays both the shortcomings and the perfection of its great worthies. Concerning this advice of James and compliance of Paul, Pres. Milligan says: ``Three different view have been taken:

(1) that Paul in this case acted ignorantly, not being aware of the fact that the law of Moses was no longer binding;

(2) that, like Peter, he acted from fear of the Jewish brethren (Ga 2:11);

(3) that he acted in conformity with the law of Christian benevolence which requires us to respect even the weaknesses and prejudices of our brethren, so far as this can be done without in any way neglecting the requirements of the Gospel." The third hypothesis is the best, but some explanations are needful. The Jewish Christians were slowly emancipated from Judaism, and they did not reach the clear conviction, until after the temple was destroyed, that its sacrifices were obsolete. Gentiles were forbidden to sacrifice idols, but there was no such prohibition with regard to the altar of Jehovah. Even Paul evidently at this time thought of the sacrifices as, like circumcision, a matter of indifference. It was left for the next generation to learn that the inspired writings of Paul himself lead to the conclusion that all the sacrifices of the temple altar pointed to the Lamb of God, and that, from the time he was offered, they became obsolete.

Until that an offering, etc. The sacrifices required of all those who had observed this vow. Acts 21:24; Nu 6:13. It is a complete vindication of Paul in this case, that he did no more here than he had done in a voluntary manner, Acts 18:18, and as appears then in a secret manner, showing that he was still in the practice of observing this rite of the Mosaic institution. Nor can it be proved that Paul ever, in any way, or at any time, spoke against the vow of the Nazarite, or that a vow of a similar kind in spirit would be improper for a Christian in any circumstances.

This I confess to be the most difficult passage in Acts to fully understand, and to reconcile with the teaching of Paul on the subject of the Mosaic law. We shall have the exact state of the question before our minds, by inquiring,

first, What was the exact position of the Jerusalem brethren in reference to the law?

second, What had Paul actually taught upon the subject? and third, How can the course pursued by both be reconciled to the mature apostolic teaching? First. It is stated, in this speech, of which James was doubtless the author, that the disciples about Jerusalem were "all zealous for the law." They recognized the authority of Moses as still binding; for they complained that Paul taught "apostasy from Moses" [#Ac 21:21|]. The specifications of this apostasy were, first, neglect of circumcision; second, abandonment of the customs." By "the customs" are meant those imposed by the law, among which, as seen in their proposition to Paul, were the Nazarite vows, with their burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and meat-offerings (#Nu 6:13-17|), and, as seen in Paul's epistles, abstinence from unclean meats, and the observance of Sabbath-days, holy days, new moons, and Sabbatic years (#Ro 14:1-23 Ga 4:9,10 Col 2:16,17|). Second. Our iniquity into Paul's teaching on the subject must have separate reference to what he had taught before this time, and what he taught subsequently.

None of his oral teachings on the subject are preserved by Luke, hence we are dependent for a knowledge of his present teaching upon those of his epistles which were written previous to this time. In none of the specifications above enumerated did he fully agree with his Jewish brethren. True, he granted the perpetuity of circumcision; yet not because he acknowledged with them the continued authority of the law, but because of the covenant with Abraham which preceded the law (see TFG "Ac 16:3). As for the law, he taught that it had been "a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but after faith is come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster" (#Ga 3:24,25|); that, "now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that in which we were held"; that we are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (#Ro 7:4-6|). In repudiating the authority of the law, he necessarily repudiated all obligation to observe "the customs." In reference to all these, he afterward said to the Colossians, that God had "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances which was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing

it to the cross." "Let no man, therefore, judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbaths; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ" (#Col 2:14,16,17|). While thus repudiating the obligation to observe the ordinances, he admitted the innocence of their observance, and forbade any breach of fellowship on account of it, laying down in reference to them all, this rule: "Let not him who eats, despise him who eats not; and let not him who eats not, judge him who eats" (#Ro 14:1-6|). In reference, therefore, to meats and days, he and the judaizers agreed that the Jews might observe them; and they differed as to the ground of this conclusion: the latter affirming that it was a matter of duty; the former holding that it was a matter of indifference. Thus far we have omitted special mention of one custom, because its importance demands for it a separate consideration. We refer to sacrifices. It is evident, from the transaction before us, as observed above, that James and the brethren in Jerusalem regarded the offering of sacrifices as at least innocent; for they approved the course of the four Nazarites, and urged Paul to join with them in the service, though it required them to offer sacrifices, and even sin-offerings. They could not, indeed, very well avoid this opinion, since they admitted the continued authority of the Mosaic law. Though disagreeing with them as to the ground of their opinion, as in reference to the other customs, Paul evidently admitted the opinion itself, for he adopted their advice, and paid the expense of the sacrifices which the four Nazarites offered [#Ac 21:23,24,26|].

Third. The commentators uniformly agree that Paul was right, and that the rites observed on this occasion are to be referred to that class which are indifferent, and in reference to which Paul acted upon the principle of being a Jew to the Jew, that he might win the Jew. {m} This would not be objectionable, if the proceeding had reference merely to meats and drinks, holy days, etc., to which it appears to be confined in their view; for all these were indifferent then, and are not less so at the present day. Who would say that it would now be sinful to abstain from

certain meats, and observe certain days as holy? But it is far different with bloody sacrifices. If disciples, either Jewish or Gentile, should now assemble in Jerusalem, construct an altar, appoint a priesthood, and offer sin-offerings, they could but be regarded as apostates from Christ. But why should it be regarded as a crime now, if it was innocent then? The truth is, that, up to this time, Paul had written nothing which directly conflicted with the service of the altar, and he did not yet understand the subject correctly. His mind, and those of all the brethren, were as yet in much the same condition on this subject that they were before the conversion of Cornelius, in reference to the reception of the uncircumcised into the Church. If we admit that the proposition above quoted from Galatians, affirming that "we are no longer under the law" [#Ga 3:24,25|], was, when fully understood, inconsistent with the continuance of the sacrifice, we make his case only the more likely like Peter's in regard to the Gentiles; for he announced propositions, on Pentecost, which were inconsistent with his subsequent course, until he was made to better understand the force of his own words. Peter finally discovered that he was wrong in that matter, and Paul at length discovered that he was wrong, in his connection with the offerings of these Nazarites.

Some years later, the whole question concerning the Aaronic priesthood and animal sacrifices was thrust more distinctly upon his mind, and the Holy Spirit made to him a more distinct revelation of the truth upon the subject, and caused him to develop it to the Churches, in Ephesians, Colossians, and especially in Hebrews. In the last-named Epistle, written during his imprisonment in Rome, he exhibited the utter inefficiency of animal sacrifices; the sacrifice of Christ, once for all, as the only sufficient sin offering; and the abrogation of the Aaronic priesthood by that of Christ, who was now the only high priest and mediator between God and man. After these developments, he could not, for any earthly consideration, have repeated the transaction with the Nazarites; for it would have been to insult the great High Priest over the house of God, by presenting, before a human priest, an offering which could not

take away sin, and which would proclaim the insufficiency of the blood of the atonement. We conclude, therefore, that the procedure described in the text was inconsistent with the truth as finally developed by the apostles, but not with so much of it as was then understood by Paul.

This conclusion presents but another proof that the Holy Spirit, in leading the apostles "into the truth," did so by a gradual development running through a series of years (see Commentary, #Ac 10:9-23-23 11:1-18|). When Paul finally was enabled to understand and develop the whole truth on this subject, no doubt the opinions and prejudices of the more liberal class of Jewish disciples yielded to his clear and conclusive arguments. But, doubtless, some still clung to the obsolete and unlawful service of the temple, assisting the unbelieving Jews to perpetuate it. Then came in the necessity for the destruction of their temple and city, so that it should be impossible for them to longer offer sacrifices which had been superseded. The destruction of the temple was not the legal termination of the Mosaic ritual; for it ceased to be legal with the death of Christ (#Eph 2:14-16 Col 2:14|); but this brought to an end its illegal continuance. Before we dismiss this passage, there are two more points claiming a moment's attention. First, the justness of the accusation which the brethren had heard against Paul. He had certainly taught the Jews that they were no longer under the law, and that "the customs" were no longer binding, and this was, in one sense, "apostasy from Moses." But he had not, as he was charged, taught them to abandon the customs; for he had insisted that they were innocent; and, in reference to circumcision, he had given no ground of offense whatever. Hence the charge, as understood by those who preferred it, was false; and it was with the utmost propriety that Paul consented to disabuse their minds, though the means he adopted for that purpose was improper. The last point claiming attention is the nature of the purification which Paul underwent. The statement which we have rendered, he "purified himself with them," is understood,

by some commentators, to mean that he took part in their vow of abstinence {n}.

But for this meaning of the term, \~agnizw\~, there is no authority in the New Testament; everywhere else it means to purify, and Paul's own statement to Felix, that "they found me purified in the temple" (#Ac 24:18|), in which he speaks of the same event, and uses the same word, is conclusive as to its meaning here. It will be remembered that no Jew who, like Paul, had been mingling with Gentiles, and disregarding the ceremonial cleanness of the law, was permitted to enter the outer court of the temple without being purified. This purification he must have undergone, and there is no evidence that he underwent any other. But it is said that he purified himself "with them," which shows that they, too, were unclean. Now, when a Nazarite became unclean within the period of his vow, it was necessary that he should purify himself, shear his head on the seventh day, and on the eighth day bring certain offerings. Then he lost the days of his vow which had preceded the uncleanness, and had to begin the count anew from the day that the offering was presented. This is fully stated in #Nu 6:1-27|, where the law of Nazarite is prescribed. Such was the condition of these Nazarites, as is further proved by the notice given of the "days of purification," and the mention, in #Ac 21:27|, of "the seven days," as of a period well known. Nazarites had no purification to perform except when they became unclean during their vow; and there was no period of seven days connected with their vow, except in the instance just mentioned. In this instance, as the head was to be sheared on the seventh day, and the offerings presented on the eighth, there were just seven whole days employed. Paul's part was to give notice to the priest of the beginning of these days, and to pay the expenses of the offerings; but he had to purify himself before he went in for this purpose. {m} Bloomfield, Olshausen, Neander, Hackett, Howson, etc. {n} Bloomfield, Olshausen.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which
were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all
the people, and laid hands on him,

28 crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all
men every where against the people, and the law, and this place:
and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath
polluted this holy place.
29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an
Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into
the temple.)

Whom they supposed, etc. This is a most striking illustration of the manner in which accusations are often brought against others. They had seen him with Paul in the city; they inferred, therefore, that he had been with him in the temple. They did not even pretend that they had seen him in the temple; but the inference was enough to inflame the angry and excitable passions of the multitude. So in the accusations which men now often make of others. They see one thing, they infer another; they could testify to one thing, but they conclude that another thing will also be true, and that other thing they charge on them as the truth. If men would state facts as they are, no small part of the slanderous accusations against others would cease. An end would be made of most of the charges of falsehood, and error, and heresy, and dishonesty, and double-dealing, and immorality. If a statement is made, it should be of the thing as it was. If we attempt to state what a man has done, it should not be what we suppose he has done. If we attempt to state what he believes, it should not be what we suppose he believes.

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and
they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith
the doors were shut.

If Paul's own brethren in Jerusalem has become prejudiced against him on account of his teaching in reference to the law [#Ac 21:20,21|], it is not surprising that the hatred of the unbelieving Jews toward him should be intense. Their treasured wrath was like a magazine, ready to explode the moment a match should be applied; and to charge him with defiling the holy place, which they believed that he had already reviled in every nation, was enough to produce the explosion. It is not the custom of mobs to investigate the charges heaped upon their victims; hence, without knowing or caring to know,

whether he had really brought Trophimus into the temple (#Ac 21:29|), they seized him and dragged him out into the court of the Gentiles. The doors of the inner court were closed, to prevent the defilement of that holy place by the blood which was likely to be shed.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar:

32 who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

The inability of the mob to agree upon any charge against him shows the precipitancy with which they had rushed upon him, while the multiplicity of charges which they vociferated shows the intensity of their hatred.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

Paul's Defense before the People

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

That Egyptian was probably a Jew, who resided in Egypt. Josephus has given an account of this Egyptian, which

strikingly accords with the statement here recorded by Luke. See Josephus' Antiq. b. xx. chap. viii. 6, and Jewish War, b. ii. chap. xiii. 5. The account which he gives is, that this Egyptian, whose name he does not mention, came from Egypt to Jerusalem, and said that he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go with him to the Mount of Olives. He said further, that he would show them from thence how the walls of Jerusalem would fall down; and he promised them that he would procure for them an entrance through those walls when they were fallen down. Josephus adds, (Jewish War,) that he got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him, "these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount, which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place." But Felix, who was apprized of his movements, marched against him with the Roman soldiers, and discomfited him, and slew four hundred of them, and took two hundred alive. "But the Egyptian escaped himself out of the fight, but did not appear any more." It was natural that the Roman tribune should suppose that Paul was this Egyptian, and that his return had produced this commotion and excitement among the people.

39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, *a city* in
Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me
to speak unto the people.
40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs,
and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there
was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew
tongue, saying,

Acts-22

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense *which I make*
now unto you.
2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue
to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)
3 I am verily a man *which am* a Jew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in
Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *and*

taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the
fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

The law of the fathers. The law of our fathers; i.e., the law which they received and handed down to us. Paul was a Pharisee; and the law in which he had been taught was not only the written law of Moses, but the traditional law which had been handed down from former times. Mt 3:6.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and
delivering into prisons both men and women.
5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate
of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the
brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were
there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was
come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone
from heaven a great light round about me.
7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me,
Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am
Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.
9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid;
but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.
10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me,
Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of
all things which are appointed for thee to do.
11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led
by the hand of them that were with me, I came into
Damascus.
12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a
good report of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,
13 came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul,
receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

And see that Just One. The Messiah. Acts 3:14. As Paul was to be an apostle. and as it was the peculiar office of an apostle to bear witness to the person and deeds of the Lord Jesus, Acts 1:21; Acts 1:22, it was necessary that he should see him, that thus he might be a competent witness of the resurrection. Shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. Shouldest hear and obey his commands.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

And wash away thy sins. Receive baptism, as an act expressive of the washing away of sins. It cannot be intended that the external rite of baptism was sufficient to make the soul pure, but that it was an ordinance divinely appointed as expressive of the washing away of sins, or of purifying the heart. Comp. Heb 10:22. Sinners are represented in the Scriptures as defiled or polluted by sin. To wash away the sins denotes the purifying of the soul from this polluted influence, 1Cor 6:11, Rev 1:5, 7:14, Isa 1:16, Ps 51:2,7. Calling on the name of the Lord. For pardon and sanctification. Rom 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It was proper that this calling on the name of the Lord should be connected with the ordinance of baptism. That ordinance was expressive of a purifying which the Lord only could produce. It is proper that the rite of baptism should be attended with extraordinary prayer; and that he who is to be baptized should make it the occasion of peculiar and very solemn religious exercises. The external rite will avail nothing without the pardoning mercy of God.

Paul’s Call to the Gentiles

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

While I prayed in the temple. Paul, like the other converts to Christianity from among the Jews, would naturally continue to offer his devotions in the temple. We meet with repeated instances of their continuing to comply with the customs of the Jewish people. I was in a trance. Greek, Ecstasy. Acts 10:10. Perhaps he here refers to what he elsewhere mentions, 2Cor 12:1-5, which he calls "visions and revelations of the Lord." In that place he mentions his being "caught up to the third heaven," 2Cor 12:2, and "into paradise," where he heard words which it was "not possible for a man to utter," 2Cor 12:4. It is not certain, however, that he refers in this place to that remarkable occurrence. The narrative would rather imply that the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the temple in a remarkable manner, in a vision, and gave him a direct command to go to the Gentiles. Paul had now stated the evidence of his conversion, which appears to have been satisfactory to them: at least they made no objection to his statement; he had shown by his being in the temple his respect for their institutions; and he now proceeds to show that in his other conduct he had been directed by the same high authority by which he had been called into the ministry, and that the command had been given to him in their own temple and in their own city.

18 and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly
out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony
concerning me.

For they will not receive. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, probably including both Jews and Christians. The Jews would not listen to him, because he had become, in their view, an apostate, and they would hate and persecute him. The Christians would not be likely to receive him, for they would remember his former persecutions, and would be suspicious of him, because he had been so long in Arabia, and had not sooner connected himself with them. Acts 9:26, "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in
every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was
standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the
raiment of them that slew him.
21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence
unto the Gentiles.

Paul in the Custody of the Chief Captain

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up
their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for
it is not fit that he should live.

Observe here, 1. With what patience the Jews heard the apostle's discourse until he made mention to preach to them. Upon which they brake forth into fury and passion, and expressed their fury by throwing dust into the air, and casting off their clothes, as if they would presently stone him, whom they looked upon as the worst of villains, and unworthy to live: where we may remark at once both what a vile opinion the Jews had of the Gentiles, whom they called and accounted dogs, and what an high esteem they had of themselves, and a proud conceit of their own deservings, as if the favours of heaven belonged to none but themselves, who yet trampled upon them, when they were tendered to them.

Observe, 2. What a vile esteem these wicked Jews had of the holy and innocent apostle, who desired above all things to preach the glad tidings of the gospel to them, and longed most affectionately for the conversion and salvation of them. They account him the greatest villain upon earth, and unworthy to live upon it; but the good man had learnt (and let all the faithful ministers of Christ learn it after him) to take pleasure in reproaches, in persecutions, in necessities and distresses, for Christ's sake. Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not meet that he should liveAway with such a fellow. Greek, Take such a man from the earth; i.e., put him to death. It is language of strong indignation and abhorrence. The reasons of their

indignation were not that they supposed that the Gentiles could not be brought into covenant with God, for they would themselves compass sea and land to make one proselyte; but they were,

(1.) that they believed that Paul taught that they might be saved without conforming to the law of Moses; and,

(2.) his speech implied that the Jews were more hardened than the Gentiles, and that he had a greater prospect of success in bringing them to God than he had in regard to the Jews.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,
24 the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.
25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?
26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman.
27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a
Roman? He said, Yea.
28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free*-born.
29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

Paul before the Council

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from *his* bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Acts-23

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

The council. Greek, The sanhedrim, Acts 22:30. It was the great council composed of seventy elders, to whom was entrusted the affairs of the nation. Mt 2:4.I have lived in all good conscience. I have conducted myself so as to maintain a good conscience. I have done what I believed to be right. This was a bold declaration, after the tumult, and charges, and accusations of the previous day, Acts 22; and yet it was strictly true. His persecutions of the Christians had been conducted conscientiously. Acts 26:9, "I verily thought with myself," says he, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Of his conscientiousness and fidelity in their service, they could bear witness. Of his conscientiousness since, he could make a similar declaration. And he, doubtless, meant to say, that as he had been conscientious in persecution, so he had been in his conversion, and in his subsequent course. And as they knew that his former life had been with a good conscience, they ought to presume that he had maintained the same character still. This was a remarkably bold appeal to be made by an accused man, and it shows the strong consciousness which Paul had of his innocence. What would have been the drift of Paul's discourse in proving this, we can only conjecture. He was interrupted, Acts 23:2; but there can be no doubt that he would have pursued such a course of argument as should tend to establish his innocence.

2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

God shall smite thee. God shall punish thee. God is just; and he will not suffer such a manifest violation of all the laws of a fair trial to pass unavenged. This was a remarkably bold and

fearless declaration. Paul was surrounded by enemies. They were seeking his life; and he must have known that such declarations would have only excited their wrath, and made them more thirsty for his blood. That he could thus address the president of the council was not only strongly characteristic of the man, but was also a strong proof that he was conscious of innocence, and that justice was on his side. This expression of Paul, "God shall smite thee," is not to be regarded in the light of an imprecation, or as an expression of angry feeling, but of a prediction, or of a strong conviction on the mind of Paul, that a man so hypocritical and unjust as Ananias was, could not escape the vengeance of God. Ananias was slain, with Hezekiah his brother, during the agitation that occurred in Jerusalem, when the robbers, or Sicarii, under their leader Manahem, had taken possession of the city. He attempted to conceal himself in an aqueduct, but was drawn forth and killed. See Josephus, Jewish Wars, b. ii. chap. xvii. 8. Thus Paul's prediction was fulfilled.

Thou whited wall. This is evidently a proverbial expression, meaning thou hypocrite. His hypocrisy consisted in his pretending to sit there to do justice; and yet, in commanding the accused to be smitten in direct violation of the law, he thus showed that his character was not what, by his sitting there, he professed it to be, but that of one determined to carry the purposes of his party, and of his own feelings. Our Saviour used a similar expression, to describe the hypocritical character of the Pharisees, Mt 23:27, when he compares them to whited sepulchres.

Observe here, 1. How sad a state, and how bad a condition, was the Jewish church now in, when in the Sanhedrin, or great council, men had power and authority, who believed in no life but this; and what hypocrites were the Pharisees, who could thus incorporate and embody with damnable heretics, the Sadducees, and yet at the same time hated and persecuted the Christians. The Sadducees were so far from believing that there was any spirit, that they blasphemously maintained, that God

himself was no spiritual, but only corporeal being. When men sin with obstinacy against supernatural light, God justly withdraws from them even natural light, and suffers them to fall from one degree of error to another.

Observe, 2. How partiality will change men's judgments, according to the interest of a party or faction. The Pharisees were bitter enemies to the apostle; but, because he owned himself of their sect, they instantly took part with him, and cry, We find no fault with him. The feuds about religion are commonly the sharpest feuds; men are more fond of the notions of their brains, than they are of the issue of their bodies. Odia Religiosorum sunt acerbissima; "Religious hates are hottest."

Observe, 3. How the dissensions of God's adversaries oft-times become the deliverance of God's servants. Thus here the Pharisees and Sadducees quarrel about the resurrection: the Pharisees justify St. Paul, and tell them that oppose him, "They are in danger of fighting against God." Thus God when he pleaseth, can find or make patrons of his people, and raise up friends from amongst his very enemies, to defend his cause.

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Then said Paul, I wist not. I knew not; I was ignorant of the fact, that he was high priest. Interpreters have been greatly divided on the meaning of this expression. Some have supposed that Paul said it in irony; as if he had said, "Pardon me, brethren, I did not consider that this was the high priest. It did not occur to me, that a man who could conduct thus could be God's high priest." Others have thought (as Grotius) that Paul used these words for the purpose of mitigating their wrath, and as an acknowledgment that he had spoken hastily, and that it was contrary to his usual habit, which was not to speak evil of the ruler of the people. As if he had said, "I acknowledge my error and my haste. I did not consider that I was addressing him

whom God had commanded me to respect." But this interpretation is not probable, for Paul evidently did not intend to retract what he had said. Dr. Doddridge renders it, "I was not aware, brethren, that it was the high priest," and regards it as all apology for having spoken in haste. But the obvious reply to this interpretation is, that if Ananias was the high priest, Paul could not but be aware of it. Of so material a point, it is hardly possible that he could be ignorant. Others suppose, that as Paul had been long absent from Jerusalem, and had not known the changes which had occurred there, he was a stranger to the person of the high priest. Others suppose that Ananias did not occupy the usual seat which was appropriated to the high priest, and that he was not clothed in the usual robes of office, and that Paul did not recognize him the high priest. But these interpretations are not probable. It is wholly improbable that, on such an occasion, the high priest, who was the presiding officer in the sanhedrim, should not be known to the accused. The true interpretation, therefore, I suppose is, that which is derived from the fact that Ananias was not then properly the high priest; that there was a vacancy in the office, and that he presided by courtesy, or in virtue of his having been formerly invested with that office. The meaning then will be, "I did not regard or acknowledge him as the high priest. I did not address him as such, since that is not his true character. Had he been truly the high Priest, even if he had thus been guilty of manifest injustice, I would not have used the language which I did. The office, if not the man, would have claimed respect. But as he is not truly and properly clothed with that office, and as he was guilty of manifest injustice, I did not believe that he was to be shielded in his injustice by the law which commands me to show respect to the proper ruler of the people." If this be the true interpretation, it shows that Luke, in this account, accords entirely with the truth of history. The character of Ananias, as given by Josephus; the facts which he has stated in regard to him, all accord with the account here given, and show that the writer of the "Acts of the Apostles" was acquainted with the history of that time, and has correctly stated it. For it is written. Ex 22:28. Paul adduces this to show that it was his purpose to

observe the law; that he would not intentionally violate it; and that, if he had known Ananias to be high priest, he would have been restrained by his regard for the law from using the language which he did. Of the ruler of thy people. This passage had not any peculiar reference to the high priest, but it inculcated the general spirit of respect for those in office, whatever that office was. As the office of high priest was one of importance and authority, Paul declares here that he would not be guilty of showing disrespect for it, or of using reproachful language towards it. (+) "wist" "knew" (c) "written" Ex 22:28, Eccl 10:20, 2Pet 2:10, Jude 1:8

Other commentators says that: Several interpretations are given by expositors of these words, I wist not, brethern, that he was the high-priest.

1. Some think that St. Paul did not really know the high-priest, having been gone so long from Jerusalem; and the high-priest being made yearly.
Others say,

2. That there being a great throng about him, the apostle could not distinctly hear who it was that spake to him.

3. Some understand it of absolute denial, that any such office as that of high-priest ought then be in being. As if the apostle had said, "I do not own any man to be a lawful high-priest now, that function being abolished and disannulled at the coming of the Messias."
Again, 4. Others understand the words, as if the apostle denied him to be the lawful high-priest, and one of God's appointing, he being one of man's making, having purchased the place with money; for the power and coveteousness of the Romans put a new high-priest every year to officiate: accordingly, St. Paul, knowing this man to be none of the posterity of Aaron, but brought in by sordid gain, might justly disown him to be the high-priest.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Orobio charges this upon Paul as an artful manner of declining persecution, unworthy the character of an upright and honest man. Chubb, a British Deist of the seventeenth century, charges it upon Patti as an act of gross "dissimulation, as designed to conceal the true ground of all the troubles that he had brought upon himself; and as designed to deceive and impose upon the Jews." He affirms also, that "St. Paul probably invented this pretended charge against himself, to draw over a party of the unbelieving Jews unto him." See Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii. p. 238., Now, in reply to this we may observe,

(1.) that there is not the least evidence that Paul denied that he had been, or was then, a Christian. An attempt to deny this, after all that they knew of him, would have been vain; and there is not the slightest hint that he attempted it.

(2.) The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was the main and leading doctrine which he had insisted on, and which had been to him the cause of much of his persecution. Acts 17:31,32, 1Cor 15, Acts 13:34 Acts 26:6,7,23,25.

(3.) Paul defended this by an argument which he deemed invincible, and which constituted, in fact, the principal evidence of its truth--the fact that the Lord Jesus had been raised. That fact had given demonstration to the doctrine of the Pharisees, that the dead would rise. As Paul had everywhere proclaimed the fact that Jesus had been raised up, and as this had been the occasion of his being opposed, it was true that he had been persecuted on account of that doctrine.

(4.) The real ground of the opposition which the Sadducees made to him, and of their opposition to his doctrine, was the additional zeal with which he urged this doctrine, and the

additional argument which he brought far the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps the cause of the opposition of this great party among the Jews--the Sadducees--to Christianity, was the strong confirmation which the resurrection of Christ gave to the doctrine which they so much hated--the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. It thus gave a triumph to their opponents among the Pharisees; and Paul, as a leading and zealous advocate of that doctrine, would excite their special hatred.

(5.) All that Paul said, therefore, was strictly true. It was because he advocated this doctrine that he was opposed. That there were other causes of opposition to him might be true also; but still this was the main and prominent cause of the hostility.

(6.) With great propriety, therefore, he might address the Pharisees, and say, "Brethren, the great doctrine which has distinguished you from the Sadducees is at stake. The great doctrine which is at the foundation of all our hopes--the resurrection of the dead--the doctrine of our fathers, of the Scriptures, of our sect, is in danger. Of that doctrine I have been the advocate. I have never denied it. I have endeavoured to establish it, and have everywhere defended it, and have devoted myself to the work of putting it on an imperishable basis among the Jews and the Gentiles. For my zeal in that I have been opposed. I have excited the ridicule of the Gentile, and the hatred of the Sadducee. I have thus been persecuted and arraigned; and for my zeal in this, in urging the argument in defence of it, which I have deemed most irrefragable--the resurrection of the Messiah--I have been persecuted and arraigned, and now cast myself on your protection against the mad zeal of the enemies of the doctrine of our fathers. Not only, therefore, was this an act of policy and prudence in Paul, but what he affirmed was strictly true, and the effect was as he had anticipated.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between

the

Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

The scribes. The learned men. They would naturally be the chief speakers. Of the Pharisees' part. Who were Pharisees; or who belonged to that party. The scribes were not a distinct sect, but might be either Pharisees or Sadducees.

We find no evil in this man. No opinion which is contrary to the law of Moses; and no conduct in spreading the doctrine of the resurrection which we do not approve. The importance of this doctrine, in their view, was so great as to throw into the back ground all the other doctrines that Paul might hold; and provided this were propagated, they were willing, to vindicate and sustain him. A similar testimony was offered to the innocence of the Saviour by Pilate, Jn 19:6.

But if a spirit or an angel, etc. They here referred, doubtless, to what Paul had said in Acts 22:17,18. He had declared that he had gone among the Gentiles in obedience to a command which he received in a vision in the temple. As the Pharisees held to the belief of spirits and angels, and to the doctrine that the will of God was often delivered to men by their agency, they were ready now to admit that he had received such a communication, and that he had gone among the Gentiles in obedience to it, to defend their great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We are not to suppose that the Pharisees had become the friends of Paul, or of Christianity. The true solution of their conduct doubtless is, that they were so inflamed with hatred against the Sadducees, that they were willing to make use of any argument against their doctrine. As the testimony of Paul might be turned to their account, they were willing to vindicate him. It is remarkable, too, that they perverted the statement of Paul in order to oppose the Sadducees. Paul had stated distinctly, Acts 22:17,18,) that he had been commanded to go by the Lord, meaning the Lord Jesus. He had said nothing of "a spirit, or an angel." Yet they would unite with the Sadducees so far as to maintain that he had received no such command from the Lord Jesus. But they might easily vary his

statements, and suppose that an "angel or a spirit" had spoken to him, and thus made use of his conduct as an argument against the Sadducees. Men are not always very careful about the exact correctness of their statements, when they wish to humble a rival. Let us not fight against God. Acts 5:39. These words are wanting in many MSS. and in some of the ancient versions. The Syriac reads it, "If a spirit or an angel have spoken to him, what is there in this?" i.e., what is there unusual or wrong.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

The appearance of the Lord in this case was a proof that he approved the course which Paul had taken before the sanhedrim.

The promise which was here made to Paul was not directly one of deliverance from the present persecution, but it implied that, and made it certain.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

11 And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

It is evident, however, that the minds of the Jews were greatly inflamed against Paul; and as they saw him in the custody of the Roman tribune, and as there was no prospect that he would punish him, they resolved to take the matter into their own hands. Michaelis conjectures that they were of the number of the Sicarii, or cut-throats, with which Judea then abounded. Acts 21:38. It is needless to remark that this was a most wicked oath. It was a deliberate purpose to commit murder; and it

shows the desperate state of morals among the Jews at that time, and the infuriated malice of the people against the apostle.

O what a low ebb was the Jewish religion now at! What an high-priest and priesthood was there, that must head a conspiracy of murdering Sadducees! How great was the degeneracy of the Jewish church, when their chief priests were thus ready to comply with, and contribute their best assistance to, such a cruel crew of cut-throats and bloody assassins! but they had almost filled up the measure of their sins, and their final destruction was near approaching.

Observe, lastly, What craft and cruelty, what fraud and force, are here found and combined together in the church's enemies.

The Plot against Paul's Life

12 And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.
13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.
14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.
15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

As though ye would enquire, etc. This request appeared so reasonable that they did not doubt that the tribune would grant it to the council. And though it was obviously a false and wicked pretence, yet these conspirators knew the character of the persons to whom they addressed themselves so well, that they did not doubt that they would prevail On the council to make the request. Public justice must have been deeply fallen,

when it was known that such an iniquitous request could be made with the certain prospect of success.

Before he comes near to the sanhedrim. The great council will thus not be suspected of being privy to the deed. We will waylay him, and murder him in the way. The plan was well laid; and nothing but the interposition of Providence could have prevented its execution. As though ye would enquire, etc. This request appeared so reasonable that they did not doubt that the tribune would grant it to the council. And though it was obviously a false and wicked pretence, yet these conspirators knew the character of the persons to whom they addressed themselves so well, that they did not doubt that they would prevail On the council to make the request. Public justice must have been deeply fallen, when it was known that such an iniquitous request could be made with the certain prospect of success.

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16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he
went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.
17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said,
Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a
certain thing to tell him.

Who might at that time have had special charge of the castle, or been on guard. Paul had the most positive assurance that his life would be spared, and that he would yet see Rome; but he always understood the Divine promises and purposes as being consistent with his own efforts, and with all proper measures of prudence and diligence in securing his own safety. He did not rest merely on the Divine promise without any effort of his own; but he took encouragement from those promises to put forth his own exertions for security and for salvation.

18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said,
Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this
young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.
19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him*
aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?
20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou
wouldest bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, as though
they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.
21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of
them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with
an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed
him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.
22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged
him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to
me.

How wonderfully God overruled the heart of the chief captain, in that he took care both of St. Paul, and the young man also

Paul Sent to Felix the Governor

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two
hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore
and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the
night;
24 and provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him*
safe unto Felix the governor.
25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:
26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth*
greeting.
27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed
of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him,
having understood that he was a Roman.
28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they
accused him, I brought him forth into their council:
29 whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but
to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of
bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man,
I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his
accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him.
Farewell.
31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and
brought *him* by night to Antipatris.
32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him,
and returned to the castle:
33 who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to
the governor, presented Paul also before him.
34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what
province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of
Cilicia;
35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And
he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Acts-24

Paul's Defense before Felix

1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the
elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed
the governor against Paul.

With a certain orator named Tertullus. Appointed to accuse Paul. This is a Roman name, and this man was doubtless a Roman. As the Jews were, to a great extent, ignorant of the Roman customs and laws, and of their mode of administering justice, it is not improbable that they were in the habit of employing Roman lawyers to plead their causes.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse
him,
saying,
Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that
very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy
providence,
3 we accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with
all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man *a* pestilent *fellow,* and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

We have found this man a pestilent fellow. λοιμον. This word is commonly applied to a plague, or pestilence; and then to a man who corrupts the morals of others, or who is turbulent, and an exciter of sedition. Our translation somewhat weakens the force of the original expression. Tertullus did not say that he was a pestilent fellow, but that he was the very pestilence itself. In this he referred to their belief, that he had been the cause of extensive disturbances everywhere among the Jews.

An exciter of tumult. This they pretended he did by preaching doctrines contrary to the laws and customs of Moses, and exciting the Jews to tumult and disorder. Throughout the world. Throughout the Roman empire, and thus leading the Jews to violate the laws, and to produce tumults, riots, and disorder.

And a ringleader. πρωτοστατην. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is properly a military word, and denotes one who stands first in an army, a standard-bearer, a leader, or commander. The meaning is, that Paul had been so active, and so prominent in preaching the gospel, that he had been a leader, or the principal person, in extending the sect of the Nazarenes. Of the sect. The original word here αιρεσεως is the word from which we have derived the term heresy. It is, however, properly translated sect, or party, and should have been so translated in Acts 24:14. Acts 5:17. Of the Nazarenes. This was the name usually given to Christians by way of contempt. They were so called because Jesus was of Nazareth.

Here note, 1. What an heavy load of reproaches and false accusations our innocent apostle laboured under; he is accounted, and called, a walking pestilence. Thus the holy and

faithful servants of God are esteemed by the world, the plague and bane of the place and nation where they live: although it is really for their sakes that God staves off plagues and judgments from falling upon the world; We have found this man a pestilant fellow.

It is not the greatest holiness towards God, nor righteousness towards men, that can sufficiently shield and defend a saint from censure and slander, from calumny and false accusation.

Note, 2. Besides the general charge that the apostle was the very pest and plague of mankind; we have a threefold accusation brought against him, That he was a mover of sedition, a profaner of the temple, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Lord, how should thy faithful ministers and ambassadors prepare themselves for, and comfort themselves under, the most hellish reproaches, when we find the great apostle, (whom St. Chrysostom honours with this character, "That the earth never bare a better man since it bare our Redeemer,") yet thus miscalled and accounted a pest, a plague, the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things!

O why should such worthless worms as we murmur, when we meet with much less reproaches! Lord! help us in imitation of thy example, for the joy that is set before us, to despise the shame, as well as to endure the cross. The best men that ever the world had, have fallen under the lashes of envenomed tongues. What foul aspersions hath malice cast upon innocency itself! Our blessed Saviour, in the clearest act of innocency, his casting out of devils, suffered the most horrid imputation, even of casting out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils, Matt 9:34.

Now the servant must not expect to be above his master: if Christ thus suffered, needs must Christianity, needs must Christians, needs must ministers and ambassadors.

6 who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we
took, and would have judged according to our law.
7 But the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great
violence took *him* away out of our hands,
8 commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of
whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things,
whereof we accuse him.
9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.
10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him
to speak, answered,
Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a
judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for
myself:
11 because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but
twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.
12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man,
neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in
the city:
13 neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse
me.
14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they
call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all
things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

But this I confess, etc. The next specification in the charge of Tertullus was, Acts 24:5, that he was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." To this, Paul replies in this and the two following verses. Of this reply we may observe,

(1.) that he does not stoop to notice the contempt implied in the use of the word Nazarenes. He was engaged in a more important business than to contend about the name which they chose to give to Christians.

(2.) He admits that he belonged to that sect or class of people. That he was a Christian he neither denied, nor was disposed to deny.

(3.) He maintains that in this way he is still worshipping the God of his fathers. Of this, the fact that he was engaged in worship in the temple, was sufficient proof.

(4.) He shows them that he believed only what was written in the law and the prophets; that this involved the main doctrine of their religion--the hope of the resurrection of the dead, Acts 24:15; and that it was his constant and earnest desire to keep a pure conscience in all things, Acts 24:16. These are the points of his defence to this second charge, and we shall see that they fully meet and dispose of the accusation. After the way. After the manner or mode of worship. Which they call heresy. This translation does not express to us the force of the original. We have attached to the word heresy an idea which is not conveyed by the Greek word, and now commonly understand by it, error of doctrine. In Paul's answer here, there is an explicit reference to their charge, which does not appear in our version. The charge of Tertullus was, that he was the ringleader of the sect τηςαιρεσεως of the Nazarenes, Acts 24:5. To this, Paul replies, "After the way which they call sect, (αιρεσιν, not error of doctrine, but after a way which they maintain is producing division or schism,) so worship I the God of my fathers." Paul was not ashamed to be called a follower of that sect or party among the Jewish people. Nor should we be ashamed to worship God in a mode that is called heresy or schism, if we do it in obedience to conscience and to God. So worship I. I continue to worship. I have not departed from the characteristic of the Jewish people, the proper and public acknowledgment of the God of the Jews. The God of my fathers. My fathers' God; Jehovah; the God whom my Jewish ancestors adored. There is something very touching in this, and fitted to find its way to the heart of a Jew. He had introduced no new object of worship, (comp. De 13:1-5;) he had not become a follower of a false or foreign God; and this fact was really a reply to their charge, that he was setting up a new sect in religion. The same thing Paul affirms of himself in 2Ti 1:3: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience." Believing all things, etc. Particularly respecting the Messiah. So he more

fully explains his meaning in his speech before king Agrippa, Acts 26:23. In the Law and in the Prophets. Commanded in the law of Moses, and foretold by the prophets. That Paul had ever disbelieved any of these things, they could not prove; and his whole course had shown that he fully credited the sacred records. Most of his arguments in defending Christianity had been drawn from the Jewish writings.

15 and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and *toward* men.

Do I exercise myself. ασκω. I accustom or employ myself; I make it my constant aim and endeavour. It is the purpose of my constant study. Paul often appeals to his conscientiousness as the leading habit of his life. Even before his conversion he endeavoured to act according to the dictates of conscience. See Acts 26:9. Comp. Php 3:5,6. To have always a conscience, etc. To do that which is right, so that my conscience shall approve of it, and never reproach me. Void of offence. αροσκοπον. That which is inoffensive, or which does not cause one to stumble or fall. lie means, that he endeavoured to keep his conscience so enlightened and pure in regard to duty, and that he acted according to its dictates in such a way, that his conduct should not be displeasing to God, or injurious to man. To have such a conscience implies two things:

(1.) That it be enlightened or properly informed in regard to truth and duty; and,

(2,) that that which is made known to be right should be honestly and faithfully performed. Without these two things, no man can have a conscience that shall be inoffensive and harmless. Toward God. In an honest endeavour to discharge all the duties of public and private worship, and to do constantly what he requires. In believing all that he has spoken; doing all that he requires; and offering to him the service which he

approves. Toward men. In endeavouring to meet all the demands of justice and mercy; to advance their knowledge, happiness, and salvation; so that I may look back on my life with the reflection that I have done all that I ought to have done, and all that I could do, to promote the welfare of the whole human family. What a noble principle of conduct was this! How devoted, and how pure! How unlike the conduct of those who live to gratify debasing sensual appetites, or for gold or honour; and who pass their lives in such a manner as to offer the grossest offence to God, and to do the most injury to man! The great and noble aim of Paul was to be pure; and no slander of his enemies, no trials, persecutions, or perils, and no pains of dying, could take away the approving voice of conscience. Alike in his travels, and in his persecutions; among friends and foes; when preaching in the synagogue, the city, or the desert; or when defending himself before governors and kings, he had this testimony of a self-approving mind. Happy they who thus frame their lives. And happy will be the end of a life where this has been the grand object of the journey through this world.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation,
and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in
the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they
had aught against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evildoing
in me, while I stood before the council,

21 except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them,
Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question
by you this day.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect
knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When
Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the
uttermost of your matter.

Having more perfect knowledge of that way. Our translation of this verse is very obscure, and critics are divided about the proper interpretation of the original. Many (Erasmus, Luther, Michaelis, Morus, etc.) render it, "Although he had a more

perfect knowledge of the Christian doctrine than Paul's accusers had, yet he deferred the hearing of the cause till Lysias had come down." They observe, that he might have obtained this knowledge, not only from the letter of Lysias, but from public rumour, as there were doubtless Christians at Caesarea. They suppose that he deferred the cause, either with the hope of receiving a bribe from Paul, (comp. Acts 24:26,) or to gratify the Jews with his being longer detained as a prisoner. Others, among whom are Beza, Grotius, Rosenmuller, and Doddridge, suppose that it should be rendered, "He deferred them, and said, After I have been more accurately informed concerning this way, when Lysias has come down, I will hear the cause." This is doubtless the true interpretation of the passage, and it is rendered more probable by the fact that Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith of Christ, (Acts 24:24,) evidently with a design to make himself better acquainted with the charges against him, and the nature of his belief.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him*
have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his
acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla,
which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning
the faith in Christ.

Felix came with his wife Drusilla. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa the elder, and was engaged to be married to Epiphanes, the son of king Antiochus, on condition that he would embrace the Jewish religion; but as he afterwards refused to do that, the contract was broken off. Afterwards she was given in marriage, by her brother Agrippa the younger, to Azizus king of Emesa, upon his consent to be circumcised. When Felix was governor of Judea, he saw Drusilla, and fell in love with her, and sent to her Simon, one of his friends, a Jew, by birth a Cyprian, who pretended to be a magician, to endeavour to persuade her to forsake her husband, and to marry Felix. Accordingly, in order to avoid the envy of her sister Bernice, who treated her ill on account of her beauty, "she was prevailed on," says Josephus, "to transgress the laws of her forefathers, and to marry Felix." Josephus, Antiq. b. xx. chap.

vii. 1, 2. She was, therefore, living in adultery with him; and this was probably the reason why Paul dwelt in his discourse before Felix particularly on "temperance," or chastity. Acts 24:25. He sent for Paul, and heard him. Perhaps he did this in order to be more fully acquainted with the case which was submitted to him. It is possible, also, that it might have been to gratify his wife, who was a Jewess, and who doubtless had a desire to be acquainted with the principles of this new sect. It is certain also that one object which Felix had in this, was to let Paul see how dependent he was on him, and to induce him to purchase his liberty.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

And as he reasoned. Greek, "And he discoursing." διαλεγομενου δεαυτου No argument should be drawn from the word that is used here, to prove that Paul particularly appealed to reason, or that his discourse was argumentative. That it was so, is indeed not improbable, from all that we know of the man, and from the topics on which he discoursed. But the word used here means simply, as he discoursed, and is applied usually to making a public address, to preaching, etc., in whatever way it is done, Acts 17:2, 18:4,19, 19:8,9, 24:12. Felix and Drusilla intended this as a matter of entertainment or amusement. Paul readily obeyed their summons, as it gave him an opportunity to preach the gospel to them; and as they desired his sentiments in regard to the faith in Christ, he selected those topics which were adapted to their condition, and stated those principles of the Christian religion which were fitted to arrest their attention, and lead them to repentance. Paul seized every opportunity of making known the gospel; and whether a prisoner or at liberty, whether before princes, governors, kings, or common people, was equally prepared to defend the pure and holy doctrines of the cross. His boldness in this instance is the more remarkable, as he was dependent on Felix for his pardon. A timeserver or an impostor would have chosen such topics as would have conciliated the favour of the judge, and procured his pardon, he would have flattered his vanity, or palliated his vices. But such

an idea never seems to have occurred to Paul. His aim was to defend the truth, and to save, if possible, the souls of Drusilla and of Felix. Of righteousness, περιδικαιοσυνης. Of justice. Not of the justice of God particularly, but of the nature and requirements of justice in the relations of life, the relations which we sustain to God and to man. This was a proper topic with which to introduce his discourse, as it was the office of Felix to dispense justice between man and man; and as his administration was not remarkable for the exercise of that virtue. It is evident that he could be influenced by a bribe, (Acts 24:26;) and it was proper for Paul to dwell on this as designed to show him the guilt of his life, and his danger of meeting the justice of a Being who cannot be bribed, but who will dispense equal justice alike to the great and the mean. That Paul dwelt also on the justice of God, as the moral Governor of the world, may also be presumed. The apprehension of that justice, and the remembrance of his own guilty life, tended to produce the alarm of Felix, and to make him tremble.

And judgment to come. The universal judgment; the judgment that was to come on all transgressors. On this topic Paul also dwelt when he preached before the Areopagus at Athens, Acts 17:31. These topics were admirably adapted to excite the alarm of both Felix and Drusilla. It evinced great boldness and faithfulness in Paul to select them; and the result showed that he correctly judged of the kind of truth which was adapted to alarm the fears of his guilty auditor.

And answered, Go thy way, etc. How different is this answer from that of the jailer of Philippi when alarmed in a similar manner. He asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and was directed to Him in whom he found peace from a troubled conscience, Acts 16:30,31. Felix was troubled; but instead of asking what he should do, he sent the messenger of God away. He was evidently not prepared to break off his sins, and turn to God. He sought peace by sending away his reprover; and manifestly intended then to banish the subject from his mind. Yet, like others, he did not intend to banish it altogether. He

looked forward to a time when he should be more at leisure; when the cares of office should press less heavily on his attention; or when he should be more disposed to attend to it. Thus multitudes, when they are alarmed, and see their guilt and danger, resolve to defer it to a more convenient time. One man is engaged in a career of pleasure, and it is not now a convenient time to attend to his soul's salvation. Another is pressed with business; with the cares of life; with a plan of gain; with the labours of office, or of a profession, and it is not now a convenient time for him to attend to religion. Another supposes that his time of life is not the most convenient. His youth he desires to spend in pleasure, and waits for a more convenient time in middle age. His middle life he spends in business, and the toils of the world, and this is not a convenient time. Such a period he expects then to find in old age. But as age advances, he finds an increasing disposition to defer it; he is still indisposed to attend to it; still in love with the world. Even old age is seldom found to be a convenient time to prepare for heaven; and it is deferred from one period of life to another, till death closes the scene. It has been commonly supposed and said, that Felix never found that more convenient time to call for Paul. That he did not embrace the Christian religion, and forsake his sins, is probable, nay, almost certain. But it is not true that he did not take an opportunity of hearing Paul further on the subject; for it is said that he sent for him often, and communed with him. But though Felix found this opportunity, yet

(1) we have no reason to suppose that the main thing --the salvation of his soul-- ever again occupied his attention. There is no evidence that he was again alarmed or awakened, or that he had any further solicitude on the subject of his sins. He had passed for ever the favourable time; the golden moments when he might have secured the salvation of his soul.

(2.) Others have no right to suppose that their lives will be lengthened out that they may have any further opportunity to attend to the subject of religion.

(3.) When a sinner is awakened, and sees his past sins, if he rejects the appeal to his conscience then, and defers it to a more convenient opportunity, he has no reason to expect that his attention will ever be again called with deep interest to the subject. He may live; but he may live without the strivings of the Holy Spirit. When a man has once deliberately rejected the offers of mercy; when he has trifled with the influences of the Spirit of God, he has no right or reason to expect that that Spirit will ever strive with him again. Such, we have too much reason to fear was the case with Felix. Though he often saw Paul again, and "communed with him," yet there is no account that he was again alarmed or awakened. And thus sinners often attend on the means of grace after they have grieved the Holy Spirit; they listen to the doctrines of the gospel, they hear its appeals and its warnings, but they have no feeling, no interest, and die in their sins. A more convenient season. Greek, "Taking time." I will take a time for this. I will call for thee. To hear thee further on this subject. This he did, Acts 24:26. It is remarkable that Drusilla was not alarmed. She was as much involved in guilt as Felix; but she, being a Jewess, had been accustomed to hear of a future judgment, until it caused in her mind no alarm. Perhaps also she depended on the rites and ceremonies of her religion as a sufficient expiation for her sins. She might have been resting on those false dependencies which go to free the conscience from a sense of guilt, and which thus beguile and destroy the soul.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Left Paul bound. Left him in custody to the charge of his successor. His object in this was to conciliate the Jews; that is, to secure their favour, and to prevent them, if possible, from accusing him for the evils of his administration before the emperor. The account which Luke gives here coincides remarkably with that which Josephus has given. He says, that

Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero. He does not indeed mention Paul, or say that Felix sought to conciliate the favour of the Jews; but he gives such an account as to make the statement by Luke perfectly consistent with his character while in office. He informs us that Felix was unpopular, and that there was reason to apprehend that the Jews would accuse him before the emperor; and, therefore, the statement in the Acts, that he would be willing to show the Jews a favour, is in perfect keeping with his character and circumstances, and is one of those undesigned coincidences, which show that the author of the Acts was fully acquainted with the circumstances of the time, and that his history is true. The account in Josephus is, that

"when Porcine Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero, the principal inhabitants of Caesarea went up to Rome to accuse Felix; and he had been certainly brought to punishment, unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who was at that time had in the greatest honour by him."

Antiq. b. xx. chap. viii. & 9. The plan of Felix, therefore, in suppressing the enmity of the Jews, and conciliating their favour by injustice to Paul, did not succeed; and is one of those instances, so numerous in the world, where a man gains nothing by wickedness. He sought money from Paul by iniquity, and failed; he sought by injustice to obtain the favour of the Jews, and failed in that also. And the inference from the whole transaction is, that "honesty is the best policy," and that man in any office should pursue a course of firm, and constant, and undeviating integrity.

Acts-25

Paul Appeals to Caesar

1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days
he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.
2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him
against
Paul, and besought him,
3 and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to
Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

Informed him of the accusation against him; and doubtless endeavoured to prejudice the mind of Festus against him. They thus showed their unrelenting disposition. It might have been supposed that after two years this unjust prosecution would be abandoned and forgotten. But malice does not thus forget its object; and the spirit of persecution is not thus satisfied. It is evident that there was here every probability that injustice would be done to Paul, and that the mind of Festus would be biassed against him. He was a stranger to Paul, and to the embittered feelings of the Jewish character, he would wish to conciliate their favour on entering on the duties of his office. And a strong representation therefore, made by the chief men of the nation, would be likely to prejudice him violently against Paul, and to unfit him for the exercise of impartial justice

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and
that he himself would depart shortly *thither.*
5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go
down with *me,* and accuse this man, if there be any
wickedness in him.
6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days,
he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the
judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.
7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down
from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and
grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not
prove.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure. Desirous of securing their favour, as he had just entered on his administration. Comp. Acts 24:27. In this he evinced rather a desire, of popularity than an inclination to do justice, Had he been disposed to do right at once, he would have immediately discharged Paul.

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

I stand at Caesar's judgment seat. The Roman emperors, after Julius Caesar, were all called Caesar; thus, Augustus Caesar, Claudius Caesar, etc., as all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh, though they had each his proper name, as Pharaoh Necho, etc. The emperor at this time (A. D. 60) was Nero, one of the most cruel and impious men that ever sat on a throne. It was under him that Paul was afterwards beheaded. When Paul says, "I stand at Caesar's judgment-seat, he means to say that he regarded the tribunal before which he then stood, and on which Festus sat, as really the judgment-seat of Csesar. The procurator, or governor, held his commission from the Roman emperor, and it was, in fact, his tribunal.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.

The reason why Paul made this appeal was, that he saw that justice would not be done him by the Roman governor. He had been tried by Felix, and justice had been denied him; and he was detained a prisoner in violation of law, to gratify the Jews. He had now been tried by Festus, and saw that he was pursuing the same course; and he resolved, therefore, to assert his rights,

and remove the cause, far from Jerusalem and from the prejudiced men in that city, at once to Rome. It was in this mysterious way that Paul's long-cherished desire to see the Roman church, and to preach the gospel there, was to be gratified. Rom 1:9, and Rom 1:10,11. For this he had prayed long, (Rom 1:10, 15:23,24;) and now at length this purpose was to be fulfilled. God answers prayer; but it is often in a way which we little anticipate. He so orders the train of events--he so places us amidst a press of circumstances--that the desire is granted in a way which we could never have anticipated, but which shows in the best manner that he is a hearer of prayer.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

When he had conferred with the council. With his associate judges, or with those who were his counsellors in the administratien of justice. They were made up ofthe chief persons, probably military as well as civil, who were about him, and who were his assistants in the administration of the affairs of the province.

Paul Brought before Agrippa and Bernice

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

He did this, probably, because Agrippa, being a Jew, would be supposed to be interested in the case. It was natural that this trial should be a topic of conversation, and perhaps Festus might be disposed to ask what was proper to be done in such cases.

15 about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring *to have* judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

It is not the manner, etc. He here states the reasons which he gave to the Jews for not delivering Paul into their hands. In Acts 25:4,5, we have an account of the fact that he would not accede to the requests of the Jews; and he here states that the reason of his refusal was, that it was contrary to the Roman law. Appian, in his Roman history, says, "It is not their custom to condemn men before they are heard." Philo de Preesi. Rom. says the same thing. In Tacitus (Annul. ii.) it is said, "A defendant is not to be prohibited from adducing all things, by which his innocence may be established." It was for this that the equity of the Roman jurisprudence was celebrated throughout the world.

We may remark, that it is a subject of sincere gratitude to the God of our nation, that this privilege is enjoyed in the highest perfection in this land. It is the privilege of every man here to be heard; to know the charges against him; to be confronted with the witnesses; to make his defence; and to be tried by the laws, and not by the passions and caprices of men. In this respect our jurisprudence surpasses all that Rome ever enjoyed; and is not inferior to that of the most favoured nation of the earth.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

This word properly denotes the worship or fear of demons; but was applied by the Greeks and Romans to the worship of their gods. It is the same word which is used in Acts 17:22, where it

is used in a good sense. Acts 17:22. There are two reasons for thinking that Festus used the word here in a good sense, and not in the sense in which we use the word superstition.

(1.) It was the word by which the worship of the Greeks and Romans, and therefore of Festus himself, was denoted, and he would naturally use it in a similar sense in applying it to the Jews. He would wish simply to describe their worship in such language as he was accustomed to use when speaking of religion.

(2.) He knew that Agrippa was a Jew. Festus would not probably speak of the religion of his royal guest as superstition, but would speak of it with respect. He meant, therefore, to say simply that they had certain inquiries about their own religion; but accused him of no crime against the Roman laws. And of one Jesus, which was dead. Gr., "Of one dead Jesus." It is evident that Festus had no belief that Jesus had been raised up; and in this he would expect that Agrippa would concur with him. Paul had admitted that Jesus had been put to death; but he maintained that he had been raised from the dead. As Festus did not believe this, he spoke of it with the utmost contempt. "They had a dispute about one dead Jesus, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." In this manner a Roman magistrate could speak of the glorious truth of the Christian religion; and this shows the spirit with which the great mass of philosophers and statesmen regarded its doctrines.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

Of Augustus. The reigning emperor at this time was Nero. The name Augustus--σεβαστου--properly denotes that which is venerable, or worthy of honour and reverence. It was first applied to Caesar Octavianus, who was the Roman emperor in

the time when our Saviour was born, and who is usually called Augustus Caesar. But the title continued to be used of his successors in office, as denoting the veneration or reverence which was due to the rank of emperor.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself.
Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice,
with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing,
with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus'
commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present
with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews
have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that
he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of
death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have
determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord.
Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially
before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I
might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and
not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

Acts-26

Paul's Defense before Agrippa

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak
for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and
answered for himself:

This design in speaking before Agrippa was, doubtless,

(1.) to vindicate his character, and obtain Agrippa':s attestation to his innocence, that thus he might allay the anger of: the Jews;

(2.) to obtain a correct representation of the case to the emperor, as Festus had desired this, in order that Agrippa might enable him to make a fair statement of the case, (Acts 25:26,27;) and,

(3.) to defend his own conversion, and the truth of Christianity, and to preach the gospel in the hearing of Agrippa and the attendants, with a hope that their minds might be improved by the truth, and that they might be converted to God.

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

I esteem it a favour and a privilege to be permitted to make my defence before one acquainted with Jewish customs and opinions. His defence, on former occasions, had been before Roman magistrates, who had little acquaintance with the opinions and customs of the Jews, who were not disposed to listen to the discussion of the points of difference between him and them, and who looked upon all their controversies with contempt. See Acts 24, Acts 25. They were, therefore, little qualified to decide a question which was closely connected with the Jewish customs and doctrines; and Paul now rejoiced to know that he was before one who, from his acquaintance with the Jewish customs and belief, would be able to appreciate his arguments and motives. Paul was not now on his trial; but he was to defend himself, or state his cause, so that Agrippa might be able to aid Festus in transmitting a true account of the case to the Roman emperor. It was his interest and duty, therefore, to defend himself as well as possible; and to put him in possession of all the facts in the case. His defence is, consequently, made up chiefly of a most eloquent statement of the facts just as they had occurred.

Subjects of debate, and of various opinions. The inquiries which had existed between the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, etc. Paul could say this of Agrippa without falsehood or flattery. Agrippa was a Jew, and had passed much of his time

in the kingdom over which he presided; and though he had passed the early part of his life chiefly at Rome, yet it was natural that he should make himself acquainted with the religion of his fathers. Paul did not know how to flatter men; but he was not unwilling to state the simple truth, and to commend men as far as truth would permit. Wherefore. On this account; because you are acquainted with those customs. The Romans, who regarded those customs as superstitious, and those questions as matters to be treated with contempt, could not listen to their discussion with patience. Agrippa, who knew their real importance, would be disposed to lend to all inquiries respecting them a patient attention.

3 especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

the strictest sect of our religion. The most rigid, the most strict; not only in regard to the written law of God, but the traditions of the elders. Paul himself elsewhere testifies, Php 3:4-6, that he had enjoyed all the advantages of birth and training in the Jewish religion, and that he had early distinguished himself by his observance of its rites and customs.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

Of the promise, etc. It is not quite certain whether Paul refers here to the promise of the Messiah, or to the hope of the resurrection of the dead. When he stood before the Jewish sanhedrim, Acts 23:6, he said that he was called in question on account of holding the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. But it may be observed, that in Paul's view, the two things were closely united. He hoped that the Messiah would come, and he hoped therefore for the resurrection of the dead. He believed that he had come, and had risen; and therefore he believed that the dead would rise. He argued the one from the other. And as he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he had risen

from the dead, and had thus furnished a demonstration that the dead would rise, it was evident that the subject of controversy between him and the Jews involved everything that was vital to their opinions and their hopes. See Acts 24:8.

Their hope of this promised mercy did cause them to serve God instantly day and night. Hope is the great exciter of industry and endeavor, expectation puts it upon action; hope of obtaining is the motive to every undertaking: the Christian's hope, or thing hoped for, is great and excellent in the esteem is high, the endeavor will be strong.

(1.) His religion is built upon the promise made of God unto the fathers. It is built upon divine revelation, which he receives and believes, and ventures his soul upon; it is built upon divine grace, and that grace manifested and conveyed by promise. The promise of God is the guide and ground of his religion, the promise made to the fathers, which was more ancient than the ceremonial law, that covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, and which the law, that was not till four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul, Ga 3:17. Christ and heaven are the two great doctrines of the gospel--that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Now these two are the matter of the promise made unto the fathers. It may look back as far as the promise made to father Adam, concerning the seed of the woman, and those discoveries of a future state which the first patriarchs acted faith upon, and were saved by that faith; but it respects chiefly the promise made to father Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and that God would be a God to him, and to his seed after him: the former meaning Christ, the latter heaven; for, if God had not prepared for them a city, he would have been ashamed to have called himself their God. Heb 11:16.

(2.) His religion consists in the hopes of this promise. He places it not, as they did, in meats and drinks, and the observance of carnal ordinances (God had often shown what little account he

made of them), but in a believing dependence upon God's grace in the covenant, and upon the promise, which was the great charter by which the church was first incorporated.

[1.] He had hope in Christ as the promised seed; he hoped to be blessed in him, to receive the blessing of God and to be truly blessed.

[2.] He had hopes of heaven; this is expressly meant, as appears by comparing Ac 24:15, That there shall be a resurrection of the dead. Paul had no confidence in the flesh, but in Christ; no expectation at all of great things in this world, but of greater things in the other world than any this world can pretend to; he had his eye upon a future state.

7 unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Day and night. With unwearied zeal; with constancy and ardour, Lk 2:37. The ordinary Jewish services and sacrifices were in the morning and evening, and might be said to be performed day and night. Some of their services, as the paschal supper, were prolonged usually till late at night. The main idea is, that they kept up the worship of God with constant and untiring zeal and devotion.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Why should it be thought, etc. The force of this question will be better seen by an interrogation point after why, τι. "What! Is it to be thought a thing incredible?" etc. It intimates surprise that it should be thought incredible; or implies that no reason could be given why such a doctrine should be unworthy of belief. A thing incredible. A doctrine which cannot be credited or believed. Why should it be regarded as absurd? With you. This is in the plural number; and it is evident that Paul here addressed not Agrippa alone, but those who were with him. There is no evidence that Agrippa doubted that the dead could be raised; but Festus, and those who were with him, probably

did; and Paul, in the ardour of his speech, turned and addressed the entire assembly. It is very evident that we have only an outline of this argument, and there is every reason to suppose that Paul would dwell on each part of the subject at greater length than is here recorded. That God should raise the dead. Why should it be regarded as absurd that God--who has all power, who was the Creator of all, who was the Author of the human frame--should again restore man to life, and continue his future existence. The resurrection is no more incredible than the original creation of the human body, and it is attended with no greater difficulties. And as the perfections of God will be illustrated by his raising up the dead; as the future state is necessary to the purposes of justice in vindicating the just, and punishing the unjust; and as God is a righteous moral Governor, it should not be regarded as an absurdity that he will raise up those who have died, and bring them to judgment.

As if the apostle had said, "The great point in controversy between me and you is this, Whether the dead in general shall arise? and, Whether Christ in particular be risen from the dead? Now why should either seem incredible to you? Is it too hard for God, who made the world, and upholds the world, and gives life to all living; is it too hard or difficult for him to raise the dead? If not, why should it be thought incredible or impossible?" Learn hence, That the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, is neither incredible, nor impossible, neither against right reason nor true faith.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? This seems to come in somewhat abruptly; but it is probable Paul said much more than is here recorded, and that he explained the promise made to the fathers to be the promise of the resurrection and eternal life, and proved that he was in the right way of pursuing his hope of that happiness because he believed in Christ who had risen from the dead, which was a pledge and earnest of that resurrection which the fathers hoped for. Paul is therefore earnest to know the power of Christ's resurrection, that by it he might attain to the

resurrection of the dead; see Php 3:10,11. Now many of his hearers were Gentiles, most of them perhaps, Festus particularly, and we may suppose, when they heard him speak so much of Christ's resurrection, and of the resurrection from the dead, which the twelve tribes hoped for, that they mocked, as the Athenians did, began to smile at it, and whispered to one another what an absurd thing it was, which occasioned Paul thus to reason with them. What! is it thought incredible with you that God should raise the dead? So it may be read. If it be marvellous in your eyes, should it be marvellous in mine eyes, saith the Lord of hosts? Zec 8:6. If it be above the power of nature, yet it is not above the power of the God of nature. Note, There is no reason why we should think it at all incredible that God should raise the dead. We are not required to believe any thing that is incredible, any thing that implies a contradiction. There are motives of credibility sufficient to carry us through all the doctrines of the Christian religion, and this particularly of the resurrection of the dead. Has not God an infinite almighty power, to which nothing is impossible? Did not he make the world at first out of nothing, with a word's speaking? Did he not form our bodies, form them out of the clay, and breathe into us the breath of life at first? and cannot the same power form them again out of their own clay, and put life into them again? Do we not see a kind of resurrection in nature, at the return of every spring? Has the sun such a force to raise dead plants, and should it seem incredible to us that God should raise dead bodies?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

That I ought to do. That I was bound, or that it was a duty incumbent on me. δειν. "I thought that I owed it to my country, to my religion, and to my God, to oppose in every manner the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah." We here see that Paul was conscientious, and that a man may be conscientious even when engaged in enormous wickedness. It is no evidence that a man is right because he is conscientious. No small part of the crimes against human laws, and almost all the cruel persecutions against Christians, have been carried on

under the plea of conscience. Paul here refers to his conscientiousness in persecution, to show that it was no slight matter which could have changed his course. As he was governed in persecution by conscience, it could have been only by a force of demonstration, and by the urgency of conscience equally clear and strong, that could ever have induced him to abandon this course, and become a friend of that Saviour whom he had thus persecuted. Many things. As much as possible. He was not satisfied with a few things--a few words, or purposes, or arguments; but he felt bound to do as much as possible to put down the new religion. Contrary to the name, etc. In opposition to Jesus himself, or to his claims to be the Messiah. The name is often used to denote the person himself, Acts 3:6.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

And when they were put to death. In the history of those transactions there is no account of any Christian being put to death, except Stephen, Acts 7. But there is no improbability in supposing that the same thing which had happened to Stephen, had occurred in other cases. Stephen was the first martyr; and as he was a prominent man, his case is particularly recorded. I gave my voice. Paul was not a member of the sanhedrim, and this does not mean that he voted, but simply that he joined in the persecution; he approved it; he assented to the putting of the saints to death. Comp. Acts 22:20. The Syriac renders it, "I joined with those who condemned them." It is evident also that Paul instigated them in this persecution, and urged them on to deeds of blood and cruelty. And when they were put to death. In the history of those transactions there is no account of any Christian being put to death, except Stephen, Acts 7. But there is no improbability in supposing that the same thing which had happened to Stephen, had occurred in other cases. Stephen was the first martyr; and as he was a prominent man, his case is particularly recorded. I gave my voice. Paul was not a member of the sanhedrim, and this does not mean that he voted, but simply that he joined in the persecution; he approved it; he

assented to the putting of the saints to death. Comp. Acts 22:20. The Syriac renders it, "I joined with those who condemned them." It is evident also that Paul instigated them in this persecution, and urged them on to deeds of blood and cruelty.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities.

To blaspheme the name of Jesus, by denying that he was the Messiah, and by admitting that he was an impostor. This was the object which they had in view in the persecution. It was not to make them blaspheme or reproach God, but to deny that Jesus was the Messiah, and to reproach him as a deceiver and an impostor. It is not necessarily implied in the expression, "and compelled them to blaspheme," that he succeeded in doing it; but that he violently endeavoured to make them apostatize from the Christian religion, and deny the Lord Jesus. It is certainly not impossible that a few might thus have been induced by the authority of the sanhedrim, and by the threats of Paul to do it; but it is certain that the great mass of Christians adhered firmly to their belief that Jesus was the Messiah. And being exceedingly mad. Nothing could more forcibly express his rage and violence against the Christians. He raged like a madman; he was so indignant that he laid aside all appearance of reason; and with the fury and violence of a maniac, he endeavoured to exterminate them from the earth. None but a madman will persecute men on account of their religious opinions; and all persecutions have been conducted like this, with the violence, and fury, and ungovernable temper of maniacs.

That Paul, being a blasphemer himself, compelled the professors of the gospel to blaspheme. This he probably did two ways.

First, by his example; they imitated him in blaspheming, or speaking evil of the ways of Christ.

Or, secondly, by his cruelty: vexing them so in the professions of Christ, that some who were unsettled probably fell away, and blasphemed the name of Christ, which they had professed: He compelled them to blaspheme.

There is a compelling power and constraining force in example, especially in the example of persons in power and authority. Men sin with a kind of authority: Paul's blasphemous example compelled others to blaspheme.

Paul Tells of His Conversion

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority
and commission from the chief priests,
13 at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above
the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them
which journeyed with me.
14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice
speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul,
Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick
against the pricks.
15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus
whom thou persecutest.
16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee
for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of
these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the
which I will appear unto thee;

The particulars mentioned in this verse and the two following are not recorded in the account of Paul's conversion in Acts 9. But it is not improbable that many circumstances may have occurred which are not recorded. Paul dwells on them here at length, in order particularly to show his authority for doing what he had done in preaching to the Gentiles.

17 delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto
whom now I send thee,

From the dominion of Satan. Comp. Col 1:13, 1Pet 2:9; Jn 12:31; Jn 16:11. Satan is thus represented as the prince of this world; the ruler of the darkness of this world; the prince of the

power of the air, etc. The heathen world, lying in sin and superstition, is represented as under his control; and this passage teaches, doubtless, that the great mass of the people of this world are the subjects of the kingdom of Satan, and are led captive by him at his will.

18 to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and
from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive
forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are
sanctified by faith that is in me.

Paul's Witness to Jews and Gentiles

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto
the heavenly vision:
20 but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem,
and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the
Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do
works meet for repentance.
21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went
about to kill *me*.
22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this
day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other
things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should
come:

That Christ should {g} suffer, [and] that he should be the {h} first that should rise from the dead, and should shew {i} light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. (g) That Christ would not be such a king as the Jews dreamed of, but one appointed to bear our miseries, and the punishment of our sins. (h) The first of those who are raised from the dead. (i) Life, yea and that a most blessed life which will be endless: and this is set against darkness, which almost in all languages sometimes signifies death, and sometimes misery and calamity.

Should suffer. Should lead a painful life, and be put to death. Acts 17:3. Compare Dan 9:27, Isa 53. And that he should be the first, etc. This declaration contains two points:

(1.) That it was taught in the prophets that the Messiah should rise from the dead. On this, see the proof alleged in Acts 2:24-32; Acts 13:32-37.

(2.) That he should be the first that should rise. This cannot mean that the Messiah should be the first dead person who should be restored to life, for Elijah had raised the son of the Shunammite, and Jesus himself had raised Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain. But all of them were dead and buried again. It does not mean that he should be the first in the order of time that should rise, but first in eminence, the most distinguished, the chief, the head of those who should rise from the dead. πρωτοςεξαναστασεωςνεκρων. In accordance with this he is called Col 1:18 "the beginning, the first-born from the dead;" having, among all the dead who should be raised up, the rights and pre-eminence of the primogeniture, or which pertained to the first-born. In 1Cor 15:20, he is called "the first-fruits of them that slept." This declaration is, therefore, made of him by way of eminence:

(1.) As being chief, a prince among those raised from the dead;

(2.) as being raised by his own power, Jn 10:18

(3.) as, by his rising, securing a dominion over death and the grave, (1Cor 15:25,26;) and,

(4.) as bringing, by his rising, life and immortality to light. He rose to return to death no more. And he thus secured an ascendancy over death and the grave, and was thus, by way of eminence, first among those raised from the dead. And should shew light unto the people. To the Jews. Should be their instructor and prophet. This Moses had predicted, De 18:15. And to the Gentiles. This had often been foretold by the prophets, and particularly by Isaiah, Isa 9:1,2. Compare Mt 4:14-16 Isa 11:10, 42:1,4, 44:3, 60:3,5,11, 61:6, 62:2, 66:12. (n) "the first" 1Cor 15:23

23 that Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

Paul Appeals to Agrippa to Believe

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

Thou art beside thyself. Thou art deranged; thou art insane. The reasons why Festus thought Paul mad were, probably,

(1.) his great earnestness and excitement on the subject.

(2.) His laying such stress on the gospel of the despised Jesus of Nazareth, as if it were a matter of infinite moment. Festus despised it; and he regarded it as proof of derangement that so much importance was attached to it.

(3.) Festus regarded, probably, the whole story of the vision that Paul said had appeared to him, as the effect of an inflamed and excited imagination; and as the proof of delirium. This is not an uncommon charge against those who are Christians, and especially when they evince any unusual zeal. Sinners regard them as under the influence of delirium and fanaticism; as terrified by imaginary and superstitious fears; or as misguided by fanatical leaders. Husbands often thus think their wives deranged, and parents their children, and wicked men the ministers of the gospel. The gay think it proof of derangement that others are serious, and anxious, and prayerful; the rich, that others are willing to part with their property to do good; the ambitious and worldly, that others are willing to leave their country and home, to go among the Gentiles to spend their lives in making known the unsearchable riches of Christ. The really

sober and rational part of the world--they who fear God, and keep his commandments; who believe that eternity is before them, and who strive to live for it--are thus charged with insanity by those who are really deluded, and who are thus living lives of madness and folly. The tenants of a madhouse often think all others deranged but themselves; but there is no madness so great, no delirium so awful, as to neglect the eternal interest of the soul for the sake of the poor pleasures and honours which this life can give.

What it was that Festus said of him (Ac 26:24): He said with a loud voice, did not whisper it to those that sat next him; if so, it had been the more excusable, but (without consulting Agrippa, to whose judgment he had seemed to pay profound deference, Ac 25:26), said aloud, that he might oblige Paul to break off his discourse, and might divert the auditors from attending to it "Paul, thou art beside thyself, thou talkest like a madman, like one with a heated brain, that knowest not what thou sayest;" yet he does not suppose that a guilty conscience had disturbed his reason, nor that his sufferings, and the rage of his enemies against him, had given any shock to it; but he puts the most candid construction that could be upon his delirium: Much learning hath made thee mad, thou hast cracked thy brains with studying. This he speaks, not so much in anger, as in scorn and contempt. He did not understand what Paul said; it was above his capacity, it was all a riddle to him, and therefore he imputes it all to a heated imagination. Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi--If thou art not willing to be understood, thou oughtest to be neglected.

(1.) He owns Paul to be a scholar, and a man of learning, because he could so readily refer to what Moses and the prophets wrote, books that he was a stranger to; and even this is turned to his reproach. The apostles, who were fishermen, were despised because they had no learning; Paul, who was a university-man, and bred a Pharisee, is despised as having too much learning, more than did him good. Thus the enemies of

Christ's ministers will always have something or other to upbraid them with.

(2.) He reproaches him as a madman. The prophets of the Old Testament were thus stigmatized, to prejudice people against them by putting them into an ill-name: Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee? said the captains of the prophet, 2Ki 9:11,Ho 9:7. John Baptist and Christ were represented as having a devil, as being crazed. It is probable that Paul now spoke with more life and earnestness than he did in the beginning of his discourse, and used more gestures that were expressive of his zeal, and therefore Festus put this invidious character upon him, which perhaps never a one in the company but himself thought of. It is not so harmless a suggestion as some make it to say concerning those that are zealous in religion above others that they are crazed.

2. How Paul cleared himself from this invidious imputation, which whether he had ever lain under before is not certain; it should seem, it had been said of him by the false apostles, for he ways (2Co 5:13), If we be beside ourselves, as they say we are, it is to God; but he was never charged with this before the Roman governor, and therefore he must say something to this.

(1.) He denies the charge, with due respect indeed to the governor, but with justice to himself, protesting that there was neither ground nor colour for it (Ac 26:25): "I am not mad, most noble Festus, nor ever was, nor any thing like it; the use of my reason, thanks be to God, has been all my days continued to me, and at this time I do not ramble, but speak the words of truth and soberness, and know what I say."

Carnal minds pass very uncharitable censures upon spiritual persons and spiritual things. Christ's kindred said, he was beside himself, Mr 3:21. Festus here judged Paul to be mad, thinking that he had over-studied himself: by meddling with matters too high for his capacity, and too deep for his

understanding, he had brought himself into a deep melancholy; Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning hath made thee mad.

But observe with what meekness and due terms of respect the apostle replied to this reviling governor, I am not mad, most noble Festus. Titles of respect and honour, given to persons in place and power, are agreeable to the mind of God, and countenanced by Christianity.

Observe, 2. What an happy victory and conquest the apostle had over his own passions; he waives the reflections Festus had made upon him; and had learned of his master, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. It is an happy attainment for a man to be master of himself under a provocation, to be regulated by right reason, and not hurried by blind passion.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

Of truth. In accordance with the predictions of Moses and the prophets; and the facts which have occurred in the death and resurrection of the Messiah. In proof of this he appeals to Agrippa, Acts 26:26,27. Truth here stands opposed to delusion, imposture, and fraud. And soberness. Soberness (σωφροσυνης, wisdom) stands opposed here to madness, or derangement, and denotes sanity of mind. The words which I speak are those of a sane man, conscious of what he is saying, and impressed with its truth. They were the words, also, of a man who, under the charge of derangement, evinced the most perfect self-possession and command of his feelings; and who uttered sentiments deep, impressive, and worthy of the attention of mankind.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

These things. The things pertaining to the early persecutions of Christians; the spread of the gospel; and the remarkable

conversion of Paul. Though Agrippa might not have been fully informed respecting these things, yet he had an acquaintance with Moses and the prophets; he knew the Jewish expectation respecting the Messiah; and he could not be ignorant respecting the remarkable public events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and of his having been put to death by order of Pontius Pilate on the cross.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul. He could not deny that he believed the prophets. He could not deny that the argument was a strong one, that they had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. He could not deny that the evidence of the miraculous interposition of God in the conversion of Paul was overwhelming. And instead, therefore, of charging him as Festus had done with derangement, he candidly and honestly avows the impression which the proof had made on his mind. Almost. Except a very little. ενολιγω. Thou hast nearly convinced me that Christianity is true, and persuaded me to embrace it. The arguments of Paul had been so rational; the appeal which he had made to his belief of the prophets had been so irresistible, that he had been nearly convinced of the truth of Christianity. We are to remember,

(1.) that Agrippa was a Jew, and that he would look on this whole subject in a different manner from the Roman Festus.

(2.) That Agrippa does not appear to have partaken of the violent passions and prejudices of the Jews who had accused Paul.

(3.) His character, as given by Josephus, is that of a mild, candid, and ingenuous man. He had no particular hostility to Christians; he knew that they were not justly charged with sedition and crime; and he saw the conclusion to which a belief

of the prophets inevitably tended. Yet, as in thousands of other cases, he was not quite persuaded to be a Christian. What was included in the "almost"--what prevented his being quite persuaded--we know not. It may have been that the evidence was not so clear to his mind as he would profess to desire; or that he was not willing to give up his sins; or that he was too proud to rank himself with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; or that, like Felix, he was willing to defer it to a more convenient season. There is every reason to believe that he was never quite persuaded to embrace the Lord Jesus; and that he was never nearer the kingdom of heaven than at this moment. It was the crisis, the turning point in Agrippa's life, and in his eternal destiny; and, like thousands of others, he neglected or refused to allow the full conviction of the truth on his mind, and died in his sins. Thou persuadest me. Thou dost convince me of the truth of the Christian religion, and persuadest me to embrace it. To be a Christian. On the name Christian, Acts 11:26. On this deeply interesting case, we may observe,

(1.) that there are many in the same situation as Agrippa-- many who are almost, but not altogether, persuaded to be Christians. They are found among

(a) those who have been religiously educated;

(b) those who are convinced by argument of the truth of Christianity;

(c) those whose consciences are awakened, and who feel their guilt, and the necessity of some better portion than this world can furnish.

(2.) Such persons are deterred from being altogether Christians by the following, among other causes:

(a) By the love of sin--the love of sin in general, or some particular sin which they are not willing to abandon.

(b) The fear of shame, persecution, or contempt, if they become Christians.

(c) By the temptations of the world--its cares, vanities, and allurements--which are often prosecuted most strongly in just this state of mind.

(d) The love of office, the pride of rank and power, as in the case of Agrippa.

(e) A disposition, like Felix, to delay to a more favourable time the work of religion, until life has wasted away, and death approaches, and it is too late; and the unhappy man dies ALMOST a Christian.

(3.) This state of mind is one of peculiar interest, and peculiar danger. It is not one of safety; and it is not one that implies any certainty that the "almost Christian" will ever be saved. There is no reason to believe that Agrippa ever became fully persuaded to become a Christian. To be almost persuaded to do a thing which we ought to do, and yet not to do it, is the very position of guilt and danger. And it is no wonder that many are brought to this point--the turning point, the crisis of life --and then lose their anxiety, and die in their sins. May the God of grace keep us from resting in being almost persuaded to be Christians. And may every one who shall read this account of Agrippa be admonished by his convictions, and be alarmed by the fact that he then paused, and that his convictions there ended! And may every one resolve, by the help of God, to forsake everything that prevents his becoming an entire believer, and without delay embrace the Son of God as his Saviour!

What an efficacy St. Paul's doctrine had upon Agrippa: though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced; his conscience was touched, though his heart was not renewed.

Learn hence, That there is certainly that in religion which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the consciences of ungodly men.

Observe, 2. How sad it is, when persons have enjoyed the scriptures, the preaching of the word, and all means of salvation, and yet are but almost Christians, and shall never enjoy the least salvation; they are within sight of heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God.

Observe, 3. That such as will be Christians indeed, must not only be almost, but altogether Christians: I would that you, and all that hear me, says the apostle, were altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Paul had no higher wish for them than that they might have the faith and consolations which he had himself enjoyed. He had so firm a conviction of the truth of Christianity, and had experienced so much of its consolations and supports amidst all his persecutions and trials, that his highest desire for them was, that they might experience the same inexpressibly pure and holy consolations. He well knew that there was neither happiness nor safety in being almost a Christian; and he desired, therefore, that they would give themselves, as he had done, entirely and altogether to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except these bonds. These chains. This is an exceedingly happy and touching appeal. Probably Paul, when he said this, lifted up his arm with the chain attached to it. His wish was, that they might be partakers of the pure joys which religion had conferred on him; that in all other respects they might partake

of the effects of the gospel, except those chains. Those he did not wish them to bear. The persecutions, and unjust trials, and confinements which he had been called to suffer in the cause, he did not desire them to endure. True Christians wish others to partake of the full blessings of religion. The trials which they themselves experience from without, in unjust persecutions, ridicule, and slander, they do not wish them to endure. The trials which they themselves experience from an evil heart, from corrupt passions, and from temptations, they do not wish others to experience. But even with these, religion confers infinitely more pure joy than the world can give; and even though others should be called to experience severe trials for their religion, still Christians wish that all should partake of the pure consolations which Christianity alone can furnish in this world and the world to come.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and
the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with
them:
31 and when they were gone aside, they talked between
themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death
or of bonds.
32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set
at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Acts-27

Paul Sails for Rome

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they
delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named
Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.
2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched,
meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* Aristarchus, a
Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.
3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously
entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to
refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under
Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.
5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia,
we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.
6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing
into
Italy; and he put us therein.
7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were
come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we
sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;
8 and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the
Fair
Havens; nigh whereunto was the city *of* Lasea.
9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now
dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul
admonished *them*,
10 and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with
hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also
of our lives.
11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner
of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by
Paul.
12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the
more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they
might
attain to Phoenix, *and there* to winter; *which is* a haven of Crete,
and lieth toward the southwest and northwest.

The Storm at Sea

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they
had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by
Crete.
14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind,
called
Euroclydon.
15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into
the wind, we let *her* drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we
had much work to come by the boat:
17 which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding
the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands,
struck sail, and so were driven.
18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day*
they lightened the ship;
19 and the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling
of the ship.
20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no
small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was
then taken away.
21 But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of
them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and
not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and
loss.
22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no
loss of *any man's* life among you, but of the ship.
23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am,
and whom I serve,
24 saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and,
lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

God hath given thee all, etc. That is, they shall all be preserved with thee. None of their lives shall be lost. It does not mean that they should be converted; but that their lives should be preserved. It is implied here that it was for the sake of Paul, or that the leading purpose of the Divine interposition to rescue them from danger was to save his life. The wicked often derive important benefits from being connected with Christians; and God often confers important favours on them in his general purposes to benefit his own people. The lives of impenitent men are often spared because God interposes to save his own people.

The encouragements that were given him in the vision, Ac 27:14.

[1.] He is forbidden to fear. Though all about him are at their wits' end, and lost in despair, yet, Fear not, Paul; fear not their fear, nor be afraid, Isa 8:12. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, but let not the saints be afraid, no, not at sea, in a storm; for the Lord of hosts is with them, and their place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks, Isa 33:14-16.

[2.] He is assured that for his part he shall come safely to Rome: Thou must be brought before Cæsar. As the rage of the most potent enemies, so the rage of the most stormy sea, cannot prevail against God's witnesses till they have finished their testimony. Paul must be preserved in this danger, for he is reserved for further service. This is comfortable for the faithful servants of God in straits and difficulties, that as long as God has any work for them to do their lives shall be prolonged.

[3.] That for his sake all that were in the ship with him should be delivered too from perishing in this storm: God hath given thee all those that sail with thee. The angel that was ordered to bring him this message could have singled him out from this wretched crew, and those that were his friends too, and have carried them safely to shore, and have left the rest to perish, because they would not take Paul's counsel. But God chooses rather, by preserving them all for his sake, to show what great blessings good men are to the world, than by delivering him only to show how good men are distinguished from the world. God has given thee all those that sail with thee, that is, spares them in answer to thy prayers, or for thy sake. Sometimes good men deliver neither sons nor daughters, but their own souls only, Eze 14:18. But Paul here delivers a whole ship's crew, almost three hundred souls. Note, God often spares wicked people for the sake of the godly; as Zoar for Lot's sake, and as Sodom might have been, if there had been ten righteous persons in it. The good people are hated and persecuted in the world as if they were not worthy to live in it, yet really it is for their sakes that the world stands. If Paul had thrust himself needlessly into bad company, he might justly have been cast

away with them, but, God calling him into it, they are preserved with him. And it is intimated that it was a great favour to Paul, and he looked upon it to be so, that others were saved for his sake: They are given thee. There is no greater satisfaction to a good man than to know that he is a public blessing.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.
26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.
27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;
28 and sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms.
29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.
30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,
31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.
32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.
33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.
34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat; for this is for your health:
for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.
35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.
36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.
37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.
38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they
discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they
were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.
40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed
themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted
up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.
41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship
aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable,
but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.
42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of
them should swim out, and escape.

Lord, what fools and madmen are the wicked, who seek the destruction of those for whose sake it is that they are not themselves destroyed!

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their*
purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should
cast *themselves* first *into the sea,* and get to land:
44 and the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the
ship.
And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

Acts-28

Paul on the Island of Melita

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island
was called Melita.
2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for
they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the
present rain, and because of the cold.
3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them*
on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened
on his hand.
4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his
hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a
murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet
vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.
6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was
a god.
7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.
8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.
9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:
10 who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

Paul Arrives at Rome

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.
12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.
13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to
Puteoli:
14 where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.
15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.
16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

Paul Preaches in Rome

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of
the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said
unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed
nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I
delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the
Romans:
18 who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go,
because there was no cause of death in me.
19 But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to
appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my
nation of.
20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to
speak with *you:* because that for the hope of Israel I am bound
with this chain.
21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of
Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came
showed or spake any harm of thee.
22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as
concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken
against.

This was the case then, and, to a great extent, is the case still. It has been the common lot of the followers of Christ to be spoken of with contempt. Comp. Acts 24:5.

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to
him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified
the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both
out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from
morning till evening.
24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and
some believed not.
25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed,
after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy
Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers,
26 saying,
Go unto this people, and say,
Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand;

and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:
27 for the heart of this people is waxed
gross, and their ears are dull of
hearing,
and their eyes have they closed;
lest they should see with *their*
eyes, and hear with *their* ears,
and understand with *their* heart,
and should be converted, and I should heal them.
28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent
unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.
29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had
great reasoning among themselves.
30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and
received all that came in unto him,

Paul dwelt two whole years. Doubtless in the custody of the soldiers. Why he was not prosecuted before the emperor during this time is not known. It is evident, however, Acts 28:21, that the Jews were not disposed to carry the case before Nero; and the matter, during this time, was suffered quietly to sleep. There is great probability that the Jews durst not prosecute him before the emperor. It is clear that they had never been in favour of the appeal to Rome, and that they had no hope of gaining their cause. Probably they might remember the former treatment of the Roman emperor of their people, Acts 18:2; they might remember that they were despised at the Roman capital, and not choose to encounter the scorn and indignation of the Roman court; and as there was no prosecution, Paul was suffered to live in quietness and safety. Lardner, however, supposes (vol. v. pp. 528, 529, Edit. 8vo. Lond. 1829) that the case of Paul was soon brought before Nero, and decided; and that the method of confinement was ordered by the emperor himself. Lightfoot also supposes that Paul's "accusers, who had come from Judea to lay their charge against him, would be urgent to get their business despatched, that they might be returning to their own home again, and so would bring him to trial as soon as they could." But nothing certain is known on the subject. It is evident, indeed, from 2Ti 4:16, that he was at

some time arraigned before the emperor; but when it was, or what was the decision, or why he was at last set at liberty, are all involved in impenetrable obscurity. In his own hired house. In a house which he was permitted to hire, and occupy as his own. Probably in this he was assisted by the kindness of his Roman friends. And received all, etc. Received all hospitably and kindly who came to him to show him kindness, or to listen to his instructions. It is evident from this, that he was still a prisoner, and was not permitted to go at large.

31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

The Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Romans

[Romans]

Romans-1

Salutation

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated
unto the gospel of God,

Hence he appeals here so often to the Old Testament; and defends every point by the authority of the Bible. The particular passages of the Old Testament on which he relied will come before us in the course of the epistle. See particularly chapters 3, 4, 9, 10, and 11. We may see here,

(1.) the reverence which Paul showed for the Old Testament. He never undervalued it. He never regarded it as obsolete, or useless. He manifestly studied it; and never fell into the impious opinion that the Old Testament is of little value.

(2.) If these things were promised--predicted in the Old Testament, then Christianity is true. Every passage which he adduces is therefore proof that it is from God.

2 (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy
Scriptures,)
3 concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the
seed of David according to the flesh;
4 and declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the
Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:
5 by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to
the faith among all nations, for his name:
6 among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:
7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints:
Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

Called to be saints. So called, or influenced by God who had called them, as to become saints. The word saints--αγιοι--means those who are holy, or those who are devoted or consecrated to God. The radical idea of the word is that which is separated from a common to a sacred use, and answers to the Hebrew word --kadosh. It is applied to anything that is set apart to the service of God, to the temple, to the sacrifices, to the utensils about the temple, to the garments, etc., of the priests, and to the priests them- selves. It was applied to the Jews as a people separated from other nations, and devoted or consecrated to God; while other nations were devoted to the service of idols. It is also applied to Christians, as being a people devoted or set apart to the service of God. The radical idea, then, as applied to Christians is, that they are separated from other men, and other objects and pursuits, and consecrated to the service of God. This is the peculiar characteristic of the saints. And this characteristic the Roman Christians had shown. For the use of the word as stated above, see the following passages of Scripture: Lk 2:23, Ex 13:2, Rom 11:16, Mt 7:6; 1Pet 1:16, Acts 9:13, 1Pet 2:5, Acts 3:21, Eph 3:5, 1Pet 2:9, Php 2:15, 1Jn 3:1,2.

Grace. This word properly means, favour. It is very often used in the New Testament, and is employed in the sense of benignity or benevolence; felicity, or a prosperous state of affairs; the Christian religion, as the highest expression of the benevolence or favour of God; the happiness which Christianity confers on its friends in this and the future life; the apostolic office; charity, or alms; thanksgiving; joy, or pleasure; and the benefits produced on the Christian's heart and life by religion--the grace of meekness, patience, charity, etc. Schleusner. In this place, and in similar places in the beginning of the apostolic epistles, it seems to be a word including all those blessings that are applicable to Christians in common; denoting an ardent wish that all the mercies and favours of God for time and eternity, blended under the general name grace, may be conferred on them.

And peace. Peace is the state of freedom from war. As war conveys the idea of discord and numberless calamities and dangers, so peace is the opposite, and conveys the idea of concord, safety, and prosperity. Thus, to wish one peace was the same as to wish him all safety and prosperity. This form of salutation was common among the Hebrews. Gen 43:23, "Peace to you, fear not;" Jud 6:23, 19:20, Lk 24:36. But the word peace is also used in contrast with that state of agitation and conflict which a sinner has with his conscience, and with God. The sinner is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, Isa 57:20. The Christian is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom 5:1. By this word, denoting reconciliation with God, the blessings of the Christian religion are often described in the Scriptures, Rom 8:6, 14:17, 15:13, Gal 5:22, Php 4:7. A prayer for peace, therefore, in the epistles, is not a mere formal salutation, but has a special reference to those spiritual blessings which result from reconciliation with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Lord Jesus Christ. From him. The Lord Jesus Christ is especially regarded in the New Testament as the source of peace, and the procurer of it. See Lk 2:14, 19:38,42, Jn 14:27, 16:33, Acts 10:36; Rom 5:1, Eph 2:17. Each of these places will show with what propriety peace was invoked from the Lord Jesus. From thus connecting the Lord Jesus with the Father in this place, we may see,

(1.) that the apostle regarded him as the source of grace and peace as really as he did the Father.

(2.) He introduced them in the same connexion, and with reference to the bestowment of the same blessings.

(3.) If the mention of the Father in this connexion implies a prayer to him, or an act of worship, the mention of the Lord Jesus implies the same thing, and was an act of homage to him.

(4.) All this shows that his mind was familiarized to the idea that he was Divine. No man would introduce his name in such connexions if he did not believe that he was equal with God. Comp. Php 2:2-11. It is from this incidental and unstudied manner of expression, that we have one of the most striking proofs of the manner in which the sacred writers regarded the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Through Jesus Christ. The duty of presenting our thanks to God, through Christ, is often enjoined in the New Testament, Eph 5:20, Heb 13:15; comp. Jn 14:14. Christ is the Mediator between God and men; or the medium by which we are to present our prayers, and also our thanksgivings. We are not to approach God directly, but through a mediator at all times, depending on him to present our cause before the mercy-seat; to plead for us there; and to offer the desires of our souls to God. It is no less proper to present thanks in his name, or through him, than it is prayer, he has made the way to God accessible to us, whether it be by prayer or praise; and it is owing to his mercy and grace that any of our services are acceptable to God.

For you all. On account of you all, i.e., of the entire Roman church. This is one evidence that that church then was remarkably pure. How few churches have there been of whom a similar commendation could be expressed.

Is spoken of. Is celebrated, or known. They were in the capital of the Roman empire; in a city remarkable for its wickedness; and in a city whose influence extended everywhere. It was natural, therefore, that their remarkable conversion to God should be celebrated everywhere. The religious or irreligious influence of a great city will be felt far and wide; and this is

one reason why the apostles preached the gospel so much in such places.

Throughout the whole world. As we say, everywhere; or throughout the Roman empire. The term world is often thus limited in the Scriptures; and here it denotes those parts of the Roman empire where the Christian church was established. All the churches would hear of the work of God in the capital, and would rejoice in it. Comp. Col 1:6,23, Jn 12:19. It is not improper to commend Christians, and to remind them of their influence; and especially to call to their mind the great power which they may have on other churches and people.

9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

A prosperous journey. A safe, pleasant journey. It is right to regard all success in travelling as depending on God, and to pray for success and safety from danger. Yet all such prayers are not answered according to the letter of the petition. The prayer of Paul that he might see the Romans was granted, but in a remarkable way. He was persecuted by the Jews, and arraigned before king Agrippa. He appealed to the Roman emperor, and was taken there in chains as a prisoner. Yet the journey might in this way have a more deep effect on the Romans, than if he had gone in any other way. In so mysterious a manner does God often hear the prayers of his people; and though their prayers are answered, yet it is in his own time and way. See the last chapters of the Acts.

By the will of God. If God shall grant it; if God will, by his mercy, grant me the great favour of my coming to you. This is a proper model of a prayer, and is in accordance with the direction of the Bible. See Jas 4:14,15.

10 making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

11 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;

Some spiritual gifts. Some have understood this as referring to miraculous gifts, which it was supposed the apostles had the power of conferring on others. But this interpretation is forced and unnatural. There is no instance where the expression denotes the power of working miracles. Besides, the apostle in the next verse explains his meaning-- "That I may be comforted together by the mutual faith," etc. From this it appears that he desired to be among them to exercise the office of the ministry, to establish them in the gospel, and to confirm their hopes. He expected that the preaching of the gospel would be the means of confirming them in the faith; and he desired to be the means of doing it. It was a wish of benevolence, and accords with what he says respecting his intended visit in Rom 15:29, "And I am sure that when I come, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." To make known to them more fully the blessings of the gospel, and thus to impart spiritual gifts, was the design he had in view.

Ye may be established. That is, that they might be confirmed in the truths of the gospel. This was one design of the ministry, that Christians may be established, or strengthened, Eph 4:13. It is not to have dominion over their faith, but to be "helpers of their joy," 2Cor 1:24. Paul did not doubt that this part of his office might be fulfilled among the Romans, and he was desirous there also of making full proof of his ministry.

12 that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

That I may be comforted, etc. It was not merely to confirm them that Paul wished to come. He sought the communion of saints; he expected to be himself edified and strengthened; and to be comforted by seeing their strength of faith, and their rapid growth in grace. We may remark here,

(1.) that one effect of religion is to produce the desire of the communion of saints. It is the nature of Christianity to seek the society of those who are the friends of Christ.

(2.) Nothing is better fitted to produce growth in grace than such communion. Every Christian should have one or more Christian friends to whom he may unbosom himself. No small part of the difficulties which young Christians experience would vanish if they should communicate their feelings and views to others. Feelings which they suppose no Christians ever had, which greatly distress them, they will find are common among those who are experienced in the Christian life.

(3.) There is nothing better fitted to excite the feelings, and confirm the hopes of Christian ministers, than the firm faith of young converts, of those just commencing the Christian life, 3Jn 1:4.

(4.) The apostle did not disdain to be taught by the humblest Christians. He expected to be strengthened himself by the faith of those just beginning the Christian life. "There is none so poor in the church of Christ, that he cannot make some addition of importance to our stores." Calvin. (1) "with you" or, "in you" (r) "mutual faith" 2Pet 1:1

13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that
oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let
hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even
as among other Gentiles.

One instance of his having purposed to go to Rome is recorded in Acts 19:21: "After these things were ended, (viz., at Ephesus,) Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem; saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome." This purpose expressed in this manner in the epistle, and the Acts of the Apostles, has been shown by Dr. Paley (Horae Paulinae on Rom 1:13) to be one of those undesigned coincidences which strongly show that both books are genuine.

That I might have some fruit among you. That I might be the means of the conversion of sinners, and of the edification of the church, in the capital of the Roman empire. It was not curiosity to see the splendid capital of the world that prompted this desire; it was not the love of travel, and of roaming from clime to clime; it was the

specific purpose of doing good to the souls of men. To have fruit means to obtain success in bringing men to the knowledge of Christ. Thus the Saviour said, (Jn 15:16) "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

I am debtor. This does not mean that they had conferred any favour on him, which bound him to make this return, but that he was under obligation to preach the gospel to all to whom it was possible. This obligation arose from the favour that God had shown him in appointing him to this work. He was specially chosen as a vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, (Acts 9:15; Rom 11:13) and he did not feel that he had discharged the obligation until he had made the gospel known as far as possible among all the nations of the earth.

The gospel claims to have power to instruct all mankind, and they who are called to preach it should be able to instruct those who esteem themselves to be wise, and who are endowed with science, learning, and talent; and they should be willing to labour to enlighten the most obscure, ignorant, and degraded portions of the race. This is the true spirit of the Christian ministry.

Here observe, How the apostle obviates an objection, and prevents a reflection upon himself: Some at Rome might be ready to say, If Paul had such a longing desire to see us as he expresses, why did he not come all this time and preach here, as he has done at Corinth and Ephesus, and elsewhere? He truly tells them, therefore, that it was not for want of inclination and will, but for want of opportunity; he had often intended it, and attempted it also, but was providentially hindered.

From whence I gather, That the ministers of God cannot always dispose of themselves and of their labours according to their own inclinations and desires, but both their persons and ministry are

directed and disposed of by the providence, and according to the pleasure of Almighty God.

Observe, 2. The great modesty and condescending humility of our apostle, in telling the Romans, that though he desired and intended to take this long journey to Rome, to preach the gospel to them, yet this was rather a debt than a gift: He doth not intimate to them, that his coming amongst them was an arbitrary favour, for which they should be indebted to him, but a bounden duty which he owed to them; I am a debtor both to Jew and Greek, and ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Here note, That the debt spoken of is the preaching of the gospel: St. Paul contracted this debt, and laid himself under an obligation to pay it then, (as every minister doth now) at his first entering upon the office of the ministry; by virtue of his mission, it was his duty to preach the gospel to all, both to the learned Greeks and unlearned Barbarians.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

The Power of the Gospel

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

For I am not ashamed, etc. The Jews had cast him off, and regarded him as an apostate; and by the wise among the Gentiles he had been persecuted, and despised, and driven from place to place, and regarded as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, (1Cor 4:13) but still he was not ashamed of the gospel. He had so firm a conviction of its value and its truth; he had experienced so much of its consolations, and had seen so much of its efficacy, that he was so far from being ashamed of it that he gloried in it as the power of God unto salvation. Men should be ashamed of crime and folly. They are ashamed of their own offences, and of the follies of their conduct, when they come to reflect on it. But they are not

ashamed of that which they feel to be right, and of that which they know will contribute to their welfare, and to the benefit of their fellow-men. Such were the views of Paul about the gospel; and it is one of his favourite doctrines that they who believe on Christ shall not be ashamed, Rom 9:33 Rom 10:11, 5:5, 2Cor 7:14, 2Ti 1:12, Php 1:20, Rom 9:33, 2Ti 1:8; comp. Mk 8:38, 1Pet 4:16, 1Jn 2:28.

The power of God. This expression means, that it is the way in which God exerts his power in the salvation of men. It is the efficacious or mighty plan, by which power goes forth to save, and by which all the obstacles of man's redemption are taken away. This expression implies,

(1.) that it is God's plan, or his appointment. It is not the device of man.

(2.) It is adapted to the end. It is fitted to overcome the obstacles in the way. It is not merely the instrument by which God exerts his power, but it has an inherent adaptedness to the end, it is fitted to accomplish salvation to man, so that it may be denominated power.

(3.) It is mighty: hence it is called power, and the power of God. It is not a feeble and ineffectual instrumentality, but it is "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds," 2Cor 10:4,5. It has shown its power as applicable to every degree of sin, to every combination of wickedness. It has gone against the sins of the world, and evinced its power to save sinners of all grades, and to overcome and subdue every mighty form of iniquity. Comp. Jer 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" 1Cor 1:18, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

Unto salvation. This word means, complete deliverance from sin and death, and all the foes and dangers that beset man. It cannot imply anything less than eternal life.

All men know what faith is. It is exercised when we confide in a parent, a friend, a benefactor. It is such a reception of a promise, a truth, or a threatening, as to suffer it to make its appropriate impression on the mind, and such as to lead us to act under its influence, or to act as we should on the supposition that it is true. Thus a sinner credits the threatenings of God, and fears: this is faith. He credits his promises, and hopes: this is faith. He feels that he is lost, and relies on Jesus Christ for mercy: this is faith. And, in general, faith is such an impression on the mind made by truth as to lead us to feel and act as if it were true; to have the appropriate feelings, and views, and conduct, raider the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God. Mk 16:16.

Observe here, 1. The glorious description which the apostle gives of the gospel; It is the power of God unto salvation. That is, the preaching of it is attended by, and accompanied with, an almighty power, which renders it effectual to salvation, if we do not bolt our ears and hearts against it.

Learn, That the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, is the chosen instrument in God's hand, which he uses and honours for the conveyance of spiritual life into the souls of men, though it be despised and ridiculed by the men of the world. The gospel is powerful; it is the power, not of men or angels, but the power of God; not the essential, but instrumental power of God; it works as an instrument, yet not a natural, but as a moral instrument in God's hands; freely, not arbitrarily. The word gives out to us, as God gives in to that; the power of the gospel is not from the preachers of the gospel, therefore do not idolize them; but they are instruments in God's hand, their words are the vehicle, or organ, through which the vital power of the Spririt is conveyed; therefore do not vilify and think meanly of them.

Observe, 2. The solemn protestation and bold profession which the apostle makes of his not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ; I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Where note, 1. He doth not say, I am not afraid to preach the gospel; but I am not ashamed, because shame hinders our readiness more than fear; a man may be fit and ready to preach the gospel, and yet be afraid to undertake it; but he that is ashamed of the work, can never be fit for it.

Note, 2. That when the apostle says, he is not ahamed of the gospel, more is intended than expressed: I am so far from being ashamed, that I account it my glory; as if the apostle had said, "Verily I esteem it the highest honour that God can confer upon me, to preach the gospel at Rome, though it should cost me my life."

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith:
as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

From faith to faith. This clause has caused much discussion. The generally received view is thus stated by Dr. Schaff: ``The righteousness is revealed from faith, or through means of faith, in order to produce faith in others." It is revealed to us by believing (faith), and the duty of the believer is to extend the gospel, or to extend the faith. Says Dr. Schaff, ``Believing includes knowledge and belief, assent and surrender, appropriation and application."

Is the righteousness of God--δικαιοσυνηθεου--. There is not a more important expression to be found in the epistle than this. It is capable of only the following interpretations.

(1.) Some have said that it means that the attribute of God, which is denominated righteousness or justice, is here displayed. It has been supposed that this was the design of the gospel to make this known; or to evince his justice in his way of saving men. There is an important sense in which this is true, (Rom 3:26.) But this does not seem to be the meaning in the passage before us. For

(a) the leading design of the gospel is not to evince the justice of God, or the attribute of justice, but the love of God. See Jn 3:16, Eph 2:4, 2Thes 2:16, 1Jn 4:8.

(b) The attribute of justice is not that which is principally evinced in the gospel. It is rather mercy, or mercy in a manner consistent with justice, or that does not interfere with justice.

(c) The passage, therefore, is not designed to teach simply that the righteousness of God, as an attribute, is brought forth in the gospel, or that the main idea is to reveal his justice.

(2.) A second interpretation which has been affixed to it is to make it the same as goodness, the benevolence of God is revealed, etc. But to this there are still stronger objections. For

(a) it does not comport with the design of the apostle's argument.

(b) It is a departure from the established meaning of the word justice, and the phrase "the righteousness of God."

(c) If this had been the design, it is remarkable that the usual words expressive of goodness or mercy had not been used. Another meaning, therefore, is to be sought as expressing the sense of the phrase.

(3.) The phrase, righteousness of God, is equivalent to God's plan of justifying men; his scheme of declaring them just in the sight of the law, or of acquitting them from punishment, and admitting them to favour. In this sense it stands opposed to man's plan of justification, i. e. by his own works. God's plan is by faith. The way in which that is done is revealed in the gospel. The object contemplated to be done is to treat men as if they were righteous. Man attempted to accomplish this by obedience to the law. The plan of God was to arrive at it by faith, here the two schemes differ; and the great design of this epistle is to show that man cannot be justified on his own plan--to wit, by works; and that the plan of God is the only way, and a wise and glorious way of making man just in the eye of the law. No small part of the perplexity usually attending this subject will be avoided if it is remembered that the discussion in this epistle pertains to the question, "How can mortal

man be just with God?" The apostle shows that it cannot be by works; and that it can be by faith. This latter is what he calls the righteousness of God which is revealed in the gospel.

To see that this is the meaning, it is needful only to look at the connexion; and at the usual meaning of the words. The word to justify--δικαιοω--means, properly, to be just, to be innocent, to be righteous. It then means to declare or treat as righteous; as when a man is charged with an offence, and is acquitted. If the crime alleged is not proved against him, he is declared by the law to be innocent. It then means to treat as if innocent, to regard as innocent, that is, to pardon, to forgive, and consequently to treat as if the offence had not occurred. It does not mean that the man did not commit the offence; or that the law might not have held him answerable for it; but that the offence is forgiven; and it is consistent to receive the offender into favour, and treat him as if he had not committed it. In what way this may be done rests with him who has the pardoning power. And in regard to the salvation of man, it rests solely with God, and must be done in that way only which he appoints and approves. The design of Paul in this epistle is to show how this is done, or to show that it is done by faith. It may be remarked here, that the expression before us does not imply any particular manner in which it is done; it does not touch the question whether it is by imputed righteousness or not; it does not say that it is on legal principles; it simply affirms that the gospel contains God's plan of justifying men by faith.

It is called God's righteousness, because it is God's plan, in distinction from all the plans set up by men. It was originated by him; it differs from all others; and it claims him as its Author, and tends to his glory. It is called his righteousness, as it is the way by which he receives and treats men as righteous. This same plan was foretold in various places, where the word righteousness is nearly synonymous with salvation. Isa 51:5, "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth." 6, "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." Isa 56:1, "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." Dan 9:24,

"To make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

In regard to this plan, it may be observed,

(1.) that it is not to declare that men are innocent and pure. That would not be true. The truth is just the reverse; and God does not esteem men to be different from what they are.

(2.) It is not to take part with the sinner, and to mitigate his offences. It admits them to their full extent; and makes him feel them also.

(3.) It is not that we become partakers of the essential righteousness of God. That is impossible.

(4.) It is not that his righteousness becomes ours. This is not true; and there is no intelligible sense in which that can be understood. But it is God's plan for pardoning sin, and for treating us as if we had not committed it; that is, adopting us as his children, and admitting us to heaven on the ground of what the Lord Jesus has done in our stead. This is God's plan. Men seek to save themselves by their own works. God's plan is to save them by the merits of Jesus Christ.

The just shall live by faith. "If any man shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him; but the just by my faith" (or by faith in me) "shall live." The very words are used by them which, are employed by the apostle, except they add the word "my, μου", my faith. The Syriac renders it in a similar manner, "The just by faith shall live." The meaning of the Hebrew in Habakkuk is the same. It does not refer originally to the doctrine of justification by faith; but its meaning is this, "The just man, or the righteous man, shall live by his confidence in God." The prophet is speaking of the woes attending the Babylonish captivity. The Chaldeans were to come upon the land and destroy it, and remove the nation, Hab 1:6-10. But this was not to be perpetual. It should have an end, Hab

2:3, and they who had confidence in God should live, Hab 2:4 that is, should be restored to their country, should be blessed and made happy. Their confidence in God should sustain them, and preserve them. This did not refer primarily to the doctrine of justification by faith, nor did the apostle so quote it; but it expressed a general principle that those who had confidence in God should be happy, and be preserved and blessed. This would express the doctrine which Paul was defending. It was not by relying on his own merit that the Israelite would be delivered, but it was by confidence in God, by his strength and mercy. On the same principle would men be saved under the gospel. It was not by reliance on their own works or merit; it was by confidence in God, by faith that they were to live. Shall live. In Habakkuk this means to be made happy, or blessed; shall find comfort, and support, and deliverance. So in the gospel the blessings of salvation are represented as life, eternal life. Sin is represented as death, and man by nature is represented as dead in trespasses and sins, Eph 2:1 The gospel restores to life and salvation, Jn 3:36, 5:29,40, 6:33,51,53, 20:31, Acts 2:28, Rom 5:18, 8:6. This expression, therefore, does not mean, as it is sometimes supposed, the justified by faith shall live; but it is expressive of a general principle in relation to men, that they shall be defended, preserved, made happy, not by their own merits or strength, but by confidence in God. This principle is exactly applicable to the gospel plan of salvation. Those who rely on God the Saviour shall be justified and saved.

The Guilt of Mankind

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

The wrath of God--οργηθεου. The word rendered wrath properly denotes that earnest appetite, or desire, by which we seek anything, or an intense effort to obtain it. And it is particularly applied to the desire which a man has to take vengeance who is injured, and who is enraged. It is thus synonymous with revenge. Eph 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath," etc. Col 3:8, "Anger, wrath, malice," etc. 1Timm 2:8; Jas 1:19. But it is also often applied to God and it is

clear that when we think of the word as applicable to him it must be divested of everything like human passion, and especially of the passion of revenge. As he cannot be injured by the sins of men, (Job 35:6-8,) he has no motive for vengeance, properly so called; and it is one of the most obvious rules of interpretation that we are not to apply to God passions and feelings which, among us, have their origin in evil. In making a revelation, it was indispensable to use words which men used; but it does not follow that when applied to God they mean precisely what they do when applied to man. When the Saviour is said (Mk 3:5) to have looked on his disciples with anger, (Greek, wrath, the same word is here,) it is not to be supposed that he had the feelings of an implacable man seeking vengeance. The nature of the feeling is to be judged of by the character of the person. So, in this place, the word denotes the Divine displeasure or indignation against sin; the Divine purpose to inflict punishment. It is the opposition of the Divine character against sin; and the determination of the Divine Mind to express that opposition in a proper way, by excluding the offender from the favours which he bestows on the righteous. It is not an unamiable or arbitrary principle of conduct. We all admire the character of a father who is opposed to disorder, and vice, and disobedience in his family, and who expresses his opposition in a proper way. We admire the character of a ruler who is opposed to all crime in the community, and who expresses those feelings in the laws. And the more he is opposed to vice and crime, the more we admire his character and his laws; and why shall we be not equally pleased with God, who is opposed to all crime in all parts of the universe, and who determines to express it in the proper way for the sake of preserving order and promoting peace. The word Divine displeasure or indignation, therefore, expresses the meaning of this phrase. See Mt 3:7, Lk 3:7, 21:23, Jn 3:36, Rom 2:5,8, 3:5, 4:15, 5:9, 9:22, 12:19; Rom 13:4,5, Eph 2:3, 5:6, 1Thes 1:10, 2:16, etc. The word occurs thirty-five times in the New Testament.

Against all ungodliness. This word properly means impiety failed to honour the true God, and had paid to idols the homage which was due to him. ασεβειαν. Multitudes also in every age refuse to

honour him, and neglect his worship, though they are not idolaters. Many men suppose that if they do not neglect their duty to their fellow-men, if they are honest and upright in their dealings, they are not guilty, even though they are not righteous, or do not do their duty to God; as though it were a less crime to dishonour God than man, and as though it were innocence to neglect and disobey our Maker and Redeemer. The apostle here shows that the wrath of God is as really revealed against the neglect of God as it is against positive iniquity; and that this is an offence of so consequence as to be placed first, and as deserving the Divine indignation more than the neglect of our duties towards men. Comp. Rom 11:26, 2Ti 2:16, Tit 2:12; Jude 1:15,18. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. Is revealed. That is, revealed to the Jews by their law; and to the Gentiles in their reason and conscience, as the apostle proceeds to show.

In unrighteousness. Or rather, by their iniquity. Their wickedness is the cause why the truth had had so little progress among them, and had exerted so little influence. This was done by their yielding to corrupt passions and propensities, and by their being therefore unwilling to retain the knowledge of a pure and holy God, who is opposed to such deeds, and who will punish them. As they were determined to practise iniquity, they chose to exclude the knowledge of a pure God, and to worship impure idols, by which they might give a sanction to their lusts. Their vice and tendency to iniquity was, therefore, the reason why they had so little knowledge of a holy God; and by the love of this, they held back the truth from making progress, and becoming diffused among them. The same thing is substantially true now. Men hold back or resist the the truth of the gospel by their sins in the following ways:

(1.) Men of influence and wealth employ both in directly opposing the gospel.

(2.) Men directly resist the doctrines of religion, since they know they could not hold to those doctrines without abandoning their sins.

(3.) Men who resolve to live in sin, of course, resist the gospel, and endeavour to prevent its influence.

(4.) Pride, and vanity, and the love of the world also resist the gospel, and oppose its advances.

(5.) Unlawful business--business that begins in evil, and progresses and ends in evil---has this tendency to hold back the gospel. Such is the effect of the traffic in ardent spirits, in the slave-trade, etc. They begin in the love of money, the root of all evil, (1Timm 6:10;) they progress in the tears and sorrows of the widow, the orphan, the wife, the sister, or the child; and they end in the deep damnation of multitudes in the world to come. Perhaps there has been nothing that has so much held back the influence of truth, and of the gospel, as indulgence in the vice of intemperance, and traffic in liquid fire.

(6.) Indulgence in vice, or wickedness of any kind, holds back the truth of God. Men who are resolved to indulge their passions will not yield themselves to this truth. And hence all the wicked, the proud, and vain, and worldly are responsible, not only for their own sins directly, but for hindering, by theft example and theft crimes, the effect of religion on others. They are answerable for standing in the way of God and his truth; and for opposing him in the benevolent design of doing good to all men. There is nothing that prevents the universal spread and influence of truth but sin. And men of wickedness are answerable for all the ignorance and woe which are spread over the community, and which have extended themselves over the world.

Our apostle having asserted and laid down a general proposition, that the justification of a sinner is only to be expected by the righteousness of the Mediator in a way of faith; he now undertakes the proof and demonstration of it thus; distributes the whole world into Gentiles and Jews; the former seeking righteousness by the dim light of nature; or the law written in their hearts; the latter by

the works of the law, that is, by their external conformity to what the law of Moses exacted and required of them.

Now his present business is to prove distinctly and fully, that neither Gentile nor Jew could ever find what they thus sought. He begins here with the Gentiles, and shews that indeed they had inbred notions of a God imprinted in their minds by nature, and also had the book of the creature before their eyes, in which much, very much of God, might be seen: yet these common notices of God, and of good and evil, they did not obey and put in practice but rebelled against the light and dictates of their natural consciences: for which cause, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against them.

Here observe, 1. A dreadful manifestation of divine wrath: The wrath of God is revealed from heaven. The wrath of God; that is, the indignation or vengeance of God: This the sinner shall feel who doth not fear it; for the fears of an incensed Deity are no bug-bears, nor the effects of ignorance and superstition, as the Atheists fancy. This wrath is said to be revealed from heaven; that is, discovered and made manifest by the God of heaven, partly by the light of nature, their own consciences giving them notice and warning of it; and partly by the examples of others, in the lashes of a divine severity on the back of sinners, by the hand of an incensed God: Thus the wrath of God was revealed to the Gentiles from heaven.

Observe, 2. The object or impulsive cause of his revealed and inflicted wrath; namely, All ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Ungodliness compriseth all sins against God, or neglect of the duties of the first table: Unrighteousness comprehends all sins against our neighbour, or the breaches of the second table.

Note here, That the abstract is put for the concrete, the sins for the sinners that commit them; the wrath of God is revealed against all

ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; that is, against all ungodly and unrighteous persons; the meaning is, that God will certainly punish these sins upon the persons of the sinners.

Observe, 3. The special aggravation of these their sins, or that which made them so very provoking to Almighty God; namely, that they held the truth in unrighteousness; that is, their natural convictions were kept down under the dominion and power of their corruptions. Lust in their wills and affections was too hard for the light in their understandings; they entertained the light of truth in their minds, but did not suffer it to have its proper effect and influence upon their hearts and lives; thus making that a prisoner which would have made them free.

Learn, 1. That it is a very great aggravation of sin, for men to offend against the light of their own minds, and to rebel against the convictions of their own consciences.

2. That the wrath of God is dreadfully incensed against all those that live in any course of sin, rebelling against the dictates and convictions of their own enlightened consciences.
Dread it then, as thou dreadest hell itself, to sin against knowledge, to rebel against the light of thy own mind, to slight the whispers, to stifle the voice of thy own conscience; but reverence and obey its dictates as the commands of God.

19 because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed *it* unto them.

That which may be known of God. That which is knowable concerning God. The expression implies that there may be many things concerning God which cannot be known. But there are also many things which may be ascertained. Such are his existence, and many of his attributes, his power, and wisdom, and justice, etc. The object of the apostle was not to say that everything pertaining to God could be known by them, or that they could have as clear a view of him as if they had possessed a revelation. We must interpret the expression according to the object which he had in view. That was, to show that so much might be known of God as

to prove that they had no excuse for their crimes; or that God would be just in punishing them for their deeds, for this it was needful only that his existence and his justice, or his determination to punish sin, should be known; and this, the apostle affirms, was known among them, and had been from the creation of the world. This expression, therefore, is not to be pressed as implying that they knew all that could be known about God, or that they knew as much as they who had a revelation; but that they knew enough to prove that they had no excuse for their sins. He had endowed them with reason and conscience, (Rom 2:14,15;) he had made them capable of seeing and investigating his works; he had spread before them the proofs of his wisdom, and goodness, and power, and had thus given them the means of learning his perfections and will.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world
are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,
even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without
excuse:

Things that are made. By his works. Comp. Heb 11:3. This means not by the original act of creation, but by the continual operations of God in his Providence, by his doings--ποιημασι--by what he is continually producing and accomplishing in the displays of his power and goodness in the heavens and the earth. What they were capable of understanding he immediately adds, and shows that he did not intend to affirm that every thing could be known of God by his works; but so much as to free them from excuse for their sins.

So that they are without excuse. God has given them so clear evidence of his existence and claims, that they have no excuse for their idolatry, and for hindering the truth by their iniquity. It is implied here, that in order that men should be responsible, they should have the means of knowledge; and that he does not judge them when their ignorance is involuntary, and the means of knowing the truth have not been communicated. But where men have these means within their reach, and will not avail themselves of them, all excuse is taken away. This was the case with the Gentile world. They had the means of knowing so much of God,

as to show the folly of worshipping dumb idols. Comp. Isa 44:8-20. They had also traditions respecting his perfections; and they could not plead for their crimes and folly that they had no means of knowing him. If this was true of the pagan world then, how much more is it true of the world now? And especially how true and fearful is this, respecting that great multitude in Christian lands who have the Bible, and who never read it; who are within the reach of the sanctuary, and never enter it; who are admonished by friends, and by the providences of God, and who regard it not; and who look upon the heavens, and even yet see no proof of the eternal power and Godhead of him who made them all! Nay, there are those who are apprized of the discoveries of modern astronomy, and who yet do not seem to reflect that all these glories are proof of the existence of an eternal God; and who live in ignorance of religion as really as the heathen, and in crimes as decided and malignant as disgraced the darkest ages of the world. For such there is no excuse, or shadow of excuse, to be offered m the day of doom. And there is no fact more melancholy in our history, and no one thing that more proves the stupidity of men, than this sad forgetfulness of Him that made the heavens, even amid all the wonders and glories that have come fresh from the hand of God, and that everywhere speak his praise.

Sinners are not willing to give honour to God as God. They are not pleased with his perfections; and therefore the mind becomes fixed on other objects, and the heart gives free indulgence to its own sinful desires. A willingness to honour God as God--to reverence, love, and obey him, would effectually restrain men from sin. Neither were thankful. The obligation to be thankful to God for his mercies, for the goodness which we experience, is plain and obvious. Thus we judge of favours received of our fellow-men. The apostle here clearly regards this unwillingness to render gratitude to God for his mercies as one of the causes of their subsequent corruption and idolatry. The reasons of this are the following.

(1.) The effect of ingratitude is to render the heart hard and insensible.

(2.) Men seek to forget the Being to whom they are unwilling to exercise gratitude.

(3.) To do this, they fix their affections on other things; and hence the heathen expressed their gratitude not to God,

But became vain. To become vain, with us, means to be elated, or self-conceited, or to seek praise from others. The meaning here seems to be, they became foolish, frivolous ill their thoughts and reasonings. They acted foolishly; they employed themselves in useless and frivolous questions, the effect of which was to lead the mind farther and farther from the truth respecting God.

Imaginations. This word means, properly, thoughts; then reasonings, and also disputations. Perhaps our word speculations, would convey its meaning here. It implies that they were unwilling to honour him, they commenced those speculations which resulted in all their vain and foolish opinions about idols, and the various rites of idolatrous worship. Many of the speculations and inquiries of the ancients were among the most vain and senseless which the mind can conceive.

Was darkened. Was rendered obscure, so that they did not perceive and comprehend the truth. The process which is stated in this verse is,

(1.) that men had the knowledge of God;

(2.) that they refused to honour him when they knew hun, and were opposed to his character and government;

(3) that they were ungrateful;

(4) that they then began to doubt, to reason, to speculate, and wandered far into darkness. This is substantially the process by

which men wander away from God now. They have the knowledge of God, but they do not love him; and being dissatisfied with his character and government, they begin to speculate, fall into error, and then "find no end in wandering mazes lost," and sink into the depths of heresy and of sin.

21 because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

From this verse to the end of the chapter, we have a large and black catalogue of the sins which the old Heathens or Gentiles were guilty of; some of which they voluntarily committed, and others were judiciously delivered up unto (for God, without any impeachment of his holiness, often punishes sin with sin.) Their sins voluntarily committed, are here recited, and the first of them is their sinning against light and knowledge. They had some natural notices of God implanted and imprinted in their minds, and such an additional knowledge of his being and attribute, as might be gained by an attentive study in the book of the creatures; but they rebelled against this light, and thereby contracted an aggravated guilt.

Learn thence, that to sin against light and knowledge, either in the omission of duty, or commission of sin, is the highest aggravation of sinfulness: As ignorance lesseneth, so knowledge aggravateth the malignity of sin.

The next sin charged upon them was, they did not glorify that God whom they had the knowledge of: That is, they did not conceive of him, and worship him as became his divine perfections and excellencies; they did not esteem so high of him as they ought, and pay that homage and honour, to the Deity which they should.

Learn thence, That the knowledge which we have of God and his attributes, if it do not engage us to honour, glorify, and worship him, suitable to his adorable perfections, it is vain and useless in God's account, and will but expose us to a more dreadful condemnation.

Another sin mentioned in this verse, which the Heathens were guilty of, was the sin of unthankfulness. They glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful: That is, they had not a due sense of the favours and benefits of God conferred upon them; but, ascribing the blessings of heaven to chance and fortune, to fate and destiny, to the influence of the stars and planets, to their own prudence and providence, they paid their thanks to blind fortune, for a favour which the eye of providence had bestowed upon them: It is impossible that God should receive the tribute of thankfulness, if we do not see all our mercies flowing from him.

Observe farther, the sad effect, fruit and consequence of the fore-mentioned sins. The Heathens which committed them, it is said,

1. That they became vain in their imaginations. That is, they had various opinions and vain conceptions of the Godhead. Some of them denied that there was a God, others doubted whether there was a God or no; some affirmed there was but one God, others owned a plurality, yea, a multiplicity of gods. Some acknowledge God's being, but denied his providence; others owned his providence, but confined it, in its exercise to secondary causes. Thus vain in their imaginations, thus absorbed in their notions, and thus sottish in their reasonings, were the Heathens concerning God, his nature and worship. Well might our apostle say, They became vain in their imaginations.

And, 2. That their foolish hearts were darkened: That is, for rebelling against the light received, their minds and understanding were more and more darkened; their natural reason obscured, but because not improved.

Lord, how dangerous is it not to improve our knowledge! how fatal to rebel against the light and convictions of our own minds! it provokes thee to deliver us up to he power of spiritual darkness on earth, and consigns us over to eternal darkness in hell, where is reserved the blackness of darkness forever, as the punishment and portion of those that rebel against the light, and sin against knowledge.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
23 and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image
made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed
beasts, and creeping things.
24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through
the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies
between themselves:

Observe here, 1. Another infamous sin charged upon the Heathens; namely, the sin of uncleanness; yea, base, unnatural uncleanness, and pollutions of the most odious kinds.

Learn thence, That idolatry and uncleanness often go together. Solomon's uncleanness led him to idolatry, and his idolatry increased his uncleanness. The city of Rome at this day, which is a grove of idols, the chief seat of idolatry, is next to Sodom for uncleanness; witness their allowing of stews by public authority.

Learn, 2. That all kinds and degrees of pollutions both natural and unnatural, are to be detested and abhorred, as dishonouring the body. Our bodies are Christ's members, the Holy Ghost's temples; let us therefore glorify God with our bodies on earth, which shall be subjects capable of glory with himself in heaven.

Observe, 2. God's judiciary tradition of these idolatrous Heathens to the sin of uncleanness. Wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness. Almighty God often doth, and always righteously may, punish sin with sin: God punished the idolatry of the Heathens here, by delivering them up to vile affections, to uncleanness, and unnatural lusts.

But how is this consistent with God's holiness and hatred of sin? Thus, God neither infuses sin into their hearts, nor excites to sin in their lives, but leaves sinners to themselves, to act without restraint, according to the inclination of their own lusts and corruptions: And also, gives them up to Satan, that unclean spirit, who will not fail to provoke them to such uncleanness as he knows their inclinations stand ready to comply with.

Lord, keep back thy servants from sinning against the light of nature, against the light of scripture, lest we be judicially darkened, and given up to a sottish and injudicious mind, to hardness of heart, and the vilest of affections.

25 who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and
served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for
ever. Amen.
26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even
their women did change the natural use into that which is
against nature:
27 and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the
woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with
men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in
themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.
28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge,
God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things
which are not convenient;
29 being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness,
covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate,
deceit, malignity; whisperers,

Wickedness. The word used here denotes a desire of injuring others; or, as we should express it, malice. It is that depravity and obliquity of mind which strives to produce injury on others. Calvin. Covetousness. Avarice, or the desire of obtaining that which belongs to others. This vice is common in the world; but it would be particularly so where the other vices enumerated here abounded, and men were desirous of luxury, and the gratification of their senses. Rome was particularly desirous of the wealth of other nations, and hence its extended wars, and the various evils of rapine and conquest. Licentiousness, κακια. This word denotes evil in general; rather the act of doing wrong than the desire, which was expressed before by the word wickedness. Full of envy. "Pain, uneasiness, mortification or discontent, excited by another's prosperity, accompanied with some degree of hatred or malignity, and often with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing him depressed." Webster. This passion is so common still, that it is not necessary to attempt to prove that it was common among the ancients. It seems to be natural to the human heart, it is one of the most common manifestations of wickedness, and shows clearly the deep depravity of man. Benevolence rejoices at the happiness of others, and seeks to promote it. But envy exists almost everywhere, and in almost every human bosom:

"All human virtue, to its latest breath Finds envy never conquered but by death." Pope.

Murder. "The taking of human life, with premeditated malice, by a person of a sane mind." This is necessary to constitute murder now; but the word used here denotes all manslaughter, or taking human life, except that which occurs as the punishment of crime. It is scarcely necessary to show that this was common among the Gentiles. It has prevailed in all communities, but it was particularly prevalent in Rome. It is necessary only to refer the reader to the common events in the Roman history of assassinations, deaths by poison, and the destruction of slaves. But in a special manner the charge was properly alleged against them, on account of the inhuman

contests of the gladiators in the amphitheatres. These were common at Rome, and constituted a favorite amusement with the people. Originally, captives, slaves, and criminals were trained up for combat; but it afterwards became common for even Roman citizens to engage in these bloody combats; and Nero at one show exhibited no less than four hundred senators and six hundred knights as gladiators. The fondness for this bloody spectacle continued till the reign of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, by whom they were abolished about six hundred years after the original institution. "Several hundred, perhaps several thousand, victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire," Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. ,xxx., A.D. 404. As an instance of what might occur in this inhuman spectacle, we may refer to what took place on such an occasion in the reign of Probus, (A.D. 281.) During his triumph, near seven hundred gladiators were reserved to shed each other's blood for the amusement of the Roman people. But "disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from their place of confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion," Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xii. With such views and with such spectacles before them, it is not wonderful that murder was regarded as a matter of little consequence, and hence this crime prevailed throughout the world. Debate. Our word debate does not commonly imply evil. It denotes commonly discussion for elucidating truth; or for maintaining a proposition, as the debates in Congress, etc. But the word in the original meant also contention, strife, altercation, connected with anger and heated zeal, Rom 13:13, 1Cor 1:11, 3:3, 2Cor 12:20, Gal 5:20. Php 1:15, 1Timm 6:4, Tit 3:9. This contention and strife would, of course, follow from malice and covetousness, etc. Deceit. This denotes fraud, falsehood, etc. That this was common is also plain. The Cretians are testified by one of the Greek poets to have been always liars. (Tit 1:12.) Juvenal charges the same thing on the Romans. (Sat. iii. 41.) "What, says he, should I do at Rome? I cannot lie." Intimating that if he were there, it would follow, of course, that he would be expected to be false. The same thing

is still true. Writers on India tell us that the word of a Hindoo, even under oath, is not to be regarded; and the same thing occurs in most pagan countries. Malignity. This word signifies here, not malignity in general, but that particular species of it which consists in misinterpreting the words or actions of others, or putting the worst construction on their conduct. Whisperers. Those who secretly, and in a sly manner, by hints and innuendoes, detract from others, or excite suspicion of them. It does not mean those who openly calumniate, but that more dangerous class who give hints of evil in others, who affect great knowledge, and communicate the evil report under an injunction of secrecy, knowing that it will be divulged. This class of people abounds everywhere, and there is scarcely any one more dangerous to the peace or happiness of society.

Here the apostle sums up the sins which the Heathens committed against the second table, or against their neighbour; not that every particular person was guilty of all these black crimes, but all were guilty of some, and some perhaps were guilty of all or most of them.

Learn hence, That the heart of man doth natually swarm and abound with stange and monstrous lusts and abominations. Lord! what a swarm is here! and yet there are multitudes more in the depths of the heart. Whatever abominations were found in the hearts and lives of Heathens and Sodomites, and the most profligate wretches under heaven, are radically and seminally in our corrupt and degenerate natures, Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c. Matt 15:19 What are our lusts, but so many toads spitting of venom and spawning of poison? Oh deplorable degradation!

Learn, 2. How much sadder is the condition which unregenerate souls abide in, who remain in and under the power and dominion, the vassalage and slavery of these imperious lusts, which perpetually rage within them, and incessantly contest and scuffle for the throne.

Learn 3. To stand astonished at the heart-changing grace of God, which has delivered thee from so dismal a condition. Oh! fall down and kiss the feet of mercy: adore the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace, which stept in so seasonably to thy rescue. Lord! what black imaginations, what vile affections, what hellish desires, what monstrous abominations were lodged in my heart and nature, before regeneration wrought a change!

Oh that ever the Holy Ghost should set his eyes upon any of the sinful offspring of apostate Adam; in whom were legions of unclean lusts, and whose nature was become the sink and seed-plot of all sin.

Observe lastly, Two particular sins, which of all others seem most monstrous in these Heathens.

1. They were haters of God, not of his essence, being and goodness, but haters of his holiness, justice and providence.

2. They were without natural affection. This appeared by sacrificing their children to their idols; and exposing themselves and their dearest relations to ruin. No sooner did we fall out with God, but we fell out with ourselves and one another.

30 backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

Backbiters. Those who calumniate, slander, or speak ill of those who are absent. Whisperers declare secretly, and with great reserve, the supposed faults of others. Backbiters proclaim them publicly and avowedly. Haters of God. There is no charge which can be brought against men more severe than this. It is the highest possible crime; yet it is a charge which the conduct of men will abundantly justify, and the truth of which all those experience who are brought to see their true character. To an awakened sinner there is often nothing more plain and

painful than that he is a hater of God. His heart rises up against Him, and his law, and his plan of saving men; and he deeply feels that nothing can subdue this but the mighty power of the Holy One. This is a charge which is not unfrequently brought against men in the Bible. See Jn 7:7,18,24,25; Jn 3:19,20. Surely, if this be the native character of man, then it is "far gone from original righteousness." No more striking proof of depravity could be given; and in no creed or confession of faith is there a more painful and humiliating representation given of human wickedness than in this declaration of an inspired apostle, that men are by nature HATERS OF GOD. Despiteful. This word denotes those who abuse, or treat with unkindness or disdain, those who are present. Whisperers and backbiters are those who calumniate those who are absent. Proud. Pride is well understood. It is an inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, etc. Webster. Of the existence of this everywhere there is abundant proof. And it was particularly striking among the ancients. The sect of the Stoics was distinguished for it, and this was the general character of their philosophers. Men will be proud where they suppose none are superior; and it is only the religion that reveals a great and infinite God, and that teaches that all blessings are his gift, and that he has given us the station which we occupy, that will produce true humility. We may add, that the system of heathenism did not disclose the wickedness of the heart, and that this was a main reason why they were elevated in self-esteem. Boasters. Those who arrogate to themselves that which they do not possess, and glory in it. This is closely connected with pride. A man who has an inordinate self-conceit, will not be slow to proclaim his own merits to those around him. Inventors of evil things. This doubtless refers to their seeking to find out new arts or plans to practise evil; new devices to gratify their lusts and passions; new forms of luxury and vice, etc. So intent were they on practicing evil, so resolved to gratify their passions, that the mind was excited to discover new modes of gratification. In cities of luxury and vice, this has always been done. Vices change their form, men become

satiated, and they are obliged to resort to some new form. The passions cease to be gratified with old forms of indulgence, and consequently men are obliged to resort to new devices to pamper their appetites, and to rekindle their dying passions to a flame. This was eminently true of ancient Rome; a place where all the arts of luxury, all the devices of passion, all the designs of splendid gratification, were called forth to excite and pamper the evil passions of men. Their splendid entertainments, their games, their theatres, their sports--cruel and bloody--were little else than new and ever- varying inventions of evil things to gratify the desires of lust and of pride. Disobedient to parents. This expresses the idea that they did not show to parents that honour, respect, and attention which was due. This has been a crime of paganism in every age; and though among the Romans the duty of honouring parents was enjoined by the laws, yet it is not improbable that the duty was often violated, and that parents were treated with great neglect and even contempt. "Disobedience to parents was punished by the Jewish law with death; and with the Hindoos it is attended with the loss of the child's inheritance. The ancient Greeks considered the neglect of it to be extremely impious, and attended with the most certain effects of Divine vengeance. Solon ordered all persons who refused to make due provision for their parents to be punished with infamy, and the same penalty was incurred for personal violence towards them." Kent's Commentaries on American Law, vol. ii. pg. 207. Comp. Virg. AEnid ix. 283. The feelings of pride and haughtiness would lead to disregard of parents. It might also be felt that to provide for them when aged and infirm was a burden; and hence there would arise disregard for their wants, and probably open opposition to their wishes, as being the demands of petulance and age. It has been one characteristic of heathenism everywhere, that it leaves children to treat their parents with neglect. Among the Sandwich islanders it was customary, when a parent was old, infirm, and sick beyond the hope of recovery, for his own children to bury him alive; and it has been the common custom in India for children to leave their aged parents to perish on the banks of the Ganges.

Covenantbreakers. Perfidious; false to their contracts. Without natural affection. This expression denotes the want of affectionate regard towards their children. The attachment of parents to children is one of the strongest in nature, and nothing can overcome it but the most confirmed and established wickedness. And yet the apostle charges on the heathen generally the want of this affection. He doubtless refers here to the practice so common among heathens of exposing their children, or putting them to death. This crime, so abhorrent to all the feelings of humanity, was common among the heathen, and is still. The Canaanites, we are told, Ps 106:37,38, "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." Manasseh, among the Jews, imitated their example, and introduced the horrid custom of sacrificing children to Moloch, and set the example by offering his own, 2Chr 33:6. Among the ancient Persians it was a common custom to bury children alive. In most of the Grecian states, infanticide was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law. The Spartan lawgiver expressly ordained that every child that was born should be examined by the ancient men of the tribe, and that if found weak or deformed, should be thrown into a deep cavern at the foot of Mount Taygetus. Aristotle, in his work on government, enjoins the exposure of children that are naturally feeble and deformed, in order to prevent an excess of population. But among all the nations of antiquity, the Romans were the most unrelenting in their treatment of infants, Romulus obliged the citizens to bring up all their male children, and the eldest of the females-- proof that the others were to be destroyed. The Roman father had an absolute right over the life of his child, and we have abundant proof that that right was often exercised. Romulus expressly authorized the destruction of all children that were deformed, only requiring the parents to exhibit them to their five nearest neighbours, and to obtain their consent to theft death. The law of the Twelve Tables, enacted in the 301st year of Rome, sanctioned the same barbarous practice.

Minucius Felix thus describes the barbarity of the Romans in this respect: "I see you exposing your infants to wild beasts and birds, or strangling them after the most miserable manner," (chap. xxx.) Pliny, the elder, defends the right of parents to destroy their children, upon the ground of its being necessary in order to preserve the population within proper bounds. Tertullian, in his apology, expresses himself boldly on this subject. "How many of you (addressing himself to the Roman people, and to the governors of cities and provinces) might I deservedly charge with infant murder; and not only so, but among the different kinds of death, for choosing some of the cruellest for their own children, such as drowning, or starving with cold or hunger, or exposing to the mercy of dogs; dying by the sword being too sweet a death for children." Nor was this practice arrested in the Roman government until the time of Constantine, the first Christian prince. The Phenicians and Carthagenians were in the habit of sacrificing infants to the gods. It may be added, that the crime is no less common among modern pagan nations, no less than 9000 children are exposed in Pekin in China, annually. Persons are employed by the police to go through the city with carts every morning to pick up all the children that may have been thrown out during the night. The bodies are carried to a common pit without the walls of the city, into which all, whether dead or living, are promiscuously thrown. (Barrow's Travels in China, p. 113, Am. ed.) Among the Hindoos the practice is perhaps still more common. In the provinces of Cutch and Guzerat alone the number of infantile murders amounted, according to the lowest calculation in 1807, to 3000 annually; according to another calculation, to 30,000. Females are almost the only victims. (Buchanan's Researches in Asia, Eng. ed., p. 49. Ward's View of the Hindoos.) In Otaheite, previously to the conversion of the people to Christianity, it was estimated that at least two-thirds of the children were destroyed. (Turnbull's Voyage round the World in 1800, 2, 3, and 4.) The natives of New South Wales were in the habit of burying the child with its mother, if she should happen to die. (Collins' Account of the Colony of New South Wales, p. 124, 125.) Among the

Hottentots, infanticide is a common crime. "The altars of the Mexicans were continually drenched. in the blood of infants." In Peru, no less than two hundred infants were sacrificed on occasion of the coronation of the Inca. The authority for these melancholy statements may be seen in Beck's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. i. 184--197, ed. 1823. See also Robertson's History of America, p. 221, ed. 1821. This is a specimen of the views and feelings of the heathen world; and the painful narrative might be continued to almost any length. After this statement, it cannot surely be deemed a groundless charge when the apostle accused them of being destitute of natural affection. Implacable. This word properly denotes those who will not be reconciled where there is a quarrel; or who pursue the offender with unyielding revenge. It denotes an unforgiving temper; and was doubtless common among the ancients, as it is among all heathen people. The aborigines of this country have given the most striking manifestation of this that the world has known. It is well known that, among them, neither time nor distance will obliterate the memory of an offence; and that the avenger will pursue the offender over hills and streams, and through heat or snow, happy if he may at last, though at the expiration of years, bury the tomahawk in the head of his victim, though it may be at the expense of his own life. See Robertson's America, book iv. & lxxiii--lxxxi. Unmerciful. Destitute of compassion. As a proof of this we may remark, that no provisions for the poor or infirm were made among the heathen. The sick and the infirm were cast out, and doomed to depend on the stinted charity of individuals. Pure religion, only, opens the heart to the appeals of want; and nothing but Christianity has yet expanded the hearts of men to make public provisions for the poor, the ignorant, and the afflicted. (1) "natural affection" or, "unsociable"

Who knowing. That the Gentiles had a moral sense, or were capable of knowing the will of God in this case, is clear from Rom 2:14,15. The means which they had of arriving at the knowledge of God were, their own reason, their conscience, and an observation of the effects of depravity. The judgment of

God. The word judgment here denotes the declared sentiment of God, that such things deserved death. It does not mean his inflictions, or his statutes or precepts; but it means that God thought or judged that they which did such things ought to die. As they were aware of this, it showed their guilt in still persevering in the face of his Judgments, and his solemn purpose to inflict punishment. Are worthy of death. The word death, in the Scriptures, is often used to denote punishment. But it does not mean here that these deserved capital punishment from the civil magistrate, but that they knew they were evil, and offensive to God, and deserving of punishment from his hand. See Jn 8:51, Rom 5:12-19.

31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

32 who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Romans-2

The Righteous Judgment of God

1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

Doest the same things. It is clearly implied here, that they were guilty of offences similar to those practised by the Gentiles. It would not be a just principle of interpretation to press this declaration as implying that precisely the same offences, and to the same extent, were chargeable on them. Thus they were not guilty, in the time of the apostle, of idolatry; but of the other crimes enumerated in the first chapter, the Jews might be guilty. The character of the nation, as given in the New Testament, is that they were "an evil and adulterous generation," Mt 12:39, Jn 8:7; that they were a "generation of vipers," Mt 3:7, 12:34; that they were wicked, Mt 12:45 that they were sinful, Mk 8:38; that they were proud, haughty,

hypocritical, etc., Mt 23:1. If such was the character of the Jewish nation in general, there is no improbability in supposing that they practised most of the crimes specified in ch 1. On this verse we may remark,

(1.) that men are prone to be severe judges of others.

(2.) This is often, perhaps commonly, done when the accusers themselves are guilty of the same offences. It often happens, too, that men are remarkably zealous in opposing those offences which they themselves secretly practise. A remarkable instance of this occurs in Jn 8:1, etc. Thus David readily condemned the supposed act of injustice mentioned by Nathan, 2Sam 12:1-6. Thus also kings and emperors have enacted severe laws against the very crimes which they have constantly committed themselves. Nero executed the laws of the Roman empire against the very crimes which he was constantly committing; and it was a common practice for Roman masters to commit offences which they punished with death in their slaves. (See instances in Grotius on this place.)

(3.) Remarkable zeal against sin may be no proof of innocence. Comp. Mt 7:3. The zeal of persecutors, and often of pretended reformers, may be far from proof that they are free from the very offences which they are condemning in others. It may all be the work of the hypocrite to conceal some base design; or of the man who seeks to show his hostility to one kind of sin, in order to be a salvo to his conscience for committing some other.

(4.) The heart is deceitful. When we judge others we should make it a rule to examine ourselves on that very point. Such an examination might greatly mitigate the severity of our judgment; or might turn the whole of our indignation against ourselves. (i) "for wherein thou" 2Sam 12:6,7

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

Which commit such things. The crimes enumerated in chap. i. The apostle is not to be understood as affirming that each and every individual among the Jews was guilty of the specific crimes charged on the heathen, but that they were, as a people, inclined to the same things. Even where they might be externally moral, they might be guilty of cherishing evil desires in their hearts, and thus be guilty of the offence, Mt 5:28. When men desire to do evil, and are prevented by the providence of God, it is right to punish them for their evil intentions. The fact that God prevents them from carrying their evil purposes into execution does not constitute a difference between their real character and the character of those who are suffered to act out their wicked designs.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

despisest properly means to contemn, or to treat with neglect. It does not mean here that they professedly treated God's goodness with neglect or contempt; but that they perverted and abused it; they did not make a proper use of it; they did not regard it as fitted to lead them to repentance; but they derived a practical impression, that because God had not come forth in judgment and cut them off, but had continued to follow them with blessings, that therefore he did not regard them as sinners, or they inferred that they were innocent and safe. This argument the Jews were accustomed to use, (comp. Lk 13:1-5, Jn 9:2;) and thus sinners still continue to abuse the goodness and mercy of God.

Long-suffering. This word denotes his slowness to anger; or his suffering them to commit sins long without punishing them. It does not differ essentially from forbearance. This is shown by his not coming forth, at the moment that sin is committed, to punish it. He might do it justly, but he spares men from day to day, and year to year, to give them opportunity to repent, and be saved. The way in

which men despise or abuse the goodness of God is to infer that he does not intend to punish sin; that they may do it safely; and instead of turning from it, to go on in committing it more constantly, as if they were safe. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Eccl 8:11. The same thing was true in the time of Peter, 2Pet 3:3,4. And the same thing is true of wicked men in every age. Nor is there a more decisive proof of the wickedness of the human heart, than this disposition to abuse the goodness of God; and because he shows kindness and forbearance, to take occasion to plunge deeper into sin, to forget his mercy, and to provoke him to anger.

Leadeth thee, etc. Or the tendency, the design of the goodness of God, is to induce men to repent of their sins, and not to lead them to deeper and more aggravated iniquity. The same sentiment is expressed in 2Pet 3:9, "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." See also Isa 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you." Hos 5:15; Eze 18:23,32.

Repentance. Change of mind, and purpose, and life. The word here evidently means not merely sorrow, but a forsaking of sin, and turning from it. The tendency of God's goodness and forbearance to lead men to repentance is manifest in the following ways.

(1.) It shows the evil of transgression when it is seen to be committed against so kind and merciful a Being.

(2.) It is fitted to melt and soften the heart. Judgments often harden the sinner's heart, and make him obstinate. But if, while he does evil, God is as constantly doing him good; if the patience of God is seen from year to year, while the man is rebellious, it is adapted to melt and subdue the heart.

(3.) The great mercy of God in this often appears to men to be overwhelming; and so it would to all, if they saw it as it is. God

bears with men from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old age; often while they violate every law, contemn his mercy, profane his name, and disgrace their species; and still, notwithstanding all this, his anger is turned away, and the sinner lives, and "riots in the beneficence of God." If there is any thing that can affect the heart of man, it is this; and when he is brought to see it, and contemplate it, it rushes over the soul, and overwhelms it with bitter sorrow.

(4.) The mercy and forbearance of God are constant. The manifestations of his goodness come in every form; in the sun, and light, and air; in the rain, the stream, the dew-drop; in food, and raiment, and home; in friends, and liberty, and protection; in health and peace; and in the gospel of Christ, and the offers of life; and in all these ways God is appealing to his creatures each moment, and setting before them the evils of ingratitude, and beseeching them to turn and live.

And from this passage we cannot but remark,

(1.) that the most effectual preaching is that which sets before men most of the goodness of God.

(2.) Every man is under obligation to forsake his sins, and turn to God. There is no man who has not seen repeated proofs of his mercy and love.

(3.) Sin is a stubborn and an amazing evil. Where it can resist all the appeals of God's mercy; where the sinner can make his way down to hell through all the proofs of God's goodness; where he can refuse to hear God speaking to him each day, and each hour, it shows an amazing extent of depravity to resist all this, and still remain a sinner. Yet there are thousands and millions who do it; and who can be won by no exhibition of love or mercy to forsake their sins, and turn to God. Happy is the man who is melted into contrition by the goodness of God, and who sees and mourns over the evil of sinning against so good a Being as is the Creator and

Parent of all. (k) "riches of his goodness" Rom 9:23 (l) "forbearance and longsuffering" Isa 30:18 (m) "not knowing" Jn 4:2 (n) "leadeth" Isa 30:18

Note, lastly, that the day of judgment will be a day of revelation, a day in which the righteousness of God's proceedings shall be universally manifested and magnified; then will all the divine attributes be conspiciously glorified; his wonderful clemency sweetly displayed; his exact justice terribyly demonstrated; his perfect wisdom clearly unfolded; all the knotty intrigues of providence wisely resolved; all the mysterious depth of divine counsels fully discovered, and to the dreadful consternation and confusion of the wicked and impenitent world: Oh how well might the apostle call this day, The revelation of the righteous judgment of God!

5 but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up
unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of
the righteous judgment of God;
6 who will render to every man according to his deeds:

But after thy hardness. The word "after" here (κατα) means, in respect to; or, you act according to the direct tendency of a hard heart in treasuring up wrath. The word hardness is used to denote insensibility of mind. It properly means that which is insensible to the touch, or on which no impression is made by contact, as a stone, etc. Hence it is applied to the mind, to denote a state where no motives make an impression; which is insensible to all the appeals made to it. See Mt 25:24, 19:8, Acts 19:9. And here it expresses a state of mind where the goodness and forbearance of God have no effect. The man still remains obdurate, to use a word which has precisely the meaning of the Greek in this place. It is implied in this expression, that the direct tendency, or the inevitable result of that state of mind, was to treasure up wrath, etc. Impenitent heart. A heart which is not affected with sorrow for sin, in view of the mercy and goodness of God. This is an explanation of what he meant by hardness. Treasurest up. To treasure up, or to lay up treasure, commonly denotes a laying by in a place of security of property that may be of use to us at some future period. In this place it is used, however, in a more general sense, to

accumulate, to increase. It still has the idea of hoarding up, carries the thought beautifully and impressively onward to future times. Wrath, like wealth treasured up, is not exhausted at present, and hence the sinner becomes bolder in sin. But it exists for future use; it is kept in store (comp. 2Pet 3:7) against future times; and the man who commits sin is only increasing this by every act of transgression. The same sentiment is taught in a most solemn manner in De 32:34,35. It may be remarked here, that most men have an immense treasure of this kind in store, which eternal ages of pain will not exhaust or diminish! Stores of wrath are thus reserved for a guilty world, and in due time it "will come upon man to the uttermost," 1Thes 2:16. Unto thyself. For thyself, and not for another; to be exhausted on thee, and not on your fellow-man. This is the case with every sinner, as really and as certainly as though he were the only solitary mortal in existence. Wrath. Note, Rom 1:18. Day of wrath. The day when God shall show or execute his wrath against sinners. Comp. Rev 6:17, 1Thes 1:10, Jn 3:36, Eph 5:6. And revelation. Or the day when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed, or made known.

Here we learn,

(1.) that the punishment of the wicked will be just. It will not be a judgment of caprice or tyranny, but a righteous judgment; that is, such a judgment as it will be right to render, or as ought to be rendered, and THEREFORE such as God will render, for he will do right, 2Thes 1:6.

(2.) The punishment of the wicked is future. It is not exhausted in this life. It is treasured up for a future day, and that day is a day of wrath. How contrary to this text are the pretences of those who maintain that all punishment is executed in this life.

(3.) How foolish, as well as wicked, is it to lay up such a treasure for the future; to have the only inheritance in the eternal world, an inheritance of wrath and woe! (o) "treasurest up" De 32:34 (p) "and revelation" Eccl 12:14

Provoking the wrath of God, Ro 2:5. The rise of this provocation is a hard and impenitent heart; and the ruin of sinners is their walking after such a heart, being led by it. To sin is to walk in the way of the heart; and when that is a hard and impenitent heart (contracted hardness by long custom, besides that which is natural), how desperate must the course needs be! The provocation is expressed by treasuring up wrath. Those that go on in a course of sin are treasuring up unto themselves wrath. A treasure denotes abundance. It is a treasure that will be spending to eternity, and yet never exhausted; and yet sinners are still adding to it as to a treasure. Every wilful sin adds to the score, and will inflame the reckoning; it brings a branch to their wrath, as some read that (Eze 8:17), they put the branch to their nose. A treasure denotes secrecy. The treasury or magazine of wrath is the heart of God himself, in which it lies hid, as treasures in some secret place sealed up; see De 32:34,Job 14:17. But withal it denotes reservation to some further occasion; as the treasures of the hail are reserved against the day of battle and war, Job 38:22,23. These treasures will be broken open like the fountains of the great deep, Ge 7:11. They are treasured up against the day of wrath, when they will be dispensed by the wholesale, poured out by full vials. Though the present day be a day of patience and forbearance towards sinners, yet there is a day of wrath coming--wrath, and nothing but wrath. Indeed, every day is to sinners a day of wrath, for God is angry with the wicked every day (Ps 7:11), but there is the great day of wrath coming, Re 6:17. And that day of wrath will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. The wrath of God is not like our wrath, a heat and passion; no, fury is not in him (Isa 27:4): but it is a righteous judgment, his will to punish sin, because he hates it as contrary to his nature. This righteous judgment of God is now many times concealed in the prosperity and success of sinners, but shortly it will be manifested before all the world, these seeming disorders set to rights, and the heavens shall declare his righteousness, Ps 50:6. Therefore judge nothing before the time.

7 to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for
glory and honor and immortality, eternal life:

Patient continuance. Who by perseverance in well doing, or in a good work. It means, that they who so continue or persevere in good works as to evince that they are disposed to obey the law of God. It does not mean those who perform one single act, but those who so live as to show that this is their character to obey God. It is the uniform doctrine of the Bible, that none will be saved but those who persevere in a life of holiness, Rev 5:10, Mt 10:22, Heb 10:38,39. No other conduct gives evidence of piety but that which continues in the ways of righteousness. Nor has God ever promised eternal life to men unless they so persevere in a life of holiness as to show that this is their character, their settled and firm rule of action. The words well doing here denote such conduct as shall be conformed to the law of God; not merely external conduct, but that which proceeds from a heart attached to God and his cause.

Seek for. This word properly denotes the act of endeavouring to find anything that is lost, Mt 18:12, Lk 2:48,49. But it also denotes the act when one earnestly strives, or desires to obtain anything; when he puts forth his efforts to accomplish it. Thus, Mt 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. Acts 16:10, 1Cor 10:24 Lk 13:24. In this place it denotes an earnest and intense desire to obtain eternal life. It does not mean simply the desire of a sinner to be happy, or the efforts of those who are not willing to forsake their sins and yield to God, but the intense effort of those who are willing to forsake all their crimes, and submit to God and obey his laws.

8 but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth,
but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Seek for. This word properly denotes the act of endeavouring to find anything that is lost, Mt 18:12, Lk 2:48,49. But it also denotes the act when one earnestly strives, or desires to obtain anything; when he puts forth his efforts to accomplish it. Thus, Mt 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. Acts 16:10, 1Cor 10:24 Lk 13:24. In this place it denotes an earnest and intense desire to obtain eternal life. It does not mean simply the desire of a sinner to be happy, or the efforts of those who are not willing to forsake their sins and yield to God, but the intense effort of those who are

willing to forsake all their crimes, and submit to God and obey his laws.

The truth here means all the correct representations which had been made of God, and his perfections, and law, and claims, whether by the light of nature or by revelation. The description thus included Gentiles and Jews; but particularly the latter, as they had been more signally favoured with the light of truth. It had been an eminent characteristic of the Jews that they had refused to obey the commands of the true God, Josh 5:6, Jud 2:2, 6:10, 2Kgs 18:12, Jer 3:13,25, 42:21, 43:4,7, 9:13

But obey unrighteousness. The expression means that they yielded themselves to iniquity, and thus became the servants of sin, Rom 6:13,16,17,19. Iniquity thus may be said to reign over men, as they follow the dictates of evil, make no resistance to it, and implicitly obey all its hard requirements.

Indignation and wrath. That is, these shall be rendered to those who are contentious, etc. The difference between indignation and wrath, says Ammonius, is that the former is of short duration, but the latter is a long-continued remembrance of evil. The one is temporary, the other denotes continued expressions of hatred of evil. Eustathius says, that the word indignation denotes the internal emotion, but wrath the external manifestation of indignation. Tholuck. Both words refer to the opposition which God will cherish and express against sin in the world of punishment.

In dispensing his frowns (Ro 2:8,9). Observe,

[1.] The objects of his frowns. In general those that do evil, more particularly described to be such as are contentious and do not obey the truth. Contentious against God. Every wilful sin is a quarrel with God, it is striving with our Maker (Isa 45:9), the most desperate contention. The Spirit of God strives with sinners (Ge 6:3), and impenitent sinners strive against the Spirit, rebel against the light (Job 24:13), hold fast deceit, strive to retain that sin which

the Spirit strives to part them from. Contentious, and do not obey the truth. The truths of religion are not only to be known, but to be obeyed; they are directing, ruling, commanding; truths relating to practice. Disobedience to the truth is interpreted a striving against it. But obey unrighteousness--do what unrighteousness bids them do. Those that refuse to be the servants of truth will soon be the slaves of unrighteousness.

[2.] The products or instances of these frowns: Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. These are the wages of sin. Indignation and wrath the causes--tribulation and anguish the necessary and unavoidable effects. And this upon the soul; souls are the vessels of that wrath, the subjects of that tribulation and anguish. Sin qualifies the soul for this wrath. The soul is that in or of man which is alone immediately capable of this indignation, and the impressions or effects of anguish therefrom. Hell is eternal tribulation and anguish, the product of wrath and indignation. This comes of contending with God, of setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa 27:4. Those that will not bow to his golden sceptre will certainly be broken by his iron rod. Thus will God render to every man according to his deeds.

9 tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil;
of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;
10 but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good;
to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

Shall also perish. απολουνται. The Greek word used here occurs frequently in the New Testament. It means, to destroy, to lose, or to corrupt; and is applied to life, (Mt 10:39) to a reward of labour, (Mt 10:42) to wisdom, (1Cor 1:19) to bottles, Mt 9:17. It is also used to denote future punishment, or the destruction of soul and body in hell, (Mt 10:28, 18:14, Jn 3:15,) where it is opposed to eternal life, and therefore denotes eternal death. Rom 14:15, Jn 17:12. In this sense the word is evidently used in this verse. The connexion demands that the reference should be to a future judgment to be passed on the heathen. It will be remarked here, that the apostle does not say they shall be saved without law. He does not give even an intimation respecting their salvation. The strain of the argument, as well as this express declaration, shows

that they who had sinned--and in the first chapter he had proved that all the heathen were sinners--would be punished. If any of the heathen are saved, it will be, therefore, an exception to the general rule in regard to them. The apostles evidently believed that the great mass of them would be destroyed. On this ground they evinced such zeal to save them; on this ground the Lord Jesus commanded the gospel to be preached to them; and on this ground Christians are now engaged in the effort to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It may be added here, that all modern investigations have gone to confirm the position that the heathen are as degraded now as they were in the time of Paul.

Shall be judged by the law. This is an equitable and just rule; and to this the Jews could make no objection. Yet the admission of this would have led directly to the point to which Paul was conducting his argument, to show that they also were under condemnation, and needed a Saviour. It will be observed here, that the apostle uses a different expression in regard to the Jews from what he does of the Gentiles. He says of the former, that they "shall be judged;" of the latter, that they "shall perish."

Tribulation. This word commonly denotes affliction, or the situation of being pressed down by a burden, as of trials, calamities, etc.; and hence to be pressed down by punishment or pain inflicted for sins. As applied to future punishment, it denotes the pressure of the calamities that will come upon the soul as the just reward of sin. And anguish. στενοχωρια. This noun is used in but three other places in the New Testament, Rom 8:35, 2Cor 6:4, 12:10. The verb is used in 2Cor 4:8, 6:12. It means, literally narrowness of place, want of room; and then the anxiety and distress of mind which a man experiences who is pressed on every side by afflictions, and trials, and want, or by punishment, and who does not know where he may turn himself to find relief. Schleusner. It is thus expressive of the punishment of the wicked. It means that they shall be compressed with the manifestations of God's displeasure, so as to be in deep distress, and so as not to know where to find relief. These words, affliction and anguish, are often connected, Rom 8:35.

Upon every soul of man. Upon all men. In Hebrew the word soul often denotes the man himself. But still the apostle, by the use of this word here, meant perhaps to signify that the punishment should not be corporeal, but afflicting the soul. It should be a spiritual punishment, a punishment of mind.

Of the Jew first. Having stated the general principle of the Divine administration, he comes now to make the application. To the principle there could be no objection. And the apostle now shows that it was applicable to the Jew as well as the Greek, and to the Jew pre-eminently. It was applicable first, or in an eminent degree, to the Jew, because

(1) he had been peculiarly favoured with light and knowledge on all these subjects.

(2.) These principles were fully stated in his own law, and were in strict accordance with all the teaching of the prophets. Rom 2:6. Also Ps 7:11, 9:17, 139:19, Prov 14:32. Of the Gentile. That is, of all who were not Jews. On what principles God will inflict punishment on them, he states in Rom 2:12-16. It is clear that this refers to the future punishment of the wicked, for

(a) it stands in contrast with the eternal life of those who seek for glory, (Rom 2:7). If this description of the effect of sin refers to this life, then the effects spoken of in relation to the righteous refer to this life also. But in no place in the Scriptures is it said that men experience all the blessings of eternal life in this world; and the very supposition is absurd.

(b.) It is not true that there is a just and complete retribution to every man, according to his deeds, in this life. Many of the wicked are prospered in life, and "there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm," Ps 73:4. Many of the righteous pine in poverty and want and affliction, and die in the flames of persecution. Nothing is more clear than [that] there is not, in this

life, a full and equitable distribution of rewards and punishments; and as the proposition of the apostle here is, that God WILL render to every man ACCORDING to his deeds, (Rom 2:6) it follows that this must be accomplished in another world.

(c.) The Scriptures uniformly affirm, that for the very things specified here, God will consign men to eternal death. 2Thes 1:8, "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that OBEY NOT the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction," etc. 1Pet 4:17. We may remark, also, that there could be no more alarming description of future suffering than is specified in this passage. It is indignation; it is wrath; it is tribulation; it is anguish which the sinner is to endure for ever. Truly men exposed to this awful doom should be alarmed, and should give diligence to escape from the woe which is to come!

11 for there is no respect of persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

The word when (οταν) does not imply that the thing shall certainly take place, but is one form of introducing a supposition, or of stating the connexion of one thing with another; Mt 5:11, 6:2,5,6,16, 10:19. It is, however, true that the main things contained in this verse, and the next, actually occurred, that the Gentiles did many things which the law of God required.

13 (for not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

Though not revealed to them as to the Jews, yet they had obtained the knowledge of them by the light of nature, The word hearts here denotes the mind itself, as it does also frequently in the sacred Scriptures; not the heart, as the seat of the affections. It does not mean that they loved or even approved of the law, but that they had knowledge of it; and that knowledge was deeply engraven on

their minds. Their conscience. This word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the morality or immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. It has usually been termed the moral sense, and is a very important principle in a moral government. Its design is to answer the purposes of an ever-attendant witness of a man's conduct; to compel him to pronounce on his own doings, and thus to excite him to virtuous deeds, to give comfort and peace when he does right, to deter from evil actions by making him, whether he will or no, his own executioner. See Jn 8:9, Acts 23:1, 24:16, Rom 9:1, 1Timm 1:5. By nature every man thus approves or condemns his own acts; and there is not a profounder principle of the Divine administration, than thus compelling every man to pronounce on the moral character of his own conduct. Conscience may be enlightened or unenlightened; and its use may be greatly perverted by false opinions. Its province is not to communicate any new truth, it is simply to express judgment, and to impart pleasure or inflict pain for a man's own good or evil conduct. The apostle's argument does not require him to say that conscience revealed any truth, or any knowledge of duty, to the Gentiles, but that its actual exercise proved that they had a knowledge of the law of God. Thus it was a witness simply of that fact.

And their thoughts. The word thoughts (λογισμων) means, properly, reasonings, or opinions, sentiments, etc. Its meaning here may be expressed by the word reflections. Their reflections on their own conduct would be attended with pain or pleasure. It differs from conscience, inasmuch as the decisions of conscience are instantaneous, and without any process of reasoning. This supposes subsequent reflection, and it means that such reflections would only deepen and confirm the decisions of conscience.

15 which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their
conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean
while accusing or else excusing one another;)
16 in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus
Christ according to my gospel.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

A Jew: the name derived from the patriarch Judah, at first given to one belonging to the tribe of Judah or to the separate kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 16:6; 25:25; Jer. 32:12; 38:19; 40:11; 41:3), in contradistinction from those belonging to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were called Israelites.

During the Captivity, and after the Restoration, the name, however, was extended to all the Hebrew nation without distinction (Esther 3:6, 10; Dan. 3:8, 12; Ezra 4:12; 5:1, 5).

Originally this people were called Hebrews (Gen. 39:14; 40:15; Ex. 2:7; 3:18; 5:3; 1 Sam 4:6, 9, etc.), but after the Exile this name fell into disuse. But Paul was styled a Hebrew (2 Cor 11:22; Phil. 3:5).

There are three names used in the New Testament to designate this people, (1.) Jews, as regards their nationality, to distinguish them from Gentiles. (2.) Hebrews, with regard to their language and education, to distinguish them from Hellenists, i.e., Jews who spoke the Greek language. (3.) Israelites, as respects their sacred privileges as the chosen people of God. "To other races we owe the splendid inheritance of modern civilization and secular culture; but the religious education of mankind has been the gift of the Jew alone." It is clear that they regarded it as a name of honour, and valued themselves much on it. See Gal 2:15, Rev 2:9.

Makest thy boast of God. Thou dost boast, or glory, that thou hast the knowledge of the true God, while other nations are in darkness. On this account the Jew felt himself far elevated above all other people, and despised them. It was true that they only had the true knowledge of God, and that he had declared himself to be their God, (De 4:7; Ps 147:19,20;) but this was not a ground for boasting, but for gratitude. This passage know us that it is much more common to boast of privileges than to be thankful for them,

and that it is no evidence of piety for a man to boast of his knowledge of God. A humble, ardent thankfulness that we have that knowledge--a thankfulness which leads us not to despise others, but to desire that they may have the same privilege--is an evidence of piety.

18 and knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are
more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
19 and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a
light of them which are in darkness,

Of the foolish. The word foolish is used in the Scriptures in two significations--to denote those who are void of understanding, and to denote the wicked. Here it is clearly used in the former sense, signifying that the Jew esteemed himself qualified to instruct those without knowledge. Of babes. This is the literal meaning of the original word. The expression is figurative, and denotes those who were as ignorant as children--an expression which they would be likely to apply to all the Gentiles. It is evident that the character here given by Paul to the Jews is one which they claimed, and of which they were proud. They are often mentioned arrogating this prerogative to themselves, as being qualified to be guides and teachers of others, Mt 14:14, 23:2,16,24. It will be remembered, also, that the Jews considered themselves to be qualified to teach all the world, and hence evinced great zeal to make proselytes. And it is not improbable (Tholuck) that their rabbies were accustomed to give the names "foolish" and "babes" to the ignorant proselytes which they had made from the heathen.

Which hast the form of knowledge. The word here translated "form" properly denotes a delineation or picturing of a thing. It is commonly used to denote also the appearance of any object; that which we see, without reference to its internal character; the external figure. It sometimes denotes the external appearance as distinguished from that which is internal; or a hypocritical profession of religion without its reality, 2Ti 3:6, "Having the form of godliness, but denying its power." It is sometimes used in a good, and sometimes in a bad sense. Here it denotes, that in their teaching they retained the semblance, sketch, or outline of the true doctrines of the Old Testament. They had in the Scriptures a

correct delineation of the truth. Truth is the representation of things as they are; and the doctrines which the Jews had in the Old Testament were a correct representation or delineation of the objects of knowledge. Comp. 2Ti 1:13.

20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the
form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not
thyself?
thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22 thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost
thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou
commit sacrilege?

Dost thou commit sacrilege? Sacrilege is the crime of violating or profaning sacred things; or of appropriating to common purposes what has been devoted to the service of religion. In this question, the apostle shows remarkable tact and skill, he could not accuse them of idolatry, for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, had never fallen into it. But then, though they had not the form, they might have the spirit of idolatry. That spirit consisted in withholding from the true God that which was his due, and bestowing the affections upon something else. This the Jews did by perverting from their proper use the offerings which were designed for his honour; by withholding that which he demanded of tithes and offerings; and by devoting to other uses that which was devoted to him, and which properly belonged to his service. That this was a common crime among them is apparent from Mal 1:8,12-14, 3:8,9. It is also evident, from the New Testament, that the temple was, in many ways, desecrated and profaned in the time of our Saviour. Mt 21:12, Mt 21:13.

23 thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the
law dishonorest thou God?

That they dishonoured God by their sin, Ro 2:23,24. While God and his law were an honour to them, which they boasted of and prided themselves in, they were a dishonour to God and his law, by giving occasion to those that were without to reflect upon their religion, as if that did countenance and allow of such things, which, as it is their sin who draw such inferences (for the faults of professors are not to be laid upon professions), so it is their sin who

give occasion for those inferences, and will greatly aggravate their miscarriages. This was the condemnation in David's case, that he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, 2Sa 12:14. And the apostle here refers to the same charge against their forefathers: As it is written, Ro 2:24. He does not mention the place, because he wrote this to those that were instructed in the law (in labouring to convince, it is some advantage to deal with those that have knowledge and are acquainted with the scripture), but he seems to point at Isa 52:5,Eze 36:22,23,2Sa 12:14. It is a lamentation that those who were made to be to God for a name and for a praise should be to him a shame and dishonour. The great evil of the sins of professors is the dishonour done to God and religion by their profession. "Blasphemed through you; that is, you give the occasion for it, it is through your folly and carelessness. The reproaches you bring upon yourselves reflect upon your God, and religion is wounded through your sides." A good caution to professors to walk circumspectly. See 1Ti 6:1.

24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

The name of God. The name and character of the true God. Is blasphemed. Mt 9:3. That is, your conduct is such as to lead the heathen world to blaspheme and reproach both your religion and its Author. By your hypocrisy and crimes the pagan world is led to despise a religion which is observed to have no effect in purifying and restraining its professors; and of course the reproach will terminate on the Author of your religion--that is, the true God. A life of purity would tend to honour religion and its Author; a life of impurity does the reverse.

There is no doubt that this was actually the effect of the deportment of the Jews. They were scattered everywhere; everywhere they were corrupt and wicked; and everywhere they and their religion were despised. Among the Gentiles. In the midst of whom many Jews lived. Through you. By means of you, or as the result of your conduct. It may mean, that you Jews do it, or profane the name of God; but the connexion seems rather to require the former sense. As it is written. To what place the apostle has reference cannot be certainly determined. There are two passages in the Old Testament

which will bear on the case, and perhaps he had them both in his view, Isa 52:5, Eze 36:20,23. The meaning is not that the passages in the Old Testament, referred to by the phrase "as it is written," had any particular reference to the conduct of the Jews in the time of Paul, but that this had been the character of the people, and the effect of their conduct as a nation, instances of which had been before observed and recorded by the prophets. The same thing has occurred to a most melancholy extent in regard to professed Christian nations. For purposes of commerce, and science, and war, and traffic, men from nations nominally Christian have gone into almost every part of the heathen world. But they have not often been real Christians. They have been intent on gain; and have to a melancholy extent been profane, and unprincipled, and profligate men.

Yet the heathen have regarded them as Christians; as fair specimens of the effect of the religion of Christ. They have learned, therefore, to abuse the name of Christian, and the Author of the Christian religion, as encouraging and promoting profligacy of life. Hence one reason, among thousands, of the importance of Christian missions to the heathen. It is well to disabuse the pagan world of their erroneous opinions of the tendency of Christianity. It is well to teach them that we do not regard these men as Christians. As we have sent to them the worst part of our population, it is well to send them holy men, who shall exhibit to them the true nature of Christianity, and raise our character in their eyes as a Christian people. And were there no other result of Christian missions, it would be worth all the expense and toll attending them, to raise the national character in the view of the pagan world.

25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

For circumcision. Jn 7:22; Acts 7:8. This was the peculiar rite by which the relation to the covenant of Abraham was recognised; or by which the right to all the privileges of a member of the Jewish commonwealth was acknowledged. The Jews of course affixed a high importance to the rite.

26 Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the
law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?
27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the
law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost
transgress the law?
28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that*
circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
29 but he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that*
of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is*
not of men, but of God.

Whose praise, etc. Whose object is not to secure the praise of men. One of the main characteristics of the Jews in the time of Christ was, a desire to secure honour among men, as being exactly scrupulous in the performance of all the duties of their religion. They prided themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their regular conformity to the precepts of the law of Moses, Mt 3:9, 6:2,5, Lk 18:10-12, Mt 23:23. But of God. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart," 1Sam 16:7. The praise of God can be bestowed only on those who conform really, and not externally only, to his requirements. The remarks which are made here respecting the Jews, are also strictly applicable to professing Christians, and we may learn--

1. That the external rites of religion are of much less importance than the state of the heart.

2. That the only value of those rites is to promote holiness of heart and life.

3. That the mere fact that we are born of pious ancestors will not save us.

4. That the fact that we were dedicated to God in baptism will not save us.

5. That a mere profession of religion, whatever may it be our creed, will not save us.

6. That the estimate which men may put on our piety is not the proper measure of our true character and standing.

7. It is an inexpressible privilege to be in possession of the word of God, and to know our duty. It may, if improved, conduce to our elevation in holiness and happiness here, and to our eternal felicity hereafter.

8. It is also a fearful thing to neglect the privileges which we enjoy. We shall be judged according to the light which we have; and it will be an awful event to go to eternity from a Christian land unprepared.

9. Whatever may be the destiny of the heathen, it is our duty to make preparation to meet God. The most wicked of the heathen may meet a far milder doom than many who are eternally moral, or who profess religion in Christian lands. Instead, therefore, of speculating on what may be their destiny, it is the duty of every individual to be at peace himself with God, and to flee from the wrath to come.

Romans-3

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there*
of circumcision?
2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were
committed the oracles of God.

that unto them were committed the oracles of God, that is, the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses, which is called the lively oracles (Ac 7:38), and those types, promises, and prophecies, which relate to Christ and the gospel. The scriptures are the oracles of God: they are a divine revelation, they come from heaven, are of infallible truth, and of eternal consequence as oracles. The Septuagint call the Urim and Thummim the logia--the oracles. The scripture is our breast-plate

of judgment. We must have recourse to the law and to the testimony, as to an oracle. The gospel is called the oracles of God, Heb 5:12,1Pe 4:11. Now these oracles were committed to the Jews; the Old Testament was written in their language; Moses and the prophets were of their nation, lived among them, preached and wrote primarily to and for the Jews. They were committed to them as trustees for succeeding ages and churches. The Old Testament was deposited in their hands, to be carefully preserved pure and uncorrupt, and so transmitted down to posterity. The Jews were the Christians' library-keepers, were entrusted with that sacred treasure for their own use and benefit in the first place, and then for the advantage of the world; and, in preserving the letter of the scripture, they were very faithful to their trust, did not lose one iota or tittle, in which we are to acknowledge God's gracious care and providence. The Jews had the means of salvation, but they had not the monopoly of salvation. Now this he mentions with a chiefly, proton men gar--this was their prime and principal privilege. The enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of a people, is to be put in the imprimis of their advantages, De 4:8,33:3,Ps 147:20.

3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make
the faith of God without effect?

The meaning of the objection is, that the fact supposed, that the Jews would become unfaithful and be lost, would imply that God had failed to keep his promises to the nation; or that he had made promises which the result showed he was not able to perform.

What David said in his haste (Ps 116:11), that all men are liars, Paul here asserts deliberately. Lying is a limb of that old man which we every one of us come into the world clothed with. All men are fickle, and mutable, and given to change, vanity and a lie (Ps 62:9), altogether vanity, Ps 39:5. All men are liars, compared with God. It is very comfortable, when we find every man a liar (no faith in man), that God is faithful. When they speak vanity every one with his neighbour, it is very comfortable to think that the words of the Lord are pure words, Ps 12:2,6. For the further proof of this he quotes Ps 51:4, That thou mightest be justified, the design of which is to show, 1. That God does and will preserve his

own honour in the world, notwithstanding the sins of men. 2. That it is our duty, in all our conclusions concerning ourselves and others, to justify God and to assert and maintain his justice, truth, and goodness, however it goes. David lays a load upon himself in his confession, that he might justify God, and acquit him from any injustice.

4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as
it is written,
That thou mightest be justified in thy
sayings, and mightest overcome when thou
art judged.
5 But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of
God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh
vengeance? (I speak as a man)
6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?
7 For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie
unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?
8 and not *rather,* (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm
that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose
damnation is just.

It is no new thing for the best of God's people and ministers to be charged with holding and teaching such things as they do most detest and abhor; and it is not to be thought strange, when our Master himself was said to be in league with Beelzebub. Many have been reproached as if they had said that the contrary of which they maintain: it is an old artifice of Satan thus to cast dirt upon Christ's ministers, Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit--Lay slander thickly on, for some will be sure to stick. The best men and the best truths are subject to slander. Bishop Sanderson makes a further remark upon this, as we are slanderously reported--blasphemoumetha. Blasphemy in scripture usually signifies the highest degree of slander, speaking ill of God. The slander of a minister and his regular doctrine is a more than ordinary slander, it is a kind of blasphemy, not for his person's sake, but for his calling's sake and his work's sake, 1Th 5:13.

The doctrines which were thus misrepresented and abused were probably these: the apostles taught that the sins of men were the occasion of promoting God's glory in the plan of salvation. That "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom 5:20. That God, in the salvation of men, would be glorified just in proportion to the depth and pollution of the guilt which was forgiven. This was true; but how easy was it to misrepresent this as teaching that men ought to sin in order to promote God's glory! And instead of stating it as an inference which THEY drew from the doctrine, to state it as what the apostles actually taught. This is the common mode in which charges are brought against others. Men draw an inference themselves, or suppose that the doctrine leads to such an inference, and then charge it on others as what they actually hold and teach. There is one maxim which should never be departed from: that a man is not to be held responsible for the inferences which we may draw from his doctrine; and that he is never to be represented as holding and teaching that which WE suppose follows from his doctrine. He is answerable only for what he avows.

There Is None Righteous

9 What then? are we better *than they?* No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

(1.) An habitual defect of every thing that is good.

[1.] There is none righteous, none that has an honest good principle of virtue, or is governed by such a principle, none that retains any thing of that image of God, consisting in righteousness, wherein man was created; no, not one; implying that, if there had been but one, God would have found him out. When all the world was corrupt, God had his eye upon one righteous Noah. Even those who through grace are justified and sanctified were none of them righteous by nature. No

righteousness is born with us. The man after God's own heart owns himself conceived in sin.

[2.] There is none that understandeth, Ro 3:11. The fault lies in the corruption of the understanding; that is blinded, depraved, perverted. Religion and righteousness have so much reason on their side that if people had but any understanding they would be better and do better. But they do not understand. Sinners are fools.

[3.] None that seeketh after God, that is,none that has any regard to God, any desire after him. Those may justly be reckoned to have no understanding that do not seek after God. The carnal mind is so far from seeking after God that really it is enmity against him.

[4.] They are together become unprofitable, Ro 3:12. Those that have forsaken God soon grow good for nothing, useless burdens of the earth. Those that are in a state of sin are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun; for it follows,

[5.] There is none that doeth good; no, not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, Ec 7:23. Even in those actions of sinners that have some goodness in them there is a fundamental error in the principle and end; so that it may be said, There is none that doeth good. Malum oritur ex quolibet defectu--Every defect is the source of evil.

10 as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Under the government and dominion of sin: under it as under a tyrant and cruel task-master, enslaved to it;--under it as under a yoke;--under the power of it, sold to work wickedness. And this he had proved, proetiasametha. It is a law term: We have charged them with it, and have made good our charge; we have proved the indictment, we have convicted them by the notorious evidence of the fact. This charge and conviction he here further illustrates by several scriptures out of the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt depraved state of all

men, till grave restrain or change them; so that herein as in a glass we may all of us behold our natural face. The Ro 3:10-12,Ps 14:1-3 are taken from Ro 3:10-12,Ps 14:1-3, which are repeated as containing a very weighty truth, Ps 53:1-3,Ps 14:1-3.

11 there is none that understandeth, there is none that
seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way,
they are together become unprofitable;
there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

An habitual defection to every thing that is evil: They are all gone out of the way. No wonder that those miss the right way who do not seek after God, the highest end. God made man in the way, set him in right, but he hath forsaken it. The corruption of mankind is an apostasy.

2. That which is actual. And what good can be expected from such a degenerate race? He instances,

(a.) In their words (Ro 3:13,14), in three things particularly:--

[1.] Cruelty: Their throat is an open sepulchre, ready to swallow up the poor and innocent, waiting an opportunity to do mischief, like the old serpent seeking to devour, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer. And when they do not openly avow this cruelty, and vent it publicly, yet they are underhand intending mischief: the poison of asps is under their lips (Jam 3:8), the most venomous and incurable poison, with which they blast the good name of their neighbour by reproaches, and aim at his life by false witness. These passages are borrowed from Ps 5:9,140:3.

[2.] Cheating: With their tongues they have used deceit. Herein they show themselves the devil's children, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. They have used it: it intimates that they make a trade of lying; it is their constant practice, especially belying the ways and people of God.

[3.] Cursing: reflecting upon God, and blaspheming his holy name; wishing evil to their brethren: Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. This is mentioned as one of the great sins of the tongue, Jam 3:9. But those that thus love cursing shall have enough of it, Ps 109:17-19. How many, who are called Christians, do by these sin evince that they are still under the reign and dominion of sin, still in the condition that they were born in.

(b.) In their ways (Ro 3:15-17): Their feet are swift to shed blood; that is, they are very industrious to compass any cruel design, ready to lay hold of all such opportunities. Wherever they go, destruction and misery go along with them; these are their companions--destruction and misery to the people of God, to the country and neighbourhood where they live, to the land and nation, and to themselves at last. Besides the destruction and misery that are at the end of their ways (death is the end of these things), destruction and misery are in their ways; their sin is its own punishment: a man needs no more to make him miserable than to be a slave to his sins.--And the way of peace have they not known; that is, they know not how to preserve peace with others, nor how to obtain peace for themselves. They may talk of peace, such a peace as is in the devil's palace, while he keeps it, but they are strangers to all true peace; they know not the things that belong to their peace. These are quoted from Pr 1:16,Isa 59:7,8.

(c.) The root of all this we have: There is no fear of God before their eyes, Ro 3:18. The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in an awful and serious regard to the word and will of God as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end. Wicked people have not this before their eyes; that is, they do not steer by it; they are governed by other rules, aim at other ends. This is quoted from Ps 36:1. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. The fear of God is would lay a restraint upon our spirits, and keep them right, Ne 5:15. When once fear is cast off, prayer is restrained (Job 15:4), and then all goes to wreck and ruin quickly. So that we have here a short account of the general

depravity and corruption of mankind; and may say, O Adam! what hast thou done? God made man upright, but thus he hath sought out many inventions.

13 Their throat *is* an open sepulchre;
with their tongues they have used deceit;
the poison of asps *is* under their lips:
14 whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:
15 their feet *are* swift to shed blood:
16 destruction and misery *are* in their ways:
17 and the way of peace have they not known:
18 there is no fear of God before their eyes.
19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

The Jews boasted of their being under the law, and placed a great deal of confidence in it: "But," says he, "the law convicts and condemns you--you see it does." That every mouth may be stopped--that all boasting may be silenced. See the method that God takes both in justifying and condemning: he stops every mouth; those that are justified have their mouths stopped by a humble conviction; those that are condemned have their mouths stopped too, for they shall at last be convinced (Jude 1:15), and sent speechless to hell, Mt 22:12. All iniquity shall stop her mouth, Ps 107:42.

Guilty before God. The idea is that of subjection to punishment; but always because the man personally deserves it, and because being unable to vindicate himself, he ought to be punished. It is never used to denote simply an obligation to punishment, but with reference to the fact that the punishment is personally deserved. This word, rendered guilty, is not elsewhere used in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint. The argument of the apostle here shows, (1.) that in order to guilt, there must be a law, either that of nature or by revelation, Rom 1:1-3:31 and (2) that in order to guilt, there must be a violation of that law which may be charged on them as individuals, and for which they are to be held personally responsible.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified
in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Further to drive us off from expecting justification by the law, he ascribes this conviction to the law (Ro 3:20): For by the law is the knowledge of sin. That law which convicts and condemns us can never justify us. The law is the straight rule, that rectum which is index sui et obliqui--that which points out the right and the wrong; it is the proper use and intendment of the law to open our wound, and therefore not likely to be the remedy. That which is searching is not sanative. Those that would know sin must get the knowledge of the law in its strictness, extent, and spiritual nature. If we compare our own hearts and lives with the rule, we shall discover wherein we have turned aside. Paul makes this use of the law, Ro 7:9, Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Observe, (1.) No flesh shall be justified, no man, no corrupted man (Ge 6:3), for that he also is flesh, sinful and depraved; therefore not justified, because we are flesh. The corruption that remains in our nature will for ever obstruct any justification by our own works, which, coming from flesh, must needs taste of the cask, Job 14:4. (2.) Not justified in his sight. He does not deny that justification which was by the deeds of the law in the sight of the church: they were, in their church-estate, as embodied in a polity, a holy people, a nation of priests; but as the conscience stands in relation to God, in his sight, we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. The apostle refers to Ps 143:2.

Righteousness through Faith

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is
manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;
22 even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ
unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no
difference:

He argues from God's glory to prove that justification must be expected only by faith in Christ's righteousness. There is no justification by the works of the law. Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is there no hope? Is the wound become incurable because of transgression? No, blessed be God, it is not

(Ro 3:21,22); there is another way laid open for us, the righteousness of God without the law is manifested now under the gospel. Justification may be obtained without the keeping of Moses's law: and this is called the righteousness of God, righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting,--righteousness which he confers upon us; as the Christian armour is called the armour of God, Eph 6:11.

Now concerning this righteousness of God observe,

(1.) That it is manifested. The gospel-way of justification is a high-way, a plain way, it is laid open for us: the brazen serpent is lifted up upon the pole; we are not left to grope our way in the dark, but it is manifested to us.

(2.) It is without the law. Here he obviates the method of the judaizing Christians, who would needs join Christ and Moses together--owning Christ for the Messiah, and yet too fondly retaining the law, keeping up the ceremonies of it, and imposing it upon the Gentile converts: no, says he, it is without the law. The righteousness that Christ hath brought in is a complete righteousness.

(3.) Yet it is witnessed by the law and the prophets; that is, there were types, and prophecies, and promises, in the Old Testament, that pointed at this. The law is so far from justifying us that it directs us to another way of justification, points at Christ as our righteousness, to whom bear all the prophets witness. See Ac 10:43. This might recommend it to the Jews, who were so fond of the law and the prophets.

(4.) It is by the faith of Jesus Christ, that faith which hath Jesus Christ for its object--an anointed Saviour, so Jesus Christ signifies. Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour in all his three anointed offices, as prophet, priest, and king--trusting in him, accepting of him, and adhering to him, in all these. It is by this that we become

interested in that righteousness which God has ordained, and which Christ has brought in.

(5.) It is to all, and upon all, those that believe. In this expression he inculcates that which he had been often harping upon, that Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, stand upon the same level, and are alike welcome to God through Christ; for there is no difference. Or, it is eis pantas--to all, offered to all in general; the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves; but it is epi pantas tous pisteuontas, upon all that believe, not only tendered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe; they are, upon their believing, interested in it, and entitled to all the benefits and privileges of it.

23 for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in
Christ Jesus:

Observe here, 1. A glorious privilege vouchsafed to believers, which the scriptures call justification, whereby they are judicially acquitted and discharged from the guilt and punishment of all their sins, and accounted righteous before God.

Observe, 2. The efficient cause of our justification. It is God that justifies: Who can forgive the crime, but the person against whom we have done the wrong?

Observe, 3. The moving or impulsive cause, namely, the free grace of God: Being justified freely by his grace.

Observe, 4. The meritorious cause, the blood-shedding and death of Christ; through redemption that is in Jesus Christ.

Observe, 5. The final cause; to declare his righteousness, not his clemency and mercy only, but his justice and righteousness, especially that attribute which disposes and inclines him to punish sin and sinners.

Observe, 6. The instrumental cause of justification, faith: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood &c. Some of the papists, especially Cagetan and a Lapide, do call faith causa aplicans in our justification: Verily, an unapplied Christ justifies none, being saved, he must be justified, that is, discharged of, absolved from, the guilt of all sin, upon the account of a complete satisfaction given to divine justice for sin.

Learn, 2. That not all and every sinner, but only repenting and believing sinners are justified by God.

Learn, 3. That when the Lord justifies a believing sinner, he doth it freely; being justified freely by his grace. It is an act of mere grace; there is nothing in the creature that can merit or deserve it: then it would be debt, and not grace.

Learn, 4. That God's free grace and Christ's full satisfaction were consistent, and both concurring in the believer's justification; we are justified freely by God's grace; yet, though the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Him God having set forth to be a propitiation.

The word propitiation is an illusion to the mercy seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was; this typified Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight.

When therefore the apostle saith, that God hath set forth Christ to be a mercy seat to us, through faith in his blood; we have reason to believe the blood of Christ, as our sin offering, doth make an atonement for us, and renders God propitious to us.

Learn, 5. That Almighty God, in the justification of a believing sinner, is not only gracious and merciful, but just and righteous, in the most exalted degree: To declare his righteousness for the remission of sin.

Where note, That the design and end of God in exacting satisfaction from Christ, was to declare his righteousness in the

remission of sin; but the apostle would have us take notice, that our justification is an act of justice as well as mercy, and that God, as he is a just God, cannot condemn the believer, since Christ has satisfied for his sins.

Oh blessed be God! that pardon of sin is built upon that very attribute, the justice of God, which is so affrighting and dreadful to the offending sinner. This attribute, which seemed to be the main bar against remmission, is now become the very ground and reason why God remits.

Hence saith St. John, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins: Faithful with respect to his own promise, and just with respect to his Son's satisfaction.

Who then can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, when justice itself doth justify them?

Behold here the sweet harmony of the divine attributes in justifying and pardoning the believer! One attribute is not robbed to pay another; neither is one attribute raised upon the ruit of another; but justice and mercy both triumph. And well might the justice of God triumph, for never was it thus honoured before, to have such a person as the Son of God stand honoured before, to have such a person as the Son of God stand at its bar, and such a sum as the Son's blood paid down at once, by way of satisfaction, to its due demands.

Oh glorious and all wise contrivance! whereby God made sufficient provision for the reparation of his honour, for the vindication of his holiness, and for the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness, and for the present consolation, and eternal salvation of all repenting and believing sinners, to the end of the world.

25 whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

To be a propitiation--ιλαστηριον. This word occurs but in one other place in the New Testament: Heb 9:5, "And over it (the ark)

the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." It is used here to denote the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant. It was made of gold, and over it were the cherubim. In this sense it is often used by the LXX. Ex 25:17, "And thou shalt make a propitatory--ιλαστηριον, of gold," Ex 25:18-20,22 30:6 31:7 35:12 37:6-9-9 40:20 Le 16:2,13. The Hebrew name for this was capphoreth, from the verb caphar, to cover, or conceal. It was from this place that God was represented as speaking to the children of Israel: Ex 25:22, "And I will speak to thee front above the Ilasterion," the propitiatory, the mercy-seat; Lev 16:2, "For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy.seat." This seat, or cover, was covered with the smoke of the incense, when the high priest entered the most holy place, Lev 16:13. And the blood of the bullock offered on the great day of atonement was to be sprinkled "upon the mercy-seat," and "before the mercy-seat," "seven times," Lev 16:14,15. This sprinkling or offering of blood was called making "an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel," etc., Lev 16:16. It was from this mercy-seat that God pronounced pardon, or expressed himself as reconciled to his people. The atonement was made, the blood was sprinkled, and the reconciliation thus effected. The name was thus given to that cover of the ark, because it was the place from which God declared himself reconciled to his people. Still the inquiry is, why is this name given to Jesus Christ? In what sense is he declared to be a propitiation? It is evident that it cannot be applied to him in any literal sense. Between the golden cover of the ark of the covenant and the Lord Jesus the analogy must be very slight, if any such analogy can be perceived. We may observe, however,

(1.) that the main idea, in regard to the cover of the ark called the mercy-seat, was that of God's being reconciled to his people; and that this is the main idea in regard to the Lord Jesus, whom "God hath set forth."

(2.) This reconciliation was effected then by the sprinkling of blood on the mercy-seat, Lev 16:15,16. The same is true of the Lord Jesus --by blood.

(3.) In the former case it was [by] the blood of atonement; the offering of the bullock on the great day of atonement, that the reconciliation was effected, Lev 16:17,18. In the case of the Lord Jesus it was also by blood--by the blood of atonement. But it was by his own blood. This the apostle distinctly states in this verse.

(4.) In the former case there was a sacrifice, or expiatory offering; and so it is in reconciliation by the Lord Jesus. In the former, the mercy-seat was the visible, declared place where God would express his reconciliation with his people. So in the latter, the offering of the Lord Jesus is the manifest and open way by which God will be reconciled to men.

(5.) In the former, there was joined the idea of a sacrifice for sin, Lev 16:1. So in the latter. And hence the main idea of the apostle here is to convey the idea of a sacrifice for sin; or to set forth the Lord Jesus as such a sacrifice. Hence the word "propitiation" in the original may express the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice, as well as the cover to the ark. The word is an adjective, and may be joined to the noun sacrifice, as well as to denote the mercy-seat of the ark. This meaning accords also with its classic meaning to denote a propitiatory offering, or an offering to produce reconciliation. Christ is thus represented, not as a mercy-seat, which would be unintelligible; but as the medium, the offering, the expiation, by which reconciliation is produced between God and man.

The word propitiation is an illusion to the mercy seat, which covered the ark wherein the law was; this typified Christ, who fully covers our sins, the transgressions of the law, out of God's sight.

26 to declare, *I say,* at this time his righteousness: that he might
be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

That are past. That have been committed; or that have existed before. This has been commonly understood to refer to past generations, as affirming that sins under all dispensations of the world are to be forgiven in this manner, through the sacrifice of Christ. And it has been supposed that all who have been justified

have received pardon by the merits of the sacrifice of Christ. This may be true; but there is no reason to think that this is the idea in this passage, for

(1.) the scope of the passage does not require it. The argument is not to show how men had been justified, but how they might be. It is not to discuss an historical fact, but to state the way in which sin was to be forgiven under the gospel.

(2.) The language has no immediate or necessary reference to past generations. It evidently refers to the past lives of the individuals who are justified, and not to the sins of former times. All that the passage means, therefore, is, that the plan of pardon is such as completely to remove all the former sins of the life, not of all former generations. If it referred to the sins of former times, it would not be easy to avoid the doctrine of universal salvation.

Through the forbearance of God. Through his patience, his long-suffering. That is, he did not come forth in judgment when the sin was committed; he spared us, though deserving of punishment; and now he comes forth completely to pardon those sins concerning which he has so long and so graciously exercised forbearance. This expression obviously refers not to the remission of sins, but to the fact that they were committed while he evinced such long-suffering. Comp. Acts 17:30. I do not know better how to show the practical value and bearing of this important passage of Scripture, than by transcribing a part of the affecting experience of the poet Cowper. It is well known that before his conversion he was oppressed by a long and dreadful melancholy; that this was finally heightened to despair; and that he was then subjected to the kind treatment of Dr. Cotton in St. Alban's, as a melancholy case of derangement. His leading thought was, that he was doomed to inevitable destruction, and that there was no hope. From this he was roused only by the kindness of his brother, and by the promises of the gospel. (See Taylor's Life of Cowper.) The account of his conversion I shall now give in his own words. "The happy period,, which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear

discovery of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the third chapter of Romans, Whom God hath set forth, etc. Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beam of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made for my pardon and justification. In a moment I believed, and received the peace of the gospel. Unless the almighty Arm had been under me, I think I should have been overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving. I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace; but flew to it with an earnestness irresistible, and never to be satisfied."

It is for the glory of his justice and righteousness (Ro 3:25,26): Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, &c. Note,

[1.] Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice, typified by the hilasterion, or mercy-seat, under the law. He is our throne of grace, in and through whom atonement is made for sin, and our persons and performances are accepted of God, 1Jo 2:2. He is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it--our priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ as in his mercy-seat, reconciling the world unto himself.

[2.] God hath set him forth to be so. God, the party offended, makes the first overtures towards a reconciliation, appoints the days-man; proetheto--fore-ordained him to this, in the counsels of his love from eternity, appointed, anointed him to it, qualified him for it, and has exhibited him to a guilty world as their propitiation. See Mt 3:17,17:5.

[3.] That by faith in his blood we become interested in this propitiation. Christ is the propitiation; there is the healing plaster

provided. Faith is the applying of this plaster to the wounded soul. And this faith in the business of justification hath a special regard to the blood of Christ, as that which made the atonement; for such was the divine appointment that without blood there should be no remission, and no blood but his would do it effectually. Here may be an allusion to the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices under the law, as Ex 24:8. Faith is the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is the blood of sprinkling.

[4.] That all who by faith are interested in this propitiation have the remission of their sins that are past. It was for this that Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, in order to remission, to which the reprieves of his patience and forbearance were a very encouraging preface. Through the forbearance of God. Divine patience has kept us out of hell, that we might have space to repent, and get to heaven. Some refer the sins that are past to the sins of the Old-Testament saints, which were pardoned for the sake of the atonement which Christ in the fulness of time was to make, which looked backward as well as forward. Past through the forbearance of God. It is owing to the divine forbearance that we were not taken in the very act of sin. Several Greek copies make en te anoche tou Theou--through the forbearance of God, to begin Ro 3:26, and they denote two precious fruits of Christ's merit and God's grace:--Remission: dia ten paresin--for the remission; and reprieves: the forbearance of God. It is owing to the master's goodness and the dresser's mediation that barren trees are let alone in the vineyard; and in both God's righteousness is declared, in that without a mediator and a propitiation he would not only not pardon, but not so much as forbear, not spare a moment; it is owning to Christ that there is ever a sinner on this side hell.

[5.] That God does in all this declare his righteousness. This he insists upon with a great deal of emphasis: To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness. It is repeated, as that which has in it something surprising. He declares his righteousness, First, In the propitiation itself. Never was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of

Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son, he did not spare him, because he had made himself sin for us, 2Co 5:21. The iniquities of us all being laid upon him, though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, Isa 53:10. Secondly, In the pardon upon that propitiation; so it follows, by way of explication: That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Mercy and truth are so met together, righteousness and peace have so kissed each other, that it is now become not only an act of grace and mercy, but an act of righteousness, in God, to pardon the sins of penitent believers, having accepted the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to his justice for them. It would not comport with his justice to demand the debt of the principal when the surety has paid it and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See 1Jo 1:9. He is just, that is, faithful to his word.

That he might be just. This verse contains the substance of the gospel. The word "just" here does not mean benevolent, or merciful, though it may sometimes have that meaning, (Mt 1:19, also Jn 17:25) but it refers to the fact that God had retained the integrity of his character as a moral Governor; that he had shown a due regard to his law, and to the penalty of the law, by his plan of salvation. Should he forgive sinners without an atonement, justice would be sacrificed and abandoned. The law would cease to have any terrors for the guilty, and its penalty would be a nullity. In the plan of salvation, therefore, he has shown a regard to the law by appointing his Son to be a substitute in the place of sinners; not to endure its precise penalty, for his sufferings were not eternal, nor were they attended with remorse of conscience, or by despair, which are the proper penalty of the law; but he endured so much as to accomplish the same ends as if those who shall be saved by him had been doomed to eternal death. That is, he showed that the law could not be violated without introducing suffering; and that it could not be broken with impunity, he showed that he had so great a regard for it, that he would not pardon one sinner without an atonement. And thus he secured the proper honour to his character as a lover of his law, a hater of sin, and a just God. He has shown that if sinners do not avail themselves of the offer of

pardon by Jesus Christ, they must experience in their own souls for ever the pains which this substitute for sinners endured in behalf of men on the cross. Thus, no principle of justice has been abandoned; no threatening has been modified; no claim of his law has been let down; no disposition has been evinced to do injustice to the universe by suffering the guilty to escape. He is in all this great transaction, a just moral governor, as just to his law, to himself, to his Son, to the universe, when he pardons, as he is when he sends the incorrigible sinner down to hell. A full compensation, an equivalent, has been provided by the sufferings of the Saviour in the sinner's stead, and the sinner may be pardoned.

And the justifier of him, etc. Greek, Even justifying him that believeth, etc. This is the peculiarity and the wonder of the gospel, Even while pardoning, and treating the ill-deserving as if they were innocent, he can retain his pure and holy character. His treating the guilty with favour does not show that he loves guilt and pollution, for he has expressed his abhorrence of it in the atonement. His admitting them to friendship and heaven does not show that he approves their past conduct and character, for he showed how much he hated even their sins by giving his Son to a shameful death for them. When an executive pardons offenders, there is an abandonment of the principles of justice and law. The sentence is set aside; the threatenings of the law are departed from; and it is done without compensation. It is declared that, in certain cases, the law may be violated, and its penalty not be inflicted. But not so with God. He shows no less regard to his law in pardoning than in punishing. This is the grand, glorious, peculiar feature of the gospel plan of salvation.

27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works?
Nay; but by the law of faith.

It is for God's glory; for boasting is thus excluded, Ro 3:27. God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last in such a way as to exclude boasting, that no flesh may glory in his presence, 1Co 1:29-31. Now, if justification were by the works of the law, boasting would not be excluded. How should it? If we were saved by our own works, we might put the crown upon our own heads. But the law of faith, that

is, the way of justification by faith, doth for ever exclude boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne; therefore it is most for God's glory that thus we should be justified. Observe, He speaks of the law of faith. Believers are not left lawless: faith is a law, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth; and yet, because it acts in a strict and close dependence upon Jesus Christ, it excludes boasting.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without
the deeds of the law.
29 *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes,
of the Gentiles also:
30 seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by
faith, and uncircumcision through faith.
31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea,
we establish the law.

Romans-4

The Example of Abraham

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining
to the flesh, hath found?
2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory;
but not before God.

If he had been justified by works, room would have been left for boasting, which must for ever be excluded. If so, he hath whereof to glory (Ro 4:2), which is not to be allowed. "But," might the Jews say, "was not his name made great (Ge 12:2), and then might not he glory?" Yes, but not before God; he might deserve well of men, but he could never merit of God. Paul himself had whereof to glory before men, and we have him sometimes glorying in it, yet with humility; but nothing to glory in before God, 1Co 4:4,Php 3:8,9. So Abraham. Observe, He takes it for granted that man must not pretend to glory in any thing before God; no, not Abraham, as great and as good a man as he was; and therefore he fetches an argument from it: it

would be absurd for him that glorieth to glory in any but the Lord.

3 For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it
was counted unto him for righteousness.
4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace,
but of debt.
5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that
justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.
6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man,
unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,
7 *saying*,
Blessed *are* they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins
are covered.

It is quoted from Ps 32:1,2, where observe,

1 The nature of forgiveness. It is the remission of a debt or a crime; it is the covering of sin, as a filthy thing, as the nakedness and shame of the soul. God is said to cast sin behind his back, to hide his face from it, which, and the like expressions, imply that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered; justification does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin), but God's not laying it to our charge, as it follows here: it is God's not imputing sin (Ro 4:8), which makes it wholly a gracious act of God, not dealing with us in strict justice as we have deserved, not entering into judgment, not marking iniquities, all which being purely acts of grace, the acceptance and the reward cannot be expected as debts; and therefore Paul infers (Ro 4:6) that it is the imputing of righteousness without works. 2 The blessedness of it: Blessed are they. When it is said, Blessed are the undefiled in the way, blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, &c., the design is to show the characters of those that are blessed; but when it is said, Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, the design is to show what that blessedness is, and what the ground and foundation of it. Pardoned people are the only blessed people. The sentiments

of the world are, Those are happy that have a clear estate, and are out of debt to man; but the sentence of the word is, Those are happy that have their debts to God discharged. O how much therefore is it our interest to make it sure to ourselves that our sins are pardoned! For this is the foundation of all other benefits. So and so I will do for them; for I will be merciful, Heb 8:12.

8 Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

9 *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

Abraham is expressly said to be justified by faith fourteen years, some say twenty-five years, before he was circumcised. Now this the apostle takes notice of in answer to the question (Ro 4:9), Cometh this blessedness then on the circumcision only, or on the uncircumcision also? Abraham was pardoned and accepted in uncircumcision, a circumstance which, as it might silence the fears of the poor uncircumcised Gentiles, so it might lower the pride and conceitedness of the Jews, who gloried in their circumcision, as if they had the monopoly of all happiness. Here are two reasons why Abraham was justified by faith in uncircumcision:--

11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

The tenour of the covenants must first be settled before the seal can be annexed. Sealing supposes a previous bargain, which is confirmed and ratified by that ceremony. After Abraham's justification by faith had continued several years only a grant by parole, for the confirmation of Abraham's faith God was pleased to appoint a sealing ordinance, and Abraham received it; though it was a bloody ordinance, yet he submitted to it, and

even received it as a special favour, the sign of circumcision, &c. Now we may hence observe,

(1.) The nature of sacraments in general: they are signs and seals--signs to represent and instruct, seals to ratify and confirm. They are signs of absolute grace and favour; they are seals of the conditional promises; nay, they are mutual seals: God does in the sacraments seal to us to be to us a God, and we do therein seal to him to be to him a people.

(2.) The nature of circumcision in particular: it was the initiating sacrament of the Old Testament; and it is here said to be,

[1.] A sign--a sign of that original corruption which we are all born with, and which is cut off by spiritual circumcision,--a commemorating sign of God's covenant with Abraham,--a distinguishing sign between Jews and Gentiles,--a sign of admission into the visible church,--a sign prefiguring baptism, which comes in the room of circumcision, now under the gospel, when (the blood of Christ being shed) all bloody ordinances are abolished; it was an outward and sensible sign of an inward and spiritual grace signified thereby.

[2.] A seal of the righteousness of the faith. In general, it was a seal of the covenant of grace, particularly of justification by faith--the covenant of grace, called the righteousness which is of faith (Ro 10:6), and it refers to an Old-Testament promise, De 30:12.

12 and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.

See here who are the genuine children and lawful successors of those that were the church's fathers: not those that sit in their chairs, and bear their names, but those that tread in their steps;

this is the line of succession, which holds, notwithstanding interruptions. It seems, then, those were most loud and forward to call Abraham father that had least title to the honours and privileges of his children. Thus those have most reason to call Christ Father, not that bear his name in being Christians in profession, but that tread in his steps.

The Promise Realized through Faith

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The former observation is levelled against those that confined justification to the circumcision, this against those that expected it by the law; now the promise was made to Abraham long before the law. Compare Ga 3:17,18.

To thy seed, which is Christ. Now Christ is the heir of the world, the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was so. And it refers to that promise (Ge 12:3), In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

14 For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

15 because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.

The law worketh wrath--wrath in us to God; it irritates and provokes that carnal mind which is enmity to God, as the damming up of a stream makes it swell--wrath in God against us. It works this, that is, it discovers it, or our breach of the law works it. Now it is certain that we can never expect the inheritance by a law that worketh wrath. How the law works wrath he shows very concisely in the latter part of the verse: Where no law is there is no transgression, an acknowledged maxim, which implies, Where there is a law there is transgression and that transgression is provoking, and so the law worketh wrath.

16 Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is

of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham;
who is the father of us all,

Why the promise was made to him by faith; for three reasons,

(1.) That it might be by grace, that grace might have the honour of it; by grace, and not by the law; by grace, and not of debt, nor of merit; that Grace, grace, might be cried to every stone, especially to the top-stone, in this building. Faith hath particular reference to grace granting, as grace hath reference to faith receiving.

(2.) That the promise might be sure. The first covenant, being a covenant of works, was not sure: but, through man's failure, the benefits designed by it were cut off; and therefore, the more effectually to ascertain and ensure the conveyance of the new covenant, there is another way found out, not by works (were it so, the promise would not be sure, because of the continual frailty and infirmity of the flesh), but by faith, which receives all from Christ, and acts in a continual dependence upon him, as the great trustee of our salvation, and in whose keeping it is safe. The covenant is therefore sure, because it is so well ordered in all things, 2Sa 23:5.

(3.) That it might be sure to all the seed. If it had been by the law, it had been limited to the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law (Ro 9:4); but therefore it was by faith that Gentiles as well as Jews might become interested in it, the spiritual as well as the natural seed of faithful Abraham.

17 (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)
before him whom he believed, *even* God, who quickeneth the
dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they
were:

18 who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the
father of many nations, according to that which was spoken,
So shall thy seed be.

It is God himself that faith fastens upon: other foundation can no man lay. Now observe what in God Abraham's faith had an eye to--to that, certainly, which would be most likely to confirm his faith concerning the things promised:--

1. God who quickeneth the dead. It was promised that he should be the father of many nations, when he and his wife were now as good as dead (Heb 11:11,12),

2. Who calleth things which are not as though they were; that is, creates all things by the word of his power, as in the beginning, Ge 1:3,2Co 4:6. The justification and salvation of sinners, the espousing of the Gentiles that had not been a people, were a gracious calling of things which are not as though they were, giving being to things that were not. It was fit that he who was to be the father of the faithful should have something more than ordinary in his faith--that in him faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened.

19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body
now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet
the deadness of Sarah's womb:
20 he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but
was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

How he believed. He here greatly magnifies the strength of Abraham's faith, in several expressions.

1. Against hope, he believed in hope, Ro 4:18. There was a hope against him, a natural hope. All the arguments of sense, and reason, and experience, which in such cases usually beget and support hope, were against him; no second causes smiled upon him, nor in the least favoured his hope. But, against all those inducements to the contrary, he believed; for he had a hope for him: He believed in hope, which arose, as his faith did, from the consideration of God's all-sufficiency. That he might become the father of many nations. Therefore God, by his almighty grace, enabled him thus to believe against hope,

that he might pass for a pattern of great and strong faith to all generations. It was fit that he who was to be the father of the faithful should have something more than ordinary in his faith--that in him faith should be set in its highest elevation, and so the endeavours of all succeeding believers be directed, raised, and quickened. Or this is mentioned as the matter of the promise that he believed; and he refers to Ge 15:5, So shall thy seed be, as the stars of heaven, so innumerable, so illustrious. This was that which he believed, when it was counted to him for righteousness, Ro 4:6. And it is observable that this particular instance of his faith was against hope, against the surmises and suggestions of his unbelief. He had just before been concluding hardly that he should go childless, that one born in his house was his heir (Ro 4:2,3); and this unbelief was a foil to his faith, and bespeaks it a believing against hope.

2. Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, Ro 4:19. Observe, His own body was now dead--become utterly unlikely to beget a child, though the new life and vigour that God gave him continued after Sarah was dead, witness his children by Keturah. When God intends some special blessing, some child of promise, for his people, he commonly puts a sentence of death upon the blessing itself, and upon all the ways that lead to it. Joseph must be enslaved and imprisoned before he be advanced. But Abraham did not consider this, ou katenoese--he did not dwell in his thoughts upon it. He said indeed, Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old? Ge 17:17. But that was the language of his admiration and his desire to be further satisfied, not of his doubting and distrust; his faith passed by that consideration, and thought of nothing but the faithfulness of the promise, with the contemplation whereof he was swallowed up, and this kept up his faith. Being not weak in faith, he considered not. It is mere weakness of faith that makes a man lie poring upon the difficulties and seeming impossibilities that lie in the way of a promise. Though it may seem to be the wisdom and policy of carnal reason, yet it is the weakness of faith, to look into the bottom of all the difficulties that arise against the promise.

3. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief (Ro 4:20), and he therefore staggered not because he considered not the frowns and discouragements of second causes; ou diekrithe--he disputed not; he did not hold any self-consultation about it, did not take time to consider whether he should close with it or no, did not hesitate nor stumble at it, but by a resolute and peremptory act of his soul, with a holy boldness, ventured all upon the promise. He took it not for a point that would admit of argument or debate, but presently determined it as a ruled case, did not at all hang in suspense about it: he staggered not through unbelief. Unbelief is at the bottom of all our staggerings at God's promises. It is not the promise that fails, but our faith that fails when we stagger.

4. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, enedynamothe--he was strengthened in faith, his faith got ground by exercise--crescit eundo. Though weak faith shall not be rejected, the bruised reed not broken, the smoking flax not quenched, yet strong faith shall be commended and honoured. The strength of his faith appeared in the victory it won over his fears. And hereby he gave glory to God; for, as unbelief dishonours God by making him a liar (1Jo 5:10), so faith honours God by setting to its seal that he is true, Joh 3:33. Abraham's faith gave God the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, goodness, and especially of his faithfulness, resting upon the word that he had spoken. Among men we say, "He that trusts another, gives him credit, and honours him by taking his word;" thus Abraham gave glory to God by trusting him. We never hear our Lord Jesus commending any thing so much as great faith (Mt 8:10,15:28): therefore God gives honour to faith, great faith, because faith, great faith, gives honour to God. 5. He was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform, plerophoretheis--was carried on with the greatest confidence and assurance; it is a metaphor taken from ships that come into the harbour with full sail. Abraham saw the storms of doubts, and fears, and temptations likely to rise against the promise, upon which many a one would have shrunk back, and lain by

for fairer days, and waited a smiling gale of sense and reason. But Abraham, having taken God for his pilot, and the promise for his card and compass, resolves to weather his point, and like a bold adventurer sets up all his sails, breaks through all the difficulties, regards neither winds nor clouds, but trusts to the strength of his bottom and the wisdom and faithfulness of his pilot, and bravely makes to the harbour, and comes home an unspeakable gainer. Such was his full persuasion, and it was built on the omnipotence of God: He was able. Our waverings rise mainly from our distrust of the divine power; and therefore to fix us it is requisite we believe not only that he is faithful, but that he is able, that hath promised. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, Ro 4:22. Because with such a confidence he ventured his all in the divine promise, God graciously accepted him, and not only answered, but out-did, his expectation. This way of glorifying God by a firm reliance on his bare promise was so very agreeable to God's design, and so very conducive to his honour, that he graciously accepted it as a righteousness, and justified him, though there was not that in the thing itself which could merit such an acceptance. This shows why faith is chosen to be the prime condition of our justification, because it is a grace that of all others gives glory to God.

21 and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;

Faith, now, is belief in God just so far as he has revealed his will to us.The main or leading leading truths that God had made known to us are, that he has given his Son to die; that he has raised him up; and that through him he is ready to pardon. To put confidence in these truths is to believe now. Doing this, we believe in the same God that Abraham did; we evince the same spirit; and thus show that we are the friends of the same God, and may be treated in the same manner.

Abraham believed the power of God in raising up an Isaac from the dead womb of Sarah; we are to believe the same power exerted in a higher instance, the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Isaac was in a figure (Heb 11:19); the resurrection of Christ was real. Now we are to believe on him that raised up Christ; not only believe his power, that he could do it, but depend upon his grace in raising up Christ as our surety; so he explains it, Ro 4:25, where we have a brief account of the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection, which are the two main hinges on which the door of salvation turns.

1. He was delivered for our offences. God the Father delivered him, he delivered up himself as a sacrifice for sin. He died indeed as a malefactor, because he died for sin; but it was not his own sin, but the sins of the people. He died to make atonement for our sins, to expiate our guilt, to satisfy divine justice.

2. He was raised again for our justification, for the perfecting and completing of our justification. By the merit of his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he took out our acquittance. When he was buried he lay a prisoner in execution for our debt, which as a surety he had undertaken to pay; on the third day an angel was sent to roll away the stone, and so to discharge the prisoner, which was the greatest assurance possible that divine justice was satisfied, the debt paid, or else he would never have released the prisoner: and therefore the apostle puts a special emphasis on Christ's resurrection; it is Christ that died, yea, rather that has risen again, Ro 8:34. So that upon the whole matter it is very evident that we are not justified by the merit of our own works, but by a fiducial obediential dependence upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness, as the condition on our part of our right to impunity and salvation, which was the truth that Paul in this and the foregoing chapter had been fixing as the great spring and foundation of all our comfort.

24 but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on
him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

In this one verse we have an abridgment of the whole gospel, the death and resurrection of Christ declared, and the benefit and advantages of both assigned. 1. For his death; he was delivered for our offences.

Here note, 1. The person delivered: He, that is, Christ Jesus the righteous; the Lord our righteousness.

Note, 2. The person delivering, not expressed, but necessarily implied and understood. Judas delivered him, the Jews delivered him, God the Father delivered him, and Christ himself delivered himself. All these did one and the same act, but not for one and the same end: Judas delivered him for gain, the Jews for envy, the Father delivered him out of love, and Christ delivered himself in great compassion to a lost world.

Note, 3. Unto what he was delivered, namely, Unto death, even the death of the cross. This in "God was an act of the highest justice, in Christ an act of wonderful obedience, in the Jews an act of the highest wickedness.

Note, 4. For whom, and for what he was delivered: for us and for our offenses: It notes the vicegerency of his sufferings, not barely for our goods the final cause, and for our sins as the meritorious cause; but for us, in our room, place and stead, dying under an imputation of guilt, and dying as the sacrificed beast for the expiation of that guilt: The original word here for offences signifies great falls, grievous offences, and heinous crimes.
This sacrificed lamb was delivered and died to expiate the guilt of guilt of great sins, and to make atonement for the greatest sinners.

Note, 5. It is here said, that Christ was delivered, rather than died for our offences, to lead us to the consideration of the first

cause of his suffering for us; namely, The determinate counsel of God, pursuant to which there concession or permission given to wicked instruments to shed his blood; his own Father delivering him up to death for our offences.

Learn hence, That our sins were not only the occasions, but the moving and impulsive cause of Christ's sufferings. He died as a sacrifice to atone an offended Deity: As the sacrifices of old were brought to the altar, and there slain, so Christ, substituting himself in our room and stead, was brought ot he altar of his cross, and there died as a victim or expiatory sacrifice for our sins. Thus, He was delivered for our offenses.

Observe, next, Our Lord's resurrection asserted, He was raised again; and its end assigned, for our justification. Christ as our surety was under the arrest of death; but having given satisfaction by his sufferings, our discharge was published to the world by his resurrection; As by dying in our stead, he bare the curse of the law; so by rising again as a common person, we receive our acquittal from the hand of a judge. His death was our payment, his resurrection our discharge; He was raised again for our justification.
Learn thence, That Christ's resurrection was the cause of our justification; not the meritorious cause, for that was his death and bloodshed; but the declarative and perfect cause of our justification.

His resurrection was a declaration of our justification, the justice of God thereby declaring itself satisfied, by its prisoner being released. His resurrection is also the perfective cause of our justification. The work of redemption wrought for us by his death, is perfected, and made effectual by his resurrection. This makes our redemption complete, which otherwise had been partial and imperfect; nay, none at all. 'Tis upon Christ, as raised, that our faith must be settled: Had he not been raised from the dead, faith in his death had had no foundation, for it

had been an unaccountable thing to believe in one that lay under he power of death.

25 who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

By the death of Christ an atonement is made for sin. If it be asked how his resurrection contributes to our acceptance with God, we may answer,

(1.) It rendered his work complete. His death would have been unavailing, his work would have been imperfect, if he had not been raised up from the dead. He submitted to death as a sacrifice, and it was needful that he should rise, and thus conquer death and subdue our enemies, that the work which he had undertaken might be complete.

(2.) His resurrection was a proof that his work was accepted by the Father. What he had done, in order that sinners might be saved, was approved. Our justification, therefore become sure, as it was for this that he had given himself up to death.

Romans-5

Results of Justification

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

It is sin that breeds the quarrel between us and God, creates not only a strangeness, but an enmity; the holy righteous God cannot in honour be at peace with a sinner while he continues under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. And such are the benignity and good-will of God to man that, immediately upon the removing of that obstacle, the peace is made. By faith we lay hold of God's arm and of his strength, and so are at peace, Isa 27:4,5. There is more in this peace than barely a cessation of enmity, there is friendship and loving-kindness, for God is either the worst enemy or the best friend. Abraham, being justified by faith, was called the friend of God (Jam 2:23), which

was his honour, but not his peculiar honour: Christ has called his disciples friends, Joh 15:13-15. And surely a man needs no more to make him happy than to have God his friend! But this is through our Lord Jesus Christ--through him as the great peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man, that blessed Day's-man that has laid his hand upon us both. Adam, in innocency, had peace with God immediately; there needed no such mediator. But to guilty sinful man it is a very dreadful thing to think of God out of Christ; for he is our peace, Eph 2:14, not only the maker, but the matter and maintainer, of our peace, Col 1:20.

The obstacles, on the part of God, to reconciliation, arising from his justice and law, been removed, and he is now willing to be at peace. The obstacles on the part of man, arising from his sin, his rebellion, and his conscious guilt, may be taken away, and he can now regard God as his friend.

The effect of this plan, when the sinner embraces it, is to produce peace in his own mind. He experiences peace; a peace which the world gives not, and which the world cannot take away, Php 4:7, 1Pet 1:8, Jn 16:22.

2 by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein
we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

This is a further privilege, not only peace, but grace, that is, this favour.

Observe, 1 The saints' happy state. It is a state of grace, God's loving-kindness to us and our conformity to God; he that hath God's love and God's likeness is in a state of grace. Now into this grace we have access prosagogen--an introduction, which implies that we were not born in this state; we are by nature children of wrath, and the carnal mind is enmity against God; but we are brought into it. We could not have got into it of ourselves, nor have conquered the difficulties in the way, but we have a manuduction, a leading by the hand,--are led into it as blind, or lame, or weak people are led,--are introduced as pardoned offenders,--are introduced by some favourite at court to kiss the king's hand, as

strangers, that are to have audience, are conducted. Prosagogen eschekamen--We have had access. He speaks of those that have been already brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. Paul, in his conversion, had this access; then he was made nigh. Barnabas introduced him to the apostles (Ac 9:27), and there were others that led him by the hand to Damascus (Ro 5:8), but it was Christ that introduced and led him by the hand into this grace. By whom we have access by faith. By Christ as the author and principal agent, by faith as the means of this access. Not by Christ in consideration of any merit or desert of ours, but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him and resignation of ourselves to him.

2. Their happy standing in this state: wherein we stand. Not only wherein we are, but wherein we stand, a posture that denotes our discharge from guilt; we stand in the judgment (Ps 1:5), not cast, as convicted criminals, but our dignity and honour secured, not thrown to the ground, as abjects. The phrase denotes also our progress; while we stand, we are going. We must not lie down, as if we had already attained, but stand as those that are pressing forward, stand as servants attending on Christ our master. The phrase denotes, further, our perseverance: we stand firmly and safely, upheld by the power of God; stand as soldiers stand, that keep their ground, not borne down by the power of the enemy. It denotes not only our admission to, but our confirmation in, the favour of God. It is not in the court of heaven as in earthly courts, where high places are slippery places: but we stand in a humble confidence of this very thing that he who has begun the good work will perform it, Php 1:6.

3 And not only *so,* but we glory in tribulations also; knowing
that tribulation worketh patience;
4 and patience, experience; and experience, hope:
5 and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is
shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given
unto us.

we glory in tribulations also, especially tribulations for righteousness' sake, which seemed the greatest objection against the saints' happiness, whereas really their happiness did not only

consist with, but take rise from, those tribulations. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer, Ac 5:41. This being the hardest point, he sets himself to show the grounds and reasons of it. How come we to glory in tribulations? Why, because tribulations, by a chain of causes, greatly befriend hope, which he shows in the method of its influence.

1. Tribulation worketh patience, not in and of itself, but the powerful grace of God working in and with the tribulation. It proves, and by proving improves, patience, as parts and gifts increase by exercise. It is not the efficient cause, but yields the occasion, as steel is hardened by the fire. See how God brings meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong. That which worketh patience is matter of joy; for patience does us more good than tribulations can do us hurt. Tribulation in itself worketh impatience; but, as it is sanctified to the saints, it worketh patience.

2. Patience experience, Ro 5:4. It works an experience of God, and the songs he gives in the night; the patient sufferers have the greatest experience of the divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works an experience of ourselves. It is by tribulation that we make an experiment of our own sincerity, and therefore such tribulations are called trials. It works, dokimen--an approbation, as he is approved that has passed the test. Thus Job's tribulation wrought patience, and that patience produced an approbation, that still he holds fast his integrity, Job 2:3.

3. Experience hope. He who, being thus tried, comes forth as gold, will thereby be encouraged to hope. This experiment, or approbation, is not so much the ground, as the evidence, of our hope, and a special friend to it. Experience of God is a prop to our hope; he that hath delivered doth and will. Experience of ourselves helps to evidence our sincerity.

4. This hope maketh not ashamed; that is, it is a hope that will not deceive us. Nothing confounds more than disappointment. Everlasting shame and confusion will be caused by the perishing

of the expectation of the wicked, but the hope of the righteous shall be gladness, Pr 10:28. See Ps 22:5,71:1. Or, It maketh not ashamed of our sufferings. Though we are counted as the offscouring of all things, and trodden under foot as the mire in the streets, yet, having hopes of glory, we are not ashamed of these sufferings. It is in a good cause, for a good Master, and in good hope; and therefore we are not ashamed. We will never think ourselves disparaged by sufferings that are likely to end so well. Because the love of God is shed abroad. This hope will not disappoint us, because it is sealed with the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of love. It is the gracious work of the blessed Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in the hearts of all the saints. The love of God, that is, the sense of God's love to us, drawing out love in us to him again. Or, The great effects of his love:

(1.) Special grace; and,

(2.) The pleasant gust or sense of it. It is shed abroad, as sweet ointment, perfuming the soul, as rain watering it and making it fruitful. The ground of all our comfort and holiness, and perseverance in both, is laid in the shedding abroad of the love of God in our hearts; it is this which constrains us, 2Co 5:14. Thus are we drawn and held by the bonds of love. Sense of God's love to us will make us not ashamed, either of our hope in him or our sufferings for him.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ
died for the ungodly.

We were without strength (Ro 5:6), in a sad condition; and, which is worse, altogether unable to help ourselves out of that condition--lost, and no visible way open for our recovery--our condition deplorable, and in a manner desperate; and, therefore our salvation is here said to come in due time. God's time to help and save is when those that are to be saved are without strength, that his own power and grace may be the more magnified, De 32:36. It is the manner of God to help at a dead lift,

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure
for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Greater love has no man.

(1.) One would hardly die for a righteous man, that is, an innocent man, one that is unjustly condemned; every body will pity such a one, but few will put such a value upon his life as either to hazard, or much less to deposit, their own in his stead.

(2.) It may be, one might perhaps be persuaded to die for a good man, that is, a useful man, who is more than barely a righteous man. Many that are good themselves yet do but little good to others; but those that are useful commonly get themselves well beloved, and meet with some that in a case of necessity would venture to be their antipsychoi--would engage life for life, would be their bail, body for body. Paul was, in this sense, a very good man, one that was very useful, and he met with some that for his life laid down their own necks, Ro 16:4. And yet observe how he qualifies this: it is but some that would do so, and it is a daring act if they do it, it must be some bold venturing soul; and, after all, it is but a peradventure.

(3.) But Christ died for sinners (Ro 5:8), neither righteous nor good; not only such as were useless, but such as were guilty and obnoxious; not only such as there would be no loss of should they perish, but such whose destruction would greatly redound to the glory of God's justice, being malefactors and criminals that ought to die. Some think he alludes to a common distinction the Jews had of their people into ndyqym--righteous, hsdym--merciful (compare Isa 17:1), and rssym--wicked. Now herein God commended his love, not only proved or evidenced his love (he might have done that at a cheaper rate), but magnified it and made it illustrious. This circumstance did greatly magnify and advance his love, not only put it past dispute, but rendered it the object of the greatest wonder and admiration: "Now my creatures shall see that I love them, I will give them such an instance of it as shall be without parallel." Commendeth his love, as merchants commend

their goods when they would put them off. This commending of his love was in order to the shedding abroad of his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. He evinces his love in the most winning, affecting, endearing way imaginable. While we were yet sinners, implying that we were not to be always sinners, there should be a change wrought; for he died to save us, not in our sins, but from our sins; but we were yet sinners when he died for us.

(4.) Nay, which is more, we were enemies (Ro 5:10), not only malefactors, but traitors and rebels, in arms against the government; the worst kind of malefactors and of all malefactors the most obnoxious. The carnal mind is not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself, Ro 8:7,Col 1:21. This enmity is a mutual enmity, God loathing the sinner, and the sinner loathing God, Zec 11:8. And that for such as these Christ should die is such a mystery, such a paradox, such an unprecedented instance of love, that it may well be our business to eternity to adore and wonder at it. This is a commendation of love indeed. Justly might he who had thus loved us make it one of the laws of his kingdom that we should love our enemies.

Justification and reconciliation are the first and primary fruit of the death of Christ: We are justified by his blood (Ro 5:9), reconciled by his death, Ro 5:10. Sin is pardoned, the sinner accepted as righteous, the quarrel taken up, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. This is done, that is, Christ has done all that was requisite on his part to be done in order hereunto, and, immediately upon our believing, we are actually put into a state of justification and reconciliation. Justified by his blood. Our justification is ascribed to the blood of Christ because without blood there is no remission Heb 9:22. The blood is the life, and that must go to make atonement. In all the propitiatory sacrifices, the sprinkling of the blood was of the essence of the sacrifice. It was the blood that made an atonement for the soul, Le 17:11.

We shall be saved from wrath, from hell and damnation. It is the wrath of God that is the fire of hell; the wrath to come, so it is called, 1Th 1:10. The final justification and absolution of believers at the great day, together with the fitting and preparing of them for it, are the salvation from wrath here spoken of; it is the perfecting of the work of grace.--Reconciled by his death, saved by his life. His life here spoken of is not to be understood of his life in the flesh, but his life in heaven, that life which ensued after his death. Compare Ro 14:9. He was dead, and is alive, Re 1:18. We are reconciled by Christ humbled, we are saved by Christ exalted. The dying Jesus laid the foundation, in satisfying for sin, and slaying the enmity, and so making us salvable; thus is the partition-wall broken down, atonement made, and the attainder reversed; but it is the living Jesus that perfects the work: he lives to make intercession, Heb 7:25. It is Christ, in his exaltation, that by his word and Spirit effectually calls, and changes, and reconciles us to God, is our Advocate with the Father, and so completes and consummates our salvation. Compare Ro 4:25,8:34. Christ dying was the testator, who bequeathed us the legacy; but Christ living is the executor, who pays it. Now the arguing is very strong. He that puts himself to the charge of purchasing our salvation will not decline the trouble of applying it.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall
be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the
death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved
by his life.

The sinner, in this state, regards God as his enemy. He trembles when he thinks of his law; fears his judgments; is alarmed when he thinks of hell. His bosom is a stranger to peace. This has been felt in all lands--alike under the thunders of the law of Sinai among the Jews, in the pagan world, and in lands where the gospel is preached. It is the effect of an alarmed and troubled conscience.

We are brought to an agreement; to a state of friendship and union. We became his friends, laid aside our opposition, and embraced him as our Friend and Portion. To effect this is the great design of

the plan of salvation, 2Cor 5:1-20, Col 1:21, Eph 2:16. It means that there were obstacles existing on both sides to a reconciliation; and that these have been removed by the death of Christ; and that a union has thus been effected. This has been done in removing the obstacles on the part of God--by maintaining the honour of his law; showing his hatred of sin; upholding his justice, and maintaining his truth, at the same time that he pardons. Rom 3:26. And, on the part of man, by removing his unwillingness to' be reconciled; by subduing, changing, and sanctifying his heart; by overcoming his hatred of God, and of his law; and bringing him into submission to the government of God. So that the Christian is, in fact, reconciled to God; he is his friend; he is pleased with his law, his character, and his plan of salvation. And all this has been accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as an offering in our place.

By his life. We were reconciled by his death. Death may include possibly his low, humble, and suffering condition. Death has the appearance of great feebleness; the death of Christ had the appearance of the defeat of his plans. His enemies triumphed and rejoiced over him on the cross, and in the tomb. Yet the effect of this feeble, low, and humiliating state was to reconcile us to God. If in this state--when humble, despised, dying, dead--he had power to accomplish so great a work as to reconcile us to God, how much more may we expect that he will be able to keep us now that he is a living, exalted, and triumphant Redeemer! If his fainting powers in dying were such as to reconcile us, how much more shall his full, vigorous powers, as an exalted Redeemer, be sufficient to keep and save us! This argument is but an expansion of what the Saviour himself said, Jn 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

11 And not only *so,* but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

To receive the atonement is, (1.) To give our consent to the atonement, approving of, and agreeing to, those methods which Infinite Wisdom has taken of saving a guilty world by the blood of a crucified Jesus, being willing and glad to be saved in a gospel way and upon gospel terms. (2.) To take the comfort of the atonement, which is the fountain and the foundation of our joy in

God. Now we joy in God, now we do indeed receive the atonement, kauchomenoi--glorying in it.

atonement was the ancient meaning of the English word atonement --AT ONE MENT--being at one, or reconciled.

The doctrine of original sin is not more difficult to be understood, than it is necessary to be known: the apostle here declares the manner how sin and death entered the world, namely, by the fall of Adam the first man: By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

Note, 1. An unhappy parent; namely, Adam: By him sin entered into the world.

2. An unhappy posterity; namely, the whole world, proceeding from and coming out of the loins of Adam, in whom all have sinned.

3. An unhappy portion; sin and death: Sin entered by Adam, and death entered by sin. This was the legacy which Adam left to all his posterity.

Now the sad and mournful truth which the scripture contains, is this: "That our first parent, by his transgression, hath entailed a miserable inheritance, an unhappy portion of sin and death upon all posterity." Adam's sin becomes ours.

1. By meritorious imputation: God treated with him not as a private person, but as caput gentis, as the root and parent of all mankind.

Hence a comparison is often made between the first and second Adam; the grace of the one, with the sin of the other: the life conveyed by the one, and the death transmitted by the other.

By Adam we were cast, by Christ we were cleared; cursed in Adam, crowned in Christ. Now this comparison would be wholly insignificant, if Adam had not been looked upon as the representative of us all.

2. The sin of Adam is derived to us by way of inhesion: We have received from him a depravity of nature, and evil disposition, a propension to all mischief, and aversion to all good.

The sin of Adam transmitted to us, doth not only cause guilt upon our persons, but filth upon our natures; not only lay a charge to us, but throws a stain upon us.

3. We make Adam's sin our own by imitation, by treading in the steps of his disobedience. Every sin we commit in defiance of the threatenings of God, is a justifying of Adam's rebellion against God; and accordingly, we die by our own folly, as well as by his fall; our destruction is of ourselves, by our actual rebellions; and we shall at the great day charge our sin and misery upon ourselves, not on God, but on Satan, not on instruments, not on our first parents.

Sin entered into the world. He was the first sinner of the race. The word sin here evidently means the violation of the law of God. He was the first sinner among men, and in consequence all others became sinners. The apostle does not here refer to Satan, the tempter, though he was the suggester of evil; for his design was to discuss the effect of the plan of salvation in meeting the sins and calamities of our race.

By one man, etc. By means of one man; by the crime of one man. His act was the occasion of the introduction of all sin into all the world. The apostle here refers to the well-known historical fact,

(Gen 3:6,7) without any explanation of the mode or cause of this. He adduced it as a fact that was well known; and evidently meant to speak of it not for the purpose of explaining the mode, or even of making this the leading or prominent topic in the discussion. His main design is not to speak of the manner of the introduction of sin, but to show that the work of Christ meets and removes well-known and extensive evils. His explanations, therefore, are chiefly confined to the work of Christ. He speaks of the introduction, the spread, and the effects of sin, not as having any theory to defend on that subject, not as designing to enter into a minute description of the case, but as it was manifest on the face of things, as it stood on the historical record, and as it was understood and admitted by mankind. Great perplexity has been introduced by forgetting the scope of the apostle's argument here, and by supposing that he was defending a peculiar theory on the subject of the introduction of sin; whereas nothing is more foreign to his design. He is showing how the plan of justification meets well-understood and acknowledged universal evils. Those evils he refers to just as they were seen, and admitted to exist. All men see them, and feel them, and practically understand them. The truth is, that the doctrine of the fall of man, and the prevalence of sin and death, do not belong peculiarly to Christianity, any more than the introduction and spread of disease does to the science of the healing art. Christianity did not introduce sin; nor is it responsible for it. The existence of sin and woe belongs to the race; appertains equally to all systems of religion, and is a part of the melancholy history of man, whether Christianity be true or false. The existence and extent of sin and death are not affected if the infidel could show that Christianity was an imposition. They would still remain. The Christian religion is just one mode of proposing a remedy for well-known and desolating evils; just as the science of medicine proposes a remedy for diseases which it did not introduce, and which could not be stayed in their desolations, or modified, if it could be shown that the whole science of healing was pretension and quackery. Keeping this design of the apostle in view, therefore, and remembering that he is not defending or stating a theory about the introduction of sin, but that he is explaining the way in which the work of Christ delivers from a deep-felt universal evil, we shall

find the explanation of this passage disencumbered of many of the difficulties with which it has been thought usually to be invested. By one man. By Adam. See Rom 5:14. It is true that sin was literally introduced by Eve, who was first in the transgression, Gen 3:6, 1Timm 2:14. But the apostle evidently is not explaining the precise mode in which sin was introduced, or making this his leading point. He therefore speaks of the introduction of sin in a popular sense, as it was generally understood. The following reasons may be suggested why the man is mentioned, rather than the woman, as the cause of the introduction of sin.

(1.) It was the natural and usual way of expressing such an event. We say that man sinned, that man is redeemed, man dies, etc. We do not pause to indicate the sex in such expressions. So in this, he undoubtedly meant to say that it was introduced by the parentage of the human race.

(2.) The name Adam, in Scripture, was given to the created pair, the parents of the human family, a name designating their earthly origin. Gen 5:1,2, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called THEIR name Adam." The name Adam, therefore, used in this connexion, (Rom 5:14,) would suggest the united parentage of the human family.

(3.) In transactions where man and woman are mutually concerned, it is usual to speak of the man first, on account of his being constituted superior in rank and authority.

(4.) The comparison on the one side, in the apostle's argument, is of the man Christ Jesus; and to secure the fitness, the congruity (Stuart) of the comparison, he speaks of the man only in the previous transaction.

(5.) The sin of the woman was not complete in its effects without the concurrence of the man. It was their uniting in it which was the cause of the evil. Hence the man is especially mentioned as having

rendered the offence what it was; as having completed it, and entailed its curses on the race. From these remarks it is clear that the apostle does not refer to the man here from any idea that there was any particular covenant transaction with him, but that he means to speak of it in the usual, popular sense; referring to him as being the fountain of all the woes that sin has introduced into the world.

Adam and Christ

12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and
death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all
have sinned:

It is certain that death could not have reigned if sin had not set up the throne for him. This proves that sin was in the world before the law, and original sin, for death reigned over those that had not sinned any actual sin, that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, never sinned in their own persons as Adam did--which is to be understood of infants, that were never guilty of actual sin, and yet died, because Adam's sin was imputed to them. This reign of death seems especially to refer to those violent and extraordinary judgments which were long before Moses, as the deluge and the destruction of Sodom, which involved infants. It is a great proof of original sin that little children, who were never guilty of any actual transgression, are yet liable to very terrible diseases, casualties, and deaths, which could by no means be reconciled with the justice and righteousness of God if they were not chargeable with guilt.

13 (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed
when there is no law.
14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over
them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's
transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.
15 But not as the offense, so also *is* the free gift: for if through the
offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and

the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath
abounded unto many.
16 And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the
judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of
many offenses unto justification.
17 For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more
they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of
righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)
18 Therefore, as by the offense of one *judgment came* upon all men to
condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift*
came upon all men unto justification of life.

First, By the offence and disobedience of one many were made sinners, and judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

Here observe,

1. That Adam's sin was disobedience, disobedience to a plain and express command: and it was a command of trial. The thing he did was therefore evil because it was forbidden, and not otherwise; but this opened the door to other sins, though itself seemingly small.

2. That the malignity and poison of sin are very strong and spreading, else the guilt of Adam's sin would not have reached so far, nor have been so deep and long a stream. Who would think there should be so much evil in sin?

3. That by Adam's sin many are made sinners: many, that is, all his posterity; said to be many, in opposition to the one that offended, Made sinners, katestathesan. It denotes the making of us such by a judicial act: we were cast as sinners by due course of law. 4. That judgment is come to condemnation upon all those that by Adam's disobedience were made sinners. Being convicted, we are condemned. All the race of mankind lie under a sentence, like an attainder upon a family. There is judgment given and recorded against us in the court of heaven;

and, if the judgment be not reversed, we are likely to sink under it to eternity.

Secondly, In like manner, by the righteousness and obedience of one (and that one is Jesus Christ, the second Adam), are many made righteous, and so the free gift comes upon all. It is observable how the apostle inculcates this truth, and repeats it again and again, as a truth of very great consequence.

Here observe,

1 The nature of Christ's righteousness, how it is brought in; it is by his obedience. The disobedience of the first Adam ruined us, the obedience of the second Adam saves us,--his obedience to the law of mediation, which was that he should fulfil all righteousness, and then make his soul an offering for sin. By his obedience to this law he wrought out a righteousness for us, satisfied God's justice, and so made way for us into his favour.

2 The fruit of it.

(a.) There is a free gift come upon all men, that is, it is made and offered promiscuously to all. The salvation wrought is a common salvation; the proposals are general, the tender free; whoever will may come, and take of these waters of life. This free gift is to all believers, upon their believing, unto justification of life. It is not only a justification that frees from death, but that entitles to life.

(b.) Many shall be made righteous--many compared with one, or as many as belong to the election of grace, which, though but a few as they are scattered up and down in the world, yet will be a great many when they come all together. Katastathesontai--they shall be constituted righteous, as by letters patent. Now the antithesis between these two, our ruin by Adam and our recovery by Christ, is obvious enough.

Perhaps there could not be found a more striking declaration anywhere, that the work of Christ had an original applicability to all men; or that it is, in its own nature, fitted to save all. The course of argument here leads inevitably to this; nor is it possible to avoid it without doing violence to the obvious and fair course of the discussion. It does not prove that all will in fact be saved, but that the plan is fitted to meet all the evils of the fall. A certain kind of medicine may have an original applicability to heal all persons under the same disease, and may be abundant and certain, and yet in fact be applied to few. The sun is fitted to give light to all, yet many may be blind, or may voluntarily close their eyes. Water is adapted to the wants of all men, and the supply may be ample for the human family, yet in fact, from various causes, many may be deprived of it. So of the provisions of the plan of redemption. They are adapted to all; they are ample, and yet in fact, from causes which this is not the place to explain, the benefits, like those of medicine, water, science, etc., may never be enjoyed by all the race. Calvin concurs in this interpretation, and thus shows that it is one which commends itself even to the most strenuous advocates of the system which is called by his name. He says, "He [the apostle] makes the grace common to all, because it is offered to all, not because it is in fact applied to all. For although Christ suffered for the sins of THE WHOLE WORLD, (nam etsi passus est Christus pro peecatis totius mundi,) and it is offered to all without distinction, (indifferenter,) yet all do not embrace it." See Calvin's Comm. on this place.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so
by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.
20 Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound.
But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:
21 that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace
reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ
our Lord.

If there was so much power and efficacy, as it seems there was, in the sin of a man, who was of the earth, earthy, to condemn us, much more are there power and efficacy in the

righteousness and grace of Christ, who is the Lord from heaven, to justify and save us. The one man that saves us is Jesus Christ. Surely Adam could not propagate so strong a poison but Jesus Christ could propagate as strong an antidote, and much stronger.

It is but the guilt of one single offence of Adam's that is laid to our charge: The judgment was ex henos eis katakrima, by one, that is, by one offence, Ro 5:16,17, Margin. But from Jesus Christ we receive and derive an abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness. The stream of grace and righteousness is deeper and broader than the stream of guilt; for this righteousness does not only take away the guilt of that one offence, but of many other offences, even of all. God in Christ forgives all trespasses, Col 2:13.

By Adam's sin death reigned; but by Christ's righteousness there is not only a period put to the reign of death, but believers are preferred to reign of life, Ro 5:17. In and by the righteousness of Christ we have not only a charter of pardon, but a patent of honour, are not only freed from our chains, but, like Joseph, advanced to the second chariot, and made unto our God kings and priests--not only pardoned, but preferred. See this observed, Re 1:5,6,5:9,10. We are by Christ and his righteousness entitled to, and instated in, more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The plaster is wider than the wound, and more healing than the wound is killing.

Be made. The same Greek word as before--be appointed, or become. The apostle has explained the mode in which this is done, Rom 1:17; Rom 3:24-26, 4:1-5. That explanation is to limit the meaning here. No more are considered righteous than become so in that way. And as all do not become righteous thus, the passage cannot be adduced to prove the doctrine of universal salvation. The following remarks may express the

doctrines which are established by this much-contested and difficult passage.

(1.) Adam was created holy; capable of obeying law; yet free to fail.

(2.) A law was given him, adapted to his condition--simple, plain, easy to be obeyed, and fitted to give human nature a trial in circumstances as favourable as possible.

(3.) Its violation exposed him to the threatened penalty as he had understood it, and to all the collateral woes which it might carry in its train--involving, as subsequent developments showed, the loss of God's favour; his displeasure evinced in man's toil, and sweat, and sickness, and death; in hereditary depravity, and the curse, and the pains of hell for ever.

(4.) Adam was the head of the race; he was the fountain of being; and human nature was so far-tried in him, that it may be said he was on trial not for himself alone, but for his posterity, inasmuch as his fall would involve them in ruin. Many have chosen to call this a covenant, and to speak of him as a federal head; and if the above account is the idea involved in these terms, the explanation is not exceptionable. As the word covenant, however, is not applied in the transaction in the Bible, and as it is liable to be misunderstood, others prefer to speak of it as a law given to Adam, and as a divine constitution under which he was placed.

(5.) His posterity are, in consequence of his sin, subjected to the same train of ills as if they had been personally the transgressors. Not that they are regarded as personally ill-deserving, or criminal for his sin. God reckons things as they are, and not falsely, (see Rom 4:3, and his imputations are all according to truth. He regarded Adam as standing at the head of the race; and regards and treats all his posterity as coming into the world subject to pain, and death, and depravity, as a

consequence of his sin. See Note, at introduction to Romans chapter 6. This is the Scripture idea of imputation; and this is what has been commonly meant when it has been said that "the GUILT of his first sin"--not the sin itself--" is imputed to his posterity."

(6.) There is something antecedent to the moral action of his posterity, and growing out of the relation which they sustain to him, which makes it certain that they will sin as soon as they begin to act as moral agents. What this is, we may not be able to say; but we may be certain that it is not physical depravity, or any created essence of the soul, or anything which prevents the first act of sin from being voluntary. This hereditary tendency to sin has been usually called "original sin;" and this the apostle evidently teaches.

(7.) As an infant comes into the world with a certainty that he will sin as soon as he becomes a moral agent here, there is the same certainty that, if he were removed to eternity, he would sin there also, unless he were changed. There is, therefore, need of the blood of the atonement and of the agency of the Holy Ghost, that an infant may be saved.

(8.) The facts, here stated accord with all the analogy in the moral government of God. The drunkard secures as a result commonly, that his family will be reduced to beggary, want, and woe. A pirate, or a traitor, will whelm not himself only, but his family in ruin. Such is the great law or constitution on which society is now organized; and we are not to be surprised that the same principle occurred in the primary organization of human affairs.

(9.) As this is the fact everywhere, the analogy disarms all objections which have been made against the scriptural statements of the effects of the sin of Adam. If just now, it was just, then. If it exists now, it existed then.

(10.) The doctrine should be left, therefore, simply as it is in the Scriptures. It is there the simple statement of a fact, without any attempt at explanation. That fact accords with all that we see and feel. It is a great principle in the constitution of things, that the conduct of one man may pass over in its effects on others, and have an influence on their happiness. The simple fact in regard to Adam is, that he sinned; and that such is the organization of the great society of which he was the head and father, that his sin has secured as a certain result that all the race will be sinners also. How this is, the Bible has not explained. It is a part of a great system of things. That it is unjust no man can prove, for none can show that any sinner suffers more than he deserves. That it is wise is apparent, for it is attended with numberless blessings. It is connected with all the advantages that grow out of the social organization. The race might have been composed of independent individuals, where the conduct of an individual, good or evil, might have affected no one but himself. But then society would have been impossible. All the benefits of organization into families, and communities, and nations, would have been unknown. Man would have lived alone; wept alone; rejoiced alone; died alone. There would have been no sympathy; no compassion; no mutual aid. God has therefore grouped the race into separate communities. He has organized society. He has constituted families, tribes, clans, nations; and though on the general principle the conduct of one may whelm another in misery, yet the union, the grouping, the constitution, is the source of most of the blessings which man enjoys in this life, and may be of numberless mercies in regard to that which is to come. If it was the organization on which the race might be plunged into sin, it is also the organization on which it may be raised to life eternal. If, on the one hand, it may be abused to produce misery, it may, on the other, be improved to the advancement of peace, sympathy, friendship, prosperity, salvation. At all events, such is the organization in common life and in religion, and it becomes man not to murmur, but to act on it, and to endeavour, by the tender mercy of God, to turn it to his welfare here and hereafter. As by this organization, through Adam, he

has been plunged into sin, so by the same organization, he shall, through "the second Adam," rise to life, and ascend to the skies.

Romans-6

Dead to Sin but Alive in Christ

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

That are dead to sin. That is, all Christians. To be dead to a thing is a strong expression denoting that it has no influence over us. A man that is dead is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. He is insensible to sounds, and tastes, and pleasures; to the hum of business, to the voice of friendship, and to all the scenes of commerce, gaiety, and ambition. When it is said, therefore, that a Christian is dead to sin, the sense is, that it has lost its influence over him; he is not subject to it; he is in regard to that, as the man in the grave is to the busy scenes and cares of this life. The expression is not infrequent in the New Testament. Gal 2:19, "For I am dead to the law." Col 3:3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." 1Pet 2:24, "Who--bare our sins--that we, being dead to sin," etc. The apostle does not here attempt to prove that Christians are thus dead, nor to state in what way they become so. He assumes the fact without argument. All Christians are thus, in fact, dead to sin. They do not live to sin; nor has sin dominion over them. The expression used here by the apostle is common in all languages. We familiarly speak of a man's being dead to sensual pleasures, to ambition, etc., to denote that they have lost their influence over him.

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

The death of Christ was a lively representation of the death of sin; and believers are to imitate his death, in their dying daily unto sin. Did Christ die for us a painful, shameful, and accursed death? such a death must sin die in us.

Were baptized. The act of baptism denotes dedication to the service of him in whose name we are baptized. One of its designs is to dedicate or consecrate us to the service of Christ. Thus (1Cor 10:2) the Israelites are said to have been "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" i.e. they became consecrated, Or dedicated, or bound to him as their leader and lawgiver. In the place before us, the argument of the apostle is evidently draw from the supposition that we have been solemnly consecrated by baptism to the service of Christ; and that to sin is therefore a violation of the very nature of our Christian profession.

Were baptized into his death. We were baptized with special reference to his death. Our baptism had a strong resemblance to his death. By that he became insensible to the things of the world; by baptism we in like manner become dead to sin. Farther, we are baptized with particular reference to the design of his death, the great leading feature and purpose of his work. That was to expiate sin; to free men from its power; to make them pure. We have professed our devotion to the same cause; and have solemnly consecrated ourselves to the same design--to put a period to the dominion of iniquity. It was to show that by the solemn profession made at our baptism, we had become dead to sin, as Christ was dead to the living world around him when he was buried; and that as he was raised up to life, so we should also rise to a new life. A similar expression occurs in Col 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism," etc.

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Mortification, putting off the old man; several ways this is expressed.

(1.) We must live no longer in sin (Ro 6:2), we must not be as we have been nor do as we have done. The time past of our life must suffice, 1Pe 4:3. Though there are none that live without sin, yet, blessed be God, there are those that do not live in sin, do not live in it as their element, do not make a trade of it: this is to be sanctified.

(2.) The body of sin must be destroyed, Ro 6:6. The corruption that dwelleth in us is the body of sin, consisting of many parts and members, as a body. This is the root to which the axe must be laid. We must not only cease from the acts of sin (this may be done through the influence of outward restraints, or other inducements), but we must get the vicious habits and inclinations weakened and destroyed; not only cast away the idols of iniquity out of the heart.--That henceforth we should not serve sin. The actual transgression is certainly in a great measure prevented by the crucifying and killing of the original corruption. Destroy the body of sin, and then, though there should be Canaanites remaining in the land, yet the Israelites will not be slaves to them. It is the body of sin that sways the sceptre, wields the iron rod; destroy this, and the yoke is broken. The destruction of Eglon the tyrant is the deliverance of oppressed Israel from the Moabites.

(3.) We must be dead indeed unto sin, Ro 6:11. As the death of the oppressor is a release, so much more is the death of the oppressed, Job 3:17,18. Death brings a writ of ease to the weary. Thus must we be dead to sin, obey it, observe it, regard it, fulfil its will no more than he that is dead doth his quandam task-masters--be as indifference to the pleasures and delights of sin as a man that is dying is to his former diversions. He that is dead is separated from his former company, converse, business, enjoyments, employments, is not what he was, does not what he did, has not what he had. Death makes a mighty change; such a change doth sanctification make in the soul, it cuts off all correspondence with sin.

(4.) Sin must not reign in our mortal bodies that we should obey it, Ro 6:12. Though sin may remain as an outlaw, though it may oppress as a tyrant, yet let it not reign as a king. Let it not make laws, nor preside in councils, nor command the militia; let it not be uppermost in the soul, so that we should obey it. Though we may be sometimes overtaken and overcome by it, yet let us never be obedient to it in the lusts thereof; let not sinful lusts be a law to you, to which you would yield a consenting obedience. In the lusts thereof--en tais epithymiais autou. It refers to the body, not to sin. Sin lies very much in the gratifying of the body, and humouring that. And there is a reason implied in the phrase your mortal body; because it is a mortal body, and hastening apace to the dust, therefore let not sin reign in it. It was sin that made our bodies mortal, and therefore do not yield obedience to such an enemy.

(5.) We must not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness, Ro 6:13. The members of the body are made use of by the corrupt nature as tools, by which the wills of the flesh are fulfilled; but we must not consent to that abuse. The members of the body are fearfully and wonderfully made; it is a pity they should be the devil's tools of unrighteousness unto sin, instruments of the sinful actions, according to the sinful dispositions. Unrighteousness is unto sin; the sinful acts confirm and strengthen the sinful habits; one sin begets another; it is like the letting forth of water, therefore leave it before it be meddled with. The members of the body may perhaps, through the prevalency of temptation, be forced to be instruments of sin; but do not yield them to be so, do not consent to it. This is one branch of sanctification, the mortification of sin.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection:

Learn thence, That all baptized persons ought to labour for, and endeavour after, a conformity to the death of Christ, in their dying daily unto sin. As he died a painful and shameful death for us, such a death should sin die in us; living a dying life, and dying a lingering, but a certain death.

6 knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him,* that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

The death of Christ was a lively representation of the death of sin; and believers are to imitate his death, in their dying daily unto sin. Did Christ die for us a painful, shameful, and accursed death? such a death must sin die in us.

Our conformity to the death of Christ obliges us to die unto sin; thereby we know the fellowship of his sufferings, Php 3:10. Thus we are here said to be planted together in the likeness of is death (Ro 6:5), to homoiomati, not only a conformity, but a conformation, as the engrafted stock is planted together into the likeness of the shoot, of the nature of which it doth participate. Planting is in order to life and fruitfulness: we are planted in the vineyard in a likeness to Christ, which likeness we should evidence in sanctification. Our creed concerning Jesus Christ is, among other things, that he was crucified, dead, and buried; now baptism is a sacramental conformity to him in each of these, as the apostle here takes notice. First, Our old man is crucified with him, Ro 6:6. The death of the cross was a slow death; the body, after it was nailed to the cross, gave many a throe and many a struggle: but it was a sure death, long in expiring, but expired at last; such is the mortification of sin in believers. It was a cursed death, Ga 3:13. Sin dies as a malefactor, devoted to destruction; it is an accursed thing. Though it be a slow death, yet this must needs hasten it that it is an old man that is crucified; not in the prime of its strength, but decaying: that which waxeth old is ready to vanish away, Heb 8:13. Crucified with him--synestaurothe, not in respect of time, but in respect of causality. The crucifying of Christ for us has an influence upon the crucifying of sin in us. Secondly, We are dead with Christ, Ro 6:8. Christ was obedient to death: when he died, we might be said to die with him, as our dying to sin is an act of conformity both to the design and to the example of Christ's dying for sin. Baptism signifies and seals our union with Christ, our engrafting into Christ; so that we are dead with him, and engaged to have no more to do with sin than he had. Thirdly, We are buried with him by baptism, Ro 6:4. Our conformity is complete. We are

in profession quite cut off from all commerce and communion with sin, as those that are buried are quite cut off from all the world; not only not of the living, but no more among the living, have nothing more to do with them. Thus must we be, as Christ was, separate from sin and sinners. We are buried, namely, in profession and

obligation: we profess to be so, and we are bound to be so: it was our covenant and engagement in baptism; we are sealed to be the Lord's, therefore to be cut off from sin. Why this burying in baptism should so much as allude to any custom of dipping under water in baptism, any more than our baptismal crucifixion and death should have any such references, I confess I cannot see. It is plain that it is not the sign, but the thing signified, in baptism, that the apostle here calls being buried with Christ, and the expression of burying alludes to Christ's burial. As Christ was buried, that he might rise again to a new and more heavenly life, so we are in baptism buried, that is, cut off from the life of sin, that we may rise again to a new life of faith and love.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Our old man. This expression occurs also in Eph 4:22, "That ye put off .... the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Col 3:9, "Lie not to one another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." From these passages it is evident that Paul uses the expression to denote our sinful and corrupt nature; the passions and evil propensities that exist before the heart is renewed. It refers to the love of sin, the indulgence of sinful propensities, in opposition to the new disposition which exists after the soul is converted, and which is called "the new man."

Is crucified. Is put to death, as if on a cross. In this expression there is a personification of the corrupt propensities of our nature represented as "our old man," our native disposition, etc. The figure is here carried out; and this old man, this corrupt nature, is represented as having been put to death in an agonizing and torturing manner. The pains of crucifixion were perhaps the most torturing of any that the human frame could bear. Death in this manner was most lingering and distressing. And the apostle here,

by the expression "is crucified," doubtless refers to the painful and protracted struggle which every one goes through when his evil propensities are subdued; when his corrupt nature is slain; and when, a converted sinner, he gives himself up to God. Sin dies within him, and he becomes dead to the world, and to sin; "for as by the cross, death is most lingering and severe, so that corrupt nature is not subdued but by anguish." (Grotius.) All who have been born again can enter into this description. They remember "the wormwood and the gall." They remember the anguish of conviction; the struggle of corrupt passion for ascendency; the dying convulsions of sin in the heart; the long and lingering conflict before it was subdued, and the soul became submissive to God. Nothing will better express this than the lingering agony of crucifixion; and the argument of the apostle is, that as sin has produced such an effect, and as the Christian is now free from its embrace and its power, he will live to God.

That the body of sin. This expression doubtless means the same as that which he had just used, "our old men" But why the term body is used, has been a subject in which interpreters have not been agreed. Some say that [it] is a Hebraism, denoting mere intensity or emphasis. Some, that it means the same as flesh; i.e., denoting our sinful propensities and lusts. Grotius thinks that the term "body" is elegantly attributed to sin, because the body of man is made up of many members joined together compactly, and sin also consists of numerous vices and evil propensities joined compactly, as it were, in one body. But the expression is evidently merely another form of conveying the idea contained in the phrase "our old man"--a personification of sin as if it had a living form, and as if it had been put to death on a cross. It refers to the moral destruction of the power of sin in the heart by the gospel, and not to any physical change in the nature or faculties of the soul. Comp. Col 2:11.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also
live with him:

By the body of sin, we are to understand the whole stock and mass of corruption, compacted as it were into one monstrous body,

prepared with all its members to commit actual sins. Called a body, because composed of many sinful passions and lusts, as the body is of many members, and also because they are executed by the body.

And farther, because sin has a real a substance in us, as if it were a body; not that sin is a substance, but the pravity of a substance. Now this body of sin must be destroyed, not as to actions only, but as to affections and inclinations also; 'tis not enough that we scratch this old man's face, but we must stab his heart in desire, in purpose, in endeavours: We must seek the death and destruction of all sin, That henceforth we may not serve sin; that is, that henceforward we should renounce the service of, and all relation to sin.

note, 1. That before regeneration, we are all servants of, yea, slaves to sin; so many lusts, so many lords reigning in us, and tyrannizing over us.

Note, 2. That it is one thing to sin, and another thing to serve sin: To serve sin, is to yield willing obedience, to indulge ourselves in any presumptuous act or course of sin. 'Tis not the presence, but prevalency of sin, that destroys and damns the sinner; 'tis not the flesh being in us, but our being in the flesh, that displeaseth God. Oh! happy for us, if sin's dominion be taken away, though its life be prolonged for a season.

9 knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

1. He argues from our sacramental conformity to Jesus Christ. Our baptism, with the design and intention of it, carried in it a great reason why we should die to sin, and live to righteousness. Thus we must improve our baptism as a bridle of restraint to keep us in from sin, as a spur of constraint to quicken us to duty. Observe this reasoning.

(a.) In general, we are dead to sin, that is, in profession and in obligation. Our baptism signifies our cutting off from the kingdom

of sin. We profess to have no more to do with sin. We are dead to sin by a participation of virtue and power for the killing of it, and by our union with Christ and interest in him, in and by whom it is killed. All this is in vain if we persist in sin; we contradict a profession, violate an obligation, return to that to which we were dead, like walking ghosts, than which nothing is more unbecoming and absurd. For (Ro 6:7) he that is dead is freed from sin; that is, he that is dead to it is freed from the rule and dominion of it, as the servant that is dead is freed from his master, Job 3:19. Now shall we be such fools as to return to that slavery from which we are discharged? When we are delivered out of Egypt, shall we talk of going back to it again?

(b.) In particular, being baptized into Jesus Christ, we were baptized into his death, Ro 6:3. We were baptized eis Christon--unto Christ, as 1Co 10:2, eis Mosen--unto Moses. Baptism binds us to Christ, it binds us apprentice to Christ as our teacher, it is our allegiance to Christ as our sovereign. Baptism is externa ansa Christi--the external handle of Christ, by which Christ lays hold on men, and men offer themselves to Christ. Particularly, we were baptized into his death, into a participation of the privileges purchased by his death, and into an obligation both to comply with the design of his death, which was to redeem us from all iniquity, and to conform to the pattern of his death, that, as Christ died for sin, so we should die to sin. This was the profession and promise of our baptism, and we do not do well if we do not answer this profession, and make good this promise.

1. He died for sin once, namely, to expiate the guilt of sin, and to make atonements for sinners; or else,

2. He died unto sin; that is, to destroy, conquer, and subdue sin in the hearts and lives of his children and people, by the aids and assistances of his Holy Spirit.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth,
he liveth unto God.

Vivification, or living to righteousness; and what is that?

(1.) It is to walk in newness of life, Ro 6:4. Newness of life supposes newness of heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life, and there is not way to make the stream sweet but by making the spring so. Walking, in scripture, is put for the course and tenour of the conversation, which must be new. Walk by new rules, towards new ends, from new principles. Make a new choice of the way. Choose new paths to walk in, new leaders to walk after, new companions to walk with. Old things should pass away, and all things become new. The man is what he was not, does what he did not.

(2.) It is to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Ro 6:11. To converse with God, to have a regard to him, a delight in him, a concern for him, the soul upon all occasions carried out towards him as towards an agreeable object, in which it takes a complacency: this is to be alive to God. The love of God reigning in the heart is the life of the soul towards God. Anima est ubi amat, non ubi animat--The soul is where it loves, rather than where it lives. It is to have the affections and desires alive towards God. Or, living (our live in the flesh) unto God, to his honour and glory as our end, by his word and will as our rule--in all our ways to acknowledge him, and to have our eyes ever towards him; this is to live unto God.--Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ is our spiritual life; there is no living to God but through him. He is the Mediator; there can be no comfortable receivings from God, nor acceptable regards to God, but in and through Jesus Christ; no intercourse between sinful souls and a holy God, but by the mediation of the Lord Jesus. Through Christ as the author and maintainer of this life; through Christ as the head from whom we receive vital influence; through Christ as the root by which we derive sap and nourishment, and so live. In living to God, Christ is all in all.

(3.) It is to yield ourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Ro 6:13. The very life and being of holiness lie in the

dedication of ourselves to the Lord, giving our own selves to the Lord, 2Co 8:5. "Yield yourselves to him, not only as the conquered yields to the conqueror, because he can stand it out no longer; but as the wife yields herself to her husband, to whom her desire is, as the scholar yields himself to the teacher, the apprentice to his master, to be taught and ruled by him. Not yield your estates to him, but yield yourselves; nothing less than your whole selves;" parastesate eautous--accommodate vos ipsos Deo--accommodate yourselves to God; so Tremellius, from the Syriac. "Not only submit to him, but comply with him; not only present yourselves to him once for all, but be always ready to serve him. Yield yourselves to him as wax to the seal, to take any impression, to be, and have, and do, what he pleases." When Paul said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? (Ac 9:6) he was then yielded to God. As those that are alive from the dead. To yield a dead carcase to a living God is not to please him, but to mock him: "Yield yourselves as those that are alive and good for something, a living sacrifice," Ro 12:1 The surest evidence of our spiritual life is the dedication of ourselves to God. It becomes those that are alive from the dead (it may be understood of a death in law), that are justified and delivered from death, to give themselves to him that hath so redeemed them.

(4.) It is to yield our members as instruments of righteousness to God. The members of our bodies, when withdrawn from the service of sin, are not to lie idle, but to be made use of in the service of God. When the strong man armed is dispossessed, let him whose right it is divide the spoils. Though the powers and faculties of the soul be the immediate subjects of holiness and righteousness, yet the members of the body are to be instruments; the body must be always ready to serve the soul in the service of God. Thus (Ro 6:19), "Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. Let them be under the conduct and at the command of the righteous law of God, and that principle of inherent righteousness which the Spirit, as sanctifier, plants in the soul." Righteousness unto holiness, which intimates growth, and progress, and ground obtained. As every sinful act confirms the sinful habit, and makes the nature more and more prone to sin (hence the members of a

natural man are here said to be servants to iniquity unto iniquity--one sin makes the heart more disposed for another), so every gracious act confirms the gracious habit: serving righteousness is unto holiness; one duty fits us for another; and the more we do the more we may do for God. Or serving righteousness, eis hagiasmon--as an evidence of sanctification

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,
but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we have two parts of our sanctification described, namely, mortification and vivification, dying unto sin, and living unto God.

1. Mortification, or dying unto sin, Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; that is, look upon the death of Christ, as a strong argument against the reign and power of sin; account yourselves dead unto sin.

Now deadness argues three things:

1. Disability. Such as are dead are disabled for working. Proportionable to the measure of our death unto sin, will be our disability to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin in a regenerate man is no more able to do all its will, than a crucified man is able to do what he will; He that is born of God cannot commit sin 1John 3:9; not as others do, and as himself formerly has done.

2. Deadness to sin argues disaffection towards sin, as well as disability: when we die to sin, our love to sin dieth.

3. Deadness argues liberty and unsubjection: he that is dead is freed from sin, as the woman by death is freed from her husband; and the Christian that is dead with Christ unto sin, stands fast in that liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free.

Observe, 2. The other part of our sanctification here declared: and that is, living unto God.

This likewise consists in three things:

1. In having our sensitive appetites in subjection, and under the subjection and dominion of reason; when we are governed like men, by reason and conscience, not like beasts, by sense and sensual inclination.

2. In having reason illuminated by faith, guided and directed by divine revelation.

And, 3. When this faith inclines and enables us to live unto God; when faith begets in us a resolution to obey God, and to persevere in our duty to him. This is to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God.

Observe lastly, Christians are said to be dead unto sin, and alive unto God, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Which phrase imports, that Christ is the root and principle of our spiritual life by faith in whom we are enabled to live unto God: as the scion ingrafted into the stock, lives by the juice and nourishment it receives from the stock; so Christians are alive unto God, in, by, and through Jesus Christ, receiving from him that virtue whereby their spiritual life is begun, carried on, and maintained, and shall in due time be perfected and completed.

From whence we learn, that Christ is not only an head of authority, but an head of influence, to his church and members; He strengthening them, they can do all things, but without him they can do nothing: that is, without an interest in him, and an influence of grace derived from him.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

The duty which the apostle exhorts the Christians to; and that is, to prevent the regency and dominion of sin: Let not reign in your mortal bodies.

But when is sin said to reign?

Answer, When the bent and tendency of the heart is toward sin, and all the faculties of the soul are on sin's side, and wholly take its part; when sin is not opposed, or but slightly opposed,; when sin is committed industriously, and temptations to sin prevail easily; when persons sin without any sense of sin, with small

remorse and check for sin; then sin is in its throne, and reigns imperiously.

But why doth the apostle say, Let not sin reign in your body, rather than in your soul?

Answer, Because sin and lusts do gratify the body exceedingly; that is, the sensual appetite, the brutish part of man: and further, because they are acted and executed by the body or outward man, called therefore the deeds of the body.

But why doth the apostle here call it a mortal body?

Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies.

Answer, 1. To put us in mind that the mortality of our bodies is the fruit and punishment of our sins; that sins having brought in death upon us, our bodies must die for sin.

2. To show the vanity and transitoriness of the delights and pleasures of sin, which do gratify a mortal body, which after all its pamperings, must perish.

3. The apostle may probably call it a mortal body, to show that our conflict with sin shall endure but a little while: ere long this mortal shall put on immortality. It may encourage to be violent in the conflict; ere long we shall be victorious in the conquest.

13 Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

As if the apostle had said, "Sin, which has such a kingly and commanding power, will be calling upon you to give up the members of your bodies, and the faculties of your souls, as instruments or weapons for its service: but yield not your consents thereto, turn a deaf ear to the voice of sin, and hearken to the call of God, who commands you to yield yoursleves unto him, and your members as instruments for his service." Here are two opposite masters, God and sin; the one a tyrant and usurper, the other a rightful lord and master. And here also are two opposite

employments: unrighteousness, by which is meant all sin, whereby we deal unrighteously with God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and righteousness, whereby we give to God, to others, and ourselves, their respective dues. Now the apostle calls loudly upon us to render unto God the things that are God's; to yield every member of the body to him, and employ it for him; for the members of the body were all created by him, and redeemed for him, and shall be glorified with him.

O let us then take heed of abusing any members of our body; let us not employ so much as a little finger or hair of our heads in the service of sin: for it is the Lord's: And let every one take heed of dishonouring God with his bodily members, lest he provoke God to deny him the comfortable use of the members of his body. When Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the prophet of God, he presently lost the use of his hand.

Oh! how suddenly can God wither an hand or arm, that is stretched out to do mischief? 'tis a righteous thing for God to smite an abused eye with blindness, an abused ear with deafness, an abused foot with lameness, a swearing or forwswearing tongue with paralytic deadness.

Lord, how justly mayest thou recal thy favours, when we fight against thee with them? Yielding the members of our bodies as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin!

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

He argues from the precious promises and privileges of the new covenant, Ro 6:14. It might be objected that we cannot conquer and subdue sin, it is unavoidably too hard for us: "No," says he, "you wrestle with an enemy that may be dealt with and subdued, if you will but keep your ground and stand to your arms; it is an enemy that is already foiled and baffled; there is strength laid up in the covenant of grace for your assistance, if you will but use it. Sin shall not have dominion." God's promises to us are more

powerful and effectual for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God. Sin may struggle in a believer, and may create him a great deal of trouble, but it shall not have dominion; it may vex him, but shall not rule over him. For we are not under the law, but under grace, not under the law of sin and death, but under the law of the spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus: we are actuated by other principles than we have been: new lords, new laws. Or, not under the covenant of works, which requires brick, and gives no straw, which condemns upon the least failure, which runs thus, "Do this, and live; do it not, and die;" but under the covenant of grace, which accepts sincerity as our gospel perfection, which requires nothing but what it promises strength to perform, which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant does not put us out of covenant, and especially that it does not leave our salvation in our own keeping, but lays it up in the hands of the Mediator, who undertakes for us that sin shall not have dominion over us, who hath himself condemned it, and will destroy it; so that, if we pursue the victory, we shall come off more than conquerors. Christ rules by the golden sceptre of grace, and he will not let sin have dominion over those that are willing subjects to that rule. This is a very comfortable word to all true believers. If we were under the law, we were undone, for the law curses every one that continues not in every thing; but we are under grace, grace which accepts the willing mind, which is not extreme to mark what we do amiss, which leaves room for repentance, which promises pardon upon repentance; and what can be to an ingenuous mind a stronger motive than this to have nothing to do with sin? Shall we sin against so much goodness, abuse such love? Some perhaps might suck poison out of this flower, and disingenuously use this as an encouragement to sin. See how the apostle starts at such a thought (Ro 6:15): Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. What can be more black and ill-natured than from a friend's extraordinary expressions of kindness and good-will to take occasion to affront and offend him? To spurn at such bowels, to spit in the face of such love, is that which, between man and man, all the world would cry out shame on.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law,
but under grace? God forbid.

For we are not under the law. We who are Christians are not subject to that law where sin is excited, and where it rages unsubdued. But it may be asked here, what is meant by this declaration? Does it mean that Christians are absolved from all the obligations of the law? I answer,

(1.) The apostle does not affirm that Christians are not bound to obey the moral law. The whole scope of his reasoning shows that he maintains that they are. The whole structure of Christianity supposes the same thing. Comp. Mt 5:17-19.

(2.) The apostle means to say that Christians are not under the law as legalists, or as attempting to be justified by it. They seek a different plan of justification altogether; and they do not attempt to be justified by their own obedience. The Jews did; they do not.

(3.) It is implied here, that the effect of an attempt to be justified by the law was not to subdue sins, but to excite them, and to lead to indulgence in them. Justification by works would destroy no sin, would check no evil propensity, but would leave a man to all the ravages and riotings of unsubdued passion. If, therefore, the apostle had maintained that men were justified by works, he could not have consistently exhorted them to abandon their sins. He would have had no powerful motives by which to urge it; for the scheme would not lead to it. But he here says that the Christian was seeking justification on a plan which contemplated and which accomplished the destruction of sin; and he therefore infers that sin should not have dominion over them. But under grace. Under a scheme of mercy, the design and tendency of which is to subdue sin, and destroy it.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey,
his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death,
or of obedience unto righteousness?

He argues from the evidence that this will be of our state, making for us, or against us (Ro 6:16): To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are. All the children of men are either the servants of God, or the servants of sin; these are the two families. Now, if we would know to which of these families we belong, we must enquire to which of these masters we yield obedience. Our obeying the laws of sin will be an evidence against us that we belong to that family on which death is entailed. As, on the contrary, our obeying the laws of Christ will evidence our relation to Christ's family.

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

How the apostle doth not barely urge the necessity of serving Christ in our regenerate state, but does enforce the proportion which our service now ought to bear to the disservice formerly done in our carnal state: As ye have yielded your members servants to iniquity,; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness.

Observe lastly, The great dignation and gracious condescension of Christ, that he should accept those members of ours as instruments of his service, which have been employed in the devil's service.

One would have expected, that Christ should rather have said, "Vile wretch? Satan has had the use and service of thy body, and all its members, from thy childhood and youth, unto this day; thy will has been his throne, thy memory his storehouse, and all thy members his tools and instruments to sin against me; thou didst indeed dedicate all these to my service and glory in thy baptism, but thou hast employed all these in Satan's service for many years past: However, if now thou art willing to yield those very members unto righteousness and to holiness, which formerly were servants unto uncleanness, I will both accept them and reward thee for them."

18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your
flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to
uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield
your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Sinners are voluntary in the service of sin. The devil could not force them into the service, if they did not yield themselves to it. This will justify God in the ruin of sinners, that they sold themselves to work wickedness: it was their own act and deed. To iniquity unto iniquity. Every sinful act strengthens and confirms the sinful habit: to iniquity as the work unto iniquity as the wages. Sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind; growing worse and worse, more and more hardened. This he speaks after the manner of men, that is, he fetches a similitude from that which is common among men, even the change of services and subjections.

Unto holiness. In order to practise holiness. Let the surrender of your members to holiness be as sincere and as unqualified as the surrender was to sin. This is all that is required of Christians. Before conversion they were wholly given to sin; after conversion they should be wholly given to God. If all Christians would employ the same energies in advancing the kingdom of God that they have in promoting the kingdom of Satan, the church would rise with dignity and grandeur, and every continent and island would soon feel the movement. No requirement is more reasonable than this; and it should be a source of lamentation and mourning with Christians that it is not so; that they have employed so mighty energies in the cause of Satan, and do so little in the service of God. This argument for energy in the divine life the apostle proceeds further to illustrate, by comparing the rewards obtained in the two kinds of servitude, that of the world and of God.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free
from righteousness.
21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are
now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death.
22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God,
ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.
23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Death is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned as wages are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin. There is no sin in its own nature venial. Death is the wages of the least sin. Sin is here represented either as the work for which the wages are given, or as the master by whom the wages are given; all that are sin's servants and do sin's work must expect to be thus paid.

but the life is a gift, it comes by favour. Sinners merit hell, but saints do not merit heaven. There is no proportion between the glory of heaven and our obedience; we must thank God, and not ourselves, if ever we get to heaven. And this gift is through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is Christ that purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it; he is the Alpha and Omega, All in all in our salvation.

Death is thus called the wages of sin, not because it is an arbitrary, undeserved appointment, but

(1.) because it is its proper desert. Not a pain will be inflicted on the sinner which he does not deserve. Not a sinner will die who ought not to die. Sinners even in hell will be treated just as they deserve to be treated; and there is not to man a more fearful and terrible consideration than this. No man can conceive a more dreadful doom than for himself to be treated for ever just as he deserves to be. But

(2.) this is the wages of sin, because, like the pay of the soldier, it is just what was threatened. Eze 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." God will not inflict anything more than was threatened, and therefore it is just. Death is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned as wages are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin. There is no sin in its own nature venial. Death is the wages of the least sin. Sin is here represented either as the work for which the wages are given, or as the master by whom the wages are given; all that are sin's servants and do sin's work must expect to be thus paid.

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Romans-7

An Analogy from Marriage

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,)
how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?
2 For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to
her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead,
she is loosed from the law of *her* husband.

The severest laws could but kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do. Thus while we were alive to the law we were under the power of it--while we were in our Old-Testament state, before the gospel came into the world, and before it came with power into our hearts. Such is the law of marriage (Ro 7:2),

When we were in the flesh, that is, in a carnal state, under the reigning power of sin and corruption--in the flesh as in our

element--then the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members, we were carried down the stream of sin, and the law was but as an imperfect dam, which made the stream to swell the higher, and rage the more. Our desire was towards sin, as that of the wife towards her husband, and sin ruled over us. We embraced it, loved it, devoted all to it, conversed daily with it, made it our care to please it. We were under a law of sin and death, as the wife under the law of marriage; and the product of this marriage was fruit brought forth unto death, that is, actual transgressions were produced by the original corruption, such as deserve death. Lust, having conceived by the law (which is the strength of sin, 1Co 15:56), bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, Jam 1:15. This is the posterity that springs from this marriage to sin and the law. This comes of the motions of sin working in our members. And this continues during life, while the law is alive to us, and we are alive to the law.

3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another
man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be
dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress,
though she be married to another man.

4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law
by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another,
even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring
forth fruit unto God.

Now we are thus married to Christ, that we should bring forth fruit unto God, Ro 7:4. One end of marriage is fruitfulness: God instituted the ordinance that he might seek a godly seed, Mal 2:15. The wife is compared to the fruitful vine, and children are called the fruit of the womb. Now the great end of our marriage to Christ is our fruitfulness in love, and grace, and every good work. This is fruit unto God, pleasing to God, according to his will, aiming at his glory. As our old marriage to sin produced fruit unto death, so our second marriage to Christ produces fruit unto God, fruits of righteousness. Good works are the children of the new nature, the products of our union with Christ, as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its union with the root.

Ye also are become dead to the law. Rom 6:3, Rom 6:4, Rom 6:8. The connexion between us and the law is dissolved, so far as the scope of the apostle's argument is concerned. He does not say that we are dead to it, or released from it as a rule of duty, or as a matter of obligation to obey it; for there neither is, nor can be, any such release; but we are dead to it as a way of justification and sanctification. In the great matter of acceptance with God, we have ceased to rely on the law, having become dead to it, and having embraced another plan. By the body of Christ. That is, by his body crucified; or, in other words, by his death. Comp. Eph 2:15, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity," etc.; that is, by his death. Col 1:22, "In the body of his flesh through death," etc.; Rom 2:14, 1Pet 2:24, "Who bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The sense is, therefore, that by the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice; by his suffering for us that which would be sufficient to meet the demands of the law; by his taking our place, he has released us from the law as a way of justification, freed us from its penalty, and saved us from its curse. Thus released, we are at liberty to be uffited to the law of him who has thus bought us with his blood.

5 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

Among other arguments used in the foregoing chapter to persuade us against sin, and to holiness, this was one (Ro 6:14), that we are not under the law; and this argument is here further insisted upon and explained (Ro 7:6): We are delivered from the law. What is meant by this? And how is it an argument why sin should not reign over us, and why we should walk in newness of life?

1. We are delivered from the power of the law which curses and condemns us for the sin committed by us. The sentence of the law against us is vacated and reversed, by the death of Christ, to all true believers. The law saith, The soul that sins shall die; but we are delivered from the law. The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. We are redeemed from the curse of the law, Ga 3:13.

2. We are delivered from that power of the law which irritates and provokes the sin that dwelleth in us. This the apostle seems especially to refer to (Ro 7:5): The motions of sins which were by the law. The law, by commanding, forbidding, threatening, corrupt and fallen man, but offering no grace to cure and strengthen, did but stir up the corruption, and, like the sun shining upon a dunghill, excite and draw up the filthy steams. We being lamed by the fall, the law comes and directs us, but provides nothing to heal and help our lameness, and so makes us halt and stumble the more. Understand this of the law not as a rule, but as a covenant of works. Now each of these is an argument why we should be holy; for here is encouragement to endeavours, though in many things we come short. We are under grace, which promises strength to do what it commands, and pardon upon repentance when we do amiss. This is the scope of these verses in general, that, in point of profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works--under the gospel of Christ, and not under the law of Moses. The difference between a law-state and a gospel-state he had before illustrated by the similitude of rising to a new life, and serving a new master; now here he speaks of is under the similitude of being married to a new husband.

6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

We are freed, by death, from our obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her obligation to her husband, Ro 7:3. This resemblance is not very close, nor needed it to be. You are become dead to the law, Ro 7:4. He does not say, "The law is dead" (some think because he would avoid giving offence to those who were yet zealous for the law), but, which comes all to one, You are dead to the law. As the crucifying of the world to us, and of us to the world, amounts to one and the same thing, so doth the law dying, and our dying to it. We are delivered from the law (Ro 7:6), katergethemen--we are nulled as to the law; our obligation to it as a husband is cassated and made void. And then he speaks of the law being dead as far as it was a law of bondage to us: That being dead wherein we were held; not the law itself, but its obligation to punishment and its provocation to sin. It is dead, it has lost its

power; and this (Ro 7:4) by the body of Christ, that is, by the sufferings of Christ in his body, by his crucified body, which abrogated the law, answered the demands of it, made satisfaction for our violation of it, purchased for us a covenant of grace, in which righteousness and strength are laid up for us, such as were not, nor could be, by the law. We are dead to the law by our union with the mystical body of Christ. By being incorporated into Christ in our baptism professedly, in our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, have no more to do with it than the dead servant, that is free from his master, hath to do with his master's yoke.

in spirit and in truth, Joh 4:24. There must be a renovation of our spirits wrought by the spirit of God, and in that we must serve. Not in the oldness of the letter; that is, we must not rest in mere external services, as the carnal Jews did, who gloried in their adherence to the letter of the law, and minded not the spiritual part of worship. The letter is said to kill with its bondage and terror, but we are delivered from that yoke that we may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, Lu 1:74,75. We are under the dispensation of the Spirit, and therefore must be spiritual, and serve in the spirit. Compare with this 2Co 3:3,6, &c. It becomes us to worship within the veil, and no longer in the outward court.

The Problem of Indwelling Sin

7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

The great advantage that he had found by the law.

1. It was discovering: I had not known sin but by the law, Ro 7:7. As that which is straight discovers that which is crooked, as the looking-glass shows us our natural face with all its spots and deformities, so there is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin which is necessary to repentance, and consequently to peace and pardon, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law.

Particularly he came to the knowledge of the sinfulness of lust by the law of the tenth commandment. By lust he means sin dwelling in us, sin in its first motions and workings, the corrupt principle. This he came to know when the law said, Thou shalt not covet. The law spoke in other language than the scribes and Pharisees made it to speak in; it spoke in the spiritual sense and meaning of it. By this he knew that lust was sin and a very sinful sin, that those motions and desires of the heart towards sin which never came into act were sinful, exceedingly sinful. Paul had a very quick and piercing judgment, all the advantages and improvements of education, and yet never attained the right knowledge of indwelling sin till the Spirit by the law made it known to him. There is nothing about which the natural man is more blind than about original corruption, concerning which the understanding is altogether in the dark till the Spirit by the law reveal it, and make it known. Thus the law is a schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, opens and searches the wound, and so prepares it for healing. Thus sin by the commandment does appear sin (Ro 7:13); it appears in its own colours, appears to be what it is, and you cannot call it by a worse name than its own. Thus by the commandment it becomes exceedingly sinful; that is, it appears to be so. We never see the desperate venom or malignity there is in sin, till we come to compare it with the law, and the spiritual nature of the law, and then we see it to be an evil and a bitter thing.

2. It was humbling (Ro 7:9): I was alive. He thought himself in a very good condition; he was alive in his own opinion and apprehension, very secure and confident of the goodness of his state. Thus he was once, pote--in times past, when he was a Pharisee; for it was the common temper of that generation of men that they had a very good conceit of themselves; and Paul was then like the rest of them, and the reason was he was then without the law. Though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, though himself a great student in the law, a strict observer of it, and a zealous stickler for it, yet without the law. He had the letter of the law, but he had not the spiritual meaning of it--the shell, but not the kernel. He had the law in his hand and in his head, but he had it not in his heart; the notion of it, but not the power of

it. There are a great many who are spiritually dead in sin, that yet are alive in their own opinion of themselves, and it is their strangeness to the law that is the cause of the mistake. But when the commandment came, came in the power of it (not to his eyes only, but to his heart), sin revived, as the dust in a room rises (that is, appears) when the sun-shine is let into it. Paul then saw that in sin which he had never seen before; he then saw sin in its causes, the bitter root, the corrupt bias, the bent to backslide,--sin in its colours, deforming, defiling, breaking a righteous law, affronting an awful Majesty, profaning a sovereign crown by casting it to the ground,--sin in its consequences, sin with death at the heels of it, sin and the curse entailed upon it. "Thus sin revived, and then I died; I lost that good opinion which I had had of myself, and came to be of another mind. Sin revived, and I died; that is, the Spirit, but the commandment, convinced me that I was in a state of sin, and in a state of death because of sin." Of this excellent use is the law; it is a lamp and a light; it converts the soul, opens the eyes, prepares the way of the Lord in the desert, rends the rocks, levels the mountains, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Thou shalt not covet. This is the beginning of the command, and all the rest is implied. The apostle knew that it would be understood without repeating the whole. This particular commandment he selected because it was more pertinent than the others to his purpose. The others referred particularly to external actions. But his object was to show the effect of sin on the mind and conscience. He therefore chose one that referred particularly to the desires of the heart.

8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

But sin. To illustrate the effect of the law on the mind, the apostle in this verse depicts its influence in exciting to evil desires and purposes. Perhaps nowhere has he evinced more consummate knowledge of the human heart than here. He brings an illustration that might have escaped most persons, but which goes directly to establish his position that the law is insufficient to promote the salvation of man. Sin here is personified. It means not a real entity;

not a physical subsistence; not something independent of the mind, having a separate existence, and lodged in the soul; but it means the corrupt passions, inclinations, and desires of the mind itself. Thus we say that lust burns, and ambition rages, and envy corrodes the mind, without meaning that lust, ambition, or envy are any independent physical subsistences; but meaning that the mind that is ambitious, or envious, is thus excited.

Concupiscence. Unlawful or irregular desire. Inclination for unlawful enjoyments. The word is the same which in Rom 7:7 is rendered lust. If it be asked in what way the law led to this, we may reply, that the main idea here is, that opposition by law to the desires and passions of wicked men only tends to inflame and exasperate them. This is the case with regard to sin in every form. An attempt to restrain it by force; to denounce it by laws and penalties; to cross the path of wickedness; only tends to irritate, and to excite into living energy, that which otherwise would be dormant in the bosom.

This it does, because

(1.) it crosses the path of the sinner, and opposes his intention, and the current of his feelings and his life.

(2.) The law acts the part of a detector, and lays open to view that which was in the bosom, but was concealed.

(3.) Such is the depth and obstinacy of sin in man, that the very attempt to restrain often only serves to exasperate, and to urge to greater deeds of wickedness. Restraint by law rouses the mad passions; urges to greater deeds of depravity; makes the sinner stubborn, obstinate, and more desperate. The very attempt to set up authority over him throws him into a posture of resistance, and makes him a party, and excites all the feelings of party rage. Any one may have witnessed this effect often on the mind of a wicked and obstinate child.

(4.) This is particularly true in regard to a sinner. He is calm often, and apparently tranquil; but let the law of God be brought home to his conscience, and he becomes maddened and enraged. He spurns its authority, yet his conscience tells him it is right; he attempts to throw it off, yet trembles at its power; and, to show his independence, or his purpose to sin, he plunges into iniquity, and becomes a more dreadful and obstinate sinner. It becomes a struggle for victory, and in the controversy with God he resolves not to be overcome. It accordingly happens that many a man is more profane, blasphemous, and desperate when under conviction for sin than at other times. In revivals of religion it often happens that men evince violence, and rage, and cursing, which they do not in a state of spiritual death in the church; and it is often a very certain indication that a man is under conviction for sin when he becomes particularly violent, and abusive, and outrageous in his opposition to God.

(5.) The effect here noticed by the apostle is one that has been observed at all times, and by all classes of writers. Thus Cato says, (Livy, xxxiv. 4,) "Do not think, Romans, that it will be hereafter as it was before the law was enacted. It is more safe that a bad man should not be accused, than that he should be absolved; and luxury not excited would be more tolerable than it will be now, by the very chains irritated and excited as a wild beast." Thus Seneca says, (de Clementia, i. 23,) "Parricides began with the law." Thus Horace; (Odes, i. 3,) "The human race, bold to endure all things, rushes through forbidden crime." Thus Ovid, (Amor. iii. 4,) "We always endeavour to obtain that which is forbidden, and desire that which is denied." (These passages are quoted from Tholuck.) See also Prov 9:17, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." If such be the effect of the law, then the inference of the apostle is unavoidable, that it is not adapted to save and sanctify man.

9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Was alive. This is opposed to what he immediately adds respecting another state, in which he was when he died. It must

mean, therefore, that he had a certain kind of peace; he deemed himself secure; he was free from the convictions of conscience and the agitations of alarm. The state to which he refers here must be doubtless that to which he himself elsewhere alludes, when he deemed himself to be righteous, depending on his own works, and esteeming himself to be blameless, Php 3:4-6 Acts 23:1, 26:4,5. It means, that he was then free from those agitations and alarms which he afterwards experienced when he was brought under conviction for sin. At that time, though he had the law, and was attempting to obey it, yet he was unacquainted with its spiritual and holy nature. He aimed at external conformity. Its claims on the heart were unfelt. This is the condition of every self-confident sinner, and of every one who is unawakened.

Without the law. Not that Paul was ever really without the law--that is, without the law of Moses; but he means before the law was applied to his heart in its spiritual meaning, and with power.

But when the commandment came. When it was applied to the heart and conscience. This is the only intelligible sense of the expression; for it cannot refer to the time when the law was given. When this was, the apostle does not say. But the expression denotes whenever it was so applied; when it was urged with power and efficacy on his conscience, to control, restrain, and threaten him, it produced this effect. We are unacquainted with the early operations of his mind, and with his struggles against conscience and duty. We know enough of him before conversion, however, to be assured that he was proud, impetuous, and unwilling to be restrained. See Acts 8:1-9:43. In the state of his self-confident righteousness and impetuosity of feeling, we may easily suppose that the holy law of God, which is designed to restrain the passions, to humble the heart, and to rebuke pride, would produce only irritation, and impatience of restraint, and revolt.

Sin revived. Lived again. This means that it was before dormant, Rom 7:8 but was now quickened into new life. The word is usually applied to a renewal of life, Rom 14:9, Lk 15:24,32 but here it means substantially the same as the expression in Rom 7:8, "Sin--wrought- in me all manner of concupiscence." The power of sin, which was before dormant, became quickened and active.

I died. That is, I was by it involved in additional guilt and misery. It stands opposed to "I was alive," and must mean the opposite of that; and evidently denotes that the effect of the commandment was to bring him under what he calls death, Rom 5:12,14,15 that is, sin reigned, and raged, and produced its withering and condemning effects; it led to aggravated guilt and misery. It may also include this idea: that before, he was self-confident and secure; but that by the commandment he was stricken down and humbled, his self-confidence was blasted, and his hopes were prostrated in the dust. Perhaps no words would better express the humble, subdued, melancholy, and helpless state of a converted sinner than the expressive phrase "I died." The essential idea here is, that the law did not answer the purpose which the Jew would claim for it, to sanctify the soul and to give comfort, but that all its influence on the heart was to produce aggravated, unpardoned guilt and woe.

10 And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death.

The ill use that his corrupt nature made of the law notwithstanding.

1. Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence, Ro 7:8. Observe, Paul had in him all manner of concupiscence, though one of the best unregenerate men that ever was; as touching the righteousness of the law, blameless, and yet sensible of all manner of concupiscence. And it was sin that wrought it, indwelling sin, his corrupt nature (he speaks of a sin that did work sin), and it took occasion by the commandment. The corrupt nature would

not have swelled and raged so much if it had not been for the restraints of the law; as the peccant humours in the body are raised, and more inflamed, by a purge that is not strong enough to carry them off. It is incident to corrupt nature, in vetitum niti--to lean towards what is forbidden. Ever since Adam ate forbidden fruit, we have all been fond of forbidden paths; the diseased appetite is carried out most strongly towards that which is hurtful and prohibited. Without the law sin was dead, as a snake in winter, which the sunbeams of the law quicken and irritate.

2. It deceived men. Sin puts a cheat upon the sinner, and it is a fatal cheat, Ro 7:11. By it (by the commandment) slew me. There being in the law no such express threatening against sinful lustings, sin, that is, his won corrupt nature, took occasion thence to promise him impunity, and to say, as the serpent to our first parents, You shall not surely die. Thus it deceived and slew him.

3. It wrought death in me by that which is good, Ro 7:13. That which works concupiscence works death, for sin bringeth forth death. Nothing so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it, and make it an occasion of sin; no flower so sweet by sin will such poison out of it. Now in this sin appears sin. The worst thing that sin does, and most like itself, is the perverting of the law, and taking occasion from it to be so much the more malignant. Thus the commandment, which was ordained to life, was intended as a guide in the way to comfort and happiness, proved unto death, through the corruption of nature, Ro 7:10. Many a precious soul splits upon the rock of salvation; and the same word which to some is an occasion of life unto life is to others an occasion of death unto death. The same sun that makes the garden of flowers more fragrant makes the dunghill more noisome; the same heat that softens wax hardens clay; and the same child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The way to prevent this mischief is to bow our souls to the commanding authority of the word and law of God, not striving against, but submitting to it.

Which was ordained to life. Which was intended to produce life, or happiness. Life here stands opposed to death, and means felicity, peace, eternal bliss. Jn 3:36. When the apostle says that it was ordained to life, he probably has reference to the numerous passages in the Old Testament which speak of the law in this manner. Lev 18:5, "Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them," Eze 20:11 Eze 20:11,13,21, 18:9,21. The meaning of these passages, in connexion with this declaration of Paul, may be thus expressed:

(1.) The law is good; it has no evil, and is itself fitted to produce no evil.

(2.) If man was pure, and it was obeyed perfectly, it would produce life and happiness only. On those who have obeyed it in heaven, it has produced only happiness.

(3.) For this it was ordained; it is adapted to it; and when perfectly obeyed, it produces no other effect. But,

(4.) man is a sinner; he has not obeyed it; and in such a case the law threatens woe. It crosses the inclination of man; and instead of producing peace and life, as it would on a being perfectly holy, it produces only woe and crime. The law of a parent may be good, and may be appointed to promote the happiness of his children; it may be admirably fitted to it if all were obedient; yet in the family there may be one obstinate, self-willed, and stubborn child, resolved to indulge his evil passions, and the results to him would be woe and despair. The commandment, which was ordained for the good of the family, and which would be adapted to promote their welfare, he alone, of all the number, would find to be unto death.

11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me,
and by it slew *me*.

The meaning here seems to be, that his corrupt and rebellious propensities, excited by the law, led him astray; caused him more and more to sin; practised a species of deception on him by urging him on headlong, and without deliberation, into aggravated transgression. In this sense, all sinners are deceived. Their passions urge them on, deluding them, and leading them farther and farther from happiness, and involving them, before they are aware, in crime and death. No being in the universe is more deluded than a sinner in the indulgence of evil passions. The description of Solomon in a particular case will apply to all, Prov 7:21-23.

"With much fair speech she caused him to yield; With the flattering of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, As an ox goeth to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correctran of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver, As a bird hasteth to the snare."

12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

1. It is holy, just, and good, Ro 7:12. The law in general is so, and every particular commandment is so. Laws are as the law-makers are. God, the great lawgiver, is holy, just, and good, therefore his law must needs be so. The matter of it is holy: it commands holiness, encourages holiness; it is holy, for it is agreeable to the holy will of God, the original of holiness. It is just, for it is consonant to the rules of equity and right reason: the ways of the Lord are right. It is good in the design of it; it was given for the good of mankind, for the conservation of peace and order in the world. It makes the observers of it good; the intention of it was to better and reform mankind. Wherever there is true grace there is an assent to this--that the law is holy, just, and good.

2. The law is spiritual (Ro 7:14), not only in regard to the effect of it, as it is a means of making us spiritual, but in regard to the extent of it; it reaches our spirits, it lays a restraint upon, and gives a direction to, the motions of the inward man; it is a

discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, Heb 4:12. It forbids spiritual wickedness, heart-murder, and heart-adultery. It commands spiritual service, requires the heart, obliges us to worship God in the spirit. It is a spiritual law, for it is given by God, who is a Spirit and the Father of spirits; it is given to man, whose principal part is spiritual; the soul is the best part, and the leading part of the man, and therefore the law to the man must needs be a law to the soul. Herein the law of God is above all other laws, that it is a spiritual law. Other laws may forbid compassing and imagining, &c., which are treason in the heart, but cannot take cognizance thereof, unless there be some overt act; but the law of God takes notice of the iniquity regarded in the heart, though it go no further. Wash thy heart from wickedness, Jer 4:14. We know this: Wherever there is true grace there is an experimental knowledge of the spirituality of the law of God.

13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid.
But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by
that which is good; that sin by the commandment might
become exceeding sinful.

Might become exeeedingly sinful. In the original this is a very strong expression, and is one of those used by Paul to express strong emphasis, or intensity, καθυπερβολην. By hyperboles. In an extensive degree; to the utmost possible extent, 1Cor 12:31, 2Cor 1:8, 4:7, 12:7, Gal 1:13. The phrase occurs in each of these places. The sense here is, that by the giving of the command, and its application to the mind, sin was completely developed; it was excited, inflamed, aggravated, and showed to be excessively malignant and deadly. It was not a dormant, slumbering principle; but it was awfully opposed to God and his law. Calvin has well expressed the sense: "It was proper that the enormity of sin should be revealed by the law; because unless sin should break forth by some dreadful and enormous excess, (as they say,) it would not be known to be sin. This excess exhibits itself the more violently, while it turns life into death." The sentiment of the whole is, that the tendency of the law is to excite the dormant sin of the bosom into active existence, and to reveal its true nature. It is desirable that that

should be done; and as that is all that the law accomplishes, it is not adapted to sanctify the soul. To show that this was the design of the apostle, it is desirable that sin should be thus seen in its true nature, because

(1.) man should be acquainted with his true character. He should not deceive himself.

(2.) Because it is one part of God's plan to develope the secret feelings of the heart, and to show to all creatures what they are.

(3.) Because only by knowing this will the sinner be induced to take a remedy, and strive to be saved. God often thus suffers men to plunge into sin; to act out their nature, that they may see themselves, and be alarmed at the consequences of their own crimes.

14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Verses 14-25: The remainder of this chapter has been the subject of no small degree of controversy. The question has been whether it describes the state of Paul before his conversion, or afterwards. It is not the purpose of these Notes to enter into controversy, or into extended discussion. But after all the attention which I have been able to give to this passage, I regard it as describing the state of a man under the gospel, as descriptive of the operations of the mind of Paul subsequent to his conversion. This interpretation is adopted for the following reasons:

(1.) Because it seems to me to be the most obvious. It is that which will strike plain men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense.

(2.) Because it agrees with the design of the apostle, which is to show that the law is not adapted to produce sanctification and peace. This he had done in regard to a man before he was

converted. If this relates to the same period, then it is a useless discussion of a point already discussed. If it relates to that period also, then there is a large field of action, including the whole period after a man's conversion to Christianity, in which the question might still be unsettled, whether the law there might not be adapted to sanctify. The apostle therefore makes thorough work with the argument, and shows that the operation of the law is everywhere the same.

(3.) Because the expressions which occur are such as cannot be understood of an impenitent sinner. Rom 7:15, Rom 7:22.

(4.) Because it accords with parallel expressions in regard to the state of the conflict in a Christian's mind.

(5.) Because there is a change made here from the past tense to the present. In Rom 7:7, etc., he had used the past tense, evidently describing some former state. In Rom 7:14 there is a change to the present, a change inexplicable, except on the supposition that he meant to describe some state different from that before described. That could be no other than to carry his illustration forward in showing the inefficacy of the law on a man in his renewed state; or to show that such was the remaining depravity of the man, that it produced substantially the same effects as in the former condition.

(6.) Because it accords with the experience of Christians, and not with sinners. It is just such language as plain Christians, who are acquainted with their own hearts, use to express their feelings. I admit that this last consideration is not by itself conclusive; but if the language did not accord with the experience of the Christian world, it would be a strong circumstance against any proposed interpretation. The view which is here expressed of this chapter, as supposing that the previous part (Rom 7:7-13) refers to a man in his unregenerate state, and that the remainder describes the effect of the law on the mind of a renewed man, was adopted by studying the

chapter itself, without aid from any writer. I am happy, however, to find that the views thus expressed are in accordance with those of the late Rev. Dr. J.P. Wilson, than whom, perhaps, no man was ever better qualified to interpret the Scriptures. He says,

"In the fourth verse, he (Paul) changes to the first person plural, because he intended to speak of the former experience of Christians, who had been Jews. In the seventh verse he uses the first person singular, but speaks in the past tense, because he describes his own experience when he was an unconverted Pharisee. In the fourteenth verse, and unto the end of the chapter, he uses the first person singular, and the present tense, because he exhibits his own experience since he became a Christian and an apostle."

15 For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

That do I. Under the influence of sinful propensities, and carnal inclinations and desires. This represents the strong native propensity to sin; and even the power of corrupt propensity under the restraining influence of the gospel. On this remarkable and important passage we may observe,

(1.) that the prevailing propensity--the habitual fixed inclination of the mind of the Christian--is to do right. The evil course is hated; the right course is loved. This is the characteristic of a pious mind. It distinguishes a holy man from a sinner.

(2.) The evil which is done is disapproved; is a source of grief; and the habitual desire of the mind is to avoid it, and be pure. This also distinguishes the Christian from the sinner.

(3.) There is no need of being embarrassed here with any metaphysical difficulties or inquiries how this can be; for

(a) it is in fact the experience of all Christians. The habitual, fixed inclination and desire of their minds is to serve God. They have a fixed abhorrence of sin; and yet they are conscious of imperfection, and error, and sin, that is the source of uneasiness and trouble. The strength of natural passion may in an unguarded moment overcome them. The power of long habits of previous thoughts may annoy them. A man who was an infidel before his conversion, and whose mind was filled with scepticism, and cavils, and blasphemy, will find the effect of his former habits of thinking lingering in his mind, and annoying his peace for years. These thoughts will start up with the rapidity of the lightning. Thus it is with every vice and every opinion. It is one of the effects of habit. "The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;" and where sin has been long indulged, it leaves its withering, desolating effect on the soul long after conversion, and produces that state of conflict with which every Christian is familiar.

(b) An effect somewhat similar is felt by all men. All are conscious of doing that, under the excitement of passion and prejudice, which their conscience and better judgment disapprove. A conflict thus exists, which is attended with as much metaphysical difficulty as the struggle in the Christian's mind referred to here.

(c) The same thing was observed and described in the writings of the heathen. Thus Xenophon, (Cyrop. vi. 1,) Araspes, the Persian, says in order to excuse his treasonable designs, "Certainly I must have two souls; for plainly it is not one and the same which is both evil and good; and at the same time wishes to do a thing and not to do it. Plainly, then, there are two souls; and when the good one prevails, then it does good; and when the evil one predominates, then it does evil." So also Epictetus (Enchirid. ii. 26) says, "He that sins does not do what he would; but what he would not, that he does." With this

passage it would almost seem that Paul was familiar, and had his eye on it when he wrote. So also the well known passage from Ovid, Meta. vii. 9: Aliudque Cupido, Mens aliud suadet. Video meliora, proboque, Deteriora sequor. "Desire prompts to one thing, but the mind persuades to another. I see the good, and approve it, and yet pursue the wrong."--See other passages of similar import quoted in Grotius and Tholuck.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is*
good.

Here is a description of the conflict between grace and corruption in the heart, between the law of God and the law of sin. And it is applicable two ways:--

1. To the struggles that are in a convinced soul, but yet unregenerate, in the person of whom it is supposed, by some, that Paul speaks.

2. To the struggles that are in a renewed sanctified soul, but yet in a state of imperfection; as other apprehend. And a great controversy there is of which of these we are to understand the apostle here. So far does the evil prevail here, when he speaks of one sold under sin, doing it, not performing that which is good, that it seems difficult to apply it to the regenerate, who are described to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; and yet so far does the good prevail in hating sin, consenting to the law, delighting in it, serving the law of God with the mind, that it is more difficult to apply it to the unregenerate that are dead in trespasses and sins.

I. Apply it to the struggles that are felt in a convinced soul, that is yet in a state of sin, knows his Lord's will, but does it not, approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and yet lives in the constant breach of it, Ro 2:17-23. Though he has that within him that witnesses against the sin he commits, and it is not without a great deal of

reluctancy that he does commit it, the superior faculties striving against it, natural conscience warning against it before it is committed and smiting for it afterwards, yet the man continues a slave to his reigning lusts. It is not thus with every unregenerate man, but with those only that are convinced by the law, but not changed by the gospel. The apostle had said (Ro 6:14), Sin shall not have dominion, because you are not under the law, but under grace, for the proof of which he here shows that a man under the law, and not under grace, may be, and is, under the dominion of sin. The law may discover sin, and convince of sin, but it cannot conquer and subdue sin, witness the predominancy of sin in many that are under very strong legal convictions. It discovers the defilement, but will not wash it off. It makes a man weary and heavy laden (Mt 11:28), burdens him with his sin; and yet, if rested in, it yields no help towards the shaking off of that burden; this is to be had only in Christ. The law may make a man cry out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? and yet leave him thus fettered and captivated, as being too weak to deliver him (Ro 8:3), give him a spirit of bondage to fear, Ro 8:15. Now a soul advanced thus far by the law is in a fair way towards a state of liberty by Christ, though many rest here and go no further. Felix trembled, but never came to Christ. It is possible for a man to go to hell with his eyes open (Nu 24:3,4), illuminated with common convictions, and to carry about with him a self-accusing conscience, even in the service of the devil. He may consent to the law that it is good, delight to know God's ways (as they, Isa 58:2), may have that within him that witnesses against sin and for holiness; and yet all this overpowered by the reigning love of sin. Drunkards and unclean persons have some faint desires to leave off their sins, and yet persist in them notwithstanding, such is the impotency and such the insufficiency of their convictions. Of such as these there are many that will needs have all this understood, and contend earnestly for it: though it is very hard to imagine why, if the apostle intended this, he should speak all along in his own person; and not only so, but in the present tense. Of his own state under conviction he had spoken at large, as of a thing past

(Ro 7:7, &c.): I died; the commandment I found to be unto death; and if here he speaks of the same state as his present state, and the condition he was now in, surely he did not intend to be so understood: and therefore,

II. It seems rather to be understood of the struggles that are maintained between grace and corruption in sanctified souls. That there are remainders of indwelling corruption, even where there is a living principle of grace, is past dispute; that this corruption is daily breaking forth in sins of infirmity (such as are consistent with a state of grace) is no less certain. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, 1Jo 1:8,10. That true grace strives against these sins and corruptions, does not allow of them, hates them, mourns over them, groans under them as a burden, is likewise certain (Ga 5:17): The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. These are the truths which, I think, are contained in this discourse of the apostle. And his design is further to open the nature of sanctification, that it does not attain to a sinless perfection in this life; and therefore to quicken us to, and encourage us in, our conflicts with remaining corruptions. Our case is not singular, that which we do sincerely strive against, shall not be laid to our charge, and through grace the victory is sure at last. The struggle here is like that between Jacob and Esau in the womb, between the Canaanites and Israelites in the land, between the house of Saul and the house of David; but great is the truth and will prevail. Understanding it thus, we may observe here,

17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.
18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

It is no more I that do it. This is evidently figurative language, for it is really the man that sins when evil is committed. But the apostle makes a distinction between sin and that which he intends by the pronoun I. By the former he evidently means his

corrupt nature; by the latter he refers to his renewed nature, his Christian principles. He means to say that he does not approve or love it in his present state, but that it is the result of his native propensities and passions. In his heart, and conscience, and habitual feeling, he did not choose to commit sin, but abhorred it. Thus every Christian can say that he does not choose to do evil, but would wish to be perfect; that he hates sin, and yet that his corrupt passions lead him astray. But sin. My corrupt passions and native propensities. That dwelleth in me. Dwelling in me as its home. This is a strong expression, denoting that sin had taken up its habitation in the mind, and abode there. It had not yet been wholly dislodged. This expression stands in contrast with another that occurs, where it is said that "the Spirit of God dwells" in the Christian, Rom 8:9, 1Cor 3:16. The sense is, that he is strongly influenced by sin on the one hand; and by the Spirit on the other. From this expression has arisen the phrase so common among Christians, indwelling sin.

19 For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would
not, that I do.

20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin
that dwelleth in me.

21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present
with me.

Is present with me. Is near; is at hand. It starts up unbidden, and undesired. It is in the path, and never leaves us, but is always ready to impede our going, and to turn us from our good designs. Comp. Ps 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me." The sense is, that to do evil is agreeable to our strong natural inclinations and passions.

22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

1. What he complains of--the remainder of indwelling corruptions, which he here speaks of, to show that the law is insufficient to justify even a regenerate man, that the best man in the world hath enough in him to condemn him, if God should deal with him according to the law, which is not the fault of the law, but of our own corrupt nature, which cannot fulfil the law.

The repetition of the same things over and over again in this discourse shows how much Paul's heart was affected with what he wrote, and how deep his sentiments were. Observe the particulars of this complaint.

(1.) I am carnal, sold under sin, Ro 7:14. He speaks of the Corinthians as carnal, 1Co 3:1. Even where there is spiritual life there are remainders of carnal affections, and so far a man may be sold under sin; he does not sell himself to work wickedness, as Ahab did (1Ki 21:25), but he was sold by Adam when he sinned and fell--sold, as a poor slave that does his master's will against his own will--sold under sin, because conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

(2.) What I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I, Ro 7:15. And to the same purport, Ro 7:19,21, When I would do good, evil is present with me. Such was the strength of corruptions, that he could not attain that perfection in holiness which he desired and breathed after. Thus, while he was pressing forward towards perfection, yet he acknowledges that he had not already attained, neither was already perfect, Php 3:12. Fain he would be free from all sin, and perfectly do the will of God, such was his settled judgment; but his corrupt nature drew him another way: it was like a clog, that checked and kept him down when he would have soared upward, like the bias in a bowl, which, when it is thrown straight, yet draws it aside.

(3.) In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good, Ro 7:18. Here he explains himself concerning the corrupt nature, which he calls flesh; and as far as that goes there is no good to be expected, any more than one would expect good corn growing upon a rock, or on the sand which is by the sea-side. As the new nature, as far as that goes, cannot commit sin (1Jo 3:9), so the flesh, the old nature, as far as that goes, cannot perform a good duty. How should it? For the flesh serveth the law of sin (Ro 7:25), it is under the conduct and government of that law;

and, while it is so, it is not likely to do any good. The corrupt nature is elsewhere called flesh (Ge 6:3,Joh 3:6); and, though there may be good things dwelling in those that have this flesh, yet, as far as the flesh goes, there is no good, the flesh is not a subject capable of any good.

(4.) I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, Ro 7:23. The corrupt and sinful inclination is here compared to a law, because it controlled and checked him in his good motions. It is said to be seated in his members, because, Christ having set up his throne in his heart, it was only the rebellious members of the body that were the instruments of sin--in the sensitive appetite; or we may take it more generally for all that corrupt nature which is the seat not only of sensual but of more refined lusts. This wars against the law of the mind, the new nature; it draws the contrary way, drives on a contrary interest, which corrupt disposition and inclination are as great a burden and grief to the soul as the worst drudgery and captivity could be. It brings me into captivity. To the same purport (Ro 7:25), With the flesh I serve the law of sin; that is, the corrupt nature, the unregenerate part, is continually working towards sin.

(5.) His general complaint we have in Ro 7:24, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The thing he complains of is a body of death; either the body of flesh, which is a mortal dying body (while we carry this body about with us, we shall be troubled with corruption; when we are dead, we shall be freed from sin, and not before), or the body of sin, the old man, the corrupt nature, which tends to death, that is, to the ruin of the soul. Or, comparing it to a dead body, the touch of which was by the ceremonial law defiling, if actual transgressions be dead works (Heb 9:14), original corruption is a dead body. It was as troublesome to Paul as if he had had a dead body tied to him, which he must have carried about with him. This made him cry out, O wretched man that I am! A man that had learned in every state to be content yet complains thus of his corrupt nature. Had I been required to

speak of Paul, I should have said, "O blessed man that thou art, an ambassador of Christ, a favourite of heaven, a spiritual father of thousands!" But in his own account he was a wretched man, because of the corruption of nature, because he was not so good as he fain would be, had not yet attained, neither was already perfect. Thus miserably does he complain. Who shall deliver me? He speaks like one that was sick of it, that would give any thing to be rid of it, looks to the right hand and to the left for some friend that would part between him and his corruptions. The remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul.

23 but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

And bringing me into captivity. Making me a prisoner, or a captive. This is the completion of the figure respecting the warfare. A captive taken in war was at the disposal of the victor. So the apostle represents himself as engaged in a warfare; and as being overcome, and made an unwilling captive to the evil inclinations of the heart. The expression is strong; and denotes strong corrupt propensities. But though strong, it is believed it is language which all sincere Christians can adopt of themselves, as expressive of that painful and often disastrous conflict in their bosoms when they contend against the native propensities of their hearts.

24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

2. What he comforts himself with. The case was sad, but there were some allays. Three things comforted him:--

(a.) That his conscience witnessed for him that he had a good principle ruling and prevailing in him, notwithstanding. It is well when all does not go one way in the soul. The rule of this good principle which he had was the law of God, to which he here speaks of having a threefold regard, which is certainly to be found in all that are sanctified, and no others.

[1.] I consent unto the law that it is good, Ro 7:16, symphemi--I give my vote to the law; here is the approbation of the judgment. Wherever there is grace there is not only a dread of the severity of the law, but a consent to the goodness of the law. "It is a good in itself, it is good for me." This is a sign that the law is written in the heart, that the soul is delivered into the mould of it. To consent to the law is so far to approve of it as not to wish it otherwise constituted than it is. The sanctified judgment not only concurs to the equity of the law, but to the excellency of it, as convinced that a conformity to the law is the highest perfection of human nature, and the greatest honour and happiness we are capable of.

[2.] I delight in the law of God after the inward man, Ro 7:22. His conscience bore witness to a complacency in the law. He delighted not only in the promises of the word, but in the precepts and prohibitions of the word; synedomai expresses a becoming delight. He did herein concur in affection with all the saints. All that are savingly regenerate or born again do truly delight in the law of God, delight to know it, to do it--cheerfully submit to the authority of it, and take a complacency in that submission, never better pleased than when heart and life are in the strictest conformity to the law and will of God. After the inward man; that is, First, The mind or rational faculties, in opposition to the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh. The soul is the inward man, and that is the seat of gracious delights, which are therefore sincere and serious, but secret; it is the renewing of the inward man, 2Co 4:16. Secondly, The new nature. The new man is called the inner man (Eph 3:16), the hidden man of the heart, 1Pe 3:4. Paul, as far as he was sanctified, had a delight in the law of God.

[3.] With the mind I myself serve the law of God, Ro 7:25. It is not enough to consent to the law, and to delight in the law, but we must serve the law; our souls must be entirely delivered up into the obedience of it. Thus it was with Paul's mind; thus it is with every sanctified renewed mind; this is the ordinary course and way; thitherward goes the bent of the soul. I myself--autos ego, plainly

intimating that he speaks in his own person, and not in the person of another.

(b.) That the fault lay in that corruption of his nature which he did really bewail and strive against: It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. This he mentions twice (Ro 7:17,20), not as an excuse for the guilt of his sin (it is enough to condemn us, if we were under the law, that the sin which does the evil dwelleth in us), but as a salvo for his evidences, that he might not sink in despair, but take comfort from the covenant of grace, which accepts the willingness of the spirit, and has provided pardon for the weakness of the flesh. He likewise herein enters a protestation against all that which this indwelling sin produced. Having professed his consent to the law of God, he here professes his dissent from the law of sin. "It is not I; I disown the fact; it is against my mind that it is done." As when in the senate the major part are bad, and carry every thing the wrong way, it is indeed the act of the senate, but the honest party strive against it, bewail what is done, and enter their protestation against it; so that it is no more they that do it.--Dwelleth in me, as the Canaanites among the Israelites, though they were put under tribute: dwelleth in me, and is likely to dwell there, while I live.

(c.) His great comfort lay in Jesus Christ (Ro 7:25): I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the midst of his complaints he breaks out into praises. It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows to be much in praise: many a poor drooping soul hath found it so. And, in all our praises, this should be the burden of the son, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ." Who shall deliver me? says he (Ro 7:24), as one at a loss for help. At length he finds an all-sufficient friend, even Jesus Christ. When we are under the sense of the remaining power of sin and corruption, we shall see reason to bless God through Christ (for, as he is the mediator of all our prayers, so he is of all our praises)--to bless God for Christ; it is he that stands between us and the wrath due to us for this sin. If it

were not for Christ, this iniquity that dwells in us would certainly be our ruin. He is our advocate with the Father, and through him God pities, and spares, and pardons, and lays not our iniquities to our charge. It is Christ that has purchased deliverance for us in due time. Through Christ death will put an end to all these complaints, and waft us to an eternity which we shall spend without sin or sigh. Blessed be God that giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

O wretched man that I am! The feeling implied by this lamentation is the result of this painful conflict; and this frequent subjection to sinful propensities. The effect of this conflict is

(1.) to produce pain and distress, it is often an agonizing struggle between good and evil; a struggle which annoys the peace, and renders life wretched.

(2.) It tends to produce humility. It is humbling to man to be thus under the influence of evil passions. It is degrading to his nature; a stain on his glory; and it tends to bring him into the dust, that he is under the control of such propensities, and so often gives indulgence to them. In such circumstances, the mind is overwhelmed with wretchedness, and instinctively sighs for relief. Can the law aid? Can man aid? Can any native strength of conscience or of reason aid? In vain all these are tried, and the Christian then calmly and thankfully acquiesces in the consolations of the apostle, that aid can be obtained only through Jesus Christ. Who shall deliver me. Who shall rescue me; the condition of a mind in deep distress, and conscious of its own weakness, and looking for aid. The body of this death. Marg. This body of death. The word body here is probably used as equivalent to flesh, denoting the corrupt and evil propensities on the soul. Rom 7:18. It is thus used to denote the law of sin in the members, as being that with which the apostle was struggling, and from which he desired to be delivered. The expression "body of this death" is a Hebraism, denoting a body deadly in its tendency; and the whole expression may mean the corrupt principles of man; the

carnal, evil affections that lead to death or to condemnation. The expression is one of vast strength, and strongly characteristic of the apostle Paul. It indicates,

(1.) that it was near him, attending him, and was distressing in its nature.

(2.) An earnest wish to be delivered from it. Some have supposed that he refers to a custom practised by ancient tyrants, of binding a dead body to a captive as a punishment, and compelling him to drag the cumbersome and offensive burden with him wherever he went. I do not see any evidence that the apostle had this in view. But such a fact may be used as a striking and perhaps not improper illustration of the meaning of the apostle here. No strength of words could express deeper feeling; none more feelingly indicate the necessity of the grace of God to accomplish that to which the unaided human powers are incompetent.

25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I
myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

I thank God. That is, I thank God for effecting a deliverance to which I am myself incompetent. There is a way of I of rescue, and trace it altogether to his mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ. What conscience could not do, what the law could not do, what unaided human strength could not do, has been accomplished by the plan the gospel; and complete deliverance can be expected there, and there alone. This is the point to which all his reasoning had tended; and having thus shown that the law was insufficient to effect this deliverance, he is now prepared to utter the language of Christian thankfulness that it can be effected by the gospel. The superiority of the gospel to the law, in overcoming all the evils under which man labours, is thus triumphantly established. Comp. 1Cor 15:57.

The law of sin. That is, in the members. The flesh throughout, in all its native propensities and passions, leads to sin; it has no

tendency to holiness; and its corruptions cart be overcome only by the grace of God. We have thus

(1.) a view of the sad and painful conflict between sin and God. They are opposed in all things.

(2.) We see the raging, withering effect of sin on the soul. In all circumstances it tends to death and woe.

(3.) We see the feebleness of the law and of conscience to overcome this. The tendency of both is to produce conflict and woe. And

(4.) we see that the gospel only can overcome sin. To us it should be a subject of ever-increasing thankfulness, that what could not be accomplished by the law can be thus effected by the gospel; and that God has devised a plan that thus effects complete deliverance, and which gives to the captive in sin an everlasting triumph.

Romans-8

Life in the Spirit

1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus, Ro 8:1. This is his triumph after that melancholy complaint and conflict in the foregoing chapter--sin remaining, disturbing, vexing, but, blessed be God, not ruining. The complaint he takes to himself, but humbly transfers the comfort with himself to all true believers, who are all interested in it. 1. It is the unspeakable privilege and comfort of all those that are in Christ Jesus that there is therefore now no condemnation to them. He does not say, "There is no accusation against them," for this there is; but the accusation is thrown out, and the indictment quashed. He does not say, "There is nothing in them that deserves condemnation," for this there is,

and they see it, and own it, and mourn over it, and condemn themselves for it; but it shall not be their ruin. He does not say, "There is no cross, no affliction to them or no displeasure in the affliction," for this there may be; but no condemnation. They may be chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world. Now this arises from their being in Christ Jesus; by virtue of their union with him through faith they are thus secured. They are in Christ Jesus, as in their city of refuge, and so are protected from the avenger of blood. He is their advocate, and brings them off. There is therefore no condemnation, because they are interested in the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to the law. In Christ, God does not only not condemn them, but is well pleased with them, Mt 17:5. 2. It is the undoubted character of all those who are so in Christ Jesus as to be freed from condemnation that they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Observe, The character is given from their walk, not from any one particular act, but from their course and way. And the great question is, What is the principle of the walk, the flesh or the spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? Which of these do we mind, for which of these doe we make provision, by which of these are we governed, which of these do we take part with?

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me
free from the law of sin and death.

No condemnation. This does not mean that sin in believers is not to be condemned as much as anywhere, for the contrary is everywhere taught in the Scriptures; but it means,

(1.) that the gospel does not pronounce condemnation like the law. Its office is to pardon; the office of the law, to condemn. The one never affords deliverance, but always condemns; the object of the other is to free from condemnation, and to set the soul at liberty.

(2.) There is no final condemnation under the gospel. The office, design, and tendency of the gospel is to free from the condemning sentence of law. This is its first and its glorious announcement, that it frees lost and ruined men from a most fearful and terrible condemnation.

Not after the flesh. Who do not live to gratify the corrupt desires and passions of the flesh. Rom 7:18. This is a characteristic of a Christian. What it is to walk after the flesh may be seen in Gal 5:19-21.

But after the Spirit. As the Holy Spirit would lead or prompt. What the Spirit produces may be seen in Gal 5:22,23.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

The law was weak, it could not accomplish them /justification & sanctification/: yet that weakness was not through any defect in the law, but through the flesh, through the corruption of human nature, by which we became incapable either of being justified or sanctified by the law. We had become unable to keep the law, and, in case of failure, the law, as a covenant of works, made no provision, and so left us as it found us. Or understand it of the ceremonial law; that was a plaster not wide enough for the wound, it could never take away sin, Heb 10:4.

The foundation of this freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us, of which he speaks Ro 8:3, God sending his own Son. Observe, When the law failed, God provided another method. Christ comes to do that which the law could not do. Moses brought the children of Israel to the borders of Canaan, and then died, and left them there; but Joshua did that which Moses could not do, and put them in possession of Canaan. Thus what the law could not do Christ did. The best exposition of this verse we have Heb 10:1-10. To make the sense of the words clear, which in our translation is a little intricate, we may read it thus, with a little transposition:--God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, &c., Ro 8:4. Observe, [1.] How Christ appeared: In the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinful, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled; but in the likeness of that flesh which was sinful. He took upon him that nature which was corrupt,

though perfectly abstracted from the corruptions of it. His being circumcised, redeemed, baptized with John's baptism, bespeaks the likeness of sinful flesh. The bitings of the fiery serpents were cured by a serpent of brass, which had the shape, through free from the venom, of the serpents that bit them.

Thus by Christ is sin condemned; though it live and remain, its life in the saints is still but like that of a condemned malefactor. It was by the condemning of sin that death was disarmed, and the devil, who had the power of death, destroyed. The condemning of sin saved the sinner from condemnation. Christ was made sin for us (2Co 5:21), and, being so made, when he was condemned sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ, condemned in the human nature: So was sanctification made to divine justice, and way made for the salvation of the sinner. Therefore, sin can neither accuse nor rule; its testimony is null, and its authority null.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. Both in our justification and in our sanctification, the righteousness of the law if fulfilled. A righteousness of satisfaction for the breach of the law is fulfilled by the imputation of Christ's complete and perfect righteousness, which answers the utmost demands of the law, as the mercy-seat was as long and as broad as the ark.

4 that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who
walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;
but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

Observe how we may answer to this character, Ro 8:5, &c.

(1.) By looking to our minds. How may we know whether we are after the flesh or after the Spirit? By examining what we mind, the things of the flesh or the things of the spirit. Carnal pleasure, worldly profit and honour, the things of sense and time, are the things of the flesh, which unregenerate people mind. The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity, are the things of the Spirit, which those that are after the Spirit do mind.

The man is as the mind is. The mind is the forge of thoughts. As he thinketh in his heart, so is he, Pr 23:7. Which way do the thoughts move with most pleasure? On what do they dwell with most satisfaction? The mind is the seat of wisdom. Which way go the projects and contrivances? whether are we more wise for the world or for our souls? phronousi ta tes sarkos--they savour the things of the flesh; so the word is rendered, Mt 16:23. It is a great matter what our savour is, what truths, what tidings, what comforts, we do most relish, and are most agreeable to us. Now, to caution us against this carnal-mindedness, he shows the great misery and malignity of it, and compares it with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual-mindedness.

[1.] It is death, Ro 8:6. It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is its alienation from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul consists. A carnal soul is a dead soul, dead as a soul can die. She that liveth in pleasure is dead (1Ti 5:6), not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death includes all misery; carnal souls are miserable souls. But to be spiritually minded, phronema tou pneumatos--a spiritual savour (the wisdom that is from above, a principle of grace) is life and peace; it is the felicity and happiness of the soul. The life of the soul consists in its union with spiritual things by the mind. A sanctified soul is a living soul, and that life is peace; it is a very comfortable life. All the paths of spiritual wisdom are paths of peace. It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this. Spiritual-mindedness is eternal life and peace begun, and an assuring earnest of the perfection of it.

[2.] It is enmity to God (Ro 8:7), and this is worse than the former. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, which is bad; but this speaks him a devil of a man. It is not only an enemy, but enmity itself. It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God; it rebels against his authority, thwarts his design, opposes his interest, spits in his face, spurns at his bowels. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. How should this humble us for and warn us against, carnal-mindedness! Shall we harbour and

indulge that which is enmity to God our creator, owner, ruler, and benefactor? To prove this, he urges that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light and darkness. The carnal man may, by the power of divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the carnal mind never can; this must be broken and expelled. See how wretchedly the corrupt will of man is enslaved to sin; as far as the carnal mind prevails, there is no inclination to the law of God; therefore wherever there is a change wrought it is by the power of God's grace, not by the freedom of man's will. Hence he infers (Ro 8:8), Those that are in the flesh cannot please God. Those that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God, wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ, the pleasing Mediator. The very sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination, Pr 15:8. Pleasing God is our highest end, of which those that are in the flesh cannot but fall short; they cannot please him, nay, they cannot but displease him. We may know our state and character,

6 For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.

The expression is one of great energy, and shows that it not only leads to death, or leads to misery, but that it is death itself; there is woe and condemnation in the very act and purpose of being supremely devoted to the corrupt passions. Its only tendency is condemnation and despair. But, to be spiritually minded is life i.e. itself is life.

7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Cannot please God. That is, while they are thus in the flesh; while they thus pursue the desires of their corrupt nature, they cannot please God. But this affirms nothing respecting their ability to turn from this course, and to pursue a different mode of life. That is a different question. A child may be obstinate, proud, and disobedient; and, while in this state, it may be affirmed of him that he cannot please his parent. But whether he might not cease to be

obstinate, and become obedient, is a very different inquiry; and the two subjects should never be confounded: It follows from this,

(1.) that those who are unrenewed are totally depraved, since in this state they cannot please God.

(2.) That none of their actions, while in this state can be acceptable to him, since he is pleased only with those who are spiritually minded.

(3.) That those who are in this state should turn from it without delay; as it is desirable that every man should please God.

(4.) That if the sinner does not turn from his course, he will be ruined. With his present character he can never please him; neither in health nor sickness; neither in life nor death; neither on earth nor in hell. He is engaged in hostility against God; and if he does not himself forsake it, it will be endless, and involve his soul in all the evils of a personal, and direct, and eternal warfare with the Lord Almighty.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

By enquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or not (Ro 8:9): You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. This expresses states and conditions of the soul vastly different. All the saints have flesh and spirit in them; but to be in the flesh and to be in the Spirit are contrary. It denotes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles. As we say, A man is in love, or in drink, that is, overcome by it. Now the great question is whether we are in the flesh or in the Spirit; and how may we come to know it? Why, by enquiring whether the Spirit of God dwell in us. The Spirit dwelling in us is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, for the indwelling is mutual (1Jo 4:16): Dwelleth in God, and God in him. The Spirit visits many that are unregenerate with his motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified he dwells; there he resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own

house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we put this question to our own hearts, Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house, here? Which interest has the ascendant? To this he subjoins a general rule of trial: If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. To be Christ's (that is, to be a Christian indeed, one of his children, his servants, his friends, in union with him) is a privilege and honour which many pretend to that have no part nor lot in the matter. None are his but those that have his Spirit; that is,

[1.] That are spirited as he was spirited--are meek, and lowly, and humble, and peaceable, and patient, and charitable, as he was. We cannot tread in his steps unless we have his spirit; the frame and disposition of our souls must be conformable to Christ's pattern.

[2.] That are actuated and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, as a sanctifier, teacher, and comforter. Having the Spirit of Christ is the same with having the Spirit of God to dwell in us. But those two come much to one; for all that are actuated by the Spirit of God as their rule are conformable to the spirit of Christ as their pattern. Now this description of the character of those to whom belongs this first privilege of freedom from condemnation is to be applied to all the other privileges that follow.

Is none of his. Is not a Christian. This is a test of piety that is easily applied; and this settles the question. If a man is not influenced by the meek, pure, and holy spirit of the Lord Jesus, if he is not conformed to his image, if his life does not resemble that of the Saviour, he is a stranger to religion. No test could be more easily applied, and none is more decisive. It matters not what else he may have. He may be loud in his professions, amiable in his temper, bold in his zeal, or active in promoting the interests of his own party or denomination in the church; but if he has not the temper of the Saviour, and does not manifest his spirit, it is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. May all who read this honestly examine themselves; and may they have that which is the source of the purest felicity, the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus.

10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

1. We cannot say but that the body is dead; it is a frail, mortal, dying body, and it will be dead shortly; it is a house of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. The life purchased and promised does not immortalize the body in its present state. It is dead, that is, it is appointed to die, it is under a sentence of death: as we say one that is condemned is a dead man. In the midst of life we are in death: be our bodies ever so strong, and healthful, and handsome, they are as good as dead (Heb 11:12), and this because of sin. It is sin that kills the body. This effect the first threatening has (Ge 3:19): Dust thou art. Methinks, were there no other argument, love to our bodies should make us hate sin, because it is such an enemy to our bodies. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin.

2. But the spirit, the precious soul, that is life; it is now spiritually alive, nay, it is life. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the life of the saint lies in the soul, while the life of the sinner goes no further than the body. When the body dies, and returns to the dust, the spirit if life; not only living and immortal, but swallowed up of life. Death to the saints is but the freeing of the heaven-born spirit from the clog and load of this body, that it may be fit to partake of eternal life. When Abraham was dead, yet God was the God of Abraham, for even then his spirit was life, Mt 22:31,32. See Ps 49:15. And this because of righteousness. The righteousness of Christ imputed to them secures the soul, the better part, from death; the righteousness of Christ inherent in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and, by God's ordination, at death elevates it, and improves it, and makes it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. The eternal life of the soul consists in the vision and fruition of God, and both assimilating, for which the soul is qualified by the righteousness of sanctification. I refer to Ps 17:15, I will behold thy face in righteousness.

The body is dead. This passage has been interpreted in very different ways. Some understand it to mean that the body is dead in respect to sin; that is, that sin has no more power to excite evil passions and desires; others, that the body must die on account of sin, but that the spiritual part shall live, and even the body shall live also in the resurrection. Thus Calvin, Beza, and Augustine. Doddridge understands it thus: "Though the body is to die on account of the first sin that entered into the world, yet the spirit is life, and shall continue to live on for ever, through that righteousness which the second Adam has introduced." To each of these interpretations there are serious objections, which it is not necessary to urge. I understand the passage in the following manner: The body refers to that of which the apostle had said so much in the previous chapters--the flesh, the man before conversion. It is subject to corrupt passions and desires, and may be said thus to be dead, as it has none of the elements of spiritual life. It is under the reign of sin and death. The word (μεν)--indeed, or truly--has been omitted in our translation, and the omission has obscured the sense. The expression is an admission of the apostle, or a summary statement of what had before been shown. "It is to be admitted, indeed, or it is true, that the unrenewed nature, the man before conversion, under the influence of the flesh, is spiritually dead. Sin has its seat in the fleshly appetites; and the whole body may be admitted thus to be dead or corrupt."

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell
in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken
your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

There is a life reserved too for the poor body at last: He shall also quicken your mortal bodies, Ro 8:11. The Lord is for the body; and though at death it is cast aside as a despised broken vessel, a vessel in which is no pleasure, yet God will have a desire to the work of his hands (Job 14:15), will remember his covenant with the dust, and will not lose a grain of it; but the body shall be reunited to the soul, and clothed with a glory agreeable to it. Vile bodies shall be newly fashioned, Php 3:21,1Co 15:42. Two great assurances of the resurrection of the body are mentioned:--

(1.) The resurrection of Christ: He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken. Christ rose as the head, and first-fruits, and forerunner of all the saints, 1Co 15:20. The body of Christ lay in the grave, under the sin of all the elect imputed, and broke through it. O grave, then, where is thy victory? It is in the virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise.

(2.) The indwelling of the Spirit. The same Spirit that raiseth the soul now will raise the body shortly: By his Spirit that dwelleth in you. The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1Co 3:16,6:19. Now, though these temples may be suffered for awhile to lie in ruins, yet they shall be rebuilt. The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, shall be repaired, whatever great mountains may be in the way. The Spirit, breathing upon dead and dry bones, will make them live, and the saints even in their flesh shall see God. Hence the apostle by the way infers how much it is our duty to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Ro 8:12,13. Let not our life be after the wills and motions of the flesh. Two motives he mentions here:--

[1.] We are not debtors to the flesh, neither by relation, gratitude, nor any other bond or obligation. We owe no suit nor service to our carnal desires; we are indeed bound to clothe, and feed, and take care of the body, as a servant to the soul in the service of God, but no further. We are not debtors to it; the flesh never did us so much kindness as to oblige us to serve it. It is implied that we are debtors to Christ and to the Spirit: there we owe our all, all we have and all we can do, by a thousand bonds and obligations. Being delivered from so great a death by so great a ransom, we are deeply indebted to our deliverer. See 1Co 6:19,20.

[2.] Consider the consequences, what will be at the end of the way. Here are life and death, blessing and cursing, set before us. If you live after the flesh, you shall die; that is, die eternally. It is the pleasing, and serving, and gratifying, of the flesh, that are the ruin of souls; that is, the second death. Dying indeed is the soul's dying: the death of the saints is but a sleep. But, on the other hand, You

shall live, live and be happy to eternity; that is the true life: If you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, subdue and keep under all fleshly lusts and affections, deny yourselves in the pleasing and humouring of the body, and this through the Spirit; we cannot do it without the Spirit working it in us, and the Spirit will not do it without our doing our endeavour. So that in a word we are put upon this dilemma, either to displease the body or destroy the soul.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live
after the flesh.
13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the
Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of
God.
15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but
ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba,
Father.

Abba is a Syriac word signifying father or my father; pater, a Greek work; and why both, Abba, Father? Because Christ said so in prayer (Mk 14:36), Abba, Father: and we have received the Spirit of the Son. It denotes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid upon the relation. Little children, begging of their parents, can say little but Father, Father, and that is rhetoric enough. It also denotes that the adoption is common both to Jews and Gentiles: the Jews call him Abba in their language, the Greeks may call him pater in their language; for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew.

Again to fear. That you should again be afraid, or be subjected to servile fear. This implies that in their former state, under the law, they were in a state of servitude, and that the tendency of it was merely to produce alarm. Every sinner is subject to such fear. He has everything of which to be alarmed. God is angry with him; his conscience will trouble him; and he has everything to apprehend in death and in eternity. But it is not so with the Christian. Comp. 2Ti 1:7.

The Spirit of adoption. The feeling of affection, love, and confidence which pertains to children; not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves, but the temper and affectionate regard of sons. Adoption is the taking and treating a stranger as one's own child. It is applied to Christians because God treats them as his children; he receives them into this relation, though they were by nature strangers and enemies. It implies, (1.) that we by nature had no claim on him; (2.) that, therefore, the act is one of mere kindness-- of pure, sovereign love; (3.) that we are now under his protection and care; and (4.) that we are bound to manifest towards him the spirit of children, and yield to him obedience. Jn 1:12. Comp. Gal 4:5, Eph 1:5. It is for this that Christians are so often called the sons of God.

Whereby we cry. As children who need protection and help. This evinces the habitual spirit of a child of God; a disposition, (1.) to express towards him the feelings due to a father; (2.) to call upon him-- to address him in the language of affection and endearing confidence; (3.) to seek his protection and aid.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

The former is the work of the Spirit as a Sanctifier; this as a Comforter. Beareth witness with our spirit. Many a man has the witness of his own spirit to the goodness of his state who has not the concurring testimony of the Spirit. Many speak peace to themselves to whom the God of heaven does not speak peace. But those that are sanctified have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits, which is to be understood not of any immediate extraordinary revelation, but an ordinary work of the Spirit, in and by the means of comfort, speaking peace to the soul. This testimony is always agreeable to the written word, and is therefore always grounded upon sanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word. The Spirit witnesses to none the privileges of children who have not the nature and disposition of children.

With our spirit. To our minds. This pertains to the adoption; and it means, that the Holy Spirit furnishes evidence to our minds that we are adopted into the family of God. This effect is not unfrequently attributed to the Holy Spirit, 2Cor 1:22, 1Jn 5:10,11; 1Cor 2:12. If it be asked how this is done, I answer, It is not by any revelation of new truth; it is not by inspiration; it is not always by assurance; it is not by a mere persuasion that we are elected to eternal life; but it is by producing in us the appropriate effects of his influence. It is his to renew the heart; to sanctify the soul; to produce "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal 5:22,23. If a man has these, he has evidence of the witnessing of the Spirit with his spirit. If not, he has no such evidence. And the way, therefore, to ascertain whether we have this witnessing of the Spirit, is by an honest and prayerful inquiry whether these fruits of the Spirit actually exist in our minds. If they do, the evidence is clear. If not, all vain confidence.of good estate; all visions, and raptures, and fancied revelations, will be mere delusions. It may be added, that the effect of these fruits of the Spirit on the mind is to produce a calm and heavenly frame; and in that frame, when attended with the appropriate fruits of the Spirit in a holy life, we may rejoice as an evidence of piety.

17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs
with Christ, if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may
be also glorified together.

Heaven is an inheritance that all the saints are heirs to. They do not come to it as purchasers by any merit or procurement of their own; but as heirs, purely by the act of God; for God makes heirs. The saints are heirs though in this world they are heirs under age; see Ga 4:1,2. Their present state is a state of education and preparation for the inheritance. How comfortable should this be to all the children of God, how little soever they have in possession, that, being heirs, they have enough in reversion! But the honour and happiness of an heir lie in the value and worth of that which he is heir to: we read of those that inherit the wind; and therefore we have here an abstract of the premises.

1. Heirs of God. The Lord himself is the portion of the saints' inheritance (Ps 16:5), a goodly heritage, Ro 8:6. The saints are spiritual priests, that have the Lord for their inheritance, Nu 18:20. The vision of God and the fruition of God make up the inheritance the saints are heirs to. God himself will be with them, and will be their God, Re 21:3.

2. Joint-heirs with Christ. Christ, as Mediator, is said to be the heir of all things (Heb 1:2), and true believers, by virtue of their union with him, shall inherit all things, Re 21:7. Those that now partake of the Spirit of Christ, as his brethren, shall, as his brethren, partake of his glory (Joh 17:24), shall sit down with him upon his throne, Re 3:21. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him! Now this future glory is further spoken of as the reward of present sufferings and as the accomplishment of present hopes.

And joint-heirs with Christ. Christ is by eminence THE Son of God. As such, he is heir to the full honours and glory of heaven. Christians are united to him; they are his friends; and they are thus represented as destined to partake with him of his glory. They are the sons of God in a different sense from what he is; he by his nature and high relation, they by adoption; but still the idea of sonship exists in both; and hence both will partake in the glories of the eternal inheritance. Comp. Php 2: 8, 9, Heb 2: 9,10. The connexion between Christ and Christians is often referred to in the New Testament. The fact that they are united here is often alleged as a reason why they will be in glory. Jn 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." 2Ti 2:11,12, "For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Rev 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," etc. Jn 17:22-24.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

This the gospel is filled with the assurances of. Now, that suffering saints may have strong supports and consolations from their hopes

of heaven, he holds the balance (Ro 8:18), in a comparison between the two, which is observable.

1. In one scale he puts the sufferings of this present time. The sufferings of the saints are but sufferings of this present time, strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time (2Co 4:17), light affliction, and but for a moment. So that on the sufferings he writes tekel, weighed in the balance and found light.

2. In the other scale he puts the glory, and finds that a weight, an exceeding and eternal weight: Glory that shall be revealed. In our present state we come short, not only in the enjoyment, but in the knowledge of that glory (1Co 2:9,1Jo 3:2): it shall be revealed. It surpasses all that we have yet seen and known: present vouchsafements are sweet and precious, very precious, very sweet; but there is something to come, something behind the curtain, that will outshine all. Shall be revealed in us; not only revealed to us, to be seen, but revealed in us, to be enjoyed. The kingdom of God is within you, and will be so to eternity.

3. He concludes the sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory--ouk axia pros ten doxan. They cannot merit that glory; and, if suffering for Christ will not merit, much less will doing. They should not at all deter and frighten us from the diligent and earnest pursuit of that glory. The sufferings are small and short, and concern the body only; but the glory is rich and great, and concerns the soul, and is eternal. This he reckons. I reckon--logizomai. It is not a rash and sudden determination, but the product of a very serious and deliberate consideration. He had reasoned the case within himself, weighed the arguments on both sides, and thus at last resolves the point. O how vastly different is the sentence of the word from the sentiment of the world concerning the sufferings of this present time!

I reckon, as an arithmetician that is balancing an account. He first sums up what is disbursed for Christ in the sufferings of this

present time, and finds they come to very little; he then sums up what is secured to us by Christ in the glory that shall be revealed, and this he finds to be an infinite sum, transcending all conception, the disbursement abundantly made up and the losses infinitely countervailed. And who would be afraid then to suffer for Christ, who as he is before-hand with us in suffering, so he will not be behind-hand with us in recompence? Now Paul was as competent a judge of this point as ever any mere man was. He could reckon not by art only, but by experience; for he knew both. He knew what the sufferings of this present time were; see 2Co 11:23-28. He knew what the glory of heaven is; see 2Co 12:3,4. And, upon the view of both, he gives this judgment here. There is nothing like a believing view of the glory which shall be revealed to support and bear up the spirit under all the sufferings of this present time. The reproach of Christ appears riches to those who have respect to the recompence of reward, Heb 11:26.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for
the manifestation of the sons of God.
20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but
by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope;

As the saints are suffering for it, so they are waiting for it. Heaven is therefore sure; for God by his Spirit would not raise and encourage those hopes only to defeat and disappoint them. He will establish that word unto his servants on which he has caused them to hope (Ps 119:49), and heaven is therefore sweet; for, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, surely when the desire comes it will be a tree of life, Pr 13:12. Now he observes an expectation of this glory,

1. In the creatures Ro 8:19-22. That must needs be a great, a transcendent glory, which all the creatures are so earnestly expecting and longing for. This observation in these verses has some difficulty in it, which puzzles interpreters a little; and the more because it is a remark not made in any other scripture, with which it might be compared. By the creature here we understand, not as some do the Gentile world, and their expectation of Christ and the gospel, which is an exposition very foreign and forced, but the whole frame of nature, especially that of this lower world--the

whole creation, the compages of inanimate and sensible creatures, which, because of their harmony and mutual dependence, and because they all constitute and make up one world, are spoken of in the singular number as the creature. The sense of the apostle in these four verses we may take in the following observations:--

(1.) That there is a present vanity to which the creature, by reason of the sin of man, is made subject, Ro 8:20. When man sinned, the ground was cursed for man's sake, and with it all the creatures (especially of this lower world, where our acquaintance lies) became subject to that curse, became mutable and mortal. Under the bondage of corruption, Ro 8:21. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which the creature has contracted by the fall of man: the creation is sullied and stained, much of the beauty of the world gone. There is an enmity of one creature to another; they are all subject to continual alteration and decay of the individuals, liable to the strokes of God's judgments upon man. When the world was drowned, and almost all the creatures in it, surely then it was subject to vanity indeed. The whole species of creatures is designed for, and is hastening to, a total dissolution by fire. And it is not the least part of their vanity and bondage that they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. The creatures are often abused to the dishonour of their Creator, the hurt of his children, or the service of his enemies.

When the creatures are made the food and fuel of our lusts, they are subject to vanity, they are captivated by the law of sin. And this not willingly, not of their own choice. All the creatures desire their own perfection and consummation; when they are made instruments of sin it is not willingly. Or, They are thus captivated, not for any sin of their own, which they had committed, but for man's sin: By reason of him who hath subjected the same. Adam did it meritoriously; the creatures being delivered to him, when he by sin delivered himself he delivered them likewise into the bondage of corruption. God did it judicially; he passed a sentence upon the creatures for the sin of man, by which they became subject. And this yoke (poor creatures) they bear in hope that it will not be so always. Ep elpidi hoti kai, &c.--in hope that the

creature itself; so many Greek copies join the words. We have reason to pity the poor creatures that for our sin have become subject to vanity.

(2.) That the creatures groan and travail in pain together under this vanity and corruption, Ro 8:22. It is a figurative expression. Sin is a burden to the whole creation; the sin of the Jews, in crucifying Christ, set the earth a quaking under them. The idols were a burden to the weary beast, Isa 46:1. There is a general outcry of the whole creation against the sin of man: the stone crieth out of the wall (Hab 2:11), the land cries, Job 31:38.

(3.) That the creature, that is now thus burdened, shall, at the time of the restitution of all things, be delivered from this bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Ro 8:21)-- they shall no more be subject to vanity and corruption, and the other fruits of the curse; but, on the contrary, this lower world shall be renewed: when there will be new heavens there will be a new earth (2Pe 3:13,Re 21:1); and there shall be a glory conferred upon all the creatures, which shall be (in the proportion of their natures) as suitable and as great an advancement as the glory of the children of God shall be to them. The fire at the last day shall be a refining, not a destroying annihilating fire. What becomes of the souls of brutes, that go downwards, none can tell. But it should seem by the scripture that there will be some kind of restoration of them. And if it be objected, What use will they be of to glorified saints? we may suppose them of as much use as they were to Adam in innocency; and if it be only to illustrate the wisdom, power, and goodness of their Creator, that is enough. Compare with this Ps 96:10-13,98:7-9. Let the heavens rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh.

(4.) That the creature doth therefore earnestly expect and wait for the manifestation of the children of God, Ro 8:19. Observe, At the second coming of Christ there will be a manifestation of the children of God. Now the saints are God's hidden ones, the wheat seems lost in a heap of chaff; but then they shall be manifested. It

does not yet appear what we shall be (1Jo 3:2), but then the glory shall be revealed. The children of God shall appear in their own colours. And this redemption of the creature is reserved till then; for, as it was with man and for man that they fell under the curse, so with man and for man they shall be delivered. All the curse and filth that now adhere to the creature shall be done away then when those that have suffered with Christ upon earth shall reign with him upon the earth. This the whole creation looks and longs for; and it may serve as a reason why now a good man should be merciful to his beast.

21 because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the
bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children
of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth
in pain together until now.

23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits
of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves,
waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

As the saints are suffering for it, so they are waiting for it. Heaven is therefore sure; for God by his Spirit would not raise and encourage those hopes only to defeat and disappoint them. He will establish that word unto his servants on which he has caused them to hope (Ps 119:49), and heaven is therefore sweet; for, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, surely when the desire comes it will be a tree of life, Pr 13:12. Now he observes an expectation of this glory,

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24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope:
for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

In the saints, who are new creatures, Ro 8:23-25. Observe,

(a.) The grounds of this expectation in the saints. It is our having received the first-fruits of the Spirit, which both quickens our desires and encourages our hopes, and both ways raises our expectations. The first-fruits did both sanctify and ensure the lump. Grace is the first-fruits of glory, it is glory begun. We, having received such clusters in this wilderness, cannot but long for the full vintage in the heavenly Canaan. Not only they--not only the creatures which are not capable of such a happiness as the first-fruits of the Spirit, but even we, who have such present rich receivings, cannot but long for something more and greater. In having the first-fruits of the Spirit we have that which is very precious, but we have not all we would have. We groan within ourselves, which denotes the strength and secrecy of these desires; not making a loud noise, as the hypocrites howling upon the bed for corn and wine, but with silent groans, which pierce heaven soonest of all. Or, We groan among ourselves. It is the unanimous vote, the joint desire, of the whole church, all agree in this: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. The groaning denotes a very earnest and importunate desire, the soul pained with the delay. Present receivings and comforts are consistent with a great many groans; not as the pangs of one dying, but as the throes of a woman in travail--groans that are symptoms of life, not of death.

(b.) The object of this expectation. What is it we are thus desiring and waiting for? What would we have? The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Though the soul be the principal part of the man, yet the Lord has declared himself for the body also, and has provided a great deal of honour and happiness for the body. The resurrection is here called the redemption of the body. It shall then be rescued from the power of death and the grave, and the bondage of corruption; and, though a vile body, yet it shall be refined and beautified, and made like that glorious body of Christ, Php 3:21,1Co 15:42. This is called the adoption.

[1.] It is the adoption manifested before all the world, angels and men. Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear, the honour is now clouded; but then God will publicly own all his children. The deed of adoption, which is now written, signed, and sealed, will then be recognized, proclaimed, and published. As Christ was, so the saints will be, declared to be the sons of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, Ro 1:4. It will then be put past dispute.

[2.] It is the adoption perfected and completed. The children of God have bodies as well as souls; and, till those bodies are brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, the adoption is not perfect. But then it will be complete, when the Captain of our salvation shall bring the many sons to glory, Heb 2:10. This is that which we expect, in hope of which our flesh rests, Ps 16:9,10. All the days of our appointed time we are waiting, till this change shall come, when he shall call, and we shall answer, and he will have a desire to the work of his hands, Job 14:14,15.

(c.) The agreeableness of this to our present state, Ro 8:24,25. Our happiness is not in present possession: We are saved by hope. In this, as in other things, God hath made our present state a state of trial and probation--that our reward is out of sight. Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust. It is acknowledged that one of the principal graces of a Christian is hope (1Co 13:13), which necessarily implies a good thing to come, which is the object of

that hope. Faith respects the promise, hope the thing promised. Faith is the evidence, hope the expectation, of things not seen. Faith is the mother of hope. We do with patience wait. In hoping for this glory we have need of patience, to bear the sufferings we meet with in the way to it and the delays of it. Our way is rough and long; but he that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and therefore, though he seem to tarry, it becomes us to wait for him.

25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for
it.
26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know
not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself
maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be
uttered.
27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of
the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints
according to *the will of* God.

The help of the Spirit in prayer. While we are in this world, hoping and waiting for what we see not, we must be praying. Hope supposes desire, and that desire offered up to God is prayer; we groan. Now observe,

1. Our weakness in prayer: We know not what we should pray for as we ought. (1.) As to the matter of our requests, we know not what to ask. We are not competent judges of our own condition. Who knows what is good for a man in this life? Ec 6:12. We are short-sighted, and very much biassed in favour of the flesh, and apt to separate the end from the way. You know not what you ask, Mt 20:22. We are like foolish children, that are ready to cry for fruit before it is ripe and fit for them; see Lu 9:54,55. (2.) As to the manner, we know not how to pray as we ought. It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well, seek in a due order; and here we are often at a loss--graces are weak, affections cold, thoughts wandering, and it is not always easy to find the heart to pray, 2Sa 7:27. The apostle speaks of this in the first person: We know not. He puts himself among the rest. Folly, and weakness,

and distraction in prayer, are what all the saints are complaining of. If so great a saint as Paul knew not what to pray for, what little reason have we to go forth about that duty in our own strength!

2 The assistances which the Spirit gives us in that duty. He helps our infirmities, meant especially of our praying infirmities, which most easily beset us in that duty, against which the Spirit helps. The Spirit in the world helps; many rules and promises there are in the word for our help. The Spirit in the heart helps, dwelling in us, working in us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, especially with respect to the infirmities we are under when we are in a suffering state, when our faith is most apt to fail; for this end the Holy Ghost was poured out. Helpeth, synantilambanetai--heaves with us, over against us, helps as we help one that would lift up a burden, by lifting over against him at the other end--helps with us, that is, with us doing our endeavour, putting forth the strength we have. We must not sit still, and expect that the Spirit should do all; when the Spirit goes before us we must bestir ourselves. We cannot without God, and he will not without us. What help? Why, the Spirit itself makes intercession for us, dictates our requests, indites our petitions, draws up our plea for us. Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts; so graciously has God provided for the encouragement of the praying remnant. The Spirit, as an enlightening Spirit, teaches us what to pray for, as a sanctifying Spirit works and excites praying graces, as a comforting Spirit silences our fears, and helps us over all our discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the spring of all our desires and breathings towards God. Now this intercession which the Spirit makes is,

(a.) With groanings that cannot be uttered. The strength and fervency of those desires which the Holy Spirit works are hereby intimated. There may be praying in the Spirit where there is not a word spoken; as Moses prayed (Ex 14:15), and Hannah, 1Sa 1:13. It is not the rhetoric and eloquence, but the faith and fervency, of our prayers, that the Spirit works, as an intercessor, in us. Cannot be uttered; they are so confused, the soul is in such a hurry with temptations and troubles, we know not what to say, nor how to

express ourselves. Here is the Spirit interceding with groans that cannot be uttered. When we can but cry, Abba, Father, and refer ourselves to him with a holy humble boldness, this is the work of the Spirit.

(b.) According to the will of God, Ro 8:27. The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word. Those desires that are contrary to the will of God do not come from the Spirit. The Spirit interceding in us evermore melts our wills into the will of God. Not as I will, but as thou wilt.

3. The sure success of these intercessions: He that searches the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, Ro 8:27. To a hypocrite, all whose religion lies in his tongue, nothing is more dreadful than that God searches the heart and sees through all his disguises. To a sincere Christian, who makes heart-work of his duty, nothing is more comfortable than that God searches the heart, for then he will hear and answer those desires which we want words to express. He knows what we have need of before we ask, Mt 6:8. He knows what is the mind of his own Spirit in us. And, as he always hears the Son interceding for us, so he always hears the Spirit interceding in us, because his intercession is according to the will of God. What could have been done more for the comfort of the Lord's people, in all their addresses to God? Christ had said, "Whatever you ask the Father according to his will he will give it you." But how shall we learn to ask according to his will? Why, the Spirit will teach us that. Therefore it is that the seed of Jacob never seek in vain.

More than Conquerors

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

The concurrence of all providences for the good of those that are Christ's, Ro 8:28. It might be objected that, notwithstanding all

these privileges, we see believers compassed about with manifold afflictions; though the Spirit makes intercession for them, yet their troubles are continued. It is very true; but in this the Spirit's intercession is always effectual, that, however it goes with them, all this is working together for their good. Observe here.

1 The character of the saints, who are interested in this privilege; they are here described by such properties as are common to all that are truly sanctified.

(1.) They love God. This includes all the out-goings of the soul's affections towards God as the chief good and highest end. It is our love to God that makes every providence sweet, and therefore profitable. Those that love God make the best of all he does, and take all in good part.

(2.) They are the called according to his purpose, effectually called according to the eternal purpose. The call is effectual, not according to any merit or desert of ours, but according to God's own gracious purpose.

2 The privilege of the saints, that all things work together for good to them, that is, all the providences of God that concern them. All that God performs he performs for them, Ps 57:2. Their sins are not of his performing, therefore not intended here, though his permitting sin is made to work for their good, 2Ch 32:31. But all the providences of God are theirs--merciful providences, afflicting providences, personal, public. They are all for good; perhaps for temporal good, as Joseph's troubles; at least, for spiritual and eternal good. That is good for them which does their souls good. Either directly or indirectly, every providence has a tendency to the spiritual good of those that love God, breaking them off from sin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, fitting them for heaven. Work together. They work, as physic works upon the body, various ways, according to the intention of the physician; but all for the patient's good. They work together, as several ingredients in a medicine concur to answer the intention.

God hath set the one over against the other (Ec 7:14): synergei, a very singular, with a noun plural, denoting the harmony of Providence and its uniform designs, all the wheels as one wheel, Eze 10:13. He worketh all things together for good; so some read it. It is not from any specific quality in the providences themselves, but from the power and grace of God working in, with, and by, these providences. All this we know--know it for a certainty, from the word of God, from our own experience, and from the experience of all the saints.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

For whom he did foreknow. The word used here (προεγνω) has been the subject of almost endless disputes in regard to its meaning in this place. The literal meaning of the word cannot be a matter of dispute. It denotes, properly, to know beforehand; to be acquainted with future events. But whether it means here simply to know that certain persons would become Christians, or to ordain and constitute them to be Christians, and to be saved, has been a subject of almost endless discussion. Without entering at large into an investigation of the word, perhaps the following remarks may throw light on it.

(1.) It does not here have reference to all the human family; for all are not, and have not been, conformed to the image of his Son. It has reference, therefore, only to those who would become Christians, and be saved.

(2.) It implies certain knowledge. It was certainly foreseen, in some way, that they would believe, and be saved. There is nothing, therefore, in regard to them that is contingent, or subject to doubt in the Divine Mind, since it was certainly foreknown.

(3.) The event which was thus foreknown must have been, for some cause, certain and fixed; since an uncertain event could not be possibly foreknown. To talk of foreknowing a contingent event-

-that is, of foreknowing an event as certain which may or may not exist--is an absurdity.

(4.) In what way such an event became certain is not determined by the use of this word. But it must have been somehow in connexion with a Divine appointment or arrangement, since in no other way can it be conceived to be certain. While the word used here, therefore, does not of necessity mean to decree, yet its use supposes that there was a purpose or plan; and the phrase is an explanation of what the apostle had just said, that it was according to the purpose of God that they were called. This passage does not affirm why, or how,or on what grounds God foreknew that some of the human family would be saved. It simply affirms the fact; and the mode in which those who will believe were designated must be determined from other sources. This passage simply teaches that he knew them; that his eye was fixed on them; that he regarded them as to be conformed to his Son; and that, thus knowing them, he designated them to eternal life. The Syriac renders it in accordance with this interpretation: "And from the beginning he knew them, and sealed them with the image of his Son,' etc. As, however, none would believe but by the influences of his Spirit, it follows that they were not foreknown on account of any faith which they would themselves exercise, or any good works which they would themselves perform, but according to the purpose or plan of God himself.

To foreknow and to predestinate are not the same thing. One is an act of foreknowledge, or knowing something before it occurs; the other is to decree something. We only have knowledge of the past, but God foresees the future even as he sees the past; foresees it, not because he has decreed it, but because there are no limitations on his knowledge. Augustine says: ``There can be no predestination without foreknowledge; but there can be foreknowledge without predestination." "Whom does God foreknow"? Those who shall love God. As he looked into the future these were present to his mind; foreknown. "What did he predestinate of them"? Not that they should love God. Not that they should believe; nor that some should be saved and others

damned; but that those who he saw beforehand would love God, should be conformed to the image of his Son. The only thing predestinated, or foreordained, is that those who love God as revealed in Christ shall become Christlike in life, and like Christ in eternity. This is the only decree in the passage.

30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Foreknow [προεγνω] . Five times in the New Testament. In all cases it means foreknow. Act 26:5; 1Pe 1:20; 2Pe 3:17; Rom 11:2. It does not mean foreordain. It signifies prescience, not preelection. "It is God 's being aware in His plan, by means of which, before the subjects are destined by Him to salvation, He knows whom He has to destine thereto" (Meyer). 46 It is to be remarked :

1. That foreknew is used by the apostle as distinct and different from predestinated [προωρισεν] .

2. That, strictly speaking, it is coordinate with foreordained. "In God is no before." All the past, present, and future are simultaneously present to Him. In presenting the two phases, the operation of God 's knowledge and of His decretory will, the succession of time is introduced, not as metaphysically true, but in concession to human limitations of thought. Hence the coordinating force of kai also.

3. That a predetermination of God is clearly stated as accompanying or (humanly speaking) succeeding, and grounded upon the foreknowledge.

4. That this predetermination is to the end of conformity to the image of the Son of God, and that this is the vital point of the passage.

5. That, therefore, the relation between foreknowledge and predestination is incidental, and is not contemplated as a special

point of discussion. God 's foreknowledge and His decree are alike aimed at holy character and final salvation.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who
can be against us?

What shall we then say to these things? What use shall we make of all that has been said? He speaks as one amazed and swallowed up with the contemplation and admiration of it, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things the less we wonder at them; but the further we are led into an acquaintance with gospel mysteries the more we are affected with the admiration of them.

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us
all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?
33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God
that justifieth.
34 Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that
is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also
maketh intercession for us.
35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation,
or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or
sword?
36 As it is written,
For thy sake we are killed all the day long;
we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through
him that loved us.
38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor
principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to
come,
39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to
separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our
Lord.

Romans-9

God’s Election of Israel

1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing
me witness in the Holy Ghost,
2 that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for
my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren--a very high pang of zeal and affection for his countrymen. He would be willing to undergo the greatest misery to do them good. Love is apt to be thus bold, and venturous, and self-denying. Because the glory of God's grace in the salvation of many is to be preferred before the welfare and happiness of a single person, Paul, if they were put in competition, would be content to forego all his own happiness to purchase theirs.

1. He would be content to be cut off from the land of the living, in the most shameful and ignominious manner, as an anathema, or a devoted person. They thirsted for his blood, persecuted him as the most obnoxious person in the world, the curse and plague of his generation, 1Co 4:13,Ac 22:22. "Now," says Paul, "I am willing to bear all this, and a great deal more, for your good. Abuse me as much as you will, count and call me at your pleasure; your unbelief and rejection create in my heart a heaviness so much greater than all these troubles can that I could look upon them not only as tolerable, but as desirable, rather than this rejection."

2. He would be content to be excommunicated from the society of the faithful, to be separated from the church, and from the communion of saints, as a heathen man and a publican, if that would do them any good. He could wish himself no more remembered among the saints, his name blotted out of the church-records; though he had been so great a planter of churches, and the spiritual father of so many thousands, yet he would be content to

be disowned by the church, cut off from all communion with it, and have his name buried in oblivion or reproach, for the good of the Jews. It may be, some of the Jews had a prejudice against Christianity for Paul's sake; such a spleen they had at him that they hated the religion he was of: "If this stumble you," says Paul, "I could wish I might be cast out, not embraced as a Christian, so you might but be taken in." Thus Moses (Ex 32:33), in a like holy passion of concern, Blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written. 3. Nay, some think that the expression goes further, and that he could be content to be cut off from all his share of happiness in Christ, if that might be a means of their salvation. It is a common charity that begins at home; this is something higher, and more noble and generous.

My kinsmen. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. We ought to be in a special manner concerned for the spiritual good of our relations, our brethren and kinsmen. To them we lie under special engagements, and we have more opportunity of doing good to them; and concerning them, and our usefulness to them, we must in a special manner give account.

4 who are Israelites; to whom *pertaineth* the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service *of God,* and the promises;

Especially because of their relation to God (Ro 9:4,5): Who are Israelites, the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen, taken into the covenant of peculiarity, dignified and distinguished by visible church-privileges, many of which are here mentioned:--

(1.) The adoption; not that which is saving, and which entitled to eternal happiness, but that which was external and typical, and entitled them to the land of Canaan. Israel is my son, Ex 4:22.

(2.) And the glory; the ark with the mercy-seat, over which God dwelt between the cherubim--this was the glory of Israel, 1Sa 4:21. The many symbols and tokens of the divine presence and

guidance, the cloud, the Shechinah, the distinguishing favours conferred upon them--these were the glory.

(3.) And the covenants--the covenant made with Abraham, and often renewed with his seed upon divers occasions. There was a covenant at Sinai (Ex 24:1-18), in the plains of Moab (De 29:1-29), at Shechem (Jos 24:1-33), and often afterwards; and still these pertained to Israel. Or, the covenant of peculiarity, and in that, as in the type, the covenant of grace.

(4.) And the giving of the law. It was to them that the ceremonial and judicial law were given, and the moral law in writing pertained to them. It is a great privilege to have the law of God among us, and it is to be accounted so, Ps 147:19,20. This was the grandeur of Israel, De 4:7,8.

(5.) And the service of God. They had the ordinances of God's worship among them--the temple, the altars, the priests, the sacrifices, the feasts, and the institutions relating to them. They were in this respect greatly honoured, that, while other nations were worshipping and serving stocks, and stones, and devils, and they knew not what other idols of their own invention, the Israelites were serving the true God in the way of his own appointment.

(6.) And the promises--particular promises added to the general covenant, promises relating to the Messiah and the gospel state. Observe, The promises accompany the giving of the law, and the service of God; for the comfort of the promises is to be had in obedience to that law and attendance upon that service.

(7.) Whose are the fathers (Ro 9:5), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those men of renown, that stood so high in the favour of God. The Jews stand in relation to them, are their children, and proud enough they are of it: We have Abraham to our father. It was for the father's sake that they were taken into covenant, Ro 11:28.

(8.) But the greatest honour of all was that of them as concerning the flesh (that is, as to his human nature) Christ came; for he took on him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16. As to his divine nature, he is the Lord from heaven; but, as to his human nature, he is of the seed of Abraham. This was the great privilege of the Jews, that Christ was of kin to them. Mentioning Christ, he interposes a very great word concerning him, that he is over all, God blessed for ever. Lest the Jews should think meanly of him, because he was of their alliance, he here speaks thus honourably concerning him: and it is a very full proof of the Godhead of Christ; he is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever. Therefore, how much sorer punishment were they worthy of that rejected him! It was likewise the honour of the Jews, and one reason why Paul had a kindness for them, that, seeing God blessed for ever would be a man, he would be a Jew; and, considering the posture and character of that people at that time, it may well be looked upon as a part of his humiliation.

5 whose *are* the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ
came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.
6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they
are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

Now the difficulty is to reconcile the rejection of the unbelieving Jews with the word of God's promise, and the external tokens of the divine favour, which had been conferred upon them. This he does in four ways:--

1. By explaining the true meaning and intention of the promise, Ro 9:6-13.

2. By asserting and proving the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men, Ro 9:14-24.

3. By showing how this rejection of the Jews, and the taking in of the Gentiles, were foretold in the Old Testament, Ro 9:25-29.

4. By fixing the true reason of the Jews' rejection, Ro 9:30, to the end.

In this paragraph the apostle explains the true meaning and intention of the promise. When we mistake the word, and misunderstand the promise, no marvel if we are ready to quarrel with God about the accomplishment; and therefore the sense of this must first be duly stated. Now he here makes it out that, when God said he would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed (which was the famous promise made unto the fathers), he did not mean it of all his seed according to the flesh, as if it were a necessary concomitant of the blood of Abraham; but that he intended it with a limitation only to such and such. And as from the beginning it was appropriated to Isaac and not to Ishmael, to Jacob and not to Esau, and yet for all this the word of God was not made of no effect; so now the same promise is appropriated to believing Jews that embrace Christ and Christianity, and, though it throws off multitudes that refuse Christ, yet the promise is not therefore defeated and invalidated, any more than it was by the typical rejection of Ishmael and Esau.

I. He lays down this proposition--that they are not all Israel who are of Israel (Ro 9:6), neither because they are, &c., Ro 9:7. Many that descended from the loins of Abraham and Jacob, and were of that people who were surnamed by the name of Israel, yet were very far from being Israelites indeed, interested in the saving benefits of the new covenant. They are not all really Israel that are so in name and profession. It does not follow that, because they are the seed of Abraham, therefore they must needs be the children of God, though they themselves fancied so, boasted much of, and built much upon, their relation to Abraham, Mt 3:9,Joh 8:38,39. But it does not follow. Grace does not run in the blood; nor are saving benefits inseparably annexed to external church privileges, though it is common for people thus to stretch the meaning of God's promise, to bolster themselves up in a vain hope.

II. He proves this by instances; and therein shows not only that some of Abraham's seed were chosen, and others not, but that God therein wrought according to the counsel of his own will; and not

with regard to that law of commandments to which the present unbelieving Jews were so strangely wedded.

1. He specifies the case of Isaac and Ishmael, both of them the seed of Abraham; and yet Isaac only taken into covenant with God, and Ishmael rejected and cast out. For this he quotes Ge 21:12, In Isaac shall thy seed be called, which comes in there as a reason why Abraham must be willing to cast out the bond-woman and her son, because the covenant was to be established with Isaac, Ge 17:19. And yet the word which God had spoken, that he would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, did not therefore fall to the ground; for the blessings wrapt up in that great word, being communicated by God as a benefactor, he was free to determine on what head they should rest, and accordingly entailed them upon Isaac, and rejected Ishmael. This he explains further (Ro 9:8,9), and shows what God intended to teach us by this dispensation.

(1.) That the children of the flesh, as such, by virtue of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, are not therefore the children of God, for then Ishmael had put in a good claim. This remark comes home to the unbelieving Jews, who boasted of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, and looked for justification in a fleshly way, by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. They had confidence in the flesh, and looked for justification in a fleshly way, by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. They had confidence in the flesh, Php 3:3. Ishmael was a child of the flesh, conceived by Hagar, who was young and fresh, and likely enough to have children. There was nothing extraordinary or supernatural in his conception, as there was in Isaac's; he was born after the flesh (Ga 4:29), representing those that expect justification and salvation by their own strength and righteousness.

(2.) That the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Those that have the honour and happiness of being counted for the seed have it not for the sake of any merit or desert of their own, but purely by virtue of the promise, in which God hath obliged

himself of his own good pleasure to grant the promised favour. Isaac was a child of promise; this his proves, Ro 9:9, quoted from Ge 18:10. He was a child promised (so were many others), and he was also conceived and born by force and virtue of the promise, and so a proper type and figure of those who are now counted for the seed, even true believers, who are born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God--of the incorruptible seed, even the word of promise, by virtue of the special promise of a new heart: see Ga 4:28. It was through faith that Isaac was conceived, Heb 11:11. Thus were the great mysteries of salvation taught under the Old Testament, not in express words, but by significant types and dispensations of providence, which to them then were not so clear as they are to us now, when the veil is taken away, and the types are expounded by the antitypes.

2 The case of Jacob and Esau (Ro 9:10-13), which is much stronger, to show that the carnal seed of Abraham were not, as such, interested in the promise, but only such of them as God in sovereignty had appointed. There was a previous difference between Ishmael and Isaac, before Ishmael was cast out: Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, born long before Isaac, was of a fierce and rugged disposition, and had mocked or persecuted Isaac, to all which it might be supposed God had regard when he appointed Abraham to cast him out. But, in the case of Jacob and Esau, it was neither so nor so, they were both the sons of Isaac by one mother; they were conceived hex henos--by one conception; hex henos koitou, so some copies read it. The difference was made between them by the divine counsel before they were born, or had done any good or evil. Both lay struggling alike in their mother's womb, when it was said, The elder shall serve the younger, without respect to good or bad works done or foreseen, that the purpose of God according to election might stand--that this great truth may be established, that God chooses some and refuses others as a free agent, by his own absolute and sovereign will, dispensing his favours or withholding them as he pleases. This difference that was put between Jacob and Esau he further illustrates by a quotation from Mal 1:2,3, where it is said, not of Jacob and Esau the person, but the Edomites and Israelites their posterity, Jacob have I loved,

and Esau have I hated. The people of Israel were taken into the covenant of peculiarity, had the land of Canaan given them, were blessed with the more signal appearances of God for them in special protections, supplies, and deliverances, while the Edomites were rejected, had no temple, altar, priests, nor prophets--no such particular care taken of them nor kindness shown to them. Such a difference did God put between those two nations, that both descended from the loins of Abraham and Isaac, as at first there was a difference put between Jacob and Esau, the distinguishing heads of those two nations. So that all this choosing and refusing was typical, and intended to shadow forth some other election and rejection.

(1.) Some understand it of the election and rejection of conditions or qualifications. As God chose Isaac and Jacob, and rejected Ishmael and Esau, so he might and did choose faith to be the condition of salvation and reject the works of the law. Thus Arminius understands it, De rejectis et assumptis talibus, certa qualitate notatis--Concerning such as are rejected and such as are chosen, being distinguished by appropriate qualities; so John Goodwin. But this very much strains the scripture; for the apostle speaks all along of persons, he has mercy on whom (he does not say on what kind of people) he will have mercy, besides that against this sense those two objections (Ro 9:14,19) do not at all arise, and his answer to them concerning God's absolute sovereignty over the children of men is not at all pertinent if no more be meant than his appointing the conditions of salvation.

(2.) Others understand it of the election and rejection of particular person--some loved, and others hated, from eternity. But the apostle speaks of Jacob and Esau, not in their own persons, but as ancestors--Jacob the people, and Esau the people; nor does God condemn any, or decree so to do, merely because he will do it, without any reason taken from their own deserts.

(3.) Others therefore understand it of the election and rejection of people considered complexly. His design is to justify God, and his

mercy and truth, in calling the Gentiles, and taking them into the church, and into covenant with himself, while he suffered the obstinate part of the Jews to persist in unbelief, and so to un-church themselves--thus hiding from their eyes the things that belonged to their peace. The apostle's reasoning for the explication and proof of this is, however, very applicable to, and, no doubt (as is usual in scripture) was intended for the clearing of the methods of God's grace towards particular person, for the communication of saving benefits bears some analogy to the communication of church-privileges. The choosing of Jacob the younger, and preferring him before Esau the elder (so crossing hands), were to intimate that the Jews, though the natural seed of Abraham, and the first-born of the church, should be laid aside; and the Gentiles, who were as the younger brother, should be taken in in their stead, and have the birthright and blessing. The Jews, considered as a body politic, a nation and people, knit together by the bond and cement of the ceremonial law, the temple and priesthood, the centre of their unity, had for many ages been the darlings and favourites of heaven, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, dignified and distinguished by God's miraculous appearances among them and for them. Now that the gospel was preached, and Christian churches were planted, this national body was thereby abandoned, their church-polity dissolved; and Christian churches (and in process of time Christian nations), embodied in like manner, become their successors in the divine favour, and those special privileges and protections which were the products of that favour. To clear up the justice of God in this great dispensation is the scope of the apostle here.

7 neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children:
but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.
8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.
9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.
10 And not only *this;* but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac,

11 (for *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any
good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election
might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)
12 it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.
13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
14 What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God?
God forbid.
15 For he saith to Moses,
I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.
16 So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of
God that showeth mercy.

Both these are indispensable to salvation, yet salvation is owing to neither, but is purely "of God that showeth mercy." See on Php 2:12, 13, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which, out of His own good pleasure, worketh in you both to will and to do."

Not of him that willeth. This does not mean that he that becomes a Christian, and is saved, does not choose eternal life; or is not made willing; or that he is compelled to enter heaven against his own choice. It is true that men by nature have no desire of holiness, and do not choose eternal life. But the effect of the influences of God's Spirit on the heart is to make it "willing in the day of his power," Ps 110:3. The meaning here is, evidently, that eternal life is not bestowed because man had any original willingness or disposition to be saved; it is not because he commences the work, and is himself disposed to it; but it is because God inclines him to it, and disposes him to seek for mercy, and then confers it in his own way. The word willeth here denotes wish or desire. Nor of him that runneth. This denotes strenuous, intense effort, as when a man is anxious to obtain an object, or hastens from danger. The meaning is not that the sinner does not make an effort to be saved; nor that all who become Christians do not in fact strive to enter into the kingdom, or earnestly desire salvation; for the Scriptures teach the contrary, Lk 16:16; 13:24. There is no effort more intense and persevering,

no struggle more arduous or agonizing, than when a sinner seeks eternal life. Nor does it mean that they who strive in a proper way, and with proper effort, shall not obtain eternal life, Mt 7:7. But the sense is,

(1.) that the sinner would not put forth any effort himself. If left to his own course he would never seek to be saved.

(2.) That he is pardoned, not on account of his effort; not because he makes an exertion; but because God chooses to pardon him. There is no merit in his anxiety, and prayers, and agony, on account of which God would forgive him; but he is still dependent on the mere mercy of God to save or destroy him at his will. The sinner, however anxious he may be, and however much or long he may strive, does not bring God under an obligation to pardon him, anymore than the condemned criminal, trembling with the fear of execution, and the consciousness of crime, lays the judge or the jury under an obligation to acquit him. This fact it is of great importance for an awakened sinner to know. Deeply anxious he should be, but there is no merit in his distress. Pray he should, but there is no merit in his prayers. Weep and strive he may, but in this there is no ground of claim on God for pardon; and, after all, he is dependent on his mere sovereign mercy, as a lost, ruined, and helpless sinner, to be saved or lost at his will. But of God that sheweth mercy. Salvation, in its beginning, its progress, and its close, is of him. He has a right, therefore, to bestow it when and where he pleases. All our mercies flow from his mere love and compassion, and not from our deserts. The essential idea here is, that God is the original fountain of all the blessings of salvation.

17 For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh,
Even for this same purpose have I raised thee
up, that I might show my power in thee,
and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

Have I raised thee up. Margin, in Ex 9:16, "made thee stand," i.e. sustained thee. The Greek word used by the apostle (εξηγειρα) means, properly, I have excited, roused, or stirred thee up; but it

may also have the meaning, "I have sustained or supported thee." That is, I have kept thee from death; I have preserved thee from ruin; I have ministered strength to thee, so that thy full character has been developed. It does not mean that God had infused into his mind any positive evil, or that by any direct influence he had excited any evil feelings, but that he had kept him in circumstances which were fitted to develop his true character. The meaning of the word and the truth of the case may be expressed in the following particulars:

(1.) God meant to accomplish some great purposes by his existence and conduct.

(2.) He kept him, or sustained him, with reference to that.

(3.) He had control over the haughty and wicked monarch. He could take his life, or he could continue him on earth. As he had control over all things that could affect the pride, the feelings, and the happiness of the monarch, so he had control over the monarch himself.

(4.) He placed him in circumstances just fitted to develop his character. He kept him amidst those circumstances until his character was fully developed.

(5.) He did not exert a positive influence on the mind of Pharaoh; for,

(6.) in all this the monarch acted freely. He did that which he chose to do. He pursued his own course. He was voluntary in his schemes of oppressing the Israelites. He was voluntary in his opposition to God. He was voluntary when he pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea. In all his doings he acted as he chose to do, and with a determined choice of evil, from which neither warning nor judgment would turn him away. Thus he is said to have hardened his own heart, Ex 8:15. (7.) Neither Pharaoh nor any sinner can justly blame God for placing them in

circumstances where they shall develop their own character, and show what they are. It is not the fault of God, but their own fault. The sinner is not compelled to sin; nor is God under obligation to save him contrary to the prevalent desires and wishes of the sinner himself.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed *it*, Why hast thou made me thus?

Who art thou, etc. Paul here strongly reproves the impiety and wickedness of arraigning God. This impiety appears,

(1.) because man is a creature of God, and it is improper that he should arraign his Maker.

(2.) He is unqualified to understand the subject. "Who art thou ?" What qualifications has a creature of a day,--a being just in the infancy of his existence; of so limited faculties; so perverse, blinded, and interested as man--to sit in judgment on the doings of the Infinite Mind? Who gave him the authority, or invested him with the prerogatives of a judge over his Maker's doings?

(3.) Even if man were qualified to investigate those subjects, what right has he to reply against God, to arraign him, or to follow out a train of argument tending to involve his Creator in shame and disgrace? Nowhere is there to be found a more cutting or humbling reply to the pride of man than this. And on no subject was it more needed. The experience of every age has shown that this has been a prominent topic of objection against the government of God; and that there has been no point in the Christian theology to which the human heart has been so ready to make objections as to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

Hath not the potter, etc. This same sovereign right of God the apostle proceeds to urge from another illustration, and another passage from the Old Testament, Isa 64:8, "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." This passage is preceded in Isaiah by one declaring the depravity of man. Isa 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." As they were polluted with sin, as they had transgressed the law of God, and had no claim and no merit, God might bestow his favours as he pleased, and mould them as the potter did the clay. He would do no injury to those who were left, and who had no claim to his mercy, if he bestowed favours on others, any more than the potter would do injustice to one part of the mass, if he put it to an ignoble use, and moulded another part into a vessel of honour. This is still the condition of sinful men. God does no injustice to a man if he leaves him to take his own course to ruin, and makes another, equally undeserving, the recipient of his mercy, he violated none of my rights by not conferring on me the talents of Newton or of Bacon; or by not placing me in circumstances like those of Peter and Paul. Where all are undeserving, the utmost that can be demanded is, that he should not treat them with injustice. And this is secured even in the case of the lost. No man will suffer more than he deserves; nor will any man go to perdition feeling that he has a claim to better treatment than he receives. The same sentiment is found in Jer 18:6, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation," etc. The passage in Isaiah proves that God has the right of a sovereign over guilty individuals; that in Jeremiah, that he has the same right over nations: thus meeting the whole case as it was in the mind of the apostle. These passages, however, assert only the right of God to do it, without affirming anything about the manner in which it is done, In fact, God bestows his favours in a mode very different from that in which a potter moulds his clay. God does not create holiness by a mere act of power, but he produces it in a manner consistent

with the moral agency of men; and bestows his favours not to compel men, but to incline them to be willing to receive them. Ps 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It should be further remarked, that the argument of the apostle here does not refer to the original creation of men, as if God had then made them one for honour and another for dishonour, he refers to man as fallen and lost. His argument is this: "Man is in ruins; he is fallen; he has no claim on God; all deserve to die. On this mass, where none have any claim, he may bestow life on whom he pleases, without injury to others; he may exercise the right of a sovereign to pardon whom he pleases; or of a potter to mould any part of the useless mass to purposes of utility and beauty."

22 *What* if God, willing to show *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

It is a simple declaration that they were IN FACT fitted for it, without making an affirmation about the manner in which they became so. A reader of the English Bible may, perhaps, sometimes draw the impression that God had fitted them for this. But this is not affirmed; and there is an evident design in not affirming it, and a distinction made between them and the vessels of mercy which ought to be regarded. In relation to the latter it is expressly affirmed that God fitted or prepared them for glory. See Rom 9:23, "Which HE had afore prepared unto glory." The same distinction is remarkably striking in the account of the last judgment in Mt 25:34-41. To the righteous, Christ will say, "Come, ye blessed of my rather, inherit the kingdom prepared FOR YOU," etc. To the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS;" not said to have been originally prepared for them. It is clear, therefore, that God intends to keep the great truth in view, that he prepares his people by direct agency for heaven; but that he exerts no such agency in preparing the wicked for destruction.

23 and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the

Gentiles?

25 As he saith also in Hosea,
I will call them my people, which were not my people;
and her beloved, which was not beloved.

26 And it shall come to pass,
that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people;
there shall they be called the children of the living God.

And it shall come to pass. It shall happen, or take place. This is a continuation of the quotation from the prophet Hosea, (Rom 1:10) designed to confirm the doctrine which he was establishing. Both these quotations have the same design, and are introduced for the same end. In Hosea they did not refer to the calling Of the Gentiles, but to the recalling the rejected Jews. God says, after the Jews had been rejected and scattered for their idolatry; after they had forfeited his favour, and been cast off as if they were not his people, he would recall them, and bestow them again the appellation of sons. The apostle does not quote this as having original reference to the Gentiles, but for the following purposes:--

(1.) If God formerly purposed to recall to himself a people whom he had rejected; if he bestowed favours on his own people after they had forfeited his favour, and ceased to be entitled to the name of "his people " then the same thing was not to be regarded as absurd if he dealt in a similar manner with the Gentiles, also a part of his original great family--the family of man--but long since rejected and deemed strangers.

(2.) The dealings of God towards the Jews in the time of Hosea settled a general principle of government. His treatment of them in this manner was a part of his great plan of governing the world. On the same plan he now admitted the Gentiles to favour. And as this general principle was established; as the history of the Jews themselves was a precedent in the case, it ought not to be objected in the time of Paul that the same principle should be carried out to meet the case also of the Gentiles. In the place. The place where

they may be scattered, or where they may dwell. Or rather, perhaps, in those nations which were not regarded as the people of God, there shall be a people to whom this shall apply. Where it was said unto them. Where the proper appellation of the people was, that they were not the people of God; where they were idolatrous, sinful, aliens, strangers; so that they had none of the marks of the children of God. Ye are not my people. People in covenant with God; under his protection, as their Sovereign, and keeping his laws.

27 Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel,
Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of
the sea, a remnant shall be saved:

A remnant shall be saved. Meaning a remnant only. This implies that great multitudes of them would be cast off, and be not saved. If only a remnant was to be saved, many must be lost; and this was just the point which the apostle was endeavouring to establish. The word remnant means that which is left, particularly what may remain after a battle or a great calamity, 2Kgs 19:31, 10:11, Jud 5:13 Isa 14:22. In this place, however, it means a small part or portion. Out of the great multitude there shall be so few left as to make it proper to say that it was a mere remnant. This implies, of course, that the great mass should be cast away or rejected. And this was the use which the apostle intended to make of it. Comp. the Wisdom of Sirach xliv. 17, "Noah--was left unto the earth as a remnant when the flood came." Shall be saved. Shall be preserved, or kept from destruction. As Isaiah had reference to the captivity of Babylon, this means that only a remnant should return to their native land. The great mass should be rejected and cast off. This was the case with the ten tribes, and also with many others who chose to remain in the land of their captivity. The use which the apostle makes of it is this: In the history of the Jews, by the testimony of Isaiah, a large part of the Jews of that time were rejected, and cast off from being the peculiar people of God. It is clear, therefore, that God has brought himself under no obligation to save all the descendants of Abraham. This case settles the principle. If God did it then, it was equally consistent for him to do it in the time of Paul, under the gospel.

28 for he will finish the work, and cut *it* short in righteousness:

because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.
29 And as Isaiah said before,
Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a
seed, we had been as Sodom,
and been made like unto Gomorrah.

Except the Lord of Sabaoth. In Isaiah, the Lord of Hosts. The word Sabaoth is the Hebrew word rendered hosts. It properly denotes armies or military hosts organized for war. Hence it denotes the hosts of heaven, and means

(1.) the angels, who are represented as marshalled or arranged into military orders, Eph 1:21, 3:10, 6:12, Col 1:16, 2:15, Jude 1:6 1Kgs 22:19, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him" Ps 103:21, 148:2.

(2.) The stars, Jer 33:22, "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered," etc.; Isa 40:26, De 4:19, etc. God is called the Lord of hosts, as being at the head of all these armies; their King and their Commander. It is a phrase properly expressive of his majesty and power, and is appropriately introduced here, as the act of saving "the seed" was a signal act of power in the midst of great surrounding wickedness.

We had been as Sodoma. The nation was so wicked, that unless God had preserved a small number who were pious from the general corruption of the people, they would have been swept off by judgment, like Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told that ten righteous men would have saved Sodom, Gen 18:32. Among the Israelites, in a time of great general depravity, a small number of holy men were found who preserved the nation. The design of the apostle here was the same as in the previous verses--to show that it was settled in the Jewish history that God might cast off the people, and reject them from enjoying the peculiar privileges of his friends. It is true that in Isaiah he has reference to the temporal punishment of the Jews. But it settles a great principle, for which Paul was contending, that God might cast off the nation consistently with his promises and his plans.--We may learn here,

(1.) that the existence of religion among a people is owing to the love of God. "Except the Lord had left us," etc.

(2.) It is owing to his mercy that any men are kept from sin, and any nation from destruction.

(3.) We see the value of religion and of pious men in a nation. Ten such would have saved Sodom; and a few such saved Judea. Comp. Mt 5:13,14. (4.) God has a right to withdraw his mercies from any other people, however exalted their privileges, and leave them to ruin; and we should not be high-minded, but fear, Rom 10:20.

Righteousness Based on Faith

30 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed
not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even
the righteousness which is of faith.
31 But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath
not attained to the law of righteousness.
32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by
the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

They depended on their own righteousness, and not on the mercy of God to be obtained by faith.By complying with all the demands of the law, so that they might merit salvation. Their attempted obedience included their prayers, fastings, sacrifices, etc., as well as compliance with the demands of the moral law. It may be asked here, perhaps, how the Jews could know any better than this?

How should they know anything about justification by faith. To this I answer,

(1.) that the doctrine was stated in the Old Testament. See Hab 2:4. Comp. Rom 1:17. Ps 32; Ps 130; Ps 14. Comp. Rom 3, Job 9:2.

(2.) The sacrifices had reference to a future state of things, and were doubtless so understood. See the epistle to the Hebrews. (3.) The principle of justification, and of living by faith, had been fully brought out in the lives and experience of the saints Of old. See Rom 4, Heb 11.

33 as it is written,
Behold, I lay in Zion a
stumblingstone and rock of
offense:
and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Romans-10

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that
they might be saved.

as God is, who is not willing that any should perish (2Pe 3:9), desires not the death of sinners.This, he says, was his heart's desire and prayer, which intimates,

(1.) The strength and sincerity of his desire. It was his heart's desire; it was not a formal compliment, as good wishes are with many from the teeth outward, but a real desire. This it was before it was his prayer. The soul of prayer is the heart's desire. Cold desires do but beg denials; we must even breathe out our souls in every prayer.

(2.) The offering up of this desire to God. It was not only his heart's desire, but it was his prayer. There may be desires in the heart, and yet no prayer, unless those desires be presented to God. Wishing and woulding, if that be all, are not praying.

2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but
not according to knowledge.

A good witness, as a reason of his good wish (Ro 10:2): I bear them record that they have a zeal of God. The unbelieving Jews were the most bitter enemies Paul had in the world, and yet Paul gives them as good a character as the truth would bear. We should say the best we can even of our worst enemies; this is blessing

those that curse us. Charity teaches us to have the best opinion of persons, and to put the best construction upon words and actions, that they will bear. We should take notice of that which is commendable even in bad people. They have a zeal of God. Their opposition to the gospel is from a principle of respect to the law, which they know to have come from God. There is such a thing as a blind misguided zeal: such was that of the Jews, who, when they hated Christ's people and ministers, and cast them out, said, Let the Lord be glorified (Isa 66:5); nay, they killed them, and thought they did God good service, Joh 16:2.

A zeal of God. A zeal for God, Thus, Jn 2:17, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" An earnest desire for the honour of the sanctuary has wholly absorbed my attention. Comp. Ps 69:9 Acts 21:20, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law;" Acts 22:3, "And was zealous toward God as ye all are this day." Zeal for God here means passionate ardour in the things pertaining to God, or in the things of religion. In this they were doubtless, many of them, sincere; but sincerity does not of itself constitute true piety. Jn 16:2, The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he, doeth God service." This would be an instance of extraordinary zeal, and in this they would be sincere; but persecution to death of apostles cannot be true religion. See also Mt 23:15; Acts 26:9, "I thought that I ought to do," etc. So many persons suppose that, provided they are sincere and zealous, they must of course be accepted of God. But the zeal which is acceptable is that which aims at the glory of God, and which is founded on true benevolence to the universe; and which does not aim primarily to establish a system of self-righteousness, as did the Jew, or to build up our own sect, as many others do. We may remark here, that Paul was not insensible to what the Jews did, and was not unwilling to give them credit for it. A minister of the gospel should not be blind to the amiable qualities of men, or to their zeal; and should be willing to speak of it tenderly, even when they are proclaiming the doctrine of depravity, or denouncing the just judgments of God.

Not according to knowledge. Not an enlightened, discerning, and intelligent zeal. Not that which was founded on correct views of God and of religious truth. Such zeal is enthusiasm, and often becomes persecuting. Knowledge without zeal becomes cold, abstract, calculating, formal; and may be possessed by devils as well as men. It is the union of the two --the action of the man called forth to intense effort by just views of truth, and by rightfeeling--that constitutes true religion. This was the zeal of the Saviour and of the apostles.

3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

The causes of their unbelief, and these are two:--

(1.) Ignorance of God's righteousness. They did not understand, and believe, and consider, the strict justice of God, in hating and punishing sin, and demanding satisfaction, did not consider what need we have of a righteousness wherein to appear before him; if they had, they would never have stood out against the gospel offer, nor expected justification by their own works, as if they could satisfy God's justice. Or, being ignorant of God's way of justification, which he has now appointed and revealed by Jesus Christ. They did not know it, because they would not; they shut their eyes against the discoveries of it, and love darkness rather.

(2.) A proud conceit of their own righteousness: Going about to establish their own--a righteousness of their own devising, and of their own working out, by the merit of their works, and by their observance of the ceremonial law. They thought they needed not to be beholden to the merit of Christ, and therefore depended upon their own performances as sufficient to make up a righteousness wherein to appear before God. They could not with Paul disclaim a dependence upon this (Php 3:9), Not having my own righteousness. See an instance of this pride in the Pharisee, Lu 18:10,11. Compare Ro 10:14.

And seeking to establish, etc. Endeavouring to confirm or make valid their own righteousness; to render it such as to constitute a ground of justification before God; or to make good their own claims to eternal life by their merits. This stands opposed to the justification by grace, or to God's plan. And they must ever be opposed. This was the constant effort of the Jews; and in this they supposed they had succeeded. See Paul's experience in Php 3:4-6; Acts 26:5. Instances of their belief on this subject occur in all the gospels, where our Saviour combats their notions of their own righteousness. See particularly their views and evasions exposed in Mt 23. Comp. Mt 5:20, etc.; Mt 6:2-5. It was this which mainly opposed the Lord Jesus and his apostles; and it is this confidence in their own righteousness which still stands in the way of the progress of the gospel among men.

Have not submitted themselves. Confident in their own righteousness, they have not yielded their hearts to a plan which requires them to come confessing that they have no merit, and to be saved by the merit of another. No obstacle to salvation by grace is so great as the self-righteousness of the sinner.

4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

The subserviency of the law to the gospel (Ro 10:4): Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. The design of the law was to lead people to Christ. The moral law was but for the searching of the wound, the ceremonial law for the shadowing forth of the remedy; but Christ is the end of both. See 2Co 3:7,Ga 3:23,24. The use of the law was to direct people for righteousness to Christ.

(1.) Christ is the end of the ceremonial law; he is the period of it, because he is the perfection of it. When the substance comes, the shadow is gone. The sacrifices, and offerings, and purifications appointed under the Old Testament, prefigured Christ, and pointed at him; and their inability to take away sin discovered the necessity of a sacrifice that should, by being once offered, take away sin.

(2.) Christ is the end of the moral law in that he did what the law could not do (Ro 8:3), and secured the great end of it. The end of the law was to bring men to perfect obedience, and so to obtain justification. This is now become impossible, by reason of the power of sin and the corruption of nature; but Christ is the end of the law. The law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the lawgiver frustrated, but, full satisfaction being made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law, the end is attained, and we are put in another way of justification. Christ is thus the end of the law for righteousness, that is, for justification; but it is only to every one that believeth. Upon our believing, that is, our humble consent to the terms of the gospel, we become interested in Christ's satisfaction, and so are justified through the redemption that is in Jesus.

This was the subject of discussion between the apostle and the Jews; and this is all that is necessary to understand in the case. Some have supposed that the word end refers to the ceremonial law; that Christ fulfilled it, and brought it to an end. Others, that he perfectly fulfilled the moral law. And others, that the law in the end leads us to Christ, or that its design is to point us to him.All these are true, but not the truth taught in this passage. That is simple and plain, that by faith in Christ the same end is accomplished in regard to our justification, that would be by perfect obedience to the moral law.

5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,
That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.
6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,
Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is,
to bring Christ down *from above:*)

That it is not at all hard or difficult. The way of justification and salvation has in it no such depths or knots as may discourage us, no insuperable difficulties attending it; but, as was foretold, it is a high-way, Isa 35:8. We are not put to climb for it--it is not in heaven; we are not put to dive for it--it is not in the deep. First, We need not go to heaven, to search the records there, or to enquire

into the secrets of the divine counsel. It is true Christ is in heaven; but we may be justified and saved without going thither, to fetch him thence, or sending a special messenger to him. Secondly, We need not go to the deep, to fetch Christ out of the grave, or from the state of the dead: Into the deep, to bring up Christ from the dead. This plainly shows that Christ's descent into the deep, or into hades, was no more than his going into the state of the dead, in allusion to Jonah. It is true that Christ was in the grave, and it is as true that he is now in heaven; but we need not perplex and puzzle ourselves with fancied difficulties, nor must we create to ourselves such gross and carnal ideas of these things as if the method of salvation were impracticable, and the design of the revelation were only to amuse us. No, salvation is not put at so vast a distance from us.

7 or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up
Christ again from the dead.)
8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and
in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;
9 that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and
shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the
dead, thou shalt be saved.

But it is very plain and easy: The word is nigh thee. When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving Christ, and feeding upon Christ, it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean; but Christ in the promise, Christ exhibited to us, and offered, in the word. Christ is nigh thee, for the word is nigh thee: nigh thee indeed: it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart; there is no difficulty in understanding, believing, and owning it. The work thou hast to do lies within thee: the kingdom of God is within you, Lu 17:21. Thence thou must fetch thy evidences, not out of the records of heaven. It is, that is, it is promised that it shall be, in thy mouth (Isa 59:21), and in thy heart, Jer 31:33. All that which is done for us is already done to our hands. Christ is come down from heaven; we need not go to fetch him. He is come up from the deep; we need not perplex ourselves how to bring him up. There is nothing now to be done, but a work in us; this must be our care, to look to our heart and mouth. Those that were under the law were to do all themselves, Do this, and live; but the gospel discovers the

greatest part of the work done already, and what remains cut short in righteousness, salvation offered upon very plain and easy terms, brought to our door, as it were, in the word which is nigh us. It is in our mouth--we are reading it daily; it is in our heart--we are, or should be, thinking of it daily. Even the word of faith; the gospel and the promise of it, called the word of faith because it is the object of faith about which it is conversant, the word which we believe;--because it is the precept of faith, commanding it, and making it the great condition of justification;--and because it is the ordinary means by which faith is wrought and conveyed. Now what is this word of faith? We have the tenour of it, Ro 10:9,10, the sum of the gospel, which is plain and easy enough. Observe,

First, What is promised to us: Thou shalt be saved. It is salvation that the gospel exhibits and tenders--saved from guilt and wrath, with the salvation of the soul, an eternal salvation, which Christ is the author of, a Saviour to the uttermost.

Secondly, Upon what terms.

1. Two things are required as conditions of salvation:--

(a.) Confessing the Lord Jesus--openly professing relation to him and dependence on him, as our prince and Saviour, owning Christianity in the face of all the allurements and affrightments of this world, standing by him in all weathers. Our Lord Jesus lays a great stress upon this confessing of him before men; see Mt 10:32,33. It is the product of many graces, evinces a great deal of self-denial, love to Christ, contempt of the world, a mighty courage and resolution. It was a very great thing, especially, when the profession of Christ or Christianity hazarded estate, honour, preferment, liberty, life, and all that is dear in this world, which was the case in the primitive times.

(b.) Believing in the heart that God raised him from the dead. The profession of faith with the mouth, if there be not the power of it in the heart, is but a mockery; the root of it must be laid in an

unfeigned assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ, especially concerning his resurrection, which is the fundamental article of the Christian faith, for thereby he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and full evidence was given that God accepted his satisfaction.

2. This is further illustrated (Ro 10:10), and the order inverted, because there must first be faith in the heart before there can be an acceptable confession with the mouth.

(a.) Concerning faith: It is with the heart that man believeth, which implies more than an assent of the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere, and strong consent. It is not believing (not to be reckoned so) if it be not with the heart. This is unto righteousness. There is the righteousness of justification and the righteousness of sanctification. Faith is to both; it is the condition of our justification (Ro 5:1), and it is the root and spring of our sanctification; in it it is begun; by it it is carried on, Ac 15:9.

(b.) Concerning profession: It is with the mouth that confession is made--confession to God in prayer and praise (Ro 15:6), confession to men by owning the ways of God before others, especially when we are called to it in a day of persecution. It is fit that God should be honoured with the mouth, for he made man's mouth (Ex 4:11), and at such a time has promised to give his faithful people a mouth and wisdom, Lu 21:15. It is part of the honour of Christ that every tongue shall confess, Php 2:11. And this is said to be unto salvation, because it is the performance of the condition of that promise, Mt 10:32. Justification by faith lays the foundation of our title to salvation; but by confession we build upon that foundation, and come at last to the full possession of that to which we were entitled. So that we have here a brief summary of the terms of salvation, and they are very reasonable; in short this, that we must devote, dedicate, and give up, to God, our souls and our bodies--our souls in believing with the heart, and our

bodies in confessing with the mouth. This do, and thou shalt live. For this (Ro 10:11) he quotes Isa 28:16, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed; ou kataischynthesetai. That is,

[1.] He will not be ashamed to own that Christ in whom he trusts; he that believes in the heart will not be ashamed to confess with the mouth. It is sinful shame that makes people deny Christ, Mk 8:38. He that believeth will not make haste (so the prophet has it)--will not make haste to run away from the sufferings he meets with in the way of his duty, will not be ashamed of a despised religion.

[2.] He shall not be ashamed of his hope in Christ; he shall not be disappointed of his end. It is our duty that we must not, it is our privilege that we shall not, be ashamed of our faith in Christ. He shall never have cause to repent his confidence in reposing such a trust in the Lord Jesus.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with
the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
11 For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not
be ashamed.
12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for
the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.
13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be
saved.

This sentiment is found substantially in Joel 2:32, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." This is expressly applied to the times of the gospel by Peter, in Acts 2:21. Acts 2:21. To call on the name of the Lord is the same as to call on the Lord himself. The word name is often used in this manner. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," etc., Prov 18:10; "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," Ps 20:1. That is, God himself is a strong tower, etc. It is clear, from what follows, that the apostle applies this to Jesus Christ; and this is one of the numerous instances in which the writers of the New Testament apply to him expressions which in the Old Testament are applicable to God. See 1Cor 1:2.

Shall be saved. This is the uniform promise. See Acts 2:21; Acts 22:16, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is proper and indispensable, because (1.) we have sinned against God, and it is right that we should confess it. (2.) Because he only can pardon us, and it is fit, that if we obtain pardon, we should ask it of God. (3.) To call upon him is to acknowledge him as our Sovereign, our Father, and our Friend; and it is right that we render him our homage. It is implied in this, that we call upon him with right feelings; that is, with a humble sense of our sinfulness and our need of pardon, and with a willingness to receive eternal life as it is offered us in the gospel. And if this be done, this passage teaches us that all may be saved who will do it. He will cast none away who come in this manner. The invitation and the assurance extend to all nations, and to men of all times.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not
believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have
not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?
15 and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is
written, How beautiful are the feet of them
that preach the gospel of peace,
and bring glad tidings of good things!

What the gospel is: It is the gospel of peace; it is the word of reconciliation between God and man. On earth peace, Lu 2:14. Or, peace is put in general for all good; so it is explained here; it is glad tidings of good things. The things of the gospel are good things indeed, the best things; tidings concerning them are the most joyful tidings, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth.How acceptable they should therefore be to the children of men for their work's sake: How beautiful are the feet, that is, how welcome are they! And, when Christ was sending forth his disciples, he washed their feet. Those that preach the gospel of peace should see to it that their feet (their life and conversation) be beautiful: the holiness of ministers' lives is the beauty of their feet. How beautiful! namely, in the eyes of those that hear them. Those that welcome the message cannot but love the messengers. See 1Th 5:12,13.

the feet. Many have supposed that the meaning of this expression is this: The feet of a herald, naked and dusty from travelling, would be naturally objects of disgust; but that which would be naturally disagreeable is thus made pleasant by the joy of the message. But this explanation is far-fetched, and wants parallel instances. Besides, it is a violation of the image which the apostle had used. That was a distant object--a herald running on the distant hills; and it supposes a picture too remote to observe distinctly the feet, whether attractive or not. The meaning of it is clearly this: "How beautiful is the coming or the running of such a herald." The feet are emblematic of his coming. Their rapid motion would be seen; and their rapidity would be beautiful from the desire to hear the message which he brought. The whole meaning of the passage, then, as applied to ministers of the gospel, is, that their coming is an attractive object, regarded with deep interest, and productive of joy--an honoured and a delightful employment.

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord,
who hath believed our report?

All the Jews have not, all the Gentiles have not; far the greater part of both remain in unbelief and disobedience. Observe, The gospel is given us not only to be known and believed, but to be obeyed. It is not a system of notions, but a rule of practice. This little success of the word was likewise foretold by the prophet (Isa 53:1): Who hath believed our report? Very few have, few to what one would think should have believed it, considering how faithful a report it is and how well worthy of all acceptation,--very few to the many that persist in unbelief. It is no strange thing, but it is a very sad and uncomfortable thing, for the ministers of Christ to bring the report of the gospel, and not to be believed in it. Under such a melancholy consideration it is good for us to go to God and make our complaint to him.

17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, Their sound
went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of
the world.

In the closing part of this chapter, the great doctrine is brought forth and defended, that the way of salvation is open for all the

world. This, in the time Of Paul, was regarded as a novel doctrine. Hence he is at so much pains to illustrate and defend it. And hence, with so much zeal and self-denial, the apostles of the Lord Jesus went and proclaimed it to the nations. This doctrine is not the less important now. And from this discussion we may learn the following truths:

(1.) the heathen world is in danger without the gospel. They are sinful, polluted, wretched. The testimony of all who visit pagan nations accords most strikingly with that of the apostles in their times. Nor is there any evidence that the great mass of heathen population has changed for the better.

(2.) The provisions of the gospel are ample for them--for all. Its power has been tried on many nations; and its mild and happy influence is seen in meliorated laws, customs, habits; in purer institutions; in intelligence and order; and in the various blessings conferred by a pure religion. The same gospel is fitted to produce on the wildest and most wretched population the same comforts which are now experienced in the happiest part of our own land.

(3.) The command of Jesus Christ remains still the same, to preach the gospel to every creature. That command has never been repealed or changed. The apostles met the injunction, and performed what they could. It remains for the church to act as they did, to feel as they did, and put forth their efforts as they did, in obeying one of the most plain and positive laws of Jesus Christ.

(4.) If the gospel is to be proclaimed everywhere, men must be sent forth into the vast field. Every nation must have an opportunity to say, "How beautiful are the feet of him that preaches the gospel of peace." Young men, strong and vigorous in the Christian course, must give themselves to this work, and devote their lives in an enterprise which the apostles regarded as honourable to them; and which Infinite Wisdom did not regard as unworthy the toils, and tears, and self-denials of the Son of God.

(5.) The church, in training young men for the ministry, in fitting her sons for these toils, is performing a noble and glorious work; a work which contemplates the triumph of the gospel among all nations. Happy will it be when the church shall feel the full pressure of this great truth, that the gospel MAY BE, preached to every son and daughter of Adam; and when every man who enters the ministry shall count it not self-denial, but a glorious privilege to be permitted to tell dying pagan men that a Saviour bled for ALL, sinners. And happy that day when it can be said with literal truth, that their sound has gone out into all the earth; and that as far as the sun in his daily course sheds his beams, so far the Sun of righteousness sheds also his pure and lovely rays into the abodes of men. And we may learn, also, from this, (6.) that God will withdraw his favours from those nations that are disobedient and rebellious. Thus he rejected the ancient Jews; and thus also he will forsake all who abuse his mercies; who become proud, luxurious, effeminate, and wicked. In this respect it becomes the people of this favoured land to remember the God of their fathers; and not to forget, too, that national sin provokes God to withdraw, and that a nation that forgets God must be punished.

19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith,
I will provoke you to jealousy by *them that are* no people,
and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

A foolish nation. The word fool means one void of understanding. But it also means one who is wicked, or idolatrous; one who contemns God. Ps 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Prov 1:7, "Fools despise wisdom and instruction." Here it means a nation who had no understanding of the true God, ασυνετω I will anger. My bestowing favours on them will excite your anger. We may remark here, (1.) that God is a sovereign, and has a right to bestow his favours on whom he pleases. (2.) That when men abuse his mercies, become proud, or cold, or dead in his service, he often takes away their privileges, and bestows them on others. (3.) That the effect of his sovereignty is to excite men to anger. Proud and wicked men are always enraged that he bestows his favours on others; and the effect of his sovereign dealings is to provoke to anger the very men who by their sins have rejected

his mercy. Hence there is no doctrine that proud man hates so cordially as he does the doctrine of Divine sovereignty; and none that will so much test the character of the wicked.

20 But Isaiah is very bold, and saith,
I was found of them that sought me not;
I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

The Jews have heard it too, Ro 10:19-21. For this he appeals to two passages of the Old Testament, to show how inexcusable they are too. Did not Israel know that the Gentiles were to be called in? They might have known it from Moses and Isaiah.

First, One is taken from De 32:21, I will provoke you to jealousy. The Jews not only had the offer, but saw the Gentiles accepting it and benefitted by that acceptance, witness their vexation at the event. They had the refusal: To you first, Ac 3:26. In all places where the apostles came still the Jews had the first offer, and the Gentiles had but their leavings. If one would not, another would. Now this provoked them to jealousy. They, as the elder brother in the parable (Lu 15:1-32) envied the reception and entertainment of the prodigal Gentiles upon their repentance. The Gentiles are here called no people, and a foolish nation, that is, not the professing people of God. How much soever there be of the wit and wisdom of the world, those that are not the people of God are, and in the end will be found to be, a foolish people. Such was the state of the Gentile world, who yet were made the people of God, and Christ to them the wisdom of God. What a provocation it was to the Jews to see the Gentiles taken into favour we may see, Ac 13:45,17:5,13, and especially Ac 22:22. It was an instance of the great wickedness of the Jews that they were thus enraged; and this in Deuteronomy is the matter of a threatening. God often makes people's sin their punishment. A man needs no greater plague than to be left to the impetuous rage of his own lusts.

Secondly, Another is taken from Isa 65:1,2, which is very full, and in it Esaias is very bold--bold indeed, to speak so plainly of the rejection of his own countrymen. Those that will be found

faithful have need to be very bold. Those that are resolved to please God must not be afraid to displease any man. Now Esaias speaks boldly and plainly,

1. Of the preventing grace and favour of God in the reception and entertainment of the Gentiles (Ro 10:20): I was found of those that sought me not. The prescribed method is, Seek and find; this is a rule for us, not a rule for God, who is often found of those that do not seek. His grace is his own, distinguishing grace his own, and he dispenses it in a way of sovereignty, gives of withholds it at pleasure--anticipates us with the blessings, the riches choicest blessings, of his goodness. Thus he manifested himself to the Gentiles, by sending the light of the gospel among them, when they were so far from seeking him and asking after him that they were following after lying vanities, and serving dumb idols. Was not this our own particular case? Did not God begin in love, and manifest himself to us when we did not ask after him? And was not that a time of love indeed, to be often remembered with a great deal of thankfulness?

2. Of the obstinacy and perverseness of Israel, notwithstanding the fair offers and affectionate invitations they had, Ro 10:21. Observe,

(a.) God's great goodness to them: All day long I have stretched forth my hands.

[1.] His offers: I have stretched forth my hands, offering them life and salvation with the greatest sincerity and seriousness that can be, with all possible expressions of earnestness and importunity, showing them the happiness tendered, setting it before them with the greatest evidence, reasoning the case with them. Stretching forth the hands is the gesture of those that require audience (Ac 26:1), or desire acceptance, Pr 1:24. Christ was crucified with his hands stretched out. Stretched forth my hands as offering reconciliation--come let us shake hands and be friends; and our duty is to give the hand to him, 2Ch 30:8.

[2.] His patience in making these offers: All day long. The patience of God towards provoking sinners is admirable. He waits to be gracious. The time of God's patience is here called a day, lightsome as a day and fit for work and business, but limited as a day, and a night at the end of it. he bears long, but he will not bear always.

(b.) Their great badness to him. They were a disobedient gainsaying people. One word in the Hebrew, in Isaiah, is here well explained by two; not only disobedient to the call, not yielding to it, but gainsaying, and quarrelling with it, which is much worse. Many that will not accept of a good proposal will yet acknowledge that they have nothing to say against it: but the Jews who believed not rested not there, but contradicted and blasphemed. God's patience with them was a very great aggravation of their disobedience, and rendered it the more exceedingly sinful; as their disobedience advanced the honour of God's patience and rendered it the more exceedingly gracious. It is a wonder of mercy in God that his goodness is not overcome by man's badness; and it is a wonder of wickedness in man that his badness is not overcome by God's goodness.

21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Lord! why should we, that are sinners ourselves, think much to bear with sinners? Let us rather imitate thy example in waiting upon them with the offers of grace and mercy, and follow them with our melting entreaties and passionate importunities, till we either overcome their obstinacy, or leave them totally inexcusable.

God's dealings even with reprobate sinners are full of tenderness and compassion; all the day long extending the arms of His mercy even to the disobedient and gainsaying. This will be felt and acknowledged at last by all who perish, to the glory of God's forbearance and to their own confusion (Ro 10:21).

It presents the figure of a parent, with hands extended, appealing to a wayward child. That child was the Jewish nation. It was cast off because it "would" be cast off. It refused to listen to appeals. See Mt 23:37. The apostle is far from ascribing the rejection of Israel to a divine decree, but he assigns the cause to Israel itself. Just so the Savior says in the passage just referred to, "How often 'would I' have gathered, . . . but 'ye would not'". The divine wish was that Israel should be saved, but Israel stubbornly refused.

Romans-11

The Remnant of Israel

1 I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin.

2 God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

Lord, they have killed, etc. This is taken from 1Kgs 19:10. The quotation is not literally made, but the sense is preserved. This was a charge which Elijah brought against the whole nation; and the act of killing the prophets he regarded as expressive of the character of the people, or that they were universally given to wickedness. The fact was true that they had killed the prophets, etc., (1Kgs 18:4,13) but the inference which Elijah seems to have drawn from it, that there were no pious men in the nation, was not well founded.

And digged down. Altars, by the law of Moses, were required to be made of earth or unhewn stones, Ex 20:24,25. Hence the expression, to dig them down, means completely to demolish or destroy them. Thine altars. There was one great altar in the front of the tabernacle and the temple, on which the daily sacrifices of

the Jews were to be made. But they were not forbidden to make altars also elsewhere, Ex 20:25. And hence they are mentioned as existing in other places, 1Sam 7:17, 16:2,3, 1Kgs 18:30,32. These were the altars of which Elijah complained as having been thrown down by the Jews; an act which was regarded as expressive of signal impiety.

I am left alone. I am the only prophet which is left alive. We are told that when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in a cave, 1Kgs 18:4. But it is not improbable that they had been discovered and put to death by Ahab. The account which Obadiah gave Elijah when he met him, (1Kgs 18:13) seems to favour such a supposition.

4 But what saith the answer of God unto him?
I have reserved to myself seven thousand men,
who have not bowed the knee to *the image of*
Baal.
5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant
according to the election of grace.
6 And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no
more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace:
otherwise work is no more work.

If men are justified by their works, it could not be a matter of favour, but was a debt. If it could be that the doctrine of justification by grace could be held, and yet at the same time that the Jewish doctrine of merit was true, then it would follow that grace had changed its nature, or was a different thing from what the word properly signified. The idea of being saved by merit contradicts the very idea of grace. If a man owes me a debt, and pays it, it cannot be said to be done by favour, or by grace. I have a claim on him for it, and there is no favour in his paying his just dues.

Works here mean conformity to the law; and to be saved by works would be to be saved by such conformity as the meritorious cause. Of course there could be no grace or favour in giving what was due; if there was favour, or grace, then works would lose their essential

characteristic, and cease to be the meritorious cause of procuring the blessings. What is paid as a debt is not conferred as a favour.

And from this it follows that salvation cannot be partly by grace and partly by works. It is not because men can advance any claims to the favour of God; but from his mere unmerited grace. He that is not willing to obtain eternal life in that way, cannot obtain it at all.

7 What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for;
but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded
8 (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see,
and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

God hath given. Expressions like this are common in the Scriptures, where God is represented as having an agency in producing the wickedness and stupidity of sinners. See Rom 9:17,18. Mt 13:16; Mk 4:11, Mk 4:12; also 2Thes 2:11.

Eyes that they should not see, etc. This expression is not taken literally from any single place in the Old Testament; but expresses the general sense of several passages, Isa 6:10, De 29:4. It denotes a state of mind not different from a spirit of slumber. When we sleep, the eyes are insensible to surrounding objects, and the ear to sounds. Though in themselves the organs may be perfect, yet the mind is as though they were not; and we have eves which then do not see, and ears which do not hear. Thus with the Jews. Though they had all the proper faculties for understanding and receiving the gospel, yet they rejected it.

9 And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap,
and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them:

Verses 9,10. And David saith, etc. This quotation is made from Ps 69:22,23. This psalm is repeatedly quoted as having reference to the events recorded in the New Testament. Acts 1:20. This quotation is introduced immediately after one that undoubtedly refers to the Lord Jesus. Rom 11:21, "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The passage here quoted immediately follows as an imprecation of vengeance for their sins. "Let their table," etc. The quotation is not

made, however, either literally from the Hebrew or from the Septuagint, but the sense only is retained. The Hebrew is, "Let their table before them be for a snare, and for those at peace let it be for a gin." The Septuagint is, "Let their table before them be for a snare, and for a stumbling-block, and for an offence." The ancient Targum is, "Let their table which they had prepared before me be for a snare, and their sacrifices be for an offence." The meaning is this: The word table denotes food, In this they expected pleasure and support. David prays that even this, where they expected joy and refreshment, might prove to them the means of punishment and righteous retribution, A snare is that by which birds or wild beasts were taken. They are decoyed into it, or walk or fly carelessly into it, and it is sprung suddenly on them. So of the Jews. The petition is, that while they were seeking refreshment and joy, and anticipating at their table no danger, it might be made the means of their ruin. The only way in which this could be done would be, that their temporal enjoyments would lead them away from God, and produce stupidity and indifference to their spiritual interests. This is often the result of the pleasures of the table, or of seeking sensual gratifications. The apostle does not say whether this prayer was right or wrong. The use which he seems to make of it is this, that David's imprecation was to be regarded in the light of a prophecy; that what he prayed for would come to pass; and that this had actually occurred in the time of the apostle: that their very enjoyments, their national and private privileges, had been the means of alienating them from God, had been a snare to them, and was the cause of their blindness and infidelity. This also is introduced in the psalm as a punishment for giving him vinegar to drink; and their treatment of the Messiah was the immediate cause why all this blindness had come upon the Jews.

And a recompence. The Hebrew word translated "that which should have been for their welfare," is capable of this meaning, and may denote their recompense, or that which is appropriately rendered to them. It means, here, that their ordinary comforts and enjoyments, instead of promoting their permanent welfare, may be the occasion of their guilt and ruin. This is often the effect of earthly comforts. They might lead us to God, and should excite our

gratitude and praise; but they are often abused to our spiritual slumber and guilt, and made the occasion of our ruin. The rich are thus often most forgetful of God; and the very abundance of their blessings made the means of darkness of mind, ingratitude, prayerlessness, and ruin. Satisfied with them, they forget the Giver; and while they enjoy many earthly blessings, God sends barrenness into their souls. This was the guilt of Sodom, "pride, and fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," (Eze 16:49) and against this Moses solemnly warned the Jews, De 6:11,12, 8:10-12. This same caution might be extended to the people of this land, and especially to those who are rich, and are blessed with all that their hearts have wished. From the use which the apostle makes of this passage in the Psalms, it is clear that he regarded it rather as a prophetic denunciation for their sins --a prediction of what would be-- than as a prayer. In his time it had been fulfilled; and the very national privileges of the Jews, on which they so much prided themselves, and which might have been so great blessings, were the occasion of their greater sin in rejecting the Messiah, and of their greater condemnation. Thus their table was made a trap, etc.

10 let their eyes be darkened, that they may not
see, and bow down their back alway.

And bow down their back alway. The Hebrew (Ps 69:23) is, "Let their loins totter or shake;" that is, as one does when he has on him a heavy burden. The apostle has retained this sense. It means, let them be called to bear heavy and oppressive burdens; let them be subjected to toil or servitude, as a reward for their sins. That this had come upon the Jews in the time of Paul is clear; and it is further clear that it came upon them, as it was implied in the psalm, in consequence of their treatment of the Messiah. Much difficulty has been felt in reconciling the petitions in the Psalms for calamities on enemies, with the Spirit of the New Testament. Perhaps they cannot all be thus reconciled; and it is not at all improbable that many of those imprecations were wrong. David was not a perfect man; and the Spirit of inspiration is not responsible for his imperfections. Every doctrine delivered by the sacred writers is true; every fact recorded is recorded as it was. But it does not follow that all the men who wrote, or about whom a narrative was given, were perfect. The reverse is the fact. And

it does not militate against the inspiration of the Scriptures that we have a record of the failings and imperfections of those men. When they uttered improper sentiments; when they manifested improper feelings; when they performed wicked actions, it is no argument against the inspiration of the Scriptures that they were recorded. All that is done in such a case, and all that inspiration demands, is that they be recorded as they are. We wish to see human nature as it is; and one design of making the record of such failings is to show what man is, even under the influence of religion; not as a perfect being, for that would not be true; but as he actually exists, mingled with imperfection. Thus many of the wishes of the ancient saints, imperfect as they were, are condemned as sinful by the spirit of the Christian religion. They were never commended or approved, but they are recorded just to show us what was in fact the character of man, even partially under the influence of religion. Of this nature, probably, were many of the petitions in the Psalms; and the Spirit of God is no more answerable for the feeling because it is recorded, than he is for the feelings of the Edomites when they said, "Rase it, rase it to the foundation," Ps 137:7. Many of those prayers, however, were imprecations on his enemies as a public man, as the magistrate of the land. As it is right and desirable that the robber and the pirate should be detected and punished; as all good men seek it, and it is indispensable for the welfare of the community, where is the impropriety of praying that it may be done? Is it not right to pray that the laws may be executed; that justice may be. maintained; and that restraint should be imposed on the guilty? Assuredly this may be done with a very different spirit from that of revenge. It may be the prayer of the magistrate that God will help him in that which he is appointed to do, and in what ought to be done. Besides, many of these imprecations were regarded as simply predictions of what would be the effect of sin; or of what God would do to the guilty. Such was the case we are now considering, as understood by the apostle. But in a prediction there can be nothing wrong.

11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God
forbid: but *rather* through their fall salvation *is come* unto the
Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Have they stumbled that they should fall? This is to be regarded as an objection, which the apostle proceeds to answer. The meaning is, Is it the design of God that the Jews should totally and irrecoverably be cast off? Even admitting that they are now unbelieving, that they have rejected the Messiah, that they have stumbled, is it the purpose of God finally to exclude them from mercy? The expression to stumble is introduced because he had just mentioned a stumbling-stone. It does not mean to fall down to the ground, or to fall so that a man may not recover himself; but to strike the foot against an obstacle, to be arrested in going, and to be in danger of falling. Hence it means to err, to sin, to be in danger. To fall expresses the state when a man pitches over an obstacle so that he cannot recover himself, but falls to the ground. Hence to err, to sin, or to be cast off irrecoverably. The apostle shows that this last was not the way in which the Jews had fallen, that they were not to be cast off for ever, but that occasion was taken by their fall to introduce the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel, and then they should be restored.

But rather through their fall. By means of their fall. The word fall here refers to all their conduct and doom at the coming of the Messiah, and in the breaking up of their establishment as a nation. Their rejection of the Messiah; the destruction of their city and temple; the ceasing of their ceremonial rites; and the rejection and dispersion of their nation by the Romans, all enter into the meaning of the word fall here, and were all the occasion of introducing salvation to the Gentiles. Salvation. The Christian religion, with all its saving benefits. It does not mean that all the Gentiles were to be saved, but that the way was open; they might have access to God, and obtain his favour through the Messiah. The Gentiles. All the world that were not Jews. The rejection and fall of the Jews contributed to the introduction of the Gentiles in the following manner:

(1.) It broke down the barrier which had long subsisted between them.

(2.) It made it consistent and proper, as they had rejected the Messiah, to send the knowledge of him to others.

(3.) It was connected with the destruction of the temple: and the rites of the Mosaic law; and taught them, and all others, that the worship of God was not to be confined to any single place.

(4.) The calamities that came upon the Jewish nation scattered the inhabitants of Judea, and with the Jews also those who had become Christians, and thus the gospel was carried to other lands.

(5.) These calamities, and the conduct of the Jews, and the close of the Jewish economy, were the means of giving to apostles, and other Christians, right views of the true design of the Mosaic institutions. If the temple had remained; if the nation had continued to flourish, it would have been long before they would have been effectually detached from those rites. Experience showed, even as it was, that they were slow in learning that the Jewish ceremonies were to cease. Some of the most agitating questions in the early church pertained to this; and if the temple had not been destroyed, the contest would have been much longer and more difficult.

12 Now if the fall of them *be* the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

How much more their fulness. The word fulness (πληρωμα) means that which fills up, or completes anything. Thus it is applied to that which fills a vessel or cup; also to the piece of cloth which is put in to fill up the rent in a garment, Mt 9:16. To the fragments which were left when Christ had fed the five thousand, Mk 8:20; Rom 13:10, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," i.e., it is the filling up of the law, or that which renders the obedience complete. See Gal 5:14. Here it stands opposed to their fall, and their diminution, and evidently means their complete restoration to the favour of God; their recovery from unbelief and apostasy. That there will be such

a recovery the apostle proceeds to show. The sentiment is, If their rejection and punishment--their being cut off from the favour of God--an event apparently so unlikely to promote the spread of true religion; if their being withdrawn from all active influence in spreading the true knowledge of God, be yet the occasion of so many blessings to mankind as have attended the spread of the gospel in consequence of it, how much more shall we expect when they shall be restored--when the energy and zeal of the Jewish nation shall unite with the efforts of others in spreading the knowledge of the true Messiah?" In what way, or when this shall be, we know not. But it is easy to see, that if the Jewish people should be converted to the Christian faith, they would have facilities for spreading the truth which the church has never had without them.

(1.) They are scattered in all nations, and have access to all people.

(2.) Their conversion, after so long unbelief, would have all the power and influence of a miracle performed in view of all nations. It would be seen why they had been preserved, and their conversion would be a most striking fulfillment of the prophecies.

(3.) They are familiar with the languages of the world, and their conversion would at once establish many Christian missionaries in the heart of all the kingdoms of the world. It would be kindling at once a thousand lights fix all the dark parts of the earth.

(4.) The Jews have shown that they are eminently fitted to spread the true religion. It was by Jews, converted to Christianity, that the gospel was first spread. Each of the apostles was a Jew; and they have lost none of the ardour, enterprise, and zeal, that always characterized their nation. Their conversion would be, therefore, to give to the Christian church a host of missionaries prepared for their work, familiar with all customs, languages, and climes, and already in the heart of all kingdoms, and with facilities for their work in advance, which others must gain only by the slow toil of many years.

13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

We may see here,

(1.) that it is the earnest wish of the ministry to save the souls of men.

(2.) That they should urge every argument and appeal with reference to to save the souls of men.

(3.) That even the most awful and humbling truths may have this tendency. No truth could be more likely to irritate and offend than that the Jews would be cast off; and yet the apostle used this so faithfully, and yet so tenderly, that he expected and desired it might be the means of saving the souls of his countrymen. Truth often irritates, enrages, and thus excites the attention. Thought or inquiry, however it may be excited, may result in conversion. And thus, even restlessness, and vexation, and anger, may be the means of leading a sinner to Jesus Christ. It should be no part of a minister's object, however, to produce anger. It is a bad emotion; in itself it is evil; and if men can be won to embrace the Saviour without anger, it is better. No wise man would excite a storm and tempest that might require infinite power to subdue, when the same object could be gained with comparative peace, and under the mild influence of love.

(4.) It is right to use all the means in our power, not absolutely wicked, to save men. Paul was full of devices; and much of the success of the ministry will depend on a wise use of plans that may, by the Divine blessing, arrest and save the souls of men.

14 if by any means I may provoke to emulation *them which are* my flesh, and might save some of them.

15 For if the casting away of them *be* the reconciling of the world, what *shall* the receiving *of them be,* but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit *be* holy, the lump *is* also *holy:* and if the root *be* holy, so *are* the branches.

Is also holy. It is lawful then for the owner to partake of it. The offering of a part has consecrated the whole. By this illustration Paul doubtless means to say that the Jewish nation, as a people, were set apart to the service of God, and were so regarded by him. Some have supposed, that by the firstfruit here the apostle intends to refer to the early converts made to the Christian faith in the first preaching of the gospel. But it is more probable that he refers to the patriarchs, the pious men of old, as the firstfruits of the Jewish nation. See Rom 11:28. By their piety the nation was in a manner sanctified, or set apart to the service of God; implying that yet tile great mass of them would be reclaimed and saved. If the root be holy. This figure expresses the same thing as is denoted in the first part of the verse. The root of a tree is the source of nutritious juices necessary for its growth, and gives its character to the tree. If that be sound, pure, vigorous, we expect the same of the branches. A root bears a similar relation to the tree that the firstfruit does to the mass of bread. Perhaps there is allusion here to Jer 11:16, where the Jewish nation is represented under the image of "a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit." In this place the reference is doubtless to Abraham and the patriarchs, as the root or founders of the Jewish nation. If they were holy, it is to be expected that the distant branches, or descendants, would also be so regarded. The mention of the root and branches of a tree gives the apostle occasion for an illustration of the relation at that time of the Jews and Gentiles to the church of Christ.

17 And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild
olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest
of the root and fatness of the olive tree;
18 boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest
not the root, but the root thee.
19 Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might
be graffed in.
20 Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou
standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear:

But fear. This fear stands opposed to the spirit of boasting and self-confidence, against which he was exhorting them. It does not mean terror or horror, but it denotes humility, watchfulness, and

solicitude to abide in the faith. Do not be haughty and high-minded against the Jew, who has been east off, but "demean yourself as a humble believer, and one who has need to be continually on his guard, and to fear lest he may fall through unbelief, and be cast off." (Stuart.) We may here learn,

(1.) that there is danger lest those who are raised to eminent privileges should become unduly exalted in their own estimation, and despise others.

(2.) The tendency of faith is to promote humility, and a sense of our dependence on God.

(3.) The system of salvation by faith produces that solicitude, and careful guarding and watchfulness, which is necessary to preserve us from apostasy and ruin.

21 for if God spared not the natural branches, *take heed* lest he
also spare not thee.
22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them
which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue
in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

The goodness. The benevolence or mercy of God towards you in admitting you to his favour. This calls for gratitude, love, confidence. It demands expressions of thanksgiving. It should be highly prized, in order that it may excite to diligence to secure its continuance. The severity of God. That is, towards the Jews. The word severity now suggests sometimes the idea of harshness, or even of cruelty. (Webster.) But nothing of this kind is conveyed in the original word here. It properly denotes cutting off--(αποτομιαν)--from (αποτεμνω), to cut off; and is commonly applied to the act of the gardener or vine dresser in trimming trees or vines, and cutting off the decayed or useless branches. Here it refers to the act of God in cutting off or rejecting the Jews as useless branches; and conveys no idea of injustice, cruelty, or harshness. It was a just act, and consistent with all the perfections of God. It indicated a purpose to do that which was right, though

the inflictions might seem to be severe, and though they must involve them in many heavy calamities.

If thou continue in his goodness. The word "his" is not in the original. And the word goodness may denote integrity, probity, uprightness, as well as favour. Rom 3:12, "There is none that doeth good." The Septuagint often thus uses the word, Ps 14:1,3, etc. This is probably the meaning here; though it may mean, "if thou dost continue in a state of favour;" that is, if your faith and good conduct shall be such as to make God continue his kindness towards you. Christians do not merit the favour of God by their faith and good works; but their obedience is an indispensable condition on which that favour is to be continued. It is thus that the grace of God is magnified, at the same time that the highest good is done to man himself. Otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. Comp. Jn 15:2 The word thou refers here to the Gentile churches. In relation to them the favour of God was dependent on their fidelity. If they became disobedient and unbelieving, then the same principle which led him to withdraw his mercy from the Jewish people would lead also to their rejection and excision. And on this principle God has acted in numberless cases. Thus his favour was withdrawn from the seven churches of Asia, Revelation chapters 1-3, from Corinth, from Antioch, from Philippi, and even from Rome itself.

23 And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in:
for God is able to graff them in again.

And they also. The Jews. If they bide not, etc. If they do not continue in wilful obstinacy and rejection of the Messiah. As their unbelief was the sole cause of their rejection, so, if that be removed, they may be again restored to the Divine favour. For God is able, etc. He has

(1.) power to restore them; to bring them back, and replace them in his favour.

(2.) He has not bound himself utterly to reject them, and for ever to exclude them. In this way the apostle reaches his purpose, which was to show them that God had not cast away his people, or finally rejected the Jewish nation, Rom 11:1,2. That God has this power, the apostle proceeds to show in the next verse.

24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural *branches,* be graffed into their own olive tree?

Which is wild by nature. Which is uncultivated and unfruitful. That is, if you were introduced into a state of favour with God from a condition which was one of enmity and hostility to him. The argument here is, that it was in itself as difficult a thing to reclaim them, and change them from opposition to God to friendship, as it would seem difficult or impossible to reclaim and make fruitful the wild olive tree.

And wert grafted contrary to nature. Contrary to your natural habits, thoughts, and practices. There was, among the Gentiles, no inclination or tendency towards God. This does not mean that they were physically depraved, or that their disposition was literally like the wild olive; but it is used, for the sake of illustration, to show that their moral character and habits were unlike those of the friends of God.

How much more, etc. The meaning of this whole verse may be thus expressed: "If God had mercy on the Gentiles, who were outcasts from his favour, shall he not much rather on those who were so long his people, to whom had been given the promises, and the covenants, and the law, whose ancestors had been so many of them his friends and among whom the Messiah was born?" In some respects there are facilities among the Jews for their conversion, which had not existed among the Gentiles. They worship one God; they admit the authority of revelation; they have the Scriptures of the Old Testament; they expect a Messiah; and they have a habit of professed reverence for the will of God.

25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this
mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that
blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the
Gentiles be come in.
26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is
written, There shall come out of Zion the
Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness
from Jacob:

All Israel. All the Jews. It was a maxim among the Jews, that "every Israelite should have part in the future age." (Grotius.) The apostle applies that maxim to his own purpose; and declares the sense in which it would be true. He does not mean to say that every Jew of every age would be saved; for he had proved that a large portion of them would be, in his time, rejected and lost. But the time would come when, as a people, they would be recovered; when the nation would turn to God; and when it could be said of them, that, as a nation, they were restored to the Divine favour. It is not clear that he means that even then every individual of them would be saved, but the body of them; the great mass of the nation would be. Nor is it said when this would be. This is one of the things which "the Father hath put in his own power," Acts 1:7. He has given us the assurance that it shall be done to encourage us in our efforts to save them; and he has concealed the time when it shall be, lest we should relax our efforts, or feel that no exertions were needed to accomplish what must take place at a fixed time.

27 for this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away
their sins.
28 As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but
as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers'
sakes.

They are beloved. God still regards them with interest; has purposes of mercy towards them; intends still to do them good. This does not mean that he approved of their conduct or character, or that he had for them the same kind of affection which he would have had if they had been obedient. God does not love a sinful

character; but he may have still purposes of mercy, and regard men with deep interest on whom he intends yet to bestow mercy.

29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

And calling of God. The word calling (κλησις) here denotes that act of God by which he extends an invitation to men to come and partake of his favours, whether it be by a personal revelation as to the patriarchs, Or by the promises of the gospel, or by the influences of his Spirit. All such invitations or callings imply a pledge that he will bestow the favour, and will not repent, or turn from it. God never draws or invites sinners to himself without being willing to bestow pardon and eternal life. The word calling here, therefore, has not respect to external privileges, but to that choosing of a sinner, and influencing him to come to God, which is connected with eternal life.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he not said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Eze 24:14, 1Sam 15:29, Ps 89:35,36, Tit 1:2, Heb 6:18, Jas 1:17. It follows from this,

(1.) that all the promises made to the people of God shall be fulfilled.

(2.) That his people need not be discouraged or desponding in times of persecution and trial.

(3.) That none who become his true friends will be forsaken, or cast off. God does not bestow the gift of repentance and faith, of pardon and peace, on men, for a temporary purpose; nor does he capriciously withdraw them, and leave the soul to ruin. When he renews a soul, it is with reference to his own glory; and to withdraw those favours, and leave such a soul once renewed to go down to hell, would be as much a violation of all the principles of his nature as it would be to all the promises of the Scripture.

(4.) For God to forsake such a soul, and leave it to ruin, would imply that he did repent. It would suppose a change of purpose and of feeling. It would be the character of a capricious being, with no settled plan or principles of action; no confidence could be reposed in him, and his government would be unworthy the affections and trust of his intelligent creation.

30 For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have
now obtained mercy through their unbelief:
31 even so have these also now not believed, that through your
mercy they also may obtain mercy.

That through your mercy, etc. The immediate effect of the unbelief of the Jews was to confer salvation on the Gentiles or to open the way for the preaching of the gospel to them. But its remote effect would be to secure the preaching of the gospel again to the Jews. Through the mercy, that is, the compassion or deep feeling of the converted Gentiles; through the deep and tender pity which they would feel for the blinded and degraded Jews, the gospel should be again carried to them, and they should be recalled to the long-lost favour of God. Each party should thus cause salvation to come to the other--the Jews to the Gentiles by their unbelief; but the Gentiles, in their turn, to the Jews by their belief. We may here learn,

(1.) that the Jews are to be converted by the instrumentality of the Gentiles. It is not to be by miracle, but by the regular and common way in which God blesses men.

(2.) That this is to be done by the mercy or compassion of the Gentiles; by their taking pity on the lost and 'wretched condition of the Jewish people.

(3.) It is to be when the abundance of the Gentiles--that is, when great numbers of the Gentiles--shall be called in. It may be asked here, whether the time is not approaching for the Gentiles to make efforts to being the Jews to the knowledge of the Messiah. Hitherto those efforts have been unsuccessful; but it will not always be so; the time is coming when the promises of God in

regard to them shall be fulfilled. Christians shall be moved with deep compassion for the degraded and forsaken Jews, and they shall be called into the kingdom of God, and made efficient agents in extending the gospel through the whole world. May the time soon come when they shall feel as they should for the rejected and forsaken children of Abraham, and when their labours for their conversion shall be attended with success.

32 For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

All are represented, therefore, as in prison, enclosed or confined by God, and to be liberated only in his own way and time. In regard to the agency of God in this, we may remark,

(1.) that the word does not mean that God compelled them to disbelieve the gospel. When, in Gal 3:22, the Scripture is said to have included all under sin, it is not meant that the Scripture compelled them not to believe.

(2.) The word does not imply that the sin and unbelief for which they were shut up were not voluntary. Even when a man is committed to prison, the crime which brought him there is voluntary, and for it he is responsible.

(3.) The keeper of a prison does no wrong in confining a criminal; or the judge in condemning him; or the executioner in fulfilling the sentence of the law. So of God. What he does is not to compel men to remain under unbelief, but to declare that they are so; so to encompass them with the proof of it that they shall realize that there is no escape from the evidence of it, and thus to press on them the evidence of their need of a Saviour. This he does in relation to all sinners who ever become converted.

(4.) Yet God permitted this; suffered Jews and Gentiles to fall into unbelief, and to be concluded under it, because he had a special purpose to answer in leaving man to the power of sin and Unbelief. One of those purposes was, doubtless, to manifest the power of his grace and mercy in the plan of redemption.

(5.) In all this, and in all other sin, man is voluntary. He chooses his course of evil, and God is under no obligation to compel him to do otherwise. Being under unbelief, God declares the fact, and avails himself of it, in the plan of salvation by grace.

33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge
of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways
past finding out!

Past finding out. Literally, which cannot be tracked or traced out. The footsteps cannot be followed. As if his path were in the sea, (Ps 77:19) and the waves closed immediately, leaving no track, it cannot be followed or sought out. It is known that he has passed, but there is no way of tracing his goings. This is a beautiful and striking figure. It denotes that God's plans are deep, and beyond our comprehension. We can see the proofs that he is everywhere; but how it is, we cannot comprehend. We are permitted to see the vast movements around us; but the invisible hand we cannot see, nor trace the footsteps of that mighty God who performs his wonders on the ocean and on the land.

34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been
his counselor?
35 or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed
unto him again?

Or who hath, etc. The sentiment in this verse is found substan Job 41:11, "Who hath prevented me, that I should repay hin Hebrew word "prevented" means to anticipate, to go before; a asks, "Who has anticipated me; who has conferred favours before I have on him; who has thus laid me under oblation to hi is the sense in which the apostle uses the word here. Who has services, laid God under obligation to recompense or pay him a is added in Job, "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine Paul, contrary to the prevailing doctrine of the Jews, shows tha could plead his own merits, or advance with a claim on God. favours of salvation must be bestowed by mercy or grace; Goc them all; and he had a right to bestow them when and where he

The same claim to all things is repeatedly made by God, Ex 1 10:14, Ps 24: 50:12.

36 For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

All things. The universe; the creation; or, still more particularly, the things of which the apostle is discoursing. He does not affirm that he is the author of sin, or of sinful thoughts; not that he creates evil, or that evil is designed to promote his glory. The apostle is not discoursing of these, but of his method of bestowing his favours; and he says that these are to be conferred in such a way as to promote his honour, and to declare the praise of him who is the original Source, the Creator and the Proprietor of all things.

From the close of this chapter we may make the following observations :--

1. God is infinitely wise, and just, and good. This is seen in all his plans and doings, and especially in the glorious plan of saving men.

2. It becomes man to be humble, he can see but few of the reasons of the doings of an infinite God. He is not qualified to sit in judgment on his plans. He is not fitted to arraign him. There is nothing more absurd than for a man to contend with God, or to find fault with his plans; and yet there is nothing more common. Man speaks, and thinks, and reasons on the great things pertaining to the Divine mind and plan, as if he were qualified to counsel the Being of infinite wisdom, and to arraign at the bar of his own reason the Being of infinite goodness.

3. It is our duty to be submissive to God. His plans may often require him to cross the path of our pleasures, or to remove some of our enjoyments. He tries us by requiring us to put confidence in him where we cannot see the reason of his doings, and to believe that he is qualified for universal empire. In all such cases it is our duty to submit to his will. Hie is seeking a grander and

nobler object than our private good. He is seeking the welfare of a vast universe; and he best knows in what way that can be promoted.

4. God is the Creator and Proprietor of all things. It would be possible to prove this from his works. But his word unequivocally asserts it. He has formed, and he upholds, and he directs all things for his glory. He who formed all has a right to all. He who is the Source of life has the right to direct it, or to withdraw the gift. He on whom all depend has a right to homage and praise.

5. He has formed a universe that is eminently adapted to declare his glory. It evinces infinite power in its creation; and it is fitted to fill the mind with evergrowing wonder and gladness in its contemplation. The sacred writers were filled with rapture when they contemplated it; and all the discoveries of astronomy, and geology, and science in general, in modern times, are fitted to carry forward the wonder, and fill the lips with new expressions of praise. The universe is vast and grand enough to occupy the thoughts for ever. How little do we know of the wonders of his creation, even pertaining to this little world; to our own bodies and souls; to the earth, the ocean, the beast and the reptile, the bird and the insect; how much less of that amazing view of worlds and systems which modern astronomy has opened to our view-- the vast starry frame which the eye can penetrate for millions and millions of miles, and where it finds world piled on world, and system rising above system, in wonderful order and grandeur, and where the utmost power of the telescope can as yet find no bounds!

6. Equally true is this in his moral government. The system is such as to excite our wonder and praise. The creation and control of free, and active, and mighty minds, is as wonderful as the creation and control of matter, even the vast masses of the planetary systems. Creation is filled with minds. God has peopled the worlds with conscious, free, and active

intelligences. The wonderful wisdom by which he controls them; the amazing moral power by which he guards and binds them to himself, by which he restrains and awes the rebellious; and the complete subjection by which he will bring all yet at his feet, is as much replete with wonder as the wisdom and skill by which he framed the heavens. To govern mind requires more wisdom and skill than to govern matter. To control angels and men evinces more glory than to roll the streams or the ocean, or than to propel and guide the planets. And especially is this true of the plan of salvation. That wondrous scheme is adapted to call forth eternal praise, and to show for ever the wisdom and mercy of God. Without such a plan, we cannot see how the Divinity could be fully manifested; with that, we see God as God, vast, grand, mighty, infinite; but still seeking to do good, and having power to enter any vast mass of iniquity, and to diffuse purity and peace over the face of an alienated and dying world.

7. The salvation of sinners is not to promote their own glory primarily, but that of God. "He is first, and he last; he is midst, and without end," in their salvation. God seeks his own honour, and seeks it by their return and their obedience. But if they will not promote his glory in that way, they must be made to promote it in their ruin.

8. It is the duty of men to seek the honour of this infinitely wise and holy God. It commends itself to every man's conscience. God has formed us all; and man can have no higher destiny and honour than to be permitted to promote and spread abroad through all the universe the knowledge of a Being whose character is infinitely lovely, whose government is right, and whose presence and favour will diffuse blessings of salvation and eternal peace on all the wide creation that will be obedient to his will.

Romans-12

Exhortations for Christian Living

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that
ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto
God, *which is* your reasonable service.

Your bodies. The bodies of animals were offered in sacrifice. The apostle specifies their bodies particularly in reference to that fact. Still the entire animal was devoted; and Paul evidently meant here the same as to say, present YOURSELVES, your entire person, to the service of God. Comp. 1Cor 6:16, Jas 3:6. It was not customary or proper to speak of a sacrifice as art offering of a soul or spirit, in the common language of the Jews; and hence the apostle applied their which Christians were to make of themselves to God. A living sacrifice. A sacrifice is an offering made to God as an atonement for sin; or any offering made to him and his service as an expression of thanksgiving or homage. It implies, that he who offers it presents it entirely, releases all claim or right to it, and leaves it to be disposed of for the honour of God. In the case of an animal, it was slain, and the blood offered; in the case of any other offering, as the firstfruits, etc., it was set apart to the service of God; and he who offered it released all claim on it, and submitted it to God, to be disposed of at his will. This is the offering which the apostle entreats the Romans to make; to devote themselves to God, as if they had no longer any claim on themselves; to be disposed of by him; to suffer and bear all that he might appoint; and to promote his honour in any way which he might command. This is the nature of true religion.

Living. (ζωσαν). It demands vigorous and active powers in the service of God the Saviour. There is something very affecting in the view of such a sacrifice; in regarding life, with all its energies, its intellectual, and moral, and physical powers, as one long sacrifice--one continued offering unto God. An immortal

being presented to him; presented voluntarily, with all his energies, from day to day, until life shall close, so that it may be said that he has lived and died an offering made freely unto God. This is religion.

Holy. This means, properly, without blemish or defect. No other sacrifice could be made to God. The Jews were expressly forbid to offer that which was lame, or blind, or in any way deformed, De 15:21; Lev 1:3,10, 3:1, 22:20, De 17:1. Comp. Mal 1:8. If offered without any of these defects, it was regarded as holy, i.e., appropriately set apart, or consecrated to God. In like manner we are to consecrate to God our best faculties; the rigour of our minds, and talents, and time. Not the feebleness of sickness merely; not old age alone; not time which we cannot otherwise employ; but the first rigour and energies of the mind and body--our youth, and health, and strength. Our sacrifice to God is to be not divided, separate; but it is to be entire and complete. Many are expecting to be Christians in sickness; many in old age; thus purposing to offer unto him the blind and the lame. The sacrifice is to be free from sin. It is not to be a divided, and broken, and polluted service. It is to be with the best affections of our hearts and lives.

Acceptable unto God. They are exhorted to offer such a sacrifice as will be acceptable to God; that is, such an one as he had just specified, one that was living and holy. No sacrifice should be made which is not acceptable to God. The offerings of the heathen' the pilgrimages of Mohammedans; the self-inflicted penalties of the Roman Catholics, uncommanded by God, cannot be acceptable to him. Those services will be acceptable to God, and those only, which he appoints. Comp. Col 2:20-23. Men are not to invent services; or to make crosses; or to seek persecutions and trials; or to provoke opposition. They are to do just what God requires of them, and that will be acceptable to God. And this fact, that what we do is acceptable to God, is the highest recompense we can have. It matters little what men think of us, if God approves what we do. To please him should be our highest aim; the fact that we do please him is our highest reward.

Which is your reasonable service. The word reasonable, with us, means that which is "governed by reason; thinking, speaking, or acting conformably to the dictates of reason," (Webster) or that which can be shown to be rational or proper. A reasonable service means that which is mental, or pertaining to reason. It stands opposed not to that which is foolish or unreasonable, but to the external service of the Jews, and such as they relied on for salvation. The worship of the Christian is that which pertains to the mind, or is spiritual; that of the Jew was external.

We may learn from this verse,

(1.)that the proper worship of God is the free homage of the mind. It is not forced or constrained. The offering of ourselves should be voluntary. No other can be a true offering, and none other can be acceptable.

(2.) We are to offer our entire selves, all that we have and are, to God. No other offering can be such as he will approve.

(3.) The character of God is such as should lead us to that. It is a character of mercy--of long-continued and patient forbearance--and it should influence us to devote ourselves to him.

(4.) It should be done without delay. God is as worthy of such service now as he ever will or can be. He has every possible claim on our affections and our hearts.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by
the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that
good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

The word used here properly denotes an age, or generation of men. It may denote a particular generation, or it may be applied to the race. It is sometimes used in each of these senses. Thus here it may mean, that Christians should not conform to the maxims, habits, feelings, etc., of a wicked, luxurious, and

idolatrous age, but should be conformed solely to the precepts and laws of the gospel; or the same principle may be extended to every age, and the direction may be, that Christians should not conform to the prevailing habits, style, and manners of the world--the people who know not God. They are to be governed by the laws of the Bible; to fashion their lives after the example of Christ; and to form themselves by principles different from those which prevail in the world. In the application of this rule there is much difficulty. Many may think that they are not conformed to the world, while they can easily perceive that their neighbour is. They indulge in many things which others may think to be conformity to the world, and are opposed to many things which others think innocent. The design of this passage is doubtless to produce a spirit that should not find pleasure in the pomp and vanity of the world; and which will regard all vain amusements and gaieties with disgust, and lead the mind to find pleasure in better things.

That ye may prove. The sense is, that such a renewed mind is essential to a successful inquiry after the will of God. Having a disposition to obey him, the mind will be prepared to understand his precepts. There will be a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and his will; a nice tact or taste, which will admit his laws, and see the propriety and beauty of his commands. A renewed heart is the best preparation for studying Christianity; the man who is chaste has most clearly and forcibly the arguments for chastity, etc. A heart in love with the fashions and follies of the world is ill-fitted to appreciate the arguments for humility, prayer, etc. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," Jn 7:17. The reason why the heart is renewed is, that we may do the will of God; the heart that is renewed is best fitted to appreciate and understand his will.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

The measure of faith. The word faith here is evidently put for religion, or Christianity. Faith is a main thing in religion. It constitutes its first demand; and the Christian religion, therefore, is characterized by its faith, or its confidence in God. See Mk 16:16. Comp. Heb 11, Rom 4. We are not therefore to be elated in our view of ourselves; we are not to judge of our own characters by wealth, or talent, or learning; but by our attachment to God, and by the influence of faith on our minds. The meaning is, judge yourselves, or estimate yourselves, by your piety. The propriety of this rule is apparent,

(1.) because no other standard is a correct one, or one of value. Our talent, learning, rank, or wealth, is a very improper rule by which to estimate ourselves. All may be wholly unconnected with moral worth; and the worst as well as the best men may possess them.

(2.) God will judge us in the day of judgment by our attachment to Christ and his cause, (Mt 25) and that is the true standard by which to estimate ourselves here.

(3.) Nothing else will secure and promote humility but this. All other things may produce or promote pride, but this will effectually secure humility. The fact that God has given all that we have; the fact that the poor and obscure may have as true an elevation of character as ourselves; the consciousness of our own imperfections and short-comings in the Christian faith; and the certainty that we are soon to be arraigned to try this great question, whether we have evidence that we are the friends of God, will all tend to promote humbleness of mind, and to bring down our usual inordinate self-estimation. If all Christians judged themselves in this way, it would remove at once no small part of the pride of station and of life from the world, and would produce deep attachment for those who are blessed with the faith of the gospel, though they may be unadorned by any of the wealth or trappings which now promote pride and distinctions among men.

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members
have not the same office:
5 so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one
members one of another.

Thus in the church, every individual is not only necessary in his place as an individual, but is needful to the proper symmetry and action of the whole. And we may learn here,

(1.) that no member of the church of Christ should esteem himself to be of no importance. In his own place he may be of as much consequence as the man of learning, wealth, and talent may be in his.

(2.) God designed that there should be differences of endowments of nature and of grace in the church; just as it was needful that there should be differences in the members of the human body.

(3.) No one should despise or lightly esteem another. All are necessary. We can no more spare the foot or the hand than we can the eye; though the latter may be much more curious and striking as a proof of Divine skill. We do not despise the hand or the foot any more than we do the eye; and in all we should acknowledge the goodness and wisdom of God. See these thoughts carried out in 1Cor 12:21-25.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to
us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion
of faith;

The word faith is thus used often to denote that extraordinary confidence in God which attended the working of miracles, etc., Mt 17:20, 21:21, Lk 17:6.

7 or ministry, *let us wait* on *our* ministering; or he that teacheth,
on teaching;
8 or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do*
it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that
showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

With simplicity. See Mt 6:22, "If thine eye be single," etc.; Lk 11:34. The word simplicity (απλοτης)is used in a similar sense to denote singleness, honesty of aim, purity, integrity, without any mixture of a base, selfish, or sinister end. It requires the bestowment of a favour without seeking any personal or selfish ends; without partiality; but actuated only by the desire to bestow them in the best possible maimer to promote the object for which they were given, 2Cor 8:2, 9:11,13, 1:12, Eph 6:5, Col 3:22. It is plain that when property was entrusted to them, there would be danger that they might be tempted to employ it for selfish and sinister ends, to promote their influence and prosperity; and hence the apostle exhorted them to do it with a single aim to the object for which it was given. Well did he know that there was nothing more tempting than the possession of wealth, though given to be appropriated to others. And this exhortation is applicable not only to the deacons of the churches, but to all who in this day of Christian benevolence are entrusted with money to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He that ruleth. This word properly designates one who is set over others, or who presides or rules, or one who attends with diligence and care to a thing. In 1Thes 5:12, it is used in relation to ministers in general: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord." 1Timm 3:4,5,12, it is applied to the head of a family, or one who diligently and faithfully performs the duty of a father: "One that ruleth well his own house." 1Timm 5:17, it is applied to "elders" in the church: "Let the elders that rule well," etc. It is not elsewhere used except in Tit 3:8,14, in a different sense, where it is translated "to maintain good works." The prevailing sense of the word, therefore, is to rule, to preside over, or to have the management of. But to what class of persons reference is had here, and what was precisely their duty, has been made a matter of controversy, and it is not easy to determine. Whether this refers to a permanent office in the church, or to an occasional presiding in their assemblies convened for business, etc., is not settled by the use of the word. It has the idea of

ruling, as in a family, or of presiding, as in a deliberative assembly; and either of these ideas would convey all that is implied in the original word. Comp. 1Cor 12:28.

He that sheweth mercy. It is probable, that this refers to those who had the care of the sick and infirm, the aged and the needy; not so much to provide for them by charity, as to attend on them in their affliction, and to take care of them. To the deacons was committed the duty of distributing alms, but to others that of personal attendance This can hardly be called an office, in the technical sense; and yet it is not improbable that they were designated to this by the church, and requested to perform it. There were no hospitals and no almshouses. Christians felt it their duty to show personal attention to the infirm and the sick; and so important was their office, that it was deemed worthy of notice in a general direction to the church. With cheerfulness. The direction given to those who distributed alms was to do it with simplicity, with an honest aim to meet the purpose for which it was entrusted to them. The direction here varies according to the duty to be performed. It is to be done with cheerfulness, pleasantness, joy; with a kind, benign, and happy temper. The importance of this direction to those in this situation is apparent. Nothing tends so much to enhance the value of personal attendance on the sick and afflicted, as a kind and cheerful temper. If anywhere a mild, amiable, cheerful, and patient disposition is needed, it is near a sick bed and when administering to the wants of those who are in affection. And whenever we may be called to such a service, we should remember that this is indispensable. If moroseness, or impatience, or fretfulness is discovered in us, it will pain those whom we seek to benefit, embitter their feelings, and render our services of comparatively little value. The needy and infirm, the feeble and the aged, have enough to bear without the impatience and harshness of professed friends. It may be added, that the example of the Lord Jesus Christ is the brightest which the world has furnished of this temper. Though constantly encompassed by the infirm and the afflicted, yet he was always kind, and gentle, and mild, and has left before us exactly what

the apostle meant when he said, "he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." The example of the good Samaritan is also another instance of what is intended by this direction. Comp. 2Cor 9:7. This direction is particularly applicable to a physician.

9 *Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 *Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;

Preferring one another. The word preferring means going before, leading, setting an example. Thus in showing mutual respect and honour, they were to strive to excel; not to see which could obtain most honour, but which could confer most, or manifest most respect. Comp. 1Pet 5:5, Eph 5:21. Thus they were to be studious to show to each other all the respect which was due in the various relations of life; children to show proper respect to parents, parents to children, servants to their masters, etc.; and all to strive, by mutual kindness, to promote the happiness of the Christian community. How different this from the spirit of the world; the spirit which seeks not to confer honour, but to obtain it; which aims not to diffuse respect, but to attract all others to give honour to us. If this single direction were to be obeyed in society, it would put an end at once to no small part of the envy, and ambition, and heart-burning, and dissatisfaction of the world. It would produce contentment, harmony, love, and order in the community; and stay the progress of crime, and annihilate the evils of strife, and discord, and malice. And especially, it would give order and beauty to the church. It would humble the ambition of those who, like Diotrephes, love to have the preeminence, (3Jn 1:9) and make every man willing to occupy the place for which God has designed him, and rejoice that his brethren may be exalted to higher posts of responsibility and honour.

11 not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

In business, (τησπουδη). This is the same word which, in Rom 12:88, is rendered diligence. It properly denotes haste intensity, ardour of mind; and hence it also denotes industry, labour. The direction means, that we should be diligently occupied in our

proper employment. It does not refer to any particular occupation, but is used, in a general sense, to denote all the labour which we may have to do; or is a direction to be faithful and industrious in the discharge of all our appropriate duties. Comp. Eccl 9:10. The tendency of the Christian religion is to promote industry.

(1.) It teaches the value of time.

(2.) Presents numerous and important things to be done.

(3.) It inclines men to be conscientious in the improvement of each moment.

(4.) And it takes away the mind from those pleasures and pursuits which generate and promote indolence. The Lord Jesus was constantly employed in filling up the great duties of his life; and the effect of his religion has been to promote industry wherever it has spread, both among nations and individuals. An idle man and a Christian are names which do not harmonize. Every Christian has enough to do to occupy all his time; and he whose life is spent in ease, and in doing nothing, should doubt altogether his religion. God has assigned us much to accomplish; and he will hold us answerable for the faithful performance of it. Comp. Jn 5:17, 9:14, 1Thes 4:11, 2Thes 3:10,12. All that would be needful to transform the idle, and vicious, and wretched, into sober and useful men, would be to give to them the spirit of the Christian religion. See the example of Paul, Acts 20:34,35.

12 rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Continuing instant in prayer. That is, be persevering in prayer. See Col 4:2. Lk 18:1 The meaning of this direction is, that in order to discharge aright the duties of the Christian life, and especially to maintain a joyful hope, and to be sustained in the midst of afflictions, it is necessary to cherish a spirit of prayer, and to live near to God. How often a Christian should pray, the

Scriptures do not inform us. Of David. we are told that he prayed seven times a day, (Ps 119:164) of Daniel, that he was accustomed to pray three times a day, (Dan 6:10) of our Saviour we have repeated instances of his praying mentioned; and the same of the apostles, The following rules, perhaps, may guide us in this:

(1.) Every Christian should have some time, allotted for this service, and some place where he may be alone with God.

(2.) It is not easy, perhaps not possible, to maintain a life of piety without regular habits of secret devotion.

(3.) The morning, when we have experienced God's protecting care, when the mind is fresh, and the thoughts are as yet clear and unoccupied with the world, when we go forth to the duties, trials, and temptations of the day; and the evening, when we have again experienced his goodness, and are about to commit ourselves to his protecting care, and when we need his pardoning mercy for the errors and follies of the day, seem to be times which commend themselves to all as appropriate seasons for private devotion.

(4.) Every person will also find other times when private prayer will be needful, and when he will be inclined to it. In affliction, in perplexity, in moments of despondency, in danger, and want, in disappointment, and in the loss of friends, we shall feel the propriety of drawing near to God, and of pouring out the heart before him.

(5.) Besides this, every Christian is probably conscious of times when he feels peculiarly inclined to pray; he feels just like praying; he has a spirit of supplication; and nothing but prayer will meet the instinctive desires of his bosom. We are often conscious of an earnest desire to see and converse with an absent friend, to have communion with those we love; and we

value such fellowship as among the happiest moments of life. So with the Christian. He may have an earnest desire to have communion with God; his heart pants for it; and he cannot resist the propensity to seek him, and pour out his desires before him. Compare the feelings expressed by David in Ps 42:1,2,

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

Comp. Ps 63:1. Such seasons should be improved; they are the "spring-times" of our piety; and we should expand every sail, that we may be "filled with all the fulness of God." They are happy, blessed moments of our life; and then devotion is sweetest and most pure; and then the soul knows what it is to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1Jn 1:3.

(6.) In addition to all this, Christians may be in the habit of praying to God without the formality of retirement. God looks upon the heart; and the heart may pour forth its secret desires to Him even when in business, when conversing with a friend, when walking, when alone, and when in society. Thus the Christian may live a life of prayer; and it shall be one of the characteristics of his life that he prays! By this he shall be known; and in this he shall learn the way to possess peace in religion.

"In every joy that crowns my days, In every pain I bear, My heart shall find delight in praise, Or seek relief in prayer. "When gladness wings my favour'd hour, Thy love my thoughts shall fill; Resigned when storms of sorrow lower, My soul shall meet thy will. "My lifted eye, without a tear, The gathering storm shall see; My steadfast heart shall know no fear: That heart shall rest on thee."

13 distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Given to hospitality. This expression means that they should readily and cheerfully entertain strangers. This is a duty which is frequently enjoined in the Scriptures. Heb 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." 1Pet 4:9, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." Paul makes this especially the duty of a Christian bishop: 1Timm 3:2, "A bishop then must--be given to hospitality;" Tit 1:8. Hospitality is especially enjoined by the Saviour, and its exercise commanded: Mt 10:40,42, "He that receiveth you receiveth me," etc. The want of hospitality is one of the charges which the Judge of mankind will allege against the wicked, and on which he will condemn them: Mt 25:43, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in." It is especially commended to us by the example of Abraham, (Gen 18:1-8,) and of Lot, (Gen 19:1,2,) who thus received angels unawares. It was one of the virtues on which Job particularly commended himself, and which he had not failed to practise. Job 31:16,17, "If I have withheld the poor from theft desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof," etc. In the time of our Saviour it was, evidently practised in the most open and frank manner. Lk 10:7, "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give." A remarkable instance is also mentioned in Lk 11:5. This virtue is no less common in eastern nations at present than it was in the time of Christ. It is eminently the virtue of oriental nations, of their ardent and open temperament. It springs up naturally in countries thinly settled, where the sight of a stranger would be therefore peculiarly pleasant; in countries, too, where the occupation was chiefly to attend flocks, and where there was much leisure for conversation; and where the population was too sparse, and the travellers too infrequent, to justify inn-keeping as a business. From all these causes, it has happened that there are, properly speaking, no inns or taverns in the regions around Palestine. It was customary, indeed, to erect places for lodging and shelter at suitable distances, or by the side of springs or watering-places, for travellers to lodge in. But they are built at the public expense, and are unfurnished. Each traveller carries his own

bed and clothes and cooking utensils, and such places are merely designed as a shelter for caravans. (See Robinson's Calmet, Art. Caravanserai.) It is still so; and hence it becomes, in their view, a virtue of high order to entertain, at their own tables, and in their families, such strangers as may be travelling. Niebuhr says, that "the hospitality of the Arabs has always been the subject of promise; and I believe that those of the present day exercise this virtue no less than the ancients did. There are, in the villages of Tehama, houses which are public, where travellers may lodge and be entertained some days gratis, if they will be content with the fare; and they are much frequented. When the Arabs are at table, they invite those who happen to come to eat with them, whether they be Christians or Mohammedans, gentle or simple." "The primitive Christians," says Calmet, "considered one principle part of their duty to consist in showing hospitality to strangers. They were, in fact, so ready in discharging this duty, that the very heathen admired them for it. They were hospitable to all strangers, but especially to those who were of the household of faith. Believers scarcely ever travelled without letters of communion, which testified the purity of their faith, and procured for them a favourable reception wherever the name of Jesus Christ was known." (Calmet, Dict.) Calmet is also of opinion that the two minor epistles of John may be such letters of recommendation and communion. Comp. 2Jn 1:10. It may be added, that it would be particularly expected of Christians that they should show hospitality to the ministers of religion. They were commonly poor; they received no fixed salary; they travelled from place to place; and they would be dependent for support on the kindness of those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. This was particularly intended by our Saviour's instructions on the subject, Mt 10:11-13,40-42. The duty of hospitality is still binding on Christians and all men. The law of Christ is not repealed. The customs of society are indeed changed; and one evidence of advancement in commerce and in security is furnished in the fact that inns are now provided and patronized for the traveller in all Christian lands. Still this does not lessen the obligations to show hospitality. It is demanded by the very

genius of the Christian religion; it evinces proper love towards mankind; it shows that there is a feeling of brotherhood and kindness towards others, when such hospitality is shown. It unites society, creates new bonds of interest and affection, to show kindness to the stranger and to the poor. To what extent this is to be done, is one of those questions which are to be left to every man's conscience and views of duty. No rule can be given on the subject. Many men have not the means to be extensively hospitable; and many are not placed in situations that require it. No rules could be given that should be applicable to all cases; and hence the Bible has left the general direction, has furnished examples where it was exercised, has recommended it to mankind, and then has left every man to act on the rule, as he will answer it to God. See Mt 25:34-46.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Don’t set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Don’t be wise in your own conceits./HNV/

[Be] of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits./KJV/

Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits. /Amplified Bible/

Be of the same mind, etc. This passage has been variously interpreted. "Enter into each other's circumstances, in order to see how you would yourself feel." Chrysostom. "Be agreed in

your opinions and views." Stuart. "Be united or agreed with each other." Flatt. Comp. Php 2:2 2Co 13:11. A literal translation of the Greek will give somewhat a different sense, but one evidently correct. "Think of, that is, regard, or seek after the same thing for each other; that is, what you regard or seek for yourself, seek also for your brethren. Do not have divided interests; do not be pursuing different ends and aims; do not indulge counter plans and purposes; and do not seek honours, offices, for yourself, which you do not seek for your brethren; so that you may still regard yourselves as brethren on a level, and aim at the same object." The Syriac has well rendered the passage: "And what you think concerning yourselves, the same also think concerning your brethren; neither think with an elevated or ambitious mind, but accommodate yourselves to those who are of humbler condition." Comp. 1Pet 3:8.

Mind not high things. Greek, Not thinking of high things. That is, not seeking them, or aspiring after them. The connexion shows that the apostle had in view those things which pertained to worldly offices and honours--wealth, and state, and grandeur. They were not to seek them for themselves; nor were they to court the society or the honours of the men in an elevated rank in life. Christians were commonly of the poorer ranks, and they were to seek their companions and joys there, and not to aspire to the society of the great and the rich. Comp. Jer 45:5, "And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not." Lk 12:15.

To men of low estate. In the Greek the word here is an adjective, (ταπεινοις) and may refer either to men or to things, either in the masculine or neuter gender. The sentiment is not materially changed, whichever interpretation is adopted. It means, that Christians should seek the objects of interest and companionship not among the great, the rich, and the noble, but among the humble and the obscure. They should do it because their Master did it before them; because his friends are most commonly found among those in humble life; because Christianity prompts to benevolence, rather than to a fondness for pride and display; and because of the influence on the mind produced by an attempt to

imitate the great, to seek the society of the rich, and to mingle with the scenes of gaiety, folly, and ambition.

Be not wise, etc. Comp. Isa 5:21, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." Rom 11:25. The meaning is, Do not trust in the conceit of your own superior skill and understanding, and refuse to hearken to the counsel of others.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men./KJV/

Things honest. Literally, things beautiful, or comely. The expression here does not refer to property, or to provision made for a family, etc. The connexion requires us to understand it respecting conduct, and especially our conduct towards those who injure us. It requires us to evince a spirit and to manifest a deportment, in such cases, that shall be lovely and comely in the view of others; such as all men will approve and admire. And the apostle wisely cautions us to provide for this, i.e. to think of it beforehand, to make it a matter of fixed principle and purpose, so that we shall not be overtaken and excited by passion. If left to the time when the offence shall be given, we may be excited and off our guard, and may therefore evince an improper temper. All persons who have ever been provoked by injury (and who has not been?) will see the profound wisdom of this caution to discipline and guard the temper by previous purpose, that we may not evince an improper spirit.

In the sight of all men. Such as all must approve; such that no man can blame; and, therefore, such as shall do no discredit to religion. This expression is taken from Prov 3:4. The passage shows that men may be expected to approve a mild, kind, and patient temper in the reception of injuries; and facts show that this is the case. The Christian spirit is one that the world must approve, however little it is disposed to act on it.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

so far as it depends on you, This implies two things:

(1.)We are to do our utmost endeavours to preserve peace, and to appease the anger and malice of others.

(2.) We are not to begin or to originate a quarrel. So far as we are concerned, we are to seek peace. But then it does not always depend on us. Others may oppose and persecute us; they will hate religion, and may slander, revile, and otherwise injure us; or they may commence an assault on our persons or property. For their assaults we are not answerable; but we are answerable for our conduct towards them; and on no occasion are we to commence a warfare with them. It may not be possible to prevent their injuring and opposing us; but it is possible not to begin a contention with them; and when they have commenced a strife, to seek peace, and to evince a Christian spirit. This command doubtless extends to everything connected with strife; and means, that we are not to provoke them to controversy, or to prolong it. when it is commenced. See Ps 34:14, Mt 5:9,39-41, Heb 12:14. If all Christians would follow this command, if they would never provoke to controversy, if they would injure no man by slander or by unfair dealing, if they would compel none to prosecute them in law by want of punctuality in payment of debts or honesty in business, if they would do nothing to irritate, or to prolong a controversy when it is commenced, it would put an end to no small part of the strife that exists in the world.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Avenge not yourselves. To avenge is to take satisfaction for an injury by inflicting punishment on the offender. To take such satisfaction for injuries done to society is lawful and proper for a magistrate, Rom 13:4; and to take satisfaction for injuries done by sin to the universe is the province of God. But the apostle here is addressing private individual Christians. And the

command is, to avoid a spirit and purpose of revenge. But this command is not to be so understood that we may not seek for justice, in a regular and proper way, before civil tribunals. If our character is assaulted, if we are robbed and plundered, if we are oppressed contrary to the law of the land, religion does not require us to submit to such oppression and injury without seeking our rights in an orderly and regular manner. If it did, it would be to give a premium to iniquity, to countenance wickedness, and require a man, by becoming a Christian, to abandon his rights. Besides, the magistrate is appointed for the praise of those who do well, and to punish evil-doers, 1Pet 2:14. Further, our Lord Jesus did not surrender his rights, (Jn 18:23;) and Paul demanded that he himself should be treated according to the rights and privileges of a Roman citizen, Acts 16:37. The command here not to avenge ourselves means, that we are not to take it out of the hands of God, or the hands of the law, and to inflict it ourselves. It is well known that where there are no laws, the business of vengeance is pursued by individuals in a barbarous and unrelenting manner. In a state of savage society, vengeance is immediately taken, if possible, or it is pursued for years, and the offended man is never satisfied until he has imbrued his hands in the blood of the offender. But Christianity seeks the ascendency of the laws; and in cases which do not admit or require the interference of the laws, in private assaults and quarrels, it demands that we bear injury with patience, and commit our cause unto God. See Lev 19:18.

I will repay, etc. This is said in substance, though not in so many words, in De 32:35,36. Its design is to assure us, that those who deserve to be punished, shall be; and that, therefore, the business of revenge may be safely left in the hands of God. Though we should not do it, yet, if it ought to be done, it will be done. This assurance will sustain us, not in the desire that our enemy shall be punished, but in the belief that God will take the matter in his own hands; that he call administer it better than we can; and that if our enemy ought to be punished, he will be. We, therefore, should leave it all with God. That God will vindicate his people,

is clearly and abundantly proved in 2Thes 1:6-10, Rev 6:9-11, De 32:40-43.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, etc. This verse is taken almost literally from Prov 25:21,22. Hunger and thirst here are put for want in general. If thine enemy is needy in any way, do him good, and supply his wants. This is, in spirit, the same as the command of the Lord Jesus, (Mt 5:44,) "Do good to them that hate you," etc. In so doing. It does not mean that we are to do this for the sake of heaping coals of fire on him, but that this will be the result. Thou shalt heap, etc. Coals of fire are doubtless emblematical of pain. But the idea here is not that in so doing we shall call down Divine vengeance on the man; but the apostle is speaking of the natural effect or result of showing him kindness. Burning coals heaped on a man's head would be expressive of intense agony. So the apostle says that the effect of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain. But the pain will result from shame, remorse of conscience, a conviction of the evil of his conduct, and an apprehension of Divine displeasure that may lead to repentance. To do this, is not only perfectly right, but it is desirable. If a man can be brought to reflection and true repentance, it should be done. In regard to this passage we may remark,

(1.) that the way to promote peace is to do good even to enemies.

(2.) The way to bring a man to repentance is to do him good. On this principle God is acting continually. He does good to all, even to the rebellious; and he designs that his goodness should lead men to repentance, Rom 2:4. Men will resist wrath, anger, and power; but goodness they cannot resist; it finds its way to the heart; and the conscience does its work, and the sinner is overwhelmed at the remembrance of his crimes.

(3.) If men would act on the principles of the gospel, the world would soon be at peace. No man would suffer himself many times

to be overwhelmed in this way with coals of fire. It is not human nature, bad as it is; and if Christians would meet all unkindness with kindness, all malice with benevolence, and all wrong with right, peace would soon pervade the community, and even opposition to the gospel might soon die away.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Be not overcome of evil. Be not vanquished or subdued by injury received from others. Do not suffer your temper to be excited; your Christian principles to be abandoned; your mild, amiable, kind, and benevolent temper to be ruffled by any opposition or injury which you may experience. Maintain your Christian principles amidst all opposition, and thus show the power of the gospel. They are overcome by evil who suffer their temper to be excited, who become enraged and revengeful, and who engage in contention with those who injure them, Prov 16:32.

But overcome evil with good. That is, subdue or vanquish evil by doing good to others. Show them the loveliness of a better spirit; the power of kindness and benevolence; the value of an amiable, Christian deportment. So doing, you may disarm them of their rage, and be the means of bringing them to better minds. This is the noble and grand sentiment of the Christian religion. Nothing like this is to be found in the heathen classics; and nothing like it ever existed among pagan nations. Christianity alone has brought forth this lovely and mighty principle; and one design of it is to advance the welfare of man by promoting peace, harmony, and love. The idea of overcoming evil with good never occurred to men until the gospel was preached. It never has been acted on except under the influences of the gospel. On this principle God shows kindness; on this principle the Saviour came, and bled, and died; and on this principle all Christians should act in treating their enemies, and in bringing a world to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. If Christians will show benevolence, if they will send forth proofs of love to the ends of the earth, the evils of the world will be overcome. Nor can the nations be converted until Christians act on this great and most important principle of their religion, on the largest scale possible, TO "OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD."

Romans-13

1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

It is God's prerogative to make laws immediately to bind conscience, and we must render to God the things that are God's. But it intimates that our subjection must be free and voluntary, sincere and hearty. Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought, Ec 10:20. To compass and imagine are treason begun. The subjection of soul here required includes inward honour (1Pe 2:17) and outward reverence and respect, both in speaking to them and in speaking of them--obedience to their commands in things lawful and honest, and in other things a patient subjection to the penalty without resistance--a conformity in every thing to the place and duty of subjects, bringing our minds to the relation and condition, and the inferiority and subordination of it. "They are higher powers; be content they should be so, and submit to them accordingly." Now there was good reason for the pressing of this duty of subjection to civil magistrates,

1. Because of the reproach which the Christian religion lay under in the world, as an enemy to public peace, order, and government, as a sect that turned the world upside down, and the embracers of it as enemies to Cæsar, and the more because the leaders were Galileans--an old slander. Jerusalem was represented as a rebellious city, hurtful to kings and provinces, Ezr 4:15,16. Our Lord Jesus was so reproached, though he told them his kingdom was not of this world: no marvel, then, if his followers have been loaded in all ages with the like calumnies, called factious, seditious, and turbulent, and looked upon as the troublers of the land, their enemies having found such representations needful for the justifying of their barbarous rage against them. The apostle therefore, for the obviating of this reproach and the clearing of Christianity from it, shows that obedience to civil magistrates is one of the laws of Christ, whose religion helps to make people good subjects; and it was very unjust to charge upon Christianity

that faction and rebellion to which its principles and rules are so directly contrary.

2. Because of the temptation which the Christians lay under to be otherwise affected to civil magistrates, some of them being originally Jews, and so leavened with a principle that it was unmeet for any of the seed of Abraham to be subject to one of another nation--their king must be of their brethren, De 17:15. Besides, Paul had taught them that they were not under the law, they were made free by Christ. Lest this liberty should be turned into licentiousness, and misconstrued to countenance faction and rebellion, the apostle enjoins obedience to civil government, which was the more necessary to be pressed now because the magistrates were heathens and unbelievers, which yet did not destroy their civil power and authority. Besides, the civil powers were persecuting powers; the body of the law was against them.

2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance
of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt
thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good,
and thou shalt have praise of the same:

Because of the danger we run ourselves into by resistance. Magistrates bear the sword, and to oppose them is to hazard all that is dear to us in this world; for it is to no purpose to contend with him that bears the sword. The Christians were then in those persecuting times obnoxious to the sword of the magistrate for their religion, and they needed not make themselves more obnoxious by their rebellion. The least show of resistance or sedition in a Christian would soon be aggravated and improved, and would be very prejudicial to the whole society; and therefore they had more need than others to be exact in their subjection, that those who had so much occasion against them in the matter of their God might have no other occasion. To this head must that argument be referred (Ro 13:2), Those that resist shall receive to themselves damnation: krima lepsontai, they shall be called to an account for it. God will reckon with them for it, because the resistance reflects upon him. The magistrates will reckon with them for it. They will come under the lash of the law, and will find the higher powers too high to be

trampled upon, all civil governments being justly strict and severe against treason and rebellion; so it follows (Ro 13:3), Rulers are a terror. This is a good argument, but it is low for a Christian.

Magistrates are therefore called gods (Ps 82:6), because they bear the image of God's authority. And those who spurn at their power reflect upon God himself. But pity it is that ever this gracious intention should be perverted, and that those who bear the sword, while they countenance and connive at sin, should be a terror to those who do well. But so it is, when the vilest men are exalted (Ps 12:1,8); and yet even then the blessing and benefit of a common protection, and a face of government and order, are such that it is our duty in that case rather to submit to persecution for well-doing, and to take it patiently, than by any irregular and disorderly practices to attempt a redress. Never did sovereign prince pervert the ends of government as Nero did, and yet to him Paul appealed, and under him had the protection of the law and the inferior magistrates more than once. Better a bad government than none at all.

It is a good thing when the punishment of malefactors is managed as an ordinance of God, instituted and appointed by him. First, As a holy God, that hates sin, against which, as it appears and puts up its head, a public testimony is thus borne. Secondly, As King of nations, and the God of peace and order, which are hereby preserved. Thirdly, As the protector of the good, whose persons, families, estates, and names, are by this means hedged about. Fourthly, As one that desires not the eternal ruin of sinners, but by the punishment of some would terrify others, and so prevent the like wickedness, that others may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Nay, it is intended for a kindness to those that are punished, that by the destruction of the flesh the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

4 for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil.

5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.
6 For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.
7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due;* custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Of justice (Ro 13:7): Render therefore to all their dues, especially to magistrates, for this refers to what goes before; and likewise to all with whom we have to do. To be just is to give to all their due, to give every body his own. What we have we have as stewards; others have an interest in it, and must have their dues. "Render to God his due in the first place, to yourselves, to you families, your relations, to the commonwealth, to the church, to the poor, to those that you have dealings with in buying, selling, exchanging, &c. Render to all their dues; and that readily and cheerfully, not tarrying till you are by law compelled to it." He specifies,

1. Due taxes:

2. Due respect: Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. This sums up the duty which we owe not only to magistrates, but to all superiors, parents, masters, all that are over us in the Lord,

3. Due payment of debts (Ro 13:8): "Owe no man any thing; that is, do not continue in any one's debt, while you are able to pay it, further than by, at least, the tacit consent of the person to whom you are indebted. Give every one his own. Do not spend that upon yourselves, which you owe to others." The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again, Ps 37:21. Many that are very sensible of the trouble think little of the sin of being in debt.

8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.
9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if *there be* any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Thou shalt not commit adultery; for though this commonly goes under the name of love (pity it is that so good a word should be so

abused) yet it is really as great a violation of it as killing and stealing is, which shows that true brotherly love is love to the souls of our brethren in the first place. He that tempts others to sin, and defiles their minds and consciences, though he may pretend the most passionate love (Pr 7:15,18), does really hate them, just as the devil does, who wars against the soul.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law.

11 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Now it is high time to awake (Ro 13:11), to awake out of the sleep of sin (for a sinful condition is a sleeping condition), out of the sleep of carnal security, sloth and negligence, out of the sleep of spiritual death, and out of the sleep of spiritual deadness; both the wise and foolish virgins slumbered and slept, Mt 25:5.

1. It is gospel time, it is the accepted time, it is working time; it is a time when more is expected than was in the times of that ignorance which God winked at, when people sat in darkness. It is high time to awake; for the sun has been up a great while, and shines in our faces. Have we this light to sleep in? See 1Th 5:5,6. It is high time to awake; for others are awake and up about us. Know the time to be a busy time; we have a great deal of work to do, and our Master is calling us to it again and again. Know the time to be a perilous time. We are in the midst of enemies and snares. It is high time to awake, for the Philistines are upon us; our neighbour's house is on fire, and our own in danger. It is time to awake, for we have slept enough (1Pe 4:3), high time indeed, for behold the bridegroom cometh."

2. "The salvation we are upon the brink of: Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed--than when we first believed, and so took upon us the profession of Christianity. Is there but a step between us and heaven, and shall we be so very slow and dull in our Christian course, and move so heavily?

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off
the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.
13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and
drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife
and envying:

How to dress ourselves:

1. "What we must put off; put off our night-clothes, which it is a shame to appear abroad in: Cast off the works of darkness." Sinful works are works of darkness; they come from the darkness of ignorance and mistake, they covet the darkness of privacy and concealment, and they end in the darkness of hell and destruction. "Let us therefore, who are of the day, cast them off; not only cease from the practice of them, but detest and abhor them, and have no more to do with them. Because eternity is just at the door, let us take heed lest we be found doing that which will then make against us," 2Pe 3:11,14.

2. "What we must put on." Our care must be wherewithal we shall be clothed, how shall we dress our souls?

(1.) Put on the armour of light. Christians are soldiers in the midst of enemies, and their life a warfare, therefore their array must be armour, that they may stand upon their defence--the armour of God, to which we are directed, Eph 6:13,

(2.) Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Ro 13:14. This stands in opposition to a great many base lusts, mentioned Ro 13:13. Rioting and drunkenness must be cast off: one would think it should follows, but, "Put on sobriety, temperance, chastity," the opposite virtues: no, "Put on Christ, this includes all. Put on the righteousness of Christ for justification; be found in him (Php 3:9) as a man is found in his clothes; put on the priestly garments of the elder brother, that in them you may obtain the blessing. Put on the spirit and grace of Christ for sanctification; put on the new man (Eph 4:24); get the habit of grace confirmed, the acts of it quickened." Jesus Christ is the best clothing for Christians to adorn themselves with, to arm themselves with; it is decent, distinguishing, dignifying, and defending. Without Christ, we are naked, deformed; all other things are filthy rages, fig-leaves,

a sorry shelter. God has provided us coats of skins--large, strong, warm, and durable. By baptism we have in profession put on Christ, Ga 3:27. Let us do it in truth and sincerity. The Lord Jesus Christ. "Put him on as Lord to rule you, as Jesus to save you, and in both as Christ, anointed and appointed by the Father to this ruling saving work."

III. How to walk. When we are up and dressed, we are not to sit still in an affected closeness and privacy, as monks and hermits. What have we good clothes for, but to appear abroad in them?--Let us walk. Christianity teaches us how to walk so as to please God, whose eye is upon us: 1Th 4:1, Walk honestly as in the day. Compare Eph 5:8, Walk as children of light. Our conversation must be as becomes the gospel. Walk honestly; euschemonos--decently and becomingly, so as to credit your profession, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion in its beauty to others. Christians should be in a special manner careful to conduct themselves well in those things wherein men have an eye upon them, and to study that which is lovely and of good report. Particularly, here are three pairs of sins we are cautioned against:--

1. We must not walk in rioting and drunkenness; we must abstain from all excess in eating and drinking. We must not give the least countenance to revelling, nor indulge our sensual appetite in any private excesses. Christians must not overcharge their hearts with surfeiting and drunkenness, Lu 21:34. This is not walking as in the day; for those that are drunk are drunk in the night, 1Th 5:7.

2. Not in chambering and wantonness; not in any of those lusts of the flesh, those works of darkness, which are forbidden in the seventh commandment. Downright adultery and fornication are the chambering forbidden. Lascivious thoughts and affections, lascivious looks, words, books, sons, gestures, dances, dalliances, which lead to, and are degrees of, that uncleanness, are the wantonness here forbidden--whatsoever transgresseth the pure and sacred law of chastity and modesty.

3. Not in strife and envying. These are also works of darkness; for, though the acts and instances of strife and envy are very common, yet none are willing to own the principles, or to acknowledge themselves envious and contentious. It may be the lot of the best saints to be envied and striven with; but to strive and to envy ill becomes the disciples and followers of the peaceable and humble Jesus. Where there are riot and drunkenness, there usually are chambering and wantonness, and strife and envy. Solomon puts them all together, Pr 23:29, &c. Those that tarry long at the wine (Pr 23:30) have contentions and wounds without cause (Pr 23:29) and their eyes behold strange women, Pr 23:33.

14 but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for
the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof.*

Romans-14

Those Weak in Faith

I. An account of the unhappy contention which had broken out in the Christian church. Our Master had foretold that offences would come; and, it seems, so they did, for want of that wisdom and love which would have prevented discord, and kept up union among them.

There was a difference among them about the distinction of meats and days; these are the two things specified. There might be other similar occasions of difference, while these made the most noise, and were most taken notice of.

See to what degrees of mortification and self-denial a tender conscience will submit. None know but those that experience it how great both the restraining and the constraining power of conscience is.

1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to
doubtful disputations.

2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is
weak, eateth herbs.
3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not
him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath
received him.
4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own
master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for
God is able to make him stand.
5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth
every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own
mind.

Another rule here given is this, that in these doubtful things every one not only may, but must, walk according to the light that God hath given him. This is laid down Ro 14:5, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; that is, "Practise according to your own judgment in these things, and leave others to do so too. Do not censure the practice of others; let them enjoy their own opinion; if they be persuaded in their own mind that they ought to do so and so, do not condemn them, but, if your sober sentiments be otherwise, do not make their practice a rule to you, any more than you must prescribe yours as a rule to them.Take heed of acting contrary to the dictates of a doubting conscience. First be persuaded that what you do is lawful, before you venture to do it." In doubtful things, it is good keeping on the sure side of the hedge. If a weak Christian doubts whether it be lawful to eat flesh, while he remains under that doubt he had best forbear, till he be fully persuaded in his own mind. We must not pin our faith upon any one's sleeve, nor make the practice of others our rule; but follow the dictates of our own understanding. To this purport he argues, Ro 14:14,23, which two verses explain this, and give us a rule not to act against the dictates,

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he
that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*.
He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks;
and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth
God thanks.

1. Here the apostle speaks of the distinction of meats and days as a thing indifferent, when it went no further than the opinion and practice of some particular persons, who had been trained up all their

days to such observances, and therefore were the more excusable if they with difficulty parted with them. But in the epistle to the Galatians, where he deals with those that were originally Gentiles, but were influenced by some judaizing teachers, not only to believe such a distinction and to practise accordingly, but to lay a stress upon it as necessary to salvation, and to make the observance of the Jewish festivals public and congregational, here the case was altered, and it is charged upon them as the frustrating of the design of the gospel, falling from grace, Ga 4:9-11. The Romans did it out of weakness, the Galatians did it out of wilfulness and wickedness; and therefore the apostle handles them thus differently. This epistle is supposed to have been written some time before that to the Galatians. The apostle seems willing to let the ceremonial law wither by degrees, and to let it have an honourable burial; now these weak Romans seem to be only following it weeping to its grave, but those Galatians were raking it out of its ashes.

2. It was not so much the difference itself that did the mischief as the mismanagement of the difference, making it a bone of contention.

(1.) Those who were strong, and knew their Christian liberty, and made use of it, despised the weak, who did not. Whereas they should have pitied them, and helped them, and afforded them meek and friendly instruction, they trampled upon them as silly, and humoursome, and superstitious, for scrupling those things which they knew to be lawful: so apt are those who have knowledge to be puffed up with it, and to look disdainfully and scornfully upon their brethren.

(2.) Those who were weak, and durst not use their Christian liberty, judged and censured the strong, who did, as if they were loose Christians, carnal professors, that cared not what they did, but walked at all adventures, and stuck at nothing. They judged them as breakers of the law, contemners of God's ordinance, and the like. Such censures as these discovered a great deal of rashness and uncharitableness, and would doubtless tend much to the alienating of

affection. Well, this was the disease, and we see it remaining in the church to this day; the like differences, in like manner mismanaged, are still the disturbers of the church's peace.

But,

II. We have proper directions and suggestions laid down for allaying this contention, and preventing the ill consequences of it. The apostle, as a wise physician, prescribes proper remedies for the disease, which are made up of rules and reasons. Such gentle methods does he take, with such cords of a man does he draw them together; not by excommunicating, suspending, and silencing either side, but by persuading them both to a mutual forbearance; Let us observe the rules he gives, some to the strong and some to the weak, and some to both, for they are interwoven; and reduce the reasons to their proper rules.

1. Those who are weak must be received, but not to doubtful disputations, Ro 14:1. Take this for a general rule; spend your zeal in those things wherein you and all the people of God are agreed, and do not dispute about matters that are doubtful. Receive him, proslambavesthe--take him to you, bid him welcome, receive him with the greatest affection and tenderness; porrigite manum (so the Syriac): lend him your hand, to help him, to fetch him to you, to encourage him. Receive him into your company, and converse, and communion, entertain him with readiness and condescension, and treat him with all possible endearments. Receive him: not to quarrel with him, and to argue about uncertain points that are in controversy, which will but confound him, and fill his head with empty notions, perplex him, and shake his faith. Let not your Christian friendship and fellowship be disturbed with such vain janglings and strifes of words.--Not to judge his doubtful thoughts (so the margin), "not to pump out his weak sentiments concerning those things which he is in doubt about, that you may censure and condemn him." Receive him, not to expose him, but to instruct and strengthen him. See 1Co 1:10,Php 3:15,16.

2. Those who are strong must by no means despise the weak; nor those who are weak judge the strong, Ro 14:3. This is levelled directly against the fault of each party. It is seldom that any such contention exists but there is a fault on both sides, and both must mend. He argues against both these jointly: we must not despise nor judge our brethren. Why so?

(A) Because God hath received them; and we reflect upon him if we reject those whom he hath received. God never cast off any one that had true grace, though he was but weak in it; never broke the bruised reed. Strong believers and weak believers, those that eat and those that eat not, if they be true believers, are accepted of God.

(B) Because they are servants to their own master (Ro 14:4): Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? We reckon it a piece of ill manners to meddle with other people's servants, and to find fault with them and censure them. Weak and strong Christians are indeed our brethren, but they are not our servants. This rash judging is reproved, Jam 3:1, under the notion of being many masters. We make ourselves our brethren's masters, and do in effect usurp the throne of God, when we take upon us thus to judge them, especially to judge their thoughts and intentions, which are out of our view, to judge their persons and state, concerning which it is hard to conclude by those few indications which fall within our cognizance. God sees not as man sees; and he is their master, and not we.

(C) Because both the one and the other, if they be true believers, and are right in the main, have an eye to God, and do approve themselves to God in what they do, Ro 14:6.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

Our end and aim: not self, but the Lord. As the particular end specifies the action, so the general scope and tendency specify the state. If we would know what way we walk in, we must enquire what end we walk towards.

First, Not to self. We have learned to deny ourselves; this was our first lesson: None of us liveth to himself. This is a thing in which all the people of God are one, however they differ in other things; though some are weak and others are strong, yet both agree in this, not to live to themselves. Not one that hath given up his name to Christ is allowedly a self-seeker; it is contrary to the foundation of true Christianity.

Secondly, But to the Lord (Ro 14:8), to the Lord Christ, to whom all power and judgment are committed, and in whose name we are taught, as Christians, to do every thing we do (Col 3:17), with an eye to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, Php 1:21. Christ is the gain we aim at, living and dying. We live to glorify him in all the actions and affairs of life; we die, whether a natural or a violent death, to glorify him, and to go to be glorified with him. Christ is the centre, in which all the lines of life and death do meet.

[2.] The ground of this, Ro 14:9. It is grounded upon Christ's absolute sovereignty and dominion, which were the fruit and end of his death and resurrection. He is Lord of those that are living to rule them, of those that are dead to receive them and raise them up.

9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that
he might be Lord both of the dead and living.
10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at
nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment
seat of Christ.
11 For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord,
every knee shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall confess to God.
12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this
rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall
in *his* brother's way.

Another rule here prescribed is to those who are clear in these matters, and know their Christian liberty, yet to take heed of using it so as to give offence to a weak brother.

(1.) Of grief to our brother, "One that is weak, and thinks it unlawful to eat such and such meats, will be greatly troubled to see thee eat them, out of a concern for the honour of the law which he thinks forbids them, Christians should take heed of grieving one another, and of saddening the hearts of Christ's little ones. See Mt 18:6,10.

(2.) Of guilt to our brother. The former is a stumbling-block, that gives our brother a great shake, and is a hindrance and discouragement to him; but this is an occasion to fall. "If thy weak brother, purely by thy example and influence, without any satisfaction received concerning his Christian liberty, be drawn to act against his conscience and to walk contrary to the light he has, and so to contract guilt upon his soul, though the thing were lawful to thee, yet not being so to him (he having not yet thereto attained), thou art to be blamed for giving the occasion." See this case explained, 1Co 8:9-11, (1Co 8:13), (Ro 14:21). We must not weaken those that are weak; that is to quench the smoking flax and to break the bruised reed. Observe the motives to enforce this caution.

14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is*
nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing
to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.
15 But if thy brother be grieved with *thy* meat, now walkest thou
not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom
Christ died.

Cause the ruin of one: The word ruin here refers, doubtless, to the ruin of the soul in hell.

[1.] Consider the royal law of Christian love and charity, which is hereby broken (Ro 14:15): If thy brother be grieved with thy meat--be troubled to see thee eat those things which the law of Moses did

forbid, which yet thou mayest lawfully do; possibly thou art ready to say, "Now he talks foolishly and weakly, and it is no great matter what he says." We are apt, in such a case, to lay all the blame on that side. But the reproof is here given to the stronger and more knowing Christian: Now walkest thou not charitably.

[2.] Consider the design of Christ's death: Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died, Ro 14:15.

First, Drawing a soul to sin threatens the destruction of that soul. By shaking his faith, provoking his passion, and tempting him to act against the light of his own conscience, thou dost, as much as in thee lies, destroy him, giving him an occasion to return to Judaism. Me apollye. It denotes an utter destruction.

Secondly, The consideration of the love of Christ in dying for souls should make us very tender of the happiness and salvation of souls, and careful not to do any thing which may obstruct and hinder them. Did Christ quit a life for souls, such a life, and shall not we quit a morsel of meat for them? Shall we despise those whom Christ valued at so high a rate? Did he think it worth while to deny himself so much for them as to die for them, and shall not we think it worth while to deny ourselves so little for them as abstaining from flesh comes to?--with thy meat. Thou pleadest that it is thy own meat, and thou mayest do what thou wilt with it; but remember that, though the meat is thine, the brother offended by it is Christ's, and a part of his purchase. While thou destroyest thy brother thou art helping forward the devil's design, for he is the great destroyer; and, as much as in thee lies, thou art crossing the design of Christ, for he is the great Saviour, and dost not only offend thy brother, but offend Christ; for the work of salvation is that which his heart is upon. But are any destroyed for whom Christ died? If we understand it of the sufficiency and general intendment of Christ's death, which was to save all upon gospel terms, no doubt but multitudes are. Though none that were given to Christ shall perish (Joh 6:39), yet thou mayest, as much as is in thy power, destroy such. No thanks to thee if they be not destroyed; by doing that which has a tendency to it,

thou dost manifest a great opposition to Christ. Nay, and thou mayest utterly destroy some whose profession may be so justifiable that thou art bound to believe, in a judgment of charity, that Christ died for them. Compare this with 1Co 8:10,11.

16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:
17 for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but
righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

it is not being of this party and persuasion, of this or the other opinion in minor things, that will recommend us to God. It will not be asked at the great day, "Who ate flesh, and who ate herbs?" "Who kept holy days, and who did not?" Nor will it be asked, "Who was conformist and who was non-conformist?" But it will be asked, "Who feared God and worked righteousness, and who did not?" Nothing more destructive to true Christianity than placing it in modes, and forms, and circumstantials, which eat out the essentials. Secondly, It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. These are some of the essentials of Christianity, things in which all the people of God are agreed, in the pursuit of which we must spend our zeal, and which we must mind with an excelling care. Righteousness, peace, and joy, are very comprehensive words; and each of them includes much, both of the foundation and the superstructure of religion. Might I limit the sense of them, it should be thus:--As to God, our great concern is righteousness--to appear before him justified by the merit of Christ's death, sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. As to our brethren, it is peace--to live in peace and love, and charity with them, following peace with all men: Christ came into the world to be the great peace-maker. As to ourselves, it is joy in the Holy Ghost--that spiritual joy which is wrought by the blessed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which respects God as their reconciled Father and heaven as their expected home.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God,
and approved of men.
19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace,
and things wherewith one may edify another.
20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure;
but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offense.

The works of peace and comfort are destroyed by such an offence given; take heed of it therefore; do not undo that which God hath done. You should work together with God, do not countermine his work.

First, The work of grace and peace is the work of God; it is wrought by him, it is wrought for him; it is a good work of his beginning, Php 1:6. Observe, The same for whom Christ died (Ro 14:15) are here called the work of God; besides the work that is wrought for us there is a work to be wrought in us, in order to our salvation. Every saint is God's workmanship, his husbandry, his building, Eph 2:10,1Co 3:9.

Secondly, We must be very careful to do nothing which tends to the destruction of this work, either in ourselves or others. We must deny ourselves in our appetites, inclinations, and in the use of Christian liberty, rather than obstruct and prejudice our own or others' grace and peace. Many do for meat and drink destroy the work of God in themselves (nothing more destructive to eh soul than pampering and pleasing the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts of it), so likewise in others, by wilful offence given. Think what thou destroyest--the work of God, whose work is honourable and glorious; think for what thou destroyest it--for meat, which was but for the belly, and the belly for it.

21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing*
whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made
weak.

22 Hast thou faith? have *it* to thyself before God. Happy *is* he
that condemneth not himself in that thing which he
alloweth.

Though men condemn us, it is well enough if our own hearts condemn us not, 1Jo 3:21.

23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not
of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin.

It must be understood likewise with this proviso, though men's judgments and opinions may make that which is good in itself to become evil to them, yet they cannot make that which is evil in

itself to become good, either in itself or to them.The Pharisees taught people to plead conscience, when they made corban an excuse for denying relief to their parents, Mt 15:5,6. But this would not serve any more than Paul's erroneous conscience would justify his rage against Christianity (Ac 26:9), or theirs, Joh 16:2.

Anyone who is not clear that it is lawful for him to eat swine's flesh (suppose), and yet is drawn, notwithstanding his doubts, to eat it, because he sees others do it, because he would gratify his appetite with it, or because he would not be reproached for his singularity; he is damned. Our rule is, to walk as far as we have attained, not further, Php 3:15,16.

The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it is a dangerous thing to debauch and put a force upon conscience, though it be under a mistake.

Consider the evil of giving offence, and what an abuse it is of our Christian liberty. He grants that all things indeed are pure. We may lawfully eat flesh, even those meats which were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but, if we abuse this liberty, it turns into sin to us: It is evil to him that eats with offence. Lawful things may be done unlawfully.--Eats with offence, either carelessly or designedly giving offence to his brethren. It is observable that the apostle directs his reproof most against those who gave the offence; not as if those were not to be blamed who causelessly and weakly took the offence from their ignorance of Christian liberty, and the want of that charity which is not easily provoked and which thinketh no evil (he several times tacitly reflects upon them), but he directs his speech to the strong, because they were better able to bear the reproof, and to begin the reformation. For the further pressing of this rule, we may here observe two directions which have relation to it:--First, Let not then your good be evil spoken of (Ro 14:16)--take heed of doing any thing which may give occasion to others to speak evil, either of the Christian religion in general, or of your Christian liberty in particular. The gospel is your good; the liberties and franchises, the privileges and immunities, granted by

it, are your good; your knowledge and strength of grace to discern and use your liberty in things disputed are your good, a good which the weak brother hath not. Now let not this be evil spoken of. It is true we cannot hinder loose and ungoverned tongues from speaking evil of us, and of the best things we have; but we must not (if we can help it) give them any occasion to do it. Let not the reproach arise from any default of ours; as 1Ti 4:12, Let no man despise thee, that is, do not make thyself despicable. So here, Do not use your knowledge and strength in such a manner as to give occasion to people to call it presumption and loose walking, and disobedience to God's law. We must deny ourselves in many cases for the preservation of our credit and reputation, forbearing to do that which we rightly know we may lawfully do, when our doing it may be a prejudice to our good name; as, when it is suspicious and has the appearance of evil, or when it becomes scandalous among good people, or has any way a brand upon it. In such a case we must rather cross ourselves than shame ourselves. Though it be but a little folly, it may be like a dead fly, very prejudicial to one that is in reputation for wisdom and honour, Ec 10:1. We may apply it more generally. We should manage all our good duties in such a manner that they may not be evil spoken of. That which for the matter of it is good and unexceptionable may sometimes, by mismanagement, be rendered liable to a great deal of censure and reproach. Good praying, preaching, and discourse, may often, for want of prudence in ordering the time, the expression, and other circumstances to edification, be evil spoken of. It is indeed their sin who do speak evil of that which is good for the sake of any such circumstantial errors, but it is our folly if we give any occasion to do so. As we tender the reputation of the good we profess and practise, let us so order it that it may not be evil spoken of. Secondly, Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God, Ro 14:22. It is not meant of justifying faith (that must not be hid, but manifested by our works), but of a knowledge and persuasion of our Christian liberty in things disputed. "Hast thou clearness in such a particular? Art thou satisfied that thou mayest eat all meats, and observe all days (except the Lord's day) alike? Have it to thyself, that is, enjoy the comfort of it in thy own bosom, and do not trouble others by the imprudent use of it, when it might give

offence, and cause thy weak brother to stumble and fall." In these indifferent things, though we must never contradict our persuasion, yet we may sometimes conceal it, when the avowing of it will do more hurt than good. Have it to thyself--a rule to thyself (not to be imposed upon others, or made a rule to them), or a rejoicing to thyself. Clearness in doubtful matters contributes very much to our comfortable walking, as it frees us from those scruples, jealousies, and suspicions, which those who have not such clearness are entangled in endlessly. Compare Ga 6:4, Let every man prove his own work, that is, bring it to the touchstone of the word and try it by that so exactly as to be well satisfied in what he does; and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Paul had faith in these things: I am persuaded that there is nothing unclean of itself; but he had it to himself, so as not to use his liberty to the offence of others.

Romans-15

1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the
weak, and not to please ourselves.
2 Let every one of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good to edification.

I. We must bear the infirmities of the weak, Ro 15:1. We all have our infirmities; but the weak are more subject to them than others--the weak in knowledge or grace, the bruised reed and the smoking flax. We must consider these; not trample upon them, but encourage them, and bear with their infirmities. If through weakness they judge and censure us, and speak evil of us, we must bear with them, pity them, and not have our affections alienated from them. Alas! it is their weakness, they cannot help it. Thus Christ bore with his weak disciples, and apologised for them. But there is more in it; we must also bear their infirmities by sympathizing with them, concerning ourselves for them, ministering strength to them, as there is occasion. This is bearing one another's burdens.

II. We must not please ourselves, but our neighbour, Ro 15:1,2. We must deny our own humour, in consideration of our brethren's weakness and infirmity.

1. Christians must not please themselves. We must not make it our business to gratify all the little appetites and desires of our own heart; it is good for us to cross ourselves sometimes, and then we shall the better bear others crossing of us. We shall be spoiled (as Adonijah was) if we be always humoured. The first lesson we have to learn is to deny ourselves, Mt 16:24.

2. Christians must please their brethren. The design of Christianity is to soften and meeken the spirit, to teach us the art of obliging and true complaisance; not to be servants to the lust of any, but to the necessities and infirmities of our brethren--to comply with all that we have to do with as fare as we can with a good conscience. Christians should study to be pleasing. As we must not please ourselves in the use of our Christian liberty (which was allowed us, not for our own pleasure, but for the glory of God and the profit and edification of others), so we must please our neighbour. How amiable and comfortable a society would the church of Christ be if Christians would study to please one another, as now we see them commonly industrious to cross, and thwart, and contradict one another!--Please his neighbour, not in every thing, it is not an unlimited rule; but for his good, especially for the good of his soul: not please him by serving his wicked wills, and humouring him in a sinful way, or consenting to his enticements, or suffering sin upon him; this is a base way of pleasing our neighbour to the ruin of his soul: if we thus please men, we are not the servants of Christ; but please him for his good; not for our own secular good, or to make a prey of him, but for his spiritual good.--To edification, that is, not only for his profit, but for the profit of others, to edify the body of Christ, by studying to oblige one another. The closer the stones lie, and the better they are squared to fit one another, the stronger is the building. Now observe the reason why Christians must please one another: For even Christ pleased not himself. The

self-denial of our Lord Jesus is the best argument against the selfishness of Christians. Observe,

(a.) That Christ pleased not himself. He did not consult his own worldly credit, ease, safety, nor pleasure; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, would not be made a king, detested no proposal with greater abhorrence than that, Master, spare thyself, did not seek his own will (Joh 5:30), washed his disciples' feet, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, troubled himself (Joh 11:33), did not consult his own honour, and, in a word, emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation: and all this for our sakes, to bring in a righteousness for us, and to set us an example. His whole life was a self-denying self-displeasing life. He bore the infirmities of the weak, Heb 4:15.

(b.) That herein the scripture was fulfilled: As it is written, The reproaches of those that reproached thee fell on me. This is quoted out of Ps 69:9, the former part of which verse is applied to Christ (Joh 2:17), The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the latter part here; for David was a type of Christ, and his sufferings of Christ's sufferings. It is quoted to show that Christ was so far from pleasing himself that he did in the highest degree displease himself. Not as if his undertaking, considered on the whole, were a task and grievance to him, for he was very willing to it and very cheerful in it; but in his humiliation the content and satisfaction of natural inclination were altogether crossed and denied. He preferred our benefit before his own ease and pleasure. This the apostle chooses to express in scripture language; for how can the things of the Spirit of God be better spoken of than in the Spirit's own words? And this scripture he alleges, The reproaches of those that reproached thee fell on me.

[1.] The shame of those reproaches, which Christ underwent. Whatever dishonour was done to God was a trouble to the Lord Jesus. He was grieved for the hardness of people's hearts, beheld a sinful place with sorrow and tears. When the saints were persecuted, Christ so far displeased himself as to take what was

done to them as done against himself: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Christ also did himself endure the greatest indignities; there was much of reproach in his sufferings.

[2.] The sin of those reproaches, for which Christ undertook to satisfy; so many understand it. Every sin is a kind of reproach to God, especially presumptuous sins; now the guilt of these fell upon Christ, when he was made sin, that is, a sacrifice, a sin-offering for us. When the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all, and he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, they fell upon him as upon our surety. Upon me be the curse. This was the greatest piece of self-displacency that could be: considering his infinite spotless purity and holiness, the infinite love of the Father to him, and his eternal concern for his Father's glory, nothing could be more contrary to him, nor more against him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him, especially considering for whom he thus displeased himself, for strangers, enemies, and traitors, the just for the unjust, 1Pe 3:18. This seems to come in as a reason why we should bear the infirmities of the weak. We must not please ourselves, for Christ pleased not himself; we must bear the infirmities of the weak, for Christ bore the reproaches of those that reproached God. He bore the guilt of sin and the curse for it; we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked; we are called only to bear the infirmities of the weak.--Even Christ; kai gar ho Christos. Even he who was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, who needed not us nor our services,--even he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, who had reason enough to pleas himself, and no reason to be concerned, much less to be crossed, for us,--even he pleased not himself, even he bore our sins. And should not we be humble, and self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another?

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written,
The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for
our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the
Scriptures might have hope.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to
be likeminded one toward another according to Christ
Jesus:
6 that ye may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify God, even the
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel to the Gentiles

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us,
to the glory of God.

Those that have received Christ by faith must receive all Christians by brotherly love; though poor in the world, though persecuted and despised, though it may be matter of reproach and danger to you to receive them, though in the less weighty matters of the law they are of different apprehensions, though there may have been occasion for private piques, yet, laying aside these and the like considerations, receive you one another. Now the reason why Christians must receive one another is taken, as before, from the condescending love of Christ to us: As Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Christ has received us into the nearest and dearest relations to himself: has received us into his fold, into his family, into the adoption of sons, into a covenant of friendship, yea, into a marriage-covenant with himself; he has received us (though we were strangers and enemies, and had played the prodigal) into fellowship and communion with himself. Those words, to the glory of God, may refer both to Christ's receiving us, which is our pattern, and to our receiving one another, which is our practice according to that pattern. We are called to an eternal glory by Christ Jesus, Joh 17:24. See to what he received us-to a happiness transcending all comprehension; see for what he received us--for his Father's glory; he had this in his eye in all the instances of his favour to us.

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision
for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* unto the
fathers:

1. He received the Jews, Ro 15:8. Let not any think hardly or scornfully therefore of those that were originally Jews, and still, through weakness, retain some favour of their old Judaism; for,

(1.) Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision. That he was a minister, diakonos--a servant, bespeaks his great and exemplary condescension, and puts an honour upon the ministry: but that he was a minister of the circumcision, was himself circumcised and made under the law, and did in his own person preach the gospel to the Jews, who were of the circumcision--this makes the nation of the Jews more considerable than otherwise they appear to be. Christ conversed with the Jews, blessed them, looked upon himself as primarily sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, laid hold of the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16, margin), and by them, as it were, caught at the whole body of mankind. Christ's personal ministry was appropriated to them, though the apostles had their commission enlarged.

(2.) He was so for the truth of God. That which he preached to them was the truth; for he came into the world to bear witness to the truth, Joh 18:37. And he is himself the truth, Joh 14:6. Or, for the truth of God, that is, to make good the promises given to the patriarchs concerning the special mercy God had in store for their seed. It was not for the merit of the Jews, but for the truth of God, that they were thus distinguished--that God might approve himself true to this word which he had spoken.--To confirm the promises made unto the fathers. The best confirmation of promises is the performance of them. It was promised that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed, that Shiloh should come from between the feet of Judah, that out of Israel should he proceed that should have the dominion, that out of Zion should go forth the law, and many the like. There were many intermediate providences which seemed to weaken those promises, providences which threatened the fatal decay of that people; but when Messiah the Prince appeared in the fulness of time, as a minister of the circumcision, all these promises were confirmed, and the truth of them was made to appear; for in Christ all the promises of God,

both those of the Old Testament and those of the New, are Yea, and in him Amen. Understanding by the promises made to the fathers the whole covenant of grace, darkly administered under the Old Testament, and brought to a clearer light now under the gospel, it was Christ's great errand to confirm that covenant, Da 9:27. He confirmed it by shedding the blood of the covenant.

2. He received the Gentiles likewise. This he shows, Ro 15:9-12.

(1.) Observe Christ's favour to the Gentiles, in taking them in to praise God--the work of the church on earth and the wages of that in heaven. One design of Christ was that the Gentiles likewise might be converted that they might be one with the Jews in Christ's mystical body. A good reason why they should not think the worse of any Christian for his having been formerly a Gentile; for Christ has received him. He invites the Gentiles, and welcomes them. Now observe how their conversion is here expressed: That the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. A periphrasis of conversion.

[1.] They shall have matter for praise, even the mercy of God. Considering the miserable and deplorable condition that the Gentile world was in, the receiving of them appears more as an act of mercy than the receiving of the Jews. Those that were Lo-ammi--not a people, were Lo-ruhama--not obtaining mercy, Ho 1:6,9,2:23. The greatest mercy of God to any people is the receiving of them into covenant with himself: and it is good to take notice of God's mercy in receiving us.

[2.] They shall have a heart for praise. They shall glorify God for his mercy. Unconverted sinners do nothing to glorify God; but converting grace works in the soul a disposition to speak and do all to the glory of God; God intended to reap a harvest of glory from the Gentiles, who had been so long turning his glory into shame.

9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *his* mercy; as
it is written,
For this cause I will confess to thee among the
Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.
10 And again he saith,
Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.
11 And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles;
and laud him, all ye people.

The fulfilling of the scriptures in this. The favour of God to the Gentiles was not only mercy, but truth. Though there were not promises directly given to them, as to the fathers of the Jews, yet there were many prophesies concerning them, which related to the calling of them, and the embodying of them in the church, some of which he mentions because it was a thing that the Jews were hardly persuaded to believe. Thus, by referring them to the Old Testament, he labours to qualify their dislike of the Gentiles, and so to reconcile the parties at variance.

[1.] It was foretold that the Gentiles should have the gospel preached to them: "I will confess to thee among the Gentiles (Ro 15:9), that is, thy name shall be known and owned in the Gentile world, there shall gospel grace and love be celebrated." This is quoted from Ps 18:49, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen. A thankful explication and commemoration of the name of God are an excellent means of drawing others to know and praise God. Christ, in and by his apostles and ministers, whom he sent to disciple all nations, did confess to God among the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ, as well as the conversion of sinners, is set forth by the praising of God. Christ's declaring God's name to his brethren is called his praising God in the midst of the congregation, Ps 22:22. Taking these words as spoken by David, they were spoken when he was old and dying, and he was not likely to confess to God among the Gentiles; but when David's psalms are read and sung among the Gentiles, to the praise and glory of God, it may be said that David is confessing to God among the Gentiles, and singing to his name. He that was the sweet psalmist of the Gentiles. Converting grace makes people greatly in love with David's psalms. Taking them as spoken by Christ, the Son of

David, it may be understood of his spiritual indwelling by faith in the hearts of all the praising saints. If any confess to God among the Gentiles, and sing to his name, it is not they, but Christ and his grace in them. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; so, I praise, yet not I, but Christ in me.

[2.] That the Gentiles should rejoice with his people, Ro 15:10. This is quoted from that song of Moses, De 32:43. Observe, Those who were incorporated among his people are said to rejoice with his people. No greater joy can come to any people than the coming of the gospel among them in power. Those Jews that retain a prejudice against the Gentiles will by no means admit them to any of their joyful festivities; for (say they) a stranger intermeddleth not with the joy, Pr 14:10. But, the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles are welcome to rejoice with his people. Being brought into the church, they share in its sufferings, are companions in patience and tribulation, to recompense which they share in the joy.

[3.] That they should praise God (Ro 15:11): Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles. This is quoted out of that short psalm, Ps 117:1. Converting grace sets people a praising God, furnishes with the richest matter for praise, and gives a heart to it. The Gentiles had been, for many ages, praising their idols of wood and stone, but now they are brought to praise the Lord; and this David in spirit speaks of. In calling upon all the nations to praise the Lord, it is intimated that they shall have the knowledge of him.

[4.] That they should believe in Christ (Ro 15:12), quoted from Isa 11:10, where observe,

First, The revelation of Christ, as the Gentiles' king. He is here called the root of Jesse, that is, such a branch from the family of David as is the very life and strength of the family: compare Isa 11:1. Christ was David's Lord, and yet withal he was the Son of David (Mt 22:45), for he was the root and offspring of David, Re 22:16. Christ, as God, was David's root; Christ, as man, was

David's offspring.--And he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles. This explains the figurative expression of the prophet, he shall stand for an ensign of the people. When Christ rose from the dead, when he ascended on high, it was to reign over the Gentiles.

Secondly, The recourse of the Gentiles to him: In him shall the Gentiles trust. Faith is the soul's confidence in Christ and dependence on him. The prophet has it, to him shall the Gentiles seek. The method of faith is first to seek unto Christ, as to one proposed to us for a Saviour; and, finding him able and willing to save, then to trust in him. Those that know him will trust in him. Or, this seeking to him is the effect of a trust in him; seeking him by prayer, and pursuant endeavours. We shall never seek to Christ till we trust in him. Trust is the mother; diligence in the use of means the daughter. Jews and Gentiles being thus united in Christ's love, why should they not be united in one another's love?

12 And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse,
and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles;
in him shall the Gentiles trust.

13 Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in
believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of
the Holy Ghost.

14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye
also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to
admonish one another.

15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you
in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is
given to me of God,

16 that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,
ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the
Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy
Ghost.

17 I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in
those things which pertain to God.

18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ
hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by
word and deed,

Now how was this great work wrought?

1. Christ was the principal agent. He does not say, "which I worked," but "which Christ wrought by me," Ro 15:18. Whatever good we do, it is not we, but Christ by us, that does it; the work is his, the strength his; he is all in all, he works all our works, Php 2:13,Isa 26:12. Paul takes all occasions to own this, that the whole praise might be transmitted to Christ.

2. Paul was a very active instrument: By word and deed, that is, by his preaching, and by the miracles he wrought to confirm his doctrine; or his preaching and his living. Those ministers are likely to win souls that preach both by word and deed, by their conversation showing forth the power of the truths they preach. This is according to Christ's example, who began both to do and teach, Ac 1:1.-- Through mighty signs and wonders: en dynamei semeion--by the power, or in the strength, of signs and wonders. These made the preaching of the word so effectual, being the appointed means of conviction, and the divine seal affixed to the gospel-charter, Mk 16:17,18. 3. The power of the Spirit of God made this effectual, and crowned all with the desired success, Ro 15:19.

(1.) The power of the Spirit in Paul, as in the other apostles, for the working of those miracles. Miracles were wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost (Ac 1:8), therefore reproaching the miracles is called the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Or,

(2.) The power of the Spirit in the hearts of those to whom the word was preached, and who saw the miracles, making these means effectual to some and not to others. It is the Spirit's operation that makes the difference. Paul himself, as great a preacher as he was, with all his might signs and wonders, could not make one soul obedient further than the power of the Spirit of God accompanied his labours. It was the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that made those great mountains plain before this Zerubbabel. This is an encouragement to faithful ministers, who labour under the sense

of great weakness and infirmity, that it is all one to the blessed Spirit to work by many, or by those that have on power. The same almighty Spirit that wrought with Paul often perfects strength in weakness, and ordains praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

19 through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit
of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto
Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.
20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ
was named, lest I should build upon another man's
foundation:
21 but as it is written,
To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see:
and they that have not heard shall understand.

Paul Plans to Visit Rome

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming
to you.

He tells them that the reason why he could not come to them was because he had so much work cut out for him elsewhere. For which cause, that is, because of his labours in other countries, he was so much hindered. God had opened a wide door for him in other places, and so turned him aside. Observe in this,

(1.) The gracious providence of God conversant in a special manner about his ministers, casting their lot, not according to their contrivance, but according to his own purpose. Paul was several times crossed in his intentions; sometimes hindered by Satan (as 1Th 2:18), sometimes forbidden by the Spirit (Ac 16:7), and here diverted by other work. Man purposes but God disposes, Pr 16:9,19:21,Jer 10:23. Ministers purpose, and their friends purpose concerning them, but God overrules both, and orders the journeys, removals, and settlements, of his faithful ministers as he pleases. The stars are in the right hand of Christ, to shine where he sets them. The gospel does not come by chance to any place, but by the will and counsel of God.

(2.) The gracious prudence of Paul, in bestowing his time and pains where there was most need. Had Paul consulted his own ease, wealth, and honour, the greatness of the word would never have hindered him from seeing Rome, but would rather have driven him thither, where he might have had more preferment and taken less pains. But Paul sought the things of Christ more than his own things, and therefore would not leave his work of planting churches, no, not for a time, to go and see Rome. The Romans were whole, and needed not the physician as other poor places that were sick and dying. While men and women were every day dropping into eternity, and their precious souls perishing for lack of vision, it was no time for Paul to trifle. There was now a gale of opportunity, the fields were white unto the harvest; such a season slipped might never be retrieved; the necessities of poor souls were pressing, and called aloud, and therefore Paul must be busy. It concerns us all to do that first which is most needful. True grace teaches us to prefer that which is necessary before that which is unnecessary, Lu 10:41,42. And Christian prudence teaches us to prefer that which is more necessary before that which is less so. This Paul mentions as a sufficient satisfying reason. We must not take it ill of our friends if they prefer necessary work, which is pleasing to God, before unnecessary visits and compliments, which may be pleasing to us. In this, as in other things, we must deny ourselves.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a
great desire these many years to come unto you;
24 whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for
I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way
thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your
company.
25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.
26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make
a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at
Jerusalem.
27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if
the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things,
their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to
them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.
29 And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in
the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.
30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in
your prayers to God for me;

How they must pray for him: That you strive together.

(1.) That you strive in prayer. We must put forth all that is within us in that duty; pray with fixedness, faith, and fervency; wrestle with God, as Jacob did; pray in praying, as Elias did (Jam 5:17), and stir up ourselves to take hold on God (Isa 64:7); and this is not only when we are praying for ourselves, but when we are praying for our friends. True love to our brethren should make us as earnest for them as sense of our own need makes us for ourselves.

(2.) That you strive together with me. When he begged their prayers for him, he did not intend thereby to excuse his praying for himself; no, "Strive together with me, who am wrestling with God daily, upon my own and my friends' account." He would have them to ply the same oar. Paul and these Romans were distant in place, and likely to be so, and yet they might join together in prayer; those who are put far asunder by the disposal of God's providence may yet meet together at the throne of his grace. Those who beg the prayers of others must not neglect to pray for themselves.

31 that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea;
and that my service which *I have* for Jerusalem may be accepted
of the saints;
32 that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and
may with you be refreshed.
33 Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

Romans-16

Personal Greetings

1 I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of
the church which is at Cenchreae:
2 that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye
assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she
hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also.
3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus:
4 who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom
not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the
Gentiles.
5 Likewise *greet* the church that is in their house. Salute my
well- beloved Epenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia
unto Christ.
6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us.
7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow
prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were
in Christ before me.
8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord.
9 Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.
10 Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of
Aristobulus' *household.*
11 Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the *household*
of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.
12 Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute
the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord.
13 Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.
14 Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and
the brethren which are with them.
15 Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and
Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.
16 Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ
salute you.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

The caution itself, which is given in the most obliging manner that could be: I beseech you, brethren. He does not will and command, as one that lorded it over God's heritage, but for love's sake beseeches. How earnest, how endearing, are Paul's exhortations! He teaches them,

1. To see their danger: Mark those who cause divisions and offences. Our Master had himself foretold that divisions and offences would come, but had entailed a woe on those by whom they come (Mt 18:7), and against such we are here cautioned. Those who burden the church with dividing and offending impositions, who uphold and enforce those impositions, who introduce and propagate dividing and offending notions, which are erroneous or justly suspected, who out of pride, ambition, affectation of novelty, or the like, causelessly separate from their brethren, and by perverse disputes, censures, and evil surmisings, alienate the affections of Christians one from another--these cause divisions and offences, contrary to, or different from (for that also is implied, it is para ten didachen), the doctrine which we have learned. Whatever varies from the form of sound doctrine which we have in the scriptures opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be once deserted, unity and peace will not last long. Now, mark those that thus cause divisions, skopein. Observe them, the method they take, the end they drive at. There is need of a piercing watchful eye to discern the danger we are in from such people; for commonly the pretences are plausible, when the projects are very pernicious. Do not look only at the divisions and offences, but run up those streams to the fountain, and mark those that cause them, and especially that in them which causes these divisions and offences, those lusts on each side whence come these wars and fightings. A danger discovered is half prevented.

2. To shun it: "Avoid them. Shun all necessary communion and communication with them, lest you be leavened and infected by them. Do not strike in with any dividing interests, nor embrace any of those principles or practices which are destructive to Christian love and charity, or to the truth which is according to godliness.--Their word will eat as doth a canker." Some think he especially warns them to take heed of the judaizing teachers, who, under convert of the Christian name, kept up the Mosaical ceremonies, and preached the necessity of them, who were industrious in all places to draw disciples after them, and whom Paul in most of his epistles cautions the churches to take heed of.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

The worse they are, the more need we have to watch against them. Now observe his description of them, in two things:--

(1.) The master they serve: not our Lord Jesus Christ. Though they call themselves Christians, they do not serve Christ; do not aim at his glory, promote his interest, nor do his will, whatever they pretend. How many are there who call Christ Master and Lord, that are far from serving him! But they serve their own belly--their carnal, sensual, secular interests. It is some base lust or other that they are pleasing; pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury, lasciviousness, these are the designs which they are really carrying on. Their God is their belly, Php 3:19. What a base master do they serve, and how unworthy to come in competition with Christ, that serve their own bellies, that make gain their godliness, and the gratifying of a sensual appetite the very scope and business of their lives, to which all other purposes and designs must truckle and be made subservient.

(2.) The method they take to compass their design: By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple. Their words and speeches have a show of holiness and zeal for God (it is an easy thing to be godly from the teeth outward), and show of kindness and love to those into whom they instil their

corrupt doctrines, accosting them courteously when they intend them the greatest mischief. Thus by good words and fair speeches the serpent beguiled Eve. Observe, They corrupt their heads by deceiving their hearts, pervert their judgments by slyly insinuating themselves into their affections. We have a great need therefore to keep our hearts with all diligence, especially when seducing spirits are abroad.

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men.* I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

Because of the peril we are in, through our proneness and aptness to be inveigled and ensnared by them: "For your obedience has come abroad unto all men--you are noted in all the churches for a willing, tractable, complying people." And,

(a.) Therefore, because it was so, these seducing teachers would be the more apt to assault them. The devil and his agents have a particular spite against flourishing churches and flourishing souls. The ship that is known to be richly laden is most exposed to privateers. The adversary and enemy covets such a prey, therefore look to yourselves, 2Jo 1:8. "The false teachers hear that you are an obedient people, and therefore they will be likely to come among you, to see if you will be obedient to them." It has been the common policy of seducers to set upon those who are softened by convictions, and begin to enquire what they shall do, because such do most easily receive the impressions of their opinions. Sad experience witnesses how many who have begun to ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, have fatally split upon this rock, which proves it to be much the duty of ministers, with a double care, to feed the lambs of the flock, to lay a good foundation, and gently to lead those that are with young.

(b.) Though it were so, yet they were in danger from these seducers. This Paul suggests with a great deal of modesty and tenderness; not as one suspicious of them, but as one solicitous for them: "You obedience has come abroad unto all men; we

grant this and rejoice in it: I am glad therefore on your behalf." Thus does he insinuate their commendation, the better to make way for the caution. A holy jealousy of our friends may very well comport with a holy joy in them. "You think yourselves a very happy people, and so do I too: but for all that you must not be secure: I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. You are a willing good-natured people, but you had best take heed of being imposed upon by those seducers." A pliable temper is good when it is under good government; but otherwise it may be very ensnaring; and therefore he gives two general rules:--

[1.] To be wise unto that which is good, that is, to be skilful and intelligent in the truths and ways of God. "Be wise to try the spirits, to prove all things, and then to hold fast that only which is good." There is need of a great deal of wisdom in our adherence to good truths, and good duties, and good people, lest in any of these we be imposed upon and deluded. Be ye therefore wise as serpents (Mt 10:16), wise to discern that which is really good and that which is counterfeit; wise to distinguish things that differ, to improve opportunities. While we are in the midst of so many deceivers, we have great need of that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way, Pr 14:8.

[2.] To be simple concerning evil--so wise as not to be deceived, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers. It is a holy simplicity, not to be able to contrive, nor palliate, nor carry on, any evil design; akeraious--harmless, unmixed, inoffensive. In malice be you children, 1Co 14:20. The wisdom of the serpent becomes Christians, but not the subtlety of the old serpent. We must withal be harmless as doves. That is a wisely simple man that knows not how to do any thing against the truth. Now Paul was the more solicitous for the Roman church, that it might preserve its integrity, because it was so famous; it was a city upon a hill, and many eyes were upon the Christians there, so that an error prevailing there would be a bad precedent, and have an ill influence upon other churches.

20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.
Amen.

Because of the promise of God, that we shall have victory at last, which is given to quicken and encourage, not to supersede, our watchful cares and vigorous endeavours. It is a very sweet promise (Ro 16:20): The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.

(1.) The titles he gives to God: The God of peace, the author and giver of all good. When we come to God for spiritual victories, we must not only eye him as the Lord of hosts, whose all power is, but as the God of peace, a God at peace with us, speaking peace to us, working peace in us, creating peace for us. Victory comes from God more as the God of peace than as the God of war; for, in all our conflicts, peace is the thing we must contend for. God, as the God of peace, will restrain and vanquish all those that cause divisions and offences, and so break and disturb the peace of the church.

(2.) The blessing he expects from God--a victory over Satan. If he mean primarily those false doctrines and seducing spirits spoken of before, of which Satan was the prime founder and author, yet doubtless, it comprehends all the other designs and devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them, all his attempts to keep us from the purity of heaven, the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. Satan tempting and troubling, acting as a deceiver and as a destroyer, the God of peace will bruise under our feet. He had cautioned them before against simplicity: now they, being conscious of their own great weakness and folly, might think, "How shall we evade and escape these snares that are laid for us? Will not these adversaries of our souls be at length too hard for us?" "No," says he, "fear not; though you cannot overcome in your own strength and wisdom, yet the God of peace will do it for you; and through him that loved us we shall be more than conquerors."

[1.] The victory shall be complete: He shall bruise Satan under your feet, plainly alluding to the first promise the Messiah made in

paradise (Ge 3:15), that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, which is in the fulfilling every day, while the saints are enabled to resist and overcome the temptations of Satan, and will be perfectly fulfilled when, in spite of all the powers of darkness, all that belong to the election of grace shall be brought triumphantly to glory. When Joshua had conquered the kings of Canaan, he called the captains of Israel to set their feet upon the necks of those kings (Jos 10:24), so will Christ, our Joshua, enable all his faithful servants and soldiers to set their feet upon Satan's neck, to trample upon, and triumph over, their spiritual enemies. Christ hath overcome for us; disarmed the strong man armed, broken his power, and we have nothing to do but to pursue the victory and divide the spoil. Let this quicken us to our spiritual conflict, to fight the good fight of faith--we have to do with a conquered enemy, and the victory will be perfect shortly.

[2.] The victory shall be speedy: He shall do it shortly. Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come. He hath said it, Behold, I come quickly. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and we are ready to give up all for lost, then will the God of peace cut the work short in righteousness.

21 Timothy my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater,
my kinsmen, salute you.
22 I Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, salute you in the Lord.
23 Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you.
Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a
brother.
24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Concluding Doxology

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my
gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the
revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the
world began,
26 but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets,
according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made
known to all nations for the obedience of faith:
27 to God only wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

The First Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Corinthians

[1 Corinthians]

1 Corinthians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,
2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:
3 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving for Spiritual Gifts

4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;
5 that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge;
6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:
7 so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:
8 who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Of the encouraging hopes the apostle had of them for the time to come, founded on the power and love of Christ, and the faithfulness of God, 1Co 1:8,9. He who had begun a good work in them, and carried it on thus far, would not leave it unfinished. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be kept by him, and confirmed to the end; and those that are so will be blameless in the day of Christ: not upon the principle of strict justice, but gracious absolution; not in rigour of law, but from rich and free grace. How desirable is it to be confirmed and kept of Christ for such a purpose as this! How glorious are the hopes of

such a privilege, whether for ourselves or others! To be kept by the power of Christ from the power of our own corruption and Satan's temptation, that we may appear without blame in the great day! O glorious expectation, especially when the faithfulness of God comes in to support our hopes! He who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son is faithful, and will do it, 1Th 5:24. He who hath brought us into near and dear relation to Christ, into sweet and intimate communion with Christ, is faithful; he may be trusted with our dearest concerns. Those that come at his call shall never be disappointed in their hopes in him. If we approve ourselves faithful to God, we shall never find him unfaithful to us. He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, Ps 89:33.

That ye may be blameless. The word rendered blameless ανεγκλητους does not mean perfect, but properly denotes those against whom there is no charge of crime; who are unaccused, and against whom there is no ground of accusation. Here it does not mean that they were personally perfect, but that God would so keep them, and enable them to evince a Christian character, as to give evidence that they were his friends, and completely escape condemnation in the last day. Rom 8:33,34. There is no man who has not his faults; no Christian who is not conscious of imperfection; but it is the design of God so to keep his people, and so to justify and sanctify them through the Lord Jesus, that the church may be presented "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle" Eph 5:27 in the day of judgment.

God is faithful. That is, God is true, and constant, and will adhere to his promises. He will not deceive. He will not promise, and then fail to perform; he will not commence anything which he will not perfect and finish. The object of Paul, in introducing the idea of the faithfulness of God, here is, to show the reason for believing that the Christians at Corinth would be kept unto everlasting life. The evidence that they will persevere depends on the fidelity of God; and the argument of the apostle is, that as they had been called by him into the fellowship of his Son, his faithfulness of character would render it certain that they would be kept to eternal life. The same idea he has presented in Php 1:6: "Being confident

of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Ye were called. The word "called" here does not refer merely to an invitation or an offer of life, but to the effectual influence which had been put forth; which had inclined them to embrace the gospel. Rom 8:30; Rom 9:12. See Mk 2:17, Lk 5:32, Gal 1:6,7, 5:8,13; Eph 1:4, Col 3:16. In this sense the word often occurs in the Scriptures, and is designed to denote a power, or influence, that goes forth with the external invitation, and that makes it effectual. That power is the agency of the Holy Spirit.

9 God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his
Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Divisions in the Church

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus
Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no
divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the
same mind and in the same judgment.

Be perfectly joined together in the same mind, as far as you can. In the great things of religion be of a mind: but, when there is not a unity of sentiment, let there be a union of affections. The consideration of being agreed in greater things should extinguish all feuds and divisions about minor ones."

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by
them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are
contentions among you.
12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of
Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye
baptized in the name of Paul?
14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;
15 lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.
16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I
know not whether I baptized any other.

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel:
not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should
be made of none effect.

The manner in which Paul preached the gospel, and the cross of Christ: Not with the wisdom of words (1Co 1:17), the enticing words of man's wisdom (1Co 2:4), the flourish of oratory, or the accuracies of philosophical language, upon which the Greeks so much prided themselves, and which seem to have been the peculiar recommendations of some of the heads of the faction in this church that most opposed this apostle. He did not preach the gospel in this manner, lest the cross of Christ should be of no effect, lest the success should be ascribed to the force of art, and not of truth; not to the plain doctrine of a crucified Jesus, but to the powerful oratory of those who spread it, and hereby the honour of the cross be diminished or eclipsed. Paul had been bred up himself in Jewish learning at the feet of Gamaliel, but in preaching the cross of Christ he laid his learning aside. He preached a crucified Jesus in plain language, and told the people that that Jesus who was crucified at Jerusalem was the Son of God and Saviour of men, and that all who would be saved must repent of their sins, and believe in him, and submit to his government and laws. This truth needed no artificial dress; it shone out with the greatest majesty in its own light, and prevailed in the world by its divine authority, and the demonstration of the Spirit, without any human helps. The plain preaching of a crucified Jesus was more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy of the heathen world.

Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish,
foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.

It is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God, 1Co 1:23,24.

1. Christ crucified is a stumbling-block to the Jews. They could not get over it. They had a conceit that their expected Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and therefore would never own one

who made so mean an appearance in life, and died so accursed a death, for their deliverer and king. They despised him, and looked upon him as execrable, because he was hanged on a tree, and because he did not gratify them with a sign to their mind, though his divine power shone out in innumerable miracles. The Jews require a sign, 1Co 1:22. See Mt 12:38.

2. He was to the Greeks foolishness. They laughed at the story of a crucified Saviour, and despised the apostles' way of telling it. They sought for wisdom. They were men of wit and reading, men that had cultivated arts and sciences, and had, for some ages, been in a manner the very mint of knowledge and learning. There was nothing in the plain doctrine of the cross to suit their taste, nor humour their vanity, nor gratify a curious and wrangling temper: they entertained it therefore with scorn and contempt. What, hope to be saved by one that could not save himself! And trust in one who was condemned and crucified as a malefactor, a man of mean birth and poor condition in life, and cut off by so vile and opprobrious a death! This was what the pride of human reason and learning could not relish. The Greeks thought it little better than stupidity to receive such a doctrine, and pay this high regard to such a person: and thus were they justly left to perish in their pride and obstinacy. Note, It is just with God to leave those to themselves who pour such proud contempt on divine wisdom and grace.

3. To those who are called and saved he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. Those who are called and sanctified, who receive the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, discern more glorious discoveries of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucified than in all his other works. Note, Those who are saved are reconciled to the doctrine of the cross, and led into an experimental acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ crucified.

For the preaching of the cross. Greek, "the word ολογος of the cross;" i.e., the doctrine of the cross; or the doctrine which

proclaims salvation only through the atonement which the Lord Jesus Christ made on the cross. This cannot mean that the statement that Christ died as a martyr on a cross appears to be foolishness to men; because, if that was all, there would be nothing that would appear contemptible, or that would excite their opposition more than in the death of any other martyr. The statement that Polycarp, and Ignatius, and Paul, and Cranmer, died as martyrs, does not appear to be foolishness, for it is a statement of an historical truth, and their death excites the high admiration of all men. And if, in the death of Jesus on the cross, there had been nothing more than a mere martyr's death, it would have been equally the object of admiration to all men. But the "preaching of the cross" must denote more than that; and must mean,

(1.) that Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men, and that it was this which gave its peculiarity to his sufferings on the cross.

(2.) That men can be reconciled to God, pardoned, and saved only by the merits and influence of this atoning sacrifice.

Foolishness. Folly. That is, it appears to them to be contemptible and foolish, or unworthy of belief. To the great mass of the Jews, and to the heathen philosophers, and indeed to the majority of the men of this world, it has ever appeared foolishness, for the following reasons:

(1.) The humble origin of the Lord Jesus. They despise him that lived in Nazareth; that was poor; that had no home, and few friends, and no wealth, and little honour among his own countrymen.

(2.) They despise him who was put to death as an impostor, at the instigation of his own countrymen, in an ignominious manner on the cross--the usual punishment of slaves.

(3.) They see not why there should be any particular efficacy in his death. They deem it incredible that he who could not save himself should be able to save them; and that glory should come from the ignominy of the cross.

(4.) They are blind to the true beauty of his personal character; to the true dignity of his nature; to his power over the sick, the lame, the dying, and the dead; they see not the bearing of the work of atonement on the law and government of God; they believe not in his resurrection, and his present state of exalted glory. The world looks only at the fact that the despised man of Nazareth was put to death on a cross, and smiles at the idea that such a death could have any important influence on the salvation of man. It is worthy of remark, also, that to the ancient philosophers this doctrine would appear still more contemptible than it does to the men of these times. Everything that came from Judea they looked upon with contempt and scorn; and they would spurn, above all things else, the doctrine that they were to expect salvation only by the crucifixion of a Jew. Besides, the account of the crucifixion has now lost to us no small part of its reputation of ignominy. Even around the cross there is conceived to be no small amount of honour and glory. There is now a sacredness about it, from religious associations; and a reverence which men in Christian lands can scarcely help feeling when they think of it. But to the ancients it was connected with every idea of ignominy. It was the punishment of slaves, impostors, and vagabonds; and had even a greater degree of disgrace attached to it than the gallows has with us. With them, therefore, the death on the cross was associated with the idea of all that is shameful and dishonourable; and to speak of salvation only by the sufferings and death of a crucified man, was fitted to excite in their bosoms only unmingled scorn.

19 For it is written,
I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.
20 Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer
of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this
world?

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom
knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching
to save them that believe.
22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:
23 but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock,
and unto the Greeks foolishness;
24 but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.
25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men;
and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise
men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are*
called:

You see the state of Christianity; not many men of learning, or authority, or honourable extraction, are called." There is a great deal of meanness and weakness in the outward appearance of our religion. For, (1.) Few of distinguished character in any of these respects were chosen for the work of the ministry. God did not choose philosophers, nor orators, nor statesmen, nor men of wealth and power and interest in the world, to publish the gospel of grace and peace. Not the wise men after the flesh, though men would apt to think that a reputation for wisdom and learning might have contributed much to the success of the gospel. Not the mighty and noble, however men might be apt to imagine that secular pomp and power would make way for its reception in the world. But God seeth not as man seeth. He hath chosen the foolish things of the world, the weak things of the world, the base and despicable things of the world, men of mean birth, of low rank, of no liberal education, to be the preachers of the gospel and planters of the church. His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways. He is a better judge than we what instruments and measures will best serve the purposes of his glory. (2.) Few of distinguished rank and character were called to be Christians. As the teachers were poor and mean, so generally were the converts. Few of the wise, and mighty, and noble, embraced the doctrine of the cross. The first Christians, both among Jews and Greeks, were weak, and foolish, and base; men of mean furniture as to their mental improvements, and very mean rank and condition as to their outward estate; and

yet what glorious discoveries are there of divine wisdom in the whole scheme of the gospel, and in this particular circumstance of its success!

27 but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to
confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things
of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

To beat down the pride and vanity of men. God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise--men of no learning to confound the most learned; the weak things of the world to confound the might--men of mean rank and circumstances to confound and prevail against all the power and authority of earthly kings; and base things, and things which are despised--things which men have in the lowest esteem, or in the utmost contempt, to pour contempt and disgrace on all they value and have in veneration; and things which are not, to bring to nought (to abolish) things that are--the conversion of the Gentiles (of whom the Jews had the most contemptuous and vilifying thoughts) was to open a way to the abolishing of that constitution of which they were so fond, and upon which they valued themselves so much as for the sake of it to despise the rest of the world. It is common for the Jews to speak of the Gentiles under this character, as things that are not. Thus, in the apocryphal book of Esther, she is brought in praying that God would not give his sceptre to those who are not, Esth. xiv. 11. Esdras, in one of the apocryphal books under his name, speaks to God of the heathen as those who are reputed as nothing, 2 Esdras vi. 56, 57. And the apostle Paul seems to have this common language of the Jews in his view when he calls Abraham the father of us all before him whom he believed, God, who calleth those things that are not as though they were, Ro 4:17. The gospel is fitted to bring down the pride of both Jews and Greeks, to shame the boasted science and learning of the Greeks, and to take down that constitution on which the Jews valued themselves and despised all the world besides, that no flesh should glory in his presence (1Co 1:29), that there might be no pretence for boasting. Divine wisdom alone had the contrivance of the method of redemption; divine grace alone revealed it, and made it known. It lay, in both respects, out of human reach. And the doctrine and discovery prevailed, in spite of all the opposition it met with from human art or authority: so

effectually did God veil the glory and disgrace the pride of man in all. The gospel dispensation is a contrivance to humble man.

28 and base things of the world, and things which are despised,
hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to
nought things that are:

And things which are not. ταμηοντα. That which is nothing; which is worthless; which has no existence; those things which were below contempt itself; and which, in the estimation of the world, were passed by as having no existence-as not having sufficient importance to be esteemed worthy even of the slight notice which is implied in contempt. For a man who despises a thing must at least notice it, and esteem it worth some attention. But the apostle here speaks of things beneath even that slight notice; as completely and totally disregarded, as having no existence. The language here is evidently that of hyperbole, Jn 21:25. It was a figure of speech common in the East, and not unusual in the sacred writings. Comp. Isa 40:17:

"All nations before him are as nothing, And they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity."

See also Rom 4:17: "God, who calleth those things which be not as though they were." This language was strongly expressive of the estimate which the Jews fixed on the Gentiles, as being a despised people, as being in fact no people; a people without laws, and organization, and religion, and privileges. See Hoss 1:10, 2:23, Rom 9:25, 1Pet 2:10. "When a man of rank among the Hindoos speaks of low-caste persons, of notorious profligates, or of those whom he despises, he calls them alla-tha-varkal, i.e., thou who are not. The term does not refer to life or existence, but to a quality or disposition, and is applied to those who are vile and abominable in all things. 'My son, my son, go not among them who are not.' 'Alas! alas! those people are all alla-tha-varkal' When wicked men prosper, it is said, 'This is the time for those who are not.' 'Have you heard that those who are not are now acting righteously? 'Vulgar and indecent expressions are also called words that are

not.' To address men in the phrase are not, is provoking beyond measure."--Roberts, as quoted in Bush's illustrations of Scripture.

29 that no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

It is as admirably fitted to glorify God. There is a great deal of power and glory in the substance and life of Christianity. Though the ministers were poor and unlearned, and the converts generally of the meanest rank, yet the hand of the Lord went along with the preachers, and was mighty in the hearts of the hearers; and Jesus Christ was made both to ministers and Christians what was truly great and honourable. All we have we have from God as the fountain, and in and through Christ as the channel of conveyance. He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1Co 1:30): all we need, or can desire. We are foolishness, ignorant and blind in the things of God, with all our boasted knowledge; and he is made wisdom to us. We are guilty, obnoxious to justice; and he is made righteousness, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; and he is made sanctification, the spring of our spiritual life; from him, the head, it is communicated to all the members of his mystical body by his Holy Spirit. We are in bonds, and he is made redemption to us, our Saviour and deliverer. Observe, Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is also made sanctification. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it; and he is made righteousness and sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption, may free the soul from the very being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave: and what is designed in all is that all flesh may glory in the Lord, 1Co 1:31. Observe, It is the will of God that all our glorifying should be in the Lord: and, our salvation being only through Christ, it is thereby effectually provided that it should be so. Man is humbled, and God glorified and exalted, by the whole scheme.

31 that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

1 Corinthians-2

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with
excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the
testimony of God.
2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus
Christ, and him crucified.
3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in
much trembling.
4 And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing
words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit
and of power:
5 that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but
in the power of God.

He was also among them in weakness and fear, and in much trembling; and yet his speech and preaching were in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 1Co 2:3,4. His enemies in the church of Corinth spoke very contemptuously of him: His bodily presence, say they, is weak, and his speech contemptible, 2Co 10:10. Possibly he had a little body, and a low voice; but, though he had not so good an elocution as some, it is plain that he was no mean speaker. The men of Lystra looked on him to be the heathen god Mercury, come down to them in the form of a man, because he was the chief speaker, Ac 14:12.

The Revelation by God's Spirit

6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet
not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world,
that come to nought:
7 but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden
wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory;
8 which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they
known
it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The ignorance of the great men of the world about it: Which none of the princes of this world knew (1Co 2:8), the principal men in authority and power, or in wisdom and learning. The Roman governor, and the guides and rulers of the Jewish church and nation, seem to be the persons here chiefly meant. These were the princes of this world, or this age, who, had they known this true and heavenly wisdom, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. This Pilate and the Jewish rulers literally did when our Redeemer was crucified upon the sentence of the one and the clamorous demands of the other. Observe, Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory, a title much too great for any creature to bear: and the reason why he was hated was because he was not known. Had his crucifiers known him, known who and what he was, they would have withheld their impious hands, and not have taken and slain him. This he pleaded with his Father for their pardon: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, Lu 23:34. Note, There are many things which people would not do if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption. They act as they do because they are blind or heedless. They know not the truth, or will not attend to it.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,
neither have entered into the heart of man,
the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

t was a testimony of love to God in the Jewish believers to live in expectation of the accomplishment o evangelical promises. Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him. Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, Isa 25:9. Observe, There are things which God hath prepared for those that love him, and wait for him. There are such things prepared in a future life for them, things which sense cannot discover, no present information can convey to our ears, nor can yet enter our hearts. Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel, 2Ti 1:10. But the apostle speaks here of the subject-matter of the divine revelation under the gospel. These are such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Observe, The great truths of the gospel are things lying out of the sphere of human discovery: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard them, nor have they entered into the heart of man. Were they objects of sense, could they be discovered by an eye of reason, and communicated by the ear to the mind, as matters of common human knowledge may, there had been

no need of a revelation. But, lying out of the sphere of nature, we cannot discover them but by the light of revelation. And therefore we must take them as they lie in the scriptures, and as God has been pleased to reveal them.

10 But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

The scripture is given by inspiration of God. Holy men spoke of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2Pe 1:21. And the apostles spoke by inspiration of the same Spirit, as he taught them, and gave them utterance. Here is a proof of the divine authority of the holy scriptures. Paul wrote what he taught: and what he taught was revealed of God by his Spirit, that Spirit that searches all things, yea, the deep things of God, and knows the things of God, as the spirit of a man that is in him knows the things of a man, 1Co 2:11. A double argument is drawn from these words in proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost:--

1. Omniscience is attributed to him: He searches all things, even the deep things of God. He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the very depths of God, penetrates into his most secret counsels. Now who can have such a thorough knowledge of God but God?

2. This allusion seems to imply that the Holy Spirit is as much in God as a man's mind is in himself. Now the mind of the man is plainly essential to him. He cannot be without his mind. Now can God be without his Spirit. He is as much and as intimately one with God as the man's mind is with the man. The man knows his own mind because his mind is one with himself. The Spirit of God knows the things of God because he is one with God. And as no man can come at the knowledge of what is in another man's mind till he communicates and reveals it, so neither can we know the secret counsels and purposes of God till they are made known to us by his Holy Spirit.

11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the
Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that
are freely given to us of God.
13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's
wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;
comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The Spirit of God knows much better how to speak of the things of God than the best critics, orators, or philosophers. Comparing spiritual things with spiritual--one part of revelation with another, the revelation of the gospel with that of the Jews, the discoveries of the New Testament with the types and prophecies of the Old.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of
God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know
them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural man, the animal man.

1.The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, Joh 1:5. Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling to enter into the mind of God, in the spiritual matters of his kingdom, and yield to their force and power. It is the quickening beams of the Spirit of truth and holiness that must help the mind to discern their excellency, and to so thorough a conviction of their truth as heartily to receive and embrace them.

2.The natural man, that is, the wise man of the world (1Co 1:19,20), the wise man after the flesh, or according to the flesh (1Co 2:26), one who hath the wisdom of the world, man's wisdom (1Co 2:4-6), a man, as some of the ancients, that would learn all truth by his own ratiocinations, receive nothing by faith, nor own any need of supernatural assistance. This was very much the character of the pretenders to philosophy and the Grecian learning and wisdom in that day. Such a man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Revelation is not with him a principle of science; he looks upon it as delirium and dotage, the extravagant thought of some deluded dreamer. It is no way to wisdom among the famous masters of the world; and for that reason he can have no knowledge of things

revealed, because they are only spiritually discerned, or made known by the revelation of the Spirit, which is a principle of science or knowledge that he will not admit.

15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned, of no man, 1Co 2:15. Either,

(1.) He who is sanctified and made spiritually-minded (Ro 8:6) judgeth all things, or discerneth all things--he is capable of judging about matters of human wisdom, and has also a relish and favor of divine truths; he sees divine wisdom, and experiences divine power, in gospel revelations and mysteries, which the carnal and unsanctified mind looks upon as weakness and folly, as things destitute of all power and not worthy any regard. It is the sanctified mind that must discern the real beauties of holiness; but, by the refinement of its facilities, they do not lose their power of discerning and judging about common and natural things. The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine, the deductions of reason and the discoveries of revelation. But he himself is judged or discerned of NO MAN. God's saints are his hidden ones, Ps 83:3. Their life is hid with Christ in God, Col 3:3. The carnal man knows no more of a spiritual man than he does of other spiritual things. He is a stranger to the principles, pleasures, and actings, of the divine life. The spiritual man does not lie open to his observation. Or,

(2.) He that is spiritual (who has had divine revelations made to him, receives them as such, and founds his faith and religion upon them) can judge both of common things and things divine; he can discern what is, and what is not, the doctrine of the gospel and of salvation, and whether a man preaches the truths of God or not. He does not lose the power of reasoning, nor renounce the principles of it, by founding his faith and religion on revelation. But he himself is judged of no man--can be judged, so as to be confuted, by no man; nor can any man who is not spiritual, not under a divine afflatus himself (see 1Co 14:37), or not founding his faith on a divine

revelation, discern or judge whether what he speaks be true or divine, or not. Of no man: for when the prophets are judged of the prophets, it is the Spirit that judges, and not the man.

None who are not spiritual are able to sit in judgment upon his higher life. He is on a higher level, and the animal man, from his lower level, cannot well estimate him. In short, he who founds all his knowledge upon principles of science, and the mere light of reason, can never be a judge of the truth or falsehood of what is received by revelation. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him (1Co 2:16), that is, the spiritual man? Who can enter so far into the mind of God as to instruct him who has the Spirit of God, and is under his inspiration? He only is the person to whom God immediately communicates the knowledge of his will. And who can inform or instruct him in the mind of God who is so immediately under the conduct of his own Spirit? Very few have known any thing of the mind of God by a natural power. But, adds the apostle, we have the mind of Christ; and the mind of Christ is the mind of God. He is God, and the principal messenger and prophet of God. And the apostles were empowered by his Spirit to make known his mind to us. And in the holy scriptures the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, are fully revealed to us. Observe, It is the great privilege of Christians that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit.

16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may
instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians-3

Laborers Together with God

1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,
but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ.

They were still mere babes in Christ. They had received some of the first principles of Christianity, but had not grown up to maturity of understanding in them, or of faith and holiness; and yet it is plain, from several passages in this epistle, that the Corinthians were very

proud of their wisdom and knowledge. Note, It is but too common for persons of very moderate knowledge and understanding to have a great measure of self-conceit. The apostle assigns their little proficiency in the knowledge of Christianity as a reason why he had communicated no more of the deep things of it to them. They could not bear such food, they needed to be fed with milk, not with meat,

2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye
were not able *to bear it,* neither yet now are ye able.

Note, It is the duty of a faithful minister of Christ to consult the capacities of his hearers and teach them as they can bear. And yet it is natural for babes to grow up to men; and babes in Christ should endeavour to grow in Stature, and become men in Christ. It is expected that their advances in knowledge should be in proportion to their means and opportunities, and their time of professing religion, that they may be able to bear discourses on the mysteries of our religion, and not always rest in plain things. It was a reproach to the Corinthians that they had so long sat under the ministry of Paul and had made no more improvement in Christian knowledge. Note, Christians are utterly to blame who do not endeavour to grow in grace and knowledge.

3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying,
and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?
4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos;
are ye not carnal?

These were proofs of their being carnal, that fleshly interests and affections too much swayed them. Note, Contentions and quarrels about religion are sad evidences of remaining carnality. True religion makes men peaceable and not contentious. Factious spirits act upon human principles, not upon principles of true religion; they are guided by their own pride and passions, and not by the rules of Christianity: Do you not walk as men? Note, It is to be lamented that many who should walk as Christians, that is, above the common rate of men, do indeed walk as men, live and act too much like other men.

5 Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom
ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

Some of the factious people in Corinth seem to have made more of them, as if they were lords of their faith, authors of their religion. Note, We should take care not to deify ministers, nor put them into the place of God. Apostles were not the authors of our faith and religion, though they were authorized and qualified to reveal and propagate it. They acted in this office as God gave to every man. Observe, All the gifts and powers that even apostles discovered and exerted in the work of the ministry were from God.

Even apostolical ministers are nothing of themselves, can do nothing with efficacy and success unless God give the increase. Note, The best qualified and most faithful ministers have a just sense of their own insufficiency, and are very desirous that God should have all the glory of their success. Paul and Apollos are nothing at all in their own account, but God is all in all.

6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.
7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he
that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.
8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every
man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Note, All the faithful ministers of Christ are one in the great business and intention of their ministry. They may have differences of sentiment in minor things; they may have their debates and contests; but they heartily concur in the great design of honouring God and saving souls, by promoting true Christianity in the world. All such may expect a glorious recompence of their fidelity, and in proportion to it: Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. Their business is one, but some may mind it more than others: their end or design is one, but some may pursue it more closely than others: their Master also is one, and yet this good and gracious Master may make a difference in the rewards he gives, according to the different service they do: Every one's own work shall have its own reward. Those that work hardest shall fare best. Those that are most faithful shall have the greatest reward; and glorious work it is in which all faithful ministers are employed.

9 For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's
husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

Note, Faithful ministers may and ought to have a concern for their own reputation. Their usefulness depends much upon it. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. This is a proper caution; there may be very indifferent building on a good foundation. It is easy to err here; and great care should be used, not only to lay a sure and right foundation, but to erect a regular building upon it. Nothing must be laid upon it but what the foundation will bear, and what is of a piece with it. Gold and dirt must not be mingled together. Note, Ministers of Christ should take great care that they do not build their own fancies or false reasonings on the foundation of divine revelation. What they preach should be the plain doctrine of their Master, or what is perfectly agreeable with it.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

But of those that hold the foundation, and embrace the general doctrine of Christ's being the mediator between God and man, there are two sorts:--

I. Some build upon this foundation gold, silver, and precious stones (1Co 3:12), namely, those who receive and propagate the pure truths of the gospel, who hold nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, and preach nothing else. This is building well upon a good foundation, making all of apiece, when ministers not only depend upon Christ as the great prophet of the church, and take him for their guide and infallible teacher, but receive and spread the doctrines he

taught, in their purity, with out any corrupt mixtures, without adding or diminishing.

II. Others build wood, hay, and stubble, on this foundation; that is, though they adhere to the foundation, they depart from the mind of Christ in many particulars, substitute their own fancies and inventions in the room of his doctrines and institutions, and build upon the good foundation what will not abide the test when the day of trial shall come, and the fire must make it manifest, as wood, hay, and stubble, will not bear the trial by fire, but must be consumed in it. There is a time coming when a discovery will be made of what men have built on this foundation: Every man's work shall be made manifest, shall be laid open to view, to his own view and that of others. Some may, in the simplicity of their hearts, build wood and stubble on the good foundation, and know not, all the while, what they have been doing; but in the day of the Lord their own conduct shall appear to them in its proper light. Every man's work shall be made manifest to himself, and made manifest to others, both those that have been misled by him and those that have escaped his errors. Now we may be mistaken in ourselves and others; but there is a day coming that will cure all our mistakes, and show us ourselves, and show us our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise: For the day shall declare it (that is, every man's work), because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is, 1Co 3:13. The day shall declare and make it manifest, the last day, the great day of trial; see 1Co 4:5. Though some understand it of the time when the Jewish nation was destroyed and their constitution thereby abolished, when the superstructure which judaizing teachers would have raised on the Christian foundation was manifested to be no better than hay and stubble, that would not bear the trial. The expression carries in it a plain allusion to the refiner's art, in which the fire separates and distinguishes the dross from the gold and silver; as it also will silver and gold and precious stones, that will endure the fire, from wood and hay and stubble, that will be consumed in it.

Note, There is a day coming that will as nicely distinguish one man from another, and one man's work from another's, as the fire

distinguishes gold from dross, or metal that will bear the fire from other materials that will be consumed in it. In that day,

1. Some men's works will abide the trial--will be found standard. It will appear that they not only held the foundation, but that they built regularly and well upon it--that they laid on proper materials, and in due form and order. The foundation and the superstructure were all of a piece. The foundation-truths, and those that had a manifest connection with them, were taught together. It may not be so easy to discern this connection now, nor know what works will abide the trial then; but that day will make a full discovery. And such a builder shall not, cannot fail of a reward. He will have praise and honour in that day, and eternal recompence after it. Note, Fidelity in the ministers of Christ will meet with a full and ample reward in a future life. Those who spread true and pure religion in all the branches of it, and whose work will abide in the great day, shall receive a reward. And, Lord, how great! how much exceeding their deserts!

2. There are others whose works shall be burnt (1Co 3:15), whose corrupt opinions and doctrines, or vain inventions and usages in the worship of God, shall be discovered, disowned, and rejected, in that day--shall be first manifested to be corrupt, and then disapproved of God and rejected. Note, The great day will pluck off all disguises, and make things appear as they are: He whose work shall be burnt will suffer loss. If he have built upon the right foundation wood and hay and stubble, he will suffer loss. His weakness and corruption will be the lessening of his glory, though he may in the general have been an honest and an upright Christian. This part of his work will be lost, turning no way to his advantage, though he himself may be saved. Observe, Those who hold the foundation of Christianity, though they build hay, wood, and stubble, upon it, may be saved. This may help to enlarge our charity. We should not reprobate men for their weakness: for nothing will damn men but wickedness. He shall be saved, yet so as by fire, saved out of the fire. He himself shall be snatched out of that flame which will consume his work. This intimates that it will be difficult for those that corrupt and deprave Christianity to be saved. God will have no mercy on their works, though he may pluck them as brands out of the burning.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss:
but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.
16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of
God dwelleth in you?

Dwelleth in you. As God dwelt formerly in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, so his Spirit now dwells among Christians. This cannot mean

(1.) that the Holy Spirit is personally united to Christians, so as to form a personal union; or

(2.) that there is to Christians any communication of his nature or personal qualities; or

(3.) that there is any union of essence or nature with them, for God is present in all places, and can, as God, be no more present at one place than at another. The only sense in which he can be peculiarly present in any place is by his influence, or agency. And the idea is one which denotes agency, influence, favour, peculiar regard; and in that sense only can he be present with his church, The expression must mean,

(a.) that the church is the seat of his operations, the field or abode on which he acts on earth;

(b.) that his influences are there, producing the appropriate effects of his agency, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering," etc., Gal 5:22,23;

(c.) that he produces there consolations, that he sustains and guides his people;

(d.) that they are regarded as dedicated or consecrated to him;

(e.) that they are especially dear to him--that he loves them, and thus makes his abode with them. Jn 14:23.

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy;
for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

It looks from other parts of the epistle, where the apostle argues to the very same purport (see 1Co 6:13-20), as if the false teachers among the Corinthians were not only loose livers, but taught licentious doctrines, and what was particularly fitted to the taste of this lewd city, on the head of fornication. Such doctrine was not to be reckoned among hay and stubble, which would be consumed while the person who laid them on the foundation escaped the burning; for it tended to corrupt, to pollute, and destroy the church, which was a building erected for God, and consecrated to him, and therefore should be kept pure and holy. Those who spread principles of this sort would provoke God to destroy them. Note, Those who spread loose principles, that have a direct tendency to pollute the church of God, and render it unholy and unclean, are likely to bring destruction on themselves. It may be understood also as an argument against their discord and factious strifes, division being the way to destruction. But what I have been mentioning seems to be the proper meaning of the passage: Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? It may be understood of the church of Corinth collectively, or of every single believer among them; Christian churches are temples of God. He dwells among them by his Holy Spirit. They are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph 2:22. Every Christian is a living temple of the living God. God dwelt in the Jewish temple, took possession of it, and resided in it, by that glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people. So Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was devoted and consecrated to God, and set apart from every common to a holy use, to the immediate service of God. So all Christians are separated from common uses, and set apart for God and his service. They are sacred to him--a very good argument this against all fleshly lusts, and all doctrines that give countenance to them. If we are the temples of God, we must do nothing that shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt and pollute ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use; and we must hearken to no doctrine nor doctor that would seduce us to any such practices. Note, Christians are holy by profession, and should

be pure and clean both in heart and conversation. We should heartily abhor, and carefully avoid, what will defile God's temple, and prostitute what ought to be sacred to him.

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

Do not be led away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel by pretenders to science and eloquence, by a show of deep learning, or a flourish of words, by rabbis, orators, or philosophers." Note, We are in great danger of deceiving ourselves when we have too high an opinion of human wisdom and arts; plain and pure Christianity will be likely to be despised by those who can suit their doctrines to the corrupt taste of their hearers, and set them off with fine language, or support them with a show of deep and strong reasoning. But he who seems to be wise must become a fool that he may be wise. He must be sensible of his own ignorance, and lament it; he must distrust his own understanding, and not lean on it. To have a high opinion of our wisdom is but to flatter ourselves, and self-flattery is the very next step to self-deceit. The way to true wisdom is to sink our opinion of our own to a due level, and be willing to be taught of God. He must become a fool who would be truly and thoroughly wise. The person who resigns his own understanding, that he may follow the instruction of God, is in the way to true and everlasting wisdom. The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way, Ps 25:9. He that has a low opinion of his own knowledge and powers will submit to better information; such a person may be informed and improved by revelation: but the proud man, conceited of his own wisdom and understanding, will undertake to correct even divine wisdom itself, and prefer his own shallow reasonings to the revelations of infallible truth and wisdom.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

Let him become a

(1.) Let him be willing to be regarded as a fool.

(2.) Let him sincerely embrace this gospel, which will inevitably expose him to the charge of being a fool.

(3.) Let all his earthly wisdom be esteemed in his own eyes as valueless and as folly in the great matters of salvation. That he may be wise. That he may have true wisdom--that which is of God. It is implied here,

(a.) that the wisdom of this world will not make a man truly wise.

(b.) That a reputation for wisdom may contribute nothing to a man's true wisdom, but may stand in the way of it.

(c.) That for such a man to embrace the gospel, it is necessary that he should be willing to cast away dependence on his own wisdom, and come with the temper of a child to the Saviour.

(d.) That to do this will expose him to the charge of folly, and the derision of those who are wise in their own conceit.

(e.) That true wisdom is found only in that science which teaches men to live unto God, and to be prepared for death and for heaven--and that science is found only in the gospel.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

21 Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours;

Life is yours, that you may have season and opportunity to prepare for the life of heaven; and death is yours, that you may go to the possession of it. It is the kind messenger that will fetch you to your Father's house. Things present are yours, for your support on the road; things to come are yours, to enrich and regale you for ever at your journey's end." Note, If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. All is ours, time and eternity, earth and heaven, life and death. We shall want no good thing, Ps 84:11. But it must be remembered, at the same time, that

we are Christ's, the subjects of his kingdom, his property. He is Lord over us, and we must own his dominion, and cheerfully submit to his command and yield themselves to his pleasure, if we would have all things minister to our advantage. All things are ours, upon no other ground than our being Christ's. Out of him we are without just title or claim to any thing that is good.

Note, Those that would be safe for time, and happy to eternity, must be Christ's. And Christ is God's. He is the Christ of God, anointed of God, and commissioned by him, to bear the office of a Mediator, and to act therein for the purposes of his glory. Note, All things are the believer's, that Christ might have honour in his great undertaking, and God in all might have the glory. God in Christ reconciling a sinful world to himself, and shedding abroad the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel.

22 whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or
death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;
23 and ye are Christ's; and Christ *is* God's.

1 Corinthians-4

The Ministry of the Apostles

1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ,
and stewards of the mysteries of God.

In our opinion of ministers, as well as all other things, we should be careful to avoid extremes. Apostles themselves were,

1. Not to be overvalued, for they were ministers, not masters; stewards, not lords. They were servants of Christ, and no more, though they were servants of the highest rank, that had the care of his household, that were to provide food for the rest, and appoint and direct their work.

Note, It is a very great abuse of their power, and highly criminal in common ministers, to lord it over their fellow-servants, and challenge authority over their faith or practice. For even apostles were but servants of Christ, employed in his work, and sent on his errand, and dispensers of the mysteries of God, or those truths which had been hidden from the world in ages and generations past. They had no authority to propagate their own fancies, but to spread Christian faith.

2. Apostles were not to be undervalued; for, though they were ministers, they were ministers of Christ. The character and dignity of their master put an honour on them. Though they are but stewards, they are not stewards of the common things of the world, but of divine mysteries. They had a great trust, and for that reason had an honourable office. They were stewards of God's household, high-stewards in his kingdom of grace. They did not set up for masters, but they deserved respect and esteem in this honourable service.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found
faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of
you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self.

Note, The ministers of Christ should make it their hearty and continual endeavour to approve themselves trustworthy; and when they have the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of their Master, they must slight the opinions and censures of their fellow-servants: But with me, saith the apostle, it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment, 1Co 4:3. Indeed, reputation and esteem among men are a good step towards usefulness in the ministry; and Paul's whole argument upon this head shows he had a just concern for his own reputation. But he that would make it his chief endeavour to please men would hardly approve himself a faithful servant of Christ, Ga 1:10. He that would be faithful to Christ must despise the censures of men for his sake. He must look upon it as a very little thing (if his Lord approves him) what judgment men form of him. They may think very meanly or very hardly of him, while he is doing his duty; but it is not by their

judgment that he must stand or fall. And happy is it for faithful ministers that they have a more just and candid judge than their fellow-servants; one who knows and pities their imperfections, though he has none of his own. It is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men, 2Sa 24:14. The best of men are too apt to judge rashly, and harshly, and unjustly; but his judgment is always according to truth. It is a comfort that men are not to be our final judges. Nay, we are not thus to judge ourselves:Note, It is not judging well of ourselves, justifying ourselves, that will prove us safe and happy. Nothing will do this but the acceptance and approbation of our sovereign Judge. Not he that commendeth himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth, 2Co 10:18.

I judge not mine own self. I do not attempt to pronounce a judgment on myself. I am conscious of imperfection, and of being biased by self-love in my own favour. I do not feel that my judgment of myself would be strictly impartial, and in all respects to be trusted. Favourable as may be my opinion, yet I am sensible that I may be biased. This is designed to soften what he had just said about their judging him, and to show further the little value which is to be put on the judgment which man may form. "If I do not regard my own opinion of myself as of high value, I cannot be suspected of undervaluing you when I say that I do not much regard your opinion; and if I do not estimate highly my own opinion of myself, then it is not to be expected that I should set a high value on the opinions of others." God only is the infallible Judge; and as we and our fellow-men are liable to be biased in our opinions, from envy, ignorance, or self-love, we should regard the judgment of the world as of little value.

4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified:
but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come,
who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and
will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall
every man have praise of God.

It is judging out of season, and judging at an adventure. He is not to be understood of judging by persons in authority, within the verge

of their office, nor of private judging concerning facts that are notorious; but of judging persons' future state, or the secret springs and principles of their actions, or about facts doubtful in themselves. To judge in these cases, and give decisive sentence, is to assume the seat of God and challenge his prerogative. Note, How bold a sinner is the forward and severe censurer! How ill-timed and arrogant are his censures! But there is one who will judge the censurer, and those he censures, without prejudice, passion, or partiality. And there is a time coming when men cannot fail judging aright concerning themselves and others, by following his judgment. This should make them now cautious of judging others, and careful in judging themselves. There is a time coming when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts--deeds of darkness that are now done in secret, and all the secret inclinations, purposes, and intentions, of the hidden man of the heart. Note, There is a day coming that will dispel the darkness and lay open the face of the deep, will fetch men's secret sins into open day and discover the secrets of their hearts: The day shall declare it. The judge will bring these things to light. The Lord Jesus Christ will manifest the counsels of the heart, of all hearts. Note, The Lord Jesus Christ must have the knowledge of the counsels of the heart, else he could not make them manifest. This is a divine prerogative (Jer 17:10), and yet it is what our Saviour challenges to himself in a very peculiar manner (Re 2:23): All the churches shall know that I am HE who searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works. Note, We should be very careful how we censure others, when we have to do with a Judge from whom we cannot conceal ourselves. Others do not lie open to our notice, but we lie all open to his: and, when he shall come to judge, every man shall have praise of God. Every man, that is, every one qualified for it, every one who has done well. Though none of God's servants can deserve any thing from him, though there be much that is blamable even in their best services, yet shall their fidelity be commended and crowned by him; and should they be condemned, reproached, or vilified, by their fellow-servants, he will roll away all such unjust censures and reproaches, and show them in their own amiable light. Note, Christians may well be patient under unjust censures, when

they know such a day as this is coming, especially when they have their consciences testifying to their integrity. But how fearful should they be of loading any with reproaches now whom their common Judge shall hereafter commend.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to
myself and *to* Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us
not
to think *of men* above that which is written, that no one of
you be puffed up for one against another.

The apostle here lets us into the reason why he had used his own name and that of Apollos in this discourse of his. He had done it in a figure, and he had done it for their sakes. He chose rather to mention his own name, and the name of a faithful fellow-labourer, than the names of any heads of factions among them, that hereby he might avoid what would provoke, and so procure for his advice the greater regard. Note, Ministers should use prudence in their advices and admonitions, but especially in their reproofs, lest they lose their end. The advice the apostle would by this means inculcate was that they might learn not to think of men above what is written (above what he had been writing), nor be puffed up for one against another (1Co 4:6). common ministers cannot bear these characters in the same sense that apostles did. Note, We must be very careful not to transfer the honour and authority of the Master to his servant. We must call no man Master on earth; one is our Master, even Christ, Mt 23:8,10. We must not think of them above what is written.

Note, The word of God is the best rule by which to judge concerning men. And again, judging rightly concerning men, and not judging more highly of them than is fit, is one way to prevent quarrels and contentions in the churches. Pride commonly lies at the bottom of these quarrels. Self-conceit contributes very much to our immoderate esteem of our teachers, as well as ourselves. Our commendation of our own taste and judgment commonly goes along with our unreasonable applause, and always with a factious adherence to one teacher, in opposition to others that may be equally faithful and well qualified. But to think modestly of ourselves, and not above what is written of our teachers, is the most

effectual means to prevent quarrels and contests, sidings and parties, in the church. We shall not be puffed up for one against another if we remember that they are all instruments employed by God in his husbandry and building, and endowed by him with their various talents and qualifications.

7 For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it,* why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*

He cautions them against pride and self-conceit by this consideration, that all the distinction made among them was owing to God: Who maketh thee to differ? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? 1Co 4:7. Here the apostle turns his discourse to the ministers who set themselves at the head of these factions, and did but too much encourage and abet the people in those feuds. What had they to glory in, when all their peculiar gifts were from God? They had received them, and could not glory in them as their own, without wronging God. At the time when they reflected on them to feed their vanity, they should have considered them as so many debts and obligations to divine bounty and grace. But it may be taken as a general maxim: We have no reason to be proud of our attainments, enjoyments, or performances; all that we have, or are, or do, that is good, is owing to the free and rich grace of God. Boasting is for ever excluded. There is nothing we have that we can properly call our own: all is received from God. It is foolish in us therefore, and injurious to him, to boast of it; those who receive all should be proud of nothing, Ps 115:1. Beggars and dependents may glory in their supports; but to glory in themselves is to be proud at once of meanness, impotence, and want. Note, Due attention to our obligations to divine grace would cure us of arrogance and self-conceit.Note, Those do not commonly know themselves best who think best of themselves, who have the highest opinion of themselves. The Corinthians might have reigned, and the apostle with them, if they had not been blown up with an imaginary royalty. Note, Pride is a great prejudice to our improvement. He is stopped from growing wiser or better who thinks himself at the height; not only full, but rich, nay, a king.

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings
without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also
might reign with you.
9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it
were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the
world, and to angels, and to men.

He comes to set forth his own circumstances and those of the other apostles, and compares them with theirs.

1. To set forth the case of the apostles: For I think it hath pleased God to set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. Paul and his fellow-apostles were exposed to great hardships. Never were any men in this world so hunted and worried. They carried their lives in their hands: God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death, 1Co 4:9. An allusion is made to some of the bloody spectacles in the Roman amphitheatres, where men were exposed to fight with wild beasts, or to cut one another to pieces, to make diversion for the populace, where the victor did not escape with his life, though he should destroy his adversary, but was only reserved for another combat, and must be devoured or cut in pieces at last; so that such wretched criminals (for they were ordinarily condemned persons that were thus exposed) might very properly be called epithanatioi--persons devoted or appointed to death. They are said to be set forth last, because the meridian gladiators, those who combated one another in the after-part of the day, were most exposed, being obliged to fight naked; so that (as Seneca says, epist. 7) this was perfect butchery, and those exposed to beasts in the morning were treated mercifully in comparison with these. The general meaning is that the apostles were exposed to continual danger of death, and that of the worst kinds, in the faithful discharge of their office. God had set them forth, brought them into view, as the Roman emperors brought their combatants into the arena, the place of show, though not for the same purposes. They did it to please the populace, and humour their own vanity, and sometimes a much worse principle. The apostles were shown to manifest the power of divine grace, to confirm the truth of their mission and doctrine, and to propagate religion in the world. These

were ends worthy of God--noble views, fit to animate them to the combat.

But they had like difficulties to encounter, and were in a manner as much exposed as these miserable Roman criminals. Note, The office of an apostle was, as an honourable, so a hard and hazardous one: "For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, 1Co 4:9. A show. We are brought into the theatre, brought out to the public view of the world. Angels and men are witnesses to our persecutions, sufferings, patience, and magnanimity. They all see that we suffer for our fidelity to Christ, and how we suffer; how great and imminent are our dangers, and how bravely we encounter them; how sharp our sufferings, and how patiently we endure them, by the power of divine grace and our Christian principles. Ours is hard work, but honourable; it is hazardous, but glorious. God will have honour from us, religion will be credited by us. The world cannot but see and wonder at our undaunted resolution, our invincible patience and constancy." And how contentedly could they be exposed, both to sufferings and scorn, for the honour of their Master! Note, The faithful ministers and disciples of Christ should contentedly undergo any thing for his sake and honour. 2. He compares his own case with that of the Corinthians: "We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honourable, but we are despised, 1Co 4:10. We are fools for Christ's sake; such in common account, and we are well content to be so accounted. We can pass for fools in the world, and be despised as such, so that the wisdom of God and the honour of the gospel may by this means be secured and displayed."

Note, Faithful ministers can bear being despised, so that the wisdom of God and the power of his grace be thereby displayed. "But you are wise in Christ. You have the fame of being wise and learned Christians, and you do not a little value yourselves upon it. We are under disgrace for delivering the plain truths of the gospel, and in as plain a manner: you are in reputation for your eloquence and human wisdom, which among many make you pass for wise men in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. We are

suffering for Christ's sake" (so being weak plainly signifies, 2Co 12:10), "when you are in easy and flourishing circumstances." Note, All Christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others who are yet engaged in the same warfare. The standard-bearers in an army are most struck at. So ministers in a time of persecution are commonly the first and greatest sufferers. Or else, "We pass upon the world for persons of but mean endowments, mere striplings in Christianity; but you look upon yourselves, and are looked upon by others, as men, as those of a much more advanced growth and confirmed strength." Note, Those are not always the greatest proficients in Christianity who think thus of themselves, or pass for such upon others. It is but too easy and common for self-love to commit such a mistake. The Corinthians may think themselves, and be esteemed by others, as wiser and stronger men in Christ than the apostles themselves. But O! how gross is the mistake!

10 We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honorable, but we *are* despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;

They were driven about the world, without having any fixed abode, any stated habitation. Poor circumstances indeed, for the prime ministers of our Saviour's kingdom to have no house nor home, and to be destitute of food and raiment! But yet no poorer than his who had not where to lay his head, Lu 9:58. But O glorious charity and devotion, that would carry them through all these hardships! How ardently did they love God, how vehemently did they thirst for the salvation of souls! Theirs was voluntary, it was pleasing poverty. They thought they had a rich amends for all the outward good things they wanted, if they might but serve Christ and save souls.

12 and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless;

being persecuted, we suffer it:

They were treated as men not fit to live, perikatharmata. It is reasonably thought by the critics that an allusion is here made to a common custom of many heathen nations, to offer men in sacrifice in a time of pestilence, or other like grievous calamity. These were

ordinarily the vilest of men, persons of the lowest rank and worst character. Thus, in the first ages, Christians were counted the source of all public calamities, and were sacrificed to the people's rage, if not to appease their angry deities. And apostles could not meet with better usage. They suffered in their persons and characters as the very worst and vilest men, as the most proper to make such a sacrifice: or else as the very dirt of the world, that was to be swept away: nay, as the off-scouring of all things, the dross, the filings of all things. They were the common-sewer into which all the reproaches of the world were to be poured. To be the off-scouring of any thing is bad, but what is it to be the off-scouring of all things! How much did the apostles resemble their Master, and fill up that which was behind of his afflictions, for his body's sake, which is the church! Col 1:24. They suffered for him, and they suffered after his example. Thus poor and despised was he in his life and ministry. And every one who would be faithful in Christ Jesus must prepare for the same poverty and contempt. Note, Those may be very dear to God, and honourable in his esteem, whom men may think unworthy to live, and use and scorn as the very dirt and refuse of the world. God seeth not as man seeth, 1Sa 16:7.

Note, The disciples of Christ, and especially his ministers, should hold fast their integrity, and keep a good conscience, whatever opposition of hardships they meet with from the world. Whatever they suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts, of their Lord. They must be content, with him and for him, to be despised and abused.

13 being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world,
and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.
14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I
warn *you.*
15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet
have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten
you through the gospel.
16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.
17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my
beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring

you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I
teach every where in every church.
18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.
19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will
know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the
power.
20 For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.
21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and
in
the spirit of meekness?

He puts it to their choice how he should come among them, whether with a rod or in love and the spirit of meekness (1Co 4:21); that is, according as they were they would find him. If they continued perverse among themselves and with him, it would be necessary to come with a rod; that is, to exert his apostolical power in chastising them, by making some examples, and inflicting some diseases and corporal punishments, or by other censures for their faults. Note, Stubborn offenders must be used with severity. In families, in Christian communities, paternal pity and tenderness, Christian love and compassion, will sometimes force the use of the rod. But this is far from being desirable, if it may be prevented. And therefore the apostle adds that it was in their own option whether he should come with a rod or in a quite different disposition and manner: Or in love and the spirit of meekness. As much as if he had said, "Take warning, cease your unchristian feuds, rectify the abuses among you, and return to your duty, and you shall find me as gentle and benign as you can with. It will be a force upon my inclination to proceed with severity. I had rather come and display the tenderness of a father among you than assert his authority. Do but your duty, and you have no reason to avoid my presence." Note, It is a happy temper in a minister to have the spirit of love and meekness predominant, and yet to maintain his just authority.

1 Corinthians-5

Judgment of Immorality

1 It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you,
and such fornication as is not so much as named among the
Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

This chapter is entirely occupied with a notice of an offence which existed in the church at Corinth, and with a statement of the measures which the apostle expected them to pursue in regard to it. Of the existence of this offence he had been informed, probably by "those of the house of Chloe," 1Cor 1:11, and there is reason to suppose that they had not even alluded to it in the letter which they had sent to him asking advice. See 1Cor 7:1.

That one should have. Probably as his wife; or it may mean simply that he had criminal intercourse with her. Perhaps some man had parted with his wife, on some account, and his Son had married her, or maintained her for criminal intercourse. It is evident from 2Cor 7:12, that the person who had suffered the wrong, as well as he who had done it, was still alive. Whether this was marriage or concubinage has been disputed by commentators, and it is not possible, perhaps, to determine.

It was told in all places, to their dishonour, and the reproach of Christians. And it was the more reproachful because it could not be denied. Note, The heinous sins of professed Christians are quickly noted and noised abroad. We should walk circumspectly, for many eyes are upon us, and many mouths will be opened against us if we fall into any scandalous practice. This was not a common instance of fornication, but such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles, that a man should have his father's wife--either marry her while his father was alive, or keep her as his concubine, either when he was dead or while he was alive. In either of these cases, his criminal conversation with her might be called fornication; but had his father been dead, and he, after his

decease, married to her, it had been incest still, but neither fornication nor adultery in the strictest sense. But to marry her, or keep her as a concubine, while his father was alive, though he had repudiated her, or she had deserted him, whether she were his own mother or not, was incestuous fornication: Scelus incredibile (as Cicero calls it), et prater unum in omni vitâ inauditum (Orat. pro Cluent.), when a woman had caused her daughter to be put away, and was married to her husband. Incredible wickedness! says the orator; such I never heard of in all my life besides. Not that there were no such instances of incestuous marriages among the heathens; but, whenever they happened, they gave a shock to every man of virtue and probity among them. They could not think of them without horror, nor mention them without dislike and detestation. The crime was known in a few instances, but chiefly of those who were princes and rulers; but it was nowhere regarded with approbation, but was always treated as abominable wickedness. Yet such a horrible wickedness was committed by one in the church of Corinth, and, as is probable, a leader of one of the factions among them, a principal man.

Note, The best churches are, in this state of imperfection, liable to very great corruptions. Is it any wonder when so horrible a practice was tolerated in an apostolical church, a church planted by the great apostle of the Gentiles?

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

1. It may be that the proud man either wholly overlooks or artfully disguises his faults, or endeavours to transform his blemishes into beauties. Those of the Corinthians that were admirers of the incestuous person's gifts could overlook or extenuate his horrid practices.

2. It may intimate to us that some of the opposite party were puffed up. They were proud of their own standing, and trampled upon him that fell. Note, It is a very wicked thing to glory over the miscarriages and sins of others. We should lay them to heart, and

mourn for them, not be puffed up with them. Probably this was one effect of the divisions among them. The opposite party made their advantage of this scandalous lapse, and were glad of the opportunity.

Note, It is a sad consequence of divisions among Christians that it makes them apt to rejoice in iniquity. The sins of others should be our sorrow. Nay, churches should mourn for the scandalous behaviour of particular members, and, if they be incorrigible, should remove them. He that had done this wicked deed should have been taken away from among them.

3 For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have
judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that
hath so done this deed,
4 in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered
together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus
Christ,
5 to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the
flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord
Jesus.
6 Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little
leaven leaveneth the whole lump?
7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump,
as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is
sacrificed for us:

This is the great doctrine of the gospel. The Jews, after they had killed the passover, kept the feast of unleavened bread. So must we; not for seven days only, but all our days. We should die with our Saviour to sin, be planted into the likeness of his death by mortifying sin, and into the likeness of his resurrection by rising again to newness of life, and that internal and external. We must have new hearts and new lives.

Note, The whole life of a Christian must be a feast of unleavened bread. His common conversation and his religious performances must be holy. He must purge out the old leaven, and keep the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. He must be without

guilt in his conduct towards God and man. And the more there is of sincerity in our own profession, the less shall we censure that of others. Note, On the whole, The sacrifice of our Redeemer is the strongest argument with a gracious heart for purity and sincerity. How sincere a regard did he show to our welfare, in dying for us! and how terrible a proof was his death of the detestable nature of sin, and God's displeasure against it! Heinous evil, that could not be expiated but with the blood of the Son of God! And shall a Christian love the murderer of his Lord? God forbid.

Note, 1. Christian churches should be pure and holy, and not bear such corrupt and scandalous members. They are to be unleavened, and should endure no such heterogeneous mixture to sour and corrupt them. Or,

2. To each particular member of the church. And so it implies that they should purge themselves from all impurity of heart and life, especially from this kind of wickedness, to which the Corinthians were addicted to a proverb. See the argument at the beginning. This old leaven was in a particular manner to be purged out, that they might become a new lump. Note, Christians should be careful to keep themselves clean, as well as purge polluted members out of their society. And they should especially avoid the sins to which they themselves were once most addicted, and the reigning vices of the places and the people where they live.

8 therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither
with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the
unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

They were also to purge themselves from malice and wickedness--all ill-will and mischievous subtlety. This is leaven that sours the mind to a great degree. It is not improbable that this was intended as a check to some who gloried in the scandalous behaviour of the offender, both out of pride and pique. Note, Christians should be careful to keep free from malice and mischief. Love is the very essence and life of the Christian religion. It is the fairest image of God, for God is love (1Jo 4:16), and therefore it is no wonder if it be the greatest beauty and ornament of a Christian. But malice is

murder in its principles: He that hates his brother is a murderer (1Jo 3:15), he bears the image and proclaims him the offspring of him who was a murderer from the beginning, Joh 8:44. How hateful should every thing be to a Christian that looks like malice and mischief.

9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:
10 yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with
the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must
ye needs go out of the world.
11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any
man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an
idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with
such a one, no, not to eat.
12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without?
do not ye judge them that are within?
13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away
from among yourselves that wicked person.

Note, Christians may and ought to testify more respect to loose worldlings than to loose Christians. This seems a paradox. Why should we shun the company of a profane or loose Christian, rather than that of a profane or loose heathen? But, as to members of the church, they are within, are professedly bound by the laws and rules of Christianity, and not only liable to the judgment of God, but to the censures of those who are set over them, and the fellow-members of the same body, when they transgress those rules. Every Christian is bound to judge them unfit for communion and familiar converse. They are to be punished, by having this mark of disgrace put upon them, that they may be shamed, and, if possible, reclaimed thereby: and the more because the sins of such much more dishonour God than the sins of the openly wicked and profane can do. The church therefore is obliged to clear herself from all confederacy with them, or connivance at them, and to bear testimony against their wicked practices. Note, Though the church has nothing to do with those without, it must endeavour to keep clear of the guilt and reproach of those within.

1 Corinthians-6

Going to Law before Unbelievers

1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law
before the unjust, and not before the saints?
2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if
the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the
smallest matters?
3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more
things that pertain to this life?
4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set
them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.
5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man
among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between
his brethren?
6 but brother goeth to law with brother, and that
before the unbelievers.

The fault he blames them for: it was going to law. Not but that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully. But,

1. Brother went to law with brother (1Co 6:6), one member of the church with another. The near relation could not preserve peace and good understanding. The bonds of fraternal love were broken through. And a brother offended, as Solomon says, is harder to be won than a strong city; their contentions are like the bars of a castle, Pr 18:19. Note, Christians should not contend with one another, for they are brethren. This, duly attended to, would prevent law-suits, and put an end to quarrels and litigations.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go
to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong?
Why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves to* be defrauded?

This tended much to the reproach of Christianity. It published at once their folly and unpeaceableness; whereas they pretended to be the children of wisdom, and the followers of the Lamb, the meek and lowly Jesus, the prince of peace. And therefore, says the apostle, "Dare any of you, having a controversy with another,

go to law, implead him, bring the matter to a hearing before the unjust?" Note, Christians should not dare to do any thing that tends to the reproach of their Christian name and profession.

Here is at least an intimation that they went to law for trivial matters, things of little value; for the apostle blames them that they did not suffer wrong rather than go to law (1Co 6:7), which must be understood of matters not very important. In matters of great damage to ourselves or families, we may use lawful means to right ourselves. We are not bound to sit down and suffer the injury tamely, without stirring for our own relief; but, in matters of small consequence, it is better to put up with the wrong. Christians should be of a forgiving temper. And it is more for their ease and honour to suffer small injuries and inconveniences than seem to be contentious.

Note, A Christian should rather put up with a little injury than tease himself, and provoke others, by a litigious contest. The peace of his own mind, and the calm of his neighbourhood, are more worth than victory in such a contest, or reclaiming his own right, especially when the quarrel must be decided by those who are enemies to religion. But the apostle tells them they were so far from bearing injuries that they actually did wrong, and defrauded, and that their brethren. Note, It is utterly a fault to wrong and defraud any; but it is an aggravation of this fault to defraud our Christian brethren. The ties of mutual love ought to be stronger between them than between others. And love worketh no ill to his neighbour, Ro 13:10. Those who love the brotherhood can never, under the influence of this principle, hurt or injure them.

The argument is, that greater evil would be done to the cause of Christ by the fact of Christians appearing before a heathen tribunal with their disputes, than could result to either party from the injury done by the other. And this is probably always the case; so that although the apostle refers here to heathen tribunals, the

same reasoning, on the principle, would apply to Christians carrying their causes into the courts at all.

Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do you not suffer yourself to be injured, rather than to dishonour the cause of religion by your litigations? They should do this,

(1.) because religion requires its friends to be willing to suffer wrong patiently, Prov 22:22, Mt 5:39,40, Rom 12:17,19, 1Thes 5:15.

(2.) Because great injury results to the cause of religion from such trials. The private wrong which an individual would suffer, in perhaps all cases, would be a less evil on the whole than the public injury which is done to the cause of piety by the litigations and strifes of Christian brethren before a civil court.

(3.) The differences among Christians could be adjusted among themselves, by a reference to their brethren. In ninety-nine cases of a hundred, the decision would be more likely to be just and satisfactory to all parties from an amicable reference, than from the decisions of a civil court. In the very few cases where it would be otherwise, it would be better for the individual to suffer, than for the cause of religion to suffer. Christians ought to love the cause of their Master more than their own individual interest. They ought to be more afraid that the cause of Jesus Christ would be injured than that they should be a few pounds poorer from the conduct of others, or than that they should individually suffer in their character from the injustice of others. To be defrauded? Receive injury; or suffer a loss of property. Grotius thinks that the word "take wrong" refers to personal insult; and the word "defrauded" refers to injury in property. Together, they are probably designed to refer to all kinds of injury and injustice. And the apostle means to say, that they had better submit to any kind of injustice than carry the cause against a Christian brother before a heathen tribunal. The doctrine here taught is, that Christians ought by no means to go to law with each other before a heathen

tribunal; that they ought to be willing to suffer any injury from a Christian brother rather than do it. And by implication the same thing is taught in regard to the duty of all Christians, that they ought to suffer any injury to their persons and property rather than dishonour religion by litigations before civil magistrates. It may be asked, then, whether lawsuits are never proper; or whether courts of justice are never to be resorted to by Christians to secure their rights? To this question we may reply, that the discussion of Paul relates only to Christians, when both parties are Christians, and that it is designed to prohibit such an appeal to courts by them. If ever lawful for Christians to depart from this rule, or for Christians to appear before a civil tribunal, it is conceived that it can be only in circumstances like the following:

(a.) Where two or more Christians may have a difference, and where they know not what is right, and what the law is in a case. In such instances there may be a reference to a civil court to determine it-- to have what is called an amicable suit, to ascertain from the proper authority what the law is, and what is justice in the case.

(b.) When there are causes of difference between Christians and the men of the world. As the men of the world do not acknowledge the propriety of submitting the matter to the church, it may be proper for a Christian to carry the matter before a civil tribunal, Evidently, there is no other way, in such cases, of settling a cause; and this mode may be resorted to, not with a spirit of revenge, but with a spirit of love and kindness. Courts are instituted for the settlement of the rights of citizens, and men by becoming Christians do not alienate their rights as citizens. Even these cases, however, might commonly be adjusted by a reference to impartial men, better than by the slow, and expensive, and tedious, and often irritating process of carrying a cause through the courts.

(c.) Where a Christian is injured in his person, character, or property, he has a right to seek redress. Courts are instituted for

the protection and defence of the innocent and the peaceable against the fraudulent, the wicked, and the violent. And a Christian owes it to his country, to his family, and to himself, that the man who has injured him should receive the proper punishment. The peace and welfare of the community demand it. If a man murders my wife or child, I owe it to the laws and to my Country, to justice and to God, to endeavour to have the law enforced. So if a man robs my property, or injures my character, I may owe it to others as well as to myself that the law in such a case should be executed, and the rights of others also be secured. But in all these cases a Christian should engage in such prosecutions, not with a desire of revenge, not with the love of litigation, but with the love of justice, and of God, and with a mild, tender, candid, and forgiving temper, with a real desire that the opponent may be benefited, and that all his rights also should be secured. Rom 13:1 and following.

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the
kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor
idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of
themselves with mankind,

Be not deceived. Those who cannot but know the fore-mentioned truth are but too apt not to attend to it. Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves that God is such a one as themselves, and that they may live in sin and yet die in Christ, may lead the life of the devil's children and yet go to heaven with the children of God. But this is all a gross cheat. Note, It is very much the concern of mankind that they do not cheat themselves in the matters of their souls. We cannot hope to sow to the flesh and yet reap everlasting life.

10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,
nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are
sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,
and by the Spirit of our God.

He puts them in mind what a change the gospel and grace of God had made in them: Such were some of you (1Co 6:11), such notorious sinners as he had been reckoning up. The Greek word

is tauta--such things were some of you, very monsters rather than men. Note, Some that are eminently good after their conversion have been as remarkably wicked before. Quantum mutatus ab illo!--How glorious a change does grace make! It changes the vilest of men into saints and the children of God. Such were some of you, but you are not what you were. You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. Note, The wickedness of men before conversion is no bar to their regeneration and reconciliation to God. The blood of Christ, and the washing of regeneration, can purge away all guilt and defilement. Here is a rhetorical change of the natural order: You are sanctified, you are justified. Sanctification is mentioned before justification: and yet the name of Christ, by which we are justified, is placed before the Spirit of God, by whom we are sanctified. Our justification is owing to the merit of Christ; our sanctification to the operation of the Spirit: but both go together. Note, None are cleansed from the guilt of sin, and reconciled to God through Christ, but those who are also sanctified by his Spirit. All who are made righteous in the sight of God are made holy by the grace of God.

ye are washed. Heb 10:22. Washing is an emblem of purifying. They had been made pure by the Spirit of God. They had been indeed baptized, and their baptism was an emblem of purifying; but the thing here particularly referred to is not baptism, but it is something that had been done by the Spirit of God, and must refer to his agency on the heart in cleansing them from these pollutions. Paul here uses three words--washed, sanctified, justified--to denote the various agencies of the Holy Spirit by which they had been recovered from sin. The first, that of washing, I understand of that work of the Spirit by which the process of purifying was commenced in the soul, and which was especially signified in baptism--the work of regeneration or conversion to God. By the agency of the Spirit, the defilement of these pollutions had been washed away or removed--as filth is removed by ablution. The agency of the Holy Ghost in regeneration is elsewhere represented by washing. Tit 3:5, "The washing of regeneration." Compare Heb 10:22.

Ye are sanctified. This denotes the progressive and advancing process of purifying which succeeds regeneration in the Christian. Regeneration is the commencement of it--its close is the perfect purity of the Christian in heaven. Jn 17:17. It does not mean that they were perfect--for the reasoning of the apostle shows that this was far from being the case with the Corinthians; but that the work was advancing, and that they were in fact under a process of sanctification.

ye are justified. Your sins are pardoned, and you are accepted as righteous, and will be treated as such on account of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 1:17"; Rom 3:25, Rom 3:26; Rom 4:3. The apostle does not say that this was last in the order of time, but simply says that this was done to them. Men are justified when they believe, and when the work of sanctification commences in the soul.

Glorify God in Your Body

12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the
power of any.
13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall
destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication,
but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

The Lord is for the body, thus: He is for its resurrection and glorification, according to what follows, 1Co 6:14, which is a second argument against this sin, the honour intended to be put on our bodies: God hath both raised up our Lord, and will raise us up by his power (1Co 6:14), by the power of him who shall change our vile body, and make it like to his glorious body by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, Php 3:21. It is an honour done to the body that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead: and it will be an honour to our bodies that they will be raised. Let us not abuse those bodies by sin, and make them vile, which, if they be kept pure, shall, notwithstanding their

present vileness, be made like to Christ's glorious body. Note, The hopes of a resurrection to glory should restrain Christians from dishonouring their bodies by fleshly lusts.

14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up
us by his own power.

15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ?
shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the
members of a harlot? God forbid.

Note, We must take care that we do not use what belongs to Christ as if it were our own, and much less to his dishonour.

16 What! know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one
body?
for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

Nothing can stand in greater opposition to the honourable relations and alliances of a Christian man than this sin. He is joined to the Lord in union with Christ, and made partaker by faith of his Spirit. One spirit lives and breathes and moves in the head and members. Christ and his faithful disciples are one, Joh 17:21,22. But he that is joined to a harlot is one body, for two shall be one flesh, by carnal conjunction, which was ordained of God only to be in a married state. Now shall one in so close a union with Christ as to be one spirit with him yet be so united to a harlot as to become one flesh with her? Were not this a vile attempt to make a union between Christ and harlots? And can a greater indignity he offered to him or ourselves? Can any thing be more inconsistent with our profession or relation? Note, The sin of fornication is a great injury in a Christian to his head and lord, and a great reproach and blot on his profession. It is no wonder therefore that the apostle should say, "Flee fornication (1Co 6:18), avoid it, keep out of the reach of temptations to it, of provoking objects. Direct the eyes and mind to other things and thoughts." Alia vitia pugnando, sola libido fugiendo vincitur--Other vices may be conquered in fight, this only by flight; so speak many of the fathers.

17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the
body;

but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

Note, We should not make our present vile bodies more vile by sinning against them.

19 What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

The fifth argument against this sin is that the bodies of Christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost which is in them, and which they have of God, 1Co 6:19. He that is joined to Christ is one spirit. He is yielded up to him, is consecrated thereby, and set apart for his use, and is hereupon possessed, and occupied, and inhabited, by his Holy Spirit. This is the proper notion of a temple--a place where God dwells, and sacred to his use, by his own claim and his creature's surrender. Such temples real Christians are of the Holy Ghost. Must he not therefore be God? But the inference is plain that hence we are not our own. We are yielded up to God, and possessed by and for God; nay, and this is virtue of a purchase made of us: You are bought with a price. In short, our bodies were made for God, they were purchased for him. If we are Christians indeed they are yielded to him, and he inhabits and occupies them by his Spirit: so that our bodies are not our own, but his. And shall we desecrate his temple, defile it, prostitute it, and offer it up to the use and service of a harlot? Horrid sacrilege! This is robbing God in the worst sense. Note, The temple of the Holy Ghost must be kept holy. Our bodies must be kept as his whose they are, and fit for his use and residence.

The apostle argues from the obligation we are under to glorify God both with our body and spirit, which are his, 1Co 6:20. He made both, he bought both, and therefore both belong to him and should be used and employed for him, and therefore should not be defiled, alienated from him, and prostituted by us. No, they must be kept as vessels fitted for our Master's use. We must look upon our whole selves as holy to the Lord, and must use our bodies as property which belongs to him and is sacred to his use and service. We are to honour him with our bodies and spirits, which are his; and therefore, surely, must abstain from fornication; and not only from the outward act, but from the adultery of the heart, as our Lord

calls it, Mt 5:28. Body and spirit are to be kept clean, that God may be honoured by both. But God is dishonoured when either is defiled by so beastly a sin. Therefore flee fornication, nay, and every sin. Use your bodies for the glory and service of their Lord and Maker. Note, We are not proprietors of ourselves, nor have power over ourselves, and therefore should not use ourselves according to our own pleasure, but according to his will, and for his glory, whose we are, and whom we should serve, Ac 27:23.

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians-7

Problems concerning Marriage

1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman.
2 Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.
3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.
4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.
5 Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.
6 But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment.
7 For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.
8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.
9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.
10 And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband:

In this paragraph the apostle gives them direction in a case which must be very frequent in that age of the world, especially among the Jewish converts; I mean whether they were to live with heathen relatives in a married state. Moses's law permitted divorce; and there was a famous instance in the Jewish state, when the people were obliged to put away their idolatrous wives, Ezr 10:3. This might move a scruple in many minds, whether converts to Christianity were not bound to put away or desert their mates, continuing infidels. Concerning this matter the apostle here gives direction. And,

In general, he tells them that marriage, by Christ's command, is for life; and therefore those who are married must not think of separation. The wife must not depart from the husband (1Co 7:10), nor the husband put away his wife, 1Co 7:11. This I command, says the apostle; yet not I, but the Lord. Not that he commanded any thing of his own head, or upon his own authority. Whatever he commanded was the Lord's command, dictated by his Spirit and enjoined by his authority. But his meaning is that the Lord himself, with his own mouth, had forbidden such separations, Mt 5:32,19:9,Mk 10:11,Lu 16:18. Note, Man and wife cannot separate at pleasure, nor dissolve, when they will, their matrimonial bonds and relation. They must not separate for any other cause than what Christ allows. And therefore the apostle advises that if any woman had been separated, either by a voluntary act of her own or by an act of her husband, she should continue unmarried, and seek reconciliation with her husband, that they might cohabit again. Note, Husbands and wives should not quarrel at all, or should be quickly reconciled. They are bound to each other for life. The divine law allows of no separation. They cannot throw off the burden, and therefore should set their shoulders to it, and endeavour to make it as light to each other as they can.

11 but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to
her husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a
wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with
him, let him not put her away.
13 And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and
if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.
14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife,
and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband:
else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.
15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a
sister is not under bondage in such *cases:* but God hath called us
to peace.

But, though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such a case a brother or sister is not in bondage (1Co 7:15),

16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy*
husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt
save *thy* wife?
17 But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath
called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all
churches.

He lays down this rule in general--as God hath distributed to every one. Note, Our states and circumstances in this world are distributions of divine Providence. This fixes the bounds of men's habitations, and orders their steps. God setteth up and pulleth down. And again, As the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. Whatever his circumstances or condition was when he was converted to Christianity, let him abide therein, and suit his conversation to it. The rules of Christianity reach every condition. And in every state a man may live so as to be a credit to it.

Note, It is the duty of every Christian to suit his behaviour to his condition and the rules of religion, to be content with his lot, and conduct himself in his rank and place as becomes a Christian. The apostle adds that this was a general rule, to be observed at all times and in all places; So ordain I in all churches.

Note, Our comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. The goodness of our outward condition does not discharge us from the duties of Christianity, nor the badness of it debar us from Christian privileges.

18 Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become
uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him
not be circumcised.
19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but
the keeping of the commandments of God.
20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.
21 Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou
mayest be made free, use *it* rather.
22 For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the
Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free,
is Christ's servant.
23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

The servants of Christ should be at the absolute command of no other master besides himself, should serve no man, any further than is consistent with their duty to him. No man can serve two masters.

24 Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with
God.

He sums up his advice: Let every man wherein he is called abide therein with God, 1Co 7:24. This is to be understood of the state wherein a man is converted to Christianity. No man should make his faith or religion an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and comfortably abide in the condition in which he is; and this he may well do, when he may abide therein with God.

25 Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the
Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained
mercy of the Lord to be faithful.
26 I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*,
that *it is* good for a man so to be.

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou
loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.
28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin
marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have
trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.
29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that
both they that have wives be as though they had none;

He enforces these advices with two reasons:--

1. The time is short, 1Co 7:29. We have but little time to continue in this world; but a short season for possessing and enjoying worldly things; kairos synestalmenos. It is contracted, reduced to a narrow compass. It will soon be gone. It is just ready to be wrapped up in eternity. Therefore do not set your hearts on worldly enjoyments. Do not be overwhelmed with worldly cares and troubles. Possess what you must shortly leave without suffering yourselves to be possessed by it. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign?

2. The fashion of this world passeth away (1Co 7:31), schema--the habit, figure, appearance, of the world, passeth away. It is daily changing countenance. It is in a continual flux. It is not so much a world as the appearance of one. All is show, nothing solid in it; and it is transient show too, and will quickly be gone. How proper and powerful an argument is this to enforce the former advice! How irrational is it to be affected with the images, the fading and transient images, of a dream! Surely man walketh in a vain show (Ps 39:6), in an image, amidst the faint and vanishing appearances of things. And should he be deeply affected, or grievously afflicted, with such a scene?

30 and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that
rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as
though they possessed not;

He takes this occasion to give general rules to all Christians to carry themselves with a holy indifferency towards the world, and every thing in it.

1. As to relations: Those that had wives must be as though they had none; that is, they must not set their hearts too much on the comforts of the relation; they must be as though they had none. They know not how soon they shall have none. This advice must be carried into every other relation. Those that have children should be as though they had none. Those that are their comfort now may prove their greatest cross. And soon may the flower of all comforts be cut down.

2. As to afflictions: Those that weep must be as though they wept not; that is, we must not be dejected too much with any of our afflictions, nor indulge ourselves in the sorrow of the world, but keep up a holy joy in God in the midst of all our troubles, so that even in sorrow the heart may be joyful, and the end of our grief may be gladness. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning. If we can but get to heaven at last, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; and the prospect of it now should make us moderate our sorrows and refrain our tears.

3. As to worldly enjoyments: Those that rejoice should be as though they rejoiced not; that is, they should not take too great a complacency in any of their comforts. They must be moderate in their mirth, and sit loose to the enjoyments they most value. Here is not their rest, nor are these things their portion; and therefore their hearts should not be set on them, nor should they place their solace or satisfaction in them.

4. As to worldly traffic and employment: Those that buy must be as though they possessed not. Those that prosper in trade, increase in wealth, and purchase estates, should hold these possessions as though they held them not. It is but setting their hearts on that which is not (Pr 23:5) to do otherwise. Buying and possessing should not too much engage our minds. They hinder many people altogether from minding the better part. Purchasing land and trying oxen kept the guests invited from the wedding-supper, Lu 14:18,19. And, when they do not altogether hinder men from minding their chief business, they do very much divert them from

a close pursuit. Those are most likely to run so as to obtain the prize who ease their minds of all foreign cares and cumbrances.

5. As to all worldly concerns: Those that use this world as not abusing it, 1Co 7:31. The world may be used, but must not be abused. It is abused when it is not used to those purposes for which it is given, to honour God and do good to men--when, instead of being oil to the wheels of our obedience, it is made fuel to lust--when, instead of being a servant, it is made our master, our idol, and has that room in our affections which should be reserved for God. And there is great danger of abusing it in all these respects, if our hearts are too much set upon it. We must keep the world as much as may be out of our hearts, that we may not abuse it when we have it in our hands.

31 and they that use this world, as not abusing *it:* for the
fashion of this world passeth away.
32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is
unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how
he may please the Lord:
33 but he that is married careth for the things that are of the
world, how he may please *his* wife.
34 There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The
unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she
may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married
careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her*
husband.

This is good, says he, for the present distress. Christians, at the first planting of their religion, were grievously persecuted. Their enemies were very bitter against them, and treated them very cruelly. They were continually liable to be tossed and hurried by persecution. This being the then state of things, he did not think it so advisable for Christians that were single to change conditions. The married state would bring more care and cumber along with it (1Co 7:33,34), and would therefore make persecution more terrible, and render them less able to bear it. Note, Christians, in regulating their conduct, should not barely consider what is lawful in itself, but what may be expedient for them.

"If thou art bound to a wife, do not seek to be loosed. It is thy duty to continue in the married relation, and do the duties of it." And though such, if they were called to suffer persecution, would find peculiar difficulties in it; yet, to avoid these difficulties, they must not cast off nor break through the bonds of duty. Duty must be done, and God trusted with events. But to neglect duty is the way to put ourselves out of the divine protection.

35 And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

Indeed to be careless is a fault; a wise concern about worldly interests is a duty; but to be careful, full of care, to have an anxious and perplexing care about them, is a sin. All that care which disquiets the mind, and distracts it in the worship of God, is evil; for God must be attended upon without distraction, 1Co 7:35. The whole mind should be engaged when God is worshipped. The work ceases while it diverts to any thing else, or is hurried and drawn hither and thither by foreign affairs and concerns. Those who are engaged in divine worship should attend to this very thing, should make it their whole business. But how is this possible when the mind is swallowed up of the cares of this life? Note, It is the wisdom of a Christian so to order his outward affairs, and choose such a condition in life, as to be without distracting cares, that he may attend upon the Lord with a mind at leisure and disengaged. This is the general maxim by which the apostle would have Christians govern themselves. In the application of it Christian prudence must direct. That condition of life is best for every man which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world. By this maxim the apostle solves the case put to him by the Corinthians, whether it were advisable to marry?

36 But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her age*, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry.

37 Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well.

38 So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he
that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.
39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth;
but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to
whom she will; only in the Lord.
40 But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I
think also that I have the Spirit of God.

1 Corinthians-8

Food Offered to Idols

Chapter 8

This chapter is very important, as it settles some principles in regard to the conduct of Christians; and shows how they should act in reference to things that are indifferent; or which in themselves can be considered as neither right nor wrong; and in reference to those things which may be considered in themselves as right and lawful, but whose indulgence might injure others. And from the chapter we learn: (1.) That Christians, though they are truly converted, yet may have many erroneous views and feelings in reference to many things, 1Cor 8:6. This was true of those converted from ancient heathenism, and it is true of those who are now converted from heathenism, and of all young converts. Former opinions, and prejudices, and even superstitions, abide long in the mind, and cast a long and withering influence over the regions of Christian piety. The morning dawn is at first very obscure. The change from night to daybreak is at first scarcely perceptible. And so it may be in conversion. The views which a heathen entertained from his childhood could not at once be removed. The influence of corrupt opinions and feelings, which a sinner has long indulged, may travel over in his conversion, and may long endanger his piety and destroy his peace. Corrupt and infidel thoughts, associations of pollution, cannot be destroyed at once; and we are not to expect from a child in the Christian life, the full vigour, and the elevated principle, and the strength to resist temptation, which we expect of the man matured in the service of the Lord Jesus. This should lead us to charity in regard to the imperfections and failings of young converts; to a willingness to

aid and counsel them; to carefulness not to lead them into sin; and it should lead us not to expect the same amount of piety, zeal, and purity in converts from degraded heathens, which we expect in Christian lands, and where converts have been trained up under all the advantages of Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes. (2.) Our opinions should be formed, and our treatment of others regulated, not by abstract knowledge, but by love, 1Cor 8:1. A man is usually much more likely to act right who is influenced by charity and love, than one who is guided by simple knowledge, or by self-confidence. One is humble, kind, tender towards the frailties of others, sensible himself of infirmity, and is disposed to do right; the other may be vain, harsh, censorious, unkind, and severe. Knowledge is useful; but for the practical purposes of life, in an erring and fallen world, love is more useful; and while the one often leads astray, the other seldom errs. Whatever knowledge we may have, we should make it a point from which we are never to depart, that our opinions of others, and our treatment of them, should be formed under the influence of love. (3.) We should not be self-confident of our wisdom, 1Cor 8:2. Religion produces humility. Mere knowledge may fill the heart with pride and vanity. True knowledge is not inconsistent with humility; but it must be joined with a heart that is right. The men that have been most eminent in knowledge have also been distinguished for humility; but the heart was right, and they saw the folly of depending on mere knowledge. (4.) There is but one God, 1Cor 8:4-6. This great truth lies at the foundation of all true religion; and yet is so simple that it may be known by all Christians, however humble, and is to be presumed to be known by all. But though simple, it is a great and glorious truth. To keep this before the minds of men, was one great purpose of all God's revelations; and to communicate it to men is now the grand object of all missionary enterprises. The world is full of idols and idolaters; but the knowledge of this simple truth would change the moral aspect of the entire globe. To spread this truth should be the great aim and purpose of all true Christians; and when this truth is spread, the idols of the heathen will fall to the dust. (5.) Christians acknowledge one and only one Lord, 1Cor 8:6. He rules over them. His laws bind them. He controls them. He has a right to them. He can dispose of them as

he pleases. They are not their own; but are bound to live entirely to him, and for the promotion of his cause. (6.) It becomes Christians to exercise continual care, lest their conduct, even in things which are in themselves lawful, should be the occasion of leading others into sin, 1Cor 8:9. Christians very often pursue a course of conduct which may not be in itself unlawful but which may lead others who have not their intelligence, or strength of principle, into error. One man may be safe where another man is in danger. One man may be able to resist temptations which would entirely overcome another. A course of life may, perhaps, be safe for a man of years and of mature judgment, which would be ruinous to a young man. And the grand principle here should be, not to do that, even though it may be lawful itself, which would, be the occasion of leading others into sin. (7.) We see here the importance and the power of example, 1Cor 8:10,11. Nothing is of more value than a correct Christian example. And this applies particularly to those who are in the more elevated ranks of life; who occupy stations of importance; who are at the head of families, colleges, and schools. The ignorant will be likely to follow the example of the learned; the poor of the rich; those in humble life will imitate the manners of the great. Even in things, therefore, which may not be in themselves unlawful in these circumstances, they should set an example of self-denial, of plainness, of abstinence, for the sake of those beneath them. They should so live that it would be safe and right for all to imitate their example, Christ, though he was rich, yet so lived that all may safely imitate him, though he was honoured of God, and exalted to the highest office as the Redeemer of the world, yet he lived so that all in every rank may follow him; though he had all power, and was worshipped by angels, yet so lived that he might teach the most humble and lowly how to live; and so lived that it is safe and proper for all to live as he did. So should every monarch, and prince, and rich man; every noble, and every learned man; every man of honour and office; every master of a family, and every man of age and wisdom, live that all others may learn of them how to live, and that they may safely walk in their footsteps. (8.) We have here a noble instance of the principles on which Paul was willing to act, 1Cor 8:13. He was willing to deny himself of any

gratification, if his conduct was likely to be the occasion of leading others into sin. Even from that which was in itself lawful he would abstain for ever, if by indulgence he would be the occasion of another's falling into transgression. But how rare is this virtue! How seldom is it practised! How few Christians and Christian ministers are there who deny themselves any gratification in things in themselves right, lest they should induce others to sin. And yet this is the grand principle of Christianity; and this should influence and guide all the professed friends and followers of Christ. This principle might be applied to many things in which many Christians now freely indulge; and, if applied, would produce great and important changes in society. 1st. Entertainments and feasts which, perhaps, you may be able to afford, (that is, afford in the supposition that what you have is yours, and not the Lord's,) may lead many of those who cannot afford it to imitate you, and to involve themselves in debt, in extravagance, in ruin. 2nd. You might possibly be safe at a festival, at a public dinner, or in a large party; but your example would encourage others where they would not be safe; and yet, how could you reply should they say that you were there, and that they were encouraged by you? 3rd. On the supposition that the use of wine and other fermented liquors may be in themselves lawful, and that you might be safe in using them, yet others may be led by your example to an improper use of them, or contract a taste for stimulating drinks that may end in their ruin. Would it be right for you to continue the use of wine in such circumstances? Would Paul have done it? Would he not have adopted the noble principle in this chapter, that he would not touch it while the world stands, if it led him to sin? 4th. You might be safe in a party of amusement, in the circle of the gay, and in scenes of merriment and mirth. I say you might be, though the supposition is scarcely possible that Christian piety is ever safe in such scenes, and though it is certain that Paul or the Saviour would not have been found there. But how will it be for the young, and for those of less strength of Christian virtue? Will they be safe there? Will they be able to guard against these allurements as you could? Will they not be led into the love of gaiety, vanity, and folly? And what would Paul have done in such cases? What would Jesus Christ have done? What should Christians now do? This single principle,

if fairly applied, would go far to change the aspect of the Christian world. If all Christians had Paul's delicate sensibilities, and Paul's strength of Christian virtue, and Paul's willingness to deny himself to benefit others, the aspect of the Christian world would soon change. How many practices, now freely indulged in, would be abandoned! And how soon would every Christian be seen to set such an example that all others could safely follow it!

1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that
we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity
edifieth.

We know, says the apostle, that we all have knowledge (1Co 8:1) as if he had said, "You who take such liberty are not the onl knowing persons; we who abstain know as much as you of th vanity of idols, and that they are nothing; but we know too that th liberty you take is very culpable, and that even lawful liberty mus be used with charity and not to the prejudice of weaker brethren. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth, 1Co 8:1.

2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he
knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Note, 1 The preference of charity to conceited knowledge. That is best which is fitted to do the greatest good. Knowledge, or at least a high conceit of it, is very apt to swell the mind, to fill it with wind, and so puff it up. This tends to no good to ourselves, but in many instances is much to the hurt of others. But true love, and tender regard to our brethren, will put us upon consulting their interest, and acting as may be for their edification. Observe, 2. That there is no evidence of ignorance more common than a conceit of knowledge: If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. He that knows most best understands his own ignorance, and the imperfection of human knowledge. He that imagines himself a knowing man, and is vain and conceited on this imagination, has reason to suspect that he knows nothing aright, nothing as he ought to know it. Note, It is one thing to know truth, and another to know it as we ought, so as duly to improve our knowledge. Much may be known when nothing is known to any good purpose, when neither

ourselves nor others are the better for our knowledge. And those who think they know any thing, and grow fain hereupon, are of all men most likely to make no good use of their knowledge; neither themselves nor others are likely to be benefited by it. But, adds the apostle, if any man love God, the same is known of God. If any man love God, and is thereby influenced to love his neighbour, the same is known of God; that is, as some understand it, is made by him to know, is taught of God. Note, Those that love God are most likely to be taught of God, and be made by him to know as they ought. Some understand it thus: He shall be approved of God; he will accept him and have pleasure in him. Note, The charitable person is most likely to have God's favour. Those who love God, and for his sake love their brethren and seek their welfare, are likely to be beloved of God; and how much better is it to be approved of God than to have a vain opinion of ourselves!

3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one.

5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)

6 but to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.

There are that are called gods, in heaven and earth, gods many, and lords many; but they are falsely thus called. The heathens had many such, some in heaven and some on earth, celestial deities, that were of highest rank and repute among them, and terrestrial ones, men made into gods, that were to mediate for men with the former, and were deputed by them to preside over earthly affairs. These are in scripture commonly called Baalim.

1.They had gods of higher and lower degree; nay, many in each order: gods many, and lords many; but all titular deities and

mediators: so called, but not such in truth. All their divinity and mediation were imagery. For, 1. To us there is but one God, says the apostle, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in or for him. We Christians are better informed; we well know there is but one God, the fountain of being, the author of all things, maker, preserver, and governor of the whole world, of whom and for whom are all things. Not one God to govern one part of mankind, or one rank and order of men, and another to govern another. One God made all, and therefore has power over all. All things are of him, and we, and all things else, are for him. Called the Father here, not in contradistinction to the other persons of the sacred Trinity, and to exclude them from the Godhead, but in contradistinction to all creatures that were made by God, and whose formation is attributed to each of these three in other places of scripture, and not appropriated to the Father alone.

2.There is to us but one Lord, one Mediator between God and men, even Jesus Christ. Not many mediators, as the heathen imagined, but one only, by whom all things were created and do consist, and to whom all our hope and happiness are owing--the man Christ Jesus; but a man in personal union with the divine Word, or God the Son. This very man hath God made both Lord and Christ, Ac 2:36. Jesus Christ, in his human nature and mediatorial state, has a delegated power, a name given him, though above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord. And thus he is the only Lord, the only Mediator, that Christians acknowledge, the only person who comes between God and sinners, administers the world's affairs under God, and mediates for men with God. All the lords of this sort among heathens are merely imaginary ones. Note, It is the great privilege of us Christians that we know the true God, and true Mediator between God and man: the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, Joh 17:3.

7 Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

He informs them that every Christian man, at that time, was not so fully convinced and persuaded that an idol was nothing. Howbeit, there is not in every man this knowledge; for some, with conscience of the idol, unto this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; with conscience of the idol; that is, some confused veneration for it. Though they were converts to Christianity, and professed the true religion, they were not perfectly cured of the old leaven, but retained an unaccountable respect for the idols they had worshipped before.

Note, Weak Christians may be ignorant, or have but a confused knowledge of the greatest and plainest truths. Such were those of the one God and one Mediator. And yet some of those who were turned form heathenism to Christianity among the Corinthians seem to have retained a veneration for their idols, utterly irreconcilable with those great principles; so that when an opportunity offered to eat things offered to idols they did not abstain, to testify their abhorrence of idolatry, nor eat with a professed contempt of the idol, by declaring they looked upon it to be nothing; and so their conscience, being weak, was defiled; that is, they contracted guilt; they ate out of respect to the idol, with an imagination that it had something divine in it, and so committed idolatry: whereas the design of the gospel was to turn men from dumb idols to the living God. They were weak in their understanding, not thoroughly apprized of the vanity of idols; and, while they ate what was sacrificed to them out of veneration for them, contracted the guilt of idolatry, and so greatly polluted themselves. This seems to be the sense of the place; though some understand it of weak Christians defiling themselves by eating what was offered to an idol with an apprehension that thereby it became unclean, and made those so in a moral sense who should eat it, every one not having a knowledge that the idol was nothing, and therefore that it could not render what was offered to it in this sense unclean. Note, We should be careful to do nothing that may occasion weak Christians to defile their consciences.

8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat,
are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours
become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.
10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in
the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is
weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered
to idols;

It seems as if some of the Corinthians had imbibed an opinion that even this might be done, because they knew an idol was nothing in the world, 1Co 8:4. The apostle seems to answer more directly to the case (1Co 10:1-22), and here to argue, upon supposition of their being right in this thought, against their abuse of their liberty to the prejudice of others; but he plainly condemns such liberty in 1Co 10:1-22. It might occasion their falling into idolatrous actions, perhaps their falling off from Christianity and revolting again to heathenism. "If a man see thee, who hast knowledge, shall not one who is less thoroughly informed in this matter, and thinks an idol something, be emboldened to eat what was offered to the idol, not as common food, but sacrifice, and thereby be guilty of idolatry?" Such an occasion of falling they should be careful of laying before their weak brethren, whatever liberty or power they themselves had. The apostle backs this caution with two considerations:-- 1 The danger that might accrue to weak brethren, even those weak brethren for whom Christ died. We must deny ourselves even what is lawful rather than occasion their stumbling, and endanger their souls (1Co 8:11): Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? Note, Those whom Christ hath redeemed with his most precious blood should be very precious and dear to us. If he had such compassion as to die for them, that they might not perish, we should have so much compassion for them as to deny ourselves, for their sakes, in various instances, and not use our liberty to their hurt, to occasion their stumbling, or hazard their ruin. That man has very little of the spirit of the Redeemer who had rather his brother should perish than himself be abridged, in any respect, of his liberty. He who hath the Spirit of Christ in him will love those whom Christ loved, so as to die for them, and will study to promote their spiritual and eternal warfare, and shun every thing that would unnecessarily grieve them, and

much more every thing that would be likely to occasion their stumbling, or falling into sin.

2 The hurt done to them Christ takes as done to himself: When you sin so against the weak brethren and wound their consciences, you sin against Christ, 1Co 8:12. Note, Injuries done to Christians are injuries to Christ, especially to babes in Christ, to weak Christians; and most of all, involving them in guilt: wounding their consciences is wounding him. He has a particular care of the lambs of the flock: He gathers them in his arm and carries them in his bosom, Isa 60:11. Strong Christians should be very careful to avoid what will offend weak ones, or lay a stumbling-block in their way. Shall we be void of compassion for those to whom Christ has shown so much? Shall we sin against Christ who suffered for us? Shall we set ourselves to defeat his gracious designs, and help to ruin those whom he died to save?

These were usually kept in the temple, where the sacrifice was offered (1Co 8:10), and, if any thing was left when the feast ended, it was usual to carry away a portion to their friends; what remained, after all, belonged to the priests, who sometimes sold it in the markets. See 1Co 10:25.

11 and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother
perish, for whom Christ died?
12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their
weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.
13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no
flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to
offend.

Note, We should be very tender of doing any thing that may be an occasion of stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. Liberty is valuable, but the weakness of a brother should induce, and sometimes bind, us to waive it. We must not rigorously claim nor use our own rights, to the hurt and ruin of a brother's soul, and so to the in jury of our Redeemer, who died for him. When it is certainly foreseen that my doing what I may forbear or refrain will occasion a fellow-christian to do what he ought to forbear/refrain, I

shall offend, scandalize, or lay a stumbling-block in his way, which to do is a sin, however lawful the thing itself be which is done. And, if we must be so careful not to occasion other men's sins, how careful should we be to avoid sin ourselves! If we must not endanger other men's souls, how much should we be concerned not to destroy our own!

We see here the importance and the power of example, 1Cor 8:10,11. Nothing is of more value than a correct Christian example. And this applies particularly to those who are in the more elevated ranks of life; who occupy stations of importance; who are at the head of families, colleges, and schools. The ignorant will be likely to follow the example of the learned; the poor of the rich; those in humble life will imitate the manners of the great. Even in things, therefore, which may not be in themselves unlawful in these circumstances, they should set an example of self-denial, of plainness, of abstinence, for the sake of those beneath them. They should so live that it would be safe and right for all to imitate their example, Christ, though he was rich, yet so lived that all may safely imitate him, though he was honoured of God, and exalted to the highest office as the Redeemer of the world, yet he lived so that all in every rank may follow him; though he had all power, and was worshipped by angels, yet so lived that he might teach the most humble and lowly how to live; and so lived that it is safe and proper for all to live as he did. So should every monarch, and prince, and rich man; every noble, and every learned man; every man of honour and office; every master of a family, and every man of age and wisdom, live that all others may learn of them how to live, and that they may safely walk in their footsteps.

1 Corinthians-9

The Rights of Those Who Preach the Gospel

1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ
our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?
2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you:
for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.

He justly upbraids the Corinthians with their disrespect: "Doubtless, if I am not an apostle to others, I am so to you, 1Co 9:2. I have laboured so long, and with so much success, among you, that you, above all others, should own and honour my character, and not call it in question." Note, It is no new thing for faithful ministers to meet with the worst treatment where they might expect the best. This church at Corinth had as much reason to believe, and as little reason to question, his apostolical mission, as any; they had as much reason, perhaps more than any church, to pay him respect.

3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this:
4 Have we not power to eat and to drink?
5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as
other apostles, and *as* the brethren of the Lord, and
Cephas?
6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?
7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who
planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or
who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?
8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?
9 For it is written in the law of Moses,
Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of
the ox that treadeth out the corn.
Doth God take care for oxen?
10 or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt,
this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and
that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.
11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing
if we shall reap your carnal things?
12 If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather?
Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all
things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.
13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things
live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar
are partakers with the altar?
14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the
gospel should live of the gospel.

15 But I have used none of these things: neither have I written
these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were*
better for me
to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.
16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of:
for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach
not the gospel!
17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against
my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me.
18 What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the
gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I
abuse not my power in the gospel.
19 For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself
servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

Though I be free from all men. He was free-born, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor depended upon any for his subsistence; yet he made himself a servant to all, that he might gain the more. He behaved as a servant; he laboured for their good as a servant; he was careful to please, as a servant to his master; he acted in many cases as if he had no privileges; and this that he might gain the more, or make the more converts to Christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the
Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I
might gain them that are under the law;

As without law. Not practicing the peculiar rites and ceremonies enjoined in the law of Moses. Not insisting on them, or urging them; but showing that the obligation to those rites had been done away; and that they were not binding, though when among the Jews I might still continue to observe them. Acts 15:1 and following: and the argument of Paul in Gall 2:11-18. I neglected the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic law, when I was with those who had not heard of the law of Moses, or those who did not observe them, because I knew that the binding obligation of these ceremonial precepts had ceased. I did not, therefore, press them upon the Gentiles, nor did I superstitiously and publicly practise them. In all this, Paul has reference only to those things which he regarded as in themselves

indifferent, and not a matter of conscience; and his purpose was not needlessly to excite the prejudice or the opposition of the world. Nothing is ever gained by provoking opposition for the mere sake of opposition. Nothing tends more to hinder the gospel than that. In all things of conscience and truth a man should be firm, and should lose his life rather than abandon either; in all things of indifference, of mere custom, of prejudice, he should yield, and accommodate himself to the modes of thinking among men, and adapt himself to their views, feelings, and habits of life, that he may win them to Christ. Being not without law to God. Not regarding myself as being absolutely without law, or as being freed from obligation to obey God. Even in all this, I endeavoured so to live as that it might be seen that I felt myself bound by law to God. I was not a despiser, and contemner and neglecter of law, as such, but only regarded myself as not bound by the peculiar ceremonial law of Moses. This is an instance of Paul's conscientiousness. He would not leave room to have it supposed for a moment that he disregarded all law. He was bound to God by law; and in the conduct to which he was referring, he felt that he was obeying him. He was bound by higher law than those ceremonial observances which were now to be done away. This passage would destroy all the refuges of the Antinomians. Whatever privileges the gospel has introduced, it has not set us free from the restraints and obligations of law. That is binding still; and no man is at liberty to disregard the moral law of God. Christ came to magnify, strengthen, and to honour the law, not to destroy it. But under the law to Christ. Bound by the law enjoined by Christ; under the law of affectionate gratitude and duty to him. I obeyed his commands; followed his instructions; sought his honour; yielded to his will. In this he would violate none of the rules of the moral law. And he here intimates, that his grand object was to yield obedience to the law of the Saviour, and that this was the governing purpose of his life. And this would guide a man right. In doing this, he would never violate any of the precepts of the moral law, for Christ obeyed them, and enjoined their observance. He would never feel that he was without law to God, for Christ obeyed God, and enjoined it on all. He would never feel that religion came to set him free from law, or to authorize licentiousness; for its grand purpose and aim is to make

men holy, and to bind them everywhere to the observance of the pure law of the Redeemer.

To the weak. Rom 15:1. To those weak in faith; scrupulous in regard to certain observances; whose consciences were tender and unenlightened, and who would be offended even by things which might be in themselves lawful. He did not lacerate their feelings, and run counter to their prejudices, for the mere sake of doing it. Became I as weak. I did not shock them. I complied with their customs. I conformed to them in my dress, habits, manner of life, and even in the services of religion. I abstained from food which they deemed it their duty to abstain from; and where, if I had partaken of it, I should have offended them. Paul did not do this to gratify himself, or them, but to do them good. And Paul's example should teach us not to make it the main business of life to gratify ourselves: and it should teach us not to lacerate the feelings of others; not to excite their prejudices needlessly; not to offend them where it will do no good. If truth offends men, we cannot help it.

But in matters of ceremony, and dress, and habits, and customs, and forms, we should be willing to conform to them, as far as can be done, and for the sole purpose of saving their souls. I am made all things to all men. I become all things; that is, I accommodate myself to them in all things, so far as can be done with a good conscience. That I might by all means. παντως. That I might use every possible endeavour that some at least might be saved. It is implied here that the opposition to the gospel was everywhere great; that men were reluctant to embrace it; that the great mass were going to ruin, and that Paul was willing to make the highest possible exertions, to deny himself, and practise every innocent art, that he might save a few at least out of the innumerable multitudes that were going to death and hell. It follows from this,

(1.) that men are in danger of ruin.

(2.) We should make an effort to save men. We should deny ourselves, and give ourselves to toil and privation, that we may save some at least from ruin.

21 to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

He specifies some particulars wherein he made himself a servant to all. He accommodated himself to all sorts of people.

1. To the Jews, and those under the law, he became a Jew, and as under the law, to gain them. Though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet in many instances he submitted to it, that he might work upon the Jews, remove their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ.

2. To those that are without the law as without law that is, to the Gentiles, whether converted to the Christian faith or not. In innocent things he could comply with people's usages or humours for their advantage. He would reason with the philosophers in their own way. And, as to converted Gentiles, he behaved among them as one that was not under the bondage of the Jewish laws, as he had asserted and maintained concerning them, though he did not act as a lawless person, but as one who was bound by the laws of Christ. He would transgress no laws of Christ to please or humour any man; but he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and so, one would have thought, might have excused himself from complying with the Jews; and yet, to do them good, and win them over to Christ, he did, in innocent things, neglect the power he had to do otherwise, and conformed to some of their usages and laws. And though he might, by virtue of that character, have challenged authority over the Gentiles, yet he accommodated himself, as much as he innocently might, to their prejudices and ways of thinking. Doing good was the study and business of his life; and, so that he might reach this end, he did not stand on privileges and punctilios.

3. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak, 1Co 9:22. He was willing to make the best of them. He did not despise nor judge them, but became as one of them, forbore to use his liberty for their sake, and was careful to lay no stumbling-block in their way. Where any, through the weakness of their understanding, or the strength of their prejudices, were likely to fall into sin, or fall off from the gospel into heathen idolatry, through his use of his liberty, he refrained himself. He denied himself for their sakes, that he might insinuate into their affections, and gain their souls. In short, he became all things to all men, that he might by all means (all lawful means) gain some. He would not sin against God to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did so for the good of others.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak:
I am made all things to all *men,* that I might by all means
save some.
23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker
thereof with *you.*
24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but
one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

And every man that striveth for the mastery. οαγωνιζομενος. That agonizes; that is, that is engaged in the exercise of wrestling, boxing, or pitching the bar or quoit. Lk 13:24. The sense is, every one who endeavours to obtain a victory in these athletic exercises. Is temperate in all things. The word which is rendered "is temperate," (εγκρατευεται,) denotes abstinence from all that would excite, stimulate, and ultimately enfeeble; from wine, from exciting and luxurious living, and from licentious indulgences. It means that they did all they could to make the body vigorous, active, and supple. They pursued a course of entire temperate living. Comp. Acts 24:25, 1Cor 7:9, Gall 5:23, 2Pet 1:6. It relates not only to indulgences unlawful in themselves, but to abstinence from many things that were regarded as lawful, but which were believed to render the body weak and effeminate. The phrase, "in all things," means that this course of temperance or abstinence was not confined to one thing, or to one class of things, but to every kind of food and drink, and every indulgence that had a

tendency to render the body weak and effeminate. The preparations which those who proposed to contend in these games made is well known, and is often referred to by the classic writers. Epictetus, as quoted by Grotius, (in loco,) thus speaks of these preparations. "Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? consider the requisite preparations and the consequence. You must observe a strict regimen; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in heat and in cold; you must drink nothing cool, (ψυχρον;) must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a pugilist, as you would under a physician, and afterwards enter the lists." (Epiet., oh. 35.) Horace has described the preparations necessary in the same way.

Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam Multa tulit fecitque puer; sudavit, et alsit, Abstinuit Venere et Baccho.--De ARTE Poet. 412 A youth who hopes the Olympic prize to gain, All arts must try, and every toil sustain; The extremes of heat and cold must often prove, And shun the weakening joys of wine and love.--Francis

To obtain a corruptible crown. A garland, diadem, or civic wreath, that must soon fade away. The garland bestowed on the victor was made of olive, pine, apple, laurel, or parsley. That would soon lose its beauty and fade; of course, it could be of little value. Yet we see how eagerly they sought it; how much self-denial those who entered the lists would practise to obtain it; how long they would deny themselves of the common pleasures of life, that they might be successful. So much temperance would heathens practise to obtain a fading wreath of laurel, pine, or parsley! Learn hence,

(1.) the duty of denying ourselves to obtain a far more valuable reward, the incorruptible crown of heaven.

(2.) The duty of all Christians, who strive for that crown, to be temperate in all things. If the heathens practised temperance to

obtain a fading laurel, should not we to obtain one that never fades?

(3.) How much their conduct puts to shame the conduct of many professing Christians and Christian ministers. They set such a value on a civic wreath of pine or laurel, that they were willing to deny themselves, and practise the most rigid abstinence. They knew that indulgence in WINE and in luxurious living unfitted them for the struggle and for victory; they knew that it enfeebled their powers, and weakened their frame; and, like men intent on an object dear to them, they abstained wholly from these things, and embraced the principles of total abstinence. Yet how many professed Christians, and Christian ministers, though striving for the crown that fadeth not away, indulge in wine, and in the filthy, offensive, and disgusting use of tobacco; and in luxurious living, and in habits of indolence and sloth! How many there are that WILL not give up these habits, though they know that they are enfeebling, injurious, offensive, and destructive to religious comfort and usefulness. Can a man be truly in earnest in his professed religion; can he be a sincere Christian, who is not willing to abandon anything and everything that will tend to impair the rigour of his mind, and weaken his body, and make him a stumbling-block to others?

(4.) The value of temperance is here presented in a very striking and impressive view. When even the heathens wished to accomplish anything that demanded skill, strength, power, rigour of body, they saw the necessity of being temperate, and they were so. And this proves what all experiment has proved, that if men wish to accomplish much, they must be temperate. It proves that men can do more without intoxicating drink than they can with it. The example of these Grecian Athletae--their wrestlers, boxers, and racers--is against all the farmers, and mechanics, and seamen, and day-labourers, and gentlemen, and clergymen, and lawyers, who plead that stimulating drink is necessary to enable them to bear cold and heat, and toil and exposure. A little experience from men like the Grecian wrestlers, who had something that they wished to do, is much better than a great deal of philosophy and

sophistical reasoning from men who wish to drink, and to find some argument for drinking that shall be a salvo to their consciences. Perhaps the world has furnished no stronger argument in favour of total abstinence than the example of the Grecian Athletae. It is certain that their example, the example of men who wished to accomplish much by bodily rigour and health, is an effectual and irrefragable argument against all those who plead that stimulating drinks are desirable or necessary in order to increase the rigour of the bodily frame. But we. We Christians. An incorruptible. An incorruptible, an unfading crown. The blessings of heaven that shall be bestowed on the righteous are often represented under the image of a crown or diadem; a crown that is unfading and eternal, 2Ti 4:8; Jas 1:12, 1Pet 5:4, Rev 2:10, 3:11, 4:4. The doctrine here taught is, the necessity of making an effort to secure eternal life. The apostle never thought of entering heaven by indolence, or by inactivity. He urged, by every possible argument, the necessity of making an exertion to secure the rewards of the just. His reasons for this effort are many. Let a few be pondered.

(1.) The work of salvation is difficult. The thousand obstacles arising, the love of sin, and the opposition of Satan and of the world, are in the

(2.) The danger of losing the crown of glory is great. Every moment exposes it to hazard, for at any moment we may die.

(3.) The danger is not only great, but it is dreadful. If anything should arouse man, it should be the apprehension of eternal damnation and everlasting wrath.

(4.) Men in this life, in the games of Greece, in the career of ambition, in the pursuit of pleasure and wealth, make immense efforts to obtain the fading and perishing object of their desires. Why should not a man be willing to make as great efforts at least to secure eternal glory?

(5.) The value of the interest at stake. Eternal happiness is before those who will embrace the offers of life. If a man should be influenced by anything to make an effort, should it not be by the prospect of eternal glory? What should influence him if this should not?

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate
in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown;
but we an incorruptible.

He directs them in their course, by setting more fully to view his own example, still carrying on the allusion.

1. Those that ran in their games were kept to a set diet: "Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things, 1Co 9:25. The fighters and wrestlers in your exercises are kept to strict diet and discipline; nay, they keep themselves to it. They do not indulge themselves, but restrain themselves from the food they eat and so from the liberties they use on other occasions. And should not Christians much more abridge themselves of their liberty, for so glorious an end as winning the race, and obtaining the prize set before them? They used a very spare diet, and course food, and denied themselves much, to prepare for their race and combat; so do I; so should you, after my example. It is hard if, for the heavenly crown, you cannot abstain from heathen sacrifices."

2. They were not only temperate, but inured themselves to hardships. Those who fought with one another in these exercises prepared themselves by beating the air, as the apostle calls it, or by throwing out their arms, and thereby inuring themselves, beforehand, to deal about their blows in close combat, or brandish them by way of flourish. There is no room for any such exercise in the Christian warfare. Christians are ever in close combat. There enemies make fierce and hearty opposition, and are ever at hand; and for this reason they must lay about them in earnest, and never drop the contest, nor flag and faint in it. They must fight, not as those that beat the air, but must strive against their enemies with all their might. One enemy the apostle here mentions, namely, the body; this must be kept under, beaten black and blue,

as the combatants were in these Grecian games, and thereby brought into subjection. By the body we are to understand fleshly appetites and inclinations. These the apostle set himself to curb and conquer, and in this the Corinthians were bound to imitate him. Note, Those who would aright pursue the interests of their souls must beat down their bodies, and keep them under. They must combat hard with fleshly lusts, and not indulge a wanton appetite, and long for heathenish sacrifices, nor eat them, to please their flesh, at the hazard of their brethren's souls. The body must be made to serve the mind, not suffered to lord over it.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

26. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air /KJVPCE/

The racers in these games run at uncertainty. All run, but one receives the prize, 1Co 9:24. Every racer, therefore, is at a great uncertainty whether he shall win it or no. But the Christian racer is at no such uncertainty. Every one may run here so as to obtain; but then he must run within the lines, he must keep to the path of duty prescribed, which, some think, is the meaning of running not as uncertainly, 1Co 9:26. He who keeps within the limits prescribed, and keeps on in his race, will never miss his crown, though others may get theirs before him. And would the Grecian racers keep within their bounds, and exert themselves to the very last, when one only could win, and all must be uncertain which that one would be? And shall not Christians be much more exact and vigorous when all are sure of a crown when they come to the end of their race?

27 but I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

He sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly inclinations, and pampering the body and its lusts and appetites: I keep my body under, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away (1Co 9:27), rejected, disapproved, adokimos, one to whom the brabeutes--the

judge or umpire of the race, will not decree the crown. The allusion to the games runs through the whole sentence.

Note, A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may show others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself, who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; and how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.

1 Corinthians-10

Warning against Idolatry

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant,
how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed
through the sea;
2 and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;
3 and did all eat the same spiritual meat;
4 and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of
that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was
Christ.

(1.) They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea (1Co 10:2), or into Moses, that is, brought under obligation to Moses's law and covenant, as we are by baptism under the Christian law and covenant. It was to them a typical baptism.

(2.) They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink, that we do. The manna on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live forever. Their drink was a stream fetched from a rock which followed them in all their journeyings in the wilderness; and this rock was Christ, that is, in type and figure.

He is the rock on which the Christian church is built; and of the streams that issue from him do all believers drink, and are refreshed. Now all the Jews did eat of this meat, and drink of this rock, called here a spiritual rock, because it typified spiritual things. These were great privileges. One would think that this should have saved them; that all who ate of that spiritual meat, and drank of that spiritual drink, should have been holy and acceptable to God. Yet was it otherwise: With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness, 1Co 10:5. Note, Men may enjoy many and great spiritual privileges in this world, and yet come short of eternal life. Many of those who were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea, that is, had their faith of his divine commission confirmed by these miracles, were yet overthrown in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land. Let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness, nor prevent judgments here on earth, except the root of the matter be in us.

5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they
were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should
not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

1. We should shun inordinate desires after carnal objects: Not lust after evil things, as they lusted, 1Co 10:6. God fed them with manna, but they must have flesh, Nu 11:4. They had food for their supply, but, not content with this, they asked meat for their lusts, Ps 16:14. Carnal desires get head by indulgence, and therefore should be observed and checked in their first rise: if once they prevail, and bear sway in us, we know not whither they will carry us. This caution stands first, because carnal appetites indulged are the root and source of much sin.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written,
The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

2. He warns against idolatry (1Co 10:7): Neither be you idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. The sin of the golden calf is referred to, Ex 32:6. They first sacrificed to their idol, then feasted on the sacrifices, and then danced before it. The apostle is speaking to the

case of the Corinthians, who were tempted to feast on the heathen sacrifices, things offered to idols, though they do not seem to have been under any temptation to offer sacrifice themselves. Even eating and drinking of the sacrifices before the idol, and as things sacrificed, was idolatry, which, by the example of the Israelites, they should be warned to avoid.

And rose up to play. παιζειν. The Hebrew word used in Ex 32:6, (,) means to laugh, to sport, to jest, to mock, to insult, (Gen 21:9;) and then to engage in dances accompanied with music, in honour of an idol. This was often practised, as the worship of idols was celebrated with songs and dances. This is particularly affirmed of this instance of idol worship, (Ex 32:19;) and this was common among ancient idolaters; and this mode of worship was even adopted by David before the ark of the Lord, 2Sam 6:6, 1Chr 13:8, 15:29. All that the word "to play" here necessarily implies is, that of choral songs and dances, accompanied with revelry in honour of the idol. It was however the fact, that such worship was usually accompanied with much licentiousness; but that is not necessarily implied in the use of the word. Most of the oriental dances were grossly indecent and licentious; and the word here may be designed to include such indelicacy and licentiousness.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

He cautions against fornication, a sin to which the inhabitants of Corinth were in a peculiar manner addicted. They had a temple among them dedicated to Venus (that is, to lust), with above a thousand priestesses belonging to it, all common prostitutes. How needful was a caution against fornication to those who lived in so corrupt a city, and had been used to such dissolute manners, especially when they were under temptations to idolatry too! and spiritual whoredom did in many cases lead to bodily prostitution. Most of the gods whom the heathens served were represented as patterns of lewdness; and much lewdness was committed in the very worship of many of them. Many of the Jewish writers, and many Christians after them, think that such worship was paid to Baal-Peor; and that fornication was committed with the daughters of

Moab in the worship of that idol. They were enticed by these women both to spiritual and corporal whoredom; first to feast on the sacrifice, if not to do more beastly acts, in honour of the idol, and then to defile themselves with strange flesh (Nu 25:1-18), which brought on a plague, that in one day slew twenty-three thousand, besides those who fell by the hand of public justice. Note, Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, in whatever external relation they may stand to him, and whatever outward privileges he may bestow upon them. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues.

Three and twenty thousand. The Hebrew text in Nu 25:9, is twenty-four thousand. In order to reconcile these statements, it may be observed, that perhaps twenty-three thousand fell directly by the plague, and one thousand were slain by Phinehas and his companions, (Grotius;) or it may be that the number was between twenty-three and twenty-four thousand, and it might be expressed in round numbers by either. --Macknight. At all events, Paul has not exceeded the truth. There were at least twenty-three thousand that fell, though there might have been more. The probable supposition is, that the three and twenty thousand fell immediately by the hand of God in the plague, and the other thousand by the judges; and as Paul's design was particularly to mention the proofs of the immediate Divine displeasure, he refers only to those who fell by that, in illustration of his subject. There was a particular reason for this caution in respect to licentiousness.

(1.) It was common among all idolaters; and Paul, in cautioning them against idolatry, would naturally warn them of this danger.

(2.) It was common at Corinth. It was the prevalent vice there. To Corinthianize was a term synonymous among the ancients with licentiousness.

(3.) So common was this at Corinth, that, as we have seen, (see the Introduction,) not less than a thousand prostitutes were supported in a single temple there; and the city was visited by vast multitudes of

foreigners, among other reasons on account of its facilities for this sin. Christians, therefore, were in a peculiar manner exposed to it; and hence the anxiety of the apostle to warn them against it.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted,
and were destroyed of serpents.

4. He warns us against tempting Christ (as some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents, 1Co 10:9), or provoking him to jealousy, 1Co 10:22. He was with the church in the wilderness; he was the angel of the covenant, who went before them. But he was greatly grieved and provoked by them in many ways: They spoke against him and Moses, Wherefore have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for which reason God sent fiery serpents among them (Nu 21:5,6), by which many of them were stung mortally. And it is but just to fear that such as tempt Christ under the present dispensation will be left by him in the power of the old serpent.

In what way the Corinthians were in danger of tempting Christ is not known, and can only be conjectured. It may be that the apostle cautions them against exposing themselves to temptation in the idol temples--placing themselves, as it were, under the unhappy influence of idolatry, and thus needlessly trying, the strength of their religion, and making an experiment on the grace of Christ, as if he were bound to keep them even in the midst of dangers into which they needlessly ran. They would have the promise of grace to keep them only when they were in the way of their duty, arid using all other precautions. To go beyond this, to place themselves in needless danger, to presume on the grace of Christ to keep them in all circumstances, would be to tempt him, and provoke him to leave them. Mt 4:7.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and
were destroyed of the destroyer.

5. He warns against murmuring: Neither murmur you as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer (1Co 10:10), by a destroying angel, an executioner of divine vengeance. They quarrelled with God, and murmured against Moses his minister, when any difficulties pressed them. When they met with

discouragements in the way to Canaan, they were very apt to fly in the face of their leaders, were for displacing them, and going back to Egypt under the conduct of others of their own choosing. Something like this seems to have been the case of the Corinthians; they murmured against Paul, and in him against Christ, and seem to have set up other teachers, who would indulge and soothe them in their inclinations, and particularly in a revolt to idolatry. Rather let them feast on idol sacrifices than bear the reproach, or expose themselves to the ill-will, of heathen neighbours. Such conduct was very provoking to God, and was likely to bring upon them swift destruction, as it did on the Israelites, Nu 14:37. Note, Murmuring against divine disposals and commands is a sin that greatly provokes, especially when it grows to such a head as to issue in apostasy, and a revolt from him and his good ways.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Not only the laws and ordinances of the Jews, but the providences of God towards them, were typical. Their sins against God, and backslidings from him, were typical of the infidelity of many under the gospel. God's judgments on them were types of spiritual judgments now. Their exclusion from the earthly Canaan typified the exclusion of many under the gospel out of the heavenly Canaan, for their unbelief. Their history was written, to be a standing monitor to the church, even under the last and most perfect dispensation: To us, on whom the end of the world is come, the concluding period of God's gracious government over men. Note, Nothing in scripture is written in vain. God had wise and gracious purposes towards us in leaving the Jewish history upon record; and it is our wisdom and duty to receive instruction from it. Upon this hint the apostle grounds a caution (1Co 10:12): Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Note, The harms sustained by others should be cautious to us. He that thinks he stands should not be confident and secure, but upon his guard. Others have fallen, and so may we. And then we are most likely to fall when we are most confident of our own strength, and thereupon most apt to be secure, and off our guard. Distrust of himself, putting him at once upon vigilance and dependence on God, is the

Christian's best security against all sin. Note, He who thinks he stands is not likely to keep his footing, if he fears no fall, nor guards against it. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves: his protection supposes our own care and caution.

Upon whom the ends of the world are come. This expression is equivalent to that which so often occurs in the Scriptures, as "the last time," "the latter day," etc. See it fully explained Acts 2:17. It means the last dispensation; or, that period and mode of the Divine administration under which the affairs of the world would be wound up. There would be no mode of administration beyond that of the gospel. But it by no means denotes necessarily that the continuance of this period called "the last times," and "the ends of the world," would be brief, or that the apostle believed that the world would soon come to an end. It might be the last period, and yet be longer than any one previous period, or than all the previous periods put together. There may be a last dynasty in an empire, and yet it may be longer than any previous dynasty, or than all the previous dynasties put together. The apostle Paul was at special pains in 2Thes 2 to show, that by affirming that the last time had come, he did not mean that the world would soon come to an end.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Note, 1. The trials of common Christians are but common trials: others have the like burdens and the like temptations; what they bear up under, and break through, we may also.

2. God is faithful. Though Satan be a deceiver, God is true. Men may be false, and the world may be false; but God is faithful, and our strength and security are in him. He keepeth his covenant, and will never disappoint the filial hope and trust of his children.

3. He is wise as well as faithful, and will proportion our burden to our strength. He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able. 4. When he will make them to issue well. He will make a way to escape, either the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. There is no valley so dark but he can find a way through it, no affliction so grievous but he can prevent, or remove, or enable us to support it, and in the end overrule it to our advantage.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

And upon this argument he grounds another caution against idolatry: Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Observe, 1. How he addresses them: My dearly beloved. It is out of tender affection to them that he presses this advice upon them. 2 The matter of his advice: "Flee idolatry; shun it, and all approaches towards it." Idolatry is the most heinous injury and affront to the true God; it is transferring his worship and honour to a rival. 3. The ground of this advice: "Seeing you have such encouragement to trust God, and to be faithful, do you approve yourselves men, be not shaken by any discouragements your heathen enemies may lay before you. God will succour and assist, help you in your trials, and help you out of them; and therefore be not guilty of any idolatrous compliances." Note, We have all the encouragement in the world to flee sin and prove faithful to God. We cannot fall by a temptation if we cleave fast to him.

15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

17 For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

He applies this to the argument against feasting with idolaters on their sacrifices, and to prove those that do so idolaters. This he does,

1. By following the principle on which they would argue it to be lawful, namely, that an idol was nothing. Many of them were nothing at all, none of them had any divinity in them. What was

sacrificed to idols was nothing, no way changed from what it was before, but was every whit as fit for food, considered in itself. They indeed seem to argue that, because an idol was nothing, what was offered was no sacrifice, but common and ordinary food, of which they might therefore eat with as little scruple. Now the apostle allows that the food was not changed as to its nature, was as fit to be eaten as common food, where it was set before any who knew not of its having been offered to an idol. But, 2. He proves that the eating of it as a part of a heathen sacrifice was,

(1.) A partaking with them in their idolatry. It was having fellowship with devils, because what the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils; and to feast with them upon these sacrifices was to partake in the sacrifice, and therefore to worship the god to whom it was made, and have fellowship or communion with him just as he who eats the Lord's supper is supposed to partake in the Christian sacrifice; or as those who ate the Jewish sacrifices partook of what was offered on their altar. But heathens sacrificed to devils: "Therefore do not feast on their sacrifices. Doing it is a token of your having fellowship with the demons to whom they are offered. I would not have you be in communion with devils."

(2.) It was a virtual renouncing of Christianity: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils, 1Co 10:21. To partake of this Christian feast was to have communion with Christ: to partake of the feasts made in honour of the heathen idols, and made of things sacrificed to them, was to have communion with devils. Now this was to compound contraries; it was by no means consistent. Communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once. One must be renounced, if the other was maintained. He who held communion with Christ must renounce that with devils; he who held communion with devils must by that very deed renounce communion with Christ. And what a manifest self-contradiction must that man's conduct be that would partake of the Lord's table, and yet partake of the table of demons! God and mammon can never be served together, nor fellowship be at once had with Christ and Satan. Those who communicate with devils

must virtually renounce Christ. This may also intimate that such as indulge themselves in gluttony or drunkenness, and by so doing make their own table the table of devils, or keep up fellowship with Satan by a course of known and wilful wickedness, cannot partake truly of the cup and table of the Lord. They may use the sign, but do not the thing signified thereby. For a man can never be at once in communication with Christ and his church and yet in fellowship with Satan. Note, How much reason have we to look to it that every sin and idol be renounced by us, when we eat and drink at the Lord's table.

He warns them, upon the whole, against such idolatry, by signifying to them that God is a jealous God (1Co 10:22): Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? It is very probable that many among the Corinthians made light of being at these heathen feasts, and thought there was no harm in it. But the apostle bids them beware. The reason with which the second commandment is enforced is, I am a jealous God. God cannot endure a rival in matter of worship; nor give his glory, nor suffer it to be given, to another. Those who have fellowship with other gods provoke him to jealousy, De 32:16. And, before this be done, persons should consider whether they are stronger than he. It is a dangerous thing to provoke God's anger, unless we could withstand his power. But who can stand before him when he is angry? Na 1:6. This should be considered by all who continue in the love and liking of sin, and in league with it, while yet they profess to keep up communion with Christ. Is not this the way to provoke his jealousy and indignation? Note, Attention to the greatness of God's power should restrain us from provoking his jealousy, from doing any thing to displease him. Shall we rouse almighty wrath? And how shall we withstand it? Are we a match for God? Can we resist his power, or control it? And, if not, shall we arm it against us, by provoking him to jealousy? No, let us fear his power, and let this restrain us from all provocation.

19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is
offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?
20 But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they
sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye
should have fellowship with devils.

21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils:
ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table
of devils.
22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Do All to the Glory of God

23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

He gives a caution against abusing our liberty in lawful things. That may be lawful which is not expedient, which will not edify. A Christian must not barely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and for the use of edification. A private Christian should do so even in his private conduct. He must not seek his own only, but his neighbour's wealth. He must be concerned not to hurt his neighbour, nay, he must be concerned to promote his welfare; and must consider how to act so that he may help others, and not hinder them in their holiness, comfort, or salvation. Those who allow themselves in every thing not plainly sinful in itself will often run into what is evil by accident, and do much mischief to others. Every thing lawful in itself to be done is not therefore lawfully done. Circumstances may make that a sin which in itself is none. These must be weighed, and the expediency of an action, and its tendency to edification, must be considered before it be done. Note, The welfare of others, as well as our own convenience, must be consulted in many things we do, if we would do them well.

"The earth is the Lord's, therefore you may eat any thing without scruple that is set before you as common food; and yet, because the earth is the Lord's, eat nothing that will give offence, lay a stumbling-block before others, and encourage some in idolatry, or tempt others to eat when they are not clear in their own mind that it is lawful, and so sin, and wound their own consciences." Note, Christians should be very cautious of doing what may thus prejudice the consciences of others, and weaken their authority with them, which is by all means to be kept up.

Our own humour and appetite must not determine our practice, but the honour of God and the good and edification of the church. We should not so much consult our own pleasure and interest as the advancement of the kingdom of God among men. Note, A Christian should be a man devoted to God, and of a public spirit.

24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth.*
25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, *that* eat, asking no
question for conscience' sake:
26 for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.
27 If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast,* and ye be
disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no
question for conscience' sake.
28 But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto
idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience'
sake: for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:
29 conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why
is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience?
30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for
that for which I give thanks?
31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all
to the glory of God.
32 Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles,
nor to the church of God:

He presses all upon them by his own example: Even as I please all men (or study to do it) in all things (that I lawfully can), not seeking my own profit, but that of many, that they may be saved, 1Co 10:33. Note, A preacher may press his advice home with boldness and authority when he can enforce it with his own example. He is most likely to promote a public spirit in others who can give evidence of it in himself. And it is highly commendable in a minister to neglect his own advantage that he may promote the salvation of his hearers. This shows that he has a spirit suitable to his function. It is a station for public usefulness, and can never be faithfully discharged by a man of a narrow spirit and selfish principles.

33 even as I please all *men* in all *things,* not seeking mine own
profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians-11

1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ.

The Covering of Women's Heads

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all
things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you.
3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is
Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head
of Christ *is* God.
4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head
covered, dishonoreth his head.
5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head
uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as
if she were shaven.
6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it
be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be
covered.
7 For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he
is
the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the
man.
8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.
9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the
woman for the man.
10 For this cause ought the woman to have power [a covering, *in sign that she is under the power of her husband*] on *her* head because
of the angels.
11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman,
neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.
12 For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also
by the woman; but all things of God.
13 Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto
God uncovered?
14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long
hair, it is a shame unto him?

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her*
hair is given her for a covering.
16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such
custom, neither the churches of God.

Disorder at the Lord's Supper

17 Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye
come together not for the better, but for the worse.
18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear
that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.
19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they
which are approved may be made manifest among you.
20 When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not
to eat the Lord's supper.
21 For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and
one is hungry, and another is drunken.
22 What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye
the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall
I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered
unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the *same* night in which he was
betrayed, took bread:
24 and when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat;
this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in
remembrance of me.
25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had
supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood:
this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.
26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the
Lord's death till he come.

Partaking of the Supper Unworthily

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup
of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood
of the Lord.
28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread,
and drink of *that* cup.
29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and
drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's
body.
30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and
many sleep.
31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.
32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,
that we should not be condemned with the world.
33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry
one for another.
34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not
together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order
when I come.

1 Corinthians-12

Spiritual Gifts

1 Now concerning spiritual *gifts,* brethren, I would not
have you ignorant.
2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb
idols, even as ye were led.
3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking
by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man
can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

Now the apostle tells them none could act under the influence, nor by the power, of the Spirit of God, who disowned and blasphemed Christ: for the Spirit of God bore uncontrollable witness to Christ by prophecy, miracles, his resurrection from the dead, the success of his doctrine among men, and its effect upon them; and could never so far contradict itself as to declare him accursed. And on the other hand no man could say Jesus was the Lord (that is, live by this faith, and work miracles to prove it), but it must be by the Holy Ghost. To own

this truth before men, and maintain it to the death, and live under the influence of it, could not be done without the sanctification of the Holy Ghost. No man can call Christ Lord, with a believing subjection to him and dependence upon him, unless that faith be wrought by the Holy Ghost. No man can confess this truth in the day of trial but by the Holy Ghost animating and encouraging him. Note, We have as necessary a dependence on the Spirit's operation and influence for our sanctification and perseverance as on the mediation of Christ for our reconciliation and acceptance with God: and no man could confirm this truth with a miracle but by the Holy Ghost. No evil spirit would lend assistance, if it were in his power, to spread a doctrine and religion so ruinous to the devil's kingdom. The substance of what the apostle asserts and argues here is that whatever pretences there were to inspiration or miracles, among those who were enemies to Christianity, they could not be from the Spirit of God; but no man could believe this with his heart, nor prove with a miracle that Jesus was Christ, but by the Holy Ghost: so that the extraordinary operations and powers among them did all proceed from the Spirit of God.

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.
7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.
8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;
9 to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;
10 to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:
11 but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.
12 For as the body is one, and hath many members and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether
we be Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have
been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Tit 3:5. But it is by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. It is the Spirit's operation, signified by the outward administration, that makes us members. And by communion at the other ordinance we are sustained; but then it is not merely by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit. The outward administration is a means appointed of God for our participation in this great benefit; but it is baptism by the Spirit, it is internal renovation and drinking into one Spirit, partaking of his sanctifying influence from time to time, that makes us true members of Christ's body, and maintains our union with him. Being animated by one Spirit makes Christians one body.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.
15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not
of the body; is it therefore not of the body?
16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not
of the body; is it therefore not of the body?
17 If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole
were hearing, where *were* the smelling?
18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the
body, as it hath pleased him.

The disposal of members in a natural body, and their situation, are as God pleases: But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased him, Ro 12:18. We may plainly perceive the divine wisdom in the distribution of the members; but it was made according to the counsel of his will; he distinguished and distributed them as he pleased. So is it also in the members of Christ's body: they are chosen out to such stations, and endued with such gifts, as God pleases. He who is sovereign Lord of all disposes his favours and gifts as he will. And who should gainsay his pleasure? What foundation is here for repining in ourselves, or envying others? We should be doing the duties of our own place, and not murmuring in ourselves, nor quarrelling with others, that we are not in theirs.

19 And if they were all one member, where *were* the body?
20 But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.
21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of
thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.
22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem
to be more feeble, are necessary:
23 and those *members* of the body, which we think to be less
honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor;
and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.
24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered
the body together, having given more abundant honor to
that *part* which lacked:

Such is the man's concern for his whole body that on the less honourable members more abundant honour is bestowed, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. Those parts which are not fit, like the rest, to be exposed to view, which are either deformed or shameful, we most carefully clothe and cover; whereas the comely parts have no such need. The wisdom of Providence has so contrived and tempered things that the most abundant regard and honour should be paid to that which most wanted it, Ro 12:24. So should the members of Christ's body behave towards their fellow-members: instead of despising them, or reproaching them, for their infirmities, they should endeavour to cover and conceal them, and put the best face upon them that they can.

25 that there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the
members should have the same care one for another.
26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with
it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with
it.

Divine wisdom has contrived and ordered things in this manner that the members of the body should not be schismatics, divided from each other and acting upon separate interests, but well affected to each other, tenderly concerned for each other, having a fellow-feeling of each other's griefs and a communion in each other's pleasures and joys, Ro 12:25,26.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Observe the order of these offices and gifts. They are here placed in their proper ranks. Those of most value have the first place. Apostles, prophets, and teachers, were all intended to instruct the people, to inform them well in the things of God, and promote their spiritual edification: without them, neither evangelical knowledge nor holiness could have been promoted. But the rest, however fitted to answer the great intentions of Christianity, had no such immediate regard to religion, strictly so called. Note, God does, and we should, value things according to their real worth: and the use of things is the best criterion of their real worth. Those are most valuable that best answer the highest purposes. Such were apostolical powers, compared with theirs who had only the gift of healing and miracles. What holds the last and lowest rank in this enumeration is diversity of tongues. It is by itself the most useless and insignificant of all these gifts. Healing diseases, relieving the poor, helping the sick, have their use: but how vain a thing is it to speak languages, if a man does it merely to amuse or boast himself! This may indeed raise the admiration, but cannot promote the edification, of the hearers, nor do them any good. And yet it is manifest from Ro 14:1-23 that the Corinthians valued themselves exceedingly on this gift. Note, How proper a method it is to beat down pride to let persons know the true value of what they pride themselves in! It is but too common a thing for men to value themselves most on what is least worth: and it is of great use to bring them to a sober mind by letting them know how much they are mistaken.

We must be content with our own rank and share, if they be lower and less than those of others. We must not be conceited of ourselves, and despise others, if we are in the higher rank and have greater gifts. Every member of the body is to preserve its own rank, and do its own office; and all are to minister to one another, and promote the good of the body in general, without envying, or despising, or neglecting, or ill-using, any one particular member.

How blessed a constitution were the Christian church, if all the members did their duty!

29 *Are* all apostles? *are* all prophets? *are* all teachers? *are* all
workers of miracles?
30 have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues?
do all interpret?
31 But covet earnestly the best gifts.
And yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

1 Corinthians-13

Love

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and
have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a
tinkling cymbal.
2 And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all
mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so
that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am
nothing.
3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor,* and though
I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth
me nothing.

The outward acts of charity: Bestowing his goods to feed the poor, 1Co 13:3. Should all a man has be laid out in this manner, if he had no charity, it would profit him nothing. There may be an open and lavish hand, where there is no liberal and charitable heart. The external act of giving alms may proceed from a very ill principle. Vain-glorious ostentation, or a proud conceit of merit, may put a man to large expense this way who has no true love to God nor men. Our doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not well done, namely, from a principle of devotion and charity, love to God, and good-will to men. Note, If we leave charity out of religion, the most costly services will be of no avail to us. If we give away all we have, while we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit. 5. Even sufferings, and even those of the most grievous kind: If we give our bodies to be burnt, without charity, it profiteth nothing, 1Co 13:3. Should we sacrifice our

lives for the faith of the gospel, and be burnt to death in maintenance of its truth, this will stand us in no stead without charity, unless we be animated to these sufferings by a principle of true devotion to God, and sincere love to his church and people, and good-will to mankind. The outward carriage may be plausible, when the invisible principle is very bad. Some men have thrown themselves into the fire to procure a name and reputation among men. It is possible that the very same principle may have worked up some to resolution enough to die for their religion who never heartily believed and embraced it. But vindicating religion at the cost of our lives will profit nothing if we feel not the power of it; and true charity is the very heart and spirit of religion. If we feel none of its sacred heat in our hearts, it will profit nothing, though we be burnt to ashes for the truth. Note, The most grievous sufferings, the most costly sacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren; should we give our own bodies to be burnt, it would not profit us. How strange a way of recommending themselves to God are those got into who hope to do it by burning others, by murdering, and massacring, and tormenting their fellow-christians, or by any injurious usage of them! My soul, enter not thou into their secrets. If I cannot hope to recommend myself to God by giving my own body to be burnt while I have no charity, I will never hope to do it by burning or maltreating others, in open defiance to all charity.

4 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not;
charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5 doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not
easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

The apostle gives us in these verses some of the properties and effects of charity, both to describe and commend it, that we may know whether we have this grace and that if we have not we may fall in love with what is so exceedingly amiable, and not rest till we have obtained it. It is an excellent grace, and has a world of good properties belonging to it. As,

I. It is long suffering--makrothymei. It can endure evil, injury, and provocation, without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power

over the angry passions, and furnishes it with a persevering patience, that shall rather wait and wish for the reformation of a brother than fly out in resentment of his conduct. It will put up with many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

II. It is kind--chresteuetai. It is benign, bountiful; it is courteous and obliging. The law of kindness is in her lips; her heart is large, and her hand open. She is ready to show favours and to do good. She seeks to be useful; and not only seizes on opportunities of doing good, but searches for them. This is her general character. She is patient under injuries, and apt and inclined to do all the good offices in her power. And under these two generals all the particulars of the character may be reduced.

III. Charity suppresses envy: It envieth not; it is not grieved at the good of others; neither at their gifts nor at their good qualities, their honours not their estates. If we love our neighbour we shall be so far from envying his welfare, or being displeased with it, that we shall share in it and rejoice at it. His bliss and sanctification will be an addition to ours, instead of impairing or lessening it. This is the proper effect of kindness and benevolence: envy is the effect of ill-will. The prosperity of those to whom we wish well can never grieve us; and the mind which is bent on doing good to all can never with ill to any.

IV. Charity subdues pride and vain-glory; It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, is not bloated with self-conceit, does not swell upon its acquisitions, nor arrogate to itself that honour, or power, or respect, which does not belong to it. It is not insolent, apt to despise others, or trample on them, or treat them with contempt and scorn. Those who are animated with a principle of true brotherly love will in honour prefer one another, Ro 12:10. They will do nothing out of a spirit of contention or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind will esteem others better than themselves, Php 2:3. True love will give us an esteem of our brethren, and raise our value for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves,

and prevent the tumours of self-conceit and arrogance. These ill qualities can never grow out of tender affection for the brethren, nor a diffusive benevolence. The word rendered in our translation vaunteth itself bears other significations; nor is the proper meaning, as I can find, settled; but in every sense and meaning true charity stands in opposition to it. The Syriac renders it, non tumultuatur--does not raise tumults and disturbances. Charity calms the angry passions, instead of raising them. Others render it, Non perperàm et perversè agit--It does not act insidiously with any, seek to ensnare them, nor tease them with needless importunities and addresses. It is not froward, nor stubborn and untractable, nor apt to be cross and contradictory. Some understand it of dissembling and flattery, when a fair face is put on, and fine words are said, without any regard to truth, or intention of good. Charity abhors such falsehood and flattery. Nothing is commonly more pernicious, nor more apt to cross the purposes of true love and good will.

V. Charity is careful not to pass the bounds of decency; ouk aschemonei--it behaveth not unseemly; it does nothing indecorous, nothing that in the common account of men is base or vile. It does nothing out of place or time; but behaves towards all men as becomes their rank and ours, with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, with courtesy and good-will towards all men. It is not for breaking order, confounding ranks bringing all men on a level; but for keeping up the distinction God has made between men, and acting decently in its own station, and minding its own business, without taking upon it to mend, or censure, or despise, the conduct of others. Charity will do nothing that misbecomes it.

VI. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness: Seeketh not its own, does not inordinately desire nor seek its own praise, or honour, or profit, or pleasure. Indeed self-love, in some degree, is natural to all men, enters into their very constitution. And a reasonable love of self is by our Saviour made the measure of our love to others, that charity which is here described, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The apostle does not mean that charity

destroys all regard to self; he does not mean that the charitable man should never challenge what is his own, but utterly neglect himself and all his interests. Charity must then root up that principle which is wrought into our nature. But charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or with the neglect of others. It often neglects its own for the sake of others; prefers their welfare, and satisfaction, and advantage, to its own; and it ever prefers the weal of the public, of the community, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to its private advantage. It would not advance, nor aggrandize, nor enrich, nor gratify itself, at the cost and damage of the public.

VII. It tempers and restrains the passions. Ou paroxynetai--is not exasperated. It corrects a sharpness of temper, sweetens and softens the mind, so that it does not suddenly conceive, nor long continue, a vehement passion. Where the fire of love is kept in, the flames of wrath will not easily kindle, nor long keep burning. Charity will never be angry without a cause, and will endeavour to confine the passions within proper limits, that they may not exceed the measure that is just, either in degree or duration. Anger cannot rest in the bosom where love reigns. It is hard to be angry with those we love, but very easy to drop our resentments and be reconciled.

VIII. Charity thinks no evil. It cherishes no malice, nor gives way to revenge: so some understand it. It is not soon, nor long, angry; it is never mischievous, nor inclined to revenge; it does not suspect evil of others, ou logizetai to kakon--it does not reason out evil, charge guilt upon them by inference and innuendo, when nothing of this sort appears open. True love is not apt to be jealous and suspicious; it will hide faults that appear, and draw a veil over them, instead of hunting and raking out those that lie covered and concealed: it will never indulge suspicion without proofs, but will rather incline to darken and disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will hardly give into an ill opinion of another, and it will do it with regret and reluctance when the evidence cannot be resisted; hence it will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, nor

give way to suspicion without any. It will not make the worst construction of things, but put the best face that it can on circumstances that have no good appearance.

IX. The matter of its joy and pleasure is here suggested: 1. Negatively: It rejoiceth not in iniquity. It takes no pleasure in doing injury or hurt to any. It thinks not evil of any, without very clear proof. It wishes ill to none, much less will it hurt or wrong any, and least of all make this matter of its delight, rejoice in doing harm and mischief. Nor will it rejoice at the faults and failings of others, and triumph over them, either out of pride or ill-will, because it will set off its own excellences or gratify its spite. The sins of others are rather the grief of a charitable spirit than its sport or delight; they will touch it to the quick, and stir all its compassion, but give it no entertainment. It is the very height of malice to take pleasure in the misery of a fellow-creature. And is not falling into sin the greatest calamity that can befal one? How inconsistent is it with Christian charity, to rejoice at such fall! 2. Affirmatively: It rejoiceth in the truth, is glad of the success of the gospel, commonly called the truth, by way of emphasis, in the New Testament; and rejoices to see men moulded into an evangelical temper by it, and made good. It takes no pleasure in their sins, but is highly delighted to see them do well, to approve themselves men of probity and integrity. It gives it much satisfaction to see truth and justice prevail among men, innocency cleared, and mutual faith and trust established, and to see piety and true religion flourish.

X. It beareth all things, it endureth all things, panta stegei, panta hypomenei. Some read the first, covers all things. So the original also signifies. Charity will cover a multitude of sins, 1Pe 4:8. It will draw a veil over them, as far as it can consistently with duty. It is not for blazing nor publishing the faults of a brother, till duty manifestly demands it. Necessity only can extort this from the charitable mind. Though such a man be free to tell his brother his faults in private, he is very unwilling to expose him by making them public. Thus we do by our own faults, and thus charity would teach us to do by the faults of others; not publish them to

their shame and reproach, but cover them from public notice as long as we can, and be faithful to God and to others. Or, it beareth all things,--will pass by and put up with injuries, without indulging anger or cherishing revenge, will be patient upon provocation, and long patient, panta hypomenei--holds firm, though it be much shocked, and borne hard upon; sustains all manner of injury and ill usage, and bears up under it, such as curses, contumacies, slanders, prison, exile, bonds, torments, and death itself, for the sake of the injurious, and of others; and perseveres in this firmness. Note, What a fortitude and firmness fervent love will give the mind! What cannot a lover endure for the beloved and for his sake! How many slights and injuries will he put up with! How many hazards will he run and how many difficulties encounter!

XI. Charity believes and hopes well of others: Believeth all things; hopeth all things. Indeed charity does by no means destroy prudence, and, out of mere simplicity and silliness, believe every word, Pr 14:15. Wisdom may dwell with love, and charity be cautious. But it is apt to believe well of all, to entertain a good opinion of them when there is no appearance to the contrary; nay, to believe well when there may be some dark appearances, if the evidence of ill be not clear. All charity is full of candour, apt to make the best of every thing, and put on it the best face and appearance? it will judge well, and believe well, as far as it can with any reason, and will rather stretch its faith beyond appearances for the support of a kind opinion; but it will go into a bad one with the upmost reluctance, and fence against it as much as it fairly and honestly can. And when, in spite of inclination, it cannot believe well of others, it will yet hope well, and continue to hope as long as there is any ground for it. It will not presently conclude a case desperate, but wishes the amendment of the worst of men, and is very apt to hope for what it wishes. How well-natured and amiable a thing is Christian charity? How lovely a mind is that which is tinctured throughout with such benevolence, and has it diffused over its whole frame! Happy the man who has this heavenly fire glowing in his heart, flowing out of his mouth, and diffusing its warmth over all with whom he has to do! How

lovely a thing would Christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more actuated and animated by this divine principle, and paid a due regard to a command on which its blessed author laid a chief stress! A new commandment give I to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another, Joh 13:34. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, Joh 13:35. Blessed Jesus! how few of thy professed disciples are to be distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!

6 rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7 beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things,
endureth all things.
8 Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they
shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether
there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.
9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in
part shall be done away.

From its longer continuance and duration: Charity never faileth. It is a permanent and perpetual grace, lasting as eternity; whereas the extraordinary gifts on which the Corinthians valued themselves were of short continuance. They were only to edify the church on earth, and that but for a time, not during its whole continuance in this world; but in heaven would be all superseded, which yet is the very seat and element of love. Prophecy must fail, that is, either the prediction of things to come (which is its most common sense) or the interpretation of scripture by immediate inspiration. Tongues will cease, that is, the miraculous power of speaking languages without learning them. There will be but one language in heaven. There is no confusion of tongues in the region of perfect tranquility. And knowledge will vanish away. Not that, in the perfect state above, holy and happy souls shall be unknowing, ignorant: it is a very poor happiness that can consist with utter ignorance. The apostle is plainly speaking of miraculous gifts, and therefore of knowledge to be had out of the common way (see 1Co 14:6), a knowledge of mysteries supernaturally communicated. Such knowledge was to vanish away. Some indeed understand it of common knowledge acquired

by instruction, taught and learnt. This way of knowing is to vanish away, though the knowledge itself, once acquired, will not be lost. But it is plain that the apostle is here setting the grace of charity in opposition to supernatural gifts. And it is more valuable, because more durable; it shall last, when they shall be no more; it shall enter into heaven, where they will have no place, because they will be of no use, though, in a sense, even our common knowledge may be said to cease in heaven, by reason of the improvement that will then be made in it. The light of a candle is perfectly obscured by the sun shining in its strength.

II. He hints that these gifts are adapted only to a state of imperfection: We know in part, and we prophesy in part, 1Co 13:9. Our best knowledge and our greatest abilities are at present like our condition, narrow and temporary. Even the knowledge they had by inspiration was but in part. How little a portion of God, and the unseen world, was heard even by apostles and inspired men! How much short do others come of them! But these gifts were fitted to the present imperfect state of the church, valuable in themselves, but not to be compared with charity, because they were to vanish with the imperfections of the church, nay, and long before, whereas charity was to last for ever.

III. He takes occasion hence to show how much better it will be with the church hereafter than it can be here. A state of perfection is in view (1Co 13:10): When that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When the end is once attained, the means will of course be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge, in a future life, because then the church will be in a state of perfection, complete both in knowledge and holiness. God will be known then clearly, and in a manner by intuition, and as perfectly as the capacity of glorified minds will allow; not by such transient glimpses, and little portions, as here. The difference between these two states is here pointed at in two particulars:

1 The present state is a state of childhood, the future that of manhood: When I was a child, I spoke as a child (that is, as some think, spoke with tongues), I understood as a child; ephronoun--sapiebam (that is, "I prophesied, I was taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, in such an extraordinary way as manifested I was not out of my childish state"), I thought, or reasoned, elogizomen, as a child; but, when I became a man, I put away childish things. Such is the difference between earth and heaven. What narrow views, what confused and indistinct notions of things, have children, in comparison of grown men! And how naturally do men, when reason is ripened and matured, despise and relinquish their infant thoughts, put them away, reject them, esteem as nothing! Thus shall we think of our most valued gifts and acquisitions in this world, when we come to heaven. We shall despise our childish folly, in priding ourselves in such things when we are grown up to men in Christ.

2. Things are all dark and confused now, in comparison of what they will be hereafter: Now we see through a glass darkly (en ainigmati, in a riddle), then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known. Now we can only discern things at a great distance, as through a telescope, and that involved in clouds and obscurity; but hereafter the things to be known will be near and obvious, open to our eyes; and our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error. God is to be seen face to face; and we are to know him as we are known by him; not indeed as perfectly, but in some sense in the same manner. We are known to him by mere inspection; he turns his eye towards us, and sees and searches us throughout. We shall then fix our eye on him, and see him as he is, 1Jo 3:2. We shall know how we are known, enter into all the mysteries of divine love and grace. O glorious change! To pass from darkness to light, from clouds to the clear sunshine of our Saviour's face, and in God's own light to see light! Ps 36:9. Note, It is the light of heaven only that will remove all clouds and darkness from the face of God. It is at best but twilight while we are in this world; there it will be perfect and eternal day.

IV. To sum up the excellences of charity, he prefers it not only to gifts, but to other graces, to faith and hope (1Co 13:13): And now abide faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity. True grace is much more excellent than any spiritual gifts whatever. And faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces, of which charity is the chief, being the end to which the other two are but means. This is the divine nature, the soul's felicity, or its complacential rest in God, and holy delight in all his saints. And it is everlasting work, when faith and hope shall be no more. Faith fixes on the divine revelation, and assents to that: hope fastens on future felicity, and waits for that: and in heaven faith well be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition. There is no room to believe and hope, when we see and enjoy. But love fastens on the divine perfections themselves, and the divine image on the creatures, and our mutual relation both to God and them. These will all shine forth in the most glorious splendours in another world, and there will love be made perfect; there we shall perfectly love God, because he will appear amiable for ever, and our hearts will kindle at the sight, and glow with perpetual devotion. And there shall we perfectly love one another, when all the saints meet there, when none but saints are there, and saints made perfect. O blessed state! How much surpassing the best below! O amiable and excellent grace of charity! How much does it exceed the most valuable gift, when it outshines every grace, and is the everlasting consummation of them! When faith and hope are at an end, true charity will burn for ever with the brightest flame. Note, Those border most upon the heavenly state and perfection whose hearts are fullest of this divine principle, and burn with the most fervent charity. It is the surest offspring of God, and bears his fairest impression. For God is love, 1Jo 4:8,16. And where God is to be seen as he is, and face to face, there charity is in its greatest height--there, and there only, will it be perfected.

11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a
child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put
away childish things.

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face:
now I

know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the
greatest of these *is* charity.

1 Corinthians-14

Speaking in Tongues

1 Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts,* but rather that ye
may prophesy.
2 For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto
men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him;* howbeit in
the spirit he speaketh mysteries.
3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification,
and exhortation, and comfort.
4 He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself;
but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Whereas the end of speaking in the church is to edify the church (1Co 14:4), to which prophesying, or interpreting scripture by inspiration or otherwise, is immediately adapted. Note, That is the best and most eligible gift which best answers the purposes of charity and does most good; not that which can edify ourselves only, but that which will edify the church. Such is prophesying, or preaching, and interpreting scripture, compared with speaking in an unknown tongue.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye
prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that
speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church
may receive edifying.
6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues,
what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by
revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by
doctrine?
7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or
harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it
be known what is piped or harped?
8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall
prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to
be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for
ye shall speak into the air.
10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world,
and none of them *is* without signification.
11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be
unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh
shall be a barbarian unto me.
12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts,* seek
that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.
13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray
that he may interpret.
14 For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth,
but my understanding is unfruitful.
15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with
the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will
sing with the understanding also.
16 Else, when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he
that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy
giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou
sayest?
17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.
18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:
19 yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my
understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also,
than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue.
20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice
be ye children, but in understanding be men.
21 In the law it is written,
With *men of* other tongues and other
lips will I speak unto this people;
and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

I. Tongues, as the Corinthians used them, were rather a token of judgment from God than mercy to any people (1Co 14:21): In the law (that is, the Old Testament) it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people; and yet for all this they will not hear me, saith the Lord, Isa 28:11. Compare De 28:46,49. To both these passages, it is thought, the apostle refers.

Both are delivered by way of threatening, and one is supposed to interpret the other. The meaning in this view is that it is an evidence that a people are abandoned of God when he gives them up to this sort of instruction, to the discipline of those who speak in another language. And surely the apostle's discourse implies, "You should not be fond of the tokens of divine displeasure. God can have no gracious regards to those who are left merely to this sort of instruction, and taught in language which they cannot understand. They can never be benefited by such teaching as this; and, when they are left to it, it is a sad sign that God gives them over as past cure." And should Christians covet to be in such a state, or to bring the churches into it? Yet thus did the Corinthian preachers in effect, who would always deliver their inspirations in an unknown tongue.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

Tongues were rather a sign to unbelievers than to believers, 1Co 14:22. They were a spiritual gift, intended for the conviction and conversion of infidels, that they might be brought into the Christian church; but converts were to be built up in Christianity by profitable instructions in their own language. The gift of tongues was necessary to spread Christianity, and gather churches; it was proper and intended to convince unbelievers of that doctrine which Christians had already embraced; but prophesying, and interpreting scripture in their own language, were most for the edification of such as did already believe: so that speaking with tongues in Christians assemblies was altogether out of time and place; neither one nor the other was proper for it. Note, That gifts may be rightly used, it is proper to know the ends which they are intended to serve. To go about the conversion of infidels, as the apostles did, had been a vain undertaking without the gift of tongues, and the discovery of this gift; but, in an assembly of Christians already converted to the Christian faith, to make use and ostentation of this gift would be perfectly impertinent, because it would be of no advantage to the assembly; not for conviction of truth, because they had already embraced it; not for their edification, because they did not understand, and could not get benefit without understanding, what they heard.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one
place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that*
are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are
mad?
24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or
one
unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:
25 and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so
falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that
God is in you of a truth.
26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of
you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a
revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto
edifying.
27 If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or
at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one
interpret.
28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the
church;
and let him speak to himself, and to God.
29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.
30 If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first
hold his peace.
31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all
may be comforted.
32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.
33 For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as
in all churches of the saints.
34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not
permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be
under obedience, as also saith the law.
35 And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their
husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in
the church.
36 What! came the word of God out from you? or came it unto
you only?

37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let
him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are
the commandments of the Lord.
38 But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant.
39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to
speak with tongues.
40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

1 Corinthians-15

The Resurrection of the Dead

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I
preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein
ye stand;
2 by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I
preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.
3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also
received, how that Christ died for our sins according to
the Scriptures;
4 and that he was buried, and that he rose again the
third day according to the Scriptures:
5 and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:
6 after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at
once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present,
but some are fallen asleep.
7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.
8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out
of due time.

(1.) That he was one born out of due time (1Co 15:8), an abortive, ektroma, a child dead born, and out of time. Paul resembled such a birth, in the suddenness of his new birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolic function, as the others were, who had personal converse with our Lord. He was called to the office when such conversation was not to be had, he was out of time for it. He had not known nor followed the Lord, nor been formed in his family, as the others were, for this high and honourable function. This was in Paul's account a very humbling circumstance.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

By owning himself inferior to the other apostles: Not meet to be called an apostle. The least, because the last of them; called latest to the office, and not worthy to be called an apostle, to have either the office or the title, because he had been a persecutor of the church of God, 1Co 15:9. Indeed, he tells us elsewhere that he was not a whit behind the very chief apostles (2Co 11:5)-- for gifts, graces, service, and sufferings, inferior to none of them. Yet some circumstances in his case made him think more meanly of himself than of any of them. Note, A humble spirit, in the midst of high attainments, is a great ornament to any man; it sets his good qualities off to much greater advantage. What kept Paul low in an especial manner was the remembrance of his former wickedness, his raging and destructive zeal against Christ and him members. Note, How easily God can bring a good out of the greatest evil! When sinners are by divine grace turned into saints, he makes the remembrance of their former sins very serviceable, to make them humble, and diligent, and faithful.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

By ascribing all that was valuable in him to divine grace: But by the grace of God I am what I am, 1Co 15:10. It is God's prerogative to say, I am that I am; it is our privilege to be able to say, "By God's grace we are what we are." We are nothing but what God makes us, nothing in religion but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us is a stream from this fountain. Paul was sensible of this, and kept humble and thankful by this conviction; so should we. Nay, though he was conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all: he thought himself so much more the debtor to divine grace. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

12 Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 and if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 and if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

And is it not absurd for one who believes in Christ to admit a principle that involves so absurd an inference? Can that man have faith in Christ who can believe concerning him that he will leave his faithful servants, whether ministers or others, in a worse state than his enemies? Note, It were a gross absurdity in a Christian to admit the supposition of no resurrection or future state. It would leave no hope beyond this world, and would frequently make his condition the worst in the world. Indeed, the Christian is by his religion crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are insipid to him in a great degree; and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those which he affects and pants after. How sad is his case indeed, if he must be dead to worldly pleasures and yet never hope for any better!

Thus did our blessed Lord himself, Heb 12:2. And thus we are bidden to do after his example, and have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life. This is the very end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (1Pe 1:9), not only what it will issue in, but what we should aim at.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the
resurrection of the dead.

For, since by man came death, it was every way proper that by man should come deliverance from it, or, which is all one, a resurrection, 1Co 15:21. And so, as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive; as through the sin of the first Adam all men became mortal, because all derived from him the same sinful nature, so through the merit and resurrection of Christ shall all who are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive, and become immortal. All who die die through the sin of Adam; all who are raised, in the sense of the apostle, rise through the merit and power of Christ. But the meaning is not that, as all men died in Adam, so all men, without exception, shall be made alive in Christ; for the scope of the apostle's argument restrains the general meaning. Christ rose as the first-fruits; therefore those that are Christ's (1Co 15:23) shall rise too.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits;
afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.
24 Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the
kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down
all rule, and all authority and power.
25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.
26 The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.
27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith,
All things are put under *him, it is* manifest that he is
excepted, which did put all things under him.
28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the
Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under
him, that God may be all in all.
29 Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if
the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the
dead?
30 and why stand we in jeopardy every hour?
31 I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord,
I
die daily.

32 If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at
Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us
eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.

It would be a much wiser thing to take the comforts of this life: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die (1Co 15:32); let us turn epicures. Thus this sentence means in the prophet, Isa 22:13. Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them. This would be a wiser course, if there were no resurrection, no after-life or state, than to abandon all the pleasures of life, and offer and expose ourselves to all the miseries of life, and live in continual peril of perishing by savage rage and cruelty. This passage also plainly implies, as I have hinted above, that those who denied the resurrection among the Corinthians were perfect Sadducees, of whose principles we have this account in the holy writings, that they say, There is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit (Ac 23:8), that is, "Man is all body, there is nothing in him to survive the body, nor will that, when once he is dead, ever revive again."

33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Error and vice are infectious: and, if we would avoid the contagion, we must keep clear of those who have taken it. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed, Pr 13:20. Here is an exhortation to break off their sins, and rouse themselves, and lead a more holy and righteous life (1Co 15:34): Awake to righteousness, or awake righteously, eknepsate dikaios, and sin not, or sin no more. "Rouse yourselves, break off your sins by repentance: renounce and forsake every evil way, correct whatever is amiss, and do not, by sloth and stupidity, be led away into such conversation and principles as will sap your Christian hopes, and corrupt your practice." The disbelief of a future state destroys all virtue and piety. But the best improvement to be made of the truth is to cease from sin, and set ourselves to the business of religion, and that in good earnest. If there will be a resurrection and a future life, we should live and act as those who believe it, and should not give into such senseless and sottish notions as will debauch our morals, and render us loose and sensual in our lives.Awake - Arouse from stupidity on this subject; awake from your conscious security; be alarmed, as it is right and proper that you should be, for you are surrounded by dangers, and

by those who would lead you into error and vice; rouse from such wild and delusive opinions as these persons have, and exercise a constant vigilance as becomes those who are the friends of God and the expectants of a blessed resurrection."

The word rendered - being together; companionship; close intercourse; converse. It refers not to discourse only, but to intercourse, or companionship. Paul quotes these words from Menander, (in Sentent. Comicor. Gr. p. 248, ed. Steph.,) a Greek poet. He thus shows that he was, in some degree at least, familiar with the Greek writers. Acts 17:28. Menander was a celebrated comic poet of Athens, educated under Theophrastus. Paul quoted this sentiment from a Greek poet, perhaps, because it might be supposed to have weight with the Greeks. It was a sentiment of one of their own writers, and here was an occasion in which it was exactly applicable. It is implied in this, that there were some persons who were endeavouring to corrupt their minds from the simplicity of the gospel. The sentiment of the passage is, that the intercourse of evil-minded men, or that the close friendship and conversation of those who hold erroneous opinions, or who are impure in their lives, tends to corrupt the morals, the heart, the sentiments of others. The particular thing to which Paul here applies it, is the subject of the resurrection. Such intercourse would tend to corrupt the simplicity of their faith, and pervert their views of the truth of the gospel, and thus corrupt their lives. It is always true that such intercourse has a pernicious effect on the mind and the heart. It is done,

(1.) by their direct effort to corrupt the opinions, and to lead others into sin.

(2.) By the secret, silent influence of their words, and conversation, and example. We have less horror at vice by becoming familiar with it; we look with less alarm on error when we hear it often expressed; we become less watchful and cautious when we are constantly with the gay, the worldly, the unprincipled, and the vicious. Hence Christ sought that there should be a pure society,

and that his people should principally seek the friendship, and conversation of each other, and withdraw from the world. It is in the way that Paul here refers to, that Christians embrace false doctrines; that they lose their spirituality, love of prayer, fervour of piety, and devotion to God. It is in this way that the simple are beguiled, the young corrupted, and that vice, and crime, and infidelity spread over the world.

34 Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have
not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.
35 But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and
with what body do they come?
36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:
37 and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that
shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some
other *grain:*
38 but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every
seed his own body.
39 All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of
men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another
of birds.
40 *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the
glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is*
another.
41 *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon,
and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differeth from
another star in glory.

All this is to intimate to us that the bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be so far changed, that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions, and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead, when they shall be raised, as there is among the sun, and moon, and stars, nay among the stars themselves

42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in
corruption, it is raised in incorruption:
43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in
weakness, it is raised in power:

(1.) It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown. Burying the dead is like sowing them; it is like committing the seed

to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. And our bodies, which are sown, are corruptible, liable to putrefy and moulder, and crumble to dust; but, when we rise, they will be out of the power of the grave, and never more be liable to corruption.

(2.) It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Ours is at present a vile body, Php 3:21. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body; it is thrown into the grave as a despised and broken vessel, in which there is no pleasure. But at the resurrection a glory will be put upon it; it will be made like the glorious body of our Saviour; it will be purged from all the dregs of earth, and refined into an ethereal substance, and shine out with a splendour resembling his.

(3.) It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is laid in the earth, a poor helpless thing, wholly in the power of death, deprived of all vital capacities and powers, of life and strength: it is utterly unable to move or stir. But when we arise our bodies will have heavenly life and vigour infused into them; they will be hale, and firm, and durable, and lively, and liable no more to any infirmity, weakness, or decay.

(4.) It is sown a natural, or animal body, soma psychikon, a body fitted to the low condition and sensitive pleasures and enjoyments of this life, which are all gross in comparison of the heavenly state and enjoyments. But when we rise it will be quite otherwise; our body will rise spiritual. Not that body would be changed into spirit: this would be a contradiction in our common conceptions; it would be as much as to say, Body changed into what is not body, matter made immaterial. The expression is to be understood comparatively. We shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined to the last degree, made light and agile; and, though they are not changed into spirit, yet made fit to be perpetual associates of spirits made perfect. And why should it not be as much in the power of God to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively, spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then,

out of the same mass of matter, produce such variety of beings, both in earth and heaven? To God all things are possible; and this cannot be impossible.

44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.
There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul;
the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit.
46 Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that
which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.
47 The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the
Lord from heaven.
48 As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as
is the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.
49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also
bear the image of the heavenly.
50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot
inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption
inherit incorruption.
51 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we
shall all be changed,
52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for
the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised
incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must*
put on immortality.
54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and
this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be
brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed
up in victory.
55 O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?

O death. This triumphant exclamation is the commencement of the fourth division of the chapter--the practical consequences of the doctrine. It is such an exclamation as every man with right feelings will be disposed to make, who contemplates the ravages of death; who looks upon a World where in all forms he has reigned, and who then contemplates the glorious truth, that a complete and final

triumph has been obtained over this great enemy of the happiness of man, and that man would die no more. It is a triumphant view which bursts upon the soul as it contemplates the fact that the work of the second Adam has repaired the ruins of the first, and that man is redeemed; his body will be raised; not another human being should die, and the work of death should be ended. Nay, it is more. Death is not only at an end; it shall not only cease, but its evils shall be repaired; and the glory and honour shall encompasse the body of man, such as would have been unknown had there n no death. No commentary can add to the beauty and force of the language in this verse; and the best way to see its beauty, and to enjoy it, is to sit down and think of DEATH; of what death has been, and has done; of the millions and millions that have died; of the earth strewed with the dead, and "arched with graves;" of our own death; the certainty that we must die, and our parents, and brothers, and sisters, and children, and friends; that all, all must die;--and then to suffer the truth, in its full-orbed splendour, to rise upon us, that the time will come when DEATH SHALL, BE AT AN END. Who, in such contemplation, can refrain from the language of triumph, and from hymns of praise? Where is thy sting? The word which is here rendered sting (κεντρον) denotes, properly, a prick, a point; hence a goad or stimulus; i.e., a rod or staff with an iron point, for goading oxen, Acts 9:5;) and then a sting properly, as of scorpions, bees, etc. It denotes here a venomous thing, or weapon, applied to death personified, as if death employed it to destroy life, as the sting of a bee or a scorpion is used, The idea is derived from the venomous sting of serpents, or other reptiles, as being destructive and painful. The language here is the language of exultation, as if that was taken away or destroyed. O grave, αδη. Hades, the place of the dead. It is not improperly rendered, however, grave. The word properly denotes a place of darkness; then the world, or abodes of the dead. According to the Hebrews, hades, or sheol, was a vast subterranean receptacle, or abode, where the souls of the dead existed. It was dark, deep, still, awful. The descent to it was through the grave; and the spirits of all the dead were supposed to be assembled there; the righteous occupying the upper regions, and the wicked the lower. Isa 14:9. Compare Lowth, Lect. on Heb. Poet. vii.

Campbell, Prel. Diss. vi. part 2, & 2. It refers here to the dead; and means that the grave, or hades, should no longer have a victory. Thy victory? Since the dead are to rise; since all the graves are to give up all that dwell in them; since no man will die after that, where is its victory? It is taken away. It is despoiled. The power of death and the grave is vanquished, and Christ is triumphant over all. It has been well remarked here, that the words in this verse rise above the plain and simple language of prose, and resemble a hymn, into which the apostle breaks out in view of the glorious truth which is here presented to the mind. The whole verse,is indeed a somewhat loose quotation from Hoss 13:14, which we translate---

"O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

But which the Seventy render-

"O death, where is thy punishment? O grave, where is thy sting?"

Probably Paul did not intend this as a direct quotation; but he spoke as a man naturally does who is familiar with the language of the Scriptures, and used it to express the sense which he intended, without meaning to make a direct and literal quotation. The form which Paul uses is so poetic in its structure, that Pope has adopted it, with only a change in the location of the members, in the "Dying Christian:"

"O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting."

The sting of death. The sting which death bears; that with which he effects his: purpose; that which is made use of to inflict death; or that which is the cause of death. There would be no death without sin. The apostle here personifies death, as if it were a living being, and as making use of sin to inflict death, or as being the sting, or envenomed instrument, with which he inflicts the mortal agony. The idea is, that sin is the cause of death. It introduced it; it makes it certain; it is the cause of the pain, distress, agony, and horror which attends it. Had there been no sin, men would not have died. If there were no sin, death would not be attended with horror or alarm. For why should innocence be afraid to die? What has innocence to fear anywhere in the universe of a just God? The fact, therefore, that men die, is proof that they are sinners; the fact that

they feel horror and alarm, is proof that they feel themselves to be guilty, and that they are afraid to go into the presence of a holy God. If this be taken away, if sin be removed, of course the horror, and remorse, and alarm which it is fitted to produce will be removed also. Is sin. Sin is the cause of it. Rom 5:12. The strength of sin. Its power over the mind; its terrific and dreadful energy; and especially its power to produce alarm in the hour of death. Is the law. The pure and holy law of God. This idea Paul has illustrated at length in Rom 7:9-13. Rom 7:9, and Rom 7:10-13, he probably made the statement here in order to meet the Jews, and to show that the law of God had no power to take away the fear of death; and that, therefore, there was need of the gospel, and that this alone could do it. The Jews maintained that a man might be justified and saved by obedience to the law. Paul here shows that it is the law which gives its chief rigour to sin, and that it does not tend to subdue or destroy it; and that power is seen most strikingly in the pangs and horrors of a guilty conscience on the bed of death. There was need, therefore, of the gospel, which alone could remove the cause of these horrors, by taking away sin, and thus leaving the pardoned man to die in peace. Rom 4:15.

56 The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

57 But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord
Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast,
unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,
forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the
Lord.

The foundation for this triumph is here intimated,

(1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt: The sting of death is sin. This gives venom to his dart: this alone puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. Sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the strength of sin is the law; it is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced, that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power.

By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, Ro 5:12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring.

(2.) In the account given of the victory saints obtain over it through Jesus Christ, 1Co 15:56. The sting of death is sin; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting. He has made atonement for sin; he has obtained remission of it. It may hiss therefore, but it cannot hurt. The strength of sin is the law; but the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's becoming a curse for us. So that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, through Christ, that is, by his incarnation, suffering, and death. Death may seize a believer, but cannot sting him, cannot hold him in his power. There is a day coming when the grave shall open, the bands of death be loosed, the dead saints revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and put out of the reach of death for ever. And then will it plainly appear that, as to them, death will have lost its strength and sting; and all by the mediation of Christ, by his dying in their room. By dying, he conquered death, and spoiled the grave; and, through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They often rejoice beforehand, in the hope of this victory; and, when they arise glorious from the grave, they will boldly triumph over death. Note, It is altogether owing to the grace of God in Christ that sin is pardoned and death disarmed. The law puts arms into the hand of death, to destroy the sinner; but pardon of sin takes away this power from the law, and deprives death of its strength and sting. It is by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we are freely justified, Ro 3:24. It is no wonder, therefore,

(3.) If this triumph of the saints over death should issue in thanksgiving to God: Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Christ Jesus, our Lord, 1Co 15:57. The way to sanctify all our joy is to make it tributary to the praise of God. Then only do we enjoy our blessings and honours in a holy manner when God has his revenue of glory out of it, and we are free to pay it to him. And this really improves and exalts our satisfaction. We are conscious at once of having done our duty and enjoyed our pleasure. And what can be more joyous in itself than the saints'

triumph over death, when they shall rise again? And shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? Shall not their souls magnify the Lord? When he shows such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him? Ps 88:10. Those who remain under the power of death can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of the saints to thankfulness and praise--praise for the victory (it is great and glorious in itself), and for the means whereby it is obtained (it is given of God through Christ Jesus), a victory obtained not by our power, but the power of God; not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so, and has by dying obtained this conquest for us. Must not this circumstance endear the victory to us, and heighten our praise to God? Note, How many springs of joy to the saints and thanksgiving to God are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests, of our Redeemer! With what acclamations will saints rising from the dead applaud him! How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever! Thanks be to God will be the burden of their song; and angels will join the chorus, and declare their consent with a loud Amen, Hallelujah.

An exhortation, and this threefold:-- 1. That they should be stedfast--hedraioi, firm, fixed in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which he had preached and they had received, namely, That Christ died for our sins, and arose again the third day, according to the scriptures (1Co 15:3,4), and fixed in the faith of the glorious resurrection of the dead, which, as he had shown, had so near and necessary a connection with the former. "Do not let your belief of these truths be shaken or staggered. They are most certain, and of the last importance." Note, Christians should be stedfast believers of this great article of the resurrection of the dead. It is evidently founded on the death of Christ. Because he lives, his servants shall live also, Joh 14:19. And it is of the last importance; a disbelief of a future life will open a way to all manner of licentiousness, and corrupt men's morals to the last degree. It will be easy and natural to infer hence that we may live like beasts, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. 2. He exhorts them to be immovable, namely, in their expectation of this great privilege of being raised

incorruptible and immortal. Christians should not be moved away from this hope of this gospel (Col 1:23), this glorious and blessed hope; they should not renounce nor resign their comfortable expectations. They are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their risen Saviour, and the promise of God, to whom it is impossible to lie--hopes that shall be their most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in Christian duty. Should they part with these hopes? Should they suffer them to be shaken? Note, Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. This hope should be an anchor to their souls, firm and sure, Heb 6:19. 3. He exhorts them to abound in the work of the Lord, and that always, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. They should be diligent and persevering herein, and going on towards perfection; they should be continually making advances in true piety, and ready and apt for every good work. The most cheerful duty, the greatest diligence, the most constant perseverance, become those who have such glorious hopes. Can we too much abound in zeal and diligence in the Lord's work, when we are assured of such abundant recompences in a future life? What vigour and resolution, what constancy and patience, should those hopes inspire! Note, Christians should not stint themselves as to their growth in holiness, but be always improving in sound religion, and abounding in the work of the Lord.

The motive resulting from the former discourse is that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; nay, they know it shall not. They have the best grounds in the world to build upon: they have all the assurance that can rationally be expected: as surely as Christ is risen, they shall rise; and Christ is as surely risen as the scriptures are true, and the word of God. The apostles saw him after his death, testified this truth to the world in the face of a thousand deaths and dangers, and confirmed it by miraculous powers received from him. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? Note, True Christians have undoubted evidence that their labour will not be in vain in the Lord; not their most diligent services, nor their most

painful sufferings; they will not be in vain, not be vain and unprofitable. Note, The labour of Christians will not be lost labour; they may lose for God, but they will lose nothing by him; nay, there is more implied than is expressed in this phrase: it means that they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will never be found unjust to forget their labour of love, Heb 6:10. Nay, he will do exceedingly abundantly above what they can now ask or think. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them, Ro 8:18. Note, Those who serve God have good wages; they cannot do too much nor suffer too much for so good a Master. If they serve him now, they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall rise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life.

1 Corinthians-16

The Collection for the Saints

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given
order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.
2 Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him
in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no
gatherings when I come.

Note, When God blesses and prospers us, we should be ready to relieve and comfort his needy servants; when his bounty flows forth upon us, we should not confine it to ourselves, but let it stream out to others. The good we receive from him should stir us up to do good to others, to resemble him in our beneficence; and therefore the more good we receive from God the more we should do good to others. They were to lay by as God had blessed them, in that proportion. The more they had, through God's blessing, gained by their business or labour, their traffic or work, the more they were to lay by. Note, God expects that our beneficence to others should hold some proportion to his bounty to us. All we

have is from God; the more he gives (circumstances being considered), the more he enables us to give, and the more he expects we should give, that we should give more than others who are less able, that we should give more than ourselves when we were less able. And, on the other hand, from him to whom God gives less he expects less. He is no tyrant nor cruel taskmaster, to exact brick without straw, or expect men shall do more good than he gives ability. Note, Where there is a willing mind he accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not (2Co 8:12); but as he prospers and blesses us, and puts us in a capacity to do good, he expects we should. The greater ability he gives, the more enlarged should our hearts be, and the more open our hands; but, where the ability is less, the hands cannot be as open, however willing the mind and however large the heart; nor does God expect it.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.
4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

Plans for Travel

5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia:
for I do pass through Macedonia.
6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.
7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.
8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.
9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.

Note, Great success in the work of the gospel commonly creates many enemies. The devil opposes those most, and makes them most trouble, who most heartily and successfully set themselves to destroy his kingdom. There were many adversaries; and therefore the apostle determined to stay. Some think he alludes in this passage to the custom of the Roman Circus, and the doors of it, at

which the charioteers were to enter, as their antagonists did at the opposite doors. True courage is whetted by opposition; and it is no wonder that the Christian courage of the apostle should be animated by the zeal of his adversaries. They were bent to ruin him, and prevent the effect of his ministry at Ephesus; and should he at this time desert his station, and disgrace his character and doctrine? No, the opposition of adversaries only animated his zeal. He was in nothing daunted by his adversaries; but the more they raged and opposed the more he exerted himself. Should such a man as he flee? Note, Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirits of faithful and successful ministers, but only enkindle their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. Indeed, to labour in vain is heartless and discouraging. This damps the spirits, and breaks the heart. But success will give life and vigour to a minister, though enemies rage, and blaspheme, and persecute. It is not the opposition of enemies, but the hardness and obstinacy of his hearers, and the backslidings and revolt of professors, that damp a faithful minister, and break his heart.

10 Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear:

for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also *do.*

And there are many adversaries. Many opposers; many who resist the gospel. These were doubtless in part Jews who excited opposition to him, and in part the friends of Demetrius. See Acts 19. That Paul had great success in Ephesus, and that his labours were attended with a great revival of religion there, is manifest from that chapter. We may remark here,

(1.) that such a work of grace, such a setting open of a great and effectual door, is often the occasion of increased opposition to the gospel. It is no uncommon thing that the adversaries of Christ should be excited at such times; and we are not to be surprised if the same thing should occur now which occurred in the time of Paul.

(2.) This was regarded by Paul as no reason why he should leave Ephesus, but rather as a reason why he should remain there. It was

regarded by him as an evidence that the Holy Spirit was there. It was proof that the enemies of God were alarmed, and that the kingdom of Christ was advancing. His presence also would be needed there, to encourage and strengthen the young converts who would be attacked and opposed; and he deemed it his duty to remain. A minister should never wish to make enemies to the gospel, nor seek to excite them to make opposition; but such opposition is often evidence that the Spirit of God is among a people; that the consciences of sinners are aroused and alarmed; and that the great enemy of God and man is making, as he was at Ephesus, a desperate effort to preserve his kingdom from being destroyed.

(3.) A minister should regard it as his duty in a special manner to be among his people when there is such opposition excited. His presence is needed to comfort and encourage the church; and when the minds of men are excited, it is often the best time to present truth, and to defend successfully the great doctrines of the Bible.

(4.) Ministers should not be discouraged because there is opposition to the gospel. It is one ground of encouragement. It is an indication of the presence of God in awakening the conscience. And it is far more favourable as a season to do good than a dead calm, and when there is universal stagnation and unconcern.

11 Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren.

He recommends Timothy to them, in several particulars. As,

1. He bids them take care that he should be among them without feat, 1Co 16:10. Timothy was sent by the apostle to correct the abuses which had crept in among them; and not only to direct, but to blame, and censure, and reprove, those who were culpable. They were all in factions, and no doubt the mutual strife and hatred ran very high among them. There were some very rich, as it is probable; and many very proud, upon account both of their outward wealth and spiritual gifts. Proud spirits cannot easily bear

reproof. It was reasonable therefore to think young Timothy might be roughly used; hence the apostle warns them against using him ill. Not but that he was prepared for the worst; but, whatever his firmness and prudence might be, it was their duty to behave themselves well towards him, and not discourage and dishearten him in his Lord's work. They should not fly out into resentment at his reproof. Note, Christians should bear faithful reproofs from their ministers, and not terrify and discourage them from doing their duty.

2. He warns them against despising him, 1Co 16:11. He was but a young man, and alone, as Ecumenius observes. He had no one to back him, and his own youthful face and years commanded but little reverence; and therefore the great pretenders to wisdom among them might be apt to entertain contemptuous thoughts of him. "Now," says the apostle, "guard against this." Not that he distrusted Timothy; he knew that Timothy would do nothing to bring contempt on his character, nothing to make his youth despicable. But pride was a reigning sin among the Corinthians, and such a caution was but too necessary. Note, Christians should be very careful not to pour contempt on any, but especially on ministers, the faithful ministers of Christ. These, whether young or old, are to be had in high esteem for their works sake. 3. He tells them they should give him all due encouragement, use him well while he was with them; and, as an evidence of this, they should send him away in friendship, and well prepared for his journey back again to Paul. This, as I have before observed, is the meaning of bringing him on his journey in peace, 1Co 16:11. Note, Faithful ministers are not only to be well received by a people among whom they may for a season minister, but are to be sent away with due respect.

He assigns the reasons why they should behave thus towards Timothy.

1. Because he was employed in the same work as Paul, and acted in it by the same authority, 1Co 16:10. He did not come on Paul's

errand among them, nor to do his work, but the work of the Lord. Though he was not an apostle, he was assistant to one, and was sent upon this very business by a divine commission. And therefore to vex his spirit would be to grieve the Holy Spirit; to despise him would be to despise him that sent him, not Paul, but Paul's Lord and theirs. Note, Those who work the work of the Lord should be neither terrified nor despised, but treated with all tenderness and respect. Such are all the faithful ministers of the word, though not all in the same rank and degree. Pastors and teachers, as well as apostles and evangelists, while they are doing their duty, are to be treated with honour and respect.

2. Another reason is implied; as they were to esteem him for his work's sake, so also for Paul's sake, who had sent him to Corinth; not of his own errand indeed, but to work the work of the Lord: Conduct him forth in peace, that he may come to me, for I look for him with the brethren (1Co 16:11); or I with the brethren look for him (the original will bear either), ekdechomai gar auton meta ton adelphon--"I am expecting his return, and his report concerning you; and shall judge by your conduct towards him what your regard and respect for me will be. Look to it that you send him back with no evil report." Paul might expect from the Corinthians, that a messenger from him, upon such an errand, should be regarded, and well treated. His services and success among them, his authority with them as an apostle, would challenge this at their hands. They would hardly dare to send back Timothy with a report that would grieve or provoke the apostle. "I and the brethren expect his return, wait for the report he is to make; and therefore do not use him ill, but respect him, regard his message, and let him return in peace."

12 As touching *our* brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

He informs them of Apollos's purpose to see them. 1. He himself had greatly desired him to come to them, 1Co 16:12. Though one party among them had declared for Apollos against Paul (if that passage is to be understood literally, vide 1Co 4:6), yet Paul did

not hinder Apollos from going to Corinth in his own absence, nay, he pressed him to go thither. He had no suspicions of Apollos, as if he would lessen Paul's interest and respect among them, to the advancement of his own. Note, Faithful ministers are not apt to entertain jealousies of each other, nor suspect of such selfish designs. True charity and brotherly love think no evil. And where should these reign, if not in the breasts of the ministers of Christ? 2. Apollos could not be prevailed on for the present to come, but would at a more convenient season. Perhaps their feuds and factions might render the present season improper. He would not go to be set at the head of a party and countenance the dividing and contentious humour. When this had subsided, through Paul's epistle to them and Timothy's ministry among them, he might conclude a visit would be more proper. Apostles did not vie with each other, but consulted each other's comfort and usefulness. Paul intimates his great regard to the church of Corinth, when they had used him ill, by entreating Apollos to go to them; and Apollos shows his respect to Paul, and his concern to keep up his character and authority, by declining the journey till the Corinthians were in better temper. Note, It is very becoming the ministers of the gospel to have and manifest a concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

Final Greetings

13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Some general advices; as,

1. That they should watch (1Co 16:13), be wakeful and upon their guard. A Christian is always in danger, and therefore should ever be on the watch; but the danger is greater at some times and under some circumstances. The Corinthians were in manifest danger upon many accounts: their feuds ran high, the irregularities among them were very great, there were deceivers got among them, who endeavoured to corrupt their faith in the most important articles, those without which the practice of virtue and piety could never subsist. And surely in such dangerous circumstances it was their concern to watch. Note, If a Christian would be secure, he must be

on his guard; and the more his danger the greater vigilance is needful for his security.

2. He advises them to stand fast in the faith, to keep their ground, adhere to the revelation of God, and not give it up for the wisdom of the world, nor suffer it to be corrupted by it--stand for the faith of the gospel, and maintain it even to death; and stand in it, so as to abide in the profession of it, and feel and yield to its influence.

Note, A Christian should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert nor renounce it. It is by this faith alone that he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation; it is by faith that we stand (2Co 1:24); it is by this that we must overcome the world (1Jo 5:4), both when it fawns and when it frowns, when it tempts and when it terrifies. We must stand therefore in the faith of the gospel, if we would maintain our integrity. 3. He advises them to act like men, and be strong: "Act the manly, firm, and resolved part: behave strenuously, in opposition to the bad men who would divide and corrupt you, those who would split you into factions or seduce you from the faith: be not terrified nor inveigled by them; but show yourselves men in Christ, by your steadiness, by your sound judgment and firm resolution."

Note, Christians should be manly and firm in all their contests with their enemies, in defending their faith, and maintaining their integrity. They should, in an especial manner, be so in those points of faith that lie at the foundation of sound and practical religion, such as were attacked among the Corinthians: these must be maintained with solid judgment and strong resolution. 4. He advises them to do every thing in charity, 1Co 16:14. Our zeal and constancy must be consistent with charity. When the apostle would have us play the man for our faith or religion, he puts in a caution against playing the devil for it. We may defend our faith, but we must, at the same time, maintain our innocence, and not devour and destroy, and think with ourselves that the wrath of man will work the righteousness of God, Jam 1:24.

Note, Christians should be careful that charity not only reign in their hearts, but shine out in their lives, nay, in their most manly defences of the faith of the gospel. There is a great difference between constancy and cruelty, between Christian firmness and feverish wrath and transport. Christianity never appears to so much advantage as when the charity of Christians is most conspicuous when they can bear with their mistaken brethren, and oppose the open enemies of their holy faith in love, when every thing is done in charity, when they behave towards one another, and towards all men, with a spirit of meekness and good will.

14 Let all your things be done with charity.

15 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas,
that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted
themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

16 that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that
helpeth with *us*, and laboreth.

17 I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus:
for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied.

18 For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore
acknowledge ye them that are such.

19 The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute
you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their
house.

20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss.

21 The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand.

22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be
Anathema, Maranatha.

With a very solemn warning to them: If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, 1Co 16:22. We sometimes need words of threatening, that we may fear. Blessed is he, says the wise man, who feareth always. Holy fear is a very good friend both to holy faith and holy living. An how much reason have all Christians to fear falling under this doom! If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha. Here observe,

1 The person described, who is liable to this doom: He that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ. A meiosis, as some think; he who blasphemes Christ disowns his doctrine, slights and contemns his institutions, or, through pride of human knowledge and learning, despises his revelations. It stands here as a warning to the Corinthians and a rebuke of their criminal behaviour. It is an admonition to them not to be led away from the simplicity of the gospel, or those principles of it which were the great motives to purity of life, by pretenders to science, by the wisdom of the world, which would call their religion folly, and its most important doctrines absurd and ridiculous. Those men had a spite at Christ; and, if the Corinthians give ear to their seducing speeches, they were in danger of apostatizing from him. Against this he gives them here a very solemn caution. "Do not give into such conduct, if you would escape the severest vengeance." Note, Professed Christians will, by contempt of Christ, and revolt from him, bring upon themselves the most dreadful destruction. Some understand the words as they lie, in their plain and obvious meaning, for such as are without holy and sincere affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many who have his name much in their mouths have no true love to him in their hearts, will not have him to rule over them (Lu 19:27), no, not though they have very towering hopes of being saved by him. And none love him in truth who do not love his laws and keep his commandments. Note, There are many Christians in name who do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. But can any thing be more criminal or provoking? What, not love the most glorious lover in the world! Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, who shed his blood for us, to testify his love to us, and that after heinous wrong and provocation! What had we a power of loving for, if we are unmoved with such love as this, and without affection to such a Saviour? But,

2. We have here the doom of the person described: "Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, lie under the heaviest and most dreadful curse. Let him be separated from the people of God, from the favour of God, and delivered up to his final, irrevocable, and inexorable vengeance" Maran-atha is a Syriac phrase, and signifies

The Lord cometh. That very Lord whom they do not love, to whom they are inwardly and really disaffected whatever outward profession they make, is coming to execute judgment. And to be exposed to his wrath, to be divided to his left hand, to be condemned by him, how dreadful! If he will destroy, who can save? Those who fall under his condemning sentence must perish, and that for ever. Note, Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ must perish without remedy. The wrath of God abides on every one who believes not on the Son, Joh 3:36. And true faith in Christ will evermore be productive of sincere love to him. Those who love him not cannot be believers in him.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you.

24 My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

[2 Corinthians]

2 Corinthians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our*
brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints
which are in all Achaia:
2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Affliction

3 Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the
Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

The object of the apostle's thanksgiving, to whom he offers up blessing and praise, namely, the blessed God, who only is to be praised, whom he describes by several glorious and amiable titles.

1. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: ho Theos kai pater tou Kyriou hemon Iesou Christou. God is the Father of Christ's divine nature by eternal generation, of his human nature by miraculous conception in the womb of the virgin, and of Christ as God-man, and our Redeemer, by covenant-relation, and in and through him as Mediator our God and our Father, Joh 20:17. In the Old Testament we often meet with this title, The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, to denote God's covenant-relation to them and their seed; and in the New Testament God is styled the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to denote his covenant-relation to the Mediator and his spiritual seed. Ga 3:16.

2. The Father of mercies. There is a multitude of tender mercies in God essentially, and all mercies are from God originally: mercy in his genuine offspring and his delight. He delighteth in mercy, Mic 7:18.

3. The God of all comfort; from his proceedeth the COMFORTER, Joh 15:26. He giveth the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, 2Co 1:22. All our comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in him.

4 who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

The benefits that he himself and his companions had received from God; for God had comforted them in all their tribulations, 2Co 1:4. In the world they had trouble, but in Christ they had peace. The apostles met with many tribulations, but they found comfort in them all: their sufferings (which are called the sufferings of Christ, 2Co 1:5, because Christ sympathized with his members when suffering for his sake) did abound, but their consolation by Christ did abound also. Note,

(1.) Then are we qualified to receive the comfort of God's mercies when we set ourselves to give him the glory of them.

(2.) Then we speak best of God and his goodness when we speak from our own experience, and, in telling others, tell God also what he has done for our souls.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you *is* steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not
trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Paul felt that he was condemned to die; that he felt as if he were under sentence of death, and with no hope of acquittal; he was called to contemplate the hour of death as just before him. The words, "in ourselves," mean, against ourselves; or, we expected certainly to die. This seems as if he had been con- condemned to die; and may either refer to some instance when the popular fury was so great that he felt it was determined he should die, or, more probably, to a judicial sentence that he should be cast to the wild beasts, with the certain expectation that he would be destroyed, as was always the case with those who were subjected to the execution of such a sentence. Here he touches only on the doctrine of the resurrection, taking it for granted that its truth is admitted by the Corinthians, and urging its bearing on their practice.

That we should not trust in ourselves. This is an exceedingly beautiful and important sentiment. It teaches that, in the time to which Paul refers, he was in so great danger, and had so certain a prospect of death, that he could put no reliance on himself, he felt that he must die; and that human aid was vain. According to every probability he would die; and all that he could do was to cast himself on the protection of that God who had power to save him even then, if he chose, and who, if he did it, would exert power similar to that which is put forth when the dead are raised. The effect, therefore, of the near prospect of death, was to lead him to put increased confidence in God. He felt that God only could save him; or that God only could sustain him if he should die. Perhaps, also, he means to say, that the effect of this was to lead him to put increased confidence in God after his deliverance; not to trust in his own plans, or to confide in his own strength; but to feel that all that he had was entirely in the hands of God. This is a common and a happy effect of the near prospect of death to a Christian; and it is well to contemplate the effect on such a mind as that of Paul in the near prospect of dying, and to see how instinctively then it clings to God. A true Christian in such circumstances will rush to His arms, and feel that there he is safe. But in God which raiseth the dead. Intimating that a rescue in such circumstances would be like raising the dead. It is probable that

on this occasion Paul was near dying; that he had given up all hope of life--perhaps, as at Lystra, (Acts 14:19,) he was supposed to be dead. He felt, therefore, that he was raised up by the immediate power of God, and regarded it as an exertion of the same power by which the dead are raised. Paul means to intimate, that so far as depended on any power of his own, he was dead. He had no power to recover himself; and but for the gracious interposition of God he would have died.

What they did in their distress: They trusted in God. And they were brought to this extremity in order that they should not trust in themselves but in God, 2Co 1:9. Note, God often brings his people into great straits, that they may apprehend their own insufficiency to help themselves, and may be induced to place their trust and hope in his all-sufficiency. Our extremity is God's opportunity. In the mount will the Lord be seen; and we may safely trust in God, who raiseth the dead, 2Co 1:9. God's raising the dead is a proof of his almighty power. He that can do this can do any thing, can do all things, and is worthy to be trusted in at all times. Abraham's faith fastened upon this instance of the divine power: He believed God who quickeneth the dead, Ro 4:17. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust in God, who can bring back not only from the gates, but from the jaws, of death.

10 who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us;*

What use they made of this deliverance: We trust that he will yet deliver us (2Co 1:10), that God will deliver to the end, and preserve to his heavenly kingdom. Note, Past experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and they lay great obligations to trust in God for time to come. We reproach our experiences if we distrust God in future straits, who hath delivered as in former troubles. David, even when a young man, and when he had but a small stock of experiences, argued after the manner of the apostle here, 1Sa 17:37.

11 ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

The Postponement of Paul's Visit

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

He appeals to the testimony of conscience with rejoicing (2Co 1:12), in which observe,

1 The witness appealed to, namely, conscience, which is instead of a thousand witnesses. This God's deputy in the soul, and the voice of conscience is the voice of God. They rejoiced in the testimony of conscience, when their enemies reproached them, and were enraged against them. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, if that be right and upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing at all times and in all conditions. An approving conscience. It does not condemn me on the subject. Though others might accuse him, though his name might be calumniated, yet he had comfort in the approval which his own conscience gave to his course. Paul's conscience was enlightened, and its decisions were correct. Whatever others might charge him with, he knew what had been the aim and purpose of his life; and the consciousness of upright aims, and of such plans as the "grace of God" would prompt to, sustained him. An approving conscience is of inestimable value when we are calumniated--and when we draw near to death.

2 The testimony this witness gave. And here take notice, Conscience witnessed,

(a.) Concerning their conversation, their constant course and tenour of life: by that we may judge of ourselves, and not by this or that single act.

(b.) Concerning the nature or manner of their conversation; that it was in simplicity and godly sincerity. This blessed apostle was a true Israelite, a man of plain dealing; you might know where to have him.

He was not a man who seemed to be one thing and was another, but a man of sincerity.

(c.) Concerning the principle they acted from in all their conversation, both in the world and towards these Corinthians; and that was not fleshly wisdom, nor carnal politics and worldly views, but it was the grace of God, a vital gracious principle in their hearts, that cometh from God, and tendeth to God. Then will our conversation be well ordered when we live and act under the influence and command of such a gracious principle in the heart.

That in simplicity. εναπλοτητι. Tindal renders this forcibly, "without doubleness." The word means sincerity, candour, probity, plain-heartedness, Christian simplicity, frankness, integrity. See 2Cor 11:3. It stands opposed to double-dealings and purposes; to deceitful appearances, and crafty plans; to mere policy, and craftiness in accomplishing an object. A man under the influence of this, is straightforward, candid, open, frank; and he expects to accomplish his purpose by integrity and fair dealing, and not by stratagem and cunning. Policy, craft, artful plans, and deep-laid schemes of deceit belong to the world; simplicity of aim and purpose are the true characteristics of a real Christian. And godly sincerity. Greek, "Sincerity of God." This may be a Hebrew idiom, by which the superlative degree is indicated; when, in order to express the highest degree, they added the name of God, as in the phrases "mountains of God," signifying the highest mountains, or "cedars of God," denoting lofty cedars. Or it may mean such sincerity as God manifests and approves; such as he, by his grace, would produce in the heart; such as the religion of the gospel is fitted to produce. The word used here, ειλικρινεια, and rendered sincerity, denotes, properly, clearness, such as is judged of or discerned in sunshine, (from ειλη and κρινω,) and thence pureness, integrity. It is most probable that the phrase here denotes that sincerity which God produces and approves; and the sentiment is, that pure religion, the religion of God, produces entire sincerity in the heart. Its purposes and aims are open and manifest, as if seen in the sunshine. The plans of the world are obscure, deceitful, and dark, as if in night.

13 For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or
acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;
14 as also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing,
even as ye also *are* ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.
15 And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before,
that ye might have a second benefit;
16 and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of
Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward
Judea.
17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the
things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with
me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?
18 But *as* God *is* true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.
19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by
us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but
in him was yea.
20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto
the glory of God by us.

Bad men are false; good men are fickle; but God is true, neither fickle nor false. The apostle, having mentioned the stability of the divine promises, makes a digression to illustrate this great and sweet truth, that all the promises of God are yea and amen. For,

1. They are the promises of the God of truth (2Co 1:20), of him that cannot lie, whose truth as well as mercy endureth for ever.

2. They are made in Christ Jesus (2Co 1:20), the Amen, the true and faithful witness; he hath purchased and ratified the covenant of promises, and is the surety of the covenant, Heb 7:22.

3. They are confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He does establish Christians in the faith of the gospel; he has anointed them with his sanctifying grace, which in scripture is often compared to oil; he has sealed them, for their security and confirmation; and he is given as an earnest in their hearts, 2Co 1:21,22. An earnest secures the promise, and is part of the payment. The illumination of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an

earnest of everlasting joy. Note, The veracity of God, the mediation of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the promises shall be sure to all the seed, and the accomplishment of them shall be to the glory of God (2Co 1:20) for the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulness.

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God;
22 who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.
23 Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.
24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

2 Corinthians-2

1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.
2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?
3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy* of you all.
4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

But that ye might know the love, etc. This was one of the best evidences of his great love to them which he could possibly give. It is proof of genuine friendship for another, when we faithfully and affectionately admonish him of the error of his course; it is the highest proof of affection when we do it with tears. It is cruelty to suffer a brother to remain in sin unadmonished; it is cruel to admonish him of it in a harsh, severe, and authoritative tone; but it is proof of tender attachment when we go to him with tears, and entreat him to repent and reform. No man gives higher proof of attachment to another than he who affectionately admonishes him of his sin and danger.

Forgiveness for the Offender

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part:
that I may not overcharge you all.

If any have caused grief. There is doubtless here an allusion to the incestuous person. But it is very delicately done. He does not mention him by name. There is not anywhere an allusion to his name; nor is it possible now to know it. Is this not a proof that the names of the offending brethren in a church should not be put on the records of sessions, and churches, and presbyteries, to be handed down to posterity? Paul does not here either expressly refer to such a person. He makes his remark general, that it might be as tender and kind to the offending brother as possible. They would know whom he meant, but they had already punished him, as Paul supposed, enough; and now all that he said in regard to him was as tender as possible, and fitted, as much as possible, to conciliate his feelings and allay his grief. He did not harshly charge him with sin; he did not use any abusive or severe epithets; but he gently insinuates that he "had caused grief;" he had pained the hearts of his brethren.

6 Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of
many.

it was a sufficient punishment to the offender. It had accomplished all that he had desired. It had humbled him, and brought him to repentance; and doubtless led him to put away his. wife. Compare 1Cor 5:1. As that had been done, it was proper now that he should be again restored to the privileges of the church. No evil would result from such a restoration, and their duty to their penitent brother demanded it. Mr. Locke has remarked, that Paul conducts this subject here with very great tenderness and delicacy. The entire passage, from 2Cor 2:5-10, relates solely to this offending brother; yet he never once mentions his name, nor does he mention his crime. He speaks of him only in the soft terms of "such a one" and "any one." Nor does he use an epithet which would be calculated to wound his feelings, or to transmit his name to posterity, or to communicate it to other churches. So that though this epistle should be read, as Paul doubtless intended, by other churches, and be

transmitted to future times, yet no one would ever be acquainted with the name of the individual. How different this from the temper of those who would blazon abroad the names of offenders, or make a permanent record to carry them down with dishonour to posterity.

7 So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him,* and comfort *him,* lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

that when that is done, the church ought to forgive the offending brother, and admit him again to their fellowship. When it can be ascertained that the punishment has been effectual in reforming him, may depend somewhat on the nature of the offence. In this case, it was sufficiently shown by his putting away his wife, and by the manifestations of sorrow. So, in other cases, it may be shown by a man's abandoning a course of sin, and reforming his life. If he has been unjust, by his repairing the evil; if he has been pursuing an unlawful business, by abandoning it; if he has pursued a course of vice, by his forsaking it, and by giving satisfactory evidences of sorrow and of reformation, for a period sufficiently long to show his sincerity. The time which will be required in each case must depend, of course, somewhat on the nature of the offence, the previous character of the individual, the temptations to which he may be exposed, and the disgrace which he may have brought on his Christian calling. It is to be observed, also, that then his restoration is to be regarded as an act of forgiveness, a layout, (χαρισασθαι, that is, χαρις, favour, grace,) on the part of the church. It is not a matter of justice, or of claim on his part; for having once dishonoured his calling, he has forfeited his right to a good standing among Christians; but it is a matter of favour, and he should be willing to humble himself before the church, and make suitable acknowledgment for his offences.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it,* for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ;

11 lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of
his devices.

Paul's Anxiety at Troas

12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a
door was opened unto me of the Lord,
13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but
taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

Paul then states the disappointment which he had had at Troas in not seeing Titus, from whom he had expected to learn what was the state of the church at Corinth, and what was the reception of his letter there; but that not seeing him there, he had gone on to Macedonia

Triumphant in Christ

14 Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in
Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in
every place.
15 For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved,
and in them that perish:

God had made him everywhere successful; and had made him triumph in Christ in every place. This fact gives him occasion 2Cor 2:15,16 to state the general effect of his preaching and his labours. His efforts, he says, were always acceptable to God--though he could not be ignorant that in some cases the gospel which he preached was the occasion of the aggravated condemnation of those who heard and rejected it. Yet he had the consolation of reflecting that it was by no fault of his, 2Cor 2:17. It was not because he had corrupted the word of God; it was not because he was unfaithful; it was not because he was not sincere. He had a good conscience-- a conscience which assured him that he spoke in sincerity, and as in the sight of God--though the unhappy effect might be that many would perish from under his ministry.

16 to the one *we are* the savor of death unto death; and to the other the
savor of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

Here observe,

1 The different success of the gospel, and its different effects upon several sorts of persons to whom it is preached. The success is different; for some are saved by it, while others perish under it. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering the different effects the gospel has. For,

(1.) Unto some it is a savour of death unto death. Those who are willingly ignorant, and wilfully obstinate, disrelish the gospel, as men dislike an ill savour, and therefore they are blinded and hardened by it: it stirs up their corruptions, and exasperates their spirits. They reject the gospel, to their ruin, even to spiritual and eternal death.

(2.) Unto others the gospel is a savour of life unto life. To humble and gracious souls the preaching of the word is most delightful and profitable. As it is sweeter than honey to the taste, so it is more grateful than the most precious odours to the senses, and much more profitable; for as it quickened them at first, when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes them more lively, and will end in eternal life.

2 The awful impressions this matter made upon the mind of the apostle, and should also make upon our spirits: Who is sufficient for these things? 2Co 2:16. Tis hikanos--who is worthy to be employed in such weighty work, a work of such vast importance, because of so great consequence? Who is able to perform such a difficult work, that requires so much skill and industry? The work is great and our strength is small; yea, of ourselves we have no strength at all; all our sufficiency is of God. Note, If men did seriously consider what great things depend upon the preaching of the gospel, and how difficult the work of the ministry is, they would be very cautious how they enter upon it, and very careful to perform it well.

3. The comfort which the apostle had under this serious consideration,

(1.) Because faithful ministers shall be accepted of God, whatever their success be: We are, if faithful, unto God a sweet savour of Christ (2Co 2:15), in those who are saved and in those also who perish. God will accept of sincere intentions, and honest endeavours, though with many they are not successful. Ministers shall be accepted, and recompensed, not according to their success, but according to their fidelity. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, Isa 49:5.

(2.) Because his conscience witnessed to his faithfulness, 2Co 2:17. Though many did corrupt the word of God, yet the apostle's conscience witnessed to his fidelity. He did not mix his own notions with the doctrines and institutions of Christ; he durst not add to, nor diminish from, the word of God; he was faithful in dispensing the gospel, as he received it from the Lord, and had no secular turn to serve; his aim was to approve himself to God, remembering that his eye was always upon him; he therefore spoke and acted always as in the sight of God, and therefore in sincerity. Note, What we do in religion is not of God, does not come from God, will not reach to God, unless it be done in sincerity, as in the sight of God.

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

2 Corinthians-3

Ministers of the New Covenant

1 Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you?

2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

3 *forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:
5 not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;
6 who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

This he does in answer to the accusations of false teachers, who magnify greatly the law of Moses. He distinguishes between the letter and the spirit even of the New Testament, 2Co 3:6. As able ministers of the New Testament, they were ministers not merely of the letter, to read the written word, or to preach the letter of the gospel only, but they were ministers of the Spirit also; the Spirit of God did accompany their ministrations. The letter killeth; this the letter of the law does, for that is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel we shall be never the better for so doing, for even that will be a savour of death unto death; but the Spirit of the gospel, going along with the ministry of the gospel, giveth life spiritual and life eternal.

7 But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away;

The Old-Testament dispensation was the ministration of death (2Co 3:7), whereas that of the New Testament is the ministration of life. The law discovered sin, and the wrath and curse of God. This showed us a God above us and a God against us; but the gospel discovers grace, and Emmanuel, God with us. Upon this account the gospel is more glorious than the law; and yet that had a glory in it, witness the shining of Moses's face (an indication thereof) when he came down from the mount with the tables in his hand, that reflected rays of brightness upon his countenance.

8 how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?
9 For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.
10 For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

The law was the ministration of condemnation, for that condemned and cursed every one who continued not in all things written therein to do them; but the gospel is the ministration of righteousness: therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed. This shows us that the just shall live by his faith. This reveals the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. The gospel therefore so much exceeds in glory that in a manner it eclipses the glory of the legal dispensation, 2Co 3:10. As the shining of a burning lamp is lost, or not regarded, when the sun arises and goes forth in his strength; so there was no glory in the Old Testament, in comparison with that of the New.

11 For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which
remaineth *is* glorious.
12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of
speech:
13 and not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of
Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is
abolished:

Concerning the duty of the ministers of the gospel to use great plainness or clearness of speech. They ought not, like Moses, to put a veil upon their faces, or obscure and darken those things which they should make plain. The gospel is a more clear dispensation than the law; the things of God are revealed in the New Testament, not in types and shadows, and ministers are much to blame if they do not set spiritual things, and gospel-truth and grace, in the clearest light that is possible. Though the Israelites could not look stedfastly to the end of what was commanded, but is now abolished, yet we may. We may see the meaning of those types and shadows by the accomplishment, seeing the veil is done away in, Christ and he is come, who was the end of the law for righteousness to all those who believe, and whom Moses and all the prophets pointed to, and wrote of.

14 but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same
veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is
done away in Christ.
15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their
heart.

16 Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken
away.
17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*,
there *is* liberty.

Concerning the privilege and advantage of those who enjoy the gospel, above those who lived under the law. For,

1. Those who lived under the legal dispensation had their minds blinded (2Co 3:14), For until this day, etc. The sense of this is, that even to the time when Paul wrote, it was a characteristic of the great mass of the Jewish people, that they did not understand the true sense of their own Scriptures. They did not understand its doctrines in regard to the Messiah. vail seems to be thrown over the Old Testament when they read it, as there was over the face of Moses, so that the glory of their own Scriptures is concealed from their view, as the glory of the face of Moses was hidden. Which vail is done away in Christ. In the manifestation, or appearance of Jesus the Messiah, the vail is removed. The obscurity which rested on the prophecies and types of the former dispensation is withdrawn; and as the face of Moses could have been distinctly seen if the vail on his face had been removed, so it is in regard to the true meaning of the Old Testament by the coming of the Messiah. What was obscure is now made clear; and the prophecies are so completely fulfilled in him, that his coming has removed the covering, and shed a clear light over them all. Many of the prophecies, for example, until the Messiah actually appeared, appeared obscure, and almost contradictory. Those which spoke of him, for illustration, as man and as God; as suffering, and yet reigning; as dying, and yet as ever-living; as a mighty Prince, a Conqueror, and a King, and yet as a man of sorrows; as humble, and yet glorious: all seemed difficult to be reconciled until they were seen to harmonize in Jesus of Nazareth. Then they were plain, and the vail was taken away. Christ is seen to answer all the previous descriptions of him in the Old Testament; and his coming casts a clear light on all which was before obscure. and there was a veil upon their hearts, 2Co 3:15. Thus it was formerly, and so it was especially as to those who remained in Judaism after the coming of the Messiah and the publication of his gospel.

Nevertheless, the apostle tells us, there is a time coming when this veil also shall be taken away, and when it (the body of that people) shall turn to the Lord, 2Co 3:16. Or, when any particular person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away; the blindness of the mind, and the hardness of the heart, are cured.

2 The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel is much more happy. For,

(1.) They have liberty: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, and where he worketh, as he does under the gospel-dispensation, there is liberty (2Co 3:17), freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the servitude of corruption; liberty of access to God, and freedom of speech in prayer. The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged, to run the ways of God's commandments. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. This is a general truth designed to illustrate the particular sentiment which he had just advanced. The word "liberty" here ελευθερια refers, I think, to freedom in speaking; the power of speaking openly and freely, as in 2Cor 3:12. It states the general truth, that the effect of the Spirit of God was to give light and clearness of view; to remove obscurity from a subject, and to enable one to see it plainly. This would be a truth that could not be denied by the Jews, who held to the doctrine that the spirit of God revealed truth, and it must be admitted by all. Under the influence of that Spirit, therefore, Paul says that he was able to speak with openness and boldness; that he had a clear view of truth, which the mass of the Jews had not; and that the system of religion which he preached was open, plain, and clear. The word "freedom" would, perhaps, better convey the idea. "There is freedom from the dark and obscure views of the Jews; freedom from their prejudices, and their superstitions; freedom from the slavery and bondage of sin; the freedom of the children of God, who have clear views of him as their Father and Redeemer, and who are enabled to express those views openly and boldly to the world."

(2.) They have light; for with open face we behold the glory of the Lord, 2Co 3:18. The Israelites saw the glory of God in a cloud, which was dark and dreadful; but Christians see the glory of the Lord as in a glass, more clearly and comfortably. It was the peculiar privilege of Moses for God to converse with him face to face, in a friendly manner; but now all true Christians see him more clearly with open face. He showeth them his glory.

(3.) This light and liberty are transforming; we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory (2Co 3:18), from one degree of glorious grace unto another, till grace here be consummated in glory for ever. How much therefore should Christians prize and improve these privileges! We should not rest contented without an experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit, bringing us into a conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But we all. All Christians. The discussion in the chapter has related Mainly to the apostles'; but this declaration seems evidently to refer to all Christians, as distinguished from the Jews. With open face. 1Cor 13:12. Tindal renders this, "And now the Lord's glory appeareth in us all as in a glass. The sense is, "with unvailed face," alluding to the fact 2Cor 3:13 that the face of Moses was vailed, so that the Children of Israel could not steadfastly look on it. In contradistinction from that, Paul says that Christians are enabled to look upon the glory of the Lord in the gospel without a vail--without any obscure, intervening medium. Beholding as in a glass. On the word glass, and the sense in which it is used in the New Testament, 1Cor 13:12. The word here used (κατοπτριζομενοι) has been very variously rendered. Macknight renders it, "We all reflecting as mirrors the glory of the Lord." Doddridge, "Beholding as by a glass." Locke, "With open countenances as mirrors, reflecting the glory of the Lord." The word κατοπτριζω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, to

look in a mirror; to behold as in a mirror. The mirrors of the ancients were made of burnished metal, and they reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness. And the meaning is, that the gospel reflected the glory of the Lord; it was, so to speak, the mirror--the polished, burnished substance in which the glory of the Lord shone, and where that glory was irradiated and reflected so that it might be seen by Christians. There was no vail over it; no obscurity; nothing to break its dazzling splendour, or to prevent its meeting the eye. Christians, by looking on the gospel, could see the glorious perfections and plans of God, as bright, and clear, and brilliant as they could see a light reflected from the burnished surface of the mirror. So to speak, the glorious perfections of God shone from heaven, beamed upon the gospel, and were thence reflected to the eye and the heart of the Christian, and had the effect of transforming them into the same image. This passage is one of great beauty, and is designed to set forth the gospel as being the reflection of the infinite glories of God to the minds and hearts of men. The glory of the Lord. The splendour, majesty, and holiness of God as manifested in the gospel, or of the Lord as incarnate. The idea is, that God was clearly and distinctly seen in the gospel. There was no obscurity, no vail, as in the case of Moses. In the gospel they were permitted to look on the full splendour of the Divine perfections--the justice, goodness, mercy, and benevolence of God--to see him as he is with undimmed and unvailed glory. The idea is, that the perfections of God shine forth with splendour and beauty in the gospel, and that we are permitted to look on them clearly and openly. Are changed into the same image. It is possible that there may be an allusion here to the effect which was produced by looking into an ancient mirror. Such mirrors were made of burnished metal, and the reflection from them would be intense. If a strong light were thrown on them, the rays would be cast by reflection on the face of him who looked on the mirror, and it would be strongly illuminated. And the idea may be, that the glory of God, the splendour of the Divine perfections, was thrown on the gospel, so to speak, like a bright light on a polished mirror; and that that glory was reflected from the gospel on him who contemplated it, so that he appeared to be transformed into the same image. Locke renders it, "We are changed into his very image

by a continued succession of glory, as it were, streaming upon us from the Lord." The figure is one of great beauty; and the idea is, that by placing ourselves within the light of the gospel--by contemplating the glory that shines there--we become changed into the likeness of the same glory, and conformed to that which shines there with so much splendour. By contemplating the resplendent face of the blessed Redeemer, we are changed into something of the same image. It is a law of our nature that we are moulded, in our moral feelings, by the persons with whom we associate, and by the objects which we contemplate. We become insensibly assimilated to those with whom we have intercourse, and to the objects with which we are familiar. We imbibe the opinions, we copy the habits, we imitate the manners, we fall into the customs of those with whom we have daily conversation, and whom we make our companions and friends. Their sentiments insensibly become our sentiments, and their ways our ways. It is thus with the books with which we are familiar. We are insensibly but certainly moulded into conformity to the opinions, maxims, and feelings which are there expressed. Our own sentiments undergo a gradual change, and we are likened to those with which in this manner we are conversant: So it is in regard to the opinions and feelings which from any cause we are in the habit of bringing before our minds. It is the way by which men become corrupted in their sentiments and feelings in their contact with the world; it is the way in which amusements, and the company of the gay and the dissipated, possess so much power; it is the way in which the young and inexperienced are beguiled and ruined; and it is the way in which Christians dim the lustre of their piety, and obscure the brightness of their religion, by their contact with the gay and fashionable world. And it is on the same great principle that Paul says that, by contemplating the glory of God in the gospel, we become insensibly but certainly conformed to the same image, and made like the Redeemer. His image will be reflected on us. We shall imbibe his sentiments, catch his feelings, and be moulded into the image of his own purity. Such is the great and wise law of our nature; and it is on this principle, and by this means, that God designs we should be made pure on earth, and kept pure in heaven for ever. From glory to glory. From one degree of glory to another.

"The more we behold this brilliant and glorious light, the more do rove reflect back its rays; that is, the more we contemplate the great truths of the Christian religion, the more do our minds become imbued with its spirit."--Bloomfield. This is said in contradistinction probably to Moses. The splendour on his face gradually died away. But not so with the light reflected from the gospel. It becomes deeper and brighter constantly. This sentiment is parallel to that expressed by the psalmist: "They go from strength to strength," Ps 84:7; that is, they go from one degree of strength to another, or one degree of holiness to another, until they come to the full vision of God himself in heaven. The idea in the phrase before us is, that there is a continual increase of moral purity and holiness under the gospel, until it results in the perfect glory of heaven. The doctrine is, that Christians advance in piety; and that this is done by the contemplation of the glory of God as it is revealed in the gospel. As by the Spirit of the Lord. Marg.; "Of the Lord the Spirit." Greek, "As from the Lord the Spirit." So Beza, Locke, Wolf, Rosenmuller, and Doddridge render it. The idea is, that it is by the Lord Jesus Christ the spirit of the law, the spirit, referred to by Paul above, 2Cor 3:6,17. It is done by the Holy Spirit procured or imparted by the Lord Jesus. This sentiment is in accordance with that which prevails everywhere in the Bible, that it is by the Holy Spirit alone that the heart is changed and purified. And the object of the statement here is, doubtless, to prevent the supposition that the change from "glory to glory" was produced in any sense by the mere contemplation of truth, or by any physical operation of such contemplation on the mind. It was by the Spirit of God alone that the heart was changed even under the gospel, and amidst the full blaze of its truth. Were it not for his agency, even the contemplation of the glorious truths of the gospel would be in vain, and would produce no saving effect on the human heart. (a) "a glass the glory" 1Cor 13:12 (b) "same image" Rom 8:29 (c) "glory to glory" Ps 84:7 (1) "by the Spirit" "of the Lord the Spirit" REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 3

(1.) The best of all evidences of a call to the office of the ministry is the Divine blessing resting on our labours, 2Cor 3:1,2. If sinners are converted; if souls are sanctified; if the interest, of pure religion

are advanced; if by humble, zealous, and self-denying efforts a man is enabled so to preach as that the Divine blessing shall rest constantly on his labours, it is among the best of all evidences that he is called of God, and is approved by him. And though it may be true, and is true, that men who are self-deceived, or are hypocrites, are sometimes the means of doing good, yet it is still true, as a general rule, that eminent and long-continued success in the ministry is an evidence of God's acceptance, and that he has called a minister to this office. Paul felt this, and often appealed to it; and why may not others also?

(2.) A minister may appeal to the effect of the gospel among his own people as a proof that it is from God, 2Cor 3:2,3. Nothing else would produce such effects as were produced at Corinth but the power of God. If the wicked are reclaimed; if the intemperate and licentious are made temperate and pure; if the dishonest are made honest, and the scoffer learns to pray, under the gospel, it proves that it is from God. To such effects a minister may appeal as proof that the gospel which he preaches is from heaven. A system which will produce these effects must be true.

(3.) A minister should so live among a people as to be able to appeal to them with the utmost confidence in regard to the purity and integrity of his own character, 2Cor 3:1,2. He should so live, and preach, and act, that he will be under no necessity of adducing testimonials from abroad in regard to his character. The effect of his gospel, and the tenor of his life, should be his best testimonial and to that he should be able to appeal. A man who is under a necessity constantly, or often, of defending his-own character; of bolstering it up by testimonials from abroad; who is obliged to spend much of his time in defending his reputation, or who chooses to spend much of his time in defending it, has usually a character and reputation not worth defending. Let a man live as he ought to do, and he will, in the end, have a good reputation. Let him strive to do the will of God, and save souls, and he will have all the reputation which he ought to have. God will take care of his character; and will give him just as much reputation as it is desirable that he should have. See Ps 37:5,6.

(4.) The church is, as it were, an epistle sent by the Lord Jesus, to show his character and will, 2Cor 3:3. It is his representative on earth. It holds his truth. It is to imitate his example. It is to show how he lived. And it is to accomplish that which he would accomplish were he personally on earth, and present among men-- as a letter is designed to accomplish some important purpose of the writer when absent. The church, therefore, should be such as shall appropriately express the will and desire of the Lord Jesus. It should resemble him. It should hold his truth; and it should devote itself with untiring diligence to the great purpose of advancing his designs, and spreading his gospel around the world.

(5.) Religion has its seat in the heart, 2Cor 3:3. It is engraven there. It is written not with ink, or engraven on stone, but it is written by the Spirit of God on the heart. That professed religion, therefore, which does not reach the heart, and which is not felt there, is false and delusive. There is no true religion which does not reach and affect the heart.

(6.) We should feel our dependence on God in all things, 2Cor 3:5. We are dependent on him,

1st, for revelation itself. Man had no power of originating the truths which constitute revelation. They are the free and pure gift of God.

2nd. For success in saving souls. God only can change the heart. It is not done by human reasoning; by any power of man; by any eloquence of persuasion. It is by the power of God; and if a minister of religion meets with any success, it will be by the presence and by the power of God alone.

3rd. We are dependent on him for the power of thought at all; for clearness of intellect; for such a state of bodily health as to permit us to think; for bright conceptions; for ability to arrange our thoughts; for the power of expressing them clearly; for such a state

of mind as shall be free from vain fancies, and vagaries, and eccentricities; and for such a state as shall mark our plans as those of common sense and prudence. On such plans much of the comfort of life depends; and on such plans depends also nearly all the success which men ever meet with in any virtuous and honourable calling. And if men felt, as they should do, how much they are dependent on God for the power of clear thinking, and for the characteristics of sound sense in their schemes, they would pray for it more than they do; and would be more grateful that such a rich blessing is so extensively conferred on men.

(7.) Religion has a living power, 2Cor 3:6. It is not the letter, but the spirit. It is not made up of forms and ceremonies. It does not consist in Cold, external rites, however regular they may be; nor in formal prayer, or in stated seasons of devotion. All these will be dead and vain, unless the heart is given to God and to his service. If these are all, there is no religion. And if we have no better religion than that, we should at once abandon our hopes, and seek for that which does not kill, but which makes alive.

(8.) The office of the ministers of the gospel is glorious, and most honourable, 2Cor 3:7-9. It is far more honourable than was the office of Moses; and their work is far more glorious than was his. His consisted in giving the law on tables of stone; in the external splendour which attended its promulgation; and in introducing a system which must be soon done away. His was a ministry "of death" and of "condemnation." Theirs is a ministration by which the Holy Spirit is communicated to men--through them as channels, or organs, by which the saving grace of that Spirit is imparted, it is a work by which men are made righteous, justified, and accepted; it is a work whose effects are never to fade away, but which are to live amidst the splendours of heaven.

(9.) The responsibility and solemnity of the work of the ministry. It was a solemn and responsible work for Moses to give the law amidst the thunders of Sinai to the children of Israel. It is much more solemn to be the medium by which the eternal truths of the

gospel are made known to men. The one, imposing as it was, was designed to be temporary, and was soon to pass away; the other is to be eternal in its effects, and is to enter vitally and deeply into the eternal destiny of man. The one pertained to laws written on stone; the other to influences that are deeply and for ever to affect the heart. No work can be more solemn and responsible than that through which the Holy Spirit, with renewing and sanctifying power, is conveyed to man; that which is connected with the justification of sinners; and that which in its effects is to be permanent as the soul itself, and to endure as long as God shall exist.

(10.) We see the folly of attempting to be justified by the law, 2Cor 3:7,9. It is the ministration of death and of condemnation. It speaks only to condemn. Law knows nothing of pardon. It is not given for that purpose; and no perfect law can contain within itself provisions for pardon. Besides, no one has ever complied with all the demands of the law; no one ever will. All have sinned. But if ALL the demands of the law be not complied with, it speaks only to condemn, Jas 2:10. If a man in other respects has been ever so good a citizen, and yet has committed murder, he must die. So says the law. If a man has been ever so valiant, and fought ever so bravely, and yet is guilty of an act of treason, he must die. The question is not what he has been in other respects, or what else he may or may not have done, but has he committed this offence? If he has, the law knows no forgiveness, and pronounces his condemnation. If pardoned, it must be by some other system than by the regular operation of law. So with the sinner against God. If the law is violated, it speaks only to condemn. If he is pardoned, it can be only by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(11.) The danger of grieving the Holy Spirit, 2Cor 3:8. The gospel is the field of the operations of the Holy Spirit in our world. It is the ministration of the Spirit. It is the channel by which his influences descend on man. To reject that gospel is to reject him, and to cut off the soul from all possibility of being brought under his saving influence and power for ever. He strives with men only in connexion with the gospel; and all hope, therefore, of being

brought under his saving power, is in attending to that gospel, and embracing its provisions. The multitudes, therefore, who are rejecting or neglecting that gospel, are throwing themselves beyond his saving influences, and placing themselves beyond the possibility of salvation,

(12.) We see the guilt of neglecting or rejecting the gospel. It is the scheme, and the only scheme, for pardon, 2Cor 3:8-10. It is a far more glorious manifestation of the goodness of God than the law of Moses. It is the glorious and benevolent manifestation of God, through the incarnation, the sufferings, and the death of his Son. It is the ONLY plan of pardoning mercy that has been or that will be revealed. If men are not pardoned through that, they are not pardoned at all. If they are not saved by that, they must die for ever. What guilt is there, therefore, in neglecting and despising it! What folly is there in turning away from its provisions of mercy,and neglecting to secure an interest in what it provides!

(13.) The gospel is to spread around the world, and endure to the end of time, 2Cor 3:11. It is not like the institutions of Moses, to endure for a limited period, and then to be done away. The cloud and tempest, the thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai, which attended the giving of the law, soon disappeared. The unusual and unnatural splendour on the countenance of Moses soon vanished away. All the magnificence of the Mosaic ritual also soon faded away. But not so the gospel. That abides. That is the last dispensation; the permanent economy; that under which the affairs of the world are to be brought to an end. That is to pervade all lands; to bless all people; to survive all revolutions; to outlive all the magnificence of courts, and all the splendour of mighty dynasties, and is to endure till this world shall come to an end, and live in its glorious effects for ever and ever. It is, therefore, to be the fixed principle, on which all Christians are to act, that the gospel is to be permanent, and is to spread over all lands, and yet fill all nations with joy. And if so, how fervent and unceasing should be their prayers and efforts to accomplish this great and glorious result!

(14.) We learn from this chapter the duty of preaching in a plain, simple, intelligible manner, 2Cor 3:12. Preaching should always be characterized indeed by good sense, and ministers should show that they are not fools, and their preaching should be such as to interest thinking men--for there is no folly or nonsense in the Bible. But their preaching should not be obscure, metaphysical, enigmatical, and abstruse. It should be so simple that the unlettered may learn the plan of salvation; so plain that no one shall mistake it except by his own fault. The hopes of the gospel are so clear that there is no need of ambiguity or enigma; no need of abstruse metaphysical reasoning in the pulpit. Nor should there be an attempt to appear wise or profound, by studying a dry, abstruse, and cold style and manner. The preacher should be open, plain, simple, sincere; he should testify what he feels; should be able to speak as himself animated by hope, and to tell of a world of glory to which he is himself looking forward with unspeakable joy.

(15.) It is the privilege of the Christian to look on the unvailed and unclouded glory of the gospel, 2Cor 3:12,13. He does not look at it through types and shadows. He does not contemplate it when a vail of obscurity is drawn designedly over it. He sees it in its true beauty and splendour. The Messiah has come, and he may contemplate openly and plainly his glory, and the grandeur of his work. The Jews looked upon it in the light of prophecy; to us it is history. They saw it only through obscure shadows, types, and figures; we see it in open day, may survey at leisure its full beauty, and contemplate in the fulness of its splendour the gospel of the blessed God. For this we cannot be too thankful; nor can we be too anxious lest we undervalue our privileges, and abuse the mercies that we enjoy.

(16.) In reading the Old Testament, we see the importance of suffering the rejected light of the New Testament to be thrown upon it, in order correctly to understand it, 2Cor 3:13,14. It is our privilege to know what the institutions of Moses meant; to see the and which he contemplated. And it is our privilege to see what they

referred to, and how they prefigured the Messiah and his gospel. In reading the Old Testament, therefore, there is no reason why we should not take with us the knowledge which we have derived from the New, respecting the character, work, and doctrines of the Messiah; and to suffer them to influence our understanding of the laws and institutions of Moses. Thus shall we treat the Bible as a whole, and allow one part to throw light on another--a privilege which we always concede to any book, There is no reason why Christians in reading the Old Testament should remain in the same darkness as the ancient or the modern Jews.

(17.) Thus read, the Old Testament will be to us of inestimable value, 2Cor 3:14. It is of value not only as introducing the gospel; as furnishing predictions whose fulfillment are full demonstration of the truth of religion; as containing specimens of the sublimest and purest poetry in the world; but it is of value as embodying, though amidst many types and shadows and much obscurity, all the great doctrines of the true religion. Though to the Jews, and to the world, there is a vail cast over it, yet to the Christian there is a beauty and splendour on all its pages--for the coming of Christ has removed that vail, and the sense of those ancient writings is now fully seen. True piety will value the Old Testament, and will find there, in the sweetest poetry in the world, the expression of feelings which the religion of the Messiah only can produce; and pure and elevated thoughts which could have been originated by nothing but his anticipated coming. It is no mark of piety or of wisdom to disparage the Jewish Scriptures. But the higher the attainments in Christian feeling, the more will the writings of Moses and the prophets be loved.

(18.) Men may have the Bible, and may read it long, and much, and yet not understand it, 2Cor 3:15. So it was, and is, with the Jews. The Scriptures were attentively read by them, and yet they did not understand them. So it is still. There is a vail on their heart, and they are blinded. So it is often now with others. Men often read the Bible, and see little beauty in it. They read, and they do not understand it. The reason is, the heart is not right. There should be a correspondence of feeling between the heart and the Bible, or a

congeniality of view in order to appreciate its value and its truth. No man can understand or appreciate Milton or Cowper who has not a taste like theirs. No man can understand and appreciate a a poem or an essay on patriotism, who is not a lover of his country; or on chastity, who is impure; or on temperance, who is intemperate; or on virtue in general, who is a stranger to virtue in every form. And so in reading the Bible. To appreciate and understand fully the writings of David, Isaiah, Paul, or John, we must have their feelings; our hearts must glow with their love to God and the Redeemer; we must feel as they did the guilt and burden of sin; and we must rejoice as they did in the hope of deliverance, and in the prospect of heaven. Till men have these feelings, they are not to wonder that the Bible is to them a dead letter, or a sealed book, and that they do not understand it, or see any beauty in its pages.

(19.) This chapter furnishes an argument for the fidelity and truth of the statement of Paul, 2Cor 3:15. The argument is, that his description is as applicable to the Jews now as it was in his own time--and that, therefore, it must have been drawn from nature. The same vail is on their hearts now as in his time; there is the same blindness arid darkness in regard to the true meaning of their Scriptures. The language of Paul will accurately express that blindness now; and his description, therefore, is not drawn from fancy, but from fact. It is true now in regard to that singular people, and it was true in his own time; and the lapse of eighteen hundred years has only served to confirm the truth of his description in regard to the people of his own nation and time.

(20.) That vail is to be removed only by their turning to God, 2Cor 3:16. It is only by true conversion that the mind can be brought to a full and clear understanding of the Scriptures; and that event will yet take place in regard to the Jews. They shall yet be converted to the Messiah whom their fathers slew, and whom they have So long rejected; and when that event shall occur, they shall see the beauty of their own Scriptures, and rejoice in the promises and glorious hopes which they hold out to the view.

(21.) The duty of meditating much on the glory of the gospel, 2Cor 3:18. It is by that we are purified. It is by keeping it constantly before the mind; dwelling on its splendour; thinking of its glorious truths, that we become transformed into the same image, and made like God. If the character is formed by the objects which we contemplate, and with which we are familiar; if we are insensibly moulded in our feelings and principles by that with which we constantly associate, then we should think much of the truths of the gospel. We should pray much--for thus we come in contact with God and his truth. We should read the Scripture much. We should commune with the good and the pure. We should make our companions of those who most love the Lord Jesus, and most decidedly bear his image. We should think much of a pure heaven. Thus shall we be moulded, insensibly it may be, but certainly, into the image of a holy God and Saviour, and be prepared for a pure and holy heaven.

2 Corinthians-4

1 Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

Their constancy and sincerity in their work and labour, concerning which observe,

1. Their constancy and perseverance in their work are declared: "We faint not (2Co 4:1) under the difficulty of our work, nor do we desist from our labour." And this their stedfastness was owing to the mercy of God. From the same mercy and grace from which they received the apostleship, they received strength to persevere in the work of that office.

Note, As it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be counted faithful, and be put into the ministry (1Ti 1:12), so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God if we continue faithful and persevere in our work with diligence. The best men in the world would faint in their work, and under their burdens, if

they did not receive mercy from God. By the grace of God I am what I am, said this great apostle in his former epistle to these Corinthians, 1Co 15:10. And that mercy which has helped us out, and helped us on, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end.

2 but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking
in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by
manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's
conscience in the sight of God.
3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:
4 in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them
which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ,
who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

An objection is obviated, which might be thus formed: "If it be thus, how then does it come to pass, that the gospel is hid, and proves ineffectual, as to some who hear it?" To which the apostle answers, by showing that this was not the fault of the gospel, nor of the preachers thereof. But the true reasons of this are,

1. Those are lost souls to whom the gospel is hid, or is ineffectual, 2Co 4:3. Christ came to save that which was lost (Mt 17:11), and the gospel of Christ is sent to save such; and, if this do not find and save them, they are lost for ever; they must never expect any thing else to save them, for there is no other method or means of salvation. The hiding of the gospel therefore from souls is both an evidence and cause of their ruin.

2. The god of this world hath blinded their minds, 2Co 4:4. They are under the influence and power of the devil, who is here called the god of this world, and elsewhere the prince of this world, because of the great interest he has in this world, the homage that is paid to him by multitudes in this world, and the great sway that, by divine permission, he bears in the world, and in the hearts of his subjects, or rather slaves. And as he is the prince of darkness, and ruler of the darkness of this world, so he darkens the understandings of men, and increases their prejudices, and supports his interest by keeping them in the dark, blinding their

minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. Observe,

(1.) Christ's design by his gospel is to make a glorious discovery of God to the minds of men. Thus, as the image of God, he demonstrates the power and wisdom of God, and the grace and mercy of God for their salvation. But,

(2.) The design of the devil is to keep men in ignorance; and, when he cannot keep the light of the gospel out of the world, he makes it his great business to keep it out of the hearts of men.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and
ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.
6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath
shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory
of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

A proof of their integrity is given, 2Co 4:5. They made it their business to preach Christ, and not themselves: We preach not ourselves. Self was not the matter nor the end of the apostles' preaching: they did not give their own notions and private opinions, nor their passions and prejudices, for the word and will of God; nor did they seek themselves, to advance their own secular interest or glory. But they preached Christ Jesus the Lord; and thus it did become them and behove them to do, as being Christ's servants. Their business was to make their Master known to the world as the Messiah, or the Christ of God, and as Jesus, the only Saviour of men, and as the rightful Lord, and to advance his honour and glory. Note, All the lines of Christian doctrine centre in Christ; and in preaching Christ we preach all we should preach. "As to ourselves," says the apostle, "we preach, or declare, that we are your servants for Jesus' sake." This was no compliment, but a real profession of a readiness to do good to their souls, and to promote their spiritual and eternal interest, and that for Jesus' sake; not for their own sake or their own advantage, but for Christ's sake, that they might imitate his great example, and advance his glory.

Note, Ministers should not be of proud spirits, lording it over God's heritage, who are servants to the souls of men: yet, at the same time, they must avoid the meanness of spirit implied in becoming the servants of the humours or the lusts of men; if they should thus seek to please men, they would not be the servants of Christ, Ga 1:10. And there was good reason,

1. Why they should preach Christ. For by gospel light we have the knowledge of the glory of God, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, 2Co 4:6. And the light of this Sun of righteousness is more glorious than that light which God commanded to shine out of darkness. It is a pleasant thing for the eye to behold the sun in the firmament; but it is more pleasant and profitable when the gospel shines in the heart.

Note, As light was the first-born of the first creation, so it is in the new creation: the illumination of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul. The grace of God created such a light in the soul that those who were sometimes darkness are made light in the Lord, Eph 5:8.

2. Why they should not preach themselves: because they were but earthen vessels, things of little or no worth or value. Here seems to be an allusion to the lamps which Gideon's soldiers carried in earthen pitchers, Jdg 7:16. The treasure of gospel light and grace is put into earthen vessels. The ministers of the gospel are weak and frail creatures, and subject to like passions and infirmities as other men; they are mortal, and soon broken in pieces. And God has so ordered it that the weaker the vessels are the stronger his power may appear to be, that the treasure itself should be valued the more.

Note, There is an excellency of power in the gospel of Christ, to enlighten the mind, to convince the conscience, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart; but all this power is from God the author, and not from men, who are but instruments, so that God in all things must be glorified.

Living by Faith

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of
the power may be of God, and not of us.
8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed,
but not in despair;
9 persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
10 always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that
the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

We are persecuted by men, pursued with hatred and violence fro
place, as men not worthy to live; yet not forsaken of God," 2Co
men may be sometimes forsaken of their friends, as well as pers
their enemies; but God will never leave them nor forsake them. A
are sometimes dejected, or cast down; the enemy may in a grea
prevail, and our spirits begin to fail us; there may be fears withi
as fightings without; yet we are not destroyed," 2Co 4:9.

11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake,
that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal
flesh.
12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.
13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I
believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and
therefore speak;

Faith kept them from fainting: We have the same spirit of faith (2Co 4:13), that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit; the same faith by which the saints of old did and suffered such great things. Note, The grace of faith is a sovereign cordial, and an effectual antidote against fainting-fits in troublous times. The spirit of faith will go far to bear up the spirit of a man under his infirmities; and as the apostle had David's example to imitate, who said (Ps 116:10), I have believed, and therefore have I spoken, so he leaves us his example to imitate: We also believe, says he, and therefore speak. Note, As we receive help and encouragement from the good words and examples of others, so we should be careful to give a good example to others.

14 knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us
also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.
15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might
through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

The consideration of the glory of God and the benefit of the church, by means of their sufferings, kept them from fainting, 2Co 4:15. Their sufferings were for the church's advantage (2Co 1:6), and thus did redound to God's glory. For, when the church is edified, then God is glorified; and we may well afford to bear sufferings patiently and cheerfully when we see others are the better for them--if they are instructed and edified, if they are confirmed and comforted. Note, The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are intended for the good of the church and the glory of God.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man
perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day.

The thoughts of the advantage their souls would reap by the sufferings of their bodies kept them from fainting: Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day, 2Co 4:16. Here note,

(1.) We have every one of us an outward and an inward man, a body and a soul.

(2.) If the outward man perish, there is no remedy, it must and will be so, it was made to perish.

(3.) It is our happiness if the decays of the outward man do contribute to the renewing of the inward man, if afflictions outwardly are gain to us inwardly, if when the body is sick, and weak, and perishing, the soul is vigorous and prosperous. The best of men have need of further renewing of the inward man, even day by day. Where the good work is begun there is more work to be done, for carrying it forward. And as in wicked men things grow every day worse and worse, so in godly men they grow better and better.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

Note, [1.] There are unseen things, as well as things that are seen. [2.] There is this vast difference between them: unseen things are eternal, seen things but temporal, or temporary only. [3.] By faith we not only discern these things, and the great difference between them, but by this also we take our aim at unseen things, and chiefly regard them, and make it our end and scope, not to escape present evils, and obtain present good, both of which are temporal and transitory, but to escape future evil and obtain future good things, which though unseen, are real, and certain, and eternal; and faith is the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen, Heb 11:1.

18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

2 Corinthians-5

1 For we know that, if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

(1.) What heaven is in the eye and hope of a believer. He looks upon it as a house, or habitation, a dwelling-place, a resting-place, a hiding-place, our Father's house, where there are many mansions, and our everlasting home. It is a house in the heavens, in that high and holy place which as far excels all the palaces of this earth as the heavens are high above the earth. It is a building of God, whose builder and maker is God, and therefore is worthy of its author; the happiness of the future state is what God hath prepared for those that love him. It is eternal in the heavens, everlasting habitations, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay in which our souls now dwell, which are mouldering and decaying, and whose foundations are in the dust.

(2.) When it is expected this happiness shall be enjoyed--immediately after death, so soon as our house of this earthly tabernacle is dissolved. Note,

[1.] That the body, this earthly house, is but a tabernacle, that must be dissolved shortly; the nails or pins will be drawn, and the cords be loosed, and then the body will return to dust as it was.

[2.] When this comes to pass, then comes the house not made with hands. The spirit returns to God who gave it; and such as have walked with God here shall dwell with God for ever.

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers groan because burdened with a body of sin, and the many corruptions that are still remaining and raging in them. This makes them complain, O wretched man that I am! Ro 7:24. (2.) There is a groaning of desire after the happiness of another life; and thus believers groan: Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (2Co 5:2), to obtain a blessed immortality, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (2Co 5:4), that being found clothed, we may not be naked (2Co 5:3),

Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house, etc. There is evidently here a change of the metaphor, which gives an apparent harshness to the construction. One idea of the apostle is, that the body here, and the spiritual body hereafter, is a house or a dwelling. Here he speaks of it as a garment which may be put on or laid off; and of himself as earnestly desiring to put on the immortal clothing or vestment which was in heaven. Both these figures are common in ancient writings; and a change in this manner in the popular style is not unusual. The Pythagoreans compared the body to a tent or hut for the soul; the Platonists liken it to a vestment.--Bloomfield. The Jews speak of a vestment to the soul in this world and the next. They affirm that the soul had a covering when it was under the throne of God, and before it was

clothed with the body. This vestment, they say, was "the image of God," which was lost by Adam. After the fall, they say, Adam and all his posterity were regarded as naked. In the future world they say the good will be clothed with a vestment for the soul, which they speak of as lucid and radiant, and such as no one on earth can attain.--Schoettgen. But there is no reason to think that Paul referred to any such trifles as the Jews have believed on this subject. He evidently regarded man as composed of body and soul. The soul was the more important part, and the body constituted its mere habitation or dwelling. Yet a body was essential to the idea of the complete man; and since this was frail and dying; he looked forward to a union with the body that should be eternal in the heavens, as a more desirable and perfect habitation of the soul. Mr. Locke has given an interpretation of this in which he is probably alone, but which has so much appearance of plausibility that it is not improper to refer to it. He supposes that this whole passage has reference to the fact that at the coming of the Redeemer the body will be changed without experiencing death, (comp. 1Cor 15:51,52;) that Paul expected that this might soon occur; and that he earnestly desired to undergo this transformation without experiencing the pains of dying. He therefore paraphrases it, "For in this tabernacle I groan, earnestly desiring, without putting off this mortal, earthly body by death, to have that celestial body superinduced, if so be the coming of Christ shall overtake me in this life, before I put off this body"

3 if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Note, [1.] Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as put an end to all our troubles here below. Naked we came into this world, and naked shall we go out of it. But,

[2.] Gracious souls are not found naked in the other world; no, they are clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. They shall be delivered out of all their troubles, and

shall have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Re 7:14.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

The believer's assurance of his interest in this future blessedness, on a double account:--

(1.) From the experience of the grace of God, in preparing and making him meet for this blessedness. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, 2Co 5:5. Note, All who are designed for heaven hereafter are wrought or prepared for heaven while they are here; the stones of that spiritual building and temple above are squared and fashioned here below. And he that hath wrought us for this is God, because nothing less than a divine power can make a soul partaker of a divine nature; no hand less than the hand of God can work us for this thing. A great deal is to be done to prepare our souls for heaven, and that preparation of the heart is from the Lord.

(2.) The earnest of the Spirit gave them this assurance: for an earnest is part of payment, and secures the full payment. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnests of everlasting grace and comfort.

6 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Therefore we are always confident. The word here used θαρρουντες means, to be of good cheer; to have good courage; to be full of hope. The idea is, that Paul was not dejected, cast down, disheartened, discouraged. He was cheerful and happy. He was patient in his trials, and diligent in his calling. He was full of hope, and of the confident expectation of heaven; and this filled him with cheerfulness and with joy. Tindal renders it, "We are always of good cheer." And this was not occasional and transitory, it was constant, it was uniform, it always παντοτε existed. This is an instance of the uniform cheerfulness which will be produced by the assured prospect of heaven. It is an instance, too, when the hope of heaven will enable a man to face danger with courage; to

endure toil with patience; and to submit to trials in any form with cheerfulness.

By faith. In the belief of those things which we do not see. We believe in the existence of objects which are invisible, and we are influenced by them. To walk by faith, is to live in the confident expectation of things that are to come; in the belief of the existence of unseen realities; and suffering them to influence us as if they were seen. The people of this world are influenced by the things that are seen. They live for wealth, honour, splendour, praise, for the objects which this world can furnish, and as if there were nothing which is unseen, or as if they ought not to be influenced by the things which are unseen. The Christian, on the contrary, has a firm conviction of the reality of the glories of heaven; of the fact that the Redeemer is there; of the fact that there is a crown of glory; and he lives and acts as if that were all real, and as if he saw it all. The simple account of faith, and of living by faith is, that we live and act as if these things were true, and suffer them to make an impression on our mind according to their real nature. Mk 16:16. It is contradistinguished from living simply under the influence of things that are seen. God is unseen--but the Christian lives, and thinks, and acts as if there were a God, and as if he saw him. Christ is unseen now by the bodily eye; but the Christian lives and acts as if he were seen; that is, as if his eye were known to be upon us, and as if he was now exalted to heaven, and was the only Saviour. The Holy Spirit is unseen; but he lives and acts as if there were such a Spirit, and as if his influences were needful to renew and purify the soul. Heaven is unseen; but the Christian lives, and thinks, and acts as if there were a heaven, and as if he now saw its glories. He has confidence in these and in kindred truths, and he acts as if they were real. Could man see all these--were they visible to the naked eye as they are to the eye of faith, no one would doubt the propriety of living and acting with reference to them. But if they exist, there is no more impropriety in acting with reference to them than if they were seen. Our seeing or not seeing them does not alter their nature or importance; and the fact that they are not seen does not make it improper to act with reference to them. There are many ways of being convinced of the existence and reality of objects besides

seeing them; and it may be as rational to be influenced by the reason, the judgment, or by strong confidence, as it is to be influenced by sight. Besides, all men are influenced by things which they have not seen. They hope for objects that are future. They aspire to happiness which they have not yet beheld. They strive for honour and wealth which are unseen, and which are in the distant future. They live and act--influenced by strong faith and hope--as if these things were attainable; and they deny themselves, and labour, and cross oceans and deserts, and breathe in pestilential air, to obtain those things which they have not seen, and which to them are in the distant future. And why should not the Christian endure like labour, and be willing to suffer in like manner, to gain the unseen crown which is incorruptible, and to acquire the unseen wealth which the moth does not corrupt? And further still, the men of this world strive for those objects which they have not beheld, without any promise or any assurance that they shall obtain them. No being, able to grant them, has promised them; no one has assured them that their lives shall be lengthened out to obtain them. In a moment they may be cut off, and all their plans frustrated; or they may be utterly disappointed, and all their plans fail; or if they gain the object, it may be unsatisfactory, and may furnish no pleasure such as they had anticipated. But not so the Christian. He has

(1.) the promise of life.

(2.) He has the assurance that sudden death cannot deprive him of it. It at once removes him to the object of pursuit, not from it.

(3.) He has the assurance that when obtained, it shall not disgust, or satiate, or decay, but that it shall meet all the expectations of the soul, and shall be eternal.

Not by sight. This may mean either that we are not influenced by a sight of these future glories, or that we are not influenced by the things which we see. The main idea is, that we are not influenced and governed by the sight. We are not governed and controlled by

the things which we see, and we do not see those things which actually influence and control us. In both it is faith that controls us, and not sight.

The apostle deduces an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state and condition in this world, 2Co 5:6-8. Here observe,

1. What their present state or condition is: they are absent from the Lord (2Co 5:6); they are pilgrims and strangers in this world; they do but sojourn here in their earthly home, or in this tabernacle; and though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be: we cannot see his face while we live: For we walk by faith, not by sight, 2Co 5:7. We have not the vision and fruition of God, as of an object that is present with us, and as we hope for hereafter, when we shall see as we are seen. Note, Faith is for this world, and sight is reserved for the other world: and it is our duty, and will be our interest, to walk by faith, till we come to live by sight.

2. How comfortable and courageous we ought to be in all the troubles of life, and in the hour of death: Therefore we are, or ought to be, always confident (2Co 5:6), and again (2Co 5:8), We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body. True Christians, if they duly considered the prospect faith gives them of another world, and the good reasons of their hope of blessedness after death, would be comforted under the troubles of life, and supported in the hour of death: they should take courage, when they are encountering the last enemy, and be willing rather to die than live, when it is the will of God that they should put off this tabernacle.

Note, As those who are born from above long to be there, so it is but being absent from the body, and we shall very soon be present with the Lord--but to die, and be with Christ--but to close our eyes to all things in this world, and we shall open them in a world of glory. Faith will be turned into sight.

To be present with the Lord. The Lord Jesus. Acts 1:24. Comp. Php 1:23. The idea of Paul is, that the Lord Jesus would constitute the main glory of heaven, and that to be with him was equivalent to being in a place of perfect bliss. He had no idea of any heaven where the Lord Jesus was not; and to be with him was to be in heaven. That world where the Redeemer is, is heaven. This also proves that the spirits of the saints, when they depart, are with the Redeemer; that is, are at once taken to heaven. It demonstrates

(1.) that they are not annihilated.

(2.) That they do not sleep, and remain in an unconscious state, as Dr. Priestly supposes.

(3.) That they are not in some intermediate state--either in a state of purgatory, as the Papists suppose, or a state where all the souls of the just and the unjust are assembled in a common abode, as many Protestants have supposed--but

(4.) that they dwell WITH Christ; they are WITH the Lord, (προςτονκυριον.) They abide in his presence; they partake of his joy and his glory; they are permitted to sit with him in his throne, Rev 3:21. The same idea the Saviour expressed to the dying thief, when he said, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," Lk 23:43.

7 (for we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 we are confident, *I say,* and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

He proceeds to deduce an inference to excite and quicken himself and others to duty, 2Co 5:9-11. So it is that well-grounded hopes of heaven will be far from giving the least encouragement to sloth and sinful security; on the contrary, they should stir us up to use the

greatest care and diligence in religion: Wherefore, or because we hope to be present with the Lord, we labour and take pains, 2Co 5:9. Philotimoumetha--We are ambitious, and labour as industriously as the most ambitious men do to obtain what they aim at. Here observe, 1. What it was that the apostle was thus ambitious of--acceptance with God. We labour that, living and dying, whether present in the body or absent from the body, we may be accepted of him, the Lord (2Co 5:9), that we may please him who hath chosen us, that our great Lord may say to us, Well done. This they coveted as the greatest favour and the highest honour: it was the summit of their ambition. 2. What further quickening motives they had to excite their diligence, from the consideration of the judgment to come, 2Co 5:10,11. There are many things relating to this great matter that should awe the best of men into the utmost care and diligence in religion; for example, the certainty of this judgment, for we must appear; the universality of it, for we must all appear; the great Judge before whose judgment-seat we must appear, the Lord Jesus Christ, who himself will appear in flaming fire; the recompence to be then received, for things done in the body, which will be very particular (unto every one), and very just, according to what we have done, whether good or bad. The apostle calls this awful judgment the terror of the Lord (2Co 5:11), and, by the consideration thereof, was excited to persuade men to repent, and live a holy life, that, when Christ shall appear terribly, they may appear before him comfortably. And, concerning his fidelity and diligence, he comfortably appeals unto God, and the consciences of those he wrote to: We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

For we must. δει. It is proper, fit, necessary that we should all appear there. This fact to which Paul now refers is another reason why it was necessary to lead a holy life, and why Paul gave himself with so much diligence and self-denial to the arduous duties of his office. There is a necessity or a fitness that we should appear there to give up our account, for we are here on trial; we are responsible moral agents; we are placed here to form characters for eternity. Before we receive our eternal allotment, it is proper that we should render our account of the manner in which we have lived, and of the

manner in which we have improved our talents and privileges. In the nature of things, it is proper that we should undergo a trial before we receive our reward, or before we are punished; and God has made it necessary and certain, by his direct and positive appointment, that we should stand at the bar of the final Judge. See Rom 14:10.

All. Both Jews and Gentiles; old and young; bond and free; rich and poor; all of every class, and every age, and every nation. None shall escape by being unknown; none by virtue of their rank or wealth; none because they have a character too pure to be judged; All shall be arraigned in one vast assemblage, and with reference to their eternal doom. See Rev 20:12. Rosenmuller supposes that the apostle here alludes to an opinion that was common among the Jews, that the Gentiles only would be exposed to severe judgments in the future world, and that the Jews would be saved as a matter of course. But the idea seems rather to be, that as the trial of the great day was the most important that man could undergo, and as all must give account there, Paul and his fellow-labourers devoted themselves to untiring diligence and fidelity that they might be accepted in that great day.

Done in his body. Literally, "the things by or through (δια) the body." Tindal renders it, "the works of his body." The idea is, that every man shall receive an appropriate reward for the actions of this life. Observe here,

(1.) that it is the works done in or through the body; not which the body itself has done. It is the mind, the man that has lived in the body, and acted by it, that is to be judged.

(2.) It is to be for the deeds of this life; not for what is done after death. Men are not to be brought into judgment for what they do after they die. All beyond the grave is either reward or punishment; it is not probation. The destiny is to be settled for ever by what is done in this world of probation.

(3.) It is to be for all the deeds done in the body; for all the thoughts, plans, purposes, words, as well as for all the outward actions of the man. All that has been thought or done must come into review, and man must give account for all.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The terror of the Lord. That is, of the Lord Jesus, who will be seated on the throne of judgment, and who will decide the destiny of all men, 2Cor 5:10 Mt 25. The sense is, knowing how much the Lord is to be feared; what an object of terror and alarm it will be to stand at the judgment-seat; how fearful and awful will be the consequences of the trial of that day. The Lord Jesus will be an object of terror and alarm or it will be a subject inspiring terror and alarm to stand there on that day, because

(1.) he has all power, and is appointed to execute judgment;

(2.) because all must there give a strict and impartial account of all that they have done;

(3.) because the wrath of God will be shown in the condemnation of the guilty. It will be a day of awful wailing and alarm when all the living and the dead shall be arraigned on trial with reference to their eternal destiny; and when countless hosts of the guilty and impenitent shall be thrust down to an eternal hell. Who can describe the amazing terror of the scene? Who can fancy the horrors of the hosts of the guilty and the wretched who shall then hear that their doom is to be fixed for ever in a world of unspeakable woe? The influence of the knowledge of the terror of the Lord on the mind of the apostle'seems to have been two-fold: first, an apprehension of it as a personal concern, and a desire to escape it, which led him to constant self-denial and toil; and, secondly, a desire to save others from being overwhelmed in the wrath of that dreadful day.

But we are made manifest unto God. The meaning of this is, probably, that God sees that we are sincere and upright in our aims and purposes. He is acquainted with our hearts. All our motives are known to him, and he sees that it is our aim to promote his glory, and to save the souls of men. This is probably said to counteract the charge which might have been brought against him by some of the disaffected in Corinth, that he was influenced by improper motives and guns. To meet this, Paul says that God knew that he was endeavouring to save souls, and that he was actuated by a sincere desire to rescue them from the impending terrors of the day of judgment.

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

This is to put an argument in their mouths wherewith to answer his accusers, who made vain boastings, and gloried in appearances only; that he might give them an occasion to glory on their behalf, or to defend them against the reproaches of their adversaries. And if the people can say that the word has been manifested to their consciences, and been effectual to their conversion and edification, this is the best defence they can make for the ministry of the word, when they are vilified and reproached.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause.

He gives good reasons for their great zeal and diligence. Some of Paul's adversaries had, it is likely, reproached him for his zeal and fervour, as if he had been a madman, or, in the language of our days, a fanatic; they imputed all to enthusiasm, as the Roman governor told him, Much learning has made thee mad, Ac 26:24. But the apostle tells them,

1. It was for the glory of God, and the good of the church, that he was thus zealous and industrious: "Whether we be beside ourselves, or whether we be sober (whether you or others do think the one or the other), it is to God, and for his glory: and it is for your cause, or to promote your good," 2Co 5:13. If they manifested

the greatest ardour and vehemency at some times, and used the greatest calmness in strong reasonings at other times, it was for the best ends; and in both methods they had good reason for what they did.

14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

2Cor 5:14 Verse 14. For the love of Christ. In this verse, Paul brings into view the principle which actuated him; the reason of his extraordinary and disinterested zeal. That was, that he was influenced by the love which Christ had shown in dying for all men, and by the argument which was furnished by that death respecting the actual character and condition of man, (in this verse;) and of the obligation of those who professed to be his true friends, 2Cor 5:15. The phrase "the love of Christ" (αγαπητουχριστου) may denote either the love which Christ bears toward us, and which he has manifested, or our love toward, him. In the former sense the phrase "the love of God" is used in Rom 5:8, 2Cor 13:13; and the phrase "love of Christ" in Eph 3:17. The phrase is used in the latter sense in Jn 15:9,10, and Rom 8:35. It is impossible to determine the sense with certainty, and it is only by the view which shall be taken of the connexion and of the argument which will in any way determine the meaning. Expositors differ in regard to it. It seems to me that the phrase here means the love which Christ had toward us. Paul speaks of his dying for all as the reason why he was urged on to the course of self-denial which he evince& Christ died for all. All were dead. Christ evinced his great love for us, and for all, by giving himself to die; and it was this love which Christ had shown that impelled Paul to his own acts of love and self-denial. He gave himself to his great work, impelled by that love which Christ had shown; by the view of the ruined condition of man which that work furnished; and by a desire to emulate the Redeemer, and to possess the same spirit which he evinced. Constraineth us. συνεχει. This word (συνεχω) properly means, to hold together, to press together, to shut up; then to press on, urge, impel, or excite.

Here it means, that the impelling, or exciting motive in the labours and self-denials of Paul, was the love of Christ--the love which he

had showed to the children of men. Christ so loved the world as to give himself for it. His love for the world was a demonstration that men were dead in sins. And we, being urged by the same love, are prompted to like acts of zeal and self-denial to save the world from ruin. Because we thus judge. Greek, "We judging this;" that is, we thus determine in our own minds, or we thus decide; or this is our firm conviction and belief--we come to this conclusion. That if one died for all. On the supposition that one died for all; or taking it for granted that one died for all, then it follows that all were dead. The "one" who died for all here is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus. The word "for" (υπερ) means, in the place of, in the stead of. See Phm 1:13, and 2Cor 5:20 of this chapter. It means that Christ took the place of sinners, and died in their stead; that he endured what was an ample equivalent for all the punishment which would be inflicted if they were to suffer the just penalty of the law; that he endured so much suffering, and that God by his great substituted sorrows made such an expression of his hatred of sin, as to answer the same end in expressing his sense of the evil of sin, and in restraining others from transgression, the guilty were personally to suffer the full penalty of the law. If this was done, of course the guilty might be pardoned and saved, since all the ends which could be accomplished by their destruction have been accomplished by the substituted sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Rom 3:25, Rom 3:26, where this subject is considered at length, The phrase "for all," (υπερπαντων,) obviously means for all mankind; for every man.

This is an exceedingly important expression in regard to the extent of the atonement which the Lord Jesus made; and while it proves that his death was vicarious, that is, in the place of others, and for their sakes, it demonstrates also that the atonement was general, and had, in itself considered, no limitation, and no particular reference to any class or condition of men, and no particular applicability to one class more than to another. There was nothing in the nature of the atonement that limited it to any one class or condition; there was nothing in the design that made it, in itself, any more applicable to one portion of mankind than to another. And whatever may be true in regard. to the fact as to its actual applicability, or in regard to the purpose of God to apply it, it is

demonstrated by this passage that his death had an original applicability to all, and that the merits of that death were sufficient to save all. The argument in favour of the general atonement, from this passage, consists in the following points:

(1.) That Paul assumes this as a matter that was well known, indisputable, and universally admitted, that Christ died for all. He did not deem it necessary to enter into the argument to prove it, nor even to state it formally. It was so well known, and so universally admitted, that he made it a first principle--an elementary position-- a maxim on which to base another important doctrine--to wit, that all were dead. It was a point which he assumed that no one would call in question; a doctrine which might be laid down as the basis of an argument--like one of the first principles or maxims in science.

(2.) It is the plain and obvious meaning of the expression--the sense which strikes all men, unless they have some theory to support to the contrary; and it requires all the ingenuity which men can ever command to make it appear even plausible that this is consistent with the doctrine of a limited atonement--much more to make it out that it does not mean all. If a man is told that all the human family must die, the obvious interpretation is, that it applies to every individual. If told that all the passengers on board a steamboat were drowned, the obvious interpretation is, that every individual was meant. If told that a ship was wrecked, and that all the crew perished, the obvious interpretation would be that none escaped. If told that all the inmates of an hospital were sick, it would be understood that there was not an individual that was not sick. Such is the view which would be taken by nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of a thousand, if told that Christ died for all; nor could they conceive how this could be consistent with the statement that he died only for the elect, and that the elect was only a small part of the human family.

(3.) This interpretation is in accordance with all the explicit declarations on the design of the death of the Redeemer. Heb 2:9,

"That he, by the grace of, God, should taste death for every man." Comp. Jn 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." 1Timm 2:6, "Who gave himself a ransom for all." See Mt 20:28, "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." 1Jn 2:2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

(4.) The fact also, that on the ground of the atonement made by the Redeemer salvation is offered unto all men by God, is a proof that he died for all. The apostles were directed to go "into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature," with the assurance that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mk 16:16, and everywhere in the Bible the most full and free offers of salvation are made to all mankind. Comp. Isa 55:1, Jn 7:37, Rev 22:17. These offers are made on the ground that the Lord Jesus died for men, Jn 3:16. They are offers of salvation through the gospel, of the pardon of sin, and of eternal life to be made "to every creature." But if Christ died only for a part; if there is a large portion of the human family for whom he died in no sense whatever; if there is no provision of any kind made for them, then God must know this, and then the offers cannot be made with sincerity, and God is tantalizing them with the offers of that which does not exist, and which he knows does not exist. It is of no use here to say that the preacher does not know who the elect are, and that he is obliged to make the offer to all in order that the elect may be reached. For it is not the preacher only who offers the gospel. It is God who does it, and he knows who the elect are, and yet he offers salvation to all. And if there is no salvation provided for all, and no possibility that all to whom the offer comes should be saved, then God is insincere; and there is no way possible of vindicating his character.

(5.) If this interpretation is not correct, and if Christ did not die for all, then the argument of Paul here is a non sequitur, and is worthless. The demonstration that all are dead, according to him, is that Christ died for all. But suppose that he meant, or that he knew, that Christ died only for a part--for the elect--then how

would the argument stand, and what would be its force? "Christ died only for a portion of the human race, therefore ALL are sinners. Medicine is provided only for a part of mankind, therefore all are sick. Pardon is offered to part only, therefore all are guilty." But Paul never reasoned in this way. He believed that Christ died for all mankind, and on the ground of that he inferred at once that all needed such an atonement; that all-were sinners, and that all were exposed to the wrath of God. And the argument is in this way, and in this way only, sound. But still it may be asked, what is the force of this argument ? How does the fact that Christ died for all prove that all were sinners, or dead in sin? I answer,

(a.) In the same way as to provide medicine for all, proves that all are sick, or liable to be sick; and to offer pardon to all who are in a prison, proves that all there are guilty. What insult is it to offer medicine to a man in health; or pardon to a man who has violated no law! And there would be the same insult in offering salvation to a man who was not a sinner, and who did not need forgiveness.

(b.) The dignity of the Sufferer, and the extent of his sufferings, prove that all were under a deep and dreadful load of guilt. Such a Being would not have come to die unless the race had been apostate; nor would he have endured so great sorrows unless a deep and dreadful malady had spread over the world. The deep anxiety, the tears, the toils, the sufferings, and the groans of the Redeemer, show what was his sense of the condition of man, and prove that he regarded them as degraded, fallen, and lost. And if the Son of God, who knows all hearts, regarded them as lost, they are lost. He was not mistaken in regard to the character of man, and he did not lay down his life under the influence of delusion and error. If to the view which has been taken of this important passage it be objected that the work of the atonement must have been to a large extent in vain; that it has been actually applied to but comparatively a small portion of the human family, and that it is unreasonable to suppose that God would suffer so great sorrows to be endured for nought, we may reply,

(1.) that it may not have been in vain, though it may have been rejected by a large portion of mankind. There may have been other purposes accomplished by it besides the direct salvation of men. It was doing much when it rendered it consistent for God to offer salvation to all; it is much that God could be seen to be just, and yet pardoning the sinner; it was much when his determined hatred of sin, and his purpose to honour his law, were evinced; and in regard to the benevolence and justice of God to other beings and to other worlds, much, very much was gained, though all the human race had rejected the plan and been lost; and in regard to all these objects, the plan was not in vain, and the sufferings of the Redeemer were not for nought. But

(2.) it is in accordance with what we see everywhere, when much that God does seems to our eyes, though not to his, to be in vain. How much rain falls on ever sterile sands or on barren rocks, to our eyes in vain! What floods of light are poured each day on barren wastes, or untraversed oceans, to our eyes in vain! How many flowers shed forth their fragrance in the wilderness, and "waste their sweetness on the desert air," to us apparently for nought! How many pearls lie useless in the ocean; how much gold and silver in the earth; how many diamonds amidst rocks to us unknown, and apparently in vain! How many lofty trees rear their heads in the untraversed wilderness, and after standing for centuries fall on the earth and decay, to our eyes in vain! And how much medicinal virtue is created by God each year in the vegetable world that is unknown to man, and that decays and is lost without removing any disease, and that seems to be created in vain! And how long has it been before the most valuable medicines have been found out, and applied to alleviating pain, or removing disease! Year after year, and age after age, they existed in a suffering world, and men died perhaps within a few yards of the medicine which would have relieved or saved them, but it was unknown, or, if known, disregarded.

But times were coming when their value would be appreciated, and when they would be applied to benefit the sufferer. So with the

plan of salvation. It may be rejected, and the sufferings of the Redeemer may seem to have been for nought. But they will yet be of value to mankind; and when the time shall come for the whole world to embrace the Saviour, there will be found no want of sufficiency in the plan of redemption, and in the merits of the Redeemer, to save all the race. Then were all dead. All dead in sin; that is, all were sinners. The fact that he died for all proves that all were transgressors. The word "dead" is not unfrequently used in the Scriptures to denote the condition of sinners. See Eph 2:1. It means not that sinners are in all senses and in all respects like a lifeless corpse, for they are not. They are still moral agents, and have a conscience, and are capable of thinking, and speaking, and acting. It does not mean that they have no more power, than one in the grave, for they have more power. But it means that there is a striking similarity, in some respects, between one Who is dead and a sinner. That similarity does not extend to everything, but in many respects it is very striking.

(1.) The sinner is as insensible to the glories of the heavenly world, and the appeals of the gospel, as a corpse is to what is going on around or above it. The body that lies in the grave is insensible to the voice of friendship, and the charms of music, and the hum of business, and the plans of gain and ambition; and so the sinner is insensible to all the glories of the heavenly world, and to all the appeals that are made to him, and to all the warnings of God. He lives as though there were no heaven and no hell; no God and no Saviour.

(2.) There is need of the same Divine power to convert a sinner which is needful to raise up the dead. The same cause does not exist, making the existence of that power necessary; but it is a fact that a sinner will no more be converted by his own power than a dead man will rise from the grave by his own power. No man ever yet was converted without direct Divine agency, any more than Lazarus was raised without Divine agency. And there is no more just or melancholy description which can be given of man, than to say that he is dead in sins. He is insensible to all the appeals that God makes to him; he is insensible to all the sufferings of the

Saviour, and to all the glories of heaven; he lives as though these did not exist, or as though he had no concern in them; his eyes see no more beauty in them than the sightless eyeballs of the dead do in the material world; his ear is as inattentive to the calls of God and the gospel as the ear of the dead is to the voice of friendship or the charms of melody; and in a world that is full of God, and that might be full of hope, he is living without God and without hope.

15 and *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

The love of Christ constrained them, 2Co 5:14. They were under the sweetest and strongest constraints to do what they did. Love has a constraining virtue to excite ministers and private Christians in their duty. Our love to Christ will have this virtue; and Christ's love to us, which was manifested in this great instance of his dying for us, will have this effect upon us, if it be duly considered and rightly judged of. For observe how the apostle argues for the reasonableness of love's constraints, and declares,

(1.) What we were before, and must have continued to be, had not Christ died for us: We were dead, 2Co 5:14. If one died for all, then were all dead; dead in law, under sentence of death; dead in sins and trespasses, spiritually dead. Note, This was the deplorable condition of all those for whom Christ died: they were lost and undone, dead and ruined, and must have remained thus miserable for ever if Christ had not died for them.

(2.) What such should do, for whom Christ died; namely, that they should live to him. This is what Christ designed, that those who live, who are made alive unto God by means of his death, should live to him that died for them, and rose again for their sakes also, and that they should not live to themselves, 2Co 5:15. Note, We should not make ourselves, but Christ, the end of our living and actions: and it was one end of Christ's death to cure us of this self-love, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of his love. A Christian's life should be consecrated to

Christ; and then do we live as we ought to live when we live to Christ, who died for us.

Constraineth us./KJV/ This word (συνεχω) properly means, to hold together, to press together, to shut up; then to press on, urge, impel, or excite. Here it means, that the impelling, or exciting motive in the labours and self-denials of Paul, was the love of Christ--the love which he had showed to the children of men. Christ so loved the world as to give himself for it. His love for the world was a demonstration that men were dead in sins. And we, being urged by the same love, are prompted to like acts of zeal and self-denial to save the world from ruin.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

That they which live. They who are true Christians; who are made alive unto God as the result of the dying love of the Redeemer. Sinners are dead in sins. Christians are alive to the worth of the soul, the presence of God, the importance of religion, the solemnities of eternity; i.e., they act and feel as if these things had a real existence, and as if they should exert a constant influence upon the heart and life. It is observable that Paul makes a distinction here between those for whom Christ died and those who actually "live;" thus demonstrating that there may be many for whom he died who do not live to God, or who are not savingly benefited by his death. The atonement was for all, but only apart are actually made alive to God, Multitudes reject it; but the fact that he died for all, that he tasted death for every man, that he not only died for the elect but for all others, that his benevolence was so great as to embrace the whole human family in the design of his death, is a reason why they who are actually made alive to God should consecrate themselves entirely to his service. The fact that he died for all erinted such unbounded and infinite benevolence, that it should induce us who are actually benefited by his death, and who have any just views of it, to devote all that we have to his service. Should not henceforth live unto themselves. Should not seek our own ease and pleasure; should not make it our great object to promote our own interest; but should make it the grand purpose

of our lives to promote his honour, and to advance his cause. This is a vital principle in religion; and it is exceedingly important to know what is meant by living to ourselves, and whether we do it. It is done in the following, and perhaps in some other ways:

(1.) When men seek pleasure, gain, or reputation, as the controlling principle of their lives.

(2.) When they are regardless of the rights of others, and sacrifice all the claims which others have on them in order to secure the advancement of their own purposes and ends.

(3.) When they are regardless of the wants of others, and turn a deaf ear to all the appeals which charity makes to them, and have no time to give to serve them, and no money to spare to alleviate their wants; and especially when they turn a deaf ear to the appeals which are made for the diffusion of the gospel to the benighted and perishing.

(4.) When their main purpose is the aggrandizement of their own families --for their families are but a diffusion of self. And

(5.) when they seek their own salvation only from selfish motives, and not from a desire to honour God. Multitudes are selfish even in their religion; and the main purpose which they have in view is to promote their own objects, and not the honour of the Master whom they profess to serve. They seek and profess religion only because they desire to escape from wrath, and to obtain the happiness of heaven, and not from any love to the Redeemer, or any desire to honour him. Or they seek to build up the interests of their own church and party, and all their zeal is expended on that, and that alone, without any real desire to honour the Saviour. Or though in the church, they are still selfish and live wholly to themselves. They live for fashion, for gain, for reputation. They practise no self-denial; they make no effort to advance the cause of God the Saviour. But unto him, etc. Unto the Lord Jesus Christ. To live to him is the opposite to living unto ourselves. It is to seek

his honour; to feel that we belong to him; that all our time and talents--all our strength of intellect and body--all the avails of our skill and toil--all belong to him, and should be employed in his service. If we have talents by which we can influence other minds, they should be employed to honour the Saviour. If we have skill, or strength to labour, by which we can make money, we should feel that it all belongs to him, and should be employed in his service. If we have property, we should feel that it is his, and that he has a claim upon it all, and that it should be honestly consecrated to his cause. And if we are endowed with a spirit of enterprise, and are fitted by nature to encounter perils in distant and barbarous climes, as Paul was, we should feel like him that we are bound to devote all entirely to his service, and to the promotion of his cause. A servant, a slave, does not live to himself, but to his master. His person, his time, his limbs, his talents, and the avails of his industry are not regarded as his own. He is judged incapable of holding any property which is not at the disposal of his master. If he has strength, it is his master's. If he has skill, the avails of it are his master's. If he is an ingenious mechanic, or labours in any department; if he is amiable, kind, gentle, and faithful, and adapted to be useful in an eminent degree, it is regarded as all the property of his master. He is bound to go where his master chooses; to execute the task which he assigns; to deny himself at his master's will; and to come and lay the avails of all his toil and skill at his master's feet. He is regarded as having been purchased with money; and the purchase-money is supposed to give a right to his time, his talents, his services, and his soul. Such as the slave is supposed to become by purchase, and by the operation of human laws, the Christian becomes by the purchase of the Son of God, and by the voluntary recognition of him as the Master, and as having a right to all that we have and are. To him all belongs; and all should be employed in endeavouring to promote his glory, and in advancing his cause. Which died for them, and rose again. Paul here states the grounds of the obligation under which he felt himself placed, to live not unto himself but unto Christ.

(1.) The first is, the fact that Christ had died for him, and for all his people. The effect of that death was the same as a purchase. It was a purchase. 1Cor 6:20 1Cor 7:23. Comp. 1Pet 1:18,19.

(2.) The second is, that he had risen again from the dead. To this fact Paul traced all his hopes of eternal life, and of the resurrection from the dead. See Rom 4:25. As we have the hope of the resurrection from the dead only from the fact that he rose; as he has "brought life and immortality to light," and hath in this way "abolished death," (2Ti 1:10;) as all the prospect of entering a world where there is no death and no grave is to be traced to the resurrection of the Saviour, so we are bound by every obligation of gratitude to devote ourselves without any reserve to him. To him, and him alone, should we live; and in his cause our lives should be, as Paul's was, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight.

17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Regeneration, which consists of two things; namely,

1. Weanedness from the world: "Henceforth we know no man after the flesh, 2Co 5:16. We do not own nor affect any person or thing in this world for carnal ends and outward advantage: we are enabled, by divine grace, not to mind nor regard this world, nor the things of this world, but to live above it. The love of Christ is in our hearts, and the world is under our feet."

Note, Good Christians must enjoy the comforts of this life, and their relations in this world, with a holy indifference.

2. A thorough change of the heart: For if any man be in Christ, if any man be a Christian indeed, and will approve himself such, he is, or he must be, a new creature, 2Co 5:17. Some read it, Let him be a new creature. This ought to be the care of all who profess the Christian faith, that they be new creatures; not only that they have a new name, and wear a new livery, but that they have a new heart and new nature. And so great is the change the grace of God makes

in the soul, that, as it follows, old things are passed away--old thoughts, old principles, and old practices, are passed away; and all these things must become new. Note, Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul; all things are new. The renewed man acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

By Jesus Christ. By the agency or medium of Jesus Christ. He was the Mediator to interpose in the work of reconciliation. And he was abundantly qualified for this work, and was the only Being that has lived in this world who was qualified for it. For

(1.) he was endowed with a Divine and human nature--the nature of both the parties at issue, God and man, and thus, in the language of Job, could "lay his hand upon both," Job 9:33.

(2.) He was intimately acquainted with both the parties, and knew what was needful to be done. He knew God the Father so well that he could say, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son," Mt 11:27. And he knew man so well that it could be said of him, he "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," Jn 2:25. No one can be a mediator who is not acquainted with the feelings, views, desires, claims, or prejudices of both the parties at issue.

(3.) He was the Friend of both the parties. He loved God. No man ever doubted this, or had any reason to call it in question; and he was always desirous of securing all that God claimed, and of vindicating him, and he never abandoned anything that God had a right to claim. And he loved man. He showed this in all his life. He sought hiss welfare in every way possible, and gave himself for him. Yet no one is qualified to act the mediator's part who is not the common friend of both the parties at issue, and who will not seek the welfare, the right, or the honour of both.

(4.) He was willing to suffer anything from either party in order to produce reconciliation. From the hand of God he was willing to endure all that he deemed to be necessary, in order to show his hatred of sin by his vicarious sufferings, and to make an atonement; and from the hand of man he was willing to endure all the reproach, and contumely, and scorn which could be possibly involved in the work of inducing man to be reconciled to God. And

(5.) he has removed all the obstacles which existed to a reconciliation. On the part of God, he has made it consistent for him to pardon. He has made an atonement so that God can be just while he justifies the sinner. He has maintained his truth, and justice, and secured the stability of his moral government, while he admits offenders to his favour. And on the part of man, he, by the agency of his Spirit, overcomes the unwillingness of the sinner to be reconciled, humbles his pride, shows him his sin, changes his heart, subdues his enmity against God, and secures in fact a harmony of feeling and purpose between God and man, so that they shall be reconciled for ever.

19 to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Reconciling the world unto himself. The world here evidently means the human race generally, without distinction of nation, age, or rank. The whole world was alienated from him, and he sought to have it reconciled. This is one incidental proof that God designed that the plan of salvation should be adapted to all men. 2Cor 5:14. It may be observed further, that God sought that the world should be reconciled. Man did not seek it. He had no plan for it. He did not desire it. He had no way to effect it. It was the offended party, not the offending, that sought to be reconciled; and this shows the strength of his love. It was love for enemies and alienated beings, and love evinced to them by a most earnest desire to become their friend, and to be at agreement with them. Rom 5:8. Tindal renders this very accurately, "For God was in Christ, and made agreement between the world and himself, and imputed not their sins unto them.

Not imputing their trespasses. Not reckoning their transgressions to them; that is, forgiving them, pardoning them. On the meaning of the word impute, Rom 4:3. The idea here is, that God did not charge on them with inexorable severity and stern justice their offences, but graciously provided a plan of pardon, and offered to remit their sins on the conditions of the gospel. The plan of reconciliation demonstrated that he was not disposed to impute their sins to them, as he might have done, and to punish them with unmitigated severity for their crimes, but was more disposed to pardon and forgive. And it may be here asked, if God was not disposed to charge with unrelenting severity their own sins to their account, but was rather disposed to pardon them, can we believe that he is disposed to charge on them the sin of another? If he does not charge on them with inexorable and unmitigated severity their own transgressions, will he charge on them with unrelenting severity--or at all--the sin of Adam? Rom 5:19. The sentiment here is, that God is not disposed or inclined to charge the transgressions of men upon them; he has no pleasure in doing it; and therefore he has provided a plan by which they may be pardoned. At the same time it is true that, unless their sins are pardoned, justice will charge or impute their sins to them, and will exact punishment to the uttermost.

And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Marg., "put in us." Tindal renders this, "and hath committed unto us the preaching of the atonement." The meaning is, that the office of making known the nature of this plan, and the conditions on which God was willing to be reconciled to man, had been committed to the ministers of the gospel.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

As an unquestionable privilege, 2Co 5:18,19. Reconciliation supposes a quarrel, or breach of friendship; and sin has made a breach, it has broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is

justly offended with the sinner. Yet, behold, there may be a reconciliation; the offended Majesty of heaven is willing to be reconciled. And observe,

1. He has appointed the Mediator of reconciliation. He has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, 2Co 5:18. God is to be owned from first to last in the undertaking and performance of the Mediator. All things relating to our reconciliation by Jesus Christ are of God, who by the mediation of Jesus Christ has reconciled the world to himself, and put himself into a capacity of being actually reconciled to offenders, without any wrong or injury to his justice or holiness, and does not impute to men their trespasses, but recedes from the rigour of the first covenant, which was broken, and does not insist upon the advantage he might justly take against us for the breach of that covenant, but is willing to enter into a new treaty, and into a new covenant of grace, and, according to the tenour thereof, freely to forgive us all our sins, and justify freely by his grace all those who do believe.

2. He has appointed the ministry of reconciliation, 2Co 5:18. By the inspiration of God the scriptures were written, which contain the word of reconciliation, showing us that peace was made by the blood of the cross, that reconciliation is wrought, and directing us how we may be interested therein. And he has appointed the office of the ministry, which is a ministry of reconciliation: ministers are to open and proclaim to sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation, and persuade them to comply therewith. For,

Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty, 2Co 5:20. As God is willing to be reconciled to us, we ought to be reconciled to God. And it is the great end and design of the gospel, that word of reconciliation, to prevail upon sinners to lay aside their enmity against God. Faithful ministers are Christ's ambassadors, sent to treat with sinners on peace and reconciliation: they come in God's name, with his entreaties, and act in Christ's stead, doing the very thing he did when he was

upon this earth, and what he wills to be done now that he is in heaven. Wonderful condescension! Though God can be no loser by the quarrel, nor gainer by the peace, yet by his ministers he beseeches sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept of the terms he offers, that they would be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, to all his laws, and to all his providences, to believe in the Mediator, to accept the atonement, and comply with his gospel, in all the parts of it and in the whole design of it. And for our encouragement so to do the apostle subjoins what should be well known and duly considered by us (2Co 5:21), namely,

(a.) The purity of the Mediator: He knew no sin.

(b.) The sacrifice he offered: He was made sin; not a sinner, but sin, that is, a sin-offering, a sacrifice for sin.

(c.) The end and design of all this: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Note,

[1.] As Christ, who knew no sin of his own, was made sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God in him.

[2.] Our reconciliation to God is only through Jesus Christ, and for the sake of his merit: on him therefore we must rely, and make mention of his righteousness and his only.

Verse 20. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ. We are the ambassadors whom Christ has sent forth to negotiate with men in regard to their reconciliation to God.

Tindal renders this, "Now then are we messengers in the room of Christ." The word here used (πρεσβευομεν, from πρεσβυς, an aged man, an elder, and then an ambassador) means, to act as an ambassador, or sometimes merely to deliver a message for

another, without being empowered to do anything more than to explain or enforce it.--Bloomfield. See Thucyd. 7, 9. An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank, employed by one prince or state at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereign.--

Webster. He is sent to do what the sovereign would himself do were he present. They are sent to make known the will of the sovereign, and to negotiate matters of commerce, of war, or of peace, and in general everything affecting the interests of the sovereign among the people to whom they are sent. At all times, and in all countries, an ambassador is a sacred character, and his person is regarded as inviolable, he is bound implicitly to obey the instructions of his sovereign, and as far as possible to do only what the sovereign would do were he, himself present.

Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, as they are sent to do what he would do were he personally present. They are to make known, and to explain, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled to men. They are not to negotiate on any new terms, nor to change those which God has proposed, nor to follow their own plans or devices; but they are simply to urge, explain, state, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled. Of course they are to seek the honour of the Sovereign who has sent them forth, and to seek to do only his will. They go not to promote their own welfare; not to seek honour, dignity, or emolument; but they go to transact the business which the Son of God would engage in were he again personally on the earth. It follows that their office is one of great dignity, and great responsibility, and that respect should be showed them as the ambassadors of the King of kings. As though God did beseech you by us. Our message is to be regarded as the message of God. It is God who speaks. What we say to you is said in his name and on his authority, and should be received with the respect which is due to a message directly from God. The gospel message is God speaking to men through the ministry, and entreating them to be reconciled. This invests the message which, the ministers of

religion bear with infinite dignity and solemnity; and it makes it a fearful and awful thing to reject it. We pray you in Christ's stead. υπερχριστου. In the place of Christ; or doing what he did when on earth, and what he would do were he where we are. Be ye reconciled to God. This is the sum and burden of the message which the ministers of the gospel bear to their fellow-men. 2Cor 5:19. It implies that man has something to do in this work. He is to be reconciled to God, he is to give up his opposition, he is to submit to the terms of mercy.

All the change in the case is to be in him, for God cannot change. God has removed all the obstacles to reconciliation which existed on his part. He has done all that he will do, all that needed to be done; in order to render reconciliation as easy as possible. And now it remains that man should lay aside his hostility, abandon his sins, embrace the terms of mercy, and become in fact reconciled to God. And the great object of the ministers of reconciliation is to urge this duty on their fellow-men. They are to do it in the name of Christ. They are to do it as if Christ were himself present, and were himself urging the message. They are to use the arguments which he would use; evince the zeal which he would show; and present the motives which he would present, to induce a dying world to become in fact reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Continuation of Notes on 2Cor 5:21

(14.) We should act feeling that we are in the immediate presence of God, and so as to meet his acceptance and approbation, whether we remain on earth, or whether we are removed to eternity, 2Cor 5:9. The prospect of being with him, and the consciousness that his eye is fixed upon us, should make us diligent, humble, and laborious. It should be the great purpose of our lives to secure his favour, and meet with his acceptance; and it should make no difference with us, in this respect, where we are--whether on earth or in heaven; with the prospect of long life,

or of an early death, in society or in solitude; at home or abroad; on the land or on the deep; in sickness or in health; in prosperity or in adversity, it should be our great aim so to live as to be "accepted of him." And the Christian will so act. To act in this manner is the very nature of true piety; and where this desire does not exist, there can be no true religion.

(15.) We must appear before the judgment-seat, 2Cor 5:10. We must all appear there. This is inevitable. There is not one of the human family that can escape. Old and young; rich and poor; bond and free; all classes, all conditions, all nations must stand there, and give an account for all the deeds done in the body, and receive their eternal doom. How solemn is the thought of being arraigned! How deeply affecting the idea that on the issue of that one trial will depend our eternal weal or woe! How overwhelming the reflection that from that sentence there can be no appeal; no power of reversing it; no possibility of afterwards changing our destiny!

(16.) We shall soon be there, 2Cor 5:10. No one knows when he is to die; and death, when it comes, will remove us at once to the judgment-seat. A disease that may carry us off in a few hours may take us there; or death that may come in an instant shall bear us to that awful bar. How many are stricken down in a moment; how many are hurried without any warning to the solemnities, of the eternal world! So we may die. No one can insure our lives; no one can guard us from the approach of the invisible king of terrors.

(17.) We should be ready to depart. If we must stand at that awful bar; and if we may be summoned there any moment, assuredly we should lose no time in being ready to go. It is our great business in life; and it should claim our first attention, and all other things should be postponed that we may be ready to die. It should be the first inquiry every morning, and the last subject of thought every evening-- for who knows when he rises in the morning but that before night he may stand at the judgment-seat! Who, when he lies down on his bed at night, knows but that in the

silence of the night-watches he may be summoned to go alone---to leave his family and friends, his home and his bed, to answer for all the deeds done in the body?

(18.) We should endeavour to save others from eternal death, 2Cor 5:11. If we have ourselves any just views of the awful terrors of the day of judgment, and if we have any just views of the wrath of God, we should endeavour "to persuade" others to flee from the wrath to come. We should plead with them; we should entreat them; we should weep over them; we should pray for them, that they may be saved from going up to meet the awful wrath of God. If our friends are unprepared to meet God; if they are living in impenitence and sin, and if we have any influence over others in any way, we should exert it all to induce them to come to Christ, and to save themselves from the awful terrors of that day. Paul deemed no self-denial and no sacrifice too great, if he might persuade them to come to God, and to save their souls. And who that has any just views of the awful terrors of the day of judgment, of the woes of an eternal hell, and of the glories of an eternal heaven, can deem that labour too great which shall be the means of saving immortal souls! Not to frighten them should we labour; not to alarm them merely should we plead with them; but we should endeavour by all means to persuade them to come to the Redeemer. We should not use tones of harshness and denunciation; we should not speak of hell as if we would rejoice to execute the sentence; but we should speak with tenderness, earnestness, and with tears, (comp. Acts 20:31,) that we may induce our friends and fellow-sinners to be reconciled to God.

(19.) We should not deem it strange or remarkable if we are charged with being deranged for being active and zealous in the subject of religion, 2Cor 5:13. There will always be enough, both in the church and out of it, to charge us with over-heated zeal; with want of prudence; or with decided mental alienation. But we are not to forget that Paul was accused of being--"mad ;" and even the Redeemer was thought to be "beside himself." "It is sufficient

for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord;" and if the Redeemer was charged with derangement on account of his peculiar views and his zeal, we should not suppose that any strange thing had happened to us if we are accused in like manner.

(20.) The gospel should be offered to all men, 2Cor 5:14. If Christ died for all, then salvation is provided for all; and then it should be offered to all freely and fully. It should be done without any mental reservation, for God has no such mental reservation; without any hesitation or misgiving; without any statements that would break the force, or weaken the power of such an offer on the consciences of men. If they reject it, they should be left to see that they reject that which is in good faith offered to them, and that for this they must give an account to God. Every man who preaches the gospel should feel that he is not only permitted but REQUIRED to preach the gospel "to every creature;" nor should he embrace any opinion whatever which will, in form or in fact, cramp him or restrain him in thus offering salvation to all mankind. The fact that Christ died for all, and that all may be saved, should be a fixed and standing point in all systems of theology, and should be allowed to shape every other opinion, and to shed its influence over every other view of truth.

(21.) All men by nature are dead in sins, 2Cor 5:14. They are insensible to their own good; to the appeals of God; to the glories of heaven, and to the terrors of hell. They do not act for eternity; they are without concern in regard to their everlasting destiny. They are as insensible to all these things, until aroused by the Spirit of God, as a dead man in his grave is to surrounding objects. And there is nothing that ever did arouse such a man, or ever could, but the same power that made the world, and the same voice that raised Lazarus from his grave. This melancholy fact strikes us everywhere; and we should be deeply humbled that it is our condition by nature, and should mourn that it is the condition of our fellow-men everywhere.

(22.) We should form our estimate of objects, and of their respective value and importance, by other considerations than those which are derived from their temporal nature, 2Cor 5:16. It should not be simply according to the flesh. It should not be as they estimate them who are living for this world. It should not be by their rank, their splendour, or their fashion. It should be by their reference to eternity, and their bearing on the state of things there.

(23.) It should be with us a very serious inquiry whether our views of Christ are such as they have who are living after the flesh, or such only as the unrenewed mind takes, 2Cor 5:16. The carnal mind has no just views of the Redeemer. To every impenitent sinner he is "a root out of a dry ground." There is no beauty in him. And to every hypocrite, and every deceived professor of religion, there is really no beauty seen in him. There is no spontaneous, elevated, glowing attachment to him. It is all forced and unnatural. But to the true Christian there is a beauty seen in his character that is not seen in any other; and the whole soul loves him, and embraces him. His character is seen to be most pure and lovely; his benevolence boundless; his ability and willingness to save infinite. The renewed soul desires no other Saviour; and rejoices that he is just what he is--rejoices in his humiliation as well as his exaltation; in his poverty as well as his glory; rejoices in the privilege of being saved by him who was spit upon, and mocked, and crucified, as well as by him who is at the right hand of God. One thing is certain, unless we have just views of Christ we can never be saved.

(24.) The new birth is a great and most important change, 2Cor 5:17. It is not in name or in profession merely, but it is a deep and radical change of the heart. It is so great that it may be said of each one, that he is a new creation of God; and in relation to each one, that old things are passed away, and all things are become new. How important it is that we examine our hearts and see whether this change has taken place, or whether we are still living

without God and without hope. It is indispensable that we be born again, Jn 3. If we are not born again, and if we are not new creatures in Christ, we must perish for ever. No matter what our wealth, talent, learning, accomplishment, reputation, or morality, unless we have been so changed that it may be said, and that we can say, "old things are passed away, and all things are become new," we must perish for ever. There is no power in the universe that can save a man who is not born again.

(25.) The gospel ministry is a most responsible and important work, 2Cor 5:18,19. There is no other office of the same importance; there is no situation in which man can be placed more solemn than that of making known the terms on which God is willing to bestow favour on apostate man.

(26.) How amazing is the Divine condescension, that God should have ever proposed such a plan of reconciliation, 2Cor 5:20,21. That he should not only have been willing to be reconciled, but that he should have sought, and have been so anxious for it as to be willing to send his own Son to die to secure it! It was pure, rich, infinite benevolence. God was not to be benefited by it. He was infinitely blessed and happy, even though man should have been lost. He was pure, and just, and holy, and it was not necessary to resort to this in order to vindicate his own character, he had done man no wrong; and if man had perished in his sins, the throne of God would have been pure and spotless. It was love--mere love. It was pure, holy, disinterested, infinite benevolence. It was worthy of God; and it has a claim to the deepest gratitude of man. Let us then, in view of this whole chapter, seek to be reconciled to God. Let us lay aside all our opposition to him. Let us embrace his plans. Let us be willing to submit to him, and to become his ETERNAL FRIENDS. Let us seek that heaven to which he would raise us; and though our earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, let us be prepared, as we may be, for that eternal habitation which he has fitted up for all who love him in the heavens.

2 Corinthians-6

1 We then, *as* workers together *with him,* beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

We then, as workers together with him. On the meaning of this expression, 1Cor 3:9. The Greek here is, συνεργουντες "working together;" and may mean either-that the apostles and ministers to whom Paul refers were joint labourers in entreating them not to receive the grace of God in vain, or it may mean that they co-operated with God, or were engaged with him in endeavouring to secure the reconciliation of the world to himself. Tindal renders it, "we as helpers." Doddridge, "we then as the joint-labourers of God." Most expositors have concurred in this interpretation. The word properly means, to work together; to co-operate in producing any result. Macknight supposes that the word here is in the vocative, and is an address to the fellow-labourers of Paul, entreating them not to receive the grace of God in vain. In this opinion he is probably alone, and has manifestly departed from the scope and design of the passage. Probably the most obvious meaning is that of our translators, who regard it as teaching that Paul was a joint-worker with God in securing the salvation of men.

That ye receive not the grace of God in vain. The "grace of God" here means evidently the gracious offer of reconciliation and pardon. And the sense is, "We entreat you not to neglect or slight this offer of pardon, so as to lose the benefit of it, and be lost. It is offered freely and fully. It may be partaken of by all, and all may be saved. But it may also be slighted, and all the benefits of it will then be lost." The sense is, that it was possible that this offer might be made to them, they might hear of a Saviour, be told of the plan of reconciliation, and have the offers of mercy pressed on their attention and acceptance, and yet all be in vain. They might, not-withstanding all this, be lost; for simply to hear of the plan of salvation or the offers of mercy, will no more save a sinner than to hear of medicine will save the sick. It must be

embraced and applied, or it will be in vain. It is true that Paul probably addressed this to those who were professors of religion; and the sense is, that they should use all possible care and anxiety lest these offers should have been made in vain. They should examine their own hearts; they should inquire into their own condition; they should guard against self-deception. The same persons (2Cor 5:20) Paul had exhorted also to be reconciled to God; and the idea is, that he would earnestly entreat even professors of religion to give all diligence to secure an interest in the saving mercy of the gospel, and to guard against the possibility of being self-deceived and ruined.

Here note, 1. The nature of the ministerial function: The ministry is a work, an arduous and laborious work; neither angels nor men are of themselves sufficient for it, without proportionable assistance from God. Ministers are workers.

Note, 2. They are workers together; they join together with one voice, with one cry, beseeching sinners to be reconciled unto God. All the ministers of Christ are fellow-labourers, workers together in God's harvest-field; that which is the work of one, is the work of all; they should all join in it, and rejoice together in the success of it; not only labour with, but bless God for the services and success of, each other.

Lord! how sad it is to see the ministers of God divided in their work and way, when one rejoiceth in that which to another is cause of mourning!

Note, 3. Ministers are workers together with God, as well as with one another; they are subordinate instruments working by him, but not co-ordinate causes producing with him the work of conversion in the souls of men; not as if they could communicate any power of strength to the working of grace by the preaching of the word, 1Cor 3:5 Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?

Observe, 4. The exhortation, or cautionary direction, given; We beseech you, receive not the grace of God in vain; where by the grace of God, is meant the grace of the gopsel; because it is graciously and freely bestowed upon a people, and because the matter and message which it brings is grace.

The law discovers God's will, the gospel discovers his good will: and by receiving this grace in vain, is meant the receiving the gospel unfruitfully, unprofitably, and ineffectually; when we do not receive it with a due estimation, with fervency of affection, with a fiducial application; when it doth not purify the heart, reform the life, and save the soul. It is not the receiving of the gospel into our houses, into our heads, into our mouths, but into our hearts, that will bring us to heaven.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted,
and in the day of salvation have I succored thee:
Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

Verse 2. For he saith. See Isa 49:8. In that passage the declaration refers to the Messiah, and the design is there to show that God would be favourable to him; that he would hear him when he prayed, and would make him the medium of establishing a covenant with his own people, and of spreading the true religion around the earth. See my Note on that place. Paul quotes the passage here, not as affirming that he used it in exactly the sense, or with reference to the same design for which it was originally spoken, but as expressing the idea which he wished to convey, or in accordance with the general principle implied in its use in Isaiah. The general idea there, or the principle involved was, that under the Messiah God would be willing to hear; that is, that he would be disposed to show mercy to the Jew and to the Gentile. This is the main idea of the passage as used by Paul. Under the Messiah, it is said by Isaiah, God would be willing to show mercy. That would be an acceptable time. That time, says Paul, has arrived. The Messiah has come, and now God is willing to pardon and save. And the doctrine in this verse is, that under the Messiah, or in the time of Christ, God

is willing to show mercy unto men. In him alone is the throne of grace accessible; and now that he has come, God is willing to pardon, and men should avail themselves of the offers of mercy.

I have heard thee. The Messiah. I have listened to thy prayer for the salvation of the heathen world. The promise to the Messiah was, that the heathen world should be given to him; but it was a promise that it should be in answer to his prayers and intercessions: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession," Ps 2:8. The salvation of the heathen world, and of all who are saved, is to be in answer to the prevalent intercession of the Lord Jesus.

Behold now is the accepted time, etc. The meaning of this passage is, "The Messiah is come. The time referred to by Isaiah has arrived. It is now a time when God is ready to show compassion, to hear prayer, and to have mercy on mankind. Only through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, does he show mercy, and men should therefore now embrace the offers of pardon." The doctrine taught here therefore is, that through the Lord Jesus, and where he is preached, God is willing to pardon and save men; and this is true wherever he is preached, and as long as men live under the sound of the gospel. The world is under a dispensation of mercy, and God is willing to show compassion; and while this exists, that is, while men live, the offers of salvation are to be freely made to them. The time will come when it will not be an acceptable time with God. The day of mercy will be closed; the period of trial will be ended; and men will be removed to a world where no mercy is shown, and where compassion is unknown. This verse, which should be read as a parenthesis, is designed to be connected with the argument which the apostle is urging, and which he presented in the previous chapter. The general doctrine is, that men should seek reconciliation with God. To enforce that, he here says, that it was now the acceptable time, the time when God was willing to be reconciled to men. The general sentiment of this passage may be thus expressed: (1.) Under the gospel it is an acceptable time, a day of mercy, a time when God

is willing to show mercy to men. (2.) There may be special seasons which may be peculiarly called the acceptable or accepted time. (a.) When the gospel is pressed on the attention by the faithful preaching of his servants, or by the urgent entreaties of friends; (b.) when it is brought to our attention by any striking dispensation of Providence; (c.) when the Spirit of God strives with us, and brings us to deep reflection, or to conviction for sin; (d.) in a revival of religion, when many are pressing into the kingdom: it is at all such seasons an accepted time, a day of salvation, a day which we should improve. It is "NOW" such a season, because (1.) the time of mercy will pass by, and God will not be willing to pardon the sinner who goes unprepared to eternity. (2.) Because we cannot calculate on the future. We have no assurance, no evidence that we shall live another day or hour. (3.) It is taught here, that the time will come when it will not be an accepted time. Now Is the accepted time; at some future period it will NOT be. If men grieve away the Holy Spirit; if they continue to reject the gospel; if they go unprepared to eternity, no mercy can be found. God does not design to pardon beyond the grave. He has made no provision for forgiveness there; and they who are not pardoned in this life must be unpardoned for ever.

3 Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

What caution they used not to give offence that might hinder the success of their preaching: Giving no offence in any thing, 2Co 6:3. The apostle had great difficulty to behave prudently and inoffensively towards the Jews and Gentiles, for many of both sorts watched for his halting, and sought occasion to blame him and his ministry, or his conversation; therefore he was very cautious not to give offence to those who were so apt to take offence, that he might not offend the Jews by unnecessary zeal against the law, nor the Gentiles by unnecessary compliances with such as were zealous for the law. He was careful, in all his words and actions, not to give offence, or occasion of guilt or grief. Note, When others are too apt to take offence, we should be cautious lest we give offence; and ministers especially should be careful lest they do any thing that may bring blame on their ministry or render that unsuccessful.

Giving no offence in any thing. We the ministers of God, 2Cor 6:1 The word rendered offence means, properly, stumbling; then offence, or cause of offence, a falling into sin. The meaning here is, "giving no occasion for contemning or rejecting the gospel; and the idea of Paul is, that he and his fellow-apostles so laboured as that no one who saw or knew them should have occasion to reproach the ministry, or the religion which they preached; but so that in their pure and self-denying lives, the strongest argument should be seen for embracing it. Comp. Mt 10:16, 1Cor 8:13, 10:32,33. Php 2:16; 1Thes 2:10, 1Thes 5:22. How they conducted [themselves] so as to give no offence he states in the following verses. That the ministry be not blamed. The phrase, "the ministry," refers here not merely to the ministry of Paul, that is, it does not mean merely that he would be subject to blame and reproach, but that the ministry itself which the Lord Jesus had established would be blamed, or would be reproached by the improper conduct of any one who was engaged in that work. The idea is, that the misconduct of one minister of the gospel would bring a reproach upon the profession itself, and would prevent the usefulness and success of others, just as the misconduct of a physician exposes the profession to reproach, or the bad conduct of a lawyer reflects itself in some degree on the entire profession. And it is so everywhere.

The errors, follies, misconduct, or bad example of one minister of the gospel brings a reproach upon the sacred calling itself, and prevents the usefulness of many others. Ministers do not stand alone. And though no one can be responsible for the errors and failings of others, yet no one can avoid suffering in regard to his usefulness by the sins of others. Not only, therefore, from a regard to his personal usefulness should every minister be circumspect in his walk, but from respect to the usefulness of all others who sustain the office of the ministry, and from respect to the success of religion all over the world. Paul made it one of the principles of his conduct so to act that no man should have cause to speak reproachfully of the ministry on his account. In order to this, he felt it to be necessary not only to claim and assert honour for the

ministry, but to lead such a life as should deserve the respect of men. If a man wishes to secure respect for his calling, it must be by living in the manner which that calling demands, and then respect and honour will follow as a matter of course.

4 but in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

It is the lot of faithful ministers often to be reduced to great difficulties, and to stand in need of much patience.

Those who would approve themselves to God must approve themselves faithful in trouble as well as in peace, not only in doing the work of God diligently, but also in bearing the will of God patiently.

In watchings. In wakefulness, or want of sleep. He probably refers to the fact that in these arduous duties, and in his travels, and in anxious cares for the churches, and for the advancement of religion, he was often deprived of his ordinary rest. He refers to this again in 2Cor 11:27. In fastings. Referring probably not only to the somewhat frequent fasts to which he voluntarily submitted as acts of devotion, but also to the fact that in his travels, when abroad and among strangers, he was often destitute of food. To such trials, those who travelled as Paul did, among strangers, and without property, would be often compelled to submit; and such trials, almost without number, the religion which we now enjoy has cost. It at first cost the painful life, the toils, the anxieties, and the sufferings of the Redeemer; and it has been propagated and perpetuated amidst the deep sorrows, the sacrifices, and the tears and blood of those who have contributed to perpetuate it on earth. For such a religion--originated, extended, and preserved in such a manner--we can never express suitable gratitude to God. Such a religion we cannot over-estimate in value; and for the extension and perpetuity of such a religion, we also should be willing to practise unwearied self-denial.

5 in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings;

6 by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the

Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

By pureness. Paul, having in the previous verses grouped together some of the sufferings which he endured, and by which he had endeavoured to commend and extend the true religion, proceeds here to group together certain other influences by which he had sought the same object. The substance of what he here says is, that it had not only been done by sufferings and trials, but by a holy life, and by entire consecration to the great cause to which he had devoted himself, he begins by stating that it was by pureness, that is, by integrity, sanctity, a holy and pure life. All preaching and all labours would have been in vain without this; and Paul well knew that if he succeeded in the ministry, he must be a good man. The same is true in all other professions. One of the essential requisites of an orator, according to Quintilian, is, that he must be a good man; and no man may expect ultimately to succeed in any calling of life unless he is pure. But however this may be in other callings, no one will doubt it in regard to the ministry of the gospel.

By knowledge. Interpreters have differed much in the interpretation of this. Rosenmuller and Schleusner understand by it prudence. Grotius interprets it as meaning a knowledge of the law. Doddridge supposes that it refers to a solicitude to improve in the knowledge of those truths which they were called to communicate to others. Probably the idea is a very simple one. Paul is showing how he endeavoured to commend the gospel to others, 2Cor 6:4. He says, therefore, that one way was by communicating knowledge, true knowledge. He proclaimed that which was true, and which was real knowledge, in opposition to the false science of the Greeks, and in opposition to those who would substitute declamation for argument, and the mere ornaments of rhetoric for truth. The idea is, that the ministry should not be ignorant; but that if they wished to commend their office, they should be well-informed, and should be men of good sense. Paul had no belief that an ignorant ministry was preferable to one that was characterized by true knowledge; and he felt that if he was to be useful, it was to be by his imparting to others truth that would be useful. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge," Mal 2:7.

By love unfeigned. Sincere, true, ardent love to all. By undissembled, pure, and genuine affection for the souls of men. What good can a minister do, if he does not love his people and the souls of men? The prominent characteristic in the life of the Redeemer was love--love to all. So if we are like him, and if we do any good, we shall have love to men. No man is useful without it; and ministers, in general, are useful just in proportion as they have it. It will prompt to labour, self- denial, and toil; it will make them patient, ardent, kind; it will give them zeal, and will give them access to the heart; it will accomplish what no eloquence, labour, or learning will do without it. He who shows that he loves me has access at once to my heart; he who does not, cannot make a way there by any argument, eloquence, denunciation, or learning. No minister is useful without it; no one with it can be otherwise than useful.

7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of
righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

Verse 7. By the word of truth. That is, by making known the truths of the gospel. It was his object to make known the simple truth. He did not corrupt it by false mixtures of philosophy and human wisdom, but communicated it as it had been revealed to him. The object of the appointment of the Christian ministry is to make known the truth; and when that is done, it cannot but be that they will commend their office and work to the favourable regards of men. By the power of God. By the Divine power which attended the preaching of the gospel. Most of the ancient commentators explain this of the power of working miracles.--Bloomfield. But it probably includes all the displays of Divine power which attended the propagation of the gospel, whether in the working of miracles, or in the conversion of men. If it be asked how Paul used this power so as to give no offence in the work of the ministry, it may be replied, that the miraculous endowments bestowed upon the apostles, the power of speaking foreign languages, etc., seem to have been bestowed upon them to be employed in the same way as were their natural faculties. 1Cor 14:32. The idea here is, that they used the great powers intrusted to them by God, not as impostors would have done, for the purposes of gain and ambition, or for vain display, but solely for the furtherance of the true

religion, and the salvation of men. They thus showed that they were sent from God, as well by the nature of the powers with which they were intrusted, as by the manner in which they used them.

By the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. Interpreters have varied much in the exposition of this passage; and many have run into utter wildness. Grotius says that it refers to the manner in which the ancient soldiers were armed. They bore a spear in their right hand, and a shield in the left. With the former they attacked their foes, with the latter they made defence. Some have supposed that it refers to the fact that they were taught to use the sword with the left hand as well as with the right. The simple idea is, that they were completely armed. To be armed on the right hand and on the left, is to be well armed, or entirely equipped. They went forth to conflict. They met persecution, opposition, and slander. As the soldier went well armed to battle, so did they. But the armour with which they met their foes, and which constituted their entire panoply, was a holy life. With that they met all the assaults of their enemies; with that all slander and persecution. That was their defence, and by that they hoped and expected to achieve their conquests. They had no swords, and spears, and helmets, and shields; no carnal weapons of offence and defence; but they expected to meet all their assaults, and to gain all their victories, by an upright and holy life.

8 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and *yet* true;

By honour and dishonour. The apostle is still illustrating the proposition that he and his fellow-labourers endeavoured to give no offence, (2Cor 6:3,) and to commend themselves as the ministers of God, 2Cor 6:4. He here (2Cor 6:8-10) introduces another group of particulars in which it was done. The main idea is, that they endeavoured to act in a manner so as to commend the ministry and the gospel, whether they were in circumstances of honour or dishonour, whether lauded or despised by the world. The word rendered "by" (δια) does not here denote the means by which they commended the gospel, but the medium. In the midst of honour and dishonour, whatever might be the esteem in which they were held by the world, they gave no offence. The first is, "by

honour." They were not everywhere honoured, or treated with respect. Yet they were sometimes honoured by men. The churches which they founded would honour them, and as the ministers of religion they would be by them treated with respect. Perhaps occasionally also they might be treated with great attention and regard by the men of the world on account of their miraculous powers. Comp. Acts 28:7. So now, ministers of the gospel are often treated with great respect and honour. They are beloved and venerated, caressed and flattered, by the people of their charge. As ministers of God, as exercising a holy function, their office is often treated with great respect by the World. If they are eloquent or learned, or if they are eminently successful, they are often highly esteemed and loved. It is difficult in such circumstances to "commend themselves as the ministers of God." Few are the men who are not injured by honour; few who are not corrupted by flattery. Few are the ministers who are proof against this influence, and who in such circumstances can honour the ministry. If done, it is by showing that they regard such things as of little moment; by showing that they are influenced by higher considerations than the love of praise; by not allowing this to interfere with their duties, or to make them less faithful and laborious; but rather by making this the occasion of increased fidelity and increased zeal in their Master's cause. Most ministers do more to "give offence" in times when they are greatly honoured by the world than when they are despised. Yet it is possible for a minister who is greatly honoured to make it the occasion of commending himself more and more as a minister of God. And he should do it; as Paul said he did. The other situation was "in dishonour." It is needless to say, that the apostles were often in situations where they had opportunity thus to commend themselves as the ministers of God. If sometimes honoured, they were often dishonoured. If the world sometimes flattered and caressed them, it often despised' them, and cast out their names as evil. 1Cor 4:13. And perhaps it is so substantially now with those who are faithful. In such circumstances, also, Paul sought to commend himself as a minister of God. It was by receiving all expressions of contempt with meekness; by not suffering them to interfere with the faithful discharge of his duties; by rising above them, and showing the power of religion to sustain

him; and by returning good for evil, prayers for maledictions, blessings for curses, and by seeking to save, not injure and destroy, those who thus sought to overwhelm him with disgrace. It may be difficult to do this, but it can be done; and when done, a man always does good.

By evil report. The word here used (δυσφημια) means, properly, ill-omened language, malediction, reproach, contumely. It refers to the fact that they were often slandered and calumniated. Their motives were called in question, and their names aspersed. They were represented as deceivers and impostors, etc. The statement here is, that in such circumstances, and when thus assailed and reproached, they endeavoured to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Evidently they endeavoured to do this by not slandering or reviling in return; by manifesting a Christian spirit; by living down the slanderous accusation, and by doing good, if possible, even to their calumniators. It is more difficult, says Chrysostom, to bear such reports than it is pain of body; and it is consequently more difficult to evince a Christian spirit then. To human nature it is trying to have the name slandered and cast out as evil when we are conscious only of a desire to do good. But it is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his Master; and if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, we must expect they will also those of his household. It is a fine field for a Christian minister, or any other Christian, to do good when his name is unjustly slandered. It gives him an opportunity of showing the true excellency of the Christian spirit; and it gives him the inexpressible privilege of being like Christ--like him in his suffering and in the moral excellence of character. A man should be willing to be anything if it will make him like the Redeemer--whether it be in suffering or in glory. See Php 3:10, 1Pet 4:13. And good report. When men speak well of us; when we are commended, praised, or honoured. To honour the gospel then, and to commend the ministry, is

(1.) to show that the earth is not set on this, and does not seek it;

(2.) to keep the heart from being puffed up with pride and self-estimation;

(3.) not to suffer it to interfere with our fidelity to others, and with our faithfully presenting to them the truth. Satan often attempts to bribe men by praise, and to neutralize the influence of ministers by flattery. It seems hard to go and proclaim to men painful truths, who are causing the incense of praise to ascend around us. And it is commonly much easier for a minister of the gospel to commend himself as a minister, of God when he is slandered than when he is praised; when his name is cast out as evil, than when the breezes of popular favour are wafted upon him. Few men can withstand the influence of flattery, but many men can meet persecution with a proper spirit; few men comparatively can always evince Christian fidelity to others when they live always amidst the influence of "good report," but there are many who can be faithful when they are poor, and despised, and reviled. Hence it has happened, that God has so ordered it that his faithful servants have had but little of the "good report" which this world can furnish, but that they have been generally. subjected to persecution and slander.

As deceivers. That is, we are regarded and treated as if we were deceivers, and as if we were practicing an imposition on mankind, and as if we would advance our cause by any trick or fraud that would be possible. We are regarded and treated as deceivers. Perhaps this refers to some charges which had been brought against them by the opposing faction at Corinth, (Locke,) or perhaps to the opinion which the Jewish priests and heathen philosophers entertained of them. The idea is, that though they were extensively regarded and treated as impostors, yet they endeavoured to live as became the ministers of God. They bore the imputation with patience, and they applied themselves diligently to the work of saving souls. Paul seldom turned aside to vindicate himself from such charges, but pursued his Master's work, and evidently felt that if he had a reputation that was worth anything, or deserved any reputation, God would take care of it. Comp. Ps

37:1-4. A man, especially a minister, who is constantly endeavouring to vindicate his own reputation, usually has a reputation which is not worth vindicating. A man who deserves a reputation will ultimately obtain just as much as is good for him, and as will advance the cause in which he is embarked. And yet true. We are not deceivers and impostors. Though we are regarded as such, yet we show ourselves to be true and faithful ministers of Christ.

9 as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

As unknown. As those who are deemed to be of an obscure and ignoble rank in life, unknown to the great, unknown to fame. The idea, I think, is, that they went as strangers, as persons unknown, in preaching the gospel. Yet, though thus unknown, they endeavoured to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Though among strangers; though having no introduction from the great and the noble, yet they endeavoured so to act as to convince the world that they were the ministers of God. This could be done only by a holy life, and by the evidence of the Divine approbation which would attend them in their work. And by this the ministers of religion, if they are faithful, may make themselves known even among those who were strangers, and may live so as to "give no offence." Every minister and every Christian, even when they are "unknown," and when among strangers, should remember their high character as the servants of God and should so live as to commend the religion which they profess to love, or which they are called on to preach. And yet how often is it that ministers, when among strangers, seem to feel themselves at liberty to lay aside their ministerial character, and to engage in conversation, and even partake of amusements, which they themselves would regard as wholly improper if it were known that they were the ambassadors of God! And how often is it the case that professing Christians when travelling, when among strangers, when in foreign lands, forget their high calling, and conduct [themselves] in a manner wholly different from what they did when surrounded by Christians, and when restrained by the sentiments and by the eyes of a Christian community! And yet well known. Our sentiments and our principles are well known. We have no concealments to

make. We practice no disguise. We attempt to impose on no one. Though obscure in our origin; though without rank, or wealth, or power, or patronage, to commend ourselves to favour, yet we have succeeded in making ourselves known to the world. Though obscure in our origin, we are not obscure now. Though suspected of dark designs, yet our principles are all well known to the world. No men of the same obscurity of birth ever succeeded in making themselves more extensively known than did the apostles. The world at large became acquainted with them; and by their self-denial, zeal, and success, they extended their reputation around the globe. As dying. That is, regarded by others as dying. As condemned often to death; exposed to death; in the midst of trials that expose us to death, and that are ordinarily followed by death. 1Cor 15:31, on the phrase, "I die daily." They passed through so many trials, that it might be said that they were constantly dying. And, behold, we live. Strange as it may seem, we still survive. Through all our trials we are preserved; and, though often exposed to death, yet we still live. The idea here is, that in all these trials, and in these exposures to death, they endeavoured to commend themselves as the ministers of God. They bore their trials with patience; submitted to these exposures without a murmur; and ascribed their preservation to the interposition of God. As chastened. The word chastened (παιδευομενοι) means corrected, chastised. It is applied to the chastening which God causes by affliction and calamities, 1Cor 11:32, Rev 3:19 Heb 12:6. It refers here, not to the scourgings to which they were subjected in the synagogues and elsewhere, but to the chastisements which God inflicted, the trials to which he subjected them. And the idea is, that in the midst of these trials they endeavoured to act as became the ministers of God. They bore them with patience. They submitted to them as coming from his hand. They felt that they were right, and they submitted without a murmur. And not killed. Though severely chastened, yet we are not put to death. We survive them--preserved by the interposition of God.

10 as sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

As sorrowful, λυπουμενοι. Grieving, afflicted, troubled, sad. Under these sufferings we seem always to be cast down and sad. We

endure afflictions that usually lead to the deepest expressions of grief. If the world looks only upon our trials, we must be regarded as always suffering, and always sad. The world will suppose that we have cause for continued lamentation, (Doddridge,) and they will regard us as among the most unhappy of mortals. Such, perhaps, is the estimate which the world usually affixes to the Christian life. They regard it as a life of sadness and of gloom--of trial and of melancholy. They see little in it that is cheerful, and they suppose that a heavy burden presses constantly on the heart of the Christian. Joy they think pertains to the gaieties and pleasures of this life; sadness to religion.

Alway rejoicing. So Paul was, notwithstanding the fact that he always appeared to have occasion for grief. Religion had a power not only to sustain the soul in trial, but to fill it with positive joy. The sources of his joy were doubtless the assurances of the Divine favour, and the hopes of eternal glory. And the same is true of religion always. There is an internal peace and joy which the world may not see or appreciate, but which is far more than a compensation for all the trials which the Christian endures.

As poor. The idea is, we are poor, yet in our poverty we endeavour "to give no offence, and to commend ourselves as the ministers of God." This would be done by their patience and resignation; by their entire freedom from everything dishonest and dishonourable; and by their readiness, when necessary, to labour for their own support. There is no doubt that the apostles were poor. Comp. Acts 3:6. The little property which some of them had, had all been forsaken in order that they might follow the Saviour, and go and preach his gospel. And there is as little doubt that the mass of ministers are still poor, and that God designs and desires that they should be. It is in such circumstances that he designs they should illustrate the beauty and the sustaining power of religion, and be examples to the world.

Yet making many rich. On the meaning of the word rich, Rom 2:4. Here the apostle means that he and his fellow-labourers, though poor themselves, were the instruments of conferring durable and

most valuable possessions on many persons. They had bestowed on them the true riches. They had been the means of investing them with treasures infinitely more valuable than any which kings and princes could bestow. They to whom they ministered were made partakers of the treasure where the moth doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

11 O *ye* Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

Our heart is enlarged. We have deep feelings, which naturally vent themselves in fervent and glowing language. The main idea here is, that he had a strong affection for them; a heart which embraced and loved them all, and which expressed itself in the language of deep emotion, he had loved them so that he was willing to be reproached, and to be persecuted, and to be poor, and to have his name cast out as evil. "I cannot be silent. I conceal or dissemble nothing. I am full of ardent attachment, and that naturally vents itself in the strong language which I have used." True attachment will find means of expressing itself. A heart full of love will give vent to its feelings. There will be no dissembling and hypocrisy there. And if a minister loves the souls of his people, he will pour out the affections of his heart in strong and glowing language.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

because his heart was thus enlarged with love to them, therefore he opened his mouth so freely to them in kind admonitions and exhortations: "You are not," says he, "straitened in us; we would gladly do you all the service we can, and promote your comfort, as helpers of your faith and your joy; and, if it be otherwise, the fault is in yourselves; it is because you are straitened in yourselves, and fail in suitable returns to us, through some misapprehensions concerning us; and all we desire as a recompense is only that you would be proportionably affected towards us, as children should love their father." Note, It is desirable that there should be a mutual good affection between ministers and their people, and this would greatly tend to their mutual comfort and advantage.

It is the language of reproof, meaning that he had not received from them the demonstrations of attachment which he had a right to expect, and which was a fair and proportionate return for the love bestowed on them. Probably he refers to the fact that they had formed parties; had admitted false teachers; and had not received his instructions as implicitly and as kindly as they ought to have done.

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged.

Now for a recompence, in the same. "By way of recompense, open your hearts m the same manner towards me as I have done toward you. It is all the reward or compensation which I ask of you; all the return which I desire. I do not ask silver or gold, or any earthly possessions. I ask only a return of love, and a devotedness to the cause which I love, and which I endeavour to promote." I speak as unto my children. I speak as a parent addressing children. I sustain toward you the relation of a spiritual father, and I have a right to require and expect a return of affection. Be also enlarged. Be not straitened in your affections. Love me as I love you. Give to me the same proofs of attachment which I have given you. The idea in this verse is, that the only compensation or remuneration which he expected for all the love which he had shown them, and for all his toils and self-denials in their behalf, (2Cor 6:4,5,) was, that they would love him, and yield obedience to the laws of the gospel requiring them to be separate from the world, (2Cor 6:14-18.) One ground of the claim which he had to their affection was, that he sustained toward them the relation of a father, and that he had a right to require and to expect such a return of love. The Syriac renders it well, "Enlarge your love towards me." Tindal renders it, "I speak unto you as unto children, which have like reward with us; stretch yourselves therefore out; bear not the yoke with unbelievers."

Ye Are the Temple of the Living God

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And in order to a correct understanding of this, the following principles may be suggested: I. There is a large field of action, pursuit, principle, and thought, over which infidelity, sin, heathenism, and the world as such, have the entire control. It is wholly without the range of Christian law, and stands opposed to Christian law. It pertains to a different kingdom; is conducted by different principles; and tends to destroy and annihilate the kingdom of Christ. It cannot be reconciled with Christian principle, and cannot be conformed to but in entire violation of the influence of religion. Here the prohibition of the New Testament is absolute and entire. Christians are not to mingle with the people of the world in these things; and are not to partake of them. This prohibition, it is supposed, extends to the following, among other things:

(1.) To idolatry. This was plain. On no account or pretence were the early Christians to partake of that, or to countenance it. In primitive times, during the Roman persecutions, all that was asked was that they should cast a little incense on the altar of a heathen god. They refused to do it; and because they refused to do it, thousands perished as martyrs. They judged rightly; and the world has approved their cause.

(2.) Sins vice, licentiousness. This is also plain. Christians are in no way to patronize them, or to lend their influence to them, or to promote them by their name, their presence, or their property. "Neither be partaker of other men's sins," 1Timm 5:22, 2Jn 1:11.

(3.) Arts and acts of dishonesty, deception, and fraud, in traffic and trade, Here the prohibition also must be absolute. No Christian can have a right to enter into partnership with another where the business is to be conducted on dishonest and unchristian principles, or where it shall lead to the violation of any of the laws of God. If it involves deception and fraud in the principles on which it is conducted; if it spreads ruin and poverty--as the distilling and vending of ardent spirits does; if it leads to the necessary violation of the Christian Sabbath, then the case is plain.

A Christian is to have no "fellowship with such unfruitful works of darkness, but is rather to reprove them," Eph 5:11.

(4.) The amusements and pleasures that are entirely worldly, and sinful in their nature; that are wholly under worldly influence, and which cannot be brought under Christian principles. Nearly all amusements are of this description. The rate principle here seems to be, that if a Christian. in such a place is expected to lay aside his Christian principles, and if it would be deemed indecorous and improper for him to introduce the subject of religion, or if religion would be regarded as entirely inconsistent with the nature of the amusement, then he is not to be found there, The world reigns there; and if the principles of his Lord and Master would be excluded, he should not be there. This applies of course to the theatre, the circus, the ball-room, and to large and splendid parties of pleasure. We are not to associate with idolaters in their idolatry; nor with the licentious in their licentiousness; nor with the infidel in his infidelity; nor with the proud in their pride; nor with the gay in their gaiety; nor with the friends of the theatre, or the ball-room, or the circus, in their attachment to these places and pursuits. And whatever other connexion we are to have with them as neighbours, citizens, or members of our families, we are not to participate with them IN these things. Thus far all seems to be clear; and this rule is a plain one, whether it applies to marriage, or to business, or to religion, or to pleasure. Comp. 1Cor 5:10. II. There is a large field of action, thought, and plan, which may be said to be common with the Christian and the world; that is, where the Christian is not expected to abandon his own principles, and where there will be, or need be, no compromise of the sternest views of truth, or the most upright, serious, and holy conduct. He may carry his principles with him; may always manifest them if necessary; and may even commend them to others. A few of these may be referred to.

(1.) Commercial transactions and professional engagements that are conducted on honest and upright principles, even when those with whom we act are not Christians.

(2.) Literary and scientific pursuits, which never, when pursued with a right spirit, interfere with the principles of Christianity, and never are contrary to it.

(3.) The love and affection which are due to relatives and friends. Nothing in the Bible assuredly will prohibit a pious son from uniting with one who is not pious in supporting an aged and infirm parent, or a much loved and affectionate sister. The same remark is true also respecting the duty which a wife owes to a husband, a husband to a wife, or a parent to a child, though one of them should not be a Christian. And the same observation is true also of neighbours, who are not to be prohibited from uniting as neighbours in social intercourse, and in acts of common kindness and charity, though all are not Christians.

(4.) As citizens. We owe duties to our country; and a Christian need not refuse to act with others in the elective franchise, or in making or administering the laws. Here, however, it is clear that he is not at liberty to violate the laws and the principles of the Bible. He cannot be at liberty to unite with them in political schemes that are contrary to the law of God, or in elevating to office men whom he cannot vote for with a good conscience as qualified for the station.

(5.) In plans of public improvement; in schemes that go to the advancement of the public welfare, when the schemes do not violate the laws of God. But if they involve the necessity of violating the Sabbath, or any of the laws of God, assuredly he cannot consistently participate in them.

(6.) In doing good to others. So the Saviour was with sinners; so he ate, and drank, and conversed with them: So we may mingle with them, without partaking of their wicked feelings and plans, so far as we can do them good, and exert over them a holy and saving influence. In all the situations here referred to, and in all the duties growing out of them the Christian may maintain his principles, and

may preserve a good conscience. Indeed, the Saviour evidently contemplated that his people would have such intercourse with the world, and that in it they would do good. But in none of these is there to be any compromise of principle; in none to be any yielding to the opinions and practices that are contrary to the laws of God. III. There is a large field of action, conduct, and plan, where Christians only will act together. These relate to the peculiar duties of religion--to prayer, Christian fellowship, the ordinances of the gospel, and most of the plans of Christian beneficence. Here the world will not intrude; and here assuredly there will be no necessity of any compromise of Christian principle.

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he
that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are
the temple of the living God; as God hath said,
I will dwell in them, and walk in *them;*
and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The temple of God. What has a temple of God to do with idol worship? It is erected for a different purpose, and the worship of idols in it would not be tolerated. It is implied here that Christians are themselves the temple of God--a fact which Paul proceeds immediately to illustrate; and that it is as absurd for them to mingle with the infidel world, as it would be to erect the image of a heathen god in the temple of JEHOVAH. This is strong language; and we cannot but admire the energy and copiousness of the expressions used by Paul, "which cannot," says Bloomfield, "be easily paralleled in the best classical writers."

With idols. Those objects which God hates, and on which he cannot look but with abhorrence. The sense is, that for Christians to mingle with the sinful world--to partake of their pleasures, pursuits, and follies--is as detestable and hateful in the sight of God, as if his temple were profaned by erecting a deformed, and shapeless, and senseless block in it as an object of worship. And assuredly, if Christians had such a sense of the abomination of mingling with the world, they would feel the obligation to be separate and pure.

For ye are the temple of the living God. See this explained 1Cor 3:16, 1Cor 3:17 The idea is, that as God dwells with his people, they ought to be separated from a sinful and polluted world. As God hath said. The words here quoted are taken substantially from Ex 29:45, Lev 26:12, Eze 37:27. They are not literally quoted, but Paul has thrown together the substance of what occurs in several places. The sense, however, is the same as occurs in the places referred to. I will dwell in them. ενοικησω. I will take up my indwelling in them. There is an allusion, doubtless, to the fact that he would be present among his people by the Shechinah, or the visible symbol of his presence. 1Cor 3:16, 1Cor 3:17. It implies, when used with reference to Christians, that the Holy Spirit would abide with them, and that the blessing of God would attend them. See Rom 8, Col 3:16, 2Ti 1:14. And walk in them. That is, I will walk among them. I will be one of their number. He was present among the Jews by the public manifestation of his presence by a symbol; he is present with Christians by the presence and guidance of his Holy Spirit. And I will be their God. Not only the God whom they worship, but the God who will protect and bless them. I will take them under my peculiar protection, and they shall enjoy my favour. This is certainly as true of Christians as it was of the Jews, and Paul has not departed from the spirit of the promise in applying it to the Christian character. His object in quoting these passages is to impress on Christians the solemnity and importance of the truth that God dwelt among them and with them; that they were under his care and protection; that they belonged to him, and that they therefore should be separate from the world.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate,
saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing;*
and I will receive you,
18 and will be a Father unto you,
and ye shall be my sons and daughters,
saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians-7

REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 7

(1.) Christians are bound, by every solemn and sacred consideration, to endeavour to purify themselves, 2Cor 7:1. They who have the promises of eternal life, and the assurance that God will be to them a Father, and evidence that they are his sons and daughters, should not indulge in the filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

(2.) Every true Christian will aim at perfection, 2Cor 7:1. He will desire to be perfect; he will strive for it; he will make it a subject of unceasing and constant prayer. No man can be a Christian to whom it would not be a pleasure to be at once as perfect as God. And if any man is conscious that the idea of being made at once perfectly holy would be unpleasant or painful, he may set it down as certain evidence that he is a stranger to religion.

(3.) No man can be a Christian who voluntarily indulges m sin, or in what he knows to be wrong, 2Cor 7:1. A man who does that, cannot be aiming at perfection. A man who does that, shows that he has no real desire to be perfect.

(4.) How blessed will be heaven! 2Cor 7:1. There we shall be perfect. And the crowning glory of heaven is not that we shall be happy, but that we shall be holy. Whatever there is in the heart that is good, shall there be perfectly developed; whatever there is that is evil shall be removed, and the whole soul will be like God. The Christian desires heaven, because he will be there perfect. He desires no other heaven. He could be induced to accept no other if it were offered to him. He blesses God day by day that there is such a heaven, and that there is no other--that there is one world which sin does not enter, and where evil shall be unknown.

(5.) What a change will take place at death! 2Cor 7:1 The Christian will be there made perfect. How this change will be there produced we do not know. Whether it will be by some extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God on the heart, or by the mere removal from the body, and from a sinful world to a world of glory, we know not. The fact seems to be clear, that at death the Christian will be made at once as holy as God is holy, and that he will ever continue to be in the future world.

(6.) What a desirable thing it is to die! 2Cor 7:1. Here, should we attain to the age of the patriarchs, like them we should continue to be imperfect. Death only will secure our perfection; and death, therefore, is a desirable event. The perfection of our being could not be attained but for death; and every Christian should rejoice that he is to die. It is better to be in heaven than on earth; better to be with God than to be away from him; better to be made perfect than to be contending here with internal corruption, and to struggle with our sins. "I would not live always," was the language of holy Job; "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ," was the language of holy Paul.

(7.) It is often painful to be compelled to use the language of reproof, 2Cor 7:8. Paul deeply regretted the necessity of doing it in the case of the Corinthians, and expressed the deepest anxiety in regard to it. No man, no minister, parent, or friend can use it but with deep regret that it is necessary. But the painfulness of it ahould not prevent our doing it. It should be done tenderly, but faithfully. If done with the deep feeling, with the tender affection of Paul, it will be done right; and when so done, it will produce the desired effect, and do good. No man should use the language of reproof with a hard heart, or with severity of feeling. If he is, like Paul, ready to weep when he does it, it will do good. If he does it because he delights in it, it will do evil.

(8.) It is a subject of rejoicing where a people exercise repentance, 2Cor 7:8. A minister has pleasure not in the pain which his reproofs cause; not in the deep anxiety and distress of the sinner;

and not in the pain which Christians feel under his reproofs; but he has joy in the happy results or the fruits which follow from it. It is only from the belief that those tears will produce abundant joy that he has pleasure in causing them, or in witnessing them.

(9.) The way to bring men to repentance, is to present to them the simple and unvarnished truth, 2Cor 7:8,9. Paul stated simple and plain truths to the Corinthians. He did not abuse them; he did not censure them in general terms; he stated things just as they were, and specified the things on account of which there was occasion for repentance. So if ministers wish to excite repentance in others, they must specify the sins over which others should weep; if we wish, as individuals, to feel regret for our sins, and to have true repentance toward God, we must dwell on those particular sins which we have committed, and should endeavour so to reflect on them that they may make an appropriate impression on the heart. No man will truly repent by general reflections on his sin; no one who does not endeavour so to dwell on his sins as that they shall make the proper impression, which each one is fitted to produce on the soul. Repentance is that state of mind which a view of the truth in regard to our own depravity is fitted to produce.

(10.) There is a great difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world, 2Cor 7:10. All men feel sorrow. All men, at some period of their lives, grieve over their past conduct. Some in their sorrow are pained because they have offended God, and go to God, and find pardon and peace in him. That sorrow is unto salvation. But the mass do not look to God. They turn away from him even in their disappointments, and in their sorrows, and in the bitter consciousness of sin. They seek to alleviate their sorrows in worldly company, in pleasure, in the intoxicating bowl; and such sorrow works death. It produces additional distress, and deeper gloom here, and eternal woe hereafter.

(11.) We may learn what constitutes true repentance, 2Cor 7:11. There should be, and there will be, deep feeling. There will be "carefulness" deep anxiety to be freed from the sin; there will be a

desire to remove it; "indignation" against it; "fear" of offending God; "earnest desire" that all that has been wrong should be corrected; "zeal" that the reformation should be entire; and a wish that the appropriate "revenge" or expression of displeasure should be excited against it. The true penitent hates nothing so cordially as he does his sin. He hates nothing but sin. And his warfare with that is decided, uncompromising, inexorable, and eternal.

(12.) It is an evidence of mercy and goodness in God that the sorrow which is felt about sin may be made to terminate in our good, and to promote our salvation, 2Cor 7:10,11. If sorrow for sin had been suffered to take its own course, and had proceeded unchecked, it would in all cases have produced death. If it had not been for the merciful interposition of Christianity, by which even sorrow might be turned to joy, this world would have been everywhere a world of sadness and of death, Man would have suffered. Sin always produces, sooner or later, woe. Christianity has done nothing to make men wretched, but it has done everything to bind up broken hearts. It has revealed a way by which sorrow may be turned into joy, and the bitterness of grief may be followed by the sweet calm and sunshine of peace.

(13.) The great purpose of Christian discipline is to benefit the whole church, 2Cor 7:12. It is not merely on account of the offender, nor is it merely that the injured may receive a just recompense. It is primarily that the church may be pure, and that the cause of religion may not be dishonoured. When the work of discipline is entered on from any private and personal motives, it is usually attended with bad feeling, and usually results in evil. When it is entered on with a desire to honour God, and to promote the purity of the church; when the whole aim is to deliver the church from opprobrium and scandal, and to have just such a church as Jesus Christ desires, then it will be prosecuted with good temper, and with right feeling, and then it will lead to happy results. Let no man institute a process of discipline on an offending brother from private, personal, and revengeful feelings. Let him first examine his own heart, and let him be sure that his aim is solely the glory of Christ, before he attempts to draw down the

censure of the church on an offending brother. How many cases of church discipline would be arrested if this simple rule were observed! And while the case before us shows that it is important in the highest degree that discipline should be exercised on an offending member of the church; while no consideration should prevent us from exercising that discipline; and while every man should feel desirous that the offending brother should be reproved or punished, yet this case also shows that it should be done with the utmost tenderness, the most strict regard to justice, and the deepest anxiety that the general interests of religion should not suffer by the manifestation of an improper-spirit, or by improper motives in inflicting punishment on an offending brother.

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Paul's Joy at the Church's Repentance

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

Verse 1. Having therefore these promises. The promises referred to in 2Cor 6:17,18; the promise that God would be a Father, a Protector, and a Friend. The idea is, that as we have a promise that God would dwell in us, that he would be our God, that he would be to us a Father, we should remove from us whatever is offensive in his sight, and become perfectly holy.

Let us cleanse ourselves. Let us purify ourselves. Paul was not afraid to bring into view the agency of Christians themselves in the work of salvation. He therefore says, "let us purify ourselves," as if Christians had much to do; as if their own agency was to be employed; and as if their purifying was dependent on their own efforts. While it is true that all purifying influence and all holiness proceed from God, it is also true that the effect of all the influences

of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to diligence, to purify our own hearts, and to urge us to make strenuous efforts to overcome our own sins. He who expects to be made pure without any effort of his own, will never become pure; and he who ever becomes holy, will become so in consequence of strenuous efforts to resist the evil of his own heart, and to become like God. The argument here is, that we have the promises of God to aid us. We do not go about the work in our own strength. It is not a work in which we are to have no aid. But it is a work which God desires, and where he will give us all the aid which we need.

Flesh And spirit. By "filthiness of the spirit," the apostle means, probably, all the thoughts or mental associations that defile the man. Thus the Saviour (Mt 15:19) speaks of evil thoughts, etc., that proceed out of the heart, and that pollute the man. And probably Paul here includes all the sins and passions which appertain particularly to mind or to the soul rather than to carnal appetites--such as the desire of revenge, pride, avarice, ambition, etc. These are in themselves as polluting and defiling as the gross sensual pleasures. They stand as much in the way of sanctification, they are as offensive to God, and they prove as certainly that the heart is depraved, as the grossest sensual passions. The main difference is, that they are more decent in the external appearance; they can be better concealed; they are usually indulged by a more elevated class in society; but they are not the less offensive to God. It may be added, also, that they are often conjoined in the same person; and that the man who is defiled in his "spirit"is often a man most corrupt and sensual in his "flesh." Sin sweeps with a desolating influence through the whole frame; and it usually leaves no part unaffected, though some part may be more deeply corrupted than others.

Perfecting. This word (επιτελουντες) means, properly, to bring to an end, to finish, complete. The idea here is, that of carrying it out to the completion. Holiness had been commenced in the heart; and the exhortation of the apostle is, that they should make every effort that it might be complete in all its parts. He does not say that this work of perfection had ever been accomplished--nor does he say

that it had not been. He only urges the obligation to make an effort to be entirely holy; and this obligation is not affected by the inquiry whether any one has been or has not been perfect. It is an obligation which results from the nature of the law of God, and his unchangeable claims on the soul. The fact that no one has been perfect does not relax the claim; the fact that no one will be in this life, does not weaken the obligation. It proves only the deep and dreadful depravity of the human heart, and should humble us under the stubbornness of guilt. The obligation to be perfect is one that is unchangeable and eternal. See Mt 5:48, 1Pet 1:15. Tindal renders this, "And grow up to full holiness in the fear of God." The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection--perfection in all things--in the love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans, and dealings with men; perfection in his prayers, and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire it, and who does not constantly aim at it. No man is a friend of God who can acquiesce in a state of sin, and who is satisfied and contented that he is not as holy as God is holy. And any man who has no desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be as perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has no true religion, How can a man be a Christian who is willing to acquiesce in a state of sin, and who does not desire to be just like his Master and Lord? In the fear of God. Out of fear and reverence of God. From a regard to his commands, and a reverence for his name. The idea seems to be, that we are always in the presence of God; we are professedly under his law; and we should be awed and restrained by a sense of his presence from the commission of sin, and from indulgence in the pollutions of the flesh and spirit. There are many sins that the presence of a child will restrain a man from committing; and how should the conscious presence of a holy God keep us from sin! If the fear of a man or of a child will restrain us, and make us attempt to be holy and pure, how should the fear of the all-present and the all-seeing God keep us, not only from outward sins, but from polluted thoughts and unholy desires!

3 I speak not *this* to condemn *you:* for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*.

4 Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

Within were fears, Referring probably to the anxiety which he had in regard to the success of the epistle which he had sent to the church at Corinth. He felt great solicitude on the subject. He had sent Titus there to see what was the state of the church, and to witness the effect of his instructions. Titus had not come to him as he had expected, at Troas, (2Cor 2:13,) and he felt the deepest anxiety in regard to him and the success of his epistle. His fears were probably that they would be indisposed to exercise the discipline on the offender; or lest the severity of the discipline required should alienate them from him; or lest the party under the influence of the false teachers should prevail. All was uncertainty, and his mind was filled with the deepest apprehension.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season.

Though I did repent. Doddridge renders this, "however anxious I may have been." The word here used does not denote repentance in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, as if any wrong had been done. It is not the language of remorse. It can denote here nothing more than "that uneasiness which a good man feels, not from the consciousness of having done wrong, but from a tenderness for others, and a fear lest that which, prompted by duty, he had said, should have too strong an effect upon them."--Campbell, diss. vi. part iii. & 9. See the meaning of the word further illustrated in the same dissertation. The word

(μεταμελομαι) denotes, properly, to change one's purpose or mind after having done anything, (Robinson;) or an uneasy feeling of regret for what has been done, without regard either to duration or effects.--Campbell. Here it is not to be understood that Paul meant to say he had done anything wrong. He was an inspired man, and what he had said was proper and right. But he was a man of deep feeling, and of tender affections. He was pained at the necessity of giving reproof. And there is no improbability in supposing that after the letter had been sent off, and he reflected on its nature and on the pain which it would cause to those whom he tenderly loved, there might be some misgiving of heart about it, and the deepest anxiety and regret at the necessity of doing it. What parent is there who has not had the same feeling as this? He has felt it necessary to correct a beloved child, and has formed the purpose, and has executed it. But is there no misgiving of heart? No question asked whether it might not have been dispensed with? No internal struggle; no sorrow?; no emotion which may be called regret at the resolution which has been taken? Yet there is no repentance as if the parent had done wrong, he feels that he has done what was right and necessary. He approves his own course, and has occasion of rejoicing at the good effects Which follow. Such appears to have been the situation of the apostle Paul in this case; and it shows that he had a tender heart, that he did not delight in giving pain, and that he had no desire to overwhelm them with grief. When the effect was seen, he was not unwilling that they should be apprized of the pain which it had cost him. When a parent has corrected a child, no injury is done if the child becomes acquainted with the strugglings which it has cost him, and the deep pain and anxiety caused by the necessity of resorting to chastisement.

For I perceive, etc. I perceive the good effect of the epistle. I perceive that it produced the kind of sorrow in you which I desired. I see that it has produced permanent good results. The sorrow, which it caused in you is only for a season; the good effects will be abiding. I have, therefore, great occasion to rejoice that I sent the epistle. It produced permanent repentance and reformation, (2Cor 7:9,) and thus accomplished all that I wished or desired.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

But that ye sorrowed to repentance: It was not mere grief; it was not sorrow producing melancholy, gloom, or despair; it was not sorrow which led you to be angry at him who had reproved you for your errors--as is sometimes the case with the sorrow that is produced by reproof; but it was sorrow that led to a change and reformation. It was sorrow that was followed by a putting away of the evil for the existence of which there had been occasion to reprove you. It denotes a change for the better; a change of mind that is durable and productive in its consequences; a change which amounts to a permanent reformation. See Campbell's Diss. ut supra. The sense here is, that it produced a change, a reformation. It was such sorrow for their sin as to lead them to reform, and to put away the evils which had existed among them. It was this fact, and not that they had been made sorry, that led Paul to rejoice.

That ye might receive damage by us in nothing. The Greek word rendered "receive damage" (ζημιωθητε) means, properly, to bring loss upon any one; to receive loss or detriment. 1Cor 3:15. Comp. Php 3:8. The sense here seems to be, "So that on the whole no real injury was done you in any respect by me. You were indeed put to pain and grief by my reproof. You sorrowed. But it has done you no injury on the whole. It has been a benefit to you. If you had not reformed; if you had been pained without putting away the sins for which the reproof was administered; if it had been mere grief without any proper fruit, you might have said that you would have suffered a loss of happiness, or you might have given me occasion to inflict severer discipline. But now you are gainers in happiness by all the sorrow which I have caused. Sinners are gainers in happiness, in the end, by all the pain of repentance produced by the preaching of the gospel. No man suffers loss by being told of his faults if he repents; and men are under the highest obligations to those faithful ministers and other friends who tell them of their errors, and who are the means of bringing them to true repentance.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

For godly sorrow. "Sorrow according, to God," (ηγαρκαταθεονλυπη) That is, such sorrow as has respect to God, or is according to his will, or as leads the soul to him. This is a very important expression in regard to true repentance, and shows the exact nature of that sorrow which is connected with a return to God. The phrase may be regarded as implying the following things:

(1.) Such sorrow as God approves, or such as is suitable to, or conformable to his will and desires., It cannot mean that it is such sorrow or grief as God has, for he has none; but such as shall be in accordance with what God demands in a return to him. It is a sorrow which his truth is fitted to produce on the heart; such a sorrow as shall appropriately arise from viewing sin as God views it; such sorrow as exists in the mind when our views accord with his in regard to the existence, the extent, the nature, and the ill-desert of sin. Such views will lead to sorrow that it has ever been committed; and such views will be "according to God."

(2.) Such sorrow as shall be exercised towards God in view of sin; which shall arise from a view of the evil of sin as committed against a holy God. It is not mainly that it will lead to pain; that it will overwhelm the soul in disgrace; that it will forfeit the favour or lead to the contempt of man; or that it will lead to an eternal hell; but, it is such as arises from a view of the evil of sin as committed against a holy and just God. It is not mainly from the fact that it is an offence against his infinite majesty. Such sorrow David had (Ps 51:4) when he said, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned;" when the offence regarded as committed against man, enormous as it was, was lost and absorbed in its greater evil when regarded as committed against God. So all true and genuine repentance is that which regards sin as deriving its main evil from the fact that it is committed against God.

(3.) That which leads to God. It leads to God to obtain forgiveness --to seek for consolation. A heart truly contrite and penitent seeks God, and implores pardon from him. Other sorrow in view of sin than that which is genuine repentance, leads the person away from God. He seeks consolation in the world; he endeavours to drive away his serious impressions, or to drown them in the pleasures and the cares of life. But genuine sorrow for sin leads the soul to God, and conducts the sinner, through the Redeemer, to him to obtain the pardon and peace which he only can give to a wounded spirit. In God alone can pardon and true peace be found; and godly sorrow for sin will seek them there.

Worketh repentance. Produces a change that shall be permanent; a reformation. It is not mere regret; it does not soon pass away in its effects, but it produces permanent and abiding changes. A man who mourns over sin as committed against God, and who seeks to God for pardon, will reform his life, and truly repent. He who has grief for sin only because it will lead to disgrace or shame, or because it will lead to poverty or pain, will not necessarily break off from it and reform. It is only when it is seen that sin is committed against God, and is evil in his sight, that it leads to a change of life.

Not to be repented of. αμεταμελητον 2Cor 7:8. Not to be regretted. It is permanent and abiding. There is no occasion to mourn over such repentance and change of life. It is that which the mind approves, and which it will always approve. There will be no reason for regretting it, and it will never be regretted. And it is so. Who ever yet repented of having truly repented of sin? Who is there, who has there ever been, who became a true penitent, and a true Christian, who ever regretted it? Not an individual has ever been known who regretted his having become a Christian. Not one who regretted that he had become one too soon in life, or that he had served the Lord Jesus too faithfully or too long.

But the sorrow of the world. All sorrow which is not toward God, and which does not arise from just views of sin as committed, against God, or lead to God. Probably Paul refers here to the sorrow which arises from worldly causes, and which does not lead to God for consolation. Such may be the sorrow which arises from the loss of friends or property; from disappointment, or, from shame and disgrace. Perhaps it may include the following things:

(1.) Sorrow arising from losses of property and friends, and from disappointment.

(2.) Sorrow for sin or vice when it overwhelms the mind with the consciousness of guilt, and when it does not lead to God, and when there is no contrition of soul from viewing it as an offence against God. Thus a female who has wandered from the paths of virtue, and involved her family and herself in disgrace; or a man who has been guilty of forgery, or perjury, or any other disgraceful crime, and who is detected; a man who has violated the laws of the land, and who has involved himself and family in disgrace, will often feel regret, and sorrow, and remorse, but it arises wholly from worldly considerations, and does not lead to God.

(3.) When the sorrow arises from a view of worldly consequences merely, and when there is no looking to God for pardon and consolation. Thus men, when they lose their property or friends, often pine in grief without looking to God. Thus when they have wandered from the path of virtue, and have fallen into sin, they often look merely to the disgrace among men, and see their names blasted, and their comforts gone, and pine away in grief. There is no looking to God for pardon or for consolation. The sorrow arises from this world, and it terminates there. It is the loss of what they valued pertaining to this world, and it is all which they had, and it produces death. It is sorrow such as the men of this World have--begins with this world, and terminates

with this world. Worketh death. Tends to death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. It does not tend to life.

(a.) It produces distress only. It is attended with no consolation.

(b.) It tends to break the spirit, to destroy the peace, and to mar the happiness.

(c.) It often leads to death itself. The spirit is broken, and the heart pines away under the influence of the unalleviated sorrow; or under its influence men often lay violent hands on themselves, and take their lives. Life is often closed under the influence of such sorrow.

(d.) It tends to eternal death. There is no looking to God; no looking for pardon. It produces murmuring, repining, complaining, fretfulness against God, and thus leads to his displeasure, and to the condemnation and ruin of the soul.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

For behold this self-same thing. For see in your own case the happy effects of godly sorrow. See the effects which it produced; see an illustration of what it is fitted to produce. The construction is, "For, lo! this very thing, to wit, your sorrowing after a godly manner, wrought carefulness, clearing of yourselves," etc. The object of Paul is to illustrate the effects of godly sorrow, to which he had referred in 2Cor 7:10. He appeals, therefore, to their own case, and says that it was beautifully illustrated among themselves.

What carefulness. σπουδην. This word properly denotes speed, haste; then diligence, earnest effort, forwardness. Here it, is evidently used to denote the diligence and the great anxiety which they manifested to remove the evils which existed among

them. They went to work to remove them. They did not sit down to mourn over them merely, nor did they wait for God to remove them, nor did they plead that they could do nothing; but they set about the work as though they believed it might be done. When men are thoroughly convinced of sin, they will set about removing it with the utmost diligence. They will feel that this can be done, an,d must be done, or that the soul will be lost.

What clearing of yourselves, απολογιαν. Apology. This word properly means a plea or defence before a tribunal or elsewhere, Acts 22:1, 2Ti 4:16. Tindal renders it, "Yea, it caused you to clear yourselves." The word here properly means apology for what had been done; and it probably refers here to the effort which would be made by the sounder part of the church to clear themselves from blame in what had occurred. It does not mean that the guilty, when convicted of sin, will attempt to vindicate themselves, and to apologize to God for what they have done; but it means that the church at Corinth were anxious to state to Titus all the mitigating circumstances of the case; they showed great solicitude to free themselves, as far as could be done, from blame; they were anxious, as far as could be, to show that they had not; approved of what had occurred, and perhaps that it had occurred only because it could not have been prevented. We are not to suppose that all the things here referred to occurred in the same individual, and that the same persons precisely evinced diligence, and made the apology, etc. It was done by the church; all evinced deep feeling; but some manifested it in one way, and some in another. The whole church was roused; and all felt, and all endeavoured, in the proper way, to free themselves from the blame, and to remove the evil from among them.

Yea, what indignation. Indignation against the sin, and perhaps against the persons who had drawn down the censure of the apostle. One effect of true repentance is to produce decided hatred of sin. It is not mere regret, or sorrow; it is positive hatred. There is a deep indignation against it as an evil and a bitter thing.

Yea, what fear. Fear lest the thing should be repeated. Fear lest it should not be entirely removed. Or it may possibly mean fear of the displeasure of Paul, and of the punishment which would be inflicted if the evil were not removed. But it more probably refers to the anxious state of mind that the whole evil might be corrected, and to the dread of having any vestige of the evil remaining among them.

Yea, what vehement desire. This may either mean their fervent wish to remove the cause of complaint, or their anxious desire to see the apostle. It is used in the latter sense in 2Cor 7:7, and according to Doddridge and Bloomfield this is the meaning here. Locke renders it, "desire of satisfying me." It seems to me more probable that Paul refers to their anxious wish to remove the sin, since this is the topic under consideration. The point of his remarks in this verse is not so much their affection for him, as their indignation against their sin, and their deep grief that sin had existed and had been tolerated among them.

Yea, what zeal. Zeal to remove the sin, and to show your attachment to me. They set about the work of reformation in great earnest.

Yea, what revenge! Tindal renders this, "it caused punishment." The idea is, that they immediately set about the work of inflicting punishment on the offender. The word here used (εκδικησιν) properly denotes maintenance of right, protection; then it is used in the sense of avengement, or vengeance; and then of penal retribution or punishment. See Lk 21:22, 2Thes 1:8, 1Pet 2:14.

In all things, etc. The sense of this is, "You have entirely acquitted yourselves of blame in this business." The apostle does not mean that none of them had been to blame, or that the church had been free from fault, for a large part of his former epistle is occupied in reproving them for their faults in this business; but

he means that, by their zeal and their readiness to take away the cause of complaint, they had removed all necessity of further blame, and had pursued such a course as entirely to meet his approbation. They had cleared themselves of any further blame in this business, and had become, so far as this was concerned, "clear," (αγνους,) or pure.

The apostle, in the foregoing verses, had declared, that godly sorrow, or a sorrow wrought by the Spirit of God, worketh true repentance, and produceth thorough reformation, not to be repented of: Now in this verse he proves, that the Corinthians sorrow for the incestuous person's sin, was of this nature, namely, a godly sorrow, because it produced such excellent effects and fruits as godly sorrow is wont to do. Seven of which he here reckons up.

1. Care, or an holy carefulness to amend what is amiss for time to come, by shunning and avoiding all occasions and temptations that lead to sin. He that truly repenteth, is careful not to sin again.

2. Clearing of themselves, that they did not approve the fact of the incestuous person,but did inflict the church's censures upon him, and so put away evil from amongst them.

3. Indignation against sin; this is found where godly sorrow is found; the heart rises, swells, and boils against sin; we are then angry and sin not; when we are angry at sin, and with ourselves for sinning.

4. Fear a true penitent fears to offend: and that he may not offend, doth nourish in himself an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of himself: There is found with him a fear of reverence, from an awful apprehension of the holiness and Majesty of God, and also a fear of diligence and vigilance, watching and warring against sin, that it may not set upon us and surprise us for the time to come.

5. Vehement desire, after a thorough reformation, and to rectify whatever is amiss; a desire to be rid of all sin, and in the mean time conflicting with it, and groaning under it.

6. Zeal; this is an affection in the true penitent, compounded of love and anger. Be zealous and repent, is Christ's own call, Rev 3:19 This will make a penitent persist in the exercise and expression of his godly sorrow for sin, and persevere in his course of mortification, in defiance of all opposition made against him.

7. Revenge; this is the result of zeal, when our zeal boils into revenge, and puts us upon self-castigations: not so much upon our bodies with whips and scourges but by the abatement of lust which stirreth in us, buffeting, the flesh, and bringing it into subjection. And this revenge leads the penitent also to make satisfaction for wrongs done, either by open confession, or secret restitution: In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear of this matter.

As if the apostle had said, "By these forementioned acts of yours, the body of you hath shewn that you did not approve of the incestuous person's sin, but evinced by your sorrow for it, that you are clear of it.

Learn hence, 1. That there is no way to get clear of the guilt of other men's sins, but by duly mourning for them: Now your are clear of this matter.

Learn, 2. That true repentance for sin, clears us from the guilt of it, both in the sight of God and man; and if so, it is both uncharitable and unchristian to stigmatize or reproach any person for the sin, which we either know or believe he has truly repented of.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, etc. In this verse Paul states the main reason why he had written to them on the subject. It was not principally on account of the man who had done the wrong, or of him who had been injured; but it was from tender anxiety for the whole church, and in order to show the deep interest which he had in their welfare. Not for his cause that had done the wrong. Not mainly or principally on account of the incestuous person, 1Cor 5:1. It was not primarily with reference to him as an individual that I wrote, but from a regard to the whole church. Nor for his cause that suffered wrong. Not merely that the wrong which he had suffered might be rectified, and that his rights might be restored, valuable and desirable as was that object. The offence was, that a man had taken his father's wife as his own, (1Cor 5:1;) and the person injured, therefore, was his father. It is evident from this passage, I think, that the father was living at the time when Paul wrote this epistle. But that our care, etc. I wrote mainly that I might show the deep interest which I had in the church at large, and my anxiety that it might not suffer by the misconduct of any of its members. It is from a regard to the welfare of the whole church that discipline should be administered, and not simply with reference to an individual who has done wrong, or an individual who is injured. In church discipline, such private interests are absorbed in the general interest of the church at large.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and
exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his
spirit was refreshed by you all.
14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed;
but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting,
which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth.
15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he
remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and
trembling ye received him.
16 I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all *things.*

I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence, etc. I have had the most ample proof that you are disposed to obey God, and to put away everything that is offensive to him. The address of this part of the epistle, says Doddridge, is wonderful. It is designed,

evidently, not merely to commend them for what they had done, and to show them the deep attachment which he had for them, but in a special manner to prepare them for what he was about to say in the following chapter respecting the collection which he had so much at heart for the poor saints at Jerusalem. What he here says was admirably adapted to introduce that subject. They had thus far showed the deepest regard for him. They had complied with all his directions. All that he had said of them had proved to be true. And as he had boasted of them to Titus, (2Cor 7:14,) and expressed his entire confidence that they would comply with his requisitions, so he had also boasted of them to the churches of Macedonia, and expressed the utmost confidence that they would be liberal in their benefactions, 2Cor 9:2. All that Paul here says in their favour, therefore, was eminently adapted to excite them to liberality, and to prepare them to comply with his wishes in regard to that contribution.

2 Corinthians-8

The Offering for the Saints

Paul had given directions for taking up this collection in the first epistle. See 2Cor 8:1, seq. Comp. Rom 15:26. This collection he had given Titus direction to take up when he went to Corinth. See 2Cor 8:6-17. But from some cause it had not been completed, 2Cor 8:10,11. What that cause was, is not stated; but it may have been possibly the disturbances which had existed there, or the opposition of the enemies of Paul, or the attention which was necessarily bestowed in regulating the affairs of the church. But in order that the contribution might be made, and might be a liberal one, Paul presses on their attention several considerations designed to excite them to give freely. The chapter is, therefore, of importance to us, as it is a statement of the duty of giving liberally to the cause of benevolence, and of the motives by which it should be done. In the presentation of this subject, Paul urges upon them the following considerations:

REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 8

(1.) Let us bear in mind that a disposition to be liberal proceeds only from God, 2Cor 8:1 The human heart is by nature selfish, and indisposed to benevolence. It is only by the grace of God that men are excited to liberality; and we should therefore pray for this, as well as for all other graces. We should beseech God to remove selfishness from our minds; to dispose us to feel as we should feel for the wants of others, and to incline us to give just what we ought to give to relieve them in trouble, and to promote their temporal and eternal welfare.

(2.) It is an inestimable blessing when God gives a spirit of liberality to the church, 2Cor 8:1. It should be regarded as a proof of his special favour, and as an evidence of the prevalence of the principles of true religion.

(3.) Men are often most liberal when in circumstances of distress, perplexity, and affliction, 2Cor 8:2. Prosperity often freezes the heart, but adversity opens it. Success in life often closes the hand of benevolence, but adversity opens it. We are taught to feel for the sufferings of others by suffering ourselves; and in the school of adversity we learn invaluable lessons of benevolence which we should never acquire in prosperity. If you want the tear of sympathy, if you want aid in a good cause, go to a man in affliction, and his heart is open. And hence it is that God often suffers his people to pass through trials in order that they may possess the spirit of large and active benevolence.

(4.) If Christians desire to be liberal they must first devote themselves to God, 2Cor 8:5. If this is not done they will have no heart to give, and they will not give. They will have a thousand excuses ready, and there will be no ground of appeal which we can make to them: True liberality is always based on the fact that we have given ourselves wholly to God.

(5.) When Christians have honestly devoted themselves to God, it will be easy to contribute liberally to the cause of benevolence, 2Cor 8:5. They will find something to give; or if they have nothing now, they will labour and deny themselves in order that they may have something to give. If every professed Christian on earth had honestly given himself to God, and should act in accordance with this, the channels of benevolence would never be dry.

(6.) We should compare ourselves in the matter of benevolence with the churches here referred to, 2Cor 8:3. They were poor; they were in deep affliction, and yet they contributed all in their power, and beyond their power. Do we do this? Do we give according to our ability? Do we deny ourselves one comfort-- withhold one gratification-- curtail one expense which fashion demands, in order that we may have the means of doing good? Oh, if every Christian would give according to his ability to the sacred cause of charity, how soon would the means be ample to place the Bible in every family on the globe, to preach the gospel in every country, and to maintain all the institutions which the cause of humanity needs in this and in other lands!

(7.) The Christian character is incomplete unless there is a spirit of large and liberal beneficence, 2Cor 8:7. This is indispensable to the proper symmetry of the Christian graces, and this should be cultivated in order to give beauty and completeness to the whole. Yet it cannot be denied that there are true Christians where this is wanting. There are those who give every other evidence of piety; who are men of prayer, and who evince humility, and who are submissive in trials, and whose conversation is that of Christians, who are yet sadly deficient in this virtue. Either by an original closeness of disposition, or by a defect of education, or by want of information in regard to the Objects of Christian benevolence, they are most stinted in their benefactions, and often excite the amazement of others that they give so little to the cause of benevolence. Such persons should be entreated to carry out their Christian

character to completion. As they abound in other things, they should abound in this grace also. They are depriving themselves of much comfort, and are bringing much injury on the cause of the Redeemer while they refuse to sustain the great objects of Christian charity: No Christian character is symmetrical or complete, unless it is crowned with the spirit of large and comprehensive benevolence towards every object that tends to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of man.

(8.) The sincerity of our love should be tested, and will be, by our readiness to deny ourselves to do good to others, 2Cor 8:8. The love of the Lord Jesus was tested in that way; and there can be no true love to God or man, where there is not a readiness to contribute of our means for the welfare of others. If we love the Redeemer, we shall devote all to his service; if we love our fellow-men, we shall evince our "sincerity" by being willing to part with our earthly substance to alleviate their woes, enlighten their ignorance, and save their souls.

(9.) Let us imitate the example of the Lord Jesus, 2Cor 8:9. He was rich, yet he became poor; and, oh! How POOR! Let the rich learn to copy his example, and be willing to part with their abundant and superfluous wealth in order that they may relieve and benefit others. That man is most happy, as well as most useful, who most resembles the Redeemer; that man will be most happy who stoops from the highest earthly elevation to the lowest condition, that he may minister to the welfare of others.

(10.) Charity should be voluntary, 2Cor 8:12. It should be the free and spontaneous offering of the heart; and the first promptings of the heart, before the pleadings of avarice come in, and the heart grows cold by the influence of returning covetousness, are likely to be the most correct.

(11.) Charity should be in an honest proportion to our means, 2Cor 8:12. It should be according to what a man hath. God has

left the determination of this proportion to every individual, responsible to him alone. He has not told us how much we shall give, or in what proportion we shall give; but he has left it for every individual to decide what he may give, and what he ought to give.

(12.) If men do not give according to their means, they must answer for it to God. Every man may have opportunity to contribute to relieve others, if he will open his heart and ears to the cries of a suffering and a dying world. No man can complain that he has no opportunity to give; or that he may not procure for his own soul all the blessings which can be produced by the most large and liberal benevolence.

(13.) Men have no excuse for being lost, 2Cor 8:12. If God required more of them than they could render, they would have. They would not be to blame. They might be sufferers and martyrs in hell, but no one would blame them. But the sinner can never have any such excuse. God never required any more of him than he had power to render; and if he dies, it will be his own fault, and the throne of God will still be spotless and pure.

(14.) God's government is an equal, and just, and good government, 2Cor 8:12. What can be more equitable than the principle that a man is accepted according to what he has? What ground of complaint can the sinner have in regard to this administration?

(15.) The churches should bear their just proportion in the cause of Christian beneficence, 2Cor 8:13-15. There are great interests of charity which MUST be sustained. The world cannot do without them. Not only must the poor be provided for, but the cause of temperance, and of Sabbath-schools, and of missions must be sustained. Bibles must be distributed, and men must be educated for the ministry, and the widow and the fatherless must be the objects of Christian benevolence. These burdens, if they are burdens, should be equally distributed. The

rich should furnish their fair proportion in sustaining them; and those in more moderate circumstances must do their fair proportion also in sustaining them. If this were done, all the objects of Christian benevolence could be sustained, and they would in fact not be burdensome to the churches. With infinite ease all might be contributed that is necessary to send the gospel around the world.

(16.) Ministers of the gospel should have as little as possible to do with money matters, 2Cor 8:19-21. While they should be willing, if it is necessary, to be the almoners of the churches, and should esteem it a privilege to be the means of conveying to the poor and needy, and to the great cause of benevolence, what the churches may choose to commit to them, yet they should not covet this office; they should not show any particular desire for it; nor should they do it unless, like Paul, they have the most ample security that the voice of slander can never be raised in regard to their management. Let them see to it that they have persons associated with them who have the entire confidence of the churches; men who will be responsible also, and who will be competent witnesses of the manner in which they discharge their duty. In all things ministers should be pure. On few points is there more danger that the enemy will endeavour to take advantage, and to injure their character, than in regard to their abuse of funds intrusted to their care.

(17.) Let all Christians so live that it may be honestly said of them, they are "the glory of Christ," 2Cor 8:23. Let them aim so to live that it will be esteemed to be an honour to the Redeemer that he called them into his kingdom, and that he so richly endowed them by his grace. This would be a commendation to all men where they might go; to say this is enough to say of any man. None can have a higher character than to have it said with truth of him, "He is the glory of Christ; he is an honour to his Redeemer and to his cause."

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and
their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

It was a time of great affliction with them, as may be seen, Ac 18:17. The Christians in these parts met with ill treatment, which had reduced them to deep poverty; yet, as they had abundance of joy in the midst of tribulation, they abounded in their liberality; they gave out of a little, trusting in God to provide for them, and make it up to them.

(2.) They gave very largely, with the riches of liberality (2Co 8:2), that is, as liberally as if they had been rich. It was a large contribution they made, all things considered; it was according to, yea beyond, their power (2Co 8:3), as much as could well be expected from them, if not more. Note, Though men may condemn the indiscretion, yet God will accept the pious zeal, of those who in real works of piety and charity do rather beyond their power.

(3.) They were very ready and forward to this good work. They were willing of themselves

3 For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they*
were willing of themselves;
4 praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and
take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. Greek, "that we would take the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." They asked of us to take part in the labour of conveying it to Jerusalem. The occasion of this distress which made the collection for the saints of Judea necessary, was probably the famine which was predicted by Agabus, and which occurred in the time of Claudius Caesar. Acts 11:28. Barnabas was associated with Paul in conveying the contribution to Jerusalem, Acts 11:30. Paul was unwilling to do it unless they particularly desired it, and he seems to have insisted that some person shoed be associated with him, 2Cor 8:20, 1Cor 16:3,4.

5 And *this they did,* not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to
the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

But first gave their own selves to the Lord. They first made an entire consecration of themselves and all that they had to the Lord. They kept nothing back. They felt that all they had was his. And where a people honestly and truly devote themselves to God, they will find no difficulty in having the means to contribute to the cause of charity.

And unto us by the will of God. That is, they gave themselves to us to be directed in regard to the contribution to be made. They complied with our wishes and followed our directions. The phrase, "by the will of God," means evidently that God moved them to this, or that it was to be traced to his direction and providence. It is one of the instances in which Paul traces everything that is right and good to the agency and direction of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing*, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing *of it;* that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have.

As there was a readiness to will. Now accomplish the thing, and be not satisfied with having begun it. Do not suppose that the intention was sufficient, or that you are now released from the obligation. A year indeed has elapsed; but the necessity of the aid for the poor has not ceased. The sentiment here is, that if we have felt it our duty to aid in a cause of benevolence, and have commenced it, and have then been interrupted in executing our

purpose, we should seize the first favourable opportunity to accomplish what we had designed. We should not regard ourselves as released from our obligation; but should, from a regard to consistency and our obligation to God, accomplish what we had intended.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not.

It is accepted. Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Macknight, and some others apply this to the person, and render it, "he is accepted;" but the more usual, and the more natural interpretation, is to apply it to the gift--it is accepted. God will approve of it, and will receive it favourably. According to that a man hath, etc. He is not required to give what he has not. His obligation is proportioned to his ability. His offering is acceptable to God according to the largeness and willingness of his heart, and not according to the narrowness of his fortune.--Locke. If the means are small, if the individual is poor, and if the gift shall be therefore small in amount, yet it may be proof of a larger heart, and of more true love to God and his cause, than when a much more ample benefaction is made by one in better circumstances. This sentiment the Saviour expressly stated and defended in the case of the poor widow, Mk 12:42-44, Lk 21:1-4. She who had cast in her two mites into the treasury, had put in more than all which the rich men-had contributed, for they had given of their abundance, but she had cast in all that she had, even all her living. The great and obviously just and equal principle here stated, was originally applied by Paul to the duty of giving alms. But it is equally true and just as applied to all the duties which we owe to God. He demands

(1.) a willing mind, a heart disposed to yield obedience. He claims that our service should be voluntary and sincere, and that we should make an unreserved consecration of what we have.

(2.) He demands only what we have power to render. He requires a service strictly according to our ability, and to be measured by that. He demands no more than our powers are fitted to produce;

no more than we are able to render. Our obligations in all cases are limited by our ability. This is obviously the rule of equity; and this is all that is anywhere demanded in the Bible, and this is everywhere demanded. Thus our love to Him is to be in proportion to our ability, and not to be graduated by the ability of angels or other beings. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL THY heart, and with all THY soul, and with all THY mind, and with all THY strength," Mk 12:30. Here the obligation is limited by the ability, and the love is to be commensurate with the ability. So of repentance, faith, and of obedience in any form. None but a tyrant ever demands more than can be rendered; and to demand more is the appropriate description of a tyrant, and cannot appertain to the ever-blessed God.

(3.) If there is any service rendered to God, according to the ability, it is accepted of him. It may not be as much or as valuable as may be rendered by beings of higher powers; it may not be as much as we would desire to render, but it is all that God demands, and is acceptable to him. The poor widow was not able to give as much as the rich man; but her offering was equally acceptable, and might be more valuable, for it would be accompanied with her prayers. The service which we can render to God may not be equal to that which the angels render; but it may be equally appropriate to our condition and our powers, and may be equally acceptable to God. God may be as well pleased with the sighings of penitence, as the praises of angels; with the offerings of a broken and a contrite heart, as with the loud hallelujahs of unfallen beings in heaven.

13 For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

For I mean not that other men be eased, etc. I do not intend that others should be eased in order to relieve you. Literally, "Not that there should be rest (ανεσις, a letting loose, remission, relaxation) to others, but affliction (θλιψις) to you." Probably the Corinthians were able to contribute more than many other churches, certainly more than the churches of Macedonia, (2Cor 8:2;) and Paul therefore presses upon them the duty of giving according to their means, yet he by no means intended that the entire burden should come on them.

And the doctrine here taught is,

(1.) that the support of the objects of benevolence should be on equal principles. The rich should bear an equal and fair proportion; and if more frequent demands are made on their benefaction than on others, they should not complain.

(2.) Christians should contribute liberally while they have the means. In the vicissitudes of life, no one can tell how soon he may be unable to contribute, or may even be dependent on the charity of others himself. A change in the commercial world; losses by fire or at sea; want of success in business; loss of health, and the failure of his plans, may soon render him unable to aid the cause of benevolence. While he is prospered, he should embrace every opportunity to do good to all. Some of the most painful regrets which men ever have, arise from the reflection that when prospered they were indisposed to give to benefit others, and when their property is swept away they become unable. God often sweeps away the property which they were indisposed to contribute to aid others, and leaves them to penury and want. Too late they regret that they were not the liberal patrons of the objects of benevolence when they were able to be. That there may be equality. That all may be just and equal. That no unjust burden should be borne by any one portion of the great family of the redeemed. Every Christian brother should bear his due proportion.

14 but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want; that there may be equality:

15 as it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

They should, therefore, impart freely to those who had been less successful. Wealth, like manna, is the gift of God. It is like that spread by his hand around us every day. Some are able to gather much more than others. By their skill, their health, their diligence, or by providential arrangements, they are eminently successful.

Others are feeble, or sick, or aged, or destitute of skill, and are less successful. All that is obtained is by the arrangement of God. The health, the strength, the skill, the wisdom by which we are enabled to obtain it, are all his gift. That which is thus honestly obtained, therefore, should be regarded as his bounty, and we should esteem it a privilege daily to impart to others less favoured and less successful. Thus society will be bound more closely together. There will be, as there was among the Israelites, the feelings of universal brotherhood. There will be on the one hand the happiness flowing from the constant exercise of the benevolent feelings; on the other the strong ties of gratitude. On the one hand the evils of poverty will be prevented, and on the other the not less, though different, evils resulting from superabundant wealth. Is it a forced and unnatural analogy also to observe, that wealth, like manna, corrupts by being kept in store? Manna, if kept more than a single day, became foul and loathsome. Does wealth, hoarded up when it might be properly employed--wealth that should have been distributed to relieve the wants of others--become corrupting in its nature, and offensive in the sight of holy and benevolent minds? Comp. Jas 5:2-4. Wealth, like manna, should be employed in the service which God designs--employed to diffuse everywhere the blessings of religion, comfort, and peace.

16 But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

For you. For your completing the collection. Paul represents it as being done for them, or for their welfare. The poor saints in Judea, indeed, were to have the immediate benefit of the contribution; but it was a privilege for them to give, and Paul rejoiced that they had that privilege. A man who presents to Christians a feasible object of benevolence, and who furnishes them an opportunity of doing good to others, is doing good to them, and they should esteem it an act of kindness done to them.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

For indeed he accepted the exhortation. He cheerfully complied with the exhortation which I gave him, to wit, to visit you, and

excite you to this good work. But being more forward. More disposed to do this than I had supposed. The idea here is, that he was very ready to engage in this; he was more ready to engage in it than Paul was to exhort him to it; he anticipated his request; he had already resolved to engage in it. Of his own accord he went, etc. he went voluntarily, and without urging. The ground of Paul's thankfulness here seems to have been this: he apprehended, probably, some difficulty in obtaining the collection there, he was acquainted with the distracted state of the church, and feared that Titus might have some reluctance to engage in the service, lie was therefore very agreeably surprised when he learned that Titus was willing to make another journey to Corinth, and to endeavour to complete the collection.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 and not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind:

20 avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

That no man should blame us. That no one should have any occasion to say that I had appropriated it to my own use, or contrary to the will of the donors. Paul felt how dangerous it was for ministers to have much to do with money matters, he had a very deep impression of the necessity of keeping his own character free from suspicion on this subject, he knew how easy it might be for his enemies to raise the charge that he had embezzled the funds, and appropriated them to his own use. He therefore insisted on having associated with him some one who had the entire confidence of the churches, and who should be appointed by them, and thus he was certain of being for ever free from blame on the subject: a most important example for all ministers in regard to the pecuniary benefactions of the churches.

In this abundance /KJV/ etc. In this large amount which is contributed by the churches, and committed to our disposal. Large sums of money are in our time committed to the ministers of the gospel, in the execution of the objects of Christian benevolence.

Nothing can be more wise than the example of Paul here, that they should have associated with them others who have the entire confidence of the churches, that there may not be occasion for slander to move her poisonous tongue against the ministers of religion.

21 providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.
22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you.
23 Whether *any do inquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow helper concerning you: or our brethren *be inquired of, they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ.
24 Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

2 Corinthians-9

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:
2 for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.
3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:
4 lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.
5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.
6 But this *I say,* He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

He which soweth sparingly. This expression has all the appearance of a proverb, and doubtless is such. It does not Occur indeed

elsewhere in the Scriptures, though substantially the same sentiment exciting to liberality often occurs. See Ps 41:1-3, Prov 11:24,25; Prov 19:17, 22:9. Paul here says that it is in giving as it is in agriculture. A man that sows little, must expect to reap little. If he sows a small piece of land, he will reap a small harvest; or if he is niggardly in sowing, and wishes to save his seed and will not commit it to the earth, he must expect to reap little. So it is in giving. Money given in alms, money bestowed to aid the poor and needy, or to extend the influence of virtue and pure religion, is money bestowed in a way similar to the act of committing seed to the earth. It will be returned again in some way with an abundant increase. It shall not be lost. The seed may be buried long. It may lie in the ground with no indication of a return or of increase. One who knew not the arrangements of Providence might suppose it was lost and dead. But in due time it shall spring up and produce an ample increase. So with money given to objects of benevolence. To many it may seem to be a waste, or may appear to be thrown away. But in due time it will be repaid in some way with abundant increase. And the man who wishes to make the most out of his money for future use and personal comfort, will give liberally to deserving objects of charity--just as the man who wishes to make the most out of his grain will not suffer it to lie in his granary, but will commit the seed to the fertile earth. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days," Eccl 11:1, that is, when the waters, as of the Nile, have over flowed the banks, and flooded the whole adjacent country, then is the time to cast abroad thy seed. The waters will retire, and the seed will sink into the accumulated fertile mud that is deposited, and will spring up in an abundant harvest. So it is with that which is given for objects of benevolence.

This every one knows is true in regard to grain that is sowed. It is also no less true in regard to deeds of charity. The idea is, that God will bestow rewards in proportion to what is given. These rewards may refer to results in this life, or to the rewards in heaven, or both. All who have ever been in the habit of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence can testify that they have lost nothing, but

have reaped in proportion to their liberality. This follows in various ways.

(1.) In the comfort and peace which results from giving. If a man wishes to purchase happiness with his gold, he can secure the most by bestowing it liberally on objects of charity. It will produce him more immediate peace than it would to spend it in sensual gratifications, and far more than to hoard it up useless in his coffers.

(2.) In reflection on it hereafter. It will produce more happiness in remembering that he has done good with it, and promoted the happiness of others, than it will to reflect that he has hoarded up useless wealth, or that he has squandered it in sensual gratification. The one will be unmingled pleasure when he comes to die; the other will be unmingled self-reproach and pain.

(3.) In subsequent life, God will in some way repay to him far more than he has bestowed in deeds of charity. By augmented prosperity, by health and future comfort, and by raising up for us and our families, when in distress and want, friends to aid us, God can and often does abundantly repay the liberal for all their acts of kindness and deeds of beneficence.

(4.) God can and will reward his people in heaven abundantly for all their kindness to the poor, and all their self-denials in endeavouring to diffuse the influence of truth and the knowledge of salvation. Indeed, the rewards of heaven will be in no small degree apportioned in this manner, and determined by the amount of benevolence which we have shown on earth. See Mt 25:34-40. On all accounts, therefore, we have every inducement to give liberally. As a farmer who desires an ample harvest scatters his seed with a liberal hand; as he does not grudge it though it falls into the earth; as he scatters it with the expectation that in due time it will spring up and reward his labours, so should we give with a liberal hand to aid the cause of benevolence; nor should we deem what we give to be lost or wasted though we wait long before we

are recompensed, or though we should be in no other way rewarded than by the comfort which arises from the act of doing good.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give;*
not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, etc. The main idea in this verse is, that the act of giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should not seem to be extorted by the importunity of others, (@Co 9:6;) nor should it be given from urgent necessity, but it should be given as an offering of the heart. On this part of the verse we may remark,

(1.) that the heart is usually more concerned in the business of giving than the head. If liberality is evinced, it will be the heart which prompts to it; if it is not evinced, it will be because the heart has some bad passions to gratify, and is under the influence of avarice, or selfishness, or some other improper attachment. Very often a man is convinced he ought to give liberally, but a narrow heart and a parsimonious spirit prevent it.

(2.) We should follow the dictates of the heart in giving. I mean that a man will usually give more correctly who follows the first promptings of his heart when an object of charity is presented, than be will if he takes much time to deliberate. The instinctive prompting of a benevolent heart is to give liberally. And the amount which should be given will usually be suggested to a man by the better feelings of his heart. But if he resolves to deliberate much, and if he suffers the heart to grow cold, and if he defers it, the pleadings of avarice will come in, or some object of attachment or plan of life will rise to view, or he will begin to compare himself with others, and he will give much less than he would have done if he had followed the first impulse of feeling. God implanted the benevolent feelings in the bosom that they should prompt us to do good; and he who acts most in accordance with them is most likely to do what he ought to do; and in general it is the safest and best rule for a man to give just what his heart prompts him to give when an object of charity is presented. Man at best is too selfish to be

likely to give too much, or to go beyond his means; and if in a few instances it should be done, more would be gained in value in the cultivation of benevolent feeling than would be lost in money. I know of no better rule on the subject, than to cultivate as much as possible the benevolent feelings, and then to throw open the soul to every proper appeal to our charity, and to give just according to the instinctive prompting of the heart.

(3.) Giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should be from the heart. Yet there is much, very much that is not so, and there is, therefore, much benevolence that is spasmodic and spurious; that cannot be depended on, and that will not endure. No dependence can be placed on a man in regard to giving, who does not do it from the steady influences of a benevolent heart. But there is much obtained in the cause of benevolence that is produced by a kind of extortion. It is given because others give, and the man would be ashamed to give less titan they do. Or, it is given because he thinks his rank in life demands it, and he is prompted to it by pride and vanity. Or, he gives from respect to a pastor or a friend, or because he is warmly importuned to give; or because he is shut up to a kind of necessity to give, and must give or he would lose his character, and become an object of scorn and detestation. In all this there is nothing cheerful and voluntary; and there can be nothing in it acceptable to God. Nor can it be depended on permanently. The heart is not in it, and the man will evade the duty as soon as he can, and will soon find excuses for not giving at all. Not grudgingly. Greek, "Not of grief," (μηεκλυπης.) Not as if he were sorry to part with his money. Not as if he were constrained to do a thing that was extremely painful to him. Or of necessity. As if he were compelled to do it. Let him do it cheerfully. For God loveth a cheerful giver. And who does not? Valuable as any gift may be in itself, yet if it is forced and constrained; if it can be procured only after great importunity and persevering effort, who can esteem it as desirable? God desires the heart in every service. No service that is not cheerful and voluntary, none that does not arise from true love to him, can be acceptable in his sight. God loves it because it shows a heart like his own--a heart disposed to give cheerfully, and to do good on the largest scale possible; and

because it shows a heart attached from principle to his service and cause. The expression here has all the appearance of a proverb, and expressions similar to this occur often in the Scriptures. In an uninspired writer, also, this idea has been beautifully expanded. "In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, and dedicate thy tithes with gladness. Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee; and as thou hast gotten give with a cheerful eye. For the Lord recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much."--Wisdom of the Son of Sirach, chap. xxxv. 9--11. In nothing, therefore, is it more important than to examine the motives by which we give to the objects of benevolence. However liberal may be our benefactions, yet God may see that there is no sincerity, and may hate the spirit with which it is done.

8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things,* may abound to every good work:

Verse 8. And God is able, etc. Do not suppose that by giving liberally you will be impoverished and reduced to want. You should rather confide in God, who is able to furnish you abundantly with what is needful for the supply of our necessities. Few persons are ever reduced to poverty by liberality. Perhaps in the whole circle of his acquaintance it would be difficult for an individual to point out one who has been impoverished or made the poorer in this way. Our selfishness is generally a sufficient guard against this; but it is also to be added, that the Divine blessing rests upon the liberal man, and that God keeps him from want. But in the mean time there are multitudes who are made poor by the want of liberality. They are parsimonious in giving, but they are extravagant in dress, and luxury, and in expenses for amusement or vice, and the consequence is poverty and want. "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty," Prov 11:24. The Divine blessing rests upon the liberal; and while every person should make a proper provision for his family, every one should give liberally, confiding in God that he will furnish the supplies for our future wants. Let this maxim be borne in mind, that no one is usually made the poorer by being liberal.

Here the apostle tacitly answers the common objection against liberal alms-giving; men are afraid they shall want themselves, what they give away to others. No, says the apostle, God is able to make all grace and mercy shown by you to abound the more towards you, that you, having a sufficiency of the comforts of this life, may abound in every good work of charity towards others.

As if he had said, Be not afraid to give, nor sparing in giving; for hereby you make God your debtor, and you will find him an all-sufficient paymaster; he will repay you both in temporals and spirituals. Thou shalt receive silver for thy brass, gold for thy silver, grace for thy gold, a treasure in haeven for thy dross on earth: nay, your gold and silver will multiply here, as seed sown when scattered with a wise and prudent hand."

The apostle here engages God's all-sufficiency for it; God will show his all-sufficiency, in giving you an all-sufficiency in all things; only we must remember, that we are to allow time; for Almighty God loves to be trusted upon his word: and those that will not give him credit, let them try if they can improve their estates better, or put them into safer hands.

We have no reason to distrust the goodness of God, and surely we have no reason to question his power; he is able to make all grace abound towards us, and abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can cause us to have a sufficiency in all things, to be content with what we have, to make up what we give, to be able to give yet more: as it is written (Ps 112:9) concerning the charitable man, He hath dispersed abroad. He hath given to the poor.

9 (as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor:
his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:)

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower. This is an expression of an earnest wish. In the previous verses he had stated the promises, or had shown what we had a right to expect as a consequence of liberality, he here unites the expression of an earnest desire that they might experience this themselves. The allusion is to the act of sowing seed. The idea is, that when a man scatters seed in his field, God provides him with the means of sowing again, he not only gives him a harvest to supply, his wants, but he blesses him also in giving him the ability to sow again. Such was the benevolent wish of Paul. He desired not only that God would supply their returning wants, but he desired also that he would give them the ability to do good again; that he would furnish them the means of future benevolence, he acknowledges God as the source of all increase, and wishes that they may experience the results of such increase. Perhaps in this language there is an allusion to Isa 55:10; and the idea is, that it is God who furnishes by his providence the seed to the sower. In like manner he will furnish you the means of doing good.

11 being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which
causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Being enriched in every thing, etc. In all respects your riches are conferred on you for this purpose. The design of the apostle is to state to them the true reason why wealth was bestowed. It was not for the purposes of luxury and self-gratification; not to be spent in sensual enjoyment, not for parade and display; it was that it might be distributed to others in such a way as to cause thanksgiving to God. At the same time, this implies the expression of an earnest wish on the part of Paul. He did not desire that they should be rich for their own gratification or pleasure; he desired it only as the means of their doing good to others. Right feeling will desire property only as the means of promoting happiness and producing thanksgiving to God. They who truly love their children and friends will wish them to be successful in acquiring wealth only that they may have the means and the disposition to alleviate misery, and promote the happiness of all around them. No one who has true benevolence will desire that any one in whom he feels an interest should be enriched for the purpose of living amidst luxury, and encompassing himself with the indulgences which wealth can

furnish. If a man has not a disposition to do good with money, it is not true benevolence, to desire that he may possess it.

Which causeth through us, etc. That is, we shall so distribute your alms as to cause thanksgiving to God. The result will be, that by our instrumentality thanks will be given to the great Source and Giver of all wealth. Property should always be so employed as to produce thanksgiving. If it is made to contribute to our own support and the support of our families, it should excite thanksgiving. If it is given to others, it should be so given, if it is possible, that the recipient should be more grateful to God than to us; should feel that though we may be the honoured instrument in distributing it, yet the true benefactor is God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

But is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God. Will abound unto God in producing thanksgivings. The result will be that it will produce abundant thanksgiving in their hearts to God.

Still our apostle proceeds, by way of motive, farther to excite and stir up the Corinthians to this charitable contribution, from sundry considerations; namely,

1st. That it would be a very seasonable supply to the church's wants, who were at this time in great want of it: Now, the seasonableness of any mercy, adds greatly to the worth and value, to the pleasure and sweetness of it.

2ndly, That it would occasion repeated praises and incessant thanksgivings to God, for many persons, and upon many accounts.

3rdly, This distribution of yours, says the apostle, will be a convincing experiment, evidence and demonstration of your

professed subjection to the gospel, and that your faith is not barren and ineffectual. No better evidence of our real; subjection to the gospel of Christ, than a cheerful compliance, not with the cheap, but with the costly duties of Christianity.

Lastly, For your alms, you will engage a stock of prayers going for you: This will procure, yea, provoke them to pray night and day for you, nay, not only engage prayer for you, but it will also draw forth their love and fervent affection towards you, make them very desirous of your acquaintance, having received such an experiment of the grace of God that is in you.

13 while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men;*

For your professed subjection, etc. Literally, "For the obedien profession of the gospel." It does not imply merely that there was a of religion, but that there was a real subjection to the gospel v professed. This is not clearly expressed in our translation. T expressed it better, "Which praise God for your obedience in ackn the gospel of Christ." There was a real and sincere submission to of Christ, and that was manifested by their giving liberally to suppl of others. The doctrine is, that one evidence of true subjection to one proof that our profession is sincere and genuine, is a will contribute to relieve the wants of the poor and afflicted frie Redeemer.

14 and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

And by their prayer for you. On the grammatical construction of this difficult verse, Doddridge and Bloomfield may be consulted. It is probably to be taken in connexion with 2Cor 9:12, and 2Cor 9:13 is a parenthesis. Thus interpreted, the sense will be, "The administration of this service 2Cor 9:12 will produce abundant thanks to God. It will also 2Cor 9:14 produce another effect. It will tend to excite the prayers of the saints for you, and thus produce important benefits to yourselves. They will earnestly desire your welfare; they will anxiously pray to be united in Christian

friendship with those who have been so signally endowed with the grace of God." The sentiment is, that charity should be shown to poor and afflicted Christians because it will lead them to pray for us and to desire our welfare. The prayers of the poorest Christian for us are worth more than all we usually bestow on them in charity; and he who has secured the pleadings of a child of God, however humble, in his behalf, has made a good use of his money. Which long after you. Who earnestly desire to see and know you. Who will sincerely desire your welfare, and who will thus be led to pray for you. For the exceeding grace of God in you. On account of the favour which God has shown to you; the strength and power of the Christian principle, manifesting itself in doing good to those whom you have never seen. The apostle supposes that the exercise of a charitable disposition is to be traced entirely to God. God is the Author of all grace; he alone excites in us a disposition to do good to others.

15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Thanks be unto God. Whitby supposes that this refers to the charitable disposition which they had manifested; and that the sense is, that God was to be adored for the liberal spirit which they were disposed, to manifest, and the aid which they were disposed to render to others. But this, it is believed, falls far below the design of the apostle. The reference is rather to the inexpressible gift which God had granted to them in bestowing his Son to die for them; and this is one of the most striking instances which occur in the New Testament, showing that the mind of Paul was full of this subject; and that wherever he began, he was sure to end with a reference to the Redeemer. The invaluable gift of a Saviour was so familiar to his mind, and he was so accustomed to dwell on that in his private thoughts, that the mind naturally and easily glanced on that whenever anything occurred that by the remotest allusion would suggest it. The idea is, "Your benefactions are indeed valuable; and for them, for the disposition which you have manifested, and for all the good which you will be enabled thus to accomplish, we are bound to give thanks to God. All this will excite the gratitude of those who shall be benefited. But how small is all this compared with the great gift which God has imparted in bestowing a Saviour! That is unspeakable. No words can express

it, no language convey an adequate description of the value of the gift, and of the mercies which result from it." His unspeakable gift. The word here used (ανεκδιηγητω) means, what cannot be related, unutterable. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The idea is, that no words can properly express the greatness of the gift thus bestowed on man. It is higher than the mind can conceive; higher than language can express. On this verse we may observe,

(1.) that the Saviour is a gift to men. So he is uniformly represented. See Jn 3:16, Gal 1:4, 2:20, Eph 1:22, 1Timm 2:6, Tit 2:14. Man had no claim on God. He could not compel him to provide a plan of salvation; and the whole arrangements the selection of the Saviour, the sending him into the world, and all the benefits resulting from his work, are all an undeserved gift to man.

(2.) This is a gift unspeakably great, whose value no language can express, no heart fully conceive. It is so because

(a.) of his own greatness and glory;

(b.) because of the inexpressible love which he evinced;

(c.) because of the unutterable sufferings which he endured;

(d.) because of the inexpressibly great benefits which result from his work. No language can do justice to this work in either of these respects; no heart in this world fully conceives the obligation which rests upon man in virtue of his work.

(3.) Thanks should be rendered to God for this. We owe him our highest praises for this. This appears,

(a.) because it was mere benevolence in God. We had no claim; we could not compel him to grant us a Saviour. The gift might have been withheld, and his throne would have been spotless. We owe

no thanks where we have a claim; where we deserve nothing, then he who benefits us has a claim on our thanks.

(b.) Because of the benefits which we have received from him. Who can express this? All our peace and hope; all our comfort and joy in this life; all our prospect of pardon and salvation; all the offers, of eternal glory are to be traced to him. Man has no prospect of being happy when he dies, but in virtue of the "unspeakable gift" of God. And when he thinks of his sins, which may now be freely pardoned; when he thinks of an agitated and troubled conscience, which may now be at peace; when he thinks of his soul, which may now be unspeakably and eternally happy; when he thinks of the hell from which he is delivered, and of the heaven to whose eternal glories he may now be raised up by the gift of a Saviour, his heart should overflow with gratitude, and the language should be continually on his lips and in his heart, "THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT." Every other mercy should seem small compared with this; and every manifestation of right feeling in the heart should lead us to contemplate the source of it, and to feel, as Paul did, that all is to be traced to the unspeakable gift of God. REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 9

(1.) This chapter, with the preceding, derives special importance from the fact that it contains the most extended discussion of the principles of Christian charity which occurs in the Bible. No one can doubt that it was intended by the Redeemer that his people should be distinguished for benevolence. It was important, therefore, that there should be some portion of the New Testament where the principles on which charity should be exercised, and the motives by which Christians should be induced to give, should be fully stated. Such a discussion we have in these chapters; and they therefore demand the profound and prayerful attention of all who love the Lord Jesus.

(2.) We have here a striking specimen of the manner in which the Bible is written. Instead of abstract statements and systematic

arrangement, the principles of religion are brought out in connexion with a case that actually occurred. But it follows that it is important to study attentively the Bible, and to be familiar with every part of it. In some part of the Scriptures, statements of the principles which should guide us in given circumstances will be found; and Christians should, therefore, be familiar with every part of the Bible.

(3.) These chapters are of special importance to the ministers of religion, and to all whose duty it is to press upon their fellow Christians the duty of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence. The principles on which it should be done are fully developed here. The motives which it is lawful to urge are urged here by Paul. It may be added, also, that the chapters are worthy of our profound study on account of the admirable tact and address which Paul evinces in inducing others to give. Well he knew human nature. Well he knew the motives which would influence others to give. And well he knew exactly how to shape his arguments and adapt his reasoning to the circumstances of those whom he addressed.

(4.) The summary of the motives presented in this chapter contains still the most important argument which can be urged to produce liberality. We cannot but admire the felicity of Paul in this address--a felicity not the result of craft and cunning, but resulting from his amiable feelings, and the love which he bore to the Corinthians and to the cause of benevolence. He reminds them of the high opinion which he had of them, and of the honourable mention which he had been induced to make of them, (2Cor 9:1,2;) he reminds them of the painful result to his own feelings and theirs if the collection should in any way fail, and it should appear that his confidence in them had been misplaced, (2Cor 9:3-5;) he refers them to the abundant reward which they might anticipate as the result of liberal benefactions, and of the fact that God loved those who gave cheerfully, (2Cor 9:6,7;) he reminds them of the abundant grace of God, who was able to supply all their wants and to give them the means to contribute liberally to meet the wants of the poor, (2Cor 9:8;) he reminds them of the joy which their

liberality would occasion, and of the abundant thanksgiving to God which would result from it, (2Cor 9:12,13;) and he refers them to the unspeakable gift of God, Jesus Christ as an example, and an argument, and as urging the highest claims in them, 2Cor 9:15. "Who," says Doddridge, "could withstand the force of such oratory?" No doubt it was effectual in that case, and it should be in all others.

(5.) May the motives here urged by the apostle be effectual to persuade us all to liberal efforts to do good! Assuredly there is no less occasion for Christian liberality now than there was in the time of Paul. There are still multitudes of the poor who need the kind and efficient aid of Christians. And the whole world now is a field in which Christian beneficence may be abundantly displayed, and every land may and should experience the benefits of the charity to which the gospel prompts, and which it enjoins. Happy are they who are influenced by the principles of the gospel to do good to all men! Happy they who have any opportunity, to illustrate the power of Christian principle in this; any ability to alleviate the wants of one sufferer, or to do anything in sending that gospel to benighted nations which alone can save the soul from eternal death!

(6.) Let us especially thank God for his unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ. Let us remember that to him we owe every opportunity to do good; that it was because he came that there is any possibility of benefiting a dying world; and that all who profess to love him are bound to imitate his example, and to show their sense of their obligation to God for giving a Saviour. How poor and worthless are all our gifts compared with the great gift of God; how slight our expressions of compassion, even at the best, for our fellow-men, compared with the compassion which he has shown for us ! When God has given his Son to die for us, what should we not be willing to give that we may show our gratitude, and that we may benefit a dying world!

2 Corinthians-10

Paul's Defense of His Ministry

REMARKS on 2nd Corinthians Chapter 10

(1.) We should have no desire to show off any peculiar boldness or energy of character which we may have, 2Cor 10:1,2. We should greatly prefer to evince the gentleness and meekness of Christ. Such a character is in itself of far more value than one that is merely energetic and bold; that is rash, authoritative, and fond of display.

(2.) They who are officers in, the church should have no desire to administer discipline, 2Cor 10:2. Some men are so fond of power, that they always love to exercise it. They are willing to show it even by inflicting punishment on others; and, "dressed in a little brief authority," they are constantly seeking occasion to show their consequence; they magnify trifles; they are unwilling to pass by the slightest offences. The reason is not that they love the truth, but that they love their own consequence, and they seek every opportunity to show it.

(3.) All Christians and all Christian ministers are engaged in a warfare, 2Cor 10:3. They are at war with sin in their own hearts, and with sin wherever it exists on earth, and with the powers of darkness. With foes so numerous and so vigilant, they should not expect to live a life of ease or quietness. Peace, perfect peace, they may expect in heaven, not on earth. Here they are to fight the good fight of faith, and thus to lay hold on eternal life. It has been the common lot of all the children of God to maintain such a war, and shall we expect to be exempt?

Shall I be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize, And sailed through bloody seas ? Are there no foes for me to face-- Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, To help me on to God?"

(4.) The weapons of the Christian are not to be carnal, but are to be spiritual, 2Cor 10:4. He is not to make his way by the exhibition of human passion; in bloody strife; and by acting under the influence of ambitious feelings. Truth is his weapon; and armed with truth, and aided by the Spirit of God, he is to expect the victory. How different is the Christian warfare from others! How different is Christianity from other systems! Mohammed made his way by arms, and propagated his religion amidst the din of battle. But not so Christianity. That is to make its way by the silent, but mighty operation of truth; and there is not a rampart of idolatry and sin that is not yet to fall before it.

(5.) The Christian should be a man of a pure spirit, 2Cor 10:4. He is to make his way by the truth. He should therefore love the truth, and he should seek to diffuse it as far as possible. In propagating or defending it, he should be always mild, gentle, and kind. Truth is never advanced, and an adversary is never convinced, where passion is evinced; where there is a haughty manner, or a belligerent spirit. The apostolic precepts are full of wisdom--speaking the truth in love," Eph 4:15; "in MEEKNESS INSTRUCTING those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2Ti 2:25.

(6.) In his warfare, the Christian shall conquer, 2Cor 10:4,5. Against the truth of Christianity nothing has been able to stand. It made its way against the arrayed opposition of priests and emperors; against customs and laws; against inveterate habits and opinions; against all forms of sin, until it triumphed, and "the banners of the faith floated from the palaces of the Caesars." So it will be in all the conflicts with evil. Nothing is more certain than that the powers of darkness in this world are destined to fall before the power of Christian truth, and that every stronghold of sin shall yet be demolished. So it is in the conflicts of the individual Christian. He may struggle long and hard. He may have many foes to contend with. But he shall gain the victory. His triumph shall be

secure; and he shall yet be enabled to say, "I have fought a good fight-- henceforth there is laid up for me a CROWN"

"The saints in all this glorious war Shall conquer, though they die; They see the triumph from afar, And seize it with their eye."

(7.) Yet all should feel their dependence on God, 2Cor 10:4. It is only through him, and by his aid, that we have any power. Truth itself has no power except as it is attended and directed by God; and we should engage in our conflict feeling that none but God can give us the victory. If forsaken by him, we shall fall; if supported by him, we may face without fear a "frowning world," and all the powers of the "dark world of hell."

(8.) We should not judge by the outward appearance, 2Cor 10:7. It is the heart that determines the character; and by that God shall judge us, and by that we should judge ourselves.

(9.) We should aim to extend the gospel as far as possible, 2Cor 10:14-16. Paul aimed to go beyond the regions where the gospel had been preached, and to extend it to far-distant lands. So the "field" still "is the world." A large portion of the earth is yet unevangelized. Instead, therefore, of sitting down quietly in enjoyment and ease, let us, like him, earnestly desire to extend the influence of pure religion, and to bring distant nations to the saving knowledge of the truth.

(10.) Let us not boast in ourselves, 2Cor 10:17. Not of our talents, wealth, learning, or accomplishments let us glory. But let us glory that we have such a God as JEHOVAH. Let us glory that we have such a Redeemer as Jesus Christ. Let us glory that we have such a sanctifier as the Holy Spirit. Let us acknowledge God as the Source of all our blessings, and to him let us honestly consecrate our hearts and our lives.

(11.) What a reverse of judgment there will yet be on human character! 2Cor 10:17,18. How many now commend themselves

who will be condemned in the last day! How many men boast of their talents and morals, and even their religion, who will then be involved in indiscriminate condemnation with the most vile and worthless of the race! How anxious should we be, therefore, to secure the approbation of God! and whatever our fellow-men may say of us, how infinitely desirable is it to be commended then by our heavenly Father!

1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ. In view of the meekness and mildness of the Redeemer; or desiring to imitate his gentleness and kindness. Paul wished to imitate that. He did not wish to have occasion for severity, he desired at all times to imitate and to exhibit the gentle feelings of the Saviour. He had no pleasure in severity; and he did not desire to exhibit it.

2 but I beseech *you,* that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

I entreat you so to act that I may not have occasion to exercise the severity which I fear I shall be compelled to use against those who accuse me of being governed wholly by worldly motives and policy. That I may not be compelled to be bold and decisive in my measures by your improper conduct.

As if we were governed by the weak and corrupt principles of human nature. As if we had no higher motive than carnal and worldly policy. As if we were seeking our own advantage, and not the welfare of the world. The charge was, probably, that he was not governed by high and holy principles, but by the principles of mere worldly policy; that he was guided by personal interests, and by worldly views--by ambition, or the love of dominion, wealth, or popularity, and that he was destitute of every supernatural endowment, and every evidence of a Divine commission.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

For though we walk in the flesh. Though we are mortal, like other men; though we dwell, like them, in mortal bodies, and necessarily must devote some care to our temporal wants; and though, being in the flesh, we are conscious of imperfections and frailties like others. The sense is, that he did not claim exemption from the common wants and frailties of nature. The best of men are subject to these wants and frailties; the best of men are liable to err.

We do not war after the flesh. The warfare in which he was engaged was with sin, idolatry, and all forms of evil. He means that in conducting this he was not actuated by worldly views or policy, or by such ambitious and interested aims as controlled the men of this world. This refers primarily to the warfare in which Paul was himself engaged as an apostle; and the idea is, that he went forth as a soldier under the great Captain of his salvation, to fight his battles, and to make conquests for him. A similar allusion occurs in 2Ti 2:3,4. It is true, however, that not only all ministers, but all Christians, are engaged in a warfare; and it is equally true that they do not maintain their conflict "after the flesh," or on the principles which govern the men of this, world. The warfare of Christians relates to the following points:

(1.) it is a warfare with the corrupt desires and sensual propensities of the heart; with internal corruption and depravity; with the remaining unsubdued propensities of a fallen nature.

(2.) With the powers of darkness--the mighty spirits of evil that seek to destroy us. See Eph 6:11-17.

(3.) With sin in all forms; with idolatry, sensuality, corruption, intemperance, profaneness, wherever they may exist. The Christian is opposed to all these; and it is the aim and purpose of his life, as far as he may be able, to resist and subdue them. He is a soldier, enlisted under the banner of the Redeemer, to oppose and resist all forms of evil. But his warfare is not conducted on worldly principles. Mohammed propagated his religion with the sword; and the men of this world seek for victory by arms and violence.

The Christian looks for his conquests only by the force and power of truth, and by the agency of the Spirit of God.

4 (for the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;)

But mighty through God. Marg., "to" They are rendered mighty or powerful by the agency of God. They depend on him for their efficacy. Paul has not here specified the weapons on which he relied; but he had before specified them, 2Cor 6:6,7, so that there was no danger of mistake. The weapons were such as were furnished by truth and righteousness, and these were rendered mighty by the attending agency of God. The sense is, that God is the Author of the doctrines which we preach, and that he attends them with the agency of his Spirit, and accompanies them to the hearts of men. It is important for all ministers to feel that their weapons are mighty ONLY through God. Conquerors and earthly warriors go into battle depending on the might of their own arm, and on the wisdom and skill which plans the battle.

The Christian goes on his warfare, feeling that however well adapted the truths which he holds are to accomplish great purposes, and however wisely his plans are formed, yet that the efficacy of all depends on the agency of God. He has no hope of victory but in God. And if God does not attend him, he is sure of inevitable defeat. To the pulling down of strong holds. The word here rendered "strongholds" (οχυρωμα) means, properly, a fastness, fortress, or strong fortification. It is here beautifully used to denote the various obstacles resembling a fortress which exist, and which are designed and adapted to oppose the truth and the triumph of the Christian's cause. All those obstacles are strongly fortified. The sins of his heart are fortified by long indulgence, and by the hold which they have on his soul. The wickedness of the world which he opposes is strongly fortified by the fact that it has seized on strong human passions; that one point strengthens another; that great numbers are united. The idolatry of the world was strongly fortified by prejudice, and long establishment, and the protection of laws, and the power of the priesthood; and the opinions of the world are entrenched behind false philosophy and the power of subtle argumentation. The whole world is fortified against

Christianity; and the nations of the earth have been engaged in little else than in raising and strengthening such strongholds for the space of six thousand years. The Christian religion goes forth against all the combined and concentrated powers of resistance of the whole world; and the warfare is to be waged against every strongly fortified place of error and of sin. These strong fortifications of error and of sin are to be battered down and laid in ruins by our spiritual weapons.

5 casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Verse 5. Casting down imaginations. Marg., reasonings. The word is probably used here in the sense of device, and refers to all the plans of a wicked world--the various systems of false philosophy, and the reasonings of the enemies of the gospel. The various systems of false philosophy were so entrenched, that they might be called the stronghold of the enemies of God. The foes of Christianity pretend to a great deal of reason, and rely on that in resisting the gospel. And every high thing, etc. Every exalted opinion respecting the dignity and purity of bunyan nature; all the pride of the human heart and of the understanding. All this is opposed to the knowledge of God, and all exalts itself into a vain self-confidence. Men entertain vain and unfounded opinions respecting their own excellency, and they feel that they do not need the provisions of the gospel, and are unwilling to submit to God. And bringing into captivity, etc. The figure here is evidently taken from military conquests. The idea is, that all the strongholds of heathenism, and pride, and sin, would be demolished; and that when this was done, like throwing down the walls of a city, or making a breach, all the plans and purposes of the soul, the reason, the imagination, and all the powers of the mind, would be subdued or led in triumph by the gospel, like the inhabitants of a captured city. Christ was the great Captain in this warfare. In his name the battle was waged, and by his power the victory was won. The captives were made for him, and under his authority; and all were to be subject to his control. Every power of thought in the heathen

world; all the systems of philosophy, and all forms of opinion among men; all the purposes of the soul; all the powers of reason, memory, judgment, fancy, in an individual, were all to come under the laws of Christ. All doctrines were to be in accordance with his will; philosophy should no longer control them, but they should be subject to the will of Christ. All the plans of life should be controlled by the will of Christ, and formed and executed under his control--as captives are led by a conqueror. All the emotions and feelings of the heart should be controlled by him, and led by him as a captive is led by a victor. The sense is, that it was the aim and purpose of Paul to accomplish this, and that it would certainly be done. The strongholds of philosophy, heathenism, and sin should be demolished, and all the opinions, plans, and purposes of the world should become subject to the all-conquering Redeemer.

6 and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

And having in a readiness, etc. I am ready to punish all disobedience, notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary. 2Cor 10:1, 2Cor 10:2. Clothed as I am with this power; aiming to subdue all things to Christ, though the weapons of my warfare are not carnal, and though I am modest or timid 2Cor 10:1 when I am with you, I am prepared to take any measures of severity required by my apostolic, office, in order that I may inflict deserved punishment on those who have violated the laws of Christ. The design of this is to meet the objection of his enemies, that he would not dare to execute his threatenings. When your obedience is fulfilled. Doddridge renders this, "Now your obedience is fulfilled, and the sounder part of your church restored to due order and submission." The idea seems to be, that Paul was ready to inflict discipline when the church had shown a readiness to obey his laws, and to do its own duty--delicately intimating that the reason why it was not done was the want of entire promptness in the church itself, and that it could not be done on any offender as long as the church itself was not prepared to sustain him. The church was to discountenance the enemies of the Redeemer; to show an entire readiness to sustain the apostle, and to unite with him in the effort to maintain the discipline of Christ's house.

That is, having in a readiness that which will revenge all disobedience upon refractory and stubborn offenders (namely, the power of excommunication) and both authority and ability to inflict such corporal punishment as he judged fit, by delivering them unto Satan; which power he resolved to make use of, when the greater part of them were, by their obedience to his admonitions, reduced to good order again.

Where note, That the apostle defers the excommunicating and censuring the offenders amongst them, they being very many, till he had, by exhortaiton and argument, brought over as many as possibly he could unto obedience. There is no place for severe remedies, when the diseases have taken and infected the whole church: the offenders in the church, when very many, cannot be easily punished; for when great multitudes are concerned, they are like to draw great multitudes after them.

The apostle's practice in this case here, is a good pattern for our imitation, not to be too forward, rash, and hasty in denouncing the censures of the church, but to proceed prudently and gradually: first using all fair means and gentle methods, and waiting with all patience for the reducing them to their duty who will be reduced, and then revenging the glory and honour of God only upon such as will by no means be reclaimed or reduced.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's.

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? /KJV/ This is addressed evidently to the members of the church, and with reference to the claims which had been set up by the false teachers. There can be no doubt that they valued themselves on their external advantages, and laid claim to peculiar honour in the work of the ministry, because they were superior in personal appearance, in rank, manners, or eloquence to Paul. Paul reproves them for thus judging, and assures them that this was not a proper

criterion by which to determine on qualifications for the apostolic office. Such things were highly valued among the Greeks, and a considerable part of the effort of Paul in these letters is to show that these things constitute no evidence that those who possessed them were sent from God. If any man trust to himself, etc. This refers to the false teachers who laid claims to be the followers of Christ by way of eminence. Whoever these teachers were, it is evident that they claimed to be on the side of Christ, and to be appointed by him. They were probably Jews, and they boasted of their talents and eloquence, and possibly that they had seen the Saviour. The phrase, "trust to himself," seems to imply that they relied on some special merit of their own, or some special advantage which they had.-- Bloomfield. It may have been that they were of the same tribe that he was, or that they had seen him, or that they confided in their own talents or endowments as proof that they had been sent by him. It is not an uncommon thing for men. to have such confidence in their own gifts, and particularly in a power of fluent speaking, as to suppose that this is a sufficient evidence that they are sent to preach the gospel. Let him of himself think this again. Since he relies so much on himself; since he has such confidence in his own powers, let him look at the evidence that I also am of Christ. That, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's. That I have given as much evidence that I am commissioned by Christ as they can produce. It may be of a different kind. It is not in eloquence, and rank, and the gift of a rapid and ready elocution, but it may be superior to what they are able to produce. Probably Paul refers here to the fact that he had seen the Lord Jesus, and that he had been directly commissioned by him. The sense is, that no one could produce more proofs of being called to the ministry than he could.

8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which
the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction,
I should not be ashamed:
9 that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.
10 For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his*
bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.

Are weighty and powerful. Tindal renders this, "sore and strong." The Greek is, "heavy and strong," (βαρειαικαισχυραι). The sense

is, that his letters were energetic and powerful. They abounded with strong argument, manly appeals, and impressive reproof. This even his enemies were compelled to admit, and this no one can deny who ever read them. Paul's letters comprise a considerable portion of the New Testament; and some of the most important doctrines of the New Testament are those which are advocated and enforced by him; and his letters have done more to give shape to the theological doctrines of the Christian world than any other cause whatever. He wrote fourteen epistles to churches and individuals on various occasions and on a great variety of topics; and his letters soon rose into very high repute among even the inspired ministers of the New Testament, 2Pet 3:15,16, and were regarded as inculcating the most important doctrines of religion. The general characteristics of Paul's letters are:

(1.) They are strongly argumentative. See especially the epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews.

(2.) They are distinguished for boldness and rigour of style.

(3.) They are written under great energy of feeling and of thought--a rapid and impetuous torrent that bears him forcibly along.

(4.) They abound more than most other writings in parentheses, and the sentences are often involved and obscure.

(5.) They often evince rapid transitions and departures from the regular current of thought. A thought strikes him suddenly, and he pauses to illustrate it, and dwells upon it long, before he returns to the main subject. The consequence is, that it is often difficult to follow him.

(6.) They are powerful in reproof--abounding with strokes of great boldness of denunciation, and also with specimens of most withering sarcasm and most delicate irony.

(7.) They abound in expressions of great tenderness and pathos. Nowhere can be found expressions of a heart more tender and affectionate than in the writings of Paul.

(8.) They dwell much on great and profound doctrines, and on the application of the principles of Christianity to the various duties of life.

(9.) They abound with references to the Saviour. He illustrates everything by his life, his example, his death, his resurrection. It is not wonderful that letters composed on such subjects and in such a manner, by an inspired man, produced a deep impression on the Christian world; nor that they should be regarded now as among the most important and valuable portions of the Bible. Take away Paul's letters, and what a chasm would be made in the New Testament! What a chasm in the religious opinions and in the consolations of the Christian world!

And his speech contemptible. To be despised. Some suppose that he had an impediment in his speech. But conjecture here is vain and useless. We are to remember that this is a charge made by his adversaries, and that it was made by the fastidious Greeks, who professed to be great admirers of eloquence, but who in his time confided much more in the mere art of the rhetorician than in the power of thought, and in energetic appeals to the reason and conscience of men. Judged by their standard, it may be that Paul had not the graces in voice or manner, or in the knowledge of the Greek language, which they esteemed necessary in a finished orator; but judged by his power of thought, and his bold and manly defence of truth, and his energy of character and manner, and his power of impressing truth on mankind, he deserves, doubtless, to be ranked among the first orators of antiquity. No man has left the impress of his own mind on more other minds than Paul.

11 Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

But they measuring themselves by themselves. Whitby and Clarke suppose that this means that they compared themselves with each other; and that they made the false apostles particularly their standard. Doddridge, Grotius, Bloomfield, and some others suppose the sense to be, that they made themselves the standard of excellence. They looked continually on their own accomplishments, and did not look at the excellences of others. They thus formed a disproportionate opinion of themselves, and undervalued all others. Paul says that he had not boldness enough for that. It required a moral courage to which he could lay no claim. Horace (B. i. Ep. 7, 98) has an expression similar to this:

Metri se quemque suo modulo ac pede, veturn est.

The sense of Paul is, that they made themselves the standard of excellence; that they were satisfied with their own attainments; and that they overlooked the superior excellence and attainments of others. This is a graphic description of pride and self-complacency; and alas! it is what is often exhibited. How many there are, and it is to be feared even among professing Christians, who have no other standard of excellence than themselves. Their views are the standard of orthodoxy; their modes of worship are the standard of the proper manner of devotion; their habits and customs are in their own estimation perfect; and their own characters are the models of excellence, and they see little or no excellence in those who differ from them. They look on themselves as the true measure of orthodoxy, humility, zeal, and piety; and they condemn all others, however excellent they may be, who differ from them. And comparing themselves, etc. Or rather comparing themselves with themselves. Themselves they make to be the standard, and they judge of everything by that. Are not wise. Are stupid and foolish. Because

(1.) they had no such excellence as to make themselves the standard.

(2.) Because this was an indication of pride.

(3.) Because it made them blind to the excellences of others. It was to be presumed that others had endowments not inferior to theirs.

(4.) Because the requirements of God, and the character of the Redeemer, were the proper standard of conduct. Nothing is a more certain indication of folly than for a man to make himself the standard of excellence. Such an individual must be blind to his own real character; and the only thing certain about his attainments is that he is inflated with pride. And yet how common! How self-satisfied are most persons! How pleased with their own character and attainments! How grieved at any comparison which is made with others implying their inferiority! How prone to undervalue all others simply because they differ from them! The margin renders this, "understand it not," that is, they do not understand their own character or their inferiority.

13 But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

But we will not boast of things without our measure. Tindal renders this, "But we will not rejoice above measure." There is great obscurity in the language here, arising from its brevity. But the general idea seems to be plain. Paul says that he had not boldness as they had to boast of things wholly beyond his proper rule and his actual attainments and influence: and, especially, that he was not disposed to enter into other men's labours; or to boast of things that had been done by the mere influence of his name, and beyond the proper limits of his personal exertions. He made no boast of having done anything where he had not been himself on the ground and laboured assiduously to secure the object. They, it is not improbable, had boasted of what had been done in Corinth as though it were really their work, though it had been

done by the apostle himself. Nay more, it is probable that they boasted of what had been done by the mere influence of their name. Occupying a central position, they supposed that their reputation had gone abroad,and that the mere influence of their reputation had had an important effect. Not so with Paul. He made no boast of anything but what God had enabled him to do by his evangelical labours, and by personal exertions. He entered into no other men's labours, and claimed nothing that others had done as his own. He was not bold enough for that.

But according to the measure of the rule, etc. Marg., or line. The word rendered "rule," (κανων, whence our English word canon,) means properly a reed, rod, or staff employed to keep anything stiff, erect, asunder, (Hom. Iliad, 8, 103 ;) then a measuring rod or line; then any standard or rule--its usual meaning in the New Testament, as, e.g., of life and doctrine, Gal 6:16; Php 3:16.--Robinson's Lex. Here it means the limit, boundary line, or sphere of action assigned to any one. Paul means to say that God had appropriated a certain line or boundary as the proper limit of his sphere of action; that his appropriate sphere extended to them; that in going to them, though they were far distant from the field of his early labours, he had confined himself within the proper limits assigned him by God; and that in boasting of his labours among them he was not boasting of anything which did not properly fall within the sphere of labour assigned to him. The meaning is, that Paul was especially careful not to boast of anything beyond his proper bounds. Which God hath distributed to us. Which, in assigning our respective fields of labour, God has assigned unto me and my fellow-labourers. The Greek word here rendered "distributed" (εμερισεν) means, properly, to measure; and the sense is, that God had measured out or apportioned their respective fields of labour; that by his providence he had assigned to each one his proper sphere; and that, in the distribution, Corinth had fallen to the lot of Paul. In going there he had kept within the proper limits; in boasting of his labours and success there he did not boast of what did not belong to him. A measure to reach even unto you. The sense is, "The limits assigned me include you, and I may therefore justly boast of what I have done among you as

within my proper field of labour." Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, Acts 26:17,18; and the whole country of Greece, therefore, he regarded as falling within the limits assigned to him. No one therefore, could blame him for going there as if he was an intruder; no one assert that he had gone beyond the proper bounds.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you; for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ:

15 not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is*, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

Not boasting of things without our measure. There is here probably an allusion to the false teachers at Corinth. They had come after Paul had been there and had entered into his labours. When he had founded the church; when he had endured trials and persecutions in order to reach Corinth; when he had laboured there for a year and a half, Acts 18:11, they came and entered the quiet and easy field, formed parties, and claimed the field as their own. Paul says that he had not courage to do that. 2Cor 10:12. That required a species of boldness to which he could lay no claim; and he did not assume honour to himself like that. That is, of other men's labours. Not intruding into churches which we did not establish, and claiming the right to direct their affairs, and to exclude the founders from all proper honours and all influence, and endeavouring to alienate the affections of Christians from their spiritual father and guide.

That we shall be enlarged. Marg., Magnified in you. Bloomfield supposes that this means, "to gain fame and glory by you;" that is, as the teacher may justly by his pupils. So Robinson renders it, "to make great, to praise." But to me the idea seems to be, that he wished them to enlarge or magnify him by introducing him to larger fields of action; by giving him a wider sphere of labour. It was not: that he wished to be magnified by obtaining a wider reputation, not as a matter of praise or ambition, but he wished to have his work and success greatly enlarged. This he hoped to be enabled to do partly by the aid of the church at Corinth. When

they became able to manage their own affairs; when his time was not demanded to superintend them; when their faith became so strong that his presence was not needed; and when they should assist him in his preparations for travel, then he would enter on his wider field of labour. He had no intention of sitting down in ease, as the false teachers in Corinth seem disposed to have done.

16 to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

But he that glorieth, he that boasts. Whatever may be the occasion of his boasting, whether in planting churches or in watering them; whether in his purposes, plans, toils, or success. Paul himself did not deem it improper on some occasions to boast, 2Cor 11:16, 12:5, but it was not of his own power, attainments, or righteousness, he was disposed to trace all to the Lord, and to regard him as the Source of all blessing and all success.

Let him glory in the Lord. In this serious and weighty admonition, Paul designs, doubtless, to express the manner in which he was accustomed to glory, and to furnish an admonition to the Corinthians. In the previous part of the chapter there had been some severe irony. He closes the chapter with the utmost seriousness and solemnity of manner, in order to show on his part that he was not disposed to glory in his own attainments, and to admonish them not to boast of theirs. If they had anything valuable, they should regard the Lord as the Author of it. In this admonition it is probable that Paul had in his eye the passage in Jer 9:23,24, though he has not expressly quoted it: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." The sentiment is a favourite one with Paul, as it should be with all Christians. 1Cor 1:31. On this verse we may here remark, I. That nothing is more common than for men to boast or glory. Little as they really have in which to glory, yet there is no one probably who has not something of which he is proud, and of which he is disposed to boast. It would

be difficult or impossible to find a person who had not something on which he prided himself; something in which he esteemed himself superior to others. II The things of which they boast are very various.

(1.) Many are proud of their personal beauty--many, too, who would be unwilling to be thought proud of it.

(2.) Many glory in their accomplishments; or, what is more likely, in the accomplishments of their children.

(3.) Many glory in their talents; talents for anything, valuable or not, in. which they suppose they surpass others. They glory in their talent for eloquence, or science, or gaining knowledge; or in their talent for gaining property or keeping it; for their skill in their professions or callings; for their ability to run, to leap, or to practise even any trick or sleight of hand. There is nothing so worthless that it does not constitute a subject of glorying, provided it be ours. If it belong to others, it may be valueless.

(4.) Many glory in their property; in fine houses, extended plantations, or in the reputation of being rich; or in gorgeous dress, equipage, and furniture. In short, there is nothing which men possess in which they are not prone to glory. Forgetful of God the giver; forgetful that all may be soon taken from them, or that they soon must leave all; forgetful that none of these things can constitute a distinction in the grave or beyond, they boast as if these things were to remain for ever, and as if they had been acquired independently of God. How prone is the man of talents to forget that God has given him his intellect, and that for its proper use he must give account! How prone is the rich man to forget that he must die! How prone the gay and the beautiful to forget that they will lie undistinguished in the grave; and that death will consume them as soon as the most vile and worthless of the species! III. If we glory, it should be in the Lord. We should ascribe our talents, wealth, health, strength, salvation to him. We should rejoice

(a.) that we have such a Lord--so glorious, so full of mercy, so powerful, so worthy of confidence and love.

(b.) We should rejoice in our endowments and possessions as his gift. We should rejoice that we may come and lay everything at his feet; and whatever may be our rank, or talents, or learning, we should rejoice that we may come with the humblest child of poverty, and sorrow, and want, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake," Ps 115:1. 1Cor 1:31.

Verse 18. For not he who commendeth himself, etc. Not he who boasts of his talents and endowments. He is not to be judged by the estimate which he shah place on himself, but by the estimate which God shall form and express. Is approved. By God. It is no evidence that we shall be saved that we are prone to commend ourselves. See Rom 12:10. But whom the Lord commendeth. Rom 2:29. The idea here is, that men are to be approved or rejected by God. He is to pass judgment on them, and that judgment is to be in accordance with his estimate of their character, and not according to their own. If he approves them, they will be saved; if he does not, vain will be all their empty boasting--vain all their reliance on their wealth, eloquence, learning, or earthly honours. None will save them from condemnation; not all these things can purchase for them eternal life. Paul thus seriously shows that we should be mainly anxious to obtain the Divine favour. It should be the grand aim and purpose of our life; and we should repress all disposition for vain-glory or self-confidence; all reliance on our talents, attainments, or accomplishments for salvation. OUR BOAST IS THAT WE HAVE SUCH A REDEEMER; AND IN THAT WE ALL MAY GLORY.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

2 Corinthians-11

1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed
bear with me.
2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused
you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to
Christ.

For I am jealous over you. This verse expresses the reason why he was disposed to speak of his attainments, and of what he dad done. It was because he loved them, and because he feared that they were in danger of being seduced from the simplicity of the gospel. The phrase, "I am jealous," (ζηλω,) means, properly, I ardently love you; I am full of tender attachment to you. The word was usual among the Greeks to denote an ardent affection of any kind, (from ζεω, to boil, to be fervid or fervent.) The precise meaning is to be determined by the connexion. 1Cor 12:31. The word may denote the jealousy which is felt by an apprehension of departure from fidelity on the part of those whom we love; or it may denote a fervid and glowing attachment. The meaning here probably is, that Paul had a strong attachment to them.

With godly jealousy. Greek, "with the zeal of God," (θεουζηλω) That is, with very great or vehement zeal--in accordance with the Hebrew custom when the name God is used to denote anything signally great, as the phrase "mountains of God," meaning very elevated or lofty mountains. The mention of this ardent attachment suggested what follows. His mind reverted to the tenderness of the marriage relation, and to the possibility that in that relation the affections might be estranged. He makes use of this figure, therefore, to apprize them of the change which he apprehended. For I have espoused you, etc. The word here used αρμοζω means, properly, to adapt, to fit, to join together. Hence to join in wedlock, to marry. Here it means to marry to another; and the idea is, that Paul had been the agent employed in forming

a connexion, similar to the marriage connexion, between them and the Saviour.

The allusion here is not certain. It may refer to the custom which prevailed when friends made and procured the marriage for the bridegroom; or it may refer to some custom like that which prevailed among the Lacedemonians, where persons were employed to form the lives and manners of virgins, and prepare them for the duties of the married life. The sense is clear. Paul claims that it was by his instrumentality that they had been united to the Redeemer. Under him they had been brought into a relation to the Saviour, similar to that sustained by the bride to her husband; and he felt all the interest in them which naturally grew out of that fact, and from a desire to present them blameless to the pure Redeemer. The relation of the church to Christ is often represented by marriage. See Eph 5:23-33, Rev 19:7, 21:9. To one husband.

To the Redeemer. That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. The allusion here, according to Doddridge, is to the custom among the Greeks "of having an officer whose business it was to educate and form young women, especially those of rank and figure, designed for marriage, and then to present them to those who were to be their husbands; and if this officer through negligence permitted them to be corrupted between the espousals and the consummation of the marriage, great blame would fall upon him." Such a responsibility Paul felt. So anxious was he for the entire purity of that church which was to constitute "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" so anxious that all who were connected with that church should be presented pure in heaven.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Verse 3. But I fear. Paul had just compared the church to a virgin, soon to be presented as a bride to the Redeemer. The mention of this seems to have suggested to him the fact, that the first woman

was deceived and led astray by the tempter, and that the same thing might occur in regard to the church which he was so desirous should be preserved pure. The grounds of his fear were

(1.) that Satan had seduced the first woman, thus demonstrating that the most holy were in danger of being led astray by temptation; and

(2.) that special efforts were made to seduce them from the faith. The persuasive arts of the false teachers, the power of philosophy, and the attractive and corrupting influences of the world, he had reason to suppose, might be employed to seduce them from simple attachment to Christ. Lest by any means. Lest somehow, (μηπως.) It is implied that many means would be used; that all arts would be tried; and that in some way, which perhaps they little suspected, these arts would be successful, unless they were constantly put on their guard. As the serpent beguiled Eve. See Gen 3:1-11. The word serpent here refers doubtless to Satan, who was the agent by whom Eve was beguiled. See Jn 8:44, 1Jn 3:8, Rev 12:9, 20:2. Paul did not mean that they were in danger of being corrupted in the same way, but that similar efforts would be made to seduce them. Satan adapts his temptations to the character and circumstances of the tempted. He varies them from age to age, and applies them in such a way as best to secure his object. Hence all should be on their guard. No one knows the mode in which he will approach him, but all may know that he will approach them in some way. Through his subtilty. See Gen 3:1. By his craft, art, wiles, (εντηπανουργια.) The word implies that shrewdness, cunning, craft was employed. A tempter always employs cunning and art to accomplish his object. The precise mode in which Satan accomplished his object is not certainly known. Perhaps the cunning consisted in assuming an attractive form--a fascinating manner--a manner fitted to charm; perhaps in the idea that the eating of the forbidden fruit had endowed a serpent with the power of reason and speech above all other animals, and that it might be expected to produce a similar transformation in Eve. At all events, there were false pretences and appearances; and such Paul apprehended would be employed

by the false teachers to seduce and allure them. 2Cor 11:13,14. So your minds should be corrupted. So your thoughts should be perverted. So your hearts should be alienated. The mind is corrupted when the affections are alienated from the proper object, and when the soul is filled with unholy plans, and purposes, and desires. From the simplicity that is in Christ.

(1.) From simple and single-hearted devotedness to him--from pure and unmixed attachment to him. The fear was that their affections would be fixed on other objects, and that the singleness and unity of their devotedness to him would be destroyed.

(2.) From his pure doctrines. By the admixture of philosophy, by the opinions of the world, there was danger that their minds should be turned away from their hold on the simple truths which Christ had taught.

(3.) From that simplicity of mind and heart; that, childlike candour and docility; that freedom from all guile, dishonesty, and deception, which so eminently characterized the Redeemer. Christ had a single.aim; was free from all guile; was purely honest; never made use of any improper arts; never resorted to false appearances, and never deceived. His followers should, in like manner, be artless and guileless. There should be no mere cunning, no trick, no craft in advancing their purposes. There should be nothing but honesty and truth in all that they say. Paul was afraid that they would lose this beautiful simplicity and artlessness of character and manner; and that they would insensibly be led to adopt the maxims of mere cunning, of policy, of expediency, of seductive arts, which prevailed so much in the world--a danger which was imminent among the shrewd and cunning people of Greece, but which is confined to no time and no place. Christians should be more guileless than even children are; as pure and free from trick, and from art and cunning, as was the Redeemer himself.

(4.) From the simplicity in worship which the Lord Jesus commended and required. The worship which the Redeemer designed to establish was simple, unostentatious, and pure --strongly in contrast with the gorgeousness and corruption of the pagan worship, and even with the imposing splendour of the Jewish temple-service. He intended that it should be adapted to all lands, and such as could be offered by all classes of men--a pure worship, claiming first the homage of the heart, and then such simple external expressions as should best exhibit the homage of the heart. How easily might this be corrupted! What temptations were there to attempt to corrupt it by those who had been accustomed to the magnificence of the temple-service, and who would suppose that the religion of the Messiah could not be less gorgeous than that which was designed to shadow forth his coming; and by those who had been accustomed to the splendid rites of the pagan worship, and who would suppose that the true religion ought not to be less costly and splendid than the false religion had been! If so much expense had been lavished on false religions, how natural to suppose that equal costliness at least should be bestowed on the true religion! Accordingly, the history of the church, for a considerable part of its existence, has been little more than a record of the various forms in which the simple worship, instituted by the Redeemer, has been corrupted, until all that was gorgeous in pagan ceremonies, and splendid in the Jewish ritual, has been introduced as a part of Christian worship.

(5.) From simplicity in dress, and manner in living. The Redeemer's dress was simple. His manner of living was simple. His requirements demand great simplicity and plainness of apparel and manner of life, 1Pet 3:3-6, 1Timm 2:9,10. Yet how much proneness is there at all times to depart from this! What a besetting sin has it been, in all ages, to the church of Christ! And how much pains should there be that the very simplicity that is in Christ should be observed by all who bear the Christian name!

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

For if he that cometh, etc. There is much difficulty in this verse in ascertaining the true sense, and expositors have been greatly perplexed and divided in opinion, especially with regard to the true sense of the last clause, "ye might well bear with him." It is difficult to ascertain whether Paul meant to speak ironically or seriously; and different views will prevail, as different views are taken of the design. If it be supposed that he meant to speak seriously, the sense will be, "If the false teacher could recommend a better Saviour than I have done, or a Spirit better able to sanctify and save, then there would be a propriety in your receiving him, and tolerating his doctrines." If the former, then the sense will be, "You cannot well bear with me; but if a man comes among you preaching a false Saviour, and a false Spirit, and a false doctrine, then you bear with him without any difficulty."

Another interpretation still has been proposed, by supposing that the word "me" is to be supplied at the close of the verse instead of "him;" and then the sense would be, "If you receive so readily one who preaches another gospel, one who comes with far less evidence that he is sent from God than I have, and if you show yourselves thus ready to fall in with any kind of teaching that may be brought to you, you might at least bear with me also." Amidst this variety it is not easy to ascertain the true sense. To me it seems probable, however, that Paul spoke seriously, and that our translation has expressed the true sense. The main idea doubtless is, that Paul felt that there was danger that they would be corrupted. If they could bring a better gospel, a more perfect system, and proclaim a more perfect Saviour, there would be no such change. But that could not be expected. It could not be done. If, therefore, they preached any other Saviour or any other gospel--if they departed from the truths which he had taught them--it would be for the worse. It could not be otherwise. The Saviour whom he preached was perfect, and was able to save. The Spirit which he preached was perfect, and able to sanctify. The gospel which he preached was perfect, and there was no hope that it could be improved. Any change must be for the worse; and as the false teachers varied from his instructions, there was every reason to apprehend that their minds would be corrupted from the

simplicity that was in Christ. The principal idea therefore is, that the gospel which he preached was as perfect as it could be, and that any change would be for the worse. No doctrine which others brought could be recommended because it was better. By the phrase "he that cometh" is meant, doubtless, the false teacher in Corinth. Preacheth another Jesus. Proclaims one who is more worthy of your love, and more able to save. If he that comes among you and claims your affections can point out another Christ who is more worthy of your confidence, then I admit that you do well to receive him. It is implied here that this could not be done. The Lord Jesus, in his character and work, is perfect. No Saviour superior to him has been provided; none but he is necessary. Whom we have not preached. Let them show, if they can, that they have any Saviour to tell of whom we have not preached. We have given all the evidence that we are sent by God, and have laid all the claim to your confidence, which they can do for having made known the Saviour. They, with all their pretensions, have no Saviour to tell you of with whom we have not already made you acquainted. They have no claims therefore, from this quarter, which we have not also. Or if ye receive another spirit, etc. If they can preach to you another Sanctifier and Comforter; or if under their ministry you have received higher proofs of the power of the Spirit in performing miracles, in the gift of tongues, in renewing sinners, and in comforting your hearts. The idea is, that Paul had proclaimed the existence and agency of the same Holy Spirit which they did; that his preaching had been attended with as striking proofs of the presence and power of that Spirit; that he had all the evidence of a Divine commission from such an influence attending his labours which they could possibly have. They could reveal no spirit better able to sanctify and save; none who had more power than the Holy Spirit which they had received under the preaching of Paul; and there was therefore no reason why they should be "corrupted" or seduced from the simple doctrines which they had received, and follow others. Or another gospel, etc. A gospel more worthy of your acceptance --one more free, more full, more rich in promises; one that revealed a better plan of salvation, or that was more full of comfort and peace. Ye might well bear with him.

Marg.,"with me." The word "him" is not in the Greek; but is probably to be supplied. The sense is, There would then be some excuse for your conduct. There would be some reason why you should welcome such teachers; But if this cannot be done; if they can preach no other and no better gospel and Saviour than I have done, then there is no excuse. There is no reason why you should follow such teachers, and forsake those who were your earliest guides in religion. Let us never forsake the gospel which we have, till we are sure we can get a better. Let us adhere to the simple doctrines of the New Testament, until some one can furnish better and clearer doctrines. Let us follow the rules of Christ in our opinions and our conduct--our plans, our mode of worship, our dress, and our amusements, engagements, and company--until we can certainly ascertain that there are better rules. A man is foolish for making any change until he has evidence that he is likely to better himself: and it remains yet to be proved that any one has ever bettered himself or his family by forsaking the simple doctrines of the Bible, and embracing a philosophical speculation; by forsaking the scriptural views of the Saviour as the incarnate God, and embracing the views which represent him as a mere man; by forsaking the simple and plain rules of Christ about our manner of life, our dress, and our words and actions, and embracing those which are recommended by mere fashion and by the customs of a gay world.

5 For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

6 But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

7 Have I committed an offense in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

8 I robbed other churches, taking wages *of them,* to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself.*

10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

As the truth of Christ is in me. That is, I solemnly declare this as in the presence of Christ. As I am a Christian man; as I feel bound

to declare the truth; and as I must answer to Christ. It is a solemn form of asseveration, equal to an oath. Rom 9:1. Comp. 1Timm 2:7. No man shall stop me, etc. Marg., this boasting shall not be stopped in me. Rom 9:15. The idea here is, that Paul was solemnly determined that the same thing should continue. He had not been burdensome to any, and he was resolved that he would not be. Rather than be burdensome he had laboured with his own hands, and he meant to do it still. No man in all Achaia should ever have reason to say that he had been an idler, and had been supported by the churches when he was doing nothing. It was the fixed and settled purpose of his life never to be burdensome to any man. What a noble resolution! How fixed were the principles of his life! And what an instance of magnanimous self-denial and of elevated purpose! Every man, minister or otherwise, should adopt a similar resolution. He should resolve to receive nothing for which he has not rendered a fair equivalent; and resolve, if he has health, never to be a burden to his friends or to the church of God. And even if sick he may yet feel that he is not burdensome to others. If he is gentle and grateful; if he makes no unnecessary care; and especially if he furnishes an example of patience and piety, and seeks the blessing of God on his benefactors, he furnishes them what they will usually esteem an ample equivalent. No man need be burdensome to his friends; and all should resolve that by the grace of God they never will be. There is considerable variety in the MSS. here, (see Mill on the place,) but in regard to the general sense there can be no doubt. Nothing should ever hinder this boasting; nothing should deprive him of the privilege of saying that he had not been a burden.

11 Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

But what I do. The course of life which I have been pursuing I will continue to pursue. That is, I will continue to preach as I have done without demanding a support. I will labour with my own hands if necessary; I will preach without demanding rigidly what I might be entitled to. That I may cut off occasion. That I may give them no opportunity of accusing me of desiring to grow rich,

and of calumniating me. Paul meant that they should have no plausible pretext even for accusing him; that no man should be able to say that he was preaching merely for the hire. Which desire occasion. No doubt his enemies eagerly sought opportunities of accusing him, and greatly wished for some plausible reason for charging him with that which would be disgraceful and ruinous to his character. Or it may mean that they desired opportunity from the example of Paul to justify themselves in their course; that they took wages from the church at Corinth largely, and desired to be able to say that they had his example. That wherein they glory. Probably meaning that they boasted that they preached the gospel gratis; that they received nothing for their labours. Yet while they did this, it is not improbable that they received presents of the Corinthians, and under various pretences contrived to get from them an ample support, perhaps much more than would have been a reasonable compensation. Men who profess to preach the gospel gratis usually contrive in various ways to get more from the people than those who receive a regular and stipulated compensation. By taxing pretty liberally their hospitality; by accepting liberal presents; by frequent proclamation of their self-denial and their poverty, they usually filch large amounts from the people. No people were ever louder in praise of poverty, or in proclamation of their own self-denials, than some orders of monks, and that when it might be said almost that the richest possessions of Europe were passing into their hands. At all events, Paul meant that these men should have no opportunity from his course to take any such advantage. He knew what he had a right to, 1Cor 9 but he had not urged the right. He had received nothing from the church at Corinth, and he meant to receive nothing. He had honestly preached the gospel to them without charge, and he meant still to do it, 1Cor 9:18. They should, therefore, have no opportunity from his conduct either to accuse him of preaching for money, or of sheltering themselves under his example in pretending to preach for nothing, when they were in fact obtaining large sums from the people. They may be found even as we. That they may be compelled honestly to pursue such a course as I do, and be found to be in fact what they pretend to be.

The sense is, "I mean so to act that if they follow my example, or plead my authority, they may be found to lead an honest life; and that if they boast on this subject, they shall boast strictly according to truth. There shall be no trick; nothing underhanded or deceptive in what they do, so far as my example can prevent it."

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

For such are false apostles. They have no claim to the apostolic office. They are deceivers. They pretend to be apostles; but they have no Divine commission from the Redeemer. Paul had thus far argued the case without giving them an explicit designations deceivers. But here he says that men who had conducted [themselves] thus; who had attempted to impose on the people; who had brought another gospel, whatever pretences they might have--and he was not disposed to deny that there was much that was plausible--were really impostors, and the enemies of Christ. It is morally certain, from 2Cor 11:22, that these men were Jews; but why they had engaged in the work of preaching, or why they had gone to Corinth, cannot with certainty be determined. Deceitful workers. Impostors. Men who practise various arts to impose on others. They were crafty, and fraudulent, and hypocritical. It is probable that they were men who saw that great advantage might be taken of the new religion; men who saw the power which it had over the people, and who saw the confidence which the new converts were inclined to repose in their teachers; perhaps men who had seen the disciples to the Christian faith commit all their property to the hands of the apostles, or who had heard of their doing it, (comp. Acts 4:34,35,) and who supposed that by pretending to be apostles also they might come in for a share of this confidence, and avail themselves of this disposition to commit their property to their spiritual guides. To succeed, it was needful as far as possible to undermine the influence of the true apostles, and take their place in the confidence of the people. Thence they were "deceitful (δολιοι) workers," full of trick, and cunning, and of plausible arts to impose on others. Transforming themselves, etc. Pretending to be apostles. Hypocritical and deceitful, they yet pretended to have been sent by Christ. This is

a direct charge of hypocrisy. They knew they were deceivers; and yet they assumed the high claims of apostles of the Son of God.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

And no marvel. And it is not wonderful, 2Cor 11:15. Since Satan himself is capable of appearing to be an angel of light, it is not to be deemed strange that those who are in his service also should resemble him. For Satan himself is transformed, etc. That is, he who is an apostate angel; who is malignant and wicked; who is the prince of evil, assumes the appearance of a holy angel. Paul assumes this as an indisputable and admitted truth, without attempting to prove it, and without referring to any particular instances. Probably he had in his eye cases where Satan put on false and delusive appearances for the purpose of deceiving, or where he assumed the appearance of great sanctity and reverence for the authority of God. Such instances occurred in the temptation of our first parents, Gen 3:1-6, and in the temptation of the Saviour, Mt 4. The phrase, "an angel of light," means a pure and holy angel--light being the emblem of purity and holiness. Such are all the angels that dwell in heaven; and the idea is, that Satan assumes such a form as to appear to be such an angel. Learn here,

(1.) his power. He can assume such an aspect as he pleases. He can dissemble, and appear to be eminently pious. He is the prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness; and it is the consummation of bad power for an individual to be able to assume any character which he pleases.

(2.) His art. He is long practised in deceitful arts. For six thousand years he has been practicing the art of delusion; and with him it is perfect.

(3.) We are not to suppose that all that appears to be piety is piety. Some of the most plausible appearances of piety are assumed by Satan and his ministers. None ever professed a profounder regard for the authority of God than Satan did when he tempted the

Saviour. And if the prince of wickedness can appear to be an angel of light, we are not to be surprised if those who have the blackest hearts appear to be men of most eminent piety.

(4.) We should be on our guard. We should not listen to suggestions merely because they appear to come from a pious man, nor because they seem to be prompted by a regard to the will of God. We may be always sure that if we are to be tempted, it will be by some one having a great appearance of virtue and religion.

(5.) We are not to expect that Satan will appear to man to be as bad as he is. He never shows himself openly to be a spirit of pure wickedness; or black and abominable in his character; or full of evil, and hateful. He would thus defeat himself. It is for this reason that wicked men do not believe that there is such a being as Satan. Though continually under his influence, and "led captive by him at his will," yet they neither see him nor the chains which lead them, nor are they willing to believe in the existence of the one or the other.

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as
the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to
their works.

Paul's Sufferings as an Apostle

16 I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool
receive me, that I may boast myself a little.
17 That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were
foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.
18 Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.
19 For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise.
20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour *you*,
if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on
the face.

For ye suffer, etc. You bear patiently with men who impose on you in every way, and who are constantly defrauding you,

though you profess to be so wise; and you may bear with me a little, though I have no such intention. Seriously, if you bear with boasters who intend to delude and deceive you in various ways, you may bear with one who comes to you with no such intention, but with an honest purpose to do good. If a man bring you into bondage. καταδουλοι. If a man, or if any one, (ειτις,) make a slave of you, or reduce you to servitude. The idea is, doubtless, that the false teachers set up a lordship over their consciences; destroyed their freedom of opinion; and made them subservient to their will. They really took away their Christian freedom as much as if they had been slaves. In what way this was done is unknown. It may be that they imposed on them rites and forms, commanded expensive and inconvenient ceremonies, and required arduous services merely at their own will. A false religion always makes slaves. It is only true Christianity that leaves perfect freedom. All heathens are slaves to their priests; all fanatics are slaves to some fanatical leader; all those who embrace error are slaves to those who claim to be their guides. The papist everywhere is the slave of the priest, and the despotism there is as great as in any region of servitude whatever. If a man devour you. This is exceedingly sarcastic. The idea is, "Though you are so wise, yet you in fact tolerate men who impose on you--no matter though they eat you up, or consume all that you have. By their exorbitant demands they would consume all you have; or, as we would say, eat you out of house and home." All this they took patiently; and freely gave all that they demanded. False teachers are always rapacious. They seek the property, not the souls of those to whom they minister. Not satisfied with a maintenance, they aim to obtain all, and their plans are formed to secure as much as possible of those to whom they minister. If a man take of you. If he take and seize upon your possessions. If he comes and takes what he pleases, and bears it away as his own. If a man exalt himself. If he set himself up as a ruler, and claim submission. No matter how arrogant his claims, yet you are ready to bear with him. You might, then, bear with me in the very moderate demands which I make on your obedience and confidence. If a man smite you on the face. The word here rendered "smite" (δερει) means,

properly, to skin, to flay; but in the New Testament it means to beat, to scourge--especially so as to take off the skin, Mt 21:35, Mk 12:3,5. The idea here is, if any one treats you with contumely and scorn--since there can be no higher expression of it than to smite a man on the face, Mt 26:67. It is not to be supposed that this occurred literally among the Corinthians; but the idea is, that the false teachers really treated them with as little respect as if they smote them on the face. In what way this was done is unknown; but probably it was by their domineering manners, and the little respect which they showed for the opinions and feelings of the Corinthian Christians. Paul says that as they bore this very patiently, they might allow him to make some remarks about himself in self-commendation.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak.
Howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am
bold also.
22 Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they
the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.
23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I *am* more; in
labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more
frequent, in deaths oft.
24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.
25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered
shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;
26 *in* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in*
perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in
the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils
among false brethren;

Among false brethren. This was the crowning danger and trial to Paul, as it is to all others. A man can better bear danger by land and water, among robbers and in deserts, than he can bear to have his confidence abused, and to be subjected to the action and the arts of spies upon his conduct. Who these were he has not informed us. He mentions it as the chief trial to which he had been exposed, that he had met those who pretended to be his friends, and who yet had sought every possible opportunity to expose and destroy him. Perhaps he has here a delicate reference to the

danger which he apprehended from the false brethren in the church at Corinth.

27 in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

That which cometh upon me daily. There is great force in the original here. The phrase rendered "that which cometh upon me" means, properly, "that which rushes upon me." The word (επισυστασις means, properly, a concourse, a crowd, hence a tumult; and the idea here is, that these cares rushed upon him, or pressed upon him like a crowd of men or a mob that bore all before it. This is one of Paul's most energetic expressions, and denotes the incessant anxiety of mind to which he was subject. The care of all the churches. The care of the numerous churches which he had established, and which needed his constant supervision. They were young; many of them were feeble; many were made up of heterogeneous materials; many composed of Jews and Gentiles mingled together, with conflicting prejudices, habits, preferences; many of them were composed of those who had been gathered from the lowest ranks of life; and questions would be constantly occurring, relating to their order and discipline, in which Paul would feel a deep interest, and which would naturally be referred to him for decision. Besides this, they had many trials. They were persecuted, and would suffer much. In their sufferings Paul would feel deep sympathy, and would desire, as far as possible, to afford them relief. In addition to the churches which he had planted, he would feel an interest in all others; and doubtless many cases would be referred to him, as an eminent apostle, for counsel and advice. No wonder that all this came rushing on him like a tumultuous assembly ready to overpower him.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

Who is weak, etc. I sympathize with all. I feel where others feel, and their sorrows excite deep sympathetic emotions in my bosom. Like a tender and compassionate friend I am affected when I see others in circumstances of distress. The word weak here may refer to any want of strength, any infirmity or

feebleness arising either from body or mind. It may include all who were feeble by persecution or by disease; or it may refer to the weak in faith and doubtful about their duty, (1Cor 9:22,) and to those who were burdened with mental sorrows. The idea is, that Paul had a deep sympathy in all who needed such sympathy from any cause. And the statement here shows the depth of feeling of this great apostle; and shows what should be the feeling of every pastor. Rom 12:15. And I am not weak? I share his feelings, and sympathize with him. If he suffers, I suffer. Bloomfield supposes that Paul means, that in the case of those who were weak in the faith he accommodated himself to their weakness, and thus became all things to all men. 1Cor 9:22. But it seems to me probable that he uses the phrase here in a more general sense, as denoting that he sympathized with those who were weak and feeble in all their circumstances.

Who is offended. σκανδαλιζεται. Who is scandalized. The word means, properly, to cause to stumble and fall; hence to be a stumbling-block to any one; to give or cause offence to any one. The idea here seems to be, "Who is liable to be led astray; who has temptations and trials that are likely to lead him to sin or to cause him to fall, and I do not burn with impatience to restore him, or with indignation against the tempter?" In all such cases Paul deeply sympathized with them, and was prompt to aid them.

And I burn not? /KJV/ That is, with anger or with great agitation of mind at learning that any one had fallen into sin. This may either mean that he would burn with indignation against those who had led them into sin, or be deeply excited in view of the disgrace which would be thus brought on the Christian cause. In either case it means that his mind would be in a glow of emotion; he would feel deeply; he could not look upon such things with indifference, or without being deeply agitated. With all he sympathized; and the condition of all, whether in a state of feeble faith, or feeble body, or falling into sin, excited the deepest emotions in his mind. The truth here taught is, that Paul felt a deep sympathy for all others who bore the Christian name, and

this sympathy for others greatly increased the cares and toils of the apostolic office which he sustained. But having given this exposition, candour compels me to acknowledge that the whole verse may mean, "Who is feeble in the faith in regard to certain observances and rites and customs, (1Cor 9:22,) and I do not also evince the same? I do not rouse their prejudices, or wound their feelings, or alarm them. On the other hand, who is scandalized, or led into sin by the example of others in regard to such custom; who is led by the example of others into transgression, and I do not burn with indignation?" In either case, however, the general sense is, that he sympathized with all others.

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern
mine infirmities.
31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for
evermore, knoweth that I lie not.
32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of
the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:
33 and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and
escaped his hands.

2 Corinthians-12

Paul's Thorn in the Flesh

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions
and revelations of the Lord.
2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the
body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God
knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven.
3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I
cannot tell: God knoweth;)
4 how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable
words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

And heard unspeakable words. The word which is here rendered "unspeakable," (αρρητα) may either mean what cannot be spoken, or what ought not to be spoken. The word means unutterable, ineffable; and whichever idea we attach to it, Paul

meant to say that he could not attempt by words to do justice to what he saw and heard. The use of the word "words" here would seem to imply that he heard the language of exalted praise; or that there were truths imparted to his mind which he could not hope to convey in any language spoken by men. Which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Marg., "possible." Witsius supposes that the word εξον may include both, and Doddridge accords with the interpretation. See also Robinson's Lexicon. The word is most commonly used in the signification of lawful. Thus, Mt 14:4, "It is not lawful for thee to have her;" Acts 16:21, "Which it is not lawful for us to observe;" Acts 22:25, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman," etc. In the same sense of lawful it is used in Mt 12:2,10,12; Mt 20:15, Mk 2:26, 10:2. When it refers to possibility, it probably means moral possibility; that is, propriety, or it means that it is right. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here rather means that it was not proper to give utterance to those things; it would not be right to attempt it. It might be also true that it would not have been possible for language to convey clearly the ideas connected with the things which Paul was then permitted to see; but the main thought is, that there was some reason why it would not be proper for him to have attempted to communicate those ideas to men at large.

The Jews held that it was unlawful to pronounce the Tetragrammaton, i.e., the name of four letters, (,) JEHOVAH; and whenever that name occurred in their Scriptures, they substituted the name Adonai in its place. They maintain, indeed, that the true pronunciation is utterly lost, and none of them to this day attempt to pronounce it. But this was mere superstition; and it is impossible that Paul should have been influenced by any such reason as this. The transaction here referred to is very remarkable. It is the only instance in the Scriptures of any one who was taken to heaven, either in reality or in vision, and who returned again to the earth, and was then qualified to communicate important truths about the heavenly world from personal observation. Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven; but they returned not to converse with men. Elijah appeared with

Moses in conversation with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration; but they conversed with him only about his decease, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, Lk 9:31. There would have been no propriety for them to have spoken to Jesus of heaven, for he came down from heaven and was in heaven, (Jn 3:13,) and they were not permitted to speak to the disciples of heaven. Lazarus was raised from the dead, (Jn 11), and many of the saints which had slept in their graves arose at the death of Jesus, (Mt 27:52,) but there is no intimation that they communicated anything to the living about the heavenly world. Of all the millions who have been taken to heaven, not one has been permitted to return to bear his testimony to its glories; to witness for God that he is faithful to his promises; to encourage his pious friends to persevere; or to invite his impenitent friends to follow him to that glorious world. And so fixed is the law, so settled is the principle, that even Lazarus was not permitted to go, though at the earnest request of the rich man in hell, and warn his friends not to follow him to that world of woe, Lk 16:27-31. Mohammed, indeed, feigned that he had made a journey to heaven, and he attempts to describe what he saw; and the difference between true inspiration and false or pretended inspiration is strikingly evinced by the difference between Paul's dignified silence--verba sacro digna silentio (Horace)--and the puerilities of the prophet of Mecca. See the Koran, chap. xvii. As the difference between the true religion and imposture is strikingly illustrated by this, we may recur to the principal events which happened to the impostor on his celebrated journey. The whole account may be seen in Prideaux's Life of Mohammed, p. 43, seq. He solemnly affirmed that he had been translated to the heaven of heavens; that on a white beast, less than a mule, but larger than an ass, he had been conveyed from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem; had successively ascended the seven heavens with his companion Gabriel, receiving and returning the salutations of its blessed inhabitants; had then proceeded alone within two bow-shots of the throne of the Almighty, when he felt a cold which pierced him to the heart, and was touched on the shoulder by the hand of God, who commanded him to pray fifty times a day, but with the

advice of Moses he was prevailed on to have the number reduced to five; and that he then returned to Jerusalem and to Mecca, having performed a journey of thousands of years in the tenth part of a night. The fact that Paul was not permitted to communicate what he had seen is very remarkable. It is natural to ask why it is so? Why has not God sent down departed saints to tell men of the glories of heaven? Why does he not permit them to come and bear testimony to what they have seen and enjoyed? Why not come and clear up the doubts of the pious; why not come and convince a thoughtless world; why not come and bear honourable testimony for God that he is faithful to reward his people? And especially why did he not suffer Paul, whom he had permitted to behold the glories of paradise, to testify simply to what he had seen, and tell us what was there ? To these questions, so obvious, it is impossible to give an answer that we can demonstrate to be the true one. But we may suggest some reasons which may furnish a plausible answer, and which may serve to remove some of the perplexity in the case. I would, therefore, suggest that the following may have been some of the reasons why Paul was not permitted to communicate what he saw to men:

(1.) It was designed for the support of Paul himself, in view of the very remarkable trials which he was about to endure. God had called him to great toils and self-denials. He was to labour much alone; to go to foreign lands; to be persecuted, and ultimately put to death; and it was his purpose to qualify him for this work by some peculiar manifestation of his favour. He accordingly gave him such views of heaven that he would be supported in his trials by a conviction of the undoubted truth of what he taught, and by the prospect of certain glory when his labours should end. It was one instance when God gave peculiar views to prepare for trials, as he often does to his people now, preparing them in a peculiar manner for peculiar trials. Christians, from some cause, often have more elevated views and deeper feeling before they are called to endure trials than they have at other times--peculiar grace to prepare them for suffering. But as this was designed in a peculiar manner for Paul

alone, it was not proper for him to communicate what he saw to others.

(2.) It is probable that if there were a full revelation of the glories of heaven, we should not be able to comprehend it; or even if we did, we should be incredulous in regard to it. So unlike what we see; so elevated above our highest comprehension; probably so unlike what we now anticipate, is heaven, that we should be slow to receive the revelation. It is always difficult to describe what we have not seen, even on earth, so that we shall have any very clear idea of it: how much more difficult must it be to describe heaven! We are often incredulous about what is reported to exist in foreign lands on earth, which we have not seen, and a long time is often necessary before we will believe it. The king of Siam, when told by the Dutch ambassador that water became so hard in his country that men might walk on it, said, "I have often suspected you of falsehood, but now I know that you lie." So incredulous might we be, with our weak faith, if we were told what-actually exists in heaven. We should not improbably turn away from it as wholly incredible.

(3.) There are great truths which it is not the design of God to reveal to men. The object is to communicate enough to win us, to comfort us, to support our faith--not to reveal all. In eternity there must be boundless truths and glories which are not needful for us to know now, and which, on many accounts, it would not be proper to be revealed to men. The question is not, do we know all, but have we enough safely to guide us to heaven, and to comfort us in the trials of life.

(4.) There is enough revealed of heaven for our guidance and comfort in this world. God has told us what it will be in general. It will be a world without sin; without tears; without wrong, injustice, fraud, or wars; without disease, pestilence, plague, death; and it is easy to fill up the picture sufficiently for all our purposes. Let us think of a world where all shall be pure and holy; of a world free from all that we now behold that is evil;

free from pain, disease, death; a world where "friends never depart, foes never come;" a world where all shall be harmony and love--and where all this shall be ETERNAL; and we shall see that God has revealed enough for our welfare here. The highest hopes of man are met when we anticipate AN ETERNAL HEAVEN; the heaviest trials may be cheerfully borne when we have the prospect of EVERLASTING REST.

(5.) One other reason may be assigned why it was not proper for Paul to disclose what he saw, and why God has withheld more full revelations from men about heaven. It is, that his purpose is that we shall here walk by faith and not by sight. We are not to see the reward, nor to be told fully what it is. We are to have such confidence in God that we shall assuredly believe that he will fully reward and bless us, and under this confidence we are to live and act here below. God designs, therefore, to try our faith, and to furnish an abundant evidence that his people are disposed to obey his commands, and to put their trust in his faithfulness. Besides, if all the glories of heaven were revealed; if all were told that might be; and if heaven were made as attractive to mortal view as possible, then it might appear that his professed people were influenced solely by the hope of the reward. As it is, there is enough to support and comfort; not enough to make it the main and only reason why we serve God. It may be added,

(a.) that we have all the truth which we shall ever have about heaven here below. No other messenger will come; none of the pious dead will return. If men, therefore, are not willing to be saved in view of the truth which they have, they must be lost. God will communicate no more.

(b.) The Christian will soon know all about heaven. He will soon be there. He begins no day with any certainty that he may not close it in heaven; he lies down to rest at no time with any assurance that he will not wake in heaven, amidst its full and eternal splendours.

(c.) The sinner will soon know fully what it is to lose heaven. A moment may make him fully sensible of his loss--for he may die; and a moment may put him for ever beyond the possibility of reaching a world of glory.

We are not capable of knowing all, nor is it fit we should know very much, of the particulars of that glorious place and state; it is our duty and interest to give diligence to make sure to ourselves a mansion there; and, if that be cleared up to us, then we should long to be removed thither, to abide there for ever. This third heaven is called paradise (2Co 12:4), in allusion to the earthly paradise out of which Adam was driven for his transgression; it is called the paradise of God (Re 2:7), signifying to us that by Christ we are restored to all the joys and honours we lost by sin, yea, to much better. The apostle does not mention what he saw in the third heaven or paradise, but tells us that he heard unspeakable words, such as it is not possible for a man to utter--such are the sublimity of the matter and our unacquaintedness with the language of the upper world: nor was it lawful to utter those words, because, while we are here in this world, we have a more sure word of prophecy than such visions and revelations. 2Pe 1:19. We read of the tongue of angels as well as men, and Paul knew as much of that as ever any man upon earth did, and yet preferred charity, that is, the sincere love of God and our neighbour. This account which the apostle gives us of his vision should check our curious desires after forbidden knowledge, and teach us to improve the revelation God has given us in his word. Paul himself, who had been in the third heaven, did not publish to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Christ: on this foundation the church is built, and on this we must build our faith and hope.

5 Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

And lest I should be exalted. Lest I should be spiritually proud; lest I should become self-confident and vain, and suppose that I was a special favourite of Heaven. If Paul was in danger of spiritual pride, who is not? If it was necessary for God to adopt some special measures to keep him humble, we are not to be surprised that the same thing should occur in other cases. There is abundant reason to believe that Paul was naturally a proud man. He was by nature self-confident; trusting in his own talents and attainments, and eminently ambitious. When he became a Christian, therefore, one of his besetting sins would be pride; and as he had been peculiarly favoured in his call to the apostleship; in his success as a preacher; in the standing which he had among the other apostles, and in the revelations imparted to him, there was also peculiar danger that he would become self-confident, and proud of his attainments. There is no danger that more constantly besets Christians, and even eminent Christians, than pride. There is no sin that is more subtle, insinuating, deceptive; none that lurks more constantly around the heart, and that finds a more ready entrance, than pride. He who has been characterized by pride before his conversion, will be in special danger of it afterwards; he who has eminent gifts in prayer, or in conversation, or in preaching, will be in special danger of it; he who is eminently successful will be in danger of it; and he who has any extraordinary spiritual comforts will be in danger of it. Of this sin he who lives nearest to God may be in most special danger; and he who is most eminent in piety should feel that he also occupies a position where the enemy will approach him in a sly and subtle manner, and where he is in peculiar danger of a fall. Possibly the fear that he might be in danger of being made proud by the flattery of his friends may have been one reason why Paul kept this thing concealed for fourteen years; and if men wish to keep themselves from the danger this sin, they should not be forward to speak even of the most favoured moments of their communion with God.

There was given to me. That is, God was pleased to appoint me. The word which Paul uses is worthy of special notice. It is that this "thorn in the flesh" was given to him, implying that it was a favour. He does not complain of it; he does not say it was sent in cruelty; he does not even speak of it as an affliction; he speaks of it as a gift, as any man would of a favour that had been bestowed. Paul had so clear a view of the benefits which resulted from it, that he regarded it as a favour, as Christians should every trial.

The messenger of Satan. Among the Hebrews it was customary to attribute severe and painful diseases to Satan. Comp. Job 2:6,7, Lk 13:16. In the time of the Saviour, malignant spirits are known to have taken possession of the body in numerous cases, and to have produced painful bodily diseases; and Paul here says that Satan was permitted to bring this calamity on him.

To buffet me. To buffet, means to smite with the hand; then to maltreat in any way. The meaning is, that the effect and design of this was deeply to afflict him. Doddridge and Clarke suppose that the reference is here to the false teacher whom Satan had sent to Corinth, and who was to him the source of perpetual trouble. But it seems more probable to me that he refers to some bodily infirmity. The general truth taught in this verse is, that God will take care that his people shall not be unduly exalted by the manifestations of his favour, and by the spiritual privileges which he bestows on them. He will take measures to humble them; and a large part of his dealings with his people is designed to accomplish this. Sometimes it will be done, as in the case of Paul, by bodily infirmity or trial, by sickness, or by long and lingering disease; sometimes by great poverty, and by an humble condition of life; sometimes by reducing us from a state of affluence, where we were in danger of being exalted above measure; sometimes by suffering us to be slandered and calumniated, by suffering foes to rise up against us who shall blacken our character, and in such a manner that we cannot meet it; sometimes by persecution; sometimes by want of success in our enterprises, and, if in the ministry, by withholding his Spirit; sometimes by suffering us to

fall into sin, and thus greatly humbling us before the world. Such was the case with David and with Peter; and God often permits us to see in this manner our own weakness, and to bring us to a sense of our dependence and to proper humility by suffering us to perform some act that should be ever afterward a standing source of our humiliation; some act so base, so humiliating, so evincing the deep depravity of our hearts, as for ever to make and keep us humble. How could David be lifted up with pride after the murder of Uriah? How could Peter after having denied his Lord with a horrid oath? Thus many a Christian is suffered to fall by the temptation of Satan, to show him his weakness and to keep him from pride; many a fall is made the occasion of the permanent benefit of the offender. And perhaps every Christian who has been much favored with elevated spiritual views and comforts can recall something which shall be to him a standing topic of regret and humiliation in his past life. We should be thankful for any calamity that will humble us; and we should remember that clear and elevated views of God and heaven are, after all, more than a compensation for all the sufferings which it may be necessary to endure in order to make us humble.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

And he said unto me. The Saviour replied. In what way this was done, or whether it was done at the time when the prayer was offered, Paul does not inform us. It is possible, as Macknight supposes, that Christ appeared to him again, and spake to him in an audible manner. Grotius supposes that this was done by the (Bath-qol-- "daughter of the voice") so frequently referred to by the Jewish writers, and which they suppose to be referred to in 1Kgs 19:12, by the phrase, "a still small voice." But it is impossible to determine in what way it was done, and it is not material. Paul was in habits of communion with the Saviour, and was accustomed to receive revelations from him. The material fact here is, that the request was not granted in the exact form in

which he presented it, but that he received assurance of grace to support him in his trial. It is one of the instances in which the fervent prayer of a good man, offered undoubtedly in faith, was not answered in the form in which he desired, though substantially answered in the assurance of grace sufficient to support him. It furnishes, therefore, a very instructive lesson in regard to prayer, and shows us that we are not to expect as a matter of course that all our prayers will be literally answered, and that we should not be disappointed or disheartened if they are not. It is a matter of fact that not all the prayers even of the pious, and of those who pray having faith in God as a hearer of prayer, are literally answered. Thus the prayer of David (2Sam 12:16-20) was not literally answered: the child for whose life he so earnestly prayed died. So the Saviour's request was not literally answered, Mk 14:36. The cup of suffering which he so earnestly desired should be taken away, was not re- moved. So in the case before us. Compare also De 3:23-27; Job 30:20, Lam 3:8. So in numerous cases now, Christians pray with fervour and with faith for the removal of some calamity which is not removed; or for something which they regard as desirable for their welfare, which is withheld. Some of the reasons why this is done are obvious:

(1.) The grace that will be imparted if the calamity is not removed, will be of greater value to the individual than would be the direct answer to his prayer. Such was the case with Paul; so it was doubtless with David; and so it is often with Christians now. The removal of the calamity might be apparently a blessing, but it might also be attended with danger to our spiritual welfare; the grace imparted may be of permanent value, and may be connected with the development of some of the loveliest traits of Christian character.

(2.) It might not-be for the good of the individual who prays that the exact thing should be granted. When a parent prays with great earnestness and with insubmision for the life of a child, he knows not what he is doing. If the child lives, he may be the occasion of much more grief to him than if he had died. David had far more trouble from Absalom than he had from the death of the child for

which he so earnestly prayed. At the same time, it may be better for the child that he should be removed. If he dies in infancy he will be saved. But who can tell what will be his character and destiny, should he live to be a man? So of other things.

(3.) God has often some better thing in store for us than would be the immediate answer to our prayer. Who can doubt that this was true of Paul? The promised grace of Christ as sufficient to support us, is of more value than would be the mere removal of any bodily affliction.

(4.) It would not be well for us, probably, should our petition be literally answered. Who can tell what is best for himself? If the thing were obtained, who can tell how soon we might forget the Benefactor, and become proud and self-confident? It was the design of God to humble Paul; and this could be much better accomplished by continuing his affliction, and by imparting the promised grace, than by withdrawing the affliction, and withholding the grace. The very thing to be done was to keep him humble; and this affliction could not be withdrawn without also foregoing the benefit. It is true, also, that where things are in themselves proper to be asked, Christians sometimes ask them in an improper manner, and this is one of the reasons why many of their prayers are not answered. But this does not pertain to the case before us. My grace is sufficient for thee. A much better answer than it would have been to have removed the calamity; and one that seems to have been entirely satisfactory to Paul. The meaning of the Saviour is, that he would support him; that he would not suffer him to sink exhausted under his trials; that he had nothing to fear. The affliction was not indeed removed; but there was a promise that the favour of Christ would be shown to him constantly, and that he would find his support to be ample. If Paul had this support, he might well bear the trial; and if we have this assurance, as we may have, we may welcome affliction, and rejoice that calamities are brought upon us. It is a sufficient answer to our prayers if we have the solemn promise of the Redeemer that we shall be upheld, and never sink under the burden of our heavy woes. My strength is made perfect in

weakness. That is, the strength which I impart to my people is more commonly and more completely manifested when my people feel that they are weak. It is not imparted to those who feel that they are strong, and who do not realize their need of Divine aid. It is not so completely manifested to those who are vigorous and strong, as to the feeble. It is when we are conscious that we are feeble, and when we feel our need of aid, that the Redeemer manifests his power to uphold, and imparts his purest consolations. Grotius has collected several similar passages from the classic writers, which may serve to illustrate this expression. Thus Pliny, vii. Epis. 26, says, "We are best where we are weak." Seneca says, "Calamity is the occasion of virtue." Quintilian, "All temerity of mind is broken by bodily calamity." Minutius Felix, "Calamity is often the discipline of virtue." There are few Christians who cannot bear witness to the truth of what the Redeemer here says, and who have not experienced the most pure consolations which they have known, and been most sensible of his comforting presence and power, in times of affliction.

Most gladly therefore, etc. I count it a privilege to be afflicted, if my trials may be the means of my more abundantly enjoying the favour of the Redeemer. His presence and imparted strength are more than a compensation for all the trials that I endure. That the power of Christ. The strength which Christ imparts; his power manifested in supporting me in trials. May rest upon me. επισκηνωση. The word properly means to pitch a tent upon; and then to dwell in or upon. Here it is used in the sense of abiding upon; or remaining with. The sense is, that the power which Christ manifested to his people rested with them, or abode with them in their trials, and therefore he would rejoice in afflictions, in order that he might partake of the aid and consolation thus imparted. Learn hence,

(1.) that a Christian never loses anything by suffering and affliction. If he may obtain the favour of Christ by his trials, he is a gainer. The favour of the Redeemer is more than a compensation for all that we endure in his cause.

(2.) The Christian is a gainer by trial. I never knew a Christian that was not ultimately benefited by trials. I never knew one who did not find that he had gained much that was valuable to him in scenes of affliction. I do not know that I have found one who would be willing to exchange the advantages he has gained in affliction for all that the most uninterrupted prosperity and the highest honours that the world could give would impart.

(3.) Learn to bear trials with joy. They are good for us. They develop some of the most lovely traits of character. They injure no one, if they are properly received. And a Christian should rejoice that he may obtain what he does obtain in affliction, cost what it may. It is worth more than it costs; and when we come to die, the things that we shall have most occasion to thank God for will be our afflictions. And, oh, if they are the means of raising us to a higher seat in heaven, and placing us nearer the Redeemer there, who will not rejoice in his trials?

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Therefore I take pleasure. Since so many benefits result from trials; since my afflictions are the occasion of obtaining the favour of Christ in so eminent a degree, I rejoice in the privilege of suffering. There is often real pleasure in affliction, paradoxical as it may appear. Some of the happiest persons I have known are those who have been deeply afflicted; some of the purest joys which I have witnessed have been manifested on a sick bed, and in the prospect of death. And I have no doubt that Paul, in the midst of all his infirmities and reproaches, had a joy above that which all the wealth and honour of the world could give. See here the power of religion. It not only supports--it comforts. It not only enables one to bear suffering with resignation, but it enables him to rejoice. Philosophy blunts the feelings; infidelity leaves men to murmur and repine in trial; the pleasures of this world have no power even to support or comfort in times of affliction; but

Christianity. furnishes positive pleasure in trial, and enables the sufferer to smile through his tears.

In infirmities. In my weaknesses. 2Cor 11:30. In reproaches. In the contempt and scorn with which I meet as a follower of Christ. 2Cor 11:21. In necessities.

In want. 2Cor 6:4, 2Cor 6:4,5. In distresses for Christ's sake. 2Cor 6:4. In the various wants and difficulties to which I am exposed on account of the Saviour, or which I suffer in his cause. For when I am weak, then am I strong. When I feel weak; when I am subjected to trial, and nature faints and fails, then strength is imparted to me, and I am enabled to bear all. The more I am borne down with trials, the more do I feel my need of Divine assistance, and the more do I feel the efficacy of Divine grace. Such was the promise in De 33:25, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." So in Heb 11:34, "Who out of weakness were made strong." What Christian has not experienced this, and been able to say that when he felt himself weak, and felt like sinking under the accumulation of many trials, he has found his strength according to his day, and felt an arm of power supporting him? It is then that the Redeemer manifests himself in a peculiar manner; and then that the excellency of the religion of Christ is truly seen, and its power appreciated and felt.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I
ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind
the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.
12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all
patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.
13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it*
be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

Paul Plans a Third Visit

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be
burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children

ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

18 I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 *and* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me, etc. Lest I should, be compelled to inflict punishment on those whom I supposed to have been converted under my ministry. I had rejoiced in them as true converts. I had counted them as among the fruit of my ministry. Now to be compelled to inflict punishment on them as having no religion would mortify me and humble me. The infliction of punishment on members of the church is a sort of punishment to him who inflicts it as well as to him who is punished. Members of the church should walk uprightly, lest they overwhelm the ministry in shame. And that I shall bewail many, etc. If they repented of their sin, he could still rejoice in them. If they continued in their sin, till he came, it would be to him a source of deep lamentation. It is evident from the word "many" here, that the disorders had prevailed very extensively in the church at Corinth. The word rendered "have sinned already" means, "who have sinned before;" and the idea is, that they were old offenders, and that they had not yet repented.

The uncleanness. Rom 1:24. And fornication, and lasciviousness, etc. 1Cor 5:1; 1Cor 6:18. This was the sin to which they were particularly exposed in Corinth, as it was the sin for which that corrupt city was distinguished. See the Introduction to the First Epistle. Hence the frequent cautions in these epistles against it; and hence it is not to be wondered at that some of those who had become professing Christians had fallen into it. It may be added, that it is still the sin to which converts from the corruptions and licentiousness of paganism are particularly exposed.

2 Corinthians-13

1 This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.
2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:
3 since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.
4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

For though he was crucified through weakness. Various modes have been adopted of explaining the phrase "through weakness." The most probable explanation is that which refers to the human nature which he had assumed, Php 2:7,8, 1Pet 3:18, and to the appearance of weakness which he manifested. He did not choose to exert his power. He appeared to his enemies to be weak and feeble. This idea would be an exact illustration of the point before the apostle. He is illustrating his own conduct, and especially in the fact that he had not exerted his miraculous powers among them in the punishment of offenders; and he does it by the example of Christ, who though abundantly able to have exerted his power and to have rescued himself from his enemies, yet was willing to appear weak, and to be crucified. It is very clear,

(1.) that the Lord Jesus seemed to his enemies to be weak and incapable of resistance.

(2.) That he did not put forth his power to protect his life. He in fact offered no resistance, as if he had no power.

(3.) He had a human nature that was peculiarly sensitive, and sensible to suffering; and that was borne down and crushed under the weight of mighty woes. Isa 53:2,3. From all these causes he seemed to be weak and feeble; and these appear to me to be the principal ideas in this expression.

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Here the apostle advises the Corinthians, instead of inquiring after the proof of Christ in him, to examine whether they were in Christ themselves; intimating to us, that such are usually most backward to examine the state of their own souls, who are forward to enquire into the spiritual state and condition of others. "You seek a proof of Christ in me, says the apostle: Oh, rather prove and examine yourselves."

Where note, 1. A duty expressed; Examine yourselves; prove yourselves: The word is a metaphor taken from goldsmiths, who with great exactness try their gold; the truth of it by the touchstone, the weight of it by the scale, and the purity of it by the fire. And the repetition of the command, Examine yourselves; prove yourselves; implies the great backwardness that is in men's natures to perform this duty, the great necessity of the duty, and the great diligence and frequency to be used in performing of the duty.

Learn hence, That self-examination is an excellent, a necessary and important duty, belonging to every one in the church, and

requires great diligence and faithfulness in the performing of it. 'Tis necessary, in regard of our comforts, and also in regard of our graces; for there are counterfeit graces, as well as real; and common graces, as well as saving; and 'tis a duty that requires diligence and frequency, because the work is difficult, because the heart is backward, because we are apt to be deceived, and willing to be deceived; because many have miscarried without is, and many perish by a negligent performance of it: Therefore examine yourselves; prove yourselves.

Note, 2. The subject-matter of our examination, whether ye be in the faith; that is, whether ye be converted to the Christian faith, whether the faith of Christ be in you, whether the pinciple of faith be in your consciences, whether the practice of faith be in your lives, whether your faith be the parent and principle of obedience, working love, and working by love.

Note, 3. The enforcement or motive to this duty, Except ye be reprobates; that is, counterfeit, adulterate, unsound, and insincere Christians, unaccepted of God, and not owned by him. As reprobate silver has no worth or fitness in it for trading, so such Christians as, upon examination are not found to have the grace of faith in them, more precious than gold, are unapproved of God, and rejected by him.

Note, 4. When the apostle expostulates with them, and says, Know ye not your ownselves? it implies both the folly and unreasonableness of the neglect of the duty, and also the possibility and easiness of knowing whether Christ be in us, or not, upon a due and diligent inquiry, whether we have experienced the quickening and transforming power of Christ in our hearts and lives.

Finally, So great is the benefit, and so sweet the comfort, which flows to us by examinations and self-acquaintance, that it will abundantly recompence our care and diligence, in the frequent and faithful discharge of it.

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.
7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear
approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be
as reprobates.
8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.
9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also
we wish, *even* your perfection.
10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I
should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath
given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Final Greetings

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one
mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with
you.
12 Greet one another with a holy kiss.
13 All the saints salute you.
14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the
communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the
Galatians
[Galatians]

Galatians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

Neither by man. "Neither by or through δι the instrumentality of any man." Here he designs to exclude all men from having had any agency in his appointment to the apostolic office. He was neither sent out from any body of men to execute their purposes, nor did he receive his commission, authority, or ordination, through the medium of any man. A minister of the gospel now receives his call from God, but he is ordained or set apart to his office by man. Matthias, the apostle chosen in the place of Judas, (Acts 1:17,) received his call from God, but it was by the vote of the body of the apostles. Timothy was also called of God, but he was appointed to his office by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, 1Timm 4:14. But Paul here says that he received no such commission as that from the apostles. They were not the means or the medium of ordaining him to his work. He had, indeed, together with Barnabas, been set apart at Antioch by the brethren there, (Acts 13:1-3,) for a special mission in Asia Minor; but this was not an appointment to the apostleship. He had been restored to sight after the miraculous blindness produced by seeing the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, and had received important instruction from him, (Acts 9:17;) but his commission as an apostle had been received directly from the Lord Jesus, without any intervening medium, or any form of human authority, Acts 9:15, 22:17-21, 1Cor 9:1.

But by Jesus Christ. That is, directly by Christ. He had been called by him, and commissioned by him, and sent by him, to engage in the work of the gospel.

To whom this epistle is sent--to the churches of Galatia. There were several churches at that time in this country, and it should seem that all of them were more or less corrupted through the arts of those seducers who had crept in among them; and therefore Paul, on whom came daily the care of all the churches, being deeply affected with their state, and concerned for their recovery to the faith and establishment in it, writes this epistle to them. He directs it to all of them, as being all more or less concerned in the matter of it; and he gives them the name of churches, though they had done enough to forfeit it, for corrupt churches are never allowed to be churches: no doubt there were some among them who still continued in the faith, and he was not without hope that others might be recovered to it.

2 and all the brethren which are with me.
Unto the churches of Galatia:
3 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God the Father, and *from* our
Lord Jesus Christ,

The apostolical benediction, Ga 1:3. Herein the apostle, and the brethren who were with him, wish these churches grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the usual blessing wherewith he blesses the churches in the name of the Lord--grace and peace. Grace includes God's good-will towards us and his good work upon us; and peace implies in it all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really needful for us; and they come from God the Father as the fountain, through Jesus Christ as the channel of conveyance. Both these the apostle wishes for these Christians. But we may observe, First grace, and then peace, for there can be no true peace without grace.

4 who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this
present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

5 to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Who gave himself for our sins. The reason why Paul so soon introduces this important doctrine, and makes it here so prominent, probably is, that this was the cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion, the great truth which was ever to be kept before the mind, and because this truth had been in fact lost sight of by them. They had embraced doctrines which tended to obscure it, or to make it void. They had been led into error by the Judaizing teachers, who held that it was necessary to be circumcised, and to conform to the whole Jewish ritual. Yet the tendency of all this was to obscure the doctrines of the gospel, and particularly the great truth that men can be justified only by faith in the blood of Jesus, Gal 5:4. Comp. Gal 1:6,7. Paul, therefore, wished to make this prominent--the very starting point in their religion; a truth never to be forgotten, that Christ gave himself for their sins, that he might deliver them from all the bad influences of this world, and from all the false systems of religion engendered in this world. The expression "who gave" τουδοντος is one that often occurs in relation to the work of the Redeemer, where it is represented as a gift, either on the part of God, or on the part of Christ himself. Jn 3:16. Comp. Jn 4:10, Rom 4:25, 2Cor 9:15, Gal 2:20, Eph 5:25, Tit 2:14. This passage proves,

(1.) that it was wholly voluntary on the part of the Lord Jesus. No one compelled him to come; no one could compel him. It is not too much to say, that God could not, and would not, COMPEL any innocent and holy being to undertake the great work of the atonement, and endure the bitter sorrows which were necessary to redeem man. God will compel the guilty to suffer, but he never will compel the innocent to endure sorrows, even in behalf of others. The whole work of redemption must be voluntary, or it could not be performed.

(2.) It evinced great benevolence on the part of the Redeemer. He did not come to take upon himself unknown and unsurveyed woes. He did not go to work in the dark. He knew

what was to be done. He knew just what sorrows were to be endured--how long, how keen, how awful. And yet, knowing this, he came resolved and prepared to endure all those woes, and to drink the bitter cup to the dregs.

(3.) If there had not been this benevolence in his bosom, man must have perished for ever. He could not have saved himself; and he had no power or right to compel another to suffer in his behalf; and even God would not lay this mighty burden on any other, unless he was entirely willing to endure it. How much, then, do we owe to the Lord Jesus; and how entirely should we devote our lives to him who loved us, and gave himself for us! The word himself is rendered, by the Syriac, his life, (Naphshe) and this is in fact the sense of the Greek, that he gave his life for our sins, or that he died in our stead. He gave his life up to toil, tears, privation, sorrow, and death, that he might redeem us. The phrase, "for our sins," υπερτωναμαρτιωνημων, means the same as on account of; meaning, that the cause or reason why he gave himself to death was our sins; that is, he died because we are sinners, and because we could be saved only by his giving himself up to death. Many Mss., instead of υπερ, here read περι, ,but the sense is not materially varied. The Syriac translates it, "who gave himself instead of," by a word denoting that there was a substitution of the Redeemer in our place. The sense is, that the Lord Jesus became a vicarious offering, and died in the stead of sinners. It is not possible to express this idea more distinctly and unambiguously than Paul has done in this passage. Sin was the procuring cause of his death; to make expiation for sin was the design of his coming; and sin is pardoned and removed only by his substituted suffering.

There Is No Other Gospel

6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you
into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

Learn hence that men, professedly pious, and apparently ardently attached to the gospel, may become soon perverted in their views, and alienated from those who had called them into the gospel, and whom they professed tenderly to love. The ardour of the affections becomes cool, and some artful, and zealous, and plausible teachers of error seduce the mind, corrupt the heart, and alienate the affections. Where there is the ardour of the first love to God, there is also an effort soon made by the adversary to turn away the heart from him; and young converts are commonly soon attacked in some plausible manner, and by art and arguments adapted to turn away their minds from the truth, and to alienate the affections from God.

Into the grace of Christ. Locke renders this, "into the covenant of grace which is by Christ." Doddridge understands it of the method of salvation which is by or through the grace of Christ. There is no doubt that it refers to the plan of salvation which is by Christ, or in Christ; and the main idea is, that the scheme of salvation which they had embraced under his instruction,, was one which contemplated salvation only by the grace or favour of Christ; and that from that they had been removed to another scheme, essentially different, where the grace of Christ was made useless and void. It is Paul's object to show that the true plan makes Christ the great and prominent object; and that the plan which they had embraced was, in this respect, wholly different.

Unto another gospel. A gospel which destroys the grace of Christ; which proclaims salvation on other terms than simple dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus; and which has introduced the Jewish rites and ceremonies as essential, in

order to obtain salvation. The apostle calls that scheme the gospel, because it pretended to be: it was preached by those who claimed to be preachers of the gospel; who alleged that they had come direct from the apostles at Jerusalem, and who pretended to declare the method of salvation. It claimed to be the gospel, and yet it was essentially unlike the plan which he had preached as constituting the gospel. That which he preached, inculcated the entire dependence of the sinner on the merits and grace of Christ; that system had introduced dependence on the observance of the rites of the Mosaic system as necessary to salvation.

7 which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

It was a different system, and one which taught an entirely different method of justification before God. It seems to me that this is the true sense of the passage, and that Paul means to teach them that the system, though it was called the gospel, was essentially different from that which he had taught, and which consisted in simple reliance on Christ for salvation. The system which they taught was, in fact, the Mosaic system--the Jewish mode, depending on the rites and ceremonies of religion--and which, therefore, did not deserve to be called the gospel. It would load them again with burdensome rites, and with cumbrous institutions, from which it was the great purpose of the gospel to relieve them.

But there be some that trouble you. Though this is most manifestly another system, and not the gospel at all, yet there are some persons who are capable of giving trouble, and of unsettling your minds, by making it plausible. They pretend that they have come direct from the apostles at Jerusalem; that they have received their instructions from them, and that they preach the true gospel as they teach it. They pretend that Paul was called into the office of an apostle after them; that he had never seen the Lord Jesus; that he had derived his information only from others; and thus they are able to present a plausible argument, and to unsettle the minds of the Galatians.

And would pervert. That is, the tendency of their doctrine is wholly to turn away, μεταστρεψαι, to destroy, or render useless the gospel of Christ. It would lead, to the denial of the necessity of dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus for salvation, and would substitute dependence on rites and ceremonies. This does not of necessity mean that such was the design of their teaching, for they might have been in the main honest; but that such was the tendency and result of their teaching. It would lead men to rely on the Mosaic rites for salvation.

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

But though we. That is, we the apostles. Probably he refers particularly to himself, as the plural is often used by Paul when speaking of himself. He alludes here, possibly, to a charge which was brought against him by the false teachers in Galatia, that he had changed his views since he came among them, and now preached differently from what he did then. See the Introduction. They endeavoured probably to fortify their own opinions in regard to the obligations of the Mosaic law, by affirming, that though Paul when he was among them had maintained that the observance of the law was not necessary to salvation, yet that he had changed his views, and now held the same doctrine on the subject which they did. What they relied on in support of this opinion is unknown. It is certain, however, that Paul did, on some occasions, (Acts 21:21-26,) comply with the Jewish rites; and it is not improbable that they were acquainted with that fact, and interpreted it as proving that he had changed his sentiments on the subject. At all events, it would make their allegation plausible that Paul was now in favour of the observance of the Jewish rites, and that if he had ever taught differently, he must now have changed his opinion. Paul, therefore, begins the discussion by denying this in the most solemn manner. He affirms that the gospel which he had at first preached to them was the true gospel. It contained the great doctrines of

salvation. It was to be regarded by them as a fixed and settled point, that there was no other way of salvation but by the merits of the Saviour. No matter who taught anything else; no matter though it be alleged that he had changed his mind; no matter even though he should preach another gospel; and no matter though an angel from heaven should declare any other mode of salvation, it was to be held as a fixed and settled position, that the true gospel had been preached to them at first. We are not to suppose that Paul admitted that he had changed his mind, or that the inferences of the false teachers there were well-founded; but we are to understand this as affirming, in the most solemn manner, that the true gospel, and the only method of salvation, had been preached among them at first.

Or an angel from heaven. This is a very strong rhetorical mode of expression. It is not to be supposed that an angel from heaven would preach any other than the true gospel. But Paul wishes to put the strongest possible case, and to affirm, in the strongest manner possible, that the true gospel had been preached to them. The great system of salvation had been taught; and no other was to be admitted--no matter who preached it, no matter what the character or rank of the preacher, and no matter with what imposing claims he came. It follows from this, that the mere rank, character, talent, eloquence, or piety of a preacher, does not of necessity give his doctrine a claim to our belief, or prove that his gospel is true. Great talents maybe prostituted; and great sanctity of manner, and even holiness of character, may be in error; and no matter what may be the rank, and talents, and eloquence, and piety of the preacher, if he does not accord with the gospel which was first preached, he is to be held accursed.

Let him be accursed. Greek, αναθεμα, (anathema.) On the meaning of this word, 1Cor 12:3; 1Cor 16:22. It is not improperly here rendered "accursed," or "devoted to destruction." The object of Paul is to express the greatest possible abhorrence of any other doctrine than that which he

had himself preached. So great was his detestation of it, that, says Luther, "he casteth out very flames of fire; and his zeal is so fervent, that he beginneth almost to curse the angels." It follows from this,

(1.) that any other doctrine than that which is proclaimed in the Bible on the subject of justification, is to be rejected and treated with abhorrence, no matter what the.rank, talent, or eloquence of him who defends it.

(2.) That we are not to patronize or countenance such preachers. No matter what their zeal, or their apparent sincerity, or their apparent sanctity, or their apparent success, or their real boldness in rebuking vice, we are to withdraw from them. "Cease, my son," said Solomon, "to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge," Prov 19:27. Especially are we to withdraw wholly from that instruction which goes to deny the great doctrines of salvation--that pure gospel which the Lord Jesus and the apostle taught. If Paul would regard even an angel as doomed to destruction, and as held accursed, should he preach any other doctrine, assuredly ice should not be found to lend our countenance to it, nor should we patronize it by attending on such a ministry. Who would desire to attend on the ministry of even an angel, if he was to be held accursed? How much less the ministry of a man preaching the same doctrine! It does not follow from this, however, that we are to treat others with severity of language, or with the language of cursing. They must answer to God. We are to withdraw from their teaching; we are to regard the doctrines with abhorrence; and we are not to lend our countenance to them. To their own Master they stand or fall; but what must be the doom of a teacher whom an inspired man has said should be regarded as "ACCURSED!" It may be added, how responsible is the ministerial office! How fearful the account which the ministers of religion must render! How much prayer, and study, and effort are needed that they may be able to understand the true gospel, and that they may not be led into error, or lead others into error!

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other
gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?
for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

By the question here, Paul means to say, that his great object was now to please God. He desired his favour rather than the favour of man. He acted with reference to his will. He derived his authority from him, and not from the sanhedrim or any earthly council. And the purpose of all this is to say, that he had not received his commission to preach from man, but had received it directly from God.

For if I yet pleased men. If I made it my aim to please men; if this was the regulating principle of my conduct. The word "yet" here ετι, has reference to his former purpose. It implies that this had once been his aim. But he says, if he had pursued that purpose to please men, if this had continued to be the aim of his life, he would not now have been a servant of Christ. He had been constrained to abandon that purpose, in order that he might be a servant of Christ; and the sentiment is, that in order that a man may become a Christian, it is necessary for him to abandon the purpose of pleasing men as the rule of his life. It may be implied also, that if in fact a man makes it his aim to please men, or if this is the purpose for which he lives and acts, and if he shapes his conduct with reference to that, he cannot be a Christian or a servant of Christ. A Christian must act from higher motives than those, and he who aims supremely at the favour of his fellow-men has full evidence that he is not a Christian. A friend of Christ must do his duty, and must regulate his conduct by the will of God, whether men are pleased with it or not. And it may be further implied, that the life and deportment of a sincere Christian will not please men. It is not that which they love. A holy, humble, spiritual life they do not love. It is true, indeed, that their consciences tell them that such a life is right; that they are often constrained to speak well of the life of Christians, and to commend it; it is true that they are constrained to respect a man who is a sincere Christian, and that they often repose confidence in such a man;

and it is true also that they often speak with respect of them when they are dead; but the life of an humble, devoted, and zealous Christian they do not love. It is contrary to their views of life. And especially if a Christian so lives and acts as to reprove them either by his words or by his life; or if a Christian makes his religion so prominent as to interfere with their pursuits or pleasures, they do not love it. It follows from this,

(1.) that a Christian is not to expect to please men. He must not be disappointed, therefore, if he does not. His Master did not please the world; and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.

(2.) A professing Christian, and especially a minister, should be alarmed when the world flatters and caresses him. He should fear either

(a) that he is not living as he ought to, and that sinners love him because he is so much like them, and keeps them in countenance; or

(b) that they mean to make him betray his religion and become conformed to them. It is a great point gained for the gay world, when it can, by its caresses and attentions, get a Christian to forsake a prayer-meeting for a party, or surrender his deep spirituality to engage in some political project. "Woe unto you," said the Redeemer, "when all men speak well of you," Lk 6:26.

(3.) One of the main differences between Christians and the world is, that others aim to please men; the Christian aims to please God. And this is a great difference.

(4.) It follows that if men would become Christians, they must cease to make it their object to please men. They must be willing to be met with contempt and a frown; they must be willing to be persecuted and despised; they must be willing to

lay aside all hope of the praise and the flattery of men, and be content with an honest effort to please God.

(5.) True Christians must differ from the world. Their aims, feelings, purposes must be unlike the world. They are to be a peculiar people; and they should be willing to be esteemed such. It does not follow, however, that a true Christian should not desire the good esteem of the world, or that he should be indifferent to an honourable reputation, (1Timm 3:7;) nor does it follow that a consistent Christian will not often command the respect of the world. In times of trial, the world will repose confidence in Christians; when any work of benevolence is to be done, the world will instinctively look to Christians; and notwithstanding, sinners will not love religion, yet they will secretly feel assured that some of the brightest ornaments of society are Christians, and that they have a claim to the confidence and esteem of their fellow-men.

Paul's Ministry of the True Gospel

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached
of me is not after man.
12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by
the revelation of Jesus Christ.
13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews'
religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of
God, and wasted it:
14 and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in
mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the
traditions of my fathers.
15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my
mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace,

He did not take time to deliberate whether he should or should not become a Christian. He made up his mind at once, and on the spot. He did not consult with any one; he did not ask advice of any one; he did not wait to be instructed by any one. He was convinced by the vision in an overpowering manner that Jesus

was the Messiah, and he yielded at once. The main idea is, that there was no delay, no consultation, no deferring it, that he might see and consult with his friends, or with the friends of Christianity. The object for which he dwells on this is to show that he did not receive his views of the gospel from man.He did not take time to deliberate whether he should or should not become a Christian. He made up his mind at once, and on the spot. He did not consult with any one; he did not ask advice of any one; he did not wait to be instructed by any one. He was convinced by the vision in an overpowering manner that Jesus was the Messiah, and he yielded at once. The main idea is, that there was no delay, no consultation, no deferring it, that he might see and consult with his friends, or with the friends of Christianity. The object for which he dwells on this is to show that he did not receive his views of the gospel from man.

Flesh and blood. Any human being: for so the phrase properly signifies. Mt 16:17. This does not mean here that Paul did not consult his own ease and happiness; that he was regardless of the sufferings which he might be called to endure; that he was willing to suffer, and was not careful to make provision for his own comforts which was true in itself; but that he did not lay the case before any man, or any body of men, for instruction or advice, he acted promptly and decisively, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, Acts 26:19 but resolved at once to obey. Many suppose that this passage means that Paul did not take counsel of the evil passions and suggestions of his own heart, or of the feelings which would have prompted him to lead a life of ambition, or a life under the influence of corrupt desires. But however true this was in fact, no such thing is intended here. It means simply that he did not take counsel of any human being, he resolved at once to follow the command of the Saviour, and at once to obey him. The passage shows,

(1.) that when the Lord Jesus calls us to follow him, we should promptly and decidedly obey.

(2.) We should not delay even to take counsel of earthly friends, or wait for human advice, or consult their wishes, but should at once resolve to follow the Lord Jesus. Most persons, when they are awakened to see their guilt, and their minds are impressed on the subject of religion, are prone to defer it; to resolve to think of it at some future time; or to engage in some other business before they become Christians; or, at least, they wish to finish what they have on hand before they yield to God. Had Paul pursued this course, he would probably never have become a Christian. It follows, therefore,

(3.) that when the Lord Jesus calls us, we should at once abandon any course of life, however pleasant, or any plan of ambition, however brilliant, or any scheme of gain, however promising, in order that we may follow him. What a brilliant career of ambition did Paul abandon! and how promptly and decidedly did he do it! tie did not pause or hesitate a moment; but, brilliant as were his prospects, he at once forsook all--paused in mid-career in his ambition--and, without consulting a human being, at once gave his heart to God. Such a course should be pursued by all. Such a promptness and decision will prepare one to become an eminent Christian, and to be eminently useful.

16 to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among
the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and
blood:

17 neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles
before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto
Damascus.

Neither went I up to Jerusalem. That is, I did not go there at once. I did not go to consult with the apostles there, or to be instructed by them in regard to the nature of the Christian religion. The design of this statement is to show that in no sense did he derive his commission from man.To them which were apostles before me.This implies that Paul then regarded himself to be an apostle. They were, he admits, apostles before

he was; but he felt also that he had original authority with them, and he did not go to them to receive instruction, or to derive his commission from them. Several of the apostles remained in Jerusalem for a considerable time after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, and it was regarded as the principal place of authority. See Acts 15. He did not go to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles after his visit to Arabia, but returned again to the place where he was converted, and preached there, showing that he had not derived his commission from the other apostles.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,
and abode with him fifteen days.
19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's
brother.
20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God,
I lie not.
21 Afterward I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;
22 and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which
were in Christ:
23 but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times
past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.
24 And they glorified God in me.

And they glorified God in me. They praised God on my account. They regarded me as a true convert and a sincere Christian; and they praised God that he had converted such a persecutor, and had made him a preacher of the gospel. The design for which this is mentioned is to show that though he was personally unknown to them, and had not derived his views of the gospel from them, yet that he had their entire confidence. They regarded him as a convert and an apostle, and they were disposed to praise God for his conversion. This fact would do much to conciliate the favour of the Galatians, by showing them that he had the confidence of the churches in the very-land where the gospel was first planted, and which was regarded as the source of ecclesiastical authority. In view of this we may remark,

(1.) that it is the duty of Christians kindly and affectionately to receive among their number those who have been converted from a career of persecution or of sin in any form. And it is always done by true Christians. It is easy to forgive a man who has been actively engaged in persecuting the church, or a man who has been profane, intemperate, dishonest, or licentious, if he becomes a true penitent, and confesses and forsakes his sins. No matter what his life has been; no matter how abandoned, sensual, or devilish; if he manifests true sorrow, and gives evidence of a change of heart, he is cordially received into any church, and welcomed as a fellow-labourer in the cause which he once destroyed. Here, at least, is one place where forgiveness is cordial and perfect. his former life is not remembered, except to praise God for his grace in recovering a sinner from such a course; the evils that he has done are forgotten; and he is henceforward regarded as entitled to all the privileges and immunities of a member of the household of faith. There is not on earth an infuriated persecutor or blasphemer who would not be cordially welcomed to any Christian church on the evidence of his repentance; not a man so debased and vile, that the most pure, and elevated, and learned, and wealthy Christians would not rejoice to sit down with him at the same communion table, on the evidence of his conversion to God.

(2.) We should "glorify" or praise God for all such instances of conversion. We should do it because

(a) of the abstraction of the talents of the persecutor from the cause of evil. Paul could have done, and would have done, immense service to the enemies of Christianity, if he had pursued the career which he had commenced. But when he was converted, all that bad influence ceased. So when an infidel or a profligate man is converted now.

(b) Because now his talents will be consecrated to a better service. They will be employed in the cause of truth and

salvation. All the power of the matured and educated talent will now be devoted to the interests of religion; and it is a fact for which we should thank God, that he often takes educated talent, and commanding influence, and an established reputation for ability, learning, and zeal, and devotes it to his own service.

(c) Because there will be a change of destiny; because the enemy of the Redeemer will now be saved. The moment when Saul of Tarsus was converted, was the moment which determined a change in his eternal destiny. Before, he was in the broad way to hell; henceforward he walked in the path of life and salvation. Thus we should always rejoice over a sinner returning from the error of his ways; and should praise God that he who was in danger of eternal ruin is now an heir of glory. Christians are not jealous in regard to the numbers who shall enter heaven. They feel that there is "room" for all; that the feast is ample for all; and they rejoice when any can be induced to come with them and partake of the happiness of heaven.

(3.) We may still glorify and praise God for the grace manifested in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. What does not the world owe to him! What do we not owe to him! No man did as much in establishing the Christian religion as he did; no one among the apostles was the means of converting and saving so many souls; no one has left so many and so valuable writings for the edification of the church. To him we owe the invaluable epistles--so full of truth, and eloquence, and promises, and consolations--on which we are commenting; and to him the church owes, under God, some of its most elevated and ennobling views of the nature of Christian doctrine and duty. After the lapse, therefore, of eighteen hundred years, we should not cease to glorify God for the conversion of this wonderful man; and should feel that we have cause of thankfulness that he changed the infuriated persecutor to a holy and devoted apostle.

(4.) Let us remember that God has the same power now. There is not a persecutor whom he could not convert with the same ease with which he changed Saul of Tarsus. There is not a vile and sensual man that he could not make pure; not a dishonest man that his grace could not make honest; not a blasphemer that he could not teach to venerate his name; not a lost and abandoned sinner that he cannot receive to himself. Let us, then, without ceasing cry unto him, that his grace may be continually manifested in reclaiming such sinners from the error of their ways, and bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, and to a consecration of their lives to his service.

Galatians-2

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also.

2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

But privately. Marg., severally. Gr., κατιδιαν . The phrase means, that he did it not in a public manner; not before a promiscuous assembly; not even before all the apostles collected together, but in a private manner to a few of the leaders and chief persons, he made a private explanation of his motives and views, that they might understand it before it became a matter of public discussion. The point on which Paul made this private explanation was not whether the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, for on that they had no doubt after the revelation to Peter, Acts 10; but whether the rites of the Jews were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. Paul explained his views and his practice on that point, which were, that he did not impose those rites on the Gentiles; that he taught that men might be justified without their observance; and that they were not necessary in order to salvation. The reasons why

he sought this private interview with the leading men in Jerusalem he has not stated; but we may suppose that they were something like the following:

(1.) The Jews in general had very strong attachment to their own customs, and this attachment was found in a high degree among those who were converted from among them to the Christian faith. They would be strongly excited, therefore, by the doctrine that those customs were not necessary to be observed.

(2.) If the matter were submitted to a promiscuous assembly of converts from Judaism, it could not fail to produce great excitement. They could not be made readily to understand the reasons why Paul acted in this manner; there would be no possibility in an excited assemblage to offer the explanations which might be desirable; and after every explanation which could be given in this manner, they might have been unable to understand all the circumstances of the case.

(3.) If a few of the principal men were made to understand it, Paul felt assured that their influence would be such as to prevent any great difficulty, he therefore sought an early opportunity to lay the case before them in private, and to secure their favour; and this course contributed to the happy issue of the whole affair. See Acts 15. There was indeed much disputation when the question came to be submitted to "the apostles and elders," Acts 15:7; many of the sect of the Pharisees in that assembly maintained that it was needful to teach the Gentiles that the law of Moses was to be kept, Acts 15:5; and no one can tell what would have been the issue of that discussion among the excitable minds of the converts from Judaism, had not Paul taken the precaution, as he here says, to have submitted the case in private to those who were of "reputation," and if Peter and James had not in this manner been satisfied, and had not submitted the views which they did, as recorded in Acts 15:7-21, and which terminated the whole

controversy. We may just remark here, that this fact furnishes an Horae Paulinae--though he has hot referred to this--of what he calls undesigned coincidences. The affair in Acts 15, and the course of the debate, looks very much as if Peter and James had had some conference with Paul in private, and had had an opportunity of understanding fully his views on the subject before the matter came before the "apostles and elders" in public, though no such private conference is there referred to by Luke. But on turning to the epistle to the Galatians, we find in fact that he had on one occasion before seen the same Peter and James, Gal 1:18,19; and that he had had a private interview with those "of reputation" on these very points, and particularly that James, Peter, and John had approved his course, and given to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, Gal 2:9. Thus understood, the case here referred to was one of the most consummate instances of prudence that occurred in the life of Paul; and from this case we may learn,

(1.) that when a difficulty is to be settled involving great principles, and embracing a great many points, it is better to seek-an opportunity of private explanation than to submit it to a promiscuous multitude or to public debate. It is not well to attempt to settle important points when the passions of a promiscuous assembly may be excited, and where prejudices are strong. It is better to do it by private explanations, when there is an opportunity coolly to ask questions and to state the facts just as they are.

(2.) The importance of securing the countenance of influential men in a popular assembly; of having men in the assembly who would understand the whole case. It was morally certain that if such men as Peter and James were made to understand the case, there would be little difficulty in arriving at an amicable adjustment of the difficulty.

(3.) Though this passage does not refer to preaching the gospel in general, since the gospel here submitted to the men of

reputation was the question referred to above, yet we may remark, that great prudence should be used in preaching; in stating truths that may excite prejudices, or when we have reason to apprehend prejudices; and that it is often best to preach the gospel to men of reputation κατιδιαν separately, or privately. In this way the truth can be made to bear on the conscience; it may be better adapted to the character of the individual; he may put himself less in a state of defence, and guard himself less against the proper influences of truth. And especially is this true in conversing with persons on the subject of religion. It should be if possible alone, or privately. Almost any man may be approached on the subject of religion if it be done when he is alone, when he is at leisure, and if it be done in a kind spirit. Almost any man will become irritated if you address him personally in a promiscuous assembly, or even with his family around him. I have never in more than one or two instances been unkindly treated when I have addressed an individual on the subject of religion, if he was alone; and though a minister should never shrink from stating the truth, and should never be afraid of man, however exalted his rank, or great his talents, or vast his wealth, yet he will probably meet with most success when he discourses privately to "them which are of reputation."

Lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. Lest the effects of my labours and journeys should be lost. Paul feared that if he did not take this method of laying the case before them privately, they would not understand it. Others might misrepresent him, or their prejudices might be excited; and when the ease came before the assembled apostles and elders, a decision might be adopted which would go to prove that he had been entirely wrong in his views, or which would lead those whom he had taught to believe that he was, and which would greatly hinder and embarrass him in his future movements. In order to prevent this, therefore, and to secure a just decision, and one which would not hinder his future usefulness, he had sought this private interview, and thus his object was gained.

He there communicated the gospel to them, which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately, &c. Here we may observe both the faithfulness and prudence of our great apostle.

(1.) His faithfulness in giving them a free and fair account of the doctrine which he had all along preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach--that of pure Christianity, free from all mixtures of Judaism. This he knew was a doctrine that would be ungrateful to many there, and yet he was not afraid to own it, but in a free and friendly manner lays it open before them and leaves them to judge whether or no it was not the true gospel of Christ. And yet,

(2.) He uses prudence and caution herein, for fear of giving offence. He chooses rather to do it in a more private than in a public way, and to those that were of reputation, that is, to the apostles themselves, or to the chief among the Jewish Christians, rather than more openly and promiscuously to all, because, when he came to Jerusalem, there were multitudes that believed, and yet continued zealous for the law, Ac 21:20. And the reason of this his caution was lest he should run, or had run, in vain, lest he should stir up opposition against himself and thereby either the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed; for nothing more hinders the progress of the gospel than differences of opinion about the doctrines of it, especially when they occasion quarrels and contentions among the professors of it, as they too usually do. It was enough to his purpose to have his doctrine owned by those who were of greatest authority, whether it was approved by others or not. And therefore, to avoid offence, he judges it safest to communicate it privately to them, and not in public to the whole church. This conduct of the apostle may teach all, and especially ministers, how much need they have of prudence, and how careful they should be to use it upon all occasions, as far as is consistent with their faithfulness.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

But neither Titus, who was with me. Paul introduces this case of Titus undoubtedly to show that circumcision was not necessary to salvation. It was a case just in point, lie had gone up to Jerusalem with express reference to this question, here was a man whom he had admitted to the Christian church without circumcising him. He claimed that he had a right to do so; and that circumcision was not necessary in order to salvation. If it were necessary, it would have been proper that Titus should have been compelled to submit to it. But Paul says this was not demanded; or if demanded by any, the point was yielded, and he was not compelled to be circumcised. It is to be remembered that this was at Jerusalem; that it was a case submitted to the apostles there; and that consequently the determination of this case settled the whole controversy about the obligation of the Mosaic laws on the Gentile converts. It is quite evident from the whole statement here, that Paul did not intend that Titus should be circumcised; that he maintained that it was not necessary; and that he resisted it when it was demanded, Gal 2:4,5. Yet on another occasion he himself performed the act of circumcision on Timothy, Acts 16:3. But there is no inconsistency in his conduct. In the case of Titus it was demanded as a matter of right and as obligatory on him, and he resisted the principle as dangerous. In the case of Timothy, it was a voluntary compliance on his part with the usual customs of the Jews, where it was not pressed as a matter of obligation, and where it would not be understood as indispensable to salvation. No danger would follow from compliance with the custom, and it might do much to conciliate the favour of the Jews, and he therefore submitted to it. Paul would not have hesitated to have circumcised Titus in the same circumstances in which it was done to Timothy; but the circumstances were different; and when it was insisted on as a matter of principle and of obligation, it became a matter of principle and of obligation with him to oppose it.

Being a Greek. Born of Gentile parents, of course he had not been circumcised. Probably both his parents were Greeks. The case with Timothy was somewhat different. His mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek, Acts 16:3.

4 and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who
came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ
Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

And that because of false brethren. Who these false brethren were is not certainly known; nor is it known whether he refers to those who were at Jerusalem, or to those who were at Antioch. It is probable that he refers to Judaizing Christians, or persons who claimed to be Christians and to have been converted from Judaism. Whether they were dissemblers and hypocrites, or whether they wore so imperfectly acquainted with Christianity, and so obstinate, opinionated, and perverse, though really in some respects good men, that they were conscientious in this, it is not easy to determine. It is clear, however, that they opposed the apostle Paul; that they regarded him as teaching dangerous doctrines; that they perverted and misstated his views; and that they claimed to have clearer views of the nature of the true religion than he had. Such adversaries he met everywhere, 2Cor 11:26; and it required all his tact and skill to meet their plausible representations. It is evident here that Paul is assigning a reason for something which he had done, and that reason was to counteract the influence of the "false brethren" in the case. But what is the thing concerning which he assigns a reason? It is commonly supposed to have been on account of the fact that he did not submit to the circumcision of Titus, and that he means to say that he resisted that in order to counteract their influence, and defeat their designs.

In this way he could more easily counteract the influence of the false brethren, he could make a full statement of his doctrines, he could meet their inquiries, and anticipate the objections of his enemies, he could thus secure the influence of the leading apostles in his favour, and effectually prevent all the efforts of

the false brethren to impose the Jewish rites on Gentile converts.

Unawares brought in. The word rendered "unawares" παρεισακτους is derived from a verb meaning to lead in by the side of others, to introduce along with others; and then to lead or bring in by stealth, to smuggle in.--Robinson, Lex. The verb occurs nowhere in the New Testament but in 2Pet 2:1, where it is applied to heresies, and is rendered, "who privily shall bring in." Here it refers probably to men who had been artfully introduced into the ministry, who made pretensions to piety, but who were either strangers to it, or who were greatly ignorant of the true nature of the Christian system; and who were disposed to take every advantage, and to impose on others the observance of the peculiar rites of the Mosaic economy. Into what they were brought, the apostle does not say. It may have been that they had been introduced into the ministry in this manner, (Doddridge;) or it may be that they were introduced into the "assembly" where the apostles were collected to deliberate on the subject.--Chandler. I think it probable that Paul refers to the occurrences in Jerusalem, and that these false brethren had been introduced from Antioch or some other place where Paul had been preaching, or that they were persons whom his adversaries had introduced to demand that Titus should be circumcised, under the plausible pretence that the laws of Moses required it, but really in order that there might be such proof as they desired that this rite was to be imposed on the Gentile converts. If Paul was compelled to submit to this, if they could carry this point, it would be just such an instance as they needed, and would settle the whole inquiry, and prove that the Mosaic laws were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. This was the reason why Paul so strenuously opposed it.

To spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus. In the practice of the Christian religion. The liberty referred to was, doubtless, the liberty from the painful, expensive, and onerous rites of the Jewish religion. See Gal 5:1. Their object in spying

out the liberty which Paul and others had, was, undoubtedly, to be witnesses of the fact that they did not observe the peculiar rites of the Mosaic system; to make report of it; to insist on their complying with those customs, and thus to secure the imposition of those rites On the Gentile converts. Their first object was to satisfy themselves of the fact that Paul did not insist on the observance of their customs; and then to secure, by the authority of the apostles, an injunction or order that Titus should be circumcised, and that Paul and the converts made under his ministry should be required to comply with those laws.

5 to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour. We did not submit to this at all. We did not yield even for the shortest tune. We did not waver in our opposition to their demands, or in the slightest degree become subject to their wishes. We steadily opposed their claims, in order that the great principle might be for ever settled that the laws of Moses were not to be imposed as obligatory on the Gentile converts.He felt that a great principle was involved; and though on all proper occasions he was willing to yield and to become all things to all men, yet here he did not court them, or temporize with them in the least. The phrase "by subjection" here means, that he did not suffer himself to be compelled to yield. The phrase "for an hour" is equivalent to the shortest period of time. He did not waver or yield at all.

they came only to spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus, or to see whether Paul would stand up in defence of that freedom from the ceremonial law which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the Christian religion. Their design herein was to bring them into bondage, which they would have effected could they have gained the point they aimed at; for, had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus, they would easily have imposed circumcision upon other Gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the

law of Moses. But Paul, seeing their design, would by no means yield to them; he would not give place by subjection, no, not for an hour, not in this one single instance; and the reason of it was that the truth of the gospel might continue with them--that the Gentile Christians, and particularly the Galatians, might have it preserved to them pure and entire, and not corrupted with the mixtures of Judaism, as it would have been had he yielded in this matter. Circumcision was at that time a thing indifferent, and what in some cases might be complied with without sin; and accordingly we find even Paul himself sometimes giving way to it, as in the case of Timothy, Ac 16:3. But when it is insisted on as necessary, and his consenting to it, though only in a single instance, is likely to be improved as giving countenance to such an imposition, he has too great a concern for the purity and liberty of the gospel, to submit to it; he would not yield to those who were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, which conduct of his may give us occasion to observe that what under some circumstances may lawfully be complied with, yet, when that cannot be done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty, of the gospel, it ought to be refused.

6 But of those who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference added nothing to me:

There is an apparent harshness in our common translation, which is unnecessary.Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me. Tindal renders this, "What they were in time passed, it maketh no matter to me." The idea seems to be this: Paul means to say, that whatever was their real rank and standing, it did not in the least affect his authority as an apostle, or his argument. While he rejoiced in their concurrence, and while he sought their approbation, yet he did not admit for a moment that he was inferior to them as an apostle, or dependent on them for the justness of his views. What they were, or what they might be thought to be, was immaterial to his claims as an apostle, and immaterial to the authority of his own views as an

apostle. He had derived his gospel from the Lord Jesus; and he had the fullest assurance that his views were just. Paul makes this remark evidently in keeping with all that he had said, that he did not regard himself as in any manner dependent on them for his authority. He did not treat them with disrespect; but he did not regard them as having a right to claim an authority over him.

God accepteth no man's person. Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11. This is a general truth, that God is not influenced in his judgment by a regard to the rank, or wealth, or external condition of any one. Its particular meaning here is, that the authority of the apostles was not to be measured, by their external rank, or by the measure of reputation which they had among men. If, therefore, it were to be admitted that he himself was not in circumstances of so much external honour as the other apostles, or that they were esteemed to be of more elevated rank than he was, still he did not admit that this gave them a claim to any higher authority. God was not influenced in his judgment by any such consideration; and Paul therefore claimed that all the apostles were in fact on a level in regard to their authority. In conference. When I conferred with them, Gal 2:2. They did not then impose on me any new obligations; they did not communicate anything to me of which I was before ignorant.

7 but contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter;

It is evidently not meant here that Paul was to preach only to the Gentiles and Peter only to the Jews, for Paul often preached in the synagogues of the Jews, and Peter was the first who preached to a Gentile, Acts 10; but it is meant that it was the main business of Paul to preach to the Gentiles, or that this was especially intrusted to him.

8 (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles;)

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me

and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go*
unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

Paul felt that if he had the countenance of these men, it would be an important proof to the churches of Galatia that he had a right to regard himself as an apostle. Their countenance was expressed in the most full and decisive manner.

That we should go unto the heathen. To preach the gospel, and to establish churches. In this way the whole matter was settled, and settled as Paul desired it to be. A delightful harmony was produced between Paul and the apostles at Jerusalem; and the result showed the wisdom of the course which he had adopted. There had been no harsh contention or strife. No jealousies had been suffered to arise. Paul had sought an opportunity of a full statement of his views to them in private, Gal 2:2, and they had been entirely satisfied that God had called him and Barnabas to the work of making known the gospel among the heathen. Instead of being jealous at their success, they had rejoiced in it; and instead of throwing any obstacle in their way, they cordially gave them the right hand. How easy would it be always to prevent jealousies and strifes in the same way! If there was, on the one hand, the same readiness for a full and frank explanation, and if, on the other, the same freedom from envy at remarkable success, how many strifes that have disgraced the church might have been avoided! The true way to avoid strife is just that which is here proposed. Let there be on both sides perfect frankness; let there be a willingness to explain and state things just as they are; and let there be a disposition to rejoice in the talents, and zeal, and success of others, even though it should far outstrip our own, and contention in the church would cease, and every devoted and successful minister of the gospel would receive the right hand of fellowship from all--however venerable by age or authority--who love the cause of true religion.

10 Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the
same which I also was forward to do.

Only they would that we should remember the poor. That is, as I suppose, the poor Christians in Judea. It can hardly be supposed that it would be necessary to make this an express stipulation in regard to the converts from among the Gentiles, and it would not have been very pertinent to the case before them to have done so. The object was, to bind together the Christians from among the heathen, and from among the Jews, and to prevent alienation and unkind feeling. It might have been alleged that Paul was disposed to forget his own countrymen altogether; that he regarded himself as so entirely the apostle of the Gentiles that he would become wholly alienated frown those who were his "kinsmen according to the flesh," and thus it might be apprehended that unpleasant feelings would be engendered among those who had been converted from among the Jews. Now nothing could be better adapted to allay this than for him to pledge himself to feel a deep interest in the poor saints among the Jewish converts; to remember them in his prayers; and to endeavour to secure contributions for their wants. Thus he would show that he was not alienated from his countrymen; and thus the whole church would be united in the closest bonds. It is probable that the Christians in Judea were at that time suffering the ills of poverty, arising either from some public persecution, or from the fact that they were subject to the displeasure of their countrymen. All who know the peculiar feelings of the Jews at that time in regard to Christians, must see at once that many of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth would be subjected to great inconveniences on account of their attachment to him. Many a wife might be disowned by her husband; many a child disinherited by a parent; many a man might be thrown out of employment by the fact that others would not countenance him; and hence many of the Christians would be poor. It became, therefore, an object of special importance to provide for them; and hence this is so often referred to in the New Testament. In addition to this, the church in Judea was afflicted with famine. Comp. Acts 11:30, Rom 15:25-27, 1Cor 16:1,2, 2Cor 8:1-7.

The same which I also was forward to do. See the passages just referred to. Paul interested himself much in the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and in this way he furnished the fullest evidence that he was not alienated from them, but that he felt the deepest interest in those who were his kindred. One of the proper ways of securing union in the church is to have the poor with them, and depending on them for support; and hence every church has some poor persons as one of the bonds of union. The best way to unite all Christians, and to prevent alienation, and jealousy, and strife, is to have a great common object of charity, in which all are interested, and to which all may contribute. Such a common object for all Christians in a sinful world. All who bear the Christian name may unite in promoting its salvation, and nothing would promote union in the now divided and distracted church of Christ like a deep and common interest in the salvation of all mankind.

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

But when Peter was come to Antioch. On the situation of Antioch, Acts 11:19. The design for which Paul introduces this statement here is evident. It is to show that he regarded himself as on a level with the chief apostles, and that he did not acknowledge his inferiority to any of them. Peter was the eldest, and probably the most honoured of the apostles. Yet Paul says that he did not hesitate to resist him in a case where Peter was manifestly wrong, and thus showed that he was an apostle of the same standing as the others.

I withstood him to the face. I openly opposed him, and reproved him. Paul thus showed that he was equal with Peter in his apostolical authority and dignity. The instance before us is one of faithful public reproof; and every circumstance in it is worthy of special attention, as it furnishes a most important illustration of the manner in which such reproof should be conducted. The

first thing to be noted is, that it was done openly, and with candour. It was reproof addressed to the offender himself. Paul did not go to others and whisper his suspicions; he did not seek to undermine the influence and authority of another by slander; he did not calumniate him, and then justify himself on the ground that what he had said was no more than true: he went to him at once, and he frankly stated his views, and reproved him in a case where he was manifestly wrong. This too was a case so public and well known, that Paul made his remarks before the church, Gal 2:14, because the church was interested in it, and because the conduct of Peter led the church into error.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

From James. Gal 1:19. Whether they were sent by James, or whether they came of their own accord, is unknown. It is evident only that they had been intimate with James at Jerusalem, and they doubtless pleaded his authority. James had nothing to do with the course which they pursued; but the sense of the whole passage is, that James was a leading man at Jerusalem, and that the rites of Moses were observed there. When they came down to Antioch, they of course observed those rites, and insisted that others should do it also. It is very evident that at Jerusalem the peculiar rites of the Jews were observed for a long time by those who became Christian converts. They would not at once cease to observe them, and thus needlessly shock the prejudices of their countrymen. Acts 21:21 also Acts 21:22-25.

He did eat with the Gentiles. Peter had been taught that in the remarkable vision which he saw, as recorded in Acts 10. He had learned that God designed to break down the wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles, and he familiarly associated with them, and partook with them of their food. He evidently disregarded the peculiar laws of the Jews about meats and drinks, and partook of the common food which was in use among the Gentiles. Thus he showed his belief that all the race was henceforward to be regarded as on a level, and that the

peculiar institutions of the Jews were not to be considered as binding, or to be imposed on others.

But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself. He withdrew from the Gentiles, and probably from the Gentile converts to Christianity. The reason why he did this is stated. He feared those who were of the circumcision, or who had been Jews. Whether they demanded this of him; whether they encountered him in debate; or whether he silently separated himself from the Gentiles without their having said anything to him, is unknown. But he feared the effect of their opposition; he feared their reproaches; he feared the report which would be made to those at Jerusalem; and perhaps he apprehended that a tumult would be excited, and a persecution commenced at Antioch by the Jews who resided there. This is a melancholy illustration of Peter's characteristic trait of mind. We see in this act the same Peter who trembled when he began to sink in the waves; the same Peter who denied his Lord. Bold, ardent, zealous, and forward, he was at the same time timid and often irresolute; and he often had occasion for the deepest humility, and the most poignant regrets at the errors of his course. No one can read his history without loving his ardent and sincere attachment to his Master; and yet no one can read it without a tear of regret that he was left thus to do injury to his cause. No man loved the Saviour more sincerely than he did, yet his constitutional timidity and irresoluteness of character often led him to courses of life fitted deeply to wound his cause.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that

Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away, etc. Concerning Barnabas, Acts 4:36. Barnabas was the intimate friend of Paul. He had been associated with him in very important labours; and the fact, therefore, that the conduct of Peter was exciting so unhappy an influence as even to lead so worthy and good a man as he was into hypocrisy and error, made it the more proper that Paul should publicly notice and reprove the conduct of Peter. It

could not but be a painful duty, but the welfare of the church and the cause of religion demanded it, and Paul did not shrink from what was so obvious a duty.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

I said unto Peter before them all. That is, probably, before all the church, or certainly before all. who had offended with him in the case. Had this been a private affair, Paul would doubtless have sought a private interview with Peter, and would have remonstrated with him in private on the subject. But it was public. It was a case where many were involved, and where the interests of the church were at stake. It was a case where it was very important to establish some fixed and just principles, and he therefore took occasion to remonstrate with him in public on the subject. This might have been at the close of public worship; or it may have been that the subject came up for debate in some of their public meetings, whether the rites of the Jews were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. This was a question which agitated all the churches where the Jewish and Gentile converts were intermingled; and it would not be strange that it should be the subject of public debate at Antioch. The fact that Paul reproved Peter before "them all," proves,

(1.) that he regarded himself, and was so regarded by the church, as on an equality with Peter, and as having equal authority with him.

(2.) That public reproof is right when an offence has been public, and when the church at large is interested, or is in danger of being led into error. Comp. 1Timm 5:20, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

(3.) That it is a duty to reprove those who err. It is a painful duty, and one much neglected; still it is a duty often enjoined in the

Scriptures, and one that is of the deepest importance to the church. He does a favour to another man who, in a kind spirit, admonishes him of his error, and reclaims him from a course of sin. He does another the deepest injury, who suffers sin unrebuked to lie upon him, and who sees him injuring himself and others, and who is at no pains to admonish him for his faults.

(4.) If it is the duty of one Christian to admonish another who is an offender, and to do it in a kind spirit, it is the duty of him who has offended to receive the admonition in a kind spirit and with thankfulness. Excitable as Peter was by. nature, yet there is no evidence that he became angry here, or that he did not receive the admonition of his brother Paul with perfect good temper, and with an acknowledgment that Paul was right and that he was wrong. Indeed, the case was so plain--as it usually is, if men would be honest--that he seems to have felt that it was right, and to have received the rebuke as became a Christian. Peter, unhappily, was accustomed to rebukes; and he was at heart too good a man to be offended when he was admonished that he had done wrong. A good man is willing to be reproved when he has erred, and it is usually proof that there is much that is wrong when we become excited and irritable if another admonishes us of our faults. It may be added here, that nothing should be inferred from this in regard to the inspiration or apostolic authority of Peter. The fault was not that he taught error of doctrine, but that he sinned in conduct. Inspiration, though it kept the apostles from teaching error, did not keep them necessarily from sin. A man may always teach the truth, and yet be far from perfection in practice. The case here proves that Peter was not perfect, a fact proved by his whole life; it proves that he was sometimes timid, and even, for a period, time-serving; but it does not prove that what he wrote for our guidance was false and erroneous.

15 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but
by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus
Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and

not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

I. Justification is properly a word applicable to courts of justice, but is used in a similar sense in common conversation among men. An illustration will show its nature. A man is charged, e.g., with an act of trespass on his neighbour's property. Now there are two ways which he may take to justify himself, or to meet the charge, so as to be regarded and treated as innocent. He may

(a) either deny that he performed the act charged on him, or he may

(b) admit that the deed was done, and set up as a defence that he had a right to do it. In either case, if the point be made out, he will be just or innocent in the sight of the law. The law will have nothing against him, and he will be regarded and treated in the premises as an innocent man; or he has justified himself in regard to the charge brought against him.

II. Charges of a very serious nature are brought against man by his Maker. He is charged with violating the law of God; with a want of love to his Maker; with a corrupt, proud, sensual heart; with being entirely alienated from God by wicked works; in one word, with being entirely depraved. This charge extends to all men; and to the entire life of every unrenewed man. It is not a charge merely affecting the external conduct, not merely affecting the heart; it is a charge of entire alienation from God--a charge, in short, of total depravity. See, especially, Rom 1, 2, 3. That this charge is a very serious one, no one can doubt. That it deeply affects the human character and standing, is as clear. It is a charge brought in the Bible; and God appeals in proof of it to the history of the world, to every man's conscience, and to the life of every one who has lived; and on these facts, and on his own power in searching the hearts, and in knowing what is in man, he rests the proofs of the charge. III. It is impossible for man to vindicate himself from this charge. He can neither show that the things charged have not been committed, nor that,

having been committed, he had a right to do them. He cannot prove that God is not right in all the charges which he has made against him in his word; and he cannot prove that it was right for him to do as he has done. The charges against him are facts which are undeniable, and the facts are such as cannot be vindicated. But if he can do neither of these things, then he cannot be justified by the law. The law will not acquit him. It holds him guilty. It condemns him. No argument which he can use will show that he is right, and that God is wrong. No works that he can perform will be any compensation for what he has already done. No denial of the existence of the facts charged will alter the case; and he must stand condemned by the law of God. In the legal sense he cannot be justified; and justification, if it ever exist at all, must be in a mode that is a departure from the regular operation of law, and in a mode which the law did not contemplate, for no law makes any provision for the pardon of those who violate it. It must be by some system which is distinct from the law, and in which man may be justified on different principles than those which the law contemplates. IV. This other system of justification is that which is revealed in the gospel by the faith of the Lord Jesus. It does NOT consist in either of the following things:

(1.) It is not a system or plan where the Lord Jesus takes the part of the sinner against the law or against God. He did not come to show that the sinner was right, and that God was wrong. He admitted most fully, and endeavoured constantly to show, that God was right, and that the sinner was wrong; nor can an instance be referred to where the Saviour took the part of the sinner against God, in any such sense that he endeavoured to show that the sinner had not done the things charged on him, or that he had a right to do them.

(2.) It is not that we are either innocent, or are declared to be innocent. God justifies the "ungodly," Rom 4:5. We are not innocent; we never have been; we never shall be; and it is not the design of the scheme to declare any such untruth as that we

are not personally undeserving. It will be always true that the justified sinner has no claims to the mercy and favour of God.

(3.) It is not that we cease to be undeserving personally. He that is justified by faith, and that goes to heaven, will go there admitting that he deserves eternal death, and that he is saved wholly by favour and not by desert.

(4.) It is not a declaration on the part of God that we have wrought out salvation, or that we have any claim for what the Lord Jesus has done. Such a declaration would not be true, and would not be made.

(5.) It is not that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is transferred to his people. Moral character cannot be transferred. It adheres to the moral agent as much as colour does to the rays of light which cause it. It is not true that we died for sin, and it cannot be so reckoned or imputed. It is not true that we have any merit, or any claim, and it cannot be so reckoned or imputed. All the imputations of God are according to truth; and he will always reckon us to be personally undeserving and sinful. But if justification be none of these things, it may be asked, what is it? I answer, It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat those sinners who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as if they had not sinned, on the ground of the merits of the Saviour. It is not mere pardon. The main difference between pardon and justification respects the sinner contemplated in regard to his past conduct, and to God's future dealings with him. Pardon is a free forgiveness of past offences. It has reference to those sins as forgiven and blotted out. It is an act of remission on the part of God. Justification has respect to the law, and to God's future dealings with the sinner. It is an act by which God determines to treat him hereafter as a righteous man, or as if he had not sinned. The ground or reason of this is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ; merit such that we can plead it as if it were our own. The rationale of it is, that the Lord Jesus has accomplished by his death the same happy effects in regard to the law and the

government of God, which would be accomplished by the death of the sinner himself. In other words, nothing would be gained to the universe by the everlasting punishment of the offender himself, which will not be secured by his salvation on the ground of the death of the Lord Jesus. He has taken our place, and died in our stead; and he has met the descending stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own head if he had not interposed, Isa 53:1 and following, and now the great interests of justice will be as firmly secured if we are saved, as they would be if we were lost. The law has been fully obeyed by one who came to save us, and as much honour has been done to it by his obedience as could have been by our own; that is, it as much shows that the law is worthy of obedience, to have it perfectly obeyed by the Lord Jesus, as it would if it were obeyed by us. It as much shows that the law of a sovereign is worthy of obedience, to have it obeyed by an only son, and an heir to the crown, as it does to have it obeyed by his subjects. And it has as much shown the evil of the violation of the law to have the Lord Jesus suffer death on the cross, as it would if the guilty had died themselves. If transgression whelm the innocent in calamity; if it extends to those who are perfectly guiltless, and inflicts pain and woe on them, it is as certainly an expression of the evil of transgression as if the guilty themselves suffer. And an impression as deep has been made of the evil of sin by the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in our stead, as if we had suffered ourselves. He endured on the cross as intense agony as we can conceive it possible for a sinner ever to endure; and the dignity of the Person who suffered--THE INCARNATE GOD--is more than an equivalent for the more lengthened sorrows which the penalty of the law exacts in hell. Besides, from the very dignity of the Sufferer in our place, an impression has gone abroad on the universe more deep and important than would have been by the sufferings of the individual himself in the world of woe. The sinner who is lost will be unknown to other worlds. His name may be unheard beyond the gates of the prison of despair. The impression which will be made on distant worlds by his individual sufferings will be as a part of the aggregate of woe, and his individual sorrows may make no impression on distant

worlds. But not so with Him who took our place, He stood in the centre of the universe. The sun grew dark, and the dead arose, and angels gazed upon the scene; and from his cross an impression went abroad to the farthest part of the universe, showing the tremendous effects of the violation of law, when not one soul could be saved from its penalty without such sorrows of the Son of God. In virtue of all this, the offender, by believing on him, may be treated as if he had not sinned; and this constitutes justification. God admits him to favour as if he had himself obeyed the law, or borne its penalty, since as many good results will now follow from his salvation as could be derived from his punishment; and since all the additional happy results will follow which can be derived from the exercise of pardoning mercy. The character of God is thus revealed. His mercy is shown. His determination to maintain his law is evinced. The truth is maintained; and yet he shows the fulness of his mercy, and the richness of his benevolence.

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

These words are generally looked upon as an objection, which the adversaries of the doctrine of justification by faith, have been always ready to make against it, namely, "That if persons be not justified by their obedience to the law, then they may live as they list in the breach and violation of the law, and freely indulge themselves in sin, and consequently make Christ the minister of sin, as if he had relaxed the duty." The apostle rejects this inference and deduction with the greatest abhorrence and detestation, saying, God forbid.

Hence note, that it is no new prejudice, though a very unjust one, against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by works, that it opens a door to licentiousness, and makes Christ the minister of sin.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

For if I build again the things which I destroyed. Paul here uses the first person; but he evidently intends it as a general proposition, and means that if any one does it he becomes a transgressor. The sense is, that if a man, having removed or destroyed that which was evil, again introduces it or establishes it, he does wrong, and is a transgressor of the law of God. The particular application here, as it seems to me, is to the subject of circumcision, and the other rites of the Mosaic law. They had been virtually abolished by the coming of the Redeemer, and by the doctrine of justification by faith. It had been seen that there was no necessity for their observance, and of that Peter and the others had been fully aware. Yet they were lending their influence again to establish them, or to "build" them up again. They complied with them, and they insisted on the necessity of their observance. Their conduct, therefore, was that of building up again that which had once been destroyed--destroyed by the ministry, and toils, and death of the Lord Jesus, and by the fair influence of his gospel. To rebuild that again, to re-establish those customs, was wrong, and now involved the guilt of a transgression of the law of God.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

For I through the law. On this passage the commentators are by no means agreed. It is agreed that in the phrase "am dead to the law," the law of Moses is referred to, and that the meaning is, that Paul had become dead to that as a ground or means of justification, lie acted as though it were not; or it ceased to have influence over him. A dead man is insensible to all around him. He hears nothing; sees nothing; and nothing affects him. So when we are said to be dead to anything, the meaning is, that it does not have an influence over us. In this sense Paul was dead to the law of Moses. He ceased to observe it as a ground of justification. It ceased, to be the grand aim and purpose of his life, as it had been formerly, to obey it. He had higher purposes than that, and truly lived to God. Rom 6:2. But on the meaning of the phrase "through the law," διανομου there has been a great variety of opinion. Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, and some others, suppose that he means the Christian religion; and that the

meaning is, "By one law, or doctrine, I am dead to another;" that is, the Christian doctrine has caused me to cast aside the Mosaic religion. Doddridge, Clarke, Chandler, and most others, however, suppose that he here refers to the law of Moses, and that the meaning is, that by contemplating the true character of the law of Moses itself; by considering its nature and design; by understanding the extent of its requisitions, he had become dead to it; that is, he had laid aside all expectations of being justified by it. This seems to me to be the correct interpretation. Paul had formerly expected to be justified by the law. He had endeavoured to obey it. It had been the object of his life to comply with all its requisitions, in order to be saved by it, Php 3:4-6. But all this while he had not fully understood its nature; and when he was made fully to feel and comprehend its spiritual requirements, then all his hopes of justification by it died, and he became dead to it. See this sentiment more fully explained Rom 7:9. That I might live unto God. That I might be truly alive, and might be found engaged in his service. He was dead to the law, but not to everything. He had not become literally inactive and insensible to all things, like a dead man, but he had become truly sensible to the commands and appeals of God, and had consecrated himself to his service. Rom 6:11.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Gal 2:20 Verse 20. I am crucified with Christ. In the previous verse, Paul had said that he was dead. In this verse he states what he meant by it, and shows that he did not wish to be understood as saying that he was inactive, or that he was literally insensible to the appeals made to him by other beings and objects. In respect to one thing he was dead; to all that was truly great and noble he was alive. To understand the remarkable phrase, "I am crucified with Christ," we may remark,

(1.) that this was the way in which Christ was put to death. He suffered on a cross, and thus became literally dead.

(2.) In a sense similar to this, Paul became dead to the law, to the world, and to sin. The Redeemer, by the death of the cross, became insensible to all surrounding objects, as the dead always are. He ceased to see and hear, and was as though they were not. Hie was laid in the cold grave, and they did not affect or influence him. So Paul says that he became insensible to the law as a means of justification; to the world; to ambition and the love of money; to the pride and pomp of life; and to the dominion of evil and hateful passions. They lost their power over him; they ceased to influence him.

(3.) This was with Christ, or by Christ. It cannot mean literally that he was put to death with him, for that is not true; but it means that the effect of the death of Christ on the cross was to make him dead to these things, in like manner as he, when he died, became insensible to the things of this busy world. This may include the following things:

(a) There was an intimate union between Christ and his people; so that what affected him, affected them. See Jn 15:5,6.

(b) The death of the Redeemer on the cross involved as a consequence the death of his people to the world and to sin. See Gal 5:24, 6:14. It was like a blow at the root of a vine or a tree, which would affect every branch and tendril; or like a blow at the head, which affects every member of the body.

(c) Paul felt identified with the Lord Jesus; and he was willing to share in all the ignominy and contempt which was connected with the idea of the crucifixion. He was willing to regard himself as one with the Redeemer. If there was disgrace attached to the manner in which he died, he was willing to share it with him. He regarded it as a matter to be greatly desired to be made just like Christ in all things, and even in the manner of his death. This idea he has more fully expressed in Php 3:10, "That I may know him, [that is, I desire earnestly to know him,] and the power of

his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." See also Col 1:24, 1Pet 4:13. Nevertheless I live. This expression is added, as in Gal 2:19, to prevent the possibility of mistake. Paul, though he was crucified with Christ, did not wish to be understood that he felt himself to be dead. He was not inactive; not insensible, as the dead are, to the appeals which are made from God, or to the great objects which ought to interest an immortal mind. He was still actively employed, and the more so from the fact that he was crucified with Christ. The object of all such expressions as this is to show that it was no design of the gospel to make men inactive, or to annihilate their energies. It was not to cause men to do nothing. It was not to paralyze their powers, or stifle their own efforts. Paul therefore says, "I am not dead. I am truly alive; and I live a better life than I did before." Paul was as active after conversion as he was before. Before, he was engaged in persecution; now, he devoted his great talents with as much energy, and with as untiring zeal, to the cause of the great Redeemer. Indeed, the whole narrative would lead us to suppose that he was more active and zealous after his conversion than he was before. The effect of religion is not to make one dead in regard to the putting forth of the energies of the soul. True religion never made one lazy man; it has converted many a man of indolence, and effeminacy, and self-indulgence, to a man actively engaged in doing good. If a professor of religion is less active in the service of God than he was in the service of the world--less laborious, and zealous, and ardent than he was before his supposed conversion--he ought to set it down as full proof that he is an utter stranger to true religion.

Yet not I. This also is designed to prevent misapprehension. In the previous clause he had said that he lived, or was actively engaged. But lest this should be misunderstood, and it should be inferred that he meant to say it was by his own energy or powers, he guards it, and says it was not at all from himself. It was by no native tendency; no power of his own; nothing that could be traced to himself, he assumed no credit for any zeal which he had shown in the true life. He was disposed to trace it all to

another. He had ample proof in his past experience that there was no tendency in himself to a life of true religion, and he therefore traced it all to another. Christ liveth in me. Christ was the source of all the life that he had. Of course this cannot be taken literally that Christ had a residence in the apostle; but it must mean that his grace resided in him; that his principles actuated him; and that he derived all his energy, and zeal, and life from his grace. The union between the Lord Jesus and the disciple was so close that it might be said the one lived in the other. So the juices of the vine are in each branch, and leaf, and tendril, and live in them and animate them; the vital energy of the brain is in each delicate nerve--no matter how small--that is found in any part of the human frame. Christ was in him, as it were, the vital principle. All his life and energy were derived from him. And the life which I now live in the flesh. As I now live on the earth, surrounded by the cares and anxieties of this life. I carry the life-giving principles of my religion to all my duties and all my trials. I live by the faith of the Son of God. By confidence in the Son of God, looking to him for strength, and trusting in his promises and in his grace.

Who loved me, etc. He felt under the highest obligation to him, from the fact that he had loved him, and given himself to the death of the cross in his behalf. The conviction of obligation on this account Paul often expresses. Rom 6:8, and Rom 6:9-11; Rom 8:35, and Rom 8:36-39; 2Cor 5:15. There is no higher sense of obligation than that which is felt towards the Saviour; and Paul felt himself bound, as we should, to live entirely to him who had redeemed us by his blood.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

I do not frustrate the grace of God. The word rendered "frustrate" αθετω means, properly, to displace, abrogate, abolish; then to make void, to render null, Mk 7:9, Lk 7:30, 1Cor 1:19. The phrase, "the grace of God," here refers to the favour of God manifested in the plan of salvation by the gospel, and is another name for the gospel. The sense is, that Paul would not take any measures, or pursue any course, that would render that vain or

inefficacious. Neither by his own life, by a course of conduct which would show that it had no influence over the heart and conduct, nor by the observance of Jewish rites and customs, would he do anything to render that inefficacious. The design is to show that he regarded it as a great principle, that the gospel was efficacious in renewing and saving man, and he would do nothing that would tend to pre, vent that impression on mankind. A life of sin, of open depravity and licentiousness, would do that. And, in like manner, a conformity to the rites of Moses, as a ground of justification, would tend to frustrate the grace of God, or to render the method of salvation solely by the Redeemer nugatory. This is to be regarded, therefore, as at the same time a reproof of Peter for complying with customs which tended to frustrate the plan of the gospel, and a declaration that he intended that his own course of life should be such as to confirm the plan, and show its efficacy in pardoning the sinner, and rendering him alive in the service of God.

For if righteousness come by the law. If justification can be secured by the observance of any law--ceremonial or moral--then there was no need of the death of Christ as an atonement. This is plain. If man by conformity to any law could be justified before God, what need was there of an atonement? The work would then have been wholly in his own power, and the merit would have been his. It follows from this, that man cannot be justified by his own morality, or his almsdeeds, or his forms of religion, or his honesty and integrity. If he can, he needs no Saviour--he can save himself. It follows, also, that when men depend on their own amiableness, and morality, and good works, they would feel no need of a Saviour; and this is the true reason why the mass of men reject the Lord Jesus. They suppose they do not deserve to be sent to hell. They have no deep sense of guilt. They confide in their own integrity, and feel that God ought to save them. Hence they feel no need of a Saviour; for why should a man in health employ a physician? And confiding in their own righteousness, they reject the grace of God, and despise the plan of justification through the Redeemer. To feel the need of a Saviour, it is necessary to feel that we are lost and

ruined sinners; that we have no merit on which we can rely; and that we are entirely dependent on the mercy of God for salvation. Thus feeling, we shall receive the salvation of the gospel with thankfulness and joy, and show that in regard to us Christ is not "dead in vain."

Galatians-3

The Spirit Received through Faith

1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Crucified among you? That is, represented among you as crucified. The words "among you," however, are wanting in many MSS., and obscure the sense. If they are to be retained, the meaning is, that the representations of the Lord Jesus, as crucified, had been as clear and impressive among them as if they had seen him with their own eyes. The argument is, that they had so clear a representation of the Lord Jesus, and of the design of his death, that it was strange that they had so soon been perverted from the belief of it. Had they seen the Saviour crucified; had they stood by the cross and witnessed his agony in death on account of sin, how could they doubt what was the design of his dying, and how could they be seduced from faith in his death, or be led to embrace any other method of justification? How could they now do it, when, although they had not seen him die, they had the fullest knowledge of the object for which he gave his precious life? The doctrine taught in this verse is, that a faithful exhibition of the sufferings and death of the Saviour ought to exert an influence over our minds and-hearts as if we had seen him die; and that they to whom such an exhibition has been made should avoid being led astray by the blandishments of false doctrines, and by the arts of man. Had we seen the Saviour expire, we could never have forgotten the scene. Let us endeavour to cherish a remembrance of his sufferings and death as if we had seen him die.

2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the
works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?
3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now
made perfect by the flesh?

By the flesh. By the observance of the carnal rites of the Jews--- for so the word here evidently means. This has not been an uncommon thing. Many have been professedly converted by the Spirit, and have soon fallen into the observance of mere rites and ceremonies, and depended mainly on them for salvation. Many churches have commenced their career in an elevated and spiritual manner, and have ended in the observance of mere forms. So many Christians begin their course in a spiritual manner, and end it "in the flesh" in another sense.

They soon conform to the world. They are brought under the influence of worldly appetites and propensities. They forget the spiritual nature of their religion; and they live for the indulgence of ease, and for the gratification of the senses. They build themselves houses, and they "plant vineyards," and they collect around them the instruments of music, and the bowl and the wine is in their feasts, and they surrender themselves to luxury of living; and it seems as if they intended to perfect their Christianity by drawing around them as much of the world as possible. The beautiful simplicity of their early piety is gone. The blessedness of those moments when they lived by simple faith has fled. The times when they sought all their consolation in God are no more; and they now seem to differ from the world only in form. I dread to see a Christian inherit much wealth, or even to be thrown into very prosperous business. I see in it a temptation to build himself a splendid mansion, and to collect around him all that constitutes luxury among the people of the world. How natural for him to fed that if he has wealth like others, he should show it in a similar manner! And how easy for the most humble and spiritually-minded Christian, in the beginning of his Christian life, to become conformed to the world, (such is the weakness of human nature in its best forms;) and having begun in the Spirit, to end in the flesh !

4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain.

5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and
worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the
law, or by the hearing of faith?

God's Covenant with Abraham

6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him
for righteousness.
7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are
the children of Abraham.

Are the children of Abraham. Abraham was the "father of the faithful." The most remarkable trait in his character was his unwavering confidence in God. They who evinced the same trait, therefore, were worthy to be called his children. They would be justified in the same way, and in the same manner meet the approbation of God. It is implied here, that it was sufficient for salvation to have a character which would render it proper to say that we are the children of Abraham. If we are like him, if we evince the same spirit and character, we may be sure of salvation.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the
heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto
Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.
9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful
Abraham.
10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:
for it is written,
Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all
things which are written in the book of the law
to do them.

For as many as are of the works of the law. As many as are seeking to be justified by yielding obedience to the law--whether the moral law, or the ceremonial law. The proposition is general; and it is designed to show that, from the nature of the ease, it is impossible to be justified by the works of the law, since, under all circumstances of obedience which we can render, we are still left with its heavy curse resting on us.

Are under the curse. The curse which the law of God denounces. Having failed by all their efforts to yield perfect obedience, they must, of course, be exposed to the curse which the law denounces on the guilty. The word rendered curse καταραν, means, as with us, properly, imprecation or cursing. It is used in the Scriptures particularly in the sense of the Hebrew --malediction, or execration, Job 31:30, Jer 29:18, Dan 9:11; of the word ,, Mal 2:2; Prov 3:33; and especially of the common Hebrew word --a curse, Gen 27:12,13, De 11:26,28,29, 23:5, 27:13, et sape al. It is here used evidently in the sense of devoting to punishment or destruction; and the idea is, that all who attempt to secure salvation by the works of the law, must be exposed to its penalty. It denounces a curse on all who do not yield entire obedience; and no partial compliance with its demands can save from the penalty.

For it is written. The substance of these words is found in De 27:26 "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." It is the solemn close of a series of maledictions which Moses denounces in that chapter on the violators of the law. In this quotation, Paul has given the sense of the passage, but he has quoted literally neither from the Hebrew nor from the Septuagint. The sense, however, is retained. The word "cursed" here means, that the violator of the law shall be devoted to punishment or destruction. The phrase, "that continueth not," in the Hebrew is "that confirmeth not"--that does not establish or confirm by his life. He would confirm it by continuing to obey it; and thus the sense in Paul and in Moses is substantially the same.

The book of the law. That is, in the law. This phrase is not found in the passage in Deuteronomy. The expression there is, "the words of this law." Paul gives it a somewhat larger sense, and applies it to the whole of the law of God. The meaning is, that the whole law must be obeyed, or man cannot be justified by it, or will be exposed to its penalty and its curse. This idea is

expressed more fully by James, 2:10, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" that is, he is guilty of breaking the law as a whole, and must be held responsible for such violation. The sentiment here is one that is common to all law, and must be, from the nature of the case. The idea is, that a man who does not yield compliance to a whole law, is subject to its penalty, or to a curse. All law is sustained on this principle. A man who has been honest, and temperate, and industrious, and patriotic, if he commits a single act of murder, is subject to the curse of the law, and must meet the penalty. A man who has been honest and honourable in all his dealings, yet if he commit a single act of forgery, he must meet the curse denounced by the laws of his country, and bear the penalty. So in all matters pertaining to law: no matter what the integrity of the man, no matter how upright he has been, yet for the one offence the law denounces a penalty, and he must bear it. It is out of the question for him to be justified by it. He cannot plead as a reason why he should not be condemned for the act of murder or forgery, that he has in all other respects obeyed the law, or even that he has been guilty of no such offences before. Such is the idea of Paul in the passage before us. It was clear to his view that man had not, in all respects, yielded obedience to the law of God. If he had not done this, it was impossible that he should be justified by the law, and he must bear its penalty.

11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

A fourth argument is here produced to prove, that no sinner can be justified before God, by the works of the law, although before men he may. The argument is this, taken from The just shall live by faith Hab 2:4: that is, live his spiritual life by faith, his life of justification and sanctification also: the life of his righteousness before God, of his holiness before men, and his life of glory with God in heaven, are all by faith. He adds, The law is not of faith; Gal 3:12 that is, the law says nothing of faith in a Mediator, or promises life to any person, save only to him who by a sinless obedience performs exactly what it prescribes: but the voice of the law is, Do, or die.

Learn hence, that the law and faith, that is, the law and the gospel, are not contrary to each other, but are mutually subservient one to another in many things; as thus, when the law makes known sin, the gospel holds forth the remedy for sin; the law discovers our need of Christ, the gospel makes an offer and gracious tender of Jesus Christ; the law makes known to us our entire duty, the gospel furnishes us with strength and ability to perform that duty.

Learn, 2. That though the law and faith, that is, the gospel, which is the doctrine of faith, be not contrary to each other, yet in point of justification they are mutually inconsistent one with another: So that if justification be by the works of the law, it cannot be had by faith: if it be had by faith, it cannot be attained by the works of the law. There can be no mixture of law and gospel, of faith and works, in this matter.

12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall
live in them.

13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made
a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that
hangeth on a tree:

From the curse of the law. The curse which the law threatens, and which the execution of the law would inflict; the punishment due to sin. This must mean, that he has rescued us from the consequences of transgression in the world of woe; he has saved us from the punishment which our sins have deserved. The word "us," here, must refer to all who are redeemed; that is, to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The curse of the law is a curse which is due to sin, and cannot be regarded as applied particularly to any one class of men. All who violate the law of God, however that law may be made known, are exposed to its penalty. The word "law" here relates to the law of God in general, to all the laws of God made known to man. The law of God denounced death as the wages of sin. It threatened punishment in the future world for ever. That would certainly have been inflicted, but for the coming

and death of Christ. The world is lying by nature under this curse, and it is sweeping the race on to ruin.

Being made a curse for us. This is an exceedingly important expression. Tindal renders it, "And was made a curse for us." The Greek word is καταρα, the same word which is used in Gal 3:10. Gal 3:10. There is scarcely any passage in the New Testament on which it is more important to have correct views than this; and scarcely any one on which more erroneous opinions have been entertained. In regard to it, we may observe that it does not mean,

(1.) that by being made a curse, his character or work were in any sense displeasing to God. He approved always of what the Lord Jesus did, and he regarded his whole character with love and approbation. The passage should never be so interpreted as to leave the impression that he was in any conceivable sense the object of the Divine displeasure.

(2.) He was not ill-deserving, he was not blameworthy. He had done no wrong, he was holy, harmless, undefiled. No crime charged upon him was proved; and there is no clearer doctrine in the Bible than that, in all his character and work, the Lord Jesus was perfectly holy and pure.

(3.) He was not guilty, in any proper sense of the word. The word guilty means, properly, to be bound to punishment for crime. It does not mean, properly, to be exposed to suffering; but it always, when properly used, implies the notion of personal crime. I know that theologians have used the word in a somewhat different sense, but it is contrary to the common and just apprehensions of men. When we say that a man is guilty, we instinctively think of his having committed a crime, or having done something wrong. When a jury finds a man guilty, it implies that the man has committed a crime, and ought to be punished. But in this sense, and in no conceivable sense, where the word is properly used, was the Lord Jesus guilty.

(4.) It cannot be meant that the Lord Jesus properly bore the penalty of the law. His sufferings were in the place of the penalty, not the penalty itself. They were a substitution for the penalty, and were, therefore, strictly and properly vicarious, and were not the identical sufferings which the sinner would himself have endured. There are some things in the penalty of the law which the Lord Jesus did not endure, and which a substitute or a vicarious victim could not endure, Remorse of conscience is a part of the inflicted penalty of the law, and will be a vital part of the sufferings of the sinner in hell--but the Lord Jesus did not endure that. Eternity of sufferings is an essential part of the penalty of the law--but the Lord Jesus did not suffer for ever. Thus there are numerous sorrows connected with the consciousness of personal guilt, which the Lord Jesus did not and cannot endure.

(5.) He was not sinful, or a sinner, in any sense. He did not so take human guilt upon him, that the words sinful and sinner could with any propriety be applied to him. They are not applied to him in any way in the Bible; but the language there is undeviating. It is, that in all senses he was holy and undefiled. And yet language is often used on this subject which is horrible, and but little short of blasphemy, as if he was guilty, and as if he was even the greatest sinner in the universe. I have heard language used which sent a thrill of horror to my heart; and language may be found in the writings of those who hold the doctrine of imputation in the strictest sense, which is but little short of blasphemy. I have hesitated whether I should copy-expressions here on this subject from one of the greatest and best of men--I mean LUTHER--to show the nature of the views which men sometimes entertain on the subject of the imputation of sin to Christ. But as Luther deliberately published them to the world in his favourite book, which he used to call his "Catharine de Bora," after the name of his wife; and as similar views are sometimes entertained now; and as it is important that such views should be held up to universal abhorrence--no matter how respectable the source from which they emanate--I will copy a few of his expressions on this subject:

"And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, THAT EVER WAS OR COULD BE IN THE WORLD. For he, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person, and without sins; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor, and a persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord; and, briefly, which hath and beareth all the sins of all men in his body: not that he himself committed them, but for that he received them, being committed or done of us, and laid them upon his own body, that he might make satisfaction for them with his own blood. Therefore, this general sentence of Moses comprehendeth him also, (albeit in his own person he was innocent,) because it found him amongst sinners and transgressors; like as the magistrate taketh him for a thief, and punisheth him whom he findeth among other thieves and transgressors, though he never committed anything worthy of death. When the law, therefore, found him among thieves, it condemned and killed him as a thief." "If thou wilt deny him to be a sinner and accursed, deny also that he was crucified and dead." "But if it be not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified between two thieves, then it is not absurd to say that he was accursed, and OF ALL SINNERS THE GREATEST." "God, our most merciful Father, sent his only Son into the world, and laid upon him all the sins of all men, saying, be thou Peter, that denier; Paul, that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; David, that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men: see, therefore, that thou pay and satisfy for them."--

Luther on the Galatians, chap. iii. 13, (pp. 213--215; Edit. Loud., 1838.) Luther was a great and holy man. He held, as firmly as any one can, to the personal holiness of the Redeemer. But this language shows how imperfect and erroneous views may warp the language of holy men; and how those sentiments led him to

use language which is little less than blasphemy. Indeed, we cannot doubt that if Luther had heard this very language used by one of the numerous enemies of the gospel in his time, as applicable to the Saviour, he would have poured out the full torrent of his burning wrath, and all the stern denunciations of his most impassioned eloquence, on the head of the scoffer and the blasphemer. It is singular, it is one of the remarkable facts in the history of mind, that a man with the New Testament before him, and accustomed to contemplate daily its language, could ever have allowed himself to use expressions like these of the holy and unspotted Saviour. But what is the meaning of the language of Paul, it will be asked, when he says that he was "made a curse for us?" In reply, I answer, that the meaning must be ascertained from the passage which Paul quotes in support of his assertion, that Christ was "made a curse for us." That passage is, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This passage is found in De 21:23. It occurs in a law respecting one who was hanged for a "sin worthy of death," De 21:22. The law was, that he should be buried the same day, and that the body should not remain suspended over the night; and it is added, as a reason for this, that "he that is hanged is accursed of God;" or, as it is in the margin, "the curse of God." The meaning is, that when one was executed for crime in this manner, he was the object of the Divine displeasure and malediction. Regarded thus as an object accursed of God, there was a propriety that the man who was executed for crime should be buried as soon as possible, that the offensive object should be hidden from the view. In quoting this passage, Paul leaves out the words "of God," and simply says, that the one who was hanged on a tree was held accursed. The sense of the passage before us is, therefore, that Jesus was subjected to what was regarded as an accursed death. He was treated in his death AS IF he had been a criminal. He was put to death in the same manner as he would have been if he had himself been guilty of the violation of the law. Had he been a thief or a murderer, had he committed the grossest and the blackest crimes this would have been the punishment to which he would have been subjected. This was the mode of punishment adapted to those crimes, and he was treated as if all these had been committed by him. Or, in other words, had he been

guilty of all these, or any of these, he could not have been treated in a more shameful and ignominious manner than he was; nor could he have been subjected to a more cruel death. As has already been intimated, it does not mean that he was guilty, nor that he was not the object of the approbation and love of God, but that his death was the same that it would have been if he had been the vilest of malefactors, and that that death was regarded by the law as accursed. It was by such substituted sorrows that we are saved; and he consented to die the most shameful and painful death, as if he were the vilest malefactor, in order that the-most guilty and vile of the human race might be saved. In regard to the way in which his death is connected with our justification, see Gal 2:16. It may be observed, also, that the punishment of the cross was unknown to the Hebrews in the time of Moses, and that the passage in De 21:23 did not refer originally to that. Nor is it known that hanging criminals alive was practised among the Hebrews. Those who were guilty of great crimes were first stoned or otherwise put to death, and then their bodies were suspended for a few hours on a gibbet. In many cases, however, merely the head was suspended utter it had been severed from the body, Gen 40:17-19; Nu 25:4,5. Crucifixion was not known in the time of the giving of the law; but the Jews gave such an extent to the law in De 21:23, as to include this mode of punishment. Jn 19:31, seq. The force of the argument here, as used by the apostle Paul, is, that if to be suspended on a gibbet after having been put to death was regarded as a curse, it should not be regarded as a curse in a less degree to be suspended alive on a cross, and to be put to death in this manner. If this interpretation of the passage be correct, then it follows that this should never be used as implying, in any sense, that Christ was guilty, or that he was ill-deserving, or that he was an object of the Divine displeasure, or that he poured out on him all his wrath. He was, throughout, an object of the Divine love and approbation. God never loved him more, or approved what he did more, than when he gave himself to death on the cross. He had no hatred towards him; he had no displeasure to express towards him. And it is this which makes the atonement so wonderful and so glorious. Had he been displeased with him; had the Redeemer been properly an object of his wrath; had he in any

sense deserved those sorrows, there would have been no merit in his sufferings; there would have been no atonement. What merit can there be when one suffers only what he deserves? But what made the atonement so wonderful, so glorious, so benevolent, what made it an atonement at all, was, that innocence was treated As IF it were guilt; that the most pure, and holy, and benevolent, and lovely Being on earth should consent to be treated, and should be treated by God and man, As IF he were the most vile and ill-deserving. This is the mystery of the atonement; this shows the wonders of the Divine benevolence; this is the nature of substituted sorrow; and this lays the foundation for the offer of pardon, and for the hope of eternal salvation.

The way and manner in and by which Jesus Christ effecteth all this for us; namely, by his being made a curse for us; not that Christ was made the very curse itself, or changed into a curse, but he took the curse upon himself, our sin became his by voluntary susception of the punishment; and Christ underwent that death, the death of the cross, which by the law was accursed, to free us from the curse of the law; as Christ was made sin for us, so was he made a curse for us. Now as he was made sin, not by contracting the guilt of sin, but by suffering the punishment of sin; so he was made a curse, by undergoing that death which the law styles accursed.

14 that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The man that doeth them shall live in them: and for every failure herein the law denounces a curse. Unless our obedience be universal, continuing in all things that are written in the book of the law, and unless it be perpetual too (if in any instance at any time we fail and come short), we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is wrath revealed, and ruin threatened: it is a separation unto all evil, and this is in full force, power, and virtue, against all sinners, and therefore against all men; for all have sinned and become guilty before God: and if, as transgressors of the law, we are under the curse of it, it must be a vain thing to look for justification by it. But, though this is not to be expected from the

law, yet the apostle afterwards acquaints us that there is a way open to our escaping this curse, and regaining the favour of God, namely, through faith in Christ, who (as he says, Ga 3:13) hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, &c. A strange method it was which Christ took to redeem us from the curse of the law; it was by his being himself made a curse for us. Being made sin for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for the present under that infamous token of the divine displeasure upon which the law of Moses had put a particular brand, De 21:22. The design of this was that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ--that all who believed on Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, might become heirs of Abraham's blessing, and particularly of that great promise of the Spirit, which was peculiarly reserved for the times of the gospel. Hence it appeared that it was not by putting themselves under the law, but by faith in Christ, that they become the people of God and heirs of the promise. Here note,

1 The misery which as sinners we are sunk into--we are under the curse and condemnation of the law.

2 The love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us--he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law.

3. The happy prospect which we now have through him, not only of escaping the curse, but of inheriting the blessing. And,

4. That it is only through faith in him that we can hope to obtain this favour.

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit. That all we who are Christian converts. The promise of the Spirit, or the promised Spirit, is here put for all the blessings connected with the Christian religion. It includes evidently the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit; and all his influences in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul, and in comforting the people of God. These

influences had been obtained in virtue of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus in the place of sinners, and these influences were the sum of all the blessings promised by the prophets.

15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

17 And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

The illustration is, that when a contract or agreement is made by men involving obligations and promises, no one can add to it or take from it. It will remain as it was originally made. So with God. He made a solemn promise to Abraham. That promise pertained to his posterity. The blessing was connected with that promise, and it was of the nature of a compact with Abraham. But if so, then this could not be effected by the law which was four hundred years after, and the law must have been given to secure some different object from that designed by the promise made to Abraham, Gal 3:19. But the promise made to Abraham was designed to secure the "inheritance," or the favour of God; and if so, then the same thing could not be secured by the observance of the law, since there could not be two ways so unlike each other of obtaining tho. same thing.

God cannot have two ways of justifying and saving men; and if he revealed a mode to Abraham, and that mode was by faith, then it could not be by the observance of the law which was given so long after. The main design of the argument and the illustration here, Gal 3:15 and following is to show that the promise made to Abraham was by no means made void by the giving of the law. The law had another design, which did not interfere with the promise made to Abraham. That stood on its own merits, irrespective of the demands and the design of the

law. It is possible, as Rosenmuller suggests, that Paul may have had his eye on an objection to his view. The objection may have been, that there were important acts of legislation which succeeded the promise made to Abraham, and that that promise must have been superseded by the giving of the law. To this he replies, that the Mosaic law given at a late period could not take away or nullify a solemn promise made to Abraham, but that it was intended for a different object.

18 For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

The Purpose of the Law

19 Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Gal 3:19 Verse 19. Wherefore then serveth the law? This is obviously an objection which might be urged to the reasoning which the apostle had pursued. It was very obvious to ask, if the principles which he had laid down were correct, of what use was the law? Why was it given at all? Why were there so many wonderful exhibitions of the Divine power at its promulgation? Why were there so many commendations of it in the Scriptures? And why were there so many injunctions to obey it? Are all these to be regarded as nothing, and is the law to be esteemed as worthless? To all this the apostle replies that the law was not useless, but that it was given by God for great and important purposes, and especially for purposes closely connected with the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and the work of the Mediator. It was added, προσετεθη. It was appended to all the previous institutions and promises. It was an additional arrangement, on the part of God, for great and important purposes. It was an arrangement subsequent to the giving of the promise, and was intended to secure important advantages until the superior arrangement under the Messiah should be introduced, and was with reference to that. Because of

transgressions. On account of transgressions, or with reference to them. The meaning is, that the law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what was sin. It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was to disclose the true nature of sin; to deter men from committing it; to declare its penalty; to convince men of it, and thus to be "ancillary" to, and preparatory to, the work of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the law of God as given to apostate man, arid this use of the law still exists. This effect of the law is accomplished

(1) by showing us what God requires, and what is duty. It is the straight rule of what is right; and to depart from that is the measure of wrong.

(2.) It shows us the nature and extent of transgression, by showing us how far we have departed from it.

(3.) It shows what is the just penalty of transgression, and is thus fitted to reveal its true nature.

(4.) It is fitted to produce conviction for sin, and thus shows how evil and bitter a thing transgression is. Rom 4:15; Rom 7:7, also Rom 7:8-11.

(5.) It thus shows its own inability to justify and save men, and is a preparatory arrangement to lead men to the cross of the Redeemer. Gal 3:24. At the same time,

(6.) the law was given with reference to transgressions, in order to keep men from transgression. It was designed to restrain and control them by its denunciations, and by the fear of its threatened penalties. When Paul says that the law was given on account of transgressions, we are not to suppose that this was the sole use of the law; but that this was a main or leading purpose. It may accomplish many other important purposes, (Calvin,) but this is one leading design. And this design it still accomplishes. It shows men their duty. It reminds them of their guilt. It teaches

them how far they have wandered from God. It reveals to them the penalty of disobedience. It shows them that justification by the law is impossible, and that there must be some other way by which men must be saved. And since these advantages are derived from it, it is of importance that that law should be still proclaimed, and that its high demands and its penalties should be constantly held up to the view of men. Till the seed should come, etc. The Messiah, to whom the promise particularly applied. See Gal 3:16. It is not implied here that the law would be of no use after that, but that it would accomplish important purposes before that. A large portion of the laws of Moses would then indeed cease to be binding. They were given to accomplish important purposes among the Jews until the Messiah should comic, and then they would give way to the more important institutions of the gospel. But the moral law would continue to accomplish valuable objects after his advent, in showing men the nature of transgression, and leading them to the cross of Christ. The essential idea of Paul here is, that the whole arrangement of the Mosaic economy, including all his laws, was with reference to the Messiah. It was a part of a great and glorious whole. It was not an independent thing. It did not stand by itself. It was incomplete, and in many respects unintelligible, until he came--as one part of a tally is unmeaning and useless until the other is found. In itself it did not justify or save men, but it served to introduce a system by which they could be saved. It contained no provisions for justifying men, but it was in the design of God an essential part of a system by which they could be saved. It was not a whole in itself, but it was a part of a glorious whole, and led to the completion and fulfillment of the entire scheme by which the race could be justified and brought to heaven. And it was ordained by angels. That is, the law was ordained by angels. The word ordained, here, διαταγεις, usually means to arrange; to dispose in order; and is commonly used with reference to the marshalling of an army. In regard to the sentiment here, that the law was ordained by angels, Acts 7:13. The Old Testament makes no mention of the presence of angels at the giving of the law; but it was a common opinion among the Jews, that the law was given by the instrumentality of angels,

and arranged by them; and Paul speaks in accordance with this opinion. Comp. Heb 2:2 The sentiment here is, that the law was prescribed, ordered, or arranged by the instrumentality of the angels-- an opinion, certainly, which none can prove not to be true. In itself considered, there is no more absurdity in the opinion that the law of God should be given by the agency of angels, than there is that it should be done by the instrumentality of man. In the Septuagint De 33:2 there is an allusion of the same kind. The Hebrew is, "From his right hand went a fiery law for them." The Seventy render this, "His angels with him on his right hand." Comp. Joseph. Ant. xv. 5, 3. That angels were present at the giving of the law is more than implied, it is believed, in two passages of the Old Testament. The one is that which is referred to above, and a part of which the translators of the Septuagint expressly apply to angels, De 33:2 The Hebrew is, "Jehovah came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came [literally] with ten thousands of holiness;" that is, with his holy ten thousands, or with his holy myriads, By the holy myriads here mentioned, what can be meant but the angels? The word "holy," in the Scriptures, is not given to storms, and winds, and tempests; and the natural interpretation is, that he was attended with vast hosts of intelligent beings. The same sentiment is found in Ps 68:17: "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands repeated; the Lord is in the midst of them, as in Sinai, as in his sanctuary." Does not this evidently imply, that when he gave the law on Mount Sinai he was surrounded by a multitude of angels? See Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus viii. pp. 565--567. It may be added, that in the fact itself there is no improbability. What is more natural than to suppose that when the law of God was promulgated in such a solemn manner on Mount Sinai to a world, that the angels should be present? If any occasion on earth has ever occurred where their presence was allowable and proper, assuredly that was one. And yet the Scriptures abound with assurances that the angels are interested in human affairs, and that they have had an important agency in the concerns of man. In the hand. That is, under the direction or control of. To be in the hand of one is to be under his control; and the idea is, that while this was done by

the ordering of the angels, or by their disposition, it was under the control of a mediator. Rosenmuller, however, and others, suppose that this means simply by, (per;); that is, that it was done by the instrumentality of a mediator. But it seems to me to imply more than this; that the mediator, here referred to had some jurisdiction or control over the law thus given; or that it was subject to him, or with reference to him. The interpretation, however, will be affected by the view which is taken of the meaning of the word mediator. Of a mediator. The word mediator μεσιτου means, properly, one who intervenes between two parties, either as an interpreter or internuncius, or as an intercessor or reconciler. In the New Testament, in all the places where it occurs, unless the passage before us be an exception, it is applied to the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator between God and man, 1Timm 2:5, Heb 8:6, 9:15, 12:24. There has been some difference of opinion as to the reference of the word here. Rosenmuller, Grotius, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Robinson, (Lex.,) Chandler, and many others, suppose that it refers to Moses. Calvin and many others suppose that the reference is to Christ. The common sentiment among expositors undoubtedly is, that the reference is to Moses; and it is by no means easy to show that that is not the correct opinion. But to me it seems that there are reasons why it should be regarded as having reference to the great Mediator between God and man. Some of the reasons which incline me to this opinion are,

(1.) that the name mediator is not, so far as I know, applied to Moses elsewhere in the Scriptures.

(2.) The name is appropriated to the Lord Jesus. This is certainly the case in the New Testament, unless the passage before us be an exception; and the name is not found in the Old Testament.

(3.) It is difficult to see the pertinency of the remark here, or the bearing on the argument on the supposition that it refers to Moses. How would it affect the drift and purport of the apostle's reasoning? How would it bear on the case? But on the

supposition that it refers to the Lord Jesus, that would be a material fact in the argument. It would show that the law was subordinate to the Messiah, and was with reference to him. It was not only subservient by being ordained by angels, but as being under the Mediator, and with reference to him, until he, the "promised seed," should come.

(4.) It is only by such an interpretation that the following "vexed" verse can be understood. If that be applied to Moses, I see not that any sense can be affixed to it that shall be pertinent or intelligible. These reasons may not appear satisfactory to others; and I admit they are not as clear as would be desirable that reasons should be in the exposition of the Bible, but they may be allowed perhaps to have some weight. If they are of weight, then the sentiment of the passage is, that the law was wholly subordinate, and could not make the promise of no effect. For

(1) it was given hundreds of years after the promise.

(2.) It was under the direction of angels, who must themselves be inferior to and subordinate to the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man. If given by their agency and instrumentality, however important it might be, it could not interfere with a direct promise made by God himself, but must be subordinate to that promise.

(3.) It was under the Mediator, the promised Messiah. It was in his hand, and subject to him. It was a part of the great plan which was contemplated in the promise, and was tributary to that, and must be so regarded. It was not an independent scheme; not a thing that stood by itself; but a scheme subordinate and tributary, and wholly under the control of the Mediator, and a part of the plan of redemption, and of course to be modified or abrogated just as that This should require, and to be regarded as wholly tributary, to it. This view will accord certainly with the argument of Paul, and with his design in showing, that the law could by no

means, and in no way, interfere with the promise made to Abraham, but must be regarded as wholly subordinate to the plan of redemption.

20 Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.
21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for
if there had been a law given which could have given life,
verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Is the law then against the promises of God? Is the law of Moses to be regarded as opposed to the promises made to Abraham? Does this follow from any view which can be taken of the subject? The object of the apostle in asking this question is, evidently, to take an opportunity to deny, in the most positive manner, that there can be any such clashing or contradiction. He shows, therefore, what was the design of the law, and declares that the object was to further the plan contemplated in the promise made to Abraham. It was an auxiliary to that. It was as good as a law could be; and it was designed to prepare the way for the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

For if there had been a law given which could have given life. The law of Moses is as good as a law can be. It is pure, and holy, and good. It is not the design to insinuate anything against the law in itself, or to say that as a law it is defective. But law could not give life. It is not its nature; and man cannot be justified by obedience to it. No man ever has yielded perfect compliance with it, and no man, therefore, can be justified by it. Gal 2:16, Gal 3:10. Verily righteousness should have been by the law. Or justification would have been secured by the law. The law of Moses was as well adapted to this as a law could be. No better law could have been originated for this purpose; and if men were to attempt to justify themselves before God by their own works, the law of Moses would be as favourable for such an undertaking as any law which could be revealed. It is as reasonable, and equal, and pure. Its demands are as just, and its terms as favourable, as could be any of the terms of mere law. And such a law has been given, in part, in order to show that. justification by the law is out of the question. If men could not be justified by a law so pure, and equal, and just, so reasonable in all its

requirements, and so perfect, how could they expect to be justified by conformity to any inferior or less perfect rule of life? The fact, therefore, that no one can be justified by the pure law revealed on Mount Sinai, for ever settles the question about the possibility of being justified by law.

22 But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise
by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

But the Scripture. The Old Testament, Jn 5:39, containing the law of Moses. Hath concluded all under sin. Has shut up συνεκλεισεν all under the condemnation of sin; that is, has declared all men, no matter what their rank and external character, to be sinners. Of course, they cannot be justified by that law which declares them to be guilty, and which condemns them, any more than the law of the land will acquit a murderer, and pronounce him innocent, at the same time that it holds him to be guilty. In regard to the meaning of the expression here used, Rom 11:32. Comp. Rom 3:9,19. That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, etc. That the promise referred to in the transaction with Abraham, the promise of justification and life by faith in the Messiah. Here we see one design of the law. It was to show that they could not be justified by their own works, to hedge up their way in regard to justification by their own righteousness, and to show them their need of a better righteousness. The law accomplishes the same end now. It shows men that they are guilty; and it does it in order that they may be brought under the influence of the pure system of the gospel, and become interested in the promises which are connected with eternal salvation.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up
unto the faith which should afterward be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto
Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster. The word rendered schoolmaster, παιδαγωγος, whence the word pedagogue, referred originally to a slave or freedman, to whose care boys were committed, and who accompanied them to the public schools. The idea here is not that, of instructor, but there is reference to the office and duty of the paedagogus among the ancients. The office was usually intrusted to slaves or freedmen. It is true, that

when the paedagogus was properly qualified, he assisted the children committed to his care in preparing their lessons. But still his main duty was not instruction, but it was to watch over the boys; to restrain them from evil and temptation; and to conduct them to the schools, where they might receive instruction. See, for illustrations of this, Wetstein, Bloomfield, etc. In the passage before us, the proper notion of pedagogue is retained. In our sense of the word schoolmaster, Christ is the schoolmaster, and not the law. The law performs the office of the ancient pedagogue, to lead us to the teacher or the instructor. That teacher or instructor is Christ. The ways in which the law does this may be the following:

(1.) It restrains us and rebukes us, and keeps us as the ancient pedagogue did his boys.

(2.) The whole law was designed to be introductory to Christ. The sacrifices and offerings were designed to shadow forth the Messiah, and to introduce him to the world.

(3.) The moral law--the law of God--shows men their sin and danger, and thus leads them to the Saviour. It condemns them, and thus prepares them to welcome the offer of pardon through a Redeemer.

(4.) It still does this. The whole economy of the Jews was designed to do this; and under the preaching of the gospel it is still done. Men see that they are condemned; they are convinced by the law that they cannot save themselves, and thus they are led to the Redeemer. The effect of the preached gospel is to showy men their sins, and thus to be preparatory, to the embracing of the offer of pardon. Hence the importance of preaching the law still; and hence it is needful that men should be made to feel that they are sinners, in order that they may be prepared to embrace the offers of mercy. Comp. Rom 10:4.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

We are no longer under a schoolmaster. Under the pedagogus, or pedagogue. We are not kept in restraint, and under bondage, and led along to another to receive instruction. We are directly under the great Teacher, the Instructor himself; and have a kind of freedom which we were not allowed before. The bondage and servitude have passed away; and we are free from the burdensome ceremonies and expensive rites (comp. Acts 15:10) of the Jewish law, and from the sense of condemnation which it imposes. This was true of the converts from Judaism to Christianity--that they became free from the burdensome rites of the law; and it is true of all converts to the faith of Christ, that, having been made to see their sin by the law, and having been conducted by it to the cross of the Redeemer, they are now made free.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

For ye are all the children of God, etc. All who bear the Christian name--the converts from among the Jews and Gentiles alike. Jn 1:12. The idea here is, that they are no longer under tutors and governors; they are no longer subject to the direction and will of the paedagogus; they are arrived at age, and are admitted to the privileges of sons. Gal 4:1 The language here is derived from the fact, that until the son arrived at age, he was in many respects not different from a servant. He was under laws and restraints, and subject to the will of another. When of age, he entered on the privileges of heirship, and was free to act for himself. Thus, under the law, men were under restraints, and subject to heavy exactions. Under the gospel, they are free, and admitted to the privileges of the sons of God.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Paul means to teach that no man has any preference or advantage in the kingdom of God because he is a rich man, or because he is of elevated rank; no one is under any disadvantage because he is poor, or because he is ignorant, or a slave. All at the foot of the cross are sinners; all at the communion table are saved by the

same grace; all who enter into heaven, will enter clothed in the same robes of salvation, and arranged, not as princes and nobles, and rich men and poor men, in separate orders and ranks, but mingling together as redeemed by the same blood, and arranged in ranks according to their eminence in holiness. Comp. Isa 56:8.

29 And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Then are ye Abraham's seed. The promise made to Abraham related to the Messiah. It was a promise that in him all should be blessed. Abraham believed in that Messiah, and was distinguished for his faith in him who was to come. If they believed in Christ, therefore, they showed that they were the spiritual descendants of Abraham. No matter whether they were Jews or Gentiles--whether they had been circumcised or not--they had the same spirit which he evinced, and were interested in the promises made to him. And heirs according to the promise. See Rom 8:17. Are heirs of God. You inherit the blessings promised to Abraham, and partake of the felicity to which he looked forward. You have become truly heirs of God, and this is in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. It is not by the obedience of the law; it is by faith--in the same way that Abraham possessed the blessing: an arrangement before the giving of the law, and therefore one that may include all, whether Jews or Gentiles. All are on a level; and all are alike the children of God, and in the same manner, and on the same terms that Abraham was.

Galatians-4

1 Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

As long as he is a child. Until he arrives at the age. The word rendered "child," νηπιος, properly means an infant; literally, one not speaking, (νη, insep, un, εποϛ;) and hence a child, or babe, but without any definite limitation.--Rob. It is used as the word infant is with us in law, to denote a minor.

Differeth nothing from a servant. That is, he has no more control of his property; he has it not at his command. This does not mean that he does not differ in any respect, but only that in the matter under consideration he does not differ. He differs in his prospects of inheriting the property, and in the affections of the father, and usually in the advantages of education, and in the respect and attention shown him; but in regard to property he does not differ, and he is like a servant, under the control and direction of others. Though he be lord of all. That is, in prospect. He has a prospective right to all the property, which no one else has. The word "lord" here, κυριος, is used in the same sense in which it is often in the Scriptures, to denote master or owner. The idea which this is designed to illustrate is, that the condition of the Jews before the coming of the Messiah was inferior, in many respects, to what the condition of the friends of God would be under him--as inferior as the condition of an heir was before he was of age, to what it would be when he should enter on his inheritance, The Jews claimed indeed, that they were the children or the sons of God--a title which the apostle would not withhold from the pious part of the nation; but it was a condition in which they had not entered on the full inheritance, and which was far inferior to that of those who had embraced the Messiah, and who were admitted to the full privileges of sonship.

They were indeed heirs. They were interested in the promises. But still they were in a condition of comparative servitude, and could be made free only by the gospel.

2 but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of
the father.
3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under
the elements of the world:
4 but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his
Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

That is, "When the fulness of time was come, which God the Father had appointed for the finishing of the legal dispensation, and for the abolishing the ceremonial rites, God sent forth from

himself the Son of himself, his only begotten Son, made, that is, born of a woman, made under and obedient to the law, subjecting himself both to its precepts and its curse, to redeem them who were under the law, and discharge them from the curse and malediction of it; that we believers, we the members of the Christian church, might receive the adoption of sons, without any observance of circumcision, or other ceremonial rites."

But when the fulness of the time was come. The full time appointed by the Father; the completion (filling up, πληρωμα) of the designated period for the coming of the Messiah. Isa 49:7, Isa 49:8, 2Cor 6:2 The sense is, that the time which had been predicted, and when it was proper that he should come, was complete. The exact period had arrived when all things were ready for his coming. It is often asked why he did not come sooner; and why mankind did not have the benefit of his incarnation and atonement immediately after the fall? Why were four thousand dark and gloomy years allowed to roll on, and the world suffered to sink deeper and deeper in ignorance and sin? To these questions perhaps no answer entirely satisfactory can be given. God undoubtedly saw reasons which we cannot see, and reasons which we shall approve if they are disclosed to us. It may be observed, however, that this delay of redemption was in entire accordance with the whole system of Divine arrangements, and with all the Divine interpositions in favour of men. Men are suffered long to pine in want, to suffer from disease, to encounter the evils of ignorance, before interposition is granted.

In respect to all of these, it may be true that they are made known at the very best time, the time that will on the whole most advance the welfare of the race. And so of the incarnation and work of the Saviour. It was seen by God to be the best time; the time when, on the whole, the race would be most benefited by his coming. Even with our limited and imperfect vision, we can see the following things in regard to its being the most fit and proper time:

(1.) It was just the time when all the prophecies centered in him, and when there could be no doubt about their fulfillment. It was important that such an event should be predicted in order that there might be full evidence that he came from heaven; and yet, in order that prophecy may be seen to have been uttered by God, it must be so far before the event as to make it impossible to have been the result of mere human conjecture.

(2.) It was proper that the world should be brought to see its need of a Saviour, and that a fair and satisfactory opportunity should be given to men to try all other schemes of salvation, that they might be prepared to welcome this. This had been done. Four thousand years were sufficient to show to man his own powers, and to give him an opportunity to devise some scheme of salvation. The opportunity had been furnished under every circumstance that could be deemed favourable. The most profound and splendid talent of the world had been brought to bear on it, especially in Greece and Rome; and ample opportunity had been given to make a fair trial of the various systems of religion devised on national happiness and individual welfare; their power to meet and arrest crime, to purify the heart, to promote public morals, and to support man in his trials; their power to conduct him to the true God, and to give him a well-founded hope of immortality. All had failed; and then it was a proper time for the Son of God to come and to reveal a better system.

(3.) It was a time when the world was at peace. The temple of Janus, closed only in times of peace, was then shut, though it had been but once closed before during the Roman history. What an appropriate time for the "Prince of Peace" to come! The world was, to a great extent, under the Roman sceptre. Communications between different parts of the world were then more rapid and secure than they had been at any former period, and the gospel could be more easily propagated. Further, the Jews were scattered in almost all lands, acquainted with the

promises, looking for the Messiah, furnishing facilities to their own countrymen, the apostles, to preach the gospel in numerous synagogues, and qualified, if they embraced the Messiah, to become most zealous and devoted missionaries. The same language, the Greek, was moreover, after the time of Alexander the Great, the common language of no small part of the world, or as least was spoken and understood, among a considerable portion of the nations of the earth. At no period before had there been so extensive a use of the same language.

(4.) It was a proper period to make the new system known. It accorded with the benevolence of God, that it should be delayed no longer than that the world should be in a suitable state for receiving the Redeemer. When that period, therefore, had arrived, God did not delay, but sent his Son on the great work of the world's redemption.

God sent forth his Son. This implies that the Son of God had an existence before his incarnation. See Jn 16:28. The Saviour is often represented as sent into the world, and as coming forth from God.

Made under the law. As one of the human race, partaking of human nature, he was subject to the law of God. As a man he was bound by its requirements, and subject to its control. He took his place under the law, that he might accomplish an important purpose for those who were under it. He made himself subject to it that he might become one of them, and secure their redemption.

5 to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive
the adoption of sons.
6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his
Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

The Spirit of his Son. The spirit of the Lord Jesus; the spirit which animated him, or which he evinced. The idea is, that as the Lord Jesus was enabled to approach God with the language of endearment and love, so they would be. He, being the true and

exalted Son of God, had the spirit appropriate to such a relation; they being adopted, and made like him, have the same spirit. The "spirit" here referred to does not mean, as I suppose, the Holy Spirit as such; nor the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, but the spirit which made them like the Lord Jesus; the spirit by which they were enabled to approach God as his children, and use the reverent, and tender, and affectionate language of a child addressing a father. It is that language used by Christians when they have evidence of adoption; the expression of the warm, and elevated, and glowing emotions which they have when they can approach God as their God, and address him as their Father.

Abba, Father. Rom 8:15. It is said in the Babylonian Gemara, a Jewish work, that it was not permitted slaves to use the title of Abba in addressing the master of the family to which they belonged. If so, then the language which Christians are here represented as using is the language of freemen, and denotes that they are not under the servitude, of sin.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Warning against Returning to Bondage

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Here note, how contemptuously, or at least disesteemingly, our apostle speaks of the legal rites of the ceremonial law: He calls them elements or rudiments, because they were God's first instructions given to his church for his worship, to which he intended afterwards a more perfect way of worship: Next he calls them weak elements, because the law made nothing perfect, and the observance of it was impotent and unavailable to a sinner's justification before God: And lastly, he calls them

beggarly elements, in comparison with that more rational and spiritual way of worship under the gospel.

Whence we may learn, that holy zeal will teach a saint to speak with a sort of contempt of any thing that encroaches upon the honour due to Christ, or any of his offices. True, the Levitical ceremonies were appointed by God himself as a part of divine worship leading to Christ, and as such to be religiously observed; but when the false apostles did urge the observation of them under the gospel, as a part of necessary commanded worship, and as a part of the Galatians righteousness before God, St. Paul is bold then to give them the name of weak and beggarly elements.

To the weak and beggarly elements. To the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, imposing a servitude really not less severe than the customs of paganism. On the word elements, Gal 4:3. They are called "weak" because they had no power to save the soul; no power to justify the sinner before God. They are called "beggarly," (Greek, πτωχα, poor,) because they could not impart spiritual riches.

Whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage. As if you had a wish to be under servitude. The absurdity is as great as it would be for a man who had been freed from slavery to desire again his chains. They had been freed by the gospel from the galling servitude of heathenism, and they now again had sunk into the Jewish observances, as if they preferred slavery to freedom, and were willing to go from one form of it to another. The main idea is, that it is absurd for men who have been made free by the gospel to go back again into any kind of servitude or bondage.

10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

St. Paul here gives instances to the Galatians, wherein it did appear, that they brought themselves under an unnecessary bondage to the rites of the ceremonial law; he tells them plainly, that they kept the ceremonial sabbaths, feasts and fasts, as if that law was obligatory, and still binding: "Ye observe days, that is,

the Jewish sabbath days, and new moons; and months, as the feast of the first month, and of the seventh month; and times, that is, the times of their solemn festivals for going up to Jerusalem, as the Passover, Pentecost, and feast of tabernacles; and years, as the sabbatical years, and years of Jubilee. This, says the apostle, makes me afraid of you, that I have preached the gospel, and the doctrine of free justification by faith, in vain to you; because you leave the doctrine I taught you, and put your confidence in observing those legal ceremonial rites."

Learn hence, 1. That the work of the ministry is a laborious work; I have bestowed upon you labour, says St. Paul. A minister's life is not a life of ease, but of much toil and pains, a labouring unto faintness and weariness, as the word here used doth import and signify.

Learn, 2. That the most laborious ministers and lively preachers may sometimes see so little fruit of their labours and endeavours, that they may have just cause to fear that few are savingly converted by their ministry: St. Paul here was afraid lest he had laboured in vain among the Galatians.

Learn, 3. That in order to the success of our ministry, we must not content ourselves with a reproof of sin in general, but must descend to particulars, and give instances of those several and distinct sins which our people are guilty of, and ought to fall under our reproof for. Thus the apostle here gives particular instances of the sins formerly reproved, in their observing days, and months, and times, and years. Generals, we say, do not affect; but particular reproofs are more piercing, and more convincing; When we say to the sinner, as Nathan to David, Thou art the man; this, if anything, will stick close to the conscience.

Days. The days here referred to are doubtless the days of the Jewish festivals. They had numerous days of such observances; and in addition to those specified in the Old Testament, the Jews had added many others, as days commemorative of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, and of other important events in their history. It is not a fair interpretation of this to suppose that the apostle refers to the Sabbath, properly so called, for this was a part of the Decalogue /the Ten Commandments/, and was observed by the Saviour himself, and by the apostles also. It is a fair interpretation to apply it to all those days which are not commanded to be kept holy in the Scriptures; and hence the passage is as applicable to the observance of saints' days, and days in honour of particular events in sacred history, as to the days observed by the Galatians. There is as real servitude in the observance of the numerous festivals and fasts in the Papal communion, and in some Protestant churches, as there was in the observance of the days in the Jewish ecclesiastical calendar; and, for anything that can see, such observances are as inconsistent now, with the freedom of the gospel, as they were in the time of Paul. We should observe as seasons of holy time what it can be proved God has commanded us, and no more.

11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

12 Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am;* for I *am* as ye *are:* ye have not injured me at all.

Brethren, I beseech you, be as, I am, etc. There is great brevity in this passage, and no little obscurity, and a great many different interpretations have been given of it by commentators. The various views expressed may be seen in Bloomfield's Crit. Dig. Locke renders it, "Let you and I be as if we were all one. Think yourselves to be very me; as I, in my own mind, put no difference at all between you and myself." Koppe explains it thus:-- "Imitate my example; for I, though a Jew by birth, care no more for Jewish rites than you." Rosenmuller explains it, "Imitate my manner of life, in rejecting the Jewish rites; as I having renounced the Jewish rites, was much like you when I preached the gospel to you." Other interpretations may be seen in Chandler, Doddridge, Calvin, etc. In our version there seems to be an impropriety of expression; for if he was as they were, it

would seem to be a matter of course that they would be like him, or would resemble him. The sense of the passage, however, it seems to. me, cannot be difficult. The reference is doubtless to the Jewish rites and customs, and to the question whether they were binding on Christians. Paul's object is to persuade them to abandon them. He appeals to them, therefore, by his own example. And it means evidently, "Imitate me in this thing. Follow my example, and yield no conformity to those rites and customs." The ground on which he asks them to imitate him may be either,

(1.) that he had abandoned them, or

(2.) because he asks them to yield a point to him. He had done so in many instances for their welfare, and had made many sacrifices for their salvation; and he now asks them to yield this one point, and to become as he was, and to cease these Jewish observances, as he had done.

For I am as ye are. Greek, "For I as ye." This means, I suppose, "For I have conformed to your customs in many things. I have abandoned my own peculiarities; given up my customs as far as possible; conformed to you as Gentiles as far as I could do, in order to benefit and save you. I have laid aside the peculiarity of the Jew on the principle of becoming all things to all men, 1Cor 9:20, and 1Cor 9:21,22) in order that I might save you. I ask in return only the slight sacrifice that you will now become like me in the matter under consideration."

Ye have not injured me at all." It is not a personal matter. I have no cause of complaint. You have done me no personal wrong. There is no variance between us; no unkind feeling; no injury done as individuals. I may, therefore, with the more freedom, ask you to yield this point, when I assure you that I do not feel personally injured. I have no wrong, to complain of, and I ask it on higher grounds than would be an individual request: it is for your good, and the good of the great cause." When Christians

turn away from the truth, and disregard the instructions and exhortations of pastors, and become conformed to the world, it is not a personal matter, or a matter of personal offence to them, painful as it may be to them. They have no peculiar reason-to say that they are personally injured. It is a higher matter. The cause suffers; the interests of religion are injured; the church at large is offended, and the Saviour is "wounded in the house of his friends." Conformity to the world, or a lapse into some sin, is a public offence, and should be regarded as an injury done to the cause of the Redeemer. It shows the magnanimity of Paul, that though they had abandoned his doctrines, and forgotten his love and his toils in their welfare, he did not regard it as a personal offence, and did not consider himself personally injured. An ambitious man, or an impostor, would have made that the main, if not the only thing.

13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

14 And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus.

15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

17 They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

Yea, they would exclude you. Margin, us. A few printed editions of the New Testament have ημας, us, instead of υμας, you.--Mill. The word exclude here probably means, that they endeavoured to exclude the Galatians from the love and affection of Paul. They would shut them out from that, in order that they might secure them for their own purposes. If the reading in the margin, however, should be retained, the sense would be clearer: "They wish to exclude us, i.e., me, the apostle, in order that they may have you wholly to themselves. If they can once get rid of your attachment to me, then they will have no difficulty in securing you for themselves." This reading, says Rosenmuller, is found "in many of the best codices, and versions, and fathers." It is

adopted by Doddridge, Locke, and others. The main idea is clear: Paul stood in the way of their designs. The Galatians were truly attached to him; and it was necessary, in order to accomplish their ends, to withdraw their affections from him. When false teachers have designs on a people, they begin by alienating their confidence and affections from their pastors and teachers. They can hope for no success until this is done; and hence the efforts of errorists, and of infidels, and of scorners, is to undermine the confidence of a people in the ministry; and when this is done, there is little difficulty in drawing them over to their own purposes.

That ye might affect them. The same word as in the former part of the verse--" that ye might zealously affect them;" i.e., that ye might show ardent attachment to them. Their first work is to manifest special interest for your welfare; their second, to alienate you from him who had first preached the gospel to you; their object, not your salvation, or your real good, but to secure your zealous love for themselves.

18 But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in *a* good *thing*, and not only when I am present with you.

And not only when I am present with you. It seems to me that there is great adroitness and great delicacy of irony in this remark; and that the apostle intends to remind them, as gently as possible, that it would have been as well for them to have shown their zeal in a good cause, when he was absent, as well as when he was with them. The sense may be, "You were exceedingly zealous in a good cause when I was with you. You loved the truth; you loved me. Since I left you, and as soon almost as I was out of your sight, your zeal died away, and your ardent love for me was transferred to others. Suffer me to remind you, that it would be well to be zealous of good when I am away, as well as when I am with you. There is not much true affection in that which dies away as soon as a man's back is turned." The doctrine is, that true zeal or love will live alike when the object is near, and when it is removed; when our friends are present with us, and when they leave us; when their eye is upon us, and when it is turned away.

19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until
Christ be formed in you,
20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for
I
stand in doubt of you.

And to change my voice. That is, from complaint and censure, to tones of entire confidence.

The Allegory of Hagar and Sarah

21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear
the law?
22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one
by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.
23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh;
but he of the free woman *was* by promise.

Verse 23. But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh. In the ordinary course of nature, without any special promise, or any unusual Divine interposition, as in the case of Isaac. But he of the free-woman, etc. The birth of Isaac was in accordance with a special promise, and by a remarkable Divine interposition. See Gen 18:10, 21:1,2, Heb 11:11,12. Comp. Rom 4:19-21. The idea here of Paul is, that the son of the slave was in a humble and inferior condition from his very birth. There was no special promise attending him. He was born into a state of inferiority and servitude, which attended him through his whole life. Isaac, however, was met with promises as soon as he was born, and was under the benefit of those promises as long as he lived. The object of Paul is to state the truth in regard to a condition of servitude and slavery. It is attended with evils from beginning to end; from the birth to the grave. By this illustration he means to show them the folly of beaming the voluntary slaves of the law after they had once been made free. (e) "bond woman" Rom 9:7,8

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants;
the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage,
which is Hagar.
25 For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to
Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

And answereth to Jerusalem. Marg., Is in the same rank with. The margin is the better translation. The meaning is, it is just like it, or corresponds with it. Jerusalem as it is now, (i.e., in the days of Paul,) is like Mount Sinai. It is subject to laws, and rites, and customs; bound by a state of servitude, and fear, and trembling, such as existed when the law was given on Mount Sinai. There is no freedom; there are no great and liberal views; there is none of the liberty which the gospel imparts to men.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not;
break forth and cry, thou that travailest
not: for the desolate hath many more
children than she which hath a
husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now.

The object of the apostle in introducing it here seems to be to prove that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, would partake of the privileges connected with the heavenly Jerusalem. He had in the previous verse spoken of the Jerusalem from above as the common mother of ALL true Christians, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles. This might be disputed or doubted by the Jews; and he therefore adduces this proof from the Old Testament. Or if it was not doubted, still the quotation was pertinent, and would illustrate the sentiment which he had just uttered. The mention of Jerusalem as a mother seems to have suggested this text. Isaiah had spoken of Jerusalem as a female that had been long desolate and childless, now rejoicing by a large accession from the Gentile world, and increased in numbers like a female who should have more children than one who had been long married. To this Paul appropriately refers when he says that the whole church, Jews and Gentiles, were the children of the heavenly Jerusalem, represented here as a rejoicing mother. He has not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but he has used the Septuagint version, and has retained the sense. The sense is, that the accession from the Gentile world would be far

more numerous than the Jewish people had ever been--a prophecy that has been already fulfilled.

30 Nevertheless what saith the Scripture?
Cast out the bondwoman and her son:
for the son of the bondwoman shall not be
heir with the son of the free woman.

Even so it is now. That is, Christians, the children of the promise, are persecuted by the Jews, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "as it now is," and who are uninterested in the promises, as Ishmael was. For an illustration of this, see Paley's Horae Pauline, on this [Epistle, No. V. Dr. Paley has remarked, that it does not appear that the apostle Paul was ever set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews, except in two instances. One of these was at Philippi, after the cure of the Pythoness, (Acts 16:19;) and the other at Ephesus, at the instance of Demetrius, Acts 19:24. The persecutions of the Christians arose, therefore, mainly from the Jews--from those who were in bondage to the law, and to rites and customs; and Paul's allusion here to the case of the persecution which Isaac the free-born son endured, is exceedingly pertinent and happy.

Cast out the bond-woman and her son. This was the language of Sarah, in an address to Abraham, requesting him to cast out Hagar and Ishmael, Gen 21:10. That was done. Paul uses it here as applicable to the case before him. As used by him, the meaning is, that everything like servitude in the gospel is to be rejected, as Hagar and Ishmael were driven away. It does not mean, as it seems to me, that they were to expel the Jewish teachers in Galatia, but that they were to reject everything like servitude and bondage; they were to adhere only to that which was free. Paul cannot here mean that the passage in Gen 21:10 originally had reference to the gospel, for nothing evidently was farther from the mind of Sarah than any such reference; nor can it be shown that he meant to approve of or vindicate the conduct of Sarah; but he finds a passage applicable to his purpose, and he conveys his ideas in that language as exactly expressing his meaning. We all use language in that way wherever we find it.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman,
but of the free.

So then, brethren. It follows from all this. Not from the allegory regarded as an argument--for Paul does not use it thus--but from the considerations suggested on the whole subject. Since the Christian religion is so superior to the Jewish; since we are by it freed from degrading servitude, and are not in bondage to rites and ceremonies; since it was designed to make us truly free, and since by that religion we are admitted to the privileges of sons, and are no longer under laws, and tutors, and governors, as if we were minors; from all this it follows, that we should feel and act, not as if we were children of a bond-woman, and born in slavery, but as if we were children of a free-woman, and born to liberty. It is the birthright of Christians to think, and feel, and act like freemen; and they should not allow themselves to become the slaves of customs, and rites, and ceremonies, but should feel that they are the adopted children of God.

Galatians-5

Stand Fast in Liberty

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath
made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of
bondage.
2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ
shall profit you nothing.

That if ye be circumcised. This must be understood with reference to the subject under consideration. If you are circumcised with such a view as is maintained by the false teachers that have come among you; that is, with an idea that it is necessary in order to your justification. He evidently did not mean that if any of them had been circumcised before their conversion to Christianity; nor could he mean to say that circumcision, in all cases, amounted to a rejection of Christianity, for he had himself procured the circumcision of Timothy, Acts 16:3. If it was done, as it was then, for prudential considerations, and with a wish not unnecessarily to

irritate the Jews, and to give one a more ready access to them, it was not to be regarded as wrong. But if, as the false teachers in Galatia claimed, as a thing essential to salvation, as indispensable to justification and acceptance with God, then the matter assumed a different aspect; and then it became, in fact, a renouncing of Christ as himself sufficient to save us. So with anything else. Rites and ceremonies in religion may be in themselves well enough, if they are held to be matters not essential; but the moment they are regarded as vital and essential, that moment they begin to infringe on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and that moment they are to be rejected; and it is because of the danger that this will be the case, that they are to be used sparingly in the Christian church. Who does not know the danger of depending upon prayers, and alms, and the sacraments, and extreme unction, and penance, and empty forms, for salvation? And who does not know how much in the Papal communion the great doctrine of justification has been obscured by numberless such rites and forms?

Christ shall profit you nothing. Will be of no advantage to you. Your dependence on circumcision, in these circumstances, will in fact amount to a rejection of the Saviour, and of the doctrine of justification by him.

3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he
is a debtor to do the whole law.

That he is a debtor to do the whole law. He binds himself to obey all the law of Moses. Circumcision was the distinguishing badge of the Jews, as baptism is of Christians. A man, therefore, who became circumcised, became a professor of the Jewish religion, and bound himself to obey all its peculiar laws. This must be understood, of course, with reference to the point under discussion; and means, if he did it with a view to justification, or as a thing that was necessary and binding. It would not apply to such a case as that of Timothy, where it was a matter of mere expediency or prudence. Gal 5:2.

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you
are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Verse 4. Christ is become of no effect unto you. You will derive no advantage from Christ. His work in regard to you is needless and vain. If you can be justified in any other way than by him, then of course you do not need him, and your adoption of the other mode is, in fact, a renunciation of him. They would not need him if they could be thus justified; and they could derive no benefit from him. A man who can be justified by his own obedience, does not need the aid or the merit of another; and ff it was true, as they seemed to suppose, that they could be justified by the law, it followed that the work of Christ was in vain so far as they were concerned.

Ye are fallen from grace. That is, this would mount to apostasy from the religion of the Redeemer, and would be in fact a rejection of the grace of the gospel.

Its simple and obvious meaning is, that if a man who had been a professed Christian should be justified by his own conformity to the law, and adopt that mode of justification, then that would amount to a rejection of the mode of salvation by Christ, and would be a renouncing of the plan of justification by grace. The two systems cannot be united. The adoption of the one is, in fact, a rejection of the other. Christ will be "a whole Saviour," or none.

5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of
righteousness by faith.

6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing,
nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

But faith which worketh by love. Faith that evinces its existence by love to God, and benevolence to men. It is not a mere intellectual belief; but it is that which reaches the heart, and controls the affections. It is not a dead faith; but it is that which is operative, and which is seen in Christian kindness and affection. It is not mere belief of the truth, but it is that which produces true attachment to others. A mere intellectual assent to the truth may leave the heart cold and unaffected; however bold, and self-confident, and "sound," may not be inconsistent with contentions, and strifes, and logomachies /an argument about words/, and

divisions. The true faith is that which is seen in benevolence, in love to God, in love to all who bear the Christian name; in a readiness to do good to all mankind. This shows that the heart is affected by the faith that is held; and this is the nature and design of all true religion. Tindal renders this, "faith, which by love is mighty in operation."

7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey
the truth?
8 This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you.
9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.
10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be
none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall
bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

the apostle means to say, that the influence which had brought this change about was at first small and unimportant; that there might have been but a few teachers of that kind, and it might have not been deemed worthy of particular attention or alarm; but that the doctrines thus infused into the churches, had spread like leaven, until the whole mass had become affected.

11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet
suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased.

Then is the offence of the cross eased. "For if I should preach the necessity of circumcision, as is alleged, the offence of the cross of Christ would be removed. The necessity of depending on the merits of the sacrifice made on the cross would be taken away, since then men could be saved by conformity to the laws of Moses. The very thing that I have so much insisted on, and that has been such a stumbling-block to the Jews, 1Cor 1:23, that conformity to their rites was of no avail, and that they must be saved only by the merits of a crucified Saviour, would be done away with." Paul means that if this had been done, he would have saved himself from giving offence, and from the evils of persecution. He would have preached that men could be saved by conformity to Jewish rites, and that would have saved him from all the persecutions which he had endured in consequence of preaching the necessity of salvation by the cross.

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Only use not liberty, etc. The word use here, introduced by our translators, obscures the sense. The idea is, "You are called to liberty, but it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. It is not freedom from virtuous restraints, and from the laws of God. It is liberty from the servitude of sin, and religious rites and ceremonies, not freedom from the necessary restraints of virtue." It was necessary to give this caution, because

(1) there was a strong tendency in all converts from heathenism to relapse again into their former habits. Licentiousness abounded; and where they had been addicted to it before their conversion, and where they were surrounded by it on every hand, they were in constant danger of falling into it again. A bare and naked declaration, therefore, that they had been called to liberty, to freedom from restraint, might have been misunderstood, and some might have supposed that they were free from all restraints.

(2.) It is needful to guard the doctrine from abuse at all times. There has been a strong tendency, as the history of the church has shown, to abuse the doctrines of grace. The doctrine that Christians are "free," that there is liberty to them from restraint, has been perverted always by Antinomians, and been made the occasion of their indulging freely in sin. And the result has shown that nothing was more important than to guard the doctrine of Christian liberty, and to show exactly what Christians are freed from, and what laws are still binding on them, Paul is, therefore, at great pains to show that the doctrines which he had maintained did not lead to licentiousness, and did not allow the indulgence of sinful and corrupt passions.

But by love serve one another. By the proper manifestation of love one to another, strive to promote each other's welfare. To do this will not be inconsistent with the freedom of the gospel. When there is love, there is no servitude. Duty is pleasant, and offices of

kindness agreeable. Paul does not consider them as freed from all law and all restraint; but they are to be governed by the law of love. They were not to feel that they were so free that they might lawfully give indulgence to the desires of the flesh, but they were to regard themselves as under the law to love one another; and thus they would fulfil the law of Christian freedom.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt
love thy neighbor as thyself.
15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be
not consumed one of another.

The Fruit of the Spirit and the Works of the Flesh

16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the
lust of the flesh.

And ye shall not fulfil, etc. Marg., Fulfil not--as if it were a command. So Tindal renders it. But the more common interpretation, as it is the more significant, is that adopted by our translators. Thus it is not merely a command; it is the statement of an important and deeply interesting truth--that the only way to overcome the corrupt desires and propensities of our nature, is by submitting to the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is not by philosophy; it is not by mere resolutions to resist them; it is not by the force of education and laws; it is only by admitting into our souls the influence of religion, and yielding ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. If we live under the influences of that Spirit, we need not fear the power of the sensual and corrupt propensities of our nature.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against
the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that
ye cannot do the things that ye would.

These words are brought in as a special reason why Christians should walk in the Spirit, that is, after the motions and guidance of God's Holy Spirit: because otherwise the flesh will quickly prevail over them; for the flesh is continually lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; that is, the evil inclinations of corrupt nature are continually struggling with, and striving against, the good

motions which the Holy Spirit of God stirreth up in us. And in like manner the Spirit, or renewed nature, opposes the motions of corrupt nature: for these two principles are contrary the one to the other; so that ye who are led by the Spirit, cannot act (with deliberation and consent) according to the flesh; nor can they that are led by the flesh, do the things which delight the Spirit.

Learn hence, 1. That there is a diversity of principles in a Christian flesh and spirit; there is a good principle, called spirit, because the Spirit of God is the author of it; and a bad principle in us, which is called flesh, by which we are inclined to that which is evil. This is called flesh, to denote its intimacy with us; it is as near to us as our flesh, to denote its nearness to us; it is as dear to us as our own flesh, as dear as a right hand or right eye; and to denote its continuance with us, as long as we carry flesh about us, so long will this principle of corrupt nature remain in us and continue with us.

Learn, 2. That the motions and inclinations in our nature to sin, do ever conflict and combat with, oppose and war against the motions of God's Holy Spirit, exciting and inclining us to good: though contraries cannot be together in the same subject in an intense, yet they may be together in a remiss, degree.

Learn, 3. The consequence and issue of this combat: We cannot do the things that we would, nor any thing as we would; we cannot perform any holy duty perfectly in this life. As soon may an imperfect father beget a perfect child, as we, in our state of imperfection, perform any duty free from sin.

O, what need, what great need then, have the best of saints of the mediation and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, when they present any performed duty unto God!

And what need also to watch our own hearts when we are upon our knees, to fortify them against the incursions and disturbances of the

flesh; seeing, after all our care and vigilance in duty, we can none of us do the things that we would, nor any thing as we should!

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these,*
adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

That is, if ye be under the guidance and government of the Holy Spirit of God, and that renewing principle of grace which he had produced in you, you are no longer under the law; that is, not under the moral law as a covenant of life for our justification, though under it as an eternal role of living; not under the vindictive, though under the directive power of the law. So that the force of the apostle's argument seems to lie thus: "You are by the Spirit, by the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, free from the curse and terror of the moral law; how unreasonable then is it to suppose, that you should be still subject to the ceremonial law? No; if you be led by the Spirit, neither the moral law shall condemn you, nor the cermonial law oblige and bind you."

20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath,
strife, seditions, heresies,

21 envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like:
of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time
past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the
kingdom of God.

Shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Cannot possibly be saved. 1Cor 6:9; 1Cor 6:10-11. In regard to this passage we may remark,

(1.) that it furnishes the most striking and unanswerable proof of human depravity. Paul represents these things as "the works of the flesh"-- the works of the unrenewed nature of man. They are such as human nature, when left to itself, everywhere produces. The world shows that such is the fact; and we cannot but ask, is a nature producing this to be regarded as pure? Is man an unfallen being? Can he save himself? Does he need no Saviour?

(2.) This passage is full of fearful admonition to those who indulge in any or all of these vices. Paul, inspired of God, has solemnly declared that such cannot be saved. They cannot enter into the

kingdom of heaven as they are. Nor is it desirable that they should. What would heaven be if filled up with adulterers, and fornicators, and idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers and drunkards? To call such a place heaven, would be an abuse of the word. No one could wish to dwell there; and such men cannot enter into heaven.

(3.) The human heart must be changed, or man cannot be saved. This follows, of course. If such is its tendency, then there is a necessity for such a change as that in regeneration, in order that man may be happy and be saved.

(4.) We should rejoice that such men cannot, with their present characters, be admitted to heaven. We should rejoice that there is one world where these vices are unknown--a world of perfect and eternal purity. When we look at the earth; when we see how these vices prevail; when we reflect that every land is polluted, and that we cannot traverse a continent or an island, visit a nook or corner of the earth, dwell in any city or town, where these vices do not exist, oh how refreshing and invigorating is it to look forward to a pure heaven! How cheering the thought that there is one world where these vices axe unknown; one world, all whose ample plains may be traversed, and the note of blasphemy shall never fall on the ear; one world, where virtue shall be safe from the arts of the seducer; one world, where we may for ever dwell, and not one reeling and staggering drunkard shall ever be seen; where there shall be not one family in want and tears, from the vice of its unfaithful head! With what joy should we look forward to that world! With what ardour should we pant that it may be our own!

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-
suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

But the fruit of the Spirit. That which the Holy Spirit produces. It is not without design, evidently, that the apostle uses the word "Spirit" here, as denoting that these things do not flow from our own nature. The vices above enumerated are the proper "works" or result of the operations of the human heart; the virtues which he enumerates are produced by a foreign influence--the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Hence Paul does not trace them to our own hearts, even when renewed. He says that they are to be regarded as the proper result of the Spirit's operations on the soul.

23 meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

They that are Christ's; that is, they that are truly his followers, and sincere disciples, they have crucified, that is, subdued, and in some degree mortified and put to death, their fleshly corruptions, their carnal lusts, and sinful affections and passions. They did, by baptism, engage themselves to die unto sin; and the regenerate have done it in some measure: that have crucified the flesh; yet we must not understand this of a total, plenary, and final crucifixion, but inchoative only; and they are said to have done it, because they are daily doing of it, in proposito, voto, et eonatu, in resolution, in desire, and endeavour.

And by affections, we are not to understand natural, fixion, is not to be understood a total extinction of sin, but a deposing of it from its regency and dominion in the soul of the sinner; yet as death surely, though slowly, follows crucifixion, so likewise doth sin live in a believer a dying life, and dies a lingering, but a certain death; They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.

Learn hence, 1. That there are a peculiar people which are Christ's, that have special interest in him, union and communion with him; They that are Christ's, not by an external profession only, but by an internal implantation into him by faith.

Learn, 2. That all such as thus have an interest in Christ, are daily crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. The death of sin is here compared to our Saviour's crucifixion;

1.To show the conformity there is betwixt the death of sin, and the death of Christ. Did Christ die a painful, shameful, lingering, and accursed, death? So dies sin in the soul of a believer. There is a gradual weakening of the power of sin in him; sin is dying, as he, but it is a long time a-dying.

2.To denote the principal mean and instrument of our mortification, namely, the death of Christ; by virtue whereof believers do crucify their corrupt affections; the great arguments to mortification being drawn from the sufferings of Christ for sin.

Learn,

3. That the work of mortification, (called here, tropically, a crucifixion,) strikes not only at all sin, but at the root of all sins; it spares none, neither the flesh, nor any of its affections and lusts, do escape; root and branches, head and members; the old man is crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, and the axe of mortification laid to the root of every sin and sinful affection. In this manner do they that are Christ's crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Here we may note, That there must be a principle of spiritual life before there can be any spiritual motion and exercise; we must first live in the Spirit, and the Spirit live in us, before we can possibly walk in the Spirit: the child must live before it can walk.

Note, 2. That when there is a principle of grace and spiritual life in the heart, there will be the actings and exercise of grace in the life: If we live in the Spirit, we shall walk in the Spirit.

I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes. Ezek 36:27. An holy heart will be attended with an holy life, and a good conscience accompanied with a good conversation; spiritual life will produce spiritual motion.

26 Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory. The word here used κενοδοξοι means, proud or vain of empty advantages, as of birth, property, eloquence, or learning. The reference here is probably to the paltry competitions which arose on account of these supposed advantages. It is possible that this might have been one cause of the difficulties existing in the churches of Galatia, and the apostle is anxious wholly to check and remove it. The Jews prided themselves on their birth; and men are everywhere prone to over-value the supposed

advantages of birth and blood. The doctrines of Paul are, that in great and most vital respects men are on a level; that these things contribute nothing to salvation, Gal 3:28 ; and that Christians should esteem them of little importance, and that they should not be suffered to interfere with their fellowship, or to mar their harmony and peace. Provoking one another. The sense is, that they who are desirous of vain glory, do provoke one another. They provoke those whom they regard as inferiors by a haughty carriage and a contemptuous manner towards them. They look upon-them often with contempt; pass them by with disdain; treat them as beneath their notice; and this provokes, on the other hand, hard feeling, and hatred, and a disposition to take revenge. When men regard themselves as equal in their great and vital interests; when they feel that they are fellow-heirs of the grace of life; when they feel that they belong to one great family, and are in their great interests on a level; deriving no advantage from birth and blood; on a level as descendants of the same apostate father; as being themselves sinners; on a level at the foot of the cross, at the communion table, on beds of sickness, in the grave, and at the bar of God; when they feel this, then the consequences here referred to will be avoided. There will be no haughty carriage such as to provoke opposition; and, on the other hand, there will be no envy on account of the superior rank of others.

Envying one another. On account of their superior wealth, rank, talent, learning. The true way to cure envy is to make men feel that in their great and important interests they are on a level. Their great interests are beyond the grave. The distinctions of this life are temporary, and are comparative trifles. Soon all will be on a level in the grave, and at the bar of God, and in heaven. Wealth, and honour, and rank do not avail there. The poorest man will wear as bright a crown as the rich; the man of most humble birth will be admitted as near the throne as he who can boast the longest line of illustrious ancestors. Why should a man who is soon to wear a "crown incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," envy him who has a ducal coronet here, or a royal diadem--baubles that are soon to be laid aside for ever? Why should he, though poor here, who is soon to inherit the treasures of heaven, where "moth and rust do not corrupt," envy him who can walk over a few acres as his own, or who

has accumulated a glittering pile of dust, soon to be left for ever? Why should he who is soon to wear the robes of salvation, made "white in the blood of the Lamb," envy him who is "clothed in purple and fine linen," or who can adorn himself and his family in the most gorgeous attire which art and skill can make, soon to give place to the winding-sheet, soon to be succeeded by the simple garb which the most humble wears in the grave? If men feel that their great interests are beyond the tomb; that in the important matter of salvation they are on a level; that soon they are to be undistinguished beneath the clods of the valley, how unimportant comparatively would it seem to adorn their bodies, to advance their name and rank, and to improve their estates? The rich and the great would cease to look down with contempt on those of more humble rank; and the poor would cease to envy those above them, for they are soon to be their equals in the grave; their equals, perhaps their superiors, in heaven !

Galatians-6

1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken. Marg., although. It is a case which the apostle supposes might happen, Christians were not perfect; and it was possible that they who were true Christians might be surprised by temptation, and fall into sin. The word rendered be overtaken προληφθη, from προλαμβανω means, properly, to take before another, to anticipate, 1Cor 11:21; then to be before taken or caught; and may here mean either that one had been formerly guilty of sin, or had been recently hurried on by his passions or by temptations to commit a fault. It is probable that the latter here is the true sense, and that it means, if a man is found to be overtaken by any sin; if his passions, or if temptation get the better of him. Tindal renders it, "If any man be fallen by chance into any fault." It refers to cases of surprise, or of sudden temptation. Christians do not commit sin deliberately, and as a part of the plan of life; but they may be surprised by sudden temptation, or urged on by impetuous and headstrong passion, as David and-Peter were. Paul does not speak of

the possibility of restoring one who deliberately forms the plan of sinning; he does not suppose that such a man could be a Christian, and that it would be proper to speak of restoring such a man.

Ye which are spiritual. Who are under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Gal 5:22, Gal 5:23. The apostle, in this verse, refers evidently to those who have fallen into some sensual indulgence, Gal 5:19-21; and says that they who have escaped these temptations, and who are under the influences of the Spirit, should recover such persons. It is a very important qualification for those who would recover others from sin, that they should not be guilty of the same sin themselves. Reformers should be holy men. Men who exercise discipline in the church should be "spiritual" men--men in whom implicit confidence may be properly reposed.

Restore such an one. On the meaning of the word here used, 2Cor 13:11. Here it means, not to restore him to the church after he has been excluded, but set him right, bring him back, recover him from his errors and his faults. The apostle does not say in what manner this is to be done; but it is usually to be done, doubtless, by affectionate admonition, by faithful instruction, and by prayer. Discipline or punishment should not be resorted to until the other methods are tried in vain, Mt 18:15-17.

In the spirit of meekness. With a kind, forbearing, and forgiving spirit. Mt 5:5. Not with anger; not with a lordly and overbearing mind; not with a love of finding others in fault, and with a desire for inflicting the discipline of the church; not with a harsh and unforgiving temper; but with love, and gentleness, and humility, and patience, and with a readiness to forgive when wrong has been done. This is an essential qualification for restoring and recovering an offending brother. No man should attempt to rebuke or admonish another who cannot do it in the spirit of meekness; no man should engage in any way in the work of reform who has not such a temper of mind.

Considering thyself, etc. Remembering how liable you are yourself to err; and how much kindness and indulgence should therefore be shown to others. You are to act as if you felt it possible that you might also be overtaken with a fault; and you should act as you would wish that others should do towards you. Pliny (Epis. viii. 22) has expressed a similar sentiment in the following beautiful language: "Atque ego optimum et emendatissimum existimo, qui caeteris ira ignoscit, tanquam ipsc quotidie peccet; ira peccatis abstinet, tanquam nemini ignoscat. Proinde hoc domi, hoc foris, hoc in onmi vitse genere teneamus, ut nobis implacabiles simus, exorabiles istis etiam, qui dare veniam nisi sibi nesciunt." The doctrine taught by Paul is, that such is human infirmity, and such the strength of human depravity, that no one knows into what sins he may himself fall. He may be tempted to commit the same sins which he endeavours to amend in others; he may be left to commit even worse sins. If this is the case, we should be tender, while we are firm; forgiving, while we set our faces against evil; prayerful, while we rebuke; and compassionate, when we are compelled to inflict on others the discipline of the church. Every man who has any proper feelings, when he attempts to recover an erring brother, should pray for him and for himself also; and will regard his duty as only half done, and that very imperfectly, if he does not "consider also that he himself may be tempted."

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Bear ye one another's burdens. Rom 15:1. Bear with each other; help each other in the Divine life. The sense is, that every man has peculiar temptations and easily besetting sins, which constitute a heavy burden. We should aid each other in regard to these, and help one another to overcome them. And so fulfil the law of Christ. The peculiar law of Christ, requiring us to love one another. Jn 13:34. This was the distinguishing law of the Redeemer; and they could in no way better fulfil it than by aiding each other in the Divine life. The law of Christ would not allow us to reproach the offender, or to taunt him, or to rejoice in his fall. We should help him to take up his load of infirmities, and sustain him by our counsels, our exhortations, and our prayers. Christians, conscious of their infirmities, have a right to the sympathy and the prayers of their brethren. They should not be east off to a cold and heartless world; a world rejoicing over

their fall, and ready to brand them as hypocrites. They should be pressed to the warm bosom of brotherly kindness; and prayer should be made to ascend without ceasing around an erring and a fallen brother. Is this the case in regard to all who bear the Christian name?

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

For if a man think himself to be something, etc. See Gal 5:26. This is designed, evidently, to be another reason why we should be kind and tender to those who have erred. It is, that even those who are most confident may fall. They who feel secure, and think it impossible that they should sin, are not safe. They may be wholly deceived, and may be nothing, when they have the highest estimate of themselves. They may themselves fall into sin, and have need of all the sympathy and kindness of their brethren. When he is nothing. When he has no strength, and no moral worth. When he is not such as he apprehends, but is lifted up with vain self-conceit. He deceiveth himself. He understands not his own character. "The worst part of the fraud falls on his own head."--Doddridge. He does not accomplish what he expected to do; and instead of acquiring reputation from others, as he expected, he renders himself contemptible in their sight.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

But let every man prove. That is, try or examine in a proper manner. Let him form a proper estimate of what is due to himself, according to his real character. Let him compare himself with the word of God, and the infallible rule which he has given, and by which we are to be judged in the last great day. Comp. Rom 12:3; 1Cor 11:28;; 2Cor 13:5.

In himself alone. Comp. Prov 14:14: "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." The sentiment is, that he will find in himself a source of pure joy. He will not be dependent on the applause of others for happiness. In an approving conscience; in the evidence of the favour of God; in an honest effort to lead a pure and holy life, he will have happiness. The source of his joys will be within; and he will not be dependent--as the man of ambition, and the man who thinks of

himself more highly than he ought, will--on the favours of a capricious multitude, and on the breath of popular applause.

And not in another. He will not be dependent on others for happiness, Here is the true secret of happiness. It consists,

(1.) in not forming an improper estimate of ourselves; in knowing just what we are, and what is due to us; in not thinking ourselves to be something, when we are nothing.

(2.) In leading such a life that it may be examined to the core; that we may know exactly what we are, without being distressed or pained. That is, in having a good conscience, and in the honest and faithful discharge of our duty to God and man.

(3.) In not being dependent on the fickle applause of the world for our comfort. The man who has no internal resources, and who has no approving conscience; who is happy only when others smile, and miserable when they frown, is a man who can have no security for enjoyment. The man who has a good conscience, and who enjoys the favour of God, and the hope of heaven, carries with him the source of perpetual joy. He cannot be deprived of it. His purse may be taken, and his house robbed, but the highwayman cannot rob him of his comforts. He carries with him an unfailing source of happiness when abroad, and the same source of happiness abides with him at home: he bears it into society, and it remains with him in solitude; it is his companion when in health, and when surrounded by his friends; and it is no less his companion when his friends leave him, and when he lies upon a bed of death.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

For every man shall bear his own burden. This seems to be a kind of proverbial saying; and it means here, every man shall have his proper reward. If he is a virtuous man, he will be happy; if a vicious man, he will be miserable. If a virtuous man, he will have the source of happiness in himself; if a sinner, he must bear the proper penalty of his sin. In the great day, every man shall be properly rewarded. Knowing this, we should be little anxious about the sentiments of

others, and should seek to maintain a good conscience towards God and man. The design of this passage is to prevent men from forming an improper estimate of themselves, and of the opinions of others. Let a man feel that he is soon to stand at the judgment-seat, and it will do much to keep him from an improper estimate of his own importance; let him feel that he must give an account to God, and that his great interests are to be determined by the estimate which God will affix to his character, and it will teach him that the opinion of the world is of little value. This will restrain his vanity and ambition. This will show him that the great business of life is to secure the favour of God, and to be prepared to give up his account; and there is no way so effectual of checking ambition, and subduing vanity and the love of applause, as to feel that we are soon to stand at the awful bar of God.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him
that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a
man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Here is a caution to take heed of mocking God, or of deceiving ourselves, by imagining that he can be imposed upon by mere pretensions or professions (Ga 6:7): Be not deceived, God is not mocked. This may be considered as referring to the foregoing exhortation, and so the design of it is to convince those of their sin and folly who endeavoured by any plausible pretences to excuse themselves from doing their duty in supporting their ministers: or it may be taken in a more general view, as respecting the whole business of religion, and so as designed to take men off from entertaining any vain hopes of enjoying its rewards while they live in the neglect of its duties. The apostle here supposes that many are apt to excuse themselves from the work of religion, and especially the more self-denying and chargeable parts of it, though at the same time they may make a show and profession of it; but he assures them that this their way is their folly, for, though hereby they may possibly impose upon others, yet they do but deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who is perfectly acquainted with their hearts as well as actions, and, as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked; and therefore, to prevent this, he directs us to lay down as a rule to ourselves, That whatsoever a man soweth that

shall he also reap; or that according as we behave ourselves now, so will our account be in the great day. Our present time is seed-time: in the other world there will be a great harvest; and, as the husbandman reaps in the harvest according as he sows in the seedness, so we shall reap then as we sow now. And he further informs us (Ga 6:8) that, as there are two sorts of seedness, sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit, so accordingly will the reckoning be hereafter: If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption. If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind. Those who live a carnal sensual life, who instead of employing themselves to the honour of God and the good of others, spend all their thoughts, and care, and time, about the flesh, must expect no other fruit of such a course than corruption--a mean and short-lived satisfaction at present, and ruin and misery at the end of it. But, on the other hand, those who sow to the Spirit, who under the guidance and influence of the Spirit do live a holy and spiritual life, a life of devotedness to God and of usefulness and serviceableness to others, may depend upon it that of the Spirit they shall reap life everlasting--they shall have the truest comfort in their present course, and an eternal life and happiness at the end of it. Note, Those who go about to mock God do but deceive themselves. Hypocrisy in religion is the greatest folly as well as wickedness, since the God we have to do with can easily see through all our disguises, and will certainly deal with us hereafter, not according to our professions, but our practices.

But not deceived. That is, in regard to your character, and your hopes for eternity. This is a formula of introduction to some admonition that is peculiarly weighty and important. It implies that there was danger that they would be deceived in reference to their character. The sources of the danger were the corruption of their own hearts, the difficulty of knowing their true character, the instructions of false teachers, etc. 1Cor 6:9. God is not mocked. He cannot be imposed on, or mocked. He knows what our real character is, and he will judge us accordingly. The word rendered mocked μυκτηριζω means, properly, to turn up the nose in scorn; hence to mock, or deride, or insult. The sense is, that God could not be

imposed on, or could not be insulted with impunity, or successfully. To mock is, properly,

(1.) to imitate, to mimic; to imitate in contempt or derision.

(2.) To deride, to laugh at, to ridicule.

(3.) To defeat, or to illude, or to disappoint.

(4.) To fool, to tantalize--Webster. Here it cannot mean to imitate, or to mimic, but it refers to the principles of the Divine administration, and must mean that they could not be treated with contempt, or successfully evaded. They could not hope to illude or impose on God. His principles of government were settled, and they could not impose on him. To what the reference is here, is not perfectly plain. In the connexion in which it stands, it seems to refer to the support of the ministers of the gospel; and Paul introduces the general principle, that as a man sows he will reap, to show them what will be the effect of a liberal and proper use of their property. If they made a proper use of it; if. they employed it for benevolent purposes; if they appropriated what they should to the support of religion, they would reap accordingly. God could not be imposed on in regard to this. They could not make him think that they had true religion when they were sowing to the flesh, and when they were spending their money in purchasing pleasure, and in luxury and vanity. No zeal, however ardent; no prayers, however fervent or long; no professions, however loud, would impose on God. And to make such prayers, and to manifest such zeal and such strong professions, while the heart was with the world, and they were spending their money for everything else but religion, was mocking God. Alas, how much mockery of God like this still prevails! How much, when men seem disposed to make God believe that they are exceedingly zealous and devoted, while their heart is truly with the world! How many long prayers are offered; how much zeal is shown; how many warm professions are made, as if to make God and man believe that the heart was truly engaged in the cause of religion, while little or nothing is given in the cause of benevolence;

while the ministers of religion are suffered to starve; and while the "loud professor" rolls in wealth, and is distinguished for luxury of living, for gaiety of apparel, for splendour of equipage, and for extravagance in parties of pleasure! Such professors attempt to mock God. They are really sowing to the flesh; and of the flesh they must reap corruption.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap
corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the
Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we
shall reap, if we faint not.

We shall reap, if we faint not. If we do not give over, exhausted and disheartened. It is implied here, that unless a man perseveres in doing good to the end of life, he can hope for no reward. He who becomes disheartened, and who gives over his efforts; he that is appalled by obstacles, and that faints on account of the embarrassments thrown in his way; he that pines for ease, and withdraws from the field of benevolence, shows that he has no true attachment to the cause, and that his heart has never been truly in the work of religion. He who becomes a true Christian, becomes such FOR ETERNITY. He has enlisted, never to withdraw. He becomes pledged to do good and to serve God always. No obstacles are to deter, no embarrassments are to drive him from the field. With the rigour of his youth, and the wisdom and influence of his riper years; with his remaining powers when enfeebled by age; with the last pulsation of life here, and with his immortal energies in a higher world, he is to do good. For that he is to live. In that he is to die; and when he awakes in the resurrection with renovated powers, he is to awake to an everlasting service of doing good, as far as he may have opportunity, in the kingdom of God.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*,
especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Paul Glories in the Cross

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine
own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

For the cross of Christ. From attachment to the cause of a crucified Saviour. If they insisted on entire dependence on the merits of his blood, and renounced all dependence on rites and ceremonies, they would suffer persecution. This verse shows the true cause of the zeal which the Judaizing teachers evinced. It was the fear of persecution. It was the want of independence and boldness in maintaining the doctrine that men.were to be saved only by the merits of the Lord Jesus. By attempting to blend together the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity; by maintaining that the observance of the Jewish rites was necessary, and yet that Jesus was the Messiah, they endeavoured to keep in with both parties, and thus to escape the opposition of the Jews. It was an unhallowed compromise. It was an attempt to blend things together which could not be united. One must really displace the other. If men depended on the rites of Moses, they had no need of dependence on the Messiah; if they professed to depend on him, then to rely on anything else was, in fact, to disown and reject him. Embracing the one system was, in fact, renouncing the other. Such is the argument of Paul; and such his solemn remonstrance against embracing any doctrine which would obscure the glory of simple dependence on the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

Keep the law. The law of Moses, or the law of God. Paul's idea is, that if they were circumcised, they brought themselves under obligation to keep the whole law of God. Gal 5:3. But they did not do it.

(1.) No man perfectly observes the whole law of God.

(2.) The Jewish nation, as such, were very far from doing it.

(3.) It is probable that these persons did not pretend even to keep the whole law of Moses. Paul insists on it, that if they were circumcised, and depended on that for salvation, they were under obligation to keep the whole law. But they did not. Probably they did not offer sacrifice, or join in any of the numerous observances of the Jewish nation, except some of the more prominent, such as circumcision. This, says Paul, is inconsistent in the highest degree; and they thus show their insincerity and hypocrisy. That they may glory in your flesh. In having you as converts, and in persuading you, to be circumcised, that they may show their zeal for the law, and thus escape persecution. The phrase "in your flesh," here is equivalent to "in your circumcision;" making use of your circumcision to promote their own importance, and to save themselves from persecution.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me,
and I unto the world.

That I should glory. That I should boast; or that I should rely on anything else. Others glory in their conformity to the laws of Moses; others in their zeal, or their talents, or their learning, or their orthodoxy; others in their wealth, or their accomplishments; others in their family alliances, and their birth; but the supreme boast and glorying of a Christian is in the cross of Christ. In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus, the crucified Messiah. It is a subject of rejoicing and glorying that we have such a Saviour. The world looked upon him with contempt; and the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and folly to the Greek. 1Cor 1:23. But to the Christian, that cross is the subject of glorying. It is so because

(1.) of the love of Him who suffered there;

(2.) of the purity and holiness of his character, for the innocent died there for the guilty;

(3.) of the honour there put on the law of God by his dying to maintain it unsullied;

(4.) of the reconciliation there made for sin, accomplishing what could be done by no other oblation, and by no power of man;

(5.) of the pardon there procured for the guilty;

(6.) of the fact that through it we become dead to the world, and are made alive to God;

(7.) of the support and consolation which goes from that cross to sustain us in trial; and,

(8.) of the fact that it procured for us admission into heaven, a title to the world of glory. All is glory around the cross. It was a glorious Saviour who died; it was glorious love that led him to die; it was a glorious object to redeem a world; and it is unspeakable glory to which he will raise lost and ruined sinners by his death. Oh, who would not glory in such a Saviour! Compared with this, what trifles are all the objects in which men usually boast! And what a lesson is here furnished to the true Christian! Let us not boast of our wealth. It will soon leave us, or we shall be taken from it, and it can aid us little in the great matters that are before us, It will not ward off disease; it will not enable us to bear pain; it will not smooth the couch of death; it will not save the soul. Let us not glory in our strength, for it will soon fail; in our beauty, for we shall soon be undistinguished in the corruption of the tomb; in our accomplishments, for they will not save us; in our learning, for it is not that by which we can be brought to heaven. But let us glory that we have for a Saviour the eternal Son of God--that glorious Being who was adored by the inhabitants of heaven; who made the worlds; who is pure, and lovely, and most holy; and who has undertaken our cause, and died to save us. I desire no higher honour than to be saved by the Son of God. It is the exaltation of my nature, and shows me more than anything else its true dignity, that one so great and glorious sought my redemption. That cannot be an object of temporary value which he sought by coming from heaven; and if there is any

object of real magnitude in this world, it is the soul which the eternal Son of God died to redeem.

Having shown what it was that the false apostles gloried in, he next shows what it was that he himself gloried in; namely, in the cross of Christ; that is, in his preaching Christ crucified, and the necessity of faith in him who died as a sacrifice upon the cross. The cross of Christ is taken three ways in scripture, materially, metaphorically, and metonymically.

The material cross of Christ is that which he died upon at Jerusalem: this the church of Rome glories in greatly, but not the apostle.

The metaphorical cross of Christ, is afflictions, Luke 9:28. Let him take up the cross; that is, submit to any afflictions. God oft-times sanctifies this cross, for the crucifying the hearts of his people to the world.

But the cross of Christ is taken metonymically for the gospel, the doctrine of the gospel, or of him that died upon the cross.

Now Christianity, or the doctrine of the gospel, crucifies us to the world: first, by discovering to us the great vanity and emptiness of the world and all the perishing satisfactions of it; secondly, by propounding such arguments to crucify the world, as were never heard of from all the philosophers and wise men that ever lived in the world; namely, arguments taken from the glory of God, from the death of Christ, from the dignity of the soul, &c.

Learn hence, That such a Christian as doth experimentally find his heart and affections daily more and more crucified to the world, by the cross of Christ, has unspeakable cause and reason sufficient for spiritual glorying and rejoicing.

It consists not in a vile esteem of the world, as useless or hurtful; or in casting off all care and concern for the things of the world, as sinful and unnecessary; nor is every degree of desire after, love

unto, or delight in, the things of the world, inconsistent with our being crucified to it: nor doth it consist in, or oblige us to, the withdrawing ourselves from all society and conversation with the men of the world.

But, positively, crucifixion to the world consists in a crucified judgment and opinion of the world; in crucifying our love and affections to the world; in crucifying our hopes and expectations from the world; in crucifying our care and concern for the world; in crucifying our delight in, and our endeavour after, the world.

We may, and ought to, glory in the blessed effect and fruit of Christ's death in re-stamping the image of God upon the soul, in the certain tokens of the love of God: we may glory in the death of Christ's enemy, and our soul's enemy: we may glory in that wherein God is glorified, and in that which is the earnest of our own glorification. Now crucifixion to the world, by the cross of Christ, is this, all this, and therefore warrantably to be boasted of, and gloried in.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything,
nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

ordinances and fleshly privileges of circumcision, &c. which the false apostles so much gloried in: namely, because circumcision, nor uncircumcision, neither the presence of that ordinance, nor the want of it, availeth any thing, as to our acceptance with Christ, and interest in him: but the new creature is all in all; a circumcised heart, not a circumcised foreskin, a renewed nature, a divine temper of mind, rendering us like to Christ; this will enable us to love him, and qualify us for living with him now in Christ Jesus.

That is, now under the Christian dispensation, under the economy of the gospel, neither the presence nor absence of this outward badge of circumcision will avail any thing to our justification before God: but that which was signified by circumcision, is the thing that pleased God; namely, the renovation of our nature, and becoming new creatures both in heart and life.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Observe here, 1. The nature of Christianity described: it is a walk. Now a walk is a motion, a free and voluntary motion, an uniform and even motion: it is a progressive motion, and a constant motion.

Observe, 2. The condition of this walk, and that is regularity: it is a walk by rule; a Christian is not a lawless person, to range and ramble, and run up and down, as fancy leads him: but he walks by rule, by the rule of scripture, by the rule of charity.

Observe, 3. The determination of that rule which a Christian is to walk by: it must be according to this rule. What rule? The foregoing verse declares it is regeneration, and the law of the new creature. As many as walk according to that rule; when the new creature in the principles and workings of it is made the ground, the pattern, and direction, of our obedience, and we frame and square all the actions of our lives according thereunto.

Observe, 4. The blessed privileges belonging to them that thus walk: Peace be into them, and mercy: that is, there shall be peace and mercy to them; these shall be their portion; nay, they shall be upon them; that is, in a large and plentiful manner vouchsafed to them.

Observe lastly, The honourable mention which the apostle makes of them that thus walk by scripture rule, according to the law of the new creature, written in the heart: he calls them the true Israel of God, the spiritual seed of Abraham, the children of his faith; which was a thousand times greater privilege than to be the children of his flesh: these are the persons interested in his blessings.

Learn hence, That true and inward peace, great and lasting peace, peace with God, and peace with conscience, is the assured portion, and shall be the possession, of all and only those who walk according to the law of God, the rule of the creature. As many as walk according to this rule.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Let no man trouble me. This implies that he had had trouble of some kind, and he earnestly desires that he may have no more. What particular trouble he here refers to is not certainly known, and commentators have not been agreed. It seems to me that the connexion requires us to understand it of the molestation which he had had in regard to his call to the apostolic office, and his authority to explain and defend the religion of the Redeemer. This had been one principal subject of this epistle. His authority had been called in question. He had felt it necessary to go into a vindication of it. His instructions had been departed from on the ground that he was not one of the original apostles, and that he differed from others. See Gal 1:11. Hence all the anxiety and trouble which he had had in regard to their departure from the doctrines which he had taught them. He closes the whole subject of the epistle by this tender and affecting language, the sense of which has been well expressed by Crellius: "I have shown my apostolic authority, and proved that I am commissioned by the Lord Jesus. I have stated and vindicated the great doctrine of justification by faith, and shown that the Mosaic law is not necessarily binding. On these points may I have no more trouble. I have enough for my nature to bear of other kinds. I bear in my body the impressive proofs that I am an apostle, and the sufferings that require all my fortitude to sustain them. These marks, received in the service of the Lord Jesus, and so strongly resembling those which he himself received, prove that I am truly engaged in his cause, and am commissioned by him. These wounds and sorrows are so many, that I have need of the kindness and prayers of Christians, rather than to be compelled to vindicate myself, and to rebuke them for their own wanderings."

For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. The word here rendered "marks" στιγματα means, properly, the marks or brands which are pricked or burnt in upon the body. So Slaves were sometimes branded by their masters, to prevent their escape; and so devotees to an idol god sometimes caused to be impressed on themselves the name or image of the divinity which they adored. Herodotus (ii. 113) mentions a temple of Hercules in Egypt, in which if any slave took refuge, and had the sacred brands or marks impressed on him, στιγματα he thereby devoted himself to the god, and it was not lawful for any one to injure him. Many have supposed that Paul here says, in allusion to such a custom, that he had the name of the Redeemer impressed on his body, and that he regarded himself as devoted to him and his cause. It seems to me that, by these marks or brands, he refers to the weals which he had received in his body; the marks of stripes and sufferings which he endured in the service of the Redeemer. Comp. 2Cor 11:24,25. He had repeatedly been scourged. He bore the marks of that on his person now. They were the evidences that he was devoted to the Saviour. He had received them in his cause; and they were the proofs that he belonged to the Lord Jesus. He had suffered for him, and had suffered much. Having thus suffered, and having thus the evidence that he belonged to the Saviour, and having by his sufferings given ample proof of that to others, he asks to be freed from further molestation. Some had in their body the marks of circumcision, the evidence that they were disciples of the law of Moses; others had perhaps in their persons the image and name of an idol to which they were devoted; but the marks which he bore were the weals which he had received by being again and again whipped publicly in the cause of the Redeemer. To that Redeemer, therefore, he felt himself united, and from that attachment he would not allow himself to be diverted. How often has an old soldier shown his scars with pride and exultation as a proof of his attachment to his country! Numerous scars, the loss of an arm, an eye, or a leg, are thus the much-valued and vaunted pledges of attachment to liberty, and a passport to the confidence of every man who loves his country. "I prize this wound," said Lafayette, when struck in the foot by a musket-ball at

Germantown, "as among the most valued of my honours." So Paul felt in regard to the scourges which he had receipted in the cause of the Lord Jesus. They were his boast and his glory; the pledge that he had been engaged in the cause of the Saviour, and a passport to all who loved the Son of God. Christians now are not subjected to such stripes and scourgings. But let us have some marks of our attachment to the Lord Jesus. By a holy life; by self-denial; by subdued animal affections; by zeal in the cause of truth; by an imitation of the Lord Jesus; and by the marks of suffering in our body, if we should be called to it, let us have some evidence that we are his; and be able to say, when we look on death and eternity, "we bear with us the evidence that we belong to the Son of God." To us, that will be of more value than any ribbon or star indicating elevated rank; more valuable than a ducal coronet; more valuable than the brightest jewel that ever sparkled on the brow of royalty.

Benediction

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the
Ephesians
[Ephesians]

Ephesians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,
To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ
Jesus:
2 Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath
blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

The work which the heart of the apostle was set upon, and that is, the work of blessing God: we bless God one way, he blesses us another; he blesses us imperatoriously, by commanding his blessings upon us; we bless him optatively, when with thankful hearts we praise him, when we wish well to him, and speak well of him.
Lord, what an infinite favour and privilege is this vouchsafed to us, not only to pray to God and receive blessings from him, but to admit us to bless him, and to account himself honoured by us when we acknowledge him the fountain of all blessings and blessedness to us his creatures!

Observe, 2. The title under which our apostle blessed him, namely, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He doth not say now under the gospel, as of old under the law, Blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; or, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; but, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Where note, 1. He is a God to Christ, in relation to his being man: Christ being foreordained before the foundation of the world,to the work and office of a Mediator, 1Pe 1:20 and the Father making a covenant or federal transaction with him from all eternity as Mediator.

Note, 2. He is a Father to Christ, and that both as God and man: a father to him as God, by eternal and ineffable generation, the one being Deus gignens, and the other Deus genitus: thus he was the only begotten Son of the Father: and Father to him as man, by virtue of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, Therefore that holy thing shall be called the Son of God Luke 1:32.

Observe, 3. The reason why under these relations he so affectionately blesses God, namely, for bestowing blessings, spiritual blessings, all spiritual blessings; and this is in or concerning heavenly things, which tend to fit us for heaven and eternal glory.
And lastly, all these blessings are conferred upon us in Christ, he, by his merit, hath purchased them; he, as our head and advocate,in our name has received them; by virtue of our union with whom we have a right upon them, and shall ere long in heaven be fully and finally possessed of them.

Behold here the transcendent bounty and liberality of our heavenly Father. He has more than one blessing for his children, he has all spiritual and heavenly blessings for them, grace on earth, and glory in heaven; grace to enable them to glorify him upon earth, and glory as the reward of grace with himself in heaven.

Rejoice, O Christian, in thy lot and portion; God himself hath but all things, and so hast thou. Has he all spiritual blessings in heaven in full possession? thou hast them also in right and title at present, and ere long shalt enjoy them in full fruitation. Eternally blessed then be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, or in heavenly things, in Christ.

Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This commences a sentence which continues to the close of Verse 12. The length of the periods in the writings of Paul, is one cause of the obscurity of his style, and renders an explanation often difficult. The meaning of this phrase is, that God has laid a foundation for gratitude for what he has done. The ground or reason of the praise here referred to, is that which is stated in the following verses. The leading thing on which the apostle dwells is God's eternal purpose--his everlasting counsel in regard to the salvation of man. Paul breaks out into the exclamation that God is worthy of praise for such a plan, and that his eternal purposes, now manifest to men, give exalted views of the character and glory of God. Most persons suppose the contrary. They feel that the plans of God are dark, and stern, and forbidding, and such as to render his character anything but amiable. They speak of him, when he is referred to as a sovereign, as if he were tyrannical and unjust; and they never connect the idea of that which is amiable and lovely with the doctrine of eternal purposes. There is no doctrine that is usually so unpopular; none that is so much reproached; none that is so much abused. There is none that men desire so much to disbelieve or avoid; none that they are so unwilling to have preached; and none that they are so reluctant to find in the Scriptures. Even many Christians turn away from it with dread; or if they tolerate it, they yet feel that there is something about it that is peculiarly dark and forbidding. Not so felt Paul. He felt that it laid the foundation for eternal praise; that it presented glorious views of God; that it was the ground of confidence and hope; and that it was desirable that Christians should dwell upon it, and praise God for it. Let us feel, therefore, as we enter upon the exposition of this chapter, that God is to be praised for ALL his plans, and that it is possible for Christians to have such views of the doctrine of eternal predestination as to give them most elevated conceptions of the glory of the Divine character. And let us also be willing to know the truth. Let us approach word after word, and phrase after phrase, and verse after verse, in this chapter, willing to know all that God teaches, to believe all that he has revealed, and ready to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ far all that he has done."

Who hath blessed us. Who does Paul mean here by "us?" Does he mean all the world? This cannot be, for all the world are not thus blessed with all spiritual blessings. Does he mean nations? For the same reason this cannot be. Does he mean the Gentiles, in contradistinction from the Jews? Why, then, does he use the word us,including himself, who was a Jew? Does he mean to say that they were blessed with external privileges, and that this was the only object of the eternal purposes of God? This cannot be, for he speaks of "spiritual blessings ;" he speaks of the persons referred to as having "redemption," and "the forgiveness of sins;" as having "obtained an inheritance," and as being sealed with the "Holy Spirit of promise." These appertain not to nations, or to external privileges, or the mere offers of the gospel, but to true Christians; to persons who have been redeemed. The persons referred to by the word "us," are those who are mentioned in Eph 1:1 1 as "saints"--αγιοις; "holy" and "faithful"-- πιστοις--believing, or believers. This observation is important, because it shows that the plan or decree of God had reference to individuals, and not merely to nations. Many have supposed (see Whitby, Dr. A. Clarke, Bloomfield, and others) that the apostle here refers to the Gentiles, and that his object is to show that they were now admitted to the same privileges as the ancient Jews, and that the whole doctrine of predestination here referred to, has relation to that fact. But, I would ask, were there no Jews in the church at Ephesus? See Ac 18:20,24 19:1-8. The matter of fact seems to have been, that Paul was uncommonly successful there among his own countrymen, and that his chief difficulty there arose, not from the Jews, but from the influence of the heathen, Acts 19:24. Besides, what evidence is there that the apostle speaks in this chapter peculiarly of the Gentiles, or that he was writing to that portion of the church at Ephesus which was of Gentile origin? And if he was, why did he name himself among them as one on whom this blessing had been bestowed? The fact is, that this is a mere supposition, resorted to without evidence, and in the face of every fair principle of interpretation, to avoid an unpleasant doctrine. Nothing can be clearer than that Paul meant to write to Christians as such; to speak of privileges which they enjoyed as peculiar to

themselves; and that he had no particular reference to nations, and did not design merely to refer to external privileges.

With all spiritual blessings. Pardon, peace, redemption, adoption, the earnest of the Spirit, etc., referred to in the following verses--blessings which individual Christians enjoy, and not external privileges conferred on nations.

In heavenly places in Christ. The word places is here understood, and is not in the original. It may mean heavenly places, or heavenly things. The word places does not express the best sense. The idea seems to be, that God has blessed us in Christ in regard to heavenly subjects or matters. In Eph 1:20, the word "places" seems to be inserted with more propriety. The same phrase occurs again in Eph 2:6, 3:10; and it is remarkable that it should occur in the same elliptical form four times in this one epistle, and, I believe, in no other part of the writings of Paul. Our translators have, in each instance, supplied the word "places," as denoting the rank or station of Christians, of the angels, and of the Saviour, to each of whom it is applied. The phrase probably means, in things pertaining to heaven; fitted to prepare us for heaven; and tending toward heaven. It probably refers here to everything that was heavenly in its nature, or that had relation to heaven, whether gifts or graces. As the apostle is speaking, however, of the mass of Christians on whom these things had been bestowed, I rather suppose that he refers to what are called Christian graces, than to the extraordinary endowments bestowed on the few. The sense is, that in Christ, i.e., through Christ, or by means of him, God had bestowed all spiritual blessings that were fitted to prepare for heaven--such as pardon, adoption, the illumination of the Spirit, etc.

4 according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

According as. The importance of this verse will render proper a somewhat minute examination of the words and phrases of which it is composed. The general sense of the passage is, that these blessings pertaining to heaven were bestowed upon Christians in accordance with an eternal purpose. They were not conferred by

chance or hap-hazard. They were the result of intention and design on the part of God. Their value was greatly enhanced from the fact that God had designed from all eternity to bestow them, and that they come to us as the result of his everlasting plan. It was not a recent plan; it was not an after-thought; it was not by mere chance; it was not by caprice; it was the fruit of an eternal counsel. Those blessings had all the value, and all the assurance of permanency, which must result from that fact. The phrase "according as" καθως--implies that these blessings were in conformity with that eternal plan, and have flowed to us as the expression of that plan. They are limited by that purpose, for it marks and measures all. It was as God had chosen that it should be, and had appointed in his eternal purpose.

He hath chosen us. The word "us" here shows that the apostle had reference to individuals, and not to communities. It includes Paul himself as one of the "chosen," and those whom he addressed--the mingled Gentile and Jewish converts in Ephesus. That it must refer to individuals is clear. Of no community, as such, can it be said, that it was "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy." It is not true of the Gentile world as such, nor of any one of the nations making up the Gentile world. The word rendered here "hath chosen" - εξελεξατο--is from a word meaning to lay out together, (Passow,) to choose out, to select. It has the idea of making a choice or selection among different objects or things. It is applied to things, as in Lk 10:42. "Mary hath chosen that good part;"--she has made a choice, or selection of it, or has shown a preference for it. 1Cor 1:27: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world ;" he has preferred to make use of them among all the conceivable things which might have been employed "to confound the wise." Comp. Acts 1:2,24, 6:5, 15:22,25. It denotes to choose out with the accessary idea of kindness or favour. Mk 13:20. "For the elect's sake whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." Jn 13:18, "I know whom I have chosen." Acts 13:17. "The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers;" that is, selected them from the nations to accomplish important purposes. This is evidently the sense of the word in the passage before us. It means to make a selection or choice, with the idea of favour or love, and with a view

to impart important benefits on those whom he chose. The idea of making some distinction between them and others, is essential to a correct understanding of the passage-- since there can be no choice where no such distinction is made. He who chooses one out of many things makes a difference, or evinces a preference--no matter what the ground or reason of his doing it may be. Whether this refers to communities and nations, or to individuals, still it is true that a distinction is made, or a preference given of one over another. It may be added, that so far as justice is concerned, it makes no difference whether it refers to nations or to individuals. If there is injustice in choosing an individual to favour, there cannot be less in choosing a nation--for a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals. Every objection which has ever been made to the doctrine of election as it relates to individuals, will apply with equal force to the choice of a nation to peculiar privileges. If a distinction is made, it may be made with as much propriety in respect to individuals as to nations.

In him. In Christ. The choice was not without reference to any means of saving them; it was not a mere purpose to bring a certain number to heaven; it was with reference to the mediation of the Redeemer, and his work. It was a purpose that they should be saved by him, and share the benefits of the atonement. The whole choice and purpose of salvation had reference to him, and out of him no one was chosen to life, and no one out of him will be saved.

Before the foundation of the world. This is a very important phrase in determining the time when the choice was made. It was not an after-thought. It was not commenced in time. The purpose was far back in the ages of eternity. But what is the meaning of the phrase "before the foundation of the world?" Dr. Clarke supposes that it means "from the commencement of the religious system of the Jews, which," says he, "the phrase some- times means." Such principles of interpretation are they compelled to resort to who endeavour to show that this refers to a national election to privileges, and who deny that it refers to individuals. On such principles the Bible may be made to signify any- thing and everything. Dr. Chandler, who also supposes that it refers to

nations, admits, however, that the word "foundation" means the beginning of anything; and that the phrase here means, "before the world began." There is scarcely any phrase in the New Testament which is more clear in its signification than this. The word rendered "foundation"--καταβολη--means, properly, a laying down, a founding, a foundation--as where the foundation of a building is laid; and the phrase "before the foundation of the world, " clearly means before the world was made, or before the work of creation. See Mt 13:35, 25:34, Lk 11:50, Heb 9:26, Rev 13:8, in all which places the phrase "the foundation of the world" means the beginning of human affairs; the beginning of the world; the beginning of history, etc. Thus, in Jn 17:24, the Lord Jesus says, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," i.e. from eternity, or before the work of creation commenced. Thus Peter says (1Pet 1:20) of the Saviour, "who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." It was the purpose of God before the worlds were made, to send him to save lost men. Comp. Rev 17:8. Nothing can be clearer than that the phrase before us must refer to a purpose that was formed before the world was made. It is not a temporary arrangement; it has not grown up under the influence of vacillating purposes; it is not a plan newly formed, or changed with each coming generation, or variable like the plans of men. It has all the importance, dignity, and assurances of stability which necessarily result from a purpose that has been eternal in the mind of God. It may be observed here,

(1.) that if the plan was formed "before the foundation of the world," all objections to the doctrine of an eternal plan are removed. If the plan was formed before the world, no matter whether a moment, an hour, a year, or millions of years, the plan is equally fixed, and the event equally necessary. All the objections which will lie against an eternal plan, will lie against a plan formed a day or an hour before the event. The one interferes with our freedom of action as much as the other.

(2.) If the plan was formed "before the foundation of the world," it was eternal. God has no new plan. He forms no new schemes. He is not changing and vacillating. If we can ascertain what is the plan

of God at any time, we can ascertain what his eternal plan was with reference to the event. It has always been the same-- for "he is of ONE MIND, and who can turn him?" Job 23:13. In reference to the plans and purposes of the Most High, there is nothing better settled than that WHAT HE ACTUALLY DOES, HE ALWAYS MEANT TO Do--which is the doctrine of eternal decrees---and the whole of it.

That we should be holy. Paul proceeds to state the object for which God had chosen his people. It is not merely that they should enter into heaven. It is not that they may live in sin. It is not that they may flatter themselves that they are safe, and then live as they please. The tendency among men has always been to abuse the doctrine of predestination and election; to lead men to say that if all things are fixed there is no need of effort; that if God has an eternal plan, no matter how men live, they will be saved if he has elected them, and that at all events they cannot change that plan, and they may as well enjoy life by indulgence in sin. The apostle Paul held no such view of the doctrine of predestination. In his apprehension it is a doctrine fitted to excite the gratitude of Christians; and the whole tendency and design of the doctrine, according to him, is to make men holy, and without blame before God in love.

And without blame before him in love. The expression "in love," is probably to be taken in connexion with the following verse, and should be tendered, "In love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." It is all to be traced to the love of God.

(1.) It was love for us which prompted to it.

(2.) It is the highest expression of love to be ordained to eternal life --for what higher love could God show us?

(3.) It is love on his part, because we had no claim to it, and had not deserved it. If this be the correct view, then the doctrine of predestination is not inconsistent with the highest moral excellence in the Divine character, and should never be represented as the

offspring of partiality and injustice. Then, too, we should give thanks that "God has, in love, predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Our apostle having in the former verse offered up a very solemn thanksgiving to God, for blessing the Ephesians with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, he comes in this verse to discover and declare the fountain from whence all these spiritual blessings did proceed and flow, namely, from God's gracious purpose in our election before all time; He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, &c.

Where note, 1. The favour vouchsafed, election; and the fruit and product of that favour, holiness of life and conversation.

Note, 1. The favour and privilege vouchsafed by God, He hath chosen. This denotes the freeness of the favour: he chose when he might have refused. His book of life is a book of love; the cause of our love is in the object; the reason of God's love is in himself.

Note, 2. The subject of this favour, He hath chosen us, us Gentiles. The Jews much gloried in their being a chosen generation, a peculiar people; we Gentiles are a chosen generation also; they were beloved for their father's sake, Abraham's, we for Christ's sake.

Note, 3. The antiquity of this favour: Before the foundation of the world: that is, from all eternity. The apostle, to take the Jews off from boasting, as they did, that the world was made for their sake, and that the Messiah from the beginning of the world did enter into a covenant with God to redeem them especially, declares, that the despised Gentiles were elected and chosen by God to be an holy people to himself; and all this, in the purpose of God, before the foundations of the world were laid.

Note, 4. God is said to have chosen us in Christ, as our head. Consider Christ as God, so we are chosen by him. I know whom I

have chosen, says Christ. Consider him as a Mediator; so we are chosen in him, not for him: because, not Christ's undertaking for us, but the Father's good pleasure towards us, was the spring and fontal cause of our election. The truth is, God was so far from choosing the Gentiles out of faith foreseen, that he did not choose them for the sake and obedience of Christ foreseen; God did not love us from eternity because Christ was to die for us in time, but because he loved us with an everlasting love; therefore in the fulness of time, Christ was sent to die for us: so that the death of Christ was the fruit and effect, but not the cause of our election. No other reason, says bishop Fell upon the place, can be assigned of this privilege, but the good pleasure of God; and if Christ's sufferings were not the cause of our election, much less our own deserving, as he adds there; Almighty God not choosing us because worthy, but to make us worthy by choosing us.

Note, 5. The effect and fruit, the benefit and end, of this free and ancient favour: That we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Holiness is here declared not to be the cause, but the effect of our election: God chose the Gentiles from eternity to be his people, not because they were holy, they were far enough from that, being afar off from God, but designing that they thus graciously chosen should be holy; initially, progressively, and perseveringly holy in this life, and perfectly holy in the next; yet arriving at such a perfection here in holiness as to denominate us blameless in the account of God, by virtue of our faith in Christ, and love to one another.

From the whole learn, 1. That God's bestowing all spiritual blessings upon us in time, is the effect and fruit of his electing love from all eternity; He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, according as he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Learn, 2. That God hath chosen none to happiness and glory hereafter, but only such as are holy in conversation here, holy in the habitual frame and disposition of their hearts, and in the general course and tenor of their lives and actions.

Learn, 3. That such as are holy before God, will endeavour to walk unblamably in the sight of man, in the exercise of love, and in the practice of all the duties of the second table, which are at once evidences of our sincerity, and an ornament to our profession; That we should be holy, and without blame, before him in love.

5 having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Having predestinated us. On the meaning of the word here used, Rom 1:4 Rom 8:29. The word used (προοριζω) means, properly, to set bounds before; and then to predetermine. There is the essential idea of setting bounds or limits, and of doing this beforehand. It is not that God determined to do it when it was actually done, but that he intended to do it beforehand. No language could express this more clearly, and I suppose this interpretation is generally admitted. Even by those who deny the doctrine of particular election, it is not denied that the word here used means to predetermine; and they maintain that the sense is, that God had predetermined to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people. Admitting, then, that the meaning is to predestinate in the proper sense, the only question is, who are predestinated? To whom does the expression apply? Is it to nations, or to individuals? I In reply to this, in addition to the remarks already made, I would observe,

(1.) that there is no specification of nations here as such, no mention of the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews.

(2.) Those referred to were those included in the word "us," among whom Paul was one--but Paul was not a heathen.

(3.) The same objection will lie against the doctrine of predestinating nations which will lie against predestinating individuals.

(4.) Nations axe made up of individuals, and the predetermination must have had some reference to individuals. What is a nation but a collection of individuals? There is no such abstract being or thing as a nation; and if there was any purpose in regard to a nation, it

must have had some reference to the individuals composing it. He that would act on the ocean, must act on the drops of water that make up the ocean; for besides the collection of drops of water there is no ocean. He that would remove a mountain, must act on the particles of matter that compose that mountain; for there is no such thing as an abstract mountain. Perhaps there was never a greater illusion than to suppose that all difficulty is removed in regard to the doctrine of election and predestination, by saying that it refers to nations. What difficulty is lessened? What is gained by it? How does it make God appear more amiable and good? Does it render him less partial to suppose that he has made a difference among nations, than to suppose he has made a difference among individuals? Does it remove any difficulty about the offer of salvation, to suppose that he has granted the knowledge of his truth to some nations, and withheld it from others? The truth is, that all the reasoning which has been founded on this supposition, has been merely throwing dust in the eyes. If there is any well-founded objection to the doctrine of decrees or predestination, it is to the doctrine at all, alike in regard to nations and individuals, and there are just the same difficulties in the one case as in the other. But there is no real difficulty in either. Who could worship or honour a God who had no plan, or purpose, or intention in what he did? Who can believe that the universe was formed and is governed without design? Who can doubt that what God does he always meant to do? When, therefore, he converts and saves a soul, it is clear that he always intended to do it. He has no new plan. It is not an after-thought. It is not the work of chance. If I can find out any thing that God has done, I have the most certain conviction that he always meant to do it--and this is all that is intended by the doctrine of election or predestination. What God does, he always meant to do. What he permits, he always meant to permit. I may add further, that if it is right to do it, it was right to intend to do it. If there is no injustice or partiality in the act itself, there is no injustice or partiality in the intention to perform it. If it is right to save a soul, it was always right to intend to save it. If it is right to condemn a sinner to woe, it was right to intend to do it. Let us, then, look at the thing itself; and if that is not wrong, we should not blame the purpose to do it, however long it has been cherished. Unto the

adoption, etc. Jn 1:12; Rom 8:15. According to the good pleasure of his will. The word rendered "good pleasure"--(ευδοκια)--means a being well pleased; delight in any thing, favour, good-will, Lk 2:14, Php 1:15. Comp. Lk 12:32. Then it denotes purpose, or will, the idea of benevolence being included. Robinson. Rosenmuller renders the phrase, "from his most benignant decree." The evident object of the apostle is to state why God chose the heirs of salvation. It was done as it seemed good to him in the circumstances of the case. It was not that man had any control over him, or that man was consulted in the determination, or that it was based on the good works of man, real or foreseen. But we are not to suppose that there were no good reasons for what he has thus done. Convicts are frequently pardoned by an executive. He does it according to his own will, or as seems good in his sight. He is to be the judge, and no one has a right to control him in doing it. It may seem to be entirely arbitrary. The executive may not have communicated the reasons why he did it, either to those who are pardoned, or to the other prisoners, or to any one else. But we are not to infer that there was no reason for doing it. If he is a wise magistrate, and worthy of his station, it is to be presumed that there were reasons which, if known, would be satisfactory to all. But those reasons he is under no obligations to make known. Indeed, it might be improper that they should be known. Of that he is the best judge. Meantime, however, we may see what would be the effect in those who were not forgiven. It would excite, very likely, their hatred, and they would charge him with partiality or with tyranny. But they should remember that whoever might be pardoned, and on whatever ground it might be done, they could not complain. They would suffer no more than they deserve. But what if, when the act of pardon was made known to one part, it was offered to the others also on certain plain and easy conditions? Suppose it should appear that while the executive meant, for wise but concealed reasons, to forgive a part, he had also determined to offer forgiveness to all. And suppose that they were in fact disposed in the highest degree to neglect it, and that no inducements or arguments could prevail on them to accept of it. Who then could blame the executive? Now this is about the case in regard to God, and the doctrine of election. All men were guilty and condemned.

For wise reasons, which God has not communicated to us, he determined to bring a portion at least of the human race to salvation. This he did not intend to leave to chance and hap-hazard. He saw that all would of themselves reject the offer, and that unless some efficient means were used, the blood of the atonement would be shed in vain. He did not make known to men who they were that he meant to save, nor the reason why they particularly were to be brought to heaven. Meantime he meant to make the offer universal; to make the terms as easy as possible, and thus to take away every ground of complaint. If men will not accept of pardon; if they prefer their sins; if nothing can induce them to come and be saved, why should they complain? If the doors of a prison are open, and the chains of the prisoners are knocked off, and they will not come out, why should they complain that others are in fact willing to come out and be saved? Let it be borne in mind, that the purposes of God correspond exactly to facts as they actually occur, and much of the difficulty is taken away. If in the facts there is no just ground of complaint, there can be none, because it was the intention of God that the facts should be so.

That is, "having predestinated us Gentiles, who in the esteem of the Jews were accounted dogs, to be his adopted sons and daughters, in and by Jesus Christ, in whom he hath made us accepted, to the abundant praise and glory of his free grace and mercy."

Observe here, 1. That none are the children of God by nature: none are born sons, but made sons; not of their own, but God's making; and in order to this glorious privilege, we were predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.

Observe, 2. The attribute mentioned here by the apostle, which moved God to predestinate us to the adoption of children: it was the glory of his grace, he mentions not the glory of his holiness, the glory of his justice, or the glory of his power, because the glory of his power is manifested in making of the world, the glory of his holiness in making of his law, the glory of his justice in turning the transgressors of that law into hell; but his grace he shows no where

so much as in the predestination ofhis children, and in what he hath predestinated them unto; he showeth indeed all his attributes herein, but grace over and above all the rest.

Observe 3. The effect and fruit of this privilege, namely, of our being predestinated to the adoption of children, and that is, our being made accepted in Christ the Beloved; the word is properly rendered, He hath made us dear, precious, and delightful, to himself; or in one word, He hath ingratiated us.

Here note, That as Jesus Christ is in an eminent manner beloved of God and accepted with him, so in like manner all God's adopted children do, and shall, find favour with God, and acceptance through Christ: He hath made us freely accepted in the Beloved.

6 to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved:

To the praise of the glory of his grace. This is a Hebraism, and means the same as "to his glorious grace." The object was to excite thanksgiving for his glorious grace manifested in electing love. The real tendency of the doctrine, in minds that are properly affected, is not to excite opposition to God, or to lead to the charge of partiality, tyranny, or severity; it is to excite thankfulness and praise. In accordance with this, Paul introduced the statement (Eph 1:3) by saying that God was to be regarded as "blessed" for forming and executing this plan. The meaning is, that the doctrine of predestination and election lays the foundation of adoring gratitude and praise. This will appear plain by a few considerations.

(1.) It is the only foundation of hope for man. If he were left to himself all the race would reject the offers of mercy, and would perish. History, experience, and the Bible alike demonstrate this.

(2.) All the joys which any of the human race have, are to be traced to the purpose of God to bestow them. Man has no power of originating any of them, and ff God had not intended to confer them, none of them would have been possessed.

(3.) All these favours are conferred on those who had no claim on God. The Christian who is pardoned had no claim on God for pardon; he who is admitted to heaven could urge no claim for such a privilege and honour; he who enjoys comfort and peace in the hour of death, enjoys it only through the glorious grace of God.

(4.) All that is done by election is fitted to excite praise. Election is to life, and pardon, and holiness, and heaven. But why should not a man praise God for these things? God chooses men to be holy, not sinful; to be happy, not miserable; to be pure, not impure; to be saved, not to be lost. For these things he should be praised. He should be praised that he has not left the whole race to wander away and die. Had he chosen but one to eternal life, that one should praise him, and all the holy universe should join in the praise. Should he now see it to be consistent to choose but one of the fallen spirits, and to make him pure, and to readmit him to heaven, that one spirit would have occasion for eternal thanks, and all heaven might join in his praises. How much more is praise due to him, when the number chosen is not one or a few, but when millions which no man can number, shall be found to be chosen to life, Rev 7:9.

(5.) The doctrine of predestination to life has added no pang of sorrow to any one of the human race. It has made millions happy who would not otherwise have been, but not one miserable. It is not a choice to sorrow, it is a choice to joy and peace.

(6.) No one has a right to complain of it. Those who are chosen assuredly should not complain of the grace which has made them what they are, and which is the foundation of all their hopes. And they who are not chosen have no right to complain; for

(a.) they have no claim to life.

(b.) They are, in fact; unwilling to come. They have no desire to be Christians and to be saved. Nothing can induce them to forsake their sins and come to the Saviour. Why, then, should they complain if others are in fact willing to be saved? Why should a

man complain for being left to take his own course, and to walk in his own way? Mysterious, therefore, as is the doctrine of predestination, and fearful and inscrutable as it is in some of its aspects, yet, in a just view of it, it is fitted to excite the highest expressions of thanksgiving, and to exalt God in the apprehension of man. He who has been redeemed and saved by the love of God; who has been pardoned and made pure by mercy; on whom the eye of compassion has been tenderly fixed, and for whom the Son of God has died, has abundant cause for thanksgiving and praise. Wherein he hath made us accepted. Has regarded us as the objects of favour and complacency. In the beloved. In the Lord Jesus Christ, the well-beloved Son of God. Mt 3:17. He has chosen us in him, and it is through him that these mercies have been conferred on us.

7 in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

The forgiveness of sins. We obtain through his blood, or through the atonement he has made, the forgiveness of sins. We are not to suppose that this is all the benefit which we receive from his death, or that this is all that constitutes redemption. It is the main, and perhaps the most important thing. But we also obtain the hope of heaven, the influences of the Holy Spirit, grace to guide us and to support us in trial, peace in death, and perhaps many more benefits. Still forgiveness is so prominent and important, and the apostle has mentioned that as if it were all.

8 wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Learn, That the gospel's method for recovering and saving lost sinners by a Redeemer, was a mystery, a hidden mystery: it was hid where all the world could never have found it, where angels and men could never discover it; it was hid in God, in his breast and bosom, in his heart and thoughts; it was hid from angels; nay, the churches knew it before the angels; yea, the angels learnt it from the churches, Eph 3:10.

Unto principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God: and as it was hid from angels, so from the wise men of the world, 1Cor 2:8. "We preach the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew;" nay, the gospel was hid from all the saints of the Old Testament, comparatively, not absolutely, with respect to that clear revelation which we have of the gospel now, it may be said to be hidden from them then.

O, what obligation then do we lie under, who live under the dispensation of the gospel, to acknowledge what an infinite favour it is from God clearly to know the mystery of his will, concerning the redemption and salvation of poor lost sinners by a Mediator! God has now revealed it, and he desires all may know and receive the revelation of it, namely, the hidden mystery of his will.
Observe, lastly, What was the impelling and moving cause of God's making known the mystery of his will by the gospel, and his enlightening the understandings of men savingly to apprehend it, proceeds entirely from the purpose and pleasure of his own good will: Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.

Such was the doctrine that God meant to call the Gentiles, which was long concealed, at least in part, and which was not fully made known until the Saviour came, and which had been till that time a mystery-- concealed truth-- though, when it was revealed, there was nothing incomprehensible in it. Thus in Col 1:26, "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." So it was in regard to the doctrine of election. It was a mystery until it was made known by the actual conversion of those whom God had chosen. So in regard to the incarnation of the Redeemer; the atonement; the whole plan of salvation. Over all these great points there was a veil thrown and men did not understand them until God revealed them. When they were revealed, the mystery was removed, and men were able to see clearly the manifestation of the will of God.

10 that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him.

That in the dispensation. The word here rendered "dispensation," οικονομιαν, means, properly, the management of household affairs. Then it means stewardship or administration; a dispensation or arrangement of things; a scheme or plan. The meaning here is, that this plan was formed in order (εις) or unto this end, that in the full arrangement of times, or in the arrangements completing the filling up of the times, God might gather together in one all things. Tindal renders it, "to have it declared when the time was full come," etc.

The fulness of times. When the times were fully completed; when all the periods should have passed by which he had prescribed, or judged necessary to the completion of the object. The period referred to here is that when all things shall be gathered together in the Redeemer at the winding up of human affairs, or the consummation of all things. The arrangement was made with reference to that, and embraced all things which conduced to that. The plan stretched from before "the foundation of the world" to the period when all times should be completed; and of course all the events occurring in that intermediate period were embraced in the plan.

He might gather together in one. The word here used--ανακεφαλαιοω means, literally, to sum up, to recapitulate, as an orator does at the close of his discourse. It is from κεφαλη the head; or κεφαλαιον, the sum, the chief thing, the main point. In the New Testament the word means to collect under one head, or to comprehend several things under one. Romm 13:9: "It is briefly comprehended, i.e. summed up under this one precept," sc., love. In the passage before us, it means that God would sum up, or comprehend all things in heaven and earth through the Christian dispensation; he would make one empire under one head, with common feelings, and under the same laws. The reference is to the unity which will hereafter exist in the kingdom of God, when all his friends on earth and in heaven shall be united, and all shall have

a common head. Now there is alienation. The earth has been separated from other worlds by rebellion. It has gone off into apostasy and sin. It refuses to acknowledge the Great Head to which other worlds are subject, and the object is to restore it to its proper place, so that there shall be one great and united kingdom.

All things. ταπαντα. It is remarkable that Paul has here used a word which is in the neuter gender. It is not all persons, all angels, or all men, or all the elect, but all things. Bloomfield and others suppose that persons are meant, and that the phrase is used for τουςπαντες. But it seems to me that Paul did not use this word without design. All things are placed under Christ, (Eph 1:22, Mt 28:18,) and the design of God is to restore harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder not only in mind, but in matter. The world is disarranged. The effects of transgression are seen everywhere; and the object of the plan of redemption is to put things on their pristine footing, and restore them as they were at first. Everything is therefore put under the Lord Jesus, and all things are to be brought under his control, so as to constitute one vast harmonious empire. The amount of the declaration here is, that there is hereafter to be one kingdom, in which there shall be no jar or alienation; that the now separated kingdoms of heaven and earth shah be united under one head, and that henceforward all shall be harmony and love. The things which are to be united in Christ, are those which are "in heaven and which are on earth." Nothing is said of hell. Of course this passage cannot teach the doctrine of universal salvation, since there is one world which is not to have a part in this ultimate union.

In Christ. By means of Christ, or under him, as the great Head and King. He is to be the great Agent in effecting this, and he is to preside over this united kingdom. In accordance with this view the heavenly inhabitants, the angels as well as the redeemed, are uniformly represented as uniting in the same worship, and as acknowledging the Redeemer as their common head and king, Rev 5:9,10,11,12.

Both which are in heaven. Marg. as in Gr., in the heavens. Many different opinions have been formed of the meaning of this

expression. Some suppose it to mean the saints in heaven, who died before the coming of the Saviour; and some that it refers to the Jews, designated as the heavenly people, in contradistinction from the Gentiles, as having nothing divine and heavenly in them, and as being of the earth. The more simple and obvious interpretation is however, without doubt, the correct one, and this is to suppose that it refers to the holy inhabitants of other worlds. The object of the plan of salvation is to produce a harmony between them and the redeemed on earth, or to produce, out of all, one great and united kingdom. In doing this, it is not necessary to suppose that any change is to be produced in the inhabitants of heaven. All the change is to occur among those on earth, and the object is to make, out of all, one harmonious and glorious empire.

And which are on earth. The redeemed on earth. The object is to bring them into harmony with the inhabitants of heaven. This is the great object proposed by the plan of salvation. It is to found one glorious and eternal kingdom, that shall comprehend all holy beings on earth and all in heaven. There is now discord and disunion. Man is separated from God, and from all holy beings. Between him and every holy being there is by nature discord and alienation. Unrenewed man has no sympathy with the feelings and work of the angels; no love for their employment; no desire to be associated with them. Nothing can be more unlike than the customs, feelings, laws, and habits which prevail on earth, from those which prevail in heaven. But the object of the plan of salvation is to restore harmony to those alienated communities, and produce eternal concord and love. Learn hence,

(1.) The greatness and glory of the plan of salvation. It is no trifling undertaking to reconcile worlds, and of such discordant materials to found one great, and glorious, and eternal empire.

(2.) The reason of the interest which angels feel in the plan of redemption, 1Pet 1:12. They are deeply concerned in the redemption of those who, with them, are to constitute that great kingdom which is to be eternal. Without envy at the happiness of others; without any feeling that the accession of others will

diminish their felicity or glory, they wait to hail the coming of others, and rejoice to receive even one who comes to be united to their number.

(3.) This plan was worthy of the efforts of the Son of God. To restore harmony in heaven and earth; to prevent the evils of alienation and discord; to rear one immense and glorious kingdom, was an object worthy the incarnation of the Son of God.

(4.) The glory of the Redeemer. He is to be exalted as the Head of this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and all the redeemed on earth and the angelic hosts shall acknowledge him as their common Sovereign and Head.

(5.) This is the greatest and most important enterprize on earth. It should engage every heart, and enlist the powers of every soul. It should be the earnest desire of all to swell the numbers of those who shall constitute this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and to bring as many as possible of the human race into union with the holy inhabitants of the other world.

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

Of him who worketh all things. Of God, the universal Agent. The affirmation here is not merely that God accomplishes the designs of salvation according to the counsel of his own will, but that he does everything. His agency is not confined to one thing, or to one class of objects. Every object and event is under his control, and is in accordance with his eternal plan. The word rendered worketh ενεργεω---means, to work, to be active, to produce, Eph 1:20; Gal 2:8, Php 2:13. A universal agency is ascribed to him. "The same God which worketh all in all," 1Cor 12:6. He has an agency in causing the emotions of our hearts. "God, who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Php 2:13. He has an agency in distributing to men their various allotments and endowments. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will," 1Cor 12:11. The agency of God is seen everywhere. Every leaf, flower, rose-bud, spire of grass; every

sunbeam, and every flash of lightning; every cataract and every torrent, all declare his agency; and there is not an object that we see that does not bespeak the control of an all-present God. It would be impossible to affirm more explicitly, that God's agency is universal, than Paul does in the passage before us.

The general doctrine is, that God works in all things, and controls all; but that his agency everywhere is in accordance with the laws and nature of that part of his kingdom where it is exerted. By this simple principle we may secure the two great points which it is desirable to secure on this subject--

(1.) the doctrine of the universal agency of God; and

(2.) the doctrine of the freedom and responsibility of man.

After the counsel of his own will. Not by consulting his creatures, or conforming to their views, but by his own views of what is proper and right. We are not to suppose that this is by mere will, as if it were arbitrary, or that he determines anything without good reason. The meaning is, that his purpose is determined by what he views to be right, and without consulting his creatures or conforming to their views. His dealings often seem to us to be arbitrary. We are incapable of perceiving the reasons of what he does. He makes those his friends who we should have supposed would have been the last to have become Christians. He leaves those who seem to us to be on the borders of the kingdom, and they remain unmoved and uneffected. But we are not thence to suppose that he is arbitrary. In every instance, we are to believe that there is a good reason for what he does, and one which we may be permitted yet to see, and in which we shall wholly acquiesce. The phrase "counsel of his own will" is remarkable. It is designed to express in the strongest manner the fact that it is not by human counsel or advice.

12 that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

With that holy Spirit of promise. With the Holy Spirit that was promised. See Jn 16:7-11,13; 15:26, 14:16,17. It is not improbable, I think, that the apostle here refers particularly to the occurrence of which we have a record in Acts 19:1-6. Paul, it is there said, having passed through the upper provinces of Asia Minor, came to Ephesus. He found certain persons who were the disciples of John, and he asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they "believed," Eph 1:2. They replied that they had not heard whether there was any Holy Ghost, and that they had been baptized unto John's baptism. Paul taught them the true nature of the baptism of John; explained to them the Christian system; and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and "the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

14 which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Until the redemption. Rom 8:23. The meaning here is, we have the Holy Spirit as the pledge that that shall be ours, and the Holy Spirit will be imparted to us until we enter on that inheritance. Of the purchased possession. Heaven, purchased for us by the death of the Redeemer. The word here used--περιποιησις--occurs in the following places in the New Testament: 1Thes 5:9, rendered "to obtain salvation;" 2Thes 2:14 to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord;" Heb 10:39, "to the saving of the soul;" 1Pet 2:9, "a peculiar people;" literally, a people of acquirement to himself; and in the passage before us. It properly means, an acquisition, an obtaining, a laying up. Here it means, the complete deliverance from sin, and the eternal salvation acquired for us by Christ. The influence of the Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying us, comforting us in trials, and sustaining us in afflictions, is the pledge that the redemption is yet to be wholly ours.

After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Where note, That the privilege of sealing always follows the duty of believing, never goes before it. Sealing doth imply that precious and excellent esteem which they have with God. Nothing but what

is precious is sealed by us. Who seals up dung and pebbles in a bag? Believers are God's jewels, his treasure, therefore sealed. Sealing also is for safety and security, for discrimination, and for confirmation. The Holy Spirit, by sanctifying of us, doth discriminate and distinguish us from the rest of the world, doth secure and preserve us from the fatal danger of a ruinous apostasy, and doth also confirm our hopes of the glorious inheritance.

Observe, 5. That the Holy Spirit is given to believers in the nature of an earnest; sanctifying grace, wrought in the heart here, is a sure earnest of glory hereafter; which is the earnest of our inheritance. An earnest binds the bargain, and is a part of the bargain, if it be but a shilling given as an earnest, it secures a contract for a thousand pounds. Believers are to consider and look upon grace, not barely as grace but as an earnest of glory.

O, be thankful to God for his sanctifying Spirit, not only as subduing thy corruptions, but as a pledge and earnest of a glorious inheritance. It is a great comfort to find grace in the soul, as sanctifying, as quickening, and renewing; but a greater matter of rejoicing to find it also there as witnessing, as sealing and confirming, as a part of our inheritance in glory, and as a pledge and earnest of the whole.

Observe, 6. That the Holy Spirit of God is God. To sanctify, to seal, to confirm our hearts, are divine operations: he that doth these, must be a divine Person. True; how the Spirit of God is God, and how he proceedeth from the Father and Son, cannot be comprehended by our reason and shallow understandings. No wonder that the doctrine of the Trinity is inexplicible, seeing the nature of God is incomprehensible; our faith, then, must assent to what our reason cannot comprehend, otherwise we can never be Christians.

Observe lastly, That heaven is here called a possession, and a purchased possession, that is, by the blood of Christ. A king's ransom we account a vast sum; O, what will our ransom by the blood of the Son of God come to! Grace is purchased, and glory is purchased, both by the blood of Christ. Lord! what will that glory come to! In eternity we shall admire it, but never fully comprehend it.

Prayer for Knowledge and Understanding

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and
love unto all the saints,
16 cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my
prayers;
17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give
unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of
him:

And revelation. That is, revealing to you more and more of the character of the Redeemer, and of the nature and results of his work. It is probable here that by the word "Spirit" the apostle refers to the Holy Spirit as the Author of all wisdom, and the Revealer of all truth. His prayer is, that God would grant to them the Holy Spirit to make them wise, and to reveal his will to them.

In the knowledge of him. Marg., for the acknowledgment. That is, in order that you may more fully acknowledge him, or know him more intimately and thoroughly. They had already made high attainments, (Eph 1:15,) but Paul felt that they might make still higher; and the idea here is, that however far Christians may have advanced in knowledge and in love, there is an unfathomed depth of knowledge which they may still explore, and which they should be exhorted still to attempt to fathom. How far was Paul from supposing that the Ephesians had attained to perfection!

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know
what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his
inheritance in the saints,

Our apostle proceeds in this verse, and to the end of the chapter, in a very affectionate and fervent prayer, on the behalf of the

Ephesians; namely, that the blessed Spirit of God, the author of all divine illumination, would farther open the eyes of their understanding, formerly shut up in heathenish blindness and darkness, that so they might know,

1. What is the hope of his calling; that is, what high and glorious hopes he had called them unto: for hope here is taken for the object of hope, or the great and good things hoped for: and it is said to be the hope of their calling, because, at their conversion from heathenism to Christianity, they were entitled to, and called to the expection of, these great and good things, which were the object of hope.

Where note, The Ephesians' deplorable state before conversion, they were without hope; and the happy exchange of their condition by embracing Christianity, they were begotten to a lively hope of glorious things, which before they were wholly ignorant of, and strangers to. As a sinner's misery lies not in what feels, but what he fears; so a Christian's happiness consists not in what he has in hand, but what he has in hope: May you know what is the hope of his calling.

The second blessing which he prays for on their behalf, is, that they may know what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; that is, say some, What an exceeding glorious thing it is to be a Christian! What an exceeding glory redounds to God, by his people, which are his inheritance! say others. But most understand the words as a description of heaven, which is here called an inheritance, a rich inheritance, a glorious inheritance, in or among the saints; that is the saints in heaven, who hold that in possession which the saints on earth have in hope and expectation.

Learn hence, That heaven is the saints' inheritance. An inheritance is an estate that belongs to children, to all such, and none but such. It is an undeserved possession, and it is a sure and certain possession.

Here note, That Almighty God is said in scripture to make heaven as sure to his saints, by all sorts of ways, as a man can make an inheritance sure to his child. It is theirs by promise, it is theirs by purchase, it is theirs by gift, it is theirs by bequest; it is given by will to them, I appoint by will unto you a kingdom. Luke 22:29
Can any thing be surer, or more ways made secure to any person, than this inheritance of heaven is to the holy servants of God? But, farther, the apostle calls it the riches of the glory of his inheritance; that is, a very rich and exceedingly glorious inheritance: such abundant riches and transcendant glory are found in it, as overwhelm the mind of man that here enters upon the close contemplation of it.

Heaven will appear to be a glorious inheritance, if we consider the glory of the place, the glory of the company, the glory of the employment, and the glory that will be then and there upon our souls and bodies. Lord, make us meet for this glorious inheritance of thy saints in light!

The next particular which the aposstle prays for, on behalf of the converted Ephesians, is this, that they might know or sensibly apprehend, the greatness of that divine power which God had exerted; first, in their conversion; next, in carrying on that work step by step, in spite of all opposition: then, in giving them the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, as miracles, tongues, and prophecy; also, the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, as knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, and patience, to inable them to go on in suffering for Christ to the uttermost; and lastly, that they might know the exceeding greatness of that power which God will farther exert towards them as believers, in raising up their dead bodies, to enter upon that glorious inheritance which God by promise insured to them; which power, he assures them, would bear some likeness to, and correspondence with that omnipotent power which God put forth, in raising Christ from the dead and advancing him to the heavenly glory, where he is Lord of all.

Observe here, What an heap of words our apostle makes use of, to set forth the power of God in the soul's conversion from the power

of sin, and in the body's ressurrection from the power of the grave: he calls it "power, the power of God, the greatness of his power, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power, and the power which raised up Christ from the dead."

Lord! what a glorious power was that which opened our Redeemer's grave, when he lay in the heart of the earth, with a mighty stone rolled upon his sepulchre! May the same Almighty Power break as under all those bars of unbelief, which keep our souls under the power and dominion of sin now, and at the great day break in pieces the bars of death and the grave, that it may be altogether impossible for us any longer to be holden by them: for towards thy saints, and in order to their salvation, thou dost engage the uttermost of thine attributes, the uttermost of thy love, and the exceeding greatness of thy power!

According to the working of his mighty power. Marg., The might of his power. This should be taken with the clause in the following verse, "which he wrought in Christ;" and the meaning is, that the power which God has exerted in us is in accordance with the power which was shown in raising up the Lord Jesus. It was the proper result of that, and was power of a similar kind. The same power is requisite to convert a sinner which is demanded in raising the dead. Neither will be accomplished but by omnipotence, Eph 2:5; and the apostle wished that they should be fully apprised of this fact, and of the vast power which God had put forth in raising them up from the death of sin. To illustrate this sentiment is one of his designs in the following verses; and hence he goes on to show that men, before their conversion, were "dead in trespasses and sins;" that they had no spiritual life; that they were the "children of wrath;" that they were raised up from their death in sin by the same power which raised the Lord Jesus from the grave, and that they were wholly saved by grace, Eph 2:1-10. In order to set this idea of the power which God had put forth in their regeneration in the strongest light, he goes into a magnificent description of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, and shows how that was connected with the renewing of Christians. God had set him over all things. He had put all things under his feet, and had made

principalities and dominions everywhere subject to him. In this whole passage, Eph 1:19-23, 2:1-10, the main thing to be illustrated is the POWER which God has shown in renewing and saving his people; and the leading sentiment is, that the SAME power is evinced in that which was required to raise up the Lord Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him over the universe.

19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who
believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,
and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,
21 far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and
every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that
which is to come:

Our apostle, in these words, discovers to us Christ's exaltation, or that glory and dignity which, after his resurrection and ascension, the Father put upon him as God-man, or Mediator; far surpassing the glory of all created beings. Now this is represented to us by the notion, and under the metaphor, of Christ's sitting at God's right hand.

This imports, 1. Fulness of rest and pleasure, that he quietly, securely, and everlastingly, possesses all that happiness and satisfaction in heaven, which God himself is possessed of, and delighted with, far above all the pleasures and delightful satisfactions which all the glorified saints and glorious angels do or can possibly enjoy.

2. It implies a fulness of honour and glory, of dignity and respect. Heb 2:9 we see Jesus to be crowned with glory and honour, sitting down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

3. Christ's sitting at God's right hand, imports his having all rule, dominion, and power, put into his hand, to govern all things both in heaven and on earth.

4. It imports and implies ability to execute that power; all those royal glorious endowments which God filled the human nature of Christ with, to make him fit to be the supreme head of his church,

and the great and wise governor of the world; all this doth God's setting Christ at his own right hand import and imply.

Far above all principality. The general sense in this verse is, that the Lord Jesus was exalted to the highest conceivable dignity and honour. Comp. Php 2:9, Col 2:10. In this beautiful and most important passage, the apostle labours for words to convey the greatness of his conceptions, and uses those which denote the highest conceivable dignity and glory. The main idea is, that God had manifested great power in thus exalting the Lord Jesus, and that similar power was exhibited in raising up the sinner from the death of sin to the life and honour of believing. The work of religion throughout was a work of power; a work of exalting and honouring the dead, whether dead in sin or in the grave; and Christians ought to know the extent and glory of the power thus put forth in their salvation. The word rendered "far above"-- υπερανω--is a compound word, meaning high above, or greatly exalted. He was not merely above the ranks of the heavenly beings, as the head; he was not one of their own rank, placed by office a little above them, but he was infinitely exalted over them, as of different rank and dignity. How could this be if he were a mere man, or if he were an angel? The word rendered "principality" --αρχης--means, properly, the beginning; and then the first, the first place, power, dominion, pre-eminence, rulers, magistrates, etc. It may refer here to any rank and power, whether among men or angels, and the sense is, that Christ is exalted above all.

The apostle expresses more plainly what he has said in the former verse figuratively; God hath exalted Christ far above all principalities and powers, might and dominion, and every name that is named; and hath put all things under his feet.
Where note,
1. The eminency,
2. The universality, of our Lord's exaltation.
Its eminency appears in the height of his exaltation; he is not only above, but far above, all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion; and in the lowness of the subjection of all things to him, having put all things under his feet. And the universality of Christ's

exaltation appears, by instancing in principalities and powers, might and dominion; under which he comprehends all things that are excellent in heaven and earth, angels and men, & c. all creatures whatsoever being placed in a degree of inferiority beneath him, and in the lowest state of subjection under him.

Whence we learn, 1. That the human nature of Christ, and his glorified body, by virtue of that unspeakable union between the two natures of Christ, his Godhead and manhood, is so highly dignified and exalted in heaven, that all the glory of heaven and earth, of kings and emperors, of sun, moon, and stars, of the souls of just men made perfect, yea, and of the spotless, glorious angels themselves, is nothing to it, nor may be compared with it. Christ now sits in heaven, in our glorified humanity united to his glorious deity; that body which hung on an ignominious cross in blood and gore, now shines brighter than ten thousand suns in the kingdom of his Father. All this honour and homage, glory and praise, dominion and power, is due to our Lord and Redeemer, as the reward of his sufferings; God hath set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers.

Learn, 2. That although the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall cease at the last day, (and be delivered up by Christ unto his Father,) as to the way wherein he now administers it, by ruling in the midst of his enemies, whom he shall then have finally subdued and destroyed: yet his natural kingdom, as God, shall never cease, but continue in the world to come, without end.

Those words here, not only in this world, but in the world to come, do show the duration of Christ's kingly government, and that he is king for ever and ever, that his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth through eternal ages.

22 and hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church,

St. Paul having spoken of Christ's sovereignty in general, over all created beings, both in heaven and in earth, in the foregoing verses, doth in the words before us declare, that as he is an head of

dominion and authority to the whole creation in general, so he is an head of influence to his church in particular.
Note, Christ was given by the Father to be the church's head. Now, this metaphor of an head implies several things; as,

1. Eminency above the church; as the head is above the members.

2. Authority over the church: the head governs all the members.

3. Oneness of nature betwixt him and his church to see an head of one nature, and members of another, is monstrous.

4. It implies a strict, intimate,and close union betwixt him and his church, as betwixt head and members; which union as to the members of the visible church, is a political union; but as to the invisible members, (real believers,) the union betwixt Christ and them is mystical, spiritual, supernatural, and indissoluble.
Lastly, this metaphor of an head, given here to Christ, implies a communication of influences from himself unto all his members; an influence of common gifts to the visible members of his body, and an influence of spiritual life and motion to the invisible members, true believers.

Indeed, Christ is the head of angels as well as saints, but in different respects; to angels, he is an head of dominion and government, an head of authority and superiority; but to his church, he is an head of dominion and direction also; not only an head of authority, but an head of vital influence too. The angels are Christ's honourable subjects, but saints are the mystical members of his body, the former are as then nobles in his kingdom, that attend upon his person, but the latter are the endeared spouse that lies in his bosom. O glorious dignity of the meanest believer above the highest angel! For as the nobles in a prince's court think it a preferment and honour to wait upon his queen, so the glorious angels account it no

dishonour to them to serve and administer to the saints, to which honourable office they are appointed, Heb 1:14 namely, to be ministering, or servicible spirits, for the good of them that are the heirs of salvation. As the chiefest servants disdain not to serve the heir, so the angels delight to serve the saints.
Observe, 2. As the character here given of Christ, The head of his church; so the honourable title put upon the church, she is his body: The head over all the church, which is his body; not his natural, but his mystical body.

This implies, 1. The church's union with Christ, and her relation to him.

2. The church's receiving influences from him, life, motion, and strength; all which the members of the body receive by virtue of union with their head.

3. It implies the duty of subjection and obedience due from the church to Christ, as from the members to the head.

4. It implies the union and order among the members themselves: that as all the members of the natural body sympathize with, and are subservient to, each other; so should all the members of the church, Christ's mystical body, employ their gifts, and improve their functions and offices, for the general good of the whole, and the mutual benefit and advantage of each other, as becomes the body of Christ, and members in particular.
But especially the church is said here to be the body of Christ, and He her head;

1. With respect to a communication of influences: Christ our head is our fountain of life; our head is our heart also, out of it are the issues of life: from him we live, by him we move, and our spiritual being is derived from him, strengthened and sustained by him; the whole church receives spiritual life, motion, and strength from Christ, as the body doth from the animating and enlivening soul.

2. Christ is called here the head of the church his body, with respect to a complication of interest, as well as a communication of influences. As the head and the body, as the husband and the wife, so Christ and his church are mutually concerned for each other: they stand and fall, live and die, together; whatsoever he has is theirs; they have nothing but through him, they have all things in him, and by him; his God is their God, his Father is their Father; his blood, his bowels, his merit, his Spirit, his life, his death, is theirs; and as all that he has is his church's, so all that he did is for his church, called here his body. He obeyed as his church's head; he died as her head; and hath in his church's name taken possession of heaven, as a purchased inheritance for her. How fitly then may Christ be called the head of the church, and the church be called the body of Christ?

Observe, 3. How Christ came to be the head of his church: God the Father gave him this authority, ver. 22, And gave him to be head over all things to the church; that dignity and superiority, that dominion and power, which Christ has over his church, is given to him by God the Father; none else was fit for it but himself: and although it was given him, what bold presumption is it, and will it be, in any person upon earth to assume any power over, or to exercise any office in, the church, when never called to it, nor authorized by Christ to undertake it!

We may demand of such confident undertakers, as the Pharisees demanded of the holy and humble Jesus, By what authority dost thou do these things? and who gave thee this authority?

Observe, 4. The high honour which is put upon the church by being Christ's body; by this she becomes Christ's fulness: The church which is his body, the fulness of him.

Yet note, The church is not the fulness of Christ personal, but of Christ mystical; not of his natural, but mystical, body: every saint, and every degree of grace in a saint, is part of Christ's fulness. The work of the ministry then is the best and noblest work in the world,

because it is an adding to the fulness of Christ. God had but one Son in the world; and he made him a minister.

And if increasing the number of converts, and adding to persons' growth in grace, be an addition to Christ's fulness, then how glorious a sight will the great day afford when Christ shall have all his fulness; when there shall not be one saint wanting; nor one degree of grace in any saint wanting; when head and members shall be both full, full of grace, full of joy, full of glory: when Christ shall be fully glorified in his saints, and they everlastingly filled with the fulness of him that filleth all in all?

Observe, 5. The glorious title here given to our Lord Jesus Christ, as head of his church. He filleth all in all; he filleth all persons, both angels and men; he filleth all places, heaven with glory, earth with grace, hell with horror; he filleth all ordinances, prayer with prevalency, preaching with efficacy, & c. he filleth all relations, fathers with paternal affections, mothers with maternal bowels; he fills all conditions, riches with thankfulness, poverty with contentment.

To the Church. With reference to the church, or for its benefit and welfare. Jn 17:2 The universe is under his control and direction for the welfare of his people.

(1.) All the elements--the physical works of God--the winds and waves-- the seas and rivers---all are under him, and all are to be made tributary to the welfare of the church.

(2.) Earthly kings and rulers; kingdoms and nations are under his control. Thus far Christ has controlled all the wicked rulers of the earth, and they have not been able to destroy that church which he redeemed with his own blood.

(3.) Angels in heaven, with all their ranks and orders, are under his control with reference to the church. Heb 1:14. Comp. Mt 26:53.

(4.) Fallen angels are under his control, and shall not be able to injure or destroy the church. Mt 16:18. The church, therefore, is safe. All the great powers of heaven, earth, and hell, are made subject to its Head and King; and no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper.

23 which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Which is his body. This comparison of the church with a person or body, of which the Lord Jesus is the head, is not uncommon in the New Testament. 1Cor 11:3; 1Cor 12:27; Eph 4:15, Eph 4:16.

The fulness of him. The word here rendered fulness-- πληρωμα means, properly, that with which anything is filled, the filling up, the contents. Rom 11:12. The exact idea here, however, is not very dear, and interpreters have been by no means united in their opinions of the meaning. It seems probable that the sense is, that the church is the completion or filling up of his power and glory. It is that without which his dominion would not be complete, he has control over the angels and over distant worlds, but his dominion would not be complete without the control over his church; and that is so glorious, that it fills up the honour of the universal dominion, and makes his empire complete. According to Rosenmuller, the word fulness here means a great number or multitude; a multitude, says he, which, not confined to its own territory, spreads afar, and fills various regions. Koppe also regards it as synonymous with multitude or many, and supposes it to mean all the dominion of the Redeemer over the body--the church. He proposes to translate the whole verse, "He has made him the Head over his church, that he might rule it as his own body--the whole wide state of his universal kingdom." "This," says Calvin, (in loc.,)" is the highest honour of the church, that the Son of God regards himself as in a sense imperfect unless he is joined to us. The church constitutes the complete body of the Redeemer. A body is complete when it has all its members and limbs in proper proportions; and those members might be said to be the completion, or the filling-up, or the fulness--πληρωμα--of the body or the person. This language would not, indeed, be such as would usually be adopted to express the idea now; but this is evidently the sense in which Paul uses it here. The meaning is, that the church sustains the same relation to

Christ which the body does to the head. It helps to form the entire person. There is a close and necessary union. The one is not complete without the other. And one is dependant on the other. When the body has all its members in due proportion, and is in sound and vigorous health, the whole person then is complete and entire. So it is to be in the kingdom of the Redeemer. He is the head; and that redeemed church is the body, the fulness, the completion, the filling-up of the entire empire over which he presides, and which he rules. On the meaning of the word fulness πληρωμα-the reader may consult Storr's Opuscula, vol. i., pp. 144--187, particularly pp. 169--183. Storr understands the word in the sense of full or abundant mercy, and supposes that it refers to the great benignity which God has shown to his people, and renders it, "The great benignity of him who filleth all things with good, as he called Jesus from the dead to life, and placed him in heaven, so even you, sprung from the heathen, who were dead in sin on account of your many offences in which you formerly lived, etc.--hath he called to life by Christ." This verse, therefore, he would connect with the following chapter, and he regards it all as designed to illustrate the great power and goodness of God. Mr. Locke renders it, "Which is his body, which is completed by him alone," and supposes it means, that Christ is the head, who perfects the church by supplying all things to all its members which they need. Chandler gives an interpretation in accordance with that which I have first suggested, as meaning that the church is the full "complement" of the body of Christ; and refers to AElian and Dionysius Halicarnassus, who use the word "fulness" or πληρωμα as referring to the rowers of a ship. Thus, also, we say that the ship's crew is its "complement," or that a ship or an army has its complement of men; that is, the ranks are filled up or complete. In like manner, the church will be the filling-up, or the complement, of the great kingdom of the Redeemer--that which will give completion or perfectness to his universal dominion.

That filleth all in all. That fills all things, or who pervades all things. 1Cor 12:6; 1Cor 15:28. Comp. Col 3:11. The idea is, that there is no place where he is not, and which he does not fill; and that he is the source of all the holy and happy influences that are

abroad in the works of God. It would not be easy to conceive of an expression more certainly denoting omnipresence and universal agency than this; and if it refers to the Lord Jesus, as seems to be indisputable, the passage teaches not only his supremacy, but demonstrates his universal agency, and his omnipresence--things that pertain only to God. From this passage we may observe,

(1.) that just views of the exaltation of the Redeemer are to be obtained only by the influence of the Spirit of God on the heart, Eph 1:17-19. Man, by nature, has no just conceptions of the Saviour, and has no desire to have. It is only as the knowledge of that great doctrine is imparted to the mind, by the Spirit of God, that we have any practical and saving acquaintance with such an exaltation. The Christian sees him, by faith, exalted to the right hand of God, and cheerfully commits himself and his all to him, and feels that all his interests are safe in his hands.

(2.) It is very desirable to have such views of an exalted Saviour. So Paul felt when he earnestly prayed that God would give such views to the Ephesians, Eph 1:17-20. It was desirable in order that they might have a right understanding of their privileges; in order that they might know the extent of the power which had been manifested in their redemption; in order that they might commit their souls with confidence to him. In my conscious weakness and helplessness; when I am borne down by the labours, and exposed to the temptations of life; when I contemplate approaching sickness and death, I desire to feel that that Saviour to whom I have committed my all is exalted far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. When the church is persecuted and opposed; when hosts of enemies rise up against it, and threaten its peace and safety, I rejoice to feel assured the Redeemer and Head of the church is over all, and that he has power to subdue all her foes and his.

(3.) The church is safe. Her great Head is on the throne of the universe, and no weapon that is formed against her can prosper, he has defended it hitherto in all times of persecution, and the past is a pledge that he will continue to protect it to the end of the world.

(4.) Let us commit our souls to this exalted Redeemer. Such a Redeemer we need--one who has all power in heaven and earth. Such a religion we need--that can restore the dead to life. Such hope and confidence we need as he can give--such peace and calmness as shall result from unwavering confidence in him who filleth all in all.

Ephesians-2

Saved by Grace

1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Who were dead in trespasses and sins. On the meaning of the word dead, Rom 5:12; Rom 6:2. It is affirmed here of those to whom Paul wrote at Ephesus, that before they were converted they were "dead in sins." There is not anywhere a more explicit proof of depravity than this, and no stronger language can be used. They were dead in relation to that to which they afterwards became alive--i. e., to holiness. Of course, this does not mean that they were in all respects dead. It does not mean that they had no animal life, or that they did not breathe, and walk, and act. Nor can it mean that they had no living intellect or mental powers, which would not have been true. Nor does it settle any question as to their ability or power while in that state. It simply affirms a fact--that in relation to real spiritual life they were, in consequence of sin, like a dead man in regard to the objects which are around him. A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not. The sound of music, and the voice of friendship and of alarm, do not arouse it. The rose and the lily breath forth their fragrance around it, but the corpse perceives it not. The world is busy and active around it, but it is unconscious of it all. It sees no beauty in the landscape; hears not the voice of a friend; looks not upon the glorious sun and stars; and is unaffected by the running stream and the rolling ocean. So with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world, he sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour; and he has no interest in eternal realities. In all these he feels no more concern, and sees no more

beauty, than a dead man does in the world around him. Such is, in fact, the condition of a sinful world. There is, indeed, life and energy and motion. There are vast plans and projects, and the world is intensely active. But, in regard to religion, all is dead. The sinner sees no beauty there; and no human power can arouse him to act for God, any more than human power can rouse the sleeping dead, or open the sightless eye-balls on the light of day. The same power is needed in the conversion of a sinner which is needed in raising the dead; and one and the other alike demonstrate the omnipotence of him who can do it.

According to the prince of the power of the air. See Eph 6:12. 2Cor 4:4. There can be no doubt that Satan is here intended, and that Paul means to say that they were under his control as their leader and prince. The phrase, "the prince of the power," may mean either "the powerful prince," or it may mean that this prince had power over the air, and lived and reigned there particularly. The word "prince"-- αρχων -- Archon, means one first in authority and power, and is then applied to any one who has the pre-eminence or rule. It is applied to Satan, or the chief of the fallen angels, as where he is called "the prince--αρχων-- of the devils," Mt 9:34, 12:24, Mk 3:22, Lk 11:15; "the prince of this world," Jn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11. But why he is here called the prince having power over the air, it is not easy to determine. Robinson (Lex.) supposes it to be because he is lord of the powers of the air; that is, of the demons who dwell and rule in the atmosphere. So Doddridge supposes that it means that he controls the fallen spirits who are permitted to range the regions of the atmosphere. It is generally admitted that the apostle here refers to the prevailing opinions both among the Jews and heathen, that the air was thickly peopled with spirits or demons. That this was a current opinion may be seen fully proved in Wetstein. Comp. Bloomfield, Grotius, and particularly Koppe. Why the region of the air was supposed to be the dwelling-place of such spirits is now unknown. The opinion may have been either that such spirits dwelt in the air or that they had control over it, according to the later Jewish belief. Cocceius, and some others, explain the word air here as meaning the same as darkness, as in profane writers. It is evident to my mind that Paul does not speak

of this as a mere tradition, opinion, or vagary of the fancy, ar as a superstitious belief; but that he refers to it as a thing which he regarded as true. In this opinion I see no absurdity that should make it impossible to believe it. For,

(1.) the Scriptures abundantly teach that there are fallen, wicked spirits; and the existence of fallen angels is no more improbable than the existence of fallen men.

(2.) The Bible teaches that they have much to do with this world. They tempted man; they inflicted disease in the time of the Saviour; they are represented as alluring and deceiving the race.

(3.) They must have some locality-some part of the universe where they dwell. That they were not confined down to hell in the time of the Redeemer is clear from the New Testament; for they are often represented as having afflicted and tortured men.

(4.) Why is there any improbability in the belief that their residence should have been in the regions of the air? That while they were suffered to be on earth to tempt and afflict men, they should have been permitted peculiarly to occupy these regions? Who can tell what may be in the invisible world, and what spirits may be permitted to fill up the vast space that now composes the universe? And who can tell what control may have been given to such fallen spirits over the regions of the atmosphere--over clouds, and storms, and pestilential air? Men have control over the earth, and pervert and abuse the powers of nature to their own ruin and the ruin of each other. The elements they employ for the purposes of ruin and of temptation. Fruit and grain they convert to poison; minerals, to the destruction caused by war. In itself considered, there is nothing more improbable that spirits of darkness may have had control over the regions of the air, than that fallen man has over the earth; and no more improbability that that power has been abused to ruin men, than that the power of men is abused to destroy each other. No one can prove that the sentiment here referred to by Paul is not true; and no one can show how the doctrine that fallen spirits may do mischief in any part of the works of God, is any more improbable

than that wicked men should do the same thing. The word "power" here--" power of the air"--I regard as synonymous with dominion or rule: "a prince having dominion or rule over the air." The spirit that now worketh. That still lives, and whose energy for evil is still seen and felt among the wicked. Paul here means undoubtedly to teach that there was such a spirit, and that he was still active in controlling men.

2 wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The deplorable condition which the Ephesians were in by nature, and all persons with them before their conversion from sin to God. It is a state of spiritual death; the natural and unregenerate man is a dead man, spiritually dead in sin. Our apostle doth not say they were in a dying, but in a dead condition; not half dead, but altogether dead.
But how so?

Not dead as to natural actions, they can eat and drink; not as to rational actions, they can reason and discourse; not as to civil actions, they can buy and sell, bargain and trade. Nor is the natural man dead to moral actions; he can pray, read, and hear the word, meditate upon it, and discourse of it; if he please, he can hearken to the voice of God's judgments, consider and call his own ways to remembrance.

But as to spiritual acts, to be spiritually performed, here he is dead, till quickened by a vital act of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to enlighten blind eyes, and whose delight it is to quicken and enliven dead souls.

But what doth this state of spiritual death imply?
It doth suppose and imply a state of separation from God, insensibility of that dismal state, an impotency and inability to recover ourselves out of that condition, and our loathsomeness and offensiveness to Almighty God, whilst we continue in it.
In short, every unregenerate man is a dead man, in a double sense.

He is, 1. Legally dead, being under the condemnatory sentence of the law; we call a man underthe sentence of death, a dead man.

2. Spiritually dead, as being destitute of a principle of spiritual life, a quickening principle to enable the soul to perform spiritual operations. Thus before regeneration are we dead, in opposition to justification: and dead in opposition to sanctification also; and the fatal instrument, by which our souls die, is here discovered, dead in or by trespasses and sins. This is the sword that kills souls, and cuts them off from God. You hath he quickened, being dead in trespasses and sins.

Observe, 2. The choice and singular privilege and favour vouchsafed to the Ephesians, in and under the power of spiritual death; they were quickened; that is, made spiritually alive by the quickening or life-giving power of the Spirit of God. A regenerate man is a living man; he lives a life of justification, which consists in pardon of sin.
A condemned man's pardon is his life; and he lives a life of sanctification, having received from the Holy Spirit a vital principle of grace in all the powers and faculties of the soul: justification reconciles God to us, sanctification reconciles us to God; justification takes away the legal enmity, sanctification the natural enmity between God and us.

Here note, That the person who is spiritually quickened, is universally quickened; there is not a faculty in the soul but is spiritually dead, and therefore not a faculty but must be spiritually quickened. As there is an universal pollution in every faculty, so must there be an universal renovation; for no spiritual duty can be performed without it, no spiritual privilege can be enjoyed without it, and we can never be saved hereafter, is not spiritually quickened here: but if quickened aright, we live a divine life, the life (in some measure) which God himself lives; and this must needs be an excellent life and a pleasant life here on earth, and shall be an everlasting life with Christ in heaven: Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.

Observe 3. The person quickening described: You hath he quickened; that is, God the Father, who, Eph 1:17, is said to have given them the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of himself. Man in his natural state considered, is unable of himself to quicken himself; he doth not so much as desire the quickening grace of God, till God gives the grace of desire.

Alas! the understanding is naturally so blind, the heart so hard, and the will so stout and stubborn, that none but a divine power can enlighten the one, and efficaciously incline the other: it is a change of stone into flesh, of a dead sinner into a living saint. A change from nature to grace requires as much or more divine power, than a change from grace to glory. To see a creature naturally filthy, now to delight in purity; to see a sinner that by nature drinks in iniquity like water, now thirsting after righteousness; to see a man that loathed the holy law and holy ways of God, now longing to walk in them, and to come to an exact conformity to God in them; these acts are above nature, contrary to nature, and consequently the God of grace is the author of them: You hath he quickened.

Our apostle having in the former verse described the Ephesians by their natural state and inward condition, as dead in trespasses and sins, doth in this verse set forth their misery in respect of their outward conversation; they walked in and made a constant trade of sin. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, &c.

Here note, 1. Their constant and continued course of life, set forth by walking; a metaphor frequently used in scripture, to set forth the tenor of a person's conversation; wherein, that is, in which sins in time past ye walked.

Note 2. The path in which they walked, in sins and trepasses; this denotes the abundance of sin that was in them, and committed by them with facility and ease, with satisfaction and delight. Walking is a motion, a voluntary motion, a progressive motion, a pleasant

and delightful motion: it is natural to men, whilst unregenerate, to walk in sin with some sort of delight and pleasure; but alas! it is the pleasure of the beast, and not of the man, a sensual, and not a rational satisfaction.

Note, 3. The guides which they are said here to follow: the world and Satan.

1. The world; that is, the corrupt course and sinful customs of the men of the world, according to the time and place in which they live; for though the world alters in the course and fashion of it, from time to time, yet it is, and ever will be, the world still; and the unregenerate part of mankind will always walk according to the course of this world.

The second guide which the Ephesians followed, was Satan, styled here a prince, in regard of that mighty power which he has in and over the men of the world; and the prince of the power of the air, because he exercises his power (by God's permission) in the lower regions of the air. All the elements and meteors stoop to his direction; when God gives him leave he can command the fire, the water, the winds, the thunders; all these powers that are in the air he can command, and therefore he is called their prince; yet here is a matter of comfort to us, Satan is the prince of the air only; if so, when the air shall cease, his kingdom shall cease; when the world is ended his dominion and power is ended.

Again, there is farther comfort in this, Satan is prince of the air, but Christ is prince of heaven and earth, and the air too: both our prayers whilst we live, and our souls when we die, pass through the air, but Satan can neither intercept the one, nor stop the other, in their passage thither. Christ, when he ascended into heaven, went through the air, this kingdom of devils, and spoiled their principalities and powers; he entered heaven in the sight of them all, and led them all captives in triumph at his chariot, so that they shall never hurt the souls of his people, not ever keep them from heaven.

Again, the devil is here described by the influence he has upon the minds of sinners: he works in the children of disobedience. Satan's way of working in and upon obstinate and impenitent sinners, is very powerful and efficacious.

Hence it is said here, 1. That they are led by Satan, they walk according to the prince of the power of the air; that is, according to his guidance, according to his mind and will. He has them at his beck; he says to one sinner, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh.

2. They are excited and assisted by Satan: he works in them, and suggests evil thoughts to them; he filled the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to lie unto the Holy Ghost; he put a lie first into their hearts, and then into their mouths.

Now from hence we may infer, that the Holy Spirit of God doth always inwardly work in pious persons, enabling them to will and to do according to his own good pleasure. For it is unreasonable to conceive that the evil spirit should have more power over the children of disobedience, in whom he dwells, than the good Spirit has in those pious persons in whose hearts he is said to dwell. Surely the Spirit of God doth more to the saving of souls, than the devil can do to the damning of them.

3 among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

In the lusts of our flesh. Living to gratify the flesh, or the propensities of a corrupt nature. It is observable here, that the apostle changes the form of the address from "ye" to "we," thus including himself with others, and saying that this was true of all before their conversion. He means undoubtedly to say, that whatever might have been the place of their birth, or the differences of religion under which they had been trained, they were substantially alike by nature. It was a characteristic of all that they lived to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The design of the apostle in thus grouping himself with them was, to show that he did not claim to be any better by nature than they

were, and that all which any of them had of value was to be traced to the grace of God. There is much delicacy here on the part of the apostle. His object was to remind them of the former grossness of their life, and their exposure to the wrath of God. Yet he does not do it harshly. He includes himself in their number. He says that what he affirms of them was substantially true of himself --of all--that they were under condemnation, and exposed to the Divine wrath.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Marg. as in Greek, wills. Complying with the wishes of a depraved nature. The "will of the flesh" is that to which the flesh, or the unrenewed nature of man, prompts; and Paul says that all had been engaged in fulfilling those fleshly propensities. This was clearly true of the heathen, and it was no less true of the unconverted Jew that he lived for himself, and sought to gratify the purposes of a depraved nature, though it might manifest itself in a way different from the heathen. The "will of the mind" referred to here relates to the wicked thoughts and purposes of the unrenewed nature--the sins which relate rather to the intellect than to the gross passions. Such, for instance, are the sins of pride, envy, ambition, covetousness, etc.; and Paul means to say, that before conversion they lived to gratify these propensities, and to accomplish these desires of the soul.

And were by nature, φυσει. By birth, or before we were converted. By conversion and adoption they became the children of God; before that, they were all the children of wrath. This is, I think, the fair meaning of this important declaration. It does not affirm when they began to be such, or that they were such as soon as they were born, or that they were such before they became moral agents, or that they became such in virtue of theft connexion with Adam--whatever may be the truth on these points; but it affirms that before they were renewed, they were the children of wrath. So far as this text is concerned, this might have been true at their very birth; but it does not directly and certainly prove that. It proves that at no time before their conversion were they the children of God, but that their whole condition before that was

one of exposure to wrath. Comp. Rom 2:14,27, 1Cor 11:14; Gal 2:15. Some men are born Jews, and some heathen; some free, and some slaves; some white, and some black; some are born to poverty, and some to wealth; some are the children of kings, and some of beggars; but, whatever their rank or condition, they are born exposed to wrath, or in a situation which would render them liable to wrath. But why this is the apostle does not say. Whether for their own sins, or for the sins of another; whether by a corrupted soul, or by imputed guilt; whether they act as moral agents as soon as born, or at a certain period of childhood, Paul does not say.

The children of wrath. Exposed to wrath, or liable to wrath. They did not by nature inherit holiness; they inherited that which would subject them to wrath. The meaning has been well expressed by Doddridge, who refers it "to the original apostasy and corruption, in consequence of which men do, according to the course of nature, fall early into personal guilt, and so become obnoxious to the Divine displeasure." Many modern expositors have supposed that this has no reference to any original tendency of our fallen nature to sin, or to native corruption, but that it refers to the habit of sin, or to the fact of their having been the slaves of appetite and passion. I admit that the direct and immediate sense of the passage is, that they were, when without the gospel, and before they were renewed, the children of wrath; but still the fair interpretation is, that they were born to that state, and that that condition was the regular result of their native depravity; and I do not know a more strong or positive declaration that can be made to show that men are by nature destitute of holiness, and exposed to perdition.

Even as others. That is, "do not suppose that you stand alone, or that you are the worst of the species. You are indeed, by nature, the children of wrath; but not you alone. All others were the same. You have a common inheritance with them. I do not mean to charge you with being the worst of sinners, or as being alone transgressors. It is the common lot of man--the sad, gloomy inheritance to which we all are born." The Greek is, οιλοιποι--"the remainder, or the others," --including all. Rom 5:1. This

doctrine, that men without the gospel are the children of wrath, Paul had fully defended in Romans, chapters 1-3. No truth, perhaps, is more frequently stated in the Bible; none is more fearful and awful in its character. What a declaration, that we "are by nature the children of wrath!" Who should not inquire what it means? Who should not make an effort to escape from the wrath to come, and become a child of glory and an heir of life?

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

But God, who is rich in mercy. On the use of the word rich by Paul, Eph 1:7. It is a beautiful expression. "God is rich in mercy;" overflowing, abundant. Mercy is the riches or the wealth of God. Men are often rich in gold, and silver, and they pride themselves in these possessions; but God is rich in mercy. In that he abounds; and he is so rich in it he is willing to impart it to others; so rich that he can make all blessed.

St. Paul having set forth that miserable state, which both Jews and Gentiles were in by nature, namely, dead in sins, and children of wrath; he doth next set forth their deliverance from that woeful estate, by the rich mercy and free grace of God: God, who is rich in mercy, &c.

Here observe, 1. The author of our deliverance, God; and the moving or impulsive cause of it, rich mercy and great love.
Where note, That God hath done more for us, infinitely more, than he did for the angels: he showed love to them, but mercy to us; they are vessels of honour, but we are vessels of mercy: the object of mercy, is a creature in distress and misery.

Note farther, That all the attributes in God are subjected to his love; this is the great prevailing attribute which sways all the rest: which way love goes, all attributes go; mercy, power, justice, and wisdom, they all work in subordination to love, they are at all love's beck, and love sets them all on work for the good and benefit of the object loved.

Note, 3. That the love which God bears to the children of men, is a great love; and the mercy which was set on work by it, is rich mercy; his love so great, that it can never be expressed; his mercy so rich, that it can never be conceived: rich mercy is abundant mercy, inconceivable mercy, inexhaustible mercy, sure mercy.

Note,4. The blessed effects and fruits of this great love and rich mercy in God towards the Ephesians, in quickening them when dead, in saving them when lost, in doing all things for them when they had undone themselves; God, who is rich in mercy--even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.

Learn hence, That poor lost sinners do stand in need of all the riches of mercy that are in God, in order to their regeneration and salvation: if ever we be saved, it is the riches of mercy that must save us.

Note, 5. How the apostle ascribes the whole work of their salvation to God's free grace, in opposition to any merit or worth in the persons to be saved: By grace ye are saved.

Learn hence, That the dependency our salvation has in the whole, and in all the parts of it, upon the free grace of God, is the great thing which St. Paul delighted to discover and make known to us here: By grace ye are saved; and he asserts it again, By grace, &c. Eph 2:8

5 even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 and hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

The apostle here instances in two branches more of that salvation which he had in the foregoing verse affirmed to be of grace, namely, that of our resurrection and glorification; both which are yet to come, and yet they are spoken of as already past: when the Father raised and glorified Christ, all believers were raised and glorified in him; for in his resurrection and glorification he did sustain the quality of a public person, representing his whole

church as their head and husband; and, accordingly, believers are and may be said to be raised already, and glorified already, not in their own persons, but in Christ their head. The apostle says, God has raised us up, and has made us sit together; not, he shall raise us, and will make us sit; to denote the dependency which our resurrection and glorification has upon Christ's, as the effects depend upon the cause, and also the undoubted certainty that they shall come to pass, Christ's resurrection and glorification being a pledge of ours.

Learn hence, 1. That Christ rose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven, not as a private person, but as the common head and parent, root and representative of his church and people; so that what he has done, they may be said to have done: they rose in him, and are set down in heaven in him; and blessed be God for the well-grounded hopes, that as we now sit together in Christ, so ere long we shall for ever sit together with Christ.

Learn, 2. That Jesus Christ is the cause of our resurrection and glorification, he is the efficient cause, the meritorious cause, and exemplary cause, of our resurrection and glorification.

Learn 3. From the phrase here used of sitting, and of sitting together in Christ, that believers shall certainly partake of the same kingly state and dignity, of the same honour and glory, of the same delight and pleasure, of the same rest and tranquillity, of the same state and security, with Christ in heaven. He hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

That in the ages to come. In all future times. The sense is, that the riches of Divine grace, and the Divine benignity, would be shown in the conversion of Christians and their salvation to all future times. Such was his love to those who were lost, that it would be an everlasting monument of his mercy, a perpetual and unchanging proof that he was good. The sense is, we are raised up with Christ, and are made to partake of his honour and glory, in order that others may for ever be impressed with a sense of the Divine goodness and

mercy to us. The exceeding riches of his grace. The abounding, overflowing riches of grace. Eph 1:7. This is Paul's favourite expression--an expression so beautiful and so full of meaning that it will bear often to be repeated. We may learn from this verse,

(1.) that one object of the conversion and salvation of sinners is to furnish a proof of the mercy and goodness of God.

(2.) Another object is, that their conversion may be an encouragement to others. The fact, that such sinners as the Ephesians had been, were pardoned and saved, affords encouragement also to others to come and lay hold on life. And so of all other sinners who are saved. Their conversion is a standing encouragement to all others to come in like manner; and now the history of the church for more than eighteen hundred years furnishes all the encouragement which we could desire.

(3.) The conversion of great sinners is a special proof of the Divine benignity. So Paul argues in the case before us; and so he often argued from his own case. 1Timm 1:16.

(4.) Heaven, the home of the redeemed, will exhibit the most impressive proof of the goodness of God that the universe furnishes. There will be a countless host who were once polluted and lost; who were dead in sins; who were under the power of Satan, and who have been saved by the riches of Divine grace--a host now happy and pure, and free from sin, sorrow, and death--the living and eternal monuments of the grace of God.

7 that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in *his* kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

In these words our apostle informs the Ephesians, and in them all succeeding Christians, that their complete salvation, from the first to the last, from the lowest to the highest step, depends upon God's free favour and grace in Christ, and not upon any merit or desert in ourselves; works having no meritorious or casual influence upon our salvation, (for they are not causes, but effects, of that grace by

which we are saved,) to the intent that all boasting may be excluded, and that all the saints' glorying may be in God, and not in themselves.

Note here, 1. That believers are saved already, in some sense; not only because they have salvation begun in their new birth here, but they have already a right and title to, yea, a pledge and an earnest of, complete salvation; believers are saved here.

Note, 2. That the believers' salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Note 3. That faith, by and through which they are said to be saved, is not of themselves, it is the gift of God; faith is the gift of God as well as Jesus Christ, and the one as necessary as the other; for as the only way to heaven is by Christ, so the only way to Christ is by faith; as sin has put a vanity into the creature, so unbelief puts a vanity in Christ, that he should profit us nothing. Wrestle we then with God in prayer for a believing heart.

9 not of works, lest any man should boast.
10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

For we are his workmanship. We are his making--ποιημα. That is, we are created or formed by him, not only in the general sense in which all things are made by him, but in that peculiar sense which is denoted by the new creation. 2Cor 5:17. Whatever of peace, or hope, or purity we have, has been produced by his agency on the soul. There cannot be conceived to be a stronger expression to denote the agency of God in the conversion of men, or the fact that salvation is wholly of grace. Created in Christ Jesus. On the word created, 2Cor 5:17. Unto good works. With reference to a holy life; or, the design for which we have been created in Christ is, that we should lead a holy life. The primary object was not to bring us to heaven. It was that we should be holy. Paul held perhaps more firmly than any other man to the position, that men are saved by the mere grace of God, and by a Divine agency on

the soul; but it is certain that no man ever held more firmly that men must lead holy lives, or they could have no evidence that they were the children of God.

Here note, That as good works are antecedently necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is absolutely necessary to good works; therefore before there can be a good work, there must be a good workman, and that good workman must be God's workmanship, created anew through the power of God.

Observe, 2. The meritorious cause of this spiritual workmanship; and that is, Christ Jesus; We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus; that is, through the intervening meditation of Christ Jesus. The life which we live in this new creation state, namely, a life of holiness, it is purchased by his death, produced by his Spirit; all spiritual life comes from God, through Christ as a Mediator; he is a quickening head and life-giving spirit; God sent his Son that we might live by him 1John 4:9; Christ is first our ransom, and then the fountain of life unto our souls: created in Christ Jesus.

Observe, 3. The final cause of this divine workmanship; and that is, to good works: all those that are new creatures are created unto good works; so that a holy life is the necessary fruit of their new creation. New creatures are not to live idly, much less to live wickedly; but to make conscience of every duty, to bring forth fruit of piety towards God, of righteousness towards our neighbour, of love and universal charity towards all mankind. Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them: that is, God hath before prepared these works for us, and also prepared us for them;
he has prepared these works for us,
first by his decree and purpose; he that ordained the end, salvation, hath appointed good works as the means thereto, by his precept and command. He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, &c. Mic 6:8.

And as God hath prepared these works for us, so he hath prepared us for them by his Holy Spirit, making our hearts fit for our work, by enlightening our minds, and inclining our wills.

Learn hence, That new creatures are both ordained and obliged to, and also fitted and prepared for, good works: God will have his children distinguished from others by the good they do, as well as the devil's children are characterized by the mischief which they do.

Observe, lastly, The constancy of the christian's duty declared, with reference to good works: he is to walk in them.

Now, walking denotes and implies both a way and action. Walking,

1. It implies a way; and intimates plainly to us, tht good works are the way and means to obtain salvation: we can never come at heaven as the end, but by walking in the path of good works as the way and means.

2. An action: walking denotes spontaneity in the principle, progress and perseverance in the motion; he that walks, goes forward, gets ground, gives not over till he comes to his journey's end.

A good man is as diligent and zealous, as constant and persevering, in good works as if he were to be saved for them and by them; and at the same time relies by faith on the merits of the Mediator for his acceptance with God, renouncing all confidence in his own good works; he knows they cannot justify themselves, much less can they justify him, who has a better righteousness than that of his best obedience, to denominate him righteous in the sight of God.

Thus are we God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works; which God had before ordained that we should walk in them.

11 Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

He calls upon the Ephesians to remember their former miserable condition before conversion, when they were in their heathen and unregenerate state, when they were Gentiles and reproached by the Jews for being uncircumcised, and looked upon by the Jews as dogs; he calls upon them here, to remember their obligations to God, for bringing them out of this miserable state and deplorable condition; Remember, that in times past, ye were Gentiles in the flesh.

Learn hence, That believers, remembering and calling to mind the sin they were guilty of, and the misery they were exposed to, in their natural and unregenerate state, may many ways be of singular use and advantage to them, and be spiritually improved by them; namely, thus

1. To excite us to magnify the greatness of God's love, and to admire the freeness and riches of his grace. This we shall certainly do, when we remember, that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

2. To inflame our love to Jesus Christ: Mary loved much, when she remembered that much was forgiven her.

3. To increase our godly sorrow for sin: Then shall they be confounded when they remember that I am pacified towards them for all their abominations, Ezek 16:63.

4. To quicken us up to greater zeal and industry for God: it was the remembrance of what Paul was before conversion, that fired him with holy zeal, and carried him forth with such vigour and industry

after his conversion, that he laboured more abundantly than all the apostles.

5. The remembrance how bad we were ourselves before conversion, will be a special mean to keep up our hearts in hopes of, in prayers for, and endeavours after the conversion of others, though very bad at present. What they are, that thou once wert; and what thou now art, that they may also be.

Observe, 2. That as St. Paul does put the Ephesians in mind of their former miserable condition, in their heathenish and unregenerate state; so he does particularize the same, and branch it forth into its distinct parts and members.
When they were unconverted Gentiles,

1. They were without Christ, that is without the knowledge of Christ, without any relation to him, or interest in him, without union and communion with him, without any communications of life and light, of grace and holiness, of joy and comfort, of pardon and protection, received from him. They did not discern any excellency, nor taste any sweetness, in Christ; and consequently had no love to him, no longings after him, no delight or satisfaction in him.
Ah! miserable condition of a Christless soul: if thou art without Christ, thou are without the spirit and grace of Christ, to enlighten thee, to quicken thee, to sanctify and save thee.

2. They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel: that is, they were no members of Christ's church either visible or invisible: they did not so much as profess themselves to be a people, that stood in any relation to God; they were unchurched Gentiles; for in Jewry only was God known, and his name great in Israel, Ps 76:1
Verily, whatever the world thinks of it, it is a very great favour from God to be born within the pale of the visible church, and to have communion with her; for thereby we partake of many excellent privileges; namely, the word and sacraments, the communion of saints, together with the offers of Christ, and salvation by him.

3. They were strangers to the covenant of promise; that is, to the covenant of grace, first made with Adam after the fall, then with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, afterwards with Israel upon Mount Sinai; for which reason it is here by the apostle called covenants, in the plural number, though it was always one and the same covenant in substance; and its being called the covenants of promise, seems to point at the promise made to Adam, Gen 3:15 that first grand original promise, of which promise all the following promises were but branches, or more full explanations.

Now the Ephesians are here said to be strangers to the covenant of promise; because, as Gentiles, this covenant was never revealed to them, nor any offer of it made by the ministry of the word, and consequently they could have no actual interest in the blessings and privileges of it.

This intimates to us, that for men to live and die without an offer of the covenant of grace made unto them, is a woeful, sad, and dangerous condition, because their salvation is rendered in an ordinary way impossible, forasmuch as the terms upon which salvation may be had are concealed from them.

4. They were without hope; that is, they were without the grace of hope, and without the means of hope: they were without hopes of redemption, without hopes of redemption, without hopes of pardon and reconciliation, and consequently without any well-grounded hope of eternal life and salvation. Such as are Christless, must be hopeless; such as are without faith, must needs be without hope; and such as are without the promise, must necessarily be without faith: for the promise is the ground of hope.

Learn, That for a person to be without a well-grounded hope of future happiness, is a very deplorable case and condition; but all such as are without the pale of the Christian church, without the bond of the covenant of grace, without the offer of a Savior in the gospel, they must be without hope, even in this life, and so are of all men most miserable.

5. They were without God in the world; that is, without the knowledge of the true God, without worshipping of him as God, without any affiance or trust in him, without performing any obedience to him: not that the Ephesians, and other heathens, lived without any sense or sensible apprehension of the majesty and holiness of the true God: now,this is to live without God in the world; and verily such a life is worse than death.

The apostle calls all the Gentiles, not only the barbarous and savage, but the best polished and civilized nations, Atheon, Atheist, because they wanted the right knowledge of God by and through a Mediator: there is no knowing God acceptably, except we know him in Christ, and approach unto him by Christ.

In this affecting manner doth our apostle set before the Ephesians their dark and dismal state whilst Gentiles, and before brought into the Christian church by preaching the gospel of Christ unto them; they were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. God grant that every unregenerate sinner may think of it till his heart and soul are affected with it.

13 but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made
nigh by the blood of Christ.

Ye who sometimes were far off. Who were formerly--ποτε. Tindal translates it, a whyle agoo. The phrase far off --μακραν--means that they were formerly far off from God and his people. The expression is derived from the custom of speaking among the Hebrews. God was supposed to reside in the temple. It was a privilege to be near the temple. Those who were remote from Jerusalem and the temple were regarded as far off from God, and hence as peculiarly irreligious and wicked. Isa 57:19.

Where note, 1. That persons who are most remote, and at the farthest distance from God, are sometimes unexpectedly brought home unto him: Ye who were afar off, are now made nigh.

Note, 2. That it is owing to the blood of Christ, to his death and sufferings, that any soul is brought into a state of nearness unto God, and finds acceptance with him: Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us;*

He is our peace: that is,

1. He is the Mediator of our peace, the great peace-maker betwixt God and men.

2.He is our peace: that is, the purchaser of our peace.

3. He is our peace; that is, the establisher of our peace. All which is to be understood, not only of peace betwixt God and man, but also betwixt man and man. Who hath made both one; that is, both Jews and Gentiles one church.

Here note, That there was a very great and deep-rooted enmity betwixt Jews and Gentiles, until Christ purchased their peace and reconciliation.

The Jews derided, scorned, and hated the Gentiles as unclean, compared them to dogs and swine.

The Gentiles, they reproached the Jews for circumcising their flesh, esteemed them, of all nations, the worst; and would hold their nose at the Jews when they met them, and cry, O faetentes Judaei! O ye stinking Jews! and turn away their eyes from them.

Learn from hence then, That the uniting of both Jew and Gentile into one church, was one blessed effect and sweet fruit of the purchase of Christ's blood; Christ's offering of himself was intended as a sacrifice for enmities between man and man, as well as for enmities between God and man: He is our peace, who hath made both one.
Observe next, What Christ hath done in order to his making peace between Jew and Gentile;

1. He has abolished the ceremonial law, called here a partition-wall, betwixt the Jews and the Gentiles; in allusion, no doubt, to that wall to Solomon's temple which separated the court of the Jews from that of the Gentiles, that they could neither come at, nor look at one another. So that this partition-wall being said to be broken down, intimates to us, that Jew and Gentile, who before had two manner of religions, the one in and under a covenant with God, the other afar off, and without God; yet now by Christ are both adopted into the same church, partakers of the same covenants, incorporated into the same faith, entitled to the same glory.

2. Christ has abolished the enmity and perpetual strife which was occasioned between Jew and Gentile, upon the account of the observation of the ceremonial law, and the ordinances thereunto belonging: He hath abolished the enmity; that is, the ceremonial law, which made the enmity between them. The ceremonial law was the cause and the continuer of that enmity which was betwixt Jew and Gentile: this is called the law of commandments contained in ordinances: because Almighty God did actually separate the Jews from all the world, by giving them ordinances and commandments, judicial and ceremonial laws, containing many visible and external observances, which forbade them to communicate with the Gentile world.

Now Christ being come in the flesh, all those observances ceased, and those legal ordinances vanished away; all nations become blessed in Christ, and Jews and Gentiles become one church, both alike the people of God, both admitted equally into covenant, and both alike blessed.

Here note, That the moral law, summarily comprised and comprehended in the Ten Commandments, was no part of the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile. Nor did the death of Christ abrogate this law, nor is it at all abolished: but it was the law of ceremonies only, which the sufferings and death of Christ put an end unto; for when he died, they all vanished; as the shadow disappears when the substance is come.

15 having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of
commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of
twain one new man, *so* making peace;
16 and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross,
having slain the enmity thereby:

> Having slain the enmity. Not only the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but the enmity between the sinner and God. He has by that death removed all the obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God and on the part of man. It is made efficacious in removing the enmity of the sinner against God, and producing peace.

17 and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to
them that were nigh.

> But how did Christ preach to the Gentiles?
> Ans. Though he did not in his own person preach peace to the Gentiles, yet he gave commission to the apostles to preach to them, Matt 28:19-20, and they and their successors, pursuant to such commission, did preach peace unto them, even to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh.
>
> Learn hence, That when the ministers of Christ do come in his name, and by a commission received from him, to preach peace, and offer terms of reconciliation unto lost sinners, it is all one as if Christ himself did come and preach; he expects the same readiness from them in receiving the message, as if it were delivered to them from his own mouth; and will treat the despisers of his ministers, and the contemners of their message, as if the affront were offered immediately to his own person.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the
Father.
19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow
citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
20 and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone;*
21 in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy
temple in the Lord:
22 in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God
through the Spirit.

Whence we learn, That the church of Christ under the gospel, is God's great household or family, in a peculiar manner admitted to an intimate communion with him, in a special way provided and cared for by him; and every sincere Christian becomes a member of this blessed family, and enjoys all the privileges thereof: Ye are all fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Note, 3. St. Paul proceeds yet farther, and compares the church of Christ to an edifice or stately building: Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, &c. Now this similitude holds forth unto us a still farther degree of nearness to, and communion with, God and his church, than the former. What can be more closely united, and more strictly joined together, than stones in a building? And our apostle calling the church an holy temple, seems to allude to Solomon's temple, which was a type of the Christian church, as the tabernacle was of the Jewish church. The tabernacle was ambulatory and changeable, made of decaying and corruptible materials, and so fitly typified the Jewish dispensation, which was temporary and transient; but the temple was made of durable rich materials, and thereby a proper type of the Christian church, which is called a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

But observe further, How our apostle doth describe this stately edifice, this spiritual building, the Christian church, these several ways:

1. By its foundation which it stands upon, namely, the apostles and prophets; that is, upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, not upon their persons: Christ himself being the personal foundation and chief corner-stone.

Learn, That though Christ himself be the builder of, and the chief corner-stone in, his church, yet he employs his ministers now, as he did the prophets and apostles of old, to lay the foundation, and carry on the superstructure, and no one apostle had a privilege in this above another.

2. The church as a spiritual building or temple, is here described by the unity and compactness of its parts: in whom all the building fitly framed together; that is, all the members of the church are by faith firmly joined to Christ as the foundation, and to one another by love, and their unity is both their strength and their beauty.

3. This building is described by its worth and perpetual increase, it groweth unto an holy temple. The church groweth two ways, by an addition of new and particular converts, and by an addition of new graces in every particular convert.

Where remark, how this spiritual edifice, the church of Christ, differs from all other buildings; both the whole of it, and all the individual parts of it, are endued with life, a life flowing from Christ the foundation, a life far from a state of perfection, in whom all the building groweth; all a Christian's life and spiritual growth flow from his union and communion with Christ; in him all the building groweth.

4. This building, namely, the Christian church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, is here described by the end and design of Christ in erecting this growing edifice; namely, to be an holy temple unto God, wherein now (as in the material temple of old) he may manifest his gracious presence, and be perpetually worshipped, glorified, and served. The whole church, or collective body of believers jointly, and each believer severally and apart, are a spiritual and holy temple unto the Lord, in and by whom all spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered up, and all the duties of new and sincere obedience acceptably performed.

Ephesians-3

Paul's Ministry to the Gentiles

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
2 if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is
given me to you-ward:

3 how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as
I wrote afore in few words;

Observe here, 1. The title given to the gospel, it is styled the grace of God; partly because the glad tidings which the gospel brings are the effect and product of God's grace and favour, and partly because the gospel is the instrument and means of working peace in the souls of persons.

Observe, 2. The title given to St. Paul's apostleship; he styles it the dispensation of the grace of God, because God had commissioned him to declare and dispense the gospel of grace to them; Christ's ministers are the dispensers of his mind to the children of men.

Observe, 3. The title here given to the calling of the Gentiles: he styles it a mystery. The calling of the Gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ,
without the works of the law, was a mystery hid from ages.

Observe, 4. The way and manner how St. Paul came by the knowledge of this mystery: it was by divine revelation from heaven, Eph 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery. The mystery of man's redemption in general, and of the calling of the Gentiles in particular to the participation of that grace, was made known by divine revelation to the apostles by God himself. The truth is, the redempton of a lost world, by the incarnation, death, and passion, of the Son of God, is so stupendous and surprising, so wonderful and amazing, that the very thoughts of it had been the highest blasphemy, if God himself had not revealed it.

4 whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the
mystery of Christ,)

In the mystery of Christ. This does not refer to anything mysterious in the person of Christ; or the union of the Divine and human nature in him; or to anything difficult of apprehension in the work of the atonement. It means the hitherto concealed doctrine, that through the Messiah the Gentiles were to be received to the same privileges as the Jews, and that the plan of salvation was to be made equally free for all. This great truth had

been hitherto concealed, or but partially understood, and Paul says that he was appointed to make it known to the world. His knowledge on the subject, he says, could be understood by what he had said, and from that they could judge whether he was qualified to state and defend the doctrines of the Gospel. Paul evidently supposed that the knowledge which he had on that subject was of eminent value; that it was possessed by few; that it was important to understand it. Hence he dwells upon it. He speaks of the glory of that truth. He traces it back to the counsels of God. He shows that it entered into his eternal plans; and he evidently felt that the truth which he had communicated in the former part of this epistle was among the most important that could come before the mind.

5 which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as
it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and
partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.
7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of
God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.
8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given,
that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of
Christ;

As if the apostle had said, "Of this gospel it pleased God to make me a successful minister or dispenser, furnishing me with ordinary and extraordinary gifts and graces from his Holy Spirit, for that weighty work and sevice; unto me, even unto me, I say, was this special favour granted, though unworthy, (being less than the least of all saints, because once a great persecutor,) yet unto me was the apostolic office committed, to preach unto the Gentiles the incomparable and incomprehensible riches of God's mercy towards them in Christ, in receiving them fully, freely and finally, in covenant with himself; and to make known unto all men what is the communion or fellowship of this mystery, namely, that the Gentiles with the Jews should have one faith, one Lord, one hope, one heavenly inheritance; which was a mystery hid in the secret intention and decree of God, until discovered by divine revelation.

Observe here, 1. How careful the apostle was to assert his authority and apostolical commission, I was made a minister; and how he refers his calling immediately to the grace of God, Unto me was this grace given. It was the grace of God converted him, it was the grace of God revealed the gospel to him, and that called him to reveal it unto others.

Observe, 2. How the apostle attributes the success of his ministry to the power of God, and not to his own endeavours; By the effectual working of his own power. The grace of God in him, and the power of God accompanying him, was effectual to the conversion of very many sinners, and to the producing of great signs and miracles which were wrought by him.

Observe, 3. The noble subject of St. Paul's sermons, what it was he preached amongst the Gentiles; namely, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches imply abundance, and abundance of such things as are of worth and value: in Christ are riches, all riches, eminently and transcendently found; riches of grace, and riches of glory: and these are called unsearchable; not as if it were unlawful to search after them, but because after our utmost search after them we can never fully discover them.

Learn hence, that there are such mazes, such mysteries of love and goodness, in our Lord Jesus Christ, as, though it be our duty to be continually searching after them, yet we can never, by our utmost searching, fully discover them and find them out.

Observe,4. The humble and low opinion which the great apostle had of himself, not barely the least, but less than the least of all saints; he was, in his own esteem, as little as could be, less than the least; a double dimunitive; a comparative made of a superlative.
Thus he debases himself, upon consideration of his former enmity against Christ and his church: lower he could not lie than he lays himself, the greatest and chiefest of sinners; the least, yea, less than the least, of all saints; growth in grace, and increase in humility accompany one another.

9 and to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery,
which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who
created all things by Jesus Christ:
10 to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly
places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,
11 according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus
our Lord:

Observe here, 1. The title given to the holy angels; they are styled principalities and powers, because God makes us of their powerful ministry in governing the kingdoms and principalities of this world: and they are said to be in heavenly places; not as if they were never here upon earth below, but because the ordinary place of their residence is heaven above.

Observe, 2. That the angels are not omniscient and all knowing. The wisdom of God in the work of redemption was a secret unknown to the glorious angels; they did not know it until God made it known unto them.

Observe, 3. That God did not make the mystery of the gospel, or the glorious work of redemption, known unto the angels immediately, but occasionally, by the revelation of it first to the church, and by the church to them: as if the apostles had said, "Had it not been for the light given to, and spread abroad in, the church, the angels had been in the dark about the mysteries of the gospel to this day. By the church is made known unto the angels the manifold wisdom of God."

Quest. But how could the church communicate this knowledge to angels?

Ans. Either the angels did gather up their knowledge of these mysteries, by the ministry of the apostles preaching them to the world in a way of information; or else they saw, as in a glass, the manifold wisdom of God, and the dispensations of his mercy, grace, and goodness, towards his church, in a way of contemplation.

Observe, 4. The title here given to the work of redemption, it is styled, the maniflod wisdom of God.

O, how full of variety was the wisdom of God in man's recovery! It is of many folds and plaits, manifold in kind, manifold in degree, manifold in its administration. There are manifold secrets in this wisdom: some less perfectly seen, some more perfectly understood, and some that will never perhaps be thoroughly understood. Doubtless, there are some secrets in the wisdom of God, which it belongs only to God to understand and know. Blessed be God that so much of the manifold wisdom of God, in the glorious work of redemption, is made known unto us, as will eternally ravish and delight us.

To the intent. Greek, "that"--ινα. The sense is, that it was with this design, or that this was the purpose for which all things were made. One grand purpose in the creation of the universe was, that the wisdom of God might be clearly shown by the church. It was not enough to evince it by the formation of the sun, the stars, the earth, the seas, the mountains, the floods. It was not enough to show it by the creation of intelligent beings, the formation of immortal minds on earth, and the various ranks of the angelic world. There were views of the Divine character which could be obtained only in connexion with the redemption of the world. Hence the universe was created, and man was made upon the earth, not merely to illustrate the Divine perfections in the work of creation, but in a still more illustrious manner in the work of redemption. And hence the deep interest which the angelic hosts have ever evinced in the salvation of man.

That now. The word now--νυν--is wanting in the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic; and is omitted by many of the Fathers. See Koppe. If it is to be retained, it means that this display is to be made under the gospel. "Now, since the Messiah is come; now, under the Christian dispensation, this revelation is to be made to distant worlds."

Unto the principalities and powers. To the angelic hosts--the intelligent beings that surround the throne of God. Eph 1:21.

By the Church. By the incarnation of the Redeemer to save it; by the mercy shown to it; by the wise arrangement made to recover his people from the fall; and by all the graces and beauties which that redeemed church will evince on earth and in heaven.

The manifold wisdom of God. Literally, much-variegated. It means the greatly-diversified wisdom. It does not mean merely that there was great wisdom, but that the wisdom shown was diversified and varied; like changing, variegated colours. There was a "beautiful and well-ordered variety of dispensations" towards that church, all of which tended to evince the wisdom of God. It is like a landscape, or a panoramic view passing before the mind, with a great variety of phases and aspects, all tending to excite admiration. In the redemption of the church, there is not merely one form or one phase of wisdom. It is wisdom, ever-varying, ever-beautiful. There was wisdom manifested when the plan was formed; wisdom in the selection of the Redeemer; wisdom in the incarnation; wisdom in the atonement; wisdom in the means of renewing the heart, and sanctifying the soul; wisdom in the various dispensations by which the Church is sanctified, guided, and brought to glory. The wisdom thus shown is like the ever-varying beauty of changing clouds, when the sun is reflected on them at evening. Each aspect is full of beauty. One bright cloud differs in appearance from others; yet all tend to fill the mind with elevated views of God.

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

he shows the great and gracious privileges which all believers are admitted to the participation of, by and through our Lord Jesus Christ; namely, boldness, access, and confidence: In whom we have boldness, and access, with confidence, through the faith of him.

Access' that is, a liberty of approach to God as a Father:

Boldness; that is, a freedom of speech in delivering our heart, our whole mind and heart, to him, in the duty of prayer and thanksgiving:
Confidence; that is, a well-grounded persuasion that both our persons and performances shall find acceptance with God.

All which privileges are enjoyed by the exercise of faith in Christ: We have boldness, access, and confidence, through the faith of him.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you,
which is your glory.

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not. The connexion here is this. Paul was then a prisoner at Rome. He had been made such in consequence of his efforts to diffuse the Christian religion among the Gentiles. Eph 3:1. His zeal in this cause, and the opinions which he held on this subject, had roused the wrath of the Jews, and led to all the calamities which he was now suffering. Of that the Ephesians, he supposes, were aware. It was natural that they should be distressed at his sufferings, for all his privations were endured on their account. But here he tells them not to be troubled and disheartened. He was indeed suffering; but he was reconciled to it, and they should be also, since it was promoting their welfare. The word rendered "faint"- εκκακεω--means, literally, to turn out a coward, or to lose one's courage; then to be faint-hearted, etc. 2Cor 4:1. It is rendered faint in Lk 18:1, 2Cor 4:1,16, Eph 3:13 and weary in Gal 6:9, 2Thes 3:13. It does not elsewhere occur. It is rendered here by Locke, dismayed. Koppe supposes it means that they should not suppose that the Christian religion was vain and false because he was suffering so much from his countrymen on account of it. But it rather means that they might be in danger of being discouraged by the fact that he was enduring so much. They might become disheartened in their attachment to a system of religion which exposed its friends to such calamities. Paul tells them that this ought not to follow. They were to be profited by all his sufferings, and they should, therefore, hold fast to a religion which was attended with so many benefits to them--though he should suffer.Which is your glory. Which tends to your honour and welfare. You have occasion to rejoice that you have a friend who

is willing thus to suffer for you; you have occasion to rejoice in all the benefits which will result to you from his trials in your behalf.

Prayer for Love Which Surpasses Knowledge

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

This is the more natural interpretation. The whole "family of God" means all his children; and the idea is, that they all bear the same name, derived from the Redeemer; all are Christians. No matter where they are, in heaven or in earth; no matter from what nation they are converted, whether Jews or Gentiles, they an have one name, and one Redeemer, and all belong to one family. See Eph 4:4-6. In heaven. Spirits of just men made perfect. It does not properly refer to angels, for he is not speaking of them, but of the family of the redeemed. If the phrase, "in heaven," could ever be taken to denote the Jews as contradistinguished from the Gentiles, I should think that this was one of the places. Many expositors have supposed that it is frequently so used in this epistle, but I see no clear evidence of it, and no instance where it seems very probable, unless this should be one. And it is not necessary here, for it may mean all the redeemed, whether in heaven or earth, though the connexion would seem rather to have suggested a reference to the Jews and the Gentiles. An expression similar to this occurs in Col 1:20:--"To reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The passage before us is one that is commonly explained by a reference to Jewish opinions. The Jews were accustomed to call the angels in heaven God's upper family, and his people on earth his lower family. See the passages cited from the Rabbinical writers in Wetstein. Is named. This means substantially the same as is. They are all of one family. They all have one Father, and are all of one community. The expression is taken from the custom in a family, where all bear the name of the head of the family; and the meaning is, that all in heaven and on earth are united under one head, and constitute one community. It does not mean that all are called by the same name, or that the name Christian is given to the angels, but that they all pertain to the same community, and constitute the same great and glorious

brotherhood. Part are in heaven, near his throne; part in distant worlds; part are angels of light; part redeemed and happy spirits; part are in the church on earth; but they are all united as one family, and have one Head and Father. This glorious family will yet be gathered together in heaven, and will encompass the throne of their common Father rejoicing.

15 of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be
strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

According to the riches of his glory. According to the glorious abundance of his mercy. See Php 4:19. Out of those stores of rich grace which can never be exhausted. The word riches, so often used by Paul, denotes abundance; and the idea here is, that his grace was inexhaustible and ample for all their wants. To be strengthened with might. To be powerfully strengthened. That is, to give you abundant strength to bear trials; to perform your duties; to glorify his name. In the inner man. In the heart, the mind, the soul. Rom 7:22. The body needs to be strengthened every day. In like manner the soul needs constant supplies of grace. Piety needs to be constantly invigorated, or it withers and decays. Every Christian needs grace given each day to enable him to bear trials, to resist temptation, to discharge his duty, to live a life of faith.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Eph 2:22. Expressions like this often occur in the Scriptures, where God is said to dwell in us, and we are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. Jn 14:23; 1Cor 6:19. That ye being rooted. Firmly established--as a tree is whose roots strike deep, and extend afar. The meaning is, that his love should be as firm in our hearts as a tree is in the soil, whose roots strike deep into the earth. And grounded. τεθεμελιωμενοι--founded--as a building is on a foundation. The word is taken from architecture where a firm foundation is laid; and the meaning is, that he wished them to be as firm in the love of Christ, as a building is that rests on a solid basis. In love. In love to the Redeemer--perhaps also in love to each other-- and to all. Love was the great principle of the true religion, and the apostle wished that they might be fully settled in that.

Our apostle here proceeds with affectionate ardour to pray for further spiritual blessings on the behalf of his beloved Ephesians:

1. He prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts by his most holy faith. The phrase of dwelling in us, imports a very close and intimate union between Christ and believers; he dwells in them subjectively and effectively, by his gracious influences, by his powerful assistances, by his quickening impressions. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union on Christ's part, and faith on our part.

2. He prays that they may be rooted and grounded in love; that is, that they might be so deeply possessed with the sense of God's love, that they might be the very habit of their souls, and rooted nature in them.

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted
and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and
length, and depth, and height;

The dimensions of redeeming love are admirable: The breadth, and length, and depth, and height. By enumerating these dimensions, the apostle designs to signify the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ, the unsearchable riches of his love, which is higher than heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, Job 11:8,9. Some describe the particulars thus: By the breadth of it we may understand the extent of it to all ages, nations, and ranks of men; by the length of it, its continuance from everlasting to everlasting; by the depth of it, its stooping to the lowest condition, with a design to relieve and save those who have sunk into the depths of sin and misery; by its height, its entitling and raising us up to the heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to comprehend this love: it is the character of all the saints that they do so; for they all have a complacency and a confidence in the love of Christ: And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, Eph 3:19. If it passeth knowledge, how can we know it? We must pray and endeavour to know something, and should still covet and strive to know more and more of it, though, after the best endeavours, none can fully comprehend it: in its full extent it surpasses knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better

perceived and known by Christians than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven.

He prays that the Ephesians may comprehend what is the breadth, length, depth, and height, of the love of God, and the mysteries of the gospel; intimating to us, that we are not to content ourselves with a superficial view of God's free love in Christ, but to make an accurate inspection into all the dimensions of it: to view it in its breadth, and extending to all ages, Jewish and Christian; in its length, as reaching from eternity to eternity; in its depth, as it stoops down to succour and relieve the vilest and the greatest, if penitent sinners; in its height, whereby it reaches up to heaven, and entitles us to the joy and felicity of the saints above.

Verily, the love of God in Christ to a lost world, is so vast and boundless, so rich and matchless, exceeding not only our comprehension, but conceptions also, that not only the natural man cannot understand it, but the renewed man also is unable to fathom it, but must be daily endeavouring to take dimensions of it; for the love of Christ surpassingly transcends the knowledge of the most illuminated believer; it surpasses natural knowledge, apostolical knowledge, yea, angelical knowledge. That ye may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.

He prays that they may know the superlative love of Christ to a lost world is a transcendent love; that the knowledge of it may be attained in some measure, that it is our duty to seek after it, and search into it; but, after all, we can never fully comprehend it. What created understanding can know what is unknowable, or comprehend what is incomprehensible?

Learn, There are such dimensions and degrees in the love of Christ to sinners, which, at least in this present and imperfect state, do surpass all comprehension and conception; also that love whereby he took our nature upon him, that love whereby he took our sins upon him, is so stupendous and amazing, that the holy angels

awfully admire it, but even their enlarged capacities cannot fully comprehend it.

He prays that they might be filled with all the fulness of God; that is, with such measures of grace, knowledge, faith, holiness, and love, which God hath appointed believers unto, and they are capable of, in this life.

Note here, 1. That there is a fulness in God, which we can neither be filled with, nor may we strive to be filled with; God is essentially full, originally full, independently full, inexhaustibly full, of all holiness and grace. Now this fullness of his is undiminishable, and consequently incommunicable.

Note, 2. That there is a fulness of God which we may, and therefore ought, to pray and endeavour to be filled with; namely, to be filled with the knowledge of God, to be filled with the grace and Spirit of God, to be filled with the wisdom of God, that we may know God more, serve him better, glorify him on earth, and be glorified with him in heaven. In a word, we may pray for, and strive to be filled with, such a measure of the fulness of God and his grace, as God shall see fit to give, and as our capacities are or may be prepared to receive; God is not straitened towards us, let us not be straitened in ourselves: Open thy mouth wide, says God, and I will fill it. Blessed be God for a present fulness of sufficiency, and for the hopes of a future fulness to satiety.

19 and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye
might be filled with all the fulness of God.
20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all
that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

It is proper to conclude our prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour has taught us to do so. Take notice how he describes God, and how he ascribes glory to him. He describes him as a God that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. There is an inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never draw dry. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is still able to do more, abundantly

more, exceedingly abundantly more. Open thy mouth ever so wide, still he hath wherewithal to fill it. Note, In our applications to God we should encourage our faith by a consideration of his all-sufficiency and almighty power. According to the power which worketh in us. As if he had said, We have already had a proof of this power of God, in what he hath wrought in us and done for us, having quickened us by his grace, and converted us to himself. The power that still worketh for the saints is according to that power that hath wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness he gives to experience his power. Having thus described God, he ascribes glory to him. When we come to ask for grace from God, we ought to give glory to God. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. In ascribing glory to God, we ascribe all excellences and perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of them all. Observe, The seat of God's praises is in the church. That little rent of praise which God receives from this world is from the church, a sacred society constituted for the glory of God, every particular member of which, both Jew and Gentile, concurs in this work of praising God. The Mediator of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from his to us through the hand of Christ; and all our praises pass from us to him through the same hand. And God should and will be praised thus throughout all ages, world without end; for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. Amen. So be it; and so it will certainly be.

Observe here, 1. How our apostle closes his prayer with thanksgiving and praise; intimating to us, that praise should evermore conclude that work which prayer began, and that spiritual blessings principally deserve our praises.

Observe, 2. The title which St. Paul's faith fixed upon, in his approaches to God in prayer and praise; and that is, his omnipotence or almighty power. In all our addresses to God, it is our duty to have such apprehensions, and use such expressions concerning him, as may most strengthen our faith. He is able, saith

the apostle,to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

Note here, The comprehensive fulness of this expression: he is able to do for us, to do abundantly for us, to do exceeding abundantly for us,above what we ask; yea, to do exceeding abundantly for us above what we can think, as well as ask.

O! how narrow, short, and poor are our prayers, compared with the power of God! It is much that the tongue can ask; it is more that the mind can think: but the Lord is able to do for us, not only above what we can ask, but abundantly above what we can think.
Lord, what an everlasting spring of comfort is this! what encouragement doth it administer to thy people! what encouragement to prayer! what encouragement in prayer! They pray to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think.

Observe, 3. That it is not God's absolute power that St. Paul bottoms his faith in prayer upon, (for God can do many things that he never will do,) but it is his operative, promised, and formerly experienced power.

According to the power that worketh in us; that is, according to that infinite and almighty power which God had exerted and put forth in their first conversion: this power was, and is, a main prop for confidence in prayer.

Learn hence, That the experience we have had of God's gracious power in working in us, by converting and quickening grace, may and ought to confirm our faith, that he will do exceeding abundantly for us above what we can ask or think, when we are upon our knees in prayer before him.

21 unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

The concluding doxology To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Where note, 1. The divine praise given to Almighty God, namely, that of glory: To him be glory.--Glory is the fountain of all excellency in the creatures; they all shine with beams borrowed from God's excellences, as stars shine with the light they receive from the body of the sun. Almighty God is that infinitely glorious being, in whom all the excellences and perfections of the creatures are eminently and transcendently found.

Note, 2. The persons giving this glory unto God: the church, To him be glory in the church. True, it is the duty of all reasonable creatures to set forth God's glory; but only the church (holy and gracious persons alone) can perform it in an active and acceptable manner.

Note, 3. The person through whom this duty becomes acceptable unto God: through Christ Jesus, To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus.

The duty of praise and thanksgiving is what we owe to God for received favours, and indeed is all we have to pay him; but neither this, nor any other duty, can find acceptance with God, but by and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians-4

The Unity of the Spirit

1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Here note, 1. The person exhorting and beseeching, I Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you; I that am in bonds for Christ, I that am imprisoned for preaching the gospel to you, and for proselyting you by it to Christianity. Nothing can more oblige a people to hearken to the exhortations of the ministers of Christ, than this consideration, that the truths which they deliver to them, they stand ready both to suffer for and to seal with their precious blood: I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you.

Note, 2. The comprehensive duty exhorted to, That ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; worthy, that is, beseeming and becoming your holy profession, answerable to the dignity and obligation of your Christian name; or, as he exhorteth the Philippians, Phil 1:20, "walk as becometh the gospel of Jesus Christ."

But when may we be said so to do:

Ans. When we walk according to the precepts and commands of the gospel; answerable to the privileges and prerogatives of the gospel; answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the gospel sets before us, the example of Jesus Christ; answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the gospel affords.

Finally, to walk worthy or our vocation, is to walk answerable to those high and glorious hopes which the gospel raises the Christian up to the expectation of.

2 with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing
one another in love;

Having exhorted them to the practice of their general duty, namely, to walk worthy of their holy vocation, in the former verse; in these two verses he presses upon them more special and particular duties, the chief of which is the duty of Christian unity and concord; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit.

The word signifies a diligent, industrious, and united endeavour, to preserve and keep, to support and maintain, to unity of the Spirit; that is, an union of heart and spirit, an unity of faith and doctrine, and unity of judgment and affection, amongst all the professors of Christianity.

Observe, 2. The means by which this duty may be performed, and the unity of the Spirit maintained; namely, in or by the bond of peace: a peacable disposition and temper, a peacable deportment and behaviour, is the bond or ligament which binds Christians together; whereas discord and division cuts that bond asunder.

Observe, 3. The special graces which the apostle recommends unto us, as excellent helps for preserving unity and peace; namely, humility, meekness, mutual forbearance.

1. Humility; With all lowliness Eph 4:2; that is, with all submissiveness of mind, and humble apprehensions of ourselves. What Tertullus said of Festus flatteringly, we may say of humility truly, By thee, O humility, we enjoy great quietness. The humble man is a peaceable man; only by pride cometh contention.

2. Meekness; which consists in a backwardness to provoke others, or to be provoked by others; as lowliness stood in opposition to pride, so meekness here stands in opposition to peevishness/ irritable/: With all lowliness and meekness.

3. Long-suffering and mutual forbearance; when Christians are so far from resenting every wrong, and revenging every injury that is offered to them, that they can bear with one another's weaknesses, cover each other's infirmities, pity one another's failings, and pardon each other's provocations. And this duty of mutual forbearance ought to proceed from a principle of love to each other; forbearing one another in love.

3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

The apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to a strict unity and concord amongst themselves next proceeds to enforce his exhortation with several arguments; and there are no fewer than seven summed up in the three verses now before us.

1. Says the apostle, there is one body, that is, one universal church, whereof ye are all members.

2. There is one Spirit, by which ye are all animated and enlivened, and therefore keep the unity of the Spirit.

3. There is one hope of eternal life, by which we are all excited. Our inheritance in heaven is the same; God doth not give one a double portion, or a parti-coloured coat above another; but it is called an inheritance in light, because all alike are partakers of it, and sharers in it: the saints have all one hope, therefore should have all but one heart.

4. One Lord Jesus Christ, the head of his church, the Saviour of the body, one whom we all profess to serve and obey: Be ye therefore one, for your Lord is one.

5. There is one faith: that is, either one grace of faith whereby we believe, or one doctrine of faith which is believed; ye all believe in one and the same Saviour, and are justified by him after one and the same manner; therefore be ye also one; one in affection as well as one in belief.

6. There is one baptism, one door by which we all enter into the church; both Jew and Gentile, bond and free, rich and poor, they are all one in Christ Jesus, and by one Spirit baptized into one body.

7. One God and Father of all things. And of all persons in Christ, whom we all expect one and the same salvation from. And this God is transcendently above all, and over all: his eye penetrates and pierces through you all, and he is in and among you all, as in his holy temple; therefore such as endeavour to divide you, do as much as in them lies to divide God himself that dwells in you.

From the whole learn, That so many are the obligations, so strong the bonds and ties, which lie upon all the members of the church to be at unity among themselves, of one judgment, and of one heart; that such as violate these bonds, and culpably divide and separate themselves from communion with their brethern, Christ looks upon them no longer as members of his body, but as having rent and torn themselves from it.

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Is given grace. The favour of God; meaning here, that God had bestowed upon each sincere Christian the means of living as he ought to do, and had in his gospel made ample provision that they might walk worthy of their vocation. What are the endowments thus given the apostle states in the following verses. The grace referred to here, most probably, means the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, or his operations on the heart in connexion with the use of the means which God has appointed. According to the measure of the gift of Christ. Grace is bestowed upon all true Christians, and all have enough to enable them to live a life of holiness. Yet we are taught here,

(1.) that it is a gift. It is bestowed on us. It is not what is originated by ourselves.
(2.) It is by a certain measure. It is not unlisted, and without rule. There is a wise adaptation; an imparting it by a certain rule. The same grace is not given to all, but to all is given enough to enable them to live as they ought to live.

(3.) That measure is the gift of Christ, or what is given in Christ. It comes through him. It is what he has purchased; what he has obtained by his merits. All have enough for the purposes for which God has called them into his kingdom; but there are not the same endowments conferred on all. Some have grace given them to qualify them for the ministry; some to be apostles; some to be martyrs; some to make them eminent as public benefactors. All this has been obtained by Christ; and one should not complain that another has more distinguished endowments than he has. Rom 12:3; Jn 1:16.

8 Wherefore he saith,
When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Wherefore he saith. The word "he" is not in the original; and it may mean "the Scripture saith," or "God saith." The point of the argument here is, that Christ, when he ascended to heaven, obtained certain gifts for men, and that those gifts are bestowed

upon his people in accordance with this. To prove that, he adduces this passage from Ps 68:18. Much perplexity has been felt in regard to the principle on which Paul quotes this Psalm, and applies it to the ascension of the Redeemer. The Psalm seems to have been composed on the occasion of removing the ark of the covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion, 2Sam 6:1, seq. It is a song of triumph, celebrating the victories of, JEHOVAH, and particularly the victories which had been achieved when the ark was at the head of the army. It appears to have no relation to the Messiah; nor would it probably occur to any one, on reading it, that it referred to his ascension, unless it had been so quoted by the apostle. Great difficulty has been felt, therefore, in determining on what principle Paul applied it to the ascension of the Redeemer. Some have supposed that the Psalm had a primary reference to the Messiah; some that it referred to him in only a secondary sense; some that it is applied to him by way of "accommodation;" and some that he merely uses the words as adapted to express him idea, as a man adopts words which are familiar to him, and which will express his thoughts, though not meaning to say that the words had any such reference originally. Storr supposes that the words were used by the Ephesian Christians in their hymns, and that Paul quoted them as containing a sentiment which was admitted among them. This is possible; but it is mere conjecture. It has been also supposed that the tabernacle was a type of Christ; and that the whole Psalm, therefore, having original reference to the tabernacle, might be applied to Christ as the antitype. But this both conjectural and fanciful. On the various modes adopted to account for the difficulty, the reader may consult Rosenmuller, in loc. To me it seems plain that the Psalm had original reference to the bringing up the ark to Mount Zion, and is a triumphal song. In the song or psalm, the poet shows why God was to be praised--on account of his greatness, and his benignity to men, Eph 4:1-6. He then recounts the doings of God in former times--particularly his conducting his people through the wilderness, and the fact that his enemies were discomfited before him, Eph 4:7-12. All this refers to the God, the symbols of whose presence were on the tabernacle, and accompanying the ark. He then speaks of the various fortunes that had befallen the ark of the covenant. It had lain among the pots,

Eph 4:13, yet it had formerly been white as snow when God scattered kings by it, Eph 4:14. He then speaks of the hill of God--the Mount Zion to which the ark was about to be removed, and says that it is an "high hill"--" high as the hills of Bashan," the hill where God desired to dwell for ever, Eph 4:16. God is then introduced as ascending that hill, encompassed with thousands of angels, as in Mount Sinai; and the poet says that, in doing it, he had triumphed over his enemies, and had led captivity captive, Eph 4:18. The fact that the ark of God thus ascended the hill of Zion, the place of rest; that it was to remain there as its permanent abode, no more to be carried about at the head of armies, was the proof of its triumph. It had made everything captive; it had subdued every foe; and its ascent there would be the means of obtaining invaluable gifts for men. Mercy and truth would go forth from that mountain; and the true religion would spread abroad, even to the rebellious, as the results of the triumph of God, whose symbol was over the tabernacle and the ark. The placing the ark there was the proof of permanent victory, and would be connected with most important benefits to men. The "ascending on high," therefore, in the Psalm, refers, as it seems to me, to the ascent of the symbol of the Divine Presence accompanying the ark on Mount Zion, or to the placing it "on high" above all its foes. The remainder of the Psalm corresponds with this view. This ascent of the ark on Mount Zion; this evidence of its triumph over all the foes of God; this permanent residence of the ark there; and this fact that its being established there would be followed with the bestowment of invaluable gifts to men, might be regarded as a BEAUTIFUL EMBLEM Of the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven. There were strong points of resemblance. He also ascended on high. His ascent was the proof of victory over his foes. He went there for a permanent abode. And his ascension was connected with the bestowment of important blessings to men. It is as such emblematic language, I suppose, that the apostle makes the quotation. It did not originally refer to this; but the events were so similar in many points that the one would suggest the other, and the same language would describe both. It was language familiar to the apostle; language that would aptly express his thoughts, and language that was not improbably applied to the ascension of the Redeemer by Christians at that time. The

phrase, therefore, "he saith"--λεγει-or "it saith," or "the Scripture saith," means, "it is said;" or, "this language will properly express the fact under consideration, to wit, that there is grace given to each one of us, or that the means are furnished by the Redeemer for us to lead holy lives." When he ascended up on high. To heaven. The Psalm is, "Thou hast ascended on high." Comp. Eph 1:20,21. He led captivity captive. The meaning of this in the Psalm is, that he triumphed over his foes. The margin is, "a multitude of captives." But this, I think, is not quite the idea. It is language derived from a conqueror, who not only makes captives, but who makes captives of those who were then prisoners, and who conducts them as a part of his triumphal procession. He not only subdues his enemy, but he leads his captives in triumph. The allusion is to the public triumphs of conquerors, especially as celebrated among the Romans, in which captives were led in chains, (Tacitus, Ann. xii. 38,) and to the custom in such triumphs of distributing presents among the soldiers. Comp. also Jud 5:30, where it appears that this was also an early custom in other nations. Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. When Christ ascended to heaven, he triumphed over all his foes. It was a complete victory over the malice of the great enemy of God, and over those who had sought his life. But he did more. He rescued those who were the captives of Satan, and led them in triumph. Man was held by Satan as a prisoner. His chains were around him. Christ rescued the captive prisoner, and designed to make him a part of his triumphal procession into heaven, that thus the victory might be complete--triumphing not only over the great foe himself, but swelling his procession with the attending hosts of those who had been the captives of Satan, now rescued and redeemed.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

Into the lower parts of the earth. To the lowest state of humiliation. This seems to be the fair meaning of the words. Heaven stands opposed to earth. One is above; the other is beneath. From the one, Christ descended to the other; and he came not only to the earth, but he stooped to the most humble condition of humanity here. See Php 2:6-8. Comp. Isa 44:23. Some have understood this of the grave; others of the region of departed spirits; but these

interpretations do not seem to be necessary. It is the earth itself that stands in contrast with the heavens; and the idea is, that the Redeemer descended from his lofty eminence in heaven, and became a man of humble rank and condition. Comp. Ps 139:15.

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all
heavens, that he might fill all things.)
11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some,
evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
12 for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the
edifying of the body of Christ:

Now from the apostle's scope and design in this argument, we learn, That though diversity of gifts in the church, and divers measures of grace in and among the members thereof, are too often a sad occasion of division and strife, through the prevalency of envy and pride, and other dividing lusts; yet this great variety and diversity of gifts and graces, rightly considered, would be found to be one of the strongest ties and bonds of union, seeing we all stand in mutual need of the gifts and graces of each other.

It is very evident, that our apostle's scope here is, to urge and enforce unity, from the diversity of gifts and graces which are amongst the members of the church; God forbid then that they should occasion envy and animosities, strife and contention, rents and divisions.

Our apostle's next argument for unity, is in the 11th and 12th verses, where he proves, that as the unity and edification of the church was the design of Christ in dispensing divers gifts and graces amongst the members of the church, so was it likewise his aim and end in instituting such variety of offices and officers in his church: for this end it was that he gave to his church by qualification and mission,

13 till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of
the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature
of the fulness of Christ:
14 that we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and
carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,
and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

St. Paul, in these words, declares one special end for which the ministry of the word was instituted and appointed, namely, to preserve from error and seduction, to prevent instability of mind, and unsettledness of judgment, and to confirm persons in fundamental truths, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, &c.

Observe here, 1. The name which St. Paul gives to unstable persons and unsettled professors: he calls them children, not in regard of age, but in respect of knowledge and understanding: children, is a word that denotes imperfection and weakness, instability and ungroundedness in knowledge.

Observe, 2. How the unsteadiness of these professors is expressed by a double metaphor; the former is drawn from a wave of the sea, they are tossed to and fro; the latter is drawn from a light cloud hovering in the air, carried about from place to place: neither wave nor cloud have any constancy, but are both moving if the least wind be stirring.

Observe, 3. The cause of this instability; every wind of doctrine; professors that have no solid principles every wind of doctrine has power over them to drive them to and fro, every teacher can cast them into what mould he pleases, and blow them, like grasses, into this or that shape, at the pleasure of his breath. But why wind of doctrine? Because there is no solidity in it, but being wind in the preacher, it breeds but wind in the hearer, because of its variety and novelty, and because of its prevalency over unstaid men. How suddenly sometimes is a family, a town, yea, a whole country, leavened with a particular error!

Observe, 4. The characters of those imposters and seducers that do thus unsettle and unhinge men, they use sleight; a metaphor taken from gamesters, who with art and sleight of hand can cog the dice, and win the game. Seducers cheat with false doctrines, as gamesters do with false dice. Cunning craftiness; the word signifies the subtility and deep policy of the old serpent; implying that seducers are old and cunning gamesters, skillful to deceive: they

lie in wait to deceive; the word signifies an ambushment, or stratagem of war, implying that all seducers' sleight and craftiness is to this very end and purpose, that they may entrap and catch men within the ambush of their impostures.

From the whole learn, That seducers and false teachers are craftsmasters of sleight and subtilty, and stratagems of deceit; they have artifices, ways and methods, to take men unawares, and to make merchandise of the people: they wrest and rack the scriptures to make them speak what they please, not what the Holy Ghost intended.

If all this art fails, their last advice is, to recommend their doctrines upon some private pretended revelation and uncommon impulse of the Holy Spirit: by all which methods they lie in wait to deceive.

15 but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things,
which is the head, *even* Christ:

Our apostle had set forth the excellent end of the ministry, in the foregoing verse, for furthering their stability and steadfastness in grace; here he declares the admirable fitness of it, for helping forward their proficiency and growth in grace. Speaking the truth in love: that is, cleaving to the truth of Christ's doctrine, and living in love with one another, you may grow up in Christ by making progress in all christian graces, being united to him as members to the head.

Here note, How the apostle draws a comparsion between the natural and mystical members, and the increase of both: as there must be a fellowship betwixt the natural head and members, so must there be a union betwixt Christ, the spiritual head, and believers, his mystical members; and as there is further required a mutual communion and fellowship of the members of the body within, and amongst themselves, in order to growth and increase, so must there be concord, love, and unity, amongst believers, if they expect to see grace growing in themselves, or in one another.

Are the members of the natural body severally distinct from one another, some principal, others ministerial; but all concurring to the service of the whole? So, in order to spiritual growth, must all the members of Christ's mystical body keep their rank and order, and act in their own sphere, with spiritual wisdom and humility; the eye not doing the work of the hand, nor the hand the work of the foot; but everyone in the calling wherein he is called, must there abide with God.

Again, is there a supply from head to members in the mystical body, and from one mystical member to another: one is apt to teach, another ready to comfort, a third able to convince, a fourth willing to exhort, a fifth to advise and counsel; and all these, and every one of these, contributing all they can to the welfare and growth of the whole. Happy is it both for the natural and mystical body, when the members of both are subservient to each other, and contribute all they can to the mutual growth and improvement of one another, and especially for the benefit and advantage of the whole.

16 from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by
that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working
in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the
edifying of itself in love.

The New Life in Christ

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk
not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,
18 having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of
God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness
of their heart:

Having the understanding darkened. That is, because they were alienated from the true God, and particularly because of "the blindness of their hearts." The apostle does not say that this was a "judicial" darkening of the understanding; or that they might not have perceived the truth; or that they had no ability to understand

it. He speaks of a simple and well-known fact--a fact that is seen now as well as then--that the understanding becomes darkened by indulgence in sin. A man who is intemperate has no just views of the government of the appetites. A man who is unchaste has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous has no just views of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices will weaken his mental powers, and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion. Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort. This is seen all over the heathen world now-- in the stolid, stupid mind; the perverted moral sense; the incapacity for profound or protracted mental effort, as really as it was among the heathens to whom Paul preached. The missionary who goes among the heathen has almost to create an intellect as well as a conscience, before the gospel will make an impression. It is seen, too, in all the intellect of the bar, the senate, the pulpit, and the medical profession, that is ruined by intemperance, and in the intellect of multitudes of young men wasted by licentiousness and drunkenness. I know that under the influence of ambition and stimulating drinks the intellect may seem to put forth unnatural efforts, and to glow with an intensity nowhere else seen; but it soon burns out--and the wastes of such an intellect become soon like the hardened scoriae of the volcano, or the cinders of the over-heated furnace. Learn hence, that if a man wishes to be blessed with a clear understanding, he should be a good man; he who wishes a mind well balanced and clear, should fear and love God; and had Christianity done no other good on earth than to elevate the intellect of mankind, it would have been the richest blessing which has ever been vouchsafed to the race. It follows, too, that as man has debased his understanding by sin, it is needful to make an exertion to elevate it again; and hence a large part of the efforts to save men must consist in patient instruction. Hence the necessity of schools at missionary stations.

From the life of God. From a life like that of God, or a life of which he is the source and author. The meaning is, that they lived a life which was unlike God, or which he' could not approve. Of the truth of this, in regard to the heathen every- where, there can be no doubt. Rom 1:20; and Rom 1:21-23.

Through the ignorance that is in them. The ignorance of the true God, and of what constituted virtue. Rom 1:20; and Rom 1:21-23.

Because of the blindness of their heart. Marg., hardness. Hardness is a better word. It is a better translation of the Greek; and it better accords with the design of the apostle. Here the reason is stated why they lived and acted as they did, and why the understanding was blinded. It is not that God has enfeebled the human intellect by a judicial sentence on account of the sin of Adam, and made it incapable of perceiving the truth; it is not that there is any deficiency or incapacity of natural powers; it is not that the truths of religion are so exalted that man has no natural ability to understand them, for they may be as well understood as any other truths, 1Cor 2:14. The simple reason is, "the hardness of THE HEART." That is the solution given by an inspired apostle, and that is enough. A man who has a blind and hard heart sees no beauty in truth, and feels not its force, and is insensible to all its appeals. Learn then,

(1.) that men are to blame for the blindness of their understanding. Whatever proceeds from a wicked heart they are responsible for. But for mere inferiority of intellect they would not be to blame.

(2.) They are under obligation to repent and love God. If it was required of them to enlarge their intellects, or create additional faculties of mind, they could not be bound to do it. But where the whole thing required is to have a better heart, they may be held responsible.

(3.) The way to elevate the understandings of mankind is to purify the heart. The approach must be made through the affections. Let

the man feel right towards God, and they will soon think right; let the heart be pure, and the understanding will be clear.

19 who being past feeling have given themselves over unto
lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.
20 But ye have not so learned Christ;
21 if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the
truth is in Jesus:
22 that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man,
which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Concerning the former conversation. The word conversation here means conduct--as it commonly does in the Bible. 2Cor 1:12. The meaning here is, "With respect to your former conduct or habits of life, lay aside all that pertained to a corrupt and fallen nature. You are not to lay everything aside that formerly pertained to you. Your dress, and manners, and modes of speech and intercourse, might have been in many respects correct. But everything that proceeded from sin; every habit, and custom, and mode of speech and of conduct that, was the result of depravity, is to be laid aside. The peculiar characteristics of an unconverted man you are to put off, and are to assume those which are the proper fruits of a renewed heart." The old man. Rom 6:6. Which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. The meaning is, (1.) that the unrenewed man is not under the direction of reason and sound sense, but is controlled by his passions and desires. The word lusts has a more limited signification with us than the original word. That word we now confine to one class of sensual appetites; but the original word denotes any passion or propermiry of the heart. It may include avarice, ambition, the love of pleasure or of gratification in any way; and the meaning here is, that the heart is by nature under the control of such desires. (2.) Those passions are deceitful. They lead us astray. They plunge us into ruin. All the passions and pleasures of the world are illusive. They promise more than they perform; and they leave their deluded votaries to disappointment, and to tears. Nothing is more "deceitful" than the promised pleasures of this world; and all who yield to them find at last that they "flatter but to betray."

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in
righteousness and true holiness.

Christians; and we may learn from this,

(1.) That it is necessary that man should be renewed in order to be saved.

(2.) That it is proper to exhort Christians to be renewed. They need renovated strength every day.

(3.) That it is a matter of obligation to be renewed. Men are bound thus to be renovated. And

(4.) that they have sufficient natural ability to change from the condition of the old to that of the new man, or they could not be exhorted to it. In the spirit of your mind. In your temper; your heart; your nature.

And that ye put on the new man. The new man refers to the renovated nature. This is called, in other places, the "new creature, or the new creation," 2Cor 5:17, and refers to the condition after the heart is changed. The change is so great, that there is no impropriety in speaking of one who has experienced it as "a new man." He has new feelings, principles, and desires. He has laid aside his old principles and practices, and, in everything that pertains to moral character, he is new. His body is indeed the same; the intellectual structure of his mind the same; but there has been a change in his principles and feelings which make him, in all the great purposes of life, a new being. Learn, that regeneration is not a trifling change. It is not a mere change of relations, or of the outward condition. It is not merely being brought from the world into the church, and being baptized, though by the most holy hands; it is much more. None of these things would make proper the declaration, "he is a new man." Regeneration by the Spirit of God does.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his
neighbor: for we are members one of another.

For we are members one of another. We belong to one body--the church --which is the body of Christ. Rom 5:12. The idea is, that falsehood tends to loosen the bonds of brotherhood. In the human body harmony is observed. The eye never deceives the hand, nor the hand the foot, nor the heart the lungs. The whole move harmoniously as if the one could put the utmost confidence in the other--and falsehood in the church is as ruinous to its interests as it would be to the body if one member was perpetually practising a deception on another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Some understand these words only as a cautionary direction, and sense them thus: If ye be angry at any time, take heed that ye sin not, by exceeding due bounds; and if at any time it doth so, suppress it speedily, before the sun go down. This was a practice even amongst the heathen; before the sun went down, they would shake hands and embrace one another; to the shame of Christians, who gave place to the devil, according to the known proverb, Contubernalem habet diabolum, qui lectum petit iratus. "He that goes angry to bed, has the devil for his chamber-fellow;" yea, for his bed-fellow! nay, he lies not only in his bed, but in his bosom.
Others understand the words as a precept and command: Be angry, but take heed of sinful anger. Now the way to be angry and not sin, is to be angry at nothing but at sin; it is our duty to be angry when we see others depart from their duty. Meek Moses, who was cool enough in his own cause, was not so in God's; he has no zeal for God, that is not moved when he sees or hears God dishonoured.

Learn hence, 1. That anger being an affection implanted by God in the human nature, is not in itself evil or sinful, but in some cases a necessary duty.

Learn hence, 2. That there is an easy and ready passage from what is lawful to what is sinful, Be angry, and sin not; implying, that it is a very easy matter to sin in our anger, and no easy matter to be angry and not to sin.

Learn, 3. That it is very difficult, if not impossible, to avoid sin in our anger, if we let anger hang upon our spirits, and continue with us; anger may pass through the heart of a wise man, but rests in the bosom of fools: anger against sin must continue, but continuance in anger will be sinful.

To prevent the sin of immoderate anger, these rules will be useful:

1. Desire not to hear what others say of thee, lest you want patience to bear what you hear; many tear themselves with anger, when they hear themselves torn with slander; we had better be in the dark concerning our own wrongs, than by knowing of them wrong ourselves by passion or desire of revenge.

2. What you do hear said of you, interpret always in the most favourable sense; call it an infirmity, and distinguish between what is spoken and the intent of the speaker.

3. In and under all provocations, cast your eye upward, look up to God; and cast your eye inward, and see what you have deserved; though not at your neighbour's hand, yet at God's hand. Shimel gave David provocation to boil up his anger to the height of fury, 2Sam 16:5,but by eyeing God, how calm and meek was his spirit! Thus, be angry, and sin not.

27 neither give place to the devil.

Neither give place to the devil. This has respect probably to the exhortation in the former verse. "Do not yield to the suggestions and temptations of Satan, who would take every opportunity to persuade you to cherish unkind and angry feelings, and to keep up a spirit of resentment among brethren." Many of our feelings, when we suppose we are merely defending our rights, and securing what is our own, are produced by the temptations of the devil. The heart is deceitful; and seldom more deceitful in any case than when a man is attempting to vindicate himself from injuries done to his person and reputation. The devil is always busy when we are angry, and in some way, if possible, will lead us into sin; and the best way to avoid his wiles is to curb the temper, and restrain even sudden

anger. No man sins by restraining his anger; no man is certain that he will not who indulges it for a moment.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Working with his hands. Pursuing some honest employment. Paul was not ashamed to labour with "his own hands," 1Cor 4:12; and no man is dishonoured by labour. God made man for toil, Gen 2:15; and employment is essential to the happiness of the race. No man, who is able to support himself, has a right to depend on others. Rom 12:11. That he may have to give to him that needeth. Marg., distribute. Not merely that he may have the means of support, but that he may have it in his power to aid others. The reason and propriety of this is obvious. The human race is one great brotherhood. A considerable part cannot labour to support themselves. They are too old, or too young; or they are crippled or feeble, or laid on beds of sickness. If others do not divide with them the avails of their labours, they will perish. We are required to labour in order that we may have the privilege of contributing to their comfort. Learn from this verse,

(1.) that every Christian should have some calling, business, or profession, by which he may support himself. The Saviour was a carpenter; Paul a tentmaker; and no man is disgraced by being able to build a house, or to construct a tent.

(2.) Christianity promotes industry. It is rare that an idle man becomes a Christian; but if he does, religion makes him industrious just in proportion as it has influence over his mind. To talk of a lazy Christian is about the same as to talk of burning water or freezing fire.

(3.) Christians should have some useful and honest employment. They should work "that which is good." They should not pursue an employment which will necessarily injure others. No man has a right to place a nuisance under the window of his neighbour; nor has he any more right to pursue an employment that shall lead his neighbour into sin, or ruin him. An honest employment benefits

everybody. A good farmer is a benefit to his neighbourhood and country; and a good shoemaker, blacksmith, weaver, cabinet-maker, watchmaker, machinist, is a blessing to the community. He injures no one; he benefits all. How is it with the distiller, and the vender of alcoholic drinks? He benefits no one; he injures everybody. Every quart of intoxicating drink that is taken from his house does evil somewhere--evil, and only evil, and that continually. No one is made better, or richer; no one is made more moral or industrious; no one is helped on the way to heaven by it. Thousands are helped on the way to hell by it, who are already in the path; and thousands are induced to walk in the way to death who, but for that distillery, store, or tavern, might have walked in the way to heaven. Is this, then, "working that WHICH IS GOOD ?" Would Paul have done it? Would Jesus do it? Strange, that by a professing Christian it was ever done! See a striking instance of the way in which the Ephesian Christians acted when they were first converted, in Acts 19:19. Acts 19:19.

(4.) The main business of a Christian is not to make money, and to become rich. It is that he may have the means of benefiting others. Beyond what he needs for himself, his poor, and sick, and aged, and afflicted brother and friend has a claim on his earnings--and they should be liberally bestowed.

(5.) We should labour in order that we may have the means of doing good to others. It should be just as much a matter of plan and purpose to do this, as it is to labour in order to buy a goat, or to build a house, or to live comfortably, or to have the means of a decent burial. Yet how few are those who have any such end in view, or who pursue their daily toil definitely, that they may have something to give away. The world will be soon converted when all Christians make that the purpose Rom 12:11.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Let no corrupt communication proceed. 1Cor 15:33. The word rendered "corrupt" σαπρος means bad, decayed, rotten, and is applied to putrid vegetables or animal substances. Then it is applied

to a tree is of a useless character, that produces no good fruit, Mt 7:17. Then it is used in a moral sense, as our word "corrupt" is, to denote that which is depraved, evil, contaminating, and may denote here anything that is obscene, offensive, or that tends to corrupt others. The importance of this admonition will be appreciated when it is remembered, (1.) that such obscene and filthy conversation prevailed everywhere, and does still among the heathen. So general is this, that at almost every missionary station it has been found that the common conversation is so corrupt and defiling, that missionaries have felt it necessary to send their children home to be educated, in order to secure them from the contaminating influence of those around them. (2.) Those who have had the misfortune to be familiar with the common conversation of the lower classes in any community, and especially with the conversation of young men, will see the importance of this admonition. Scarcely anything can be conceived more corrupt or corrupting than that which often prevails among young men--and even young men in the academies and colleges of this land. (3.) Its importance will be seen from the influence of such corrupt communications. "The passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it!" the expression of such a thought deepens the pollution on the soul, and corrupts others. It is like retaining an offensive carcase above ground, to pollute the air, and to diffuse pestilence and death, which should at once be buried out of sight. A Christian should be pure in his conversation. His Master was pure. His God is pure. The heaven to which he goes is pure. The religion which he professes is pure. NEVER should he indulge himself in an obscene allusion; never should retail anecdotes of all obscene character, or smile when they are retailed by others. Never should he indulge in a jest having a double meaning; never should he listen to a song of this character. If those with whom he associates have not sufficient respect for themselves and him to abstain from such corrupt and corrupting allusions, he should at once leave them.

30 And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God. This is addressed to Christians, and it proves that it is possible for them to grieve the Holy Spirit. The word here used--λυπειτε, means, properly, to afflict

with sorrow; to make sad or sorrowful. It is rendered, to make sorry, or sorrowful, Mt 14:9, 17:23, 18:31, 19:22, 26:22,37 Mk 14:19, Jn 16:20, 2Cor 2:2, 6:10, 7:8,9,11, 1Thes 4:13. It is rendered grieved, Mk 10:22, Jn 21:17, Rom 14:15, 2Cor 2:4,5, Eph 4:30; and once, "in heaviness," 1Pet 1:6. The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The common meaning is, to treat others so as to cause grief. We are not to suppose that the Holy Spirit literally endures grief, or pain, at the conduct of men. The language is such as is fitted to describe what men endure, and is applied to him to denote that kind of conduct which is fitted to cause grief; and the meaning here is, "do not pursue such a course as is fitted, in its own nature, to pain the benevolent heart of a holy being. Do not act towards the Holy Spirit in a manner which would produce pain in the bosom of a friend who loves you. There is a course of conduct which will drive that Spirit from the mind as if he were grieved and pained--as a course of ingratitude and sin would pain the heart of an earthly friend, and cause him to leave you." If asked what that conduct is, we may reply,

(1.) Open and gross sins. They are particularly referred to here; and the meaning of Paul is, that theft, falsehood, anger, and kindred vices, would grieve the Holy Spirit, and cause him to depart.

(2.) Anger, in all its forms. Nothing is more fitted to drive away all serious and tender impressions from the mind than the indulgence of anger.

(3.) Licentious thoughts and desires. The Spirit of God is pure, and he dwells not in a soul that is filled with corrupt imaginings.

(4.) Ingratitude. We feel ingratitude more than almost anything else; and why should we suppose that the Holy Spirit would not feel it also?

(5.) Neglect. The Spirit of God is grieved by that. Often he prompts us to pray; he disposes the mind to seriousness, to the perusal of the Bible, to tenderness and penitence. We neglect those favoured

moments of our piety, and lose those happy seasons for becoming like God.

(6.) Resistance. Christians often resist the Holy Ghost. He would lead them to be dead to the world; yet they drive on their plans of gain. He would teach them the folly of fashion and vanity; yet they deck themselves in the gayest apparel. He would keep them from the splendid party, the theatre, and the ballroom; yet they go there. All that is needful for a Christian to do, in order to be eminent in piety, is to yield to the gentle influences which would draw him to prayer and to heaven.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil
speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:
32 and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Ephesians-5

Walk as Children of Light

1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

Verse 1. Be ye therefore followers of God. Gr., "Be imitators--μιμηται--of God." The idea is not that they were to be the friends of God, or numbered among his followers, but that they were to imitate him in the particular thing under consideration. The word "therefore"--ουν--connects this with the previous chapter, where he had been exhorting them to kindness, and to a spirit of forgiveness, and he here entreats them to imitate God, who was always kind and ready to forgive. Comp. Mt 5:44-47. As he forgives us, (Eph 4:32) we should be ready to forgive others; as he has borne with our faults, we should bear with theirs; as he is ever ready to hear our cry when we ask for mercy, we should be ready to hear others when they desire to be forgiven; and as he is never weary with doing us good, we should never be weary in benefiting them. As dear children. The meaning is, "as those children which are beloved follow the example of a father, so we, who are beloved of God, should follow his example." What a simple rule this is! And how much contention and strife would be avoided if it were followed! If every Christian who

is angry, unforgiving, and unkind, would just ask himself the question, "How does God treat me?" it would save all the trouble and heart-burning which ever exists in the church.

2 and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor.

And walk in love. That is, let your lives be characterized by love; let that be evinced in all your deportment and conversation. Jn 13:34. As Christ also hath loved us. We are to evince the same love for one another which he has done for us. He showed his love by giving himself to die for us, and we should evince similar love to one another, 1Jn 3:16. And hath given himself for us. This is evidently added by the apostle to show what he meant by saying that Christ loved us, and what we ought to do to evince our love for each other. The strength of his love was so great that he was willing to give himself up to death on our account; our love for our brethren should be such that we would be willing to do the same thing for them, 1Jn 3:16. An offering. The word here used--προσφοραν--means, properly, that which is offered to God--in any way, or whatever it may be. It is, however, in the Scriptures, commonly used to denote an offering without blood--a thank-offering--and thus is distinguished from a sacrifice, or a bloody oblation. The word occurs only in Acts 21:26, 24:17, Rom 15:16, Eph 5:2, Heb 10:5,8,10,14,18. It means here that he regarded himself as an offering to God. And a sacrifice, θυσιαν. Christ is here expressly called a Sacrifice--the usual word in the Scriptures to denote a proper sacrifice. A sacrifice was an offering made to God by killing an animal and burning it on an altar, designed to make atonement for sin. It always implied the killing of the animal as an acknowledgment of the sinner that he deserved to die. It was the giving up of life, which was supposed to reside in the blood, (Rom 3:25,) and hence it was necessary that blood should be shed. Christ was such a sacrifice; and his love was shown in his being willing that his blood should be shed to save men. For a sweet-smelling savour. 2Cor 2:15, where the word savour is explained. The meaning here is, that the offering which Christ made of himself to God was like the grateful and pleasant smell of incense, that is, it was acceptable to him. It was an exhibition of

benevolence with which he was pleased, and it gave him the opportunity of evincing his own benevolence in the salvation of men. The meaning of this in the connexion here is, that the offering which Christ made was one of love. So, says Paul, do you love one another. Christ sacrificed himself by love, and that sacrifice was acceptable to God. So do you show love one to another. Sacrifice everything which opposes it, and it will be acceptable to God. He will approve all which is designed to promote love, as he approved the sacrifice which was made, under the influence of love, by his Son.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

But fornication. A common vice among the heathen then as it is now, and one into which they were in special danger of falling. Rom 1:29; 1Cor 6:18. And all uncleanness. Impurity of life. Rom 1:24. Comp. Rom 6:9, Gall 5:19, Eph 4:19, Col 3:5. Or covetousness. The connexion in which this word is found is remarkable. It is associated with the lowest and most debasing vices, and this, as well as those vices, was not once to be named among them. What was Paul's estimate, then, of covetousness? He considered it as an odious and abominable vice; a vice to be regarded in the same light as the most gross sin, and as wholly to be abhorred by all who bore the Christian name. See Eph 5:5. The covetous man, according to Paul, is to be ranked with the sensual, and with idolaters, (Eph 5:5,) and with those who are entirely excluded from the kingdom of God. Is this the estimate in which the vice is held now? Is it the view which professing Christians take of it? Do we not feel that there is a great difference between a covetous man and a man of impure and licentious life? Why is this? Because

(1.) it is so common;

(2.) because it is found among those who make pretensions to refinement and even religion;

(3.) because it is not so easy to define what is covetousness, as it is to define impurity of life; and

(4.) because the public conscience is seared, and the mind blinded to the low and groveling character of the sin. Yet is not the view of Paul the right view? Who is a covetous man? A man who, in the pursuit of gold, neglects his soul, his intellect, and his heart. A man who, in this insatiable pursuit, is regardless of justice, truth, charity, faith, prayer, peace, comfort, usefulness, conscience; and who shall say that there is any vice more debasing or degrading than this? The time may come, therefore, when the covetous man will be regarded as deserving the same rank in the public estimation with the most vicious, and when TO COVET will be considered as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as any of the vices here named. When that time shall come, the world's conversion will probably be not a distant event. Let it not be once named among you. That is, let it not exist; let there be no occasion for mentioning such a thing among you; let it be wholly unknown. This cannot mean that it is wrong to mention these vices for the purpose of rebuking them, or cautioning those in danger of committing them--for Paul himself in this manner mentions them here, and frequently elsewhere--but that they should not exist among them.

4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not
convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor
covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the
kingdom of Christ and of God.

For this ye know. Be assured of this. The object here is, to deter from indulgence in those vices by the solemn assurance that no one who committed them could possibly be saved. Nor unclean person. No one of corrupt and licentious life can be saved. See Rev 22:15. Nor covetous man, who is an idolater. That is, he bestows on money the affections due to God. See Col 3:5. To worship money is as real idolatry as to worship a block of stone. If this be so, what an idolatrous world is this! How many idolaters are there in professedly Christian lands! How many, it is to be feared, in the church itself! And since every covetous man is certainly to be excluded from the kingdom of God, how anxious should we be to examine our hearts, and to know whether this sin may not lie at our door! Hath any inheritance, etc. Such an one shall never enter

heaven. This settles the inquiry about the final destiny of a large portion of the world; and this solemn sentence our conscience and all our views of heaven approve. Let us learn hence,

(1.) that heaven will be pure.

(2.) That it will be a desirable place--for who would wish to live always with the licentious and the impure?

(3.) It is right to reprove these vices, and to preach against them. Shall we not be allowed to preach against those sins which will certainly exclude men from heaven?

(4.) A large part of the world is exposed to the wrath of God. What numbers are covetous! What multitudes are licentious! In how many places is licentiousness openly and unblushingly practised! In how many more places in secret! And in how many more is the heart polluted, while the external conduct is moral; the soul corrupt, while the individual moves in respectable society!

(5.) What a world of shame will hell be! How dishonourable and disgraceful to be damned for ever, and to linger on in eternal fires, because the man was TOO POLLUTED to be admitted into pure society! Here, perhaps, he moved in fashionable life, and was rich, and honoured, and flattered; there he will be sent down to hell because his whole soul was corrupt, and because God would not suffer heaven to be contaminated by his presence!

(6.) What a doom awaits the covetous man! He, like the sensualist, is to be excluded from the kingdom of God. And what is to be his doom? Will he have a place apart from the common damned--a golden palace and a bed of down in hell? No. It will be no small part of his aggravation that he will be doomed to spend an eternity with those in comparison with whom on earth, perhaps, he thought himself to be pure as an angel of light.

(7.) With this multitude of the licentious mad the covetous, will sink to hell all who are not renewed and sanctified. What a prospect

for the gay, the fashionable, the moral, the amiable, and the lovely, who have no religion! For all the impenitent and the unbelieving, there is but one home in eternity. Hell is less terrible from its penal fires and its smoke of torment, than from its being made up of the profane, the sensual, and the vile; and its supremest horrors arise from its being the place where shall be gathered all the corrupt and unholy dwellers in a fallen world; all who are so impure that they cannot be admitted into heaven. Why, then, will the refined, the moral, and the amiable not be persuaded to seek the society of a pure heaven? to be prepared for the world where holy beings dwell?

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

Let no man deceive you. Let no one, by artful plans, persuade you that there will be no danger from practising these vices. We may suppose that they would be under strong temptations to mingle in the gay and festive scenes where these vices were not frowned on, or where they were practised; or that they might be tempted to commit them by some of the plausible arguments which were then used for theft indulgence. Many of their friends may have been in these circles; and they would endeavour to convince them that such were the customs which had been long practised, and that there could be no harm still in theft indulgence. Not a few philosophers endeavoured, as is well known, to defend some of these practices, and even practised them themselves. Rom 1:1 and following. It required, therefore, all the authority of an apostle to convince them, that however plausible were the arguments in defence of them, they certainly exposed those who practised them to the wrath of God.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

8 For ye were sometime darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light;

Here the Ephesians are put in mind of the darkness and blindness of their heathen state, before the light of the gospel came among them; they were not only dark, very much in the dark, but darkness itself: he next acquaints them with their happy condition, by entertaining of the gospel of Christ; they therefore became light in the Lord, they were savingly enlightened by the word and Spirit of

God; and accordingly he urges them to walk answerably to their Christian profession, Walk as children of the light.

Note here, 1. That the state which every soul is in by nature, and before conversion, is a state of spiritual darkness; like men in the dark, they go they know not whither, they do they know not what, they stumble and fall they know not how and when.

Note, 2. That all those whom God calls effectually out of the darkness and ignorance of their natural and unregenerate state, he doth enlighten them by his word and Holy Spirit.

Note, 3. That such as are so called and enlightened, ought to walk suitably to their privilege, and answerably to their high and honourable profession. Walk as children of light; that is, holy, humbly, cheerfully, thankfully, before God; exemplarily and unblamably before the world.

9 (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

The unfruitful works. The deeds of darkness that produce no benefit to the body or the soul. The word unfruitful is here used in contrast with the "fruit of the Spirit," Eph 5:9. But rather reprove them. By your life, your conversation, and all your influence. This is the business of Christians. Their lives should be a standing rebuke of a sinful world, and they should be ever ready to express their disapprobation of its wickedness in every form.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

For it is a shame even to speak, etc. Comp. Rom 1:24; also Rom 1:25-32. It is still a shame to speak of the practices of the heathen. Missionaries tell us that they cannot describe the images on the car of Juggernaut, or tell us what is done in the idol temples. All over the world the same thing is true. The cheek of modesty and virtue would be suffused with shame at the very mention of what is done by the worshippers of idols; and the same is true of what is done

by multitudes in Christian lands, who are not worshippers of idols. Their deeds cannot be described in the circles of the refined and the delicate; they cannot be told in the presence of mothers and sisters. Is there not emphasis here in the words, "even to SPEAK of those things?" If the apostle would not allow, them to name those things, or to speak of them, is it wise or safe for Christians now to be familiar with the accounts of those practices of pollution, and for ministers to portray them in the pulpit, and for the friends of "moral reform" to describe them before the world? The very naming of those abominations often produces improper associations in the mind; the description creates polluting images before the imagination; the exhibition of pictures, even for the purpose of condemning them, defiles the soul. There are some vices which, from the corruptions of the human heart, cannot be safely described; and it is to be feared that, under the plea of faithfulness, many have done evil by exciting improper feelings, where they should only have alluded to the crime, and then spoken in thunder. Paul did not describe these vices, he denounced them; he did not dwell upon them long enough for the imagination to find employment, and to corrupt the soul. He mentioned the vice, and then he mentioned the wrath of God; he alluded to the sin, and then he spoke of the exclusion from heaven. Comp. 1Cor 6:18.

13 But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

For whatsoever doth make manifest is light. "Anything which will show the real form and nature of an object deserves to be called light." Of the truth of this no one can doubt. The meaning in this connexion is, that that system which discloses the true nature of what is done by the heathen deserves to be considered as light; and that the gospel, which does this, should be regarded as a system of light and truth. It discloses the odiousness and vileness, and it stands thus in strong contrast with all the false and abominable systems which have upheld or produced those vices.

Because admonitions and reproof make the works of darkness manifest to the sinner's conscience, set sin forth in its black and ugly colours.

A discovery of sin in its vileness, odiousness, and ugliness, is necessary to a sinner's conviction of it, and conversion from it; and God doth not only bless the ministry of the word from the pulpit, but sometimes by a word of reproof from the mouth of a private christian, and the light of his holy example for this great end. A reproof piously and prudently given to open sinners, by private christians, shall not miss of its end; it will certainly have its effect, either in the sinner's conversion and salvation, or in his obduration and condemnation: as all things reprovable are made manifest by light, so a prudent reproof and pious conversation put sin to shame, if not to silence.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Wherefore he saith. Marg., or it. διολεγει. The meaning may be, either that the Lord says, or the Scripture. Much difficulty has been experienced in endeavouring to ascertain where this is said. It is agreed on all hands that it is not found, in so many words, in the Old Testament. Some have supposed that the allusion is to Isa 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live--awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs," etc. But the objections to this are obvious and conclusive.

(1.) This is not a quotation of that place, nor has it a resemblance to it, except in the word" awake."

(2.) The passage in Isaiah refers to a different matter, and has a different sense altogether. Isa 26:19. To make it refer to those to whom the gospel comes is most forced and unnatural. Others have supposed that the reference is to Isa 60:1-3, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come," etc. But the objection to this is not less decisive.

(1.) It is not a quotation of that passage, and the resemblance is very remote, if it can be seen at all.

(2.) That is addressed to the church, calling on her to let her light shine; this, to awake and arise from the dead, with the assurance that Christ would give them light. The exhortation here is to

Christians, to avoid the vices of the heathen around them; the exhortation in Isaiah is to the church, to rejoice and exult in view of the fact that the day of triumph had come, and that the heathen were to be converted, and to come in multitudes and devote themselves to God. In the design of the two passages there is no resemblance. Some have supposed that the words are taken from some book among the Hebrews which is now lost. Epiphanius supposed that it was a quotation from a prophecy of Elijah; Syncellus and Euthalius, from some writing of Jeremiah; Hippolytus, from the writing of some now unknown prophet. Jerome supposed it was taken from some apocryphal writings. Grotius supposes that it refers to the word light Eph 5:13, and that the sense is, "That light says; that is, that a man who is pervaded by that light, let him so say to another." Heumann, and after him Storr, Michaelis, and Jenning, (Jewish Ant. ii. 252,) suppose that the reference is to a song or hymn that was sung by the early Christians, beginning in this manner, and that the meaning is, "Wherefore, as it is said in the hymns which we sing,

' Awake, thou that sleepest; Arise from the dead; Christ shall give thee light.'"

Others have supposed that there is an allusion to a sentiment which prevailed among the Jews, respecting the significancy of blowing the trumpet on the first day of the month, or the feast of the new moon. Maimonides conjectures that that call of the trumpet, especially in the month Tisri, in which the great day of atonement occurred, was designed to signify a special call to repentance; meaning, "You who sleep, arouse from your slumbers; search and try yourselves; think on your Creator; repent, and attend to the salvation of the soul." Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. But all this is evidently conjecture. I see no evidence that Paul meant to make a quotation at all. Why may we not suppose that he speaks as an inspired man, and that he means to say, simply, that God now gives this command, or that God now speaks in this way? The sense then would be, "Be separate from sinners. Come out from among the heathen. Do not mingle with their abominations; do not name them. You are the children of light; and God says to

you, Awake from false security, rouse from the death of sin, and Christ shall enlighten you." Whatever be the origin of the sentiment in this verse, it is worthy of inspiration, and accords with all that is elsewhere said in the Scriptures. Awake thou that sleepest. Arouse from a state of slumber and false security. Sleep and death are striking representations of the state in which men are by nature. In sleep we are, though living, insensible to any danger that may be near; we are unconscious of what may be going on around us; we hear not the voice of our friends; we see not the beauty of the grove or the landscape; we are forgetful of our real character and condition. So with the sinner. It is as if his faculties were locked in a deep slumber. He hears not when God calls; he has no sense of danger; he is insensible to the beauties and glories of the heavenly world; he is forgetful of his true character and condition. To see all this, he must be first awakened; and hence this solemn command is addressed to man. He must rouse from this condition, or he cannot be saved. But can he awaken himself? Is it not the work of God to awaken a sinner? Can he rouse himself to a sense of his condition and danger? How do we do in other things? The man that is sleeping on the verge of a dangerous precipice we would approach, and say, "Awake, you are in danger." The child that is sleeping quietly in its bed, while the flames are bursting into the room, we would rouse, and say, "Awake, or you will perish." Why not use the same language to the sinner slumbering on the verge of ruin, in a deep sleep, while the flames of wrath are kindling around him? We have no difficulty in calling on sleepers elsewhere to awake when in danger; how can we have any difficulty when speaking to the sinner? And arise from the dead. The state of the sinner is often compared to death. Eph 2:1. Men are by nature dead in sins; yet they must rouse from this condition, or they will perish. How singular, it may be said, to call upon the dead to rise! How could they raise themselves up? Yet God speaks thus to men, and commands them to rise from the death of sin. Learn then,

(1.) that men are not dead in sin in any such sense that they are not moral agents, or responsible.

(2.) That they are not dead in any such sense that they have no power of any kind.

(3.) That it is right to call on sinners to arouse from their condition, and live.

(4.) That they must put forth their efforts as if they were to begin the work themselves, without waiting for God to do it for them. They are to awake; they are to arise. It is not God who is to awake; it is not Christ who is to arise. It is the sinner who is to awake from his slumber, and arise from the state of death; nor is he to wait for God to do the work for him. And Christ shall give thee light. Christ is the light of the world. Jn 1:4, Jn 1:9; Jn 8:12; Heb 1:3. The idea here is, that if they will use all the powers with which God has endowed them, and arouse from their spiritual slumber, and make an appropriate effort for salvation, then they may expect that Christ will shine upon them, and bless them in their efforts. This is just the promise that we need, and it is all that we need. All that man can ask is, that if he will make efforts to be saved, God will bless those efforts, so that they shah not be in vain. Faculties of mind have been given us to be employed in securing our salvation; and if we will employ them as they were intended to be employed, we may look for the Divine aid; if not, we cannot expect it. "God helps those who help themselves ;" and they who will make no effort for their salvation must perish, as they who will make no effort to provide food must starve. This command was indeed addressed at first to Christians; but it involves a principle which is applicable to all. Indeed, the language here is rather descriptive of the condition of impenitent sinners than of Christians. In a far more important sense they are "asleep," and are "dead;" and with the more earnestness, therefore, should they be entreated to awake, and to rise from the dead, that Christ may give them light.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Redeeming the time. The word here rendered redeeming, means, to purchase; to buy up from the possession or power of any one; and then to redeem, to set free--as from service or bondage. Gall 3:13. Here it means, to rescue or recover our time from waste; to

improve it for great and important purposes. Because the days are evil. Because the times in which you live are evil. There are many allurements and temptations that would lead you away from the proper improvement of time, and that would draw you into sin. Such were those that would tempt them to go to places of sinful indulgence and revelry, where their time would be wasted, and worse than wasted. As these temptations abounded, they ought therefore to be more especially on their guard against a sinful and unprofitable waste of time. This exhortation may be addressed to all, and is applicable to all periods. The sentiment is, that we ought to be solicitous to improve our time to some useful purpose, because there are, in an evil world, so many temptations to waste it. Time is given us for most valuable purposes. There are things enough to be done to occupy it all, and no one need have it hang heavy on his hands. He that has a soul to be saved from eternal death need not have one idle moment. He that has a heaven to win has enough to do to occupy all his time. Man has just enough given him to accomplish all the purposes which God designs, and God has not given him more than enough. They redeem their time who employ it

(1.) in gaining useful knowledge;

(2.) in doing good to others;

(3.) in employing it for the purpose of an honest livelihood for themselves and families;

(4.) in prayer and self-examination, to make the heart better;

(5.) in seeking salvation, and in endeavouring to do the will of God. They are to redeem time from all that would waste and destroy it--like recovering marshes and fens to make them rich meadows and vineyards. There is time enough wasted by each sinner to secure the salvation of the soul; time enough wasted to do all that is needful to be done to spread religion around the world, and to save the race. We should still endeavour to redeem our time for the same reasons which are suggested by the apostle--because the days are

evil. There are evil influences abroad; allurements and vices that would waste time, and from which we should endeavour to rescue it. There are evil influences tending to waste time

(1.) in the allurements to pleasure and amusement in every place, and especially in cities;

(2.) in the temptations to novel-reading, consuming the precious hours of probation to no valuable purpose;

(3.) in the temptations of ambition, most of the time spent for which is wholly thrown away, for few gain the prize, and when gained, it is all a bauble, not worth the effort;

(4.) in dissipation--for who can estimate the amount of valuable tune that is worse than thrown away in the places of revelry and dissipation?

(5.) in wild and visionary plans--temptations to which abound in all lands, and pre-eminently in our own;

(6.) and in luxurious indulgence--in dressing, and eating, and drinking.

A most important and necessary duty exhorted to; namely, to redeem the time. This cannot be done in a natural sense: time, once past, is irrecoverably lost, we can no more recall it; but in a moral sense, time may be said to be redeemed, when our diligence to improve it is redoubled, when we do much work in a little time.
To redeem time, supposes and implies a right knowledge of the use and end of time, and high valuation of the worth and excellency of time, and resolution to rescue it out of the hands of those that would devour it: idleness, excess of sleep, inordinate adorning of the body, immoderate recreations, vain company, an excess of worldly business, all these are robbers of our time, and time must be rescued out of their hands.

Quest. Who are the persons more especially concerned to redeem time?

Ans. All those that are young: such as have idly wasted a great part of their time; all that are ignorant and graceless; all that are weak and aged, and have but a few sands in their glass; all those that are recovered from sickness; and all such as, through poverty, restraint or service, are scanted of their time, should wisely redeem it, and industriously improve it, for God and their souls: because upon this moment depends eternity, and according to our present choice will be our eternal lot.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the
Lord *is.*

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with
the Spirit;

Verse 18. And be not drunk with wine. A danger to which they were exposed, and a vice to which those around them were much addicted. Lk 21:34. It is not improbable that in this verse there is an allusion to the orgies of Bacchus, or to the festivals celebrated in honour of that heathen god. He was "the god of wine," and, during those festivals, men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated, and with wild songs and cries to run through streets, and fields, and vineyards. To these things the apostle opposes psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as much more appropriate modes of devotion, and would have the Christian worship stand out in strong contrast with the wild and dissolute habits of the heathen. Plato says, that while those abominable ceremonies in the worship of Bacchus continued, it was difficult to find in all Attica a single sober man. Rosenmuller, Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. On the subject of wine, and the wines used by the ancients, Jn 2:10, Jn 2:11. We may learn from this verse,

19 speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the
name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Giving thanks always. This is probably designed to be connected with the preceding verse, and to denote that the proper subject of psalms and hymns is thanksgiving and praise. This is indeed always the main design, and should be so regarded; and this part of worship should be so conducted as to keep up in the heart a lively sense of the mercy and goodness of God. For all things. υπερπαντων for all things, or all persons. Dr. Barrow supposes that the meaning here is, that they were to give thanks for all persons, and to regard themselves as under obligations to give thanks for the mercies bestowed upon the human race, in accordance with the idea expressed in the Liturgy of the Episcopal Church, "We, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men." This idea is beautiful; and it accords with the requirements of the Scriptures elsewhere. 1Timm 2:1, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." Such is the duty of Christians; and I see no departure from the fair meaning of the words here, in supposing that the apostle may have designed to express such an idea. The sense, according to this, would be, that we are to praise God for his general mercy to mankind; for all the happiness which mortals are permitted to enjoy; for the love of God to mankind in creation, in providence, and in redemption--just as a grateful child will give thanks for all the kindness shown to his brothers and sisters. One obvious effect of this would be to overcome selfishness, and to make us rejoice in the happiness of others as well as in our own. Another effect would be to make us feel a deeper interest in the condition of our fellow-creatures. Another would be to elevate and enlarge our conceptions of the goodness or God--directing the mind to all the favours which he has bestowed on the race. Man has much for which to be grateful; and the duty of acknowledging the mercy of God to the race should not be forgotten. We are often prone so to magnify our calamities, and to contemplate the woes of the race, that we overlook the occasions for gratitude; and we should, therefore, look upon the mercies which we enjoy as well as the miseries which we endure, that our hearts may be right. He who looks only on his trials will soon find his mind soured and complaining; he who endeavours to find how many occasions for

gratitude he has, will soon find the burden of his sorrows alleviated, and his mind tranquil and calm. Yet, if the words here are to be taken as in our translation, "for all things," they are full of force and beauty. At the close of life, and in heaven, we shall see occasion to bless God for all his dealings with us. We shall see that we have not suffered one pang too much, or been required to perform one duty too severe. We shall see that all our afflictions, as well as our mercies, were designed for our good, and were needful for us. Why, then, should we not bless God in the furnace, as well as in the palace; on a bed of pain, as well as on a bed of down; in want, as well as when sitting down at the splendid banquet? God knows what is best for us; and the way in which he leads us, mysterious though it seem to be now, will yet be seen to have been full of goodness and mercy.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, through his mediation, or trusting in him. Jn 14:13. The meaning is, that we are always to approach God through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. When we ask for mercy, it is to be on his account, or through his merits; when we plead for strength and grace to support us in trial, it is to be in dependence on him; and when we give thanks, it is to be through him, and because it is through his intervention that we receive all blessings, and by his merits that even the gratitude of beings so sinful as we are can be accepted.

21 submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Our apostle having exhorted the Ephesians to such general duties as belong to all Christians, comes now to exhort them to the practice of relative duties, as they are members of societies, and particularly as they live in a family society one with another, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants; much of the life and power of religion appearing in the conscientious practice and performance of religious duties.

But first he gives them a general direction to submit themselves one to another in the fear of God, that is, by yielding and mutually condescending to each other, stooping to the meanest office of love and kindness one towards another; and this in the fear of God, that is, either in obedience to the command of God, which enjoins this

submission, for then we perform our duty one towards another acceptably, and as we ought, when we eye the command of God in what we do: or else in the fear of God, that is, making the fear of God the rule and measure of our submission one to another; for we are by no means bound to submit ourselves in order to the pleasing of our neighbours, any farther than is consistent with that subjection and obedience which we owe to God.

Learn hence, That where that noble and divine principle of the fear of God prevaileth in the heart, it will make a man conscientiously careful of his duty towards man: the fear of God in him will have both the force of a motive to quicken him up unto, and also of a rule to guide and direct him in, that submission, which, in obedience to God is due and payable to his neighbours.

Be Subject to One Another

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the
Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of
the church: and he is the saviour of the body.
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to
their own husbands in every thing.
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,
and gave himself for it;

Husbands, love your wives. The duty of the wife is to obey; the right of the husband is to command. But the apostle would guard against the abuse of that right by enjoining the manifestation of such a spirit on the husband as would secure obedience on the part of the wife. He proceeds, therefore, to show that the husband, in all his intercourse with the wife, should manifest the same spirit which the Lord Jesus did towards the church; or, in other words, he holds up the conduct of the Redeemer towards the church as the model for a husband to imitate. If a husband wished a rule that would be short, simple, clear, and efficacious, about the manner in which he should regard and treat his wife, he could not find a better one than that here suggested. Even as Christ loved the Church. This was the strongest love that has ever been evinced in this world. It follows, that a husband is in no danger of loving his wife too much, provided

she be not loved more than God. We are to make the love which Christ had for the church the model. And gave himself for it. Gave himself to die to redeem it. The meaning here is, that husbands are to imitate the Redeemer in this respect. As he gave himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves and to bear toil and trial, that we may promote the happiness of the wife. It is the duty of the husband to toil for her support; to provide for her wants; to deny himself of rest and ease, if necessary, in order to attend on her in sickness; to go before her in danger; to defend her if she is in peril; and to be ready to die to save her. Why should he not be? If they are shipwrecked, and there is a single plank on which safety can be secured, should he not be willing to place her on that, and see her safe at all hazards to himself? But there may be more implied in this than that a man is to toil, and even to lay down his life for the welfare of his wife. Christ laid down his life to save the church; and a husband should feel that it should be one great object of his life to promote the salvation of his wife. He is bound so to live as not to interfere with her salvation, but so as to promote it in every way possible. He is to furnish her all the facilities that she may need, to enable her to attend on the worship of God; and to throw no obstacles in her way. He is to set her the example; to counsel her if she needs counsel; and to make the path of salvation as easy for her as possible. If a husband has the spirit and self-denial of the Saviour, he will regard no sacrifice too great if he may promote the salvation of his family.

26 that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

27 that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Not having spot. Not having a stain, a defect, or any impurity--still retaining the allusion to a bride, and to the care taken to remove every blemish. Or wrinkle. In the rigour and beauty of youth; like a bride in whom here is no wrinkle of age. Or any such thing. Nothing to deform, disfigure, or offend. To this beautiful illustration of the final glory of the church, the apostle was led by the mention of the relation of the husband and the wife. It shows

(1.) the tendency of the thoughts of Paul. He delighted to allow the associations in his mind, no matter what the subject was, to draw him along to the Redeemer.

(2.) The passage here shows us what the church will yet be. There will be a period in its history when there shall not be any imperfection; when there shall be neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. In heaven all will be pure. On earth we are preparing for that world of purity; and it cannot be denied that here there is much that is imperfect and impure. But in that future world, where the church shall be presented to Christ, clothed in the robes of salvation, there shall not be one unholy member, one deceiver or hypocrite, one covetous or avaricious man, one that shall pain the hearts of the friends of purity by an unholy life. And in all the millions that shall be gathered there out of every land, and people, and tongue, and age, there shall be no envy malice, backbiting, pride, vanity, worldliness; there shall be no annoying and vexing conflict in the heart with evil passions, "nor any such thing." How different from the church as it is now; and how we should pant for that blessed world!

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

Of his flesh, and of his bones. There is an allusion here evidently to the language which Adam used respecting Eve, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," Gen 2:23. It is language which is employed to denote the closeness of the marriage relation, and which Paul applies to the connexion between Christ and his people. Of course, it cannot be understood literally. It is not true, literally, that our bones are a part of the bones of Christ, or our flesh of his flesh; nor should language ever be used that would imply a miraculous union. It is not a physical union, but a union of attachment, of feeling, of love. If we avoid the notion of a physical union, however, it is scarcely possible to use too strong language in describing the union of believers with the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures make use of language which is stronger than that employed to describe any other connexion; and there is no union

of affection so powerful as that which binds the Christian to the Saviour. So strong is it, that he is willing for it to forsake father, mother, and home; to leave his country, and to abandon his possessions; to go to distant lands, and dwell among barbarians, to make the Redeemer known; or to go to the cross or the stake from simple love to the Saviour. Account for it as men may, there has been manifested on earth nowhere else so strong an attachment as that which binds the Christian to the cross. It is stronger love than that which a man has for his own flesh and bones; for it makes him willing that his flesh should be consumed by fire, or his bones broken on the wheel, rather than deny him. Can the infidel account for this strength of attachment on any other principle than that it has a Divine origin ?

30 for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be
joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the
church.
33 Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even
as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband.

Ephesians-6

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Children. τεκνα. This word usually signifies those who are young; but it is here used, evidently, to denote those who were under the care and government of their parents, or those who were not of age. Obey your parents. This is the first great duty which God has enjoined on children. It is to do what their parents command them to do. The God of nature indicates that this is duty, for he has impressed it on the minds of all in every age; and the Author of revelation confines it. It is particularly important,

(1.) because the good order of a family, and hence of the community, depends on it; no community or family being prosperous where there is not due subordination in the household.

(2.) Because the welfare of the child depends on it; it being of the highest importance that a child should be early taught obedience to law, as no one can be prosperous or happy who is not thus obedient.

(3.) Because the child is not competent, as yet, to reasons on what is right, or qualified to direct himself; and, while that is the case, he must be subject to the will of some other person.

(4.) Because the parent, by his age and experience, is to be presumed to be qualified to direct and guide a child. The love which God has implanted in the heart of a parent for a child secures, in general, the administration of this domestic government in such a way as not to injure the child. A father will not, unless under strong passion or the excitement of intoxication, abuse his authority. He loves the child too much. He desires his welfare; and the placing of the child under the authority of the parent is about the same thing, in regard to the welfare of the child, as it would be to endow the child at once with all the wisdom and experience of the parent himself.

(5.) It is important, because the family government is designed to be an imitation of the government of God. The government of God is what a perfect family government would be; and to accustom a child to be obedient to a parent is designed to be one method of leading him to be obedient to God. No child that is disobedient to a parent will be obedient to God; and that child that is most obedient to a father and mother will be most likely to become a Christian, and an heir of heaven. And it may be observed, in general, that no disobedient child is virtuous, prosperous, or happy. Every one foresees the ruin of such a child; and most of the cases of crime that lead to the penitentiary, or the gallows, commence by disobedience to parents. In the Lord. That is, as far as their commandments agree with those of God, and no farther. No parent can have a right to require a child to steal, or lie, or cheat, or assist him in committing murder, or in doing any other wrong thing. No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God, or to make a profession of religion. The duties and rights of children, in such cases, are similar to those of wives, Eph

5:22; and, in all cases, God is to be obeyed rather than man. When a parent, however, is opposed to a child; when he expresses an unwillingness that a child should attend a particular church, or make a profession of religion, such opposition should, in all cases, be a sufficient reason for the child to pause and re-examine the subject. He should pray much, and think much, and inquire much, before, in any case, he acts contrary to the will of a father or mother; and, when he does do it, he should state to them, with great gentleness and kindness, that he believes he ought to love and serve God. For this is right. It is right,

(1.) because it is so appointed by God as a duty;

(2.) because children owe a debt of gratitude to their parents for what they have done for them;

(3.) because it will be for the good of the children themselves, and for the welfare of society.

2 Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment
with promise;

Which is the first commandment with promise. With a promise annexed to it. The promise was, that their days should be long in the land which the Lord their God would give them. It is not to be supposed that the observance of the four first commandments would not be attended with a blessing, but no particular blessing is promised. It is true, indeed, that there is a general declaration annexed to the second commandment, that God would show mercy to thousands of generations of them that loved him, and that kept his commandments. But that is rather a declaration in regard to all the commands of God than a promise annexed to that specific commandment. It is an assurance that obedience to the law of God would be followed with blessings to a thousand generations, and is given in view of the first and second commandments together, because they related particularly to the honour that was due to God. But the promise in the fifth commandment is a special promise. It does not relate to obedience to God in general, but it is a particular assurance that they who honour their parents shall have a particular blessing as the result of that obedience.

That it may be well with thee. This is found in the fifth commandment as recorded in De 5:16. The whole commandment as there recorded is, "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The meaning here is, that they would be more happy, useful, and virtuous, if they obeyed their parents than if they disobeyed them. And thou mayest live long on the earth. In the Commandment, as recorded in Ex 20:12, the promise is, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This referred to the promised land--the land of Canaan. The meaning doubtless is, that there would be a special providence, to those who were obedient to parents length of days. Long regarded as a great blessing; and this blessing was promised. The apostle here gives to the promise a more general form, and says obedience to parents was connected at all times with long life. We may remark here,

(1.) that long life is a blessing. It affords a longer space to prepare for eternity; it enables a man to be more useful; and it furnishes a longer opportunity to study the works of God on earth. It is not improper to desire it; and we should make use of all the means in our power to lengthen out our days, and to preserve and protract our lives.

(2.) It is still true that obedience to parents is conducive to length of life, and that those are most obedient in early life, other things being equal, have prospect of living long. This occurs because

(a.) obedient are saved from the vices and crimes which shorten life. No parent will command his child to be a drunkard, a gambler, a spendthrift, a pirate, or a murderer. But these vices and crimes, resulting in most cases from disobedience to parents, all shorten they who early commit them are certain of an early grave. No child who disobeys a parent can have any security that he will not fall a victim to such vices and crimes.

(b.) Obedience to parents is connected with virtuous habits that are conducive to long life. It will make a child industrious, temperate, sober; it will lead him to restrain and govern his wild passions; it will lead him to form habits of self-government which will, in future life, save him from the snares of vice and temptation.

(c.) Many a life is lost early by disobeying a parent. A child disobeys a father, and goes into a dram-shop; or he goes to sea; or he becomes the companion of the wicked--and he may be wrecked at sea, or his character on land may be wrecked for ever. Of disobedient children, there is perhaps not one in a hundred that ever reaches an honoured old age.

(d.) We may still believe that God, in his providence, will watch over those who are obedient to a father and mother. If he regards a falling sparrow, (Mt 10:29,) he will not be unmindful of an obedient child; if he numbers the hairs of the head, (Mt 10:30,) he will not be regardless of the little boy that honours him by obeying a father and mother.

3 that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And ye fathers. A command addressed particularly to fathers because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to obey, it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey. This statement is in accordance with what he had said Eph 5:22-25 of the relation of husband and wife. It was the duty of the wife to obey --but it was the corresponding duty of the husband to manifest such a character that it would be pleasant to yield obedience--so to love her, that his known wish would be law to her. In like manner it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it

would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion. Provoke not your children to wrath. That is, by unreasonable commands; by needless severity; by the manifestation of anger. So govern them, and so punish them--if punishment is necessary --that they shall not lose their confidence in you, but shall love you. The apostle here has hit on the very danger to which parents are most exposed in the government of their children. It is that of souring their temper; of making them feel that the parent is under the influence of anger, and that it is right for them to be so too. This is done

(1.) when the commands of a parent are unreasonable and severe. The spirit of a child then becomes irritated, and he is "discouraged," Col 3:21.

(2.) When a parent is evidently excited when he punishes a child. The child then feels

(a.) that if his father is angry, it is not wrong for him to be angry; and

(b.) the very fact of anger in a parent kindles anger in his bosom--just as it does when two men are contending. If he submits in the case, it is only because the parent is the strongest, not because he is right; and the child cherishes anger, while he yields to power. There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is angry, but because it is right; not because it has become a matter of personal contest, but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it. The moment when a child sees that a parent punishes him under the influence of anger, that moment the child will be likely to be angry too--and his anger will be as proper as that of the parent. And yet how often is punishment inflicted in this manner! And how often does the child feel that the parent punished him simply because he was the strongest, not because it was right! And how often is the mind of a child left with a strong

conviction that wrong has been done him by the punishment which he has received, rather than with repentance for the wrong that he has himself done! But bring them up. Place them under such discipline and instruction that they shall become acquainted with the Lord. In the nurture, ενπαιδεια. The word here used means, training of a child; hence education, instruction, discipline. Here it means that they are to train up their children in such a manner as the Lord approves; that is, they are to educate them for virtue and religion. And admonition. The word here used--νουθεσια--means, literally, a putting in mind; then warning, admonition, instruction. The sense here is, that they were to put them in mind of the Lord--of his existence, perfections, law, and claims on their hearts and lives. This command is positive, and is in accordance with all the requirements of the Bible on the subject. No one can doubt that the Bible enjoins on parents the duty of endeavouring to train up their children in the ways of religion, and of making it the grand purpose of this life to prepare them for heaven. It has been often objected that children should be left on religious subjects to form their own opinions when they are able to judge for themselves. Infidels and irreligious men always oppose or neglect the duty here enjoined; and the plea commonly is, that to teach religion to children is to make them prejudiced; to destroy their independence of mind; and to prevent their judging as impartially on so important a subject as they ought to. In reply to this, and in defence of the requirements of the Bible on the subject, we may remark,

(1.) that to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in religion, is about the same as to suffer a garden to lie without any culture. Such a garden would soon be overrun with weeds, and briers, and thorns--but not sooner, or more certainly, than the mind of a child would.

(2.) Men do instruct their children in a great many things, and why should they not in religion? They teach them how to behave in company; the art of farming; the way to make or use tools; how to make money; how to avoid the arts of the cunning seducer. But why should it not be said that all this tends to destroy their independence, and to make them prejudiced? Why not leave their minds open and

free, and suffer them to form their own judgments about farming and the mechanic arts when their minds are matured?

(3.) Men do inculcate their own sentiments in religion. An infidel is not usually very anxious to conceal his views from his children. Men teach by example, by incidental remarks, by the neglect of that which they regard as of no value. A man who does not pray, is teaching his children not to pray; he who neglects the public worship of God, is teaching his children to neglect it; he who does not read the Bible, is teaching his children not to read it. Such is the constitution of things, that it is impossible for a parent not to inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so, all that the Bible requires is, that his instructions should be RIGHT,

(4.) To inculcate the truths of religion is not to make the mind narrow, prejudiced, and indisposed to perceive the truth. Religion makes the mind candid, conscientious, open to conviction, ready to follow the truth. Superstition, bigotry, infidelity, and all error and falsehood, make the mind narrow and prejudiced.

(5.) If a man does not teach his children truth, others will teach them error. The young sceptic that the child meets in the street; the artful infidel; the hater of God; the unprincipled stranger, will teach the child. But is it not better for a parent to teach his child the truth than for a stranger to teach him error.

(6.) Religion is the most important of all subjects, and therefore it is of most importance that children on that subject should be taught TRUTH. Of whom can God so properly require this as of a parent? If it be asked in what way a parent is to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,

I answer,

1st. by directly inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion--just as he does anything else that he regards as of value.

2nd. By placing them in the Sabbath school, where he may have a guarantee that they will be taught the truth. 3rd. By conducting them--not merely sending them--to the sanctuary, that they may be taught in the house of God.

4th. By example--all teaching being valueless without that.

5th. By prayer for the Divine aid in his efforts, and for the salvation of their souls. These duties are plain, simple, easy to be performed, and are such as a man knows he ought to perform. If neglected, and the soul of the child be lost, a parent has a most fearful account to render to God.

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the
flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto
Christ;

6 not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ,
doing the will of God from the heart;

Not with eyeservice. That is, not with service rendered only under the eye of the master, or when his eye is fixed on you. The apostle has here adverted to one of the evils of involuntary servitude as it exists everywhere. It is, that the slave will usually obey only when the eye of the master is upon him. The freeman, who agrees to labour for stipulated wages, may be trusted when the master is out of sight; but not the slave. Hence the necessity, where there are slaves, of having "drivers" who shall attend them, and who shall compel them to work. This evil it is impossible to avoid, except where true religion prevails--and the extensive prevalence of true religion would set the slave at liberty. Yet, as long as the relation exists, the apostle would enjoin on the servant the duty of performing his work conscientiously, as rendering service to the Lord. This direction, moreover, is one of great importance to all who are employed in the service of others. They are bound to perform their duty with as much fidelity as though the eye of the employer was always upon them, remembering that though the eye of man may be turned away, that of God never is. As men-pleasers. As if it were the main object to please men. The object should be rather to please and honour God. But as the servants of Christ. 1Cor 7:22. Doing the will of God from the heart. That is, God requires

industry, fidelity, conscientiousness, submission, and obedience in that rank of life. We render acceptable service to God when, from regard to his will, we perform the services which are demanded of us in the situation in life where we may be placed, however humble that may be.

7 with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:
8 knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall
he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

As to the Lord, and not to men. That is, he should regard his lot in life as having been ordered by Divine Providence for some wise and good purpose; and, until he may be permitted to enjoy his liberty in a quiet and peaceable manner, 1Cor 7:21, he should perform his duties with fidelity, and feel that he was rendering acceptable service to God. This would reconcile him to much of the hardships of his lot. The feeling that God has ordered the circumstances of our lives, and that he has some wise and good ends to answer by it, makes us contented there; though we may feel that our fellow-man may be doing us injustice. It was this principle that made the martyrs so patient under the wrongs done them by men; and this may make even a slave patient and submissive under the wrongs of a master. But let not a master think, because a pious slave shows this spirit, that therefore the slave feels that the master is right in withholding his freedom; nor let him suppose, because religion requires the slave to be submissive and obedient, that therefore it approves of what the master does. It does this no more than it sanctioned the conduct of Nero, because religion required the martyrs to be unresisting, and to allow themselves to be led to the stake. A conscientious slave may find happiness in submitting to God, and doing his will, just as a conscientious martyr may. But this does not sanction the wrong, either of the slave-owner or of the persecutor.

Knowing that whatsoever good thing. Whatever a man does that is right, for that he shall be appropriately rewarded. No matter what his rank in life, if he discharges his duty to God and man. he will be accepted. A man in a state of servitude may so live as to honour God; and, so living, he should not be greatly solicitous about his condition. A master may fail to render suitable recompense to a

slave; but, if the servant is faithful to God, he will recompense him in the future world. It is in this way that religion would make the evils of life tolerable, by teaching those who are oppressed to bear their trials in a patient spirit, and to look forward to the future world of reward, Religion does not approve of slavery. It is the friend of human rights. If it had full influence on earth, it would restore every man to freedom, and impart to each one his rights. Christianity nowhere requires its friends to make or to own a slave. No one under the proper influence of religion ever yet made a man a slave; there is no one under its proper influence who would not desire that all should be free; and just in proportion as true religion spreads over the world will universal freedom be its attendant.

But Christianity would lighten the evils of slavery even while it exists, and would comfort those who are doomed to so hard a lot, by assuring them that there they may render acceptable service to God, and that they soon will be admitted to a world where galling servitude will be known no more. If they may not have freedom here, they may have contentment; if they feel that wrong is done them by men, they may feel that right will be done them by God; if their masters do not reward them for their services here, God will; and if they may not enjoy liberty here, they will soon be received into the world of perfect freedom in heaven.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

And ye masters. The object of this is to secure for servants a proper treatment. It is evident, from this, that there were in the Christian church those who were masters; and the most obvious interpretation is, that they were the owners of slaves. Some such persons would be converted, as such are now. Paul did not say that they could not be Christians. He did not say that they should be excluded at once from the communion. He did not hold them up to reproach, or use harsh and severe language in regard to them. He taught them their duty towards those who were under them, and laid down principles which, if followed, would lead ultimately to universal freedom. Do the same things unto them. ταυτα. The "same things," here, seem to refer to what he had said in the

previous verses. They were, to evince towards their servants the same spirit which he had required servants to evince towards them --the same kindness, fidelity, and respect for the will of God. He had required servants to act conscientiously; to remember that the eye of God was upon them, and that in that condition in life they were to regard themselves as serving God, and as mainly answerable to him. The same things the apostle would have masters feel. They were to be faithful, conscientious, just, true to the interests of their servants, and to remember that they were responsible to God. They were not to take advantage of their power to oppress them, to punish them unreasonably, or to suppose that they were freed from responsibility in regard to the manner in which they treated them. In the corresponding passage in Colossians Col 4:1 this is, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." Col 4:1

The Whole Armor of God

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Our apostle, calling us here forth to the Christian warfare, gives forth the first word of encouragement to battle: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

A Christian, above all men, needs resolution, and a daring courage: if he be possessed with fear, he is unfit to go into the field; if dispirited with strong impressions of danger, how unready for the encounter! Cowards win neither earth nor heaven. But where lies the Christian's strength? Verily, on the Lord, and not in himself; the strength of the whole host of saints lies in the Lord of hosts, and accordingly it ought to be the Christian's great care, in all difficulties and dangers, to strengthen his faith in the almighty power of God.

11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

They must be well armed: "Put on the whole armour of God (Eph 6:11), make use of all the proper defensitives and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan--get and exercise all the Christian graces, the whole armour, that no part be naked

and exposed to the enemy." Observe, Those who would approve themselves to have true grace must aim at all grace, the whole armour. It is called the armour of God, because he both prepares and bestows it. We have no armour of our own that will be armour of proof in a trying time. Nothing will stand us in stead but the armour of God. This armour is prepared for us, but we must put it on; that is, we must pray for grace, we must use the grace given us, and draw it out into act and exercise as there is occasion. The reason assigned why the Christian should be completely armed is that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil--that he may be able to hold out, and to overcome, notwithstanding all the devil's assaults, both of force and fraud, all the deceits he puts upon us, all the snares he lays for us, and all his machinations against us. This the apostle enlarges upon here, and shows,

1. What our danger is, and what need we have to put on this whole armour, considering what sort of enemies we have to deal with--the devil and all the powers of darkness: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, &c., Eph 6:12. The combat for which we are to be prepared is not against ordinary human enemies, not barely against men compounded of flesh and blood, nor against our own corrupt natures singly considered, but against the several ranks of devils, who have a government which they exercise in this world.

(1.) We have to do with a subtle enemy, an enemy who uses wiles and stratagems, as Eph 6:11. He has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls: hence he is called a serpent for subtlety, an old serpent, experienced in the art and trade of tempting.

(2.) He is a powerful enemy: Principalities, and powers, and rulers. They are numerous, they are vigorous; and rule in those heathen nations which are yet in darkness. The dark parts of the world are the seat of Satan's empire. Yea, they are usurping princes over all men who are yet in a state of sin and ignorance. Satan's is a kingdom of darkness; whereas Christ's is a kingdom of light.

(3.) They are spiritual enemies: Spiritual wickedness in high places, or wicked spirits, as some translate it. The devil is a spirit,

a wicked spirit; and our danger is the greater from our enemies because they are unseen, and assault us ere we are aware of them. The devils are wicked spirits, and they chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to, spiritual wickednesses, pride, envy, malice, &c. These enemies are said to be in high places, or in heavenly places, so the word is, taking heaven (as one says) for the whole expansum, or spreading out of the air between the earth and the stars, the air being the place from which the devils assault us. Or the meaning may be, "We wrestle about heavenly places or heavenly things;" so some of the ancients interpret it. Our enemies strive to prevent our ascent to heaven, to deprive us of heavenly blessings and to obstruct our communion with heaven. They assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts; and therefore we have need to be upon our guard against them. We have need of faith in our Christian warfare, because we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, as well as of faith in our Christian work, because we have spiritual strength to fetch in. Thus you see your danger.

Put on the whole armour of God. The whole description here is derived from the weapons of an ancient soldier. The various parts of those weapons--constituting the "whole panoply"--are specified in Eph 6:14-17. The word rendered "whole armour," (πανοπλιαν, panoply,) means complete armour, offensive and defensive. See Lk 11:22. Rom 13:12, 2Cor 6:7. "The armour of God" is not that which God wears, but that which he has provided for the Christian soldier. The meaning here is,

(1.) that we are not to provide in our warfare such weapons as men employ in their contests, but such as God provides; that we are to renounce the weapons which are carnal, and put on such as God has directed for the achievement of the victory.

(2.) We are to put on the "whole armour." We are not to go armed partly with what God has appointed, and partly with such weapons as men use; nor are we to put on a part of the armour only, but the whole of it. A man needs all that armour if he is about to fight the battles of the Lord; and if he lacks one of the weapons which God

has appointed, defeat may be the consequence. That ye may be able to stand. The foes are so numerous and mighty, that, unless clothed with the Divine armour, victory will be impossible. Against the wiles of the devil. The word rendered "wiles" μεθοδεια means, properly, that which is traced out with method; that which is methodized; and then that which is well laid--art, skill, cunning. It occurs in the New Testament only in Eph 4:14, and in this place. It is appropriately here rendered wiles, meaning cunning devices, arts, attempts to delude and destroy us. The wiles of the devil are the various arts and stratagems which he employs to drag souls down to perdition. We can more easily encounter open force than we can cunning; and we need the weapons of Christian armour to meet the attempts to draw us into a snare, as much as to meet open force. The idea here is, that Satan does not carry on an open warfare. He does not meet the Christian soldier face to face. He advances covertly; makes his approaches in darkness; employs cunning rather than power, and seeks rather to deceive and betray than to vanquish by mere force. Hence the necessity of being constantly armed to meet him whenever the attack is made. A man who has to contend with a visible enemy may feel safe, if he only prepares to meet him in the open field. But far different is the case if the enemy is invisible; if he steals upon us slyly and stealthily; if he practices war only by ambushes and by surprises. Such is the foe that we have to contend with--and almost all the Christian struggle is a warfare against stratagems and wiles. Satan does not openly appear. He approaches us not in repulsive forms, but comes to recommend some plausible doctrine, to lay before us some temptation that shall not immediately repel us. He presents the world in an alluring aspect; invites to pleasures that seem to be harmless; and leads us in indulgence, until we have gone so far that we cannot retreat.

Observe, 2. A direction given how a saint may come to be strong in the Lord; namely, by putting on the whole armour of God; that is, by being clothed with the following graces, which are hereafter mentioned in this chapter; as, the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, &c.

Now these are called armour of God, because they are of his appointment and institution; and of his make and constitution; and this armour must be put on, that is, our grace kept in continual exercise. It is one thing to have armour in the house, and another to have it buckled on in the field; it is not sufficient to have grace in the habit and principle, but it is grace in act and exercise that must conquer spiritual enemies.

Observe, 3. A reason assigned why the Christian is to be thus completely armed: That he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; intimating that the devil is one chief enemy we have to combat with in the Christian warfare, and that this enemy is a wily, subtle enemy, discovering his dangerous policy, first by tempting and alluring into sin, and then by vexing and tormenting for sin.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places.*

For we wrestle. Gr., "The wrestling to us ;" or, "There is not to us a wrestling with flesh and blood." There is undoubtedly here an allusion to the ancient games of Greece, a part of the exercises in which consisted in wrestling. 1Cor 9:25, and following. The Greek word here used--παλη--denotes a wrestling; and then a struggle, fight, combat, here it refers to the struggle or combat which the Christian is to maintain--the Christian warfare. Not with flesh and blood. Not with men. Gall 1:16. The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that opposed them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution; nor that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their nature, which was true of them then as it is now; but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They were the source and origin of all their spiritual conflicts, and with them the warfare was to be maintained. But against principalities. There can be no doubt whatever that the apostle alludes here to evil spirits. Like good angels, they were regarded as divided into ranks and orders, and were supposed to be under the control of one mighty leader. Eph 1:21. It is probable that the allusion here is to the ranks and orders which they sustained

before their fall, something like which they may still retain. The word principalities refers to principal rulers, or chieftains. Powers. Those who had power, or to whom the name of powers was given. Milton represents Satan as addressing the fallen angels in similar language :--

"Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers."

Against the rulers of the darkness of this world. The rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds. Eph 2:2 Darkness is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin; and no description could be more accurate than that of representing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world. The earth--dark, and wretched, and ignorant, and sinful--is just such a dominion as they would choose, or as they would cause; and the degradation and woe of the heathen world are just such as foul and malignant spirits would delight in. It is a wide and a powerful empire. It has been consolidated by ages. It is sustained by all the authority of law; by all the omnipotence of the perverted religious principle; by all the reverence for antiquity; by all the power of selfish, corrupt, and base passions. No empire has been so extended, or has continued so long, as that empire of darkness; and nothing on earth is so difficult to destroy. Yet the apostle says that it was on that kingdom they were to make war. Against that, the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up; and that was to be overcome by the spiritual weapons which he specifies. When he speaks of the Christian warfare here, he refers to the contest with the powers of this dark kingdom. He regards each and every Christian as a soldier to wage war on it in whatever way he could, and wherever he could attack it. The contest, therefore, was not primarily with men, or with the internal corrupt propensities of the soul; it was with this vast and dark kingdom that had been set up over mankind. I do not regard this passage, therefore, as having a primary reference to the struggle which a Christian maintains with his own corrupt propensities. It is a warfare on a large scale with the entire kingdom of darkness over the world. Yet, in maintaining the warfare, the struggle will be with such portions of that kingdom as we come in contact with, and will actually relate

(1.) to our own sinful propensities--which are a part of the kingdom of darkness;

(2.) with the evil passions of others--their pride, ambition, and spirit of revenge--which are also a part of that kingdom;

(3) with the evil customs, laws, opinions, employments, pleasures of the world--which are also a part of that dark kingdom;

(4) with error, superstition, false doctrine--which are also a part of that kingdom; and

(5) with the wickedness of the heathen world--the sins of benighted nations ---also a part of that kingdom. Wherever we come in contact with evil--whether in our own hearts or elsewhere--there we are to make war. Against spiritual wickedness. Marg., "or wicked spirits." Literally, "the spiritual things of wickedness;" but the allusion is undoubtedly to evil spirits, and to their influences on earth. In high places, εντοιςεπουρανιοις, "in celestial, or heavenly places." The same phrase occurs in Eph 1:3, 2:6, where it is translated, "in heavenly places." The word (επουρανιοις) is used of those that dwell in heaven, Mt 18:35, Php 2:10; of those who come from heaven, 1Cor 15:48, Php 3:21; of the heavenly bodies--the sun, moon, and stars, 1Cor 15:40. Then the neuter plural of the word is used to denote the heavens; and then the lower heavens, the sky, the air, represented as the seat of evil spirits. Eph 2:2. This is the allusion here. The evil spirits are supposed to occupy the lofty regions of the air, and thence to exert a baleful influence on the affairs of man. What was the origin of this opinion it is not needful here to inquire. No one can prove, however, that it is incorrect. It is against such spirits, and all their malignant influences, that Christians are called to contend. In whatever way their power is put forth--whether in the prevalence of vice and error; of superstition and magic arts; of infidelity, atheism, or antinomianism; of evil customs and laws; of pernicious fashions and opinions, or in the corruptions of our own hearts, we are to make war on all these forms of evil, and never to yield in the conflict.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be
able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having
on the breastplate of righteousness;
15 and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
16 above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to
quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

How our apostle having described the enemy in the foregoing verse, and set him forth in all his formidable strength and power, comes forth in the head of his Ephesian camp, gives a fresh alarm, and bids them arm! arm! Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day; intimating that an evil day is before us; that it will be of mighty advantage to us to be able to stand in the evil day; and that without the help of divine armour we cannot stand in that day. The sanctifying graces of God's Spirit are this armour: he that has not these, let his common gifts be never so gay and glorious, he will never hold out to fight the last battle, but fall into the enemy's hand, and be taken captive by him at his will.

Observe next, How our apostle comes to describe the armour of God piece by piece, which the Christian is to put on before he takes the field against the enemy. Here is the soldier's girdle, his breastplate, his shoes, his shield, his helmet, and his sword, all described; his offensive and defensive weapons, wherewith soldiers of old used to arm their bodies from head to foot.

Now the apostle assigneth to particular graces a use and excellency answerable to these pieces of armour, and shows that there is some resemblance between every grace and that piece of the bodily armour to which it is here compared; but observable it is, that although there be pieces of armour for all other parts of the body, here is none assigned for the back, nor back-parts, because there must be no running away, no hope of escaping by flight in this spiritual warfare: if we turn our back upon our enemy, we lie open to his darts, and are in danger of destruction; if we fight on, we have our second in the field, and are sure of victory, provided we enter the field in order and stand to our arms, maintain our watch, keep our ground, and appear armed cap-a-pie, from head to foot, with the

several pieces of armour here recommended: the first of which is the girdle of truth, Having your loins girt about with truth Eph 6:14 that is, sincerity of heart. Doth a girdle or belt adorn the soldier? so doth sincerity adorn the Christian. Doth the girdle strengthen the soldier's loins? so doth sincerity strengthen the soul, and every grace in the soul: it is sincere faith that is strong faith; it is sincere love that is mighty love.

Secondly, The breastplate of righteousness; by which is to be understood the love and practice of universal holiness.

But why is this compared to a breastplate?

Ans. Because as the breastplate defends the most principal parts of the body, where the heart and vitals are closely couched together; thus holiness preserves the soul and conscience, the principal parts of a Christian, from the wounds and harms of sin, which is the weapon that Satan uses to give conscience its deadly stab with.

The third piece of Christian armour is the spiritual shoe, fitted to the soldier's foot, and worn by him so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan: the soldier's way is sometimes full of sharp stones, and sometimes strewed with sharp iron spikes stuck into the ground; the soldier will soon be wounded, or foundered, if not well shod. Therefore the direction here is, Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; that is, maintaining an holy readiness of spirit, and a resolute frame of heart, to undergo any suffering, and endure any hardship in your Christian warfare; which frame of spirit being wrought in us by the doctrine of the gospel, is therefore called the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The fourth piece of armour recommended above all to be put on, is the shield of faith; this is that grace by which we believe the truth of God's word in general, and depend upon Christ in particular, as

crucified, for pardon and life, and this upon the warrant of the promise.

But why is faith compared to a shield?

Ans. Because, as the shield defends the whole body, so faith defends the whole man; the understanding from error, the conscience from searedness, the will from rebellion against the will and command of God. And as the shield defends the whole armour, as well as the soldier's whole body, it defends the breastplate, as well as the breast; so faith is our armour upon armour, a grace that preserves all other graces whatsoever.

The fifth piece of armour is mentioned, The helmet of salvation; Eph 6:17 by which the grace of hope is understood, which has for its object salvation, called therefore the hope of salvation. Salvation is the ultimate and comprehensive object of the Christian's expectation; and it is compared to an helmet, because as the helmet defends the head, so doth the hope of salvation defend the soul; it keeps the head above water, and makes the Christian bold and brave. Hope is a grace of singular use and excellent service to a Christian, in the whole course of his Christian warfare; it puts him upon noble services, it keeps him patient under the greatest sufferings, and it will enable the soul to wait long for the performance of divine promises.

The sixth piece of spiritual armour is the sword. Eph 6:17. The former were defensive, but this is both an offensive and defensive weapon; such is the word of God. But why compared to a sword?
Ans. In regard both of its necessity and excellency: the sword was ever esteemed a most necessary and useful part of the soldier's furniture; of such usefulness, necessity, and excellency is the word of God, by which the Christian doth defend himself, and offend his enemies.

But why is it called the sword of the Spirit?

Ans. Because the Spirit was the author of it; the Spirit of God is the interpreter of it: and it is the Spirit that gives the word its efficacy and power in the soul: the word of God, contained in the scriptures, is the sword by which the Spirit of God enables his saints to overcome and vanquish all their enemies.

The seventh and last piece of spiritual armour is mentioned, and that is prayer: Praying always, with all prayer, &c. Eph 6:18
Here note, The time for prayer, praying always; the sorts and kinds of prayer, praying always, with all prayer; the inward principle of prayer, from which it must flow, in the Spirit; the guard to set about the duty of prayer, watching thereunto; the constancy to be exercised in the duty, with all perservance, the comprehensiveness of the duty,for all saints.

Learn, That prayer is a necessary duty for all Christians, and to be used, with all other pieces of spiritual armour, by the Christian soldier.

What our duty is: to take and put on the whole armour of God, and then to stand our ground, and withstand our enemies.

(1.) We must withstand, Eph 6:13. We must not yield to the devil's allurements and assaults, but oppose them. Satan is said to stand up against us, 1Ch 21:1. If he stand up against us, we must stand against him; set up, and keep up, an interest in opposition to the devil. Satan is the wicked one, and his kingdom is the kingdom of sin: to stand against Satan is to strive against sin. That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, in the day of temptation, or of any sore affliction.

(2.) We must stand our ground: And, having done all, to stand. We must resolve, by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, and

he will flee. If we distrust our cause, or our leader, or our armour, we give him advantage. Our present business is to withstand the assaults of the devil, and to stand it out; and then, having done all that is incumbent on the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, our warfare will be accomplished, and we shall be finally victorious.

(3.) We must stand armed; and this is here most enlarged upon. Here is a Christian in complete armour: and the armour is divine: Armour of God, armour of light, Ro 13:12. Armour of righteousness, 2Co 6:7. The apostle specifies the particulars of this armour, both offensive and defensive. The military girdle or belt, the breast-plate, the greaves (or soldier's shoes), the shield, the helmet, and the sword. It is observable that, among them all, there is none for the back; if we turn our back upon the enemy, we lie exposed.

[1.] Truth or sincerity is our girdle, Eph 6:14. It was prophesied of Christ (Isa 11:5) that righteousness should be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. That which Christ was girded with all Christians must be girded with. God desires truth, that is, sincerity, in the inward parts. This is the strength of our loins; and it girds on all other pieces of our armour, and therefore is first mentioned. I know no religion without sincerity. Some understand it of the doctrine of the truths of the gospel: they should cleave to us as the girdle does to the loins, Jer 13:11. This will restrain from libertinism and licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body. This is the Christian soldier's belt: ungirded with this, he is unblessed.

[2.] Righteousness must be our breast-plate. The breast-plate secures the vitals, shelters the heart. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us is our breast-plate against the arrows of divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. The apostle explains this in 1Th 5:8, Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love. Faith and love include all Christian graces; for by faith we are united to Christ and by love to our brethren. These will infer a diligent observance of our duty to God, and a righteous

deportment towards men, in all the offices of justice, truth, and charity.

[3.] Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs: And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, Eph 6:15. Shoes, or greaves of brass, or the like, were formerly part of the military armour (1Sa 17:6): the use of them was to defend the feet against the gall-traps, and sharp sticks, which were wont to be laid privily in the way, to obstruct the marching of the enemy, those who fell upon them being unfit to march. The preparation of the gospel of peace signifies a prepared and resolved frame of heart, to adhere to the gospel and abide by it, which will enable us to walk with a steady pace in the way of religion, notwithstanding the difficulties and dangers that may be in it. It is styled the gospel of peace because it brings all sorts of peace, peace with God, with ourselves, and with one another. It may also be meant of that which prepares for the entertainment of the gospel, namely, repentance. With this our feet must be shod: for by living a life of repentance we are armed against temptations to sin, and the designs of our great enemy. Dr. Whitby thinks this may be the sense of the words: "That you may be ready for the combat, be shod with the gospel of peace, endeavour after that peaceable and quiet mind which the gospel calls for. Be not easily provoked, nor prone to quarrel: but show all gentleness and all long-suffering to all men, and this will certainly preserve you from many great temptations and persecutions, as did those shoes of brass the soldiers from those galltraps," &c.

[4.] Faith must be our shield: Above all, or chiefly, taking the shield of faith, Eph 6:16. This is more necessary than any of them. Faith is all in all to us in an hour of temptation. The breast-plate secures the vitals; but with the shield we turn every way. This is the victory over the world, even our faith. We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises and threatenings, such a faith being of great use against temptations. Consider faith as it is the evidence of things not seen and the substance of things hoped for, and it will appear to be of admirable use for this purpose. Faith, as receiving Christ and the benefits of redemption, so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a sort of universal defence. Our enemy the devil is here called

the wicked one. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called darts, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and the deep wounds that they give to the soul; fiery darts, by way of allusion to the poisonous darts which were wont to inflame the parts which were wounded with them, and therefore were so called, as the serpents with poisonous stings are called fiery serpents. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts which Satan shoots at us. Faith is the shield with which we must quench these fiery darts, wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hit us, or at least that they may not hurt us. Observe, Faith, acted upon the word of God and applying that, acted upon the grace of Christ and improving that, quenches the darts of temptation.

[5.] Salvation must be our helmet (Eph 6:17); that is, hope, which has salvation for its object; so 1Th 5:8. The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation, well founded and well built, will both purify the soul and keep it from being defiled by Satan, and it will comfort the soul and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan. He would tempt us to despair; but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him.

[6.] The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The sword is a very necessary and useful part of a soldier's furniture. The word of God is very necessary, and of great use to the Christian, in order to his maintaining the spiritual warfare and succeeding in it. It is called the sword of the Spirit, because it is of the Spirit's inditing and he renders it efficacious and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. Like Goliath's sword, none like that; with this we assault the assailants. Scripture-arguments are the most powerful arguments to repel temptation with. Christ himself resisted Satan's temptations with, It is written, Mt 4:4,6,7,10. This, being hid in the heart, will preserve from sin (Ps 119:11), and will mortify and kill those lusts and corruptions that are latent there.

[7.] Prayer must buckle on all the other parts of our Christian armour, Eph 6:18. We must join prayer with all these graces, for our defence against these spiritual enemies, imploring help and

assistance of God, as the case requires: and we must pray always. Not as though we were to do nothing else but pray, for there are other duties of religion and of our respective stations in the world that are to be done in their place and season; but we should keep up constant times of prayer, and be constant to them. We must pray upon all occasions, and as often as our own and others' necessities call us to it. We must always keep up a disposition to prayer, and should intermix with immediately ejected prayers with other duties, and with common business. Though set and solemn prayer may sometimes be unseasonable (as when other duties are to be done), yet pious ejections can never be so. We must pray with all prayer and supplication, with all kinds of prayer: public, private, and secret, social and solitary, solemn and sudden; with all the parts of prayer: confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings for favours received. We must pray in the Spirit; our spirits must be employed in the duty and we must do it by the grace of God's good Spirit. We must watch thereunto, endeavouring to keep our hearts in a praying frame, and taking all occasions, and improving all opportunities, for the duty: we must watch to all the motions of our own hearts towards the duty. When God says, Seek my face, our hearts must comply, Ps 27:8. This we must do with all perseverance. We must abide by the duty of prayer, whatever change there may be in our outward circumstances; and we must continue in it as long as we live in the world. We must persevere in a particular prayer; not cutting it short, when our hearts are disposed to enlarge, and there is time for it, and our occasions call for it. We must likewise persevere in particular requests, notwithstanding some present discouragements and repulses. And we must pray with supplication, not for ourselves only, but for all saints; for we are members one of another. Observe, None are so much saints, and in so good a condition in this world, but they need our prayers, and they ought to have them. The apostle passes hence to the conclusion of the epistle.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

19 and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open
my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Our apostle having directed the Ephesians to the duty of prayer in general, desires them here to pray for himself in particular.

Where observe, 1. His exhortation and direction to pray for himself, and all the ministers of the gospel: And for me. Learn hence, That the ministers of Christ are and ought in a special manner to be remembered in the saints' prayers.

Observe, 2. The mercy which he desires them to pray for: That utterance may be given: namely a readiness to deliver to others what God has handed unto us. Ministers depend upon God for utterance, and it is their people's duty to be earnest with God to give it to them.

Observe, 3. The end why he desires this utterance: That he may open his mouth boldly to make known the ministry of the gospel.
Where note, 1. The sublime nature of the gospel minister: and that is, to make known that gospel-mystery.

2. The manner how he is to perform this work: That I may open my mouth boldly; namely, in asserting truth, and in reproving sin, with a wise and prudent, with a meek and humble, with an active and zealous boldness.

Observe 4. A double argument to back and enforce his request to pray for him:

1. From his office: For which I am an ambassador. The ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors; and shall not their people pray for the success of their embassies?

From his afflicted state: He was an ambassador in bonds; his zeal for God, and his truth, confined him to a prison; he preached himself into a gaol. Well, therefore, might they pray for him, who had now lost his liberty, and soon after was to lose his life, for them: no prayers can be too much to strengthen the hands, and to encourage the hearts, of such as suffer tribulation and persecution for the sake

of Christ: Pray for me, that I may make known the mysteries of the gospel, for which I am an ambassadsor in bonds.

20 for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak
boldly, as I ought to speak.

Final Greetings

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a
beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make
known to you all things:
22 whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might
know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.
23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in
sincerity.
Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians
[Philippians]

Philippians-1

Salutation

1 Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the
bishops and deacons:
2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and *from* the
Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Philippian Christians

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

The proper character of a gospel minister: he is his people's constant remembrancer, and the rememberer of his people: I remember you all, says the apostle, I remember you always, and in every prayer. This is a very great part of our ministerial duty, to pray for the people; and not in our public offices only, but in our private addresses also, and this continually, without ceasing; we should never rise off our knees, without bearing our people upon our hearts before the Lord. Did minister and people strive more together in their prayers one for another, there would be less strife and contention between them one with another. Ministers must be their people's remembrancers; St. Paul here remembered the Philippians, all the Philippians always, and in every prayer.

Observe, 2. St. Paul could and did remember the Philippians with joy: though he was in sadness himself in a prison, yet he could think of them, as a people converted by his ministry, with joy; making request with joy. When the ministers of Christ see any success of their labours in the lives of their people, it is a matter of inexpressible joy to them, how sad soever the case is with them

as to their outward circumstances; when they sigh in a prison with respect to their personal sufferings, they can sing and rejoice, if they find their people's proficiency in knowledge and growth in grace: I thank my God for you, making request with joy.

Observe, 3. The ground and occasion of this his joy, For your fellowship in the gospel; Phil 1:5 that is, for your ready embracing of the gospel at my first preaching of it to you, for the real subjection of some, and the professed subjection of all, to the faith of Christ, whereby you were brought into fellowship with Christ and his church; and also for the continuance of you, in the faith and profession of the gospel, from the first day until now.

Learn hence, That when a people, upon the plain and persuasive preaching of the gospel, do readily receive and obey it, and remain constant in their profession of it, and obedience to it, it is matter of unspeakable thanksgiving and praise to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ. I thank God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now, that is, for continuing in the faith, and persevering in your professed subjection to the gospel of Christ, I bless God for this.

4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

6 being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

Here we have a further cause assigned of St. Paul's joy on the Philippians' behalf: namely, the firm and full assurance which he had of their perseverance in grace unto the end. God, that has begun, will perfect, that is, augment and increase it, till it arrive at perfection in glory.

Note here, 1. The nature of grace described, or the proper title deservedly given to the grace of God; it is called a good work; he that hath begun a good work, &c. Well may regenerating grace be called a good work, because it is the living foundation and vital principle from whence all good works do proceed and flow; the grace of God in the heart is the root of all true holiness in the life;

as good works are necessary to salvation, so renewing grace is necessary to good works.

Note, 2. As the nature of grace described, so the author and augmenter of grace declared, and that is, God. He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, that is, augment it, and increase it. As the good work of grace in the heart is God's work, and he is the author of it, so he will maintain it, and carry it on to perfection, and be both the increaser and perfecter of it; God never doth his work by halves.

Note, 3. The certainty of grace asserted: Being confident of this very thing.

But what ground had St. Paul for this confidence?

Ans. Because grace is the care of the whole Trinity: all the Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, do concern themselves both in the production, preservation, and perfection of it; the Father decrees it, the Son purchases it, the Spirit infuses it: the Father begets it, the Son excites it, the Holy Spirit conducts: and as they all did concur to its production, so did they all co-operate and work together for the preservation of it.

Learn hence, That such persons, in whose souls Almighty God has begun a good work of grace, may with much assurance expect by the influence of God's care, and the exercise of their own endeavours, that they shall hold out and persevere in a state of grace unto the end; until the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment.

7 even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you
in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and
confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.
8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels
of Jesus Christ.

These words are expressive of that passionate degree of Christian love which St. Paul bore to the Philippians; he durst appeal to God, as to the sincerity and fervency of it: God is my record, I call

him to witness, and can appeal to him as the searcher of hearts, how greatly I long after you; that is, how passionately and sincerely I love you, with the most intense and hearty affection, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.
The expression may denote the efficient cause, and the exemplary cause, of his love.

1. That the author of this his love unto them was Christ, he was the spring and procurer of it; and consequently it was no carnal or selfish love, to serve his own ends and designs upon them, but truly spiritual.

2. That Christ's love to him was the pattern and example, according to which he loved them, with no common love, but with an entire and intense affection, from the ground of the heart and the most intimate bowels: no words can be more expressive of that fervent love and earnest longing which St. Paul had for the welfare of the Philippians; a love which very far exceeds the love of all relations. He doth not say I long after you in the bowels of a father, or in the bowels of an husband, but in the bowels of Jesus Christ; humbly comparing his love towards them to the love of Jesus Christ; not for the degrees of it, not for the fruits and advantages of it, but for the truth and sincerity of it: I greatly long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Learn hence, That there is no stronger love, no more endeared affection, between such ministers of Christ and their beloved people, as they have been happily instrumental to convert to God when present with them, they passionately love them; when absent from them they affectionately long after them; imitating, as much as they can, their Lord Jesus Christ, both in reality and sincerity, and also in the measure and degree, of endearing affection:

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment;

After salutations given by St. Paul to his beloved Philippians, he next pours out his soul in fervent prayer and supplication for them; and the mercy which he prays for is observable, first, namely,

growth and proficiency in grace: This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge,and in all judgment; that their love to God, their love to him, and their love one to another, may yet more and more abound.

Love is the root-grace from which most graces spring; therefore he prays for the strengthening of that grace in particular, and that there may be found with them judgment, as well as affection, in the exercise of it: we ought to love judiciously, as well as affectionately.
The more judicious a saint grows in his Christian course, and the more understanding and judgment is found with him in the way of his duty; the stronger his grace is, and the more glory will he bring to God.
The understanding and judgment being the guiding and leading faculties in man, there can be no more acceptable holiness in the will, than there is knowledge in the understanding.

I can hate sin, and love God, no more than I know of the evil of sin, and of the perfections that are in God: the more judicious then a Christian grows, the more his holiness grows; and accordingly St. Paul's prayer is, that they may grow more and more in knowledge in all judgment.

Observe, 2. The great ends mentioned by the apostle for which he did so earnestly desire their proficiency in knowledge and judgment, and their growth in love, and every other grace; namely,

1. That they might approve things that are excellent, that is, all such things as the gospel requires: implying, that the things prescribed to us in the gospel, are things excellent and good for us, things worthy to be prescribed by God, and things reasonable to be practised by us; and that the approbation of these things, by a steadiness in judgment and practice, is every Christian's duty, and ought to be their great endeavour.

2. That they might be sincere in their holy profession, incorrupt and pure both in doctrine and manners.

3. That they might be without offence, unblameable in conversation, and be kept from being occasions of stumbling unto others, even to the end of their days.

4. He prays that they may not only be inoffensive persons, but fruitful Christians: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God; that is, that they may abound in good works, undertaken in Christ's strength, and with an eye at God's glory.

Learn hence, 1. That a negative holiness is not sufficient to salvation: it is not enough that Christians be harmless and inoffensive towards others, but they must labour after an holy fruitfulness in good works: they must be filled with all the fruits of righteousness.

Learn, 2. That our works be truly good, and fruits of righteousness, it is necessary that they be done by Christ's strength and assistance, and with an eye at the glory and praise of God, in order to their acceptance: Filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Learn, 3. That no shorter time ought to be assigned for our inoffensive walking, and fruitfulness in conversation, than the day of our death: Unto the death of Christ, says our apostle, that is, till the great reckoning-day, when Christ will render to us our complete reward: if we be faithful and fruitful to the death, we shall then receive the crown of life.

10 that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere
and without offense till the day of Christ;
11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus
Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

To Me to Live Is Christ

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

Our apostle's design in these words is, to prevent the Philippians' stumbling, and being scandalized at his present sufferings, assuring them that the things which happened to him, through the malice of his persecutors, have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, than any ways to the hinderance of it, as they feared.

Learn hence, That the sufferings and persecutions which the messengers and ministers of Christ do undergo for the sake of the gospel, are oft-times so overruled by the wisdom of God, that they rather increase than diminish the church, and rather promote than prejudice the interest of the gospel.
Next, he declares the special and particular advantages which had redounded to the gospel, by those sufferings which he had patiently endured for the gospel's sake.

1. His bonds in Christ, that is, his imprisonment for the gospel of Christ, were manifest in the palace; that is, were manifestly taken notice of in Nero's court, and elsewhere in the city; so that people enquiring into the cause of his sufferings, found that it was not any misdemeanor, but that his preaching and practising the doctrine of Christianity was the only reason of his sufferings.

2. Another advantage which accrued to the church by his bonds, was this, namely, that many ministers of Christ, who preached the word of God far and near, hearing of his constancy under suffering, were both encouraged and emboldened thereby; encouraged to shake off fear, and emboldened to preach Christ with greater resolution. Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Note here, The title given by this great apostle to the inferior ministers of the gospel: he calls them brethren, and brethren in the Lord, putting himself and them in mind of their mutual and respective duties, which was to live and love as brethren: to admonish, exhort, and encourage one another, to stand up in defence of the just credit and reputation of one another, and jointly to set their shoulder to the work of Christ together.

Note, 2. That the ministers of Christ, observing how God upholds some of their brethren under sufferings and persecutions, should encourage themselves to go on with resolution in the work of the Lord, not fearing their own personal sufferings, knowing that the same assistance which supported one, stands ready to succour others: The brethern in the Lord waxed confident by my bonds.

13 so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places;*

14 and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife. What was the ground of this "envy and strife" the apostle does not mention. It would seem, however, that even in Rome there was a party which was jealous of the influence of Paul, and which supposed that this was a good opportunity to diminish his influence, and to strengthen their own cause. He was not now at large so as to be able to meet and confute them. They had access to the mass of the people. It was easy, under plausible pretences, to insinuate hints about the ambitious aims, or improper influence of Paul, or to take strong ground against him and in favour of their own views, and they availed themselves of this opportunity. It would seem most probable, though this is not mentioned, that these persons were Judaizing teachers, professing Christianity, and who supposed that Paul's views were derogatory to the honour of Moses and the law.

He suffered from false friends as well as from enemies (Php 1:15,16): Some preach Christ even of envy and strife. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely. Now this would be a stumbling-block and discouragement to some, that there were those who envied Paul's reputation in the churches, and the interest he had among the Christians, and endeavoured to supplant and undermine him. They were secretly pleased when he was laid up in prison, that they might have the better opportunity to steal away the people's affections; and they laid themselves out the more in preaching, that they might gain to themselves the reputation they envied him: Supposing to add affliction to my bonds. They thought hereby to grieve his spirit, and make him afraid of losing his interest, uneasy under his confinement, and impatient for release. It is sad that there should be men who profess the gospel, especially who preach it, who are governed by such principles as these, who should preach Christ in spite to Paul, and to increase the affliction of his bonds. Let us not think it strange if in these later and more degenerate ages of the church there should be any such. However, there were others who were animated by Paul's sufferings to preach Christ the more vigorously: Some also of good will, and love: from sincere affection to the gospel, that the work might not stand while the workman was laid up.--Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. They knew that he was appointed to support and propagate the gospel in the world, against all the violence and opposition of its enemies, and were afraid lest the gospel should suffer by his confinement. This made them the more bold to preach the word and supply his lack of service to the church.

Our apostle had declared in the foregoing verses, that several of his brethren in the work of the ministry, through his constancy in suffering, were emboldened to preach Jesus Christ with more resolution than before. But here he discovers, that there was a vast difference between those preachers: all did not preach Christ alike, with the same mind, from the same motives, for the same sincere ends.

Some, alas! preach Christ out of envy and strife; that is, envying the success of the apostle's ministry, and endeavouring to draw people off from approving him, to applaud them, hoping to grieve and gall him thereby: but others preached the gospel of Christ of good-will, with a purity of intention, and sincerity of affection, both towards Christ and towards himself, who, for the defence of the gospel, now lay in prison. However, seeing Christ was preached and made known by both, by some in pretence, by others in truth, the apostle rejoiced at it, and took comfort in it.

Learn hence, 1. That such ministers of the gospel are gladly and joyfully to be heard, who preach Christ and his pure word soundly and truly, with what mind soever, from what motive soever, and for what end soever, they preach Christ and his holy gospel. The word is his which they bring, how vicious soever the person, and how bad soever the intention be of him that brings it; and, if the message be his, it is our duty to receive it without prejudice, be the principle what it will in him that delivers it. Many preach in Christ's name, who perish in his wrath; for Christ takes notice of the inward intention, as well as of the outward action, and observes not only the matter which ministers preach, but the end for which, and the motives from which, they preach, whether from love and good will, or from envy and strife.

Learn, 2. That such Christians who find their hearts inflamed with zeal for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls, do and will rejoice exceedingly that Christ is preached, whoever the person is, or whatever the principle may be in him that preaches: If Christ be preached, says St. Paul, I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

17 but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Still our apostle pursues and prosecutes his former design, namely, to prevent the Philippians being offended at his sufferings; and accordingly, he shows that as the gospel of Christ had gained much already, it should gain yet more, by his imprisonment and afflictions, which he was very confident would tend to the furtherance of his salvation, through the help of their prayers, and the supplies of grace from the Spirit of Christ; where, by salvation is meant deliverance out of his present sufferings, which he fully expected by the help and benefit of the church's prayers.

Great are the expectations of the saints, even as to temporal salvation and outward mercies, from the joint prayers and intercessions of the church of Christ. This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer. But if by salvation be meant eternal happiness, then his confident persuasion was this, That all the designs of his adversaries against him should be so overruled and ordered by God, that through the influences and supplies of the Holy Spirit, all should work together for good, and his eternal salvation be advanced thereby, through the concurrence and assistance of their prayers.

20 according to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I
shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also
Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by
death.

In the 20th verse he tells them, that according to his former expectation and hope, he was resolved that no terror should ever make him ashamed to own the truth of Christ, but that, with a convincing boldness, he would now, as heretofore appear in the defence of it, and that Christ should be magnified by him in the body, whether by life or death; that is, whether my life be further prolonged, or be now by martyrdom ended, Christ will be magnified: if I live, the power of Christ will be magnified in my deliverance from death: if I die, his power will be magnified in enabling me to undergo death for his name and sake: so that I am at a point, either to love or die, as the wisdom of Christ shall determine; I am, as to myself, indifferent for either, well knowing

that Christ will be glorified in me, and by me, both by life and death.

Learn hence, That nothing lies so near the heart of a saint as the honour and glory of Christ; this he resolves shall be promoted by him, living and dying; by his great services, supposing his life, and by his extraordinary sufferings and martyrdom, in case of his death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.
22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall
choose I wot not.

For to me to live is Christ. My sole aim in living is to glorify Christ. He is the supreme End of my life, and I value it only as being devoted to his honour. Doddridge. His aim was not honour, learning, gold, pleasure; it was to glorify the Lord Jesus. This was the single purpose of his soul--a purpose to which he devoted himself with as much singleness and ardour as ever did a miser to the pursuit of gold, or a devotee of pleasure to amusement, or an aspirant for fame to ambition. This implied the following things:

(1.) A purpose to know as much of Christ as it was possible to know--to become as fully acquainted as he could with his rank, his character, his plans, with the relations which he sustained to the Father, and with the claims and influences of his religion. See Php 3:10, Eph 3:19. Comp. Jn 17:3.

(2.) A purpose to imitate Christ--to make him the model of his life. It was a design that his Spirit should reign in his heart, that the same temper should actuate him, and that the same great end should be constantly had in view.

(3.) A purpose to make his religion known, as far as possible, among mankind. To this Paul seriously gave his life, and devoted his great talents. His aim was to see on how many minds he could impress the sentiments of the Christian religion; to see to how many of the human family he could make Christ known, to whom he was unknown before. Never was there a man who gave himself

with more ardour to any enterprise, than Paul did to this; and never was one more successful, in any undertaking, than he was in this.

(4.) It was a purpose to enjoy Christ. He drew his comforts from him. His happiness he found in communion with him. It was not in the works of art; not in the pursuits of elegant literature; not in the gay and fashionable world; but it was in communion with the Saviour, and in endeavouring to please him. Remark,

(1.) Paul never had occasion to regret this course. It produced no sadness when he looked over his life. He never felt that he had had an unworthy aim of living; he did not wish that his purpose had been different when he came to die.

(2.) If it was Paul's duty thus to live, it is no less that of every Christian. What was there in his case that made it his duty to "live unto Christ," which does not exist in the case of every sincere Christian on earth? No believer, when he comes to die, will regret that he has lived unto Christ; but how many, alas! regret that this has not been the aim and purpose of their souls?

And to die is gain - But how would it be gain to die? What advantage would there be in Paul's circumstances? What in ours? It may be answered, that it will be gain for a Christian to die in the following respects:--

(1.) He will be then freed from sin. Here it is the source of perpetual humiliation and sorrow; in heaven he will sin no more.

(2.) He will be freed from doubts about his condition. Here the best are liable to doubts about theft personal piety, and often experience many an anxious hour in reference to this point; in heaven, doubt will be known no more.

(3.) He will be freed from temptation. Here, no one knows when he may be tempted, nor how powerful the temptation may be; in heaven, there will be no allurement to lead him astray; no artful,

cunning, and skilful votaries of pleasure to place inducements before him to sin; and no heart to yield to them, if there were.

(4.) He will be delivered from all his enemies--from the slanderer, the calumniator, the persecutor. Here the Christian is constantly liable to have his motives called in question, or to be met with detraction and slander; there, there will be none to do him injustice; all will rejoice in the belief that he is pure.

(5.) He will be delivered from suffering. Here he is constantly liable to it. His health fails, his friends die, his mind is sad. There, there shall be no separation of friends, no sickness, and no tears.

(6.) He will be delivered from death. Here, death is ever nigh--dreadful, alarming, terrible to our nature There, death will be known no more. No face will ever turn pale, and no knees tremble, at his approach; in all heaven there will never be seen a funeral procession, nor will the soil there ever open its bosom to furnish a grave.

(7.) To all this may be added the fact, that the Christian will be surrounded by his best friends; that he will be reunited with those whom he loved on earth; that he will be associated with the angels of light; and that he will be admitted to the immediate presence of his Saviour and his God? Why, then, should a Christian be afraid to die? And why should he not hail that hour, when it comes, as the hour of his deliverance, and rejoice that he is going home? Does the prisoner, long confined in a dungeon, dread the hour which is to open his prison, add permit him to return to his family and friends? Does the man in a foreign land, long an exile, dread the hour when he shall embark on the ocean to be conveyed where he may embrace the friends of his youth? Does the sick man dread the hour which restores him to health? the afflicted, the hour of comfort? the wanderer at night, the cheering light of returning day? And why, then, should the Christian dread the hour which will restore him to immortal vigour; which shall remove all his sorrows; which shall introduce him to everlasting day?

"Death is the crown of life: Were death denied, poor man would live in vain; Were death denied, to live would not be life; Were death denied, even fools would wish to die. Death wounds to cure; we tall; we rise; we reign ! Spring from our fetters; hasten in the skies; Where blooming Eden withers in our sight. Death gives us more than was in Eden lost. The king of terrors is the prince of peace." Night Thoughts, iii.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

And to be with Christ. We may remark on this expression,

(1.) that this was the true reason why he wished to be away. It was his strong love to Christ; his anxious wish to be with him; his firm belief that in his presence was "fulness of joy."

(2.) Paul believed that the soul of the Christian would be immediately with the Saviour at death. It was evidently his expectation that he would at once pass to his presence, and not that he would remain in an intermediate state to some far distant period.

(3.) The soul does not sleep at death. Paul expected to be with Christ, and to be conscious of the fact--to see him, and to partake of his glory.

(4.) The soul of the believer is made happy at death. To be with Christ is synonymous with being in heaven, for Christ is in heaven, and is its glory. We may add,

(a.) that this wish to be with Christ constitutes a marked difference between a Christian and other men. Other men may be willing to die; perhaps be desirous to die, because their sorrows are so great that they feel that they cannot be borne. But the Christian desires to depart from a different motive altogether. It is to be with Christ--and this constitutes a broad line of distinction between him and other men.

(b.) A mere willingness to die, or even a desire to die, is no certain evidence of preparation for death. If this willingness or desire is caused by mere intensity of suffering; if it is produced by disgust at the world, or by disappointment; if it arises from some view of fancied Elysian fields beyond the grave, it constitutes no evidence whatever of preparation for death. I have seen not a few persons who were not professed Christians on a bed of death, and not a few willing to die, nay, not a few who wished to depart. But in the vast majority of instances it was because they were sick of life, or because their pain made them sigh for relief, or because they were so wretched that they did not care what happened--and this they and their friends construed into an evidence that they were prepared to die! In most instances this is a miserable delusion; in no case is a mere willingness to die an evidence of preparation for death.

24 nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.
25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue
with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;
26 that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by
my coming to you again.
27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:
that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of
your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving
together for the faith of the gospel;

Only let your conversation. The word conversation we now apply almost exclusively to oral discourse, or to talking. But it was not formerly confined to that, and is never so used in the Scriptures. It means conduct in general--including, of course, our manner of speaking, but not limited to that--and should be so understood in every place where it occurs in the Bible. The original word here used πολιτευω-politeuo, means, properly, to administer the State; to live as a citizen; to conduct one's self according to the laws and customs of a State. See Acts 23:1. Comp. examples in Wetstein. It would not be improperly rendered, "let your conduct, as a citizen, be as becomes the gospel;" and might without impropriety, though not exclusively, be referred to our deportment as members of a community, or citizens of a State. It undoubtedly implies that, as citizens, we should act, in all the duties which that relation

involves--in maintaining the laws, in submission to authority, in the choice of rulers, etc., as well as in other relations --on the principles of the gospel; for the believer is bound to perform every duty on Christian principles. But the direction here should not be confined to that. It doubtless includes our conduct in all relations in life, and refers to our deportment in general; not merely as citizens of the State, but as members of the church, and in all other relations. In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it--all should be done as becomes the gospel. The direction, therefore, in this place, is to be understood of everything pertaining to conduct.

As it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

(1.) The rules of the gospel are to be applied to all our conduct--to our conversation, business transactions, modes of dress, style of living, entertainments, etc. There is nothing which we do, or say, or purpose, that is to be excepted from those rules.

(2.) There is a way of living which is appropriate to the gospel, or which is such as the gospel requires. There is something which the gospel would secure as its proper fruits in all our conduct, and by which our lives should be regulated. It would distinguish us from the gay, and from those who seek honour and wealth as their supreme object. If all Christians were under the influence of the gospel, there would be something in their dress, temper, conversation, and aims, which would distinguish them from others. The gospel is not a thing of naught; nor is it intended that it should exert no influence on its friends.

(3.) It is very important that Christians should frame their lives by the rules of the gospel, and, to this end, should study them, and know what they are. This is important,

(a.) because they are the best and wisest of all rules;

(b.) because it is only in this way that Christians can do good;

(c.) because they have solemnly covenanted with the Lord to take his laws as their guide;

(d.) because it is only in this way that they can enjoy religion; and

(e.) because it is only by this that they can have peace on a dying bed. If men live as "becometh the gospel," they live well. Their lives are honest and honourable; they are men of truth and uprightness; they will have no sources of regret when they die, and they will not give occasion to their friends to hang their heads with shame in the remembrance of them. No man on a dying bed ever yet regretted that he had framed his life by the rules of the gospel, or felt that his conduct had been conformed too much to it.

28 and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an
evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.
29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe
on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

For unto you. Unto you as Christians. This favour is granted unto you in your present circumstances. It is given. God concedes to you this privilege or advantage. In the behalf of Christ. In the cause of Christ, or with a view to honour Christ. Or, these things are brought on you in consequence of your being Christians. Not only to believe on him. It is represented here as a privilege to be permitted to believe on Christ. It is so.

(1.) It is an honour to a man to believe one who ought to be believed, to trust one who ought to be trusted, to love one who ought to be loved.

(2.) It is a privilege to believe on Christ, because it is by such faith that our sins are forgiven; that we become reconciled to God, and have the hope of heaven.

(3.) It is a privilege, because it saves the mind from the tortures and the deadly influence of unbelief --the agitation, and restlessness, and darkness, and gloom of a sceptic.

(4.) It is a privilege, because we have then a Friend to whom we may go in trial, and on whom me may roll all our burdens. If there is anything for which a Christian ought to give unfeigned thanks, it is that he has been permitted to believe on the Redeemer. Let a sincere Christian compare his peace, and joy, and hope of heaven, and support in trials, with the restlessness, uneasiness, and dread of death, in the mind of an unbeliever, and he will see abundant occasion for gratitude. But also to suffer for his sake. Here it is represented as a privilege to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer-- a declaration which may sound strange to the world. Yet this sentiment frequently occurs in the New Testament. Thus it is said of the apostles, Acts 5:41, that "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Col 1:24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you." 1Pet 4:13: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." Comp. Jas 1:2, Mk 10:30. Acts 5:41. It is a privilege thus to suffer in the cause of Christ, because

(1.) we then resemble the Lord Jesus, and are united with him in trials;

(2.) because we have evidence that we are his, if trials come upon us in his cause;

(3.) because we are engaged in a good cause, and the privilege of maintaining such a cause is worth much of suffering; and

(4.) because it will be connected with a brighter crown and more exalted honour in heaven.

30 having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Having the same struggle. The same agony αγωνα-- the same strife with bitter foes, and the same struggle in the warfare.

Which ye saw in me. When I was in Philippi, opposed by the multitude, and thrown into prison, Acts 16.

And now hear to be in me. In Rome. He was a prisoner there, was surrounded by enemies, and was about to be tried for his life. He says that they ought to rejoice if they were called to pass through the same trials.

In this chapter we have a beautiful illustration of the true spirit of a Christian, in circumstances exceedingly trying. The apostle was in a situation where religion would show itself, if there were any in the heart; and where, if there was none, the bad passions of our nature would be developed. He was a prisoner. He had been unjustly accused. He was about to be put on trial for his life, and it was wholly uncertain what the result would be. He was surrounded with enemies, and there were not a few false friends and rivals who took advantage of his imprisonment to diminish his influence, and to extend their own. He was, perhaps, about to die; and, at any rate, was in such circumstances as to be under a necessity of looking death in the face.

In this situation he exhibited some of the tenderest and purest feelings that ever exist in the heart of man--the genuine fruit of pure religion. He remembered them with affectionate and constant interest in his prayers. He gave thanks for all that God had done for them. Looking upon his own condition, he said that the trials which had happened to him, great as they were, had been overruled to the furtherance of the gospel. The gospel had become known even in the imperial palace. And though it had been preached by some with no good will towards him, and with much error, yet he cherished no hard feeling; he sought for no revenge; he rejoiced that in any way, and from any motives, the great truth had been made known that a Saviour died. Looking forward to the possibility that his trial before the emperor might terminate in his death, he calmly anticipated such a result, and looked at it with composure. He says that, in reference to the great purpose of his life, it would make no difference whether he lived or died, for he was assured that Christ would be honoured whatever was the result. To him personally it would be gain to die; and, as an individual, he longed for the hour when he might be with Christ. This feeling is religion, and this is produced only by the hope of eternal life through the Redeemer.

An impenitent sinner never expressed such feelings as these; nor does any other form of religion but Christianity enable a man to look upon death in this manner. It is not often that a man is even willing to demand then this state of mind is produced not by the hope of heaven, but by disgust at the world; by disappointed ambition; by painful sickness, when the sufferer feels that any change would be for the better. But Paul had none of these feelings. His desire to depart was not produced by a hatred of life; nor by the greatness of his sufferings; nor by disgust at the world. It was the noble, elevated, and pure wish to be with Christ--to see him whom he supremely loved, whom he had so long and so faithfully served, and with whom he was to dwell for ever. To that world where Christ dwelt he would gladly rise; and the only reason why he could be content to remain here was, that he might be a little longer useful to his fellow-men. Such is the elevated nature of Christian feeling. But alas! how few attain to it; and even among Christians how few are they that can habitually feel and realize that it would be gain for them to die! How few can say with sincerity that they desire to depart, and to be with Christ? How rarely does even the Christian reach that state of mind, and gain that view of heaven, that, standing amidst his comforts here, and looking on his family, and friends, and property, he can say, from the depths of his soul, that he feels it would be gain for him to go to heaven? Yet such deadness to the world may be produced--as it was in the case of Paul; such deadness to the world should exist in the heart of every sincere Christian. Where it does exist, death loses its terror, and the heir of life can look calmly on the bed where he will lie down to die; can think calmly of the moment when he will give the parting hand to wife and child, and press them to his bosom for the last time, and imprint on them the last kiss; can look peacefully on the spot where he will moulder back to dust, and in view of all can triumphantly say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Philippians-2

Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation

1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of
love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
2 fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love,
being of one accord, of one mind.

The important duty which the apostle exhorts the Philippians to; and that is, love and unity, unity in judgment and opinion, unity in heart and affection, unity in design and endeavours; so necessary and advantageous is the duty of unity and concord among all the professors of Christianity, that all the cautions and warnings, all the advice and counsel, all the melting entreaties and passionate importunities of the ministers of Christ, are little enough to excite persons to it, and direct them in the practice of it.

Observe, 2. What an heap of arguments the apostle makes use of to excite and quicken the Philippians to the love and practice of this duty: If there be any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels and mercies.

As if he had said, If ever you have tasted, by means of my ministry, any sweetness and consolation in Christ and his holy religion, if ever you have found any comfort in his love, if ever you have enjoyed any communion with his Spirit, if ye be men, and have any bowels of mercy for yourselves, if ye be Christians, and have any pity for me in my bonds, fulfill ye my joy in this, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind.

O! the tenderness, the gentleness, and meekness of soul which was in St. Paul, and ought to be in every spiritual pastor towards his people, to win them, and prevail upon them to love the truth and peace.

Fulfil ye my joy, says the apostle; as if he had said, Sufferings I have enough already; O! do not you, by your divisions and dissensions, add more: I am already a prisoner, expecting the sentence of death, preparing for the sword of persecution, but none of these things move me; I can rejoice in a dungeon, sing in the stocks, triumph in death, if I can but hear you stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

But, if I hear that you are broken by divisions, my heart is broke; the news of differences and dissensions among you will be heavier to me than my chain, darker than my dungeon, sharper than Nero's sword. Do not thus add to my sorrow and sufferings; but as you have begun and occasioned joy in me, I beseech you fulfil and complete my joy, by your being of one heart, of one mind, entirely one.

3 *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Let nothing be done through strife. With a spirit of contention. This command forbids us to do anything, or attempt anything, as the mere result of strife. This is not the principle from which we are to act, or by which we are to be governed. We are to form no plan, and aim at no object, which is to be secured in this way. The command prohibits all attempts to secure anything over others by mere physical strength, or by superiority of intellect or numbers, or as the result of dark schemes and plans formed by rivalry, or by the indulgence of angry passions, or with the spirit of ambition. We are not to attempt to do anything merely by outstripping others, or by showing that we have more talent, courage, or zeal. What we do is to be by principle, and with a desire to maintain the truth, and to glorify God. And yet how often is this rule violated! How often do Christian denominations attempt to outstrip each other, and to see which shall be the greatest! How often do ministers preach with no better aim! How often do we attempt to outdo others in dress, and in the splendour of furniture and equipage! How often, even in plans of benevolence, and in the cause of virtue and religion, is the secret aim to outdo others. This is all wrong. There is no holiness in such efforts. Never once did the Redeemer act from such a

motive, and never once should this motive be allowed to influence us. The conduct of others may be allowed to show us what we can do, and ought to do; but it should not be our sole aim to outstrip them. Comp. 2Cor 9:2-4. Or vainglory. The word here used --κενοδοζια kenodoxia, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the adjective--κενοδοξος kenedoxos, occurs once in Gall 5:26. Gall 5:26. It means, properly, empty pride, or glory, and is descriptive of vain and hollow parade and show. Suidas renders it, "any vain opinion about one's self"--ματαιατιςπερι εαυτουοιησις. The idea seems to be that of mere self-esteem; a mere desire to honour ourselves, to attract attention, to win praise, to make ourselves uppermost, or foremost, or the main object. The command here solemnly forbids our doing anything with such an aim--no matter whether it be in intellectual attainments, in physical strength, in skill in music, in eloquence or song, in dress, furniture, or religion. Self is not to be foremost; selfishness is not to be the motive. Probably there is no command of the Bible which would have a wider sweep than this, or would touch on more points of human conduct, if fairly applied. Who is there who passes a single day without, in some respect, desiring to display himself? What minister of the gospel preaches, who never has any wish to exhibit his talents, eloquence, or learning? How few make a gesture, but with some wish to display the grace or power witch which it is done! Who, in conversation, is always free from a desire to show his wit, or his power in argumentation, or his skill in repartee? Who plays at the piano without the desire of commendation? Who thunders in the senate, or goes to the field of battle; who builds a house, or purchases an article of apparel; who writes a book, or performs a deed of benevolence, altogether uninfluenced by this desire? If all could be taken out of human conduct which is performed merely from "strife," or from "vain-glory," how small a portion would be left! But in lowliness of mind. Modesty, or humility. The word here used is the same which is rendered humility in Acts 20:19, Col 2:18,23; 1Pet 5:5; humbleness in Col 3:12; and lowliness in Eph 4:2; Php 2:3. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It here means humility, and it stands opposed to that pride or self-valuation which would lead us to strive for the ascendancy, or which acts from a wish for flattery or

praise. The best and the only true correction of these faults is humility. This virtue consists in estimating ourselves according to truth. It is a willingness to take the place which we ought to take in the sight of God and man; and, having the low estimate of our own importance and character which the truth about our insignificance as creatures and vileness as sinners would produce, it will lead us to a willingness to perform lowly and humble offices that we may benefit others. Let each esteem other better than themselves. Comp. 1Pet 5:5. This is one of the effects produced by true humility, and it naturally exists in every truly modest mind. The reasons are these:

(1.) We are sensible of our own defects, but we have not the same clear view of the defects of others. We see our own hearts; we are conscious of the great corruption there; we have painful evidence of the impurity of the motives which often actuate us-- the evil thoughts and corrupt desires in our own souls; but we have not the same view of the errors, defects, and follies of others. We can see only their outward conduct; but, in our own case, we can look within. It is natural for those who have any just sense of the depravity of their own souls, charitably to hope that it is not so with others, and to believe that they have purer hearts. This will lead us to feel that they are worthy of more respect than we are. Hence this is always the characteristic of modesty and humility--graces which the gospel is fitted eminently to produce. A truly pious man will be always, therefore, an humble man, and will wish that others should be preferred in office and honour to himself. Of course, this will not make him blind to the defects of others when they are manifested; but he will be himself retiring, modest, unambitious, unobtrusive. This rule of Christianity would strike a blow at all the ambition of the world. It would rebuke the love of office, and would produce universal contentment in any low condition of life where the providence of God may have cast our lot. 1Cor 7:21.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Look not every man on his own things. That is, be not selfish. Do not let your care and attention be wholly absorbed by your own concerns, or by the concerns of your own family. Evince a

tender interest for the happiness of the whole, and let the welfare of others lie near your hearts. This, of course, does not mean that there is to be any improper interference in the business of others, or that we are to have the character of "busy-bodies in other men's matters," 2Thes 3:11; 1Timm 5:13; 1Pet 4:15; but that we are to regard, with appropriate solicitude, the welfare of others, and to strive to do them good. But every man also on the things of others. It is the duty of every man to do this. No one is at liberty to live for himself, or to disregard the wants of others. The object of this rule is to break up the narrow spirit of selfishness, and to produce a benevolent regard for the happiness of others. In respect to the rule we may observe:

(1.) We are not to be "busy-bodies" in the concerns of others. See the references above. We are not to attempt to pry into their secret purposes. Every man has his own plans, and thoughts, and intentions, which no other one has a right to look into. Nothing is more odious than an intermeddler in the concerns of others.

(2.) We are not to obtrude our advice where it is not sought, or at unseasonable times and places, even if the advice is in itself good. No man likes to be interrupted to hear advice; and I have no right to require that he should suspend his business in order that I may give him counsel.

(3.) We are not to find fault with what pertains exclusively to him. We are to remember that there are some things which are his business, not ours; and we are to learn to "possess our souls in patience," if he does not give just as much as we think he ought to benevolent objects, or if he dresses in a manner not to please our taste, or if he indulges in things which do not accord exactly with our views. He may see reasons for his conduct which we do not; and it is possible that he may be right, and that, if we understood the whole case, we should think and act as he does. We often complain of a man because he does not give as much as we think he ought to objects of charity; and it is possible that he may be miserably niggardly and narrow. But it is also possible that he may be more embarrassed than we know of; or that he

may just then have demands against him of which we are ignorant; or that he may have numerous poor relatives dependant on him; or that he gives much with "the left hand" which is not known by "the right hand." At any rate, it is his business, not ours; and we are not qualified to judge until we understand the whole case.

(4.) We are not to be gossips about the concerns of others. We are not to hunt up small stories and petty scandals respecting their families; we are not to pry into domestic affairs, and divulge them abroad, and find pleasure in circulating such things from house to house. There are domestic secrets which are not to be betrayed; and there is scarcely an offence of a meaner or more injurious character than to divulge to the public what we have seen in a family whose hospitality we have enjoyed.

(5.) Where Christian duty and kindness require us to look into the concerns of others, there should be the utmost delicacy. Even children have their own secrets, and their own plans and amusements, on a small scale, quite as important to them as the greater games which we are playing in life; and they will feel the meddlesomeness of a busy-body to be as odious to them as we should in our plans. A delicate parent, therefore, who has undoubtedly a right to know all about his children, will not rudely intrude into their privacies, or meddle with their concerns. So, when we visit the sick, while we show a tender sympathy for them, we should not be too particular in inquiring into their maladies or their feelings. So, when those with whom we sympathize have brought their calamities on themselves by their own fault, we should not ask too many questions about it. We should not too closely examine one who is made poor by intemperance, or who is in prison for crime. And so, when we go to sympathize with those who have been, by a reverse of circumstances, reduced from affluence to penury, we should not ask too many questions. We should let them tell their own story. If they voluntarily make us their confidants, and tell us all about their circumstances, it is well; but let us not drag out the circumstances, or wound their feelings by our impertinent

inquiries, or our indiscreet sympathy in their affairs. There are always secrets which the sons and daughters of misfortune would wish to keep to themselves. But, while these things are true, it is also true that the rule before us positively requires us to show an interest in the concerns of others; and it may be regarded as implying the following things:

(1.) We are to feel that the spiritual interests of every one in the church is, in a certain sense, our own interest. The church is one. It is confederated together for a common object. Each one is intrusted with a portion of the honour of the whole, and the conduct of one member affects the character of all. We are therefore to promote, in every way possible, the welfare of every other member of the church. If they go astray, we are to admonish and entreat them; if they are in error, we are to instruct them; if they are in trouble, we are to aid them. Every member of the church has a claim on the sympathy of his brethren, and should be certain of always finding it when his circumstances are such as to demand it.

(2.) There are circumstances where it is proper to look with special interest on the temporal concerns of others. It is when the poor, the fatherless, and the afflicted must be sought out in order to be aided and relieved. They are too retiring and modest to press their situation on the attention of others, and they need that others should manifest a generous care in their welfare in order to relieve them. This is not improper interference in their concerns, nor will it be so regarded.

(3.) For a similar reason, we should seek the welfare of all others in a spiritual sense. We should seek to arouse the sinner, and lead him to the Saviour. He is blind, and will not come himself; unconcerned, and will not seek salvation; filled with the love of this world, and will not seek a better; devoted to pursuits that will lead him to ruin, and he ought to be apprized of it. It is no more an improper interference in his concerns to apprize him of his condition, and to attempt to lead him to the Saviour, than it is to warn a man in a dark night, who walks on the verge of a

precipice, of his peril; or to arouse one from sleep whose house is in flames. In like manner, it is no more intermeddling with the concerns of another to tell him that there is a glorious heaven which may be his, than it is to apprize a man that there is a mine of golden ore on his farm. It is for the man's own interest, and it is the office of a friend to remind him of these things. Hie does a man a favour who tells him that he has a Redeemer, and that there is a heaven to which he may rise; he does his neighbour the greatest possible kindness who apprizes him that there is a world of infinite woe, and tells him of an easy way by which he may escape it. The world around is dependant on the church of Christ to be apprized of these truths. The gay will not warn the gay of their danger; the crowd that presses to the theatre or the ball-room will not apprize those who are there that they are in the broad way to hell; and every one who loves his neighbour should feel sufficient interest in him to tell him that he may be eternally happy in heaven.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Behold here the greatest example of humility, of lowliness and abasement, that ever the world was acquainted with: the mighty God became less than man!

To make a due estimate hereof we must first observe, What Christ was before his incarnation and humiliation, namely, the great and mighty God: for, says the apostle, he was in the form of God, and equal with God; that is, being the substantial form, and essential image of the Father, enjoying the divine nature, with all its glory, and all the ensigns of majesty which God himself had eternally and invariably. As to be in the form of a servant, signifies that he was a servant; so to be in the form of God, signifies that he was God.

And observe, 2. He was in the form of God, before he was in the form of a servant: And, being in the form of God, he thought it

no robbery to be equal with God. Now if he thought it no robbery, it could be no robbery; and if no robbery, he must be equal; and if equal, he must be God by nature, as the Father is.
Learn hence, That our Saviour possessed that glory which is truly divine, before he assumed our nature as man: he had a peerage or equality with his Father in glory; the angels adored him im heaven before his incarnation on earth, Isa 6:1,2.

Observe, 3. What mighty abasement the holy Jesus, God blessed for evermore, underwent, when he humbled himself: He was found in fashion as a man; he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.
Behold here the Son of righteousness under an (almost total) eclipse; he that was eternally beautiful and glorious, being the brightness of his Father's glory, was so veiled, clouded, and debased, in the day of his humiliation, that he appears not like a God, scarce like a man.
Note, 1. He took upon him the form of a servant: now this was a lower degree of condescension than the assuming the naked human nature; for a servant is not simply a man, but a mean man, a man in a low estate.

Lord! what abasement was here, that Christ, who was in the form of God, should degrade himself into the form of a servant, and take the human nature without honour, after it had lost its primitive innocency, after sin had blotted the original glory of it, and withered the beauty and excellency thereof! O inconceivable condescension!

Note, 2. He emptied himself, or made himself of no reputation, that is, in the day of his incarnaton he laid aside the robes of his glory, he emptied himself of that divine splendour and majesty which before he had; not by ceasing to be what he was, but by assuming something to himself which before he was not: the Son of God descended from his throne, and put on our vile mortality;

he parted with his glory, that he might part with his life for our salvation.

Note, 3. He was made in the likeness of man, and found in fashion as a man; that is, he was truly and really man, made in the likeness of other men, without any visible outward difference: He was in all things like unto us, sin only excepted, Rom 8:3. He is said to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, that is, in flesh that had the marks and miserable effects of sin upon it: not that Christ assumed sinful flesh, or flesh really defiled, by sin, but he assumed the human nature, attended with a whole troop of human imfirmities, which sin first let into that nature, as hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, mortality and death. By reason of which, though he was not a sinner, yet he looked like one, and they that conversed with him took him for one, seeing all these effects of sin upon him.

Lord, what a stoop was this! To be made in the likeness of innocent flesh had been much; but to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, rebellious flesh, flesh, though not defiled, yet miseraably defaced by sin! O, what is this! and who can declare his humiliation!

Note, 4. The nature of this humiliation: he humbled himself; the word imports both a real and a voluntary abasement. Real: Christ did not personsate an humble man, nor act the part of one in a debased state, but was really and in very deed humbled, both in the sight of God and man: and, as it was real, so also was his humiliation voluntary. It is not said he was humbled, but that he humbled himself; he was willing to stoop to this low and abject state for us; and it was the voluntariness of his humiliation that made it so acceptable to God, and so beneficial and servicable unto us.

Note, 5. The degrees of our holy Lord's humiliation: he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Here we have the depth of Christ's humiliation specified; it was unto death, and also aggravated, even unto the death of the cross; he humbled

himself, not only to become a mortal man, but a dead corpse; and that too hanging on a tree, dying the death of a malefactor. There was pain, shame, and a curse, in the death of the cross: Christ underwent the pain patiently, the shame meekly, the curse obediently, all of them willingly and cheerfully, that the justice of God might be satisfied, his wrath pacified, his majesty reconciled, death and hell vanquished and destroyed. Behold the trancendency of Christ's love to the children of men! Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend; but greater love had the Son of God than this, that he laid down his life for his inveterate enemies: he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1. Here are the two natures of Christ: his divine nature and his human nature.

(1.) Here is his divine nature: Who being in the form of God (Php 2:6), partaking of the divine nature, as the eternal and only begotten Son of God. This agrees with Joh 1:1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God: it is of the same import with being the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), and the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person, Heb 1:3. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God; did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, I and my Father are one, Joh 10:30. It is the highest degree of robbery for any mere man or mere creature to pretend to be equal with God, or profess himself one with the Father. This is for a man to rob God, not in tithes and offerings, but of the rights of his Godhead, Mal 3:8. Some understand being in the form of God--en morphe Theou hyparchon, of his appearance in a divine majestic glory to the patriarchs, and the Jews, under the Old Testament, which was often called the glory, and the Shechinah. The word is used in such a sense by the LXX. and in the New Testament. He appeared to the two disciples, en hetera morphe--In another form, Mk 16:12. Metemorphothe--he was transfigured before them, Mt 17:2. And he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he did not greedily catch at, nor covet and affect to appear

in that glory; he laid aside the majesty of his former appearance while he was here on earth, which is supposed to be the sense of the peculiar expression, ouk harpagmon hegesato. Vid. Bishop Bull's Def. cap. 2 sect. 4 et alibi, and Whitby in loc.

(2.) His human nature: He was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man. He was really and truly man, took part of our flesh and blood, appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act, and by his own consent. We cannot say that our participation of the human nature is so. Herein he emptied himself, divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of his former appearance, to clothe himself with the rags of human nature. He was in all things like to us, Heb 2:17.

2. Here are his two estates, of humiliation and exaltation.

(1.) His estate of humiliation. He not only took upon him the likeness and fashion of a man, but the form of a servant, that is, a man of mean estate. He was not only God's servant whom he had chosen, but he came to minister to men, and was among them as one who serveth in a mean and servile state. One would think that the Lord Jesus, if he would be a man, should have been a prince, and appeared in splendour. But quite the contrary: He took upon him the form of a servant. He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, meanness, poverty, and disgrace; he had nowhere to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life.

But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross. He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He not only suffered, but was actually and voluntarily obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under as Mediator, and by which he was obliged to die. I have power to

lay down my life, and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father, Joh 10:18. And he was made under the law, Ga 4:4. There is an emphasis laid upon the manner of his dying, which had in it all the circumstances possible which are humbling: Even the death of the cross, a cursed, painful, and shameful death,--a death accursed by the law (Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree)--full of pain, the body nailed through the nervous parts (the hands and feet) and hanging with all its weight upon the cross,--and the death of a malefactor and a slave, not of a free-man,--exposed as a public spectacle. Such was the condescension of the blessed Jesus.

8 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and
became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name
which is above every name:
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven,
and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

The former verse spake of the depth of Christ's humiliation; these, of the height of his exaltation.

Where observe, 1. The dignity itself conferred by God upon Christ; God exalted him, highly exalted him, exalted him above all exaltation, as the word signifies. Christ in his resurrection was exalted; in his ascension, he was highly exalted; in his sitting at God's right hand, he was very highly exalted above all exaltation.

Observe, 2. How the steps of Christ's exaltation did punctually answer the steps of his humiliation; the first step of his humiliation was his incarnation, by which he was made man, and, as our surety, was made sin.

The first step of his exaltation was his resurrection, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power; and, as our surety, having paid our debt was released from the prison of the grave.
The second step of his humiliation, was his poor and contemptible life, and his painful, shameful, and accursed death; answerable thereunto is Christ's ascension into heaven, and sitting there at God's right hand, advancing him above all principalities and

power, that is, above all the angels, and placing him next himself in dignity and honour.

Observe, 3. The connection between Christ's humiliation and exaltation: he humbled himself, and became obedient to the death; wherefore God hath highly exalted him.

Where note, That some make the humiliation of Christ the meritorious cause of his exaltation; and his exaltation the reward of his humiliation: others make the humiliation of Christ only the antecedent of his exaltation; he humbled himself, and God has exalted him to a dignity above all dignities and pre-eminency whatsoever, making him King and Head of his church, and giving him all power both in heaven and earth, requiring that the divine honour due to God should be given to him also.

Observe, 4. The particulars of our Lord's exaltation declared: and they are three.

1. God hath given him a name above every name; that is, dignity and power, majesty and authority, over all creatures both in heaven and earth.

2. That every knee, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, should bow to the name of Jesus: every knee, that is, every creature in heaven, earth, and hell, shall bow, that is, yield subjection to Christ, some voluntarily, others unwillingly; the good angels and good men paying a cheerful homage, the evil angels and bad men yielding a forced and constrained subjection to him.

3. That every tongue must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; every tongue, that is, every person, men of all nations and languages, shall confess Christ crucified to be the Lord and Judge of the world, acknowledging his royal sovereignity and dominion.

Observe, 5. The end of Christ's glorious exaltation; it was, to the glory of God the Father: that is, it pleased God the Father, for his

own glory, that the Lord Jesus Christ, after he had been deeply humbled, should be highly exalted.

Observe, lastly, the apostle's great design and scope in setting before the Philippians the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ: and that was to excite them to the grace and duty of humility, that the same humble mind should be in them which was also in Christ Jesus. As if he had said our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself greatly for us, and afterwards was highly exalted by God above us; so in proportion may you expect to be exalted by God, if you humble yourselves, in order to maintain and preserve the church's peace and unity; for before honour is humility.

His exaltation: Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation. Because he humbled himself, God exalted him; and he highly exalted him, hyperypsose, raised him to an exceeding height. He exalted his whole person, the human nature as well as the divine; for he is spoken of as being in the form of God as well as in the fashion of man. As it respects the divine nature, it could only be the recognizing of his rights, or the display and appearance of the glory he had with the Father before the world was (Joh 17:5), not any new acquisition of glory; and so the Father himself is said to be exalted. But the proper exaltation was of his human nature, which alone seems to be capable of it, though in conjunction with the divine. His exaltation here is made to consist in honour and power. In honour; so he had a name above every name, a title of dignity above all the creatures, men and angels. And in power: Every knee must bow to him. The whole creation must be in subjection to him: things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, the inhabitants of heaven and earth, the living and the dead. At the name of Jesus; not at the sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus; all should pay a solemn homage. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord--every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer, and that all power in heaven and earth is given to him, Mt 28:18. Observe the vast extent of the kingdom of Christ; it reaches to heaven and earth, and to all the creatures in each, to angels as well as men, and to the dead as well

as the living.--To the glory of God the Father. Observe, It is to the glory of God the Father to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, Joh 5:23. Whatever respect is paid to Christ redounds to the honour of the Father. He who receiveth me receiveth him who sent me, Mt 10:40.

11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shining as Lights in the World

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed. The Philippians had from the beginning manifested a remarkable readiness to show respect to the apostle, and to listen to his teaching. This readiness he more than once refers to and commends. He still appeals to them, and urges them to follow his counsels, that they might secure their salvation. Now much more in my absence. Though they had been obedient when he was with them, yet circumstances had occurred in his absence which made their obedience more remarkable, and more worthy of special commendation. Work out your own salvation. This important command was first addressed to Christians, but there is no reason why the same command should not be regarded as addressed to all--for it is equally applicable to all. The duty of doing this is enjoined here; the reason, for making the effort, or the encouragement for the effort, is stated in the next verse. In regard to the command here, it is natural to inquire why it is a duty, and what is necessary to be done in order to comply with it? On the first of these inquiries, it may be observed that it is a duty to make a personal effort to secure salvation, or to work out our salvation:

(1.) Because God commands it. There is no command more frequently repeated in the Scriptures, than the command to make to ourselves a new heart; to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to break off from sin, and to repent.

(2.) It is a duty because it is our own personal interest that is at stake. No other one has, or can have, as much interest in our salvation as we have. It is every man's duty to be as happy as possible here, and to be prepared for eternal happiness in the future world. No man has a right either to throw away his life or his soul. He has no more right to do the one than the other; and if it is a man's duty to endeavour to save his life when in danger of drowning, it is no less his duty to endeavour to save his soul when in danger of hell.

(3.) Our earthly friends cannot save us. No effort of theirs can deliver us from eternal death without our own exertion. Great as may be their solicitude for us, and much as they may do, there is a point where their efforts must stop--and that point is always short of our salvation, unless we are roused to seek salvation. They may pray, and weep, and plead, but they cannot save us. There is a work to be done on our own hearts which they cannot do.

(4.) It is a duty, because the salvation of the soul will not take care of itself without an effort on our part. There is no more reason to suppose this than that health and life will take care of themselves without our own exertion. And yet many live as if they supposed that somehow all would yet be well; that the matter of salvation need not give them any concern, for that things will so arrange themselves that they will be saved. Why should they suppose this any more in regard to religion than in regard to anything else?

(5.) It is a duty, because there is no reason to expect the Divine interposition without our own effort. No such interposition is promised to any man, and why should he expect it? In the case of all who have been saved, they have made an effort--and why should we expect that God will favour us more than he did them? "God helps them who help themselves;" and what reason has any man to suppose that he will interfere in his case and save him, if he will put forth no effort to "work out his own salvation?" In regard to the other inquiry --What does the command imply; or

what is necessary to be done in order to comply with it?--we may observe, that it does not mean

(1.) that we are to attempt to deserve salvation on the ground of merit. That is out of the question; for what can man do that shall be an equivalent for eternal happiness in heaven? Nor

(2.) does it mean that we are to endeavour to make atonement for past sins. That would be equally impossible--and it is, besides, unnecessary. That work has been done by the great Redeemer. But it means,

(1.) that we are to make an honest effort to be saved in the way which God has appointed;

(2.) that we are to break off from our sins by true repentance;

(3.) that we are to believe in the Saviour and honestly to put our trust in him;

(4.) that we are to give up all that we have to God;

(5.) that we are to break away from all evil companions and evil plans of life; and

(6.) that we are to resist all the allurements of the world, and all the temptations which may assault us that would lead us back from God, and are to persevere unto the end. The great difficulty in working out salvation is in forming a purpose to begin at once. When that purpose is formed, salvation is easy. With fear and trembling. That is, with that kind of anxiety which one has who feels that he has an important interest at stake, and that he is in danger of losing it. The reason or the ground for "fear" in this case is in general this: there is danger of losing the soul.

(1.) So many persons make ship wreck of all hope and perish, that there is danger that we may also.

(2.) There are so many temptations and allurements in the world, and so many things that lead us to defer attention to religion, that there is danger that we may be lost.

(3.) There is danger that if the present opportunity passes, another may not occur. Death may soon overtake us. No one has a moment to lose. No one can designate one single moment of his life, and say, "I may safely lose that moment. I may safely spend it in the neglect of my soul."

(4.) It should be done with the most earnest concern, from the immensity of the interest at stake. If the soul is lost, all is lost. And who is there that can estimate the value of that soul which is thus in danger of being lost for ever?

Observe here, 1. The commendation given by St. Paul of his beloved Philippians, for their cheerful obedience to the precepts of the gospel: they always obeyed, that is, ever since their first conversion to christianity, not only while the apostle was upon the spot with them, but since the providence of God necessitated his absence from them; not in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.
But how came it to pass that their obedience was greater, when they wanted the apostle for their instructor?

Ans. In the absence of one teacher they had another, and him a better that the inspired apostle, even the inspiring Spirit of God, who in the apostle's absence was more immediately present with them by his inward motions, to excite and enable them both to will and to do what is well pleasing to him.

O! how good is God at the supplying the wants, and making up the losses of his people! If persecution drives his church's ministers into dungeons, and they cannot hear a voice behind them, they shall have the presence of his Holy Spirit, and hear a voice within them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it.

Observe, 2. A special duty which St. Paul exhorts the Philippians to be found in the practice of, namely, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling; implying, that it should be every christian's great work to be daily working out his own salvation, that is, diligently making use of all means and faithfulness, practising all duties in order thereunto.

Note here, 1. The excellency of the object proposed; and that is, salvation: there is salvation held forth and tendered by God to lost sinners, in the gospel.

Note, 2. The difficulty of salvation, supposed and implied in the word work; which signifies an exerting our utmost endeavours, in order to the attaining of it. The work of salvation is no lazy man's business, but a work of labour and difficulty, though the difficulties may be overcome by an industrious diligence.

Note, 3. The necessity of perseverance, in order to our attaining of salvation: Work out your salvation, that is, perfect and consummate the work which you have happily begun.

Note, 4. The manner how we should work out our own salvation: namely, with fear and trembling; intimating, that an holy fear of God, and an humble fear of ourselves, will be of singular use and advantage to us in the working out of our salvation.

Observe, 3. The argument or motive to excite unto this labour and diligence in and about the work of salvation; and this is very encouraging, because God works with us, and in us, ver. 13. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.

That God works with us, is great encouragement to work; but we must remember God works arbitrarily, and not necessarily; he worketh but of his own good pleasure, as a free agent, who can cease when he pleases. Therefore work with fear and trembling.

Learn from the whole, 1. That we can do nothing without God.

2. That he will do nothing without his assistance, he will do nothing without the concurrence of our endeavours: he worketh in us both to will and to do, and we must work with him, in order to the working out of our salvation.

13 for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

He exhorts them to diligence and seriousness in the Christian course: Work out your own salvation. It is the salvation of our souls (1Pe 1:9), and our eternal salvation (Heb 5:9), and contains deliverance from all the evils sin had brought upon us and exposed us to, and the possession of all good and whatsoever is necessary to our complete and final happiness. Observe, It concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls: whatever becomes of other things, let us take care of our best interests. It is our own salvation, the salvation of our own souls. It is not for us to judge other people; we have enough to do to look to ourselves; and, though we must promote the common salvation (Jude 1:3) as much as we can, yet we must upon no account neglect our own. We are required to work out our salvation, katergazesthe. The word signifies working thoroughly at a thing, and taking true pains. Observe, We must be diligent in the use of all the means which conduce to our salvation. We must not only work at our salvation, by doing something now and then about it; but we must work out our salvation, by doing all that is to be done, and persevering therein to the end. Salvation is the great thing we should mind, and set our hearts upon; and we cannot attain salvation without the utmost care and diligence. He adds, With fear and trembling, that is, with great care and circumspection: "Trembling for fear lest you miscarry and come short. Be careful to do every thing in religion in the best manner, and fear lest under all your advantages you should so much as seem to come short," Heb 4:1. Fear is a great guard and preservative from evil.

II. He urges this from the consideration of their readiness always to obey the gospel: "As you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, Php 2:12. You

have been always willing to comply with every discovery of the will of God; and that in my absence as well as presence. You make it to appear that regard to Christ, and care of your souls, sway more with you than any mode of showing respect whatsoever." They were not merely awed by the apostle's presence, but did it even much more in his absence. "And because it is God who worketh in you, do you work out your salvation. Work, for he worketh." It should encourage us to do our utmost, because our labour shall not be in vain. God is ready to concur with his grace, and assist our faithful endeavours. Observe, Though we must use our utmost endeavours in working out our salvation, yet still we must go forth, and go on, in a dependence upon the grace of God. His grace works in us in a way suitable to our natures, and in concurrence with our endeavours; and the operations of God's grace in us are so far from excusing, that they are intended to quicken and engage our endeavours. "And work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for he worketh in you." All our working depends upon his working in us. "Do not trifle with God by neglects and delays, lest you provoke him to withdraw his help, and all your endeavours prove in vain. Work with fear, for he works of his good pleasure."--To will and to do: he gives the whole ability. It is the grace of God which inclines the will to that which is good: and then enables us to perform it, and to act according to our principles. Thou hast wrought all our works in us, Isa 26:12. Of his good pleasure. As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it, nor pretend to deserve it. God's good will to us is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagements to his creatures, but those of his gracious promise.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Among those of perverted sentiments and habits; those who are disposed to complain and find fault; those who will take every occasion to pervert what you do and say, and who seek every opportunity to

retard the cause of truth and righteousness. It is not certainly known to whom the apostle refers here, but it seems not improbable that he had particular reference to the Jews who were in Philippi. The language here used was employed by Moses De 32:6 as applicable to the Jewish people, and it is accurately descriptive of the character of the nation in the time of Paul. The Jews were among the most bitter foes of the gospel, and did perhaps more than any other people to embarrass the cause of truth, and prevent the spread of the true religion.

16 holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

Holding forth the word of life. That is, you are under obligation to hold forth the word of life. It is a duty incumbent on you as Christians to do it. The "word of life" means the gospel, called the "word of life" because it is the message that promises life; or perhaps this is a Hebraism, denoting the living, or life giving word. The gospel stands thus in contrast with all human systems of religions for they have no efficacy to save--and to the law which "killeth." Jn 6:63; 2Cor 3:6. The duty here enjoined is that of making the gospel known to others, and of thus keeping up the knowledge of it in the world. This duty rests on Christians, Mt 5:14,16, and they cannot escape from the obligation. They axe bound to do this, not only because God commands it, but

(1.) because they are called into the church that they may be witnesses for God, Isa 43:10.

(2.) Because they are kept on the earth for that purpose. If it were not for some such design, they would be removed to heaven at once on their conversion.

(3.) Because there are no others to do it. The gay will not warn the gay, nor the proud the proud, nor the scoffer the scoffer. The thoughtless and the vain will not go and tell others that there is a God and a Saviour; nor will the wicked warn the wicked, and tell them that they are in the way to hell. There are none who will do this but Christians; and, if they neglect it, sinners will go unwarned and unalarmed down to death. This duty rests on every Christian.

The exhortation here is not made to the pastor, or to any officer of the church particularly; but to the mass of communicants. They are to shine as lights in the world; they are to hold forth the word of life. There is not one member of a church who is so obscure as to be exempt from the obligation; and there is not one who may not do something in this work. If we are asked how this may be done, we may reply,

(1.) they are to do it by example. Every one is to hold forth the living word in that way.

(2.) By efforts to send the gospel to those who have it not. There is almost no one who cannot contribute something, though it may be but two mites, to accomplish this.

(3.) By conversation. There is no Christian who has not some influence over the minds and hearts of others; and he is bound to use that influence in holding forth the word of life.

(4.) By defending the Divine origin of religion when attacked.

(5.) By rebuking sin, and thus testifying to the value of holiness. The defence of the truth, under God, and the diffusion of a knowledge of the way of salvation, rests on those who are Christians. Paganism never originates a system which it would not be an advantage to the world to have destroyed as soon as it is conceived. Philosophy has never yet told of a way by which a sinner may be saved. The world at large devises no plan for the salvation of the soul. The most crude, ill-digested, and perverse systems of belief conceivable, prevail in the community called "the world." Every form of opinion has an advocate there; every monstrous vagary that the human mind ever conceived finds friends and defenders there. The human mind has of itself no elastic energy to bring it from the ways of sin; it has no recuperative power to lead it back to God. The world at large is dependant on the church for any just views of God, and of the way of salvation; and every Christian is to do his part in making that salvation known.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your
faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Behold here now St. Paul, the undershepherd, imitates Christ, that great and good Shepherd, in his readiness to lay down his life for the sheep; not for their reconciliation, but for their confirmation: If, says he, it shall please God that I be, by martyrdom, offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith; that is, to establish you in the faith which I have taught you, and to confirm and seal the truth of it with my blood, I will rejoice therein for your sakes; and I desire you to rejoice with me, and to bless God for me in so doing.

Note here, The emphasis and elegancy of the apostle's words, If I be offered up: a manifest allusion to the Jewish sacrifices, in which there was wine poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice, and then offered up to God. Thus, says he, if my blood, like wine, be poured forth, whilst I am employed by the preaching of the gospel to render you Gentiles an acceptable sacrifice, and a sweet-smelling savour unto God, I should rejoice even thus to die in your service, and for the confirmation of your faith.

Hence learn, That life itself is not, and will not be thought too dear, or accounted by the ministers of Christ too much, to lay down in the service of their people's souls, and for the confirmation of their faith: If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice.

Learn, 2. That the ministers of Christ should not preach any thing to their people, but what they dare seal and confirm the truth of, with their very blood, if God calls them thereunto. St. Paul had before preached the doctrine of the gospel to the Philippians, and now he stood ready to seal it with his blood.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that
I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

For all seek their own. That is, all who are with me. Who Paul had with him at this time is not fully known, but he doubtless means that this remark should apply to the mass of Christians and Christian ministers then in Rome. Perhaps he had proposed to some of them to go and visit the church at Philippi, and they had declined it because of the distance and the dangers of the way. When the trial of Paul came on before the emperor, all who were with him in Rome fled from him, 2Ti 4:16; and it is possible that the same disregard of his wishes and his welfare had already begun to manifest itself among the Christians who were at Rome, so that he was constrained to say that, as a general thing, they sought their own ease and comfort, and were unwilling to deny themselves in order to promote the happiness of those who lived in the remote parts of the world. Let us not be harsh in judging them. How many professing Christians in our cities and towns are there now who would be willing to leave their business and their comfortable homes, and go on an embassy like this to Philippi? How many are there who would not seek some excuse, and show that it was a characteristic that they "sought their own" rather than the things which pertained to the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Which pertain to his cause and kingdom. They are not willing to practise self-denial in order to promote that cause. It is implied here,

(1.) that it is the duty of those who profess religion to seek the things which pertain to the kingdom of the Redeemer, or to make that the great and leading object of their lives. They are bound to be willing to sacrifice "their own" things--to deny themselves of ease, and to be always ready to expose themselves to peril and want if they may be the means of advancing his cause.

(2.) That frequently this is not done by those who profess religion. It was the case with the professed Christians at Rome, and it is often the case in the churches now. There are few Christians who deny themselves much to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer; few who are willing to lay aside what they regard as "their own" in order to advance his cause. Men live for their own ease; for their families;

for the prosecution of their own business--as if a Christian could have anything which he has a right to pursue independently of the kingdom of the Redeemer, and without regard to his will and glory.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.
22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.
23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.
24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.
25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.
26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.
27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death. Dr. Paley has remarked (Hor. Paul. on Phil. No. ii.) that the account of the sickness and recovery of Epaphroditus is such as to lead us to suppose that he was not restored by miracle; and he infers that the power of healing the sick was conferred on the apostles only occasionally, and did not depend at all on their will, since, if it had, there is every reason to suppose that Paul would at once have restored him to health. This account, he adds, shows also that this epistle is not the work of an impostor. Had it been, a miracle would not have been spared. Paul would not have been introduced as showing such anxiety about a friend lying at the point of death, and as being unable to restore him. It would have been said that he interposed at once, and raised him up to health.

On me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. In addition to all the sorrows of imprisonment, and the prospect of a trial, and the want of friends. The sources of his sorrow, had Epaphroditus died, would have been such as these:

(1.) He would have lost a valued friend, and one whom he esteemed as a brother and worthy fellow-labourer.

(2.) He would have felt that the church at Philippi had lost a valuable member.

(3.) His grief might have been aggravated from the consideration that his life had been lost in endeavouring to do him good. He would have felt that he was the occasion, though innocent, of his exposure to danger.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again,
ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.
29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such
in reputation:
30 because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not
regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Let us learn, from the interesting narrative respecting Epaphroditus at the close of this chapter, to live and act as becomes Christians in every situation in life, Php 2:25-30. It was much to have the praise of an apostle, and to be commended for his Christian conduct, as this stranger in Rome was. He went there, not to view the wonders of the imperial city, and not to run the rounds of giddy pleasure there, but to perform an important duty of religion. While there he became sick--not by indulgence in pleasures; not as the result of feasting and revelry, but in the work of Christ. In a strange city, far from home, amidst the rich, the great, the gay; in a place where theatres opened their doors, and where places of amusement abounded, he led a life which an apostle could commend as pure. There is nothing more difficult for a Christian than to maintain an irreproachable walk when away from the usual restraints and influences that serve to keep him in the paths of piety, and when surrounded with the fascinations and allurements of a great and wicked city.

Philippians-3

Pressing toward the Mark

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to
you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe.

Verse 1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. That is in the Lord Jesus. Php 3:3, Acts 1:24, and 1Thes 5:16. The idea here is, that it is the duty of Christians to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. This duty implies the following things.

(1.) They should rejoice that they have such a Saviour. Men everywhere have felt the need of a Saviour, and to us it should be a subject of unfeigned joy that one has been provided for us. When we think of our sins, we may now rejoice that there is One who can deliver us from them; when we think of the worth of tile soul, we may rejoice that there is One who can save it from death; when we think of our danger, we can rejoice that there is One who can rescue us from all peril, and bring us to a world where we shall be forever safe.

(2.) We may rejoice that we have such a Saviour. He is just such as we need. He accomplishes just what we want a Saviour to do. We need one to make known to us a way of pardon, and he does it. We need one to make an atonement for sin, and he does it. We need one to give us peace from a troubled conscience, and he does it. We need one to support us in trials and bereavements, and he does it. We need one who can comfort us on the bed of death, and guide us through the dark valley, and the Lord Jesus is just what we want. When we look at his character, it is just such as it should be to win our hearts, and to make us love him; and when we look at what he has done, we see that he has accomplished all that we can desire, and why should we not rejoice?

(3.) We may and should rejoice in him. The principal joy of the true Christian should be in the Lord. He should find his happiness not in riches, or gaiety, or vanity, or ambition, or books, or in the world in any form, but in communion with the Lord Jesus, and in the hope of eternal life through him. In his friendship, and in his service, should be the highest of our joys, and in these we may always be happy. It is the privilege, therefore, of a Christian to rejoice. He has more sources of joy than any other man--sources which do not fail when all others fail. Religion is not sadness or melancholy, it is joy; and the Christian should never leave the

impression on others that his religion makes him either gloomy or morose. A cheerful countenance, an eye of benignity, a conversation pleasant and kind, should always evince the joy of his heart, and in all his intercourse with the world around him he should show that his heart is full of joy.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Beware of dogs. Dogs in the east are mostly without masters; they wander at large in the streets and fields, and feed upon offals, and even upon corpses. Comp. 1Kgs 14:11, 16:4, 21:19. They are held as unclean, and to call one a dog is a much stronger expression of contempt there than with us, 1Sam 17:43, 2Kgs 8:13. The Jews called the heathen dogs, and the Mohammedans call Jews and Christians by the same name. The term dog also is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, and is evidently so employed here. It is possible that the language used here may have been derived from some custom of affixing a caution on a house that was guarded by a dog to persons approaching it. L'Enfant remarks that at Rome it was common for a dog to lie chained before the door of a house, and that a notice was placed in sight, "Beware of the dog." The same notice I have seen in this city affixed to the kennel of dogs in front of a bank, that were appointed to guard it. The reference here is, doubtless, to Judaizing teachers; and the idea is, that they were contentious, troublesome, dissatisfied, and would produce disturbance. The strong language which the apostle uses here shows the sense which he had of the danger arising from their influence. It may be observed, however, that the term dogs is used in ancient writings with great frequency, and even by the most grave speakers. It is employed by the most dignified characters in the Iliad, (Bloomfield;) and the name was given to a whole class of Greek philosophers--the Cynics. It is used in one instance by the Saviour, Mt 7:6. By the use of the term here, there can be no doubt that the apostle meant to express strong disapprobation of the character and course of the persons referred to, and to warn the Philippians in the most solemn mariner against them. Beware of evil workers. Referring, doubtless, to the same persons that he had characterized as dogs. The reference is to Jewish teachers, whose doctrines and influence he regarded only as evil. We do not know

what was the nature of their teaching, but we may presume that it consisted much in urging the obligations of the Jewish rites and ceremonies; in speaking of the advantage of having been born Jews; and in urging a compliance with the law in order to justification before God. In this way their teachings tended to set aside the great doctrine of salvation by the merits of the Redeemer. Beware of the concision. Referring, doubtless, also to the Jewish teachers. The word rendered concision κατατομη-- means, properly, a cutting off, a mutilation, it is used here contemptuously for the Jewish circumcision, in contrast with the true circumcision. Robinson, Lex. It is not to be understood that Paul meant to throw contempt on circumcision as enjoined by God, and as practised by the pious Jews of other times, Acts 16:3, but only as it was held by the false Judaizing teachers. As they held it, it was not the true circumcision. They made salvation to depend on it, instead of its being only a sign of the covenant with God. Such a doctrine, as they held it, was a mere cutting off of the flesh, without understanding anything of the true nature of the rite; and hence the unusual term by which he designates it. Perhaps, also, there may be included the idea that a doctrine so held would be, in fact, a cutting off of the soul; that is, that it tended to destruction. Their cutting and mangling the flesh might be regarded as an emblem of the manner in which their doctrine would cut and mangle the church. Doddridge. The meaning of the whole is, that they did not understand the true nature of the doctrine of circumcision, but that with them it was a mere cutting of the flesh, and tended to destroy the church.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

For we are the circumcision. We who are Christians. We have and hold the true doctrine of circumcision. We have that which was intended to secure this rites for we are led to renounce the flesh, and to worship God in the spirit. The apostle, in this verse, teaches that the ordinance of circumcision was not designed to be a mere outward ceremony, but was intended to be emblematic of the renunciation of the flesh with its corrupt propensities, and to lead to the pure and spiritual worship of God. In this he has undoubtedly

stated its true design. They who now urged it as necessary to salvation, and who made salvation depend on its mere outward observance, had lost sight of this object of the rite. But this, the real design of circumcision, was attained by those who had been led to renounce the flesh, and who had devoted themselves to the worship of God. Rom 2:28, Rom 2:29. Which worship God in the spirit. Jn 4:24. Comp. Gen 17:10-14. And rejoice in Christ Jesus. See Php 4:1. That is, we have, through him, renounced the flesh; we have become the true worshippers of God, and have thus attained what was originally contemplated by circumcision, and by all the other rites of religion. And have no confidence in the flesh. In our own corrupt nature; or in any ordinances that relate merely to the flesh. We do not depend on circumcision for salvation, or on any external rites and forms whatever --on any advantage of rank, or blood. The word "flesh" here seems to refer to every advantage which any may have of birth; to any external conformity to the law, and to everything which unaided human nature can do to effect salvation. On none of these things can we put reliance for salvation; none of them will constitute a ground of hope.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man
thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:
5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of
Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a
Pharisee;
6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness
which is in the law, blameless.

Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. So far as the righteousness which can be obtained by obeying the law is concerned, it is not needful to suppose here that he refers merely to the ceremonial law; but the meaning is, that he did all that could be done to obtain salvation by the mere observance of law. It was supposed by the Jews, and especially by the Pharisees, to which sect he belonged, that it was possible to be saved in that way; and Paul says that he had done all that was supposed to be necessary for that. We are not to imagine that, when he penned this declaration, he meant to be understood as saying that he had wholly complied with the law of God; but that, before his conversion, he supposed that he had done all that was necessary

to be done in order to be saved by the observance of law. He neglected no duty that he understood it to enjoin. He was not guilty of deliberately violating it. He led a moral and strictly upright life, and no one had occasion to "blame" or to accuse him as a violator of the law of God. There is every reason to believe that Paul, before his conversion, was a young man of correct deportment, of upright life, of entire integrity; and that he was free from the indulgences of vice and passion, into which young men often fall. In all that he ever says of himself as being "the chief of sinners," and as being "unworthy to be called an apostle," he never gives the least intimation that his early life was stained by vice, or corrupted by licentious passions. On the contrary, we are left to the fair presumption that, if any man could be saved by his own works, he was that man. This fact should be allowed to make its proper impression on those who are seeking salvation in the same way; and they should be willing to inquire whether they may not be deceived in the matter, as he was, and whether they are not in as much real danger in depending on their own righteousness, as was this most upright and zealous young man.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

But what things were gain to me. The advantages of birth, of education, and of external conformity to the law. "I thought these to be gain--that is, to be of vast advantage in the matter of salvation. I valued myself on these things, and supposed that I was rich in all that pertained to moral character and to religion." Perhaps, also, he refers to these things as laying the foundation of a hope of future advancement in honour and in wealth in this world. They commended him to the rulers of the nation; they opened before him a brilliant prospect of distinction; they made it certain that he could rise to posts of honour and of office, and could easily gratify all the aspirings of his ambition. Those I counted loss. "I now regard them all as so much loss. They were really a disadvantage--a hindrance--an injury. I look upon them not as gain or an advantage, but as an obstacle to my salvation." He had relied on them. He had been led by these things to an improper estimate of his own character, and he had been thus hindered from embracing the true religion, lie says, therefore, that he now renounced all dependence on them; that he esteemed them not as contributing to his salvation, but, so

far as any reliance should be placed on them, as in fact so much loss.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss. Not only those things which he had just specified, and which he had himself possessed, he says he would be willing to renounce in order to obtain an interest in the Saviour, but everything which could be imagined. Were all the wealth and honour which could be conceived of his, we would be willing to renounce them in order that he might obtain the knowledge of the Redeemer. He would be a gainer who should sacrifice everything in order to win Christ. Paul had not only acted on this principle when he became a Christian, but had ever afterwards continued to be ready to give up everything in order that he might obtain an interest in the Saviour. He uses here the same word ζημιαν,--which he does in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 27:21, when speaking of the loss which had been sustained by loosing from Crete, contrary to his advice, on the voyage to Rome. The idea here seems to be, "What I might obtain, or did possess, I regard as loss in comparison with the knowledge of Christ, even as seamen do the goods on which they set a high value, in comparison with their lives. Valuable as they may be, they are willing to throw them all overboard in order to save themselves." Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things. Paul, when he became a Christian, gave up his brilliant prospects in regard to this life, and everything indeed on which his heart had been placed. He abandoned the hope of honour and distinction; he sacrificed every prospect of gain or ease; and he gave up his dearest friends, and separated himself from those whom he tenderly loved. He might have risen to the highest posts of honour in his native land, and the path which an ambitious young man desires was fully open before him. But all this had been cheerfully sacrificed in order that he might obtain an interest in the Saviour,

and partake of the blessings of his religion, he has not, indeed, informed us of the exact extent of his loss in becoming a Christian. It is by no means improbable that he had been excommunicated by the Jews; and that he had been disowned by his own family. And do count them but dung. The word here used--σκυβαλον--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, dregs, refuse; what is thrown away as worthless; chaff, offal, or the refuse of a table or of slaughtered animals; and then filth of any kind. No language could express a more deep sense of the utter worthlessness of all that external advantages could confer in the matter of salvation. In the question, of justification before God, all reliance on birth, and blood, and external morality, and forms of religion, and prayers, and alms, is to be renounced, and, in comparison with the merits of the great Redeemer, to be esteemed as vile. Such were Paul's views; and we may remark, that if this was so in his case, it should be in ours. Such things can no more avail for our salvation than they could for his. We can no more be justified by them than he could. Nor will they do anything more in our case to commend us to God than they did in his.

Not having mine own righteousness. That is, not relying on that for salvation. This was now the great aim of Paul, that it might be found at last that he was not trusting to his own merits, but to those of the Lord Jesus. Which is of the law. Rom 10:3. The "righteousness which is of the law" is that which could be obtained by conformity to the precepts of the Jewish religion, such as Paul had endeavoured to obtain before he became a Christian. He now saw that no one complied perfectly with the holy law of God, and that all dependence on such a righteousness was vain. All men by nature seek salvation by the law. They set up some standard which they mean to comply with, and expect to be saved by conformity to that. With some it is the law of honour, with others the laws of honesty, with others the laws of kindness and courtesy, and with others the law of God. If they comply with the requirements of these laws, they suppose that they will be safe; and it is only the grace of God showing them how defective their standard is, or how far they come from complying with its demands, that can ever bring them from this dangerous

dependence. Paul in early life depended on his compliance with the laws of God as he understood them, and supposed that he was safe. When he was brought to realize his true condition, he saw how far short he had come of what the law of God required, and that all dependence on his own works was vain. But that which is through the faith of Christ. That justification which is obtained by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 1:17; Rom 3:24; Rom 4:5. Righteousness which is of God by faith. Which proceeds from God, or of which he is the great Source and Fountain. This may include the following things:

(1.) God is the author of pardon--and this is a part of the righteousness which the man who is justified has.

(2.) God purposes to treat the justified sinner as if he had not sinned--and thus his righteousness is of God.

(3.) God is the source of all the grace that will be imparted to the soul, making it really holy. In this way, all the righteousness which the Christian has is "of God." The idea of Paul is, that he now saw that it was far more desirable to be saved by righteousness obtained from God than by his own. That obtained from God was perfect, and glorious, and sufficient; that which he had attempted to work out was defective, impure, and wholly insufficient to save the soul. It is far more honourable to be saved by God than to save ourselves; it is more glorious to depend on him than to depend on anything that we can do.

9 and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is
of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the
righteousness which is of God by faith:
10 that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the
fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his
death;

That I may know him. That I may be fully acquainted with his nature, his character, his work, and with the salvation which he has wrought out. It is one of the highest objects of desire in the mind of the Christian to know Christ. Eph 3:19. And the power of his resurrection. That is, that I may understand and experience the

proper influence which the fact of his resurrection should have on the mind. That influence would be felt in imparting the hope of immortality; in sustaining the soul in the prospect of death, by the expectation of being raised from the grave in like manner; and in raising the mind above the world, Rom 6:11. There is no one truth that will have greater power over us, when properly believed, than the truth that Christ has risen from the dead. His resurrection confirms the truth of the Christian religion, 1Cor 15:11; makes it certain that there is a future state, and that the dead will also rise; dispels the darkness that was around the grave, and shows us that our great interests are in the future world. The fact that Christ has risen from the dead, when fully believed, will produce a sure hope that we also shall be raised, and will animate us to bear trials for his sake, with the assurance that we shall be raised up as he was. One of the things which a Christian ought most earnestly to desire is, to feel the power of this truth on his soul--that his great Redeemer has burst the bands of death; has brought life and immortality to light, and has given us the pledge that our bodies shall rise. What trials may we not bear with this assurance? What is to be dreaded in death, if this is so? What glories rise to the view when we think of the resurrection! And what trifles are all the things which men seek here, when compared with the glory that shall be ours when we shah be raised from the dead! And the fellowship of his sufferings. That I may participate in the same kind of sufferings that he endured; that is, that I may in all things be identified with him. Paul wished to be just like his Saviour. He felt that it was an honour to live as he did; to evince the spirit that he did, and to suffer in the same manner. All that Christ did and suffered was glorious in his view, and he wished in all things to resemble him. He did not desire merely to share his honours and triumphs in heaven, but, regarding his whole work as glorious, he wished to be wholly conformed to that, and, as far as possible, to be just like Christ. Many are willing to reign with Christ, but they would not be willing to suffer with him; many would be willing to wear a crown of glory like him, but not the crown of thorns; many would be willing to put on the robes of splendour which will be worn in heaven, but not the scarlet robe of contempt and mockery. They would desire to share the glories and triumphs of redemption,

but not its poverty, contempt, and persecution. This was not the feeling of Paul. He wished in all things to be just like Christ, and hence he counted it an honour to be permitted to suffer as he did. So Peter says, "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," 1Pet 4:13. So Paul says Col 1:24that he rejoiced in his sufferings in behalf of his brethren, and desired "to fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ," or that in which he had hitherto come short of the afflictions which Christ endured. The idea is, that it is an honour to suffer as Christ suffered; and that the true Christian will esteem it a privilege to be made just like him, not only in glory, but in trial. To do this is one evidence of piety; and we may ask ourselves, therefore, whether these are the feelings of our hearts. Are we seeking merely the honours of heaven, or should we esteem it a privilege to be reproached and reviled, as Christ was--to have our names cast out, as his was--to be made the object of sport and derision, as he was--and to be held up to the contempt of a world, as he was? If so, it is an evidence that we love him; if not so, and we are merely seeking the crown of glory, we should doubt whether we have ever known anything of the nature of true religion. Being made conformable to his death. In all things, being just like Christ---to live as he did, and to die as he did. There can be no doubt that Paul means to say that he esteemed it so desirable to be just like Christ, that he would regard it as an honour to die in the same manner. He would rejoice to go with him to the cross, and to pass through the circumstances of scorn and pain which attended such a death. Yet how few there are who would be willing to die as Christ died, and how little would the mass of men regard it as a privilege and honour! Indeed, it requires an elevated state of pious feeling to be able to say that it would be regarded as a privilege and honour to die like Christ; to have such a sense of the loveliness of his character in all things, and such ardent attachment to him, as to rejoice in the opportunity of dying as he did! When we think of dying, we wish to have our departure made as comfortable as possible. We would have our sun go down without a cloud. We would wish to lie on a bed of down; we would have our head sustained by the kind arm of a friend, and not left to fall, in the intensity of sufferring, on the breast; we would wish to have the place where we die surrounded by sympathizing kindred,

and not by those who would mock our dying agonies. And, if such is the will of God, it is not improper to desire that our end may be peaceful and happy; but we should also feel, if God should order it otherwise that it would be an honour, in the cause of the Redeemer, to die amidst reproaches--to be led to the stake, as the martyrs have been--or to die, as our Master did, on a cross. They who are most like him in the scenes of humiliation here, will be most like him in the realms of glory.

By the resurrection of the dead, here, is not to be understood the general resurrection, for all men shall attain to that, whether they strive for it or no; but he intends that complete holiness, and absolute perfection in grace, which shall attend the state of the resurrection; so he explains it himself in the next verse, Not that I have already attained, &c. or am already perfect; and he shows how diligent he was in endeavouring, in the use of all possible means, to arrive at it, and attain unto it.

Learn, That the glorious resurrection of the just, or grace consummated in glory, is attainable, and deserves and requires the utmost care and diligence of the most holy and zealous Christians to be exerted and put forth, in order to the attaining of it: If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.

11 if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect:
but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am
apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Our apostle here compares himself to a person running in a race; the prize which he did contend and run for, was, perfection in grace. The highest degree of which, in this life, consists in a desire and endeavour to obtain the largest measures and fullest degrees of holiness, that are here attainable: the manner how he ran for this prize, he tells us, was by looking forward, not backward; he did not look back to the things which he had left behind, namely, to the privileges of Judaism, nor to his past performances; but, like a racer, kept himself continually upon the stretch, with his eye fixed firmly upon the prize at the end of the goal, that he might lay hold upon it, and be crowned with it.

Note, Christianity is a race; every Christian in this life must run this race; in his running he must look forward, and not backward, not reckon how much of the way is past, but make the best of the way to come: he must keep heaven, as the mark and prize he runs for, continually in his eye, to hearten him on against all hardships and discouragements whatsoever; and in a word, must be apprehended before he can apprehend. St. Paul was apprehended by Christ, and caught hold of by him, whin he fled from him, otherwise he had never apprehended: Christ takes hold on us, before we have any desire to lay hold on him; we move as moved of him, and assisted of him.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. That is, to have obtained that for which I have been called into the service of the Redeemer. There is something which I strive after which I have not yet gained. This statement is a confirmation of the opinion that in the previous verse, where he says that he was not "already perfect," he includes a moral perfection, and not merely the obtainment of the prize or reward; for no one could suppose that he meant to be understood as saying that he had obtained the crown of glory. This one thing I do. Paul had one great aim and purpose of life. He did not attempt to mingle the world and religion, and to gain both. He did not seek to obtain wealth and salvation too; or honour here and the crown of glory hereafter; but he had one object, one aim, one great purpose of soul. To this singleness of purpose he owed his extraordinary attainments in piety, and his uncommon success as a minister. A man will accomplish little who allows his mind to be distracted by a multiplicity of objects. A Christian will accomplish nothing who has not a single great aim and purpose of soul. That purpose should be to secure the prize, and to renounce everything that would be in the way to its attainment. Let us, then, so live that we may be able to say, that there is one great object which we always have in view, and that we mean to avoid everything which would interfere with that. Forgetting those things which are behind.

There is an allusion here undoubtedly to the Grecian races. One running to secure the prize would not stop to look behind him to see how much ground he had run over, or who of his competitors had fallen or lingered in the way. He would keep his eye steadily on the prize, and strain every nerve that he might obtain it. If his attention was diverted for a moment from that, it would hinder his flight, and might be the means of his losing the crown. See cut on page 249. So the apostle says it was with him. He looked onward to the prize. He fixed the eye intently on that. It was the single object in his view, and he did not allow his mind to be diverted from that by anything--not even by the contemplation of the past. He did not stop to think of the difficulties which he had overcome, or the troubles which he had met, but he thought of what was yet to be accomplished. This does not mean that he would not have regarded a proper contemplation of the past life as useful and profitable for a Christian, (Eph 2:11,) but that he would not allow any reference to the past to interfere with the one great effort to win the prize. It may be, and is, profitable for a Christian to look over the past mercies of God to his soul, in order to awaken emotions of gratitude in the heart, and to think of his shortcomings and errors, to produce penitence and humility. But none of these things should be allowed, for one moment, to divert the mind from the purpose to win the incorruptible crown. And it may be remarked in general, that a Christian will make more rapid advances in piety by looking forward than by looking backward. Forward, we see everything to cheer and animate us--the crown of victory, the joys of heaven, the society of the blessed-- the Saviour beckoning to us, and encouraging us. Backward, we see everything to dishearten and to humble. Our own unfaithfulness; our coldness, deadness, and dulness; the little zeal and ardour which we have, all are fitted to humble and discourage. He is the most cheerful Christian who looks onward, and who keeps heaven always in view. He who is accustomed much to dwell on fine past, though he may be a true Christian, will be likely to be melancholy and dispirited, to be a recluse rather than a warm-hearted and active friend of the Saviour. Or if he looks backward to contemplate what he has done--the space that he has run over --the difficulties which he has surmounted--and his own rapidity in the race, he will be likely to

become self-complacent and self-satisfied. He will trust in his past endeavours, and feel that the prize is now secure, and will relax his future efforts. Let us, then, look onward. Let us not spend our time either in pondering the gloomy past, and our own unfaithfulness, or in thinking of what we have done, and thus becoming puffed up with self-complacency; but let us keep the eye steadily on the prize, and run the race as though we had just commenced it. And reaching forth. As one does in a race. Unto those things which are before. Before the racer there was a crown or garland to be bestowed by the judges of the games. Before the Christian there is the crown of glory, the eternal reward of heaven. There is the favour of God, victory over sin and death, the society of the redeemed and of angelic beings, and the assurance of perfect and eternal freedom from all evil. These are enough to animate the soul, and to urge it on with ever-increasing rigour in the Christian race.

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Of the high calling of God. Which is the end or result of that calling. God has called us to great and noble efforts; to a career of true honour and glory; to the obtainment of a bright and imperishable crown. It is a calling which is "high," or upward ανω--that is, which tends to the skies. The calling of the Christian is from heaven, and to heaven. Comp. Prov 15:24, He has been summoned by God, through the gospel of the Lord Jesus, to secure the crown. It is placed before and above him in heaven. It may he his, if he will not faint or tire, or look backward. It demands his highest efforts, and it is worth all the exertions which a mortal can make even in the longest life.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Let as many as be perfect, that is, grown Christians, instructed thoroughly in their Christian duty, who, compared with others, may be called perfect, be thus minded, as I am, namely, to believe the circumcision of the flesh abolished, and that no confidence is to be placed in any righteousness of our own, but in the righteousness which is of God by faith only; and if any, seduced by the judaizing teachers, be otherwise minded, and think that the ceremonial law is not abrogated, nor the practice of circumcision abolished, God

in his due time will show them their error, and convince them, that none of those things are now necessary for the obtaining of his favour.
Nevertheless, in the mean time, he exhorts all persons, according to the measures of light and knowledge which they had received, to walk according to the rule of the Scriptures, preserving mutual love, and avoiding further rents and divisions.

Observe here, That in the first and best age of the Christian church, there was, and we cannot expect but there ever will be, a variety of opinions and differences in judgment amongst the members thereof.

Observe, 2. That in this case of unavoidable differences amongst good men, there ought to be mutual charity and meekness, moderation and forbearance, no censorious judging of each other, but look first at what is wanting in ourselves and next at what is useful in others: the one will make us humble, the other charitable; and both peaceable.

And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded. That is, if there were any among them who had not these elevated views and aims, and who had not been brought to sec the necessity of such efforts, or who had not learned that such high attainments were possible. There might be those among them who had been very imperfectly instructed in the nature of religion; those who entertained views which impeded their progress, and prevented the simple and earnest striving for salvation which Paul was enabled to put forth. He had laid aside every obstacle; renounced all the Jewish opinions which had impeded his salvation, and had now one single aim--that of securing the prize. But there might be those who had not attained to these views, and who were still impeded and embarrassed by erroneous opinions. God shall reveal even this unto you. He will correct your erroneous opinions, and disclose to you the importance of making this effort for the prize. This is the expression of an opinion, that to those who were sincere and true Christians, God would yet make a full revelation of the nature of religion, or would lead them on so that they would fully understand

it. They who are acquainted with religion at all, or who have been truly converted, God will teach and guide until they shall have a full understanding of divine things.

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. This is a most wise and valuable rule, and a rule that would save much difficulty and contention in the church, if it were honestly applied. The meaning is this--that though there might be different degrees of attainment among Christians, and different views on many subjects, yet there were points in which all could agree; there were attainments which they all had made, and in reference to them they should walk in harmony and love. It might be that some had made much greater advances than others. They had more elevated views of religion; they had higher knowledge; they were nearer perfection. Others had had less advantages of education and instruction, had had fewer opportunities of making progress in the divine life, and would less understand the higher mysteries of the Christian life. They might not see the truth or propriety of many things which those in advance of them would see clearly. But it was not worth while to quarrel about these things. There should be no angry feeling, and no fault-finding on either side. There were many things in which they could see alike, and where there were no jarring sentiments. In those things they could walk harmoniously; and they who were in advance of others should not complain of their less informed brethren as lacking all evidence of piety; nor should those who had not made such advances complain of those before them as fanatical, or as disposed to push things to extremes. They who had the higher views should, as Paul did, believe that God will yet communicate them to the church at large, and in the mean time should not denounce others; and those who had less elevated attainments should not censure their brethren as wild and visionary. There were common grounds on which they might unite, and thus the harmony of the church would be secured. No better rule than this could be applied to the subjects of inquiry which spring up among Christians respecting temperance, slavery, moral reform, and the various doctrines of religion; and, if this rule had been always observed, the church would have been always saved from harsh contention and from schism. If a man does not

see things just as I do, let me try with mildness to "teach" him, and let me believe that if he is a Christian, God will make this known to him yet; but let me not quarrel with him, for neither of us would be benefited by that, nor would the object be likely to be attained. In the mean time, there are many things in which we can agree. In them let us work together, and strive, as far as we can, to promote the common object. Thus we shall save our temper, give no occasion to the world to reproach us, and be much more likely to come together in all our views. The best way to make true Christians harmonious is, to labour together in the common cause of saving souls. As far as we can agree, let us go and labour together; and where we cannot yet, let us "agree to differ." We shall all think alike by-and-by.

16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the
same rule, let us mind the same thing.

17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk
so as ye have us for an ensample.

And mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. There were those in the church who endeavoured to live as he had done, renouncing all confidence ill the flesh, and aiming to win the prize. There were others, it would seem, who were actuated by different views. See Php 3:18. There are usually two kinds of professing Christians in every church--those who imitate the Saviour, and those who are worldly and vain. The exhortation here is, to "mark"--that is, to observe with a view to imitate--those who lived as the apostles did. We should set before our minds the best examples, and endeavour to imitate the most holy men. A worldly and fashionable professor of religion is a very bad example to follow; and, especially, young Christians should set before their minds for imitation, and associate with, the purest and most spiritual members of the church. Our religion takes its form and complexion much from those with whom we associate; and he will usually be the most holy man who associates with the most holy companions.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you
even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

For many walk. Many live, the Christian life being often in the Scriptures compared with a journey. In order to induce them to imitate those who were the most holy, the apostle says that there

were many, even in the church, whom it would not be safe for them to imitate. He evidently here refers mainly to the church at Philippi, though it may be that he meant to make the declaration general, and to say that the same thing existed in other churches. There has not probably been any time yet in the Christian church when the same thing might not be said. Of whom I have told you often. When he preached in Philippi. Paul was not afraid to speak of church-members when they did wrong, and to warn others not to imitate their example. He did not attempt to cover up or excuse guilt because it was in the church, or to apologize for the defects and errors of those who professed to be Christians. The true way is, to admit that there are those in the church who do not honour their religion, and to warn others against following their example. But this fact does not make religion any the less true or valuable, any more than the fact that there is counterfeit money makes all money bad, or makes genuine coin of no value. And now tell you even weeping. This is the true spirit with which to speak of the errors and faults of Christians. It is not to go and blazon their inconsistencies abroad. It is not to find pleasure in the fact that they are inconsistent. It is not to reproach religion on that account, and to say that all religion is false and hollow, and that all professors are hypocrites. We should rather speak of the fact with tears; for, if there is any thing that should make us weep, it is, that there are those in the church who are hypocrites, or who dishonour their profession. We should weep,

(1.) because they are in danger of destroying their own souls;

(2.) because they are destined to certain disappointment when they come to appear before God; and

(3.) because they injure the cause of religion, and give occasion to the "enemies of the Lord to speak reproachfully." He who loves religion will weep over the inconsistencies of its friends; he who does not will exult and triumph. That they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. The "cross" was the instrument of death on which the Redeemer died to make atonement for sin. As the atonement made by Christ for sin is that which peculiarly distinguishes his

religion from all others, the "cross" comes to be used to denote his religion; and the phrase here means, that they were the enemies of his religion, or were strangers to the gospel. It is not to be supposed that they were open and avowed enemies of the cross or that they denied that the Lord Jesus died on the cross to make an atonement. The characteristic of those persons mentioned in tile following verse is, rather, that they were living in a manner which showed that they were strangers to his pure gospel. An immoral life is enmity to the cross of Christ; for he died to make us holy. A life where there is no evidence that the heart is renewed is enmity to the cross; for he died that we might be renewed. They are the enemies of the cross, in the church,

(1.) who have never been born again;

(2.) who are living in the indulgence of known sin;

(3.) who manifest none of the peculiarities of those who truly love him;

(4.) who have a deeper interest ill worldly affairs than they have in the cause of the Redeemer;

(5.) whom nothing can induce to give up their worldly concerns when God demands it;

(6.) who are opposed to all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; and

(7.) who are opposed to all the peculiar duties of religion, or who live in the habitual neglect of them. It is to be feared that at all times there are such enemies of the cross in the church, and the language or, the apostle implies that it ks a proper subject of grief and tears. He wept over it, and so should we. It is from this cause that so much injury is done to the true religion in the world. One secret enemy in a camp may do more harm than fifty men who are open foes; and a single unholy or inconstant member in a church may do much more injury than many men who are avowedly opposed to religion.

It is not by infidels, and scoffers, and blasphemers, so much, that injury is done to the cause of religion; it is by the unholy lives of its professed friends--the worldliness, inconsistency, and want of the proper spirit of religion, among those who are in the church. Nearly all the objections that are made to religion are from this quarter; and if this objection, were taken away, the religion of Christ would soon spread its triumphs around the globe.

Whose end is destruction. That is, as they have no true religion, they must perish in the same manner as all sinners. A mere profession will not save them. Unless they are converted, and become the true friends of the cross, they cannot enter heaven. Whose God is their belly. Who worship their own appetites; or who live not to adore and honour God, but for self-indulgence and sensual gratifications. See Rom 16:18. And whose glory is in their shame. That is, they glory in things of which they ought to be ashamed. They indulge in modes of living which ought to cover them with confusion. Who mind earthly things. That is, whose hearts are set on earthly things, or who live to obtain them. Their attention is directed to honour, gain, or pleasure, and their chief anxiety is that they may secure these objects. This is mentioned as one of the characteristics of enmity to the cross of Christ; and if this be so, how many are there in the church now who are the real enemies of the cross! How many professing Christians are there who regard little else than worldly things! How many who live only to acquire wealth, to gain honour, or to enjoy the pleasures of the world! How many are there who have no interest in a prayer-meeting, in a Sabbath-school, in religious conversation, and in the advancement of true religion on the earth! These are the real enemies of the cross. It is not so much those who deny the doctrines of the cross, as it is those who oppose its influence on their hearts; not so much those who live to scoff and deride religion, as it is those who "mind earthly things," that injure this holy cause in the world.

For our conversation is in heaven. That is, this is true of all who are sincere Christians. It is a characteristic of Christians, in contradistinction from those who are the "enemies of the cross,"

that their conversation is in heaven. The word "conversation" we now apply almost entirely to oral discourse. It formerly, however, meant conduct in general, and it is usually employed in this sense in the Scriptures. Php 1:27, where the verb occurs, from which the noun here is derived. The word here used πολιτευμα --is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, any public measure, administration of the state, the manner in which the affairs of a state are administered; and then the state itself, the community, commonwealth, those who are bound under the same laws, and associated in the same society. Here it cannot mean that their "conversation," in the sense of discourse or talking, was in heaven; nor that their "conduct" was in heaven --for this would convey no idea, and the original word does not demand it; but the idea is, that they were heavenly citizens, or citizens of the heavenly world, in contradistinction from a worldly community. They were governed by the laws of heaven; they were a community associated as citizens of that world, and expecting there to dwell. The idea is, that there are two great communities in the universe--that of the world, and that of heaven; that governed by worldly laws and institutions, and that by the laws of heaven; that associated for worldly purposes, and that associated for heavenly or religious purposes; and that the Christian belonged to the latter--the enemy of the cross, though in the church, belonged to the former. Between true Christians, therefore, and others, there is all the difference which arises from belonging to different communities; being bound together for different purposes; subject to different laws; and altogether under a different administration. There is more difference between them than there is between the subjects of two earthly governments. Comp. Eph 2:6,19. From whence also we look for the Saviour. From heaven. That is, it is one of the characteristics of the Christian that he believes that the Lord Jesus will return from heaven, and that he looks and waits for it. Other men do not believe this, (2Pet 3:4,) but the Christian confidently expects it. His Saviour has been taken away from the earth, and is now in heaven, but it is a great and standing article of his faith that that same Saviour will again come, and take the believer to himself. Jn 14:2, Jn 14:3; 1Thes 4:14. This was the firm belief of the early

Christians, and this expectation with them was allowed to exert a constant influence on their hearts and lives.

It led them

(1.) to desire to be prepared for his coming;

(2.) to feel that earthly affairs were of little importance, as the scene here was soon to close;

(3.) to live above the world, and in the desire of the appearing of the Lord Jesus. This was one of the elementary doctrines of their faith, and one of the means of producing deadness to the world among them; and among the early Christians there was, perhaps, no doctrine that was more the object of firm belief, and the ground of more delightful contemplation, than that their ascended Master would return. In regard to the certainty of their belief on this point, and the effect which it had on their minds, see the following texts of the New Testament, Mt 24:42,44; Lk 12:37, Jn 14:3, Acts 1:11, 1Cor 4:5, Col 3:4, 1Thes 2:19, 2Thes 2:1; Heb 10:37, Jas 5:7,8, 1Jn 3:2, Rev 22:7,12,20. It may be asked, with great force, whether Christians in general have now any such expectation of the second appearing of the Lord Jesus, or whether they have not fallen into the dangerous error of prevailing unbelief, so that the expectation of his coming is allowed to exert almost no influence on the soul? In the passage before us, Paul says that it was one of the distinct characteristics of Christians that they looked for the coming of the Saviour from heaven. They believed that he would return. They anticipated that important effects would follow to them from his second coming. So we should look. There may be, indeed, a difference of opinion about the time when he will come, and about the question whether he will come to reign "literally" on the earth--but the fact that Christ will return to our world is common ground on which all Christians may meet, and is a fact which should be allowed to exert its full influence on the heart. It is a glorious truth--for what a sad world would this be, and what a sad prospect would be before the Christian, if the Saviour were never to come to raise his people from their graves, and to gather his redeemed to himself!

The fact that he will come is identified with all our hopes. It is fitted to cheer us in trial; to guard us in temptation; to make us dead to the world; to lead us to keep the eye turned toward heaven.

Who shall change our vile body. 1Cor 5:1, and following. The original words, which are here rendered "vile body," properly mean "the body of humiliation;" that is, our humble body. It refers to the body as it is in its present state, as subject to its infirmities, disease, and death. It is different far from what it was when man was created, and from what it will be in the future world. Paul says that it is one of the objects of the Christian hope and expectation that this body, so subject to infirmities and sicknesses, will be changed. That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. Gr., "The body of his glory;" that is, the body which he has in his glorified state. What change the body of the Redeemer underwent when he ascended to heaven we are not informed; nor do we know what is the nature, size, appearance, or form of the body which he now has. It is certain that it is adapted to the glorious world where he dwells; that it has none of the infirmities to which it was liable when here; that it is not subject, as here, to pain or death; that it is not sustained in the same manner. The body of Christ in heaven is of the same nature as the bodies of the saints will be in the resurrection, and which the apostle calls "spiritual bodies," 1Cor 15:44;) and it is doubtless accompanied with all the circumstances of splendour and glory which are appropriate to the Son of God. The idea here is, that it is the object of the desire and anticipation of the Christian, to be made just like Christ in all things. He desires to resemble him in moral character here, and to be like him in heaven. Nothing else will satisfy him but such conformity to the Son of God; and when he shall resemble him in all things, the wishes of his soul will be all met and fulfilled. According to the working, etc. That is, such a change demands the exertion of vast power. No creature can do it. But there is One who has power entrusted to him over all things, and he can effect this great transformation in the bodies of men. Comp. 1Cor 15:26,27. He can mould the mind and the heart to conformity to his own image, and thus also he can transform the body so that it shall resemble his. Everything he can make subject to his will. Mt 28:18; Jn 17:2. And he that has this power can

change our humbled and debased bodies, so that they shall put on the glorious appearance and form of that of the Son of God himself. What a contrast between our bodies here--frail, feeble, subject to sickness, decay, and corruption--and the body as it will be in heaven! And what glorious prospect awaits the weak and dying believer, in the future world!

19 whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. There are many called by Christ's name who are enemies to Christ's cross, and the design and intention of it. Their walk is a surer evidence what they are than their profession. By their fruits you shall know them, Mt 7:20. The apostle warns people against such,

1.) Very frequently: I have told you often. We so little heed the warnings given us that we have need to have them repeated. To write the same things is safe, Php 3:1.

(2.) Feelingly and affectionately: I now tell you weeping. Paul was upon proper occasions a weeping preacher, as Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. Observe, An old sermon may be preached with new affections; what we say often we may say again, if we say it affectionately, and are ourselves under the power of it.

2. He gives us the characters of those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ.

(1.) Whose God is their belly. They minded nothing but their sensual appetites. A wretched idol it is, and a scandal for any, but especially for Christians, to sacrifice the favour of God, the peace of their conscience, and their eternal happiness to it. Gluttons and drunkards make a god of their belly, and all their care is to please it and make provision for it. The same observance which good people give to God epicures give to their appetites. Of such he

says, They serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies, Ro 16:18.

(2.) They glory in their shame. They not only sinned, but boasted of it and gloried in that of which they ought to have been ashamed. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. "They value themselves for what is their blemish and reproach."

(3.) They mind earthly things. Christ came by his cross to crucify the world to us and us to the world; and those who mind earthly things act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and this great design of it. They relish earthly things, and have no relish of the things which are spiritual and heavenly. They set their hearts and affections on earthly things; they love them, and even dote upon them, and have a confidence and complacency in them. He gives them this character, to show how absurd it would be for Christians to follow the example of such or be led away by them; and, to deter us all from so doing, he reads their doom.

(4.) Whose end is destruction. Their way seems pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death, Ro 6:21. It is dangerous following them, though it is going down the stream; for, if we choose their way, we have reason to fear their end. Perhaps he alludes to the total destruction of the Jewish nation.

II. He proposes himself and his brethren for an example, in opposition to these evil examples: Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark those who walk as you have us for an example, Php 3:17. Mark them out for your pattern. He explains himself (Php 3:20) by their regard to Christ and heaven: For our conversation is in heaven. Observe, Good Christians, even while they are here on earth, have their conversation in heaven. Their citizenship is there, politeuma. As if he had said, We stand related the that world, and are citizens of the New Jerusalem. This world is not our home, but that is. There our greatest privileges and concerns lie. And, because our citizenship is there, our

conversation is there; being related to that world, we keep up a correspondence with it. The life of a Christian is in heaven, where his head is, and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections upon things above; and where his heart is there will his conversation be. The apostle had pressed them to follow him and other ministers of Christ: "Why," might they say, "you are a company of poor, despised, persecuted people, who make no figure, and pretend to no advantages in the world; who will follow you?" "Nay," says he, "but our conversation is in heaven. We have a near relation and a great pretension to the other world, and are not so mean and despicable as we are represented." It is good having fellowship with those who have fellowship with Christ, and conversation with those whose conversation is in heaven.

1. Because we look for the Saviour from heaven (Php 3:20): Whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not here, he has ascended, he has entered within the veil for us; and we expect his second coming thence, to gather in all the citizens of that New Jerusalem to himself.

2. Because at the second coming of Christ we expect to be happy and glorified there. There is good reason to have our conversation in heaven, not only because Christ is now there, but because we hope to be there shortly: Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, Php 3:21. There is a glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, which they will be instated in at the resurrection. The body is now at the best a vile body, to soma tes tapeinoseos hemon--the body of our humiliation: it has its rise and origin from the earth, it is supported out of the earth, and is subject to many diseases and to death at last. Besides, it is often the occasion and instrument of much sin, which is called the body of this death, Ro 7:24. Or it may be understood of its vileness when it lies in the grave; at the resurrection it will be found a vile body, resolved into rottenness and dust; the dust will return to the earth as it was, Ec 12:7. But it will be made a glorious body; and not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage. Observe,

(1.) The sample of this change, and that is, the glorious body of Christ; when he was transfigured upon the mount, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, Mt 17:2. He went to heaven clothed with a body, that he might take possession of the inheritance in our nature, and be not only the first-born from the dead, but the first-born of the children of the resurrection. We shall be conformed to the image of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many brethren, Ro 8:29.

(2.) The power by which this change will be wrought: According to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. There is an efficacy of power, an exceeding greatness of power, and the working of mighty power, Eph 1:19. It is matter of comfort to us that he can subdue all things to himself, and sooner or later will bring over all into his interest. And the resurrection will be wrought by this power. I will raise him up at the last day, Joh 6:44. Let this confirm our faith of the resurrection, that we not only have the scriptures, which assure us it shall be, but we know the power of God, which can effect it, Mt 22:29. At Christ's resurrection was a glorious instance of the divine power, and therefore he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead (Ro 1:4), so will our resurrection be: and his resurrection is a standing evidence, as well as pattern, of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom will be completely conquered. Not only he who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb 2:14), but the last enemy, shall be destroyed, that is, death, 1Co 15:26, shall be swallowed up in victory, 1Co 15:54.

Here our apostle proposes his own example to their imitation: follow me, who have renounced all my Jewish privileges, all confidence in any thing of my own; and mark them for your patterns, who walk so as to have us for an example.

O! how happy is it when the ministers of Christ go before their people, and tread out the steps which they are to take towards heaven; when they can say to their people, (without any

upbraiding from their own consciences,) Be followers of us, and of all such as have us for an example.

Next, he warns them against following the doctrines and practices of the false teachers, the judaizing doctors, those great zealots for the observation of the ceremonial law, and the rite of circumcision; these he paints out in their proper colours:

1. He calls them the enemies of the cross of Christ, because they preached up the necessity of circumcision, and the observation of the ceremonial law; and so, in effect, denied Christ to be come in the flesh, or affirmed that he died in vain.

Whose end is destruction: if they persist in their wicked doctrines and practices, their end will be everlasting destruction:
Whose god is their belly; who chiefly mind the gratification and pleasing of a sensual appetite: they who serve their belly before God, or as they should serve God, do make a god of their belly; we may provide for the belly, but not serve it; that is to serve us, by fitting us to serve God, our neighbours, and ourselves;

Whose glory is in their shame; that is, they gloried in their wicked practices in general, whereof they ought to be ashamed, and in the circumcision of the shameful member in particular; they are puffed up with that which should rather make them blush:

They mind earthly things; the riches, honours, pleasures, applause of the world, are things wholly upon their hearts,
counting gain godliness, not regarding Christ's interest, but only the promoting their own designs.

Lord! what a dismal character is this of those men that undertake to be teachers of others! With what a black coal doth the apostle draw their picture! and yet his hand was guided by the Spirit of God, whose judgment of them was according to truth.

As if the apostle had said, "As you love your souls, follow not those false teachers afore described, for they are citizens of the world: but imitate and follow us, who are citizens of heaven, where our head is, where our heart is, where our happiness is. It is true we live here below, but we belong to the corporation and society above, our citizenship is in heaven; for we have an high esteem of that happiness, and our chief concern is to make sure of it, and we please and delight ourselves with the joyful expectation of it, and we live answerably to our expectation; as we hope hereafter to love like the angels in glory, so we now endeavour to live like the angels in holiness."

Learn hence, All the faithful, both ministers and people, have a right to heaven, as to their city; they are therefore with their hearts and affections to be daily aspiring after it, and live in hopes of getting, ere long, the full possession of it.

Observe here, 1. All the faithful, who have their conversation in heaven, do expect and look for Christ coming from thence, not as a terrible judge, but as a gracious and powerful Saviour.

Observe, 2. What they do expect at the coming of this Saviour, namely, the changing of their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

Note here, 1. The present condition of the body of man: it is in a vile condition, vile in its original, our body is made of vile dust; vile, in regard of its accidental vileness, as the body is the seat of many vile diseases, and subject to vile abuses; vile considered with respect to its ultimate vileness at death; how does a body, as beautiful as ever was Absalom's, when death comes, run into rottenness and putrefaction! Our sin makes us vile in the sight of God whilst we live, and renders our bodies viler in the sight of men when we die.

Note, 2. The future condition which the bodies of good men shall be in, at the appearance of Christ: this vile body shall be a beautiful and a blessed body; the body we lay down shall be

rebuilt, formed and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; resembling his in incorruptibility and immortality, in purity and spirituality, in power and activity, in happiness and felicity.

Note, 3. The efficient cause of this great and glorious change, with reference to the body; and that is Christ, he shall change our vile bodies: together with the means by which all this is to be effected and accompolished, namely, the wonderful power of Christ, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Surely it is as easy for Christ to give a body to a soul at the resurrection, as to breathe a soul into a body every day in the work of creation. But the power of Christ is but a weak argument to build our hopes of the body's resurrection upon, without a revelation of his will: he can quench all the fire in hell in a moment; but where has he said he will do it? But now in the case before us, Christ is not only able to raise, but has declared he will raise and change our vile bodies; so that faith is enabled to make a sufficient reply to all the astonishing difficulties that reason can muster up: and those Christians that can only say, Our conversation is in heaven, may add, from thence we look for a Saviour, The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

21 who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Philippians-4

Rejoice in the Lord

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved.

Behold in this glass the heart of every faithful ambassador of Jesus Christ: it would not please them so much to have an imperial crown set upon their heads, and to be made the emperors of the world, as to see souls brought off from the world, by their ministry, to the obedience of the word. This made the Philippians St. Paul's joy and crown at present, and gave him hopes they would be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ. May the same mind be in us which was in this great apostle.

Observe, 2. The great and important duty which St. Paul here exhorts the Philippians to; and that is, steadfastness in the faith and doctrine of the gospel in general: and in particular, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, without obliging themselves to observe circumcision, or any part of the ceremonial law: Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved, my joy and crown.

Learn hence, 1. That steadfastness in the true religion, and perseverance in the faith of Christ, is the great and indespensable duty of every Christian that has a due regard to his salvation. That such a steadiness in the faith of Christ, and his holy religion, is a present joy, and will be an eternal crown of rejoicing to the ministers of God.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

That they be of the same mind. That they be united, or reconciled. Whether the difference related to doctrine, or to something else, we cannot determine from this phrase. The language is such as would properly relate to any difference. In the Lord. In their Christian walk and plans. They were doubtless professing Christians, and the apostle exhorts them to make the Lord the great object of their affections, and, in their regard for him, to bury all their petty differences and animosities.

3 And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellow laborers, whose names *are* in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Observe here, 1. The duty exhorted to: Christian cheerfulness and joy; a duty which glorifies God, adorns religion, is beneficial to ourselves, by enabling us to bear afflictions, to glory in them, and to triumph over them.

Observe, 2. The object of this duty, a glorious and replenishing object; Christ the Lord: Rejoice in the Lord.

3. The perpetuity and constancy of the duty: Rejoice alway; that is, at all times, and in all conditions.

4. The difficulty of the duty, implied in the repetition of the command: Again, I say, Rejoice.

From the whole note, 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the great, sure, and perpetual joy of his children and people.

2. That it is their duty to be joying in him always, and always rejoicing for him, and to rejoice in their knowledge fo him, in his undertaking for them, in their interest in him, in their influences of grace and comfort derived from him, in their hopes fo glory to be eternally enjoyed with him.

3. That to get the heart up to this duty, at all times, and in all conditions, is no easy work: therefore the exhortation is doubled: Rejoice alway; and again I say, Rejoice; pointing out how averse we are to this spiritual and very beneficial duty.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. That is, let it be such that others may see it. This does not mean that they were to make an ostentatious display of it, but that it should be such a characteristic of their lives that it would be constantly visible to others. The word moderation επιεικες--refers to restraint on the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then

propriety, gentleness, mildness.--They were to indulge in no excess of passion, or dress, or eating, or drinking. They were to govern their appetites, restrain their temper, and to be examples of what was proper for men in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear. The Lord is at hand. Is near. Php 3:20; 1Cor 16:22. This has the appearance of being a phrase in common use among the early Christians, and as being designed to keep before their minds a lively impression of an event which ought, by its anticipation, to produce an important effect. Whether, by this phrase, they commonly understood the coming of the Lord to destroy Jerusalem, or to remove them by death, or to judge the world, or to reign personally on the earth, it is impossible now to determine, and is not very material to a proper understanding of its use here. The idea is, that the expectation that the Lord Jesus will "come" ought to be allowed to produce moderation of our passions, in our manner of living, in our expectations of what this world can furnish, and in our desires of earthly good. On him who feels that he is soon to die, and to stand at the bar of God-- on him who expects soon to see the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, it cannot fail to have this effect. Men indulge their passions--are extravagant in their plans of life, and in their expectations of earthly good for themselves and for their families, because they have no realizing sense of the truth that there is before them a vast eternity. He that has a lively expectation that heaven will soon be his, will form very moderate expectations of what this world can furnish.

Be careful for nothing. That is, be not anxious or solicitous about the things of the present life. The word here used--μεριμνατε --does not mean that we are to exercise no care about worldly matters--no care to preserve our property, or to provide for our families, (1Timm 5:8;) but that there is to be such confidence in God as to free the mind from anxiety, and such a sense of dependence on him as to keep it calm. See the subject explained Mt 6:25. But in every thing. Everything in reference to the supply of your wants, and the wants of your families; everything in respect to afflictions, embarrassments, and trials: and everything relating to your spiritual condition. There ia nothing which

pertains to body, mind, estate, friends, conflicts, losses, trials, hopes, fears, in reference to which we may not go and spread it all out before the Lord. By prayer and supplication. The word rendered supplication is a stronger term than the former. It is the mode of prayer peculiarly which arises from the sense of need, or want--from δεομαι, to want, to need. With thanksgiving. Thanksgiving connected with prayer. We can always find something to be thankful for, no matter what may be the burden of our wants, or the special subject of our petitions. When we pray for the supply of our wants, we may be thankful for that kind Providence which has hitherto befriended us; when we pray for restoration from sickness, we may be thankful for the health we have hitherto enjoyed, and for God's merciful interposition in the former days of trial, and for his goodness in now sparing our lives; when we pray that our children and friends may be preserved from danger and death, we may remember how often God has interposed to save them; when, oppressed with a sense of sin, we pray for pardon, we have abundant cause of thanksgiving that there is a glorious way by which we may be saved. The greatest sufferer that lives in this world of redeeming love, and who has the offer of heaven before him, has cause of gratitude. Let your request be made known unto God. Not as if you were to give him information, but to express to him your wants. God needs not to be informed of our necessities, but he requires that we come and express them to him. Comp. Eze 36:37: "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

And the peace of God. The peace which God gives. The peace here particularly referred to is that which is felt when we have no anxious care about the supply of our wants, and when we go confidently and commit everything into the hands of God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee," Isa 26:3 Jn 14:27. Which passeth all understanding. That is, which surpasses all that men had conceived or imagined. The expression is one that denotes that the peace imparted is of the highest possible kind. The apostle Paul frequently used terms

which had somewhat of a hyperbolical cast, Eph 3:19; comp. Jn 21:25;) and the language here is that which one would use who designed to speak of that which was of the highest order. The Christian, committing his way to God, and feeling that he will order all things aright, has a peace which is nowhere else known. Nothing else will furnish it but religion. No confidence that a man can have in his own powers; no reliance which he can repose on his own plans or on the promises or fidelity of his fellow-men, and no calculations which he can make on the course of events, can impart such peace to the soul as simple confidence in God. Shall keep your hearts and minds. That is, shall keep them from anxiety and agitation. The idea is, that by thus making our requests known to God, and going to him in view of all our trials and wants, the mind would be preserved from distressing anxiety. The way to find peace, and to have the heart kept from trouble, is thus to go and spread out all before the Lord. Comp. Isa 26:3,4,20, 37:1-7. The word here rendered shall keep is a military term, and means that the mind would be guarded as a camp or castle is. It would be preserved from the intrusion of anxious fears and alarms. Through Christ Jesus. By his agency, or intervention. It is only in him that the mind can be preserved in peace. It is not by mere confidence in God, or by mere prayer, but it is by confidence in God as he is revealed through the Redeemer, and by faith in him. Paul never lost sight of the truth, that all the security and happiness of a believer were to be traced to the Saviour.

Think on These Things

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

Whatsoever things are true. In this exhortation the apostle assumes that there were certain things admitted to be true, and pure, and good, in the world, which had not been directly revealed, or which were commonly regarded as such by the men

of the world; and his object is to show them that such things ought to be exhibited by the Christian. Everything that was honest and just towards God and towards men was to be practised by them, and they were in all things to be examples of the highest kind of morality. They were not to exhibit partial virtues; not to perform one set of duties to the neglect or exclusion of others; not to be faithful in their duties to God, and to neglect their duty to men; not to be punctual in their religious rites, and neglectful of the common laws of morality; but they were to do everything that could be regarded as the fair subject of commendation, and that was implied in the highest moral character. The word true refers here to everything that was the reverse of falsehood. They were to be true to their engagements; true to their promises; true in their statements; and true in their friendships. They were to maintain the truth about God; about eternity; about the judgment; and about every man's character. Truth is a representation of things as they are; and they were constantly to live under the correct impression of objects. A man who is false to his engagements, or false in his statements and promises, is one who will always disgrace religion. Whatsoever things are honest. σεμνα. Properly, venerable, reverend; then honourable, reputable. The word was originally used in relation to the gods, and to the things that pertained to them, as being worthy of honour or veneration. Pussow. As applied to men, it commonly means grave, dignified, worthy of veneration or regard. In the New Testament it is rendered grave in 1Timm 3:8,11, and Tit 2:2, the only places where the word occurs except this; and the noun (σεμνοτης) is rendered honesty in 1Timm 2:2 and gravity in 1Timm 3:4, Tit 2:7. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The word, therefore, does not express precisely what the word honest does with us, as confined to dealings or business transactions, but rather has reference to what was regarded as worthy of reputation or honour; what there was in the customs of society, in the respect due to age and rank, and in the intercourse of the world, that deserved respect or esteem. It includes indeed what is right in the transaction of business, but it embraces also much more, and means that the Christian is to show respect to all the venerable and proper customs of society,

when they did not violate conscience or interfere with the law of God. Comp. 1Timm 3:7. Whatsoever things are just. The things which are right between man and man. A Christian should be just in all his dealings. His religion does not exempt him from the strict laws which bind men to the exercise of this virtue, and there is no way by which a professor of religion can do more injury, perhaps, than by injustice and dishonesty in his dealings. It is to be remembered, that the men of the world, in estimating a man's character, affix much more importance to the virtues of justice and honesty than they do to regularity in observing the ordinances of religion; and therefore, if a Christian would make an impression on his fellow-men favourable to religion, it is indispensable that he manifest uncorrupted integrity in his dealings. Whatsoever things are pure. Chaste--in thought, and feeling, and in the intercourse between the sexes. 1Timm 5:2. Whatsoever things are lovely. The word here used means, properly, what is dear to any one; then what is pleasing. Here it means what is amiable--such a temper of mind that one can love it; or such as to be agreeable to others. A Christian should not be sour, crabbed, and irritable in his temper for nothing almost tends so much to injure the cause of religion as a temper always chafed; a brow morose and stern; an eye that is severe and unkind, and a disposition to find fault with everything. And yet it is to be regretted that there are many persons, who make no pretensions to piety, who far surpass many professors of religion in the virtue here commended. A sour and crabbed temper in a professor of religion will undo all the good that he attempts to do. Whatsoever things are of good report. That is, whatsoever is truly reputable in the world at large. There are actions which all men agree in commending, and which in all ages and countries are regarded as virtues. Courtesy, urbanity, kindness, respect for parents, purity between brothers and sisters, are among those virtues--and the Christian should be a pattern and an example in them all. His usefulness depends much more on the cultivation of these virtues than is commonly supposed. If there be any virtue. If there is anything truly virtuous. Paul did not suppose that he had given a full catalogue of the virtues which he would have cultivated. He therefore adds, that if there was anything else that had the nature

of true virtue in it, they should be careful to cultivate that also. The Christian should be a pattern and example of every virtue. And if there be any praise. Anything worthy of praise, or that ought to be praised. Think on these things. Let them be the object of your careful attention and study, so as to practise them. Think what they are; think on the obligation to observe them; think on the influence which they would have on the world around you.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Acknowledgment of the Philippians' Gift

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Our apostle being now come to the conclusion of this epistle, acquaints the Philippians with what great joy he had received their charity sent unto him; and that it came no sooner, he believed did not proceed from any disrespect towards him, but only for want of either ability or opportunity of sending to him: yet withal gives them to understand, that he could bear want, or a strait condition, very well, for, having Christ for his teacher, he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therein to be content; he could bear either plenty or scarcity, fulness or want; yea, could do all things through Christ that strengthened him.

Observe here, 1. The vicissitude and great uncertainty of St. Paul's outward condition: at one time he abounds, at another time he is abased; at one time he abounds, at another time he is abased; at one time he is full, at another in want; teaching us, that the dearest of God's children, in regard of their outward condition, are subject to variety of changes.

Observe, 2. The general lesson which they have learnt, with reference to this variety of conditions, and that is, the lesson of contentment: I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Observe, 3. The particular lessons learnt by him: Both how to abound, and how to be abased. They are both hard lessons, but, of the two, perhaps it is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased.

Quest. 1. When may man be said to know how to abound?

Ans. When he sets a due value and right esteem upon the things of the world, and neither prizes them too high nor too low: when a man so uses his abundance as to avoid the temptations which do attend and accompany that abundance; when he is willing to part with his abundance at the call and command of God; and, in a word, when he attends more to the duties of his prosperous state, than to the sensual pleasures and satisfaction of it.

Quest. 2. What is it to know how to be abased?

Ans. Not to be discouraged, or suffer the spirit to sink or faint in the day of adversity: to be not only humbled by affliction, but humble under it; to suffer what God inflicts, without impatience or complaint, without sourness of spirit or discontent; to believe the hand of a Father: that whatever we part with, is but a perishing creature; that God is able to restore all our lost comfort with advantage to us, and will do it if it be good for us, either in kind or equivalency: this is to know how to be abased.

Quest. 3. How doth it appear harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased?

Ans. Thus: there are more duties, and harder duties, required of those that abound, than of them that want. There are more

temptations, and stronger temptations, which attend those in abundance than them that want.

Hence it is that God gives so many solemn charges and commands to those that abound, to take heed to themselves, more than those that are in want. When thou art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God,, and thy heart be lifted up. Deut 6:12
In a word, I do not remember one instance in all the scripture of a full or prosperous condition, which was ever so much as the remote occasion of the sinner's conversion unto God; but I find in scripture that an afflicted condition has been blessed to many for this end, 2Chr 33:12; Hos 5:15; Job 23:14.

Observe, 4. The school which St. Paul learnt this great lesson in, to know how to be abased, and how to abound, and to be thoroughly content in every condition: it was not at Gamaliel's feet, but Christ's feet: I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Christ was both his tutor and his strengthener, he taught him his lesson, and enabled him to practise it.

See here, 1. That a real Christian is able to do all things, all things that concern a Christian, all things that belong to the glory of God, and his soul's salvation; all things, not in a legal, but evangelical sense; not all things, nor indeed any thing, with a sinless perfection, but all things in respect of his love to the whole law, in respect of his purpose and resolution, in respect of his desire and endeavours.

Again, I can do all things; understand it in an active sense, I can deny myself, believe in a withdrawing God, conquer the world, subdue unmortified corruption, and live a life of evangelical perfection: take it also in a passive sense, I can suffer all things, I can bear Christ's cross, wear his yoke, endure any thing for him, or from him, when called forth to suffer.

Note, 2. That as a Christian can do all things, so his ability to do all things lies not in himself, but in Christ. A believer receives an

active power from Christ, to enable him to do whatever he requires him to do: ability to subdue corruption, to conquer temptation, to bear affliction, and to glorify God in every condition: all this is from Christ; and the sincere Christian may say with this eminent saint, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding, ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

The modesty and great ingenuity of the apostle, in assuring them, that his praising their liberality so much was not upon design to get more: Not because I desire a gift; that is, any further gift for my own private advantage; I am far from the thought of spunging upon you: but I aim at your advantage in this that your liberality may afford you the fruits of a plentiful reward in the day of Christ, who will not forget your work and labour of love in ministering to the saints. Having thus guarded against all suspicion of greediness in himself, and evidenced that his commending of their liberality was not upon design, he proceeds again to praise their liberality yet farther, and extols it in such words as may cause admiration.

Note, 1. How abundantly satisfied the apostle was with what he had received, I have all, and abound, I am full; as if he had had the treasures of the Indies in his coffers. Grace is content with a little, and thinks that little an abundance; the contented man only is rich.

2. How St. Paul gives an acknowledgment, under his hand, that Epaphroditus had faithfully delivered to him the whole of their charity sent by him; I have received of Epaphroditus all the things

which were sent from you. Epaphroditus was their chief minister, or bishop, a person of great reputation, whose fidelity none could suspect; yet St. Paul gives it under his hand, that he had executed his trust faithfully. Though a man be never so trust-worthy in himself, and be never so much entrusted by others, yet he ought, in wisdom, to guard against any suspicion which may be taken up against his honesty and faithfulness.

Note, 3. The high expressions which St. Paul makes use of, in setting forth the Philippians' charity towards him: he calls it an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God; the very same words here which he makes use of, Eph 5:2, where he calls the death of Christ, a sacrifice and sweet- smelling savour. The expression is borrowed from the Levitical sacrifices, which were of God's appointing and approving; and it imports, that our charity expressed towards the members, but especially the ministers, of Jesus Christ, now under the gospel, is as acceptable and well-pleasing unto God as the sweetest incense and the fattest sacrifices were under the law.

Here observe, That the Socinians, to lessen the meritoriousness of Christ's sacrifice, do parallel this text with that other, Eph 5:2, "Is the death of Christ (say they) called a sacrifice, and sweet-smelling savour? So is the Philippians' charity here called a sacrifice, but both in a figurative and metaphorical sense only."

But mark the difference, St. Paul, Eph 5:2 says, Christ gave himself a sacrifice, which, being once offered, was sufficient to take away sin, Heb 10:10 but the Philippians are not said to give themselves a sacrifice, but their alms were as grateful to God as incense.
If it be said from Rom 12:1 that believers are required to present themselves living sacrifices unto God, and acceptable: I answer, So they are, and so they do present themselves gratulatory, but not expiatory, sacrifices unto God, Ye are a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto God through Jesus Christ. 2Pe 2:5 Christ's oblation and sacrifice was acceptable for itself; believers, and their eucharistical sacrifices, are acceptable to God

only in, by, and through, our Lord Jesus Christ, By him set us offer the sacrifice of praise continually. Heb 13:15

Note lastly, The assurance which St. Paul gives the Philippians, that God would abundantly recompense their charity into their own bosoms, ver. 19.My God will supply all your need, &c. As if he had said, "Do not think you shall want, because you have liberally supplied my wants; no, my God will supply you, for your supplying me: According to his riches in glory, that is, according to his rich mercy and glorious grace." There is no need to be supplied in the glory of the next life, but there is a glory in rich grace, which readily and plentifully supplies all the needs in this life.

Note, 1. That such as administer now to the wants of others, may fall into want, and be driven to straits themselves.

2. That the more forward they have been to supply the wants and administer to the necessities of others in the time of their abundance, the more may they expect from the bountiful hand of God, in the day of their necessity and distress: My God shall supply all your need, &c.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of
Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odor of a sweet
smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.
19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in
glory by Christ Jesus.
20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The endearing title given to Almighty God, God our Father; the word Father is a title of great honour; the word our is a word of singular comfort. The appropriating positive terms, mine, thine, ours, have a great sweetness in them, and breathe abundance of affection. As Luther used to say, "The comfort of the gospel lay in pronouns possessive, when we can say with believing Thomas, My Lord and my God; with blessed Paul, Who loved me, and gave himself for me."
Learn, That God is a Father in a more peculiar and special manner to all that are interested in his Son Jesus Christ. The word Father

implies spiritual generation, that we are begotten by him, and like unto him; it implies vehemency of affection, no bowels comparable unto a father's; it implies designed benefit by correction, that he exercises in unto profit.

And in the word our is implied, that God is the Father of every believer, the weakest as well as the strongest; we are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus: and it points out our duty also, that as there is one God and Father of all, so all believers should be of one heart and of one mind among themselves.

Note, 2. What it is which our apostle attributes and ascribes unto God, namely, glory, and that for ever and ever. Glory, that is, the manifestation of all his glorious excellences and perfections.
Learn hence, That it is the fervent desire of all believers to have the worth and excellences of God everlastingly acknowledged, and in a boundless manner displayed: Unto God be glory for ever and ever.
This word, for ever and ever, is, upon different accounts, the saddest and sweetest word in all the Bible. When applied to sinners, and what they suffer from God as the desert, the due desert, of their sins, then it is a word of the saddest weight, Rev 14:11. The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;

They shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. 2Thess 1:9
'Tis the word for ever and ever that sets all hell a roaring, and it is the same word that fills heaven with joy and rejoicing. To God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me
greet you.
22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.
23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the

Colossians
[Colos sians]

Colossians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our*
brother,
2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at
Colossae:
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
praying always for you,
4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye*
have to all the saints,
5 for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard
before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

St. Paul discovers the motive which excited the Colossians to such steadiness and constancy in the faith of Christ, and in love one to another; and that was the hope laid up for them in heaven; that is, the great and good things here hoped for, and there to be enjoyed.
As the sinners misery consists not in what he feels, but what he fears; so the believer's happiness lies not in what he has in his hand, but in what he has in hope: the reward which encourages his perseverance in faith and love, is laid up in heaven; that is, safely and plentifully, as a parent lays up his treasures for the use of his children: It is both lawful and laudable then for Christians to have

an eye to the promised reward, as an encouragement to duty, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven.

Observe, 2. Ther means by which they came to the knowledge of this hope, it was by the word of truth, the preaching of the gospel to them by the ministry of Epaphras; this was so exceedingly blessed by God, that thereby the saving hope of this reward was wrought in them.

Where note, The title given to the gospel, it is eminently the word of truth, having Christ for its main subject, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and being confirmed by Christ the testator's blood.

Note farther, That the preaching of this word of truth, the doctrine of the gospel, is the great instrumental mean, appointed by God for begetting in us a lively hope of the reward laid up for us in heaven; for the hope laid up for you in heaven, whereof you have heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

Observe, 3. The commendation here given of the gospel, which had begot in these Colossians a lively hope of the heavenly reward:
It is commended, 1. For being one and the same gospel which was preached by the apostles throughout all the world, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; that is, with incredible swiftness into the most eminent parts and places of the world then known; an infallible proof of the divinity of the gospel, that it was thus owned and blessed of God.

The gospel, at all times, and in all places, is one and the same; and Christ, when he pleases, can swiftly drive the chariot of the gospel round about the world, and bring in not only persons and familiers, but cities, nations, and kingdoms, to the obedience of it.

2. The gospel preached to them is commended for its fruitfulness, it bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you; that is, fruits of piety and holiness towards God, and fruits of righteousness and charity towards man.

Learn hence, That it is matter of praise, and unspeakable thanksgiving, to the ministers of Christ, when the light of the gospel breaks forth among a people, where it never befoe shined, and is accompanied with early and constant fruits of piety, humility, faith and love, in the hearts and lives of those to whom it is preached. The gospel bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day you heard of it, &c.

6 which is come unto you, as *it is* in all the world; and bringeth forth
fruit, as *it doth* also in you, since the day ye heard *of it*, and knew the
grace of God in truth:
7 as ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for
you a faithful minister of Christ;
8 who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.
9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray
for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of
his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Observe here, 1. The person who first preached the gospel of Christ to the Colossians, and converted them to the Christian faith, it was Epaphras; As ye learned of Epaphras.

Observe, 2. The commendation given to Epaphras, and his character by St. Paul; he was regularly called to the work, and a diligent fellow-labourer with St. Paul in the work of preaching and dispensing the mysteries of the everlasting gospel to a lost world; who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.

Learn hence, That the knowledge of life and salvation is ordinarily wrought in persons by the preaching of the gospel, by men called of God to that sacred function.

Observe, 3. A particular instance of the faithfulness of Epaphras towards the Colossians, he declared unto St. Paul their love in the Spirit; that is, their spiritual love and fervent affection to him, though they had never seen his face nor heard his voice.
The faithful ministers and members of Jesus Christ do affectionately love one another though they see not the face of each other; there is no such loadstone of love as the grace of God. This will draw forth

the heart and affections of a believer to the ends of the earth, to pray for, to mourn over, and to rejoice with such of their brethren as they never saw, but of whose condition they have heard.

Observe, 4. The kind return which St. Paul makes to them, for their love in the Spirit towards him; For this cause we do not cease to pray for you: there is no such way to attain an interest in, and to obtain constant benefit and advantage by the prayers of the ministers of God, as to be expressive of our love and affection both to God and them.

Observe, 5. The especial blessings which he prays for on the Colossians' behalf, namely, that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will, that is, attain to a more perfect and comprehensive knowledge of God's will and their duty, furnished with all divine wisdom and spiritual understanding, to regulate their lives according to their knowledge.

Learn from hence, That there is a fulness of divine knowledge, which is attained by none, but should be aimed at by all, seeing they that know most of God's word and revealed will, come far short of what they should know.

Learn, 2. That the knowledge wisdom, and understanding, which Christians should especially labour after, and attain unto, is of things spiritual: that ye be filled with knowledge and spiritual understanding.

10 that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being
fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of
God;

Being fruitful in every good work. This is one way in which we are to walk worthy of the Lord, and so as to please him. Jn 15:8. And increasing in the knowledge of God. This is another way in which we may walk worthy of the Lord, and so as to please him. It is by endeavouring to become better acquainted with his true character. God is pleased with those who desire to understand what he is; what he does; what he purposes; what he commands. Hence he not only commands us to study his works, (comp. Ps 111:2,) but he has made

a world so beautiful as to invite us to contemplate his perfections as reflected in that world. All good beings desire that others should understand their character, and God delights in those who are sincerely desirous of knowing what he is, and who inquire with humility and reverence into his counsels and his will. Men are often displeased when others attempt to look into their plans, for they are sensible they will not bear the light of investigation. God has no plans which would not be seen to be, in the highest degree, glorious to him.

Strengthened with all might. This was also an object of Paul's earnest prayer. He desired that they might be strengthened for the performance of duty; to meet temptations; and to bear up under the various trials of life. According to his glorious power. Not by any human means, but by the power of God. There is a manifestation of power in the spirit with which Christians are enabled to bear up under trims, which shows that it is not of human origin. It is the power which God gives them in the day of trial. This power is "glorious," or, as it is in the Greek, it is the "power of his glory." It is manifestly the power of the great and glorious God, and it tends to promote his glory, and to show forth his praise. Unto all patience. So that you may be enabled to bear all your trials without murmuring. It is only the power of God that can enable us to do that.

Giving thanks to the Father. This is another mode by which we may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," Col 1:10; to wit, by rendering appropriate thanks to God for his mercy. The particular point which the apostle here says demanded thanksgiving was, that they had been called from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. This had been done by the special mercy of the Father, who had provided the plan of salvation, and had sent his Son to redeem them. The connexion shows that the word "Father" refers, in this place, not to God as the Father of his creatures, but to the Father as distinguished from the Son. It is the "Father" who has translated us into the kingdom of the "Son." Our especial thanks are due to the "Father" in this, as he is represented as the great Author of the whole plan of salvation as he who sent his Son to redeem us. Who hath made us meet. The word here used ικανοω means, properly, to make

sufficient, from ικανος sufficient, abundant, much. The word conveys the idea of having sufficient or enough to accomplish anything. 2Cor 3:6. The verb is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. In its use here, there seems to be implied the idea of conferring the privilege or the ability to be thus made the partakers of the kingdom, and the idea also of rendering us fit for it. The sense is, he has conferred on us grace sufficient to make it proper that we should partake of the blessings of his kingdom. In regard to this "fitness" or "meetness" for that kingdom, we may remark,

(1.) that it does not mean that we are rendered fit by our own merits, or by anything which we have done; for it is expressly said that it is God who has thus rendered us "meet" for it. No one, by his own merits, ever made himself fit for heaven. His good works cannot be an equivalent for the eternal rewards of heaven; nor is the heart, when unrenewed, even in the best state, fit for the society and the employments of heaven. There is no adaptedness of such a heart, however amiable and however refined, to the pure spiritual joys of the upper world. Those joys are the joys of religion, of the love of God, of pleasure in holiness; and the unrenewed heart can never be wrought up to a fitness to enter into those joys. Yet

(2.) there is a fitness or meetness which Christians possess for heaven. It consists in two things. First, in their having complied with the conditions on which God promises heaven; so that, although they have no merit in themselves, and no fitness by their own works, they have that meetness which results from having complied with the terms of favour. They have truly repented of their sins, and believed in the Redeemer; and they are thus in the proper state of mind to receive the mercy of God; for, according to the terms of mercy, there is a propriety that pardon should be bestowed on the penitent, and peace on the believing. A child that is truly broken-hearted for a fault is in a fit state of mind to be forgiven; a proud, and obstinate, and rebellious child is not. Secondly, there is, in fact, a fitness in the Christian for the participation of the inheritance of the saints in light. He has a state of feeling that is adapted to that. There is a congruity between his feelings and heaven--a state of mind that can be satisfied with nothing but heaven. He has in his

heart substantially the same principles which reign in heaven; and he is fitted to find happiness only in the same objects in which the inhabitants of heaven do. He loves the same God and Saviour; has pleasure in the same truths; prefers, as they do, holiness to sin; and, like the inhabitants of heaven, he would choose to seek his pleasure in holy living, rather than in the ways of vanity, his preferences are all on the side of holiness and virtue; and, with such preferences, he is fitted for the enjoyments of heaven. In character, views, feelings, and preferences, therefore, the Christian is made "fit" to participate in the employments and joys of the saints in light. To be partakers of the inheritance. The privileges of religion are often represented as an heirship, or an inheritance. Rom 8:17. Of the saints in light. Called, Col 1:13, "the kingdom of his dear Son." This is a kingdom of light, as opposed to the kingdom of darkness in which they formerly were. In the East, and particularly in Persia, there prevailed early the belief that there were two great kingdoms in the universe--that of light, and that of darkness. We find traces of this opinion in the Scriptures, where the kingdom of God is called "light," and that of Satan is called "darkness." These are, of course, figurative expressions; but they convey important truth. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of holiness, knowledge, happiness; and all these are found in the kingdom over which God presides, and of which Christians are the heirs. Accordingly, we find the word light often used to describe this kingdom. Thus it is said of God, who presides over it, that he "is light, and in him is no darkness at all," 1Jn 1:5; of Christ, that he is "the light of man," Jn 1:4; that he is "the true light," Jn 1:9; that he is "the light of the world," Jn 8:12. Comp. Jn 12:35; Lk 2:32. The angels of that kingdom are "angels of light," 2Cor 11:14. Those who compose that kingdom on earth are "the children of light," Lk 16:8, 1Thes 5:5. And all the descriptions of that kingdom in heaven represent it as filled with light and glory, Isa 60:19, Rev 21:23, 22:5.

11 strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto
all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;
12 giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be
partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
13 who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath
translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Reconciliation through Christ's Death

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the
forgiveness of sins:
15 who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every
creature:
16 for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are
in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or
dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by
him, and for him:

Concerning the person of the Redeemer. Glorious things are here said of him; for blessed Paul was full of Christ, and took all occasions to speak honourably of him. He speaks of him distinctly as God, and as Mediator.

1. As God he speaks of him, Col 1:15-17. (1.) He is the image of the invisible God. Not as man was made in the image of God (Ge 1:27), in his natural faculties and dominion over the creatures: no, he is the express image of his person, Heb 1:3. He is so the image of God as the son is the image of his father, who has a natural likeness to him; so that he who has seen him has seen the Father, and his glory was the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, Joh 1:14,14:9.

(2.) He is the first-born of every creature. Not that he is himself a creature; for it is prototokos pases ktiseos--born or begotten before all the creation, or before any creature was made, which is the scripture-way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was; when there was no depth, before the mountains were settled, while as yet he had not made the earth, Pr 8:23-26. It signifies his dominion over all things, as the first-born in a family is heir and lord of all, so he is the heir of all things, Heb 1:2 The word, with only the change of the accent, prototokos, signifies actively the first begetter or producer of all things, and so it well agrees with the following clause. Vid. Isidor. Peleus. epist. 30 lib. 3.

(3.) He is so far from beginning himself a creature that he is the Creator: For by him were all things created, which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, Col 1:16. He made all things out of nothing, the highest angel in heaven, as well as men upon earth. He made the world, the upper and lower world, with all the inhabitants of both. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made which was made, Joh 1:3. He speaks here as if there were several orders of angels: Whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, which must signify either different degrees of excellence or different offices and employments. Angels, authorities, and powers, 1Pe 3:22. Christ is the eternal wisdom of the Father, and the world was made in wisdom. He is the eternal Word, and the world was made by the word of God. He is the arm of the Lord, and the world was made by that arm. All things are created by him and for him; di autou kai eis auton. Being created by him, they were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure and for his praise. He is the end, as well as the cause of all things. To him are all things, Ro 11:36; eis auton ta panta.

(4.) He was before all things. He had a being before the world was made, before the beginning of time, and therefore from all eternity. Wisdom was with the Father, and possessed by him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, Pr 8:22. And in the beginning the Word was with God and was God, Joh 1:1. He not only had a being before he was born of the virgin, but he had a being before all time.

(5.) By him all things consist. They not only subsist in their beings, but consist in their order and dependences. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the word of his power that they are still upheld, Heb 1:3. The whole creation is kept together by the power of the Son of God, and made to consist in its proper frame. It is preserved from disbanding and running into confusion.

17 and he is before all things, and by him all things consist:
18 and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning,
the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the
preeminence.

Our apostle having, in the former verses, described what Christ is in himself, comes next to describe him with relation to his church; shewing,

1. That he is her Head, he is the Head of the body, the church; as the head and the members make one body, so Christ and his people constitute one church; he is of the same nature (as man) with his church, he poureth forth the same Spirit upon his church, he is both an Head of authority, and a Head of influence to his church, he sympathizes with her in all her sufferings on earth, and longs for the full fruition and final enjoyment of her in heaven.

2. He is the beginning of the Christian church, the root, the fountain and foundation of it, the active beginning, or the first principle and author of it, and of all those influences of grace and spiritual life which do animate and enlive it.

3. He is called the first-born from the dead.

1. Because he was the first that arose to an immortal life, never to die more; all others that were raised to life, besides him, died again, but death had no more dominion over him.
Again, 2. Because he was the principal and efficient cause of their resurrection; all that were raised before him, were raised by him, by a power derived from him:
And, 3. Because he is the pattern and exemplary cause of the resurrection; his members are not only raised by him, but like unto him. Fashioned like unto his glorious body Phil 3:21.
Was his body raised sustantially the same? So shall ours be.
Was his body wonderfully improved by the resurrection? So shall ours, in point of purity and spirituality, in point of power and activity, in point of immortality and incorruptibility.
Was his holy body raised to be eternally glorified? So shall ours.
How fitly then is our Lord here called the first-born from the dead? Even herein he had the pre-eminence.

Still our apostle proceeds in describing the person of our Redeemer, and the admirable qualificatons found in him for the work and

service of our redemption; he declares here, that there was a perfect and complete fulness of all divine graces and excellencies dwelling in the Mediator, and that by the pleasure and appointment of God the Father; there is in him a fulness of merit for our justification, a fulness of grace for our sanctification, a fulness of wisdom for our direction, a fulness of power for our preservation, a fulness of mercy, pity, and compassion, to relieve and succour us in all our distresses.

And this fulness which is in Christ, is an original and independent fulness, and it is an infinite and inexhaustible fulness; it is a complete and comprehensive fulness, and it is a ministerial fulness; the fulness that is in him of grace and comfort, is on purpose to communicate unto us, to be dispersed and given forth to all his members. No sooner had our apostle said, that he is the Head of the body, the church; but he instantly subjoins, that it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell, namely, for his church's benefit and advantage.

19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;
20 and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to
reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be*
things in earth, or things in heaven.

Through the blood of his cross. By his blood shed on the cross. That blood, making atonement for sin, was the means of making reconciliation between God and man. On the meaning of the word blood, as used in this connexion, Rom 3:25. By him to reconcile all things to himself. On the meaning of the word reconcile, Mt 5:24, Rom 5:10, 2Cor 5:18. When it is said that "it pleased the Father by Christ to reconcile all things to himself," the declaration must be understood with some limitation.

(1.) It relates only to those things which are in heaven and earth -- for those only are specified. Nothing is said of the inhabitants of hell, whether fallen angels, or the spirits of wicked men who are there.

(2.) It cannot mean that all things are actually reconciled for that never has been true. Multitudes on earth have remained alienated from God, and have lived and died his enemies.

(3.) It can mean then, only, that he had executed a plan that was adapted to this; that if fairly and properly applied, the blood of the cross was fitted to secure entire reconciliation between heaven and earth. There was no enemy which it was not fitted to reconcile to God; there was no guilt, now producing alienation, which it could not wash away.

Here one special reason is assigned why all fulness dwelt in our Lord the Redeemer, namely, to fit him for the great work and office of a Mediator or Reconciler, that so he might happily make up that breach which sin had made between God and the world, having removed the enmity which was betwixt them by his death and sufferings, called here the blood of his cross, that is the blood which he freely and voluntarily shed upon the cross.

Note here, 1. That God and man were once friends, though soon by sin made enemies; reconciliation doth suppose an antecedent friendship.

Note, 2. That though man was first in the breach yet God was first in the offer of reconciliation; It pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself.

Note, 3. That as there was no possibility of ever making up this breach, but by a Mediator; so no person in heaven or earth was or could be found, in all things fitted or furnished for the work of a Mediator, but only Christ; By him to reconcile all things to himself.

Note, 4. The universality of the subject reconciled, all things both in heaven and in earth: By things in heaven,
1. Some understand the blessed angels; but there being no breach between God and them, Christ was not the author of reconciliation, though he was an head of confirmation to them. Others understand it of a reconciliation between the angels and man, thus: Whilst man continued in his obedience to God, angels and men were in a state of perfect friendship one with another; but when man rebelled against God, the angels became averse to man for that rebellion; but

God being reconciled to man by the death of his son, the angels are become friends and ministering spirits to us, and both they and we constitute one church under Christ the head thereof; thus Christ reconciled all things in heaven and earth, that is, the angels in heaven he has reconciled to man on earth.

2. Other, by things in heaven, do not understand the angels, but the saints departed; the patriarchs, prophets, and all the faithful now in heaven, or here on earth, they were all reconciled, in order to their being saved; intimating, that the blood of Christ did expiate the guilt of those persons who lived before him, as well as of those that died after him: He reonciled all things in heaven and earth, capable of reconciliation, appointed to it, and that stood in need of it.

Note, lastly, The instrumental means by which all this was effected, namely, by the blood of the cross; to make up the breach betwixt God and the fallen creature, cost the Mediator no less than his precious blood.

Lord! Who can look upon sin as any other than an infinite and immense evil, which cost the Son of God his life to expiate the guilt of it? How can a little sin be committed against a great God?

Whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. That is, to produce harmony between the things in heaven and in earth; so that all things shall be reconciled to him, or so that there shall be harmony between heaven and earth. The meaning is not that "the things in heaven" were alienated from God, but that there was alienation in the universe which affected heaven, and the object was to produce again universal concord and love. Substantially the same sentiment is found in Eph 1:10. Eph 1:10. Much has been written on the meaning of this expression, and a great variety of opinions have been entertained of it. It is best, always, unless necessity require a different interpretation, to take words in their usual signification. If that rule be adopted here, "things in heaven" will refer to God and the angels, and perhaps may include the principles of the Divine government. "Things on earth" will embrace men, and the various things on earth which are now at variance with God and with

heaven. Between these, it is designed to produce harmony by the blood of the cross, or by the atonement. As in heaven nothing is wrong; as it is not desirable that anything should be changed there, all the change that is to take place, in order to produce reconciliation, is to be on the part of men and the things of this world. The only effect of the blood of the atonement on the "things" of heaven, in effecting the reconciliation, is to render it consistent for God to be at peace with sinners. The effect on earth is to dispose the sinner to a willingness to be reconciled; to lead him to lay aside his enmity; to change his heart; and to effect a change in the views and principles prevailing on earth which are now at variance with God and his government. When this shall be done there will be harmony between heaven and earth, and an alienated world will be brought into conformity with the laws and government of the Creator.

Paul's Ministry to the Church

21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled

St. Paul having treated of Christ's work of reconciliation in general, in the preceding verse, in this he applies it ot the Colosssians in particular:
Where 1. He describes to them the miserable state and deplorable condition they were in before they were converted to the Christian faith; they were strangers, nay, enemies unto God: Enemies in their minds, which implies a deep rooted enmity, advancing so high as to hate God, not as a Creator, but as a lawgiver; not as a Benefactor, but as a judge and revenger of sin.

O deplorable degradation, to be at enmity in our minds against him who
is the author of our being, and the fountain of our happiness!

Observe, 2. The gracious change wrought in their condition by virtue of Christ's mediation, you hath he reconciled; not only laid own his life to purchase reconciliation for them, but by the ministry of his word, accompanied with the operation of his holy Spirit, working upon their hearts, even then when they had a strong

aversion from God, to accept of terms of peace and reconciliation with him: You, who were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, now hath he reconciled.
Observe, 3. The way and means by which Christ effected this work of reconciliation for them and us, namely, by taking upon him a true body, subject to fleshly infirmities, though without sin; and in that body suffering death for us, that we might be presented at the last day, perfectly holy unto god.

In order to our reconciliation with God, it pleased Christ, the second Person in the ever-glorious Trinity, to assume a body of flesh, that he might be of the same nature with us, and in that body of flesh to die for sin; that the same nature which had sinned, might give satisfaction for sin.

And further, to make us completely happy, he has not only taken away the legal enmity on God's part, but the natural anmity on our part; for he sanctifies those whom he reconciles initially in this life, but perfectly and completely in the next, and where and when they shall be presented holy, unblameable, and unreproveable, to his heavenly Father.

22 in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and
unblamable and unreprovable in his sight:
23 if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved
away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which
was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I
Paul am made a minister;

Here our apostle declares to the Colossians, how they may know whether they were indeed of the number of those who were actually reconciled to God by the blood of his Son, namely, if they persevered in the faith, and continued grounded fast in their holy religion; If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled; implying, that it is the great duty of Christians, who have sat under the preaching of the gospel, to be well settled in the doctrine of faith, which they have heard and received, and that the best way to be settled, is to be well grounded; if we are not settled in religion, we can never grow in religion; an ungrounded Christian can never be a growing Christian; and if we are not well grounded in the faith, we

can never suffer for the faith; for such as are sceptics in religion, will never prove martyrs for the sake of religion.

Observe, 2. The universality of that tender, which by the preaching of the gospel is made unto all sorts of sinners, of reconciliation with God, and acceptance through Christ; which gospel was preached to every creature under heaven; that is to lost mankind, to some of all sorts; not in Judea only, but amongst the Gentiles also; to every human creature, no person, no nation being refused or passed by; plainly intimating, that an indefinite and universal tender of reconciliation with God, and salvation by Jesus Christ, is made unto all person, by the preaching of the gospel.

Happy they, whose hearts are inclined and disposed to accept of, and comply with them, who in the day of the gospel's visitation, do know the things of their peace.

24 who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

As if the apostle had said, "I am not only contented with, but I greatly rejoice in, my sufferings for you converted Gentiles, and help, as much as in me lies, to fill up some part of that which is, by God's decree, behind, unfulfilled of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church."

Note here, 1. That Almighty God has decreed such a measure of sufferings to his church, whereof Christ, as the head, underwent a considerable part and proportion, when he was here upon earth, in his poverty, in his labours, in his sufferings, both in life, and at his death.

Note, 2. That there is yet a remainder of sufferings, assigned over by Christ unto his members, which must be filled up by them, whreof St. Paul had a great share, and every believer must have some share; for, as long as Christ has a member upon the earth, there will be something for that member to suffer.

Note, 3. That those sufferings which Christ's members suffer, are the sufferings of Christ; the sufferings of the members are the sufferings of the Head, being undergone for the sake of the Head. Christ, in his natural body considered, can suffer no more; but in his mystical body, in his members, he daily suffers, and will suffer, till the measure of sufferings is filled up which God hath determined.

Quest. But why are Christ's sufferings in and by his members thus to be prolonged, yea, perpetuated?
Ans. Not by way of satisfaction for sin, not in order to reconciliation with God, but in order to the conversion of the world, for example to others, for perfecting of their own graces, and for increasing of their glory.

25 whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of
God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;
26 *even* the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from
generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ, as a Redeemer, was long hid from the knowledge of the Gentiles; and that at last they were brought to the knowledge of Christ, and the participation of gospel privileges was a great mystery awfully to be admired, and a glorious mercy with all thankfulness to be acknowledged, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles-which is Christ, in you, the hope of glory, which gospel, preached amongst you, and received and entertained by you, is an earnest and ground of your hope of glory.

Note here, 1. That Christ is in, and among believers; he is among them by the preaching of the gospel, he is in them by the inhabitation of his holy Spirit.

Note, 2. That all true believers, whilst here on earth, have an hope of glory.

Note, 3. That Christ's indwelling presence in the souls of believers by his holy Spirit, is an earnest of that glory, and an evident demonstration of their hope of it: Believers have in them a glorious

hope, they have before them a glory hoped for; Christ is the ground of both, by him we obtain the end of our hope, even the salvation of our souls.

27 to whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Colossians-2

1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and *for* them at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

What was the ground and occasion of St. Paul's inexpressible agony and concern of spirit, for and on behalf of these Colossians; namely this, there was a number of men risen up who began very early to corrupt the purity and simplicity of the gospel and the Christian religion: a sort they were, partly of Judaizing, and partly Paganizing Christians; the former joined the Jewish ceremonies, the latter the Gentiles impurities, even in worship with the Christian religion.
Now the urgency of this case put the solicitous and concerned spirit of this great apostle into an inexpressible agony, as his words here intimate; I would ye knew what a conflict I have for you and your near neighbours of Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.

The men of the world little understand, and less consider, what burden of solicitous care lies upon the ministers of Christ, for and on behalf of the whole church of Christ in general, which is continually in danger of being corrupted by false teachers, who everywhere lie in wait to deceive.

2 that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

Our apostle having discovered, in the former verse, that inward anxiety of mind which he laboured under, on the behalf of these Colossians, doth, in these words, propose an expedient how the threatening danger might be averted, namely, by mutual love one to another, and by a clear and effacious faith of the gospel; by these he reckons they would be so closely compacted together, as that no subtlety or violence could endanger them: If, by faith, they did cleave close to God and Christ, and by love keep close to one another, he firmly believed they would give no enemies an opportunity, either to be the successful authors, or the delighted spectators of their ruin.

Learn hence, That the maintaining of sincere love amongst Christians, and the improving of their faith to greater measure of certainty and efficacy, in reference to the substantials of Christianity, are the best means to unite, establish, and preserve them against the fatal danger of a ruinous apostasy: That their hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, &c.

3 in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

That is, in Jesus Christ, and in his gospel, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, laid up as in a store-house, and from thence are they only to be expected and derived. The knowledge of Christ and his gospel is an extensive and comprehensive knowledge, a rich and enriching knowledge; the chiefest gain is loss, and the richest treasure is dung, when Christ's riches are displayed; and after all that we have or can attain unto, of the knowledge of Christ, his works is unsearchable, no finite understanding can reach the depth thereof; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

Note here, How exceedingly desirous the apostle was, that the Colossians might continue sound in the Christian faith, and be preserved out of the hands of false teachers, who by false arguments, and ensnaring persuasions sought to beguile them, in matters of religion: We are in greater danger from the subtle seducer, than we are from the fiery persecutor; sophistical arguments, and insinuating persuasions, captivate those persons whom violence could never have brought over to their party; therefore is our apostle so earnest

with the Colossians, that none should beguile them with inticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit,
joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith
in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in
him:

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord. Have received him by faith as your Saviour, or as you were instructed respecting his rank, character, and work. The object here is to induce them not to swerve from the views which they had of Christ when he was made known to them. This is, "As you have received the doctrine of Christ Jesus, the Lord, by the preaching of Epaphras, and therein have embraced Christ by faith, so do you constantly adhere to that doctrine, conforming you lives thereunto; and seeing you are thus implanted into Christ, be like trees, well and deeply rooted in him, or like a house, firmly built upon him, as the only sure and abiding foundation."

Learn, That such as have received the grace of God in truth, ought, to labour after stability in grace and establishment in the true religion, that they may stand like a rock, immoveable in assaults, and unshaken amidst all the batteries that may be made upon their faith by heretics and seducers.

So walk ye in him. Continue in those views of Christ; live in the maintenance of them; let them regulate your whole conduct. The word walk, in the Scriptures, is used to denote the manner of life; and the sense here is, that they should live and act wholly under the influence of the conceptions which they had of the Saviour when they first embraced him. The particle "so" is supplied by our translators, and rather weakens the sense. No stress should be laid on it, as is often done. The meaning is, simply, "Since you have received Christ as your Lord as he was preached to you, hold fast the doctrine which you have received, and do not permit yourselves to be turned aside by any Jewish teachers, or teachers of philosophy."

7 rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have
been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,
after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and
not after Christ.

The apostle cautions the Colossians against deceivers (Col 2:4): And this I say lest any man beguile you with enticing words; and Col 2:8, Lest any man spoil you. He insists so much upon the perfection of Christ and the gospel revelation, to preserve them from the ensnaring insinuations of those who would corrupt their principles.

Note, 1 The way in which Satan spoils souls is by beguiling them. He deceives them, and by this means slays them. He is the old serpent who beguiled Eve through his subtlety, 2Co 11:3. He could not ruin us if he did not cheat us; and he could not cheat us but by our own fault and folly.

2. Satan's agents, who aim to spoil them, beguile them with enticing words. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the flattery of those who lie in wait to deceive, and by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles and wicked practices. By good words, and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple, Ro 16:18. "You ought to stand upon your guard against enticing words, and be aware and afraid of those who would entice you to any evil; for that which they aim at is to spoil you." If sinners entice thee, consent thou not, Pr 1:10. Observe,

I. A sovereign antidote against seducers (Col 2:6,7): As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in him, rooted and built up, &c. Here note,

1. All Christians have, in profession at least, received Jesus Christ the Lord, received him as Christ, the great prophet of the church, anointed by God to reveal his will; as Jesus the great high priest, and Saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself; and as Lord, or sovereign and king, whom we are to obey and be

subject to.--Received him, consented to him, taken him for ours in every relation and every capacity, and for all the purposes and uses of them.

2 The great concern of those who have received Christ is to walk in him--to make their practices conformable to their principles and their conversation agreeable to their engagements. As we have received Christ, or consented to be his, so we must walk with him in our daily course and keep up our communion with him.

3. The more closely we walk with Christ the more we are rooted and established in the faith. A good conversation is the best establishment of a good faith. If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him; and the more firmly we are rooted in him the more closely we shall walk in him: Rooted and built up. Observe, We cannot be built up in Christ, unless we be first rooted in him. We must be united to him by a lively faith, and heartily consent to his covenant, and then we shall grow up in him in all things.--As you have been taught--"according to the rule of the Christian doctrine, in which you have been instructed." Observe, A good education has a good influence upon our establishment. We must be established in the faith, as we have been taught, abounding therein. Observe, Being established in the faith, we must abound therein, and improve in it more and more; and this with thanksgiving. The way to have the benefit and comfort of God's grace is to be much in giving thanks for it. We must join thanksgiving to all our improvements, and be sensible of the mercy of all our privileges and attainments. Observe,

II The fair warning given us of our danger: Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, Col 2:8. There is a philosophy which is a noble exercise of our reasonable faculties, and highly serviceable to religion, such a study of the works of God as leads us to the knowledge of God and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is vain and deceitful, which is prejudicial to religion, and sets up the wisdom of man in competition with the wisdom of God, and while it pleases men's fancies ruins their faith; as nice and curious speculations about

things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or a care of words and terms of art, which have only an empty and often a cheating appearance of knowledge. After the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world: this plainly reflects upon the Jewish pedagogy or economy, as well as the Pagan learning. The Jews governed themselves by the traditions of their elders and the rudiments or elements of the world, the rites and observances which were only preparatory and introductory to the gospel state; the Gentiles mixed their maxims of philosophy with their Christian principles; and both alienated their minds from Christ. Those who pin their faith on other men's sleeves, and walk in the way of the world, have turned away from following after Christ. The deceivers were especially the Jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in competition with it and contradiction to it.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

Had they then the Shechinah, or special presence of God, called the glory, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ (Col 2:9): For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the cherubim, in a cloud which covered the mercy-seat; but now it dwells in the person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature, and is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and has more clearly declared the Father to us. It dwells in him bodily; not as the body is opposed to the spirit, but as the body is opposed to the shadow. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in the Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and man. That is, this was the great and central doctrine that was to be maintained about Christ, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him. Every system which denied this was a denial of the doctrine which they had been taught; and against everything that would go to undermine this, they were especially to be on their guard. Almost all heresy has been begun by some form of the denial of the great central truth of the incarnation of the Son of God.

Here St. Paul gives a reason of the foregoing caution against philosophy; for in him, that is, in Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; As if he had said, "Let no man impose upon you by a lame and imperfect philosophy, there is no need of that, for

now there is introduced an absolute and complete doctrine, namely, that of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has the fulness of all divine wisdom in it, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in himself, that is personally and substantially."

Where note, That the apostle says not, that the Godhead is assistant to Christ, but, that it resideth or dwelleth in him; as the Deity dwelt in the the ark symbolically, so it dwelt in Christ bodily.
Note farther, That Christ is not here said to be filled with the fulness of God, as the church is said to be, Eph 1:23 in regard of the gifts and graces which she had received from him; but the whole fulness of the Godhead is here said to reside in him, which can argue him to be no less than really and truly God, his complete essence dwelleth in him. Well might the apostle therefore add, Ye are complete in him Col 2:10, wanting no requisite to salvation; ye need not go to the philosophers for knowledge, for in Christ you have complete wisdom; he is above all Pagan philosophers and Jewish Rabbies; nay, he is the Head of all principalities and powers; that is, above the highest angel in heaven.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

And ye are complete in him. Having no need, for the purposes of salvation, of any aid to be derived from the philosophy of the Greeks, or the traditions of the Jews. All that is necessary to secure your salvation is to be found in the Lord Jesus. There is a completion, or a filling up, in him, so as to leave nothing wanting. This is true in respect

(1.) to the wisdom which is needful to guide us;

(2.) the atonement to be made for sin;

(3.) the merit by which a sinner can be justified; and

(4.) the grace which is needful to sustain us in the trials, and to aid us in the duties of life. 1Cor 1:30. There is no necessity, therefore, that we should look to the aid of philosophy, as if there was a defect in the teachings of the Saviour; or to human strength, as if he were

unable to save us; or to the merits of the saints, as if those of the Redeemer were not sufficient to meet all our wants.

11 in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

The apostle had asserted before, that we are complete in Christ: He proves it now, thus; we want not circumcision: Why? Because we have in Christ the thing signified by circumcision, namely, the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which consists in putting off, by the power of Christ's Spirit, the body of natural corruption; which done, there was no need of the outward circumcision made with hands, or the cutting off the flesh of the fore-skin.

Observe, Original corruption is a body, or, as a body to us, it cleaves as close to the soul as the flesh to the bones. This body, with all its members, we must be cutting daily by spiritual circumcision or real mortification; and, where that is done, God is well pleased: He regards not that cirumcision which is outward in the flesh, which is made with hands, but that which is inward, the circumcision of the heart, and of the Spirit, whose praise is not of man, but of God.

Had they circumcision, which was the seal of the covenant? In Christ we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands (Col 2:11), by the work of regeneration in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, Ro 2:29. This is owing to Christ, and belongs to the Christian dispensation. It is made without hands; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the blessed Spirit of God. We are born of the Spirit, Joh 3:5. And it is the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Tit 3:5. It consists in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, in renouncing sin and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1Pe 3:21. And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of sin. The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, Ro 6:6. Christ was circumcised, and, by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that effectual grace which puts off the body of the sins

of the flesh. Again, The Jews thought themselves complete in the ceremonial law; but we are complete in Christ, Col 2:10. That was imperfect and defective; if the first covenant had been faultless, there would no place have been sought for the second (Heb 8:7), and the law was but a shadow of good things, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect, Heb 10:1. But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete sacrifice for sin and revelation of the will of God. Which is the head of all principality and power.

Ye are circumcised. You have received that which was designed to be represented by circumcision--the putting away of sin. Php 3:3. With the circumcision made without hands. That made in the heart by the renunciation of all sin. The Jewish teachers insisted on the necessity of the literal circumcision in order to salvation, (comp. Eph 2:11;) and hence this subject is so often introduced into the writings of Paul, and he is at so much pains to show that, by believing in Christ, all was obtained which was required in order to salvation. Circumcision was an ordinance by which it was denoted that all sin was to be cut off or renounced, and that he who was circumcised was to be devoted to God and to a holy life. All this, the apostle says, was obtained by the gospel; and, consequently, they had all that was denoted by the ancient rite of circumcision. What Christians had obtained, moreover, related to the heart; it was not a mere ordinance pertaining to the flesh. In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh. That is, in renouncing the deeds of the flesh, or becoming holy. The word "body," here, seems to be used with reference to circumcision. In that ordinance, the body of the FLESH was subjected to the rite; with Christians, it is the body of sin that is cut off. By the circumcision of Christ. Not by the fact that Christ was circumcised, but that we have that kind of circumcision which Christ established--to wit, the renouncing of sin. The idea of the apostle here seems to be, that since we have thus been enabled by Christ to renounce sin, and to devote ourselves to God, we should not be induced, by any plausible arguments, to return to an ordinance pertaining to the flesh, as if that were needful for salvation.

12 buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking (Col 2:12): Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you have risen with him. We are both buried and rise with him, and both are signified by our baptism; not that there is anything in the sign or ceremony of baptism which represents this burying and rising, any more than the crucifixion of Christ is represented by any visible resemblance in the Lord's supper: and he is speaking of the circumcision made without hands; and says it is through the faith of the operation of God. But the thing signified by our baptism is that we are buried with Christ, as baptism is the seal of the covenant and an obligation to our dying to sin; and that we are raised with Christ, as it is a seal and obligation to our living to righteousness, or newness of life. God in baptism engages to be to us a God, and we become engaged to be his people, and by his grace to die to sin and to live to righteousness, or put off the old man and put on the new.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

And the uncircumcision of your flesh. That is, Gentiles, and giving unrestrained indulgence to the desires of the flesh. They lived as those who had not by any religious rite or covenant brought themselves under obligations to lead holy lives.

Christ's death is our life: And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, Col 2:13. A state of sin is a state of spiritual death. Those who are in sin are dead in sin. As the death of the body consists in its separation from the soul, so the death of the soul consists in its separation from God and the divine favour. As the death of the body is the corruption and putrefaction of it, so sin is the corruption or depravation of the soul. As a man who is dead is unable to help himself by any power of his own, so an habitual sinner is morally impotent: though he has a natural power, or the power of a reasonable creature, he has not a spiritual power, till he has the divine life or a renewed nature. It is principally to be understood of the Gentile world, who lay in

wickedness. They were dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh, being aliens to the covenant of promise, and without God in the world, Eph 2:11,12. By reason of their uncircumcision they were dead in their sins. It may be understood of the spiritual uncircumcision or corruption of nature; and so it shows that we are dead in law, and dead in state. Dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is called a dead man because he is under a sentence of death; so sinners by the guilt of sin are under the sentence of the law and condemned already, Joh 3:18. And dead in state, by reason of the uncircumcision of our flesh. An unsanctified heart is called an uncircumcised heart: this is our state. Now through Christ we, who were dead in sins, are quickened; that is, effectual provision is made for taking away the guilt of sin, and breaking the power and dominion of it. Quickened together with him--by virtue of our union to him, and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls.

14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,
which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his
cross;

Whatever was in force against us is taken out of the way. He has obtained for us a legal discharge from the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us (Col 2:14), which may be understood, 1. Of that obligation to punishment in which consists the guilt of sin. The curse of the law is the hand-writing against us, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's wall. Cursed is every one who continues not in every thing. This was a hand-writing which was against us, and contrary to us; for it threatened our eternal ruin. This was removed when he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Ga 3:13. He cancelled the obligation for all who repent and believe. "Upon me be the curse, my father." He vacated and disannulled the judgment which was against us. When he was nailed to the cross, the curse was as it were nailed to the cross. And our indwelling corruption is crucified with Christ, and by virtue of his cross. When we remember the dying of the Lord Jesus, and see him nailed to the cross, we should see the hand-writing against us taken out of the way. Or rather, 2. It must be understood of the ceremonial law, the hand-writing of ordinances, the ceremonial institutions or the law of commandments contained in ordinances (Eph 2:15), which was a

yoke to the Jews and a partition-wall to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross; that is, disannulled the obligation of it, that all might see and be satisfied that it was no more binding. When the substance came, the shadows fled away. It is abolished (2Co 3:13), and that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away, Heb 8:13. The expressions are in allusion to the ancient methods of cancelling a bond, either by crossing the writing or striking it through with a nail.

Now, says the apostle, your debt of sin is paid to the justice of God, by the death of Christ; and seeing the obligation is cancelled, it would be madness and impiety to renew it again, as those do who plead for circumcision and practise the legal ceremonies.

Note here, There was an obligation upon every man to undergo the curse of the law; for violating the commands of the law, there was an handwriting against us. The obligation must be cancelled, before the condemning power of the law can be abolished, and sin pardoned: None but Christ could cancel this obligation? and not he neither, without paying the full sum payable from us; Christ when hanging on the cross, did nail this handwriting to his cross, which shall never be produced in judgment against the penitent believer; but this obligation remains upon the file uncancelled, with respect to all sinners who live and die in their sins, and they shall always lie in prison, ever satisfying, but never able fully to satisfy this obligation.

Blotting out the handwriting. The word rendered handwriting means something written by the hand, a manuscript; and here, probably, the writings of the Mosaic law, or the law appointing many ordinances or observances in religion. The allusion is probably to a written contract, in which we bind ourselves to do any work, or to make a payment, and which remains in force against us until the bond is cancelled. That might be done either by blotting out the names, or by drawing lines through it, or, as appears to have been practised in the east, by driving a nail through it. The Jewish ceremonial law is here represented as such a contract, binding those under it to its observance, until it was nailed to the cross. The meaning here is, that the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law are abolished, and

that its necessity is superseded by the death of Christ. His death had the same effect, in reference to those ordinances, as if they had been blotted from the statute-book. This it did by fulfilling them, by introducing a more perfect system and by rendering their observance no longer necessary, since all that they were designed to typify had been now accomplished in a better way. Eph 2:15. Of ordinances. Prescribing the numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. That was against us. That is, against our peace, happiness, comfort; or, in other words, which was oppressive and burdensome. Comp. Acts 15:10. Those ordinances bound and lettered the soul, restrained the expansive spirit of true piety which seeks the salvation of all alike, and thus operated as a hinderance to the enlarged spirit of true religion. Thus they really operated against the truly pious Jew, whose religion would lead him to seek the salvation of the world; and to the Gentile, since he was not in a situation to avail himself of them, and since they would be burdensome if he could. It is in this sense, probably, that the apostle uses the word "us," as referring to all, and as cramping and restraining the true nature of religion. Which was contrary to us. Operated as a hinderance, or obstruction, in the matter of religion. The ordinances of the Mosaic law were necessary, in order to introduce the gospel; but they were always burdensome. They were to be confined to one people; and if they were continued, they would operate to prevent the spread of the true religion around the world. 2Cor 3:7,9. Hence the exulting language of the apostle in view of the fact that they were now taken away, and that the benefits of religion might be diffused all over the world. The gospel contains nothing which is "against," or "contrary to," the true interest and happiness of any nation or any class of men. And took it out of the way. Gr., "Out of the midst;" that is, he wholly removed it. He has removed the obstruction, so that it no longer prevents union and harmony between the Jews and the Gentiles. Nailing it to his cross. As if he had nailed it to his cross, so that it would be entirely removed out of our way. The death of Jesus had the same effect, in regard to the rites and institutions of the Mosaic religion, as if they had been affixed to his cross. It is said that there is an allusion here to the ancient method by which a bond or obligation was cancelled, by driving a nail through it, and affixing it to a post. This was practised, says Grotius, in Asia. In a somewhat similar manner, in our banks

now, a sharp instrument, like the blade of a knife, is driven through a check, making a hole through it, and furnishing to the teller of the bank a sign or evidence that it has been paid. If this be the meaning, then the expression here denotes that the obligation of the Jewish institutions ceased on the death of Jesus, as if he had taken them and nailed them to his own cross, in the manner in which a bond was cancelled.

15 *and* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

And having spoiled. Plundered; as a victorious army does a conquered country. Col 2:8. The terms used in this verse are all military; and the idea is, that Christ has completely subdued our enemies by his death. A complete victory was achieved by his death, so that everything is now in subjection to him, and we have nothing to fear. Principalities and powers. Eph 1:21; Eph 6:12. The "principalities and powers" here referred to, are the formidable enemies that had held man in subjection, and prevented his serving God. There can be no doubt, I think, that the apostle refers to the ranks of fallen, evil spirits which had usurped a dominion over the world. Jn 12:31; Eph 2:2 The Saviour, by his death, wrested the dominion from them, and seized upon what they had captured, as a conqueror seizes upon his prey. Satan and his legions had invaded the earth, and drawn its inhabitants into captivity, and subjected them to their evil reign. Christ, by his death, subdues the invaders, and recaptures those whom they had subdued. He made a show of them openly. As a conqueror, returning from a victory, displays in a triumphal procession the kings and princes whom he has taken, and the spoils of victory. This was commonly done when a "triumph" was decreed for a conqueror. On such occasions, it sometimes happened that a considerable number of prisoners were led along amidst the scenes of triumph. 2Cor 2:14. Paul says that this was now done "openly"--that is, it was in the face of the whole universe; a grand victory; a glorious triumph over all the powers of hell. It does not refer to any public procession or display on the earth; but to the grand victory as achieved in view of the universe, by which Christ, as a conqueror, dragged Satan and his legions at his triumphal car. Comp. Rom 16:20. Triumphing over them in it. Marg., "or, himself." Either "by the cross," or "by himself." Or, it may mean, as Rosenmuller

suggests, that "God Col 2:12 triumphed over these foes in him; i.e., in Christ." The sense is substantially the same, that this triumph was effected by the atonement made for sin by the Redeemer. See the word triumph explained in the 2Cor 2:14. The meaning of all this is, that since Christ has achieved for us such a victory, and has subdued all the foes of man, we should not be led captive, but should regard ourselves as freemen. We should not be made again the slaves of custom, or habit, or ritual observances, or superstitious rites, or anything whatever that has its origin in the kingdom of darkness. We are bound to assert and to use our freedom, and should not allow any hostile power, in the form of philosophy or false teaching of any kind, to plunder or "spoil" us, Col 2:8. The Christian is a freeman. His great Captain has subdued all his enemies, and we should not allow them again to set up their dark empire over our souls. The argument of the apostle in these verses Col 2:13-15 is derived from what Christ has done for us. He mentions four things. (1.) He has given us spiritual life; (2.) he has forgiven all our trespasses; (3.) he has blotted out or abolished the "ordinances" that were against us; and (4.) he has triumphed over all our foes. From all this he infers Col 2:16, seq. that we should not be made captive or subdued by any of the rights of superstition, or any of the influences of the kingdom of darkness.

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days:*

Let no man therefore judge you. Rom 14:10,13. The word judge here is used in the sense of pronouncing a sentence. The meaning is, "since you have thus been delivered by Christ from the evils which surrounded you; since you have been freed from the observances of the law, let no one sit in judgment on you, or claim the right to decide for you in those matters. You are not responsible to man for your conduct, but to Christ; and no man has a right to impose that on you as a burden from which he has made you free." In meat. Marg., for eating and drinking. The meaning is, "in respect to the various articles of food and drink." There is reference here, undoubtedly, to the distinctions which the Jews made on this subject, implying that an effort had been made by Jewish teachers to show them that the Mosaic laws were binding on all. Or in respect of an holyday. Marg., part. The meaning is, "in the part, or the particular of a holyday; that is, in respect to it." The word rendered

"holyday" --εορτη means, properly, a feast or festival; and the allusion here is to the festivals of the Jews. The sense is, that no one had a right to impose their observance on Christians, or to condemn them if they did not keep them. They had been delivered from that obligation by the death of Christ, Col 2:14. Or of the new moon. On the appearance of the new moon, among the Hebrews, in addition to the daily sacrifices, two bullocks, a ram, and seven sheep, with a meat-offering, were required to be presented to God, Nu 10:10, 28:11-14. The new moon in the beginning of the month Tisri (October) was the beginning of their civil year, and was commanded to be observed as a festival, Lev 23:24,25. Or of the sabbath days. Gr, "of the sabbaths." The word Sabbath in the Old Testament is applied not only to the seventh day, but to all the days of holy rest that were observed by the Hebrews, and particularly to the beginning and close of their great festivals. There is, doubtless, reference to those days in this place, as the word is used in the plural number, and the apostle does not refer particularly to the Sabbath properly so called. There is no evidence, from this passage, that he would teach that there was no obligation to observe any holy time, for there is not the slightest reason to believe that he meant to teach that one of the ten commandments had ceased to be binding on mankind. If he had used the word in the singular number --"THE Sabbath"--it would then, of course, have been clear that he meant to teach that that commandment had ceased to be binding, and that a sabbath was no longer to be observed. But the use of the term in the plural number, and the connexion, show that he had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law-- and not to the moral law, or the ten commandments. No part of the moral law-- no one of the ten commandments -- could be spoken of as "a shadow of good things to come." These commandments are, from the nature of moral law, of perpetual and universal obligation.

Here we have an inference or conclusion drawn by our apostle from the foregoing argument, that seeing the ceremonial law was now abolished, therefore none should take upon them to judge or condemn another for not observing any of the legal ceremonies, either those that related to meats, that is, the difference to be

observed in meats, or the other relating to the difference to be observed in days.

Here note, That the days observed amongst the Jews, were of three sorts: Anniversary, which returned every year, called here an holy day; Lunary which returned every month, the first day of every new moon; Weekly, which returned every week, and on the seventh day of every week: All which are abrogated, even the Jewish seventh-day sabbath; and the Lord's day, or the Christian's first-day sabbath, substituted in its place, 1Cor 16:2.

Observe here, 1. That there is both a sinful and a lawful abstinence from meats; that abstinence is sinful, when men abstain from some meats, under pretence of holiness and conscience, as if some meats were unclean, or less holy in their own natures than others, 1Tim 4:4 or as if simple abstinence at any time were a thing acceptable to God in itself, without respect had to the end for which it is sometimes required.

But there is a three-fold abstinence from meats, which is lawful; Political, enjoined by the magistrate for civil ends; Medicinal, prescribed by the physician for health's preservation; Ecclesiastical, when God by his providence, and the voice of his church, calls his people to fasting.

Observe, 2. The reason alledged by the apostle, why Christians should not judge one another, with respect to meats and drinks, times and seasons, namely, because those legal ceremonies were but dark shadows of things to come; but the body and substance, represented by those shadows, is Christ come in the flesh: And consequently, to observe the ceremonies, and regard these shadows under the gospel, is in effect to say, That Christ the body is not yet come.

Here note, 1. The title given to the ceremonial worship, it is styled a shadow, because it was a dark and imperfect representation of the truth: What is a shadow, but the coming of a thick body posed between Christ the true light and us, and so casts a shadow of him.

Note, 2. The title given to Christ with respect to the shadows of the ceremonial law, he is the body and the substance of them; now as the shadow vanishes when the substance is come, so these ceremonial ordinances were to cease upon the coming of Christ; and to observe them now, under the gospel, is in effect to say, that Christ is not yet come in the flesh.

Note, 3. That the Jewish sabbath was a ceremonial ordinance, and a part of that handwriting of ordinances which was to be blotted out by Christ; and consequently the Christian is not obliged to observe it.
As the distinction of meats and drinks and the observation of the new moons were confessedly ceremonial; so was also the Jewish sabbath, which with the rest was equally cancelled by Christ as a part of the handwriting of ordinances; so that to observe the Jewish sabbath, or to condemn the Christian for not observing it, is as much a denial, that Christ is come in the flesh as to observe circumcision, or any other part of the ceremonial law.

17 which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.
18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and
worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath
not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

Let no man beguile you of your reward. Marg., judge against you. The word here used καταβραβευω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is a word which was employed with reference to the distribution of prizes at the Grecian games, and means, to give the prize against any one, to deprive of the palm. Hence it means to deprive of a due reward; and the sense here is, that they were to be on their guard lest the "reward"--the crown of victory to which they looked forward--should be wrested from them by the arts of others. That would be done if they should be persuaded to turn back, or to falter in the race. The only way to secure the prize was to hold on in

the race which they were then running; but if they yielded to the philosophy of the Greeks, and the teachings of the Jews, they would be defrauded of this reward as certainly as a racer at the games would if the crown of victory should be unjustly awarded to another. In this case, too, as real injustice would be done, though the apostle does not say it would be in the same manlier. Here it would be by art--in the case of the racer it would be by a wrong decision; but in either case the crown was lost. This exhortation has the more force from this consideration. Against an unjust judge we could have no power; but we may take care that the reward be not wrested from us by fraud. In a voluntary humility. Marg. "being a voluntary in humility." Tindal renders this, "Let no man make you shoot at a wrong mark, which, after his own imagination, walketh in the humbleness of angels." The word used here (ταπεινοφροσυνη) means, lowliness of mind, modesty, humbleness of deportment; and the apostle refers, doubtless, to the spirit assumed by those against whom he would guard the Colossians--the spirit of modesty or of humble inquirers. The meaning is, that they would not announce their opinions with dogmatic certainty, but they would put on the appearance of great modesty. In this way, they would become really more dangerous--for no false teachers are so dangerous as those who assume the aspect of great humility, and who manifest great reverence for Divine things. The word rendered "voluntary" here θελων --does not, properly, belong to the word rendered "humility." It rather appertains to the subsequent part of the sentence, and means that the persons referred to were willing, or had pleasure in attempting, to search into the hidden and abstruse things of religion. They were desirous of appearing to do this with an humble spirit--even with the modesty of an angel--but still they had pleasure in that profound and dangerous kind of inquiry. And worshipping of angels. θρησκειατωναγγελων. This does not mean, as it seems to me, that they would themselves worship angels, or that they would teach others to do it--for there is no reason to believe this. Certainly the Jewish teachers, whom the apostle seems to have had particularly in his eye, would not do it; nor is there any evidence that any class of false teachers would deliberately teach that angels were to be worshipped. The reference is rather to the profound reverence--the spirit of lowly piety--which the angels evinced, and to the fact that the teachers referred to would

assume the same spirit, and were, therefore, the more dangerous. They would come professing profound regard for the great mysteries of religion, and for the incomprehensible perfections of the Divinity, and would approach the subject professedly with the awful veneration which the angels have when they "look into these things," 1Pet 1:12. There was no bold, irreverent, or confident declamation, but the danger in the case arose from the fact that they assumed so much the aspect of modest piety; so much the appearance of the lowly devotion of angelic beings. The word here rendered worship θρησκεια--occurs in the New Testament only here, in Acts 26:6, Jas 1:26,27, in each of which places it is rendered religion. It means here the religion, or the spirit of humble reverence and devotion which is evinced by the angels; and this accords well with the meaning in Jas 1:26,27. Intruding into those things which he hath not seen. Or, inquiring into them. The word used here (εμβατευων) means, to go in, or enter; then to investigate, to inquire. It has not, properly, the meaning of intruding, or of impertinent inquiry, (see Passow,) and I do not see that the apostle meant to characterize the inquiry here as such. He says that it was the object of their investigations to look, with great professed modesty and reverence, into those things which are not visible to the eye of mortals. The "things" which seem here to be particularly referred to, are the abstruse questions respecting the mode of the Divine subsistence; the ranks, orders, and employments of angelic beings; and the obscure doctrines relating to the Divine government and plans. These questions comprised most of the subjects of inquiry in the Oriental and Grecian philosophy, and inquiries on these the apostle apprehended would tend to draw away the mind from the "simplicity that is in Christ." Of these subjects, what can be known more than is revealed? Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. Notwithstanding the avowed "humility," the modesty, the angelic reverence, yet the mind was full of vain conceit, and self-confident, carnal wisdom. The two things are by no means incompatible --the men apparently most meek and modest being sometimes the most bold in their speculations, and the most reckless in regard to the great landmarks of truth. It is not so with true modesty, and real "angelic veneration," but all this is sometimes assumed for the purpose of deceiving; and sometimes there is a native appearance of modesty which is by no means an index of the true

feelings of the soul. The most meek and modest men in appearance are sometimes the most proud and reckless in their investigations of the doctrines of religion.

19 and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Our apostle having warned the Colossians against the errors of the Judaizing teachers, comes next to warn them against the practice of the Paganizing Christians, who were directd by their guides to worship the angels, covering their error with a plausible shew of humility, pretending it was presumptuous to go to God immediately, without the mediation of those excellent creatures; but this the apostle tells them was a bold intruding into things they knew nothing of, God having neither revealed nor taught any such thing; and argued, that they were vainly puffed up with the foolish imaginations of their own fleshly minds.

Next he shews, that these angel-worshippers do not acknowledge Christ for the Head of the church, while they apply themselves to angels as mediators; whereas he alone discharges the office of the Head, completely giving life and growth to his whole church, and to every member therof; which members being furnished with spiritual life from him, and knit to him, and one another by the joints and bands of charity and other graces, they grow and increase with such an increase of holiness as is from God, and tends to his glory.

Note here, 1. That the nature of man is prone, extremely prone, to idolatry and false worship.

2. That it is a really idolatry to worship an angel, as it is to worship a worm; for divine worship is only due to a divine person.

Note, 3. That it is a renouncing of Christ, to make use of angels, or any other mediator, besides Christ, unto the Father: not holding the head. It was a notion that the minds of mankind, that God was not to be immediately approached to by sinful men; but that their prayers were to be presented by certain mediators and intercessors, who were

to procure for them the favour of God, and the acceptance of their prayers.

Hence they worshipped angels, and the souls departed of their heroes, whom they canonized, and translated into the number of their inferior gods, by whom they addressed their supplications to their superior gods. With this notion Almighty God was pleased to comply so far, as under the Jewish institution to appoint Moses a mediator betwixt him and them; and now under the Christian dispensation to appoint Jesus Christ to be the only Mediator betwixt God and man.

Note, 4. That it is usual for idolaters, and false worshippers, to cover themselves with a more than ordinary show of humility: Let none beguile you in a voluntary humility.

True it is, that all duties of worship ought to be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed to constrained; but they must not be voluntary, as voluntary is opposed ot instituted or appointed; God doth no more approve of that worship we give him according to our will, than he doth approve of our neglect of that which is according to his own will. But man, vain man, likes any way of worshipping God which is of his own framing, much better than that which is of God's own appointing.

He cautions them to take heed of those who would introduce the worship of angels as mediators between God and them, as the Gentile philosophers did: Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, Col 2:18. It looked like a piece of modesty to make use of the mediation of angels, as conscious to ourselves of our unworthiness to speak immediately to God; but, though it has a show of humility, it is a voluntary, not a commanded humility; and therefore it is not acceptable, yea, it is not warrantable: it is taking that honour which is due to Christ only and giving it to a creature. Besides, the notions upon which this practice was grounded were merely the inventions of men and not by divine revelation,--the proud conceits of human reason, which make a man presume to dive into things, and determine them, without sufficient knowledge and warrant: Intruding into those things which he hath not

seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind--pretending to describe the order of angels, and their respective ministries, which God has hidden from us; and therefore, though there was a show of humility in the practice, there was a real pride in the principle. They advanced those notions to gratify their own carnal fancy, and were fond of being thought wiser than other people. Pride is at the bottom of a great many errors and corruptions, and even of many evil practices, which have great show and appearance of humility.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (touch not; taste not; handle not;

Our apostle being now in the close of this chapter, returns to expostulate, and argues the case with those who were willing to subject themselves to the observation of the old Jewish rites and ceremonies. He argues thus: "If says he, you profess yourselves in your baptism to be spiritually dead with Christ, and to be freed by his death from the Levitical ordinances, why are ye subject to those ordinances? Such are touch not, taste not, handle not; touch not any unclean thing, taste not any forbidden meat, handle not any consecrated vessel; all which observances were to perish necessarily with the very using: And whereas they were set of with a specious shew of wisdom, as if they were voluntary services and free-will offerings to God, he acknowledges, that they had indeed a shew of wisdom, a shew of humility, and seeming to give any honour to the satisfying of the flesh; but all this had nothing of spiritual devotion and piety in it."

Learn hence, 1. That such as do by baptism profess themselves to be dead with Christ to the ceremonial law, may certainly conclude, that the Jewish ceremonies have no more any power over them, or that they ought to yield themselves to the observation of them: If ye be dead with Christ, why are ye subject to ordinances?

Learn, 2. That though God approveth and accepteth willing worship, yet not will-worship, what fair shew soever it may seem to have, either of wisdom, humility, or mortification; whatever is the product of our fancies, is a very fornication in religion, and an abomination

in the sight of God, how pleasing soever it may be in the sight of men; and yet men are most forward to that service of God which is of man's finding out and setting up; man likes it better to worship a god of his own making, than to worship the God that made him; and likes any way of worshipping god which is of his own framing, more than that which is of God's appointing. Ah! Wretched heart of man, which, whilst it seems very zealous to worship and honour God, hath not zeal to do it in any other way than in that which reflects the highest dishonour upon him.

He takes occasion hence to warn them again: "Wherefore, if you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances? Col 2:20. If as Christians you are dead to the observances of the ceremonial law, why are you subject to them? Such observances as, Touch not, taste not, handle not," Col 2:21,22. Under the law there was a ceremonial pollution contracted by touching a dead body, or any thing offered to an idol; or by tasting any forbidden meats, &c., which all are to perish with the using, having no intrinsic worth in themselves to support them, and those who used them saw them perishing and passing away; or, which tend to corrupt the Christian faith, having no other authority than the traditions and injunctions of men.--Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility. They thought themselves wiser than their neighbours, in observing the law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ, that they might be sure in the one, at least, to be in the right; but, alas! it was but a show of wisdom, a mere invention and pretence. So they seem to neglect the body, by abstaining from such and such meats, and mortifying their bodily pleasures and appetites; but there is nothing of true devotion in these things, for the gospel teaches us to worship God in spirit and truth and not by ritual observances, and through the mediation of Christ alone and not of any angels. Observe,

1. Christians are freed by Christ from the ritual observances of Moses's law, and delivered from that yoke of bondage which God himself had laid upon them.

2. Subjection to ordinances, or human appointments in the worship of God, is highly blamable, and contrary to the freedom and liberty of the gospel. The apostle requires Christians to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, Ga 5:1. And the imposition of them is invading the authority of Christ, the head of the church, and introducing another law of commandments contained in ordinances, when Christ has abolished the old one, Eph 2:15. 3. Such things have only a show of wisdom, but are really folly. It is true wisdom to keep close to the appointments of the gospel, and an entire subjection to Christ, the only head of the church.

22 which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

Which things. Which scrupulous observance of the numerous precepts enjoining rites and ceremonies, the observance of days, and the distinctions between meats and drinks. Have indeed a show of wisdom. Have a great appearance of piety, and of regard for the will of God. They have a show of "wisdom," too, or of a deep acquaintance with divine things. They who insist on them appear to be learned in what constitutes religion, and to have a deep insight into its mysteries. Doubtless they who urged the obligation of these things laid claim to uncommon acquaintance with the nature of religion, and urged the observance of these things on the ground of their tendency to promote piety, just as they always do who insist much on the observance of religious rites and ceremonies. In will worship. Voluntary worship; that is, worship beyond what God strictly requires--supererogatory service. Probably many of these things they did not urge as being strictly required, but as conducing greatly to piety. The plea doubtless was, that piety might be promoted by service rendered beyond what was absolutely enjoined, and that thus there would be evinced a spirit of uncommon piety--a readiness not only to obey all that God required, but even to go beyond this, and to render him voluntary service. There is much plausibility in this; and this has been the

foundation of the appointment of the fasts and festivals of the church; of penances and self-inflicted tortures; of painful vigils and pilgrimages; of works of supererogation; and of the merits of the "saints." A large part of the corruptions of religion have arisen from this plausible, but deceitful argument. God knew best what things it was most conducive to piety for his people to observe; and we are most safe when we adhere most closely to what he has appointed, and observe no more days and ordinances than he has directed. There is much apparent piety about these things; but there is much wickedness of heart at the bottom, and there is nothing that more tends to corrupt pure religion. And humility. Col 2:18. There is a great show of reverence for divine things in the manner in which they pursue their investigations, and in their humble and meek compliance with painful rites and ceremonies; in fastings, abstinence, and penances. Under all this there lurks often the worst kind of pride; for "Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean." And neglecting of the body. Putting on sackcloth and ashes; subjecting it to painful fastings and penances; appearing in a form of squalid poverty, as if the body were not worth regarding, and as if the attention were so much engrossed by the nobler care of the soul, as to be entirely regardless of the body. Yet, we may observe,

(1.) God made the body as well as the soul, and has shown his care of it by its "being fearfully and wonderfully made," and by all the provision which he has made for its wants.

(2.) Religion pertains to the body as well as the soul, and should teach a man properly to regard it. Man is bound so to take care of the body, as to have the most health and the longest life possible in the service of his Creator, and so as to be able to employ it in the best manner. There is no religion in ragged or squalid clothing, in a dirty face, in offensive personal habits, in filth and defilement, and in setting at defiance the decencies of life.

(3.) Much affected sanctity may exist where there is a most proud and corrupt heart. A long face, a demure countenance, a studied disregard of the decencies of dress and the courtesies of life, as if they were unworthy of notice, may be the exponent of the most

hateful pride, and of the basest purposes of the soul. A man should be on his guard always against one who, under, pretence of extraordinary sanctity, professes to despise the ordinary dress and usages of society. Not in any honour. That is, there is no real honour in these things; there is nothing to ennoble and elevate the soul; nothing that is to be commended. To the satisfying of the flesh. The only effect is, to satisfy or please the flesh; that is, the carnal and corrupt nature, for so the word flesh is often used in the Scriptures. The effect of these observances, on which so much stress is laid as if they would promote piety, is merely to gratify pride, self-righteousness, the love of distinction, and the other carnal propensities of our nature. There seems to be a great deal of humility and piety in them; there is really little else than pride, selfishness, and ambition.

Colossians-3

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Observe here, 1. The nature of the duty to which we are exhorted; this is expressed both affirmatively and negatively; affirmatively, Seek the things above, and set your affections on them; negatively, Not on the things here on earth; it being impossible to seek and set our affections upon both in an intense degree.
Quest. But what is it to seek those things that are above, and to set our affections upon them?

Ans. In these two words, four things are comprehended;

1. An act of our understanding, that we know the worth of these things.

2. An act of the will, to chuse these things, and with the ardour and vehemency of our affections to love them.

3. An act of industry and endeavour in the pursuit of these things, if by any means we may attain them. Our affections are so many

springs of motion to set our endeavours on work for the obtaining of what we love and desire.

4. It implies a clear preference of the things above to things below, when they come in competition; set your affections more on things above than on the things below, and shew it by your readiness to part with these things. Not on things on the earth. Wealth, honour, pleasure. Our affections should not be fixed on houses and lands; on scenes of fashion and gaiety; on low and debasing enjoyments. He explains this duty (Col 3:2): Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Observe, To seek heavenly things is to set our affections upon them, to love them and let our desires be towards them. Upon the wings of affection the heart soars upwards, and is carried forth towards spiritual and divine objects. We must acquaint ourselves with them, esteem them above all other things, and lay out ourselves in preparation for the enjoyment of them. David gave this proof of his loving the house of God, that he diligently sought after it, and prepared for it, Ps 27:4. This is to be spiritually minded (Ro 8:6), and to seek and desire a better country, that is, a heavenly, Heb 11:14,16. Things on earth are here set in opposition to things above. We must not dote upon them, nor expect too much from them, that we may set our affections on heaven; for heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, and a supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to one will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other.

Observe, 2. What is the object of this act, or what it is that we are to seek and set our affections upon, namely, the things which are above; God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, together with the blessed state and condition of heaven, and the happiness above; as also those dispositions and qualifications which are requisite for the obtaining of this happiness and bringing us to the fruition of it; all these are comprehended in the latitude of the object, the things which are above.

Observe, 3. The arguments which our apostle uses to excite us to this duty:

1. If ye be risen with Christ, that is, if ye believe that Christ is risen, and if ye will bear a conformity and resemblance to him in his resurrection, and be made partakers of the power and virtue of it; for Christ's resurrection is of the power and virtue of it; for Christ's resurrection is not only a pattern, but a principle; it has a power and efficacy in it to raise us up to a spiritual life; If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.

2. A second argument is drawn from Christ's exaltation in heaven: he sitteth on the right hand of God; which words declare the exaltation of his human nature, and his being advanced to be the supreme King and Governor of his church.
Now the force of this argument lies in the relation that is between the Head and the members, between Christ and Christians; as the Head has an influence upon the members, so the members have an affection for the Head, which makes them aspire heavenwards, where their Head is; because their glorified Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God, by the power of his Spirit, draws out their affection towards him: If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things above.

As if St. Paul had said "I'd Christ our Head risen, and ascended into heaven? Let us in our hearts and affections follow him thither, and patiently wait till he receive our souls, and raise our bodies, and take us wholly to himself, that we may be forever with the Lord."

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Here we have a fresh argument to enforce the foregoing exhortation, Seek the things above, for ye are dead, that is, dead to sin, dead to the world, therefore be not over eager in the pursuit of the things below.

How affrighting a sight would it be, to see a dead man rise out of his grave, and converse with the world, and follow the things here below!

As affecting is it to see Christians, who by baptismal profession do own themsleves to be dead to the world, yet buried in the world; and

instead of setting their affections on things above, pursuing, with the full bent of their desires, the things below. Ye are dead, it follows, your life is hid with Christ in God:

Your life, that is, your spiritual life of grace, and your eternal life of glory, they are both hid with Christ, now with God in heaven.
Hid in Christ, 1. As the effect is in the cause, as the life of the branchs is hid in the root, so is the life of a Christian hid in Christ; he is our root.

Again, hid in Christ, that is, 2. Deposited and laid up with Christ, committed to his care and custody, securely put into his hands.

3. Hid with Christ, that is, dispensed by him, and derived from him at his pleasure; of his fulness we receive, when and in what measure he pleaseth.

Note here, 1. Our life, short and uncertain in itself, and common to us with the brutes, deserves not comparatively, the name of life.

Note, 2. That Christ is the believer's life, he is both the author and efficient cause of it, the meritorious cause of it, and the exemplary cause and pattern of it.

Note, 3. That the Christian's life is hid with Christ.
The phrase imports, 1. Security and safety; what is hidden in Christ, and with him, must be safe, and out of the reach of danger; grace is incorruptible seed, that shall never die: The world, Satan, and sin, may assault, but shall not overcome; neither lust within, nor the devil, nor the world, shall be able to vanquish that life which is hid in Christ.

2. It imports obscurity; what is hidden, is concealed: The life of grace is totally hidden from the wicked, and hid, in some sort, from winnowings of temptation, under the prevalencey of corruption; much more is the life of glory hidden, it doth not yet appear; we can no more conceive of it by all we have heard, than we can conceive what the sun is by seeing a glowworm.

3. Our life being hid with Christ, it imports plenty and abundance: I am come, that ye may have life more abundantly, Joh 10:10.

- Our true life lies in the other world: You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God, Col 3:3. The new man has its livelihood thence. It is born and nourished from above; and the perfection of its life is reserved for that state. It is hid with Christ; not hid from us only, in point of secrecy, but hid for us, denoting security. The life of a Christian is hid with Christ. Because I live you shall live also, Joh 14:19. Christ is at present a hidden Christ, or one whom we have not seen; but this is our comfort, that our life is hid with him, and laid up safely with him. As we have reason to love him whom we have not seen (1Pe 1:8), so we may take the comfort of a happiness out of sight, and reserved in heaven for us.

For ye are dead. Dead to the world; dead to sin; dead to earthly pleasures. On the meaning of the word dead, Rom 6:2; Eph 2:1 The idea of the apostle is, that as Christ became literally dead in the tomb, so we, in virtue of our connexion with him, have become dead to sin, to worldly influences, pleasures, and ambition. Or, in other words, we are to be to them as if we were dead, and they had no more influence over us than the things of earth had over him in the grave. Rom 6:2. And your life. There is still life. Though dead to one class of objects, you are alive to others. See the sentiment here expressed explained at large Gall 2:20. Is hid with Christ in God. The language here is taken probably from treasure which is "hid" or concealed in a place of security; and the idea is, that eternal life is an invaluable jewel or treasure, which is laid up with Christ in heaven where God is. There it is safely deposited. It has this security, that it is with the Redeemer, and that he is in the presence of God; and thus nothing can reach it or take it away. It is not left with us, or entrusted to our keeping--for then it might be lost, as we might lose an invaluable jewel; or it might be wrested from us; or we might be defrauded of it; but it is now laid up far out of our sight, and far from the reach of all our enemies, and with One who can

"keep that which we have committed to him against that day," 2Ti 1:12. Our eternal life, therefore, is as secure as it could possibly be made. The true condition of the Christian is, that he is "dead" to this world, but that he has immortal life in prospect, and that is secure, being in the holy keeping of his Redeemer, now in the presence of God. From this it follows that he should regard himself as living for heaven.

4 When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

The Old Life and the New

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

That although the apostle told them in the third verse, that they were dead to sin, yet here, in the fifth verse, he bids them mortify sin; intimating, that the work of mortification, at the best, is but imperfect, and must be carried on daily and progressively; they were mortified but in part; the old man has a strong heart, and is a long time a dying, after it has received its deadly wound: Sin lives a dying life, and dies a lingering death; Mortify therefore, &c.

Note, 2. What it is they are called upon to mortify, their members upon earth; where, by members, we are to understand all the lusts and corruptions of our hearts and natures, all the relics and remains of sin unsubdued and unpurged out of the soul; he instances in fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections and desires and covetousness, which loveth the world above God, and is therefore no better than idolatry.

But why are these called members, and members upon earth?
Ans. They are called members, in allusion to what St. Paul had called sin before, namely, a body of sin Col 2:11; therefore he calls particular lusts members of that body; and also because they require and call for the members of the body, as instruments to bring them

into act; likewise, because these lusts are naturally as dear to men as their bodily members, they can as soon part with a right hand or a right eye, as with a bosom and beloved lust; they are also called members upon the earth, because they are conversant about earthly things, because they will cleave to us as long as we live upon earth; and to intimate, that none of these must be carried to heaven with us, but be mortified on earth.

But what is it to mortify these members?

Ans. To mortify sin is to deny our consent to the solicitations of sin, to suppress the first motions of sin, to enervate the power and activity of sin.

Learn hence, 1. That in the holiest and best of God's children and servants, there are relics and remains of sin, to be daily mortified, and gradually subdued.

Learn, 2. That after God has brought a person into a state of grace, it is his duty, and ought to be his endeavour, daily to mortify sin, and all the remains of unsubdued corruption. A caution, Take heed of concluding sin is mortified, because it is restrained, because the acts of sin are intermitted, because some particular sins are subdued: Is all sin hated of thee, loathed and left by thee? It is more to loath a sin, than it is to leave a sin; sin may be left, and yet be loved; but no man can loath a sin, and love it at the same time.

Learn, 3. That covetousness is a sin, which, above others, a Christian should set himself against, and endeavour to mortify and subdue, it having a sort of idolatry in it, drawing our love, our trust, our fear, our joy, from God, and placing the supremacy of our affections in and upon the creatures. True, the covetous man does not believe his money to be God; but by his inordinate loving of it; and fiducial trusting in it he is as truly guilty of idolatry, as if he bowed his knee unto it: for God more regards the internal acts of the mind, than he doth the external acts of the body.

6 for which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 in the which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them.
8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy,
filthy communication out of your mouth.
9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with
his deeds;

In the foregoing verses, St. Paul exhorted the Colossians to mortify external and outward sins, as fornication and uncleanness; here he presses them to mortify internal and spiritual sins, such as anger, wrath, and malice, sins of the heart. The axe of mortification must be laid to the root of inward corruption, spiritual sins, heart sins: Though they are minoris infamia, of less infamy and reproach before men, yet they are majoris reatus, of greater guilt in the sight of God; therefore a sincere Christian has a special respect to these in the work of mortification; put off all these anger, wrath, malice:
Anger, or the sudden motions and raising of passion:
Wrath is anger advanced to an height and
malice is anger accompanied with a desire of revenge, a rooted displeasure:

As jealousy is the rage of a man, so malice is the rage of the devil; it is the very soul and spirit of the apostate nature. No sin renders a man so like to Satan as wrath and malice. A malicious desire of revenge is so far beneath a Christian, that it is the baseness of a man, yea, the spawn of a devil. This sin indulged, destroys the soul, as sure as murder, yea, it is no less than murder in the account of God, He that hateth his brother is a murderer 1John 3:15.
Observe next, The apostle exhorts the Colossians to guard against the sins of the heart. Put off blasphemy, filthy communication, and lying; that is, evil speaking, filthy speaking and false speaking.
Sins of the tongue are to be guarded and watched against, as well as sins of the heart; they are most scandalous, they dishonour God, and discredit religion, and wrong our own souls. The sins of the tongue, are little considered, their great guilt not apprehended, but men must account for their open reproaches, secret backbitings, scoffings, derisions, whereby they endeavour to fix an ignominy upon their neighbour; and particularly, the sin of lying here cautioned against, Lie not one to another.

All lying is here condemned; the officious lie, tending to our own or our neighbour's profit; the pernicious lie, tending to our neighbour's prejudice; the jocular and jocose lie, tending to recreation and sport. The scripture condemneth all, without restriction, All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, Rev 21:8
Whosoever loveth and maketh a lie Rev 22:15. Lying makes a man like the devil, who was a liar as well as a murderer from the beginning.

Observe, lastly, The argument to enforce the exhortation to mortify all sin, the sins of the heart, the sins of the tongue, the sins of the life, and that is drawn from the consideration of their present state; they had in their baptism made a profession to put off the old man with his deeds, that is, their own sinful nature, and put on the new man in baptism, which being renewed by illumination and divine knowledge, and so conformed to the image of God, rendered them now the objects of his special love.

Note here, That there were many ceremonies in baptism used in the primitive church, to which St. Paul alludes in several places in his epistles; as drenching in water, so as to seem buried in and under it, Buried with him in baptism Col 2:12: Likewise putting off their old clothes at going in, and putting on new at their coming out of the water, to which St. Paul alludes here, when he tells them they had, namely, in their baptism, put off the old man, and put on the new.
Whence learn, That there is no argument more moving and effectually exciting unto holiness of life, than that which is taken from our baptismal vow and profession; the obligation of this is very strong, if duly considered.

The apostle makes use of it here as a potent argument, to quicken them to the mortification of all sin, seeing they had in baptism put off the old man, that is, professed and solemnly engaged so to do, and had put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

10 and have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after
the image of him that created him:
11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor
uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all,
and in all.
12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of
mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;
13 forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man
have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye.

Our apostle having now finished his exhortation to the practice of that great duty of mortification of sin, called here, a putting off the old man, comes next to mention several graces and virtues, which he exhorts them to be found in the practice of; and this he styles, a putting on the new man; teaching us hereby, that a negative holiness, is not sufficient to salvation; it is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do wll; a man may go to hell for not doing good, as well as for doing wickedly.

Observe farther, The particular graces and virtues which they are exhorted to put on.

1. Bowels of mercy and kindness; that is, a tender pity towards, and an inward sympathy with, those that are in misery; and this expressed in outward acts of succour and relief, according to our ability.

There is a natural pity which man can hardly put off, it is seated in the very nature of man; and accordingly, unmercifulness is a sin against the light of nature, as well as against the law of God:

But there is, besides this, a spiritual pity, which flows from sure love, and that a divine love; now, this is more an act of grace than of nature; this the apostle here exhorts the Colossians to, Put on bowels of mercy; they who have put on, and are clothed with, garments of holiness, will also put on bowls of mercy as a garment.

2. Humbleness of mind; whereby a man, sensible of God's goodness, and his own infirmities, hath an humble apprehension, and a modest estimation of himself: The more holiness anyh person has the more humility he has; humility is a certain evidence of our holiness, because it is a great part of our holiness.

3. Meekness and long-suffering, which moderate anger, and enable us to put up affronts and injuries. This is a spirit and temper divine,

and truly Christ-like; none so abused and affronted as he; but, being reviled, he blessed, and committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. When another hurts thee by unjust provocation, why shouldst thou hurt thyself by sinful passion? Christ was a Lamb for meekness; it doth not become any of his followers to be like lions for fierceness.

4. Forebearance, and mutual forgiveness; Forbearing one another and forgiving one another. No Christians are so perfect, but they are liable to offend one another; he must have no friends, that will have a friend with no faults, and consequently they stand in need of forgiveness from each other.

Learn hence, 1. That Christians are obliged, by the laws of their holy religion, to forbear and forgive one another.

2. They are obliged to imitate Christ in this duty of forgiveness; Christ forgives us universally, freely, sincerely, so as never more to upbraid us with the fault he has forgiven us; such a forgiveness are we to exercise towards our brother. As Christ forgave you; so also do ye.

Observe lastly, The argument which St. Paul makes use of to press the Colossians to the practice of the forementioned duties, and that is drawn from their election and vocation; Put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy. You that had the favour to be chosen of God out of the heathen world, to be his church and people, and are now holy and beloved of God, let the sense of this divine favour oblige you to humility and meekness, to long suffering and mutual forgiveness, yea, to the love and practice of universal holiness.

14 And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Which is the bond of perfectness. The bond of all perfection; the thing which will unite all other things, and make them complete. Comp. the parallel place in Eph 4:3. The idea seems to be, that love will bind all the other graces fast together, and render the whole system complete. Without love, though there might be other graces and virtues, there would be a want of harmony and compactness in our Christian graces--and this was necessary to unite and complete the whole. There is great beauty in the expression, and it contains most important truth. If it were possible to conceive that the other graces could exist among a Christian people, yet there would be a

sad incompleteness, a painful want of harmony and union, if love were not the reigning principle. Nor faith, nor zeal, nor prophecy, nor the power of speaking with the tongue of angels, would answer the purpose. See this sentiment expressed in 1Cor 13, and the effect of love more fully explained in the Notes on that chapter.

Still our apostle makes use of the former metaphor, comparing the graces of the holy Spirit to garments, which he exhorts Christians to put on; he had mentioned the putting on of mercy, meekness, humility, &c. before; now he advises, to put on charity, or the grace of love, as the upper garment over and above all the rest, comparing it to a bond or ligament, which ties and knits all the members of the church together.

Quest. But what is this grace of charity?

Ans. It is a brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all hs fellow-members, in Christ for grace sake; or a gracious propensity of heart towards our neighbour, whereby we will, and do to our power procure all good for him.

Quest. But why does St. Paul compare charity to an upper garment?

Above all, put on charity.

Because, 1. The upper garment is larger and broader than the rest, so ought charity to extend itself to all persons, and upon all occasions.

2. The upper garment is usually fairer than the rest, so doth charity shine brightest amongst all the graces.

3. The upper garment distinguishes the several orders and degrees of men; thus Christians are known by love as by a livery; it is the bond that Christ's sincere disciples wear.

Quest. But how is charity the bond of perfectness?

The meaning is, that it is the most perfect bond of union among Christians, it knitteth together all the scattered members of the church, and makes their graces and gifts subservient to the good of one another, so that the church is hereby made a complete intire body, which was lame without it; in this sense, charity is called the bond of perfectness.

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Rule in your hearts. Preside in your hearts; sit as umpire there, (Doddridge;) govern and control you. The word here rendered rule βραβευετω--is commonly used in reference to the Olympic and other games. It means, to be a director, or arbiter of the public games; to preside over them and preserve order, and to distribute the prizes to the victors. The meaning here is, that the peace which God gives to the soul is to be to us what the brabeutes, or governor at the games, was to those who contended there. It is to preside over and govern the mind; to preserve everything in its place; and to save it from tumult, disorder, and irregularity. The thought is a very beautiful one. The soul is liable to the agitations of passion and excitement--like an assembled multitude of men. It needs something to preside over it, and keep its various faculties in place and order; and nothing is so well fitted to do this as the calm peace which religion gives, a deep sense of the presence of God, the desire and the evidence of his friendship, the hope of his layout, and the belief that he has forgiven all our sins. The "peace of God" will thus calm down every agitated element of the soul; subdue the tumult of passion, and preserve the mind in healthful action and order--as a ruler sways and controls the passions of assembled multitudes of men. To the which also ye are called. To which peace. In one body. To be one body; or to be united as one. Eph 4:4-6. And be ye thankful. For all mercies, and especially for your privileges and hopes as Christians. A spirit of thankfulness, also, would tend much to promote harmony and peace. An ungrateful people is commonly a tumultuous, agitated, restless, and dissatisfied people. Nothing better tends to promote peace and order than gratitude to God for his mercies.

As if the apostle had said, "Let that peace which God has given you within, and calleth you to exercise without, govern your lives, and direct you in all your actions towards men, and live in continual thankfulness to God!"

Here note, That the original word to rule in the heart, signifies to umpire, or to act the part of an umpire, in appeasing strife.

Now, this peace, 1. Inwardly hushes and stills all in the soul, the tumultuous affections are up, and in an hurry; when anger, hatred, and revenge begin to rise in the soul, this calms and composes all.

2. Outwardly, peace of conscience produces peaceableness of conversation; where the peace of God rules in the heart, it disposes it to peaceableness in the life.
Now, this consists in these things, namely, in an unwillingnesss to provoke others, in an unaptness to be provoked by others, in a readiness to be to be reconciled when provoked, and in a forwardness to reconcile others that are at variance.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Dwell in you richly in all wisdom. Abundantly, producing the spirit of true wisdom. That doctrine is adapted to make you wise. The meaning is, that they were to lay up the doctrines of the gospel in their hearts; to meditate upon them; to allow them to be their guide, and to endeavour wisely to improve them to the best purpose.

These words come in by way of direction and advice, to help the Colossians in the exercise of the foregoing graces; seeing it is the word of Christ, or the holy scriptures, which teach the forementioned duties, he advises that that word of God may dwell in, and take up its abode with them, richly and plentifully, that they may be furnished thereby with all true and sound wisdom.

Note here, 1. The title given to the holy scriptures, they are the word of Christ, because they have Christ for their author, Christ for their object, and Christ for their end.

Note, 2. The advice given with respect to the word of Christ, Let it dwell: Not come for an hour, but to tarry; not to tarry for a night, but to take up its fixed residence and abode.

Note, 3. Where it should dwell, not in the ear, nor in the head only, not in the memory barely, nor in the affections, but in the heart and soul, Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. Ps 119:11. The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide. Ps 37:31

Note, 4. How the word should dwell in us, richly, copiously, and plentifully, in its commands, in its promises, in it threatenings; let the word, the whole word, dwell in you, being diligently searched, heartily received, and carefully observed.
Note, 5. The persons to whom this advice is given by the apostle, all the saints at Colosse, the whole body of the people are injoined an holy familiarity with the Bible, it is to be in their houses, in their hands, and in their hearts, that it may dwell richly in them.

Here our apostle declares one special benefit which the Colossians would receive, by having the word of Christ dwell richly in them; it would enable them to teach and admonish one another, and also to excite and stir up the affections of each other, by singing those psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs therein contained, or such others as were composed by the inspiration and direction of the holy Spirit of God: always remembering, not to sing gracefully only, but with grace; that is, with attention and devotion in our hearts to the Lord. See this explained Eph 5:19,20. The only additional thought here is, that their psalms and hymns were to be regarded as a method of "teaching" and "admonishing;" that is, they were to be imbued with truth, and to be such as to elevate the mind, and withdraw it from error and sin. Dr. Johnson once said, that if he were allowed to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made the laws. It is true, in a more important sense, that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church need care little who preaches, or who makes the creed. He will more effectually mould the sentiments of a church than they who preach or make creeds and confessions. Hence, it is

indispensable, in order to the preservation of the truth, that the sacred songs of a church should be imbued with sound evangelical sentiment.

Learn hence, The singing psalms, both in public assemblies, and private families, and therein praising and blessing of God for mercies received, is a great and necessary duty, to be jointly performed by all persons capable of it.

Learn, 2. That in singing, a special regard must be had, that there be an inward harmony, and a gracious melody in the soul, by the exercise of the understanding, and the orderly motion of the affections; if the heart and affections be not stirred up in this duty, the outward grace, though never so graceful, availeth nothing.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

1. That all our thoughts, words and actions, must and ought to be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to do all by the authority and command of Christ, to do all in the power and strength of Christ, to do all for the honour and glory of Christ, to do all after the pattern and example of Christ.

Learn, 2. That all prayers and thanksgivings, as they are only due to God, so they must be performed by us through Jesus Christ, that so they may find acceptance with God; Giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Social Duties of the New Life

18 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

19 Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them.

20 Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.

21 Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger,* lest they be discouraged.

22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not
with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing
God:
23 and whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto
men;
24 knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the
inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.
25 But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath
done: and there is no respect of persons.

Colossians-4

1 Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is just and equal;
knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.
2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;
3 withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of
utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in
bonds:
4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
5 Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the
time.

Walk in wisdom. That is, conduct upright and honest. Deal with them on the strictest principles of integrity, so that they may not have occasion to reproach the religion which you profess. Toward them that are without. Without the pale of the church, or who, are not professing Christians. 1Cor 5:12. They were surrounded by heathens, as Christians now are by men of the world. The injunction is one that requires us to act with prudence and propriety (ενσοφια) towards them; and there is, perhaps, not a more important direction in the New Testament than this. Among the reasons for this are the following:

(1.) Men of the world judge of religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.

(2.) They judge of religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and conversation of the members of the church.

(3.) They understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.

(4.) They set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principle of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. They may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict, in the observance of rites and ceremonies--but all these are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless attended with an upright life.

(5.) No professing Christian can possibly do good to others who does not live an upright life. If you have cheated a man out of never so small a sum, it is vain that you talk to him about the salvation of his soul; if you have failed to pay him a debt when it was due, or to finish a piece of work when you promised it, or to tell him the exact truth in conversation, it is vain for you to endeavour to induce him to be a Christian. He will feel, if he does not say-- and he might very properly say--that he wants no religion which will not make a man honest.

(6.) No man will attempt to do much good to others whose own life is not upright. He will be sensible of the inconsistency, and will feel that he cannot do it with any sense of propriety; and the honour of religion, therefore, and the salvation of our fellow-men, demand that, in all our intercourse with others, we should lead lives of the strictest integrity. Redeeming the time. Eph 5:16.

By them without, are meant the Heathen, who are yet without the pale of the visible church; to walk in wisdom toward them, is a duty of great latitude, but imports particularly here, an endeavour to the uttermost to promote their conversion and salvation, by begetting in them a due veneration for the gospel, and a love and liking to the Christian religion.

Learn hence, That private Christians, by walking wisely before them that are yet unconverted effectually to Christianity, may be exceedingly helpful to promote the entertainment of the gospel

amongst them. They may pray, and pray in faith, for their conversion, and the further spreading of the gospel, in order to that end. The ardent devotions and the holy conversations of private Christians are excellent means to recommend the gospel and the Christian religion, and to represent them as most amiable and desirable.

Having in the former part of the verse, directed the Colossians to walk wisely before the unconverted Gentiles that were among them, in this latter part of the verse, he advises them to redeem every opportunity, for gaining over those infidels to the Christian religion. A Christian that knows the worth of time, will redeem it, will improve it for the soul, for the benefit of his own soul, and for the advantage of others: How this is done, see the note on Eph 1:16.

The apostle exhorts them further to a prudent and decent conduct towards all those with whom they conversed, towards the heathen world, or those out of the Christian church among whom they lived (Col 4:5): Walk in wisdom towards those who are without. Be careful, in all your converse with them, to get no hurt by them, or contract any of their customs; for evil communications corrupt good manners; and to do not hurt to them, or increase their prejudices against religion, and give them an occasion of dislike. Yea, do them all the good you can, and by all the fittest means and in the proper seasons recommend religion to them.--Redeeming the time; that is, either "improving every opportunity of doing them good, and making the best use of your time in proper duty" (diligence in redeeming time very much recommends religion to the good opinion of others), or else "walking cautiously and with circumspections, to give them no advantage against you, nor expose yourselves to their malice and ill-will," Eph 5:15,16. Walk circumspectly, redeeming the time, because the days are evil, that is, dangerous, or times of trouble and suffering.

6 Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Direction is here given to all Christians for the right government of the tongue, and well ordering of the speech, that it be not corrupt and rotten, filthy or frothy, vain and unprofitable, but mild and courteous, savoury and gracious, wise and discreet.

Note here, 1. That we are not left at random in our ordinary discourse, to let our tongue run riot and talk what we please, without any regard to the edification of others.

Note, 2. That there ought to be both a gracefulness and grace in our speech, some savour of piety, someting that may testify there is grace wrought in ourselves, and tends to the working of grace in others.

Note, 3. That our speech may be thus savoury at all times, it must be seasoned with salt.

1. With the salt of truth: There must be an agreement betwixt the thing and our words, without falsehood; and an agreement betwixt our tongue and our hearts, without dissimulation.

2. With the salt of wisdom and prudence; this will teach us the time when, the manner how, and the measure how much to speak; those words must needs be unsavoury, that have neither truth nor prudence in them.
The people wondered of old at the gracious words which came our of Christ's mouth; and we may justly wonder at the graceless words which come out of the mouths of many that are called Christians.

Final Greetings

7 All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, *who is* a beloved
brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord:
8 whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might
know your estate, and comfort your hearts;
9 with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you.
They shall make known unto you all things which *are done* here.
10 Aristarchus my fellow prisoner saluteth you, and Mark, sister's son to
Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come
unto you, receive him;)
11 and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These
only *are my* fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have
been a comfort unto me.

12 Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you,
always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand
perfect and complete in all the will of God.
13 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them
that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.
14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.
15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the
church which is in his house.
16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also
in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle*
from Laodicea.
17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast
received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.
18 The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds.
Grace be with you. Amen.

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians
[1 Thessalonians]

1 Thessalonians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy,
Unto the church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father,
and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ:
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians' Faith and Example

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in
our prayers;

Your work of faith.That is, your work showing or evincing faith. The reference is probably to acts of duty, holiness, and benevolence, which proved that they exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Works of faith are those to which faith prompts, and which show that there is faith in the heart. This does not mean, therefore, a work of their own producing faith, but a work which showed that they had faith. And labour of love. Labour produced by love, or showing that you are actuated by love. Such would be all their kindness toward the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted; and all their acts which showed that they loved the souls of men. And patience of hope. Patience in your trials, showing that you have such a hope of future blessedness as to sustain you in your afflictions. It was the hope of heaven through the Lord Jesus that gave them patience. Rom 8:24. "The phrases here are Hebraisms, meaning active faith, and laborious love, and patient hope, and might have been so translated." Doddridge. In our Lord Jesus Christ. That is, your hope is founded only on him. The only hope that we have of heaven is through the Redeemer. In the sight of God and our Father. Before God, even our Father. It is a hope which we have through the merits of the

Redeemer, and which we are permitted to cherish before God; that is, in his very presence. When we think of God; when we reflect that we must soon stand before him, we are permitted to cherish this hope. It is a hope which will be found to be genuine even in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God. This does not mean that it had been merely professed before God, but that it was a hope which they might dare to entertain in the presence of God, and which would bear the scrutiny of his eye.

3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love,
and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God
and our Father;

4 knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power,
and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what
manner of men we were among you for your sake.

6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the
word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

7 so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and
Achaia.

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in
Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-
ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had
unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living
and true God;

Here the apostle produces a further evidence of these Thessalonians' conversion, namely, that they did not only turn from idols to serve God the Father, but did also believe in Jesus Christ his only Son: this act of faith is expressed by waiting, they waited for his Son from heaven, that is, by faith, they expected that Christ, whom the apostle had preached to them, and was gone to heaven, would certainly come again from thence, to deliver his redeemed ones from the wrath to come, that is from the punishment and vengeance eternally due unto them for sin. And the ground of this their expectation was Christ's resurrection from the dead; to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.

Note here, 1. A description, a heart-affecting, yea, a soul- affecting description of that wrath which doth await every wicked and impenitent sinner; it is a wrath to come; after thousands, yea millions of years, that sinners have lain under it; still it is a wrath to come; and they are as far from being delivered from it, as the first hour they fell under it.

Note, 2. That Jesus Christ delivered up himself to death, that he might be a Saviour and deliverer of his people from this wrath; let it break forth when it will, not a drop of it shall ever fall upon any one of them.

Note, 3. That believers may warrantably expect deliverance by Christ from this wrath, seeing God has raised him from the dead.

Note, 4. Therefore, may and ought they to wait and wish, to look and long, for his coming from heaven, when deliverance from wrath will be perfected and completed.

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Note, 4. Therefore, may and ought they to wait and wish, to look and long, for his coming from heaven, when deliverance from wrath will be perfected and completed.

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead,
even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians-2

Paul's Ministry in Thessalonica

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was
not in vain:
2 but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully
entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak
unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

And were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, Acts 16:19, seq. By being beaten and cast into prison. The shame of the treatment consisted in the fact that it was wholly undeserved; that it was contrary to the laws; and that it was accompanied with circumstances designed to make their punishment as ignominious as possible. The Thessalonians knew of this, and Paul was not disposed to palliate the conduct of the Philippians. What was "shameful treatment" he speaks of as such without hesitation. It is not wrong to call things by their right names, and when we have been abused, it is not necessary that we should attempt to smoothe the matter over by saying that it was not so. We were bold in our God. By humble dependence on the support of our God. It was only his powerful aid that could have enabled them to persevere with ardour and zeal in such a work after such treatment. The meaning here is, that they were not deterred from preaching the gospel by the treatment which they had received, but

at the very next important town, and on the first opportunity, they proclaimed the same truth, though there was no security that they might not meet with the same persecution there. Paul evidently appeals to this in order to show them that they were not impostors, and that they were not influenced by the hope of ease or of selfish gains. Men who were not sincere and earnest in their purposes would have been deterred by such treatment as they had received at Philippi. With much contention. Amidst much opposition, and where great effort was necessary. The Greek word here used is αγων (agony,) a word referring usually to the Grecian games. Col 2:1. It means the course, or place of contest; and then the contest itself, the strife, the combat, the effort for victory; and the apostle here means, that, owing to the opposition there, there was need of an effort on his part like the desperate struggles of those who contended for the mastery at the Grecian games. Comp. Notes on 1Cor 9:24-27. The triumph of the gospel there was secured only by an effort of the highest kind, and by overcoming the most formidable opposition.

3 For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

For our exhortation. That is, the exhortation to embrace the gospel. The word seems to be used here so as to include preaching in general. The sense is, that the means which they used to induce them to become Christians were not such as to delude them. Was not of deceit. Was not founded on sophistry. The apostle means to say, that the Thessalonians knew that his manner of preaching was not such as was adopted by the advocates of error.

Nor of uncleanness.--Not such as to lead to an impure life. It was such as to lead to holiness and purity. The apostle appeals to what they knew to be the tendency of his doctrine as an evidence that it was true. Most of the teaching of the heathen philosophers led to a life of licentiousness and corruption. The tendency of the gospel was just the reverse.

Nor in guile. Not by the arts of deceit. There was no craftiness or trick, such as could not bear a severe scrutiny. No point was carried by art, cunning, or stratagem. Everything was done on the most honourable and fair principles. It is much when a man can say that he

has never endeavoured to accomplish anything by mere trick, craft, or cunning. Sagacity and shrewdness are always allowable in ministers as well as others; trick and cunning never. Yet stratagem often takes the place of sagacity, and trick is often miscalled shrewdness. Guile, craft, cunning, imply deception, and can never be reconciled with that entire honesty which a minister of the gospel, and all other Christians, ought to possess. 2Cor 12:16. Comp. Ps 32:2, 34:13, Jn 1:47, 1Pet 2:1,22, Rev 14:5.

4 but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel,
even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our
hearts.

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel. Comp. @1Ti 1:11,12. Since there had been committed to us an office so high and holy, and so much demanding sincerity, fidelity, and honesty, we endeavoured to act in all respects in conformity to the trust reposed in us. The gospel is a system of truth and sincerity, and we evinced the same. The gospel is concerned with great realities, and we did not resort to trick and illusion. The office of the ministry is most responsible, and we acted in view of the great account which we must render. The meaning is, that Paul had such a sense of the truth, reality, and importance of the gospel, and of his responsibility, as effectually to keep him from anything like craft or cunning in preaching it. An effectual restrainer from mere management and trick will always be found in a deep conviction of the truth and importance of religion. Artifice and cunning are the usual accompaniments of a bad cause; and, when adopted by a minister of the gospel, will usually, when detected, leave the impression that he feels that he is engaged in such a cause. If an object cannot be secured by sincerity and straight-forward dealing, it is not desirable that it should be secured at all. Even so we speak. In accordance with the nature of the gospel; with the truth and sincerity which such a cause demands. Not as pleasing men. Not in the manner of impostors, who make it their object to please men. The meaning of the apostle is, that he did not aim to teach such doctrines as would flatter men; as would win their applause; or as would gratify their passions or their fancy. We are not to suppose that he desired to offend men; or that he regarded their esteem as of no value; or that he was indifferent whether they were pleased or displeased; but that it was not the direct object of his

preaching to please them. It was to declare the truth, and to obtain the approbation of God, whatever men might think of it. Gal 1:10. Which trieth our hearts. It is often said to be an attribute of God that he tries or searches the hearts of men, 1Chr 28:9, 29:17; Jer 11:20, 17:10, Ps 11:4, Rom 8:27. The meaning here is, that the apostle had a deep conviction of the truth that God knew all his motives, and that all would be revealed in the last day.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God *is* witness:

For neither at any time used we flattering words. Job 32:21; Job 32:22; 2Cor 2:17. The word here rendered "flattering"--κολακεια--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger, He stated simple truth--not refusing to commend men if truth would admit of it, and never hesitating to declare his honest convictions about their guilt and danger. One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery; and Paul says, that when preaching to the Thessalonians he had carefully avoided it. He now appeals to that fact as a proof of his own integrity. They knew that he had been faithful to their souls. Nor a cloke of covetousness. The word rendered "cloke" here-- προφασις--means, properly, "what is shown or appears before any one;" i.e., show, pretence, pretext, put forth in order to cover one's real intent, Mt 23:14, Mk 12:40, Lk 20:47. The meaning here is, that he did not put on a pretence or appearance of piety for the sake of promoting the schemes of covetousness. The evidence of that was not only what their observed of the general spirit of the apostle, but also the fact that when with them he had actually laboured with his own hands for a support, 1Thes 2:9. It is obvious that there were those there, as sometimes there are now, who, under the pretence of great zeal for religion, were really seeking wealth; and it is possible that it may have been alleged against Paul and his fellow-labourers that they were such persons. God is witness. This is a solemn appeal to God for the truth of what he had said. He refers not only to their own observation, but he calls God himself to witness his sincerity. God knew the truth in the case. There could have been

no imposing on him; and the appeal, therefore, is to one who was intimately acquainted with the truth. Learn hence,

(1.) that it is right, on important occasions, to appeal to God for the truth of what we say.

(2.) We should always so live that we can properly make such an appeal to him.

6 nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when
we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

Neither of you, nor yet of others. Nowhere has this been our object. The love of fame is not that which has influenced us. The particular idea in this verse seems to be, that though they had uncommon advantages, as the apostles of Christ, for setting up a dominion or securing an ascendency over others yet they had not availed themselves of it. As an apostle of Christ; as appointed by him to found churches; as endowed with the power of working miracles, Paul had every advantage for securing authority over others and turning it to the purposes of ambition or gain. When we might have been burdensome. Marg., "or, used authority." Some understand this as meaning that they might have demanded a support in virtue of their being apostles; others, as Calvin, and as it is in the margin, that they might have used authority, and have governed them wholly in that manner, exacting unqualified obedience. The Greek properly refers to that which is weighty--ενβαρει --heavy, burdensome. Anything that weighs down, or oppresses --as a burden, sorrow, or authority, would meet the sense of the Greek. It seems probable, from the context, that the apostle did not refer either to authority or to support exclusively, but may have included both. In their circumstances it might have been somewhat burdensome for them to have maintained him and his fellow-labourers, though as an apostle he might have required it. Comp. 1Cor 9:8-15. Rather than be oppressive in this respect, he had chosen to forego his right, and to maintain himself by his own labour. As an apostle also he might have exerted his authority, and might have made use of his great office for the purpose of placing himself at the head of churches, and giving them laws. But he chose to do nothing that would be a burden; he treated them with the gentleness with which a nurse

cherishes her children, 1Thes 2:7, or a father his sons, 1Thes 2:11, and employed only the arts of persuasion. Comp. 2Cor 12:13; 2Cor 12:14; 2Cor 12:15; 2Cor 12:16.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

So, being affectionately desirous of you. The word here rendered "being affectionately desirous" ιμειρω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means to long after, to have a strong affection for. The sense here is, that Paul was so strongly attached to them that he would have been willing to lay down his life for them. We were willing to have imparted unto you. To have given or communicated, Rom 1:11. Not the gospel of God only. To be willing to communicate the knowledge of the gospel was in itself a strong proof of love, even if it were attended with no self-denial or hazard in doing it. We evince a decided love for a man when we tell him of the way of salvation, and urge him to accept of it. We show strong interest for one who is in danger, when we tell him of a way of escape, or for one who is sick, when we tell him of a medicine that will restore him; but we manifest a much higher love when we tell a lost and ruined sinner of the way in which he may be saved. There is no method in which we can show so strong an interest in our fellow-men, and so much true benevolence for them, as to go to them and tell them of the way by which they may be rescued from everlasting ruin. But also our own souls. Or rather lives--ψυχας. Mt 6:25, 20:28, Lk 12:22,23, Mk 3:4. This does not mean that the apostle was willing to be damned, or to lose his soul in order to save them; but that, if it had been necessary, he would have been ready to lay down his life. See Jn 3:16. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Comp. Jn 15:13. His object seems to be to assure them that he did not leave them from any want of love to them, or from the fear of being put to death. It was done from the strong conviction of duty. He appears to have left them because he could not longer remain without exposing others to danger, and without the certainty that there would be continued disturbances. See Acts 17:9,10.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Notwithstanding our apostle was free, wholly free, from all shadow and appearance of covetousness in the whole course of his ministry, yet it may seem as if some persons (probably the false apostles) did, though with the highest injustice, charge him with it; accordingly, to clear himself from that imputation, here he tells the Thessalonians, he laboured night and day in the business of his calling; making tents to maintain himself, that so he might not be chargeable or burdensome to any of them; or any ways retard or hinder the success of the gospel amongst them; labouring night and day, that we might not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God freely.

Yet observe, this was only a case of necessity; for at other times, and in other places, we find our apostle asserting his own right, and God's appointment, that every one that preacheth the gospel should live of the gospel. 1Cor 9:14

Next our apostle calls upon them to remember his labour and travail, that is his pains and diligence in preaching the gospel; the words signify labour unto weariness, and labour after weariness, his painfulness, both in his preaching, and in his secular calling; and from his calling upon the Thessalonians to remember this, he learns us this lesson of instruction, namely, that it is the standing duty of a people to keep in their constant remembrance the great labour and pains which the faithful ministers of Christ do take amongst them, that so they may be duly thankful, both to God and them, and put a just value upon that spiritual good, which, at any time, that have experienced and received from them; Remember, brethren, our labour and travail.

Observe again, having asserted his laboriousness in preaching to them, he next puts them in remembrance of his exemplariness in conversation amongst them, how holily, justly, and unblameably we

behaved ourselves amongst you; that is, performing his duty with great integrity and uprightness towards God and man, so that none justly could blame him for neglect amongst them; and for the truth of this, he appeals to God as a judge, and to themselves as witnesses; Ye are witnesses and God also.

Learn hence, that it is a great happiness, and unspeakable consolation, both to ministers and people, when the duties of religion, relating to both tables, are performed with such exactness, that they can and dare appeal to one another, as to their holy and unblameable conversation, and to God himself, as to the purity of their aim and sincerity of intention.

10 Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also,* how holily and justly and unblamably
we behaved ourselves among you that believe:
11 as ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one
of you, as a father *doth* his children,
12 that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his
kingdom and glory.

1Thes 2:11
Observe, that still our apostle appeals to their own consciences for his good behaviour amongst them: Ye know: Happy minister, that has a throne in the consciences of his people, unto which he can and dare, at all times, appeal, for the clearing of his innocency and integrity, in and before the face of the whole world!

Observe next, that having compared himself to a nurse before, he resembles himself to a father now, we exhorted you as a father doth his children. As it is the office of a father to direct and instruct, to counsel and exhort his children, so the apostle did exhort, comfort, and charge the Thessalonians, that they be strictly conscientious in the faithful discharge of their whole duty, both to God and man, and patient under all, and all manner of trials and afflictions whatsoever, which they did, or might meet with, in the way of well doing.

Where note, that a mixture of meekness and gentleness, accompanied with authority and gravity is an excellent compostion in the ministers of the gospel: St. Paul having shewn, that, for

gentleness, he was a nursing mother, declareth here, that for authority and gravity, he was an instructing father.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Not as the word of men. Not of human origin, but as a Divine revelation. You were not led to embrace it by human reasoning, or the mere arts of persuasion, or from personal respect for others, but by your conviction that it was a revelation from God. It is only when the gospel is embraced in this way, that religion will show itself sufficient to abide the fiery trials to which Christians may be exposed. He who is convinced by mere human reasoning, may have his faith shaken by opposite, artful reasoning; he who is won by the mere arts of popular eloquence, will have no faith which will be proof against similar arts in the cause of error; he who embraces religion from mere respect for a pastor, parent, or friend, or because others do, may abandon it when the popular current shall set in a different direction, or when his friends shall embrace different views; but he who embraces religion as the truth of God, and from the love of the truth, will have a faith, like that Of the Thessalonians, which will abide every trial. Which effectually worketh also in you that believe. The word rendered "which" here--ος--may be referred either to "truth" or to "God." The grammatical construction will admit of either, but it is not material which is adopted. Either of them expresses a sense undeniably true, and of great importance. The meaning is, that the truth was made efficacious in the minds of all who became true Christians. It induced them to abandon their sins, to devote themselves to God, to lead pure and holy lives, and enabled them to abide the trials and temptations of life. Comp. Php 2:12, Php 2:13; Heb 13:21. The particular illustration here is, that when they embraced the gospel, it had such an efficacy on their hearts as to prepare them to meet all the terrors of bitter persecution without shrinking.

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews:

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen; Literally, "of those who are of your fellow, tribe, or fellow-clansmen," συμφυλετων. The Greek word means "one of the same tribe," and then a fellow-citizen, or fellow-countryman. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The particular reference here seems not to be to the heathen, who were the agents or actors in the scenes of tumult and persecutions, but to the Jews by whom they were led on, or who were the prime-movers in the persecutions which they had endured. It is necessary to suppose that they were principally Jews who were the cause of the persecution which had been excited against them, in order to make the parallelism between the church there and the churches in Palestine exact. At the same time, there was a propriety in saying that, though this parallelism was exact, it was by the "hands of their own countrymen" that it was done; that is, they were the visible agents or actors by whom it was done--the instruments in the hands of others. In Palestine, the Jews persecuted the churches directly, out of Palestine, they did it by means of others. They were the real authors of it, as they were in Judea; but they usually accomplished it by producing an excitement among the heathen, and by the plea that the apostles were making war on civil institutions. This was the case in Thessalonica. "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, set all the city on an uproar." "They drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also," Acts 17:5,6. The same thing occurred a short time after at Berea. "When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people," Acts 17:13; Comp. Acts 14:2. "The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren." "The epistle, therefore, represents the case accurately as the history states it. It was the Jews always who set on foot the persecutions against the apostles and their followers." Paley, Hor. Paul. in loc. It was, therefore, strictly true, as the apostle here states it,

(1.) that they were subjected to the same treatment from the Jews as the churches in Judea were, since they were the authors of the excitement against them; and

(2.) that it was carried on, as the apostle states, "by their own countrymen;" that is, that they were the agents or instruments by which it was done. This kind of undesigned coincidence between the epistle and the history in the Acts of the Apostles, is one of the arguments from which Paley (Hor. Paul.) infers the genuineness of both.

15 who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have
persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all
men:
16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to
fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the
uttermost.

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles. See Acts 17:5,13. No particular instance is mentioned in the life of Paul previous to this, when they had formally commanded him not to preach to the heathen; but no one can doubt that this was one of the leading points of difference between him and them. Paul maintained, that the Jews and Gentiles were now on a level with regard to salvation; that the wall of partition was broken down; that the Jew had no advantages over the rest of mankind in this respect, and that the heathen might be saved without becoming Jews, or being circumcised, Rom 2:25-29; Rom 3:22-31; Col 1:25. The Jews did not hold it unlawful "to speak to the Gentiles," and even to offer to them eternal life, (Mt 23:15;) but it was only on condition that they should become proselytes to their religion, and should observe the institutions of Moses. If saved, they held that it would be as Jews--either originally such, or such by becoming proselytes. Paul maintained just the opposite opinion, that heathens might be saved without becoming proselytes to the Jewish system, and that, in fact, salvation was as freely offered to them as to the children of Abraham. Though there are no express instances in which they prohibited Paul from speaking to the Gentiles recorded before the date of this epistle, yet events occurred afterwards which showed what were their feelings, and such as to make it in the highest degree probable that they had attempted to restrain him. See Acts 22:21,22. "And he [Christ] said unto me [Paul,] Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they [the Jews] gave him audience unto this word,

and then lift up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

Paul's Absence and Concern

17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

But we, brethren, being taken from you. There is more implied in the Greek word here rendered, "being taken from you"--απορφανισθεντες--than appears from our translation. It properly has relation to the condition of an orphan, (comp. Jn 14:18,) or one who is bereaved of parents. Then it is used in a more general sense, denoting to be bereaved of; and in this place it does not mean merely that he was "taken from them," but there is included the idea that it was like a painful bereavement. It was such a state as that of one who had lost a parent. No word, perhaps, could have expressed stronger attachment for them. Observe here, that St. Paul having all along, in the chapter before us, compared himself to a tender father, and a nursing mother, for his affectionate love unto, and his solicitous concern for, these Christian converts; he doth in the words before us, declare, that this constrained absence from them, occasioned him no less grief than that of a tender father, when bereft of his beloved children; or that of an indulgent mother, when the child she loves as her own soul is taken violently from her.

We, brethren, being taken from you; the words intimate such a separation as death makes between a father and a child, which rends the parent's heart in sunder, and is like cutting off a limb or member from his body, exquisitely painful; intimating, that the enforced absence of a pastor from his beloved people, though but for a short season, is very afflictive.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

How he expresses his desire and endeavour, his fervent purpose, and fixed resolution to come unto them, to see their face, to refresh them, and be refreshed by them; I endeavoured abundantly to see your

face, but Satan hindered; that is, his instruments, persecutors, lay in wait for him, on the one hand, and caused some dissentions in other churches, which detained him from coming to them; on the other hand, Satan hindered.

Learn thence, that such as obstruct the preaching and propagating of the gospel, and persecute the promoters of it, are Satan's instruments and ministers.

2. That such as do Satan's work, it is fit they should bear this name.

3. Thus The devil shall cast some of you into prison Rev 2:13, that is, his servants: It is fit that master and servant should have both one name.

19 For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye
in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

That there are degrees of glory in heaven, probably according to the measures and degrees of service we have done for God on earth; there is, no doubt, an equality of glory there, as to the essentials, but not with respect to the accidentals; besides the joy and satisfaction which the ministers of Christ are partakers of, in heaven, in common with other glorified saints, they have an additional joy and glory from the success of their pious and painful labours, which God has crowned with the conversion and edification of many souls.

Lord! Who would not study, spend, and be spent in the service of such a master? Is it not worth all our labour and sufferings, to appear in the presence of Christ, accompanied with all those souls whom we have instrumentally either brought home, or built up in the most holy faith, either converted, comforted, or confirmed in the way to heaven? To hear one spiritual child say, "Lord, this is the instrument by whom I believed;" another, "This is the minister by whom I was established;" a third, "This is he that quickened me by his example, and provoked me to love, and to good works: O blessed be God, that I ever saw his face, and heard his voice!"

But, Lord, what will it be to hear thy blessed voice saying to us, "Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of me your Lord; I have kept an exact account of all your fervent prayers for your people, of all your instructive and persuasive sermons, of all your sighs and groans poured forth before me, on behalf of those whom ye would have persuaded to be happy, but could not! Every tear from your eye, and drop of sweat from your face, shall now meet with an eternal recompence; you shall now find me, according to my promise, not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love."

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

1 Thessalonians-3

1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

To be left at Athens alone. Paul had been conducted to Athens from Berea, where he remained until Silas and Timothy could come to him, Acts 17:15. It appears from the statement here, that Timothy had joined him there, but such was his solicitude for the church at Thessalonica, that he very soon after sent him there, and chose to remain himself alone at Athens. Why he did not himself return to Thessalonica, is not stated. It is evidently implied here that it was a great personal inconvenience for him thus to part with Timothy, and to remain alone at Athens, and that he evinced the strong love which he had for the church at Thessalonica by being willing to submit to it. What that inconvenience consisted in, he has not stated, but it is not difficult to understand.

(1.)He was among total strangers, and, when Timothy was gone, without an acquaintance or friend.

(2.) The aid of Timothy was needed in order to prosecute the work which he contemplated. He had requested that Timothy should join him as soon as possible when he left Berea, (Acts 17:15;) and he evidently felt it desirable that in preaching the gospel in that city he should have all the assistance he could obtain. Yet he was willing to

forego those comforts and advantages in order to promote the edification of the church at Thessalonica.

2 and sent Timothy, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow
laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you
concerning your faith:

And our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ. A third token of affectionate interest in their welfare. The meaning is, "I did not send one whom I did not want, or who could be of no use here, but one who was a fellow-labourer with me, and whose aid would have been of essential service to me. In parting with him, therefore, for your welfare, I showed a strong attachment for you. I was willing to endure personal inconvenience, and additional toil, in order to promote your welfare," To establish you. To strengthen you; to make you firm στηριξαι. This was to be done by presenting such considerations as would enable them to maintain their faith steadfastly in their trials. And to comfort you concerning your faith. It is evident that they were suffering persecution on account of their faith in the Lord Jesus; that is, for their belief in him as a Saviour. The object of sending Timothy was to suggest such topics of consolation as would sustain them in their trials--that is, that he was the Son of God; that the people of God had been persecuted in all ages; that God was able to support them, etc.

3 that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves
know that we are appointed thereunto.

It would be most to the purpose, however, to suppose that he means to state the general idea that all Christians are exposed to persecution, and could not hope to avoid it. It would then appear that the Thessalonians had partaken only of the common lot. Still there may have been a special reference to the fact that Paul and his fellow-labourers there were subjected to trims; and if this be the reference, then the idea is, that the Thessalonians should not be "moved" by their trials, for even their teachers were not exempt. Even their enemies could not say that the apostle and his co-workers were impostors, for they had persevered in preaching the gospel when they knew that these trials were coming upon them. The phrase, "we are appointed thereunto," means that such was the Divine arrangement. No one who professed Christianity could hope

to be exempted from trial, for it was the common lot of all believers. Comp. 1Cor 4:9; 2Ti 3:12.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we
should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.
5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your
faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our
labor be in vain.

For this cause. Since I knew that you were so liable to be persecuted, and since I feared that some might be turned from the truth by this opposition. When I could no longer forbear. 1Thes 3:1. I sent to know your faith. That is, your fidelity, or your steadfastness in the gospel. Lest by some means. Either by allurements to apostasy, set before you by your former heathen friends; or by the arts of false teachers; or by the severity of suffering. Satan has many methods of seducing men from the truth, and Paul was fearful that by some of his arts he might be successful there. The tempter. Satan; for though the Jews were the immediate actors in those transactions, yet the apostle regarded them as being under the direction of Satan, and as accomplishing his purposes. He was, therefore, the real author of the persecutions which had been excited. He is here called the "Tempter," as he is often, (comp. Mt 4,) and the truths taught are;

(1.) that Satan is the great author of persecution; and

(2.) that in a time of persecution--or of trial of any kind--he endeavours to tempt men to swerve from the truth, and to abandon their religion. In persecution, men are tempted to apostatize from God, in order to avoid suffering. In afflictions of other kinds, Satan often tempts the sufferer to murmur and complain; to charge God with harshness, partiality, and severity, and to give vent to expressions that will show that religion has none of its boasted power support the soul in the day of trial. Comp. Job 1:9-11. In all times of affliction, as well as in prosperity, we may be sure that the Tempter" is not far off, and should be on our guard against his wiles.

6 But now when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us
good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good

remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see*
you:
7 therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our
affliction and distress by your faith:
8 for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

Verse 8. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. This is equivalent to saying, "My life and comfort depend on your stability in the faith, and your correct Christian walk." Comp. Martial vi. 70. Non est vivere, sed valere, vita--" Life consists not merely in living, but in the enjoyment of health." See, also, Seneca, Epis. 99, and Manilius, iv. 5, as quoted by Wetstein. The meaning here is, that Paul now enjoyed life; he had that which constituted real life, in the fact that they acted as became Christians, and so as to show that his labour among them had not been in vain. The same thing here affirmed is true of all faithful ministers of the gospel. They feel that they have something that may be called life, and that is worth living for, when those to whom they preach maintain a close walk with God.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy
wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;
10 night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and
might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?
11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct
our way unto you.
12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward
another, and toward all *men*, even as we *do* toward you:

Still our apostle perseveres in prayer, on the behalf of his beloved Thessalonians; and the particular mercy he prays for, is, their abundant increase in the grace and duty of love, first amongst themselves and their fellow-brethren in Christ, all Christians far and near; next towards all men, heathens and infidels, their bitter and bloody persecutors not excepted.
Where note, The true property of Christian love; it is,

1. A brotherly affection, which every true Christian chiefly bears to all his fellow-members in Christ, for grace sake;

2. A gracious propensity of heart, which a Christian bears for God's sake to all mankind, whereby he wills, and to his power procures, all good for them.

Here a particular and special reason is assigned, why he prayed so fervently for their abounding in love, namely, in order to their establishment in faith and holiness; teaching us, that as true love evidences the co-existence of all graces, so it gives stability and establishment to all graces.

Learn hence, 1. That growth in grace is accompanied with stability both in faith and holiness.

2. That a general and abounding charity, being that by which we become most like unto God, tends exceedingly to our establishment in all grace, and renders us unblameable before God, at the appearance of Christ.

Learn, 3. That there will be no possibility of appearing unblameable before Christ at his coming, without the love and practice of universal holiness in our Christian course.

Learn, 4. That the perfecting of a saint's graces, and rendering him altogether unblameable, without spot or imperfection in grace and holiness, is reserved till Christ's coming. Then, and not till then, shall our holiness be perfected, our love improved to a seraphim's likeness, all burning; then shall we obey with vigour, praise with cheerfulness, delight in God above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like unto him, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality.
Come, then, Lord, down to me, Or take me up to thee.

13 to the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

1 Thessalonians-4

A Life Pleasing to God

1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more.

In these words, we have a general exhortation given to the Thessalonians, that, according to the doctrine and injunctions formerly given them for a holy conversation suitable to the gospel, they would make it their care and endeavour to abound more and more in the exercise of piety, and outstrip themselves in doing their duty toward God and one another; We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, &c.

Where note, 1. With what great condescension and earnestness St. Paul applies himself to them; he styles them his brethren, and exhorts and beseeches them. The ministers of Christ must not only be teachers, but beseechers also, meekly and affectionately entreating persons to be kind to themselves, and comply with their present duty.

Yet observe, 2. With what authority he backs his entreaty; he beseeches and exhorts by the Lord Jesus, that is, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by his authority, and for his sake; so that he that despiseth the gentle exhortations of Christ's ministers, despiseth not men, but God; as the authority of a prince is despised, when his messages by his ambassadors are rejected.

Note, 3. The general and comprehensive duty which they are exhorted to, namely, to walk so as to please God in their daily conversation, to be found in the practice of all the duties and virtues of a good life.

Where note, that St. Paul, in the course of his ministry, did not only explain and unfold gospel mysteries but urge and enforce moral

duties: Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk. This must be a minister's care, to acquaint his people, that as the privileges of Christianity are very great, so the duties it requires are strict and exact; and those which we call moral duties, are an integral part of our religion; he that is not a moral man, is no Christian; let us preach and press second-table duties, with arguments drawn from the first, namely, that they performed in humble obedience to the command of God, and with a single eye at the glory of God, and from an inward principle of love to God, and then we can never preach up morality too much, nor our people practice it too much.

Observe, lastly, the apostle exhorts them to abound more and more, that is, in grace and holiness; Christians are to be thankful for, but not satisfied with, their present measures of grace received; God allows us liberty to enlarge our desires after an abundance of his grace: and happy is it where there is found a holy covetousness going along with the grace of God, as there is an insatiable covetousness going along with the gold and treasure of this world: this, says the apostle here, will please God, when ye abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

This is the will of God, even your sanctification: that is, this is the will of God, eminently and emphatically revealed in his word, that Christians should be holy and pure, chaste and clean: not indulging themselves in those impure and filthy lusts of the flesh, fornication, and all manner of uncleanness, which the Gentiles, who knew not the true God savingly, were addicted to, and, in a most beastly manner, guilty of; but that every one should know how to possess and make use of his body, and all its members, as the vessel and instrument of the soul, in holiness and honour.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle descends from general to particular duties: he exhorted the Thessalonians, 1Thess 4:1, in the general, to walk so as to please God; here he exhorteth them in particular, to purity and chastity, both of heart and life, and to watch against all the violent eruptions of concupiscence in their

earthly members; teaching us, that the ministers of God must not satisfy themselves with giving general exhortations to a good life, but must treat of particular sins and duties, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other; thus doth our apostle here.

Observe, 2. The particular duty exhorted to, sanctification; a comprehensive word, and of a large extent; in the general, it consists in a conformity of our natures to the nature of God, and in a conformity of our lives to the will of God.

In particular, sanctification here stands in opposition to all bodily uncleanness, as the next words do plainly shew, that ye should abstain from fornication, that is, all filthiness and uncleanness contrary to chastity; intimating to us, that as there are no sins that human nature is more inclined to, than the lusts of the flesh; so there are no sins that a Christian should more guard against, and strive to mortify and subdue, as being contrary to that purity of nature and life which the gospel directs, and the Holy Spirit assists unto.

Observe, 3. The argument which our apostle here uses to enforce his exhortation to purity and holiness; This is the will of God; 'tis both the command of God that we should be holy, and the will of God to make us holy; now the signification of God's will ought to be a sufficient inducement to us to desire it, and endeavour after it. This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication.

Observe, 4. The remedy prescribed against all bodily uncleanness, and that is, a careful preserving the vessel of the body free from all fleshly pollution, and in that measure of purity and chastity which is suitable to the honour put upon it by God, in being made a temple for the Holy Ghost, That every one should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.

Where note, the title given to our body, it is called a vessel; it is, first, the Spirit's vessel, he resides in it as in his temple; and

accordingly, it seems to be an allusion to the consecrated vessels of the temple, in which a more than ordinary cleanness and purity was found:
Secondly, it is the soul's vessel, 'tis its vessel or receptacle, in which, for a time, it is preserved; and it is the instrument of the soul, by which it acts and performs its office and function.

Now, it is every person's, every man and woman's duty, to possess their body, and to be masters of it, not to be possessed by it, or enslaved to it, but to keep it in subjection to, and as the instrument of, the soul; the body is God's curious workmanship, 'tis Christ's precious purchase, 'tis the soul's receptacle, 'tis the Holy Ghost's temple; therefore, to be kept holy, pure, and clean, like the consecrated vessels of the temple.

Observe, 5. Our apostle exhorts the Thessalonians, not only to abstain from the outward act of uncleanness, but to mortify and subdue the inward lust of concupiscence, 1Thess 4:5, or, as the word signifies, the feverish fit, or violent passion of burning desire, which boileth within, through all the members of the body without.

There is a divine art in the exercise of chastity, and no small skill required to keep a man's soul and body free from fleshly uncleanness; in order to which, inordinate desires must be resisted, the outward senses guarded, enticing and ensnaring objects avoided, wanton company declined, meat, drink, and sleep, soberly used, our lawful callings diligently followed, the first motions to uncleanness suppressed, prayer to God renewed; and, if these prevail not, marriage, God's special remedy, holily made use of. Thus may Christians possess their vessels in sanctification and honour, not in the lusts of concupiscence.

4 that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor;
5 not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:
6 that no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

It is expressed in these words: That you should abstain from fornication (1Th 4:3), by which we are to understand all uncleanness whatsoever, either in a married or unmarried state. Adultery is of course included, though fornication is particularly mentioned. And other sorts of uncleanness are also forbidden, of which it is a shame even to speak, though they are done by too many in secret. All that is contrary to chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour, is contrary to the command of God in the decalogue, and contrary to that holiness which the gospel requires.

2. There are several arguments to enforce this caution. As,

(1.) This branch of sanctification in particular is the will of God, 1Th 4:3. It is the will of God in general that we should be holy, because he that called us is holy, and because we are chosen unto salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit; and not only does God require holiness in the heart, but also purity in our bodies, and that we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, 2Co 7:1. Whenever the body is, as it ought to be, devoted to God, and dedicated and set apart for him, it should be kept clean and pure for his service; and, as chastity is one branch of our sanctification, so this is one thing which God commands in his law, and what his grace effects in all true believers.

(2.) This will be greatly for our honour: so much is plainly implied, 1Th 4:4. Whereas the contrary will be a great dishonour. And his reproach shall not be wiped away, Pr 6:33. The body is here called the vessel of the soul, which dwells therein (so 1Sa 21:5), and it must be kept pure from defiling lusts. Every one should be careful in this matter, as he values his own honour and will not be contemptible on this account, that his inferior appetites and passions gain not the ascendant, tyrannizing over his reason and conscience, and enslaving the superior faculties of his soul. What can be more dishonourable than for a rational soul to be enslaved by bodily affections and brutal appetites?

(3.) To indulge the lust of concupiscence is to live and act like heathens? Even as the Gentiles who know not God, 1Th 4:5. The Gentiles, and especially the Grecians, were commonly guilty of some sins of uncleanness which were not so evidently forbidden by the light of nature. But they did not know God, nor his mind and will, so well as Christians know, and should know, this his will, namely our sanctification in this branch of it. It is not so much to be wondered at, therefore, if the Gentiles indulge their fleshly appetites and lusts; but Christians should not walk as unconverted Gentiles, in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, &c. (1Pe 4:3), because those who are in Christ have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.

(4.) The sin of uncleanness, especially adultery, is a great piece of injustice that God will be the avenger of; so we may understand those words, That no man go beyond or defraud his brother (1Th 4:6), in any matter--en to pragmati, in this matter of which the apostle is speaking in the preceding and following verses, namely, the sin of uncleanness. Some understand these words as a further warning and caution against injustice and oppression, all fraud and deceit in our dealings with men, which are certainly criminal, and contrary to the gospel. And Christians should not impose upon the ignorance and necessity of those they deal with, and so go beyond them, nor should they by equivocations or lying arts defraud them; and although this may be practised by some and lie long undiscovered, and so go unpunished among men, yet the righteous God will render a recompence. But the meaning may rather be to show the injustice and wrong that in many cases are done by the sin of uncleanness. Not only are fornication and other acts of uncleanness sins against his own body who commits them (1Co 6:18), not only are they very injurious to the sinner himself both in soul and body, but sometimes they are very injurious, and no less than defrauding, acts of injustice to others, particularly to those who are joined together in the marriage covenant and to their posterity. And, as this sin is of such a heinous nature, so it follows that God will be the avenger of it. Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, Heb 13:4. This the apostle had forewarned and testified by his gospel, which, as it contained exceedingly great and

precious promises, so also it revealed from heaven the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness among men, Ro 1:18.

(5.) The sin of uncleanness is contrary to the nature and design of our Christian calling: For God hath called us not unto uncleanness, but unto holiness, 1Th 4:7. The law of God forbids all impurity, and the gospel requires the greatest purity; it calls us from uncleanness unto holiness.

(6.) The contempt therefore of God's law and gospel is the contempt of God himself: He that despises despises God, not man only. Some might possibly make light of the precepts of purity and holiness, because they heard them from men like themselves; but the apostle lets them know that they were God's commands, and to violate them was no less than to despise God. He adds, God hath given Christians his Spirit, intimating that all sorts of uncleanness do in an especial manner grieve the Holy Spirit, and will provoke him to withdraw from us; and also the Holy Spirit is given unto us to arm us against these sins, and to help us to mortify these deeds of the body, that we may live, Ro 8:13.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.
8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath
also given unto us his Holy Spirit.
9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you:
for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

For ye yourselves are taught of God. The word here rendered "taught of God" θεοδιδακτοι occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is correctly translated, and must refer here to some direct teaching of God on their own hearts, for Paul speaks of their being so taught by him as to need no special precepts in the case. He probably refers to that influence exerted on them when they became Christians, by which they were led to love all who bear the Divine image. He calls this being "taught of God," not because it was of the nature of revelation or inspiration, but because it was, in fact, the teaching of God in this case, though it was secret and silent. God has many ways of teaching men. The lessons which we learn from his Providence are a part of his instructions. The same

is true of the decisions of our own consciences, and of the secret and silent influence of his Spirit on our hearts, disposing us to love what is lovely, and to do what ought to be done. In this manner all true Christians are taught to love those who bear the image of their Saviour. They feel that they are brethren; and such is their strong attachment to them, from the very nature of religion, that they do not need any express command of God to teach them to love them. It is one of the first--the elementary effects of religion on the soul, to lead us to love "the brethren;" and to do this is one of the evidences of piety about which there need be no danger of deceptions.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

The Thessalonians gave good evidence of their being taught of God by their love to the brethren in all Macedonia, 1Th 4:10. They not only loved those of their own city and society, or such as were near them and just of their own sentiments, but their love was extensive. And a true Christian's is so to all the saints, though distant from him in place, and differing from him in some opinions or practices of less moment.

2 The exhortation itself is to increase more and more in this great grace and duty of brotherly love, 1Th 4:10. Though these Thessalonians had in some sense no need of an exhortation to brotherly love, as if it were wholly wanting, yet they must be exhorted to pray for more, and labour for more. There are none on this side heaven who love in perfection. Those who are eminent in this or any other grace have need of increase therein as well as of perseverance unto the end.

II. Of quietness and industry in their callings.

Observe, 1 The apostle exhorts to these duties: that they should study to be quiet, 1Th 4:11. It is the most desirable thing to have a calm and quiet temper, and to be of a peaceable and quiet behaviour. This tends much to our own and others' happiness; and Christians should study how to be quiet. We should be ambitious

and industrious how to be calm and quiet in our minds, in patience to possess our own souls, and to be quiet towards others; or of a meek and mild, a gentle and peaceable disposition, not given to strife, contention, or division. Satan is very busy to disquiet us; and we have that in our own hearts that disposes us to be disquiet; therefore let us study to be quiet. It follows, Do your own business. When we go beyond this, we expose ourselves to a great deal of inquietude. Those who are busy-bodies, meddling in other men's matters, generally have but little quiet in their own minds and cause great disturbances among their neighbours; at least they seldom mind the other exhortation, to be diligent in their own calling, to work with their own hands; and yet this was what the apostle commanded them, and what is required of us also. Christianity does not discharge us from the work and duty of our particular callings, but teaches us to be diligent therein.

2 The exhortation is enforced with a double argument; namely,

(1.) So we shall live creditably. Thus we shall walk honestly, or decently and creditably, towards those that are without, 1Th 4:12. This will be to act as becomes the gospel, and will gain a good report from those that are strangers, yea, enemies to it. Note, It is a great ornament to religion when the professors of it are of meek and quiet spirits, diligent to do their own business, and not busy-bodies in other men's matters.

(2.) We shall live comfortably, and have lack of nothing, 1Th 4:12. People often by their slothfulness bring themselves into narrow circumstances, and reduce themselves to great straits, and are liable to many wants, when such as are diligent in their own business live comfortably and have lack of nothing. They are not burdensome to their friends, nor scandalous to strangers. They earn their own bread, and have the greatest pleasure in so doing.

11 and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to
work with your own hands, as we commanded you;
12 that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and
that ye may have lack of nothing.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

But I would not have you to be ignorant. I would have you fully informed on the important subject which is here referred to. It is quite probable from this, that some erroneous views prevailed among them in reference to the condition of those who were dead, which tended to prevent their enjoying the full consolation which they might otherwise have done. Of the prevalence of these views, it is probable the apostle had been informed by Timothy on his return from Thessalonica, 1Thes 3:6. What they were we are not distinctly informed, and can only gather from the allusions which Paul makes to them, or from the opposite doctrines which he states, and which are evidently designed to correct those which prevailed among them. From these statements, it would appear that they supposed that those who had died, though they were true Christians, would be deprived of some important advantages which those would possess who should survive to the coming of the Lord. There seems some reason to suppose, as Koppe conjectures, (comp. also Saurin, Serra. vol. vi. 1,) that the cause of their grief was two-fold: one that some among them doubted whether there would be any resurrection, (comp. 1 Cor xv. 12,) and that they supposed that they who had died were thus cut off from the hope of eternal happiness, so as to leave their surviving friends to sorrow "as those who had no hope;" the other, that some of them believed that, though those who were dead would indeed rise again, yet it would be long after those who were living when the Lord Jesus would return had been taken to glory, and would always be in a condition inferior to them. See Koppe, in loc. The effect of such opinions as these can be readily imagined. It would be to deprive them of the consolation which they might have had, and should have had, in the loss of their pious friends. They would either mourn over them as wholly cut off from hope, or would sorrow that they were to be deprived of the highest privileges which could result from redemption. It is not to be regarded as wonderful that such views should have prevailed in Thessalonica. There were

those even at Corinth who wholly denied the doctrine of the resurrection, (1Cor 15:12;) and we are to remember that those to whom the apostle now wrote, had been recently converted from heathenism; that they had enjoyed his preaching but a short time; that they had few or no books on the subject of religion; and that they were surrounded by those who had no faith in the doctrine of the resurrection at all, and who were doubtless able--as skeptical philosophers often are now--to urge their objections to the doctrines in such a way as greatly to perplex Christians. The apostle, therefore, felt the importance of stating the exact truth on the subject, that they might not have unnecessary sorrow, and that their unavoidable grief for their departed friends might not be aggravated by painful apprehensions about their future condition.

That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. That is, evidently, as the heathen who had no hope of future life. Comp. Eph 2:12. Their sorrow was caused not only by the fact that their friends were removed from them by death, but from the fact that they had no evidence that their souls were immortal; or that, if they still lived, that they were happy; or that their bodies would rise again. Hence, when they buried them, they buried their hopes in the grave; and so far as they had any evidence, they were never to see them again. Their grief at parting was not mitigated by the belief that the soul was now happy, or by the prospect of again being with them in a better world. It was on this account, in part, that the heathens indulged in expressions of such excessive grief. When their friends died, they hired men to play in a mournful manner on a pipe or trumpet, or women to howl and lament in a dismal manner. They beat their breasts; uttered loud shrieks; rent their garments; tore off their hair; cast dust on their heads, or sat down in ashes. It is not improbable that some among the Thessalonians, on the death of their pious friends, kept up these expressions of excessive sorrow. To prevent this, and to mitigate their sorrow, the apostle refers them to the bright hopes which Christianity had revealed, and points them to the future glorious re-union with the departed pious dead.

Learn hence, (1.) that the world without religion is destitute of hope. It is just as true of the heathen world now as it was of the ancient pagans, that they have no hope of a future state. They have no evidence that there is any such future state of blessedness; and without such evidence there can be no hope. Comp. Eph 2:12.

(2.) That the excessive sorrow of the children of this world, when they lose a friend is not to be wondered at. They bury their bones in the grave. They part, for all that they know or believe, with such a friend for ever. The wife, the son, the daughter, they consign to silence--to decay --to dust, not expecting to meet them again. They look forward to no glorious resurrection, when that body shall rise, and when they shall be re-united to part no more. It is no wonder that they weep--for who would not weep when he believes that he parts with his friends for ever?

(3.) It is only the hope of future blessedness that can mitigate this sorrow. Religion reveals a brighter world --a world where all the pious shall be reunited; where the bonds of love shall be made stronger than they were here; where they shall never be severed again. It is only this hope that can soothe the pains of grief at parting; only when we can look forward to a better world, and feel that we shall see them again-- love them again --love them for ever, that our tears are made dry.

(4.) The Christian, therefore, when he loses a Christian friend, should not sorrow as others do. He will feel, indeed, as keenly as they do, the loss of their society; the absence of their well known faces; the want of the sweet voice of friendship and love; for religion does not blunt the sensibility of the soul, or make the heart unfeeling. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus; and religion does not prevent the warm gushing expressions of sorrow when God comes into a family and removes a friend. But this sorrow should not be like that of the world. It should not be

(a.) such as arises from the feeling that there is to be no future union;

(b.) it should not be accompanied with repining or complaining;

(c.) it should not be excessive, or beyond that which God designs that we should feel. It should be calm, submissive, patient; it should be that which is connected with steady confidence in God; and it should be mitigated by the hope of a future glorious union in heaven. The eye of the weeper should look up through his tears to God. The heart of the sufferer should acquiesce in him, even in the unsearchable mysteries of his dealings, and feel that all is right.

(5.) It is a sad thing to die without hope--so to die as to have no hope for ourselves, and to leave none to our surviving friends that we are happy. Such is the condition of the whole heathen world; and such the state of those who die in Christian lands, who have no evidence that their peace is made with God. As I love my friends, my father, my mother, my wife, my children, I would not have them go forth and weep over my grave as those who have no hope in my death. I would have their sorrow for my departure alleviated by the belief that my soul is happy with my God, even when they commit my cold clay to the dust; and were there no other reason for being a Christian, this would be worth all the effort which it requires to become one. It would demonstrate the unspeakable value of religion, that my living friends may go forth to my grave, and be comforted in their sorrows with the assurance that my soul is already in glory, and that my body will rise again! No eulogium for talents, accomplishments, or learning; no paens of praise for eloquence, beauty, or martial deeds; no remembrances of wealth and worldly greatness, would then so meet the desires which my heart cherishes, as to have them enabled, when standing around my open grave, to sing the song which only Christians can sing:--
Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb, Take this new treasure to thy trust; And give these sacred relics room To seek a slumber in the dust. Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear Invade thy bounds. No mortal woes Can reach the peaceful sleeper here, While angels watch the soft repose. So Jesus slept: God's dying Son Pass'd thro' the grave, and bless'd the bed Rest here, bless saint, till from his throne; The morning break, and pierce the shade. Break from his throne, illustrious morn: Attend, O Earth, his sovereign word;

Restore thy trust--a glorious form-- Call'd to ascend, and meet the Lord. //WATTS//.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Will God bring with him. This does not mean that God will bring them with him from heaven when the Saviour comes--though it will be true that their spirits will descend with the Saviour; but it means that he will bring them from their graves, and will conduct them with him to glory, to be with him. Comp. Jn 14:3. The declaration, as it seems to me, is designed to teach the general truth, that the redeemed are so united with Christ, that they shall share the same destiny as he does. As the head was raised, so will all the members be. As God brought Christ from the grave, so will he bring them; that is, his resurrection made it certain that they would rise. It is a great and universal truth that God will bring all from their graves who "sleep in Jesus;" or that they shall all rise. The apostle does not, therefore, refer so much to the time when this would occur--meaning that it would happen when the Lord Jesus should return--as to the fact that there was an established connection between him and his people, which made it certain that if they died united with him by faith, they would be as certainly brought from the grave as he was. If, however, it means, as Prof. Bush (Anastasis, pp. 266, 267) supposes, that they will be brought with him from heaven, or will accompany him down, it does not prove that there must have been a previous resurrection, for the full force of the language would be met by the supposition that their spirits had ascended to heaven. and would be brought with him to be united to their bodies when raised. If this be the correct interpretation, then there is probably an allusion to such passages as the following, representing the coming of the Lord accompanied by his saints. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee," Zech 14:6. "And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints," Jude 1:14. "Who," says Pres. Dwight, (Serra. 164,) "are those whom God will bring with him at this time? Certainly not the bodies of his saints .... The only answer is, he will bring with him "the spirits of just men made perfect."

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord. By the command, or inspired teaching of the Lord. Prof. Bush (Anastasis, p. 265) supposes that the apostle here alludes to what the Saviour says in Mt 24:30,31. "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." etc. It is possible that Paul may have designed a general allusion to all that the Lord had said about his coming, but there cannot have been an exclusive reference to that passage, for in what he says here there are several circumstances mentioned to which the Saviour in Matthew does not allude. The probability, therefore, is, that Paul means that the Lord Jesus had made a special communication to him on the subject.

Shall not prevent them which are asleep. Shall not precede; anticipate; go before. The word prevent with us is now commonly used in the sense of hinder, but this is never its meaning in the Scriptures. The word, in the time of the translators of the Bible, was used in its primitive and proper sense (proevenio,) meaning to precede, or anticipate. Job 3:12, "Why did the knees prevent me?" That is, why did they anticipate me, so that I did not perish. Ps 79:8, "Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us;" that is, go before us in danger. Ps 119:147, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried ;" that is, I anticipated it, or I prayed before the morning dawned. Mt 17:26, "Jesus prevented him, saying;" that is, Jesus anticipated him; he commenced speaking before Peter had told him what he had said. Comp. Ps 17:13, 59:10 Ps 88:13, 95:2, 2Sam 22:6,19, Job 30:27, 41:11. The meaning here is, that they who would be alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus, would not be 'changed' and received up into glory before those who were in there graves were raised up.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians-5

1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I
write unto you.
2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as
a thief in the night.
3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction
cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they
shall not escape.
4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake
you as a thief.
5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are
not of the night, nor of darkness.
6 Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be
sober.

In this passage, there is an allusion to the fact that persons not only sleep in the night, but that they are frequently drunken in the night also. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, when he comes, will find the wicked sunk not only in carnal security, but in sinful indulgences; and that those who are Christians ought not only to be awake and to watch as in the daytime, but to be temperate. They ought to be like persons engaged in the sober, honest, and appropriate employments of the day, and not like those who waste their days in sleep, and their nights in revelry. A man who expects soon to see the Son of God coming to judgment, ought to be a sober man. No one would wish to be summoned from a scene of dissipation to his bar. And who would wish to be called there from the ball-room; from the theatre; from the scene of brilliant worldly amusement? The most gay votary of the world; the most accomplished, and flattered, and joyous patron of the ball-room; the most richly-dressed and admired daughter of vanity, would tremble at the thought of being summoned from those brilliant halls, where pleasure is now found, to the judgment-bar. They would wish to have at least a little time that they might prepare for so solemn a scene. But if so, as this event may at any moment occur, why should they not be habitually sober-minded? Why should they not aim to be always in that state of mind

which they know would be appropriate to meet him? Especially should Christians live with such vigilance and soberness as to be always prepared to meet the Son of God. What Christian can think it appropriate for him to go up to meet his Saviour from the theatre, the ballroom, or the brilliant worldly party? A Christian ought always so to live, that the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven would not excite the least alarm.

The apostle having acquainted the Thessalonians with the privilege of their converted state, that they were the children of the light, having received a light of knowlege, a light of grace and holiness, and a light of joy and comfort from the gospel, he comes next to infer the duties proper and suitable to persons in such a state:
First, negative, Let us not sleep, as do others; sleep is not proper for the day, but the night; the sleep here intended, is the sleep of sin, and of sinful security, whereby all the spiritual senses of a man are bound up, so that he is both unapprehensive of his duty, and regardless of his danger.

Secondly, positive, Let us watch and be sober; that is, let us be always ready and prepared for Christ's coming; and that we may be so, let us be found in the daily exercise of sobriety, at no time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day overtake us unawares; the exercise of these two graces, watchfulness and sobriety, do best together, and can hardly be separated one from another; he that is not sober, cannot be watchful; and he that is not watchful, can never be ready for Christ's coming: let us therefore (says the apostle) watch, and be sober.

Observe next, our apostle subjoins a reason to enforce his exhortation to watchfulness and sobriety, because sleep and drunkenness are works of darkness, performed in the night, and not suitable for the childeren of the day: They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunken in the night. The old heathens had their Bacchanalia, their drunken feast in the night; and in the apostles time, drunkenness was so shameful a vice, that men were ashamed to be seen drunken in the daytime: But, Lord, to what a height of impudence is the intemperance of our age arrived, when

Christians blush not to do that at mid-day, which heathens were ashamed of at midnight!

Observe farther, another reason suggested why we should be thus sober and watchful, namely, because our life is a spiritual warfare: 'Tis now a time of fighting, therefore not of sleeping, and intemperate eating and drinking; soldiers must be upon their guard and well-armed; accordingly St. Paul directs to the two principal pieces of spiritual armour, to guard the most noble and vital parts, namely, the head and the heart; the helmet for the head, the breast-plate for the heart; for these two being the chief fountains of life and sensation, the preserving of them safe is, in effect, the preserving of the whole man; and accordingly, the soldiers that were upon their watch, and kept sentinel, never stood without their helmet and breast-plate. In allusion to which, our apostle here directs us, as Christian soldiers, to put on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation, without which we can never be rightly and duly prepared for our spiritual warfare.

Note here, of what admirable use, faith, love, and hope, are to a Christian; faith fortifies against destructive temptations, love will preserve from apostacy and revolting, and hope will be of universal use unto us in the exercises of our Christian course; it will be a cordial to comfort us, a spur to quicken us, a staff to support us, a bridle to restrain us, a helmet to defend us: Therefore let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

A reason enforcing the apostle's exhortation to holiness of life, For, or because God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ.

Note here, 1. What a Christian is not appointed to; he is not appointed to wrath.

2. What he is appointed to, namely, to obtain salvation.

3. The means by whom a Christian doth obtain salvation, and that is by our Lord Jesus Christ.
Learn, hence, that God's ordination and appointment of us to happiness and salvation, doth not discharge us from care and endeavour after the practice of universal holiness; it is the greatest piece of folly imaginable, from the appointment of the end, to infer the refusal or neglect of the means.

Learn, 2. That our Lord Jesus is the person appointed by God the Father, by whom alone all believers shall obtain salvation.

Learn, 3. That nothing short of the death of Christ was sufficient to purchase salvation for us, we obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died for us.

Learn, 4. That the great end designed by Christ in dying for us, was our living to him, in order to our living with him; a life of grace on earth, is our evidence for a life of glory in heaven; whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Observe lastly, the great and important duty which he exhorts the Thessalonians to perform mutually to each other, and that is, to comfort themselves together with this hope, and to edify and build up one another in faith and holiness; wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, as also ye do; implying, that as it is the duty, so it ought to be the endeavour of Christians to edify one another, both in their graces, and in their comforts.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another,
even as also ye do.

Paul Exhorts the Brethren

12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among
you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;
13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be
at peace among yourselves.
14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort
the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*.

Now we exhort you, brethren. Marg., beseech. This earnest entreaty is evidently addressed to the whole church, and not to the ministers of the gospel only. The duties here enjoined are such as appertain to all Christians in their appropriate spheres, and should not be left to be performed by ministers only. Warn them. The same word which in 1Thes 5:12 is rendered admonish. It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject. They suppose that it is the duty only of the officers of the church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God.

That are unruly. Marg., disorderly. The word here used (ατακτος) is one which properly means not keeping the ranks, as of soldiers; and then irregular, confused, neglectful of duty, disorderly. The reference here is to the members of the church who were irregular in their Christian walk. It is not difficult, in an army, when soldiers get out of the line, or leave their places in the ranks, or are thrown into confusion, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state of irregularity and confusion. As little difficult is it, when the members of a church are out of their places, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state. Many a church is like an army where half the soldiers are out of the line; where there is entire insubordination in the ranks, and where not half of them could be depended on for efficient service in a campaign. Indeed, an army

would accomplish little, if as large a proportion of it were irregular, idle, remiss, or pursuing their own aims to the neglect of the public interest, as there are members of the church who can never be depended on in accomplishing the great purpose for which it was organized.

Comfort the feeble-minded. The dispirited; the disheartened; the downcast. To do this is also the duty of each church member. There are almost always those who are in this condition, and it is not easy to appreciate the value of a kind word to one in that state, Christians are assailed by temptation; in making efforts to do good they are opposed and become disheartened; in their contests with their spiritual foes they are almost overcome; they walk through shades of spiritual night, and find no comfort. In such circumstances, how consoling is the voice of a friend! How comforting is it to feel that they are not alone! How supporting to be addressed by one who has had the same conflicts, and has triumphed! Every Christian--especially every one who has been long in the service of his Master--has a fund of experience which is the property of the church, and which may be of incalculable value to those who are struggling now amidst many embarrassments along the Christian way. He who has that experience should help a weak and sinking brother; he should make his own experience of the efficacy of religion in his trials and conflicts, the means of sustaining others in their struggles. There is no one who would not reach out his hand to save a child borne down a rapid stream; yet how often do experienced and strong men in the Christian faith pass by those who are struggling in the "deep waters, where the proud waves have come over their souls!" By these are intended the timorous and faint-hearted, or such as are dejected and of a sorrowful spirit. Some are cowardly, afraid of difficulties, and disheartened at the thoughts of hazards, and losses, and afflictions; now such should be encouraged; we should not despise them, but comfort them; and who knows what good a kind and comfortable word may do them?

To support the weak, 1Th 5:14. Some are not well able to perform their work, nor bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, help their infirmities, and lift at one end of the burden,

and so help to bear it. It is the grace of God, indeed, that must strengthen and support such; but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavour to minister of that grace to them. 5. To be patient towards all men, 1Th 5:14. We must bear and forbear. We must be long-suffering, and suppress our anger, if it begin to rise upon the apprehension of affronts or injuries; at least we must not fail to moderate our anger: and this duty must be exercised towards all men, good and bad, high and low. We must not be high in our expectations and demands, nor harsh in our resentments, nor hard in our impositions, but endeavour to make the best we can of every thing, and think the best we can of every body.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any *man;* but ever follow
that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men.*

See that none render evil for evil. Mt 5:39,44. The meaning here is, that we are not to take vengeance. Comp. Rom 12:17, Rom 12:19. This law is positive, and is universally binding. The moment we feel ourselves acting from a desire to "return evil for evil," that moment we are acting wrong. It may be right to defend our lives, and the lives of our friends; to seek the protection of the law for our persons, reputation, or property, against those who would wrong us; to repel the assaults of calumniators and slanderers; but in no case should the motive be to do them wrong for the evil which they have done us. But ever follow that which is good. Which is benevolent, kind, just, generous. Rom 12:20, Rom 12:21. Both among yourselves, and to all men. The phrase "to all men," seems to have been added to avoid the possibility of misconstruction. Some might possibly suppose that this was a good rule to be observed towards those of their own number, but that a greater latitude in avenging injuries might be allowable towards their enemies out of the church. The apostle, therefore, says that the rule is universal. It relates to the heathen, to infidels, sceptics, and persecutors, as well as to the members of the church. To every man we are to do good as we are able--no matter what they do to us. This is the rule which God himself observes toward the evil and unthankful, (Mt 5:45,) and is one of the original and beautiful laws of our holy religion.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

Pray without ceasing. Rom 12:12. The direction here may be fairly construed as meaning

(1.) that we are to be regular and constant in the observance of the stated seasons of prayer. We are to observe the duty of prayer in the closet, in the family, and in the assembly convened to call on the name of the Lord. We are not to allow this duty to be interrupted or intermitted by any trifling cause. We are so to act that it may be said we pray regularly in the closet, in the family, and at the usual seasons when the church prays to which we belong.

(2.) We are to maintain an uninterrupted and constant spirit of prayer. We are to be in such a frame of mind as to be ready to pray publicly if requested; and when alone, to improve any moment of leisure which we may have when we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pray. That Christian is in a bad state of mind who has suffered himself, by attention to worldly cares, or by light conversation, or by gayety and vanity, or by reading an improper book, or by eating or drinking too much, or by late hours at night among the thoughtless and the vain, to be brought into such a condition that he cannot engage in prayer with proper feelings. There has been evil done to the soul if it be not prepared for communion with God at all times, and if it would not find pleasure in approaching his holy throne.

We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. So we may praise God for everything that happens to us under his government. A man owes a debt of obligation to him for anything which will recall him from his wanderings, and which will prepare him for heaven. Are there any dealings of God towards men which do not contemplate such an end? Is a man ever made to drink the cup of affliction when no drop of mercy is intermingled? Is he ever visited with calamity which does not in some way contemplate his own temporal or eternal good? Could we see all, we should see that we are never placed in circumstances in which there is not much for which we should thank God. And when, in his dealings, a cloud seems to cover his face, let

us remember the good things without number which we have received, and especially remember that we are in the world of redeeming love, and we shall find enough for which to be thankful. For this is the will of God. That is, that you should be grateful. This is what God is pleased to require you to perform in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the gift of that Saviour he has laid the foundation for that claim, and he requires that you should not be unmindful of the obligation. Heb 13:15.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19 Quench not the Spirit.

Quench not the Spirit. This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire; and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. For it is this Spirit of grace and supplication that helpeth our infirmities, that assisteth us in our prayers and thanksgivings. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He worketh as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. This fire may have been regarded as emblematic of devotion, and as denoting that that devotion was never to become extinct. The Holy Spirit is the source of true devotion, and hence the enkindlings of piety in the heart, by the Spirit, are never to be quenched. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance; or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. The Holy Spirit, in his influences on the soul, is here compared with fire that might be made to burn more intensely, or that might be extinguished. In a similar manner the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up (αναζωπυρειν, kindle up, cause to burn) the gift of God,"2Ti 1:6. Anything that will tend to damp the ardour of piety in the soul; to chill our feelings; to render us cold and lifeless in the service of God, may be regarded as "quenching the Spirit." Neglect of cultivating the Christian graces, or of prayer, of the Bible, of the sanctuary, of a careful watchfulness over the heart, will do it. Worldliness, vanity, levity, ambition, pride, the love of dress, or indulgence in an improper train of

thought, will do it. It is a great rule in religion that all the piety which there is in the soul is the fair result of culture. A man has no more religion than he intends to have; he has no graces of the Spirit which he does not seek; he has no deadness to the world which is not the object of his sincere desire, and which he does not aim to have. Any one, if he will, may make elevated attainments in the divine life; or he may make his religion merely a religion of form, and know little of its power and its consolations.

That it must be a Christian's special care, that the graces of God's Holy Spirit be not quenched in him, nor any of its motions resisted by him. Sin in general quenches the Spirit, as water quenches fire: particularly, sins committed against knowledge and conscience; inordinate love of the world quenches the Spirit, as earth will extinguish fire as well as water.

A cold, customary, formal performance of holy duties, without the exercise of lively faith and holy love in the performance of them, will grieve and quench the Spirit, expecially sensual lusts indulged, and anger, malice, and revenge harboured in the heart: the holy Dove will not rest upon that man that has the heart of a vulture in his breast and bosom; and let us always remember,if we quench the Spirit in his motions, he is also quenched by us in his offices; he doth us many good offices; in prayer, he is our helper, our assistant, he quickens to the duty, and in the duty, and helps our infirmities, and makes intercession for us in our Christian course; he guides us, comforts us and bears witness to our integrity in us: all these good offices will he cease to do for us, if he be quenched in us.

20 Despise not prophesyings.

21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

How close this duty is coupled with the former. Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings; plainly intimating to us, that the Spirit is then dangerously quenched, when prophesying, or the preaching of the word, is sinfully neglected.

Note, 2. That by prophesying here, is not meant foretelling things to come, but the interpretation and application of the holy Scriptures, which we call preaching.

Note, 3. That by not despising it, we are to understand, that it is our obliged duty to put a high value and esteem upon it, to attend to it, and have a great regard for it, to honour the public ministry as an ordinance of God for instruction, conversion, and edification.

Learn, that it is not sufficient that we do not slight the ordinance of preaching, nor declaim against it as vain and useless, (as the manner of some is,) but we are to have an honourable esteem of it, and evidence that esteem by a due attendance upon it: more is intended by the Holy Ghost than is here expressed; for though he only forbids the sins, he intends the duty or grace in strict opposition to the sin, namely, that Christians ought to be so far from despising, that they ought to be very foreward in embracing the ministry and preaching of the word; despise not prophesyings.

We must not despise preaching, though it be plain, and not with enticing words of men's wisdom, and though we be told no more than what we knew before. It is useful, and many times needful, to have our minds stirred up, our affections and resolutions excited, to those things that we knew before to be our interest and our duty.

Despise not prophesyings. On the subject of prophesyings in the early Christian church, 1Cor 14:1, seq. The reference here seems to be to preaching. They were not to undervalue it in comparison with other things. It is possible that in Thessalonica, as appears to have been the case subsequently in Corinth, (comp. 1Cor 14:19, there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. It would not be unnatural that comparisons should be made between these two classes of endowments, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and hence may have arisen this solemn caution not to disregard or despise the ability to make known divine truth in intelligible language. A similar counsel may not be inapplicable to us now. The office of setting forth the truth of God is to be the permanent office in the church; that of speaking foreign languages by miraculous endowment, was to be temporary. But the

office of addressing mankind on the great duties of religion, and of publishing salvation, is to be God's great ordinance for converting the world. It should not be despised, and no man commends his own wisdom who contemns it--for

(1.) it is God's appointment--the means which he has designated for saving men.

(2.) There is nothing else that has so much power over mankind as the preaching of the gospel: there is no other institution of heaven or earth, among men, that is destined to exert so wide and permanent an influence as the Christian ministry. (3.) It is an influence which is wholly good. No man is made the poorer, or the less respectable, or more miserable in life or in death, by following the counsels of a minister of Christ when he makes known the gospel.

(4.) He who despises it contemns that which is designed to promote his own welfare, and which is indispensable for his salvation. It remains yet to be shown that any man has promoted his own happiness, or the welfare of his family, by affecting to treat with contempt the instructions of the Christian ministry.

Observe here, 1. The persons to whom this advice is given: to the church of the Thessalonians, not to the ministers, but to the people, Know them that labour among you, &c. 1Thess 5:12

Observe, 2. The advice itself, Prove all things; examine, try, and approve them, with a judgment of private discretion, not of public decision.

Learn, 1. That it is the duty of all Christians to examine the grounds of their faith and religion, and not to take them upon trust; otherwise their embracing the best religion in the world is rather the result of chance than of judgment and choice.

Learn, 2. That although all doctrines and opinions must be tried: yet, only that which is good, must be retained.

Learn, 3. That nothing is to be held fast, but what is first tried: Suppose we hold that which is good, yet if we have not tried and proved it to be good, it is no better to us than that which is evil; to approve before trial is not good, though the thing approved be never so good.

Inference, That this is a strong argument for the perspicuity and sufficiency of the holy scriptures, and against the necessity of a living Judge; for he that must try all things, must also try the doctrine of this living Judge; and therefore, till he has made this trial, must not admit his doctrine as an article of Christian faith; for these words plainly teach, that what we hold fast must be first tried; Try all things, and hold fast that which is good.

Prove all things. Subject everything submitted to you to be believed to the proper test. The word here used (δοκιμαζετε,) is one that is properly applicable to metals, referring to the art of the assayer by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested. 1Cor 3:13. This trial was usually made by fire. The meaning here is, that they were carefully to examine everything proposed for their belief. They were not to receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with vehemence, zeal, or plausibility. In the various opinions and doctrines which were submitted to them for adoption, they were to apply the appropriate tests from reason and the word of God; and what they found to be true they were to embrace; what was false they were to reject. Christianity does not require men to disregard their reason, or to be credulous. It does not expect them to believe anything because others say it is so. It does not make it a duty to receive as undoubted truth all that synods and councils have decreed; or all that is advanced by the ministers of religion. It is, more than any other form of religion, the friend of free inquiry, and would lead men everywhere to understand the reason of the opinions which they entertain. Comp. Acts 17:11,12, 1Pet 3:15. Hold fast that which is good. Which is in accordance with reason and the word of God; which is adapted to promote the salvation of the soul and the welfare of society. This is just as much a duty as it is to "prove all things." A man who has applied the proper

tests, and has found out what is truth, is bound to embrace it and to hold it fast. He is not at liberty to throw it away, as if it were valueless; or to treat truth and falsehood alike. It is a duty which he owes to himself and to God, to adhere to it firmly, and to suffer the loss of all things rather than to abandon it. There are few more important rules in the New Testament than the one in this passage. It shows what is the true nature of Christianity, and it is a rule whose practical value cannot but be felt constantly in our lives. Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything. Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything--no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no opinion: until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favour of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current or popular opinion or prejudice may be against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr's death.

And proving all things must be in order to holding fast that which is good. We must not always be seekers, or fluctuating in our minds, like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

This advice genuinely follows upon the former; after we have tried all things, we must hold fast that which is good, and abstain from evil.

Where note, the gradation used by our apostle, we must abstain from evil, from all evil, from all appearance of evil.

Abstain from all appearance of evil. Not only from evil itself, but from that which seems to be wrong. There are many things which are known to be wrong. They are positively forbidden by the laws of heaven, and the world concurs in the sentiment that they are wicked. But there are also many things about which there may be some reasonable doubt. It is not quite easy to determine in the case what is right or wrong. The subject has not been fully examined, or the question of its morality may be so difficult to settle, that the mind may be nearly or quite balanced in regard to it There are many things which, in themselves, may not appear to us to be positively wrong, but winch are so considered by large and respectable portions of the community; and for us to do them would be regarded as inconsistent and improper. There are many things, also, in respect to which there is great variety of sentiment among mankind--where one portion would regard them as proper, and another as improper. There are things, also, where, whatever may be our motive, we may be certain that our conduct will be regarded as improper. A great variety of subjects, such as those pertaining to dress, amusements, the opera, the ball-room, games of chance and hazard, and various practices in the transaction of business, come under this general class; which, though on the supposition that they cannot be proved to be in themselves positively wrong or forbidden, have much the "appearance" of evil, and will be so interpreted by others. The safe and proper rule is to lean always to the side of virtue. In these instances, it may be certain that there will be no sin committed by abstaining; there may be by indulgence. No command of God, or of propriety, will be violated if we decline complying with these customs; but, on the other hand, we may wound the cause of religion by yielding to what possibly is a mere temptation. No one ever does injury or wrong by abstaining from the pleasures of the ball-room, the theatre, or a glass of wine; who can indulge in them, without, in the view of large and respectable portions of the community, doing that which has the "appearance" at least "of evil ?"

This is a good means to prevent our being deceived with false doctrines, or unsettled in our faith; for our Saviour has told us (Joh 7:17), If a man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God. Corrupt affections indulged in the heart, and evil practices allowed of in the life, will greatly tend to promote fatal errors in the mind; whereas purity of heart, and integrity of life, will dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it. We should therefore abstain from evil, and all appearances of evil, from sin, and that which looks like sin, leads to it, and borders upon it. He who is not shy of the appearances of sin, who shuns not the occasions of sin, and who avoids not the temptations and approaches to sin, will not long abstain from the actual commission of sin.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.

Final Greetings and Benediction

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians
[2 Thessalonians]

2 Thessalonians-1

Salutation

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy,
Unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the
Lord Jesus Christ:
2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Judgment at Christ's Coming

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet,
because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of
every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;
4 so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your
patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye
endure:
5 *which is* a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye
may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also
suffer:

the endurance of affliction, in a proper manner, by the righteous, is a proof that there will be a righteous judgment of God in the last day.

(1.) It is evidence that there will be a future judgment--since the righteous here suffer so much, and the wicked triumph.

(2.) These things are now permitted in order that the character may be developed, and that the reason of the sentence in the last day may be seen.

(3.) The manner in which these afflictions are borne is an evidence--an indication (ενδειγμα) of what the results of the judgment will be. The word rendered "manifest token," (ενδειγμα,) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means an indication, token, proof, anything that shows, or points out, how a thing is, or is to be, (from ενδεικνυμι, to show, to point out.) The meaning here is, therefore, that the course of events referred to--the persecutions which they endured, and the manner in which they were borne--furnished a proof that there would be a righteous judgment, and also afforded an indication of what the result of that judgment would be. We may, in general, learn what will be the issues of the judgment in the case of an individual from the manner in which he bears trials.

Of the righteous judgment of God. That there will be a just judgment hereafter. The crimes of the wicked who go unpunished on the earth, and the sufferings of the good who are unavenged, are a demonstration that there will be a judgment, when all these inequalities will be adjusted.

That ye may be counted worthy. As the result of your affliction, that you may be fitted for the kingdom of God. This does not mean that Christians will merit heaven by their sufferings, but that they may show that they have such a character that there is a fitness or propriety that they should be admitted there. They may evince, by their patience and resignation, by their deadness to the world, and their holy lives, that they are not disqualified to enter into that kingdom where the redeemed are to dwell. No true Christian will ever feel that he is worthy on his own account, or that he has any claim to eternal life; yet he may have evidence that he has the characteristics to which God has promised salvation, and is fitted to dwell in heaven.

6 seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you. The sense is, "There will be a future judgment, because it is proper that God should punish those who now persecute you. It is not right that they should go unpunished,

and triumph for ever. It is not an arbitrary thing, a thing which is indifferent; a thing which may or may not be done; it is a just and proper thing that the wicked should be punished." The doctrine is, that the future punishment of the wicked is just and proper; and that, being just and proper, it will be inflicted. Many suppose that there would be no justice in the eternal punishment of the wicked; that the threatening of that punishment is wholly arbitrary; that it might easily be dispensed with; and that, because it is unjust, it will not be inflicted, and need not be dreaded. But that it is just and proper, a very slight degree of reflection must show. For

(1.) it is inconceivable that God should threaten such punishment unless it were just How can it be reconciled with his perfections that he can hold up before mankind the assurance that any of them will be punished for ever, unless it be right that it should be so? Can we believe that he deliberately threatens what is wrong, or that in the face of the universe, he publicly declares his intention to do what is wrong?

(2.) Men themselves believe that it is just that the wicked should be punished. They are constantly making laws, and affixing penalties to them, and executing them, under the belief that it is right. Can they regard it as wrong in God to do the same thing? Can that be wrong in him which is right in themselves?

(3.) If it be right to punish wickedness here, it is not wrong to punish it in the future world. There is nothing in the two places which can change the nature of what is done. If it be right for God to visit the sinner here with the tokens of his displeasure, there is nothing which can make it wrong to visit him in like manner in the future world. Why should that be wrong in another world which is right and proper in this?

(4.) It will be a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked in a future state, for they are not always punished here as they deserve. No one can seriously maintain that there is an equal distribution of rewards and punishments on the earth. Many a man goes to the grave having received no adequate punishment for his crimes. Many a

murderer, pirate, robber, traitor, and plunderer of nations under the name of a conqueror thus dies. No one can doubt that it would be a "just" thing to punish them here if they could be arrested. Why should it be any the less "just" to punish them when they enter another world? In like manner, many a man lives a life of profligacy; or is an open scoffer; or aims to cast off the government of God; or is a seducer of innocence; and yet lives ill the midst of wealth, and goes down in calmness and. peace to the grave. Ps 73:3-5; Job 21:23-33. Why is it not "just" that such an one should be punished in the future world? Comp. Ps 73:16-20. But, if it be right that God should punish the wicked in the future world, it will be done. For

(1.) there is nothing to hinder him from doing it. He has all power, and has all necessary means of inflicting punishment, entirely at his disposal.

(2.) It would not be right not to do it. It is not right for a magistrate to treat the righteous and the wicked alike, or to show that he has as much regard to the one as to the other.

(3.) It cannot be believed that God has uttered a threatening which he never meant to execute, or to appear before the universe as having held up before men the terror of the most awful punishment which could be inflicted, but which he never intended to carry into effect. Who could have confidence in such a Being? Who could know what to believe when he makes the most solemn declaration?

(4.) The Judge of all the earth will "do right;" and if it be right to declare that "the wicked shall be turned into hell," it will not be wrong to inflict the sentence. And if, on the whole, it be right that the sinner should be punished, it will be done.

7 and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall
be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,
8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and
that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
9 who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the
presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction. Mt 25:41,46. The word which is here rendered destruction (ολεθρον,) is different from that which occurs in Mt 25:46, and which is there rendered punishment κολασις. The word ολεθρον --occurs only here and in 1Cor 5:5, 1Thes 5:8, 1Timm 6:9; in each of which places it is rendered destruction. It does not denote annihilation, but is used in the same sense in which we use the word when we say that a thing is destroyed. Thus health is destroyed when it fails; property is destroyed when it is burned, or sunk in the ocean; a limb is-destroyed that is lost in battle; life is destroyed when one dies. In the case before us, the destruction, whatever it be, is

(1.) to be continued for ever; and

(2.) is to be of the nature of punishment. The meaning then must be, that the soul is destroyed as to the great purposes of its being with enjoyment, dignity, honour, holiness, happiness. It will not be annihilated, but will live and linger on in destruction. It seems difficult to conceive how any one can profess to hold that this passage is a part of the word of God, and yet deny the doctrine of future eternal punishment. It would not be possible to state that doctrine in clearer language than this. It never is stated in clearer language in any creed or confession of faith; and if it be not true that the wicked will be punished for ever, it must be admitted that it would not have been possible to reveal the doctrine in human language. From the presence of the Lord. That is, a part of their punishment will consist in being banished from the immediate presence of the Lord. There is a sense in which God is everywhere present, and in that sense he will be in the world where the wicked will dwell, to punish them. But the phrase is also used to denote his more immediate presence; the place where are the symbols of his majesty and glory; the home of the holy and the blessed. It is in that sense that the word is used here; and the idea is, that it will be one of the circumstances contributing to the deeper woe of the place of punishment, that those who dwell there will be banished from that holy abode, and will never be permitted to enter there. And from the glory of his power. The meaning seems to be, that they will not be able to endure the manifestation of his power and majesty when he

shall appear, but will be driven away by it into outer darkness. See 2Thes 2:8. The Saviour, in describing his Second Advent, uses this language: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," Mt 24:30. There will be a great exhibition of both. The power will be seen in the convulsions of nature, which will precede or attend him; in the resurrection of the dead; and in the bringing of all to judgment. And the glory will be seen in his own person; the dignity and number of his attendants; and the honour that shall then be conferred on him as the final Judge of all mankind. By the manifestation of that power and glory the wicked will be driven away into eternal ruin. They will not be able to stand before it, and though, in common with the righteous, they may see the majesty of the Redeemer in the last day, yet they will be driven away to witness it no more.

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints. That is, the redeemed in that day will be the means of promoting his glory, or the universe will see his glory manifested in their redemption. His chief glory, as seen in that day, will be connected with the fact that he has redeemed his people; and he will come in order that all the appropriate honour of such a work may then be manifested, he will be "glorified" then by the numbers that shall have been redeemed; by their patience in the trials through which they have passed; by the triumphs which religion shall have made on the earth; by their praises and songs; and by their ascent with him to the realms of blessedness. And to be admired in all them that believe.This may either mean that he will be admired among or by them that believe; or that the ground of the admiration which he will receive in that day will be what will be seen in them; that is, their graces, their numbers, their joys, their triumphs will be the occasion of producing admiration of him for he will be regarded as the source of it all. Tindal renders it, "and to be made marvellous in all them that believe." The latter interpretation seems to me to be the correct one. The general idea is, that Christ in that day will be manifested in a glorious manner, and that the source of his highest triumphs will be what is seen in the saints. His main honour, when he returns to the world, will not be the outward splendours which will attend his coming, nor the angels that will accompany him, nor the

manifestation of his power over the elements, but the church which he has redeemed. It will then be seen that he is worthy of universal admiration, for having redeemed that church, lie shall then be admired or glorified in his people,

(1.) for having conceived the plan of redeeming them;

(2.) for being willing to become incarnate, and to die to save them;

(3.) for the defence of his church in all its persecutions and trials;

(4.) for raising his people from the dead;

(5.) for the virtues and graces which they will exhibit in that day. This appropriate honour of Christ in the church has never yet been fully seen. His people on earth have, in general, most imperfectly reflected his image. They have in general been comparatively few in number, and scattered upon the earth. They have been poor and despised. Often they have been persecuted, and regarded as the "filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things." The honours of this world, have been withheld from them. The great have regarded it as no honour to be identified with the church, and the proud have been ashamed to be enrolled among the followers of the Lamb. In the last day all this will be changed, and the assembled church will show to admiring worlds how great and glorious is its Redeemer, and how glorious was the work of redemption. Because our testimony among you was believed. The meaning of this seems to be, that they would be among the number of those who would in that day honour the Saviour, because they had embraced what the apostle had preached to them respecting these future scenes. Thus interpreted, this clause should be regarded as connected with 1Thes 1:7, "And to you it is a righteous thing that he should give rest with us, because our testimony among you was believed." That is, you have shown that you are true Christians, and it is proper that you should partake of the triumphs and hopes of that day.

10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired
in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was
believed) in that day.

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count
you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his*
goodness, and the work of faith with power:
12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and
ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness. That is, make the work of salvation complete and effectual. Oldshausen has well expressed the sense: "May God fill you with all that good which is pleasing to him." The thoughts in the passage are,

(1.) that the purpose towards them on the part of God was one of "goodness" or benevolence;

(2.) that there was a state of mind which would be regarded by him as pleasing, or as his "good pleasure ;" and

(3.) that Paul wished that this might be accomplished in them. desired that there might be in them everything which would be pleasing to God, and which his benevolence was fitted to secure.

2 Thessalonians-2

The Revealing of the Man of Sin

Study it attentively, repeatedly and slowly

This chapter is very important in reference to the rise of that great antichristian power which has exerted, and which still exerts so baleful an influence over the Christian world. Assuming now that it refers to the Papacy, in accordance with the exposition which has been given, there are a few important reflections to which it gives rise.

(1.) The Second Advent of the Redeemer is an event which is distinctly predicted in the Scriptures. This is assumed in this chapter;

and though Paul corrects some errors into which the Thessalonians had fallen, he does not suggest this as one of them. Their error was in regard to the time of his appearing; not the fact.

(2.) The time when he will appear is not made known to men. The apostles did not pretend to designate it, nor did the Saviour himself, Mt 24:36, Mk 13:32, Acts 1:7.

(3.) The course of reasoning in this chapter would lead to the expectation that a considerable time would elapse before the Saviour would appear. The apostles, therefore, did not believe that the end of the world was near, and they did not teach false doctrine on the subject, as infidels have often alleged. No one, who attentively and candidly studies this chapter, it seems to me, can suppose that Paul believed that the Second Advent of the Saviour would occur within a short time, or during the generation when he lived. He has described a long series of events which were to intervene before the Saviour would appear--events which, if the interpretation which has been given is correct, have been in fact in a process of developement from that time to the present, and which, it must have been foreseen, even then, would require a long period before they would be completed. There was to be a great apostasy. There were, at that time, subtle causes at work which would lead to it. They were, however, then held in check and restrained by some foreign influence. But the time would come, when that foreign power would be withdrawn. Then these now hidden and restrained corruptions would develope themselves into this great antichristian power. That power would sustain itself by a series of pretended miracles and lying wonders; and, after all this, would be the second coming of the Son of man. But this would require time. Such a series of events would not be completed in a day, or in a single generation. They would require a succession--perhaps a long succession--of years, before these developements would be complete. It is clear, therefore, that the apostle did not hold that the Lord Jesus would return in that age, and that he did not mean to be understood as teaching it; and consequently it should not be said that he or his fellow-apostles were mistaken in the statements which they have recorded respecting the second coming of the Lord Jesus and the end of the world.

(4.) The apostle Paul was inspired. He has recorded in this chapter a distinct prediction of an important series of events which were to occur at a future, and most of them at quite a remote period. They were such that they could have been foreseen by no natural sagacity, and no human skill. There were, indeed, corruptions existing then in the church, but no mere natural sagacity could have foreseen that they would grow up into that enormous system which would overshadow the Christian world, and live for so many ages.

(5.) If these predictions referred to the Papacy, we may see how we are to regard that system of religion. The simple inquiry, if this interpretation is correct, is, How did the apostle Paul regard that system to which he referred? Did he consider it to be the true church? Did he regard it as a church at all? The language which he uses will enable us easily to answer these questions. He speaks of it as "the apostasy;" he speaks of the head of that system as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the wicked one," and as "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God;" he says that his "coming is after the working of Satan, with lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Can it be believed, then, that he regarded this as a true church of Jesus Christ? Are these the characteristics of the church as laid down elsewhere in the Scriptures ? Wherever it may lead, it seems clear me that the apostle did not regard that system of which he spoke as having any of the marks of a true church; and the only question which can be raised on this point is, whether the fair interpretation of the passage demands that it shall be considered as referring to the Papacy. Protestants believe that it must be so understood; and Papists have not yet disproved the reasons which they allege for their belief.

(6.) If this be the fair interpretation, then we may see what is the value of the pretended "succession" of the ministry through that system. If such a regular "succession" of ministers from the apostles could be made out, what would it be worth? What is the value of a spiritual descent from pope Alexander VI.? How would it increase the proper respect for the ministerial office, if it could be proved to be derived in a right line from those monsters of incest, ambition, covetousness,

and blood, who have occupied the Papal throne? A Protestant minister should blush and hang his head if it were charged on him that he held his office by no better title than such a derivation. Much less should he make it a matter of glorying, and an argument to prove that he only is an authorized minister, that he has received his office through such men.

(7.) From this chapter we may see the tendency of human nature to degeneracy. The elements of that great and corrupt apostasy existed even in apostolic times. Those elements grew regularly up into the system of the Papacy, and spread blighting and death over the whole Christian world. It is the tendency of human nature to corrupt the best things The Christian church was put in possession of a pure, and lovely and glorious system of religion. It was a religion adapted to elevate and save the race. There was not an interest of humanity which it would not have fostered and promoted; there was not a source of human sorrow which it would not have mitigated or relieved; there were none of the race whom it would not have elevated and purified. Its influence, as far as it was seen, was uniformly of the happiest kind. It did no injury anywhere, but produced only good. But how soon was it voluntarily exchanged for the worst florin of superstition and error that has ever brooded in darkness over mankind! How soon did the light fade, and how rapidly did it become more obscure, until it well-nigh went out altogether! And with what tenacity did the world adhere to the system that grew up under the great apostasy, maintaining it by learning, and power, and laws, and dungeons, and racks, and fagots! What a comment is this on human nature, thus "loving darkness more than light," and error rather than truth!

(8.) The chapter teaches the importance of resisting error at the beginning. These errors had their foundation in the time of the apostles. They were then comparatively small, and perhaps to many they appeared unimportant; and yet the whole Papal system was just the developement of errors, the germs of which existed in their days. Had these been crushed, as Paul wished to crush them, the church might have been saved from the corruption, and woes, and persecutions produced by the Papacy. So error now should always be

opposed--no matter how small or unimportant it may appear. We have no right to connive at it; to patronise it; to smile upon it. The beginnings of evil are always to be resisted with firmness; and if that is done, the triumph of truth will be certain.

(9.) The church is safe. It has now passed through every conceivable form of trial, and still survives, and is now more vigorous and flourishing than it ever was before. It has passed through fiery times of persecution; survived the attempts of emperors and kings to destroy it; and lived while the system of error described here by the apostle Paul has thrown its baleful shade over almost the whole Christian world. It cannot reasonably be supposed that it will be called to pass through such trials again as it has already endured; but whether it does or not, the past history of the church is a guarantee that it will survive all that it is destined to encounter. None but a religion of Divine origin could have continued to live amidst so many corruptions, and so many attempts to destroy it; and in the view of the past history of that church, it is impossible not to come to the conclusion that it has been founded by God himself.

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and *by* our gathering together unto him,

We must take heed of false prophets, especially in this matter, who go about to deceive, and that for the most part, after three sorts: for either they brag of fake prophetical revelations, or they bring conjectures and reasons of their own, or use counterfeit writings.

(b) By dreams and fables, which men pretend to be spiritual revelations.

(c) Either by word of mouth, or by written books.

(d) Either by forged letter, or falsely commented upon.

Nor by one who claims to quote a word or letter from us. It is thought that a forged letter had been circulated to which Paul alludes. In the close of this Epistle he shows how his letters may be known to be

genuine. Some suppose, however, that by "letter" he refers to an incorrect interpretation which was placed on his first letter.

Note here, 1. The error which the apostle disproves, namely that the day of Christ, that is, the day of judgment, was then at hand, to come in a few years; which was very true with respect to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, but not as the final judgment.
Learn hence, That the time of Christ's coming to judgment must be patiently expected, but not postively determined.

Note, 2. The effect which this error might produce, namely, trouble and unsettledness of mind: That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or troubled: implying,

(1.) That errors breed trouble and disquietude of mind.

(2.) That Christians should be so established, and have such constancy of mind, that they should not be easily shaken and moved from the faith.

Note, 3. A removal of all the supposed foundations of this error, or the means which these imposters used to entice the Thessalonians to embrace it; and they are three, namely, spirit, word, and letter; Not by spirit, that is, be not shaken in mind by any pretence of spiritual or divine revelation; nor by word, by any pretended message or word from us; nor by letter, that is, nor by any thing contained in our former epistle, or in any spurious and counterfeit writings, passing under the apostle's name: mentioning as if Christ should come in that age wherein they loved. We need not wonder that St. Paul is so careful to obviate this error of the present coming and appearance of Christ, because, should the Thessalonians have depended upon it, and found themselves deceived in their expectation of it, it might have caused great trouble to them, and even shaken their steadfastness in faith.

That ye be not soon shaken in mind. The word here used signifies, properly, to be moved as a wave of the sea, or to be tossed upon the waves, as a vessel is. Then it means to be shaken in any way. See Mt

11:7, 24:29, Lk 6:38, Acts 4:31, Heb 12:26. The reference here is to the agitation or alarm felt from the belief that the day of judgment would soon occur. It is uniformly said in the Scriptures, that the approach of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, will produce a great consternation and alarm. Mt 24:30, "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." Rev 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Lk 23:30, "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us." Comp. Isa 2:21,22. Of the truth of this, there can be no doubt. We may imagine something of the effects which will be produced by the alarm caused in a community when a belief prevails that the day of judgment is near. It is easy to account for such facts; and no doubt, when the Lord Jesus shall actually come, the effect on the guilty world will be overwhelming. The apostle here says, also, that those who were Christians were "shaken in mind and troubled" by this anticipation. There are, doubtless, many true Christians who would be alarmed at such an event, as there are many who, like Hezekiah, Isa 38:1,2, are alarmed at the prospect of death. Many real Christians might, on the sudden occurrence of such an event, feel that they were not prepared, and be alarmed at the prospect of passing through the great trial which is to determine their everlasting destiny. It is no certain evidence of a want of piety to be alarmed at the approach of death. Our nature dreads death, and though there may be a well-founded hope of heaven, it will not always preserve a delicate physical frame from trembling when it comes. As from us, Perhaps this would be found in the fact that it was not uncommon in the early times of Christianity to attempt to impose forged writings on the churches. Nothing would be more natural for an impostor who wished to acquire influence, than to do this; and that it was often done is well known.

2 that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by
spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ
is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come,*
except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be
revealed, the son of perdition;

Let no man deceive you by any means. That is, respecting the coming of the Lord Jesus. This implies that there were then attempts to deceive, and that it was of great importance for Christians to be on their guard. The result has shown that there is almost no subject on which caution is more proper, and on which men are more liable to delusion. The means then resorted to for deception appear, from the previous verse, to have been either an appeal to a pretended verbal message from the apostle, or a pretended letter from him. The means now, consist of a claim to uncommon wisdom in the interpretation of obscure prophecies of the Scriptures. The necessity for the caution here given has not ceased.

For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first. Until all apostasy αποστασια shall have occurred--the great apostasy. There is scarcely any passage of the New Testament which has given occasion to greater diversity of opinion than this. Though the reference seems to be plain, and there is scarcely any prophecy of the Bible apparently more obvious and easy in its general interpretation; yet it is proper to mention some of the opinions which have been entertained of it. Some have referred it to a great apostasy from the Christian church, particularly on account of persecution, which would occur before the destruction of Jerusalem. The "coming of the Lord" they suppose refers to the destruction of the holy city; and, according to this, the meaning is, that there would be a great apostasy before that event would take place. Of this opinion was Vitringa, who refers the" apostasy to a great defection from the faith which took place between the time of Nero and Trajan. Whitby also refers it to an event which was to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem, and supposes that the apostasy would consist in a return from the Christian to the Jewish faith by multitudes of professed converts. The "man of sin," according to him, means the Jewish nation, so characterized on account of its eminent wickedness. Hammond explains the apostasy by the defection to the Gnostics, by the arts of Simon Magus, whom he supposes to be the man of sin; and by the "day of the Lord" he also understands the destruction of Jerusalem. Grotius takes Gaius Caesar, or Caligula, to be the man of sin, and by the apostasy he

understands his abominable wickedness. In the beginning of his government, he says, his plans of iniquity were concealed, and the hopes of all were excited in regard to his reign; but his secret iniquity was subsequently "revealed," and his true character understood. Wetstein understands by the "man of sin, Titus and the Flavian house." He says that he does not understand it of the Roman Pontiff, who "is not one such as the demonstrative pronoun thrice repeated designates, and who neither sits in the temple of God, nor calls himself God; nor Caius, or Simon Gioriac, nor any Jewish impostor, nor Simon Magus." Koppe refers it to the king mentioned in Dan 11:36. According to him, the reference is to a great apostasy of the Jews from the worship of God, and the "man of sin" is the Jewish people. Others have supposed that the reference is to Mohammed, and that the main characteristics of the prophecy may be found in him. Of the Papists, a part affirm that the apostasy is the falling away from Rome in the time of the Reformation; but the greater portion suppose that the allusion is to Antichrist, who, they say, will appear in the world before the great day of judgment, to combat religion and the saints. See these opinions stated at length, and examined, in Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, Diss. xxii. Some more recent expositors have referred it to Napoleon Bonaparte; and some (as Oldshausen) suppose that it refers to some one who has not yet appeared, in whom all the characteristics here specified will be found united. Most Protestant commentators have referred it to the great apostasy under the Papacy; and by the "man of sin," they suppose there is allusion to the Roman Pontiff the Pope. It is evident that we are in better circumstances to understand the passage than those were who immediately succeeded the apostles. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the epistle was written, and the "day of the Lord" has not yet come, and we have an opportunity of inquiring, whether in all that long tract of time any one man can be found, or any series of men have arisen, to whom the description here given is applicable. If so, it is in accordance with all the proper rules of interpreting prophecy, to make such an application. If it be fairly applicable to the Papacy, and cannot be applied in its great features to anything else, it is proper to regard it as having such an original reference. Happily, the expressions which are used by the apostle are, in themselves, not difficult of interpretation, and all that

the expositor has to do is, to ascertain whether in any one great apostasy all the things here mentioned have occurred. If so, it is fair to apply the prophecy to such an event; if not so, we must wait still for its fulfilment. The word rendered "falling away," (αποστασια, apostasy) of so general a character, that it may be applied to any departure from the faith as it was received in the time of the apostles It occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts 21:21, where it is rendered "to forsake"--" thou teachest all the Jews which are among us to forsake Moses"-- apostasy from Moses-- αποστασιαναπομωσεως. The word means a departing from, or a defection. See the verb used in 1Timm 4:1, "Some shall depart from the faith"--αποστησοςται. 1Timm 4:1. See also Heb 3:12, Lk 8:13, Acts 5:37. The reference here is evidently to some general falling away, or to some great religious apostasy that was to occur, and which would be under one head, leader, or dynasty, and which would involve many in the same departure from the faith, and in the same destruction. The use of the article here, "the apostasy," (Gr.,) Erasmus remarks, "signifies that great and before-predicted apostasy." It is evidently emphatic, showing that there had been a reference to this before, or that they understood well that there was to be such an apostasy. Paul says 2Thes 2:5, that when he was with them, he had told them of these things. The writers in the New Testament often speak of such a defection under the name of Antichrist. Rev 13:14, 1Jn 2:18,22, 4:3, 2Jn 1:7.

And that man of sin. This is a Hebraism, meaning a man of eminent wickedness; one distinguished for depravity. Comp. Jn 17:12; Prov 6:12, in Heb. The use of the article here-- οανθρωπος --"the man of sin," is also emphatic, as in the reference to "the falling away," and shows that there is allusion to one of whom they had before heard, and whose character was well known; who would be the wicked one by way of eminence. See also 2Thes 2:8, "that wicked" οανομος. There are two general questions in regard to the proper interpretation of this appellative: the one is whether it refers to an individual, or to a series of individuals of the same general character, aiming at the accomplishment of the same plans; and the other is, whether there has been any individual, or any series of individuals,

since the time of the apostle, who, by eminence, deserved to be called "the man of sin." That the phrase, "the man of sin," may refer to a succession of men of the same general character, and that it does so refer here, is evident from the following considerations: (1.) The word "king" is used in Dan 7:25, 11:36, to which places Paul seems to allude, to denote a succession of kings. (2.) The same is true of the beast mentioned in Daniel Chapters 7, 8. Rev 13., representing a kingdom or empire through its successive changes and revolutions. (3.) The same is true of the "woman arrayed in purple and scarlet," (Rev 17:4,) which cannot refer to a single woman, but is the emblem of a continued corrupt administration. (4.) It is clear that a succession is intended here, because the work assigned to "the man of sin," cannot be supposed to be that which could be accomplished by a single individual. The statement of the apostle is, that there were then tendencies to such an apostasy, and that "the man of sin" would be revealed at no distant period, and yet that he would continue his work of "lying wonders" until the coming of the Saviour. In regard to this "man of sin," it may be further observed, (1.) that his appearing was to be preceded by "the great apostasy;? and (2.) that he was to continue and perpetuate it. His rise was to be owing to a great departure from the faith, and then he was to be the principal agent in continuing it by "signs and lying wonders." He was not himself to originate the defection, but was to be the creation, or result of it. He was to rise upon it, or grow out of it, and, by artful arrangements adapted to that purpose, was to perpetuate it. The question then is, to whom this phrase, descriptive of a succession of individuals so eminent for wickedness that: the name "the man of sin" could be applied, was designed by the Spirit of inspiration to refer. Bishop Newton has shown that it cannot refer to Caligula, to Simon Magus, to the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or to the revolt of the Jews from the faith, or to the Flavian family, or to Luther, as some of the Papists suppose, or to one man who will appear just before the end of the world, as others of the Romanists suppose. See his Dissertations on the Prophecies, xxii. pp. 393--402. Comp. Oldshansen, in loc. The argument is too long to be inserted here. But can it be referred to the Papacy? Can it denote the pope of Rome, meaning not a single pope, but the succession? If all the circumstances of the entire passage can be shown to be fairly

applicable to him, or if it can be shown that all that is fairly implied in the language used here has received a fulfilment in him, then it is proper to regard it as having been designed to be so applied, and then this may be numbered among the prophecies that are in part fulfilled. The question now is on the applicability of the phrase "the man of sin" to the pope. That his rise was preceded by a great apostasy, or departure from the purity of the simple gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, cannot reasonably be doubted by any one acquainted with the history of the church. That he is the creation or result of that apostasy, is equally clear. That he is the grand agent in continuing it, is equally manifest. Is the phrase itself one that is properly applicable to him? Is it proper to speak of the pope of Rome, as he has actually appeared, as "the man of sin?" In reply to this, it might be sufficient to refer to the general character of the Papacy, and to its influence in upholding and perpetuating various forms of iniquity in the world. It would be easy to show that there has been no dynasty or system that has contributed so much to uphold and perpetuate sins of various kinds on the earth, as the Papacy. No other one has been so extensively and so long the patron of superstition; and there are vices of the grossest character which have all along been fostered, by its system of celibacy, indulgences, monasteries, and absolutions. But it would be a better illustration of the meaning of the phrase "man of sin," as applicable to the pope of Rome, to look at the general character of the popes themselves. Though there may have been some exceptions, yet there never has been a succession of men of so decidedly wicked character as have occupied the Papal throne since the great apostasy commenced.

Be revealed. Be made manifest. There were at the time when the apostle wrote, two remarkable things, (1.) that there was already a tendency to such an apostasy as he spoke of; and (2.) there was something which as yet prevented the appearance or the rise of the man of sin, 2Thes 2:7. When the hinderance which then existed should be taken out of the way, he would be manifested. 2Thes 2:7.

Unless the falling away - From the pure faith of the gospel, come first. This began even in the apostolic age. But the man of sin, the

son of perdition - Eminently so called, is not come yet. However, in many respects, the Pope has an indisputable claim to those titles. He is, in an emphatical sense, the man of sin, as he increases all manner of sin above measure. And he is, too, properly styled, the son of perdition, as he has caused the death of numberless multitudes, both of his opposers and followers, destroyed innumerable souls, and will himself perish everlastingly. He it is that opposeth himself to the emperor, once his rightful sovereign; and that exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped - Commanding angels, and putting kings under his feet, both of whom are called gods in scripture; claiming the highest power, the highest honour; suffering himself, not once only, to be styled God or vice - god. Indeed no less is implied in his ordinary title, "Most Holy Lord," or, "Most Holy Father." So that he sitteth - Enthroned. In the temple of God - Mentioned Rev 11:1. Declaring himself that he is God - Claiming the prerogatives which belong to God alone.

As if the apostle had said, "Let no man deceive you in this article of your faith, by any pretence whatsoever; for before Christ's coming there shall come a great falling away from the catholic faith, and by that means the man of sin will be revealed, who is the son of perdition:"--

Note here, 1. Such a proneness there is in the nature and mind of man to embrace and entertain error, when once vented, that there is need of repeated dissuasives from it, and to guard persons against the poison and infatuation of it. Let no man deceive you by any means.

Note, 2. A general apostasy or defection of the visible church from the faith of Christianity, must be before Christ's coming to judgment; Except there come a falling away first. It is foretold as a thing that would certainly come to pass.

Note, 3. The revelation of Antichrist declared, That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition; where by the man of sin, understand not a particular individual person, but a society and succession of men, such as is found in and amongst the papacy,

where the sodomy, blasphemy, incest, adultries, sorceries, murders, treasons, which are not only committed, but countenanced; not only acted, but authorized; do most evidently declare that there never was such an apostasy from Christianity since it had a being in the world, as is found amongst them.

Note, 4. This man of sin is also styled the son of perdition.

(1.) Actively, a destroying son, one that brings others to destruction.

(2.) Passively, a son that shall be destroyed; Antichrist and all his adherents shall be destroyed, utterly destroyed, by Jesus Christ, and his kingdom shall perish without any hope of recovery; first destroying, and at last destroyed.

Where note, That our apostle at the first, the very first, mentioning Antichrist, doth declare his destiny; at his first rising he declares his fall and ruin. That man of sin, the son of perdition.

by any means—Greek, "in any manner." Christ, in Mt 24:4, gives the same warning in connection with the same event. He had indicated three ways (2Th 2:2) in which they might be deceived (compare other ways, 2Th 2:9, and Mt 24:5, 24). a falling away—rather as the Greek, "the falling away," or "apostasy," namely, the one of which "I told you" before (2Th 2:5), "when I was yet with you," and of which the Lord gave some intimation (Mt 24:10-12; Joh 5:43). that man of sin be revealed—The Greek order is, "And there have been revealed the man of sin." As Christ was first in mystery, and afterwards revealed (1Ti 3:16), so Antichrist (the term used 1Jo 2:18; 4:3) is first in mystery, and afterwards shall be developed and revealed (2Th 2:7-9). As righteousness found its embodiment in Christ, "the Lord our righteousness," so "sin" shall have its embodiment in "the man of sin." The hindering power meanwhile restrains its manifestation; when that shall be removed, then this manifestation shall take place. The articles, "the apostasy," and "the man of sin," may also refer to their being well known as foretold in Da 7:8, 25, "the little horn speaking great words against the Most High, and thinking to change times and laws"; and Da

11:36, the wilful king who "shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; neither shall he regard any god." the son of perdition—a title applied besides to Judas (the traitor, Joh 17:12), and to none else. Antichrist (the second "beast" coming up out of the earth); therefore he shall at first be "like a lamb, while he speaks as a dragon" (Re 13:11); "coming in peaceably and by flatteries," "working deceitfully," but "his heart shall be against the holy covenant" (Da 11:21, 23, 28, 30). Seeds of "the falling away" soon appear (1Ti 4:1-3), but the full development and concentration of these anti-Christian elements in one person are still to appear. Contrast the King of Zion's coming as JESUS:

(1) righteous or just;

(2) having salvation;

(3) lowly; whereas Antichrist is:

(1) "the man of (the embodiment of) sin;

(2) the son of perdition;

(3) exalting himself above all that is worshipped. He is the son of perdition, as consigning many to it, and finally doomed to it himself (Re 17:8, 11). "He whose essence and inheritance is perdition" [ALFORD]. As "the kingdom of heaven" is first brought before us in the abstract, then in the concrete, the King, the Lord Jesus; so here, first we have (2Th 2:7) "the mystery of iniquity," then "the iniquitous one" (2Th 2:8). Doubtless "the apostasy" of Romanism (the abstract) is one of the greatest instances of the working of the mystery of iniquity, and its blasphemous claims for the Pope (the concrete) are forerunners of the final concentration of blasphemy in the man of sin, who shall not merely, as the Pope, usurp God's honor as vicegerent of God, but oppose God openly at last.

4 who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Who opposeth. That is, he is distinguished as an opposer of the great system which God has revealed for human salvation, and of those who would serve God in purity in the gospel of his Son. No Protestant will doubt that this has been the character of the Papacy. The opposition of the general system to the gospel; the persecution of Wickliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of the Waldenses and the Reformers; the Inquisition, the cruelties in the reign of Mary, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, are obvious illustrations of this. And exalteth himself above all that is called God. That is, whether among the heathen or the Sews: above a false god, or the true God. This could be true only of one who set aside the Divine laws; who undertook to legislate where God only has a right to legislate, and whose legislation was contrary to that of God. Any claim of a dominion over conscience; or any arrangement to set aside the Divine laws, and to render them nugatory, would correspond with what is implied. in this description. It cannot be supposed that any one would openly claim to be superior to God; but the sense must be, that the enactments and ordinances of the "man of sin" would pertain to the province in which God only can legislate, and that the ordinances made by him would be such as to render nugatory the Divine laws, by appointing others in their place. he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; and thus have the bishops of Rome not only opposed God's authority, and that of the civil magistrates, who are called gods, but have exalted themselves above God and earthly governors, in demanding greater regard to their commands than to the commands of God or the magistrate. As God, he sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now, so the antichrist here mentioned is some usurper of God's authority in the Christian church, who claims divine honours; and to whom can this better apply than to the bishops of Rome, to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given, as Dominus Deus noster papa--Our Lord God the pope; Deus alter in terrâ--Another God on earth; Idem est dominium Dei et papæ--The dominion of God and the pope is the same?No one can reasonably doubt that all that is here affirmed may be found in the claims of the pope of Rome. The assumptions of the Papacy have related to the following things:

(1.) To authority above all the inferior orders of the priesthood--above all pastors, bishops, and primates.

(2.) Authority above all kings and emperors, "deposing some, and advancing others, obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, to wait barefooted at his gate, treading even upon the neck, and kicking off the imperial crown with his foot." Newton. Thus Gregory VII made Henry IV wait barefooted at his gate. Thus Alexander III trod upon the neck of Alexander I. Thus Celestin kicked off the imperial crown of Henry VI. Thus the right was claimed, and asserted, of laying nations under interdict, of deposing kings, and of absolving their subjects from their oaths of allegiance. And thus the pope claimed the right over all unknown lands that might be discovered by Columbus, and apportioned the New World as he pleased--in all these things claiming prerogatives which can appertain only to God.

(3.) To authority over the conscience, in matters which can pertain only to God himself, and where he only can legislate. Thus it has been, and is, one of the claims set up for the pope that he is infallible. Thus he "forbids what God has commanded," as the marriage of the clergy, communion in both kinds, the use of the Scriptures for the common people. Thus he has set aside the second commandment by the appointment of image-worship; and thus he claims the power of the remission of sins. Multitudes of things which Christ allows his people are forbidden by the Papacy, and many things are enjoined, or allowed, directly contrary to the Divine legislation.

Or that is worshipped. σεβασμα. This word means an object of worship. See Acts 18:23, where it is rendered devotions. It may be applied to the worship of a heathen divinity, or of the true God. "It may refer to a person, an idol, or a place. Probably Paul refers here to the heroes and other subordinate divinities of the heathen mythology." Oldshausen. No one can doubt that the pope has claimed higher honours, as the vicegerent of Christ, than was ever rendered in the ancient "hero worship." So that he, as God. That is, claiming the honours due to God. This expression would not imply

that he actually claimed to be the true God, but only that he sits in the temple, and manifests himself as if he were God. He claims such honours and such reverence as the true God would if he should appear in human form. It should be observed here, however, that there is much reason to doubt the genuineness of this phrase--"as God" ωςθεον. Mill supposes that it was inserted from the context. It is marked with an asterisk in the Vulgate, the Coptic, and the Syriac, and is omitted by many of the fathers. See Mill and Wetstein. It is rejected by Griesbach and Lachmann, and marked as doubtful by Hahn. It is defended, however, by Matthaei, Koppe, Knapp, and Schott. The sense is not materially affected whether it be regarded as genuine or not. Sitteth in the temple of God. That is, in the Christian church. It is by no means necessary to understand this of the temple at Jerusalem, which was standing at the time this epistle was written, for

(1.) the phrase "the temple of God" is several times used with reference to the Christian church, 2Cor 6:16, Eph 2:21, 1Cor 3:16,17, Rev 3:12; and

(2.) the temple was the proper symbol of the church, and an apostle trained amidst the Hebrew institutions would naturally speak of the church as the temple of God. The temple at Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God on earth. When the Christian church was founded, it was spoken of as the peculiar dwelling-place of God. See the passages referred to above. He dwelt among his people. He was with them, and walked with them, and manifested himself among them-- as he had done in the ancient temple. The usage in the New Testament would not lead us to restrict this language to an edifice, or a "church," as the word is now commonly used, but rather to suppose that it denotes the church as a society; and the idea is, that the Antichrist here referred to would present himself in the midst of that church as claiming the honours due to God alone. In the temple at Jerusalem, God himself presided. There he gave laws to his people; there he manifested himself as God; and there he was worshipped. The reign of the "man of sin" would be as if he should sit there. In the Christian church he would usurp the place which God had occupied in the temple. He would claim

Divine attributes and homage. He would give laws and responses as God did there. He would be regarded as the head of all ecclesiastical power; the source from which all authority emanated; the same in the Christian church which God himself was in the temple. This does not then refer primarily to the pope as sitting in any particular church on any particular occasion, but to his claiming in the church of Christ the authority and homage which God had in the temple at Jerusalem. In whatever place, whether in a cathedral or elsewhere, this authority should be exercised, all that the language here conveys would be fulfilled. No one can fail to see that the authority claimed by the pope of Rome, meets the full force of the language used here by the apostle. Showing himself that he is God. This does not necessarily mean that he actually, in so many words, claimed to be God; but that he usurped the place of God, and claimed the prerogatives of God. If the names of God are given to him, or are claimed by him; if he receives the honours due to God; if he asserts a dominion like that of God, then all that the language fairly implies will be fulfilled. The following expressions, applied to the pope of Rome by Catholic writers without any rebuke from the Papacy, will show how entirely applicable this is to the pretended head of the church. He has been styled "Our Lord God the Pope; another God upon earth: King of kings and Lord of lords. The same is the dominion of God and the Pope. To believe that our Lord God the Pope might not decree as he decreed, is heresy. The power of the Pope is greater than all created power, and extends itself to things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal. The Pope doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God." See the authority for these extraordinary declarations in Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, xxii. How can it be doubted that the reference here is to the Papacy? Language could not be plainer, and it is not possible to conceive that anything can ever occur which would furnish a more manifest fulfilment of this prophecy. Indeed, interpreted by the claims of the Papacy, it stands among the very clearest of all the predictions in the sacred Scriptures.

Our apostle proceeds in the further description of this man of sin, by a two-fold note of distinction, namely, by his enmity and opposition, and by his dignity and exhaltation.

Observe, 1. His enmity and opposition; He opposeth himself, that is, against Christ, as his name Antichrist signifies, opposing him in his doctrine, in his offices, in his members; corrupting his doctrine, debasing his offices, persecuting his members.

Observe, 2. His dignity and exaltation, which consists of two parts, 1.He exhalteth himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; that is, he exalteth himself above all magistrates, emperors, kings and princes, who are called gods, because representing his person, as his vicegerents, usurping a power over all civil authority, enthroning and dethroning princes at his pleasure.

Observe, 3. His arrogance is set forth, in relation to God himself, that as God he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. By the temple of God, understand the church of God, the external, visible church, which professeth the faith of Christ and bears his name; in this temple of God he sitteth as an officer or bishop: and sits as God, that is, as God upon earth, whom all must adore: kings kissing his feet, emperors holding his stirrup; and claiming the same power that Christ hath in and over the church, namely, an universal supremacy, an absolute authority, and an unerring infallibility.

And the usurped titles given to him declare that he sheweth himself that he is God; he is called supremum numen in terris; "the chief god upon earth;" and that from him it is affirmed, that no appeals are to be made, no, not to God himself; that he can change the sacraments delivered by Christ, and decree contrary to scripture. Now to accept of these flattering titles, and to pretend to such an unlimited power, is to shew himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Da 11:36, 37 is here referred to. The words used there as to Antiochus Epiphanes, Paul implies, shall even be more applicable to the man of sin, who is the New Testament actual Antichrist, as Antiochus was the Old Testament typical Antichrist. The previous world kingdoms had each one extraordinary person as its

representative head and embodiment (thus Babylon had Nebuchadnezzar, Da 2:38, end; Medo-Persia had Cyrus; Greece had Alexander, and Antiochus Epiphanes, the forerunner of Antichrist); so the fourth and last world kingdom, under which we now live, shall have one final head, the concentrated embodiment of all the sin and lawless iniquity which have been in pagan and papal Rome. Rome's final phase will probably be an unholy alliance between idolatrous superstition and godless infidelity. Who opposeth and exalteth himself—There is but one Greek article to both participles, implying that the reason why he opposeth himself is in order that he may exalt himself above, &c. ALFORD takes the former clause absolutely, "He that withstands (CHRIST)," that is, Antichrist (1Jo 2:18). As at the conclusion of the Old Testament period, Israel apostate allied itself with the heathen world power against Jesus and His apostles (Lu 23:12; and at Thessalonica, Ac 17:5-9), and was in righteous retribution punished by the instrumentality of the world power itself (Jerusalem being destroyed by Rome), Da 9:26, 27; so the degenerate Church (become an "harlot"), allying itself with the godless world power (the "beast" of Revelation) against vital religion (that is, the harlot sitting on the beast), shall be judged by that world power which shall be finally embodied in Antichrist (Zec 13:8, 9; 14:2; Re 17:16, 17). In this early Epistle, the apostate Jewish Church as the harlot, and pagan Rome as the beast, form the historical background on which Paul draws his prophetic sketch of the apostasy. In the Pastoral Epistles, which were later, this prophecy appears in connection with Gnosticism, which had at that time infected the Church. The harlot (the apostate Church) is first to be judged by the beast (the world power) and its kings (Re 17:16); and afterwards the beasts and their allies (with the personal Antichrist at their head, who seems to rise after the judgment on the harlot, or apostate Church) shall be judged by the coming of Jesus Himself (Re 19:20). Anti-Christian tendencies produce different Antichrists: these separate Antichrists shall hereafter find their consummation in an individual exceeding them all in the intensity of his evil character [AUBERLEN]. But judgment soon overtakes him. He is necessarily a child of death, immediately after his ascent as the beast out of the bottomless pit going into perdition (Re 17:8, 11). Idolatry of self, spiritual pride, and rebellion against God, are

his characteristics; as Christ-worship, humility, and dependence on God, characterize Christianity. He not merely assumes Christ's character (as the "false Christs," Mt 24:24), but "opposes" Christ. The Greek implies one situated on an opposite side (compare 1Jo 2:22; 2Jo 7). One who, on the destruction of every religion, shall seek to establish his own throne, and for God's great truth, "God is man," to substitute his own lie, "Man is God" [TRENCH]. above all that is called God— (1Co 8:5). The Pope (for instance, Clement VI) has even commanded the angels to admit into Paradise, without the alleged pains of purgatory, certain souls. But still this is only a foreshadowing of the Antichrist, who will not, as the Pope, act in God's name, but against God. or that is worshipped—Rome here again gives a presage of Antichrist. The Greek is Sebasma; and Sebastus is the Greek for Augustus, who was worshipped as the secular ruler and divine vicegerent. The papacy has risen on the overthrow of Cæsar's power. Antichrist shall exalt himself above every object of worship, whether on earth as the Cæsar, or in heaven as God. The various prefigurations of Antichrist, Mohammed, Rome, Napoleon, and modern infidel secularism, contain only some, not all, his characteristics. It is the union of all in some one person that shall form the full Antichrist, as the union in one Person, Jesus, of all the types and prophecies constituted the full Christ [OLSHAUSEN]. in the temple of God . . . that he is God—"He will reign a time, times, and half a time" (Da 7:25), that is, three and a half years, and will sit in the temple at Jerusalem: then the Lord shall come from heaven and cast him into the take of fire and shall bring to the saints the times of their reigning, the seventh day of hallowed rest, and give to Abraham the promised inheritance" [IRENÆUS, Against Heresies, 30.4]. showing himself—with blasphemous and arrogant DISPLAY (compare a type, Ac 12:21-23). The earliest Fathers unanimously looked for a personal Antichrist. Two objections exist to Romanism being regarded the Antichrist, though probably Romanism will leave its culmination in him:

(1) So far is Romanism from opposing all that is called God, that adoration of gods and lords many (the Virgin Mary and saints) is a leading feature in it;

(2) the papacy has existed for more than twelve centuries, and yet Christ is not come, whereas the prophecy regards the final Antichrist as short-lived, and soon going to perdition through the coming of Christ (Re 17:8, 11). Gregory the Great declared against the patriarch of Constantinople, that whosoever should assume the title of "universal bishop" would be "the forerunner of Antichrist." The papacy fulfilled this his undesigned prophecy. The Pope has been called by his followers, "Our Lord God the Pope"; and at his inauguration in St. Peter's, seated in his chair upon the high altar, which is treated as his footstool, he has vividly foreshadowed him who "exalteth himself above all that is called God." An objection fatal to interpreting the temple of God here as the Church (1Co 3:16, 17; 6:19) is, the apostle would never designate the apostate anti-Christian Church "the temple of God." It is likely that, as Messiah was revealed among the Jews at Jerusalem, so Antimessiah shall appear among them when restored to their own land, and after they have rebuilt their temple at Jerusalem. Thus Da 11:41, 45 (see on Da 11:41; Da 11:45), corresponds, "He shall enter the glorious land (Judea), and he shall plant the tabernacles of his palaces between the seas in the glorious holy mountain"; and then (Da 12:1) "Michael, the great prince, shall stand up" to deliver God's people. Compare Note, see on Da 9:26, 27. Also the king of Assyria, type of Antichrist (Isa 14:12-14). "Lucifer" (a title of Messiah, assumed by Antichrist, Re 22:16); "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." "I will sit upon the mount of the congregation (that is, God's place of meeting His people of old, the temple), in the sides of the north (Ps 48:2); I will be like the Most High." Re 11:1, 2, "The temple of God . . . the holy city" (namely, Jerusalem, Mt 4:5), compare Ps 68:18, 29, referring to a period since Christ's ascension, therefore not yet fulfilled (Isa 2:1-3; Eze 40:1-44:31; Zec 14:16-20; Mal 3:1). "In the temple of God," implies that it an internal, not an external, enemy which shall assail the Church. Antichrist shall, the first three and a half years of the prophetical week, keep the covenant, then break it and usurp divine honors in the midst of the week. Some think Antichrist will be a Jew. At all events he will, "by flatteries," bring many, not only of the Gentiles, but also of "the tribes" of Israel (so the Greek for "kindreds," Re 11:8, 9), to own him as their long-

looked-for Messiah, in the same "city where our Lord was crucified." "Sitteth" here implies his occupying the place of power and majesty in opposition to Him who "sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3), and who shall come to "sit" there where the usurper had sat (Mt 26:64). See on Da 9:27; Re 11:2, 3, 9, 11. Compare Eze 38:2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, as to Tyre, the type of Antichrist, characterized by similar blasphemous arrogance.

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

And now ye know what withholdeth. Marg., holdeth. The reference is, to something that then operated to constrain or hold back the obvious tendency of things, so that "the man of sin" should not at once appear, or so that things should not soon so develope themselves as to give rise to this antichristian power. There were causes at work, even then, which would ultimately lead to this; but there was also something which checked the tendency of things, so that the revelation or development of the "man of sin" was put off to a future period. The obvious meaning of this would be, that, when the apostle wrote, there was a tendency to what would occur under the great apostasy, and that this would soon develope itself if it were not restrained. If the reference is to the Papacy, this would consist in corruptions already existing in the church, having a resemblance to those which afterwards existed under that system, or which were the germ of that system. If there were a tendency towards the concentration of all power in an individual in the church,--if there were an assumption of authority by one class of ministers above another,--if there were a denial of the "parity of the clergy," the tendency would have been to that ultimate assumption of authority which is found in the Romish hierarchy. But conjecture is useless as to what was the precise form in which this tendency then began to develope itself. That the corruptions early began in the church which terminated in the Papacy, and which led on directly to it, we know; and that the apostle was able to foresee and predict such a final development, shows that he was under the influence of inspiration. It is not known precisely what is referred to by the phrase "what with- holdeth," τοκατεχον. The phrase means, properly, something that holds back, or restrains. The word here is in the neuter gender, "What withholdeth." In the following verse it is in the masculine

gender, οκατεχων,-- "he that letteth", or withholdeth; and the reference would seem to be to some agency or state of things under the control of an individual, or of some civil power, that then operated as a restraint on the natural tendency of things. Of this, the apostle says, they had had full information; but we can only conjecture what it was. The restraining power of any thing controlled by an individual, or of any government, or the restraining power of God, would meet all that the phrase implies. The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to civil power, meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed. The supposition that there was even then a tendency to concentrate all ecclesiastical power at Rome, and that while the civil authority remained there it would not suffer ecclesiastical power to grow to the exorbitant height which it ultimately reached, will meet all that is implied in the language. That he might be revealed in his time.

The man of sin. The meaning is, that there was then a restraint operating which would prevent the development of this antichristian power until the proper time; that is, till the state of the world should be such that in the Divine arrangements it would be proper to permit it. It was not to be permitted until the gospel should be extensively preached, and had had an opportunity of showing its fair effects on the nations; until it had become so planted and established that even the rise of this antichristian power could not effectually uproot it. Had the "man of sin" been permitted to rise at once, the consequence might have been that the new religion would have been crushed so that it could never have revived again. There was then a providential arrangement by which this growth of wickedness should be checked and restrained, until the new religion should take deep root in the earth, and its perpetuity should be secured. Then the great trial was to be permitted under the "man of sin."

His rise is mentioned, 2Th 2:6,7. Concerning this we are to observe two things:--

(1.) There was something that hindered or withheld, or let, until it was taken away. This is supposed to be the power of the Roman empire, which the apostle did not think fit to mention more plainly at that time; and it is notorious that, while this power continued, it prevented the advances of the bishops of Rome to that height of tyranny to which soon afterwards they arrived.

(2.) This mystery of iniquity was gradually to arrive at its height; and so it was in effect that the universal corruption of doctrine and worship in the Romish church came in by degrees, and the usurpation of the bishops of Rome was gradual, not all at once; and thus the mystery of iniquity did the more easily, and almost insensibly, prevail. The apostle justly calls it a mystery of iniquity, because wicked designs and actions were concealed under false shows and pretences, at least they were concealed from the common view and observation. By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced; and, by a pretended zeal for God and his glory, bigotry and persecution were promoted. And he tells us that this mystery of iniquity did even then begin, or did already work. While the apostles were yet living, the enemy came, and sowed tares; there were then the deeds of the Nicolaitans, persons who pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him. Pride, ambition, and worldly interest of church-pastors and church-rulers, as in Diotrephes and others, were the early working of the mystery of iniquity, which, by degrees, came to that prodigious height which has been visible in the church of Rome.

now ye know—by my having told you. The power must have been one "known" to the Thessalonians. what withholdeth—that which holds him back; "keeps him in check": the power that has restrained the man of sin from his full and final development, is the moral and conservative influence of political states [OLSHAUSEN]: the fabric of human polity as a coercive power; as "he who now letteth" refers to those who rule that polity by which the great upbursting of godlessness is kept down [ALFORD]. The "what withholdeth" refers to the general hindrance; "he who now letteth," to the person in whom that hindrance is summed up. Romanism, as a forerunner of Antichrist, was thus kept in check by

the Romanemperor (the then representative of the coercive power) until Constantine, having removed the seat of empire to Constantinople, the Roman bishop by degrees first raised himself to precedency, then to primacy, and then to sole empire above the secular power. The historical fact from which Paul starts in his prediction was probably the emperor Claudius' expulsion of the Jews, the representative of the anti-Christian adversary in Paul's day, from Rome, thus "withholding" them in some degree in their attacks on Christianity; this suggested the principle holding good to the end of time, and about to find its final fulfilment in the removal of the withholding person or authority, whereupon Antichrist in his worst shape shall start up. that he might be—Greek, "in order that": ye know that which keeps him back, in God's purposes, from being sooner manifested, "in order that he may be revealed in his own time" (that is, the time appointed by God to him as his proper time for being manifested), not sooner (compare Da 11:35). The removal of the withholding power will be when the civil polity, derived from the Roman empire, which is to be, in its last form, divided into ten kingdoms (Re 17:3, 11-13), shall, with its leading representative head for the time being ("he who now letteth," Greek, "withholdeth," as in 2Th 2:6), yield to the prevalent godless "lawlessness" with "the lawless one" as its embodiment. The elect Church and the Spirit cannot well be, as DE BURGH suggests, the withholding power meant; for both shall never be wholly "taken out of the way" (Mt 28:20). However, the testimony of the elect Church, and the Spirit in her, are the great hindrance to the rise of the apostasy; and it is possible that, though the Lord shall have a faithful few even then, yet the full energy of the Spirit in the visible Church, counteracting the energy or "working" of "the mystery of lawlessness" by the testimony of the elect, shall have been so far "taken out of the way," or set aside, as to admit the manifestation of "the lawless one"; and so DE BURGH'S'S view may be right (Lu 18:8; Re 11:3-12). This was a power of which the Thessalonians might easily "know" through Paul's instruction.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth *will let*, until he be taken out of the way.

For the mystery of iniquity. On the meaning of the word mystery, Rom 11:25. Comp. 1Cor 2:7, Eph 1:9; Eph 3:3, Col 1:26. It means

properly that which is hidden or concealed; not necessarily that which is unintelligible. The "mystery of iniquity," seems here to refer to some hidden or concealed depravity-some form of sin which was working secretly and silently: and which had not yet developed itself. Any secret sources of iniquity in the church--anything that tended to corrupt its doctrines, and to destroy the simplicity of the faith of the gospel, would correspond with the meaning of the word. Doddridge correctly supposes that this may refer to the pride and ambition of some ministers, the factious temper of some Christians, the imposing of unauthorized severities, the worship of angels, etc. Doth already work. There are elements of these corruptions already existing in the church. Bishop Newton maintains that the foundations of Popery were laid in the apostles' days, and that the superstructure was raised by degrees; and this is entirely in accordance with the statements of the apostle Paul. In his own time, he says, there were things, which, if not restrained, would expand and ripen into that apostasy. He has not told us particularly to what he refers, but there are several intimations in his writings, as well as in other parts of the New Testament, that even in the apostolic age there existed the elements of those corruptions which were afterwards developed and imbodied in the Papacy. Even "then," says bishop Newton, "idolatry was stealing into the church, 1Cor 10:14, and a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." Col 2:18; Col 2:18. "There existed strife and divisions, 1Cor 3:3; an adulterating and handling the word of God deceitfully, 2Cor 2:17, 4:2; a gain of godliness, teaching of things for filthy lucre's sake, 1Timm 6:5, Tit 1:11; a vain observation of festivals, Gal 4:10; a vain distinction of meats, 1Cor 8:8; a neglecting of the body, Col 2:23; traditions, and commandments, and doctrines of men, (Col 2:8,22)." Compare 3Jn 1:9, "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence." These things constituted the elements of the corruptions which were afterwards developed in the Papacy, and which are imbodied in that system. An eye that could see all, would even then have perceived that, if there were no restraint, these incipient corruptions would grow up into that system, and would be expanded into all the corruptions and arrogant claims which have ever characterized it. Comp. 1Jn 4:3. Only he who now letteth. Who now hinders or restrains-- οκατεχων. This is the same word which is used in 2Thes

2:6, and rendered "withholdeth," except that it is there in the neuter gender. There can be no doubt that there is reference to the same restraining power, or the same power under the control of an individual: but what that was, is not quite certain. It was some power which operated as a check on the growing corruptions then existing, and which prevented their full development, but which was to be removed at no distant period, and whose removal would give an opportunity for those corruptions to develope themselves, and for the full revelation of the man of sin. Such a supposition as that the civil power of Rome was such a restraint, operating to prevent the assumption of the ecclesiastical claims of supremacy which afterwards characterized the Papacy, will correspond with all that is necessarily implied in the language. Will let, until he be taken out of the way. This will be an effectual check on these corruptions, preventing their full development, until it is removed, and then the man of sin will appear. The supposition which will best suit this language is, that there was then some civil restraint, preventing the development of existing corruptions, but that there would be a removal, or withdrawing of that restraint; and that then the tendency of the existing corruptions would be seen. It is evident, as Oldshansen remarks, that this resisting or restraining power must be something out of the church, and distinguished from the antichristian tendency itself: von der Kirche und vom Antichristenthum. It is necessary, therefore, to understand this of the restraints of civil power. Was there, then, any fact in history which will accord with this interpretation? The belief among the primitive Christians was, that what hindered the rise of the man of sin was the Roman empire, and therefore "they prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that when the Roman empire should be dissolved and broken in pieces, the empire of the man of sin would be raised on its ruins." Bp. Newton. How this revolution was effected, may be seen by the statement of Machiavel. "The emperor of Rome, quitting Rome to dwell at Constantinople," (in the fourth century under Constantine,) "the Roman empire began to decline, but the church of Rome augmented as fast. Nevertheless, until the coming in of the Lombards, all Italy being under the dominion of either emperors or kings, the bishops assumed no more power than what was due to their doctrine and manners; in civil affairs they were subject to the

civil power. But Theodoric, king of the Goths, fixing his seat at Ravenna, was that which advanced their interest, and made them more considerable in Italy, for there being no other prince left in Rome, the Romans were forced for protection to pay greater allegiance to the pope. The Lombards having invaded and reduced Italy into several can- tons, the pope took the opportunity, and began to hold up his head. For being, as it were, governor and principal of Rome, the emperor of Constantinople and the Lombards bare him a respect, so that the Romans (by mediation of their pope) began to treat and confederate with Longinuis, [the emperor's lieutenant,] and the Lombards, not as subjects, but as equals and companions; which said custom continuing, and the pope's entering into alliance sometimes with the Lombards, and sometimes with the Greeks, contracted great reputation to their dignity." (Hist. of Florence, B.i. p 6, of the English translation.) A more extended quotation on this subject, may be seen in Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 407,408. To any one acquainted with the decline and fall of the Roman empire, nothing can be more manifest than the correspondence of the facts in history respecting the rise of the Papacy, and the statement of the apostle Paul here. The simple facts are these.

(1.) There were early corruptions in the church at Rome, as there were elsewhere, but peculiarly there, as Rome was the seat of philosophy and of power.

(2.) There were great efforts made by the bishop of Rome to increase his authority, and there was a steady approximation to what he subsequently claimed--that of being universal bishop.

(3.) There was a constant tendency to yield to him deference and respect in all matters.

(4.) This was kept in check as long as Rome was the seat of the imperial power. Had that power remained there, it would have been impossible for the Roman bishop ever to have obtained the civil and ecclesiastical eminence which he ultimately did. Rome could not have had two heads, both claiming and exercising supreme power; and there never could have been a "revelation of the man of sin."

(5.) Constantine removed the seat of empire to Constantinople; and this removal or "taking away" of the only restraint on the ambitious projects of the Roman bishops, gave all the opportunity which could be desired for the growth of the papal power. In all history there cannot, probably, be found a series of events corresponding more accurately with a prophetic statement than this; and there is every evidence, therefore, that these are the events to which the Spirit of inspiration referred.

He will surely be revealed; for the mystery - The deep, secret power of iniquity, just opposite to the power of godliness, already worketh. It began with the love of honour, and the desire of power; and is completed in the entire subversion of the gospel of Christ. This mystery of iniquity is not wholly confined to the Romish church, but extends itself to others also. It seems to consist of, Human inventions added to the written word. Mere outside performances put in the room of faith and love. Other mediators besides the man Christ Jesus. The two last branches, together with idolatry and bloodshed, are the direct consequences of the former; namely, the adding to the word of God. Already worketh - In the church. Only he that restraineth - That is, the potentate who successively has Rome in his power. The emperors, heathen or Christian; the kings, Goths or Lombards; the Carolingian or German emperors.

the mystery of iniquity—the counterwork to "the mystery of godliness" (1Ti 3:16). Anti-Christianity latently working, as distinguished from its final open manifestation. "Mystery" in Scripture means, not what remains always a secret, but that which is for a while hidden, but in due time manifested (compare Eph 3:4, 5). Satan will resort to a mode of opposition more conformed to the then imminent "appearing" and "presence" of the Saviour, and will anticipate Him with a last effort to maintain the dominion of the world [DE BURGH], just as at His first advent he rushed into open opposition, by taking possession of the bodies of men. "Iniquity," Greek, "lawlessness"; defiant rejection of God's law (compare Note, see on Zec 5:9, Zec 5:10). "Wickedness" (translated by the Septuagint by the same Greek, meaning "lawlessness," which Paul

employs here), embodied there as a woman, answers to "the mystery of iniquity," here embodied finally in "the man of sin": as the former was ultimately banished for ever from the Holy Land to her own congenial soil, Babylon, so iniquity and the man of sin shall fall before Michael and the Lord Himself, who shall appear as the Deliverer of His people (Da 12:1-3; Zec 14:3-9). Compare Mt 12:43. The Jewish nation dispossessed of the evil spirit, the demon of idolatry being cast out through the Babylonian captivity, receives ultimately a worse form of the evil spirit, Christ-opposing self-righteousness. Also, the Christian Church in course of time taken possession of by the demon of Romish idolatry, then dispossessed of it by the Reformation, then its house "garnished" by hypocrisy, secularity, and rationalism, but "swept empty" of living faith, then finally apostatizing and repossessed by "the man of sin," and outwardly destroyed for a brief time (though even then Christ shall have witnesses for Him among both the Jews, Zec 13:9, and Gentiles, Mt 28:20), when Christ shall suddenly come (Da 11:32-45; Lu 18:7, 8). already— (2Jo 9, 10; Col 2:18-23; 1Ti 4:1); compare "even now already" (1Jo 2:18; 4:3) as distinguished from "in his own time" of being revealed hereafter. Antiquity, it appears from hence, is not a justification for unscriptural usages or dogmas, since these were "already," even in Paul's time, beginning to spring up: the written word is the only sure test. "Judaism infecting Christianity is the fuel; the mystery of iniquity is the spark." "It is one and the same impurity diffusing itself over many ages" [BENGEL]. only he who now letteth will let —The italicized words are not in the Greek. Therefore, translate rather, "only (that is, the continuance of the MYSTERY of iniquity-working will be only) until he who now withholdeth (the same Greek as in 2Th 2:6) be taken out of the way." "Only (waiting, Heb 10:13) until he," &c. Then it will work no longer in mystery, but in open manifestation.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

And then shall that Wicked be revealed. οανομος, "the wicked one," referring to the "man of sin," and called "the wicked one" because of the eminent depravity of the system of which he was to be the head. 2Thes 2:3. Whom the Lord shall consume. The Lord Jesus.

Acts 1:24. The word consume here αναλωσει means to destroy. See Gall 5:15, Lk 9:54. The word would be applicable to any kind of destruction. The methods by which this will be done are immediately specified--and it is of much importance to understand them, if this refers to the Papacy. With the spirit of his mouth. What goes out of his mouth, or what he speaks; that is word, truth, command, or gospel--all of which he may be regarded as speaking. In Rev 1:16, 19:16,21, it is said of the Redeemer that "a sharp two-edged sword goeth out of his mouth" that is, his word, doctrine, or command--what he speaks --is like a sharp sword. It will cut deep; will lay open the heart; will destroy his enemies. Comp. Isa 11:4, "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The reference in the passage before us is one of the methods which would be employed to "destroy" the man of sin; and the sense is, that it would be by what is spoken by the Redeemer. This may refer either to what he will say at his coming, or to his truth--already spoken; to what has gone from his lips, by whomsoever uttered; and the meaning then is, that one of the grand agencies for destroying this antichristian power is the truth spoken or revealed by the Saviour--that is, his pure gospel. If this latter be the true interpretation, it may mean that the process for his destruction may have commenced long anterior to the personal appearing of the Redeemer, but that the complete destruction of this power will be accomplished by the splendour of his Second Advent. It cannot be denied, however, that the most obvious interpretation is that which refers both clauses in the sentence to the same period--that of his second coming. Still, it is not improper to suppose that it may be implied that his power will be weakened and diminished by the influence of the gospel, though it may not be wholly destroyed until the second coming of the Saviour. And shall destroy. καταργησει. Shall bring to naught; cause to cease; put an end to. This is, in some respects, a stronger word than that which in the former part of the verse is rendered consume. It denotes a more entire destruction than that, though it does not refer so much to any positive agency by which it will be done. In the former word, the attention is directed more to the agency by which the destruction will be effected --to the exertion of some kind of power to do it; in this word the attention is directed rather to the entireness or totality of the destruction. The antichristian

domination will wholly cease, or be entirely destroyed. The words would naturally harmonize with the idea that there would be a somewhat gradual process under the operation of truth toward the destruction of the man of sin, but that the complete annihilation of his power would be by some more manifest exhibition of the personal glory of the Saviour. With the brightness of his coming. This is evidently a Hebraism, meaning his splendid or glorious appearing. The Greek word, however, rendered "brightness"--(επιφανεια, epiphany)--means merely an appearing, or appearance. So it is used in 1Timm 6:14; 2Ti 1:10 4:1,8 Tit 2:13, in all which places it is rendered appearing, and refers to the manifestation of the Saviour when he shall come to judge the world. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament. There is no necessary idea of splendour in the word; and the idea is not, as our translation would seem to convey, that there would be such a dazzling light, or such unsufferable brightness, that all would be consumed before it, but that he would appear, and that this antichristian power would be destroyed by his appearing: that is, by himself when he would return. The agency in doing it would not be his brightness, but himself. It would seem to follow from this, that however this enormous power of wickedness might be weakened by truth, the final triumph over it would be reserved for the Son of God himself on his second return to our world. Yet, if this be so, it need not lessen our zeal in endeavouring to diminish the power of these corruptions; to establish and spread the truth; or to convert the defenders of these errors to a better faith.

whom the Lord—Some of the oldest manuscripts read, "the Lord Jesus." How awful that He whose very name means God-Saviour, should appear as the Destroyer; but the salvation of the Church requires the destruction of her foe. As the reign of Israel in Canaan was ushered in by judgments on the nations for apostasy (for the Canaanites were originally worshippers of the true God: thus Melchisedek, king of Salem, was the "priest of the most high God," Ge 14:18: Ammon and Moab came from righteous Lot), so the Son of David's reign in Zion and over the whole earth, is to be ushered in by judgments on the apostate Christian world. consume . . . and . . . destroy—So Da 7:26, "consume and destroy"; Da 11:45. He

shall "consume" him by His mere breath (Isa 11:4; 30:33): the sentence of judgment being the sharp sword that goeth out of His mouth (Re 19:15, 21). Antichrist's manifestation and destruction are declared in the same breath; at his greatest height he is nearest his fall, like Herod his type (Isa 1:24-27; Ac 12:20-23). As the advancing fire, while still at a distance consumes little insects [CHRYSOSTOM] by its mere heat, so Christ's mere approach is enough to consume Antichrist. The mere "appearance of the coming" of the Lord of glory is sufficient to show to Antichrist his perfect nothingness. He is seized and "cast alive into the take of fire" (Re 19:20). So the world kingdoms, and the kingdom of the beast, give place to that of the Son of man and His saints. The Greek for "destroy" means "abolish" (the same Greek is so translated, 2Ti 1:10); that is, cause every vestige of him to disappear. Compare as to Gog attacking Israel and destroyed by Jehovah (Eze 38:1-39:29), so as not to leave a vestige of him.

These words contain both the risk and ruin of Antichrist, his revelation and destruction.

Observe, 1. The title given to him, o Anomos, the lawless one, he that boasts himself to be above all law, and assumes to himself a power to dispense with all the laws of God, as we well know who does.

Observe, 2. His revelation, Then shall that wicked be revealed. God has revealed Antichrist to the world, let none wilfully shut their eyes against him, but let him be shunned and abhorred; if his adherents will not fall off from him, but be partakers with him in his sins, let them expect to be partakers also with him in his plagues; to continue his adherents is dangerous, but to turn his disciples is more dangerous: for that is a downright apostasy, and flat revolt from Christ to Antichrist. How Almighty God may dispense mercifully with errors imbibed in our education we know not, but to turn our back on the truth wherein we have been educated and instructed, makes it more dangerous to our salvation.

Observe, 3. Antichrist's ruin, Whom the Lord shall consume and destroy.

Here note, That the apostle had no sooner discovered Antichrist's rise, but he presently declares his ruin: The Lord shall destroy him; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ shall destroy him gradually, he shall waste away by little and little; as his rise was, such shall his ruin be: destroyed and consumed he shall be, but not presently; because God has an use for him, work to do for him, to scourge his people, to try his people, to unite his people.

Observe, 4. How Antichrist's ruin is accompolished,

(1.) With the spirit of his mouth, or the breath of his mouth: the expression denotes, the facility and easiness of his destruction: it is done with a breath; the breath of God here denotes the preaching of the gospel, and intimates, that Antichrist's destruction shall be by the ministry of the word, and the victorious evidence of truth; but besides this ministerial word, there will be a providential word, which God will make use of for Antichrist's destruction: the former means we are to use, the latter God is to make use of.
Again,

(2.) The destruction of Antichrist shall be by the brightness of Christ's coming; at Christ's coming to judgment, the final ruin and utter destruction of Antichrist shall be accompolished; let not the church then be discouraged, though Antichrist remains, after all endeavours used for his ruin, it is sufficient we are assured that Antichristianism shall be finally destroyed; for the time, leave we that to God; if it be not till the day of judgment, or Christ's final conquest over all his adversaries, why should not we be contented to tarry for it; seeing infinite wisdom determines the time, as well as the thing itself.

9 *even him,* whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan. Greek, κατενεργειαντουσατανα, According to the energy of Satan; that is, the energetic or efficient operation of Satan. The word rendered

after, it need not be said to one who looks at the Greek, does not refer to time, but is a preposition, meaning according to, in conformity with; meaning that the manner of his appealing would be accompanied by such works as would show that the agency of Satan was employed, and such as he only could produce. It does not mean that the coming of the Lord Jesus would be after Satan had worked in this manner, but that the manifestation of that wicked one would be with such demonstrations of power and wonder as Satan only could effect. The system over which he presides is originated by Satan, and sustained by those things which he alone can perform. On the word Satan, Job 1:6. The idea is, that it would be under the direction and control of the great enemy of God, and that the things on which it would rely for support could be traced to his agency. In all the pretended miracles to which it would appeal, there would be nothing which Satan could not accomplish. With all power. With all the power which Satan can exhibit; meaning, also, that there would be a great exertion of power in the case. It would not be a feeble and imbecile dominion. The dominion of the Papacy has been one of the most powerful on earth. There has been none which has been more dreaded by the nations of the earth--and there have been times when nations trembled, and kings turned pale on their thrones, at the frown of the pope. And signs. This word frequently denotes real miracles, but not necessarily so. It may be applied to pretended miracles as well as real, and is undoubtedly so used here, as it is connected with "lying wonders," and as it is said that the thing wrought would be "after the working of Satan." There is doubtless reference to such "signs and wonders" as the Saviour mentions in Mt 24:24. Mt 24:24. It is hardly necessary to remark that the Papacy has always relied for support on its pretended miracles. Even in our own age the wonders performed by the Prince Hohenloe, and by the pretended seamless garment of the Saviour, have been proclaimed as true miracles, and as furnishing indubitable evidence of the truth of the Roman Catholic system. The dissolving of the blood of St. Januarius, the removal of Pilate's stairs to Rome, and the transportation to Italy of the "house of our Lady," are among the miracles to which there is a constant reference in the Papal communion. In addition to these and to all similar pretensions, there is the power claimed of performing a miracle at the pleasure of the

priest by the change of bread and wine into the "body and blood, the soul and divinity" of the Lord Jesus. In 1756, there was published in London a book entitled, "The miraculous power of the church of Christ, asserted through each successive century, from the apostles down to the present time." The power of working miracles has been one of the standing claims of the Papacy. And lying wonders. False or pretended miracles. They would be such as would be claimed to be miracles; such as would excite wonder; and yet such as were false and delusive. No Protestant assuredly needs to be convinced that this is just the character of the pretended miracles of the Papacy.

Verse 10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. There are two ideas here. The first is, that there would be deceit; and the other is, that it would be for the purpose of promoting unrighteousness or iniquity. The iniquitous system would be maintained by fraudulent methods. No one who has read Pascal's Provincial Letters can ever doubt that this description is applicable to the system of the Jesuits; and no one familiar with the acts of the Papacy, as they have always been practised, can doubt that the whole system is accurately described by this language. The plausible reasoning by which the advocates of that system have palliated and apologised for sins of various kinds, has been among its most remarkable features. In them that perish. Among those who will perish; that is, among the abandoned and wicked. The reference is to men of corrupt minds and lives, over whom this system would have power; countenancing them in their depravity, and fitting them still farther for destruction. The idea is, that these acts would have especial reference to men who would be lost at any rate, and who would be sustained in their wickedness by this false and delusive system. Because they received not the love of the truth. They prefer this system of error and delusion to the simple and pure gospel, by which they might have been saved.

whose coming—The same Greek as was used for the Lord's coming (2Th 2:8) or personal "presence." is—in its essential character. after—according to the working ("energy") of Satan, as opposed to the energy or working of the Holy Spirit in the Church (see on Eph 1:19). As Christ is related to God, so is Antichrist to

Satan, his visible embodiment and manifestation: Satan works through him. Re 13:2, "The dragon gave him (the beast) his power . . . seat . . . great authority." lying wonders—literally, "wonders" or "prodigies of falsehood." His "power, signs, and wonders," all have falsehood for their base, essence, and aim (Joh 8:44), [ALFORD]. In Mt 24:24 Jesus implies that the miracles shall be real, though demoniac, such mysterious effects of the powers of darkness as we read of in the case of the Egyptian sorcerers, not such as Jesus performed in their character, power, or aim; for they are against the revealed Word, and therefore not to be accepted as evidences of truth; nay, on the authority of that sure Word of prophecy (here, and Mt 24:24), to be known and rejected as wrought in support of falsehood (De 13:1-3, 5; Ga 1:8, 9; Re 13:11-15; 19:20). The same three Greek words occur for miracles of Jesus (Ac 2:22; Heb 2:4); showing that as the Egyptian magicians imitated Moses (2Ti 3:1-8), so Antichrist will try to imitate Christ's works as a "sign," or proof of divinity.

deceivableness—rather as Greek, "deceit of (to promote) unrighteousness" (2Th 2:12). in—The oldest manuscripts and versions omit "in." Translate, "unto them that are perishing" (2Co 2:15, 16; 4:3): the victims of him whose very name describes his perishing nature, "the son of perdition"; in contrast to you whom (2Th 2:13) "God hath from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." because—literally, "in requital for"; in just retribution for their having no love for the truth which was within their reach (on account of its putting a check on their bad passions), and for their having "pleasure in unrighteousness" (2Th 2:12; Ro 1:18); they are lost because they loved not, but rejected, the truth which would have saved them. received not—Greek, "welcomed not"; admitted it not cordially. love of the truth—not merely love of truth, but love of THE truth (and of, Jesus who is the Truth, in opposition to Satan's "lie," 2Th 2:9, 11; Joh 8:42-44), can save (Eph 4:21). We are required not merely to assent to, but to love the truth (Ps 119:97). The Jews rejected Him who came in His divine Father's name; they will receive Antichrist coming in his own name (Joh 5:43). Their pleasant sin shall prove their terrible scourge.

10 and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish;
because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be
saved.

An account is here given how Antichrist doth acquire and keep up his power in the world: the first and great instrument is Satan; after the working of Satan, is as much as, by the working of Satan, denoting not only his pattern but his influence. The devil has a great hand over wicked men in the world, his way of dealing with them is most efficacious and powerful; he is certainly the first founder and supporter of the Antichristian state.

Observe, 2. The subordinate instrumental means by which Antichrist gained his power in the world; namely, by pretended miracles: With all power, and signs, and lying wonders. Miracles are called powers, because the effects of extraordinary powers; signs, from their use, because they sealed the doctrine to which they are applied; wonders, because they breed astonishment in the minds of beholders. Now Antichrist pretends to all these, but his are lying powers, lying signs, and lying wonders; because the greatest of his pretended miracles are fables, forgeries, impostures, diabolical delusions.

Learn hence, That Antichrist doth uphold and support his kingdom by a false show of signs, wonders, and mighty deeds; they are mira, but not miracula; what he cannot prove by the oracles of God, he endeavours to prove by the miracles of Satan.

1. By the ways and means how they are drawn into this apostasy and defection, and that is, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness; where, by unrighteousness, understand his false doctrine and wicked laws, which tend to the making his disciples and followers injurious to God, unjust to men, and cruel to themselves; and by deceivableness, is meant all manner of deceits and wiles, tricks and cunning persuasions, to make the world believe his unrighteous errors to be pure and innocent truths.

Learn, That such as are ringleaders to error, are men of no conscience, but find out all unrighteous ways and means to make

their tenets plausible, and pass for truth; they come with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.

Again, 2. They are described by the doom and misery which await them, they are such as perish; that is, such as are in an actual state of perdition, and, without hastening out of it, are undone for ever. Learn hence, That the subjects of Antichrist's power and seduction are those that perish.

And, 3. They are described by their sin, which is the cause and reason of this doom: Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Where mark, It is not enough to receive the truth in the light of it, but we must also receive it in the love of it, or it will do us no good; to make truth operative, there is required, besides knowledge, faith and love, there may be knowledge without faith, and there may be faith without love, that is, without any affection to the truth believed; it was therefore a pious prayer of St. Austin, Fac me, Domine, &c. "Lord, make me taste that by love, which I taste by knowledge." As the certainity of truth calls for faith, so the amiableness of truth calls for love: if truth be not received into the heart as well as the head, it will not secure against apostasy, nor prevent perishing.

The apostle further describes the reign and rule of this man of sin. Here we are to observe,

(1.) The manner of his coming, or ruling, and working: in general, that it is after the example of Satan, the grand enemy of souls, the great adversary of God and man. He is the great patron of error and lies, the sworn enemy of the truth as it is in Jesus and all the faithful followers of Jesus. More particularly, it is with Satanical power and deceit. A divine power is pretended for the support of this kingdom, but it is only after the working of Satan. Signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; by these the papal kingdom was first set up, and has all along been kept up, but they have false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles that have served their cause, things false in fact, or

fraudulently managed, to impose upon the people: and the diabolical deceits with which the antichristian state has been supported are notorious. The apostle calls it all deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2Th 2:10. Others may call them pious frauds, but the apostle called them unrighteous and wicked frauds; and, indeed, all fraud (which is contrary to truth) is an impious thing. Many are the subtle artifices the man of sin has used, and various are the plausible pretences by which he had beguiled unwary and unstable souls to embrace false doctrines, and submit to his usurped dominion.

(2.) The persons are described who are his willing subjects, or most likely to become such, 2Th 2:10. They are such as love not the truth that they may be saved. They heard the truth (it may be), but they did not love it; they could not bear sound doctrine, and therefore easily imbibed false doctrines; they had some notional knowledge of what was true, but they indulged some powerful prejudices, and so became a prey to seducers. Had they loved the truth, they would have persevered in it, and been preserved by it; but no wonder if they easily parted with what they never had any love to. And of these persons it is said that they perish or are lost; they are in a lost condition, and in danger to be lost for ever. For,

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

And for this cause. Because they chose error, or their hearts love that more than they do truth. The original reason then of their embracing and adhering to the system was not an arbitrary decree on the part of God, but that they did not love the truth. Hence he gave them up to this system of error. If a man strongly prefers error to truth, and sin to holiness, it is not wrong to allow him freely to evince his own preference.

"sends," or "is sending"; the "delusion" is already beginning. God judicially sends hardness of heart on those who have rejected the truth, and gives them up in righteous judgment to Satan's delusions (Isa 6:9, 10; Ro 1:24-26, 28). They first cast off the love of the truth, then God gives them up to Satan's delusions, then they settle down into "believing the lie": an awful climax (1Ki 22:22, 23; Eze 14:9; Job 12:16; Mt 24:5, 11; 1Ti 4:1). strong delusion—Greek, "the

powerful working of error," answering to the energizing "working of Satan" (2Th 2:9); the same expression as is applied to the Holy Ghost's operation in believers: "powerful" or "effectual (energizing) working" (Eph 1:19). Gr., "energy of deceit;" a Hebraism, meaning strong deceit. The agency of God is here distinctly recognised, in accordance with the uniform statements of the Scriptures, respecting evil. Comp. Ex 7:13, 9:12, 10:1,20,27, 11:10, 14:8, De 2:30 Isa 45:7. On the nature of this agency, Jn 12:40. It is not necessary here to suppose that there was any positive influence on the part of God in causing this delusion to come upon them, but all the force of the language will be met, as well as the reasoning of the apostle, by supposing that God withdrew all restraint, and suffered men simply to show that they did not love the truth. God often places men in circumstances to develope their own nature, and it cannot be shown to be wrong that he should do so. If men have no love of the truth, and no desire to be saved, it is not improper that they should be allowed to manifest this. How it happened that they had no "love of the truth," is a different question, to which the remarks of the apostle do not appertain. Comp. Rom 9:17, Rom 9:18; Rom 1:24. That they should believe a lie. This does not affirm that God wished them to believe a lie nor that he would not have preferred that they should believe the truth; nor that he exerted any direct agency to cause them to believe a lie. It means merely that he left them, because they did not love the truth, to believe what was false, and what would end in their destruction. Can any one doubt that this constantly occurs in the world? Men are left to believe impostors; to trust to false guides; to rely on unfounded information; to credit those who live to delude and betray the innocent; and to follow those who lead them to ruin. God does not impose by direct power to preserve them. Can any one doubt this? Yet this is not peculiarly the doctrine of revelation. The fact pertains just as much to the infidel as it does to the believer in Christianity, and he is just as much bound to explain it as the Christian is. It belongs to our world--to us all--and it should not be charged on Christianity as a doctrine pertaining peculiarly to that system.

That they all might be damned. The word damned we commonly apply now exclusively to future punishment, and it has a harsher

signification than the original word. 1Cor 11:29. The Greek word κρινω -- means to judge, determine, decide; and then to condemn, Rom 2:27, 14:22, Jas 4:11; Jn 7:51, Lk 19:22, Acts 13:27. It may be applied to the judgment of the last day, Jn 5:22, 8:50, Acts 17:31, Rom 3:6, 2Ti 4:1, but not necessarily. The word judged, or condemned, would, in this place, express all that the Greek word necessarily conveys. Yet there can be no doubt that the judgment or condemnation which is referred to, is that which will occur when the Saviour will appear. It does not seem to me to be a necessary interpretation of this to suppose that it teaches that God would send a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, in order that all might be damned who did not believe the truth; or that he desired that they should be damned, and sent this as the means of securing it; but the sense is, that this course of events would be allowed to occur, so that ινα not ειςτο all who do not love the truth would be condemned. The particle here used, and rendered "that" (ινα) in connection with the phrase "all might be damned" is employed in two general senses, either as marking the end, purpose, or cause for, or on account of, which anything is done; to the end that, or in order that it may be so and so; or as marking simply the result, event, or upshot of an action, so that, so as that. Robinson, Lex. In the latter case it denotes merely that something will really take place, without indicating that such was the design of the agent, or that what brought it about was in order that it might take place. It is also used, in the later Greek, so as neither to mark the purpose, or to indicate that the event would occur, but merely to point out that to which the preceding words refer. It is not proper, therefore, to infer that this passage teaches that all these things would be brought about in the arrangements of Providence, in order that they might be damned who came under their influence. The passage teaches that such would be the result; that the connection between these delusions and the condemnation of those who were deluded, would be certain. It cannot be proved from the Scriptures that God sends on men strong delusions, in order that they may be damned. No such construction should be put on a passage of Scripture if it can be avoided, and it cannot be shown that it is necessary here. Who believed not the truth. The grounds or reasons why they would be damned are now stated. One would be that they did not believe the truth --not that

God sent upon them delusion in order that they might be damned. That men will be condemned for not believing the truth, and that it will be right thus to condemn them, is everywhere the doctrine of the Scriptures, and is equally the doctrine of common sense. Mk 16:16. But had pleasure in unrighteousness. This is the second ground or reason of their condemnation. If men have pleasure in sin, it is proper that they should be punished. There can be no more just ground of condemnation than that a man loves to do wrong.

The sin of those who are seduced by Antichrist was mentioned in the foregoing verse, the judgment of such is here declared in these verses, which is twofold, delusion in this world, and damnation in the next.
1. Delusion in this world.

Here note, 1. The author of this judgment, God shall send them strong delusions; as it is a sin, God has no hand in it; but as it is a punishment, God has to do in it; there is a judicial traduction or delivering them up to a spirit of error, who do not receive the truth in the love of it, and this without the least shadow of unrighteousness, punishing sin with sin.

Note, 2. The degree or nature of the punishment: delusions, strong delusions: given up to the efficacy of error, which is discovered by the absurdity of those errors which they cleave unto, and by the obstinacy wherewith they cleave unto them.

Learn hence, (1.) That strong delusions may be, and sometimes are, of God's own sending.

(2.) That by God's just judgment there is an infatuation upon the followers and abettors of Antichrist, that they swallow the grossest errors, and believe the strongest delusions, to their own destruction.

Note, 3. The issue and result of this punishment, That they should believe a lie; false doctrines are often called a lie in scripture: all the doctrine of the man of sin, with which he hath deceived the world, under the notion of truth, is one great lie; but beside this, he approves

and applauds the doctrine of equivocation, and teaches, that in many cases it is necessary, and in some very lawful, to lie; these they call pious frauds, but they are indeed diabolical forgeries.

Observe, 2. Their dreadful punishment in the other world, That they all might be damned, &c.
Where mark, the punishment itself, damnation, for filling up the measure of their obduration, together with the justice and equity of it; expressed negatively, they believed not the truth, received it not with simplicity of mind, to be instructed and directed by it; positively, they had pleasure in unrighteousness, in unrighteous doctrines and practices.

Learn hence, 1. That errors in judgment, as well as sins in practice, may bring damnation upon the soul's of men. Error is as damnable as vice, for it is as contrary to the law of God as vice is.

Learn, 2. That though all errors may bring damnation upon men's souls, yet some may be said more especially than others to be damning errors; such are the errors of Antichrist, the man of sin.
Oh, how dangerous then it is to be found amongst his followers! To be sharers with them in their sins, will render us partakers of their plagues.

12 that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

We have the sin and ruin of the subjects of antichrist's kingdom declared, 2Th 2:11,12.

(1.) Their sin is this: They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness: they did not love the truth, and therefore they did not believe it; and, because they did not believe the truth, therefore they had pleasure in unrighteousness, or in wicked actions, and were pleased with false notions. Note, An erroneous mind and vicious life often go together and help forward one another.

(2.) Their ruin is thus expressed: God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie. Thus he will punish men for their

unbelief, and for their dislike of the truth and love to sin and wickedness; not that God is the author of sin, but in righteousness he sometimes withdraws his grace from such sinners as are here mentioned; he gives them over to Satan, or leaves them to be deluded by his instruments; he gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and leaves them to themselves, and then sin will follow of course, yea, the worst of wickedness, that shall end at last in eternal damnation. God is just when he inflicts spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter, upon those who have no love to the truths of the gospel, who will not believe them, nor live suitably to them, but indulge false doctrines in their minds, and wicked practices in their lives and conversations.

Chosen to Salvation

13 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Our apostle, having in the foregoing verses set forth a fatal apostasy from the sincerity of the Christian faith and worship, here in this verse exempts the Thessalonians from the number of those that were endangered by it; and this he makes mention of, to their great comfort, and with thanksgivings to God: We are bound to give thanks, &c.

Observe here, 1. The titles given to the Thessalonians by our apostle, Brethren, and beloved of the Lord; not beloved of the apostle only, but of the Lord also, both with an antecedent love, bestowing grace upon them, and with a consequent love, believing in his name, and suffering for his sake.

Observe, 2. His obligation to bless God on their behalf, he gave thanks: this showed his esteem of the blessing; he gave thanks always, which showed how deeply he was affected with the blessing, and he owns it as a debt which was due unto them; We are bound to give thanks, &c.

Observe, 3. The matter of his thanksgiving, or the mercy which he was thus thankful for, and that was their election to salvation; We are bound to give thanks, because God hath chosen you.
Whence learn, That God's election either of ourselves or others to salvation, is, and ought to be, great matter of thanksgiving unto God.

Observe, 4. Their election is amplified,

(1.) By the antiquity of it, from the beginning, that is, from all eternity, In the beginning was the word, Joh 1:1 that is, before the beginning, before God began to create any thing, the Word was.

(2.) From the means of its accomplishment; and they are two, one on God's part, the sanctification of the Spirit; the other on their part, the belief of the truth.

Where note, 1. That election is to the means as well as to the end; and without the means, can the end never be attained; he that hath chosen us to salvation, hath chosen us to be holy, and to believe the truth, in order to salvation.

Note, 2. That sanctification and holiness are not the cause of our election, but the effect and fruit of it.

Note, 3. That sanctification being the fruit, it is also the evidence of our election; Sic se apeit decretum, thus the decree of God is made evident to us; the election of God is a secret in the bosom of God, it is only manifested to us by the effects, which are sanctification by the Spirit, and a sound belief of the gospel.
Where mark, a bare belief of the doctrine of the gospel saves none, unless accompanied with the sanctification of the Spirit.

Note, 4. The necessary connection between the sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth, even as between the cause and the

effect, and they do also accompany one another; the gospel was a supernatural doctrine, and it was fit that it should be accompanied with a supernatural operation, how else should it be known to be of God? The gospel and the Spirit are inseparable companions; where the gospel is little known, there is little of the Spirit found: He hath chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.

But—In delightful contrast to the damnation of the lost (2Th 2:12) stands the "salvation" of Paul's converts. are bound—in duty (2Th 1:3). thanks . . . to God—not to ourselves, your ministers, nor to you, our converts. beloved of the Lord—Jesus (Ro 8:37; Ga 2:20; Eph 5:2, 25). Elsewhere God the Father is said to love us (2Th 2:16; Joh 3:16; Eph 2:4; Col 3:12). Therefore Jesus and the Father are one. from the beginning—"before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4; compare 1Co 2:7; 2Ti 1:9); in contrast to those that shall "worship the beast, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Re 13:8). Some of the oldest manuscripts read as English Version, but other oldest manuscripts and Vulgate read, "as first-fruits." The Thessalonians were among the first converts in Europe (compare Ro 16:5; 1Co 16:15). In a more general sense, it occurs in Jas 1:18; Re 14:4; so I understand it here including the more restricted sense. chosen you—The Greek, is not the ordinary word for "elected," implying His eternal selection; but taken for Himself, implying His having adopted them in His eternal purpose. It is found in the Septuagint (De 7:7; 10:15). through—rather as Greek, "in sanctification" as the element in which the choice to salvation had place (compare 1Pe 1:2), standing in contrast to the "unrighteousness," the element in which Antichrist's followers are given over by God to damnation (2Th 2:12). of the Spirit—wrought by the Spirit who sanctifies all the elect people of God, first by eternally consecrating them to perfect holiness in Christ, once for all, next by progressively imparting it. belief of the truth—contrasted with "believed not the truth" (2Th 2:12).

To the stability of the election of grace, 2Th 2:13. Therefore were they beloved of the Lord, because God had chosen them from the

beginning. He had loved them with an everlasting love. Concerning this election of God we may observe,

(1.) The eternal date of it--it is from the beginning; not the beginning of the gospel, but the beginning of the world, before the foundation of the world, Eph 1:4. Then,

(2.) The end to which they were chosen--salvation, complete and eternal salvation from sin and misery, and the full fruition of all good.

(3.) The means in order to obtaining this end--sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. The decree of election therefore connects the end and the means, and these must not be separated. We are not the elected of God because we were holy, but that we might be holy. Being chosen of God, we must not live as we list; but, if we are chosen to salvation as the end, we must be prepared for it by sanctification as the necessary means to obtain that end, which sanctification is by the operation of the Holy Spirit as the author and by faith on our part. There must be the belief of the truth, without which there can be by true sanctification, nor perseverance in grace, nor obtaining of salvation. Faith and holiness must be joined together, as well as holiness and happiness; therefore our Saviour prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail (Lu 22:32), and for his disciples (Joh 17:17), Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth.

14 whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle comforted the Thessalonians in the former verse from their election, in this from their vocation; whereunto, that is, to which salvation, sanctification, and belief of the gospel, God hath called you, by our preaching of the word, to the obtaining of the glory purchased, and conferred by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note here, 1. The author of the Thessalonians' vocation, God the Father; he calleth you, that is, God, who from the beginning chose you to salvation.

None but God,

(1.) Hath authority to call; He only is our proper Lord, and rightful Sovereign, our Creator, and our owner; therefore he has a right to call us to duty, and to require duty from us, Jas 4:12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.

None but God, 1. Hath power to call; for to effectual calling there is required, not only the invitation of the word, but also the effectual operation of the Spirit; it is a work of divine power to give grace to graceless souls.

Note, 2. The means, that is, the external and outward means, by which they were called; By our gospel, that is, by our preaching of the gospel to you. The ministry of the word is the great instrument in the hand of the Spirit for a sinner's effectual vocation, and bringing home to God.

But why doth our apostle call it our gospel? Doth not that derogate from the authority of it, to appropriate it to any man?
No; he calls it not his gospel by way of revelation, but in regard of dispensation only; and his gospel, imported the great pains which he took in preaching of the gospel, and the hazard he ran in dispensing of the gospel to them. It is also a word of esteem, love, and affection; what we love, we call ours.

Note, 3. The end of this calling, which is twofold,

1. Ultimate, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, the glory of heaven, and of the whole man, whole soul and body in heaven, called the glory of Christ, because purchased by him, promised by him, prayed for by him, conferred by him, and enjoyed eternally with.

2. Subordinate, they are called to faith and holiness, in order to salvation: for there must be a likeness between the person calling, and the persons called; without likeness to him we can never love him, and without loving of him must never expect to live with him.

From the whole, learn, That such as are elected and chosen of God, are in time effectually called by faith and holiness to obtain eternal glory and happiness.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

An exhortation to stedfastness and perseverance: Therefore, brethren, stand fast, 2Th 2:15. Observe, He does not say, "You are chosen to salvation, and therefore you may be careless and secure;" but therefore stand fast. God's grace in our election and vocation is so far from superseding our diligent care and endeavour that it should quicken and engage us to the greatest resolution and diligence. So the apostle John having told those to whom he wrote that they had received the anointing which should abide in them, and that they should abide in him (in Christ), subjoins this exhortation, Now abide in him, 1Jo 2:27,28. The Thessalonians are exhorted to stedfastness in their Christian profession, to hold fast the traditions which they had been taught, or the doctrine of the gospel, which had been delivered by the apostle, by word or epistle. As yet the canon of scripture was not complete, and therefore some things were delivered by the apostles in their preaching, under the guidance of the infallible Spirit, which Christians were bound to observe as coming from God; other things were afterwards by them committed to writing, as the apostle had written a former epistle to these Thessalonians; and these epistles were written as the writers were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Note, There is no argument hence for regarding oral traditions in our days, now that the canon of scripture is complete, as of equal authority with the sacred writings. Such doctrines and duties as were taught by the inspired apostles we must stedfastly adhere to; but we have no certain evidence of any thing delivered by them more than what we find contained in the holy scriptures.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

And hold the traditions which ye have been taught. On the word traditions, Mt 15:2. It means properly things delivered over from one to another; then anything orally delivered--any precept,

doctrine, or law. It is frequently employed to denote that which is not written, as contradistinguished from that which is written, (comp. Mt 15:2,) but not necessarily or always; for here the Apostle speaks of the "traditions which they had been taught by his epistle." Comp. 1Cor 11:2. Here it means the doctrines or precepts which they had received from the apostle, whether when he was with them, or after he left them; whether communicated by preaching or by letter. This passage can furnish no authority for holding the "traditions" which have come down from ancient times, and which profess to have been derived from the apostles; for

(1.) there is no evidence that any of those traditions were given by the apostles;

(2.) many of them are manifestly so trifling, false, and contrary to the writings of the apostles, that they could not have been delivered by them;

(3.) if any of them are genuine, it is impossible to separate them from those which are false,

(4.) we have all that is necessary for salvation in the written word; and

(5.) there is not the least evidence that the apostle here meant to refer to any such thing. He speaks only of what had been delivered to them by himself, whether orally or by letter; not of what was delivered from one to another as from him. There is no intimation here that they were to hold anything as from him which they had not received directly from him, either by his own instructions personally or by letter. With what propriety, then, can this passage be adduced to prove that we are to hold the traditions which professedly come to us through a great number of intermediate persons? Nowhere is the evidence here that the church was to hold those unwritten traditions, and transmit them to future times?

Our apostle having abundantly comforted the Thessalonians in the former verses, from their election and vocation, he closes the

chapter with an exhortation to them to perseverance and constancy in the truth; Therefore, brethren, stand fast.

Observe, 1. The illative particle, therefore that is, because God hath chosen and called you, and given you such assurance of his favour, and such advantages against error and seduction, therefore let it be your care to persevere; assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence, but engage to greater diligence.

Observe, 2. The duty inferred: stand fast; it is a military word, used by captains to their soldiers, to prevent a cowardly and treacherous revolt; he had been describing a great apostasy that would come, now bids them be upon their guard and stand fast.
Observe, 3. The means directed to, in order to their steadfastness and perseverance, namely, to hold the traditions which they had been taught, either by word or by epistle.

Here note, (1.) The act, hold, with a strong hand, hold against all assaults, whether of error or persecution.

(2.) The object, the traditions taught, either by word, or by epistle.
Where mark, That all the apostle's doctrines, whether preached when amongst them, or written to them in his absence from them, he calls traditions; so that holding the traditions here, is nothing else but perseverance in apostolical doctrine.

From the whole note, 1. That what assurance soever we have of God's preserving us in the truth, yet are we bound to use all possible care and caution in order to our own preservation.

Note, 2. That it is our duty to stand fast in the faith of Christ, and professions of godliness, whatsoever dangers or temptations we may be exposed to.

Note, 3. That the doctrine of Christianity taught by the apostles is a tradition, and that holding this tradition is the best means for standing fast in the faith of Christ.

Note, 4. That while the apostles were in being, there were two ways of delivering the truth, namely, by word of mouth and writing; Whether by word or our epistle.

Note, 5. That now, when they are long since dead, and we cannot receive the doctrine of life from them by word of mouth, we must stick to the scriptures and written word, against all pretences to unwritten traditions, or pretended revelations, because the scriptures are a perfect rule both for our faith and practice.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself. This expression is equivalent to this: "l pray our Lord Jesus, and our Father, to comfort you." It is really a prayer offered to the Saviour--a recognition of Christ as the source of consolation as well as the Father, and a union of his name with that of the Father in invoking important blessings. It is such language as could be used only by one who regarded the Lord Jesus as Divine. And God even our Father. Gr., "And God, and (και) our Father;" though not incorrectly rendered "even our Father." If it should be contended that the use of the word "and"--" our Lord Jesus Christ, and God," proves that the Lord Jesus is a different being from God--the use of the same word "and" would prove that the "Father" is a different being from God. But the truth is, the apostle meant to speak of the Father and the Son as the common source of the blessing for which he prayed. Which hath loved us. Referring particularly to the Father. The love which is referred to is that manifested in redemption, or which is shown us through Christ. See Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9. And hath given us everlasting consolation. Not temporary comfort, but that which will endure for ever. The joys of religion are not like other joys. They soon fade away;--they always terminate at death ;--they cease when trouble comes, when sickness invades the frame, when wealth or friends depart, when disappointment lowers, when the senses by age refuse to minister as they once did to our pleasures. The comforts of religion depend on no such contingencies. They live through all these changes--attend us in sickness, poverty, bereavement, losses, and age; they are with us in death, and they are perpetual and unchanging beyond the grave. And good hope through grace. Rom 5:2 Rom 5:5. Heb 6:19.

Comfort your hearts. 1Thes 3:2; 1Thes 5:11; 1Thes 5:14. The Thessalonians were in the midst of trials, and Paul prayed that they might have the full consolations of their religion.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted the Thessalonians in the former verses, from their election and vocation, he closes the chapter with an exhortation to them to perseverance and constancy in the truth; Therefore, brethren, stand fast.

Observe, 1. The illative particle, therefore that is, because God hath chosen and called you, and given you such assurance of his favour, and such advantages against error and seduction, therefore let it be your care to persevere; assurance of salvation doth not encourage negligence, but engage to greater diligence.

Observe, 2. The duty inferred: stand fast; it is a military word, used by captains to their soldiers, to prevent a cowardly and treacherous revolt; he had been describing a great apostasy that would come, now bids them be upon their guard and stand fast.
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From what he takes encouragement in his prayer--from the consideration of what God had already done for him and them: Who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 2Th 2:16. Here observe,

1 The love of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; our election, vocation, justification, and salvation, are all owing to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

2. From this fountain in particular all our consolation flows. And the consolation of the saints is an everlasting consolation. The comforts of the saints are not dying things; they shall not die with them. The spiritual consolations God gives none shall deprive them of; and God will not take them away: because he love them with an everlasting love, therefore they shall have everlasting consolation.

3. Their consolation is founded on the hope of eternal life. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and are not only patient, but joyful, in tribulations; and there is good reason for these strong consolations, because the saints have good hope: their hope is

grounded on the love of God, the promise of God, and the experience they have had of the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God, and it is good hope through grace; the free grace and mercy of God are what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, and not on any worth or merit of their own.

What it is that he asks of God for them--that he would comfort their hearts, and establish them in every good word and work, 2Th 2:17. God had given them consolations, and he prayed that they might have more abundant consolation. There was good hope, through grace, that they would be preserved, and he prayed that they might be established: it is observable how comfort and establishment are here joined together. Note therefore,

1. Comfort is a means of establishment; for the more pleasure we take in the word, and work, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. And,

2. Our establishment in the ways of God is a likely means in order to comfort; whereas, if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, or if we are halting and faltering in our duty, no wonder if we are strangers to the pleasures and joys of religion. What is it that lies at the bottom of all our uneasiness, but our unsteadiness in religion? We must be established in every good word and work, in the word of truth and the work of righteousness: Christ must be honoured by our good works and good words; and those who are sincere will endeavour to do both, and in so doing they may hope for comfort and establishment, till at length their holiness and happiness be completed.

17 comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Our apostle having abundantly comforted and affectionately exhorted the Thessalonians in the former verses, now concludes with fervent prayer for them.
Where observe, 1. The persons prayed to: our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father.

Where note, (1.) That prayer must be made to God alone, he only knows all our wants, and he alone is capable of hearing and helping us.

Note, (2.) That Jesus Christ is here invocated, together with God the Father; surely his Godhead is hereby proved, for he that is the object both of internal and external worship, is God: our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, &c.

Observe, 2. The ground of audience and success in prayer: Which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.

Where note, (1.) That God's love to sinners, manifested in their redemption by Jesus Christ, giveth great boldness and encouragement in the duty of prayer.

Note, (2.) That God hath given all believers solid ground of substantial and perpetual consolation; he hath given us everlasting consolation.

Note, (3.) That God has given all believers hope, a good or well-grounded hope of eternal life, and this hope is a great encouragement to the duty of prayer.

Observe, 3. The blessings prayed for: increase of comfort, and perseverance or establishment.

(1.) The apostle prays for increase of comfort; Our Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father, comfort your hearts.
Where note, that true comfort flows from God, and that the heart is the proper seat of spiritual comfort. Thou hast put gladness into my heart. Ps 4:7

(2.) For establishment and perseverance; And establish you in every good word and work. By every good word, is meant sound doctrine; by every good work, holiness of life.

Learn hence, That establishment in faith and holiness is a great and necessary blessing, earnestly to be sought of God in prayer; as at all times this blessing is to be sought, so especially in unsettled times, that when we are most in danger of falling by temptation, we may be kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation.

2 Thessalonians-3

Pray for Us

1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have
free course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you:
2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked
men:
for all *men* have not faith.
3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep *you* from
evil.

But the Lord is faithful. Though men cannot be trusted, God is faithful to his promises and his purposes. He may always be confided in; and when men are unbelieving, perverse, unkind, and disposed to do us wrong, we may go to him, and we shall always find in him one in whom we may confide. This is an exceedingly interesting declaration, and is a beautiful illustration of the resource which a truly pious mind will feel that it has. We often have occasion to know, to our sorrow, that "all men have not faith." We witness their infidelity. We see how they turn away from the truth. We see many who once gave some evidence that they had faith, abandon it all; and we see many in the church who seem to have no true faith, and who refuse to lend their aid in promoting the cause of religion. In such circumstances, the heart is disposed to despond, and to ask whether religion can be advanced in the midst of so much indifference and opposition? At such times, how consoling is it to be able to turn, as Paul did, to one who is faithful; who never fails us; and who will certainly accomplish his benevolent purposes. Men may be faithless and false, but God never is. They may refuse to embrace the gospel, and set themselves against it, but God will not abandon his great purposes. Many who are in the church may forget their solemn and sacred vows, and may show no fidelity to the cause

of their Saviour, but God himself will never abandon that cause. To a pious mind it affords unspeakably more consolation to reflect that a faithful God is the Friend of the cause which we love, than it would were all men, in and out of the church, its friends. Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. Jn 17:16. Comp. Eph 6:16. The allusion is to the Evil One, or Satan, and the meaning is, that God would keep them from his wiles.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do
and will do the things which we command you.

And we have confidence in the Lord. Not primarily in you, for you have hearts like others, but in the Lord. It is remarkable that when Paul expresses the utmost confidence m Christians that they will live and act as becomes their profession, his reliance is not on anything in themselves, but wholly on the faithfulness of God. He must be a stranger to the human heart who puts much confidence in it even in its best state. Php 1:6, 4:7, 2Ti 1:12. Comp. Jude 1:24, Rev 3:10, Prov 28:26.

A further ground of hope that God would do this for them, seeing they did and would do the things they were commanded, 2Th 3:4. The apostle had this confidence in them, and this was founded upon his confidence in God; for there is otherwise no confidence in man. Have confidence in no man when left to himself [BENGEL].

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the
patient waiting for Christ.

As if he had said, "That we may not be mistaken in this our confidence, we pray that the Lord will direct your hearts into the love of God, which will constrain you to this obedience."
Where note, That to direct man's heart right into the love of God, is the work of God; The Lord directs your heart into the love of God.
Note farther, That these Thessalonians did love God already for the apostle had before commended their work of faith, their labour of love, and yet here he prays, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God, &c.

Learn hence, That the hearts of the holiest and best of saints do stand in need of a more perfect and constant direction into the love of God; as ships that are best rigged need a pilot, so they that love God must

need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory.

Observe farther, From the phrase here used, (direct,) that God works upon us as rational creatures; he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction, not by violence and compulsion: the Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful; it changes the will, but without offering violence to the freedom and liberty of the will; we are not forced but directed; The Lord direct your hearts.--

Again, the Lord direct your hearts; it implies, there are many things that would wreath and bend, crook and turn, our hearts another way, and direct our love to a contrary object, to the world and the flesh; therefore we had need pray with earnestness, The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God; it follows,--and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Note here, 1. The true character of a sincere Christian; he waits for the coming of Christ: such as love Christ fervently, long for his coming greatly.

Note, 2. How patience qualifies those holy ardours, and longing desires, which the saints have to be with Christ: though love sets us upon the wing to be gone, yet patience commands us to wait Christ's own time for going; vehement love needs the allay of patience; most need much patience to die, but some need as much patience to live: therefore says the apostle, The Lord direct your hearts into a patient waiting for Christ; intimating, that the saints of God have great need of patience to enable them to endure that state of distance and separation from Christ so long as they must endure it in this world: well then might the apostles pray on behalf of the Thessalonians, The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ.

Two things of the greatest importance the apostle prays for:--

1. That their hearts may be brought into the love of God, to be in love with God as the most excellent and amiable Being, the best of

all beings; and this is not only most reasonable and necessary in order to our happiness, but is our happiness itself; it is a great part of the happiness of heaven itself, where this love shall be made perfect. We can never attain to this unless God by his grace direct our hearts aright, for our love is apt to go astray after other things. Note, We sustain a great deal of damage by misplacing our affections; it is our sin and our misery that we place our affections upon wrong objects. If God directs our love aright upon himself, the rest of the affections will thereby be rectified.

2. That a patient waiting for Christ may be joined with this love of God. There is no true love of God without faith in Jesus Christ. We must wait for Christ, which supposes our faith in him, that we believe he came once in flesh and will come again in glory: and we must expect this second coming of Christ, and be careful to get ready for it; there must be a patient waiting, enduring with courage and constancy all that we may meet with in the mean time: and we have need of patience, and need of divine grace to exercise Christian patience, the patience of Christ (as some read the word), patience for Christ's sake and after Christ's example.

And into the patient waiting for Christ. Marg., patience of Christ. The marginal reading is in accordance with the Greek, and seems best to express the apostle's meaning. The prayer of the apostle was, that they might have the love of God in their hearts, and "the patience of Christ;" that is, the same patience which Christ evinced in his trials. They were then suffering affliction and persecution. They needed patience, that they might endure their trials in a proper manner. It was natural for the apostle to refer them to the Saviour, the great example of patience, and to pray that they might have the same which he had. That it does not mean that they were to wait patiently for the appearing of Christ, as our translation seems to imply, is quite clear, because the apostle had just been showing them that he would not appear until after a long series of events had occurred.

patient waiting for Christ—rather as Greek, "the patience (endurance) of Christ," namely, which Christ showed [ALFORD]

(2Th 2:4; 1Th 1:3). ESTIUS, however, supports English Version (compare Re 1:9; 3:10). At all events, this grace, "patience," or persevering endurance, is connected with the "hope" (1Th 1:3, 10) of Christ's coming. In ALFORD'S translation we may compare Heb 12:1, 2, "Run with patience (endurance) . . . looking to JESUS . . . who, for the joy that was before Him, endured the cross"; so WE are to endure, as looking for the hope to be realized at His coming (Heb 10:36, 37).

The Obligation to Work

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

Now we command you, brethren. The apostle now 2Thes 3:6-12 turns to an important subject--the proper method of treating those who were idle and disorderly in the church. In the previous epistle he had adverted to this subject, but in the mild language of exhortation. When he wrote that epistle he was aware that there were some among them who were disposed to be idle, and he had tenderly exhorted them "to be quiet, and to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands," 1Thes 4:11. But it seems the exhortation, and the example of Paul himself when there, 1Thes 2:9, had not been effectual in inducing them to be industrious. It became, therefore, necessary to use the strong language of command, as he does here, and to require that if they would not work, the church should withdraw from them. What was the original cause of their idleness, is not known. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that it was much increased by their expectation that the Saviour would soon appear, and that the world would soon come to an end. If this was to be so, of what use would it be to labour? Why strive to accumulate property with reference to the wants of a family, or to a day of sickness, or old age? Why should a man build a house that was soon to be burnt up, or why buy a farm which he was so soon to leave? The effect of the expectation of the speedy appearing of the Lord Jesus has always been to induce men to neglect their worldly affairs, and to lead idle lives. Man, naturally disposed to be idle, wants the stimulus of hope that he is labouring for the future

welfare of himself, for his family, or for society, nor will he labour if he believes that the Saviour is about to appear. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.--1Cor 5:4. That ye withdraw yourselves. 1Timm 6:6. This is the true notion of Christian discipline. It is not primarily that of cutting a man off, or denouncing him, or excommunicating him; it is that of withdrawing from him. We cease to have fellowship with him. We do not regard him any longer as a Christian brother. We separate from him. We do not seek to affect him in any other respect; we do not injure his name or standing as a man, or hold him up to reprobation; we do not follow him with denunciation or a spirit of revenge; we simply cease to recognize him as a Christian brother, when he shows that he is no longer worthy to be regarded as such. We do not deliver him over to the civil arm; we do not inflict any positive punishment on him; we leave him unmolested in all his rights as a citizen, a man, a neighbour, a husband, a father, and simply say that he is no longer one of us as a Christian. How different is this from excommunication, as it has been commonly understood! How different from the anathemas fulminated by the Papacy, and the delivering of the heretic over to the civil power! From every brother that walketh disorderly. 1Cor 5:11, also 1Cor 5:12-13. A "disorderly walk" denotes conduct that is in any way contrary to the rules of Christ. The proper idea of the word used here (ατακτως,) is that of soldiers who do not keep the ranks; who are regardless of order; and then who are irregular in any way. The word would include any violation of the rules of Christ on any subject. And not after the tradition which ye received of us. According to the doctrine which we delivered to you. 2Thes 2:15. This shows that by the word "tradition" the apostle did not mean unwritten doctrines handed down from one to another, for he evidently alludes to what he had himself taught them, and his direction is not that that should be handed down by them, but that they should obey it.

we command you—Hereby he puts to a particular test their obedience in general to his commands, which obedience he had recognized in 2Th 3:4. withdraw—literally, "to furl the sails"; as we say, to steer clear of (compare 2Th 3:14). Some had given up labor as though the Lord's day was immediately coming. He had enjoined mild censure of such in 1Th 5:14, "Warn . . . the unruly";

but now that the mischief had become more confirmed, he enjoins stricter discipline, namely, withdrawal from their company (compare 1Co 5:11; 2Jo 10, 11): not a formal sentence of excommunication, such as was subsequently passed on more heinous offenders (as in 1Co 5:5; 1Ti 1:20). He says "brother," that is, professing Christian; for in the case of unprofessing heathen, believers needed not be so strict (1Co 5:10-13). disorderly—Paul plainly would not have sanctioned the order of Mendicant Friars, who reduce such a "disorderly" and lazy life to a system. Call it not an order, but a burden to the community (BENGEL, alluding to the Greek, 2Th 3:8, for "be chargeable," literally, "be a burden"). the tradition—the oral instruction which he had given to them when present (2Th 3:10), and subsequently committed to writing (1Th 4:11, 12). which he received of us—Some oldest manuscripts read, "ye received"; others, "they received." The English Version reading has no very old authority.

(1.) His commands and directions to the whole church regard,

[1.] Their behaviour towards the disorderly persons who were among them, which is thus expressed (2Th 3:6), to withdraw themselves from such, and afterwards to mark that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet not to count him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother. The directions of the apostle are carefully to be observed in our conduct towards disorderly persons. We must be very cautious in church-censures and church-discipline. We must,

First, Note that man who is suspected or charged with not obeying the word of God, or walking contrary thereto, that is, we must have sufficient proof of his fault before we proceed further.

We must, Secondly, Admonish him in a friendly manner; we must put him in mind of his sin, and of his duty; and this should be done privately (Mt 18:15); then, if he will not hear, we must, Thirdly, Withdraw from him, and not keep company with him, that is, we must avoid familiar converse and society with such, for two reasons, namely, that we may not learn his evil ways; for he who follows

vain and idle persons, and keeps company with such, is in danger of becoming like them. Another reason is for the shaming, and so the reforming, of those that offend, that when idle and disorderly persons see how their loose practices are disliked by all wise and good people they may be ashamed of them, and walk more orderly. Love therefore to the persons of our offending brethren, even when we hate their vices, should be the motive of our withdrawing from them; and even those who are under the censures of the church must not be accounted as enemies (2Th 3:15); for, if they be reclaimed and reformed by these censures, they will recover their credit and comfort, and right to church-privileges as brethren.

[2.] Their general conduct and behaviour ought to be according to the good example the apostle and those who were with him had given them: Yourselves know how you ought to follow us, 2Th 3:7. Those who planted religion among them had set a good example before them; and the ministers of the gospel should be ensamples to the flock. It is the duty of Christians not only to walk according to the traditions of the apostles, and the doctrines they preached, but also according to the good example they set before them, to be followers of them so far as they were followers of Christ.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not
ourselves disorderly among you;
8 neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with
labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to
any of you:
9 not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample
unto you to follow us.
10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if
any would not work, neither should he eat.
11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly,
working not at all, but are busybodies.
12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord
Jesus
Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.
13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.
14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man,
and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Benediction

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means.
The Lord *be* with you all.
17 The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in
every epistle: so I write.
18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to
Timothy
[1 Timothy]

1 Timothy-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our
Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, *which is* our hope;

Our Saviour. The name Saviour is as applicable to God the rather as to the Lord Jesus Christ, since God is the great Author of salvation. Lk 1:47. Comp. 1Timm 4:10, Tit 2:10, Jude 1:25.

2 Unto Timothy, *my* own son in the faith:
Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God our Father, and Jesus Christ our
Lord.

That endearing title which our apostle gives to Timothy, he calls him his son, his own son, his own son in the faith because, as some think, converted by him to the Christian faith; others, that he was more thooughly instructed, edified, and and encouraged, by St. Paul, but converted before; possibly also he may call him his son, because he was as assisting to him, as obsequious and observing of him, as a son is to a father, he being a young man, and the apostle now aged, or it may be he calls him his son, because he resembled him in faith and doctrine, preaching and conversation, as a son resembled a father in face and manners.

Consider Timothy as a spiritual son to St. Paul, begotten to the faith by him, and then the note is this, that the ministers of Christ cannot but bear a fervent and affectionate love to those that are their spiritual children, their sons in the faith, and converted to Christ by their ministry; consider him as an assistant to St. Paul, a co-worker and fellow-labourer with him in the work of the gospel, and thus affectionately beloved by him, and we may learn for our instruction, how fervently the ministers of Christ should love one another, speak respectfully of each other, secure the reputation one

of another, strengthen each other's hearts in the work of God. We have little, God knows, very little love from the world: Lord, how sad is it that we should yet have less one for another! See how the heart of St. Paul and his assistant Timothy were knit together in love like father and son, to the great reputation, as well as the successful furtherance of the gospel.

mercy—added here, in addressing Timothy, to the ordinary salutation, "Grace unto you (Ro 1:7; 1Co 1:3, &c.), and peace." In Ga 6:16, "peace and mercy" occur. There are many similarities of style between the Epistle to the Galatians and the Pastoral Epistles (see Introduction); perhaps owing to his there, as here, having, as a leading object in writing, the correction of false teachers, especially as to the right and wrong use of the law (1Ti 1:9). If the earlier date be assigned to First Timothy, it will fall not long after, or before (according as the Epistle to the Galatians was written at Ephesus or at Corinth) the writing of the Epistle to the Galatians, which also would account for some similarity of style. "Mercy" is grace of a more tender kind, exercised towards the miserable, the experience of which in one's own case especially fits for the Gospel MINISTRY. Compare as to Paul himself (1Ti 1:14, 16; 1Co 7:25; 2Co 4:1; Heb 2:17) [BENGEL]. He did not use "mercy" as to the churches, because "mercy" in all its fulness already existed towards them; but in the case of an individual minister, fresh measures of it were continually needed. "Grace" has reference to the sins of men; "mercy" to their misery. God extends His grace to men as they are guilty; His "mercy" to them as they are miserable [TRENCH]. Ministers need more grace than others, to discharge their duty faithfully; and they need more mercy than others, to pardon what is amiss in them: and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we ministers, in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit!

3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine,

That thou mightest charge some. The word charge here--παραγγειλης-- seems to mean more than is commonly implied by the word as used by us. If it had been a single direction or command, it might have been given by Paul himself before he left, but it seems rather to refer to that continuous instruction which would convince these various errorists, and lead them to inculcate only the true doctrine. As they may have been numerous,--as they may have embraced various forms of error, and as they might have had plausible grounds for their belief, this was evidently a work requiring time, and hence Timothy was left to effect this at leisure. It would seem that the wrath which had been excited against Paul had not affected Timothy, but that he was permitted to remain and labour without molestation. It is not certainly known who these teachers were, but they appear to have been of Jewish origin, and to have inculcated the peculiar sentiments of the Jews respecting the law. That it is the great duty, and ought to be the special care, of the ministers of God, that no new or strange doctrine be broached in the church of Christ; I besought thee--that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.

Neither give heed to fables. fables—legends about the origin and propagation of angels, such as the false teachers taught at Colosse (Col 2:18-23). "Jewish fables" (Tit 1:14). "Profane, and old wives' fables" (1Ti 4:7; 2Ti 4:4). That is, that they should not bestow their attention on fables, or regard such trifles as of importance. The "fables" here referred to were probably the idle and puerile superstitions and conceits of the Jewish Rabbies. The word rendered fable (μυθος) means properly speech or discourse, to and then fable or fiction, or a mystic discourse. Such things abounded among the Greeks as well as the Jews, but it is probable that the latter here are particularly intended. These were composed of frivolous and unfounded stories, which they regarded as of great importance, and which they seem have desired to incorporate with

the teachings of Christianity. Paul, who had been brought up amidst these superstitions, saw at once how they would tend, to draw off the mind from the truth, and would corrupt the true religion. One of the most successful arts of the adversary of souls has been to mingle fable with truth; and when he cannot overthrow the truth by direct opposition, to neutralize it by mingling with it much that is false and frivolous. Ministers should avoid, as much as may be, what will occasion disputes; and would do well to insist on the great and practical points of religion, about which there can be no disputes; for even disputes about great and necessary truths draw off the mind from the main design of Christianity, and eat out the vitals of religion, which consist in practice and obedience as well as in faith, that we may not hold the truth in unrighteousness.

4 neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister
questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: *so do.*
5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart,
and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned:

Now the end of the commandment. Rom 10:4. In order that Timothy might fulfil the design of his appointment, it was necessary that he should have a correct view of the design of the law. The teachers, to whom he refers, insisted much on its obligation and importance; and Paul designs to say that he did not intend to teach that the law was of no consequence, and was not, when properly understood, obligatory. Its nature and use, however, was not correctly understood by them, and hence it was of great importance for Timothy to inculcate correct views of the purpose for which it was given. The word "commandment" here, some have understood of the gospel, (Doddridge ;) others of the particular command which the apostle here gives to Timothy, (Benson, Clarke, and Macknight ;) but it seems more naturally to refer to all that God had commanded--his whole law. As the error of these teachers arose from improper views of the nature and design of law, Paul says that that design should be understood. It was not to produce distinctions and angry contentions, and was not to fetter the minds of Christians with minute and burdensome observances, but it was to produce love. Is charity. On the meaning of this word, 1Cor 13:1. Out of a pure heart. The love which is genuine must proceed from a holy heart. The commandment was not designed to

secure merely the outward expressions of love, but that which had its seat in the heart. And of a good conscience. A conscience free from guilt. Of course there can be no genuine love to God where the dictates of conscience are constantly violated, or where a man knows that he is continually doing wrong. If a man wishes to have the evidence of love to God, he must keep a good conscience. All pretended love, where a man knows that he is living in sin, is mere hypocrisy. And of faith unfeigned. Undissembled confidence in God. This does seem to be intended specifically of faith in the Lord Jesus, but it means that all true love to God, such as this law would produce, must be based on confidence in him. How can any one have love to him who has no confidence in him? Can we exercise love to a professed friend in whom we have no confidence? Faith, then, is as necessary under the law as it is under the gospel.

6 from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;

From which some having swerved. Marg., not aiming at. The word here used αστοχεω-- means properly, to miss the mark; to err; and then, to swerve from. Comp. 1Timm 6:21, 2Ti 2:18. It does not mean that they had ever had that from which they are said to have swerved--for it does not follow that a man who misses a mark had ever hit it--but merely that they failed of the things referred to, and had turned to vain talk. The word "which" (ων,) in the plural, refers not to the law, but to the things enumerated --a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith.

Have turned aside unto vain jangling. Vain talk, empty declamation, discourses without sense. The word here used does not mean contention or strife, but that kind of discourse which is not founded in good sense. They were discourses on their pretended distinctions in the law; on their traditions and ceremonies; on their useless genealogies, and on the fabulous statements which they had appended to the law of Moses.

Desiring to be teachers of the law. That is, to have the credit and reputation of being well versed in the law of Moses, and qualified to explain it to others. This was a high honour among the Jews, and these teachers laid claim to the same distinction. Understanding

neither what they say. That is, they do not understand the true nature and design of that law which they attempt to explain to others. This was true of the Jewish teachers, and equally so of those in the church at Ephesus, who attempted to explain it. They appear to hare explained the law on the principles which commonly prevailed among the Jews, and hence their instructions tended greatly to corrupt the faith of the gospel. They made affirmations of what they knew nothing of, and though they made confident asseverations, yet they often pertained to things about which they had no knowledge. One needs only a slight acquaintance with the manner of teaching among Jewish Rabbies, or with the things found in their traditions, to see the accuracy of this statement of the apostle. A sufficient illustration of this may be found in Allen's "Modern Judaism."

7 desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they
say, nor whereof they affirm.
8 But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully;
9 knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for
the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for
unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of
mothers, for manslayers,

Knowing this. That is, "If any one knows, or admits this, he has the proper view of the design of the law." The apostle does not refer particularly to himself as knowing or conceding this, for then he would have used the plural form of the participle, (see the Greek;) but he means that any one, who had just views of the law, would see that that which he proceeds to specify was its real purpose. The law is not made for a righteous man.--There has been great variety in the interpretation of this passage. Some suppose that the law here refers to the ceremonial laws of Moses, (Clarke, Rosenmuller, Abbot;) others to the denunciatory part of the law, (Doddridge and Bloomfield;) and others that it means that the chief purpose of the law was to restrain the wicked. It seems clear, however, that the apostle does not refer merely to the ceremonial law, for he specifies that which condemns the unholy and profane; the murderers of fathers and mothers; liars and perjured persons. It was not the ceremonial law which condemned these things, but the moral law. It cannot be supposed, moreover, that the apostle meant, to say that

the law was not binding on a righteous man, or that he was under no obligation to obey it--for he everywhere teaches that the moral law is obligatory on all mankind. To suppose also that a righteous man is released from the obligation to obey the law, that is, to do right, is an absurdity. Nor does he seem to mean, as Macknight supposes, that the law was not given for the purpose of justifying a righteous man--for this was originally one of its designs. Had man always obeyed it, he would have been justified by it. The meaning seems to be, that the purpose of the law was not to fetter and perplex those who were righteous, and who aimed to do their duty and to please God, It was not intended to produce a spirit of servitude and bondage. As the Jews interpreted it, it did this, and this interpretation appears to have been adopted by the teachers at Ephesus, to whom Paul refers. The whole tendency of their teaching was to bring the soul into a state of bondage, and to make religion a condition of servitude. Paul teaches, on the other hand, that religion was a condition of freedom, and that the main purpose of the law was not to fetter the minds of the righteous by numberless observances and minute regulations, but that it was to restrain the wicked from sin. This is the case with all law. No good man feels himself fettered and manacled by wholesome laws, nor does he feel that the purpose of law is to reduce him to a state of servitude. It is only the wicked who have this feeling--and in this sense the law is made for a man who intends to do wrong.

law is not made for a righteous man—not for one standing by faith in the righteousness of Christ put on him for justification,and imparted inwardly by the Spirit for sanctification. "One not forensically amenable to the law" [ALFORD]. For sanctification, the law gives no inward power to fulfil it; but ALFORD goes too far in speaking of the righteous man as "not morally needing the law." Doubtless, in proportion as he is inwardly led by the Spirit, the justified man needs not the law, which is only an outward rule (Ro 6:14; Ga 5:18, 23). But as the justified man often does not give himself up wholly to the inward leading of the Spirit, he morally needs the outward law to show him his sin and God's requirements. The reason why the ten commandments have no power to condemn

the Christian, is not that they have no authority over him, but because Christ has fulfilled them as our surety (Ro 10:4).

10 for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind,
for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any
other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

The Jews used it unlawfully, as an engine to divide the church, a cover to the malicious opposition they made to the gospel of Christ; they set it up for justification, and so used it unlawfully. We must not therefore think to set it aside, but use it lawfully, for the restraint of sin. The abuse which some have made of the law does not take away the use of it; but, when a divine appointment has been abused, call it back to its right use and take away the abuses, for the law is still very useful as a rule of life; though we are not under it as under a covenant of works, yet it is good to teach us what is sin and what is duty. It is not made for a righteous man, that is, it is not made for those who observe it; for, if we could keep the law, righteousness would be by the law (Ga 3:21): but it is made for wicked persons, to restrain them, to check them, and to put a stop to vice and profaneness. It is the grace of God that changes men's hearts; but the terrors of the law may be of use to tie their hands and restrain their tongues. A righteous man does not want those restraints which are necessary for the wicked; or at least the law is not made primarily and principally for the righteous, but for sinners of all sorts, whether in a greater or less measure, 1Ti 1:9,10. In this black roll of sinners, he particularly mentions breaches of the second table, duties which we owe to our neighbour; against the fifth and sixth commandments, murderers of fathers and mothers, and manslayers; against the seventh, whoremongers, and those that defile themselves with mankind; against the eighth, men-stealers; against the ninth, liars and perjured persons; and then he closes his account with this, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. Some understand this as an institution of a power in the civil magistrate to make laws against such notorious sinners as are specified, and to see those laws put in execution.

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was
committed to my trust.

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that
he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;
13 who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious:
but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

no matter what a man is required to give up in order to become a minister of the gospel, he should be thankful to Christ for putting him into the office. A minister when he comes to die, feels that the highest favour which heaven has conferred on him has been in turning his feet away from the paths of ambition, and the pursuits of ease or gain, and leading him to that holy work to which he has been enabled to consecrate his life.

Who hath enabled me. Who has given me ability or strength for this service. The apostle traced to the Lord Jesus the fact that he was in the ministry at all, and all the ability which he had to perform the duties of thai holy office. It is not necessary here to suppose, as many have done, that he refers to miraculous power conferred on him, but he makes the acknowledgment which any faithful minister would do, that all the strength which he has to perform the duties of his office is derived from Christ. Comp. Jn 15:5; 1Cor 15:10.

He counted me faithful; and none are counted faithful but those whom He makes so. Christ's ministers are trusty servants, and they ought to be so, having so great a trust committed to them.

14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and
love which is in Christ Jesus.
15 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am
chief.

This is a faithful saying. Gr., "Faithful is the word," or doctrine--ολογος. This verse has somewhat the character of a parenthesis, and seems to have been thrown into the midst of the narrative because the mind of the apostle was full of the subject. He had said that he, a great sinner, had obtained mercy. This naturally led him to think of the purpose for which Christ came into the world--to

save sinners--and to think how strikingly that truth had been illustrated in his own case, and how that case had shown that it was worthy the attention of all. The word rendered "saying," means, in this place, doctrine, position, or declaration. The word "faithful," means assuredly true; it was that which might be depended on, or on which reliance might be placed. The meaning is, that the doctrine that Christ came to save sinners might be depended on as certainly true. Comp. 2Ti 2:11, Tit 3:8. And worthy of all acceptation. Worthy to be embraced or believed by all. This is so because

(1.) all are sinners and need a Saviour. All, therefore, ought to welcome a doctrine which shows them how they may be saved.

(2.) Because Christ died for all. If he had died for only a part of the race, and could save only a part, it could not be said, with any propriety, that the doctrine was worthy of the acceptance of "all". If that were so, what had it to do with all? How could all be interested in it, or benefited by it? If medicine had been provided for only a part of the patients in a hospital, it could not be said that the announcement of such a fact was worthy the attention of all. It would be highly worthy the attention of those for whom it was designed, but there would be a part who would have nothing to do with it; and why should they concern themselves about it? But if it were provided for each one, then each one would have the highest interest in it. So, if salvation has been provided for me, it is a matter claiming my profoundest attention; and the same is true of every human being. If not provided for me, I have nothing to do with it. It does not concern me at all.

(3.) The manner in which the provision of salvation has been made in the gospel is such as to make it worthy of universal acceptation. It provides for the complete pardon of sin, and the restoration of the soul to God. This is done in a way that is honourable to God--maintaining his law and his justice; and, at the same time, it is in a way that is honourable to man. He is treated afterwards as a friend of God and an heir of life. He is raised up from his degradation, and restored to the favour of his Maker. If man were himself to

suggest a way of salvation, he could think of none that would be more honourable to God and to himself; none that would do so much to maintain the law, and to elevate him from all that now degrades him. What higher honour can be conferred on man than to have his salvation sought as an object of intense and earnest desire by one so great and glorious as the Son of God?

(4.) It is worthy of all acceptance, from the nature of the salvation itself. Heaven is offered, with all its everlasting glories, through the blood of Christ--and is not this worthy of universal acceptation? Men would accept of a coronet or crown; a splendid mansion, or a rich estate; a present of jewels and gold, if freely tendered to them; but what trifles are these compared with heaven! If there is anything that is worthy of universal acceptation, it is heaven, for all will be miserable unless they enter there. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The great and peculiar doctrine of the gospel. He "came into the world." He, therefore, had a previous existence. He came. He had, therefore, an object in coming. It makes his gospel more worthy of acceptation, that he had an intention, a plan, a wish, in thus coming into the world. He "came" when he was under no necessity of coming; he came to save, not to destroy; to reveal mercy, not to denounce judgment; to save sinners--the poor, the lost, the wandering, not to condemn them; he came to restore them to the favour of God, to raise them up from their degradation, and to bring them to heaven. Of whom I am chief. Gr., first. The word is used to denote eminence, and it means that he occupied the first rank among sinners. There were none who surpassed him. This does not mean that he had been the greatest of sinners in all respects, but that in some respects he had been so great a sinner, that, on the whole, there were none who had surpassed him. That to which he particularly refers was doubtless the part which he had taken in putting the saints to death; but in connexion with this, he felt, undoubtedly, that he had by nature a heart eminently prone to sin. See Rom

7. Except in the matter of persecuting the saints, the youthful Saul of Tarsus appears to have been eminently moral, and his outward conduct was framed in accordance with the strictest rules of the

law, Php 3:6, Acts 26:4,6. After his conversion, he never attempted to extenuate his conduct, or excuse himself. He was always ready, in all circles, and in all places, to admit, to its fullest extent, the fact that he was a sinner. So deeply convinced was he of the truth of this, that he bore about with him the constant impression that he was eminently unworthy; and hence he does not say merely that he had been a sinner of most aggravated character, but he speaks of it as something that always pertained to him--" of whom I am chief." We may remark

(1.) that a true Christian will always be ready to admit that his past life has been evil;

(2.) that this will become the abiding and steady conviction of the soul; and

(3.) that an acknowledgment that we are sinners is not inconsistent with evidence of piety, and with high attainments in it. The most eminent Christian has the deepest sense of the depravity of his own heart, and of the evil of his past life.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Howbeit for this came. That is, this was on, of the causes, or this was a leading reason. We are not to suppose that this was the only one. God had other ends to answer by his conversion than this; but this was one of the designs why he was pardoned-- that there might be for all ages a permanent proof that sins of the deepest dye might be forgiven. It was well to have one such example at the outset, that a doubt might never arise about the possibility of forgiving great transgressors. The question thus would be settled for ever. That in me first. Not first in the order of time, as our translation would seem to imply, but that in me the first or chief of sinners ενεμοιπρωτω he might show an example. The idea is, that he sustained the first rank as a sinner, and that Jesus Christ designed to show mercy to him as such, in order that the possibility of pardoning the greatest sinners might be evinced, and that no one might afterwards despair of salvation on account of the greatness

of his crimes. Might show forth all long-suffering. The highest possible degree of forbearance, in order that a case might never occur about which there could be any doubt. It was shown by his example that the Lord Jesus could evince any possible degree of patience, and could have mercy on the greatest imaginable offenders. For a pattern. υποτυπωσιν. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 2Ti 1:13, where it is rendered form. It properly means a form, sketch, or imperfect delineation. Then it denotes a pattern or example, and here it means that the case of Paul was an example for the encouragement of sinners in all subsequent times. It was that to which they might look when they desired forgiveness and salvation. It furnished all the illustration and argument which they would need to show that they might be forgiven. It settled the question for ever that the greatest sinners might be pardoned; for as he was "the chief of sinners," it proved that a case could not occur which was beyond the possibility of mercy. Which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. All might learn from the mercy shown to him that salvation could be obtained. From this verse we may learn

(1.) that no sinner should despair of mercy. No one should say that he is so great a sinner that he cannot be forgiven. One who regarded himself as the "chief" of sinners was pardoned, and pardoned for the very purpose of illustrating this truth, that any sinner might be saved. His example stands as the illustration of this to all ages; and were there no other, any sinner might now come and hope for mercy. But there are other examples. Sinners of all ranks and descriptions have been pardoned. Indeed, there is no form of depravity of which men can be guilty, in respect to which there are not instances where just such offenders have been forgiven. The persecutor may reflect that great enemies of the cross like him have been pardoned; the profane man and the blasphemer, that many such have been forgiven; the murderer, the thief, the sensualist, that many of the same character have found mercy, and have been admitted to heaven.

(2.) The fact that great sinners have been pardoned, is a proof that others of the same description may be also. The same mercy that

saved them can save us--for mercy is not exhausted by being frequently exercised. The blood of atonement which has cleansed so many can cleanse us--for its efficacy is not destroyed by being once applied to the guilty soul. Let no one then despair of obtaining mercy because he feels that his sins are too great to be forgiven. Let him look to the past, and remember what God has done. Let him remember the case of Saul of Tarsus; let him think of David and Peter; ... and thousands like them, who have found mercy; and in their examples let him see a full proof that God is willing to save any sinner, no matter how vile, provided he is penitent and believing.

17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *be* honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Now unto the King eternal. This ascription of praise is offered to God in view of the mercy which he had shown to so great a sinner. It is the outbreak of that grateful emotion which swelled his bosom, and which would not be denied expression, when Paul recalled his former life and the mercy of God to his soul. It somewhat interrupts indeed the train of his remarks, but the heart was so full that it demanded utterance. It is just an instance of the joy and gratitude which fill the soul of a Christian when he is led along in a train of reflections which conduct him to the recollection of his former sin and danger, and to the fact that he has obtained mercy and has now the hope of heaven. The apostle Paul not unfrequently, in accordance with a mode of writing that was common among the Hebrews, interposes an expression of praise in the midst of his reasonings. Comp. Rom 1:25, 2Cor 11:31.

Be honour. Let there be all the respect and veneration shown to him which is his due. And glory. Praise. Let him be praised by all for ever. Amen. So be it; an expression of strong affirmation. Jn 3:3. Here it is used to denote the solemn assent of the heart to the sentiment conveyed by the words used. Mt 6:13, 1Cor 14:16.

18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Mightest war a good warfare. The Christian life is often compared to a warfare or struggle for victory, comp. Eph 6:10-17, 1Cor 9:7

2Cor 10:4, and the services of the Christian ministry especially are likened to those of a soldier, 2Ti 2:3,4, 4:7. The meaning here is, that he should contend with earnestness as a Christian and a minister in that holy service in which he was engaged, and endeavour to secure the victory. He "wars a good warfare" who is engaged in a righteous cause; who is faithful to his commander and to his post; who is unslumbering in observing the motions of the enemy, and fearless in courage in meeting them; who never forsakes his standard, and who continues thus faithful till the period of his enlistment has expired, or till death. Such a soldier the Christian minister should be.

19 holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck:

Holding faith. Fidelity to the cause in which you are enlisted as a good soldier should do. This does not mean, as it seems to me, that Timothy should hold to the system of doctrines revealed in the gospel, but that he should have that fidelity which a good soldier ought to have. He should not betray his trust. He should adhere to the cause of his Master with unwavering steadfastness. This would include, of course, a belief of the truth, but this is not the leading idea in the phrase. And a good conscience. Acts 23:1. A good conscience, as well as fidelity, is necessary in the service of the Redeemer. A good conscience is that which is well informed in regard to what is right, and where its dictates are honestly followed. Which some having put away. That is, which good conscience some have put from them, or in other words, have not followed its dictates The truth thus taught is, that men make shipwreck of their faith by not keeping a good conscience. They love sin. They follow the leadings of passion. They choose to indulge in carnal propensities. As a matter of course, they must, if they will do this, reject and renounce the gospel. Men become infidels because they wish to indulge in sin. No man can be a sensualist, and yet love that gospel which enjoins purity of life. If men would keep a good conscience, the way to a steady belief in the gospel would be easy. If men will not, they must expect sooner or later to be landed in infidelity. Concerning faith. In respect to the whole subject of faith. They are unfaithful to God, and they reject the whole system of the gospel. "Faith" is sometimes used to denote the gospel--as faith is

the principal thing in the gospel. Have made shipwreck. There is an entire destruction of faith--as a ship is wholly ruined that strikes on a rock and sinks.

Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander. Hymeneus is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, except in 2Ti 2:17, where he is mentioned in connection with Philetus as a very dangerous man. An Alexander is mentioned in Acts 19:33, which some have supposed to be the same as the one referred to here. It is not certain, however, that the same person is intended. Acts 19:33. In 2Ti 4:14, Alexander the coppersmith is mentioned as one who had done the apostle "much evil," and there can be little doubt that he is the same person who is referred to here. One of the doctrines which Hymeneus held was that the "resurrection was past already," 2Ti 2:18; but what doctrine Alexander held is unknown. It is not improbable, as he is mentioned here in connection with Hymeneus, that he maintained the same opinion; and, in addition to that, he appears to have been guilty of some personal injury to the apostle. Both also were guilty of blasphemy. Whom I have delivered unto Satan. On the meaning of this expression, 1Cor 5:5. That they may learn not to blaspheme. It cannot be supposed that Satan would undertake to teach them not to blaspheme, or that Paul put them under him as an instructor on that subject. The instructions of Satan tend rather to teach his followers to blaspheme, and none in his school fail to be apt scholars. The meaning here is, that Paul excommunicated them, and not improbably brought upon them, by giving them over to Satan, some physical maladies, that they might be reformed. Comp. 1Cor 5:5. It is not entirely clear what is meant by blaspheme in this place. Comp. 1Timm 1:13 It cannot be supposed that they were open and bold blasphemers, for such could not have maintained a place in the church, but rather that they held doctrines which the apostle regarded as amounting to blasphemy; that is, doctrines which were in fact a reproach on the Divine character. There are many doctrines held by men which are in fact a reflection on the Divine character, and which amount to the same thing as blasphemy. A blasphemer openly expresses views of the Divine character which are a reproach to God; an errorist expresses the same thing in another way--by teaching as true about God that

which represents him in a false light, and to suppose which, in fact, is a reproach. The spirit with which this is done in the two cases may be different; the thing itself may be the same. Let us be careful that we hold no views about God which are reproachful to him, and which, though we do not express it in words, may lead us to blaspheme him in our hearts.

Holding faith and a good conscience, 1Ti 1:19. Those that put away a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions of a renewed enlightened conscience, and keep conscience void of offence (Ac 24:16), a conscience not debauched by any vice or sin, and this will be a means of preserving us sound in the faith; we must look to the one as well a the other, for the mystery of the faith must be held in a pure conscience, 1Ti 3:9. As for those who had made shipwreck of the faith, he specifies two, Hymeneus and Alexander, who had made a profession of the Christian religion, but had quitted that profession; and Paul had delivered them to Satan, had declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, and, as some think, had, by an extraordinary power, delivered them to be terrified or tormented by Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ and the good ways of the Lord. Observe, The primary design of the highest censure in the primitive church was to prevent further sin and to reclaim the sinner. In this case it was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, 1Co 5:5. Observe,

(1.) Those who love the service and work of Satan are justly delivered over to the power of Satan: Whom I have delivered over to Satan.

(2.) God can, if he please, work by contraries: Hymeneus and Alexander are delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme, when one would rather think they would learn of Satan to blaspheme the more.

(3.) Those who have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted.

(4.) Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for, if we once let go our hold of these, we do not know where we shall stop.

20 of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

St. Paul had exhorted Timothy in the foregoing verse to war a good warfare; here he directs him to two weapons which he would have him use in that warfare, namely, faith, and a good conscience; neither will do alone: not faith without a good conscience, nor a good conscience without faith; hold both faith in thy teaching, and a good conscience in thy practice: hold them fast; for faith stands with a good conscience, and falls with a bad one.

Learn hence, That in the most perilous times, when some lose their graces and comforts, their present peace and future hopes, that we may not lose what we have on earth, and what we look for in heaven, one continual care must be, to get and keep, to have and hold, faith and a good conscience.

And mark the encouragement given to exercise this care; some, through the neglect of it, concerning faith have made shipwreck. Our life is a sea-faring condition; a good conscience is the ark in which we are secure, made by God's own direction, (as was that of Noah,) and pitched within and without, as was his: a window it had in the top to let in the light of heaven, but not the least crack or crevice below, to let in a drop of guilt, or endanger its own safety: it shoots off all the showers that fall downwards, and all the floods that rage upwards. Such a security is an innocent mind and a clear conscience; but if we do not hold fast a good conscience, but let it go, we have seen the last of faith; it sinks, it shipwrecks presently. Concerning faith have made shipwreck.

That is, of the number of those who have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience are these two men. They made shipwreck

of faith. But how: by renouncing Christianity expressly? No, but implicitly, by denying the resurrection, and maintaining such doctrines as utterly subverted and totally overthrew the faith.
Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.
That is, whom I have inflicted the church's censure of excommunication upon, cast them out of the church, and delivered to Satan as God's executioner, who oft-times tormented the person with greivous diseases and bodily pains, called elsewhere, the destruction of the flesh, 1Cor 5:5

Learn hence, That excommunication rightly administered is a very solemn ordinance, a shutting out of heaven him who is justly cast out of the church's communion here on earth.

But observe, The charitable intention of the apostle in denouncing this sentence of excommunication; it was, That they might learn not to blaspheme.
Mark, it was none of Satan's desire, but the apostle's that they might learn not to blaspheme. Satan was then God's executioner, when the church wanted the countenance of the Christian magistrate; and his design was destruction, but the apostle's was reformation; not to ruin, but reclaim.

Learn, That the end of the church's censure, in particular if excommunication, is not to serve to the destruction of the censured, much less to the private revenge of the censurer; but to reform and reclaim the offender, that others may be warned, and the infection stayed: Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

1 Timothy-2

Instructions concerning Prayer

1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers,
intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;

First of all. That is, as the first duty to be enjoined; the thing that is to be regarded with primary concern. Comp. Lk 12:1; 2Pet 1:20. It does not mean that this was to be the first thing in public worship in the order of time, but that it was to be regarded as a duty of primary importance. The duty of praying for the salvation of the whole world was not to be regarded as a subordinate and secondary thing. Supplications. It is not entirely easy to mark the difference in the meaning of the words used here, and it is not essential. They all relate to prayer, and refer only to the different parts of prayer, or to distinct classes of thought and desire which come before the mind in pleading for others. On the difference between the words supplications and prayers, Heb 5:7. Intercessions. The noun used occurs only in this place and in 1Timm 4:5, of this epistle. The verb, however (εντυγχανω) occurs in Acts 25:24, Rom 8:27,34, 11:2, Heb 7:25. See the meaning explained in the Rom 8:26; Heb 7:25. There is one great Intercessor between God and man, who pleads for our salvation on the ground of what he himself has done, but we are permitted to intercede for others, not on the ground of any merit which they or we possess, but on the ground of the merit of the great Advocate and Intercessor. It is an inestimable privilege to be permitted to plead for the salvation of our fellow-men. Giving of thanks. That is, in behalf of others. We ought to give thanks for the mercy of God to ourselves; it is right and proper also that we should give thanks for the goodness of God to others. We should render praise that there is a way of salvation provided; that no one is excluded from the offer of mercy; and that God is using so many means to call lost sinners to himself. For all men. Prayers should be made for all men--for all need the grace and mercy of God; thanks should be rendered for all, for all may be saved. Does not this direction imply that Christ died for all mankind? How could we give thanks in their behalf if there were no mercy for them, and no way had been provided by which they could be saved? It may

be observed here, that the direction to pray and to give thanks for all men, showed the large and catholic nature of Christianity. It was opposed entirely to the narrow and bigoted feelings of the Jews, who regarded the whole Gentile world as excluded from covenant mercies, and as having no offer of life. Christianity threw down all these barriers, and all men are on a level; and since Christ has died for all, there is ample ground for thanksgiving and praise in behalf of the whole human race.

For kings. On the respect due to rulers, Rom 13:1-7. The meaning here is, that while all men should be the subjects of prayer, those should be particularly remembered before the throne of grace who are in authority. The reason is, that so much depends on their character and plans; that the security of life, liberty, and property, depends so much on them. God has power to influence their hearts, and to incline them to what is just and equal; and hence we should pray that a Divine influence may descend upon them. The salvation of a king is of itself of no more importance than that of a peasant or a slave; but the welfare of thousands may depend on him, and hence he should be made the special subject of prayer. All that are in authority. Marg., "or, eminent place." This does not necessarily mean those who hold office, but refers to any of elevated rank. The happiness of all who are under their control depends greatly on them, and hence we should pray for them that they may be converted men, and inclined to do that which is right. That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. That their hearts may be so inclined to what is right that they may protect us in the enjoyment of religion, and that we may not be opposed or harassed by persecution. This does not mean that their protection would dispose us to lead quiet and peaceful lives, but that under their protection we may be saved from oppression on account of our religion. Christians are disposed of themselves to be peaceful and orderly; they ask of their rulers only that they may not be harassed in the enjoyment of their rights. In all godliness and honesty. In the practice of all our duties towards God, and of all the duties which we owe to men. The word godliness here denotes piety--or the duty which we owe to God; the word honesty refers to our duties to our fellow-men. The Christian asks from civil rulers such protection

that he may be enabled quietly to perform both these classes of duties.

In praying for our governors, we take the most likely course to lead a peaceable and quiet life. The Jews at Babylon were commanded to seek the peace of the city whither the Lord had caused them to be carried captives, and to pray to the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof they should have peace, Jer 29:7. 6. If we would lead a peaceable and quiet life, we must live in all godliness and honesty; we must do our duty to God and man. He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it, 1Pe 3:10,11. Now the reason he gives for this is because this is good in the sight of God our Saviour; that is, the gospel of Christ requires this. That which is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour we should do, and should abound in.

2 for kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Who will have all men to be saved. That is, it is in accordance with his nature, his feelings, his desires. The word will cannot be taken here in the absolute sense, denoting a decree like that by which he willed the creation of the world, for then it would certainly be done. But the word is often used to denote a desire, wish, or what is in accordance with the nature of any one. Thus it may be said of God that he "wills" that his creatures may be happy--because it is in accordance with his nature, and because he has made abundant provision for their happiness--though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to make them happy. God wills that sickness should be relieved, and sorrow mitigated, and that the oppressed should go free, because it is agreeable to his nature; though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to produce it. A parent wills the welfare of his child. It is in accordance with his nature, his feelings, his desires; and he makes every needful arrangement for it. If the child is not virtuous and happy, it is his own fault. So God wills that all men should be saved. It would be in accordance with his benevolent nature. He has made ample provision for it. He uses all proper means to secure their salvation.

He uses no positive means to prevent it, and if they are not saved it will be their own fault. For places in the New Testament where the word here translated "will" (θελω) means to desire or wish, Lk 8:20, 23:8, Jn 16:19; Gal 4:20, Mk 7:24, 1Cor 7:7, 11:3, 14:5, Mt 15:28. This passage cannot mean, as many have supposed, that God wills that all kinds of men should be saved, or that some sinners of every rank and class may be saved, because

(1.) the natural and obvious interpretation of the language is opposed to such a sense. The language expresses the desire that "all men" should be saved, and we should not depart from the obvious sense of a passage unless necessity requires it.

(2.) Prayer and thanksgiving 1Timm 2:1 are directed to be offered, not for some of all ranks and conditions, but for all mankind. No exception is made, and no direction is given that we should exclude any of the race from the expressions of our sympathy, and from an interest in our supplications. The reason given here for that prayer is, that God desires that all men should be saved. But how could this be a reason for praying for all, if it means that God desired only the salvation of some of all ranks?

(3.) In 1Timm 2:5,6, the apostle gives reasons showing that God wished the salvation of all men, and those reasons are such as to prove that the language here is to be taken in the most unlimited sense. Those reasons are,

(a) that there is one God over all, and one Mediator between God and men--showing that God is the Father of all, and has the same interest in all; and

(b) that Christ gave himself a ransom for all--showing that God desired their salvation. This verse proves

(1.) that salvation is provided for all --for if God wished all men to be saved, he would undoubtedly make provision for their salvation; and if he had not made such provision, it could not be

said that he desired their salvation, since no one can doubt that he has power to provide for the salvation of all;

(2.) that salvation should be offered to all men--for if God desires it, it is right for his ministers to announce that desire, and if he desires it, it is not proper for them to announce anything contrary to this;

(3.) that men are to blame if they are not saved. If God did not wish their salvation, and if he had made no provision for it, they could not be to blame if they rejected the gospel. If God wishes it, and has made provision for it, and they are not saved, the sin must be their own--and it is a great sin, for there is no greater crime which a man can commit than to destroy his own soul, and to make himself the eternal enemy of his Maker.

3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;

Our apostle subjoins his reasons for our praying for all men, because Christ came into the world to save all men, 1Tim 1:15 Because it is the desire of God, as well as the design of Christ, that all men should be saved, and because such prayers are good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Learn hence, 1. That to pray for all men, as well enemies as friends, especially and particularly for rulers and magistrates, is good, acceptable, and agreeable to Almighty God, as all acts of obedience to his commanding will are: This is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Learn, 2. That it is not only all sorts of men that God and Christ desire should be saved, but our Lord willed, together with his Father, the salvation of all men in general, so far as to make a sacrifice sufficient for all, if they repent and believe, and to offer a general pardon to all on condition of acceptance, and to send his ministers amongst all with the word of reconciliation, accompanying it with an hearty desire that all would accept of it; in short, what Christ offered to all, he undoubtedly purchased for all; but he offers to all pardon and life upon condition of

acceptance, therefore he is so far willing that all men should be saved.

Learn, 3. The means and method by which and in which God would have all men to be saved, namely, by coming to the knowledge of the truth; it is evidently false then, which some confidently affirm, that a man may be saved in any religion: no, he cannot come to salvation but by the knowledge of the truth; without the knowledge of God, without faith in Christ, where he has been revealed, and without obedience to the gospel, where it has been made known, there is no possibility of salvation; God would have all men to be saved, by coming to the knowledge of the truth.

One reason why all men are to be prayed for is because there is one God, and that God bears a good will to all mankind. There is one God (1Ti 2:5), and one only, there is no other, there can be no other, for there can be but one infinite. This one God will have all men to be saved; he desires not the death and destruction of any (Eze 33:11), but the welfare and salvation of all. Not that he has decreed the salvation of all, for then all men would be saved; but he has a good will to the salvation of all, and none perish but by their own fault, Mt 23:37. He will have all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, to be saved in the way that he has appointed and not otherwise. It concerns us to get the knowledge of the truth, because that is the way to be saved; Christ is the way and the truth, and so he is the life.

"Imitate God." Since He wishes that all should be saved, do you also wish it; and if you wish it, pray for it. For prayer is the instrument of effecting such things [CHRYSOSTOM]. Paul does not say, "He wishes to save all"; for then he would have saved all in matter of fact; but "will have all men to be saved," implies the possibility of man's accepting it (through God's prevenient grace) or rejecting it (through man's own perversity). Our prayers ought to include all, as God's grace included all

4 who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

For there is one God. This is a reason for offering prayer for all men, and for the declaration 1Timm 2:4 that God desires that all men should be saved. The reason is founded in the fact that he is the common Father of all the race, and that he must have the same desire for the welfare of all his children. He has made them of one blood, Acts 17:26, and he must have the same interest in the happiness of all. Comp. Eph 4:6; Rom 3:30. And one Mediator between God and men. Gal 3:19, Gal 3:20; Heb 9:15. This also is given as a reason why prayer should be offered for all, and a proof that God desires their salvation. The argument is, that there is the same Mediator between God and all men. He is not the Mediator between God and a part of the human race, but between "God and men," implying that he desired the salvation of the race. Whatever love there was in giving the Mediator at all, was love for all the race: whatever can be argued from that about the interest which God has in man, is proof of his interest in the race at large. It is proper, therefore, to pray for all. It may be remarked here that there is but one Mediator. There is not one for kings and another for their subjects; one for the rich and another for the poor; one for the master and another for the slave. All are on the same level, and the servant may feel that, in the gift of a Mediator, God regarded him with the same interest that he did his master. It may be added, also, that the doctrine of the Papists, that the saints or the Virgin Mary may act as mediators to procure blessings for us, is false. There is but "one Mediator;" and but one is necessary. Prayer offered to the "saints," or to the "Virgin," is idolatry; and, at the same time, removes the one great Mediator from the office which he alone holds, of making intercession with God. The man Christ Jesus. Jesus was truly and properly a man, having a perfect human body and soul, and is often called a man in the New Testament. But this does not prove that he was not also divine--any more than his being called God, Jn 1:1, 20:28, Rom 9:5, 1Jn 5:20 Heb 1:8, proves that he was not also a man. The use of the word man here was probably designed to intimate that, though he was divine, it was in his human nature that we are to consider him as discharging the office. Doddridge.

5 For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the
man Christ Jesus;

The apostle's argument runs thus: We ought to pray for all, because there is one God who is good to all, and one Mediator between God and mankind, who took upon him the common nature of all men, and gave himself a satisfactory and sufficient ransom for all, which was in due time testified and borne witness to by us his apostles.

Learn hence, 1. That the only way of friendly intercourse between God and fallen man, is by and through a Mediator. God cannot look upon fallen men out of a Mediator, but as rebels, traitors, and objects of his vindictive wrath; nor can fallen man, without a Mediator, look up to God, but as a provoked majesty, an angry judge, and a consuming fire.

Learn, 2. That there is no other Mediator between God and man, but Jesus Christ, who was both God and man; for though the apostle calls him the Man Christ Jesus, this is not added to exclude the divine nature from the Mediatorship, but emphatically to declare that nature in which he gave himself a ransom for us; the human nature is the matter of our ransom; the divine nature gave worth and value to it; Christ suffered being man, and satisfied being God.

Learn, 3. That this one Mediator, Jesus Christ, gave himself a ransom for all; whoever perishes under the gospel, it is not because no ransom was paid for him, nor because it was not sufficient for him, for it is most notorious that God has issued forth an universal act of grace, offering pardon of sin and eternal salvation to all men without exception, living under the gospel, upon condition of their believing acceptance; if they reject and refuse it, 'tis to their unutterable and inevitable condemnation.--

Learn, 4. That Christ's mediation and intercession is founded upon redemption; because he gave himself a ransom for all therefore is he, and he only, qualified to intercede for all, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of mankind: therefore the distinction of the church of Rome, between a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession, is groundless: for who

dares plead with an offended God as an intercessor on the behalf of sinners, that has not first, as a redeemer, satisfied the justice of God for sin? As there was no redemption wrought by any, so there is no intercession to be made by any, but by Christ; as there is but one God, so but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

6 who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Who gave himself a ransom for all. Not for an elect nation, like the Jews, or for the elect individuals arbitrarily selected, but for all men. All men have been redeemed by his blood, if they will accept the ransom. This also is stated as a reason why prayer should be offered for all, and a proof that God desires the salvation of all. The argument is, that as Christ died for all, it is proper to pray for all; and that the fact that he died for all, is proof that God desired the salvation of all. Whatever proof of his desire for their salvation can be derived from this, in relation to any of the race, is proof in relation to all. On the meaning of the phrase "he gave himself a ransom," Mt 20:28; Rom 3:26. On the fact that it was for "all," 2Cor 5:14. ransom—properly of a captive slave. Man was the captive slave of Satan, sold under sin. He was unable to ransom himself, because absolute obedience is due to God, and therefore no act of ours can satisfy for the least offense. Le 25:48 allowed one sold captive to be redeemed by one of his brethren. The Son of God, therefore, became man in order that, being made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, as our elder brother He should redeem us (Mt 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1Pe 1:18, 19). The Greek implies not merely ransom, but a substituted or equivalent ransom: the Greek preposition, "anti," implying reciprocity and vicarious substitution. Who gave himself a ransom for all - Such a ransom, the word signifies, wherein a like or equal is given; as an eye for an eye, or life for life: and this ransom, from the dignity of the person redeeming, was more than equivalent to all mankind.

To be testified in due time. Marg., a testimony. The Greek is, "the testimony in its own times," or in proper times-- τομαρτυριον καιροιςιδιοις. There have been very different explanations of this phrase. The common interpretation, and that which seems to me to be correct, is, that "the testimony of this will be furnished in the

proper time; that is, in the proper time it shall be made known through all the world." See Rosenmuller. Paul affirms it as a great and important truth that Christ gave himself a ransom for all mankind--for Jews and gentiles; for all classes and conditions of men alike. This truth had not always been understood. The Jews had supposed that salvation was designed exclusively for their nation, and denied that it could be extended to others, unless they became Jews. According to them, salvation was not provided for, or offered to heathens as such, but only on condition that they became Jews. In opposition to this, Paul says that it was a doctrine of revelation that redemption was to be provided for all men, and that it was intended that the testimony to this should be afforded at the proper time. It was not fully made known under the ancient dispensation, but now the period had come when it should be communicated to all. Rom 5:6, Gal 4:4.

7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and* lie not,) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not. That is, by Christ; or I solemnly appeal to Christ--a form of an oath. Rom 9:1. Paul makes a solemn declaration similar to this in regard to his call to the apostleship, in Gal 1:20. For the reasons why he did it, Gal 1:20. It is probable that there were those in Ephesus who denied that he could be an apostle, and hence his solemn declaration affirming it.

8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

That men pray everywhere. Not merely in the temple, or in other sacred places, but in all places. The Jews supposed that there was special efficacy in prayers offered at the temple in Jerusalem; the heathen also had the same view in regard to their temples--for both seemed to suppose that they came nearer to God by approaching his sacred abode. Christianity teaches that God may be worshipped in any place, and that we are at all times equally near him. Jn 4.20 and following. Acts 17:25. The direction here given that men should pray in contradistinction from the, duties of women, specified in the next verse, may be intended to imply that men should conduct the exercises of public worship. The duties of

women pertain to a different sphere. Comp. 1Timm 2:11,12. Lifting up holy hands. To lift up the hands denotes supplication, as it was a common attitude of prayer to spread abroad the hands towards heaven. Comp. Ps 68:31, Ex 9:29,33, 1Kgs 8:22, 2Chr 6:12,13, Isa 1:16. See also Horace Odes, III. xxii. 1; Ovid, M. ix. 701; Livy, v. 21; Seneca, Ep. 21. "Holy hands" here mean hands that are not defiled by sin, and thai have not been employed for any purpose of iniquity. The idea is, that when men approach God they should do it in a pure and holy manner.

Without wrath. That is, without the intermingling of any evil passion; with a calm, peaceful, benevolent mind. There should be nothing of the spirit of contention; there should be no anger towards others; the suppliant should be at peace with all men. It is impossible for a man to pray with comfort, or to suppose that his prayers will be heard, if he cherishes anger. The following exquisite and oft-quoted passage from Jeremy Taylor, is a more beautiful and striking illustration of the effect of anger in causing our prayers to return unanswered than was probably ever penned by any one else. Nothing could be more true, beautiful, and graphic. "Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend propulsion, defence, displeasure, or revenge. It is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse and a fair conversation; it intends its own object with all the earnestness of perception or activity of design, and a quicker motion of a too warm and distempered blood; it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over; and therefore can never suffer a man to be in a disposition to pray. For prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which

presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, and singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven and rise above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconsistent. Descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the libation and frequent weighing of its wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel." The Return of Prayers, Works vol. i. 638. Ed. Lond. 1835. And doubting. This. word, as used here, does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that we are to come before God without any doubts of our own piety, or in the exercise of perfect faith. The word used (διαλογισμος) means, properly, computation, adjustment of accounts; then reflection, thought; then reasoning, opinion; then debate, contention, strife. Lk 9:46, Mk 9:33,34; Php 2:14. This is the sense evidently in this place. They were not to approach God in prayer in the midst of clamorous disputings and angry contentions. They were not to come When the mind was heated with debate, and irritated by strife for victory. Prayer was to be offered in a calm, serious, sober state of mind, and they who engage in polemical strife, or in warm contention of any kind, are little fitted to unite in the solemn act of addressing God. How often are theologians, when assembled together, so heated by debate, and so anxious for party victory, that they are in no suitable state of mind to pray! How often do even good men, holding different views on the disputed points of religious doctrine, suffer their minds to become so excited, and their temper so ruffled, that they are conscious they are in an unfit state of mind to approach the throne of grace together! That theological debate has gone too far; that strife for victory has become too warm, when the disputants are in such a state of mind that they cannot unite in prayer; when they could not cease their contentions, and with a calm and proper spirit, bow together before the throne of grace.

I will - A word strongly expressing his apostolical authority. Therefore - This particle connects the eighth with the first verse.

That men pray in every place - Public and private. Wherever men are, there prayer should be. Lifting up holy hands - Pure from all known sin. Without wrath - In any kind, against any creature. And every temper or motion of our soul that is not according to love is wrath. And doubting - Which is contrary to faith. And wrath, or unholy actions, or want of faith in him we call upon, are the three grand hinderances of God's hearing our petitions. Christianity consists of faith and love, embracing truth and grace: therefore the sum of our wishes should be, to pray, and live, and die, without any wrath or doubt.

A direction how to pray, 1Ti 2:8. 1. Now, under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, but men must pray every where: no place is amiss for prayer, no place more acceptable to God than another, Joh 4:21. Pray every where. We must pray in our closets, pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or private. 2. It is the will of God that in prayer we should lift up holy hands: Lifting up holy hands, or pure hands, pure from the pollution of sin, washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. I will wash my hands, &c., Ps 26:6. 3. We must pray in charity: Without wrath, or malice, or anger at any person. 4. We must pray in faith without doubting (Jam 1:6), or, as some read it, without disputing, and then it falls under the head of charity.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

The true idea here is, that her attention to her appearance should be such that she will be offensive to no class of persons; such as to show that her mind is supremely fixed on higher and more important things, and such as to interfere with no duty which she owes, and no good which she can do, either by spending her time needlessly in personal adorning, or by lavishing that money for dress which might do good to others, or by neglecting the proprieties of her station, and making herself offensive to others. In fact, this is applicable for any thing that has any form of evil which we all men and women should refrain from it.

The direction in 1Timm 2:9-12, therefore, is to be understood particularly of the proper deportment of females in the duties of public worship. At the same time, the principles laid down are doubtless such as were intended to apply to them in the other situations in life, for if modest apparel is appropriate in the sanctuary, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is here prohibited in dress is wrong there, it would be difficult to show that it is right elsewhere.

And sobriety. The word here used means properly, sanity; then sober-mindedness, moderation of the desires and passions. It is opposed to all that is frivolous, and to all undue excitement of the passions. The idea is, that in their apparel and deportment they should not entrench on the strictest decorum. Doddridge.

It is a poor ambition to decorate a dying body with gold and pearls. It should not be forgotten that the body thus adorned will soon need other habiliments, and will occupy a position where gold and pearls would be a mockery. When the heart is right; when there is true and supreme love for religion, it is usually not difficult to regulate the subject of dress. Costly array. Expensive dress. This is forbidden, for it is foolish; and the money thus employed may be much more profitably used in doing good. "Costly array" includes that which can be ill afforded, and that which is inconsistent with the feeling that the principal ornament is that of the heart.

10 but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good
works.
11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the
man, but to be in silence.
13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.
14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in
the transgression.
15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they
continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

1 Timothy-3

Qualifications of Bishops

1 This *is* a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

Our apostle acquaints Timothy with the dignity, honour, and excellency of the sacred function: He that desireth the office of a bishop, that is, to rule and teach in the church of God, he desireth a good work, that is, honourable employment.

As if our apostle had said, "Know, O Timothy, that as to the office of a bishop, whoever desireth it, doth desire a very great and excellent work; it is not a bare name, title, dignity, a place of honour and command; but a work, a work of vast importance, labour, and difficulty: take heed therefore whom thou dost admit, and of those that are also admitted into the sacred function, to consider the great weight of that important service, to enterprize it with extraordinary dread and caution, looking upon their office not with aspiring but tremendous thoughts:--for who is sufficient for these things?

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Must be blameless. This is a different word (ανεπιληπτος) from that rendered blameless in Lk 1:6, Php 2:15, 3:6, (αμεμπτος) Compare Lk 1:6; Php 3:6. The word here used does not mean that, as a necessary qualification for office, a bishop should be perfect; but that he should be a man against whom no charge of immorality, or of holding false doctrine, is alleged. His conduct should be irreprehensible or irreproachable. Undoubtedly it means that if any charge could be brought against him implying moral obliquity, he is not fit for the office, he should be a man of irreproachable character for truth, honesty, chastity, and general uprightness. The husband of one wife. This need not be understood as requiring that a bishop should be a married man, as Vigilantias, a presbyter in the church at Barcelona in the fourth century, supposed, however desirable, in general, it may be that a minister of the gospel should

be married. But, while this interpretation is manifestly to be excluded as false, there has been much difference of opinion on the question whether the passage means that a minister should not have more than one wife at the same time, or whether it prohibits the marriage of a second wife after the death of the first. On this question the Notes of Bloomfield, Doddridge, and Macknight, may be consulted. That the former is the correct opinion, seems to me to be evident from the following considerations:

(1.) It is the most obvious meaning of the language, and it would doubtless be thus understood by those to whom it was addressed. At a time when polygamy was not uncommon, to say that a man should "have but one wife" would be naturally understood as prohibiting polygamy.

(2.) The marriage of a second wife, after the death of the first, is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as wrong. The marriage of a widow to a second husband is expressly declared to be proper, 1Cor 7:39; and it is not unfair to infer from that permission that it is equally lawful and proper for a man to marry the second time. But if it is lawful for any man, it is right for a minister of the gospel. No reason can be assigned against such marriages in his case, which would not be equally valid in any other. Marriage is as honourable for a minister of the gospel as for any other man, (comp. Heb 13:4; and, as Doddridge has well remarked, "circumstances may be so adjusted that there may be as much reason for a second marriage as for the first, and as little inconvenience of any kind may attend it."

(3.) There was a special propriety in the prohibition, if understood as prohibiting polygamy. It is known that it was extensively practised, and was not regarded as unlawful. Yet one design of the gospel was to restore the marriage relation to its primitive condition; and though it might not have seemed absolutely necessary to require of every man who came into the church to divorce his wives, if he had more than one, yet, in order to fix a brand on this irregular practice, it might have been deemed desirable to require of the ministers of the gospel that they should

have but one wife. Thus the practice of polygamy would gradually come to be regarded as dishonourable and improper, and the example and influence of the ministry would tend to introduce correct views in regard to the nature of this relation. One thing is clear from this passage, that the views of the Papists in regard to the celibacy of the clergy are directly at variance with the Bible. The declaration of Paul in Heb 13:4, is, that "marriage is honourable in all;" and here it is implied that it was proper that a minister should be married. If it were not, why did not Paul prohibit it altogether! Instead of saying that it was improper that a bishop should have more than one wife, why did he not say that it was improper that he should be married at all! Would not a Romanist say so now? Vigilant. This word νηφαλεος occurs only here and in 1Timm 3:11; Tit 2:2. It means, properly, sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; then sober-minded, watchful, circumspect. Robinson. A minister should have a watchful care over his own conduct. He should be on his guard against sin in any form.

Sober. σωφρονα. Properly, a man of a sound mind; one who follows sound reason, and who is not under the control of passion. The idea is, that he should have his desires and passions well regulated. Perhaps the word prudent would come nearer to the meaning of the apostle than any single word which we have. Of good behaviour. Marg., modest. Coverdale renders it, mannerly. The most correct rendering, according to the modern use of language, would be, that he should be a gentleman. He should not be slovenly in his appearance, or rough and boorish in his manners. He should not do violence to the usages of refined intercourse, nor be unfit to appear respectably in the most refined circles of society. Inattention to personal neatness, and to the rules which regulate refined intercourse, is indicative neither of talent, learning, nor religion; and though they are occasionally--not often--connected with talent, learning, and religion, yet they are never the fruit of either, and are always a disgrace to those who exhibit such incivility and boorishness, for such men ought to know better. A minister of the gospel should be a finished gentleman in his manners, and there is no excuse for him if he is not. His religion, if

he has any, is adapted to make him such. He has usually received such an education as ought to make him such, and in all cases ought to have had such a training. He is admitted into the best society, and has an opportunity of becoming familiar with the laws of refined intercourse. He should be an example and a pattern in all that goes to promote the welfare of mankind, and there are few things so easily acquired that are fitted to do this, as refinement and gentility of manners. No man can do good, on the whole, or in the "long run," by disregarding the rules of refined intercourse; and, other things being equal, the refined, courteous, polite gentleman in the ministry, will always do more good than he who neglects the rules of good-breeding.

Given to hospitality. This is often enjoined on all Christians as a duty of religion. For the reasons of this, and the nature of the duty, Rom 12:3, Heb 13:2. It was a special duty of the ministers of religion, as they were to be examples of every Christian virtue. Apt to teach. Gr., Didactic; that is, capable of instructing, or qualified for the office of a teacher of religion. As the principal business of a preacher of the gospel is to teach, or to communicate to his fellowmen the knowledge of the truth, the necessity of this qualification is obvious. No one should be allowed to enter the ministry who is not qualified to impart instruction to others on the doctrines and duties of religion; and no one should feel that he ought to continue in the ministry, who has not industry, and self-denial, and the love of study enough to lead him constantly to endeavour to increase in knowledge, that he may be qualified to teach others. A man who would teach a people, must himself keep in advance of them on the subjects on which he would instruct them.

3 not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient,
not a brawler, not covetous;

Not greedy of filthy lucre. Not contentious or avaricious. Gr., Not desirous of base gain. The desire of this is condemned everywhere in the New Testament; but it is especially the duty of a minister of the gospel to be free from it. He has a right to a support, 1Cor 9:1; and following, but there is nothing that more certainly paralyzes the usefulness of a minister of the gospel than the love of money.

There is an instinctive feeling in the human bosom that such a man ought to be actuated by a nobler and a purer principle. As avarice, moreover, is the great sin of the world--the sin that sways more hearts, and does more to hinder the progress of the gospel, than all others combined--it is important in the highest degree that the minister of religion should be an example of what men should be, and that he, by his whole life, should set his face against that which is the main obstruction to the progress of that gospel which he is appointed to preach.

But patient. Modest, mild, gentle. See the word (Gr.) in Php 4:5, Tit 3:2, Jas 3:17, 1Pet 2:18, where it is rendered gentle. The word means that the minister of the gospel should be a man of mild and kind demeanour, such as his Master was. Not a brawler. Comp. 2Ti 2:24. That is, he should not be a man given to contention, or apt to take up a quarrel. The Greek is, literally, Not disposed to fight. Not covetous, Gr., Not a lover of silver; that is, of money. A man should not be put into the ministry who is characteristically a lover of money. Such a one, no matter what his talents may be, has no proper qualification for the office, and will do more harm than good.

4 one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

One that ruleth well his own house. This implies that a minister of the gospel would be, and ought to be, a married man. It is everywhere in the New Testament supposed that he would be a man who could be an example in all the relations of life. The position which he occupies in the church has a strong resemblance to the relation which a father sustains to his household; and a qualification to govern a family well, would be an evidence of a qualification to preside properly in the church. It is probable that, in the early Christian church, ministers were not unfrequently taken from those of mature life, and who were, at the time, at the head of families; and, of course, such would be men who had had an opportunity of showing that they had this qualification for the office. Though, however, this cannot be insisted on now as a previous qualification for the office, yet it is still true that, if he has a family, it is a necessary qualification, and that a man in the

ministry should be one who governs his own house well. A want of this will always be a hinderance to extensive usefulness.

5 (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

For if a man know not how to rule. This is a beautiful and striking argument. A church resembles a family. It is, indeed, larger, and there is a greater variety of dispositions in it than there is in a family. The authority of a minister of the gospel in a church is also less absolute than that of a father. But still there is a striking resemblance. The church is made up of an assemblage of brothers and sisters. They are banded together for the same purposes, and have a common object to aim at. They have common feelings and common wants. They have sympathy, like a family, with each other in their distresses and afflictions. The government of the church also is designed to be paternal. It should be felt that he who presides over it, has the feelings of a father; that he loves all the members of the great family; that he has no prejudices, no partialities, no selfish aims to gratify. Now, if a man cannot govern his own family well; if he is severe, partial, neglectful, or tyrannical at home, how can he be expected to take charge of the more numerous "household of faith" with proper views and feelings? If, with all the natural and strong ties of affection, which bind a father to his own children; if, when they are few comparatively in number, and where his eye is constantly upon them, he is unable to govern them aright, how can he be expected to preside in a proper manner over the larger household, where he will be bound with comparatively feebler ties, and where he will be exposed more to the influence of passion, and where he will have a much less constant opportunity of supervision? Confucius, as quoted by Doddridge, has a sentiment strikingly resembling that before us: "It is impossible, that he who knows not how to govern and reform his own family, should rightly govern and reform a people." We may remark, also, in this verse, a delicate and beautiful use of words by the apostle, to prevent the possibility of misapprehension. While he institutes a comparison between the government of a family and that of the church, he guards against the possibility of its being supposed that he would countenance arbitrary authority in the church, even such authority as a father must of necessity employ in his own family.

Hence he uses different words, he speaks of the father as 'ruling' over his own family, or presiding over it --προστηναι; he describes the minister of religion as having a tender care for the church --επιμεληθεται.

6 not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Not a novice. Marg., one newly come to the faith. The Greek word, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, means, properly, that which is newly planted. Thus it would mean a plant that was not strong, or not fitted to bear the severity of storms; that had not as yet struck its roots deep, and could not resist the fierceness of a cold blast. Then the word comes to mean a new convert; one who has had little opportunity to test his own faith, or to give evidence to others that he would be faithful to the trust committed to him. The word does not refer so much to one who is young in years, as one who is young in faith. Still, all the reasons which apply against introducing a very recent convert into the ministry, will apply commonly with equal force against introducing one young in years. Lest being lifted up with pride. We are not to suppose that this is the only reason against introducing a recent convert into the ministry, but it is a sufficient reason. He would be likely to be elated by being intrusted at once with the highest office in the church, and by the commendations and flattery which he might there receive. No condition is wholly proof against this; but he is much less likely to be injured who has had much experience of the depravity of his own heart, and whose mind has been deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel. He fall into the condemnation of the devil. That is, the same kind of condemnation which the devil fell into; to wit, condemnation on account of pride. It is here intimated, that the cause of the apostasy of Satan was Pride--a cause which is as likely to have been the true one as any other. Who can tell but it may have been produced by some new honour which was conferred on him in heaven, and that his virtue was not found sufficient for the untried circumstances in which he was placed? Much of the apostasy from eminent virtue in this world, arises from this cause; and possibly the case of Satan may have been the most signal instance of this kind which has occurred in the universe. The idea of Paul is, that a young convert should not suddenly be raised

to an exalted station in the church. Who can doubt the wisdom of this direction? The word rendered lifted up, (τυφωθεις,) is from a verb which means, to smoke, to fume, to surround with smoke; then to inflate--as a bladder is with air; and then to be conceited or proud; that is, to be like a bladder filled, not with a solid substance, but with air

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without. Who are without the church; that is, of those who are not Christians. This includes, of course, all classes of those who are not Christians--heathens, infidels, Jews, moral men, and scoffers. The idea is, that he must have a fair reputation with them for integrity of character. His life must be in their view upright must not be addicted to anything which they regard as inconsistent with good morals. His deportment must be such that they shall regard it as not inconsistent with his profession. He must be true, and just, and honest in his dealings with his fellow-men, and so live that they cannot say that he has wronged them. lie must not give occasion for scandal or reproach in his intercourse with the other sex, but must be regarded as a man of a pure life and of a holy walk. The reason for this injunction is too obvious. It is his business to endeavour to do such men good, and to persuade them to become Christians. But no minister of the gospel can possibly do such men good, unless they regard him as an upright and honest man. No matter how he preaches or prays; no matter how orthodox, learned, or apparently devout he may be, all his efforts will be in vain unless they regard him as a man of incorruptible integrity. If they hate religion themselves, they insist justly that since he has professed it, he shall be governed by its principles; or if they feel its importance, they will not be influenced to embrace it by a man that they regard as hypocritical and impure. Go to a man whom you have defrauded, or who regards you as having done or attempted wrong to any other one, and talk to him about the necessity of religion, and he will instinctively say, that he does not want a religion which will not make its professor true, honest, and pure. It is impossible, therefore, for a minister to over-estimate the importance of having a fair character in the view of the world, and no man should be

introduced into the ministry, or sustained in it, who has not a fair reputation. Col 4:5; 1Thes 4:12. Lest he fall into reproach. That is, in such a way as to bring dishonour on the ministerial character. His life will be such as to give men occasion to reproach the cause of religion. And the snare of the devil. The snare which the devil lays to entrap and ruin the ministers of the gospel and all good men. The snare to which reference is here made, is that of blasting the character and influence of the minister of the gospel. The idea is, that Satan lays this snare so to entangle him as to secure this object, and the means which he uses is the vigilance and suspicion of those who are out of the church. If there is anything of this kind in the life of a minister which they can make use of, they will be ready to do it. Hence the necessity, on his part, of an upright and blameless life. Satan is constantly aiming at this thing; the world is watching for it; and if the minister has any propensity which is not in entire accordance with honesty, Satan will take advantage of it, and lead him into the snare.

Qualifications of Deacons

8 Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not double-tongued, not given
to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;
9 holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.
10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a
deacon, being *found* blameless.

the mystery of the faith—holding the faith, which to the natural man remains a mystery, but which has been revealed by the Spirit to them (Ro 16:25; 1Co 2:7-10), in a pure conscience (1Ti 1:5, 19). ("Pure," that is, in which nothing base or foreign is intermixed [TITTMANN]). Though deacons were not ordinarily called on to preach (Stephen and Philip are not exceptions to this, since it was as evangelists, rather than as deacons, they preached), yet as being office-bearers in the Church, and having much intercourse with all the members, they especially needed to have this characteristic, which every Christian ought to have. On the word mystery, 1Cor 2:7. It means that which had been concealed, or hidden, but which was now revealed. The word faith, here, is synonymous with the gospel; and the sense is, that he should hold firmly the great

doctrines of the Christian religion, which had been so long. concealed from men, but which were now revealed. The reason is obvious. Though not a preacher, yet his influence and example would be great, and a man who held material error, ought not to be in the office. In a pure conscience. A mere orthodox faith was not all that was necessary, for it was possible that a man might be professedly firm in the belief of the truths of revelation, and yet be corrupt at heart.

And let these also be first proved. That is, tried or tested in regard to the things which were the proper qualifications for the office. This does not mean that they were to be employed as preachers, but that they were to undergo a proper trial in regard to their fitness for the office which they were to fill. They were not to be put into it without any opportunity of knowing what they were. It should be ascertained that they were grave, serious, temperate, trustworthy men; men who were sound in the faith, and who would not dishonour the office. It is not said here, that there should be a formal trial, as if they were candidates for this office; but the meaning is, that they should have had an opportunity of making their character known, and should have gained such respect for their piety, and their other qualifications, that there would be reason to believe that they would perform the functions of the office well. Thus, in Acts 6:3, when deacons were first appointed, the church was directed to "look out seven men of honest report," who might be appointed to the office.

11 Even so *must their* wives *be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Even so must their wives be grave. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Grotius, Bloomfield, and many others, suppose that by the word wives, here, γυναικας, the apostle means deaconesses. Clarke supposes that it refers to women in general. The reason assigned for supposing that it does not refer to the wives of deacons, as such, is, that nothing is said of the qualifications of the wives of bishops --a matter of as much importance as that of the character of the wife of a deacon; and that it cannot be supposed that the apostle would

specify the one, without some allusion to the other. But that the common interpretation, which makes it refer to the wives of deacons, as such, is to be adhered to, seems to me to be clear. For,

(1,) it is the obvious and natural interpretation.

(2.) The word here used--wives--is never used of itself to denote deaconesses.

(3.) If the apostle had meant deaconesses, it would have been easy to express it without ambiguity. Comp. Rom 16:1.

(4.) What is here mentioned is important, whether the same thing is mentioned of bishops or not.

(5.) In the qualifications of bishops, the apostle had made a statement respecting his family, which made any specification about the particular members of the family unnecessary. He was to be one who presided in a proper manner over his own house, or who had a well-regulated family, 1Timm 3:4,5. By a comparison of this passage, also, with Tit 2:3,4, which bears a strong resemblance to this, it would seem that it was supposed that the deacons would be taken from those who were advanced in life, and that their wives would have some superintendence over the younger females of the church. It was, therefore, especially important that they should be persons whose influence would be known to be decidedly favourable to piety. No one can doubt that the character of a woman may be such, that it is not desirable that her husband should be an officer in the church. A bad woman ought not to be intrusted with any additional power or influence. Grave. 1Timm 3:4. Not slanderers. Comp. Tit 2:3, "Not false accusers." The Greek word is διαβολους--devils. It is used here in its original and proper sense, to denote a calumniator, slanderer, or accuser. It occurs in the same sense in 2Ti 3:3, Tit 2:3. Elsewhere in the New Testament, it is uniformly rendered devil, Mt 4:1; and is given to Satan, the prince of the fallen angels, (Mt 9:34,) by way of eminence, as the accuser. Comp. Job 1:6, and following; Rev 12:10. Here it means that they should not be women who were in

the habit of calumniating others, or aspersing their character. Mingling as they would with the church, and having an opportunity to claim acquaintance with many, it would be in their power, if they chose, to do great injury to the character Of others. Sober. 1Timm 3:2. Faithful in all things. To their husbands, to their families, to the church, to the Saviour.

13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

A good degree. The word here used βαθμος occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, a step, as of a stair; and the fair meaning is that of going up higher, or taking an additional step of dignity, honour, or standing. So far as the word is concerned, it may mean either an advance in officer in dignity, in respectability, or in influence. It cannot certainly be inferred that the apostle referred to a higher grade of office; for all that the word essentially conveys is, that, by exercising this office well, a deacon would secure additional respectability and influence in the church. Still, it is possible that those who had performed the duties of this office well were appointed to be preachers. They may have shown so much piety, prudence, good sense, and ability to preside over the church, that it was judged proper that they should be advanced to the office of bishops or pastors of the churches. Such a course would not be unnatural. This is, however, far from teaching that the office of a deacon is a subordinate office, with a view to an ascent to a higher grade. And great boldness in the faith. The word here rendered boldness properly refers to boldness in speaking. See it explained in the Acts 4:13; 2Cor 3:12; Php 1:20. But the word is commonly used to denote boldness of any kind--openness, frankness, confidence, assurance. Jn 7:13,26, Mk 8:32, 2Cor 7:4. As it is here connected with faith--"boldness in the faith"--it means, evidently, not so much public speaking, as a manly and independent exercise of faith in Christ. The sense is, that by the faithful performance of the duties of the office of a deacon, and by the kind of experience which a man would have in that office, he would establish a character of firmness in the faith, which would show that he was a decided Christian. This passage, therefore, cannot be fairly used to prove that the deacon was a preacher, or

that he belonged to a grade of ministerial office from which he was regularly to rise to that of a presbyter.

The Mystery of Our Religion

14 These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee
shortly:
15 but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to
behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living
God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

But if I tarry long. Paul appears to have been uncertain how long circumstances would require him to be absent. He expected to return, but it was possible that his hope of returning soon would be disappointed. That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself. That is, that he might have just views about settling the affairs of the church. In the house of God. This does not mean in a place of public worship, nor does it refer to propriety of deportment there. It refers rather to the church as a body of believers, and to intercourse with them. The church is called the "house of God," because it is that in which he dwells. Formerly, his peculiar residence was in the temple at Jerusalem; now that the temple is destroyed, it is in the church of Christ, among his people. Which is the church of the living God. This seems to have been added to impress the mind of Timothy with the solemn nature of the duty which he was to perform. What he did pertained to the honour and welfare of the church of the living God, and hence he should feel the importance of a correct deportment, and of a right administration of its affairs. The pillar and ground of the truth. There has been no little diversity of opinion among critics whether this phrase is to be taken in connection with the preceding, meaning that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth; or whether it is to be taken in connection with what follows, meaning that the principal support of the truth was the doctrine there referred to--that God was manifest in the flesh. Bloomfield remarks on this: "It is surprising that any who have any knowledge or experience in Greek literature could tolerate so harsh a construction as that which arises from the latter method." The more natural interpretation

certainly is, to refer it to the former; and this is supported by the consideration that it would then fall in with the object of the apostle. His design here seems to be, to impress Timothy with a deep sense of the importance of correct conduct in relation to the church; of the responsibility of those who presided over it; and of the necessity of care and caution in the selection of proper officers. To do this, he reminded him that the truth of God that revealed truth which he had given to save the world--was intrusted to the church; that it was designed to preserve it pure, to defend it, and to transmit it to future times; and that, therefore, every one to whom the administration of the affairs of the church was intrusted, should engage in this duty with a deep conviction of his responsibility. On the construction of the passage, Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, and Clarke, may be consulted. The word "pillar" means a column, such as that by which a building is supported, and then any firm prop or support. Gal 2:9, Rev 3:12. If it refers to the church here, it means that that is the support of the truth, as a pillar is of a building. It sustains it amidst the war of elements, the natural tendency to fall, and the assaults which may be made on it, and preserves it when it would otherwise tumble into ruin. Thus it is with the church. It is intrusted with the business of maintaining the truth, of defending it from the assaults of error, and of transmitting it to future times. The truth is, in fact, upheld in the world by the church. The people of the world feel no interest in defending it, and it is to the church of Christ that it is owing that it is preserved and transmitted from age to age. The word rendered "ground"--εδραιωμα--means properly, a basis, or foundation. The figure here is evidently taken from architecture, as the use of the word pillar is. The proper meaning of the one expression would be, that truth is supported by the church, as an edifice is by a pillar; of the other, that the truth rests on the church, as a house does on its foundation. It is that which makes it fixed, stable, permanent; that on which it securely stands amidst storms and tempests; that which renders it firm when systems of error are swept away as a house that is built on the sand. Comp. Mt 7:24; Mt 7:25-27. The meaning then is, that the stability of the truth on earth is dependent on the church. It is owing to the fact that the church is itself founded on a rock, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, that no storms of persecution can

overthrow it, that the truth is preserved from age to age. Other systems of religion are swept away; other opinions change; other forms of doctrine vanish; but the knowledge of the great system of redemption is preserved on earth unshaken, because the church is preserved, and because its foundations cannot be moved. This does not refer, I suppose, to creeds and confessions, or to the decisions of synods and councils; but to the living spirit of truth and piety in the church itself. As certainly as the church continues to live, so certain it will be that the truth of God will be perpetuated among men.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Learn, That our holy faith, our Christian religion, is a mystery, a great mystery, an unquestionable mystery, a mystery of godliness, a mystery hidden in God, Eph 3:2; hidden in Christ, Col 3:3; hidden in the scriptures, Rev 3:18: hidden in and under the types and shadows of the ceremonial law; nay, hidden even in the gospel itself, for we know but in part; and if Christianity be a mystery, then the knowledge of it is the effect of divine revelation and supernatural discovery, not to be known by the light or benefit of nature, but God reveals it to us by his Spirit.

And, without controversy. Undeniably, certainly. The object of the apostle is to say that the truth which he was about to state admitted of no dispute. Great is the mystery. On the meaning of the word mystery, 1Cor 2:7. The word means that which had been hidden or concealed. The meaning here is not that the proposition which he affirms was mysterious, in the sense that it was unintelligible, or impossible to be understood; but that the doctrine respecting the incarnation and the work of the Messiah, which had been so long kept hidden from the world, was a subject of the deepest importance. This passage, therefore, should not be used to prove that there is anything unintelligible, or anything that surpasses human comprehension, in that doctrine, whatever may be the truth on that point; but that the doctrine which he now proceeds to state, and which had been so long concealed from mankind, was of the utmost

consequence. Of godliness. The word godliness means, properly, piety, reverence or religiousness. It is used here, however, for the gospel scheme, to wit, that which the apostle proceeds to state. This "mystery" which had "been hidden from ages and from generations, and which was now manifest," Col 1:26, was the great doctrine on which depended religion everywhere, or was that which constituted the Christian scheme.

God. Probably there is no passage in the New Testament which has excited so much discussion among critics as this, and none in reference to which it is so difficult to determine the true reading. It is the only one, it is believed, in which the microscope has been employed to determine the lines of the letters used in a manuscript; and, after all that has been done to ascertain the exact truth in regard to it, still the question remains undecided. It is not the object of these Notes to enter into the examination of questions of this nature. A full investigation may be found in Wetstein. The question which has excited so much controversy is, whether the original Greek was θεος, God, or whether it was ος, who, or ο, which. The controversy has turned, to a considerable degree, on the reading in the Codex Alexandrinus; and a remark or two on the method in which the manuscripts of the New Testament were written, will show the true nature of the controversy. Greek manuscripts were formerly written entirely in capital letters, and without breaks or intervals between the words, and without accents. See a full description of the methods of writing the New Testament, in an article by Prof. Stuart in Dr. Robinson's Bibliotheca Sacra, No. 2, pp. 254, seq. The small, cursive Greek letters which are now used, were not commonly employed in transcribing the New Testament, if at all, until the ninth or tenth centuries. It was a common thing to abridge or contract words in the manuscript. Thus, πρ would be used for, πατηρ, father; κς for κυριος, Lord; θς for θεος, God, etc. The words thus contracted were designated by a faint line or dash over them. In this place, therefore, if the original were θX, standing for θεος, God, and the line in the θ and the faint line over it, were obliterated from any cause, it would be easily mistaken for ος, who. To ascertain which of these is the true reading, has been the great question; and it is with reference to this that the microscope has been resorted to in the

examination of the Alexandrian manuscript. It is now generally admitted that the faint line over the word has been added by some later hand, though not improbably by one who found that the line was nearly obliterated, and who meant merely to restore it. Whether the letter O was originally written with a line within it, making the reading, God, it is now said to be impossible to determine, in consequence of the manuscript at this place having become so much worn by frequent examination. The Vulgate and the Syriac read it, who, or which. The Vulgate is, "Great is the sacrament of piety which was manifested in the flesh." The Syriac, "Great is the mystery of godliness, that he was manifested in the flesh." The probability in regard to the correct reading here, as it seems to me, is, that the word, as originally written, was θεος --God. At the same time, however, the evidence is not so clear that it can be properly used in an argument. But the passage is not necessary to prove the doctrine which is affirmed, on the supposition that that is the correct reading. The same truth is abundantly taught elsewhere. Comp. Mt 1:23, Jn 1:14.

Was manifest. Marg., Manifested. The meaning is, appeared in the flesh. In the flesh. In human nature. See this explained Rom 1:3. The expression here looks as though the true reading of the much disputed word was God. It could not have been, it would seem evident, o, which, referring to "mystery," for how could a 'mystery'" be manifested in the flesh? Nor could it be ος, who, unless that should refer to one who was more than a man; for how absurd would it be to say that a "a man was manifested, or appeared in the flesh!" How else could a man appear? The phrase here means that God appeared in human form, or with human nature; and this is declared to be the "great" truth so long concealed from human view, but now revealed as constituting the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The expressions which follow in this verse refer to God as thus manifested in the flesh; to the Saviour as he appeared on earth, regarded as a divine and human Being. It was the fact that he thus appeared and sustained this character, which made the things which are immediately specified so remarkable, and so worthy of attention. Justified in the Spirit. That is, the incarnate Person above referred

to; the Redeemer, regarded as God and man. The word Spirit here, it is evident, refers to the Holy Spirit; for

(1.) it is not possible to attach any intelligible idea to the phrase, "he was justified by his own spirit, or soul,"

(2.) as the Holy Spirit performed so important a part in the work of Christ, it is natural to suppose there would be some allusion here to him; and

(3.) as the "angels" are mentioned here as having been with him, and as the Holy Spirit is often mentioned in connection with him, it is natural to suppose that there would be some allusion to Him here. The word justified, here, is not used in the sense in which it is when applied to Christians, but in its more common signification. It means to indicate, and the sense is, that he was shown to be the Son of God by the agency of the Holy Ghost; he was thus vindicated from the charges alleged against him. The Holy Spirit furnished the evidence that he was the Son of God, or justified his claims. Thus he descended on him at his baptism, Mt 3:16; he was sent To convince the world of sin, because it did not believe on him, Jn 16:8,9; the Saviour cast out devils by him, Mt 12:28; the Spirit was given to him without measure, Jn 3:34; and the Spirit was sent down, in accordance with his promise, to convert the hearts of men, Acts 2:33. All the manifestations of God to him; all the power of working miracles by his agency; all the influences imparted to the man Christ Jesus, endowing him with such a wisdom as man never had before, may be regarded as an attestation of the Holy Ghost to the divine mission of the Lord Jesus, and of course as a vindication from all the charges against him. In like manner, the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and his agency in the conversion of every sinner, prove the same thing, and furnish the grand argument in vindication of the Redeemer that he was sent from God. To this the apostle refers as a part of the glorious truth of the Christian scheme now revealed--the "mystery of religion;" as a portion of the amazing records, the memory of which the church was to preserve as connected with the redemption of the world. Seen of angels. They were attendants on his ministry, and came to him in times of distress,

peril, and want. Comp. Lk 2:9-13, 22:43; Lk 24:4, Heb 1:6, Mt 4:11. They felt an interest in him and his work, and they gladly came to him in his sorrows and troubles. The design of the apostle is to give an impressive view of the grandeur and glory of that work which attracted the attention of the heavenly hosts, and which drew them from the skies that they might proclaim his advent, sustain him in his temptations, witness his crucifixion, and watch over him in the tomb. The work of Christ, though despised by men, excited the deepest interest in heaven. Comp. 1Pet 1:12. Preached unto the Gentiles. This is placed by the apostle among the "great" things which constituted the "mystery" of religion. The meaning is, that it was a glorious truth that salvation might be, and should be, proclaimed to all mankind, and that this was a part of the important truths made known in the gospel. Elsewhere this is called, by way of eminence, "the mystery of the gospel;" that is, the grand truth, which had not been known until the coming of the Saviour. Eph 6:19; Col 1:26, Col 1:27; Col 4:3. Before his coming, a wall of partition had divided the Jewish and Gentile world. The Jews regarded the rest of mankind as excluded from the covenant mercies of God, and it was one of the principal stumbling-blocks in their way, in regard to the gospel, that it proclaimed that all the race was on a level, that that middle wall of partition was broken down, and that salvation might now be published to all men. Comp. Acts 22:21, Eph 2:14,15, Rom 3:22, 10:11-20. The Jew had no peculiar advantage for salvation by being a Jew; the Gentile was not excluded from the hope of salvation. The plan of redemption was adapted to man as such--without regard to his complexion, country, customs, or laws. The blood of Christ was shed for all, and wherever a human being could be found salvation might be freely offered him. This is a glorious truth; and, taken in all its bearings, and in reference to the views which then prevailed, and which have always more or less prevailed, about the distinctions made among men by caste and rank, there is scarcely any more glorious truth connected with the Christian revelation, or one which will exert a wider influence in promoting the welfare of man. It is a great privilege to be permitted to proclaim that all men in one respect--and that the most important--are on a level; that they are all equally the objects of the Divine compassion; that Christ died for one as really as for another; that

birth, wealth, elevated rank, or beauty of complexion, contribute nothing to the salvation of one man; and that poverty, a darker skin, slavery, or a meaner rank, do nothing to exclude another from the favour of his Maker: Believed on in the world. This also is mentioned among the "great" things which constitute the mystery of revealed religion. But why is this regarded as so remarkable as to be mentioned thus? In point of importance, how can it be mentioned in connection with the fact that God was manifest in the flesh; that he was vindicated by the Holy Ghost; that he was an object of intense interest to angelic hosts; and that his coming had broken down the walls which had separated the world, and placed them now on a level? I answer, perhaps the following circumstances may have induced the apostle to place this among the remarkable things evincing the greatness of this truth:

(1.) The strong improbability arising from the greatness of the "mystery," that the doctrines respecting the incarnate Deity would be believed. Such is the incomprehensible nature of many of the truths connected with the incarnation; so strange does it seem that God would become incarnate; so amazing that he should appear in human flesh and blood, and that the incarnate Son of God should die, that it might be regarded as a wonderful thing that such a doctrine had in fact obtained credence in the world. But it was a glorious truth that all the natural improbabilities in the case had been overcome, and that men had accredited the announcement.

(2.) The strong improbability that his message would be believed, arising from the wickedness of the human heart. Man, in all his history, had shown a strong reluctance to believe any message from God, or any truth whatever revealed by him. The Jews had rejected his prophets, and put them to death, Mt 23, Acts 7, and had at last put his own Son--their Messiah--to death. Man everywhere had shown his strong inclination to unbelief. There is in the human soul no elementary principle or germ of faith in God. Every man is an unbeliever by nature--an infidel first, a Christian afterwards; an infidel as he comes into the world; a believer only as he is made so by grace. The apostle, therefore, regarded it as a glorious fact that the message respecting the Saviour had been believed in the world.

It overcame such a strong and universal reluctance to confide in God, that it showed that there was more than human power in operation to overcome this reluctance.

(3.) The extent to which this had been done may have been a reason why he thought it worthy of the place which he gives it here. It had been embraced, not by a few, but by thousands in all lands where the gospel had been published; and it was proof of the truth of the doctrine, and of the great power of God, that such high mysteries as those relating to redemption, and so much opposed to the natural feelings of the human heart, should have been embraced by so many. The same thing occurs now. The gospel makes its way against the native incredulity of the world, and every new convert is an additional demonstration that it is from God, and a new illustration of the greatness of this mystery. Received up into glory. To heaven. Comp. Jn 17:5. Acts 1:9. This is mentioned as among the "great," or remarkable things pertaining to "godliness," or the Christian revelation, because it was an event which had not elsewhere occurred, and was the crowning grandeur of the work of Christ. It was an event that was fitted to excite the deepest interest in heaven itself. No event of more importance has ever occurred in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, than the re-ascension of the triumphant Son of God to glory, after having accomplished the redemption of a world.

But what is the truth which the churches and ministers are the pillars and grounds of? He tells us (1Ti 3:16) that without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. The learned Camero joins this with what goes before, and then it runs thus: "The pillar and ground of the truth, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." He supposes this mystery to be the pillar, &c. Observe,

(1.) Christianity is a mystery, a mystery that could not have been found out by reason or the light of nature, and which cannot be comprehended by reason, because it is above reason, though not contrary thereto. It is a mystery, not of philosophy or speculation; but of godliness, designed to promote godliness; and herein it exceeds all the mysteries of the Gentiles. It is also a revealed

mystery, not shut up and sealed; and it does not cease to be a mystery because now in part revealed. But,

(2.) What is the mystery of godliness? It is Christ; and here are six things concerning Christ, which make up the mystery of godliness.

[1.] That he is God manifest in the flesh: God was manifest in the flesh. This proves that he is God, the eternal Word, that was made flesh and was manifest in the flesh. When God was to be manifested to man he was pleased to manifest himself in the incarnation of his own Son: The Word was made flesh, Joh 1:14.

[2.] He is justified in the Spirit. Whereas he was reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, he was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all the calumnies with which he was loaded. He was made sin for us, and was delivered for our offences; but, being raised again, he was justified in the Spirit; that is, it was made to appear that his sacrifice was accepted, and so he rose again for our justification, as he was delivered for our offences, Ro 4:25. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1Pe 3:18.

[3.] He was seen of angels. They worshipped him (Heb 1:6); they attended his incarnation, his temptation, his agony, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; this is much to his honour, and shows what a mighty interest he had in the upper world, that angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels.

[4.] He is preached unto the Gentiles. This is a great part of the mystery of godliness, that Christ was offered to the Gentiles a Redeemer and Saviour; that whereas, before, salvation was of the Jews, the partition-wall was now taken down, and the Gentiles were taken in. I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, Ac 13:47.

[5.] That he was believed on in the world, so that he was not preached in vain. Many of the Gentiles welcomed the gospel which the Jews rejected. Who would have thought that the world, which lay in wickedness, would believe in the Son of God, would take him

to be their Saviour who was himself crucified at Jerusalem? But, notwithstanding all the prejudices they laboured under, he was believed on, &c.

[6.] He was received up into glory, in his ascension. This indeed was before he was believed on in the world; but it is put last, because it was the crown of his exaltation, and because it is not only his ascension that is meant, but his sitting at the right hand of God, where he ever lives, making intercession, and has all power, both in heaven and earth, and because, in the apostasy of which he treats in the following chapter, his remaining in heaven would be denied by those who pretend to bring him down on their altars in the consecrated wafers.

Observe, First, He who was manifest in flesh was God, really and truly God, God by nature, and not only so by office, for this makes it to be a mystery. Secondly, God was manifest in flesh, real flesh. Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, Heb 2:14. And, what is more amazing, he was manifest in the flesh after all flesh had corrupted his way, though he himself was holy from the womb. Thirdly, Godliness is a mystery in all its parts and branches, from the beginning to the end, from Christ's incarnation to his ascension. Fourthly, It being a great mystery, we should rather humbly adore it, and piously believe it, than curiously pry into it, or be too positive in our explications of it and determinations about it, further than the holy scriptures have revealed it to us.

1 Timothy-4

Prediction of Apostasy

Study it attentively, repeatedly and slowly

In view of the instructions of this chapter, we may make the following remarks:--

1 The word bishop in the New Testament never means what is now commonly understood by it--a Prelate. It does not denote here, or anywhere else in the New Testament, one who has charge over a diocese composed of a certain district of country, embracing a number of churches with their clergy.

2. There are not "three orders" of clergy in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, in this chapter, expressly designates the characteristics of those who should have charge of the church, but mentions only two--"bishops" and "deacons." The former are ministers of the word, having charge of the spiritual interests of the church; the other are deacons, of whom there is no evidence that they were appointed to preach.--There is no "third" order. There is no allusion to any one who was to be "superior" to the "bishops" and "deacons." As the apostle Paul was expressly giving instructions in regard to the organization of the church, such an omission is unaccountable if he supposed there was to be an order of "prelates" in the church. Why is there no allusion to them? Why is there no mention of their qualifications? If Timothy was himself a prelate, was he to have nothing to do in transmitting the office to others? Were there no peculiar qualifications required in such an order of men which it would be proper to mention? Would it not be respectful, at least, in Paul to have made some allusion to such an office, if Timothy himself held it?

3. There is only one order of preachers in the church. The qualifications of that order are specified with great minuteness and particularity, as well as beauty, 1Timm 3:2-7. No man really needs to know more of the qualifications for this office than could be learned from a prayerful study of this passage.

4. A man who enters the ministry ought to have high qualifications, 1Timm 3:2-7. No man ought, under any pretence, to be put into the ministry who has not the qualifications here specified. Nothing is gained in any department of human labour, by appointing incompetent persons to fill it. A farmer gains nothing by employing a man on his farm who has no proper qualifications for his business; a carpenter, a shoemaker, or a blacksmith, gains nothing by

employing a man who knows nothing about his trade; and a neighbourhood gains nothing by employing a man as a teacher of a school who has no qualifications to teach, or who has a bad character. Such a man would do more mischief on a farm, or in a workshop, or in a school, than all the good which he could do would compensate. And so it is in the ministry. The true object is not to increase the number of ministers, it is to increase the number of those who are qualified for their work, and if a man has not the qualifications laid down by the inspired apostle, he had better seek some other calling.

5. The church is the guardian of the truth, 1Timm 3:15. It is appointed to preserve it pure, and to transmit it to future ages. The world is dependent on it for any just views of truth. The church has the power, and is intrusted with the duty, of preserving on earth a just knowledge of God and of eternal things; of the way of salvation; of the requirements of pure morality:--to keep up the knowledge of that truth which tends to elevate society and to save man. It is intrusted with the Bible, to preserve uncorrupted, and to transmit to distant ages and lands. It is bound to maintain and assert the truth in its creeds and confessions of faith. And it is to preserve the truth by the holy lives of its members, and to show in their walk what is the appropriate influence of truth on the soul. Whatever religious truth there is now on the earth, has been thus preserved and transmitted, and it still devolves on the church to bear the truth of God on to future times and to diffuse it abroad to distant lands.

6. The closing verse of this chapter 1Timm 3:16 gives us a most elevated view of the plan of salvation, and of its grandeur and glory. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to condense more interesting and sublime thought into so narrow a compass as this. The great mystery of the incarnation; the interest of angelic beings in the events of redemption; the effect of the gospel on the heathen world; the tendency of the Christian religion to break down every barrier among men, and to place all the race on a level; its power in overcoming the unbelief of mankind; and the re-ascension of the Son of God to heaven, present a series of most wonderful facts to our contemplation. These things are found in no other system of

religion, and these are worthy of the profound attention of every human being. The manifestation of God in the flesh! What a thought! It was worthy of the deepest interest among the angels, and it claims the attention of men, for it was for men and not for angels that he thus appeared in human form. Comp. 1Pet 1:12.

7. How strange it is that man feels no more interest in these things! God was manifest in the flesh for his salvation, but he does not regard it. Angels looked upon it with wonder; but man, for whom he came, feels little interest in his advent or his work? The Christian religion has broken down the barrier among nations, and has proclaimed that all men may be saved; yet the mass of men look on this with entire unconcern. The Redeemer ascended to heaven, having finished his great work; but how little interest do the mass of mankind feel in this! He will come again to judge the world; but the race moves on, regardless of this truth; unalarmed at the prospect of meeting him; feeling no interest in the assurance that he has come and died for sinners, and no apprehension in view of the fact that he will come again, and that they must stand at his bar. All heaven was moved with his first advent, and will be with his second; but the earth regards it with unconcern. Angelic beings look upon this with the deepest anxiety, though they have no personal interest in it: man, though all his great interests are concentrated on it, regards it as a fable, disbelieves it all, and treats it with contempt and scorn. Such is the difference between heaven and earth--angels and men!

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Verse 1. Now the Spirit. Evidently the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of inspiration. It is not quite certain, from this passage, whether the apostle means to say that this was a revelation then made to him, or whether it was a well-understood thing as taught by the Holy Spirit. He himself elsewhere refers to this same prophecy, and John also more than once mentions it. Comp. 2Thes 2; 1Jn 2:18; Rev 20. From 2Thes 2:6, it would seem that this was a truth which had before been communicated to the apostle Paul, and that he had dwelt on it when he preached the gospel in Thessalonica. There is no probability,

however, in the supposition that so important a subject was communicated directly by the Holy Ghost to other of the apostles. Speaketh expressly. In express words, ρητως. It was not by mere hints, and symbols, and shadowy images of the future. it was in an open and plain manner--in so many words. The object of this statement seems to be to call the attention to Timothy to it in an emphatic manner, and to show the importance of attending to it. That in the latter times. Under the last dispensation, during which the affairs of the world would close. Heb 1.2 It does not mean that this would occur just before the end of the world, but that it would take place during that last dispensation, and that the end of the world would not happen until this should take place. 2Thes 2:3 Some shall depart from the faith. The Greek word here-- αποστησονται, apostesnotai-- is that from which we have derived the word apostate, and would be properly so rendered here. The meaning is, that they would apostatize from the belief of the truths of the gospel. It does not mean that, as individual, they would have been true Christians; but that there would be a departure from the great doctrines which constitute the Christian faith. The ways in which they would do this are immediately specified, showing what the apostle meant here by departing from the faith. They would give heed to seducing spirits, to the doctrines of devils, etc. The use of the word "some", here τινες, does not imply that the number would be small. The meaning is, that certain persons would thus depart, or that there would be an apostasy of the kind here mentioned, in the last days. From the parallel passage in 2Thes 2:3, it would seem that this was to be an extensive apostasy. Giving heed to seducing spirits. Rather than to the Spirit of God. It would be a part of their system to yield to those spirits that led astray. The spirits here referred to are any that cause to err, and the most obvious and natural construction is to refer it to the agency of fallen spirits. Though it may apply to false teachers, yet, if so, it is rather to them as under the influence of evil spirits. This may be applied, so far as the phraseology is concerned, to any false teaching; but it is evident that the apostle had a specific apostasy in view--some great system that would greatly corrupt the Christian faith; and the words here should be interpreted with reference to that. It is true that men in all ages are prone to give heed to seducing spirits; but the thing referred to here is some grand

apostasy, in which the characteristics would be manifested, and the doctrines held, which the apostle proceeds immediately to specify. Comp. 1Jn 4:1. And doctrines of devils. Gr.,

"Teachings of demons"--διδασκαλιαις δαιμονιων. This may either mean teachings respecting demons, or teachings by demons. Whether the phrase here means that, in the apostasy, they would give heed to doctrines respecting demons, or to doctrines which demons taught, cannot, it seems to me, be determined with certainty. If the previous phrase, however, means that they would embrace doctrines taught by evil spirits, it can hardly be supposed that the apostle would immediately repeat the same idea in another form; and then the sense would be, that one characteristic of the time referred to would be the prevalent teaching respecting demons. They would "give heed to," or embrace, some peculiar views respecting demons. The word here rendered devils is δαιμονια-- demons. This word, among the Greeks, denoted the following things:

(1.) A god or goddess, spoken of the heathen gods. Comp. in New Testament, Acts 17:18

(2.) A divine being, where no particular one was specified, the agent or author of good or evil fortune; of death, fate, etc. In this sense it is often used in Homer.

(3.) The souls of men of the golden age, which dwelt unobserved upon the earth to regard the actions of men, and to defend them--tutelary divinities, or geniuses--like that which Socrates regarded as his constant attendant. Xen. Mem. 4. 8. 1.6; Apol. Soc. 4. See Passow.

(4.) To this may be added the common use in the New Testament, where the word denotes a demon in the Jewish sense--a bad spirit, subject to Satan, and under his control; one of the host of fallen angels-- commonly, but not very properly, rendered devil, or devils. These spirits were supposed to wander in desolate places, Mt 12:43. Comp. Isa 13:21, 34:14; or they dwell in the air, Eph 2:2. They were

regarded as hostile to mankind, Jn 8:44; as able to utter heathen oracles, Acts 16:17; as lurking in the idols of the heathen, 1Cor 10:20, Rev 9:20. They are spoken of as the authors of evil, Jas 2:19. Comp. Eph 6:12; and as having the power of taking possession of a person, of producing diseases, or of causing mania, as in the case of the demoniacs, Lkke 4:33, 8:27, Mt 17:18, Mk 7:29,30; and often elsewhere. The doctrine, therefore, which the apostle predicted would prevail, might, so far as the word used is concerned, be either of the following:

(1.) Accordance with the prevalent notions of the heathen respecting false gods; or a falling into idolatry similar to that taught in the Grecian mythology. It can hardly be supposed, however, that he designed to say that the common notions of the heathen would prevail in the Christian church, or that the worship of the heathen gods as such would be set up there.

(2.) An accordance with the Jewish views respecting demoniacal possessions, and the power of exorcising them, If this view should extensively prevail in the Christian church, it would be in accordance with the language of the prediction.

(3.) Accordance with the prevalent heathen notions respecting the departed spirits of the good and the great, who were exalted to the rank of demi-gods; and who, though invisible, were supposed still to exert all important influence in favour of mankind. To these beings, the heathen rendered extraordinary homage. They regarded them as demi-gods. They supposed that they took a deep interest in human affairs. They invoked their aid. They set apart days in honour of them. They offered sacrifices, and performed rites and ceremonies, to propitiate their favour. They were regarded as a sort of mediators or intercessors between man and the superior divinities. If these things are found anywhere in the Christian church, they may be regarded as a fulfilment of this prediction, for they were not of a nature to be foreseen by any human sagacity. Now it so happens, that they are in fact found in the Papal communion, and in a way that corresponds fairly to the meaning of the phrase, as it would have been understood in the time of the apostle. There is,

first, the worship of the Virgin and of the saints, or the extraordinary honours rendered to them--corresponding almost entirely with the reverence paid by the heathen to the spirits of heroes, or to demi-gods. The saints are supposed to have extraordinary power with God, and their aid is implored as intercessors. The Virgin Mary is invoked as "the mother of God," and as having power still to command her Son. The Papists do not, indeed, offer the same homage to the saints which they do to God, but they ask their aid; they offer prayer to them. The following extracts from the catechism of Dr. James Butler, approved and recommended by Dr. Kenrick, "bishop of Philadelphia," expresses the general views of Roman Catholics on this subject. "Q. How do Catholics distinguish between the honour they give to God, and the honour they give to the saints, when they pray to God and the saints? A. Of God alone they beg grace and mercy; and of the saints they only ask the assistance of their prayers. Q. Is it lawful to recommend ourselves to the saints, and ask their prayers? A. Yes; as it is lawful and a very pious practice to ask the prayers of our fellow creatures on earth, and to pray for them." In the "Prayer to be said before mass," the following language occurs, "In union with the holy church and its minister, and invoking the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the angels and saints; we now offer the adorable sacrifice of the mass," etc. In the "General Confession" it is said, "I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly." So, also, the Council of Trent declared, Sess. 25, Concerning the Invocation of the Saints, "that it is good and useful to supplicate them, and to fly to their prayers, power, and aid; but that they who deny that the saints are to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for men, or that their invocation of them is idolatry, hold an impious opinion." See also Peter Dens' Moral Theology, translated by the Rev. J. F. Berg, pp. 342--356. Secondly, in the Papal communion the doctrine of exorcism is still held--implying a belief that evil spirits or demons have power over the human frame; a doctrine which comes fairly under the meaning of the phrase here--"the doctrine respecting demons." Thus, in Dr. Butler's Catechism: "Q. What do you mean by exorcism? A. The rites and prayers instituted

by the church for the casting out devils, or restraining them from hurting persons, disquieting places, or abusing any of God's creatures to our harm. Q. Has Christ given his church any such power over devils? A. Yes, he has. See Mt 10:1, Mk 3:15, Lk 9:1. And that this power was not to die with the apostles, nor to cease after the apostolic age, we learn from the perpetual practice of the church, and the experience of all ages." The characteristic here referred to by the apostle, therefore, is one that applies precisely to the Roman Catholic communion, and cannot be applied with the same fitness to any other association calling itself Christian on earth. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Holy Spirit designed to designate that apostate church.

Speaking lies in hypocrisy. ενυποκρισειψευδολογων. Or rather, "by, or through the hypocrisy of those speaking lies." So it is rendered by Whitby, Benson, Macknight, and others. Our translators have rendered it as if the word translated "speaking lies"-- ψευδολογων referred to demons, or devils δαιμονιων --in the previous verse. But there are two objections to this. One is, that then, as Koppe observes, the words would have been inverted--ψευδολογωνενυποκρισει. The other is, that if that construction is adopted, it must be carried through the sentence, and then all the phrases "speaking lies," "having their conscience seared," "forbidding to marry," etc., must be referred to demons. The preposition εν, in, may denote by or through, and is often so used. If this be the true construction, then it will mean that those who departed from the faith did it by or through the hypocritical teachings of those who spoke lies, or who knew that they were inculcating falsehoods; of those whose conscience was seared; of those who forbade to marry, etc. The meaning then will be, "In the last days certain persons will depart from the faith of the gospel. This apostasy will essentially consist in their giving heed to spirits that lead to error, and in embracing corrupt and erroneous views on demonology, or in reference to invisible beings between us and God. This they will do through the hypocritical teaching of those who inculcate falsehood; whose consciences are seared," etc. The series of characteristics, therefore, which follow, are those of the teachers, not of the taught; of the ministers of the church, not of the great body of the people. The apostle meant to say that this grand

apostasy would occur under the influence of a hypocritical, hardened, and arbitrary ministry, teaching their own doctrines instead of the Divine commands, and forbidding that which God had declared to be lawful. In the clause before us--"speaking lies in hypocrisy"--two things are implied, first, that the characteristic of those referred to would be that they would "speak lies;" second, that this would be done hypocritically. In regard to the first, there can be no doubt among Protestants of its applicability to the Papal communion. The entire series of doctrines respecting the authority of the Pope, purgatory, the Mass, the invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, the Seven Sacraments, the authority of tradition, the doctrine of merit, etc., is regarded as false. Indeed, the system could not be better characterized than by saying that it is a system "speaking lies." The entire scheme attempts to palm falsehood upon the world, in the place of the simple teaching of the New Testament. The only question is, whether this is done "in hypocrisy," or hypocritically. In regard to this, it is not necessary to maintain that there is no sincerity among the ministers of that communion, or that all are hypocritical in their belief and their teaching. The sense is, that this is the general characteristic, or that this is understood by the leaders or prime movers in that apostasy. In regard to the applicability of this to the ministers of the Papal communion, and the question whether they teach what they know to be false, we may observe

(1.) that many of them are men of eminent learning, and there can be no reason to doubt that they know that many of the Catholic legends are false, and many of the doctrines of their faith contrary to the Bible.

(2.) Not a few of the things in that communion must be known by them to be false, though not known to be so by the people. Such are all the pretended miracles wrought by the relics of the saints; the liquefying of the blood of St. Januarius, etc. 2Thes 2:9. As the working of these tricks depends wholly on the priesthood, they must know that they are "speaking lies in hypocrisy."

(3.) The matter of fact seems to be, that when young men who have been trained in the Catholic church, first turn their attention to the ministry, they are sincere. They have not yet been made acquainted with the "mysteries of iniquity" in the communion in which they have been trained, and they do not suspect the deceptions that are practised there. When they pass through their course of study, however, and become acquainted with the arts and devices on which the fabric rests, and with the scandalous lives of many of the clergy, they are shocked to find how corrupt and false the whole system is. But they are now committed. They have devoted their lives to this profession. They are trained now to this system of imposture, and they must continue to practise and perpetuate the fraud, or abandon the church, and subject themselves to all the civil and ecclesiastical disabilities which would now follow if they were to leave and reveal all its frauds and impostures. A gentleman of high authority, and who has had as good an opportunity as any man living to make accurate and extensive observations, stated to me, that this was a common thing in regard to the Catholic clergy in France and Italy. No one can reasonably doubt that the great body of that clergy must be apprized that much that is relied on for the support of the system is mere legend, and that the miracles which are pretended to be wrought are mere trick and imposture. Having their conscience seared with a hot iron. The allusion here is doubtless to the effect of applying a hot iron to the skin. The cauterized part becomes rigid and hard, and is dead to sensibility. So with the conscience of those referred to. It has the same relation to a conscience that is sensitive and quick in its decisions, that a cauterized part of the body has to a thin, delicate, and sensitive skin. Such a conscience exists in a mind that will practise delusion without concern; that will carry on a vast system of fraud without wincing; that will incarcerate, scourge, or burn the innocent without compassion; and that win practise gross enormities, and indulge in sensual gratifications under the mask of piety. While there are many eminent exceptions to an application of this to the Papal communion, yet this description will apply better to the Roman priesthood in the time of Luther found in many other periods of the world--than to any other body of men that ever lived.

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

As if our apostle had said, "Although the mystery of godliness, the doctrine of Christianity, be so clearly revealed, and fully confirmed, yet the spirit of prophecy has very plainly told us, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith once embraced by them, either in whole or in part; turning apostates, by giving heed to impostures and doctrines of men, teaching erors suggested by devils, who cover their lies with hypocritical pretences, and are men of hardened hearts, seared consciences, profligate lives, forbidding some, whom they have seduced, to marry, and commanding them to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them which do believe and know the truth."

Observe here, 1. That the apostasy and defection of a considerable part of the Christian church in the latter times was foreseen and foretold very long before it came to pass: by Daniel, say some, Dan 11:28,38 &c. by St. Paul, say others, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians; and in his first epistle to Timothy, the Spirit speaketh expressly, that some shall depart from the faith, that is, from the doctrine of the faith received; which we know the church of Rome has most notoriously done.

Observe, 2. The cause of this apostasy and defection from Christianity, Giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

Quest. But what is here meant by doctrines of devils?

Ans. These (says our reverend archbishop Tillotson) can be no other doctrines than those tending to idolatry, which the scripture every where doth in a particular manner ascribe to the devil, as the inventor and promoter of; therefore he tells us, that, in some ancient copies, the words run thus: In the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith; for they shall worship the dead, having regard to doctrines of devils:-- so that the particular kind of idolatry into which some part of the Christian church should apostatize, is here pointed out, namely, that they should worship souls departed, or the

spirits of dead men, which was part of the heathen idolatry, into which the people of Israel did frequently relapse; these departed souls were called Daemons, and were esteemed a middle sort of divine powers, between the supreme gods and mortal men, whose office it was to be agents and mediators between the gods above and men below; thus is the holy city trodden down by the Gentiles, that is, overwhelmed with the Gentiles' idolatry.

Observe, 3. The persons revolting, who they are foretold to be; not all, but, but some only: In the latter days, some shall depart from the faith; not the whole visible church, but a very great and considerable part of it.

Learn thence, That the true church of Christ was never wholly extinguished, nor the light of the gospel ever quite put out, no, not in the greatest darkness, that ever was, to overwhelm it; some (only) and not all, that shall depart from the faith.

Observe, 4. The persons described who should be the occasion of this apostasy and revolt: namely, such as speak lies in hypocrisy, and have seared consciences, that is, such stupid consciences as have lost the sense of good and evil, and no longer do their office. These lies, which the apostate church of Rome is guilty of, the profound Mr. Mede styles, "Lying miracles, fabulous legends of the acts of saints and sufferings of martyrs, counterfeit writings under the name of the first and best antiquity."
Lord! who could have coined or believed such monstrous stuff as the popish legends are fraught with, but such as are cauterized, past all feeling and tenderness both of conscience and sense itself.

Observe, 5. The doctrines discovered which these apostates would teach, namely, the forbidding marriage to some, and enjoining abstinence from some meats as unlawful and unclean to others, both which are called doctrines of devils, that is, wicked and devilish doctrines.

Learn thence, That the Popish doctrine forbidding marriage, not absolutely to all, but with restrictions and limitation to some, to wit,

their clergy, and all such as shall enter into holy orders, is a devilish and wicked doctrine: for it forbids that which the word alloweth, nay, in some cases commandeth, Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; Heb 13:4 if honourable in all, then surely lawful for all; under the Old Testament, the prophets, priests, and Levites, did marry; under the New, the ministers of God have a power to marry; Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife? 1Cor 9:5 And that they made use of their power is evident from the following words, as well as other apostles and Cephas.

The other wicked doctrine concerning meats is also found in the church of Rome, who by a law to oblige some orders of men, as monks, to abstain from certain meats reducing them thereby from Christian liberty to a conformity to the legal rites, which may well by reckoned as an apostasy from the Christian faith; for although St. Paul, Rom 14:1-23 doth allow the forbearance of some sorts of meats to avoid scandal, yet he doth no where condemn the eating of them as unclean: the doctrine therefore of the church of Rome, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, is wicked and devilish.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had the mystery of godliness summed up; and therefore very fitly, in the beginning of this chapter, we have the mystery of iniquity summed up: The Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith; whether he means the Spirit in the Old Testament, or the Spirit in the prophets of the New Testament, or both. The prophecies concerning antichrist, as well as the prophecies concerning Christ, came from the Spirit. The Spirit in both spoke expressly of a general apostasy from the faith of Christ and the pure worship of God. This should come in the latter times, during the Christian dispensation, for these are called the latter days; in the following ages of the church, for the mystery of iniquity now began to work. Some shall depart from the faith, or there shall be an apostasy from the faith. Some, not all; for in the worst of times God will have a remnant, according to the election of grace. They shall depart from the faith, the faith delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3), which was delivered at once, the sound doctrine of the gospel. Giving heed to seducing

spirits, men who pretended to the Spirit, but were not really guided by the Spirit, 1Jo 4:1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, every one who pretends to the Spirit. Now here observe,

1. One of the great instances of the apostasy, namely, giving heed to doctrines of demons, or concerning demons; that is, those doctrines which teach the worship of saints and angels, as a middle sort of deities, between the immortal God and mortal men, such as the heathen called demons, and worshipped under that notion. Now this plainly agrees to the church of Rome, and it was one of the first steps towards that great apostasy, the enshrining of the relics of martyrs, paying divine honours to them, erecting altars, burning incense, consecrating images and temples, and making prayers and praises to the honour of saints departed. This demon-worship is paganism revived, the image of the first beast.

in the latter times—in the times following upon the times in which he is now writing. Not some remote future, but times immediately subsequent, the beginnings of the apostasy being already discernible (Ac 20:29): these are the forerunners of "the last days" (2Ti 3:1).

depart from the faith—The apostasy was to be within the Church, the faithful one becoming the harlot. In 2Th 2:3 (written earlier), the apostasy of the Jews from God (joining the heathen against Christianity) is the groundwork on which the prophecy rises; whereas here, in the Pastoral Epistles, the prophecy is connected with Gnostic errors, the seeds of which had already been sown in the Church [AUBERLEN] (2Ti 2:18). Apollonius Tyanæus, a heretic, came to Ephesus in the lifetime of Timothy.

The instruments of promoting and propagating this apostasy and delusion.

(1.) It will be done by hypocrisy of those that speak lies, the agents and emissaries of Satan, who promote these delusions by lies and forgeries and pretended miracles, 1Ti 4:2. It is done by their hypocrisy, professing honour to Christ, and yet at the same time

fighting against all his anointed offices, and corrupting or profaning all his ordinances. This respects also the hypocrisy of those who have their consciences seared with a red-hot iron, who are perfectly lost to the very first principles of virtue and moral honesty. If men had not their consciences seared as with a hot iron, they could never maintain a power to dispense with oaths for the good of the catholic cause, could never maintain that no faith is to be kept with heretics, could never divest themselves of all remains of humanity and compassion, and clothe themselves with the most barbarous cruelty, under pretence of promoting the interest of the church.

(2.) Another part of their character is that they forbid to marry, forbid their clergy to marry, and speak very reproachfully of marriage, though an ordinance of God; and that they command to abstain from meats, and place religion in such abstinence at certain times and seasons, only to exercise a tyranny over the consciences of men.

3. On the whole observe,

(1.) The apostasy of the latter times should not surprise us, because it was expressly foretold by the Spirit.

(2.) The Spirit is God, otherwise he could not certainly foresee such distant events, which as to us are uncertain and contingent, depending on the tempers, humours, and lusts of men.

(3.) The difference between the predictions of the Spirit and the oracles of the heathen is remarkable; the Spirit speaks expressly, but the oracles of the heathen were always doubtful and uncertain.

(4.) It is comfortable to think that in such general apostasies all are not carried away, but only some.

(5.) It is common for seducers and deceivers to pretend to the Spirit, which is a strong presumption that all are convinced that this is the most likely to work in us an approbation of what pretends to come from the Spirit.

(6.) Men must be hardened, and their consciences seared, before they can depart from the faith, and draw in others to side with them.

(7.) It is a sign that men have departed from the faith when they will command what God has forbidden, such as saint and angel or demon-worship; and forbid what God has allowed or commanded, such as marriage and meats.

4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

For every creature of God is good. Gr., all the creatures, or all that God has created--πανκτισμα: that is, as he made it. Comp. Gen 1:10,12,18,31. It does not mean that every moral agent remains good as long as he is a creature of God, but moral agents, men and angels, were good as they were made at first. Gen 1:31. Nor does it mean that all that God has made is good for every object to which it can be applied. It is good in its place: good for the purpose for which he made it. But it should not be inferred that a thing which is poisonous in its nature is good for food, because it is a creation of God. It is good only in its place, and for the ends for which he intended it. Nor should it be inferred that what God has made is necessarily good after it has been perverted by man. As God made it originally, it might have been used without injury. Apples and peaches were made good, and are still useful and proper as articles of food; rye and indian corn are good, and are admirably adapted to the support of man and beast; but it does not follow that all that man can make of them is necessarily good. He extracts from them a poisonous liquid, and then says that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." But is this a fair use of this passage of Scripture? True, they are good --they are to be received with gratitude as he made them, and as applied to the uses for which he designed them: but why apply this passage to prove that a deleterious beverage which man has extracted from what God has made, is good also, and good for all the purposes to which it can be applied? As God made these things, they are good. As man perverts them, it is no longer proper to call them the "creation of God," and they may be injurious in the highest degree. This passage, therefore,

should not be adduced to vindicate the use of intoxicating drinks. As employed by the apostle, it had no such reference, nor does it contain any principle which can properly receive any such appellation. And nothing to be refused. Nothing that God has made, for the purposes for which he designed it. The necessity of the case--the "exigency of the passage"--requires this interpretation. It cannot mean that we are not to refuse poison if offered in our food, or that we are never to refuse food that is to us injurious or offensive; nor can it any more mean that we are to receive all that may be offered to us as a beverage. The sense is, that as God made it, and for the purposes for which he designed it, it is not to be held to be evil; or, which is the same thing, it is not to be prohibited as if there were merit in abstaining from it. It is not to be regarded as a religious duty to abstain from food which God has appointed for the support of man.

A Good Minister of Jesus Christ

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt
be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith
and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.
7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself
rather unto godliness.

But refuse. That is, refuse to pay attention to them, or reject them. Do not consider them of sufficient importance to occupy your time. Profane. The word here used does not mean that the fables here referred to were blasphemous or impious in their character, but that they had not the character of true religion, 2Ti 2:16. And old wive's. Old women's stories; or such as old women held to be important. The word is used here, as it is often with us, in the sense of silly. Fables. Fictions, or stories that were not founded on fact. The heathen religion abounded with fictions of this kind, and the Jewish teachers were also remarkable for the number of such fables which they had introduced into their system. It is probable that the apostle referred here particularly to the Jewish fables, and the counsel which he gives to Timothy is to have nothing to do with them. And exercise thyself rather unto godliness. Rather than attempt to understand

those fables. Do not occupy your time and attention with them, but rather cultivate piety, and seek to become more holy.

8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

By bodily exercise he meaneth corporal austerities, abstinence from meats and marriage; all the external exercises of religion; these do profit a little, though but a little, in comparsion of the profit of godliness.

Where note, That fastings, humiliations, and watchings, with other bodily exercises, which serve to bring down the pride and wantonness of the body, have their proper and necessary use, and are expressive of a just revenge which a sinner takes upon himself for former excesses; they are, when wisely managed, what God accepts, but the least that God expects from us: Bodily exercise profiteth little.

But observe, The universal usefulness of godliness to all the purposes of life, Godliness is profitable to all things.

1. It is profitable to make a man rich, to help him to get and increase an estate; because it makes a man wise and prudent, diligent and industrious, thrifty and frugal.

2. It is profitable to make a man renowned as well as rich; it is the only way to attain a good name and reputation: the godly man is a worthy and excellent man, and he is an useful and servicable man, and such do seldom miss of a good reputation in the world; those that want goodness themselves, will yet commend it in others.

3. It is profitable for pleasure, as well as for riches and honour; for a life of religion doth increase the relish and sweetness of all our sensible enjoyments, so far is it from abridging us of any earthly delights: and besides, it adds to us a world of pleasures of its own; thus godliness is profitable unto men in all things, having the promise of happiness both in this life, and that which is to come, annexed to it.

9 This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.
10 For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach. In making this truth known, that all might be saved, or that salvation was offered to all. The labour was chiefly experienced in carrying this intelligence abroad among the Gentiles; the reproach arose chiefly from the Jews for doing it.

Who is the Saviour of all men. This must be understood as denoting that he is the Saviour of all men in some sense which differs from what is immediately affirmed: "specially of those that believe." There is something pertaining to them in regard to salvation which does not pertain to "all men." It cannot mean that he brings all men to heaven, especially those who believe--for this would be nonsense. And if he brings all men actually to heaven, how can it be especially true that he does this in regard to those who believe? Does it mean that he saves others without believing. But this would be contrary to the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures. See Mk 16:16. When, therefore, it is said that he "is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe, "it must mean that there is a sense in which it is true that he may be called the Saviour of all men, while, at the same time, it is actually true that those only are saved who believe. This may be true in two respects.

(1.) As he is the Preserver of men, (Job 7:20,) for in this sense he may be said to save them from famine, and war, and peril--keeping them from day to day; comp. Ps 107:28;

(2.) as he has provided salvation for all men. He is thus their Saviour, and may be called the common Saviour of all; that is, he has confined the offer of salvation to no one class of men; he has not limited the atonement to one division of the human race; and he actually saves all who are willing to be saved by him. Specially of those that believe. This is evidently designed to limit the previous remark. If it had been left there, it might have been inferred that he would actually save all men. But the apostle held no such doctrine,

and he here teaches that salvation is actually limited to those who believe. This is the speciality or the peculiarity in the salvation of those who actually reach heaven, that they are believers. Mk 16:16. All men, therefore, do not enter heaven, unless all men have faith. But is this so? What evidence is there that the great mass of mankind die believing on the Son of God?

11 These things command and teach.

Let no man despise thy youth. That is, do not act in such a manner that any shall despise you on account of your youth. Act as becomes a minister of the gospel in all things, and in such a way that men will respect you as such, though you are young. It is clear from this that Timothy was then a young man, but his exact age there is no means of determining. It is implied here,

(1.) that there was danger that, by the levity and indiscretion to which youth are so much exposed, the ministry might be regarded with contempt; and

(2.) that it was possible that his deportment should be so grave, serious, and every way appropriate that the ministry would not be blamed, but honoured. The way in which Timothy was to live so that the ministry would not be despised on account of his youth, the apostle proceeds immediately to specify. But be thou an example of the believers. One of the constant duties of a minister of the gospel, no matter what his age. A minister should so live, that if all his people should closely follow his example, their salvation would be secure, and they would make the highest possible attainments in piety. On the meaning of the word rendered example, Php 1:27; 1Thes 1:7. In word. In speech--that is, your manner of conversation. This does not refer to his public teaching--in which he could not probably be an example to them--but to his usual and familiar conversation. In conversation. In general deportment. See this word explained in Php 1:27. In charity. Love to the brethren, and to all. 1Cor 13:1 and following. In spirit. In the government of your passions, and in a mild, meek, forgiving disposition. In faith. At all times, and in all trials, show to believers by your example, how they ought to maintain unshaken confidence in God. In purity. In chasteness of life. See 1Timm 5:2. There should be nothing in your

intercourse with the other sex that would give rise to scandal. The Papists, with great impropriety, understand this as enjoining celibacy--as if there could be no purity in that holy relation which God appointed in Eden, and which he has declared to "be honourable in all," (Heb 13:4,) and which he has made so essential to the well-being of mankind. If the apostle had wished to produce the highest possible degree of corruption in the church, he would have enjoined the celibacy of the clergy and the celibacy of an indefinite number of nuns and monks. There are no other institutions on the earth which have done so much to corrupt the chastity of the race, as those which have grown out of the doctrine that celibacy is more honourable than marriage.

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the
believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in
purity.

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to
doctrine.

St. Paul, being uncertain when he should see this young labourer again, adds farther instructions to those already given him.

And here, 1. He requires him to give attendance to reading, that is, be diligent in private reading the holy scriptures, to enable him to teach, instruct, and exhort others, what they ought to believe and know, and what they ought to practise and do.

Where note, That the illuminations and teachings of the Holy Spirit must not take off any ministers from reading and studying the holy scriptures, but we must fit ourselves the better thereby to exhort, direct, and instruct others.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by
prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee. by letting it lie unused. In 2Ti 1:6 the gift is represented as a spark of the Spirit lying within him, and sure to moulder by neglect, the stirring up or keeping in lively exercise of which depends on the will of him on whom it is bestowed (Mt 25:18, 25, 27, 28). The charism or spiritual gift, is that of the Spirit which qualified him for "the work of an evangelist" (Eph 4:11;

2Ti 4:5), or perhaps the gift of discerning spirits, specially needed in his function of ordaining, as overseer [BISHOP HINDS].

An important question arises here, to what the word gift refers :--whether to natural endowment; to office; or to some supposed virtue which had been conferred by ordination--some transmitted influence which made him holy as a minister of religion, and which was to continue to be transmitted by the imposition of apostolic hands.--The word which is here used, is rendered gift in every place in which it occurs in the New Testament. It is found in the following places, and with the following significations:-- deliverance from peril, 2Cor 1:11; a gift or quality of the mind, 1Co 7:7; gifts of Christian knowledge or consolation, Rom 1:11; 1Cor 1:7; redemption or salvation through Christ, Rom 5:15,16; Rom 6:23, 11:29; the miraculous endowments conferred by the Holy Spirit, Rom 12:6, 1Cor 12:4,9,28,30,31; and the special gift or endowment for the work of the ministry, 1Timm 4:14, 2Ti 1:6, 1Pet 4:10. The gift then referred to here was that by which Timothy was qualified for the work of the ministry. It relates to his office and qualifications -to every thing that entered into his fitness for the work. It does not refer exclusively to any influence that came upon him in virtue of his ordination, or to any new grace that was infused into him by that act, making him either officially or personally more holy than other men, or than he was before--or to any efficacy in the mere act of ordination--but it comprised the whole train of circumstances by which he had been qualified for the sacred office, and recognised as a minister of religion. All this was regarded as a gift, a benefit, or favour, χαρισμα,--and he was not to neglect or disregard the responsibilities and advantages growing out of it. In regard to the manner in which this gift or favour was bestowed, the following things are specified.

(1.) It was the gift of God, 2Ti 1:6. He was to be recognised as its source; and it was not therefore conferred merely by human hands. The call to the ministry, the qualifications for the office, and the whole arrangement by which one is endowed for the work, are primarily to be traced to him as the source.

(2.) It was given to Timothy in accordance with certain predictions which had existed in regard to him--the expectations of those who had observed his qualifications for such an office, and who had expressed the hope that he would one day be permitted to serve the Lord in it.

(3.) It was sanctioned by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. The call of God to the work thus recognised by the church, and the approbation of the Presbytery expressed by setting him apart to the office, should be regarded by Timothy as a part of the "gift" or benefit (charisma) which had been conferred on him, and which he was not to neglect.

(4.) An additional circumstance which might serve to impress the mind of Timothy with the value of this endowment, and the responsibility of this office, was, that Paul himself had been concerned in his ordination, 2Ti 1:6. He who was so much more aged, (2Ti 4:6,7); he who had been a father to him, and who had adopted him and treated him as a son, had been concerned in his ordination; and this fact imposed a higher obligation to perform aright the functions of an office which had been conferred on him in this manner. We are not to suppose, therefore, that there was any mysterious influence conveyed by the act of ordination, or that that act imparted any additional degree of holiness. The endowment for the ministry; the previous anticipations and hopes of friends; and the manner in which he had been inducted into the sacred office, should all be regarded as a benefit or favour of a high order, and as a reason why the gift thus bestowed should not be neglected--and the same things now should make a man who is in the ministry deeply feel the solemn obligations resting on him to cultivate his powers in the highest degree, and to make the most of his talents.

Which was given thee by prophecy. That is, by the Holy Spirit, at his general ordination, or else consecration, to the special see of Ephesus, speaking through the prophets God's will to give him the graces needed to qualify him for his work (1Ti 1:18; Ac 13:1-3); the prophetic declarations and the hopes of pious friends in regard to your future usefulness, have been among the means by which you

have been introduced to the ministry, and should be a reason why you should cultivate your powers, and perform faithfully the duties of your office. 1Timm 1:18.

With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. It was common to lay on the hands in imparting a blessing, or in setting apart to any office. See Mt 19:15, Mk 6:5, Lk 4:40, 13:13, Lev 8:14, Nu 27:23 Acts 28:8, 6:6, 8:17, 13:3. So in Joshua's case (Nu 27:18-20; De 34:9). The gift was connected with the symbolical act of laying on hands. The reference here is undoubtedly to the act by which Timothy was set apart to the office of the ministry. The word rendered presbytery--πρεσβυτεριον, occurs only in two other places in the New Testament--Lk 22:66, where it is rendered elders and Acts 22:5, where it is rendered "estate of the elders." It properly means an assembly of aged men; council of elders. In Lk 22:66, Acts 22:5, it refers to the Jewish sanhedrim. Mt 5:22. In the passage before us, it cannot refer to that body--for they did not ordain men to the Christian ministry--but to some association, or council, or body of elders of the Christian church. It is clear from the passage

(1.) that there was more than one person engaged in this service, and taking part in it when Timothy was ordained, and therefore it could not have been by a prelate or bishop alone.

(2.) That the power conferred, whatever it was, was conferred by the whole body constituting the Presbytery--since the apostle says that the "gift" was imparted, not in virtue of any particular power or eminence in any one individual, but by the "laying on of the hands of the Presbytery."

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

Meditate upon these things. Upon the train of events by which you have been led into the ministry, and upon the responsibilities and duties of the office. Let your mind be deeply impressed with these things; make them the subject of profound and serious thought. Give thyself wholly to them. Gr., "Be in them"--a phrase similar to that of Horace--totus in illis. The meaning is plain. He was to devote his life wholly to this work. He was to have no other grand aim of living.

His time, attention, talents, were to be absorbed in the proper duties of the work. He was not to make that subordinate and tributary to any other purpose, nor was he to allow any other object to interfere with the appropriate duties of that office. He was not to live for money, fame, or pleasure; not to devote his time to the pursuits of literature or science for their own sakes; not to seek the reputation of an elegant or profound scholar; not to aim to be distinguished merely as an accomplished gentleman, or as a skilful farmer, teacher, or author. Whatever was done in any of these departments, was to be wholly consistent with the direction, εντουτοιςισθι--"be in these things"-- be absorbed in the appropriate duties of the ministerial office. It may be remarked here that no man will ever make much of himself, or accomplish much in any profession, who does not make this the rule of his life. He who has one great purpose of life to which he patiently and steadily devotes himself, and to which he makes everything else bend, will uniformly rise to high respectability, if not to eminence. He who does not do this, can expect to accomplish nothing. That thy profiting. Gr. Thy going forward; that is, thy advancement or progress. A minister of the gospel ought to make steady improvement in all that pertains to his office. No man ought to be satisfied with present attainments. To all. Marg., in all things. The margin is the more correct rendering, but either of them makes good sense. It should be apparent to all persons who attend on a stated preaching of a minister of the gospel, that he is making steady advances in knowledge, and wisdom, and piety, and in all things that pertain to the proper performance of the duties of his office. If a man really makes progress, it will be seen and appreciated by others; if he does not, that will be as well understood by his hearers.

Ministers are to be much in meditation. They are to consider beforehand how and what they must speak. They are to meditate on the great trust committed to them, on the worth and value of immortal souls, and on the account they must give at the last.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them:
for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear
thee.

He exhorted him to read the scriptures before, now to meditate upon what he read.
Where note, That if those who were inspired, and divinely qualified, must yet read, meditate, study hard, and employ their whole time to fit themselves for the ministerial work, what shall we think of the ignorance and impudence of our lay-preachers, who, without any such divine qualification, or without any call or commission, without giving themselves wholly to these things, dare presume to teach the scriptures, when they never understood them; nay, can hardly read them!

Meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them. Be in them, says the original, lay out thy whole strength and time in studying God's will, and making known thy people's duty.

Three things are here explicitly condemned in persons set apart for the holy function.

1. Sloth and negligence; it is a painful service we are engaged in, and woe unto us if we be slothful in business, if we be sparing of our pains for fear of shortening our days, and hastening our end; verily the lamp of our lives can never burn out better than in lighting others to heaven.

2. Worldly-mindedness, 1Pe 5:2 feed the flock, but not for filthy lucre: the spiritual man must not so mind earthly things as to make them his principal aim and scope; for if so, he will act accordingly, and defeat all the ends of his ministry. The apostles had no settled maintenance, but their subsistence to seek: yet were wholly in these things. How much should we be so now, who have our maintenance, but their subsistence to seek: yet were wholly in these things. How much should we be so now, who have our maintenance legally secured! How should we seek the kingdom of God, and the welfare of our people's souls, seeing all other things are added to us, in measure, though not in excess!

3. Incumbrance by worldly business: he that must give himself wholly to these things, what leisure can he find for magistracy, for

managing law-suits, for farming of lands, and for secular concerns: we cannot make a business of two things so widely different from each other.

Can we be spiritual persons, and yet mere seculars in our thoughts and care?
Well therefore might St. Paul say to Timothy, But thou, O man of God, flee these things, 1Tim 6:11

Observe lastly, The reason which the apostle subjoins why he would have Timothy do all this: That his profiting may appear to all men; he must read, meditate, pray, and study, that he may improve and profit himself;

Take heed unto thyself. This may be understood as relating to everything of a personal nature that would qualify him for his work. It may be applied to personal piety; to health; to manners; to habits of living; to temper; to the ruling purposes; to the intercourse with others. In relation to personal religion, a minister should take heed

(1.) that he has true piety; and

(2.) that he is advancing in the knowledge and love of God. In relation to morals, he should be upright; to his intercourse with others, and his personal habits, he should be correct, consistent, and gentlemanly, so as to give needless offence to none. The person of a minister should be neat and cleanly; his manners such as will show the fair influence of religion on his temper and deportment; his style of intercourse such as will be an example to the old and the young, and such as will not offend against the proper laws of courtesy and urbanity. There is no religion in a filthy person; in uncouth manners; in an inconvenient and strange form of apparel; in bad grammar, and in slovenly habits--and to be a real gentleman should be as much a matter of conscience with a minister of the gospel as to be a real Christian. Indeed under the full and fair influence of the gospel, the one always implies the other. Religion refines the manners--it does not corrupt them; it makes one

courteous, polite, and kind--it never produces boorish manners, or habits that give offence to the well-bred and the refined. And unto the doctrine. The kind of teaching which you give, or to your public instructions. The meaning is, that he should hold and teach only the truth, he was to "take heed" to the whole business of public instruction that is, both to the matter and the manner. The great object was to get as much truth as possible before the minds of his hearers and in such a way as to produce the deepest impression on them. Continue in them. That is, in these things which have been specified. He was ever to be found perseveringly engaged in the performance of these duties. For in doing thou shalt both save thyself. By holding of the truth, and by the faithful performance of your duties, you will secure the salvation of the soul. We are not to suppose that the apostle meant to teach that this would be the meritorious cause of his salvation, but that these faithful labours would be regarded as an evidence of piety, and would be accepted as such. It is equivalent to saying, that an unfaithful minister of the gospel cannot be saved; one who faithfully performs all the duties of that office with a right spirit, will be. And them that hear thee. That is, you will be the means of their salvation. It is not necessary to suppose that the apostle meant to teach that he would save all that heard him. The declaration is to be understood in a popular sense, and it is undoubtedly true, that a faithful minister will be the means of saving many sinners. The assurance furnishes a ground of encouragement for a minister of the gospel. He may hope for success, and should look for success. He has the promise of God that if he is faithful he shall see the fruit of his labours; and this result of his work is a sufficient reward for all the toils, and sacrifices, and self-denials of the ministry. If a minister should be the means of saving but one soul from the horrors of eternal suffering and eternal sinning, it would be worth the most self-denying labours of the longest life. Yet what minister of the gospel is there, who is at all faithful to his trust, who is not made the honoured instrument of the salvation of many more than one? Few are the devoted ministers of Christ who are not permitted to see evidence even here, that their labour has not been in vain. Let not, then, the faithful preacher be discouraged. A single soul rescued

from death will be a gem in his eternal crown brighter by far than ever sparkled on the brow of royalty.
As if the apostle had said, "Have a special regard to the piety of thy life, and to the purity of thy doctrine, and this continually; so shalt thou do what lieth in thee, to save both thine own soul, and the souls of all thy people."

1. Take heed unto thyself. Our lives must be such as become ministers of God, and preachers of righteousness; for the eyes of God and the whole world are upon us; the observing eye of God, the censorious and insidious eye of the world, who will charge the miscarriages of a single person upon the whole order, and condemn all for the faults of one: therefore let every one take heed unto himself; the honour of our profession requires it, the conscience of our duty challenges it, a due regard to the glory of God and our own reputation commands it.

2. Take heed unto thy doctrine, that it be the pure and uncorrupted word of God, expounded agreeably to the sense of the ancient church, and of our own church in particular, which has with the greatest care followed the ancient pattern: many errors are abroad in the world, which have adulterated the truths of the gospel; it is therefore prudential and necessary, that the ministers of God keep at a great distance from every opinion which looks like heretical, and not to come within the reach of suspicion: it is not enough for us to be innocent, unless we appear so.

Note farther, The order of the words: St. Paul bids Timothy first to take heed of his life, and next to his doctrine; not first to his doctrine, and then to his life: Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine. Because the success of our doctrine depends upon the goodness of our lives; it is this must render our doctrine operative and effectual; this is the principal thing; we must do as well as teach: for who will believe him in the pulpit, who contradicts

himself in his conversation? therefore take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine.

Note lastly, The great benefit of this course, and the blessed advantage of it: we shall save ourselves, deliver our own selves by our diligence and care; for the faithful nurse shall be paid, though the child die at the breast; and not only ourselves, but our people also; them that hear us: that is, "We shall do our utmost, and all that lieth in us, to save the souls that are committed to us, that they may be our crown of rejoicing, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming." God will pronounce us pure and innocent from the blood of all men; and if our people perish, their blood will be upon their own heads; which God avert for his mercy's sake. Amen.

1 Timothy-5

Responsibilities toward Others

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Rebuke not an elder, but entreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren;

Verse 1. Rebuke not an elder. The word elder here is not used in the sense in which it often is, to denote an officer of the church, a presbyter, but in its proper and usual sense, to denote an aged man. This is evident, because the apostle immediately mentions in contradistinction from the elder, "the younger men," where it cannot be supposed that he refers to them as officers. The command to treat the "elder" as a "father," also shows the same thing. By the direction not to rebuke, it is not to he supposed that the minister of the gospel is not to admonish the aged, or that he is not to show them their sins when they go astray, but that he is to do this as he would to a father. He is not to assume a harsh, dictatorial, and denunciatory manner. The precepts of religion always respect the proprieties of life, and never allow us to transgress them, even when the object is to reclaim a soul from error, and to save one who is wandering. Besides, when

this is the aim, it will always be most certainly accomplished by observing the respect due to others on account of office, relation, rank, or age. But entreat him as a father. As you would a father. That is, do not harshly denounce him. Endeavour to persuade him to lead a more holy life. One of the things for which the ancients were remarkable above most of the moderns, and for which the Orientals are still distinguished, was respect for age. Few things are enjoined with more explicitness and emphasis in the Bible than this, Lev 19:32, Job 29, Prov 20:20, 30:17 Comp. Dan 7:9,10, Rev 1:14,15. The apostle would have Timothy, and, for the same reason, every other minister of the gospel, a model of this virtue. And the younger men as brethren. That is, treat them as you would your own brothers. Do not consider them as aliens; strangers, or enemies, but entertain towards them, even when they go astray, the kindly feelings of a brother. This refers more particularly to his private intercourse with them, and to his personal efforts to reclaim them when they had fallen into sin. When these efforts were ineffectual, and they sinned openly, he was to "rebuke them before all," 1Timm 5:20, that others might be deterred from following their example.

With all purity. Nothing could be more characteristic of Paul's manner than this injunction; nothing could show a deeper acquaintance with human nature. He knew the danger which would beset a youthful minister of the gospel when it was his duty to admonish and entreat a youthful female; he knew, too, the scandal to which he might be exposed if, in the performance of the necessary duties of his office, there should be the slightest departure from purity and propriety. He was therefore to guard his heart with more than common vigilance in such circumstances, and was to indulge in no word, or look, or action, which could by any possibility be construed as manifesting an improper state of feeling. On nothing else do the fair character and usefulness of a youthful minister more depend, than on the observance of this precept. Nowhere else does he more need the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the exercise of prudence, and the manifestation of incorruptible integrity, than in the performance of this duty. A youthful minister who fails here, can never recover the perfect purity of an unsullied reputation, and never in subsequent life be wholly free from suspicion. Comp. Mt 5:28.

2 the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all
purity.

That are widows indeed. Who are truly widows. We associate with the word widow, commonly, not only the idea of the loss of a husband, but many other things that are the usual accompaniments of widowhood--a poor and dependent condition; care and solicitude; sadness and sorrow. This idea is implied in the use of the word employed here--χηρα--which means properly one who is bereaved, (from the adjective χηρος, bereaved,) and which, as Calvin says, conveys the idea of one in distressed circumstances. What Paul regarded as constituting true widowhood, he specifies in verses 1Timm 5:4,5,9,10. He connects with it the idea that she had no persons dependent on her; that she was desolate, and evinced true trust in God; that she was so aged that she would not marry again; and that by her life she had given evidence of possessing a heart of true benevolence, 1Timm 5:10.

3 Honor widows that are widows indeed.

4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to
show piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good
and acceptable before God.

And to requite their parents. To repay them, as far as possible, for all their kindness. This debt can never be wholly repaid, but still a child should feel it a matter of sacred obligation to do as much towards it as possible. For that is good and acceptable before God. It is a duty everywhere enjoined. Comp. Mt 15:5-7; Eph 6:1,2.

5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and
continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.

A widow indeed, and desolate. The word rendered desolate means solitary, alone. It does not necessarily imply the idea of discomfort, which we attach to the word desolate. The sense is, that she had no children or other descendants; none on whom she could depend for support. Trusteth in God. She has no one else to look to but God. She has no earthly reliance; and, destitute of husband, children, and property, she feels her dependence, and steadily looks to God for consolation and support. And continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. Continually. 1Timm 2:1. See also the description of Anna in Lk 2:36,37. The apostle regards this as one of the characteristics of those who were "widows indeed," whom

he would have received into the class to be maintained by the church, and to whom the charge of younger members of the church might be intrusted.

6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

But she that liveth in pleasure. Marg., delicately. The Greek word σπαταλαω occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Jas 5:5: "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth." It properly means to live in luxury, voluptuously; to indulge freely in eating and drinking; to yield to the indulgence of the appetites. It does not indicate grossly criminal pleasures; but the kind of pleasure connected with luxurious living, and with pampering the appetites. It is probable that in the time of the apostle, there were professedly Christian widows who lived in this manner--as there are such professing Christians of all kinds in every age of the world. Is dead while she liveth". To all the proper purposes of life she is as if she were dead. There is great emphasis in this expression, and nothing could convey more forcibly the idea that true happiness is not to be found in the pleasures of sense. There is nothing in them that answers the purposes of life. They are not the objects for which life was given, and as to the great and proper designs of existence, such persons might as well be dead.

But she is not a widow indeed that lives in pleasure (1Ti 5:6), or who lives licentiously. A jovial widow is not a widow indeed, not fit to be taken under the care of the church. She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives, is no living member of the church, but as a carcase in it, or a mortified member. We may apply it more generally; those who live in pleasure are dead while they live, spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins; they are in the world to no purpose, buried alive as to the great ends of living.

8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

But if any provide not for his own. The apostle was speaking 1Timm 5:4 particularly of the duty of children towards a widowed mother. In enforcing that duty, he gives the subject, as he often does in similar cases, a general direction, and says that all ought to provide for those who are dependent on them, and that if they did

not do this, they had a less impressive sense of the obligations of duty than even the heathen had. On the duty here referred to, comp. Rom 12:17, 2Cor 8:21. The meaning is, that the person referred to is to think beforehand προνοει of the probable wants of his own family, and make arrangements to meet them. God thus provides for our wants; that is, he sees beforehand what we shall need, and makes arrangements for those wants by long preparation. The food that we eat, and the raiment that we wear, he foresaw that we should need, and the arrangement for the sup- ply was made years since, and to meet these wants he has been carrying forward the plans of his providence in the seasons; in the growth of animals; in the formation of fruit; in the bountiful harvest. So, according to our measure, we are to anticipate what will be the probable wants of our families, and to make arrangements to meet them. The words 'his own,' refer to those who are naturally dependent on him, whether living in his own immediate family or not. There may be many distant relatives naturally dependent on our aid, besides those who live in our own house. And especially for those of his own house. Marg., kindred. The word house, or household, better expresses the sense than the word kindred. The meaning is, those who live in his own family. They would naturally have higher claims on him than those who did not. They would commonly be his nearer relatives, and the fact, from whatever cause, that they constituted his own family, would lay the foundation for a strong claim upon him. He who neglected his own immediate family would be more guilty than he who neglected a more remote relative. He hath denied the faith. By his conduct, perhaps, not openly. He may still be a professor of religion and do this; but he will show that he is imbued with none of the spirit of religion, and is a stranger to its real nature. The meaning is, that he would, by such an act, have practically renounced Christianity, since it enjoins this duty on all. We may hence learn that it is possible to deny the faith by conduct as well as by words; and that a neglect of doing our duty is as real a denial of Christianity as it would be openly to renounce it. Peter denied his Lord in one way, and thousands do the same thing in another. He did it in words; they by neglecting their duty to their families, or their duty in their closets, or their duty in attempting to send salvation to their fellow-men, or

by an openly irreligious life. A neglect of any duty is so far a denial of the faith. And is worse than an infidel. The word here does not mean an infidel, technically so called, or one who openly professes to disbelieve Christianity, but any one who does not believe; that is, any one who is not a sincere Christian. The word, therefore, would include the heathen, and it is to them, doubtless, that the apostle particularly refers. They acknowledged the obligation to provide for their relatives. This was one of the great laws of nature written on their hearts, and a law which they felt bound to obey. Few things were inculcated more constantly by heathen moralists than this duty. Galgacus, in Tacitas, says, "Nature dictates that to every one, his own children and relatives should be most dear." Cicero says, "Every man should take care of his own family"--suos quisque debet tueri. See Rosenmuller, in loc., and also numerous examples of the same kind quoted from Apuleius, Cicero, Plutarch, Homer, Terence, Virgil, and Servius, in Priceaus, in loc. The doctrine here is,

(1.) that a Christian ought not to be inferior to an unbeliever in respect to any virtue;

(2.) that in all that constitutes true virtue he ought to surpass him;

(3.) that the duties which are taught by nature ought to be regarded as the more sacred and obligatory from the fact that God has given us a better religion; and

(4.) that a Christian ought never to give occasion to an enemy of the gospel to point to a man of the world and say, "There is one who surpasses you in any virtue."

"If any (a general proposition; therefore including in its application the widow's children or grandchildren) provide not for his own (relations in general), and especially for those of his own house (in particular), he hath (practically) denied the faith." Faith without love and its works is dead; "for the subject matter of faith is not mere opinion, but the grace and truth of God, to which he that believes gives up his spirit, as he that loves gives up his heart"

[MACK]. If in any case a duty of love is plain, it is in relation to one's own relatives; to fail in so plain an obligation is a plain proof of want of love, and therefore of want of faith. "Faith does not set aside natural duties, but strengthens them" [BENGEL]. Because even an infidel (or unbeliever) is taught by nature to provide for his own relatives, and generally recognizes the duty; the Christian who does not so, is worse (Mt 5:46, 47). He has less excuse with his greater light than the infidel who may break the laws of nature.

One reason why this care must be taken that those who are rich should maintain their poor relations, and not burden the church with them is (1Ti 5:16) that it may relieve those who are widows indeed. Observe, Charity misplaced is a great hindrance to true charity; there should be prudence in the choice of the objects of charity, that it may not be thrown away upon those who are not properly so, that there may be the more for those who are real objects of charity.

9 Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years
old, having been the wife of one man,
10 well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if
she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she
have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every
good work.

If she have brought up children. Either her own or others. The idea is, if she has done this in a proper manner. If she have lodged strangers. If she has been characterized by hospitality--a virtue greatly commended in the Scriptures. Comp. 1Timm 3:2 If she have washed the saints' feet. It is not certain whether this is to be understood literally, or whether it merely denotes that she had performed offices of a humble and self-denying kind--such as would be shown by washing the feet of others. It was one of the rites of hospitality in the East to wash the feet of the guest, Gen 18:4, and Paul might have spoken of this as having been literally performed. There is not the slightest evidence that he refers to it as a religious rite, or ordinance, any more than he does to the act of bringing up children as a religious rite. Jn 13:1 and following. If she have relieved the afflicted. If it has been her character that she was ready to furnish relief to those who were in distress. If she have

diligently followed every good work. This is one of the characteristics of true piety. A sincere Christian will, like God, be the friend of all that is good, and will be ready to promote every good object according to his ability. He will not merely be the friend of one good cause, to the neglect of others, but he will endeavour to promote every good object, and though from peculiar circumstances, and peculiar dealings of Providence, he may have been particularly interested in some one object of charity, yet every good object will find a response in his heart, and he will be ready to promote it by his influence, his property, and his prayers.

11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax
wanton against Christ, they will marry;
12 having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

Having damnation. Or rather, having condemnation; or incurring guilt. This does not mean of necessity that they would lose their souls. See the phrase explained 1Cor 11:29. The meaning is, that they would contract guilt, if they had been admitted among this class of persons, and then married again. The apostle does not say that that would be wrong in itself, 1Timm 5:14, or that they would be absolutely prohibited from it, but that injury would be done if they were admitted among those who were "widows indeed"--who were supported by the church, and who were intrusted with a certain degree of care over the more youthful females--and then should leave that situation. It might give occasion for scandal; it might break in upon the arrangements; it would show that there was a relaxing of the faith, and of the deadness to the world, which they were supposed to have; and it was better that they should be married 1Timm 5:14, without having been thus admitted. Because they have cast of their first faith. This does not mean that they would lose all their religion, or wholly fall away, but that this would show that they had not the strong faith, the deadness to the world, the simple dependence on God, 1Timm 5:5,) and the desire which they had to be weaned from worldly cares and influences, which they once had. When they became widows, all their earthly hopes seemed to be blasted. They were then dead to the world, and felt their sole dependence on God. But if, under the influence of these strong emotions, they were admitted to the "class of widows" in the church, there was no certainty that they would continue in

this state of mind. Time would do much to modify their grief. There would be a reviving love of the world, and under the influence of this they would be disposed to enter into the married relation, and thus show that they had not the strong and simple faith which they had when the blow which made them widows fell heavily upon them.

13 And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.

And withal. In addition to the prospect that they may marry again, there are other disadvantages which might follow from such an arrangement, and other evils to be feared, which it is desirable to avoid. They learn to be idle. That is, if supported by the church, and if without the settled principles which might be expected in those more aged and experienced, it may be feared that they will give themselves up to an indolent life. There would be a security in the age and established habits of those more advanced in life, which there could not be in their case. The apostle does not mean that widows are naturally disposed to be idle, but that in the situation referred to, there would be danger of it. Wandering about from house to house. A natural consequence of supposing that they had nothing to do, and a practice not only profitless, but always attended with mischief. Tattlers also. Literally, overflowing; then overflowing with talk--praters, triflers. They would learn all the news; become acquainted with the secrets of families; and of course indulge in much idle and improper conversation. Our word gossippers would accurately express the meaning here. The noun does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The verb occurs in 3Jn 10; rendered, prating against. And busybodies. 2Thes 3:11. The word means, probably, working all round, over-doing, and then an intermeddler. Persons who have nothing to do of their own, commonly find employment by interesting themselves in the affairs of their neighbours. No one likes to be wholly idle; and if any one is not found doing what he ought to do, he will commonly be found engaged in doing what he ought not. Speaking things which they ought not. Revealing the concerns of their neighbours; disclosing secrets; magnifying trifles, so as to exalt themselves into importance, as if they were intrusted with the secrets of others;

inventing stories and tales of gossip, that they may magnify and maintain their own consequence in the community. No persons are commonly more dangerous to the peace of a neighbourhood, than those who have nothing to do.

14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children,
guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak
reproachfully.

15 For some are already turned aside after Satan.

For some are already turned aside after Satan. That is, some young widows. The meaning is, that in the respects above mentioned, 1Timm 5:13, they had followed the great Tempter, rather than the Lord Jesus. This is stated as a reason why they should not be admitted into the number of the widows who were to be maintained at the expense of the church, and to whom the care of the younger female members was to be committed.

16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve
them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them
that are widows indeed.

Let them relieve them. That is, let them support them. This was an obvious rule of duty. 1Timm 5:8. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to leave those who are properly dependent on us to be supported by others, when we are able to maintain them ourselves. That it may relieve, etc. That it may have the means of supporting those who are truly dependent. To require or expect the church, therefore, to support those whom we ought ourselves to support, is, in fact, to rob the poor and friendless. In regard to these directions respecting widows, 1Timm 5:3-16, we may remark in general, as the result of the exposition which has been given,

(1.) they were to be poor widows, who had not the means of support themselves.

(2.) They were, probably, to be not merely supported, but to be usefully employed in the service of the church, particularly in overseeing the conduct, and imparting instruction to the female members.

(3.) They were to be of such age and character that there would be security of stability and correctness of deportment; such that they would not be tempted to leave the situation, or to act so as to give occasion of reproach.

(4.) It is by no means certain that this was intended to be a permanent arrangement. It grew probably out of the peculiar customs respecting intercourse between the sexes in the oriental world, and would undoubtedly be proper now in similar circumstances. But it by no means follows that this arrangement is binding on the churches where the customs of society are different. Yet

(5.) the passage inculcates the general principle that the poor widows of the church are to be assisted, when they have no relatives on whom they can naturally depend. No class of people are more helpless than aged widows, and for that class God has always shown a special concern, and his people should do so likewise.

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.

Our apostle proceeds next to give Timothy directions concerning elders; not old men in years, but elders in office, such as were employed in the governing of the church, and over and above that service, laboured even unto weariness in preaching of the word, and expounding the Christian doctrine, requiring that double honour be given unto such.

Note here, 1. The elders' work and duty declared; to rule well: wisely to preside over, and discreetly to govern, the church of Christ; also to labour in the word and doctrine; to take pains in preaching the gospel upon all occasions: those that are advanced to the highest eminency in the church will not think themselves above this part of their duty.

Note, 2. The honour and respect challenged on their behalf: double honour is their due, namely, an honour of reverence, and an honour of maintenance, and a double measure of either; some think it an allusion to the first born, who was the priest of the family, and had a double portion amongst his brethren; the Levites succeeded them,

and the ministers of the gospel these; who, when laborious in governing and teaching the church of Christ, deserve more honour and better maintenence than the unkind world is willing to confer upon them; who, instead of double honour, sometimes deny them civil respect.

Note, 3. In that the apostle styles the ministers' maintenance is not to be esteemed in the nature of alms, but of a tribute paid by an inferior to a superior; neither is our maintenance mercenary wages, but such as ought to be given as a testimony of honour, as well as in the nature of a reward. As then they are worthy of, let them never fail to receive, double honour, who rule well, and also labour in the word and doctrine.

18 For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer *is* worthy of his reward.

And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. This expression is found substantially in Mt 10:10, Lk 10:7. It does not occur in so many words in the Old Testament, and yet the apostle adduces it evidently as a quotation from the Scriptures, and as authority in the case. It would seem probable, therefore, that he had seen the gospel by Matthew or by Luke, and that he quoted this as a part of Scripture, and regarded the. Book from which he made the quotation as of the same authority as the Old Testament. If so, then this may be regarded as an attestation of the apostle to the inspiration of the "Gospel" in which it was found.

19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

Receive not an accusation. He was not to regard such a charge as well founded unless sustained by two or three witnesses. It is clear from this, that Paul supposed that Timothy would be called on to hear charges against others who were in the ministerial office, and to express his judgment on such cases. There is no reason, however, to suppose that he meant that he should hear them alone, or as a "bishop," for this direction does not make the supposition improper that others would be associated with him. It is just such counsel as would now be given to a Presbyterian or Congregational minister, or such as would be given to an associate justice in a court, on the supposition that a brother judge was at any time to be tried by him

and his colleagues. But before two or three witnesses. Marg., under. The meaning is, unless supported by the testimony of two or three persons, he was not to regard an accusation against a presbyter as proved, if there was but one witness in the case, however positive he might be in his testimony. The reasons for this direction were probably such as these:

(1.) This was the requirement of the Jewish law in all cases, which had thus settled a principle which the apostle seems to have regarded as important, if not obligatory, under the Christian dispensation. See De 17:6, 19:15. Jn 8:17; 2Cor 13:1.

(2.) There would be much greater reason to apprehend that one person might be deceived in the matter on which he bore witness, or might do it from malignant motives, or might be bribed to give false testimony, than that two or three would give such testimony; and the arrangement, therefore, furnished important security for the innocent.

(3.) There might be reason to apprehend that evil-minded persons might be disposed to bring charges against the ministers of the gospel or other officers of the church, and it was important therefore that their rights should be guarded with anxious care. The ministers of religion often give offence to wicked men by their rebukes of sin, (comp. Mk 6:17-20;) wicked men would rejoice to see an accusation against them sustained; the cause of religion would be liable to suffer much when its ministers were condemned as guilty of gross offences, and it is right, therefore, that the evidence in the case should be as free as possible from all suspicion that it is caused by malignity, by hatred of religion, or by conspiracy, or by a desire to see religion disgraced.

(4.) The character of a minister of the gospel is of value, not only to himself and family, as is the case with that of other men, but is of special value to the church, and to the cause of religion. It is the property of the church. The interests of religion depend much on it, and it should not be wantonly assailed; and every precaution should be adopted that Christianity should not be deprived of the advantage which may be derived in its favour from the piety, experience, and

talents of its public defenders. At the same time, however, the wicked, though in the ministry, should not be screened from the punishment which they deserve. The apostle gave no injunction to attempt to cover up their faults, or to save them from a fair trial, he only demanded such security as the nature of the case required, that the trial should be fair. If a minister of the gospel has been proved to be guilty of crime, the honour of religion, as well as simple justice, requires that he shall be punished as he deserves. He sins against great light; he prostitutes a holy office, and makes use of the very reputation which his office gives him, that he may betray the confidence of others; and such a man should not escape. There should be no "benefit of clergy," and neither a black coat, nor bands, nor the lawn should save a villain.

20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Them that sin. That have been proved to have committed sin--referring probably to the elders mentioned in the previous verse, but giving the direction so general a form that it might be applicable to others. Rebuke before all. Before all the church or congregation. The word rebuke properly denotes to reprove or reprehend. It means here that there should be a public statement of the nature of the offence, and such a censure as the case demanded. It extends only to spiritual censures. There is no power given of inflicting any punishment by fine or imprisonment. The power of the church, in such cases, is only to express its strong and decided disapprobation of the wrong done, and if the case demands it, of disowning the offending member or minister. This direction to "rebuke an offender before all," may be easily reconciled with the direction in 1Timm 5:1, "Rebuke not an elder." The latter refers to the private and pastoral intercourse with an elder, and to the method in which he should be treated in such intercourse--to wit, with the feelings due to a father; the direction here refers to the manner in which an offender should be treated, who has been proved to be guilty, and where the case has become public. Then there is to be a public expression of disapprobation. That others also may fear. That they be kept from committing the same offence. Comp. 1Pet 2:14. The end of punishment is not the gratification of the private feelings of him who administers it, but the prevention of crime.

21 I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

I charge thee before God. Comp. Lu 16:28 Ac 20:21. The word rendered charge means, properly, to call to witness; then to affirm with solemn attestations; and then to admonish solemnly, to urge upon earnestly. It is a word which implies that the subject is of great importance. Paul gives this charge as in the presence of God, of the Redeemer, and of the elect angels, and wishes to secure that sense of its solemnity which must arise from the presence of such holy witnesses. And the Lord Jesus Christ. As in the presence of the Lord Jesus; with his eye resting upon you.

And the elect angels. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to speak as if we were in the presence of holy angels, and of the disembodied spirits of the good. Comp. Heb 12:1. No one can prove that the angels, and that the departed spirits of holy men are not witnesses of what we do. Sin, too, should be avoided as if every eye in the universe were upon us. How many things do we do which we would not; how many feelings do we cherish which we would at once banish from our minds, if we felt that the heavens above us were as transparent as glass, and that all the holy beings around the throne were fixing an intense gaze upon us! The word "elect" here seems to imply that there had been some influence used to keep them, and some purpose respecting them, which had not existed in regard to those who had fallen. Saints are called elect because they are chosen of God unto salvation, (Eph 1:4,5;) and it would appear that it is a great law extending through the universe, that both those who remain in a state of holiness, and those who are made holy, are the subjects of purpose and choice on the part of God. The fact only is stated; the reasons which led to the choice, alike in regard to angels and men, are unknown to us. Comp. Mt 11:25. That thou observe these things. Probably referring to all the things which he had enjoined in the previous parts of the epistle. Without preferring one before another. Marg., prejudice. The meaning is without previous judgment--

χωρις προκριματος--without any prejudice on account of rank, wealth, personal friendship, or predilection of any sort. Let there be entire impartiality in all cases. Justice was beautifully represented by the ancients as holding a pair of scales equally balanced. It is as important that there should be entire impartiality in the church as in civil transactions, and though it is not wrong for a minister of the gospel to have his personal friends, yet in the administration of the affairs of the church, he should remember that all are brethren, and all, of whatever rank, colour, sex, or age, have equal rights. Partiality. Gr., inclination or proclivity--that is, without being inclined to favour one party or person more than another. There should be no purpose to find one guilty, and another innocent; no inclination of heart towards one which would lead us to resolve to find him innocent; and no aversion for another which would make us resolve to find him guilty.

Lay hands suddenly on no man:it seems to be meant of the ordaining of men to the office of the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications for it. Some understand it of absolution: "Be not too hasty in laying hands on any; remit not the censure of the church to any, till time be first taken for the proof of their sincerity in their repentance, neither be partakers of other men's sins, implying that those who are too easy in remitting the censures of the church encourage others in the sins which are thus connived at, and make themselves thereby guilty." Observe, We have great need to watch over ourselves at all times, that we do not make ourselves partakers of other men's sins. "Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or being any way accessary to it, in others." Here is, 1. A caution against the rash ordination of ministers, or absolution of those who have been under church-censures: Lay hands suddenly on no man. 2. Those who are rash, either in the one case or the other, will make themselves partakers in other men's sins. 3. We must keep ourselves pure, if we will be pure; the grace of God makes and keeps us pure, but it is by our own endeavours.

Some have understood this of laying on hands to heal the sick (Koppe ;) others of the laying on of hands to absolve penitents; but the obvious meaning is to refer it to ordination. It was usual to lay the hands on the heads of those who were ordained to a sacred office, or appointed to perform an important duty. 1Timm 4:14. Comp. Acts 6:6, 8:17. The idea here is, that TimotHy should not be hasty in an act so important as that of introducing men to the ministry, he should take time to give them a fair trial of their piety; he should have satisfactory evidence of their qualifications, he should not at once introduce a man to the ministry because he gave evidence of piety, or because he burned with an ardent zeal, or because he thought himself qualified for the work. It is clear from this that the apostle regarded Timothy as having the right to ordain to the ministry; but not that he was to ordain alone, or as a prelate. The injunction would be entirely proper on the supposition that others were to be associated with him in the act of ordaining. It is just such as a Presbyterian father in the ministry would give in a charge to his son now; it is in fact just the charge which is now given by Presbyterians and Congregationalists to those who are set apart to the sacred office, in reference to ordaining others. Neither be partakers of other men's sins. This is evidently to be interpreted in connection with the injunction "to lay hands suddenly on no man." The meaning in this connection, is, that Timothy was not to become a participant in the sins of another by introducing him to the sacred office. He was not to invest one with a holy office who was a wicked man or a heretic, for this would be to sanction his wickedness and error. If we ordain a man to the office of the ministry who is known to be living in sin, or to cherish dangerous error, we become the patrons of the sin and of the heresy. We lend to it the sanction of our approbation; and give to it whatever currency it may acquire from the reputation which we may have, or which it may acquire from the influence of the sacred office of the ministry. Hence the importance of caution in investing any one with the ministerial office. But while Paul meant, doubtless, that this should be applied particularly to ordination to the ministry, he has given it a general character. In no way are we to participate in the sins of other men. We are not to be engaged with them in doing wrong; we are not to patronize them in a wicked business; we are not to be known as their

companions or friends; and we are not to partake of their unlawful gains.

The second interpretation given of these words is, that Timothy is here directed how to carry himself in censuring and absolving of penitents: as if St. Paul had said, "When thou hast justly censured an offender, be not too hasty in absolving of him, (for this also was done by imposition of hands,) until some trial be made of his reformation, lest by so doing thou becomest guilty of his future faults: but keep thyself pure from all sin, whose office it is to censure and reprove sin in others." In both these senses have these words been understood, Lay hands suddenly on no man; keep thyself pure.

that is, ordain (1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; Tit 1:5). The connection is with 1Ti 5:19. The way to guard against scandals occurring in the case of presbyters is, be cautious as to the character of the candidate before ordaining him; this will apply to other Church officers so ordained, as well as to presbyters. Thus, this clause refers to 1Ti 5:19, as next clause, "neither be partaker of other men's sins," refers to 1Ti 5:20. ELLICOTT and WIESINGER understand it of receiving back into Church fellowship or absolution, by laying hands on those who had been "rebuked" (1Ti 5:20) and then excommunicated (Mt 18:17); 1Ti 5:20 favors this. But as in 1Ti 4:14, and Ac 6:6; 13:3; 2Ti 1:6, the laying on of hands is used of ordination (compare however as to confirmation, Ac 8:17), it seems better to take it so here.

neither be partaker of other men's sins—by negligence in ordaining ungodly candidates, and so becoming in some degree responsible for their sins. Or, there is the same transition from the elders to all in general who may sin, as in 1Ti 5:19, 20. Be not a partaker in other men's sins by not "rebuking them that sin before all," as well as those that are candidates for the presbytery, as also all "that sin." keep thyself pure—"thyself' is emphatic. "Keep THYSELF" clear of participation in OTHER men's sin by not failing to rebuke them that sin (1Ti 5:20). Thus the transition is easy to 1Ti 5:23, which is concerning Timothy personally; compare also 1Ti 5:24.

23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake
and thine often infirmities.

Drink no longer water.--There has been much difficulty felt in regard to the connection which this advice has with what precedes and what follows. Many have considered the difficulty to be so great that they have supposed that this verse has been displaced, and that it should be introduced in some other connection. The true connection, and the reason for the introduction of the counsel here, seems to me to be this; Paul appears to have been suddenly impressed with the thought--a thought which is very likely to come over a man who is writing on the duties of the ministry--of the arduous nature of the ministerial office. He was giving counsels in regard to an office which required a great amount of labour, care, and anxiety. The labours enjoined were such as to demand all the time; the care and anxiety incident to such a charge would be very likely to prostrate the frame, and to injure the health. Then he remembered that Timothy was yet but a youth: he recalled his feebleness of constitution and his frequent attacks of illness; he recollected the very abstemious habits which he had prescribed for himself, and, in this connection, he urges him to a careful regard for his health, and prescribes the use of a small quantity of wine, mingled with water, as a suitable medicine in his case. Thus considered, this direction is as worthy to be given by an inspired teacher as it is to counsel a man to pay a proper regard to his health, and not needlessly to throw away his life. Comp. Mt 10:23. The phrase, "drink no longer water," is equivalent to "drink not water only." See numerous instances in Wetstein. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

But use a little wine. Mingled with the water--the common method of drinking wine in the East. See Robinson's Bibliotheca Sacra. i. 512, 513. For thy stomach's sake. It was not for the pleasure to be derived from the use of wine, or because it would produce hilarity or excitement, but solely because it was regarded as necessary for the promotion of health; that is, as a medicine. And thine often infirmities. ασθενειας. Weaknesses or sicknesses. The word would include all infirmities of body, but seems to refer here to some attacks of sickness to which Timothy was liable, or to some feebleness of constitution; but beyond this we have no information

in regard to the nature of his maladies. In view of this passage, and as a further explanation of it, we may make the following remarks:

(1.) The use of wine, and of all intoxicating drinks, was solemnly forbidden to the priests under the Mosaic law, when engaged in the performance of their sacred duties, Lev 10:9,10. The same was the case among the Egyptian priests, Clarke. 1Timm 3:3. It is not improbable that the same thing would be regarded as proper among those who ministered in holy things under the Christian dispensation. The natural feeling would be, and not improperly, that a Christian minister should not be less holy than a Jewish priest, and especially when it is remembered that the reason of the Jewish law remained the same--"that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and clean and unclean."

(2.) It is evident from this passage that Timothy usually drank water only, or that, in modern language, he was a "tee-totaller." He was, evidently, not in the habit of drinking wine, or he could not have been exhorted to do it.

(3.) He must have been a remarkably temperate youth to have required the authority of an apostle to induce him to drink even a little wine. See Doddridge. There are few young men so temperate as to require such an authority to induce them to do it.

(4.) The exhortation extended only to a very moderate use of wine. It was not to drink it freely; it was not to drink it at the tables of the rich and the great, or in the social circle; it was not even to drink it by itself; it was to use "a little," mingled with water--for this was the usual method. See Athaeneus Deipno. lib. ix. x. c. 7.

(5.) It was not as a common drink, but the exhortation or command extends only to its use as a medicine. All the use which can be legitimately made of this injunction--whatever conclusion may be drawn from other precepts--is, that it is proper to use a small quantity of wine for medicinal purposes.

(6.) There are many ministers of the gospel, now, alas! to whom under no circumstances could an apostle apply this exhortation--"Drink no longer water only." They would ask, with surprise, what he meant? whether he intended it in irony, and for banter--for they need no apostolic command to drink wine. Or if he should address to them the exhortation, "Use a little wine," they could regard it only as a reproof for their usual habit of drinking much. To many, the exhortation would be appropriate, if they ought to use wine at all, only because they are in the habit of using so much, that it would be proper to restrain them to a much smaller quantity.

(7.) This whole passage is one of great value to the cause of temperance. Timothy was undoubtedly in the habit of abstaining wholly from the use of wine. Paul knew this, and he did not reprove him for it. He manifestly favoured the general habit, and only asked him to depart in some small degree from it, in order that he might restore and preserve his health. So far, and no farther, is it right to apply this language in regard to the use of wine; and the minister who should follow this injunction would be in no danger of disgracing his sacred profession by the debasing and demoralizing sin of intemperance.

24 Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment;
and some *men* they follow after.

Some men's sins are open beforehand. This declaration, though it assumes a general form, is to be taken evidently in connection with the general subject of introducing men to the ministry 1Timm 5:22 5:23 is to be regarded as a parenthesis. The apostle had given Timothy a charge 1Timm 5:22 respecting the character of those whom he should ordain. He here says, in reference to that, that the character of some men was manifest. There was no disguise. It was evident to all what it was, and there could be no danger of mistake respecting it. Their conduct was apparent to all. About such men he ought not to hesitate a moment, and, no matter what their talents, or learning, or rank in the community, he ought to have no participation in introducing them to the ministry. Going before to judgment. Their character is well understood. There is no need of waiting for the day of judgment to know what they are. Their deeds so precede their own appearance at the judgment-bar, that the record and the verdict

can be made up before they arrive there, and there will be scarcely need even of the formality of a trial. The meaning here is, that there could be no doubt about the character of such men, and Timothy should not be accessory to their being introduced into the office of the ministry. And some men they follow after. That is, their character is not fully understood here. They conceal their plans. They practise deception. They appear different from what they really are. But the character of such men will be developed, and they will be judged according to their works. They cannot hope to escape with impunity. Though they have endeavoured to hide their evil deeds, yet they will follow after them to the judgment-bar, and will meet them there. The meaning, in this connection, seems to be, that there ought to be circumspection in judging of the qualifications of men for the office of the ministry. It ought not to be inferred from favourable appearances at once, or on slight acquaintance, that they are qualified for the office--for they may be of the number of those whose characters, now concealed or misunderstood, will be developed only on the final trial.

St. Paul had just before exhorted Timothy to keep himself pure from other men's sins, whether candidates or penitents: here comes in subsequent advice, in order thereunto: as if our apostle had said, "Timothy, if thou beest diligent to observe, and not over hasty either in ordaining candidates, or absolving penitents, thou mayest in some measure perceive who are worthy, and who are unworthy. If thou layest thine hands upon those who are actually faulty, thou partakest with them, by being an occasion of their sinning; but if thou canst not discover their faultiness beforehand, though they afterwards prove wicked, it is not thy fault; God will at length detect them, yea, they will discover themselves; and when their faults are manifest, deal with them according to the discipline of the church."

Learn hence, 1. That how much soever sinners attempt the hiding, yet they cnnot actually hide themselves, or their sinnings, from God's sight and knowledge. They cannot be hid, says St. Paul, though men labour much to hide them.

Oh! sinner, there is no way to hide thyself from God: thou mayest by repentance hide thyself in God, in the love, in the favour, in the mercy of God, but from God thou canst not be hid. As the saints' good works are open and manifest in the sight and to the view of God, so they that are otherwise cannot be hid from him who is every where? Or what thing can be our covering from him, in whose sight all things are open? Lord! what will it avail to hide ourselves from men, when we lie open and manifest to the eye of God? They that are otherwise cannot be hid.

going before to judgment—as heralds; crying sins which accuse their perpetrator. The connection seems to me this: He had enjoined Timothy, 1Ti 5:20, "Rebuke them that sin before all": and in 1Ti 5:22, "Neither be partaker of other men's sins," by ordaining ungodly men; having then by a digression at the clause, "keep thyself pure," guarded against an ascetical error of Timothy in fancying purity consisted in asceticism, and having exhorted him to use wine for strengthening him in his work, he returns to the subject of his being vigorous as an overseer in rebuking sin, whether in presbyters or people, and in avoiding participation in men's sins by ordaining ungodly candidates. He says, therefore, there are two classes of sins, as there are two classes of good works: those palpably manifest, and those not so; the former are those on which thou shouldest act decidedly at once when called on, whether to rebuke in general, or to ordain ministers in particular; as to the latter, the final judgment alone can decide; however hidden now they "cannot be hid" then. This could only be said of the final judgment (1Co 4:5; therefore, ALFORD'S reference of this verse to Timothy's judgment in choosing elders must be wrong); all judgments before then are fallible. Thus he implies that Timothy can only be responsible if he connive at manifest, or evident sins; not that those that are otherwise shall escape judgment at last: just as in the case of good works, he can only be responsible for taking into account in his judgments those which are patent to all, not those secret good works which nevertheless will not remain hidden at the final judgment.

25 Likewise also the good works *of some* are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

1 Timothy-6

1 Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed.

Let as many servants. On the word here rendered servants-- δουλοι-- Eph 6:5. The word is that which was commonly applied to a slave, but it is so extensive in its signification as to be applicable to any species of servitude, whether voluntary or involuntary. If slavery existed in Ephesus at the time when this epistle was written, it would be applicable to slaves; if, any other kind of servitude existed, the word would be equally applicable to that. There is nothing in the word itself which essentially limits it to slavery. Examine Mt 13:27, 20:27, Mk 10:44, Lk 2:29, Jn 15:15, Acts 2:18, 4:29, 16:17, Rom 1:1 2Cor 4:5, Jude 1:1, Rev 1:1, 2:20, 7:3. The addition of the phrase "under the yoke," however, shows undoubtedly that it is to be understood here of slavery. As are under the yoke. On the word yoke, Mt 11:29. The phrase here properly denotes slavery, as it would not be applied to any other species of servitude. See Lev 26:13. Dem. 322. 12. ζυγοςδουλοσυνης Rob. Lex. It sometimes denotes the bondage of the Mosaic law as being a severe and oppressive burden. Acts 15:10, Gal 5:1. It may be remarked here that the apostle did not regard slavery as a light or desirable thing. He would not have applied this term to the condition of a wife or a child. Count their own masters worthy of all honour. Treat them with all proper respect. They were to manifest the right spirit themselves, whatever their masters did; they were not to do anything that would dishonour religion. The injunction here would seem to have particular reference to those whose masters were not Christians. In the following verse, the apostle gives particular instructions to those who had pious masters. The meaning here is, that the slave ought to show the Christian spirit towards his master who was not a Christian; he ought to conduct himself so that religion would not be dishonoured; he ought not to give his master occasion to say that the only effect of the Christian religion on the mind of a servant was to make him restless, discontented, dissatisfied, and disobedient. In the humble and trying situation in which he confessedly was--under the yoke of bondage--

he ought to evince patience, kindness, and respect for his master, and as long as the relation continued he was to be obedient. This command, however, was by no means inconsistent with his desiring his freedom, and securing it, if the opportunity presented itself. See Notes on 1Cor 7:21. Comp., on the passage before us, Eph 6:5; Eph 6:6-8, 1Pet 2:18. That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. That religion be not dishonoured and reproached, and that there may be no occasion to say that Christianity tends to produce discontent and to lead to insurrection. If the effect of religion had been to teach all who were servants that they should no longer obey their masters, or that they should rise upon them and assert their freedom by violence, or that their masters were to be treated with indignity on account of their usurped rights over others, the effect would have been obvious. There would have been a loud and united outcry against the new religion, and it could have made no progress in the world. Instead of this, Christianity taught the necessity of patience and meekness, and forbearance in the endurance of all wrong--whether from private individuals, Mt 5:39-41, 1Cor 6:7; or under the oppressions and exactions of Nero, Rom 13:1-7; or amidst the hardships and cruelties of slavery. Let as many servants. On the word here rendered servants-- δουλοι--Eph 6:5. The word is that which was commonly applied to a slave, but it is so extensive in its signification as to be applicable to any species of servitude, whether voluntary or involuntary. If slavery existed in Ephesus at the time when this epistle was written, it would be applicable to slaves; if, any other kind of servitude existed, the word would be equally applicable to that. There is nothing in the word itself which essentially limits it to slavery. Examine Mt 13:27, 20:27, Mk 10:44, Lk 2:29, Jn 15:15, Acts 2:18, 4:29, 16:17, Rom 1:1 2Cor 4:5, Jude 1:1, Rev 1:1, 2:20, 7:3. The addition of the phrase "under the yoke," however, shows undoubtedly that it is to be understood here of slavery. As are under the yoke. On the word yoke, Mt 11:29. The phrase here properly denotes slavery, as it would not be applied to any other species of servitude. See Lev 26:13. Dem. 322. 12. ζυγοςδουλοσυνης Rob. Lex. It sometimes denotes the bondage of the Mosaic law as being a severe and oppressive burden. Acts 15:10, Gal 5:1. It may be remarked here that the apostle did not regard slavery as a light or desirable thing. He would not have applied this term to the condition of a wife or a child.

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2 And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*,
because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they
are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.
These things teach and exhort.

Where note, That the poorest and meanest professor of Christianity may do much good or much hurt to religion: some might be ready to say "Alas, what credit or discredit can a poor servant do to religion? Much every way: he may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, Titus 2:9 by his Christian behaviour; and the name of God, and his doctrine, may be blasphemed by him, if he be negligent in his duty. None are so inconsiderable but they are capable of serving the great ends of religion, and may honour God in some measure; and are capable of being honoured by him upon earth, and with him in the highest heavens.

The opposition is between those Christian slaves under the yoke of heathen, and those that have believing masters (he does not use the phrase "under the yoke" in the latter case, for service under believers is not a yoke). Connect the following words thus, "Let them (the slaves) not, because they (the masters) are brethren (and so equals, masters and slaves alike being Christians), despise them (the masters)."

And they that have believing masters. Masters who are Christians. It is clear from this, that Paul supposed that, at that time, and under those circumstances, a man might become a Christian who had slaves under him. How long he might continue to hold his fellow-men in bondage, .and yet be a Christian, is, however, quite a different question. It is quite clear, from the New Testament, as well as from facts now, that God may convert men when pursuing any kind of wickedness. The effect of religion, however, in all cases, will be to lead them to cease to do wrong. It is by no means improbable that many of those who had owned slaves, in accordance with the prevailing custom in the Roman empire, may have been converted--for the fact that a man has been living a life of sin does not prevent the possibility of his conversion. There is no evidence that Paul refers here to any who had bought slaves after they were converted; nor is there any intimation of any such transaction among Christians in the New Testament. Nor is there any intimation that he regarded it as right and best that they should continue to hold slaves; nor that he

would approve their making arrangements to persevere in this as a permanent institution. Nor is it to be fairly inferred from this passage that he meant to teach that they might continue this, and yet be entitled to all the respect and confidence due to the Christian name, or be regarded as maintaining a good standing in the church. Whatever may be true on these points, the passage before us only proves that Paul considered that a man who was a slave-holder might be converted, and be spoken of as a "believer," or a Christian. Many have been converted in similar circumstances, as many have in the practice of all other kinds of iniquity. What was their duty after their conversion, was another question; and what was the duty of their "servants," or slaves, was another question still. It is only this latter question which the apostle is here considering. Not despise them, because they are brethren. Not treat them with any want of the respect which is due to their station. The word here used sometimes denotes to neglect, or, not to care for, Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13. Here it is not necessary to suppose that it denotes actual contempt, but only that want of respect which might possibly spring up in the mind if not well instructed, or not on its guard, among those who were servants or slaves. It was to be apprehended that the effect of the master and the slave having both embraced religion would be to produce in the mind of the servant a want of respect and deference for his master. This danger was to be apprehended from the following causes:--

(1.) Christianity taught that all men were made of "one blood," and were by nature equal, Acts 17:26. It was natural, therefore, for the slave to infer that by nature he was equal to his master, and it would be easy to pervert this truth to make him disrespectful and insubordinate.

(2.) They were equal to them as Christians. Christianity taught them that they were all "brethren" in the Lord, and that there was no distinction before God. It might be natural to infer from this, that all distinctions in society were to be abolished, and that, in all respects, the slave was to regard himself as on a level with his master.

(3.) Some, who did not well understand the nature of Christianity, or who might have been disposed to cause trouble, may have taken

advantage of the undeniable truths about the equality of men by nature and by redemption, to produce discontent on the part of the slave. They may have endeavoured to embitter the feelings of the slaves towards their masters who held them in bondage. The effect, it is easy to see, may have been to lead those who were in a state of servitude to manifest open and marked disrespect. In opposition to this, the apostle would have Timothy teach that Christianity did not rudely assail the existing institutions of society, and especially did not teach those who were in subordinate ranks to be disrespectful to those above them. But rather do them service. That is, serve them with more cheerfulness and alacrity than they did before the master was converted; or serve them with the more cheerfulness because they were Christians. The reasons for this were, because the master was now more worthy of affectionate regard, and because the servant might look for better treatment at his hands. Comp. Notes on Eph 6:6.

Because they are faithful. If the common sense of the Greek verb be urged, the sense must be, "Because they (the masters) are faithful and beloved who are sedulously intent on the benefiting" of their servants. That is, because they are believers, or are Christians -πιστοι; the same word which in the beginning of the verse is rendered believing. It does not here mean that they were "faithful" to their servants or their God, but merely that they were Christians. And beloved. Probably, "beloved of God;" for so the word is often used. As they are the friends of God, they who are servants should show them the more respect. The idea is, simply, that one whom God loves should be treated with more respect than if he were not thus beloved; or, a good man deserves more respect than a wicked man. In all the relations of life, we should respect those above us the more in proportion to the excellency of their character. Partakers of the benefit. That is, the benefit which the gospel imparts--for so the connection requires us to understand it. It cannot mean, as many have supposed, that they were "partakers of the benefit of the labours of the servant," or enjoyed the fruits of their labours,--for how could this be a reason for their treating them with the more respect? It would be rather a reason for treating them with less respect, because they were living on the avails of unrequited toil. But the true reason assigned is, that the master had been, by the grace of God, permitted to participate

in the same benefits of salvation as the servant; he had received, like him, the pardon of sin, and he was to be regarded as a fellow-heir of the grace of life. The expression here might be rendered, "they are partakers of, or are devoted to, the good cause." Rob. Lex. The argument is, that they were not infidels, or strangers to religion, or those who would try to hinder the progress of that which was dear to the heart of the servant, but were united with them in that same good work; they participated in the blessings of the same salvation, and they were really endeavouring to further the interests of religion. There ought, therefore, to be the more respect shown to them, and the more cheerful service rendered them.

Those that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren; for this brotherhood relates only to spiritual privileges, not to any outward dignity or advantage (those misunderstood and abuse their religion who make it a pretence for denying the duties that they owe to their relations); nay, rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved. They must think themselves the more obliged to serve them because the faith and love that bespeak men Christians oblige them to do good; and that is all wherein their service consists. Observe, It is a great encouragement to us in doing our duty to our relations if we have reason to think they are faithful and beloved, and partakers of the benefit, that is, of the benefit of Christianity. Again, Believing masters and servants are brethren, and partakers of the benefit; for in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, Ga 3:28. Timothy is appointed to teach and exhort these things. Ministers must preach not only the general duties of all, but the duties of particular relations.

Godliness with Contentment

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words,
even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is
according to godliness;

If any man teach otherwise. Any otherwise than that respect should be shown to masters; and that a more cheerful and ready service should be rendered because they were Christians. It is evidently

implied here that some might be disposed to inculcate such views of religion as would produce discontent and a spirit of insubordination among those who were held to servitude. Who they were is not known, nor is it known what arguments they would employ to do it, It would seem probable that the arguments which would be employed would be such as these:--that God made all men equal; that all had been redeemed by the same blood; that all true Christians were fellow-heirs of heaven; and that it was wrong to hold a Christian brother in bondage, etc. From Undeniable principles it would seem that they drew the inference that slaves ought at once to assert their freedom; that they should refuse obedience to their masters; and that the tendency of their teaching was, instead of removing the evil by the gradual and silent influence of Christian principles, to produce discontent and insurrection. From some of the expressions here used by the apostle, as characteristic of these teachers, it would seem to be probable that these persons were Jews. They were men given to subtle disputations, and those who doted about questions and verbal disputes, and who were intent on gain, supposing that that which conduced to mere worldly prosperity was of course religion. These characteristics apply well to Jewish teachers. And consent not to wholesome words. Words conducing to a healthful state of the church; that is, doctrines tending to produce order and a due observance of the proprieties of life; doctrines leading to contentment, and sober industry, and the patient endurance of evils. Even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. The doctrines of the Saviour--all of which tended to a quiet life, and to a patient endurance of wrongs.

And to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Which tends to produce piety or religion; that is, the doctrine which would be most favourable to an easy and rapid propagation of the gospel. The idea seems to be, that such a state of insubordination and discontent as they would produce, would be unfavourable to the promotion of religion. Who can doubt it?

Paul here warns Timothy to withdraw from those who corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and made it the subject off strife, debate, and controversy: If any man teach otherwise (1Ti 6:3-5), do not preach

practically, do not teach and exhort that which is for the promoting of serious godliness--if he will not consent to wholesome words, words that have a direct tendency to heal the soul--if he will not consent to these, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Observe, We are not required to consent to any words as wholesome words except the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but to those we must give our unfeigned assent and consent, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. Observe, The doctrine of our Lord Jesus is a doctrine according to godliness; it has a direct tendency to make people godly.

4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and
strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil
surmisings,
5 perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the
truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.
6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

But godliness. Piety; religion. The meaning is, that real religion should be regarded as the greatest and most valuable acquisition. With contentment. This word, as now used, refers to a state of mind; a calm and satisfied feeling; a freedom from murmuring and complaining. The idea is, that "piety, connected with a contented mind--or a mind acquiescing in the allotments of life--is to be regarded as the real gain." Tindal gives substantially the same interpretation: "Godliness is great riches, if a man be content with that he hath." Coverdale,--" Howbeit, it is of great advantage, who is so godly, and holdeth him content with that he hath." The word which is used here--αυταρκεια --means, properly, self-sufficiency, and is used here, in a good sense, to denote a mind satisfied with its lot. If there be true religion, united with its proper accompaniment, peace of mind, it is to be regarded as the true riches. The object of the apostle seems to be, to rebuke those who supposed that property constituted everything that was worth living for. He tells them, therefore, that the true gain, the real riches which we ought to seek, is religion, with a contented mind. This does more to promote happiness than wealth can ever do, and this is what should be regarded as the great object of life.

7 For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry
nothing out.

8 And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

As if the apostle had said, "Although these seducers are for making a gain of godliness, yet we know that godliness is great gain, especially godliness with contentment; with contentment, I say, which it becomes us to have, for we brought nothing into the world with us, and shall carry nothing away with us; having therefore food and raiment, let us be therewith content and satisfied."

Learn hence, 1. That godliness is the sincere practice of the Christian religion, so called, because it directeth and prescribeth to us the true and only way of worshipping and serving God.

Learn, 2. That some men suit their godliness with their worldly ends, they make a trade and saving bargain of it.

Learn, 3. That godliness, or the sincere practice of the Christian religion, is true gain, great gain, yea, the best gain, both for this world, and that which is to come.

Learn, 4. That one great point of godliness, is to be content with what we have, yea, though it be only food and raiment.

Contentment is a sedate and quiet temper of mind about outward things: it is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, but to some more, to others less, of these outward comforts; but nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary, a little will suffice a contented mind; he is not rich that has much, but he that has enough: that man is poor who covets more, having food and raiment, &c.

Observe lastly, The apostle's argument to excite and move the Christian to this duty of contentment, without enlarging his desires inordinately after the world, and the perishing satisfactions of it. For we brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; where remark, that the note of assurance is fixed rather to our carrying out than to our bringing in; the apostle doth not say, it is certain that we brought nothing into the world, and we shall

carry nothing out: but he says, we brought nothing in, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

The note of assurance is applied to the latter; for this reason I conceive, because though all persons come naked, and bring nothing with them into the world, yet abundance is put upon them, and they are born heirs to vast possessions; but it is obvious to every eye, and most indubitably certain, that they carry nothing away with them.

Death is called an unclothing; it unclothes the body, disrobing it of all its gaudy and glorious attire: yea, it unclothes the bones; our flesh wears off quickly in the grave. We proverbially say of a rich man, he has left a vast estate, left it behind him, carrying neither a foot of land, nor a farthing of money with him; therefore doth St. Paul add, it is certain we can carry nothing out.

9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

will be rich—have more than "food and raiment." Greek, "wish to be rich"; not merely are willing, but are resolved, and earnestly desire to have riches at any cost (Pr 28:20, 22). This wishing (not the riches themselves) is fatal to "contentment" (1Ti 6:6). Rich men are not told to cast away their riches, but not to "trust" in them, and to "do good" with them (1Ti 6:17, 18; Ps 62:10).

fall into temptation—not merely "are exposed to temptation," but actually "fall into" it. The falling into it is what we are to pray against, "Lead us not into temptation" (Jas 1:14); such a one is already in a sinful state, even before any overt act of sin. The Greek for "temptation" and "gain" contains a play on sounds—porasmus, peirasmus.

The parties described: they that will be rich, that is, whether God will or no; their hearts are set upon the world, they feel it coming, and have it they will, if by any means, right or wrong, they can come at it, ask nobody's leave, no, not God Almighty's leave, but rich they are resolved to be.

Observe, 2. Their danger represented: they fall into temptation and a snare, and many foolish lusts, &c.

Learn hence, That a will and resolution to be rich, is the occasion of much mischief to those that cherish and allow it in themselves; a will to be rich, is to make riches our principal business, our main scope, our great work, to pursue the world with the full bent of our wills: now the bent of our wills is discovered, first, by intention, secondly, by industrious prosecution; when the mind is wholly intent upon getting wealth, and unwearied industry is found in the pursuit of it. Now this is to make a god of the world; for that which is a man's aim, design, and end, is his chief good, and that which is our chiefest good is God. They that will be rich, &c.

Learn, 2. That an hot and over eager pursuit of the world lays a man open to endless temptations, so that it is not only difficult, but impossible, to keep his innocency; and that being irrecoverably lost, drowns a man in perdition and destruction.

But they that will be rich. Further to enforce the duty of contentment, the apostle refers to some of the evils which necessarily attend a desire to be rich. Those evils have been so great and uniform in all ages, and are so necessary accompaniments of that desire, that, even amidst many inconveniences which may attend the opposite condition, we should be contented with our lot. Indeed, if we could see all, it would only be necessary to see the evils which the desire of wealth produces in the world, to make us contented with a most lowly condition of life. Perhaps nothing more would be necessary to make a poor man satisfied with his lot, and grateful for it, than to be acquainted with the perplexities and cares of a rich man. There is more emphasis to be placed on the word will, here, in the phrase "will be rich," than might be supposed from our translation. It is not the sign of the future tense, but implies an actual purpose or design to become rich-- οιβουλομενοι. The reference is to those in whom this becomes the object of earnest desire, and who lay their plans for it. Fall into temptation. That is, they are tempted to do wicked things in order to accomplish their purposes. It is extremely difficult to cherish the desire to be rich, as the leading

purpose of the soul, and to be all honest man. And a snare. Birds are taken in a snare, and wild beasts were formerly. Job 18:8, Job 18:9. The net was sprung suddenly upon them, and they could not escape. The idea here is, that they who have this desire, become so entangled, that they cannot easily escape. They become involved in the meshes of worldliness and sin; their movements are so lettered by cares, and inordinate desires, and by artificial wants, that they are no longer freemen. They become so involved in these things, that they cannot well break away from them if they would. Comp. Prov 28:20.

And into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Desires, such as the love of wealth creates. They are foolish--as being not such as an intelligent and immortal being should pursue; and they are hurtful--as being injurious to morals, to health, and to the soul. Among those desires, are the fondness for display; for a magnificent dwelling, a train of menials, and a splendid equipage; for sumptuous living, feasting, the social glass, company, and riotous dissipation. Which drown men in destruction and perdition. The word which is here rendered, drown βυθιζω means, to sink in the deep, or, to cause to sink; and the meaning here is, that they become submerged as a ship that sinks. The idea of drowning is not properly that of the apostle, but the image is that of a wreck, where a ship and all that is in it, go down together. The destruction is complete. There is a total ruin of happiness, of virtue, of reputation, and of the soul. The ruling desire to be rich leads on a train of follies which ruins everything here, and hereafter. How many of the human family have thus been destroyed!

fall into temptation and a snare, 1Ti 6:9. It is not said, those that are rich, but those that will be rich, that is, that place their happiness in worldly wealth, that covet it inordinately, and are eager and violent in the pursuit of it. Those that are such fall into temptation and a snare, unavoidably; for, when the devil sees which way their lusts carry them, he will soon bait his hook accordingly. He knew how fond Achan would be of a wedge of gold, and therefore laid that before him. They fall into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Observe,

(1.) The apostle supposes that,

[1.] Some will be rich; that is, they are resolved upon it, nothing short of a great abundance will satisfy.

[2.] Such will not be safe nor innocent, for they will be in danger of ruining themselves for ever; they fall into temptation, and a snare, &c.

[3.] Worldly lusts are foolish and hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition. [4.] It is good for us to consider the mischievousness of worldly fleshly lusts. They are foolish, and therefore we should be ashamed of them, hurtful, and therefore we should be afraid of them, especially considering to what degree they are hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition.

(2.) The apostle affirms that the love of money is the root of all evil, 1Ti 6:10. What sins will not men be drawn to by the love of money? Particularly this was at the bottom of the apostasy of many from the faith of Christ; while they coveted money, they erred from the faith, they quitted their Christianity, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Observe,

[1.] What is the root of all evil; the love of money: people may have money, and yet not love it; but, if they love it inordinately, it will push them on to all evil.

[2.] Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money: Which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, 2Ti 4:10. For the world was dearer to him than Christianity. Observe, Those that err from the faith pierce themselves with many sorrows; those that depart from God do but treasure up sorrows for themselves.

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some
coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced
themselves through with many sorrows.

with . . . sorrows—"pains": "thorns" of the parable (Mt 13:22) which choke the word of "faith." "The prosperity of fools destroys them" (Pr 1:32).

Here we have the nature of covetousness, the evil and sin of covetousness, and the mischief and hurt of it declared.

Observe, 1. The nature of it: it is an inordinate love of money, an insatiable desire after wealth.

Observe, 2. The evil and sinfulness of it: it is a root of sin, The root of all evil; the fruit of all sin grows from this root, distrustful care, tormenting fear, anger, malice, envy, deceit, oppression, bribery, perjury, vexatious lawsuits, and the like; nay, farther, covetousness is the root of heresy in judgment, as well as of iniquity in practice. They have erred from the faith: that is, in point of doctrine, as well as in practice; it makes a man believe, as well as act, against the rule of faith, for filthy lucre.

Observe, 3. The mischief and hurt of covetousness declared: it pierces, it pierces through with sorrows, yea, with many sorrows. But whom doth it pierce?

First, others; it pierces the poor, the needy, the widow, the fatherless, all that fall within the reach of its gripping hand; nay, it doth not spare its own master, or slave rather, but pierces him: They pierce themselves through, says the apostle, with many sorrows, with many more, and much worse sorrows, than they pierce others with.

Riches ill gotten, by covetousness or oppression, instead of making their owners heartily merry, make their consciences ache, and give them many a stitch in their side. None can tell what gall and wormwood springs from this bitter root, both to themselves and others: The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some covet after, they err from the faith, piercing themselves through with many sorrows. It is the root of all evil, of sin, and also of trouble and disquiet.

For the love of money is the root of all evil. That is, of all kinds of evil. This is evidently not to be understood as literally true, for there are evils which cannot be traced to the love of money --the evils growing out of ambition, and intemperance, and debasing lusts, and of the hatred of God and of goodness. The expression here is evidently a popular saying--" all sorts of evils grow out of the love of money." Similar expressions often occur in the classic writers. See Wetstein, in loc., and numerous examples quoted by Pricaeus. Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. No small part of the crimes of the world can be traced to the love of gold. But it deserves to be remarked here, that the apostle does not say that "money is the root of all evil," or that it is an evil at all. It is the 'love' of it which is the source of evil. Which while some coveted after. That is, some who were professing Christians. The apostle is, doubtless, referring to persons whose history was known to Timothy, and warning him, and teaching him to warn others, by their example.

They have erred from the faith. Marg., been seduced. The Greek is, they have been led astray from; that is, they have been so deceived, as to depart from the faith. The notion of deception or delusion is in the word, and the sense is, that, deceived by the promises held out by the prospect of wealth, they have apostatized from the faith. It is not implied of necessity that they were ever real Christians. They have been led off from truth and duty, and from all the hopes and joys which religion would have imparted. And have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. With such sorrows as remorse, and painful reflections on their folly, and the apprehension of future wrath. Too late they see that they have thrown away the hopes of religion for that which is at best unworthy the pursuit of an immortal mind; which leads them on to a life of wickedness; which fails of imparting what it promised when its pursuit is successful; and which, in the great majority of instances, disappoints its votaries in respect to its attainment. The word rendered "pierced themselves through"--περιεπειραν--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is a word whose force and emphasis cannot be well expressed in a translation. It is from πειρω, and is made more emphatic by the addition of the preposition περι. The word πειρω, peiro, means,

properly, to pierce through from one end to another, and is applied to meat that is pierced through by the spit when it is to be roasted (Passow;) then it means, to pierce through and through. The addition of the preposition (περι) to the word, conveys the idea of doing this all round; of piercing everywhere. It was not a single thrust which was made, but they are gashed all round with penetrating wounds. Such is the effect on those who cast off religion for the sake of gold. None can avoid these consequences who do this. Every man is in the hands of a holy and just God, and sooner or later he must feel the effects of his sin and folly

The Good Fight of Faith

11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after
righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

But thou—in contrast to the "some" (1Ti 6:10). Whatever all the world else do. Flee - As from a serpent, instead of coveting these things. man of God—who hast God as thy true riches (Ge 15:1; Ps 16:5; La 3:24). Applying primarily to Timothy as a minister (compare 2Pe 1:21), just as the term was used of Moses (De 33:1), Samuel (1Sa 9:6), Elijah, and Elisha; but, as the exhortation is as to duties incumbent also on all Christians, the term applies secondarily to him (so 2Ti 3:17) as a Christian man born of God (Jas 1:18; 1Jo 5:1), no longer a man of the world raised above earthly things; therefore, God's property, not his own, bought with a price, and so having parted with all right in himself: Christ's work is to be his great work: he is to be Christ's living representative.

it is a title borrowed from the Old Testament, where it is frequently given to the prophets, who revealed the mind and will of God to the people.

Now by giving it to Timothy, the apostle intimates his duty to him, to contemn the world, and flee the eager pursuit of riches. As if the apostle had said, "O Timothy! thou art a minister, and a man of God, solemnly dedicated to his service, and devoted entirely to his glory; see then that thou abhor, and avoid that detestable sin of covetousness. Heavenly truths are the subjects of thy daily study;

Oh! let not earthly things be the object of thy chiefest delight and love; but follow after spiritual riches, namely, righteousness and godliness, faith and love, patience and meekness; that godliness which gives contentment with food and raiment, that faith which assures us of a better and more enduring substance, that righteousness or justice which requires us to let every man enjoy his own, that love which makes us willing to distribute, that patience which makes us willing to submit to a low condition, that meekness which suppresses wrath against those that are injurious to us. All these virtues and graces are necessary to thee as a minister of God; they are certainly indications of a mind free from covetousness, and infallible preservations from it."

Hence he takes occasion to caution Timothy, and to counsel him to keep in the way of God and his duty, and particularly to fulfil the trust reposed in him as a minister. He addresses himself to him as a man of God. Ministers are men of God, and ought to conduct themselves accordingly in every thing; they are men employed for God, devoted to his honour more immediately. The prophets under the Old Testament were called men of God.

1. He charges Timothy to take heed of the love of money, which had been so pernicious to many: Flee these things. It ill becomes any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God.

2. To arm him against the love of the world, he directs him to follow that which is good. Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness: righteousness in his conversation towards men, godliness towards God, faith and love as living principles, to support him and carry him on in the practice both of righteousness and godliness. Those that follow after righteousness and godliness, from a principle of faith and love, have need to put on patience and meekness--patience to bear both the rebukes of Providence and the reproaches of men, and meekness wherewith to instruct gainsayers and pass by the affronts and injuries that are done us. Observe, It is not enough that men of God flee these things, but they must follow after what is directly contrary thereto. Further, What excellent

persons men of God are who follow after righteousness! They are the excellent of the earth, and, being acceptable to God, they should be approved of men.

3. He exhorts him to do the part of a soldier: Fight the good fight of faith. Note, Those who will get to heaven must fight their way thither. There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the opposition of the powers of darkness. Observe, It is a good fight, it is a good cause, and it will have a good issue. It is the fight of faith; we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, 2Co 10:3,4. He exhorts him to lay hold on eternal life. Observe,

(1.) Eternal life is the crown proposed to us, for our encouragement to war, and to fight the good fight of faith, the good warfare.

(2.) This we must lay hold on, as those that are afraid of coming short of it and losing it. Lay hold, and take heed of losing your hold. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown, Re 3:11.

(3.) We are called to the fight, and to lay hold on eternal life.

(4.) The profession Timothy and all faithful ministers make before many witnesses is a good profession; for they profess and engage to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life; their calling and their own profession oblige them to this.

12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Fight the good fight of faith. Not about words. The noble conflict in the cause of religion, Eph 6:10-17. 1Cor 9:26; 1Cor 9:27. The allusion is to the contests at the Grecian games. BIRKS thinks this Epistle was written from Corinth, where contests in the national games recurred at stated seasons, which will account for the allusion here as in 1Co 9:24-26. Contrast "strifes of words" (1Ti 6:4). Compare 1Ti 1:18; 2Ti 4:7. The "good profession" is connected with the good fight (Ps 60:4). The whole verse is an allusion to the Olympic games, particularly to that of racing, where the garland or

crown being hung up at the end of the goal, he that came first did lay hold of it, and take it to himself; and because these games were performed in the sight of many spectators, the apostle continues the allusion, and says, Timothy had before many witnesses professed his readiness to suffer for the faith.

Lay hold on eternal life. As the crown of victory that is held out to you. Seize this as eagerly as the competitors at the Grecian games laid hold on the prize. 1Cor 9:25. Whereunto thou art also called. That is, by the Spirit of God, and by the very nature of your profession. God does not 'call' his people that they may become rich; he does not convert them in order that they may devote themselves to the business of gain. They are 'called' to a higher and nobler work. Yet how many professing Christians there are who seem to live as if God had 'called' them to the special business of making money, and who devote themselves to it with a zeal and assiduity that would do honour to such a calling, if this had been the grand object which God had in view in converting them! And hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. That is, either when he embraced the Christian religion, and made a public profession of it in the presence of the church and of the world; or when he was solemnly set apart to the ministry; or as he, in his Christian life, had been enabled publicly to evince his attachment to the Saviour. I see no reason to doubt that the apostle may have referred to the former, and that in early times a profession of religion may have been openly made before the church and the world. Such a method of admitting members to the church would have been natural, and would have been fitted to make a deep impression on others. It is a good thing often to remind professors of religion, of the feelings which they had when they made a profession of religion; of the fact that the transaction was witnessed by the world; and of the promises which they then made to lead holy lives. One of the best ways of stimulating ourselves or others to the faithful performance of duty, is the remembrance of the vows then made; and one of the most effectual methods of reclaiming a backslider, is to bring to his remembrance that solemn hour when he publicly gave himself to God.

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

Quickeneth all things—that is, "maketh alive." But the oldest manuscripts read, "preserveth alive"; as the same Greek means in Ac 7:19; compare Ne 9:6. He urges Timothy to faithfulness here by the present manifestation of God's power in preserving all things, as in 1Ti 6:14, by the future manifestation of God's power at the appearing of Christ. The assurance that "eternal life," 1Ti 6:12, will be the result of "fighting the good fight," rests on the fulness and power of Him who is the God of all life, present and to come.

Who gives life to all. Eph 2:1. It is not quite clear why the apostle refers to this attribute of God as enforcing the charge which he here makes. Perhaps he means to say, that God is the source of life, and that as he had given life to Timothy--natural and spiritual--he had a right to require that it should be employed in his service; and that, if, in obedience to this charge and in the performance of his duties, he should be required to lay down his life, he should bear in remembrance, that God had power to raise him up again. This is more distinctly urged in 2Ti 2:8-10. And before Christ Jesus. As in the presence of Christ, and stimulated by his example.

Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. He gives him a solemn charge: I give thee charge in the sight of God that thou do this. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day to that God whose eyes are upon us all, who sees what we are and what we do:--God, who quickens all things, who has life in himself and is the fountain of life. This should quicken us to the service of God that we serve a God who quickens all things. He charges him before Christ Jesus, to whom in a peculiar manner he stood related as a minister of his gospel: Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. Observe, Christ died not only as a sacrifice, but as a martyr; and he witnessed a good confession when he was arraigned before Pilate, saying (Joh 18:36,37), My kingdom is not of this world: I am come to bear witness unto the truth. That good confession of his before Pilate, My kingdom is not of this world,

should be effectual to draw off all his followers, both ministers and people, from the love of this world. Marg., profession. The same Greek word is used which in 1Timm 6:12 is translated profession. The reference is to the fact that the Lord Jesus, when standing at the bar of Pilate, who claimed to have power over his life, did not shrink from an open avowal of the truth. Jn 18:36,37. Nothing can be better fitted to preserve our minds steadfast in the faith, and to enable us to maintain our sacred vows in this world when allured by temptation, or when ridiculed for our religion, than to remember the example of the Lord Jesus. Let us place him before us as he stood at the bar of Pilate--threatened with death in its most appalling form, and ridiculed for the principles which he maintained; let us look on him, friendless and alone, and see with what seriousness, and sincerity, and boldness, he stated the simple truth about himself, and we shall have one of the best securities that we can have, that we shall not dishonour our profession. A clear view of the example of Christ our Saviour, in those circumstances, and a deep conviction that his eye is upon us to discern whether we are steadfast as he was, will do more than all abstract precepts to make us faithful to our Christian calling.

Observe here, what a solemn adjuration and vehement charge is given to Timothy, by our apostle to watch and guard against the sin of covetousness, and avoid the eager pursuit of worldly wealth: I charge thee before God and Christ, that thou keep this commandment spotless and unrebukable, until the coming of Christ, and mayest be found such at his appearing.

Observe, 2. What a glorious display our apostle here makes of the adorable attributes of God; he styles him the God that quickeneth all things, that is all things that have, or shall have life; the blessed and only Potentate, because all power is essential in him, and derived from him; who only hath immortality, that is, an original, primative, simple, independent, essential immortality, that is only proper and peculiar to God; he only is essentially and necessarily of himself immortal; dwelling in the light which is inaccessible, and none can approach unto; and whom no man hath seen, nor can see.

14 that thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukable, until
the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

That thou keep this commandment. Referring particularly to the solemn injunction which he had just given him, to "fight the good fight of faith," but perhaps also including all that he had enjoined on him. Without spot. It seems harsh, and is unusual, to apply the epithet-- "without spot"--ασπιλος--to a command or doctrine, and the passage may be so construed that this may be understood as referring to Timothy himself--" That thou keep the commandment so that thou mayest be without spot and unrebukeable." See Bloomfield, Crit. Dig., in loc. The word here rendered "without spot," occurs in the New Testament only here, and in Jas 1:27, 1Pet 1:19, 2Pet 3:14. It means without any stain or blemish; pure. If applied here to Timothy, it means that he should so keep the command that there would be no stain on his moral character; if to the doctrine, that that should be kept pure.

15 which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only
Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man
can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom
be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

Who only hath immortality. The word here--αθανασια --properly means exemption from death, and seems to mean that God, in his own nature, enjoys a perfect and certain exemption from death. Creatures have immortality only as they derive it from him, and of course are dependent on him for it. He has it by his very nature, and it is in his case underived, and he cannot be deprived of it. It is one of the essential attributes of his being, that he will always exist, and that death cannot reach him. Comp. the expression in Jn 5:26. "The Father hath life in himself," Jn 5:26. Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto. Gr., "Inhabiting inapproachable light." The light where he dwells is so brilliant and dazzling, that mortal eyes could not endure it. This is a very common representation of the dwelling-place of God. See examples quoted in Pricaeus, in loc. Heaven is constantly represented as a place of the most pure and brilliant light, needing not the light of the sun, or the moon, or the stars, Rev 21:23,24; Rev 22:5, and God is

represented as dwelling in that light, surrounded by amazing and inapproachable glory. Comp. Rev 4:6; Eze 1:4, Heb 1:3.

dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto—After life comes mention of light, as in Joh 1:4. That light is unapproachable to creatures, except in so far as they are admitted by Him, and as He goes forth to them [BENGEL]. It is unapproachable on account of its exceeding brightness [THEOPHYLACT]. If one cannot gaze steadfastly at the sun, which is but a small part of creation, by reason of its exceeding heat and power, how much less can mortal man gaze at the inexpressible glory of God [THEOPHYLACT, To Autolycus] (Ps 104:2; 1Jo 1:5). no man hath seen— (Ex 23:20; Joh 1:18; Col 1:15; Heb 11:27; 1Jo 4:12). Perhaps even in the perfect state no creature shall fully see God. Still the saints shall, in some sense, have the blessedness of seeing Him, which is denied to mere man (Mt 5:8; 1Co 13:12; 1Jo 3:2; Re 22:4).

17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded. One of the evils to which they are particularly exposed. The idea is, that they should not value themselves on account of their wealth, or look down with pride and arrogance on their inferiors. They should not suppose that they are any better men, or any nearer heaven, because they are wealthy. Property really makes no distinction in the great things that pertain to character and salvation. It does not necessarily make one wise, or learned, or great, or good. In all these things the man who has not wealth may be vastly the superior of him who has; and for so slight and unimportant a distinction as gold can confer, no man should be proud. Besides, let such a man reflect that his property is the gift of God; that he is made rich because God has chosen to arrange things so that he should be; that it is not primarily owing to any skill or wisdom which he has; that his property only increases his responsibility, and that it must all soon be left, and he be as poor as the "beggar that lies at his gate;" and he will see ample reason why he should not be proud. Nor trust in uncertain riches. Marg., The uncertainty of. The margin expresses the meaning of the Greek

more accurately than the text, but the sense is not materially varied. Riches are uncertain because they may soon be taken away. No dependence can be placed on them in the emergencies of life. He who is rich to-day, has no security that he will be tomorrow; and if he shall be rich tomorrow, he has no certainty that his riches will meet his necessities then. A man whose house is in flames, or who is shipwrecked, or whose child lies dying, or who is himself in the agonies of death, can derive no advantage from the fact that he is richer than other men. Lk 12:16 and Lk 12:17-21. That against which Paul here directs Timothy to caution the rich, is that to which they are most exposed. A man who is rich, is very liable to "trust" in his riches, and to suppose that he needs nothing more. Comp. Lk 12:19. He feels that he is not dependent on fellow-men, and he is very likely to feel that he is not dependent on God. It is for this cause that God has recorded so many solemn declarations in his word respecting the instability of riches, (comp. Prov 23:5,) and that he is furnishing so many instructive lessons in his providence, showing how easily riches may suddenly vanish away.

But in the living God.

(1.) He is able to supply all our wants, and to do for us what riches cannot do; and

(2) he never changes, or leaves those who put their trust in him. He is able to meet our wants if in the flames, or in a storm at sea, or when a friend dies, or when we lie down on a bed of death, or wherever we may be in the eternal world. Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. The meaning of this seems to be, that God permits us to enjoy everything. Everything in the works of creation and redemption he has given to man for his happiness, and he should therefore trust in him. He has not merely given wealth for the comfort of men, but he has given everything; and he on whom so many and so great blessings have been bestowed for his comfort, should trust in the great Benefactor himself, and not rely merely on one of his gifts. Comp. 1Cor 3:21; 1Cor 1:22; 1Cor 1:23.

Resuming the subject from above, 1Ti 6:5, 10. The immortality of God, alone rich in glory, and of His people through Him, is opposed to the lust of money (compare 1Ti 6:14-16). From speaking of the desire to be rich, he here passes to those who are rich:

(1) What ought to be their disposition;

(2) What use they ought to make of their riches, and,

(3) The consequences of their so using them.

uncertain riches—rather as Greek, "the uncertainty of riches." They who rest their trust on riches, rest trust on uncertainty itself (Pr 23:5). Now they belong to one person, now to another, and that which has many masters is possessed by none [THEODORET].

living God—The best manuscripts and versions omit "living." He who trusts in riches transfers to them the duty he owes to God [CALVIN].

to enjoy—Greek, "for enjoyment." Not that the heart may cleave to them as its idol and trust (1Ti 4:3). Enjoyment consists in giving, not in holding fast for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them. That they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate: not only to do it, but to do it willingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. He must charge them to think of another world, and prepare for that which is to come by works of charity: Laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that they may take hold on eternal life Non-employment should be far removed, as from man, so from his resources (Jas 5:2, 3) [BENGEL].

Hence we may observe,

(1.) Ministers must not be afraid of the rich; be they ever so rich, they must speak to them, and charge them.

(2.) They must caution them against pride, and vain confidence in their riches: That they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches. Stir them up to works of piety and charity: That they do good, &c.

(3.) This is the way for the rich to lay up in store for themselves for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life; in the way of well-doing we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and eternal life will be the end of all, Ro 2:7.

(4.) Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy: Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he has to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, avoiding profane and vain babblings; not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babbling, or human learning, which often opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some who have been very proud of their learning, their science, which is falsely so called, have by that been debauched in their principles and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that.

Our apostle having in a very solemn manner exhorted Timothy to avoid that dangerous sin of covetousness himself, in the foregoing verses he doth in these verses require him to lay the same charge upon others, particularly upon worldly rich men; Charge them that are rich.

Observe here, 1. Timothy's duty, not barely to exhort and teach, but to charge and command. True, the ministers of Christ are servants to their people; but servants to their souls, not to their wills, much less to their lusts: there is an authority in our office, which empowers us to command for God, as well as to entreat.

Observe, 2. The subject of this Charge: them that are rich in this world.
Mark, no man is forbidden to be rich, nor yet to use such lawful means by which, through God's blessing thereupon, man may be rich; but rich men need a charge; they want plain dealing from ministers, because they meet with so little of it from other men; for some flatter them, others fear them: God's ministers ought surely to deal fairly with them.

Observe, 3. The charge itself; and this is set down negatively, and affirmatively, both, twofold.

1. The negative matter of the charge, That they be not high-minded; pride of heart, and haughtiness of mind and spirit, is one special sin which great men are subject to.
When God lifts them up by his providence, they lift themselves up by pride: there is a secret malignity in riches when they meet with men's corruptions, to lift them above their due region: though neither the wiser, the holier, the nearer heaven, for all their wealth, nay, perhaps a great deal nearer hell for the abuse of it, yet still the rich think high, look big, breathe scorn, talk with disdain, forgetting that God gives them riches to exalt him, and not themselves.

Next part of the negative charge is, That they trust not in uncertain riches; intimating that creature-confidence, or making an idol or wealth, is the dreadful bane and ruin of rich men; their actions say to the gold, Thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; but the vanity and sinfulness of this appears by the apostle's calling them uncertain riches; uncertain in their abode and continuances with us, uncertain in their promises and pretences to us: we expect more from them than ever we find in them.
Observe, 4. The positive part of the charge;

1. To trust in God, the living God, a bountiful God; he giveth riches; they buy, they do not give, he giveth all things; all the wealth in the world cannot give a mouthful of air or ray of light if God withholds it. God is the giver of all: he giveth richly all things;

the most miserable man cannot number the rich mercies which he doth receive; and he giveth all things richly to enjoy: that is, he gives an heart to take and taste the comfort of what he gives; he gives not only possessions, but fruition. Riches can do none of these things; why then should we trust in uncertain riches and not in the living God?

18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to
distribute, willing to communicate;

do good—like God Himself (Ps 119:68; Ac 14:17) and Christ (Ac 10:38)That they do good. On the duty enjoined in this verse, Gal 6:10, Heb 13:16. That they be rich in good works. "That their good works may be as abundant as their riches." Ready to distribute. To divide with others. Comp. Acts 4:34. The meaning is that they should be liberal, or bountiful. Willing to communicate. Marg., or sociable. The translation in the text is a more correct rendering of the Greek. The idea is, that they should be willing to share their blessings with others, so as to make others comfortable. Heb 13:16. Comp. the argument of Paul in 2Cor 8:13-15, 2Cor 8:13; 2Cor 8:14, 2Cor 8:15.

Laying up in store for themselves, etc. The meaning of this verse is, that they were to make such a use of their property that it would contribute to their eternal welfare. It might be the means of exalted happiness and honour in heaven, if they would so use it as not to interfere with religion in the soul, and so as to do the most good possible. See the sentiment in this verse explained at length Lk 16:9.

19 laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time
to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding
profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so
called:

21 which some professing have erred concerning the faith.
Grace be with thee. Amen.

Keep that which is committed to thy trust. All that is entrusted to you, and to which reference has been particularly made in this epistle. The honour of the gospel, and the interests of religion, had been specially committed to him; and he was sacredly to guard this

holy trust, and not suffer it to be wrested from him. Avoiding profane and vain babblings. Gr., "Profane, empty words." The reference is to such controversies and doctrines as tended only to produce strife, and were not adapted to promote the edification of the church. 1Timm 1:4; 1Timm 4:7. And oppositions of science falsely so called. Religion has nothing to fear from true science, and the minister of the gospel is not exhorted to dread that. Real science, in all its advances, contributes to the support of religion; and just in proportion as that is promoted will it be found to sustain the Bible, and to confirm the claims of religion to the faith of mankind. See this illustrated at length in Wiseman's Lectures on the connection between science and religion. It is only false or pretended science that religion has to dread, and which the friend of Christianity is to avoid. The meaning here is, that Timothy was to avoid everything which falsely laid claim to being "knowledge" or "science." There was much of this in the world at the time the apostle wrote; and this, more perhaps than anything else, has tended to corrupt true religion since.

that which is committed to thy trust—Greek, "the deposit" (1Ti 1:18; 2Ti 1:12, 14; 2:2). "The true" or "sound doctrine" to be taught, as opposed to "the science falsely so called," which leads to "error concerning the faith" (1Ti 6:21). "It is not thine: it is another's property with which thou hast been entrusted: Diminish it not at all" [CHRYSOSTOM]. "That which was entrusted to thee, not found by thee; which thou hast received, not invented; a matter not of genius, but of teaching; not of private usurpation, but of public tradition; a matter brought to thee, not put forth by thee, in which thou oughtest to be not an enlarger, but a guardian; not an originator, but a disciple; not leading, but following. 'Keep,' saith he, 'the deposit,'; preserve intact and inviolate the talent of the catholic faith. What has been entrusted to thee, let that same remain with thee; let that same be handed down by thee. Gold thou hast received, gold return. I should be sorry thou shouldest substitute aught else. I should be sorry that for gold thou shouldest substitute lead impudently, or brass fraudulently. I do not want the mere appearance of gold, but its actual reality. Not that there is to be no progress in religion in Christ's Church. Let there be so by all means,

and the greatest progress; but then let it be real progress, not a change of the faith. Let the intelligence of the whole Church and its individual members increase exceedingly, provided it be only in its own kind, the doctrine being still the same. Let the religion of the soul resemble the growth of the body,which, though it develops its several parts in the progress of years, yet remains the same as it was essentially" [VINCENTIUS LIRINENSIS, A.D. 434].

(4.) Here is a lesson for ministers in the charge given to Timothy: Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Every minister is a trustee, and it is a treasure committed to his trust, which he has to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, avoiding profane and vain babblings; not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babbling, or human learning, which often opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, for that is committed to our trust. Some who have been very proud of their learning, their science, which is falsely so called, have by that been debauched in their principles and been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel, and resolve to live and die by that. Observe,

[1.] Ministers cannot be too earnestly exhorted to keep what is committed to their trust, because it is a great trust lodged with them: O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust! as if he had said, "I cannot conclude without charging thee again; whatever thou doest, be sure to keep this trust, for it is too great a trust to be betrayed."

[2.] Ministers are to avoid babblings, if they would keep what is committed to them, because they are vain and profane.

[3.] That science that opposes the truth of the gospel is falsely so called; it is not true science, for if it were it would approve of the gospel and consent to it.

[4.] Those who are so fond of such science are in great danger of erring concerning the faith; those who are for advancing reason above faith are in danger of leaving faith.

Our apostles concludes this his epistle to Timothy with a very passionate and pathetic exhortation to him; that he would maintain the purity of the doctrine of the gospel, and preach that to his hearers, avoiding all idle speculations and philosophical niceties, which the heathen philosophers admire, despising, in the mean time, the plainness and simplicity of the gospel: and he tells him farther, that some Christians, being taken with this sort of learning, have corrupted christianity, turned heretics, erring concerning the faith; to prevent which, he begs for Timothy the grace of God, to preserve, sanctify, and save him.

Learn hence, That in the first beginnings of Christianity, the philosphers, by pretences of great learning, were the greatest despisers and the bitterest enemies of Christianity.

Secondly, That the generality of them were taken up with mere useless notions, instead of necessary and useful knowledge.

Thirdly, That Timothy, and every minister of Christ with him, ought to preach the gospel without any such human mixtures, in the purity and plainness of it; and the people receive it with a simplicity of mind, to be guided and directed by it.

Lastly, That the sanctifying and establishing grace of God is necessary, and indispensably needful, to preserve both ministers and people steadfast in the faith of the gospel, and to persevere in their obedience to it.

The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy.

[2 Timothy]

2 Timothy-1

Salutation

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the
promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, *my* dearly beloved son:
Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our
Lord.

Be Not Ashamed

3 I thank God, whom I serve from *my* forefathers with pure
conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my
prayers night and day;

But how could Paul, before conversion, be said to serve the God of his forefathers with a pure conscience, when he was a persecutor, and the chief of sinners?
Ans. The meaning is, That he worshipped the same God, and the only true God, which his forefathers worshipped, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that he worshipped him in sincerity, according to his conscience, and the measures of light then received.
Learn hence, That the church before Christ had the same faith, the same object of faith, and worshiped God, the same God, under the law, with us under the gospel: I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers. That is, whom both I and my ancestors served. With a pure conscience - He always worshiped God according to his conscience, both before and after his conversion One who stands on the verge of life is much refreshed by the remembrance of his predecessors, to whom he is going.

whom I serve (Ro 1:9) as did my forefathers. He does not mean to put on the same footing the Jewish and Christian service of God; but simply to assert his own conscientious service of God as he had received it from his progenitors (not Abraham, Isaac, &c., whom he calls "the fathers," not "progenitors" as the Greek is here; Ro 9:5). The memory of those who had gone before to whom he is about to be gathered, is now, on the eve of death, pleasant to him; hence also, he calls to mind the faith of the mother and grandmother of Timothy; as he walks in the faith of his forefathers (Ac 23:1; 24:14; 26:6, 7; 28:20), so Timothy should persevere firmly in the faith of his parent and grandparent. Not only Paul, but the Jews who reject Christ, forsake the faith of their forefathers, who looked for Christ; when they accept Him, the hearts of the children shall only be returning to the faith of their forefathers (Mal 4:6; Lu 1:17; Ro 11:23, 24, 28). Probably Paul had, in his recent defense, dwelt on this topic, namely, that he was, in being a Christian, only following his hereditary faith.

Paul reckoned among his forefathers the patriarchs and the holy men of former times, as being of the same nation with himself; though it may be that he also included his more immediate ancestors, who, for anything known to the contrary, may have been distinguished examples of piety. His own parents, it is certain, took care that he should be trained up in the ways of religion. Comp. Php 3:4, Php 3:5; Acts 26:4; Acts 26:5. The phrase "from my forefathers," probably means, after the example of my ancestors. He worshipped the same God; he held substantially the same truths; he had the same hope of the resurrection and of immortality; he trusted to the same Saviour having come, on whom they relied as about to come. His was not, therefore, a different religion from theirs; it was the same religion carried out and perfected. The religion of the Old Testament and the New is essentially the same. Acts 23:6.

Behold here the ministers duty in a more especial manner, to be much in prayer one for another; they stand greatly in need of this mutual help to strengthen each other's hands, and encourage one another's hearts in the ways of God: They should therefore, without ceasing, remember one another at the throne of grace.

4 greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be
filled with joy;
5 when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee,
which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice;
and I am persuaded that in thee also.
6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift
of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

That thou stir up the gift of God. Gr., That thou kindle up as a fire. The original word used here denotes the kindling of a fire, as by bellows, etc. It is not uncommon to compare piety to a flame or a fire, and the image is one that is obvious when we speak of causing that to burn more brightly. The idea is, that Timothy was to use all proper means to keep the flame of pure religion in the soul burning, and more particularly his zeal in the great cause to which he had been set apart. The agency of man himself is needful to keep the religion of the heart warm and glowing. However rich the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, they do not grow of their own accord, but need to be cultivated by our own personal care. Which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. In connection with the presbytery. 1Timm 4:14. This proves that Paul took part in the ordination of Timothy; but it does not prove either that he performed the duty alone, or that the "ordaining virtue," whatever that was, was imparted by him only; for

(1.) it is expressly said 1Timm 4:14, that he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, of which Paul was doubtless one; and

(2.) the language here used, "by the putting on of my hands," is just such as Paul, or any other one of the presbytery, would use in referring to the ordination of Timothy, though they were all regarded as on a level. It is such an expression as an aged Presbyterian, or Congregational, or Baptist minister would address to a son whom he had assisted to ordain. Nothing would be more natural than to remind him that his own hands had been laid on him when he was set apart to the work of the ministry. It would be in the nature of a tender, pathetic, and solemn appeal, bringing all that there was in his own character, age, and relation to the other, to bear on him, in order to

induce him to be faithful to his trust. On other occasions, he would naturally remind him that others had united with him in the act, and that he had derived his authority through the presbytery, just as Paul appeals to Timothy, 1Timm 4:14. But no one would now think of inferring from this, that he meant to be understood as saying that he alone had ordained him, or that all the authority for preaching the gospel had been imparted through his hands, and that those who were associated with him only expressed "concurrence;" that is, that their presence there was only an unmeaning ceremony. What was the "gift of God" which had been conferred in this way, Paul specifies in the next verse. It is "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The meaning is, that these had been conferred by God, and that the gift had been recognised by his ordination. It does not imply that any mysterious influence had gone from the hands of the ordainers, parting any holiness to Timothy which he had not before.

by the putting on of my hands—In 1Ti 4:14, it is "with [not by] the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The apostle was chief in the ordination, and to him "BY" is applied. The presbytery were his assistants; so "with," implying merely accompaniment, is said of them. Paul was the instrument in Timothy's ordination and reception of the grace then conferred; the presbyters were the concurrent participants in the act of ordination; so the Greek, "dia" and "meta." So in ordinations by a bishop in our days, he does the principal act; they join in laying on hands with him.

7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear. A timorous and servile spirit. This is said in order to encourage Timothy, who was not improbably modest and diffident. But of power. Power to encounter foes and dangers; power to bear up under trials; power to triumph in persecutions. That is, it is the nature of the gospel to inspire the mind with holy courage. Comp., however, Lk 24:49. And of Love to God and to the souls of men. The tendency of this also, is to "cast out fear," 1Jn 4:18, and to make the mind bold and constant. Nothing will do more to inspire courage, to make a man fearless of danger, or ready to endure privation and persecution, than love. The love of country, and wife, and children, and home, makes the most timid bold

when they are assailed; and the love of Christ and of a dying world nerves the soul to great enterprises, and sustains it in the deepest sorrows. And of a sound mind. The Greek word denotes one of sober mind; a man of prudence and discretion. The state referred to here is that in which the mind is well balanced, and under right influences; in which it sees things in their just proportions and relations; in which it is not feverish and excited, but when everything is in its proper place. It was this state of mind which Timothy was exhorted to cultivate; this which Paul regarded as so necessary to the performance of the duties of his office. It is as needful now for the minister of religion as it was then.

8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Do not be ashamed to bear your testimony to the doctrines taught by the Lord Jesus. Jn 3:11,32,33, 7:7. Comp. Acts 10:42, 20:24; 1Cor 1:6, Rev 22:16. Paul seems to have apprehended that Timothy was in some danger of being ashamed of this gospel, or of shrinking back from its open avowal in the trials and persecutions to which he now saw it exposed him. Nor of me his prisoner. Of the testimony which I have borne to the truth of the gospel. This passage proves that, when Paul wrote this epistle, he was in confinement. Comp. Eph 3:1, 6:20, Php 1:13,14,16; Col 4:3,18, Phm 1:9. Timothy knew that he had been thrown into prison on account of his love for the gospel. To avoid that himself, there might be some danger that a timid young man might shrink from an open avowal of his belief in the same system of truth. But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. The sufferings to which the profession of the gospel may expose you. Comp. Col 1:24. According to the power of God. That is, according to the power which God gives to those who are afflicted on account of the gospel. The apostle evidently supposes that they who were subjected to trials on account of the gospel, might look for Divine strength to uphold them, and asks him to endure those trials, relying on that strength, and not on his own.

9 who hath saved us, and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;

As if the apostle had said, "To fortify thee against the fear of those persecutions, and to arm thee against the shame of those reproaches, which may probably attend thee in the work of the gospel, consider, that the God whom thou servest in this employment, is he that hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling: Called us first, to Christianity, and then to this holy function of the ministry; but to neither of them according to the merit of our works; as if we had done any thing to deserve either of these favours at his hands; but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ before the world began: that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by Jesus Christ: which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discovered by our Saviour Jesus Christ's coming into the world; who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; that is, made a fuller and clearer discovery of it by the gospel; to preach which gospel I am a commissioned apostle, and for this I suffer; and God help you, when thereunto called, to suffer with me."

Learn hence, 1. That God himself is the author of man's salvation; He hath saved us: That effectual vocation doth accompany salvation; That the Christian's calling is an holy calling; that it is also an act of free and gracious favour in God to call; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.

Learn farther, That God's purpose or eternal decree to save before all time was manifested by Christ's appearing in time; But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Observe also, The happy effects of Christ's appearing:

1. To abolish death; not to root it at present out of the world, but to take away its dominion, its dread and terror, the whole power and disposal of it, I am alive, and have the keys of life and death. Rev 1:18

2. To bring life and immortality to light; that is, immortal life more clearly manifested and discovered.

Note here, 1. That the soul of man is immortal, and that there is another state, an immortal state, which remains for men after this life; otherwise, the justice of God's providence could not be sufficiently vindicated; but upon the supposal of a future state of immortality, it may. An account of the unequal providences of God in this world, is easy to him that believes the certainty of another; as good and evil are at present different in their natures, so shall they be in their rewards.

Note, 2. That the greatest discovery that ever was made of life and immortality to lost sinners, is made by Jesus Christ in the gospel. It was discovered, though darkly, to the Old Testament saints; but the discovery made of it by the gospel, as it was an unexpected discovery, a free and gracious discovery, so was it a more clear, more full, and final discovery of it; Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, &c.

10 but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus
Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and
immortality to light through the gospel:
11 whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher
of the Gentiles.
12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not
ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that
he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against
that day.

For the which cause I also suffer these things. That is, I suffer on account of my purpose to carry the gospel to the Gentiles. Col 1:24. Nevertheless I am not ashamed. Comp. Rom 1:16. For I know whom I have believed. Marg., trusted. The idea is, that he understood the character of that Redeemer to whom he had committed his eternal interests, and knew that he had no reason to be ashamed of confiding in him. He was able to keep all that he had intrusted to his care, and would not suffer him to be lost. Isa 28:16. And am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him. That is, the soul with all its immortal interests. A man has nothing of higher value to intrust to another than the intereats of his soul, and there is no other act of confidence like that in which he intrusts the keeping of that soul to the Son of God. Learn hence,

(1.) that religion consists in committing the soul to the care of the Lord Jesus; because

(a) we feel that we cannot secure its salvation ourselves;

(b) it is by nature in danger;

(c) if not saved by him, it will not be saved at all.

(2.) That is a great and invaluable treasure which is committed to him.

(a) No higher treasure can be committed to another;

(b) in connection with that the whole question of our happiness on earth and in heaven is intrusted to him, and all depends on his fidelity.

(3.) It is done by the true Christian with file most entire confidence, so that the mind is at rest. The grounds of this confidence are

(a) what is said of the mighty power of the Saviour;

(b) his promises that he will keep all who confide in him, (comp. Jn 10:27-29;)

(c) experience--the fact that those who have trusted in him have found that he is able to keep them.

(4.) This act of committing the soul, with all its interests, to the Saviour, is the true source of peace in the trials of life. This is so because

(a) having done this, we feel that our great interests are secure. If the soul is safe, why need we be disturbed by the loss of health, or property, or other temporal comforts. Those are secondary things. A man who is shipwrecked, and who sees his son or daughter safe with

him on the shore, will be little concerned that a casket of jewels fell overboard--however valuable it might be.

(b) All those trials will soon pass away, and he will be safe in heaven.

(c) These very things may further the great object--the salvation of the soul. A man's great interests may be more safe when in a prison than when in a palace; on a pallet of straw than on a bed of down; when constrained to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," than when encompassed with the wealth of Croesus. Against that day. The day of judgment--called "that day," without anything further to designate it, because it is the great day; "the day for which all other days were made." It seems to have been so much the object of thought and conversation among the early Christians that the apostle supposed that he would be understood by merely referring to it as "that day ;" that is, the day which they were always preaching about, and talking about, and thinking about.

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Hold fast the form of sound words. 1Timm 1:3. On the Greek word here rendered "form," 1Timm 1:16, where it is rendered pattern. The word means a form, sketch, or imperfect delineation--an outline. Grotius says that it here means "an exemplar, but an exemplar fixed in the mind--an idea." Calvin says that the command is that he should adhere to the doctrine which he had learned, not only in its substance, but in its form. Archbishop Tilotson explains this as meaning the profession of faith which was made by Christians at baptism. There seems to be an allusion to some summary or outline of truth which Paul had given to Timothy, though there is no evidence that it was written. Indeed, there is every presumption that, if it refers to such a summary, it was not committed to writing. If it had been, it would have been regarded as inspired, and would have taken its place in the canon of Scripture. It may be presumed that almost none of the sacred writings would have been more sacredly preserved than such a condensed summary of Christian truth. But there is no improbability in supposing that Paul, either at his ordination, or on some other occasion, may have stated the outlines of the Christian religion to Timothy, that he might have a clear and connected view of the

subject. The passage, therefore, may be used as an argument for the propriety of some brief summary of doctrine as a matter of convenience, though not as having binding authority on the consciences of others.

By sound words, we are to understand the doctrine of the gospel; by a form of sound words, the truths and doctrine of the gospel methodically disposed and digested; to hold it fast, is, not to swerve from it in the course of our ministry, but pertinaciously to adhere to it, not parting with it ourselves, nor suffering it to be adulterated and corrupted by others.
This form of sound words some take to be the articles of our creed, in the words wherein we now have them, probably the same in sense, if not in words. This is called, That good thing 2Tim 1:14 which was committed to Timothy to keep: meaning, that summary of Christian doctrine which was committed to his care and keeping.

Learn hence, 1. That evangelical words are sound words: All gospel-truth is of an healing nature.

Learn, 2. That a form of sound words, or a methodical system, of gospel- truths, is very profitable both for ministers and people.

Learn, 3. That such a form of sound words is very faithfully to be retained, and very carefully to be kept unto.

Learn, 4. That faith and love are the hands whereby we are to hold fast gospel-truth; Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.

Learn, 5. That as Christians are to hold these evangelical truths fast in their judgments, so are they to hold them forth in their lives and practices: Keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us; that is, the power and assistance of the Holy Ghost will not be wanting to our endeavours, to help our memory, love, and practice, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

15 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away
from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.
16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft
refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain:
17 but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and
found *me.*

Our apostle having complained of many in Asia forsaking him, in the day of his sufferings in the foregoing verse; in this, he makes a grateful commemoration of the kindness of Onesiphorus towards him, who refreshed him with his Presence and relief, and was not ashamed of his chain, of his imprisonment, as others were.

Learn, 1. It is no new thing for the most holy and innocent servants of Christ to suffer hardship, imprisonment, banishment, yea, even death itself, for the sake of Christ; and when they do so, to have friends forsake, and turn their backs upon them. Prosperity affords many friends, more flatterers; but who regards the prisoner in bonds? who cares for looking upon the dial when the sun is off?

Learn, 2. That not to be ashamed of the saints in the day of their sufferings, but to own them, and administer to them in such a condition, is a certain sign of a sound and sincere Christian. Good Onesiphorus had this, amongst other evidences of his gracious state, that he was not ashamed to own a persecuted Paul in chains. Nay, he searched for the apostle very diligently, and found him; so far was he from hiding his eyes from him, and forsaking him, as the men of Asia did.

Observe next, Our apostle's fervent and affectionate prayer to God, abundantly to recompence this labour of love in Onesiphorus towards him: First, He begs mercy for his whole household, The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus.
Note, 1. How thankful the saints of God are for mercies received from God, by the hands of men.

Note, 2. That acts of Christian chrity to the suffering servants of Christ, do receive a considerable part of their reward, even here, in the hearty and affectionate prayers of the people of God on their

behalf. How well did it fare with Onesiphorus and his household upon the score of St. Paul's prayer, "The Lord shew mercy to the house of Onesiphorus;" next he prays for Onesiphorus himself, The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; that is, in the great day of judgment.

Learn hence, 1. That the holiest of men, and best of saints, will stand in need of mercy, much mercy, when they stand before God at the great day.

Learn, 2. That the merciful Christian, which was here shewn mercy to the ministers and members of Jesus Christ, may expect, and shall find mercy in that day, when they stand in need of mercy. They that shew mercy in the evil day, shall certainly find mercy in the great day; The Lord grant that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

18 The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

2 Timothy-2

A Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, Marg. by. Before, or in the presence of, many witnesses. Perhaps he refers to a solemn charge which he gave him, in the presence of the church, when he was ordained. It is by no means improbable that such a charge was given then to a newly-ordained minister, as it is now. On such an occasion, the apostle would be likely to state a summary of Christian doctrine,-- 2Ti 1:13, --and to exhort Timothy to a faithful adherence to it. The same commit thou to faithful men. In the same way as those things have been committed to you. The reference is undoubtedly to ordination to the ministerial office. Timothy was to

see that those only were admitted to the ministry who were qualified to understand the truths of religion, and to communicate them to others. This is a clear warrant for ministers to set apart others to the same sacred office. It does not prove that the people are not at liberty to choose their own pastor, but only that those in the ministry are to set apart others to the same office with themselves. There is, doubtless, to be a succession of ministers in the church; but the true line of the succession is to be found in good men who are qualified to teach, and who have the Spirit of Christ, and not merely in those who have been ordained. Who shall be able to teach others also. On the qualifications of ministers, 1Timm 3:2, also 1Timm 3:3-7.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Such hardships as a soldier is called to endure. The apostle supposes that a minister of the gospel might be called to endure hardships, and that it is reasonable that he should be as ready to do it as a soldier is. On the hardships which he endured himself, 2Cor 11:23-29. Soldiers often endure great privations. Taken from their homes and friends; exposed to cold, or heat, or storms, or fatiguing marches; sustained on coarse fare, or almost destitute of food, they are often compelled to endure as much as the human frame can bear, and often, indeed, sink under their burdens and die. If, for reward or their country's sake, they are willing to do this, the soldier of the cross should be willing to do it for his Saviour's sake, and for the good of the human race. Hence, let no man seek the office of the ministry as a place of ease. Let no one' come into it merely to enjoy himself. Let no one enter it who is not prepared to lead a soldier's life, and to welcome hard, ship and trial as his portion. He would make a bad soldier, who, at his enlistment, should make it a condition that he should be permitted to sleep on a bed of down, and always be well clothed and fed, and never exposed to peril, or compelled to pursue a wearisome march. Yet do not some men enter the ministry, making these the conditions? And would they enter the ministry on any other terms?

4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life. Having alluded to the soldier, and stated one thing in which the Christian minister is to resemble him, another point of resemblance

is suggested to the mind of the apostle. Neither the minister nor the soldier is to be encumbered with the affairs of this life, and the one should not be more than the other. This is always a condition in becoming a soldier. He gives up his own business during the time for which he is enlisted, and devotes himself to the service of his country. The farmer leaves his plough, and the mechanic his shop, and the merchant his store, and the student his books, and the lawyer his brief; and neither of them expect to pursue these things while engaged in the service of their country. It would be wholly impracticable to carry on the plans of a campaign, if each one of these classes should undertake to prosecute his private business. See this fully illustrated from the Rules of War among the Romans, by Grotius, in loc. Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or to engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was, that they were excluded from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which it was thought would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit. So with the ministers of the gospel. It is equally improper for them to 'entangle' themselves with the business of a farm or plantation; with plans of speculation and gain, and with any purpose of worldly aggrandizement. The minister of the gospel accomplishes the design of his appointment only when he can say in sincerity, that he "is not entangled with the affairs of this life." Comp. 1Cor 9:25-27. That he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. That is, him who has enlisted him, or in whose employ he is. His great object is, to approve himself to him. It is not to pursue his own plans, or to have his own will, or to accumulate property or fame for himself. His will is absorbed in the will of his commander, and his purpose is accomplished if he meet with his approbation. Nowhere else is it so true that the will of one becomes lost in that of another, as in the case of the soldier. In an army it is contemplated that there shall be but one mind, one heart, one purpose, that of the commander; and that the whole army shall be as obedient to that as the members of the human body are to the one will that controls all. The application of this is obvious. The grand purpose of the minister of the gospel is to please Christ. He is to pursue no separate plans, and to have no separate will, of his own; and it is contemplated that

the whole corps of Christian ministers and members of the churches shall be as entirely subordinate to the will of Christ, as an army is to the orders of its chief.

5 And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

Yet is he not crowned except he strives lawfully. In conformity with the rules of the games. See Grotius, in loc. NO one could obtain the prize unless he had complied with all the laws of the games, and had thus given to those with whom he contended, a fair opportunity to succeed. "In those contests, he who transgressed the rules in the least matter, not only failed of the prize, even though the apparent victor, but was sometimes disgraced and punished," Pict. Bib. So the apostle here represents the Christian minister as engaged in a struggle or conflict for the crown. He says, that he could not hope to win it unless he should comply with all the laws by which it is conferred; unless he should subdue every improper propensity; and make an effort like that evinced by the combatants at the Olympic games. Comp. 1Cor 9:26, 1Cor 9:27.

6 The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.

The husbandman that laboureth. The margin is, "labouring first, must be partaker." The idea, according to the translation in the text, is, that there is a fitness or propriety (δει) that the man who cultivates the earth, should enjoy the fruits of his labour. See the same image explained 1Cor 9:10. But if this be the meaning here, it is not easy to see why the apostle introduces it. According to the marginal reading, the word 'first' is introduced in connexion with the word labour--" labouring first, must be partaker." That is, it is a great law that the husbandman must work before he receives a harvest. This sense will accord with the purpose of the apostle. It was to remind Timothy that labour must precede reward; that if a man would reap, he must sow; that he could hope for no fruits, unless he toiled for them. The point was not that the husbandman would be the first one who would partake of the fruits; but that he must first labour before he obtained the reward. Thus understood, this would be an encouragement to Timothy to persevere in his toils, looking onward to the reward. The Greek will bear this construction, though it is not the most obvious one.

7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Consider what I say. 1Timm 4:15. The sense is, "Think of the condition of the soldier, and the principles on which he is enlisted; think of the aspirant for the crown in the Grecian games; think of the farmer, patiently toiling in the prospect of the distant harvest; and then go to your work with a similar spirit." These things are worth attention. When the minister of the gospel thinks of his hardships, of his struggles against an evil world, and of his arduous and constant discouraging toil, let him think of the soldier, of the man who struggles for this world's honours, and of the patient farmer --and be content. How patiently do they bear all, and yet for what inferior rewards! And the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Enable you to see the force of these considerations, and to apply them to your own case. Such are often the discouragements of the ministry; so prone is the mind to despondency, that we need the help of the Lord to enable us to apply the most obvious considerations, and to derive support from the most plain and simple truths and promises.

8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel:

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead. Or rather, perhaps, "Remember Jesus Christ; who was raised from the dead." The idea seems not to be, as our translators supposed, that he was to reflect on the fact that he was raised from the dead; but rather that he was to think of the Saviour himself. "Think of the Saviour, now raised up from the dead after all the sorrows of this life, and let this encourage you to bear your trials." There is nothing better fitted to enable Us to endure the labours and trials of this life, than to think of the Saviour. On the phrase, 'seed of David,' Rom 1:3.

9 wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer. As if I were a violator of the laws. That is, I am treated as if I were a criminal. Even unto bonds. As if I were one of the worst kind of malefactors, Eph 6:20. During the apostle's first imprisonment at Rome, he was permitted to "dwell in his own hired house," though guarded by a soldier, and probably chained to him. Acts 28:16,30. What was his condition in his second

imprisonment, during which this epistle was written, we have no means of knowing with certainty. It is probable, however, that he was subjected to much more rigid treatment than he had been in the first instance. The tradition is, that he and Peter were together in the Mamertine prison at Rome; and the place is still shown in which it is said that they were confined. The Mamertine prisons are of great antiquity. According to Livy, they were constructed by Ancus Marrtius, and enlarged by Servius Tullius. The lower prison is supposed to have been once a quarry, and to have been at one time occupied as a granary. These prisons are on the descent of the Capitoline Mount, towards the Forum. They consist of two apartments, one over the other, built with large, uncemented stones. There is no entrance to either, except by a small aperture in the roof, and by a small hole in the upper floor, leading to the cell below, without any staircase to either. The upper prison is twenty-seven feet long, by twenty wide; the lower one is elliptical, and measures twenty feet by ten. In the lower one is a small spring, which is said at Rome to have arisen at the command of Peter, to enable him to baptize his keepers, Processus and Martianus, with forty-seven companions, whom he converted. No certain reliance can be placed on any part of this tradition, though in itself there is no improbability in supposing that these prisons may have been used for confining Christians, and the apostle Paul among others. Dr. Burton says, that a more horrible place for the confinement of a human being can scarcely be conceived. But the word of God is not bound. This is one of Paul's happy turns of thought. Comp. Acts 26:29.

The meaning is plain. The gospel was prospered. That could not be lettered hand imprisoned. It circulated with freedom, even when he who was appointed to preach it was in chains. See Php 1:13,14. As this was the great matter, his own imprisonment was of comparatively little consequence. What may befall us is of secondary importance. The grand thing is, the triumph of truth on the earth; and well may we bear privations and sorrows, if the gospel moves on in triumph.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also
obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.
11 *It is* a faithful saying:

For if we be dead with *him,* we shall also live with *him:*
12 if we suffer, we shall also reign with *him:*
if we deny *him,* he also will deny us:

St. Paul having acquainted Timothy in the foregoing verses with his sufferings, even unto bonds, here he lets him understand and know, why, and for whose sake, he did so cheerfully endure all these things, namely, for the elects sake. Though the rest of the world rejected the gospel, yet the elect would be confirmed by his example, and obtain that salvation which in and through Jesus Christ was offered and tendered to them.

Here note, That there is a certain election of God, which hath infallibly chosen to salvation all those who make their calling and election sure, by perseverance in holiness and good works.

Note, 2. That the faithful ministers of Christ do think no sufferings to much, or too dear, for the sake of God's elect, (for the sake of believing Christians, who are a chosen generation) so that their sufferings may but further their eternal glory, happiness and salvation.

To encourage yet again to a patient enduring of all sorts of afflictions, he assures Timothy, that if we be rendred comformable to Christ in his sufferings, we shall be also in his glory: If we suffer for him, we shall reign with him: if we be dead with him, dead to sin, and dead to the world, we shall also live with him, in conformity to his resurrection; but if for fear of suffering we disown him, he will also deny us; if we believe not, if we be unfaithful and forsake him, yet he will be true to his word, he will not forsake his own cause, but make good his threatenings, his own veracity stands firm, and is as much engaged to execute the threatening, as to fulfil the promise.

13 if we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful:
he cannot deny himself.

An Approved Workman

14 Of these things put *them* in remembrance, charging *them* before the
Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, *but* to the
subverting of the hearers.
15 Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth
not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Study to show thyself approved unto God. Give diligence, 2Pet 1:10, or make an effort so to discharge-the duties of the ministerial office as to meet the Divine approbation. The object of the ministry is not to please men. Such doctrines should be preached, and such plans formed, and such a manner of life pursued, as God will approve. To do this demands study or care--for there are many temptations to the opposite course; there are many things the tendency of which is to lead a minister to seek popular favour rather than the Divine approval. If any man please God, it will be as the result of deliberate intention and a careful life. A workman that needeth not to be ashamed. A man faithfully performing his duty, so that when he looks over what he has done, he may not blush. Rightly dividing the word of truth. The word here rendered "rightly dividing," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to cut straight, to divide right; and the allusion here may be to a steward who makes a proper distribution to each one under his care of such things as his office and their necessities require. Comp. Mt 13:52. Some have supposed that there is an allusion here to the Jewish priest cutting or dividing the sacrifice into proper parts; others, that the allusion is to the Scribes dividing the law into sections; others, to a carver distributing food to the guests at a feast. Robinson (Lex.) renders it, "rightly proceeding as to the word of truth;" that is, rightfully and skilfully teaching the word of truth. The idea seems to be, that the minister of the gospel is to make a proper distribution of that word, adapting his instructions to the circumstances and wants of his hearers, and giving to each that which will be fitted to nourish the soul for heaven.

16 But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto
more ungodliness.

17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneus
and Philetus;

St. Paul having now finished the exhortatory part of this chapter, and acquainted Timothy what he would have him practise and do, now comes to a dehortation, advising him what he would have him avoid and shun; and here, first, he bids him shun profane and vain babblings; the vain babblings of the Heathen philosopers, and the profane notions of heretical and seducing teachers, particularly the Gnostics, the followers of Simon Magus and Menander, who were

guilty of an apostasy from Christianity, by turning the resurrection into an allegory; affirming that the resurrection of the soul to piety and virtue, was the only resurrection to be expected, disowning the resurrection of the body, and asserting, that the flesh was unfit to rise.

Observe, secondly, The nature of erroneous doctrine declared; it is of a devouring, spreading and destroying nature, their words will eat asdoth a gangrene.

Quest. How doth a gangrene eat?
Ans. It eats speedily, it eats incurably, it eats mortally, as it is well known the gangrene doth.

Quest. But what is it that heresies eat?
Ans. Faith, peace and godliness; so here, they overthrow the faith of some, and increase unto more ungodliness.

Quest. How comes it to pass that they so eat?
Ans. The spreading and prevailing of heresies, may be ascribed partly to the subtility and activity of seducers, partly to the curiousity and simplicity of the seduced, and partly to the justice of God, for the manifestation of those that are sincere, and the punishment of those that receive not the truth in the love of it.

18 who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is
past already; and overthrow the faith of some.
19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal,
The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that
nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Nevertheless the foundation of God is sure. Marg. steady. The meaning is, that though some had been turned away by the arts of these errorists, yet the foundation of the church which God had laid remained firm. Comp. Eph 2:20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." As long as this foundation remained farm, there was no reason to be troubled from the few-instances of apostasy which had occurred. Comp. Ps 11:3. It is not uncommon to compare the church to a building erected on a solid foundation. Eph 2:20,21 1Cor 3:9,10, Mt 16:18.

Having this seal. On seals were often inscriptions, and the thought here is of the inscription. Upon this seal are two inscriptions.

1. The Lord knoweth them that are his. The first cheers with the assurance that the Lord knows his own, and will not forget them.

2. Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. The second shows who are his. The Lord knows his people, and his people obey him. Thus they may know that they are known of God.

The word seal is sometimes used to denote the instrument by which an impression is made, and sometimes the impression or inscription itself. A seal is used for security Mt 27:66, or as a mark of genuineness, Rev 9:4. The seal here is one that was affixed to the foundation, and seems to refer to some inscription on the foundation-stone which always remained there, and which denoted the character and design of the edifice. The allusion is to the custom, in rearing an edifice, of inscribing the name of the builder and the design of the edifice on the corner-stone. See Rosenmuller, Alte u. neue Morgenland, No. 405. So the church of Christ is a budding reared by the hands of God. Its foundation has been firmly and securely laid, and on that foundation there is an inscription always remaining, which determines the character of the edifice. The Lord knoweth them that are his. This is one of the inscriptions on the foundation-stone of the church, which seems to mark the character of the building. It always stands there, no matter who apostatizes. It is, at the same time, a fearful inscription --showing that no one can deceive God; that he is intimately acquainted with all who enter that building; and that in the multitudes which enter there, the friends and the foes of God are intimately known. He can separate his own friends from all others, and his constant care will be extended to all who are truly his own, to keep them from failing. This has the appearance of being a quotation, but no such passage is found in the Old Testament in so many words. In Nah 1:7, the following words are found: "And he knoweth them that trust in him;" and it is possible that Paul may have had that in his eye; but it is not necessary to suppose that he designed it as a quotation. A phrase somewhat similar to this is found in Nu

16:5, "The Lord will show who are his," rendered in the Septuagint, "God knoweth who are his;" and Whitby supposes that this is the passage referred to. But whether Paul had these passages in view or not, it is clear that he meant to say that it was one of the fundamental things in religion, that God knew who were his own people, and that he would preserve them from the danger of making shipwreck of their faith.

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. This is the other seal or inscription which is made on the foundation which God has laid. The foundation has two inscriptions-the first implying that God knows all who are his own people; the other, that all who are his professed people should depart from evil. This is not found in so many words in the Old Testament, and, like the former, it is not to be regarded as a quotation. The meaning is, that it is an elementary principle in the true church, that all who become members of it should lead holy lives. It was also true that they would lead holy lives, and amidst all the defections of errorists, and all their attempts to draw away others from the true faith, those might be known to be the true people of God who did avoid evil.

(Isa 52:11). In both clauses there may be an allusion to Nu 16:5, 26, Septuagint. God's part and man's part are marked out. God chooseth and knoweth His elect; our part is to believe, and by the Spirit depart from all iniquity, an unequivocal proof of our being the Lord's (compare De 29:29; Lu 13:23-27). St. Lucian when asked by his persecutors, "Of what country art thou?" replied, "I am a Christian." "What is your occupation? . . . I am a Christian." "Of what family? . . . I am a Christian." [CHRYSOSTOM, Orations, 75]. He cannot be honored with the name Christian, who dishonors by iniquity, Christ, the Author of the name. Blandina's refreshment amidst her tortures was to say, "I am a Christian, and with us Christians no evil is done" [EUSEBIUS, Ecclesiastical History, 5.1]. Apostasy from the faith is sure soon to be followed by indulgence in iniquity. It was so with the false teachers (2Ti 3:2-8, 13).

As if our apostle had said, "Notwithstanding that Hymeneus and Philetus, with others, are fallen away, nevertheless we know that the

foundation of God, his holy covenant, standeth firm and sure, having a seal annexed to it, (as usually contracts have, whereby two parties do oblige themselves mutually to each other,) which seal on God's part has this impress or inscription, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and on our part it is written, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Learn hence, 1. That the covenant of God made with us in Christ Jesus is a firm and sure foundation to build our hopes of perseverance and eternal life upon: The foundation of God standeth sure.

Learn, 2. That the covenant (according to the nature of all covenants) is conditional; on God's promising assistance, acceptance, and rewards; on our part a departing from all iniquity, and an obligation to the love and practice of universal holiness. All that make a profession of Christianity ought to take especial care that their lives may answer their light, their practices correspond with their profession; Christianity being not a speculative science, but a practical art of holy living.

It may be a great comfort to us that the unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of no effect. Though the faith of some particular persons be overthrown, yet the foundation of God standeth sure (2Ti 2:19); it is not possible that they should deceive the elect. Or it may be meant of the truth itself, which they impugn. All the attacks which the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ cannot shake it; it stands firm, and weathers all the storms which have been raised against it. The prophets and apostles, that is, the doctrines of the Old and New Testament, are still firm; and they have a seal with two mottoes upon it, one on the one side, and the other on the other, as is usual in a broad seal. 1. One expresses our comfort--that the Lord knows those that are his, and those that are not; knows them, that is, he owns them, so knows them that he will never lose them. Though the faith of some be overthrown, yet the Lord is said to know the ways of the righteous, Ps 1:6. None can overthrow the faith of any whom God hath chosen. 2. Another declares our duty--that every one who names the name of Christ must depart from iniquity. Those who would have the comfort of the privilege must make conscience

of the duty. If the name of Christ be called upon us, we must depart from iniquity, else he will not own us; he will say in the great day (Mt 7:23), Depart from me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity. Observe,

(1.) Whatever errors are introduced into the church, the foundation of God standeth sure, his purpose can never be defeated.

(2.) God hath some in the church who are his and whom he knows to be his.

(3.) Professing Christians name the name of Christ, are called by his name, and therefore are bound to depart from iniquity; for Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, Tit 2:14.

20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor.

Our apostle had told us at verses 17 and 18, of certain heretics; such as Hymeneus and Philetus, whose doctrines did eat like a canker or gangrene: he tells us here, that it is not to be wondered at, that there should be such persons in the church, because the visible church is God's great house, now it is no uncommon thing in great men's houses, to have vessels of all sorts, some of wood and earth, others of gold and silver, some to honourable uses, and others to dishonourable.

In like manner it is in the church of Christ, there will be number of orthodox and also of heterodox Christians, hypocrites and sincere Christians. He also advises Timothy, therefore, not to be scandalized at them, but to purify himself from them, to keep himself pure from heresy and impiety; hereby he would manifest himself to be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use; that is, for the service and glory of God, and disposed for every good work.

Learn hence, That all Christians, but especially the ministers of Christ, ought to be, like the consecrated vessels of the temple,

dedicated and set apart for our Lord's especial use and service: we are not only with other Christians dedicated by baptism, but consecrated at our solemn ordination: so that there is a sacredness upon our persons; and to prostitute ourselves to any lust, is a greater profanation than Belshazzar was guilty of, when he desecrated the holy vessels of the temple.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel
unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared
unto every good work.
22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity,
peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do
gender strifes.

Still our apostle proceeds in his holy, cautionary directions to Timothy what to avoid, and what to follow.

He advises him, 1. To avoid and flee youthful lusts: by which may be understood, not only the lusts of the flesh, but also the lusts and vices of the mind, as ambition and pride, vain-glory and ostentation. Where note, That the flesh, with its affections and lusts, are such dangerous enemies to our holiness and salvation, that the holiest of ministers and best of men have need, very great need, to be warned of them, and cautioned against them: flee thou, O Timothy, also youthful lusts.

2. He advises Timothy also to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, that is, controversies and disputes, knowing that such contentious wranglings do but engender strife.
It is not unworthy our observation, that no less than four times in these two epistles, do we meet with this precept from the apostle, to avoid questions and disputes, and to apply to that which is practical, showing of what great importance it is so to do; and we shall meet with it again in the epistle to Titus. Titus 3:9

From whence learn, That disputes about matters which only serve to beget strife and contention, but tend little to edification in faith and holiness, are vain talking, unprofitable disputes, and as such to be avoided.

Observe next, he directs Timothy what to follow, having shown him what to avoid; namely, to follow after righteousness and faith, peace and charity with all persons, but especially with all our brethren and fellow-Christians calling on the same Lord, and professing the same faith with us.

Where note, That we ought to have charity for, to maintain peace with, and by no means to separate from our communion, any person who serves Christ with a pure heart: Follow, says our apostle, charity and peace, with all those that call on the Lord Jesus Christ out of a pure heart.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto
all *men,* apt to teach, patient;

And the servant of the Lord. Referring here primarily to the Christian minister, but applicable to all Christians; for all profess to be the servants of the Lord. Must not strive. He may calmly inquire after truth; he may discuss points of morals, or theology, if he will do it with a proper spirit; he may "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," (Jude 1:3;) but he may not do that which is here mentioned as strife. The Greek word-- μαχεσθαι --commonly denotes, to fight to make war, to contend. In Jn 6:52, Acts 7:26, 2Ti 2:24, it is rendered strove, and strive; in Jas 4:2, fight. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the servant of Christ should be a man of peace. He should not indulge in the feelings which commonly give rise to contention, and which commonly characterize it. He should not struggle for mere victory, even when endeavouring to maintain truth; but should do this, in all cases, with a kind spirit, and a mild temper; with entire candour; with nothing designed to provoke and irritate an adversary; and so that, whatever may be the result of the discussion, "the bond of peace" may, if possible, be preserved. Comp. Rom 12:18. But be gentle unto

all men. 1Thes 2:7. The word rendered gentle, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means that the Christian minister is to be meek and mild towards all, not disputatious and quarrelsome.

Apt to teach. Notes, 1Timm 3:2. Patient. Marg., forbearing. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, patient under evils and injuries. Robinson, Lex. Comp. Eph 4:2; Col 3:13

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. That is, those who embrace error, and array themselves against the truth. We are not to become angry with such persons, and denounce them at once as heretics. We are not to hold them up to public reproach and scorn; but we are to set about the business of patiently instructing them. Their grand difficulty, it is supposed in this direction, is, that they are ignorant of the truth. Our business with them is, calmly to show them what the truth is. If they are angry, we are not to be. If they oppose the truth, we are still calmly to state it to them. If they are slow to see it, we are not to become weary or impatient, Nor, if they do not embrace it at all, are we to become angry with them, and denounce them. We may pity them, but we need not use hard words. This is the apostolic precept about the way of treating those who are in error; and can any one fail to see its beauty and propriety? Let it be remembered, also, that this is not only beautiful and proper in itself; it is the wisest course, if we would bring others over to our opinions. You are not likely to convince a man that you are right, and that he is wrong, if you first make him angry; nor are you very likely to do it, if you enter into harsh contention. You then put him on his guard; you make him a party; and, from self-respect, or pride, or anger, he will endeavour to defend his own opinions, and will not yield to yours. Meekness and gentleness are the very best things, if you wish to convince another that he is wrong. Win his heart first, and then modestly and kindly show him what the truth is, in as few words, and with as unassuming a spirit, as possible, and you have him. If God peradventure will give them repentance, etc. Give them such a view of the error which they have embraced, and such regret for having embraced it, that they shall be willing to admit the truth. After all our care in teaching others the truth, our only dependence is on God for

its success. We cannot be absolutely certain that they will see their error; we cannot rely certainly on any power which argument will have; we can only hope that God may show them their error, and enable them to see and embrace the truth. Compare Acts 11:18. The word rendered peradventure, here μηποτε--means, usually, not even, never; and then, that never, lest ever--the same as lest perhaps. It is translated lest at any time, Mt 4:6, 5:26, 13:15, Mk 4:12, Lk 21:34 lest, Mt 7:6, 13:29, 15:32, et al.; lest haply, Lk 14:12; Acts 5:39. It does not imply that there was any chance about what is said, but rather that there was uncertainty in the mind of the speaker, and that there was need of caution lest something should occur; or, that anything was done, or should be done, to prevent something from happening. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament in the sense which our translators, and all the critics, so far as I have examined, give to it here--as implying a hope that God would give them repentance, etc. But I may be permitted to suggest another interpretation, which will accord with the uniform meaning of the word in the New Testament, and which will refer the matter to those who had embraced the error, and not to God. It is this: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves--(αντιδιατιθεμενους) lest --μηποτε --God should give them repentance, and they should recover themselves out of the snare of the devil," etc. That is, they put themselves in this posture of opposition so that they shall not be brought to repentance, and recover themselves. They do it with a precautionary view that they may not be thus brought to repentance, and be recovered to God. They take this position of opposition to the truth, intending not to be converted; and this is the reason why they are not converted.

And that they may recover themselves. Marg., awake. The word which is rendered recover in the text and awake in the margin ανανηψωσιν occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, to become sober again, as from inebriation; to awake from a deep sleep; and then, to come to a right mind, as one does who is aroused from a state of inebriety, or from sleep. The representation in this part of the verse implies that while under the influence of error, they were like a man intoxicated, or like one in deep slumber. From this state they were to be roused, as one is from sleep, or as a man is

recovered from the stupor and dullness of intoxication. Out of the snare of the devil. The snare which the devil has spread for them, and in which they have become entangled. There is a little confusion of metaphor here, since in the first part of the verse, they are represented as asleep, or intoxicated; and, here, as taken in a snare. Yet the general idea is clear. In one part of the verse, the influence of error is represented as producing sleep, or stupor; in the other, as being taken in a snare or net; and, in both, the idea is, that an effort was to be made that they might be rescued from this perilous condition.

Who are taken captive by him at his will. Marg., alive. The Greek word means, properly, to take alive; and then to take captive, to win over, Lk 5:10; and then to ensnare, or seduce. Here it means that they had been ensnared by the arts oh Satan unto (εις) his will; that is, they were so influenced by him, that they complied with his will. Another interpretation of this passage should be mentioned here, by which it is proposed to avoid the incongruousness of the metaphor of awaking one from a snare. It is adopted by Doddridge, and is suggested also by Burder, as quoted by Rosenmuller, A.u.n. Morgenland. According to this, the reference is to an artifice of fowlers, to scatter seeds impregnated with some intoxicating drugs, intended to lay birds asleep, that they may draw the snare over them more securely. There can be no doubt that such arts were practised, and it is possible that Paul may have alluded to it. Whatever is the allusion, the general idea is clear. It is an affecting representation of those who have fallen into error.

They are in a deep slumber. They are as if under the fatal influence of some stupefying potion. They are like birds taken alive in this state, and at the mercy of the fowler. They will remain in this condition, unless they shall be roused by the mercy of God; and it is the business of the ministers of religion to carry to them that gospel call, which God is accustomed to bless in showing them their danger. That message should be continually sounded in the ears of the sinner, with the prayer and the hope that God will make it the means of arousing him to seek his salvation.

25 in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

By the servant of the Lord, we are here to understand all the bishops and governors, the pastors and teachers, of the church; by not striving, that they are not to irritate and provoke such as dissent and differ from them; not to strive indecently with the tongue, but by soft and gentle words, by close and hard arguments, endeavour to convince their judgment; for no man that is in an error thinks that he is so; therefore if we go about by violence to rend men's opinions from them, they will but hold them so much the faster; but if we have but so much patience and charity as to unrip their errors by degrees, they will at last fall into pieces of themselves. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all, and patient; it follows farther, in meekness instructing, --if God, peradventure, &c.

Where note, 1. The duty directed to; and that is, without bitterness and passion, but with great lenity and meekness, to instruct the erroneous, even when the oppose the truth; such especially as do it out of ignorance, and for want of better information, are particularly to be pitied, and patiently borne with, together with those who labour under the prejudices and prepossessions of a contrary education; in meekness instructing those that oppose.

Note, 2. The benefit hoped for, and the advantage expected, by such meek and gentle methods of instruction as are here directed to;

1. That Almighty God may peradventure give them repentance, blessing such prudential and pious means for their conversion from error and seduction; and

2. That they may be recovered out of Satan's snares and temptations, they being at present captivated by him according to his will.

Learn, 1. That if erroneous and misled persons will not bear gentle teaching, much less will they yield to sharp invectives, or provoking disputes.

Yet, 2. Disputations wisely managed, like defensive wars, are both useful and necessary in defence of the truth, though they do not bring over gainsayers.

Learn, 3, That until erroneous and misled persons can be brought by consideration to be agents in recovering themselves, no teaching or disputing will be sufficient or effectual to recover them: That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him.

Lastly, error is the devil's snare as well as sin: error is as dangerous as vice; the one is an open road, the other is a by-path, to hell and destruction; consequently, such a Christian as has a due regard to, and value for his own salvation, will be as much afraid of erroneous principles as of debauched practices: That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

26 and *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil,
who are taken captive by him at his will.

The servant of the Lord must not strive, 2Ti 2:24. Nothing worse becomes the servant of the Lord Jesus, who himself did not strive nor cry (Mt 12:19), but was a pattern of meekness, and mildness, and gentleness to all, than strife and contention. The servant of the Lord must be gentle to all men, and thereby show that he is himself subject to the commanding power of that holy religion which he is employed in preaching and propagating.--Apt to teach. Those are unapt to teach who are apt to strive, and are fierce and froward. Ministers must be patient, bearing with evil, and in meekness instructing (2Ti 2:25) not only those who subject themselves, but those who oppose themselves. Observe,

1. Those who oppose themselves to the truth are to be instructed; for instruction is the scripture-method of dealing with the erroneous, which is more likely to convince them of their errors than fire and faggot: he does not bid us kill their bodies, under pretence of saving their souls.

2. Such as oppose themselves are to be instructed in meekness, for our Lord is meek and lowly (Mt 11:29), and this agrees well with the character of the servant of the Lord (2Ti 2:24): He must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient. This is the way to convey truth in its light and power, and to overcome evil with good, Ro 12:21.
3. That which ministers must have in their eyes, in instructing those who oppose themselves, must be their recovery: If God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. Observe,

(1.) Repentance is God's gift.

(2.) It is a gift with a peradventure in the case of those who oppose themselves; and therefore, though we are not to despair of the grace of God, yet we must take heed of presuming upon it. To the acknowledging of the truth.

(3.) The same God who gives us the discovery of the truth does by his grace bring us to the acknowledging of it, otherwise our hearts would continue in rebellion against it, for we are to confess with our mouths as well as to believe with our hearts, Ro 10:9,10. And thus sinners recover themselves out of the snare of the devil; see here,

[1.] The misery of sinners: they are in the snare of the devil, and are led captive by him at his will, 2Ti 2:26. They are slaves to the worst of task-masters; he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Eph 2:2. They are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil's; they are as fishes that are taken in n evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare. Further, They are under Ham's curse (a servant of servants shall he be, Ge 9:25), they are slaves to him who is but a slave and vassal.

[2.] The happiness of those who repent: they recover themselves out of this snare, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and they have escaped; and the greater the danger the greater the deliverance. When sinners repent, those who before were led captive by the devil at his will come to be led into the glorious liberty of the

children of God, and have their wills melted into the will of the Lord Jesus. The good Lord recover us all out of the snare.

2 Timothy-3

The Character of Men in the Last Days

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

Timothy must not think it strange if there were in the church bad men; for the net of the gospel was to enclose both good fish and bad, Mt 22:47,48. Jesus Christ had foretold (Mt 24:1-51) that there would come seducers, and therefore we must not be offended at it, nor think the worse of religion or the church for it. Even in gold ore there will be dross, and a great deal of chaff among the wheat when it lies on the floor.

I Timothy must know that in the last days (2Ti 3:1), in gospel times, there would come perilous times. Though gospel times were times of reformation in many respects, let him know that even in gospel times there would be perilous times; not so much on account of persecution from without as on account of corruptions within. These would be difficult times, wherein it would be difficult for a man to keep a good conscience. He does not say, "Perilous times shall come, for both Jews and Gentiles shall be combined to root out Christianity;" but "perilous times shall come, for such as have the form of godliness (2Ti 3:5) shall be corrupt and wicked, and do a great deal of damage to the church." Two traitors within the garrison may do more hurt to it than two thousand besiegers without. Perilous times shall come, for men shall be wicked.

Note, 1. Sin makes the times perilous. When there is a general corruption of manners, and of the tempers of men, this makes the times dangerous to live in; for it is hard to keep our integrity in the midst of general corruption.

2 The coming of perilous times is an evidence of the truth of scripture-predictions; if the event in this respect did not answer to the prophecy, we might be tempted to question the divinity of the Bible. 3. We are

all concerned to know this, to believe and consider it, that we may not be surprised when we see the times perilous: This know also.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters,
proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

For men shall be lovers of their own selves. In the professing Church. Compare the catalogue, Ro 1:29, &c., where much the same sins are attributed to heathen men; it shall be a relapse into virtual heathendom, with all its beast-like propensities, whence the symbol of it is "a beast" (Re 13:1, 11, 12, &c.; 17:3, 8, 11). It shall be one of the characteristics of those times, that men shall be eminently selfish, evidently under the garb of religion. 2Ti 3:5. The word here used φιλαυτος--does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means a lover of one's self, selfish. Such a love of self as to lead us to secure our salvation is proper. But this interferes with the rights and happiness of no other persons. the selfishness which is condemned, is that regard to our own interests which interferes with the rights and comforts of others; which makes self the central and leading object of living; and which tramples on all that would interfere with that. As such it is a base and hateful and narrow passion; but it has been so common in the world that no one can doubt the correctness of the prophecy of the apostle that it would exist "in the last times."

Learn hence, That sins, especially great sins, seldom go single and alone, but commonly generate and beget one another. Thus here, self-love begets covetousness, covetousness pride, and pride blasphemy. Thus men fall from one sin to another, and proceed from one degree of wickedness to another

Paul tells Timothy what would be the occasion of making these times perilous, or what shall be the marks and signs whereby these times may be known, 2Ti 3:2, &c.

1. Self-love will make the times perilous. Who is there who does not love himself? But this is meant of an irregular sinful self-love. Men love their carnal selves better than their spiritual selves. Men love to gratify their own lusts, and make provision for them, more than to please God and do their duty. Instead of Christian charity, which takes

care for the good of others, they will mind themselves only, and prefer their own gratification before the church's edification.

2. Covetousness. Observe, Self-love brings in a long train of sins and mischiefs. When men are lovers of themselves, no good can be expected from them, as all good may be expected from those who love God with all their hearts. When covetousness generally prevails, when every man is for what he can get and for keeping what he has, this makes men dangerous to one another, and obliges every man to stand on his guard against his neighbour.

3. Pride and vain-glory. The times are perilous when men, being proud of themselves, are boasters and blasphemers, boasters before men whom they despise and look upon with scorn, and blasphemers of God and of his name. When men do not fear God they will not regard man, and so vice versâ.

4. When children are disobedient to their parents, and break through the obligations which they lie under to them both in duty and gratitude, and frequently in interest, having their dependence upon them and their expectation from them, they make the times perilous; for what wickedness will those stick at who will be abusive to their own parents and rebel against them?

5. Unthankfulness and unholiness make the times perilous, and these two commonly go together. What is the reason that men are unholy and without the fear of God, but that they are unthankful for the mercies of God? Ingratitude and impiety go together; for call a man ungrateful, and you can call him by no worse name. Unthankful, and impure, defiled with fleshly lusts, which is an instance of great ingratitude to that God who has provided so well for the support of the body; we abuse his gifts, if we make them the food and fuel of our lusts.

6. The times are perilous when men will not be held by the bonds either of nature or common honesty, when they are without natural affection, and truce-breakers, 2Ti 3:3. There is a natural affection due to all. Wherever there is the human nature, there should be humanity

towards those of the same nature, but especially between relations. Times are perilous when children are disobedient to their parents (2Ti 3:2) and when parents are without natural affection to their children, 2Ti 3:3. See what a corruption of nature sin is, how it deprives men even of that which nature has implanted in them for the support of their own kind; for the natural affection of parents to their children is that which contributes very much to the keeping up of mankind upon the earth. And those who will not be bound by natural affection, no marvel that they will not be bound by the most solemn leagues and covenants. They are truce-breakers, that make no conscience of the engagements they have laid themselves under.

7. The times are perilous when men are false accusers one of another, diaboloi--devils one to another, having no regard to the good name of others, or to the religious obligations of an oath, but thinking themselves at liberty to say and do what they please, Ps 12:4.

8. When men have no government of themselves and their own appetites: not of their own appetites, for they are incontinent; not of their own passions, for they are fierce; when they have no rule over their own spirits, and therefore are like a city that is broken down, and has no walls; they are soon fired, upon the least provocation.

9. When that which is good and ought to be honoured is generally despised and looked upon with contempt. It is the pride of persecutors that they look with contempt upon good people, though they are more excellent than their neighbours.

10. When men are generally treacherous, wilful, and haughty, the times are perilous (2Ti 3:4)-- when men are traitors, heady, high-minded. Our Saviour has foretold that the brother shall betray the brother to death and the father the child (Mt 10:21), and those are the worst sort of traitors: those who delivered up their Bibles to persecutors were called traditores, for they betrayed the trust committed to them. When men are petulant and puffed up, behaving scornfully to all about them, and when this temper generally prevails, then the times are perilous.

11. When men are generally lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. When there are more epicures than true Christians, then the times are bad indeed. God is to be loved above all. That is a carnal mind, and is full of enmity against him, which prefers any thing before him, especially such a sordid thing as carnal pleasure is.

12. When, notwithstanding all this, they have the form of godliness (2Ti 3:5), are called by the Christian name, baptized into the Christian faith, and make a show of religion; but, how plausible soever their form of godliness is, they deny the power of it. When they take upon them the form which should and would bring along with it the power thereof, they will put asunder what God hath joined together: they will assume the form of godliness, to take away their reproach; but they will not submit to the power of it, to take away their sin. Observe here,

(1.) Men may be very bad and wicked under a profession of religion; they may be lovers of themselves, &c., yet have a form of godliness.

(2.) A form of godliness is a very different thing from the power of it; men may have the one and be wholly destitute of the other; yea, they deny it, at least practically in their lives.

(3.) From such good Christians must withdraw themselves.

3 without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Trucebreakers. The same word in Rom 1:31, is rendered implacable. Rom 1:31. It properly means, without treaty; that is, those who are averse to any treaty or compact. It may thus refer to those who are unwilling to enter into any agreement; that is, either those who are unwilling to be reconciled to others when there is a variance--implacable; or those who disregard treaties or agreements. In either case, this marks a very corrupt condition of society. Nothing would be more indicative of the lowest state of degradation, than that in which all compacts and agreements were utterly disregarded. False accusers. Marg., makebates. The word makebate means one who excites contentions and quarrels. Webster. The Greek here is διαβολοι--devils --the primitive meaning of which is, calumniator, slanderer, accuser. Comp. 1Timm 3:11, where the word is rendered slanderers.

Incontinent. 1Cor 7:5. Literally, without strength; that is, without strength to resist the solicitations of passion, or who readily yield to it. Fierce. The Greek word used here-- ανημερος does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means ungentle, harsh, severe, and is the opposite of gentleness and mildness. Religion produces gentleness; the want of it makes men rough, harsh, cruel. 2Ti 2:24. Despisers of those that are good. In Tit 1:8, it is said of a bishop that he must be "a lover of good men." This, in every condition of life, is a virtue; and hence the opposite of it is here set down as one of the characteristics of that evil age of which the apostle speaks.

4 traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Traitors. This word is used in the New Testament only here and in Lk 6:16, Acts 7:52. It means any one who betrays-- whether it be a friend or his country. Treason has been in all ages regarded as one of the worst crimes that man can commit. Heady. The same word in Acts 19:36, is rendered rashly. It occurs only there and in this place in the New Testament. It properly means falling forwards; prone, inclined, ready to do anything; then precipitate, headlong, rash. It is opposed to that which is deliberate and calm; and here means, that men would be ready to do anything without deliberation, or concern for the consequences. They would engage in enterprises which would only disturb society, or prove their own ruin. High-minded. Literally, puffed up. 1Timm 3:6, where the same word is rendered lifted up with pride. The meaning is, that they would be inflated with pride or self-conceit. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. That is, of sensual pleasures, or vain amusements. This has been, and is, the characteristic of a great part of the world, and has often distinguished even many who profess religion. Of a large portion of mankind it may be said that this is their characteristic, that they live for pleasure; they have no serious pursuits; they brook no restraints which interfere with their amusements, and they greatly prefer the pleasures to be found in the gay assembly, in the ball-room, or in the place of low dissipation, to the friendship of their Creator.

5 having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Having a form of godliness. That is, they profess religion, or are in connexion with the church. This shows that the apostle referred to

some great corruption in the church; and there can be little doubt that he had his eye on the same great apostasy to which he refers in 2Thes 2, 1Timm 4. All these things to which he refers here have been practised and tolerated in that apostate church, while no body of men, at any time, have been more zealous in maintaining a form of godliness; that is, in keeping up the forms of religion. But denying the power thereof. Opposing the real power of religion; not allowing it to exert any influence in their lives. It imposes no restraint on their passions and carnal propensities; but in all respects, except in the form of religion, they live as if they had none. This has been common in the world. The most regular and bigoted adherence to the forms of religion, furnishes no evidence in itself that there is any true piety at heart, or that true religion has any actual control over the soul. It is much easier for men to observe the forms of religion than it is to bring the heart under its controlling influence. From such turn away. Have no intercourse with them as if they were Christians; show no countenance to their religion; do not associate with them. Comp. 2Jn 1:10,11; 2Cor 6:17.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

For of this sort are they which creep into houses. Who go slyly and insidiously into families. They are not open and manly in endeavouring to propagate their views, but they endeavour by their address to ingratiate themselves first with weak women, and through them to influence men. Comp. Tit 1:11. The word translated "creep into," is rendered by Doddridge, insinuate themselves; by Bloomfield, wind their way into, in the manner of serpents; by Bretschneider, deceitfully enter; by Robinson and Passow, go in, enter in. It is not certain that the idea of deceit or cunning is contained in this word, yet the whole complexion of the passage implies that they made their way by art and deceitful tricks. And lead captive silly women. One of the tricks always played by the advocates of error, and one of the ways by which they seek to promote their purposes. Satan began his work of temptation with Eve rather than with Adam, and the advocates of error usually follow his example. There are always weak-minded women enough in any community to give an opportunity of practicing these arts, and often the aims of the imposter and deceiver can be best secured by appealing to them. Such women are easily flattered; they

are charmed by the graceful manners of religious instructors; they lend a willing ear to anything that has the appearance of religion, and their hearts are open to anything that promises to advance the welfare of the world. At the same time, they are just such persons as the propagators of error can rely on. They have leisure; they have wealth; they are busy; they move about in society, and by their activity they obtain an influence, to which they are by no means entitled by their piety or talents. There are, indeed, very many women in the world who cannot be so easily led away as men; but it cannot be denied also that there are those who are just adapted to the purposes of such as seek to spread plausible error. The word rendered silly women, means properly little women, and then weak women.

Laden with sins. With so many sins that they seem to be burdened with them. The idea is, that they are under the influence of sinful desires and propensities, and hence are better adapted to the purposes of deceivers. Led away with divers lusts. With various kinds of passions or desires-- επιθυμιαις --such as pride, vanity, the love of novelty, or a susceptibility to flattery, so as to make them an easy prey to deceivers.

Ever learning. That is, these "silly women;" for so the Greek demands. The idea is, that they seem to be disciples. They put themselves wholly under the care of these professedly religious teachers, but they never acquire the true knowledge of the way of salvation. And never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They may learn many things, but the true nature of religion they do not learn. There are many such persons in the world, who, whatever attention they may pay to religion, never understand its nature. Many obtain much speculative acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity, but never become savingly acquainted with the system; many study the constitution and government of the church, but remain strangers to practical piety; many become familiar with the various philosophical theories of religion, but never become truly acquainted with what religion is; and many embrace visionary theories, who never show that they are influenced by the Spirit of the gospel. Nothing is more common than for persons to be very busy and active in religion, and even to learn

many things about it, who still remain strangers to the saving power of the gospel.

7 ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist
the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest
unto all *men*, as theirs also was.

But they shall proceed no further. There is a certain point beyond which they will not be allowed to go. Their folly will become manifest, and the world will understand it. The apostle does not say how far these false teachers would be allowed to go, but that they would not be suffered always to prosper and prevail. They might be plausible at first, and lead many astray; they might, by art and cunning, cover up the real character of their system, but there would be a fair development of it, and it would be seen to be folly. The apostle here may be understood as declaring a general truth in regard to error. It often is so plausible at first, that it seems to be true. It wins the hearts of many persons, and leads them astray. It flatters them personally, or it flatters them with the hope of a better state of things in the church and the world. But the time will always come when men will see the folly of it. Error will advance only to a certain point, when it will be seen to be falsehood and folly, and when the world will arise and cast it off. In some cases, this point may be slower in being reached than in others; but there is a point, beyond which error will not go.

For their folly shall be manifest unto all men. The world will see and understand what they are, and what they teach. By smooth sophistry, and cunning arts, they will not be able always to deceive mankind.

As their's also was. That of Jannes and Jambres. That is, it became manifest to all that they could not compete with Moses and Aaron; that their claims to the power of working miracles were the mere arts of magicians, and that they had set up pretensions which they could not sustain. Comp. Ex 8:18,19. In regard to the time to which the apostle referred in this description, it has already been observed 2Ti 3:1, that it was probably to that great apostasy of the "latter days," which he has described in 2Thes 2, 1Timm 4. But there seems to be no reason to doubt that he had his eye immediately on some persons

who had appeared then, and who had evinced some of the traits which would characterize the great apostasy, and whose conduct showed that the great "falling away" had already commenced. In 2Thes 2:7, he says that the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work, or was even then manifesting itself; and there can be no doubt that the apostle saw that there had then commenced what he knew would yet grow up into the great defection from the truth. In some persons, at that time, who had the form of godliness, but who denied its power; who made use of insinuating arts to proselyte the weak and the credulous; who endeavoured to imitate the true apostles, perhaps by attempting to work miracles, as Jannes and Jambres did, he saw the germ of what was yet to grow up into so gigantic a system of iniquity as to overshadow the world. Yet he consoled Timothy with the assurance that there was a point beyond which the system of error would not be allowed to go, but where its folly must be seen, and where it would be arrested.

Paul's Last Charge to Timothy

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose,
faith, long-suffering, charity, patience,
11 persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at
Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all
the Lord delivered me.

A special mean is here propounded, how Timothy and his successors may be preserved from the seduction of false teachers, namely, by setting before themselves the example of the great apostle St. Paul; we are more easily led by precedents than by precepts; therefore the apostle propounds his own example as a pattern; Thou hast fully known my doctrine, my manner of life and conversation, my purpose to adhere to, my faith in Christ, my long-suffering and patience in undergoing persecution for him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, and how God was graciously pleased to deliver me out of all.

Learn hence, 1. That younger ministers ought especially to observe the doctrine and conversation of the elder, the pious way and walking of the graver ministers, and must follow them. Aged Paul propounds his

virtues to young Timothy for imitation; Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life; my doctrine to be sound and sincere, my life to be holy and unblameable.

Learn, 2. That it is both lawful and laudable, at sometimes, and upon some occasions, to mention both the graces which God hath wrought in us, and also the sufferings and persecutions which we endure and undergo for him; Thou knowest what persecutions I endured at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

Learn, 3. That always opposition, and often persecution, attends the preaching of the gospel wherever it goes. St. Paul went to Antioch, from Antioch to Iconium, from Iconium to Lystra, preaching the gospel; but pesecution followed him hard at the heels wherever he went. But observe how the goodness of God accompanied him too; Out of them all the

Lord delivered me; not only our dangers, but our deliverances also, must be recorded and observed.

Observe, farther, How the apostle argues, from his own persecutions in particular, to all the godly's persecutions in general; Yea, and all that will live godlily in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution;

Mark, Not this or that godly man, but all, every one without exception; the better the men, the sooner persecuted; the devil shoots his arrow at the whitest and fairest mark.
Again, all that will, he doth not say, All that wish well to godliness, but All that will, all that are absolutely resolved so to do.

And farther, if he will live, if he can or will keep his godliness in his heart, and not discover it in his life, he may escape hatred and persecution: but if he will live religiously, let him look for persecution.

Observe, farther, It is said, He that will live godlily, and not civilly, but living godlily, exposes to the world's scorn and hatred; In a word, his godliness in Christ Jesus, that is, such godliness as is exerted in the virtue, strength, and power of Christ Jesus particularly.

Godliness in Christ Jesus is real and true godliness; 'tis exact godliness, 'tis an active godliness, 'tis a prevailing godliness, it is a world condemning godliness; such godliness cannot escape the world's hatred.

Learn, That all those that shew forth the power of religion in an holy conversation, must certainly look for persecution.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Paul takes occasion from the reference to his own persecutions, to say that his case was not peculiar. It was the common lot of all who endeavoured to serve their Redeemer faithfully; and Timothy himself, therefore, must not hope to escape from it. The apostle had a particular reference, doubtless, to his own times; but he has put his remark into the most general form, as applicable to all periods. It is undoubtedly true at all times, and will ever be, that they who are devoted Christians--who live as the Saviour did --and who carry out his principles always, will experience some form of persecution. The essence of persecution consists in subjecting a person to injury or disadvantage on account of his opinions. It is something more than meeting his opinions by argument, which is always right and proper; it is inflicting some injury on him: depriving him of some privilege, or right; subjecting him to some disadvantage, or placing him in less favourable circumstances, on account of his sentiments. This may be either an injury done to his feelings, his family, his reputation, his property, his liberty, his influence; it may be by depriving him of an office which he held, or preventing him from obtaining one to which he is eligible; it may be by subjecting him to fine or imprisonment, to banishment, torture, or death. If, in any manner, or in any way, he is subjected to disadvantage on account of his religious opinions, and deprived of any immunities and rights to which he would be otherwise entitled, this is persecution. Now, it is doubtless as true as it ever was, that a man who will live as the Saviour did, will, like him, be subjected to some such injury or disadvantage. On account of his opinions, he may be held up to ridicule, or treated with neglect, or excluded from society to which his attainments and manners would otherwise introduce him, or

shunned by those who might otherwise value his friendship. These things may be expected in the best times, and under the most favourable circumstances; and it is known that a large part of the history of the world, in its relation to the church, is nothing more than a history of persecution. It follows, from this,

(1.) that they who make a profession of religion, should come prepared to be persecuted. It should be considered as one of the proper qualifications for membership in the church, to be willing to bear persecution, and to resolve not to shrink from any duty in order to avoid it.

(2.) They who are persecuted for their opinions, should consider that this may be one evidence that they have the Spirit of Christ, and are his true friends. They should remember that, in this respect, they are treated as the Master was, and are in the goodly company of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs; for they were all persecuted. Yet,

(3.) if we are persecuted, we should carefully inquire, before we avail ourselves of this consolation, whether we are persecuted because we "live godly in Christ Jesus," or for some other reason. A man may embrace some absurd opinion, and call it religion; he may adopt some mode of dress irresistibly ludicrous, from the mere love of singularity, and may call it conscience; or he may be boorish in his manners, and uncivil in his deportment, outraging all the laws of social life, and may call this "deadness to the world;" and for these, and similar things, he may be contemned, ridiculed, and despised. But let him not infer, therefore, that he is to be enrolled among the martyrs, and that he is certainly a real Christian. That persecution which will properly furnish any evidence that we are the friends of Christ, must be only that which is "for righteousness' sake," Mt 5:10, and must be brought upon us in an honest effort to obey the commands of God.

(4.) Let those who have never been persecuted in any way, inquire whether it is not an evidence that they have no religion. If they had been more faithful, and more like their Master, would they have always escaped? And may not their freedom from it prove that they

have surrendered the principles of their religion, where they should have stood firm, though the world were arrayed against them? It is easy for a professed Christian to avoid persecution, if he yields every point in which religion is opposed to the world. But let not a man who will do this, suppose that he has any claim to be numbered among the martyrs, or even entitled to the Christian name.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving,
and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast
been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them;*

Several arguments are here made use of, by St. Paul, to press Timothy to the duty of perseverance in the doctrine of Christ, contained in the holy scriptures; the first is drawn from the authority of the person from whom he had received that doctrine, to wit, St. Paul himself, an inspired apostle of Jesus Christ.

Continue in the things which thou hast learned; that is, from me, and by me as an authorized apostle. All the servants of God, but especially the ministers of God, must continue constant in the faith, and steadfast in the truth received.

The second argument of Timothy's adhering to the doctrine of the scriptures, is drawn from his long acquaintance with the scriptures, even from his childhood, yea, from his infancy: From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, &c. And the argument lies thus, "Thou, O Timothy, hast learnt the scriptures from thy infancy; now what a shame would it be for thee, who hast been taught so early the true religion, to turn from it and forsake it; from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, from a suckling, as the word signifies." From whence learn, That it is the duty of parents to instruct their children betimes in the holy and good word of God; we read before of the care that Timothy's mother and grandmother took in that matter,

Observe, 2. The title given to the word of God, - the holy scriptures; they are holy in their author, holy in their matter, holy in their penman, holy in their end and design, which is to make us holy, Joh

16:17. The word of God is not only pure but purifying, not only clean but cleansing.

Observe, 3. the high commendation given of the word, It is able to make thee wise unto salvation; no knowledge can bring us to salvation without the knowledge of the holy scriptures; the philosophers will teach you moral wisdom, but not a word of salvation by a Redeemer, without whom our salvation is impossible; it is here added, -wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Learn, thence, that the holy scriptures, though they instruct us in the way of salvation, yet cannot save us without faith in Christ Jesus.

15 and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which
are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in
Christ Jesus.
16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in
righteousness:

Our apostle closes this chapter with an exhortation to Timothy to persevere in his study of the holy scriptues, by an argument drawn,

1. From the dignity and authority of the scriptures; 2. From their utility; 3. From their perfection.

1. From their dignity and authority,They are given by the inspiration of God: that is, they are not the contrivance of any man's wit and fancy, but a revelation of the mind and will of God; and those that wrote them were excited to it, and assisted in it, by the Spirit of God; no part of scripture had either angels or men for its author, but every part of scripture is divinely inspired or breathed by God, both for matter and order, style and words.

A second argument is drawn from the utility and sufficiency of the holy scriptures; they are profitable for doctrine and instruction, teaching us what to know and believe in order to salvation,

concerning God, and Christ, and ourselves, &c. for reproof of error, and confutation of false doctrines, for correction of sin and evil manners, for instruction in righteousness, directing us how to lead a holy and righteous life, according to the will of God.

A third argument is taken from the perfection of them; they are able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works; that is, to make the ministers of Christ complete in knowledge, faith, and holiness, every way fitted for their work and duty, as Christians, and as ministers.

Observe here, 1. That the scriptures of the Old Testament, and not of the New, must be the scriptures here intended, they being the only scriptures which Timothy had known from a child; that was before the scriptures of the new Testament were written.

Observe, 2. That the apostle doth not say that these scriptures were of themselves sufficient to make Timothy wise unto salvation, but only that with faith in Christ Jesus they were sufficient for that end; much more then must the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament together, when accompanied with faith in Jesus Christ, be sufficent for that end.

Observe, 3. That the scriptures are a perfect, plain, and sufficient rule, in all things necessary to salvation.

1. They are a perfect rule; because the writers of them were inspired, and consequently their writings are infallible.

2. They are a plain rule; otherwise they would be no rule at all, of no more use to direct our faith and practice than a sun-dial in a dark room is to tell us the hour of the day. A rule that is not plain, whatever it may be in itself, is of no use to us till it is made plain.

3. They are a sufficient rule; they are able to make the man of God perfect, and wise to salvation. Here the church of Rome distinguishes, and says, the scriptures are sufficient to salvation, but

not to instruction, to whom one of the martyrs replied, "If so, God send me the salvation and you the instruction."

It is conceived by some that this was the last epistle that ever St. Paul wrote; if so, this is the last charge that ever he gave, and concerns us the more to attend to the solemnity of it. The chapter before us is St. Paul's Cygnea Cantio, his last and sweetest song; by a spiritual sagacity he saw his end approaching, and the time of his martyrdom to be at hand; he therefore, like a dying man, adjures TImothy in a most awful and tremendous manner, to preach the word with all diligence and care, which he had so highly extolled in the foregoing chapter, as being able to make all persons wise unto salvation.

And is profitable. It is useful, it is adapted to give instruction, to administer reproof, etc. If "all" Scripture is thus valuable, then we are to esteem no part of the Old Testament as worthless. There is no portion of it, even now, which may not be fitted, in certain circumstances, to furnish us valuable lessons, and, consequently, no part of it which could be spared from the sacred canon. There is no part of the human body which is not useful in its place, and no part of it which can be spared without sensible loss. For doctrine. For teaching or communicating instruction. Comp. 1Timm 4:16. For reproof. On the meaning of the word here rendered reproof ελεγχος--Heb 11:1. It here means, probably, for convincing; that is, convincing a man of his sins, of the truth and claims of religion, etc., Jn 16:8. For correction. The word here used--επανορθωσις--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly, a setting to rights, reparation, restoration, (from επανορθοω, to right up again, to restore;) and here means, the leading to a correction or amendment of life--a reformation. The meaning is, that the Scriptures are a powerful means of reformation, or of putting men into the proper condition in regard to morals. After all the means which have been employed to reform mankind; all the appeals which are made to them on the score of health, happiness, respectability, property, and long life, the word of God is still the most powerful and the most effectual means of recovering those who have fallen into vice. No reformation can be permanent which is not based on the principles of the word of God. For instruction in righteousness. Instruction in regard to the

principles of justice, or what is right. Man needs not only to be made acquainted with truth, to be convinced of his error, and to be reformed; but he needs to be taught what is right, or what is required of him, in order that he may lead a holy life. Every reformed and regenerated man needs instruction, and should not be left merely with the evidence that he is reformed, or converted, he should be followed with the principles of the word of God, to show him how he may lead an upright life. The Scriptures furnish the rules of holy living in abundance, and thus they are adapted to the whole work of recovering man, and of guiding him to heaven.

17 that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy-4

1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Verse 1. I charge thee therefore before God. 1Timm 5:21. Who shall judge the quick and the dead. That is, the Lord Jesus; for he is to be the Judge of men, Mt 25:31-46, 2Cor 5:10. The word quick means living, Acts 10:42; Eph 2:1; and the idea is, that he would be alike the Judge of all who were alive when he should come, and of all who had died. 1Thes 4:16, 1Thes 4:17. In view of the fact that all, whether preachers or hearers, must give up their account to the final Judge, Paul charges Timothy to be faithful; and what is there which will more conduce to fidelity in the discharge of duty, than the thought that we must soon give up a solemn account of the manner in which we have performed it? At his appearing. That is, the judgment shall then take place. This must refer to a judgment yet to take place, for the Lord Jesus has not yet "appeared" the second time to men; and, if this be so, then there is to be a resurrection of the dead. On the meaning of the word rendered appearing, 2Thes 2:8. It is there rendered brightness. Comp. 1Timm 6:14, 2Ti 1:10, Tit 2:13. And his kingdom. Or, at the setting up of his kingdom. The idea of his reigning, or setting up his kingdom, is not unfrequently associated with the idea of his coming. See Mt 16:28. The meaning is, that, at his second advent, the extent and majesty of his kingdom will be fully

displayed. It will be seen that he has control over the elements, over the graves of the dead, and over all the living. It will be seen that the earth and the heavens are under his sway, and that all things there acknowledge him as their sovereign Lord. In order to meet the full force of the language used by Paul here, it is not necessary to suppose that he will set up a visible kingdom on the earth, but only that there will be an illustrious display of himself as a king, and of the extent and majesty of the empire over which he presides. Comp. Rom 14:11; Php 2:10.

2 preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove,
rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Preach the word. The word of God; the gospel. This was to be the main business of the life of Timothy, and Paul solemnly charges him, in view of the certain coming of the Redeemer to judgment, to be faithful in the performance of it. Be instant. Rom 12:12, The meaning here is, that he should be constant in this duty. Literally, to stand by, or to stand fast by; that is, he was to be pressing or urgent in the performance of this work. He was always to be at his post, and was to embrace every opportunity of making known the gospel. What Paul seems to have contemplated was not merely that he should perform the duty at stated and regular times; but that he should press the matter as one who had the subject much at heart, and never lose an opportunity of making the gospel known.

In season. ευκαιρως. In good time; opportunely. Comp. Mt 16:16, Lk 22:6, Mk 14:11. The sense is, when it could be conveniently done; when all things were favourable, and when there were no obstructions or hinderances. It may include the stated and regular seasons for public worship, but is not confined to them. Out of season. ακαιρως. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is the opposite of the former, and means that a minister is to seek opportunities to preach the gospel even at such periods as might be inconvenient to himself, or when there might be hinderances and embarrassments, or when there was no stated appointment for preaching. He is not to confine himself to the appointed times of worship, or to preach only when it will be perfectly convenient for himself; but he is to have such an interest and earnestness in the work, that it will lead him to do it in the face

of embarrassments and discouragements, and whenever he can find an opportunity. A man who is greatly intent on an object will seek every opportunity to promote it. He will not confine himself to stated times and places, but will present it everywhere, and at all times. A man, therefore, who merely confines himself to the stated seasons of preaching the gospel, or who merely reaches when it is convenient to himself, should not consider that he has come up to the requirement of the rule laid down by the apostle. He should preach in his private conversation, and in the intervals of his public labours, at the side of the sick bed, and wherever there is a prospect of doing good to any one. If his heart is full of love to the Saviour and to souls, he cannot help doing this. Reprove. Or convince. 2Ti 3:16. The meaning is, that he was to use such arguments as would convince men of the truth of religion, and of their own need of it. Rebuke. Rebuke offenders. Tit 2:15. See the use of the word in Mt 8:26, 12:16, (rendered charged;) Mt 16:22, 17:18; Mt 19:13, 20:31, Lk 4:35,39, 17:3, 18:15, Jude 1:9. In the New Testament the word is used to express a judgment of what is wrong, or contrary to one's will, and hence to admonish or reprove. It implies our conviction that there is something evil, or some fault in him who is rebuked. The word in this verse rendered reprove, does not imply this, but merely that one may be in error, and needs to have arguments presented to convince him of the truth. That word also implies no superior authority in him who does it. He presents reasons, or argues the case, for the purpose of convincing. The word here rendered rebuke, implies authority or superiority, and means merely that we may say that a thing is wrong, and administer a rebuke for it, as if there were no doubt that it was wrong. The propriety of the rebuke rests on our authority for doing it, not on the arguments which we present. This is based on the presumption that men often know that they are doing wrong, and need no arguments to convince them of it. The idea is, that the minister is not merely to reason about sin, and convince men that it is wrong; but he may solemnly admonish them not to do it, and warn them of the consequences. Exhort. Rom 12:8. With all long-suffering. That is, with a patient and persevering spirit if you are opposed. 2Ti 2:25. Comp. Rom 2:4. Comp. Rom 9:22, 2Cor 6:6, Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2, Col 1:11, 3:12, 1Timm 1:16. And doctrine. Teaching, or patient instruction.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;
but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers,
having itching ears;

For the time will come, etc. Probably referring to the time mentioned in 2Ti 3:1, seq. When they will not endure sound doctrine. Greek, healthful doctrine; i.e., doctrine contributing to the health of the soul, or to salvation. At that time they would seek a kind of instruction more conformable to their wishes and feelings. But after their own lusts. They will seek such kind of preaching as will accord with their carnal desires; or such as will palliate their evil propensities, and deal gently with their vices. Comp. Isa 30:10, "Speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits." Shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. The word rendered heap επισωρευω--does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to heap up upon, to accumulate; and here to multiply. The word rendered itching--κνηθω--also occurs only in this place in the New Testament. It means to rub, to scratch; and then to tickle, and here to feel an itching for something pleasing or gratifying. The image is derived from the desire which we have when there is an itching sensation, to have it rubbed or scratched. Such an uneasiness would these persons have to have, some kind of instruction that would allay their restless and uneasy desires, or would gratify them. In explanation of this passage we may observe,

(1.) that there will be always religious teachers of some kind, and that, in proportion as error and sin abound, they will be multiplied. The apostle here says, that by turning away from Timothy, and from sound instruction, they would not abandon all religious teachers, but would rather increase and multiply them. Men often declaim much against a regular ministry, and call it priestcraft; and yet, if they were to get rid of such a ministry, they would by no means escape from all kinds of religious teachers. The deeper the darkness, and the more gross the errors, and the more prevalent the wickedness of men, the more will a certain kind of religious teachers abound, and the more it will cost to support them.

(2.) In such classes of persons as the apostle here refers to, there is a restless, uneasy desire to have some kind of preachers. They have

"itching ears." They will be ready to run after all kinds of public instructors. They will be little pleased with any, and this will be one reason why they will have so many. They are fickle, and unsettled, and never satisfied. desire to hear the truth, and to learn the way of salvation, is a good desire. But this can be better gratified by far under the patient and intelligent labour of a single religious teacher, than by running after many teachers, or than by frequent changes. How much would a child learn if he were constantly running from one school to another?

(3.) Such persons would have teachers according to "their own lusts;" that is, their own tastes, or wishes. They would have those who would coincides with their whims; who would foster every vagary which might enter their imagination; who would countenance every wild project for doing good; who would be the advocates of the errors which they held; and who would be afraid to rebuke their faults. These are the principles on which many persons choose their religious teachers. The true principle should be, to select those who will faithfully declare the truth, and who will not shrink from exposing and denouncing sin, wherever it may be found.

4 and they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

But watch thou in all things. Be vigilant against error and against sin, and faithful in the performance of duty. Mt 25:13; 1Cor 16:13. Endure afflictions. 2Ti 2:3. The Greek word here is the same which is there rendered "endure hardness." Do the work of an evangelist. On the word evangelist, Acts 21:8. The phrase here means, do the work of preaching the gospel, or of one appointed to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. This is the proper business of all ministers, whatever other rank they may maintain. Whether it was ever regarded as the proper duty of a separate class of men to do this, Eph 5:11. Make full proof of thy ministry. Marg., fulfil. Comp. Rom 14:5. The word here used denotes, properly, to bear or bring fully; then to persuade fully; and then to make fully assured of, to give full proof of. The meaning here seems to be, to furnish full evidence of what is the design of the Christian ministry, and of what it is adapted to

accomplish, by the faithful performance of all its duties. Timothy was so to discharge the duties of his office as to furnish a fair illustration of what the ministry could do, and thus to show the wisdom of the Saviour in its institution. This should be the aim of all the ministers of the gospel. Each one should resolve, by the blessing of God, that the ministry, in his hands, shall be allowed, by a fair trial, to show to the utmost what it is adapted to do for the welfare of mankind.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

For I am now ready to be offered. This conviction of the apostle that he was about to die, is urged as a reason why Timothy should be laborious and faithful in the performance of the duties of his office. His own work was nearly done. He was soon to be withdrawn from the earth, and whatever benefit the world might have derived from his experience or active exertions, it was now to be deprived of it. He was about to leave a work which he much loved, and to which he had devoted the rigour of his life, and he was anxious that they who were to succeed him should carry on the work with all the energy and zeal in their power. This expresses the common feeling of aged ministers as death draws near. The word "ready," in the phrase "ready to be offered," conveys an idea which is not in the original. It implies a willingness to depart, which, whether true or not, is not the idea conveyed by the apostle. His statement is merely of the fact that he was about to die, or that his work was drawing to a close. No doubt he was "ready," in the sense of being willing and prepared, but this is not the idea in the Greek. The single Greek word rendered "I am ready to be offered"--σπενδομαι--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Php 2:17, where it is translated, "if I be offered." See it explained Php 2:17. The allusion here, says Burder (in Rosenmuller's A. u. n. Morgenland,) is to the custom which prevailed among the heathen generally, of pouring wine and oil on the head of a victim when it was about to be offered in sacrifice. The idea of the apostle then is, that he was in the condition of the victim on whose head the wine and oil had been already poured, and which was just about to be put to death; that is, he was about to die. Every preparation had been made, and he only awaited the blow which was to strike him down. The meaning is not that he was to be a sacrifice; it is that his death was about to occur. Nothing more remained to be

done but to die. The victim was all ready, and he was sure that the blow would soon fall. What was the ground of his expectation, he has not told us. Probably there were events occurring in Rome which made it morally certain that though he had once been acquitted, he could not now escape. At all events, it is interesting to contemplate an aged and experienced Christian on the borders of the grave, and to learn what were his feelings in the prospect of his departure to the eternal world. Happily, Paul has in more places than one (comp. Php 1:23) stated his views in such circumstances, and we know that his religion then did not fail him. He found it to be in the prospect of death what he had found it to be through all his life--the source of unspeakable consolation; and he was enabled to look calmly onward to the hour which should summon him into the presence of his Judge. And the time of my departure is at hand. Gr., dissolving, or dissolution. So we speak of the dissolution of the soul and body. The verb from which the noun (αναλυσις,) is derived (αναλυω,) means to loosen again; to undo. It is applied to the act of unloosing or casting off the fastenings of a ship, preparatory to a departure. The proper idea in the use of the word would be, that he had been bound to the present world, like a ship to its moorings, and that death would be a release. He would now spread his sails on the broad ocean of eternity. The true idea of death is that of loosening the bands that confine us to the present world; of setting us free, and permitting the soul to go forth, as with expanded sails, on its eternal voyage. With such a view of death, why should a Christian fear to die?

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

8 henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

A crown of righteousness. That is, a crown won in the cause of righteousness, and conferred as the reward of his conflicts and efforts in the cause of holiness. It was not the crown of ambition; it was not a garland won in struggles for earthly distinction; it was that which was the appropriate reward of his efforts to be personally holy, and to spread the principles of holiness as far as possible through the world. Which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me. The Lord Jesus, appointed to judge the world, and to dispense the rewards of

eternity. It will be seen, in the last day, that the rewards of heaven are not conferred in an arbitrary manner, but that they are bestowed because they ought to be, or that God is righteous and just in doing it. No man will be admitted to heaven who ought not, under all the circumstances of the case, to be admitted there; no one will be excluded who ought to have been saved. At that day. That is, the time when he will come to judge the world, Mt 25.

And not to me only. "Though my life has been spent in laboriously endeavouring to spread his religion; though I have suffered much, and laboured long; though I have struggled hard to win the prize, and now have it full in view, yet I do not suppose that it is to be conferred on me alone. It is not like the wreath of olive, laurel, pine, or parsley, 1Cor 9:25, which could be conferred only on one victor, 1Cor 9:24; but here every one may obtain the crown who strives for it. The struggle is not between me and a competitor in such a sense that, if I obtain the crown, he must be excluded; but it is a crown which he can obtain as well as I. As many as run--as many as fight the good fight--as many as keep the faith--as many as love his appearing, may win the crown as well as I." Such is religion, and such is the manner in which its rewards differ from all others. At the Grecian games, but one could obtain the prize, 1Cor 9:24. All the rest who contended in those games, no matter how numerous they were, or how skilfully they contended, or how much effort they made, were of course subjected to the mortification of a failure, and to all the ill-feeling and envy to which such a failure might give rise. So it is in respect to all the prizes which this world can bestow. In a lottery, but one can obtain the highest prize; in a class in college, but one can secure the highest honour in the scramble for office, no matter how numerous the competitors may be, or what may be their merits, but one can obtain it. All the rest are liable to the disappointments and mortifications of defeat.

Not so in religion. No matter how numerous the competitors', or how worthy any one of them may be, or how pre-eminent above his brethren, yet all may obtain the prize; all may be crowned with a diadem of life of equal brilliancy. No one is excluded because another is successful; no one fails of the reward because another obtains it.

Who, then, would not make an effort to win the immortal crown? Unto all them also that love his appearing. That is, unto all who desire his second coming. To believe in the second advent of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, and to desire his return, became a kind of a criterion by which Christians Were known. No others but true Christians were supposed to believe in that, and no others truly desired it. Comp. Rev 1:7, 22:20. It is so now. It is one of the characteristics of a true Christian, that he sincerely desires the return of his Saviour, and would welcome his appearing in the clouds of heaven.

Personal Instructions

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:
10 for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.
11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Only Luke is with me. Luke, the author of the gospel which bears his name, and of the Acts of the Apostles. For a considerable part of the ministry of Paul, he was his travelling companion, comp. Acts 16:10; and we know that he went with him to Rome, Acts 27:1. Take Mark. John Mark, Acts 15:37. He was the son of a sister of Barnabas, and had been the travelling companion of Barnabas and Paul. There had been a temporary alienation between Paul and him, Acts 15:38, but this passage proves that that had been removed, and that Paul was reconciled to him.

For he is profitable to me for the ministry. In what way he would be profitable he does not say; nor is it known why Mark was at that time with Timothy. It may be observed however, that this is such language as Paul might be expected to use of Mark, after what had occurred, as recorded in Acts 15:38. He felt that he was now about to die. If he suspected that there was on the part of Mark any lingering apprehension that the great apostle was not entirely reconciled to him, or retained a recollection of what had formerly occurred, nothing would be more natural than that at this trying time of his life,

Paul should summon him to his side, and express towards him the kindest emotions. It would soothe any lingering irritation in the mind of Mark to receive such a message.

12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.
13 The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest,
bring *with thee,* and the books, *but* especially the parchments.

And the books. It is impossible to determine what books are meant here. They may have been portions of the Old Testament, or classic writings, or books written by other Christians, or by himself. It is worthy of remark, that even Paul did not travel without books, and that he found them in some way necessary for the work of the ministry. Especially the parchments. The word here used, (μεμβρανος, whence our word membrane,) occurs only in this place in the New Testament, and means skin, membrane, or parchment. Dressed skins were among the earliest materials for writing, and were in common use before the art of making paper from rags was discovered. These "parchments" seem to have been something different from "books," and, probably, refer to some of his own writings. They may have contained notes, memorandums, journals, or unfinished letters. It is, of course, impossible now to determine what they were. Benson supposes they were letters which he had received from the churches; Macknight, that they were the originals of the letters which he had written; Bishop Bull, that they were a kind of common-place book, in which he inserted hints and extracts of the most remarkable passages in the authors which he read. All this, however, is mere conjecture.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him
according to his works:
15 of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our
words.
16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook
me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge.
17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;
that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the
Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the
lion.

Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me. Though all men forsook me, yet God did not. This expresses an universal truth in regard to the faithfulness of God. See Ps 27:10. Comp. Job 5:17-19, Isa 43:1,2. That by me the preaching might be fully known. The word preaching here probably means the gospel as preached by him. The word rendered "might be fully known" πληροφορηθη means, "might obtain full credence;" that is, might be fully confirmed, so that others might be assured of its truth. The apostle, doubtless, means that on his trial, though forsaken by all men, he was enabled to be so steadfast in his profession of the truth, and so calm in the prospect of death, that all who witnessed his trial, saw that there was a reality in religion, and that the gospel was founded in truth. He had maintained as a preacher that the gospel was able to support the soul in trial, and he was now able to illustrate its power in his own case. He had proclaimed the gospel as the true system of religion, and he was now able to bear testimony to it with the prospect of approaching martyrdom. The sentiment of this passage then is, that the truth of the gospel is made known, or that men may become fully assured of it, by the testimony which is borne to it by its friends in the near prospect of death. One of the most important means of establishing the truth of the gospel in the world, has been the testimony borne to it by martyrs, and the spirit of unwavering confidence in God which they have evinced. And now, one of the most important methods of keeping up the knowledge of the value of religion in the world, and of convincing men of the truth of Christianity, is the spirit evinced by its friends when they are about to die. Men judge much, and justly, of the value of a system of religion by its power to comfort in the day of calamity, and to sustain the soul when about to enter on an untried state of being. That system is of little value to mankind which leaves us in the day of trial; that is of inestimable worth which will enable us to die with the firm hope of a brighter and better world. Christian, having served his God faithfully in life, may, therefore, be eminently useful when he comes to die.

And that all the Gentiles might hear. Paul was at this time in Rome. His trial was before a heathen tribunal, and he was surrounded by Pagans. Rome, too, was then the centre of the world, and at all times there was a great conflux of strangers thee. His trial, therefore, gave

him an opportunity of testifying to the truth of Christianity before Gentile rulers; and in such circumstances, that the knowledge of his sufferings, and of the religion for which he suffered, might be conveyed by the strangers who witnessed it to the ends of the world. His main object in life was, to make the gospel known to the Gentiles, and he had thus an opportunity of furthering that great cause, even on what he supposed might be the trial which would determine with him the question of life or death. Comp. Rom 1:10. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. This may either mean that he was delivered from Nero, compared with a lion, or, literally, that he was saved from being thrown to lions in the amphitheatre, as was common in Rome. 1Cor 15:32. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare tyrants and persecutors with ravenous wild beasts. Comp. Ps 22:13,21, Jer 2:30. Nero is called a lion by Seneca, and it was usual among heathen writers to apply the term in various senses to princes and warriors. See Grotius, in loc. The common interpretation here has been, that this refers to Nero, and there is no improbability in the interpretation. Still, it is quite as natural to suppose, that the punishment which had been appointed for him, or to which he would have been subjected, was, to be thrown to lions, and that in some way, now unknown to us, he had been delivered from it. Paul attributes his deliverance entirely to the Lord; but what instrumental agency there may have been, he does not specify.

18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work. He does not say from death, for he expected now to die. See 2Ti 4:6. But he was assured that God would keep him from shrinking from death when the hour approached; from apostasy, and from the manifestation of an improper spirit when he came to die. And will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. So keep me from evil that I shall reach his heavenly kingdom. See 2Ti 4:8. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Paul was accustomed to introduce a doxology in his writings when his heart was full, (comp. Rom 9:5,) and in no place could it be more appropriate than here, when he had the fullest confidence that he was soon to be brought to heaven. If man is ever disposed to ascribe glory to God, it is on such an occasion. And the Lord shall deliver me from

every evil work. He does not say from death, for he expected now to die. See 2Ti 4:6. But he was assured that God would keep him from shrinking from death when the hour approached; from apostasy, and from the manifestation of an improper spirit when he came to die. And will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. So keep me from evil that I shall reach his heavenly kingdom. See 2Ti 4:8. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Paul was accustomed to introduce a doxology in his writings when his heart was full, (comp. Rom 9:5,) and in no place could it be more appropriate than here, when he had the fullest confidence that he was soon to be brought to heaven. If man is ever disposed to ascribe glory to God, it is on such an occasion.

Final Greetings

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.
20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick.
21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and
Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.
22 The Lord Jesus Christ *be* with thy spirit. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul to
Titus
[Titus]

Titus-1

Salutation

1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to
the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is
after godliness;
2 in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before
the world began;

These verses contain the apostle's salutation, and the first part of this chapter;
in which observe, 1. The person saluting, described by his name, Paul; by his general office, a servant of God; by his special office, an apostle of Jesus Christ; by the end of his office, to preach the faith, and thereby to promote the faith of God's elect, and to bring persons to the acknowledgment of the doctrine of the gospel, which is truth according to godliness.

Learn hence, That the great design and end of preaching the gospel, is, to produce faith in the heart, and holiness or godliness in the life, of those that sit under it; not that common, notional, and intellectual faith, which is ofttimes found in unholy persons: but that lively faith, which is elsewhere called the faith of the operation of God, and here, the faith of God's elect; even such a faith as is the parent and principle of obedience.

Observe, 2. The apostle declares a farther end of his office, namely, to raise Christians up to a lively hope and expectation of that eternal life, which that God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the world began.

But how could God then promise, when there was none to promise to?

Ans. The promise was made to Christ, and in him to all his members: for there was a federal transaction betwixt the Father and the Son from all eternity; the Son promised to give his soul an offering for sin, and the Father engaged that he should see his seed, and the travail of his soul.

Observe, 3. How God, who promised us in Christ eternal life before all time, did accompolish and make good that word in the fulness of time.

Verse 3. He hath in due time manifested his word through preaching; that is, What God so long ago purposed in himself, and promised to his Son, he hath in the fittest appointed season made manifest by the preaching of the gospel, which is committed to me by the appointment of God and Christ.

Learn hence, That the doctrine of salvation is much more clearly revealed to us that live under the gospel, than it was to the fathers of the Old Testament. Life and immortality, that is, the clearer knowledge and more full assurance of eternal life, is now brought about by the preaching of the gospel.

Observe, 4. The person saluted, Titus, described by his relation. St. Paul's son in the faith; he begat him by his ministry unto God, was the instrument of his conversion unto Christianity; his son after the common faith.

Where note, That the church has but one faith common to all Christians, it has one common object of faith, Christ crucified; it has one common end of faith, eternal salvation; this is the end of every believer's faith and hope.

Observe lastly, The salutation itself: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour; that is, all spiritual, temporal, and eternal blessings, I most heartily wish unto you, from God the Father, and Jesus Christ our worthy Mediator.

Learn hence, That whatever spiritual grace or temporal blessings we now receive from God, is from him not barely as a Creator, but as a Father, a gracious Father in Christ, in whom he pours forth the immensity of his love upon us, and through whom he conveys all kind of blessings unto us.

3 but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching,
which is committed unto me according to the commandment of
God our Saviour;
4 To Titus, *mine* own son after the common faith:
Grace, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ our Saviour.

Qualifications of Elders and Bishops

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting. Marg., left undone. The Greek is, "the things that are left;" that is, those which were left unfinished; referring, doubtless, to arrangements which had been commenced, but which for some cause had been left incomplete. Whether this had occurred because he had been driven away by persecution, or called away by important duties demanding his attention elsewhere, cannot now be determined. The word rendered, "set in order"-- επιδιορθωση-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to make straight upon, and then to put further to rights, to arrange further. Robinson, Lex.--- There were things left unfinished which he was to complete. One of these things, and perhaps the principle, was, to appoint elders in the various cities where the gospel had been preached. And ordain. The word ordain has now acquired a technical signification which it cannot be shown that it has in the New Testament. It means, in common usage, to "invest with a ministerial function or sacerdotal power; to introduce, and establish, and settle in the pastoral office with the customary forms and solemnities," (Webster;) and it may be added, with the idea always connected with it, of the imposition of hands, But the word used here does not necessarily convey this meaning, or imply that Titus was to go through what would now

be called an ordination service. It means to set, place, or constitute; then, to set over any thing, as a steward or other officer (see Mt 24:45, Lk 12:42, Acts 6:3,) though without reference to any particular mode of investment with an office. See the word, ordain, explained in the Acts 1:22, 14:23. Titus was to appoint or set them over the churches, though with what ceremony is now unknown. There is no reason to suppose that he did this except as the result of the choice of the people. Comp. Acts 6:3. Elders. Gr., Presbyters. See the word explained Acts 14:23. These elders, or presbyters, were also called bishops (comp. 1Timm 3:1), for Paul immediately, in describing their qualifications, calls them bishops-- "ordain elders in every city--if any be blameless --FOR a bishop must be blameless," etc. If the elders and bishops in the times of the apostles were of different ranks, this direction would be wholly unmeaning. It would be the same as if the following directions were given to one who was authorized to appoint officers over an army: "Appoint captains over each company, who shall be of good character, and acquainted with military tactics, for a brigadier-General must be of good character, and acquainted with the rules of war." --That the same rank is denoted also by the terms presbyter and bishop here, is further apparent because the qualifications which Paul states as requisite for the "bishop" are not those which pertain to a prelate or a diocesan bishop, but to one who was a pastor of a church, or an evangelist. It is clear, from Tit 1:7, that those whom Titus was to appoint were "bishops;" and yet it is absurd to suppose that the apostle meant prelatical bishops, for no one can believe that such bishops were to be appointed in "every city" of the island. According to all modern notions of Episcopacy, one such bishop would have been enough for such an island as Crete, and indeed it has been not unfrequently maintained that Titus himself was in fact the bishop of that diocese. But if these were not prelates who were to be ordained by Titus, then it is clear that the term "bishop" in the New Testament is given to the Presbyters or elders; that is, to all ministers of the gospel. That usage should never have been departed from. In every city. Crete was anciently celebrated for the number of its cities. In one passage, Homer ascribes to the island an hundred cities, (Il ii. 649 ;) in another, ninety (Od. xix. 174.) It may be presumed that many

of these cities were towns of no very considerable size, and yet it would seem probable that each one was large enough to have a church, and to maintain the gospel. Paul, doubtless, expected that Titus would travel over the whole island, and endeavour to introduce the gospel in every important place.

6 if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

Having faithful children. 1Timm 3:4,6. That is, having a family well-governed, and well-trained in religion. The word here -πιστα-- applied to the children, and rendered faithful, does not necessarily mean that they should be truly pious, but it is descriptive of those who had been well-trained, and were in due subordination. If a man's family were not of his character--if his children were insubordinate, and opposed to religion--if they were decided infidels or scoffers, it would show that there was such a deficiency in the head of the family that he could not be safely entrusted with the government of the church. 1Timm 3:5. It is probably true also, that the preachers at that time would be selected, as far as practicable, from those whose families were all Christians. There might be great impropriety in placing a man over a church, a part of whose family were Jews or Heathens. Not accused of riot. That is, whose children were not accused of riot. This explains what is meant by faithful. The word rendered riot ασωτια is translated excess in Eph 5:18, and riot in Tit 1:6, 1Pet 4:4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, though the word riotous is found in Lk 15:13. See it explained Eph 5:18. The meaning here is, that they should not be justly accused of this; this should not be their character. It would, doubtless, be a good reason now why a man should not be ordained to the ministry that he had a dissipated and disorderly family.

7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

For . . . must—The emphasis is on "must." The reason why I said "blameless," is the very idea of a "bishop" (an overseer of the flock; he here substitutes for "presbyter" the term which expresses his duties) involves the necessity for such blamelessness, if he is to have influence over the flock.

steward of God—The greater the master is, the greater the virtues required in His servant [BENGEL], (1Ti 3:15); the Church is God's house, over which the minister is set as a steward (Heb 3:2-6; 1Pe 4:10, 17). Note: ministers are not merely Church officers, but God's stewards; Church government is of divine appointment.

not self-willed—literally, "self-pleasing"; unaccommodating to others; harsh, the opposite of "a lover of hospitality" (Tit 1:6); so Nabal (1Sa 25:1-44); self-loving and imperious; such a spirit would incapacitate him for leading a willing flock, instead of driving. Comp. 2Pet 2:10. The word-- αυθαδης not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, properly, self-complacent; and then, assuming, arrogant, imperious, Rob. Lex. The gist of the offence--the very "head and front"--is that of being self-complacent; a trait of character which of necessity, makes a man imperious, dogmatical, impatient of contradiction, and unyielding. Such a man, evidently, is not fit for the office of a minister of the gospel.

not given to wine—(See on 1Ti 3:3; 1Ti 3:8).

not given to filthy lucre—not making the Gospel a means of gain (1Ti 3:3, 8). In opposition to those "teaching for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit 1:11; 1Ti 6:5; 1Pe 5:2).

8 but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

But a lover of hospitality. 1Timm 3:2. A lover of good men. Marg., "or things." The Greek (φιλαγαθος) means, a lover of good, and may apply to anything that is good. It may refer to good men, as included under the general term good; and there is no more essential qualification of a bishop than this. A man who sustains the office of a minister of the gospel, should love every good object, and be ever ready to promote it; and he should love every good man, no matter in what denomination or country he may be found--no matter what his complexion, and no matter what his rank in life. Comp. Php 4:8. Sober. 1Timm 3:2. Just. Upright in his dealings with all. A minister can do little good who is not. Comp.

Php 4.8. Holy. Pious, or devout. Faithful in all his duties to God. 1Timm 2:8. Temperate. εγκρατη. Having power or control over all his passions. We apply the term, now, with reference to abstinence from intoxicating liquors. In the Scriptures, it incudes not only that, but also much more. It implies control over all our passions and appetites. See it explained Acts 24:25. Comp. 1Cor 7:9 1Cor 9:25; Gal 5:23.

9 holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may
be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the
gainsayers.

Holding fast the faithful word. That is, the true doctrines of the gospel. This means, that he is to hold this fast, in opposition to one who would wrest it away, and in opposition to all false teachers, and to all systems of false philosophy. He must be a man who is firm in his belief of the doctrines of the Christian faith, and a man who can be relied on to maintain and defend those doctrines in all circumstances. Comp. 2Thes 2:15. As he hath been taught. Marg., in teaching. Gr., "according to the teaching." The sense is, according to that doctrine as taught by the inspired teachers of religion. It does not mean as he had individually been taught; but he was to hold the faith as it was delivered by those whom the Saviour had appointed to make it known to mankind. The phrase, "the doctrine," or "the teaching," had a sort of technical meaning, denoting the gospel as that which had been communicated to mankind, not by human reason, but by teaching. That he may be able by sound doctrine. By sound teaching, or instruction. 1Timm 1:10; 1Timm 4:16. He was not to dictate, or to denounce; but to seek to convince by the statement of the truth. 2Ti 2:25. Both to exhort and to convince. To persuade them, or to bring them over to your views by kind exhortation, and by the instruction which shall convince. The former method is to be used where men know the truth, but need encouragement to follow it; the latter, where they are ignorant, or are opposed to it. Both exhortation and argument are to be used by the ministers of religion. The gainsayers. Opposers. Literally, those who speak against; that is, against the truth. Rom 10:21.

10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially
they of the circumcision:

A reason is here subjoined by our apostle, why Titus should take such special care to fill the church with able guides, namely, because there was a multitude of false teachers dispersed abroad, and scattered up and down everywhere, particularly the judaizing doctors, those of the circumcision, mentioned Acts 15:1 who would make Christianity nothing more that a supplement to the law of Moses. These he tells Titus must have their mouths stopped, not by force, for Titus had no power of the sword, but by confutation; he must take care to ordain such as might silence them, though not satisfy them. For mark the efficacy of error, and the power of seduction, they subvert whole houses, they make proselytes without number.

Learn hence, That such is the strength of error, and the weakness and unsteadiness of many Christians, that whole households may be subverted by the most gross deceivers. If the apostle's converts were thus easily and universally misled, no wonder if ours be so.

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers. There are many persons who are indisposed to submit to authority, (see the word unruly in Tit 1:6;) many who are vain talkers --who are more given to talk, than to the duties of practical religion, (see the character of "Talkative," in the Pilgrim's Progress;) and many who live to deceive others under the mask of religion. They make great pretensions to piety; they are fluent in argument, and they urge their views in a plausible manner. Specially they of the circumcision. Jews, spoken of here as "of the circumcision" particularly, because they urged the necessity of circumcision in order that men might be saved. Acts 15:1. This proves that there were not a few Jews in the island of Crete.

11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses,
teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Whose mouths must be stopped. The word here rendered stopped επιστομιζειν--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to check, or curb, as with a bridle; to restrain, or bridle in; and then, to put to silence. It is, of course, implied here, that this was to be done in a proper way, and in accordance with the spirit of the gospel. The apostle gives Timothy no civil power to do it, nor does he direct him to call in the aid of the civil arm. All the

agency which he specifies as proper for this, is that of argument and exhortation. These are the proper means of silencing the advocates of error; and the history of the church shows that the ministers of religion can be safely intrusted with no other. Comp. Ps 32:8,9. Who subvert whole houses. Whole families. Comp. Mt 23:14 2Ti 3:6. That is, they turn them aside from the faith. Teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. For gain. That is, they inculcate such doctrines as will make themselves popular, and as will give them access to the confidence of the people. They make it their first object to acquire influence as ministers of religion, and then abuse that in order to obtain money from the people. This they would doubtless do under many pretences; such as, that it was needful for the support of the gospel, or for the relief of the poor, or, perhaps, for the assistance of distant Christians in persecution. Religion is the most powerful principle that ever governs the mind; and if a man has the control of that, it is no difficult thing to induce men to give up their worldly possessions. In all ages, there have been impostors who have taken advantage of the powerful principle of religion, to obtain money from their deluded followers. No people can be too vigilant in regard to pretended religious teachers; and while it is undoubtedly their duty to contribute liberally for the support of the gospel, and the promotion of every good cause, it is no less their duty to examine with care every proposed object of benevolence, and to watch with an eagle eye those who have the disbursement of the charities of the church. It is very rare that ministers ought to have much to do with disposing of the funds given for benevolent purposes; and when they do, they should in all cases be associated with their lay brethren. See Paley's Horae Paulinae, ch. iv., No. 1, 3, note. Comp. 1Cor 16:3. On the phrase "filthy lucre," 1Timm 3:3.

12 One of themselves, *even* a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians *are* always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

One of themselves. That is, one of the Cretans. The quotation here shows, that Paul had his eye not only on the Jewish teachers there, but on the native Cretans. The meaning is, that, alike in reference to Jewish teachers and native-born Cretans, there was need of the utmost vigilance in the selection of persons for the ministry. They all had well-known traits of character, which made it proper that

no one should be introduced into the ministry without extreme caution. It would seem, also, from the reasoning of Paul here, that the trait of character here referred to pertained not only to the native Cretans, but also to the character of the Jews residing there; for he evidently means that the caution should extend to all who dwelt on the island. Even a prophet of their own. Or, a poet; for the word prophet προφητης-- like the Latin word vates, was often applied to poets, because they were supposed to be inspired of the muses, or to write under the influence of inspiration. So Virgil, Ecl. 9, 32: Et me fecere poetam Pierides ..... me quoque dicunt vatera pastores. Varro, Ling. Lat. 6, 3: Vates poetse dicti sunt. The term prophet was also given by the Greeks to one who was regarded as the interpreter of the gods, or who explained the obscure responses of the oracles. As such an interpreter--as one who thus saw future events, he was called a prophet; and as the poets claimed much of this kind of knowledge, the name was given to them. It was also given to one who was regarded as eminently endowed with wisdom, or who had that kind of sagacity by which the results of present conduct might be foreseen, as if he was under the influence of a kind of inspiration. The word might have been applied to the person here referred to --Epimenides--in this latter sense, because he was eminently endowed with wisdom. He was one of the seven wise men of Greece. He was a contemporary of Solon, and was born at Phaestus, in the island of Crete, B. C. 659, and is said to have reached the age of 157 years. Many marvellous tales are told of him, (see Anthon, Class. Dic.,) which are commonly supposed to be fabulous, and which are to be traced to the invention of the Cretans. The event in his life which is best known is, that he visited Athens, at the request of the inhabitants, to prepare the way by sacrifices for the introduction of the laws of Solon. He was supposed to have intercourse with the gods, and it was presumed that a peculiar sacredness would attend the religious services in which he officiated. On this account, also, as well as because he was a poet, the name prophet may have been given him. Feuds and animosities prevailed at Athens, which it was supposed such a man might allay, and thus prepare them for the reception of the laws of Solon. The Athenians wished to reward him with wealth and public honours; but he refused to accept of any remuneration, and only

demanded a branch of the sacred olive tree, and a decree of perpetual friendship between Athens and his native city. After his death, divine honours were paid to him by the Cretans. He wrote a poem on the Argonantic expedition, and other poems, which are now entirely lost. The quotation here is supposed to be made from a treatise on oracles and responses, which is also lost. The Cretans are always liars. This character of the Cretans is abundantly sustained by the examples adduced by Wetstein. To be a Cretan, became synonymous with being a liar, in the same way as to be a Corinthian, became synonymous with living a licentious life. Compare Introduction to 1Cor 1:1. Thus the scholiast says, παροιμιαεστιτοκρητιζεινεπιτουψευδεσθαι to act the Cretan, is a proverb for to lie. The particular reason why they had this character abroad, rather than other people, is unknown. Bishop Warburton supposes that they acquired it by claiming to have among them the tomb of Jupiter, and by maintaining that all the gods, like Jupiter, were only mortals who had been raised to divine honours. Thus the Greeks maintained that they always proclaimed a false-hood by asserting this opinion. But their reputation for falsehood seems to have arisen from some deeper cause than this, and to have pertained to their general moral character. They were only more eminent in what was common among the ancient heathen, and what is almost universal among the heathen now. Comp. Eph 4:25. Evil beasts. In their character, beasts or brutes of a ferocious or malignant kind. This would imply, that there was a great want of civilization, and that their want of refinement was accompanied with what commonly exists in that condition--the unrestrained indulgence of wild and ferocious passions. See examples of the same manner of speaking of barbarous and malicious men in Wetstein. Slow bellies. Mere gormandizers. Two vices seem here to be attributed to them, which indeed commonly go together--gluttony and sloth. An industrious man will not be likely to be a gormandizer, and a gormandizer will not often be an industrious man. The mind of the poet, in this, seems to have conceived of them first as an indolent, worthless people; and then immediately to have recurred to the cause--that they were a race of gluttons: a people whose only concern was the stomach. Comp. Php 3:19. On the connexion between gluttony and sloth, see the examples in

Wetstein. Seldom have more undesirable, and, in some respects, incongruous qualities, been grouped together in describing any people. They were false to a proverb, which was, indeed, consistent enough with their being ferocious--though ferocious and wild nations are sometimes faithful to their word; but they were, at the same time, ferocious and lazy, fierce and gluttonous--qualities which are not often found together. In some respects, therefore, they surpassed the common depravity of human nature, and blended in themselves ignoble properties which, among the worst people, are usually found existing alone. To mingle apparently contradictory qualities of wickedness in the same individual or people, is the height of depravity; as to blend in the same mind apparently inconsistent traits of virtuous character, or those which exist commonly, in their highest perfection, only alone, is the highest virtue.

13 This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may
be sound in the faith;

This witness is true. That is, this testimony, long before borne by one of their own number, was true when the apostle wrote to Titus. The fact that this was the general character of the people, was a reason why he should be on his guard in introducing men into the ministry, and in the arrangement of affairs pertaining to the church. That it was true, see proofs in Wetstein. Wherefore rebuke them. 2Ti 4:2. Sharply. αποτομως--cuttingly, severely--from αποτεμνω, to cut off. The word is used here in the sense of severity, meaning that the reproof should be such as would be understood, and would show them plainly the wickedness of such traits of character, he was not to be mealy-mouthed, but he was to call things by their right names, and not to spare their faults. When men know that they are doing wrong, we should tell them so in few words; if they do not know it, it is necessary to teach them, in order to convince them of their error. That they may be sound in the faith. That they may not allow the prevailing vices to corrupt their views of religion. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, etc. 1Timm 1:4. And commandments of men that turn from the truth. Mt 15:3, Mt 15:4-6.

14 not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that
turn from the truth.

15 Unto the pure all things *are* pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving *is* nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Unto the pure all things are pure. Rom 14:14; Rom 14:20. There is probably an allusion here to the distinctions made in respect to meats and drinks among the Jews. Some articles of food were regarded as "clean," or allowed to be eaten; and some as "unclean," or forbidden. Paul says, that those distinctions ceased under the Christian dispensation, and that to those who had a conscience not easily troubled by nice and delicate questions about ceremonial observances, all kinds of food might be regarded as lawful and proper. Comp. 1Timm 4:4, 1Timm 4:5. If a man habitually maintains a good conscience in the sight of God, it will be accepted of him whether he do or do not abstain from certain kinds of food. Comp. Col 2:16. This passage, therefore, should not be interpreted as proving that all things are right and lawful for a Christian, or that whatever he may choose to do will be regarded as pure, but as primarily referring to distinctions in food, and meaning that there was no sanctity in eating one kind of food, and no sin in another, but that the mind was equally pure whatever was eaten. The phrase has a proverbial cast, though I know not that it was so used. The principle of the declaration is, that a pure mind--a truly pious mind will not regard the distinctions of food and drink; of festivals, rites, ceremonies, and days, as necessary to be observed in order to promote its purity. The conscience is not to be burdened and enslaved by these things, but is to be controlled only by the moral laws which God has ordained. But there may be a somewhat higher application of the words-- that every ordinance of religion; every command of God; every event that occurs in Divine Providence, tends to promote the holiness of one who is of pure heart. He can see a sanctifying tendency in everything, and can derive from all that is commanded, and all that occurs, the means of making the heart more holy. While a depraved mind will turn every such thing to a pernicious use, and make it the means of augmenting its malignity and corruption, to the pure mind it will be the means of increasing its confidence in God, and of making itself more holy. To such a mind everything may become a means of grace. But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure. Everything

is made the means of increasing their depravity. No matter what ordinances of religion they observe; what distinctions of meats, or drinks, or days they regard, and what events of Providence occur, all are the occasion of augmented depravity. Such distinctions in food they make the means of fostering their pride and producing self-righteousness; the mercies of God they abuse to pamper their own lusts, and the afflictive events of Divine Providence they make the occasion of murmuring and rebellion. Naturally corrupt at heart, no ordinances of religion, and no events of Providence, make them any better, but all tend to deepen their depravity. A sentiment similar to this is found in the classic writers. Thus Seneca, Epis. 98. Malus animus omnia in malum vertit, etiam quse specie optimi venerunt. So again (de Beneficiis v. 12,) Quemadmodum stomachus morbo vitiatus, et colliques bilem, quoscunque acceperit cibos mutat--ita animus ceecus quicquid illi commiseris, id onus suum, et perniciem facit.

But even their mind and conscience is defiled. It is not a mere external defilement--a thing which they so much dread--but a much worse kind of pollution, that which extends to the soul and the conscience. Everything which they do tends to corrupt the inner man more and more, and to make them really more polluted and abominable in the sight of God. The wicked, while they remain impenitent, are constantly becoming worse and worse. They make everything the means of increasing their depravity, and even those things which seem to pertain only to outward observances, are made the occasion of the deeper corruption of the heart.

Here note, The honourable title which a gracious and merciful God puts upon good men, notwithstanding they have much impurity and sin inhering in them, and many sinful weaknesses and infirmities cleaving to them, yet God calls them pure; Unto the pure, &c. They are now initially so, and shall ere long be perfectly so.
Note, 2. A privilege purchased for them by the blood of Christ, and that is the lawful liberty and use of meats, &c. under the gospel, which were prohibited by, and forbidden under, the ceremonial law: Unto the pure, all things are now pure.

Mark, he doth not say, to the defiled all things are unclean, but, nothing is pure; they pollute all they touch. To an unsanctified man nothing is sanctified; whatever he does is unclean, either in the matter, in the manner, or in the end, of his doing it; and the reason follows, because their mind and conscience are defiled. No wonder the streams are polluted, when the fountains are poisoned things lawful and good they abuse and turn to sin; they suck poison out of that from which others draw sweetness; their mind and conscience, those leading faculties, being defiled, a taint is communicated to all they do. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, Pr 15:8. And Pr 21:4, The ploughing of the wicked is sin, not in itself, but as done by him; the carnality of the mind and heart mars all the labour of the hand. The mind and conscience are defiled, partly by blindness, partly by stupidity and senselessness.

all things—external, "are pure" in themselves; the distinction of pure and impure is not in the things, but in the disposition of him who uses them; in opposition to "the commandments of men" (Tit 1:14), which forbade certain things as if impure intrinsically. "To the pure" inwardly, that is, those purified in heart by faith (Ac 15:9; Ro 14:20; 1Ti 4:3), all outward things are pure; all are open to, their use. Sin alone touches and defiles the soul (Mt 23:26; Lu 11:41). Their moral consciousness of the conformity or discrepancy between their motives and acts on the one hand, and God's law on the other. A conscience and a mind defiled are represented as the source of the errors opposed in the Pastoral Epistles (1Ti 1:19; 3:9; 6:5).

16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

They profess that they know God. That is, the Jewish teachers particularly, who are referred to in Tit 1:14. All those persons were professors of religion, and claimed that they had a peculiar knowledge of God. But in works they deny him. Their conduct is such as to show that they have no real acquaintance with him. Being abominable. In their conduct. The word here used--βδελυκτοι--occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means that which is detestable, or to be held in abhorrence. And disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. Marg., void of

judgment. On the word here used-- αδοκιμος, Rom 1:28; 2Cor 13:5. It means here, that in reference to everything that was good, their conduct was such that it could not be approved, or deserved disapprobation. It was for this reason; from the character of the people of the island of Crete, and of those who claimed to be teachers there enforcing the obligation of the Mosaic law, that it was so important for Titus to exercise special care in introducing men into the ministry, and in completing the arrangements contemplated in the organization of the churches there. Yet, is this character confined to them? Are there none now who profess that they know God, but in works deny him; whose conduct is such that it ought to be abhorred; who are disobedient to the plain commands of God, and whose character in respect to all that pertains to true piety, is to be disapproved by the truly pious, and will be by God at the last day? Alas! taking the church at large, there are many such; and the fact that there are such persons, is the grand hinderance to the triumphs of religion on the earth. "The way to heaven is blocked up by dead professors of religion."

Behold here the dismal character of many hypocritical persons in the Jewish church. They professed the knowledge of God, the true God, but in their works, in their actions, they denied him, and so became abominable both to God and man, disobedient to the law, and averse to every good work.

Here learn, 1. That hypocrites are generally great professors, they profess great knowledge of God, and great zeal for him.
2. That to deny God is a very heinous sin, and an abominable wickedness; (1Ti 5:8; 2Ti 2:12; 3:5).

There is a twofold denial of God, first, in words expressly and openly; secondly, in practice, closely and consequentially. They, themselves, are abominable—though laying so much stress on the contracting of abomination from outward things (compare Le 11:10-13; Ro 2:22). They are reprobate—rejected as worthless when tested (see on Ro 1:28; 1Co 9:27; 2Ti 3:8).

They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him. There may be at once a professing of God, and a denial of him: many a man's practice speaks aloud, that there is no God, when he makes a fair confession and profession of him with his mouth and tongue.

Learn, 3. That no sorts of persons are so odious to God, and abominable in his sight, as those who make a profession of his holy name and truth, but walk contrary in their lives to their profession.

But are not these judaizers (as you call them) men who profess religion, and speak well of God, and Christ, and righteousness of life, and should they be so severely taxed? Answer, They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, Tit 1:16. There are many who in word and tongue profess to know God, and yet in their lives and conversations deny and reject him; their practice is a contradiction to their profession. They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness, Eze 33:31. Being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. The apostle, instructing Titus to rebuke sharply, does himself rebuke sharply; he gives them very hard words, yet doubtless no harder than their case warranted and their need required. Being abominable--bdelyktoi, deserving that God and good men should turn away their eyes from them as nauseous and offensive. And disobedient--apeitheis, unpersuadable and unbelieving. They might do divers things; but it was not the obedience of faith, nor what was commanded, or short of the command. To every good work reprobate, without skill or judgment to do any thing aright. See the miserable condition of hypocrites, such as have a form of godliness, but without the power; yet let us not be so ready to fix this charge on others as careful that it agree not to ourselves, that there be not in us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but that we be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with

the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God, Php 1:10,11.

Titus-2

The Teaching of Sound Doctrine

1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:
2 that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in
charity, in patience.

That the aged men. All aged men--for there is no reason to suppose that the apostle refers particularly to those who were in office, or who were technically elders, or presbyters. If he had, he would have used the common word-- πρεσβυτερος presbyter (see Mt 15:2, 16:21, 21:23, 26:3,47,57,59, 1Timm 5:1,17,19, Tit 1:5 Jas 5:14, 1Pet 5:1,) instead of the unusual word-- πρεσβυτης an old or aged man--a word which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in Lk 1:18, "For I am an old man," and Phm 1:9, "being such an one as Paul the aged." It is in no instance applied to an office. Besides, the instructions which Titus was to give to such men was not that which peculiarly pertained to elders as officers in the church, but to all old men. The idea is, that he was to adapt his instructions to the peculiar character of different classes of his hearers. The aged needed special instructions, and so did the young. Be sober. Marg., vigilant. See the word explained 1Timm 3:2, where it is rendered vigilant. In 1Timm 3:11, the same word is rendered sober. Grave. Serious. 1Timm 3:8. Compare Php 4:8, where the same word is rendered honest. Temperate. σωφρονας. Rather, prudent, or sober-minded. See it explained 1Timm 3:2, where it is rendered sober. Also, Tit 1:8. Sound in faith. 1Timm 1:10; Tit 1:13. In charity. In love. 1Cor 13:1, seq. The meaning is, that an old man should evince love for all, especially for those who are good. He should have overcome, at his time of life, all the fiery, impetuous, envious, wrathful passions of his early years, and his mind should be subdued into sweet benevolence to all mankind. In patience. In the infirmities of old age--in the trials resulting from the loss of the friends of their early years --in their loneliness in the world, they should show that the effect of all God's dealings with them has been

to produce patience. The aged should submit to the trials of their advanced years, also, with resignation--for they will soon be over. A few more sighs, and they will sigh no more; a little longer bearing up under their infirmities, and they will renew their youth before the throne of God.

3 The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things;

The aged women likewise. Not only those who may have the office of deaconnesses, but all aged females. That they be in behaviour as becometh holiness. Marg., holy women. The Greek word is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It means appropriate to a sacred place or person, or becoming to religion. Their conduct should be such as the gospel requires. Not false accusers. Marg., make-bates. Gr., διαβολους, the word commonly applied to the devil--as the accuser. See it explained 1Timm 3:11, where it is rendered slanderers. Not given to much wine. 1Timm 3:3. Teachers of good things. That is, instructing the younger--whether their own children, or whether they sustain the office of deaconess, and are appointed to give instruction to younger females. Comp. 1Timm 5:2-6.

4 that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

That they may teach the young women to be sober. Marg., wise --a word similar to that which in Tit 2:2 is rendered temperate, and in 1Timm 3:2, sober. The meaning is, that they should instruct them to have their desires and passions well regulated, or under proper control. To love their husbands, φιλανδρους. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. In Eph 5:25, Paul directs husbands to love their wives, and in Eph 5:33, the wife to reverence her husband, and here he says that it should be one of the first duties enjoined on the wife that she should love her husband. All happiness in the marriage relation is based on mutual love. When that departs, happiness departs. No wealth or splendour in a dwelling--no gorgeousness of equipage or apparel-- no magnificence of entertainment or sweetness of music--and no forms of courtesy and politeness, can be a compensation for the want of affection. Mutual love between a husband and wife will diffuse comfort through the

obscurest cottage of poverty; the want of it cannot be supplied by all that can be furnished in the palaces of the great. To love their children. Nature prompts to this, and yet there are those so depraved that they have no maternal affection. Rom 1:31. Religion reproduces natural affection when sin has weakened or destroyed it, and it is the design of Christianity to recover and invigorate all the lost or weakened sensibilities of our nature.

To be discreet. The same word rendered in Tit 2:2, temperate, and explained in Tit 2:4. Chaste. Pure--in heart, and in life. Keepers at home. That is, characteristically attentive to their domestic concerns, or to their duties in their families. A similar injunction is found in the precepts of the Pythagoreans-- τανγαρ γυναικαδειοικουρενκαιενδονμενεν. See Creuzer's Symbolik, iii. 120. This does not mean, of course, that they are never to go abroad, but they are not to neglect their domestic affairs; they are not to be better known abroad than at home; they are not to omit their own duties, and become "busy-bodies" in the concerns of others. Religion is the patron of the domestic virtues, and regards the appropriate duties in a family as those most intimately connected with its own progress in the world. It looks benignly on all which makes home a place of contentment, intelligence, and peace. It does not flourish when domestic duties are neglected; and whatever may be done abroad, or whatever self-denial and zeal in the cause of religion may be evinced there, or whatever call there may be for the labours of Christians there, or however much good may be actually done abroad, religion has gained nothing, on the whole, if, in order to secure these things, the duties of a wife and mother at home have been disregarded. Our first duty is at home, and all other duties will be well performed just in proportion as that is. Good. In all respects, and in all relations.

To a wife, a mother, a sister, there can be no higher characteristic ascribed, than to say that she is good. What other trait of mind will enable her better to perform her appropriate duties of life? What other will make her more like her Saviour? Obedient to their own husbands. Eph 5:22, seq. Col 3:18. That the word of God be not blasphemed. That the gospel may not be injuriously spoken of (Mt

9:3,) on account of the inconsistent lives of those who profess to be influenced by it. The idea is, that religion ought to produce the virtues here spoken of, and that when it does not, it will be reproached as being of no value.

5 *to be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

6 Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded.

Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. Marg., discreet. On the meaning of the Greek word used here (σωφρονειν,) Tit 2:2; Tit 2:4. The idea is, that they should be entreated to be prudent, discreet, serious in their deportment; to get the mastery over their passions and appetites; to control the propensities to which youth are subject; and that there should be such self-government, under the influence of religion, as to avoid excess in everything. A well-governed mind, superior to the indulgence of those passions to which the young are prone, will express the meaning of the word here. They should be "steady in their behaviour, superior to sensual temptations, and constant in the exercise of every part of self-government." Doddridge. The reasons for this are obvious.

(1.) The hopes of the church depend much on them.

(2.) A young man who cannot govern himself, gives little promise of being useful or happy.

(3.) Indulgence in the propensities to which young men are prone, will, sooner or later, bring ruin to the body and the soul.

(4.) They are just at the period of life when they are exposed to peculiar temptations, and when they need to exercise a peculiar guardianship over their own conduct.

(5.) Like others, they may soon die; and they should be habitually in such a frame of mind, as to be prepared to stand before God. A young man who feels that he may be soon in the eternal world, cannot but be sensible of the propriety of having a serious mind, and of living and acting as in the immediate presence of his Maker and Judge.

7 In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine
showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works. Not merely teaching others, but showing them by example how they ought to live. On the word rendered pattern (τυπον, type,) see Heb 8:6; 1Cor 10:6; Php 3:17. In doctrine. In your manner of teaching. 1Timm 4:16. Showing uncorruptness. The word here used does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, here, the same as purity--that which is not erroneous, and which does not tend to corrupt or vitiate the morals of others, or to endanger their salvation. Everything in his teaching was to be such as to make men purer and better. Gravity. See this word explained 1Timm 2:2, where it is rendered honesty. Comp. 1Timm 3:4, where it is rendered gravity. It does not elsewhere occur. See the use of the adjective, however, in Php 4:8, 1Timm 3:8,11, Tit 2:2 The word properly means venerableness; then, whatever will insure respect, in character, opinions, deportment. The sense here is, that the manner in which a preacher delivers his message, should be such as to command respect, he should evince good sense, undoubted piety, an acquaintance with his subject, simplicity, seriousness, and earnestness, in his manner. Sincerity. See this word (αφθαρσια) explained Eph 6:24. It is rendered immortality in Rom 2:7, 2Ti 1:10; incorruption, in 1Cor 15:42,50,53,54; and sincerity, Eph 6:24, and in the place before us. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means incorruption, incapacity of decay; and, therefore, would be here synonymous with purity. It should be said, however, that it is wanting in many Mss., and is rejected in the later editions of the New Testament by Wetstein, Tittman, and Hahn.

Sound speech. 1Timm 1:10. He was to use language that would be spiritually healthful (υγιη;) that is, true, pure, uncorrupted.--This word, and its correlatives, is used in this sense, in the New Testament, only by the apostle Paul. It is commonly applied to the body, meaning that which is healthful, or whole. See Lk 5:31, 6:10, 7:10, 15:27, Mt 12:13, 15:31, Mk 3:5, 5:34 Jn 5:4,6,9,11,14,15, 7:23, Acts 4:10, 3Jn 1:2. For Paul's use of the word, see 1Timm 1:10, 6:3, 2Ti 1:13, 4:3, Tit 1:9,13, 2:1,2,8. It does not elsewhere occur. That cannot be condemned. Such as cannot be shown to be weak, or

unsound; such that no one could find fault with it, or such as an adversary could not take hold of and blame. This direction would imply purity and seriousness of language, solidity of argument, and truth in the doctrines which he maintained.

St. Paul having directed Titus what doctrine to preach, comes now to instruct him what example to lead, in all things show thyself a pattern of good works; as if he had said, In all the good which thou exhortest thy hearers to, be an eminent pattern of it thyself; that they may see that visibly in thy life, which thou pressest upon them by thy preaching. By piety and good works second thy doctrine; there must be a sweet harmony between a minister's doctrine and his conversation; otherwise he pulls down faster than he builds up: an heterodox conversation will carry an orthodox preacher to hell.
He closes this admonition to Titus concerning preaching, with this solemn charge, namely, that his doctrine be sound and profitable, sincere without mixture, grave without levity, sound words that can never be confuted by gainsayers, which must be expected; but happy will you be if they can have nothing justly to charge your doctrine or conversation with.

Learn hence, that the ministers of God have ever had, and must always expect, some that will withstand, oppose, and gainsay them, as long as there is a devil in the world: and so long as the ministers of God endeavour to batter down the walls of his kingdom, he will raise up storms about their ears.

Learn, 2. That it is the duty, and must be the care and endeavour, of all the ministers of God, to oblige themselves to such an exemplary piety of conversation, as may stop the mouth of slander. That the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say against them.

8 sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the
contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.
9 *Exhort* servants to be obedient unto their own masters, *and* to
please *them* well in all things; not answering again;

Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters. See this explained Eph 6:5, seq., 1Timm 6:1-4.

Not answering again. Marg., gainsaying. Not contradicting, or not disobeying. They were to do what the master required, if it did not interfere with the rights of conscience, without attempting to argue the matter--without disputing with the master--and without advancing their own opinions. Where this relation exists, no one can doubt that this is a proper frame of mind for a servant. It may be observed, however, that all that is here said would be equally appropriate, whether the servitude was voluntary or involuntary. A man who becomes voluntarily a servant, binds himself to obey his master cheerfully and quietly, without gainsaying, and without attempting to reason the matter with him, or propounding his own opinions, even though they may be much wiser than those of his employer, he makes a contract to obey his master, not to reason with him, or to instruct him.

Not purloining. Not to appropriate to themselves what belongs to their masters. The word purloin means, literally, to take or carry away for one's self; and would be applied to an appropriation to one's self of what pertained to a common stock, or what belonged to one in whose employ we are--as the embezzlement of public funds. Here it means that the servant was not to apply to his own use what belonged to his master; that is, was not to pilfer --a vice to which, as all know, servants, and especially slaves, are particularly exposed. See the word explained Acts 5:2. But showing all good fidelity. In labouring, and in taking care of the property intrusted to them. That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. That they may show the fair influence of religion on them, in all respects, making them industrious, honest, kind, and obedient. They were to show that the effect of the religion which they professed was to make them better fitted to discharge tile duties of their station in life, however humble; or that its influence on them was desirable in every respect. In this way, they might hope also that the minds of their masters might be reached, and that they might be brought to respect and love the gospel. Learn, hence,

(1.) that one in the most humble walk of life may so live as to be an ornament to religion, as well as one favoured with more advantages.

(2.) That servants may do much good, by so living as to show to all around them that there is a reality in the gospel, and to lead others to love it.

(3.) If, in this situation of life, it is a duty so to live as to adorn religion, it cannot be less so in more elevated situations. A master should feel the obligation not to be surpassed in religious character by his servant.

10 not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn
the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.
11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all
men,

That bringeth salvation. Marg., to all men, hath appeared. That is, in the margin, "the grace which brings salvation to all men has been revealed." The marginal reading is most in accordance with the Greek, though it will bear either construction. If that which is in the text be adopted, it means that the plan of salvation has been revealed to all classes of men; that is, that it is announced or revealed to all the race that they may be saved. Comp. Col 1:23. If the other rendering be adopted, it means that that plan was fitted to secure the salvation of all men; that none were excluded from the offer; that provision had been made for all, and all might come and be saved. Whichever interpretation be adopted, the sense here will not be essentially varied. It is, that the gospel was adapted to man as man, and therefore might include servants as well as masters; subjects, as well as kings; the poor, as well as the rich; the ignorant, as well as the learned. See 1Timm 2:1,2; Acts 17:26.

12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should
live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
13 looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the
great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

Teaching us. That is the "grace of God" so teaches us; or that system of religion which is a manifestation of the grace of God, inculcates the great and important duties which Paul proceeds to state. That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. "That by denying ourselves of these, or refusing to practise them, we should lead a holy life." The word ungodliness, here means all that would be included under the word impiety; that is, all failure in the performance of our proper

duties towards God. Rom 1:18. The phrase "worldly lusts," refers to all improper desires pertaining to this life--the desire of wealth, pleasure, honour, sensual indulgence. It refers to such passions as the men of this world are prone to, and would include all those things which cannot be indulged in with a proper reference to the world to come. The gross passions would be of course included, and all those more re- fined pleasures also which constitute the characteristic and peculiar enjoyments of those who do not live unto God. We should live soberly. See the word soberly (σωφρονως) explained Tit 2:2, Tit 2:4. It means that we should exercise a due restraint on our passions and propensities. Righteously. Justly. This refers to the proper performance of our duties to our fellowmen; and it means that religion teaches us to perform those duties with fidelity, according to all our relations in life; to all our promises and contracts; to our fellow-citizens and neighbours; to the poor, and needy, and ignorant, and oppressed; and to all those who are providentially placed in our way who need our kind offices. Justice to them would lead us to act as we would wish that they would towards us. And godly. Piously; that is, in the faithful performance of our duties to God. We have here, then, an epitome of all that religion requires:

(1.) Our duty to ourselves--included in the word "soberly," and requiring a suitable control over our evil propensities and passions;

(2.) our duty to our fellow-men in all the relations we sustain in life; and

(3.) our duty to God--evinced in what will be properly regarded as a pious life. He that does these things, meets all the responsibilities of his condition and relations; and the Christian system, requiring the faithful performance of these duties, shows how admirably it is adapted to man.

Observe here, 1. The character given of that reward which the gospel promises to them that live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world; this is described,

1. By its futurity, it is hope, something expected, and to come;

2. By its transcendency, it is a blessed hope.
Learn, That the Christian's hope (for the good things hoped for) is laid up, not in this, but in the other world; because this world, and this present state, is not capable of that happiness which the Christian hopes for. It is too great, it is too good, for earth, it is laid up in heaven.

Observe, 2. The time and season when this glorious reward and blessed hope shall be dispensed reward and blessed hope shall be dispensed and given forth unto the godly, and that is, at the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

14 who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity,
and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Who gave himself for us. Eph 5:2. That he might redeem us from all iniquity. The word here rendered redeem λυτροω, occurs only here and in Lk 24:21, 1Pet 1:18. The noun, however-- λυτρον, lutron, occurs in Mt 20:28, and Mk 10:45, where it is rendered ransom. See it explained Mt 20:28. It is here said that the object of his giving himself was to save his people from all iniquity. See this explained Mt 1:21. And purify unto himself.

(1.) Purify them, or make them holy. This is the first and leading object. Heb 9:14.

(2.) Unto himself: that is, they are no longer to be regarded as their own, but as redeemed for his own service, and for the promotion of his glory. 1Cor 6:19, 1Cor 6:20. A peculiar people, 1Pet 2:9. The word here used (περιουσιος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, having abundance; and then one's own, what is special, or peculiar, (Rob. Lex.;) and here means that they were to be regarded as belonging to the Lord Jesus. It does not mean, as the word would seem to imply--and as is undoubtedly true--that they are to be a peculiar people in the sense that they are to be unlike others, or to have views and principles peculiar to themselves; but that they belong to the "Saviour" in contradistinction from belonging to themselves--"peculiar," or his own in the sense that a man's property is his own, and does not belong to others. This

passage, therefore, should not be used to prove that Christians should be unlike others in their manner of living, but that they belong to Christ as his redeemed people. From that it may indeed be inferred that they should be unlike others, but that is not the direct teaching of the passage. Zealous of good works. As the result of their redemption; that is, this is one object of their having been redeemed. Eph 2:10.

15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let
no man despise thee.

Titus-3

Be Careful to Maintain Good Works

1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey
magistrates, to be ready to every good work,
2 to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, showing all
meekness unto all men.

Observe here, that in those early days of Christianity, great scandal was brought upon religion by the undutiful carriage of servants and subjects towards their masters and magistrates; and this upon a false notion of Christian liberty, advanced and propagated by the false apostles, judaizing teachers, and gnostic libertines; whereupon he requires Titus to put Christians in mind of their duty in that particular, and to inculcate it earnestly upon them, that the Christian religion might not be slandered upon this account. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers.

Learn hence, that the duty of subjection to governors and governments, and of obedience to magistrates and rulers, is of very great importance, and ought to be enforced and frequently inculcated upon the people by the ministers of God; because by nature all men desire liberty, and to cast off the yoke of God. Every one would rule and govern, although the duty of subjection be much the easier duty.

2. From St. Paul's pressing Titus to preach up the doctrine of obedience and subjection to governors and government, learn, That there is no such way and method to bring the world to live regularly

under government, like planting the gospel among them, and making them subject to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calumny and evil-speaking has been a reigning vice in all ages, and a greater guilt is contracted by it than men apprehend; every man ought to be as just to his neighbour's reputation as his own:
if what we report of another we know to be false, it is downright lying;
if what we report of others we believe to be false, it is slander;
if what evil we report of others be really true, and we know it to be so, yet it is defamation, and contrary to that charity and goodness which Christianity requires;
for to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without necessity, is certainly a sin, and included in this apostolic prohibition: to think and speak evil of others, is not only a bad thing, but a sign of a bad man; and in many cases it is as great charity to conceal an evil we hear of our neighbour, as it is to relieve him in his distress.
The next exhortation is, to be no brawlers; in the original, no fighters; that is, neither with tongue nor hand, but meek and gentle, putting up a double wrong, rather than revenge a single injury, using all meekness towards all men. Meekness pacifies wrath, and conquers animosity to a wonder, making him tame and gentle, who by opposition is furious and implacable: the hardest flint is sooner broken upon a pillow or cushion that gently yieldeth, than upon a bar of iron that furiously resisteth

To speak evil of no man. Gr., "to blaspheme (βλασφημειν, compare Mt 9:3) no one." Doddridge renders it, "Calumniate no one." The idea is, that we are not to slander, revile, or defame any one. We are not to say anything to any one, or of any one, which will do him injury. We are never to utter anything which we know to be false about him, or to give such a colouring to his words or conduct as to do him wrong in any way. We should always so speak to him and of him in such a way that he will have no reason to complain that he is an injured man. It may be necessary, when we are called to state what we know of his character, to say things which are not at all in his favour, or things which he has said or done that were wrong; but

(1.) we should never do this for the purpose of doing him injury, or so as to find a pleasure in it; and

(2.) where it is necessary to make the statement, it should be so as to do him no injustice. We should give no improper colouring. We should exaggerate no circumstance. We should never attempt to express ourselves about his motives, or charge on him bad motives--for we know not what his motives were. We should state every palliating circumstance of which we have knowledge, and do entire justice to it. We should not make the bad traits of his character prominent, and pass over all that is good. In a word, we should show that we would rather find him to be a good man than a bad man--even if the result should be that we had been mistaken in our opinions. It is better that we should have been mistaken, than that he should be a bad man.

3 For we ourselves also were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another.

For we ourselves. We who are Christians. There is no reason for supposing, as Benson does, that this is to be understood as confined to Paul himself. There are some things mentioned here which were not probably true of him before his conversion, and the connexion does not require us to suppose that he referred particularly to himself. He is stating a reason why those to whom Titus was appointed to preach should be urged to lead holy lives, and especially to manifest a spirit of order, peace, kindness, and due subordination to law. In enforcing this, he says, that those who were now Christians had formerly been wicked, disorderly, and sensual, but that under the influence of the gospel, they had been induced to lead better lives. The same gospel which had been effectual in their case, might be in others. To others it would be an encouragement to show that there were cases in which the gospel had been thus efficacious, and those who were appointed to preach it might refer to their own example as a reason why others should be persuaded to lead holy lives. In preaching to others, also, they were not to be proud or arrogant. They were to remember that they were formerly in the same condition with those whom they addressed, and whom they exhorted to reformation.

They were not to forget that what they had that was superior to others they owed to the grace of God, and not to any native goodness. He will exhort the wicked to repentance most effectually who remembers that his own former life was wicked; he will evince most of the proper spirit in doing it who has the deepest sense of the errors and folly of his own past ways. Foolish. See this word explained in Lk 24:26, where it is rendered fools. Comp. Rom 1:14, where it is rendered unwise; and Gal 3:1,3, 1Timm 6:9, where it is rendered foolish. Disobedient. To law, to parents, to civil authority, to God. This is the natural character of the human heart. See Lk 1:17, Rom 1:30 2Ti 3:2, Tit 1:16, where the same word occurs. Deceived. By the great enemy, by false teachers, by our own hearts, and by the flattery of others. It is a characteristic of man by nature that he sees nothing in its true light, but walks along amidst constant, though changing and very beautiful illusions. Comp. Mt 24:4,6,11; 2Ti 3:13, 1Pet 2:25, Rev 12:9, 18:23, where the same word occurs. See also Rev 20:3,8,10, where the same word is applied to that great deceiver who has led the world astray. Every one who is converted feels, and is ready to confess, that before conversion he was deceived as to the comparative value of things, as to the enjoyment which he expected to find in scenes of pleasure and riot, and often in what seemed to him well-formed plans. Serving divers lusts and pleasures. Indulging in the various corrupt passions and propensities of the soul. We were so under their influence that it might be said we were their servants, or were slaves to them (δουλευοντες;) that is, we implicitly obeyed them. Rom 6:16,17. Living in malice. Gr., in evil ενκακια; that is, in all kinds of evil. Rom 1:29, where the word is rendered maliciousness. And envy. Displeasure at the happiness and prosperity of others. Rom 1:29. Hateful. στυγητοι. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, that our conduct was such as to be worthy of the hatred of others. Of whom, before his conversion, is not this true? And hating one another. There was no brotherly love; no true affection for others. There was ill-will felt in the heart, and it was evinced in the life. This is an apt description of the state of the heathen world before the gospel shines on it, and it may be regarded as the characteristic of all men before conversion. They have no true love for one another, such as they ought to cherish, and they are liable constantly to give indulgence to feelings which

evince hatred. In contentions, and strifes, and litigations, and wars, this feeling is constantly breaking out. All this is suggested here as a reason why Christians should now be gentle and mild toward those who are evil. Let us remember what we were, and we shall not be disposed to treat others harshly. When a Christian is tempted to unkind thoughts or words towards others, nothing is more appropriate for him than to reflect on his own past life.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

But after that. Gr., when-- οτε. The meaning is, that "when the love of God was manifested in the plan of salvation, he saved us from this state by our being washed and purified." The idea is not, that "the love of God appeared" after we had sinned in this way; but that when his mercy was thus displayed we were converted from our sins, and made pure in his sight. The kindness. ηχρηστοτης, --the goodness, or the benignity. The word is rendered goodness and good in Rom 2:4; 3:12; Rom 11:22, thrice; kindness, 2Cor 6:6, Eph 2:7, Col 3:12; Tit 3:4; and gentleness, Gal 5:22. The act of redeeming us was one of great kindness, or goodness. And love of God. Marg., pity. The Greek word is φιλανθρωπια-- philanthropy--the love of man. The plan of salvation was founded on love to man, and was the highest expression of that love. Jn 3:16. The Greek of this verse is, "When the kindness and love of God our Saviour to man was manifested, he saved us," (Tit 3:5,) to wit, from those sins of which we had before been guilty.

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Not by works of righteousness which we have done. The plan was not based on our own good works, nor are our own good works now the cause of our salvation. If men could have been saved by their own good works, there would have been no need of salvation by the Redeemer; if our own deeds were now the basis of our title to eternal life, the work of Christ would be equally unnecessary. It is a great and fundamental principle of the gospel that the good works of men come in for no share in the justification of the soul. They are in no sense a consideration on account of which God pardons a man, and receives him to favour. The only basis of justification is the merit of

the Lord Jesus Christ; and in the matter of justification before God, all the race is on a level. Eph 2:8,9. But according to his mercy.

(1.) It had its origin in mercy;

(2.) it is by mere mercy or compassion, and not by justice;

(3.) it is an expression of great mercy; and

(4.) it is now in fact conferred only by mercy. Whatever we have done or can do, when we come to receive salvation from the hand of God, there is no other element which enters into it but mercy. It is not because our deeds deserve it; it is not because we have by repentance and faith wrought ourselves into such a state of mind that we can claim it; but, after all our tears, and sighs, and prayers, and good deeds, it is a mere favour. Even then God might justly withhold it if he chose, and no blame would be attached to him if he should suffer us to sink down to ruin. He saved us. That is, he began that salvation in us which is to be completed in heaven. A, man who is already renewed and pardoned may be spoken of as saved--for

(1.) the work of salvation is begun, and

(2.) when begun it will certainly be completed. Php 1:6. By the washing of regeneration. In order to a correct understanding of this important passage, it is necessary to ascertain whether the phrase here used refers to baptism, and whether anything different is intended by it from what is meant by the succeeding phrase--" renewing of the Holy Ghost."--The word rendered washing (λουτρον) occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in Eph 5:26, where also it is rendered washing--" That he might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word." The word properly means a bath; then water.for bathing; then the act of bathing, washing, ablution. Passow and Robinson. It is used by Homer to denote a warm or cold bath; then a washing away, and is thus applied to the drink-offerings in sacrifice, which were supposed to purify or wash away sin. Passow. The word here does not mean laver, or the vessel for washing in, which would be expressed by λουτηρ, louter;

and this word cannot be properly applied to the baptismal font. The word in itself would naturally be understood as referring to baptism, (comp. Acts 22:16,) which was regarded as the emblem of washing away sins, or of cleansing from them. I say it was the emblem, not the means of purifying the soul from sin. If this be the allusion, and it seems probable, then the phrase "washing of regeneration" would mean "that outward washing or baptism which is the emblem of regeneration," and which is appointed as one of the ordinances connected with salvation. Mk 16:16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is not affirmed in his phrase that baptism is the means of regeneration; or that grace is necessarily conveyed by it; and still less that baptism is regeneration, for no one of these is a necessary interpretation of the passage, and should not be assumed to be the true one. The full force of the language will be met by the supposition that it means that baptism is the emblem or symbol of regeneration, and, if this is the case, no one has a right to assume that the other is certainly the meaning. And that this is the meaning is further clear, because it is nowhere taught in the New Testament that baptism is regeneration, or that it is the means of regeneration. The word rendered regeneration (παλιγγενεσια, palingenesia) occurs in the New Testament only here and in Mt 19:28,--"in the regeneration when the Son of man," etc. It means, properly, a new-birth, reproduction, or renewal. It would properly be applied to one who should be begotten again in this sense, that a new life was commenced in him in some way corresponding to his being made to live at first. To the proper idea of the word, it is essential that there should be connected the notion of the commencement of life in the man, so that he may be said to live anew; and as religion is in the Scriptures represented as life, it is properly applied to the beginning of that kind of life by which man may be said to live anew. This word, occurring only here and in Mt 19:28, and there indubitably not referring to baptism, should not be here understood as referring to that, or be applied to that, for

(1.) that is not the proper meaning of the word;

(2.) there is no Scripture usage to sanction it;

(3.) the connexion here does not demand it;

(4.) the correlatives of the word (Jn 3:3,5,6,8, 1Pet 1:3) are applied only to that great moral change which is produced by the Holy Ghost; and

(5.) it is a dangerous use of the word. Its use in this sense leaves the impression that the only change needful for man is that which is produced by being regularly baptized. On almost no point has so much injury been done in the church as by the application of the word regeneration to baptism. It affects the beginning of religion in the soul; and if a mistake is made there, it is one which must pervade all the views of piety. And renewing of the Holy Ghost. This is an important clause, added by Paul apparently to save from the possibility of falling into error. If the former expression, "the washing of regeneration," had been left to stand by itself, it might have been supposed possibly that all the regeneration which would be needed would be that which would accompany baptism. But he avoids the possibility of this error, by saying that the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is an indispensable part of that by which we are saved. It is necessary that this should exist in addition to that which is the mere emblem of it--the washing of regeneration --for without this the former would be unmeaning and unavailing. It is important to observe that the apostle by no means says that this always follows from the former, nor does he affirm that it ever follows from it--whatever may be tile truth on that point--but he asserts that this is that on which our salvation depends. The word rendered renewing (ανακαινωσις--anakainosis) occurs only here and in Rom 12:2, where it is also rendered renewing. Compare Rom 12:2 The verb (ανακαινοω--anakainoo) occurs in 2Cor 4:16, Col 3:19, in both which places it is rendered renewed, and the corresponding word, ανακαινιζω --anakainidzo, in Heb 6:6. The noun properly means making new again; a renewing; a renovation. Comp. H. Planck in Bib. Repos., i. 677. It is a word which is found only in the writings of Paul and in ecclesiastical Greek writers. It would be properly applied to such a change as the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, making one a new man; that is, a man new, so far as religion is concerned--new in his views, feelings, desires, hopes, plans, and

purposes. He is so far different from what he was before, that it may be said he enters on a new life. Eph 4:23,24. The "renewing of the Holy Ghost" of course means that which the Holy Ghost produces, recognising the fact, everywhere taught in the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit is the Author of the new creation. It cannot mean, as Koppe supposes, the renewing of the mind itself, or producing a holy spirit in the soul.

Not by—Greek, "Out of"; "not as a result springing from works," &c. of righteousness—Greek, "in righteousness," that is, wrought "in a state of righteousness": as "deeds . . . wrought in God." There was an utter absence in us of the element ("righteousness") in which alone righteous works could be done, and so necessarily an absence of the works. "We neither did works of righteousness, nor were saved in consequence of them; but His goodness did the whole" [THEOPHYLACT]. we—emphatically opposed to "His." mercy—the prompting cause of our salvation individually: "In pursuance of His mercy." His kindness and love to man were manifested in redemption once for all wrought by Him for mankind generally; His mercy is the prompting cause for our individual realization of it. Faith is presupposed as the instrument of our being "saved"; our being so, then, is spoken of as an accomplished fact. Faith is not mentioned, but only God's part. as Paul's object here is not to describe man's new state, but the saving agency of God in bringing about that state, independent of all merit on the man's part (see on Tit 3:4). by—Greek, "through"; by means of. the washing—rather, "the laver," that is, the baptismal font. of regeneration—designed to be the visible instrument of regeneration. "The apostles are wont to draw an argument from the sacraments to prove the thing therein signified, because it ought to be a recognized principle among the godly, that God does not mark us with empty signs, but by His power inwardly makes good what He demonstrates by the outward sign. Wherefore baptism is congruously and truly called the laver of regeneration. We must connect the sign and thing signified, so as not to make the sign empty and ineffectual; and yet not, for the sake of honoring the sign, to detract from the Holy Spirit what is peculiarly His" [CALVIN], (1Pe 3:21). Adult candidates for baptism are presupposed to have had repentance and faith (for Paul

often assumes in faith and charity that those addressed are what they profess to be, though in fact some of them were not so, 1Co 6:11), in which case baptism would be the visible "laver or regeneration" to them, "faith being thereby confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer to God" [Article XXVII, Church of England]. Infants are charitably presumed to have received a grace in connection with their Christian descent, in answer to the believing prayers of their parents or guardians presenting them for baptism, which grace is visibly sealed and increased by baptism, "the laver of regeneration." They are presumed to be then regenerated, until years of developed consciousness prove whether they have been actually so or not. "Born of (from) water and (no 'of' in Greek) the Spirit." The Word is the remote and anterior instrument of the new birth; Baptism, the proximate instrument. The Word, the instrument to the individual; Baptism, in relation to the Society of Christians. The laver of cleansing stood outside the door of the tabernacle, wherein the priest had to wash before entering the Holy Place; so we must wash in the laver of regeneration before we can enter the Church, whose members are "a royal priesthood." "Baptism by the Spirit" (whereof water baptism is the designed accompanying seal) makes the difference between Christian baptism and that of John. As Paul presupposes the outward Church is the visible community of the redeemed, so he speaks of baptism on the supposition that it answers to its idea; that all that is inward belonging to its completeness accompanied the outward. Hence he here asserts of outward baptism whatever is involved in the believing appropriation of the divine facts which it symbolizes, whatever is realized when baptism fully corresponds to its original design. So Ga 3:27; language holding good only of those in whom the inward living communion and outward baptism coalesce. "Saved us" applies fully to those truly regenerate alone; in a general sense it may include many who, though put within reach of salvation, shall not finally be saved. "Regeneration" occurs only once more in New Testament, Mt 19:28, that is, the new birth of the heaven and earth at Christ's second coming to renew all material things, the human body included, when the creature, now travailing in labor-throes to the birth, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Regeneration, which now begins in the believer's soul, shall then be

extended to his body, and thence to all creation. and renewing—not "the laver ('washing') of renewing," but "and BY the renewing," &c., following "saved us." To make "renewing of the Holy Ghost" follow "the laver" would destroy the balance of the clauses of the sentence, and would make baptism the seal, not only of regeneration, but also of the subsequent process of progressive sanctification ("renewing of the Holy Ghost"). Regeneration is a thing once for all done; renewing is a process daily proceeding. As "the washing," or "laver," is connected with "regeneration," so the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is connected with "shed on us abundantly" (Tit 3:6).

(6.) Here is the outward sign and seal thereof in baptism, called therefore the washing of regeneration. The work itself is inward and spiritual; but it is outwardly signified and sealed in this ordinance. Water is of a cleansing and purifying nature, does away the filth of the flesh, and so was apt to signify the doing away of the guilt and defilement of sin by the blood and Spirit of Christ, though that aptness alone, without Christ's institution, would not have been sufficient. This it is that makes it of this signification on God's part, a seal of righteousness by faith, as circumcision was, in the place of which it succeeds; and on ours an engagement to be the Lord's. Thus baptism saves figuratively and sacramentally, where it is rightly used. Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord, Ac 22:16. So Eph 5:26, That he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water by the word. Slight not this outward sign and seal, where it may be had according to Christ's appointment; yet rest not in the outward washing, but look to the answer of a good conscience, without which the external washing will avail nothing. The covenant sealed in baptism binds to duties, as well as exhibits and conveys benefits and privileges; if the former be not minded, in vain are the latter expected. Sever not what God has joined; in both the outer and inner part is baptism complete; as he that was circumcised became debtor to the whole law (Ga 5:3), so is he that is baptized to the gospel, to observe all the commands and ordinances thereof, as Christ appointed. Disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you, Mt 28:19,20. This is the outward sign and seal of salvation, baptism, called here the washing of regeneration.

(7.) Here is the principal efficient, namely, the Spirit of God; it is the renewing of the Holy Ghost; not excluding the Father and the Son, who in all works without themselves are concurring; nor the use of means, the word and sacraments, by which the Spirit works; through his operation it is that they have their saving effect. In the economy of our salvation, the applying and effecting part is especially attributed to the Holy Spirit. We are said to be born of the Spirit, to be quickened and sanctified by the Spirit, to be led and guided, strengthened and helped, by the Spirit. Through him we mortify sin, perform duty, walk in God's ways; all the acts and operations of the divine life in us, the works and fruits of righteousness without us, all are through this blessed and Holy Spirit, who is therefore called the Spirit of life, and of grace and holiness; all grace is from him. Earnestly therefore is he to be sought, and greatly to be heeded by us, that we quench not his holy motions, nor resist and oppose him in his workings. Res delicatula est Spiritus--The Spirit is a tender thing. As we act towards him, so may we expect he will to us; if we slight, and resist, and oppose his workings, he will slacken them; if we continue to vex him, he will retire. Grieve not therefore the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption, Eph 4:30. The Spirit seals by his renewing and sanctifying, his witnessing and assuring work; he distinguishes and marks out for salvation, and fits for it; it is his work: we could not turn to God by any strength of our own, any more than we can be justified by any righteousness of our own.

6 which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

That is, which Holy Spirit was in its gifts and graces plentifully poured forth upon us, and dwelleth in us, not essentially, but energetically, illuminating, guiding, strengthening, and confirming of us: and the end of God herein is, That being justified by his grace, that is, by faith in his Son, we should be made heirs of eternal life, according to the hope which the promises of God have given us thereof.

Learn hence, 1. That all the grace which is so plentiful poured forth upon believers, is by the means and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Learn, 2. That justification being a sinner's absolution from guilt and punishment by the satisfaction of Christ the Redeemer, is yet an act of special grace and free favour in God, That being justified by his grace.
Learn, 3. That it is the blessed privilege of all justified persons, that they are now heirs to, and shall ere long be possessors of, eternal life; they shall ere long have in hand, what they now possess in hope: Being justified by grace, we are heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

7 that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according
to the hope of eternal life.
8 *This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm
constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to
maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto
men.

This is a faithful saying. 1Timm 1:15. The reference here is to what he had been just saying, meaning that the doctrine which he had stated about the method of salvation was in the highest degree important, and entirely worthy of belief. And these things I will that thou affirm constantly. Make them the constant subject of your preaching. That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. This shows that Paul supposed that the doctrines of the gospel were fitted to lead men to holy living. Comp. Tit 3:1, and Php 4:8. The "good works," here refer not merely to acts of benevolence and charity, but to all that is upright and good--to an honest and holy life. These things are good and profitable unto men. That is, these doctrines which he had stated were not mere matters of speculation, but they were fitted to promote human happiness, and they should be constantly taught.

9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and
strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.
10 A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition,
reject;

As if the apostle had said, Avoid and shun, and refuse communion with, him that doth obstinately persist in dangerous errors and heresies, and accordingly let him be excommunicated.

Learn hence, 1. Who is an heretic in the apostle's sense; even he who is preverted from the true faith, and holds opinions which subvert the foundations of it; and one who is condemned in his own conscience, and sins against his own convictions: for the apostle here bids Titus not to inform him of his fault, which shows him that the crime lay not in his head, in his understanding, but in his will and affections: for no man who acts according to his judgment and conscience, how erroneous soever, is self-condemned in that action.

Learn, 2. That even heretics themselves ought to be tenderly and lovingly dealt with, so long as there is any hope that they may be gained or won.

Learn, 3. That the charity of the church, in her censure of excomminication, aims rather at the cutting off errors than of persons.

But because, after all, there will be heresies and heretics in the church, the apostle next directs Titus what to do in such a case, and how to deal with such, Tit 3:10. He who forsakes the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, who broaches false doctrines and propagates them to the corrupting of the faith in weighty and momentous points, and breaks the peace of the church about them, after due means used to reclaim him, must be rejected. "Admonish him once and again, that, if possible, he may be brought back, and thou mayest gain thy brother; but, if this will not reduce him, that others be not hurt, cast him out of the communion, and warn all Christians to avoid him."-- Knowing that he that is such is subverted (turned off from the foundation) and sinneth grievously, being self-condemned. Those who will not be reclaimed by admonitions, but are obstinate in their sins and errors, are subverted and self-condemned; they inflict that punishment upon themselves which the governors of the church should inflict upon them: they throw themselves out of the church, and throw off its communion, and so are self-condemned.

Observe, 1. How great an evil real heresy is, not lightly therefore to be charged upon any, though greatly to be taken heed of by all. Such a one is subverted or perverted--a metaphor from a building so ruined as to render it difficult if not impossible to repair and raise it up again. Real heretics have seldom been recovered to the true faith: not so much defect of judgment, as perverseness of the will, being in the case, through pride, or ambition, or self-willedness, or covetousness, or such like corruption, which therefore must be taken heed of: "Be humble, love the truth and practise it, and damning heresy will be escaped."

2. Pains and patience must be used about those that err most grievously. They are not easily and soon to be given up and cast off, but competent time and means must be tried for their recovery.

3. The church's means even with heretics are persuasive and rational. They must be admonished, instructed, and warned; so much nouthesia imports.

4. Upon continued obstinacy and irreclaimableness, the church has power, and is obliged, to preserve its own purity, by severing such a corrupt member which discipline may by God's blessing become effectual to reform the offender, or if not it will leave him the more inexcusable in his condemnation.

11 knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

A man that is an heretic. The word heretic is now commonly applied to one who holds some fundamental error of doctrine, "a person who holds and teaches opinions repugnant to the established faith, or that which is made the standard of orthodoxy." Webster. The Greek word here used (αιρετικος-- haireticos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The corresponding noun (αιρεσις-- hairesis) occurs in the following places: Acts 5:17, 15:5, 24:5 Acts 26:5, 28:22, where it is rendered sect; and Acts 24:14 1Cor 11:19, Gall 5:20, 2Pet 2:1, where it is rendered heresy, and heresies. Acts 24:14. The true notion of the word is that of one who is a promoter of a sect or party. The man who makes divisions in a church, instead of aiming to promote unity, is the one who is intended. Such a man may form sects and parties on

some points of doctrine on which he differs from others, or on some custom, religious rite, or peculiar practice; he may make some unimportant matter a ground of distinction from his brethren, and may refuse to have fellowship with them, and endeavour to get up a new organization. Such a man, according to the Scripture usage, is a heretic, and not merely one who holds a different doctrine from that which is regarded as orthodoxy. The spirit of the doctrine here is the same as in Rom 16:17, and the same class of persons is referred to. "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have received; and avoid them." Rom 16:17. The word here used is defined by Robinson, (Lex.,) "one who creates dissensions, introduces errors--a factious person." It is not found in classic Greek, but often in ecclesiastical writers. See Suicer's Thesau. After the first and second admonition. Comp. Mt 18:15-17. That is, do not do it hastily and rashly. Give him an opportunity to explain himself, and to repent and abandon his course. No man is to be cut off without giving him a proper opportunity to vindicate his conduct, and to repent if he has done wrong. If, after the first and second admonition, a man, who is undoubtedly doing wrong, will not repent, then he is to be cut off. The apostle does not say in what way this admonition is to be given, or whether it should be public or private. The language which he uses would justify either, and the method which is to be adopted is doubtless to be determined by circumstances. The thing which is to be reached is, that his fault is to be fairly set before his mind. Reject. παραιτου. This word is rendered excuse in Lk 14:18,19; refuse, Acts 25:11, 1Timm 4:7, 5:11, Heb 12:25 avoid, 2Ti 2:23; and entreated, Heb 12:19. Its prevailing meaning, as used in connections like the one before us, is, to reject in relation to an office; that is, to decline appointing one to an office. It probably had a primary reference to that here, and meant that a man who was given to making dissensions, or who was a factious person, should not be admitted to an office in the church. The general direction would also include this--that he should not be admitted to the church. He is neither to be owned as a member, nor admitted to office. Comp. Mt 18:17: "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." In regard to this passage, then, we may observe,

(1.) that the utmost limit which this allows is mere exclusion. It does not allow us to follow the offender with injury.

(2.) It does not authorize us to oppose one on account of his mere private opinions. The essential idea is that of a factious, division-making man; a man who aims to form sects and parties, whether on account of opinions, or from any other cause.

(3.) It does not make it right to deliver such a man over to the "secular arm," or to harm him in body, soul, property, or reputation. It gives no power to torture him on the rack, or with thumb-screws, or to bind him to the stake. It authorizes us not to recognise him as a Christian brother, or to admit him to an office in the church --but beyond this it gives us no right to go. He has a right to his own opinion still, so far as we are concerned, and we are not to molest him in the enjoyment of that right.

(4.) It demands that, when a man is undoubtedly a heretic in the sense here explained, there should be the utmost kindness towards him, in order if possible to reclaim him. We should not begin by attacking and denouncing his opinions; or by formally arraigning him; or by blazoning his name abroad as a heretic; but he is to be dealt with in all Christian kindness and brotherly fidelity. He is to be admonished more than once by those who have the right to admonish him; and then, and then only, if he does not repent, he is to be simply avoided. That is to be an end of the matter so far as we are concerned. The power of the church there ceases. It has no power to deliver him over to any one else for persecution or punishment, or in any way to meddle with him. He may live where he pleases; pursue his own plans; entertain his own opinions or company, provided he does not interfere with us; and though we have a right to examine the opinions which he may entertain, yet our work with him is done. If these principles had been observed, what scenes of bloody and cruel persecution in the church would have been avoided!

Knowing that he that is such is subverted. Literally, is turned out; or, is changed, i.e., for the worse. He has gone from the right way, and therefore he should be rejected. And sinneth, being condemned of

himself. His own conscience condemns him. He will approve the sentence, for he knows that he is wrong; and his self-condemnation will be punishment sufficient. His own course, in attempting a division or schism in the church, shows him that it is right that he should be separated from the communion of Christians. He that attempts to rend the church, without a good reason, should himself be separated from it.

Personal Instructions

12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to
come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.
13 Bring Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey diligently, that
nothing be wanting unto them.
14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses,
that they be not unfruitful.

And let ours. Our friends; that is, those who were Christians. Paul had just directed Titus to aid Zenas and Apollos himself; and he here adds that he wished that others who were Christians would be characterized by good works of all kinds. To maintain good works. Marg., profess honest trades. The Greek will admit of the interpretation in the margin, or will include that; but there is no reason why the direction should be supposed to have any peculiar reference to an honest mode of livelihood, or why it should be confined to that. It rather means, that they should be distinguished for good works, including benevolent deeds, acts of charity, honest toil, and whatever would enter into the conception of an upright life. Tit 3:8. For necessary uses. Such as are required by their duty to their families, and by the demands of charity. Tit 3:8. That they be not unfruitful. That it may be seen that their religion is not barren and worthless, but that it produces a happy effect on themselves and on society. Jn 15:16; Eph 4:28.

Benediction

15 All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the
faith.
Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul to
Philemon
[Philemon]

Philemon-1

Salutation

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy *our* brother,
Unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer,
2 and to *our* beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to
the church in thy house:
3 Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus
Christ.

Philemon's Love and Faith

4 I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,
5 hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord
Jesus, and toward all saints;
6 that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the
acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.
7 For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of
the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

Paul Pleads for Onesimus

8 Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that
which is convenient,

The marvellous condescending humility of our apostle in these expressions: As an apostle he was the highest ruler and officer in the church of God, and had the fullest authority and power that a person could have upon earth, to command, require, and enjoin Philemon to the practice of his duty; but he tells him, though he might be bold to enjoin, yet he rather chose to beseech: For love's sake I rather beseech thee.

hence, That church rulers and governors, although they have a commanding power and authority, which upon occasion they may and must make use of; yet they should choose much rather in love to entreat, hoping that will work more kindly and effectually upon the minds of persons.

Observe, 2. The argument St. Paul uses as a ground of entreaty: I Paul desire and beseech thee, I Paul the aged, I Paul a prisoner.

Note, he urges his years as an argument for granting his request; that he was aged, and an aged minister of Christ: if honour be due to an aged person walking in the ways of righteousness, much more is it so to an aged minister, gray-headed in the service of Christ, and having faithfully discharged his duty there. He also urges his sufferings as well as his years; I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. The sufferings of Christ's ministers in the cause of God should by no means lessen and diminish, but rather augment and increase, that reverence, regard, and respect, which is deservedly due and payable unto them.

Observe, 3. The person whom he thus intercedes with affection for: Onesimus, whom he calls his son begotten in his bonds; that is, his spiritual son, converted to Christianity by his ministry, when he was in prison.

Where note, That endearing love, and that fervent affection, which the ministers of Christ bear to their converts, to such as they have gained unto Christ; it equals, nay, perhaps exceeds, the natural affections of parents towards their own children

9 yet for love's sake I rather beseech *thee,* being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

10 I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds:

11 which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me:

12 whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:

13 whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have
ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel:
14 but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not
be as it were of necessity, but willingly.
15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest
receive him for ever;
16 not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially
to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the
Lord?
17 If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.
18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth *thee* aught, put that on mine
account;
19 I Paul have written *it* with mine own hand, I will repay *it:* albeit I do
not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.
20 Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in
the Lord.
21 Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that
thou wilt also do more than I say.
22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your
prayers I shall be given unto you.

Final Greetings

23 There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus;
24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.
25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the

Hebrews

[Hebrews]

Hebrews-1

God Has Spoken by His Son

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

God, who at sundry times. The commencement of this epistle varies from all the others which Paul wrote. In every other instance, he at first announces his name, and the name of the church or of the individual to whom he wrote. In regard to the reason why he here varies from that custom, see the Introduction, & 3. This commences with the full acknowledgment of his belief, that God had made important revelations in past times, but that now he had communicated his will in a manner that more especially claimed their attention. This announcement was of particular importance here. He was writing to those who had been trained up in the full belief of the truths taught by the prophets. As the object of the apostle was to show the superior claims of the gospel, and to lead them from putting confidence in the rites instituted in accordance with the directions of the Old Testament, it was of essential importance that he should admit that their belief of the inspiration of the prophets was well founded, he was not an infidel, he was not disposed to call in question the Divine origin of the books which were regarded as given by inspiration, he fully admitted all that had been held by the Hebrews on that head, and yet showed that the new revelation had more important claims to their attention. The word rendered "at sundry times" --πολυμερως-- means, in many parts. It refers here to the fact, that the former revelation had

been given in various parts. It had not all been given at once. It had been communicated from time to time, as the exigencies of the people required, and as God chose to communicate it. At one time it was by history, then by prophecy, by poetry, by proverbs, by some solemn and special message, etc. The ancient revelation was a collection of various writings, on different subjects, and given at different times; but now God had addressed us by his Son--the one great Messenger, who had come to finish the Divine communications, and to give a uniform and connected revelation to mankind. The contrast here is between the numerous separate parts of the revelation given by the prophets, and the oneness of that given by his Son. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

And in divers manners πολυτροπως. In many ways. It was not all in one mode. He had employed various methods in communicating his will. At one time it was by direct communication, at another by dreams, at another by visions, etc. In regard to the various methods which God employed to communicate his will, see Introduction to Isaiah, & 7. In contradistinction from these, God had now spoken by his Son. He had addressed us in one uniform manner. It was not by dreams, or visions; it was a direct communication from him. The word used here, also, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. In times past. Formerly; in ancient times. The series of revelations began, as recorded by Moses, with Adam, (Gen 3.) and terminated with Malachi--a period of more than three thousand five hundred years. From Malachi to the time of the Saviour, there were no recorded Divine communications; and the whole period of written revelation, or when the Divine communications were recorded from Moses to Malachi, was about a thousand years. Unto the fathers. To our ancestors; to the people of ancient times. By the prophets. The word prophet, in the Scriptures, is used in a wide signification. It means not only those who predict future events, but those who communicate the Divine will on any subject. Rom 12:6; 1Cor 14:1. It is used here in that large

sense--as denoting all those by whom God had made communications to the Jews in former times.

2 hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Hath in these last days. In this the final dispensation; or in this dispensation under which the affairs of the world will be wound up. Phrases similar to this occur frequently in the Scriptures. They do not imply that the world was soon coming to an end, but that that was the last dispensation, the last period of the world. There had been the patriarchal period, the period under the law, the prophets, etc., and this was the period during which God's last method of communication would be enjoyed, and under which the world would close. It might be a very long period, but it would be the last one; and, so far as the meaning of the phrase is concerned, it might be the longest period, or longer than all the others put together, but still it would be the last one. Acts 2:17; Isa 2:2. Spoken unto us. The word "us" here does not of necessity imply that the writer of the epistle had actually heard him, or that they had heard him to whom the epistle was written. It means that God had now communicated his win to man by his Son. It may be said, with entire propriety, that God has spoken to us by his Son, though we have not personally heard or seen him. We have what he spoke, and caused to be recorded, for our direction. By his Son. The title commonly given to the Lord Jesus, as denoting his peculiar relation to God. It was understood, by the Jews, to denote equality with God, (Jn 5:18; comp. Jn 10:33,36,) and is used with such a reference here. Rom 1:4, where the meaning of the phrase "Son of God" is fully considered. It is implied here, that the fact, that the Son of God has spoken to us, imposes the highest obligations to attend to what he has said; that he has authority superior to all those who have spoken in past times; and that there will be peculiar guilt in refusing to attend to what he has spoken. See Heb 2:1-4; comp. Heb 12:25. The reasons for the superior respect which should be shown to the revelations of the Son of God may be such as these:---

(1.) His rank and dignity. He is: the equal with God, (Jn 1:1,) and is himself called God in this chapter, Heb 1:8. He has a right, therefore, to command, and when he speaks men should obey.

(2.) The clearness of the truths which he communicated to man, on a great variety of subjects, that are of the highest moment to the world. Revelation has been gradual--like the breaking of the day in the east. At first there is a little light; it increases and expands till objects become more and more visible, and then the sun rises in full-orbed glory. At first we discern only the existence of some object--- obscure and undefined; then we can trace-its outline; then its colour, its size, its proportions, its drapery--till it stands before us fully revealed. So it has been with revelation. There is a great variety of subjects which we now see clearly, which were very imperfectly understood by the teaching of the prophets, and would be now if we had only the Old Testament. Among them are the following:--

(a.) The character of God. Christ came to make him known as a merciful Being, and to show how he could be merciful as well as just. The views given of God by the Lord Jesus are far more clear than any given by the ancient prophets; compared with those entertained by the ancient philosophers, they are like the sun compared with the darkest midnight.

(b.) The way in which man may be reconciled to God, The New Testament-- which may be considered as that which God "has spoken to us by his Son" --has told us how the great work of being reconciled to God can be effected. The Lord Jesus told us that he came to "give his life a ransom for many;" that he laid down his life for his friends; that he was about to die for man; that he would draw all men to him. The prophets indeed-- particularly Isaiah --threw much light on these points. But the mass of the people did not understand their revelations. They pertained to future events--always difficult

to be understood. But Christ has told us the way of salvation; and he has made it so plain, that he who runs may read.

(c.) The moral precepts of the Redeemer are superior to those of any and all that had gone before him. They are elevated, pure, expansive, benevolent--such as became the Son of God to proclaim. Indeed, this is admitted on all hands. Infidels are constrained to acknowledge, that all the moral precepts of the Saviour are eminently pure and benignant. If they were obeyed, the world would be filled with justice, truth, purity, and benevolence. Error, fraud, hypocrisy, ambition, wars, licentiousness, and intemperance, would cease; and the opposite virtues would diffuse happiness over the face of the world. Prophets had indeed delivered many moral precepts of great importance, but the purest and most extensive body of just principles and of good morals on earth are to be found in the teachings of the Saviour.

(d.) He has given to us the clearest view which man has had of the future state; and he has disclosed, in regard to that future state, a class of truths of the deepest interest to mankind, which were before wholly unknown or only partially revealed.

1. He has revealed the certainty of a state of future existence--in opposition to the Sadducees of all ages. This was denied, before he came, by multitudes; and where it was not, the arguments by which it was supported were often of the feeblest kind. The truth was held by some--like Plato and his followers--but the arguments on which they relied were feeble, and such as were unfitted to give rest to the soul. The truth they had obtained by TRADITION; the arguments were THEIR OWN.

2. He revealed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This before was doubted or denied by nearly all the world. It was held to be absurd and impossible. The Saviour taught its certainty; he raised up more than one to show that it was

possible; he was himself raised, to put the whole matter beyond debate.

3. He revealed the certainty of future judgment--the judgment of all mankind.

4. He disclosed great and momentous truths respecting the future state. Before he came, all was dark. The Greeks spoke of Elysian fields, but they were dreams of the imagination; the Hebrews had some faint notion of a future state, where all was dark and gloomy, with perhaps an occasional glimpse of the truth that there is a holy and blessed heaven; but to the mass of mind, all was obscure. Christ revealed a heaven, and told us of a hell. He showed us that the one might be gained, and the other avoided. He presented important motives for doing it; and, had he done nothing more, his communications were worthy the profound attention of mankind. I may add,

That the Son of God has claims on our attention from the MANNER in which he spoke, He spoke as one having "authority," Mt 7:29. He spoke as a witness of what he saw and knew, Jn 3:11. He spoke without doubt or ambiguity of God, and heaven, and hell. His is the language of one who is familiar with all that he describes; who saw all, who knew all. There is no hesitancy or doubt in his mind of the truth of what he speaks; and he speaks as if his whole soul were impressed with its unspeakable importance. Never were so momentous communications made to men of hell as fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus, (Mt 23:33 ;) never were announcements made so fitted to awe and appall a sinful world. Whom he hath appointed heir of all things. See Ps 2:8; comp. Rom 8:17. This is language taken from the fact that he is "the SON of God." If a Son, then he is an heir --for so it is usually among men. This is not to be taken literally, as if he inherits anything as a man does. An heir is one who inherits anything after the death of its possessor--usually his father. But this cannot be applied in this sense to the Lord Jesus. The language is used to denote his rank and dignity as the Son of God. As such, all things are

his, as the property of the father descends to his son at his death. The word rendered heir-- κληρονομος--means, properly,

(1.) one who acquires anything by lot; and

(2.) an heir in the sense in which we usually understand the word. It may also denote a possessor of anything received as s portion, or of property of any kind. See Rom 4:13,14. It is, in every instance, rendered heir in the New Testament. Applied to Christ, it means that, as the Son of God, he is possessor or lord of all things, or that all things are his. Comp. Acts 2:36, 10:36; Jn 17:10, 16:15. "All things that the Father hath are mine." The sense is, that all things belong to the Son of God. Who is so rich, then, as Christ? Who so able to endow his friends with enduring and abundant wealth? By whom. By whose agency; or who was the actual agent in the creation. Grotius supposes that this means, "on account of whom;" and that the meaning is, that the universe was formed with reference to the Messiah, in accordance with an ancient Jewish maxim, But the more common and classical usage of the word rendered by, (δια,) when it governs a genitive, as here, is to denote the instrumental cause; the agent by which anything is done. See Mt 1:22, 2:5,15,23, Lk 18:31, Jn 1:17 Acts 2:22,43, 4:16, 12:9, Rom 2:16, 5:5. It may be true that the universe was formed with reference to the glory of the Son Of God, and that this world was brought into being in order to show his glory; but it would not do to establish that doctrine on a passage like this. Its obvious and proper meaning is, that he was the agent of the creation--a truth that is elsewhere abundantly taught. See Jn 1:3,10, Col 1:16, Eph 3:9, 1Cor 8:6. This sense, also, better agrees with the design of the apostle in this place. His object is to set forth the dignity of the Son of God. This is better shown by the consideration that he was the Creator of all things, than that all things were made for him. The worlds. The universe, or creation. So the word here-- αιων--is undoubtedly used in Heb 11:3. The word properly means age--an indefinitely long period of time; then

perpetuity, ever, eternity--always being. For an extended investigation of the meaning of the word, the reader may consult an essay by Prof. Stuart, in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, for 1829, pp. 406--452. From the sense of age, or duration, the word comes to denote the present and future age; the present world, and the world to come; the present world, with all its cares, anxieties, and evils; the men of this world--a wicked generation, etc. Then it means the world --the material universe--creation as it is. The only perfectly clear use of the word in this sense in the New Testament is in Heb 11:3, and there there can be no doubt. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The passage before us will bear the same interpretation, and this is the most obvious and intelligible. What would be the meaning of saying that the ages or dispensations were made by the Son of God? The Hebrews used the word-- --olam--in the same sense. It properly means age, duration; and thence it came to be used by them to denote the world--made up of ages or generations; and then the world itself. This is the fair, and, as it seems to me, the only intelligible interpretation of this passage--an interpretation amply sustained by texts referred to above, as demonstrating that the universe was made by the agency of the Son of God Comp. Heb 1:10, and Jn 1:3.

3 who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Who being the brightness of his glory. This verse is designed to state the dignity and exalted rank of the Son of God, and is exceedingly important with reference to a correct view of the Redeemer. Every word which is employed is of great importance, and should be clearly understood in order to a correct apprehension of the passage. First, In what manner does it refer to the Redeemer? To his Divine nature? To the mode of his existence before he was incarnate? Or to him as he appeared on earth? Most of the ancient commentators

supposed that it referred to his Divine dignity before he became incarnate; and proceed to argue, on that supposition, on the mode of the Divine existence. The true solution seems to me to be, that it refers to him as incarnate, but still has reference to him as the incarnate Son of God. It refers to him as Mediator, but not simply or mainly as a man. It is rather to him as Divine--thus, in his incarnation, being the brightness of the Divine glory, and the express image of God. That this is the correct view is apparent, I think, from the whole scope of the passage. The drift of the argument is, to show his dignity as he has spoken to us, (Heb 1:1,) and not in the period antecedent to his incarnation. It is to show his claims to our reverence as sent from Gods the last and greatest of the messengers which God has sent to man. But, then, it is a description of him as he actually is ---the incarnate Son of God; the equal of the Father in human flesh: and this leads the writer to dwell on his Divine character, and to argue from that, Heb 1:8,10-12. I have no doubt, therefore, that this description refers to his Divine nature, but it is the Divine nature as it appears in human flesh. An examination of the words used will prepare us for a more clear comprehension of the sense. The word glory--δοξα-- properly, a seeming, an appearance; and then (1.) praise, applause, honour; (2.) dignity, splendour, glory; (3.) brightness, dazzling light; and (4.) excellence, perfection, such as belongs to God, and such as there is in heaven. It is probably used here, as the word-- is often among the Hebrews, to denote splendour, brightness, and refers to the Divine perfections as resembling a bright light, or the sun. The word is applied to the sun and stars, 1Cor 15:40,41; to the light which Paul saw on the way to Damascus, Acts 22:11; to the shining of Moses' face, 2Cor 3:7; to the celestial light, which surrounds the angels, Rev 18:1; and glorified saints, Lk 9:31,32; and to the dazzling splendour or majesty in which God is enthroned. 2Thes 1:9, 2Pet 1:17, Rev 15:8, 21:11,23. Here there is a comparison of God with the sun; he is encompassed with splendour and majesty; he is a being of light and of infinite perfection. It refers to all in God that is bright, splendid, glorious; and the

idea is, that the Son of God is the brightness of it all. The word rendered brightness απαυγασμα --occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, reflected splendour, or the light which emanates from a luminous body. The rays or beams of the sun are its "brightness," or that by which the sun is seen and known. The sun itself we do not see; the beams which flow from it we do see. The meaning here is, that if God be represented under the image of a luminous body, as he is in the Scriptures, (see Ps 84:11, Mal 4:2,) then Christ is the radiance of that light, the brightness of that luminary. Stuart. He is that by which we perceive God, or by which God is made known to us in his real perfections. Comp. Jn 1:18; Jn 14:9. It is by him only that the true character and glory of God is known to men. This is true in regard to the great system of revelation; but it is especially true in regard to the views which men have of God. Mt 11:27: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The human soul is dark respecting the Divine character, until it is enlightened by Christ. It sees no beauty, no glory in his nature--nothing that excites wonder, or that wins the affections, until it is disclosed by the Redeemer. Somehow it happens--account for it as men may--that there are no elevating, practical views of God in the world; no views that engage and hold the affections of the soul; no views that are transforming and purifying, but those which are derived from the Lord Jesus. A man becomes a Christian, and at once he has elevated practical views of God. He is, to him, the most glorious of all beings. He finds supreme delight in contemplating his perfections. But he may be a philosopher or an infidel, and though he may profess to believe in the existence of God, yet the belief excites no practical influence on him; he sees nothing to admire--nothing which leads him to worship him. Comp. Rom 1:21. And the express image. The word here used χαρακτηρ likewise occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is that from which our word character is derived. It properly means, a graying, tool; and then something engraved or stamped--a character --as, a

letter, mark, sign. The image stamped on coins, seals, wax, expresses the idea; and the sense here is, that if God be represented under the idea of a substance, or being, then Christ is the exact resemblance of that, as an image is of the stamp or die. The resemblance between a stamp and the figure which is impressed is exact; and so is the resemblance between the Redeemer and God. See Col 1:15: "Who is the image of the invisible God." Of his person. The word person, with us, denotes an individual being, and is applied to human beings, consisting of body and soul. We do not apply it to anything dead--not using it with reference to the body when the spirit is gone. It is applied to man-- with individual and separate consciousness and will; with body and soul; with an existence separate from others. It is evident that it cannot be used in this sense when applied to God, and that this word does not express the true idea of the passage here. Tindal renders it, more accurately, substance. The word in the original υποστασις --whence our word hypostasis means, literally, a foundation, or substructure. Then it means, a well-founded trust, firm expectation, oonttdence, firmness, boldness; and then reality, substance, essential nature. In the New Testament, it is rendered confident, or confidence, (2Cor 9:4, 11:17, Heb 3:14;) substance, (Heb 11:1;) and person in the passage before us. It is not elsewhere used. Here it properly refers to the essential nature of God--that which distinguishes him from all other beings and which, if I may so say, constitutes him God; and the idea is, that, the Redeemer is the exact resemblance of that. This resemblance consists, probably, in the following things--though perhaps the enumeration does not include all-- but in these he certainly resembles God, or is his exact image. (1.) In his original mode of being, or before the incarnation. Of this we know little. But he had a "glory with the Father before the world was," Jn 17:5. He was "in the beginning with God, and was God," Jn 1:1. He was in intimate union with the Father, and was one with him, in certain respects; though in certain other respects, there was a distinction. I do not see any evidence in the Scriptures of the doctrine of "eternal generation," and it is

certain that that doctrine militates against the proper eternity of the Son of God. The natural and fair meaning of that doctrine would be, that there was a time when he had not an existence, and when he began to be, or was begotten. But the Scripture doctrine is, that he had a strict and proper eternity. I see no evidence that he was, in any sense, a derived being--deriving his existence and his divinity from the rather. The Fathers of the Christian church, it is believed, held that the Son of God, as to his Divine, as well as his human nature, was derived from the Father. Hence the Nicene creed speaks of him as begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light very God of very God, begotten, not made" --language implying derivation in his Divine nature. They held, with one voice, that he was God; but it was in this manner. See Stuart, Excursus III on the Epistle to the Hebrews. But this is incredible, and impossible. A derived being cannot, in any proper sense, be God; and if there is any attribute which the Scriptures have ascribed to the Saviour with peculiar clearness, it is that of proper eternity, Rev 1:11,18, Jn 1:1. It may have been, that it was by him that the perfections of God were made known, before the incarnation, to the angelic world, but on that point the Scriptures are silent. (2.) On earth he was the brightness of the Divine glory, and the express image of his person. (a.) It was by him, eminently, that God was made known to men--as it is by the beams of the sun that that is made known. (b.) He bore an exact resemblance to God. He was just such a being as we should suppose God to be, were he to become incarnate, and to act as a man. He was the embodied representation of the Deity. He was pure--like God. He was benevolent--like God. He spake to the winds and storms--like God. He healed diseases--like God. He raised the dead--like God. He wielded the power which God only can wield, and he manifested a character in all respects like that which we should suppose God would evince, if he appeared in human flesh, and dwelt among men. And this is saying much. It is, in fact, saying that the account in the Gospels is real, and that the Christian religion is true. Uninspired men could never have drawn such a character as

that of Jesus Christ, unless that character had actually existed. The attempt has often been made to describe God, or to show how he would speak and act if he came down to earth. Thus the Hindoos speak of the incarnations of Vishnu; and thus Homer, and Virgil, and most of the ancient poets, speak of the appearance of the gods, and describe them as they were supposed to appear. But how different from the character of the Lord Jesus! They are full of passion, and lust, and anger, and contention, and strife; they come to mingle in battles, and to take part with contending armies, and they evince the same spirit as men, and are merely men of great power, and more gigantic passions; but Christ is God IN HUMAN NATURE. The form is that of man; the Spirit is that of God. He walks, and eats, and sleeps as a man; he thinks, and speaks, and acts like God. He was born as a man--but the angels adored him as God. As a man he ate; yet, by a word, he created food for thousands, as if he were God. Like a man he slept on a pillow, while the vessel was tossed by the waves; like God he rose, and rebuked the winds, and they were still. As a man he went, with affectionate interest, to the house of Martha and Mary. As a man he sympathized with them in their affliction, and wept at the grave of their brother; like God he spoke, and the dead came forth to the land of the living. As a man he travelled through the land of Judea. lie was without a home; yet everywhere the sick were laid at his feet, and health came from his touch, and strength from the words of his lips--as if he were God. As a man he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane; he bore his cross to Calvary; he was nailed to the tree; yet then the heavens grew dark, and the earth shook, and the dead arose--as if he were God. As a man he slept in the cold tomb; like God he rose, and brought life and immortality to light. He lived on earth as a man--he ascended to heaven like God. And in all the life of the Redeemer, in all the variety of trying situations in which he was placed, there was not a word or action which was inconsistent with the supposition that he was the incarnate God. There was no failure of any effort to heal the sick or to raise the dead; no look, no word, no deed, that is not perfectly consistent with

this supposition; but, on the contrary, his life is full of events which can be explained on no other supposition than that he was the appropriate shining forth of the Divine glory, and the exact resemblance of the essence of God. There are not two Gods, as there are not two suns when the sun shines. It is the one God, in a mysterious and incomprehensible manner, shining into the world in the face of Jesus Christ. 2Cor 4:6. As the wax bears the perfect image of the seal--perfect not only in the outline, but in the filling up--in all the lines, and features, and letters, so is it with the Redeemer. There is not one of the Divine perfections which has not the counterpart in him; and if the glory of the Divine character is seen at all by men, it will be Been in and through him. And upholding all things by the word of his power. That is, by his powerful word, or command. The phrase "word of his power' is a Hebraism, and means his efficient command. There could not be a more distinct ascription of divinity to the Son of God than this. He upholds or sustains all things--i. e. the universe. It is not merely the earth; not only its rocks, mountains, seas, animals, and men, but it is the universe--all distant worlds. How can he do this who is not God? He does it by his word-- his command. What a conception! That a simple command should do all this: So the world was made when God "spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast," Ps 33:9. So the Lord Jesus commanded the waves and the winds, and they were still, (Mt 8:26,27;) so he spoke to diseases, and they departed--and to the dead, and they arose. Comp. Gen 1:3. I know not how men can explain away this ascription of infinite power to the Redeemer. There can be no higher idea of omnipotence than to say, that he upholds all things by his word; and assuredly he who can hold up this wast universe, so that it does not sink into anarchy or into nothing, must be God. The same power Jesus claimed for himself. See Mt 28:18. When he had by himself purged our sins. "By himself"--not by the blood of bulls and lambs, but by his own blood. This is designed to bring in the grand feature of the Christian scheme, that the purification made for sin was by his blood, instead of the blood which was shed in the temple-

service. The word here rendered "purged" means purified, or "expiated". Jn 15:2 The literal rendering is, "having made purification for our sins." The purification or cleansing, which he effected, was by his blood. See 1Jn 1:7: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." This the apostle here states to have been the great object for which he came, and having done this, he sat down on the right hand of God. See Heb 7:27, 9:12-14. It was not merely to teach that he came; it was to purify the hearts of men, to remove their sins, and to put an end of sacrifice by the sacrifice of himself. Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Of God. Mk 16:19 Eph 1:20, seq.

4 being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Being made so much better. Being exalted so much above the angels. The word "better" here does not refer to moral character, but to exaltation of rank. As Mediator; as the Son of God in our nature, he is exalted far above the angels. Than the angels. Than all angels of every rank. Eph 1:21; comp. 1Pet 3:22: "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." He is exalted to his mediatorial throne, and all things are placed beneath his feet. As he hath by inheritance. Or in virtue of his name--the Son of God; an exaltation such as is implied in that name. As a son has a rank in a family above servants; as he has a control over the property above that which servants have, so it is with the Mediator. He is the Son of God: angels are the servants of God, and the servants of the church. They occupy a place in the universe, compared with that which he occupies, similar to the place which servants in a family occupy compared with that which a son has. To illustrate and prove this is the design of the remainder of this chapter. The argument which the apostle insists on is, that the title "THE Son of God" is to be given to him alone. It has been conferred on no others. Though the angels, and though saints are called in general "sons of God," yet the title "THE Son of God" has been given to him only. As the apostle was writing to Hebrews, he makes his appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures alone for the

confirmation of this opinion, A more excellent name. To wit, the name Son. It is a more honourable and exalted name than has ever been bestowed on them. It involves more exalted privileges, and entitles him on whom it is bestowed to higher respect and honour than any name ever bestowed on them.

The Son Superior to Angels

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again,
I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

For unto which oft he angels, etc. The object of this is to prove that the Son of God, who has spoken to men in these last days, is superior to the angels. As the apostle was writing to those who had been trained in the Jewish religion, and who admitted the authority of the Old Testament, of course he made his appeal to that, and undoubtedly referred for proof to those places which were generally admitted to relate to the Messiah. Abarbanel says, that it was the common opinion of the Jewish doctors, that the Messiah would be exalted above Abraham, Moses, and the angels. Stuart. There is a difficulty, as we shall see, in applying the passages which follow to the Messiah--a difficulty which we may find it not easy to explain. Some remarks will be made on the particular passages as we go along. In general, it may be observed here,

(1.) That it is to be presumed that those passages were, in the time of Paul, applied to the Messiah. He seems to argue from them as though this was commonly understood,and is at no pains to prove it.

(2.) It is to be presumed, that those to whom he wrote would at once admit this to be so. If this were not so, we cannot suppose that he would regard this mode of reasoning as at all efficacious, or adapted to convince those to whom he wrote.

(3.) He did not apprehend that the application which he made of these texts would be called in question by the countrymen

of those to whom he wrote. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the application was made in accordance with the received opinions, and the common interpretation.

(4.) Paul had been instructed, in early life, in the doctrines of the Jewish religion, and made fully acquainted with all their principles of interpretation. It is to be presumed, therefore, that he made these quotations in accordance with the prevalent belief, and with principles which were well understood and admitted,

(5.) Every age and people have their own modes of reasoning. They may differ from others, and others may regard them as unsound, and yet, to that age and people, they are satisfactory and conclusive. The ancient philosophers employed modes of reasoning which would not strike us as the most forcible, and which, perhaps, we should not regard as tenable. So it is with the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Mohammedans now. So it was with the writers of the dark ages, who lived under the influence of the scholastic philosophy. They argue from admitted principles in their country and time--just as we do in ours. Their reasoning was as satisfactory to them, as ours is to us.

(6.) In a writer of any particular age we are to expect to find the prevailing mode of reasoning, and appeals to the usual arguments on any subject. We are not to look for methods of argument founded on the inductive philosophy in the writings of the schoolmen, or in the writings of the Chinese or the Hindoos. It would be unreasonable to expect it. We are to expect that they will be found to reason in accordance with the customs of their time; to appeal to such arguments as were commonly alleged; and, if they are reasoning with an adversary, to make use of the points which he concedes, and to urge them as fitted to convince him. And this is not wrong. It may strike him with more force than it does us; it may be that we can see that is not the most solid mode of reasoning, but still it may not be in itself an improper method. That the

writers of the New Testament should have used that mode of reasoning sometimes, is no more surprising than that we find writers in China reasoning from acknowledged principles, and in the usual manner there; or than that men in our own land, reason on the principles of the inductive philosophy. These remarks may not explain all the difficulties in regard to the proof-texts adduced by Paul in this chapter, but they may remove some of them, and may so prepare the way that we may be able to dispose of them all as we advance. In the passage which is quoted in this verse, there is not much difficulty in regard to the propriety of its being thus used. The difficulty lies in the subsequent quotations in the chapter.

Said he at any time. He never used language respecting the angels, like that which he employs respecting his Son. He never applied to any one of them the name Son.

Thou art my Son. The name "sons of God," is applied in the Scriptures to saints, and may have been given to the angels. But the argument here is, that the name "my son" has never been given to any one of them particularly, and by eminence. In a large, general sense, they are the sons of God, or the children of God; but the name is given to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, in a peculiar sense, implying a peculiar relation to him, and a peculiar dominion over all things. This passage is quoted from Ps 2.--a Psalm that is usually believed to pertain particularly to the Messiah, and one of the few Psalms that have undisputed reference to him. Acts 4:25; Acts 13:33.

This day. Acts 13:33, where this passage is applied to the resurrection of Christ from the dead;--proving that the phrase "this day" does not refer to the doctrine of eternal generation, but to the resurrection of the Redeemer--"the FIRST-BEGOTTEN of the dead," Rev 1:6. Thus Theodoret says of the phrase "this day"--" It does not express his eternal generation, but that which is connected with time." The argument of the apostle here does not turn on the time when this was said, but on the fact that this was said to him, and not

to any one of the angels; and this argument will have equal force, whether the phrase be understood as referring to the fact of his resurrection, or to his previous existence. The structure and scope of the second Psalm refers to his exaltation after the kings of the earth set themselves against him, and endeavoured to cast off his government from them. In spite of that, and subsequent to that, he would set his King, which they had rejected, on his holy hill of Zion. See Ps 2:2-6.

Have I begotten thee. See this place explained Acts 13:33. It must, from the necessity of the case, be understood figuratively; and must mean substantially, "I have constituted, or appointed thee." If it refers to his resurrection, it means that that resurrection was a kind of begetting to life, or a beginning of life, see Rev 1:5. And yet, though Paul (Acts 13:33) has applied it to the resurrection of the Redeemer, and though the name "Son of God" is applied to him on account of his resurrection, (Rom 1:4,) yet I confess this does not seem to me to come up to all that the writer here intended. The phrase, "THE Son of God," I suppose, properly denotes that the Lord Jesus sustained a relation to God, designated by that name, corresponding to the relations which he sustained to man, designated by the name "the Son of man." The one implied that he had a peculiar relation to God, as the other implied that he had a peculiar relation to man. This is indisputable. But on what particular account the name was given him, or how he was manifested to be the Son of God, has been the great question. Whether the name refers to the mode of his existence before the incarnation, and to his being begotten from eternity, or to the incarnation and the resurrection, has long been a point on which men have been divided in opinion. The natural idea conveyed by the title, `THE Son of God,' is, that he sustained a relation to God which implied more than was human or angelic; and this is certainly the drift of the argument of the apostle here. I do not see, however, that he refers to the doctrine of `eternal generation,' or that he means to teach that. His point is, that

God had declared and treated him as a Son--as superior to the angels and to men, and that this was shown in what had been said of him in the Old Testament. This would be equally clear, whether there is reference to the doctrine of eternal generation or not. The sense is, "he is more than human." He is more than angelic, He has been addressed and treated as a Son--which none of the angels have. They are regarded simply as ministering spirits. They sustain subordinate stations, and are treated accordingly. He, on the contrary, is the brightness of the Divine glory, he is treated and addressed as a Son. In his original existence this was so. In his incarnation this was so. When on earth this was so; and in his resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, he was treated in all respects as a Son--as superior to all servants, and to all "ministering spirits." The exact reference, then, of the phrase "this day have I begotten thee," in the Psalm, is to the act of constituting him, in a public manner, the Son of God; and refers to God's setting him as King on the "holy hill of Zion"--or making him King over the church and the world, as Messiah; and this was done eminently, as Paul shows (Acts 13) by the resurrection. It was based, however, on what was fit and proper. It was not arbitrary. There was a reason why he should thus be exalted, rather than a man or an angel; and this was, that he was the God incarnate, and had a nature that qualified him for universal empire, and he was thus appropriately called "THE Son of God."

And again, I will be to him a Father. This passage is evidently quoted from 2Sam 7:14. A sentiment similar to this is found in Ps 89:20-27. As these words were originally spoken, they referred to Solomon. They occur in a promise to DAVID, that he should not fail to have an heir to sit on his throne, or that his throne should be perpetual. The promise was particularly designed to comfort him in view of the fact, that God would not suffer him to build the temple, because his hands had been defiled with blood. To console him, in reference to that, God promises him far greater honour than that would be. He promises that the house should be built by one of his own

family, and that his family and kingdom should be established for ever. That, in this series of promises, the Messiah was included, as a descendant of David, was the common opinion of the Jews, of the early Christians, and has been of the great body of interpreters. It was certainly from such passages as this, that the Jews derived the notion, which prevailed so universally in the time of the Saviour, that the Messiah was to be the Son or the descendant of David. See Mt 22:42-45, 9:27, 15:22, 20:30,31, Mk 10:47,48, Lk 18:38,39, Mt 12:23; Mt 21:9, Jn 7:42, Rom 1:3, Rev 5:5, 22:16. That opinion was universal. No one doubted it; and it must have been common for the Jews to apply such texts as this to the Messiah. Paul would not have done it, in this instance, unless it had been usual. Nor was it improper. If the Messiah was to be a descendant of David, then it was natural to apply these promises, in regard to his posterity, in an eminent and peculiar sense to the Messiah. They were a part of the promises which included him, and which terminated in him. The promise, therefore, which is here made is, that God would be to him, in a peculiar sense, a Father, and he should be a Son. It does not, as I suppose, pertain, originally, exclusively to the Messiah, but included him as a descendant of David. To him it would be applicable in an eminent sense; and if applicable to him at all, it proved all that the passage here is adduced to prove--that the name Son is given to the Messiah, a name not given to angels. That is just the point on which the argument turns. What is implied in the bestowment of that name, is another point on which the apostle discourses in the other parts of the argument. I have no doubt, therefore, that while these words originally might have been applicable to Solomon, or to any of the other descendants of David who succeeded him on the throne, yet they at last terminated, and were designed to, in the Messiah, to whom pre-eminently God would be a Father. Comp. Introduction to Isaiah, & 7, iii. (3,) and Isa 7:16.

6 And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

And again. Marg., When he bringeth in again. The proper construction of this sentence probably is, "But when, he the moreover, brings in," etc. The word "again" refers not to the fact that Son of God is brought again into the world, implying that he had been introduced before; but it refers to the course of the apostle's argument, or to the declaration which is made about the Messiah in another place. "The name Son is not only given to him as above, but also in another place, or on another occasion, when he brings in the first-begotten into the world."

When he bringeth in. When he introduces. So far as the language here is concerned, this might refer to the birth of the Messiah; but it is evident, from the whole connexion, that the writer meant to refer to something that is said in the Old Testament. This is plain, because the passage occurs among quotations designed to prove specific point--that the Son of God, the Author of the Christian system, was superior to the angels. A declaration of the writer here, however true and solemn, would not have answered the purpose. A proof-text was wanting; a text which would be admitted, by those to whom he wrote, to bear on the point under consideration. The meaning then is, "that on another occasion, different from those to which he had referred, God, when speaking of the Messiah, or when introducing him to mankind, had used language showing that he was superior to the angels." The meaning of the phrase, "when he bringeth in," therefore, I take to be, when he introduces him to men; when he makes him known to the world--to wit, by the declaration which he proceeds immediately to quote.

The first-begotten. Christ is called the "first-begotten," with reference to his resurrection from the dead, in Rev 1:5, Col 1:18. It is probable here, however, that the word is used, like the word first-born, or first-begotten, among the Hebrews, by way of eminence. As the first-born was the principal heir, and had peculiar privileges, so the Lord Jesus Christ sustains a similar rank in the universe of which God is the Head and

Father. Jn 1:14, where the word, "only-begotten," is used to denote the dignity and honour of the Lord Jesus. Into the world. When he introduces him to mankind, or declares what he is to be.

He saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. Much difficulty has been experienced in regard to this quotation, for it cannot be denied that it is intended to be a quotation. In the Septuagint these very words occur in De 32:43, where they are inserted in the Song of Moses. But they are not in the Hebrew; nor are they in all the copies of the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries.", The Septuagint is, "Rejoice ye heavens with him and let all the angels of God worship him. Let the nations rejoice with his people, and let all the sons of God be strong in him, for he has avenged the blood of his sons." But there are objections to our supposing that the apostle had this place in his view, which seem to me to settle the matter.

(1.) One is, that the passage is not in the Hebrew; and it seems hardly credible that, in writing to Hebrews, and to those residing in the very country where the Hebrew Scriptures were constantly used, he should adduce, as a proof-text on an important doctrine, what was not in their Scriptures.

(2.) A second is, that it is omitted in all the ancient versions, except the Septuagint.

(3.) A third is, that it is impossible to believe that the passage in question, in Deuteronomy, had any reference to the Messiah. It does not relate to his "introduction" to the world. It would not occur to any reader that it had any such reference. The context celebrates the victory over the enemies of Israel which God will achieve. After saying that "his arrows would be drunk with blood, and that his sword would devour flesh with the blood of the slain and of captives, from the time when he begins to take vengeance on an enemy," the

Septuagint (not the Hebrew) immediately asserts, "let the heavens rejoice at the same time with him, and let all the angels of God worship him." That is: "Let the inhabitants of the heavenly world rejoice in the victory of God over the enemies of his people, and let them pay their adoration to him." But the Messiah does not appear to be alluded to anywhere in the context; much less described as "introduced into the world." There is, moreover, not the slightest evidence that it was ever supposed by the Jews to have any such reference; and though it might be said that the apostle merely quoted language that expressed his meaning--as we often do when we are familiar with any well-known phrase that will exactly suit our purpose and convey an idea--yet, it should be remarked, that this is not the way in which this passage is quoted. It is a proof-text, and Paul evidently meant to be understood as saying, that that passage had a fair reference to the Messiah. It is evident, moreover, that it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote. It is morally certain, therefore, that this was not the passage which the writer intended to quote. The probability is, that the writer here referred to Ps 97:7, (in the Sept. Ps 96:7.) In that place, the Hebrew is, "worship him all ye gods " --all ye elohim. In the Septuagint it is, "Let all his angels worship him ;" where the translation is literal, except that the word God--"angels of God" --is used by the apostle instead of his-- "all his angels"--as it is in the Septuagint. The word "gods" elohim is rendered by the word angels, but the word may have that sense. Thus it is rendered by the Seventy, in Job 20:15; and in Ps 8:6, 138:1. It is well known, that the word elohim may denote kings and magistrates, because of their rank and dignity; and is there anything improbable in the supposition that, for a similar reason, the word may be given also to angels? The fair interpretation of the passage, then, would be, to refer it to angelic beings; and the command, in Ps 97, is for them to do homage to the being there referred to. The only question then is, whether the Psalm can be regarded properly as having any reference to the Messiah? Did the apostle fairly and properly use this language as referring to him?

On this we may remark,

(1.) That the fact that he uses it thus may be regarded as proof that it would be admitted to be proper by the Jews in his time, and renders it probable that it was in fact so used.

(2.) Two Jewish rabbins of distinction--Raschi and Kimchi--affirm, that all the Psalms, from 93, to 101 are to be regarded as referring to the Messiah. Such was, and is, the opinion of the Jews.

(3.) There is nothing in the Psalm which forbids such a reference, or which can be shown to be inconsistent with it. Indeed, the whole Psalm might be taken as beautifully descriptive of the "introduction" of the Son of God into the world, or as a sublime and glorious description of his advent. Thus, in Ps 97:1, the earth is called on to rejoice that the Lord reigns. In Ps 97:2-5, he is introduced or described as coming in the most magnificent manner--clouds and darkness attend him; a fire goes before him; the lightnings play; and the hills melt like wax --a sublime description of his coming, with appropriate symbols, to reign, or to judge the world. In Ps 97:6, it is said that all people shall see his glory; in Ps 97:7, that all who worship graven images shall be confounded, and all the angels are required to do him homage, and in vers. Ps 97:8-12, the effect of his advent is described as filling Zion with rejoicing, and the hearts of the people of God with gladness. It cannot be proved, therefore, that this Psalm had no reference to the Messiah; but the presumption is that it had, and that the apostle has quoted it not only as it was usually regarded in his time, but as it was designed by the Holy Ghost. If so, then it proves, what the writer intended, that the Son of God should be adored by the angels; and, of course, that he was superior to them. It proves also more. Whom would God require the angels to adore? A creature? A man? A fellow-angel? To ask these questions is to answer them. He could

require them to worship none but God, and the passage proves that the Son of God is divine.

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son *he saith,* Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever:

But unto the Son he saith. In Ps 45:6,7. The fact that the writer of this epistle makes this application of the Psalm to the Messiah, proves that it was so applied in his time, or that it would be readily admitted to be applicable to him. It has been generally admitted, by both Jewish and Christian interpreters, to have such a reference. Even those who have doubted its primary applicability to the Messiah, have regarded it as referring to him in a secondary sense. Many have supposed that it referred to Solomon in the primary sense, and that it has a secondary reference to the Messiah. To me it seems most probable that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. It is to be remembered, that the hope of the Messiah was the peculiar hope of the Jewish people. The coming of the future King, so early promised, was the great event to which they all looked forward with the deepest interest. That hope inspired their prophets and their bards, and cheered the hearts of the nation in the time of despondency. The Messiah, if I may so express it, was the hero of the Old Testament--more so than Achilles is of the Iliad, and AEneas of the AEniad. The sacred poets were accustomed to employ all their most magnificent imagery in describing him, and to present him in every form that was beautiful in their conception, and that would be gratifying to the pride and hopes of the nation. Every thing that is gorgeous and splendid in description is lavished on him; and they were never under any apprehension of attributing to him too great magnificence in his personal reign; too great beauty of moral character; or too great an extent of dominion. That which would be regarded by them as a magnificent description of a monarch, they freely applied to him; and this is evidently the case in this Psalm. That the description may have been, in part, derived from the view of Solomon in the magnificence of his

court, is possible, but no more probable than that it was derived from the general view of the splendour of any oriental monarch, or than that it might have been the description of a monarch which was the pure creation of inspired poetry. Indeed, I see not why this Psalm should ever have been supposed to be applicable to Solomon. His name is not mentioned. It has no peculiar applicability to him. There is nothing that would apply to him which would not also apply to many an oriental prince. There are some things in it which are much less applicable to him than to many others. The king here described is a conqueror. He girds his sword on his thigh, and his arrows are sharp in the hearts of his foes, and the people are subdued under him. This was not true of Solomon. His was a reign of peace and tranquillity, nor was he ever distinguished for war. On the whole, it seems clear to me, that this Psalm is designed to be a beautiful poetic description of the Messiah as king. The images are drawn from the usual characteristics of an oriental prince; and there are many things in the poem--as there, are in parables--for the sake of keeping, or veri-similitude, and which are not, in the interpretation, to be cut to the quick. The writer imagined to himself a magnificent and beautiful prince: a prince riding prosperously in his conquests; swaying a permanent and wide dominion; clothed in rich and splendid vestments; eminently upright and pure; and scattering blessings everywhere--and that prince was the Messiah. The Psalm, therefore, I regard as relating originally and exclusively to Christ; and though, in the interpretation, the circumstances should not be unduly pressed, nor an attempt be made to spiritualize them, yet the whole is a glowing and most beautiful description of Christ as a King. The same principles of interpretation should be applied to it which are applied to parables, and the same allowance be made for the introduction of circumstances for the sake of keeping, or for finishing the story. If this be the correct view, then Paul has quoted the Psalm in conformity exactly with its original intention, as he undoubtedly quoted it as it was understood in his time.

Thy throne. A throne is the seat on which a monarch sits, and is here the symbol of dominion, because kings, when acting as rulers, sit on thrones. Thus a throne becomes the emblem of authority or empire. Here it means, that his rule or dominion would be perpetual- "for ever and ever" --which assuredly could not be applied to Solomon.

O God. This certainly could not be applied to Solomon; but applied to the Messiah, it proves what the apostle is aiming to prove--that he is above the angels. The argument is that a name is given to him which is never given to them. They are not called God in any strict and proper sense. The argument here requires us to understand this word as used in a sense more exalted than any name which is ever given to angels, and though it may be maintained that the name Elohim is given to magistrates or to angels, yet here the argument requires us to understand it as used in a sense superior to what it ever is when applied to an angel--or of course to any creature, since it was the express design of the argument to prove that the Messiah was superior to the angels. The word God should be taken in its natural and obvious sense, unless there is some necessary reason for limiting it. If applied to magistrates (Ps 82:6) it must be so limited. If applied to the Messiah there is no such necessity, (Jn 1:1, Isa 10:6, 1Jn 5:20, Php 2:6,) and it should be taken in its natural and proper sense. The form here--οθεος in the vocative case and not the nominative. It is the usual form of the vocative in the Septuagint, and nearly the only form of it. Stuart. This, then, is a direct address to the Messiah, calling him God; and I see not why it is not to be used in the usual and proper sense of the word. Unitarians proposed to translate this, "God is thy throne;" but how can God be a throne of a creature? What is the meaning of such an expression? Where is there one parallel? And what must be the nature of that cause which renders such an argument necessary?--This refers, as it seems to me, to the Messiah as king. It does not relate to his mode of existence before the incarnation, but to him as the magnificent monarch of his people. Still the ground or reason

why this name is given to him is that he is divine. It is language which properly expresses his nature. He must have a divine nature, or such language would be improper. I regard this passage, therefore, as full proof that the Lord Jesus is divine; nor is it possible to evade this conclusion by any fair interpretation of it. It cannot be wrong to address him as God; nor addressing him as such, not to regard him as divine.

Is for ever and ever. This could not, in any proper sense, apply to Solomon. As applied to the Messiah, it means that his essential kingdom will be perpetual, Lk 1:33. As Mediator his kingdom will be given up to the Father, or to God, without reference to a mediatorial work, (1Cor 15:24,28--1Cor 15:24; 1Cor 15:28,) but his reign over his people will be perpetual. There never will come a time when they shall not obey and serve him, though the peculiar form of his kingdom, as connected with the work of mediation, will be changed. The form of the organized church, for example, will be changed--for there shall be no necessity for it in heaven--but the essential dominion and power of the Son of God will not cease. He shall have the same dominion which he had before he entered on the work of mediation; and that will be eternal. It is also true, that, compared with earthly monarchs, his kingdom shall be perpetual. They soon die. Dynasties pass away. But his empire extends from age to age, and is properly a perpetual dominion. The fair and obvious interpretation of this passage would satisfy me, were there nothing else, that this Psalm had no reference to Solomon, but was designed originally as a description of the Messiah, as the expected King and Prince of his people.

A sceptre of righteousness. That is, a right or just sceptre. The phrase is a Hebraism. The former expression described the perpetuity of his kingdom; this describes its equable nature. It would be just and equal. Isa 11:5. A sceptre is a staff or wand usually made of wood, five or six feet long, and commonly overlaid with gold, or ornamented with golden rings. Sometimes, however, the sceptre was made of ivory, or

wholly of gold. It was borne in the hands of kings as an emblem of authority and power. Probably it had its origin in the staff or crook of the shepherd-- as kings were at first regarded as the shepherds of their people. Thus Agamemnon is commonly called, by Homer, the shepherd of the people. The sceptre thus becomes the emblem of kingly office and power--as when we speak of swaying a sceptre;-- and the idea here is, that the Messiah would be a King, and that the authority which he would wield would be equitable and just. He would not be governed, as monarchs often are, by mere caprice, or by the wishes of courtiers and flatterers; he would not be controlled by mere will, and the love of arbitrary power; but the execution of his laws would be in accordance with the principles of equity and justice. How well this accords with the character of the Lord Jesus we need not pause to show. Comp. Isa 11:2, seq.

a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Thou hast loved righteousness. Thou hast been obedient to the law of God, or holy and upright. Nothing can be more truly adapted to express the character of any one, than this is to describe the Lord Jesus, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled," who "did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found;" but it is with difficulty that this can be applied to Solomon. Assuredly, for a considerable part of his life, this declaration could not well be appropriate to him; and it seems to me, that it is not to be regarded as descriptive of him at all. It is language prompted by the warm and pious imagination of the Psalmist, describing the future Messiah and, as applied to him, is true to the letter.

Therefore God, even thy God. The word even inserted here by the translators, weakens the force of the expression. This might be translated, "O God, thy God hath anointed thee." So it is rendered by Doddridge, Clarke, Stuart, and others. The Greek will bear this construction, as well the Hebrew in Ps

45:7. In the margin in the Psalm it is rendered, "O God." This is the most natural construction, as it accords with what is just said before. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever. Thou art just and holy, therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee." It is not material, however, which construction is adopted.

Hath anointed thee. Anciently kings and priests were consecrated to their office by pouring oil on their heads. See Lev 8:12, Nu 3:3; 1Sam 10:1, 2Sam 2:7, Ps 2:6, Isa 61:1, Acts 4:27, 10:38; Mt 1:1 The expression "to anoint," therefore, comes to mean, to consecrate to office, or to set apart to some public work. This is evidently the meaning in the Psalm, where the whole language refers to the appointment of the personage there referred to to the kingly office.

The oil of gladness. This probably means the perfumed oil that was poured on the head, attended with many expressions of joy and rejoicing. The inauguration of the Messiah, as king would be an occasion of rejoicing and triumph. Thousands would exult at it--as in the coronation of a king; and thousands would be made glad by such a consecration to the office of Messiah. Above thy fellows. Above thine associates; that is, above all, who sustain the kingly office. He would be more exalted than all other kings. Doddridge supposes that it refers to angels, who might have been associated with the Messiah in the government of the world. But the more natural construction is, to suppose that it refers to kings, and to mean that he was the most exalted of all.

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

And. That is, "To add another instance;" or, "to the Son he saith in another place, or in the following language." This is connected with Heb 1:8. "Unto the Son he saith, (Heb 1:8,) Thy throne, etc.--and (Heb 1:10) he also saith, Thou Lord," etc. That this is the meaning is apparent, because

(1.) the object of the whole quotation is to show the exalted character of the Son of God, and

(2.) an address here to JEHOVAH would be wholly irrelevant. Why, in an argument designed to prove that the Son of God was superior to the angels, should the writer break out in an address to JEHOVAH, in view of the fact that he had laid the foundations of the world, and that he himself would continue to live when the heavens should be rolled up and pass away? Such is not the manner of Paul, or of any other good writer; and it is clear that the writer here designed to adduce this as applicable to the Messiah. Whatever difficulties there may be about the principles on which it is done, and the reason why this passage was selected for the purpose, there can be no doubt about the design of the writer. He meant to be understood as applying it to the Messiah, beyond all question, or the quotation is wholly irrelevant, and it is inconceivable why it should have been made.

Thou, Lord. This is taken from Ps 102:25-27. The quotation is made from the Septuagint, with only a slight variation, and is an accurate translation of the Hebrew. In the Psalm, there can be no doubt that JEHOVAH is intended. This is apparent on the face of the Psalm, and particularly because the name JEHOVAH is introduced Ps 102:1,12, and because he is addressed as the Creator of all things, and as immutable. No one, on reading the Psalm, ever would doubt that it referred to God; and, if the apostle meant to apply it to the Lord Jesus, it proves most conclusively that he is divine. In regard to the difficult inquiry, why he applied this to the Messiah, or on what principle such an application can be vindicated, we may perhaps throw some light by the following remarks. It must be admitted, that probably few persons, if any, on reading the Psalm, would suppose that it referred to the Messiah; but

(1.) the fact that the apostle thus employs it, proves that it was understood, in his time, to have such a reference, or, at least, that those to whom he wrote would admit that it had such a reference. On no other principle would he have used it in an

argument. This is at least of some consequence, in showing what the prevailing interpretation was.

(2.) It cannot be demonstrated that it had no such reference--for such was the habit of the sacred writers in making the future Messiah the theme of their poetry, that no one can prove that the writer this Psalm did not design that the Messiah should be the subject of his praise here.

(3.) There is nothing in the Psalm which may not be applied to the Messiah; but there is much in it that is peculiarly applicable to him. Suppose, for example, that the Psalmist, Ps 102:1-11, in his complaints, represents the people of God, before the Redeemer appeared, as lowly, sad, dejected, and afflicted, speaking of himself as one of them, and as a fair representative of that people, the remainder of the Psalm will well agree with the promised redemption. Thus, having described the sadness and sorrow of the people of God, he speaks of the fact that God would arise and have mercy upon Zion, (Ps 102:13,14,) that the heathen would fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth would see his glory, (Ps 102:15,) and that when the Lord should build up Zion he would appear in his glory, Ps 102:16. To whom else could this be so well applied as to the Messiah? To what time so well as to his time? Thus, too, in Ps 102:20, it is said that the Lord would look down from heaven "to hear the groaning of the prisoner, and to loose them that are appointed to death"--language remarkably resembling that used by Isaiah, Isa 61:1 which the Saviour applies to himself, in Lk 4:17-21. The passage then quoted by the apostle (Ps 102:25-27) is designed to denote the immutability of the Messiah, and the fact that in him all the interests of the church were safe. He would not change. He had formed all things, and he would remain the same. His kingdom would be permanent, amidst all the changes occurring on earth, and his people had no cause of apprehension or alarm, Ps 102:28.

(4.) Paul applies this language to the Messiah, in accordance with the doctrine which he had stated, (Heb 1:2,) that it was by him that God "made the worlds." Having stated that, he seems to have felt that it was not improper to apply to him the passages occurings in the Old Testament that speak of the work of creation. The argument is this. "He was, in fact, the Creator of all things. But, to the Creator, there is applied language in the Scriptures which shows that he was far exalted above the angels. He would remain the same, while the heavens and the earth should fade away. His years are enduring and eternal. Such a Being MUST be superior to the angels; such a Being must be divine." The words "Thou, Lord" συκυριε are not in the Hebrew of the Psalm, though they are in the Septuagint. In the Hebrew, in the Psalm, (Ps 102:24,) it is an address to God--"I said, O my God"-- --but there can be no doubt that the Psalmist meant to address JEHOVAH, and that the word God is used in its proper sense, denoting divinity. See Ps 102:1,12, of the Psalm. In the beginning. See Gen 1:1. When the world was made. Comp. Jn 1:1, where the same phrase is applied to the Messiah --

"In the beginning was the Word." Hast laid the foundation of the earth. Hast made the earth. This language is such as is common in the Scriptures, where the earth is represented as laid on a foundation, or as supported. It is figurative language, derived from the act of rearing an edifice. The meaning here is, that the Son of God was the original Creator or Founder of the universe. He did not merely arrange it out of pre-existing materials, but he was properly its Creator or Founder. And the heavens art the works of thine hands. This must demonstrate the Lord Jesus to be divine. He that made the vast heavens must be God. No creature could perform a work like that; nor can we conceive that power to create the vast array of distant worlds could possibly be delegated. If that power could be delegated, there is not an attribute of Deity which may not be, and thus all our notions of what constitutes divinity would be utterly confounded. The word "heavens" here must mean all parts of the universe except the earth, see Gen 1:1 The word

hands is used, because it is by the hands that we usually perform any work.

11 They shall perish, but thou remainest:
and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
12 and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be
changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.
13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right
hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

But to which of the angels. The apostle adduces one other proof of the exaltation of the Son of God above the angels. He asks where there is an instance in which God had addressed any one of the angels, and asked him to sit at his right hand until he should subdue his enemies under him? Yet that high honour had been conferred on the Son of God; and he was therefore far exalted above them. Sit on my right hand. Heb 1:3. This passage is taken from Ps 90:1--a Psalm that is repeatedly quoted in this epistle as referring to the Messiah, and the very passage before us is applied by the Saviour to himself, in Mt 22:43,44, and by Peter it is applied to him in Acts 2:34,35. There can be no doubt, therefore, of its applicability to the Messiah. Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Until I reduce them to entire subjection. A footstool is what is placed under the feet when we sit on a chair; and the phrase here means that an enemy is entirely subdued. Comp. 1Cor 15:25. The phrase, to make an enemy a footstool, is borrowed from the custom of ancient warriors, who stood on the necks of vanquished kings, on the occasion of celebrating a triumph over them, as a token of their complete prostration and subjection. Isa 10:6.--The enemies here referred to are the foes of God and of his religion; and the meaning is, that the Messiah is to be exalted until all those foes are subdued. Then he will give up the kingdom to the Father. 1Cor 15:24, seq. The exaltation of the Redeemer, to which the apostle refers here, is to the mediatorial throne. In this he is exalted far above the angels. His foes are to be subdued to him, but angels are to be employed as mere instruments in that great work.

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Are they not all. There is not one of them that is elevated to the high rank of the Redeemer. Even the most exalted angel is employed in the comparatively humble office of a ministering spirit, appointed to aid the heirs of salvation.

Ministering spirits. A ministering spirit is one that is employed to execute the will of God. The proper meaning of the word here-- λειτουργικα (whence our word liturgy) is, pertaining to public service, or the service of the people (λαος;) and is applied particularly to those who were engaged in the public service of the temple. They were those who rendered aid to others; who were helpers or servants. Such is the meaning as used here. They are employed to render aid or assistance to others--to wit, to Christians.

Sent forth. Appointed by God for this. They are sent; are under his control; are in a subordinate capacity. Thus Gabriel was sent forth to convey an important message to Daniel. Dan 9:21-23.

To minister. For the aid or succour of such. They come to render them assistance and, if employed in this humble office, how much inferior to the dignity of the Son of God--the Creator and Ruler of the worlds!

Who shall be heirs of salvation. To the saints; to Christians. They are called "heirs of salvation," because they are adopted into the family of God, and are treated as his sons. Rom 8:14, seq. The main point here is, that the angels are employed in a much more humble capacity than the Son of God; and, therefore, that he sustains a far more elevated rank. But while the apostle has proved, that he has incidentally stated an exceedingly interesting and important doctrine, that the angels are employed to further the salvation of the people of God, and to aid them in their journey to heaven. In this doctrine there is nothing absurd. It is no more improbable that

angels should be employed to aid man, than that one man should aid another; certainly not as improbable as that the Son of God should come down, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," (Mt 20:28,) and that he performed on earth the office of a servant, Jn 13:1-15. Indeed, it is a great principle of the Divine administration, that one class of God's creatures are to minister to others; that one is to aid another--to assist him in trouble, to provide for him when poor, and to counsel him in perplexity. We are constantly deriving benefit from others, and are dependent on their counsel and help. Thus, God has appointed parents to aid their children; neighbours to aid their neighbours; the rich to aid the poor; and all over the world the principle is seen, that one is to derive benefit from the aid of others. Why may not the angels be employed in this service? They are pure, benevolent, powerful; and as man was ruined in the fall by the temptation offered by one of an angelic, though fallen nature, why should not others of angelic, unfallen holiness, come to assist in repairing the evils which their fallen, guilty brethren have inflicted on the race? To me there seems to be a beautiful propriety in bringing aid from another race, as ruin came from another race; and that as those endowed with angelic might, though with fiendish malignity, ruined man, those with angelic might, but heavenly benevolence, should aid in his recovery and salvation. Farther, it is, from the necessity of the case, a great principle, that the weak shall be aided by the strong; the ignorant by the enlightened; the impure by the pure; the tempted by those who have not fallen by temptation. All over the world we see this in operation; and it constitutes the beauty of the moral arrangements on the earth; and why shall not this be extended to the inhabitants of other abodes? Why shall not angels, with their superior intelligence, benevolence, and power, come in to perfect this system, and show how much adapted it is to glorify God? In regard to the ways in which angels become ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, the Scriptures have not fully informed us; but facts are mentioned, which will furnish some light on this inquiry. What they do now may be learned from the Scripture account of what they have done-

-as it seems to be a fair principle of interpretation, that they are engaged in substantially the same employment in which they have ever been. The following methods of angelic interposition in behalf of man are noted in the Scripture.

(1.) They feel a deep interest in man. Thus the Saviour says, "There is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," Lk 15:10.

(2.) Thus also he says, when speaking of the "little ones" that compose his church, "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," Mt 18:10.

(3.) They feel a special interest in all that relates to the redemption of man. Thus Peter says of the things pertaining to redemption, "which things the angels desire to look into," 1Pet 1:12. In accordance with this they are represented as praising God over the fields of Bethlehem, where the shepherds were to whom it was announced that a Saviour was born, (Lk 2:13;) an angel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah, (Lk 1:26;) an angel declared to the shepherds that he was born, (Lk 2:10;) the angels came and ministered to him in his temptation, (Mt 6:11;) an angel strengthened him in the garden of Gethsemane, (Lk 22:43;) angels were present in the sepulchre where the Lord Jesus had been laid, to announce his resurrection to his disciples, (Jn 20:12;) and they re-appeared to his disciples on Mount Olivet, to assure them that he would return, and receive his people to himself, Acts 1:10.

(4.) They appear for the defence and protection of the people of God. Thus it is said, (Ps 34:7,) "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Thus two angels came to hasten Lot from the cities of the Plain, and to rescue him from the impending destruction, Gen 19:1,15. Thus an angel opened the prison doors of the apostles, and delivered them when they had been confined by the Jews, Acts 5:19. Thus the angel of the Lord delivered

Peter from prison, when he had been confined by Herod, Acts 12:7,8.

(5.) Angels are sent to give us strength to resist temptation. Aid was thus furnished to the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane, when there "appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him," Lk 22:43. The great trial there seems to have been somehow connected with temptation; some influence of the power of darkness, or of the prince of evil, Lk 22:53; comp. Jn 14:30. In this aid which they rendered to the tempted Redeemer, and in the assistance which they render to us when tempted, there is a special fitness and propriety. Man was at first tempted by a fallen angel. No small part--if not all the temptations in the world--are under the direction now of fallen angels. They roam at large, "seeking whom they may devour," 1Pet 5:8. The temptations which occur in life, the numerous allurements which beset our path, all have the marks of being under the control of dark and malignant spirits. What, therefore, can be more appropriate, than for the pure angels of God to interpose and aid man against the skill and wiles of their fallen and malignant fellow-spirits ? Fallen angelic power and skill--power and skill far above the capability and the strength of man--are employed to ruin us; and how desirable is it for like power and skill, under the guidance of benevolence, to come in to aid us!

(6.) They support us in affliction. Thus an angel brought a cheering message to Daniel; the angels were present to give comfort to the disciples of the Saviour, when he had been taken from them by death, and when he ascended to heaven. Why may it not be so now, that important consolations, in some way, are imparted to us by angelic influence? And

(7.) they attend dying saints, and conduct them to glory. Thus the Saviour says of Lazarus, that-when he died he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom," Lk 16:22. Is there any impropriety in supposing that the same thing may

be done still? Assuredly, if anywhere heavenly aid is needed, it is when the spirit leaves the body. If anywhere a guide is needed, it is when the ransomed soul goes up the unknown path to God. And if angels are employed on any messages of mercy to mankind, it is proper that it should be when life is closing, and the spirit is about to ascend to heaven. Should it be said that they are invisible, and that it is difficult to conceive how we can be aided by beings whom we never see, I answer--I know that they are unseen. They no longer appear, as they once did, to be the visible protectors and defenders of the people of God. But no small part of the aid which we receive from others comes from sources unseen by us. We owe more to unseen benefactors than to those whom we see; and the most grateful of all aid, perhaps, is that which is furnished by a hand which we do not see, and from quarters which we cannot trace. How many an orphan is benefited by some unseen and unknown benefactor! So it may be a part of the great arrangements of Divine Providence, that many of the most needed and acceptable interpositions for our welfare should come to us from invisible sources, and be conveyed to us from God by unseen hands.

Hebrews-2

So Great Salvation

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip.

Verse 1. Therefore. Gr. "On account of this" διατουτο that is, on account of the exalted dignity and rank of the Messiah, as stated in the previous chapter. The sense is, "Since Christ, the Author of the new dispensation, is so far exalted above the prophets, and even the angels, we ought to give the more earnest attention to all that has been Spoken."

We ought. It is fit or proper that we should attend to those things. When the Son of God speaks to men, every consideration makes it appropriate that we should attend to what is spoken.

To give the more earnest heed. To give the more strict attention. To the things which we have heard. Whether directly from the Lord Jesus, or from his apostles. It is possible, that some of those to whom the apostle was writing had heard the Lord Jesus himself preach the gospel; others had heard the same truths declared by the apostles.

Lest at any time. We ought to attend to those things at all times. We ought never to forget them; never to be indifferent to them. We are sometimes interested in them, and then we feel indifferent to them; sometimes at leisure to attend to them, and then the cares of the worlds, or a heaviness and dulness of mind, or a cold and languid state of the affections, renders us indifferent to them and they are suffered to pass out of the mind without concern. Paul says, that this ought never to be done! At no time should we be indifferent to those things. They are always important to us, and we should never be in a state of mind when they would be uninteresting. At all times; in all places; and in every situation of life, we should feel that the truths of religion are of more importance to us than all other truths, and nothing should be suffered to efface their image from the heart.

We should let them slip. Marg, Run out as leaking vessels. Tindal renders this, "lest we be split." The expression here has given rise to much discussion as to its meaning; and has been very differently translated. Doddridge renders it, "lest we let them flow out of our minds." Prof. Stuart, "lest at any time we should slight them." Whitby, "that they may not entirely slip out of our memories." The word here used παραρρεω -- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The Septuagint translators have used the word but once. Prov 3:21, "Son, do not pass by, μηπαραρρυης but keep my counsel;" that is, do

not pass by my advice by neglect, or suffer it to be disregarded. The word means, according to Passow, to flow by, to flow over; and then, to go by, to fall, to flow away. It is used to mean, to flow near, to flow by--as of a river; to glide away, to escape--as from the mind, i.e. to forget; and to glide along--as a thief does by stealth. See Robinson's Lex. The Syriac and Arabic translators have rendered it, that we may not fall. After all that has been said on the meaning of the word here, (compare Stuart, in loc.,) it seems to me, that the true sense of the expression is that of flowing or gliding by--as a river; and that the meaning here is, that we should be very cautious that the important truths spoken by the Redeemer and his apostles should not be suffered to glide by us without attention, or without profit. We should not allow them to be like a stream that glides on by us without benefiting us; that is, we should endeavour to secure and retain them as our own. The truth taught is, that there is great danger, now that the true system of religion has been revealed, that it will not profit us, but that we shall lose all the benefit of it. This danger may arise from many sources--some of which are the following:--

(1.) We may not feel that the truths revealed are important; and before their importance is felt, they may be beyond our reach. So we are often deceived in regard to the importance of objects; and before we perceive their value, they are irrecoverably gone. So it is often with time, and with the opportunities of obtaining an education, or of accomplishing any object which is of value. The opportunity is gone before we perceive its importance. So the young suffer the most important period of life to glide away before they perceive its value; and the opportunity of making much of their talents is lost, because they did not embrace the suitable opportunities.

(2.) By being engrossed in business. We feel that that is now the most important thing. That claims all our attention. We have no time to pray, to read the Bible, to think of religion, for the cares of the world engross all the time--and the

opportunities of salvation glide insensibly away, until it is too late.

(3.) By being attracted by the pleasures of life. We attend to them now, and are drawn along from one to another, until religion is suffered to glide away with all its hopes and consolations; and we perceive, too late, that we have let the opportunity of salvation slip for ever. Allured by those pleasures, the young neglect it; and new pleasures, starting up in future life, carry on the delusion, until every favourable opportunity for salvation has passed away;

(4.) We suffer favourable opportunities to pass by without improving them. Youth is by far the best time, as it is the most appropriate time, to become a Christian--and yet how easy is it to allow that period to slip away, without becoming interested in the Saviour! One day glides on after another, and one week, one month, one year passes away after another--like a gently-flowing stream--until all the precious time of youth has gone, and we are not Christians. So a revival of religion is a favourable time--and yet many suffer this to pass by without becoming interested in it. Others are converted, and the heavenly influences descend all around us, but we are unaffected; and the season, so full of happy and heavenly influences, is gone, to return no more.

(5.) We let the favourable season slip, because we design to attend to it at some future period of life. So youth defers it to manhood--manhood to old age--old age to a death-bed, and then neglects it--until the whole of life has glided away, and the soul is not saved. Paul knew man. He knew how prone he was to let the things of religion slip out of the mind; and hence the earnestness of his caution that we should give heed to the subject now, lest the opportunity of salvation should soon glide away. When once passed, it can never be recalled. Learn hence,

(1.) The truths of religion will not benefit us, unless we give heed to them. It will not save us that the Lord Jesus has come and spoken to men, unless we are disposed to listen. It will not benefit us that the sun shines, unless we open our eyes. Books will not benefit us, unless we read them; medicine, unless we take it; nor will the fruits of the earth sustain our lives, however rich and abundant, they may be, if we disregard and neglect them. So with the truths of religion. There is truth enough to save the world--but the world disregards and despises it.

(2.) It needs not great sins to destroy the soul. Simple neglect will do it as certainly as atrocious crimes. Every man has a sinful heart that will destroy him, unless he makes an effort to be saved. And it is not merely the great sinner, therefore, who is in danger. It is the man who neglects his soul--whether a moral or an immoral man, a daughter of amiableness, or a daughter of vanity and vice.

As if our apostle had said, Seeing Christ is so excellent in his person, and seeing the gospel has such a glorious author as the blessed Jesus let us take great heed that we esteem his person, revere his authority, reverence his ministry and message, and that our memories be not like leaking vessels, suffering the word at any time to slip and run from us.

Learn hence, 1. The consideration of the revelation of the gospel of the Son of God, is a powerful motive to an high estimation of it, Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed; that is, knowing the excellency of his person, and the sublimity of his doctrine.

2. The true and only way of honouring our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is by diligent attendance and obedience to his word: where there is no faith in, nor love unto, Jesus Christ, the author and dispenser of the gospel.

3. There are sundry times and seasons wherin, and several ways and means whereby, men are in great danger of losing the word, if they attend not diligently to its preservation. Lest at any time; some lose the word in a time of prosperity, others in a time of persecution, some in a time of temptation.

4. The word heard is not lost without great sin, as well as with the inevitable ruin of the souls of men. If we suffer the word to slip out of our memories, that we forget it; out of our hearts, that we despise it; out of our lives, that we are disobedient to it; it is lost as to us, and will end in our loss, yea, in our ruin at the last.

5. The only way to prevent this sin and danger, under the word, is by a very diligent attendance upon it, and giving mor earnest heed to the things contained in it: we are to attend to the word before we hear, to bring us to it; to attend upon it in hearing, that it may be remembered by us; and after we have heard it, that it may be practised by us.
This consideration, that it is the word of Christ, the great an mighty God, the wisdom of the Father, that we are going forth to hear, will engage us to give the more earnest heed to the things we hear, lest at any time we should let them slip.

The apostle proceeds in the plain profitable method of doctrine, reason, and use, through this epistle. Here we have the application of the truths before asserted and proved; this is brought in by the illative particle therefore, with which this chapter begins, and which shows its connection with the former, where the apostle having proved Christ to be superior to the angels by whose ministry the law was given, and therefore that the gospel dispensation must be more excellent than the legal, he now comes to apply this doctrine both by way of exhortation and argument.

I. By way of exhortation: Therefore we ought to give the more diligent heed to the things which we have heard, Heb 2:1. This is the first way by which we are to show our esteem of

Christ and of the gospel. It is the great concern of every one under the gospel to give the most earnest heed to all gospel discoveries and directions, to prize them highly in his judgment as matters of the greatest importance, to hearken to them diligently in all the opportunities he has for that purpose, to read them frequently, to meditate on them closely, and to mix faith with them. We must embrace them in our hearts and affections, retain them in our memories, and finally regulate our words and actions according to them.

II. By way of argument, he adds strong motives to enforce the exhortation.

1. From the great loss we shall sustain if we do not take this earnest heed to the things which we have heard: We shall let them slip. They will leak, and run out of our heads, lips, and lives, and we shall be great losers by our neglect. Learn,

(1.) When we have received gospel truths into our minds, we are in danger of letting them slip. Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not without much care retain what is poured into them; this proceeds from the corruption of our natures, the enmity and subtlety of Satan (he steals away the word), from the entanglements and snares of the world, the thorns that choke the good seed.

(2.) Those meet with an inconceivable loss who let gospel truths, which they had received, slip out of their minds; they have lost a treasure far better than thousands of gold and silver; the seed is lost, their time and pains in hearing lost, and their hopes of a good harvest lost; all is lost, if the gospel be lost.

(3.) This consideration should be a strong motive both to our attention to the gospel and our retention of it; and indeed, if we do not well attend, we shall not long retain the word of God; inattentive hearers will soon be forgetful hearers.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

For if the word spoken by angels. The revelation in the Old Testament. It was indeed given by Jehovah; but it was the common opinion of the Hebrews, that it was by the ministry of angels. Acts 7:38; Acts 7:53, and Gal 3:19, where this point is fully considered. As Paul was discoursing here of the superiority of the Redeemer to the angels, it was to the point to refer to the fact that the law had been given by the ministry of angels.

Was steadfast. Was firm-- βεβαιος--settled, established. It was not vacillating and fluctuating. It determined what crime was, and it was firm in its punishment. It did not yield to circumstances; but, if not obeyed in all respects, it denounced punishment. The idea here is not that everything was fulfilled, but it is, that the law so given could not be violated with impunity. It was not safe to violate it, but it took notice of the slightest failure to yield perfect obedience to its demands.

And every transgression. Literally, going beyond, passing by. It means every instance of disregarding the law.

And disobedience. Every instance of not hearing the law παρακοη and hence every instance of disobeying it. The word here stands opposite to hearing it, or attending to it--and the sense of the whole is, that the slightest infraction of the law was sure to be punished. It made no provision for indulgence in sin; it demanded prompt, implicit, and entire Obedience.

Received a Just recompense of reward. Was strictly punished. Subjected to equal retribution. This was the character of the law. It threatened punishment for each and every offence, and made no allowance for transgression in any form. Comp. Nu 15:30,31.

How shall we escape. How shall we escape the just recompense due to transgressors? What way is there of being saved from punishment, if we suffer the great salvation to be neglected, and do not embrace its offers ? The sense is, that there is no other way of salvation, and the neglect of this will be followed by certain destruction. Why it will, the apostle proceeds to show, by stating that this plan of salvation was proclaimed first by the Lord himself, and had been confirmed by the most decided and amazing miracles.

If we neglect. It is not merely if we commit great sins; not if we are murderers, adulterers, thieves, infidels, atheists, scoffers. It is, if we merely neglect this salvation--if we do not embrace it--if we suffer it to pass unimproved. Neglect is enough to ruin a man. A man who is in business need not commit forgery or robbery to ruin himself; he has only to neglect his business, and his ruin is certain. A man who is lying on a bed of sickness need not cut his throat to destroy himself; he has only to neglect the means of restoration, and he will be ruined. A man floating in a skiff above Niagara, need not move an oar or make an effort to destroy himself; he has only to neglect using the oar at the proper time, and he will certainly be carried over the cataract. Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple neglect. By neglect of education, children grow up in ignorance; by neglect, a farm grows up to weeds and briars ; by neglect, a house goes to decay; by neglect of sowing, a man will have ho harvest; by neglect of reaping, the harvest would rot in the fields. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect; and why may it not be so in religion? There is nothing in earthly affairs, that is valuable, that will not be ruined if it is not attended to; and why may it not be so with the concerns of the soul? Let no one infer, therefore, that because he is not a drunkard, or an adulterer, or a murderer, that therefore he will be saved. Such an inference would be as irrational as it would be for a man to infer, that because he is not a murderer his farm will produce a harvest, or that because he is not an adulterer, therefore his merchandise will take care of itself.

Salvation would be worth nothing if it cost no effort; and there will be no salvation where no effort is put forth.

So great salvation. Salvation from sin and from hell. It is called great, because

(1) its Author is great. This is perhaps the main idea in this passage. It "began to be spoken by the Lord;" it had for its author the Son of God, who is so much superior to the angels; whom the angels were required to worship, (Heb 1:6;) who is expressly called God, (Heb 1:8;) who made all things, and who is eternal, (Heb 1:10-12.) A system of salvation promulgated by him must be of infinite importance, and have a claim to the attention of man.

(2.) It is great, because it saves from great sins. It is adapted to deliver from all sins, no matter how aggravated. No one is saved who one feels that his sins are small, or that they are of no consequence. Each sees his sins to be black and aggravated; and each one who enters heaven, will go there feeling and confessing that it is a great salvation which has brought such a sinner there. Besides, this salvation delivers from all sin--no matter how gross and aggravated. The adulterer, the murderer, the blasphemer, may come and be saved; and the salvation which redeems such sinners from eternal ruin is great.

(3.) It is great, because it saves from great dangers. The danger of an eternal hell besets the path of each one. All do not see it; and all will not believe it when told of it. But this danger hovers over the path of every mortal. The danger of an eternal hell! Salvation from everlasting burnings! Deliverance from unending ruin! Surely that salvation must be great which shall save from such a doom! If that salvation is neglected, that danger still hangs over each and every man. The gospel did not create that danger it came to deliver from it. Whether the gospel be true or false, each man is by nature exposed to eternal death--just as each one is exposed to

temporal death, whether the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection be true or false. The gospel comes to provide a remedy for dangers and woes--it does not create them; it comes to deliver men from great dangers--not to plunge them into them. Lacking the gospel, and before it was preached at all, men were in danger of everlasting punishment; and that system which came to proclaim deliverance from such a danger is great.

(4.) The salvation itself is great in heaven. It exalts men to infinite honours, and places on their heads an eternal crown. Heaven, with all its glories, is offered to us; and such a deliverance, and such an elevation to eternal honours, deserves to be called GREAT. If that is neglected, there is no other salvation; and man must be inevitably destroyed.

(5.) It is great, because it was effected by infinite displays of power, and wisdom, and love. It was procured by the incarnation and humiliation of the Son of God. It was accomplished amidst great sufferings and self-denials. It was attended with great miracles. The tempest was stilled, and the deaf were made to hear and the blind to see, and the dead were raised, and the sun was darkened, and the rocks were rent. The whole series of wonders connected with the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus, was such as the world had not elsewhere seen, and such as was fitted to hold the race in mute admiration and astonishment. If this be so, then religion is no trifle. It is not a matter of little importance, whether we embrace it or not. It is the most momentous of all the concerns that pertain to man; and has a claim on his attention which nothing else can have. Yet the mass of men live in the neglect of it. It is not that they are professedly Atheists, or Deists, or that they are immoral or profane; it is not that they oppose it, and ridicule it, and despise it; it is that they simply neglect it. They pass it by, They attend to other things. They are busy with their pleasures, or in their counting-houses-in their workshops, or on their farms; they are engaged in politics or in book-making; and they neglect religion NOW as a thing of

small importance--proposing to attend to it hereafter, as if they acted on the principle, that everything else was to be attended to before religion. Which at the first. Gr. Which received the beginning of being spoken. The meaning is correctly expressed in our translation. Christ began to preach the gospel; the apostles followed him. John prepared the way, but the Saviour was properly the first preacher of the gospel. By the Lord. By the Lord Jesus. Actst 1:24. And was confirmed unto us, etc. They who heard him preach--that is, the apostles--were witnesses of what he said, and certified us of its truth. When the apostle here says "us," he means the church at large. Christians were assured of the truth of what the Lord Jesus spake, by the testimony of the apostles; or the apostles communicated it to those who had not heard him in such a manner, as left no room for doubt.

3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him;*

The apostle having set forth the transcendant dignity of Christ's person and office, and shown that he was a more excellent priest than Aaron, a more excellent king than Melchizedek, hereupon he infers, that such as despise the gospel, the doctrine of this blessed Jesus, are far mare inexcusable than those that were the transgressors of the law of Moses.

If the word spoken by angels were steadfast; that is if the law given by the ministry of angels was firm and inviolable, and all the transgressors of it were justly and severely punished; how can we escape perishing, if we neglect the gospel, which makes a discovery of that great salvation which was purchased by Christ for lost sinners?
The apostle's argument is drawn (a minoriad majus) from the less to the greater. Thus, if Almighty God was so severe against the violation of a far meaner institution, to wit the law given by the ministry and dispensation of angels; how can we escape that neglect to hear and obey the gospel, which makes a tender, yea, the only tender of salvation to a lost world?

Note here, 1. The great care which God Almighty takes to make lost sinners happy, namely by offering them a great salvation.
Note, 2. The great care which every one of us ought to take in order to our own happiness and salvation, and that is, not to neglect it.

Note, 3. The great guilt which they contract, and the inevitable punishment God will inflict on such as do neglect this great salvation, How shall they escape?
Learn hence, 1. That there is salvation; great in its author, Christ Jesus; great in the price paid for it, the blood of Jesus; great in regard of the evils it saves us from, sin, Satan, the curse of the law, death and hell; great in respect of the gracious privileges it interests believers in.

Learn, 2. That notwithstanding this salvation is so great, yet there are some that neglect it.

Learn, 3. That it is impossible for such neglecters to escape.

Quest. 1. What shall they not escape?
Ans. The curse of the law, the wrath of God, the sentence of Christ denounced and the sentence of Christ inflicted.

Quest. 2. Why shall they not escape?
Ans. Because such persons sin against the remedy, the only remedy, which the wisdom of God hath found out for man's recovery; and accordingly the mouth of God hath spoken it, the hand of God hath written it, and the oath of God hath confirmed it, that such sinners shall not escape: such as sin against the remedy, must perish without the remedy.

4 God also bearing *them* witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

God also bearing them witness. By miracles. Giving them the sanction of his authority, or showing that they were sent by

him. No man can work a miracle by his own power. When the dead are raised, the deaf made to hear, and the blind to see, by a word, it is the power of God alone that does it. He thus becomes a witness to the Divine appointment of him by whose instrumentality the miracle is wrought; or furnishes an attestation that what he says is true. Acts 14:3. With signs and wonders. These words are usually connected in the New Testament. The word rendered signs σημειον-- means any miraculous event that is fitted to show that what had been predicted by a prophet would certainly take place. See Mt 12:38. Compare Isa 7:1. A wonder -τερας-- denotes a portent, or prodigy--something that is fitted to excite wonder or amazement-and hence a miracle. The words together refer to the various miracles which were performed by the Lord Jesus and his apostles, designed to confirm the truth of the Christian religion. And with divers miracles. Various miracles--such as healing the sick, raising the dead, etc. The miracles were not of one class merely, but were various, so that all pretence of deception should be taken away. And gifts of the Holy Ghost. Marg. Distributions, The various influences of the Holy Spirit enabling them to speak different languages, and to perform works beyond the power of man. 1Cor 12:4-11. According to his own will. As he chose. He acted as a sovereign in this. He gave them where he pleased, and imparted them in such measure as he chose. The sense of this whole passage is--"The gospel has been promulgated to man in a solemn manner. It was first published by the Lord of glory himself. It was confirmed by the most impressive and solemn miracles. It is undoubtedly a revelation from heaven; was given in more solemn circumstances than the law of Moses, and its threatenings are more to be dreaded than those of the law. Beware, therefore, how you trifle with it, or disregard it. It cannot be neglected with safety; its neglect or rejection must be attended with condemnation."

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection. In this verse the apostle returns to the subject which he had been discussing in Chapter 1--the superiority of the Messiah to the angels. From that subject he had been diverted, (Heb 2:1-4,) by showing them what must be the consequences of defection from Christianity, and the danger of neglecting it. Having shown that, he now proceeds with the discussion, and shows that an honour had been conferred on the Lord Jesus which had never been bestowed on the angels--to wit, the supremacy over this world. This he does by proving, from the Old Testament, that such a dominion was given to man, (Heb 2:6-8,) and that this dominion was in fact exercised by the Lord Jesus, Heb 2:9. At the same time, he meets an objection which a Jew would be likely to make. It is, that Jesus appeared to be far inferior to the angels. He was a man of a humble condition. He was poor, and despised. He had none of the external honour which was shown to Moses--the founder of the Jewish economy; none of the apparent honour which belonged to angelic beings. This implied objection he removes, by showing the reason why he became so. It was proper, since he came to redeem man, that he should be a man, and not take on himself the nature of angels; and, for the same reason, it was proper that he should be subjected to sufferings, and be made a man of sorrows, Heb 2:10-17. The remark of the apostle in the verse before us is, that God had never put the world in subjection to the angels, as he had to the Lord Jesus. They had no jurisdiction over it; they were mere ministering spirits; but the world had been put under the dominion of the Lord Jesus. The world to come. The word here rendered world οικουμενη means, properly, the inhabited or inhabitable world. See Mt 24:14; Lk 2:1, 4:5, 21:27, (Gr. ;) Acts 11:28, 17:6, 31, 19:27, 24:5, Rom 10:18; Heb 1:6, Rev 3:10, 12:9, 16:14 -in all which places, but one, it is rendered world. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The proper meaning is, the world or earth considered as inhabitable--and here the jurisdiction refers to the control

over man, or the dwellers on the earth. The phrase, "the world to come," occurs not unfrequently in the New Testament. Comp. Eph 2:7, 1Cor 10:11, Heb 6:5. The same phrase, "the world to come, --occurs often in the Jewish writings. According to Buxtorf (Lex. Ch. Talm. Rub.) it means, as some suppose, "the world which is to exist after this world is destroyed, and after the resurrection of the dead, when souls shall be again united to their bodies." By others it is supposed to mean "the days of the Messiah, when he shall reign on the earth." To me it seems to be clear that the phrase here means, the world under the Messiah-- the world, age, or dispensation which was to succeed the Jewish, and which was familiarly known to them as "the world to come;" and the idea is, that that world, or age, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Christ, and not of the angels. This point the apostle proceeds to make out. Isa 2:2.

6 But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

But one in a certain place testified. The apostle was writing to those who were supposed to be familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and where it would be necessary only to makes reference in general, without mentioning the name. The place which is quoted here is Ps 8:4-6. The argument of the apostle is this--that there stood in the sacred Scriptures a declaration, that "all things were placed under the control and jurisdiction of MAN," but that that had not yet been accomplished. It was not true (Heb 2:8) that all things were subject to him; and the complete truth of that declaration would be found only in the jurisdiction conferred on the Messiah--THE MAN, by way of eminence--the incarnate Son of God. It would not occur to any one probably in reading the Psalm, that the verse here quoted had any reference to the Messiah. It seems to relate to the dominion which God had given man over his works in this lower world, or to the fact that he was made lord over all things. That dominion is apparent, to a considerable extent, everywhere, and is a standing proof of the truth of what is recorded in Gen 1:26, that God originally gave dominion to

man over the creatures on earth--since it is only by this supposition that it can be accounted for, that the horse, and the elephant, and the ox, and even the panther and the lion, are subject to the control of man. The argument of Paul seems to be this:-- "Originally this control was given to man. It was absolute and entire. All things were subject to him, and all obeyed. Man was made a little lower than the angels, and was the undisputed lord of this lower world. He was in a state of innocence. But he rebelled, and this dominion has been in some measure lost. It is found complete only in the second man, the Lord from heaven, (1Cor 15:47,) the Lord Jesus, to whom this control is absolutely given. He comes up to the complete idea of man--man as he was in innocence, and man as he was described by the Psalmist, as having been made a little lower than the angels, and having entire dominion over the world." Much difficulty has been felt by commentators in regard to this passage, and to the principle on which it is quoted. The above seems to me to be that which is most probably true. There are two other methods by which an attempt has been made to explain it. One is, that Paul uses the words here by way of allusion, or accommodation, (Doddridge;) as words that will express his meaning, without designing to say that the Psalm originally had any reference to the Messiah. Most of the later commentators accord with this opinion. The other opinion is, that David originally referred to the Messiah--that he was deeply and gratefully affected in view of the honour that God had conferred on him; and that in looking down by faith on the posterity that God had promised him, (see 2Sam 7:14,) he saw one among his own descendants to whom God would give this wide dominion, and expresses himself in the elevated language of praise. This opinion is defended by Prof. Stuart. See his Com. On the Hebrews, Excursus IX.

What is man, etc. What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honours? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? He seems so insignificant; his life is so much like a vapour;

he so soon disappears, that the question may well be asked why this extraordinary dominion is given him? He is so sinful, also, and so unworthy; so much unlike God, and so passionate and revengeful; is so prone to abuse his dominion, that it may be well asked why God has given it to him? Who would suppose that God would give such a dominion over his creatures to one who was so prone to abuse it, as man has shown himself to be? He is so feeble, also, compared with other creatures--even of those which are made subject to him-that the question may well be asked why God has conceded it to him? Such questions may be asked when we contemplate man as he is. But similar questions may be asked, if, as was probably the case, the Psalm here be supposed to have had reference to man as he was created. Why was one so feeble, and so comparatively without strength, placed over this lower world, and the earth made subject to his control? Why is it that, when the heavens are so vast and glorious, (Ps 8:3,) God has taken such notice of man? Of what consequence can he be amidst works so wonderful? "When I look on the heavens, and survey their greatness and their glory," is the sentiment of David, "why is it that man has attracted so much notice, and that he has not been wholly overlooked in the vastness of the works of the Almighty? Why is it, that instead of this he has been exalted to so much dignity and honour?" This question, thus considered, strikes us with more force now, than it could have struck David. Let any one sit down, and contemplate the heavens as they are disclosed by the discoveries of modern astronomy, and he may well ask the question, "What is man that he should have attracted the attention of God, and been the object of so much care?" The same question would not have been inappropriate to David, if the Psalm be supposed to have had reference originally to the Messiah, and if he was speaking of himself particularly as the ancestor of the Messiah. "What is man; what am I; what can any of my descendants be, who must be of mortal frame, that this dominion should be given him? Why should any of a race so feeble, so ignorant, so imperfect, be exalted to such honour?" We may ask the question here, and it may be asked

in heaven with pertinency and with power, "Why was man so honoured, as to be united to the Godhead? Why did the Deity appear in the human form? What was there in man that should entitle him to this honour of being united to the Divinity, and of being thus exalted above the angels?" The wonder is not yet solved; and we may well suppose that the angelic ranks look with amazement --but without envy--on the fact, that man, by his union with the Deity in the person of the Lord Jesus, has been raised above them in rank and in glory.

Or the son of man. This phrase means the same as man, and is used merely to give variety to the mode of expression. Such a change or variety in words and phrases, when the same thing is intended, occurs constantly in Hebrew poetry. The name "son of man" is often given to Christ, to denote his intimate connexion with our race, and the interest which he felt in us, and is the common term which the Saviour uses when speaking of himself. Here it means man, and may be applied to human nature everywhere--and therefore to human nature in the person of the Messiah.

That thou visitest him. That thou shouldst regard him, or treat him with so much honour. Why is he the object of so much interest to the Divine Mind?

7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;
thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over
the works of thy hands:

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Marg. A little while inferior to. The Greek may here mean, a little inferior in rank, or inferior for a little time. But the probable meaning is, that it refers to inferiority of rank. Such is its obvious sense in Ps 8, from which this is quoted. The meaning is, that God had made man but little inferior to the angels in rank. He was inferior, but still God had exalted him almost to their rank. Feeble, and weak, and dying as he was, God had exalted him, and had given him a dominion and a rank almost like that of the angels. The wonder of the Psalmist is, that God had given to human nature so much honour--a wonder that is not at all

diminished, when we think of the honour done to man by his connexion with the Divine nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. If, in contemplating the face as it appears; if, when we look at the dominion of man over the lower world, we are amazed that God has bestowed so much honour on our nature, how much more should we wonder that he has honoured man by his connexion with the Divinity. Paul applies this to the Lord Jesus. His object is to show that he is superior to the angels. In doing this, he shows that he had a nature given him in itself but little inferior to the angels, and then that that had been exalted to a rank and dominion far above theirs. That such honour should be put on man is what is fitted to excite amazement, and well may one continue to ask why it has been done? When we survey the heavens, and contemplate their glories, and think of the exalted rank of other beings, we may well inquire why has such honour been conferred on man? Thou crownedst him with glory and honour. That is, with exalted honour. Glory and honour here are nearly synonymous. The meaning is, that elevated honour had been conferred on human nature. A most exalted and extended dominion had been given to man, which showed that God had greatly honoured him. This appeared eminently in the person of the Lord Jesus, "the exalted Man," to whom this dominion was given in the widest extent. And didst set him over, etc. Man has been placed over the other works of God

(1.) by the original appointment, (Gen 1:26;)

(2.) man at large--though fallen, sinful, feeble, dying;

(3.) man, eminently in the person of the Lord Jesus, in whom human nature has received its chief exaltation. This is what is particularly in the eye of the apostle--and the language of the Psalm will accurately express this exaltation.

8 thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.
For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

Thou hast put all things in subjection, etc. Ps 8:6. That is, all things are put under the control of man, or, thou hast given him dominion over all things. For in that he put all in subjection. The meaning of this is, that "the fair interpretation of the passage in the Psalm is, that the dominion of man, or of human nature over the earth, was to be absolute and total. Nothing was to be excepted. But this is not now the fact in regard to man in general, and can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. There the dominion is absolute and universal." The point of the argument of the apostle may be this:--"It was the original appointment (Gen 1:26) that man should have dominion over this lower world, and be its absolute lord and sovereign. Had he continued in innocence, this dominion would have been entire and perpetual. But he fell, and we do not now see him exerting this dominion. What is said of the dominion of man can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus, and there it is completely fulfilled." But now we see not yet all things put under him. That is, "It is not now true that all things are subject to the control of man. There is indeed a general dominion over the works of God, and over the inferior creation. But the control is not universal. A large part of the animal creation rebels, and is brought into subjection only with difficulty. The elements are not entirely under his control; the tempest and the ocean rage; the pestilence conveys death through city and hamlet; the dominion of man is a broken dominion. His government is an imperfect government. The world is not yet put wholly under his dominion, but enough has been done to constitute a pledge that it will yet be done. It will be fully accomplished only in him who sustains our nature, and to whom dominion is given over the worlds."

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

But we see Jesus. "We do not see that man elsewhere has the extended dominion of which the Psalmist speaks. But we see the fulfillment of it in Jesus, who was crowned with glory and

honour, and who has received a dominion that is superior to that of the angels." The point of this is, not that he suffered, and not that he tasted death for every man; but that on account of this, or as a reward for thus suffering, he was crowned with glory and honour, and that he thus fulfilled all that David (Ps 8) had said of the dignity and honour of man. The object of the apostle is to show that he was exalted, and in order to this he shows why it was--. to wit, because he had suffered death to redeem man. Comp. Php 2:8,9. Who was made a little lower than the angels. That is, as a man, or when on earth. His assumed rank was inferior to that of the angels. He took upon himself, not the nature of angels, Heb 2:16, but the nature of man. The apostle is probably here answering some implied objections to the rank which it was claimed that the Lord Jesus had, or which might be urged to the views which he was defending. Those objections were mainly two: first, that Jesus was a man; and, secondly, that he suffered and died. If that was the fact, it was natural to ask how he could be superior to the angels? How could he have had the rank which was claimed for him? This he answers by showing, first, that his condition as a man was voluntarily assumed--" he was made lower than the angels;" and, secondly, by showing that, as a consequence of his sufferings and death, he was immediately crowned with glory and honour. This state of humiliation became him in the great work which he had undertaken, and he was immediately exalted to universal dominion--and, as Mediator, was raised to a rank far above the angels. For the suffering of death. Marg. By. The meaning of the preposition here rendered "for," (δια, here governing the accusative,) is, "on account of; "that is, Jesus, on account of the sufferings of death, or in virtue of that, was crowned with glory and honour. His crowning was the result of his condescension and sufferings. Php 2:8,9. It does not here mean as our translation would seem to imply, that he was made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death, but that as a reward for having suffered death He was raised up to the right hand of God.

Crowned with glory and honour. That is, at the right hand of God. He was raised up to heaven, Acts 2:33, Mk 16:19. The meaning is, that he was crowned with the highest honour on account of his sufferings. Comp. Php 2:8,9, Heb 12:2, 5:7-9, Eph 1:20-23. That he. Or rather, "since he by the grace of God tasted death for every man." The sense is, that after he had thus tasted death, and as a consequence of it, he was thus exalted. The word here rendered "that" οπως --means usually and properly, that, so that, in order that, to the end that, etc. But it may also mean, when, after that, after. Acts 3:19. This is the interpretation which is given by Prof. Stuart, (in loc,) and this interpretation seems to be demanded by the connexion. The general interpretation of the passage has been different. According to that, the sense is, "We see Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, so as that, by the grace of God, he might taste of death for every man." See Robinson's Lex. on the word οπως, and Doddridge on the place. But it is natural to ask when Jesus was thus crowned with glory and honour? It was not before the crucifixion --for he was then poor and despised. The connexion seems to require us to understand this of the glory to which he was exalted in heaven, and this was after his death, and could not be in order that he might taste of death. I am disposed, therefore, to regard this as teaching that the Lord Jesus was exalted to heaven in virtue of the atonement which he had made--and this accords with Php 2:8,9, Heb 12:2. It accords both with the fact in the case, and with the design of the apostle in the argument before us. By the grace of God. By the favour of God, or by his benevolent purpose towards men. It was not by any claim which man had, but was by his special favour. Should taste death. Should die; or, should experience death. See Mt 16:28. Death seems to be represented as something bitter and unpalatable--something unpleasant--as an object may be to the taste. Or the language may be taken from a cup--since to experience calamity and sorrow is often represented as drinking a cup of woes, Ps 11:6, 73:10, 75:8, Isa 51:17, Mt 20:22, 26:39.

For every man. For all υπερπαντος-- for each and all -- whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, high or low, elect or non-elect. How could words affirm more clearly, that the atonement made by the Lord Jesus was unlimited in its nature and design? How can we express that idea in more clear or intelligible language? That this refers to the atonement is evident--for it says that he "tasted death" for them. The friends of the doctrine of general atonement do not desire any other than Scripture language in which to express their belief. It expresses it exactly-- without any need of modification or explanation. The advocates of the doctrine of limited atonement cannot thus use Scripture language to express their belief. They cannot incorporate it with their creeds, that the Lord Jesus "tasted death for EVERY MAN." They are compelled to modify it, to limit it, to explain it, in order to prevent error and misconception. But that system cannot be true which requires men to shape and modify the plain language of the Bible, in order to keep men from error. 2Cor 5:14, where this point is considered at length. Learn hence, (Heb 2:6-9,) from the incarnation of the Son of God, and his exaltation to heaven, what an honour has been conferred on human nature. When we look on the weakness and sinfulness of our race, we may well ask, What is man, that God should honour him or regard him? He is the creature of a day. He is feeble and dying. He is lost and degraded. Compared with the universe at large, he is a speck, an atom. He has done nothing to deserve the Divine favour or notice; and when we look at the race at large, we can do it only with sentiments of the deepest humiliation and mortification. But when we look at human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus, we see it honoured there to a degree that is commensurate with all our desires, and that fills us with wonder. We feel that it is an honour to human nature; that it has done much to elevate man--when we look on such a man as Howard or Washington. But how much more has that nature been honoured in the person of the Lord Jesus! (1.) What an honour to us it was, that he should take our nature into intimate union with himself--passing by the angelic hosts, and becoming a man!

(2.) What an honour it was, that human nature there was so pure and holy; that man--everywhere else so degraded and vile--could be seen to be noble, and pure, and god-like! (3.) What an honour it was, that the Divinity should speak to men in connexion with human nature, and perform such wonderful works; that the pure precepts of religion should come forth from human lips--the great doctrines of eternal life be uttered by a man; and that from human hands should go forth power to heal the sick, and to raise the dead! (4.) What an honour to man it was, that the atonement for sin should be made in his own nature, and that the universe should be attracted to that scene where one in our form, and with flesh and blood like our own, should perform that great work. (5) What an honour it is to man, that his own nature is exalted far above all heavens! That one in our form sits on the throne of the universe! That adoring angels fall prostrate before him! That to him is entrusted all power in heaven and on earth! (6.) What an honour to man, that one in his nature should be appointed to judge the worlds! That one in our own form, and with a nature like ours, shall sit on the throne of judgment, and pronounce the final doom on angels and men! That assembled millions shall be constrained to bow before him, and receive their eternal doom from his hands! That prince and potentate, the illustrious dead of all past times, and the mighty men who are yet to live, shall all appear before him, and all receive from him there the sentence of their final destiny! I see, therefore, the most honour done to my nature as a man-- not in the deeds of proud conquerors; not in the lives of sages and philanthropists; not in those who have carried their investigations farthest into the obscurities of matter and of mind; not in the splendid orators, poets, and historians of other times, or that; now live--much as I may admire them, or feel it an honour to belong to a race which has produced such illustrious men--but in the fact, that the Son of God has chosen a Body like my own in which to dwell; in the expressible loveliness evinced in his pure morals, his benevolence, his blameless life; in the great deeds that he performed on earth; in the fact, that it was this form that was

chosen in which to make atonement for sin; in the honours that now cluster around him in heaven, and the glories that shall attend him when he shall come to judge the world.
"Princes to his imperial name Bend their bright sceptres down; Dominions, thrones, and powers rejoice To see him wear the crown. "Archangels sound his lofty praise Through every heavenly street; And lay their highest honours down, Submissive at his feet. "Those Soft, those blessed feet of his, That once rude iron tore, High on a throne of light they stand, And all the saints adore. "His head, the dear, majestic head, That cruel thorns did wound; See--what immortal glories shine, And circle it around ! "This is the Man, the exalted Man, Whom we, unseen, adore; But when our eyes behold his face, Our hearts shall love him more."

10 For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

For it became him. There was a fitness or propriety in it. It was such an arrangement as became God to make, in redeeming many, that the great agent by whom it was accomplished, should be made complete in all respects by sufferings. The apostle evidently means by this to meet an objection that might be offered by a Jew to the doctrine which he had been stating--an objection drawn from the fact, that Jesus was a man of sorrows, and that his life was a life of affliction. This he meets by stating that there was a fitness and propriety in that fact. There was a reason for it --a reason drawn from the plan and character of God. It was fit, in the nature of the case, that he should be qualified to be a complete or perfect Saviour--a Saviour just adapted to the purpose undertaken, by sufferings. The reasons of this fitness the apostle does not state. The amount of it probably was, that it became him, as a Being of infinite benevolence--as one who wished to provide a perfect system of redemption--to subject his Son to such sufferings as should completely qualify him to be a Saviour for all men. This subjection to his humble condition, and to his many woes, made him such a Saviour as man needed, and qualified him fully for his work. There was

a propriety that he who should redeem the suffering and the lost should partake of their nature; identify himself with them; and share their woes, and the consequences of their sins.

For whom are all things. With respect to whose glory the whole universe was made; and with respect to whom the whole arrangement for salvation has been formed. The phrase is synonymous with "the Supreme Ruler;" and the idea is, that it became the Sovereign of the universe to provide a perfect scheme of salvation--even though it involved the humiliation and death of his own Son.

And by whom are all things. By whose agency everything is made. As it was by his agency, therefore, that the plan of salvation was entered into, there was a fitness that it should be perfect. It was not the work of fate or chance, and there was a propriety that the whole plan should bear the mark of the infinite wisdom of its Author.

In bringing many sons unto glory. To heaven. This was the plan--it was to bring many to heaven who should be regarded and treated as his sons. It was not a plan to save a few--but to save many. Learn hence,

(1.) that the plan was full of benevolence.

(2.) No representation of the gospel should ever be made which will leave the impression that a few only, or a small part of the whole race, will be saved. There is no such representation in the Bible, and it should not be made. God intends, taking the whole race together, to save a large part of the human family. Few in ages that are past, it is true, may have been saved, few now are his friends and are travelling to heaven; but there are to be brighter days on earth. The period is to arrive when the gospel shall spread over all lands; and during that long period of the millennium, innumerable millions will be brought under its saving power, and be admitted to heaven. All exhibitions of the gospel are wrong

which represent it as narrow in its design, narrow in its offer, and narrow in its result.

To make the captain of their salvation. The Lord Jesus, who is represented as the leader or commander of the army of the redeemed-- "the sacramental host of God's elect." The word "captain" we apply now to an inferior officer--the commander of a "company" of soldiers. The Greek word --αρχηγος--is a more general term, and denotes, properly, the author or source of any thing; then a leader, chief, prince. In Acts 3:15, it is rendered prince--" and killed the prince of life." So in Acts 5:31--"Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour." In Heb 12:2, it is rendered author: "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Comp. Heb 12:2.

Perfect through sufferings. Complete by means of sufferings; that is, to render him wholly qualified for his work, so that he should be a Saviour just adapted to redeem man. This does not mean that he was sinful before, and was made holy by his sufferings; nor that he was not in all respects a perfect man before;--but it means, that by his sufferings he was made wholly fitted to be a Saviour of men; and that therefore the fact of his being a suffering man was no evidence, as a Jew might have urged, that he was not the Son of God. There was a completeness, a filling up, of all which was necessary to his character as a Saviour, by the sufferings which he endured. We are made morally better by afflictions, if we receive them in a right manner--for we are sinful, and need to be purified in the furnace of affliction; Christ was not made better, for he was before perfectly holy, but he was completely endowed for the work which he came to do, by his sorrows. Nor does this mean here precisely that he was exalted to heaven as a reward for his sufferings, or that he was raised up to glory as a consequence of them--which was true in itself--but that he was rendered complete, or fully qualified to be a Saviour by his sorrows, he was rendered thus complete,

(1.) because his suffering in all the forms that flesh is liable to, made him an example to all his people who shall pass through trials. They have before them a perfect model to show them how to bear afflictions. Had this not occurred, he could not have been regarded as a complete or perfect Saviour--that is, such a Saviour as we need.

(2.) He is able to sympathize with them, and to succour them in their temptations, Heb 2:18.

(3.) By his sufferings an atonement was made for sin. He would have been an imperfect Saviour--if the name Saviour could have been given to him at all--if he had not died to make an atonement for transgression. To render him complete as a Saviour, it was necessary that he should suffer and die; and when he hung on the cross in the agonies of death, he could appropriately say, "It is finished." The work is complete, All has been done that could be required to be done; and man may now have the assurance that he has a perfect Saviour--perfect not only in moral character, but perfect in his work, and in his adaptedness to the condition of men." Comp. Heb 5:8,9; Lk 13:32.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

For both he that sanctifieth. This refers evidently to the Lord Jesus. The object is to show that there was such a union between him and those for whom he died, as to make it necessary that he should partake of the same nature, or that he should be a suffering man, Heb 2:14. He undertook to redeem and sanctify them. He called them brethren, he identified them with himself. There was, in the great work of redemption, a oneness between him and them, and hence it was necessary that he should assume their nature--and the fact, therefore, that he appeared as a suffering man, does not at all militate with the doctrine that he had a more exalted nature, and was even above the angels. Prof. Stuart endeavours to prove that the word sanctify here is used in the sense of, to make expiation or atonement, and that the

meaning is, "he who maketh expiation, and they for whom expiation is made." Bloomfield gives the same sense to the word, as also does Rosenmuller. That the word may have such a signification it would be presumptuous in any one to doubt, after the view which such men have taken of it; but it may be doubted whether this idea is necessary here. The word sanctify is a general term, meaning, to make holy or pure; to consecrate, set apart, devote to God; to regard as holy, or to hallow. Applied to the Saviour here, it may be used in this general sense--that he consecrated, or devoted himself to God--as eminently the consecrated or holy one --the Messiah, (Jn 17:19:) applied to his people, it may mean that they, in like manner, were the consecrated, the holy, the pure on earth. There is a richness and fairness in the word when so understood, which there is not when it is limited to the idea of expiation; and it seems to me that it is to be taken in its richest and fullest sense, and that the meaning is, "the great consecrated Messiah--the Holy One of God--and his consecrated and holy followers, are all of one."

All of one. Of one family; spirit; Father; nature. Father of these significations will suit the connexion, and some such idea must be understood; The meaning is, that they were united, or partook of something in common, so as to constitute a oneness, or a brotherhood; and that since this was the case, there was a propriety in his taking their nature. It does not mean that they were originally of one nature or family; but that it was understood in the writings of the prophets that the Messiah should partake of the nature of his people, and that therefore, though he was more exalted than the angels, there was a propriety that he should appear in the human form. Comp. Jn 17:21. For which cause. That is, because he is thus united with them, or has undertaken their redemption.

He is not ashamed. As it might be supposed that one so exalted and pure would be. It might have been anticipated that the Son of God would refuse to give the name brethren to

those who were so humble, and sunken, and degraded, as those whom he came to redeem. But he is willing to be ranked with them, and to be regarded as one of their family.

To call them brethren. To acknowledge himself as of the same family, and to speak of them as his brothers. That is, he is so represented as speaking of them in the prophecies respecting the Messiah--for this interpretation the argument of the apostle demands. It was material for him to show that he was so represented in the Old Testament. This he does in the following verses.

Saying. This passage is found in Ps 22:22. The whole of that Psalm has been commonly referred to the Messiah; and in regard to such a reference there is less difficulty than attends most of the other portions of the Old Testament that are usually supposed to relate to him. The following verses of the Psalm are applied to him, or to transactions connected with him, in the New Testament, Ps 22:1,8,18; and the whole Psalm is so strikingly descriptive of his condition and sufferings, that there can be no reasonable doubt that it had an original reference to him. There is much in the Psalm that cannot be well applied to David; there is nothing which cannot be applied to the Messiah; and the proof seems to be clear, that Paul quoted this passage in accordance with the original sense of the Psalm. The point of the quotation here is not that he would "declare the name" of God, but that he gave the name brethren to those whom he addressed.

I will declare thy name. I will make thee known. The word "name" is used, as it often is, to denote God himself. The meaning is, that it would be a part of the Messiah's work to make known to his disciples the character and perfections of God--or to make them acquainted with God. He performed this. In his parting prayer (Jn 17:6) he says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world." And again, Jnn 17:26, "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it."

Unto my brethren. The point of the quotation is in this. He spoke of them as brethren. Paul is showing that he was not ashamed to call them such. As he was reasoning with those who had been Jews, and as it was necessary, as a part of his argument, to show that what he maintained respecting the Messiah was found in the Old Testament, he makes his appeal to that, and shows that the Redeemer is represented as addressing his people as brethren. It would have been easy to appeal to facts, and to have shown that the Redeemer used that term familiarly in addressing his disciples, (comp. Mt 12:48,49, 25:40, 28:10, Lk 8:21; Jn 20:17,) but that would not have been pertinent to his object. It is full proof to us, however, that the prediction in the Psalm was literally fulfilled.

In the midst of the church. That is, in the assembly of my brethren. The point of the proof urged by the apostle lies in the first part of the quotation. This latter part seems to have been adduced, because it might assist their memory to have the whole verse quoted; or because it contained an interesting truth respecting the Redeemer--though not precisely a proof of what he was urging; or because it implied substantially the same truth as the former member. It shows that he was united with his church; that he was one of them; and that he mingled with them as among brethren. Will I sing praise. That the Redeemer united with his disciples in singing praise, we may suppose to have been in the highest degree probable--though, I believe, but a single case is mentioned--that at the close of the Supper which he instituted to commemorate his death, Mt 26:30. This, therefore, proves what the apostle intended--that the Messiah was among them as his brethren, that he spoke to them as such, and mingled in their devotions as one of their number.

And again. That is, it is said in another place, or language is used of the Messiah in another place, indicating the confidence which he put in God, and showing that he partook

of the feelings of the children of God, and regarded himself as one of them. I will put my trust in him. I will confide in God; implying (1.) a sense of dependence on God, and (2.) confidence in him. It is with reference to the former idea that the apostle seems to use it here--as denoting a condition where there was felt to be need of Divine aid. His object is to show that he took part with his people, and regarded them as brethren; and the purpose of this quotation seems to be, to show that he was in such a situation as to make an expression of dependence proper. He was one with his people, and shared their dependence and their piety--using language which showed that he was identified with them, and could mingle with the tenderest sympathy in all their feelings. It is not certain from what place this passage is quoted. In Ps 18:3, and the corresponding passage in 2Sam 22:3, the Hebrew is --"I will trust in him;" but this Psalm has never been regarded as having any reference to the Messiah, even by the Jews-- and it is difficult to see how it could be considered as having any relation to him. Most critics therefore, as Rosenmuller, Calvin, Koppe, Bloomfield, Stuart, etc., regard the passage as taken from Isa 8:17. The reasons for this are, (1.) that the words are the same in the Septuagint as in the epistle to the Hebrews; (2.) the apostle quotes the next verse immediately as applicable to the Messiah; (3.) no other place occurs where the same expression is found. Isa 8:17, is "I will wait for him," or I will trust in him -- rendered by the Septuagint πεποιθωςεσομαιεπαυτω-- the same phrase precisely as is used by Paul--and here can be no doubt that he meant to quote it here. The sense in Isaiah is, that he had closed his message to the people; he had been directed to seal up the testimony; he had exhorted the nation to repent, but he had done it in vain; and he had now nothing to do but to put his trust in the Lord, and commit the whole cause to him. His only hope was in God; and he calmly and confidently committed his cause to him. Paul evidently designs to refer this to the Messiah; and the sense as applied to him is--"The Messiah in using this language expresses himself as a man. It is men who exercise dependence on God; and by the use of this language he speaks

as one who had the nature of man, and who expressed the feelings of the pious, and showed that he was one of them, and that he regarded them as brethren." There is not much difficulty in the argument of the passage; nor it is seen that in such language he must speak as a man, or as one having human nature; but the main difficulty is on the question how this and the verse following can be applied to the Messiah? In the prophecy they seem to refer solely to Isaiah, and to be expressive of his feelings alone-- the feelings of a man who saw little encouragement in his work, and who having done all that he could do, at last put his sole trust in God. In regard to this difficult and yet unsettled question, the reader may consult my introduction to Isaiah, & 7. The following remarks may serve in part to remove the difficulty. (1.) The passage in Isaiah (Isa 8:17,18) occurs in the midst of a number of predictions relating to the Messiah--preceded and followed by passages that had an ultimate reference undoubtedly to him. See Isa 7:14, 9:1-7 and Notes on those passages. (2.) The language, if used of Isaiah, would as accurately and fitly express the feelings and the condition of the Redeemer. There was such a remarkable similarity in the circumstances, that the same language would express the condition of both. Both had delivered a solemn message to men; both had come to exhort them to turn to God, and to put their trust in him, and both with the same result. The nation had disregarded them alike; and now their only hope was to confide in God; and the language here used would express the feelings of both--" I will trust in God. I will put confidence in him, and look to him." (3.) There can be little doubt that, in the time of Paul, this passage was regarded by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. This is evident, because (a.) Paul would not have so quoted it as a proof-text, unless it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote; and (b.) because, in Rom 9:32,33, it is evident that the passage in Isa 8:14, is regarded as having reference to the Messiah, and as being so admitted by the Jews. It is true that this may be considered merely as an argument ad hominem--or an argument from what was admitted by those with whom he was reasoning,

without vouching for the precise accuracy of the manner in which the passage was applied--but that method of argument is admitted elsewhere, and why should we not expect to find the sacred writers reasoning as other men do, and especially as was common in their own times? The apostle is showing them, that according to their own Scripture, and in accordance with principles which they themselves admitted, it was necessary that the Messiah should be a man and a sufferer; that he should be identified with his people, and be able to use language which would express that condition. In doing this, it is not remarkable that he should apply to him language which they admitted to belong to him, and which would accurately describe his condition. (4.) It is not necessary to suppose that the passage in Isaiah had an original and primary reference to the Messiah. It is evident from the whole passage that it had not. There was a primary reference to Isaiah himself, and to his children as being emblems of certain truths. But still there was a strong resemblance, in certain respects, between his feelings and condition and those of the Messiah. There was such a resemblance, that the one would not unaptly symbolize the other. There was such a resemblance that the mind--probably of the prophet himself, and of the people--would look forward to the more remote, but similar event--the coming and the circumstances of the Messiah. So strong was this resemblance, and so much did the expressions of the prophet here accord with his declarations elsewhere pertaining to the Messiah, that in the course of time they came to be regarded as relating to him in a very important sense, and as destined to have their complete fulfillment when he should come. As such they seem to have been used in the time of Paul; and no one can PROVE that the application was improper. Who can demonstrate that God did not intend that those transactions referred to by Isaiah should be designed as symbols of what would occur in the time of the Redeemer? They were certainly symbolical actions--for they are expressly so said to have been by Isaiah himself, (Isa 8:18;) and none can demonstrate that they might not have had an ultimate reference to the Redeemer. And

again. In another verse, or in another declaration; to wit, Isa 7:18. Behold I and the children which God hath given me. This is only a part of the passage in Isaiah, and seems to have been partially quoted, because the point of the quotation consisted in the fact, that he sustained to them somewhat of the relation of a parent towards his children--as having the same nature, and being identified with them in interest and feeling. As it is used by Isaiah, it means that he and his children were "for signs and emblems" to the people of his time--to communicate and confirm the will of God, and to be pledges of the Divine favour and protection. Isa 7:18. As applied to the Messiah, it means that he sustained to his people a relation so intimate, that they could be addressed and regarded as his children. They were of one family; one nature. He became one of them, and had in them all the interest which a father has in his sons, He had, therefore, a nature like ours; and though he was exalted above the angels, yet his relation to man was like the most tender and intimate earthly connexions, showing that he took part in the same nature with them. The point is that he was a man; that since those who were to be redeemed partook of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same, (Heb 2:14,) and thus identified himself with them.

12 saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.
13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again,
Behold I and the children which God hath given me.
14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,
he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death
he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the
devil;

Forasmuch then. Since; or because. As the children. Those who were to become the adopted children of God; or who were to sustain that relation to him. Are partakers of flesh and blood. Have a human and not an angelic nature. Since they are men, he became a man. There was a fitness or propriety that he should partake of their nature. 1Cor 15:50; Mt 16:17.

He also himself, etc. He also became a man, or partook of the same nature with them. Jn 1:14. That through death. By dying. It is implied here,

(1.) that the work which he undertook of destroying him that had the power of death was to be accomplished by his own dying; and

(2.) that, in order to this, it was necessary that he should be a man. An angel does not die, and therefore he did not take on him the nature of angels; and the Son of God, in his Divine nature, could not die, and therefore he assumed a form in which he could die--that of a man. In that nature the Son of God could taste of death; and thus he could destroy him that had the power of death. He might destroy. That he might subdue, or that he might overcome him, and destroy his dominion. The word destroy here is not used in the sense of closing life, or of killing, but in the sense of bringing into subjection, or crushing his power. This is the work which the Lord Jesus came to perform--to destroy the kingdom of Satan in the world, and to set up another kingdom in its place. This was understood by Satan to be his object. Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24. That had the power of death. I understand this as meaning that the devil was the cause of death in this world, he was the means of its introduction, and of its long and melancholy reign. This does not affirm anything of his power of inflicting death in particular instances--whatever may be true on that point--but that death was a part of his dominion; that he introduced it; that he seduced man from God, and led on the train of woes which result in death. He also made it terrible. Instead of being regarded as falling asleep, or being looked on without alarm, it becomes, under him, the means of terror and distress. What power Satan may have in inflicting death in particular: instances no one can tell. The Jewish Rabbins speak much of Samuel, "the angel of death"-- --who they supposed had the control of life, and was the great messenger employed in closing it. The Scriptures, it is believed, are silent on that point. But that Satan was the means of

introducing "death into the world, and all our woe," no one can doubt; and over the whole subject, therefore, he may be said to have had power. To destroy that dominion; to rescue man; to restore him to life; to place him in a world where death is unknown; to introduce a state of things where not another one would ever die, was the great purpose for which the Redeemer came. What a noble object! What enterprise in the universe has been so grand and noble as this! Surely an undertaking that contemplates the annihilation of DEATH; that designs to bring this dark dominion to an end, is full of benevolence, and commends itself to every man as worthy of his profound attention and gratitude. What woes are caused by death in this world! They are seen everywhere. The earth is "arched with graves." In almost every dwelling death has been doing his work of misery. The palace cannot exclude him; and he comes unbidden into the cottage. He finds his way to the dwelling of ice in which the Esquimaux and the Greenlander live; to the tent of the Bedouin Arab, and the wandering Tartar; to the wigwam of the Indian, and to the harem of the Turk; to the splendid mansion of the rich, as well as to the abode of the poor. That reign of death has now extended near six thousand years, and will travel on to future times--meeting each generation, and consigning the young, the vigorous, the lovely, and the pure, to dust. Shall that gloomy reign continue forever? Is there no way to arrest it? Is there no place where death can be excluded? Yes: heaven --and the object of the Redeemer is to bring us there.

And deliver them. Not all of them in fact, though the way is open for all. This deliverance relates

(1.) to the dread of death. He came to free them from that.

(2.) From death itself--that is, ultimately to bring them to a world where death shall be unknown. The dread of death may be removed by the work of Christ, and they who had been subject to constant alarms on account of it may be brought to look on it with calmness and peace; and ultimately they will

be brought to a world where it will be wholly unknown. The dread of death is taken away, or they are delivered from that, because

(a.) the cause of that dread--to wit, sin--is removed. 1Cor 15:54, 1Cor 15:55.

(b.) Because they are enabled to look to the world beyond with triumphant joy. Death conducts them to heaven. A Christian has nothing to fear in death; nothing beyond the grave. In no part of the universe has he any thing to dread, for God is his friend, and he will be his protector everywhere. On the dying bed; in the grave; on the way up to the judgment; at the solemn tribunal; and in the eternal world, he is under the eye and the protection of his Saviour--and of what should he be afraid? Who through fear of death. From the dread of dying --that is, whenever they think of it, and they think of it so often as to make them slaves of that fear. This obviously means the natural dread of dying, and not particularly the fear of punishment beyond. It is that indeed which often gives its principal terror to the dread of death; but still the apostle refers here evidently to natural death--as an object which men fear. All men have, by nature, this dread of dying-- and perhaps some of the inferior creation have it also. It is certain that it exists in the heart of every man, and that God has implanted it there for some wise purpose. There is the dread

(1.) of the dying pang, or pain.

(2.) Of the darkness and gloom of mind that attends it.

(3.) Of the unknown world beyond--the "evil that we know not of."

(4.) Of the chilliness, and loneliness, and darkness of the grave.

(5.) Of the solemn trial at the bar of God.

(6.) Of the condemnation which awaits the guilty--the apprehension of future woe. There is no other evil that we fear so much as we do DEATH, and there is nothing more clear than that God intended that we should have a dread of dying. The REASONS why he designed this are equally clear.

(1.) One may have been to lead men to prepare for it-- which otherwise they would neglect.

(2.) Another, to deter them from committing self-murder where nothing else would deter them. Facts have shown that it was necessary that there should be some strong principle in the human bosom to prevent this crime, and even the dread of death does not always do it. So sick do men become of the life that God gave them; so weary of the world; so overwhelmed with calamity; so oppressed with disappointment and cares, that they lay violent hands on themselves, and rush unbidden into the awful presence of their Creator. This would occur more frequently by far than it now does, if it were not for the salutary fear of death which God has implanted in every bosom.

God designed that man should be deterred from rushing uncalled into his awful presence, by this salutary dread of death, and his implanting this feeling in the human heart is one of the most striking and conclusive proofs of a moral government over the world. This instinctive dread of death can be overcome only by religion --and then man does not NEED it to reconcile him to life. He becomes submissive to trials, he is willing to bear all that is laid on him. He resigns himself to the dispensations of Providence, and feels that life, even in affliction, is the gift of God, and is a valuable endowment. He now dreads self-murder as a crime of deep dye, and religion restrains him and keeps him by a more mild and salutary restraint than the dread of death. The man who has true religion is willing to live or to die; he feels that life is the gift of God, and that he will take it away in the best time

and manner; and feeling this, he is willing to leave all in his hands, We may remark,

(1.) how much do we owe to religion! It is the only thing that will effectually take away the dread of death, and yet secure this point--to make man willing to live in all the circumstances where God may place him. It is possible that philosophy or stoicism may remove, to a great extent, the dread of death--but then it will be likely to make a man willing to take his life if he is placed in trying circumstances. Such an effect it had on Cato in Utica; and such an effect it had on Hume, who maintained that suicide was lawful, and that to turn a current of blood from its accustomed channel was of no more consequence than to change the course of any other fluid!

(2.) In what a sad condition is the sinner! Thousands there are who never think of death with composure, and who, all their life long, are subject to bondage through the fear of it. They never think of it if they can avoid it; and when it is forced upon them, it fills them with alarm. They attempt to drive the thought away. They travel; they plunge into business; they occupy the mind with trifles; they drown their fears in the intoxicating bowl: but all this tends only to make death more terrific and awful when the reality comes. If man were wise, he would seek an interest in that religion which, if it did nothing else, would deliver him from the dread of death; and the influence of the gospel in this respect, if it exerted no other, is worth to a man all the sacrifices and self-denials which it would ever require. All their life-time subject to bondage. Slaves of fear; in a depressed and miserable condition, like slaves under a master. They have no freedom; no comfort; no peace. From this miserable state Christ comes to deliver man. Religion enables him to look calmly on death and the judgment, and to feel that all will be well.

15 and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on
him the seed of Abraham.
17 Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Wherefore in all things. In respect to his body; his soul; his rank and character. There was a propriety that he should be like them, and should partake of their nature. The meaning is, that there was a fitness that nothing should be wanting in him in reference to the innocent propensities and sympathies of human nature.

It behoved him. It became him; or there was a fitness and propriety in it. The reason why it was proper, the apostle proceeds to state. Like unto his brethren.

Like unto those who sustained to him the relation of brethren; particularly as he undertook to redeem the descendants of Abraham, and as he was a descendant of Abraham himself, there was a propriety that he should be like them. He calls them brethren; and it was proper that, he should show that he regarded them as such by assuming their nature.

That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest.

(1.) That he might be merciful; that is, compassionate. That he might know how to pity us in our infirmities and trials, by having a nature like our own.

(2.) That he might be faithful; that is, perform with fidelity all the functions pertaining to the office of high priest. The idea is, that it was needful that he should become a man; that he should experience, as we do, the infirmities and trials of life; and that, by being a man, and partaking of all that pertained

to man except his sins, he might feel how necessary it was that there should be fidelity in the office of high priest. Here were a race of sinners and sufferers. They were exposed to the wrath of God. They were liable to everlasting punishment. The judgment impended over the race, and the day of vengeance hastened on. All now depended on the Great High Priest. All their hope was in his fidelity to the great office which he had undertaken. If he were faithful, all would be safe; if he were unfaithful, all would be lost. Hence the necessity that he should enter fully into the feelings, fears, and dangers of man; that he should become one of the race, and be identified with them, so that he might be qualified to perform with faithfulness the great trust committed to him.

High priest. The Jewish high priest was the successor of Aaron, and was at the head of the ministers of religion among the Jews. He was set apart with solemn ceremonies--clad in his sacred vestments--and anointed with oil, Ex 29:6-9, Lev 8:2. He was by his office the general judge of all that pertained to religion, and even of the judicial affairs of the Jewish nation, De 17:8-12, 19:17, 21:5, 33:9,10. He only had the privilege of entering the most holy place once a year, on the great day of expiation, to make atonement for the sins of the whole people, Lev 16:2, etc. He was the oracle of truth--so that, when clothed in his proper vestments, and having on the Urim and Thummim, he made known the will of God in regard to future events. The Lord Jesus became, in the Christian dispensation, what the Jewish high priest was in the old; and an important object of this epistle is to show that he far surpassed the Jewish high priest, and in what respects the Jewish high priest was designed to typify the Redeemer. Paul, therefore, early introduces the subject, and shows that the Lord Jesus came to perform the functions of that sacred office, and that he was eminently endowed for it.

In things pertaining to God. In offering sacrifice; or in services of a religious nature. The great purpose was to offer sacrifice, and make intercession; and the idea is, that Jesus

took on himself our nature that he might sympathize with us; that thus he might be faithful to the great trust committed to him--the redemption of the world. Had he been unfaithful, all would have been lost, and the world would have sunk down to woe.

To make reconciliation. By his death as a sacrifice. The word here used-- ιλασκομαι--occurs but in one other place in the New Testament, (Lk 18:13,) where it is rendered, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" that is, reconciled to me. The noun ιλασμος-- propitiation) is used in 1Jn 2:2, 4:10. The word here means, properly, to appease, to reconcile, to conciliate; and hence to propitiate AS TO SINS; that is, to propitiate God in reference to sins, or to render him propitious. The Son of God became a man, that he might so fully enter into the feelings of the people as to be faithful, and that he might be qualified, as a high priest, to perform the great work of rendering God propitious in regard to sins. How he did this is fully shown in the subsequent parts of the epistle.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

For in that he himself, etc. Because he has suffered, he is able to sympathize with sufferers. Being tempted. Or, being tried. The Greek word here used is more general in its meaning than the English word tempted. It means to put to the proof; to try the nature or character of; and this may be done either

(1.) by subjecting a person to afflictions or sufferings, that his true character may be tried--that it may be seen whether he has sincere piety and love to God; or

(2.) by allowing one to fall into temptation--properly so called--where some strong inducement to evil is presented to the mind, and where it becomes thus a trial of virtue. The Saviour was subjected to both these in as severe a form as was ever presented to men. His sufferings surpassed all others; and the temptations of Satan (Mt 4) were presented in the most alluring form in which he could exhibit them. Being

proved or tried in both these respects, he showed that he had a strength of virtue which could bear all that could ever occur to seduce him from attachment to God; and at the same time to make him a perfect model for those who should be tried in the same manner. He is able to succour, etc. This does not mean that he would not have had power to assist others if he had not gone through these sufferings, but that he is now qualified to sympathize with them from the fact that he has endured like trials.

"He knows what sore temptations mean, For he has felt the same."

The idea is that one who has himself been called to suffer, is able to sympathize with those who suffer; one who has been tempted, is able to sympathize with those who are tempted in like manner; one who has been sick is qualified to sympathize with the sick; one who has lost a child, can sympathize with him who follows his beloved son or daughter to the grave; one who has had some strong temptation to sin urged upon himself, can sympathize with those who are now tempted; one who has never been sick, or who has never buried a friend, or been tempted, is poorly qualified to impart consolations in such scenes. Hence it is, that ministers of the gospel are often--like their Master--much persecuted and afflicted, that they may be able to assist others, Hence they are called to part with the children of their love; or to endure long and painful sicknesses; or to pass through scenes of poverty and want, that they may sympathize with the most humble and afflicted of their flock. And they should be willing to endure all this; for

(1.) thus they are like their Master, (comp. Col 1:24, Php 3:10;) and

(2.) they are thus enabled to be far more extensively useful. Many a minister owes a large part of his usefulness to the fact that he has been much afflicted; and for those afflictions,

therefore, he should unfeignedly thank God. The idea which is here expressed by the apostle; that one is enabled to sympathize with others from having himself suffered, was long since beautifully expressed by Virgil:--

"Me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores. Jactatam, hac demum voluit consistere terra. Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco." AEn. I. 628. "For I myself, like you, have been distressed, Till heaven afforded me this place of rest: Like you, an alien in a land unknown, I learn to pity Woes so like my own." Dryden.

Jesus is thus able to alleviate the sufferer. In all our temptations and trials let us remember

(1.) that he suffered more--infinitely more--than we can do, and that in all our sorrows we shall never reach what he endured. We enter no region of trial where he has not gone beyond us; we tread no dark and gloomy way where he has not gone before us.

(2.) Let us remember that he is to us a brother, for he "is not ashamed to call us brethren." He had a nature like ours; he condescended to appear as one of our race, with all the innocent propensities and passions of a man. What matchless condescension! And what an honour for us to be permitted to address him as an "elder brother," and to know that he feels a deep sympathy in our woes!

(3.) Let us then, in all times of affliction, look to him. Go not, suffering Christian, to philosophy; attempt not to deaden your feelings by the art of the Stoic; but go at once to the Saviour--the great, sympathizing High Priest, who is able to succour you--and rest your burdens on him.

"His heart is made of tenderness, His soul is fill'd with love. "Touched with a sympathy within, He knows our feeble

frame; He knows what sore temptations mean, For he has felt the same. "Then let our humble faith address His mercy and his power; We shall obtain delivering grace, In every trying hour."

Hebrews-3

Christ Superior to Moses

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

Wherefore. That is, since Christ sustains such a character as has been stated in the previous chapter; since he is so able to succour those who need assistance; since he assumed our nature that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, his character ought to be attentively considered, and we ought to endeavour fully to understand it.

Holy brethren. The name brethren is often given to Christians to denote that they are of one family. It is possible, also, that the apostle may have used the word here in a double sense--denoting that they were his brethren as Christians, and as Jews. The word holy is applied to them to denote that they were set apart to God, or that they were sanctified. The Jews were often called a "holy people," as being consecrated to God; and Christians are holy, not only as consecrated to God, but as sanctified.

Partakers of the heavenly calling. On the meaning of the word calling, Eph 4:1 The "heavenly calling" denotes the calling which was given to them from heaven, or which was of a heavenly nature. It pertained to heaven, not to earth; it came from heaven, not from earth; it was a calling to the reward

and happiness of heaven, and not to the pleasures and honours of the world.

Consider. Attentively ponder all that is said of the Messiah. Think of his rank; his dignity; his holiness; his sufferings; his death; his resurrection, ascension, intercession. Think of him, that you may see the claims to a holy life; that you may learn to bear trials; that you may be kept from apostasy. The character and work of the Son of God are worthy of the profound and prayerful consideration of every man; and especially every Christian should reflect much on him. Of the friend that we love we think much; but what friend have we like the Lord Jesus?

The Apostle. The word apostle is nowhere else applied to the Lord Jesus. The word means one who is sent--and in this sense it might be applied to the Redeemer as one sent by God, or as by way of eminence THE one sent by him. But the connexion seems to demand that there should be some allusion here to one who sustained a similar rank among the Jews; and it is probable that the allusion is to Moses, as having been the great apostle of God to the Jewish people, and that Paul here means to say, that the Lord Jesus, under the new dispensation, filled the place of Moses and of the high priest under the old, and that the office of "apostle" and "high priest," instead of being now separated, as it was between Moses and Aaron under the old dispensation, was now blended in the Messiah. The name apostle is not indeed given to Moses directly in the Old Testament, but the verb from which the Hebrew word for apostle is derived is frequently given him. Thus, in Ex 3:10, it is said, "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh." And in Heb 3:13, "The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you." So also in Heb 3:14,15, of the same chapter. From the word there used-- to send, the word denoting apostle --is derived; and it is not improbable that Moses would be regarded as being, by way of eminence, THE one sent by God. Further, the Jews applied the word --apostle, to the minister of the synagogue; to him

who presided over its affairs, and who had the general charge of the services there; and in this sense it might be applied by way of eminence to Moses, as being the general director and controller of the religious affairs of the nation, and as sent for that purpose. The object of Paul is to show that the Lord Jesus, in the Christian system--as the great apostle sent from God--sustained a rank and office similar to this, but superior in dignity and authority.

And High Priest. One great object of this epistle is, to compare the Lord Jesus with the high priest of the Jews, and to show that he was in all respects superior. This was important, because the office of high priest was that which eminently distinguished the Jewish religion, and because the Christian religion proposed to abolish that. It became necessary, therefore, to show that all that was dignified and valuable in that office was to be found in the Christian system. This was done by showing that in the Lord Jesus was found all the characteristics of a high priest, and that all the functions which had been performed in the Jewish ritual were performed by him, and that all which had been prefigured by the Jewish high priest was fulfilled in him. The apostle here merely alludes to him, or names him as the high priest, and then postpones the consideration of his character, in that respect, till after he had compared him with Moses.

Of our profession. Of our religion; of that religion which we profess. The apostle and high priest whom we confessed as ours when we embraced the Christian religion.

2 who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house.

Who was faithful. Heb 2:17. He performed with fidelity all the functions entrusted to him. To him that appointed him. Marg. Made. The word made, however, is used in the sense

of constituted or appointed. The meaning is, that he was faithful to God. Perhaps Paul urges on them the necessity of considering his fidelity in order to keep them from the danger of apostasy. A leading object of this epistle was to preserve those whom he addressed from apostatizing from God, amidst the temptations and trials to which they were exposed. In doing this, what could be a more powerful argument than to direct their attention to the unwavering constancy and fidelity of the Lord Jesus? The importance of such a virtue in the Saviour is manifest. It is seen everywhere; and all the great interests of the world depend on it. A husband should maintain inviolate fidelity towards a wife, and a wife towards her husband; a child should be faithful to a parent, a clerk and apprentice to his employer, a lawyer to his client, a physician to his patient, an ambassador to the government that commissions him. No matter what may be the temptations in the way; in all these, and in all other relations, there should be inviolate fidelity. The welfare of the world depended on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus. Had he failed in that, all would have been lost. His fidelity was worthy of the more attentive consideration, from the numerous temptations which beset his path, and the attempts which were made to turn him aside from his devotedness to God. Amidst all the temptations of the adversary, and all the trials through which he passed, he never for a moment swerved from fidelity to the great trust which had been committed to his hands. What better example to preserve them, from the temptations to apostasy, could the apostle propose to the Christians whom he addressed? What, in these temptations and trials, could be more appropriate than for them to "consider" the example of the great Apostle and High Priest of their profession? What more proper for us now, in the trials and temptations of our lives, than to keep that great and glorious example continually before our eyes? As also Moses was faithful, Fidelity to God was remarkable in Moses. In all the provocations and rebellions of the Jews, he was firm and unwavering. This is affirmed of him in Nu 12:7, to which place the apostle here alludes:--"My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all

his house." The word house, as applied to Moses, is used probably in the sense of family, as it often is, and refers to the family over which he presided--that is, the Jewish nation. The whole Jewish people were a household, or the family of God, and Moses was appointed to preside over it, and was faithful in the functions of his office there.

3 For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house.

For this man. The Lord Jesus. The word "man" is understood, but there can be no doubt that he is referred to. Was counted worthy. Was more worthy; or is more worthy. The word here used does not refer to anything that had been said of him, or to any estimate which had been made of him. It means simply that he was worthy of more honour than Moses. How he was so Paul proceeds to show. Of more glory δοξης. Honour, dignity, regard. He really had a higher rank, and was worthy of more respect. This was saying much for the Messiah; and that it was proper to say this Paul proceeds to show. He did not attempt in any way to undervalue Moses and his institutions. He gave him all the honour which the Jews were themselves disposed to render him. He admitted that he had been eminently faithful in the station where God had placed him; and he then proceeds to show that the Lord Jesus was entitled to honour superior to that, and that hence the Christian religion had more to attach its friends to it than the Jewish had. Inasmuch as he who hath builded the house. The idea here is, either that he who is the maker of a house--the architect-- is worthy of more respect than the house itself; or that he who is the founder of a family is worthy of more honour than the family of which he is the founder. It seems to me that the former is the meaning--for the latter is not always true. The founder of a family may be really deserving of much less respect than some of his descendants. But it is always true that the architect is worthy of more respect than the house which he makes. He exhibits intellect and skill.

The house, however splendid, has neither. The plan of the house was drawn by him; its beauty, its proportions, its ornaments, are what he made them, and but for him they would not have existed, Michael Angelo was worthy of more honour than "St. Peter's" at Rome; and Sir Christopher Wren worthy of more than St. Paul's at London. Galileo is more worthy of praise than the telescope, and Fulton more than a steam-engine. All the evidence of skill and adaptedness that there is in the invention had its origin in the inventor; all the beauty of the statue or the temple had its origin in the mind of him that designed it, an author is worthy of more honour than a book; and he that forms a work of art is worthy of more respect than the work itself. This is the idea here. Paul assumes that all things owed their origin to the Son of God, Heb 1:2,8,10. He was the Author of the universe; the Source of all wise and well-founded systems; the Originator of the Jewish dispensation, over which Moses presided. Whatever beauty or excellence there might have been, therefore, in that system, was to be traced to him; and whatever ability even Moses displayed was imparted by him. Christ is really the head of the family over which Moses presided, and has claims, therefore, to higher honour as such.

4 For every house is builded by some *man;* but he that built all things *is* God.

For every house is builded by some man. The words in this verse are plain, and the sentiment in it clear. The only difficulty is in seeing the connexion, and in understanding how it is intended to bear on what precedes, or on what follows. It is clear that every house must have a builder, and equally clear that God is the Creator of all things. But what is the meaning of this passage in this connexion? What is its bearing on the argument? If the verse was entirely omitted, and the fifth verse read in connexion with the third, there would be apparently nothing wanting to complete the sense of the writer, or to finish the comparison which he had commenced. Various ways have been adopted to explain the difficulty. Perhaps the following observations may remove it, and express the true sense.

(1.) Every family must have a founder; every dispensation an author; every house a builder. There must be some one, therefore, over all dispensations --the old and the new--the Jewish and the Christian.

(2.) Paul assumes that the Lord Jesus was Divine. He had demonstrated this in Heb 1; and he argues as if this were so, without now stopping to prove it, or even to affirm it expressly.

(3.) God must be over all things. He is Creator of all; and he must therefore be over all. As the Lord Jesus, therefore, is Divine, he must be over the Jewish dispensation as well as the Christian--or he must, as God, have been at the head of that--or over his own family or household.

(4.) As such, he must have a glory and honour which could not belong to Moses. He, in his Divine character, was the Author of both the Jewish and the Christian dispensations; and he must, therefore, have a rank far superior to that of Moses--which was the point which the apostle designed to illustrate. The meaning of the whole may be thus expressed:-- "The Lord Jesus is worthy of more honour than Moses, He is so, as the maker of a house deserves more honour than the house. He is Divine. In the beginning he laid the foundation of the earth, and was the agent in the creation of all things, Heb 1:2,10. He presides, therefore, over everything; and was over the Jewish and Christian dispensations--for there must have been some one over them, or the author of them, as really as it must be true that every house is built by some person. Being, therefore, over all things, and at the head of all dispensations, he MUST be more exalted than Moses." This seems to me to be the argument--- an argument which is based on the supposition that he is at the head of all things, and that he was the agent in the creation of all worlds. This view will make all consistent. The Lord Jesus will be seen to have a claim to a far higher honour than Moses, and Moses

will be seen to have derived his honour, as a servant of the Mediator, in the economy which he had appointed. ◆

5 And Moses verily *was* faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

Moses was faithful--as a servant. Not as the head of the dispensation; not as having originated it; but as in the employ and under the direction of its great Founder and Author--the Messiah. As such a servant he deserves all the honour for fidelity which has ever been claimed for him, but it cannot be the honour which is due to him who is at the head of the family or house. Paul assumed that Moses was a servant, and argued on that supposition, without attempting to prove it, because it was so often affirmed in the Old Testament, and must have been conceded by all the Jews. In numerous instances he is spoken of as "THE servant of the Lord." See Josh 1:1,2, 9:24 1Chr 6:49; 2Chr 24:9, Neh 10:29, Dan 9:11, Ex 14:31, 1Kgs 8:56, Ps 105:26. As this point was undisputed, it was only necessary to show that the Messiah was superior to a servant, in order to make the argument clear. For a testimony. To bear witness to those truths which were to be revealed; that is, he was the instrument of the Divine communications to the people, or the medium by which God made his will known. He did not originate the truths himself; but he was the mere medium by which God made known his truth to his people--a servant whom he employed to make his will known. The word "after" here is not necessary in order to a just translation of this passage, and obscures the sense. It does not mean that he was a witness of those truths which were to be spoken subsequently to his time, under another dispensation; nor those truths which the apostle proposed to consider in another part of the epistle, as Doddridge supposes; but it means merely that Moses stood forth as a public witness of the truths which God designed to reveal, or which were to be spoken. God did not speak to his people directly, and face to face, but he spoke through Moses, as an organ or medium. The sense is, Moses was a mere servant of God to communicate his will to man.

6 but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

But Christ as a son over his own house. He is not a servant. To the whole household or family of God he sustains the same relation which a son and heir in a family does to the household. That relation is far different from that of a servant. Moses was the latter; Christ was the former. To God he sustained the relation of a Son, and recognised him as his Father, and sought in all things to do his will; but over the whole family of God--the entire Church of all dispensations--he was like a son over the affairs of a family. Compared with the condition of a servant, Christ is as much superior to Moses as a son and heir is to the condition of a servant. A servant owns nothing; is heir to nothing; has no authority, and no right to control anything, and is himself wholly at the will of another. A son is the heir of all; has a prospective right to all; and is looked up to by all with respect. But the idea here is not merely that Christ is a son; it is that as a son he is placed over the whole arrangements of the household, and is one to whom all is entrusted as if it were his own. Whose house we are. Of whose family we are a part, or to which we belong. That is, we belong to the family over which Christ is placed, and not to that which was subject to Moses. If we hold fast. A leading object of this epistle is to guard those to whom it was addressed against the danger of apostasy. Hence this is introduced on all suitable occasions; and the apostle here says, that the only evidence which they could have that they belonged to the family of Christ, would be that they held fast the confidence which they had unto the end. If they did not do that, it would demonstrate that they never belonged to his family, for evidence of having belonged to his household was to be furnished only by perseverance to the end. The confidence. The word here used originally means, the liberty of speaking boldly and without restraint; then it means boldness, or confidence in general. And the rejoicing. The word here used means, properly, glorying, boasting, and then rejoicing. These words are used here in an adverbial

signification, and the meaning is, that the Christian has a confident and a rejoicing hope. It is

(1.) confident--bold--firm. It is not like the timid hope of the pagan, and the dreams and conjectures of the philosopher; it is not that which gives way at every breath of opposition; it is bold, firm, and manly. It is

(2.) rejoicing--triumphant, exulting. Why should not the hope of heaven fill with joy? Why should not he exult who has the prospect of everlasting happiness? Unto the end. To the end of life. Our religion, our hope, our confidence in God, must be persevered in to the end of life, if we would have evidence that we are his children. If hope is cherished for a while, and then abandoned; if men profess religion, and then fall away--no matter what were their raptures and triumphs--it proves that they never had any real piety. No evidence can be strong enough to prove that a man is a Christian, unless it leads him to persevere to the end of life.

A Rest for the People of God

7 Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,
8 harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

Wherefore. In view of the fact that the Author of the Christian dispensation has a rank far superior to that of Moses. Because Christ has claims on us far greater than those which Moses had, let us hearken to his voice, and dread his displeasure. As the Holy Ghost saith. In Ps 95:7-11. This is full proof that, in the estimation of the author of this epistle, the writer of this Psalm was inspired. The Holy Ghost speaks through the word which he has revealed. The apostle quotes this passage, and applies it to those whom he addressed, because the admonition was as pertinent and important under the Christian dispensation as it was under the Jewish. The danger

of hardening the heart by neglecting to hear his voice was as great, and the consequences would be as fearful and alarming.--We should regard the solemn warnings in the Old Testament against sin, and against the danger of apostasy, as addressed by the Holy Ghost to us. They are as applicable to us as they were to those to whom they were at first addressed; and we need all the influence of such appeals, to keep us from apostasy, as much as they did. Today. Now; at present. At the very time when the command is addressed to you. It is not to be put off till tomorrow. All God's commands relate to the present--to this day--to the passing moment. He gives us no commands about the future, he does not require us to repent; and to turn to him to-morrow, or ten years hence. The reasons are obvious.

(1.) Duty pertains to the present. It is our duty to turn from sin, and to love him now.

(2.) We know not that we shall live to another day. A command, therefore, could not extend to that time, unless it were accompanied with a revelation that we should live till then--and such a revelation God does not choose to give. Every one, therefore, should feel that whatever commands God addresses to him are addressed to him now. Whatever guilt he incurs by neglecting those commands is incurred now. For the present neglect and disobedience each one is to answer--and each one must give account to God for what he does TODAY. If ye will hear. In case you are willing to hearken to God, listen now, and do not defer it to a future period.--There is much in a willingness to hear the voice of God. A willingness to learn is usually the precursor of great attainments in knowledge. A willingness to reform is usually the precursor of reformation. Get a man willing to break off his habits of profaneness or intemperance, and usually all the rest is easy. The great difficulty in the mind of a sinner is in his will. He is unwilling to hear the voice of God; unwilling that he should reign over him; unwilling now to attend to

religion. While this unwillingness lasts he will make no efforts, and he sees, or creates, a thousand difficulties in the way of his becoming a Christian. But when that unwillingness is overcome, and he is disposed to engage in the work of religion, difficulties vanish, and the work of salvation becomes easy. His voice. The voice of God speaking to us

(1.) in his written word;

(2.) in the preached gospel;

(3.) in our own consciences;

(4.) in the events of his Providence;

(5.) in the admonitions of our relatives and friends. Whatever conveys to us the truth of God, or is adapted to impress that on us, may be regarded as his voice speaking to us. He thus speaks to us every day in some of these ways; and every day, therefore, he may entreat us not to harden our hearts.

Harden not your hearts. Do not render the heart insensible to the Divine voice and admonition. A hard heart is that where the conscience is seared and insensible; where truth makes no impression; where no religious effect is produced by afflictions; where preaching is listened to without interest; and where the mind is unaffected by the appeals of friends. The idea here is, that a refusal to listen to the voice of God is connected with a hardening of the heart. It is in two ways.

(1.) The very refusal to do this tends to harden it. And

(2.) in order to resist the appeals of God, men must resort to the means of voluntarily hardening the heart. This they do by setting themselves against the truth; by the excuses which they offer for not becoming Christians; by plunging into sin in order to avoid serious impressions; and by direct resistance of the Holy Ghost. No inconsiderable part of the efforts of sinners consists in endeavouring to produce insensibility in their minds to the truth and the appeals of God. As in the provocation. Literally, in the embittering-- Then it means that which embitters or provokes the mind--as disobedience. Here it refers to what they did to embitter the mind of God against them; that is, to the course of conduct which was adopted to provoke him to wrath. In the day of temptation. In the time of temptation--the word day being used here, as it is often, to denote an indefinite period, or time in general. The word temptation here refers to the various provocations by which they tried the patience of God. They rebelled against him; they did that which put the Divine patience and forbearance to a trial. It does not mean that they tempted God to do evil, but that his long-suffering was tried by their sins. In the wilderness. The desert through which they passed. The word wilderness, in the Scriptures, commonly means a desert. Mt 3:1. "One provocation was in demanding bread at Sin; a second for want of water at Massah or Meribah; a third time at Sinai with the golden calf; a fourth time at Taberah for want of flesh; a fifth time at Kadesh, when they refused to go up into Canaan, and the oath came that they should die in the wilderness. A like refusal may prevent us from entering into rest."--Dr. J. P. Wilson, MS. Notes.

Proved me. "As if they would have made an experiment how much it was possible for me to bear." Doddridge. The meaning is, they put my patience to a thorough trial. And saw my works. That is, my miracles, or my interpositions in their behalf. They saw the wonders at the Red Sea, the descent on Mount Sinai, the supply of manna, etc.; and yet, while seeing those works, they rebelled. Even while sinners look on the

doings of God, and are surrounded by the proofs of his power and goodness, they rebel, and provoke him to anger. Men sin when God is filling their houses with plenty; when he opens his hand daily to supply their wants; when they behold the manifestations of his goodness on the sea and on the land; and even in the midst of all the blessings of redemption they provoke him to wrath. Forty years. The whole time during which they were passing from Egypt to the promised land. This may mean, either that they saw his works forty years, or that they tempted him forty years. The sense is not materially affected, whichever interpretation is preferred.

Wherefore I was grieved. On the word grieved, Eph 4:30. The word here means that he was offended with, or that he was indignant at them. They do alway err in their heart. Their long trial of forty years had been sufficient to show that it was a characteristic of the people that they were disposed to wander from God. Forty years are enough to show what the character is. They had seen his works; they had been called to obey him; they had received his law; and yet their conduct, during that time, had shown that they were not disposed to obey him. So of an individual. A man who has lived in sin forty years; who during all that time has rebelled against God, and disregarded all his appeals; who has lived for himself, and not for his Maker, has shown what his character is. Longer time is unnecessary; and if God should then cut him down, and consign him to hell, he could not be blamed for doing it. A man who during forty years will live in sin, and resist all the appeals of God, shows what is in his heart; and no injustice is done if then he is summoned before God, and he swears that he shall not enter into his rest. And they have not known my ways. They have been rebellious. They have not been acquainted with the true God; or they have not approved my doings. The word know is often used, in the Scriptures, in the sense of approving, or loving. Mt 7:23.

9 when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works
forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in *their* heart;
and they have not known my ways.
11 So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

So I sware in my wrath. God is often represented in the Scriptures as swearing--and usually as swearing by himself, or by his own existence. Of course this is figurative, and denotes a strong affirmation, or a settled and determined purpose. An oath with us implies the strongest affirmation, or the expression of the most settled and determined purpose of mind. The meaning here is, that so refractory and perverse had they showed themselves, that he solemnly resolved that they should never enter into the land of Canaan.

They shall not enter into my rest. Marg. As in the original, if they shall enter. That is, they shall not enter. The word if has this negative meaning in Hebrew, and this meaning is transferred to the Greek word if. Comp. 1Sam 3:17, 2Sam 3:35, 2Kgs 6:31. It is called "my rest" here; meaning that it was such rest as God had provided, or such as he enjoyed. The particular rest referred to here was that of the land of Canaan, but which was undoubtedly regarded as emblematic of the "rest" in heaven. Into that rest God solemnly said they should never enter. They had been rebellious. All the means of reclaiming them had failed. God had warned and entreated them; he had caused his mercies to pass before them, and had visited them with judgments in vain; and he now declares, that for all their rebellion they should be excluded from the promised land. God speaks here in the manner of men. Men are affected with feelings of indignation in such circumstances, and God makes use of such language as expresses such feelings. But we are to understand it in a manner consistent with his character, and we are not to suppose that he is affected with the same emotions which agitate the bosoms of men. The meaning is, that he formed and expressed a deliberate and solemn purpose, that they should never enter into the promised land. Whether this rest refers here to heaven, and whether the meaning is that God

would exclude them from that blessed world, will be more appropriately considered in the next chapter. The particular idea is, that they were to be excluded from the promised land, and that they should fall in the wilderness. No one can doubt, also, that their conduct had been such as to show that the great body of them were unfit to enter into heaven.

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Take heed, brethren. In view of the conduct of the rebellious Jews, and of their fearful doom, be on your guard lest you also be found to have had the same feelings of rebellion and unbelief. See to it, that under the new dispensation, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel, you be not found to manifest such feelings as shall exclude you from the heavenly world. The principle has been settled by their unbelief, that they who oppose God will be excluded from his rest. That may be shown under all dispensations, and in all circumstances; and there is not less danger of it under the gospel, than there was when the fathers were conducted to the promised land. You are travelling through a wilderness--the barren wilderness of this world. You are exposed to trials and temptations. You meet with many a deadly and mighty foe. You have hearts prone to apostasy and sin. You are seeking a land of promise--a land of rest. You are surrounded by the wonders of almighty power, and by the proofs of infinite beneficence. Disobedience and rebellion in you will as certainly exclude you from heaven, as their rebellion did them from the promised land; and as their great sin was unbelief, be on your guard lest you manifest the same.

An evil heart of unbelief. An evil, unbelieving heart. The word unbelief is used to qualify the word heart by a Hebraism--a mode of speech that is common in the New Testament. An unbelieving heart was the cause of their apostasy, and what worked their ruin will produce ours. The root of their evil was a want of confidence in God--and this is what is meant here by a heart of unbelief. The great difficulty on earth everywhere is a want of confidence in God and this

has produced all the ills that man has ever suffered. It led to the first apostasy; and it has led to every other apostasy, and will continue to produce the same effects to the end of the world. The apostle says that this heart of unbelief is "evil." Men often feel that it is a matter of little consequence whether they have faith or not, provided their conduct is right; and hence they do not see or admit the propriety of what is said about the consequences of unbelief in the Scriptures. But what do they say about a want of confidence between a husband and wife? Are there no evils in that? What husband can sleep with quietness on his pillow, if he has no confidence in the virtue of his wife? What child can have peace who has no confidence in a parent? How can there be prosperity in a community, where there is no confidence in a bank or an insurance office, or where one merchant has no confidence in another; where a neighbour has no confidence in his neighbour; where the sick have no confidence in a physician; and where, in general, all confidence is broken up between man and man? If I wished to produce the deepest distress in any community, and had the power, I would produce the same want of confidence between man and man which there is now between man and his Maker. I would thus take away sleep from the pillow of every husband and wife, every parent and child; and make every man wretched, with the feeling that all the property which he had was insecure. Among men, nothing is seen to be productive of greater evil than a want of confidence or faith; and why should not the same evil exist in the Divine administration? And if want of confidence produces such results between man and man, why should it not produce similar, or greater miseries, where it occurs in relation to God? There is not an evil that man endures which might not be alleviated or removed by confidence in God; and hence one great object of the Christian religion is, to restore to man his lost confidence in the God that made him.

In departing from the living God. Manifested in departing from him; or leading to a departure from him. The idea is, that such a heart of unbelief would be connected with apostasy

from God. All apostasy first exists in the heart, and then is manifested in the life. They who indulge in unbelief in any form, or in regard to any subject, should remember that this is the great source of all alienation from God, and that if indulged it will lead to complete apostasy. They who wish to live a life of piety should keep the heart right, he that lives "by the faith of the Son of God" is safe; and none is safe but he.

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

But exhort one another daily. This is addressed to the members of the churches; and it follows, therefore,

(1.) that it is their duty to exhort their brethren; and

(2.) that it is their duty to do it daily; that is, constantly. See Heb 10:24, 1Thes 4:18, 5:11; Rom 12:8. While this is the special duty of the ministers of the gospel, 1Timm 6:2, 2Ti 4:2; Tit 2:6,15, it is also the duty of all the members of the churches --and a most important, but much neglected duty. This does not refer to public exhortation, which more appropriately pertains to the ministers of the gospel, but to that private watch and care which the individual members of the church should have over one another. But in what cases is such exhortation proper? What rules should regulate it ? I answer, It may be regarded as a duty, or is to be performed in such cases as the following:--

(1.) Intimate friends in the church should exhort and counsel one another; should admonish each other of their faults; and should aid one another in the divine life.

(2.) Parents should do the same thing to their children. They are placed particularly under their watch and care. A pastor cannot often see the members of his flock in private; and a parent may greatly aid him in his work by watching over the members of their families who are connected with the church.

(3.) Sabbath school teachers may aid much in this duty. They are to be assistants to parents and to pastors. They often have under their care youthful members of the churches. They have an opportunity of knowing their state of mind, their temptations, and their dangers, better than the pastor can have. It should be theirs, therefore, to exhort them to a holy life.

(4.) The aged should exhort the young. Every aged Christian may thus do much for the promotion of religion. His experience is the property of the church; and he is bound so to employ it, as to be useful in aiding the feeble, reclaiming the wandering, recovering the backslider, and directing the inquiring. There is a vast amount of spiritual capital of this kind in the church that is unemployed, and that might be made eminently useful in helping others to heaven.

(5.) Church members should exhort one another. There may not be the intimacy of personal friendship among all the members of a large church, but still the connexion between them should be regarded as sufficiently tender and confidential to make it proper for any one to admonish a brother who goes astray. They belong to the same communion. They sit down at the same Supper of the Lord. They express their assent to the same articles of faith. They are regarded by the community as united. Each member sustains a portion of the honour and the responsibility of the whole; and each member should feel that he has a right, and that it is his duty, to admonish a brother if he goes astray. Yet this duty is greatly neglected. In what church is it performed! How often do church-members see a fellow-member go astray, without any exhortation or admonition! How often do they hear reports of the inconsistent lives of other members, and perhaps contribute to the circulation of these reports themselves, without any pains taken to inquire whether they are true! How often do the poor fear the rich members of the church, or the rich despise the poor, and see each other live in sin, without any attempt to entreat or save them! I would not

have the courtesies of life violated. I would not have any assume a dogmatical or dictatorial air. I would have no one step out of his proper sphere of life. But the principle which I would lay down is, that the fact of church-membership should inspire such confidence, as to make it proper for one member to exhort another whom he sees going astray. Belonging to the same family; having the same interest in religion; and all suffering when one suffers, why should they not be allowed tenderly and kindly to exhort one another to a holy life?

While it is called To-day. While life lasts; or while you may be permitted to use the language, "To-day hear the voice of God." The idea is, that the exhortation is not to be intermitted. It is to be our daily business to admonish and exhort one another. Christians are liable every day to go astray; every day they need aid in the divine life; and they who are fellow;heirs with them of salvation should be ever ready to counsel and advise them.

Lest any of you be hardened. Heb 3:8. It is possible for Christians to become, in a sense, hardened. Their minds become less sensitive than they were to the claims of duty, and their consciences become less tender. Hence the propriety of mutual exhortation, that they may always have the right feeling, and may always listen to the commands of God.

The deceitfulness of sin. Eph 4:22. Sin is always deceitful. It promises more than it performs. It assures us of pleasure which it never imparts. It leads us on beyond what was supposed when we began to indulge in it. The man who commits sin is always under a delusion; and sin, if he indulges it, will lead him on from one step to another, until the heart becomes entirely hardened. Sin puts on plausible appearances and pretences; it assumes the name of virtue; it offers excuses and palliations, until the victim is snared; and then, spell-bound, he is hurried on to every excess. If sin was always seen in its true aspect when man is tempted to commit it, it would

be so hateful that he would flee from it with the utmost abhorrence. What young man would become a drunkard, if he saw, when he began, exactly the career which he would run? What young man, now vigorous and healthful, and with fair prospects of usefulness and happiness, would ever touch the intoxicating bowl, if he saw what he would be when he became a sot? What man would ever enter the room of the gambler, if he saw just where indulgence would soon lead him, and if, at the commencement he saw exactly the woe and despair which would inevitably ensue? Who would become a voluptuary and a sensualist, if he saw exactly the close of such a career? Sin deceives, deludes, blinds. Men do not, or will not, see the fearful results of indulgence. They are deluded by the hope of happiness or of gain; they are drawn along by the fascinations and allurements of pleasure, until the heart becomes hard and the conscience seared--and then they give way without remorse. From such a course the apostle would have Christians guarded by kind and affectionate exhortation. Each one should feel that he has an interest in keeping his brother from such a doom; and each Christian, thus in danger should be willing to listen to the kind exhortation of a Christian brother.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

For we are made partakers of Christ. We are spiritually united to the Saviour. We become one with him. We partake of his Spirit and allotments. The sacred writers are accustomed to describe the Christian as being closely united to the Saviour, and as being one with him. Jn 15:1, seq., Jn 17:21; Jn 17:23; Eph 5:30; 1Cor 12:27. The idea is, that we participate in all that pertains to him. It is a union of feeling and affection; a union of principle and of congeniality; a union of dependence as well as love; a union where nothing is to be imparted by us, but everything gained; and a union, therefore, on the part of the Redeemer of great condescension. It is the union of the branch to the vine, where the branch is supported and nourished by the vine, and not the union of the ivy and the oak, where the ivy has its own roots, and merely clings around

the oak and climbs up upon it. What else can be said so honourable of man as that he is "a partaker of Christ;" that he shares his feelings here, and that he is to share his honours in a brighter world? Compared with this, what is it to participate with the rich and the gay in their pleasures; what would it be to share in the honours of conquerors and kings?

If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast. Heb 3:6. If we continue to maintain the same confidence which we had in the beginning, or which we showed at the commencement of our Christian life. At first, they had been firm in the Christian hope. They evinced true and strong attachment to the Redeemer. They were ardent and devoted to his cause. If they continued to maintain that to the end, that is, the end of life; if, in the midst of all temptations and trials they adhered inflexibly to the cause of the Savior, they would show that they were true Christians, and would partake of the blessedness of the heavenly world with the Redeemer. The idea is, that it is only perseverance in the ways of religion that constitutes certain evidence of piety. Where piety is manifested through life, or where there is an untiring devotion to the cause of God, there the evidence is clear and undoubted. But where there is at first great ardour, zeal, and confidence, which soon dies away, then it is clear that they never had any real attachment to him and his cause. It may be remarked here, that the "beginning of the confidence" of those who are deceived, and who know nothing about religion at heart, is often as bold as where there is true piety. The hypocrite makes up in ardour what he lacks in sincerity; and he who is really deceived, is usually deceived under the influence of some strong and vivid emotion, which he mistakes for true religion. Often the sincere convert is calm, though decided, and sometimes is even timorous and doubting; while the self-deceiver is noisy in profession, and clamorous in his zeal, and much disposed to blame the lukewarmness of others. Evidence of piety, therefore, should not be built on that early zeal; nor should it be concluded, that because there is ardour, there is of necessity genuine religion.

Ardour is valuable, and true religion is ardent; but there is other ardour than that which the gospel inspires. The evidence of genuine piety is to be found in that which will bear us up under trials, and endure amidst persecution and opposition. The doctrine here is, that it is necessary to persevere if we would have the evidence of true piety. This doctrine is taught everywhere in the Scriptures. Persevere in what? I answer, not

(1.) merely in a profession of religion. A man may do that, and have no piety.

(2.) Not in zeal for party or sect. The Pharisees had that to the end of their lives.

(3.) Not in mere honesty, and correctness of external deportment. A man may do that in the church, as well as out of it, and yet have no religion. But we should persevere

(1) in the love of God and of Christ--in conscious, ardent, steady attachment to Him to whom our lives are professedly devoted.

(2) In the secret duties of religion: in that watchfulness over the heart; that communion with God; that careful study of the Bible; that guardianship over the temper; and in that habitual intercourse with God in secret prayer which is appropriate to a Christian, and which marks the Christian character.

(3) In the performance of the public duties of religion: in leading a Christian life, as distinguished from a life of worldliness and vanity--a life of mere morality and honesty--a life such as thousands lead who are out of the church. There

is something which distinguishes a Christian from one who is not a Christian; a religious from an irreligious man. There is something in religion; something which serves to characterize a Christian; and unless that something is manifested, there can be no evidence of true piety. The Christian is to be distinguished in temper, feeling, deportment, aims, plans, from the men of this World; and unless those characteristics are shown in the life and deportment, there can be no well-founded evidence of religion. Learn,

(1.) that it is not mere feeling that furnishes evidence of religion.

(2.) That it is not mere excitement that constitutes religion.

(3.) That it is not mere ardour.

(4.) That it is not mere zeal. All these may be temporary. Religion is something that lasts through life. It goes with a man everywhere. It is with him in trial. It forms his plans; regulates his temper; suggests his words; prompts to his actions. It lives with him in all his external changes, and goes with him through the dark valley of death, and accompanies him up to the bar of God, and is with him for ever.

15 while it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice,
harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that
came out of Egypt by Moses.

When they had heard. Had heard God speaking to them, and giving them his commands. Did provoke.Provoked him to anger; or their conduct was such as was fitted to produce indignation. Heb 3:8. Howbeit. αλλα. But. This particle "in a series of questions, and standing at the head of a question, means, but, further. It serves to connect, and give intensity to

the interrogation." Stuart. Paul means to ask, with emphasis, whether the great mass of those who came out of Egypt did not apostatize at the same time he means to intimate that there is no security that they who have witnessed remarkable manifestations of the greatness of God, and who have partaken of extraordinary mercies, will not apostatize and perish. As the Hebrews, who heard God speak from Mount Sinai, revolted and perished, so it is possible that they who witness the mercies of God in redemption may be in danger of abusing all those mercies, and of perishing. By the example, therefore, of the disobedient Israelites, he would admonish professed Christians of their danger.

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

But with whom was he grieved forty years? With whom was he angry? Heb 3:10. Was it not with them that had sinned? That had sinned in various ways --by rebellion, murmuring, unbelief. As God was angry with them for their sins, we have the same reason to apprehend that he will be angry with us if we sin; and we should, therefore, be on our guard against that unbelief which would lead us to depart from him, Heb 3:12. Whose carcases fell, Nu 14:29. That is, they all died, and were left on the sands of the desert. The whole generation was strewed along in the way to Canaan. All of those who had seen the wonders that God had done in the land of Ham---who had been rescued in so remarkable a manner from oppression--were thus cut down, and died in the deserts through which they were passing, Nu 26:64,65. Such an example of the effects of revolt against God, and of unbelief, was well fitted to admonish Christians in the time of the apostle, and is fitted to admonish us now, of the danger of the sin of unbelief. We are not to suppose that all of those who thus died were excluded from heaven. Moses and Aaron were among the number of those who were not permitted to enter the promised land, but of their piety there can be no doubt. Beyond all question, also, there were many others of that generation who were truly pious. But, at different times, they seem all to have partaken of the prevalent feelings of

discontent, and were all involved in the sweeping condemnation that they should die in the wilderness.

18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

But to them that believed not. That did not confide in God. De 1:32: "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." In consequence of this want of faith, God solemnly sware unto them that they should not enter into the promised land. De 1:34,35: "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers, save Caleb," etc. The distinct reason, therefore, assigned by --Moses, why they did not enter the promised land, was a want of faith; and this accords directly with the design of the apostle here. He is exhorting those whom he addresses to beware of an evil heart of unbelief, Heb 3:12. He says that it was such a heart that excluded the Hebrews from the promised land. The same thing, says he, must exclude you from heaven--the promised home of the believer; and if that firm confidence in God and his promises which he requires is wanting, you will be excluded from the world of eternal rest.

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

It was unbelief that kept them out of Canaan. Hence, the lesson which is given more fully in the next chapter. These warnings show us that the Hebrew Christians addressed were subjected to trials, and some of them in danger of apostasy, falling away through unbelief. Hence, the fate of Israel in the wilderness is pointed out. If unbelief shut out the Israelites from the rest in Canaan, unbelief will shut the gates of heavenly rest to those who have started on the way.

So we see, etc. We see, from the direct testimony of the Old Testament, that unbelief was the reason why they were excluded from the promised land. Let us learn, in view of the reasoning and exhortations here--

(1.) The evil of unbelief. It excluded that whole generation, consisting of many hundred thousand souls, from the land of promise--the land to which they had looked with ardent hopes, and with warm desires. It will exclude countless millions from heaven. A want of confidence in God is the great source of evil in this world, and will be the cause of wretchedness to all eternity of unnumbered hosts. But surely that was not a small or unimportant thing which strewed the desert with the bones of that whole generation whom God had, in so remarkable a manner, rescued from Egyptian servitude. And that cannot be a small matter which wile cause multitudes to sink down to infinite wretchedness and despair.

(2.) Let us, who are professed Christians, be cautious against indulging unbelief in our hearts. Our difficulties all begin there. We lose confidence in God. We doubt his promises, his oaths, his threatenings. In dark and trying times we begin to have doubts about the wisdom of his dealings, and about his goodness. Unbelief once admitted into the heart is the beginning of many woes. When a man loses confidence in God, he is on a shoreless ocean that is full of whirlpools, and rocks, and quicksands, and where it is impossible to find a secure anchorage. There is nothing to which he may moor his driven bark; and he will never find safety or peace till he comes back to God.

(3.) Let us live a life of faith. Let us so live that we may say with Paul, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." So living, we shall have peace. The mind will be at rest. Storms and tempests may blow, but we shall be secure. Others

may be troubled in the vicissitudes of life, but our minds will be at peace.

(4.) Let us live expecting the future "rest" that remains for us. Let us keep our eye fixed upon it. To us there is a rest promised, as there was to the Hebrews whom God had delivered from the land of oppression; and we may by faith attain to that, "rest," as they might have reached the land of Canaan.

(5.) Let us persevere to the end. He that draws back must be lost. He that does not endure to the end of life, in the ways of religion, can never have been a Christian. There is nothing which will furnish certain evidence of religion, unless our piety is such as to lead us to persevere till death. The man who enters on the professed Christian life expecting to fall away, or who can look upon the possibility of falling away without concern, has never known anything of the nature of true religion, he cannot be a Christian. He may have had raptures and visions; he may be a loud professor, and a noisy and zealous partisan, but he has no evidence that he has ever known anything about religion. That religion which is not connected with a firm and determined purpose, by the grace of God, to persevere to the end of life, is no true religion; and a man who expects to fall away and go back again to the world, or who can look at such an idea without alarm, should regard it as a settled matter that he has no true knowledge of God.

(6.) No man should delay the work of salvation to a future time. To-day is the accepted time; to-day the only time of which we have any security. God speaks to-day, and to-day his voice should be heard. No man on any subject should defer till to-morrow what ought to be done to-clay. He who defers religion till a future time neglects his own best interest;

violates most solemn obligations; and endangers his immortal soul. What security can any one have that he will live to see another day? What evidence has he that he will be any more disposed to attend to his salvation then than he is now? What evidence can he have that he will not provoke God by this course, and bring condemnation on his soul? Of all delusions, that is the most wonderful by which dying men are led to defer attention to the concerns of the soul to a future period of life. Nowhere has Satan such advantage as in keeping this delusion before the mind; and if in respect to anything the voice of warning and alarm should be lifted loud and long, it is in reference to this. Oh, why will not men be wise to-day? Why will they not embrace the offer of salvation now? Why will they not at once make sure of eternal happiness? And why, amidst the changes and trials of this life, will they not so secure the everlasting inheritance as to feel that that is safe--that there is one thing at least that cannot be shaken and disturbed by commercial embarrassment and distress; one thing secure, though friends and kindred are torn away from them; one thing safe when their own health fads, and they lie down on the bed where they will bid adieu to all earthly comforts, and from which they will never rise.

Hebrews-4

1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

1. Let us therefore fear. Let us be apprehensive that we may possibly fail of that rest. The kind of fear which is recommended here is that which leads to caution and care. A man who is in danger of losing his life or health should be watchful; a seaman that is in danger of running on a lee-shore should be on his guard. So we who have the offer of heaven, and who yet are in danger of losing it, should take all possible precautions lest we fail of it,

Lest a promise being left us. Paul assumes here that there is such a promise. In the subsequent part of the chapter, he goes

more into the subject, and proves from the Old Testament that there is such a promise made to us. It is to be remembered, that Paul had not the New Testament then to appeal to, as we have, which is perfectly clear on the subject, but that he was obliged to appeal to the Old Testament. This he did, not only because the New Testament was not then written, but because he was reasoning with those who had been Hebrews, and who regarded the authority of the Old Testament as decisive. If his reasoning to us appears somewhat obscure, we should put ourselves in his place, and should remember that the converts then had not the full light which we have now in the New Testament.

Of entering into his rest. The rest of God--the rest of the world where he dwells. It is called his rest, because it is that which he enjoys, and which he alone can confer. There can be no doubt that Paul refers here to heaven, and means to say that there is a promise left to Christians of being admitted to the enjoyment of that blessed world where God dwells.

Any of you should seem to come short of it. The word "seem" here is used as a form of gentle and mild address, implying the possibility of thus coming short. The word here-- δοκεω - is often used so as to appear to give no essential addition to the sense of a passage, though it is probable that it always gave a shading to the meaning. Thus the phrase esa videatur is often used by Cicero at the end of a period, to denote merely that a thing was--though he expressed it as though it merely seemed to be. Such language is often used in argument or in conversation as a modest expression, as when we say a thing seems to be so and so, instead of saying "it is." In some such sense Paul probably used the phrase here--perhaps as expressing what we would by this language--" lest it should appear at last that any of you had come short of it." The phrase "come short of it" is probably used with reference to the journey to the promised land, where they who came out of Egypt came short of that land, and fell in the wilderness. They did not reach it. --This verse teaches the important truth, that

though heaven is offered to us, and that a "rest" is promised to us if we seek it, yet that there is reason to think that many may fail of reaching it who had expected to obtain it. Among those will be the following classes:--

(1.) Those who are professors of religion, but who have never known anything of true piety.

(2.) Those who are expecting to be saved by their own works, and are looking forward to a world of rest on the ground of what their own hands can do.

(3.) Those who defer attention to the subject, from time to time, until it becomes too late. They expect to reach heaven, but they are not ready to give their hearts to God now, and the subject is deferred from one period to another, until death arrests them unprepared.

(4.) Those who have been awakened to see their guilt and danger, and who have been almost, but not quite, ready to give up their hearts to God. Such were Agrippa, Felix, the young ruler, (Mk 10:21;) and such are all those who are almost but not quite prepared to give up the world, and to devote themselves to the Redeemer. To all these the promise of "rest" is made, if they will accept of salvation as it is offered in the gospel; all of them cherish a hope that they will be saved; and all of them are destined alike to be disappointed. With what earnestness, therefore, should we strive that we may not fail of the grace of God!

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them. This translation by no means conveys the sense of the original. According to this, it would seem that the Gospel, as we understand it, or the whole plan of salvation, was communicated to them, as well as to us. But this is by no means the idea. The discussion has reference only to the

promise of rest; and the assertion of the apostle is, that this good news of a promise of rest is made to us, as really as it was made to them. "Rest" was promised to them in the land of Canaan--an emblem of the eternal rest of the people of God. That was unquestioned, and Paul took it for granted. His object now is, to show that a promise of "rest" is as really made to us as it was to them, and that there is the same danger of failing to secure it as there was then. It was important for him to show that there was such a promise made to the people of God in his time; and as he was discoursing of those who were Hebrews, he of course made his appeal to the Old Testament. The literal translation would be, "For we are evangelized--εσμενευηγγελισμενοι-- as well as they." The word evangelize means, to communicate good news, or glad tidings; and the idea here is, that the good news or glad tidings of "rest" is announced to us as really as it was to them. This the apostle proves in the following verses. But the word preached. Marg. Of hearing. The word preach we also use now, in a technical sense, as denoting a formal proclamation of the gospel by the ministers of religion.

But this is not the idea here. It means, simply, the word which they heard; and refers particularly to the promise of "rest" which was made to them. That message was communicated to them by Moses.

Did not profit them. They derived no advantage from it. They rejected and despised it, and were, therefore, excluded from the promised land. It exerted no influence over their hearts and lives, and they lived and died as though no such promise had been made. Thus many persons live and die now. The offer of salvation is made to them. They are invited to come, and be saved. They are assured that God is willing to save them, and that the Redeemer stands with open arms to welcome them to heaven. They are trained up under the gospel; are led early in life to the sanctuary; are in the habit of attending on the preaching of the gospel all their days; but still what they hear exerts no saving influence on their hearts.

At the close of life, all that could be truly said of them is, that they have not been profited; it has been no real advantage to them, in regard to their final destiny, that they have enjoyed so many privileges.

Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Marg. "Or, because they were not united by faith to" There are some various readings on this text, and one of these has given occasion to the version in the margin. Many Mss., instead of the common reading--συγκεκραμενος which the word mixed would be united to ολογος "the word," have another reading-- συγκεκραμενους according to which the word mixed would refer to "them," and would mean that they who heard the word and rejected it were not mixed, or united, with those who believed it. The former reading makes the best sense, and is the best sustained; and the idea is, that the message which was preached was not received into the heart by faith. They were destitute of faith, and the message did not profit them. The word mixed is supposed by many of the best critics to refer to the process of which food is made nutritive, by being properly mixed with the saliva and the gastric juice, and thus converted into chyme and chyle, and then changed into blood. If suitably mired in this manner, it contributes to the life and health of the bodily frame; if not, it is the means of disease and death. So it is supposed the apostle meant to say of the message which God sends to man. If properly received--if mixed or united with faith--it becomes the means of spiritual support and life; if not, it furnishes no alhnent to the soul, and will be of no advantage. As food, when properly digested, incorporates itself with the body, and gives it support, so those critics suppose it to be of the word of God, that it incorporates itself with the internal and spiritual man, and gives it support and life: It may be doubted, however, whether the apostle had any such allusion as this, and whether it is not rather a refinement of the critics than of Paul. The word used here properly denotes a mixing or mingling together, like water and wine, 2 Mac. xv. 39; a uniting together in proper proportions and order, as of the body, 1Cor 12:24; and it may

refer here merely to a proper union of faith with the word, in order that it might be profitable. The idea is, that merely to hear the message of life with the outward ear will be of no advantage. It must be believed, or it will be of no benefit. The message is sent to mankind at large. God declares his readiness to save all. But this message is of no advantage to multitudes--for such reasons as these:--

(1.) Many do not attend to it at all. They do not even listen respectfully to it. Multitudes go not near the place where the gospel is proclaimed; and many, when there, and when they seem to attend, have their minds and hearts on other things.

(2.) Many do not believe it. They have doubts about the whole subject of religion, or about the particular doctrines of the gospel; and while they do not believe it, how can they be benefited by it? How can a man be profited by the records of history if he does not believe them? How can one be benefited by the truths of science if he does not believe them? And if a man was assured that by going to a certain place he might close a bargain that would be a great advantage to him, of what use would this information be to him if he did not believe a word of it? So of the knowledge of salvation; the facts of the history recorded in the Bible; the offset of eternal life.

(3.) Men do not allow the message of life to influence their conduct, and of course it is of no advantage to them. Of what use can it be, if they steadily resist all the influence which it would have, and ought to have, on their lives? They live as though it were ascertained that there is no truth in the Bible; no reason for being influenced by the offered hope of eternal life, or alarmed by the threatened danger of eternal death. Resolved to pursue a course of life that is at variance with the commands of God, they cannot be profited by the message of salvation. Having no faith which influences and controls the heart, they are not in the least benefited by the offer of heaven. When they die, their condition is in no wise made better by

the fact, that they were trained up in a pious family; that they were instructed in the Sabbath-school; that they had the Bible in their dwellings, and that they sat regularly under a preached gospel. For any advantage to be derived from all this in the future world, they might as well have never heard the message of life. Nay it would have been better for them. The only effect of these privileges is to harden them in guilt, and to sink them deeper in hell. 2Cor 2:16.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For we which have believed do enter into rest. That is, it is a certain fact that believers will enter into rest. That promise is made to "believers;" and as we have evidence that we come under the denomination of believers, it will follow that we have the offer of rest as well as they. That this is so the apostle proceeds to prove; that is, he proceeds to show, from the Old Testament, that there was a promise to "believers" that they would enter into rest. Since there was such a promise, and since there was danger that by unbelief that "rest" might be lost, he proceeds to show them the danger, and to warn them of it.

As he said, etc. See Heb 3:11. The meaning of this passage is this:-- "God made a promise of rest to those who believe. They to whom the offer was first made failed, and did not enter in. It must follow, therefore, that the offer extended to others, since God designed that some should enter in, or that it should not be provided in vain. To them it was a solemn declaration, that unbelievers should not enter in--and this implied that believers would. As we now, "says he, "sustain the character of believers, it follows that to us the promise of rest is now made, and we may partake of it."

If they shall enter, etc. That is, they shall not enter in. See Heb 3:11. The "rest" here spoken of, as reserved for Christians,

must be different from that of the promised land. It is something that pertains to Christians now, and it must, therefore, refer to the "rest" that remains in heaven.

Although the works were finished, etc. This is a difficult expression. What works are referred to? it may be asked. How does this bear on the subject under discussion? How can it be a proof that there remains a "rest" to those who believe now? This was the point to be demonstrated; and this passage was designed clearly to bear on that point. As it is in our translation, the passage seems to make no sense whatever. Tindal renders it, "And that spake he verily long after that the works were made from the foundation of the world laid," which makes much better sense than our translation. Doddridge explains it as meaning, "And this may lead us further to reflect on what is elsewhere said concerning his works as they were finished from the foundation of the world." But it is difficult to see why they should reflect on his works just then, and how this would bear on the case in hand. Prof. Stuart supposes that the word "rest" must be understood here before "works," and translates it, "Shall not enter into my rest--to wit, rest from the works which were performed when the world was founded." Prof. Robinson (Lex.) explains it as meaning, "The rest here spoken of, 'MY rest,' could not have been God's resting from his works, (Gen 2:2,) for this rest, the Sabbath, had already existed from the creation of the world." Dr. J.P. Wilson (MSS. Notes) renders it, "For we who have believed do enter into rest (or a cessation) indeed (καιτοι) of the works done (among men) from the beginning of the world." Amidst this variety of interpretation it is difficult to determine the true sense. But perhaps the main thought may be collected from the following remarks.

(1.) The Jews, as the people of God, had a rest promised them in the land of Canaan. Of that they failed by their unbelief.

(2.) The purpose of the apostle was to prove that there was a similar promise made to the people of God long subsequent to that, and to which all his people were invited.

(3.) That rest was not that of the promised land, it was such as God had himself when he had finished the work of creation. That was peculiarly his rest--the rest of God, without toil or weariness, and after his whole work was finished.

(4.) His people were invited to the same rest--the rest of God--to partake of his felicity; to enter into that bliss which he enjoyed when he had finished the work of creation. The happiness of the saints was to be like that. It was to be, in their case, also a rest from toil--to be enjoyed at the end of all that they had to do. To prove that Christians were to attain to such a rest was the purpose which the apostle had in view--showing that it was a general doctrine pertaining to believers in every age, that there was a promise of rest for them. I would, then, regard the middle clause of this verse as a parenthesis, and render the whole," For we who are believers shall enter into rest--[the rest] indeed which occurred when the works were finished at the foundation of the world--as he said [in one place] as I have sworn in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest." That was the true rest--such rest or repose as God had when he finished the work of creation--such as he has now in heaven. This gives the highest possible idea of the dignity and desirableness of that "rest" to which we look forward--for it is to be such as God enjoys, and is to elevate us more and more to him. What more exalted idea can there be of happiness than to participate in the calmness, the peace, the repose, the freedom from raging passions, from wearisome toil, and from agitating cares, which God enjoys? Who, torn with conflicting passions here, wearied with toil, and distracted with care, ought not to feel it a privilege to look forward to that rest? Of this rest the Sabbath and the promised land were emblems. They to whom the promise was made did not enter in; but some shall enter in, and the promise therefore pertains to us.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise,
And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.
5 And in this *place* again,
If they shall enter into my rest.
6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and
they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of
unbelief:

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein. That is, "Since there is a rest spoken of in the Scriptures, implying that it is to be enjoyed by some, and since they to whom it was first promised did not inherit it, it follows that it must still be in reserve." This is the conclusion which the apostle draws from the argument in the previous verses, and is connected with Heb 4:9, where he says that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God"--the point to which the whole argument tended. The statement in Heb 4:7,8, is to be regarded as an interruption in stating the conclusion, or as the suggestion of a new thought or a new argument bearing on the subject, which he sets down even while stating the conclusion from his argument. It has the appearance of being suggested to him as a new thought of importance, and which he preferred to place even in the midst of the summing up of the argument rather than omit it altogether. It denotes a state of mind full of the subject, and where one idea came hastening after another, and which it was deemed important to notice, even though it should seem to be out of place. The position in this verse (Heb 4:6) is, that it was a settled or indisputable matter that some would enter into rest. The implied argument to prove this is,

(1.) that there was a "rest" spoken of which deserved to be called a divine rest, or the "rest of God;"

(2) it could not be supposed that God would prepare such a rest in vain; for it would follow, that if he had fitted up a world of rest he designed that it should be occupied. As he knew, therefore, that they to whom it was first offered would not enter in, it must be that he designed it for some others, and

that it remained to be occupied by us now. And they to whom it was first preached, Marg. The Gospel. Gr. Evangelized; that is, to whom the good news of the rest was first announced--the Israelites. Entered not in because of unbelief. Heb 3:19.

7 again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Again, he limiteth. He designates, or definitely mentions. The word rendered limiteth οριζει means to bound, to set a boundary--as of a field, or farm; and then, to determine or fix definitely, to designate, appoint. Here it means, that he specifies particularly, or mentions expressly. A certain day. A particular time; he mentions TO-DAY particularly. That is, in the time of David, he uses the word "to-day," as if there was then an offer of rest, and as if it were then possible to enter into it. The object of the additional thought was to show that the offer of rest was not confined to the Israelites, to whom it was first made; that David regarded it as existing in his day; and that man might even then be invited to come and partake of the rest that was promised. "Nearly five hundred years after the time when the Israelites were going to the promised land, and when the offer of rest was made to them, we hear David speaking of rest still; rest which was offered in his time, and which might then be lost by hardening the heart. It could not be, therefore, that the offer of rest pertained merely to the promised land. It must be something in advance of that. It must be something existing in the time of David. It must be an offer of heaven." "A Jew might feel the force of this argument more than we do; still it is conclusive to prove the point under consideration, that there was a rest spoken of long after the offer of the promised land, and that all the promises could not have pertained to that". Saying in David. In a Psalm composed by David, or rather, perhaps, saying by David; that is, God spake by him. To-day. Now; that is, even in the time of David. After so long a time. That is, so long after the first promise was made; to wit, about five hundred years. These are the words of Paul, calling attention to the fact, that so long a time after the entrance into the promised

land there was still a speaking of "to-day," as if even then they were called to partake of the rest. As it is said. To quote it exactly; or to bring the express authority of the Scriptures. It is expressly said even after that long time, "To-day--or Now--if you will hear his voice." All this is to prove that even in that time, there was an offer of rest.

8 For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

For if Jesus Marg. "That is, Joshua." The Syriac renders it, "Joshua the Son of Nun." Jesus is the Greek mode of writing Joshua, and there can be no doubt that Joshua is here intended. The object is to prove that Joshua did not give the people of God such a rest as to make it improper to speak of a "rest" after that time. "If Joshua had given them a complete and final rest; if, by his conducting them to the promised land, all had been done which had been contemplated by the promise, then it would not have been alluded to again, as it was in the time of David." Joshua did give them a rest in the promised land; but it was not all which was intended, and it did not exclude the promise of another and more important rest. Then would he not. Then God would not have spoken of another time when that rest could be obtained. The "other day" here referred to is that which is mentioned before by the phrase "to-day," and refers to the time in which it is spoken of long after Joshua, to wit, in the time of David.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

There remaineth, therefore, a rest. This is the conclusion to which the apostle comes. The meaning is this, that according to the Scriptures there is now a promise of rest made to the people of God. It did not pertain merely to those who were called to go to the promised land, nor to those who lived in the time of David, but it is still true that the promise of rest pertains to all the people of God of every generation. The reasoning by which the apostle comes to this conclusion is briefly this.

(1.) That there was a rest called "the rest of God"--spoken of in the earliest period of the world--implying that God meant that it should be enjoyed.

(2.) That the Israelites, to whom the promise was made, failed of obtaining that which was promised by their unbelief.

(3.) That God intended that some should enter into his rest--since it would not be provided in vain.

(4.) That long after the Israelites had fallen in the wilderness, we find the same reference to a rest which David in his time exhorts those whom he addressed to endeavour to obtain.

(5.) That if all that had been meant by the word rest, and by the promise, had been accomplished when Joshua conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan, we should not have heard another day spoken of when it was possible to forfeit that rest by unbelief. It followed, therefore, that there was something besides that; something that pertained to all the people of God, to which the name rest might still be given, and which they were exhorted still to obtain. The word rest in this verse σαββατισμος Sabbatism, in the margin is rendered keeping of a Sabbath. It is a different word from σαββατον --the Sabbath; and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is not found in the Septuagint. It properly means, a keeping Sabbath-- from σαββατιζω to keep Sabbath. This word, not used in the New Testament, occurs frequently in the Septuagint, Ex 16:30, Lev 23:32, 26:35 2Chr 36:21 and in 3 Esd. i. 58; 2 Mac. vi. 6. It differs from the word Sabbath. That denotes the time--the day, this, the keeping, or observance of it; the festival. It means here, a resting, or an observance of sacred repose--and refers undoubtedly to heaven, as a place of eternal rest with God. It cannot mean the rest in the land of

Canaan--for the drift of the writer is to prove that that is not intended. It cannot mean the Sabbath, properly so called--for then the writer would have employed the usual word σαββατον--Sabbath. It cannot mean the Christian Sabbath--for the object is not to prove that there is such a day to be observed; and his reasoning about being excluded from it by unbelief and by hardening the heart would be irrelevant. It must mean, therefore, heaven--the world of spiritual and eternal rest; and the assertion is, that there is such a resting, or keeping of a Sabbath in heaven for the people of God. Learn hence,

(1.) that heaven is a place of cessation from wearisome toil. It is to be like the "rest" which God had after the work of creation, (Heb 4:4) Heb 4:4, and of which that was the type and emblem. There will be employment there, but it will be without fatigue; there will be the occupation of the mind, and of whatever powers we may possess, but without weariness. Here we are often worn down and exhausted. The body sinks under continued toil, and falls into the grave. There the slave will rest from his toil; the man here oppressed and broken down by anxious care will cease from his labours. We know but little of heaven; but we know that a large part of what now oppresses and crushes the frame will not exist there. Slavery will be unknown; the anxious care for support will be unknown, and all the exhaustion which proceeds from the love of gain, and from ambition, will be unknown. In the wearisome toils of life, then, let us look forward to the rest that remains in heaven; and as the labourer looks to the shades of the evening, or to the Sabbath, as a period of rest, so let us look to heaven as the place of eternal repose.

(2.) Heaven will be like a Sabbath. The best description of it is to say it is an eternal Sabbath. Take the Sabbath on earth, when best observed, and extend the idea to eternity, and let there be separated all idea of imperfection from its

observance, and that would be heaven. The Sabbath is holy; so is heaven. It is a period of worship; so is heaven. It is for praise, and for the contemplation of heavenly truth; so is heaven. The Sabbath is appointed that we may lay aside worldly cares and anxieties for a little season here; heaven, that we may lay, them aside for ever.

(3.) The Sabbath here should be like heaven. It is designed to be its type and emblem. So far as the circumstances of the case will allow, it should be just like heaven. There should be the same employments; the same joys; the same communion with God. One of the best rules for employing the Sabbath aright is, to think what heaven will be, and then to endeavour to spend it in the same way. One day in seven at least should remind us of what heaven is to be; and that day may be, and should be, the most happy of the seven.

(4.) They who do not love the Sabbath on earth are not prepared for heaven. If it is to them a day of tediousness; if its hours move heavily; if they have no delight in its sacred employments, what would an eternity of such days be? How would they be passed? Nothing can be clearer than that if we have no such happiness in a season of holy rest, and in holy employments here, we are wholly unprepared for heaven. To the Christian it is the subject of the highest joy in anticipation, that heaven is to be one long, unbroken SABBATH--an eternity of successive Sabbath hours. But what, to a sinner, could be a more repulsive and gloomy prospect than such an eternal Sabbath?

(5.) If this be so, then what a melancholy view is furnished as to the actual preparation of the great mass of men for heaven! How is the Sabbath now spent? In idleness; in business; in travelling; in hunting and fishing; in light reading and conversation; in sleep; in visiting; in riding, walking,

lounging, ennui; in revelry and dissipation; in any and every way except the right way; in every way except in holy communion with God. What would the race be if once translated to heaven as they are! What a prospect would it be to this multitude to have to spend an eternity, which would be but a prolongation of the Sabbath of holiness!

(6.) Let those who love the Sabbath rejoice in the prospect of eternal rest in heaven. In our labour let us look to that world where wearisome toil is unknown; in our afflictions, let us look to that world where tears never fall; and when our hearts are pained by the violation of the Sabbath all around us, let us look to that blessed world where such violation will cease for ever. It is not far distant. A few steps will bring us there. Of any Christian it may be said that perhaps his next Sabbath will be spent in heaven--near the throne of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

For he that is entered into rest. That is, the man who is so happy as to reach heaven, will enjoy a rest similar to that which God had when he finished the work of creation. It will be

(1) a cessation from toil; and

(2) it will be a rest similar to that of God--the same kind of enjoyment, the same freedom from care, anxiety, and labour, How happy, then, are they who have entered into heaven! Their toils are over. Their labours are done. Never again will they know fatigue. Never more will they feel anxious care. Let us learn then,

(1.) not to mourn improperly for those who have left us, and gone to heaven. Happy in the rest of God, why should not we rejoice? Why wish them back again in a world of toil?

(2.) Let us in our toils look forward to the world of rest. Our labours will all be over. The weary man will lay down his burden; the exhausted frame will know fatigue no more. Rest is sweet at night after the toils of day; how much more sweet will it be in heaven after the toils of life! Let us

(3) labour while it is called to-day. Soon we shall cease from our work. All that we have to do is to be done soon. We shall soon cease from our work, as God did from his. What we have to do for the salvation of children, brothers, sisters, friends, and for the world, is to be done soon. From the abodes of bliss we shall not be sent forth to speak to our kindred of the blessedness of that world, or to admonish our friends to escape from the place of despair. The pastor will not come again to warn and invite his people; the parent will not come again to tell his children of the Saviour and of heaven; the neighbour will not come to admonish his neighbour. Comp. Lk 16:24-29. We shall ALL have ceased from our work, as God did from his; and never again shall we speak to a living friend to invite him to heaven.

11 Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

As if our apostle had said, "Seeing there is such and eternal glorious rest prepared for, and promised to believers then it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour of everyone of us to secure our title to it, and our interest in it, by a stedfast faith, and persevering obedience, lest, following the example of our forefathers in the wilderness, we fall and perish as they did."

Learn hence, 1. That there is a rest promised to us uder the gospel, as there was to the Jews of old under the dispensation of the law.

Learn, 2. That the Jews heretofore, by sin in general, by unbelief and disobedience in particular, did fall short of the rest proposed to them, and never entered into it, but were destroyed by the just indignation of God.

Learn, 3. That in the Israelites' sin and God's displeasure, in the event of the one, and in the effects of the other, there was an example set forth, of what would be our own lot and portion if through unbelief we fall short of the rest which the gospel proposed to us: Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. It is our duty to improve examples, lest we be made examples of divine displeasure.

Learn, 4. That we cannot rationally have tha least expectation of escaping vengeance under the guilt of those sins, which others, in like manner, being guilty of, having not escaped; for with God there is no respect of persons. Did the Israelites miss of the earthly Canaan? So shall we of the heavenly, through unbelief.

12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

For the word of God. The design of this and the following verse is obvious. It is to show that we cannot escape the notice of God; that all insincerity, unbelief, hypocrisy, will be detected by him; and that since our hearts are perfectly open before him, we should be sincere, and should not attempt to deceive him. The sense is, that the truth of God is all-penetrating and searching, and that the real thoughts and intents of the heart will be brought to light; and that if there is insincerity and self-deception, there can be no hope of escape. There has been a great variety of opinion here about the meaning of the phrase "the word of God." Some have supposed that it means the Lord Jesus; others the whole of the

divine revelation; others the gospel; others the particular threatening referred to here. The "word of God" is that which God speaks--whether it be a promise or a threatening; whether it be law or gospel; whether it be a simple declaration or a statement of a doctrine. The idea here is, that what God had said is fitted to detect hypocrisy, and to lay open the true nature of the feelings of the soul, so that there can be no escape for the guilty. His truth is adapted to bring out the real feelings, and to show man exactly what he is. Truth always has this power --whether preached, or read, or communicated by conversation, or impressed upon the memory and conscience by the Holy Spirit. There can be no escape from the penetrating, searching application of the word of God. That truth has power to show what man is, and is like a penetrating sword that lays open the whole man. Comp. Isa 49:2 The phrase "the word of God" here may be applied, therefore, to the truth of God, however made known to the mind. In some way it will bring out the real feelings, and show what man is.

Is quick. Gr. ζων--living. It is not dead, inert, and powerless. It has a living power, and is energetic and active. It is adapted to produce this effect.

And powerful. Mighty. Its power is seen in awakening the conscience; alarming the fears; laying bare the secret feelings of the heart; and causing the sinner to tremble with the apprehension of the coming judgment. All the great changes in the moral world for the better, have been caused by the power of truth. They are such as the truth in its own nature is fitted to effect; and, if we may judge of its power by the greatness of the revolutions produced, no words can over-estimate the might of the truth which God has revealed.

Sharper than any two-edged sword. Literally, two-mouthed sword διστομον. The word mouth was given to the sword because it seemed to devour all before it. It consumed or destroyed, as a wild beast does. The comparison of the word

of God to a sword, or to an arrow, is designed to show its power of penetrating the heart, Eccl 12:11. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." Comp. Isa 49:2; "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." Rev 1:16: "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" Rev 2:12,16, 19:15. The comparison is common in the classics, and in Arabic poetry. See Gesenius, on Isa 49:2 The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; and the meaning here is, that the word of God reaches the heart--the very centre of action and lays open the motives and feelings of the man. It was common among the ancients to have a sword with two-edges. The Roman sword was commonly made in this manner. The fact that it had two edges made it more easy to penetrate, as well as to cut with every way. Piercing even to the dividing asunder. Penetrating so as to divide.

Soul and spirit. The animal life from the immortal soul. The former word here--ψυχη-- soul--is evidently used to denote the animal life, as distinguished from the mind or soul. The latter word-- πνευμα--spirit--means the soul; the immaterial and immortal part; that which lives when the animal life is extinct, This distinction occurs in 1Thes 5:23" your whole spirit. and soul, and body ;" and it is a distinction which we are constantly in the habit of making. There is the body in man--the animal life--and the immortal part that leaves the body when life is extinct. Mysteriously united, they constitute one man. When the animal life is separated from the soul, or when the soul leaves the animated body, the body dies, and life is extinct. To separate the one from the other is, therefore, the same as to take life--and this is the idea here, that the word of God is like a sharp sword that inflicts deadly wounds. The sinner "dies;" that is, he becomes dead to his former hopes, or is "slain" by the law. Rom 7:9, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This is the power referred to here--the power of destroying the hopes of the sinner; cutting him down under

conviction; and prostrating him, as if a sword had pierced his heart.

And of the joints and marrow. The figure is still continued of the sword that takes life. Such a sword would seem to penetrate even the joints and marrow of the body. It would separate the joints, and pierce through the very bones to the marrow. A similar effect, Paul says, is produced by truth. It seems to penetrate the very essence of the soul, and lay it all open to the view.

And is a discerner of the thoughts. It shows what the thoughts and intentions are. Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and some others, suppose that the reference here is to God speaking by his word. But the more natural construction certainly is, to refer it to the word or truth of God. It is true that God searches the heart, and knows the thoughts; but that is not the truth which is prominent here. It is, that the thoughts and intents of the heart are brought out to view by the word of God. And can any one doubt this? See Rom 7:7. Is it not true that men are made to see their real character under the exhibition of the truth of God? That in the light of the law they see their past lives to be sinful? That the exhibition of truth calls to their recollection many long forgotten sins? And that their feelings are brought out when the truth of God is proclaimed? Men then are made to look upon their motives as they had never done before, and to see in their hearts feelings whose existence they would not have suspected, if it had not been for the exhibition of the truth. The exhibition of the truth is like pouring down the beams of the sun at midnight on a dark world; and the truth lays open the real feelings of the sinner, as that sun would disclose the clouds of wickedness that are now performed under cover of the night. Many a man has a deep and fixed hostility to God, and to his gospel, who might never be sensible of it, if the truth was not faithfully proclaimed. The particular idea here is, that the truth of God will detect the feelings of the hypocrite and self-deceiver. They cannot always conceal their emotions, and the time will

come when truth, like light poured into the soul, will reveal their unbelief and their secret sins. They who are cherishing a hope of salvation, therefore, should be on their guard lest they mistake the name for the reality. Let us learn from this verse,

(1,) the power of truth. It is fitted to lay open the secret feelings of the soul. There is not an effect produced in awakening a sinner, or in his conviction, conversion, and Sanctification, which the truth is not adapted to produce. The truth of God is not dead; nor fitted to make man worse; nor designed merely to show its own weakness, and to be a mere occasion on which the Holy Spirit acts on the mind; --it is, in its own nature, FITTED to produce just the effects which are produced when it awakens, convicts, converts, and sanctifies the soul.

(2.) The truth should be preached with the feeling that it is adapted to this end. Men who preach should endeavour to understand the nature of the mind and of the moral feelings, as really as he who would inflict a deadly wound should endeavour to understand enough about anatomy to know where the heart is, or he who administers medicine should endeavour to know what is adapted to remove certain diseases. And he who has no belief in the efficacy of truth to produce any effect, resembles one who should suppose that all knowledge of the human system was needless to him who wished and who should cut at random-- to perform a surgical operations piously leaving it with God to direct the knife; or he who should go into a hospital of patients, and administer medicines indiscriminately-devoutly saying, that all healing must come from God, and that the use of medicine was only to show its own weakness! Thus many men seem to preach. Yet, for aught that appears, truth is just as wisely adapted to save the soul, as medicine is to heal the sick; and why, then, should not a preacher be as careful to study the nature of

truths and its adaptedness to a particular end, as a student of the healing art is to understand the adaptedness of medicine to cure disease? The true way of preaching is, to feel that truth is adapted to the end in view; to select that which is best fitted for that end; to preach as if the whole result depended on getting that truth before the mind and into the heart, and then to leave the whole result with God--as a physicians with right feelings, will exert all his skill to save his patient, and then commit the whole question of life and health to God. He will be more likely to praise God intelligently who believes that he has wisely adapted a plan to the end in view, than he who believes that God works only at random.

13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight. There is no being who is not wholly known to God. All his thoughts, feelings, plans, are distinctly understood. Of the truth of this there can be no doubt. The design of the remark here is, to guard those to whom the apostle was writing from self-deception --since they could conceal nothing from God.

All things are naked. Exposed; uncovered. There is nothing that can be concealed from God, Ps 139:11,12.

"The veil of night is no disguise, No screen from thy all-searching eyes; Thy hands can seize thy foes as soon Through midnight shades as blazing noon."

And opened τετραχηλισμενα. The word here used -- τραχηλιζω -- properly means,

(1.) to lay bare the neck, or to bend it back so as to expose the throat to being cut.

(2.) To expose; to lay open in any way. Why the word is used here has been a matter of inquiry. Some have supposed that the phrase is derived from offering sacrifice, and from the fact that the priest carefully examined the victim, to see whether it was sound, before it was offered. But this is manifestly a forced exposition. Others have supposed that it is derived from the custom of bending back the head of a criminal, so as to look full in his face, and recognise him, so as not to be mistaken; but this is equally forced and unnatural. This opinion was first proposed by Erasmus, and has been adopted by Clarke and others, Bloomfield, following, as he says, the interpretation of Chrysostom, Grotius, (though this is not the sentiment of Grotius,) Beza, Alting, Hammond, and others, supposes the allusion to be to the custom of cutting the animal down the back-bone through the spinal marrow, and thus of laying it open entirely. This sense would well suit the connexion. Grotius supposes that it means to strip off the skin by dividing it at the neck, and then removing it. This view is also adopted substantially by Doddridge. These explanations are forced, and imply a departure, more or less, from the proper meaning of the Greek word. The most simple and obvious meaning is usually the best in explaining the Bible. The word which the apostle employs relates to the neck; τραχηλος ---and not to the spinal marrow, or the skin. The proper meaning of the verb is, to bend the neck back, so as to expose it in front when an animal is slain. Passow. Then it means, to make bare; to remove everything like covering; to expose a thing entirely--as the naked neck is for the knife. The allusion here is undoubtedly to the sword which Paul had referred to in the previous verse, as dividing the soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow; and the meaning is, that in the hand of God, who held that sword, everything was exposed. We are, in relation to that, like an animal whose neck is bent back, and laid bare, and ready for the slaughter. Nothing hinders God from striking; there is nothing that can prevent that sword from penetrating the heart any more than, when the neck of the animal is bent back and laid bare, there

is anything that can hinder the sacrificing priest from thrusting the knife into the throat of the victim. If this be the true interpretation, then what an affecting view does it give of the power of God, and of the exposedness of man to destruction! All is bare, naked, open. There is no concealment; no hinderance; no power of resistance. In a moment God can strike, and his dreadful sentence shall fall on the sinner like the knife on the exposed throat of the victim. What emotions should the sinner have who feels that he is exposed each moment to the sentence of eternal justice --to the sword of God--as the animal with bent-back neck is exposed to the knife! And what solemn feeling should all have who remember that all is naked and open before God! Were we transparent, so that the World could see all we are, who would dare go abroad? Who would wish the world to read all his thoughts and feelings for a single day? Who would wish his best friends to look in upon his naked soul, as we can look into a room through a window? Oh, what blushes and confusion; what a hanging down of the head, and what an effort to escape from the gaze of men would there be, if every one knew that all his secret feelings were seen by every person whom he met! Social enjoyment would end; and the now gay and blithe multitudes in the streets would become processions of downcast and blushing convicts. And yet all these are known to God. He reads every thought; sees every feeling; looks through the whole soul. How careful should we be to keep our heart pure; how anxious that there should be nothing in the soul that we are not willing to have known!

With whom we have to do. Literally, with whom is our account. Our account; our reckoning is to be with him before whom all is naked and open. We cannot, therefore, impose on him. We cannot pass off hypocrisy for sincerity. He will judge us according to truth, not according to appearances; and his sentence, therefore, will be just. A man who is to be tried by one who knows all about him, should be a pure and holy man.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest. The apostle here resumes the subject which had been slightly hinted at in Heb 2:17, 3:1, and pursues it to the end of chapter 10. The object is to show that Christians have a great High Priest as really as the Jews had; to show wherein he surpassed the Levitical priesthood; to show how all that was said of the Aaronic priesthood, and all the types pertaining to that priesthood, were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus; and to state and illustrate the nature of the consolations which Christians might derive from the fact that they had such an High Priest. One of the things on which the Jews most valued their religion, was the fact that it had such a minister of religion as their high priest--the most elevated functionary of that dispensation. It came, therefore, to be of the utmost importance to show that Christianity was not inferior to the Jewish religion in this respect, and that the High Priest of the Christian profession would not suffer in point of dignity, and in the value of the blood with which he would approach God, and in the efficacy of his intercession, when compared with the Jewish high priest. Moreover, it was a doctrine of Christianity that the Jewish ritual was to pass away; and its temple services cease to be observed. It was, therefore, of vast importance to show why hey passed away, and how they were superseded. To do this, the apostle is led into this long discussion respecting their nature. He shows that they were designed to be typical. He proves that they could not purify the heart, and give peace to the conscience. He proves that they were all intended to point to something future, and to introduce the Messiah to the world; and that when this object was accomplished, their great end was secured, and they were thus all fulfilled. In no part of the Bible can there be found so full an account of the design of the Mosaic institutions as in chapter 5 through 10 of this epistle; and were it not for this, the volume of inspiration would be incomplete. We should be left in the dark on some

of the most important subjects in revelation; we should ask questions for which we could find no certain answer. The phrase "great High Priest" here is used with reference to a known usage among the Jews. In the time of the apostle the name high priest pertained not only to him who actually held the office, and who had the right to enter into the holy of holies, but to his deputy, and to those who had held the office, but who had retired from it; and perhaps also the name was given to the head of each one of the twenty-four courses or classes into which the priests were divided. Comp. Lk 1:5; Mt 26:3. The name "great high priest" would designate him who actually held the office, and was at the head of all the other priests; and the idea here is, not merely that the Lord Jesus was a Priest, but that he was at the head of all; in the Christian economy he sustained a rank that corresponded with that of the great high priest in the Jewish.

That is passed into the heavens. Heb 9:12,24. The Jewish high priest went once a year into the most holy place in the temple, to offer the blood of the atonement. Heb 9:7. Paul says that the Christian High Priest has gone into heaven. He has gone there also to make intercession, and to sprinkle the blood of the atonement on the mercy-seat. Heb 9:24; Heb 9:25.

Jesus the Son of God. Not a descendant of Aaron, but one greater-- the Son of God. Heb 1:2.

Let us hold fast our profession. Heb 9:23; Heb 3:14. This is the drift and scope of the epistle-- to show that Christians should hold fast their profession, and not apostatize. The object of the apostle now is to show why the fact, that we have such a High Priest, is a reason why we should hold fast our professed attachment to him. These reasons--which are drawn out in the succeeding chapters--are such as the following.

(1.) We may look to him for assistance--since he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Heb 4:15,16.

(2.) The impossibility of being renewed again if we should fall away from him, since there is but one such High Priest, and since the sacrifice for sin can never be repeated, Heb 6.

(3.) The fact that all the ancient types were fulfilled in him, and that everything which there was in the Jewish dispensation, to keep men from apostasy, exists much more powerfully in the Christian scheme.

(4.) The fact that they who rejected the laws of Moses died without mercy, and much more any one who should reject the Son of God must expect more certain and fearful severity, Heb 10:27-30. By considerations such as these, the apostle aims to show them the danger of apostasy, and to urge them to a faithful adherence to their Christian profession.

15 For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.

For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched. Our High Priest is not cold and unfeeling. That is, we have one who is abundantly qualified to sympathize with us in our afflictions, and to whom, therefore, we may look for aid and support in trials. Had we a high priest who was cold and heartless; who simply performed the external duties of his office, without entering into the sympathies of those who came to seek for pardon; who had never experienced any trials, and who felt himself above those who sought his aid, we should necessarily feel disheartened in attempting to overcome our sins, and to live to God. His coldness would repel us; his stateliness would awe us; his distance and reserve would keep us away, and perhaps render us indifferent to all desire to be saved. But tenderness and sympathy attract those who are feeble, and kindness does more than anything else to encourage those who have to encounter difficulties and dangers. Heb 2:16, also Heb 2:17-18. Such tenderness and sympathy has our great High Priest. But was in all points tempted like as we are. Tried as we are. Heb 2:18. He was subjected to all the kinds of trial to which we can be, and he

is, therefore, able to sympathize with us, and to aid us. He was tempted--in the literal sense; he was persecuted; he was poor; he was despised; he suffered bodily pain; he endured the sorrows of a lingering and most cruel death. Yet without sin. 1Pet 2:22: "Who did no sin." Isa 53:9: "He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth." Heb 7:26: "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The importance of this fact, that the great High Priest of the Christian profession was "without sin," the apostle illustrates at length in chapters 7 through 9. He here merely alludes to it, and says that one who was "without sin" was able to assist those who were sinners, and who put their trust in him.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace. "The throne of grace!" What a beautiful expression! A throne is the seat of a sovereign; a throne of grace is designed to represent a sovereign seated to dispense mercy and pardon. The illustration or comparison here may have been derived from the temple service. In that service God is represented as seated in the most holy place on the mercy-seat. The high priest approaches that seat or throne of the Divine Majesty with the blood of the atonement, to make intercession for the people, and to plead for pardon. Heb 9:7, 9:8. That scene was emblematic of heaven. God is seated on a throne of mercy. The great High Priest of the Christian calling, having shed his own blood to make expiation, is represented as approaching God, and pleading for the pardon of men. To a God willing to show mercy he comes with the merits of a sacrifice sufficient for all, and pleads for their salvation. We may, therefore, come with boldness, and look for pardon. We come not depending on our own merits, but we come where a sufficient sacrifice has been offered for human guilt, and where we are assured that God is merciful. We may, therefore, come without hesitancy, or trembling, and ask for all the mercy that we need. That we may obtain mercy. This is what we want first. We need pardon--as the first thing when we come to

God. We are guilty and self-condemned--and our first cry should be for mercy-- mercy. A man who comes to God, not feeling his need of mercy, must fail of obtaining the Divine favour; and he will be best prepared to obtain that favour who has the deepest sense of his need of forgiveness. And find grace. Favour--strength, help, counsel, direction, support, for the various duties and trials of life. This is what we next need--we all need--we always need. Even when pardoned, we need grace to keep us from sin, to aid us in duty, to preserve us in the day of temptation. And feeling our need of this, we may come and ask of God all that we want for this purpose. Such is the assurance given us; and to this bold approach to the throne of grace all are freely invited. In view of it, let us:

(1) rejoice that there is a throne of grace. What a World would this be if God sat on a throne of justice only, and if no mercy were ever to be shown to men! Who is there who would not be overwhelmed with despair? But it is not so. He is on A THRONE OF GRACE. By day and by night; from year to year; from generation to generation, he is on such a throne. In every land he may be approached, and in as many different languages as men speak may they plead for mercy. In all times of our trial and temptation we may be assured that he is seated on that throne, and, wherever we are, we may approach him with acceptance.

(2) We need the privilege of coming before such a throne. We are sinful, and need mercy; we are feeble, and need grace to help us. There is not a day of Our lives in which we do not need pardon; not an hour in which we do not need grace.

(3) How obvious are the propriety and necessity of prayer! Every man is a sinner, and should pray for pardon; every man is weak, feeble, dependent, and should pray for grace. Not till a man can prove that he has never done any sin should he maintain that he has no need of pardon; not till he can show that he is able alone to meet the storms and temptations of life

should he feel that he has no need to ask for grace. Yet who can feel this? And how strange it is that all men do not pray!

(4) It is easy to be forgiven. All that needs to be done is to plead the merits of our great High Priest, and God is ready to pardon. Who would not be glad to be able to pay a debt in a manner so easy? Yet how few there are who are willing to pay the debt to justice thus!

(5.) It is easy to obtain all the grace that we need. We have only to ask for it--and it is done. How easy then to meet temptation, if we would! How strange that any should rely on their own strength, when they may lean on the arm of God!

(6.) If men are not pardoned, and if they fall into sin and ruin, they alone are to blame. There Is A THRONE OF GRACE. It is always accessible. There is A GOD. He is always ready to pardon. There Is A REDEEMER. He is the great High Priest of men. He is always interceding, His merits may always be pleaded as the ground of our salvation. Why then, oh why, should any remain unforgiven, and perish? On them alone the blame must lie. In their own bosoms is the reason why they are not saved.

Hebrews-5

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Verse 1. For every high priest. That is, among the Jews, for the remarks relate to the Jewish system. The Jews had one high priest who was regarded as the successor of Aaron. The word "high priest" means chief priest; that is, a priest of higher rank and office than others. By the original regulation the Jewish high priest was to be of the family of Aaron, (Ex

29:9,) though in later times the office was frequently conferred on others. In the time of the Romans it had become venal, and the Mosaic regulation was disregarded, 2 Mac. iv. 7; Jos. Ant. xv. 3, 1. It was no longer held for life, so that there were several persons at one time to whom was given the title of high priest. The high priest was at the head of religious affairs, and was the ordinary judge of all that pertained to religion, and even of the general justice of the Hebrew commonwealth, De 17:8-12, 19:17; De 21:5, 23:9,10. He only had the privilege of entering the most holy place once a year, on the great day of atonement, to make expiation for the sins of the people, Lev 16. He was to be the son of one who had married a virgin, and was to be free from any corporeal defect, Lev 21:13. The dress of the high priest was much more costly and magnificent than that of the inferior order of priests, Ex 39:1-9. He wore a mantle or robe--meil-- of blue, with the borders embroidered with pomegranates in purple and scarlet; an ephod-- --made of cotton, with crimson, purple, and blue, and ornamented with gold, worn over the robe or mantle, without sleeves, and divided below the arm-pits into two parts or halves, of which one was in front, covering the breast, and the other behind, covering the back. In the ephod was a breastplate of curious workmanship, and on the head a mitre. The breastplate was a piece of broidered work about ten inches square, and was made double, so as to answer the purpose of a pouch or bag. It was adorned with twelve precious stones, each one having the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The two upper corners of the breastplate were fastened to the ephod, and the two lower to the girdle. The cut is supposed to give an illustration of this part of the dress of the high priest. It is copied from Taylor's Fragments, appended to Calmet. As there is frequent reference to the high priest of the Jews in this epistle, and as he performed so important an office among the Hebrews, it may be useful to have a view of the appearance of this officer in fall dress. The following cuts will illustrate this.

The first represents him with the robe and the ephod. On each shoulder is seen an onyx stone, Upon each of which were engraved the names of six of the tribes of the children of Israel. The breastplate is also seen with a wrought chain of gold fastened to each corner, and passing under the arms and over each shoulder. The dress is described at length in Ex 28. The second cut, exhibits the dress of the high priest on the day of expiation, and is very plain and simple, consisting only of plain linen, with a sash and girdle, Lev 16:4,23.

Taken from among men. There may be an allusion here to the fact, that the great High Priest of the Christian dispensation had a higher than human origin, and was selected from a rank far above men. Or it may be that the meaning is, that every high priest on earth--including, all under the old dispensation and the great High Priest of the new--is ordained with reference to the welfare of men, and to bring some valuable offering for man to God.

Is ordained for men. Is set apart or consecrated for the welfare of men. The Jewish high priest was set apart to his office with great solemnity. See Ex 29.

In things pertaining to God. In religious matters, or with reference to the worship and service of God. He was not to be a civil ruler, nor a teacher of science, nor a military leader, but his business was to superintend the affairs of religion.

That he may offer both gifts. That is, thank-offerings, or oblations, which would be the expressions of gratitude. Many such offerings were made by the Jews under the laws of Moses, and the high priest was the medium by whom they were to be presented to God.

And sacrifices for sins. Bloody offerings; offerings made of slain beasts. The blood of expiation was sprinkled by him on the mercy-seat, and he was the appointed medium by which

such sacrifices were to be presented to God. Heb 4:6, seq. We may remark here,

(1.) that the proper office of a priest is to present a sacrifice for sin.

(2.) It is improper to give the name priest to a minister of the gospel. The reason is, that he offers no sacrifice; he sprinkles no blood. He is appointed to "preach the word," and to lead the devotions of the church, but not to offer sacrifice. Accordingly, the New Testament preserves entire consistency on this point, for the name priest is never once given to the apostles, or to any other minister of the gospel. Among the Papists there is consistency--though gross and dangerous error--in the use of the word priest. They believe that the minister of religion offers up "the real body and blood of our Lord;" that the bread and wine are changed by the words of consecration into the "body and blood, the soul and divinity, of the Lord Jesus," (Decrees of the Council of Trent;) and that this is really offered by him as a sacrifice. Accordingly, they "elevate the host;" that is, lift up or offer the sacrifice, and require all to bow before it and worship; and with this view they are consistent in retaining the word priest. But why should this name be applied to a Protestant minister, who believes that all this is blasphemy, and who claims to have no sacrifice to offer when he comes to minister before God? The great sacrifice --the one sufficient atonement--has been offered; and the ministers of the gospel are appointed to proclaim that truth to men, not to offer sacrifices for sin.

2 who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are
out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Who can have compassion. Marg. Reasonably bear with. The idea is that of sympathizing with. The high priest is taken from among men, in order that he may have a fellow-feeling for those on whose behalf he officiates. Sensible of his own ignorance, he is able to sympathize with those who are

ignorant; and compassed about with infirmity, he is able to succour those who have like infirmities. And on them that are out of the way. The erring and the guilty. If he were taken from an order of beings superior to men, he would be less qualified to sympathize with those who felt that they were sinners, and who needed pardon. For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. Heb 7:28. He is liable to err; he is subject to temptation; he must die, and appear before God: and encompassed with these infirmities, he is better qualified to minister in behalf of guilty and dying men. For the same reason it is that the ministers of the gospel are chosen from among men. They are of like passions with others. They are sinners; they are dying men. They can enter into the feelings of those who are conscious of guilt; they can sympathize with those who tremble in dread of death; they can partake of the emotions of those who expect soon to appear before God.

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as *was* Aaron.

And no man taketh this honour to himself. No one has a right to enter on this office unless he has the qualifications which God has prescribed. There were fixed and definite laws in regard to the succession in the office of the high priest, and to the qualifications of him who should hold the office. But he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Aaron was designated by name. It was necessary that his successors should have as clear evidence that they were called of God to the office, as though they had been mentioned by name. The manner in which the high priest was to succeed to the office was designated in the law of Moses, but in the time of Paul these rules were little regarded. The office had become venal, and was conferred at pleasure by the Roman rulers. Still it was true that, according to the law, to which alone Paul here refers, no one might hold this office but he who had the qualifications which Moses prescribed, and which showed that he was called of God. We may remark here,

(1.) that this does not refer so much to an internal as to an external call. He was to have the qualifications prescribed in the law; but it is not specified that he should be conscious of an internal call to the office, or be influenced by the Holy Spirit to it. Such a call was, doubtless, in the highest degree desirable, but it was not prescribed as an essential qualification.

(2.) This has no reference to the call to the work of the Christian ministry, and should not be applied to it. It should not be urged as a proof-text to show that a minister of the gospel should have a "call" directly from God, or that he should be called according to a certain order of succession. The object of Paul is not to state this, whatever may be the truth on this point. His object is to show that the Jewish high priest was called of God to his office in a certain way, showing that he held the appointment from God, and that therefore it was necessary that the great High Priest of the Christian profession should be called in a similar manner. To this alone the comparison should be understood as applicable.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

So also Christ glorified not himself. Jn 8:54. The meaning is, that Jesus was not ambitious; that he did not intrude himself into the great office of high priest; he did not enter upon its duties without being regularly called to it. Paul claimed that Christ held that office; but, as he was not descended from Aaron, and as no one might perform its duties without being regularly called to it, it was incumbent on him to show that Jesus was not an intruder, but had a regular vocation to that work. This he shows by a reference to two passages of the Old Testament. But he that said unto him. That is, he who said to him, "Thou art my son," exalted him to that office He received his appointment from him. This was decisive in the case; and this was sufficient, if it could be made out; for the only claim which Aaron and his successors could have to the office, was the fact that they had received their appointment

from God. Thou art my Son. Ps 2:7. See this passage explained Acts 13:33. It is here used with reference to the designation to the priestly office, though in the Psalm more particularly to the anointing to the office of king. The propriety of this application is founded on the fact, that the language in the Psalm is of so general a character, that it may be applied to any exaltation of the Redeemer, or to any honour conferred on him. It is here used with strict propriety, for Paul is saying that Jesus did not exalt himself, and in proof of that he refers to the fact that God had exalted him by calling him his "Son."

6 As he saith also in another *place,* Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

As he said also in another place. Ps 110:4. Thou art a Priest ever. It is evident here that the apostle means to be understood saying that the Psalm referred to Christ-and this is one of instances of quotation from the Old. Testament respecting wh there can be no doubt. Paul makes winch of this argument i subsequent part of this epistle, Heb 7, and reasons as if no would deny that the Psalm had a reference to the Messiah. It clear, from this, that the Psalm was understood by the Jews at t time to have such a reference, and that it was so universa admitted that no one would call it in question. That the Psa refers to the Messiah has been the opinion of nearly all Christ commentators, and has been admitted by the Jewish Rabbins general also. The evidence that it refers to the Messiah is such the following.

(1.) It is a Psalm of David, and yet is spoken of One who was superior to him, and whom he called his "Lord," Ps 110:1.

(2.) It cannot be referred to JEHOVAH himself, for he is expressly Ps 110:1 distinguished from him who is here addressed.

(3.) It cannot be referred to any one in the time of David, for there was no one to whom he would attribute this character of superiority but God.

(4.) For the same reason there was no one among his posterity, except the Messiah, to whom he would apply this language.

(5.) It is expressly ascribed by the Lord Jesus to himself, Mt 22:43,44.

(6.) The scope of the Psalm is such as to be applicable to the Messiah, and there is no part of it which would be inconsistent with such a reference. Indeed, there is no passage of the Old Testament of which it would be more universally conceded that there was a reference to the Messiah than this Psalm. Thou art a Priest. He is not here called a high priest, for Melchisedek did not bear that title, nor was the Lord Jesus to be a high priest exactly in the sense in which the name was given to Aaron and his successors. A word is used, therefore, in a general sense, to denote that he would be a print simply, or would sustain the priestly office. This was all that was needful to the present argument, which was, that he was designated by God to the priestly office, and that he had not intruded himself into it. For ever. This was an important circumstance, of which the apostle makes much use in another part of the epistle. Heb 7:8, Heb 7:23 Heb 7:24. The priesthood of the Messiah was not to change from hand to hand; it was not to be laid down at death; it was to remain unchangeably the same. After the order. The word rendered order-- ταξις ~means, "a setting in order--hence arrangement or disposition. It may be applied to ranks of soldiers; to the gradations of office; or to any rank which men sustain in society. To say that he was of the same order with Melchisedek, was to say that he was of the same rank or station. He was like him in his designation to the office. In what respects he was like him the apostle shows more fully in Heb

7. One particular in which there was a striking resemblance, which did not exist between Christ and any other high-priest,

was that Melchisedek was both a priest and a king. None of the kings of the Jews were priests; nor were any of the priests ever elevated to the office of king. But in Melchisedek these offices were united; and this fact constituted a striking resemblance between him and the Lord Jesus. It was on this principle that there was such pertinency in quoting here the passage from Ps 2. See Heb 5:5. The meaning is, that Melchisedek was of a peculiar rank or order; that he was not numbered with the Levitical priests, and that there were important features in his office which differed from theirs. In those features it was distinctly predicted that the Messiah would resemble him.

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Who. That is, the Lord Jesus--for so the connexion demands. The object of this verse and the two following is, to show that the Lord Jesus had that qualification for the office of priest to which he had referred Heb 5:2. It was one important qualification for that office, that he who sustained it should be able to show compassion, to aid those that were out of the way, and to sympathize with sufferers; in other words, they were themselves encompassed with infirmity, and thus were able to succour those who were subjected to trials. The apostle shows now that the Lord Jesus had those qualifications, as far as it was possible for one to have them who had no sin. In the days of his flesh he suffered intensely; he prayed with fervour; he placed himself in a situation where he learned subjection and obedience by his trials; and in all things he went far beyond what had been evinced by the priests under the ancient dispensation.

In the days of his flesh. When he appeared on earth as a man. Flesh is used to denote human nature, and especially human nature as susceptible of suffering. The Son of God still is united to human nature, but it is human nature glorified; for in his case, as in all others, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1Cor 15:50. He has now a glorified body,

Php 3:21, such as the redeemed will have in the future world. Comp, Rev 1:13-17. The phrase "days of his flesh," means the time when he was incarnate, or when he lived on earth in human form. The particular time here referred to, evidently, was the agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

Prayers and supplications. These words are often used to denote the same thing. If there is a difference, the former--δεησεις--means, petitions which arise from a sense of need,--from δεομαι-- want, to need; the latter refers usually to supplication for protection, and is applicable to one who, under a sense of guilt, flees to an altar with the symbols of supplication in his hand. Suppliants in such cases often carried an olive-branch as an emblem of the peace which they sought.

A fact is mentioned by Livy respecting the Locrians that may illustrate this passage. "Ten delegates from the Locrians, squalid and covered with rags, came into the hall where the consuls were sitting, extending the badges of suppliants--olive branches--according to the custom of the Greeks; and prostrated themselves on the ground before the tribunal, with a lamentable cry," Lib xxix. c. 16. The particular idea in the word here used ικετηρια is, petition for protection,help, or shelter, (Passow;) and this idea accords well with the design of the passage. The Lord Jesus prayed as one who had need, and as one who desired protection, shelter, or help. The words here, therefore, do not mean the same thing, and are not merely intensive, but they refer to distinct purposes which the Redeemer had in his prayers. He was about to die, and, as a man, he needed the Divine help; he was, probably, tempted in that dark hour, Jn 12:30, and he fled to God for protection.

With strong crying. This word does not mean weeping, as the word "crying" does familiarly with us. It rather means an outcry, the voice of wailing and lamentation. It is the cry for help of one who is deeply distressed, or in danger; and refers here to the earnest petition of the Saviour when in the agony of Gethsemane, or when on the cross. It is the intensity of the

voice which is referred to, when it is raised by an agony of suffering. Comp. Lk 22:44: "He prayed more earnestly." Mt 27:46: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice--My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" See also Mt 26:38,39, 27:60.

And tears. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, Jn 11:35, and over Jerusalem, Lk 19:41. It is not expressly stated by the Evangelists that he wept in the garden of Gethsemane, but there is no reason to doubt that he did. In such an intense agony as to cause a bloody sweat, there is every probability that it would be accompanied with tears. We may remark then,

(1.) that there is nothing dishonourable in tears, and that man should not be ashamed, on proper occasions, to weep. The fact that the Son of God wept is a full demonstration that it is not disgraceful to weep. God has so made us as to express sympathy for others by tears. Religion does not make the heart insensible and hard, as stoical philosophy does; it makes it tender and susceptible to impression.

(2.) It is not improper to weep. The Son of God wept--and if he poured forth tears it cannot be wrong for us. Besides, it is a great law of our nature, that in suffering we should find relief by tears. God would not have so made us if it had been wrong.

(3.) The fact that the Son of God thus wept should be allowed deeply to affect our hearts.
"He wept that we might weep;" Each sin demands a tear."
He wept that he might redeem us; we should weep that our sins were so great as to demand such bitter woes for our salvation. That we had sinned; that our sins caused him such anguish; that he endured for us this bitter conflict, should make us weep. Tear should answer to tear, and sigh respond to sigh, and groan to groan, when we contemplate the sorrows of the Son of God in accomplishing our redemption. That man must have a hard heart who has never had an emotion when he has reflected that the Son of God wept, and bled, and died for him. Unto him that

was able. To God. He alone was able then to save. In such a conflict man could not aid; and the help of angels, ready as they were to assist him, could not sustain him. We may derive aid from man in trial; we may be comforted by sympathy and counsel; but there are sorrows where God only can uphold the sufferer. That God was able to uphold him, in his severe conflict, the Redeemer could not doubt; nor need we doubt it, in reference to ourselves, when deep sorrows come over our souls. To save him from death. It would seem from this, that what constituted the agony of the Redeemer was the dread of death, and that he prayed that he might be saved from that. This might be, so far as the language is concerned, either the dread of death on the spot by the intensity of his sufferings and by the power of the tempter, or it might be the dread of the approaching death on the cross. As the Redeemer, however, knew that he was to die on the cross, it can hardly be supposed that he apprehended death in the garden of Gethsemane. What he prayed for was, that, if it were possible, he might be spared from a death so painful as he apprehended, Mt 26:39. Feeling that God had power to save him from that mode of dying, the burden of his petition was, that, if human redemption could be accomplished without such sufferings, it might please his Father to remove that cup from him. And was heard. In Jn 11:42, the Saviour says, "I know that thou hearest me always." In the garden of Gethsemane he was heard. His prayer was not disregarded, though it was not literally answered. The cup of death was not taken away; but his prayer was not disregarded. What answer was given--what assurance or support was imparted to his soul--we are not informed. The case, however, shows us,

(1.) that prayer may be heard even when the sufferings which are dreaded, and from which we prayed to be delivered, may come upon us. They may come with such assurances of Divine favour, and such supports, as will be full proof that the prayer was not disregarded.

(2.) That prayer offered in faith may not be always literally answered. No one can doubt that Jesus offered the prayer of faith; and it is as little to be doubted, if he referred in the prayer to the death on the cross, that it was not literally answered. Comp, Mt 26:39.

In like manner it may occur now, that prayer shall be offered with every right feeling, and with an earnest desire for the object, which may not be literally answered. Christians, even in the highest exercise of faith, are not inspired to know what is best for them; and, as long as this is the case, it is possible that they may ask for things which it would not be best to have granted. They who maintain that the prayer of faith is always literally answered, must hold that the Christian is under such a guidance of the Spirit of God that he cannot ask anything amiss. 2Cor 12:9.

In that he feared. Marg. For his piety. Coverdale, "Because he had God in honour." Tindal, "Because he had God in reverence." Prof. Stuart renders it, "And was delivered from that which he feared." So also Doddridge. Whitby, "Was delivered from his fear." Luther renders it, "And was heard for that he had God in reverence"--dass er Gott in Ehren hatte. Beza renders it, "His prayers being heard, he was delivered from fear." From this variety in translating the passage, it will be seen at once that it is attended with difficulty. The Greek is, literally, "from fear or reverence" --αποτηςευλαβειας. The word occurs in the New Testament only in one other place, Heb 12:28, where it is rendered "fear." "Let us serve him with reverence and godly fear." The word properly means, caution, circumspection; then timidity, fear; then the fear of God, reverence, piety. Where the most distinguished scholars have differed as to the meaning of a Greek phrase, it would be presumption in me to attempt to determine its sense. The most natural and obvious interpretation, however, as it seems to me, is, that it means that he was heard on account of his reverence for God; his profound veneration; his submission. Such was his piety that the prayer was heard, though it was not literally

answered. A prayer may be heard, and yet not literally answered; it may be acceptable to God, though it may not consist with his arrangements to bestow the very blessing that is sought. The posture of the mind of the Redeemer, perhaps, was something like this. He knew that he was about to be put to death in a most cruel manner. His tender and sensitive nature, as a man, shrank from such a death. As a man he went, under the pressure of his great sorrows, and pleaded that the cup might be removed, and that man might be redeemed by a less fearful scene of suffering. That arrangement, however, could not be made. Yet the spirit which he evinced; the desire to do the will of God; the resignation, and the confidence in his Father which he evinced, were such as were acceptable in his sight. They showed that he had unconquerable virtue; that no power of temptation, and no prospect of the intensest woes which human nature could endure, could alienate him from piety, To show this was an object of inestimable value, and, much as it cost the Saviour, was worth it all. So now it is worth much to see what Christian piety can endure; What strong temptations it can resist; and what strength it has to bear up under accumulated woes: and even though the prayer of the pious sufferer is not directly answered, yet that prayer is acceptable to God, and the result of such a trial is worth all that it costs.

8 though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

Though he were a Son. Though the Son of God. Though he sustained this exalted rank, and was conscious of it, yet he was willing to learn experimentally what is meant by obedience in the midst of sufferings. Yet learned he obedience. That is, he learned experimentally and practically. It cannot be supposed that he did not know what obedience was; or that he was indisposed to obey God before he suffered; or that he had, as we have, perversities of nature, leading to rebellion, which required to be subdued by suffering;--but that he was willing to test the power of obedience in sufferings; to become personally and practically acquainted with the nature of such obedience in the midst of protracted woes. Comp. Php 2:8. The

object here is, to show how well fitted the Lord Jesus was to be a Saviour for man-kind; and the argument is, that he has set us an example, and has shown that the most perfect obedience may be manifested in the deepest sorrows of the body and the soul. Learn hence, that one of the objects of affliction is to lead us to obey God. In prosperity we forget it. We become self-confident and rebellious. Then God lays his hand upon us; breaks up our plans; crushes our hopes; takes away our health; and teaches us that we must be submissive to his will. Some of the most valuable lessons of obedience are learned in the furnace of affliction; and many of the most submissive children of the Almighty have been made so, as the result of protracted woes.

9 and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

And being made perfect. That is, being made a complete Saviour--a Saviour fitted in all respects to redeem men. Sufferings were necessary to the completeness or the finish of his character as a Saviour--not to his moral perfection, for he was always without sin. See this explained Heb 2:10. He became the Author, That is, he was the procuring cause (αιτιος) of salvation. It is to be traced wholly to his sufferings and death. Heb 2:10. Unto all them that obey him. It is not to save those who live in sin. Only those who obey him have any evidence that they will be saved. Jn 14:15.

10 called of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The Danger of Slothfulness and Apostasy

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

For when for the time. Considering the time which has elapsed since you were converted. You have been Christians long

enough to be expected to understand such doctrines. This verse proves that those to whom he wrote were not recent converts.

Ye ought to be teachers. You ought to be able to instruct others. He does not mean to say, evidently, that they ought all to become public teachers, or preachers of the gospel, but that they ought to be able to explain to others the truths of the Christian religion. As parents, they ought to be able to explain them to their children; as neighbours, to their neighbours; or as friends, to those who were inquiring the way to life.

Ye have need. That is, probably the mass of them had need. As a people, or a church, they had shown that they were ignorant of some of the very elements of the gospel.

Again. This shows that they had been taught, on some former occasions, what were the first principles of religion, but they had not followed up the teaching as they ought to have done.

The first principles. The very elements; the rudiments; the first lessons--such as children learn before they advance to higher studies. See the word here used explained Rom 4:3, under the word "elements." The Greek word is the same.

Of the oracles of God. Of the Scriptures, or what God has spoken. Rom 3:2 The phrase here may refer to the writings of the Old Testament, and particularly to those parts which relate to the Messiah; or it may include all that God had at that time revealed, in whatever way it was preserved. In 1Pet 4:11, it is used with reference to the Christian religion, and to the doctrines which God had revealed in the gospel. In the passage before us it may mean, the Divine oracles or communications, in whatever way they had been made known. They had shown that they were ignorant of the very rudiments of the Divine teaching.

And are become such. There is more meant in this phrase than that they simply were such persons. The word rendered "are

become" γινομαι--sometimes implies a change of state, or a passing from one state to another--well expressed by the phrase "are become." See Mt 5:45, 4:3, 13:32, 6:16, 10:25, Mk 1:17, Rom 7:3,4. The idea here is, that they had passed from the hopeful condition in which they were when they showed that they had an acquaintance with the great principles of the gospel, and that they had become such as to need again the most simple form of instruction. This agrees well with the general strain of the epistle, which is to preserve them from the danger of apostasy. They were verging towards it, and had come to that state where, if they were recovered, it must be by being again taught the elements of religion.

Have need of milk. Like little children. You can bear only the most simple nourishment. The meaning is, that they were incapable of receiving the higher doctrines of the gospel, as much as little children are incapable of digesting solid food. They were, in fact, in a state of spiritual infancy.

And not of strong meat. Greek. "Strong food." The word meat, with us, is used now to denote only animal food. Formerly, it meant food in general. The Greek word here means nourishment.

13 For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of
righteousness: for he is a babe.
14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those
who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both
good and evil.

Hebrews-6

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go
on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance
from dead works, and of faith toward God,
2 of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of
resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

And this will we do. We will make these advances towards a higher state of knowledge and piety. Paul had confidence that they would do it Heb 6:9,10; and though they had lingered long around the elements of Christian knowledge, he believed that they would yet go on to make higher attainments. If God permit. This is not to be interpreted as if God was unwilling that they should make such advances, or if it were doubtful whether he would allow it if they made an honest effort, and their lives were spared; but it is a phrase used to denote their dependence on him. It is equivalent to saying, "if he would spare their lives, their health, and their reason; if he would continue the means of grace, and would impart his Holy Spirit; if he would favour their efforts, and crown them with success, they would make these advances." In reference to anything that we undertake, however pleasing to God in itself, it is proper to recognise our entire dependence on God. See Jas 4:13-16. Comp. Jn 15:5.

4 For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

For it is impossible. It is needless to say that the passage here Heb 6:4-6 has given occasion to much controversy, and that the opinions of commentators and of the Christian world are yet greatly divided in regard to its meaning. On the one hand, it is held that the passage is not intended to describe those who are true Christians, but only those who have been awakened and enlightened, and who then fall back; and on the other, it is maintained that it refers to those who are true Christians, and who then apostatize. The contending parties have been Calvinists and Armenians; each party, in general, interpreting it according to the views which are held on the question about falling from grace. I shall endeavour, as well as I may be able, to state the true meaning of the passage, by an examination of the words and phrases in detail: observing here, in general, that it seems to me that it refers to true Christians; that the object is to keep them from apostasy; and that it teaches that, if they should apostatize, it would be

impossible to renew them again, or to save them. That it refers to true Christians will be apparent from these considerations:--

(1.) Such is the sense which would strike the great mass of readers. Unless there were some theory to defend, the great body of readers of the New Testament would consider the expression here used as describing true Christians.

(2.) The connexion demands such an interpretation. The apostle was addressing Christians. He was endeavouring to keep them from apostasy. The object was not to keep those who were awakened and enlightened from apostasy, but it was to preserve those who were already in the Church of Christ from going back to perdition. The kind of exhortation appropriate to those who were awakened and convicted, but who were not truly converted, would be to become converted; not to warn them of the danger of falling away. Besides, the apostle would not have said of such persons that they could not be converted and saved. [But of sincere Christians it might be said, with the utmost propriety, that they could not be renewed again, and be saved, if they should fall away--because they rejected the only plan of salvation after they had tried it, and renounced the only scheme of redemption after they had tasted its benefits. If that plea could not save them, what could? If they neglected that, by what Other means could they be brought to God?

(3.) This interpretation accords, as I suppose, with the exact meaning of the phrases which the apostle uses. An examination of those phrases will show that he refers to those who are sincere believers. The phrase "it is impossible," obviously and properly denotes absolute impossibility. It has been contended, by Storr and others, that it denotes only great difficulty. But the meaning which would at first strike all readers would be, that the thing could not be done; that it was not merely very difficult, but absolutely impracticable. The word--αδυνατον--occurs only in the New Testament in the

following places, in all which it denotes that the thing could not be done. Mt 19:26, Mk 10:27: "With men this is impossible;" that is, men could not save one who was rich; implying that the thing was wholly beyond human power. Lk 18:27: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God"---referring to the same case. Acts 14:8 "A man of Lystra, impotent in his feet;" that is, who was wholly unable to walk. Rom 8:3: "For what the law could not do;" what was absolutely impossible for the law to accomplish; that is, to save men. Heb 6:18: "In which it was impossible for God to lie." Heb 10:4: "It is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin." And Heb 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."--In all of these instances denoting absolute impossibility. These passages show that it is not merely a great difficulty to which the apostle refers, but that he meant to say that the thing was wholly impracticable; that it could not be done. And if this be the meaning, then it proves that if those referred to should fall away, they could never be renewed; their case was hopeless, and they must perish:--that is, if a true Christian should apostatize, or fall from grace, he never could be renewed again, and could not be saved. Paul did not teach that he might fall away and be renewed again as often as he pleased. He had other views of the grace of God than this; and he meant to teach, that if a man should once cast off true religion, his case was hopeless, and he must perish: and by this solemn consideration--the only one that would be effectual in such a case--he meant to guard them against the danger of apostasy.

For those who were once enlightened. The phrase "to be enlightened" is one that is often used in the Scriptures, and may be applied either to one whose understanding has been enlightened to discern his duty, though he is not converted, (comp. Jn 1:9;) or, more commonly, to one who is truly converted. Eph 1:18. It does not of necessity refer to true Christians, though it cannot be denied that it more obviously suggests the idea that the heart is truly changed, and that it is more commonly used in that sense. Comp. Ps 19:8. Light, in

the Scriptures, is the emblem of knowledge, holiness, and happiness; and there is no impropriety here in understanding it in accordance with the more decisive phrases which follow, as referring to true Christians.

And have tasted. To taste of a thing means, according to the usage in the Scriptures, to experience, or to understand it. The expression is derived from the fact, that the taste is one of the means by which we ascertain the nature or quality of an object. Comp. Mt 16:28, Jn 8:51; Heb 2:9. The proper idea here is, that they had experienced the heavenly gift, or had learned its nature.

The heavenly gift. The gift from heaven, or which pertains to heaven. Jn 4:10. The express!on properly means, some favour or gift which has descended from heaven; and may refer to any of the benefits which God has conferred on man in the work of redemption. It might include the plan of salvation; the forgiveness of sins; the enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, or any one of the graces which that spirit imparts. The use of the article, however,--" the heavenly gift,"--limits it to something special, as being conferred directly from heaven; and the connexion would seem to demand that we understand it of some peculiar favour which could be conferred only on the children of God. It is an expression which may be applied to sincere Christians; it is at least doubtful whether it can with propriety be applied to any other.

And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Partakers of the influences of the Holy Ghost--for it is only in this sense that we can partake of the Holy Spirit. We partake of food when we share it with others; we partake of pleasure when we enjoy it with others; we partake of spoils in war when they are divided between us and others. So we partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit when we share these influences conferred on his people. This is not language which can properly be applied to any one but a true Christian; and

though it is true that an unpardoned sinner may be enlightened and awakened by the Holy Spirit, yet the language here used is not such as would be likely to be employed to describe his state. It is too clearly expressive of those influences which renew and sanctify the soul. It is as elevated language as can be used to describe the joy of the Christian, and is undoubtedly used in that sense here. If it is not, it would be difficult to find any language which would properly express the condition of a renewed heart. Grotius, Bloomfield, and some others, understood this or the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. But this is not necessary, and does not accord well with the general description here, which evidently pertains to the mass of those whom the apostle addressed.

And have tasted the good word of God. That is, either the doctrines which he teaches, and which are good or pleasant to the soul; or the word of God which is connected with good, that is, which promises good. The former seems to be the correct meaning--that the word of God, or the truth which he taught, was itself a good. It was that which the soul desired, and in which it found comfort and peace. Comp. Ps 119:103, 141:6. The meaning here is, that they had experienced the excellency of the truth of God; they had seen and enjoyed its beauty. This is language which cannot be applied to an impenitent sinner. He has no relish for the truth of God; sees no beauty in it; derives no comfort from it. It is only the true Christian who has pleasure in its contemplation, and who can be said to "taste" and enjoy it. This language describes a state or mind of which every sincere Christian is conscious, It is that of pleasure in the word of God. He loves the Bible; he loves the truth of God that is preached. He sees an exquisite beauty in that truth. It is not merely in its poetry; in its sublimity; in its argument; but he has now a taste or relish for the truth itself, which he had not before his conversion. Then he might have admired the Bible for its beauty of language, or for its poetry; he might have been interested in preaching for its eloquence or power of argument; but now his love is for the truth. Comp. Ps 19:10. There is no book that he so

much delights in as the Bible; and no pleasure is so pure as that which he has in contemplating the truth. Comp. Josh 21:45, 23:16.

And the powers of the world to come. Or of the "coming age." "The age to come" was a phrase in common use among the Hebrews, to denote the future dispensation, the times of the Messiah. The same idea was expressed by the phrases, "the last times," "the end of the world," etc., which are of so frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. They all denoted an age which was to succeed the old dispensation; the time of the Messiah; or the period in which the affairs of the world would be wound up. Isa 2:2. Here it evidently refers to that period; and the meaning is, that they had participated in the peculiar blessings to be expected in that dispensation--to wit, in the clear views of the way of salvation, and the influences of the Holy Spirit on the soul. The word "powers" here implies that in that time there would be some extraordinary manifestation of the power of God. An unusual energy would be put forth to save men, particularly as evinced by the agency of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Of this "power" the apostle here says they of whom he spake had partaken. They had been brought under the awakening and renewing energy which God put forth under the Messiah, in saving the soul. They had experienced the promised blessings of the new and last dispensation; and the language here is such as appropriately describes Christians, and as indeed can be applicable to no other. It may be remarked respecting the various expressions used here, Heb 6:4,5,

(1.) that they are such as properly denote a renewed state. They obviously describe the condition of a Christian; and though it may be not certain that any one of them, if taken by itself, would prove that the person to whom it was applied was truly converted, yet, taken together, it is clear that they are designed to describe such a state. If they are not, it would be difficult to find any language which would be properly

descriptive of the character of a sincere Christian. I regard the description here, therefore, as that which is clearly designed to denote the state of those who were born again, and were the true children of God; and it seems plain to me, that no other interpretation would have ever been thought of, if this view had not seemed to conflict with the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints."

(2.) There is a regular gradation here from the first elements of piety in the soul to its highest developments; and, whether the apostle so designed it or not, the language describes the successive steps by which a true Christian advances to the highest stage of Christian experience. The mind is

(a.) enlightened; then

(b.) tastes the gift of heaven, or has some experience of it; then

(c.) it is made to partake of the influences of the Holy Ghost; then

(d.) there is experience of the excellence and loveliness of the word of God; and

(e.) finally, there is a participation of the full "powers" of the new dispensation--of the extraordinary energy which God puts forth in the gospel to sanctify and save the soul.

If they shall fall away. Literally, "and having fallen away." "There is no if in the Greek in this place--' having fallen away.'" Dr. J. P. Wilson. It is not an affirmation that any had actually fallen away, or that, in fact, they would do it; but the statement is, that on the supposition that they had fallen away, it would be impossible to renew them again. It is the same as supposing a case which, in fact, might never occur:--as if we should say, "had a man fallen down a precipice, it would be impossible to save him;" or, "had the child fallen into the

stream, he would certainly have been drowned." But though this literally means "having fallen away," yet the sense, in the connexion in which it stands, is not improperly expressed by our common translation. The Syriac has given a version Which is remarkable, not as a correct translation, but as showing what was the prevailing belief in the time in which it was made, (probably the first or second century,) in regard to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. "For it is impossible that they who have been baptized, and who have tasted the gift which is from heaven, and have received the spirit of holiness, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power of the coming age, should again sin, so that they should be renewed again to repentance, and again crucify the Son of God, and put him to ignominy." The word rendered "fall away" means, properly, "to fall near by any one;" "to fall in with, or meet;" and thus to fall aside from, to swerve or deviate from; and here means undoubtedly to apostatize from, and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity, or a going back to a state of Judaism, heathenism, or sin. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is material to remark here, that the apostle does not say that any true Christian ever had fallen away. He makes a statement of what would occur on the supposition that such a thing should happen -but a statement may be made of what would occur on the supposition that a certain thing should take place, and yet it be morally certain that the event never would happen. It would be easy to suppose what would happen if the ocean should overflow a continent, or if the sun should cease to rise, and still there be entire certainty that such an event never would occur.

To renew them again. Implying that they had been before renewed, or had been true Christians. The word again"--παλιν --supposes this; and this passage, therefore, confirms the considerations suggested above, showing that they were true Christians who were referred to. They had once repented, but it would be impossible to bring them to this state again. The

declaration, of course, is to be read in connexion with the first clause of Heb 6:4, "It is impossible to renew again to repentance those who once were true Christians, should they fall away." I know of no declaration more unambiguous than this. It is a positive declaration. It is not that it would be very difficult to do it; or that it would be impossible for man to do it, though it might be done by God; it is an unequivocal and absolute declaration that it would be utterly impracticable that it should be done by any one, or by any means; and this, I have no doubt, is the meaning of the apostle. Should a Christian fall from grace, he must perish. HE NEVER COULD BE SAVED The reason of this the apostle immediately, adds.

Seeing. This word is not in the Greek, though the sense is expressed. The Greek literally is, "having again crucified to themselves the Son of God." The reason here given is, that the crime would be so great, and they would so effectually exclude themselves from the only plan of salvation, that they could not be saved. There is but one way of salvation. Having tried that, and then renounced it, how could they then be saved? The case is like that of a drowning man. If there was but one plank by which he could be saved, and he should get on that, and then push it away and plunge into the deep, he must die. Or if there was but one rope by which the shore could be reached from a wreck, and he should cut that and cast it off, he must die. Or if a man were sick, and there was but one kind of medicine that could possibly restore him, and he should deliberately dash that away, he must die. So in religion. There is but one way of salvation. If a man deliberately rejects that, he must perish.

They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh. Our translators have rendered this as if the Greek were--ανασταυρουνταςπαλιν-- crucify again, and so it is rendered by Chrysostom, by Tindal, Coverdale, Beza, Luther, and others. But this is not properly the meaning of the Greek. The

word αναστανρος is an intensive word, and is employed instead of the usual word "to crucify," only to denote emphasis. It means that such an act of apostasy would be equivalent to crucifying him in an aggravated manner. Of course this is to be taken figuratively. It could not be literally true that they would thus crucify the Redeemer. The meaning is, that their conduct would be as if they had crucified him; it would bear a strong resemblance to the act by which the Lord Jesus was publicly rejected and condemned to die. The act of crucifying the Son of God was the great crime which outpeers any other deed of human guilt. Yet the apostle says, that should they who had been true Christians fall away, and reject him, they would be guilty of a similar crime. It would be a public and solemn act of rejecting him. It would show that if they had been there they would have joined in the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" The intensity and aggravation of such a crime perhaps the apostle meant to indicate by the intensive or emphatic ανα in the αναστανρουντας. Such an act would render their salvation impossible, because

(1.) the crime would be aggravated beyond that of those who rejected him and put him to death--for they knew not what they did; and

(2.) because it would be a rejection of the only possible plan of salvation, after they had had experience of its power and known its efficacy. The phrase "to themselves," Tindal renders, "as concerning themselves." Others, "as far as in them lies," or as far as they have ability to do. Others, "to their own heart." Probably Grotius has suggested the true sense. "They do it for themselves. They make the act their own. It is as if they did it themselves; and they are to be regarded as having done the deed." So we make the act of another our own when we authorize it beforehand, or approve of it after it is done.

And put him to an open shame. Make him a public example; or hold him up as worthy of death on the cross. See the same word explained in Mt 1:19, in the phrase, "make her a public example." The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Their apostasy and rejection of the Saviour would be like holding him up publicly as deserving the infamy and ignominy of the cross. A great part of the crime attending the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, consisted in exhibiting him to the passing multitude as deserving the death of a malefactor. Of that sin they would partake who should reject him, for they would thus show that they regarded his religion as an imposture, and would, in a public manner, hold him up as worthy only of rejection and contempt. Such, it seems to me, is the fair meaning of this much-disputed passage--a passage which Would never have given so much perplexity if it had not been supposed that the obvious interpretation would interfere with some prevalent articles of theology. The passage proves that if true Christians should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew and save them. If then it should be asked whether I believe that any true Christian ever did, or ever will fall from grace, and wholly lose his religion, I would answer unhesitatingly, No. Comp. Jn 10:27,28, Rom 8:38,39, Gal 5:4. If then it be asked what was the use of a warning like this, I answer,

(1.) It would show the great sin of apostasy from God if it were to occur. It is proper to state the greatness of an act of sin, though it might never occur, in order to show how it would be regarded by God.

(2.) Such a statement might be one of the most effectual means of preserving from apostasy. To state that a fall from a precipice would cause certain death, would be one of the most certain means of preserving one from falling; to affirm that arsenic would be certainly fatal, is one of the most effectual means of preventing its being taken; to know that fire certainly destroys, is one of the most sure checks from the danger. Thousands have been preserved from going over the

Falls of Niagara by knowing that there would be no possibility of escape; and so effectual has been this knowledge, that it has preserved all from such a catastrophe, except the very few who have gone over by accident. So in religion. The knowledge that apostasy would be fatal, and there could be no hope of being saved should it once occur, would be a more effectual preventive of the danger than all the other means that could be used. If a man believed that it would be an easy matter to be restored again, should he apostatize, he would feel little solicitude in regard to it; and it has occurred, in fact, that they who suppose that this may occur, have manifested little of the care to walk in the paths of strict religion, which should have been evinced.

(3.) It may be added, that the means used by God to preserve his people from apostasy have been entirely effectual. There is no evidence that one has ever fallen away who was a true Christian, Comp. Jn 10:27,28, and 1Jn 2:19; and to the end of the world it will be true, that the means which he uses to keep his people from apostasy will not in a single instance fail.

5 and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

By the enlightened here, understand those that were baptized and embraced Christianity: The ancients called baptism illumination, and baptized persons the enlightened; because of that divine illumination which was conveyed to the minds of men by the knowledge of Christianity.

By tasting the heavenly gift, and being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, understand such as had not only heard of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but had some experience of them themselves; as also of the spiritual benefits conferred upon them in baptism, by the Holy Spirit.

By tasting the good word of God understand some relish of the truth and goodness of the gospel, some pleasure in entertaining it, by reason of the gracious promises of eternal life and happiness contained in it.

The gospel that proclaimed remission of sins, was a good word; this good word they saw confirmed by miracles,

tongues, and prophecy, and so could not but be convinced of the truth of it, which is here called a tasting it; who have tasted the good word of God; it follows, and the powers of the world to come; that is, the power of the gospel-age; for the "world to come," in the language of the prophets, doth signify the times of the Messiah: And thus, the powers of the world to come, are the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon men, in order to the propagation of the gospel; such were the gifts of healing, casting out devils, woking miracles. Others, by tasting the powers of the world to come, understand some apprehensions of the resurrection and furture judgement, with affections suitable thereunto.

Now concerning these, says our apostle, if they fall away; that is, if they shall, after all this apostatize from this profession, out of love to this present world, or from fear of persecution and sufferings, if they shall relapse either to Heathenism or Judaism, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; that is, it is a thing very difficult, hardly to be hoped for, that such willful apostates should be restored again by repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; that is, they virtually, and in effect crucify him over again, and as much as in them lies; for, by denying and renouncing of him, they declare him to be an imposter, and consequently worthy of death.

So that the plain sense of the words seem to be this: "If those that are baptized, and have received the doctrine of the gospel, and are endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, shall yet, after this, apostatize from Christianity, it is very difficult, and next to an impossibility, to recover such again by repentance; seeing they are guilty of as great a crime, as if, in their own persons, they had put to death, and ignominiously used the Son of God."

Here note, That it is not a partial apostasy from the Christian religion, by any particular vicious practice, but a total apostasy from Christianity, and more especially to the Heathen idolatry, which is here intended.

From the whole learn, 1. That they which have been enlightened, awakened, and made partakers of the gifts and

graces of the Holy Spirit in some measure, and tasted the sweetness of the word and ways of God in some degree, may yet fall away.
2. That if such do fall away, it is very difficult, though not altogether impossible, to renew them again to repentence: and that for these reasons;
1. Because of the greatness and heinous nature of the sin, it being a downright apostasy from God, against the clearest light and knowledge, and fullest conviction of a man's mind; and the highest affront to the Son of God, who revealed the Christian religion to the world, and sealed it with his blood.
2. Because those who are guilty of this sin, do renounce and cast off the means of their recovery, and therefore it becomes extremely difficult to renew them again to repentance: they reject Christ and his holy gospel, and refuse the only remedy appointed for their recovery.
3. Because it is so high a provocation to God, to withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit from such persons, by the power and efficacy whereof they should be brought to repentance: God justly leaving those who so unworthily leave him.
Lord! how fearful and fatal a condition is it, to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; to decay in religion, and apostatize from grace; to have had some work of the Spirit and word upon our hearts, so as to have light and love, some taste and savour of religion, some desires after, and hopes of heaven; and, after all, to cool and give over, to revolt and backslide, and have our latter end worse than our beginning?

6 if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.

He shows how far persons may go in religion, and, after all, fall away, and perish for ever, Heb 6:4,5.

(1.) They may be enlightened. Some of the ancients understand this of their being baptized; but it is rather to be understood of notional knowledge and common illumination, of which persons may have a great deal, and yet come short of heaven. Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened (Nu

24:3), and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness.

(2.) They may taste of the heavenly gift, feel something of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in his operations upon their souls, causing them to taste something of religion, and yet be like persons in the market, who taste of what they will not come up to the price of, and so but take a taste, and leave it. Persons may taste religion, and seem to like it, if they could have it upon easier terms than denying themselves, and taking up their cross, and following Christ.

(3.) They may be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, that is, of his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; they may have cast out devils in the name of Christ, and done many other mighty works. Such gifts in the apostolic age were sometimes bestowed upon those who had no true saving grace.

(4.) They may taste of the good word of God; they may have some relish of gospel doctrines, may hear the word with pleasure, may remember much of it, and talk well of it, and yet never be cast into the form and mould of it, nor have it dwelling richly in them.

(5.) They may have tasted of the powers of the world to come; they may have been under strong impressions concerning heaven, and dread of going to hell. These lengths hypocrites may go, and, after all, turn apostates. Now hence observe,

[1.] These great things are spoken here of those who may fall away; yet it is not here said of them that they were truly converted, or that they were justified; there is more in true saving grace than in all that is here said of apostates.

[2.] This therefore is no proof of the final apostasy of true saints. These indeed may fall frequently and foully, but yet they will not totally nor finally from God; the purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant that God has made with them, ordered in all things and sure, the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the word, these are their security. But the tree that has not these roots will not stand.

2 The apostle describes the dreadful case of such as fall away after having gone so far in the profession of the religion.

(1.) The greatness of the sin of apostasy. It is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame. They declare that they approve of what the Jews did in crucifying Christ, and that they would be glad to do the same thing again if it were in their power. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself, who expects all should reverence his Son, and honour him as they honour the Father. They do what in them lies to represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing, and would have him to be a public shame and reproach. This is the nature of apostasy.

(2.) The great misery of apostates.

[1.] It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. It is extremely hazardous. Very few instances can be given of those who have gone so far and fallen away, and yet ever have been brought to true repentance, such a repentance as is indeed a renovation of the soul. Some have thought this is the sin against the Holy Ghost, but without ground. The sin here mentioned is plainly apostasy both from the truth and the

ways of Christ. God can renew them to repentance, but he seldom does it; and with men themselves it is impossible.

[2.] Their misery is exemplified by a proper similitude, taken from the ground that after much cultivation brings forth nothing but briers and thorns; and therefore is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned, Heb 6:8. To give this the greater force here is observed the difference that there is between the good ground and the bad, that these contraries, being set one over against the other, illustrate each other. First Here is a description of the good ground: It drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it. Believers do not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in; and this good ground bringeth forth fruit answerable to the cost laid out, for the honour of Christ and the comfort of his faithful ministers, who are, under Christ, dressers of the ground. And this fruit-field or garden receives the blessing. God declares fruitful Christians blessed, and all wise and good men account them blessed: they are blessed with increase of grace, and with further establishment and glory at last. Secondly, Here is the different case of the bad ground: It bears briers and thorns; it is not only barren of good fruit, but fruitful in that which is bad, briers and thorns, fruitful in sin and wickedness, which are troublesome and hurtful to all about them, and will be most so to sinners themselves at last; and then such ground is rejected. God will concern himself no more about such wicked apostates; he will let them alone, and cast them out of his care; he will command the clouds that they rain no more upon them. Divine influences shall be restrained; and that is not all, but such ground is nigh unto cursing; so far is it from receiving the blessing, that a dreadful curse hangs over it, though as yet, through the patience of God, the curse is not fully executed. Lastly, Its end is to be burned. Apostasy will be punished with everlasting burnings, the fire that shall never be quenched. This is the sad end to which apostasy leads, and therefore Christians should go on and grow in grace, lest, if

they do not go forward, they should go backward, till they bring matters to this woeful extremity of sin and misery.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

For the earth. The design of the apostle by this comparison is apparent. It is to show the consequences of not making a proper use of all the privileges which Christians have, and the effect which would follow should those privileges fail to be improved. He says, it is like the earth. If that absorbs the rain, and produces an abundant harvest, it receives the Divine blessing. If not, it is cursed, or is worthless. The design is to show that if Christians should become like the barren earth, they would be cast away and lost.

Which drinketh in the rain. A comparison of the earth as if it were "thirsty"--a comparison that is common in all languages.

That cometh oft upon it. The frequent showers that fall. The object is, to describe fertile land which is often watered with the rains of heaven. The comparison of "drinking in" the rain is designed to distinguish a mellow soil which receives the rain, from hard or rocky rand where it runs off.

And bringeth forth herbs. The word herbs we now limit, in common discourse, to the small vegetables which die every year, and which are used as articles of food, or to such in general as have not ligneous or hard woody stems. The word here means anything which is cultivated in the earth as an article of food, and includes all kinds of grains. Meet for them. Useful or appropriate to them.

By whom it is dressed. Marg. "for whom." The meaning is, on account of whom it is cultivated. The word "dressed" here means cultivated. Comp. Gen 2:15.

Receiveth blessing from God. Receives the Divine approbation. It is in accordance with his wishes and plans, and he stories upon it and blesses it. He does not curse it, as he does the desolate and barren soil. The language is figurative, and must be used to denote that which is an object of the Divine favour. God delights in the harvests which the earth brings forth; in the effects of dews and rains and suns, in causing beauty and abundance; and on much fields of beauty and plenty he looks down with pleasure. This does not mean, as I suppose, that he renders it more fertile and abundant, for

(1.) it cannot be shown that it is true that God thus rewards the earth for its fertility; and

(2.) such an interpretation would not accord well with the scope of the passage. The design is to show that a Christian who makes proper use of the means of growing in grace which God bestows upon him, and who does not apostatize, meets with the Divine favour and approbation. His course accords with the Divine intention and wishes, and he is a man on whom God will smile--as he seems to on the fertile earth.

8 but that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.

But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected. That is, by the farmer or owner. It is abandoned as worthless. The force of the comparison here is, that God would thus deal with those who professed to be renewed if they should be like such a worthless field.

And is nigh unto cursing. Is given over to execration, or is abandoned as useless. The word cursing means, devoting to destruction. The sense is not that the owner would curse it in words, or imprecate a curse on it, as a man does who uses profane language, but the language is taken here from the more common use of the word curse--as meaning to devote to destruction. So the land would be regarded by the farmer.

It would be valueless, and would be given up to be overrun with fire.

Whose end is to be burned. Referring to the land. The allusion here is to the common practice, among the Oriental and Roman agriculturists, of burning bad and barren lands. An illustration of this is afforded by Pliny. "There are some who burn the stubble on the field, chiefly upon the authority of Virgil: the principal reason for which is, that they may burn the seeds of weeds," Nat. Hist. xviii. 30. The authority of Virgil, to which Pliny refers, may be found in Georg. i. 84.

"Saepe etiam steriles incendere profuit agros, Atque levem stipulam crepitantibus urere flammis."

"It is often useful to set fire to barren lands, and burn the light stubble in crackling flames." The object of burning land in this way was to render it available for useful purposes; or to destroy noxious weeds, and thorns, and underbrush. But the object of the apostle requires him to refer merely to the fact of the burning, and to make use of it as an illustration of an act of punishment. So, Paul says, it would be in the dealings of God with his people. If, after all attempts to secure holy living, and to keep them in the paths of salvation, they should evince none of the spirit of piety, all that could be done would be to abandon them to destruction, as such a field is overrun with fire. It is not supposed that a true Christian will fall away and be lost; but we may remark,

(1.) that there are many professed Christians who seem to be in danger of such ruin. They resist all attempts to produce in them the fruits of good living as really as some pieces of ground do to secure a harvest. Corrupt desires, pride, envy, uncharitableness, covetousness, and vanity, are as certainly seen in their lives as thorns and briers are on a bad soil. Such briers and thorns you may cut down again and again; you may

strike the plough deep, and seem to tear away all their roots; you may sow the ground with the choicest grain, but soon the briers and the thorns will again appear and be as troublesome as ever. No pains will subdue them or secure a harvest. So with many a professed Christian. He may be taught, admonished, rebuked, and afflicted, but all will not do. There is essential and unsubdued perverseness in his soul, and, despite all the attempts to make him a holy man, the same bad passions are continually breaking out anew.

(2.) Such professing Christians are "nigh unto cursings." They are about to be abandoned for ever. Unsanctified and wicked in their hearts, there is nothing else which can be done for them, and they must be lost! What a thought! A professing Christian "nigh unto cursing!" A man, the efforts for whose salvation are about to cease for ever, and who is to be given over as incorrigible and hopeless! For such a man--in the church or out of it--we should have compassion. We have some compassion for an ox which is so stubborn that he will not work, and which is to be put to death; for a horse which is so fractious that he cannot be broken, and which is to be killed; for cattle which are so unruly that they cannot be restrained, and which are only to be fattened for the slaughter; and even for a field which is desolate and barren, and which is given up to be overrun with briers and thorns; but how much more should we pity a man, all the efforts for whose salvation fail, and who is soon to be abandoned to everlasting destruction!

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things. We confidently hope for better things respecting you. We trust that you are true Christians; that you will produce the proper fruits of holiness; that you will be saved. Things that accompany salvation. Things that pertain to salvation. The Greek phrase here means, "near to salvation," or things that are conjoined with salvation. So Coverdale renders it, "and that salvation is nigher." The form of expression seems to refer to what was said in Heb 6:8.

The land overrun with briers was nigh to cursing; the things which Paul saw in them were nigh to salvation. From this verse it is evident

(1.) that the apostle regarded them as sincere Christians, and

(2.) that he believed they would not fall away. Though he had stated what must be the inevitable consequence if Christians should apostatize, yet he says that, in their case, he had a firm conviction that it would not occur. There is no inconsistency in this. We may be certain that if a man should take arsenic it would kill him; and yet we may have the fullest conviction that he will not do it. Is not this verse a clear proof that Paul felt that it was certain that true Christians would never fall away and be lost? If he supposed that they might, how could he be persuaded that it would not happen to them? Why not to them as well as to others? Learn hence, that while we assure men that if they should fall away they would certainly perish, we may nevertheless address them with the full persuasion that they will be saved.

10 For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

For God is not unrighteous. God will do no wrong. He will not forget or fail to reward the endeavours of his people to promote his glory, and to do good. The meaning here is, that by their kindness in ministering to the wants of the saints, they had given full evidence of true piety. If God should forget that, it would be "unrighteous,"

(1.) because there was a propriety that it should be remembered; and

(2.) because it is expressly promised that it shall not fail of reward, Mt 10:42. Your work. Particularly in ministering to the wants of the saints. Labour of love. Deeds of benevolence when there was no hope of recompense, or when love was the motive in doing it. Which ye have shewed toward his name.

Toward him--for the word name is often used to denote the person himself. They had showed that they loved God by their kindness to his people. Mt 25:40: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." In that ye have ministered to the saints. You have supplied their wants. This may refer either to the fact that they contributed to supply the wants of the poor members of the church, (comp. Gal 2:10, or it may refer to some special acts of kindness which they had shown to suffering and persecuted Christians. It is not possible now to know to what particular acts the apostle refers. We may learn,

(1.) that to show kindness to Christians, because they are Christians, is an important evidence of piety.

(2.) It will in no case be unrewarded. God is not "unjust ;" and he will remember an act of kindness shown to his people--even though it be nothing but giving a cup of cold water.

11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

And we desire that every one of you. We wish that every member of the church should exhibit the same endeavour to do good, until they attain to the full assurance of hope. It is implied here, that the full assurance of hope is to be obtained by a persevering effort to lead a holy life. The same diligence. The same strenuous endeavour, the same ardour and zeal. To the full assurance of hope. In order to obtain the full assurance of hope. The word rendered "full assurance," means firm persuasion, and refers to a state of mind where there is the fullest conviction, or where there is no doubt. See Col 2:2, 1Thes 1:6 Heb 10:22 comp. Lk 1:1, Rom 4:21, 14:5, 2Ti 4:6,17, where the same word, in different forms, occurs. Hope is a compound emotion, Eph 2:12 made up of an earnest desire for an object, and a corresponding expectation of obtaining it. The hope of heaven is made up of an earnest wish to reach heaven, and a corresponding expectation of it, or reason to believe that it will be ours. The full assurance of that hope exists where there is the highest desire of heaven, and such

corresponding evidence of personal piety, as to leave no doubt that it will be ours.

To the end. To the end of life. The apostle wished that they would persevere in such acts of piety to the end of their course, as to have their hope of heaven fully established, and to leave no doubt on the mind that they were sincere Christians. Learn hence,

(1.) that full assurance of hope is to be obtained only by holy living.

(2.) It is only when that is persevered in that it can be obtained.

(3.) It is not by visions and raptures, by dreams and revelations, that it can now be acquired, for God imparts no such direct revelation now.

(4.) It is usually only as the result of a life of consistent piety that such an assurance is to be obtained. No man can have it who does not persevere in holy living; and they who do obtain it usually secure it only near the end of a life of eminent devotedness to God. God could impart it at once when the soul is converted; but such is the tendency of man to indolence and sloth, that even good men would then relax their efforts, and sit down contented, feeling that they had now the undoubted prospect of heaven. As it is, it is held out as a prize to be won--as that whose acquisition is to cheer us in our old age, when the warfare is over, and when, amidst the infirmities of years, and in the near prospect of death, we need special consolation. Comp. 2Ti 4:6,7.

That ye be not slothful. Indolent; inactive. This was what he was especially desirous of guarding them against. By diligent and strenuous effort only could they secure themselves from the danger of apostasy. But followers. Imitators--that you may live as they lived. Of them who through faith and patience. By faith, or confidence in God, and by patience in suffering--

referring to those who in times of trial had remained faithful to God, and had been admitted to heaven. In Heb 11 the apostle has given a long list of such persevering and faithful friends of God. See Notes on that chapter.

12 that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith
and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear
by no greater, he sware by himself,

For when God made promise to Abraham. That he would bless him, and multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, Gen 22:16,17. The object of introducing this example here is to encourage those to whom the apostle was writing to persevere in the Christian life. This he does by showing that God had given the highest possible assurance of his purpose to bless his people by an oath. Reference is made to Abraham in this argument probably, for two reasons.

(1.) To show the nature of the evidence which Christians have that they will be saved, or the ground of encouragement--being the same as that made to Abraham, and depending, as in his case, on the promise of God; and

(2.) because the example of Abraham was just in point. He had persevered. He had relied firmly and solely on the promise of God. He did this when appearances were much against the fulfilment of the promise, and he thus showed the advantage of perseverance and fidelity in the cause of God. Because he could swear by no greater. There is no being greater than God. In taking an oath among men it is always implied that the appeal is to one of superior power, who is able to punish for its infraction. But this could not occur in the case of God himself. There was no greater being than himself, and the oath, therefore, was by his own existence. He sware by himself. Gen 22:16: "By myself have I sworn." Comp. Isa 45:23. In an oath of this kind God pledges his veracity; declares that the event shall be as certain as his existence; and secures it by all the perfections of his nature. The usual form of the oath is, "As I live, saith the Lord." See Nu 14:21,28; Eze 33:11.

Verse 14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee. That is, I will certainly bless thee. The phrase is a Hebrew mode of expression, to denote emphasis or certainty--indicated by the repetition of a word. Comp. Gen 16:10, Ex 8:10, Joel 3:14, Jud 5:30, 15:16. Multiplying I will multiply thee. I will greatly increase thee--I will grant thee an exceedingly numerous posterity.

14 saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife.

And so, after he had patiently endured. After he had waited for a long time. He did not faint or grow weary, but he persevered in a confident expectation of the fulfilment of what God had so solemnly promised. He obtained the promise. Evidently the promise referred to in the oath--that he would have a numerous posterity. The apostle intimates that he had waited for that a long time; that his faith did not waver, and that in due season the object of his wishes was granted. To see the force of this, we are to remember,

(1.) that when he was called by God from Haran, and when the promise of a numerous posterity was made to him, he was seventy-five years old, Gen 12:1-6.

(2.) Twenty-four years elapsed after this, during which he was a sojourner in a strange land, before the manner in which this promise would be fulfilled was made known to him, Gen 17:1-16.

(3.) It was only when he was a hundred years old, and when he had persevered in the belief of the truth of the promise against all the natural improbabilities of its accomplishment, that he received the pledge of its fulfilment in the birth of his son Isaac, Gen 21:1-5.

(4.) The birth of that son was a pledge that the other blessings implied in the promise would be granted, and in that pledge Abraham may be said to have "received the promise." He did not actually see the numerous posterity of which he was to be the honoured ancestor, nor the Messiah who was to descend from him, nor the happy influences which would result to mankind from the fulfilment of the promise. But he saw the certainty that all this would occur; he saw by faith the Messiah in the distance, (Jn 8:56,) and the numerous blessings which would result from his coming. It was a remarkable instance of faith, and one well fitted to the purpose of the apostle. It would furnish ample encouragement to the Christians to whom he wrote to persevere their course, and to avoid the dangers of apostasy. If Abraham persevered when appearances were so much against the fulfilment of what had been promised, then Christians should persevere under the clearer light, and with the more distinct promises of the gospel.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of
promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath:
18 that by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for
God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for
refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Wherein God. On account of which, or since an oath had this effect, God was willing to appeal to it, in order to assure his people of salvation.

Willing more abundantly. In the most abundant manner, or to make the case as sure as possible. It does not mean more abundantly than in the case of Abraham, but that he was willing to give the most ample assurance possible. Coverdale renders it, correctly, "very abundantly."

The heirs of promise. The heirs to whom the promise of life pertained; that is, all who were interested in the promises made to Abraham--thus embracing the heirs of salvation now.

The immutability of his counsel. His fixed purpose, he meant to show, in the most solemn manner, that his purpose would not change. The plans of God never change; and all the hope which we can have of heaven is founded on the fact that his purpose is immutable. If he changed his plans; if he was controlled by caprice; if he willed one thing to-day and another thing tomorrow, who could confide in him or who would have any hope of heaven? No one would know what to expect; and no one could put confidence in him. The farmer ploughs and sows because he believes that the laws of nature are settled and fixed; the mariner ventures into unknown seas because the needle points in one direction; we plant an apple-tree because we believe it will produce apples, a peach because it will produce peaches, a pear because it will produce a pear. But suppose there were no settled laws--that all was governed by caprice--who would know what to plant? Who then would plant anything? So in religion. If there were nothing fixed and settled, who would know what to do? If God should change his plans by caprice, and save one man by faith today and condemn another for the same faith tomorrow; or if he should pardon a man today and withdraw the pardon tomorrow, what security could we have of salvation? How grateful, therefore, should we be, that God has an immutable counsel, and that this is confirmed by a solemn oath! No one could honour a God that had not such an immutability of purpose; and all the hope which man can have of heaven is in the fact that He is unchanging.

Confirmed it by an oath. Marg. Interposed himself. Tindal and Coverdale, "added an oath." The Greek is, "interpose with an oath"-- εμεσιτευσενορκω. The word here used-- μεσιτευω -- means, to mediate or intercede for one; and then to intervene or interpose. The meaning here is, that he interposed an oath between himself and the other party by way of a confirmation or pledge.

That by two immutable things. What the "two immutable things" here referred to are, has been made a matter of question

among commentators. Most expositors, as Doddridge, Whitby, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and Calvin, suppose that the reference is to the promise and the oath of God, each of which would be a firm ground of the assurance of salvation, and in each of which it would be impossible for God to lie. Prof. Stuart supposes that the reference is to two oaths--the oath made to Abraham, and that by which the Messiah was made High Priest according to the order of Melchisedek, Ps 110:4, Heb 5:6,10. He supposes that thus the salvation of believers would be amply secured, by the promise that Abraham should have a Son, the Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed, and in the oath that his Son should be High Priest for ever. But to this interpretation it may be objected that the apostle seems to refer to two things distinct from each other in their nature, and not to two acts of the same kind. There are two kinds of security referred to, whereas the security furnished according to this interpretation would be the same--that arising from an oath. However numerous the oaths might be, still it would be security of the same kind; and if one of them were broken, no certainty could be derived from the other. On the supposition, however, that he refers to the promise and the oath, there would be two kinds of assurance, of different kinds. On the supposition that the promise was disregarded--if such a supposition may be made--still there would be the security of the oath and thus the assurance of salvation was two-fold. It seems to me, therefore, that the apostle refers to the promise and to the oath of God, as constituting the two grounds of security for the salvation of his people. Those things were both unchangeable; and when his word and oath are once passed, what he promises is secure.

In which it was impossible for God to Lie. That is, it would be contrary to his nature; it is not for a moment to be supposed. Comp. Tit 1:2: "God--that cannot lie." The impossibility is a moral impossibility, and the use of the word here explains the Sense in which the words impossible, cannot, etc., are often used in the Scriptures. The meaning here is, that such was the

love of God for truth, such his holiness of character, that he could not speak falsely.

We might have a strong consolation. The strongest of which the mind can conceive. The consolation of a Christian is not in his own strength; his hope of heaven is not in any reliance on his own powers. His comfort is, that God has promised eternal life to his people, and that He cannot prove false to his word, Tit 1:2.

Who have fled for refuge. Referring to the fact that one charged with murder fled to the city of refuge, or laid hold on an altar for security. So we, guilty and deserving of death, have fled to the hopes of the gospel in the Redeemer.

To lay hold upon. To seize and hold fast--as one does an altar when he is pursued by the avenger of blood. The hope set before us.

The hope of eternal life offered in the gospel. This is set before us as our refuge, and to this we flee when we feel that we are in danger of death. On the nature of hope, Eph 2:12.

19 which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. Hope accomplishes for the soul the same thing which an anchor does for a ship. It makes it fast and secure. An anchor preserves a ship when the waves beat and the wind blows; and as long as the anchor holds, so long a ship is safe, and the mariner apprehends no danger. So with the soul of the Christian. In the tempests and trials of life, his mind is calm as long as his hope of heaven is firm. If that gives way, he feels that all is lost. Among the heathen writers, hope is often compared with an anchor. So Socrates said, "To ground hope on a false supposition, is like trusting to a weak anchor." Again--"A ship ought not to trust to one anchor, nor life to one hope." Both sure and stedfast. Firm and secure. This refers to the anchor. That is fixed in the sand, and the vessel is secure. And which

entereth into that within the veil. The allusion to the anchor here is dropped, and the apostle speaks simply of hope. The "veil" here refers to that which, in the temple, divided the holy from the most holy place. Mt 21:12. The place "within the veil"--the most holy place--was regarded as God's peculiar abode, where he dwelt by the visible symbol of his presence. That holy place was emblematic of heaven; and the idea here is, that the hope of the Christian enters into heaven itself; it takes hold on the throne of God; it is made firm by being fastened there. It is not the hope of future riches, honours, or pleasures in this life--for such a hope would not keep the soul steady; it is the hope of immortal blessedness and purity in the world beyond.

20 whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Whither. To which most holy place--heaven. The forerunner. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. A forerunner προδρομος--is one who goes before others to prepare the way. The word is applied to light troops sent forward as scouts. Diod. Sic. 17.17. Comp. "Wisdom of Solomon," (Apoc.,) xii. 8: "Thou didst send wasps, forerunners of thy host, to destroy them by little and little." The meaning here is, that Jesus went first into the heavenly sanctuary. He led the way. He has gone there on our account, to prepare a place for us, Jn 14:3. Having such a friend and advocate there, we should be firm in the hope of eternal life; and, amidst the storms and tempests around us, we should be calm. Made an High Priest for ever. Heb 5:6; Heb 5:10/ To illustrate this fact was the object for which this discussion was introduced, and which had been interrupted by the remarks occurring in this chapter on the danger of apostasy. Having warned them of this danger, and exhorted them to go on to make the highest attainments possible in the divine life, the apostle resumes the discussion respecting Melchizedek, and makes the remarks which he intended to make respecting this remarkable man. See Heb 5:11. (g) "the forerunner" Heb 4:14 (h) "Melchisedec" Heb 7:17

Hebrews-7

The Priestly Order of Melchizedek

1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God,
who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and
blessed him;

For this Melchisedec. Heb 5:6. The name, Melehisedek, from which the apostle derives a portion of his argument here, is Hebrew and is correctly explained as meaning king of righteousness--being compounded of two words --king and righteousness. Why this name was given to this man is unknown. Names, however, were frequently given on account of some quality or characteristic of the man. Isa 8:18. This name may have been given on account of his eminent integrity. The apostle calls attention to it Heb 7:2 as a circumstance worthy of notice, that his name, and the name of the city where he reigned, were so appropriate to one who, as a priest, was the predecessor of the Messiah. The account of Melchisedek, which is very brief, occurs in Gen 14:18-20. The name occurs in the Bible only in Gen 14, Ps 110:4, and in this epistle. Nothing else is certainly known of him. Grotius supposes that he is the same man who, in the history of Sanchoniathon, is called συδυκ--Sydyc. It has indeed been made a question by some whether such a person ever actually existed, and consequently whether this be a proper name. But the account in Genesis is as simple an historical record as any other in the Bible. In that account there is no difficulty whatever. It is said simply, that when Abraham was returning from a successful military expedition, this man, who, it seems, was well known, and who was respected as a priest of God, came out to express his approbation of what he had done, and to refresh him with bread and wine. As a tribute of gratitude to him, and as a thank-offering to God, Abraham gave him a tenth part of the spoils which he had taken. Such an occurrence was by no means improbable, nor would it have been attended with any special difficulty if it had not been for the use which the apostle makes of it in this epistle. Yet on no subject has there been a greater

variety of opinion than in regard to this man. The bare recital of the opinions which have been entertained of him would fill a volume. But in a case which seems to be plain, from the Scripture narrative, it is not necessary even to enumerate these opinions. They only serve to show how easy it is for men to mystify a clear statement of history, and how fond they are of finding what is mysterious and marvellous in the plainest narrative of facts. That he was Shem; as the Jews suppose, or that he was the Son of God himself, as many Christian expositors have maintained, there is not the slightest evidence. That the latter opinion is false is perfectly clear; for if he were the Son of God, with what propriety could the apostle say that he "was made like the Son of God," Heb 7:3; that is, like himself; or that Christ was constituted a priest "after the order of Melchisedec;" that is, that he was a type of himself? The most simple and probable opinion is that given by Josephus, that he was a pious Canaanitish prince; a personage eminently endowed by God, and who acted as the priest of his people. That he combined in himself the offices of priest and king furnished to the apostle a beautiful illustration of the offices sustained by the Redeemer, and was, in this respect, perhaps the only one whose history is recorded in the Old Testament who would furnish such an illustration. That his genealogy was not recorded, while that of every other priest mentioned was so careful traced and preserved, furnished another striking illustration. In this respect, like the Son of God, he stood alone. He was not in a line of priests; he was preceded by no one in the sacerdotal office, nor was he followed by any. That he was superior to Abraham, and consequently to all who descended from Abraham; that a tribute was rendered to him by the great ancestor of all the fraternity of Jewish priests, was just an illustration which suited the purpose of Paul. His name, therefore, the place where he reigned, his solitariness, his lone conspicuity in all the past, his dignity, and perhaps the air of mystery thrown over him in the brief history in Genesis, furnished a beautiful and striking illustration of the solitary grandeur, and the inapproachable eminence of the priesthood of the Son of God. There is no evidence that Melchisedek was

designed to be a type of the Messiah, or that Abraham so understood it. Nothing of this kind is affirmed; and how shall we affirm it when the sacred oracles are silent?

King of Salem. Such is the record in Gen 14:18. The word Salem----means, peace; and from this fact the apostle derives his illustration in Heb 7:2. He regards it as a fact worth remarking on, that the name of the place ever which he ruled expressed so strikingly the nature of the kingdom over which the Messiah was placed. In regard to the place here denoted by the name Salem, the almost uniform opinion has been that it was that afterwards known as Jerusalem. The reasons for this opinion are,

(1.) that it is a part of the name Jerusalem itself--the name Jerus, altered from Jebus, having been afterwards added, because it was the residence of the Jebusites.

(2.) The name Salem is itself given to Jerusalem. Ps 86:2: "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion."

(3.) Jerusalem would be in the direction through which Abraham would naturally pass on his return from the slaughter of the kings. He had pursued them unto Dan, Gen 14:14, and he was returning to Mamre, that is, Hebron, Gen 14:13. On his return, therefore, he would pass in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Rosenmuller, however, supposes that by the name here Jerusalem is not intended, but the whole region occupied by the Jebusites and Hittites, or the royal seat of this region, situated not far from the cities of the plain--the vale of Siddim, where Sodom and Gomorrah were situated. But I see no reason for doubting that the common opinion, that Jerusalem is intended, is correct. That place was favourably situated for a capital of a nation or tribe; was easily fortified; and would be likely to be early selected as a royal residence,

Priest of the most high God. This is the account which is given of him in Gen 14:18. The leading office of priest was to offer sacrifice. This duty was probably first performed by the father of the family, (comp. Job 1:5; see also Gen 8:20, 22:2; and when he was dead it devolved on the eldest son. It would seem, also, that in the early ages, among all nations whose records have reached us, the office of priest and king were united in the same person. It was long before it was found that the interests of religion would be promoted by having the office of priest pertain to an order of men set apart for this special work, That Melchisedek, who was a king, should also be a priest, was not, therefore, remarkable. The only thing remarkable is, that he should have been a priest of the true God. In what way he became acquainted with Him, is wholly unknown. It may have been by tradition preserved from the times of Noah, as it is possible that the arrival of Abraham in that land may have been in some way the means of acquainting him with the existence and character of JEHOVAH. The fact shows, at least, that the knowledge of the true God was not extinct in the world.

Who met Abraham. He came out to meet him, and brought with him bread and wine. Why he did this, is not mentioned. It was probably as an expression of gratitude to Abraham for having freed the country from oppressive and troublesome invaders, and in order to furnish refreshments to the party which Abraham headed, who had become weary and exhausted with the pursuit. There is not the slightest evidence that the bread and wine which he brought forth was designed to typify the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as has been sometimes supposed. Comp. Bush on Gen 14:18. What did he know of this ordinance? And why should we resort to such a supposition, when the whole case may be met by a simple reference to the ancient rites of hospitality, and by the fact that the deliverance of the country by Abraham from a grievous invasion made some expression of gratitude on the part of this pious king in the highest degree proper?

Returning from the slaughter of the kings. Amraphel, king of Shiner, Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and "Tidal, king of nations," who had invaded the valley where Sodom and Gomorrah were, and had departed with a great amount of booty. Those kings Abraham had pursued beyond Dan, and to the neighbourhood of Damascus, and had smitten them, and recovered the spoil.

And blessed him. For the important service which he had rendered in taking vengeance on these invaders; in freeing the land from the apprehension of being invaded again; and in recovering the valuable booty which they had taken away. From Heb 7:6,7, it appears that this act of blessing was regarded as that of one who was superior to Abraham: that is, he blessed him as a priest and a king. As such he was superior in rank to Abraham, who never claimed the title of king, and who is not spoken of as a priest.

2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all. That is, a tenth part of all the spoils which he had taken, Gen 14:20; thus acknowledging that, in dignity of office, Melchisedek was greatly his superior, Heb 7:4,6,8. This does not appear to have been, on the part of Abraham, so much designed as a present to Melchisedek personally, as an act of pious thankfulness to God. He doubtless recognised in Melchisedek one who was a minister of God, and to him, as such, he devoted the tenth of all which he had taken, as a proper acknowledgment of the goodness of God and of his claims. From this it is evident that the propriety of devoting a tenth part of what was possessed to God, was regarded as a duty before the appointment of the Levitical law. Some expression of this kind is obviously demanded, and piety seems early to have fixed on the tenth part as being no more than a proper proportion to consecrate to the service of religion, for the propriety of the use which the apostle makes of this fact, Heb 7:4, Heb 7:6; Heb 7:8.

First being. The first idea in the interpretation of his name and office, etc. First being mentioned as king of righteousness, and then as king of peace.

King of righteousness. The literal translation of the name Melchisedek. Heb 7:1 The argument implied in this by the remarks of the apostle is, that he bore a name which made him a proper emblem of the Messiah. There was a propriety that one in whose "order" the Messiah was to be found should have such a name. It would be exactly descriptive of him; and it was worthy of observation, that he of whose "order" it was said the Messiah would be should have had such a name. Paul does not say that this name was given to him with any such reference, or that it was designed to be symbolical of what the Messiah would be; but that there was a remarkable coincidence; that it was a fact which was worth at least a passing thought. This is a kind of remark that might occur to any one to make, and where the slight use which Paul makes of it would not be improper anywhere; but it cannot be denied, that to one accustomed to the Jewish mode of reasoning--accustomed to dwell much on hidden meanings, and to trace out concealed analogies--it would be much more obvious and striking than it is with us. We are to place ourselves in the situation of those to whom Paul wrote--trained up with Jewish feelings, and Jewish modes of thought--and to ask how this would strike their minds. And this is no more unreasonable than it would be in interpreting a Greek classic, or a work of a Hindoo philosopher, that we should endeavour to place ourselves in the situation of the writer, and of those for whom he wrote, and ascertain what ideas would be conveyed to them by certain expressions. It is not meant by these observations that there was really no intrinsic force in what Paul here said respecting the import of the name. There was force; and all the use which he makes of it is proper. His meaning appears to be merely that it was a fact worthy of remark, that the name had a meaning which corresponded so entirely with the character of Him who was to be a high priest of the same "order."

And after that. He is mentioned after that with another appellation equally significant.

King of peace. A literal translation of the appellation "king of Salem," Heb 7:1 The idea of Paul is, that it was worthy of remark that the appellation which he bore was appropriate to one whose ministry, it was said, the priesthood of the Messiah would resemble.

3 without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

Without father. The phrase without father απατωρ --means, literally, one who has no father; one who has lost his father; one who is an orphan. Then it denotes one who is born after the death of his father; then one whose father is unknown--spurious. Passow. The word occurs often in these senses in the classic writers, for numerous examples of which the reader may consult Wetstein, in loc. It is morally certain, however, that the apostle did not use the word here in either of these senses, for there is no evidence that Melchizedek was fatherless in any of these respects. It was very important, in the estimation of the Jews, that the line of their priesthood should be carefully kept; that their genealogies should be accurately marked and preserved; and that their direct descent from Aaron should be susceptible of easy and certain proof. But the apostle says that there was no such genealogical table in regard to Melchizedek. There was no record made of the name either of his father, his mother, or any of his posterity. He stood alone. It is simply said that such a man came out to meet Abraham--and that is the first and the last which we hear of him and of his family. Now, says the apostle, it is distinctly said Ps 110:4 that the Messiah was to be a priest according to his order: and in this respect there is a remarkable resemblance, so far as the point of his being a priest--which was the point under discussion--was concerned. The Messiah thus, as a priest, STOOD ALONE. His name does not appear in the line of priests. He pertained to another tribe, Heb 7:14. No one of his ancestors is mentioned as a priest; and: as a priest he has no

descendants and no followers. He has a lonely conspicuity similar to that of Melchisedek; a standing unlike that of any other priest. This should not, therefore, be construed as meaning that the genealogy of Christ could not be traced out--which is not true, for Mt 1 and Lk 3 have carefully preserved it; but that he had no genealogical record as a priest. As the reasoning of the apostle pertains to this point only, it would be unfair to construe it as implying that the Messiah was to stand unconnected with any ancestor, or that his genealogy would be unknown. The meaning of the word rendered "without father" here is, therefore, one the name of whose father is not recorded in the Hebrew genealogies.

Without mother. The name of whose mother is unknown, or is not recorded in the Hebrew genealogical tables. Philo calls Sarah-- αμητορα--without mother, probably because her mother is not mentioned in the sacred records. The Syriac has given the correct view of the meaning of the apostle. In that version it is, "Of whom neither the father nor mother are recorded in the genealogies." The meaning here is not that Melchisedek was of low and obscure origin, as the terms "without father and without mother" often signify in the classic writers, and in Arabic, (comp. Wetstein ;) for there is no reason to doubt that Melchisedek had an ancestry as honourable as other kings and priests of his time. The simple thought is, that the name of his ancestry does not appear in any record of those in the priestly office. Without descent, Marg, pedigree. The Greek word αγενεαλογητος -- means, without genealogy; whose descent is unknown. He is merely mentioned himself, and nothing is said of his family or of his posterity. Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life. This is a much more difficult expression than any of the others respecting Melchizedek. The obvious meaning of the phrase is, that, in the records of Moses, neither the beginning nor the close of his life is mentioned. It is not said when he was born, or when he died; nor is it said that he was born, or that he died. The apostle adverts to this particularly, because it was so unusual in the records of Moses, who is in general so careful to mention the

birth and death of the individuals whose lives he mentions. Under the Mosaic dispensation everything respecting the duration of the sacerdotal office was determined accurately by the law. In the time of Moses, and by his arrangement, the Levites were required to serve from the age of thirty to fifty, Nu 4:3,23,36,43,47; Nu 8:24,26. After the age of fifty, they were released from the more arduous and severe duties of their office. In later periods of the Jewish history they commenced their duties at the age of twenty, 1Chr 23:24,27. The priests also, and the high priest, entered on their office at thirty years of age, though it is not supposed that they retired from it at any particular period of life. The idea of the apostle here is, that nothing of this kind occurs in regard to Melchizedek. No period is mentioned when he entered on his office; none when he retired from it. From anything that appears in the sacred record it might be perpetual--though Paul evidently did not mean to be understood as saying that it was so. It cannot be that he meant to say that Melehizedek had no beginning of days literally, that is, that he was from eternity; or that he had no end of life literally, that is, that he would exist for ever--for this would be to make him equal with God. The expression used must be interpreted according to the matter under discussion, and that was the office of Melchizedek as a priest. Of that no beginning is mentioned, and no end. That this is the meaning of Paul there can be no doubt; but there is a much more difficult question about the force and pertinency of this reasoning--about the use which he means to make of this fact, and the strength of the argument which he here designs to employ. This inquiry cannot easily be settled. It may be admitted, undoubtedly, that it would strike a Jew with much more force than it would any other person; and to see its pertinency we ought to be able to place ourselves in their condition, and to transfer to ourselves, as far as possible, their state of feeling. It was mentioned in Ps 110:4, that the Messiah was to be a "priest after the order of Melchizedek." It was natural, then, to turn to the only record which existed of him--the very brief narrative in Gen 14. There the account is simple and plain--that he was a pious Canaanitish king, who officiated

as a priest. In what point then, it would be asked, was the Messiah to resemble him? In his personal character; his office; his rank; or in what he did? It would be natural, then, to run out the parallel, and seize upon the points in which Melchizedek differed from the Jewish priests which would be suggested on reading that account for it was undoubtedly in those points that the resemblance between Christ and Melchizedek was to consist. Here the record was to be the only guide, and the points in which he differed from the Jewish priesthood, according to the record, were such as these.

(1.) That there is no account of his ancestry as a priest--neither father nor mother being mentioned--as was indispensable in the records of the Levitical priesthood.

(2.) There was no account of any descendants in his office, and no reason to believe that he had any, and he thus stood alone.

(3.) There was no account of the commencement or close of his office as a priest, but, so far as the record goes, it is just as it would have been if his priesthood had neither beginning nor end. It was inevitable, therefore, that those who read the Psalm, and compared it with the account in Gen 14, should come to the conclusion that the Messiah was to resemble Melchizedek in some such points as these--for these are the points in which he differed from the Levitical priesthood; and to run out these points of comparison is all that the apostle has done here. It is just what would be done by any Jew, or indeed by any other man; and the reasoning grew directly out of the two accounts in the Old Testament. It is not, then, quibble or quirk --it is sound reasoning, based on these two points:

(1) that it was said in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek; and

(2) that the only points, according to the record, in which there was anything peculiar about the priesthood of Melchizedek, or in which he differed from the Levitical priesthood, were such

as those which Paul specifies, he reasons from the record; and though there is, as was natural, something of a Jewish cast about it, yet it was the only kind of reasoning that was possible in the case.

But made like. The word here used means, to be made like, to be made to resemble; and then to be like, to be compared with. Our translation seems to imply that there was a Divine agency or intention by which Melchizedek was made to resemble the Son of God; but this does not seem to be the idea of the apostle. In the Psalm it is said that the Messiah would resemble Melchizedek in his priestly office, and this is doubtless the idea here. Paul is seeking to illustrate the nature and perpetuity of the office of the Messiah by comparing it with that of Melchizedek. Hence he pursues the idea of this resemblance; and the true sense of the word used here is, "he was like, or he resembled the Son of God." So Tindal and Coverdale render it, "is likened unto the Son of God." The points of resemblance are those which have been already suggested:

(1) in the name--king of righteousness, and king of peace;

(2) in the fact that he had no ancestors or successors in the priestly office;

(3) that he was, according to the record, a perpetual priest--there being no account of his death; and perhaps

(4) that he united in himself the office of king and priest. It may be added, that the expression here, "was made like unto the Son of God," proves that he was not himself the Son of God, as many have supposed. How could he be "made like" himself? How could a comparison be formally made between Christ and himself?

Abideth a priest continually. That is, as far as the record in Genesis goes--for it was according to this record that Paul was reasoning. This clause is connected with Heb 7:1; and, the

intermediate statements are of the nature of a parenthesis, containing important suggestions respecting the character of Melchizedek, which would be useful in preparing the readers for the argument which the apostle proposed to draw from his rank and character. The meaning is, that there is no account of his death, or of his ceasing to exercise the priestly office; and in this respect he may be compared with the Lord Jesus. All other priests cease to exercise their office by death, Heb 7:23; but of the death of Melchizedek there is no mention. It must have been true that the priesthood of Melchizedek terminated at his death; and it will be also true that that of Christ will cease when his Church shall have been redeemed, and when he shall have given up the mediatorial kingdom to the rather, 1Cor 15:25-28. The expression, "abideth a priest continually," therefore, is equivalent to saying that he had a perpetual priesthood, in contradistinction from those whose office terminated at a definite period, or whose office passed over into the hands of others. Heb 7:24.

4 Now consider how great this man *was,* unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Now consider how great this man was. The object of the apostle was to exalt the rank and dignity of Melchizedek. The Jews had a profound veneration for Abraham; and if it could be shown that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, then it would be easy to demonstrate the superiority of Christ, as a priest, to all who descended from Abraham. Accordingly he argues, that he to whom even the patriarch Abraham showed so much respect, must have had an exalted rank. Abraham, according to the views of the East, the illustrious ancestor of the Jewish nation, was regarded as superior to any of his posterity, and of course was to be considered as of higher rank and dignity than the Levitical priests, who were descended from him. Even the patriarch Abraham. One so great as he is acknowledged to have been. On the word patriarch, Acts 2:29. It occurs only in Acts 2:29, 7:8,9, and in this place. Gave the tenth of the spoils. Heb 7:2 The argument here is, that Abraham acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek by thus devoting the usual part of the spoils of war, or of what

was possessed, to God by his hands, as the priest of the Most High. Instead of making a direct consecration by himself, he brought them to him as a minister of religion, and recognised in him one who had a higher official standing in the matter of religion than himself. The Greek word rendered spoils--ακροθινιον--means, literally, the top of the heap, from ακρον, top, and θιν, heap. The Greeks were accustomed, after a battle, to collect the spoils together, and throw them into a pile, and then, before they were distributed, to take off a portion from the top, and devote it to the gods, Xen. Cyro. vii. 6, 36; Herod. i. 86, 90; viii. 121, 122; Dion. Hal. ii. In like manner it was customary to place the harvest in a heap; and, as the first thing, to take off a portion from the top to consecrate as a thank-offering to God. The word then came to denote the first-fruits which were offered to God, and then the best of the spoils of battle. It has that sense here, and denotes the spoils or plunder which Abraham had taken of the discomfited kings.

5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi. The meaning of this verse is, that the Levitical priests had a right to receive tithes of their brethren, but still that they were inferior to Melchizedek. The apostle admits that their superiority to the rest of the people was shown by the fact that they had a right to require of them the tenth part of the productions of the land for their maintenance, and for the support of religion. But still he says that their inferiority to Melchizedek, and consequently to Christ as a priest, was shown by the fact that the illustrious ancestor of all the Jewish people, including the priests as well as others, had confessed his inferiority to Melchizedek by paying him tithes. Who receive the office of the priesthood. Not all the descendants of Levi were priests. The apostle, therefore, specifies particularly those who "received this office," as being those whom he specially designed, and as those whose inferiority to Christ as a priest it was his object to show. Have a commandment to take tithes. Have by the law a

commission, or a right to exact tithes of the people, De 14:22,27-29.

6 but he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of
Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

But he whose descent is not counted from them. Melchizedek. The word descent is, in the margin, pedigree. The meaning is, that he was not in the same genealogy--μηγενεαλογουμενος--he was not of the order of Levitical priests. That Melchizedek is meant there can be no doubt; at the same time, also, the thought is presented with prominence, on which Paul so much insists, that he was of a different order from the Levitical priesthood. And blessed him. Blessed him as a priest of God; blessed him in such a manner as to imply acknowledged superiority. See Heb 7:1. That had the promises. The promise that he should have a numerous posterity; that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. See Heb 6:12-16.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

And without all contradiction. It is an admitted principle; a point about which there can be no dispute. The less is blessed of the better. The act of pronouncing a blessing is understood to imply superiority of rank, age, or station. So when a father lays his hand on his children and blesses them, it is understood to be the act of one superior in age, venerableness, and authority; when a prophet pronounced a blessing on the people, the same thing was understood; and the same is true, also, when a minister of religion pronounces a blessing on a congregation. It is the act of one who is understood to sustain an office above the people on whom the blessing is pronounced. This was understood of the Saviour when parents brought their children to him to lay his hands on them and bless them, Mt 19:13; and the same was true of Jacob, when flying he blessed the sons of Joseph, Heb 11:21, Gen 48:5-20. The word less here means the one of inferior rank; who is less in office, honour, or age. It does not imply inferiority of moral or religious character, for this is not the point under consideration. The word better means one who is of superior office or rank, not one who has necessarily a purer or holier

character. That Melchizedek was thus superior to Abraham, Paul says, is implied by the very declaration that he "blessed him." It is also seen to be true by the whole comparison. Abraham was a petty prince; an Emir--the head of a company of Nomades, or migratory shepherds, having, it is true, a large number of dependents, but still not having the rank here given to Melchizedek. Though called a prophet, Gen 20:7, yet he is nowhere called either a priest or a king. In these respects, it was undoubted that he was inferior to Melchizedek.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them,*
of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

And here men that die receive tithes. Another point showing the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood. They who thus received tithes, though by the right to do this they asserted a superiority over their brethren, were mortal. Like others, they would soon die; and in regard to the most essential things they were on a level with their brethren. They had no exemption from sickness, affliction, or bereavement, and death came to them with just as much certainty as he approached other men. The meaning of this is, that they are mortal like their brethren, and the design is to show the inferiority of their office by this fact. Its obvious and natural signification, in the apprehension of the great mass of readers, would not be, as the meaning has been supposed to be, that it refers "to the brief and mutable condition of the Levitical priesthood." See Stuart, in loco. Such an interpretation would not occur to any one if it were not to avoid the difficulty existing in the correlative member of the verse, where it is said of Melchizedek that "he liveth." But is the difficulty avoided then? Is it not as difficult to understand what is meant by his having an immutable and perpetual priesthood, as it is to know what is meant by his not dying literally ? Is the one any more true than the other whatever difficulties, therefore, there may be, we are bound to adhere to the obvious sense of the expression here; a sense which furnishes also a just and forcible ground of comparison. It seems to me, therefore, that the simple meaning of this passage is, that under the Levitical economy those who received tithes were mortal, and were thus placed in strong contrast with him

of whom it was said, "he liveth." Thus they were inferior to him--as a mortal is inferior to one who does not die; and thus also they must he inferior to him who was made a priest after the "order" of him who thus "lived."

But there. In contrast with "here" in the same verse. The reference here is to the account of Melchizedek: "Here" in the Levitical economy, men received tithes who are mortal; "there," in the account of Melchizedek, the case is different.

He receiveth them. Melchizedek -- for so the connexion evidently demands.

Of whom it is witnessed. Of whom the record is. There is not, in Genesis, indeed any direct record that he lives, but there is the absence of a record that he died; and this seems to have been regarded as, in fact, a record of permanency in the office, or as having an office which did not pass over to successors by the death of the then incumbent.

That he liveth. This is an exceedingly difficult expression, and one which has always greatly perplexed commentators. The fair and obvious meaning is, that all the record we have of Melchizedek is, that he was "alive;" or, as Grotius says, the record is merely that he lived. We have no mention of his death, from anything that the record shows, it might appear that he continued to live on, and did not die. Arguing from the record, therefore, there is a strong contrast between him and the Levitical priests, all of whom we know are mortal, Heb 7:23. The apostle is desirous of making out a contrast between them and the priesthood of Christ, on this point, among others; and in doing this he appeals to the record in the Old Testament, and says that there was a case which furnished an intimation that the priestly office of the Messiah was not to pass over from him to others by death. That case was, that he was expressly compared Ps 110:4 with Melchizedek, and that in the account of Melchizedek there was no record of his death. As to the force of this argument, it must be admitted that it would strike

a Jew more impressively than it does most readers now; and it may not be improbable that the apostle was reasoning from some interpretation of the passages in Gen 14 and Ps 110, which was then prevalent, and which would then be conceded on all hands to be correct. If this was the admitted interpretation, and if there is no equivocation, or mere trick in the reasoning--as there cannot be shown to be--why should we not allow to the Jew a peculiarity of reasoning as we do to all other people? There are modes of reasoning and illustration in all nations, in all societies, and in all professions, which do not strike others as very forcible. The ancient philosophers had methods of reasoning which now seem weak to us; the lawyer often argues in a way which appears to be a mere quirk or quibble, and so the lecturer in science sometimes reasons. The cause of all this may not be always that there is real quibble or quirk, in the mode of argumentation, but that he who reasons in this manner has in his view certain points which he regards as undisputed which do not appear so to us; or that he argues from what is admitted in the profession, or in the school where he is taught, which are not understood by those whom he addresses. To this should be added also the consideration, that Paul had a constant reference to the Messiah, and that it is possible that in his mind there was here a transition from the type to the antitype, and that the language which he uses may be stronger than if he had been speaking of the mere record of Melchizedek if he had found it standing by itself. Still his reasoning turns mainly on the fact, that in the case of Melchizedek there was no one who had preceded him in that office, and that he had no successor, and, in regard to the matter in hand, it was all one as if he had been a perpetual priest, or had continued still alive.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in
Abraham.

And as I may so say. So to speak--ωςεποςειπειν. For numerous examples in the classic writers of this expression, see Wetstein, in loc. It is used precisely as it is with us when we say, "so to speak," or, "if I may be allowed the

expression." It is employed when what is said is not strictly and literally true, but when it amounts to the same thing, or when about the same idea is conveyed. "It is a softening down of an expression which a writer supposes his readers may deem too strong, or which may have the appearance of excess or severity. It amounts to an indirect apology for employing an unusual or unexpected assertion or phrase." Prof. Stuart. Here Paul could not mean that Levi had actually paid tithes in Abraham--for he had not then an existence; or that Abraham was his representative--for there had been no appointment of Abraham to act in that capacity by Levi; or that the act of Abraham was imputed or reckoned to Abraham--for that was not true, and would not have been pertinent to the case if it were so. But it means, that in the circumstances of the case, the same thing occurred in regard to the superiority of Melchizedek, and the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood, as if Levi had been present with Abraham, and had himself actually paid tithes on that occasion. This was so because Abraham was the distinguished ancestor of Levi; and when an ancestor has done an act implying inferiority of rank to another, we feel as if the whole family, or all the descendants, by that act recognised the inferiority, unless something occurs to change the relative rank of the persons. Here nothing indicating any such change had occurred. Melchizedek had no descendants of which mention is made, and the act of Abraham, as the head of the Hebrew race, stood therefore as if it were the act of all who descended from him.

Levi. The ancestor of the whole Levitical priesthood, and from whom they received their name. He was the third son of Jacob and Leah, and was born in Mesopotamia. On account of the conduct of Simeon and Levi towards Shechem, for the manner in which he had treated their sister Dinah, Gen 34:25, and which Jacob characterized as "cruelty," Gen 49:5,6, Jacob said that they should be "scattered in Israel," Gen 49:7. Afterwards the whole tribe of Levi was chosen by God to execute the various functions of the priesthood, and were

"scattered" over the land, having no inheritance of their own, but deriving their subsistence from the offerings of the people. Nu 3:6, seq. Levi is here spoken of as the ancestor of the tribe, or collectively to denote the entire Jewish priesthood.

Who receiveth tithes. That is, his descendants, the priests and Levites, receive tithes.

Payed tithes in Abraham. It is the same as if he had payed tithes in or by Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

For he was yet in the loins of his father. Abraham is here called the father of Levi, by a common use of the word, referring to a more remote ancestor than the literal father. The meaning of the apostle is that he was even then, in a certain sense, in the loins of Abraham, when Melchizedek met him; or it was all the same as if he were there, and had then an existence. The relation which subsisted between him and Abraham, in the circumstances of the case, implied the same thing as if he had then been born, and had acted for himself by paying tithes. Instances of this occur constantly. A father sells a farm, to which his son would be heir, and it is the same as if the son had sold it. He has no more control over it than if he had been present and disposed of it himself. A father acknowledges fealty to a government for a certain title or property which is to descend to his heirs, and it is all one as if the heir had himself done it; and it is not improper to say that it is the same as if he had been there and acted for himself. For some valuable remarks on the nature of the reasoning here employed, see Stuart on the Hebrews, Eursus xiv. The reasoning here is, indeed, especially such as would be fitted to impress a Jewish mind, and perhaps more forcibly than it does ours. The Jews valued themselves on the dignity and honour of the Levitical priesthood, and it was important to show them on their own principles, and according to their

own sacred writings, that the great ancestor of all the Levitical community had himself acknowledged his inferiority to one who was declared also in their own writings Ps 110 to be like the Messiah, or who was of the same "order." At the same time, the reasoning concedes nothing false, and conveys no wrong impression. It is not mere fancy or accommodation, nor is it framed on allegory or cabalistic principles. It is founded in truth, and such as might be used anywhere, where regard was shown to pedigree, or respect was claimed on account of the illustrious deeds of an ancestor. It would be regarded as sound reasoning in a country like England, where titles and ranks are recognised, and where various orders of nobility exist. The fact that a remote ancestor had done homage or fealty to the ancestor of another class of titled birth would be regarded as proof of acknowledged inferiority in the family, and might be used with force and propriety in an argument. Paul has done no more than this.

11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood. As the Jews supposed. They were accustomed to regard the system as perfect, It was an appointment of God, and they were tenacious of the opinion that it was to be permanent, and that it needed no change. But Paul says that this could not be. Even from their own Scriptures it was apparent that a priest was to arise of another order, and of a more permanent character; and this, he says, was full proof that there was defect of some kind in the previous order. What this defect was he does not here specify, but the subsequent reasoning shows that it was in such points as these--that it was not permanent; that it could not make the worshippers perfect; that the blood which they offered in sacrifice could not take away sin, and could not render those who offered it holy. Comp. Heb 7:19,23,24, Heb 10:1-4. For under it the people received the law. This assertion seems necessary in order to establish the point maintained in Heb

7:12, that if the priesthood is changed there must be also a change of the law. In order to this it was necessary to admit that the law was received under that economy, and that it was a part of it, so that the change of one involved also the change of the other. It was not strictly true that the whole law was given after the various orders of Levitical priests were established--for the law on Sinai, and several other laws were given before that distinct arrangement was made; but it was true

(1) that a considerable part of the laws of Moses were given under that arrangement; and

(2) that the whole of the ceremonial observances was connected with that. They were parts of one system, and mutually dependent on each other. This is all that the argument demands. What further need was there, etc. "If that system would lead to perfection; if it was sufficient to make the conscience pure, and to remove sin, then there was no necessity of any other. Yet the Scriptures have declared that there would be another Of a different order, implying that there was some defect in the former." This reasoning is founded on the fact that there was an express prediction of the coming of a priest of a different "order," Ps 110:4, and that this fact implied that there was some deficiency in the former arrangement. To this reasoning it is impossible to conceive that there can be any objection.

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For the priesthood being changed. According to the prediction in Ps 110 that it would be. When that occurs, the consequence specified will also follow. There is made of necessity a change also of the law. The law so far as it grew out of that, or was dependent on it. The connexion requires us to understand it only of the law so far as it was connected with the Levitical priesthood. This could not apply to the ten commandments--for they were given before the institution of the priesthood; nor

could it apply to any other part of the moral law, for that was not dependent on the appointment of the Levitical priests. But the meaning is, that since a large number of laws--constituting a code of considerable extent and importance--was given for the regulation of the priesthood, and in reference to the rites of religion, which they were to observe or superintend, it followed that when their office was superseded by one of a wholly different order, the law which had regulated them vanished also, or ceased to be binding. This was a very important point in the introduction of Christianity, and hence it is that it is so often insisted on in the writings of Paul. The argument to show that there had been a change or transfer of the priestly office, he proceeds to establish in the sequel.

13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For he of whom these things are spoken. The Lord Jesus, the Messiah, to whom they had reference. The things here spoken of pertain to his office as priest; his being of the order of Melchizedek. The apostle here assumes it as a point concerning which there could be no dispute, that these things referred to the Lord Jesus. Those whom he addressed would not be disposed to call this in question, and his argument had conducted him to this conclusion. Pertaineth to another tribe. To the tribe of Judah, Heb 7:14. Of which no man gave attendance at the altar. The priestly office pertained only to the tribe of Levi. No one of the tribe of Judah had any part in the performance of the duties of that office. This was settled by the Jewish law.

In the foregoing verses, our apostle had asserted the change of the Priesthood, and there with the changing of the law. In these verses he proves it by the translation of the Priesthood, and therewith the changing of the law. In these verses he proves it by the translation of the Priesthood to another tribe; namely, from Levi to Judah. The Levitical Priesthood was confined to one certain tribe, that of Levi, and to one certain family, that of Aaron:

Whence it follows, that the tribe being changed, and God having instituted a Priest of another tribe, the Priesthood must be changed also. Now it being evident, that Christ sprang not of the Tribe of Levi, but out of Judah, the apostle from the changing of the tribe, strongly infers the change of the Priesthood.

Note here, 1. How it was a fruit of the manifold wisdom of God, and a very great mercy and favour to give the law, but a far greater to take it away.

2. If under the law, the whole worship of God did so depend on the Priesthood, that that failing, the whole worship was to cease, as being no more acceptable to God, how much more will all worship under the New Testament be rejected by him, if there be not a due regard therein to our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great and only High Priest of his church.

14 For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe
Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah. It is well known; it cannot be a matter of dispute. About the fact that the Lord Jesus was of the tribe of Judah there could be no doubt. Comp. Mt 1:3. But probably the apostle means here to refer to more than that simple fact. It was a doctrine of the Old Testament, and was admitted by the Jews, that the Messiah was to be of that tribe. See Gen 49:10; Isa 11:1, Mic 5:2, Mt 11:6, This was an additional consideration to show that there was to be a change of some kind in the office of the priesthood, since it was declared Ps 110 that the Messiah was to be a priest. The fact that the Messiah is to be of the tribe of Judah is still admitted by the Jews. As their distinction of tribes now, however, is broken up, and as it is impossible for them to tell who belongs to the tribe of Judah, it is held by them that when he comes this-will be made known by miracle. Of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. That is, in the

Mosaic laws respecting the office of priest this tribe is not mentioned. All the arrangements pertain to the tribe of Judah.

15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest,

Verse 15. And it is yet far more evident. Not that our Lord would spring out of Judah, but the point which he was endeavouring to establish; that there must be a change of the priesthood, was rendered still more evident from another consideration. A strong proof of the necessity of such a change of the priesthood was furnished from the fact that the Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah; but a much stronger because, as a priest, he was to be of the order of Melchizedek--that is, he was of the same rank with one who did not even belong to that tribe. After the similitude, Resembling; that is, he was to be of the order of Melchizedek.

Who is made. That is, the other priest is made--to wit, the Messiah. He was made a priest by a peculiar law. Not after the law of a carnal commandment. Not according to the law of a commandment pertaining to the flesh. The word carnal means fleshly; and the idea is, that the law under which the priests of the old dispensation were made was external, rather than spiritual; it related more to outward observances than to the keeping of the heart. That this was the nature of the Mosaic ritual in the main, it was impossible to doubt, and the apostle proceeds to argue from this undeniable truth. But after the power of an endless life. By an authority of endless duration, That is, it was not concerned mainly with outward observances, and did not pass over from one to another by death, but was unchanging in its character, and spiritual in its nature. It was enduring and perpetual as a priesthood, and was thus far exalted above the service performed by the priests under the former dispensation.

16 who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17 For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

For there is verily a disannulling. A setting aside. The law which existed before in regard to the priesthood becomes now abrogated, in consequence of the change which has been made in the priesthood. Heb 7:12. Of the commandment. Relating to the office of priest, or to the ceremonial rites in general. This does not refer to the moral law, as if that was abrogated, for

(1) the reasoning of the apostle does not pertain to that, and

(2) that law cannot be abrogated. It grows out of the nature of things, and must be perpetual and universal. Going before. Going before the Christian dispensation, and introducing it. For the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. That is, it was not adapted to save man; it had not power to accomplish what was necessary to be done in human salvation. It answered the end for which it was designed--that of introducing a more perfect plan, and then vanished as a matter of course. It did not expiate guilt; it did not give peace to the conscience; it did not produce perfection, (Heb 7:11,) and therefore it gave place to a better system.

For the law made nothing perfect. The Levitical, ceremonial law. It did not produce a perfect state; it did not do what was desirable to be done for a sinner. Heb 8:11. That law, as such, did not reconcile man to God; it did not make an atonement; it did not put away guilt; in one word, it did not restore things to the condition in which they were before the law was broken and man became a sinner. If man were saved under that system--as many undoubtedly were--it was not in virtue of any intrinsic efficacy which it possessed, but in virtue of that great Sacrifice which it typified. But the bringing in of a better hope did. Marg. "But it was." The correct rendering is, probably, "but there is the bringing in of a better hope by which we have access to God." The law could not effect this. It left the conscience guilty, and sin unexpiated. But there is

now the introduction of a better system by which we can approach a reconciled God. The "better hope" here refers to the more sure and certain expectation of heaven introduced by the gospel. There is a better foundation for hope; a more certain way of obtaining the Divine favour than the law could furnish. By the which. By which better hope; that is, by means of the ground of hope furnished by the gospel--to wit, that God is now reconciled, and that we can approach him with the assurance that he is ready to save us. We draw nigh unto God. We have access to him. Rom 5:1; Rom 5:2.

19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did;* by the which we draw nigh unto God.

20 And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest:*

21 (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek:)

For those priests were made without an oath. The Levitical priests were set apart and consecrated without their office being confirmed to them by an oath on the part of God. They received it by regular descent, and when they arrived at a suitable age they entered on it of course. Jesus received his office by special appointment, and it was secured to him by an oath. The word rendered "oath" is, in the margin, "swearing of an oath". This is the proper meaning of the Greek word, but the sense is not materially varied. But this with an oath. This priest, the Lord Jesus, became a priest in virtue of an oath. The Lord sware. Heb 6:3. The reference here is to Ps 110:4 "The Lord hath sworn." and will not repent. That is, will not regret, or will not alter his mind through regret--for this is the meaning of the Greek word.

22 by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

By so much. Inasmuch as an oath is more solemn than a mere appointment. The meaning is, that there is all the additional security in the suretyship of Jesus which arises from the solemnity of an oath. It is not implied that God would not be true to his mere promise, but the argument here is derived from the custom of speaking among men. An oath is regarded

as much more sacred and binding than a mere promise; and the fact that God has sworn in a given case furnishes the highest security that what he has promised will be performed. Was Jesus made a surety. The word surety εγγυος-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint. It properly means, a bondsman; one who pledges his name, property, or influence, that a certain thing shall be done. When a contract is made, a debt contracted, or a note given, a friend often becomes the security in the case, and is himself responsible if the terms of the contract are not complied with. In the case of the new covenant between God and man, Jesus is the "security," or the bondsman. But of what, and to whom, is he the surety? It cannot be that he is a bondsman for God that he will maintain the covenant, and be true to the promise which he makes, as Crellius supposes, for we need no suck "security" of the Divine faithfulness and veracity. It cannot be that he becomes responsible for the Divine conduct in any way--- for no such responsibility is needed or possible. But it must mean, that he is the security or bondsman on the part of man; He is the pledge that we shall be saved. He becomes responsible, so to speak, to law and justice, that no injury shall be done by our salvation, though we are sinners. He is not a security that we shall be saved, at any rate, without holiness, repentance, faith, or true religions for he never could enter into a suretyship of that kind; but his suretyship extends to this point, that the law shall be honoured; that all its demands shall be met; that we may be saved though we have violated it, and that its terrific penalty shall not fall upon us. The case is this:-- A sinner becomes a true penitent, and enters heaven. It might be said that he does this over a broken law; that God treats the good and bad alike, and that no respect has been paid to the law or the penalty in his salvation. Here the great Surety comes in, and says that it is not so. He has become responsible for this; he the surety, the pledge, that all proper honour shall be paid to justice, and that the same good effects shall ensue as if the penalty of the law had been fully borne. He himself has died to honour the law, and to open a way by which its penalty may be fully

remitted consistently with justice, and he becomes the everlasting pledge or security to law, to justice, to the universe, that no injury shall result from the pardon and salvation of the sinner. According to this view, no man can rely on the suretyship of Jesus but he who expects salvation on the terms of the gospel. The suretyship is not at all that he shall be saved in his sins, or that he shall enter heaven no matter what life he leads; it is only that if he believes, repents, and is saved, no injury shall be clone to the universe, no dishonour to the law. For this the Lord Jesus is responsible. Of a better testament. Rather, "of a better covenant." The former covenant, was that which God made with his people under the Mosaic dispensation: the new covenant is that made by means of Christ. This is better, because (1) the terms are more simple and easy; (2) the observances and rites are much less onerous and hard; (3) it relates to all men, not being confined to the Jewish people; (4) it is now sure. The former was administered through the instrumentality of the Levitical priesthood, this by the Son of God; that was transitory and changing, this is permanent and eternal.

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 but this *man,* because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Wherefore he is able also. As he ever lives, and ever intercedes, he has power to save. He does not begin the work of salvation, and then relinquish it by reason of death, but he lives on as long as it is necessary that anything should be done for the salvation of his people. We need a Saviour who has power and Christ has shown that he has all the power which is needful to rescue man from eternal death. To the uttermost. This does not mean simply for ever--but that he has power to save them so that their salvation shall be complete ειςτοπαντελες. He does not abandon the work midway; he does not begin a work which he is unable to finish. He can aid

us as long as we need anything done for our salvation; he can save all who will entrust their salvation to his hands. That come unto God by him. In his name; or depending on him. To come to God, is to approach him for pardon and salvation. Seeing he ever liveth. He does not die as the Jewish priests did. To make intercession for them. Rom 8:34. He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved. The precise mode, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for his people is not revealed. The general meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavours to live a holy life. Comp. 1Jn 2:1. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes; and is the pledge or security for us that the law shall be honoured, and the justice and truth of God maintained, though we are saved. It is reasonable to presume that this is somehow by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that that is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. As that is infinite, we need not fear that it will ever be exhausted.

26 For such a high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

For such an High Priest became us. Was fitted to our condition. That is, there was that in our character and circumstances which demanded that a high priest for us should be personally holy. It was not requisite merely that he should have great power; or that he should be of a rank superior to that of the Jewish priesthood; but there was a special propriety that he should surpass all others in moral purity. Other priests were mere mortal men, and it was necessary that their office should pass to other hands: they were sinful men also, and it was necessary that sacrifices should be made for themselves as well as others. We need, however, a different priest. We need not only one who ever lives, but one who is perfectly holy, and who has no need to bring an offering for himself, and all the merit of whose sacrifice, therefore, may be ours. Such an high priest we have in the person of the Lord Jesus; and there is no truth more

interesting, and no proposition more susceptible of proof, than that. HE IS EXACTLY FITTED TO MAN. In his moral character, and in the great work which he has accomplished, he is just such a Saviour as is adapted to the wants of ignorant, fallen, wretched, sinful man. He is benevolent, and pities our woes; wise, and is able to enlighten our ignorance; compassionate, and ready to forgive our faults. He has made such an sacrifice. It was necessary to put away our guilt, and offers such intercession as we need to have offered for us in order that we may be preserved from falling. Who is holy. Not merely outwardly righteous, but pure in heart. Harmless. Not injuring any one. To no one did he do wrong. Neither to their name, person, or property, did he ever do injury; nor will he ever. He is the only one who has lived on earth of whom it could be said that he never, in any way, did wrong to another. Undefiled. By sin; by any improper desire or passion. He was unstained by crime; "unspotted from the world." Sin always defiles the soul; but from every such pollution the Lord Jesus was free. Separate from sinners. That is, he did not associate with them as such. He did not partake of their feelings, plans, pleasures. Though he mingled with them, yet it was merely to do them good; and in all his life there was an entire separation from the feelings, principles, and views of a sinful world. And made higher than the heavens. Exalted above the visible heavens; that is, at the right hand of God. Eph 1:21, Php 2:9. We needed a high priest who is thus exalted, that he may manage our cause before the throne of God.

27 who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Who needeth not daily, as those High priests. As the Jewish priests. This is an additional circumstance introduced to show the superior excellency of the High Priest of the Christian profession, and to show also how he was fitted to our wants. The Jewish high priest was a sinful man. He had the same fallen and corrupt nature as others. He needed an expiatory sacrifice for his own sins as really as they did for theirs. When he approached God to offer sacrifice, it was needful to make

an atonement for himself; and when all was done, it was still a sacrifice offered by a sinful man. But it was not so in the case of Jesus. He was so holy that he needed no sacrifice for himself, and all that he did was in behalf of others. Besides, it was necessary that the sacrifices in the Jewish service should be constantly repeated. They were imperfect. They were mere types and shadows. They who offered them were frail, sinful men. It became necessary, therefore, to repeat them every day to keep up the proper sense of their transgressions, and to furnish a suitable acknowledgment of the tendency to sin alike among the people and the priests. Neither in the nature of the offering, nor in the character of those who made it, was there any sufficient reason why it should cease to be offered, and it was therefore repeated day by day. But it was not so with the Lord Jesus. The offering which he made, though presented but once, was so ample and perfect, that it had sufficient merit for all the sins of the world, and needed never to be repeated. It is not probable that the Jewish high priest himself personally officiated at the offering of sacrifice every day; but the meaning here is, that it was done daily, and that there was need of a daily sacrifice in his behalf. As one of the Jewish people, the sacrifice was offered on his account, as well as on the account of others--for he partook of the common infirmities and sinfulness of the nation. For this he did once. That is, once for all εφαπαξ. He made such an atonement that it was not needful that it should be repeated. Thus he put an end to sacrifice; for when he made the great atonement it was complete, and there was no need that any more blood should be shed for human guilt.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

Who is consecrated for evermore. Marg., Perfected. Heb 2:10. The idea is, that the appointment is complete and permanent. It does not pass from one to the other. It is perfect in all the arrangements, and will remain so for ever.

Hebrews-8

The Mediator of a New Covenant

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

Now of the things which we have spoken. Or, "of the things of which we are speaking," (Stuart;) or, as we should say, of what is said. The Greek does not necessarily mean things that had been spoken, but may refer to all that he was saying, taking the whole subject into consideration. This is the sum. Or, this is the principal thing; referring to what he was about to say, not what he had said. Our translators seem to have understood this as referring to a summing up, or recapitulation of what he had said--and there can be no doubt that the Greek would bear this interpretation. But another exposition has been proposed, adopted by Bloomfield, Stuart, Michaelis, and Storr, among the moderns, and found also in Sindas, Theodoret, Theophylact, and others, among the ancients. It is that which regards the word rendered sum κεφαλαιον as meaning the principal thing; the chief matter; the most important point. The reason for this interpretation is, that the apostle in fact goes into no recapitulation of what he had said, but enters on a new topic relating to the priesthood of Christ. Instead of going over what he had demonstrated, he enters on a more important point, that the priesthood of Christ is performed in heaven, and that he has entered into the true tabernacle there. All which preceded was type and shadow, this was that which the former economy had adumbrated. In the previous chapters the apostle had shown that he who sustained this office was superior in rank to the Jewish priests; that they were frail and dying, and that the office in their hands was changing from one to another, but that that of Christ was permanent and abiding. He now comes to consider

the real nature of the office itself; the sacrifice which was offered; the substance of which all in the former dispensation was the type. This was the principle thing κεφαλαιον the head, the most important matter; and the consideration of this is pursued through chapters 8-10. We have such an High Priest. That is settled; proved; indisputable. The Christian system is not destitute of that which was regarded as so essential to the old dispensation--the office of a high priest. Who is set on the right hand of a throne, etc. He is exalted to honour and glory before God. The right hand was regarded as the place of principle honour; and when it is said that Christ is at the right hand of God, the meaning is, that he is exalted to the highest honour in the universe. Mk 16:19.

2 a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the
Lord pitched, and not man.

A minister of the sanctuary. Marg. "or holy things." Gr. τωναγιων. The Greek may either mean the sanctuary--denoting the Holy of Holies--or holy things. The word sanctuary kodesh--was given to the tabernacle or temple as a holy place, and the plural form which is here used-- ταγια--was given to the most holy place by way of eminence --the full form of the name being-- --kodesh kodushim, or, αγιαγιων hagia hagion, (Jahn's Arche. & 328,) or, as it is here used, simply as ταγια. The connexion seems to require us to understand it of the most holy place, and not of holy things. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, the great High Priest, has entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven, of which that in the tabernacle was an emblem. For a description of the most holy place in the temple, Mt 21:12. And of the true tabernacle. The real tabernacle in heaven, of which that among the Hebrews was but this type. The word tabernacle σκηνη means, properly, a booth, hut, or tent, and was applied to the tent which Moses was directed to build as the place for the worship of God. That tabernacle, as the temple was afterwards, was regarded as the peculiar abode of God on earth. Here the reference is to heaven, as the dwelling place of God, of which that tabernacle was the emblem or symbol.

It is called the "true tabernacle," as it is the real dwelling of God, of which the one made by Moses was but the emblem. It is not moveable and perishable like that made by man, but is unchanging and eternal. Which the Lord pitched, and not man. The word pitched is adapted to express the setting up of a tent. When it is said that "the Lord pitched the true tabernacle"--that is, the permanent dwelling in heaven--the meaning is, that heaven has been fitted up by God himself, and that whatever is necessary to constitute that an appropriate abode for the Divine majesty has been done by him. To that glorious dwelling the Redeemer has been received, and there he performs the office of High Priest in behalf of man. In what way he does this the apostle specifies in the remainder of this chapter, and in chapters 9 and 10.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

For every High Priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. This is a general statement about the functions of the high priest. It was the peculiarity of the office; it constituted its essence, that some gift or sacrifice was to be presented. This was indisputable in regard to the Jewish high priest, and this is involved in the nature of the priestly office everywhere. A priest is one who offers sacrifice, mainly in behalf of others. The principles involved in the office are,

(1.) that there is need that some offering or atonement should be made for sin; and,

(2.) that there is a fitness or propriety that some one should be designated to do it. If this idea that a priest must offer sacrifice be correct, then it follows that the name priest should not be given to any one who is not appointed to offer sacrifice. It should not therefore be given to the ministers of the gospel, for it is no part of their work to offer sacrifice--the great sacrifice for sin having been once offered by the Lord Jesus, and not being again to be repeated. Accordingly, the writers in the New Testament are perfectly uniform and consistent on

this point. The name priest is never once given to the ministers of the gospel there. They are called ministers, ambassadors, pastors, bishops, overseers, etc., but never priests. Nor should they be so called in the Christian church. The name priest, as applied to Christian ministers, has been derived from the papists. They hold that the priest does offer as a sacrifice the real body and blood of Christ in the mass, and holding this, the name priest is given to the minister who does it consistently. It is not indeed right or Scriptural--for the whole doctrine on which it is based is absurd and false--but while that doctrine is held the name is consistent. But with what show of consistency or propriety can the name be given to a Protestant minister of the gospel?

Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. That the Lord Jesus should make an offering. That is, since he is declared to be a priest, and since it is; essential to the office that a priest should make an offering, it is indispensable that he should bring a sacrifice to God. He could not be a priest, on the acknowledged principles on which that office is held, unless he did it. What the offering was which the Lord Jesus made the apostle specifies more fully in Heb 9:11-14 Heb 9:25,26

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there
are priests that offer gifts according to the law:
5 who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as
Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the
tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according
to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.
6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much
also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established
upon better promises.

But now hath he obtained. That is, Christ.

A more excellent ministry. A service of a higher order, or of a more exalted nature. It was the real and substantial service of which the other was but the emblem; it pertained to things

in heaven, while that was concerned with the earthly tabernacle; it was enduring, while that was to vanish away. 2Cor 3:6, seq.

By how much. By as much as the new covenant is more important than the old, by so much does his ministry exceed in dignity that under the ancient dispensation,

He is the Mediator. Gal 3:19, Gal 3:19, where the word Mediator is explained. It means here that Christ officiates between God and man according to the arrangements of the new covenant.

Of a better covenant. Marg. "Or testament." This word properly denotes a disposition, arrangement, or ordering of things; and, in the Scriptures, is employed to describe the arrangement which God has made to secure the maintenance of his worship on earth, and the salvation of men. It is uniformly used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to denote the covenant which God makes with men. The word which properly denotes a covenant or compact συνθηκη--suntheke, is never used. The writers of the New Testament evidently derived its use from the Septuagint; but why the authors of that version employed it as denoting a will, rather than the proper one denoting a compact, is unknown. It has been supposed by some, and the conjecture is not wholly improbable, that it was because they were unwilling to represent God as making a compact or agreement with men, but chose rather to represent him as making a mere arrangement or ordering of things. Compare Heb 8:8, and Heb 9:16,17. This is a better covenant than the old, inasmuch as it relates mainly to the heart; to the pardon of sin; to a spiritual and holy religion. See Heb 8:10. The former related more to external rites and observances, and was destined to vanish away. See Heb 8:13.

Which was established upon better promises. The promises in the first covenant pertained mainly to the present life. They were promises of length of days; of increase of numbers; of seed-time and harvest; of national privileges; and of extraordinary peace, abundance, and prosperity. That there was also the promise of eternal life it would be wrong to doubt; but this was not the main thing. In the new covenant, however, the promise of spiritual blessings becomes the principal thing. The mind is directed to heaven; the heart is cheered with the hopes of immortal life; the favour of God and the anticipation of heaven are secured in the most ample and solemn manner.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place
have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come,
saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house
of Israel and with the house of Judah:

For finding fault with them. Or rather, "finding fault, he says is, with the Jewish people-for they had had nothing to do in giving the covenant, but with the covenant itself. "Stating its defects, he had said to them that he would give them one more perfect, and of which that was only preparatory. So Grottos, Stuart, Rosenmuller, and Erasmus understand it. Doddridge, Koppe, and many others understand it as it is in our translation, as implying that the fault was found with the people, and they refer to the passage quoted from Jeremiah for proof, where the complaint is of the people. The Greek may bear either construction; but may we not adopt a somewhat different interpretation still? May not this be the meaning? "For, using the language of complaint, or language that implied that there was defect or error, he speaks of another covenant." According to this, the idea would be, not that he found fault specifically either with the covenant or the people, but generally that he used language which implied that there was defect somewhere when he promised another and a better covenant. The word rendered "finding fault" properly means, to censure, or to blame. It is rendered in Mk

7:2 "they found fault," to wit, with those who ate with unwashed hands; in Rom 9:19, "why doth he yet find fault?" It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is language used where wrong has been done; where there is ground of complaint; where it is desirable that there should be a change. In the passage here quoted from Jeremiah, it is not expressly stated that God found fault either with the covenant or with the people, but that he promised that he would give another covenant, and that it should be different from that which he gave them when they came out of Egypt--implying that there was defect in that, or that it was not faultless. The whole meaning is, that there was a deficiency which the giving of a new covenant would remove.

He saith. In Jer 31:31-34. The apostle has not quoted the passage literally as it is in the Hebrew, but he has retained the substance, and the sense is not essentially varied. The quotation appears to have been made partly from the Septuagint, and partly from the memory. This often occurs in the New Testament.

Behold. This particle is designed to call attention to what was about to be said as important, or as having some special claim to notice. It is of very frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, being much more freely used by the sacred writers than it is in the classic authors.

The days come. The time is coming. This refers doubtless to the times of the Messiah. Phrases such as these, "in the last days," "in after times," and "the time is coming," are often used in the Old Testament to denote the last dispensation of the world --the dispensation when the affairs of the world would be wound up. See the phrase explained in the Notes, Heb 1:2, and Isa 2:2. There can be no doubt that, as it is used by Jeremiah, it refers to the times of the gospel.

When I will make a new covenant. A covenant that shall contemplate somewhat different ends; that shall have

different conditions, and that shall be more effective in restraining from sin. The word covenant here refers to the arrangement, plan, or dispensation into which he would enter in his dealings with men. On the meaning of the word, Acts 7:8, and Heb 9:16,17. The word covenant with us commonly denotes a compact or agreement between two parties that are equal, and who are free to enter into the agreement or not. In this sense, of course, it cannot be used in relation to the arrangement which God makes with man. There is

(1) no equality between them, and

(2) man is not at liberty to reject any proposal which God shall make. The word, therefore, is used in a more general sense, and more in accordance with the original meaning of the Greek word. It has been above remarked, Heb 8:6, that the proper word to denote covenant, or compact-- συνθηκη syntheke --is never used either in the Septuagint or in the New Testament; another word διαθηκη -- diathake--being carefully employed. Whether the reason there suggested for the adoption of this word in the Septuagint be the real one or not, the fact is indisputable. I may be allowed to suggest, as possible, here an additional reason why this so uniformly occurs in the New Testament. It is, that the writers of the New Testament never meant to represent the transactions between God and man as a compact or covenant, properly so called. They have studiously avoided it; and their uniform practice, in making this nice distinction between the two words, may show the real sense in which the Hebrew word rendered covenant , berith -is used in the Old Testament. The word which they employ-- διαθηκη -never means a compact or agreement as between equals. It remotely and secondarily means a will, or testament-- and hence our word "New Testament." But this is not the sense in which it is used in the Bible--for God has never made a will in the sense of a testamentary disposition of what belongs to him. We are referred, therefore, in order to arrive at the true Scripture view of this whole matter, to the original meaning of the word--

diatheke διθηκη --as denoting a disposition, arrangement, plan; then that which is ordered, a law, precept, promise, etc. Unhappily, we have no single word which expresses the idea, and hence a constant error has existed in the church--either keeping up the notion of a compact--as if God could make one with men; or the idea of a will--equally repugnant to truth. The word διαθηκη is derived from a verb--διατιθημι--meaning, to place apart, to set in order; and then to appoint, to make over, to make an arrangement with. Hence the word διαθηκη diatheke--means, properly, the arrangement or disposition which God made with men in regard to salvation; the system of statutes, directions, laws, and promises, by which men are to become subject to him, and to be saved. The meaning here is, that he would make a new arrangement, contemplating, as a primary thing, that the law should be written in the heart; an arrangement which would be peculiarly spiritual in its character, and which would be attended with the diffusion of just views of the Lord.

With the house of Israel. The family, or race of Israel--for so the word house is often used in the Scriptures and elsewhere. The word "Israel" is used in the Scriptures in the following senses.

(1.) As a name given to Jacob, because he wrestled with the angel of God and prevailed as a prince, Gen 32:28.

(2.) As denoting all who were descended from him-- called "the children of Israel"--or the Jewish nation.

(3.) As denoting the kingdom of the ten tribes--or the kingdom of Samaria, or Ephraim--that kingdom having taken the name Israel in contradistinction from the other kingdom, which was called Judah.

(4.) As denoting the people of God in general--his true and sincere friends--his church. Rom 2:28, Rom 2:29; Rom 9:6. In this place, quoted from Jeremiah, it seems to be used to

denote the kingdom of Israel in contradistinction from that of Judah, and together they denote the whole people of God, or the whole Hebrew nation, This arrangement was ratified and confirmed by the gift of the Messiah, and by implanting his laws in the heart. It is not necessary to understand this as refering to the whole of the Jews, or to the restoration of the ten tribes; but the words Israel and Judah are used to denote the people of God in general; and the idea is, that with the true Israel under the Messiah the laws of God would be written in the heart, rather than be mere external observances. And with the house of Judah. The kingdom of Judah. This kingdom consisted of two tribes--Judah and Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was, however, small, and the name was lost in that of Judah.

9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers,
in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the
land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant,
and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Not according to the covenant, etc. An arrangement or dispensation relating mainly to outward observances, and to temporal blessings. The meaning is, that the new dispensation would be different from that which was made with them when they came out of Egypt. In what respects it would differ is specified in Heb 8:10-12.

Because they continued not in my covenant. In Jeremiah, in the Hebrew, this is, "while my covenant they brake." That is, they failed to comply with the conditions on which I promised to bestow blessings upon them. In Jeremiah this is stated as a simple fact; in the manner in which the apostle quotes it, it is given as a reason why he would give a new arrangement. The apostle has quoted it literally from the Septuagint, and the sense is not materially varied. The word rendered "because" οτι may mean "since"--"since they did not obey that covenant, and it was ineffectual in keeping them from sin, showing that it was not perfect or complete in regard to what was needful to be done for man, a new arrangement shall be made that will be without defect." This accords with the reasoning of the

apostle; and the idea is, simply, that an arrangement may be made for man, adapted to produce important ends in one state of society or one age of the world, which would not be well adapted to him in another, and which would not accomplish all which it would be desirable to accomplish for the race. So an arrangement may be made for teaching children which would not answer the purpose of instructing those of mature years, and which at that time of life may be-superseded by another. A system of measures may be adapted to the infancy of society, or to a comparatively rude period of the world, which would be ill adapted to a more advanced state of society. Such was the Hebrew system. It was well adapted to the Jewish community in their circumstances, and answered the end then in view. It served to keep them separate from other people; to preserve the knowledge and the worship of the true God, and to introduce the gospel dispensation.

And I regarded them not. In Jeremiah this is, "Although I was an husband unto them." The Septuagint is as it is quoted here by Paul. The Hebrew is, --which may be rendered, "although I was their Lord;" or, as it is translated by Gesenius, "and I rejected them." The word --means,

(1.) to be lord or master over anything, (Isa 26:13;)

(2.) to become the husband of any one, (De 21:13, 24:1;)

(3.) with --to disdain, to reject. So Jer 3:14. It is very probable that this is the meaning here, for it is not only adopted by the Septuagint, but by the Syriac. So Abulwalid, Kimchi, and Rabbi Tanchum understood it. The Arabic word means, to reject, to loathe, to disdain. All that is necessary to observe here is, that it cannot be demonstrated that the apostle has not given the true sense of the prophet. The probability is, that the Septuagint translators would give the meaning which was commonly understood to be correct, and there is still more probability that the Syriac translator would adopt the true sense; for

(1) the Syriac and Hebrew languages strongly resemble each other; and

(2) the old Syriac version--the Peshito--is incomparably a better translation than the Septuagint. If this, therefore, be the correct translation, the meaning is, that since they did not regard and obey the laws which he gave them, God would reject them as his people, and give new laws better adapted to save men. Instead of regarding and treating them as his friends, he would punish them for their offences, and visit them with calamities.

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God,
and they shall be to me a people:

For this is the covenant. This is the arrangement, or the dispensation, which shall succeed the old one.

With the house of Israel. With the true Israel; that is, with all those whom he will regard and treat as his friends.

After those days. This may either mean, "after those days I will put my laws in their hearts," or, "I will make this covenant with them after those days." This difference is merely in the punctuation, and the sense is not materially affected. It seems to me, however, that the meaning of the Hebrew in Jeremiah is, "in those after days" Isa 2:1, "I will put my laws into their mind;" that is, in that subsequent period, called in Scripture "the after times," "the last days;" "the ages to come," meaning the last dispensation of the world. Thus interpreted, the sense is, that this would be done in the times of the Messiah.

I will put my laws into their mind. Marg. Give. The word give in Hebrew is often used in the sense of put. The meaning here

is, that they would not be mere external observances, but would affect the conscience and the heart. The laws of the Hebrews pertained mainly to external rites and ceremonies; the laws of the new dispensation would relate particularly to the inner man, and be designed to control the heart. The grand peculiarity of the Christian system is, that it regulates the conscience and the principles of the soul rather than external matters. It prescribes few external rites, and those are exceedingly simple, and are merely the proper expressions of the pious feelings supposed to be in the heart; and all attempts either to increase the number of these rites, or to make them imposing by their gorgeousness, have done just so much to mar the simplicity of the gospel, and to corrupt religion.

And write them in their hearts. Marg. Upon. Not on tables of stone or brass, but on the soul itself. That is, the obedience rendered will not be external. The law of the new system will have living power, and bind the faculties of the soul to obedience. The commandment there will be written in more lasting characters than if engraved on tables of stone.

And I will be to them a God. This is quoted literally from the Hebrew. The meaning is, that he would sustain to them the appropriate relation of a God; or, if the expression may be allowed, he would be to them what a God should be, or what it is desirable that men should find in a God. We speak of a father's acting in a manner appropriate to the character of a father; and the meaning here is, that he would be to his people all that is properly implied in the name of God. He would be their Lawgiver, their Counsellor, their Protector, their Redeemer, their Guide. He would provide for their wants, defend them in danger, pardon their sins, comfort them in trials, and save their souls, he would be a faithful friend, and would never leave them nor forsake them. It is one of the inestimable privileges of his people that JEHOVAH is their God. The living and ever-blessed Being who made the heavens sustains to them the relation of a Protector and a

Friend, and they may look up to heaven feeling that he is all which they could desire in the character of a God.

And they shall be to me a people. This is not merely stated as a fact, but as a privilege. It is an inestimable blessing to be regarded as one of the people of God, and to feel that we belong to him--that we are associated with those whom he loves, and whom he treats as his friends.

11 and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, etc. That is, no one shall be under a necessity of imparting instruction to another, or of exhorting him to become acquainted with the Lord. This is designed to set forth another of the advantages which would attend the new dispensation. In the previous verse it had been said that one advantage of that economy would be, that the law would be written on the heart, and that they who were thus blessed would be regarded as the people of God. Another advantage over the old arrangement or covenant is here stated. It is that the knowledge of the Lord and of the true religion, would be deeply engraved on the minds of all, and that there would be no necessity for mutual exhortation and counsel. "They shall have a much more certain and effectual teaching than they can derive from another." Doddridge. This passage does not refer to the fact that the true religion will be universally diffused, but that among those who are interested in the blessings of the new covenant there would be an accurate and just knowledge of the Lord. In some way they would be so taught respecting his character that they would not need the aid to be derived from others. All under that dispensation, or sustaining to him the relation of "a people," would, in fact, have a correct knowledge o? the Lord. This could not be said of the old dispensation, for

(1.) their religion consisted much in outward observances.

(2.) It was not to such an extent as the new system a dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

(3.) There were not as many means as now for learning the true character of God.

(4.) The fullest revelations had not been made to them of that character. That was reserved for the coming of the Saviour, and under him it was intended that there should be communicated the full knowledge of the character of God. Many Mss, and those among the best, here have πολιτην citizen--fellow-citizen, instead of πλησιον, neighbour; and this is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, Rosenmuller, Knapp, Stuart, and by many of the fathers. It is also in the version of the LXX. in the place quoted from Jeremiah. It is not easy to determine the true reading, but; the word neighbour better accords with the meaning of the Hebrew -and there is strong authority from the MSS. and the versions for this reading.

And every man his brother. Another form of expression, meaning that there would be no necessity that one should teach another.

Saying, Know the Lord. That is, become acquainted with God; learn his character and his will. The idea is, that the true knowledge of Jehovah would prevail as a characteristic of those times.

For all shall know me. That is, all those referred to; all who are interested in the new covenant, and who are partakers of its blessings. It does not mean that all persons, in all lands, would then know the Lord--though the time will come when that will be true; but the expression is to be limited by the point under discussion. That point is not that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole world, but that all who are interested in the new dispensation will have a much more full and clear knowledge of God than was possessed under the old. Of the truth of this no one can doubt. Christians have a

much more perfect knowledge of God and of his government than could have been learned merely from the revelations of the Old-Testament.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,
and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, etc. That is the blessing of pardon will be much more richly enjoyed under the new dispensation than it was under the old. This is the fourth circumstance adduced in which the new covenant will surpass the old. That was comparatively severe in its inflictions, (see Heb 10:28;) marked every offence with strictness, and employed the language of mercy much less frequently than that of justice. It was a system where law and justice reigned; not where mercy was the crowning and prevalent attribute, it was true that it contemplated pardon, and made arrangements for it; but it is still true that this is much more prominent in the new dispensation than in the old. It is there the leading idea. It is that which separates it from all other systems. The entire arrangement is one for the pardon of sin in a manner consistent with the claims of law and justice, and it bestows the benefit of forgiveness in the most ample and perfect manner on all who are interested in the plan. In fact, the peculiarity by which the gospel is distinguished from all other systems, ancient and modern, philosophic and moral, pagan and deistical, is, that it is a system making provision for the forgiveness of sin, and actually bestowing pardon on the guilty. This is the centre, the crown, the glory of the new dispensation. God is merciful to the unrighteousness of men; and their sins are remembered no more. Will I remember no more. This is evidently spoken after the manner of men, and in accordance with human apprehension. It cannot mean literally that God forgets that men are sinners, but it means that he treats them as if this were forgotten. Their sins are not charged upon them, and they are no more punished than if they had passed entirely out of the recollection. God treats them with just as much kindness, and regards them with as sincere affection, as if their sins ceased

wholly to be remembered, or, which is the same thing, as if they had never sinned.

13 In that he saith, A new *covenant,* he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. That is, the use of the word "new" implies that the one which it was to supersede was "old." New and old stand in contradistinction from each other. Thus we speak of a new and old house, a new and old garment, etc. The object of the apostle is to show that, by the very fact of the arrangement for a new dispensation differing so much from the old, it was implied of necessity that that was to be superseded, and would vanish away. This was one of the leading points at which he arrived. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. This is a general truth which would be undisputed, and which Paul applies to the ease under consideration. An old house, or garment; an ancient tree; an aged man---all have indications that they are soon to disappear. They cannot be expected to remain long. The very fact of their growing old Is an indication that they will soon be gone. So Paul says it was with the dispensation that was represented as old. It had symptoms of decay. It had lost the rigour which it had when it was fresh and new; it had every mark of an antiquated and a declining system; and it had been expressly declared that a new and more perfect dispensation was to be given to the world. Paul concluded, therefore, that the Jewish system must soon disappear.

Hebrews-9

Read this chapter repeatedly, slowly and attentively.

1 Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine
service, and a worldly sanctuary.
2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the
candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the
sanctuary.
3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the
holiest of all;
4 which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant
overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that
had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the
covenant;

Which had the golden censer. The censer was a fire-pan, made for the purpose of carrying fire, in order to burn incense on it in the place of worship. The forms of the censer were various; but the following cuts will represent those which are most common. Some difficulty has been felt respecting the statement of Paul here, that the "golden censer" was in the most holy place, from the fact that no such utensil is mentioned by Moses as pertaining to the tabernacle; nor in the description of Solomon's temple, which was modelled after the tabernacle, is there any account of it given. But the following considerations will probably remove the difficulty.

(1.) Paul was a Jew, and was familiar with what pertained to the temple, and gave such a description of it as would be in accordance with what actually existed in his time. The fact that Moses does not expressly mention it does not prove that, in fact, no such censer was laid up in the most holy place.

(2.) Aaron and his successors were expressly commanded to burn incense in a "censer" in the most holy place before the

mercy-seat. This was to be done on the great day of atonement, and but once in a year, Lev 16:12,13.

(3.) There is every probability that the censer that was used on such an occasion was made of gold. All the implements that were employed in the most holy place were made of gold, or overlaid with gold, and it is in the highest degree improbable that the high priest would use any other on so solemn an occasion. Comp. 1Kgs 7:50.

(4.) As the golden censer was to be used only once in a year, it would naturally be laid away in some secure situation--and none would so obviously occur as the most holy place. There it would be perfectly safe. No one was permitted to enter there but the high priest; and being preserved there it would be always ready for his use. The statement of Paul, therefore, has the highest probability, and undoubtedly accords with what actually occurred in the tabernacle and the temple. The object of the incense burned in worship was to produce an agreeable fragrance or smell. Lk 1:9.

And the ark of the covenant. This ark or chest was made of shittim-wood, was two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and the same in height, Ex 25:10. It was completely covered with gold, and had a lid, which was called the "mercy-seat," on which rested the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence between the out. stretched wings of the cherubim. It was called "the ark of the covenant," because within it were the two tables of the covenant, or the law of God written on tables of stone. It was a simple chest, coffer, or box, with little ornament, though rich in its materials. A golden crown or moulding ran around the top, and it had rings and staves in its sides by which it might be borne, Ex 25:12-16. This ark was regarded as the most sacred of all the appendages of the tabernacle. Containing the law, and being the place where the symbol of the Divine Presence was manifested, it was regarded as peculiarly holy; and in the various wars and revolutions in the Hebrew commonwealth,

it was guarded with peculiar care. After the passage over the Jordan it remained for some time at Gilgal, (Josh 4:19,) whence it was removed to Shiloh, 1Sam 1:3. From hence the Israelites took it to their camp, apparently to animate them in battle, but it was taken by the Philistines, 1Sam 4. The Philistines, however, oppressed by the hand of God, resolved to return it, and sent it to Kirjath-Jearim, 1Sam 7:1. In the reign of Saul it was at Nob. David conveyed it to the house of Obed-Edom, and thence to his palace on Mount Zion. 2Sam 6. At the dedication of the temple it was placed in the Holy of Holies by Solomon, where it remained for many years. Subsequently, it is said, the wicked kings of Judah, abandoning themselves to idolatry, established idols in the most holy place itself; and the priests removed the ark, and bore it from place to place to secure it from profanation. Calmet. When Josiah ascended the throne he commanded the priests to restore the ark to its place in the sanctuary, and forbade them to carry it about from one place to another as they had before done, 2Chr 35:3. The subsequent history of the ark is unknown. It is probable that it was either destroyed when the city of Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, or that it was carried with other spoils to Babylon. There is no good reason to suppose that it was ever in the second temple; and it is generally admitted by the Jews that the ark of the covenant was one of the things that were wanting there. Abarbanel says, that the Jews flatter themselves that it will be restored by the Messiah.

Wherein, That is, in the ark for so the construction naturally requires. In 1Kgs 8:9, however, it is said that there was nothing in the ark, "save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb:" and it has been supposed by some that the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron were not in the ark, but that they were in capsules, or ledges made on its sides for their safe keeping, and that this should be rendered "by the ark." But the apostle uses the same language respecting the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron which he does about the two tables of stone; and as they were certainly in the ark, the fair

construction here is that the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron were in it also. The account in Ex 16:32-34, Nu 17:10, is, that they were laid up in the most holy place, "before the testimony," and there is no improbability whatever in the supposition that they were in the ark, Indeed that would be the most safe place to keep them, as the tabernacle was often taken down, and removed from place to place. It is clear, from the passage in 1Kgs 8:9, that they were not in the ark in the temple, but there is no improbability in the supposition that before the temple was built they might have been removed from the ark and lost. When the ark was carried from place to place, or during its captivity by the Philistines, it is probable they were lost, as we never hear of them afterwards.

The golden pot. In Ex 16:33, it is simply a "pot," without specifying the material. In the Septuagint it is rendered "golden pot;" and as the other utensils of the sanctuary were of gold, it may be fairly presumed that this was also.

That had manna. A small quantity of manna which was to be preserved as a perpetual remembrance of the food which they had eaten in their long journey in the wilderness, and of the goodness of God in miraculously supplying their wants. As the manna, also, would not of itself keep, Ex 16:20, the fact that this was to be laid up to be preserved from age to age was a perpetual miracle in proof of the presence and faithfulness of God. On the subject of the manna, see Bush's Notes on Ex 16:15.

And Aaron's rod that budded. That budded and blossomed as a proof that God had chosen him to minister to him. The princes of the tribes were disposed to rebel, and to call in question the authority of Aaron. To settle the matter each one was required to take a rod or staff of office, and to bring it to Moses with the name of the tribe to which it appertained written on it. These were laid up by Moses in the tabernacle; and it was found, on the next day, that the rod marked with the name of Levi had budded and blossomed, and produced

almonds. In perpetual remembrance of this miracle, the rod was preserved in the ark, Nu 17. Its subsequent history is unknown. It was not in the ark when the temple was built; nor is there any reason to suppose that it was preserved to that time.

And the tables of the covenant. The two tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written. They were expressly called "the words of the covenant" in Ex 34:28. On the word covenant, Ex 34:28. Heb 9:6 and Heb 9:17 of this chapter. These two tables were in the ark at the time the temple was dedicated, 1Kgs 8:9. Their subsequent history is unknown. It is probable that they shared the fate of the ark, and were either carried to Babylon, or were destroyed when the city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

5 and over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of
which we cannot now speak particularly.
6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went
always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service *of God.*
7 But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not
without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of
the people:

But into the second. The second apartment or room, called the most holy place, Heb 9:3. Went the High priest alone once every year. On the great day of atonement, Ex 30:10. On that day he probably entered the holy of holies three or four times, first to burn incense, Lev 16:12; then to sprinkle the blood of the bullock on the mercy-seat, Lev 16:14; then he was to kill the goat of the sin-offering, and bring that blood within the veil, and sprinkle it also on the mercy-seat; and then, perhaps, he entered again to bring out the golden censer. The Jewish tradition is, that he entered the holy of holies four times on that day. After all, however, the number of times is not certain, nor is it material; the only important point being that he entered it only on one day of the year, while the holy place was entered every day. Not without blood. That is, he bare with him blood to sprinkle on the mercy-seat. This was the blood of the bullock and of the goat--borne in at two different

times. Which he offered for himself. The blood of the bullock was offered for himself and for his house or family--thus keeping impressively before his own mind and the mind of the people the fact that the priests, even of the highest order, were sinners, and needed expiation like others, Lev 16:11. And for the errors of the people. The blood of the goat was offered for them, Lev 16:15. The word rendered errors--αγνοημα --denotes, properly, ignorance, involuntary error; and then error or fault in general--the same as the Hebrew from -- to err. The object was to make expiation for all the error and sins of the people, and this occurred once in the year. The repetition of these sacrifices was a constant remembrance of sin; and the design was, that neither the priests nor the people should lose sight of the fact that they were violators of the law of God.

8 the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:

The Holy Ghost. Who appointed all this. The whole arrangement in the service of the tabernacle is represented as having been under the direction of the Holy Ghost, or this was one of his methods of teaching the great truths of religion, and of keeping them before the minds of men. Sometimes that Spirit taught by direct revelation; sometimes by the written word; and sometimes by symbols. The tabernacle, with its different apartments, utensils, and services, was a permanent means of keeping important truths before the minds of the ancient people of God. This signifying. That is, showing this truth, or making use of this arrangement to impress this truth on the minds of men, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest. That the way into the holiest of all. Into heaven--of which the most holy place in the tabernacle was undoubtedly designed to be an emblem. It was the place where the visible symbol of God--the Shekinah--dwelt; where the blood of propitiation was sprinkled, and was, therefore, an appropriate emblem of that holy heaven where God dwells, and whence pardon is obtained by the blood of the atonement. Was not yet made manifest. The way to heaven was not

opened, or fully understood. It was not known how men could appear before God, or how they could come with the hope of pardon. That way has now been opened by the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven, and by the assurance that all who will may come in his name. While as the first tabernacle was yet standing. As long as it stood, and the appointed services were held in it. The idea is, that until it was superseded by a more perfect system it was a proof that the way to heaven was not yet fully and freely opened, and that the Holy Ghost designed that it should be such a proof. The apostle does not specify in what the proof consisted, but it may have been in something like the following.

(1.) It was a mere symbol, and not the reality--showing that the true way was not yet fully understood.

(2.) It was entered but once a year--showing that there was not access at all times.

(3.) It was entered only by the high priest--showing that there was not free and full access to all the people.

(4.) It was accessible only by Jews--showing that the way in which all men might be saved was not then fully revealed. The sense is, that it was a system of types and shadows, in which there were many burdensome rites, and many things to prevent men from coming before the symbol of the Divinity, and was therefore an imperfect system. All these obstructions are now removed; the Saviour--the great High Priest of his people--has entered heaven, and "opened it to all true believers," and all of every nation may now have free access to God. See Heb 9:12; comp. Heb 10:19-22.

9 which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Which was a figure for the time then present. That is, as long as the tabernacle stood. The word rendered figure--παραβολη-- is not the same as type --τυπος, (Rom 5:14; Actst

7:43,44; Jnn 20:25, 1Cor 10:6,11, Php 3:17, --but is the word commonly rendered parable, Mt 13:3,10,13,18,24,31,33-36,53, 15:15 et saepe, and means, properly, a placing side by side; then, a comparison, or similitude, Here it is used in the sense of image, or symbol--something to represent other things. The idea is, that the arrangements and services of the tabernacle were a representation of important realities, and of things which were more fully to be revealed at a future period. There can be no doubt that Paul meant to say that this service in general was symbolical or typical, though this will not authorize us to attempt to spiritualize every minute arrangement of it. Some of the things in which it was typical are specified by the apostle himself; and wisdom and safety in explaining the arrangements of the tabernacle and its services consist in adhering very closely to the explanations furnished by the inspired writers. An interpreter is on an open Sea, to be driven he knows not whither, when he takes leave of these safe pilots. Both gifts. Thank-offerings. And sacrifices. Bloody offerings. The idea as, that all kinds of offerings to God were made there. That could not make him that did the service perfect. That could not take away sin, and remove the stains of guilt on the soul. Heb 7:11; comp. Heb 8:7, 7:27, 10:1,11.

As pertaining to the conscience. They related mainly to outward and ceremonial rites; and even when offerings were made for sin, the conscience was not relieved. They could not expiate guilt; they could not make the soul pure; they could not of themselves impart peace to the soul by reconciling it to God. They could not fully accomplish what the conscience needed to have done in order to give it peace. Nothing will do this but the blood of the Redeemer.

Which stood only in meats and drinks. The idea is, that the ordinances of the Jews, in connexion with the services of religion, consisted much of laws pertaining to what was lawful to eat and drink, etc. A considerable part of those laws related to the distinction between clean and unclean beasts,

and to such arrangements as were designed to keep them externally distinct from other nations. It is possible, also, that there may be a reference here to meat and drink offerings. On the grammatical difficulties of this verse, see Stuart on the Hebrews, in loc.

And divers washings. The various ablutions which were required in the service of the tabernacle and the temple--washing of the hands, of the victim that was to be offered, etc, It was for this purpose that the laver was erected in front of the tabernacle, Ex 30:18, 31:9 Ex 35:16, and that the brazen sea and the lavers were constructed in connexion with the temple of Solomon, 2Chr 4:3-5; 1Kgs 7:26. The Greek word here is baptisms. On its meaning, Mt 3:6; Mk 7:4.

And carnal ordinances. Marg. "Or, rites or ceremonies." Or, "Ordinances of the flesh;" that is, which pertained to the flesh, or to external ceremonies. The object was rather to keep them externally pure than to cleanse the conscience and make them holy in heart.

Imposed on them. Laid on them--επικειμενα. It does not mean that there was any oppression or injustice in regard to these ordinances, but that they were appointed for a temporary purpose.

Until the time of reformation. The word here rendered reformation --διορθωσις means, properly, emendation, improvement, reform. It refers to putting a thing in a right condition; making it better; or raising up and restoring that which is fallen down. Passow. Here the reference is undoubtedly to the gospel, as being a better system--a putting things where they ought to be. Comp. Acts 3:21. The idea here is, that those ordinances were only temporary in their nature, and were designed to endure till a more perfect system should be introduced. They were of value to introduce that better system; they were not adapted to purify the conscience and remove the stains of guilt from the soul.

10 *which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation.

11 But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

But Christ being come. Now that the Messiah has come, a more perfect system is introduced, by which the conscience may be made free from guilt.

An High Priest of good things to come. See Heb 10:1 The apostle having described the tabernacle, and shown wherein it was defective in regard to the real wants of sinners, proceeds now to describe the Christian system, and to show how that met the real condition of man, and especially how it was adapted to remove sin from the soul. The phrase, "high priest of good things to come," seems to refer to those "good things" which belonged to the dispensation that was to come; that is, the dispensation under the Messiah. The Jews anticipated great blessings in that time. They looked forward to better things than they enjoyed under the old dispensation. They expected more signal proofs of the Divine favour; a clearer knowledge of the way of pardon; and more eminent spiritual enjoyments. Of these, the apostle says that Christ, who had come, was now the high priest. It was he by whom they were procured; and the time had actually arrived when they might enjoy the long-anticipated good things under the Messiah.

By a greater and more perfect tabernacle. The meaning is, that Christ officiated as High Priest in a much more magnificent and perfect temple than either the tabernacle or the temple under the old dispensation. He performed the great functions of his priestly office--the sprinkling of the blood of the atonement--in heaven itself, of which the most holy place in the tabernacle was but the emblem. The Jewish high priest entered the sanctuary made with hands to minister before God; Christ entered into heaven itself. The word "by" here

δια means, probably, through; and the idea is, that Christ passed through a more perfect tabernacle on his way to the mercy-seat in heaven than the Jewish high priest did when: he passed through the outer tabernacle, Heb 9:2, and through the veil into the most holy place. Probably the idea in the mind of the writer was that of the Saviour passing through the visible heavens above us, to which the veil, dividing the holy from the most holy place in the temple, bore some resemblance. Many, however, have understood the word "tabernacle" here as denoting the body of Christ, (see Grotius and Bloomfield, in loc.;) and according to this the idea is, that Christ, by means of his own body and blood offered as a sacrifice, entered into the Most Holy Place in heaven. But it seems to me that the whole scope of the passage requires us to understand it of the more perfect temple in heaven where Christ performs his ministry, and of which the tabernacle of the Hebrews was but the emblem. Christ did not belong to the tribe of Levi; he was not an high priest of the order of Aaron; he did not enter the holy place on earth, but he entered the heavens, and perfects the work of his ministry there.

Not made with hands. A phrase that properly, describes heaven as being fitted up by God himself. 2Cor 5:1.

Not Of this building. Gr. "of this creation κτισεως. The meaning is, that the place where he officiates is not fitted up by human power and art, but is the work of God. The object is to show that his ministry is altogether more perfect than that which could be rendered by a Jewish priest, and performed in a temple which could not have been reared by human skill and power.

12 neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us.*

Neither by the blood of goats and calves. The Jewish sacrifice consisted of the shedding of the blood of animals. On the great day of attonement the high priest took with him into the most holy place

(1.) the blood of a young bullock, Lev 16:3,11, which is here called the blood of a "calf," which he offered for his own sin; and

(2.) the blood of a goat, as a sin-offering for others, Lev 16:9,15. It was by, or by means of δια blood thus sprinkled on the mercy-seat, that the high priest sought the forgiveness of his own sins and the sins of the people. But by his own blood. That is, by his own blood shed for the remission of sins. The meaning is, that it was in virtue of his own blood, or by means of that, that, he sought the pardon of his people. That blood was not shed for himself--for he had no sin--and consequently there was a material difference between his offering and that of the Jewish high priest. The difference related to such points as these,

(1.) The offering which Christ made was wholly for others; that of the Jewish priest for himself as well as for them.

2.) The blood offered by the Jewish priest was that of animals; that offered by the Saviour was his own.

(3.) That offered by the Jewish priest was only an emblem or type--for it could not take away sin; that offered by Christ had a real efficacy, and removes transgression from the soul.

He entered into the holy place. Heaven. The meaning is, that as the Jewish high priest bore the blood of the animal into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it there as the means of expiation, so the offering which Christ has to make in heaven, or the consideration on which he pleads for the pardon of his people, is the blood which he shed on Calvary. Having made the atonement, he now pleads the merit of it as a reason why sinners should be saved. It is not, of course, meant that he literally bore his own blood into heaven--as the high priest

did the blood of the bullock and the goat into the sanctuary; or that he literally sprinkled it on the mercy-seat there; but that that blood, having been shed for sin, is now the ground of his pleading and intercession for the pardon of sin--as the sprinkled blood of the Jewish sacrifice was the ground of the pleading of the Jewish high priest for the pardon of himself and the people.

Having obtained eternal redemption for us. That is, by the shedding of his blood. On the meaning of the word redemption, Gal 3:13. The redemption which the Lord Jesus effected for his people is eternal. It will continue for ever. It is not a temporary deliverance leaving the redeemed in danger of falling into sin and ruin, but it makes salvation secure, and in its effects extends through eternity. Who can estimate the extent of that love which purchased for us such a redemption? Who can be sufficiently grateful that he is thus redeemed? The doctrine in this verse is, that the blood of Christ is the means of redemption, or atones for sin. In the following verses the apostle shows that it not only makes atonement for sin, but that it is the means of sanctifying or purifying the soul.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer
sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;

For if the blood of bulls and of goats. Referring still to the great day of atonement, when the offering made was the sacrifice of a bullock and a goat.

And the ashes of an heifer. For an account of this, see Nu 19:2-10. In Heb 9:9 it is said that the ashes of the heifer, after it was burnt, should be kept "for a water of separation; it is a purification for sin." That is, the ashes were to be carefully preserved; and, being mixed with water, were sprinkled on those who were from any cause ceremonially impure. The reason for this appears to have been that the heifer was considered as a sacrifice whose blood has been offered, and the application of the ashes to which she had been burnt was regarded as an evidence of participation in that sacrifice. It

was needful, where the laws were so numerous respecting eternal pollutions, or where the members of the Jewish community were regarded as so frequently "unclean" by contact with dead bodies, and in various other ways, that there should be some method in which they could be declared to be cleansed from their "uncleanness." The nature of these institutions also required that this should be in connexion with sacrifice; and in order to this it was arranged that there should be this permanent sacrifice--the ashes of the heifer that had been sacrificed --of which they could avail themselves at any time, without the expense and delay of making a bloody offering specifically for the occasion. It was, therefore, a provision of convenience; and at the same time was designed to keep up the idea that all purification was somehow connected with the shedding of blood.

Sprinkling the unclean. Mingled with water, and sprinkled on the unclean. The word unclean here refers to such as had been defiled by contact with dead bodies, or when one had died in the family, etc. See Nu 19:11-22.

Sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh. Makes holy so far as the flesh or body is concerned. The uncleanness here referred to related to the body only, and of course the means of cleansing extended only to that. It was not designed to give peace to the conscience, or to expiate moral offences. The offering thus made removed the obstructions to the worship of God, so far as to allow him who had been defiled to approach him in a regular manner. Thus much the apostle allows was accomplished by the Jewish rites. They had an efficacy in removing ceremonial uncleanness; and in rendering it proper that he who had been polluted should be permitted again to approach and worship God. The apostle goes on to argue that, if they had such an efficacy, it was fair to presume that the blood of Christ would have far greater efficacy, and would reach to the conscience itself and make that pure.

14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

How much more shall the blood of Christ. As being infinitely more precious than the blood of an animal could possibly be. If the blood of an animal had any efficacy at all, even in removing ceremonial pollutions, how much more is it reasonable to suppose may be effected by the blood of the Son of God!

Who through the eternal Spirit. This expression is very difficult, and has given rise to a great variety of interpretation.--Some Mss., instead of eternal here, read holy, making it refer directly to the Holy Spirit. See Wetstein. These various readings, however, are not regarded as of sufficient authority to lead to a change in the text, and are of importance only as showing that it was an early opinion that the Holy Spirit is here referred to. The principal opinions which have been entertained respecting this phrase are the following.

(1.) That which regards it as referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This was the opinion of Owen, Doddridge, and Archbishop Tillotson.

(2.) That which refers it to the divine:nature of Christ. Among those who have maintained this opinion are Beza, Ernesti, Wolf, Vitriuga, Storr, and the late Dr. J.P. Wilson, MSS. Notes.

(3.) Others, as Grotius, Rosenmuller, Koppe, understand it as meaning endless or immortal life, in contradistinction from the Jewish sacrifices which were of a perishable nature, and which needed so often to be repeated.

(4.) Others regard it as referring to the glorified person of the Saviour, meaning that, in his exited or spiritual station in heaven, he presents the efficacy of blood,

(5.) Others suppose that it means Divine influence; and that the idea is, that Christ was actuated and filled with a Divine influence when he offered up himself as a sacrifice--an influence which was not of a temporal and fleeting nature, but which was eternal in its efficacy. This is the interpretation preferred by Prof. Stuart. For an examination of these various opinions, see his "Excursus xviii." on this epistle. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide what is the true meaning of the passage amidst this diversity of opinion; but there are some reasons which seem to me to make it probable that the Holy Spirit is intended, and that the idea is, that Christ made his great sacrifice under the extraordinary influences of that Eternal Spirit. The reasons which lead me to this opinion are the following.

(1.) It is that which would occur to the great mass of the readers of the New Testament. It is presumed that the great body of sober, plain, and intelligent readers of the Bible, on perusing the passage, suppose that it refers to the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity. There are few better and safer rules for the interpretation of a volume designed like the Bible for the mass of mankind, than to abide by the sense in which they understand it.

(2.) This interpretation is one which is most naturally conveyed by the language of the original. The phrase, the spirit τοπνευμα has so far a technical and established meaning in the New Testament as to denote the Holy Ghost, unless there is something in the connexion which renders such an application improper. In this case there is nothing certainly which necessarily forbids such an application. The high names and classical authority of those who have held this opinion are a sufficient guarantee of this.

(3.) This interpretation accords with the fact, that the Lord Jesus is represented as having been eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Comp. Jn 3:34. Though he

was Divine, yet he was also a man, and as such was under influences similar to those, of other pious men. The Holy Spirit is the source and sustainer of all piety in the soul; and it is not improper to suppose that the man Christ Jesus was, in a remarkable manner, influenced by the Holy Ghost in his readiness to obey God, and to suffer according to his will.

(4.) If there was ever an occasion on which we may suppose he was influenced by the Holy Ghost, that of his sufferings and death here referred to may be supposed eminently to have been such an one. It was expressive of the highest state of piety--of the purest love to God and man--which has ever existed in the human bosom; it was the most trying time of his own life; it was the period when there would be the most strong temptation to abandon his work; and, as the redemption of the whole world was dependent on that act, it is reasonable to suppose that the richest heavenly grace would be there imparted to him, and that he would then be eminently under the influence of that Spirit which was granted not "by measure unto him." Jn 3:34.

(5.) This representation is not inconsistent with the belief that the sufferings and death of the Redeemer were voluntary, and had all the merit which belongs to a voluntary transaction. Piety in the heart of a Christian now is not less voluntary because it is produced and cherished by the Holy Ghost, nor is there less excellence in it because the Holy Ghost imparts strong faith in the time of temptation and trial. It seems to me, therefore, that the meaning of this expression is, that the Lord Jesus was led by the strong influences of the Spirit of God to devote himself as a sacrifice for sin. It was not by any temporary influence--not by mere excitement; it was by the influence of the Eternal Spirit of God; and the sacrifice thus offered could, therefore, accomplish effects which would be eternal in their character. It was not like the offering made by the Jewish high priest, which was necessarily renewed every year, but it was under the influence of one who was eternal, and the effects of whose influence might be everlasting. It

may be added, that if this is a correct exposition it follows that the Holy Ghost is eternal, and must therefore be Divine.

Offered himself. That is, as a sacrifice. He did not offer a bullock or a goat, but he offered himself. The sacrifice of one's self is the highest offering which he can make: in this case it was the highest which the universe had to make.

Without spot. Marg. "Or, fault." The animal that was offered in the Jewish sacrifices was to be without blemish. See Lev 1:10, 22:19-22. It was not to be lame, or blind, or diseased. The word which is here used and rendered "without spot" αμωμος--refers to this fact, that there was no defect or blemish. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, the great Sacrifice, was perfect. See Heb 7:26.

Purge your conscience. That is, cleanse, purify, or sanctify your conscience. The idea is, that this offering would take away whatever rendered the conscience defiled or sinful. The offerings of the Jews related in the main to external purification, and were not adapted to give peace to a troubled conscience. They could render the worshipper externally pure, so that he might draw near to God, and not be excluded by any ceremonial pollution or defile. merit; but the mind, the heart, the conscience, they could not make pure. They could not remove that which troubles a man when he recollects that he has violated a holy law and has offended God, and when he looks forward to an awful judgment-bar. The word conscience here is not to be understood as a distinct and independent faculty of the soul, but as the soul or mind itself reflecting and pronouncing on its own acts. The whole expression refers to a mind alarmed by the recollection of guilt--for it is guilt only that disturbs a man s conscience. Guilt originates in the soul remorse and despair; guilt makes a man troubled when he thinks of death and the judgment; it is guilt only which alarms a man when he thinks of a holy God; and it is nothing but guilt that makes the entrance into another world terrible and awful. If man had no guilt he would

never dread his Maker, nor would the presence of his God be ever painful to him, Gen 3:6-10; if a man had no guilt he would not fear to die--for what have the innocent to fear anywhere? The universe is under the government of a God of goodness and truth, and, under such a government, how can those who have done no wrong have anything to dread? The fear of death, the apprehension of the judgment to come, and the dread of God, are strong and irrefragable proofs that every man is a sinner. The only thing, therefore, which ever disturbs the conscience, and makes death dreadful, and God an object of aversion, and eternity awful, is GUILT. If that is removed, man is calm and peaceful; if not, he is the victim of wretchedness and despair.

From dead works. From works that are deadly in their nature, or that lead to death. Or it may mean from works that have no spirituality, and no life. By "works" here the apostle does not refer to their outward religious acts particularly, but to the conduct of the life---to what men do; and the idea is, that their acts are not spiritual and saving, but such as lead to death. See Heb 6:1.

To serve the living God. Not in outward form, but in sincerity and in truth; to be his true friends and worshippers. The phrase, "the living God," is commonly used in tile Scriptures to describe the true God as distinguished from idols, which are represented as dead, or without life, Ps 115:4-7. The idea in this verse is, that it is only the sacrifice made by Christ which can remove the stain of guilt from the soul. It could not be done by the blood of bulls and of goats--for that did not furnish relief to a guilty conscience--but it could be done by the blood of Christ. The sacrifice which he made for sin was so pure and of such values that God can consistently pardon the offender, and restore him to his favour. That blood, too, can give peace--for Christ poured it out in behalf of the guilty. It is not that he took part with the sinner against God; it is not that he endeavours to convince him who has a troubled

conscience that he is needlessly alarmed, or that sin is not as bad as it is represented to be, or that it does not expose the soul to danger. Christ never took the part of the sinner against God; he never taught that sin was a small matter, or that it did not expose to danger. He admitted all that is said of its evil. But he provides for giving peace to the guilty conscience by shedding his blood that it may be forgiven, and by revealing a God of mercy who is willing to receive the offender into favour, and to treat him as though he had never sinned. Thus the troubled conscience may find peace; and thus, though guilty, man may be delivered from the dread of the wrath to come.

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

And for this cause. With this view; that is, to make an effectual atonement for sin, and to provide a way by which the troubled conscience may have peace. He is the Mediator. Gal 3:19,20. He is the Mediator between God and man in respect to that new covenant which he has made, or the new dispensation by which men are to be saved. He stands between God and man--the parties at variance--and undertakes the work of mediation and reconciliation. Of the new testament. Not testament--for a testament, or will, needs no mediator; but of the new covenant, or the new arrangement or disposition of things under which he proposes to pardon and save the guilty. Heb 9:16,17. That by means of death. His own death as a sacrifice for sin. The old covenant or arrangement also contemplated death but it was the death of an animal. The purposes of this were to be effected by the death of the Mediator himself; or this covenant was to be ratified in his blood. For the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament. The covenant or arrangement under Moses. The general idea here is, that these were offences for which no expiation could be made by the sacrifices under that dispensation, or from which the blood

then shed could not redeem. This general idea may include two particulars.

(1.) That they who had committed transgressions under that covenant, and who could not be fully pardoned by the imperfect sacrifices then made, would receive a full forgiveness of all their sins in the great day of account through the blood of Christ. Though the blood of bulls and goats could not expiate, yet they offered that blood in faith; they relied on the promised mercy of God; they looked forward to a perfect sacrifice; and now the blood of the great atonement, offered as a full expiation for all their sins, would be the ground of their acquittal in the last day.

(2.) That the blood of Christ would now avail for the remission of all those sins which could not be expiated by the sacrifices offered under the law. It not only contemplated the remission of all the offences committed by the truly pious under that law, but would now avail to put away sin entirely. No sacrifice which men could offer would avail, but the blood of Christ would remove all that guilt. That they which are called. Alike under the old covenant and the new. Might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. That is, the fulfilment of the promise; or that they might be made partakers of eternal blessings. That blood is effectual alike to save those under the ancient covenant and the new--so that they will be saved in the same manner, and unite in the same song of redeeming love.

16 For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

For where a testament is. This is the same word διαθηκη which, in Heb 8:6, is rendered covenant. For the general signification of the word, Heb 8:6. There is so much depending, however, on the meaning of the word, not only in the interpretation of this passage, but also of other parts of the Bible, that it may be proper to explain it here more at length. The word διαθηκη --occurs in the New Testament thirty-three times. It is translated covenant in the common version, in Lk

1:72; Acts 3:26, 7:8, Rom 9:4, 11:27, Gal 3:15,17, 4:24, Eph 2:12, Heb 8:6,8,9,10; Heb 9:4, 10:16, 12:24, 13:20. In the remaining places it is rendered testament: Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20, 1Cor 11:25, 2Cor 3:6,14; Heb 7:22, 9:15-17,20, Rev 11:19. In four of those instances, Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20 and 1Cor 11:25, it is used with reference to the institution or celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the Septuagint it occurs not far from three hundred times; in considerably more than two hundred of which, it is the translation of the Hebrew word Berith. In one instance, Zech 11:14, it is the translation of the word brotherhood; once, De 9:5, of --word; once, Jer 34:18, of "words of the covenant;" once, Lev 26:11, of tabernacle; once, Ex 31:7, of testimony; it occurs once, Eze 16:8, where the reading of the Greek and Hebrew text is doubtful; and it occurs three times, 1Sam 11:2, 20:8, 1Kgs 8:9, where there is no corresponding word in the Hebrew text. From this use of the word by the authors of the Septuagint, it is evident that they regarded it as the proper translation of the Hebrew Berith, and as conveying the same sense which that word does. It cannot be reasonably doubted that the writers of the New Testament were led to the use of the word, in part at least, by. the fact that they found it occurring so frequently in the version m common use; but it cannot be doubted, also, that they regarded it as fairly conveying the sense of the word Berith. On no principle can it be supposed that inspired and honest men would use a word, in referring to transactions in the Old Testament, which did not fairly convey the idea which the writers of the Old Testament meant to express. The use being thus regarded as settled, there are some facts in reference to it which are of great importance in interpreting the New Testament, and in understanding the nature of the "covenant" Which God makes with man. These facts are the following.

(1.) The word διαθηκη diatheke--is not that which properly denotes compact, agreement, or covenant. That word is συνθηκη --syntheke-- or, in other forms, συνθεσις and συνθεσια; or if the word diatheke is used in that signification

it is only remotely, and as a secondary meaning. See Passow; comp. the Septuagint in Isa 28:15, 30:1; Dan 11:6, and Wisdom i. 16; I Mac. x. 26; 2 Mac. xiii. 25; xiv. 26. It is not the word which a Greek would have employed to denote a compact or covenant, He would have employed it to denote a disposition, ordering, or arrangement of things, whether of religious rites, civil customs, or property; or if used with reference to a compact, it would have been with the idea of an arrangement or ordering of matters, not with the primary notion of an agreement with another.

(2.) The word properly expressive of a covenant or compact συνθηκη is never used in the New Testament. In all the allusions to the transactions between God and man, this word never occurs. From some cause, the writers and speakers in the New Testament seem to here supposed that the word would leave an impression which.they did not wish to leave. Though it might have been supposed that, in speaking of the various transactions between God and man, they would have selected this word, yet with entire uniformity they have avoided it. No one of them--though the word διαθηκη diatheke--has been used by no less than six of them--has been betrayed in a single instance into the use of the word συνθηκη syntheke, or has differed from the other writers in the language employed. This cannot be supposed to be the result of concert or collusion, but it must have been founded on some reason which operated equally on all their minds.

(1.) In like manner, and with like remarkable uniformity, the word συνθηκη syntheke--is never used in the Septuagint with reference to any arrangement or "covenant" between God and man. Once indeed in the Apocrypha, and but once, it is used in that sense. In the three only other instances in Which it occurs in the Septuagint, it is with reference to compacts between man and man, Isa 28:16, 30:1, Dan 11:6. This remarkable fact, that the authors of that version never use the word to denote any transaction between God and man, shows

that there must have been some reason for it which acted on their minds with entire uniformity.

(2.) It is no less remarkable that neither in the Septuagint nor the New Testament is the word διαθηκη--diatheke--ever used in the sense of will or testament, unless it be in the case before us. This is conceded on all hands, and is expressly admitted by Prof. Stuart, (Com Heb p. 439,) though he defends this use of the word in this passage. A very important inquiry presents itself here which has never received a solution generally regarded as satisfactory. It is why the word διαθηκη --diatheke--was selected by the writers of the New Testament to express the nature of the transaction between God and man in the plan of salvation. It might be said, indeed, that they found this word uniformly used in the Septuagint, and that they employed it as expressing the idea which they wished to convey, with sufficient accuracy. But this is only removing the difficulty one step farther back. Why did the Seventy adopt this word? Why did they not rather use the common and appropriate Greek word to express the notion of a covenant? A suggestion on this subject has already been made in the Heb 8:6. Comp. Bib. Repository, vol. xx. p. 55. Another reason may, however, be suggested for this remarkable fact which is liable to no objection. It is, that in the apprehension of the authors of the Septuagint, and of the writers of the New Testament, the word διαθηκη diatheke--in its original and proper signification, fairly conveyed the sense of the Hebrew word Berith, and that the word συνθηκη syntheke--or compact, agreement, would not express that; and that they never meant to be understood as conveying the idea, either that God entered into a COMPACT or COVENANT with man, or that he made a WILL. They meant to represent him as making an arrangement, a disposition, an ordering of things, by which his service might be kept up among his people, and by which men might be saved; but they were equally remote from representing him as making a compact, or a will. In support of this there may be alleged

(1.) the remarkable uniformity in which the word διαθηκη diatheke-- is used, showing that there was some settled principle from which they never departed; and

(2.) used mainly the meaning of the word itself. Prof. Stuart has, undoubtedly, given the accurate original sense of the word. "The real, genuine, and original meaning of διαθηκη diatheke--is, arrangement, disposition, or disposal of a thing," p. 440. The word from which it is derived-- διατιθημι means, to place apart or asunder; and then to set, arrange, dispose in a certain order. Passow. From this original signification is derived the use which the word has, with singular uniformity, in the Scriptures. It denotes the arrangement, disposition, or ordering of things which God made in relation to mankind, by which he designed to keep up his worship on earth, and to save the soul. It means neither covenant nor will; neither compact nor legacy; neither agreement nor testament. It is an arrangement of an entirely different order from either of them, and the sacred writers, with an uniformity which could have been secured only by the presiding influence of the One Eternal Spirit, have avoided the suggestion that God made with man either a compact or a will. We have no word which precisely expresses this idea; and hence our conceptions are constantly floating between a compact and a will, and the views which we have are as unsettled as they are unscriptural. The simple idea is, that God has made an arrangement by which his worship may be celebrated and souls saved. Under the Jewish economy this arrangement assumed one form; under the Christian another. In neither was it a compact or covenant between two parties in such a sense that one party would be at liberty to reject the terms proposed; in neither was it a testament or will, as if God had left a legacy to man; but in both there were some things in regard to the arrangement such as are found in a covenant or compact. One of those things--equally appropriate to a compact between man and man, and to this arrangement the apostle refers to

here, that it implied in all cases the death of the victim. If these remarks are well founded, they should be allowed materially to shape our views in the interpretation of the Bible. Whole treatises of divinity have been written on a mistaken view of the meaning of this word--understood as meaning covenant. Volumes of angry controversy have been published on the nature of the "covenant" with Adam, and on its influence on his posterity. The only literal, "covenant" which can be supposed in the plan of redemption is that between the Father and the Son--though even the existence of such a covenant is rather the result of devout and learned imagining than of any distinct statement in the volume of inspiration. The simple statement there is, that God has made an arrangement for salvation, the execution of which he has entrusted to his Son, and has proposed it to man to be accepted as the only arrangement by which man can be saved, and which he is not at liberty to disregard. There has been much difference of opinion in reference to the meaning of the passage here, and to the design of the illustration introduced. If the word used--διαθηκη--means testament, in the sense of a will, then the sense of that passage is, that "a will is of force only when he who made it dies, for it relates to a disposition of his property after his death." The force of the remark of the apostle then would be, that the fact that the Lord Jesus made or expressed his will to mankind, implied that he would die to confirm it; or that since in the ordinary mode of making a will it was of force only when he who made it was dead, therefore it was necessary that the Redeemer should die, in order to confirm and ratify that which he made. But the objections to this, which appears to have been the view of our translators, seem to me to be insuperable. They are these.

(1.) The word διαθηκη --diatheke--is not used in this sense in the New Testament elsewhere. See the remarks above.

(2.) The Lord Jesus made no such will. He had no property, and the commandments and instructions which he gave to is disciples were not of the nature of a will or testament.

(3.) Such an illustration would not be pertinent to the design of the apostle, or in keeping with his argument. He is comparing the Jewish and Christian dispensations, and the point of comparison in this chapter relates to the question about the efficacy of sacrifice in the two arrangements, he showed that the arrangement for blood-shedding by sacrifice entered into both; that the high priest of both offered blood as an expiation; that the holy place was entered with blood, and that consequently there was death in both the arrangements or dispensations. The former arrangement or dispensation was ratified with blood, and it was equally proper that the new arrangement should be also. The point of comparison is not that Moses made a will or testament which could be of force only when he died, and that the same thing was required in the new dispensation, but it is that the former covenant was ratified by blood, or by the death of a victim, and that it might be expected that the new dispensation would be confirmed, and that it was, in fact, confirmed in the same manner. In this view of the argument what pertinency would there be in introducing an illustration respecting a will and the manner in which it became efficient. Heb 9:18. It seems clear, therefore, to me, that the word rendered testament here is to be taken in the sense in which it is ordinarily used in the New Testament. The opinion that the word here means such a Divine arrangement as is commonly denoted a "covenant," and not testament, is sanctioned by not a few names of eminence in criticism, such as Pierce, Doddridge, Michaelis, Steadel, and the late Dr. J.P. Wilson. Bloomfield says that the connexion here demands this. The principal objections to this view are,

(1.) that it is not proved that no covenants or compacts were valid, except such as were made by the intervention of sacrifices.

(2.) That the word rendered testator διαθεμενος --cannot refer to the death of an animal slain for the purpose of ratifying a

covenant, but must mean either a testator or a contractor, i.e. one of two contracting parties.

(3.) That the word rendered dead Heb 9:17-- νεκροις--means only dead men, and never is applied to the dead bodies of animals. See Stuart on the Heb. p. 442. These objections to the supposition that the passage refers to a covenant or compact, Prof. Stuart says are, in his view, insuperable, and they are certainly entitled to grave consideration. Whether the view above presented is one which can be sustained, we may be better able to determine after an examination of the words and phrases which the apostle uses. Those objections which depend wholly on the philological argument derived from the words used will be considered, of course, in such an examination. It is to be remembered at the outset,

(1.) that the word διαθηκη -diatheke--is never used in the New Testament in the sense of testament or will, unless in this place;

(2.) that it is never used in this sense in the Septuagint; and

(3.) that the Hebrew word --Berith--never has this signification. This is admitted. See Stuart on the Heb. pp. 439, 440. It must require very strong reasons to prove that it has this meaning here, and that Paul has employed the word in a sense differing from its uniform signification elsewhere in the Bible. Compare, however, the remarks of Prof, Stuart ia Biblical Repository, vol. xx. p. 364. There must also of necessity be. αναγκη--That is, it is necessary in order to confirm the covenant, or it would not be binding in cases where this did not occur. The necessity in the case is simply to make it valid or obligatory. So we say now, there must "necessarily" be a seal, or a deed would not be valid. The fair interpretation of this is, that this was the common and established custom in making a "covenant" with God, or confirming the arrangement with him in regard to salvation. To this it is objected, (see the first objection above,) that "it is

yet to be made out that no covenants were valid except those by the intervention of sacrifices." In reply to this, we may observe,

(1.) that the point to be made out is not that this was a custom in compacts between man and man, but between man and his Maker. There is no evidence, as it seems to me, that the apostle alludes to a compact between man and man. The mistake on this subject has arisen partly from the use of the word "testament" by our translators, in the sense of will--supposing that it must refer to some transaction relating to man only; and partly from the insertion of the word "men" in Heb 9:17, in the translation of the phrase--επινεκροις upon the dead," or "over the dead."- But it is not necessary to suppose that there is a reference here to any transaction between man and man at all, as the whole force of the illustration introduced by the apostle will be retained if we suppose him speaking only of a covenant between man and God. Then his assertion will be simply that, in the arrangement between God and man, there was a necessity of the death of something, or of the shedding of blood in order to ratify it. This view will save the necessity of proof that the custom of ratifying compacts between man and man by sacrifice prevailed. Whether that can be made out or not, the assertion of the apostle may be true, that in the arrangement which God makes with man, sacrifice was necessary in order to confirm or ratify it.

(2.) The point to be made out is, not that such a custom is or was universal among all nations, but that it was the known and regular opinion among the Hebrews that a sacrifice was necessary in a "covenant "with God, in the same way as if we should say that a deed was not valid without a seal, it would not be necessary to show this in regard to all nations, but only that it is the law or the custom in the nation where the writer lived, and at the time when he lived. Other nations may have very different modes or confirming or ratifying a deed and the

same nation may have different methods at various times. The fact or custom to which I suppose there is allusion here, is that of sacrificing an animal to ratify the arrangement between man and his Maker, commonly called a "covenant;" In regard to the existence of such a custom, particularly among the Hebrews? we may make the following observations. It was the common mode of ratifying the "covenant" between God and man. That was done over a sacrifice, or by the shedding of blood. So the covenant with Abraham was ratified by slaying an heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. The animals were divided and a burning lamp passed between them, Gen 15:9,18. So the covenant made with the Hebrews in the wilderness was ratified in the same manner, Ex 24:6, seq. Thus, in Jer 34:18, God speaks of the "men that had transgressed his covenant which they had made before him when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof." See also Zech 9:11. Indeed, all the Jewish sacrifices were regarded as a ratification of the covenant. It was never supposed that it was ratified or confirmed in a proper manner without such a sacrifice. Instances occur, indeed, in which there was no sacrifice offered when a covenant was made between man and man, see Gen 23:16, 24:9, De 25:7,9, Ruth 4:7; but these cases do not establish the point that the custom did not prevail of ratifying a covenant with God by the blood of sacrifice. Further; the terms used in the Hebrew in regard to making a covenant with God, prove that it was understood to be ratified by sacrifice, or that the death of a victim was necessary. . Berith "to cut a covenant"--the word karath meaning to cut; to cut off; to cut down; and the allusion being to the victims offered in sacrifice, and cut in pieces on occasion of entering into a covenant. See Gen 15:10, Jer 34:18,19. The same idea is expressed in the Greek phrases ορκιατεμνειντεμνεινσπονδας, and in the Latin icere faedus. Comp. Virgil, AEn, viii. 641.

Et caesa jungebant faedera porca

These considerations show that it was the common sentiment, alike among the Hebrews and the heathen, that a covenant with God was to be ratified or sanctioned by sacrifice; and the statement of Paul here is, that the death of a sacrificial victim was needful to confirm or ratify such a covenant with God. It was not secure, or confirmed, until blood was thus shed. This was well understood among the Hebrews, that all their covenant transactions with God were to be ratified by a sacrifice; and Paul says that the same principle must apply to any arrangement between God and men. Hence he goes on to show that it was necessary that a sacrificial victim should die in the new Covenant which God established by man through the Mediator. See Heb 9:23. This I understand to be the sum of the argument here. It is not that every contract made between man and man was to be ratified or confirmed by a sacrifice--for the apostle is not discussing that point; but it is that every similar transaction with God must be based on such a sacrifice, and that no covenant with him could be complete without such a sacrifice. This was provided for in the ancient dispensation by the sacrifices which were constantly offered in their worship; in the new, by the one great Sacrifice offered on the cross. Hence all our approaches to God are based on the supposition of such a sacrifice, and are, as it were, ratified over it. We ratify or confirm such a covenant arrangement, not by offering the sacrifice anew, but by recalling it in a proper manner when we celebrate the death of Christ, and when, in view of his cross, we solemnly pledge ourselves to be the Lord's.

The death of the testator. According to our common version, the death of him who makes a will. But if the views above expressed are correct, this should be rendered the covenanter, or "the victim set apart to be slain." The Greek will admit of the translation of the word διαθεμενος --diathemenos --by the word covenanter, if the word διαθηκη diatheke--is rendered covenant. To such a translation here as would make the word refer to a victim slain in order to ratify a covenant, it is

objected that "the word has no such meaning anywhere else. It must either mean a testator, or a contractor, i. e. one of two covenanting parties. But where is the death of a person covenanting made necessary in order to confirm the covenant? Prof. Stuart, in loc. To this objection I remark respectfully,

(1.) that the word is never used in the sense of testator, either in the New Testament or the Old, unless it be here. It is admitted of the word διαθηκη, diatheke--by Prof. Smart himself, that it never means will, or testament, unless it be here, and it is equally true of the word used here that it never means one who makes a will. If, therefore, it should be that a meaning quite uncommon, or wholly unknown in the usage of the Scriptures, is to be assigned to the use of the word here, why should it be assumed that that unusual meaning should be that of making a will, and not that of confirming a covenant?

(2.) If the apostle used the word διαθηκη-- diatheke --in the sense of a covenant in this passage, nothing is more natural than that he should use the corresponding word διαθεμενος--diathemenos--in the sense of that by which a covenant was ratified. He wished to express the idea that the covenant was alway ratified by the death of a victim--a sacrifice of an animal under the law, and the sacrifice of the Redeemer under the gospel-- and no word would so naturally convey that idea as the one from which the word covenant was derived. It is to be remembered, also, that there was no word to express that thought. Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek furnished such a word; nor have we now any word to express that thought, but are obliged to use circumlocution to convey the idea. The word covenanter would not do it; nor the words victim or sacrifice. We can express the idea only by some phrase like this--" the victim set apart to be slain to ratify the covenant." But it was not an unusual thing for the apostle Paul to make use of a word in a sense quite peculiar to himself. Comp. 2Cor 4:17.

(3.) The word διατιθημι diatithemi--properly means, to place apart, to set in order, to arrange. It is rendered appoint in Lk 22:29; made and make, with reference to a covenant, Actst 3:25, Heb 8:10, 10:16. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in the passage before us. The idea of placing, laying, disposing, arranging, etc, enters into the word--as to place wares or merchandize for sale, to arrange a contract, etc. See Passow. The fair meaning of the word here may be, whatever goes to arrange, dispose, or settle the covenant, or to make the covenant secure and firm. If the reference be to a compact, it cannot relate to one of the contracting parties, because the death of neither is necessary to confirm it. But it may refer to that which was well known as an established opinion, that a covenant with God was ratified only by a sacrifice. Still, it must be admitted that this use of the word is not elsewhere found, and the only material question is, whether it is to be presumed that the apostle would employ a word in a single instance, in a peculiar signification, where the connexion would not render it difficult to be understood. This must be admitted, that he might, whichever view is taken of the meaning of this passage; for, on the supposition that he refers here to a will, it is conceded that he uses the word in a sense which does not once occur elsewhere either in the Old Testament or the New. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here may, without impropriety, be regarded as referring to the victim that was slain in order to ratify a covenant with God; and that the meaning is, that such a covenant was not regarded as confirmed until the victim was slain. It may be added that the authority of Michaelis, Macknight, Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Dr. J.P. Wilson, is a proof that such an interpretation cannot be a very serious departure from the proper use of a Greek word.

17 For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

For a testament. Such an arrangement as God enters into with man. See the remarks on Heb 9:16. Is of force. Is ratified, or

confirmed--in the same way as a deed or compact is confirmed by affixing a seal. After men are dead. επινεκροις. "Over the dead." That is, in accordance with the view given above, after the animal is dead; or over the body of the animal slain for sacrifice, and to confirm the covenant. "For a covenant is completed or confirmed over dead sacrifices, seeing it is never of force as long as the victim set apart for its ratification is still living." MSS. Notes of Dr. J. P. Wilson. To this interpretation it is objected, that "νεκροις--nekrois--means only dead men; but men surely were not sacrificed by the Jews, as a mediating sacrifice in order to confirm a covenant." Prof. Stuart, in loc. In regard to this objection, and to the proper meaning of the passage, we may remark,

(1,) that the word "men" is not in the Greek, nor is it necessarily implied, unless it be in the use of the Greek word rendered dead. The proper translation is, "upon, or over the dead." The use of the word "men" here by our translators would seem to limit it to the making of a will.

(2.) It is to be presumed, unless there is positive proof to the contrary, that the Greeks and Hebrews used the word dead as it is used by other people, and that it might refer to deceased animals, or vegetables, as well as to men. A sacrifice that had been offered was dead; a tree that had fallen was dead; an animal that had been torn by other wild animals was dead. It is possible that a people might have one word to refer to dead men, and another to dead animals, and another to dead vegetables; but what is the evidence that the Hebrews or the Greeks had such words?

(3.) What is the meaning of this very word--νεκρος nekros-,in Heb 6:1, 9:14, of this very epistle, when it is applied to works--"dead works"--if it never refer to anything but men? Comp. Jas 2:17,20,26, Eph 2:1,5, Rev 3:1. In Eccl 9:4, it is applied to a dead lion. I suppose, therefore, that the Greek phrase here will admit of the interpretation which the "exigency of the place" seems to demand, and that the idea is,

that a covenant with God was ratified over the animals slain ill sacrifice, and was not considered as confirmed until the sacrifice was killed. Otherwise. Since--επει. That is, unless this takes place it will be of no force. It is of no strength. It is not strong--ισχυει--it is not confirmed or ratified. While the testator liveth. Or while the animal selected to confirm the covenant is alive. It can be confirmed only by its being slain. A full examination of the meaning of this passage (Heb 9:16,17) may be found in an article in the Biblical Repository, vol. xx. pp. 51--71, and in Prof. Stuart's reply to that article. Bib. Repos. xx. pp. 356--381.

18 Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.

Whereupon. οθεν--Whence. Or since this is a settled principle, or an indisputable fact, it occurred in accordance with this, that the first covenant was confirmed by the shedding of blood. The admitted principle which the apostle had stated, that the death of the victim was necessary to confirm the covenant, was the reason why the first covenant was ratified with blood. If there were any doubt about the correctness of the interpretation given above, that Heb 9:16,17 refer to a covenant, and not a will, this verse would seem to be enough to remove it. For how could the fact, that a will is not binding until he who makes it is dead, be a reason why a covenant should be confirmed by blood? What bearing would such a fact have on the question, whether it ought or ought, not to be confirmed in this manner. Or how could that fact, though it is universal, be given as a reason to account for the fact that the covenant made by the instrumentality of Moses was ratified by blood? No possible connexion can be seen in such reasoning. But admit that Paul had stated, Heb 9:16, Heb 9:17, a general principle that in all covenant transactions with God the death of a victim was necessary, and everything is plain. We then see why he offered the sacrifice and sprinkled the blood. It was not on the basis of such reasoning as this: "The death of a man who makes a will is indispensable before the will is of binding force, THEREFORE it was that Moses confirmed the covenant

made with our fathers by the blood of a sacrifice; "but by such reasoning as this: "It is a great principle that in order to ratify a covenant between God and his people a victim should be slain, therefore it was that Moses ratified the old covenant in this manner, and therefore it was also that the death of a victim was necessary under the new dispensation." Here the reasoning of Paul is clear and explicit; but who could see the force of the former? Prof. Stuart indeed connects this verse with Heb 9:15, and says that the course of thought is, "The new covenant of redemption from sin was sanctioned by the death of Jesus; consequently, or wherefore, οθεν, the old covenant, which is a type of the new, was sanctioned by the blood of victims." But is this the reasoning of Paul? Does he say that because the blood of a Mediator was to be shed under the new dispensation, and because the old was a type of this, that THEREFORE the old was confirmed by blood? Is he not rather accounting for the shedding of blood at all, and showing that it was necessary that the blood of the Mediator should be shed, rather than assuming that, and from that arguing that a typical shedding of blood was needful? Besides, on this supposition, why is the statement in Heb 9:16,17 introduced? What bearing have these verses in the train of thought? What are they but an inexplicable obstruction? The first testament. Or rather covenant-- the word testament being supplied by the translators.

Was dedicated. Marg. Purified. The word used to ratify, to confirm, to consecrate, to sanction. Literally, to renew.

Without blood. It was ratified by the blood of the animals that were slain in sacrifice. The blood was then sprinkled on the principal objects that were regarded as holy under that dispensation.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people. When he had recited all the law, and had given all the commandments entrusted Him to deliver, Ex 24:8

He took the blood of calves and of goats. This passage has given great perplexity to commentators from the fact that Moses, in his account of the transactions connected with the ratification of the covenant with the people, Ex 24:3 mentions only a part of the circumstances here referred to. He says nothing of the blood of calves and of goats; nothing of water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop; nothing of sprinkling the book, the tabernacle, or the vessels of the ministry. It has been made a question, therefore, whence Paul obtained a knowledge of these circumstances? Since the account is not contained in the Old Testament, it must have been either by tradition or by direct inspiration. The latter supposition is hardly probable, for

(1.)the information here can hardly be regarded as of sufficient importance to have required an original revelation; for the illustration would have had sufficient force to sustain his conclusion if the literal account in Exodus only had been given, that Moses sprinkled the people; but

(2.) such an original act of inspiration here would not have been consistent with the object of the apostle. In that argument it was essential that he should state only the facts about the ancient dispensation which were admitted by the Hebrews themselves. Any statement of his own about things which they did not concede to be true, or which was not well understood as a custom, might have been called in question, and would have done much to invalidate the entire force of the argument. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the facts here referred to had been preserved by tradition; and in regard to this, and the authority due to such a tradition, we may remark,

(1.) that it was well known that the Jews had a great number of traditions which they carefully preserved;

(2.) that there is no improbability in the supposition that many events in their history would be preserved in this manner, since in the small compass of a volume like the Old Testament it cannot be presumed that all the events of their nation had been recorded;

(3.) though they had many traditions of a trifling nature, and many which were false, (comp. Mt 15:2,) yet they doubtless had many that were true; (4.) in referring to those traditions, there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul may have been guided by the Spirit of inspiration in selecting only those which were true; and (5.) nothing is more probable than what is here stated. If Moses sprinkled "the people;" if he read "the book of the law" then, (Ex 24:7;) and if this was regarded as a solemn act of ratifying a covenant with God, nothing would be more natural than that he should sprinkle the book of the covenant, and even the tabernacle and its various sacred utensils. We are to remember, also, that it was common among the Hebrews to sprinkle blood for the purpose of consecrating, or as an emblem of purifying. Thus Aaron and his sons and their garments were sprinkled with blood when they were consecrated to the office of priests, Ex 29:19-21; the blood of sacrifices was sprinkled on the altar, Lev 1:5,11, 3:2,13; and blood was sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary, Lev 4:16,17; comp. Lev 6:27, 7:14. So Josephus speaks of the garments of Aaron and of his sons being sprinkled with "the blood of the slain beasts, and with spring water." "Having consecrated them and their garments," he says, "for seven days together, he did the same to the tabernacle, and the vessels thereto belonging, both with oil and with the blood of bulls and of rams," Ant. B. iii. chap. viii. & 6. These circumstances show the strong probability of the truth of what is here affirmed by Paul, while it is impossible to prove that Moses did not sprinkle the book and the tabernacle in the manner stated. The mere omission by

Moses cannot demonstrate that it was not done. On the phrase "the blood of calves and of goats," Heb 9:12.

With water. Agreeably to the declaration of Josephus that "spring water was used." In Lev 14:49-51, it is expressly mentioned that the blood of the bird that was killed to cleanse a house from the plague of leprosy should be shed over running water, and that the blood and the water should be sprinkled on the walls. It has been suggested also, (see Bloomfield,) that the use of water was necessary in order to prevent the blood from coagulating, or so as to: make it possible to sprinkle it.

And scarlet wool. Marg, Purple. The word here used denotes crimson, or deep scarlet. The colour was obtained from a small insect which was found adhering to the shoots of a species of oak in Spain and in Western Asia, of about the size of a pea. It was regarded as the most valuable of the colours for dyeing, and was very expensive. Why the wool used by Moses was of this colour is not known unless it be because it was the most expensive of colours, and thus accorded with everything employed in the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils. Wool appears to have been used in order to absorb and retain the blood.

And hyssop. That is, a bunch of hyssop intermingled with the wool, or so connected with it as to constitute a convenient instrument for sprinkling. Comp. Lev 14:51. Hyssop is a low shrub, regarded as one of the smallest of the plants, and her me put in contrast with the cedar of Lebanon. It sprung out of the rocks or walls, 1Kgs 4:33, and was used for purposes of purification. The term seems to have comprised not only the common hyssop, but also lavender and other aromatic plants. Its fragrance, as well as its size, may have suggested the idea of using it in the sacred services of the tabernacle. The appearance of the hyssop is represented by the foregoing engraving.

And sprinkled both the book, This circumstance is not mentioned by Moses, but it has been shown above not to be improbable. Some expositors, however, in order to avoid the difficulty in the passage, have taken this in connexion with the word λαβων -rendered, "he took" "--meaning, "taking the blood, and the book itself;" but the more natural and proper construction is, that the book was sprinkled with the blood.

And all the people. Moses says, "and sprinkled it on the people," Ex 24:8. We are not to suppose that either Moses or Paul designs to say that the blood was actually sprinkled on each one of the three millions of people in the wilderness; but the meaning doubtless is, that the blood was sprinkled over the people, though in fact it might have fallen on a few. So a man now standing on an elevated place, and surrounded by a large assembly, if he should sprinkle water over them from the place where he stood, might be said to sprinkle it on the people, though in fact but few might have been touched by it. The act would be equally significant whether the emblem fell on few or many.

Saying, This is the blood of the testament. Of the covenant. Heb 9:16,17. That is, this is the blood by which the covenant is ratified. It was the means used to confirm it; the sacred and solemn form by which it was made sure. When this was done, the covenant between God and the people was confirmed --as a covenant between man and man is when it is sealed. Which God hath enjoined unto you. In Ex 24:8, "which God hath made with you. The language used by Paul, "which God hath enjoined" -- ενετειλατο-- commanded--shows that he did not regard this as strictly of the nature of a covenant, or compact. When a compact is made between parties, one does not enjoin or command the other, but it is a mutual agreement. In the transactions between God and man, though called Berith--or διαθηκη--diatheke--the idea of a covenant or compact is so far excluded that God never loses his right to command or enjoin. It is not a transaction between equals, or an agreement; it is a solemn arrangement on the part of God which he

proposes to men, and which he enjoins them to embrace; which they are not indeed at liberty to disregard, but which, when embraced, is appropriately ratified by some solemn act on their part. Compare Heb 8:6.

20 saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21 Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

He sprinkled--both the tabernacle. This circumstance is not stated by Moses. On the probability that this was done, Heb 9:19. The account of setting up the tabernacle occurs in Ex 40. In that account it is said that Moses anointed the tabernacle with the holy anointing oil, Heb 9:9-11. Josephus (Ant. B. III. ch. viii. & 6) says that he consecrated it, and the vessels thereto belonging, with the blood of bulls and of rams. This was undoubtedly the tradition in the time of Paul, and no one can prove that it is not correct. And all the vessels of the ministry. Employed in the service of God. The altar, the laver, (Ex 40:10,11,) the censers, dishes, bowls, etc., which were used in the tabernacle.

22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

And almost all things. It is a general custom to purify everything by blood. This rule was not universal, for some things were purified by fire and water, (Nu 31:22,23,) and some by water only, Nu 31:24, Lev 16:26,28. But the exceptions to the general rule were few. Almost everything in the tabernacle and temple service was consecrated or purified by blood. And without shedding of blood is no remission. Remission or forgiveness of sins. That is, though some things were purified by fire and water, yet when the matter pertained to the forgiveness of sins, it was universally true that no sins were pardoned except by the shedding of blood. Some impurities might be removed by water and fire, but the stain of sin could be removed only by blood. This declaration referred, in its primary meaning, to the Jewish rites; and the sense is, that under that dispensation it was universally true that in order to the forgiveness of sin blood must be shed. But

it contains a truth of higher order and importance still. It is universally true that sin never has been, and never will be forgiven, except in connexion with and in virtue of the shedding of blood. It is on this principle that the plan of salvation by the atonement is based, and on this that God in fact bestows pardon on men. There is not the slightest evidence that any man has ever been pardoned except through the blood shed for the remission of sins. The infidel who rejects the atonement has no evidence that his sins are pardoned; the man who lives in the neglect of the gospel, though he has abundant evidence that he is a sinner, furnishes none that his sins are forgiven; and the Mohamadin and the heathen can point to no proof that their sins are blotted out. It remains to be demonstrated that one single member of the human family has ever had the slightest evidence of pardoned sin, except through the blood of expiation. In the Divine arrangement there is no principle better established than this, that all sin which is forgiven is remitted through the blood of the atonement; a principle which has never been departed from hitherto, and which never will be. It follows, therefore,

(1.) that no sinner can hope for forgiveness except through the blood of Christ;

(2.) that if men are ever saved they must be willing to rely on the merits of that blood;

(3.) that all men are on a level in regard to salvation, since all are to be saved in the same way; and

(4.) that there will be one and the same song in heaven--the song of redeeming love.

23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The patterns of things in the heavens. The tabernacle and its various utensils. Heb 8:5. Be purified with these. With water and blood, and by these ceremonies. But the heavenly things themselves. The heavenly tabernacle or sanctuary into which Christ has entered, and where he performs the functions of his ministry. The use of the word purified here applied to heaven, does not imply that heaven was before unholy, but it denotes that it is now made accessible to sinners; or that they may come and worship there in an acceptable manner. The ancient tabernacle was purified or consecrated by the blood of the victims slain, so that men might approach with acceptance and worship; the heavens by purer blood are rendered accessible to the guilty. The necessity for "better sacrifices" in regard to the latter was, that it was designed to make the conscience pure, and because the service in heaven is more holy than any rendered on earth. With better sacrifices than these. To wit, the sacrifice made by the offering of the Lord Jesus on the cross. This infinitely surpassed in value all that had been offered under the Jewish dispensation.

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands. Into the temple or tabernacle. The Jewish high priest alone entered into the most holy place; and the other priests into the holy place. Jesus, being of the tribe of Judah, and not of Levi, never entered the temple proper. He had access only to the courts of the temple, in the same way as any other Jew had. Mt 21:12. He has entered into the true temple--heaven of which the earthly tabernacle was the type. Which are the figures of the true. Literally, the antitypes αντιτυπα. The word properly means that which is formed after a model, pattern, or type; and then that which corresponds to something, or answers to, it. The idea here is, that the type or fashion--the true figure or form--was shown to Moses in the Mount, and

then the tabernacle was made after that model, or corresponded to it. The true original figure is heaven itself; the tabernacle was an antitype of that--or was so formed as in some sense to correspond to it. That is, it corresponded in regard to the matters under consideration--the most holy place denoted heaven; the mercy-seat and the shekinah were symbols of the presence of God, and of the fact that he shows mercy in heaven; the entrance of the high priest was emblematical of the entrance of the Redeemer into heaven; the sprinkling of the blood there was a type of what the Redeemer would do in heaven. Now to appear in the presence of God for us. As the Jewish high priest appeared before the shekinah, the symbol of the Divine Presence in the tabernacle, so Christ appears before God himself in our behalf in heaven. He has gone to plead for our salvation; to present the merits of his blood as a permanent reason why we should be saved, Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25.

25 nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest
entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
26 for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the
world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to
put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the
judgment:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die. Or, "since it is appointed unto men to die once only." The object of this is to illustrate the fact that Christ died but once for sin, and that is done by showing that the most important events pertaining to man occur but once. Thus it is with death. That does not, and cannot occur many times. It is the great law of our being, that men die but once, and hence the same thing was to be expected to occur in regard to him who made the atonement. It could not be supposed that this great law pertaining to man would be departed from in the case of him who died to make the atonement, and that he would repeatedly undergo the pains of death. The same thing was true in regard to the judgment. Man is to be judged once, and but once. The decision is to be final, and is not to be repeated. In like

manner, there was a fitness that the great redeemer should die but once, and that his death should, without being repeated, determine the destiny of man. There was a remarkable oneness in the great events which most affected men; and neither death, the judgment, nor the atonement could be repeated. In regard to the declaration here, that "it is appointed unto men once to die," we may observe,

(1,) that death is the result of appointment, Gen 3:19, It is not the effect of chance, or hap-hazard. It is not a "debt of nature." It is not the condition to which man was subject by the laws of his creation. It is not to be accounted for by the mere principles of physiology. God could as well have made the heart to play for ever as for fifty years. Death is no more the regular result of physical laws than the guillotine and the gallows are. It is, in all cases, the result of intelligent appointment, and for an adequate cause.

(2.) That cause, or the reason of that appointment, is sin. Rom 6:23. This is the adequate cause; this explains the whole of it. Holy beings do not die. There is not the slightest proof that an angel in heaven has died, or that any perfectly holy being has ever died, except the Lord Jesus. In every death, then, we have a demonstration that the race is guilty; in each case of mortality we have an affecting memento that we are individually transgressors.

(3.) Death occurs but once in this world. It cannot be repeated, if we should desire to have it repeated. Whatever truths or facts, then, pertain to death; whatever lessons it is calculated to convey, pertain to it as an event which is not to occur again. That which is to occur but once in an eternity of existence acquires, from that very fact, if there were no other circumstances, an immense importance. What is to be done but once, we should wish to be done well. We should make all proper preparation for it; we should regard it with singular

interest. If preparation is to be made for it, we should make all which we expect ever to make. A man who is to cross the ocean but once--to go away from his home never to return--should make the right kind of preparation. He cannot come back to take that which he has forgotten; to arrange that which he has neglected; to give counsel which he has failed to do; to ask forgiveness for offences for which he has neglected to seek pardon. And so of death. A man who dies, dies but once. He cannot come back again to make preparation, if he has neglected it; to repair the evils which he has caused by a wicked life; or to implore pardon for sins for which he had failed to ask forgiveness. Whatever is to be done with reference to death, is to be done once for all before he dies.

(4.) Death occurs to all. "It is appointed unto men"--to the race. It is not an appointment for one, but for all. No one is appointed by name to die; and not an individual is designated as one who shall escape. No exception is made in favour of youth, beauty, or blood; no rank or station is exempt; no merit, no virtue, no patriotism, no talent, can purchase freedom from it. In every other sentence which goes out against men, there may be some hope of reprieve. Here there is none. We cannot meet an individual who is not under sentence of death. It is not only the poor wretch in the dungeon, doomed to the gallows, who is to die --it is the rich man in his palace; the gay trifler in the assembly room; the friend that we embrace and love; and she whom we meet in the crowded saloon of fashion, with all the graces of accomplishment and adorning. Each one of these is just as much under sentence of death as the poor wretch in the cell, and the execution on any one of them may occur before his. It is, too, for substantially the same cause, and is as really deserved. It is for sin that all are doomed to death; and the fact that we must die should be a constant remembrance of our guilt.

(5.) As death is to occur to us but once, there is a cheering interest in the reflection that when it is passed it is passed for ever. The dying pang, the chill, the cold sweat, are not to be repeated. Death is not to approach us often--he is to be allowed to come to us but once. When we have once passed through the dark valley, we shall have the assurance that we shall never tread its gloomy way again. Once, then, let us be willing to die--since we can die but once; and let us rejoice in the assurance which the gospel furnishes, that they who die in the Lord leave the world to go where death in any form is unknown. But after this the judgment. The apostle does not say how long after death this will be, nor is it possible for us to know, Acts 1:7; Mt 24:36. We may suppose, however, that there will be two periods in which there will be an act of judgment passed on those who die.

(1.) Immediately after death, when they pass into the eternal world, when their destiny will be made known to them. This seems to be necessarily implied in the supposition that they will continue to live, and to be happy or miserable after death. This act of judgment may not be formal and public, but will be such as to show them what must be the issues of the final day; and as the result of that interview with God, they will be made happy or miserable until the final doom shall be pronounced.

(2.) The more public and formal act of judgment, when the whole world will be assembled at the bar of Christ, Mt 25. The decision of that day will not change or reverse the former; but the trial will be of such a nature as to bring out all the deeds done on earth, and the sentence which will be pronounced will be in view of the universe, and will fix the everlasting doom. Then the body will have been raised; the affairs of the world will be wound up; the elect will all be gathered in, and the state of retribution will commence, to continue for ever. The main thought of the apostle here may be, that after death will commence a state of retribution which can never change. Hence there was a propriety that Christ

should die but once. In that future world he would not die to make atonement, for there all will be fixed and final. If men, therefore, neglect to avail themselves of the benefits of the atonement here, the opportunity will be lost for ever. In that changeless state, which constitutes the eternal judgment, no sacrifice will be again offered for sin; there will be no opportunity to embrace that Saviour who was rejected here on earth.

28 so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

So Christ was once offered. As men are to die but once, and as all beyond the grave is fixed by the judgment, so that his death there would make no change in the destiny, there was a propriety that he should die but once for sin. The argument is, there is one probation only, and therefore there was need of but one sacrifice, or of his dying but once. If death were to occur frequently in the existence of each individual, and if each intermediate period were a state of probation, then there might be a propriety that an atonement should be made with reference to each state. Or if beyond the grave there were a state of probation still, then also there might be a propriety that an atoning sacrifice should be offered there. But since neither of these things is true, there was a fitness that the great Victim should die but once. To bear the sins of many.

To suffer and die on account of their sins. Isa 53:6, Isa 53:11; Gal 3:13. The phrase does not mean

(1.) that Christ was a sinner--for that was in no sense true. See Heb 7:26. Nor

(2.) that he literally bore the penalty due to transgression--for that is equally untrue. The penalty of the law for sin is all which the law when executed inflicts on the offender for his transgress loud and includes, in fact, remorse of conscience, overwhelming despair, and eternal punishment. But Christ

did not suffer for ever, nor did he experience remorse of conscience, nor did he endure utter despair. Nor

(3.) does it mean that he was literally punished for our sins. Punishment pertains only to the guilty. An innocent being may suffer for what another does, but there is no propriety in saying that he is punished for it. A father suffers much from the misconduct of a son, but we do not say that he is punished for it; a child suffers much from the intemperance of a parent, but no one would say that it was a punishment on the child. Men always connect the idea of criminality with punishment; and when we say that a man is punished, we suppose at once that there is guilt. The phrase here means simply, that Christ endured sufferings in his own person which, if they had been inflicted on us, would have been the proper punishment of sin. He who was innocent interposed, and received on himself what was descending to meet us, and consented to be treated as he would have deserved if he had been a sinner. Thus he bore what was due to us; and this in Scripture phrase is what is meant by bearing our iniquities. Isa 53:4.

And unto them that look for him. To his people. It is one of the characteristics of Christians that they look for the return of their Lord, 1Timm 2:13, 2Pet 3:12; comp. 1Thes 1:10. They fully believe that he will come. They earnestly desire that he will come, 2Ti 4:8, Rev 22:20. They are waiting for his appearing, 1Thes 1:10. He left the world and ascended to heaven, but he will again return to the earth, and his people are looking for that time as the period when they shall be raised up from their graves; when they shall be publicly acknowledged to be his, and when they shall be admitted to heaven. Jn 14:3.

Shall he appear the second time. He first appeared as the Man of sorrows to make atonement for sin. His second appearance will be as the Lord of his people, and the Judge of the quick and the dead, Mt 25:31; see Acts 1:11. The apostle does not say when this would be, nor is any intimation given in the

Scriptures when it will occur. It is, on the contrary, everywhere declared that this is concealed from men, (Acts 1:7, Mt 24:36;) and all that is known respecting the time is, that it will be suddenly, and at an unexpected moment, Mt 24:42,44,50.

Without sin. That is, when he comes again he will not make himself a sin-offering; or will not come in order to make atonement for sin. It is not implied that when he came the first time he was in any sense a sinner, but that he came then with reference to sin, or that the main object of his incarnation was to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" When he comes the second time, it will be with reference to another object.

Unto salvation. That is, to receive his friends and followers to eternal salvation. He will come to save them from all their sins and temptation; to raise them from their graves; to place them at his right hand in glory, and to confirm them in the everlasting inheritance which he has promised to all who truly love him, and who wait for his appearing.

In view of this anticipated return of the Redeemer, we may remark---

(1.) There is a propriety that the Lord Jesus should thus return. He came once to be humbled, despised, and put to death; and there is a fitness that he should come to be honoured in his own world.

(2.) Every person on earth is interested in the fact that he will return, for "every eye shall see him," Rev 1:7. All who are now in their graves, and all who now live, and all who will hereafter live, will behold the Redeemer in his glory.

(3.) It will not be merely to gaze upon him, and to admire his magnificence that they will see him. It will be for greater and more momentous purposes--with reference to an eternal doom.

(4.) The great mass of men are not prepared to meet him. They do not believe that he will return; they do not desire that he should appear; they are not ready for the solemn interview which they will have with him. His appearing now would overwhelm them with surprise and horror. There is nothing in the future which they less expect and desire than the second coming of the Son of God; and in the present state of the world his appearance would produce almost universal consternation and despair. It would be like the coming of the flood of waters on the old world; like the sheets of fire on the cities of the plain, or as death now comes to the great mass of those who die.

(5.) Christians are prepared for his coming. They believe in it; they desire it; they are expecting it. In this they are distinguished from all the world besides; and they would be ready to hail his coming as that of a friend, and to rejoice in his appearance as that of their Saviour.

(6.) Let us, then, live in habitual preparation for his advent. To each one of us he will come soon; to all he will come suddenly. Whether he come to remove us by death, or whether in the clouds of heaven to judge the world, the period is not far distant when we shall see him. Yes, our eyes shall behold the Son of God in his glory! That which we have long desired--a sight of our Saviour, who died for us--shall soon, very soon, be granted unto us. No Christian begins a week or a day in which there is not a possibility that before its close he may have seen the Son of God in his glory; none lies down upon his bed at night who may not, when the morning dawns upon this world, be gazing with infinite delight on the glories of the great Redeemer in the heavens.

Hebrews-10

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.

For the law, having a shadow. That is, the whole of the Mosaic economy was a shadow; for so the word law is often used. The word shadow here refers to a rough outline of anything, a mere sketch, such as a carpenter draws with a piece of chalk, or such as an artist delineates when he is about to make a picture. He sketches an outline of the object which he designs to draw, which has some resemblance to it, but is not "the very image;" for it is not yet complete. The words rendered "the very image" refer to a painting or statue which is finished, where every part is an exact copy of the original. The "good things to come" here refer to the future blessings which would be conferred on man by the gospel. The idea is, that under the ancient sacrifices there was an imperfect representation; a dim outline of the blessings which the gospel would impart to men. They were a typical representation; they were not such that it could be pretended that they would answer the purpose of the things themselves Which they were to represent, and would make those who offered them perfect. Such a rude outline --such a mere sketch, or imperfect delineation--could no more answer the purpose of saving the soul than the rough sketch which an architect makes would answer the purpose of a house, or than the first outline which a painter draws would answer the purpose of a perfect and finished portrait. All that could be done by either would be to convey some distant and obscure idea of what the house or the picture might be, and this was all that was done by the law of Moses. Can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually. The sacrifices here particularly referred to were those which were offered on the great day of atonement. These were regarded as the most sacred and efficacious of all; and yet the apostle says

that the very fact that they were offered every year showed that there must be some deficiency about them, or they would have ceased to be offered. Make the comers there unto perfect. They could not free them from the stains of guilt; they could not give ease to a troubled conscience; there was in them no efficacy by which sin could be put away. Comp. Heb 7:11, 9:9.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Marg. "Or they would have." The sense is the same. The idea is, that the very fact that they were repeated showed that there was some deficiency in them as to the matter of cleansing the soul from sin. If they had answered all the purposes of a sacrifice in putting away guilt, there would have been no need of repeating them in this manner. They were, in this respect, like medicine. If that which is given to a patient heals him, there is no need of repeating it; but if it is repeated often it shows that there was some deficiency in it, and if taken periodically through a man's life, and the disease should still remain, it would show that it was not sufficient to effect his cure. So it was with the offerings made by the Jews. They were offered every year, and indeed every day, and still the disease of sin remained. The conscience was not satisfied; and the guilty felt that it was necessary that the sacrifice should be repeated again and again.

Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. That is, if their sacrifices had so availed as to remove their past sins, and to procure forgiveness, they would have had no more trouble of conscience on account of them. They would not have felt that it was necessary to make these sacrifices over and over again in order to find peace. When a man has full evidence that an atonement has been-made which will meet all the demands of the law, and which secures the remission of sin, he feels that it is enough. It is all that the case demands, and his conscience may have peace. But when he does not feel this, or has not evidence that his sins are all forgiven, those sins will rise to remembrance,

and he will be alarmed. He may be punished for them after all. Thence it follows, that if a man wants peace he should have good evidence that his sins are forgiven through the blood of the atonement. No temporary expedient; no attempt to cover them up; no effort to forget them will answer the purpose. They must be blotted out if he will have peace--and that can be only through a perfect sacrifice. By the use of the word rendered "conscience" here, it is not meant that he who was pardoned would have no consciousness that he was a sinner, or that he would forget it, but that he would have no trouble of conscience; he would have no apprehension of future wrath. The pardon of sin does not cause it to cease to be remembered. He who is forgiven may have a deeper conviction of its evil than he had ever had before. But he will not be troubled or distressed by it as if it were to expose him to the wrath of God. The remembrance of it will humble him; it will serve to exalt his conceptions of the mercy of God and the glory of the atonement, but it will no longer overwhelm the mind with the dread of hell. This effect, the apostle says, was not produced on the minds of those who offered sacrifices every year. The very fact that they did it showed that the conscience was not at peace.

3 But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.

4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should. There was an essential defect in them. 1. They were not of the same nature with us who sinned. 2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts offered to the justice and government of God. They were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable. Much less were they of the same nature that was offended; and nothing less than the nature that was offended could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for the offence. 3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must

voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. The reference here is to the sacrifices which were made on the great day of the atonement, for on that day the blood of bulls and of goats alone was offered. Heb 9:7. Paul here means to say, doubtless, that it was not possible that the blood of those animals should make a complete expiation so as to purify the conscience, and so as to save the sinner from deserved wrath. According to the Divine arrangement, expiation was made by those sacrifices for offences of various kinds against the ritual law of Moses, and pardon for such offences was thus obtained. But the meaning here is, that there was no efficacy in the blood of a mere animal to wash away a moral offence. It could not repair the law; it could not do anything to maintain the justice of God; it had no efficacy to make the heart pure. The mere shedding of the blood of an animal never could make the soul pure. This the apostle states as a truth which must be admitted at once as indisputable; and yet it is probable that many of the Jews had imbibed the opinion that there was such efficacy in blood shed according to the Divine direction, as to remove all stains of guilt from the soul. Heb 9:9,10.

5 Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice
and offering thou wouldest not,
but a body hast thou prepared me:

Wherefore. This word shows that the apostle means to sustain what he had said by a reference to the Old Testament itself. Nothing could be more opposite to the prevailing Jewish opinions about the efficacy of sacrifice than what he had just said. It was, therefore, of the highest importance to defend the position which he had laid down by authority which they would not presume to call in question, and he therefore makes his appeal to their own Scriptures.

When he cometh into the world. When the Messiah came, for the passage evidently referred to him. The Greek is,

"Wherefore coming into the world, he saith." It has been made a question when this is to be understood as spoken--whether when he was born, or when he entered on the work of his ministry. Grotius understands it of the latter. But it is not material to a proper understanding of the passage to determine this. The simple idea is, that since it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, Christ coming into the world made arrangements for a better sacrifice.

He saith. That is, this is the language denoted by his great undertaking; this is what his coming to make an atonement implies. We are not to suppose that Christ formally used these words on any occasion--for we have no record that he did--but this language is that which appropriately expresses the nature of his work. Perhaps also the apostle means to say, that it was originally employed in the Psalm from which it is quoted in reference to him, or was indited by him with reference to his future advent.

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not. This is quoted from Ps 40:6,8. There has been much perplexity felt by expositors in reference to this quotation; and, after all which has been written, it is not entirely removed. The difficulty relates to these points.

(1.) To the question whether the Psalm originally had any reference to the Messiah. The Psalm appears to have pertained merely to David, and it would probably occur to no one on reading it to suppose that it referred to the Messiah, unless it had been so applied by the apostle in this place.

(2.) There are many parts of the Psalm, it has been said, which cannot, without a very forced interpretation, be applied to Christ. See Psl. 40:2,12,14-16.

(3.) The argument of the apostle in the expression, "a body hast thou prepared me," seems to be based on a false translation of

the principles he has done it.--It is not the design of these Notes to go rate an extended examination of questions of this nature. Such examination must be sought in more extended commentaries, and in treatises expressly relating to points of this kind. On the design of Ps 40, and its applicability to the Messiah, the reader may consult Prof. Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus xx., and Kuinoel, in loc. After the most attentive examination which I can give of the Psalm, it seems to me probable that it is one of the Psalms which had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah, and that the apostle has quoted it just as it was meant to be understood by the Holy Spirit, as applicable to him. The reasons for this opinion are briefly these.

(1.) There are such Psalms, as is admitted by all. The Messiah was the hope of the Jewish people; he was made the subject of their most sublime prophecies; and nothing was more natural than that he should be the subject of the songs of their sacred bards. By the spirit of inspiration they saw him in the distant future in the various circumstances in which he would be placed, and they dwelt with delight upon the vision. Comp. Intro. to Isaiah, & 7. iii.

(2.) The fact that it is here applied to the Messiah is a strong circumstance to demonstrate that it had an original applicability to him. This proof is of two kinds. First, that it is so applied by an inspired apostle, which with all who admit his inspiration seems decisive of the question. Second, the fact that he so applied it shows that this was an ancient and admitted interpretation. The apostle was writing to those who had been Jews, and whom he was desirous to convince of the truth of what he was alleging in regard to the nature of the Hebrew sacrifices. For this purpose it was necessary to appeal to the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but it cannot be supposed that he would adduce a passage for proof whose relevancy would not be admitted. The presumption is that the passage was in fact commonly applied as here.

(3.) The whole of the Psalm may be referred to the Messiah without anything forced or unnatural. The Psalm throughout seems to be made up of expressions used by a suffering person, who had indeed been delivered from some evils, but who was expecting many more. The principal difficulties in the way of such an interpretation, relate to the following points.

(a.) In Psl. 40:2, the speaker in the Psalm says, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," and on the ground of this he gives thanks to God. But there is no real difficulty in supposing that this may refer to the Messiah. His enemies often potted against his life; laid snares for him, and endeavoured to destroy him; and it may be that he refers to some deliverance from such machinations. If it is objected to this that it is spoken of as having been uttered "when he came into the world," it may be replied, that that phrase does not necessarily refer to the time of his birth, but that he uttered this sentiment some time during the period of his incarnation. "He, coming into the world for the purpose of redemption, made use of this language." In a similar manner we would say of Lafayette, that "he, coming to the United States to aid in the cause of liberty, suffered a wound in battle." That is, during the period in which he was engaged in. this cause, he suffered in this manner.

(b.) The next objection or difficulty relates to the application of Psl. 40:12 to the Messiah, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." To meet this, some have suggested that he refers to the sins of men which he took upon himself, and which he here speaks of as his own. But it is not true that the Lord Jesus so took upon himself the sins of others that they could be called his. They were not his, for he was in every sense" holy, harmless, and undefiled." The true solution of this difficulty probably is, that the word rendered iniquity means, calamity, misfortune, trouble. See Ps 31:10, 1Sam 28:10, 2Kgs 7:9, Ps 38:6; comp. Ps 49:6. The proper idea in the word is that of turning away,

curving, making crooked; and it is thus applied to anything which is perverted or turned from the right way; as when one is turned from the path of rectitude: or commits sin; when one is turned from the way of prosperity or happiness, or is exposed to calamity. This seems to be the idea demanded by the scope of the Psalm, for it is not a penitential Psalm, in which the speaker is recounting his sins, but one in which he is enumerating his sorrows; praising God in the first part of the Psalm for some deliverance already experienced, and supplicating his interposition in view of calamities that he saw to be corning upon him. This interpretation also seems to be demanded in Ps 49:12 of the Psalm by the parallelism. In the former part of the verse, the word to which "iniquity" corresponds is not sin, but evil, i.e. calamity.

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about; Mine iniquities [calamities] hard taken hold upon me."

If the word, therefore, be used here as it often is, and as the scope of the Psalm and the connexion seem to demand, there is no solid objection against applying this verse to the Messiah.

(c.) A third objection to this application of the Psalm to the Messiah is, that it cannot be supposed that he would utter such imprecations on his enemies as are found in Psl. 40:14,15: "Let them be ashamed and confounded; let them be driven backward; let them be desolate." To this it may be replied, that such imprecations are as proper in the mouth of the Messiah as of David; but particularly, it may be said also, that they are improper in the mouth of neither. Both David and the Messiah did, in fact, utter denunciations against the enemies of piety and of God. God does the same thing in his word and by his Providence. There is no evidence of any malignant feeling in this; nor is it inconsistent with the highest benevolence. The lawgiver who says that the murderer shall die, may have a heart full of benevolence; the judge who sentences him to death, may do it with eyes filled with tears. The objections, then, are not of such a nature that it is improper to regard this Psalm: as wholly applicable to the Messiah.

(4.) The Psalm cannot be applied with propriety to David, nor do we know of any one to whom it can be but to the Messiah. When was it true of David that he said that he "had come to do the will of God in view of the fact that God did not require sacrifice and offerings? In what "volume of a book" was it written of him before his birth, that he "delighted to do the will of God?" When was it true, that he had "preached righteousness in the great congregation?" These expressions are such as can be applied properly only to the Messiah, as Paul does here; and taking all these circumstances together, it will probably be regarded as the most proper interpretation to refer the whole Psalm at once to the Redeemer, and to suppose that Paul has used it in strict accordance with its original design. The other difficulties referred to will be considered in the exposition of the passage. The difference between sacrifice and offering is, that the former refers to bloody sacrifices; the latter, to any oblation made to God--as a thank-offering; an offering of flour, oil, etc. Isa 1:11. When it is said, "Sacrifice and, offering thou wouldest not," the meaning is not that such oblations were in no sense acceptable to God--for as his appointment, and when offered with a sincere heart, they doubtless were; but that they were not as acceptable to him as obedience, and especially as the expression is used here, that they could not avail to secure the forgiveness of sins. They were not in their own nature such as was demanded to make an expiation for sin, and hence a body was prepared for the Messiah by which a more perfect sacrifice could be made. The sentiment here expressed occurs more than once in the Old Testament. Thus, 1Sam 15:22, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Hoss 6:6, "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." Comp. Ps 51:16,17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." This was an indisputable principle of the Old Testament, though it was much obscured and forgotten in the common estimation among the Jews. In accordance with this principle, the Messiah came to render obedience of the highest order,

even to such all extent that he was willing to lay down his own life.

But a body hast thou prepared me. This is one of the passages which has caused a difficulty in understanding this quotation from the Psalm. The difficulty is, that it differs from the Hebrew, and that the apostle builds an argument upon it. It is not unusual indeed in the New Testament, to make use of the language of the Septuagint, even where it varies somewhat from the Hebrew; and where no argument is based on such a passage, there can be no difficulty in such a usage, since it is not uncommon to make use of the language of others to express our own thoughts. But the apostle does not appear to have made such a use of the passage here, but to have applied it in the way of argument. The argument, indeed, does not rest wholly, perhaps not principally, on the fact that a "body had been prepared" for the Messiah; but still this was evidently, in the view of the apostle, an important consideration, and this is the passage on which the proof of this is based. The Hebrew (Ps 40:6) is, "Mine ears hast thou opened;" or, as it is in the margin, "digged." The idea there is, that the ear had been, as it were, excavated, or dug out, so as to be made to hear distinctly; that is, certain truths had been clearly revealed to the speaker; or perhaps it may mean that he had been made "readily and attentively obedient" Stuart. Comp. Is 1:5, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." In the Psalm, the proper connexion would seem to be, that the speaker had been made obedient, or had been so led that he was disposed to do the will of God. This may be expressed by the fact that the ear had been opened so as to be quick to hear, since an indisposition to obey is often expressed by the fact that the ears are stopped. There is manifestly no allusion here, as has been sometimes supposed, to the custom of boring through the ear of a servant with an awl, as a sign that he was willing to remain and serve his master, Ex 21:6; De 15:17. In that ease, the outer circle, or rim of the ear, was bored through with an awl; here the idea is that of hollowing out, digging, or excavating --a

process to make the passage clear, not to pierce the outward ear. The Hebrew in the Psalm the Septuagint translates, "a body hast thou prepared me," and this rendering has been adopted by the apostle, various ways have been resorted to of explaining the fact that the translators of the Septuagint rendered it in this manner, none of which are entirely free from difficulty. Some critics, as Cappell, Ernesti, and others, have endeavoured to show that it is probable that the Septuagint reading in Ps 40:6, was-- ωτιονκατηρτισωμοι "my ear thou hast prepared;" that is, for obedience. But of this there is no proof, and indeed it is evident that the apostle quoted it as if it were σωμα, body. See Heb 5:10. It is probably altogether impossible now to explain the reason why the translators of the Septuagint rendered the phrase as they did; and this remark may be extended to many other places of their version. It is to be admitted here, beyond all doubt, whatever consequences may follow,

(1.) that their version does not accord with the Hebrew;

(2.) that the apostle has quoted their version as it stood, without attempting to correct it;

(3.) that his use of the passage is designed, to some extent at least, as proof of what he was demonstrating. The leading idea, the important and essential point in the argument, is, indeed, not that a body was prepared, but that He came to do the will of God; but still it is clear that the apostle meant to lay some stress on the fact that a body had been prepared for the Redeemer. Sacrifice and offering, by the bodies of lambs and goats, were not what was required; but, instead of that, the Messiah came to do the will of God by offering a more perfect sacrifice, and in accomplishing that it was necessary that he should be endowed with a body. But on what principle the apostle has quoted a passage to prove this which differs from the Hebrew, I confess I cannot see, nor do any of the explanations offered commend themselves as satisfactory. The

only circumstances which seem to furnish any relief to the difficulty are these two--

(1.) that the main point in the argument of the apostle was not that "a body had been prepared," but that the Messiah came to do the "will of God," and that the preparation of a body for that was rather an incidental circumstance; and

(2) that the translation by the Septuagint was not a material departure from the scope of the whole Hebrew passage. The main thought--that of doing the will of God in the place of offering sacrifice--was still retained; the opening of the ears, i.e., rendering the person attentive and disposed to obey, and the preparing of a body in order to obedience, were not circumstances so unlike as to make it necessary for the apostle to re-translate the whole passage in order to the main end which he had in view. Still, I admit that these considerations do not seem to me to be wholly satisfactory. Those who are disposed to examine the various opinions which have been entertained of this passage may find them in Kuinoel, in loc., Rosenmuller, Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus xx., and Kennicott on Ps 40:7. Kennicott supposes that there has been a change in the Hebrew text, and that instead of the present reading oznaim, ears, the reading was oz, guph--then a body; and that these words became united by the error of transcribers, and by a slight change then became as the present copies of the Hebrew text stands. This conjecture is ingenious; and if it were ever allowable to follow a mere conjecture, I should be disposed to do it here. But there is no authority from mss. for any change, nor do any of the old versions justify it, or agree with this, except the Arabic.

6 in burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. This is not quoted literally from the Psalm, but the sense is retained. The reading there is, "burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required." The quotation by the apostle is taken from the Septuagint, with the change of a single word,

which does not materially affect the sense--the word ουκευδοκησας ouk eudokesas-" thou hast no pleasure," instead of ουκηθελησας ouk ethelesas "thou dost not will." The idea is, that God had no pleasure in them as compared with obedience. He preferred the latter, and they could not be made to come in the place of it, or to answer the same purpose. When they were performed with a pure heart, he was doubtless pleased with the offering. As used here in reference to the Messiah, the meaning is, that they would not be what was required of him. Such offerings would not answer the end for which he was sent into the world, for that end was to be accomplished only by his being "obedient unto death."

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

Then said I. I the Messiah. Paul applies this directly to Christ, showing that he regarded the passage in the Psalm as referring to him as the speaker. Lo, I come. Come into the world, Psl 40:6. It is not easy to see how this could be applied to David in any circumstance of his life. There was no situation in which he could say that, since sacrifices and offerings were not what was demanded, he came to do the will of God in the place or stead of them. The time here referred to by the word "then" is, when it was manifest that sacrifices and offerings for sin would not answer all the purposes desirable, or when in view of that fact the purpose of the Redeemer is conceived as formed to enter upon a work which would effect what they could not.

In the volume of the book it is written of me. The word here rendered "volume"--κεφαλις-- means, properly, a little head; and then a knob, and here refers, doubtless, to the head or knob of the rod on which the Hebrew manuscripts were rolled. Books were usually so written as to be rolled up; and when they were read they were unrolled at one end of the manuscript, and rolled up at the other as fast as they were read. Lk 4:17. The rods on which they were rolled had small heads, either for the purpose of holding them or for ornament; and hence the name head came metaphorically to be given to the roll or volume. But what volume is here intended? And where is that

written which is here referred to if David was the author of the Psalm from which this is quoted, (Ps 40) then the book or volume which was then in existence must have been principally, if not entirely, the five books of Moses, and perhaps the books of Job, Joshua, and Judges, with probably a few of the Psalms. It is most natural to understand this of the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses, as the word "volume," at that time, would undoubtedly have most naturally suggested that. But plainly, this could not refer to David himself, for in what part of the law of Moses, or in any of the volumes then extant, can a reference of this kind be found to David? There is no promise, no intimation that he would come "to do the will of God" with a view to effect that which could not be done by the sacrifices prescribed by the Jewish law. The reference of the language, therefore, must be to the Messiah--to some place where it is represented that he would come to effect by his obedience what could not be done by the sacrifices and offerings under the law. But still, in the books of Moses, this language is not literally found, and the meaning must be, that this was the language which was there implied respecting the Messiah; or this was the substance of the description given of him, that he would come to take the place of those sacrifices, and by his obedience unto death would accomplish what they could not do. They had a reference to him; and it was contemplated, in their appointment, that their inefficiency would be such that there should be felt a necessity for a higher sacrifice, and when he should come they would all be done away. The whole language of the institution of sacrifices, and of the Mosaic economy, was, that a Saviour would hereafter come to do the will of God in making an atonement for the sin of the world. That there are places in the books of Moses which refer to the Saviour is expressly affirmed by Christ himself, (Jn 5:46) 46,) and by the apostles, (comp. Acts 26:23,) and that the general spirit of the institutions of Moses had reference to him is abundantly demonstrated in this epistle. The meaning here is, "I come to do thy will in making an atonement, for no other offering would expiate sin. That I would do this is the language

of the Scriptures which predict my coming, and of the whole spirit and design of the ancient dispensation"

To do thy will, 0 God. This expresses the amount of all that the Redeemer came to do. He came to do the will of God

(1) by perfect obedience to his law, and

(2) by making an atonement for sin--becoming "obedient unto death," Php 2:8. The latter is the principal thought here, for the apostle is showing that sacrifice and offering such as were made under the law would not put away sin, and that Christ came, in contradistinction from them, to make a sacrifice that would be efficacious. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is held out as being the "will of God" that such an atonement should be made. There was salvation in no other way, nor was it possible that the race should be saved unless the Redeemer drank that cup of bitter sorrows. See Mt 26:39. We are not to suppose, however, that it was by mere arbitrary will that those sufferings were demanded. There were good reasons for all that the Saviour was to endure, though those reasons are not all made known to us.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein;* which are offered by the law;

Above, when he said. That is, the Messiah. The word "above" refers here to the former part of he quotation. That is, "having in the former part of what was quoted said that God did not require sacrifices, in the latter part he says that he came to do the will of God in the place of them." Sacrifice and offering and burnt, offerings, etc. These words are not all used in the Psalm from which the apostle quotes, but the idea is, that the specification there included all kinds of offerings. The apostle dwells upon it because it was important to show that the same remark applied to all the sacrifices which could be offered by man. When the Redeemer made the observation about the inefficacy of sacrifices, he meant that there was none of them which would be sufficient to take away sin.

9 then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Then said he. In another part of the passage quoted. When he had said that no offering which man could make would avail, then he said that he would come himself. He taketh away the first. The word "first" here refers to sacrifices and offerings, he takes them away; that is, he shows that they are of no value in removing sin. He states their inefficacy, and declares his purpose to abolish them. That he may establish the second. To wit, the doing of the will of God. The two stand in contrast with each other; and he shows the inefficacy of the former, in order that the necessity for his coming to do the will of God may be fully seen. If they had been efficacious, there would have been no need of his coming to make an atonement.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all.*

By the which will. That is, by his obeying God in the manner specified. It is in virtue of his obedience that we are sanctified. The apostle immediately specifies what he means, and furnishes the key to his whole argument, when he says that it was through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. It was not merely his doing the will of God in general, but it was the specific thing of offering his body in the place of the Jewish sacrifices. Comp. Php 2:8. Whatever part his personal obedience had in our salvation, yet the particular thing here specified is, that it was his doing the will of God by offering himself as a sacrifice for sin that was the means of our sanctification. We are sanctified. We are made holy. The word here is not confined to the specific work which is commonly called sanctification--or the process of making the soul holy after it is renewed, but it includes everything by which we are made holy in the sight of God. It embraces, therefore, justification and regeneration as well as what is commonly known as sanctification. The idea is, that whatever there is in our hearts which is holy, or whatever influences are brought to bear upon us to make us holy, is all to be traced to the fact that the Redeemer became obedient unto death, and was willing to offer his body as a sacrifice for sin. Through the offering of the

body. As a sacrifice. A body just adapted to such a purpose had been prepared for him, Heb 10:5. It was perfectly holy; it was so organized as to be keenly sensitive to suffering; it was the dwelling-place of the incarnate Deity. Once for all. In the sense that it is not to be offered again. Heb 9:28. This idea is repeated here because it was very important to be clearly understood, in order to show the contrast between the offering made by Christ, and those made under the law. The object of the apostle is to exalt the sacrifice made by him above those made by the Jewish high priests. This he does by showing that such was the efficacy of the atonement made by him that it did not need to be repeated; the sacrifices made by them, however, were to be renewed every year.

11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering
oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

And every Priest standeth daily ministering. That is, this is done every day. It does not mean literally that every priest was daily concerned in offering sacrifices, for they took turns according to their courses, (Lk 1:5,) but that this was done each day, and that every priest was to take his regular place in doing it, Nu 28:3. The object of the apostle is to prove, that under the Jewish economy sacrifices were repeated constantly, showing their imperfection, but that under the Christian economy the great Sacrifice had been offered once, which was sufficient for all. And offering oftentimes the same sacrifices. The same sacrifices were offered morning and evening every day.

12 but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever,
sat down on the right hand of God;

But this Man. The Lord Jesus. The word man is not in the original here. The Greek is literally "but this;" to wit, this priest. The apostle does not state here whether he was a man, or a being of a higher order, he merely mentions him as a priest, in contradistinction from the Jewish priests. After he had offered one sacrifice for sins. By dying on the cross. This he did but once; this could not be repeated; and need not be repeated, for it was sufficient for the sins of the world. For ever sat down. That is, he sat down then to return no more for the

purpose of offering sacrifice for sin. He will no more submit himself to scenes of suffering and death to expiate human guilt.

13 from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

From henceforth expecting. Or, waiting. He waits there until this shall be accomplished according to the promise made to him that all things shall be subdued under him. 1Cor 15:25 and following. Till his enemies. There is an allusion here to Ps 110:1, where it is said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The enemies of the Redeemer are Satan, the wicked of the earth, and all the evil passions of the heart. The idea is, that all things are yet to be made subject to his will --either by a cheerful and cordial submission to his authority, or by being crushed beneath his power. The Redeemer, having performed his great work of redemption by giving himself as a sacrifice on the cross, is represented now as calmly waiting until this glorious triumph is achieved, and this promise is fulfilled. We are not to suppose that he is inactive, or that he takes no share in the agency by which this is to be done, but the meaning is, that he looks to the certain fulfilment of the promise. His footstool. That is, they shall be thoroughly and completely subdued. The same idea is expressed in 1Cor 15:25, by saying that all his enemies shall be put under his feet. The language arose from the custom of conquerors in putting their feet on the necks of their enemies, as a symbol of subjection. See Josh 10:24; Isa 26:5, Isa 26:6.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

For by one offering. By offering himself once on the cross. The Jewish priest offered his sacrifices often, and still they did not avail to put away sin; the Saviour made one sacrifice, and it was sufficient for the sins of the world.

He hath perfected for ever, He hath laid the foundation of the eternal perfection. The offering is of such a character that it secures their final freedom from sin, and wilt make them for ever holy. It cannot mean that those for whom he died are made

at once perfectly holy, for that is not true; but the idea is, that the offering was complete, and did not need to be repeated; and that it was of such a nature as entirely to remove the penalty due to sin, and to lay the foundation for their final eternal holiness. The offerings made under the Jewish law were so defective that there was a necessity for repeating them every day; the offering made by the Saviour was so perfect that it needed not to be repeated, and that it secured the complete and final salvation of those who avail themselves of it.

Them that are sanctified. Those who are made holy by that offering. It does not mean that they are as yet wholly sanctified, but that they have been brought under the influence of that gospel which sanctifies and saves. Heb 2:11, 9:13. The doctrine taught in this verse is, that all those who are, in any measure; sanctified, will be perfected for ever. It is not a temporary work which has been begun in their souls, but one which is designed to be carried forward to perfection. In the atonement made by the Redeemer there is the foundation laid for their eternal perfection, and it was with reference to that, that it was offered. Respecting this work and the consequences of it, we may remark, that there is

(1.) perfection in its nature, it being of such a character that it needs not to be repeated;

(2.) there is perfection in regard to the pardon of sin--all past sins being forgiven to those who embrace it, and being for ever forgiven; and

(3.) there is to be absolute perfection, for them for ever. They will be made perfect at some future period, and when that shall take place it will be to continue for ever and ever.

15 *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he
had said before,
16 This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days,
saith the Lord;

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I
write them;
17 and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.
18 Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for
sin.

Now where remission of these is. Remission or forgiveness of sins; that is, of the sins mentioned in the previous verse. There is no more offering for sin. If those sins are wholly blotted out, there is no more need of sacrifice to atone for them, any more than there is need to pay a debt again which has been once paid. The idea of Paul is, that in the Jewish dispensation there was a constant repeating of the remembrance of sins by the sacrifices which were offered, but that in reference to the dispensation under the Messiah sin would be entirely cancelled. There would be one great and all-sufficient sacrifice; and when there was faith in that offering, sin would be absolutely forgiven. If that was the case, there would be no occasion for any further sacrifice for it, and the offering need not be repeated. This circumstance, on which the apostle insists so much, made a very important difference between the new covenant and the old. In the one, sacrifices were offered every day; in the other, the sacrifice once made was final and complete: in the one case, there was no such forgiveness, but that the offender was constantly reminded of his sins by the necessity of the repetition of sacrifice; in the other, the pardon was so complete that all dread of wrath was taken away, and the sinner might look up to God as calmly and joyfully as if he had never been guilty of transgression.

Let Us Draw Near and Hold Fast

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by
the blood of Jesus,

Having therefore, brethren. The apostle, in this verse, enters on the hortatory part of his epistle, which continues to the end of it. He had gone into an extensive examination of the Jewish and Christian systems; he had compared the Founders of the two--Moses and the Son of God--and shown how far superior

the latter was to the former; he had compared the Christian great High Priest with the Jewish high priest, and shown his superiority; he had compared the sacrifices under the two dispensations, and showed that in all respects the Christian sacrifice was superior to the Jewish --that it was an offering that cleansed from sin; that it was sufficient when once offered, without being repeated, while the Jewish offerings were only typical, and were unable to put away sin; and he had shown that the great High Priest of the Christian profession had opened a way to the mercy-seat in heaven, and was himself now seated there; and having shown this, he now exhorts Christians to avail themselves fully of all their advantages, and to enjoy, to the widest extent, all the privileges now conferred on them. One of the first of these benefits was, that they had now free access to the mercy-seat.

Boldness to enter into the holiest. Marg. liberty. The word rendered boldness-- παρρησιαν-- properly means, boldness of speech, or freedom, where one speaks all that he thinks, Acts 4:13; and then it means boldness in general, license, authority, pardon. Here the idea is, that before Christ died and entered into heaven, there was no such access to the throne of grace as man needed. Man had no offering which he could bring that would make him acceptable to God. But now the way was open. Access was free for all, and all might come with the utmost freedom. The word holiest here is taken from the holy of holies in the temple, Heb 9:3, and is there applied to heaven, of which that was the emblem. The entrance into the most holy place was forbidden to all but the high priest; but now access to the real "holy of holies" was granted to all, in the name of the great High Priest of the Christian profession.

By the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is the means by which this access to heaven is procured. The Jewish high priest entered the holy of holies with the blood of bullocks and of rams, Heb 9:7; but the Saviour offered his own blood, and that became the means by which we may have access to God.

20 by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us,
through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

By a new and living way. By a new method or manner. It was a mode of access that was till then unknown. No doubt many were saved before the Redeemer came, but the method by which they approached God was imperfect and difficult. The word which is here rendered new --προσφατον-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means slain, or killed thereto; i.e. newly killed, just dead; and then fresh, recent. Passow. It does not so much convey the idea that it is new in the sense that it had never existed before, as new in the sense that it is recent, or fresh. It was a way which was recently disclosed, and which had an the freshness of novelty. It is called a "living way," because it is a method that imparts life, or because it leads to life and happiness. Doddridge renders it "ever living way," and supposes, in accordance with the opinion of Dr. Owen, that the allusion is to the fact that under the old dispensation the blood was to be offered as soon,as it was shed, and that it could not be offered when it was cold and coagulated. The way by Christ was, however, always open. His blood was, as it were, always warm, and as if it had been recently shed. This interpretation seems to derive some support from the word which is rendered "new." See above. The word living, also, has often the sense of perennial, or perpetual, as when applied to a fountain always running, in opposition to a pool that dries up, Jn 4:10, and the new way to heaven may be called living in all these respects. It is a way that conducts to life. It is ever-living--as if the blood which was shed always retained the freshness of that which is flowing from tho vein. And it is perpetual and constant---like a fountain that always flows--for it is by a sacrifice whose power is perpetual and unchanging.

Which he hath consecrated for us. Marg. "or, new made." The word here used means, properly, to renew, and then to initiate, to consecrate, to sanction. The idea is, that he has dedicated this way for our use; as if a temple or house were set apart for our service. It is a path consecrated by him for the service and

salvation of man; a way of access to the eternal sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service alone.

Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. The Jewish high priest entered into the most holy place through the veil that divided the holy from the most holy place. That entrance was made by his drawing the veil aside, and thus the interior sanctuary was laid open. But there has been much difficulty felt in regard to the sense of the expression here used. The plain meaning of the expression is, that the way to heaven was opened by means or through the veil that is, of his body or through the medium of the flesh of Jesus; sacrificed for sin, as the most holy place in the temple was entered by means or through the medium of the veil. We are not to suppose, however, that the apostle meant to say there was, in all respects, a resemblance between the veil and the flesh of Jesus, nor that the veil was in any manner typical of his body, but there was a resemblance in the respect under considerations---to wit, in the fact that the holy place was rendered accessible by withdrawing the veil, and that heaven was rendered accessible through the slain body of Jesus. The idea is, that there is by means both of the veil of the temple, and of the body of Jesus, a medium of access to God. God dwelt in the most holy place in the temple behind the veil by visible symbols, and was to be approached by removing the veil; and God dwells in heaven, in the most holy place there, and is to be approached only through the offering of the body of Christ. Prof. Stuart supposes that the point of the comparison may be, that the veil of the temple operated as a screen to hide the visible symbol of the presence of God from human view, and that in like manner the body of Jesus might be regarded as a "kind of temporary, tabernacle, or veil of the Divine nature which dwelt within him," and that "as the veil of the tabernacle concealed the glory of Jehovah in the holy of belies, from the view of men, so Christ's flesh or body screened or concealed the higher nature from our view, which dwelt within this veil, as God did within the veil of the temple." See this and other

views explained at length in the larger commentaries. It does not seem to me to be necessary to attempt to carry out the point of the comparison in all respects. The simple idea which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle was, that the veil of the temple and the body of Jesus were alike in this respect, that they were the medium of access to God. It is by the offering of the body of Jesus; by the fact that he was clothed with flesh, and that in his body he made all atonement for sin, and that with his body raised up from the dead he has ascended to heaven, that we have access now to the throne of mercy.

21 and *having* a high priest over the house of God;

And having an High Priest over the house of God. Over the spiritual house of God; that is, the church. Comp. Heb 3:1-6. Under the Jewish dispensation there was a great high priest, and the same is true under the Christian dispensation, This the apostle had shown at length in the previous part of the epistle. The idea here is, that as under the former dispensation it was regarded as a privilege that the people of God might have access to the mercy-seat by means of the high priest, so it is true, in a much higher sense, that we may now have access to God through our greater and more glorious High Priest.

22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us draw near with a true heart. In prayer and praise; in every act of confidence and of worship. A sincere heart was required under the ancient dispensation; it is always demanded of men when they draw near to God to worship him. See Jn 4:23,24. Every form of religion which God has revealed requires the worshippers to come with pure and holy hearts.

In full assurance of faith. See the word here used explained in the Heb 6:11. The "full assurance of faith" means unwavering confidence; a fullness of faith in God which leaves no room for doubt. Christians are permitted to come thus because God has revealed himself through the Redeemer as in every way deserving their fullest confidence. No one approaches God in an acceptable manner who does not come to him in this

manner. What parent would feel that a child came with any right feelings to ask a favour of him who had not the fullest confidence in him?

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. By the blood of Jesus. This was fitted to make the conscience pure. The Jewish cleansing or sprinkling with blood related only to that which was external, and could not make the conscience perfect, Heb 9:9; but the Sacrifice offered by the Saviour was designed to give peace to the troubled mind, and to make it pure and holy. An "evil conscience" is a consciousness of evil, or a conscience oppressed with sin; that is, a conscience that accuses of guilt. We are made free from such a conscience through the atonement of Jesus, not because we become convinced that we have not committed sin, and not because we are led to suppose that our sins are less than we had otherwise supposed--for the reverse of both these is true--but because our sins are forgiven, and since they are freely pardoned they no longer produce remorse and the fear of future wrath. A child that has been forgiven may feel that he has done very wrong, but still he will not be then overpowered with distress in view of his guilt, or with the apprehension of punishment.

And our bodies washed with pure water. See Tit 3:5 Ac 22:16. Alford, Prof. Stuart, Delitzch, Moll, Meyer and most commentators refer the passage to baptism. That is undoubtedly the thought of the sacred writer; the heart and spirit are cleansed by the blood of Christ and the body sanctified by washing in pure water, effecting the purification of the whole man.

23 Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering;
for he *is* faithful that promised;

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. To secure this was one of the leading designs of this epistle, and hence the apostle adverts to it so frequently. It is evident that those to whom he wrote were suffering persecution, Heb 12 and that there was great danger that they would apostatize. As these persecutions came probably from the Jews, and as the

aim was to induce them to return to their former opinions, the object of the apostle is to show that there was in the Christian scheme every advantage of which the Jews could boast; everything pertaining to the dignity of the great Founder of the system, the character of the High Priest, and the nature and value of the sacrifices offered; and that all this was possessed far more abundantly in the permanent Christian system than in that which was typical in its character, and which were designed soon to vanish away. In view of all this, therefore, the apostle adds that they should hold fast the profession of their faith, without being shaken by their trials, or by the arguments of their enemies. We have the same inducement to hold fast the profession of our faith--for it is the same religion still; we have the same Saviour, and there is held out to us still the same prospect of heaven. For he is faithful that promised. To induce them to hold fast their profession, the apostle adds this additional consideration. God, who had promised eternal life to them, was faithful to all that he had said. he arrangement here is,

(1.) That since God is so faithful to us, we ought to be faithful to him.

(2.) The fact that he is faithful is an encouragement to us. We are dependent on him for grace to hold fast our profession. If he were to prove unfaithful, we should have no strength to do it. But this he never does; and we may be assured that all that he has promised he will perform. To the service of such a God, therefore, we should adhere without wavering. Comp. 1Cor 10:13.

24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

And let us consider one another. Let us so regard the welfare of others as to endeavour to excite them to persevere in the Christian life. The idea is, that much might be done in securing perseverance and fidelity by mutual, kind exhortation. They were not to be selfish; they were not to regard their own interests only, (Php 2:4;) they were to have a kind sympathy in

the concerns of each other. They had, as Christians have now, the Same duties to perform, and the same trials to meet, and they should strengthen each other in their trials, and encourage them in their work. To provoke unto love. We use the word provoke now in a somewhat different sense, as meaning to offend, to irritate, to incense; but its original meaning is, to arouse, to excite, to call into action, and it is used in this sense here. The Greek is, literally, "unto a paroxysm of love" εις παροξυσμον; the word paroxysm meaning excitement or impulse; and the idea is, that they were to endeavour to arouse or excite each other to the manifestation of love. The word is that which properly expresses excitement, and means that Christians should endeavour to excite each other. Men are sometimes afraid of excitement in religion. But there is no danger that Christians will ever be excited to love each other too much, or to perform too many good works.

25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is;* but exhorting *one another:* and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. That is, for purposes of public worship. Some expositors have understood the word here rendered assembling--επισυναγωγην--as meaning the society of Christians, or the church; and they have supposed that the object of the apostle here is, to exhort them not to apostatize from the church. The arguments for this opinion may be seen at length in Kuinoel, in loc. But the more obvious interpretation is that which is commonly adopted, that it refers to public worship. The Greek word (the noun) is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 2Thes 2:1, where it is rendered gathering together. The verb is used in Mt 23:3 Mt 24:31, Mk 1:33, 13:27, Lk 12:1, 13:34, in all which places it is rendered gathered together. It properly means an act of assembling, or a gathering together, and is nowhere used in the New Testament in the sense of an assembly, or the church. The command, then, here is, to meet together for the worship of God, and it is enjoined on Christians as an important duty to do it. It is implied, also, that there is blame or fault where this is "neglected."

As the manner of some is. Why those here referred to neglected public worship is not specified. It may have been from such causes as the following:

(1.) Some may have been deterred by the fear of persecution, as those who were thus assembled would be more exposed to danger than others.

(2.) Some may have neglected the duty because they felt no interest in it--as professing Christians now sometimes do.

(3.) It is possible that some may have had doubts about the necessity and propriety of this duty, and on that account may have neglected it.

(4.) Or it may perhaps have been, though we can hardly suppose that this reason existed, that some may have neglected it from a cause which now sometimes operates--from dissatisfaction with a preacher, or with some member or members of the church, or with some measure in the church. Whatever were the reasons, the apostle says that they should not be allowed to operate, but that Christians should regard it as a sacred duty to meet together for the worship of God. None of the causes above suggested should deter men from this duty. With all who bear the Christian name--with all who expect to make advances in piety and religious knowledge, it should be regarded as a sacred duty to assemble together for public worship. Religion is social; and our graces are to be strengthened and invigorated by waiting together on the Lord. There is an obvious propriety that men should assemble together for the worship of the Most High, and no Christian can hope that his graces will grow, or that he can perform his duty to his Maker, without uniting thus with those who love the service of God.

But exhorting one another. That is, in our assembling together--a direction which proves that it is proper for Christians to

exhort one another when they are gathered together for public worship. Indeed, there is reason to believe that the preaching in the early Christian assemblies partook much of the character of mutual exhortation.

And so much the more as ye see the day approaching. The term "day" here refers to some event which was certainly anticipated, and which was so well understood by them that no particular explanation was necessary. It was also some event that was expected soon to occur, and in relation to which there were indications then of its speedily arriving. If it had not been something which was expected soon to happen, the apostle would have gone into a more full explanation of it, and would have stated at length what these indications were. There has been some diversity of opinion about what is here referred to, many commentators supposing that the reference is to the anticipated second coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom on the earth; and others to the fact-that the period was approaching when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and when the services of the temple were to cease. So far as the language is concerned, the reference might be to either event, for the word a "day" is applied to both in the New Testament. The word would properly be understood as referring to an expected period, when something remarkable was to happen, which ought to have an important influence on their character and conduct. In support of the opinion that it refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom, we may adduce the following considerations:

(1.) The term used-"day"--will as properly refer to that event as to any other. It is a word which would be likely to suggest the idea of distress, calamity, or judgment of some kind, for so it is often used in the Scriptures. Comp. Ps 37:13, 1Sam 26:10, Jer 30:7, Eze 21:15; Isa 2:12.

(2.) Such a period was distinctly predicted by the Saviour, and the indications which would precede it were clearly pointed

out, see Mt 24. That event was then so near, that the Saviour said that "that generation would not pass" until the prediction had been fulfilled, Mt 24:34.

(3.) The destruction of Jerusalem was an event of great importance to the Hebrews, and to the Hebrew Christians to whom this epistle was directed; and it might be reasonable to suppose that the apostle Paul would refer to it.

(4.) It is not improbable that, at the time of writing this epistle, there were indications that that day was approaching. Those indications were of so marked a character, that when the time approached they could not well be mistaken, (see Mt 24:6-12,24,26), and it is probable that they had already begun to appear.

(5.) There were no such indications that the Lord Jesus was about to appear to set up a visible kingdom. It was not a fact that that was about to occur, as the result has shown; nor is there any positive proof that the mass of Christians were expecting it, and no reason to believe that the apostle Paul had any such expectation. See 2Thes 2:1-5.

(6.) The expectation that the destruction of Jerusalem was referred to, and was about to occur, was just that which might be expected to produce the effect on the minds of the Hebrew Christians which the apostle here refers to. It was to be a solemn and fearful event. It would be a remarkable manifestation of God. It would break up the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the nation, and would scatter them abroad. It would require all the exercise of their patience and faith in passing through these scenes. It might be expected to be a time when many would be tempted to apostatize; and it was proper, therefore, to exhort them to meet together, and to strengthen and encourage each other as they saw that that event was drawing near. The argument, then, would be this: The danger against which the apostle desired to guard those to whom he was writing was that of apostasy from Christianity to

Judaism. To preserve them from this, he urges the fact that the downfall of Judaism was near, and that every indication which they saw of its approach ought to be allowed to influence them, and to guard them from that danger. It is for reasons such as these that I suppose the reference here is not to the "second advent" of the Redeemer, but to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. At the same time, it is not improper to use this passage as an exhortation to Christians to fidelity when they shall see that the end of the world draws nigh, and when they shall perceive indications that the Lord Jesus is about to come. And so of death. We should be the more diligent when we see the indications that the great Messenger is about to come to summon us into the presence of our final Judge. And who does not know that he is approaching him with silent and steady footsteps, and that even now he may Be very near? Who can fail to see himself indications that the time approaches when he must lie down and die? Every pang that we suffer should remind us of this, and when the hair changes its hue, and time makes furrows in the cheek, and the limbs become feeble, we should regard them as premonitions that he is coming, and should be more diligent as we see that he is drawing near.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth. If, after we are converted and become true Christians, we should apostatize, it would be impossible to be recovered again, for there would be no other sacrifice for sin; no way by which we could be saved. This passage, however, like Heb 6:4-6, has given rise to much difference of opinion. But that the above is the correct interpretation seems evident to me from the following considerations:

(1.) It is the natural and obvious interpretation, such as would occur probably to ninety nine readers in a hundred, if there were no theory to support, and no fear that it would conflict with some other doctrine.

(2.) It accords with the scope of the epistle, which is to keep those whom the apostle addressed from returning again to the Jewish religion, under the trials to which they were subjected.

(3.) It is in accordance with the fair meaning of the language--the words, "after that we have received the knowledge of the truth," referring more naturally to true conversion than to any other state of mind.

(4.) The sentiment would not be correct if it referred to any but real Christians. It would not be true that one who had been somewhat enlightened, and who then sinned "wilfully," must look on fearfully to the judgment, without a possibility of being saved. There are multitudes of cases where such persons are saved. They willfully resist the Holy Spirit; they strive against him; they for a long time refuse to yield, but they are brought again to reflection, and are led to give their hearts to God.

(5.) It is true, and always will be true, that if a sincere Christian should apostatize, he could never be converted again. Heb 6:4-6. The reasons are obvious. He would have tried the only plan of salvation, and it would have failed. He would have embraced the Saviour, and there would not have been efficacy enough in his blood to keep him, and there would be no more powerful Saviour, and no more efficacious blood of atonement. He would have renounced the Holy Spirit, and would have shown that his influences were not effectual to keep him, and there would be no other agent of greater power to renew and save him after he had apostatized. For these reasons it seems clear to me that this passage refers to true Christians, and that the doctrine here taught is, that if such an one should apostatize, he must look forward only to the terrors of the judgment, and to final condemnation. Whether this, in fact, ever occurs, is quite another question. In regard to that inquiry, see Heb 6:4, and following. If this view be correct, we may add, that the passage should not be regarded as applying to what is commonly known as the "sin against the Holy

Ghost," or "the unpardonable sin." The word rendered "wilfully"--εκουσιως -- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1Pet 5:2, where it is rendered willingly-- " taking the oversight thereof [of the church] not by constraint, but willingly". It properly means, willingly, voluntarily, of our own accord, and applies to cases where no constraint is used. It is not to be construed here strictly, or metaphysically, for all sin is voluntary, or is committed willingly, but must refer to a deliberate act, where a man MEANS to abandon his religion, and to turn away from God. If it were to be taken with metaphysical exactness, it would demonstrate that every Christian who ever does anything wrong, no matter how small, would be lost. But this cannot, from the nature of the case, be the meaning. The apostle well knew that Christians do commit such sins, (see Rom 7:1) and following and his object here is not to set forth the danger of such sins, but to guard Christians against apostasy from their religion. In the Jewish law, as is indeed the case everywhere, a distinction is made between sins of oversight, inadvertence, or ignorance, (Lev 4:2,13,22,27, 5:15; Nu 15:24,27-29. Comp. Acts 3:17, 17:30,) and sins of presumption; sins that are deliberately and intentionally committed. See Ex 21:14, Nu 15:30, De 17:12, Ps 19:13. The apostle here has reference, evidently, to such a distinction, and means to speak of a decided and deliberate purpose to break away from the restraints and obligations of the Christian religion.

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Should a man do this, there is no sacrifice for sins which could save him. He would have rejected deliberately the only atonement made for sin, and there will be no other made. It is as if a man should reject the only medicine that could heal him, or push away the only boat that could save him when shipwrecked. See Heb 6:6. The sacrifice made for sin by the Redeemer is never to be repeated, and if that is deliberately rejected, the soul must be lost.

27 but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery
indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment. The word "certain" here does not mean fixed, sure, inevitable, as our translation would seem to imply. The Greek is the same as "a τις fearful expectation," etc. So it is rendered by Tindall. The idea is, that if there was voluntary apostasy after having embraced the Christian religion, there could be nothing but an expectation of the judgment to come. There could be no other hope but that through the gospel, and as this would have been renounced, it would follow that the soul must perish. The "fearful apprehension" or expectation here does not refer so much to what would be in the mind itself, or what would be experienced, as to what must follow. It might be that the person referred to would have no realizing sense of all this, and still his situation be that of one who had nothing to expect but the terrors of the judgment to come. And fiery indignation. Fire is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of fierce punishment. The idea is, that the person referred to could expect nothing but the wrath of God. Which shall devour the adversaries. All who become the adversaries or enemies of the Lord. Fire is often said to devour, or consume, and the meaning here is, that those who should thus become the enemies of the Lord must perish.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

He that despised Moses' law. That is, the apostate from the religion of Moses. It does not mean that in all cases the offender against the law of Moses died without mercy, but only where offences were punishable with death, and probably the apostle had in his eye particularly the case of apostasy from the Jewish religion. The subject of apostasy from the Christian religion is particularly under discussion here and it was natural to illustrate this by a reference to a similar case under the law of Moses. The law in regard to apostates from the Jewish religion was positive. There was no reprieve, De 13:6-10. Died without mercy. That is, there was no provision for pardon. Under two or three witnesses. It was the settled law among the Hebrews, that in all cases involving capital punishment, two or three witnesses should be necessary. That is, no one was to be

executed unless two persons certainly bore testimony, and it was regarded as important, if possible, that three witnesses should concur in the statement. The object was the security of the accused person if innocent. The principle in the law was, that it was to be presumed that two or three persons would be much less likely to conspire to render a false testimony than one would be, and that two or three would not be likely to be deceived in regard to a fact which they had observed.

29 of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy. That is, he who renounces Christianity ought to be regarded as deserving a much severer punishment than the man who apostatized from the Jewish religion, and if he ought to be so regarded he will be--for God will treat every man as he ought to be treated. This must refer to future punishment, for the severest punishment was inflicted on the apostate from the Jewish religion which can be in this world--death; and yet the apostle here says that a severer punishment than that would be deserved by him who should apostatize from the Christian faith. The reasons why so much severer punishment would be deserved are such as these: The Author of the Christian system was far more exalted than Moses, the founder of the Jewish system; he had revealed more important truths; he had increased and confirmed the motives to holiness; he had furnished more means for leading a holy life; he had given himself as a sacrifice to redeem the soul from death; and he had revealed with far greater clearness the truth that there is a heaven of glory and of holiness. He who should apostatize from the Christian faith, the apostle goes on to say, would also be guilty of the most aggravated crime of which man could be guilty --the crime of trampling under foot the Son of God, of showing contempt for his holy blood, and despising the Spirit of grace.

Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God. This language is taken either from the custom of ancient conquerors who were accustomed to tread on the necks of their enemies in token of their being subdued, or from the fact that men tread on that which they despise and contemn. The idea is, that he who should apostatize from the Christian faith would act as if he should indignantly and contemptuously trample on God's only Son. What crime could be more aggravated than this?

And hath counted the blood of the covenant. The blood of Jesus by which the new covenant between God and man was ratified. Mt 9:16-20. Comp. Mt 26:28.

Wherewith he was sanctified. Made holy, or set apart to the service of God. The word sanctify is used in both these senses. Prof. Stuart renders it, "by which expiation is made;" and many others, in accordance with this view, have supposed that it refers to the Lord Jesus. But it seems to me that it refers to the person who is here supposed to renounce the Christian religion, or to apostatize from it. The reasons for this are such as these.

(1.) It is the natural and proper meaning of the word here rendered sanctified. This word is commonly applied to Christians in the sense that they are made holy. See Acts 20:32, 26:18, 1Cor 1:2, Jude 1:1. Comp. Jn 10:36, 17:17.

(2.) It is unusual to apply this word to the Saviour. It is true, indeed, that he says, (Jn 17:19,) "for their sakes I sanctify myself," but there is no instance in which he says that he was sanctified by his own blood. And where is there an instance in which the word is used as meaning "to make expiation?"

(3.) The supposition that it refers to one who is here spoken of as in danger of apostasy, and not of the Lord Jesus, agrees with the scope of the argument. The apostle is showing the great guilt, and the certain destruction, of one who should apostatize from the Christian religion. In doing this, it was natural to

speak of the dishonour which would thus be done to the means which had been used for his sanctification--the blood of the Redeemer. It would be treating it as if it were a common thing, or as if it might be disregarded, like anything else which was of no value.

An unholy thing. Gr. common; often used in the sense of unholy. The word is so used because that which was holy was separated from a common to a sacred use. What was not thus consecrated was free to all, or was for common use, and hence also the word is used to denote that which is unholy.

And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. The Holy Spirit, called the "Spirit of grace," because he confers favour or grace on men. The meaning of the phrase "done despite unto"--ενυβρισας --is, "having reproached, or treated with malignity or contempt?" The idea is, that if they were thus to apostatize, they would by such an act treat the Spirit of God with disdain and contempt. It was by him that they had been renewed; by him that they had been brought to embrace the Saviour, and to love God; by him that they had any holy feelings or pure desires; and if they now apostatized from religion, such an act would be, in fact, treating the Holy Spirit with the highest indignity. It would be saying that all his influences were valueless, and that they needed no help from him. From such considerations, the apostle shows that if a true Christian were to apostatize nothing would remain for him but the terrific prospect of eternal condemnation. He would have rejected the only Saviour; he would have, in fact, treated him with the highest indignity; he would have considered his sacred blood, shed to sanctify men, as a common thing, and would have shown the highest disregard for the only agent who can save the soul--the Spirit of God. How could such an one afterwards be saved? The apostle does not indeed say that any one ever would thus apostatize from the true religion, nor is there any reason to believe that such a case ever has occurred; but if it should occur the doom would be inevitable. How dangerous, then, is every step which would lead to such a precipice! And

how strange and unscriptural the opinion held by so many that sincere Christians may "fall away," and be renewed again and again!

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me,
I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again,
The Lord shall judge his people.

For we know him that hath said. We know who has said this--God. They knew this because it was recorded in their own sacred books. Vengeance belongeth unto me, etc. This is found in De 32:35. See it explained in Rom 12:19. It is there quoted to show that we should not avenge ourselves; it is here quoted to show that God will certainly inflict punishment on those who deserve it. If any should apostatize in the manner here referred to by the apostle, they would, says he, be guilty of great and unparalleled wickedness, and would have the certainty that they must meet the wrath of God. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. This is quoted from De 32:35. That is, he will judge them when they deserve it, and punish them if they ought to be punished. The mere fact that they are his people will not save them from punishment if they deserve it, any more than the fact that one is a beloved child will save him from correction when he does wrong. This truth was abundantly illustrated in the history of the Israelites; and the same great principle would be applied should any sincere Christian apostatize from his religion. He would have before him the certainty of the most fearful and severe of all punishments.

31 *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There may be an allusion here to the request of David to "fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men," when it was submitted to him for the sin of numbering the people, whether he would choose seven years of famine, or flee three months before his enemies, or have three days of pestilence, 2Sam 24. He preferred "to fall into the hands of the Lord," and God smote seventy thousand men by the pestilence. The idea here is, that to fall into the hands of the Lord, after having despised his mercy and rejected his salvation, would be

terrific; and the fear of this should deter from the commission of the dreadful crime. The phrase "living God" is used in the Scripture in opposition to idols. God always lives; his power is Capable of being always exerted. He is not like the idols of wood or stone which have no life, and which are not to be dreaded, but he always lives. It is the more fearful to fall into his hands because he will live for ever. A man who inflicts punishment will die, and the punishment will come to an end; but God will never cease to exist, and the punishment which he is capable of inflicting to-day he will be capable of inflicting for ever and ever. T

o fall into his hands, therefore, for the purpose of punishment--which is the idea here--is fearful,

(1.) because he has all power, and can inflict just what punishment he pleases;

(2) because he is strictly just, and will inflict the punishment which ought to be inflicted;

(3) because he lives for ever, and can carry on his purpose of punishment to eternal ages; and

(4) because the actual inflictions of punishment which have occurred show what is to be dreaded. So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on Babylon, Idumea, Capernaum, and Jerusalem; and so it is in the world of woe--the eternal abodes of despair, where the worm never dies. All men must, in one sense, fall into his hands. They must appear before him. They must be brought to his bar when they die. How unspeakably important it is, then, now to to embrace his offers of salvation, that we may not fall into his hands as a righteous avenging Judge, and sink beneath his uplifted arm for ever!

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

But call to remembrance the former days. It would seem from this, that at the time when the apostle wrote this epistle they were suffering some severe trials, in which they were in great danger of apostatizing from their religion. It is also manifest that they had on some former occasion endured a similar trial, and had been enabled to bear it with a Christian spirit, and with resignation. The object of the apostle now is to remind them that they were sustained under those trials, and he would encourage them now to similar patience by the recollection of the grace then conferred on them. What was the nature of their former trials, or of that which they were then experiencing, is not certainly known. It would seem probable, however, that the reference in both instances is to some form of persecution by their own countrymen. The meaning is, that when we have been enabled to pass through trials once, we are to make the remembrance of the grace then bestowed on us a means of supporting and encouraging us in future trials.

After ye were illuminated. After you became Christians, or were enlightened to see the truth. This phrase, referring here undoubtedly to the fact that they were Christians, may serve to explain the disputed phrase in Heb 6:4. Heb 6:4.

A great fight of afflictions. The language here seems to be taken from the Grecian Games. The word "fight" means, properly, contention, combat, such as occurred in the public games. Here the idea is, that in the trials referred to they had a great struggle; that is, a struggle to maintain their faith without wavering, or against those who would have led them to apostatize from their religion. Some of the circumstances attending this conflict are alluded to in the following verses.

Partly. That is, your affliction consisted partly in this. The Greek is, "this"--specifying one kind of affliction that they were called to endure.

Whilst ye were made a gazing-stock. θεατριζομενοι, --you were made a public spectacle, as if in a theatre; you were held up to public view, or exposed to public scorn when this was done, or in precisely what manner, we are not told. It was not an uncommon thing, however, for the early Christians to be held up to reproach and scorn, and probably this refers to some time when it was done by rulers or magistrates. It was a common custom among the Greeks and Romans to lead criminals, before they were put to death, through the theatre, and thus to expose them to the insults and reproaches of the multitude. See the proofs of this adduced by Kuinoel on this passage. The language here seems to have been taken from this custom, though there is no evidence that the Christians to whom Paul refers had been treated in this manner.

By reproaches. Reproached as being the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; probably as weak and fanatical.

And afflictions. Various sufferings inflicted on them. They were not merely reviled in words, but they were made to endure positive sufferings of various kinds.

And partly, while ye became companions of them that were so used. That is, even when they had not themselves been subjected to these trials, they had sympathized with those who were. They doubtless imparted to them of their property, sent to them relief, and identified themselves with them. It is not known to what particular occasion the apostle here refers. In the next verse he mentions one instance in which they had done this, in aiding him when he was a prisoner.

33 partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds. You sympathized with me when a prisoner, and sent to my relief. It is not known

to what particular instance of imprisonment the apostle here refers. It is probable, however, that it was on some occasion when he was a prisoner in Judea, for the persons to whom this epistle was sent most,probably resided there. Paul was at one time a prisoner more than two years at Cesarea, (Acts 24:27,) and during this time he was kept-in the charge of a centurion, and his friends had free access to him, Acts 24:23. It would seem not improbable that this was the occasion to which he here refers.

And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. The plunder of your property. It was not an uncommon thing for the early Christians to be plundered. This was doubtless a part of the "afflictions" to which the apostle refers in this case. The meaning is, that they yielded their property not only without resistance, but with joy. They, in common with all the early Christians, counted it a privilege and honour to suffer in the cause of their Master. Php 3:10, Php 4:13. Men may be brought to such a state of mind as to part with their property with joy. It is not usually the case; but religion will enable a man to do it. Knowing in yourselves. Marg., "or, that ye have in yourselves; or, for yourselves." The true rendering is, "knowing that ye have for yourselves." It does not refer to any internal knowledge which they had of this, but to the fact that they were assured that they had laid up for themselves a better inheritance in heaven. That ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Better than any earthly possession, and more permanent. It is

(1.) better--it is worth more --it gives more comfort--it makes a man really richer. The treasure laid up in heaven is worth more to a man than all the wealth of Croesus. It will give him more solid peace and comfort; will better serve his turn in the various situations in which he may be placed in life, and will do more on the whole to make him happy, is not said here that property is worth nothing to a man--which is not true, if he uses it well--but that the treasures of heaven are worth more.

(2.) It is more enduring. Property here soon vanishes. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or at any rate all that we possess must soon be left. But in heaven all is permanent and secure. No calamity of war, pestilence or famine; no change of times; no commercial embarrassment; no failure of a crop, or a bank; no fraud of sharpers and swindlers, and no act of a pick-pocket or highwayman can take it away; nor does death ever come there to remove the inhabitants of heaven from their "mansions." With this hope, therefore, Christians may cheerfully see their earthly wealth vanish, for they can look forward to their enduring and their better inheritance.

35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

Cast not away therefore your confidence. Gr. "your boldness;" referring to their confident hope in God. They were not to cast this away, and to become timid, disheartened, and discouraged. They were to bear up manfully under all their trials, and to maintain a steadfast adherence to God and to his cause. The command is not to "cast this away." Nothing could take it from them if they trusted in God, and it could be lost only by their own neglect or imprudence. Rosenmuller supposes (Alte und Neue Morgenland, in loc.) that there may be an allusion here to the disgrace which was attached to the act of a warrior if he cast away his shield, Among the Greeks this was a crime which was punishable with death. Alexander ab Alexand. Gen. Dier. L. ii. c. 13. Among the ancient Germans, Tacitus says, that to lose the shield in battle was regarded as the deepest dishonour, and that those who were guilty of it were not allowed to be present at the sacrifices or in the assembly of the people. Many, says he, who had suffered this calamity, closed their own lives with the halter under the loss of honour. Tac. Germ. c. 6. A similar disgrace would attend the Christian soldier if he should cast away his shield of faith. Comp. Eph 6:16. Which hath great recompence of reward. It will furnish a reward by the peace of mind which it gives here, and will be connected with the rewards of heaven.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of
God, ye might receive the promise.

For ye have need of patience. They were then suffering, and in all trials we have need of patience. We have need of it because there is in us so much disposition to murmur and repine; because our nature is liable to sink under sufferings; and because our trials are often protracted. All that Christians can do in such cases is to be patient--to lie calmly in the hands of God, and submit to his will day by day, and year by year. See Jas 1:3,4; Rom 5:4. That after ye have done the will of God. That is, in bearing trials, for the reference here is particularly to afflictions. Ye might receive the promise. The promised inheritance or reward--in heaven. It is implied here that this promise will not be received unless we are patient in our trials, and the prospect of this reward should encourage us to endure them.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

For yet a little while. There seems to be an allusion here to what the Saviour himself said, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me," Jn 16:16. Or more probably, it may be to Hab 2:3: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The idea which the apostle means to convey evidently is, that the time of their deliverance from their trials was not far remote. And he that shall come will come. The reference here is, doubtless, to the Messiah. But what "coming" of his is referred to is more uncertain. Most probably the idea is, that the Messiah, who was coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to overthrow the Jewish power, (Mt 25,) would soon do this. In this way he would put a period to their persecutions and trials, as the power of the Jewish people to afflict them would be at an end. A similar idea occurs in Lk 21:28, "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Lk 21:8. The Christians

in Palestine were oppressed, reviled, and persecuted by the Jews. The destruction of the city and the temple would put an end to that power, and would be, in fact, the time of deliverance for those who had been persecuted. In the passage before us, Paul intimates that that period was not far distant. Perhaps there were already "signs" of his coming, or indications that he was about to appear; and he therefore urges them patiently to persevere in their fidelity to him during the little time of trial that remained. The same encouragement and consolation may be employed still. To all the afflicted it may be said, that "he that shall come will come" soon. The time of affliction is not long. Soon the Redeemer will appear to deliver his afflicted people from all their sorrows; to remove them from a world of pain and tears; and to raise their bodies from the dust, and to receive them to mansions where trials are for ever unknown. Jn 14:3, 1Thes 4:13-18.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back,
my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

Now the just shall live by faith. This is a part of the quotation from Habakkuk, Hab 2:3,4, which was probably commenced in the previous verse. See the passage fully explained Romm 1:7. The meaning in the connexion in which it stands here, in accordance with the sense in which it was used by Habakkuk, is, that the righteous should live by continued confidence in God. They should pass their lives, not in doubt, and fear, and trembling apprehension, but in the exercise of a calm trust in God. In this sense it accords with the scope of what the apostle is here saying, he is exhorting the Christians whom he addressed to perseverance in their religion, even in the midst of many persecutions. To encourage this he says, that it was a great principle that the just--that is, all the pious--ought to live in the constant exercise of faith in God. They should not confide in their own merits, works, or strength. They should exercise constant reliance on their Maker, and he would keep them even unto eternal life. The sense is, that a persevering confidence or belief in the Lord will preserve us amidst all the trials and calamities to which we are exposed.

But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. This also is a quotation from Hab 2:4, but from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew. Why the authors of the Septuagint thus translated the passage it is impossible now to say. The Hebrew is rendered, in the common version, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;" or more literally, "Behold the scornful; his mind shall not be happy," (Stuart;) or, as Gesenius renders it, "See, he whose soul is unbelieving shall, on this account, be unhappy." The sentiment there is, that the scorner or unbeliever in that day would be unhappy, or would not prosper--, . The apostle has retained the general sense of the passage; and the idea which he expresses is, that the unbeliever, or he who renounces his religion, will incur the Divine displeasure. He will be a man exposed to the Divine wrath; a man on whom God cannot look but with disapprobation. By this solemn consideration, therefore, the apostle urges on them the importance of perseverance, and the guilt and danger of apostasy from the Christian faith. If such a case should occur, no matter what might have been the former condition, and no matter what love or zeal might have been evinced, yet such an apostasy would expose the individual to the certain wrath of God. His former love could not save him, any more than the former obedience of the angels saved them from the horrors of eternal chains and darkness, or than the holiness in which Adam was created saved him and his posterity from the calamities which his apostasy incurred.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

But we are not of them, etc. We who are true Christians do not belong to such a class. In this the apostle expresses the fullest conviction that none of those to whom he wrote would apostatize. The case which he had been describing was only a supposable case, not one which he believed would occur. He had only been stating what must happen if a sincere Christian should apostatize. But he did not mean to say that this would occur in regard to them, or in any case. He made a statement of a general principle under the Divine

administration, and he designed that this should be a means of keeping them in the path to life. What could be a more effectual means than the assurance that if a Christian should apostatize he must inevitably perish for ever? See the sentiment in this verse illustrated at length in the Heb 6:4 and following. (c) "draw back" Heb 10:26 (++) "perdition" "Destruction" (&) "believe" "have faith"

Hebrews-11

Faith

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for. On the general nature of faith, Mk 16:10. The margin here is, "ground, or confidence." There is scarcely any verse of the New Testament more important than this, for it states what is the nature of all true faith, and is the only definition of it which is attempted in the Scriptures. Eternal life depends on the existence and exercise of faith, (Mk 16:16,) and hence the importance of an accurate understanding of its nature. The word rendered substance --υποστασις--occurs in the New Testament only in the following places. In 2Cor 9:4, 11:17, Heb 3:14, where it is rendered confident and confidence; and in Heb 1:3, where it is rendered person, and in the passage before us. Comp. Heb 1:3. Prof. Stuart renders it here confidence; Chrysostom, "Faith gives reality or substance to things hoped for." The word properly means that which is placed under, (Germ. Unterstellen;) then ground, basis, foundation, support. Then it means, also. reality, substance, existence, in contradistinction from that which is unreal, imaginary, or deceptive, (tauschung.) Passow. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here has reference to something which imparts reality in the view of the mind to those things which are not seen, and which

serves to distinguish them from those things which are unreal and illusive. It is that which enables us to feel and act as if they were real, or which causes them to exert an influence over us as if we saw them. Faith does this on all other subjects as well as religion. A belief that there is such a place as London or Calcutta, leads us to act as if this were so, if we have occasion to go to either; a belief that money may be made in a certain undertaking, leads men to act as if this were so: a belief in the veracity of another leads us to act as if this were so. As long as the faith continues, whether it be well-founded or not, it gives all the force of reality to that which is believed. We feel and act just as if it were so, or as if we saw the object before our eyes. This, I think, is the clear meaning here. We do not see the things of eternity. We do not see God, or heaven, or the angels, or the redeemed in glory, or the crowns of victory, or the harps of praise; but we have faith in them, and this leads us to act as if we saw them. And this is, undoubtedly, the fact in regard to all who live by faith, and who are fairly under its influence.

Of things hoped for. In heaven. Faith gives them reality in the view of the mind. The Christian hopes to be admitted into heaven; to be raised up in the last day from the slumbers of the tomb; to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy. Under the influence of faith he allows these things to control his mind as if they were a most affecting reality.

The evidence of things not seen. Of the existence of God; of heaven; of angels; of the glories of the world prepared for the redeemed. The word rendered evidence ελεγχος occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in 2Ti 3:16, where it is rendered reproof. It means, properly, proof, or means of proving, to wit, evidence; then proof which convinces another of error or guilt; then vindication or defence; then summary or contents. See Pussow. The idea of evidence which goes to demonstrate the thing under consideration, or which is adapted to produce conviction in the mind, seems to be the elementary idea in the word. So when a proposition is demonstrated; when

a man is arraigned, and evidence is furnished of his guilt, or when he establishes his innocence; or when one by argument refutes his adversaries, the idea of convincing argument enters into the use of the word in each case. This, I think, is clearly the meaning of the word here. "Faith in the Divine declarations answers all the purposes of a convincing argument, or is itself a convincing argument to the mind, of the real existence of those things which are not seen." But is it a good argument? Is it rational to rely on such a means of being convinced? Is mere faith a consideration which should ever convince a rational mind? The infidel says no; and we know there may be a faith which is no argument of the truth of what is believed. But when a man who has never seen it believes that there is such a place as London, his belief in the numerous testimonies respecting it which he has heard and read is, to his mind, a good and rational proof of its existence, and he would act on that belief without hesitation. When a son credits the declaration or the promise of a father who has never deceived him, and acts as though that declaration and promise were true, his faith is to him a ground of conviction and of action, and he will act as if these things were so. In like manner the Christian believes what God says. He has never seen heaven; he has never seen an angel; he has never seen the Redeemer; he has never seen a body raised from the grave; but he has evidence which is satisfactory to his mind that God has spoken on these subjects, and his very nature prompts him to confide in the declarations of his Creator. Those declarations are, to his mind, more convincing proof than anything else would be. They are more conclusive evidence than would be the deductions on his own reason; far better and more rational than all the reasonings and declarations of the infidel to the contrary. He feels and acts, therefore, as if these things were so--for his faith in the declarations of God has convinced him that they are so. The object of the apostle, in this chapter, is not to illustrate the nature of what is called saving faith, but to show the power of unwavering confidence in God in sustaining the soul, especially in times of trial; and particularly in leading us to act, in view of promises and of things not seen, as if they were so.

"Saving faith" is the same kind of confidence directed to the Messiah--the Lord Jesus--as the Saviour of the soul.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed. The first instance of the strength of faith, which the apostle refers to, is that by which we give credence to the declarations of the Scriptures about the work of creation, Gen 1:3, This is selected first, evidently, because it is the first thing that occurs in the Bible, or is the first thing there narrated in relation to which there is the exercise of faith. He points to no particular instance in which this faith was exercise--for none is especially mentioned--but refers to it as an illustration of the nature of faith which every one might observe in himself. The faith here exercised is confidence in the truth of the Divine declarations in regard to the creation. The meaning is, that our knowledge on this subject is a mere matter of faith in the Divine testimony. It is not that we could reason this out, and demonstrate that the worlds were thus made; it is not that profane history goes back to that period and informs us of it; it is simply that God has told us so in his word. The strength of the faith, in this case, is measured

(1.) by the fact that it is mere faith--that there is nothing else on which to rely in the case, and

(2.) by the greatness of the truth believed. After all the acts of faith which have ever been exercised in this world, perhaps there is none which is really more strong, or which requires higher confidence in God, than the declaration that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word!

We understand. We attain to the apprehension of; we receive and comprehend the idea. Our knowledge of this fact is derived only from faith, and not from our own reasoning.

That the worlds. In Gen 1:1, it is "the heaven and the earth." The phrase which the apostle uses denotes a plurality of worlds, and is proof that he supposed there were other worlds besides our earth. How far his knowledge extended on this point we have no means of ascertaining; but there is no reason to doubt that he regarded the stars as "worlds," in some respects, like our own. On the meaning of the Greek word used here, Heb 1:2 The plural form is used there also, and in both cases, it seems to me, not without design.

Were framed. It is observable that the apostle does not here use the word make or create. That which he does use --καταρτιζω--means, to put in order, to arrange, to complete, and may be applied to that which before had an existence, and which is to be put in order or re-fitted, Mt 4:24, Mk 1:19, Mt 21:16, Heb 10:5. The meaning here is, that they were set in order by the word of God. This implies the act of creation, but the specific idea is that of arranging them in the beautiful order in which they are now. Doddridge renders it "adjusted." Kuinoel, however, supposes that the word is used here in the sense of form or make. It has probably about the meaning which we attach to the phrase "fitting up anything"--as, for example, a dwelling--and includes all the previous arrangements, though the thing which is particularly denoted is not the making, but the arrangement. So in the work here referred to. "We arrive at the conviction that the universe was fitted up or arranged, in the present manner, by the word of God."

By the word of God. This does not mean here, by the Logos, or the second Person of the Trinity, for Paul does not use that term here or elsewhere. The word which he employs is ρημα--rema--meaning, properly, a word spoken, and in this place command. Comp. Gen 1:3,6,9,11,14,20, Ps 33:6; -"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." In regard to the agency of the Son of God in the work of the creation, see Heb 1:2; comp. Jn 1:3.

So that things which are seen. The point of the remark here is, that the visible creation was not moulded out of pre-existing materials, but was made out of nothing. In reference to the grammatical construction of the passage, see Stuart, Comm. in loc. The doctrine taught is, that matter was not eternal; that the materials of the universe, as well as the arrangements, were formed by God, and that all this was done by a simple command. The argument here, so far as it is adapted to the purpose of the apostle, seems to be, that there was nothing which appeared, or which was to be seen, that could lay the foundation of a belief that God made the worlds; and, in like manner, our faith now is not to be based on what "appears," by which we could infer or reason out what would be, but that we must exercise strong confidence in Him who had power to create the universe out of nothing. If this vast universe has been called into existence by the mere word of God, there is nothing which we may not believe he has ample power to perform.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

By faith Abel offered. See Gen 4:4,5. In the account in Genesis of the offering made by Abel, there is no mention of faith --as is true also indeed of most of the instances referred to by the apostle. The account in Genesis is, simply, that Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Men have speculated much as to the reason why the offering of Abel was accepted, and that of Cain rejected; but such speculation rests on no certain basis, and the solution of the apostle should be regarded as decisive and satisfactory, that in the one case there was faith, in the other not. It could not have been because an offering of the fruits of the ground was not pleasing to God, for such an offering was commanded under the Jewish law, and was not in itself improper. Both the brothers selected that which was to them most obvious; which they had reared with their own hands; which they regarded as

most valuable. Cain had cultivated the earth, and he naturally brought what had grown under his care; Abel kept a flock, and he as naturally brought what he had raised: and had the temper of mind in both been the same, there is no reason to doubt that the offering of each would have been accepted. To this conclusion we are led by the nature of the case, and the apostle advances substantially the same sentiment--for he says that the particular state of mind on which the whole turned was, that the one had faith and the other not. How the apostle himself was informed of the fact, that it was faith which made the difference, he has not informed us. The belief that he was inspired will, however, relieve the subject of this difficulty--for, according to such a belief, all his statements here, whether recorded in the Old Testament or not, are founded in truth. It is equally impossible to tell with certainty what was the nature of the faith of Abel. It has been commonly asserted that it was faith in Christ---looking forward to his coming, and depending on his sacrifice when offering that which was to be a type of him. But of this there is no positive evidence, though, from Heb 12:24, it seems to be not improbable. Sacrifice, as a type of the Redeemer's great offering, was instituted early in the history of the world. There can be no reason assigned for the offering of blood as an atonement for sin, except that it had originally a reference to the great atonement which was to be made by blood; and as the salvation of man depended on this entirely, it is probable that that would be one of the truths which would be first communicated to man after the fall. The bloody offering of Abel is the first of the kind which is definitely mentioned in the Scriptures, (though it is not improbable that such sacrifices were offered by Adam, comp. Gen 3:21,) and consequently Abel may be regarded as the recorded head of the whole typical system, of which Christ was the antitype and the fulfilment. Heb 12:24.

A more excellent sacrifice. πλειοναθυσιαν -as rendered by Tindal, "more plenteous sacrifice;" or as Wickliffe renders it, more literally, "a much more sacrifice;" that is, a more full or

complete sacrifice; a better sacrifice. The meaning is, that it had in it much more to render it acceptable to God. In the estimate of its value, the views of him who offered it would be more to be regarded than the nature of the offering itself By which.

By which sacrifice so offered. The way in which he obtained the testimony of Divine approbation was by the sacrifice offered in this manner. It was not merely by faith; it was by the offering of a sacrifice in connexion with, and under the influence of faith.

He obtained witness that he was righteous. That is, from God. His offering, made in faith, was the means of his obtaining the Divine testimonial that he was a righteous man. Heb 11:2. This is implied in what is said in Gen 4:4: "And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering;" that is, he regarded it as the offering of a righteous man.

God testifying of his gifts. In what way this was done is not mentioned either here or in Genesis. Commentators have usually supposed that it was by fire descending from heaven to consume the sacrifice. But there is no evidence of this, for there is no intimation of it in the Bible. It is true that this frequently occurred when an offering was made to God, (see Gen 15:17, Lev 9:24, Jud 6:21, 1Kgs 18:38;) but the sacred writers give us no hint that this happened in the case of the sacrifice made by Abel; and since it is expressly mentioned in other cases and not here, the presumption rather is that no such miracle occurred on the occasion. So remarkable a fact--the first one in all history if it were so--could hardly have failed to be noticed by the sacred writer. It seems to me, therefore, that there was some method by which God "testified" his approbation of the offering of Abel which is unknown to us, but in regard to what it was conjecture is vain.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

By faith Enoch was translated. The account of Enoch is found in Gen 5:21-24. It is very brief, and is this, that "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." There is no particular mention of his faith; and the apostle attributes this to him, as in the case of Abel, either because it was involved in the very nature of piety, or because the fact was communicated to him by direct revelation. In the account in Genesis, there is nothing inconsistent with the belief that Enoch was characterized by eminent faith, but it is rather implied in the expression, "he walked with God." Comp. 2Cor 5:7. It may also be implied in what is said by the apostle Jude, (Jude 1:14,15,) that "he prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," etc. From this it would appear that he was a preacher; that he predicted the coming of the Lord to judgment, and that he lived in the firm belief of what was to occur in future times. Moses does not say expressly that Enoch was translated. He says "he was not, for God took him." The expression "he was not," means he was no more among men; or he was removed from the earth. This language would be applicable to any method by which he was removed, whether by dying, or by being translated. A similar expression respecting Romulus occurs in Livy, (i. 16,) Nec deinde in tetris Romulus fuit. The translation of the Septuagint on this part of the verse in Genesis is, ουχευρισκετο--"was not found;" that is, he disappeared. The authority for what the apostle says here that he "was translated," is found in the other phrase in Genesis, "God took him." The reasons which led to the statement that he was translated without seeing death, or that show that this is a fair conclusion from the words in Genesis, are such as these.

(1.) There is no mention made of his death, and in this respect the account of Enoch stands by itself. It is, except in this case, the uniform custom of Moses to mention the age and the death of the individuals whose biography he records, and in many cases this is about all that is said of them. But in regard to Enoch there is this remarkable exception, that no record is

made of his death-showing that there was something unusual in the manner of his removal from the world.

(2.) The Hebrew word used by Moses, found in such a connexion, is one which would rather suggest the idea that he had been taken, in some extraordinary manner from the world. That word----means, to take--with the idea of taking to one's self. Thus, Gen 8:20, "Noah took of all beasts, and offered a burnt-offering." Thus it is often used in the sense of taking a wife --that is, to one's self, (Gen 4:19, 6:2, 12:19, 19:14;) and then it is used in the sense of taking away, Gen 14:12, 27:35, Job 1:21 Gen 12:20, Ps 31:13, Jer 15:15. The word, therefore, would naturally suggest the idea that he had been taken by God to himself, or had been removed in an extraordinary manner from the earth. This is confirmed by the fact that the word is not used anywhere in the Scriptures to denote a removal by death, and that in the only other instance in which it (is used in relation to a removal from this world, it occurs in the statement respecting the translation of Elijah. "And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel, came forth to Elisha, and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away () thy master from thy head to-day?" 2Kgs 2:3,6; comp. Heb 11:11. This transaction, where there could be no doubt about the manner of the removal, shows in what sense the word is used in Genesis.

(3.) It was so understood by the translators of the Septuagint. The apostle has used the same word in this place which is employed by the Seventy in Gen 5:24--μετατιθημι. This word means to transpose, to put in another place; and then to transport, transfer, translate, Acts 7:16, Heb 7:12. It properly expresses the removal to another place, and is the very word which would be used on the supposition that one was taken to heaven without dying.

(4.) This interpretation of the passage in Genesis by Paul is in accordance with the uniform interpretation of the Jews. In the Targum of Onkelos it is evidently supposed that Enoch was

translated without dying. In that Targum the passage in Gen. v. 24 is rendered, "And Enoch walked in the fear of the Lord, and was not, for the Lord did not put him to death"-- " So also in Ecclesiasticus or the Son of Sirach, v: (xlix. 14,) "But upon the earth was no man created like Enoch; for he was taken from the earth." These opinions of the Jews and of the early translators, are of value only as showing that the interpretation which Paul has put upon Gen 5:24 is the natural interpretation. It is such as occurs to separate writers, without collusion, and this shows that this is the meaning most naturally suggested by the passage. That he should not see death. That is, that he should not experience death, or be made personally acquainted with it. The word taste often occurs in the same sense. Heb 2:9, "That he should taste death for every man," Comp Mt 16:28, Mk 9:1, Lk 9:27. And was not found. Gen 5:24: "And he was not." That is, he was not in the land of the living. Paul retains the word used in the Septuagint. He had this testimony, that he pleased God. Implied in the declaration in Gen 5:22, that he "walked with God." This denotes a state of friendship between God and him, and of course implies that his conduct was pleasing to God. The apostle appeals here to the sense of the account in Genesis, but does not retain the very words. The meaning here is not that the testimony respecting Enoch was actually given before his translation, but that the testimony relates to his having pleased God before he was removed. Stuart. In regard to this instructive fragment of history, and to the reasons why Enoch was thus removed, we may make the following remarks.

(1.) The age in which he lived was undoubtedly one of great wickedness. Enoch is selected as the only one of that generation signalized by eminent piety, and he appears to have spent his life in publicly reproving a sinful generation, and in warning them of the approaching judgment, Jude 1:14,16. The wickedness which ultimately led to the universal deluge seems already to have commenced in the earth, and Enoch, like Noah, his great-grandson, was raised up as a preacher of righteousness to reprove a sinful generation.

(2.) It is not improbable that the great truths of religion in that age were extensively denied; and probably, among other things, the future state, the resurrection, the belief that man would exist in another world, and that it was maintained that death was the end of being--was an eternal sleep. If so, nothing could be better adapted to correct the prevailing evils than the removal of an eminent man, without dying, from the world. His departure would thus confirm the instructions of his life; and his removal, like the death of saints often now, would serve to make an impression which his living instructions would not.

(3.) His removal is, in itself, a very important and instructive fact in history. It has occurred in no other instance except that of Elijah; nor has any other living man been translated to heaven except the Lord Jesus. That fact was instructive in a great many respects.

(a.) It showed that there was a future state --another world.

(b.) It showed that the body might exist in that future state--though doubtless so changed as to adapt it to the condition of things there.

(c.) It prepared the world to credit the account of the ascension of the Redeemer. If Enoch and Elijah were removed thus without dying, there was no intrinsic improbability that the Lord Jesus would be removed after having died and risen again.

(d.) It furnishes a demonstration of the doctrine that the saints will exist hereafter, which meets all the arguments of the sceptic and the infidel. One single fact overturns all the mere speculations of philosophy, and renders nugatory all the objections of the sceptic. The infidel argues against the truth of the resurrection, and of the future state, from the difficulties attending the doctrine. A single case of one who has been

raised up from the dead, or who has been removed to heaven, annihilates all such arguments--for how can supposed difficulties destroy a well authenticated fact?

(e,) It is an encouragement to piety. It shows that God regards his friends; that their fidelity and holy living please him; and that in the midst of eminent wickedness and a scoffing world, it is possible so to live as to please God. The conduct of this holy man, therefore, is an encouragement to us to do our duty, though we stand alone; and to defend the truth, though all who live with us upon the earth deny and deride it.

(4.) The removal of Enoch shows that the same thing would be possible in the case of every saint. God could do it in other cases, as well as in his, with equal ease. That his friends, therefore, are suffered to remain on the earth--that they linger on in enfeebled health, or are crushed by calamity, or are stricken: down by the pestilence as others are, is not because God could not remove them, as Enoch was, without dying, but because there is some important reason why they should remain, and linger, and suffer, and die. Among those reasons may be such as the following:

(a.) The regular operation of the laws of nature, as now constituted, require it. Vegetables die; the inhabitants of the deep die; the fowls that fly in the air, and the beasts that roam over hills and plains die; and man, by his sins, is brought under the operation of this great universal law. It would be possible, indeed, for God to save his people from this law, but it would require the interposition of continued miracles; and it is better to have the laws of nature regularly operating, than to have them constantly set aside by Divine interposition.

(b.) The power of religion is now better illustrated in the way in which the saints are actually removed from the earth, than it would be if they were all translated. Its power is now seen in its enabling us to overcome the dread of death, and in its supporting us in the pains and sorrows of the departing hour.

It is a good thing to discipline the soul so that it will not fear to die; it shows how superior religion is to all the forms of philosophy, that it enables the believer to look calmly forward to his own certain approaching death. It is an important matter to keep this up from age to age, and to show to each generation that religion can overcome the natural apprehension of the most fearful calamity which befalls a creature--death; and can make man calm in the prospect of lying beneath the clods of the valley, cold, dark, alone, to moulder back to his native dust. (c.) The death of the Christian does good. It preaches to the living. The calm resignation, the peace, the triumph of the dying believer, is a constant admonition to a thoughtless and wicked world. The deathbed of the Christian proclaims the mercy of God from generation to generation, and there is not a dying saint who may not, and who probably does not do great good in the closing hours of his earthly being.

(d.) It may be added, that the present arrangement falls in with the general laws of religion, that we are to be influenced by faith, not by sight. If all Christians were removed like Enoch, it would be an argument for the truth of religion addressed constantly to the senses. But this is not the way in which the evidence of the truth of religion is proposed to man. It is submitted to his understanding, his conscience, his heart; and in this there is of design a broad distinction between religion and other things. Men act, in other matters, under the influence of the senses; it is designed that in religion they shall act under the influence of higher and nobler considerations, and that they shall be influenced not solely by a reference to what is passing before their eyes, but to the things which are not seen.

6 But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him:* for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

But without faith it is impossible to please him. Without confidence in God--in his fidelity, his truth, his wisdom, his promises. And this is as true in other things as ill religion. It is impossible for a child to please his father unless he has confidence in him. It is impossible for a wife to please her

husband, or a husband a wife, unless they have confidence in each other. If there is distrust and jealousy on either part, there is discord and misery. We cannot be pleased with a professed friend unless he has such confidence in us as to believe our declarations and promises, The same thing is true of God. He cannot be pleased with the man who has no confidence in him; who doubts the truth of his declarations and promises; who does not believe that his ways are right, or that he is qualified for universal empire. The requirement of faith or confidence in God is not arbitrary; it is just what we require of our children, and partners in life, and friends, as the indispensable condition of our being pleased with them.

For he that cometh to God. In any way--as a worshipper. This is alike required in public worship, in the family, and in secret devotion.

Must believe that he is. That God exists. This is the first thing required in worship. Evidently we cannot come to him in an acceptable manner if we doubt his existence. We do not see him, but we must believe that he is; we cannot form in our mind a correct image of God, but this should not prevent a conviction that there is such a Being. But the declaration here implies more than that there should be a general persuasion of the truth that there is a God. It is necessary that we have this belief in lively exercise in the act of drawing near to him, and that we should realize that we are actually in the presence of the all-seeing JEHOVAH.

And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This is equally necessary as the belief that he exists. If we could not believe that God would hear and answer our prayers, there could be no encouragement to call upon him. It is not meant here that the desire of the reward is to be the motive for seeking God--for the apostle makes no affirmation on that point; but that it is impossible to make an acceptable approach to him unless we have this belief.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

By faith Noah. It is less difficult to see that Noah must have been influenced by faith than that Abel and Enoch were. Everything which Noah did, in reference to the threatened deluge, was done in virtue of simple faith or belief of what God said. It was not because he could show from the course of events that things were tending to such a catastrophe; or because such an event had occurred before, rendering it probable that it would be likely to occur again; or because this was the common belief of men, and it was easy to fall into this himself. It was simply because God had informed him of it, and he put unwavering reliance on the truth of the Divine declaration.

Being warned of God. Gen 6:13. The Greek word here used means divinely admonished. Comp. Gen 8:5.

Of things not seen as yet. Of the flood which was yet future. The meaning is, that there were no visible signs of it; there was nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would occur. This admonition was given an hundred and twenty years before the deluge, and of course long before there could have been any natural indications that it would occur.

Moved with fear. Marg. Being wary. The Greek word ευλαβηθεις ---occurs only here and in Acts 23:10: "The chief captain fearing lest Paul," etc. The noun occurs in Heb 5:7: "And was heard in that he feared," Heb 5:7) and Heb 12:28: "With reverence and godly fear." The verb properly means, to act with caution, to be circumspect, and then to fear, to be afraid. So far as the word is concerned, it might mean here that Noah was influenced by the dread of what was coming, or it

may mean that he was influenced by proper caution and reverence for God. The latter meaning agrees better with the scope of the remarks of Paul, and is probably the true sense. His reverence and respect for God induced him to act under the belief that what he had said was true, and that the calamity which he had predicted would certainly come upon the world.

Prepared an ark to the saving of his house. In order that his family might be saved, Gen 6:14-22. The salvation here referred to was preservation from the flood.

By the which. By which faith.

He condemned the world. That is, the wicked world around him. The meaning is, that by his confidence in God, and his preparation for the flood, he showed the wisdom of his own course and the folly of theirs. We have the same phrase now in common use, where one who sets a good example is said to "condemn others." He shows the guilt and folly of their lives by the contrast between his conduct and theirs. The wickedness of the sinner is condemned not only by preaching, and by the admonitions and threatenings of the law of God, but by the conduct of every good man. The language of such a life is as plain a rebuke of the sinner as the most fearful denunciations of Divine wrath.

And became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. The phrase, "heir of righteousness," here means, properly, that he acquired, gained, or became possessed of that righteousness. It does not refer so much to the mode by which it was done, as if it were by inheritance, as to the fact that he obtained it. The word heir is used in this general sense in Rom 4:13,14, Tit 3:7, Heb 1:2, 6:17. Noah was not the heir to that righteousness by inheriting it from his ancestors, but in virtue of it he was regarded as among the heirs or sons of God, and as being a possessor of that righteousness which is connected with faith.

The phrase "righteousness which is by faith" refers to the fact that he was regarded and treated as a righteous man. Rom 1:17. It is observable here, that it is not said that Noah had specific faith in Christ, or that his being made heir of the righteousness of faith depended on that, but it was in connexion with his believing what God said respecting the deluge. It was faith or confidence in God which was the ground of his justification, in accordance with the general doctrine of the Scriptures that it is only by faith that man can be saved, though the specific mode of faith was not that which is required now under the gospel. In the early ages of the world, when few truths were revealed, a cordial belief of any of those truths showed that there was real confidence in God, or that the principle of faith was in the heart; in the fuller revelation which we enjoy, we are not only to believe those truths, but specifically to believe in Him who has made the great atonement for sin, and by whose merits all have been saved who have entered heaven. The same faith or confidence in God which led Noah to believe what God said about the deluge would have led him to believe what he has said about the Redeemer; and the same confidence in God which led him to commit himself to his safe keeping in an ark on the world of waters, would have led him to commit his soul to the safe keeping of the Redeemer, the true Ark of safety. As the principle of faith, therefore, existed in the heart of Noah, it was proper that he should become, with others, an "heir of the righteousness by faith."

In regard to the circumstances which show the strength of his faith, we may make the following remarks.

(1.) It pertained to a very distant future event. It looked forward to that which was to happen after a lapse of an hundred and twenty years. This was known to Noah, (Gen 6:3;) and, at this long period before it occurred, he was to begin to build an ark to save himself and family--to act as though this would be undoubtedly true. This is a much longer period than man now is required to exercise faith before that is realized which is the object of belief. Rare is it that three-score years intervene

between the time when a man first believes in God and when he enters into heaven; much more frequently it is but a few months or days; not an instance now occurs in which the period is lengthened out to an hundred and twenty years.

(2.) There was no outward evidence that what Noah believed would occur. There were no appearances in nature which indicated that there would be such a flood of waters after more than a century had passed away. There were no breakings up of the fountains of the deep; no marks of the far-distant storm gathering on the sky, which could be the basis of the calculation. The word of God was the only ground of evidence; the only thing to which he could refer gainsayers and revilers. It is so now. There are no visible signs of the coming of the Saviour to judge the world. Yet the true believer feels and acts as if it were so--resting on the sure word of God.

(3.) The course of things was much against the truth of what Noah believed. No such event had ever occurred. There is no evidence that there had ever been a storm of rain half sufficient to drown the world; or that there had ever been the breaking up of the deep, or that there had ever been a partial deluge. For sixteen hundred years the course of nature had been uniform, and all the force of this uniformity would be felt and urged when it should be alleged that this was to be disturbed, and to give place to an entire new order of events. Comp. 2Pet 3:4. The same thing is now felt in regard to the objects of the Christian faith. The course of events is uniform. The laws of nature are regular and steady. The dead do not leave their graves. Seasons succeed each other in regular succession; men are born, live, and die, as in former times; fire does not wrap the earth in flames; the elements do not melt with fervent heat; seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter follow each other, and "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." How many probabilities are there now, therefore, as there were in the time of Noah, against that which is the object of faith!

(4.) It is not improbable that when Noah proclaimed the approaching destruction of the world by a deluge, the possibility of such an event was strongly denied by the philosophers of that age. The fact that such an event could have occurred has been denied by infidel philosophers in our own times, and attempts have been gravely made to show that the earth did not contain water enough to cover its surface to the height mentioned in the Scriptures, and that no condensation of the vapour in the atmosphere could produce such an effect. It is not improbable that some such arguments may have been used in the time of Noah, and it is morally certain that he could not meet those arguments by any philosophy of his own. There is no reason to think that he was endowed with such a knowledge of chemistry as to be able to show that such a thing was possible, or that he had such an acquaintance with the structure of the earth as to demonstrate that it contained within itself the elements of its own destruction. All that he could oppose to such speculations was the simple declaration of God; and the same thing is also true now in regard to the cavils and philosophical arguments of infidelity. Objections drawn from philosophy are often made against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; the destruction of the earth by the agency of fire; and even the existence of the soul after death. These difficulties may be obviated partly by science; but the proof that these events will occur does not depend on science. It is a matter of simple faith; and all that we can in fact oppose to these objections is the declaration of God. The result showed that Noah was not a fool or a fanatic in trusting to the word of God against the philosophy of his age; and the result will show the same of the Christian in his confiding in the truth of the Divine declarations against the philosophy of his age.

(5.) It is beyond all question that Noah would be subjected to much ridicule and scorn, he would be regarded as a dreamer; a fanatic; an alarmist; a wild projector. The purpose of making preparation for such an event as the flood to occur after the lapse of an hundred and twenty years, and when there were no indications of it, and all appearances were against it, would be

regarded as in the highest degree wild and visionary. The design of building a vessel which would outride the storm, and which would live in such an open sea, and which would contain all sorts of animals with the food for them for an indefinite period, could not but have been regarded as eminently ridiculous. When the ark was preparing, nothing could have been a more happy subject for scoffing and jibes. In such an age, therefore, and in such circumstances, we may suppose that all the means possible would have been resorted to, to pour contempt on such an undertaking. They who had wit, would find here an ample subject for its exercise; if ballads were made then, no more fertile theme for a profane song could be desired than this; and in the haunts of revelry, intemperance, and pollution, nothing would furnish a finer topic to give point to a jest, than the credulity and folly of the old man who was building the ark. It would require strong faith to contend thus with the wit, the sarcasm, the contempt, the raillery, and the low jesting, as well as with the wisdom and philosophy of a whole world. Yet it is a fair illustration of what occurs often now, and of the strength of that faith in the Christian heart which meets meekly and calmly the scoffs and jeers of a wicked generation.

(6.) All this would be heightened by delay. The time was distant. What now completes four generations would have passed away before the event predicted would occur, Youth grew up to manhood, and manhood passed on to old age, and still there were no signs of the coming storm. That was no feeble faith which could hold on in this manner for an hundred and twenty years, believing unwaveringly that all which God had said would be accomplished. But it is an illustration of faith in the Christian church now. The church maintains the same confidence in God from age to age--and, regardless of all the reproaches of scoffers, and all the arguments of philosophy, still adheres to the truths which God has revealed. So with individual Christians. They look for the promise. They are expecting heaven. They doubt not that the time will come when they will be received to glory; when their bodies will be

raised up glorified and immortal, and when sin and sorrow will be no more. In the conflicts and trials of life, the time of their deliverance may seem to be long delayed. The world may reproach them, and Satan may tempt them to doubt whether all their hope of heaven is not delusion. But their faith fails not; and though hope seems delayed, and the heart is sick, yet they keep the eye on heaven. So it is in regard to the final triumphs of the gospel. The Christian looks forward to the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea. Yet that time may seem to be long delayed. Wickedness triumphs. A large part of the earth is still filled with the habitations of cruelty. The progress of the gospel is slow. The church comes up reluctantly to the work. The enemies of the cause exult and rejoice, and ask, with scoffing triumph, Where is the evidence that the nations will be converted to God? They suggest difficulties; they refer to the numbers, and to the opposition of the enemies of the true religion; to the might of kingdoms, and to the power of fixed opinion, and to the hold which idolatry has on mankind; and they sneeringly inquire. At what period will the world be converted to Christ? Yet, in the face of all difficulties, and arguments, and sneers, faith confides in the promise of the Father to the Son, that the "heathen shall be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession," Ps 2:8. The faith of the true Christian is as strong in the fulfilment of this promise, as that of Noah was in the assurance that the guilty world would be destroyed by a flood of waters.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

By faith Abraham. There is no difficulty in determining that Abraham was influenced by faith in God. The case is even stronger than that of Noah, for it is expressly declared, Gen 15:6, "And he believed, in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Comp. Rom 4:1, and following. In the illustrations of the power of faith in this chapter, the apostle appeals to two instances m which it was exhibited by

Abraham, "the father of the faithful." Each of these required confidence in God of extraordinary strength, and each of them demanded a special and honourable mention. The first was that when he left his own country to go to a distant land of strangers, (Heb 11:8-10;) the other when he showed his readiness to sacrifice his own son in obedience to the will of God, Heb 11:17-19.

When he was called. Gen 12:1: "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Into a Place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed. To Palestine, or the land of Canaan, though that was not indicated at the time.

And he went out not knowing whither he went. Gen 12:4. Abraham at that time took with him Sarai, and Lot the son of his brother, and "the souls that they had gotten in Haran." Terah, the father of Abraham, started on the journey with them, but died in Haran, Gen 11:31,32. The original call was made to Abraham, Gen 12:1, Acts 7:2,3; but he appears to have induced his father and his nephew to accompany him. At this time he had no children, (Gen 11:30,) though it seems probable that Lot had, Gen 12:6. Some, however, understand the expression in Gen 12:6, "and the souls they had gotten in Haran," as referring to the servants or domestics that they had in various ways procured, and to the fact that Abraham and Lot gradually drew around them a train of dependents and followers who were disposed to unite with them, and accompany them wherever they went. The Chaldee Paraphrast understands it of the proselytes which Abraham had made there--"All the souls which he had subdued under the law." When it is said that Abraham "went out not knowing whither he went," it must be understood as meaning that he was ignorant to what country he would in fact be led. If it be supposed that he had some general intimatian of the nature of that country, and of the direction in which it was situate, yet it

must be remembered that the knowledge of geography was then exceedingly imperfect; that this was a distant country; that it lay beyond a pathless desert, and that probably no traveller had ever come from that land to apprize him what it was. All this serves to show what was the strength of the faith of Abraham.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country. The land of Canaan that had been promised to him and his posterity. He resided there as if he were a stranger and sojourner. He had no possessions there which he did not procure by honest purchase; he owned no land in fee-simple, except the small piece which he bought for a burial-place. See Gen 23:7-20. In all respects he lived there as if he had no peculiar right in the soil; as if he never expected to own it; as if he were in a country wholly owned by others. He exercised no privileges which might not have been exercised by any foreigner, and which was not regarded as a right of common--that of feeding his cattle in any unoccupied part of the land; and he would have had no power of ejecting any other persons, excepting that which any one might have enjoyed by the pre-occupancy of the pasture grounds. To all intents and purposes he was a stranger. Yet he seems to have lived in the confident and quiet expectation that that land would, at some period, come into the possession of his posterity. It was a strong instance of faith that he should cherish this belief for so long a time, when he was a stranger there--when he gained no right in the soil, except in the small piece that was purchased as a burial-place for his wife--and when he saw old age coming on, and still the whole land in the possession of others.

Dwelling in tabernacles. In tents, the common mode of living in countries where the principal occupation is that of keeping flocks and herds. His dwelling thus in moveable tents looked little like its being his permanent possession.

With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. That is, the same thing occurred in regard to them which had to Abraham. They also lived in tents. They acquired no fixed property, and no title to the land, except to the small portion purchased as a burial-place. Yet they were heirs of the same promise as Abraham, that the land would be theirs. Though it was still owned by others, and filled with its native inhabitants, yet they adhered to the belief that it would come into the possession of their families. In their movable habitations-- in their migrations from place to place--they seem never to have doubted that the fixed habitation of their posterity was to be there, and: that all that had been promised would be certainly fulfilled.

10 for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

For he looked for a city which hath foundations. It has been doubted to what the apostle here refers. Grotius and some others suppose that he refers to Jerusalem, as a permanent dwelling for his posterity in contradistinction from the unsettled mode of life which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob led. But there is no evidence that Abraham looked forward to the building of such a city, for no promise was made to him of this kind; and this interpretation falls evidently below the whole drift of the passage. Comp. Heb 11:12:14-16, 12:22, 13:14. Phrases like that of "the city of God," "a city with foundations," "the new Jerusalem," and "the heavenly Jerusalem" in the time of the apostle, appear to have acquired a kind of technical signification. They referred to the area--of which Jerusalem, the seat of the worship of God, seems to have been regarded as the emblem. Thus in Heb 12:22, the apostle speaks of the "heavenly Jerusalem," and in Heb 13:14, he says, "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In Rev 21:2, John says that he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven," and proceeds in that chapter and the following to give a most beautiful description of it. Even so early as the time of Abraham, it would seem that the future blessedness of the

righteous was foretold under the image of a splendid City reared on permanent foundations. It is remarkable that Moses does not mention this as an object of the faith of Abraham, and it is impossible to ascertain the degree of distinctness which this had in is view. It is probable that the apostle, in speaking of his faith in this particular, did not rely on any distinct record, or even any tradition, but spoke of his piety in the language which, he would use to characterize religion of any age, or in any individual, he was accustomed, in common with others of his time, to contemplate the future blessedness of the righteous under the image of a beautiful city; a place where the worship of God would be celebrated for ever--a city of which Jerusalem was the most striking representation to the mind of a Jew. It was natural for him to speak of strong piety in this manner wherever it existed, and especially in such a case as that of Abraham, who left his own habitation to wander in a distant land. This fact showed that he regarded himself as a stranger and sojourner; and yet he had a strong expectation of a fixed habitation, and a permanent inheritance. He must, therefore, have looked on to the permanent abodes of the righteous; the heavenly city ;--and though he had an undoubted confidence that the promised land would be given to his posterity, yet, as he did not possess it himself, he must have looked for his own permanent abode to the fixed residence of the just in heaven. This passage seems to me to prove that Abraham had an expectation of future happiness after death. There is not the slightest evidence that he supposed there would be a magnificent and glorious capital where the Messiah would personally reign, and where the righteous dead, raised from their graves, would dwell in the second advent of the Redeemer. All that the passage fairly implies is, that while Abraham expected the possession of the promised land for his posterity, yet his faith looked beyond this for a permanent home in a future world.

Whose builder and maker is God. Which would not be reared by the agency of man, but of which God was the immediate and direct architect. This shows conclusively, I think, that the

reference in this allusion to the "city" is not to Jerusalem, as Grotius supposes; but the language is just such as will appropriately describe heaven, represented as a city reared without human hands or art, and founded and fashioned by the skill and power of the Deity; Comp. 2Cor 5:1 The language here applied to God as the "architect" or framer of the universe is often used in the classic writers. See Kuinoel and Wetstein. The apostle here commends the faith of Abraham as eminently strong. The following hints will furnish topics of reflection to those who are disposed to inquire more fully into its strength.

(1.) The journey which he undertook was then a long and dangerous one. The distance from Haran to Palestine, by a direct route, was not less than four hundred miles, and this journey lay across a vast desert --a part of Arabia Deserta. That journey has always been tedious and perilous; but to see its real difficulty, we must put ourselves into the position in which the world was four thousand years ago. There was no knowledge of the way; no frequented path; no facility for travelling; no turnpike or railway; and such a journey then must have appeared incomparably more perilous than almost any which could now be undertaken.

(2.) He was going among strangers. Who they were he knew not; but the impression could not but have been made on his mind that they were strangers to religion, and that a residence among them would be anything but desirable.

(3.) He was leaving country, and home, and friends; the place of his birth and the graves of his fathers, with the moral certainty that he would see them no more.

(4.) He had no right to the country which he went to receive. He could urge no claim on the ground of discovery, or inheritance, or conquest, at any former period; but though he went in a peaceful manner, and with no power to take it, and could urge no claim to it whatever, yet he went with the

utmost confidence that it would be his. He did not even expect to buy it--for he had no means to do this, and it seems never to have entered his mind to bargain for it in any way, except for the small portion that he needed for a burying ground.

(5.) He had no means of obtaining possession. He had no wealth to purchase it; no armies to conquer it; no title to it which could be enforced before the tribunals of the land. The prospect of obtaining it must have been distant, and probably he saw no means by which it was to be done. In such a case, his only hope could be in God.

(6.) It is not impossible that the enterprise in that age might have been treated by the friends of the patriarch as perfectly wild and visionary. The prevailing religion evidently was idolatry, and the claim which Abraham set up to a special call from the Most High, might have been deemed entirely fanatical. To start off on a journey through a pathless desert; to leave his country and home, and all that he held dear, when he himself knew not whither he went; to go with no means of conquest, but with the expectation that the distant and unknown land would be given him, could not but have been regarded as a singular instance of visionary hope. The whole transaction, therefore was in the highest degree an act of simple confidence in God, where there was no human basis or calculation, and where all the principles on which men commonly act would have led him to pursue just the contrary course. It is, therefore, not without reason, that the faith of Abraham is so commended.

11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive
seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because
she judged him faithful who had promised.
12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so*
many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is
by the seashore innumerable.
13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but
having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them,* and

embraced *them,* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

These all died in faith. That is those who had been just mentioned--Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. It was true of Abel and Noah also, that they died in faith, but they are not included in this declaration, for the "promises" were not particularly entrusted to them; and if the word "these" be made to include them, it must include Enoch also, who did not die at all. The phrase here used, "these all died in faith," does not mean that they died in the exercise or possession of religion, but more strictly that they died not having possessed what was the object of their faith. They had been looking for something future, which they did not obtain during their lifetime, and died believing that it would yet be theirs.

Not having received the promises. That is, not having received the fulfilment of the promises; or the promised blessings. The promises themselves they had received. Comp. Lk 24:49, Acts 1:4,11,16, Gal 3:14 Heb 11:33,39. In all these places the word promise is used by metonymy for the thing promised.

But having seen them afar off. Having seen that they would be fulfilled in future times. Comp. Jn 8:56. It is probable that the apostle here means that they saw the entire fulfilment of all that the promises embraced in the future that is, the bestowment of the land of Canaan, the certainty of a numerous posterity, and of the entrance into the heavenly Canaan --the world of fixed and permanent rest. According to the reasoning of the apostle here, the "promises" to which they trusted included all these things.

And were persuaded of them. Had no doubt of their reality.

And embraced them. This word implies more than our word embrace frequently does; that is, to receive as true. It means, properly, to draw to one's self; and then to embrace, as one does a friend from whom he has been separated. It then means

to greet, salute, welcome, and here means a joyful greeting of those promises; or a pressing them to the heart, as we do a friend. It was not a cold and formal reception of them, but a warm and hearty welcome. Such is the nature of true faith when it embraces the promises of salvation. No act of pressing a friend to the bosom is ever more warm and cordial.

And confessed that they were strangers. Thus Abraham said, Gen 23:4, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." That is, he regarded himself as a foreigner; as having no home and no possessions there. It was on this ground that he proposed to buy a burial place of the sons of Heth.

And pilgrims. This is the word-- παρεπιδημος--which is used by Abraham, as rendered by the Seventy in Gen 23:4, and which is there translated "sojourner" in the common English version. The word pilgrim means, properly, a wanderer, a traveller, and particularly one who leaves his own country to visit a holy place. This sense does not quite suit the meaning here, or in Gen 23:4. The Hebrew word-- means, properly, one who dwells in a place, and particularly one who is a mere resident without the rights of; a citizen. The Greek word means a by-resident; one who lives by another or among a people not his own. This is the idea here. It is not that they confessed themselves to be wanderers, or that they had left their home to visit a holy place, but that they resided as mere sojourners in a country that was not theirs. What might be their ultimate destination, or their purpose, is not implied in the meaning of the word. They were such as reside awhile among another people, but have no permanent home there.

On the earth. The phrase here used--επιτηςγης--might mean merely on the land of Canaan, but the apostle evidently uses it in a larger sense as denoting the earth in general. There can be no doubt that this accords with the views which the patriarchs had--regarding themselves not only as strangers in the land of Canaan, but feeling that the same thing was true

in reference to their whole residence upon the earth--that it was not their permanent home.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

They might have had opportunity to have returned. The journey was not so long or perilous that they could not have retraced their steps, it would have been no more difficult or dangerous for them to do that than it was to make the journey at first. This shows that their remaining as strangers and sojourners in the land of Canaan was voluntary. They preferred it, with all its inconveniences and hardships, to return to their native land. The same thing is true of all the people of God now. If they choose to return to the world, and to engage again in all its vain pursuits, there is nothing to hinder them. There are "opportunities" enough. There are abundant inducements held out. There are numerous gay and worldly friends who would regard it as a matter of joy and triumph to have them return to vanity and folly again. They would welcome them to their society; rejoice to have them participate in their pleasures; and be willing that they should share in the honours and the wealth of the world. And they might do it. There are multitudes of Christians who could grace, as they once did, the ball-room; who could charm the social party by song and wit; who could rise to the highest posts of office, or compete successfully with others in the race for the acquisition of fame. They have seen and tasted enough of the vain pursuits of the world, to satisfy them with their vanity; they are convinced of the sinfulness of making these things the great objects of living; their affections are now fixed on higher and nobler objects, and they choose not to return to those pursuits again, but to live as strangers and sojourners on the earth--for there is nothing more voluntary than religion.

16 But now they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. That is, at the time referred to when they confessed that they were strangers and sojourners, they showed that they sought a better country than the one which they had left. They lived as if they had no expectation of a permanent residence on earth, and were looking to another world. The argument of the apostle here appears to be based on what is apparent from the whole history, that they had a confident belief that the land of Canaan would be given to "their posterity; but as for themselves they had no expectation of permanently dwelling there, but looked to a home in the heavenly country. Hence they formed no plans for conquest; they laid claim to no title in the soil; they made no purchases of farms for cultivation; they lived and died without owning any land, except enough to bury their dead. All this appears as if they looked for a final home in a "better country, even an heavenly."

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Since they had such an elevated aim, he was willing to speak of himself as their God and Friend. They acted as became his friends, and he was not ashamed of the relation which he sustained to them. The language to which the apostle evidently refers here is that which is found in Ex 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." We are not to suppose that God is ever ashamed of anything that he does. The meaning here is, that they had acted in such a manner that it was fit that he should show towards them the character of a Benefactor, Protector, and Friend.

For he hath prepared for them a city. Such as they had expected--a heavenly residence, Heb 11:10. There is evidently here a reference to heaven, represented as a city--the New Jerusalem--prepared for his people by God himself. Comp. Mt 25:34. Thus they obtained what they had looked for by faith. The wandering and unsettled patriarchs to whom the promise was made, and who showed all their lives that they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims, were admitted to the home of permanent rest; and their posterity was ultimately

admitted to the possession of the promised land. Nothing could more certainly demonstrate that the patriarchs believed in a future state than this passage. They did not expect a permanent home on earth. They made no efforts to enter into the possession of the promised land themselves. They quietly and calmly waited for the time when God would give it to their posterity; and, in the meantime, for themselves they looked forward to their permanent home in the heavens. Even in this early period of the world, therefore, there was the confident expectation of the future state. Comp. Mt 22:31. We may remark, that the life of the patriarchs was, in all essential respects, such as we should lead. They looked forward to heaven; they sought no permanent possessions here; they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. So should we be. In our more fixed and settled habits of life; in our quiet homes; in our residence in the land in which we were born, and in the society of old and tried friends, we should yet regard ourselves as "strangers and sojourners." We have here no fixed abode. The houses in which we dwell will soon be occupied by others; the paths in which we go will soon be trod by the feet of others; the fields which we cultivate will soon be ploughed and sown and reaped by others. Others will read the books which we read; sit down at the tables where we sit; lie on the beds where we repose; occupy the chambers where we shall die, and from whence we shall be removed to our graves. If we have any permanent home, it is in heaven; and that we have the faithful lives of the patriarchs teach us, and the unerring word of God everywhere assures us.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he
that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*,

By faith Abraham. The apostle had stated one strong instance of the faith of Abraham, and he now refers to one still more remarkable--the strongest illustration of faith, undoubtedly, which has ever been evinced in our world.

When he was tried. The word here used is rendered tempted in Mt 4:1,3, 16:1, 19:3, 22:18,35, and in twenty-two other places in the New Testament; prove, in Jn 6:6; hath gone about, in

Acts 24:6; examine, 2Cor 13:6; and tried, in Rev 2:2,10, 3:10. It does not mean here, as it often does, to place inducements before one to lead him to do wrong, but to subject his faith to a trial in order to test its genuineness and strength. The meaning here is, that Abraham was placed in circumstances which showed what was the real strength of his confidence in God.

Offered up Isaac. That is, he showed that he was ready and willing to make the sacrifice, and would have done it if he had not been restrained by the voice of the angel, Gen 22:11,12. So far as the intention of Abraham was concerned, the deed was done, for he had made every preparation for the offering, and was actually about to take the life of his son.

And he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son. The promises particularly of a numerous posterity. The fulfilment of those promises depended on him whom he was now about to offer as a sacrifice. If Abraham had been surrounded with children, or if no special promise of a numerous posterity had been made to him, this act would not have been so remarkable. It would, in any case, have been a strong act of faith; it was peculiarly strong in his case, from the circumstances that he had an only son, and that the fulfilment of the promise depended on his life.

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Gen 21:12. A numerous posterity had been promised to him. It was there said expressly that this promise was not to be fulfilled through the son of Abraham by the bond-woman Hagar, but through Isaac. Of course, it was implied that Isaac was to reach manhood; and yet, notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding Abraham fully believed it, he prepared deliberately, in obedience to the Divine command, to put him to death. The phrase, "thy seed be called," means, that his posterity was to be named after Isaac, or was to descend only from him. The word "called," in the Scriptures, is often equivalent to the verb to be. See Isa 56:7. To name or call a

thing, was the same as to say that it was, or that it existed. It does not mean here that his spiritual children were to be called or selected from among the posterity of Isaac, but that the posterity promised to Abraham would descend neither from Ishmael nor the sons of Keturah, but in the line of Isaac. This is a strong circumstance insisted on by the apostle, to show the strength of Abraham's faith. It was shown not only by his willingness to offer up the child of his old age--his only son by his beloved wife, but by his readiness, at the command of God, to sacrifice even him on whom the fulfilment of the promises depended.

18 of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead. And that he would do it; for so Abraham evidently believed, and this idea is plainly implied in the whole narrative. There was no other way in which the promise could be fulfilled; and Abraham reasoned justly in the case. He had received the promise of a numerous posterity, he had been told expressly that it was to be through this favourite child, he was now commanded to put him to death as a sacrifice, and he prepared to do it. To fulfil these promises, therefore, there was no other way possible but for him to be raised up from the dead, and Abraham fully believed that it would be done. The child had been given to him at first in a supernatural manner, and he was prepared, therefore, to believe that he would be restored to him again by miracle. He did not doubt that he who had given him to him at first, in a manner so contrary to all human probability, could restore him again in a method as extraordinary, He therefore, anticipated that he would raise him up immediately from the dead. That this was the expectation of Abraham is apparent from the narrative in Gen 22:6: "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you;" in the plural--"and we will return;" that is, I and Isaac will return, for no other persons went with them, Gen 22:6. As Abraham went with the full expectation of

sacrificing Isaac, and as he expected Isaac to return with him, it follows that he believed that God would raise him up immediately from the dead.

From whence also he received him in a figure. There has been great difference of opinion as to the sense of this passage, but it seems to me to be plain. The obvious interpretation is, that he then received him by his being raised up from the altar as if from the dead. He was to Abraham dead. He had given him up. He had prepared to offer him as a sacrifice. He lay there before him as one who was dead. From that altar he was raised up by direct Divine interposition, as if he was raised from the grave, and this was to Abraham a figure or a representation of the resurrection. Other interpretations may be seen in Stuart, in loc. The following circumstances will illustrate the strength of Abraham's faith in this remarkable transaction.

(1.) The strong persuasion on his mind that God had commanded this. In a case of this nature--where such a sacrifice was required--how natural would it have been for a more feeble faith to have doubted whether the command came from God! It might have been suggested to such a mind that this must be a delusion, or a temptation of Satan; that God could not require such a thing; and that whatever might be the appearance of a Divine command in the cases there must be some deception about it. Yet Abraham does not appear to have reasoned about it at all, or to have allowed the strong feelings of a father to come in to modify his conviction that God had commanded him to give up his son. What an example is this to us! And how ready should we be to yield up a son--an only son--when God comes himself and removes him from us.

(2.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact that, in obedience to the simple command of God, all the strong feelings of a father were overcome. On the one hand, there were his warm affections for an only son; and on the other, there was the simple command of God. They came in collisions but Abraham did not hesitate a moment. The strong

paternal feeling was sacrificed at once. What an example this, too, for us! When the command of God and our own attachments come into collision, we should not hesitate a moment. God is to be obeyed. His command and arrangements are to be yielded to, though most tender ties are rent asunder, and though the heart bleeds.

(3.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact that, in obedience to the command of God, he resolved to do what in the eyes of the world would be regarded as a most awful crime. There is no crime of a higher grade than the murder of a son by the hand of a father. So it is now estimated by the world, and so it would have been in the time of Abraham. All the laws of God and of society appeared to be against the act which Abraham was about to commit, and he went forth not ignorant of the estimate which the world would put on this deed if it were known. How natural, in such circumstances, would it have been to argue, that God could not possibly give such a command; that it was against all the laws of heaven and earth; that there was required in this what God and man alike must and would pronounce to be wrong and abominable! Yet Abraham did not hesitate. The command of God in the case was, to his mind, a sufficient proof that this was right; and it should teach us that whatever our Maker commands us should be done--no matter what may be the estimate affixed to it by human laws, and no matter how it may be regarded by the world.

(4.) The strength of his faith was seen in the fact, that there was a positive promise of God to himself which would seem to be frustrated by what he was about to do. God had expressly promised to him a numerous posterity, and had said that it was to be through this son. How could this be if he was put to death as a sacrifice? And how could God command such a thing when his promise was thus positive? Yet Abraham did not hesitate. It was not for him to reconcile these things; it was his to obey. He did not doubt that somehow all that God had said would prove to be true; and as he saw but one way in which it

could be done--by his being immediately restored to life--he concluded that that was to be the way. So when God utters his will to us, it is ours simply to obey. It is not to inquire in what way his commands or revealed truth can be reconciled with other things. He will himself take care of that. It is ours at once to yield to what he commands, and to believe that somehow all that he has required and said will be consistent with everything else which he has uttered.

(5.) The strength of the faith of Abraham was seen in his belief that God would raise his son from the dead. Of that he had no doubt. But what evidence had he of that? It had not been promised. No case of the kind had ever occurred; and the subject was attended with all the difficulties which attend it now. But Abraham believed it; for, first, there was no other way in which the promise of God could be fulfilled; and, second, such a thing would be no more remarkable than what had already occurred. It was as easy for God to raise him from the dead as it was to give him at first, contrary to all the probabilities of the case---and he did not, therefore, doubt that it would be so. Is it less easy for us to believe the doctrine of the resurrection than it was for Abraham? Is the subject attended with more difficulties now than it was then? The faith of Abraham, in this remarkable instance, shows us that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, notwithstanding the limited revelations then enjoyed, and all the obvious difficulties of the case, was early believed in the world; and as those difficulties are no greater now, and as new light has been shed upon it by subsequent revelations, and especially as, in more than one instance, the dead have been actually raised, those difficulties should not be allowed to make us doubt it, now.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. See Gen 27:26-40. The meaning is, that he pronounced

a blessing on them in respect to their future condition. This was by faith in God, who had communicated it to him, and in full confidence that he would accomplish all that was here predicted. The act of faith here was simply that which believes that all that God says is true. There were no human probabilities at the time when these prophetic announcements were made, which could have been the basis of his calculation; but all that he said must have rested merely on the belief that God had revealed it to him. A blessing was pronounced on each, of a very different nature, but Isaac had no doubt that both would be fulfilled.

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying. Gen 47:31 Gen 48:1-20. That is, when he was about to die. He saw his death near when he pronounced this blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. This is an exact quotation from the Septuagint in Gen 47:31. The English version of that place is, "and Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head," which is a proper translation, in the main, of the word --mittch. That word, however, with different points----mattch, means, a branch, a bough, a rod, a staff, and the translators of the Septuagint have so rendered it. The Masoretic points are of no authority, and either translation, therefore, would be proper. The word rendered "head" in Gen 47:31-- "bed's head"----rosh, means, properly, head, but may there mean the top of anything, and there is no impropriety in applying it to the head or top of a staff. The word rendered in Gen 47:31, bowed----implies, properly, the idea of worshipping. It is bowing, or prostration for the purpose of worship or homage. Though the Septuagint and the apostle here have, therefore, given a somewhat different version from that commonly given of the Hebrew, and sustained by the Masoretic pointing, yet it cannot be demonstrated that the version is unauthorized, or that it is not a fair translation of the Hebrew. It has also the probabilities of the case in its favour. Jacob was tenderly affected in view of the goodness of God,

and of the assurance that he would be conveyed from Egypt when he died, and buried in the land of his fathers. Deeply impressed with this, nothing was more natural than that the old man should lean reverently forward, and incline his head upon the top of his staff, and adore the covenant faithfulness of his God. Such an image is much more natural and probable than that he should "bow upon his bed's head"--a phrase which at best is not very intelligible. If this be the true account, then the apostle does not refer here to what was done when he "blessed the sons of Joseph," but to an act expressive of strong faith in God which had occurred just before. The meaning then is, "By faith when about to die he blessed the sons of Joseph; and by faith also, he reverently bowed before God in the belief that when he died his remains would be conveyed to the promised land, and expressed his gratitude in an act of worship, leaning reverently on the top of his staff." The order in which these things are mentioned is of no consequence, and thus the whole difficulty in the case vanishes. Both the acts here referred to were expressive of strong confidence in God.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

By faith Joseph, when he died. When about to die. See Gen 50:24,25. Made mention of the departing of the children of Israel. Marg. "remembered." The meaning is, that he called this to their mind; he spake of it. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." This prediction of Joseph could have rested only on faith in the promise of God. There were no events then occurring which would be likely to lead to this, and nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would be so, except what God had spoken. The faith of Joseph, then, was simple confidence in God; and its strength was seen in his firm conviction that what had been promised would be fulfilled, even when there were no appearances that, to human view, justified it. And gave commandment concerning his bones. Gen 50:25,26. And Joseph took an oath of the children of

Israel; saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." He had such a firm belief that they would possess the land of promise, that he exacted an oath of them that they would remove his remains with them, that he might be buried in the land of his fathers. He could not have exacted this oath, nor could they have taken it, unless both he and they had a sure confidence that what God had spoken would be performed.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith Moses, when he was born. That is, by the faith of his parents. The faith of Moses himself is commended in the following verses. The statement of the apostle here is that his parents were led to preserve his life by their confidence in God. They believed that he was destined to some great purpose, and that he would be spared, notwithstanding all the probabilities against it, and all the difficulties in the case.

Was hid three months of his parents. By his parents. In Ex 2:2, it is said that it was done by his mother. The truth doubtless was, that the mother was the agent in doing it--since the concealment, probably, could be better effected by one than where two were employed--but that the father also concurred in it is morally certain. The concealment was at first, probably in their own house. The command seems to have been (Ex 1:22,) that the child should be cast into the river as soon as born. This child was concealed in the hope that some way might be found out by which his life might be spared.

Because they saw he was a proper child. A fair, or beautiful child-- αστειον. The word properly means, pertaining to a city, (from αστυ, a city;) then urbane, polished, elegant; then fair, beautiful. In Acts 7:20, it is said that he was "fair to God," (Marg. ;) that is, exceedingly fair, or very handsome. His extraordinary beauty seems to have been the reason which particularly influenced his parents to attempt to preserve him.

It is not impossible that they supposed that his uncommon beauty indicated that he was destined to some important service in life, and that they were on that account the more anxious to save him.

And they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Requiring that all male children should be given up to be thrown into the Nile. That is, they were not so alarmed, or did not so dread the king, as to be induced to comply with the command. The strength of the faith of the parents of Moses appears,

(1.) because the command of Pharaoh to destroy all the male children was positive, but they had so much confidence in God as to disregard it.

(2.) Because there was a strong improbability that their child could be saved. They themselves found it impossible to conceal him longer than three months; and when it was discovered, there was every probability that the law would be enforced, and that the child would be put to death. Perhaps there was reason also to apprehend that the parents would be punished for disregarding the authority of the king.

(3.) Because they probably believed that their child was destined to some important work. They thus committed him to God instead of complying with the command of an earthly monarch; and, against strong probabilities in the case, they believed that it was possible that in some way he might be preserved alive. The remarkable result showed that their faith was not unfounded.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

By faith Moses. He had confidence in God when he called him to be the leader of his people. He believed that he was able to deliver them; and he so trusted in him that he was willing, at his command, to forego the splendid prospects which opened before him in Egypt. When he was come to

years. Gr. "being great;" that is, when he was grown up to manhood. He was at that time forty years of age. Acts 7:23. He took this step, therefore, in the full maturity of his judgment, and when there was no danger of being influenced by the ardent passions of youth. Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. When saved from the ark in which he was placed on the Nile, he was brought up for the daughter of Pharaoh, Ex 2:9. He seems to have been adopted by her, and trained up as her own son. What prospects this opened before him is not certainly known. There is no probability that he would be the heir to the crown of Egypt, as is often affirmed, for there is no proof that the crown descended in the line of daughters; nor, if it did, is there any probability that it would descend on an adopted son of a daughter. But his situation could not but be regarded as highly honourable, and as attended with great advantages. It gave him the opportunity of receiving the best education which the times and country afforded--an opportunity of which he seems to have availed himself to the utmost. Acts 7:22. It would doubtless be connected with important offices in the state. It furnished the opportunity of a life of ease and pleasure--such as they commonly delight in who reside at courts. And it doubtless opened before him the prospect of wealth, for there is no improbability in supposing that he would be the heir of the daughter of a rich monarch. Yet all this, it is said, he "refused." There is indeed no express mention made of his formally and openly refusing it, but his leaving the court, and identifying himself with his oppressed countrymen was, in fact, a refusal of these high honours, and of these brilliant prospects. It is not impossible that, when he became acquainted with his real history, there was some open and decided refusal, on his part, to be regarded as the son of the daughter of this heathen monarch. By faith Moses. He had confidence in God when he called him to be the leader of his people. He believed that he was able to deliver them; and he so trusted in him that he was willing, at his command, to forego the splendid prospects which opened before him in Egypt. When he was come to years. Gr. "being great;" that is,

when he was grown up to manhood. He was at that time forty years of age. Acts 7:23. He took this step, therefore, in the full maturity of his judgment, and when there was no danger of being influenced by the ardent passions of youth. Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. When saved from the ark in which he was placed on the Nile, he was brought up for the daughter of Pharaoh, Ex 2:9. He seems to have been adopted by her, and trained up as her own son. What prospects this opened before him is not certainly known. There is no probability that he would be the heir to the crown of Egypt, as is often affirmed, for there is no proof that the crown descended in the line of daughters; nor, if it did, is there any probability that it would descend on an adopted son of a daughter. But his situation could not but be regarded as highly honourable, and as attended with great advantages. It gave him the opportunity of receiving the best education which the times and country afforded--an opportunity of which he seems to have availed himself to the utmost. Acts 7:22. It would doubtless be connected with important offices in the state. It furnished the opportunity of a life of ease and pleasure--such as they commonly delight in who reside at courts. And it doubtless opened before him the prospect of wealth, for there is no improbability in supposing that he would be the heir of the daughter of a rich monarch. Yet all this, it is said, he "refused." There is indeed no express mention made of his formally and openly refusing it, but his leaving the court, and identifying himself with his oppressed countrymen was, in fact, a refusal of these high honours, and of these brilliant prospects. It is not impossible that, when he became acquainted with his real history, there was some open and decided refusal, on his part, to be regarded as the son of the daughter of this heathen monarch.

25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. With those whom God had chosen to be his people--the Israelites, They were then oppressed and downtrodden; but they were the descendants of Abraham, and were those whom

God had designed to be his peculiar people. Moses saw that if he cast in his lot with them, he must expect trials. They were poor, and crushed, and despised--a nation of slaves. If he identified himself with them, his condition would be like theirs--one of great trial; if he sought to elevate and deliver them, such an undertaking could not but be one of great peril and hardship. Trial and danger, want and care, would follow from any course which he could adopt, and he knew that an effort to rescue them from bondage must be attended with the sacrifice of all the comforts and honour which he enjoyed at court. Yet he "chose" this. He on the whole preferred it. He left the court, not because he was driven away; not because there was nothing there to gratify ambition; or to be a stimulus to avarice; and not on account of harsh treatment--for there is no intimation that he was not treated with all the respect and honour due to his station, his talents, and his learning, but because he deliberately preferred to share the trials and sorrows of the friends of God. So every one who becomes a friend of God, and casts in his lot with his people, though he may anticipate that it will be attended with persecution, with poverty, and with scorn, prefers this to all the pleasures of a life of gaiety and sin, and to the most brilliant prospects of wealth and fame which this world can offer.

Than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. We are not to suppose that Moses, even at the court of Pharaoh, was leading a life of vicious indulgence. The idea is, that sins were practised there such as those in which pleasure is sought; and that if he had remained there it must have been because he loved the pleasures of a sinful court and a sinful life, rather than the favour of God. We may learn from this,

(1.) that there is a degree of pleasure in sin. It does not deserve to be called happiness and the apostle does not call it so. It is "pleasure," excitement, hilarity, merriment, amusement. Happiness is more solid and enduring than "pleasure;" and solid happiness is not found in the ways of sin. But it cannot be denied that there is a degree of pleasure which maybe

found in amusement; in the excitement of the ballroom; in feasting and revelry; in sensual enjoyments. All which wealth and splendour, music and dancing, sensual gratifications, and the more refined pursuits in the circles of fashion can furnish, may be found in a life of irreligion; and if disappointment, and envy, and sickness, and mortified pride, and bereavements do not occur, the children of vanity and sin can find no inconsiderable enjoyment in these things. They say they do; and there is no reason to doubt the truth of their own testimony in the case. They call it a "life of pleasure;" and it is not proper to withhold from it the appellation which they choose to give it. It is not the most pure or elevated kind of enjoyment, but it would be unjust to deny that there is any enjoyment in such a course.

(2.) It is only "for a season." It will all soon pass away. Had Moses lived at the court of Pharaoh all his days, it would have been only for a little "season." These pleasures soon vanish, for

(a.) life itself is short at best; and if a career of "pleasure" is pursued through the whole of the ordinary period allotted to man, it is very brief

(b.) Those who live for pleasure often abridge their own lives. Indulgence brings disease in its train, and the votaries of sensuality usually die young. The art has never been yet discovered of combining intemperance and sensuality with length of days. If a man wishes a reasonable prospect of long life, he must be temperate and virtuous. Indulgence in vice wears out the nervous and muscular system, and destroys the powers of life--just as a machine without balance-wheel or governor would soon tear itself to pieces.

(c.) Calamity, disappointment, envy, and rivalship, mar such a life of pleasure--and he who enters on it, from causes which he cannot control, finds it very short. And,

(d.) compared with eternity, oh how brief is the longest life spent in the ways of sin. Soon it must be over--and then the unpardoned sinner enters on an immortal career where pleasure is for ever unknown!

(3.) In view of all the "pleasures" which sin can furnish, and in view of the most brilliant prospects which this world can hold out, religion enables man to pursue a different path. They who become the friends of God are willing to give up all those fair and glittering anticipations, and to submit to whatever trials may be incident to a life of self-denying piety. Religion, with all its privations and sacrifices, is preferred, nor there ever is occasion to regret the choice. Moses deliberately made that choice: nor in all the trials which succeeded it--in all the cares incident to his great office in conducting the children of Israel to the promised land--in all their ingratitude and rebellion--is there the least evidence that he ever once wished himself back again that he might enjoy "the pleasures of sin" in Egypt.

26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

Esteeming the reproach of Christ. Marg. "For;" that is, on account of Christ. This means either that he was willing to bear the reproaches incident to his belief that the Messiah would come, and that he gave up his fair prospects in Egypt with that expectation; or that he endured such reproaches as Christ suffered; or the apostle uses the expression as a sort of technical phrase, well understood in his time, to denote sufferings endured in the cause of religion. Christians at that time would naturally describe all sufferings on account of religion as endured in the cause of Christ; and Paul, therefore, may have used this phrase to denote sufferings in the cause of religion--meaning that Moses suffered what, when the apostle wrote, would be called "the reproaches of Christ." It is not easy, or perhaps possible, to determine which of these interpretations is the correct one. The most respectable names may be adduced in favour of each, and every reader must be left to adopt his own view of that which is correct. The

original will admit of either of them. The general idea is, that he would be reproached for the course which he pursued. He could not expect to leave the splendours of a court, and undertake what he did, without subjecting himself to trials. He would be blamed by the Egyptians for his interference in freeing their "slaves," and in bringing so many calamities upon their country, and he would be exposed to ridicule for his folly in leaving his brilliant prospects at court to become identified with an oppressed and despised people. It is rare that men are zealous in doing good without exposing themselves both to blame and to ridicule.

Greater riches. Worth more; of greater value. Reproach itself is not desirable; but reproach, when a man receives it in an effort to do good to others, is worth more to him than gold, 1Pet 4:13,14. The scars which an old soldier has received in the defence of his country are more valued by him than his pension; and the reproach which a good man receives in endeavouring to save others is a subject of greater joy to him than would be all the wealth which could be gained in a life of sin.

Than the treasures in Egypt. It is implied here, that Moses had a prospect of inheriting large treasures in Egypt, and that he voluntarily gave them up to be the means of delivering his nation from bondage. Egypt abounded in wealth; and the adopted son of the daughter of the king would naturally be heir to a great estate.

For he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. The "recompence of the reward" here referred to must mean the blessedness of heaven--for he had no earthly reward to look to. He had no prospect of pleasure, or wealth, or honour, in his undertaking. If he had sought these, so far as human sagacity could foresee, he would have remained at the court of Pharaoh. The declaration here proves that it is right to have respect to the rewards of heaven in serving God. It does not prove that this was the only or the main motive which induced

Moses to abandon his prospects at court; nor does it prove that this should be our main or only motive in leading a life of piety. If it were, our religion would be mere selfishness. But it is right that we should desire the rewards and joys of heaven, and that we should allow the prospect of those rewards and joys to influence us as a motive to do our duty to God, and to sustain us in our trials. Comp. Php 3:8-11,13,14.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith he forsook Egypt. Some have understood this of the first time in which Moses forsook Egypt, when he fled into Midian, as recorded in Ex 2; the majority of expositors have supposed that it refers to the time when he left Egypt to conduct the Israelites to the promised land. That the latter is the time referred to is evident from the fact that it is said that he did "not fear the wrath of the king." When Moses first fled to the land of Midian it is expressly said that he went because he did fear the anger of Pharaoh for his having killed an Egyptian, Ex 2:14,15. He was at that time in fear of his life; but when he left Egypt at the head of the Hebrew people, he had no such apprehensions. God conducted him out with "an high hand;" and throughout all the events connected with that remarkable deliverance, he manifested no dread of Pharaoh, and had no apprehension from what he could do. He went forth, indeed, at the head of his people when all the power of the king was excited to destroy them, but he went confiding in God; and this is the faith referred to here. For he endured. He persevered, amidst all the trials and difficulties connected with his leading forth the people from bondage. As seeing him who is invisible. As if he saw God. He had no more doubt that God had called him to this work, and that he would sustain him, than if he saw him with his bodily eyes. This is a most accurate account of the nature of faith. Comp. Heb 11:1.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Through faith he kept the passover. Gr., "he made πεποιηκε --the passover," which means more, it seems to me, than that

he merely kept or celebrated it. It implies that he instituted this rite, and made the arrangements for its observance. There is reference to the special agency, and the special faith which he had in its institution. The faith in the case was confidence that this would be the means of preserving the firstborn of the Israelites, when the angel should destroy the firstborn of the Egyptians, and also that it would be celebrated as a perpetual memorial of this great deliverance. On the Passover, Mt 26:2.

And the sprinkling of blood. The blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels and door-posts of the houses, Ex 12:22.

Lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. "The firstborn of the Egyptians, Ex 12:23. The apostle has thus enumerated some of the things which illustrated the faith of Moses. The strength of his faith may be seen by a reference to some of the circumstances which characterized it.

(1.) It was such confidence in God as to lead him to forsake the most flattering prospects of worldly enjoyment. I see no evidence, indeed, that he was the heir to the throne; but he was evidently heir to great wealth; he was encompassed with all the means of worldly pleasure; he had every opportunity for a life of literary and scientific pursuits; he was eligible to high and important trusts; he had a rank and station which would be regarded as one of the most honoured and enviable on earth. None of those who are mentioned before in this chapter were required to make just such sacrifices as this. Neither Abel, nor Noah, nor Enoch, was called to forsake such brilliant worldly prospects; and though Abraham was called to a higher act of faith when commanded to give up his beloved son, yet there were some circumstances of trial in the case of Moses, illustrating the nature of faith, which did not exist in the case of Abraham. Moses, in the maturity of life, and with everything around him that is usually regarded by men as objects of ambition, was ready to forego it all. So, wherever true faith exists, there is a readiness to abandon the

hope of gain, and brilliant prospects of distinction, and fascinating pleasures, in obedience to the command of God.

(2.) Moses entered on an undertaking wholly beyond the power of man to accomplish, and against every human probability of success. It was no less than that of restoring to freedom two millions of downtrodden, oppressed, and dispirited slaves, and conducting aged and feeble men, tender females, helpless children, with numerous flocks and herds, across barren wastes to a distant land. He undertook this against the power of probably the most mighty monarch of his time; from the midst of a warlike nation; and when the whole nation would be kindled into rage at the loss of so many slaves, and when he might expect that all the power of their wrath would descend on him and his undisciplined and feeble hosts. He did this when he had no wealth that he could employ to furnish provisions or the means of defence; no armies at his command to encircle his people on their march; and even no influence among the people himself, and with every probability that they would disregard him. Comp. Ex 3:11, 4:1. He did this when the whole Hebrew people were to be aroused to willingness to enter on the great undertaking; when there was every probability that they would meet with formidable enemies in the way, and when there was nothing human whatever on which the mind could fix as a basis of calculation of success. If there ever was any undertaking commenced opposed to every human probability of success, it was that of delivering the Hebrew people, and conducting them to the promised land. To human view it was quite as hopeless and impracticable as it would be now for a stranger from Africa, claiming to be a native prince there, and to have a commission from God, to liberate the two and a half millions of slaves in this country, and conduct them to the land of their fathers. In all the difficulties and discouragements of the undertaking of Moses, therefore, his only hope of success must have arisen from his confidence in God.

(3.) It was an undertaking where there were many certain trials before him. The people whom he sought to deliver were poor and oppressed. An attempt to rescue them would bring down the wrath of the mighty monarch under whom they were. They were a people unaccustomed to self-government, and, as the result proved, prone to ingratitude and rebellion. The journey before him lay through a dreary waste, where there was every prospect that there would be a want of food and water, and where he might expect to meet with formidable enemies. In all these things his only hope must have been in God. It was he only who could deliver them from the grasp of the tyrant; who could conduct them through the wilderness; who could provide for their wants in the desert; and who could defend a vast multitude of women and children from the enemies which they would be likely to encounter.

(4.) There was nothing in this to gratify ambition, or to promise an earthly reward. All these prospects he gave up when he left the court of Pharaoh. To be the leader of a company of emancipated slaves through a pathless desert to a distant land, had nothing in itself that could gratify the ambition of one who had been bred at the most magnificent court on earth, and who had enjoyed every advantage which the age afforded to qualify him to fill any exalted office. The result showed that Moses never designed to be himself the king of the people whom he led forth, and that he had no intention of aggrandizing his own family in the case.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry *land:* which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land. Ex 14:22,29. That is, it was only by confidence in God that they were able to do this. It was not by power which they had to remove the waters, and to make a passage for themselves; and it was not by the operation of any natural causes. It is not to be supposed that all who passed through the Red Sea had

saving faith. The assertion of the apostle is, that the passage was made in virtue of strong confidence in God, that if it had not been for this confidence the passage could not have been made at all. Of this no one can entertain a doubt who reads the history of that remarkable transaction. Which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. Ex 14:27,28. Evidently referred to here as showing the effects of not having faith in God, and of what must inevitably have befallen the Israelites if they had had no faith. The destruction of the Egyptians by the return of the waters, in accordance with natural laws, showed that the Israelites would have been destroyed in the passage, if a Divine energy had not been employed to prevent it. On the passage through the Red Sea, see Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol..i., pp. 81--86.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, etc. Josh 6:12-20. That is, it was not by any natural causes, or by any means that were in themselves adapted to secure such a result. It was not because they fell of themselves; nor because they were assailed by the hosts of the Israelites; nor was it because there was any natural tendency in the blowing of horns to cause them to fall. None of these things were true; and it was only by confidence in God that means so little adapted to such a purpose could have been employed at all; and it was only by continued faith in him that they could have been persevered in day by day, when no impression whatever was made. The strength of the faith evinced on this occasion appears from such circumstances as these: that there was no natural tendency in the means used to produce the effect; that there was great apparent improbability that the effect would follow that they might be exposed to much ridicule from those within the city for attempting to demolish their strong walls in this manner, and from the fact that the city was encircled day after day without producing any result. This may teach us the propriety and necessity of faith in similar circumstances. Ministers of the gospel often preach where there seems to be as little prospect of beating down the opposition in the human

heart by the message which they deliver, as there was of demolishing the walls of Jericho by the blowing of rams' horns, They blow the gospel trumpet from week to week and month to month, and there seems to be no tendency in the strong citadel of the heart to yield. Perhaps the only apparent result is to excite ridicule and scorn. Yet let them not despair. Let them blow on. Let them still lift up their voice with faith in God, and in due time the walls of the citadel will totter and fall. God has power over the human heart, as he had over Jericho; and in our darkest day of discouragement, let us remember that we are never in circumstances indicating less probability of success, from any apparent tendency in the means used to accomplish the result, than those were who encompassed this heathen city. With similar confidence in God we may hope for similar success.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

By faith the harlot Rahab. She resided in Jericho, Josh 2:1. When Joshua crossed the Jordan, he sent two men as spies to her house, and she saved them by concealment from the enemies that would have destroyed their lives. For this act of hospitality and kindness, they assured her of safety when the city should be destroyed, and directed her to give an indication of her place of abode to the invading Israelites, that her house might be spared, Josh 2:18,19. In the destruction of the city, she was accordingly preserved, Josh 6. The apostle seems to have selected this case as illustrating the nature of faith, partly because it occurred at Jericho, of which he had just made mention, and partly to show that strong faith had been exercised not only by the patriarchs, and by those who were confessed to be great and good, but by those in humble life, and whose earlier conduct had been far from the ways of virtue. Calvin. Much perplexity has been felt in reference to this case, and many attempts have been made to remove the difficulty. The main difficulty has been that a woman of this character should be enumerated among those who were eminent for piety; and many expositors have endeavoured to show that the word rendered harlot does not necessarily

denote a woman of abandoned character, but may be used to denote a hostess. This definition is given by Schleusner, who says that the word may mean one who prepares and sells food, and who receives strangers to entertain them. Others have supposed that the word means an idolatress, because those devoted to idolatry were frequently of abandoned character. But there are no clear instances in which the Greek word and the corresponding Hebrew word----is used in this sense. The usual and the fair meaning of the word is that which is given in our translation, and there is no good reason why that signification should not be retained here. It is not implied by the use of the word here, however, that Rahab was an harlot at the time to which the apostle refers; but the meaning is, that this had been her character, so that it was proper to designate her by this appellation.

In regard to this case, therefore, and in explanation of the difficulties which have been felt in reference to it, we may remark,

(1.) that the obvious meaning of this word here and of the corresponding place in Josh 2:4 is, that she had been a woman of abandoned character, and that she was known as such. That she might have been also a hostess, or one who kept a house of entertainment for strangers, is at the same time by no means improbable, since it not unfrequently happened, in ancient as well as modern times, that females of this character kept such houses. It might have been the fact that her house was known merely as a house of entertainment that led the spies who went to Jericho to seek a lodging there. It would be natural that strangers coming into a place should act in this respect as all other travellers did, and should apply for entertainment at what was known as a public house.

(2.) There is no improbability in supposing that her course of life had been changed either before their arrival, or in consequence of it. They were doubtless wise and holy men. Men would not be selected for an enterprise like this in whom

the leader of the Hebrew army could not put entire confidence. It is not unfair, then, to suppose that they were men of eminent piety as well as sagacity. Nor is there any improbability in supposing that they would acquaint this female with the history of their people, with their remarkable deliverance from Egypt, and with the design for which they were about to invade the land of Canaan. There is evidence that some such representations made a deep impression on her mind, and led to a change in her views and feelings, for she not only received them with the usual proofs of hospitality, but jeoparded her own life in their defence, when she might easily have betrayed them. This fact showed that she had a firm belief that they were what they professed to be---the people of God--and that she was willing to identify her interests with theirs.

(3.) This case--supposing that she had been a woman of bad character, but now was truly converted--does not stand alone. Other females of a similar character have been converted, and have subsequently led lives of piety; and though the number is not comparatively great, yet the truth of God has shown its power in renewing and sanctifying some at least of this, the most abandoned and degraded class of human beings. "Publicans and harlots," said the Saviour, "go into the kingdom of God," Mt 21:31. Rahab seems to have been one of them; and her case shows that such instances of depravity are not hopeless. This record, therefore, is one of encouragement for the most abandoned sinners; and one too which shows that strangers, even in a public house, may do good to those who have wandered far from God and virtue, and that we should never despair of saving the most abandoned of our race.

(4.) There is no need of supposing that the apostle in commending this woman approved of all that she did. That she was not perfect is true. That she did some things which cannot be vindicated is true also--and who does not? But admitting all that may be said about any imperfection in her

character, (comp. Josh 2:4,) it was still true that she had strong faith--and that is all that the apostle commends. We are under no more necessity of vindicating all that she did, than we are all that David or Peter did--or all that is now done by those who have the highest claims to virtue.

(5.) She had strong faith. It was only a strong belief that Jehovah was the true God, and that the children of Israel were his people, which would have led her to screen these strangers at the peril of her own life; and when the city was encompassed, and the wails fell and the tumult of battle raged, she showed her steady confidence in their fidelity, and in God, by using the simple means on which she was told the safety of herself and her family depended, Josh 6:22,23.

With them that believed not. The inhabitants of the idolatrous city of Jericho. The margin is, "were disobedient." The more correct rendering, however, is, as in the text, believed not. They evinced no such faith as Rahab had, and they were therefore destroyed.

Received the spies with peace. With friendliness and kindness, Josh 2:1, seq.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthah; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:

33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

Women received their dead raised to life again. As in the case of the woman of Zarephath, whose child was restored to life by Elijah, 1Kgs 17:19-22; and of the son of the Shunammite

woman, whose child was restored to life by Elisha, 2Kgs 4:18-37.

And others were tortured. The word which is here used τυμπανιζω to tympanize, refers to a form of severe torture which was sometimes practised. It is derived from τυμπανον--tympanum --a drum, tabret, timbrel; and the instrument was probably so called from resembling the drum or the timbrel. This instrument consisted in the East of a thin wooden rim covered over with skin, as a tambourine is with us. See it described in the Isa 5:12. The engine of torture here referred to probably resembled the drum in form, on which the body of a criminal was bent so as to give greater severity to the wounds which were inflicted by scourging. The lash would cut deeper when the body was so extended, and the open gashes exposed to the air would increase the torture. See 2 Mac. vi. 19--29. The punishment here referred to seems to have consisted of two things--the stretching upon the instrument, and the scourging. See Robinson's Lex., and Stuart, in loc. Bloomfield, however, supposes that the mode of the torture can be best learned from the original meaning of the word τυμπανον --tympanum--as meaning

(1.) a beating-stick, and

(2.) a beating-post, which was in the form of a T, thus suggesting the posture of the sufferer. This beating, says he, was sometimes administered with sticks or rods; and sometimes with leather thongs inclosing pieces of lead. The former account, however, better agrees with the usual meaning of the word.

Not accepting deliverance. When it was offered them; that is, on condition that they would renounce their opinions, or do what was required of them. This is the very nature of the spirit of martyrdom.

That they might obtain a better resurrection. That is, when they were subjected to this kind of torture they were looked upon as certainly dead. To have accepted deliverance than, would have been a kind of restoration to life or a species of resurrection. But they refused this, and looked forward to a more honourable and glorious restoration to life; a resurrection, therefore, which would be better than this. It would be in itself more noble and honourable, and would be permanent, and therefore better. No particular instance of this kind is mentioned in the Old Testament; but, amidst the multitude of cases of persecution to which good men were subjected, there is no improbability in supposing that this may have occurred. The case of Eleazer, recorded in 2 Mac. Vi., so strongly resembles what the apostle says here, that it is very possible he may have had it in his eye. The passage before us proves that the doctrine of the resurrection was understood and believed before the coming of the Saviour, and that it was one of the doctrines which sustained and animated those who were called to suffer on account of their religion. In the prospect of death under the infliction of torture on account of religion, or under the pain produced by disease, nothing will better enable us to bear up under the suffering than the expectation that the body will be restored to immortal rigour, and raised to a mode of life where it will be no longer susceptible of pain. To be raised up to that life is a "better resurrection" than to be saved from death when persecuted, or to be raised up from a bed of pain.

36 and others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

And others had trial of cruel mockings. Referring to the scorn and derision which the ancient victims of persecution experienced. This has been often experienced by martyrs, and doubtless it was the case with those who suffered on account of their religion before the advent of the Saviour as well as afterwards. Some instances of this kind are mentioned in the Old Testament, (2Kgs 2:23, 1Kgs 22:24;) and it was frequent in the time of the Maccabees. And scourging. Whipping. This was a common mode of punishment, and was usually

inflicted before a martyr was put to death. Mt 10:17, Mt 27:26. For instances of this, see Jer 20:2; 2 Mac. vii. 1; v. 17.

37 they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

They were stoned. A common method of punishment among the Jews. Mt 21:35,44. Thus Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned. See 2Chr 24:21; comp. 1Kgs 21:1-14. It is not improbable that this was often resorted to in times of popular tumult, as in the case of Stephen, Acts 7:59; comp. Jn 10:31, Acts 14:5. In the time of the terrible persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes, and under Manasseh, such instances also probably occurred.

They were sawn asunder. It is commonly supposed that Isaiah was put to death in this manner. For the evidence of this, see Introduction to Isaiah, & 2. It is known that this mode of punishment, though not common, did exist in ancient times. Among the Romans, the laws of the twelve tables affixed this as the punishment of certain crimes; but this mode of execution was very rare, since Aulius Gellius says, that in his time no one remembered to have seen it practised. It appears, however, from Suetonius, that the emperor Caligula often condemned persons of rank to be sawn through the middle. Calmet, writing above a hundred years ago, says, "I am assured that the punishment of the saw is still in use among the Switzers, and that they put it in practice not many years ago upon one of their countrymen, guilty of a great crime, in the plain of Grenelles, near Paris. They put him into a kind of coffin, and sawed him lengthwise, beginning at the head, as a piece of wood is sawn." Pict. Bib. It was not an unusual mode of punishment to cut a person asunder, and to suspend the different parts of the body to walls and towers as a warning to the living. See 1Sam 31:10, and Morier's Second Journey to Persia, p. 96.

Were tempted. On this expression, which has given much perplexity to critics, see the Notes of Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield,

and Kuinoel. There is a great variety of reading in the Mss. and editions of the New Testament, and many have regarded it as an interpolation. The difficulty which has been felt in reference to it has been, that it is a much milder word than those just used, and that it is hardly probable that the apostle would enumerate this among those which he had just specified, as if to be tempted deserved to be mentioned among sufferings of so severe a nature. But it seems to me, there need be no real difficulty in the case. The apostle here, among other sufferings which they were called to endure, may have referred to the temptations which were presented to the martyrs, when about to die, to abandon their religion and live. It is very possible to conceive that this might have been among the highest aggravations of their sufferings. We know that in latter times it was a common practice to offer life to those who were doomed to a horrid death, on condition that they would throw incense on the altars of a heathen god, and we may easily suppose that a temptation of that kind, artfully presented in the midst of keen tortures, would greatly aggravate their sufferings. Or suppose when a father was about to be put to death for his religion, his wife and children were placed before him, and should plead with him to save his life by abandoning his religion, we can easily imagine that no pain of the rack would cause so keen torture to the soul as their cries and tears would. Amidst the sorrows of martyrs, therefore, it was not improper to say that they were tempted, and to place this among their most aggravated woes. For instances of this nature, see 2 Mac. vi. 21, 22; vii. 17, 24.

Were slain with the sword. As in the case of the eighty-five priests slain by Doeg, (1Sam 22:18;) and the prophets, of whose slaughter by the sword Elijah complains, 1Kgs 19:10.

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins. Driven away from their homes, and compelled to clothe themselves in this rude and uncomfortable manner. A dress of this kind, or a dress made of hair, was not uncommon with the prophets,

and seems indeed to have been regarded as an appropriate badge of their office. See 2Kgs 1:8; Zech 13:4.

Being destitute, afflicted, tormented. The word tormented here means tortured. The apostle expresses here in general what in the previous verses he had specified in detail.

38 of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

Of whom the world was not worthy. The world was so wicked that it had no claim that such holy men should live in it. These poor, despised, and persecuted men, living as outcasts and wanderers, were of a character far elevated above the world. This is a most beautiful expression. It is at once a statement of their eminent holiness, and of the wickedness of the rest of mankind. They wandered in deserts, etc. On the Scripture meaning of the word desert or wilderness, Mt 3:1. This is a description of persons driven away from their homes, and wandering about from place to place to procure a scanty subsistence. Comp. 1 Mac, i. 53; 2 Mac. v. 27; vi. 7. The instances mentioned in the Books of Maccabees are so much in point, that there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul referred to some such cases, if not these very cases. As there is no doubt about their historic truth, there was no impropriety in referring to them, though they are not mentioned in the canonical books of Scripture. One of those cases may be referred to as strikingly illustrating what is here said. "But Judas Maccabeus, with nine others, or thereabout, withdrew himself into the wilderness, and lived in the mountains after the manner of beasts, with his company, who fed on herbs continually, lest they should be partakers of the pollution," 2 Mac. v. 27.

39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith. They were all commended and approved on account of their confidence in God. Heb 11:2.

Received not the promise. That is, did not receive the fulfilment of the promise; or did not receive all that was promised. They all still looked forward to some future blessings. Heb 11:13.

God having provided some better thing for us. Marg., foreseen. That is, "God having provided, or determined on giving some better thing than any of them realized, and, which we are now permitted to enjoy." That is, God gave them promises; but they were not allowed to see their fulfilment. We are permitted now to see what they referred to, and in part, at least, to witness their completion; and though the promise was made to them, the fulfilment more particularly pertains to us.

That they without us should not be made perfect. That is, complete. The whole system of revelation was not complete at once, or in one generation. It required successive ages to make the system complete, so that it might be said that it was finished, or perfect. Our existence, therefore, and the developments in our times, were as necessary to the perfection of the system as the promise made to the patriarchs. And as the system would not have been complete if the blessings had been simply conferred on us without the previous arrangements, and the long scheme of introductory measures, so it would not have been complete if the promises had been merely given to them without the corresponding fulfilment in our times. They are like the two parts of a tally. The fathers had one part in the promises, and we the other in the fulfilment, and neither would have been complete without the other. The "better things," then, referred to here as possessed by Christians, are the privilege of seeing those promises fulfilled in the Messiah; the blessings resulting from his atonement; the more expanded views which they have under the gospel; the brighter hopes of heaven itself, and the clearer apprehension of what heaven will be, which they are permitted to enjoy. This, therefore, accords entirely with the argument which the apostle is pursuing--which is, to show

that the Christians whom he addressed should not apostatize from their religion. The argument is, that in numerous instances, as specified, the saints of ancient times, even under fiery trials, were sustained by faith in God, and that, too, when they had not seen the fulfilment of the promises, and when they had much more obscure views than we are permitted to enjoy. If they, under the influence of the mere promise of future blessings, were enabled thus to persevere, how much more reason is there for us to persevere, who have been permitted, by the coming of the Messiah, to witness the perfection of the system!

40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

There is no part of the New Testament of more value than this chapter; none which deserves to be more patiently studied, or which may be more frequently applied to the circumstances of Christians. These invaluable records are adapted to sustain us in times of trial, temptation, and persecution; to show us what faith has done in days that are past, and what it may do still in similar circumstances. Nothing can better show the value and the power of faith, or of true religion, than the records in this chapter. It has done what nothing else could do. It has enabled men to endure what nothing else would enable them to bear; and it has shown its power in inducing them to give up, at the command of God, what the human heart holds most dear. And among the lessons which we may derive from the study of this portion of divine truth, let us learn from the example of Abel to continue to offer to God the sacrifice of true piety which he requires, though we may be taunted or opposed by our nearest kindred; from that of Enoch to walk with God, though surrounded by a wicked world, and to look to the blessed translation to heaven which awaits all the righteous; from that of Noah to comply with all the directions of God, and to make all needful preparations for the future events which he has predicted, in which we are to be interested--as death, judgment, and eternity--though the events may seem to be remote, and though there may be no visible indications of their coming, and though the world may

deride our faith and our fears; from that of Abraham to leave country, and home, and kindred, if God calls us to, and to go just where he commands, through deserts and wilds, and among strange men; and like him, also, to be ready to give up the dearest objects of our earthly affection, even when attended with all that can try or torture our feelings of affection-- feeling that God, who gave, has a right to require their removal in his own way; and that, however much we may fix our hopes on a dear child, he can fulfil all his purposes and promises to us though such a child should be removed by death; from that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to regard ourselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, having here no permanent home, and seeking a better country; from that of Moses to be willing to leave all the pomp and splendour of the world, all our brilliant prospects and hopes, and to welcome poverty, reproach, and suffering, that we may identify ourselves with the people of God; by the remembrance of the host of worthies who met danger, and encountered mighty foes, and vanquished them, let us learn to go forth in our spiritual conflicts against the enemies of our souls and of the church, assured of victory; and from the example of those who were driven from the abodes of men, and exposed to the storms of persecution, let us learn to bear every trial, and to be ready, at any moment, to lay down our lives in the cause of truth and of God. Of all those holy men who made these sacrifices, which of them ever regretted it, when he came calmly to look over his life, and to review it on the borders of the eternal world? None. Not one of them ever expressed regret that he had given up the world; or that he had obeyed the Lord too early, too faithfully, or too long. Not Abraham, who left his country and kindred; not Moses, who abandoned his brilliant prospects in Egypt; not Noah, who subjected himself to ridicule and scorn for an hundred and twenty years; and not one of those who were exposed to lions, to fire, to the edge of the sword, or who were driven away from society as outcasts, to wander in pathless deserts, or to take up their abodes in caverns, ever regretted the course which they had chosen. And who of them all now regrets it?

Who, of these worthies, now looks from heaven and feels that he suffered one privation too much, or that he has not had an ample recompense for all the ills he experienced in the cause of religion? So we shall feel when from the bed of death we look over the present life, and look out on eternity. Whatever our religion may have cost us, we shall not feel that we began to serve God too early, or served him too faithfully. Whatever pleasure, gain, or splendid prospects we gave up in order to become Christians, we shall feel that it was the way of wisdom, and shall rejoice that we were able to do it. Whatever sacrifices, trials, persecution, and pain, we may meet with, we shall feel that there has been more than a compensation in the consolations of religion, and in the hope of heaven, and that by every sacrifice we have been the gainers. When we reach heaven, we shall see that we have not endured one pain too much, and that through whatever trials we may have passed, the result is worth all which it has cost. Strengthened, then, in our trials by the remembrance of what faith has done in times that are past; recalling the example of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, let us go cheerfully on our way. Soon the journey of trials will be ended, and soon what are now objects of faith will become objects of fruition; and in their enjoyment, how trifling and brief will seem all the sorrows of our pilgrimage below! There is no part of the New Testament of more value than this chapter; none which deserves to be more patiently studied, or which may be more frequently applied to the circumstances of Christians. These invaluable records are adapted to sustain us in times of trial, temptation, and persecution; to show us what faith has done in days that are past, and what it may do still in similar circumstances. Nothing can better show the value and the power of faith, or of true religion, than the records in this chapter. It has done what nothing else could do. It has enabled men to endure what nothing else would enable them to bear; and it has shown its power in inducing them to give up, at the command of God, what the human heart holds most dear. And among the lessons which we may derive from the study of this portion of divine truth, let us learn from the example of

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Hebrews-12

The Chastening of the Lord

Study this chapter repeatedly, slowly & attentively.

1 Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Verse 1. Wherefore. In view of what has been said in the previous chapter. Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. The apostle represents those to whom he had referred in the previous chapter as looking on to witness the efforts which Christians make, and the manner in which they live. There is allusion here, doubtless, to the ancient games. A great multitude of spectators usually occupied the circular seats in the amphitheatre, from which they could easily behold the combatants. 1Cor 9:24, seq. In like manner the apostle represents Christians as encompassed with the multitude of worthies to whom he had referred in the previous chapter. It cannot be fairly inferred from this that he means to say that all those ancient worthies were actually looking at the conduct of Christians, and saw their conflicts. It is a figurative representation, such as is common, and means that we ought to act as if they were in sight, and cheered us on. How far the spirits of the just who are departed from this world are permitted to behold what is done on earth--if at all--is not revealed in the Scriptures. The phrase "a cloud of witnesses," means many witnesses, or a number so great that they seem to be a cloud. The comparison of a multitude of persons to a cloud is common in the classic writers. See Homer's Il. iv. 274, xxiii. 133; Statius, i. 340, and other instances adduced in Wetstein, in loc. Comp. 1Thes 4:17.

Let us lay aside every weight. The word rendered weight --ογκον-- means that which is crooked or hooked, and thence

anything that is attached or suspended by a hook--that is, by its whole weight, and hence means weight. See Passow. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The word is often used in the classic writers in the sense of swelling, tumour, pride. Its usual meaning is that of weight or burden; and there is allusion here, doubtless, to the runners in the games, who were careful not to encumber themselves with anything that was heavy. Hence their clothes were so made as not to impede their running, and hence they were careful in their training not to overburden themselves with food, and in every way to remove what would be an impediment or hindrance. As applied to the racers, it does not mean that they began to run with anything like a burden, and then threw it away--as persons sometimes aid their jumping by taking a stone in their hands to acquire increased momentum--but that they were careful not to allow anything that would be a weight or an encumbrance. As applied to Christians, it means that they should remove all which would obstruct their progress in the Christian course. Thus it is fair to apply it to whatever would be an impediment in our efforts to win the crown of life. It is not the same thing in all persons. In one it may be pride; in another, vanity; in another, worldliness; in another, a violent and almost ungovernable temper; in another, a corrupt imagination; in another, a heavy, leaden, insensible heart; in another, some improper and unholy attachment. Whatever it may be, we are exhorted to lay it aside; and this general direction may be applied to anything which prevents our making the highest possible attainment in the divine life. Some persons would make much more progress if they would throw away many of their personal ornaments; some if they would disencumber themselves of the heavy weight of gold which they are endeavouring to carry with them. So some very light objects, in themselves considered, become material encumbrances. Even a feather or a ring--such may be the fondness for these toys--may become such a weight that they will never make much progress towards the prize.

And the sin which doth so easily beset us. The word which is here rendered "easily beset" --ευπεριστατον--euperistaton--does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, "standing well around;" and hence denotes that which is near, or at hand, or readily occurring. So Chrysostom explains it. Passow defines it as meaning, "easy to encircle." Tindal renders it, "the sin that hangeth on us." Theodoret and others explain the word as if derived from περιστασις --peristasis--a word which sometimes means affliction, peril--and hence regard it as denoting that which is full of peril, or the sin which so easily subjects one to calamity. Bloom, field supposes, in accordance with the opinion of Grotius, Crellius, Kypke, Kuinoel, and others, that it means "the sin which especially winds around us and hinders our course," with allusion to the long Oriental garments. According to this, the meaning would be, that as a runner would be careful not to encumber himself with a garment which would be apt to wind around his legs in running, and hinder him, so it should be with the Christian, who especially ought to lay aside everything which resembles this that is, all sin which must impede his course. The former of these interpretations however, is most commonly adopted, and best agrees with the established sense of the word. It will then mean that we are to lay aside every encumbrance, particularly or especially--for so the word Kai," and," should be rendered here--the sins to which we are most exposed. Such sins are appropriately called "easily-besetting sins." They are those to which we are particularly liable. They are such sins as the following:

(1.) Those to which we are particularly exposed by our natural temperament or disposition. In some this is pride, in others indolence, or gaiety, or levity, or avarice, or ambition, or sensuality.

(2.) Those in which we freely indulged before we became Christians. They will be likely to return with power, and we are far more likely, from the laws of association, to fall into them than into any other. Thus a man who has been

intemperate is in special danger from that quarter; a man who has been an infidel is in special danger of scepticism; one who has been avaricious, proud, gay, or ambitious, is in special danger, even after conversion, of again committing these sins.

(3.) Sins to which we are exposed by our profession, by our relations to others, or by our situation in life. They whose condition will entitle them to associate with what are regarded as the more elevated classes of society, are in special danger of indulging in the methods of living and of amusement that are common among them; they who are prospered in the world are in danger of losing the simplicity and spirituality of their religion; they who hold a civil office are in danger of becoming mere politicians, and of losing the very form and substance of piety.

(4.) Sins to which we are exposed from some peculiar weakness in our character. On some points we may be in no danger. We may be constitutionally so firm as not to be especially liable to certain forms of sin. But; every man has one or more weak points, in his character; and it is there that he is particularly exposed. A bow may be in the main very strong. All along its length there may be no danger of its giving way--save at one place where it has been made too thin, or where the material was defective--and if it ever breaks, it will of course be at that point. That is the point, therefore, which needs to be guarded and strengthened. So in reference to character. There is always some weak point which needs especially to be guarded, and our principal danger is there. Self-knowledge, so necessary in leading a holy life, consists much in searching out those weak points of character where we are most exposed; and our progress in the Christian course will be determined much by the fidelity with which we guard and strengthen them.

And let us run with patience the race that is set before us. The word rendered "patience" rather means in this place

perseverance. We are to run the race without allowing ourselves to be hindered by any obstructions, and without giving out or fainting in the way. Encouraged by the example of the multitudes who have run the same race before us, and who are now looking out upon us from heaven where they dwell, we are to persevere as they did to the end.

2 looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Looking unto Jesus, As a farther inducement to do this the apostle exhorts us to look to the Saviour. We are to look to his holy life; to his patience and perseverance in trials; to what he endured in order to obtain the crown, and to his final success and triumph.

The author and finisher of our faith. The word "our" is not in the original here, and obscures the sense. The meaning is, he is the first and the last as an example of faith, or of confidence in God--occupying in this, as in all other things, the preeminence, and being the most complete model that can be placed before us. The apostle had not enumerated him among those who had been distinguished for their faith, but he now refers to him as above them all; as a case that deserved to stand by itself. It is probable that there is a continuance here of the allusion to the Grecian games which the apostle had commenced in the previous verse. The word "author" αρχηγον-- (marg, beginner)-- means, properly, the source, or cause of anything; or one who makes a beginning. It is rendered in Acts 3:16, Acts 5:31, prince; in Heb 2:10, captain; and in the place before us, author. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The phrase, "the beginner of faith," or the leader on of faith, would express the idea. He is at the head of all those who have furnished an example of confidence in God, for he was himself the most illustrious instance of it. The expression, then, does not mean properly that he produces faith in us, or that we believe because he causes us to believe --whatever may be the truth about that--

but that he stands at the head as the most eminent example that can be referred to on the subject of faith. We are exhorted to look to him, as if at the Grecian games there was one who stood before the racer who had previously carried away every palm of victory; who had always been triumphant, and with whom there was no one who could be compared. The word finisher-- τελειωτην--corresponds in meaning with the word author. It means that he is the completer as well as the beginner; the last as well as the first. As there has been no one hitherto who could be compared with him, so there will be no one hereafter. Comp. Rev 1:8,11 "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." The word does not mean that he was the "finisher" of faith, in the sense that he makes our faith complete, or perfects it--whatever may be true about that--but that he occupies this elevated position of being beyond comparison above all others. Alike in the commencement and the close, in the beginning of faith and in its ending, he stands pre-eminent. To this illustrious model we should look--as a racer would on one who had been always so successful that he surpassed all competitors and rivals. If this be the meaning, then it is not properly explained, as it is commonly, (see Bloomfield and Stuart, in loc.,) by saying that the word here is synonymous with rewarder, and refers to the βραβευτης--brabeutes-or the distributor of the prize. Comp. Col 3:15. There is no instance where the word is used in this sense in the New Testament, (comp. Passow,) nor would such an interpretation present so beautiful and appropriate a thought as the one suggested above.

Who for the joy that was set before him. That is, who in view of all the honour which he would have at the right hand of God, and the happiness which he would experience from the consciousness that he had redeemed a world, was willing to bear the sorrows connected with the atonement.

Endured the cross. Endured patiently the ignominy and pain connected with the suffering of death on the cross.

Despising the shame. Disregarding the ignominy of such a mode of death. It is difficult for us now to realize the force of the expression, "enduring the shame of the cross," as it was understood in the time of the Saviour and the apostles. The views of the world have changed, and it is now difficult to divest the "cross" of the associations of honour and glory which the word suggests, so as to appreciate the ideas which encompassed it then. There is a degree of dishonour which we attach to the guillotine, but the ignominy of a death on the cross was greater than that; there is disgrace attached to the block, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that; there is a much deeper infamy attached to the gallows, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that. And that word--the cross--which when now proclaimed in the ears of the refined, the intelligent, and even the gay, excites an idea of honour in the ears of the people of Athens, of Corinth, and of Rome, excited deeper disgust than the word gallows does with us, for it was regarded as the appropriate punishment of the most infamous of mankind. We can now scarcely appreciate these feelings, and of course the declaration that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame," does not make the impression on our minds in regard to the nature of his sufferings, and the value of his example, which it should do. When we now think of the "cross," it is not of the multitude of slaves, and robbers, and thieves, and rebels, who have died on it, but of the one great victim whose death has ennobled even this instrument of torture, and encircled it with a halo of glory. We have been accustomed to read of it as an imperial standard in war in the days of Constantine, and as the banner under which armies have marched to conquest; it is intermingled with the sweetest poetry; it is a sacred thing in the most magnificent cathedrals; it adorns the altar, and is even an object of adoration; it is in the most elegant engravings; it is worn by beauty and piety as an ornament near the heart; it is associated with all that is pure in love, great in self-sacrifice, and holy in religion. To see the true force of the expression here, therefore, it is necessary to divest

ourselves of these ideas of glory which encircle the "cross," and to place ourselves in the times and lands in which, when the most infamous of mankind were stretched upon it, it was regarded for such men as an appropriate mode of punishment. That infamy Jesus was willing to bear; and the strength of his confidence in God, his love for man, and the depth of his humiliation, was shown in the readiness and firmness with which he went forward to such a death.

And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Exalted to the highest place of dignity and honour in the universe. Mk 6:19; Eph 1:20, seq. The sentiment here is, "Imitate the example of the great Author of our religion. He, in view of the honour and joy before him, endured the most severe sufferings to which the human frame can be subjected, and the form of death which is regarded as the most shameful. So, amidst all the severe trials to which you are exposed on account of religion, patiently endure all--for the glorious rewards, the happiness and the triumph of heaven, are before you."

3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

For consider him. Attentively reflect on his example, that you may be able to bear your trials in a proper manner. That endured such contradiction of sinners. Such opposition. The reference is to the Jews of the time of the Saviour, who opposed his plans, perverted his sayings, and ridiculed his claims. Yet, regardless of their opposition, he persevered in the course which he had marked out, and went patiently forward in the execution of his plans. The idea is, that we are to pursue the path of duty, and follow the dictates of conscience, let the world say what they will about it. In doing this, we cannot find a better example than the Saviour. No opposition of sinners ever turned him from the way which he regarded as right; no ridicule ever caused him to abandon any of his plans; no argument, or expression of scorn, ever caused him for a moment to deviate from his course. Lest ye be

wearied and faint in your minds. The meaning is, that there is great danger of being disheartened and wearied out by the opposition which you meet with. But with the bright example of one who was never disheartened, and who never became weary in doing the will of God, you may persevere. The best means of leading a faithful Christian life, amidst the opposition which we may encounter, is to keep the eye steadily fixed on the Saviour.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. The general sense of this passage is, "You have not yet been called, in your Christian struggles, to the highest kind of sufferings and sacrifices. Great as your trials may seem to have been, yet your faith has not yet been put to the severest test. And since this is so, you ought not to yield in the conflict with evil, but manfully resist it." In the language here used, there is undoubtedly a continuance of the allusion to the agonistic games--the strugglings and wrestlings for mastery there. In those games, the boxers were accustomed to arm themselves for the fight with the caestus. This, at first, consisted of strong leathern thongs wound around the hands, and extending only to the wrist, to give greater solidity to the fist. Afterwards these were made to extend to the elbow, and then to the shoulder; and, finally, they sowed pieces of lead or iron in them, that they might strike a heavier and more destructive blow. The consequence was, that those who were engaged in the fight were often covered with blood, and that resistance "unto blood" showed a determined courage, and a purpose not to yield. But though the language here may be taken from this custom, the fact to which the apostle alludes, it seems to me, is the struggling of the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane, when his conflict was so severe, that great drops of blood fell down to the ground. Mt 26:42, seq. It is, indeed, commonly understood to mean that they had not yet been called to shed their blood as martyrs in the cause of religion. See Stuart, Bloomfield, Doddridge, Clarke, Whitby, Kuinoel, etc. Indeed, I find in none of the commentators what seems to me to be the true sense of this passage, and what

gives an exquisite beauty to it, the allusion to the sufferings of the Saviour in the garden. The reasons which lead me to believe that there is such an allusion are briefly these.

(1.) The connexion. The apostle is appealing to the example of the Saviour, and urging Christians to persevere amidst their trials by looking to him. Nothing would be more natural, in this connexion, than to refer to that dark night when, in the severest conflict with temptation which he ever encountered, he so signally showed his own firmness of purpose, and the effects of resistance on his own bleeding body, and his signal victory, in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2.) The expression, "striving against sin," seems to demand the same interpretation. On the common interpretation, the allusion would be merely to their resisting persecution; but here the allusion is to some struggle in their minds against committing sin. The apostle exhorts them to strive manfully and perseveringly against sin in every form, and especially against the sin of apostasy. To encourage them, he refers them to the highest instance on record where there was a "striving against sin"--the struggle of the Redeemer in the garden with the great enemy, who there made his most violent assault, and where the resistance of the Redeemer was so great as to force the blood through his pores. What was the exact form of the temptation there, we are not informed. It may have been to induce him to abandon his work even then, and to yield, in view of the severe sufferings of his approaching death on the cross. If there ever was a point where temptation would be powerful, it would be there. When a man is about to be put to death, how strong is the inducement to abandon his purpose, his plans, or his principles, if he may save his life! How many, of feeble virtue, have yielded just there! If to this consideration we add the thought that the Redeemer was engaged in a work never before undertaken; that he designed to make an atonement never before made; that he was about to endure sorrows never before endured; and that on the decision of that moment depended the ascendency of sin or

holiness on the earth, the triumph or the fall of Satan's kingdom, the success or the defeat of all the plans of the great adversary of God and man; and that, on such an occasion as this, the tempter would use all his power to crush the lonely and unprotected Man of sorrows in the garden of Gethsemane, it is easy to imagine what may have been the terror of that fearful conflict, and what virtue it would require in him to resist the concentrated energy of Satan's might, to induce him even then to abandon his work. The apostle says of those to whom he wrote, that they had not yet reached that point. Comp. Heb 5:7.

(3.) This view furnishes a proper climax to the argument of the apostle for perseverance. It presents the Redeemer before the mind as the great Example; directs the mind to him in various scenes of his life--as looking to the joy before him--disregarding the ignominy of his sufferings-- enduring the opposition of sinners--and then in the garden as engaged in a conflict with his great foe, and so resisting sin that, rather than yield, he endured that fearful mental struggle which was attended with such remarkable consequences. This is the highest consideration which could be presented to the mind of a believer to keep him from yielding in the conflict with evil; and if we could keep him in the eye, resisting even unto blood, rather than yield in the least degree, it would do more than all other things to restrain us from sin. How different his case from ours? How readily we yield to sin! We offer a faint and feeble resistance, and then surrender. We think it will be unknown; or that others do it; or that we may repent of it; or that we have no power to resist it; or that it is of little consequence, and our resolution gives way. Not so the Redeemer. Rather than yield in any form to sin, he measured strength with the great adversary when alone with him in the darkness of the night, and gloriously triumphed! And so would we always triumph if we had the same settled purpose to resist sin in every form, even unto blood.

5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation. This exhortation is found in Prov 3:11,12. The object of the apostle in introducing it here is, to show that afflictions were designed, on the part of God, to produce some happy effects in the lives of his people, and that they ought, therefore, to bear them patiently. In the previous verses, he directs them to the example of the Saviour. In this verse and the following, for the same object, he directs their attention to the design of trials, showing that they are necessary to our welfare, and that they are, in fact, proof of the paternal care of God. This verse might be rendered as a question, "And have ye forgotten?" etc. This mode of rendering it will agree somewhat better with the design of the apostle.

Which speaketh unto you. Which may be regarded as addressed to you; or which invokes a principle as applicable to you as to others. He does not mean that when Solomon used the words he had reference to them particularly, but that he Used them with reference to the children of God, and they might therefore be applied to them. In this way we may regard the language of the Scriptures as addressed to us.

As unto children. As if he were addressing children. The language is such as a father uses.

My son. It is possible that in these words Solomon may have intended to address a son literally, giving him paternal counsel; or he may have spoken as the head of the Jewish people, designing to address all the pious, to whom he sustained, as it were, the relation of a father. Or it is possible, also, that it may be regarded as the language of God himself addressing his children. Whichever supposition is adopted, the sense is substantially the same.

Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord. Literally, "Do not regard it as a small matter, or as a trivial thing"--ολιγωρει. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The word here rendered chastening παιδεια--and also in Heb 12:6-8, and Heb 12:9, "corrected"--παιδευτας--does not refer to affliction in general, but that kind of affliction which is designed to correct us for our faults, or which is of the nature of discipline. The verb properly relates to the training up of a child--including instruction, counsel, discipline, and correction, (see this use of the verb in Acts 7:22, 2Ti 2:25, Tit 2:12,) and then especially discipline, or correction for faults --to correct, chastise, chasten, 1Cor 11:32, 2Cor 6:9, Rev 3:19. This is the meaning here; and the idea is, not that God will afflict his people in general, but that if they wander away he will correct them for their faults. He will bring calamity upon them as a punishment for their offences, and in order to bring them back to himself, he will not suffer them to wander away unrebuked and unchecked, but will mercifully reclaim them, though by great sufferings. Afflictions have many objects, or produce many happy effects. That referred to here is, that they are means of reclaiming the wandering and erring children of God, and are proofs of his paternal care and love. Comp. 2Sam 7:14, 12:13,14, Ps 89:31-34; Prov 3:11,12. Afflictions, which are always sent by God, should not be regarded as small matters, for these reasons:

(1.) The fact that they are sent by God. Whatever he does is of importance, and is worthy the profound attention of men.

(2.) They are sent for some important purpose, and they should be regarded, therefore, with attentive concern. Men despise them when

(1.) they treat them with affected or real unconcern;

(2.) when they fail to receive them as Divine admonitions, and regard them as without any intelligent design; and

(3.) when they receive them with expressions of contempt, and speak of them and of the government of God with scorn. It should be a matter of deep concern, when we are afflicted in any manner, not to treat the matter lightly, but to derive from our trials all the lessons which they are adapted to produce on the mind.

Nor faint, etc. Bear up patiently under them. This is the second duty. We are first to study their character and design; and, secondly, to bear up under them, however severe they may be, and however long they may be continued. "Avoid the extremes of proud insensibility and entire dejection." Doddridge.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. This is also a quotation from Prov. 3. It means that it is a universal rule that God sends trials on those whom he truly loves. It does not, of course, mean that he sends chastisement which is not deserved; or that he sends it for the mere purpose of inflicting pain. That cannot be. But it means that, by his chastisements, he shows that he has a paternal care for us. He does not treat us with neglect and unconcern, as a father often does his illegitimate child. The very fact that he corrects us shows that he has towards us a father's feelings, and exercises towards us a paternal care. If he did not, he would let us go on without any attention, and leave us to pursue a course of sin that would involve us in ruin. To restrain and govern a child; to correct him when he errs, shows that there is a parental solicitude for him, and that he is not an outcast. And as there is in the life of every child of God something that deserves correction, it happens that it is universally true that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Whom he receives or acknowledges as his child. This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

The general sense of the passage is retained, as is often the case in the quotations from the Old Testament. The meaning is the same as in the former part of the verse, that every one who becomes a child of God is treated by him with that watchful care which shows that he sustains towards him the paternal relation.

6 for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

If ye endure chastening. That is, if you undergo, or are called to experience correction. It does not mean here, "if you endure it patiently, or if you bear up under it," but if you are chastised or corrected by God." The affirmation does not relate to the manner of bearing it, but to the fact that we are disciplined. God dealeth with you as with sons. He does not cast you off, and regard you as if you were in no way related to him. For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? That is, he evinces towards his son the care which shows that he sustains the relation of a father. If he deserves correction, he corrects him; and he aims, by all proper means, to exhibit the appropriate care and character of a father. And as we receive such attention from an earthly parent, we ought to expect to receive similar notice from our Father in heaven.

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

But if ye be without chastisement. If you never meet with anything that is adapted to correct your faults, to subdue your temper, to chide your wanderings, it would prove that you were in the condition of illegitimate children--cast off and disregarded by their father. Whereof all are partakers. All who are the true children of God. Then are ye bastards, and not sons. The reference here is to the neglect with which such children are treated, and to the general want of care and discipline over them:--

"Lost in the world's wide range; enjoined no aim, Prescribed no duty. and assigned no name." Savage.

In the English law, a bastard is termed nullius filiua,. Illegitimate children are usually abandoned by their father. The care of them is left to the mother, and the father endeavours to avoid all responsibility, and usually to be concealed and unknown. His own child he does not wish to recognize; he neither provides for him, nor instructs him, nor governs him, nor disciplines him. A father who is worthy of the name, will do all these things. So Paul says it is with Christians. God has not cast them off. In every way he evinces towards them the character of a father. And if it should be that they passed along through life without any occurrence that would indicate the paternal care and attention designed to correct their faults, it would show that they never had been his children, but were cast off and wholly disregarded. This is a beautiful argument; and we should receive every affliction as full proof that we are not forgotten by the High and Holy One who condescends to sustain the character, and to evince towards us, in our wanderings, the watchful care of a Father.

9 Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Furthermore. As an additional consideration to induce us to receive chastisement with submission. The argument in this verse is derived from the difference in the spirit and design with which we are corrected by God and by an earthly parent. In God everything is without any intermingling of passion or any improper feeling. In an earthly parent there is often much that is the result of hasty emotion, of an irascible temper, perhaps of the mere love of power. There is much that is inflicted without due reflection, and that produces only pain in the bosom of the parent himself in the recollection. Yet, with all this imperfection of parental government, we were patient and unmurmuring. How much more should we submit to one whose paternal discipline is caused by no excited feeling; by no love of power; by no want of reflection, and which never furnishes occasion for regret!

Fathers of our flesh. Earthly fathers; those from whom we have derived our being here. They are contrasted here with God who is called "the Father of spirits," not because the father does not sustain the paternal relation to the soul as well as the body, but to designate the nature of the dominion over us. The dominion of God is that which pertains to a spiritual kingdom, having more direct reference to the discipline of the soul, and being designed to prepare us for the spiritual world; that of the earthly father pertains primarily to our condition here, and the discipline is designed to subdue our unruly passions, to teach us to restrain our appetites, to inculcate maxims of health and prosperity, and to prevent those things which would impede our happiness in the present world. See, however, many curious instances of the manner in which these phrases were used by the Jewish writers, collected by Wetstein.

We gave them reverence. We submitted to them; honoured them; loved them. Painful at the time as correction may have been, yet when we have fully understood the design of it, we have loved them the more. The effect of such discipline, properly administered, is to produce real veneration for a parent--for he who, in a timely and appropriate manner restrains his child is the only one who will secure ultimate reverence and respect.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection. Since God's government is so much more perfect; since he has so much better right to control us; and since his administration is free from all the defects which attend parental discipline on earth, there is a much higher reason for bowing with submission and reverence to him. The Father of spirits. Thus in Nu 16:22, God is called the God of the spirits of all flesh." So also Nu 27:16; comp. Job 33:4. The idea seems to be, that as the soul is the most important part of man, this name is given to God by way of eminence, or he is eminently and supremely our Father. It was his to create the immortal part, and to that spirit

which is never to die he sustains the relation of Father. The earthly father is parent to the man as mortal; God is the Father of man as immortal. God is himself a Spirit. Angels and human souls, therefore, may be represented as peculiarly his offspring. It is the highest designation which could be given to God to say that he is at the head of the universe of mind; not implying that he is not also at the head of the material universe, but designing to bring into view this high characteristic of the Almighty, that all created minds throughout the universe sustain to him the relation of children. To this Great Being we should, therefore, more cheerfully subject ourselves than to an earthly parent.

And live. Meaning that his fatherly chastisements are adapted to secure our spiritual life. He corrects us that he may promote our final happiness, and his inflictions are the means of saving us from eternal death.

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

For they verily for a few days. That is, with reference to a few days, (προς;) or it was a chastisement that had reference mainly to this short life. The apostle seems to bring in this circumstance to contrast the dealings of earthly parents with those of God. One of the circumstances is, that the corrections of earthly parents had a muck less important object than those of God. They related to this life--a life so brief that it may be said to continue but a "few days." Yet, in order to secure the benefit to be derived for so short a period from fatherly correction, we submitted without murmuring. Much more cheerfully ought we to submit to that discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father which is designed to extend its benefits through eternity. This seems to me to afford a better sense than that adopted by Professor Stuart and others, that it means, "during our childhood or minority;" or than that proposed by Doddridge, that it refers both to our earthly parents and to our heavenly Father.

After their own pleasure. Marg. "as seemed good, or meet, to them." Meaning that it was sometimes done arbitrarily, or from caprice, or under the influence of passion. This is an additional reason why we should submit to God, We submitted to our earthly parents, though their correction was sometimes passionate, and was designed to gratify their own pleasure, rather than to promote our good. There is much of this kind of punishment in families; but there is none of it under the administration of God.

But he for our profit. Never from passion, from caprice, from the love of power or superiority, but always for our good. The exact benefit which he designs to produce we may not be able always to understand; but we may be assured that no other cause influences him than a desire to promote our real welfare; and as he can never be mistaken in regard to the proper means to secure that, we may be assured that our trials are always adapted to that end.

That we might be partakers of his holiness. Become so holy that it may be said that we are partakers of the very holiness of God. Comp. 2Pet 1:4. This is the elevated object at which God aims by our trials. It is not that he delights to produce pain; not that he envies us, and would rob us of our little comforts; not that he needs what We prize to increase his own enjoyment, and therefore rudely takes it away; and not that he acts from caprice--now conferring a blessing, and then withdrawing it without any reason: it is, that he may make us more pure and holy, and thus promote our own best interest. To be holy as God is holy; to be so holy that it may be said that we "are partakers of his holiness," is a richer blessing than health, and property, and friends, without it; and when by the exchange of the one we acquire the other, we have secured infinitely more than we have lost. To obtain the greater good, we should be willing to part with the less; to secure the everlasting friendship and favour of God, we should be willing, if necessary, to surrender the last farthing

of our property; the last friend that is left us; the last feeble and fluttering pulsation of life in our veins.

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. It does not impart pleasure, nor is this its design. All chastisement is intended to produce pain, and the Christian is as sensitive to pain as others. His religion does not blunt his sensibilities, and make him a stoic, but it rather increases his susceptibility to suffering. The Lord Jesus, probably, felt pain, reproach, and contempt, more keenly than any other human being ever did; and the Christian feels the loss of a child, or bodily suffering, as keenly as any one. But while religion does not render him insensible to suffering, it does two things--

(1.) it enables him to bear the pain without murmuring, and

(2.) it turns the affliction into a blessing on his soul. Nevertheless afterward. In future life. The effect is seen in a pure life, and in a more entire devotedness to God. We are not to look for the proper fruits of affliction while we are suffering, but afterwards. It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. It is a tree that bears good fruit and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe. It frequently requires a long time before all the results of affliction appear--as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden orange. When those fruits are ripened they are

(1.) fruits "of righteousness." They make us more holy, more dead to sin and the world, and more alive to God. And they are

(2.) "peaceable." They produce peace, calmness, submission in the soul. They make the heart more tranquil in its confidence in God, and more disposed to promote the religion of peace. The apostle speaks of this as if it were a universal truth in regard to Christians who are afflicted. And it is so, There is no Christian who is not ultimately benefited by trials, and who is not able at some period subsequently to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." When a Christian comes to die, he does not feel that he has had one trial too many, or one which he did not deserve. He can then look back and see the effect of some early trial, so severe that he once thought he could hardly endure it, spreading a hallowed influence over his future years, and scattering its golden fruit all along the pathway of life. I have never known a Christian who was not benefited by afflictions; I have seen none who was not able to say that his trials produced some happy effect on his religious character, and on his real happiness in life. If this be so, then no matter how severe our trials, we should submit to them without a murmur. The more severe they are, the more we shall yet be blessed--on earth or in heaven.

Warning against Rejecting God's Grace

12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

Wherefore. In view of the facts which have been now stated --that afflictions are sent from God, and are evidences of his paternal watchfulness. Lift up the hands which hang down. As if from weariness and exhaustion. Renew your courage; make a new effort to bear them. The hands fall by the side when we are exhausted with toil, or worn down by disease. Isa 35:3, from which place this exhortation is taken. And the feeble knees. The knees also become enfeebled by long effort, and tremble as if their strength were gone. Courage and resolution may do much, however, to make them firm, and it is to this that the apostle exhorts those to whom he wrote. They were to make every effort to bear up under their trials.

The hope of victory will do much to strengthen one almost exhausted in battle; the desire to reach home invigorates the frame of the weary traveller. So it is with the Christian. In persecution and sickness and bereavement, he may be ready to sink under his burdens. The hands fall, and the knees tremble, and the heart sinks within us. But confidence in God, and the hope of heaven, and the assurance that all this is for our good, will reinvigorate the enfeebled frame, and enable us to bear what we once supposed would crush us to the dust. A courageous mind braces a feeble body, and hope makes it fresh for new conflicts.

13 and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

And make straight paths for your feet. Marg., even. The word here used means, properly, straight, in the sense of upright, erect, Acts 14:10; but it is here used in the sense of straight horizontally, that is, level, plain, smooth. The meaning is, that they were to remove all obstacles out of the way, so that they need not stumble and fall. There is probably an allusion here to Prov 4:25-27, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." The idea is, that by every proper means they were to make the way to heaven as plain and easy as possible. They were to allow no obstructions in the path over which the lame and feeble might fall. Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. A lame man needs a smooth path to walk in. The idea is here, that everything which would prevent those in the church who were in any danger of falling--the feeble, the unestablished, the weak--from walking in the path to heaven, or which might be an occasion to, them of falling, should be removed. Or it may mean, that in a road that was not level, those who were lame would be in danger of spraining, distorting, or wrenching a lame limb; and the counsel is, that whatever would have a tendency to this should be removed. Divested of the figure, the passage means, that everything should be removed which would hinder any one from walking in the

path to life. But let it rather be healed. As in the case of lameness, pains should be taken to heal it rather than to suffer it to be increased by careless exposure to a new sprain or fracture, so it should be in our religious and moral character. Whatever is defective we should endeavour to restore to Soundness, rather than to suffer the defect to be increased. Whatever is feeble in our faith or hope; whatever evil tendency there is in our hearts, we should endeavour to strengthen and amend, lest it should become worse, and we should entirely fall.

14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Follow peace with all men. Do not give indulgence to those passions which lead to litigations, strifes, wars. Rom 14:19. The connexion here requires us to understand this mainly of persecutors. The apostle is referring to the trials which those whom he addressed were experiencing. Those trials seem to have arisen mainly from persecution, and he exhorts them to manifest a spirit of kindness towards all, even though they were engaged in persecuting them. This is the temper of the gospel. We are to make war with sin, but not with men; with bad passions and corrupt desires, but not with our fellow-worms.

And holiness. Instead of yielding to contending passions and to a spirit of war; instead of seeking revenge on your persecutors and foes, make it rather your aim to be holy, Let that be the object of your pursuit; the great purpose of your life. Men might in such cases counsel them to seek revenge; the spirit of religion would counsel them to strive to be holy. In such times they were in great danger of giving indulgence to evil passions, and hence the special propriety of the exhortation to endeavour to be holy.

Without which no man shall see the Lord. That is, shall see him in peace; or shall so see him as to dwell with him. All will see him in the day of judgment; but to "see" one is often used in the sense of being with one, dwelling with one,

enjoying one. Mt 5:8. The principle here stated is one which is never departed from, Rev 21:27; Isa 35:8, 52:1, 60:21, Joel 3:17, Mt 13:41, 1Cor 6:9,10. No one has ever been admitted to heaven in his sins; nor is it desirable that any one ever should be. Desirable as it is that lost men should be happy, yet it is benevolence which excludes the profane, the impious, and the unbelieving from heaven--just as it is benevolence to a family to exclude profligates and seducers, and as it is benevolence to a community to confine thieves and robbers in prison. This great principle in the Divine administration will always be adhered to; and hence they who are expecting to be saved without holiness or religion are destined to certain disappointment. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God will not admit one unrepenting and unpardoned sinner to heaven. It was the importance and the certainty of this principle which made the apostle insist on it here with so much earnestness. Amidst all their trials, when exposed to persecution, and when everything might tempt them to the indulgence of feelings which were the opposite of holiness, they were to make it their great object to be like God. For this they were to seek, to strive, to labour, to pray. This with us, in all our trials, should also be the great aim of life. How deeply affecting, then, is the inquiry, whether we have that holiness which is indispensable to salvation! Let us not deceive ourselves. We may have many things else--many things which are in themselves desirable, but without this one thing we shall never see the Lord in peace. We may have wealth, genius, learning, beauty, accomplishments, houses, lands, books, friends--but without religion they will be all in vain. Never can we see God in peace without a holy heart; never call we be admitted into heaven without that religion which will identify us with the angels around the throne!

15 looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any
root of bitterness springing up trouble *you,* and thereby many be
defiled;

Looking diligently. This phrase implies close attention. It is implied that there are reasons why we should take special care. Those reasons are found in the propensities of our hearts

to evil; in the temptations of the world; in the allurements to apostasy presented by the great adversary of our souls.

Lest any man fail. As every man is in danger, it is his personal duty to see to it that his salvation be secure.

Fail of the grace of God. Marg. fall from. The Greek is, "lest any one be wanting or lacking"--υστερων. There is no intimation in the words used here that they already had grace, and might fall way--whatever might be true about that--but that there was danger that they might be found at last to be deficient in that religion which was necessary to save them. Whether this was to be by losing the religion which they now had, or by the fact that they never had any--however near they may have come to it--the apostle does not here intimate, and this passage should not be used in the discussion of the question about falling from grace. It is a proper exhortation to be addressed to any man in the church, or out of it, to inquire diligently whether there is not reason to apprehend that when he comes to appear before God he will be found to be wholly destitute of religion.

Lest any root of bitterness springing up. Any bitter root. There is, doubtless, an allusion here to De 29:18: "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." The allusion there is to those who were idolaters, and who instead of bearing the fruits of righteousness, and promoting the piety and happiness of the nation, would bear the fruits of idolatry, and spread abroad irreligion and sin. The allusion, in both cases, is to a bitter plant springing up among those that were cultivated for ornament or use, or to a tree bearing bitter and poisonous fruit, among those that produced good fruit. The reference of the apostle is to some person who should produce a similar effect in the church--to one who should inculcate false doctrines; or who should apostatize; or who should lead

an unholy life, and thus be the means of corrupting and destroying others. They were to be at especial pains that no such person should start up from among themselves, or be tolerated by them. Trouble you. By his doctrines and example. And thereby many be defiled. Led away from the faith, and corrupted. One wicked man, and especially one hypocrite in the church, may be the means of destroying many others.

16 lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Lest there be any fornicator. The sin here referred to is one of those which would spread corruption in the church, and against which they ought to be especially on their guard. Allusion is made to Esau as an example, who, himself a corrupt and profane man, for a trifle threw away the highest honour which as a son he could have. Many have regarded the word here used as referring to idolatry, or defection from the true religion to a false one--as the word is often used in the Old Testament--but it is more natural to understand it literally. The crime here mentioned was one which abounded everywhere in ancient times, as it does now, and it was important to guard the church against it. Acts 15:20; 1Cor 6:18.

Or profane person. The word profane here refers to one who, by word or conduct, treats religion with contempt, or has no reverence for that which is sacred. This may be shown by words; by the manner; by a sneer; by neglect of religion; or by openly renouncing the privileges which might be connected with our salvation. The allusion here is to one who should openly cast off all the hopes of religion for indulgence in temporary pleasure, as Esau gave up his birthright for a trifling gratification. In a similar manner the young, for temporary gratification, neglect or despise all the privileges and hopes resulting from their being born in the bosom of the church; from being baptized and consecrated to God; and from being trained up in the lap of piety.

As Esau. It is clearly implied here that Esau sustained the character of a fornicator and a profane person, The former appellation is probably given to him to denote his licentiousness, shown by his marrying many wives, and particularly foreigners, or the daughters of Canaan. See Gen 36:2; comp. Gen 26:34,35. The Jewish writers abundantly declare that that was his character. See Wetstein, in loc. In proof that the latter appellation--that of a profane person--belonged to him, see Gen 25:29-34. It is true that it is rather by inference, than by direct assertion, that it is known that he sustained this character. The birthright, in his circumstances, was a high honour. The promise respecting the inheritance of the land of Canaan, the coming of the Messiah, and the preservation of the true religion, had been given to Abraham and Isaac, and was to be transmitted by them. As the eldest son, all the honour connected with this, and which is now associated with the name Jacob, would have properly appertained to Esau. But he undervalued it. He lived a licentious life. He followed his corrupt propensities, and gave the reins to indulgence. In a time of temporary distress, also, he showed how little he really valued all this by bartering it away for a single meal of victuals. Rather than bear the evils of hunger for a short period, and evidently in a manner implying a great undervaluing of the honour which he held as the firstborn son in a pious line, he agreed to surrender all the privileges connected with his birth. It was this which made the appellation appropriate to him; and this will make the appellation appropriate in any similar instance.

Who for one morsel of meat. The word meat here is used, as it is commonly in the Scriptures, in its primitive sense in English to denote, food, Gen 25:34. The phrase here, "morsel of meat," would be better rendered by "a single meal."

Sold his birthright. The birthright seems to have implied the first place or rank in the family; the privilege of offering sacrifice and conducting worship in the absence or death of the father; a double share of the inheritance; and in this

instance the honour of being in the line of the patriarchs, and transmitting the promises made to Abraham and Isaac. What Esau parted with we can easily understand by reflecting on the honours which have clustered around the name of Jacob.

17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

For ye know how that afterward, etc. When he came to his father, and earnestly besought him to reverse the sentence which he had pronounced. See Gen 27:34-40. The "blessing" here referred to was not that of the birthright, which he knew he could not regain, but that pronounced by the father Isaac on him whom he regarded as his first born son. This Jacob obtained by fraud, when Isaac really meant to bestow it on Esau. Isaac appears to have been ignorant wholly of the bargain which Jacob and Esau had made in regard to the birthright, and Jacob and his mother contrived in this way to have that confirmed which Jacob had obtained of Esau by contract. The sanction of the father, it seems, was necessary, before it could be made sure; and Rebecca and Jacob understood that the dying blessing of the aged patriarch would establish it all. It was obtained by dishonesty on the part of Jacob, but so far as Esau was concerned it was an act of righteous retribution for the little regard he had shown for the honour of his birth.

For he found no place of repentance. Marg. "Way to change his mind." That is, no place for repentance in the mind of Isaac, or no way to change his mind. It does not mean that Esau earnestly sought to repent and could not, but that when once the blessing had passed the lips of his father he found it impossible to change it. Isaac firmly declared that he had pronounced the blessing, and though it had been obtained by fraud, yet, as it was of the nature of a Divine prediction it could not now be changed. He had not indeed intended that it should be thus. He had pronounced a blessing on another which had been designed for him. But still the benediction had been given. The prophetic words had been pronounced.

By Divine direction the truth had been spoken, and how could it be changed? It was impossible now to reverse the Divine purposes in the case, and hence the "blessing" must stand as it had been spoken. Isaac did, however, all that could be done. He gave a benediction to his son Esau, though of far inferior value to that which he had pronounced on the fraudulent Jacob, Gen 27:39,40.

Though he sought it carefully with tears. Gen 27:34. He sought to change the purpose of his father, but could not do it. The meaning and bearing of this passage, as used by the apostle, may be easily understood.

(1.) The decision of God, on the human character and destiny, will soon be pronounced. That decision will be according to truth, and cannot be changed.

(2.) If we should despise our privileges, as Esau did his birthright, and renounce our religion, it would be impossible to recover what we had lost. There would be no possibility of changing the Divine decision in the case, for it would be determined for ever. This passage, therefore, should not be alleged to show that a sinner cannot repent, or that he cannot find "place for repentance," or assistance to enable him to repent, or that tears and sorrow for sin would be of no avail, for it teaches none of these things; but it should be used to keep us from disregarding our privileges, from turning away from the true religion, from slighting the favours of the gospel, and from neglecting religion till death comes; because when God has once pronounced a sentence excluding us from his favour, no tears, or pleading, or effort of our own can change him. The sentence which he pronounces on the scoffer, the impenitent, the hypocrite, and the apostate, is one that will abide for ever without change. This passage, therefore, is in accordance with the doctrine more than once stated before in this epistle, that if a Christian should really apostatize, it would be impossible that he should be saved. Heb 6:1, seq.

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

For ye are not come. To enforce the considerations already urged, the apostle introduces this sublime comparison between the old and new dispensations, Heb 12:18-24. The object, in accordance with the principal scope of the epistle, is to guard them against apostasy. To do this, he shows that under the new dispensation there was much more to bind them to fidelity, and to make apostasy dangerous, than there was under the old. The main point of the comparison is, that under the Jewish dispensation everything was adapted to awe the mind, and to restrain by the exhibition of grandeur and of power; but that under the Christian dispensation, while there was as much that was sublime, there was much more that was adapted to win and hold the affections. There were revelations of higher truths. There were more affecting motives to lead to obedience. There was that of which the former was but the type and emblem. There was the clear revelation of the glories of heaven, and of the blessed society there, all adapted to prompt to the earnest desire that they might be our own. The considerations presented in this passage, constitute the climax of the argument so beautifully pursued through this epistle, showing that the Christian system was far superior, in every respect, to the Jewish. In presenting this closing argument, the apostle first refers to some of the circumstances attending the former dispensation, which were designed to keep the people of God from apostasy, and then the considerations of superior weight existing under the Christian economy.

The mount that might be touched. Mount Sinai. The meaning here is, that that mountain was palpable, material, touchable--in contradistinction from the Mount Zion to which the church had now come, which is above the reach of the external senses, Heb 12:22. The apostle does not mean that it was permitted to the Israelites to touch Mount Sinai--for this was strictly forbidden, Ex 19:12; but he evidently alludes to that prohibition, and means to say that a command forbidding

them to "touch" the mountain, implied that it was a material or palpable object. The sense of the passage is, that every circumstance that occurred there was fitted to fill the soul with terror. Everything accompanying the giving of the law, the setting of bounds around the mountain which they might not pass, and the darkness and tempest on the mountain itself, was adapted to overawe the soul. The phrase, "the touchable mountain"--if such a phrase is proper --would express the meaning of the apostle here. The "Mount Zion" to which the church now has come, is of a different character. It is not thus visible and palpable. It is not enveloped in smoke and flame, and the thunders of the Almighty do not roll and re-echo among its lofty peaks as at Horeb; yet it presents stronger motives to perseverance in the service of God. And that burned with fire. Ex 19:18. Comp. De 4:11, 33:2. Nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest. See Ex 19:16. For ye are not come. To enforce the considerations already urged, the apostle introduces this sublime comparison between the old and new dispensations, Heb 12:18-24. The object, in accordance with the principal scope of the epistle, is to guard them against apostasy. To do this, he shows that under the new dispensation there was much more to bind them to fidelity, and to make apostasy dangerous, than there was under the old. The main point of the comparison is, that under the Jewish dispensation everything was adapted to awe the mind, and to restrain by the exhibition of grandeur and of power; but that under the Christian dispensation, while there was as much that was sublime, there was much more that was adapted to win and hold the affections. There were revelations of higher truths. There were more affecting motives to lead to obedience. There was that of which the former was but the type and emblem. There was the clear revelation of the glories of heaven, and of the blessed society there, all adapted to prompt to the earnest desire that they might be our own. The considerations presented in this passage, constitute the climax of the argument so beautifully pursued through this epistle, showing that the Christian system was far superior, in every respect, to the Jewish. In presenting this closing argument, the

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19 and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice*
they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to
them any more:

20 (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so
much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust
through with a dart:

For they could not endure that which was commanded. They could not sustain the awe produced by the fact that God uttered his commands himself. The meaning is not that the commands themselves were intolerable, but that the manner in which they were communicated inspired a terror which they could not bear. They feared that they should die. Ex 20:19 And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned. Ex 19:13. The prohibition was, that neither beast nor man should touch it on pain of death. The punishment was to be either by stoning, or being "shot through." Or thrust through with a dart. Ex 19:13. "Or shot through." This phrase, however, though it is found in the common editions of the New Testament, is wanting in all the more valuable manuscripts; in all the ancient versions; and it occurs in none of the Greek ecclesiastical writers, with one exception. It is omitted now by almost all editors of the New Testament. It is beyond all doubt an addition of later times, taken from the Septuagint of Ex 19:13. Its omission does not injure the sense.

21 and so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear
and quake:)

And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, etc. This is not recorded in the account of the giving of the law in Exodus, and it has been made a question on what authority the apostle made this declaration respecting Moses. In De 9:19, Moses indeed says of himself, after he had come down from the mountain, and had broken the two tables of stone that were in his hand, that he was greatly afraid of the anger of the Lord on account of the sin of the people. "I was afraid of the anger

and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you;" and it has been supposed by many that this is the passage to which the apostle here alludes. But it is very evident that was spoken in a different occasion from the one which is referred to in the passage before us. That was after the law was promulgated, and Moses had descended from the mount; and it was not said in view of the terrors of the scene when the law was given, but of the apprehension of the wrath of God against the people for their sin in making the golden calf. I know not how to explain this, except by the supposition that the apostle here refers to some tradition that the scene produced this effect on his mind. In itself, it is not improbable that Moses thus trembled with alarm, (comp. Ex 19:16,) nor that the remembrance of it should have been handed down among the numerous traditions which the Jews transmitted from age to age. There must have been many things that occurred in their journey through the wilderness which are not recorded in the Books of Moses. Many of them would be preserved naturally in the memory of the people, and transmitted to their posterity; and though those truths might become intermingled with much that was fabulous, yet it is not irrational to suppose that an inspired writer may have adduced pertinent and true examples from these traditions of what actually occurred. It was one method of preserving the truth, thus to select such instances of what actually took place from the mass of traditions, which were destined to perish, as would be useful in future times. The circumstance here mentioned was greatly fitted to increase the impression of the sublimity and fearfulness of the scene. Moses was accustomed to commune with God. He had met him at the "bush," and had been addressed by him face to face; and yet so awful were the scenes at Horeb, that even he could not bear it with composure. What may we, then, suppose to have been the alarm of the body of the people, when the mind of the great leader himself was thus overpowered!

22 but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

But ye are come unto mount Sion. You who are Christians; all who are under the new dispensation. The design is to contrast the Christian dispensation with the Jewish, and to show that its excellences and soul; advantages were far superior to the religion of their fathers. It had more to win the affections; more to elevate the more to inspire with hope. It had less that was terrific and alarming; it appealed less to the fears and more to the hopes of mankind; but still apostasy from this religion could not be less terrible in its consequences than apostasy from the religion of Moses. In the passage before us, the apostle evidently contrasts Sinai with Mount Zion;and means to say that there was more about the latter that was adapted to win the heart, and to preserve allegiance, than there was about the former. Mount Zion literally denoted the southern hill in Jerusalem, on which a part of the city was built. That part of the city was made by David and his successors the residence of the court, and soon the name Zion was given familiarly to the whole city. Jerusalem was the centre of religion in the land; the place where the temple stood, and where the worship of God was celebrated, and where God dwelt by a visible symbol, and it became the type and emblem of the holy abode where He dwells in heaven. It cannot be literally meant here that they had come to the Mount Sion in Jerusalem, for that was as true of the whole Jewish people as of those whom the apostle addressed; but it must mean that they had come to the Mount Zion of which the holy city was an emblem; to the glorious mount which is revealed as the dwelling-place of God, of angels, of saints. That is, they had "come" to this by the revelations and hopes of the gospel. They were not, indeed, literally in heaven, nor was that glorious city literally on earth; but the dispensation to which they had been brought was that which conducted them directly up to the city of the living God, and to the holy mount where he dwelt above. The view was not confined to an earthly mountain enveloped in smoke and flame, but opened at once on the holy place where God abides. By the phrase, "ye are come," the apostle means that this was the characteristic of the new dispensation, that it

conducted them there, and that they were already, in fact, inhabitants of that glorious city. They were citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, (comp. Php 3:20,) and were entitled to its privileges.

And unto the city of the living God. The city where the living God dwells--the heavenly Jerusalem. Comp. Heb 11:10. God dwelt by a visible symbol in the temple at Jerusalem--and to that his people came under the old dispensation. In a more literal and glorious sense his abode is in heaven, and to that his people have now come.

The heavenly Jerusalem. Heaven is not unfrequently represented as a magnificent city, where God and angels dwell; and the Christian revelation discloses this to Christians as certainly their final home. They should regard themselves already as dwellers in that city, and live and act as if they saw its splendour, and partook of its joy. In regard to this representation of heaven as a city where God dwells, the following places may be consulted: Heb 11:10,14-16, 12:28, 13:14 Gal 4:26, Rev 3:12 Rev 21:2,10-27. It is true that Christians have not yet seen that city by the bodily eye, but they look to it with the eye of faith. It is revealed to them; they are permitted by anticipation to contemplate its glories, and to feel that it is to be their eternal home. They are permitted to live and act as if they saw the glorious God whose dwelling is there, and were already surrounded by the angels and the redeemed. The apostle does not represent them as if they were expecting that it would be visibly set up on the earth, but as being now actually dwellers in that city, and bound to live and act as if they were amidst its splendours.

And to an innumerable company of angels. The Greek here is, "to myriads [or ten thousands] of angels in an assembly or joyful convocation." The phrase, "tens of thousands," is often used to denote a great and indefinite number. The word rendered "general assembly," (Heb 12:23)-- πανηγυρις-- refers, properly, to "an assembly or convocation of the whole

people in order to celebrate any public festival or solemnity, as the public games or sacrifices." Rob. Lex. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and refers here to the angels viewed as assembled around the throne of God, and celebrating his praises. It should be regarded as connected with the word angels, referring to their convocation in heaven, and not to the church of the first-born. This construction is demanded by the Greek. Our common translation renders it as if it were to be united with the church-- "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn;" but the Greek will not admit of this construction. The interpretation which unites it with the angels is adopted now by almost all critics, and in almost all the editions of the New Testament. On the convocation of angels, Job 1:6. The writer intends, doubtless, to contrast that joyful assemblage of the angels in heaven with those who appeared in the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. God is always represented as surrounded by hosts of angels in heaven. See De 33:2, 1Kgs 22:19, Dan 7:10, Ps 68:17; comp. Heb 12:1; see also Rev 5:2, Mt 26:53, Lk 2:13. The meaning is, that under the Christian dispensation Christians, in their feelings and worship, become united to this vast host of holy angelic beings. It is, of course, not meant that they are visible, but they are seen by the eye of faith. The argument here is, that as, in virtue of the Christian revelation, we become associated with those pure and happy spirits, we should not apostatize from such a religion, for we should regard it as honourable and glorious to be identified with them.

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

And church of the firstborn. That is, you are united with the church of the firstborn. They who were firstborn among, the Hebrews enjoyed peculiar privileges, and especially pre-eminence of rank. Col 1:15. The reference here is, evidently, to those saints who had been distinguished for their piety, and who may be supposed to be exalted to peculiar honours in heaven--such as the patriarchs, prophets, martyrs. The

meaning is, that by becoming Christians we have become, in fact, identified with that happy and honoured church, and that this is a powerful motive to induce us to persevere. It is a consideration which should make us adhere to our religion amidst all temptations and persecutions, that we are identified with the most eminently holy men who have lived, and that we are to share their honours and their joys. The Christian is united in feeling, in honour, and in destiny, with the excel. lent of all the earth and of all times, he should feel it, therefore, an honour to be a Christian; he should yield to no temptation which would induce him to part from so goodly a fellowship.

Which are written in heaven. Marg. enrolled. The word here was employed by the Greeks to denote that one was enrolled as a citizen, or entitled to the privileges of citizenship. Here it means. that the names of the persons referred to were registered or enrolled among the inhabitants of the heavenly world. Lk 10:20. And to God the Judge of all. God, who will pronounce the final sentence on all mankind. The object of the reference here to God as Judge does not appear to be to contrast the condition of Christians with that of the Jews, as is the case in some of the circumstances alluded to, but to bring impressively before their minds the fact that they sustained a peculiarly near relation to him from whom all were to receive their final allotment. As the destiny of all depended on him, they should be careful not to provoke his wrath. The design of the apostle seems to be to give a rapid glance of what there was in heaven, as disclosed by the eye of faith to the Christian, which should operate as a motive to induce him to persevere in his Christian course. The thought that seems to have struck his mind in regard to God was, that he would do right to all. They had, therefore, everything to fear if they revolted from him; they had everything to hope if they bore their trials with patience, and persevered to the end. And to the spirits of just men made perfect. Not only to the more eminent saints--the "church of the firstborn"--but to all who were made perfect in heaven. They were not only united

with the imperfect Christians on earth, but with those who have become completely delivered from sin, and admitted to the world of glory. This is a consideration which ought to influence the minds of all believers. They are even now united with all the redeemed in heaven. They should so live as not to be separated from them in the final day. Most Christians have among the redeemed already not a few of their most tenderly beloved friends. A father may be there; a mother, a sister, a smiling babe. It should be a powerful motive with us so to live as to be prepared to be reunited with them in heaven.

24 and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. This was the crowning excellence of the new dispensation, in contradistinction from the old. They had been made acquainted with the true Messiah; they were united to him by faith; they had been sprinkled with his blood. Heb 7:22, and Heb 8:6. The highest consideration which can be urged to induce any one to persevere in a life of piety is the fact that the, Son of God has come into the world and died to save sinners. Comp. Heb 12:2, seq. of this chapter.

And to the blood of sprinkling. The blood which Jesus shed, and which is sprinkled upon us to ratify the covenant. Heb 9:18, seq.

That speaketh better things than that of Abel. Or, "than Abel; "the words "that of" being supplied by the translators. In the original there is no reference to the blood of Abel shed by Cain, as our translators seem to have supposed; but the allusion is to the faith of Abel, or to the testimony which he bore to a great and vital truth of religion. The meaning here is, that the blood of Jesus speaks better things than Abel did; that is, that the blood of Jesus is the reality of which the offering of Abel was a type. Abel proclaimed by the sacrifice which he made the great truth, that salvation could be only by a bloody offering--but he did this only in a typical and obscure manner; Jesus proclaimed it in a more distinct and

better manner by the reality. The object here is to compare the Redeemer with Abel, not in the sense that the blood shed in either case calls for vengeance, but that salvation by blood is more clearly revealed in the Christian plan than in the ancient history; and hence illustrating, in accordance with the design of this epistle, the superior excellency of the Christian scheme over all which had preceded it. There were other points of resemblance between Abel and the Redeemer, but on them the apostle does not insist. Abel was a martyr, and so was Christ; Abel was cruelly murdered, and so was Christ; there was aggravated guilt in the murder of Abel by his brother, and so there was in that of Jesus by his brethren--his own countrymen; the blood of Abel called for vengeance, and was followed by a fearful penalty on Cain, and so was the death of the Redeemer on his murderers--for they said, "his blood be on us and on our children," and are yet suffering under the fearful malediction then invoked;--but the point of contrast here is, that the blood of Jesus makes a more full, distinct, and clear proclamation of the truth, that salvation is by blood, than the offering made by Abel did. The apostle alludes here to what he had said in Heb 11:4. Heb 11:4. Such is the contrast between the former and the latter dispensations; and such the motives to perseverance presented by both. In the former, the Jewish, all was imperfect, terrific, and alarming. In the latter, everything was comparatively mild, winning, alluring, animating. Terror was not the principal element; but heaven was opened to the eye of faith, and the Christian was permitted to survey the Mount Zion--the New Jerusalem--the angels--the redeemed--the blessed God-- the glorious Mediator--and to feel that that blessed abode was to be his home. To that happy world he was tending; and with all these pure and glorious beings he was identified. Having stated and urged this argument, the apostle, in the remainder of the chapter, warns those whom he addressed in a most solemn manner against a renunciation of their Christian faith.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape,* if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven:

Him that speaketh. That is, in the gospel. Do not turn away from him who has addressed you in the new dispensation, and called you to obey and serve him. The meaning is, that God had addressed them in the gospel as really as he had done the Hebrews on Mount Sinai, and that there was as much to be dreaded in disregarding his voice now as there was then. He does not speak, indeed, amidst lightnings, and thunders, and clouds, but he speaks by every message of mercy; by every invitation; by every tender appeal He spake by his Son, (He 1:2;) he speaks by the Holy Spirit, and by all his calls and warnings in the gospel. For if they escaped not. If they who heard God under the old dispensation, who refused to obey him, were cut off. Heb 10:28. Who refused him that spake on earth. That is, Moses. The contrast here is between Moses and the Son of God, the head of the Jewish and the head of the Christian dispensation. Moses was a mere man, and spake as such, though in the name of God. The Son of God was from above, and spake as an inhabitant from heaven.

26 whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

Whose voice then shook the earth. When he spake at Mount Sinai. The meaning is, that the mountain and the region around quaked, Ex 19:18. The "voice" here referred to is that of God speaking from the holy mount. But now hath he promised, saying. The words here quoted are taken from Hag 2:6, where they refer to the changes which would take place under the Messiah. The meaning is, that there would be great revolutions in his coming, as if the universe were shaken to its centre. The apostle evidently applies this passage, as it is done in Haggai, to the first advent of the Redeemer. I shake not the earth only. This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but the sense is retained. In Haggai it is, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." The apostle lays

emphasis on the fact that not only the earth was to be shaken, but also heaven. The shaking of the earth here evidently refers to the commotions among the nations that would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. But also heaven. This may refer either

(1) to the extraordinary phenomena in the heavens at the birth, the death, and the ascension of Christ;

(2) to the revolutions in morals and religion which would be caused by the introduction of the gospel, as if everything were to be changed--expressed by "a shaking of the heavens and the earth;" or

(3) it may be more literally taken as denoting that there was a remarkable agitation in the heavens--in the bosoms of its inhabitants--arising from a fact so wonderful as that the Son of God should descend to earth, suffer, and die. I see no reason to doubt that the latter idea may have been included here; and the meaning of the whole then is, that while the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, fearful and solemn as it was, was an event that merely shook the earth in the vicinity of the holy Mount, the introduction of the gospel agitated the universe. Great changes upon the earth were to precede it; one revolution was to succeed another preparatory to it, and the whole universe would be moved at an event so extraordinary. The meaning is, that the introduction of the gospel was a much more solemn and momentous thing than the giving of the law--and that therefore it was much more fearful and dangerous to apostatize from it.

27 And this *word,* Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

And this word, Yet once more. That is, this reference to a great agitation or commotion in some future time. This is designed as an explanation of the prophecy in Haggai; and the idea is, that there would be such agitations that everything which was not fixed on a permanent and immovable basis

would be thrown down as in an earthquake. Everything which was temporary in human institutions; everything which was wrong in customs and morals; and everything in the ancient system of religion which was merely of a preparatory and typical character, would be removed. What was of permanent value would be retained, and a kingdom would be established which nothing could move. The effect of the gospel would be to overturn everything which was of a temporary character in the previous system, and everything in morals which was not founded on a solid basis, and to set up, in the place of it, principles which no revolution and no time could change. The coming of the Saviour, and the influence of his religion on mankind, had this effect in such respects as the following.

(1.) All that was of a sound and permanent nature in the Jewish economy was retained; all that was typical and temporary was removed. The whole mass of sacrifices and ceremonies, that were designed to prefigure the Messiah, of course then ceased; all that was of permanent value in the law of God, and in the principles of religion, was incorporated in the new system and perpetuated.

(2.) The same is true in regard to morals. There was much truth on the earth before the time of the Saviour; but it was intermingled with much that was false. The effect of his coming has been to distinguish what is true and what is false; to give permanency to the one, and to cause the other to vanish.

(3.) The same is true of religion. There are some views of religion which men have by nature which are correct; there are many which are false. The Christian religion gives permanence and stability to the one, and causes the other to disappear. And in general it may be remarked, that the effect of Christianity is to give stability to all that is founded on truth, and to drive error from the world. Christ came that he might destroy all the systems of error--that is, all that could be shaken on earth, and to confirm all that is true. The result

of all will be, that he will preside over a permanent kingdom, and that his people will inherit "a kingdom which cannot be moved," Heb 12:28.

The removing of those things that are shaken. Marg., more correctly, "may be.". The meaning is, that those principles of religion and morals which were not founded on truth, would be removed by his coming.

As of things that are made. Much perplexity has been felt by expositors in regard to this phrase, but the meaning seems to be plain. The apostle is contrasting the things which are fixed and stable with those which are temporary in their nature, or which are settled on no firm foundation. The former he speaks of as if they were uncreated and eternal principles of truth and righteousness. The latter he speaks of as if they were created and therefore liable, like all things which are "made," to decay, to change, to dissolution, That those things which cannot be shaken may remain. The eternal principles of truth, and law, and righteousness. These would enter into the new kingdom which was to be set up, and of course that kingdom would be permanent. These are not changed or modified by time, circumstances, human opinions, or laws. They remain the same from age to age, in every land, and in all worlds. They have been permanent in all the fluctuations of opinion; in all the varied forms of government on earth; in all the revolutions of states and empires. To bring out these is the result of the events of Divine Providence, and the object of the coming of the Redeemer; and on these principles that great kingdom is to be reared which is to endure for ever and ever.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved. We who are Christians. We pertain to a kingdom that is permanent and unchanging. The meaning is, that the kingdom of the Redeemer is never to pass away. It is not, like the

Jewish dispensation, to give place to another, nor is there any power that can destroy it. Mt 16:18. It has now endured for eighteen hundred years, amidst all the revolutions on earth, and in spite of all the attempts which have been made to destroy it; and it is now as vigorous and stable as it ever was. The past has shown that there is no power of earth or hell that can destroy it, and that in the midst of all revolutions this kingdom still survives. Its great principles and laws will endure on earth till the end of time, and will be made permanent in heaven. This is the only kingdom in which we can be certain that there will be no revolution; the only empire which is destined never to fall.

Let us have grace whereby we may serve God. Marg. "let us hold fast." The Greek is, literally, let us have grace; the meaning is, "let us hold fast the grace or favour which we have received in being admitted to the privileges of that kingdom." The object of the apostle is to keep them in the reverent fear and service of God. The argument which he presents is, that this kingdom is permanent. There is no danger of its being overthrown. It is to continue on earth to the end of time; it is to be established in heaven for ever. If it were temporary, changeable, liable to be overthrown at any moment, there would be much less encouragement to perseverance. But in a kingdom like this there is every encouragement, for there is the assurance

(1.) that all our interests there are safe;

(2.) that all our exertions will be crowned with ultimate success;

(3.) that the efforts which we make to do good will have a permanent influence on mankind, and will bless future ages; and

(4.) that the reward is certain. A man subject to a government about whose continuance there would be the utmost

uncertainty, would have little encouragement to labour with a view to any permanent interest. In a government where nothing is settled, where all policy is changing, and where there are constantly vacillating plans, there is no inducement to enter on any enterprize demanding time and risk. But where the policy is settled; where the principles and the laws are firm; where there is evidence of permanency, there is the highest encouragement. The highest possible encouragement of this kind is in the permanent and established kingdom of God. All other governments may be revolutionized--this never will be; all others may have a changeful policy--this has none; all others will be overthrown --this never will. With reverence and godly fear. With true veneration for God, and with pious devotedness.

29 for our God *is* a consuming fire.

For our God is a consuming fire. This is a further reason why we should serve God with profound reverence and unwavering fidelity. The quotation is made from De 4:24: "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The object of the apostle here seems to be, to show that there was the same reason for fearing the displeasure of God under the new dispensation which there was under the old. It was the same God who was served. There had been no change in his attributes, or in the principles of his government. He was.no more the friend of sin now than he was then; and the same perfections of his nature which would then lead him to punish transgression would also lead him to do it now. His anger was really as terrible, and as much to be dreaded, as it was at Mount Sinai; and the destruction which he would inflict on his foes would be as terrible now as it was then. The fearfulness with which he would come forth to destroy the wicked might be compared to a fire that consumed all before it. Mk 9:44-46. The image here is a most fearful one, and is in accordance with all the representations of God in the Bible, and with all that we see in the Divine dealings with wicked men, that punishment, as inflicted by him, is awful and overwhelming. So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on the hosts of Sennacherib; and on Jerusalem;--and so

it has been in the calamities of pestilence, war, flood, and famine, with which God has visited guilty men. By all these tender and solemn considerations, therefore, the apostle urges the friends of God to perseverance and fidelity in his service. His goodness and mercy; the gift of a Saviour to redeem us; the revelation of a glorious world; the assurance that all may soon be united in fellowship with the angels and the redeemed; the certainty that the kingdom of the Saviour is established on a permanent basis, and the apprehension of the dreadful wrath of God against the guilty, all should lead us to persevere in the duties of our Christian calling, and to avoid those things which would jeopard the eternal interests of our souls.

Hebrews-13

Service Well-pleasing to God

1 Let brotherly love continue.
2 Be not fogtful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Let brotherly love continue.Implying that it now existed among them. The apostle had no occasion to reprove them for the want of it, as he had in regard to some to whom he wrote, but he aims merely to impress on them the importance of this virtue, and to caution them against the danger of allowing it ever to be interrupted. Jn 13:34.

For thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Without knowing that they were angels. As Abraham (Gen 18:2, seq.) and Lot did, Gen 19. The motive here urged for doing it is, that by entertaining the stranger we may perhaps be honoured with the presence of those whose society will be to us an honour and a blessing. It is not well for us to miss the opportunity of the presence, the conversation, and the prayers of the good. The influence of such guests in a family is worth more than it costs to entertain them. If there is danger that we may sometimes receive those of an opposite character, yet it

is not wise, on account of such possible danger, to lose the opportunity of entertaining those whose presence would be a blessing. Many a parent owes the conversion of a child to the influence of a pious stranger in his family; and the hope that this may occur, or that our own souls may be blessed, should make us ready, at all proper times, to welcome the feet of the stranger to our doors. Many a man, if he had been accosted as Abraham was at the door of his tent by strangers, would have turned them rudely away; many a one in the situation of Lot would have sent the unknown guests rudely from his door; but who can estimate what would have been the results of such a course on the destiny of those good men and their families? For a great number of instances in which the heathen were supposed to have entertained the gods, though unknown to them, see Wetstein, in loc.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; *and* them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Remember them that are in bonds. All who are bound; whether prisoners of war; captives in dungeons; those detained in custody for trial; those who are imprisoned for righteousness' sake; or those held in slavery. The word used here will include all instances where bonds, shackles, chains were ever used. Perhaps there is an immediate allusion to their fellow-Christians who were suffering imprisonment on account of their religion, of whom there were doubtless many at that time; but the principle will apply to every case of those who are imprisoned or oppressed. The word remember implies more than that we are merely to think of them. Comp. Ex 20:8, Eccl 12:1. It means that we are to remember them with appropriate sympathy; or as we should wish others to remember us if we were in their circumstances. That is, we are

(1.) to feel deep compassion for them;

(2.) we are to remember them in our prayers;

(3.) we are to remember them, as far as practicable, with aid for their relief. Christianity teaches us to sympathize with all the oppressed, the suffering, and the sad; and there are more of this class than we commonly suppose, and they have stronger claims on our sympathy than we commonly realize. In this land there are not far from ten thousand confined in prison: the father separated from his children; the husband from his wife; the brother from his sister; and all cut off from the living world. Their fare is coarse, and their couches hard, and the ties which bound them to the living world are rudely snapped asunder. Many of them are in solitary dungeons; all of them are sad and melancholy men. True, they are there for crime; but they are men--they are our brothers. They have still the feelings of our common humanity, and many of them feel their separation from wife and children and home as keenly as we would. That God who has mercifully made our lot different from theirs has commanded us to sympathize with them--and we should sympathize all the more when we remember that but for his restraining grace we should have been in the same condition. There are in this land of "liberty," also, nearly three millions who are held in the hard bondage of slavery. There is the father, the mother, the child, the brother, the sister. They are held as property; liable to be sold; having no right to the avails of their own labour; exposed to the danger of having the tenderest ties sundered at the will of their master; shut out from the privilege of reading the word of God; fed on coarse fare; living in wretched hovels; and often subjected to the painful inflictions of the lash at the caprice of a passionate driver. Wives and daughters are made the victims of degrading sensuality, without the power of resistance or redress; the security of home is unknown; and they are dependent on the will of another man whether they shall or shall not worship their Creator. We should remember them, and sympathize with them as if they were our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, or sons and daughters. Though of different colour, yet the same blood flows in their veins as in ours, (Acts 17:26;) they are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. By nature they have the same right to "life, liberty, and

the pursuit of happiness," which we and our children have; and to deprive them of that right is as unjust as it would be to deprive us and ours of it. They have a claim on our sympathy, for they are our brethren. They need it, for they are poor and helpless. They should have it, for the same God who has kept us from that hard lot has commanded us to remember them. That kind remembrance of them should be shown in every practicable way. By prayer; by plans contemplating their freedom; by efforts to send them the gospel; by diffusing abroad the principles of liberty and of the rights of man; by using our influence to arouse the public mind in their behalf, we should endeavour to relieve those who are in bonds, and to hasten the time when "the oppressed shall go free." On this subject Is 48:6.

As bound with them. There is great force and beauty in this expression. Religion teaches us to identify ourselves with all who are oppressed, and to feel what they suffer as if we endured it ourselves. Infidelity and atheism are cold and distant. They stand aloof from the oppressed and the sad. But Christianity unites all hearts in one; binds us to all the race, and reveals to us, in the case of each one oppressed and injured, a brother.

And them which suffer adversity. The word here used refers, properly, to those who are maltreated, or who are injured by others. It does not properly refer to those who merely experience calamity. As being yourselves also in the body.

As being yourselves exposed to persecution and suffering, and liable to be injured. That is, do to them as you would wish them to do to you if you were the sufferer. When we see an oppressed and injured man, we should remember that it is possible that we may be in the same circumstances, and that then we shall need and desire the sympathy of others.

4 Marriage *is* honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Marriage is honourable in all. The object here is to state that honour is to be shown to the marriage relation. It is not to be undervalued by the pretence of the superior purity of a state of celibacy, as if marriage were improper for any class of men, or any condition of life; and it should not be dishonoured by any violation of the marriage contract. The course of things has shown that there was abundant reason for the apostle to assert, with emphasis, that "marriage was an honourable condition of life." There has been a constant effort made to show that celibacy was a more holy state; that there was something in marriage that rendered it dishourable for those who were in the ministry, and for those of either sex who would be eminently pure. This sentiment has been the cause of more abomination in the world than any other single opinion claiming to have a religious sanction. It is one of the supports on which the Papal system rests, and has been one of the principal upholders of all the corruptions in monasteries and nunneries. The apostle asserts, without any restriction or qualification, that marriage is honourable in all; and this proves that it is lawful for the ministers of religion to marry, and that the whole doctrine of the superior purity of a state of celibacy is false. See this subject examined 1Cor 7. And the bed undefiled. Fidelity to the marriage vow. But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. All licentiousness of life, and all violations of the marriage covenant, will be severely punished by God. 1Cor 6:9. The sins here referred to prevailed everywhere, and hence there was the more propriety for the frequent and solemn injunctions to avoid them which we find in the Scriptures.

5 *Let your* conversation *be* without covetousness; *and be* content
with such things as ye have: for he hath said,
I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Let your conversation. Your conduct--for so the word conversation is used in the Scriptures. Php 1:27. Be without covetousness. Eph 5:3; Col 3:5. And be to content with such things as ye have. Php 4:11,12; Mt 6:25, seq. The particular reason here given for contentment is, that God has promised never to leave his people. Compare with this the beautiful

argument of the Saviour in Mt 6:25, seq. For he hath said. That is, God has said. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. See De 31:6, Josh 1:5; 1Chr 28:20. Substantially the same expression is found in each of those places, and all of them contain the principle on which the apostle here relies, that God will not forsake his people.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper,
and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

So that we may boldly say. Without any hesitation or doubt. In all times of perplexity and threatening want; in all times when we scarcely know whence the supplies for our necessities are to come, we may put our trust in God, and be assured that he will not leave us to suffer. In the facts which occur under the providential dealings, there is a ground for confidence on this subject which is not always exercised even by good men. It remains yet to be shown that they who exercise simple trust in God for the supply of their wants are ever forsaken. Comp. Ps 37:25. The Lord is my helper. Substantially this sentiment is found in Ps 27:1, Ps 118:6. The apostle does not adduce it as a quotation, but as language which a true Christian may employ. The sentiment is beautiful, and full of consolation. What can we fear if we have the assurance that the Lord is on our side, and that he will help us? Man can do no more to us than he permits, and of course no more than will be for our own good; and, under whatever trials we may be placed, we need be under no painful apprehensions, for God will be our Protector and our Friend.

7 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken
unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end
of *their* conversation.

Remember them which have the rule over you. Marg., "are the guides." The word here used means, properly, leaders, guides, directors. It is often applied to military commanders. Here it means teachers--appointed to lead or guide them to eternal life. It does not refer to them so much as rulers or governors, as teachers or guides. In Heb 13:17, however, it is used in the former sense. The duty here enjoined is that of remembering them; that is, remembering their counsel, their

instructions, their example. Who have spoken to you the word of God. Preachers; either apostles or others. Respect is to be shown to the ministerial office by whomsoever it is borne. Whose faith follow. That is, imitate. Heb 6:12. Considering the end of their conversation. Of their conduct; of their manner of life. The word here rendered the end--εκβασις -- occurs only here and in 1Cor 10:13, where it is rendered "a way of escape." It properly means, a going out, an egress, and is hence spoken of as a going out from life, or as an exit from the world-- death. This is probably the meaning here. It does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever, was the aim or end for which they lived--for the Greek will not bear that construction; but it means that they were attentively to contemplate the end or the issue of the conduct of those holy teachers--the close or going out of all that they did; to wit, in a peaceful death. Their faith sustained them. They were enabled to persevere in a Christian course, and did not faint or fail. There is allusion, doubtless, to those who had been their religious instructors, and who had died in the faith of the gospel, either by persecution, or by an ordinary death; and the apostle points to them as examples of that to which he would exhort those whom he addressed--of perseverance in the faith until death. Thus explained, this verse does not refer to the duty of Christians towards living teachers, but toward those who are dead. Their duty towards living teachers is enforced in Heb 13:17. The sentiment here is, that the proper remembrance of those now deceased, who were once our spiritual instructors and guides, should be allowed to have an important influence in inducing us to lead a holy life. We should remember them with affection and gratitude; we should recall the truths which they taught, and the exhortations which they addressed to us; we should cherish, with kind affection, the memory of all that they did for our welfare, and we should not forget the effect of the truths which they taught in sustaining their own souls when they died.

8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, etc. As this stands in our common translation it conveys an idea which is not in the original. It would seem to mean that Jesus Christ, the unchangeable Saviour, was the end or aim of the conduct of those referred to, or that they lived to imitate and glorify him. But this is by no means the meaning in the original. There it stands as an absolute proposition, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" that is, that he is unchangeable. The evident design of this independent proposition here is, to encourage them to persevere by showing that their Saviour was always the same; that he who had sustained his people in former times was the same still, and would be the same for ever. The argument here, therefore, for perseverance is founded on the immutability of the Redeemer. If he were fickle, vacillating, changing in his character and plans; if to-day he aids his people, and to-morrow will forsake them; if at one time he loves the virtuous, and at another equally loves the vicious; if he formed a plan yesterday which he has abandoned today; or if he is ever to be a different being from what he is now, there would be no encouragement to effort. Who would know what to depend on? Who would know what to expect tomorrow? For who could have any certainty that he could ever please a capricious or a vacillating being? Who could know how to shape his conduct if the principles of the Divine administration were not always the same? At the same time, also, that this passage furnishes the strongest argument for fidelity and perseverance, it is an irrefragable proof of the divinity of the Saviour. It asserts immutability--sameness in the past, the present, and to all eternity --but of whom can this be affirmed but God? It would not be possible to conceive of a declaration which would more strongly assert immutability than this.

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for *it is* a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. That is, they should have settled and fixed points of belief, and not

yield to every new opinion which was started. The apostle does not exhort them to adhere to an opinion merely because they had before held it, or because it was an old opinion, nor does he forbid their following the leadings of truth, though they might be required to abandon what they had before held; but he cautions them against that vacillating spirit, and that easy credulity, which would lead them to yield to any novelty, and to embrace an opinion because it was new or strange. Probably the principal reference here is to the Judaizing teachers, and to their various doctrines about their ceremonial observances and traditions. But the exhortation is applicable to Christians at all times. A religious opinion, once embraced on what was regarded a good evidence, or in which we have been trained, should not be abandoned for slight causes. Truth, indeed, should always be followed, but it should be only after careful inquiry.

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. This is the proper foundation of adherence to the truth. The heart should be established with the love of God, with pure religion, and then we shall love the truth, and leave it in the right manner. If it is the head merely which is convinced, the consequence is bigotry, pride, narrow-mindedness. If the belief of the truth has its seat in the heart; it will be accompanied with charity, kindness, good-will to all men. In such a belief of the truth it is a good thing to have the heart established. It will produce

(1.) firmness and stability of character;

(2.) charity and kindness to others;

(3.) consolation and support in trials and temptations. When a man is thrown into trials and temptations, he ought to have some settled principles on which he can rely; some fixed points of belief that will sustain his soul.

Not with meats. The meaning is, that it is better to have the heart established with grace, or with the principles of pure religion, than with the most accurate knowledge of the rules of distinguishing the clean from the unclean among the various articles of food. Many such rules were found in the law of Moses, and many more had been added by the refinements of Jewish rulers and by tradition. To distinguish and remember all these required no small amount of knowledge, and the Jewish teachers, doubtless, prided themselves much on it. Paul says that it would be much better to have the principles of grace in the heart than all this knowledge; to have the mind settled on the great truths of religion than to be able to make the most accurate and learned distinctions in this matter. The same remark may be made about a great many other points besides the Jewish distinctions respecting meats. The principle is, that it is better to have the heart established in the grace of God, than to have the most accurate knowledge of the distinctions which are made on useless or unimportant subjects of religion. This observation would extend to many of the shibboleths of party; to many of the metaphysical distinctions in a hair-splitting theology; to many of the points of controversy which divide the Christian world. Which have not profited, etc, Which have been of no real benefit to their souls. 1Cor 8:8.

10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

Heb 13:10 Verse 10. We have an altar. We who are Christians. The Jews had an altar on which their sacrifices were offered which was regarded as sacred, and of the benefit of which no others might partake. The design of the apostle is to show that the same thing substantially, so far as privilege and sanctifying influence were concerned, was enjoyed by Christians. The "altar" to which he here refers is evidently the

cross on which the great sacrifice was made. Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. A part of the meat offered in sacrifice among the Jews became the property of the priests and Levites, and they had, by the law, a right to this, as a part of their support. See Lev 6:25,26, Nu 18:9,10. But the apostle says that there is a higher and more valuable sacrifice of which they have no right to partake while they remain in the service of the "tabernacle" or temple; that is, while they remain Jews. The participation in the great Christian sacrifice appertained only to those who were the friends of the Redeemer; sad however much they might value themselves on the privilege of partaking of the sacrifices offered under the Jewish law, that of partaking of the great sacrifice made by the Son of God was much greater. Which serve the tabernacle. Heb 9:2,3. The Jewish priests and Levites.

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

For the bodies of those beasts, etc. The word here rendered "for"--γαρ--would be here more properly rendered "moreover." Stuart. The apostle is not urging a reason for what he had said in the previous verse, but is suggesting anew consideration to excite those whom he addressed to fidelity and perseverance. In the previous verse the consideration was, that Christians are permitted to partake of the benefits of a higher and more perfect sacrifice than the Jews were, and therefore should not relapse into that religion. In this verse the consideration is, that the bodies of the beasts that were burned were taken without the camp, and that in like manner the Lord Jesus suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, and that we should be willing to go out with him to that sacrifice, whatever reproach or shame it might be attended with. Whose blood is brought into the sanctuary, etc. Heb 9:7,12. Are burned without the camp. Lev 4:12,21, 16:27. The "camp" here refers to the time when the Israelites were in the wilderness, and lived in encampments. The same custom was observed after the temple was built, by conveying the body of the animal slain for a sin-offering, on the great day of

atonement, beyond the walls of Jerusalem to be consumed there. "Whatever," says Grotius, "was not lawful to be done in the camp, afterwards was not lawful to be done in the city."

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood. That there might be a conformity between his death for sin and the sacrifices which typified it. It is implied here that it was voluntary on the part of Jesus that he suffered out of the city; that is, it was so ordered by Providence that it should be so. This was secured by his being put to death as the result of a judicial trial, and not by popular tumult. See Notes on Isa 53:8. If he had been killed in a tumult, it is possible that it might have been done as in other cases, (comp. the case of Zacharias, son of Barachias, Mt 23:35,) even at the altar is he was subjected, however, to a judicial process, his death was effected with more deliberation, and in the usual form. Hence he was conducted out of the city, because no criminal was executed within the walls of Jerusalem. Without the gate. Without the gate of Jerusalem, Jn 19:17,18. The place where he was put to death was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, and hence the Latin word which we commonly use in speaking of it, Calvary, Lk 23:33; comp. Mt 27:33. Calvary, as it is now shown, is within the walls of Jerusalem; but there is no reason to believe that is the place where the Lord Jesus was crucified, for that was outside of the walls of the city. The precise direction from the city is not designated by the sacred writers, nor are there any historical records, or traditional marks, by which it can now be known where the exact place was. All that we know on the subject from the New Testament is, that the name was Golgotha; that the place of the crucifixion and sepulchre were near each other; that they were without the gate, and nigh to the city, and that they were in a frequented spot, Jn 19:20. "This would favour the conclusion that the place was probably upon a great road leading from one of the gates; and such a spot would only be found upon the western or northern sides of the city, on the roads leading towards Joppa or Damascus." See the question about the place of the

crucifixion examined at length in Robinson's Bibli. Research., vol. ii., pp. 69--80, and Bibliotheca Sacra, No. 1.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp. As if we were going forth with him when he was led away to be crucified. He was put to death as a malefactor. He was the object of contempt and scorn. He was held up to derision, and was taunted and reviled on his way to the place of death, and even on the cross. To be identified with him there, to follow him, to sympathize with him, to be regarded as his friend, would have subjected one to similar shame and reproach. The meaning here is, that we should be willing to regard ourselves as identified with the Lord Jesus, and to bear the same shame and reproaches which he did. When he was led away, amidst scoffing and reviling, to be put to death, would we, if we had been there, been willing to be regarded as his followers, and to have gone out with him as Iris avowed disciples and friends? Alas, how many are there who profess to love him when religion subjects them to no reproach, who would have shrunk from following him to Calvary! Bearing his reproach. Sympathizing with him; or bearing such reproach as he did. See 1Pet 4:13. Comp. Hen 12:2; Php 3:10; Col 1:24.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

For here we have no continuing city, etc. We do not regard this as our final home, or our fixed abode, and we should be willing to bear reproaches during the little time that we are to remain here. Comp. Heb 11:10, seq. If, therefore, in consequence of our professed attachment to the Saviour, we should be driven away from our habitations, and compelled to wander, we should be willing to submit to it, for our permanent home is not here, but in heaven. The object of the writer seems to be to comfort the Hebrew Christians on the supposition that they would be driven by persecution from the city of Jerusalem, and doomed to wander as exiles. He tells them that their Lord was led from that city to be put to death, and they should be willing to go forth also; that their permanent home was not Jerusalem, but heaven; and they

should be willing, in view of that blessed abode, to be exiled from the city where they dwelt, and made wanderers in the earth.

15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to his name.

By him therefore. The Jews approached God by the blood of the sacrifice, and by the ministry of their high priest. The exhortation of the apostle here is founded on the general course of argument in the epistle. "In view of all the considerations presented respecting the Christian High Priest--his dignity, purity, and love, his sacrifice and his intercession--let us persevere in offering through him praise to God." That is, let us persevere in adherence to our religion. The sacrifice of praise. For all the mercies of redemption. The Jews, says Rosenmuller, (Alte u. neue Morgenland, in loc.,) had a species of offerings which they called peace--offerings, or friendship-offerings. They were designed not to produce peace or friendship with God, but to preserve it. Burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, were all on account of transgression, and were designed to remove transgression. But in their peace-offerings, the offerer was regarded as one who stood in the relation of a friend with God, and the oblation was a sign of thankful acknowledgment for favours received; or they were connected with vows in order that further blessings might be obtained; or they were brought voluntarily as a means to continue themselves in the friendship and favour of God, Lev 7:11,12. Comp. Jenning's Jew. Ant. i. 335. That is, the fruit of our lips. The phrase, "fruit of the lips," is a Hebraism, meaning what the lips produce; that is, words. Comp. Prov 18:20, Hoss 14:2. Giving thanks to his name. To God; the name of one being often put for the person himself. Praise now is one of the great duties of the redeemed. It Will be their employment for ever.

16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

But to do good, and to communicate, forget not. To communicate or impart to others; that is, to share with them what we have. The Greek word means, having in common

with others. The meaning is, that they were to show liberality to those who were in want, and were to take special pains not to forget this duty. We are prone to think constantly of our own interests, and there is great danger of forgetting the duty which we owe to the poor and the needy. On the duty here enjoined, Gal 6:10. For with such sacrifices God is well pleased. He is pleased with the sacrifices of prayer and of praise; with the offerings of a broken and a contrite heart; but he is especially pleased with the religion which leads us to do good to others. This was eminently the religion of his Son, the Lord Jesus; and to this all true religion prompts. The word "sacrifices" here is not taken in a strict sense, as denoting that which is offered as an expiation for sin, or in the sense that we are, by doing good, to attempt to make atonement for our transgressions, but in the general sense of an offering made to God. God is pleased with this, (1.) because it shows in us a right state of heart; (2.) because it accords with his own nature. He does good continually, and he is pleased with all who evince the same spirit.

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

Obey them that have the rule over you. Marg., guide. See Notes on ver. 7. The reference here is to their religious teachers, and not to civil rulers. They were to show them proper respect, and to submit to their authority in the church, so far as it was administered in accordance with the precepts of the Saviour. The obligation to obedience does not, of course, extend to anything which is wrong in itself, or which would be a violation of conscience. The doctrine is, that subordination is necessary to the welfare of the church, and that there ought to be a disposition to yield all proper obedience to those who are set over us in the Lord. Comp. 1Thes 5:12, 1Thes 5:13.

And submit yourselves. That is, to all which they enjoin that is lawful and right. There are, in relation to a society,

(1,) those things which God has positively commanded--which are always to be obeyed.

(2.) Many things which have been agreed on by the society as needful for its welfare--and these are to be submitted to unless they violate the rights of conscience; and

(3.) many things which are, in themselves, a matter of no express Divine command, and of no formal enactment by the community. They are matters of convenience; things that tend to the order and harmony of the community, and of the propriety of these, "rulers" in the church and elsewhere should be allowed to judge, and we should submit to them patiently. Hence, in the church, we are to submit to all the proper regulations for conducting public worship; for the promotion of religion; and for the administration of discipline.

For they watch for your souls. They have no selfish aim in this. They do not seek "to lord it over God's heritage." It is for your own good that they do this, and you should, therefore, submit to these arrangements. And this shows, also, the true principle on which authority should be exercised in a church. It should be in such a way as to promote the salvation of the people; and all the arrangements should be with that end. The measures adopted, therefore, and the obedience enjoined, should not be arbitrary, oppressive, or severe, but should be such as will really promote salvation.

As they that must give account. To God. The ministers of religion must give account to God for their fidelity, for all that they teach, and for every measure which they adopt, they must soon be called into judgment. There is, therefore, the best security that, under the influence of this solemn truth, they will pursue only that course which will be for your good.

That they may do it with joy, and not with grief. μηστεναζοντες -not sighing, or groaning; as they would who had been unsuccessful. The meaning is, that they should so obey, that when their teachers came to give up their account, they need not do it with sorrow over their perverseness and disobedience.

For this is unprofitable for you. That is, their giving up their account in that manner--as unsuccessful in their efforts to save you--would not be of advantage to you, but would be highly injurious. This is a strong mode of expressing the idea that it must be attended with imminent peril to their souls to have their religious teachers go and give an account against them. As they would wish, therefore, to avoid that, they should render to them all proper honour and obedience.

18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Pray for us. This is a request which the apostle often makes in his own behalf and in behalf of his fellow-labourers in the gospel. See 1Thes 5:25. Eph 6:18,19. For we trust we have a good conscience, etc. Acts 24:16. The apostle here appeals to the uprightness of his Christian life as a reason why he might claim their sympathy, he was conscious of an aim to do good; he sought the welfare of the church; and having this aim he felt that he might appeal to the sympathy of all Christians in his behalf. It is only when we aim to do right, and to maintain a good conscience, that we can with propriety ask the prayers of others, or claim their sympathy. And if we are "willing in all things to live honestly," we may expect the sympathy, the prayers, and the affections of all good men.

19 But I beseech *you* the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

It is here first in the letter he mentions himself, in a way so unobtrusive, as not to prejudice his Hebrew readers against him, which would have been the result had he commenced this as his other Epistles, with authoritatively announcing his name and apostolic commission.

That I may be restored to you the sooner. It is here clearly implied that the writer was deterred from visiting them by some adverse circumstances over which he had no control. This might be either by imprisonment, or sickness, or the want of a convenient opportunity of reaching them. The probability is, judging particularly from the statement in Heb 13:23, that he was then a prisoner, and that his detention was on that account. See Intro. & 4, (6.) The language here is such as Paul would use on the supposition that he was then a prisoner at Rome--and this is a slight circumstance going to show the probability that the epistle was composed by him.

Benediction and Final Greetings

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord
Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the
everlasting covenant,
21 make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in
you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ;
to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Now the God of peace. God who is the Author, or the Source of peace. 1Thes 5:23. The word peace in the New Testament is used to denote every kind of blessing or happiness. It is opposed to all that would disturb or trouble the mind, and may refer, therefore, to reconciliation with God; to a quiet conscience; to the evidence of pardoned sin; to health and prosperity; and to the hope of heaven. Jn 14:27. That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. Acts 2:32 1Cor 15:15. It is only by the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus that we have peace, for it is only by him that we have the prospect of an admission into heaven. That great shepherd of the sheep. Jn 10:1,14. The idea here is, that it is through the tender care of that great Shepherd that true happiness is bestowed on the people of God. Through the blood of the everlasting covenant. The blood shed to ratify the everlasting covenant that God makes with his people. Heb 9:14, Heb 9:15-23. This phrase, in the original, is not connected, as it is in our

translation, with his being raised from the dead; nor should it be so rendered, for what can be the sense of "raising Christ from the dead by the blood of the covenant?" In the Greek it is, "The God of peace, who brought again from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, great by the blood of the everlasting covenant, our Lord Jesus," etc. The meaning is, that he was made or constituted the great Shepherd of the sheep--the great Lord and Ruler of his people, by that blood. That which makes him so eminently distinguished; that by which he was made superior to all others who ever ruled over the people of God, was the fact that he offered the blood by which the eternal covenant was ratified. It is called everlasting or eternal, because (1.) it was formed in the councils of eternity, or has been an eternal plan in the Divine Mind; and (2.) because it is to continue for ever. Through such a covenant God can bestow permanent and solid "peace" on his people, for it lays the foundation of the assurance of eternal happiness.

Make you perfect. The apostle here does not affirm that they were then perfect, or that they would be in this life. The word here used--καταρτιζω-means, to make fully ready, to put in full order; to make complete. The meaning here is, that Paul prayed that God would fully endow them with whatever grace was necessary to do his will and to keep his commandments. See the word explained Heb 11:3. It is an appropriate prayer to be offered at all times, and by all who love the church, that God would make all his people perfectly qualified to do all his will. Working in you. Marg. Doing. The idea here is, that the only hope that they would do the will of God was, that he would, by his own agency, cause them to do what was well-pleasing in his sight: Comp. Php 2:12. It is not from any expectation that man would do it himself Through Jesus Christ. The idea is, that God does not directly and by his own immediate agency convert and sanctify the heart, but it is through the gospel of Christ, and all good influences on the soul must be expected through the Saviour. To whom be glory for ever and ever. That is, to Christ; for so the connexion

evidently demands. It is not uncommon for the apostle Paul to introduce doxologies in this way in the midst of a letter. Rom 9:4.

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation:
for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23 Know ye that *our* brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if
he come shortly, I will see you.

Suffer the word of exhortation. Referring to the arguments and counsels in this whole epistle--which is, in fact, a practical exhortation to perseverance in adhering to the Christian religion amidst all the temptations which existed to apostasy. For I have written a letter unto you in few words. This does not mean that this epistle is short compared with the others that the author had written, for most of the epistles of Paul are shorter than this. But it means, that it was brief compared with the importance and difficulty of the subjects of which he had treated. The topics introduced would have allowed a much more extended discussion, but in handing them he had made use of as few words as possible. No one can deny this who considers the sententious manner of this epistle. As an illustration of this, perhaps we may remark, that it is easy to expand the thoughts of this epistle into ample volumes of exposition, and that in fact it is difficult to give an explanation of it without a commentary that shall greatly surpass in extent the text. None can doubt, also, that the author of this epistle could have himself greatly expanded the thoughts and the illustrations if he had chosen. It is with reference to such considerations, probably, that he says that the epistle was brief.

Know ye not that our brother Timothy is set at liberty. Or, is sent away. So it is rendered by Prof. Stuart, and others. On the meaning of this, and its importance in determining who was the author of the epistle, see the Intro. & 2, (5,) 4, and Prof. Stuart's Intro. & 19. This is a strong circumstance showing that Paul was the author of the epistle, for from the first acquaintance of Timothy with Paul he is represented as his constant companion, and spoken of as a brother. 2Cor 1:1

Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1:1. There is no other one of the apostles who would so naturally have used this term respecting Timothy; and this kind mention is made of him here because he was so dear to the heart of the writer, and because he felt that they to whom he wrote would also feel an interest in his circumstances. As to the meaning of the word rendered "set at liberty"--απολελυμενον--there has been much difference of opinion, whether it means "set at liberty from confinement," or "sent away on some message to some other place." That the latter is the meaning of the expression appears probable from these considerations.

(1.) The connexion seems to demand it. The writer speaks of him as if he were now away, and as if he hoped that he might soon return. "With whom, if he come shortly, I will see you." This is language which would be used rather of one who had been sent on some embassy, than of one who was just released from prison. At all events, he was at this time away, and there was some expectation that he might soon return. But on the supposition that the expression relates to release from imprisonment, there would be an entire incongruity in the language. It is not, as we should then suppose, "our brother Timothy is now released from prison, and therefore I will come soon with him and see you;" but, "our brother Timothy is now sent away, and if he return soon, I will come with him to you."

(2.) In Php 2:19,23, Paul, then a prisoner at Rome, speaks of the hope which he entertained that he would be able to send Timothy to them, as soon as he should know how it would go with him. He designed to retain him until that point was settled, as his presence with him would be important until then, and then to send him to give consolation to the Philippians, and to look into the condition of the church. Now the passage before us agrees well with the supposition that that event had occurred: that Paul had ascertained with sufficient clearness that he would be released, so that he

might be permitted yet to visit the Hebrew Christians; that he had sent Timothy to Philippi, and was waiting for his return; that as soon as he should return he would be prepared to visit them; and that in the mean time, while Timothy was absent, he wrote to them this epistle.

(3.) The supposition agrees well with the meaning of the word here used--απολυω. It denotes, properly, to let loose from; to loosen; to unbind; to release, to let go free; to put away, or divorce; to dismiss simply, or let go, or send away. See Mt 14:15, 22, 23; Mt 15:32, 39, Lk 9:12, et al. Comp. Rob. Lex. and Stuart's Intro. % 19. The meaning, then, I take to be this, that Timothy was then sent away on some important embassage; that the apostle expected his speedy return; and that then he trusted that he would be able, with him, to visit those to whom this epistle was written.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints.
They of Italy salute you.
25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

The Epistle of James

[James]

James-1

Salutation

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,
Greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

My brethren. Not brethren as Jews, but as Christians. Compare Jas 2:1. Count it all joy. Regard it as a thing to rejoice in; a matter which should afford you happiness. You are not to consider it as a punishment, a curse, or a calamity, but as a fit subject of felicitation. Mt 5:12. When ye fall into divers temptations. On the meaning of the word temptations, Mt 4:1. It is now commonly used in the sense of placing allurements before others to induce them to sin, and in this sense the word seems to be used in Jas 1:13-14. Here, however, the word is used in the sense of trials, to wit, by persecution, poverty, calamity of any kind. These cannot be said to be direct inducements or allurements to sin, but they try the faith, and they show whether he who is tried is disposed to adhere to his faith in God, or whether he will apostatize. They so far coincide with temptations, properly so called, as to test the religion of men. They differ from temptations, properly so called, in that they are not brought before the mind for the express purpose of inducing men to sin. In this sense, it is true that God never tempts men, Jas 1:13-14. On the sentiment in the passage before us, 1Pet 1:6-7. The word divers here refers to the various kinds of trials which they might experience--sickness, poverty, bereavement, persecution, etc. They were to count it a matter of joy that their religion was subjected to anything that tried it. It is well for us to have the reality of our religion tested, in whatever way it may be done.

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Patience is one of the fruits of such a trial, and the grace of patience is worth the trial which it may cost to procure it. This is one of the passages which show that James was acquainted with the writings of Paul. See the Introduction to James chapter 5, Jas 5:1 The sentiment expressed here is found in Rom 5:3. Rom 5:3. Paul has carried the sentiment out farther, and shows that tribulation produces other effects than patience. James only asks that patience may have its perfect work, supposing that every Christian grace is implied in this.

3 knowing *this,* that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

But let patience have her perfect work. Let it be fairly developed. Let it produce its appropriate effects without being hindered. Let it not be obstructed in its fair influence on the soul, by murmurings, complaining, or rebellion. Patience under trials is fitted to produce important effects on the soul, and we are not to hinder them in any manner by a perverse spirit, or by opposition to the will of God. Every one who is afflicted should desire that the fair effects of affliction should be produced on his mind, or that there should be produced in his soul precisely the results which his trials are adapted to accomplish. That ye may be perfect and entire. The meaning of this is explained in the following phrase--"wanting nothing;" that is, that there may be nothing lacking to complete your character. There may be the elements of a good character; there may be sound principles, but those principles may not be fully carried out so as to show what they are. Afflictions, perhaps, more than anything else, will do this; and we should therefore allow them to do all that they are adapted to do in developing what is good in us. The idea here is, that it is desirable not only to have the elements or principles of piety in the soul, but to have them fairly carried out, so as to show what is their real tendency and value. 1Pet 1:7. On the word perfect, as used in the Scriptures, Job 1:1 The word rendered entire, (ολοκληροι,) means, whole in every part. 1Thes 5:23. The word occurs only in these two places. The corresponding noun (ολοκληριαν) occurs in Acts 3:16, rendered perfect soundness. Wanting nothing. "Being left in nothing;" that is, everything being complete, or fully carried out.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

If any of you lack wisdom. Probably this refers particularly to the kind of wisdom which they would need in their trials, to enable them to bear them in a proper manner; for there is nothing in which Christians more feel the need of heavenly wisdom than in regard to the manner in which they should bear trials, and what they should do in the perplexities, and disappointments, and bereavements that come upon them: but the language employed is so general, that what is here said may be applied to the need of wisdom in all respects. The particular kind of wisdom which we need in trials is to enable us to understand their design and tendency; to perform our duty under them, or the new duties which may grow out of them; to learn the lessons which God designs to teach, for he always designs to teach us some valuable lessons by affliction; and to cultivate such

views and feelings as are appropriate under the peculiar forms of trial which are brought upon us, to find out the sins for which we have been afflicted, and to learn how we may avoid them in time to come. We are in great danger of going wrong when we are afflicted; of complaining and murmuring; of evincing a spirit of insubmission, and of losing the benefits which we might have obtained if we had submitted to the trial in a proper manner. So in all things we "lack wisdom." We are shortsighted; we have hearts prone to sin; and there are great and important matters pertaining to duty and salvation on which we cannot but feel that we need heavenly guidance.

Let him ask of God. That is, for the specific wisdom which he needs; the very wisdom which is necessary for him in the particular case. It is proper to bear the very case before God; to make mention of the specific want; to ask of God to guide us in the very matter where we feel so much embarrassment. It is one of the privileges of Christians, that they may not only go to God and ask him for that general wisdom which is needful for them in life, but that whenever a particular emergency arises, a case of perplexity and difficulty in regard to duty, they may bring that particular thing before his throne, with the assurance that he will guide them. Compare Ps 25:9; Isa 37:14; Joel 2:17.

That giveth to all men liberally. The word men here is supplied by the translators, but not improperly, though the promise should be regarded as restricted to those who ask. The object of the writer was to encourage those who felt their need of wisdom, to go and ask it of God; and it would not contribute anything to furnish such a specific encouragement to say of God that he gives to all men liberally whether they ask or not. In the Scriptures, the promise of Divine aid is always limited to the desire. No blessing is promised to man that is not sought; no man can feel that he has a right to hope for the favour of God, who does not value it enough to pray for it; no one ought to obtain it, who does not prize it enough to ask for it. Compare Mt 7:7-8. The word rendered liberally, (απλως,) means, properly, simply; that is, in simplicity, sincerity, reality. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the corresponding noun occurs in Rom 12:8; 2Cor 1:12; 11:3, rendered simplicity; in 2Cor 8:2; 2Cor 9:13, rendered liberality and liberal; 2Cor 9:11, rendered bountifulness; and Eph 6:5; Col 3:22, rendered singleness, scil., of

the heart. The idea seems to be that of openness, frankness, generosity; the absence of all that is sordid and contracted; where there is the manifestation of generous feeling, and liberal conduct, In a higher sense than in the case of any man, all that is excellent in these things is to be found in God; and we may therefore come to him feeling that in his heart there is more that is noble and generous in bestowing favours than in any other being. There is nothing that is stinted and close; there is no partiality; there is no withholding of his favour because we are poor, and unlettered, and unknown.

And upbraideth not. Does not reproach, rebuke, or treat harshly. He does not coldly repel us, if we come and ask what we need, though we do it often and with importunity. Compare Lk 18:1-7. The proper meaning of the Greek word is to rail at, reproach, revile, chide; and the object here is probably to place the manner in which God bestows his favours in contrast with what sometimes occurs among men. He does not reproach or chide us for our past conduct; for our foolishness; for our importunity in asking. He permits us to come in the most free manner, and meets us with a spirit of entire kindness, and with promptness in granting our requests. We are not always sure, when we ask a favour of a man, that we shall not encounter something that will be repulsive, or that will mortify us; we are certain, however, when we ask a favour of God, that we shall never be reproached in an unfeeling manner, or meet with a harsh response.

And it shall be given him. Compare Jer 29:12-13, "Then shall ye call upon me, and go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart." See also Mt 7:7-8; 21:22; Mk 11:24; 1Jn 3:22; 5:14. This promise, in regard to the wisdom that may be necessary for us, is absolute; and we may be sure that if it be asked in a proper manner it will be granted us. There can be no doubt that it is one of the things which God is able to impart; which will be for our own good; and which, therefore, he is ever ready to bestow. About many things there might be doubt whether, if they were granted, they would be for our real welfare, and therefore there may be a doubt whether it would be consistent for God to bestow them; but there can be no such doubt about wisdom. That is always for our good; and we may be sure, therefore, that we shall obtain that, if the request be made

with a right spirit. If it be asked in what may expect he will bestow it on us, it may be replied,

(1,) That it is through his word--by enabling us to see clearly the meaning of the sacred volume, and to understand the directions which he has there given to guide us;

(2,) by the secret influences of his Spirit

(a) suggesting to us the way in which we should go, and

(b) inclining us to do that which is prudent and wise; and,

(3,) by the events of his Providence making plain to us the path of duty, and removing the obstructions which may be in our path. It is easy for God to guide his people; and they who "watch daily at the gates, and wait at the posts of the doors" of wisdom, (Prov 8:34,) will not be in danger of going astray, Ps 25:9.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

But let him ask in faith. See the passages referred to in Jas 1:5. Mt 7:7, and Heb 11:6 to obtain any favour from God if there is not faith; and where, as in regard to the wisdom necessary to guide us, we are sure that it is in accordance with his will to grant it to us, we may come to him with the utmost confidence, the most entire assurance, that it will be granted. In this case, we should come to God without a doubt that, if we ask with a proper spirit, the very thing that we ask will be bestowed on us. We cannot in all other cases be so sure that what we ask will be for our good, or that it will be in accordance with his will to bestow it; and hence we cannot in such cases come with the same kind of faith. We can then only come with unwavering confidence in God, that he will do what is right and best; and that if he sees that what we ask will be for our good, he will bestow it upon us. Here, however, nothing prevents our coming with the assurance that the very thing which we ask will be conferred on us. Nothing wavering. μηδενδιακρινομενος. "Doubting or hesitating as to nothing, or in no respect." See Acts 20:20; 11:12. In regard to the matter under consideration, there is to be no hesitancy, no doubting, no vacillation of the mind. We are to come to God with the utmost confidence and assurance. For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the

sea, etc. The propriety and beauty of this comparison will be seen at once. The wave of the sea has no stability. It is at the mercy of every wind, and seems to be driven and tossed every way. So he that comes to God with unsettled convictions and hopes, is liable to be driven about by every new feeling that may spring up in the mind. At one moment, hope and faith impel him to come to God; then the mind is at once filled with uncertainty and doubt, and the soul is agitated and restless as the ocean. Compare Isa 57:20. Hope on the one hand, and the fear of not obtaining the favour which is desired on the other, keep the mind restless and discomposed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. Compare Heb 11:6. A man can hope for favour from God only as he puts confidence in him. He sees the heart; and if he sees that there is no belief in his existence or his perfections--no real trust in him--no reliance on his promises, his wisdom, his grace--it cannot be proper that he should grant an answer to our petitions. That will account sufficiently for the fact that there are so many prayers unanswered; that we so frequently go to the throne of grace, and are seat empty away. A man that goes to God in such a state of mind, should not expect to receive any favour.

A double-minded man. The word here used (διψυχος) occurs only here and in Jas 4:8. It means, properly, one who has two souls; then one who is wavering or inconstant. It is applicable to a man who has no settled principles; who is controlled by passion; who is influenced by popular feeling; who is now inclined to one opinion or course of conduct, and now to another. Is unstable in all his ways. That is, not merely in regard to prayer, the point particularly under discussion, but in respect to everything. From the instability which the wavering must evince in regard to prayer, the apostle takes occasion to make the general remark concerning such a man, that stability and firmness could be expected on no subject. The hesitancy which he manifested on that one subject would extend to all; and we might expect to find such a man irresolute and undetermined in all things. This is always true. If we find a man who takes hold of the promises of God with firmness; who feels the deepest assurance when he prays that God will hear prayer; who always goes to him without hesitation in his perplexities and trials,

never wavering, we shall find one who is firm in his principles, steady in his integrity, settled in his determinations, and steadfast in his plans of life--a man whose character we shall feel that we understand, and in whom we can confide. Such a man eminently was Luther; and the spirit which is thus evinced by taking firmly hold of the promises of God is the best kind of religion.

8 A double-minded man *is* unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 but the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

BURKITT

Our apostle having finished his necessary digression concerning prayer, in the foregoing verses, returns now to his former argument, concerning bearing affliction with joy; and urges a strong reason here to enforce the duty, Let the brother of low degree; that is, such a Christian as is brought low by persecution and sufferings for Christ, let him rejoice that God has exalted him, and made him rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom: nothing is more certain, than that the greatest abuses and sufferings for Christ, are an honour and exaltation to us; he adds, But let the rich rejoice in that he is made low, that is, when he loses any thing for Christ; as if the apostle had said, "Let the poor Christian rejoice, in that he is spiritually exalted, and the rich man rejoice, in that he is spiritually humbled; a rich man's humility is his glory."

Observe next, the apostle rendereth a reason why the rich man should have a lowly mind, in the midst of his flourishing conditon, because all the pomp and grandeur of riches fades like a flower; and he himself also is beautiful, but fading; fair, but vanishing: and he pursues this similitude of a flower in the eleventh verse, shewing, that as the flower fadeth presently before the heat of the scorching sun, so the rich man fades, and all his riches are both transitory and passing.

Learn hence, that it ought to comfort a Christian that suffers loss for Christ by persecution, to consider, that the things which he loseth for the sake of Christ, are things of a fading nature, which could not have been kept long by him, had they not been rent from him; by

parting with that which he could not keep, he makes sure of that which he can never lose; well therefore may the rich man rejoice in his humiliation; Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, and the rich that he is made low.

BARNES

Let the brother of low degree. This verse seems to introduce a new topic, which has no other connexion with what precedes than that the apostle is discussing the general subject of trials. Compare Jas 1:2. Turning from the consideration of trials in general, he passes to the consideration of a particular kind of trials, that which results from a change of circumstances in life, from poverty to affluence, and from affluence to poverty. The idea which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle is, that there is a great and important trial of faith in any reverse of circumstances; a trial in being elevated from poverty to riches, or in being depressed from a state of affluence to want. Wherever change occurs in the external circumstances of life, there a man's religion is put to the test, and there he should feel that God is trying the reality, of his faith. The phrase "of low degree" (ταπεινος) means one in humble circumstances; one of lowly rank or employment; one in a condition of dependence or poverty. It stands here particularly opposed to one who is rich; and the apostle doubtless had his eye, in the use of this word, on those who had been poor.

Rejoice. Margin, glory. Not because, being made rich, he has the means of sensual gratification and indulgence; not because he will now be regarded as a rich man, and will feel that he is above want; not even because he will have the means of doing good to others. Neither of these was the idea in the mind of the apostle; but it was, that the poor man that is made rich should rejoice because his faith and the reality of his religion are now tried; because a test is furnished which will show, in the new circumstances in which he is placed, whether his piety is genuine. In fact, there is almost no trial of religion which is more certain and decisive than that furnished by a sudden transition from poverty to affluence, from adversity to prosperity, from sickness to health. There is much religion in the world that will bear the ills of poverty, sickness, and persecution, or that will bear the temptations arising from prosperity, and even affluence, which will not bear the transition from one to the other; as there is many a human frame that could become accustomed to

bear either the steady heat of the equator, or the intense cold of the north, that could not bear a rapid transition from the one to the other. Php 4:12.

In that he is exalted. A good man might rejoice in such a transition, because it would furnish him the means of being more extensively useful; most persons would rejoice because such a condition is that for which men commonly aim, and because it would furnish them the means of display, of sensual gratification, or of ease; but neither of these is the idea of the apostle. The thing in which we are to rejoice in the transitions of life is, that a test is furnished of our piety; that a trial is applied to it which enables us to determine whether it is genuine. The most important thing conceivable for us is to know whether we are true Christians, and we should rejoice in everything that will enable us to settle this point.

Here the apostle exhorts suffering Christians to patience, by the example of the Old-Testament saints, who were exceeding dear to God, employed in special services for God, yet exercised with long and sharp affliction for him. Now, their nature was as tender and as frail as ours, and we have the same blessed Spirit to comfort and assist us with them.
Note thence, 1. That the examples of excellent persons who have gone in the thorny path of affliction before us, and beaten it for us, are for excellent use to suppress our fears, to support our spirits under all our conflicts, and to rouse our courage in all our encounters.

Note, 2. That it is our great duty to eye the encourging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before us, and strive to imitate and follow such worthy patterns. The first sufferers had the hardest task; strange and untried torments are most terrible; they knew not the strength of their enemy which they were to engage, but we fight with an enemy which has been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us; certainly we that live in these last times have the best helps ever any had to subdue our fears; Take we then the prophets, and primitive saints, for an example both of grievous sufferings and of great patience.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth
the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion
of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat. Isaiah (Isa 40:7) employs the word wind, referring to a burning wind that dries up the flowers. It is probable that the apostle also refers not so much to the sun itself, as to the hot and fiery wind called the simoom, which often rises with the sun, and which consumes the green herbage of the fields. So Rosenmuller and Bloomfield interpret it. It withereth the grass. Isa 40:7. It withereth the stalk, or that which, when dried, produces hay or fodder--the word here used being commonly employed in the latter sense. The meaning is, that the effect of the hot wind is to wither the stalk or spire which supports the flower, and when that is dried up, the flower itself falls. This idea will give increased beauty and appropriateness to the figure --that man himself is blasted and withered, and then that all the external splendour which encircled him falls to the ground, like a flower whose support is gone. And the grace of the fashion of it perisheth. Its beauty disappears. So shall the rich man fade away an his ways. That is, his splendour, and all on which he prided himself, shall vanish. The phrase "in his ways," according to Rosenmuller, refers to his counsels, his plans, his purposes; and the meaning is, that the rich man, with all by which he is known, shall vanish. A man's "ways," that is, his mode of life, or those things by which he appears before the world, may have somewhat the same relation to him which the flower has to the stalk on which it grows, and by which it is sustained. The idea of James seems to be, that as it was indisputable that the rich man must soon disappear, with all that he had of pomp and splendour in the view of the world, it was well for him to be reminded of it by every change of condition; and that he should therefore rejoice in the providential dispensation by which his property would be taken away, and by which the reality of his religion would be tested. We should rejoice in anything by which it can be shown whether we are prepared for heaven or not.

Trial and Temptation

12 Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he
shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them
that love him.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation. The apostle seems here to use the word temptation in the most general sense, as denoting anything that will try the reality of religion, whether affliction, or persecution, or a direct inducement to sin placed before the mind. The word temptation appears in this chapter to be used in two senses; and the question may arise, why the apostle so employs it. Compare Jas 1:2,13. But, in fact, the word temptation is in itself of so general a character as to cover the whole usage, and to justify the manner in which it is employed. It denotes anything that will try or test the reality of our religion; and it may be applied, therefore, either to afflictions or to direct solicitations to sin--the latter being the sense in which it is now commonly employed. In another respect, also, essentially the same idea enters into both the ways in which the word is employed. Affliction, persecution, sickness, etc., may be regarded as, in a certain sense, temptations to sin; that is, the question comes before us whether we will adhere to the religion on account of which we are persecuted, or apostatize from it, and escape these sufferings; whether in sickness and losses we will be patient and submissive to that God who lays his hand upon us, or revolt and murmur. In each and every case, whether by affliction, or by direct allurements to do wrong, the question comes before the mind whether we have religion enough to keep us, or whether we will yield to murmuring, to rebellion, and to sin. In these respects, in a general sense, all forms of trial may be regarded as temptation. Yet in the following verse (Jas 1:13) the apostle would guard this from abuse. So far as the form of trial involved an allurement or inducement to sin, he says that no man should regard it as from God. That cannot be his design. The trial is what he aims at, not the sin. In the verse before us he says, that whatever may be the form of the trial, a Christian should rejoice in it, for it will furnish an evidence that he is a child of God. For when he is tried. In any way--if he bears the trial.

He shall receive the crown of life. 2Ti 4:8. It is possible that James had that passage in his eye. Compare the Introduction to James 5 (Jas 5:1). Which the Lord hath promised. The sacred writers often speak of such a crown as promised, or as in reserve for the children of God, 2Ti 4:8; 1Pet 5:4; Rev 2:10; 3:11; 4:4. Them that love him. A common expression to denote those who are truly pious, or who are his friends. It is sufficiently distinctive to characterize them, for the great mass of men do not love God. Compare Rom 1:30.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. Jas 1:12. The apostle here seems to have had his eye on whatever there was in trial of any kind to induce us to commit sin--whether by complaining, by murmuring, by apostasy, or by yielding to sin. So far as that was concerned, he said that no one should charge it on God. He did nothing in any way with a view to induce men to do evil. That was only an incidental thing in the trial, and was no part of the Divine purpose or design. The apostle felt evidently that there was great danger, from the general manner in which the word temptation was used, and from the perverse tendency of the heart, that it would be charged on God that he so arranged these trials, and so influenced the mind, as to present inducements to sin. Against this, it was proper that an inspired apostle should bear his solemn testimony; so to guard the whole subject as to show that whatever there was in any form of trial that could be regarded as an inducement or allurement to sin, is not the thing which he contemplated in the arrangement, and does not proceed from him. It has its origin in other causes; and if there was nothing in the corrupt human mind itself leading to sin, there would be nothing in the Divine arrangement that would produce it.

For God cannot be tempted with evil. Marg., evils. The sense is the same. The object seems to be to show that, in regard to the whole matter of temptation, it does not pertain to God. Nothing can be presented to his mind as an inducement to do wrong, and as little can he present anything to the mind of man to induce him to sin. Temptation is a subject which does not pertain to him. He stands aloof from it altogether. In regard to the particular statement here, that "God cannot be tempted with evil," or to do evil, there can be no doubt of its truth, and it furnishes the highest security for the welfare of the universe. There is nothing in him that has a tendency to wrong; there can be nothing presented from without to induce him to do wrong.

(1.) There is no evil passion to be gratified, as there is in men.

(2.) There is no want of power, so that an allurement could be presented to seek what he has not.

(3.) There is no want of wealth, for he has infinite resources, and all that there is or can be is his, Ps 50:10-11.

(4.) There is no want of happiness, that he should seek happiness in sources which are not now in his possession. Nothing, therefore, could be presented to the Divine Mind as an inducement to do evil. Neither tempteth he any man. That is, he places nothing before any human being with a view to induce him to do wrong. This is one of the most positive and unambiguous of all the declarations in the Bible, and one of the most important. It may be added, that it is one which stands in opposition to as many feelings of the human heart as perhaps any other one. We are perpetually thinking--the heart suggests it constantly --that God does place before us inducements to evil, with a view to lead us to sin. This is done in many ways.

(a) Men take such views of his decrees as if the doctrine implied that he meant that we should sin, and that it could not be otherwise than that we should sin.

(b) It is felt that all things are under his control, and that he has made his arrangements with a design that men should do as they actually do.

(c) It is said that he has created us with just such dispositions as we actually have, and knowing that we would sin.

(d) It is said that, by the arrangements of his Providence, he actually places inducements before us to sin, knowing that the effect will be that we will fall into sin, when he might easily have prevented it.

(e) It is said that he suffers some to tempt others, when he might easily prevent it if he chose, and that this is the same as tempting them himself. Now, in regard to these things, there may be much which we cannot explain, and much which often troubles the heart even of the good; yet the passage before us is explicit on one point, and all these things must be held in consistency with that --that God does not place inducements before us with a view that we should sin, or in order to lead us into sin. None of his decrees, or his arrangements, or his desires, are based on that, but all have some

other purpose and end. The real force of temptation is to be traced to some other source--to ourselves, and not to God. See Jas 1:14.

14 but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own It lust. That is, the fountain or source of all temptation is in man himself. is true that external inducements to sin may be placed before him, but they would have no force if there was not something in himself to which they corresponded, and over which they might have power. There must be some "lust;" some desire; some inclination; something which is unsatisfied now, which is made the foundation of the temptation, and which gives it all its power. If there were no capacity for receiving food, or desire for it, objects placed before us appealing to the appetite could never be made a source of temptation; if there were nothing in the soul which could be regarded as the love of acquisition or possession, gold would furnish no temptation; if there were no sensual propensities, we should be in that quarter above the power of temptation. In each case, and in every form, the power of the temptation is laid in some propensity of our nature, some desire of that which we do not now possess. The word rendered "lust" in this place, (επιθυηιας,) is not employed here in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used, as denoting libidinousness. It means desire in general; an earnest wish for anything, Eph 4:22. It seems here to be used with reference to the original propensities of our nature--the desires implanted in us, which are a stimulus to employment--as the desire of knowledge, of food, of power, of sensual gratifications; and the idea is, that a man may be drawn along by these beyond the prescribed limits of indulgence, and in the pursuit of objects that are forbidden. He does not stop at the point at which the law requires him to stop, and is therefore guilty of transgression. This is the source of all sin. The original propensity may not be wrong, but may be perfectly harmless--as in the case of the desire of food, etc. Nay, it may furnish a most desirable stimulus to action; for how could the human powers be called forth, if it were not for this? The error, the fault, the sin, is not restraining the indulgence where we are commanded to do it, either in regard to the objects sought, or in regard to the degree of indulgence. And enticed. Entrapped, caught; that is, he is seized by this power, and held fast; or he is led along and beguiled, until he falls into sin, as in a snare that springs suddenly upon him.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Then when lust hath conceived. Compare Job 15:35. The allusion here is obvious. The meaning is, when the desire which we have naturally is quickened, or made to act, the result is that sin is produced. As our desires of good lie in the mind by nature, as our propensities exist as they were created, they cannot be regarded as sin, or treated as such; but when they are indulged, when plans of gratification are formed, when they are developed in actual life, the effect is sin. In the mere desire of good, of happiness, of food, of raiment, there is no sin; it becomes sin when indulged in an improper manner, and when it leads us to seek that which is forbidden-- to invade the rights of others, or in any way to violate the laws of God. The Rabbins have a metaphor which strongly expresses the general sense of this passage: "Evil concupiscence is at the beginning like the thread of a spider's web; afterwards it is like a cart rope."--Sanhedrin, fol. 99,

It bringeth forth sin. The result is sin--open, actual sin. When that which is conceived in the heart is matured, it is seen to be sin. The design of all this is to show that sin is not to be traced to God, but to man himself; and in order to this, the apostle says that there is enough in the heart of man to account for all actual sin, without supposing that it is caused by God. The solution which he gives is, that there are certain propensities in man which, when they are suffered to get themselves out, will account for all the sin in the world. In regard to those native propensities themselves, he does not say whether he regards them as sinful and blameworthy or not; and the probability is, that he did not design to enter into a formal examination, or to make a formal statement, of the nature of these propensities themselves. He looked at man as he is--as a creature of God--as endowed with certain animal propensities--as seen, in fact, to have strong passions by nature; and he showed that there was enough in him to account for the existence of sin, without bringing in the agency of God, or charging it on him. In reference to those propensities, it may be observed that there are two kinds, either of which may account for the existence of sin, but which are frequently both combined. There are, first, our natural propensities; those which we have as men, as endowed with an animal nature, as having constitutional desires to be gratified, and wants to be supplied. Such

Adam had in innocence; such the Saviour had; and such are to be regarded as in no respect in themselves sinful and wrong. Yet they may, in our case, as they did in Adam, lead us to sin, because, under their strong influence, we may be led to desire that which is forbidden, or which belongs to another. But there are, secondly, the propensities and inclinations which we have as the result of the fall, and which are evil in their nature and tendency; which as a matter of course, and especially when combined with the former, lead to open transgression. It is not always easy to separate these, and in fact they are often combined in producing the actual guilt of the world. It often requires a close analysis of a man's own mind to detect these different ingredients in his conduct, and the one often gets the credit of the other. The apostle James seems to have looked at it as a simple matter of fact, with a common sense view, by saying that there were desires (επιθυμιας) in a man's own mind which would account for all the actual sin in the world, without charging it on God. Of the truth of this, no one can entertain a doubt.

And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. The result of sin, when it is fully carried out, is death--death in all forms. The idea is, that death, in whatever form it exists, is to be traced to sin, and that sin will naturally and regularly produce it. There is a strong similarity between this declaration and that of the apostle Paul, (Rom 6:21-23;) and it is probable that James had this passage in his eye. Rom 6:21-23 and Rom 5:12. Any one who indulges in a sinful thought or corrupt desire, should reflect that it may end in death--death temporal and eternal. Its natural tendency will be to produce such a death. This reflection should induce us to check an evil thought or desire at the beginning. Not for one moment should we indulge in it, for soon it may secure the mastery, and be beyond our control; and the end may be seen in the grave, and the awful world of woe.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Do not err, my beloved brethren. This is said as if there were great danger of error in the point under consideration. The point on which he would guard them, seems to have been in respect to the opinion that God was the author of sin, and that the evils in the world are to be traced to him. There was great danger that they would embrace that opinion, for experience has shown that it is a danger into which men are always prone to fall. Some of the sources of this danger

have been already alluded to. Jas 1:13. To meet the danger, he says that, so far is it from being true that God is the source of evil, he is in fact the author of all that is good: every good gift, and every perfect gift, (Jas 1:17,) is from him, Jas 1:18.

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Every good gift and every perfect gift. The difference between good and perfect here, it is not easy to mark accurately. It may be that the former means that which is benevolent in its character and tendency; the latter that which is entire, where there is nothing even apparently wanting to complete it; where it can be regarded as good as a whole and in all its parts. The general sense is, that God is the author of all good. Everything that is good on the earth we are to trace to him; evil has another origin. Compare Mt 13:28. Is from above. From God, who is often represented as dwelling above--in heaven.

And cometh down from the Father of lights. From God, the source and fountain of all light. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of knowledge, purity, happiness; and God is often represented as light. Compare 1Jn 1:5; 1Timm 6:16. There is, doubtless, an allusion here to the heavenly bodies, among which the sun is the most brilliant. It appears to us to be the great original fountain of light, diffusing its radiance over all worlds. No cloud, no darkness seems to come from the sun, but it pours its rich effulgence on the farthest part of the universe. So it is with God. There is no darkness in him, (1Jn 1:5;) and all the moral light and purity which there is in the universe is to be traced to him. The word Father here is used in a sense which is common in Hebrew, (Mt 1:1,) as denoting that which is the source of anything, or that from which anything proceeds. Isa 9:6.

With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The design here is clearly to contrast God with the sun in a certain respect. As the source of light, there is a strong resemblance. But in the sun there are certain changes. It does not shine on all parts of the earth at the same time, nor in the same manner all the year. It rises and sets; it crosses the line, and seems to go far to the south, and sends its rays obliquely on the earth; then it ascends to the north, recrosses the line, and sends its rays obliquely on southern regions.

By its revolutions it produces the changes of the seasons, and makes a constant variety on the earth in the productions of different climes. In this respect God is not indeed like the sun. With him there is no variableness, not even the appearance of turning. He is always the same, at all seasons of the year, and in all ages; there is no change in his character, his mode of being, his purposes and plans. What he was millions of ages before the worlds were made, he is now; what he is now, he will be countless millions of ages hence. We may be sure that whatever changes there may be in human affairs; whatever reverses we may undergo; whatever oceans we may cross, or whatever mountains we may climb, or in whatever worlds we may hereafter take up our abode, God is the same. The word which is here rendered variableness (παραλλαγη) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means change, alteration, vicissitude, and would properly be applied to the changes observed in astronomy. See the examples quoted in Wetstein. The phrase rendered shadow of turning would properly refer to the different shade or shadow cast by the sun from an object, in its various revolutions, in rising and setting, and in its changes at the different seasons of the year.

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Of his own will. Gr., willing, βουληθεις. The idea is, that the fact that we are "begotten" to be his children is to be traced solely to his will. He purposed it, and it was done. The antecedent in the case on which all depended was the sovereign will of God. Jn 1:13. Eph 1:5. When it is said, however, that he has done this by his mere will, it is not to be inferred that there was no reason why it should be done, or that the exercise of his will was arbitrary, but only that his will determined the matter, and that is the cause of our conversion. It is not to be inferred that there are not in all cases good reasons why God wills as he does, though those reasons are not often stated to us, and perhaps we could not comprehend them if they were. The object of the statement here seems to be to direct the mind up to God as the source of good and not evil; and among the most eminent illustrations of his goodness is this, that by his mere will, without any external power to control him, and where there could be nothing but benevolence, he has adopted us into his family, and given us a most exalted condition, as renovated beings, among his creatures. Begat he us. The Greek word here is the same which in Jas 1:15 is rendered "bringeth forth"--" sin bringeth forth death." The word is

perhaps designedly used here in contrast with that, and the object is to refer to a different kind of production, or bringing forth, under the agency of sin, and the agency of God. The meaning here is, that we owe the beginning of our spiritual life to God.

With the word of truth. By the instrumentality of truth. It was not a mere creative act, but it was by truth as the seed or germ. There is no effect produced in our minds in regeneration which the truth is not fitted to produce, and the agency of God in the case is to secure its fair and full influence on the soul.

That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Compare Eph 1:12. For the meaning of the word rendered first-fruits, Rom 8:23. Compare Rom 11:6; 16:5; 1Cor 15:20,23; 16:15; Rev 14:4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It denotes, properly, that which is first taken from anything; the portion which was usually offered to God. The phrase here does not primarily denote eminence in honour or degree, but refers rather to time--the first in time; and in a secondary sense it is then used to denote the honour attached to that circumstance. The meaning here is, either

(1) that, under the gospel, those who were addressed by the apostles had the honour of being first called into his kingdom as a part of that glorious harvest which it was designed to gather in this world, and that the goodness of God was manifested in thus furnishing the first-fruits of a most glorious harvest; or

(2) the reference may be to the rank and dignity which all who are born again would have among the creatures of God in virtue of the new birth.

Hearing and Doing the Word

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren. The connexion is this: "Since God is the only source of good; since he tempts no man; and since by his mere sovereign goodness, without any claim on our part, we have had the high honour conferred on us of being made the first-fruits of his creatures, we ought to be ready to hear his voice, to subdue all

our evil passions, and to bring our souls to entire practical obedience." The necessity of obedience, or the doctrine that the gospel is not only to be learned but practised, is pursued at length in this and the following chapter. The particular statement here (Jas 1:19-21) is, that religion requires us to be meek and docile; to lay aside all irritability against the truth, and all pride of opinion, and all corruption of heart, and to receive meekly the engrafted word. See the analysis of the chapter.

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak. That is, primarily, to hear God; to listen to the instructions of that truth by which we have been begotten, and brought into so near relation to him. At the same time, though this is the primary sense of the phrase here, it may be regarded as inculcating the general doctrine that we are to be more ready to hear than to speak; or that we are to be disposed to learn always, and from any source. Our appropriate condition is rather that of learners than instructors; and the attitude of mind which we should cultivate is that of a readiness to receive information from any quarter. The ancients have some sayings on this subject which are well worthy of our attention. "Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak." "The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds." See Benson. So Valerius Maximus, vii. 2: "How noble was the response of Xenocrates! When he met the reproaches of others with a profound silence, some one asked him why he alone was silent? Because, says he, I have sometimes had occasion to regret that I have spoken, never that I was silent." See Wetstein. So the son of Sirach, "Be swift to hear, and with deep consideration (ενμακροθυμια) give answer," chap. v. 11. So the Rabbins have some similar sentiments. "Talk little, and work much," Pirkey Aboth. c. i. 15. "The righteous speak little, and do much; the wicked speak much, and do nothing," Bava Metsia, fol. 87. A sentiment similar to that before us is found in Eccl 5:2, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God." So Prov 10:19, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin;" Prov 13:3, "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life;" Prov 15:2, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."

Slow to wrath. That is, we are to govern and restrain our temper; we are not to give indulgence to excited and angry passions. Compare Prov 16:32, "He that is slow to anger is greater than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." See also on this subject, Job 5:2; Prov 11:17; 13:10; 14:16; 15:18; 19:19; 22:24; 25:28; Eccl 7:9; Rom 12:17; 1Th 5:14; 1Pe 3:8. The particular point here is, however, not that we should be slow to wrath as a general habit of mind, which is indeed most true, but in reference particularly to the reception of the truth. We should lay aside all anger and wrath, and should come to the a calm in a investigation of truth with mind, and an imperturbed spirit. A state of wrath or anger is always unfavourable to the investigation of truth. Such an investigation demands a calm spirit, and he whose mind is excited and enraged is not condition to see the value of truth, or to weigh the evidence for it.

20 for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Does not produce in the life that righteousness which God requires. Its tendency is not to incline us to keep the law, but to break it; not to induce us to embrace the truth, but the opposite. The meaning of this passage is not that our wrath will make God either more or less righteous; but that its tendency is not to produce that upright course of life, and love of truth, which God requires. A man is never sure of doing right under the influence of excited feelings; he may do that which is in the highest sense wrong, and which he will regret all his life. The particular meaning of this passage is, that wrath in the mind of man will not have any tendency to make him righteous. It is only that candid state of mind which will lead him to embrace the truth which can be hoped to have such an effect.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Wherefore. In view of the fact that God has begotten us for his own service; in view of the fact that excited feeling tends only to wrong, let us lay aside all that is evil, and submit ourselves wholly to the influence of truth.

Lay apart all filthiness. The word here rendered filthiness, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly filth; and then is applied to evil conduct considered as disgusting or offensive.

Sin may be contemplated as a wrong thing; as a violation of law; as evil in its nature and tendency, and therefore to be avoided; or it may be contemplated as disgusting, offensive, loathsome. To a pure mind, this is one of its most odious characteristics; for, to such a mind, sin in any form is more loathsome than the most offensive object can be to any of the senses.

And superfluity of naughtiness. Literally, "abounding of evil." It is rendered by Doddridge, "overflowing of malignity;" by Tindal, "superfluity of maliciousness;" by Benson, "superfluity of malice;" by Bloomfield, "petulance." The phrase "superfluity of naughtiness": or of evil, does not exactly express the sense, as if we were only to lay aside that which abounded, or which is superfluous, though we might retain that which does not come under this description; but the object of the apostle is to express his deep abhorrence of the thing referred to by strong and emphatic language. He had just spoken of sin in one aspect, as filthy, loathsome, detestable; here he designs to express his abhorrence of it by a still more emphatic description, and he speaks of it not merely as an evil, but as an evil abounding, overflowing; an evil in the highest degree. The thing referred to had the essence of evil in it, (κακια;) but it was not merely evil, it was evil that was aggravated, that was overflowing, that was eminent in degree, (περισσεια.) The particular reference in these passages is to the reception of the truth; and the doctrine taught is, that a corrupt mind, a mind full of sensuality and wickedness, is not favourable to the reception of the truth. It is not fitted to see its beauty, to appreciate its value, to understand its just claims, or to welcome it to the soul. Purity of heart is the best preparation always for seeing the force of truth. And receive with meekness. That is, open the mind and heart to instruction, and to the fair influence of truth. Meekness, gentleness, docility, are everywhere required in receiving the instructions of religion, as they are in obtaining knowledge of any kind. Mt 18:2-3.

The engrafted word. The gospel is here represented under the image of that which is implanted or engrafted from another source; by a figure that would be readily understood, for the art of engrafting is everywhere known. Sometimes the gospel is represented under the image of seed sown, (compare Mk 6:14, seq.;) but here it is under the figure of a shoot implanted or engrafted, that produces fruit of

its own, whatever may be the original character of the tree into which it is engrafted. Rom 11:17. The meaning here is, that we should allow the principles of the gospel to be thus engrafted on our nature; that however crabbed or perverse our nature may be, or however bitter and vile the fruits which it might bring forth of its own accord, it might, through the engrafted word, produce the fruits of righteousness.

Which is able to save your souls. It is not, therefore, a weak and powerless thing, merely designed to show its own feebleness, and to give occasion for God to work a miracle; but it has power, and is adapted to save. Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:18; 2Ti 3:15.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

These words are a direction given for the right hearing of, and due profiting by the word of God.
In order to the former, our apostle shews,

1. What we must lay aside, namely, all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness; that is, all sensual lusts, and angry passions.

And, 2. Receive with meekness, calmness, and submission, the engrafted word; that is, the word planted and sown in our hearts by the hands of Christ's ministers: which is able to save our souls, that is, from hell and damnation; yet does not the word save of itself, but God by the word; the power of the word is not intrinsical, but extrinsical, derived from God, whose the word is.

Learn hence, 1. That as all sin in general, so anger, wrath, and malice in particular, ought to be laid aside by us at all times, but then especially when we go forth to hear the word of God.

Learn, 2. That the word must be received with all meekness of spirit, if we would hear it with profit and advantage; there must not be found with us either a wrathful fierceness, or a proud stubbornness, or a contentious wrangling, but humility and brokenness of spirit,

dociblilty and tractableness of spirit, under the word, otherwise all our hearing will be an addition to our sin, and an aggravation of our condemnation.

Learn, 3. That he word must not only be apprehended and received by us, but implanted and engrafted in us, or it will never be able to save our souls; receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

Quest. But how may we know when the word is an engrafted word? Ans. When it is a fruitful word, The word of the truth of the gospel is come unto you, and bringeth forth fruit Col 1:6.

Learn, 4. Though hearing of the word be a duty, yet it must not be rested in; be hearers, but not only hearers. Alas! bare hearing of the word is the least part of Christianity, and the lightest part of Christianity; though we be intelligent hearers, though we be very diligent and attentive hearers, though we be affectionate hearers, yea, though we make great proficiency in knowlege by our hearing, yet all this will deceive us at last, if nothing farther be added to it.

Therefore, learn, 5. That the doers of the word are the best hearers, yea, the only hearers in God's account: not to hear at all is atheistical, and produces no religion; to hear, and not to know and be affected with what we hear, is stoical, and breeds a blind religion; to know, and not to do, is Pharisaical, and breeds a lame religion; the practical hearer is the only approved hearer in the account of God: A good understanding have they that do they commandments, Ps 111:10.

Lastly, without this, all our hearing is but self-deceiving; and this is the most shameful deceit, the most dangerous deceit, and, if timely care and endeavours prevent not, an irreparable and eternal deceit: Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only. Obey the gospel, and do not merely listen to it. Compare Mt 7:21. Deceiving your own selves. It is implied here, that by merely hearing the word but not doing it, they would deceive their own souls. The nature of this deception was this, that they would imagine that that was all which was required, whereas the main thing was that they should be obedient. If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance on preaching, or a respectful attention to it, he has done all that is required of him, he is labouring under a most gross self- deception. And yet there are multitudes who seem to imagine that they have done all that is demanded of them when they have heard attentively the word preached. Of its influence on their lives, and its claims to obedience, they are utterly regardless.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For if any be, etc. The ground of the comparison in these verses is obvious. The apostle refers to what all persons experience, the fact that we do not retain a distinct impression of ourselves after we have looked in a mirror. While actually looking in the mirror, we see all our features, and can trace them distinctly; when we turn away, the image and the impression both vanish. When looking in the mirror, we can see all the defects and blemishes of our person; if there is a scar, a deformity, a feature of ugliness, it is distinctly before the mind; but when we turn away, that is "out of sight, and out of mind." When unseen it gives no uneasiness, and, even if capable of correction, we take no pains to remove it. So when we hear the word of God. It is like a mirror held up before us. In the perfect precepts of the law, and the perfect requirements of the gospel, we see our own short-comings and defects, and perhaps think that we will correct them. But we turn away immediately, and forget it all. If, however, we were "doers of the word," we should endeavour to remove all those defects and blemishes in our moral character, and to bring our whole souls into conformity with what the law and the gospel require. The phrase "natural face," (Gr., face of birth,) means, the face or appearance which we have in virtue of our natural birth. The word glass here means mirror. Glass was not commonly used for mirrors among the ancients, but they were made of polished plates of metal. Isa 3:24, and Job 37:18.

24 for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein,* he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

But whoso looketh. παρακυψας. This word means, to stoop down near by anything; to bend forward near, so as to look at anything more closely. 1Pet 1:12. The idea here is that of a close and attentive observation. The object is not to contrast the manner of looking in the glass, and in the law of liberty, implying that the former was a "careless beholding," and the latter an attentive and careful looking, as Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others suppose; for the word used in the former case (κατενοησε) implies intense or accurate observation, as really as the word used here; but the object is to show that if a man would attentively look into, and continue in the law of liberty, and not do as one who went away and forgot how he looked, he would be blessed. The emphasis is not in the manner of looking, it is on the duty of continuing or persevering in the observance of the law. The perfect law of liberty. Referring to the law of God, or his will, however made known, as the correct standard of conduct. It is called the perfect law, as being wholly free from all defects; being just such as a law ought to be. Compare Ps 19:7. It is called the law of liberty, or freedom, because it is a law producing freedom from the servitude of sinful passions and lusts. Compare Ps 119:45; Rom 6:16, seq. And continueth therein. He must not merely look at the law, or see what he is by comparing himself with its requirements, but he must yield steady obedience to it. Jn 14:21. This man shall be blessed in his deed. Marg., doing. The meaning is, that he shall be blessed in the very act of keeping the law. It will produce peace of conscience; it will impart happiness of a high order to his mind; it will exert a good influence over his whole soul. Ps 19:11, "In keeping of them there is great reward."

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion *is* vain.

If any man among you seem to be religious. Pious, or devout. That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be some one thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct; and if there is any one thing in

reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless.

And bridleth not his tongue. Restrains or curbs it not, as a horse is restrained with a bridle. There may have been some reason why the apostle referred to this particular sin which is now unknown to us; or he may perhaps have intended to select this as a specimen to illustrate this idea, that if there is any one evil propensity which religion does not control, or if there is any one thing in respect to which its influence is not felt, whatever other evidences of piety there may be, this will demonstrate that all those appearances of religion are vain. For religion is designed to bring the whole man under control, and to subdue every faculty of the body and mind to its demands. If the tongue is not restrained, or if there is any unsubdued propensity to sin whatever, it proves that there is no true religion. But deceiveth his own heart. Implying that he does deceive his heart by supposing that any evidence can prove that he is under the influence of religion if his tongue is unrestrained. Whatever love, or zeal, or orthodoxy, or gift in preaching or in prayer he may have, this one evil propensity will neutralize it all, and show that there is no true religion at heart. This man's religion is vain. As all religion must be which does not control all the faculties of the body and the mind. The truths, then, which are taught in this verse are,

(1,) that there may be evidences of piety which seem to be very plausible or clear, but which in themselves do not prove that there is any true religion. There may be much zeal, as in the case of the Pharisees; there may be much apparent love of Christians, or much outward benevolence; there may be an uncommon gift in prayer; there may be much self-denial, as among those who withdraw from the world in monasteries or nunneries; or there may have been deep conviction for sin, and much joy at the time of the supposed conversion, and still there be no true religion. Each and all of these things may exist in the heart where there is no true religion.

(2.) A single unsubdued sinful propensity neutralizes all these things, and shows that there is no true religion. If the tongue is not subdued; if any sin is indulged, it will show that the seat of the evil has not been reached, and that the soul, as such, has never been brought into subjection to the law of God. For the very essence of

all the sin that there was in the soul may have been concentrated on that one propensity. Everything else which may be manifested may be accounted for on the supposition that there is no religion; this cannot be accounted for on the supposition that there is any.

1. That there have been, are, and ever will be, many professors of religion, who seem, and only seem to be religious.

Observe, 2. That an unbridled and ungoverned tongue, is a certain sign and evidence of a man's being only seemingly religious; it seems there were many unbridled tongues in the apostle's days, amongst the professors of Christianity, which put the apostle upon spending the whole third chapter about the government of the tongue; the grace and word of God are bridles, which we are to put on, to restrain us from sinful and excessive speaking.

Observe, 3. That such a man as pretends to religion, and seems to be religious, without bridling and governing of his tongue, all his religion is but vain and self-deceiving: Vain, that is, empty; in shew and appearance only, nothing in truth, and in reality: or vain, that is ineffectual; it doth not perform its office, it does not answer its end, their religion will do them no good, stand them in no stead; that faith, that hope, those prayers which will consist with the reigning evils of the tongue, are vain and self-deceiving; that religion, which cannot tame the tongue, will never save the soul; though some evils of the tongue may consist with grace, yet an unbridled tongue cannot consist with it: deceit in our lips is as bad as falsehood in our dealings, and virulence in our tongue as bad as violence in our hands; and if thy religion be vain, all is vain to thee; thy hopes are vain, thy comforts are vain. The sum is, that an unbridled tongue, in a religious professor, is enough to prove his religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Pure religion. On the word here rendered religion, (θρησκεια,) Col 2:18. It is used here evidently in the sense of piety, or as we commonly employ the word religion. The object of the apostle is

to describe what enters essentially into religion; what it will do when it is properly and fairly developed. The phrase "pure religion," means that which is genuine and sincere, or which is free from any improper mixture.

And undefiled before God and the Father. That which God sees to be pure and undefiled, Rosenmuller supposes that there is a metaphor here taken from pearls or gems, which should be pure, or without stain. Is this. That is, this enters into it; or this is religion such as God approves. The apostle does not say that this is the whole of religion, or that there is nothing else essential to it; but his general design clearly is, to show that religion will lead to a holy life, and he mentions this as a specimen, or an instance of what it will lead us to do. The things which he specifies here are in fact two:

(1.) That pure religion will lead to a life of practical benevolence; and

(2) that it will keep us unspotted from the world. If these things are found, they show that there is true piety. If they are not, there is none. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. To go to see, to look after, to be ready to aid them. This is an instance or specimen of what true religion will do, showing that it will lead to a life of practical benevolence. It may be remarked in respect to this,

(1,) that this has always been regarded as an essential thing in true religion; for

(a) it is thus an imitation of God, who is "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows in his holy habitation," Ps 68:6; and who has always revealed himself as their friend, De 10:18; 14:29; Ps 10:14; Ps 82:3; Isa 1:17; Jer 7:7; 49:11; Hos 14:3;

(b) religion is represented as leading its friends to do this, or this is required everywhere of those who claim to be religious, Isa 1:17; De 24:17; 14:29; Ex 22:22; Job 29:11-13.

(2.) Where this disposition to be the real friend of the widow and the orphan exists, there will also exist other corresponding things

which go to make up the religious character. This will not stand alone. It will show what the heart is, and prove that it will ever be ready to do good. If a man, from proper motives, is the real friend of the widow and the fatherless, he will be the friend of every good word and work, and we may rely on him in any and every way in doing good. And to keep himself unspotted from the world. Rom 12:2; Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15-17. That is, religion will keep us from the maxims, vices, and corruptions which prevail in the world, and make us holy. These two things may, in fact, be said to constitute religion. If a man is truly benevolent, he bears the image of that God who is the fountain of benevolence; if he is pure and uncontaminated in his walk and deportment, he also resembles his Maker, for he is holy. If he has not these things, he cannot have any well-founded evidence that he is a Christian; for it is always the nature and tendency of religion to produce these things. It is, therefore, an easy matter for a man to determine whether he has any religion; and equally easy to see that religion is eminently desirable. Who can doubt that that is good which leads to compassion for the poor and the helpless, and which makes the heart and the life pure?

Observe here, 1. That the apostle doth not set down the whole of religion, but an eminent part and instance of it only: pure religion is this, that is, this is the practice of religion, without which all religion is vain; this is an eminent fruit, which springs from the root of pure religion; if pure religon live in the heart, the fruits of pious charity will appear in the life.

Observe, 2. The acts of charity, when they flow from a religious principle, do commence acts of worship; to visit the widow and fatherless, considered in itself, may be only an act of indifferency and civil courtesy; but when it is performed as an act of duty, in obedience to the command of God, or as an act of mercy and pity, for the supply of their wants by our purse, or for the comforting of their hearts by our counsel; being thus done out of conscience, it is as acceptable to God as an act of worship, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.

Observe, 3. How the apostle joins charity and purity together; a pretense to the one without the other discovers the insincerity of both; the relieving of the afflicted, and a life unspotted, must go together, or God accept of neither: Pure religion is this, to visit the widow, and keep himself unspotted from the world; that is, from the defilement and pollutions of the world by the lusts thereof; plainly intimating,

1. That the world is a filthy place, a dirty defiling thing. What company almost can you come into, generally speaking, that is not sooty and leprous? How hard is it to converse with them, and not be polluted and infected by them? Even as hard as it is to touch pitch, and not be defiled.

2. That it is our duty, and ought to be our daily endeavour, to keep ourselves as unstained by, and unspotted from the world as we can: and that we may escape the pollutions which are in the world through lust, let us be instant in prayer, diligent in our watch, that if we cannot make the world better, that shall never make us worse.

3. That we should more and more grow weary of the world, and long for heaven, where there is nothing that defileth, where we shall have pure hearts, pure company, every thing agreeable, and this not for a few years, but for everlasting ages. Lord! when shall we ascend on high to live with thee in purity?

James-2

Warning against Partiality

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with respect of persons.

My brethren. Perhaps meaning brethren in two respects--as Jews, and as Christians. In both respects the form of address would be proper. Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the distinguishing thing in the Christian religion, for it is this by which man is justified, and hence it comes to be put for religion itself.

1Timm 3:9. The meaning here is, "Do not hold such views of the religion of Christ, as to lead you to manifest partiality to others on account of their difference of rank or outward circumstances." The Lord of glory. The glorious Lord; he who is glorious himself, and who is encompassed with glory. 1Cor 2:8. The design here seems to be to show that the religion of such a Lord should be in no way dishonoured. With respect of persons. That is, you are not to show respect of persons, or to evince partiality to others on account of their rank, wealth, apparel, etc. Compare Prov 24:23; 28:21; Lev 19:15; De 1:17; De 10:17; 2Ch 19:7; Ps 40:4. Acts 10:34; and Rom 2:11 to see the subject explained.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

For if there come unto your assembly. Marg., as in Gr., synagogue. It is remarkable that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word synagogue is applied to the Christian church. It is probably employed here because the apostle was writing to those who had been Jews; and it is to be presumed that the word synagogue would be naturally used by the early converts from Judaism to designate a Christian place of worship, or a Christian congregation, and it was probably so employed until it was superseded by a word which the Gentile converts would be more likely to employ and which would, in fact, be better and more expressive--the word church. The word synagogue (συναγωγην) would properly refer to the whole congregation, considered as assembled together, without respect to the question whether all were truly pious or not; the word church (εκκλησια) would refer to the assembly convened for worship as called out, referring to the fact that they were called out from the world, and convened as worshippers of God, and would, therefore, be more applicable to a body of spiritual worshippers. It is probable that the Christian church was modelled, in its general arrangements, after the Jewish synagogue; but there would be obviously some disadvantages in retaining the name, as applicable to Christian worship. It would be difficult to avoid the associations connected with the name, and hence it was better to adopt some other name which would be free from this disadvantage, and on which might be engrafted all the ideas which it was necessary to connect with the notion of the Christian organization. Hence the word church, liable to no such objection as that of synagogue, was soon adopted, and ultimately

prevailed, though the passage before us shows that the word synagogue would be in some places, and for a time, employed to designate a Christian congregation. We should express the idea here by saying, "If a man of this description should come into the church."

A man with, a gold ring. Indicative of rank or property. Rings were common ornaments of the rich; and probably then, as now, of those who desired to be esteemed to be rich. For proof that they were commonly worn, see the quotations in Wetstein, in loc.

In goodly apparel. Rich and splendid dress. Compare Lk 16:19.

A poor man in vile raiment. The Greek here is, filthy, foul; the meaning of the passage is, in sordid, shabby clothes. The reference here seems to be, not to those who commonly attended on public worship, or who were members of the church, but to those who might accidentally drop in to witness the services of Christians. See 1Cor 14:24.

3 and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing. If you show him superior attention on account of his rich and gay apparel, giving him a seat by himself, and treating others with neglect or contempt. Religion does not forbid proper respect to rank, to office, to age, or to distinguished talents and services, though even in such cages it does not require that we should feel that such persons have any peculiar claims to salvation, or that they are not on a level with all others, as sinners before God; it does not forbid that a man who has the means of procuring for himself an eligible pew in a church should be permitted to do so; but it requires that men shall be regarded and treated according to their moral worth, and not according to their external adorning; that all shall be considered as in fact on a level before God, and entitled to the privileges which grow out of the worship of the Creator. A stranger coming into any place of worship, no matter what his rank, dress, or complexion, should be treated with respect, and everything should be done that can be to win his heart to the service of God.

And say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place. Marg., as in Gr., well, or seemly; that is, in an honourable place near the pulpit; or in some elevated place where he would be conspicuous. The meaning is, you treat him with distinguished marks of respect on the first appearance, merely from the indications that he is a rich man, without knowing anything about his character. And say to the poor, Stand thou there. Without even the civility of offering him a seat at all. This may be presumed not often to occur in a Christian church; yet it practically does sometimes, when no disposition is evinced to furnish a stranger with a seat. Or sit here under my footstool. Perhaps some seats in the places of worship were raised, so that even the footstool would be elevated above a lower seat. The meaning is, that he would be treated as if he were not worth the least attention.

4 are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

To prevent the growing evil condemned in the foregoing verse, of undervaluing those that are rich in grace, because poor in estate, the apostle in this verse declares how God himself gives countenance to the contrary practice; he confers a threefold dignity upon them; they are chosen by him, they are rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven now as if the apostle said, "Are they fit to be despised by you, that are thus highly dignified and enriched by God?" And to stir up their attention to what he speaks, he ushers in his interrogation with this, Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world? &c.

Learn hence, that such as are poor in this world, and disesteemed of men, may yet be chosen of God, rich in grace, and heirs of glory. This he does, to demonstrate the sovereignty and freeness of his grace, and the glory of his wisdom. The first choice that Christ made of persons to be his followers were poor men; and ever since, generally speaking, they are the poor that receive the gospel: God has more rent, and better paid him, from a smokey cottage than from many stately palaces, where men wallow in wealth, and forget God.

6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

And draw you before the judgment-seats. That is, they are your persecutors rather than your friends. It was undoubtedly the case that many of the rich were engaged in persecuting Christians, and that on various pretenses they dragged them before the judicial tribunals.

7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

Do they not blaspheme that worthy name. This is another argument to show that the rich had no special claim to the honour which they were disposed to show them. The "worthy name" here referred to is, doubtless, the name of the Saviour. The thing here affirmed would, of course, accompany persecution. They who persecuted Christians, would revile the name which they bore. This has always occurred. But besides this, it is no improbable supposition that many of those who were not disposed to engage in open persecution, would revile the name of Christ, by speaking contemptuously of him and his religion. This has been sufficiently common in every age of the world, to make the description here not improper. And yet nothing has been more remarkable than the very thing adverted to here by James, that notwithstanding this, many who profess to be Christians have been more disposed to treat even such persons with respect and attention than they have their own brethren, if they were poor; that they have cultivated the favour, sought the friendship, desired the smiles, aped the manners, and coveted the society of such persons, rather than the friendship and the favour of their poorer Christian brethren. Even though they are known to despise religion in their hearts, and not to be sparing of their words of reproach and scorn towards Christianity; though they are known to be blasphemers, and to have the most thorough contempt for serious, spiritual religion, yet there is many a professing Christian who would prefer to be at a party given by such persons than at a prayer-meeting where their poorer brethren are assembled; who would rather be known by the world to be the associates and friends of such persons, than of those humble believers who can make no boast of rank or wealth, and who are looked down upon with contempt by the great and the gay.

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well:

If ye fulfil the royal law. That is, the law which he immediately mentions requiring us to love our neighbour as ourselves. It is called a "royal law," or kingly law, on account of its excellence or

nobleness; not because it is ordained by God as a king, but because it has some such prominence and importance among other laws as a king has among other men; that is, it is majestic, noble, worthy of veneration. It is a law which ought to govern and direct us in all our intercourse with men--as a king rules his subjects. According to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Lev 19:18. Compare Mt 19:19. See it explained by the Saviour, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Lk 10:25-37. In regard to its meaning, Mt 19:19. Ye do well. That is, "if you fairly comply with the spirit of this law, you do all that is required of you in regulating your intercourse with others. You are to regard all persons as your neighbours, and are to treat them according to their real worth; you are not to be influenced in judging of them, or in your treatment of them, by their apparel, or their complexion, or the circumstances of their birth, but by the fact that they are fellow-beings." This is another reason why they should not show partiality in their treatment of others, for if, in the true sense, they regarded all others as "neighbours," they would treat no one with neglect or contempt.

9 but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin. You transgress the plain law of God, and do wrong. See the references on Jas 2:1. And are convinced of the law as transgressors. Gr., "By the law." The word convinced is now used in a somewhat different sense from what it was formerly. It now commonly refers to the impression made on a man's mind by showing him the truth of a thing which before was doubted, or in respect to which the evidence was not clear. A man who doubted the truth of a report or a proposition may be convinced or satisfied of its truth; a man who has done wrong, though he supposed he was doing what was proper, may be convinced of his error. So a man may be convinced that he is a sinner, though before he had no belief of it, and no concern about it; and this may produce in his mind the feeling which is technically known as conviction, producing deep distress and anguish. Jn 16:8. Here, however, the word does not refer so much to the effect produced on the mind itself, as to the fact that the law would hold such an one to be guilty; that is, the law pronounces what is done to be wrong. Whether they would be personally convinced of it, and troubled about it as convicted sinners, would be a different question, and one to which the apostle

does not refer; for his object is not to show that they would be troubled about it, but to show that the law of God condemned this course, and would hold them to be guilty. The argument here is not from the personal distress which this course would produce in their own minds, but from the fact that the law of God condemned it.

10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point,* he is guilty of all.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law. All except the single point referred to. The apostle does not say that this in fact ever did occur, but he says that if it should, and yet a man should have failed in only one particular, he must be judged to be guilty. The case supposed seems to be that of one who claimed that he had kept the whole law. The apostle says that even if this should be admitted for the time to be true in all other respects, yet, if he had failed in any one particular--in showing respect to persons, or in anything else--he could not but be held to be a transgressor. The design of this is to show the importance of yielding universal obedience, and to impress upon the mind a sense of the enormity of sin from the fact that the violation of any one precept is in fact an offence against the whole law of God. The whole law here means all the law of God; all that he has required; all that he has given to regulate us in our lives.

And yet offend in one point. In one respect; or shall violate any one of the commands included in the general word law. The word offend here means, properly, to stumble, to fall; then to err or fail in duty. Mt 5:29; Mt 26:31.

He is guilty of all. He is guilty of violating the law as a whole, or of violating the law of God as such; he has rendered it impossible that he should be justified and saved by the law. This does not affirm that he is as guilty as if he had violated every law of God; or that all sinners are of equal grade because all have violated some one or more of the laws of God; but the meaning is, that he is guilty of violating the law of God as such; he shows that he has not the true spirit of obedience; he has exposed himself to the penalty of the law, and made it impossible now to be saved by it. His acts of obedience in other respects, no matter how many, will not screen him from the charge of being a violator of the law, or from its penalty. He must be held and treated as a transgressor for that

offence, however upright he may be in other respects, and must meet the penalty of the law as certainly as though he had violated every commandment. One portion of the law is as much binding as another, and if a man violates any one plain commandment, he sets at nought the authority of God. This is a simple principle which is everywhere recognised, and the apostle means no more by it than occurs every day. A man who has stolen a horse is held to be a violator of the law, no matter in how many other respects he has kept it, and the law condemns him for it. He cannot plead his obedience to the law in other things as a reason why he should not be punished for this sin; but however upright he may have been in general, even though it may have been through a long life, the law holds him to be a transgressor, and condemns him. He is as really condemned, and as much thrown from the protection of law, as though he had violated every command. So of murder, arson, treason, or ally other crime. The law judges a man for what he has done in this specific case, and he cannot plead in justification of it that he has been obedient in other things. It follows, therefore, that if a man has been guilty of violating the law of God in any one instance, or is not perfectly holy, he cannot be justified and saved by it, though he should have obeyed it in every other respect, any more than a man who has been guilty of murder can be saved from the gallows because he has, in other respects, been a good citizen, a kind father, an honest neighbour, or has been compassionate to the poor and the needy. He cannot plead his act of truth in one case as an offset to the sin of falsehood in another; he cannot defend himself from the charge of dishonesty in one instance by the plea that he has been honest in another; he cannot urge the fact that he has done a good thing as a reason why he should not be punished for a bad one. He must answer for the specific charge against him, and none of these other things can be an offset against this one act of wrong. Let it be remarked, also, in respect to our being justified by obedience to the law, that no man can plead before God that he has kept all his law except in one point. Who is there that has not, in spirit at least, broken each one of the ten commandments? The sentiment here expressed by James was not new with him. It was often expressed by the Jewish writers, and seems to have been an admitted principle among the Jews. See Wetstein, in loc, for examples.

11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.

Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

12 So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. On the phrase, "the law of liberty," Jas 1:26; and Jas 4:11. The meaning is, that in all our conduct we are to act under the constant impression of the truth that we are soon to be brought into judgment, and that the law by which we are to be judged is that by which it is contemplated that we shall be set free from the dominion of sin. In the rule which God has laid down in his word, called "the law of liberty," or the rule by which true freedom is to be secured, a system of religion is revealed by which it is designed that man shall be emancipated not only from one sin, but from all. Now, it is with reference to such a law that we are to be judged; that is, we shall not be able to plead on our trial that we were under a necessity of sinning, but we shall be judged under that law by which the arrangement was made that we might be free from sin. If we might be free from sin; if an arrangement was made by which we could have led holy lives, then it will be proper that we shall be judged and condemned if we are not righteous. The sense is, "In all your conduct, whatever you do or say, remember that you are to be judged, or that you are to give an impartial account; and remember also that the rule by which you are to be judged is that by which provision is made for being delivered from the dominion of sin, and brought into the freedom of the gospel." The argument here seems to be, that he who habitually feels that he is soon to be judged by a law under which it was contemplated that he might be, and should be, free from the bondage of sin, has one of the strongest of all inducements to lead a holy life.

13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy. This is obviously an equitable principle, and is one which is everywhere found in the Bible. Prov 21:13, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but will not be heard." 2Sam 22:26-27, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury". Compare Ps 18:25-26; Mt 6:15; 7:1-2. The idea which the apostle seems to design to convey here is, that there will certainly be a

judgment, and that we must expect that it will be conducted on equitable principles; that no mercy is to be shown when the character is not such that it will be proper that it should be; and that we should habitually feel in our conduct that God will be impartial, and should frame our lives accordingly.

And mercy rejoiceth against judgment. Marg., glorieth. Gr., Boasts, glories, or exults. The idea is that of glorying over, as where one is superior to another, or has gained a victory over another. The reference all along here is to the judgment, the trial of the great day; and the apostle is stating the principles on which the trial at that day will be conducted--on which one class shall be condemned and the other acquitted and saved. In reference to one class, the wicked, he says that where there has been no mercy shown to others--referring to this as one evidence of piety--that is, where there is no true piety, there will be judgment without mercy; in the other case there will be, as it were, a triumph of mercy, or mercy will appear to have gained a victory over judgment. Strict justice would indeed plead for their condemnation, but the attribute of mercy will triumph, and they will be acquitted. The attributes of mercy and justice would seem to come in conflict, but mercy would prevail. This is a true statement of the plan of salvation, and of what actually occurs in the redemption of a sinner. Justice demands, as what is her due, that the sinner should be condemned; mercy pleads that he may be saved--and mercy prevails. It is not uncommon that there seems to be a conflict between the two. In the dispensations of justice before human tribunals, this often occurs. Strict justice demands the punishment of the offender; and yet there are cases when mercy pleads, and when every man feels that it would be desirable that pardon should be extended to the guilty, and when we always rejoice if mercy triumphs. In such a case, for example, as that of Major Andre, this is strikingly seen. On the one hand, there was the undoubted proof that he was guilty; that he had been taken as a spy; that by the laws of war he ought to be put to death; that as what he had done had tended to the ruin of the American cause, and as such an act, if unpunished, would always expose an army to surprise and destruction, he ought, in accordance with the law of nations, to die. On the other hand, there were his youth, his high attainments, his honourable connexions, his brilliant hopes, all pleading that he might live, and that he might be pardoned. In the bosom of Washington, the promptings of justice and mercy thus came into

collision. Both could not be gratified, and there seemed to be but one course to be pursued. His sense of justice was shown in the act by which he signed the death-warrant; his feelings of compassion in the fact that when he did it his eyes poured forth a flood of tears. How every generous feeling of our nature would have been gratified if mercy could have triumphed, and the youthful and accomplished officer could have been spared! In the plan of salvation, this does occur. Respect is done to justice, but mercy triumphs. Justice indeed pleaded for the condemnation of the sinner, but mercy interposed, and he is saved. Justice is not disregarded, for the great Redeemer of mankind has done all that is needful to uphold it; but there is the most free and full exercise of mercy, and, while the justice of God is maintained, every benevolent feeling in the breast of all holy beings can be gratified in the salvation of countless thousands.

Faith without Works Is Dead

14 What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith? The apostle here returns to the subject adverted to in Jas 1:22-27, the importance of a practical attention to the duties of religion, and the assurance that men cannot be saved by a mere opinion, speculative or merely by holding correct sentiments. He doubtless had in his eye those who abused the doctrine of justification by faith, by holding that good works are unnecessary to salvation, provided they maintain an orthodox belief. As this abuse probably existed in the time of the apostles, and as the Holy Ghost saw that there would be danger that in later times the great and glorious doctrine of justification by faith would be thus abused, it was important that the error should be rebuked, and that the doctrine should be distinctly laid down that good works are necessary to salvation. The apostle, therefore, in the question before us, implicitly asserts that faith would not "profit" at all unless accompanied with a holy life, and this doctrine he proceeds to illustrate in the following verses. Jas 2:1, the analysis of this chapter; and Jas 5:1, the Introduction to chapter 5, (2.). In order to a proper interpretation of this passage, it should be observed that the stand-point from which the apostle views this subject is not before a man is converted, inquiring in what way he may be justified before God, or on what ground his sins may

be forgiven; but it is after a man is converted, showing that that faith can have no value which is not followed by good works; that is, that it is not real faith, and that good works are necessary if a man would have evidence that he is justified. Thus understood, all that James says is in entire accordance with what is taught elsewhere in the New Testament. Can faith save him? It is implied in this question that faith cannot save him, for very often the most emphatic way of making an affirmation is by asking a question. The meaning here is, that that faith which does not produce good works, or which would not produce holy living if fairly acted out, will save no man, for it is not genuine faith.

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,
16 and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and
filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are
needful to the body; what *doth it* profit?

If a brother or sister be naked, etc. The comparison in these verses is very obvious and striking. The sense is, that faith in itself, without the acts that correspond to it, and to which it would prompt, is as cold, and heartless, and unmeaning, and useless, as it would be to say to one who was destitute of the necessaries of life, "depart in peace." In itself considered, it might seem to have something that was good; but it would answer none of the purposes of faith unless it should prompt to action. In the case of one who was hungry or naked, what he wanted was not good wishes or kind words merely, but the acts to which good wishes and kind words prompt. And so in religion, what is wanted is not merely the abstract state of mind which would be indicated by faith, but the life of goodness to which it ought to lead. Good wishes and kind words, in order to make them what they should be for the welfare of the world, should be accompanied with corresponding action. So it is with faith. It is not enough for salvation without the benevolent and holy acts to which it would prompt, any more than the good wishes and kind words of the benevolent are enough to satisfy the wants of the hungry, and to clothe the naked, without correspondent action. Faith is not and cannot be shown to be genuine, unless it is accompanied with corresponding acts; as our good wishes for the poor and needy can be shown to be genuine, when we have the means of aiding them, only by actually ministering to their necessities. In the one case, our wishes would be shown to he unmeaning and heartless; in the other,

our faith would be equally so. In regard to this passage, therefore, it may be observed,

(1,) that in fact faith is of no more value, and has no more evidence of genuineness when it is unaccompanied with good works, than such empty wishes for the welfare of the poor would be when unaccompanied with the means of relieving their wants. Faith is designed to lead to good works. It is intended to produce a holy life; a life of activity in the service of the Saviour. This is its very essence; it is what it always produces when it is genuine. Religion is not designed to be a cold abstraction; it is to be a living and vivifying principle.

(2.) There is a great deal of that kindness and charity in the world which is expressed by mere good wishes. If we really have not the means of relieving the poor and the needy, then the expression of a kind wish may be in itself an alleviation to their Sorrows, for even sympathy in such a case is of value, and it is much to us to know that others feel for us; but if we have the means, and the object is a worthy one, then such expressions are mere mockery, and aggravate rather than soothe the feelings of the sufferer. Such wishes will neither clothe nor feed them; and they will only make deeper the sorrows which we ought to heal. But how much of this is there in the world, when the sufferer cannot but feel that all these wishes, however kindly expressed, are hollow and false, and when he cannot but feel that relief would be easy!

(3.) In like manner there is much of this same kind of worthless faith in the world--faith that is dead; faith that produces no good works; faith that exerts no practical influence whatever on the life. The individual professes indeed to believe the truths of the gospel; he may be in the church of Christ; he would esteem it a gross calumny to be spoken of as an infidel; but as to any influence which his faith exerts over him, his life would be the same if he had never heard of the gospel. There is not one of the truths of religion which is bodied forth in his life; not a deed to which he is prompted by religion; not an act which could not be accounted for on the supposition that he has no true piety. In such a case, faith may with propriety be said to be dead. Being alone. Marg., by itself. The sense is, "being by itself;" that is, destitute of any accompanying fruits or results, it shows that it is dead. That which is alive bodies itself forth, produces

effects, makes itself visible; that which is dead produces no effect, and is as if it were not.1Jn 3:18

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

St. James brings in these words by way of dialogue, between a sincere believer that has true faith, and a falsehearted hypocrite that only pretends to it; thus, "Thou sayest thou hast true faith, though thou hast no works to evidence its truth; I say, I have true faith, because I have good works, which are the genuine effects and fruits of it. Come we now to the trial and let it appear who saith truth, thou or I; if thou that hast no works sayest true, prove thy faith to be true some other way. Works thou hast none, shew thy faith then be something else; but that is impossible, therefore thou vainly boastest of that which thou hast not; but, on the other side, says the sincere believer, I can make good what I say, proving the truth of my faith by the fruits of it is my works; this is a real demonstration that my faith is no vain ostentation as your's is." This way of arguing is very convincing; it grips the conscience of the hypocrite, and covers him with shame and confusion of face.

Learn hence, that good works are the evidences by which Christ will judge of our faith now, and according to which Christ will judge of us, and our faith at the great day. These two, faith and good works, ought to be as inseparable as light and the sun, as fire and heat. Obedience is the daughter of faith, and faith the parent and principle of obedience.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

As if the apostle had said, "Be thou either Jew of Christian, thou believest that there is a God, and assentest to the articles of religion: herein thou doest well, but this is no more than what the devils do: for they also believe and tremble; and if thou hast no better faith, and no better fruits of thy faith than they, thou hast the same reason to tremble which they have."

Observe here, 1. That a bare and naked assent to the truths of the gospel, yea, to the fundamental truths and articles of religion, is not faith that will justify and save. The devils have it, yet have no hopes of salvation with it; they believe that there is a God, and a Christ that died for others, though not for them; so that an atheist that does not

believe a God, is worse than a devil; for he believes that there is a God, whose being the Atheist denies.
Observe, 2. That horror is the fruit and effect of the devil's faith; the more they know of God, the more they dread him; the more they think of him, the more they tremble at him. O God! All knowledge of thee out of Christ is uncomfortable; thine attributes, which are in themselves dreadful and terrible, being beheld by us in thy Son, do yield comfort and sweetness to us; The devils believe, but tremble.

Thou believest that there is one God. One of the great and cardinal doctrines of religion is here selected as an illustration of all. The design of the apostle seems to have been to select one of the doctrines of religion, the belief of which would--if mere belief in any doctrine could--save the soul; and to show that even this might be held as an article of faith by those who could be supposed by no s one to have any claim to the name of Christian. He selects therefore, the great fundamental doctrine of all religion--the doctrine of the existence of one Supreme Being--and shows that if even this were held in such a way as it might be, and as it was held by devils, it could not save men. The apostle here is not to be supposed to be addressing such an one as Paul, who held to the doctrine that we are justified by faith; nor is he to be supposed to be combating the doctrine of Paul, as some have maintained, (Jas 2:1, the Introduction;) but he is to be regarded as addressing one who held, in the broadest and most unqualified sense, that provided there was faith, a man would be saved. To this he replies, that even the devils might have faith of a certain sort, and faith that would produce sensible effects on them of a certain kind, and still it could not be supposed that they had true religion, or that they would be saved. Why might not the same thing occur in regard to man?

Thou doest well. So far as this is concerned, or so far as it goes. It is a doctrine which ought to be held, for it is one of the great fundamental truths of religion.

The devils. The demons, (ταδαιμονια.) There is, properly, but one being spoken of in the New Testament as the devil--οδιαβολος, and οσαταν--though demons are frequently spoken of in the plural number. They are represented as evil spirits, subject to Satan, or under his control, and engaged with him in carrying out his plans of

wickedness. These spirits or demons were supposed to wander in desert and desolate places, (Mt 12:43,) or to dwell in the atmosphere, (Eph 2:2;) they were thought to have the power of working miracles, but not for good, (Rev 16:14; compare Jn 10:21;) to be hostile to mankind, (Jn 8:44;) to utter the heathen oracles, (Acts 16:17;) to lurk in the idols of the heathen, (1Cor 10:20;) and to take up their abodes in the bodies of men, afflicting them with various kinds of diseases, Mt 7:22; 9:34; Mt 10:8; 17:18; Mk 7:29-30; Lk 4:33; 8:27,30, et sape. It is of these evil spirits that the apostle speaks when he says this they believe.

Also, believe. That is, particularly, they believe in the existence of the one God. How far their knowledge may extend respecting God, we cannot know; but they are never represented in the Scriptures as denying his existence, or as doubting the great truths of religion. They are never described as atheists. That is a sin of this world only. They are not represented as skeptics. That, too, is a peculiar sin of the earth; and probably, in all the universe besides, there are no beings but those who dwell on this globe, who doubt or deny the existence of God, or the other great truths of religion.

And tremble. The word here used (φρισσω) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to be rough, uneven, jaggy, sc., with bristling hair; to bristle, to stand on end, as the hair does in a fright; and then to shudder or quake with fear, etc. Here the meaning is, that there was much more in the case referred to than mere speculative faith. There was a faith that produced some effect, and an effect of a very decided character. It did not, indeed, produce good works, or a holy life, but it made it manifest that there was faith; and, consequently, it followed that the existence of mere faith was not all that was necessary to save men, or to make it certain that they would be secure, unless it were held that the devils would be justified and saved by it. If they might hold such faith, and still remain in perdition, men might hold it, and go to perdition. A man should not infer, therefore, because he has faith, even that faith in God which will fill him with alarm, that therefore he is safe. He must have a faith which will produce another effect altogether--that which will lead to a holy life.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

But wilt thou know. Will you have a full demonstration of it; will you have the clearest proof in the case. The apostle evidently felt that the instances to which he was about to refer, those of Abraham and Rahab, were decisive. O vain man. The reference by this language is to a man who held an opinion that could not be defended. The word vain here used, (κενος,) means properly empty, as opposed to full--as empty hands, having nothing in them; then fruitless, or without utility or success; then false, fallacious. The meaning here, properly, would be "empty," in the sense of being void of understanding; and this would be a mild and gentle way of saying of one that he was foolish, or that he to maintained an argument that was without sense. James means, doubtless, represent it as a perfectly plain matter, a matter about which no man of sense could have any reasonable doubt. If we must call a man foolish, as is sometimes necessary, let us use as mild and inoffensive a term as possible--a term which, while it will convey our meaning, will not unnecessarily wound and irritate. That faith without works is dead. That the faith which does not produce good works is useless in the matter of salvation, he does not mean to say that it would produce no effect, for in the case of the demons it did produce trembling and alarm; but that it would be valueless in the matter of salvation. The faith of Abraham and of Rahab was entirely different from this.

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Was not Abraham our father. Our progenitor, our ancestor; using the word father, as frequently occurs in the Bible, to denote a remote ancestor. Mt 1:1. A reference to his and probably most of those to whom this epistle was addressed were of this character. Jas 2:1, the Introduction.

Justified by works. That is, in the sense in which James is maintaining that a man professing religion is to be justified by his works. He does not affirm that the ground of acceptance with God is that we keep the law, or are perfect; or that our good works make an atonement for our sins, and that it is on their account that we are pardoned; nor does he deny that it is necessary that a man should believe in order to be saved. In this sense he does not deny that men are justified by faith; and thus he does not contradict the doctrine of the apostle Paul. But he does teach that where there are no good

works, or where there is not a holy life, there is no true religion; that that faith which is not productive of good works is of no value; that if a man has that faith only, it would be impossible that he could be regarded as justified, or could be saved; and that consequently, in that large sense, a man is justified by his works; that is, they are the evidence that he is a justified man, or is regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker. The point on which the apostle has his eye is the nature of saving faith; and his design is to show that a mere faith which would produce no more effect than that of the demons did, could not save. In this he states no doctrine which contradicts that of Paul. The evidence to which he appeals in regard to faith, is good works and a holy life; and where that exists it shows that the faith is genuine. The case of Abraham is one directly in point. He showed that he had that kind of faith which was not dead. he gave the most affecting evidence that his faith was of such a kind as to lead him to implicit obedience, and to painful sacrifices. Such an act as that referred to--the act of offering up his son--demonstrated, if anything could, that his faith was genuine, and that his religion was deep and pure. In the sight of heaven and earth it would justify him as a righteous man, or would prove that he was a righteous man. In regard to the strength of his faith, and the nature of his obedience in this sacrifice, Heb 11:19. That the apostle here cannot refer to the act of justification as the term is commonly understood, referring by that to the moment when he was accepted of God as a righteous man, is clear from the fact that in a passage of the Scriptures which he himself quotes, that is declared to be consequent on his believing: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." The act here referred to occurred long subsequent to that, and was thus a fulfilment or Confirmation of the declaration of Scripture, which says that "he believed God." It showed that his faith was not merely speculative, but was an active principle, leading to holy living. Jas 2:23. This demonstrates that what the apostle refers to here is the evidence by which it is shown that a man's faith is genuine, and that he does not refer to the question whether the act of justification, where a sinner is converted, is solely in consequence of believing. Thus the case proves what James purposes to prove, that the faith which justifies is only that which leads to good works.

When he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar. This was long after he believed, and was an act which, if any could, would show that his

faith was genuine and sincere. On the meaning of this passage, Heb 11:17.

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

How faith wrought with his works. συνηργει. Co-operated with. The meaning of the word is, to work together with any one; to co-operate, (1Cor 16:16; 2Cor 6:1;) then to aid, or help, (Mk 16:20;) to contribute to the production of any result, where two or more persons or agents are united. Compare Rom 8:28. The idea here is, that the result in the case of Abraham, that is, his salvation, or his religion, was secured, not by one of these things alone, but that both with contributed to it. The result which was reached, to wit, his acceptance God, could not have been obtained by either one of them separately, but both, in some sense, entered into it. The apostle does not say that, in regard to the merit which justifies, they came in for an equal share, for he makes no affirmation on that point; he does not deny that in the sight of God, who foresees and knows all things, he was regarded as a justified man the moment he believed, but he looks at the result as it was, at Abraham as he appeared under the trial of his faith, and says that in that result there was to be seen the co-operation of faith and good works. Both contributed to the end, as they do now in all cases where there is true religion. And by works was faith made perfect. Made complete, finished, or entire. It was so carried out as to show its legitimate and fair results. This does not mean that the faith in itself was defective before this, and that the defect was remedied by good works; or that there is any deficiency in what the right kind of faith can do in the matter of justification, which is to be helped out by good works; but that there was that kind of completion which a thing has when it is fully developed, or is fairly carried out.

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God,
and it was imputed unto him for righteousness:
and he was called the Friend of God.

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith. That is, the fair and full meaning of the language of Scripture was expressed by this act, showing in the highest sense that his faith was genuine; or the declaration that he truly believed, was confirmed or established by this act. His faith was shown to be genuine; and the fair meaning of the declaration that he believed God was carried out in the subsequent act. The passage here referred to occurs in Gen 15:6.

That which it is said Abraham believed, or in which he believed God, was this: "This shall not be thine heir, (viz., Eliezer of Damascus,) but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir." And again, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be," Gen 15:3-5. The act of confiding in these promises, was that act of which it is said that "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." The act of offering his son on the altar, by which James says the Scripture was fulfilled, occurred some twenty years afterwards. That act confirmed or fulfilled the declaration. It showed that his faith was genuine, and that the declaration that he believed in God was true; for what could do more to confirm that, than a readiness to offer his own son at the command of God? It cannot be supposed that James meant to say that Abraham was justified by works without respect to faith, or to deny that the primary ground of his justification in the sight of God was faith, for the very passage which he quotes shows that faith was the primary consideration: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed," etc. The meaning, therefore, can only be, that this declaration received its fair and full expression when Abraham, by an act of obedience of the most striking character, long after he first exercised that faith by which he was accepted of God, showed that his faith was genuine. If he had not thus obeyed, his faith would have been inoperative and of no value. As it was, his act showed that the declaration of the Scripture that, he "believed," was well founded.

Abraham believed God, and it was imputed, etc. Rom 4:3 for a full explanation of this passage.

And he was called the Friend of God. In virtue of his strong faith and obedience. See 2Chr 20:7: "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" Isa 41:8, "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." This was a most honourable appellation; but it is one which, in all eases, will result from true faith and obedience.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Ye see then. From the course of reasoning pursued, and the example referred to. How that by works a man is justified, and not by faith

only. Not by a cold, abstract, inoperative faith. It must be by a faith that shall produce good works, and whose existence will be shown to men by good works. As justification takes place in the sight of God, it is by faith, for he sees that the faith is genuine, and that it will produce good works if the individual who exercises faith shall live; and he justifies men in view of that faith, and of no other. If he sees that the faith is merely speculative; that it is cold and dead, and would not produce good works, the man is not justified in his sight. As a matter of fact, therefore, it is only the faith that produces good works that justifies; and good works, therefore, as the proper expression of the nature of faith, foreseen by God as the certain result of faith, and actually as seen by performed men, are necessary in order to justification. In other words, no man will be justified who has not a faith which will produce good works, and which is of an operative and practical character. The ground of justification in the case is faith, and that only; the evidence of it, the carrying it out, the proof of the existence of the faith, is good works; and thus men are justified and saved not by mere abstract and cold faith, but by a faith necessarily connected with good works, and where good works perform an important part. James, therefore, does not contradict Paul, but he contradicts a false explanation of Paul's doctrine, he does not deny that a man is justified in the sight of God by faith, for the very passage which he quotes shows that he believes that; but he does deny that a man is justified by a faith which would not produce good works, and which is not expressed by good works; and thus he maintains, as Paul always did, that nothing else than a holy life can show that a man is a true Christian, and is accepted of God.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way?

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works? In the same sense in which Abraham was, as explained above--showing by her act that her faith was genuine, and that it was not a mere cold and speculative assent to the truths of religion. Her act showed that she truly believed God. If that act had not been performed, the fact would have shown that her faith was not genuine, and she could not have been justified. God saw her faith as it was; he saw that it would produce acts of obedience, and he accepted her as righteous. The act which she performed was the public manifestation of her faith, the evidence that she was justified. Heb 11:31 for a full explanation of the case of Rahab. It may be observed here, that we are not to

suppose that everything in the life and character of this woman is commended. She is commended for her faith, and for the fair expression of it; a faith which, as it induced her to receive the messengers of the true God, and to send them forth in peace, and as it led her to identify herself with the people of God, was also influential, we have every reason to suppose, in inducing her to abandon her former course of life. When we commend the faith of a man who has been a profane swearer, or an adulterer, or a robber, or a drunkard, we do not commend his former life, or give a sanction to it. We commend that which has induced him to abandon his evil course, and to turn to the ways of righteousness. The more evil his former course has been, the more wonderful, and the more worthy of commendation, is that faith by which he is reformed and saved.

26 For as the body without the spirit [*or*, breath] is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

For as the body without the spirit is dead. Marg., breath. The Greek word πνευμα is commonly used to denote spirit or soul, as referring to the intelligent nature. The meaning here is the obvious one, that the body is animated or kept alive by the presence of the soul, and that when that is withdrawn, hope departs. The body has no life independent of the presence of the soul. So faith without works is dead also. There is as much necessity that faith and works should be united to constitute true religion, as there is that the body and soul should be united to constitute a living man. If good works do not follow, it is clear that there is no true and proper faith; none that justifies and saves. If faith produces no fruit of good living, that fact proves that it is dead, that it has no power, and that it is of no value. This shows that James was not arguing against real and genuine faith, nor against its importance in justification, but against the supposition that mere faith was all that was necessary to save a man, whether it was accompanied by good works or not. He maintains that if there is genuine faith it will always be accompanied by good works, and that it is only that faith which can justify and save. If it leads to no practical holiness of life, it is like the body without the soul, and is of no value whatever. James and Paul both agree in the necessity of true faith in order to salvation; they both agree that the tendency of true faith is to produce a holy life; they both agree that where there is not a holy life there is no true religion, and that a man cannot be saved. We may learn, then, from the whole doctrine of the New Testament on the subject, that unless we believe in the Lord

Jesus we cannot be justified before God; and that unless our faith is of that kind which will produce holy living, it has no more of the characteristics of true religion than a dead body has of a living man.

James-3

The Tongue

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Verse 1. My brethren, be not many masters. "Be not many of you teachers." The evil referred to is that where many desired to be teachers, though but few could be qualified for the office, and though, in fact, comparatively few were required. A small number, well qualified, would better discharge the duties of the office, and do more good, than many would; and there would be great evil in having many crowding themselves unqualified into the office. The word here rendered masters (διδασκαλοι) should have been rendered teachers. It is so rendered in Jn 3:2; Acts 13:1; Rom 2:20; 1Cor 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; 1Timm 2:11; 4:3; Heb 5:12; though it is elsewhere frequently rendered master. It has, however, in it primarily the notion of teaching, (διδασκω,) even when rendered master; and the word master is often used in the New Testament, as it is with us, to denote an instructor--as the "schoolmaster". Compare Mt 10:24-25; 22:16; Mk 10:17; 12:19, et al. The word is not properly used in the sense of master, as distinguished from a servant, but as distinguished from a disciple or learner. Such a position, indeed, implies authority, but it is authority based not on power, but on superior qualifications. The connexion implies that the word is used in that sense in this place; and the evil reprehended is that of seeking the office of public instructor, especially the sacred office. It would seem that this was a prevailing fault among those to whom the apostle wrote. This desire was common among the Jewish people, who coveted the name and the office of Rabbi, equivalent to that here used, (compare Mt 23:7,) and who were ambitious to be doctors and teachers. See Rom 2:19; 1Timm 1:7. This fondness for the office of teachers they naturally carried with them into the Christian church when they were converted, and it is this which the apostle here rebukes. (A proof of some importance that this prevailed in the early Christian church, among those who had been Jews, is

furnished by a passage in the Apocryphal work called "The Ascension of Isaiah the Prophet;" a work which Dr. Lawrence. the editor, supposes was written not far from the apostolic age. "in those days (the days of the Messiah) shall many be attached to office, destitute of wisdom; multitudes of iniquitous elders and pastors, injurious to their flocks, and addicted to rapine, nor shall the holy pastors themselves diligently discharge their duty" chap. iii. 23-24). The same spirit the passage before us would rebuke now, and for the same reasons; for although a man should be willing to become a public instructor in religion when called to it by the Spirit and Providence of God, and should esteem it a privilege when so called, yet there would be scarcely anything more injurious to the cause of true religion, or that would tend more to produce disorder and confusion, than a prevailing desire of the prominence and importance which a man has in virtue of being a public instructor. If there is anything which ought to be managed with extreme prudence and caution, it is that of introducing men into the Christian ministry. Compare 1Timm 5:22; Acts 1:15-26; 13:2-3.

Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation, (μειζονκριμα) Or rather, a severer judgment; that is, we shall have a severer trial, and give a stricter account. The word here used does not necessarily mean condemnation, but judgment, trial, account; and the consideration which the apostle suggests is not that those who were public teachers would be condemned, but that there would be a much more solemn account to be rendered by them than by other men, and that they ought duly to reflect on this in seeking the office of the ministry. He would carry them in anticipation before the judgment-seat, and have them determine the question of entering the ministry there. No better "stand-point" can be taken in making up the mind in regard to this work; and if that had been the position assumed in order to estimate the work, and to make up the mind in regard to the choice of this profession, many a one who has sought the office would have been deterred from it; and it may be added, also, that many a pious and educated youth would have sought the office, who has devoted his life to other pursuits. A young man, when about to make choice of a calling in life, should place himself by anticipation at the judgment-bar of Christ, and ask himself how human pursuits and plans will appear there. If that were the point of view taken, how many would have been deterred from the ministry

who have sought it with a view to honour or emolument! How many, too, who have devoted themselves to the profession of the law, to the army or navy, or to the pursuits of elegant literature, would have felt that it was their duty to serve God in the ministry of reconciliation? How many at the close of life, in the ministry and out of it, feel, when too late to make a change, that they have wholly mistaken the purpose for which they should have lived!

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body.

For in many things we offend all. We all offend. The word here rendered offend, means to stumble, to fall; then to err, to fail in duty; and the meaning here is, that all were liable to commit error, and that this consideration should induce men to be cautious in seeking an office where an error would be likely to do so much injury. The particular thing, doubtless, which the apostle had in his eye, was the peculiar liability to commit error, or to do wrong with the tongue. Of course, this liability is very great in an office where the very business is public speaking. If anywhere the improper use of the tongue will do mischief, it is in the office of a religious teacher; and to show the danger of this, and the importance of caution in seeking that office, the apostle proceeds to show what mischief the tongue is capable of effecting. If any man offend not in word. In his speech; in the use of his tongue.

The same is a perfect man. Perfect in the sense in which the apostle immediately explains himself; that he is able to keep every other member of his body in subjection. His object is not to represent the man as absolutely spotless in every sense, and as wholly free from sin, for he had himself just said that "all offend in many things;" but the design is to show that if a man can control his tongue, he has complete dominion over himself, as much as a man has over a horse by the bit, or as a steersman has over a ship if he has hold of the rudder. He is perfect in that sense, that he has complete control over himself, and will not be liable to error in anything. The design is to show the important position which the tongue occupies, as governing the whole man. On the meaning of the word perfect, Job 1:1.

And able also to bridle the whole body. To control his whole body, that is, every other part of himself, as a man does a horse by the bridle. The word rendered "to bridle," means to lead or guide with a bit; then to rein in, to check, to moderate, to restrain. A man always has complete government over himself if he has the entire control of his tongue. It is that by which he gives expression to his thoughts and passions; and if that is kept under proper restraint, all the rest of his members are as easily controlled as the horse is by having the control of the bit.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us;
and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of
fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm,
whithersoever the governor listeth.

Behold also the ships. This illustration is equally striking and obvious. A ship is a large object. It seems to be unmanageable by its vastness, and it is also impelled by driving storms. Yet it is easily managed by a small rudder; and he that has control of that, has control of the ship itself. So with the tongue. It is a small member as compared with the body; in its size not unlike the rudder as compared with the ship. Yet the proper control of the tongue in respect to its influence on the whole man, is not unlike the control of the rudder in its power over the ship. Which though they be so great. So great in themselves, and in comparison with the rudder. Even such. bulky and unwieldy objects are controlled by a very small thing. And are driven of fierce winds. By winds that would seem to leave the ship beyond control. It is probable that by the "fierce winds" here as impelling the ship, the apostle meant to illustrate the power of the passions in impelling man. Even a man under impetuous passion would be restrained, if the tongue is properly controlled, as the ship driven by the winds is by the helm. Yet are they turned about with a very small helm. The ancient rudder or helm was made in the shape of an oar. This was very small when compared with the size of the vessels about as small as the tongue is as compared with the body. Whithersoever the governor listeth. As the helmsman pleases. It is entirely under his control.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things.
Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

Even so, the tongue is a little member. Little compared with the body--as the bit or the rudder is, compared with the horse or the ship;

And boasteth great things. The design of the apostle is to illustrate the power and influence of the tongue. This may be done in a great many respects: and the apostle does it by referring to its boasting; to the effects which it produces, resembling that of fire, (Jas 3:6;) to its untameableness, (Jas 3:8-9;) and to its giving utterance to the most inconsistent and incongruous thoughts, Jas 3:9-10. The particular idea here is, that the tongue seems to be conscious of its influence and power, and boasts largely of what it can do. The apostle means doubtless to convey the idea that it boasts not unjustly of its importance. It has all the influence in the world, for good or for evil, which it claims. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Marg., wood. The Greek word (υλη) means a wood, forest, grove; and then fire-wood, fuel. This is the meaning here. The sense is, that a very little fire is sufficient to ignite a large quantity of combustible materials, and that the tongue produces effects similar to that. A spark will kindle a lofty pile; and a word spoken by the tongue may set a neighbourhood or a village "in a flame."

6 And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

And the tongue is a fire. In this sense, that it produces a "blaze," or a great conflagration. It produces a disturbance and an agitation that may be compared with the conflagration often produced by a spark.

A world of iniquity. A little world of evil in itself. This is a very expressive phrase, and is similar to one which we often employ, as when we speak of a town as being a world in miniature. We mean by it that it is an epitome of the world; that all that there is in the work is represented there on a small scale. So when the tongue is spoken of as being "a world of iniquity," it is meant that all kinds of evil that are in the world are exhibited there in miniature; it seems to concentrate all sorts of iniquity that exist on the earth. And what evil is there which may not be originated or fomented by the tongue? What else is there that might with so much propriety be represented as a little world of iniquity? With all the good which it does, who can estimate the amount of evil which it causes. Who can measure the evils which arise from scandal, and slander, and profaneness, and perjury, and falsehood, and blasphemy, and obscenity, and the inculcation of error, by the tongue? Who can gauge the amount of

broils, and contentions, and strifes, and wars, and suspicions, and enmities, and alienations among friends and neighbours, which it produces? Who can number the evils produced by the "honeyed" words of the seducer; or by the tongue of the eloquent in the maintenance of error, and the defence of wrong? If all men were dumb, what a portion of the crimes of the world would soon cease! If all men would speak only that which ought to be spoken, what a change would come over the face of human affairs!

So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body. It stains or pollutes the whole body. It occupies a position and relation so no portion which is not affected by it. Of the truth of this, no one can have any doubt. There is nothing else pertaining to us as moral and intellectual beings, which exerts such an influence over ourselves as the tongue. A man of pure conversation is understood and felt to be pure in every respect; but who has any confidence in the virtue of the blasphemer, or the man of obscene lips, or the calumniator and slanderer? We always regard such a man as corrupt to the core.

And setteth on fire the course of nature. The margin is, "the wheel of nature." The Greek word also (τροχος) means a wheel, or anything made far revolving and running. Then it means the course run by a wheel; a circular course or circuit. The word rendered nature, (γενεσις,) means, procreation, birth, nativity; and therefore the phrase means, literally, the wheel of birth--that is, the wheel which is set in motion at birth, and which runs on through life.--Rob. Lex. sub voce γενεσις. It may be a matter of doubt whether this refers to successive generations, or to the course of individual life. The more literal sense would be that which refers to an individual; but perhaps the apostle meant to speak in a popular sense, and thought of the affairs of the world as they roll on from age to age, as all enkindled by the tongue, keeping the world in a constant blaze of excitement. Whether applied to an individual life, or to the world at large, every one can see the justice of the comparison. One naturally thinks, when this expression is used, of a chariot driven on with so much speed that its wheels by their rapid motion become self-ignited, and the chariot moves on amidst flames.

And it is set on fire of hell. Hell, or Gehenna, is represented as a place where the fires continually burn: Mt 5:22. The idea here is, that that which causes the tongue to do so much evil derives its origin from hell. Nothing could better characterize much of that which the tongue does, than to say that it has its origin in hell, and has the spirit which reigns there. The very spirit of that world of fire and wickedness--a spirit of falsehood, and slander, and blasphemy, and pollution--seems to inspire the tongue. The image which seems to have been before the mind of the apostle was that of a torch which enkindles and burns everything as it goes along--a torch itself lighted at the fires of hell. One of the most striking descriptions of the woes and curses which there may be in hell, would be to portray the sorrows caused on the earth by the tongue.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

For every kind of beasts. The apostle proceeds to state another thing showing the power of the tongue, the fact that it is ungovernable, and that there is no power of man to keep it under control. Everything else but this has been tamed. It is unnecessary to refine on the expressions used here, by attempting to prove that it is literally true that every species of beasts, and birds, and fishes has been tamed. The apostle is to be understood as speaking in a general and popular sense, showing the remarkable power of man over those things which are by nature savage and wild. The power of man in taming wild beasts is wonderful. Indeed, it is to be remembered that nearly all those beasts which we now speak of as "domestic" animals, and which we are accustomed to see only when they are tame, were once fierce and savage races. This is the ease with the horse, the ox, the ass, (Job 11:12; and Job 39:5,) the swine, the dog, the cat, etc. The editor of the Pictorial Bible well remarks, "There is perhaps no kind of creature, to which man has access, which might not be tamed by him with proper perseverance. The ancients seem to have made more exertions to this end, and with much better success, than ourselves. The examples given by Pliny, of creatures tamed by men, relate to elephants, lions, and tigers, among beasts; to the eagle, among birds; to asps, and others serpents; and to crocodiles, and various fishes, among the inhabitants of the water. Nat. Hist. viii. 9, 16, 17; x. 5, 44. The lion was very commonly tamed by the ancient Egyptians, and trained to assist both in hunting

and in war." Notes in loc. The only animal which it has been supposed has defied the power of man to tame it, is the hyena, and even this, it is said, has been subdued, in modern times. There is a passage in Euripides which has a strong resemblance to this of James:-- βραχυτοισθενοςανερος, αλλαποικιλιαςπραπιδων δαμαφυλαποντου, χθονιωνταεριωντεπαιδευματα

"Small is the power which nature has given to man; but, by various acts of his superior understanding, he has subdued the tribes of the sea, the earth, and the air." Compare on this subject, the passages quoted by Pricaeus in the Critici Sacri, in loc.

And of birds. It is a common thing to tame birds, and even the most wild are susceptible of being tamed. A portion of the feathered race, as the hen, the goose, the duck, is thoroughly domesticated. The pigeon, the martin, the hawk, the eagle, maybe; and perhaps there are none of that race which might not be made subject to the will of man.

And of serpents. The ancients showed great skill in this art, in reference to asps and other venomous serpents, and it is common now in India. In many instances, indeed, it is known that the fangs of the serpents are extracted; but even when this is not done, they who practise the art learn to handle them with impunity.

And of things, in the sea. As the crocodile, mentioned by Pliny. It may be affirmed with confidence that there is no animal which might not, by proper skill and perseverance, be rendered tame, or made obedient to the will of man. It is not necessary, however, to understand the apostle as affirming that literally every animal has been tamed, or ever can be. He evidently speaks in a popular sense of the great power which man undeniably has over all kinds of wild animals--over the creation beneath him.

8 but the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

But the tongue can no man tame. This does not mean that it is never brought under control, but that it is impossible effectually and certainly to subdue it. It would be possible to subdue and

domesticate any kind of beasts, but this could not be done with the tongue, It is an unruly evil. An evil without restraint, to which no certain effectual check can be applied. Of the truth of this no one can have any doubt, who looks at the condition of the world. Full of deadly poison. That is, it acts on the happiness of man, and on the peace of society, as poison does on the human frame. The allusion here seems to be to the bite of a venomous reptile. Compare Ps 140:3, "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips." Rom 3:13, "With their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." Nothing would better describe the mischief that may be done by the tongue. There is no sting of a serpent that does so much evil in the world; there is no poison more deadly to the frame than the poison of the tongue is to the happiness of man. Who, for example, can stand before the power of the slanderer? What mischief can be done in society that can be compared with that which he, may do?
'Tis slander;' Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states, Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave This viperous slander enters. Shakspere, in Cymbeline

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Therewith bless we God. We men do this; that is, all this is done by the tongue. The apostle goes not mean that the same man does this, but that all this is done by the same organ--the tongue. Even the Father. Who sustains to us the relation of a Father. The point in the remark of the apostle is, the absurdity of employing the tongue in such contradictory uses as to bless one who has to us the relation of a Father and to curse any being, especially those who are made in his image. The word bless here is used in the sense of praise, thank, worship.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. The meaning here may be, either that out of the mouth of man two such opposite things proceed, not referring to the same individual, but to different persons; or, out of the mouth of the same individual. Both of these are true; and both are equally incongruous and wrong. No organ should be devoted to uses so unlike, and the mouth should be

employed in giving utterance only to that which is just, benevolent, and good. It is true, however, that the mouth is devoted to these opposite employments; and that while one part of the race employ it purposes of praise, the other employ it in uttering maledictions. It is also true of many individuals that at one time they praise their Maker, and then, with the sane organ, calumniate, and slander, and revile their fellow-men. After an act of solemn devotion in the house of God, the professed worshipper goes forth with the feelings of malice in his heart, and the language of slander, detraction, or even blasphemy on his lips. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. They are as incongruous as it would be for the same fountain to send forth both salt water and fresh; or for the same tree to bear different kinds of fruit.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet *water* and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs ? so *can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Such a thing is impossible in nature, and equally absurd in morals. A fig-tree bears only figs; and so the tongue ought to give utterance only to one class of sentiments and emotions. These illustrations are very striking, and show the absurdity of that which the apostle reproves. At the same time, they accomplish the main purpose which he had in view, to repress the desire of becoming public teachers without suitable qualifications. They show the power of the tongue; they show what a dangerous power it is for a man to wield who has not the proper qualifications; they show that no one should put himself in the position where he may wield this power without such a degree of tried prudence, wisdom, discretion, and piety, that there shall be a moral certainty that he will use it aright.

The Wisdom from Above

13 Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? This is spoken with reference to the work of public teaching; and the meaning of the apostle is, that if there were such persons among them, they should be selected for that office. The characteristics here stated as necessary qualifications, are wisdom and knowledge. Those, it would seem, on which reliance had been placed, were

chiefly those which were connected with a ready elocution, or the mere faculty of speaking. The apostle had stated the dangers which would follow if reliance were placed on that alone, and he now says that something more is necessary, that the main qualifications for the office are wisdom and knowledge. No mere power of speaking, however eloquent it might be, was a sufficient qualification. The primary things to be sought in reference to that office were wisdom and knowledge, and they who were endowed with these things should be selected for public instructors.

Let him shew out of a good conversation. From a correct and consistent life and deportment. On the meaning of the word conversation, Php 1:27. The meaning here is, that there should be an upright life, and that this should be the basis in forming the judgment in appointing persons to fill stations of importance, and especially in the office of teaching in the church.

His works. His acts of uprightness and piety. He should be a man of a holy life.

With meekness of wisdom. With a wise and prudent gentleness of life; not in a noisy, arrogant, and boastful manner. True wisdom is always meek, mild, gentle; and that is the wisdom which is needful, if men would become public teachers. It is remarkable that the truly wise man is always characterized by a calm spirit, a mild and placid demeanour, and by a gentle, though firm, enunciation of his sentiments. A noisy, boisterous, and stormy declaimer we never select as a safe counsellor. He may accomplish much in his way by his bold eloquence of manner, but we do not put him in places where we need far-reaching thought, or where we expect the exercise of profound philosophical views. In an eminent degree, the ministry of the gospel should be characterized by a calm, gentle, and thoughtful wisdom--a wisdom which shines in all the actions of the life.

As if our apostle had said, "If any among you desire to approve yourselves more knowing than others, wiser and better than others, as you would be thought when you censure and despise others, shew it to the world by a better conversation, by your abounding

fruitfulness in good works, and by such meekness of spirit as will be an evidence of true wisdom."

Hence we learn, that the wise man is a meek and patient man; as pride and folly, so wisdom and meekness, are companions; the more wisdom a man has, the more he can check himself, and curb his passion: Moses is renowned in Scripture for his wisdom, and for meekness; we all affect the reputation of wisdom, let us discover it by humility, in being lowly within ourselves: and by our meekness in bearing with and forbearing one another; yet must our meekness be a wise meekness, it must be opposite to fierceness, but not to zeal; Moses was very meek in his own cause, but as hot as fire in the cause of God; meekness and zeal are consistent, let us then shew out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

Observe here, 1. How the apostle points at the root of all tongue evils; we pretend zeal and justice, zeal for God, and doing right to ourselves; but the true cause is envy, called bitter envying, as being bitter in its root, bitter in its fruit, bitter to others, bitter to ourselves; this is a painful evil, an unprofitable evil, a foolish, sinful evil; it makes another's good our grief.
But why so?

The good of another is no hurt to us; we have not the less because another has more; Leah's fruitfulness was no cause of Rachel's barrenness; why then should it be the occasion of Rachel's envy? Thy portion is not impaired because thy brother's is increased.

Observe, 2. How envy and strife are here joined together; if you have envying and strife in your hearts; when envy is found in the heart, strife will soon be found in the tongue, for envy is the mother of strife; natural corruption doth most of all betray itself by envy; it has an early spring, and a late autumn: we have it as soon as we come into the world, and it is a hard matter to leave it before we go out of it again: children suck it in with their milk, and the old man buries it in his coffin.

Observe, 3. What are the bitter effects and fruits of envy and strife, namely, confusion, and every evil work; an envious spirit is an unquiet and wicked spirit; the devil worketh by no instruments more than by envious, discontented, and malicious persons; pride and envy were the two first sins that crept into the world; the first man was ruined by pride, the second destroyed by envy, the whole world could not hold two brothers when the one was envied by the other: Cain's envy tasted blood, and verily the sinner's envy thirsts after it; well therefore may the apostle say, Where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

This wisdom descendeth not from above. 1Cor 3:3. The wisdom here referred to is that carnal or worldly wisdom which produces strife and contention; that kind of knowledge which leads to self-conceit, and which prompts a man to defend his opinions with overheated zeal. In the contentions which are in the world, in church and state, in neighbourhoods and families, at the bar, in political life, and in theological disputes, even where there is the manifestation of enraged and irascible feeling, there is often much of a certain kind of wisdom. There is learning, shrewdness, tact, logical skill, subtle and skilful argumentation--"making the worse appear the better reason;" but all this is often connected with a spirit so narrow, bigoted, and contentious, as to show clearly that it has not its origin in heaven. The spirit which is originated there is always connected with gentleness, calmness, and a love of truth. But is earthly. Has its origin in this world, and partakes of its spirit. It is such as men exhibit who are governed only by worldly maxims and principles. Sensual. Marg., natural. The meaning is, that it has its origin in our sensual rather than in our intellectual and moral nature. It is that which takes counsel of our natural appetites and propensities, and not of high and spiritual influences. Devilish. Demoniacal, (δαιμονιωδης) Such as the demons exhibit. Jas 2:19. There may be indeed talent in it, but there is the intermingling of malignant passions, and "it leads to contentions, strifes, divisions, and "every evil work."

16 For where envying and strife *is,* there *is* confusion and every evil work.

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion. Marg.:, tumult, or unquietness. Everything is unsettled and agitated. There is no mutual confidence; there is no union of plan and effort; there is no co-operation in promoting a common object; there is no stability in any plan; for a purpose, though for good, formed by one portion, is defeated by another. And every evil work. The truth of this no one can have any doubt who has observed the effects in a family or neighbourhood where a spirit of strife prevails. Love and harmony of course are banished; all happiness disappears; all prosperity is at an end. In place of the peaceful virtues which ought to prevail, there springs up every evil passion that tends to mar the peace of a community. Where this spirit prevails in a church, it is of course impossible to expect any progress in Divine things; and in such a church any effort to do good is vain.
"The Spirit, like a peaceful dove, Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

But the wisdom that is from above. 1Cor 2:6. The wisdom which has a heavenly origin, or which is from God. The man who is characterized by that wisdom will be pure, peaceable, etc. This does not refer to the doctrines of religion, but to its spirit.

Is first pure. That is, the first effect of it on the mind is to make it pure. The influence on the man is to make him upright, sincere, candid, holy. The word here used (αγνος) is that which would be applied to one who is innocent, or free from crime or blame. Compare Php 4:8; 1Timm 5:22; 1Jn 3:3, where the word is rendered, as here, pure; 2Cor 7:11, where it is rendered clear, [in this matter;] 2Cor 11:2; Tit 2:5; 1Pet 3:2, where it is rendered chaste. The meaning here is, that the first and immediate effect of religion is not on the intellect, to make it more enlightened; or on the imagination, to make it more discursive and brilliant; or on the memory and judgment, to make them clearer and stronger; but it is to purify the heart, to make the man upright, inoffensive, and good. This passage should not be applied, as it often is, to the doctrines of religion, as if it were the first duty of a church to keep itself free from errors in

doctrine, and that this ought to be sought even in preference to the maintenance of peace--as if it meant that in doctrine a church should be "first pure, then peaceable;" but it should be applied to the individual consciences of men, as showing the effect of religion on the heart and life. The first thing which it produces is to make the man himself pure and good; then follows the train of blessings which the apostle enumerates as flowing from that. It is true that a church should be pure in doctrinal belief, but that is not the truth taught here. It is not true that the Scripture teaches, here or elsewhere, that purity of doctrine is to be preferred to a peaceful spirit; or that it always leads to peaceful spirit; or that it is proper for professed Christians and Christian ministers to sacrifice, as is often done, a peaceful spirit, in an attempt to preserve purity of doctrine. Most of the persecutions in the church have grown out of this maxim. This led to the establishment of the Inquisition; this kindled the fires of Smithfield; this inspirited Laud and his friends; this has been the origin of no small part of the schisms in the church. A pure spirit is the best promoter of peace, and will do more than anything else to secure the prevalence of truth.

Then peaceable. The effect of true religion --the wisdom which is from above--will be to dispose a man to live in peace with all others. Rom 14:19; Heb 12:14.

Gentle. Mild, inoffensive, clement. The word here used (επιεικης) is rendered moderation in Php 4:6; patient in 1Timm 3:3; and gentle in Tit 3:2; Jas 3:17; 1Pet 2:18. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Every one has a clear idea of the virtue of gentleness--gentleness of spirit, of deportment, and of manners; and every one can see that that is the appropriate spirit of religion. 2Cor 10:1. It is from this word that we have derived the word gentleman; and the effect of true religion is to make every one, in the proper and best sense of the term, a gentleman. How can a man have evidence that he is a true Christian, who is not such? The highest title which can be given to a man is that he is a Christian gentleman.

And easy to be entreated. The word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means easily persuaded, compliant. Of course, this refers only to cases where it is right and proper to be easily persuaded and complying. It cannot refer to things which are in themselves wrong. The sense is, that he who is under the influence

of the wisdom which is from above, is not a stiff, stern, obstinate, unyielding man. He does not take a position, and then hold it whether right or wrong; he is not a man on whom no arguments or persuasions can have any influence. He is not one who cannot be affected by any appeals which may be made to him on the grounds of patriotism, justice, or benevolence; but is one who is ready to yield when truth requires him to do it, and who is willing to sacrifice his own convenience for the good of others. See this illustrated in the ease of the apostle Paul, in 1Cor 9:20-22. 1Cor 9:20-22.

Full of mercy. Merciful; disposed to show compassion to others. This is one of the results of the wisdom that is from above, for it makes us like God, the "Father of mercies." Mt 5:7.

And good fruits. The fruits of good living; just, benevolent, and kind actions. Php 1:11; 2Cor 9:10. Compare Jas 2:14-26. Without partiality. Marg., "or wrangling." The word here used (αδιακριτος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, not to be distinguished. Here it may mean either of the following things:

(a) not open to distinction or doubt; that is, unambiguous, so that there shall be no doubt about its origin or nature;

(b) making no distinction, that is, in the treatment of others, or impartial towards them; or

(c) without strife, from διακρινω, to contend. The second meaning here suggested seems best to accord with the sense of the passage; and according to this the idea is, that the wisdom which is from above, or true religion, makes us impartial in our treatment of others: that is, we are not influenced by a regard to dress, rank, or station, but we are disposed to do equal justice to all, according to their moral worth, and to show kindness to all, according to their wants. See Jas 2:1-4. And without hypocrisy. What it professes to be; sincere. There is no disguise or mask assumed. What the man pretends to be, he is. This is everywhere the nature of true religion. It has nothing of its own of which to be ashamed, and which needs to be concealed; its office is not to hide or conceal anything that is wrong. It neither is a mask, nor does it need a mask. If such is the nature of the "wisdom which is from above," who is there that

should be ashamed of it? Who is there that should not desire that its blessed influence should spread around the world?

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

And the fruit of righteousness. That which the righteousness here referred to produces, or that which is the effect of true religion. The meaning is, that righteousness or true religion produces certain results on the life, like the effects of seed sown in good ground. Righteousness or true religion as certainly produces such effects, as seed that is sown produces a harvest.

Is sown in peace. Is scattered over the world in a peaceful manner. That is, it is not done amidst contentions, and brawls, and strifes. The farmer sows his seed in peace. The fields are not sown amidst the tumults of a mob, or the excitements of a battle or a camp. Nothing is more calm, peaceful, quiet, and composed, than the farmer, as he walks with measured tread over his fields, scattering his seed. So it is in sowing the "seed of the kingdom," in preparing for the great harvest of righteousness in the world. It is done by men of peace; it is done in peaceful scenes, and with a peaceful spirit; it is not in the tumult of war, or amidst the hoarse brawling of a mob. In a pure and holy life; in the peaceful scenes of the sanctuary and the Sabbath; by noiseless and unobtrusive labourers, the seed is scattered over the world, and the result is seen in an abundant harvest in producing peace and order.

Of them that make peace. By those who desire to produce peace, or who are of a peaceful temper and disposition. They are engaged everywhere in scattering these blessed seeds of peace, contentment, and order; and the result shall be a glorious harvest for themselves and for mankind--a harvest rich and abundant on earth and in heaven. The whole effect, therefore, of religion, is to produce peace. It is all peace--peace in its origin and in its results; in the heart of the individual, and in society; on earth, and in heaven. The idea with which the apostle commenced this chapter seems to have been that such persons only should be admitted to the office of public teachers. From that, the mind naturally turned to the effect of religion in general; and he states that in the ministry and out of it; in the heart of the individual and on society at large; here and hereafter,

the effect of religion is to produce peace. Its nature is peaceful as it exists in the heart, and as it is developed in the world; and wherever and however it is manifested, it is like seed sown, not amid the storms of war and the contentions of battle, but in the fields of quiet husbandry, producing in rich abundance a harvest of peace. In its origin, and in all its results, it is productive only of contentment, sincerity, goodness, and peace. Happy he who has this religion in his heart; happy he who with liberal hand scatters its blessings broadcast over the world!

James-4

Friendship with the World

1 From whence *come* wars and fightings among you? *come they* not hence, *even* of your lusts that war in your members?

Barnes:

From whence come wars and fightings among you? Marg., brawlings. The reference is to strifes and contentions of all kinds; and the question then, as it is now, was an important one, what was their source or origin? The answer is given in the succeeding part of the verse. Some have supposed that the apostle refers here to the contests and seditions existing among the Jews, which afterwards broke out in rebellion against the Roman authority, and which led to the overthrow of the Jewish nation. But the more probable reference is to domestic broils, and to the strifes of sects and parties; to the disputes which were carried on among the Jewish people, and which perhaps led to scenes of violence, and to popular outbreaks among themselves. When the apostle says "among you," it is not necessary to suppose that he refers to those who were members of the Christian church as actually engaged in these strifes, though he was writing to such; but he speaks of them as a part of the Jewish people, and refers to the contentions which prevailed among them as a people--contentions in which those who were Christian converts were in great danger of participating, by being drawn into their controversies, and partaking of the spirit of strife which existed among their countrymen. It is known that such a spirit of contention prevailed among the Jews at that time in an eminent degree, and it was well to put those among them who professed to be Christians

on their guard against such a spirit, by stating the causes of all wars and contentious. The solution which the apostle has given of the causes of the strifes prevailing then, will apply substantially to all the wars which have ever existed on the earth.

Come they not hence, even of your lusts? Is not this the true source of all war and contention? The word rendered lusts is in the margin rendered pleasures. This is the usual meaning of the word, (ηδονη;) but it is commonly applied to the pleasures of sense, and thence denotes desire, appetite, lust. It may be applied to any desire of sensual gratification, and then to the indulgence of any corrupt propensity of the mind. The lust or desire of rapine, of plunder, of ambition, of fame, of a more extended dominion, would be properly embraced in the meaning of the word. The word would equally comprehend the spirit-which leads to a brawl in the street, and that which prompted to the conquests of Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon. All this is the same spirit evinced on a larger or smaller scale.

That war in your members. The word member (μελος) denotes, properly, a limb or member of the body; but it is used in the New Testament to denote the members of the body collectively; that is, the body itself as the seat of the desires and passions, Rom 6:13,19; 7:5,23; Col 3:5. The word war here refers to the conflict between those passions which have their seat in the flesh, and the better principles of the mind and conscience, producing a state of agitation and conflict. Rom 7:23. Compare Gal 5:17. Those corrupt passions which have their seat in the flesh, the apostle says are the causes of war. Most of the wars which have occurred in the world can be traced to what the apostle here calls lusts. The desire of booty, the love of conquest, the ambition for extended rule, the gratification of revenge, these and similar causes have led to all the wars that have desolated the earth. Justice, equity, the fear of God, the spirit of true religion, never originated any war, but the corrupt passions of men have made the earth one great battle-field. If true religion existed among all men, there would be no more war. War always supposes that wrong has been done on one side or the other, and that one party or the other, or both, is indisposed to do right. The spirit of justice,

equity, and truth, which the religion of Christ would implant in the human heart, would put an end. to war for ever.

Burkitt:

The Jews, to whom St. James directed this epistle, had at that time great wars and fightings, not only with their neighbours, but even among themselves: in every city there were wars and fightings among them.

Now, the apostle here puts it to their consciences to tell and declare whence these animosities and contentions, those wars and fightings, did proceed; come they not hence, even from your lusts?
Plainly intimating, that the cause of all civil dissentions are men's corruptions: War stirs first within, before it breaks forth without; were there not a fight in ourselves, there would be no fighting with others. Lust within is the make-bait in all societies and communities without. Pride and covetousness, envy and ambition, make men injurious to one another; worldly and sensual lusts first war in ourselves, before they disturb the common peace.

JFB:

whence—The cause of quarrels is often sought in external circumstances, whereas internal lusts are the true origin. wars, &c.—contrasted with the "peace" of heavenly wisdom. "Fightings" are the active carrying on of "wars." The best authorities have a second "whence" before "fightings." Tumults marked the era before the destruction of Jerusalem when James wrote. He indirectly alludes to these. The members are the first seat of war; thence it passes to conflict between man and man, nation and nation. come they not, &c.—an appeal to their consciences. lusts—literally, "pleasures," that is, the lusts which prompt you to "desire" (see on Jas 4:2) pleasures; whence you seek self at the cost of your neighbor, and hence flow "fightings." that war—"campaign, as an army of soldiers encamped within" [ALFORD] the soul; tumultuously war against the interests of your fellow men, while lusting to advance self. But while warring thus against others they (without his knowledge) war against the soul of the man himself, and against the Spirit; therefore they must be "mortified" by the Christian.

MHC:

The apostle here reproves the Jewish Christians for their wars, and for their lusts as the cause of them: Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members, Jam 4:1 The Jews were a very seditious people, and had therefore frequent wars with the Romans; and they were a very quarrelsome divided people, often fighting among themselves; and many of those corrupt Christians against whose errors and vices this epistle was written seem to have fallen in with the common quarrels. Hereupon, our apostle informs them that the origin of their wars and fightings was not (as they pretended) a true zeal for their country, and for the honour of God, but that their prevailing lusts were the cause of all. Observe hence, What is sheltered and shrouded under a specious pretence of zeal for God and religion often comes from men's pride, malice, covetousness, ambition, and revenge. The Jews had many struggles with the Roman power before they ere entirely destroyed. They often unnecessarily embroiled themselves, and then fell into parties and factions about the different methods of managing their wars with their common enemies; and hence it came to pass that, when their cause might be supposed good, yet their engaging in it and their management of it came from a bad principle. Their worldly and fleshly lusts raised and managed their wars and fightings; but one would think here is enough said to subdue those lusts; for, 1. They make a war within as well as fightings without. Impetuous passions and desires first war in their members, and then raise feuds in their nation. There is war between conscience and corruption, and there is war also between one corruption and another, and from these contentions in themselves arose their quarrels with each other. Apply this to private cases, and may we not then say of fightings and strifes among relations and neighbours they come from those lusts which war in the members? From lust of power and dominion, lust of pleasure, or lust of riches, from some one or more of these lusts arise all the broils and contentions that are in the world; and, since all wars and fightings come from the corruptions of our own hearts, it is therefore the right method for the cure of contention to lay the axe to the root, and mortify those lusts that war in the members.

2 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.

Ye lust, and have not. That is, you wish to have something which you do not now possess, and to which you have no just claim, and this prompts to the effort to obtain it by force. You desire extension of territory, fame, booty, the means of luxurious indulgence, or of magnificence and grandeur, and this leads to contest and bloodshed. These are the causes of wars on the large scale among nations, and of the contentions and strifes of individuals. The general reason is, that others have that which we have not, and which we desire to have; and not content with endeavouring to obtain it, if we can, in a peaceful and honest manner, and not willing to content ourselves without its possession, we resolve to secure it by force. Socrates is reported by Plato to have said on the day of his death, "nothing else but the body and its desires cause wars, Seditions, and contests of every kind; for all wars arise through the possession of wealth."--Phaedo of Plato, by Taylor, London, 1793, p. 158. The system of wars in general, therefore, has been a system of great robberies, no more honest or honourable than the purposes of the foot-pad, and more dignified only because it involves greater skill and talent. It has been said that "to kill one man makes a murderer, to kill many makes a hero." So it may be said, that to steal a horse, or to rob a house, makes a man a thief or burglar; to fire a dwelling subjects him to the punishment of arson; but to plunder kingdoms and provinces, and to cause cities, towns, and hamlets to be wrapped in flames, makes an illustrious conqueror, and gives a title to what is deemed a bright page in history. The one enrols the name among felons, and consigns the perpetrator to the dungeon or the gibbet; the other, accompanied with no more justice, and with the same spirit, sends the name down to future times as immortal. Yet in the two the all-discerning eye of God may see no difference except in the magnitude of the crime, and in the extent of the injury which has been inflicted. In his way, and according to the measure of his ability, the felon who ends his life in a dungeon, or on the gibbet, is as worthy of grateful and honoured remembrance as the conqueror: triumphing in the spoils of desolated empires.

Ye kill. Marg., "or envy." The marginal reading "envy" has been introduced from some doubt as to the correct reading of the text, whether it should be φονευτε, ye kill, or φθονειτε, ye envy. The latter reading has been adopted by Erasmus, Schmidius, Luther, Beza, and some others, though merely from conjecture. There is no authority from the manuscripts for the change. The correct reading

undoubtedly is, ye kill. This expression is probably to be taken in the sense of having a murderous disposition, or fostering a brutal and murderous spirit. It is not exactly that they killed or committed murder previous to "desiring to have," but that they had such a covetous desire of the possessions of others as to produce a murderous and bloody temper. The spirit of murder was at the bottom of the whole; or there was such a desire of the possessions of others as to lead to the commission of this crime. Of what aggressive wars which have ever existed is not this true?

Desire to have. That is, what is in the possession of others.

And cannot obtain. By any fair and honest means; by purchase or negotiation: and this leads to bloody conquests. All wars might have been avoided if men had been content with what they had, or could rightfully obtain, and had not desired to have what was in the possession of others, which they could not obtain by honest and honourable means. Every war might have been avoided by fair and honourable negotiation.

Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Notwithstanding you engage in contentions and strifes, you do not obtain what you seek after. If you sought that from God which you truly need, you would obtain it, for he would bestow upon you all that is really necessary. But you seek it by contention and strife, and you have no security of obtaining it. He who seeks to gain anything by war seeks it in an unjust manner, and cannot depend on the Divine help and blessing. The true way of obtaining anything: which we really need is to seek it from God by prayer, and then to make use of just and fair means of obtaining it, by industry and honesty, and by a due regard for the rights of others. Thus sought, we shall obtain it if it would be for our good; if it is withheld, it will be because it is best for us that it should not be ours. In all the wars which have been waged on the earth, whether for the settlement of disputed questions, for the adjustment of boundaries, for the vindication of violated rights, or for the permanent extension of empire, how rare has it been that the object which prompted to the war has been secured! The course of events has shown that, indisposed as men are to do justice, there is much more probability

of obtaining the object by patient negotiation than there is by going to war.

3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Ye ask, and receive not. That is, some of you ask, or you ask on some occasions. Though seeking in general what you desire by strife, and without regard to the rights of others, yet you sometimes pray. It is not uncommon for men who go to war to pray, or to procure the services of a chaplain to pray for them. It sometimes happens that the covetous and the quarrelsome; that those who live to wrong others, and who are fond of litigation, pray. Such men may be professors of religion. They keep up a form of worship in their families. They pray for success m their worldly engagements, though those engagements are all based on covetousness. Instead of seeking property that they may glorify God, and do good; that they may relieve the poor and distressed; that they may be the patrons of learning, philanthropy, and religion, they do it that they may live in splendour, and be able to pamper their lusts. It is not indeed very common that persons with such ends and aims of life pray, but they sometimes do it; for, alas! there are many professors of religion who have no higher aims than these, and not a few such professors feel that consistency demands that they should observe some form of prayer. If such persons do not receive what they ask for, if they are not prospered in their plans, they should not set it down as evidence that God does not hear prayer, but as evidence that their prayers are offered for improper objects, or with improper motives.

Because ye ask amiss. Ye do it with a view to self-indulgence and carnal gratification.

That you may consume it upon your lusts. Marg., pleasures. This is the same word which is used in Jas 4:1, and rendered lusts. The reference is to sensual gratifications; and the word would include all that comes under the name of sensual pleasure, or carnal appetite. It was not that they might have a decent and comfortable living, which would not be improper to desire, but that they might have the means of luxurious dress and living; perhaps the means of gross sensual gratifications. Prayers offered that we may have the means of sensuality and voluptuousness, we have no reason to suppose God will answer, for he has not promised to hear such prayers; and it

becomes every one who prays for worldly prosperity, and for success in business, to examine his motives with the closest scrutiny. Nowhere is deception more likely to creep in than into such prayers; nowhere are we more likely to be mistaken in regard to our real motives, than when we go before God and ask for success in our worldly employments.

4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

5 Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

Ye adulterers and adultresses. These words are frequently used to denote those who are faithless towards God, and are frequently applied to those who forsake God for idols, Hos 3:1; Isa 57:3,7; Ezekiel chapters 16 and 23. It is, not necessary to suppose that the apostle meant that those to whom he wrote were literally guilty of the sins here referred to; but he rather refers to those who were unfaithful to their covenant with God by neglecting their duty to him, and yielding themselves to the indulgence of their own lusts and passions. The idea is, "You have in effect broken your marriage covenant with God by loving the world more than him; and, by the indulgence of your carnal inclinations, you have violated those obligations to self-mortification and self-denial to which you were bound by your religious engagements." To convince them of the evil of this, the apostle shows them what was the true nature of that friendship of the world which they sought. It may be remarked here, that no terms could have been found which would have shown more decidedly the nature of the sin of forgetting the covenant vows of religion for the pleasures of the world, than those which the apostle uses here. It is a deeper crime to be unfaithful to God than to any created being; and it will yet be seen that even the violation of the marriage contract, great as is the sin, is a slight offence compared with unfaithfulness towards God,'

Know ye not that the friendship of the world. Compare 1Jn 2:15. The term world here is to be understood not of the physical world as God made it, for we could not well speak of the "friendship" of that, but of the community, or people, called "the world," in contradistinction from the people of God. Compare Jn 12:31; 1Cor 1:20; 1Cor 3:19; Gal 4:3; Col 2:8. The "friendship of the world,"

(φιλιατουκοσμου,) is the love of that world; of the maxims which govern it, the principles which reign there, the ends that are sought, the amusements and gratifications which characterize it as distinguished from the church of God. It consists in setting our hearts on t hose things; in conforming to them; in making them the object of our pursuit with the same spirit with which they are sought by those who make no pretensions to religion. Rom 12:2.

Is enmity with God. Is in fact hostility against God, since that world is arrayed against him. It neither obeys his laws, submits to his claims, nor seeks to honour him. To love that world is, therefore, to be arrayed against God; and the spirit which would lead us to this is, in fact, a spirit of hostility to God.

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world. "Whoever" he may be, whether in the church or out of it. The fact of being a member of the church makes no difference in this respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it. The phrase "whosoever will" (βουληθη) implies purpose, intention, design. It supposes that the heart is set on it; or that there is a deliberate purpose to seek the friendship of the world. It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships. Wherever there is a manifested purpose to find our chosen friends and associates there rather than among Christians; wherever there is a greater desire to enjoy the smiles and approbation of the world than there is to enjoy the approbation of God and the blessings of a good conscience; and wherever there is more conscious pain because we have failed to win the applause of the world, or have offended its rotaries, and have sunk ourselves in its estimation, than there is because we have neglected our duty to our Saviour, and have lost the enjoyment of religion, there is the clearest proof that the heart wills or desires to be the "friend of the world."

Is the enemy of God. This is a most solemn declaration, and one of fearful import in its bearing on many who are members of the

church. It settles the point that any one, no matter what his professions, who is characteristically a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian. In regard to the meaning of this important verse, then, it may be remarked,

(1,) that there is a sense in which the love of this world, or of the physical universe, is not wrong. That kind of love for it as the work of God, which perceives the evidence of his wisdom and goodness and power in the various objects of beauty, usefulness, and grandeur, spread around us, is not evil. The world as such-- the physical structure of the earth, of the mountains, forests, flowers, seas, lakes, and vales--is full of illustrations of the Divine character and it cannot be wrong to contemplate those things with interest, or with warm affection toward their Creator.

(2.) When that world, however, becomes our portion; when we study it only as a matter of science, without "looking through nature up to nature's God.;" when we seek the wealth which it has to confer, or endeavour to appropriate as our supreme portion its lands, its minerals, its fruits; when we are satisfied with what it yields, and when in the possession or pursuit of these things, our thoughts never rise to God; and when we partake of the spirit which rules in the hearts of those who avowedly seek this world as their portion, though we profess religion, then the love of the world becomes evil, and comes in direct conflict with the spirit of true religion.

(3.) The statement in this verse is, therefore, one of most fearful import for many professors of religion. There are many in the church who, so far as human judgment can go, are characteristically lovers of the world. This is shown

(a) by their conformity to it in all in which the world is distinguished from the church as such;

(b) in their seeking the friendship of the world, or their finding their friends there rather than among Christians;

(c) in preferring the amusements of the world to the scenes where spiritually-minded Christians find their chief happiness;

(d) in pursuing the same pleasures that the people of the world do, with the same expense, the same extravagance, the same luxury;

(e) in making their worldly interests the great object of living, and everything else subordinate to that. This spirit exists in all cases where no worldly interest is sacrificed for religion; where everything that religion peculiarly requires is sacrificed for the world. If this be so, then there are many professing Christians who are the "enemies of God." Php 3:18. They have never known what is true friendship for him, and by their lives they show that they can be ranked only among his foes. It becomes every professing Christian, therefore, to examine himself with the deepest earnestness to determine whether he is characteristically a friend of the world or of God; whether he is living for this life only, or is animated by the high and pure principles of those who are the friends of God. The great Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived, and soon our appropriate place will be assigned us, and our final Judge will determine to which class of the two great divisions of the human family we belong--to those who are the friends of the world, or to those who are the friends of God.

6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

But he giveth more grace. The reference here is undoubtedly to God. Some have regarded this clause as a continuation of the quotation in the previous verse, but it is rather to be considered as a declaration of the apostle himself. The writer had just spoken of envy, and of the crimes which grew out of it. He thought of the wars and commotions of the earth, and of the various lusts which reigned among men. In the contemplation of these things, it seems suddenly to have occurred to him that all were not under the influence of these things; that there were cases where men were restrained, and where a spirit opposite to these things prevailed. Another passage of Scripture struck his mind, containing the truth that there was a class of men to whom God gave grace to restrain these passions, and to subdue these carnal propensities. They were the humble, in

contradistinction to the proud; and he states the fact that "God giveth more grace;" that is, that in some instances he confers more grace than in the cases referred to; to some he gives more grace to overcome their evil passions, and to subdue their corrupt inclinations, than he does to others. The meaning may be thus expressed: "It is true that the natural spirit in man is one that tends to envy, and thus leads to all the sad consequences of envy. But there are instances in which higher grace or favour is conferred; in which these feelings are subdued, and these consequences are prevented. They are not indeed to be found among the proud, whom God always resists; but they are to be found among the meek and the humble. Wherefore submit yourselves to his arrangements; resist the devil; draw nigh to God; purify yourselves, and weep over your past offences, and you shall find that the Lord will lift you up, and bestow his favour upon you," Jas 4:10,

Wherefore he saith. The reference here is to Prov 3:34, "Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly." The quotation is made exactly from the Septuagint, which, though not entirely literal, expresses the sense of the Hebrew without essential inaccuracy. This passage is also quoted in 1Pet 5:5.

God resisteth the proud. The proud are those who have an inordinate self-esteem; who have a high and unreasonable conceit of their own excellence or importance. This may extend to anything; to beauty, or strength, or attainments, or family, or country, or equipage, or rank, or even religion. A man may be proud of anything that belongs to him, or which can in any way be construed as a part of himself, or as pertaining to him. This does not, of course, apply to a correct estimate of ourselves, or to the mere knowledge that we may excel others. One may know that he has more strength, or higher attainments in learning or in the mechanic arts, or greater wealth than others, and yet have properly no pride in the case. He has only a correct estimate of himself, and he attaches no undue importance to himself on account of it. His heart is not lifted up; he claims no undue deference to himself; he concedes to all others what is their due; and he is humble before God, feeling that all that he has, and is, is nothing in his sight, he is willing to occupy his appropriate place in the sight of God and men, and to be esteemed just as he is.

Pride goes beyond this, and gives to a man a degree of self-estimation which is not warranted by anything that he possesses. God looks at things as they are; and hence he abhors and humbles this arrogant claim, Lev 26:19; Job 33:17; Ps 59:12; Prov 8:13 ; Prov 16:18; 29:13; Isa 23:9; 28:1; Dan 4:37; Zech 10:11. This resistance of pride he shows not only in the explicit declarations of his word, but in the arrangements of his providence and grace.

(1.) In his providence, in the reverses and disappointments which occur; in the necessity of abandoning the splendid mansion which we had built, or in disappointing us in some favourite plan by which our pride was to be nurtured and gratified.

(2.) In sickness, taking away the beauty, and strength on which we had so much valued ourselves, and bringing us to the sad condition of a sick bed.

(3.) In the grave, bringing us down to corruption and worms. Why should one be proud who will soon become so offensive to his best friends that they will gladly hide him in the grave?

(4.) In the plan of salvation he opposes our pride. Not a feature of that plan is fitted to foster pride, but all is adapted to make us humble.

(a) The necessity for the plan--that we are guilty and helpless sinners;

(b)the selection of a Saviour--one who was so poor, and who was so much despised by the world, and who was put to death, on a cross;

(c) our entire dependence on him for salvation, with the assurance that we have no merit of our own, and that salvation is all of grace; (d) the fact that we are brought to embrace it only by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and that if we were left to ourselves we should never have one right thought or holy desire--all this is fitted to humble us, and to bring us low before God. God has done nothing to foster the self-estimation of the human heart; but how much has he done to "stain the pride of all glory!" Isa 23:9. But giveth grace unto the humble. The meaning is, that he shows them favour; he bestows upon them the grace needful to secure their salvation. This he does

(1,) because they feel their need of his favour;

(2,) because they will welcome his teaching and value his friendship;

(3,) because all the arrangements of his grace are adapted only to such a state of mind. You cannot teach one who is so wise that he already supposes he knows enough; you cannot bestow grace on one who has no sense of the need of it. The arrangements of salvation are adapted only to an humble heart.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. That is, in his arrangements for obtaining his favour. Yield to what he has judged necessary for your welfare in the life that is, and your salvation in the life to come. The duty here enjoined is that of entire acquiescence in the arrangements of God, whether in his providence or grace. All these are for our good, and submission to them is required by the spirit of true humility. The object of the command here, and in the succeeding injunctions to particular duties, is to show them how they might obtain the grace which God is willing to bestow, and how they might overcome the evils against which the apostle had been endeavouring to guard them. The true method of doing this is by submitting ourselves in all things to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. While you yield to God in all things, you are to yield to the devil in none. You are to resist and oppose him in whatever way he may approach you, whether by allurements, by flattering promises, by the fascinations of the world, by temptation, or by threats. See 1Pet 5:9. Satan makes his way, and secures his triumphs, rather by art, cunning, deception, and threatenings, than by true courage; and when opposed manfully, he flies. The true way of meeting him is by direct resistance, rather than by argument; by steadfastly refusing to yield in the slightest degree, rather than by a belief that we can either convince him that he is wrong, or can return to virtue when we have gone a certain length in complying with his demands. No one is safe who yields in the least to the suggestions of the tempter; there is no one who is not safe if he does not yield. A man, for example, is always safe from intemperance if he resists all allurements to

indulgence in strong drink, told never yields in the slightest degree; no one is certainly safe if he drinks even moderately.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double-minded.

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Compare 2Chr 15:2. This declaration contains a great and important principle in religion. If we wish the favour of God, we must come to him; nor can we hope for his mercy, unless we approach him and ask him for it. We cannot come literally any nearer to God than we always are, for he is always round about us; but we may come nearer in a spiritual sense. We may address him directly in prayer; we may approach him by meditation on his character; we may draw near to him in the ordinances of religion. We can never hope for his favour while we prefer to remain at a distance from him; none who in fact draw near to him will find him unwilling to bestow on them the blessings which they need.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners. There may possibly be an allusion here to Isa 1:15-16: "Your hands are full of blood; wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil." The heart is the seat of motives and intentions--that by which we devise anything; the hands, the instruments by which we execute our purposes. The hands here are represented as defiled by blood, or by acts of iniquity. To wash or cleanse the hands was, therefore, emblematic of putting away transgression, Mt 27:24. Compare De 21:6; Ps 26:6. The heathen and the Jews were accustomed to wash their hands before they engaged in public worship. The particular idea here is, that in order to obtain the favour of God, it is necessary to put away our sins; to approach him with a desire to be pure and holy. The mere washing of the hands, in itself, could not recommend us to his favour; but that of which the washing of the hands would be all emblem, would be acceptable in his sight. It may be inferred from what is said here that no one can hope for the favour of God who does not abandon his transgressions. The design of the apostle is, evidently, to state one of the conditions on which we can make an acceptable approach to God. It is indispensable that we come with a purpose and desire to wash ourselves from all iniquity, to put away from us all our

transgressions. So David said, "I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord," Ps 26:6.

And purify your hearts. That is, do not rest satisfied with a mere external reformation; with putting away your outward transgressions. There must be a deeper work than that; a work which shall reach to the heart, and which shall purify the affections. This agrees with all the requisitions of the Bible, and is in accordance with what must be the nature of religion. If the heart is wrong, nothing can be right. If, while we seek an external reformation, we still give indulgence to the secret corruptions of the heart, it is clear that we can have no true religion.

Ye double minded. Jas 1:8. The apostle here seems to have had his eye on those who were vacillating in their purposes; whose hearts were not decidedly fixed, but who were halting between good and evil, The heart was not right in such persons. It was not settled and determined in favour of religion, but vibrated between that and the world. The proper business of such persons, therefore, was to cleanse the heart from disturbing influences, that it might settle down in unwavering attachment to that which is good.

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and *your* joy to heaviness.

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep. That is, evidently, on account of your sins. The sins to which the apostle refers are those which he had specified in the previous part of the chapter, and which he had spoken of as so evil in their nature, and so dangerous in their tendency. The word rendered "be afflicted" means, properly, to endure toil or hardship; then to endure affliction or distress; and here means, that they were to afflict themselves--that is, they were to feel distressed and sad on account of their transgressions. Compare Ezr 8:21. The other words in this clause are those which are expressive of deep grief or sorrow. The language here used shows that the apostle supposed that it was possible that those who had done wrong should voluntarily feel sorrow for it, and that, therefore, it was proper to call upon them to do it. Let your laughter be turned to mourning. It would seem that the persons referred to, instead of suitable sorrow and humiliation on account of sin, gave themselves to joyousness, mirth, and revelry. See a similar instance

in Isa 22:12-13. It is often the case, that those for whom the deep sorrows of repentance would be peculiarly appropriate, give themselves to mirth and vanity. The apostle here says that such mirth did not become them. Sorrow, deep and unfeigned, was appropriate on account of their sins, and the sound of laughter and of revelry should be changed to notes of lamentation. To how many of the assemblies of the vain, the gay, and the dissipated, might the exhortation in this passage with propriety be now addressed! Your joy to heaviness. The word here rendered heaviness occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means dejection, sorrow. It is not gloom, melancholy, or moroseness, but it is sorrow on account of sin, God has so made us that we should feel sorrow when we are conscious that we have done wrong, and it is appropriate that we should do so.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord. Compare Mt 23:12. Jas 4:6. That is, be willing to take your appropriate place in the dust on account of your transgressions. This is to be "in the sight of the Lord," or before him. Our sins have been committed against him; and their principal aggravation, whoever may have been wronged by them, and great as is their criminality in other respects, arises from that consideration. Ps 51:4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Lk 15:18, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." As the Being against whom we have sinned is the only one who can pardon, it is proper that we should humble ourselves before him with penitent confession. And he shall lift you up. He will exalt you from the condition of a broken-hearted penitent to that of a forgiven child; will wipe away your tears, remove the sadness of your heart, fill you with joy, and clothe you with the garments of salvation. This declaration is in accordance with all the promises in the Bible, and with all the facts which occur on the earth, that God is willing to show mercy to the humble and contrite, and to receive those who are truly penitent into his favour. Compare Lk 15:22.

Judging a Brother

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of *his* brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.

MHC:

We are cautioned against the sin of evil-speaking: Speak not evil one of another, brethren, Jam 4:11. The Greek word, katalaleite, signifies speaking any thing that may hurt or injure another; we must not speak evil things of others, though they be true, unless we be called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for the; much less must we report evil things when they are false, or, for aught we know, may be so. Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice. This, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness (Pr 31:26), must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian. Speak not evil one of another,

1. Because you are brethren. The compellation, as used by the apostle here, carries an argument along with it. Since Christians are brethren, they should not defile nor defame one another. It is required of us that we be tender of the good name of our brethren; where we cannot speak well, we had better say nothing than speak evil; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, merely to expose them, nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve, and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading things concerning them of which they are altogether innocent. What is this but to raise the hatred and encourage the persecutions of the world, against those who are engaged in the same interests with ourselves, and therefore with whom we ourselves must stand or fall? "Consider, you are brethren."

2. Because this is to judge the law: He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. The law of Moses says, Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people, Le 19:16. The law of Christ

is, Judge not, that you be not judged, Mt 7:1 The sum and substance of both is that men should love one another. A detracting tongue therefore condemns the law of God, and the commandment of Christ, when it is defaming its neighbour. To break God's commandments is in effect to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they were too strict, and laid too great a restraint upon us. The Christians to whom James wrote were apt to speak very hard things of one another, because of their differences about indifferent things (such as the observance of meats and days, as appears from Ro 14:1-23): "Now," says the apostle, "he who censures and condemns his brother for not agreeing with him in those things which the law of God has left indifferent thereby censures and condemns the law, as if it had done ill in leaving them indifferent. He who quarrels with his brother, and condemns him for the sake of any thing not determined in the word of God, does thereby reflect on that word of God, as if it were not a perfect rule. Let us take heed of judging the law, for the law of the Lord is perfect; if men break the law, leave that to judge them; if they do not break it, let us not judge them." This is a heinous evil, because it is to forget our place, that we ought to be doers of the law, and it is to set up ourselves above it, as if we were to be judges of it. He who is guilty of the sin here cautioned against is not a doer of the law, but a judge; he assumes an office and a place that do not belong to him, and he will be sure to suffer for his presumption in the end. Those who are most ready to set up for judges of the law generally fail most in their obedience to it.

Barnes:

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. It is not known to whom the apostle here particularly refers, nor is it necessary to know. It is probable that among those whom he addressed there were some who were less circumspect in regard to speaking of others than they should be, and perhaps this evil prevailed. There are few communities where such an injunction would not be proper at any time, and few churches where some might not be found to whom the exhortation would be appropriate. Eph 4:31; also 1Pet 2:1 The evil here referred to is that of talking against others---against their actions, their motives, their manner of living, their families, etc. Few things are more common in the world; nothing is more decidedly against the true spirit of religion.

He that speaketh evil of his brother. Referring here probably to a Christian brother, or to a fellow Christian. The word may however be used in a larger sense to denote any one--a brother of the human race. Religion forbids both, and would restrain us from all evil speaking against any human being.

And judgeth his brother. His motives, or his conduct. Mt 7:1.

Speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. Instead of manifesting the feelings of a brother, he sets himself up as judge, and not only a judge of his brother, but a judge of the law. The law here referred to is probably the law of Christ, or the rule which all Christians profess to obey. It is that which James elsewhere calls the "law of liberty," (Jas 1:25;) the law which released men from the servitude of the Jewish rites, and gave them liberty to worship God without the restraint and bondage (Acts 15:10; Gal 4:21-31) implied in that ancient system of worship; and the law by which it was contemplated that they should be free from sin. It is not absolutely certain to what the apostle refers here, but it would seem probable that it is to some course of conduct which one portion of the church felt they were at liberty to follow, but which another portion regarded as wrong, and for which they censured them. The explanation which will best suit the expressions here used, is that which supposes that it refers to some difference of opinion which existed among Christians, especially among those of Jewish origin, about the binding nature of the Jewish laws, in regard to circumcision, to holy days, to ceremonial observances, to the distinctions of meats, etc. A part regarded the law on these subjects as still binding, another portion supposed that the obligation in regard to these matters had ceased by the introduction of the gospel. Those who regarded the obligation of the Mosaic law as still binding, would of course judge their brethren, and regard them as guilty of a disregard of the law of God by their conduct. We know that differences of opinion on these points gave rise to contentions, and to the formation of parties in the church, and that it required all the wisdom of Paul and of the other apostles to hush the contending elements to peace. Col 2:16-18. To some such source of contention the apostle doubtless refers here; and the meaning probably is, that they who held the opinion that all the Jewish ceremonial laws were still binding on Christians, and who judged and condemned their

brethren who did not [observe them], by such a course judged and condemned "the law of liberty" under which they acted--the law of Christianity that had abolished the ceremonial observances, and released men from their obligation. The judgment which they passed, therefore, was not only on their brethren, but was on that law of Christianity which had given greater liberty of conscience, and which was intended to abolish the obligation of the Jewish ritual. The same thing now occurs when we judge others for a course which their consciences approve, because they do not deem it necessary to comply with all the rules which we think to be binding. Not a few of the harsh judgments which one class of religionists pronounce on others, are in fact judgments on the laws of Christ. We set up our own standards, or our own interpretations, and then we judge others for not complying with them, when in fact they may be acting only as the law of Christianity, properly understood, would allow them to do. They who set up the claim to a right to judge the conduct of others, should be certain that they understand the nature of religion themselves. It may be presumed, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that others are as conscientious as we are; and it may commonly be supposed that they who differ from us have some reason for what they do, and may be desirous of glorifying their Lord and Master, and that they may possibly be right. It is commonly not safe to judge hastily of a man who has turned his attention to a particular subject, or to suppose that he has no reasons to allege for his opinions or conduct.

But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. It is implied here that it is the simple duty of every Christian to obey the law. He is not to assume the office of a judge about its propriety or fitness; but he is to do what he supposes the law to require of him, and is to allow others to do the same. Our business in religion is not to make laws, or to declare what they should have been, or to amend those that are made; it is simply to obey those which are appointed, and to allow others to do the same, as they understand them. It would be well for all individual Christians. and Christian denominations, to learn this, and to imbibe the spirit of charity to which it would prompt.

Burkitt:

These words, as generally delivered by our apostle, are a disuasive from the sin of detraction, or speaking evil of one another, either by secret whispering, or open backbiting; a very common but most unbecoming sin amongst Christians. What pleasure do some persons take in divulging the faults of others, in aggravating their faults, in defrauding them of their necessary excuse and mitigation, though at the same time they are conscious of it, by lessening their good actions through the suppostion of their false aims and ends? It is an injurious and unworthy jealousy, when a person's actions are fair, to suspect his intentions, by mentioning his failings, but suppressing his worth and excellencies. It becomes Christians neither to give way to this growing evil themselves, nor give ear to it in others.

But there seems to be something special and particular in these words, which respects the Jews, to whom this epistle is directed; as if the apostle had said, "Give over your reproach and censoriousness against the Gentile Christians, who do not observe your ceremonial law, your feasts, your sabbath, your circumcision; for both the law of Christ, and the law of Moses, which you profess to own, do bind you to love your neighbour as yourself, and forbids such uncharitalbe censures; So that by condemning your brethren, you condemn the law, and set yourselves above it; and all this in contempt of the law, and the lawgiver, who is one, and is able both to save and to destroy."

JFB:

Having mentioned sins of the tongue (Jas 3:5-12), he shows here that evil-speaking flows from the same spirit of exalting self at the expense of one's neighbor as caused the "fightings" reprobated in this chapter (Jas 4:1). Speak not evil—literally, "Speak not against" one another. brethren—implying the inconsistency of such depreciatory speaking of one another in brethren. speaketh evil of the law—for the law in commanding, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Jas 2:8), virtually condemns evil-speaking and judging [ESTIUS]. Those who superciliously condemn the acts and words of others which do not please themselves, thus aiming at the reputation of sanctity, put their own moroseness in the place of the law, and claim to themselves a power of censuring above the law of God, condemning what the law permits [CALVIN]. Such a one acts

as though the law could not perform its own office of judging, but he must fly upon the office [BENGEL]. This is the last mention of the law in the New Testament. ALFORD rightly takes the "law" to be the old moral law applied in its comprehensive spiritual fulness by Christ: "the law of liberty."

12 There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

There is one lawgiver. There is but one who has a right to give law. The reference here is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Legislator of the church. This, too, is a most important and vital principle, though one that has been most imperfectly understood and acted on. The tendency everywhere has been to enact other laws than those appointed by Christ--the laws of synods and councils--and to claim that Christians are bound to observe them, and should be punished if they do not. But it is a fundamental principle in Christianity that no laws are binding on the conscience, but those which Christ has ordained; and that all attempts to make other laws pertaining to religion binding on the conscience is a usurpation of his prerogatives. The church is safe while it adheres to this as a settled principle; it is not safe when it submits to any legislation in religious matters as binding the conscience.

Who is able to save and to destroy. Compare Mt 10:28. The idea here would seem to be, that he is able to save those whom you condemn, and to destroy you who pronounce a judgment on them. Or, in general, it may mean that he is intrusted with all power, and is abundantly able to administer his government; to restrain where it is necessary to restrain; to save where it is proper to save; to punish where it is just to punish. The whole matter pertaining to judgment, therefore, may be safely left in his hands; and, as he is abundantly qualified for it, we should not usurp his prerogatives.

Who art thou that judgest another? "Who art thou, a weak and frail and erring mortal, thyself accountable to that Judge, that thou shouldest interfere, and pronounce judgment on another, especially when he is doing only what that Judge permits him to do?" Rom 14:4 for this sentiment explained at length. Also Rom 2:1, and Mt 7:1. There is nothing more decidedly condemned in the Scriptures

than the habit of pronouncing a judgment on the motives and conduct of others. There is nothing in which we are more liable to err, or to indulge in wrong feelings; and there is nothing which God claims more for himself as his peculiar prerogative.

Boast Not of Tomorrow

13 Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:

Go to now. The apostle here introduces a new subject, and refers to another fault which was doubtless prevalent among them, as it is everywhere, that of a presumptuous confidence respecting the future, or of forming plans stretching into the future, without any proper sense of the uncertainty of life, and of our absolute dependence on God. The phrase "go to now," (αγενυν,) is a phrase designed to arrest attention, as if there were something that demanded their notice, and especially, as in this case, with the implied thought that that to which the attention is called is wrong. See Jas 5:1. Compare Gen 11:7; Isa 1:18.

Ye that say. You that form your plans in this manner, or that speak thus confidently of what you will do in the future. The word say here probably refers to what was in their thoughts, rather than to what was openly expressed.

To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city. That is, they say this without any proper sense of the uncertainty of life, and of their absolute dependence on God.

And continue there a year. Fixing a definite time; designating the exact period during which they would remain, and when they would leave, without any reference to the will of God. The apostle undoubtedly means to refer here to this as a mere specimen of what he would reprove. It cannot be supposed that he refers to this single case alone as wrong. All plans are wrong that are formed in the same spirit. "The practice to which the apostle here alludes," says the editor of the Pictorial Bible, "is very common in the East to this day, among a very respectable and intelligent class of merchants. They

convey the products of one place to some distant city, where they remain until they have disposed of their own goods and have purchased others suitable for another distant market; and thus the operation is repeated, until, after a number of years, the trader is enabled to return prosperously to his home. Or again, a shopkeeper or a merchant takes only the first step in this process--conveying to a distant town, where the best purchases of his own line are to be made, such goods as are likely to realize a profit, and returning, without any farther stop, with a stock for his own concern. These operations are seldom very rapid, as the adventurer likes to wait opportunities for making advantageous bargains; and sometimes opens a shop in the place to which he comes, to sell by retail the goods which he has bought." The practice is common in India. See Roberts' Oriental Illustrations.

And buy and sell, and get gain. It is not improbable that there is an allusion here to the commercial habits of the Jews at the time when the apostle wrote. Many of them were engaged in foreign traffic, and for this purpose made long journeys to distant trading cities, as Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, etc.--BloomSeld.

14 whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

Whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow. They formed their plans as if they knew; the apostle says it could not be known. They had no means of ascertaining what would occur; whether they would live or die; whether they would be prospered, or would be overwhelmed with adversity. Of the truth of the remark made by the apostle here, no one can doubt; but it is amazing how men act as if it were false. We have no power of penetrating the future so as to be able to determine what will occur in a single day or a single hour, and yet we are almost habitually forming our plans as if we saw with certainty all that is to happen. The classic writings abound with beautiful expressions respecting the uncertainty of the future, and the folly of forming our plans as if it were known to us. Many of those passages, some of them almost precisely in the words of James, may be seen in Grotius and Pricseus, in loc. Such passages occur in Anacreon, Euripides, Menander, Seneca, Horace, and others, suggesting an obvious but much-neglected thought, that the

future is to us all unknown. Man cannot penetrate it; and his plans of life should be formed in view of the possibility that his life may be cut off and all his plans fail, and consequently in constant preparation for a higher world. For what is your life? All your plans must depend of course on the continuance of your life; but what a frail and uncertain thing is that! How transitory and evanescent as a basis on which to build any plans for the future! Who can calculate on the permanence of a vapour? Who can build any solid hopes on a mist?

It is even a vapour. Marg., For it is. The margin is the more correct rendering. The previous question had turned the attention to life as something peculiarly frail, and as of such a nature that no calculation could be based on its permanence. This expression gives a reason for that, to wit, that it is a mere vapour. The word vapour, (ατμις,) means a mist, an exhalation, a smoke; such a vapour as we see ascending from a stream, or as lies on the mountain side in the morning, or as floats for a little time in the air, but which is dissipated by the rising sun, leaving not a trace behind. The comparison of life with a vapour is common, and is as beautiful as it is just. Job says,
0 remember that my life is wind; Mine eye shall no more see good. Job 7:7.

So the Psalmist,

For he remembered that they were but flesh. A wind that passeth away and that cometh not again. Ps 78:39.

Compare 1Chr 29:15; Job 14:10-11.

And then vanisheth away. Wholly disappears. Like the dissipated vapour, it is entirely gone. There is no remnant, no outline, nothing that reminds us that it ever was. So of life. Soon it disappears altogether. The works of art that man has made, the house that he has built, or the book that he has written, remain for a little time, but the life has gone. There is nothing of it remaining--any more than there is of the vapour which in the morning climbed silently up the mountain side. The animating principle has vanished for ever. On

such a frail and evanescent thing, who can build any substantial hopes?

15 For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

For that ye ought to say. Instead of what you do say, "we will go into such a city," you ought rather to recognise your absolute dependence on God, and feel that life and success are subject to his will. The meaning is not that we ought always to be saying that in so many words, for this might become a mere ostentatious form, offensive by constant unmeaning repetition; but we are, in the proper way, to recognise our dependence on him, and to form all our plans with reference to his will. If the Lord will, etc. This is proper, because we are wholly dependent on him for life, and as dependent on him for success, he alone can keep us, and he only can make our plans prosperous. In a thousand ways he can thwart our best-laid schemes, for all things are under his control. We need not travel far in life to see how completely all that we have is in the hands of God, or to learn how easily he can frustrate us if he pleases. There is nothing on which the success of our plans depends over which we have absolute control; there is nothing, therefore, on which we can base the assurance of success but his favour.

16 But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

But now ye rejoice in your boastings. That is, probably, in your boastings of what you can do; your reliance on your own skill and sagacity. You form your plans for the future as if with consummate wisdom, and are confident of success. You do not anticipate a failure; you do not see how plans so skilfully formed can fail. You form them as if you were certain that you would live; as if secure from the numberless casualties which may defeat your schemes. All such rejoicing is evil. It is founded on a wrong view of yourselves and of what may occur. It shows a spirit forgetful of our dependence on God; forgetful of the uncertainty of life; forgetful of the many ways by which the best-laid plans may be defeated. We should never boast of any wisdom or skill in regard to the future. A day, an hour may defeat our best-concerted plans, and show us that we have not the slightest power to control coming events.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. That is, he is guilty of sin if he does not do it. Cottoa Mather

adopted it as a principle of action, "that the ability to do good in any case imposes an obligation to do it." The proposition in the verse before us is of a general character, but probably the apostle meant that it should refer to the point specified in the previous verses--the forming of plans respecting the future. The particular meaning then would be, "that he who knows what sort of views he should take in regard to the future, and how he should form his plans in view of the uncertainty of life, and still does not do it, but goes on recklessly, forming his plans boastingly and confident of success, is guilty of sin against God." Still, the proposition will admit of a more general application. It is universally true that if a man knows what is right, and does not do it, he is guilty of sin. If he understands what his duty is; if he has the means of doing good to others; if by his name, his influence, his wealth, he can promote a good cause; if he can, consistently with other duties, relieve the distressed, the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed; if he can send the gospel to other lands, or can wipe away the tear of the mourner; if he has talents by which he can lift a voice that shah be heard in favour of temperance, chastity, liberty, and religion, he is under obligations to do it: and if, by indolence, or avarice, or selfishness, or the dread of the loss of popularity, he does not do it, he is guilty of sin before God. No man can be released from the obligation to do good in this world to the extent of his ability; no one should desire to be. The highest privilege conferred on a mortal, besides that of securing the salvation of his own soul, is that of doing good to others--of alleviating sorrow, instructing ignorance, raising up the bowed down, comforting those that mourn, delivering the wronged and the oppressed, supplying the wants of the needy, guiding inquirers into the way of truth, and sending liberty, knowledge, and salvation around the world. If a man does not do this when he has the means, he sins against his own soul, against humanity, and against his Maker; if he does it cheerfully and to the extent of his means, it likens him more than anything else to God.

James-5

Warning to the Rich

1 Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall
come upon *you*.

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

Barnes:

Ye rich men. Not all rich men, but only that class of them who are specified as unjust and oppressive. There is no sin in merely being rich; where sin exists peculiarly among the rich, it arises from the manner in which wealth is acquired, the spirit which it tends to engender in the heart, and the way in which it is used. Lk 6:24 and also 1Timm 6:9.

Weep and howl. Gr., "Weep howling." This would be expressive of very deep distress. The language is intensive in a high degree, showing that the calamities which were coming upon them were not only such as would produce tears, but tears accompanied with loud lamentations. In the East, it is customary to give expression to deep sorrow by loud out cries. Compare Isa 13:6; 14:31; 15:2; 16:7; Jer 4:8; 47:2; Joel 1:5.

For your miseries that shall come upon you. Many expositors, as Benson, Witby, Macknight, and others, suppose that this refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to the miseries which would be brought in the siege upon the Jewish people, in which the rich would be the peculiar objects of cupidity and vengeance. They refer to passages in Josephus, which describe particularly the sufferings to which the rich were exposed; the searching of their houses by the zealots, and the heavy calamities which came upon them and their families. But there is no reason to suppose that the apostle referred particularly to those events. The poor as well as the rich suffered in that siege, and there were no such special judgements then brought upon the rich as to show that they were the marked objects of the Divine displeasure. It is much more natural to suppose that the apostle means to say that such men as he here refers to exposed themselves always to the wrath of God, and that they had great reason to weep in the anticipation of his vengeance. The sentiments here expressed by the apostle are not applicable merely to the Jews of his time. If there is any class of men which has special reason to dread the wrath of God at all times, it is just the class of men here referred to.

Your riches are corrupted. The word here rendered corrupted (σηπω) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, to cause to rot, to corrupt, to destroy. The reference here is to their hoarded treasures; and the idea is, that they had accumulated more than they needed for their own use; and that, instead of distributing them to do good to others, or employing them in any useful way, they kept them until they rotted or spoiled. It is to be remembered, that a considerable part of the treasures which a man in the East would lay up, consisted of perishable materials, as garments, grain, oil, etc. Such articles of property were often stored up, expecting that they would furnish a supply for many years, in case of the prevalence of famine or wars. Compare Lk 12:18-19. A suitable provision for the time to come cannot be forbidden; but the reference here is to cases in which great quantities had been laid up, perhaps while the poor were suffering, and which were kept until they became worthless. Your garments are moth-eaten. The same idea substantially is expressed here in another form. As the fashions in the East did not change as they do with us, wealth consisted much in the garments that were laid up for show or for future use. Mt 6:19. Q. Curtius says that when Alexander the Great was going to take Persepolis, the riches of all Asia were gathered there together, which consisted not only of a great abundance of gold and silver, but also of garments, Lib. vi. c. 5. Horace tells us that when Lucullus the Roman was asked if he could lend a hundred garments for the theatre, he replied that he had five thousand in his house, of which they were welcome to take part or all. Of course, such property would be liable to be moth-eaten; and the idea here is, that they had amassed a great amount of this kind of property which was useless to them, and which they kept until it became destroyed.

Your gold and silver is cankered. That is, that you have heaped together, by injustice and fraud, a large amount, and have kept it from those to whom it is due, (Jas 5:4,) until it has become corroded. The word rendered is cankered, (κατιωται) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly means, to cause to rust; to rust out, (Passow;) to be corroded with rust, (Robinson;) to be spotted with rust. It is true that gold and silver do not properly rust, or become oxidized, and that they will not be corroded like iron and steel; but by being kept long in a damp place they will contract a dark colour, resembling rust in appearance. This seems to be the idea in the mind of the apostle. He speaks of gold and silver as they

appear after having been long laid up without use; and undoubtedly the word which he uses here is one which would to an ancient have expressed that idea, as well as the mere literal idea of the rusting or oxidizing of metals. There is no reason to suppose that the word was then used in the strict chemical sense of rusting, for there is no reason to suppose that the nature of oxidization was then fully understood. And the rust of them. Another word is used here--ιος. This properly denotes something sent out or emitted, (from ιημι,) and is applied to a missile weapon, as an arrow; to poison, as emitted from the tooth of a serpent; and to rust, as it seems to be emitted from metals. The word refers to the dark discoloration which appears on gold and silver, when they have remained long without use. Shall be a witness against you. That is, the rust or discoloration shall bear testimony against you that the money is not used as it should be, either in paying those to whom it is due, or in doing good to others. Among the ancients, the gold and silver which any one possessed was laid up in some secret and safe place. Isa 45:3. There were no banks then in which money might be deposited; there were few ways of investing money so as to produce regular interests; there were no corporations to employ money in joint operations; and it was not very common to invest money in the purchase of real estate, and stocks and mortgages were little known. And shall eat your flesh as it were fire. This cannot be taken literally. It must mean that the effect would be as if it should corrode or consume their very flesh; that is, the fact of their laying up treasures would be followed by painful consequences. The thought is very striking, and the language in which it is conveyed is singularly bold and energetic. The effect of thus heaping up treasure will be as corroding as fire in the flesh. The reference is to the punishment which God would bring on them for their avarice and injustice--effects that will come on all now for the same offences. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. The day of judgment; the dosing scenes of this world. You have been heaping up treasure; but it will be treasure of a different kind from what you have supposed. It is treasure not laid up for ostentation, or luxury, or use in future life, but treasure the true worth of which will be seen at the judgment-day. So Paul speaks of "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom 2:5. There are many who suppose they are accumulating property that may be of use to them, or that may secure them the reputation of possessing great wealth, who are in fact accumulating a most fearful treasure against the day of final

retribution. Every man who is rich should examine himself closely to see whether there is anything in the manner in which he has gained his property, or in which he now holds it, that will expose him to the wrath of God in the last day. That on which he so much prides himself may yet bring down on him the vengeance of heaven; and in the day of judgment he may curse his own madness and folly in wasting his probation in efforts to amass property.

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your In fields. the previous verses the form of the sin which the apostle specified was that they had hoarded their property, he now states another form of their guilt, that, while doing this, they had withheld what was due from the very labourers who had cultivated their fields, and to whose labour they were indebted for what they had. The phrase, "who have reaped down your fields," is used to denote labour in general. This particular thing is specified, perhaps, because the reaping of the harvest seems to be more immediately connected with the accumulation of property. What is said here, however, will apply to all kinds of labour. It may be remarked, also, that the sin condemned here is one that may exist not only in reference to those who are hired to cultivate a farm, but to all in our employ, to day-labourers, to mechanics, to seamen, etc. It will apply, in an eminent degree, to those who hold others in slavery, and who live by their unrequited toils. The very essence of slavery is, that the slave shall produce by his labour so much more than he receives for his own maintenance as to support the master and his family in indolence. The slave is to do the work which the master would otherwise be obliged to do; the advantage of the system is supposed to be that the master is not under a necessity of labouring at all. The amount which the slave receives is not presumed to be what is a fair equivalent for what he does, or what a freeman could be hired for; but so much less than his labour is fairly worth, as to be a source of so much gain to the master. If slaves were fairly compensated for their labour; if they received what was understood to be a just price for what they do, or what they would be willing to bargain for if they were free, the system would at once come to an end. No owner of a slave would keep him if he did not suppose that out of his unrequited toil he might make money, or might be relieved himself from the necessity of labour, he who hires a freeman to reap down his fields pays what the freeman regards as a fair equivalent for what he does; he who employs a slave does not give what the slave would regard as an

equivalent, and expects that what he gives will be so much less than an equivalent, that he may be free alike from the necessity of labour and of paying him what he has fairly earned. The very essence of slavery, therefore, is fraud; and there is nothing to which the remarks of the apostle here are more applicable than to that unjust and oppressive system. Which is of you kept back by fraud. The Greek word here used (αποστερεω) is rendered defraud, in Mk 10:10; 1Cor 6:7-8; 7:5; and destitute, in 1Timm 6:5. It occurs nowhere else, except in the passage before us. It means to deprive of, with the notion that that to which it is applied was due to one, or that he had a claim on it. The fraud referred to in keeping it back, may be anything by which the payment is withheld, or the claim evaded--whether it be mere neglect to pay it; or some advantage taken in making the bargain; or some evasion of the law; or mere vexatious delay; or such superior power that he to whom it is due cannot enforce the payment; or such a system that he to whom it is fairly due is supposed in the laws to have no rights, and to be incapable of suing or being sued. Any one of these things would come under the denomination of fraud. Crieth. That is, cries out to God for punishment. The voice of this wrong goes up to heaven. And the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. That is, he hears them, and he will attend to their cry. Compare Ex 22:27. They are oppressed and wronged; they have none to regard their cry on earth, and to redress their wrongs, and they go and appeal to that God who will regard their cry, and avenge them. On the phrase "Lord of sabaoth," or Lord of hosts, for so the word sabaoth means, Isa 1:9, and Rom 9:29. Perhaps by the use of the word here it is implied that the God to whom they cry--the mighty Ruler of all worlds-- is able to vindicate them. It may be added, that the cry of the oppressed and the wronged is going up constantly from all parts of the earth, and is always heard by God. In his own time he will come forth to vindicate the oppressed, and to punish the oppressor. It may be added, also, that if what is here said were regarded as it should be by all men, slavery, as well as other systems of wrong, would soon come to an end. If everywhere the workman was fairly paid for his earnings; if the poor slave who cultivates the fields of the rich were properly compensated for his toil; if he received what a freeman would contract to do the work for; if there was no fraud in withholding what he earns, the system would soon cease in the earth. Slavery could not live a day if this were done. Now there is no such compensation; but the cry of

oppressed millions will continue to go up to heaven, and the period must come when the system shall cease. Either the master must be brought to such a sense of right that he will be disposed to do justice, and let the oppressed go free; or God will so impoverish the lands where the system prevails as to make all men see that the system is unprofitable and ruinous as compared with free labour; or the oppressed will somehow become so acquainted with their own strength and their rights that they shall arise and assert their freedom; or under the prevalence of true religion better views will prevail, and oppressors, turned to God, shall relax the yoke of bondage; or God will so bring heavy judgments in his holy providence on the oppressors, that the system of slavery will everywhere come to an end on the earth. Nothing is more certain than that the whole system is condemned by the passage of Scripture before us; that it is contrary to the genuine spirit of Christianity, and that the prevalence of true religion would bring it to an end. Probably all slave holders feel that to place the Bible in the hands of slaves, and to instruct them to read it, would be inconsistent with the perpetuity of the system. Yet a system which cannot survive the most full and free circulation of the sacred Scriptures, must be founded in wrong.

JFB:

ye rich—who have neglected the true enjoyment of riches, which consists in doing good. James intends this address to rich Jewish unbelievers, not so much for themselves, as for the saints, that they may bear with patience the violence of the rich (Jas 5:7), knowing that God will speedily avenge them on their oppressors [BENGEL]. miseries that shall come—literally, "that are coming upon you" unexpectedly and swiftly, namely, at the coming of the Lord (Jas 5:7); primarily, at the destruction of Jerusalem; finally, at His visible coming to judge the world.

3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

These words may be considered wither relatively or absolutely. Consider them, 1. With relation to the Jews, to whom they were written immmediately, and they are a prediction or denuncitation of that judgment which was coming upon the right men in the Jewish

nation; which prediction, Josephus assures us, was fulfilled by the slaughter and spoiling of the rich Jews throughout Galilee and Judea, the zealots sparing none but the poor and low. Thus did the vengeance of God, and does to this day, pursue and follow that wicked people, who killed the Lord of Life, and their own prophets, who brought judgment on themselves to the uttermost.

Consider the words absolutely in themselves, and they are a severe and cutting reprehension to covetous rich men, for their sordid sparing of that wealth which God had given them for public service. And the apostle gives us,

1. A description of their sin.

2. A declaration of their punishment.

Observe, 1. A description of the sin of the covetous rich worldlings, they chose rather to have their goods to be corrupted and spoiled, than to be employed to good uses; their victuals might have refreshed the bowels of the hungry, but they rather suffered them to putrify and stink; the garments which lay useless in their wardrobes, might have clothed the backs of their naked brethren, but they had rather let them be moth eaten; their gold and silver might have been applied to many good uses, but they had rather it should be cankered, and rust in their chests.

Observe, 2. The punishment denounced against them for this their sin, the rust of their gold and silver shall witness against them; that is, their consciences shall at once convince them of their base covetousness, and torment them for it; and this corroding of their consciences shall have an impression upon their bodies, it shall eat their flesh as it were fire; and all that treasure which, with wrong to others, and violation of their own consciences, they had heaped together, was but heaped up for the spoiler, and the violence of the last days.

Learn from the whole, 1. That it is hard to possess riches without sin; a hard matter to have them, and not be hindered from heaven by them.

Learn, 2. That a covetous hoarding, and sordid sparing of wealth, which our suffering brethren want, brings a curse both upon our persons and estates.

3. That more miseries, and dreadful judgments, shall come upon wicked rich men, which, if believingly apprehended, would cause them now to weep and howl. We do not hurt with our wealth, say some; aye, but what good do you do with it? Where are the poor members of Christ, whom ye have relieved with the superfluities of your table? But can many say truly, they have done no harm with their estates?
Lord! what carelessness in religion, what contempt of God, what riot and excess is found amongst many that abound in wealth, who expend more upon a lust in one day, than would maintain a poor family many years.

Learn, 4. That in the day of judgment, not only our actions, but all the circumstances of our actions, shall be brought forth, and produced as arguments of conviction; the rusty iron, the cankered silver, the moth eaten clothes, shall be produced; the stones of the wall, built by oppression, shall cry, "Lord, we were built by oppression and violence;" and the beam out of the timber shall answer it, True, Lord, even so it is, Hab 2:11 The circumstances of men's sins at the great day will be as so many memorials to put them in mind of guilt, and God in mind of vengeance: Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of it shall be witness against you.

4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields,
which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them
which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Let us consider the address to sinners; and here we find James seconding what his great Master had said: Woe unto you that are rich; for you have received your consolation, Lu 6:24. The rich people to whom this word of warning was sent were not such as professed the Christian religion, but the worldly and unbelieving Jews, such as are here said to condemn and kill the just, which the Christians had no power to do; and though this epistle was written

for the sake of the faithful, and was sent principally to them, yet, by an apostrophe, the infidel Jews may be well supposed here spoken to. They would not hear the word, and therefore it is written, that they might read it. It is observable, in the very first inscription of this epistle, that it is not directed, as Paul's epistles were, to the brethren in Christ, but, in general, to the twelve tribes; and the salutation is not, grace and peace from Christ, but, in general, greeting, Jam 1:1 The poor among the Jews received the gospel, and many of them believed; but the generality of the rich rejected Christianity, and were hardened in their unbelief, and hated and persecuted those who believed on Christ. To these oppressing, unbelieving, persecuting, rich people, the apostle addresses himself in the Jam 5:1-6.

1. He foretels the judgments of God that should come upon them, Jam 5:1-3. they should have miseries come upon them, and such dreadful miseries that the very apprehension of them was enough to make them weep and howl--misery that should arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness, and misery that should be completed by these things witnessing against them at the last, to their utter destruction; and they are now called to reason upon and thoroughly to weigh the matter, and to think how they will stand before God in judgment: Go to now, you rich men.

(1.) "You may be assured of this that very dreadful calamities are coming upon you, calamities that shall carry nothing of support nor comfort in them, but all misery, misery in time, misery to eternity, misery in your outward afflictions, misery in your inward frame and temper of mind, misery in this world, misery in hell. You have not a single instance of misery only coming upon you, but miseries. The ruin of your church and nation is at hand; and there will come a day of wrath, when riches shall not profit men, but all the wicked shall be destroyed."

(2.) The very apprehension of such miseries as were coming upon them is enough to make them weep and howl. Rich men are apt to say to themselves (and others are ready to say to them), Eat, drink, and be merry; but God says, Weep and howl. It is not said, Weep

and repent, for this the apostle does not expect from them (he speaks in a way of denouncing rather than admonishing); but, "Weep and howl, for when your doom comes there will be nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Those who live like beasts are called howl like such. Public calamities are most grievous to rich people, who live in pleasure, and are secure and sensual; and therefore they shall weep and howl more than other people for the miseries that shall come upon them.

(3.) Their misery shall arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness. "Corruption, decay, rust, and ruin, will come upon all your goodly things: Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten, Jam 5:2. Those things which you now inordinately affect will hereafter insupportably wound you: they will be of no worth, of no use to you, but, on the contrary, will pierce you through with many sorrows; for,"

(4.) "They will witness against you, and they will eat your flesh as it were fire," Jam 5:3. Things inanimate are frequently represented in scripture as witnessing against wicked men. Heaven, earth, the stones of the field, the production of the ground, and here the very rust and canker of ill-gotten and ill-kept treasures, are said to witness against impious rich men. They think to heap up treasure for their latter days, to live plentifully upon when they come to be old; but, alas! they are only heaping up treasures to become a prey to others (as the Jews had all taken from them by the Romans), and treasures that will prove at last to be only treasures of wrath, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then shall their iniquities, in the punishment of them, eat their flesh as it were with fire. In the ruin of Jerusalem, many thousands perished by fire; in the last judgment the wicked shall be condemned to everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels. The Lord deliver us from the portion of wicked rich men! and, in order to this, let us take care that we do not fall into their sins, which we are next to consider.

2 The apostle shows what those sins are which should bring such miseries. To be in so deplorable a condition must doubtless be owing to some very heinous crimes.

(1.) Covetousness is laid to the charge of this people; they laid by their garments till they bred moths and were eaten; they hoarded up their gold and silver till they were rusty and cankered. It is a very great disgrace to these things that they carry in them the principles of their own corruption and consumption--the garment breeds the moth that frets it, the gold and silver breeds the canker that eats it; but the disgrace falls most heavily upon those who hoard and lay up these things till they come to be thus corrupted, and cankered, and eaten. God gives us our worldly possessions that we may honour him and do good with them; but if, instead of this, we sinfully hoard them up, thorough and undue affection towards them, or a distrust of the providence of God for the future, this is a very heinous crime, and will be witnessed against by the very rust and corruption of the treasure thus heaped together.

(2.) Another sin charged upon those against whom James writes is oppression: Behold, the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, &c., Jam 5:4. Those who have wealth in their hands get power into their hands, and then they are tempted to abuse that power to oppress such as are under them. The rich we here find employing the poor in their labours, and the rich have as much need of the labours of the poor as the poor have of wages from the rich, and could as ill be without them; but yet, not considering this, they kept back the hire of the labourers; having power in their hands, it is probable that they made as hard bargains with the poor as they could, and even after that would not make good their bargains as they should have done. This is a crying sin, an iniquity that cries so as to reach the ears of God; and, in this case, God is to be considered as the Lord of sabaoth, or the Lord of hosts, Kyriou sabaoth, a phrase often used in the Old-Testament, when the people of God were defenseless and wanted protection, and when their enemies were numerous and powerful. The Lord of hosts, who has all ranks of beings and creatures at his disposal, and who sets all in their several places, hears the oppressed when they cry by reason of the cruelty or injustice of the oppressor, and he will give orders to some of those hosts that are under him (angels, devils, storms, distempers, or the like) to avenge the wrongs done to those who are dealt with unrighteously and unmercifully.

Take heed of this sin of defrauding and oppressing, and avoid the very appearances of it.

(3.) Another sin here mentioned is sensuality and voluptuousness. You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton, Jam 5:5. God does not forbid us to use pleasure; but to live in them as if we lived for nothing else is a very provoking sin; and to do this on the earth, where we are but strangers and pilgrims, where we are but to continue for a while, and where we ought to be preparing for eternity--this, this is a grievous aggravation of the sin of voluptuousness. Luxury makes people wanton, as in Ho 13:6, According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Wantonness and luxury are commonly the effects of great plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great estates, and not too much indulge themselves in carnal, sensual pleasures: "You have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter: you live as if it were every day a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby your hearts are fattened and nourished to stupidity, dulness, pride, and an insensibility to the wants and afflictions of others." Some may say, "What harm is there in good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have?" What! Is it no harm for people to make gods of their bellies, and to give all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging the appetites of their bodies? Surely that which brought flames upon Sodom, and would bring these miseries for which rich men are here called to weep and howl, must be a heinous evil! Pride, and idleness, and fullness of bread, mean the same thing with living in pleasure, and being wanton, and nourishing the heart as in a day of slaughter.

(4.) Another sin here charged on the rich is persecution: You have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you, Jam 5:6. This fills up the measure of their iniquity. They oppressed and acted very unjustly, to get estates; when they had them, they gave way to luxury and sensuality, till they had lost all sense and feeling of the wants or afflictions of others; and then they persecute and kill without remorse. They pretend to act legally indeed, they condemn

before they kill; but unjust prosecutions, whatever colour of law they may carry in them, will come into the reckoning when God shall make inquisition for blood, as well as massacres and downright murders. Observe here, The just may be condemned and killed: but then again observe, When such do suffer, and yield without resistance to the unjust sentence of oppressors, this is marked by God, to the honour of the sufferers and the infamy of their persecutors; this commonly shows that judgments are at the door, and we may certainly conclude that a reckoning-day will come, to reward the patience of the oppressed and to break to pieces the oppressor. Thus far the address to sinners goes.

5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth. One of the things to which the rich are peculiarly addicted. Their wealth is supposed to be of value, because it furnishes them the means of doing it. Compare Lk 12:19; 16:19. The word translated "lived in pleasure," (τρυφαω,) occurs only here in the New Testament. It means, to live delicately, luxuriously, at ease. There is not in the word essentially the idea of vicious indulgence, but that which characterizes those who live for enjoyment. They lived in ease and affluence on the avails of the labours of others; they indulged in what gratified the taste, and pleased the ear and the eye, while those who contributed the means of this were groaning under oppression. A life of mere indolence and ease, of delicacy and luxury, is nowhere countenanced in the Bible; and even where unconnected with oppression and wrong to others, such a mode of living is regarded as inconsistent with the purpose for which God made man, and placed him on the earth. See Lk 12:19-20. Every man has high and solemn duties to perform, and there is enough to be done on earth to give employment to every human being, and to fill up every hour in a profitable and useful way.

And been wanton. This word now probably conveys to most minds a sense which is not in the original. Our English word is now commonly used in the sense of lewd, lustful, lascivious. It was, however, formerly used in the sense of sportive, joyous, gay, and was applied to anything that was variable or fickle. The Greek word used here (σπαταλαω) means, to live luxuriously or voluptuously. 1Timm 5:6, where the word is explained. It does not refer necessarily to gross

criminal pleasures, though the kind of living here referred to often leads to such indulgences. There is a close connexion between what the apostle says here, and what he refers to in the previous verses--the oppression of others, and the withholding of what is due to those who labour. Such acts of oppression and wrong are commonly resorted to in order to obtain the means of luxurious living, and the gratification of sensual pleasures. In all countries where slavery exists, the things here referred to are found in close connexion. The fraud and wrong by which the reward of hard toil is withheld from the slave is connected with indolence and sensual indulgence on the part of the master.

Ye have nourished your hearts. Or, yourselves--the word hearts here being equivalent to themselves. The meaning is, that they appeared to have been fattening themselves, like stall-fed beasts, for the day of slaughter. As cattle are carefully fed, and are fattened with a view to their being slaughtered, so they seemed to have been fattened for the slaughter that was to come on them--the day of vengeance. Thus many now live. They do no work; they contribute nothing to the good of society; they are mere consumers--fruges consumere nati; and, like stall-fed cattle, they seem to live only with reference to the day of slaughter, and to the recompense which awaits them after death.

As in a day of slaughter. There has been much variety in the interpretation of this expression. Robinson (Lex.) renders it, "like beasts in the day of slaughter, without care or forethought." Rosenmuller (Morgenland) supposes that it means, as in a festival; referring, as he thinks, to the custom among the ancients of having a feast when a part of the animal was consumed in sacrifice, and the rest was eaten by the worshippers. So Benson. On such occasions, indulgence was given to appetite almost without limit; and the idea then would be, that they had given themselves up to a life of pampered luxury. But probably the more correct idea is, that they had fattened themselves as for the day of destruction; that is, as animals are fattened for slaughter. They lived only to eat and drink, and to enjoy life. But, by such a course, they were as certainly preparing for perdition, as cattle were prepared to be killed by being stall-fed.

6 Ye have condemned *and* killed the just; *and* he doth not resist you.

Ye have condemned and killed the just. τονδικαιον-- the just one, or the just man--for the word used is in the singular number. This may either refer to the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ---meaning that their conduct towards his people had been similar to the treatment of the Saviour, and was in fact a condemnation and crucifixion of him afresh; or, that by their rejection of him in order to live in sin, they in fact condemned him and his religion; or, that they had condemned and killed the just man--meaning that they had persecuted those who were Christians; or, that by their harsh treatment of others in withholding what was due to them, they had deprived them of the means of subsistence, and had, as it were, killed the righteous. Probably the true meaning is, that it was one of their characteristics that they had been guilty of wrong towards good men. Whether it refers, however, to any particular act of violence, or to such a course as would wear out their lives by a system of oppression, injustice, and fraud, cannot now be determined.

And he doth not resist you. Some have supposed that this refers to God, meaning that he did not oppose them; that is, that he bore with them patiently while they did it. Others suppose that it should be read as a question--"and doth he not resist you?" meaning that God would oppose them, and punish them for their acts of oppression and wrong. But probably the true reference is to the "just man" whom they condemned and killed; meaning that they were so powerful that all attempts to resist them would be vain, and that the injured and oppressed could do nothing but submit patiently to their acts of injustice and violence. The sense may be either that they could not oppose them--the rich men being so powerful, and they who were oppressed so feeble; or that they bore their wrongs with meekness, and did not attempt it. The sins, therefore, condemned in these verses, (Jas 5:1-6,) and for which it is said the Divine vengeance would come upon those referred to, are these four:

(1,) that of hoarding up money when it was unnecessary for their real support and comfort, and when they might do so much good with it, (compare Mt 6:19;)

(2,) that of keeping back the wages which was due to those who cultivated their fields; that is, keeping back what would be a fair

compensation for their toil--applicable alike to hired men and to slaves;

(3,) that of giving themselves up to a life of ease, luxury, and sensual indulgence; and,

(4,) that of wronging and oppressing good and just men-- men, perhaps in humble life, who were unable to vindicate their rights, and who had none to undertake their cause; men who were too feeble to offer successful resistance, or who were restrained by their principles from attempting it. It is needless to say that there are multitudes of such persons now on the earth, and that they have the same reason to dread the Divine vengeance which the same class had in the time of the apostle James.

Patience and Prayer

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.
Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth,
and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter
rain.

Be patient therefore, brethren. That is, under such wrongs as the apostle had described in the previous verses. Those whom he addressed were doubtless suffering under those oppressions, and his object was to induce them to bear their wrongs without murmuring and without resistance. One of the methods of doing this was by showing them, in an address to their rich oppressors, that those who injured and wronged them would be suitably punished at the day of judgment, or that their cause was in the hands of God; and another method of doing it was by the direct inculcation of the duty of patience. Mt 5:38 and also through verse 45. The margin here is, be long patient, or suffer with long patience. The sense of the Greek is, "be long-suffering, or let not your patience be exhausted. Your courage, rigour, and forbearance is not to be short-lived, but is to be enduring. Let it continue as long as there is need of it, even to the coming of the Lord. Then you will be released from sufferings."

Unto the coming of the Lord. The coming of the Lord Jesus--either to remove you by death, or to destroy the city of Jerusalem and bring to an end the Jewish institutions, or to judge the world and receive

his people to himself. The "coming of the Lord" in any way was an event which Christians were taught to expect, and which would be connected with their deliverance from troubles. As the time of his appearing was not revealed, it was not improper to refer to that as an event that might possibly be near; and as the removal of Christians by death is denoted by the phrase "the coming of the Lord"--that is, his coming to each one of us--it was not improper to speak of death in that view. On the general subject of the expectations entertained among the early Christians of the second advent of the Saviour, 1Cor 15:51 and also 2Thes 2:2-3.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. The farmer waits patiently for the grain to grow. It requires time to mature the crop, and he does not become impatient. The idea seems to be, that we should wait for things to develop themselves in their proper season, and should not be impatient before that season arrives. In due time we may expect the harvest to be ripened. We cannot hasten it. We cannot control the rain, the sun, the seasons; and the farmer therefore patiently waits until in the regular course of events he has a harvest. So we cannot control and hasten the events which are in God's own keeping; and we should patiently wait for the developments of his will, and the arrangements of his providence, by which we may obtain what we desire.

And hath long patience for it. That is, his patience is not exhausted. It extends through the whole time in which, by the Divine arrangements, he may expect a harvest.

Until he receive the early and latter rain. In the climate of Palestine there are two rainy seasons, on which the harvest essentially depends--the autumnal and the spring rains--called here and elsewhere in the Scriptures the early and the latter rains. See De 11:14; Job 29:23; Jer 5:24. The autumnal or early rains of Scripture, usually commence in the latter half of October or the beginning of November; not suddenly, but by degrees, which gives opportunity for the husbandman to sow his fields of wheat and barley. The rains come mostly from the west or south-west, continuing for two or three days at a time, and failing especially during the nights. The wind then chops round to the north or east, and several days of fine

weather succeed. During the months of November and December the rains continue to fall heavily; afterwards they return only at longer intervals, and are less heavy; but at no period during the winter do they entirely cease to occur. Snow often falls in Jerusalem, in January and February, to the depth of a foot or more, but it does not last long. Rain continues to fall more or less through the month of March, but it is rare after that period. At the present time there are not any particular periods of rain, or successions of showers, which might be regarded as distinct rainy seasons. The whole period from October to March now constitutes only one continued rainy season, without any regularly intervening time of prolonged fair weather. Unless, therefore, there has been some change in the climate since the times of the New Testament, the early and the latter rains for which the husbandman waited with longing, seem rather to have implied the first showers of autumn, which revived the parched and thirsty earth, and prepared it for the seed; and the latter showers of spring, which continued to refresh and forward the ripening crops and the vernal products of the fields. In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene.--Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. ii., pp. 96-100.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

Be ye also patient. As the farmer is. In due time, as he expects the return of the rain, so you may anticipate deliverance from your trials. Stablish your hearts. Let your purposes and your faith be firm and unwavering. Do not become weary and fretful; but bear with constancy all that is laid upon you, until the time of your deliverance shall come.

For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Compare Rev 22:10,12,20; 1Cor 15:51. It is clear, I think, from this place, that the apostle expected that that which he understood by "the coming of the Lord" was soon to occur; for it was to be that by which they would obtain deliverance from the trials which they then endured. See Jas 5:7. Whether it means that he was soon to come to judgment, or to bring to an end the Jewish policy and to set up his kingdom on the earth, or that they would soon be removed by death, cannot be determined from the mere use of the language. The most natural

interpretation of the passage, and one which will accord well with the time when the epistle was written, is, that the predicted time of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24) was at hand; that there were already indications that that would soon occur; and that there was a prevalent expectation among Christians that that event would be a release from many trials of persecution, and would be followed by the setting up of the Redeemer's kingdom. Perhaps many expected that the judgment would occur at that time, and that the Saviour would set up a personal reign on the earth. But the expectation of others might have been merely--what is indeed all that is necessarily implied in the predictions on the subject--that there would be after that a rapid and extensive spread of the principles of the Christian religion in the world. The destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple would contribute to that by bringing to an end the whole system of Jewish types and sacrifices; by convincing Christians that there was not to be one central rallying-point, thus destroying their lingering prejudices in favour of the Jewish mode of worship; and by scattering them abroad through the world to propagate the new religion. The epistle was written, it is supposed, some ten or twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem, (Intro., & 3,) and it is not improbable that there were already some indications of that approaching event.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Grudge not one against another. Marg., "groan, grieve." The Greek word (στεναζω) means, to sigh, to groan, as of persons in distress, (Rom 8:23;) and then to sigh or groan through impatience, fretfulness, ill-humour; and hence to murmur, to find fault, to complain. The exact idea here is, not that of grudging in the sense of dissatisfaction with what others possess, or of being envious; it is that of being fretful and impatient--or, to use a common word which more exactly expresses the sense, that of grumbling. This may arise from many causes; either because others have advantages which we have not, and we are discontented and unhappy, as if it were wrong in them to have such enjoyments; or because we, without reason, suppose they intend to slight and neglect us; or because we are ready to take offence at any little thing, and to "pick a quarrel" with them. There are some persons who are always grumbling. They have a sour, dissatisfied, discontented temper; they see no excellence in other persons; they are displeased that others are more prospered,

honoured, and beloved than they are themselves; they are always complaining of what others do, not because they are injured, but because others seem to them to be weak and foolish; they seem to feel that it becomes them to complain if everything is not done precisely as in their estimation it should be. It is needless to say that this spirit--the offspring of pride--will make any man lead a wretched life; and equally needless to say that it is wholly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Compare Lk 3:14; Php 4:11; 1Timm 6:8; Heb 13:5.

Lest ye be condemned. That is, for judging others with this spirit--for this spirit is in fact judging them. Mt 7:1.

Behold, the judge standeth before the door. The Lord Jesus, who is soon to come to judge the world. See Jas 5:8. He is, as it were, even now approaching the door--so near that he can hear all that you say.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

Take, my brethren, the prophets. That is, in your trials and persecutions. To encourage them to the exercise of patience, he points them to the example of those who had trod the same thorny path before them. The prophets were in general a much persecuted race of men; and the argument on which the apostle relies from their example is this:

(1,) that if the prophets were persecuted and tried, it may be expected that other good men will be;

(2,) that they showed such patience in their trials as to be a model for us. An example of suffering affliction. That is, they showed us how evils are to be borne.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. The word rendered "we count them happy," (μακαριζομεν,) occurs only here and in Lk 1:48, where it is rendered "shall call me blessed." The word μακαριος, (blessed, or happy,) however, occurs often. See Mt 5:3-11; 11:6; Mt 13:6, et saepe. The sense here is, we speak of their patience with

commendation. They have done what they ought to do, and their name is honoured and blessed. Ye have heard of the patience of Job. As one of the most illustrious instances of patient sufferers. See Job 1:21. The book of Job was written, among other reasons, to show that true religion would bear any form of trial to which it could be subjected. See Job 1:9-11; Job 2:5-6. And have seen the end of the Lord. That is, the end or design which the Lord had in the trials of Job, or the result to which he brought the case at last--to wit, that he showed himself to be very merciful to the poor sufferer; that he met him with the expressions of his approbation for the manner in which he bore his trials; and that he doubled his former possessions, and restored him to more than his former happiness and honour. See Job 42. Augustine, Luther, Wetstein, and others, understand this as referring to the death of the Lord Jesus, and as meaning that they had seen the manner in which he suffered death, as an example for us. But, though this might strike many as the true interpretation, yet the objections to it are insuperable.

(1.) It does not accord with the proper meaning of the word end, (τελος.) That word is in no instance applied to death, nor does it properly express death. It properly denotes an end, term, termination, completion: and is used in the following senses:

(a) to denote the end, the termination, or the last of anything, Mk 3:26; 1Cor 15:24; Lk 21:9; Heb 7:3;

(b) an event, issue, or result, Mt 26:58; Rom 6:21; 2Cor 11:18;

(c) the final purpose,, that to which all the parts tend, and in which they terminate, 1Timm 1:5;

(d) tax, custom, or tribute--what is paid for public ends or purposes, Mt 17:25; Rom 13:7.

(2.) This interpretation, referring it to the death of the Saviour, would not accord with the remark of the apostle in the close of the verse, "that the Lord is very merciful." That is, what he says was "seen," or this was what was particularly illustrated in the case referred to. Yet this was not particularly seen in the death of the Lord Jesus. He was indeed most patient and submissive in his death, and it is true that he showed mercy to the penitent malefactor; but this

was not the particular and most prominent trait which he evinced in his death. Besides, if it had been, that would not have been the thing to which the apostle would have referred here. His object was to recommend patience under trials, not mercy shown to others; and this he does by showing

(a) that Job was an eminent instance of it, and

(b) that the result was such as to encourage us to be patient. The end or the result of the Divine dealings in his case was, that the Lord was "very pitiful and of tender mercy;" and we may hope that it will be so in our case, and should therefore be encouraged to be patient under our trials. That the Lord is very pitiful. As he showed deep compassion in the case of Job, we have equal reason to suppose that he will in our own.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

Is any among you afflicted? By sickness, bereavement, disappointment, persecutions, loss of health or property. The word used here refers to suffering evil of any kind, (κακοπαθει.)

Let him pray. That is, prayer is appropriate to trial. The mind naturally resorts to it, and in every way it is proper. God only can remove the source of sorrow; he can grant unto us "a happy issue out of all our afflictions;" he can make them the means of sanctifying the soul. Compare 2Chr 33:12; Ps 34:4; 107:6,13,28. It matters not what is the form of the trial, it is a privilege which all have to go to God in prayer. And it is an inestimable privilege. Health fails, friends die, property is lost, disappointments come upon us, danger threatens, death approaches--and to whom shall we go but to God? He ever lives. He never fails us or disappoints us if we trust in him, and his ear is ever open to our cries. This would be a sad world indeed, if it were not for the privilege of prayer. The last resource of millions who suffer--for millions suffer every day--would be taken away, if men were denied the access to the throne of grace. As it is, there is no one so poor that he may not pray; no one so disconsolate

and forsaken that he may not find in God a friend; no one so broken-hearted that he is not able to bind up his spirit. One of the designs of affliction is to lead us to the throne of grace; and it is a happy result of trials if we are led by our trials to seek God in prayer.

Is any merry? The word merry now conveys an idea which is not properly found in the original word here. It refers now, in common usage, to light and noisy pleasure; to that which is jovial; to that which is attended with laughter, or which causes laughter, as a merry jest. In the Scriptures, however, the word properly denotes cheerful, pleasant, agreeable, and is applied to a state of mind free from trouble--the opposite of affliction-happy, Prov 15:13,16; 17:22; Isa 24:7; Lk 15:23-24,29,32. The Greek word used here (ευθυμει) means, literally, to have the mind well, (ευ and θυμος;) that is, to have it happy, or free from trouble; to be cheerful.

Let him sing psalms. That is, if any one is happy; if he is in health, and is prospered; if he has his friends around him, and there is nothing to produce anxiety; if he has the free exercise of conscience and enjoys religion, it is proper to express that in notes of praise. Compare Eph 5:19-20. On the meaning of the word here rendered "sing psalms," Eph 5:9, where it is rendered making melody. It does not mean to sing psalms in contradistinction from singing hymns, but the reference is to any songs of praise. Praise is appropriate to such a state of mind. The heart naturally gives utterance to its emotions in songs of thanksgiving. The sentiment in this verse is well expressed in the beautiful stanza,
In every joy that crowns my days, In every pain I bear, My heart shall find delight in praise, Or seek relief in prayer. Mrs. Williams.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

Is any sick among you? In the previous verse the reference was to affliction in general, and the duty there urged was one that was applicable to all forms of trial. The subject of sickness, however, is so important, since it so often occurs, that a specific direction was desirable. That direction is to call in the aid of others to lead our thoughts, and to aid us in our devotions, because one who is sick is less able to direct his own reflections and to pray for himself than he

is in other forms of trial. Nothing is said here respecting the degree of sickness, whether it is that which would be fatal if these means were used or not; but the direction pertains to any kind of illness.

Let him call for the elders of the church. Gr., presbyters. Acts 15:2; and also Acts 11:30. It cannot be supposed that this refers to the apostles, for it could not be that they would be always accessible; besides, instructions like this were designed to have a permanent character, and to be applicable to the church at all times and in all places. The reference, therefore, is doubtless to the ordinary religious teachers of the congregation; the officers of the church intrusted with its spiritual interests. The spirit of the command would embrace those who are pastors, and any others to whom the spiritual interests of the congregation are confided--ruling elders, deacons, etc. If the allusion is to the ordinary officers of the church, it is evident that the cure to be hoped for (Jas 5:15) was not miraculous, but was that to be expected in the use of appropriate means accompanied by prayer. It may be added, as worthy of note, that the apostle says they should "call" for the elders of the church; that is, they should send for them. They should not wait for them to hear of their sickness, as they might happen to, but they should cause them to be informed of it, and give them an opportunity of visiting them and praying with them. Nothing is more common than for persons--even members of the church--to be sick a long time, and to presume that their pastor must know all about it; and then they wonder that he does not come to see them, and think hard of him because he does not. A pastor cannot be supposed to know everything; nor can it be presumed that he knows when persons are sick, any more than he can know anything else, unless he is apprized of it; and many hard thoughts, and many suspicions of neglect would be avoided, if, when persons are sick, they would in some way inform their pastor of it. It should always be presumed of a minister of the gospel that he is ready to visit the sick. But how can he go unless he is in some way apprized of the illness of those who need his counsel and his prayers? The sick send for their family physician; why should they presume that their pastor will know of their illness any more than that their physician will?

And let them pray over him. With him, and for him. A man who is sick is often little capable of praying himself; and it is a privilege to have some one to lead his thoughts in devotion. Besides, the prayer

of a good man may be of avail in restoring him to health, Jas 5:15. Prayer is always one important means of obtaining the Divine favour, and there is no place where it is more appropriate than by the bedside of sickness. That relief from pain may be granted; that the mind may be calm and submissive; that the medicines employed may be blessed to a restoration to health; that past sins may be forgiven; that he who is sick may be sanctified by his trials; that he may be restored to health, or prepared for his "last change"--all these are subjects of prayer which we feel to be appropriate in such a case, and every sick man should avail himself of the aid of those who "have an interest at the throne of grace," that they may be obtained.

In the name of the Lord. By the authority or direction of the Lord; or as an act in accordance with his will, and that will meet with his approbation. When we do anything that tends to promote virtue, to alleviate misery, to instruct ignorance, to save life, or to prepare others for heaven, it is right to feel that we are doing it in the name of the Lord. Compare for such uses of the phrase "in the name of the Lord," and "in my name," Mt 10:22; 18:6,20, Mt 19:29; 24:9; Mk 9:41; 13:13; Lk 21:12,17; Rev 2:3; Col 3:17. There is no reason to think that the phrase is used here to denote any peculiar religious rite or "sacrament." It was to be done in the name of the Lord, as any other good deed is.

15 and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

And the prayer of faith. The prayer offered in faith, or in the exercise of confidence in God. It is not said that the particular form of the faith exercised shall be that the sick man will certainly recover; but there is to be unwavering confidence in God, a belief that he will do what is best, and a cheerful committing of the cause into his hands. We express our earnest wish, and leave the case with him. The prayer of faith is to accompany the use of means, or all means would be ineffectual without the blessing of God. Shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. This must be understood, as such promises are everywhere, with this restriction, that they will be restored to health if it shall be the will of God; if he shall deem it for the best. It cannot be taken in the absolute and unconditional sense, for then, if these means were used, the sick person would always recover, no matter how often he might be sick, and he need never die. The design is to encourage them to the use of these means with

a strong hope that it would be effectual. It may fairly be inferred from this statement,

(1,) that there would be cases in large numbers where these means would be attended with this happy result; and,

(2,) that there was so much encouragement to do it that it would be proper in any case of sickness to make use of these means. It may be added, that no one can demonstrate that this promise has not been in numerous instances fulfilled. There are instances, not a few, where recovery from sickness seems to be in direct answer to prayer, and no one can prove that it is not so. Compare the case of Hezekiah, in Isa 38:1-5. And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Perhaps there maybe a particular allusion here to sins which may have brought on the sickness as a punishment. In that case the removal of the disease. in answer to prayer would be an evidence that the sin was pardoned. Compare Mt 9:2. But the promise may be understood in a more general sense as denoting that such sickness would be the means of bringing the sins of the past life to remembrance, especially if the one who was sick had been unfaithful to his Christian vows; and that the sickness in connexion with the prayers offered would bring him to true repentance, and would recover him from his wanderings. On backsliding and erring Christians sickness often has this effect; and the subsequent life is so devoted and consistent as to show that the past unfaithfulness of him who has been afflicted is forgiven. This passage (Jas 5:14-15) is important, not only for the counsel which it gives to the sick, but because it has been employed by the Roman Catholic communion as almost the only portion of the Bible referred to sustain one of the peculiar rites of their religion-- that of "extreme unction"--a "sacrament," as they suppose, to be administered to those who are dying. It is of importance, therefore, to inquire more particularly into its meaning. There can be but three views taken of the passage:

That it refers to a miraculous healing by the apostles, or by other early ministers of religion who were endowed with the power of healing diseases in this manner. This is the interpretation of Doddridge, Macknight, Benson, and others. But to this view the objections seem to me to be insuperable.

(a) Nothing of this kind is said by the apostle, and this is not necessary to be supposed in order to a fair interpretation of the passage.

(b) The reference, as already observed, is clearly not to the apostles, but to the ordinary officers of the church--for such a reference would be naturally understood by the word presbyters; and to suppose that this refers to miracles, would be to suppose that this was a common endowment of the ordinary ministers of religion. But there was no promise of this, and there is no evidence that they possessed it. In regard to the extent of the promise, "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover," Mk 16:17.

(c) If this referred to the power of working miracles, and if the promise was absolute, then death would not have occurred at all among the early disciples. It would have been easy to secure a restoration to health in any instance where a minister of religion was at hand. II. It is supposed by the Roman Catholics to give sanction to the practice of "extreme unction," and to prove that this was practised in the primitive church. But the objections to this are still more obvious.

(a) It was not to be performed at death, or in the immediate prospect of death, but in sickness at any time. There is no hint that it was to be only when the patient was past all hope of recovery, or in view of the fact that he was to die. But "extreme unction," from its very nature, is to be practised only where the patient is past all hope of recovery.

(b) It was not with a view to his death, but to his living, that it was to be practised at all. It was not that he might be prepared to die, but that he might he restored to health--"and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." But "extreme unction" can be with no such reference, and no such hope. It is only with the expectation that the patient is about to die; and if there were any expectation that he would be raised up even by this ordinance, it could not be administered as "extreme unction."

(c) The ordinance practised as "extreme unction" is a rite wholly unauthorized in the Scriptures, unless it be by this passage. There

are instances indeed of persons being embalmed after death. It was a fact also that the Saviour said of Mary, when she poured ointment on his body, that she "did it for his burial," or with reference to his burial, (Mt 26:12;)but the Saviour did not say that it was with reference to his death, or was designed in any way to prepare him to die, nor is there any instance in the Bible in which such a rite is mentioned. The ceremony of extreme unction has its foundation in two things: first, in superstition, in the desire of something that shall operate as a charm, or that shall possess physical efficiency in calming the apprehensions of a troubled conscience, and in preparing the guilty to die; and, second, in the fact that it gives immense power to the priesthood. Nothing is better adapted to impart such power than a prevalent belief that a minister of religion holds in his hands the ability to alleviate the pangs of the dying, and to furnish a sure passport to a world of bliss. There is deep philosophy in that which has led to the belief of this doctrine--for the dying look around for consolation and support, and they grasp at anything which will promise ease to a troubled conscience, and the hope of heaven. The gospel has made arrangements to meet this state of mind in a better way--in the evidence which the guilty may have that by repentance and faith their sins are blotted out through the blood of the cross. III. The remaining supposition, therefore, and, as it seems to me, the true one, is, that the anointing with oil was, in accordance with a common custom, regarded as medicinal, and that a blessing was to be invoked on this as a means of restoration to health. Besides what has been already said, the suggestions may be made in addition:

(a) This was, as we have seen, a common usage in the East, and is to this day.

(b) This interpretation meets all that is demanded to a fair understanding of what is said by the apostle.

(c) Everything thus directed is rational and proper. It is proper to call in the ministers of religion in time of sickness, and to ask their counsels and their prayers. It is proper to make use of the ordinary means of restorate to health. It was proper then, as it is now, to do this "in the name of the Lord;" that is, believing that it is in accordance with his benevolent arrangements, and making use of

means which he has appointed. And it was proper then, as it is now, having made of those means, to implore the Divine blessing on them, and to feel that their efficacy depends wholly on him. Thus used, there was ground of hope and of faith in regard to the recovery of the sufferer; and no one can show that in thousands of instances in the apostles' day, and since, the prayer of faith, accompanying the proper use of means, may not have raised up those who were on the borders of the grave, and who but for these means would have died.

16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Confess your faults one to another. This seems primarily to refer to those who were sick, since it is added, "that ye may be healed." The fair interpretation is, that it might be supposed that such confession would contribute to a restoration to health. The case supposed all along here (see Jas 5:15) is, that the sickness referred to had been brought upon the patient for his sins, apparently as a punishment for some particular transgressions. 1Cor 11:30. In such a case, it is said that if those who were sick would make confession of their sins, it would, in connexion with prayer, be an important means of restoration to health. The duty inculcated, and which is equally binding on all now, is, that if we are sick, and are conscious that we have injured any persons, to make confession to them. This indeed is a duty at all times, but in health it is often neglected, and there is a special propriety that such confession should be made when we are sick. The particular reason for doing it which is here specified is, that it would contribute to a restoration to health--"that ye may be healed." In the case specified, this might be supposed to contribute to a restoration to health from one of two causes:

(1.) If the sickness had been brought upon them as a special act of Divine visitation for sin, it might be hoped that when the confession was made the hand of God would be withdrawn; or

(2) in any case, if the mind was troubled by the recollection of guilt, it might be hoped that the calmness and peace resulting from confession would be favourable to a restoration to health. The former case would of course be more applicable to the times of the apostles; the latter would pertain to all times. Disease is often greatly aggravated by the trouble of mind which arises from conscious guilt;

and, in such a case, nothing will contribute more directly to recovery than the restoration of peace to the soul agitated by guilt and by the dread of a judgment to come. This may be secured by confession--confession made first to God, and then to those who are wronged. It may be added, that this is a duty to which we are prompted by the very nature of our feelings when we are sick, and by the fact that no one is willing to die with guilt on his conscience; without having done everything that he can to be at peace with all the world. This passage is one on which Roman Catholics rely to demonstrate the propriety of "auricular confession," or confession made to a priest with a view to an absolution of sin. The doctrine which is held on that point is, that it is a duty to confess to a priest, at certain seasons, all our sins, secret and open, of which we have been guilty; all our improper thoughts, desires, words, and actions; and that the priest has power to declare on such confession that the sins are forgiven. But never was any text less pertinent to prove a doctrine than this passage to demonstrate that. For,

(1,) the confession here enjoined is not to be made by a person in health, that he may obtain salvation, but by a sick person, that he may be healed.

(2.) As mutual confession is here enjoined, a priest would be as much bound to confess to the people as the people to a priest.

(3.) No mention is made of a priest at all, or even of a minister of religion, as the one to whom the confession is to be made.

(4.) The confession referred to is for "faults" with reference to "one another," that is, where one has injured another; and nothing is said of confessing faults to those whom we have not injured at all.

(5.) There is no mention here of absolution, either by a priest or any other person.

(6.) If anything is meant by absolution that is scriptural, it may as well be pronounced by one person as another; by a layman as a clergyman. All that it can mean is, that God promises pardon to those who are truly penitent, and this fact may as well be stated by

one person as another. No priest, no man whatever, is empowered to say to another either that he is truly penitent, or to forgive sin. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" None but he whose law has been violated, or who has been wronged, can pardon an offence. No third person can forgive a sin which a man has committed against a neighbour; no one but a parent can pardon the offences of which his own children have been guilty towards him; and who call put himself in the place of God, and presume to pardon the sins which his creatures have committed against him?

(7.) The practice of "auricular confession" is "evil, and only evil, and that continually." Nothing gives so much power to a priesthood as the supposition that they have the power of absolution. Nothing serves so much to pollute the soul as to keep impure thoughts before the mind long enough to make the confession, and to state them in words. Nothing gives a man so much power over a female as to have it supposed that it is required by religion, and appertains to the sacred office, that all that passes in the mind should be disclosed to him. The thought which but for the necessity of confession would have vanished at once; the image which would have departed as soon as it came before the mind but for the necessity of retaining it to make confession--these are the things over which a man would seek to have control, and to which he would desire to have access, if he wished to accomplish purposes of villany. The very thing which a seducer would desire would be the power of knowing all the thoughts of his intended victim; and if the thoughts which pass through the soul could be known, virtue would be safe nowhere. Nothing probably under the name of religion has ever done more to corrupt the morals of a community than the practice of auricular confession.

And pray one for another. One for the other; mutually. Those who have done injury, and those who are injured, should pray for each other. The apostle does not seem here, as in Jas 5:14-15, to refer particularly to the prayers of the ministers of religion, or the elders of the church, but refers to it as a duty appertaining to all Christians.

That ye may be healed. Not with reference to death, and therefore not relating to "extreme unction," but in order that the sick may be restored again to health. This is said in connexion with the duty of confession, as well as prayer; and it seems to be implied that both might contribute to a restoration to health. Of the way in which prayer would do this, there can be no doubt; for all healing comes from God, and it is reasonable to suppose that this might be bestowed in answer to prayer. Of the way in which confession might do this, see the remarks already made. We should be deciding without evidence if we should say that sickness never comes now as a particular judgment for some forms of sin, and that it might not be removed if the suffering offender would make full confession to God, or to him whom he has wronged, and should resolve to offend no more. Perhaps this is, oftener than we suppose, one of the methods which God takes to bring his offending and backsliding children back to himself, or to warn and reclaim the guilty. When, after being laid on a bed of pain, his children are led to reflect on their violated vows and their unfaithfulness, and resolve to sin no more, they are raised up again to health, and made eminently useful to the church. So calamity, by disease or in other forms, often comes upon the vicious and the abandoned. They are led to reflection and to repentance. They resolve to reform, and the natural effects of their sinful course are arrested, and they become examples of virtue and usefulness in the world.

The effectual fervent prayer. The word effectual is not the most happy translation here, since it seems to do little more than to state a truism--that a prayer which is effectual is availing--that is, that it is effectual. The Greek word (ενεργουμενη) would be better rendered by the word energetic, which indeed is derived from it. The word properly refers to that which has power; which in its own nature is fitted to produce an effect. It is not so much that it actually does produce an effect, as that it is fitted to do it. This is the kind of prayer referred to here. It is not listless, indifferent, cold, lifeless, as if there were no vitality in it, or power, but that which is adapted to be efficient--earnest, sincere, hearty, persevering. There is but a single word in the original to answer to the translation effectual fervent. Macknight and Doddridge suppose that the reference is to a kind of prayer "inwrought by the Spirit," or the "inwrought prayer;"

but the whole force of the original is expressed by the word energetic, or earnest.

Of a righteous man. The quality on which the success of the prayer depends is not the talent, learning, rank, wealth, or office of the man who prays, but the fact that he is a "righteous man," that is, a good man; and this may be found in the ranks of the poor, as certainly as the rich; among laymen, as well as among the ministers of religion; among slaves, as well as among their masters.

Availeth much. ισχυει. Is strong; has efficacy; prevails. The idea of strength or power is that which enters into the word; strength that overcomes resistance and secures the object. Compare.Mt 7:28; Acts 19:16; Rev 12:8. It has been said that "prayer moves the arm that moves the world;" and if there is anything that can prevail with God, it is prayer-- humble, fervent, earnest petitioning. We have no power to control him; we cannot dictate or prescribe to him; we cannot resist him in the execution of his purposes; but we may ASK him for what we desire, and he has graciously said that such asking may effect much for our own good and the good of our fellow-men. Nothing has been more clearly demonstrated in the history of the world than that prayer is effectual in obtaining blessings from God, and in accomplishing great and valuable purposes. It has indeed no intrinsic power; but God has graciously purposed that his favour shall be granted to those who call upon him, and that what no mere human power can effect should be produced by his power in answer to prayer.

17 Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

Elias. The common way of writing the word Elijah in the New Testament, Mt 11:14; 16:14; 17:3, etc.

Was a man subject to like passions as we are. This does not mean that Elijah was passionate in the sense in which that word is now commonly used; that is, that he was excitable or irritable, or that he was the victim of the same corrupt passions and propensities to which other men are subject; but that he was like afflicted; that he

was capable of suffering the same things, or being affected in the same manner. In other words, he was a mere man, subject to the same weaknesses and infirmities as other men. Acts 14:15. The apostle is illustrating the efficacy of prayer. In doing this, he refers to an undoubted case where prayer had such efficacy. But to this it might be objected that Elijah was a distinguished prophet, and that it was reasonable to suppose that his prayer would be heard. It might be said that his example could not be adduced to prove that the prayers of those who were not favoured with such advantages would be heard; and especially that it could not be argued from his case that the prayers of the ignorant, and of the weak, and of children and of servants, would be answered. To meet this, the apostle says that he was a mere man, with the same natural propensities and infirmities as other men, and that therefore his case is one which should encourage all to pray. It was an instance of the efficacy of prayer, and not an illustration of the power of a prophet.

And he prayed earnestly. Greek, "He prayed with prayer"--a Hebraism, to denote that he prayed earnestly. Compare Lk 22:15. This manner of speaking is common in Hebrew. Compare 1Sam 26:25; Ps 118:18, Lam 1:2 The reference here is undoubtedly to 1Kgs 17:1. In that place, however, it is not said that Elijah prayed, but that he said, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word." Either James interprets this as a prayer, because it could be accomplished only by prayer, or he states what had been handed down by tradition as the way in which the miracle was effected. There can be no reasonable doubt that prayer was employed in the case, for even the miracles of the Saviour were accomplished in connexion with prayer, Jn 11:41-42.

That it might not rain. Not to gratify any private resentment of his, but as a punishment on the land for the idolatry which prevailed in the time of Ahab. Famine was one of the principal methods by which God punished his people for their sins. And it rained not on the earth. On the land of Palestine, for so the word earth is frequently understood in the Bible. Lk 2:1. There is no reason to suppose that the famine extended beyond the country that was subject to Ahab. By the space. For the time. Of three years and six months. Lk 4:25 to see this explained. Compare Lightfoot, Horae Hebraicae, on Lk 4:25.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

This epistle concludes with an exhortation to do all we can in our places to promote the conversion and salvation of others, Jam 5:19,20. Some interpret these verses as an apology which the apostle is making for himself that he should so plainly and sharply reprove the Jewish Christians for their many faults and errors. And certainly James gives a very good reason why he was so much concerned to reclaim them from their errors, because in thus doing he should save souls, and hide a multitude of sins. But we are not to restrain this place to the apostle's converting such as erred from the truth; no, nor to other ministerial endeavours of the like nature, since it is said, "If any err, and one convert him, let him be who he will that does so good an office for another, he is therein an instrument of saving a soul from death." Those whom the apostle here calls brethren, he yet supposes liable to err. It is no mark of a wise or a holy man to boast of his being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge when he is in an error. But if any do err, be they ever so great, you must not be afraid to show them their error; and, be they ever so weak and little, you must not disdain to make them wiser and better. If they err from the truth, that is, from the gospel (the great rule and standard of truth), whether it be in opinion or practice, you must endeavour to bring them again to the rule. Errors in judgment and in life generally go together. There is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical miscarriage. There is no one habitually bad, but upon some bad principle. Now to convert such is to reduce them from their error, and to reclaim them from the evils they have been led into. We are not presently to accuse and exclaim against an erring brother, and seek to bring reproaches and calamities upon him, but to convert him: and, if by all our endeavours we cannot do this, yet we are nowhere empowered to persecute and destroy him. If we are instrumental in the conversion of any, we are said to convert them, though this be principally and efficiently the work of God. And, if we can do no more towards the conversion of sinners, yet we may do this--pray for the grace and Spirit of God to convert and change them. And let those that are in any way serviceable to convert others know what will be the happy consequence of their doing this: they may take great comfort in it at present, and they will meet with a crown at last. He that is said to err from the truth in Jam 5:19 is

described as erring in his way in Jam 5:20, and we cannot be said to convert any merely by altering their opinions, unless we can bring them to correct and amend their ways. This is conversion--to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and not to turn him from one party to another, or merely from one notion and way of thinking to another. He who thus converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death. There is a soul in the case; and what is done towards the salvation of the soul shall certainly turn to good account. The soul being the principal part of the man, the saving of that only is mentioned, but it includes the salvation of the whole man: the spirit shall be saved from hell, the body raised from the grave, and both saved from eternal death. And then, by such conversion of heart and life, a multitude of sins shall be hid. A most comfortable passage of scripture is this. We learn hence that though our sins are many, even a multitude, yet they may be hid or pardoned; and that when sin is turned from or forsaken it shall be hid, never to appear in judgment against us. Let people contrive to cover or excuse their sin as they will, there is no way effectually and finally to hide it but by forsaking it. Some make the sense of this text to be, that conversion shall prevent a multitude of sins; and it is a truth beyond dispute that many sins are prevented in the party converted, many also may be prevented in others that he may have an influence upon, or may converse with. Upon the whole, how should we lay out ourselves with all possible concern for the conversion of sinners! It will be for the happiness and salvation of the converted; it will prevent much mischief, and the spreading and multiplying of sin in the world; it will be for the glory and honour of God; and it will mightily redound to our comfort and renown in the great day. Those that turn many to righteousness, and those who help to do so, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth. Either doctrinally and speculatively, by embracing error; or practically, by falling into sinful practices. Either of these may be called "erring from the truth," because they are contrary to what the truth teaches and requires. What is here said does not appear to have any connexion with what precedes, but the apostle seems to have supposed that such a case might occur; and, in the conclusion of the epistle, he called their attention to the importance of endeavouring to save an erring brother, if such an instance should happen. The exhortation would be proper in addressing a letter to any church, or in publicly

addressing any congregation. And one convert him. This does not mean convert him as a sinner, or regenerate him, but turn him from the error of his way; bring him back from his wanderings; re-establish him in the truth, and in the practice of virtue and religion. So far as the word used here is concerned, (επιστρεψη,) he who had erred from the truth, and who was to be converted, may have been a true Christian before. The word means simply to turn, sc., from his way of error. Lk 22:32.

20 let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Our apostle concludes his epistle with an exhortation to the duty of fraternal correction and Christian admonition: "If, says he, any one among you, who hath made an outward profession of Christianity, shall, for fear of persecution, or otherwise turn aside from the rule of the gospel, whether in matters of faith or practice, such a person, either Minister or private Christian, as shall be instrumental, by prayer, reproof, or counsel to recover him out of that wandering and backsliding condition, shall have the honour to save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins; that is, he shall be a means of bringing him to a sight of his sins, and to seek a pardon of them, which is the only true and happy way of hiding and of covering of them."

Learn hence, 1. It is not sufficient that every one takes care of his own soul, but he must also watch over the souls of others; there is no brother so mean in the Christian church, but the care of his salvation belongeth to all in the Christian communion.

Learn, 2. What great honour God puts upon the creature, in calling him a Saviour to a restored and converted brother, he shall save a soul from death: but when God puts the glory of his own work upon the head of the creature, what cause has he to lay the crown of his excellency at the foot of God? When the honour of the supreme Cause is put upon the instrument, the instrument ought to ascribe all the efficacy and efficiency to the first cause, saying, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise. Amen.

shall hide a multitude of sins—not his own, but the sins of the converted. The Greek verb in the middle voice requires this. Pr 10:12 refers to charity "covering" the sins of others before men; James to one's effecting by the conversion of another that that other's sins be covered before God, namely, with Christ's atonement. He effects this by making the convert partaker in the Christian covenant for the remission of all sins. Though this hiding of sins was included in the previous "shall save," James expresses it to mark in detail the greatness of the blessing conferred on the penitent through the converter's instrumentality, and to incite others to the same good deed.

The First Epistle Of Peter
[1 Peter]

1 Peter-1

Salutation

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia,
Asia, and Bithynia,

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. On the word apostle, Rom 1:1; 1Cor 9:1, seq.

To the strangers. In the Greek, the word "elect" (1Pet 1:2) occurs here: εκλεκτοιςπαρεπιδημοις, "to the elect strangers." He here addresses them as elect; in the following verse he shows them in what way they were elected. See the Notes there. The word rendered strangers occurs only in three places in the New Testament; Heb 11:13, 1Pet 2:11, where it is rendered pilgrims, and in the place before us. Heb 11:13. The word means, literally, a by-resident, a sojourner among a people not one's own.--Robinson. There has been much diversity of opinion as to the persons here referred to: some supposing that the epistle was written to those who had been Jews, who were now converted, and who were known by the common appellation among their countrymen as "the scattered abroad," or the "dispersion ;" that is, those who were strangers or sojourners away from their native land; others, that the reference is to those who were called, among the Jews, "proselytes of the gate," or those who were admitted to certain external privileges among the Jews, (Mt 23:15;) and others, that the allusion is to Christians as such, without reference to their origin, and who are spoken of as strangers and pilgrims. That the apostle did not write merely to those who had been Jews, is clear from 1Pet 4:3,4, (comp. Intro. & 1;) and it seems probable that he means here Christians as such, without reference to their origin, who were scattered through the various provinces of Asia Minor. Yet it seems also probable that he did not use the term as denoting that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," or

with reference to the fact that the earth was not their home, as the word is used in Heb 11:13; but that he used the term as a Jew would naturally use it, accustomed, as he was, to employ it as denoting his own countrymen dwelling in distant lands, he would regard them still as the people of God, though dispersed abroad; as those who were away from what was properly the home of their fathers. So Peter addresses these Christians as the people of God, now scattered abroad; as similar in their condition to the Jews who had been dispersed among the Gentiles. Comp. the Intro., & 1. It is not necessarily implied that these persons were strangers to Peter, or that he had never seen them; though this was not improbably the fact in regard to most of them.

Scattered. Greek, of the dispersion, (διασποραις;) a term which a Jew would be likely to use who spoke of his countrymen dwelling among the heathen. Jn 7:35, Jas 1:1, where the same Greek word is found. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. Here, however, it is applied to Christians as dispersed or scattered abroad,

Throughout Pontus, etc. These were provinces of Asia Minor. Their position may be seen in the map prefixed to the Acts of the Apostles. On the situation of Pontus, Acts 2:9.

Elect. That is, chosen. The meaning here is, that they were in fact chosen. The word does not refer to the purpose to choose, but to the fact that they were chosen or selected by God as his people. It is a word commonly applied to the people of God as being chosen out of the world, and called to be his. The use of the word does not determine whether God had a previous eternal purpose to choose them or not. That must be determined by something else than the mere use of the term. This word has reference to the act of selecting them, without throwing any light on the question why it was done. See Mt 24:22,24,31, Mk 13:20, Lk 18:7, Rom 8:33; Col 3:12. Comp. Jn 15:16. The meaning is, that God had, on some account, a preference for them above others as his people, and had chosen them from the midst of others to be heirs of salvation. The word should be properly understood as applied to the act of choosing them, not to the purpose to choose them; the fact of his selecting them to be his, not the doctrine that he would choose them; and is a word,

therefore, which should be freely and gratefully used by all Christians, for it is a word in frequent use in the Bible, and there is nothing for which men should be more grateful than the fact that God has chosen them to salvation. Elsewhere we learn that the purpose to choose them was eternal, and that the reason of it was his own good pleasure. Eph 1:4,5. We are here also informed that it was in accordance with "the foreknowledge of God the Father."

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The Father is regarded, in the Scriptures, as the Author of the plan of salvation, and as having chosen his people to life, and given them to his Son to redeem and save, Jn 6:37,65, 17:2,6,11. It is affirmed here that the fact that they were elect was in some sense in accordance with the "foreknowledge of God." On the meaning of the phrase, Rom 8:29. The passage does not affirm that the thing which God "foreknew," and which was the reason of their being chosen, was, that they would of themselves be disposed to embrace the offer of salvation. The foreknowledge referred to might have been of many other things as constituting the reason which operated in the case; and it is not proper to assume that it could have been of this alone. It may mean that God foreknew all the events which would ever occur, and that he saw reasons why they should be selected rather than others; or that he foreknew all that could be made to bear on their salvation; or that he foreknew all that he would himself do to secure their salvation; or that he foreknew them as having been designated by his own eternal counsels; or that he foreknew all that could be accomplished by their instrumentality; or that he saw that they would believe; but it should not be assumed that the word means necessarily any one of these things. The simple fact here affirmed, which no one can deny, is, that there was foreknowledge in the case on the part of God. It was not the result of ignorance or of blind chance that they were selected. But if foreknown, must it not be certain? How could a thing which is foreknown be contingent or doubtful? The essential idea here is, that the original choice was on the part of God, and not on their part, and that this choice was founded on what he before knew to be best. He undoubtedly saw good and sufficient reasons why the choice should fall on them. I do not know that the reasons why he did it are revealed, or that they could be fully comprehended by us if they were. I am quite certain that it is not stated that it is because they would be more disposed of

themselves to embrace the Saviour than others; for the Scriptures abundantly teach, what every regenerated person feels to be true, that the fact that we are disposed to embrace the Saviour is to be traced to a Divine influence on our hearts, and not to ourselves. See Jn 6:65, Rom 9:16, Tit 3:5, Ps 110:2,3.

Through sanctification of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The Greek is, "by (εν) sanctification of the Spirit;" that is, it was by this influence or agency. The election that was purposed by the Father was carried into effect by the agency of the Spirit in making them holy. The word rendered sanctification (αγιασμος) is not used here in its usual and technical sense to denote the progressive holiness of believers, but in its more primitive and usual sense of holiness. 1Cor 1:30. It means here the being made holy; and the idea is, that we become in fact the chosen or elect of God by a work of the Spirit on our hearts making us holy; that is, renewing us in the Divine image. We are chosen by the Father, but it is necessary that the heart should be renewed and made holy by a work of grace, in order that we may actually become his chosen people. Though we are sinners, he proposes to save us; but we are not saved in our sins, nor can we regard ourselves as the children of God until we have evidence that we are born again. The purpose of God to save us found us unholy, and we become in fact his friends by being renewed in the temper of our mind. A man has reason to think that he is one of the elect of God, just so far as he has evidence that he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and so far as he has holiness of heart and life, AND NO FARTHER.

Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This expresses the design for which they had been chosen by the Father, and renewed by the Spirit. It was that they might obey God, and lead holy lives. On the phrase "unto obedience," Rom 1:5. The phrase "unto sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," means to cleansing from sin, or to holiness, since it was by the sprinkling of that blood that they were to be made holy. See it explained Heb 9:18, seq. Heb 12:24.

Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Rom 1:7. The phrase "be multiplied" means, "may it abound," or "may it be conferred abundantly on you." From this verse we may learn that they who are

chosen should be holy. Just in proportion as they have evidence that God has chosen them at all, they have evidence that he has chosen them to be holy; and, in fact, all the evidence which any man can have that he is among the elect, is that he is practically a holy man, and desires to become more and more so. No man can penetrate the secret counsels of the Almighty. No one can go up to heaven, and inspect the book of life to see if his name be there. No one should presume that his name is there without evidence. No one should depend on dreams, or raptures, or visions, as proof that his name is there. No one should expect a new revelation declaring to him that he is among the elect. All the proof which any man can have that he is among the chosen of God, is to be found in the evidences of personal piety; and any man who is willing to be a true Christian may have all that evidence in his own case. If any one, then, wishes to settle the question whether he is among the elect or not, the way is plain. Let him become a true Christian, and the whole matter is determined, for that is all the proof which any one has that he is chosen to salvation. Till a man is willing to do that, he should not complain of the doctrine of election. If he is not willing to become a Christian and to be saved, assuredly he should not complain that those who are think that they have evidence that they are the chosen of God.

2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:
Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The Christian's Hope and Salvation

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Cor 1:3.

Which according to his abundant mercy. Marg., as in the Greek, much. The idea is, that there was great mercy shown them in the fact that they were renewed. They had no claim to the favour, and the favour was great. Men are not begotten to the hope of heaven

because they have any claim on God, or because it would not be right for him to withhold the favour. Eph 2:4.

Hath begotten us again. The meaning is, that as God is the Author of our life in a natural sense, so he is the Author of our second life by regeneration. The Saviour said, (Jn 3:3,) that "except a man be born again" or begotten again, ηεννηθηανωθεν, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Peter here affirms that that change had occurred in regard to himself and those whom he was addressing. The word used here as a compound (αναγενναω) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, though it corresponds entirely with the words used by the Saviour in Jn 3:3,5,7. Perhaps the phrase "begotten again" would be better in each instance where the word occurs, the sense being rather that of being begotten again, than of being born again.

Unto a lively hope. The word lively we now use commonly in the sense of active, animated, quick; the word here used, however, means living, in contradistinction from that which is dead. The hope which they had, had living power. It was not cold, inoperative, dead. It was not a mere form--or a mere speculation--or a mere sentiment; it was that which was vital to their welfare, and which was active and powerful. On the nature of hope, Rom 8:24. Comp. Eph 2:12.

By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the foundation of our hope. It was a confirmation of what he declared as truth when he lived; it was a proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; it was a pledge that all who are united to him will be raised up. 1Cor 15:1, seq. 2Ti 1:10; 1Thes 4:14.

To an inheritance. Through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus we now cherish the hope of that future inheritance in heaven. On the word inheritance, Acts 20:32; Eph 1:11, Eph 1:14, Eph 1:18; Col 1:12. Christians are regarded as the adopted children of God, and heaven is spoken of as their inheritance--as what their Father will bestow on them as the proof of his love.

Incorruptible. It will not fade away and vanish, as that which we inherit in this world does. See the word explained 1Cor 9:25. The meaning here is, that the inheritance will be imperishable, or will endure for ever. Here, to whatever we may be heirs, we must soon part with the inheritance; there it will be eternal.

And undefiled. Heb 7:26; Heb 13:4; Jas 1:27. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. As applied to an inheritance, it means that it will be pure. It will not have been obtained by dishonesty, nor will it be held by fraud; it will not be such as will corrupt the soul, or tempt to extravagance, sensuality, and lust, as a rich inheritance often does here; it will be such that its eternal enjoyment will never tend in any manner to defile the heart. "How many estates," says Benson, "have been got by fraudulent and unjust methods; by poisoning, or in some other way murdering the right heir; by cheating of helpless orphans; by ruining the fatherless and widows; by oppressing their neighbours, or grinding the faces of the poor, and taking their garments or vineyards from them! But this future inheritance of the saints is stained by none of these vices; it is neither got nor detained by any of these methods; nor shall persons polluted with vice have any share in it." Here no one can be heir to an inheritance of gold or houses without danger of soon sinking into indolence, effeminacy, or vice; there the inheritance may be enjoyed for ever, and the soul continually advance in, knowledge, holiness, and the active service of God.

And that fadeth not away. Gr. αμαραντον. This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the word αμαραντινος (amarantine) occurs in @1Pe 5:4, applied to a crown or garland. The word is properly applied to that which does not fade or wither, in contradistinction from a flower that fades. It may then denote anything that is enduring, and is applied to the future inheritance of the saints to describe its perpetuity in all its brilliance and splendour, in contrast with the fading nature of all that is earthly. The idea here, therefore, is not precisely the same as is expressed by the word "incorruptible." Both words indeed denote perpetuity, but that refers to perpetuity in contrast with decay; this denotes perpetuity in the sense that everything there will be kept in its original brightness and beauty. The crown of glory, though worn for millions of ages, will

not be dimmed; the golden streets will lose none of their lustre; the flowers that bloom on the banks of the river of life will always be as rich in colour, and as fragrant, as when we first beheld them.

Reserved in heaven for you. Marg., us. The difference in the text margin arises from the various readings in MSS. The common reading is "for you." The sense is not materially affected. The idea is, that it is an inheritance appointed for us, and kept by one who can make it sure to us, and who will certainly bestow it upon us. Mt 25:34; Jn 14:2; Col 1:5.

Who are kept by the power of God. That is, "kept" or preserved in the faith and hope of the gospel; who are preserved from apostasy, or so kept that you will finally obtain salvation. The word which is here used and rendered kept, (φρουρεω--phroureo,) is rendered in 2Cor 11:32, kept with a garrison; in Gal 3:23, and here, kept; in Php 4:7, shall keep. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means to keep, as in a garrison or fortress; or as with a military watch. The idea is, that there was a faithful guardianship exercised over them to save them from danger, as a castle or garrison is watched to guard it against the approach of an enemy. The meaning is, that they were weak in themselves, and were surrounded by temptations; and that the only reason why they were preserved was, that God exerted his power to keep them. The only reason which any Christians have to suppose they will ever reach heaven, is the fact that God keeps them by his own power. Comp. Php 1:6; 2Ti 1:12; 2Ti 4:18. If it were left to the will of man; to the strength of his own resolutions; to his power to meet temptations, and to any probability that he would of himself continue to walk in the path of life, there would be no certainty that any one would be saved.

Through faith. That is, he does not keep us by the mere exertion of power, but he excites faith in our hearts, and makes that the means of keeping us. As long as we have faith in God, and in his promises, we are safe. When that fails, we are weak; and if it should fail altogether, we could not be saved. Eph 2:8.

Unto salvation. Not preserved for a little period, and then suffered to fall away, but so kept as to be saved. We may remark here that Peter, as well as Paul, believed in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If he did not, how could he have addressed these Christians in this manner, and said that they were "kept by the power of God unto salvation". What evidence could he have had that they would obtain salvation, unless he believed in the general truth that it was the purpose of God to keep all who were truly converted?

Ready to be revealed in the last time. That is, when the world shall close. Then it shall be made manifest to assembled worlds that such an inheritance was "reserved" for you, and that you were "kept" in order to inherit it. Mt 25:34. This verse, then, teaches that the doctrine that the saints will persevere and be saved, is true. They are "kept by the power of God to salvation;" and as God has all power, and guards them with reference to this end, it cannot be but that they will be saved. It may be added,

(a.) that it is very desirable that the doctrine should be true. Man is so weak and feeble, so liable to fall, and so exposed to temptation, that it is in itself every way a thing to be wished that his salvation should be in some safer hands than his own.

(b.) If it is desirable that it should be true, it is fair to infer that it is true, for God has made all the arrangements for the salvation of his people which are really desirable and proper.

(c.) The only security for the salvation of any one is founded on that doctrine. If it were left entirely to the hands of men, even the best of men, what assurance could there be that any one could be saved Did not Adam fall? Did not holy angels fall? Have not some of the best of men fallen into sin? And who has such a strength of holiness that he could certainly confide in it to make his own salvation sure? Any man must know little of himself, and of the human heart, who supposes that he has such a strength of virtue that he would never fall away if left to himself. But if this be so, then his only hope of salvation is in the fact that God intends to "keep his people by his own power through faith unto salvation"

4 to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not
away, reserved in heaven for you,
5 who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready
to be revealed in the last time.
6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye
are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

Wherein ye greatly rejoice. In which hope of salvation. The idea is, that the prospect which they had of the future inheritance was to them a source of the highest joy, even in the midst of their many sufferings and trials. On the general grounds for rejoicing, Rom 5:1, Rom 5:2; Php 3:1; Php 4:4; 1Thes 5:16. 1Pet 1:8. The particular meaning here is, that the hope which they had of their future inheritance enabled them to rejoice even in the midst of persecutions and trials. It not only sustained them, but it made them happy. That must be a valuable religion which will make men happy in the midst of persecutions and heavy calamities.

Though now for a season. A short period--ολιγον. It would be in fact only for a brief period, even if it should continue through the whole of life. 2Cor 4:17: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment." It is possible, however, that Peter supposed that the trials which they then experienced would soon pass over. They may have been suffering persecutions which he hoped would not long continue.

If need be. This phrase seems to have been thrown in here to intimate that there was a necessity for their afflictions, or that there was "need" that they should pass through these trials. There was some good to be accomplished by them, which made it desirable and proper that they should be thus afflicted. The sense is, "since there is need;" though the apostle expresses it more delicately by suggesting the possibility that there might be need of it, instead of saying absolutely that there was need. It is the kind of language which we would use in respect to one who was greatly afflicted, by suggesting to him, in the most tender manner, that there might be things in his character which God designed to correct by trials, instead of saying roughly and bluntly that such was undoubtedly the fact. We would not say to such a person, "you certainly needed this affliction to lead you to amend your life:" but, it may be that there is something in your character which makes it desirable, or that God

intends that some good results shall come from it which will show that it is wisely ordered."

Ye are in heaviness. Gr., "Ye are sorrowing," λυπηθεντες; you are sad, or grieved, Mt 14:9, 17:23.

Through manifold temptations. Through many kinds of trials, for so the word rendered temptation (πειρασμος) means, Jas 1:2,12. Mt 4:1, 6:13. The meaning here is, that they now endured many things which were fitted to try or test their faith. These might have consisted of poverty, persecution, sickness, or the efforts of others to lead them to renounce their religion, and to go back to their former state of unbelief. Any one or all of these would try them, and would show whether their religion was genuine. On the various ways which God has of trying his people, Isa 28:23, seq.

7 that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold
that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto
praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

That the trial of your faith. The putting of your religion to the test, and showing what is its real nature. Jas 1:3,12. Being much more precious than of gold. This does not mean that their faith was much more precious than gold, but that the testing of it, (δοκιμιον,) the process of showing whether it was or was not genuine, was a much more important and valuable process than that of testing gold in the fire. More important results were to be arrived at by it, and it was more desirable that it should be done. That perisheth. Not that gold perishes by the process of being tried in the fire, for this is not the fact, and the connexion does not demand this interpretation. The idea is, that gold, however valuable it is, is a perishable thing. It is not an enduring, imperishable, indestructible thing, like religion. It may not perish in the fire, but it will in some way, for it will not endure for ever. Though it be tried with fire. This refers to the gold. See the Greek. The meaning is, that gold, though it will bear the action of fire, is yet a destructible thing, and will not endure for ever. It is more desirable to test religion than it is gold, because it is more valuable. It pertains to that which is eternal and indestructible, and it is therefore of more importance to show its true quality, and to free it from every improper mixture. Might be found unto praise. That is, might be found to be genuine, and such as to meet the praise or commendation of the final Judge. And honour. That honour might

be done to it before assembled worlds. And glory. That it might be rewarded with that glory which will be then conferred on all who have shown, in the various trials of life, that they had true religion. At the appearing of Jesus Christ. To judge the world. Comp. Mt 25:31, Acts 1:11, 1Thes 4:16, 2Thes 2:8, 1Timm 6:14, 2Ti 4:1,8, Tit 2:13. From these two verses (1Pet 1:6,7) we may learn: I. That it is desirable that the faith of Christians should be tried.

(a.) It is desirable to know whether that which appears to be religion is genuine, as it is desirable to know whether that which appears to be gold is genuine. To gold we apply the action of intense heat, that we may know whether it is what it appears to be; and as religion is of more value than gold, so it is more desirable that it should be subjected to the proper tests, that its nature may be ascertained. There is much which appears to be gold, which is of no value, as there is much which appears to be religion, which is no value. The one is worth no more than the other, unless it is genuine.

(b.) It is desirable in order to show its true value. It is of great importance to know what that which is claimed to be gold is worth for the purposes to which gold is usually applied; and so it is in regard to religion. Religion claims to be of more value to man than anything else. It asserts its power to do that for the intellect and the heart which nothing else can do; to impart consolation in the various trials of life which nothing else can impart; and to give a support which nothing else can on the bed of death. It is very desirable, therefore, that in these various situations it should show its power; that is, that its friends should be in these various conditions, in order that they may illustrate the true value of religion.

(c.) It is desirable that true religion should be separated from all alloy. There is often much alloy in gold, and it is desirable that it should be separated from it, in order that it may be pure. So it is in religion. It is often combined with much that is unholy and impure; much that dims its lustre and mars its beauty; much that prevents its producing the effect which it would otherwise produce. Gold is, indeed, often better, for some purposes, for having some alloy mixed with it; but not so with religion. It is never better for having a little pride, or vanity, or selfishness, or meanness, or worldliness, or sensuality mingled with it; and that which will remove these things from our religion will be a favour to us.

II. God takes various methods of trying his people, with a design to test the value of their piety, and to separate it from all impure mixtures.

(1.) He tries his people by prosperity--often as decisive a test of piety as can be applied to it. There is much pretended piety, which will bear adversity, but which will not bear prosperity. The piety of a man is decisively tested by popularity; by the flatteries of the world; by a sudden increase of property; and in such circumstances it is often conclusively shown that there is no true religion in the soul.

(2.) He tries his people in adversity. He lays his hand on them heavily, to show

(a.) whether they will bear up under their trials, and persevere in his service;

(b.) to show whether their religion will keep them from murmuring or complaining;

(c.) to show whether it is adapted to comfort and sustain the soul.

(3.) He tries his people by sudden transition from one to the other. We get accustomed to a uniform course of life, whether it be joy or sorrow; and the religion which is adapted to a uniform course may be little fitted to transitions from one condition of life to another. In prosperity we may have shown that we were grateful, and benevolent, and disposed to serve God; but our religion will be subjected to a new test, if we are suddenly reduced to poverty. In sickness and poverty, we learn to be patient and resigned, and perhaps even happy. But the religion which we then cultivated may be little adapted to a sudden transition to prosperity; and in such a transition, there would be a new trial of our faith. That piety which shone so much on a bed of sickness, might be little fitted to shine in circumstances of sudden prosperity. The human frame may become accustomed either to the intense cold of the polar regions, or to the burning heats of the equator; but in neither case might it bear a transition from one to the other. It is such a transition that is a more

decisive test of its powers of endurance than either intense heat or cold, if steadily prolonged.

III. Religion will bear any trial which may be applied to it, as gold will bear the action of fire. IV. Religion is imperishable in its nature. Even the most fine gold will perish. Time will corrode it, or it will be worn away by use, or it will be destroyed at the universal conflagration; but time and use will not wear out religion, and it will live on through the fires that will consume everything else. V. Christians should be willing to pass through trials.

(a.) They will purify their religion, as the fire will remove dross from gold.

(b.) They will make it shine more brightly, as gold does when it comes out of the furnace.

(c.) They disclose more fully its value.

(d.) They will furnish an evidence that we shall be saved; for that religion which will bear the tests that God applies to it in the present life, will bear the test of the final trial.

8 whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him*
not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Whom having not seen, ye love. This epistle was addressed to those who were "strangers scattered abroad," 1Pet 1:1, and it is evident that they had not personally seen the Lord Jesus. Yet they had heard of his character, his preaching, his sacrifice for sin, and his resurrection and ascension, and they had learned to love him.

(1.) It is possible to love one whom we have not seen. Thus we may love God, whom no "eye hath seen," 1Jn 4:20; and thus we may love a benefactor, from whom we have received important benefits, whom we have never beheld.

(2.) We may love the character of one whom we have never seen, and from whom we may never have received any particular favours. We may love his uprightness, his patriotism, his benignity, as represented to us. We might love him the more if we should become

personally acquainted with him, and if we should receive important favours from him; but it is possible to feel a sense of strong admiration for such a character in itself.

(3.) That may be a very pure love which we have for one whom we have never seen. It may be based on simple excellence of character; and in such a case there is the least chance for any intermingling of selfishness, or any improper emotion of any kind.

(4.) We may love a friend as really and as strongly when he is absent, as when he is with us. The wide ocean that rolls between us and a child, does not diminish the ardour of our affection for him; and the Christian friend that has gone to heaven, we may love no less than when he sat with us at the fireside.

(5.) Millions, and hundreds of millions, have been led to love the Saviour, who have never seen him. They have seen--not with the bodily eye, but with the eye of faith--the inimitable beauty of his character, and have been brought to love him with an ardour of affection which they never had for any other one.

(6.) There is every reason why we should love him.

(a.) His character is infinitely lovely.

(b.) He has done more for us than any other one who ever lived among men. He died for us, to redeem our souls, he rose, and brought life and immortality to light. He ever lives to intercede for us in heaven. He is employed in preparing mansions of rest for us in the skies, and he will come and take us to himself, that we may be with him for ever. Such a Saviour ought to be loved, is loved, and will be loved. The strongest attachments which have ever existed on earth have been for this unseen Saviour. There has been a love for him stronger than that for father, or mother, or wife, or sister, or home, or country. It has been so strong, that thousands have been willing, on account of it, to bear the torture of the rack or the stake. It has been so strong, that thousands of youth of the finest minds, and the most flattering prospects of distinction, have been willing to leave the comforts of a civilized land, and to go among the benighted heathen, to tell them the story of a Saviour's life and death. It has been so strong, that unnumbered multitudes have longed, more than

they have for all other things, that they might see him, and be with him, and abide with him for ever and ever. Php 1:23. In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing. He is now in heaven, and to mortal eyes now invisible, like his Father. Faith in him is the source and fountain of our joy. It makes invisible things real, and enables us to feel and act, in view of them, with the same degree of certainty if we saw them. Indeed, the conviction to the mind of a true believer that there is a Saviour, is as certain and as strong as if he saw him; and the same may be said of his conviction of the existence of heaven, and of eternal realities. If it should be said that filth may deceive us, we may reply,

(1.) May not our bodily senses also deceive us? Does the eye never deceive? Are there no optical illusions? Does the ear never deceive? Are there no sounds which are mistaken? Do the taste and the smell never deceive? Are we never mistaken in the report which they bring to us? And does the sense of feeling never deceive? Are we never mistaken in the size, the hardness, the figure of objects which we handle? But,

(2.) for all the practical purposes of life, the senses are correct guides, and do not in general lead us astray. So,

(3.) there are objects of faith about which we are never deceived, and where we do act and must act with the same confidence as if we had personally seen them. Are we deceived about the existence of London, or Paris, or Canton, though we may never have seen either? May not a merchant embark with perfect propriety in a commercial enterprise, on the supposition that there is such a place as London or Canton, though he has never seen them? Would he not be reputed mad, if he should refuse to do it on this ground? And so, may not a man, in believing that there is a heaven, and in forming his plans for it, though he has not yet seen it, act as rationally and as wisely as he who forms his plans on the supposition that there is such a place as Canton? Ye rejoice. Ye do rejoice; not merely ye ought to rejoice. It may be said of Christians that they do in fact rejoice; they are happy. The people of the world often suppose that religion makes its professors sad and melancholy. That there are those who have not great comfort in their religion, no one indeed can doubt; but this arises from several causes entirely independent of their religion. Some have melancholy temperaments, and are not happy in

anything. Some have little evidence that they are Christians, and their sadness arises not from religion, but from the want of it. But that true religion does make its possessors happy, any one may easily satisfy himself by asking any number of sincere Christians, of any denomination, whom he may meet. With one accord they will say to him that they have a happiness which they never found before; that however much they may have possessed of the wealth, the honours, and the pleasures of the world--and they who are now Christians have not all of them been strangers to these things--they never knew solid and substantial peace till they found it in religion. And why should they not be believed? The world would believe them in other things; why will they not when they declare that religion does not make them gloomy, but happy. With joy unspeakable. A very strong expression, and yet verified in thousands of cases among young converts, and among those in the maturer days of piety. There are thousands who can say that their happiness when they first had evidence that their sins were forgiven, that the burden of guilt was rolled away, and that they were the children of God, was unspeakable. They had no words to express it, it was so full and so new.

"Tongue can never express The sweet comfort and peace of a soul in its earliest love."

And so there have been thousands of mature Christians who can adopt the same language, and who could find no words to express the peace and joy which they have found in the love of Christ, and the hope of heaven. And why are not all Christians enabled to say constantly that they "rejoice with joy unspeakable?" Is it not a privilege which they might possess? Is there anything in the nature of religion which forbids it? Why should not one be filled with constant joy who has the hope of dwelling in a world of glory for ever? Comp. Jn 14:27, 16:22. And full of glory. (1.) Of anticipated glory--of the prospect of enjoying the glory of heaven. (2.) Of present glory--with a joy even now which is of the same nature as that in heaven; a happiness the same in kind, though not in degree, as that which will be ours in a brighter world. The saints on earth partake of the same kind of joy which they will have in heaven; for

the happiness of heaven will be but an expansion, a prolongation, and a purifying of that which they have here. Eph 1:14.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. The result or object of your faith; that is, what your faith is designed and adapted to secure. Rom 10:4. The word rendered receiving is used here as indicating that they would surely obtain that. They even now had such peace and joy in believing, that it furnished undoubted evidence that they would be saved; and such that it might be said that even now they were saved. The condition of one who is a true Christian here is so secure that it may even now be called salvation.

9 receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you:

Of which salvation. Of the certainty that this system of religion, securing the salvation of the soul, would be revealed. The object of this reference to the prophets seems to be to lead them to value the religion which they professed more highly, and to encourage them to bear their trials with patience. They were in a condition, in many respects, far superior to that of the prophets. They had the full light of the gospel. The prophets saw it only at a distance and but dimly, and were obliged to search anxiously that they might understand the nature of that system of which they were appointed to furnish the comparatively obscure prophetic intimations.

The prophets. This language would imply that this had been a common and prevalent wish of the prophets. Have enquired. This word is intensive. It means that they sought out, or scrutinized with care the revelations made to them, that they might understand exactly what was implied in that which they were appointed to record in respect to the salvation which was to be made known through the Messiah. See the following places where the same word is used which occurs here: Lk 11:50,51, Acts 15:17, Rom 3:11, Heb 11:6, 12:17.

And searched diligently. εξερευναω Comp. Dan 9:2,3. The word here used means to search out, to trace out, to explore. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament, though one of the words from

which this is compounded (ερευναω) occurs. Jn 5:39, Jn 8:52, Rom 8:27, 1Cor 2:10, Rev 2:23. The idea is, that they perceived that in their communications there were some great and glorious truths which they did not fully comprehend, and that they diligently employed their natural faculties to understand that which they were appointed to impart to succeeding generations. They thus became students and interpreters for themselves of their own predictions. They were not only prophets, but men. They had souls to be saved in the same way as others. They had hearts to be sanctified by the truth; and it was needful, in order to this, that truth should be applied to their own hearts in the same way as to others. The mere fact that they were the channels or organs for imparting truth to others would not save them, any more than the fact that a man now preaches truth to others will save himself, or than the fact that a sutler delivers bread to an army will nourish and support his own body.

Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Of the favour that should be shown to you in the gospel. Though the predictions which they uttered appeared to the men of their own times, and perhaps to themselves, obscures yet they were in fact prophecies of what was to come, and of the favours which, under another dispensation, would be bestowed upon the people of God. The apostle does not mean to say that they prophesied particularly of those persons to whom he was then writing, but that their prophecies were in fact for their benefit, for the things which they predicted had actually terminated on them, The benefit was as real as though the predictions had been solely on their account.

11 searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Searching what. That is, examining their own predictions with care, to ascertain what they meant. They studied them as we do the predictions which others have made; and though the prophets were the medium through which the truth was made known, yet their own predictions became a subject of careful investigation to themselves. The expression here used in the original, rendered "what," (εις τινα,) literally, "unto what," may mean, so far as the Greek is concerned, either "what time," or "what people," or "what person;" that is, with reference to what person the prophecies were really uttered. The

latter, it seems to me, is the correct interpretation, meaning that they inquired in regard to him, who he would be, what would be his character, and what would be the nature of the work which he would perform. There can be no doubt that they understood that their predictions related to the Messiah; but till it is not improper to suppose that it was with them an interesting inquiry what sort of a person he would be, and what would be the nature of the work which he would perform. This interpretation of the phrase ειςτινα, (unto what or whom,) it should be observed, however, is not that which is commonly given of the passage. Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Whitby, Benson, and Grotius suppose it to refer to time, meaning that they inquired at what time, or when these things would occur. Macknight thinks it refers to people, (λαον,) meaning that they diligently inquired what people would put him to death. But the most obvious interpretation in that which I have suggested above, meaning that they made particular inquiry to whom their prophecies related--what was his rank and character, and what was to be the nature of his work. What would be a more natural inquiry for them than this? What would be more important? And how interesting is the thought that when Isaiah, for example, had given utterance to the sublime predictions which we now have of the Messiah, in his prophecies, he sat himself down with the spirit of a little child, to learn by prayer and study, what was fully implied in the amazing words which the Spirit had taught him to record! How much of mystery might seem still to hang around the subject! And how intent would such a mind be to know what was the full import of those words!

Or what manner of time. This phrase, in Greek, (ποιονκαιρον,) would properly relate, not to the exact time when these things would occur, but to the character or condition of the age when they would take place; perhaps referring to the state of the world at that period, the preparation to receive the gospel, and the probable manner in which the great message-would be received. Perhaps, however, the inquiry in their minds pertained to the time when the predictions would be fulfilled, as well as to the condition of the world when the event takes place. The meaning of the Greek phrase would not exclude this latter sense. There are not unfrequent indications of time in the prophets, (comp. Dan 9:24, seq.;) and these indications were of so clear a character, that when the Saviour actually appeared there was a general expectation that the event would then occur. Mt 2:2.

The Spirit of Christ which was in them. This does not prove that they knew that this was the Spirit of Christ, but is only a declaration of Peter that it was actually so. It is not probable that the prophets distinctly understood that the Spirit of inspiration, by which they were led to foretell future events, was peculiarly the Spirit of Christ. They understood that they were inspired; but there is no intimation, with which I am acquainted, in their writings, that they regarded themselves as inspired by the Messiah. It was not improper, however, for Peter to say that the Spirit by which they were influenced was in fact the Spirit of Christ, so called because that Spirit which suggested these future events to them was given as the great Medium of all revealed truth to the world. Comp. Heb 1:3, Jn 1:9, 14:16,26, 16:7, Isa 49:6. It is clear from this passage,

(1.) that Christ must have had an existence before his incarnation; and,

(2.) that he must have understood then what would occur to him when he should become incarnate; that is, it must have been arranged or determined beforehand.

Did signify. Meant to intimate or manifest to them, (εδηλου;) or what was implied in the communications made to them.

When it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ. As Isaiah, Isa 53; Dan 9:25-27. They saw clearly that the Messiah was to suffer; and doubtless this was the common doctrine of the prophets, and the common expectation of the pious part of the Jewish nation. Yet it is not necessary to suppose that they had clear apprehensions of his sufferings, or were able to reconcile all that was said on that subject with what was said of his glory and his triumphs. There was much about those sufferings which they wished to learn, as there is much still which we desire to know. We have no reason to suppose that there were any views of the sufferings of the Messiah communicated to the prophets except what we now have in the Old Testament; and to see the force of what Peter says, we ought to imagine what would

be our views of him if all that we have known of Christ as history were obliterated, and we had only the knowledge which we could derive from the Old Testament. As has been already intimated, it is probable that they studied their own predictions, just as we would study them if we had not the advantage of applying to them the facts which have actually occurred.

And the glory that should follow. That is, they saw that there would be glory which would be the result of his sufferings, but they did not clearly see what it would be. They had some knowledge that he would be raised from the dead, Ps 16:8-11; comp. Acts 2:25-28; they knew that he would "see of the travail of his soul, and would be satisfied," (Isa 53:11;) they had some large views of the effects of the gospel on the nations of the earth, Isa 11; Isa 25:7,8; Isa 60; Isa 66. But there were many things respecting his glorification which it cannot be supposed they clearly understood; and it is reasonable to presume that they made the comparatively few and obscure intimations in their own writings in relation to this, the subject of profound and prayerful inquiry.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

Unto whom it was revealed. They were not permitted to know fully the import of the predictions which they were made the instruments of communicating to mankind, but they understood that they were intended for the benefit of future ages. That not unto themselves. We are not to suppose that they derived no benefit from their own predictions; for, as far as they understood the truth, it was as much adapted to sanctify and comfort them as it is us now: but the meaning is, that their messages had reference mainly to future times, and that the full benefit of them would be experienced only in distant ages. Heb 11:39,40.

Unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you. Not unto us by name, but their ministrations had reference to the times of the Messiah; and those to whom Peter wrote, in common with all Christians, were those who were to enjoy the fruits of the communications which they made. The word reported means announced, or made known. By them that have preached the gospel

unto you. The apostles, who have made known unto you, in their true sense, the things which the prophets predicted, the import of which they themselves were so desirous of understanding.

With the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Accompanied by the influences of the Holy Ghost bearing those truths to tile heart, and confirming them to the soul. It was the same Spirit which inspired the prophets which conveyed those truths to the souls of the early Christians, and which discloses them to true believers in every age. Comp. Jn 16:13,14, Acts 2:4, 10:44,45. The object of Peter by thus referring to the prophets, and to the interest which they took in the things which those to whom he wrote now enjoyed, seems to have been, to impress on them a deep sense of the value of the gospel, and of the great privileges which they enjoyed. They were reaping the benefit of all the labours of the prophets. They were permitted to see truth clearly, which the prophets themselves saw only obscurely. They were, in many respects, more favoured than even those holy men had been. It was for them that the prophets had spoken the word of the Lord; for them and their salvation that a long line of the most holy men that the world ever saw, had lived, and toiled, and suffered; and while they themselves had not been allowed to understand the full import of their own predictions, the most humble believer was permitted to see what the most distinguished prophet never saw. See Mt 13:17.

Which things the angels desire to look into. The object of this reference to the angels is the same as that to the prophets. It is to impress on Christians a sense of the value of that gospel which they had received, and to show them the greatness of their privileges in being, made partakers of it. It had excited the deepest interest among the most holy men on earth, and even among the inhabitants of the skies. They were enjoying the full revelation of what even the angels had desired more fully to understand, and to comprehend which they had employed their great powers of investigation. The things which are here referred to, εις α -unto which, are those which the prophets were so desirous to understand--the great truths respecting the sufferings of Christ, the glory which would follow, and the nature and effects of the gospel. In all the events pertaining to the redemption of a world they felt a deep interest. The word which is

rendered "to look," (παρακυψαι,) is rendered stooping down, and stooped down, in Lk 24:12, Jn 20:5,11; looketh, in Jas 1:25; and look, in the place before us. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, to stoop down near by anything; to bend forward near, in order to look at anything more closely.--Robinson, Lex. It would denote that state where one, who was before at so great a distance that he could not dearly see an object, should draw nearer, stooping down in order that he might observe it more distinctly. It is possible, as Grotius supposes, that there may be an allusion here to the posture of the cherubim over the mercy-seat, represented as looking down with an intense gaze, as if to behold what was in the ark. But it is not necessary to suppose that this is the allusion, nor is it absolutely certain that that was the posture of the cherubim. Heb 9:5. All that is necessarily implied in the language is, that the angels had an intense desire to look into these things; that they contemplated them with interest and fixed attention, like one who comes near to an object, and looks narrowly upon it. In illustration of this sentiment, we may make the following suggestions: I The angels, doubtless, desire to look into all the manifestations of the character of God, wherever those manifestations are made.

(1.) It is not unreasonable to suppose that, to a great degree, they acquire the knowledge of God as all other creatures do. They are not omniscient, and cannot be supposed to comprehend at glance all his doings.

(2.) They doubtless employ their faculties, substantially as we do, in the investigation of truth; that is, from things known they seek to learn those that are even unknown.

(3.) It is not unreasonable to suppose that there are many things in relation to the Divine character and plans, which they do not yet understand. They know, undoubtedly, much more than we do; but there are plans and purposes of God which are yet made known to none of his creatures. No one can doubt that these plans and purposes must be the object of the attentive study of all holy created minds.

(4.) They doubtless feel a great interest in the welfare of other beings--of their fellow-creatures, wherever they are. There is in the universe one great brotherhood, embracing all the creatures of God.

(5.) They cannot but feel a deep interest in man--a fallen creature, tempted, suffering, dying, and exposed to eternal death. This they have shown in every period of the world's history. Heb 1:14. II. It is probable, that in each one of the worlds which God has made, there is some peculiar manifestation of his glory and character; something which is not to be found at all in any other world, or, if found, not in so great perfection; and that the angels would feel a deep interest in all these manifestations, and would desire to look into them.

(1.) This is probable from the nature of the case, and from the variety which we see in the form, size, movements, and glory of the heavenly orbs. There is no reason to suppose, that on any one of those worlds all the glory of the Divine character would be manifest, which he intends to make known to the universe.

(2.) This is probable from what we can now see of the worlds which he has made. We know as yet comparatively little of the heavenly bodies, and of the manifestations of the Deity; and yet, as far as we can see, there must be far more striking exhibitions of the power, and wisdom, and glory of God, in many or of those worlds that roll above us, than there are on our earth. On the body of the sun--on the planets Jupiter and Saturn, so vast in comparison with the earth--there must be far more impressive exhibitions of the glory of the Creator, than there is on our little planet. Saturn, for example, is 82,000 miles in diameter, 1100 times as large as our earth; it moves at the rate of 22,000 miles an hour; it is encircled by two magnificent rings, 5000 miles apart, the innermost of which is 21,000 miles from the body of the planet, and 22,000 miles in breadth, forming a vast illuminated arch over the above the brightness of our moon, and giving a most beautiful to the heavens there. It is also, doubtless, true of all which God has made, that in each one of them there may some peculiar manifestation of the glory of the Deity.

(3.) The universe therefore, seems fitted up to give eternal employment to mind in contemplating it; and, in the worlds which God has made, is enough to employ the study of his creatures for ever. On our own world, the most diligent and pious student of the works of God might spend many thousand years, and then leave much, very much, which he did not comprehend; and it may yet be the eternal employment of holy minds to range from world to world, and in each new world to find much to study and to admire; much that shall proclaim the wisdom, power, love, and goodness of God, which had not elsewhere been seen.

(4.) Our world, therefore, though small, a mere speck in creation, may have something to manifest the glory of the Creator which may not exist in any other. It cannot be its magnitude; for, in that respect, it is among the smallest which God has made. It may not be the height and the majesty of our mountains, or the length and beauty of our rivers, or the fragrance of our flowers, or the clearness of our sky; for, in these respects, there may be much more to admire in other worlds: it is the exhibition of the character of God in the work of redemption; the illustration of the way in which a sinner may be forgiven; the manifestation of the Deity as incarnate, assuming permanently a union with one of his own creatures. This, so far as we know, is seen in no other part of the universe; and this is honour enough for one world. To see this, the angels may be attracted down to earth. When they come, they come not to contemplate our works of art, our painting and our sculpture, or to read our books of science or poetry: they come to gather around the cross, to minister to the Saviour, to attend on his steps while living, and to watch over his body when dead; to witness his resurrection and ascension, and to bless, with their offices of kindness, those whom he died to redeem, Heb 1:4.

III. What, then, is there in our world which we may suppose would attract their attention? What is there which they would not see in other worlds? I answer, that the manifestation of the Divine character in the plan of redemption, is that which would peculiarly attract their attention here, and lead them from heaven down to earth.

(1.) The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God would be to them an object of the deepest interest. This, so far as we know, or have reason to suppose, has occurred nowhere else. There is no evidence that in any other world God has taken upon himself the form of one of his own creatures dwelling there, and stooped to live and act like one of them; to mingle with them; to share their feelings; and to submit to toil, and want, and sacrifice, for their welfare.

(2.) The fact that the guilty could be pardoned would attract their attention, for

(a.) it is elsewhere unknown, no inhabitant of heaven having the need of pardon, and no offer of pardon having been made to a rebel angel.

(b.) There are great and difficult questions about the whole subject of forgiveness, which an angel could easily see, but which he could not so easily solve. How could it be done consistently with the justice and truth of God? How could he forgive, and yet maintain the honour of his own law, and the stability of his own throne. There is no more difficult subject in a human administration than that of pardon; and there is none which so much perplexes those who are intrusted with executive power.

(3.) The way in which pardon has been shown to the guilty here would excite their deep attention. It has been in a manner entirely consistent with justice and truth; showing, through the great sacrifice made on the cross, that the attributes of justice and mercy may both be exercised: that, while God may pardon to any extent, he does it in no instance the expense of justice and truth. This blending of the attributes of the Almighty in beautiful harmony; this manifesting of mercy to the guilty and the lost; this raising up a fallen and rebellious race to the favour and friendship of God; and this opening before a dying creature the hope of immortality, was what could be seen by the angels nowhere else: and hence it is no wonder that they hasten with such interest to our world, to learn the mysteries of redeeming love. Every step in the process of recovering a sinner must be new to them, for it is unseen elsewhere; and the whole work, the atonement, the pardon and renovation of the sinner, the conflict of the child of God with his spiritual foes, the supports

of religion in the time of sickness and temptation, the bed of death, the sleep in the tomb, the separate flight of the soul to its final abode, the resurrection of the body, and the solemn scenes of the judgment, all must open new fields of thought to an angelic mind, and attract the heavenly inhabitants to our world, to learn here what they cannot learn in their own abodes, however otherwise bright, where sin, and suffering, and death, and redemption are unknown. In view of these truths we may add:

(1.) The work of redemption is worthy of the study of the profoundest minds. Higher talent than any earthly talent has been employed in studying it; for, to the most exalted intellects of heaven, it has been a theme of the deepest interest. No mind on earth is too exalted to be engaged in this study; no intellect here is so profound that it would not find in this study a range of inquiry worthy of itself.

(2.) This is a study that peculiarly appropriate to man. The angels have no other interest in it than that which arises from a desire to know God, and from a benevolent regard for the welfare of others; we have a personal interest in it of the highest kind. It pertains primarily to us. The plan was formed for us. Our eternal all depends upon it. The angels would be safe and happy if they did not fully understand it; if we do not understand it, we are lost for ever. It has claims to their attention as a wonderful exhibition of the character and purposes of God, and as they are interested in the welfare of others; it claims our attention because our eternal welfare depends on our accepting the offer of mercy made through a Saviour's blood.

(3.) How amazing, then, how wonderful, is the indifference of man to this and glorious work! How wonderful, that neither as a matter of speculation, nor of personal concern, he can be induced to look into these things! "How wonderful that all other subjects engross his attention, and excite inquiry; but that for this he feels no concern, and that here he finds nothing to interest him! It is not unreasonable to suppose, that amidst all the other topics of wonder in this plan as seen by angels, this is not the least--that man by nature takes no interest in it; that in so stupendous a work, performed in his own world, he feels no concern; that he is unmoved when he is told that even God became incarnate, and appeared on the earth where he

himself dwells; and that, busy and interested as he is in other things, often of a most trifling nature, he has no concern for that on which is suspended his own eternal happiness. If heaven was held in mute astonishment when the Son of God left the courts of glory to be poor, to be persecuted, to bleed, to die, not less must be the astonishment than when, from those lofty heights, the angelic hosts look down upon a race unconcerned amidst wonders such as those of the incarnation and the atonement!

Call to Holy Living

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind. The allusion here is to the manner in which the Orientals were accustomed to dress. They wear loose, flowing robes, so that, when they wished to run, or to fight, or to apply themselves to any business, they are obliged to bind their garments close around them. Mt 5:38, seq. The meaning here is, that they were to have their minds in constant preparation to discharge the duties, or to endure the trials of life--like those who were prepared for labour, for a race, or for a conflict. Be sober. 1Timm 3:2; Tit 1:8. And hope to the end. Marg., perfectly. The translation in the text is the most correct. It means, that they were not to become faint or weary in their trials. They were not to abandon the hopes of the gospel, but were to cherish those hopes to the end of life, whatever opposition they might meet with, and however much might be done by others to induce them to apostatize. Comp. Heb 10:35. Heb 10:36. For the grace that is to be brought unto you. For the favour that shall then be bestowed upon you; to wit, salvation. The word brought here means, that this great favour which they hoped for would be borne to them by the Saviour on his return from heaven. At the revelation of Jesus Christ. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in his glory; that is, when he comes to judge the world. 2Thes 1:7.

14 as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

As obedient children. That is, conduct yourselves as becomes the children of God, by obeying his commands; by submitting to his will; and by manifesting unwavering confidence in him as your

Father, at all times. Not fashioning yourselves. Not forming or modelling your life. Comp. Rom 12:2 The idea is, that they were to have some model or example, in accordance with which they were to frame their lives, but that they were not to make their own former principles and conduct the model. The Christian is to be as different from what he was himself before conversion as he is from his fellow-men. He is to be governed by new laws, to aim at new objects, and to mould his life in accordance with new principles. Before conversion, he was

(a.) supremely selfish;

(b.) he lived for personal gratification;

(c.) he gave free indulgence to his appetites and passions, restrained only by a respect for the decencies of life, and by a reference to his own health, property, or reputation, without regard to the will of God;

(d.) he conformed himself to the customs and opinions around him, rather than to the requirements of his Maker;

(e.) he lived for worldly aggrandizements, his supreme object being wealth or fame; or

(f.) in many cases, those who are now Christians, gave indulgence to every passion which they wished to gratify, regardless of reputation, health, property, or salvation. Now they are to be governed by a different rule, and their own former standard of morals and of opinions is no longer their guide, but the will of God. According to the former lusts in your ignorance. When you were ignorant of the requirements of the gospel, and gave yourselves up to the unrestrained indulgence of your passions.

15 but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. Lev 11:44. This command was addressed at first to the Israelites, but it is with equal propriety addressed to Christians, as the professed people of compared. The foundation of the command is, that they professed to be his people, and that as his people they ought to be like their God.

Mic 4:5. It is a great truth, that men everywhere will imitate the god whom they worship. They will form their character in accordance with his. They will regard what he does as right. They will attempt to rise no higher in virtue than the god whom they adore, and they will practise freely what he is supposed to do or approve. Hence, by knowing what are the characteristics of the gods which are worshipped by any people, we may form a correct estimate of the character of the people themselves; and hence, as the God who is the object of the Christian's worship is perfectly holy, the character of his worshippers should also be holy. And hence, also, we may see that the tendency of true religion is to make men pure. As the worship of the impure gods of the heathen moulds the character of the worshippers into their image, so the worship of Jehovah moulds the character of his professed friends into his image, and they become like him.

16 because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear:

And if ye call on the Father. That is, if you are true Christians, or truly pious--piety being represented in the Scriptures as calling on God, or as the worship of God. Acts 9:11; Gen 4:26, 1Kgs 18:24, Ps 116:17, 2Kgs 5:11, 1Chr 16:8, Joel 2:32, Rom 10:13; Zeph 3:9, 1Cor 1:2, Acts 2:21. The word "Father" here is used evidently not to denote the Father in contradistinction to the Son, but as referring to God as the Father of the universe. 1Pet 1:14 "As obedient children." God is often spoken of as the Father of the intelligent beings whom he has made. Christians worship him as a Father--as one having all the feelings of a kind and tender parent towards them. Ps 103:13, seq. Who without respect of persons. Impartiality. Who is not influenced in his treatment of men by a regard to rank, wealth, beauty, or any external distinction. Acts 10:34, Rom 2:11. Judgeth according to every man's work. He judges each one according to his character; or to what he has done, Rev 22:12. 2Cor 5:10. The meaning is, "You worship a God who will judge every man according to his real character, and you should therefore lead such lives as he can approve." Pass the time of your sojourning. "Of your temporary residence on earth. This is not your permanent home, but you are strangers and sojourners." Heb 11:13. In fear. Php 2:12 Heb 12:28. With true reverence or veneration for God and his law.

Religion is often represented as the reverent fear of God, De 6:2,13,24, Prov 1:7, 3:13, 14:26,27, et saepe al.

18 forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers;

For as much as ye know. This is an argument for a holy life, derived from the fact that they were redeemed, and from the manner in which their redemption had been effected. There is no more effectual way to induce true Christians to consecrate themselves entirely to God, than to refer them to the fact that they are not their own, but have been purchased by the blood of Christ. That ye were not redeemed. On the word rendered redeemed, (λυτροω lutroo,) Tit 2:14. The word occurs in the New Testament only in Lk 24:21, Tit 2:14, and in this place. The noun (λυτρον--lutron) is found in Mt 20:28, Mk 10:45, rendered ransom. For the meaning of the similar word, απολυτρωσις -- (apolutrosis,) Rom 3:24. This word occurs in Lk 21:28, Rom 3:24, 8:23, 1Cor 1:30, Eph 1:7,14, 4:30, Col 1:14; Heb 9:15, in all which places it is rendered redemption; and in Heb 11:35, where it is rendered deliverance. The word here means that they were rescued from sin and death by the blood of Christ, as the valuable consideration on account of which it was done; that is, the blood, or the life of Christ offered as a sacrifice, effected the same purpose in regard to justice and to the maintenance of the principles of moral government, which the punishment of the sinner himself would have done. It was that which God was pleased to accept in the place of the punishment of the sinner, as answering the same great ends in his administration. The principles of his truth and justice could as certainly be maintained in this way as by the punishment of the guilty themselves. If so, then there was no obstacle to their salvation; and they might, on repentance, be consistently pardoned and taken to heaven.

With corruptible things, as silver and gold. On the word corruptible, as applicable to gold, 1Pet 1:7. Silver and gold usually constitute the price or the valuable consideration paid for the redemption of captives. It is clear that the obligation of one who is redeemed, to love his benefactor, is in proportion to the price which is paid for his ransom. The idea here is, that a price far more valuable than any amount of silver or gold had been paid for the redemption of the

people of God, and that they were under proportionate obligation to devote themselves to his service. They were redeemed by the life of the Son of God offered in their behalf; and between the value of that life and silver and gold there could be no comparison.

From your vain conversation. Your vain conduct, or manner of life. 1Pet 1:15. The word vain, applied to conduct, (ματαιας,) means properly empty, fruitless. It is a word often applied to the worship of idols, as being nothing, worthless, unable to help, (Acts 14:15, 1Kgs 16:13, 2Kgs 17:15, Jer 2:5,8,19); and is probably used in a similar sense in this place. The apostle refers to their former worship of idols, and to all the abominations connected with that service, as being vain and unprofitable; as the worship of nothing real, (comp. 1Cor 8:4), "We know that an idol is nothing in the world;" and as resulting in a course of life that answered none of the proper ends of living. From that they had been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Received by tradition from your fathers. The mode of worship which had been handed down from father to son. The worship of idols depends on no better reason than that it is that which has been practised in ancient times; and it is kept up now in all lands, in a great degree, only by the fact that it has had the sanction of the venerated men of other generations.

But with the precious blood of Christ. On the use of the word blood, and the reason why the efficacy of the atonement is said to be in the blood, Rom 3:25. The word precious (τιμιος,) is a word which would be applied to that which is worth much; which is costly. Comp. for the use of the noun (τιμη) in this sense, Mt 27:6, "The price of blood;" Acts 4:34, 5:2,3, 7:16. See also for the use of the adjective, (τιμιος,) Rev 17:4, "gold and precious stones." Rev 18:12, "vessels of most precious wood." Rev 21:11, "a stone most precious." The meaning here is, that the blood of Christ had a value above silver and gold; it was worth more, to wit,

(1.) in itself--being a more valuable thing and

(2.) in effecting our redemption. It accomplished what silver and gold could not do. The universe had nothing more valuable to offer, of which we can conceive, than the blood of the Son of God. As of

a lamb. That is, of Christ regarded as a lamb offered for sacrifice. Jn 1:29. Without blemish and without spot. Such a lamb only was allowed to be offered in sacrifice, Lev 22:20-24, Mal 1:8. This was required,

(1.) because it was proper that man should offer that which was regarded as perfect in its kind; and,

(2.) because only that would be a proper symbol of the great sacrifice which was to be made by the Son of God. The idea was thus kept up from age to age that he, of whom all these victims were the emblems, would be perfectly pure.

19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Still our apostle is pressing Christians to the love and practice of holiness, and a reverential fear of God, by fresh arguments and motives, particularly from their redemption; saying, that they could not but be sensible that they were redeemed with a very costly price, not with silver and gold, which yet would ransom kings, but by the precious blood of Christ, whom the paschal lamb typified, and who was from eternity fore-ordained to the office of a mediator, though he was not manifested in the flesh till these last days, for the good and benefit of those who by him do believe in God that raised Christ from the dead, and gloriously exalted him at his right hand, upon which account their faith and hope may safely and comfortably rest in God.

Note here, 1. The thraldom, bondage, and slavery, of our sinful state before we were redeemed.

Note, 2. The impotency and inability of all outward things, be they never so rich, precious, and costly, to redeem and ransom an enslaved sinner. Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold. All the gold and silver in the world was no ransom for one soul, nay, the blood of all the creatures in the world offered up in sacrifice to the justice of God, could have been no sufficient compensation.

Note, 3. That the redemption of every soul cost no less than the precious blood of the Son of God, that spotless Lamb, who by the sacrifice of his death atoned divine displeasure.

Note, 4. That God the Father fore-ordained Jesus Christ his Son to this blessed office of a Redeemer before the foundation of the world, though he was not manifest in the flesh till these last times.

Note, 5. That by Christ the Redeemer we are taught to know God, and to believe in him who raised Christ from the dead.
Here observe, How the Socinians wrest and misapply this text, where we are said by Christ to believe in God. Thus they argue, "He by whom we believe in God, is not that God in whom we believe, because the means of faith can never be the object of faith; but Christ is he: the apostle says here, by whom we believe in God, therefore Christ is not God."

Ans. Christ, considered in his human nature, in which he died, and was raised for us, is he by whom we believe in God, that is, own him to be able to raise us from the dead; but this hinders not his being God according to his divine nature, by which he did actually raise himself from the dead, Joh 10:18.

20 who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world. That is, it was foreordained, or predetermined, that he should be the great atoning Sacrifice for sin. On the meaning of the word foreordained, (προγινωσκω,) see Rom 8:29. The word is rendered which knew, Acts 26:5; foreknew and foreknow, Rom 8:29, 11:2; foreordainedin 1Pet 1:20; and know before, 2Pet 2:17. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The sense is, that the plan was formed, and the arrangements made for the atonement, before the world was created. Before the foundation of the world. That is, from eternity. It was before man was formed; before the earth was made; before any of the material universe was brought into being; before the angels were created. Mt 15:34, Jn 17:24, Eph 1:4.

Who by him do believe in God. Faith is sometimes represented particularly as exercised in God, and sometimes in Christ. It is always a characteristic of true religion that a man has faith in God.

Mk 11:22. That raised him up from the dead. Acts 2:24; Acts 3:15, Acts 3:26; Acts 4:10; Acts 5:30; Acts 13:30; Rom 4:24; 1Cor 15:15. And gave him glory. By exalting him at his own right hand in heaven, Php 2:9, 1Timm 3:16, Eph 1:20,21. That your faith and hope might be in God. That is, by raising up the Lord Jesus, and exalting him to heaven, he has laid the foundation of confidence in his promises, and of the hope of eternal life. 1Pet 1:3. Comp. 1Cor 15; Col 1:27, 1Thes 1:3; 1Timm 1:1.

21 who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently:

Seeing ye have purified your souls. Greek, "Having purified your souls." The apostles were never afraid of referring to human agency as having an important part in saving the soul. Comp. 1Cor 4:15. No one is made pure without personal intention or effort--any more than one becomes accomplished or learned without personal exertion. One of the leading effects of the agency of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to make efforts for our own salvation; and there is no true piety which is not the fair result of culture, as really as the learning of a Porson or a Parr, or the harvest of the farmer. The amount of effort which we make "in purifying our souls" is usually also the measure of our attainments in religion. No one can expect to have any true piety beyond the amount of effort which he makes to be conformed to God, any more than one can expect wealth, or fame, or learning, without exertion. In obeying the truth. That is, your yielding to the requirements of truth, and to its fair influence on your minds, has been the means of your becoming pure. The truth here referred to is, undoubtedly, that which is revealed in the gospel--the great system of truth respecting the redemption of the world. Through the Spirit. By the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to apply truth to the mind; and however precious the truth may be, and however adapted to secure certain results on the soul, it will never produce those effects without the influences of the Holy Spirit. compare Tit 3:5,6. Jn 3:5. Unto unfeigned love of the brethren. The effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit in applying the truth has been to produce sincere love to all who are true Christians. Comp. Jn 13:34; 1Thes 4:9. See also 1Jn 3:14-18. See that ye love one another with a pure

heart fervently. Comp. Heb 13:1; Jnn 13:34; Jn 13:35; Eph 5:2 The phrase "with a pure heart fervently," means

(1.) that it should be genuine love, proceeding from a heart in which there is no guile or hypocrisy; and

(2.) that it should be intense affection, (εκτενως;) not cold and formal, but ardent and strong. If there is any reason why we should love true Christians at all, there is the same reason why our attachment to them should be intense. This verse establishes the following points:

(1.) That truth was at the foundation of their piety. They had none of which this was not the proper basis; and in which the foundation was not as broad as the superstructure. There is no religion in the world which is not the fair developement of truth; which the truth is not fitted to produce.

(2.) They became Christians as the result of obeying the truth; or by yielding to its fair influence on the soul. Their own minds complied with its claims; their own hearts yielded; there was the exercise of their own volitions. This expresses a doctrine of great importance.

(a.) There is always the exercise of the powers of the mind in true religion; always a yielding to truth; always a voluntary reception of it into the soul.

(b.) Religion is always of the nature of obedience. It consists in yielding to what is true and right; in laying aside the feelings of opposition, and in allowing the mind to follow where truth and duty lead.

(c.) This would always take place when the truth is presented to the mind, if there were no voluntary resistance. If all men were ready to yield to the truth, they would become Christians. The only reason why all men do not love and serve God, is that they refuse to yield to what they know to be true and right.

(3.) The agency by which this was accomplished was that of the Holy Ghost. Truth is adapted in itself to a certain end or result, as seed is adapted to produce a harvest. But it will no more of itself

produce its appropriate effects on the soul, than seed will produce a harvest without rains, and dews, and suns. In all cases, therefore, the proper effect of truth on the soul is to be traced to the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the germination of the seed in the earth is to the foreign cause that acts on it. No man was ever converted by the mere effect of truth without the agency of the Holy Ghost, any more than seed germinates when laid on a hard rock.

(4.) The effect of this influence of the Holy Spirit in applying the truth is to produce love to all who are Christians. Love to Christian brethren springs up in the soul of every one who is truly converted: and this love is just as certain evidence that the seed of truth has germinated in the soul, as the green and delicate blade that peeps up through the earth is evidence that the seed sown has been quickened into life. Comp. 1Thes 4:9; 1Jn 3:14. We may learn hence,

(a.) that truth is of inestimable value. It is as valuable as religion itself, for all the religion in the world is the result of it.

(b.) Error and falsehood are mischievous and evil in the same degree. There is no true religion which is the fair result of error; and all the pretended religion that is sustained by error is worthless.

(c.) If a system of religion, or a religious measure or doctrine, cannot be defended by truth, it should be at once abandoned. Comp. Job 13:7.

(d.) We should avoid the places where error is taught. Prov 19:27, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

(e.) We should place ourselves under the teachings of truth, for there is truth enough in the world to occupy all our time and attention; and it is only by truth that our minds can be benefited.

23 being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

But of incorruptible. By truth, communicating a living principle to the soul which can never decay. Comp. 1Jn 3:9: "His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." By the word of God. Jas 1:18: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,

that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Comp. Jn 1:13. It is the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures that Divine truth is made the instrument of quickening the soul into spiritual life. Which liveth and abideth for ever. This expression may either refer to God, as living for ever, or to the word of God, as being for ever true. Critics are about equally divided in the interpretation. The Greek will bear either construction. Most of the recent critics incline to the latter opinion--that it refers to the word of God, or to his doctrine. So Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Wolf, Macknight, Clarke. It seems to me, however, that the more natural construction of the Greek is to refer it to God, as ever-living or enduring; and this interpretation agrees well with the connexion. The idea then is, that as God is everliving, that which is produced directly by him in the human soul, by the instrumentality of truth, may be expected also to endure for ever. It will not be like the offspring of human parents, themselves mortal, liable to early and certain decay, but may be expected to be as enduring as its ever-living Creator.

24 For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

For all flesh is as grass. That is, all human beings, all men. The connexion here is this: The apostle, in the previous verse, had been contrasting that which is begotten by man with that which is begotten by God, in reference to its permanency. The former was corruptible and decaying; the latter abiding. The latter was produced by God, who lives for ever; the former by the agency of man, who is himself corruptible and dying. It was not unnatural, then, to dwell upon the feeble, frail, decaying nature of man, in contrast with God; and the apostle, therefore, says that "all flesh, every human being, is like grass. There is no stability in anything that man does or produces, he himself resembles grass that soon fades and withers; but God and his word endure for ever the same." The comparison of a human being with grass, or with flowers, is very beautiful, and is quite common in the Scriptures. The comparison turns on the fact, that the grass or the flower, however green or beautiful it may be, soon loses its freshness; is withered; is cut down, and dies. Thus in Ps 103:15,16:

"As for man, his days are as grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth, For the wind passeth over it and it is gone, And the place thereof shall know it no more."

So in Isa 40:6-8; a passage which is evidently referred to by Peter in this place:--

"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, And all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, The flower fadeth. When the wind of Jehovah bloweth upon it: Surely the people is grass, The grass withereth, The flower fadeth, But the word of our God shall stand for ever."
Jas 1:10,11. This sentiment is beautifully imitated by the great dramatist in the speech of Wolsey:--

"This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms, And bears his blushing honours thick upon him. The third day comes a frost, a killing frost. And--when he thinks, good easy man, full surely His greatness is a ripening--nips his root, And then he falls."

Comp. Isa 40:6-8. And all the glory of man. All that man prides himself on--his wealth, rank, talents, beauty, learning, splendour of equipage or apparel. As the flower of grass. The word rendered "grass," (χορτος,) properly denotes herbage; that which furnishes food for animals--pasture, hay. Probably the prophet Isaiah, from whom this passage is taken, referred rather to the appearance of a meadow or a field, with mingled grass and flowers, constituting a beautiful landscape, than to mere grass. In such a field, the grass soon withers with heat, and with the approach of winter; and the flowers soon fade and fall. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away. This is repeated, as is common in the Hebrew writings, for the sake of emphasis, or strong confirmation.

25 but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.
And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

But the word of the Lord. In Isa 40:8, "the word of our God." The sense is not materially varied.

Endureth for ever. Is unmoved, fixed, permanent. Amidst all the revolutions on earth, the fading glories of natural objects, and the wasting strength of man, his truth remains unaffected. Its beauty

never fades; its power is never enfeebled. The gospel system is as lovely now as it was when it was first revealed to man, and it has as much power to save as it had when first applied to a human heart. We see the grass wither at the coming on of autumn; we see the flower of the field decay; we see man, though confident in his strength, and rejoicing in the rigour of his frame, cut down in an instant; we see cities decline, and kingdoms lose their power: but the word of God is the same now that it was at first, and, amidst all the changes which may ever occur on the earth, that will remain the same.

And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. That a is, this gospel is the "word" which was referred to by Isaiah in the passage which has been quoted, In view, then, of the affecting truth stated in the close of this chapter, 1Pet 1:24,25, let us learn habitually to reflect on our feebleness and frailty. "We all do fade as a leaf," Isa 64:6. Our glory is like the flower of the field. Our beauty fades, and our strength disappears, as easily as the beauty and rigour of the flower that grows up in the morning, and that in the evening is cut down, Ps 90:6. The rose that blossoms on the cheek of youth may wither as soon as any other rose; the brightness of the eye may become dim, as readily as the beauty of field covered with flowers; the darkness of death may come over the brow of manliness and intelligence, as readily as night settles down on the landscape; and our robes of adorning may be laid aside, as soon as beauty fades in a meadow full of flowers before the scythe of the mower. There is not an object of natural beauty on which we pride ourselves that will not decay; and soon all our pride and pomp will be laid low in the tomb. It is sad to look on a beautiful lily, a rose, a magnolia, and to think how soon all that beauty will disappear. It is more sad to look on a rosy cheek, a bright eye, a lovely form, an expressive brow, an open, serene, intelligent countenance, and to think how soon all that beauty and brilliancy will fade away. But amidst these changes which beauty undergoes, and the desolations which disease and death spread over the world, it is cheering to think that all is not so, There is that which does not change, which, never loses its beauty. "The word of the Lord" abides. His cheering promises, his assurances that there is brighter and better world, remain amidst all these changes the same. The traits which are drawn on the character by the religion of Christ, more lovely by far than the most delicate colouring of the lily, remain for ever. There they abide, augmenting

in loveliness, when the rose fades from the cheek; when the brilliancy departs from the eye; when the body moulders away in the sepulchre. The beauty of religion is the only permanent beauty in the earth.

1 Peter-2

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

Wherefore laying aside. On the word rendered laying aside, see Rom 13:12, Eph 4:22,25, Col 3:8. The allusion is to putting off clothes; and the meaning is, that we are to cast off these things entirely; that is, we are no longer to practise them. The word wherefore (ουν) refers to the reasonings in the first chapter. In view of the considerations stated there, we should renounce all evil.

All malice. All evil, (κακιαν.) The word malice we commonly apply now to a particular kind of evil, denoting extreme enmity of heart, ill-will, a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification, or from a spirit of revenge.---Webster. The Greek word, however, includes evil of all kinds. Rom 1:29. Comp. Acts 8:22, where it is rendered wickedness, and 1Cor 5:8, 14:20, Eph 4:31, Col 3:8, Tit 3:3.

And all guile. Deceit of all kinds. Rom 1:29; 2Cor 12:16; 1Thes 2:3.

And hypocrisies. 1Timm 4:2; Mt 23:28; Gal 2:13, on the word rendered dissimulation. The word means, feigning to be what we are not; assuming a false appearance of religion; cloking a wicked purpose under the appearance of piety:

And envies. Hatred of others on account of some excellency which they have, or something which they possess which we do not. Rom 1:29.

And all evil speaking. Greek, Speaking against others. This word (καταλαλια) occurs only here and in 2Cor 12:20, where it is rendered backbitings. It would include all unkind or slanderous speaking against others. This is by no means an uncommon fault in the world, and it is one of the designs of religion to guard against it. Religion

teaches us to lay aside whatever guile, insincerity, and false appearances we may have acquired, and to put on the simple honesty and openness of children. We all acquire more or less of guile and insincerity ill the course of life, We learn to conceal our sentiments and feelings, and almost unconsciously come to appear different from what we really are. It is not so with children. In the child, every emotion of the bosom: appears as it is. Nature there work, well and beautifully. Every emotion is expressed; every feeling of the heart is developed; and in the cheeks, the open eye, the joyous or sad countenance, we know all that there is in the bosom, as certainly as we know all that there is in the rose by its colour and its fragrance. Now, it is one of the purposes of religion to bring us back to this state, and to strip off all the subterfuges which we may have acquired in life; and he in whom this effect is not accomplished has never been converted. A man that is characteristically deceitful, cunning, and crafty, cannot be a Christian. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Mt 18:3.

2 as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

As new-born babes. The phrase here used would properly denote those which were just born, and hence Christians who had just begun the spiritual life. See the word explained 2Ti 3:15. It is not uncommon, in the Scriptures, to compare Christians with little children. Mt 18:3 for the reasons of this comparison. Comp. 1Cor 3:2 Heb 5:12,14. Desire the sincere milk of the word. The pure milk of the word, On the meaning of the word sincere, Eph 6:24. The Greek word here (αδολον) means, properly, that which is without guile or falsehood; then unadulterated, pure, genuine. The Greek adjective rendered "of the word," (λογικον,) means properly rational, pertaining to reason, or mind; and, in the connexion here with milk, means that which is adapted to sustain the soul. Rom 12:1. There is no doubt that there is allusion to the gospel in its purest and most simple form, as adapted to be the nutriment of the new-born soul. Probably there are two ideas here; one, that the proper aliment of piety is simple truth; the other, that the truths which they were to desire were the more elementary truths of the gospel, such as would be adapted to those who were babes in knowledge. That ye may grow thereby. As babes grow on their proper nutriment. Piety in the heart is susceptible of growth, and is

made to grow by its proper element, as a plant or a child is, and will grow in proportion as it has the proper kind of nutriment, from this verse we may see,

(1.) the reason of the injunction of the Saviour to Peter, to "feed his lambs," Jn 21:15, 1Pet 2:1,2. Young Christians strongly resemble children, babes; and they need watchful care, and kind attention, and appropriate aliment, as much as new-born infants do. Piety receives its form much from its commencement; and the character of the whole Christian life will be determined in a great degree by the views entertained at first, and the kind of instruction which is given to those who are just entering on their Christian course. We may also see,

(2.) that it furnishes evidence of conversion, if we have a love for the simple and pure truths of the gospel, It is evidence that we have spiritual life, as really as the desire of appropriate nourishment is evidence that an infant has natural life. The new-born soul loves the truth. It is nourished by it. It perishes without it. The gospel is just what it wants; and without that it could not live. We may also learn from this verse,

(3.) that the truths of the gospel which are best adapted to that state, are those which are simple and plain. Heb 5:12, seq. It is not philosophy that is needed then; it is not the profound and difficult doctrines of the gospel; it is those elementary truths which he at the foundation of all religion, and which can be comprehended by children: Religion makes every one docile and humble as a child; and whatever may be the age at which one is converted, or whatever attainments he may have made in science, he relishes the same truths which are loved by the youngest and most unlettered child that is brought into the kingdom of God.

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Or rather, as Doddridge renders it, "Since you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The apostle did not mean to express any doubt on the subject, but to state that, since they had had an experimental acquaintance with the grace of God, they should desire to increase

more and more in the knowledge and love of him, On the use of the word taste, Heb 6:4.

3 if so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

Christ the Living Stone

4 To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men,
but chosen of God, *and* precious,

To whom coming. To the Lord Jesus, for so the word "Lord" is to be understood in 1Pet 2:3. Acts 1:24. The idea here is, that they had come to him for salvation, while the great mass of men rejected him. Others "disallowed" him, and turned away from him, but they had seen that he was the one chosen or appointed of God, and had come to him in order to be saved. Salvation is often represented as coming to Christ. See Mt 11:28.

As unto a living stone. The allusion in this passage is to Isa 28:16, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Isa 28:16. There may be also possibly an allusion to Ps 118:22, "The stone which the builders disallowed, is become the head-stone of the corner." The reference is to Christ as the foundation on which the church is reared. He occupied the same place in regard to the church which a foundation-stone does to the edifice that is reared upon it. Comp. Mt 7:24,25. Rom 9:33, Eph 2:20, seq. The phrase "living stone" is however unusual, and is not found, I think, except in this place. There seems to be an incongruity in it, in attributing life to a stone, yet the meaning is not difficult to be understood. The purpose was not to speak of a temple, like that at Jerusalem, made up of gold and costly stones; but of a temple made up of living materials--of redeemed men--in which God now resides. In speaking of that, it was natural to refer to the foundation on which the whole rested, and to speak of that as corresponding to the whole edifice. It was all a living temple--a temple composed of living materials--from the foundation to the top. Compare the expression in Jn 4:10, "He would have given thee living water;" that is, water which would have imparted life to the soul. So Christ imparts life to the whole spiritual temple that is reared on him as a foundation.

Disallowed indeed of men. Rejected by them, first by the Jews, in causing him to be put to death; and then by all men when he is offered to them as their Saviour. Isa 53:3. Ps 118:22: "Which the builders refused." Comp. Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11.

But chosen of God. Selected by him as the suitable foundation on which to rear his church. And precious. Valuable. The universe had nothing more valuable on which to rear the spiritual temple. To whom coming. To the Lord Jesus, for so the word "Lord" is to be understood in 1Pet 2:3. Acts 1:24. The idea here is, that they had come to him for salvation, while the great mass of men rejected him. Others "disallowed" him, and turned away from him, but they had seen that he was the one chosen or appointed of God, and had come to him in order to be saved. Salvation is often represented as coming to Christ. See Mt 11:28.

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But chosen of God. Selected by him as the suitable foundation on which to rear his church. And precious. Valuable. The universe had nothing more valuable on which to rear the spiritual temple.

5 ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy
priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus
Christ.

Ye also, as lively stones. Gr., "living stones." The word should have been so rendered. The word lively with us now has a different meaning from living, and denotes active, quick, sprightly. The Greek word is the same as that used in the previous verse, and rendered living. The meaning is, that the materials of which the temple here referred to was composed, were living materials throughout. The foundation is a living foundation, and all the superstructure is composed of living materials. The purpose of the apostle here is to compare the church to a beautiful temple--such as the temple in Jerusalem, and to show that it is complete in all its parts, as that was. It has within itself what corresponds with everything that was valuable in that. It is a beautiful structure like that; and as in that there was a priesthood, and there were real and acceptable sacrifices offered, so it is in the Christian church. The Jews prided themselves much on their temple. It was a most costly and splendid edifice. It was the place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed to dwell. It had an imposing service, and there was acceptable worship rendered there. As a new dispensation was introduced; as the tendency of the Christian system was to draw off the worshippers from that temple, and to teach them that God could be worshipped as acceptably elsewhere as at Jerusalem, (Jn 4:21-23;) as Christianity did not inculcate the necessity of rearing splendid temples for the worship of God; and as in fact the temple at Jerusalem was about to be destroyed for ever, it was important to show that in the Christian church there might be found all that was truly beautiful and valuable in the temple at Jerusalem; that it had what corresponded to what was in fact most precious there, and that there was still a most magnificent and

beautiful temple on the earth. Hence the sacred writers labour to show that all was found in the church that had made the temple at Jerusalem so glorious, and that the great design contemplated by the erection of that splendid edifices, --the maintenance of the worship of God was now accomplished in a more glorious manner than even in the services of that house. For there was a temple, made up of living materials, which was still the peculiar dwelling-place of God on the earth. In that temple there was a holy priesthood--for every Christian was a priest. In that temple there were sacrifices offered, as acceptable to God as in the former--for they were spiritual sacrifices, offered continually. These thoughts were often dwelt upon by the apostle Paul, and are here illustrated by Peter, evidently with the same design, to impart consolation to those who had never been permitted to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, and to comfort those Jews, now converted to Christianity, who saw that that splendid and glorious edifice was about to be destroyed. The peculiar abode of God on the earth was now removed from that temple to the Christian church, The first aspect in which this is illustrated here is, that the temple of God was made up of living stones;" that is, that the materials were not inanimate stones, but endued with life, and so much more valuable than those employed in the temple at Jerusalem, as the soul is more precious than any materials of stone. There were living beings which composed that temple, constituting a more beautiful structure, and a more appropriate dwelling-place for God, than any edifice could be made of stone, however costly or valuable.

A spiritual house. A spiritual temple, not made of perishable materials, like that at Jerusalem; not composed of matter, as that was, but made up of redeemed souls--a temple more appropriate to be the residence of one who is a pure spirit. Eph 2:19, seq. and 1Cor 6:19,20. An holy priesthood. In the temple at Jerusalem, the priesthood appointed to minister there, and to offer sacrifices, an essential part of the arrangement. It was important, to show that this was not overlooked in the spiritual that God was raising. Accordingly, the apostle says that amply provided for, by constituting the whole body of Christians to be in fact a priesthood. Every one is engaged in offering sacrifice to God. The business is not intrusted to a particular class to be known as priests; there is not a particular portion to whom the name is to be peculiarly given; but every Christian is in fact a priest, and is engaged in offering an

acceptable sacrifice to God. See Rom 1:6 "And hath made us kings and priests unto God." The Great High Priest in this service is the Lord Jesus Christ, (see the Epistle to the Hebrews, passim;) but besides him there is no one who sustains this office, except as it is borne by all the Christian members. There are ministers, elders, pastors, evangelists in the church; but there is no one who is a priest, except in the general sense that all are priests---for the great sacrifice has been offered, and there is no expiation now to be made. The name priest, therefore, should never be conferred on a minister of the gospel. It is never so given in the New Testament, and there was a reason why it should not be. The proper idea of a priest is one who offers sacrifice; but the ministers of the New Testament have no sacrifices to offer--the one great and perfect oblation for the sins of the world having been made by the Redeemer on the cross. To him, and him alone, under the New Testament dispensation, should the name priest be given, as it is uniformly in the New Testament, except in the general sense in which it is given to all Christians. In the Roman Catholic communion it is consistent to give the name priest to a minister of the gospel, but it is wrong to do it. It is consistent, because they claim that a true sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is offered in the mass. It is wrong, because that doctrine is wholly contrary to the New Testament, and is derogatory to the one perfect oblation which has been once made for the sins of the world, and in conferring on a class of men a degree of importance and of power to which they have no claim, and which is so liable to abuse. But in a Protestant church it is neither consistent nor right to give the name to a minister of religion. The only sense in which the term can now be used in the Christian church is a sense in which it is applicable to all Christians alike--that they" offer the sacrifice of prayer mid praise,"

To offer up spiritual sacrifices. Not bloody offerings, the blood of lambs and bullocks, but those which are the offerings of the heart--the sacrifices of prayer and praise. As there is a priest, there is also involved the notion of a sacrifice; but that which is offered is such as all Christians offer to God, proceeding from the heart, and breathed forth from the lips, and in a holy life. It is called sacrifice, not because at makes an expiation for sin, but because it is of the nature of worship. Heb 13:15; Heb 10:14.

Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Rom 12:1. Through the merits of the great sacrifice made by the Redeemer on the cross. Our prayers and praises are in themselves so imperfect, and proceed from such polluted lips and hearts, that they can be acceptable only through him as our intercessor before the throne of God. Heb 9:24, Heb 9:25; Heb 10:19, seq.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture,
Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious:
and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture. Isa 28:16. The quotation is substantially as it is found in the Septuagint. Behold, I lay in Sion. Isa 28:16, and Rom 9:33. A chief corner-stone. The principal stone on which the corner of the edifice rests. A stone is selected for this which is large and solid, and, usually, one which is squared, and wrought with care; and as such a stone is commonly laid with solemn ceremonies, so, perhaps, in allusion to this, it is here said by God that he would lay his stone at the foundation. The solemnities attending this were those which accompanied the great work of the Redeemer. See the word explained in the Eph 2:20. Elect. Chosen of God, or selected for this purpose, 1Pet 2:4. And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Shall not be ashamed. The Hebrew is, "shall not make haste." See it explained Rom 9:33.

7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which
be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is
made the head of the corner,

Unto you therefore which believe. Christians are often called simply believers, because faith in the Savour is one of the prominent characteristics by which they are distinguished from their fellowmen. It sufficiently describes any man, to say that he is a believer in the Lord Jesus. He is precious. Marg., an honour. That is, according to the margin, it is an honour to believe on him, and should be so regarded. This is true, but it is very doubtful whether this is the idea of Peter. The Greek is ητιμη; literally, "esteem, honour, respect, reverence;" then "value or price." The noun is probably used in the place of the adjective, in the sense of honourable, valued, precious; and it is not incorrectly rendered in the text, "he is precious." The connexion demands this interpretation. The apostle was not showing that it was an honour to believe on Christ, but was stating the estimate which was put on him by those who believe, as contrasted with the view taken of him by

the world. The truth which is taught is, that while the Lord Jesus is rejected by the great mass of men, he is regarded by all Christians as of inestimable value. I. Of the fact there can be no doubt. Somehow, Christians perceive a value in him which is seen in nothing else. This is evidenced

(a.) in their avowed estimate of him as their best friend;

(b.) in their being willing so far to honour him as to commit to him the keeping of their souls, resting the whole question of their salvation on him alone;

(c.) in their readiness to keep his commands, and to serve him, while the mass of men disobey him; and

(d.) in their being willing to die for him. II The reasons why he is so precious to them are such as these:

(1.) They are brought into a condition where they can appreciate his worth. To see the value of food, we must be hungry; of clothing, we must be exposed to the winter's blast; of home, we must be wanderers without a dwelling-place; of medicine, we must be sick; of competence, we must be poor. So, to see the value of the Saviour, we must see that we are poor, helpless, dying sinners; that the soul is of inestimable worth; that we have no merit of our own; and that unless some one interpose, we must perish. Every one who becomes a true Christian is brought to this condition; and in this state he can appreciate the worth of the Saviour. In this respect the condition of Christians is unlike that of the rest of mankind--for they are in no better state to appreciate the worth of the Saviour, than the man in health is to appreciate the value of the healing art, or than he who has never had a want unsupplied, the kindness of one who comes to us with an abundant supply of food.

(2.) The Lord Jesus is in fact of more value to them than any other benefactor. We have had benefactors who have done us good, but none who have done us such good as he has. We have had parents, teachers, kind friends, who have provided for us, taught us, relieved us; but all that they have done for us is slight, compared with what he has done. The fruit of their kindness, for the most part, pertains to the present world; and they have not laid down their lives for us. What he has done pertains to our welfare to all eternity; it is the fruit of the sacrifice of his own life. How precious should the name and memory of one be who has laid down his own life to save us!

(3.) We owe all our hopes of heaven to him; and in proportion to the value of such a hope, he is precious to us. We have no hope of salvation but in him. Take that away--blot out the name and the work of the Redeemer--and we see no way in which we could be saved; we have no prospect of being saved. As our hope of heaven, therefore, is valuable to us; as it supports us in trial; as it comforts us in the hour of death, so is the Saviour precious: and the estimate which we form of him is in proportion to the value of such a hope.

(4.) There is an intrinsic value and excellency in the character of Christ, apart from his relation to us, which makes him precious to those who can appreciate his worth. In his character, abstractedly considered, there was more to attract, to interest, to love, than in that of any other one who ever lived in our world. There was more purity, more benevolence, more that was great in trying circumstances, more that was generous and self-denying, more that resembled God, than in any other one who ever appeared on earth. In the moral firmament, the character of Christ sustains a pre-eminence above all others who have lived, as great as the glory of the sun is superior to the feeble lights, though so numerous, which glimmer at midnight. With such views of him, it is not to be wondered at, that, however he may be estimated by the world, "to them who believe he is PRECIOUS." But unto them which be disobedient. Literally, unwilling to be persuaded, (απειθης;) that is, those who refused to believe; who were obstinate or contumacious, Lk 1:17, Rom 1:30. The meaning is, that to them he is made a stone against which they impinge, and ruin themselves. 1Pet 2:8. The stone which the builders disallowed. Which they rejected, or refused to make a

corner-stone. The allusion here, by the word "builders," is primarily to the Jews, represented as raising a temple of salvation, or building with reference to eternal life. They refused to lay this stone, which God had appointed, as the foundation of their hopes, but preferred some other foundation. See this passage explained Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11; and Rom 9:33. The same is made the head of the corner. That is, though it is rejected by the mass of men, yet God has in fact made it the corner-stone on which the whole spiritual temple rests, Acts 4:11,12. However men may regard it, there is, in fact, no other hope of heaven than that which is founded on the Lord Jesus. If men are not saved by him, he becomes to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.

8 and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

And a stone of stumbling. A stone over which they stumble, or against Which they impinge. The idea seems to be that of a cornerstone which projects from the building, against which they dash themselves, and by which they are made to fall. Mt 21:44. The rejection of the Saviour becomes the means of their ruin. They refuse to build on him, and it is as if one should run against a solid projecting corner-stone of a house, that would certainly be the means of their destruction. Comp. Lk 1:34. An idea similar to this occurs in Mt 21:44: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." The meaning is, that if this foundation-stone is not the means of their salvation, it will be of their ruin. It is not a matter of indifference whether they believe on him or not--whether they accept or reject him. They cannot reject him without the most fearful consequences to their souls.

And a rock of offence. This expresses substantially the same idea as the phrase "stone of stumbling." The word rendered "offence," σκανδαλον, means properly "a trap-stick--a crooked stick on which the bait is fastened, which the animal strikes against, and so springs the trap," (Robinson, Lex.;) then a trap, gin, snare; and then anything which one strikes or stumbles against; a stumbling block. It then denotes that which is the cause or occasion of ruin. This language would be strictly applicable to the Jews, who rejected the Saviour on account of his humble birth, and whose rejection of him was

made the occasion of the destruction of their temple, city, and nation. But it is also applicable to all who reject him, from whatever cause; for their rejection of him will be followed with ruin to their souls. It is a crime for which God will judge them as certainly as he did the Jews who disowned him and crucified him, for the offence is substantially the same. What might have been, therefore, the means of their salvation, is made the cause of their deeper condemnation.

Even to them which stumble at the word. To all who do this. That is, they take the same kind of offence at the gospel which the Jews did at the Saviour himself. It is substantially the same thing, and the consequences must be the same. How does the conduct of the man who rejects the Saviour now, differ from that of him who rejected him when he was on the earth?

Being disobedient. 1Pet 2:7. The reason why they reject him is, that they are not disposed to obey. They are solemnly commanded to believe the gospel; and a refusal to do it, therefore, is as really an act of disobedience as to break any other command of God. Whereunto they were appointed. (εις ο και ετεθησαν.) The word "whereunto" means unto which. But unto what? It cannot be supposed that it means that they were "appointed" to believe on him and be saved by him; for

(1.) this would involve all the difficulty which is ever felt in the doctrine of decrees or election; for it would then mean that he had eternally designated them to be saved, which is the doctrine of predestination; and

(2.) if this were the true interpretation, the consequence would follow that God had been foiled. In his plan--for the reference here is to those who would not be saved, that is, to those who "stumble at that stumbling-stone," and are destroyed. Calvin supposes that it means, "unto which rejection and destruction they were designated in the purpose of God." So Bloomfield renders it, "Unto which (disbelief) they were destined," (Crit. Digest;) meaning, as he supposes, that "into this stumbling and disobedience they were permitted by God to fall." Doddridge interprets it, "To which also

they were appointed by the righteous sentence of God, long before, even as early as in his first purpose and decree he ordained his Son to be the great foundation of his church." Rosenmuller gives substantially the same interpretation. Clemens Romanus says it means that "they were appointed, not that they should sin, but that, sinning, they should be punished." See Wetstein. So Macknight, "To which punishment they were appointed." Whitby gives the same interpretation of it, that because they were disobedient, (referring, as he supposes, to the Jews who rejected the Messiah,) "they were appointed, for the punishment of that disobedience, to fall and perish." Dr. Clarke supposes that it means that they were prophesied of that they should, thus fall; or that, long before, it was predicted that they should thus stumble and fall. In reference to the meaning of this difficult passage, it is proper to observe that there is in the Greek verb necessarily the idea of designation, appointment, purpose. There was some agency or intention by which they were put in that condition; some act of placing or appointing, (the word τιθημι meaning to set, put, lay, lay down, appoint, constitute,) by which this result was brought about. The fair sense, therefore, and one from which we cannot escape, is, that this did not happen by chance or accident, but that there was a Divine arrangement, appointment, or plan on the part of God in reference to this result, and that the result was in conformity with that. So it is said in Jude 1:4, of a similar class of men, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." The facts were these:

(1.) That God appointed his Son to be the corner-stone of his church.

(2.) That there was a portion of the world which, from some cause, would embrace him and be saved.

(3.) That there was another portion who, it was certain, would not embrace him.

(4.) That it was known that the appointment of the Lord Jesus as a Saviour would be the occasion of their rejecting him, and of their deeper and more aggravated condemnation.

(5.) That the arrangement was nevertheless made, with the understanding that all this would be so, and because it was best on

the whole that it should be so, even though this consequence would follow. That is, it was better that the arrangement should be made for the salvation of men even with this result, that a part would sink into deeper condemnation, than that no arrangement should be made to save any. The primary and originating arrangement, therefore, did not contemplate them or their destruction, but was made with reference to others, and notwithstanding they would reject him, and would fall. The expression whereunto (εις ο) refers to this plan, as involving, under the circumstances, the result which actually followed. Their stumbling and falling was not a matter of chance, or a result which was not contemplated, but entered into the original arrangement; and the whole, therefore, might be said to be in accordance with a wise plan and purpose. And,

(6.) it might be said in this sense, and in this connexion, that those who would reject him were appointed to this stumbling and falling. It was what was foreseen; what entered into the general arrangement; what was involved in the purpose to save any. It was not a matter that was unforeseen, that the consequence of giving a Saviour would result in the condemnation of those who should crucify and reject him; but the whole thing, as it actually occurred, entered into the Divine arrangement. It may be added, that as, in the facts in the case, nothing wrong has been done by God, and no one has been deprived of any rights, or punished more than he deserves, it was not wrong in him to make the arrangement. It was better that the arrangement should be made as it is, even with this consequence, than that none at all should be made for human salvation. Rom 9:5, seq. Jn 12:39, Jn 12:40. This is just a statement, in accordance with what everywhere occurs in the Bible, that all things enter into the eternal plans of God; that nothing happens by chance; that there is nothing that was not foreseen; and that the plan is such as, on the whole, God saw to be best and wise, and therefore adopted it. If there is nothing unjust and wrong in the actual developement of the plan, there was nothing in forming it. At the same time, no man who disbelieves and rejects the gospel should take refuge in this as an excuse. He was "appointed" to it no otherwise than as it actually occurs; and as they know that they are voluntary in rejecting him, they cannot lay the blame of this on the purposes of God. They are not forced or compelled to do it; but it was seen that this

consequence would follow, and the plan was laid to send the Saviour notwithstanding.

God's Own People

9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

But ye are a chosen generation. In contradistinction from those who, by their disobedience, had rejected the Saviour as the foundation of hope. The people of God are often represented as his chosen or elected people. 1Pet 1:2.

A royal priesthood. 1Pet 2:2%. The meaning of this is, probably, that they "at once bore the dignity of kings, and the sanctity of priests."--Doddridge. Comp. Rev 1:6: "And hath made us kings and priests unto God." See also Isa 61:6: "But ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call you ministers of our God." It may be, however, that the word royal is used only to denote the dignity of the priestly office which they sustained, or that they constituted, as it were, an entire nation or kingdom of priests. They were a kingdom over which he presided, and they were all priests; so that it might be said they were a kingdom of priests--a kingdom in which all the subjects were engaged in offering sacrifice to God. The expression appears to be taken from Ex 19:6--"And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests"--and is such language as one who had been educated as a Jew would be likely to employ to set forth the dignity of those whom he regarded as the people of God.

An holy nation. This is also taken from Ex 19:6. The Hebrews were regarded as a nation consecrated to God; and now that they were east off or rejected for their disobedience, the same language was properly applied to the people whom God had chosen in their place --the Christian church.

A peculiar people. Comp. Tit 2:14, The margin here is purchased. The word peculiar, in its common acceptation now, would mean that they were distinguished from others, or were singular. The reading

in the margin would mean that they had been bought or redeemed. Both these things are so, but neither of them expresses the exact sense of the original. The Greek (λαοζειςπεριποιησιν) means, "a people for a possession;" that is, as pertaining to God. They are a people which he has secured as a possession, or as his own; a people, therefore, which belong to him, and to no other. In this sense they are peculiar as being his; and, being such, it may be inferred that they should be peculiar in the sense of being unlike others in their manner of life. But that idea is not necessarily in the text. There seems to be here also an allusion to Ex 19:5: "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure with me (Sept. λαοζπεριουσιος) above all people."

That ye should shew forth the praises of him. Marg., virtues. The Greek word (αρετη) means properly good quality, excellence of any kind. It means here the excellences of God--his goodness, his wondrous deeds, or those things which make it proper to praise him. This shows one great object for which they were redeemed. It was that they might proclaim the glory of God, and keep up the remembrance of his wondrous deeds in the earth. This is to be done

(a.) by proper ascriptions of praise to him in public, family, and social worship;

(b.) by being always the avowed friends of God, ready ever to vindicate his government and ways;

(c.) by endeavouring to make known his excellences to all those who are ignorant of him; and

(d.) by such a life as shall constantly proclaim his praise--as the sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the streams, the flowers do, showing what God does. The consistent life of a devoted Christian is a constant setting forth of the praise of God, showing to all that the God who has made him such is worthy to be loved.

Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. On the word called, Eph 4:1. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, sin, and misery, and refers here to their condition before their conversion; light is the emblem of the opposite, and is a beautiful

representation of the state of those who are brought to the knowledge of the gospel. Acts 26:18. The word marvellous means wonderful; and the idea is, that the light of the gospel was such as was unusual, or not to be found elsewhere, as that excites wonder or surprise which we are not accustomed to see. The primary reference here is, undoubtedly, to those who had been heathens, and to the great change which had been produced by their having been brought to the knowledge of the truth as revealed in the gospel; and, in regard to this, no one can doubt that the one state deserved to be characterized as darkness, and the other as light. The contrast was as great as that between midnight and noonday. But what is here said is substantially correct of all who are converted, and is often as strikingly true of those who have been brought up in Christian lands, as of those who have lived among the heathen. The change in conversion is often so great and so rapid, the views and feelings are so different before and after conversion, that it seems like a sudden transition from midnight to noon. In all cases also, of true conversion, though the change may not be so striking, or apparently so sudden, there is a change of which this may be regarded as substantially an accurate description. In many cases the convert can adopt this language in all its fulness, as descriptive of his own conversion; in all cases of genuine conversion it is true that each one can say that he has been called from a state in which his mind was dark to one in which it is comparatively clear.

10 which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Which in time past were not a people. That is, who formerly were not regarded as the people of God. There is an allusion here to the passage in Hoss 2:23, "And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." It is, however, a mere allusion, such as one makes who uses the language of another to express his ideas, without meaning to say that both refer to the same subject. In Hosea, the passage refers evidently to the reception of one portion of the Israelites into favour after their rejection; in Peter, it refers mainly to those who had been Gentiles, and who had never been recognised as the people of God. The language of the prophet would exactly express his idea, and he therefore uses it without intending to say that this was its original application. See it explained Rom 9:25. Comp. Eph 2:11, seq.

Which had not obtained mercy. That is, who had been living unpardoned, having no knowledge of the way by which sinners might be forgiven, and no evidence that your sins were forgiven. They were then in the condition of the whole heathen world, and they had not then been acquainted with the glorious method by which God forgives iniquity.

Live as Servants of God

11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims. On the word rendered strangers, (παροικους,) Eph 2:19, where it is rendered foreigners. It means, properly, one dwelling near, neighbouring; then a by-dweller, a sojourner, one without the rights of citizenship, as distinguished from a citizen; and it means here that Christians are not properly citizens of this world, but that their citizenship is in heaven, and that they are here mere sojourners. Php 3:20. For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven." On the word rendered pilgrims, (παρεπιδημους,) 1Pet 1:1; Heb 11:13. A pilgrim, properly, is one who travels to a distance from his own country to visit a holy place, or to pay his devotion to some holy object; then a traveller, a wanderer. The meaning here is, that Christians have no permanent home on earth; their citizenship is not here; they are mere sojourners, and they are passing on to their eternal home in the heavens. They should, therefore, act as become such persons; as sojourners and travellers do. They should not

(a.) regard the earth as their home.

(b.) They should not seek to acquire permanent possessions here, as if they were to remain here, but should act as travellers do, who merely seek a temporary lodging, without expecting permanently to reside in a place.

(c.) They should not allow any such attachments to be formed, or arrangements to be made, as to impede their journey to their final home, as pilgrims seek only a temporary lodging, and steadily pursue their journey.

(d.) Even while engaged here in the necessary callings of life--their studies, their farming, their merchandize--their thoughts and affections should be on other things. One in a strange land thinks much of his country and home; a pilgrim, much of the land to which he goes; and even while his time and attention may be necessarily occupied by the arrangements needful for the journey, his thoughts and affections will be far away.

(e.) We should not encumber ourselves with much of this world's goods. Many professed Christians get so many worldly things around them, that it is impossible for them to make a journey to heaven. They burden themselves as no traveller would, and they make no progress. A traveller takes along as few things as possible; and a staff is often all that a pilgrim has. We make the most rapid progress in our journey to our final home when we are least encumbered with the things of this world. Abstain from freshly lusts. Such desires and passions as the carnal appetites prompt to. Gal 5:19, seq., a sojourner in a land, or a pilgrim, does not give himself up to the indulgence of sensual appetites, or to the soft pleasures of the soul. All these would hinder his progress, and turn him off from his great design. Comp. Rom 13:4, Gal 5:24, 2Ti 2:22, Tit 2:12, 1Pet 1:14. Which war against the soul. Rom 8:12, Rom 8:13. The meaning is, that indulgence in these things makes war against the nobler faculties of the soul; against the conscience, the understanding, the memory, the judgment, the exercise of a pure imagination. Comp. Gal 5:17. There is not a faculty of the mind, however brilliant in itself, which will not be ultimately ruined by indulgence in the carnal propensities of our nature. The effect of intemperance on the noble faculties of the soul is well known; and alas, there are too many instances in which the light of genius, in those endowed with splendid gifts, at the bar, in the pulpit, and in the senate, is extinguished by it, to need a particular description. But there is one vice pre-eminently, which prevails all over the heathen world, (Comp. Rom 1:27, seq.) and extensively in Christian lands, which more than all others, blunts the moral sense, pollutes the memory, defiles the imagination, hardens the heart, and sends a withering influence through all the faculties of the soul.

"The soul grows clotted by contagion, Embodies, and embrutes, till she quite lose The divine property of her first being,"

Of this passion, Burns beautifully and truly said-
"But oh ! it hardens a' within, And petrifies the feeling."
From all these passions the Christian pilgrim is to abstain.

12 having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Having your conversation honest. Your conduct. Php 1:27. That is, lead upright and consistent lives. Comp. Php 4:8.

Among the Gentiles. The heathen by whom you are surrounded, and who will certainly observe your conduct. 1Thes 4:12, "That ye may walk honestly towards them that are without." Comp. Rom 13:13.

That, whereas they speak against you as evil doers,. Marg., wherein. Gr., ενω--in what; either referring to time, and meaning that at the very time when they speak against you in this manner they may be silenced by seeing your upright lives; or meaning in respect to which--that is, that in respect to the very matters for which they reproach you they may see by your meek and upright conduct that there is really no ground for reproach. Wetstein adopts the former, but the question which is meant is not very important. Bloomfield supposes it to mean inasmuch, whereas. The sentiment is a correct one, whichever interpretation is adopted It should be true that at the very time when the enemies of religion reproach us, they should see that we are actuated by Christian principles, and that in the very matter for which we are reproached we are conscientious and honest.

They may, by your good works, which they shall behold. Gr., "which they shall closely or narrowly inspect." The meaning is, that upon a close and narrow examination, they may see that you are actuated by upright principles, and ultimately be disposed to do you justice. It is to be remembered that the heathen were very little acquainted with the nature of Christianity; and it is known that in the early ages they charged on Christians the most abominable vices, and even accused them of practices at which human nature revolts. The meaning of Peter is, that while they charged these things on Christians, whether from ignorance or malice, they ought so to live as that a more full acquaintance with them, and a closer inspection of their conduct, would disarm their prejudices, and show that their

charges were entirely unfounded. The truth taught here is, that our conduct as Christians should be such as to bear the strictest scrutiny; such that the closest examination will lead our enemies to the conviction; that we are upright and honest. This may be done by every Christian; this his religion solemnly requires him to do.

Glorify God. Honour God; that is, that they may be convinced by your conduct of the pure and holy nature of that religion which he has revealed, and be led also to love and worship him. Mt 5:16.

In the day of visitation. Many different opinions have been entertained of the meaning of this phrase, some referring it to the day of judgment; some to times of persecution; some to the destruction of Jerusalem; and some to the time when the gospel was preached among the Gentiles, as a period when God visited them with mercy. The word visitation (επισκοπη,) means the act of visiting or being visited for any purpose, usually with the notion of inspecting conduct, of inflicting punishment, or of conferring favours. Comp. Mt 25:36,43, Lk 1:68,78, 7:16, 19:44. In the sense of visiting for the purpose of punishing, the word is often used in the Septuagint for the Heb. , (pakad,) though there is no instance in which the word is so used in the New Testament, unless it be in the verse before us. The "visitation" here referred to is undoubtedly that of God; and the reference is to some time when he would make a "visitation" to men for some purpose, and when the fact that the Gentiles had narrowly inspected the conduct of Christians would lead them to honour him. The only question is, to what visitation of that kind the apostle referred. The prevailing use of the word in the New Testament would seem to lead us to suppose that the "visitation" referred to was designed to confer favours rather than to inflict punishment, and indeed the word seems to have somewhat of a technical character, and to have been familiarly used by Christians to denote God's coming to men to bless them; to pour out his Spirit upon them; to revive religion. This seems to me to be its meaning here; and, if so, the sense is, that when God appeared among men to accompany the preaching of the gospel with saving power, the result of the observed conduct of Christians would be to lead those around them to honour him by giving up their hearts to him; that is, their consistent lives would be the means of the revival and extension of true religion.

And is it not always so? Is not the pure and holy walk of Christians an occasion of his bending his footsteps down to earth to bless dying sinners, and to scatter spiritual blessings with a liberal hand? Comp. 1Cor 14:24, 1Cor 14:25.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:
whether it be to the king, as supreme;

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man. Gr., "to every creation of man," (ανθρωπινηκτισει.) The meaning is, to every institution or appointment of man; to wit, of those who are in authority, or who are appointed to administer government. The laws, institutes, and appointments of such a government may be spoken of as the creation of man; that is, as what man makes. Of course, what is here said must be understood with the limitation everywhere implied, that what is ordained by those in authority is not contrary to the law of God. Acts 4:19. On the general duty here enjoined of subjection to civil authority, Rom 13:1-7. For the Lord's sake. Because he has required it, and has intrusted this power to civil rulers. Rom 13:6. Comp. Eph 6:7. Whether it be to the king. It has been commonly supposed that there is reference here to the Roman emperor, who might be called king, because in him the supreme power resided. The common title of the Roman sovereign was, as used by the Greek writers, αυτοκρατωρ, and among the Romans themselves, imperator, (emperor;) but the title king was also given to the sovereign. Jn 19:15, "We have no king but Cesar." Acts 17:7, "And these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Peter undoubtedly had particular reference to the Roman emperors, but he uses a general term, which would be applicable to all in whom the supreme power resided, and the injunction here would require submission to such authority, by whatever name it might be called. The meaning is, that we are to be subject to that authority whether exercised by the sovereign in person, or by those who are appointed by him.

14 or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the
punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence
the ignorance of foolish men:

For so is the will of God. That is, it is in accordance with the Divine will that in this way you should put them to silence. That with well doing. By a life of uprightness and benevolence. Ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Tit 2:8. The reference here is

to men who brought charges against Christians, by accusing them of being inimical to the government, or insubordinate, or guilty of crimes. Such charges, it is well known, were often brought against them by their enemies in the early ages of Christianity. Peter says they were brought by foolish men, perhaps using the word foolish in the sense of evil-disposed, or wicked, as it is often used in the Bible. Yet, though there might be malice at the bottom, the charges were really based on ignorance. They were not thoroughly acquainted with the principles of the Christian religion; and the way to meet those charges was to act in every way as became good citizens, and so as "to live them down." One of the best ways o meeting the accusations of our enemies is to lead a life of strict integrity. It is not easy for the wicked to reply to this argument.

16 as free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

As free. That is, they were to consider themselves as freemen, as having a right to liberty. The Jews boasted much of their freedom and regarded it as a birthright privilege that they were free, Jn 8:33. They never willingly acknowledged their subjection to any other power, but claimed it as an elementary idea of their civil constitution that God only was their Sovereign. They were indeed conquered by the Romans, and paid tribute, but they did it because they were compelled to do it, and it was even a question much debated among them whether they should do it or not, Mt 22:17. Josephus has often referred to the fact that the Jews rebelled against the Romans under the plea that they were a free people, and that they were subject only to God. This idea of essential freedom the Jews had when they became Christians, and every thing in Christianity tended to inspire them with the love of liberty, They who were converted to the Christian faith, whether from among the Jews or the Gentiles, were made to feel that they were the children of God; that his law was the supreme rule of their lives; that in the ultimate resort they were subject to him alone; that they were redeemed, and that, therefore, the yoke of bondage could not be properly imposed on them; that God "had made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth," (Acts 17:26;) and that, therefore, they were on a level before him. The meaning here is, that they were not to consider themselves as slaves, or to act as slaves. In their subjection to civil authority they were not to forget that they were freemen in the highest sense, and that liberty was an invaluable blessing. They

had been made free by the Son of God, Jn 8:32,36. They were free from sin and condemnation. They acknowledged Christ as their supreme Head, and the whole spirit and tendency of his religion prompted to the exercise of freedom. They were not to submit to the chains of slavery; not to allow their consciences to be bound, or their essential liberty to be interfered with; nor in their subjection to the civil magistrate were they ever to regard themselves otherwise than as freemen. As a matter of fact, Christianity has always been the friend and promoter of liberty. Its influence emancipated the slaves throughout the Roman empire; and all the civil freedom which we enjoy, and which there is in the world, can be traced to the influence of the Christian religion. To spread the gospel in its purity everywhere would be to break every yoke of oppression and bondage, and to make men everywhere free. It is the essential right of every man who is a Christian to be a freeman--to be free to worship God; to read the Bible; to enjoy the avails of his own labour; to train up his children in the way in which he shall deem best; to form his own plans of life, and to pursue his own ends, provided only that he does not interfere with the equal right of others--and every system which prevents this, whether it be that of civil government, of ecclesiastical law, or of domestic slavery, is contrary to the religion of the Saviour.

And not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness. Marg., as in Greek, having. Not making your freedom a mere pretext under which to practise all kinds of evil. The word rendered maliciousness κακια--means more than our word maliciousness does; for it denotes evil of any kind, or all kinds. The word maliciousness refers rather to enmity of heart ill-will, an intention to injure. The apostle has reference to an abuse of freedom, which has often occurred. The pretence of those who have acted in this manner has been, that the freedom of the gospel implied deliverance from all kinds of restraint; that they were under no yoke, and bound by no laws; that, being the children of God, they had a right to all kinds of enjoyment and indulgence; that even the moral law ceased to bind them, and that they had a right to make the most of liberty in all respects. Hence they have given themselves up to all sorts of sensual indulgence, claiming exemption from the restraints of morality as well as of civil law, and sinking into the deepest abyss of vice. Not a few have done this who have professed to be Christians; and, occasionally, a fanatical sect now appears who make the freedom which they say

Christianity confers a pretext for indulgence in the most base and degrading vices. The apostles saw this tendency in human nature, and in nothing are they more careful than to guard against this abuse.

But as the servants of God. Not free from all restraint; not at liberty to indulge in all things, but bound to serve God in the faithful obedience of his laws. Thus bound to obey and serve him, they could not be at liberty to indulge in those things which would be in violation of his laws, and which would dishonour him. See this sentiment explained 1Cor 7:22; 1Cor 9:21.

17 Honor all *men.* Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Honour all men. That is, show them the respect which is due to them according to their personal worth, and to the rank and office which they sustain. Rom 13:7.

Love the brotherhood. The whole fraternity of Christians, regarded as a band of brothers. The word here used occurs only in this place and in 1Pet 5:9, where it is rendered brethren. The idea expressed here occurs often in the New Testament. Jn 13:34, Jn 13:35.

Fear God, A duty everywhere enjoined in the Bible, as one of the first duties of religion. Comp. Lev 25:17, 24:7, 25:14; Prov 1:7, 3:13, 9:10, 23:17; Rom 3:18; 2Cor 7:1 The word fear, when used to express our duty to God, means that we are to reverence and honour him. Religion, in one aspect, is described as the fear of God; in another, as the love of God; in another, as submission to his will, etc. A holy veneration or fear is always an elementary principle of religion. It is the fear, not so much of punishment as of his disapprobation; not so much the dread of suffering at the dread of doing wrong.

Honour the king. Referring here primarily to the Roman sovereign, but implying that we are always to respect those who have the rule over us. Rom 13:1-7. The doctrine taught in these verses 1Pet 2:13-17 is, that we are faithfully to perform all the relative duties of life. There are duties which we owe to ourselves, which are of importance in their place, and which we are by no means at liberty to neglect. But we also owe duties to our fellow-men, to our

Christian brethren, and to those who have the rule over us; and religion, while it is honoured by our faithful performance of our duty to ourselves, is more openly honoured by our performance of our duties to those to whom we sustain important relations in life. Many of the duties which we owe to ourselves are, from the nature of the case, hidden from public observation. All that pertains to the examination of the heart; to our private devotions; to the subjugation of our evil passions; to our individual communion with God, must be concealed from public view. Not so, however, with those duties which pertain to others. In respect to them, we are open to public view. The eye of the world is upon us. The judgment of the world in regard to us is made up from their observation of the manner in which we perform them. If religion fails there, they judge that it fails altogether; and however devout we may be in private, if it is not seen by the world that our religion leads to the faithful performance of the duties which we owe in the various relations of life, it will be regarded as of little value.

The Example of Christ's Suffering

18 Servants, *be* subject to *your* masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

With all fear. That is, with all proper reverence and respect. Eph 6:6. Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. The word rendered froward (σκολιοις) means properly crooked, bent; then perverse, wicked, unjust, peevish. Any one who is a servant or domestic is liable to be employed in the service of such a master; but while the relation continues, the servant should perform his duty with fidelity, whatever may be the character of the master. Slaves are certainly liable to this; and even those who voluntarily engage as servants to others, cannot always be sure that they will have kind employers. Though the terms used here do not necessarily imply that those to whom the apostle gave this direction were slaves, yet it may be presumed that they probably were, since slavery abounded throughout the Roman empire; but the directions will apply to all who are engaged in the service of others, and are therefore of permanent value. Slavery will, sooner or later, under the influence of the gospel, wholly cease in the world, and instructions addressed to masters and slaves will have no permanent value; but it will always be true that there will be those employed as domestics, and

it is the duty of all who are thus engaged to evince true fidelity and a Christian spirit themselves, whatever may be the character of their employers.

19 For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

Reason for subjection even to froward masters. thankworthy—(Lu 6:33). A course out of the common, and especially praiseworthy in the eyes of God: not as Rome interprets, earning merit, and so a work of supererogation (compare 1Pe 2:20). for conscience toward God—literally, "consciousness of God": from a conscientious regard to God, more than to men.

20 For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God.

For what glory is it. What honour or credit would it be.

If, when ye be buffeted for your faults. That is, if you are punished when you deserve it, The word buffet (κολαφιζω) means, to strike with the fist; and then to strike in any way; to maltreat, Mt 26:67, Mk 14:65, 1Cor 4:11, 2Cor 12:7, Perhaps there may be a reference here to the manner in which servants were commonly treated, or the kind of punishment to which they were exposed. They would be likely to be struck in sudden anger, either by the hand, or by anything that was accessible, The word rendered "for your faults," is sinning, (αμαρτανοντες,) That is, "if being guilty of an offence, or having done wrong." The idea is, that if they were justly punished, and should take it patiently, there would be no credit or honour in it,

Ye shall take it patiently. "If, even then, you evince an uncomplaining spirit, and bear it with the utmost calmness and patience, it would be regarded as comparatively no virtue, and as entitling you to no honour. The feeling of all who saw it would be that you deserved it, and there would be nothing to excite their sympathy or compassion. The patience evinced might indeed be as great as in the other ease, but there would be the feeling that you deleted all that you received, and the spirit evinced in that ease could not be regarded as entitled to any particular praise. If your masters are inflicting on you only what you deserve, it would be in the highest degree shameful for you to rise up against them, and resist them, for it would be only adding to the wrong which you had

already done:" The expression here is, doubtless, to be understood comparatively. The meaning is not that absolutely there would be no more credit due to one who should bear his punishment patiently when he had done wrong, than if he had met it with resistance and murmuring; but that there is very little credit in that compared with the patience which an innocent person evinces, who, from regard to the will of God, and by control over all the natural feelings of resentment, meekly endures wrong. This expresses the common feeling of our nature. We attribute no particular credit to one who submits to a just punishment even with a calm temper. We feel that it would be wrong in the highest degree for him to do otherwise. So it is when calamities are brought on a man on account of his sins. If it is seen to be the fruit of intemperance or crime, we do not feel that there is any great virtue exhibited if he bears it with a calm temper. But if he is overwhelmed with calamity when it seems to have no particular connexion with his sins, or to be a punishment for any particular fault; if he suffers at the hand of man, where there is manifest injustice done him, and yet evinces a calm, submissive, and meek temper, we feel that in such cases there is eminent virtue.

This is acceptable with God. Marg., as in 1Pet 2:19, thank. It is that which is agreeable to him, or with which he is pleased.

21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

For even hereunto were ye called. Such a spirit is required by the very nature of your Christian vocation; you were called into the church in order that you might evince it. 1Thes 3:3. Because Christ also suffered for us. Marg., "Some read, for you." The latest editions of the Greek Testament adopt the reading "for you." The sense, however, is not essentially varied. The object is, to hold up the example of Christ to those who were called to suffer, and to say to them that they should bear their trials in the same spirit that he evinced in his. Php 3:10. Leaving us an example. The apostle does not say that this was the only object for which Christ suffered, but that it was an object, and an important one. The word rendered example (υπογραμμον) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly a writing copy, such as is set for children; or an outline or sketch for a painter to fill up; and then, in general, an example, a pattern for imitation. That ye should follow his steps.

That we should follow him, as if we trod exactly along behind him, and should place our feet precisely where his were. The meaning is, that there should be the closest imitation or resemblance. The things in which we are to imitate him are specified in the following verses.

22 who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Who did no sin. Who was in all respects perfectly holy. There is an allusion here to Isa 53:9; and the sense is, that he was entirely innocent, and that he suffered without having committed any crime. In this connexion the meaning is, that we are to be careful that, if we suffer, it should be without committing any crime, We should so live, as the Saviour did, as not to deserve to be punished, and thus only shall we entirely follow his example. It is as much our duty to live so as not to deserve the reproaches of others, as it is to bear them with patience when we are called to suffer them. The first thing in regard to hard treatment from others, is to live that there shall be no just occasion for it; the next is, if reproaches come upon us when we have not deserved them, to bear them as the Saviour did. If he suffered unjustly, we should esteem it to be no strange thing that we should; if he bore the injuries done him with meekness, we should learn that it is possible for us to do it also; and should learn also that we have not the spirit of his religion unless we actually do it. On the expression here used, Isa 53:9; Heb 7:26. Neither was guile found in his mouth. There was no deceit, hypocrisy, or insincerity, he was in all respects what he professed to be, and he imposed on no one by any false and unfounded claim. All this has reference to the time when the Saviour was put to death; and the sense is, that though he was condemned as an impostor, yet that the charge was wholly unfounded. As in his whole life before he was perfectly sincere, so he was eminently on that solemn occasion.

23 who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously:

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. He did not use harsh and opprobrious words in return for those which he received.

(1.) He was reviled, he was accused of being a seditious man; spoken of as a deceiver; charged with being in league with Beelzebub, the "prince of the devils ;" and condemned as a blasphemer against God. This was done

(a.) by the great and the influential of the land;

(b.) in the most public manner;

(c.) with a design to alienate his friends from him;

(d.) with most cutting and severe sarcasm and irony; and

(e.) in reference to everything that would most affect a man of delicate and tender sensibility.

(2.) He did not revile those who had reproached him. He asked that justice might be done. He demanded that if he had spoken evil, they should bear witness of the evil; but beyond that he did not go. He used no harsh language, He showed no anger. He called for no revenge. He prayed that they might be forgiven, He calmly stood and bore it all, for he came to endure all kinds of suffering in order that he might set us an example, and make an atonement for our sins. When he suffered, he threatened not. That is, when he suffered injustice from others, in his trial and in his death, he did not threaten punishment. He did not call down the wrath of heaven. He did not even predict that they would be punished; he expressed no wish that they should be. But committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Marg., his cause. The sense is much the same. The meaning is, that he committed his cause, his name, his interests, the whole case, to God. The meaning of the phrase "that judgeth righteously" here is, that God would do him exact justice. Though wronged by men, he felt assured that he would do right. He would rescue his name from these reproaches; he would give him the honour in the world which he deserved; and he would bring upon those who had wronged him all that was necessary in order to show his disapprobation of what they had done, and all that would be necessary to give the highest support to the cause of virtue. Comp Lk 23:46. This is the example which is set before us when we are wronged. The whole example embraces these points:

(1.) We should see to it that we ourselves are guiltless in the matter: for which we are reproached or accused. Before we fancy that we are suffering as Christ did, we should be sure that our lives are such. as not to deserve reproach. We cannot indeed hope to be as pure in all things as he was; but we may so live that if we are reproached

and reviled we may be certain that it is not for any wrong that we have done to others, or that we do not deserve it from our fellowmen.

(2.) When we are reproached and reviled, we should feel that we were called to this by our profession; that it was one of the things which we were taught to expect when we became Christians; that it is what the prophets and apostles endured, and what the Master himself suffered in an eminent degree; and that if we meet with the scorn of the great, the gay, the rich, the powerful, it is no more than the Saviour did, and no more than we have been taught to expect will be our portion. It may be well, too, to remember our unworthiness; and to reflect, that though we have done no wrong to the individual who reviles us, yet that we are sinners, and that such reproaches may not be a useless admonisher of our being guilty before God. So David felt when reproached by Shimei: "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" 2Sam 16:10.

(3.) When this occurs, we should calmly and confidently commit our cause to God. Our name, our character, our influence, our reputation, while living and after we are dead, we should leave entirely with him. We should not seek nor desire revenge. We should not call down the wrath of God on our persecutors and slanderers. We should calmly fed that God win give us the measure of reputation which we ought to have in the world, and that he will suffer no ultimate injustice to be done us. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day," Ps 37:5,6. The Latin Vulgate has here, "But he committed himself to him who judged him unjustly," judieanti se injuste; that is, to Pontius pilate, meaning that he left himself in his hands, though he knew that the sentence was unjust. But there is no authority for this in the Greek, and this is one of the instances in which that version departs from the original.

24 who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Who his own self. Heb 1:3, on the phrase "when he had by himself purged our sins." The meaning is, that he did it in his own proper person; he did not make expiation by offering a bloody victim, but was himself the sacrifice.

Bare our sins. There is an allusion here undoubtedly to Isa 53:4,12. See the meaning of the phrase "to bear sins" fully considered in the Notes on those places. As this cannot mean that Christ so took upon himself the sins of men as to become himself a sinner, it must mean that he put himself in the place of sinners, and bore that which those sins deserved; that is, that he endured in his own person that which, if it had been inflicted on the sinner himself, would have been a proper expression of the Divine displeasure against sin, or would have been a proper punishment for sin. 2Cor 5:21. He was treated as if he had been a sinner, in order that we might be treated as if we had not sinned; that is, as if we were righteous. There is no other way in which we can conceive that one bears the sins of another. They cannot be literally transferred to another; and all that can be meant is, that he should take the consequences on himself, and suffer as if he had committed the transgressions himself.

In his own body. This alludes undoubtedly to his sufferings. The sufferings which he endured on the cross were such as if he had been guilty; that is, he was treated as he would have been if he had been a sinner. He was treated as a malefactor; crucified as those most guilty were; endured the same kind of bodily pain that the guilty do who are punished for their own sins; and passed through mental sorrows strongly resembling --as much so as the case admitted of-- what the guilty themselves experience when they are left to distressing anguish of mind, and are abandoned by God. The sufferings of the Saviour were in all respects made as nearly like the sufferings of the most guilty, as the sufferings of a perfectly, innocent being could be.

On the tree. Marg., "to the tree. Gr., επιτοξυλον. The meaning is rather, as in the text, that while himself on the cross, he bore the sorrows which our sins deserved. It does not mean that he conveyed our sorrows there, but that while there he suffered under the intolerable burden, and was by that burden crushed in death. The phrase "on the tree," literally "on the wood," means the cross. The

same Greek word is used in Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, Gal 3:13, as applicable to the cross, in all of which places it is rendered tree.

That we, being dead to sins. In virtue of his having thus been suspended on a cross; that is, his being put to death as an atoning sacrifice was the means by which we become dead to sin, and live to God. The phrase "being dead to sins" is, in the original, ταιςαμαρτιαις απογενομενοι, literally, "to be absent from sins." The Greek word was probably used (by an euphemism) to denote to die, that is, to be absent from the world, This is a milder and less repulsive word than to say to die. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning is, that we being effectually separated from sin--that is, being so that it no longer influences us--should live unto God. We are to be, in regard to sin, as if we were dead; and it is to have no more influence over us than if we were in our graves. Rom 6:2-7. The means by which this is brought about is the death of Christ, Rom 6:8; for as he died literally on the cross on account of our sins, the effect has been to lead us to see the evil of transgression, and to lead new and holy lives.

Should live unto righteousness. Though dead in respect to sin, yet we have real life in another, respect. We are made alive unto God, to righteousness, to true holiness. Rom 6:11; Gal 2:20.

By whose stripes. This is taken from Isa 53:5. See it explained in the Notes on that verse. The word rendered stripes (μωλωπι) means, properly, the livid and swollen mark of a blow; the mark designated by us when we use the expression "black and blue." It is not properly a bloody wound, but that made by pinching, beating, scourging. The idea seems to be that the Saviour was scourged or whipped; and that the effect on us is the same in producing spiritual healing, or in recovering us from our faults, as if we had been scourged ourselves. By faith we see the bruises inflicted on him, the black and blue spots made by beating; we remember that they were on account of our sins, and not for his; and the effect in reclaiming us is the same as if they had been inflicted on us.

Ye were healed. Sin is often spoken of as a disease, and redemption from it as a restoration from a deadly malady. See this explained in the Isa 53:5.

For ye were as sheep going astray. Here also is an allusion to Isa 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray." See Notes on that verse. The figure is plain. We were like a flock without a shepherd. We had wandered far away from the true fold, and were following our own paths. We were without a protector, and were exposed to every kind of danger. This aptly and forcibly expresses the condition of the whole race before God recovers men by the plan of salvation. A flock thus wandering without a shepherd, conductor, or guide, is in a most pitiable condition; and so was man in his wanderings before he was sought out and brought back to the true fold by the great Shepherd. But are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. To Christ, who thus came to seek and save those who were lost. He is often called a Shepherd. Jn 10:1, seq. The word rendered bishop, (επισκοπος) means overseer. It may be applied to one who inspects or oversees anything, as public works, or the execution of treaties; to anyone who is an inspector of wares offered for sale; or, in general, to any one who is a superintendent. It is applied in the New Testament to those who are appointed to watch over the interests of the church, and especially to the officers of the church. Here it is applied to the Lord Jesus as the great Guardian and Superintendent of his church; and the title of Universal Bishop belongs to him alone.

1 Peter-3

The Behavior of Wives and Husbands

1 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any
obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the
conversation of the wives;
2 while they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands. On the d
here enjoined, 1Cor 11:3, seq.; Eph 5:22. That, if any obey not the wo
The word of God; the gospel. That is, if any wives have husbands w
are not true Christians. This would be likely to occur when the gospel w
first preached, as it does now, by the fact that wives might be convert
though their husbands were not. It cannot be inferred from this, that a
they themselves had become Christians they had married unbeliev
husbands. The term "word" here refers particularly to the gospel
preached; and the idea is, that if they were regardless of that gospel wh

preached--if they would not attend on preaching, or if they w unaffected by it, or if they openly rejected it, there might be hope still t they would be converted by the Christian influence of a wife at home such cases, a duty of special importance devolves on the wife. They a may without the word be won. In some other way than by preaching. T does not mean that they would be converted independently of influence of truth--for truth is always the instrument of conversion, (1:18, Jn 17:17;) but that it was to be by another influence than preachi By the conversation of the wives. By the conduct or deportment of th wives. Php 1:27. The word conversation, in the Scriptures, is ne confined, as it is now with us, to oral discourse, but denotes conduc general. It includes indeed "conversation" as the word is now used, bu embraces also much more--including everything that we do. The mean here is, that the habitual deportment of the wife was to be such as to sh the reality and power of religion; to show that it had such influence her temper, her words, her whole deportment, as to demonstrate tha was from God.

While they behold your chaste conversation. Your pure conduct. The word chaste here (αγνην) refers to purity of conduct in all respects, and not merely to chastity properly so called. It includes that, but it also embraces much more. The conduct of the wife is to be in all respects pure; and this is to be the grand instrumentality in the conversion of her husband. A wife may be strictly chaste, and yet there may be many other things in her conduct and temper which would mar the beauty of her piety, and prevent any happy influence on the mind of her husband. Coupled with fear. The word fear, in this place, may refer either to the fear of God, or to a proper respect and reverence for their husbands, Eph 5:33. The trait of character which is referred to is that of proper respect and reverence in all the relations which she sustained, as opposed to a trifling and frivolous mind. Leighton suggests that the word fear here relates particularly to the other duty enjoined--that of chaste conversation--"fearing the least stain of chastity, or the very appearance of anything not suiting with it. It is a delicate, timorous grace, afraid of the least air, or shadow of anything that hath but a resemblance of wronging it, in carriage, or speech, or apparel."

3 Whose adorning, let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 but *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

But let it be the hidden man of the heart. This expression is substantially the same as that of Paul in Rom 7:22, "the inward man." Rom 7:22. The word "hidden" here means that which is concealed; that which is not made apparent by the dress, or by ornament. It lies within, pertaining to the affections of the soul. In that which is not corruptible. Properly, "in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." This is said to be incorruptible in contradistinction to gold and apparel. They will decay; but the internal ornament is ever enduring. The sense is, that whatever pertains to outward decoration, however beautiful and costly, is fading; but that which pertains to the soul is enduring. As the soul is immortal, so all that tends to adorn that will be immortal too; as the body is mortal, so all with which it can be invested is decaying, and will soon be destroyed. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning. The connexion here shows that the apostle refers to this, not only as that which would be of great price in the sight of God, but as that which would tend to secure the affection of their husbands, and win them to embrace the true religion, (1Pet 3:1,2;) and, in order to this, he recommends them, instead of seeking external ornaments, to seek those of the mind and of the heart, as more agreeable to their husbands; as better adapted to win their hearts to religion; as that which would be most permanently proved.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

For after this manner, in the old time. The allusion here is particularly to the times of the patriarchs, and the object of the apostle is to state another reason why they should seek that kind of ornament which he had been commending. The reason is, that this characterised the pious and honoured females of ancient times--those females who had been most commended of God, and who were most worthy to be remembered on earth. Who trusted in God. Greek, "Who hoped in God;" that is, who were truly pious. They

were characterised by simple trust or hope in God, rather than by a fondness for external adorning. Adorned themselves. To wit, with a meek and quiet spirit, manifested particularly by the respect evinced for their husbands. Being in subjection unto their own husbands. This was evidently a characteristic of the early periods of the world; and piety was understood to consist much in proper respect for others, according to the relations sustained towards them.

6 even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Even as Sara obeyed Abraham. Sarah was one of the most distinguished of the wives of the patriarchs, and her case is referred to as furnishing one of the best illustrations of the duty to which the apostle refers. Nothing is said, in the brief records of her life, of any passion for outward adorning; much is said of her kindness to her husband, and her respect for him. Comp. Gen 12:5, 18:6.

Calling him lord. See Gen 18:12. It was probably inferred from this instance, by the apostle, and not without reason, that Sarah habitually used this respectful appellation, acknowledging by it that he was her superior, and that he had a right to rule in his own house. The word lord has the elementary idea of ruling, and this is the sense here--that she acknowledged that he had a right to direct the affairs of his household, and that it was her duty to be in subjection to him as the head of the family. In what respects this is a duty, may be seen by consulting Eph 5:22. Among the Romans, it was quite common for wives to use the appellation lord, (dominus,) when speaking of their husbands. The same custom also prevailed among the Greeks, See Grotius, in loc. This passage does not prove that the term lord should be the particular appellation by which Christian wives should address their husbands now, but it proves that there should be the same respect and deference which was implied by its use in patriarchal times The welfare of society, and the happiness of individuals, are not diminished by showing proper respect for all classes of persons in the various relations of life.

Whose daughters ye are. That is, you will be worthy to be regarded as her daughters, if you manifest the same spirit that she did. The margin here, as the Greek, is children. The sense is, that if they

demeaned themselves correctly in the relation of wives, it would be proper to look upon her as their mother, and to feel that they were not unworthy to be regarded as her daughters.

As long as ye do well. In respect to the particular matter under consideration.

And are not afraid with any amazement. This passage has been supposed variously understood. Some have that this is suggested as an argument to persuade them to do well, from the consideration that by so doing they would be preserved from those alarms and terrors which a contest with superior power might bring with it, and which would prove as injurious to their peace as to their character. Rosenmuller explains it, "If ye do well, terrified by no threats of unbelieving husbands, if they should undertake to compel you to deny the Christian faith." Doddridge supposes that it means that they were to preserve their peace and fortitude in any time of danger, so as not to act out of character, through amazement or danger. Calvin, Benson, and Bloomfield understand it of that firmness and intrepidity of character which would be necessary to support their religious independence, when united with heathen husbands; meaning that they were not to be deterred from doing their duty by any threats or terrors, either of their unbelieving husbands, or of their enemies and persecutors. Dr. Clarke supposes that it means that if they did well, they would live under no dread of being detected in improprieties of life, or being found out in their infidelities to their husbands, as those must always be who are unfaithful to their marriage vows. The word rendered amazement (πτοησις) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means terror, trepidation, fear; and the literal translation of the Greek is, "not fearing any fear."

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge,
giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being
heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Likewise, ye husbands. On the general duty of husbands, Eph 5:25, seq.

Dwell with them. That is, "Let your manner of living with them be that which is immediately specified.

According to knowledge. In accordance with an intelligent view of the nature of the relation; or, as becomes those who have been instructed in the duties of this relation according to the gospel. The meaning evidently is, that they should seek to obtain just views of what Christianity enjoins in regard to this relation, and that they should allow those intelligent views to control them in all their intercourse with their wives.

Giving honour unto the wife. It was an important advance made in society when the Christian religion gave such a direction as this, for everywhere among the heathen, and under all false systems of religion, woman has been regarded as worthy of little honour or respect. She has been considered as a slave, or as a mere instrument to gratify the passions of man. It is one of the elementary doctrines of Christianity, however, that woman is to be treated with respect; and one of the first and most marked effects of religion on society is to elevate the wife to a condition in which she will be worthy of esteem. The particular reasons for the honour which husbands are directed to show to their wives, here specified, are two: she is to be treated with special kindness as being more feeble than man, and as having a claim therefore to delicate attention; and she is to be honoured as the equal heir of the grace of life. Doddridge, Clarke, and some others, suppose that the word honour here refers to maintenance or support; and that the command is, that the husband is to provide for his wife so that she may not want. But it seems to me that the word is to be understood here in its more usual signification, and that it inculcates a higher duty than that of merely providing for the temporal wants of the wife, and strikes at a deeper evil than a mere neglect of meeting her temporal necessities. The reasons assigned for doing this seem to imply it,

As unto the weaker vessel. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare the body to a vessel, (Comp. 1Thes 4:4,) and thence the comparison is extended to the whole person. This is done either because the body is frail and feeble, like an earthen vessel easily broken; or because it is that in which the soul is lodged; or because, in accordance with a frequent use of the word, (see below,) the body is the instrument by which the soul accomplishes its purposes, or is the helper of the soul. Comp. Acts 9:15, Rom 9:22,23, 2Cor 4:7. In the later Hebrew usage it was common to apply the term

vessel (Heb. , Gr. σκευος) to a wife, as is done here. See Schoettgen, Hor. Heb. p. 827. Expressions similar to this, in regard to the comparative feebleness of woman, occur frequently in the classic writers. See Wetstein in loc. The reasons why the term vessel was given to a wife, are not very apparent. A not unfrequent sense of the word used here (σκευος) in the Greek Classics was that of an instrument; a helper; one who was employed by another to accomplish anything, or to aid him, (Passow) and it seems probable that this was the reason why the term was given to the wife. Comp. Gen 2:18. The reason here assigned for the honour that was to be shown to the wife is, that she is "the weaker vessel." By this it is not necessarily meant that she is of feebler capacity, or inferior mental endowments, but that she is more tender and delicate; more subject to infirmities and weaknesses; less capable of enduring fatigue and toil; less adapted to the rough and stormy scenes of life. As such, she should be regarded and treated with special kindness and attention. This is a reason, the force of which all can see and appreciate. So we feel toward a sister; so we feel toward a beloved child, if he is of feeble frame and delicate constitution; and so every man should feel in relation to his wife. She may have mental endowments equal to his own; she may have moral qualities in every way superior to his; but the God of nature has made her with a more delicate frame, a more fragile structure, and with a body subject to many infirmities to which the more hardy frame of man is a stranger.

And as being heirs together of the grace of life. The grace that is connected with eternal life; that is, as fellow-Christians. They were equal heirs of the everlasting inheritance, called in the Scripture "life;" and the same "grace" connected with that inheritance had been conferred on both. This passage contains a very important truth in regard to the female sex. Under every other system of religion but the Christian system, woman has been regarded as in every way inferior to man. Christianity teaches that, in respect to her highest interests, the interests of religion, she is every way his equal. She is entitled to all the hopes and promises which religion imparts. She is redeemed as he is, she is addressed in the same language of tender invitation. She has the same privileges and comforts which religion imparts here, and she will be elevated to the same rank and privileges in heaven. This single truth would

raise the female sex everywhere from degradation, and check at once half the social evils of the race. Make her the equal of man in the hope of heaven, and at once she rises to her appropriate place. Home is made what it should be, a place of intelligence and pure friendship; and a world of suffering and sadness smiles under the benefactions of Christian woman.

That your prayers be not hindered. It is fairly implied here,

(1.) that it was supposed there would be united or family prayer. The apostle is speaking of "dwelling with the wife," and of the right manner of treating her; and it is plainly supposed that united prayer would be one thing that would characterise their living together. He does not direct that there should be prayer. He seems to take it for granted that there would be; and it may be remarked, that where there is true religion in right exercise, there is prayer as a matter of course. The head of a family does not ask whether he must establish family worship; he does it as one of the spontaneous fruits of religion-as a thing concerning which no formal command is necessary. Prayer in the family, as everywhere else, is a privilege; and the true question to be asked on the subject is not whether a man must, but whether he may pray.

(2.) It is implied that there might be such a way of living as effectually to hinder prayer; that is, to prevent its being offered aright, and to prevent any answer. This might occur in many ways. If the husband treated the wife unkindly; if he did not show her proper respect and affection; if there were bickerings, and jealousies, and contentions between them, there could be no hope that acceptable prayer would be offered. A spirit of strife; irritability and unevenness of temper; harsh looks and unkind words; a disposition easily to take offence, and an unwillingness to forgive, all these prevent a "return of prayers." Acceptable prayer never can be offered in the tempest of passion, and there can be no doubt that such prayer is often "hindered" by the inequalities of temper, and the bickerings and strifes that exist in families. Yet how desirable is it that husband and wife should so live together that their prayers may not be hindered! How desirable for their own peace and happiness in that relation; how desirable for the welfare of children!

8 Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another;
love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

Finally. As the last direction, or as general counsel in reference to your conduct in all the relations of life. The apostle had specified most of the important relations which Christians sustain, (1Pet 2:13-25, 3:1-7;) and he now gives a general direction in regard to their conduct in all those relations. Be ye all of one mind. Rom 12:16. The word here used (ομοφρων) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, of the same mind; like-minded; and the object is to secure harmony in their views and feelings. Having compassion one of another. Sympathizing, (συμπαθεις;) entering into one another's feelings, and evincing a regard for each other's welfare. Rom 12:15. Comp. 1Cor 12:26, Jn 11:35. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It describes that state of mind which exists when we enter into the feelings of others as if they were our own, as the different parts of the body are affected by that which affects one. 1Cor 12:26.

Love as brethren. Marg., loving to the; i.e., the brethren. The Greek word (φιλαδελφος) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means loving one's brethren; that is, loving each other as Christian brethren.--Rob. Lex. Thus it enforces the duty so often enjoined in the New Testament, that of love to Christians as brethren of the same family. Rom 12:10. Comp. Heb 13:1, Jn 13:34. Be pitiful. The word here used (ευσπλαγχνος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Eph 4:32, where it is rendered tender-hearted. See Notes on that verse. Be courteous. This word also (φιλοφρων) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means friendly-minded, kind, courteous. Later editions of the New Testament, instead of this, read (ταπεινοφρονες) of a lowly or humble mind. See Hahn. The sense is not materially varied. In the one word, the idea of friendliness is the one that prevails; in the other, that of humility. Christianity requires both of these virtues, and either word enforces an important injunction. The authority is in favour of the latter reading; and though Christianity requires that we should be courteous and gentlemanly in our treatment of others, this text can hardly be relied on as a proof-text of that point.

9 not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise
blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit
a blessing.

Not rendering evil for evil. Mt 5:39 Mt 5:44; Rom 12:17. Or railing for railing. 1Timm 6:4. Comp. Mk 15:29, Lk 23:39. But contrariwise blessing. In a spirit contrary to this. Mt 5:44. Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. "Knowing that you were called to be Christians in order that you should obtain a blessing infinite and eternal in the heavens. Expecting such a blessing yourselves, you should be ready to scatter blessings on all others. You should be ready to bear all their reproaches, and even to wish them well. The hope of eternal life should make your minds calm; and the prospect that you are to be so exalted in heaven should fill your hearts with benignity and love." There is nothing which is better fitted to cause our hearts to overflow with benignity, to make us ready to forgave all others when they forgive us, than the hope of salvation. Cherishing such a hope ourselves, we cannot but wish that all others may share it, and this will lead us to wish for them every blessing. A man who has a hope of heaven should abound in every virtue, and show that he is a sincere well-wisher of the race. Why should one who expects soon to be in heaven harbour malice in his bosom? Why should he wish to injure a fellow-worm? How can he?

10 For he that will love life, and see good days,
let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no
guile:

For he that will love life. Or., "He willing, (θελων,) or that wills to love life." It implies that there is some positive desire to live; some active wish that life should be prolonged. This whole passage 1Pet 3:10-12 is taken, with some slight variations, from Ps 34:12-16. In the Psalm this expression is, "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" The sense is substantially the same. It is implied here that it is right to love life, and to desire many days. The desire of this is referred to by the psalmist and by the apostle, without any expression of disapprobation, and the way is shown by which length of days may be secured. Life is a blessing; a precious gift of God. We are taught so to regard it by the instinctive feelings of our nature; for we are so made as to love it, and to dread its extinction. Though we should be prepared to resign it when God

commands, yet there are important reasons why we should desire to live. Among them are the following:

(1.) Because, as already intimated, life, as such, is to be regarded as a blessing. We instinctively shrink back from death, as one of the greatest evils; we shudder at the thought of annihilation. It is not wrong to love that, in proper degree, which, by our very nature, we are prompted to love; and we are but acting out one of the universal laws which our Creator has impressed on us, when, with proper submission to his will, we seek to lengthen out our days as far as possible.

(2.) That we may see the works of God, and survey the wonders of his hand on earth. The world is full of wonders, evincing the wisdom and goodness of the Deity; and the longest life, nay, many such lives as are allotted to us here, could be well employed in studying his works and ways.

(3.) That we may make preparation for eternity. Man may, indeed, make preparation in a very brief period; but the longest life is not too much to examine and settle the question whether we have a well-founded hope of heaven. If man had nothing else to do, the longest life could be well employed in inquiries that grow out of the question whether we are fitted for the world to come. In the possibility, too, of being deceived, and in view of the awful consequences that will result from deception, it is desirable that length of days should be given us that we may bring the subject to the severest test, and so determine it, that we may go sure to the changeless world.

(4.) That we may do good to others. We may, indeed, do good in another world; but there are ways of doing good which are probably confined to this. What good we may do hereafter to the inhabitants of distant worlds, or what ministrations, in company with angels, or without them, we may exercise towards the friends of God on earth after we leave it, we do not know; but there are certain things which we are morally certain we shall not be permitted to do in the future world. We shall not

(a.) personally labour for the salvation of sinners, by conversation and other direct efforts;

(b.) we shall not illustrate the influence of religion by example in sustaining us in trials, subduing and controlling our passions, and making us dead to the world;

(c.) we shall not be permitted to pray for our impenitent friends and kindred, as we may now;

(d.) we shall not have the opportunity of contributing of our substance for the spread of the gospel, or of going personally to preach the gospel to the perishing;

(e.) we shall not be employed in instructing the ignorant, in advocating the cause of the oppressed and the wronged, in seeking to remove the fetters from the slave, in dispensing mercy to the insane, or in visiting the prisoner in his lonely cell;

(f.) we shall not have it in our power to address a kind word to an impenitent child, or seek to guide him in paths of truth, purity, and salvation. What we can do personally and directly for the salvation of others is to be done in this world; and, considering how much there is to be done, and how useful life may be on the earth, it is an object which we should desire, that our days may be lengthened out, and should use all proper means that it may be done. While we should ever be ready and willing to depart when God calls us to go; while we should not wish to linger on these mortal shores beyond the time when we may be useful to others, yet, as long as he permits us to live, we should regard life as a blessing, and should pray that, if it be his will, we may not be cut down in the midst of our way.

"Love not thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest Live well; here long, or short, permit to heaven." Paradise Lost.

And see good days. In the Psalm (Ps 34:12) this is, "and loveth many days, that he may see good." The quotation by Peter throughout the passage is taken from the Septuagint, excepting that there is a change of the person from the second to the third: in the psalm, e.g., "refrain thy tongue from evil," etc.; in the quotation, "let him refrain his tongue from evil," etc. "Good days" are prosperous days; happy days; days of usefulness; days in which we may be respected and

loved. Let him refrain his tongue from evil. The general meaning of all that is said here is, "let him lead an upright and pious life; doing evil to no one, but seeking the good of all men." To refrain the tongue from evil, is to avoid all slander, falsehood, obscenity, and profaneness, and to abstain from uttering erroneous and false opinions. Comp. Jas 1:26, 3:2. And his lips that they speak no guile. No deceit; nothing that will lead others astray. The words should be an exact representation of the truth, Rosenmuller quotes a passage from the Hebrew book Musar, which may be not an inappropriate illustration of this: "A certain Assyrian wandering through the city, cried and said, 'Who will receive the elixir of life?' The daughter of Rabbi Jodus heard him, and went and told her father. 'Call him in,' said he. When he came in, Rabbi Jannei said to him, 'What is that elixir of life which thou art selling?' He said to him, 'Is it not written, What man is he that desireth life, and loveth days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile. Lo, this is the elixir of life which is in the mouth of a man!'"

11 let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Let him eschew evil. Let him avoid all evil. Comp. Job 1:1. And do good. In any and every way; by endeavouring to promote the happiness of all. Comp. Gal 6:10. Let him seek peace, and ensue it. Follow it; that is, practise it. Mt 5:9; Rom 12:18. The meaning is, that a peaceful spirit will contribute to length of days. (1.) A peaceful spirit--a calm, serene, and equal temper of mind--is favourable to health, avoiding those corroding and distracting passions which do so much to wear out the physical energies of the frame; and (2.) such a spirit will preserve us from those contentions and strifes to which so many owe their death. Let any one reflect on the numbers that are killed in duels, in battles, and in brawls, and he will have no difficulty in seeing how a peaceful spirit will contribute to length of days.

12 For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous. That is, he is their Protector. His eyes are indeed on all men, but the language here is that which describes continual guardianship and care. And his ears are open unto their prayers. He hears their prayers. As he is a hearer of prayer, they are at liberty to go to him at all times, and to pour out their desires before him. This passage is taken from Ps 34:15, and it

is designed to show the reason why a life of piety will contribute to length of days.

But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. Marg., upon. The sense of the passage, however, is against. The Lord sets his face against them: an expression denoting disapprobation, and a determination to punish them. His face is not mild and benignant towards them, as-it is towards the righteous. The general sentiment in these verses (1Pet 3:10-12) is, that while length of days is desirable, it is to be secured by virtue and religion, or that virtue and religion will contribute to it. This is not to be understood as affirming that all who are righteous will enjoy long life, for we know that the righteous are often cut down in the midst of their way; and that in, fire, and flood, and war, and the pestilence, the righteous and the wicked often perish together. But still there is a sense in which it is true that a life of virtue and religion will contribute to length of days, and that the law is so general as to be a basis of @calculation in reference to the future. I. Religion and virtue contribute to those things which are favourable to length of days, which are conducive to health and to a vigorous constitution. Among those things are the following,

(a.) a calm, peaceful, and contented mind--avoiding the wear and tear of the raging passions of lusts, avarice, and ambition;

(b.) temperance in eating and drinking--always favourable to length of days;

(c.) industry-- ne of the essential means, as a general rule, of promoting long life;

(d.) prudence and economy--avoiding the extravagances by which many shorten their days; and

(e.) a conscientious and careful regard of life itself. Religion makes men feel that life is a blessing, and that it should not be thrown away. Just in proportion as a man is under the influence of religion, does he regard life as of importance, and does he become careful in preserving it. Strange and paradoxical as it may seem, the want of religion often makes men reckless of life, and ready to throw it away for any trifling cause. Religion shows a man what great issues

depend on life, and makes him, therefore, desirous of living to secure his own salvation and the salvation of all others. II. Multitudes lose their lives who would have preserved them ff they had been under the influence of religion. To see this, we have only to reflect

(a.) on the millions who are cut off in war as the result of ambition, and the want of religion;

(b.) on the countless hosts cut down in middle life, or in youth, by intemperance, who would have been saved by religion;

(c.) on the numbers who are the victims of raging passions, and who are cut off by the diseases which gluttony and licentiousness engender;

(d.) on the multitude who fall in duels, all of whom would have been saved by religion;

(e.) on the numbers who, as the result of disappointment in business or in love, close their own lives, who would have been enabled to bear up under their troubles if they had had religion; and

(f.) on the numbers who are cut off from the earth as the punishment of their crimes, all of whom would have continued to live if they had had true religion. III. God protects the righteous. He does it by saving them from those vices by which the lives of so many are shortened; and often, we have no reason to doubt, in answer to their prayers, when, but for those prayers, they would have fallen into crimes that would have consigned them to an early grave, or encountered dangers from which they would have had no means of escape. No one can doubt that in fact those who are truly religious are saved from the sins which consign millions to the tomb; nor is there any less reason to doubt that a protecting shield is often thrown before the children of God when in danger. Comp. Ps 91.

13 And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? This question is meant to imply, that as a general thing they need apprehend no evil if they lead an upright and benevolent life.

The idea is, that God would in general protect them, though the next verse shows that the apostle did not mean to teach that there would be absolute security, for it is implied there that they might be called to suffer for righteousness' sake. While it is true that the Saviour was persecuted by wicked men, though his life was wholly spent in doing good; while it is true that the apostles were put to death, though following his example; and while it is true that good men have often suffered persecution, though labouring only to do good, still it is true as a general thing that a life of integrity and benevolence conduces to safety, even in a wicked world. Men who are upright and pure; who live to do good to others; who are characteristically benevolent; and who are imitators of God--are those who usually pass life in most tranquillity and security, and are often safe when nothing else would give security but confidence in their integrity. A man of a holy and pure life may, under the protection of God, rely on that character to carry him safely through the world, and to bring him at last to an honoured grave. Or should he be calumniated when living, and his sun set under a cloud, still his name will be vindicated, and justice will ultimately be done to him when he is dead. The world ultimately judges right respecting character, and renders "honour to whom honour is due." Comp. Ps 37:3-6.

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye:* and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake. Implying that though, in general, a holy character would constitute safety, yet that there was a possibility that they might suffer persecution. Comp. Mt 5:10 2Ti 3:12. Happy are ye. Perhaps alluding to what the Saviour says in Mt 5:10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." On the meaning of the word happy or blessed, Mt 5:3. The meaning here is, not that they would find positive enjoyment in persecution on account of righteousness, but that they were to regard it as a blessed condition; that is, as a condition that might be favourable to salvation; and they were not therefore, on the whole, to regard it as an evil. And be not afraid of their terror. Of anything which they can do to cause terror. There is evidently an allusion here to Isa 8:12,13: "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Isa 8:12, seq. Comp. Isa 51:12, Mt 10:28. Neither be troubled. With apprehension of danger. Compare Jn 14:1. If we are true Christians, we have really no reason to be alarmed in view of

anything that can happen to us. God is our protector, and he is abundantly able to vanquish all our foes; to uphold us in all our trials; to conduct us through the valley of death, and to bring us to heaven. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come," 1Cor 3:21,22.

15 but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. In Isa 8:13 this is, "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself;" that is, in that connexion, regard him as your Protector, and be afraid of him, and not of what man can do. The sense in the passage before us is, "In your hearts, or in the affections of the soul, regard the Lord God as holy, and act towards him with that confidence which a proper respect for one so great and so holy demands. In the midst of dangers, be not intimidated; dread not what man can do, but evince proper reliance on a holy God, and flee to him with the confidence which is due to one so glorious." This contains, however, a more general direction, applicable to Christians at all times. It is, that in our hearts we are to esteem God as a holy being, and in all our deportment to act towards him as such. The object of Peter in quoting the passage from Isaiah, was to lull the fears of those whom he addressed, and preserve them from any alarms in view of the persecutions to which they might be-exposed; the trials which would be brought upon them by men. Thus, in entire accordance with the sentiment as employed by Isaiah, he says, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." That is, "in order to keep the mind calm in trials, sanctify the Lord in your hearts; regard him as your holy God and Saviour; make him your refuge. This will allay all your fears, and secure you from all that you dread." The sentiment of the passage then is, that the sanctifying of the Lord God in our hearts, or proper confidence in him as a holy and righteous God, will deliver us from fear. As this is a very important sentiment for Christians, it may be proper, in order to a just exposition of the passage, to dwell a moment on it.

I. What is meant by our-sanctifying the Lord God? It cannot mean to make him holy, for he is perfectly holy, whatever may be our estimate of him; and our views of him evidently can make no change

in his character. The meaning therefore must be, that we should regard him as holy in our estimate of him, or in the feelings which we have towards him. This may include the following things:

(1.) To esteem or regard him as a holy being, in contradistinction from all those feelings which rise up in the heart against him--the feelings of complaining and murmuring under his dispensations, as if he were severe and harsh; the feelings of dissatisfaction with his government, as if it were partial and unequal; the feelings of rebellion, as if his claims were unfounded or unjust.

(2.) To desire that he may be regarded by others as holy, in accordance with the petition in the Lord's prayer, (Mt 6:9,) "hallowed be thy name;" that is, "let thy name be esteemed to be holy everywhere;" a feeling in opposition to that which is regardless of the honour which he may receive in the world. When we esteem a friend, we desire that all due respect should be shown him by others; we wish that all who know him should have the same views that we have; we are sensitive to his honour, just in proportion as we love him.

(3.) To act towards him as holy, that is, to obey his laws, and acquiesce in all his requirements, as if they were just and good. This implies,

(a.) that we are to speak of him as holy, in opposition to the language of disrespect and irreverence so common among mankind;

(b.) that we are to flee to him in trouble, in contradistinction from withholding our hearts from him, and flying to other sources of consolation and support. II. What is it to do this in the heart? Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts;" that is, in contradistinction from a mere external service. This may imply the following things:

(1.) In contradistinction from a mere intellectual assent to the proposition that he is holy. Many admit the doctrine that God is holy into their creeds, who never suffer the sentiment to find its way to the heart. All is right on this subject in the articles of their faith; all in their hearts may be murmuring and complaining. In their creeds he is spoken of as just and good; in their hearts they regard him as partial and unjust, as severe and stern, as unamiable and cruel.

(2.) In contradistinction from a mere outward form of devotion, in our prayers, and in our hymns, we, of course, "ascribe holiness to our Maker." But how much of this is the mere language of form! How little does the heart accompany it! And even in the most solemn and sublime ascriptions of praise, how often are the feelings of the heart entirely at variance with what is expressed by the lips? What would more justly offend us, than for a professed friend to approach us with the language of friendship, when every feeling of his heart belied his expressions, and we knew that his honeyed words were false and hollow! III. Such a sanctifying of the Lord in our hearts will save us from fear. We dread danger, we dread sickness, we dread death, we dread the eternal world. We are alarmed when our affairs are tending to bankruptcy; we are alarmed when a friend is sick and ready to die; we are alarmed if our country is invaded by a foe, and the enemy already approaches our dwelling. The sentiment in the passage before us is, that if we sanctify the Lord God with proper affections, we shall be delivered from these alarms, and the mind will be calm.

(1.) The fear of the Lord, as Leighton (in loc.) expresses it, "as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears: the heart possessed with this fear hath no room for the other." It is an absorbing emotion; making everything else comparatively of no importance. If we fear God, we have nothing else to fear. The highest emotion which there can be in the soul is the fear of God; and when that exists, the soul will be calm amidst all that might tend otherwise to disturb it. "What time I am afraid," says David, "I will trust in thee," Ps 56:3. "We are not careful," said Daniel and his friends, "to answer thee, O king. Our God can deliver us; but if not, we will not worship the image," Dan 3:16.

(2.) If we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, there will be a belief that he will do all things well, and the mind will be calm. However dark his dispensations may be, we shall be assured that everything is ordered aright. In a storm at sea, a child may be calm when he feels that his father is at the helm, and assures him that there is no danger. In a battle, the mind of a soldier may be calm, if he has confidence in his commander, and he assures him that all is safe. So in anything, if we have the assurance that the best thing is done that can be, that the issues will all be right, the mind will be calm. But in

this respect the highest confidence that can exist, is that which is reposed in God.

(3.) There will be the assurance that all is safe. "Though I walk," says David, "through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me," Ps 23:4. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Ps 27:1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," Ps 46:1-3. Let us ever then regard the Lord as holy, just, and good. Let us flee to him in all the trials of the present life, and in the hour of death repose on his arm. Every other source of trust will fail; and whatever else may be our reliance, when the hour of anguish approaches, that reliance will fail, and that which we dreaded will overwhelm us. Nor riches, nor honours, nor earthly friends, can save us from those alarms, or be a security for our souls when "the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow" upon us. And be ready always. That is,

(a.) be always able to do it; have such reasons for the hope that is in you that they can be stated; or, have good and substantial reasons; and

(b.) be willing to state those reasons on all proper occasions. No man ought to entertain opinions for which a good reason cannot be given; and every man ought to be willing to state the grounds of his hope on all proper occasions. A Christian should have such intelligent views of the truth of his religion, and such constant evidence in his own heart and life that he is a child of God,as to be able at any time to satisfy a candid inquirer that the Bible is a revelation from heaven, and that it is proper for him to cherish the hope of salvation.

To give an answer. Greek, An apology, (απολογιαν.) This word formerly did not mean, as the word apology does now, an excuse for anything that is done as if it were wrong, but a defence of anything. We apply the word now to denote something written or said in extenuation of what appears to others to be wrong, or what might be construed as wrong--as when we make an apology to others for not

fulfilling an engagement, or for some conduct which might be construed as designed neglect. The word originally, however, referred rather to that which was thought not to be true, than that which might be construed as wrong; and the defence or "apology" which Christians were to make of their religion, was not on the supposition that others would regard it as wrong, but in order to show them that it was true. The word here used is rendered defence, Acts 22:1, Php 1:7,17; answer, Acts 25:16, 1Cor 9:3, 2Ti 4:16, 1Pet 3:15; and clearing of yourselves in 2Cor 7:11. We are not to hold ourselves ready to make an apology for our religion as if it were a wrong thing to be a Christian; but we are always to be ready to give reasons for regarding it as true.

To every man that asketh you. Any one has a right respectfully to ask another on what grounds he regards his religion as true; for every man has a common interest in religion, and in knowing what is the truth on the subject. If any man, therefore, asks us candidly and respectfully by what reasons we have been led to embrace the gospel, and on what grounds we regard it as true, we are under obligation to state those grounds in the best manner that we are able. We should regard it not as an impertinent intrusion into our private affairs, but as an opportunity of doing good to others, and to honour the Master whom we serve. Nay, we should hold ourselves in readiness to state the grounds of our faith and hope, whatever may be the motive of the inquirer, and in whatever manner the request may be made. Those who were persecuted for their religion, were under obligation to make as good a defence of it as they could, and to state to their persecutors the "reason" of the hope which they entertained. And so now, if a man attacks our religion; if he ridicules us for being Christians; if he tauntingly asks us what reason we have for believing the truth of the Bible, it is better to tell him in a kind manner, and to meet his taunt with a kind and strong argument, than to become angry, or to turn away with contempt. The best way to disarm him, is to show him that by embracing religion we are not fools in understanding; and, by a kind temper, to convince him that the influence of religion over us when we are abused and insulted, is a "reason" why we should love our religion, and why he should too.

A reason of the hope that is in you. Gr, "an account," (λογον.) That is, you are to state on what ground you cherish that hope. This refers to the whole ground of our hope, and includes evidently two things:

(1.) The reason why we regard Christianity as true, or as furnishing a ground of hope for men; and,

(2.) the reason which we have ourselves for cherishing a hope of heaven, or the experimental and practical views which we have of religion, which constitute a just ground of hope. It is not improbable that the former of these was more directly in the eye of the apostle than the latter, though both seem to be implied in the direction to state the reasons which ought to satisfy others that it is proper for us to cherish the hope of heaven. The first part of this duty--that we are to state the reasons why we regard the system of religion which we have embraced as true--implies, that we should be acquainted with the evidences of the truth of Christianity, and be able to state them to others. Christianity is founded on evidence; and though it cannot be supposed that every Christian will be able to understand all that is involved in what are called the evidences of Christianity, or to meet all the objections of the enemies of the gospel; yet every man who becomes a Christian should have such intelligent views of religion, and of the evidences of the truth of the Bible, that he can show to others that the religion which he has embraced has claims to their attention, or that it is not a mere matter of education, of tradition, or of feeling. It should also be an object with every Christian to increase his acquaintance with the evidences of the truth of religion, not only for his own stability and comfort in the faith, but that he may be able to defend religion if attacked, or to guide others if they are desirous of knowing what is truth. The second part of this duty, that we state the reasons which we have for cherishing the hope of heaven as a personal matter, implies

(a.) that there should be, in fact, a well-founded hope of heaven; that is, that we have evidence that we are true Christians, since it is impossible to give a "reason" of the hope that is in us unless there are reasons for it;

(b.) that we be able to state in a clear and intelligent manner what constitutes evidence of piety, or what should be reasonably regarded as such; and

(c.) that we be ever ready to state these reasons. A Christian should always be willing to converse about his religion. He should have such a deep conviction of its truth, of its importance, and of his personal interest in it; he should have a hope so firm, so cheering, so sustaining, that he will be always prepared to converse on the prospect of heaven, and to endeavour to lead others to walk in the path to life. With meekness. With modesty; without any spirit of ostentation; with gentleness of manner. This seems to be added on the supposition that they sometimes might be rudely assailed; that the questions might be proposed in a spirit of cavil; that it might be done in a taunting or insulting manner. Even though this should be done, they were not to fall into a passion, to manifest resentment, or to retort in an angry and revengeful manner; but, in a calm and gentle spirit, they were to state the reasons of their faith and hope, and leave the matter there. And fear. Marg., reverence. The sense seems to be, "in the fear of God; with a serious and reverent spirit; as in the presence of Him who sees and hears all things." It evidently does not mean with the fear or dread of those who propose the question, but with that serious and reverent frame of mind which is produced by a deep impression of the importance of the subject, and a conscious sense of the presence of God. It follows, from the injunction of the apostle here,

(1.) that every professing Christian should have clear and intelligent views of his own personal interest in religion, or such evidences of piety that they can be stated to others, and that they can be made satisfactory to other minds;

(2.) that every Christian, however humble his rank, or however unlettered he may be, may become a valuable defender of the truth of Christianity;

(3.) that we should esteem it a privilege to bear our testimony to the truth and value of religion, and to stand up as the advocates of truth in the world. Though we may be rudely assailed, it is an honour to speak in defence of religion; though we are persecuted and reviled, it is a privilege to be permitted in anyway to show our fellow-men that there is such a thing as true religion, and that man may cherish the hope of heaven.

16 having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Having a good conscience. That is, a conscience that does not accuse you of having done wrong. Whatever may be the accusations of your enemies, so live that you may be at all times conscious of uprightness. Whatever you suffer, see that you do not suffer the pangs inflicted by a guilty conscience, the anguish of remorse. On the meaning of the word conscience, Rom 2:15. The word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. There is always a feeling of obligation connected with operations of conscience, which precedes, attends, and follows our actions. "Conscience is first occupied in ascertaining our duty, before we proceed to action; then in judging of our actions when performed." A "good conscience" implies two things:

(1.) That it be properly enlightened to know what is right and wrong, or that it be not under the dominion of ignorance, superstition, or fanaticism, prompting us to do what would be a violation of the Divine law; and

(2) that its dictates be always obeyed. Without the first of these--clear views of that which is right and wrong--conscience becomes an unsafe guide; for it merely prompts us to do what we esteem to be right, and if our views of what is right and wrong are erroneous, we may be prompted to do what may be a direct violation of the law of God. Paul thought he "ought" to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, (Acts 26:9;) the Saviour said, respecting his disciples, that the time would come when whosoever should kill them would think that they were doing God service, (Jn 16:2;) and Solomon says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death," (Prov 14:12, 16:25.) Under an unenlightened and misguided conscience, with the plea and pretext of religion, the most atrocious crimes have been committed; and no man should infer that he is certainly doing right, because he follows the promptings of conscience. No man, indeed, should act against the dictates of his conscience; but there may have been a previous wrong in not using proper means to ascertain what is right.

Conscience is not revelation, nor does it answer the purpose of a revelation. It communicates no new truth to the soul, and is a safe guide only so far as the mind has been properly enlightened to see what is truth and duty. Its office is to prompt us to the performance of duty, not to determine what is right. The other thing requisite that we may have a good conscience is, that its decisions should be obeyed. Conscience is appointed to be the "vicegerent" of God in inflicting punishment, if his commands are not obeyed. It pronounces a sentence on our own conduct. Its penalty is remorse; and that penalty will be demanded if its promptings be not regarded. It is an admirable device, as a part of the moral government of God, urging man to the performance of duty, and, in case of disobedience, making the mind its own executioner. There is no penalty that will more certainly be inflicted, sooner or later, than that incurred by a guilty conscience. It needs no witnesses; no process for arresting the offender; no array of judges and executioners; no stripes, imprisonment, or bonds. Its inflictions will follow the offender into the most secluded retreat; overtake him in his most rapid flight; find him out in northern snows, or on the sands of the equator; go into the most splendid palaces, and seek out the victim when he is safe from all the vengeance that man can inflict; pursue him into the dark valley of the shadow of death, or arrest him as a fugitive in distant worlds. No one, therefore, can over-estimate the importance of having a good conscience. A true Christian should aim, by incessant study and prayer, to know what is right, and then always do it, no matter what may be the consequences. That, whereas they speak evil of you. They who are your enemies and persecutors. Christians are not to hope that men will always speak well of them, Mt 5:11, Lk 6:26. As of evil doers. 1Pet 2:12. (*) "conversation" "Behaviour" They may be ashamed. They may see that they have misunder- stood your conduct, and regret that they have treated you as they have. We should expect, if we are faithful and true, that even our enemies will yet appreciate our motives, and do us justice. Comp. Psa. xxxvii. 5, 6. That falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. Your good conduct as Christians. They may accuse you of insincerity, hypocrisy, dishonesty; of being enemies of the state, or of monstrous crimes; but the time will come when they will see their error, and do you justice. See Notes one,hap, ii. 12.

17 For *it is* better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evildoing.

For it is better, if the will of God be so. That is, if God sees it to be necessary for your good that you should suffer, it is better that you should suffer for doing well than for crime. God often sees it to be necessary that his people should suffer. There are effects to be accomplished by affliction which can be secured in no other way; and some of the happiest results on the soul of a Christian, some of the brightest traits of character, are the effect of trials. But it should be our care that our sufferings should not be brought upon us for our own crimes or follies. No man can promote his own highest good by doing wrong, and then enduring the penalty which his sin incurs; and no one should do wrong with any expectation that it may be overruled for his own good. If we are to suffer, let it be by the direct hand of God, and not by any fault of our own. If we suffer then, we shall have the testimony of our own conscience in our favour, and the feeling that we may go to God for support. If we suffer for our faults, in addition to the outwar& pain of body, we shall endure the severest pangs which man can suffer--those which the guilty mind inflicts on itself.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins. Comp. 1Pet 2:21. The design of the apostle in this reference to the sufferings of Christ, is evidently to remind them that he suffered as an innocent being, and not for any wrong-doing, and to encourage and comfort them in their sufferings by his example. The reference to his sufferings leads him (1Pet 2:18-22) into a statement of the various ways in which Christ suffered, and of his ultimate triumph. By his example in his sufferings, and by his final triumph, the apostle would encourage those whom he addressed to bear with patience the sorrows to which their religion exposed them. He assumes that all suffering for adhering to the gospel is the result of well-doing; and for an encouragement in their trials, he refers them to the example of Christ, the highest instance that ever was, or ever will be, both of well-doing, and of suffering on account of it. The expression, "hath once suffered," in the New Testament, means once for all; once, in the sense that it is not to occur again. Comp. Heb 7:27. The particular point here, however, is not that he once suffered; it is that

he had in fact suffered, and that in doing it he had left an example for them to follow.

The just for the unjust. The one who was just, (δικαιος) on account of, or in the place of, those who were unjust, (υπεραδικων;) or one who was righteous, on account of those who were wicked. Comp. Rom 5:6; 2Cor 5:21; Heb 9:28. The idea on which the apostle would particularly fix their attention was, that he was just or innocent. Thus he was an example to those who suffered for well-doing.

That he might bring us to God. That his death might be the means of reconciling sinners to God. Comp. Jn 3:14; Jn 12:32. It is through that death that mercy is proclaimed to the guilty; it is by that alone that God can be reconciled to men; and the fact that the Son of God loved men, and gave himself a sacrifice for them, enduring such bitter sorrows, is the most powerful appeal which can be made to mankind to induce them to return to God. There is no appeal which can be made to us more powerful than one drawn from the fact that another suffers on our account. We could resist the argument which a father, a mother, or a sister would use to reclaim us from a course of sin; but if we perceive that our conduct involves them in suffering, that fact has a power over us which no mere argument could have.

Being put to death in the flesh. As a man; in his human nature. Comp. Rom 1:3,4. There is evidently a contrast here between "the flesh" in which it is said he was "put to death," and "the spirit" by which it is said he was "quickened." The words "in the flesh" are clearly designed to denote something that was peculiar in his death; for it is a departure from the usual method of speaking of death. How singular would it be to say of Isaiah, Paul, or Peter, that they were put to death in the flesh! How obvious would it be to ask, In what other way are men usually put to death? What was there peculiar in their case, which would distinguish their death from the death of others? The use of this phrase would suggest the thought at once, that though, in regard to that which was properly expressed by the phrase, "the flesh," they died, yet that there was something else in respect to which they did not die. Thus, if it were said of a man that he was deprived of his rights as a father, it would be implied that in other respects he was not deprived of his rights; and this would be especially true if it were added that he continued to enjoy his rights

as a neighbour, or as holding an office under the government. The only proper inquiry, then, in this place is, What is fairly implied in the phrase, the flesh? Does it mean simply his body, as distinguished from his human soul? or does it refer to him as a man, as distinguished from some higher nature, over which death had no power? Now, that the latter is the meaning seems to me to be apparent, for these reasons:

(1.) It is the usual way of denoting the human nature of the Lord Jesus, or of saying that he became incarnate, or was a man, to speak of his being in the flesh. See Rom 1:2: "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh." Jn 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh." 1Timm 3:16: "God was manifest in the flesh." 1Jn 4:2: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." 2Jn 1:7: "Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

(2.) So far as appears, the effect of death on the human soul of the Redeemer was the same as in the case of the soul of any other person; in other words, the effect of death in his case was not confined to the mere body or the flesh. Death, with him, was what death is in any other case--the separation of the soul and body, with all the attendant pain of such dissolution. It is not true that his "flesh," as such, died without the ordinary accompaniments of death on the soul, so that it could be said that the one died, and the other was kept alive. The purposes of the atonement required that he should meet death in the usual form; that the great laws which operate everywhere else in regard to dissolution, should exist in his case; nor is there in the Scriptures any intimation that there was, in this respect, anything peculiar in his case. If his soul had been exempt from whatever there is involved in death in relation to the spirit, it is unaccountable that there is no hint on this point in the sacred narrative. But if this be so, then the expression "in the flesh" refers to him as a man, and means, that so far as his human nature was concerned, he died. In another important respect, he did not die. On the meaning of the word flesh in the New Testament, see Rom 1:3.

But quickened. Made alive-- ζωοποιηθεις. This does not mean kept alive, but made alive; recalled to life; reanimated. The word is never used in the sense of maintained alive, or preserved alive. Compare

the following places, which are the only ones in which it occurs in the New Testament: Jn 5:21, twice; Jn 6:63; Rom 4:17, 8:11, 1Cor 15:36,45, 1Timm 6:13, 1Pet 3:18; in all which it is rendered quickened, quicken, quickeneth, 1Cor 15:22, be made alive; 2Cor 3:6, giveth life; and Gal 2:21, have given life. "Once the word refers to God, as he who giveth life to all creatures, 1Timm 6:13; three times it refers to the life-giving power of the Holy Ghost, or of the doctrines of the gospel, Jn 6:63, 2Cor 3:6, Gal 3:21; seven times it is used with direct reference to the raising of the dead, Jn 5:21, Rom 4:17, 8:11; 1Cor 15:22,36,45, 1Pet 3:18". See Biblical Repos., April, 1845, p. 269. See also Passow, and Robinson; Lex. The sense, then, cannot be that, in reference to his soul or spirit, he was preserved alive when his body died, but that there was some agency or power restoring him to life, or reanimating him after he was dead.

By the Spirit. According to the common reading in the Greek, this is τωπνευματι -- with the article the--"the Spirit." Hahn, Tittman, and Griesbach omit the article, and then the reading is, "quickened in spirit;" and thus the reading corresponds with the former expression, "in flesh" (σαρκι,) where the article also is wanting. The word spirit, so far as the mere use of the word is concerned, might refer to his own soul, to his Divine nature, or to the Holy Spirit. It is evident

(1.) that it does not refer to his own soul, for,

(a.) as we have seen, the reference in the former clause is to his human nature, including all that pertained to him as a man, body and soul;

(b.) there was no power in his own spirit, regarded as that appertaining to his human nature, to raise him up from the dead, any more than there is such a power in any other human soul. That power does not belong to a human soul in any of its relations or conditions.

(2.) It seems equally clear that this does not refer to the Holy Spirit, or the Third Person of the Trinity, for it may be doubted whether the work of raising the dead is anywhere ascribed to that Spirit. His peculiar province is to enlighten, awaken, convict, convert, and sanctify the soul; to apply the work of redemption to the hearts of

men, and to lead them to God. This influence is moral, not physical; an influence accompanying the truth, not the exertion of mere physical power.

(3.) It remains, then, that the reference is to his own Divine nature--a nature by which he was restored to life after he was crucified; to the Son of God, regarded as the Second Person of the Trinity. This appears, not only from the facts above stated, but also

(a.) from the connexion. It is stated that it was in or by this spirit that he went and preached in the days of Noah. But it was not his spirit as a man that did this, for his human soul had then no existence. Yet it seems that he did this personally or directly, and not by the influences of the Holy Spirit, for it is said that "he went and preached." The reference, therefore, cannot be to the Holy Ghost, and the fair conclusion is that it refers to his Divine nature.

(b.) This accords with what the apostle Paul says, (Rom 1:3,4,) "which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,"--that is, in respect to his human nature,--"and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness,"--that is, in respect to his Divine nature,--" by the resurrection from the dead." See Notes on that passage.

(c.) It accords with what the Saviour himself says, Jn 10:17,18: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." This must refer to his Divine nature, for it is impossible to conceive that a human soul should have the power of restoring its former tenement, the body, to life. See Notes on the passage. The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the passage means, that as a man, a human being, he was put to death; in respect to a higher nature, or by a higher nature, here denominated Spirit, (πνευμα,) he was restored to life. As a man, he died; as the incarnate Son of God, the Messiah, he was made alive again by the power of his own Divine Spirit, and exalted to heaven. Comp. Robinson's Lex. on the word πνευμα.

These words are brought in as a strong argument, why Christians that suffer wrongfully should bear it patiently; it was our Saviour's own case; he that had perfect innocency and unspotted

righteousness, suffered in the severest manner for us that were unrighteous, that he might reconcile us to God, being put to death in the flesh, that is, in our human anture, but quickened by the Spirit, or raised to life again by the power of his godhead; it doth therefore well become all his followers cheerfully to undergo all manner of sufferings for him, which they meet with in their duty to him.

Note here, 1. Christ did not barely suffer for our good, but he suffered in our stead: he is not only said to suffer for us, but to suffer for our sins, that is, the punishment of our sins; for no man was ever said to suffer for sin that did not undergo and endure the punishment of sin.

As the sin-offering under the law is called an offering for sin, because it did expiate the guilt of sin, by dying in the place and stead of the offender; in like manner, when the death of Christ is called an offering for sin, what can it import, but that he suffered to make atonement for sin in our place and stead? The just for the unjust; if these words do not imply the substitution of Christ as our surety, and his suffering the punishment due to our sins, what words can express it?

Note, 2. That the great end of Christ's bitter death and bloody sufferings, was to bring all those for whom he died unto God; now Christ's bringing us to God imports our apostasy from him, and our inability to return to him; that sin unsatisfied for, which was the great bar to keep us from him, is mercifully removed by him, and that our chief happiness consists in the enjoyment of him.

Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: As if St. Peter had said, "Though Christ suffered for our sins, and was put to death in his human nature, or flesh, yet he was quickened and made alive by the Spirit, in which, or by which Spirit, he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which in the days of Noah were hardened in sin and disobedience, whilst the long-suffering of God endured them, and waited for their repentance no less than an hundred and twenty years, whilst the ark was making and preparing, and Noah preached to them; yet so impenitent were they to the very last, that only eight were saved in the ark."

Note here, 1. That the old world before the flood were in prison whilst here on earth, being in bondage and captivity to sin and Satan, held in the chains of their lusts, and in the bondage of their iniquity; such as are in bondage to sin, are captives in Satan's prison: the old world was also in prison whilst on earth, as having received from God the sentence of destruction, and were reserved as in prison, against the day of slaughter, if they repented not within an hundred and twenty years.

Note, 2. That Christ by his Spirit did preach to the old world in the ministry of his prophets, Enoch and Noah; and his Spirit did chide with them and reprove them, in order to their bringing to repentance.

Note, 3. That those refractory and hardened sinners, for despising the offers of grace made to them, were for their disobedience clapped up in the prison of hell, suffering the vengence of eternal fire; such as were cast into prison in Noah's time, were all fast in St. Peter's time: there is no picking the locks of hell gates, no breaking through the walls of the fiery Tophet; hell has a door to take in, but none to let out.

Note, 4. That though Christ by his Spirit preached to the spirits in prison, yet it was not when they were in prison, I mean in the prison of hell, but when here on earth; there are no sermons in hell, no conditions of happiness proposed, no tenders of salvation propounded there; Christ preached to these prisoners to prevent their imprisonment, Christ preached to these men, who were now in prison, that they might not have been imprisoned.

Note lastly, That the obstinate infidelity, and sottish stupidity, of the old world, was amazing, that after an hundred and twenty years' preaching, no more than eight persons should be persuaded into the belief of the world's destruction.
From the beginning we find that the prophets of God had cause to complain that few have believed their report: do not the ministers of God now groan to God, that they run in vain, and labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought? From the beginning it has been so.

if thou honourest any of us with better success, and givest us to see the fruit of our labours in the lives of our people, help us to set the crown of praise on the head of thine own grace, and say Non nobis, Comine, non nobis, &c. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

20 which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

By which. Evidently by the Spirit referred to in the previous verse--ενω--the Divine nature of the Son of God; that by which he was "quickened" again, after he had been put to death; the Son of God regarded as a Divine Being, or in that same nature which afterwards became incarnate, and whose agency was employed in quickening the man Christ Jesus, who had been put to death. The meaning is, that the same "Spirit" which was efficacious in restoring him to life, after he was put to death, was that by which he preached to the spirits in prison. He went. To wit, in the days of Noah. No particular stress should be laid here on the phrase he went." The literal sense is, "he, having gone, preached," etc. --πορευθεις. It is well known that such expressions are often redundant in Greek writers, as in others. So Herodotus, "to these things they spake, saying"--for they said. "And he, speaking, said;" that is, he said. So Eph 2:17, "And came and preached peace," etc. Mt 9:13, "But go and learn what that meaneth," etc. So God is often represented as coming, as descending, etc,, when he brings a message to mankind. Thus Gen 11:5, "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower." Ex 19:20, "The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai." Nu 11:25, "The Lord came down in a cloud." 2Sam 22:10, "He bowed the heavens and came down." The idea, however, would be conveyed by this language that he did this personally, or by himself, and not merely by employing the agency of another. It would then be implied here, that though the instrumentality of Noah was employed, yet that it was done not by the Holy Spirit, but by him who afterwards became incarnate. On the supposition, therefore, that this whole massage refers to his preaching to the antediluvians in the time of Noah, and not to the "spirits" after they were confined in prison, this is language which the apostle would have properly and probably used. If that supposition meets the full force of the language, then no argument can be based on it in proof that he went to preach to them after their death, and while his body was lying in the grave. And

preached. The word used here (εκηρυξεν) is of a general character, meaning to make a proclamation of any kind, as a crier does, or to deliver a message, and does not necessarily imply that it was the gospel which was preached, nor does it determine anything in regard to the nature of the message. It is not affirmed that he preached the gospel, for if that specific idea had been expressed it would have been rather by another word--ευαγγελιζω. The word here used would be appropriate to such a message as Noah brought to his contemporaries, or to any communication which God made to men. See Mt 3:1, 4:17, Mk 1:35; Mk 5:20, 7:36. It is implied in the expression, as already remarked, that he did this himself; that it was the Son of God who subsequently became incarnate, and not the Holy Spirit, that did this; though the language is consistent With the supposition that he did it by the instrumentality of another, to wit, Noah. Qui facit per alium, facit per se. God really proclaims a message to mankind when he does it by the instrumentality of the prophets, or apostles, or other ministers of religion; and all that is necessarily implied in this language would be met by the supposition that Christ delivered a message to the antediluvian race by the agency of Noah. No argument, therefore, can be derived from this language to prove that Christ went and personally preached to those who were confined in hades or in prison. Unto the spirits in prison. That is, clearly, to the spirits now in prison, for this is the fair meaning of the passage. The obvious sense is, that Peter supposed there were "spirits in prison" at the time when he wrote, and that to those same spirits the Son of God had at some time "preached," or had made some proclamation respecting the will of God. As this is the only passage in the New Testament on which the Romish doctrine of purgatory is supposed to rest, it is important to ascertain the fair meaning of the language here employed. There are three obvious inquiries in ascertaining its signification. Who are referred to by spirits? What is meant by in prison? Was the message brought to them while in the prison, or at some previous period? I. Who are referred to by spirits? The specification in the next verse determines this. They were those "who were sometime disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." No others are specified; and if it should be maintained that this means that he went down to hell, or to sheol, and preached to those who are confined there, it could be inferred from this passage only that he preached to that portion of the lost spirits confined there which belonged to the particular generation in which Noah lived. Why he should do this;

or how there should be such a separation made in hades that it could be done; or what was the nature of the message which he delivered to that portion, are questions which it is impossible for any man who holds to the opinion that Christ went down to hell after his death to preach, to answer. But if it means that he preached to those who lived in the days of Noah, while they were yet alive, the question will be asked why are they called "spirits?" Were they spirits then, or were they men like others? To this the answer is easy. Peter speaks of them as they were when he wrote; not as they had been, or were at the time when the message was preached to them. The idea is, that to those spirits who were then in prison who had formerly lived in the days of Noah, the message had been in fact delivered. It was not necessary to speak of them precisely as they were at the time when it was delivered, but only in such a way as to identify them. We should use similar language now. If we saw a company of men in prison who had seen better days--a multitude now drunken, and debased, and poor, and riotous --it would not be improper to say that "the prospect of wealth and honour was once held out to this ragged and wretched multitude. All that is needful is to identify them as the same persons who once had this prospect. In regard to the inquiry, then, who these "spirits" were, there can be no difference of opinion. They were that wicked race which lived in the days of Noah. There is no allusion in this passage to any other; there is no intimation that to any others of those "in prison" the message here referred to had been delivered. II. What is meant by prison here? Purgatory, or the limbus patrum, say the Romanists--a place in which departed souls are supposed to be confined, and in which their final destiny may still be effected by the purifying fires which they endure, by the prayers of the living, or by a message in some way conveyed to their gloomy abodes --in which such sins may be expiated as do not deserve eternal damnation. The Syriac here is "in sheol," referring to the abodes of the dead, or the place in which departed spirits are supposed to dwell. The word rendered prison, (φυλακη) means properly watch, guard--the act of keeping watch, or the guard itself; then watchpost, or station; then a place where any one is watched or guarded, as a prison; then a watch in the sense of a division of the night, as the morning watch. It is used in the New Testament, with reference to the future world, only in the following places: 1Pet 3:19, "Preached unto the spirits in prison;" and Rev 20:7, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison". An idea similar to the one here expressed may be found in 2Pet 2:4, though the word prison

does not there occur: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;" and in Jude 1:6, "and the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." The allusion, in the passage before us, is undoubtedly to confinement or imprisonment in the invisible world; and perhaps to those who are reserved there with reference to some future arrangement--for this idea enters commonly into the use of the word prison. There is, however, no specification of the place where this is; no intimation that it is purgatory--a place where the departed are supposed to undergo purification; no intimation that their condition can be affected by anything that we can do; no intimation that those particularly referred to differ in any sense from the others who are confined in that world; no hint that they can be released by any prayers or sacrifices of ours. This passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, for (1.) the essential ideas which enter into the doctrine of purgatory are not to be found in the word here used; (2.) there is no evidence in the fair interpretation of the passage that any message is borne to them while in prison; (3.) there is not the slightest hint that they can be released by any prayers or offerings of those who dwell on the earth. The simple idea is that of persons confined as in a prison; and the passage will prove only that in the time when the apostle wrote there were those who were thus confined. III. Was the message brought to them while in prison, or at some previous period? The Romanists say that it was while in prison; that Christ, after he was put to death in the body, was still kept alive in his spirit, and went and proclaimed his gospel to those who were in prison. So Bloomfield maintains, (in loc.,) and so OEcumenius and Cyril, as quoted by Bloomfield. But against this view there are plain objections drawn from the language of Peter himself. (1.) As we have seen, the fair interpretation of the passage "quickened by the Spirit," is not that he was kept alive as to his human soul, but that he, after being dead, was made alive by his own Divine energy. (2.) If the meaning be that he went and preached after his death, it seems difficult to know why the reference is to those only who "had been disobedient in the days of Noah." Why were they alone selected for this message? Are they separate from others? Were they the only ones in purgatory who could be beneficially affected by his preaching? On the other method of interpretation, we can suggest a

reason why they were particularly specified. But how can we on this? (3.) The language employed does not demand this interpretation. Its full meaning is met by the interpretation that Christ once preached to the spirits then in prison, to wit, in the days of Noah; that is, that he caused a Divine message to be borne to them. Thus it would be proper to say that "Whitfield came to America, and preached to the souls in perdition;" or to go among the graves of the first settlers of New Haven, and say, "Davenport came from England to preach to the dead men around us." (4.) This interpretation accords with the design of the apostle in inculcating the duty of patience and forbearance in trials; in encouraging those whom he addressed to be patient in their persecutions. See the analysis of the chapter. With this object in view, there was entire propriety in directing them to the long-suffering and forbearance evinced by the Saviour, through Noah. He was opposed, reviled, disbelieved, and, we may suppose, persecuted. It was to the purpose to direct them to the fact that he was saved as the result of his steadfastness to Him who had commanded him to preach to that ungodly generation. But what pertinency would there have been in saying that Christ went down to hell, and delivered some sort of a message there, we know not what, to those who are confined there?

Which sometime were disobedient. Which were once, or formerly, (ποτε,) disobedient or rebellious. The language here does not imply that they had ceased to be disobedient, or that they had become obedient at the time when the apostle wrote; but the object is to direct the attention to a former race of men characterized by disobedience, and to show the patience evinced under their provocations, in endeavouring to do them good. To say that men were formerly rebellious, or rebellious in a specified age, is no evidence that they are otherwise now. The meaning here is, that they did not obey the command of God when he called them to repentance by the preaching of Noah. Comp. 2Pet 2:5, where Noah is called "a preacher of righteousness."

When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah. God waited on that guilty race a hundred and twenty years, (Gen 6:3,) a period sufficiently protracted to evince his long-suffering toward one generation. It is not improbable that during that whole

period Noah was, in various ways, preaching to that wicked generation. Comp. Heb 11:7.

While the ark was a preparing. It is probable that preparations were made for building the ark during a considerable portion of that time. St. Peter's, at Rome, was a much longer time in building; and it is to be remembered that in the age of the world when Noah lived, and with the imperfect knowledge of the arts of naval architecture which must have prevailed, it was a much more serious undertaking to construct an ark that would hold such a variety and such a number of animals as that was designed to, and that would float safely for more than a year in an universal flood, than it was to construct such a fabric as St. Peter's, in the days when that edifice was reared. Wherein few, that is, eight souls. Eight persons--Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, Gen 7:7. The allusion to their being saved here seems to be to encourage those whom Peter addressed to perseverance and fidelity, in the midst of all the opposition which they might experience. Noah was not disheartened. Sustained by the Spirit of Christ--the presence of the Son of God--he continued to preach. He did not abandon his purpose, and the result was that he was saved. True, they were few in number who were saved; the great mass continued to be wicked; but this very fact should be an encouragement to us--that though the great mass of any one generation may be wicked, God can protect and save the few who are faithful.

21 The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Observe here, 1. The type and the anti-type, the ark and baptism; their salvation from the deluge, by the ark, prefigureth our salvation from God's wrath by baptism. As all that were without the ark perished, and all within the ark were saved; so all that are ingrafted into Christ by faith, whereof baptism is a seal, are saved, whilst the unbelieving and unbaptized part of the world perish. Baptism is such a mean of spiritual salvation now, as the ark was of Noah's and his family's temporal salvation then: the like figure whereunto, baptism now saveth us.

Observe, 2. How our apostle expresses himself, and plainly declares what he means by that baptism which is saving; negatively, it is not the outward ceremony of sprinkling the face, or washing the body with water, that is saving, or any ways pleasing unto God, save only as it is an act and exercise of our obedience to his command and will; but positively, it is the answer of a good conscience towards God, that is, the faithful answer of a resolved soul in the covenant of baptism, who gives up himself to the obedience of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and renounces the world, the flesh, and the devil; this covenanting is the condition of salvation, and baptism but the sign.

Learn hence, The outward baptism alone saves none, but the inward only; and the sign and singular effect of inward baptism, is the answer of a good conscience towards God, Yet we must not conclude, with the Anabaptists, from this text that baptism can be of no saving advantage to infants, because, they cannot at present make this answer of a good conscience: for in the same manner speaks St. Paul of circumcision, that the true circumcision before God is the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit, and not the outward circumcision of the flesh.

But who dare argue from thence, that the Jewiah infants, for want of the inward circumcision, must not be admitted to the outward?

The argument is the very same: will you say that the answer of a good conscience is absolutely necessary, and expressly required, that baptism may be beneficial; therefore they only are to be baptized that can make this answer? The same may we say, that the inward circumcision of the heart was required as the only acceptable circumcision in the sight of God: therefore they only are to be circumcised, who have this inward circumcision of the heart. But as the one was the will of God, so is the other.

True indeed, The Jews did not admit proselytes to circumcision then, no more will we admit adult persons to baptism now, without the answer of a good conscience, or a solemn stipulation to be the Lord's for ever: but they admitted infants to circumcision without it; in like manner, the Christian church now admits the children of Christian

parents to baptism, without any such answer made by them, but for them only.

22 who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse,

1. Of his going into heaven, there to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people.

2. He is here affirmed to be at God's right hand. The right hand is the upper hand, the hand of honour; and the right hand is the hand of power; accordingly Christ sitting at God's right hand, as an enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power: and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven.

3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool.
For though his victory is yet incomplete and inconsummate, and we see not all things yet put under him, it may suffice at present that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and that's enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken; and that though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all: for refusing to submit to his sceptre, they will fall by the rod of his strength, Angels and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him. Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse,

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enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power: and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven.

3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool.
For though his victory is yet incomplete and inconsummate, and we see not all things yet put under him, it may suffice at present that we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and that's enough to show that the power of his enemies is broken; and that though they make some opposition still, yet it is to no purpose at all: for refusing to submit to his sceptre, they will fall by the rod of his strength, Angels and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him. Our apostle having in the close of the former verse, spoken of the resurrection of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby, he makes mention in this verse,

1. Of his going into heaven, there to dispatch all that remained to be done for the completing the salvation of his people.

2. He is here affirmed to be at God's right hand. The right hand is the upper hand, the hand of honour; and the right hand is the hand of power; accordingly Christ sitting at God's right hand, as an enthroned king, imports sovereign honour and supreme power: and that God has exalted his Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to his kingdom in heaven.

3. It is asserted, that angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him; that is, our Jesus, in whom we hope, believe, and trust, is advanced in heaven to a pre-eminency above, and to a superiority over, all angels and celestial powers, waiting and expecting until all his enemies on earth become his footstool.
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and principalities in heaven, and all powers and potentates upon earth, being made subject unto him.

1 Peter-4

Good Stewards of God's Grace

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh. Since he as a man has died for us. 1Pet 3:18. The design was to set the suffering Redeemer before them as an example in their trials. Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. That is, evidently, the same mind that he evinced--a readiness to suffer in the cause of religion, a readiness to die as he had done. This readiness to suffer and die, the apostle speaks of as armour, and having this is represented as being armed. Armour is put on for offensive or defensive purposes in war; and the idea of the apostle here is, that that state of mind when we are ready to meet with persecution and trial, and when we are ready to die, will answer the purpose of armour in engaging in the conflicts and strifes which pertain to us as Christians, and especially in meeting with persecutions and trials. We are to put on the same fortitude which the Lord Jesus had, and this will be the best defence against our foes, and the best security of victory. For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. Comp. Rom 6:7. To "suffer in the flesh" is to die. The expression here has a proverbial aspect, and seems to have meant something like this: "when a man is dead, he will sin no more;" referring of course to the present life. So if a Christian becomes dead in a moral sense--dead to this world, dead by being crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20)--he may be expected to cease from sin. The reasoning is based on the idea that there is such a union between Christ and the believer that his death on the cross secured the death of the believer to the world. Comp. 2Ti 2:11, Col 2:20, 3:3.

That he no longer should live. That is, he has become, through the death of Christ, dead to the world and to the former things which influenced him, in order that he should hereafter live not to the lusts

of the flesh. 2Cor 5:15. The rest of his time in the flesh. The remainder of the time that he is to continue in the flesh; that is, that he is to live on the earth. To the lusts of men. Such lusts as men commonly live for and indulge in. Some of these are enumerated in the following verse. But to the will of God. In such a manner as God commands. The object of redemption is to rescue us from being swayed by wicked lusts, and to bring us to be conformed wholly to the will of God.

3 For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

For the time past of our life may suffice us. "We have spent sufficient time in indulging ourselves, and following our wicked propensities, and we should hereafter live in a different manner." This does not mean that it was ever proper thus to live, but that, as we would say, "we have had enough of these things; we have tried them; there is no reason why we should indulge in them any more." An expression quite similar to this occurs in Horace--Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti. Ternpus abire tibi est, etc.--Epis, ii. 213.

To have wrought the will of the Gentiles. This does not mean to be subservient to their will, but to have done what they willed to do; that is, to live as they did. That the Gentiles or heathen lived in the manner immediately specified, Rom 1:21, seq.

When we walked in lasciviousness. When we lived in the indulgence of corrupt passions--the word walk being often used in the Scriptures to denote the manner of life. On the word lasciviousness, Rom 13:13. The apostle says we, not as meaning that he himself had been addicted to these vices, but as speaking of those who were Christians in general. It is common to say that we lived so and so, when speaking of a collection of persons, without meaning that each one was guilty of all the practices enumerated. 1Thes 4:17, for a similar use of the word we. The use of the word we in this place would show that the apostle did not mean to set himself up as better than they were, but was willing to be identified with them. Lusts. The indulgence of unlawful desires. Rom 1:24.

Excess of wine. The word here used (οινοφλυγια) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means overflowing of wine, (οινος), wine, and φλυω, to overflow; then wine-drinking; drunkenness. That this was a common vice need not be proved. Multitudes of those who became Christians had been drunkards, for intemperance abounded in all the heathen world. Comp. 1Cor 6:9-11. It should not be inferred here from the English translation, "excess of wine," that wine is improper only when used to excess, or that the moderate use of wine is proper. Whatever may be true on that point, nothing, can be determined in regard to it from the use of this word. The apostle had his eye on one thing--on such a use of wine as led to intoxication; such as they had indulged in before their conversion. About the impropriety of that, there could be no doubt. Whether any use of wine, by Christians or other persons, was lawful, was another question. It should be added, moreover, that the phrase "excess of wine" does not precisely convey the meaning of the original. The word excess would naturally imply something more than was needful; or something beyond the proper limit or measure; but no such idea is in the original word. That refers merely to the abundance of wine, without any reference to the inquiry whether there was more than was proper or not. Tindal renders it, somewhat better, drunkenness. So Luther, Trunkenheit.

Revellings, Rendered rioting in Rom 13:13. Rom 13:13. The Greek word (κωμος) occurs only here, and in Rom 13:13, and Gal 5:21. It means feasting, revel; "a carousing or merry-making after supper, the guests often sallying into the streets, and going through the city with torches, music, and songs in honour of Bacchus," etc.--Robinson, Lex. The word would apply to all such noisy and boisterous processions now--scenes wholly inappropriate to the Christian.

Banquetings. The word here used (ποτος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly drinking; an act of drinking; then a drinking bout; drinking together. The thing forbidden by it is an assembling together for the purpose of drinking. There is nothing in this word referring to eating, or to banqueting, as the term is now commonly employed. The idea in the passage is, that it is improper

for Christians to meet together for the purpose of drinking--as wine, toasts, etc. The prohibition would apply to all those assemblages where this is understood to be the main object. It would forbid, therefore, an attendance on all those celebrations in which drinking toasts is understood to be an essential part of the festivities, and all those where hilarity and joyfulness are sought to be produced by the intoxicating bowl. Such are not proper places for Christians.

And abominable idolatries. Literally, unlawful idolatries; that is, unlawful to the Jews, or forbidden by their laws. Then the expression is used in the sense of wicked, impious, since what is unlawful is impious and wrong. That the vices here referred to were practised by the heathen world is well known. Rom 1:26", seq. That many who became Christians were guilty of them before their conversion, is clear from this passage. The fact that they were thus converted shows the power of the gospel, and also that we should not despair in regard to those who are indulging in these vices now. They seem indeed almost to be hopeless, but we should remember that many who became Christians when the gospel was first preached, as well as since, were of this character. If they were reclaimed; if those who had been addicted to the gross and debasing vices referred to here, were brought into the kingdom of God, we should believe that those who are living in the same manner now may also be recovered. From the statement made in this verse, that "the time past of our lives may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles," we may remark that the same may be said by all Christians of themselves; the same thing is true of all who are living in sin.

(1.) It is true of all who are Christians, and they feel it, that they lived long enough in sin.

(a) They made a fair trial--many of them with ample opportunities; with abundant wealth; with all that the fashionable world can furnish; with all that can be derived from low and gross indulgences. Many who are now Christians had opportunities of living in splendour and ease; many moved in gay and brilliant circles; many occupied stations of influence, or had brilliant prospects of distinction; many gave indulgence to gross propensities; many were the companions of the vile and the abandoned. Those who are now

Christians, take the church at large, have had ample opportunity of making the fullest trial of what sin and the world can furnish.

(b.) They all feel that the past is enough for this manner of living. It is "sufficient" to satisfy them that the world cannot furnish what the soul demands. They need a better portion; and they can now see that there is no reason why they should desire to continue the experiment in regard to what the world can furnish. On that unwise and wicked experiment they have expended time enough; and satisfied with that, they desire to return to it no more.

(2.) The same thing is true of the wicked--of all who are living for the world. The time past should be regarded as sufficient to make an experiment in sinful indulgences; for

(a.) the experiment has been made by millions before them, and has always failed; and they can hope to find in sin only what has always been found--disappointment, mortification, and despair.

(b.) They have made a sufficient experiment. They have never found in those indulgences what they flattered themselves they would find, and they have seen enough to satisfy them that what the immortal soul needs can never be obtained there.

(c.) They have spent sufficient time in this hopeless experiment. Life is short. Man has no time to waste. He may soon die-- and at whatever period of life any one may be who is living in sin, we may say to him the he has already thrown away enough of probation in a fruitless attempt to find happiness where it can never be found. For any purpose whatever for which any one could ever suppose it to be desirable to live in sin, the past should suffice. But why should it ever be deemed desirable at all? The fruits of sin are always disappointment, tears, death, despair.

4 wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you:*

Wherein they think it strange. In respect to which vices, they who were once your partners and accomplices now think it strange that you no longer unite with them. They do not understand the reasons why you have left them. They regard you as abandoning a course of life which has much to attract and to make life merry, for a severe

and gloomy superstition. This is a true account of the feelings which the people of the world have when their companions and friends leave them and become Christians. It is to them a strange and unaccountable thing, that they give up the pleasures of the world for a course of life which to them seems to promise anything but happiness. Even the kindred of the Saviour regarded him as "beside himself," (Mk 3:21,) and Festus supposed that Paul was mad, Acts 26:24. There is almost nothing which the people of the world so little comprehend as the reasons which influence those with ample means of worldly enjoyment to leave the circles of gaiety and vanity, and to give themselves to the serious employments of religion. The epithets of fool, enthusiast, fanatic, are terms which frequently occur to the heart to denote this, if they are not always allowed to escape from the lips. The reasons why they esteem this so strange, are something like the following:

(1.) They do not appreciate the motives which influence those who leave them. They feel that it is proper to enjoy the world, and to make life cheerful, and they do not understand what it is to act under a deep sense of responsibility to God, and with reference to eternity. They live for themselves. They seek happiness as the end and aim of life. They have never been accustomed to direct the mind onward to another world, and to the account which they must soon render at the bar of God. Unaccustomed to act from any higher motives than those which pertain to the present world, they cannot appreciate the conduct of those who begin to live and act for eternity.

(2.) They do not, yet see the guilt and folly of sinful pleasures. They are not convinced of the deep sinfulness of the human soul, and they to think it strange that others should abandon a course of life which seems them so innocent. They do not see why those who have been so long accustomed to these indulgences should have changed their opinions, and why they now regard those things as sinful which they once considered to be harmless.

(3.) They do not see the force of the argument for religion. Not having the views of the unspeakable importance of religious truth and duty which Christians now have, they wonder that they should break off from the course of life which they formerly pursued, and separate from the mass of their fellow-men. Hence they sometimes regard the conduct of Christians as amiable weakness; sometimes as

superstition; sometimes as sheer folly; sometimes as madness; and sometimes as sourness and misanthropy. In all respects they esteem it strange.

"Lions and beasts of savage name Put on the nature of the lamb, While the wide world esteems it strange, Gaze, and admire, and hate the change."

That ye run not with them. There may be an allusion here to the well-known orgies of Bacchus, in which his votaries ran as if excited by the furies, and were urged on as if transported with madness. See Ovid, Metam. iii. 529, thus translated by Addison:
"For now, through prostrate Greece, young Bacchus rode, Whilst howling matrons celebrate the god; All ranks and sexes to his or orgies ran, To mingle in the pomp and fill the train."

The language, however, will well describe revels of any sort, and at any period of the world. To the same excess of riot. The word rendered excess (a?a??s??) means, properly, a pouring out, an affusion; and the idea here is, that all the sources and forms of riot and disorder were poured out together. There was no withholding, no restraint. The most unlimited indulgence was given to the passions. This was the case in the disorder referred to among the ancients, as it is the case now in scenes of midnight revelry. On the meaning of the word riot, Eph 5:18, Tit 1:6. Speaking evil of you. Gr., blasphemy. Mt 9:3. The meaning here is, that they used harsh and reproachful epithets of those who would not unite with them in their revelry. They called them fools, fanatics, hypocrites, etc. The idea is not that they blasphemed God, or that they charged Christians with crime, but that they used language fitted to injure the feelings, the character, the reputation of those who would no longer unite with them in the ways of vice and folly.

5 who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Who shall give account. That is, they shall not do this with impunity. They are guilty in this of a great wrong, and they must answer for it to God. That is ready to judge. That is, "who is prepared to judge"--τωετοιμωςεχοντι. See the phrase used in Acts 21:13: "I am ready not

to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem." 2Cor 12:14 "The third time I am ready to come to you." Compare the word ready--ετοιμος in Mt 22:4,8, 24:44, 25:10, Lk 12:40, 22:33, 1Pet 1:5. The meaning is, not that he was about to do it, or that the day of judgment was near at hand--whatever the apostle may have supposed to be true on that point--but that he was prepared for it; all the arrangements were made with reference to it; there was nothing to hinder it. To judge the quick and the dead. The living and the dead; that is, those who shall be alive when he comes, and those in their graves. This is a common phrase to denote all who shall be brought before the bar of God for judgment. Acts 10:42. 1Thes 4:16; 1Thes 4:17; 2Ti 4:1 The meaning in this connexion seems to be, that they should bear their trials and the opposition which they would meet with patiently, not feeling that they were forgotten, nor attempting to avenge themselves; for the Lord would vindicate then when he should come to judgment, and call those who had injured them to an account for all the wrongs which they had done to the children of God.

6 For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

For, for this cause. The expression, "For, for this cause," refers to an end to be reached, or an object to be gained, or a reason why anything referred to is done. The end or reason why the thing referred to here, to wit, that "the gospel was preached to the dead," was done, is stated in the subsequent part of the verse to have been "that they might be judged," etc. It was with reference to this, or in order that this might be, that the gospel was preached to them.

Was the gospel preached also to them that are dead. Many, as Doddridge, Whitby, and others, understand this of those who are spiritually dead, that is, the Gentile, and suppose that the object for which this was done was that "they might be brought to such a state of life as their carnal neighbours will look upon as a kind of condemnation and death." --Doddridge. Others have suppose that it refers to those who had suffered martyrdom in the cause of Christianity; others, that it refers to the sinners of the old world, (Saurin.) expressing a hope that some of them might be saved; and others, that it means that the Saviour went down and preached to those who are dead, in accordance with one of the interpretations

given of 1Pet 3:19. It seems to me that the most natural and obvious interpretation is to refer it to those who were then dead, to whom the gospel had been preached when living, and who had become true Christians. This is the interpretation proposed by Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others. In support of this, it may be said,

(1.) that this is the natural and obvious meaning of the word dead, which should be understood literally, unless there is some good reason in the connexion for departing from the common meaning of the word.

(2.) The apostle had just used the word in that sense in the previous verse.

(3.) This will suit the connexion, and accord with the design of the apostle. He was addressing those who were suffering persecution. It was natural, in such a connexion, to refer to those who had died in the faith, and to show, for their encouragement, that though they had been put to death, yet they still lived to God. He therefore says, that the design in publishing the gospel to them was, that though they might be judged by men in the usual manner, and put to death, yet that in respect to their higher and nobler nature, the spirit, they might live unto God. It was not uncommon nor unnatural for the apostles, in writing to those who were suffering persecution, to refer and example an argument for fidelity and perseverance. Compare 1Thes 4:13, Rev 14:13. That they might be judged according to men in the flesh. That is, so far as men are concerned, (καταανθρωπους), or in respect to the treatment which they received from men in the flesh, they were judged and condemned; in respect to God, and the treatment which they received from him, καταθεον, they would live in spirit. Men judged them severely, and put them to death for their religion; God gave them life, and saved them. By the one they were condemned in the flesh--so far as pain, and sorrow, and death could be inflicted on the body; by the other they were made to live in the spirit--to be his, to live with him. The word judged her, I supposed, therefore, to refer to a sentence passed on them for their religion, consigning them to death for it. There is a particle in the original--μεν indeed--which has not been retained in the common translation, but which is quite important to the sense: "that they might indeed be judged in the flesh, but live," etc. The direct object or design of

preaching the gospel to them was not that they might be condemned and put to death by man, but this was indeed or in fact one of the results in the way to a higher object. But live according to God. In respect to God, or so far as he was concerned. By him they would not be condemned. By him they would be made to live--to have the true life. The gospel was preached to them in order that so far as God was concerned, so far as their relation to him was concerned, so far as he would deal with them, they might live. The word live here seems to refer to the whole life that was the consequence of their being brought under the power of the gospel;

(a.) that they might have spiritual life imparted to them;

(b.) that they might live a life of holiness in this world;

(c.) that they might live hereafter in the world to come. In one respect, and so far as men were concerned, their embracing the gospel was followed by death; in another respect, and so far as God was concerned, it was followed by life. The value and permanence of the latter, as contrasted with the former, seems to have been the thought in the mind of the apostle in encouraging those to whom he wrote to exercise patience in their trials, and to show fidelity in the service of their Master. In the spirit. In their souls, as contrasted with their body. In respect to that--to the flesh--they were put to death; in respect to their souls--their higher natures--they were made truly to live. The argument, then, in this verse is, that in the trials which we endure on account of religion, we should remember the example of those who have suffered for it, and should remember why the gospel was preached to them. It was in a subordinate sense, indeed, that they might glorify God by a martyr's death; but in a higher sense, that in this world and the next they might truly live. The flesh might suffer in consequence of their embracing the gospel that was preached to them, but the soul would live. Animated by their example, we should be willing to suffer in the flesh, if we may for ever live with God.

7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

But the end of an things is at hand. This declaration is also evidently designed to support and encourage them in their trials, and to excite them to lead a holy life, by the assurance that the end of all things

was drawing nigh. The phrase, "the end of all things," would naturally refer to the end of the world; the winding up of human affairs. It is not absolutely certain, however, that the apostle used it here in this sense. It might mean that so far as they were concerned, or in respect to them, the end of all things drew near. Death is to each one the end of all things here below: the end of his plans and of his interest in all that pertains to sublunary affairs. Even if the phrase did originally and properly refer to the end of the world, it is probable that it would soon come to denote the end of life in relation to the affairs of each individual; since, if it was believed that the end of the world was near, it must consequently be believed that the termination of the earthly career of each one also drew near to a close. It is possible that the latter signification may have come ultimately to predominate, and that Peter may have used it in this sense without referring to the other. Comp. 2Pet 3:8, seq., for his views on this subject. Rom 13:11, Rom 13:12. The word rendered "is at hand," (ηγγικε,) may refer either to proximity of place or time, and it always denotes that the place or the time referred to was not far off. In the former sense, as referring to nearness of place, see Mt 21:1, Mk 11:1; Lk 7:12, 15:25, 18:35,40, 19:29,37,41, 24:46, Acts 9:3, 10:9, 21:33; in the latter sense, as referring to time as being near, see Mt 3:2; Mt 4:17, 10:7, 21:34, 26:45, Mk 1:16, Lk 21:20,28, Acts 7:17, Rom 13:12; Heb 10:25, 1Pet 4:7. The idea as applied to time, or to an approaching event, is undoubtedly that it is close by; it is not far off; it will soon occur. If this refers to the end of the world, it would mean that it was soon to occur; if to death, that this was an event which could not be far distant--perhaps an event that was to be hastened by their trials. The fact that it is such language as we now naturally address to men, saying that in respect to them "the end of all things is at hand," shows that it cannot be demonstrated that Peter did not use it in the same sense, and consequently that it cannot be proved that he meant to teach that the end of the world was then soon to occur.

Be ye therefore sober. Serious; thoughtful; considerate. Let a fact of so much importance make a solemn impression on your mind, and preserve you from frivolity, levity, and vanity. See the word explained 1Timm 3:2.

And watch unto prayer. Be looking out for the end of all things in such a manner as to lead you to embrace all proper opportunities for

prayer. Comp. Mt 26:39,41. The word rendered watch, means to be sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; then watchful, circumspect. The important truth, then, taught by this passage is, that the near approach of the end of all things should make us serious and prayerful. I The end may be regarded as approaching. This is true

(1.) of all things; of the winding up of the affairs of this world. It is constantly drawing nearer and nearer, and no one can tell how soon it will occur. The period is wisely hidden from the knowledge of all men, Mt 24:36, Acts 1:7, among other reasons, in order that we may be always ready, No man can tell certainly at what time it will come; no man can demonstrate that it may not come at any moment. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is represented that it will come at an unexpected hour, as a thief in the night, and when the mass of men shall be slumbering in false security, Mt 24:37-39,42,43, 1Thes 5:2; Lk 21:34.

(2.) It is near in relation to each one of us. The day of our death cannot be far distant; it may be very near. The very next thing that we may have to do, may be to lie down and die. II. It is proper that such a nearness of the end of all things should lead us to be serious, and to pray.

(1.) To be serious; for

(a.) the end of all things, regard to us, is a most important event. It closes our probation. It fixes our character. It seals up our destiny. It makes all ever onward in character and doom unchangeable.

(b.) We are so made as to be serious in view of such events. God has so constituted the mind, that when we lose property, health, or friends; when we look into a grave, or are beset with dangers; when we are in the room of the dying or the dead, we are serious and thoughtful. It is unnatural not to be so. Levity and frivolity on such occasions are as contrary to all the finer and better feelings of our nature as they are to the precepts of the Bible.

(c) There are advantages in seriousness of mind. It enables us to take better views of things, Eccl 7:2,3. A calm, sober, sedate mind is the

best for a contemplation of truth, and for looking at things as they are.

(2.) To be watchful unto prayer.

(a.) Men naturally pray when they suppose that the end of all things is coming. An earthquake induces them to pray. An eclipse, or any other supposed prodigy, leads men to pray if they suppose the end of the world is drawing near. A ship-wreck, or any other sudden danger, leads them to pray, Ps 107:28. So men often pray in sickness who have never prayed in days of health.

(b.) It is proper to do it. Death is an important event, and in anticipation of such an event we should pray. Who can help us then but God? Who can conduct us through the dark valley but he? Who can save us amidst the wrecks and ruins of the universe but he? Who can dissipate our fears, and make us calm amidst the convulsions of dissolving nature, but God? As that event, therefore, may come upon us at any hour, it should lead us to constant prayer; and the more so because, when it comes, we may be in no state of mind to pray. The posture in which we should feel that it would be most appropriate that the messenger of death should find us, would be that of prayer.

8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

And above all things. More than all things else. Have fervent charity among yourselves. Warm, ardent love towards each other. On the nature of charity, 1Cor 13:1 The word rendered fervent, means properly extended; then intent, earnest, fervent. For charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Love to another shall so cover or hide a great many imperfections in him, that you will not notice them. This passage is quoted from Prov 10:12: "Love covereth all sins." For the truth of it we have only to appeal to the experience of every one.

(a.) True love to another makes us kind to his imperfections, charitable towards his faults, and often blind even to the existence of faults. We would not see the imperfections of those whom we love; and our attachment for what we esteem their real excellencies, makes us insensible to their errors.

(b.) If we love them we are ready to cover over their faults, even those which we may see in them. Of love the Christian poet says---

"Tis gentle, delicate, and kind. To faults compassionate or blind."

The passage before us is not the same in signification as that in Jas 5:20, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Jas 5:20. That passage means, that by the conversion of another the sins of him who is converted shall be covered over, or not brought to judgment for condemnation; that is, they shall be covered over so far as God is concerned---this passage means that, under the influence of love, the sins of another shall be covered over so far as we are concerned; that is, they shall be unobserved or forgiven. The language here used does not mean, as the Romanists maintain, that "charity shall procure us pardon for a multitude of sins;" for, besides that such a doctrine is contrary to the uniform teachings of the Scriptures elsewhere, it is a departure from the obvious meaning of the passage. The subject on which the apostle is treating is the advantage of love in our conduct towards others, and this he enforces by saying that it will make us kind to their imperfections, and lead us to overlook their faults. It is nowhere taught in the Scriptures that our "charity" to others will be an atonement or expiation for our own offences. If it could be so, the atonement made by Christ would have been unnecessary. Love, however, is of inestimable value in the treatment of others; and imperfect as we are, and liable to go astray, we all have occasion to cast ourselves on the charity of our brethren, and to avail ourselves much and often of that "love which covers over a multitude of sins."

9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Use hospitality one to another. On the duty of hospitality, Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2. Without grudging. Greek, "without murmurs;" that is, without complaining of the hardship of doing it; of the time, and expense, and trouble required in doing it. The idea of grudging, in the common sense of that word--that is, of doing it unwillingly, or regretting the expense, and considering it as ill-bestowed, or as not producing an equivalent of any kind--is not exactly the idea here. It is that we are to do it without murmuring or complaining. It greatly enhances the value of hospitality, that it be done On our part with entire cheerfulness. One of the duties involved in it is to make a

guest happy; and this can be done in no other way than by showing him that he is welcome.

10 As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

As every man hath received the gift. The word rendered the gift, (χαρισμα,) in the Greek, without the article, means endowment of any kind, but especially that conferred by the Holy Spirit. Here it seems to refer to every kind of endowment by which we can do good to others; especially every kind of qualification furnished by religion by which we can help others. It does not refer here particularly to the ministry of the word--though it is applicable to that, and includes that--but to all the gifts and graces by which we can contribute to the welfare of others. All this is regarded as a gift, or charisma, of God. It is not owing to ourselves, but is to be traced to him. See the word explained 1Timm 4:14. Even so minister the same one to another, in anything by which you can benefit another. Regard what you have and they have not as a gift bestowed upon you by God for the common good, and be ready to impart it as the wants of others require. The word minister here (διακονουντες) would refer to any kind of ministering, whether by counsel, by advice, by the supply of the wants of the poor, or by preaching. It has here no reference to any one of these exclusively; but means, that in whatever God has favoured us more than others, we should be ready to minister to their wants. See 2Ti 1:18; 2Cor 3:3, 8:19,20. As good stewards. Regarding yourselves as the mere stewards of God; that is, as appointed by him to do this work for him, and intrusted by him with what is needful to benefit others. He intends to do them good, but he means to do it through your instrumentality, and has intrusted to you as a steward what he designed to confer on them. This is the true idea, in respect to any special endowments of talent, property, or grace, which we may have received from God. Comp. 1Cor 4:1,2, Lk 16:1,2,8. Of the manifold grace of God. The grace or favour of God evinced in many ways, or by a variety of gifts. His favours are not confined to one single thing; as, for example, to talent for doing good by preaching; but are extended to a great many things by which we may do good to influence, property, reputation, wisdom, experience. All these are to be regarded as his gifts; all to be employed in doing good to others as we have opportunity.

11 If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth; that God in

all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

If any man speak. As a preacher, referring here particularly to the office of the ministry. Let him speak as the oracles of God. As the oracles of God speak; to wit, in accordance with the truth which God has revealed, and with an impressive sense of the responsibility of delivering a message from him. The word rendered oracles, (λογια) means, properly, something spoken or uttered; then anything uttered by God--a Divine communication--a revelation, Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12. See the general duty here inculcated illustrated at length in Rom 12:6-8. The passage here has a strong resemblance to the one in Romans. If any man minister. διακονει. This may refer either, so far as the word is concerned, to the office of a deacon, or to any service which one renders to another. See 1Pet 4:10. The word commonly refers to service in general; to attendance on another, or to aid rendered to another; to the distribution of alms, etc. It seems probable that the word here does not refer to the office of a deacon as such, because the peculiarity of that office was to take charge of the poor of the church, and of the funds provided for them, (Acts 6:2,3;) but the apostle here says that they to whom he referred should "minister as of the ability which God giveth," which seems to imply that it was rather to distribute what was their own, than what was committed to them by the church. The word may refer to any aid which we reader to others in the church, as distributing alms, attending on the sick, etc. Rom 12:7,8. As of the ability which God giveth. In regard to property, talent, strength, influence, etc. This is the limit of all obligation, No one is bound to go beyond his ability; every one is required to come up to it. Comp. Mk 14:8, Lk 17:10. That God in all things may be glorified. That he may be honoured; to wit, by our doing all the good we can to others, and thus showing the power of his religion. 1Cor 10:31. Through Jesus Christ. That is, as the medium through whom all those holy influences come by which God is honoured. To whom. That is, to God; for he is the main subject of the sentence. The apostle says that in all things lie is to be glorified by us, and then adds in this doxology that he is worthy to be thus honoured. Comp. Rev 1:6; 2Ti 4:18. Many, however, suppose that the reference here is to the Son of God. That it would be true of him, and appropriate, Rom 9:5.

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Beloved, think it not strange. Do not consider it as anything which you had no reason to expect; as anything which may not happen to others also. Concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. Referring, doubtless, to some severe persecution which was then impending. We have not the means of determining precisely what this was. The word rendered fiery trial (πυρωσει) occurs only here and in Rev 18:9,18; in both of which latter places it is rendered burning. It means, properly, a being on fire, burning, conflagration; and then any severe trial. It cannot be demonstrated from this word that they were literally to suffer by fire, but it is clear that some heavy calamity was before them. As though some strange thing happened unto you. Something unusual; something which did not occur to others.

13 but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings. That is, sufferings of the same kind that he endured, and inflicted for the same reasons. Comp. Col 1:24, Jas 1:2; Mt 5:12. The meaning here is, that they were to regard it as a matter of rejoicing that they were identified with Christ, even in suffering. See this sentiment illustrated at length Php 3:10. That, when his glory shall be revealed. At the day of judgment. Mt 26:30. Ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. Being admitted to the rewards which he will then confer on his people. Comp. 1Thes 2:19. Every good man will have joy when, immediately at death, he is received into the presence of his Saviour; but his joy will be complete only when, in the presence of assembled worlds, he shall hear the sentence which shall confirm him in happiness for ever.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye;* for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye. That is, in his cause, or on his account. Mt 5:11. The sense of the word happy here is the same as blessed in Mt 5:3,4, etc. It means that they were to regard their condition or lot as a blessed one; not that they would

find personal and positive enjoyment on being reproached and vilified. It would be a blessed condition, because it would be like that of their Saviour; would show that they were his friends; would be accompanied with rich spiritual influences in the present world; and would be followed by the rewards of heaven. For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. The glorious and Divine Spirit. There is no doubt that there is reference here to the Holy Spirit; and the meaning is, that they might expect that that Spirit would rest upon them, or abide with them, if they were persecuted for the cause of Christ. There may be some allusion here, in the language, to the fact that the Spirit of God descended and abode on the Saviour at his baptism, (Jn 1:33;) and, in like manner, they might hope to have the same Spirit resting on them. The essential idea is, that, if they were called to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer, they would not be left or forsaken. They might hope that God would impart his Spirit to them in proportion to their sufferings in behalf of religion, and that they would have augmented joy and peace. This is doubtless the case with those who suffer persecution, and this is the secret reason why they are so sustained in their trials. Their persecutions are made the reason of a much more copious effusion of the Spirit on their souls. The same principle applies, doubtless, to all the forms of trial which the children of God pass through; and in sickness, bereavement, loss of property, disappointment in their worldly plans, and death itself, they may hope that larger measures of the Spirit's influences will rest upon them. Hence it is often gain to the believer to suffer. On their part. So far as they are concerned; or by them. He is evil spoken of. That is, the Holy Spirit. They only blaspheme him, (Greek;) they reproach his sacred influences by their treatment of you and your religion. But on your part he is glorified. By your manner of speaking of him, and by the honour done to him in the patience evinced in your trials, and in your purity of life.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

But let none of you suffer as a murderer. If you must be called to suffer, see that it be not for crime. Comp. 2Pet 3:14, 2Pet 3:17. They were to be careful that their sufferings were brought upon them only in consequence of their religion, and not because any crime could be laid to their charge. If even such charges were brought against them, there should be no pretext furnished for them by their lives. As an evil doer. As a wicked man; or as guilty of injustice and wrong

towards others. Or as a busy-body in other men's matters. The Greek word here used (αλλοτριοεπισκοπος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, an inspector of strange things, or of the things of others. Professor Robinson (Lex.) supposes that the word may refer to one who is "a director of heathenism;" but the more obvious signification, and the one commonly adopted, is that which occurs in our translation --one who busies himself with what does not concern him; that is, one who pries into the affairs of another; who attempts to control or direct them as if they were his own. In respect to the vice here condemned, Php 2:4. Comp. 2Thes 3:11, and 1Timm 5:13.

16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian. Because he is a Christian; if he is persecuted on account of his religion. This was often done, and they had reason to expect that it might occur in their own case. 2Pet 3:17. On the import of the word Christian, and the reasons why the name was given to the disciples of the Lord Jesus, Acts 11:26. Let him not be ashamed. (1.) Ashamed of religion so as to refuse to suffer on account of it. (2.) Ashamed that he is despised and maltreated. He is to regard his religion as every way honourable, and all that fairly results from it in time and eternity as in every respect desire able. He is not to be ashamed to be called a Christian; he is not to be ashamed of the doctrines taught by his religion; he is not to be ashamed of the Saviour whom he professes to love; he is not to be ashamed of the society and fellowship of those who are true Christians, poor and despised though they may be; he is not to be ashamed to perform any of the duties demanded by his religion; he is not to be ashamed to have his name cast out, and himself subjected to reproach and scorn. A man should be ashamed only of that which is wrong. He should glory in that which is right, whatever may be the consequences to himself. Christians now, though not subjected to open persecution, are frequently reproached by the world on account of their religion; and though the rack may not be employed, and the fires of martyrdom are not enkindled, yet it is often true that one who is a believer is called to "suffer as a Christian." He may be reviled and despised. His views may be regarded as bigoted, narrow, severe. Opprobrious epithets, on account of his opinions, may be applied to him. His former friends and companions may leave him because he has become a Christian. A wicked father, or a gay and

worldly mother, may oppose a child, or a husband may revile a wife, on account of their religion. In all these cases, the same spirit essentially is required which was enjoined on the early Christian martyrs. We are never to be ashamed of our religion, whatever results may follow from our attachment to it. Rom 1:16. But let him glorify God on this behalf. Let him praise God that he is deemed not unworthy to suffer in such a cause. It is a matter of thankfulness (1.) that they may have this evidence that they are true Christians; (2.) that they may desire the advantages which may result from suffering as Christ did, and in his cause. Acts 5:41, where the sentiment here expressed is fully illustrated. Comp. Php 3:10; Col 1:24.

17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

The time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God - God first visits his church, and that both in justice and mercy. What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel - How terribly will he visit them! The judgments which are milder at the beginning, grow more and more severe. But good men, having already sustained their part, are only spectators of the miseries of the wicked.

For the time is come. That is, this is now to be expected. There is reason to think that this trial will now occur, and there is a propriety that it should be made. Probably the apostle referred to some indications then apparent that this was about to take place.

That judgment must begin. The word judgment here (κρμα) seems to mean the severe trial which would determine character. It refers such calamities as would settle the question whether there was any religion, or would test the value of that which was professed. It was to "begin" at the house of God, or be applied to the church first, in order that the nature and worth of religion might be see. The reference is, doubtless, to some fearful calamity which would primarily fall on the "house of God;" that is, to some form of persecution which was to be let loose upon the church.

At the house of God. Benson, Bloomfield, and many others, suppose that this , refers to the Jews, and to the calamities that were to come

around the temple and the holy city about to be destroyed. But the more obvious reference is to Christians, spoken of as the house or family Of God. There is probably in the language here an allusion to Eze 9:6 "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; and begin at my sanctuary." Jer 25:29. But the language used here by the apostle does not denote literally the temple, or the Jews, but those who were in his time regarded as the people of God--Christians--the church. So the phrase () house of Jehovah is used to denote the family or people of God, Nu 12:7, Hoss 8:1. Comp. also 1Timm 3:15, 1Timm 3:15. The sense here is, therefore, that the series of calamities referred to were to commence with the church, or were to come first upon the people of God. Schoettgen here aptly quotes a passage from the writings of the Rabbins: "Punishments never come into the world unless the wicked are in it; but they do not begin, unless they commence first with the righteous."

And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel God? If God brings such trials upon us who have obeyed his gospel, what have we not reason to suppose he will bring upon those who are yet in their sins? And if we are selected first as the objects of this visitation, if there is that in us which requires such method of dealing, what are we to suppose will occur in the end with those who make no pretensions to religion, but are yet living in open transgression? The sentiment is, that if God deals thus strictly with his people; if there is that in them which makes the, visitations of his judgment proper on them, there is a certainty that they who are not his people, but who live in iniquity, will in the end be overwhelmed with the tokens of severer wrath. Their punishment hereafter will be certain; and who can tell what will be the measure of its severity? Every wicked man, when he sees the trials which God brings upon his own people, should tremble under the apprehension of the deeper calamity which will hereafter come upon himself. We may remark,

(1.) that the judgments which God brings upon his own people make it certain that the wicked will punished. If he does not spare his own people, why should he spare others?

(2.) The punishment of the wicked is merely delayed. It begins at the house, of God, Christians are tried, and are recalled from their

wanderings, and are prepared by discipline for: the heavenly world. The punishment of the wicked is often delayed to a future world, and in this life they have almost uninterrupted prosperity, but in the end it will be certain. Ps 73:1, seq. The punishment will come in the end. It cannot be evaded. Sooner or later justice requires that the wicked should be visited with the expressions of Divine displeasure on account of sin, and in the future world there will be ample time for the infliction of all the punishment which they deserve.

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

And if the righteous scarcely be saved. If they are saved with difficulty. The word here used (μολις) occurs in the following places: Acts 14:18, "scarce restrained they the people;" Acts 27:7, "and scarce were come over against Cnidus;" Acts 27:8, "and hardly passing it;" Acts 27:16, "we had much work to come by the boat"- literally, we were able with difficulty to get the boat; Rom 5:7, "scarcely for a righteous man will one die;" and in the passage before us. The word implies that there is some difficulty, or obstruction, so that the thing came very near not to happen, or so that there was much risk about it. Compare Lk 13:31. The apostle in this passage seems to have had his eye on a verse in Proverbs, (Prov 11:31,) and he has merely expanded and illustrated it: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." By the question which he employs, he admits that the righteous are saved with difficulty, or that there are perils which jeopard their salvation, and which are of such a kind as to make it very near not to happen. They would indeed be saved, but it would be in such a manner as to show that the circumstances were such as to render it, to human appearances, doubtful and problematical. This peril may have arisen from many circumstances:

(a.) The difficulty of forming a plan of salvation, involving a degree of wisdom wholly beyond that of man, and of such a character that beforehand it would have been problematical and doubtful whether it could be. There was but one way in which it could be done. But what human wisdom could have devised that, or thought of it? There was but one being who could save. But who would have supposed that the Son of God would have been willing to become a man, and to die on a cross to do it? If he had been unwilling to come and die, the righteous could not have been saved.

(b.) The difficulty of bringing those who are saved to a willingness to accept of salvation. All were disposed alike to reject it; and there were many obstacles in the human heart, arising from pride, and selfishness, and unbelief, and the love of sin, which must be overcome before any would accept of the offer of mercy. There was but one agent who could overcome these things, and induce any of the race to embrace the gospel--the Holy Spirit. But who could have anticipated that the Spirit of God would have undertaken to renew and sanctify the polluted human heart? Yet, if he had failed, there could have been no salvation for any.

(c.) The difficulty of keeping them from falling away amidst the temptations and allurements of the world. Often it seems to be wholly doubtful whether those who have been converted will be kept to eternal life. They have so little religion; they yield so readily to temptation; they conform so much to the world; they have so little strength to bear up under trials, that it seems as if there was no power to preserve them and bring them to heaven. They are saved when they seemed almost ready to yield everything.

(d.) The difficulty of rescuing them from the power of the great enemy of souls. The adversary has vast power, and he means, if he can, to destroy those who are the children of God. Often they are in most imminent danger, and it seems to be a question of doubtful issue whether they will not be entirely overcome, and perish. It is no small matter to rescue a soul from the dominion of Satan, and to bring it to heaven, so that it shall be eternally safe. Through the internal struggles and the outward conflicts of life, it seems often a matter of doubt whether with all their effort they will be saved; and when they are saved, they will feel that they have been rescued from thousands of dangers, and that there has been many a time when they have stood on the very verge of ruin, and when, to human appearances, it was scarcely possible that they could be saved. Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear! What hope is there of their salvation? The meaning is, that they would certainly perish; and the doctrine in the passage is, that the fact that the righteous are saved with so much difficulty is proof that the wicked will not be saved at all. This follows, because

(a.) there is the same difficulty in their salvation which there was in the salvation of those who became righteous; the same difficulty arising from the love of sin, the hardness of the heart, and the arts and power of the adversary.

(b.) No one can be saved without effort, and in fact the righteous are saved only by constant and strenuous effort on their part. But the wicked make no effort for their own salvation. They make use of no means for it; they put forth no exertions to obtain it; they do not make it a part of their plan of life. How, then, can they be saved? But where will they appear? I answer,

(a.) they will appear somewhere. They will not cease to exist when they pass away from this world. Not one of them will be annihilated; and though they vanish from the earth, and will be seen here no more, yet they will make their appearance in some other part of the universe.

(b.) They will appear at the judgment-seat, as all others will, to receive their sentence according to the deeds done in the body. It follows from this,

(1.) that the wicked will certainly be destroyed. If the righteous are scarcely saved, how can they be?

(2.) That there will be a state of future punishment, for this refers to what is to occur in the future world.

(3.) That the punishment of the wicked will be eternal, for it is the opposite of what is meant by saved. The time will never come when it will be said that they are saved! But if so, their punishment must be eternal!

19 Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God. That is, who endure the kind of sufferings that he, by his Providence, shall appoint. Comp. 1Pet 3:17, 4:15,16. Commit the keeping of their souls to him. Since there is so much danger; since there is no one else that can keep them; and since he is a Being so faithful, let them

commit all their interests to him. Comp. Ps 37:5. The word souls here (ψυχας) is equivalent to themselves. They were to leave everything in his hand, faithfully performing every duty, and not being anxious for the result. In well doing. Constantly doing good, or seeking to perform every duty in a proper manner. Their business was always to do right; the result was to be left with God. A man who is engaged always in well-doing, may safely commit all his interest to God. As unto a faithful Creator. God may be trusted, or confided in, in all his attributes, and in all the relations which he sustains as Creator, Redeemer, Moral Governor, and Judge. In these, and in all other respects, we may come before him with confidence, and put unwavering trust in him. As Creator particularly; as one who has brought us, and all creatures and things into being, we may be sure that he will be "faithful" to the design which he had in view. From that design he will never depart until it is fully accomplished. He abandons no purpose which he has formed, and we may be assured that he will faithfully pursue it to the end. As our Creator we may come to him, and look to him for his protection and care. He made us. He had a design in our creation. He so endowed us that we might live for ever, and so that we might honour and enjoy him. He did not create us that we might be miserable; nor does he wish that we should be. He formed us in such a way that, if we choose, we may be eternally happy. In that path in which he has appointed us to go, if we pursue it, we may be sure of his aid and protection. If we really aim to accomplish the purposes for which we were made, we may be certain that he will show himself to be a "faithful Creator;" one in whom we may always confide. And even though we have wandered from him, and have long forgotten why we were made, and have loved and served the creature more than the Creator, we may be sure, if we will return to him, that he will not forget the design for which he originally made us. As our Creator we may still confide in him. Redeemed by the blood of his Son, and renewed by his Spirit after the image of Him who created us, we may still go to him as our Creator, and may pray that even yet the high and noble ends for which we were made may be accomplished in us. Doing this, we shah find him as true to that purpose as though we had never sinned. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God. That is, who endure the kind of sufferings that he, by his Providence, shall appoint. Comp. 1Pet 3:17, 4:15,16. Commit the keeping of their souls to him. Since there is so much danger; since there is no one else that can keep them; and since he is a Being so faithful, let

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1 Peter-5

Tend the Flock of God

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and
a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory
that shall be revealed:

The elders which are among you I exhort. The word elder means, properly, one who is old; but it is frequently used in the New Testament as applicable to the officers of the church; probably because aged persons were at first commonly appointed to these offices. Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:2. There is evidently an allusion here to the fact that such persons were selected on account of their age, because in the following verses (1Pet 5:4, seq.) the apostle addresses particularly the younger. It is worthy of remark, that he here refers only to one class of ministers. He does not speak of three "orders," of "bishops, priests, and deacons;" and the evidence from the passage here is quite strong that there were no such orders in the churches of Asia Minor, to which this epistle was directed. It is also worthy of remark, that the word "exhort" is here used. The language which Peter uses is not that of stern and arbitrary command; it is that of kind and mild Christian exhortation. Phm 1:8, Phm 1:9.

Who am also an elder. Gr., "a fellow-presbyter," (συμπρεσβυτερος.) This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means that he was a co-presbyter with them; and he makes this one of the grounds of his exhortation to them. He does not put it on the ground of his apostolical authority; or urge it because he was the "vicegerent of Christ;" or because he was the head of the church; or because,he had any pre-eminence over others in any way. Would he have used this language if he had been the "head of the church" on earth? Would he if he supposed that the distinction between apostles and other ministers was to be perpetuated? Would he if he believed that there were to be distinct orders of clergy? The whole drift of this passage is adverse to such a supposition.

And a witness of the sufferings of Christ. Peter was indeed a witness of the sufferings of Christ when on his trial, and doubtless also when he was scourged and mocked, and when he was crucified. After his denial of his Lord, he wept bitterly, and evidently then followed him to the place where he was crucified, and, in company with others, observed with painful solicitude the last agonies of his Saviour. It is not, so far as I know, expressly said in the Gospels that Peter was present at the crucifixion of the Saviour; but it is said (Lk 23:49) that "all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things," and nothing is more probable than that Peter was among them. His warm attachment to his Master: and his recent bitter repentance for having denied him, would lead him to follow him to the place of his death; for after the painful act of denying him he would not be likely to expose himself to the charge of neglect, or of any want of love again. His own solemn declaration here makes it certain that he was present. He alludes to it now, evidently because it qualified him to exhort those whom he addressed. It would be natural to regard with peculiar respect one who had actually seen the Saviour in his last agony, and nothing would be more impressive than an exhortation falling from the lips of such a man. A son would be likely to listen with great respect to any suggestions which should be made by one who had seen his father or mother die. The impression which Peter had of that scene he would desire to have transferred to those whom he addressed, that by a lively view of the sufferings of their Saviour they might be excited to fidelity in his cause.

And a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Another reason to make his exhortation impressive and solemn. He felt that he was an heir of life. He was about to partake of the glories of heaven. Looking forward, as they did also, to the blessed world before him and them, he had a right to exhort them to the faithful performance of duty. Any one, who is himself an heir of salvation, may appropriately exhort his fellow-Christians to fidelity in the service of their common Lord.

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof,* not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Feed the flock of God. Discharge the duties of a shepherd towards the flock. On the word feed, Jn 21:15. It is a word which Peter would

be likely to remember, from the solemn manner in which the injunction to perform the duty was laid on him by the Saviour. The direction means to take such an oversight of the church as a shepherd is accustomed to take of his flock. Jn 10:1, seq.

Which is among you. Marg., as much as in you is. The translation in the text is the more correct. It means the churches which were among them, or over which they were called to preside.

Taking the oversight thereof--επισκοπουντες. The fair translation of this word is, discharging the episcopal office; and the word implies all that is ever implied by the word bishop in the New Testament. This idea should have been expressed in the translation. The meaning is not merely to take the oversight--for that might be done in a subordinate sense by any one in office; but it is to take such an oversight as is implied in the episcopate, or by the word bishop. The words episcopate, episcopal, and episcopacy, are merely the Greek word used here and its correlatives transferred to our language. The sense is that of overseeing; taking the oversight of; looking after, as of a flock; and the word has originally no reference to what is now spoken of as peculiarly the episcopal office. It is a word strictly applicable to any minister of religion, or officer of a church. In the passage before us this duty was to be performed by those who, in 1Pet 5:1, are called presbyters or elders; and this is one of the numerous passages in the New Testament which prove that all that is properly implied in the performance of the episcopal functions pertained to those who were called presbyters, or elders. If so, there was no higher grade of ministers to which the peculiar duties of the episcopate were to be intrusted; that is, there was no class of officers corresponding to those who are now called bishops. Comp. Acts 20:28. Not by constraint, but willingly. Not as if you felt that a heavy yoke was imposed on you, or a burden from which you would gladly be discharged. Go cheerfully to your duty as a work which you love, and act like a freeman in it, and not as a slave. Arduous as are the labours of the ministry, yet there is no work on earth in which a man can and should labour more cheerfully. Not for filthy lucre. Shameful or dishonourable gain. 1Timm 3:3.

But of a ready mind. Cheerfully, promptly. We are to labour in this work, not under the influence of the desire of gain, but from the promptings of love. There is all the difference conceivable between

one who does a thing because he is paid for it and one who does it from love--between, for example, the manner in which one attends on us when we are sick who loves us, and one who is merely hired to do it. Such a difference is there in the spirit with which one who is actuated by mercenary motives, and one whose heart is in the work, will engage in the ministry.

3 neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Neither as being lords. Marg., overruling. The word here used (κατακυριευω) is rendered exercise dominion over, in Mt 20:25; exercise lordship over, in Mk 10:42; and overcame, in Acts 19:16. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It refers properly to that kind of jurisdiction which civil rulers or magistrates exercise. This is an exercise of authority, as contradistinguished from the influence of reason, persuasion, and example. The latter pertains to the ministers of religion; the former is forbidden to them. Their dominion is not to be that of temporal lordship; it is to be that of love and truth. This command would prohibit all assumption of temporal power by the ministers of religion, and all conferring of titles of nobility on those who are preachers of the gospel. It needs scarcely to be said that it has been very little regarded in the church. Over God's heritage--τωνκληρων. Vulgate, in cleris--over the clergy. The Greek word here (κληρος--kleros) is that from which the word clergy has been derived; and some have interpreted it here as referring to the clergy, that is, to priests and deacons who are under the authority of a bishop. Such an interpretation, however, would hardly be adopted now. The word means properly,

(a.) a lot, die, anything used in determining chances;

(b.) a part or portion, such as is assigned by lot; hence

(c.) an office to which one is designated or appointed, by lot or otherwise; and

(d.) in general any possession or heritage, Acts 26:18, Col 1:12. The meaning here is, "not lording it over the possessions or the heritage of God." The reference is, undoubtedly, to the church, as that which is peculiarly his property; his own in the world. Whitby and others suppose that it refers to the possessions or property of the church;

Doddridge explains it--"not assuming dominion over those who fall to your lot," supposing it to mean that they were not to domineer over the particular congregations committed by Providence to their care. But the other interpretation is most in accordance with the usual meaning of the word.

But being ensamples to the flock. Examples. 1Timm 4:12. Peter has drawn here with great beauty, the appropriate character of the ministers of the gospel, and described the spirit with which they should be actuated in the discharge of the duties of their office. But how different it is from the character of many who have claimed to be ministers of religion; and especially how different from that corrupt communion which professes in a special manner to recognise Peter as the head, and the vicegerent of Christ. It is well remarked by Benson on this passage, that "the church of Rome could not well have acted more directly contrary to this injunction of St. Peter's if she had studied to disobey it, and to form herself upon a rule that should be the reverse of this."

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown
of glory that fadeth not away.

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you*
be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God
resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear. The prince of the pastors--the Lord Jesus Christ. "Peter, in the passage above, ranks himself with the elders; here he ranks Christ himself with the pastors."--Benson. 1Pet 2:25. Comp. Heb 13:20. Ye shall receive a crown of glory. A glorious crown or diadem. Comp. 2Ti 4:8. That fadeth not away. This is essentially the same word, though somewhat different in form, which occurs in 1Pet 1:4. 1Pet 1:4. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Comp. 1Cor 9:25.

Likewise, ye younger. All younger persons of either sex. Submit yourselves unto the elder. That is, with the respect due to their age, and to the offices which they sustain. There is here, probably, a particular reference to those who sustained the office of elders or teachers, as the same word is used here which occurs in 1Pet 5:1. As there was an allusion in that verse, by the use of the word, to age, so there is in this verse to the fact that they sustained an office in the church. The general duty, however, is here implied, as it is

everywhere in the Bible, that all suitable respect is to be shown to the aged. Comp. Lev 19:32, 1Timm 5:1, Acts 23:4, 2Pet 2:9. Yea, all of you be subject one to another. In your proper ranks and relations. You are not to attempt to lord it over one another, but are to treat each other with deference and respect. Eph 5:21; Php 2:3. And be clothed with humility. The word here rendered be clothed (εγκομβοομαι) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from κομβος--a strip, string, or loop to fasten a garment; and then the word refers to a garment that was fastened with strings. The word εγκομβωμα (egkomboma) refers particularly to a long white apron, or outer garment, that was commonly worn by slaves. See Rob. Lex. Passow Lex. There is, therefore, peculiar force in the use of this word here, as denoting an humble mind. They were to be willing to take any place, and to perform any office, however humble, in order to serve and benefit others. They were not to assume a style and dignity of state and authority, as if they would lord it over others, or as if they were better than others; but they were to be willing to occupy any station, however humble, by which they might honour God. It is known that not a few of the early Christians actually sold themselves as slaves, in order that they might preach the gospel to those who were in bondage. The sense here is, they were to put on humility as a garment bound fast to them, as a servant bound fast to him the apron that was significant of his station. Comp. Col 3:13. It is not unusual in the Scriptures, as well as in other writings, to compare the virtues with articles of apparel; as that with which we are clothed, or in which we are seen by others. Comp. Isa 11:5, 59:17. For God resisteth the proud, etc. This passage is quoted from the Greek translation in Prov 3:34. See it explained in the Jas 4:6, where it is also quoted.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Humble yourselves therefore. Be willing to take a low place--a place such as becomes you. Do not arrogate to yourselves what does not belong to you; do not evince pride and haughtiness in your manner; do not exalt yourselves above others. Lk 14:7, seq. Comp. Prov 15:33, 18:12, 22:4, Mic 6:8; Php 2:8. Under the mighty hand of God. This refers probably to the calamities which he had brought upon them, or was about to bring upon them; represented here, as often elsewhere, as the infliction of his hand--the hand being that by which we accomplish anything. When that hand was upon them they were

not to be lifted up with pride and with a spirit of rebellion, but were to take a lowly place before him, and submit to him with a calm mind, believing that he would exalt them in due time. There is no situation in which one will be more likely to feel humility than in scenes of affliction. That he may exalt you in due time. When he shall see it to be a proper time.

(1.) They might be assured that this would be done at some time. He would not always leave them in this low and depressed condition. He would take off his heavy hand, and raise them up from their state of sadness and suffering.

(2.) This would be in due time; that is, in the proper time, in the best time.

(a.) It might be in the present life.

(b.) It would certainly be in the world to come. There they would be exalted to honours which will be more than an equivalent for all the persecution, poverty, and contempt which are suffered in this world. He may well afford to be humble here who is to be exalted to a throne in heaven.

7 casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Casting all your care upon him. Comp. Ps 55:22, from whence this passage was probably taken. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved," Compare, for a similar sentiment, Mt 6:25-30. The meaning is, that we are to commit our whole cause to him. If we suffer heavy trials; if we lose our friends, health, or property; if we have arduous and responsible duties to perform; if we feel that we have no strength, and are in danger of being crushed by what is laid upon us, we may go and cast all upon the Lord; that is, we may look to him for grace and strength, and feel assured that he will enable us to sustain all that is laid upon us. The relief in the case will be as real, and as full of consolation, as if he took the burden and bore it himself. He will enable us to bear with ease what we supposed we could never have done; and the burden which he lays upon us will be light, Mt 11:30. Php 4:6,7. For he careth for you. Mt 10:29, seq. He is not like the gods worshipped by many of the heathen, who were supposed to be so exalted, and so distant, that they did not

interest themselves in human affairs; but He condescends to regard the wants of the meanest of his creatures. It is one of the glorious attributes of the true God, that he can and will thus notice the wants of the mean as well as the mighty; and one of the richest of all consolations when we are afflicted, and are despised by the world, is the thought that we are not forgotten by our heavenly Father. He who remembers the failing sparrow, and who hears the young ravens when they cry, will not be unmindful of us. "Yet the Lord thinketh on me," was the consolation of David, when he felt that he was "poor and needy," Ps 40:17. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Ps 27:10. Comp. Isa 49:15. What more can one wish than to be permitted to feel that the great and merciful Jehovah thinks on him? What are we--what have we done, that should be worthy of such condescension? Remember, poor, despised, afflicted child of God, that you will never be forgotten. Friends on earth, the. great, the gay, the noble, the rich, may forget you; God never will. Remember that you will never be entirely neglected. Father, mother, neighbour, friend, those whom you have loved, and those to whom you have done good, may neglect you, but God never will. You may become poor, and they may pass by you; you may lose your office, and flatterers may no longer throng your path; your beauty may fade, and your admirers may leave you; you may grow old, and be infirm, and appear to be useless in the world, and no one may seem to care for you; but it is not thus with the God whom you serve. When he loves, he always loves; if he regarded you with favour when you were rich, he will not forget you when you are poor; he who watched over you with a parent's care in the bloom of youth, will not cast you off when you are "old and grey-headed," Ps 71:18. If we are what we should be, we shall never be without a friend as long as there is a God.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Be sober. While you cast your cares upon God, and have no anxiety on that score, let your solicitude be directed to another point. Do not doubt that he is able and willing to support and befriend you, but be watchful against your foes. See the word used here fully explained in 1Thes 5:6. Be vigilant. This word (γρηγορεω) is everywhere else in the New Testament rendered watch. See Mt 24:42,43, 25:13, 26:38,40,41. It means that we should exercise careful circumspection, as one does when he is in danger, in reference to the

matter here referred to, it means that we are to be on our guard against the wiles and the power of the evil one.

Your adversary the devil. Your enemy; he who is opposed to you. Satan opposes man in his best interests. He resists his efforts to do good; his purposes to return to God; his attempts to secure his own salvation. There is no more appropriate appellation that can be given to him than to say that he resists all our efforts to obey God and to secure the salvation of our own souls. As a roaring lion. Comp. Rev 12:12. Sometimes Satan is represented as transforming himself into an angel of light, (2Cor 11:14;) and sometimes, as here, as a roaring lion: denoting the efforts which he makes to alarm and overpower us. The lion here is not the crouching lion-the lion stealthfully creeping towards his foe--but it is the raging monarch of the woods, who by his terrible roar would intimidate all so that they might become an easy prey. The particular thing referred to here, doubtless, is persecution, resembling in its terrors a roaring lion. When error comes in; when seductive arts abound; when the world allures and charms, the representation of the character of the foe is not of the roaring lion, but of the silent influence of an enemy that has clothed himself in the garb of an angel of light, 2Cor 11:14. Walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. "Naturalists have observed that a lion roars when he is roused with hunger, for then he is most fierce, and most eagerly seeks his prey. See Jud 14:5, Ps 22:13; Jer 2:15, Eze 22:25, Hoss 11:10, Zeph 3:3, Zech 11:3."--Benson.

9 whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Whom resist. Jas 4:7. You are in no instance to yield to him, but are in all forms to stand up and oppose him. Feeble in yourselves, you are to confide in the arm of God. No matter in what form of terror he approaches, you are to fight manfully the fight of faith. Comp. Eph 6:10, seq. Stedfast in the faith. Confiding in God. You are to rely on him alone, and the means of successful resistance are to be found in the resources of faith. Eph 6:16. Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. Comp. for a similar sentiment, 1Cor 10:13. The meaning is, that you should be encouraged to endure your trials by the fact that your fellow-Christians suffer the same things. This consideration might furnish consolation to them in their trials in the following ways:

(1.) They would feel that they were suffering only the common lot of Christians. There was no evidence that God was peculiarly angry with them, or that he had in a peculiar manner forsaken them.

(2.) The fact that others were enabled to bear their trials should be an argument to prove to them that they would also be able. If they looked abroad, and saw that others were sustained, and were brought off triumphant, they might be assured that this would be the case with them.

(3.) There would be the support derived from the fact that they were not alone in suffering. We can bear pain more easily if we feel that we are not alone--that it is the common lot--that we are in circumstances where we may have sympathy from others. This remark may be of great practical value to us in view of persecutions, trials, and death. The consideration suggested here by Peter to sustain those whom he addressed, in the trials of persecution, may be applied now to sustain and comfort us in every form of apprehended or real calamity. We are all liable to suffering. We are exposed to sickness, bereavement, death. We often feel as if we could not bear up under the sufferings that may be before us, and especially do we dread the great trial--DEATH. It may furnish us some support and consolation to remember,

(1.) that this is the common lot of men. There is nothing peculiar in our case. It proves nothing as to the question whether we are accepted of God, and are beloved by him, that we suffer; for those whom he has loved most have been often among the greatest sufferers. We often think that our sufferings are peculiar; that there have been none like them. Yet, if we knew all, we should find that thousands--and among them the most wise, and pure, and good--have endured sufferings of the same kind as ours, and perhaps far more intense in degree.

(2.) Others have been conveyed triumphantly through their trials. We have reason to hope and to believe that we shall also, for

(a.) our trials have been no greater than theirs have been; and

(b.) their natural strength was no greater than ours. Many of them were timid, and shrinking, and trembling, and felt that they had no strength, and that they should fail under the trial.

(3.) The grace which sustained them can sustain us. The hand of God is not shortened that it cannot save; his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. His power is as great, and his grace is as fresh, as it was when the first sufferer was supported by him; and that Divine strength which supported David and Job in their afflictions, and the apostles and martyrs in theirs, is just as powerful as it was when they applied to God to be upheld in their sorrows.

(4.) We are especially fearful of death--fearful that our faith will fail, and that we shall be left to die without support or consolation. Yet let us remember that death is the common lot of man. Let us remember who have died--tender females; children; the timid and the fearful; those, in immense multitudes, who had no more strength by nature than we have. Let us think of our own kindred who have died. A wife has died, and shall a husband be afraid to die? A child, and shall a father? A sister, and shall a brother? It does much to take away the dread of death, to remember that a mother has gone through the dark valley; that that gloomy vale has been trod by delicate, and timid, and beloved sisters. Shall I be afraid to go where they have gone? Shall I apprehend that I shall find no grace that is able to sustain me where they have found it? Must the valley of the shadow of death be dark and gloomy to me, when they found it to be illuminated with the opening light of heaven? Above all, it takes away the fear of death when I remember that my Saviour has experienced all the horrors which can ever be in death; that he has slept in the tomb, and made it a hallowed resting-place.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.

But the God of all grace. The God who imparts all needful grace. It was proper in their anticipated trials to direct them to God, and to breathe forth in their behalf an earnest and affectionate prayer that they might be supported. A prayer of this kind by an apostle would also be to them a sort of pledge or assurance that the needed grace would be granted them. Who hath called us unto his eternal glory. And who means, therefore, that we shall be saved. As he has called

us to his glory, we need not apprehend that he will leave or forsake us. On the meaning of the word called, Eph 4:1. After that ye have suffered a while. After you have suffered as long as he shall appoint. The Greek is, "having suffered a little," and may refer either to time or degree. In both respects the declaration concerning afflictions is true. They are short, compared with eternity; they are light, compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2Cor 4:16, seq. Make you perfect. By means of your trials. The tendency of affliction is to make us perfect. Stablish. The Greek word means to set fast; to fix firmly; to render immovable, Lk 16:26, 9:61, 22:32, Rom 1:11, 16:25 1Thes 3:2,13, et al. Strengthen Give you strength to bear all this. Settle you. Literally, found you, or establish you on a firm foundation--θεμελιωσει. The allusion is to a house which is so firmly fixed on a foundation that it will not be moved by winds or floods. Comp, Mt 7:24, seq.

11 To him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

13 The *church that is* at Babylon, elected together with *you,* saluteth you; and *so doth* Mark my son.

14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity.
Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The Second Epistle Of Peter
[2 Peter]

2 Peter-1

Salutation

1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the
righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

To them that have obtained like precious faith with us. With us who are of Jewish origin. This epistle was evidently written to the same persons as the former, and that was intended to embrace many who were of Gentile origin. 1Pet 1:1 The apostle addresses them all now, whatever was their origin, as heirs of the common faith, and as in all respects brethren.

Through the righteousness of God. Through the method of justification which God has adopted. See this fully explained in Rom 1:17. God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Marg., our God and Saviour. The Greek will undoubtedly bear the construction given in the margin; and if this be the true rendering, it furnishes an argument for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Bishop Middleton, Slade, Valpy, Bloomfield, and others, contend that this is the true and proper rendering. It is doubted, however, by Wetstein, Grotius, and others. Erasmus supposes that it may be taken in either sense. The construction, though certainly not a violation of the laws of the Greek language, is not so free from all doubt as to make it proper to use the passage as a proof-text in an argument for the divinity of the Saviour. It is easier to prove the doctrine from other texts that are plain, than to show that this must be the meaning here.

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God,
and of Jesus our Lord.

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. That is, grace and peace abound to us, or may be expected to be conferred on us abundantly, if we

have a true knowledge of' God and of the Saviour. Such a knowledge constitutes true religion: for in that we find grace--the grace that pardons and sanctifies; and peace--peace of conscience, reconciliation with God, and calmness in the trials of life. Jn 7:3.

According as his divine power hath given unto us. All the effects of the gospel on the human heart are, in the Scriptures, traced to the power of God. Rom 1:16. There are no moral means which have ever been used that have such power as the gospel; none through which God has done so much in changing the character and affecting the destiny of man. All things that pertain unto life and godliness. The reference here in the word life is undoubtedly to the life of religion; the life of the soul imparted by the gospel. The word godliness is synonymous with piety. The phrase "according as" (ως) seems to be connected with the sentence in 2Pet 1:5, "Forasmuch as he has conferred on us these privileges and promises connected with life and godliness, we are bound, in order to obtain all that is implied in these things, to give all diligence to add to our faith, knowledge," etc. Through the knowledge of him. By a proper acquaintance with him, or by the right kind of knowledge of him. Jn 17:3.

That hath called us to glory and virtue. Margin, by. Greek, "through glory," etc. Doddridge supposes that it means that he has done this "by the strengthening virtue and energy of his spirit." Rosenmuller renders it, "by glorious benignity." Dr. Robinson (Lex.) renders it, "through a glorious display of his efficiency." The objection which any one feels to this rendering arises solely from the word virtue, from the fact that we are not accustomed to apply that word to God. But the original word (αρετη) is not as limited in its signification as the English word is, but is rather a word which denotes a good quality or excellence of any kind. In the ancient classics it is used to denote manliness, vigour, courage, valour, fortitude; and the word would rather denote energy or power of some kind, than what we commonly understand by virtue, and would be, therefore, properly applied to the energy or efficiency which God has displayed in the work of our salvation. Indeed, when applied to moral excellence at all, as it is in 1Pet 1:5 of this chapter, and often elsewhere, it is perhaps with a reference to the energy, boldness, rigour, or courage which is evinced in

overcoming our evil propensities, and resisting allurements and temptations. According to this interpretation, the passage teaches that it is by a glorious Divine efficiency that we are called into the kingdom of God.

Make Your Calling and Election Sure

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Whereby. διων. "Through which"--in the plural number, referring either to the glory and virtue in the previous verse, and meaning that it was by that glorious Divine efficiency that these promises were given; or, to all the things mentioned in the previous verse, meaning that it was through those arrangements, and in order to their completion, that these great and glorious promises were made. The promises given are in connexion with the plan of securing "life and godliness," and are a part of the gracious arrangements for that object. Exceeding great and precious promises. A promise is an assurance on the part of another of some good for which we are dependent on him. It implies,

(1.) that the thing is in his power;

(2.) that he may bestow it or not, as he pleases;

(3.) that we cannot infer from any process of reasoning that it is his purpose to bestow it on us

(4.) that it is a favour which we can obtain only from him, and not by any independent effort of our own. The promises here referred to are those which pertain to salvation. Peter had in his eye probably all that then had been revealed which contemplated the salvation of the people of God. They are called "exceeding great and precious," because of their value in supporting and comforting the soul, and of the honour and felicity which they unfold to us.

The promises referred to are doubtless those which are made in connexion with the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, for there are no other promises made to man. They refer to the pardon of sin; strength, comfort, and support in trial; a glorious resurrection; and a happy immortality. If we look at the greatness and glory of the objects, we shall see that the promises are in fact exceedingly precious; or if we look at their influence in supporting and elevating the soul, we shall have as distinct a view of their value. The promise goes beyond our reasoning powers; enters a field which we could not otherwise penetrate--the distant future; and relates to what we could not otherwise obtain. All that we need in trial, is the simple promise of God that he will sustain us; all that we need in the hour of death, is the assurance of our God that we shall be happy for ever. What would this world be without a promise? How impossible to penetrate the future! How dark that which is to come would be! How bereft we should be of consolation! The past has gone, and its departed joys and hopes can never be recalled to cheer us again; the present may be an hour of pain, and sadness, and disappointment, and gloom, with perhaps not a ray of comfort; the future only opens fields of happiness to our vision, and everything there depends on the will of God, and all that we can know of it is from his promises. Cut off from these, we have no way either of obtaining the blessings which we desire, or of ascertaining that they can be ours. For the promises of God, therefore, we should be in the highest degree grateful, and in the trials of life we should cling to them with unwavering confidence as the only things which can be an anchor to the soul. That by these. Greek, "through these." That is, these constitute the basis of your hopes of becoming partakers of the divine nature. Comp. 2Cor 7:1. Partakers of the divine nature. This is a very important and a difficult phrase. An expression somewhat similar occurs in Heb 2:10, "That we might be partakers of his holiness." Heb 2:10. In regard to the language here used, it may be observed,

(1.) that it is directly contrary to all the notions of Pantheism --or the belief that all things are now God, or a part of God--for it is said that the object of the promise is, that we "may become partakers of the divine nature," not that we are now.

(2.) It can not be taken in so literal a sense as to mean that we can ever partake of the divine essence, or that we shall be absorbed into the divine nature so as to lose our individuality. This idea is held by the Budhists; and the perfection of being is supposed by them to consist in such absorption, or in losing their own individuality, and their ideas of happiness are graduated by the approximation which may be made to that state. But this cannot be the meaning here, because

(a.) it is in the nature of the case impossible. There must be for ever an essential difference between a created and an uncreated mind.

(b.) This would argue that the Divine Mind is not perfect. If this absorption was necessary to the completeness of the character and happiness of the Divine Being, then he was imperfect before; if before perfect, he would not be after the absorption of an infinite number of finite and imperfect minds.

(c.) In all the representations of heaven in the Bible, the idea of individuality is one that is prominent. Individuals are represented everywhere as worshippers there, and there is no intimation that the separate existence of the redeemed is to be absorbed and lost in the essence of the Deity. Whatever is to be the condition of man hereafter, he is to have a separate and individual existence, and the number of intelligent beings is never to be diminished either by annihilation, or by their being united to ally other spirit so that they shall become one. The reference then, in this place, must be to the moral nature of God; and the meaning is, that they who are renewed become participants of the same moral nature; that is, of the same views, feelings, thoughts, purposes, principles of action. Their nature as they are born, is sinful, and prone to evil, (Eph 2:3;) their nature as they are born again, becomes like that of God. They are made like God; and this resemblance will increase more and more for ever, until in a much higher sense than can be true in this world, they may be said to have become "partakers of the divine nature." Let us remark, then,

(a.) that man only, of all the dwellers on the earth, is capable of rising to this condition. The nature of all the other orders of

creatures here below is incapable of any such transformation that it can be said that they become "partakers of the divine nature."

(b.) It is impossible now to estimate the degree of approximation to which man may yet rise towards God, or the exalted sense in which the term may yet be applicable to him; but the prospect before the believer in this respect is most glorious. Two or three circumstances may be referred to here as mere hints of what we may yet be:

(1.) Let any one reflect on the amazing advances made by himself since the period of infancy. But a few, very few years ago, he knew nothing. He was in his cradle, a poor, helpless infant. He knew not the use of eyes, or ears, or hands, or feet. He knew not the name or use of anything, not even the name of father or mother, he could neither walk, nor talk, nor creep. He knew not even that a candle would burn him if he put his finger there. He knew not how to grasp or hold a rattle, or what was its sound, or whence that sound or any other sound came. Let him think what he is at twenty, or forty, in comparison with this; and then, if his improvement in every similar number of years hereafter should be equal to this, who can tell the height to which he will rise?

(2.) We are here limited in our powers of learning about God or his works. We become acquainted with him through his works--by means of the senses. But by the appointment of this method of becoming acquainted with the external world, the design seems to have been to accomplish a double work quite contradictory --one to help us, and the other to hinder us. One is to give us the means of communicating with the external world--by the sight, the hearing, the smell, the touch, the taste; the other is to shut us out from the external world, except by these. The body is a casement, an enclosure, a prison in which the soul is incarcerated, from which we can look out on the universe only through these organs. But suppose, as may be the case in a future state, there shall be no such enclosure, and that the whole soul may look directly on the works of God--on spiritual existences, on God himself--who can then calculate the height to which man may attain in becoming a "partaker of the divine nature?"

(3.) We shall have an eternity before us to grow in knowledge, and in holiness, and in conformity to God. Here, we attempt to climb the hill of knowledge, and having gone a few steps--while the top is still lost in the clouds--we lie down and die. We look at a few things; become acquainted with a few elementary principles; make a little progress in virtue, and then all our studies and efforts are suspended, and "we fly away." In the future world we shall have an eternity before us to make progress in knowledge, and virtue, and holiness, uninterrupted; and who can tell in what exalted sense it may yet be true that we shall be "partakers of the divine nature," or what attainments we may yet make? Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. The world is full of corruption. It is the design of the Christian plan of redemption to deliver us from that, and to make us holy; and the means by which we are to be made like God, is by rescuing us from its dominion.

5 And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;

And beside this. καιαυτοτουτο. Something here is necessary to be understood in order to complete the sense. The reference is to 2Pet 1:3; and the connexion is, "since (2Pet 1:3) God has given us these exalted privileges and hopes, in respect to this, (κατα or δια being understood,) or as a consequence fairly flowing from this, we ought to give all diligence that we may make good use of these advantages, and secure as high attainments as we possibly can. We should add one virtue to another, that we may reach the highest possible elevation in holiness."

Giving all diligence. Greek, "Bringing in all zeal or effort." The meaning is, that we ought to make this a distinct and definite object, and to apply ourselves to it as a thing to be accomplished.

Add to your faith virtue. It is not meant in this verse and the following that we are to endeavour particularly to add these things one to another in the order in which they are specified, or that we are to seek first to have faith, and then to add to that virtue, and then to add knowledge to virtue rather than to faith, etc. The order

in which this is to be done, the relation which one of these things may have to another, is not the point aimed at; nor are we to suppose that any other order of the words would not have answered the purpose of the apostle as well, or that any one of the virtues specified would not sustain as direct a relation to any other, as the one which he has specified. The design of the apostle is to say, in an emphatic manner, that we are to strive to possess and exhibit all these virtues; in other words, we are not to content ourselves with a single grace, but are to cultivate all the virtues, and to endeavour to make our piety complete in all the relations which we sustain. The essential idea in the passage before us seems to be, that in our religion we are not to be satisfied with one virtue, or one class of virtues, but that there is to be

(1.) a diligent CULTIVATION of our virtues, since the graces of religion are as susceptible of cultivation as any other virtues;

(2.) that there is to be PROGRESS made from one virtue to another, seeking to reach the highest possible point in our religion; and,

(3.) that there is to be an ACCUMULATION of virtues and graces-or we are not to be satisfied with one class, or with the attainments which we can make in one class. We are to endeavour to add on one after another until we have become possessed of all. Faith, perhaps, is mentioned first, because that is the foundation of all Christian virtues; and the other virtues are required to be added to that, because, from the place which faith occupies in the plan of justification, many might be in danger of supposing that if they had that they had all that was necessary. Comp. Jas 2:14, seq. In the Greek word rendered "add," (επιχορηγησατε,) there is an allusion to a chorus-leader among the Greeks, and the sense is well expressed by Doddridge: "Be careful to accompany that belief with all the lovely train of attendant graces." Or, in other words, "let faith lead on as at the head of the choir or the graces, and let all the others follow in their order." The word here rendered virtue is the same which is used in 2Pet 1:3; and there is included in it, probably, the same general idea which was noticed there. All the

things which the apostle specifies, unless knowledge be an exception, are virtues in the sense in which that word is commonly used; and it can hardly be supposed that the apostle here meant to use a general term which would include all of the others. The probability is, therefore, that by the word here he has reference to the common meaning of the Greek word, as referring to manliness, courage, rigour, energy; and the sense is, that he wished them to evince whatever firmness or courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected. True virtue is not a tame and passive thing. It requires great energy and boldness, for its very essence is firmness, manliness, and independence. And to virtue knowledge. The knowledge of God and of the way of salvation through the Redeemer, 2Pet 2:3. Comp. 2Pet 3:8. It is the duty of every Christian to make the highest possible attainments in knowledge.

6 and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness;

And to knowledge temperance. On the meaning of the word temperance, Acts 24:25, and 1Cor 9:25. The word here refers to the mastery over all our evil inclinations and appetites. We are to allow none of them to obtain control over us. 1Cor 6:12. This would include, of course, abstinence from intoxicating drinks; but it would also embrace all evil passions and propensities. Everything is to be confined within proper limits, and to no propensity of our nature are we to give indulgence beyond the limits which the law of God allows. And to temperance patience. Jas 1:4. And to patience godliness. True piety. 1Pet 1:3. 1Timm 2:2; 1Timm 3:16; 1Timm 4:7, 1Timm 4:8; 1Timm 6:3, 1Timm 6:5, 1Timm 6:6 1Timm 6:11.

7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

And to godliness brotherly kindness. Love to Christians as such. Jn 13:34; Heb 13:1. And to brotherly kindness charity. Love to all mankind. There is to be a peculiar affection for Christians as of the same family; there is to be a true and warm love, however, for all the race. 1Cor 13:1, seq.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For if these things be in you, and abound. If they are in you in rich abundance; if you are eminent for these things. They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful. They will show that you are not barren or unfruitful. The word rendered barren, is, in the margin, idle. The word idle more accurately expresses the sense of the original. The meaning is, that if they evinced these things, it would show

(1.) that they were diligent in cultivating the Christian graces, and

(2.) that it was not a vain thing to attempt to grow in knowledge and virtue. Their efforts would be followed by such happy results as to be an encouragement to exertion. In nothing is there, in fact, more encouragement than in the attempt to become eminent in piety. On no other efforts does God smile more propitiously that on the attempt to secure the salvation of the soul and to do good. A small part of the exertions which men put forth to become rich, or learned, or celebrated for oratory or heroism, would secure the salvation of the soul. In the former, also, men often fail; in the latter, never.

To encourage Christians to grow and improve in the fore-mentioned virtues and graces, our apostle here lays before us, 1. The great advantage of such a proficiency and growth; If these things be in you and abound, that is, the fore-mentioned graces, they will both cause you, and evidence you not to be barren and unfruitful in your profession of Christianity and faith in Christ: the exercises of divine graces are the best evidenves of our being made partakers of the divine nature.

Observe, 2. The miserable state of those whose faith is not fruitful in good works; He that lacketh these things, that is, who doth not live in the exercise of the afore-mentioned graces, is spiritually blind, and really destitute of that knowledge which he pretends to, blinded by his passions and lusts, and sensual affections, and sees not the great end and design of Christianity, forgetting that in baptism he solemnly vowed all this, and that he was sacramentally washed from his old sins.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

But he that lacketh these things is blind. He has no clear views of the nature and the requirements of religion. And cannot see afar off. The word used here, which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, (μυωπαζω,) means to shut the eyes; i.e., to contract the eyelids, to blink, to twinkle, as one who cannot see clearly, and hence to be near-sighted. The meaning here is, that he is like one who has an indistinct vision; one who can see only the objects that are near him, but who has no correct apprehension of objects that are more remote. He sees but a little way into the true nature and design of the gospel, he does not take those large and clear views which would enable him to comprehend the whole system at a glance. And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. He does not remember the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has been devised to purify the heart, and that he has been so far brought under the power of that system as to have his sins forgiven. If he had any just view of that, he would see that he was under obligation to make as high attainments as possible, and to cultivate to the utmost extent the Christian graces.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence. 2Pet 1:5. "In view of these things, give the greater diligence to secure your salvation." The considerations on which Peter based this appeal seem to have been the fact that such promises are made to us, and such hopes held out before us; the degree of uncertainty thrown over the whole matter of our personal salvation by low attainments in the divine life, and the dreadful condemnation which will ensue if in the end it shall be found that we are destitute of all real piety. The general thought is, that religion is of sufficient importance to claim our highest diligence, and to arouse us to the most earnest efforts to obtain the assurance of salvation.

To make your calling and election sure. On the meaning of the word calling, Eph 4:1. On the meaning of the word election, Rom 9:11; 1Thes 1:4; Comp. Eph 1:5. The word rendered election here,

(εκλογη) occurs only in this place and in Acts 9:15, Rom 9:11; 11:5 Rom 11:7,28, 1Thes 1:4; though corresponding words from the same root denoting the elect, to elect, to choose, frequently occur. The word here used means election, referring to the act of God, by which those who are saved are chosen to eternal life. As the word calling must refer to the act of God, so the word election must; for it is God who both calls and chooses those who shall be saved. The word in the Scriptures usually refers to the actual choosing of those who shall be saved; that is, referring to the time when they, in fact, become the children of God, rather than to the purpose of God that it shall be done; but still there must have been an eternal purpose, for God makes no choice which he did not always intend to make. The word sure, means firm, steadfast, secure, (βεβαιαν). Here the reference must be to themselves; that is, they were so to act as to make it certain to themselves that they had been chosen, and were truly called into the kingdom of God. It cannot refer to God, for no act of theirs could make it more certain on his part, if they had been actually chosen to eternal life. Still, God everywhere treats men as moral agents; and what may be absolutely certain in his mind from the mere purpose that it shall be so, is to be made certain to us only by evidence, and in the free exercise of our own powers. The meaning here is, that they were to obtain such evidences of personal piety as to put the question whether they were called and chosen, so far as their own minds were concerned, to rest; or so as to have undoubted evidence on this point. The Syriac, the Vulgate, and some Greek manuscripts, insert here the expression "by your good works;" that is, they were to make their calling sure by their good works, or by holy living. This clause, as Calvin remarks, is not authorized by the best authority, but it does not materially affect the sense. It was undoubtedly by their "good works" in the sense of holy living, or of lives consecrated to the service of God, that they were to obtain the evidence that they were true Christians; that is, that they had been really called into the kingdom of God, for there is nothing else on which we can depend for such evidence. God has given no assurance to us by name that he intends to save us. We can rely on no voice, or vision, or new revelation, to prove that it is so. No internal feeling of itself, no raptures, no animal excitement, no confident persuasion in our own minds that we are elected, can be proof in the case; and the only certain evidence on which we can

rely is that which is found in a life of sincere piety. In view of the important statement of Peter in this verse, then, we may remark,

(1.) that he believed in the doctrine of election, for he uses language which obviously implies this, or such as they are accustomed to use who believe the doctrine.

(2.) The fact that God has chosen those who shall be saved, does not make our own efforts unnecessary to make that salvation sure to us. It can be made sure to our own minds only by our own exertions; by obtaining evidence that we are in fact the children of God. There can be no evidence that salvation will be ours, unless there is a holy life; that is, unless there is true religion. Whatever may be the secret purpose of God in regard to us, the only evidence that we have that we shall be saved is to be found in the fact that we are sincere Christians, and are honestly endeavouring to do his will.

(3.) It is possible to make our calling and election sure; that is, to have such evidence on the subject that the mind shall be calm, and that there will be no danger of deception. If we can determine the point that we are in fact true Christians, that settles the matter--for then the unfailing promise of God meets us that we shall be saved. In making our salvation sure to our own minds, if we are in fact true Christians, we have not to go into an argument to prove that we have sufficient strength to resist temptation, or that we shall be able in any way to keep ourselves. All that matter is settled by the promise of God, that if we are Christians we shall be kept by him to salvation. The only question that is to be settled is, whether we are in fact true Christians, and all beyond that may be regarded as determined immutably. But assuredly it is possible for a man to determine the question whether he is or is not a true Christian.

(4.) If it can be done, it should be. Nothing is more important for us to do than this; and to this great inquiry we should apply our minds with unfaltering diligence, until by the grace of God we can say that there are no lingering doubts in regard to our final salvation. For if ye do these things. The things referred to in the previous verses. If you use all diligence to make as high

attainments as possible in piety, and if you practise the virtues demanded by religion, 2Pet 1:5-7.

Ye shall never fall. You shall never fall into perdition. That is, you shall certainly be saved.

11 for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For so an entrance. In this manner you shall be admitted into the kingdom of God. Shall be ministered unto you. The same Greek word is here used which occurs in 2Pet 1:5, and which is there rendered add. 2Pet 1:5. There was not improbably in the mind of the apostle a recollection of that word; and the sense may be, that "if they would lead on the virtues and graces referred to in their beautiful order, those graces would attend them in a radiant train to the mansions of immortal glory and blessedness." See Doddridge in loc. Abundantly. Gr., richly. That is, the most ample entrance would be furnished; there would be no doubt about their admission there. The gates of glory would be thrown wide open, and they, adorned with all the bright train of graces, would be admitted there. Into the everlasting kingdom, etc. Heaven. It is here called everlasting, not because the Lord Jesus shall preside over it as the Mediator, (comp. 1Cor 14:24,) but because, in the form which shall be established when "he shall have given it up to the Father," it will endure for ever. The empire of God which the Redeemer shall set up over the souls of his people shall endure to all eternity. The object of the plan of redemption was to secure their allegiance to God, and that will never terminate.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them,* and be established in the present truth.

Wherefore I will not be negligent. That is, in view of the importance of these things. To put you always in remembrance. To give you the means of having them always in remembrance; to wit, by his writings. Though ye know them. It was of importance for Peter, as it is for ministers of the gospel now, to bring known truths to remembrance. Men are liable to forget them, and they do not exert the influence over them which they ought. It is the office of the ministry not only to impart to a people truths which they

did not know before, but a large part of their work is to bring to recollection well-known truths, and to seek that they may exert a proper influence on the life. Amidst the cares, the business, the amusements, and the temptations of the world, even true Christians are prone to forget them; and the ministers of the gospel render them an essential service, even if they should do nothing more than remind them of truths which are well understood, and which they have known before. A pastor, in order to be useful, need not always aim at originality, or deem it necessary always to present truths which have never been heard of before. He renders an essential service to mankind who reminds them of what they know but are prone to forget, and who endeavours to impress plain and familiar truths on the heart and conscience, for these truths are most important for man. And be established in the present truth. That is, the truth which is with you, or which you Have received.--Rob. Lex. on the word παρειμι. The apostle did not doubt that they were now confirmed in the truth as far as it had been made known to them, but he felt that amidst their trials, and especially as they were liable to be drawn away by false teachers, there was need of reminding them of the grounds on which the truths which they had embraced rested, and of adding his own testimony to confirm their Divine origin. Though we may be very firm in our belief of the truth, yet there is a propriety that the grounds of our faith should be stated to us frequently, that they may be always in our remembrance. The mere fact that at present we are firm in the belief of the truth, is no certain evidence that we shall always continue to be; nor because we are thus firm should we deem it improper for our religious teachers to state the grounds on which our faith rests, or to guard us against the arts of those who would attempt to subvert our faith.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance;

Yea, I think it meet. I think it becomes me as an apostle. It is my appropriate duty; a duty which is felt the more as the close of life draws near. As long as I am in this tabernacle. As long as I live; as long as I am in the body. The body is called a tabernacle, or tent, as that in which the soul resides for a little time. 2Cor 5:1. To stir you up, by putting you in remembrance. To excite or arouse you to a diligent performance of your duties; to keep up in your

minds a lively sense of Divine things. Religion becomes more important to a man's mind always as he draws near the close of life, and feels that he is soon to enter the eternal world.

14 knowing that shortly I must put off *this* my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.

Greek, "the putting off (as a garment) of my tabernacle is speedy": implying a soon approaching, and also a sudden death (as a violent death is). Christ's words, Joh 21:18, 19, "When thou art old," &c., were the ground of his "knowing," now that he was old, that his foretold martyrdom was near. Compare as to Paul, 2Ti 4:6. Though a violent death, he calls it a "departure" (Greek for "decease," 2Pe 1:15), compare Ac 7:60.

15 Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Moreover, I will endeavour. I will leave such a permanent record of my views on these subjects that you may not forget them. He meant not only to declare his sentiments orally, but to record them that they might be perused when he was dead. He had such a firm conviction of the truth and value of the sentiments which he held, that he would use all the means in his power that the church and the world should not forget them.

After my decease. My exode, εξοδον, my journey out; my departure; my exit from life. This is not the usual word to denote death, but is rather a word denoting that he was going on a journey out of this world, he did not expect to cease to be, but he expected to go on his travels to a distant abode. This idea runs through all this beautiful description of the feelings of Peter as he contemplated death. Hence he speaks of taking down the "tabernacle" or tent, the temporary abode of the soul, that his spirit might be removed to another place, (1Pet 1:13;) and hence he speaks of an exode from the present life--a journey to another world. This is the true notion of death; and if so, two things follow from it:

(1.) we should make preparation for it, as we do for a journey, and the more in proportion to the distance that we are to travel, and the time that we are to be absent; and

(2.) when the preparation is made, we should not be unwilling to enter on the journey, as we are not now when we are prepared to leave our homes to visit some remote part of our own country, or a distant land. To have these things always in remembrance. By his writings. We may learn from this,

(1.) that when a Christian grows old, and draws near to death, his sense of the value of Divine truth by no means diminishes. As he approaches the eternal world; as from its borders he surveys the past, and looks on to what is to come; as he remembers what benefit the truths of religion have conferred on him in life, and sees what a miserable being he would now be if he had no such hope as the gospel inspires; as he looks on the whole influence of those truths on his family and friends, on his country and the world, their value rises before him with a magnitude which he never saw before, and he desires most earnestly that they should be seen and embraced by all. A man on the borders of eternity is likely to have a very deep sense of the value of the Christian religion and is he not then in favourable circumstances to estimate this matter aright? Let any one place himself in imagination in the situation of one who is on the borders of the eternal world, as all in fact soon will be, and can he have any doubt about the value of religious truth?

(2.) We may learn from what Peter says here, that it is the duty of those who are drawing near to the eternal world, and who are the friends of religion, to do all they can that the truths of Christianity "may be always had in remembrance." Every man's experience of the value of religion, and the results of his examination and observation, should be regarded as the property of the world, and should not be lost. As he is about to die, he should seek, by all the means in his power, that those truths should be perpetuated and propagated. This duty may be discharged by some in counsels offered to the young, as they are about to enter on life giving them the results of their own experience, observation, and reflections on the subject of religion; by some, by an example consistent that it cannot be soon forgotten--a legacy to friends and to the world of much more value than accumulated silver and gold; by some, by solemn warnings or exhortations on the bed of death; in other cases, by a recorded experience of the conviction and value of

religion, and a written defence of its truth, and illustration of its nature--for every man who can write a good book owes it to the church and the world to do it; by others, in leaving the means of publishing and spreading good books in the world. He does a good service to his own age, and to future ages, who records the results of his observations and his reflections in favour of the truth in a book that shall be readable; and though the book itself may be ultimately forgotten, it may have saved some persons from ruin, and may have accomplished its part in keeping up the knowledge of the truth in his own generation. Peter, as a minister of the gospel, felt himself bound to do this, and no men have so good an opportunity of doing this now as ministers of the gospel; no men have more ready access to the press; no men have so much certainty that they will have the public attention, if they will write anything worth reading; no men, commonly, in a community are better educated, or are more accustomed to write; no men, by their profession, seem to be so much called to address their fellow-men in any way in favour of the truth; and it is matter of great marvel that men who have such opportunities, and who seem especially called to the work, do not do more of this kind of service in the cause of religion. Themselves soon to die, how can they help desiring that they may leave something that shall bear an honourable, though humble, testimony to truths which they so much prize, and which they are appointed to defend? A tract may live long after the author is in the grave; and who can calculate the results which have followed the efforts of Baxter and Edwards to keep up in the world the remembrance of the truths which they deemed of so much value? This little epistle of Peter has shed light on the path of men now for eighteen hundred years, and will continue to do it until the second coming of the Saviour.

Eyewitnesses of Christ's Glory

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables. That is, fictions or stories invented by artful men, and resting on no solid foundation. The doctrines which they held about the coming of

the Saviour were not, like many of the opinions of the Greeks, defended by weak and sophistical reasoning, but were based on solid evidence --evidence furnished by the personal observation of competent witnesses. It is true of the gospel, in general, that it is not founded on cunningly devised fables; but the particular point referred to here is the promised coming of the Saviour. The evidence of that fact Peter proposes now to adduce.

When we made known unto you. Probably Peter here refers particularly to statements respecting the coming of the Saviour in his first epistle, (1Pet 1:5,13, 4:13;) but this was a common topic in the preaching, and in the epistles, of the apostles. It may, therefore, have referred to statements made to them at some time in his preaching, as well as to what he said in his former epistle. The apostles laid great stress on the second coming of the Saviour, and often dwelt upon it. Comp. 1Thes 4:16; Acts 1:11.

The power and coming. These two words refer to the same thing; and the meaning is, his powerful coming, or his coming in power. The advent of the Saviour is commonly represented as connected with the exhibition of power. Mt 24:30. "Coming in the clouds of heaven, with power." Mt 24:30. Comp. Lk 22:69, Mk 3:9. The power evinced will be by raising the dead; summoning the world to judgment; determining the destiny of men, etc. When the coming of the Saviour, therefore, was referred to by the apostles in their preaching, it was probably always in connexion with the declaration that it would be accompanied by exhibitions of great power and glory--as it undoubtedly will be. The fact that the Lord Jesus would thus return, it is clear, had been denied by some among those to whom this epistle was addressed, and it was important to state the evidence on which it was to be believed. The grounds on which they denied it (2Pet 3:4) were, that there were no appearances of his approach; that the promise had not been fulfilled; that all things continued as they had been; and that the affairs of the world moved on as they always had done. To meet and counteract this error--an error which so prevailed that many were in danger of "falling from their own steadfastness," (2Pet

3:17,)--Peter states the proof on which he believed in the coming of the Saviour.

But were eye-witnesses Of his majesty. On the mount of transfiguration, Mt 17:1-5, Mt 17:1, seq. That transfiguration was witnessed only by Peter, James, and John. But it may be asked how the facts there witnessed demonstrate the point under consideration--that the Lord Jesus will come with power? To this it may be replied,

(1.) that these apostles had there such a view of the Saviour in his glory as to convince them beyond doubt that he was the Messiah.

(2.) That there was a direct attestation given to that fact by a voice from heaven, declaring that he was the beloved Son of God.

(3.) That that transfiguration was understood to have an important reference to the coming of the Saviour in his kingdom and his glory, and was designed to be a representation of the manner in which he would then appear. This is referred to distinctly by each one of the three evangelists who have mentioned the transfiguration. Mt 16:28, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" Mk 9:1,2, Lk 9:27,28. The transfiguration which occurred soon after these words were spoken was designed to show them what he would be in his glory, and to furnish to them a demonstration which they could never forget, that he would yet set up his kingdom in the world.

(4.) They had in fact such a view of him as he would be in his kingdom, that they could entertain no doubt on the point; and the fact, as it impressed their own minds, they made known to others. The evidence as it lay in Peter's mind was, that that transfiguration was designed to furnish proof to them that the Messiah would certainly appear in glory, and to give them a view of him as coming to reign which would never fade from their memory. As that had not yet been accomplished, he maintained that the evidence was clear that it must occur at some future time. As the transfiguration was with reference to his coming in his kingdom,

it was proper for Peter to use it with that reference, or as bearing on that point.

17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, He was honoured by God in being thus addressed. When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. The magnificent splendour; the bright cloud which overshadowed them, Mt 17:5. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mt 17:5; Mt 3:17, This demonstrated that he was the Messiah. Those who heard that voice could not doubt this; they never did afterwards doubt.

18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

nd this voice which came from heaven we heard. To wit, Peter, and James, and John. When we were with him in the holy mount. Called holy on account of the extraordinary manifestation of the Redeemer's glory there. It is not certainly known what mountain this was, but it has commonly been supposed to be Mount Tabor. Mt 17:1.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy. That is a prophecy pertaining to the coming of the Lord Jesus; for that is the point under discussion. There has been considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of this passage. Some have supposed that the apostle, when he says "a more sure word," did not intend to make any comparison between the miracle of the transfiguration and prophecy, but that he meant to say merely that the word of prophecy was very sure, and could certainly be relied on. Others have supposed that the meaning is, that the prophecies which foretold his coming into the world having been confirmed by the fact of his advent, are rendered more sure and undoubted than when they were uttered, and may now be confidently appealed to. So Rosenmuller, Benson, Macknight, Clarke, Wetstein, and Grotius. Luther renders it, "we have a firm prophetic word;" omitting the comparison. A literal translation of

the passage would be, "and we have the prophetic word more firm." If a comparison is intended, it may be either that the prophecy was more sure than the fables referred to in 2Pet 1:16; or than the miracle of the transfiguration; or than the word which was heard in the holy mount; or than the prophecies even in the time when they were first spoken. If such a comparison was designed, the most obvious of these interpretations would be, that the prophecy was more certain proof than was furnished in the mount of transfiguration. But it seems probable that no comparison was intended, and that the thing on which Peter intended to fix the eye was not that the prophecy was a better evidence respecting the advent of the Messiah than other evidences, but that it was a strong proof which demanded their particular attention, as being of a firm and decided character. There can be no doubt that the apostle refers hereto what is contained in the Old Testament; for, in 2Pet 1:21, he speaks of the prophecy as that which was spoken "in old time, by men that were moved by the Holy Ghost." The point to which the prophecies related, and to which Peter referred, was the great doctrine respecting the coming of the Messiah, embracing perhaps all that pertained to his work, or all that he designed to do by his advent. They had had one illustrious proof respecting his advent as a glorious Saviour by his transfiguration on the mount; and the apostle here says that the prophecies abounded with truths on these points, and that they ought to give earnest heed to the disclosures which they made, and to compare them diligently with facts as they occurred, that they might be confirmed more and more in the truth. If, however, as the more obvious sense of this passage seems to be, and as many suppose to be the correct interpretation, (see Doddridge, in loc., and Professor Stuart, on the canon of the Old Test., p. 329,) it means that the prophecy was more sure, more steadfast, more to be depended on than even what the three disciples had seen and heard in the mount of transfiguration, this may be regarded as true in the following respects:

(1.) The prophecies are numerous, and by their number they furnish a stronger proof than could be afforded by a single manifestation, however clear and glorious.

(2.) They were recorded, and might be the subject of careful comparison with the events as they occurred.

(3.) They were written long beforehand, and it could not be urged that the testimony which the prophets bore was owing to any illusion on their minds, or to any agreement among the different writers to impose on the world. Though Peter regarded the testimony which he and James and John bore to the glory of the Saviour, from what they saw on the holy mount, as strong and clear confirmation that he was the Son of God, yet he could not but be aware that it might be suggested by a caviller that they might have agreed to impose on others, or that they might have been dazzled and deceived by some natural phenomenon occurring there. Comp. Kuinoel on Mt 17:1, seq.

(4.) Even supposing that there was a miracle in the case, the evidence of the prophecies, embracing many points in the same general subject, and extending through a long series of years, would be more satisfactory than any single miracle whatever. See Doddridge, in loc. The general meaning is, that the fact that he had come as the Messiah was disclosed in the mount by such a manifestation of his glory, and of what he would be, that they who saw it could not doubt it; the same thing the apostle says was more fully shown also in the prophecies, and these prophecies demanded their close and prolonged attention.

Where unto ye do well that ye take heed. They are worthy of your study, of your close and careful investigation. There is perhaps no study more worthy of the attention of Christians than that of the prophecies.

As unto a light that shineth in a dark place. That is, the prophecies resemble a candle, lamp, or torch, in a dark room, or in an obscure road at night. They make objects distinct which were before unseen; they enable us to behold many things which would be otherwise invisible. The object of the apostle in this representation seems to have been, to state that the prophecies do not give a

perfect light, or that they do not remove all obscurity, but that they shed some light on objects which would otherwise be entirely dark, and that the light which they furnished was so valuable that we ought by all means to endeavour to avail ourselves of it. Until the day shall dawn, and we shall see objects by the clear light of the sun, they are to be our guide. A lamp is of great value in a dark night; though it may not disclose objects so clearly as the light of the sun. But it may be a safe and sure guide; and a man who has to travel in dark and dangerous places, does "well" to "take heed" to his lamp.

Until the day dawn. Until you have the clearer light which shall result from the dawning of the day. The reference here is to the morning light as compared with a lamp; and the meaning is, that we should attend to the light furnished by the prophecies until the truth shall be rendered more distinct by the events as they shall actually be disclosed--until the brighter light which shall be shed on all things by the glory of the second advent of the Saviour, and the clearing up of what is now obscure in the splendours of the heavenly world. The point of comparison is between the necessary obscurity of prophecy, and the clearness of events when they actually occur--a difference like that which is observable in the objects around us when seen by the shining of the lamp and by the light of the sun. The apostle directs the mind onward to a period when all shall be clear--to that glorious time when the Saviour shall return to receive his people to himself in that heaven where all shall be light. Comp. Rev 21:23-26, 22:5. Meantime, we should avail ourselves of all the light which we have, and should apply ourselves diligently to the study of the prophecies of the Old Testament which are still unfulfilled, and of those in the New Testament which direct the mind onward to brighter and more glorious scenes than this world has yet witnessed. In our darkness they are a cheering lamp to guide our feet, till that illustrious day shall dawn. Comp. 1Cor 13:9,10.

And the day-star. The morning star--the bright star that at certain periods of the year leads on the day, and which is a pledge that the morning is about to dawn. Comp. Rev 2:28, 22:16. Arise in your hearts. On your hearts; that is, sheds its beams on your hearts. Till you see the indications of that approaching day which all is light.

The period referred to here by the approaching day that is to diffuse this light, is when the Saviour shall return in the full revelation of his glory--the splendour of his kingdom. Then all will be clear. Till that time, we should search the prophetic records, and strengthen our faith, and comfort our hearts, the predictions of the future glory of his reign. Whether this refers, as some suppose, to his reign on earth, either personally or by the principles of his religion universally prevailing, or, as others suppose, to the brighter revelations of heaven when he shall come to receive his people to himself, it is equally clear that a brighter time than any that has yet occurred is to dawn on our race, and equally true that we should regard the prophecies, as we do the morning star, as the cheering harbinger of day.

Learn hence, That the written word of God is a surer word, more to be depended and relied upon than any voice from heaven, though attested by the greatest and most eminent apostle, and consequently to be more heeded and regarded by us; nay, farther, the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit in and upon the hearts and lives of sincere and serious Christians is a more certain and indubitable evidence of their salvation, than if an angel should come from heaven on purpose to tell them that they should certainly come thither; for the testimony of an angel, at the highest, is but the testimony of a creature; but the testimony of the sanctifying Spirit is the testimony of God himself; it is therefore the sure word that we are to attend unto; and that revelation of God's will, being final, is and ought to be attneded to, before any pretended or real revelations whatsoever

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.

Knowing this first. Bearing this steadily in mind as a primary and most important truth.

That no prophecy of the scripture. No prophecy contained in the inspired records. The word scripture here shows that the apostle referred particularly to the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. The remark which he makes about prophecy is

general, though it is designed to bear on a particular class of the prophecies.

Is of any private interpretation. The expression here used (ιδιαςεπιλυσεως) has given rise to as great a diversity of interpretation, and to as much discussion, as perhaps any phrase in the New Testament; and to the present time there is no general agreement among expositors as to its meaning. It would be foreign to the design of these Notes, and would be of little utility, to enumerate the different interpretations which have been given of the passage, or to examine them in detail. It will be sufficient to remark, preparatory to endeavouring to ascertain the true sense of the passage, that some have held that it teaches that no prophecy can be interpreted of itself, but can be understood only by comparing it with the event; others, that it teaches that the prophets did not themselves understand what they wrote, but were mere passive Organs under the dictation of the Holy Spirit to communicate to future times what they could not themselves explain; others, that it teaches that "no prophecy is of self-interpretation," (Horsley;) others, that it teaches that the prophecies, besides having a literal signification, have also a hidden and mystical sense which cannot be learned from the prophecies themselves, but is to be perceived by a peculiar power of insight imparted by the Holy Ghost, enabling men to understand their recondite mysteries. It would be easy to show that some of these opinions are absurd, and that none of them are sustained by the fair interpretation of the language used, and by the drift of the passage. The more correct interpretation, as it seems to me, is that which supposes that the apostle teaches that the truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention; were not their own opinions, but were of higher origin, and were imparted by God; and according to this the passage may be explained, "knowing this as a point of first importance when you approach the prophecies, or always bearing this in mind, that it is a great principle in regard to the prophets, that what they communicated was not of their own disclosure; that is, was not revealed or originated by them." That this is the correct interpretation will be apparent from the following considerations:

(1.) It accords with the design of the apostle, which is to produce an impressive sense of the importance and value of the prophecies, and to lead those to whom he wrote to study them with diligence. This could be secured in no way so well as by assuring them that the writings which he wished them to study did not contain truths originated by the human mind, but that they were of higher origin.

(2.) This interpretation accords with what is said in the following verse, and is the only one of all those proposed that is consistent with that, or in connexion with which that verse will have any force. In that verse (2Pet 1:21) a reason is given for what is said here: "For (γαρ) the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, etc. But this can be a good reason for what is said here only on the supposition that the apostle meant to say that what they communicated was not originated by themselves; that it was of a higher than human origin; that the prophets spake "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This fact was a good reason why they should show profound respect for the prophecies, and study them with attention. But how could the fact that they were moved by the Holy Ghost be a reason for studying them, if the meaning here is that the prophets could not understand their own language, or that the prophecy could be understood only by the event, or that the prophecy had a double meaning, etc.? If the prophecies were of Divine origin, then that was a good reason why they should be approached with reverence, and should be profoundly studied.

(3.) This interpretation accords as well, to say the least, with the fair meaning of the language employed, as either of the other opinions proposed. The word rendered interpretation (επιλυσις) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means solution, (Rob. Lex.,) disclosure, (Prof. Stuart on the Old Testament, p. 328,) making free, (Passow,) with the notion that what is thus released or loosed was before bound, entangled, obscure. The verb from which this word is derived (επιλυω) means, to let loose upon, as dogs upon a hare, (Xen. Mem. 7, 8; lb. 9, 10 ;) to loose or open letters; to loosen a band; to loose or disclose a riddle or a dark saying, and then to enlighten, illustrate, etc.--Passow. It is twice used in the New Testament. Mk 4:34, "He expounded all things to his disciples"; Acts 19:39, "It shall be

determined in a lawful assembly." The verb would be applicable to loosing anything which is bound or confined, and thence to the explanation of a mysterious doctrine or a parable, or to a disclosure of what was before unknown. The word, according to this, in the place before us, would mean the disclosure of what was before bound, or retained, or unknown; either what had never been communicated at all, or what had been communicated obscurely; and the idea is, "no prophecy recorded in the Scripture is of, or comes from, any exposition or disclosure of the will and purposes of God by the prophets themselves." It is not a thing of their own, or a private matter originating with themselves, but it is to be traced to a higher source. If this be the true interpretation, then it follows that the prophecies are to be regarded as of higher than any human origin; and then, also, it follows that this passage should not be used to prove that the prophets did not understand the nature of their own communications, or that they were mere unconscious and passive instruments in the hand of God to make known his will. Whatever may be the truth on those points, this passage proves nothing in regard to them, any more than the fact that a minister of religion now declares truth which he did not originate, but which is to be traced to God as its author, proves that he does not understand what he himself says. It follows, also, that this passage cannot be adduced by the Papists to prove that the people at large should not have free access to the word of God, and should not be allowed to interpret it for themselves. It makes no affirmation on that point, and does not even contain any principle of which such a use can be made; for,

(1.) whatever it means, it is confined to prophecy; it does not embrace the whole Bible.

(2.) Whatever it means, it merely states a fact; it does not enjoin a duty. It states, as a fact, that there was something about the prophecies which was not of private solution, but it does not state that it is the duty of the church to prevent any private explanation or opinion even of the prophecies.

(3.) It says nothing about the church as empowered to give a public or authorized interpretation of the prophecies. There is not a hint, or an intimation of any kind, that the church is intrusted

with any such power whatever. There never was any greater perversion of a passage of Scripture than to suppose that this teaches that any class of men is not to have free access to the Bible. The effect of the passage, properly interpreted, should be to lead us to study the Bible with profound reverence, as having a higher than any human origin, not to turn away from it as if it were unintelligible, nor to lead us to suppose that it can be interpreted only by one class of men. The fact that it discloses truths which the human mind could not of itself have originated, is a good reason for studying it with diligence and with prayer--not for supposing that it is unlawful for us to attempt to understand it; a good reason for reverence and veneration for it--not for sanctified neglect.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

For the prophecy came not in old time. Marg., "or, at any." The Greek word (ποτε) will bear either construction. It would be true in either sense, but the reference is particularly to the recorded prophecies in the Old Testament. What was true of them, however, is true of all prophecy, that it is not by the will of man. The word prophecy here is without the article, meaning prophecy in general--all that is prophetic in the Old Testament; or, in a more general sense still, all that the prophets taught, whether relating to future events or not.

By the will of man. It was not of human origin; not discovered by the human mind. The word will, here seems to be used in the sense of prompting or suggestion; men did not speak by their own suggestion, but as truth was brought to them by God.

But holy men of God. Pious men commissioned by God, or employed by him as his messengers to mankind.

Spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Comp. 2Ti 3:16. The Greek phrase here (υποπνευματοςαγιουφερομενοι) means borne along, moved, influenced by the Holy Ghost. The idea is, that in what they spake they were carried along by an influence from above. They moved in the case only as they were moved; they spake only as the influence of the Holy Ghost was upon them.

They were no more self-moved than a vessel at sea is that is impelled by the wind; and as the progress made by the vessel is to be measured by the impulse bearing upon it, so the statements made by the prophets are to be traced to the impulse which bore upon their minds. They were not, indeed, in all respects like such a vessel, but only in regard to the fact that all they said as prophets was to be traced to the foreign influence that bore upon their minds. There could not be, therefore, a more decided declaration than this in proof that the prophets were inspired. If the authority of Peter is admitted, his positive and explicit assertion settles the question. If this be so, also, then the point with reference to which he makes this observation is abundantly confirmed, that the prophecies demand our earnest attention, and that we should give all the heed to them which we would to a light or lamp when travelling in a dangerous way, and in a dark night. In a still more general sense, the remark here made may also be applied to the whole of the Scriptures. We are in a dark world. We see few things clearly; and all around us, on a thousand questions, there is the obscurity of midnight. By nature there is nothing to cast light on those questions, and we are perplexed, bewildered, embarrassed. The Bible is given to us to shed light on our way. It is the only light which we have respecting the future, and though it does not give all the information which we might desire in regard to what is to come, yet it gives us sufficient light to guide us to heaven. It teaches us what it is necessary to know about God, about our duty, and about the way of salvation, in order to conduct us safely; and no one who has committed himself to its direction, has been suffered to wander finally away from the paths of salvation. It is, therefore, a duty to attend to the instructions which the Bible imparts, and to commit ourselves to its holy guidance in our journey to a better world: for soon, if we are faithful to its teachings, the light of eternity will dawn upon us, and there, amidst its cloudless splendour, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known; then we shall "need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give us light, and we shall reign for ever and ever." Comp. Rev 21:22-24, 22:5.

2 Peter-2

False Prophets and Teachers

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Men bring destruction "on themselves." No one compels them to deny the Lord that bought them; no one forces them to embrace any dangerous error. If men perish, they perish by their own fault, for (a.) ample provision was made for their salvation as well as for others; (b.) they were freely invited to be saved; (c.) it was, in itself, just as easy for them to embrace the truth as it was for others; and (d.) it was as easy to embrace the truth as to embrace error.

Almighty God never intended a certain remedy against heresy, any more than he did against sin and vice: It is certain, that there is no certain and effectual remedy against either of them; God does what he sees best and fittest, not what we think to be so.

Infallibility itself is no effectual remedy against heresy; the apostles were certainly infallible, and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguish heresy, which never more abounded than in the apostles times; St. Paul says, there must be heresies, 1Cor 1:19 St. Peter here says, that there shall be false teachers: Now, if there must be heresies and false teachers, either the church is not infallible, or infallibility is no effectual remedy against heresy.

Christ is here called the Lord that bought these men who brought destruction upon themselves, denying the Lord that bought them; because none should perish for want of a sufficient sacrifice for sin; Christ by his blood purchased for them pardon and life, to be theirs, upon condition of believing acceptance. Men bring destruction "on themselves." No one compels them to deny the Lord that bought them; no one forces them to embrace any dangerous error. If men perish, they perish by their own fault, for (a.) ample provision was made for their salvation as well as for

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Christ is here called the Lord that bought these men who brought destruction upon themselves, denying the Lord that bought them; because none should perish for want of a sufficient sacrifice for sin; Christ by his blood purchased for them pardon and life, to be theirs, upon condition of believing acceptance.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. (1.) Because they were professors of religion, and religion would seem to be held responsible for their conduct; and, (2,) because they were professed teachers of religion, and, by many, would be understood as expounding the true doctrines of the gospel.

Observe, in the next place, the method seducers take to draw disciples after them: they use feigned words; they flatter, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, inducing them to yield entirely to the opinions which these seducers endeavour to propagate, and sell and deliver themselves over to the instruction and government of these false teacher, who make a gain of those whom they make their proselytes, serving themselves and making some advantage of them; for all this is through covetousness, with a desire and design to get more wealth, or credit, or commendation, by increasing the number of their followers. The faithful ministers of Christ, who show men the way of truth, desire the profit and advantage of their followers, that they may be saved; but these seducing teachers desire and design only their own temporal advantage and worldly grandeur.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

And through covetousness. This shows what one of the things was by which they were influenced--a thing which, like licentiousness, usually exerts a powerful influence over the teachers of error. The religious principle is the strongest that is implanted in the human

bosom; and men who can obtain a livelihood in no other way, or who are too unprincipled or too indolent to labour for an honest living, often turn public teachers of religion, and adopt the kind of doctrines that will be likely to give them the greatest power over the purses of others. True religion, indeed, requires of its friends to devote all that they have to the service of God and to the promotion of his cause; but it is very easy to pervert this requirement, so that the teacher of error shall take advantage of it for his own aggrandizement.

Make merchandise of you. Treat you not as rational beings, but as a bale of goods, or any other article of traffic. That is, they would endeavour to make money out of them, and regard them only as fitted to promote that object.

Now of a long time lingereth not. Greek, "of old; long since." The idea seems to be, that justice had been long attentive to their movements, and was on its way to their destruction. It was not a new thing--that is, there was no new principle involved in their destruction; but it was a principle which had always been in operation, and which would certainly be applicable to them, and of a long time justice had been impatient to do the work which it was accustomed to do. What had occurred to the angels that sinned, (2Pet 2:4,) to the old world, (2Pet 2:5,) and to Sodom and Gomorrah, (2Pet 2:6,) would occur to them; and the same justice which had overthrown them might be regarded as on its way to effect their destruction. Comp. Isa 18:4. And their damnation slumbereth not. Their condemnation, (1Cor 11:29,) yet here referring to future punishment. "Mr. Blackwell observes, that this is a most beautiful figure, representing the vengeance that shall destroy such incorrigible sinners as an angel of judgment pursuing them on the wing, continually approaching nearer and nearer, and in the mean time keeping a watchful eye upon them that he may at length discharge an unerring low." --Doddridge. It is not uncommon to speak of "sleepless justice;" and the idea here is, that however justice may have seemed to slumber or to linger, it was not really so, but that it had on them an ever-watchful eye, and was on its way to do that which was right in regard to them. A sinner should never forget that there is an eye of unslumbering vigilance always upon him, and that everything that he does is

witnessed by one who will yet render exact justice to all men. No man, however careful to conceal his sins, or however bold in transgression, or however unconcerned he may seem to be, can hope that justice will always linger, or destruction always slumber.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

But cast them down to hell. Gr., ταρταρωσας--"thrusting them down to Tartarus." The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is common in the classical writers. It is a verb formed from ταρταρος (Tartarus,) which in Greek mythology was the lower part, or abyss of hades, where the shades of the wicked were supposed to be imprisoned and tormented, and answered to the Jewish word γεεννα --Gehenna. It was regarded, commonly, as beneath the earth; as entered through the grave; as dark, dismal, gloomy; and as a place of punishment. Comp. Job 10:21,22, and Mt 5:22. The word here is one that properly refers to a place or punishment, since the whole argument relates to that, and since it cannot be pretended that the "angels that sinned" were removed to a place of happiness on account of their transgression. It must also refer to punishment in some other world than this, for there is no evidence that this world is made a place of punishment for fallen angels.

And delivered them into chains of darkness. "Where darkness lies like chains upon them."--Rob. Lex. The meaning seems to be, that they are confined in that dark prison-house as if by chains. We are not to suppose that spirits are literally bound; but it was common to bind or fetter prisoners who were in dungeons, and the representation here is taken from that fact. This representation that the mass of fallen angels are confined in Tartarus, or in hell, is not inconsistent with the representations which elsewhere occur that their leader is permitted to roam the earth, and that even many of those spirits are allowed to tempt men. It may be still true that the mass are confined within the limits of their dark abode; and it may even be true also that Satan and those who are permitted to roam the earth are under bondage, and are permitted to range only

within certain bounds, and that they are so secured that they will be brought to trial at the last day.

To be reserved unto judgment. Jude 1:6, "to the judgment of the great day." They will then, with the revolted inhabitants of this world, be brought to trial for their crimes. That the fallen angels will be punished after the judgment is apparent from Rev 20:10. The argument in this verse is, that if God punished the angels who revolted from him, it is a fair inference that he will punish wicked men, though they were once professors of religion.

5 and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person,* a
preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the
ungodly;

A preacher of righteousness. In Gen 6:9, it is said of Noah that he was "a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God;" and it may be presumed that during his long life he was faithful in reproving the wickedness of his age, and warned the world of the judgment that was preparing for it, Compare Notes, Heb 11:7.

6 and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned
them with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after
should live ungodly;

7 and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing,
vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds:)

For that righteous man dwelling among them. The Latin Vulgate renders this, "For in seeing and hearing he was just;" meaning that he maintained his uprightness, or that he did not become contaminated by the vices of Sodom. Many expositors have supposed that this is the correct rendering; but the most natural and the most common explanation is that which is found in our version. According to that, the meaning is, that compelled as he was, while living among them, to see and to hear what was going on, his soul was constantly troubled.

In seeing and hearing. Seeing their open acts of depravity, and hearing their vile conversation. The effect which this had on the mind of Lot is not mentioned in Genesis, but nothing is more probable than the statement here made by Peter. Whether this

statement was founded on tradition, or whether it is a suggestion of inspiration to the mind of Peter, cannot be determined. The words rendered seeing and hearing may refer to the act of seeing, or to the object seen. Wetstein and Robinson suppose that they refer here to the latter, and that the sense is, that he was troubled by what he saw and heard. The meaning is not materially different. Those who live among the wicked are compelled to see and hear much that pains their hearts, and it is well if they do not become indifferent to it, or contaminated by it.

Vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. Tortured or tormented his soul--εβασανιζεν. Compare Mt 8:6,29; Lk 8:28, Rev 9:5, 11:10, 14:10, 20:10, where the same word is rendered tormented. The use of this word would seem to imply that there was something active on the part of Lot which produced this distress on account of their conduct, lie was not merely troubled as if his soul were passively acted on, but there were strong mental exercises of a positive kind, arising perhaps from anxious solicitude how he might prevent their evil conduct, or from painful reflections on the consequences of their deeds to themselves, or from earnest pleadings in their behalf before God, or from reproofs and warnings of the wicked. At all events, the language is such as would seem to indicate that he was not a mere passive observer of their conduct. This, it would seem, was "from day to day;" that is, it was constant. There were doubtless reasons why Lot should remain among such a people, and why, when he might so easily have done it, he did not remove to another place. Perhaps it was one purpose of his remaining to endeavour to do them good, as it is often the duty of good men now to reside among the wicked for the same purpose. Lot is supposed to have resided in Sodom--then probably the most corrupt place on the earth--for sixteen years; and we have in that fact an instructive demonstration that a good man may maintain the life of religion in his soul when surrounded by the wicked, and an illustration of the effects which the conduct of the wicked will have on a man of true piety when he is compelled to witness it constantly. We may learn from the record made of Lot what those effects will be, and what is evidence that one is truly pious who lives among the wicked.

(1.) He will not be contaminated with their wickedness, or will not conform to their evil customs.

(2.) He will not become indifferent to it, but his heart will be more and more affected by their depravity. Comp. Ps 119:136, Lk 19:41; Acts 17:16.

(3.) He will have not only constant, but growing solicitude in regard to it--solicitude that will be felt every day: "He vexed his soul from day to day." It will not only be at intervals that his mind will be affected by their conduct, but it will be an habitual and constant thing. True piety is not fitful, periodical, and spasmodic; it is constant and steady. It is not a jet that occasionally bursts out; it is a fountain always flowing.

(4.) He will seek to do them good. We may suppose that this was the case with Lot; we are certain that it is a characteristic of true religion to seek to do good to all, however wicked they may be.

(5.) He will secure their confidence. He will practise no improper arts to do this, but it will be one of the usual results of a life of integrity, that a good man will secure the confidence of even the wicked. It does not appear that Lot lost that confidence, and the whole narrative in Genesis leads us to suppose that even the inhabitants of Sodom regarded him as a good man. The wicked may hate a good man because he is good; but if a man lives as he should, they will regard him as upright, and they will give him the credit of it when he dies, if they should withhold it while he lives.

9 the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Verse 9. The Lord knoweth, etc. That is, the cases referred to show that God is able to deliver his people when tempted, and understands the best way in which it should be done. He sees a way to do it when we cannot, though it is often a way which we should not have thought of. He can send all angel to take his tempted people by the hand; he can interpose and destroy the power of the tempter; he can raise up earthly friends; he can deliver his people completely and for ever from temptation, by their removal to heaven. And to reserve the unjust. As he does the

rebel angels, 2Pet 2:4. The case of the angels shows that God can keep wicked men, as if under bonds, reserved for their final trial at his bar. Though they seem to go at large, yet they are under his control, and are kept by him with reference to their ultimate arraignment.

heretics are frequently unclean persons, monstrous opinions and vile affections accompany one another; such as oppose the faith are flesh-defilers.
Note farther, That seducers are opposers of civil government and dominion, they despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Some think the dignities here intended were the angels, others the apostles, but most understand it of civil rulers: it is a very heinous sin in the sight of God to despise government, and oppose rulers.

10 but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.
Presumptuous *are they,* self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

And despise government. Marg., dominion. That is, they regard all government in the state, the church, and the family, as an evil. Advocates for unbridled freedom of all sorts; declaimers on liberty and on the evils of oppression; defenders of what they regard as the rights of injured man, and yet secretly themselves lusting for the exercise of the very power which they would deny to others--they make no just distinctions about what constitutes true freedom, and in their zeal array themselves against government in all forms. No topic of declamation would be more popular than this, and from none would they hope to secure more followers; for if they could succeed in removing all respect for the just restraints of law, the way would be open for the accomplishment of their own purposes, in setting up a dominion over the minds of others. It is a common result of such views, that men of this description become impatient of the government of God himself, and seek to throw off all authority, and to live in the unrestrained indulgence of their vicious propensities.

They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. The word rendered dignities here, (δοξας,) means properly honour, glory, splendour;

then that which is fitted to inspire respect; that which is dignified or exalted. It is applied here to men of exalted rank; and the meaning is, that they did not regard rank, or station, or office--thus violating the plainest rules of propriety and of religion. Acts 23:4, Acts 23:5. Jude, between whose language and that of Peter in this chapter there is a remarkable resemblance, has expressed this more fully. He says, (Jude 1:8,) "These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." It is one of the effects of religion to produce respect for superiors; but when men are self-willed, and when they purpose to give indulgence to corrupt propensities, it is natural for them to dislike all government. Accordingly, it is by no means an unfrequent effect of certain forms of error to lead men to speak disrespectfully of those in authority, and to attempt to throw off all the restraints of law. It is a very certain indication that men hold wrong opinions when they show disrespect to those in authority, and despise the restraints of law.

11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

This he aggravates, by setting forth the very different conduct of more excellent creatures, even the angels, of whom observe, 1. They are greater in power and might, and that even than those who are clothed with authority and power among the sons of men, and much more than those false teachers who are slanderous revilers of magistrates and governors; the good angels vastly exceed us in all natural and moral excellences, in strength, understanding, and holiness too. 2. Good angels are accusers of sinful creatures, either of their own kind, or ours, or both. Those who are allowed to behold the face of God, and stand before his throne, cannot but have a zeal for his honour, and accuse and blame those who dishonour him. 3. Angels bring their accusations of sinful creatures before the Lord; they do not publish their faults, and tell their crimes to their fellow-creatures, in a way of calumny and slander; but it is before the Lord, who is the Judge, and will be the avenger, of all impiety and injustice. 4. Good angels mingle no bitter revilings nor base reproaches with any of the accusations or charges they bring against the wickedest and worst of criminals. Let us, who pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, imitate the angels in this particular; if we complain of

wicked men, let it be to God, and that not with rage and reviling, but with compassion and composedness of mind, that may evidence that we belong to him who is meek and merciful.

Bring not railing accusation. They simply say, "The Lord rebuke thee," Jude 1:9. Comp. Zech 3:2 The Greek here is, "bring not blasphemous or reproachful judgment, or condemnation"--βλασφημονκρισιν. They abhor all scurrility and violence of language; they simply state matters as they are. No one can doubt that this accords with what we should expect of the angels; and that if they had occasion to speak of those who were opposers, it would be in a calm and serious manner, not seeking to overwhelm them by reproaches.

They are eminently so with respect to the government of their passions; when they contend with devils themselves, it is without disturbance, without railing accusations.
It is our duty to learn this angelical lesson, or forbearing railing accusations; not to return evil for evil, but being defamed, to entreat; we are to be as just to another's reputation as our own; they that handle the names of others rudely, must expect their own will be, at one time or other, handled as roughly; nothing is more just with God, than to suffer others to open their mouths against those who will open their own mouths against others.

12 But these, as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

The apostle, having shown (2Pe 2:11) how unlike seducing teachers are to the most excellent creatures, proceeds (2Pe 2:12) to show how like they are to the most inferior: they are like the horse and mule, which have no understanding; they are as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.

But these, as natural brute beasts. These persons, who resemble so much irrational animals which are made to be taken and destroyed. The point of the comparison is, that they are like fierce and savage beasts that exercise no control over their appetites, and that seem to be made only to be destroyed. These persons, by their fierce and ungovernable passions, appear to be made only for

destruction, and rush blindly on to it. The word rendered natural, (which, however, is wanting in several manuscripts,) means as they are by nature, following the bent of their natural appetites and passions. The idea is, that they exercised no more restraint over their passions than beasts do over their propensities. They were entirely under the dominion of their natural appetites, and did not allow their reason or conscience to exert any constraint. The word rendered brute, means without reason; irrational. Man has reason, and should allow it to control his passions; the brutes have no rational nature, and it is to be expected that they will act out their propensities without restraint. Man, as an animal, has many passions and appetites resembling those of the brute creation, but he is also endowed with a higher nature, which is designed to regulate and control his inferior propensities, and to keep them in subordination to the requirements of law. If a man sinks himself to the level of brutes, he must expect to be treated like brutes; and as wild and savage animals--lions, and panthers, and wolves, and bears--are regarded as dangerous, and as "made to be taken and destroyed," so the same destiny must come upon men who make themselves like them. Made to be taken and destroyed. They are not only useless to society, but destructive; and men feel that it is right to destroy them. We are not to suppose that this teaches that the only object which God had in view in making wild animals was that they might be destroyed; but that men so regard them. Speak evil of the things that they understated not. Of objects whose worth and value they cannot appreciate. This is no uncommon thing among men, especially in regard to the works and ways of God. And shall utterly perish in their own corruption. Their views will be the means of their ruin; and they render them fit for it, just as much as the fierce passions of the wild animals do.

13 and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that count it
pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting
themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;
14 having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling
unstable souls: a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed
children:

As they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time. As men peculiarly wicked, shameless, and abandoned; for only such revel

in open day. Comp. Acts 2:15; 1Thes 5:7. Spots they are and blemishes. That is, they are like a dark spot on a pure garment, or like a deformity on an otherwise beautiful person. They are a scandal and disgrace to the Christian profession. Sporting themselves. The Greek word here means to live delicately or luxuriously; to revel. The idea is not exactly that of sporting, or playing, or amusing themselves; but it is that they take advantage of their views to live in riot and luxury. Under the garb of the Christian profession, they give indulgence to the most corrupt passions.

Here we have many sad and dreadful instances given of the height of sensuality and brutishness which these seducers were arrived at, and had attained unto. Lord! how do fleshly lusts, and sensual affections, obscure the light of conscience, and corrupt its judgment? There is such an intimate communion between the soul and the body, that they interchangeably corrupt one another. To what a desperate degree of hardness and insensibility, had the flames of lust seared the consciences of these men? They had lost all the ingenuous bashfulness of human nature, and pleased themselves in their licentious principles and practices, not declining to do that at noon-day which Heathens would have blushed to be found doing at mid-night.

Observe particularly, how luxury and uncleanness accompany each other; they took pleasure in rioting and sporting themselves in their feasts, and their eyes were full of adultery. They feasted and fed immeasurably, impurely, and lustfully, making their plenty fodder and fuel for their lusts: for having fed to the full, every one neighed after his neighbour's wife, and, putting out the candles after supper, they gave way promiscuously to the ravings of unbridled lust, turning the temple of the Holy Ghost into an hog-sty: But know, O unclean sinner! that God will return flames for flames, and revenge this fire in thy heart with the fire of hell. How nearly does it concern thee, who has burnt in these impute flames of uncleanness, and kindled the flames of God's wrath, to labour to cool and quench them with the blood of Christ, and the tears of repentance, which alone can allay the heats of sin in thee, and of wrath in God? Let unclean sinners improve examples, lest they be made examples.

With their own deceivings. Jude, in the parallel place, (Jude 1:12,) has, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you." Several versions, and a few manuscripts also, here read feasts instead of deceivings, (αγαπαις for απαταις.) The common reading, however, is undoubtedly the correct one, (see Wetstein, in loc;) and the meaning is, that they took advantage of their false views to turn even the sacred feasts of charity, or perhaps the Lord's Supper itself, into an occasion of sensual indulgence. Comp. 1Cor 11:20, seq. The difference between these persons, and those in the church at Corinth, seems to have been that these did it of design, and for the purpose of leading others into sin; those who were in the church at Corinth erred through ignorance.

Having eyes full of adultery. Marg., as in the Greek, an adulteress; that is, gazing with desire after such persons. The word full is designed to denote that the corrupt passion referred to had wholly seized and occupied their minds. The eye was, as it were, full of this passion; it saw nothing else but some occasion for its indulgence; it expressed nothing else but the desire. The reference here is to the sacred festival mentioned in the previous verse; and the meaning is, that they celebrated that festival with licentious feelings, giving free indulgence to their corrupt desires by gazing on the females who were assembled with them. In the passion here referred to, the eye is usually the first offender, the inlet to corrupt desires, and the medium by which they are expressed. Comp. Mt 5:28. The wanton glance is a principal occasion of exciting the sin; and there is much often in dress, and mien, and gesture, to charm the eye and to deepen the debasing passion. And that cannot cease from sin. They cannot look on the females who may be present without sinning. Comp. Mt 5:28. There are many men in whom the presence of the most virtuous woman only excites impure and corrupt desires. The expression here does not mean that they have no natural ability to cease from sin, or that they are impelled to it by any physical necessity, but only that they are so corrupt and unprincipled that they certainly will sin always. Beguiling unstable souls. Those who are not strong in Christian principle, or who are naturally fluctuating and irresolute. The word rendered beguiling means to bait, to entrap, and would be applicable to the methods practised in hunting. Here it means that it was one of their arts to place specious allurements before those who were known not to

have settled principles or firmness, in order to allure them to sin. Comp. 2Ti 3:6. An heart they have exercised with covetous practices. Skilled in the arts which covetous men adopt in order to cheat others out of their property. A leading purpose which influenced these men was to obtain money. One of the most certain ways for dishonest men to do this is to make use of the religious principle; to corrupt and control the conscience; to make others believe that they are eminently holy, or that they are the special favourites of heaven; and when they can do this, they have the purses of others at command. For the religious principle is the most powerful of all principles; and he who can control that, can control all that a man possesses. The idea here is, that these persons had made this their study, and had learned the ways in which men could be induced to part with their money under religious pretences. We should always be on our guard when professedly religious teachers propose to have much to do with money matters. While we should always be ready to aid every good cause, yet we should remember that unprincipled and indolent men often assume the mask of religion that they may practise their arts on the credulity of others, and that their real aim is to obtain their property, not to save their souls. Cursed children. This is a Hebraism, meaning literally, "children of the curse;" that is, persons devoted to the curse, or who will certainly be destroyed.

15 which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

The particular point to which Peter refers in which they imitated him, seems to have been the love of gain, or covetousness. Possibly, however, he might have designed to refer to a more general resemblance, for in fact they imitated him in the following things: (1.) in being professed religious teachers, or the servants of God; (2.) in their covetousness; (3.) in inducing others to sin, referring to the same kind of sins in both cases. Balaam counselled the Moabites to entice the children of Israel to illicit connexion with their women, thus introducing licentiousness into the camp of the Hebrews, Nu 31:16; comp. Nu 25:1-9 and in like manner these teachers led others into licentiousnes, thus corrupting the church.

Who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Who was supremely influenced by the love of gain, and was capable of being employed,

for a price, in a wicked design; thus prostituting his high office, as a professed prophet of the Most High, to base and ignoble ends. That Balaam, though he professed to be influenced by a supreme regard to the will of God, (Nu 22:18,38,) was really influenced by the desire of reward, and was willing to prostitute his great office to secure such a reward, there can be no doubt.

(1.) The elders of Moab and of Midian came to Balaam with "the rewards of divination in their hand," (Nu 22:7,) and with promises from Balak of promoting him to great honour, if he would curse the children of Israel, Nu 22:17.

(2.) Balaam was disposed to go with them, and was restrained from going at once only by a direct and solemn prohibition from the Lord, Nu 22:11.

(3.) Notwithstanding this solemn prohibition, and notwithstanding he said to the ambassadors from Balak that he would do only as God directed, though Balak should give him his house full of silver and gold, (Nu 22:18,) yet he did not regard the matter as settled, but proposed to them that they should wait another night, with the hope that the Lord would give a more favourable direction in reference to their request, thus showing that his heart was in the service which they required, and that his inclination was to avail himself of their offer, Nu 22:19.

(4.) When he did obtain permission to go, it was only to say that which the Lord should direct him to say, (Nu 22:20;) but he went with a "perverse" heart, with a secret wish to comply with the desire of Balak, and with a knowledge that he was doing wrong, (Nu 22:34,) and was restrained from uttering the curse which Balak desired only by an influence from above which he could not control. Balaam was undoubtedly a wicked man, and was constrained by a power from on high to utter sentiments which God meant should be uttered, but which Balaam would never have expressed of his own accord.

Our apostle, having charged these men with insatiable lust in the former verse, proceeds next to tax them with insatiable covetousness in this verse, declaring that this sin had diverted them

from the right way of truth and godliness, and caused them to imitate Balaam of old, whose love of honour and wealth so blinded his eyes, that the ass he rode upon could see beyond him, whose mouth God miraculously opened to rebuke the madness of the prophet.

Note here, 1. How the wicked in after ages do in their courses and practices imitate such wicked persons as lived before them in former ages: These men followed the way of Balaam, imitate his covetousness and insatiable desire of wealth.

Note, 2. That as it is the nature of all sin to carry men out of the way, so covetousness in particular will carry a man astray, and put him upon the practice of any wickedness: It neither fears nor forbears any sinful course to attain its end; they that will be rich meet with many enticements unto sin, and they will not fear to embrace any enticement. Nay, verily, a thirst after gain, will make a man thirst after blood, to get gain. Witness Balaam and Judas, who were both covetous and bloody. Covetousness is oft-times the cause of uncleanness. How many, for the sake of money, have violated their matrimonial faith, allured more with the adulterer's purse than by his person. Let no person hope to escape any sin that embraces this one sin.

Note, 3. What a mighty struggle there sometimes is in a natural man's conscience concerning sin. The light of Balaam's conscience made him refuse the wages of unrighteousness, and speak honourably: If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot, &c. but at the same time lust in his heart led him forth strongly to desire it. He loved the wages of unrighteousness: loved it, yet durst not touch it.

Note, 4. How extremely, yea, brutishly mad, such men are upon their lusts, who will not be rebuked or stopped in their progress of impiety without a miracle. Balaam's running was so greedy, and his march so furious, that he had cursed the people, had not the angel stopped him, and the ass spoken to him. Little thanks to a resolute sinner that he does not rush on, when the arm of omnipotency pulls him back. O let the heart-changing power of the grace of God

influence us to good, as well as his almighty arm restrain us from evil, or we are miserable.

16 but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet.

Though some more uncommon and extraordinary rebuke may for a little while cool men's courage, and hinder their violent progress in the way of sin, it will not make them forsake the way of iniquity and go over into the way of holiness.

The dumb ass, speaking with man's voice. Nu 22:28. God seems to have designed that both Balaam and Balak should be convinced that the children of Israel were his people; and so important was it that this conviction should rest fully on the minds of the nations through whom they passed, that he would not suffer even a pretended prophet to make use of his influence to curse them. He designed that all that influence should be in favour of the cause of truth, thus furnishing a striking instance of the use which he often makes of wicked men. To convince Balaam of the error of his course, and to make him sensible that God was an observer of his conduct, and to induce him to utter only what he should direct, nothing would be better fitted than this miracle. The very animal on which he rode, dumb and naturally stupid, was made to utter a reproof; a reproof as directly from heaven as though the stones had cried out beneath his feet, or the trees of the wood had uttered the language of remonstrance. As to the nature of the miracle here referred to, it may be remarked, (1.) that it was as easy for God to perform this miracle as any other; and (2.) that it was a miracle that would be as likely to be effectual, and to answer the purpose, as any other. No man can show that it could not have occurred; and the occasion was one in which some decided rebuke, in language beyond that of conscience, was necessary.

17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

These are wells without water. Jude 1:12,13 employs several other epithets to describe the same class of persons. The language employed both by Peter and Jude is singularly terse, pointed, and emphatic. Nothing to an oriental mind would be more expressive than to say of professed religious teachers, that they were "wells without water." It was always a sad disappointment to a traveller in

the hot sands of the desert to come to a well where it was expected that water might be found, and to find it dry. It only aggravated the trials of the thirsty and weary traveller. Such were these religious teachers. In a world, not unaptly compared, in regard to its real comforts, to the wastes and sands of the desert, they would only grievously disappoint the expectations of all those who were seeking for the refreshing influences of the truths of the gospel. There are many such teachers in the world. Clouds that are carried with a tempest. Clouds that are driven about by the wind, and that send down no rain upon the earth. They promise rain, only to be followed by disappointment. Substantially the same idea is conveyed by this as by the previous phrase. "The Arabs compare persons who put on the appearance of virtue, when yet they are destitute of all goodness, to a light cloud which makes a show of rain, and afterwards vanishes."--Benson. The sense is this: The cloud, as it rises, promises rain. The expectation of the farmer is excited that the thirsty earth is to be refreshed with needful showers. Instead of this, however, the wind "gets into" the cloud; it is driven about, and no rain falls, or it ends in a destructive tornado which sweeps everything before it. So of these religious teachers. Instruction in regard to the way of salvation was expected from them; but, instead of that, they disappointed the expectations of those who were desirous of knowing the way of life, and their doctrines only tended to destroy.

Still our apostle proceeds in characterising and describing these seducers, which were then amongst them. He describing them before by their luxury and licentiousness, by their incontinency and uncleanness, by their insatiableness and covetousness, now he proceeds to discover their vanity and emptiness. They pretended indeed to be deep fountains of saving knowledge, but they were like wells without water; and to be clouds, containing abundance of rain, for the watering of the church; whereas they were like clouds carried about with the tempest of pride and ambition, from one vicious doctrine and practice to another, darkening the church; for whom, by the just judgment of God, is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Note here, 1. The ministers of the gospel ought to be as wells, for depth of knowledge, for purity of doctrine, for residency and fixedness of abode; every one knows where the town-well stands; though ministers are wells of clay, yet should they be always full of the water of life, and always at hand for the people to have recourse unto.

Note, 2. The ministers of Christ must be full and watery clouds, able and apt to teach, able to open Scriptures, able to convince gainsayers, continually dropping down the heavenly dew; but not as clouds without water, without the water of true knowledge, without the water of holiness, sanctify both of heart and life, nor without the water of consolation and refreshment. The highest commendation of a minister is industry for, and usefulness to the souls of others: clouds consume themselves by watering others.

Note, 3. That although seducers are wont to make great shews and appearances of worth in themselves, yet it is a great and inexcusable sin to make shew of that goodness of which we are wholly void, and to which we are also opposite; to be wells without water, and clouds without rain, big and black, accompanied with emptiness and dryness. Appearing goodness sets men at the farthest distance from real goodness; they that satisfy themselves in appearances, will never labour after holiness in reality.

18 For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity. When they make pretensions to wisdom and learning, or seem to attach great importance to what they say, and urge it in a pompous and positive manner. Truth is simple, and delights in simple statements. It expects to make its way by its own intrinsic force, and is willing to pass for what it is worth. Error is noisy and declamatory, and hopes to succeed by substituting sound for sense, and by such tones and arts as shall induce men to believe that what is said is true, when it is known by the speaker to be false. They allure through the lusts of the flesh. The same word is used here which in 2Pet 2:14 is

rendered beguiling, and in Jas 1:14 enticed. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means that they make use of deceitful arts to allure, ensnare, or beguile others. The means which it is here said they employed, were the lusts of the flesh; that is, they promised unlimited indulgence to the carnal appetites, or taught such doctrines that their followers would feel themselves free to give unrestrained liberty to such propensities. This has been quite a common method in the world, of inducing men to embrace false doctrines. Through much wantonness. 2Ti 3:6. The meaning here is, that they made use of every variety of lascivious arts to beguile others under religious pretences. This has been often done in the world; for religion has been abused to give seducers access to the confidence of the innocent, only that they might betray and ruin them. It is right that for all such the "mist of darkness should be reserved for ever;" and if there were not a place of punishment prepared for such men, there would be defect in the moral administration of the universe.

Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. Marg.,for a little child. The difference between the margin and the text here arises from a difference of reading in the Greek. Most of the later editions of the Greek Testament coincide with the reading in the margin, (ολιγως,) meaning little, but a little, scarcely. This accords better with the scope of the passage; and, according to this, it means that they had almost escaped from the snares and influences of those who live in error and sin. They had begun to think of their ways; they had broken off many of their evil habits; and there was hope that they would be entirely reformed, and would become decided Christians, but they were allured again to the sins in which they had so long indulged. This seems to me to accord with the design of the passage, and it certainly accords with what frequently occurs, that those who are addicted to habits of vice become apparently interested in religion, and abandon many of their evil practices, but are again allured by the seductive influences of sin, and relapse into their former habits. In the case referred to here it was by professedly religious teachers--and is this never done now? Are there none, for example, who have been addicted to habits of intemperance, who had been almost reformed, but who are led back again by the influence of religious teachers? Not directly and openly, indeed, would they lead them into habits

of intemperance. But, when their reformation is begun, its success and its completion depend on total abstinence from all that intoxicates. In this condition, nothing more is necessary to secure their entire reformation and safety than mere abstinence; and nothing more may be necessary to lead them into their former practices than the example of others who indulge in moderate drinking, or than the doctrine inculcated by a religious teacher that such moderate drinking is not contrary to the spirit of the Bible.

The next sin charged upon these seducers is pride and ostentation, they speak big, great swelling words of vanity; with a lofty and affected style they propound their false doctrines to amuse the simple. It is the usual practice of seducers to speak in an high-flown strain of words, that, being not understood, they may be the more admired.

Next they allure to their party such novice Christians who had left the Heathenish bestiality, and made an outward profession of the Christian religion. The word rendered to allure, is a metaphor taken from fishers or fowlers, who produce the bait or shrape, but hide the net or snare. Seducers bait their hook with such baits as are proper to the fish they would catch, else they are no good anglers. But observe, why the bait is here before us, it is liberty, it is licentiousness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh; no bait like this.

As clouds carried with a tempest. When we see a cloud we expect a refreshing shower from it; but these are clouds which yield no rain, for they are driven with the wind, but not of the Spirit, but the stormy wind or tempest of their own ambition and covetousness. They espouse and spread those opinions that will procure most applause and advantage to themselves; and as clouds obstruct the light of the sun, and darken the air, so do these darken counsel by words without knowledge and wherein there is no truth; and, seeing these men are for promoting darkness in this world, it is very just that the mist of darkness should be their portion in the next. Utter darkness was prepared for the devil, the great deceiver, and his angels, those instruments that he uses to turn men from the truth, and therefore for them it is reserved, and that for ever; the fire of hell is everlasting, and the smoke of the bottomless pit rises up for

ever and ever. And it is just with God to deal thus with them, because

(1.) They allure those they deal with, and draw them into a net, or catch them as men do fish; and,

(2.) It is with great swelling words of vanity, lofty expressions, which have a great sound, but little sense.

(3.) They work upon the corrupt affections and carnal fleshly lusts of men, proposing what is grateful to them. And,

(4.) They seduce persons who in reality avoided and kept at a distance from those who spread and those who embraced hurtful and destructive errors.

Observe, [1.] By application and industry men attain a skilfulness and dexterity in promoting error. They are as artful and as successful as the fisher, who makes angling his daily employment. The business of these men is to draw disciples after them, and in their methods and management there are some things worth observing, how they suit their bait to those they desire to catch.

[2.] Erroneous teachers have a peculiar advantage to win men over to them, because they have sensual pleasure to take them with; where as the ministers of Christ put men upon self-denial, and the mortifying of those lusts that others gratify and please: wonder not therefore that truth prevails no more, or that errors spread so much.

[3.] Persons who have for a while adhered to the truth, and kept clear of errors, may by the subtlety and industry of seducers be so far deceived as to fall into those errors they had for a while clean escaped. "Be therefore always upon your guard, maintain a godly jealousy of yourselves, search the scriptures, pray for the Spirit to instruct and establish you in the truth, walk humbly with God, and watch against every thing that may provoke him to give you up to a reprobate mind, that you may not be taken with the fair and specious pretences of these false teachers, who promise liberty to all who will hearken to them, not true Christian liberty for the service of God, but a licentiousness in sin, to follow the devices

and desires of their own hearts." To prevent these men's gaining proselytes, he tells us that, in the midst of all their talk of liberty, they themselves are the vilest slaves, for they are the servants of corruption; their own lusts have gotten a complete victory over them, and they are actually in bondage to them, making provision for the flesh, to satisfy its cravings, comply with its directions, and obey its commands. Their minds and hearts are so far corrupted and depraved that they have neither power nor will to refuse the task that is imposed on them. They are conquered and captivated by their spiritual enemies, and yield their members servants of unrighteousness: and what a shame it is to be overcome and commanded by those who are themselves the servants of corruption, and slaves to their own lusts! This consideration should prevent our being led away by these seducers;

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

They themselves are the servants of corruption. They are the slaves of gross and corrupt passions, themselves utter strangers to freedom, and bound in the chains of servitude. These passions and appetites have obtained the entire mastery over them, and brought them into the severest bondage. This is often the case with those who deride the restraints of serious piety. They are themselves the slaves of appetite, or of the rules of fashionable life, or of the laws of honour, or of vicious indulgences. "he is a freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves besides." Comp. 2Cor 3:17.

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Learn hence, That a person may forsake many gross and scandalous sins, and have a visible change and reformation wrought in his life; but, not being a thorough and prevailing change, he is still in an unsafe state; his latter end may be worse than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Observe here, The odious character given of apostates; the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, who, though washed in the water of baptism externally, yet their natures were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. All the outward reformation of life which is found in unrenewed persons, is but like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly; upon occasion it will again to the mire; make the swine a sheep, change its nature, and it will never delight in filth more; but whilst it retains its filthy nature, it will delight in filthiness. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still; and swine washed are swine still. No wonder then if temptation draw them to return to their vomit, and mire again.

Under all the appearances of reformation, still their evil nature remained, as really as that of the dog or the swine, and that nature finally prevailed. There was no thorough internal change, any more than there is in the swine when it is washed, or in the dog, This passage, therefore, would seem to demonstrate that there never had been any real change of heart, and of course there had been no falling away from true religion. The dog and the swine had never been anything else than the dog and the swine, and these persons had never been anything else than sinners.

The dog is turned to his own vomit again. That is, to eat it up. The passage would seem to imply, that whatever pains should be taken to change the habits of the dog, he would return to them again. The quotation here is from Prov 26:11: "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly." A similar proverb is found in the Rabbinical writers. Of the truth of the disgusting fact here affirmed of the dog, there can be no doubt. Phaedrus (Fab. 27) states a fact still more offensive respecting its habits. In the view of the Orientals, the dog was reckoned among the most vile and disgusting of all animals. Comp. De 23:18, 1Sam 17:43, 2Sam 3:8, 9:8, 16:9, Mt 7:6, Php 3:2. See also Horace, II. Epis. l, 26:---

No matter how clean the swine is made by washing, thin would not prevent it, in the slightest degree, from rolling in filth again. It will act out its real nature. So it is with the sinner. No external reformation will certainly prevent his returning to his former habits; and when he does return, we can only say that he is acting according to his real nature--a nature which has never been changed, any more than the nature of the dog or the swine. On the characteristics of the persons referred to in this chapter, (2Pet 2:9-19,) see the Introduction, & 3.

The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never were changed; that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been no real change. This passage will prove--what there are abundant facts to confirm--that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former corrupt habits. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can fit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation. Observe here, The odious character given of apostates; the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, who, though washed in the water of baptism externally, yet their natures were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. All the outward reformation of life which is found in unrenewed persons, is but like the washing of a swine, which you may make clean, but can never make cleanly; upon occasion it will again to the mire; make the swine a sheep, change its nature, and it will never delight in filth more; but whilst it retains its filthy nature, it will delight in filthiness. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still; and swine washed are swine still. No wonder then if temptation draw them to return to their vomit, and mire again.

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No matter how clean the swine is made by washing, thin would not prevent it, in the slightest degree, from rolling in filth again. It will

act out its real nature. So it is with the sinner. No external reformation will certainly prevent his returning to his former habits; and when he does return, we can only say that he is acting according to his real nature--a nature which has never been changed, any more than the nature of the dog or the swine. On the characteristics of the persons referred to in this chapter, (2Pet 2:9-19,) see the Introduction, & 3.

The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never were changed; that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been no real change. This passage will prove--what there are abundant facts to confirm--that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former corrupt habits. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can fit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation.

2 Peter-3

The Promise of the Lord's Coming

1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I
stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
2 that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy
prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and
Saviour:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you. This expression proves that he had written a former epistle, and that it was addressed to the same persons as this. Comp. Intro. & 3. In both which I stir up your pure minds, etc. That is, the main object of both epistles is the same--to call to your remembrance important truths which you have before heard, but which you are in danger of forgetting, or from which you are in danger of being turned away

by prevailing errors. Comp. 2Pet 3:12, seq. The word rendered pure, ειλικρινης occurs only here and in Php 1:10, where it is rendered sincere. The word properly refers to that which may be judged of in sunshine; then it means clear, manifest; and then sincere, pure--as that in which there is no obscurity. The idea here perhaps is, that their minds were open, frank, candid, sincere, rather than that they were pure. The apostle regarded them as disposed to see the truth, and yet as liable to be led astray by the plausible errors of others. Such minds need to have truths often brought fresh to their remembrance, though they are truths with which they had before been familiar.

That ye may be mindful of the words. Of the doctrines; the truths; the prophetic statements. Jude 1:18 says that it had been foretold by the apostles, that in the last days there would be scoffers, Peter refers to the instructions of the apostles and prophets in general, though evidently designing that his remarks should bear particularly on the fact that there would be scoffers. Which were spoken before by the holy prophets. The predictions of the prophet before the advent of the Saviour, respecting his character and work, Peter had before appealed to them, (2Pet 1:19-21,) as furnishing important evidence in regard to the truth of the Christian religion, and valuable instruction in reference to its nature. See Notes on that passage. Many of the most important doctrines respecting the kingdom of the Messiah are stated as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New, (comp. Isa 53,) and the prophecies therefore deserve to be studied as an important part of Divine revelation. It should be added here, however, that when Peter wrote there was this special reason why he referred to the prophets, that the canon of the New Testament was not then completed, and he could not make his appeal to that. To some parts of the writings of Paul he could and did appeal, (2Pet 3:15,16,) but probably a very small part of what is now the New Testament was known to those to whom this epistle was addressed. And of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. As being equally entitled with the prophets tb state and enforce the doctrines and duties of religion. It may be observed, that no man would have used this language who did not regard himself and his fellow-apostles as inspired, and as on a level with the prophets.

3 knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

Knowing this first. As among the first and most important things to be attended to--as one of the predictions which demand your special regard. Jude Jude 1:18 says that the fact that there would be "mockers in the last time," had been particularly foretold by them. It is probably that Peter refers to the same thin, and we may suppose that this was so well understood by all the apostles that they made it a common subject of preaching. That there shall come in the last days. In the last dispensation; in the period during which the affairs of the world shall be wound up. The apostle does not say that that was the last time in the sense that the world was about to come to and end; nor is it implied that the period called "the last day" might not be a very long period, longer in fact than either of the previous periods of the world. He says that during that period it had been predicted there would arise those whom he calls scoffers. On the meaning of the phrase "in the last days," as used in the Scriptures, Acts 2:17, Heb 1:2, Isa 2:2. Scoffers. In Jude 1:18 the same Greek word is rendered mockers. The word means those who deride, reproach, ridicule. There is usually in the word the idea of contempt or malignity towards an object. Here the sense seems to be that they would treat with derision or contempt the predictions respecting the advent of the Saviour, and the end of the world. It would appear probable that there was a particular or definite class of men referred to; a class who would hold peculiar opinions, and who would urge plausible objections against the fulfilment of the predictions respecting the end of the world, and the second coming of the Saviour-- for those are the points to which Peter particularly refers. It scarcely required inspiration to foresee that there would be scoffers in the general sense of the term--for they have so abounded in every age, that no would hazard much in saying that they would be found at any particular time; but the eye of the apostle is evidently on a particular class of men, the special form of whose reproaches would be the ridicule of the doctrines that the Lord Jesus would return; that there would be a day of judgment; that the world would be consumed by fire, etc. Archbishop Tillotson explains this of the Carpocratins, a large sect of the Gentiles, who denied the resurrection of the dead, and the future judgment. Walking after their own lusts. Living in the free indulgence of their

sensual appetites. 2Pet 2:10, 2Pet 2:12; 2Pet 2:14; 2Pet 2:18; 2Pet 2:19.

4 and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? That is, either Where is the fulfilment of that promise; or, Where are the indications or signs that he will come? They evidently meant to imply that the promise had utterly failed; that there was not the slightest evidence that it would be accomplished; that they who had believed this were entirely deluded. It is possible that some of the early Christians, even in the time of the apostles, had undertaken to fix the time when these events would occur, as many have done since; and that as that time had passed by, they inferred that the prediction had utterly failed. But whether this were so or not, it was easy to allege that the predictions respecting the second coming of the Saviour seemed to imply that the end of the world was near, and that there were no indications that they would be fulfilled. The laws of nature were uniform, as they had always been, and the alleged promises had failed.

For since the fathers fell asleep. Since they died---death being often, in the Scriptures, as elsewhere, represented as sleep. Notes, John xi. 11; I Cor xi. 30. This reference to the "fathers," by such scoffers, was probably designed to be ironical and contemptuous. Perhaps the meaning may be thus expressed: "These old men, the prophets, indeed foretold this event. They were much concerned and troubled about it; and their predictions alarmed others, and filled their bosoms with dread. They looked out for the signs of the end of the world, and expected that that day was drawing near. But those good men have died. They lived to old age, and then died as others; and since they have departed, the affairs of the world have gone on very much as they did before. The earth is suffered to have rest, and the laws of nature operate in the same way that they always did." It seems not improbable that the immediate reference in the word fathers is not to the prophets of former times, but to aged and pious men of the times of the apostles, who had dwelt much on this subject, and who had made it a subject of conversation and of preaching. Those old men, said the scoffing objector, have

died like others; and, notwithstanding their confident predictions, things now move on as they did from the beginning.

All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. That is, the laws of nature are fixed and settled. The argument here--for it was doubtless designed to be an argument--is based on the stability of the laws of nature, and the uniformity of the course of events. Thus far all these predictions had failed. Things continued to go on as they had always done. The sun rose and set; the tides ebbed and flowed; the seasons followed each other in the usual order; one generation succeeded another, as had always been the case; and there was every indication that those laws would continue to operate as they had always done. This argument for the stability of the earth, and against the prospect of the fulfilment of the predictions of the Bible, would have more force with many minds now than it had then, for eighteen hundred years more have rolled away, and the laws of nature remain the same. Meantime, the expectations of those who have believed that the world was coming to an end have been disappointed; the time set for this by many interpreters of Scripture has passed by; men have looked out in vain for the coming of the Saviour, and sublunary affairs move on as they always have done. Still there are no indications of the coming of the Saviour; and perhaps it would be said that the farther men search, by the aid of science, into the laws of nature, the more they become impressed with their stability, and the more firmly they are convinced of the improbability that the world will be destroyed in the manner in which it is predicted in the Scriptures that it will be. The specious and plausible objection arising from this source, the apostle proposes to meet in the following verses.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

For this they willingly are ignorant of. λανθανειγαραυτουςτουτοθελοντας. There is some considerable variety in the translation of this passage. In our common version the Greek word (θελοντας) is rendered as if it were an adverb, or as if it referred to their ignorance in regard to the event; meaning, that while they might have known this fact, they took no pains to do it, or that they preferred to have its recollection far from their minds. So Beza and Luther render it. Others, however, take it as

referring to what follows, meaning, "being so minded; being of that opinion; or affirming." So Bloomfield, Robinson, (Lex.,) Mede, Rosenmuller, etc. According to this interpretation the sense is, "They who thus will or think; that is, they who hold the opinion that all things will continue to remain as they were, are ignorant of this fact that things have not always thus remained; that there has been a destruction of the world once by water." The Greek seems rather to demand this interpretation; and then the sense of the passage will be, "It is concealed or hidden from those who hold this opinion, that the earth has been once destroyed." It is implied, whichever interpretation is adopted, that the will was concerned in it; that they were influenced by that rather than by sober judgment and by reason; and whether the word refers to their ignorance, or to their holding that opinion, there was obstinacy and perverseness about it. The will has usually more to do in the denial and rejection of the doctrines of the Bible than the understanding has. The argument which the apostle appeals to in reply to this objection is a simple one. The adversaries of the doctrine affirmed that the laws of nature had always remained the same, and they affirmed that they always would. The apostle denies the fact which they assumed, in the sense in which they affirmed it, and maintains that those laws have not been so stable and uniform that the world has never been destroyed by an overwhelming visitation from God. It has been destroyed by a flood; it may be again by fire. There was the same improbability that the event would occur, so far as the argument from the stability of the laws of nature is concerned, in the one case that there is in the other, and consequently the objection is of no force.

That by the word of God. By the command of God. "He spake, and it was done." Comp. Gen 1:6,9, Ps 33:9. The idea here is, that everything depends on his word or will. As the heavens and the earth were originally made by his command, so by the same command they call be destroyed.

The heavens were of old. The heavens were formerly made, Gen 1:1 The word heaven in the Scriptures sometimes refers to the atmosphere, sometimes to the starry worlds as they appear above us, and sometimes to the exalted place where God dwells. Here it

is used, doubtless, in the popular signification, as denoting the heavens as they appear, embracing the sun, moon, and stars.

And the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Marg., consisting. Gr., συνεστωσα. The Greek word, when used in an intransitive sense, means to stand with, or together; then tropically, to place together, to constitute, place, bring into existence. -- Robinson. The idea which our translators seem to have had is, that, in the formation of the earth, a part was out of the water, and a part under the water; and that the former, or the inhabited portion, became entirely submerged, and that thus the inhabitants perished. This was not, however, probably the idea of Peter. He doubtless has reference to the account given in Gen 1 of the creation of the earth, in which water performed so important a part. The thought in his mind seems to have been, that water entered materially into the formation of the earth, and that in its very origin there existed the means by which it was afterwards destroyed. The word which is rendered "standing" should rather be rendered consisting of, or constituted of; and the meaning is, that the creation of the earth was the result of the Divine agency acting on the mass of elements which in Genesis is called waters, Gen 1:2,6,7,9. There was at first a vast fluid, an immense unformed collection of materials, called waters, and from that the earth arose. The point of time, therefore, in which Peter looks at the earth here, is not when the mountains, and continents, and islands, seem to be standing partly out of the water and partly in the water, but when there was a vast mass of materials called waters from which the earth was formed. The phrase "out of the water" (εξυδατος) refers to the origin of the earth. It was formed from, or out of, that mass. The phrase "in the water" (διυδατος) more properly means through or by. It does not mean that the earth stood in the water in the sense that it was partly submerged; but it means not only that the earth arose from that mass that is called water in Gen 1, but that that mass called water was in fact the grand material out of which the earth was formed. It was through or by means of that vast mass of mingled elements that the earth was made as it was. Everything arose out of that chaotic mass; through that, or by means of that, all things were formed, and from the fact that the earth was thus formed out of the

water, or that water entered so essentially into its formation, there existed causes which ultimately resulted in the deluge.

6 whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

The world that then was, etc. Including all its inhabitants. Rosenmuller supposes that the reference here is to some universal catastrophe which occurred before the deluge in the time of Noah, and indeed before the earth was fitted up in its present form, as described by Moses in Gen 1. It is rendered more than probable, by the researches of geologists in modern times, that such changes have occurred; but there is no evidence that Peter was acquainted with them, and his purpose did not require that he should refer to them. All that his argument demanded was the fact that the world had been once destroyed, and that therefore there was no improbability in believing that it would be again. They who maintained that the prediction that the earth would be destroyed was improbable, affirmed that there were no signs of such an event; that the laws of nature were stable and uniform; and that as those laws had been so long and so uniformly unbroken, it was absurd to believe that such an event could occur. To meet this, all that was necessary was to show that, in a case where the same objections substantially might be urged, it had actually occurred, that the world had been destroyed. There was, in itself considered, as much improbability in believing that the world could be destroyed by water as that it would be destroyed by fire, and consequently the objection had no real force. Notwithstanding the apparent stability of the laws of nature, the world had been once destroyed; and there is, therefore, no improbability that it may be again. On the objections which might have been plausibly urged against the flood, Heb 11:7.

7 but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

But the heavens and the earth which are now. As they now exist. There is no difficulty here respecting what is meant by the word earth, but it is not so easy to determine precisely how much is included in the word heavens. It cannot be supposed to mean heaven as the place where God dwells; nor is it necessary to suppose that Peter understood by the word all that would now be

implied in it, as used by a modern astronomer. The word is doubtless employed in a popular signification, referring to the heavens as they appear to the eye; and the idea is, that the conflagration would not only destroy the earth, but would change the heavens as they now appear to us. If, in fact, the earth with its atmosphere should be subjected to an universal conflagration, all that is properly implied in what is here said by Peter would occur.

By the same word. Dependent solely on the will of God. He has only to give command, and all will be destroyed. The laws of nature have no stability independent of his will, and at his pleasure all things could be reduced to nothing, as easily as they were made. A single word, a breath of command, from one Being, a Being over whom we have no control, would spread universal desolation through the heavens and the earth. Notwithstanding the laws of nature, as they are called, and the precision, uniformity, and power with which they operate, the dependence of the universe on the Creator is as entire as though there were no such laws, and as though all were conducted by the mere will of the Most High, irrespective of such laws. In fact, those laws have no efficiency of their own, but are a mere statement of the way in which God produces the changes which occur, the methods by which He operates who "works all in all." At any moment he could suspend them; that is, he could cease to act, or withdraw his efficiency, and the universe would cease to be.

Are kept in store. Gr., "Are treasured up." The allusion in the Greek word is to anything that is treasured up, or reserved for future use. The apostle does not say that this is the only purpose for which the heavens and the earth are preserved, but that this is one object, or this is one aspect in which the subject may be viewed. They are like treasure reserved for future use.

Reserved unto fire. Reserved or kept to be burned up, 2Pet 3:10. The first mode of destroying the world was by water, the next will be by fire. That the world would at some period be destroyed by fire was a common opinion among the ancient philosophers, especially the Greek Stoics. What was the foundation of that opinion, or whence it was derived, it is impossible now to

determine; but it is remarkable that it should have accorded so entirely with the statements of the New Testament. The authorities in proof that this opinion was entertained may be seen in Wetstein, in loc. See Seneca, N. Q. iii. 28; Cic. N. D. ii. 46; Simplicius in Arist. de Ccelo i. 9; Eusebius, P. xv. 18. It is quite remarkable that there have been among the heathen in ancient and modern times so many opinions that accord with the statements of revelation--opinions, many of them, which could not have been founded on any investigations of science among them, and which must, therefore, have been either the result of conjecture, or handed down by tradition. Whatever may have been their origin, the fact that such opinions prevailed and were believed, may be allowed to have some weight in showing that the statements in the Bible are not improbable.

Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The world was destroyed by a flood on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. It would seem from this passage that it will be destroyed by fire with reference to the same cause; at least, that its destruction by fire will involve the perdition of wicked men. It cannot be inferred from this passage that the world will be all wicked at the general conflagration as it was in the time of Noah; but the idea in the mind of Peter seems to have been, that in the destruction of the world by fire the perdition of the wicked will be involved, or will at that time occur. It also seems to be implied that the fire will accomplish an important agency in that destruction, as the water did on the old world. It is not said, in the passage before us, whether those to be destroyed will be living at that time, or will be raised up from the dead, nor have we any means of determining what was the idea of Peter on that point. All that the passage essentially teaches is, that the world is reserved now with reference to such a consummation by fire; that is, that there are elements kept in store that may be enkindled into an universal conflagration, and that such a conflagration will be attended with the destruction of the wicked.

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years. This (2Pet 3:8,9) is the second

consideration by which the apostle meets the objection of scoffers against the doctrine of the second coming of the Saviour. The objection was, that much time, and perhaps the time which had been supposed to be set for his coming, had passed away, and still all things remained as they were. The reply of the apostle is, that no argument could be drawn from this, for that which may seem to be a long time to us is a brief period with God. In the infinity of his own duration there is abundant time to accomplish his designs, and it can make no difference with him whether they are accomplished in one day or extended to a thousand years. Man has but a short time to live, and if he does not accomplish his purposes in a very brief period, he never will. But it is not so with God. He always lives; and we cannot therefore infer, because the execution of his purposes seems to be delayed, that they are abandoned. With Him who always lives it will be as easy to accomplish them at a far distant period as now. If it is his pleasure to accomplish them in a single day, he can do it; if he chooses that the execution shall be deferred to a thousand years, or that a thousand years shall be consumed in executing them, he has power to carry them onward through what seems to us to be so vast a duration. The wicked, therefore, cannot infer that they will escape because their punishment is delayed; nor should the righteous fear that the Divine promises will fail because ages pass away before they are accomplished. The expression here used, that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years," etc., is common in the Rabbinical writings. See Wetstein in loc. A similar thought occurs in Ps 90:4: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise. That is, it should not be inferred because his promise seems to be long delayed that therefore it will fail. When men, after a considerable lapse of time, fail to fulfil their engagements, we infer that it is because they have changed their plans, or because they have forgotten their promises, or because they have no ability to perform them, or because there is a want of principle which makes them regardless of their obligations. But no such inference can be drawn from the apparent delay of the fulfilment of the Divine purposes. Whatever may be the

reasons why they seem to be deferred, we may be sure that it is from no such causes as these.

As some men count slackness. It is probable that the apostle here had his eye on some professing Christians who had become disheartened and impatient, and who, from the delay in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and from the representations of those who denied the truth of the Christian religion, arguing from that delay that it was false, began to fear that his promised coming would indeed never occur. To such he says that it should not be inferred from his delay that he would not return, but that the delay should be regarded as an evidence of his desire that men should have space for repentance, and an opportunity to secure their salvation. 2Pet 3:15.

But is longsuffering to us-ward. Toward us. The delay should be regarded as a proof of his forbearance, and of his desire that men should be saved. Every sinner should consider the fact that he is not cut down in his sins, not as a proof that God will not punish the wicked, but as a demonstration that he is now forbearing, and is willing that he should have an ample opportunity to obtain eternal life. No man should infer that God will not execute his threatenings, unless he can look into the most distant parts of a coming eternity, and demonstrate that there is no suffering appointed for the sinner there; any man who sins, and who is spared even for a moment, should regard the respite as a proof that God is merciful and forbearing now.

Not willing that any should perish. That is, he does not desire it or wish it. His nature is benevolent, and he sincerely desires the eternal happiness of all, and his patience towards sinners proves that he is willing that they should be saved. If he were not willing, it would be easy for him to cut them off, and exclude them from hope at once. This passage, however, should not be adduced to prove

(1.) that sinners never will in fact perish; for

(a.) the passage does not refer to what God will do as the final Judge of mankind, but to what are his feelings and desires now towards men.

(b.) One may have a sincere desire that others should not perish, and yet it may be that, in entire consistency with that, they will perish. A parent has a sincere wish that his children should not be punished, and yet he himself may be under a moral necessity to punish them. A lawgiver may have a sincere wish that no one should ever break the laws, or be punished, and yet he himself may build a prison, and construct a gallows, and cause the law to be executed in a most rigorous manner. A judge on the bench may have a sincere desire that no man should be executed, and that every one arraigned before him should be found to be innocent, and yet even he, in entire accordance with that wish, and with a most benevolent heart, even with tears in his eyes, may pronounce the sentence of the law. (c.) It cannot be inferred that all that the heart of infinite benevolence would desire will be accomplished by his mere will. It is evidently as much in accordance with the benevolence of God that no man should be miserable in this world, as it is that no one should suffer in the next, since the difficulty is not in the question where one shall suffer, but in the fact itself that any should suffer; and it is just as much in accordance with his nature that all should he happy here, as that they should be happy hereafter. And yet no man can maintain that the fact that God is benevolent proves that no one will suffer here. As little will that fact prove that none will suffer in the world to come.

(2.) The passage should not be adduced to prove that God has no purpose, and has formed no plan, in regard to the destruction of the wicked; for

(a.) the word here used has reference rather to his disposition, or to his nature, than to any act or plan.

(b.) There is a sense, as is admitted by all, in which he does will the destruction of the wicked--to wit, if they do not repent--that is, if they deserve it.

(c.) Such an act is as inconsistent with his general benevolence as an eternal purpose in the matter, since his eternal purpose can only have been to do what he actually does; and if it be consistent with a sincere desire that sinners should be saved to do this, then it is consistent to determine beforehand to do it--for to determine before

hand to do what is in fact right, cannot but be a lovely trait in the character of any one.

(3.) The passage then proves

(a.) that God has a sincere desire that men should be saved;

(b.) that any purpose in regard to the destruction of sinners is not founded on mere will, or is not arbitrary;

(c.) that it would be agreeable to the nature of God, and to his arrangements in the plan of salvation, if all men should come to repentance, and accept the offers of mercy; (d.) that if any come to him truly penitent, and desirous to be saved, they will not be cast off;

(e.) that, since it is in accordance with him nature that he should desire that all men may be saved, it may be presumed that he has made an arrangement by which it is possible that they should be; and

(f.) that, since this is his desire, it is proper for the ministers of religion to offer salvation to every human being. Comp. Eze 33:11.

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord Jesus. That is, the day in which he will be manifested. It is called his day, because he will then be the grand and prominent object as the Judge of all. Comp. Lk 17:27.

Will come as a thief in the night. Unexpectedly; suddenly. 1Thes 5:2.

In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. That is, what seems to us to be the heavens. It cannot mean that the holy abode where God dwells will pass away; nor need we suppose that

this declaration extends to the starry worlds and systems as disclosed by the modern astronomy. The word is doubtless used in a popular sense--that is, as things appear to us; and the fair interpretation of the passage would demand only such a change as would occur by the destruction of this world by fire. If a conflagration should take place, embracing the earth and its surrounding atmosphere, all the phenomena would occur which are here described; and, if this would be so, then this is all that can be proved to be meant by the passage. Such a destruction of the elements could not occur without "a great noise."

And the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Gr., "the elements being burned, or burning, (καυσουμενα,) shall be dissolved." The idea is, that the cause of their being "dissolved" shall be fire; or that there will be a conflagration extending to what are here called the "elements," that shall produce the effects here described by the word "dissolved." There has been much difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word here rendered elements, (στοιχεια.) The word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Gal 4:3,9, 2Pet 3:10,12, in which it is rendered elements; Col 2:8,20, in which it is rendered rudiments; and in Heb 5:12, where it is tendered principles. For the general meaning of the word, Gall 4:3. The word denotes the rudiments of anything; the minute parts or portions of which anything is composed, or which constitutes the simple portions out of which anything grows, or of which it is compounded. Here it would properly denote the component parts of the material world; or those which enter into its composition, and of which it is made up. It is not to be supposed that the apostle used the term with the same exact signification with which a chemist would use it now, but in accordance with the popular use of the term in his day. In all ages, and in all languages, some such word, with more or less of scientific accuracy, has been employed to denote the primary materials out of which others were formed, just as, in most languages, there have been characters or letters to denote the elementary sounds of which language is composed. The ancients in general supposed that the elements out of which all things were formed were four--air, earth, fire, and water. Modern science has entirely overturned this theory, and has shown that these, so far from being simple elements, are themselves compounds; but the tendency of modern science is still to show that the elements of all things are

in fact few in number. The word, as here used by Peter, would refer to the elements of things as then understood in a popular sense; it would now not be an improper word to be applied to the few elements of which all things are composed, as disclosed by modern chemistry. In either case the use of the word would be correct. Whether applied to the one or the other, science has shown that all are capable of combustion. Water, in its component parts, is inflammable in a high degree; and even the diamond has been shown to be combustible. The idea contained in the word "dissolved," is, properly, only the change which heat produces. Heat changes the forms of things; dissolves them into their elements; dissipates those which were solid by driving them off into gases, and produces new compounds, but it annihilates nothing. It could not be demonstrated from this phrase that the world would be annihilated by fire; it could be proved only that it will undergo important changes. So far as the action of fire is concerned, the form of the earth may pass away, and its aspect be changed; but unless the direct power which created it interposes to annihilate it, the matter which now composes it will still be in existence.

The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.

That is, whether they are the works of God or man--the whole vegetable and animal creation, and all the towers, the towns, the palaces, the productions of genius, the paintings, the statuary, the books, which man has made.

"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the great globe itself, And all that it inherits, shall disrobe, And, like the baseless fabric of a vision, Leave not one wreck behind."

The word rendered "burned up," like the word just before used and rendered fervent heat--a word of the same origin, but here intensive --means that they will undergo such a change as fire will produce; not, necessarily, that the matter composing them will be annihilated. If the matter composing the earth is ever to be destroyed entirely, it must be by the immediate power of God, for only He who created

can destroy. There is not the least evidence that a particle of matter originally made has been annihilated since the world began; and there are no fires so intense, no chemical powers so mighty, as to cause a particle of matter to cease wholly to be. So far as the power of man is concerned, and so far as one portion of matter can prey on another, matter is as imperishable as mind, and neither can be destroyed unless God destroys it. Whether it is his purpose to annihilate any portion of the matter which he has made, does not appear from his word; but it is clear that he intends that the universe shall undergo important changes. As to the possibility or probability of such a destruction by fire as is here predicted, no one can have any doubt who is acquainted with the disclosures of modern science in regard to the internal structure of the earth. Even the ancient philosophers, from some cause, supposed that the earth would yet be destroyed by fire, (2Pet 3:7;) and modern science has made it probable that the interior of the earth is a melted and intensely heated mass of burning materials; that the habitable world is but a comparatively thin crust or shell over those internal fires; that earthquakes are caused by the vapours engendered by that heated mass whet, water comes in contact with it; and that volcanoes are but openings and vent-holes through which those internal flames make their way to the surface. Whether these fires will everywhere make their way to the surface, and produce an universal conflagration, perhaps could not be determined by science; but no one can doubt that the simple command of God would be all that is necessary to pour those burning floods over the earth, as he once caused the waters to roll over every mountain and through every valley. As to the question whether it is probable that such a change produced by fire, and bringing the present order of things to a close, will occur, it may be remarked farther, that there is reason to believe that such changes are in fact taking place in other worlds. "During the last two or three centuries, upwards of thirteen fixed stars have disappeared. One of them, situated in the northern hemisphere, presented a peculiar brilliancy, and was so bright as to be seen by the naked eye at mid-day. It seemed to be on fire, appearing at first of a dazzling white, then of a reddish yellow, and lastly of an ashy pale colour. La Place supposes that it was burned up, as it has never been seen since. The conflagration was visible about sixteen months." The well-known astronomer, Von Littrow, in the section of his work on "New and Missing Stars," (entitled Die Wunder der

Himmels oder Gemeinfassliche Darstellung der Weltsystems, Stuttgard, 1843, & 227,) observes: "Great as may be the revolutions which take place on the surface of those fixed stars, which are subject to this alternation of light, what entirely different changes may those others have experienced, which in regions of the firmament where no star had ever been before, appeared to blaze up in clear flames, and then to disappear, perhaps for ever." He then gives a brief history of those stars which have excited the particular attention of astronomers. "In the year 1572, on the 11th of November," says he, "Tycho, on passing from his chemical laboratory to the observatory, through the court of his house, observed in the constellation Cassiopeia, at a place where before he had only seen very small stars, a new star of uncommon magnitude. It was so bright that it surpassed even Jupiter and Venus in splendour, and was visible even in the day-time. During the whole time in which it was visible, Tycho could observe no parallax or change of position. At the end of the year, however, it gradually diminished; and at length, in March 1574, sixteen months after its discovery, entirely disappeared, since which all traces of it have been lost. When it first appeared, its light was of a dazzling white colour; in January 1573, two months after its reviving, it became yellowish; in a few months it assumed a reddish hue, like Mars or Aldebaran; and in the beginning of the year 1574, two or three months before its total disappearance, it glimmered only with a gray or lead-coloured light, similar to that of Saturn." See Bibliotheca Sacra, III, p. 181. If such things occur in other worlds, there is nothing improbable or absurd in the supposition that they may yet occur on the earth.

11 *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness,

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved. Since this is an undoubted truth. What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. In holy conduct and piety. That is, this fact ought to be allowed to exert a deep and abiding influence on us, to induce us to lead holy lives. We should feel that there is nothing permanent on the earth; that this is not our abiding home; and that our great interests are in another world. We should be serious, humble, and prayerful; and should make it our great object to be prepared for the solemn scenes through which we are soon to

pass. An habitual contemplation of the truth, that all that we see is soon to pass away, would produce a most salutary effect on the mind. It would make us serious. It would repress ambition. It would lead us not to desire to accumulate what must so soon be destroyed. It would prompt us to lay up our treasures in heaven. It would cause us to ask with deep earnestness whether we are prepared for these amazing scenes, should they suddenly burst upon us.

Looking for. Not knowing when this may occur, the mind should be in that state which constitutes expectation; that is, a belief that it will occur, and a condition of mind in which we would not be taken by surprise should it happen at any moment. Tit 2:13. And hasting unto the coming. Marg., as in Greek, "hasting the coming." The Greek word rendered hasting, (σπευδω,) means to urge on, to hasten; and then to hasten after anything, to await with eager desire. This is evidently the sense here.--Wetstein and Robinson. The state of mind which is indicated by the word is that when we are anxiously desirous that anything should occur, and when we would hasten or accelerate it if we could. The true Christian does not dread the coming of that day. He looks forward to it as the period of his redemption, and would welcome, at any time, the return of his Lord and Saviour. While he is willing to wait as long as it shall please God for the advent of his Redeemer, yet to him the brightest prospect in the future is that hour when he shall come to take him to himself. The coming of the day of God. Called "the day of God," because God will then be manifested in his power and glory.

hasting unto—with the utmost eagerness desiring [WAHL], praying for, and contemplating, the coming Saviour as at hand. The Greek may mean "hastening (that is, urging onward [ALFORD]) the day of God"; not that God's eternal appointment of the time is changeable, but God appoints us as instruments of accomplishing those events which must be first before the day of God can come. By praying for His coming, furthering the preaching of the Gospel for a witness to all nations, and bringing in those whom "the long-suffering of God" waits to save, we hasten the coming of the day of God. The Greek verb is always in New Testament used as neuter (as English Version here), not active; but the Septuagint uses it actively. Christ says, "Surely I come quickly. Amen." Our part is

to speed forward this consummation by praying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Re 22:20).

12 looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Nevertheless we, according to his promise. The allusion here seems to be, beyond a doubt, to two passages in Isaiah, in which a promise of this kind is found. Isa 65:17: "For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isa 66:22: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord," etc. Comp. Rev 21:1, where John says he had a vision of the new heaven and the new earth which was promised: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." Isa 65:17. Look for new heavens and a new earth. It may not be easy to answer many of the questions which might be asked respecting the "new heavens and earth" here mentioned. One of those which are most naturally asked is is, whether the apostle meant to say that this earth, after being purified by fire, would be fitted up again for the abode of the redeemed; but this question it is impossible to answer with certainty. The following remarks may perhaps embrace all that is known, or that can be shown to be probable, on the meaning of the passage before us. I The "new heavens and the new earth" referred to will be such as will exist after the world shall have been destroyed by fire; that is, after the general judgment. There is not a word expressed, and not a hint given, of any "new heaven and earth" previous to this, in which the Saviour will reign personally over his saints, in such a renovated world, through a long millennial period. The order of events stated by Peter, is

(a.) that the heavens and earth which are now, are "kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men," 2Pet 3:7;

(b.) that the day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly, 2Pet 3:10; that then the heavens and earth will pass away with a

great noise, the elements will melt, and the earth with all its works be burned up, 2Pet 3:10; and

(c.) that after this (2Pet 3:13) we are to expect the "new heavens and new earth." Nothing is said of a personal reign of Christ; nothing of the resurrection of the saints to dwell with him on the earth; nothing of the world's being fitted up for their abode previous to the final judgment. If Peter had any knowledge of such events, and believed that they would occur, it is remarkable that he did not even allude to them here. The passage before us is one of the very few places in the New Testament where allusion is made to the manner in which the affairs of the world will be closed; and it cannot be explained why, if he looked for such a glorious personal reign of the Saviour, the subject should have been passed over in total silence. II The word "new," applied to the heavens and the earth that are to succeed the present, might express one of the following three things--that is, either of these things would correspond with all that is fairly implied in that word:

(a.) If a new world was literally created out of nothing after this world is destroyed; for that would be in the strictest sense new. That such an event is possible no one can doubt, though it is not revealed.

(b.) If an inhabitant of the earth should dwell after death on any other of the worlds now existing, it would be to him a "new" abode, and everything would appear new. Let him, for instance, be removed to the planet Saturn, with its wonderful ring, and its seven moons, and the whole aspect of the heavens, and of the world on which he would then dwell, would be new to him. The same thing would occur if he were to dwell on any other of the heavenly bodies, or if he were to pass from world to world. See this illustrated at length in the works of Thomas Dick, LLd.---"Celestial Scenery," etc. Comp. 1Pet 1:12

(c.) If the earth should be renovated, and fitted up for the abode of man after the universal conflagration, it would then be a new abode, III. This world, thus renovated, may be from time to time the temporary abode of the redeemed, after the final judgment. No one can prove that this may not be, though there is no evidence that it

will be their permanent and eternal abode, or that even all the redeemed will at any one time find a home on this globe, for no one can suppose that the earth is spacious enough to furnish a dwelling-place for all the unnumbered millions that are to be saved. But that the earth may again be revisited from time to time by the redeemed; that in a purified and renovated form it may be one of the "many mansions" which are to be fitted up for them, (Jn 14:2,) may not appear wholly improbable from the following suggestions:

(1.) It seems to have been a law of the earth that in its progress it should be prepared at one period for the dwelling-place of a higher order of beings at another period. Thus, according to the disclosures of geology, it existed perhaps for countless ages before it was fitted to be an abode for man; and that it was occupied by the monsters of an inferior order of existence, who have now passed away to make room for a nobler race. Who can tell but the present order of things may pass away to make place for the manifestations of a more exalted mode of being?

(2.) There is no certain evidence that any world has been annihilated, though some have disappeared from human view. Indeed, as observed above, (2Pet 3:10,) there is no proof that a single particle of matter ever has been annihilated, or ever will be. It may change its form, but it may still exist.

(3.) It seems also to accord most with probability, that, though the earth may undergo important changes by flood or fire, it will not be annihilated. It seems difficult to suppose that, as a world, it will be wholly displaced from the system of which it is now a part, or that the system itself will disappear. The earth, as one of the worlds of God, has occupied too important a position in the history of the universe to make it to be easily believed that the place where the Son of God became incarnate and died, shall be utterly swept away. It would, certainly, accord more with all the feelings which we can have on such a subject, to suppose that a world once so beautiful when it came from the hand of its Maker, should be restored to primitive loveliness; that a world which seems to have been made primarily (1Pet 1:12) with a view to illustrate the glory of God in redemption, should be preserved in some appropriate form to be

the theatre of the exhibition of the development of that plan in far distant ages to come.

(4.) To the redeemed, it would be most interesting again to visit the spot where the great work of their redemption was accomplished; where the Son of God became incarnate and made atonement for sin; and where there would be so many interesting recollections and associations, even after the purification by fire, connected with the infancy of their existence, and their preparation for eternity. Piety would at least wish that the world where Gethsemane and Calvary are should never be blotted out from the universe. But

(5.) if, after their resurrection and reception into heaven, the redeemed shall ever revisit a world so full of interesting recollections and associations, where they began their being, where their Redeemer lived and died, where they were renewed and sanctified, and where their bodies once rested in the grave, there is no reason to suppose that this will be their permanent and unchanging abode. It may be mere speculation, but it seems to accord best with the goodness of God, and with the manner in which the universe is made, to suppose that every portion of it may be visited, and become successively the abode of the redeemed; that they may pass from world to world, and survey the wonders and the works of God as they are displayed in different worlds. The universe, so vast, seems to have been fitted up for such a purpose, and nothing else that we can conceive of will be so adapted to give employment without weariness to the minds that God has made, in the interminable duration before them. IV. The new heavens and earth will be holy. They will be the abode of righteousness for ever.

(a.) This fact is clearly revealed in the verse before us: "wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is also the correct statement of the Scriptures, Rev 21:27, 1Cor 6:9,10, Heb 12:14.

(b.) This will be in strong contrast with what has occurred on earth. The history of this world has been almost entirely a history of sin--of its nature, developments, results. There have been no perfectly holy beings on the earth, except the Saviour, and the angels who have occasionally visited it. There has been no perfectly holy place--city, village, hamlet; no perfectly holy community. But the future

world, in strong contrast with this, will be perfectly pure, and will be a fair illustration of what religion in its perfect form will do.

(c.) It is for this that the Christian desires to dwell in that world, and waits for the coming of his Saviour. It is not primarily that he may be happy, desirable as that is, but that he may be in a world where he himself will be perfectly pure, and where all around him will be pure; where every being that he meets shall be "holy as God is holy," and every place on which his eye rests, or his foot treads, shall be uncontaminated by sin. To the eye of faith and hope, how blessed is the prospect of such a world!

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent. That is, in securing your salvation. The effect of such hopes and prospects should be to lead us to an earnest inquiry whether we are prepared to dwell in a holy world, and to make us diligent in performing the duties, and patient in bearing the trials of life. He who has such hopes set before him, should seek earnestly that he may be enabled truly to avail himself of them, and should make their attainment meet the great object of his life. He who is so soon to come to an end of all weary toil, should be willing to labour diligently and faithfully while life lasts, he who is so soon to be relieved from all temptation and trial, should be willing to bear a little longer the sorrows of the present world What are all these compared with the glory that awaits us? Comp. 1Cor 15:58; Rom 8:18, seq. 2Cor 4:16, seq. That ye may be found of him in peace. Found by him when he returns in such a state as to secure your eternal peace. Without spot, and blameless. Eph 5:27. It should be an object of earnest effort with us to have the last stain of sin and pollution removed from our souls. A deep feeling that we are soon to stand in the presence of a holy God, our final Judge, cannot but have a happy influence in making us pure.

15 And account *that* the long-suffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Regard his delay in coming to judge the world, not as an evidence that he never will come, but as a proof of his desire that we should

be saved. Many had drawn a different inference from the fact that: the Saviour did not return, and had supposed that it was a proof that he would never come, and that his promises had failed. Peter says that that conclusion was not authorized, but that we should rather regard it as an evidence of his mercy, and of his desire that we should be saved. This conclusion is as proper now as it was then. Wicked men should not infer, because God does not cut them down, that therefore they never will be punished, or that God is not faithful to his threatenings. They should rather regard it as a proof that he is willing to save them; for

(1.) he might justly cut them off for their sins;

(2.) the only reason of which we have knowledge why he spares the wicked is to give them space for repentance; and

(3.) as long as life is prolonged a sinner has the opportunity to repent, and may turn to God. We may therefore, in our own case, look on all the delays of God to punish--on all his patience and forbearance towards us, notwithstanding our sins and provocations--on the numberless tokens of his kindness scattered along our way, as evidence that he is not willing that we should perish. What an accumulated argument in any case would this afford of the willingness of God to save! Let any man look on his own sins, his pride, and selfishness, and sensuality; let him contemplate the fact that he has sinned through many years, and against many mercies; let him endeavour to estimate the number and magnitude of his offences, and upon God's patience in bearing with him while these have been committed, and who can overrate the force of such an argument in proof that God is slow to anger, and is willing to save? Rom 2:4. Even as our beloved brother Paul also. From this reference to Paul the following things are clear:

(1.) that Peter was acquainted with his writings;

(2.) that he presumed that those to whom he wrote were also acquainted with them;

(3.) that Peter regarded Paul as a "beloved brother," notwithstanding the solemn rebuke which Paul had had occasion to administer to him, Gal 2:2, seq.;

(4.) that he regarded him as authority in inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion; and

(5.) that he regarded him as an inspired man, and his writings as a part of Divine truth. 2Pet 3:16. That Peter has shown in his epistles that he was acquainted with the writings of Paul, has been abundantly proved by Eichhon, (Einleitung in das N. Tes. viii. 606, seq.,) and will be apparent by a comparison of the following passages: Eph 1:3, with 1Pet 3:1; Col 3:8, with 1Pet 2:1; Eph 5:22, with 1Pet 3:1; Eph 5:21, with 1Pet 5:5; 1Thes 5:6, with 1Pet 5:8; 1Cor 16:20 with 1Pet 5:14; Rom 8:18, with 1Pet 5:1; Rom 4:24 with 1Pet 1:21; Rom 13:1,3,4 with 1Pet 2:13,14; 1Timm 2:9, with 1Pet 3:5. The writings of the apostles were doubtless extensively circulated; and one apostle, though himself inspired, could not but feel a deep interest in the writings of another. There would be cases also, as in the instance before us, in which one would wish to confirm his own sentiments by the acknowledged wisdom, experience, and authority of another.

According to the wisdom given unto him. Peter evidently did not mean to disparage that wisdom, or to express a doubt that Paul was endowed with wisdom; he meant undoubtedly that, in regard to Paul, the same thing was true which he would have affirmed of himself or of any other man, that whatever wisdom he had was to be traced to a higher than human origin. This would at the same time tend to secure more respect for the opinion of Paul than if he had said it was his own, and would keep up in the minds of those to whom he wrote a sense of the truth that all wisdom is from above. In reference to ourselves, to our friends, to our teachers, and to all men, it is proper to bear in remembrance the fact that all true wisdom is from the "Father of lights." Comp. Jas 1:6,17.

Hath written unto you. It is not necessary to suppose that Paul had written any epistles addressed specifically, and by name, to the persons to whom Peter wrote. It is rather to be supposed that the persons to whom Peter wrote (1Pet 1:1) lived in the regions to

which some of Paul's epistles were addressed, and that they might be regarded as addressed to them. The epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians were of this description, all addressed to churches in Asia Minor, and all, therefore, having reference to the same people to whom Peter addressed his epistles.

16 as also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.

As also in all his epistles. Not only in those which he addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, but in his epistles generally. It is to be presumed that they might have had an acquaintance with some of the other epistles of Paul, as well as those sent to the churches in their immediate vicinity.

Speaking in them of these things. The things which Peter had dwelt upon in his two epistles. The great doctrines of the cross; of the depravity of man; of the Divine purposes; of the new birth; of the consummation of all things; of the return of the Saviour to judge the world, and to receive his people to himself; the duty of a serious, devout, and prayerful life, and of being prepared for the heavenly world. These things are constantly dwelt upon by Paul, and to his authority in these respects Peter might appeal with the utmost confidence.

In which. The common reading in this passage is ενοις, and according to this the reference is to the subjects treated of--"in which things" --referring to what he had just spoken of--"speaking of these things." This reading is found in the common editions of the New Testament, and is supported by far the greater number of Mss., and by most commentators and critics. It is found in Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and has every evidence of being the genuine reading. Another reading, however, (εναις,) is found in some valuable Mss., and is supported by the Syriac and Arabic versions, and adopted by Mill, (Proleg. 1484,) and by Beza. According to this, the reference is to the epistles themselves as would seem to be implied in our common version. The true construction, so far as the evidence goes, is to refer it not directly to the epistles, but to the things of which

Peter says Paul wrote; that is, not to the style and language of Paul, but to the great truths and doctrines which he taught. Those doctrines were indeed contained in his epistles, but still, according to the fair construction of the passage before us, Peter should not be understood as accusing Paul of obscurity of style. He refers not to the difficulty of understanding what Paul meant, but to the difficulty of comprehending the great truths, which he taught. This is, generally, the greatest difficulty in regard to the statements of Paul. The difficulty is not that the meaning of the writer is not plain, but it is either

(a.) that the mind is overpowered by the grandeur of the thought, and the incomprehensible nature of the theme, or

(b.) that the truth is so unpalatable, and the mind is so prejudiced against it, that we are unwilling to receive it. Many a man knows well enough what Paul means, and would receive his doctrines without hesitation if the heart was not opposed to it; and in this state of mind Paul is charged with obscurity, when the real difficulty lies only in the heart of him who makes the complaint. If this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it should not be adduced to prove that Paul is an obscure writer, whatever may be true on that point. There are, undoubtedly, obscure things in his writings, as there are in all other ancient compositions, but this passage should not be adduced to prove that he had not the faculty of making himself understood. An honest heart, a willingness to receive the truth, is one of the best qualifications for understanding the writings of Paul; and when this exists, no one will fall to find truth that may be comprehended, and that will be eminently adapted to sanctify and save the soul.

Are some things hard to be understood. Things pertaining to high and difficult subjects, and which are not easy to be comprehended. Peter does not call in question the truth of what Paul had written; he does not intimate that he himself would differ from him. His language is rather that which a man would use who regarded the writings to which he referred as true, and what he says here is an honourable testimony to the authority of Paul. It may be added,

(1.) that Peter does not say that all the doctrines of the Bible, or even all the doctrines of Paul, are hard to be understood, or that nothing is plain.

(2.) He says nothing about withholding the Bible, or even the writings of Paul, from the mass of Christians, on the ground of the difficulty of understanding the Scriptures; nor does he intimate that that was the design of the Author of the Bible.

(3.) It is perfectly manifest, from this very passage, that the writings of Paul were in fact in the hands of the people, else how could they wrest and pervert them?

(4.) Peter says nothing about an infallible interpreter of any kind, nor does he intimate that either he or his "successors" were authorized to interpret them for the church.

(5.) With what propriety can the pretended successor of Peter--the pope--undertake to expound those difficult doctrines in the writings of Paul, when even Peter himself did not undertake it, and when he did not profess to be able to comprehend them? Is the pope more skilled in the knowledge of Divine things than the apostle Peter? Is he better qualified to interpret the sacred writings than an inspired apostle was?

(6.) Those portions of the writings of Paul, for anything that appears to the contrary, are just as "hard to be understood" now, as they were before the "infallible" church undertook to explain them. The world is little indebted to any claims of infallibility in explaining the meaning of tile oracles of God. It remains yet to be seen that any portion of the Bible has been made clearer by any mere authoritative explanation. And

(7.) it should be added, that without any such exposition, the humble inquirer after truth may find enough in the Bible to guide his feet in the paths of salvation. No one ever approached the sacred Scriptures with a teachable heart, who did not find them "able to make him wise unto salvation." Compare 2Ti 3:15.

Which they that are unlearned. The evil here adverted to is that which arises in cases where those without competent knowledge undertake to become expounders of the word of God. It is not said that it is not proper for them to attempt to become instructed by the aid of the sacred writings; but the danger is, that without proper views of interpretation, of language, and of ancient customs, they might be in danger of perverting and abusing certain portions of the writings of Paul. Intelligence among the people is everywhere in the Bible presumed to be proper in understanding the sacred Scriptures; and ignorance may produce the same effects in interpreting the Bible which it will produce in interpreting other writings. Every good thing is liable to abuse; but the proper way to correct this evil, and to remove this danger, is not to keep the people in ignorance, or to appoint some one to be an infallible interpreter; it is to remove the ignorance itself by enlightening the people, and rendering them better qualified to understand the sacred oracles. The way to remove error is not to perpetuate ignorance; it is to enlighten the mind, so that it may be qualified to appreciate the truth.

And unstable. Who have no settled principles and views. The evil here adverted to is that which arises where those undertake to interpret the Bible who have no established principles. They regard nothing as settled. They have no landmarks set up to guide their inquiries. They have no stability in their character, and Of course nothing can be regarded as settled in their methods Of interpreting the Bible. They are under the control of feeling and emotion, and are liable to embrace one opinion to-day, and another directly opposite to-morrow. But the way to prevent this evil is not by attempting to give to a community an authoritative interpretation of the Bible; it is to diffuse abroad just principles, that men may obtain from the Bible an intelligent view of what it means.

Wrest. Pervert--στρεβλουσιν. The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a windlass, winch, instrument of torture, (στρεβλη,) and means to roll or wind on a windlass; then to wrench, or turn away, as by the force of a windlass; and then to wrest or pervert. It implies a turning out of the way by the application of force, here the meaning is, that they apply those portions of the Bible to a purpose for which they were never intended. It is doubtless true that this may occur. Men may

abuse and pervert anything that is good. But the way to prevent this is not to set up a pretended infallible interpreter. With all the perversities arising from ignorance in the interpreter of the Bible; in all the crude, and weak, and fanciful expositions which could be found among those who have interpreted the Scriptures for themselves--and they are many--if they were all collected together, there would not be found so many adapted to corrupt and ruin the soul, as have come from the interpretations attempted to be palmed upon the world by the one church that claims to be the infallible expounder of the word of God.

As they do also the other scriptures. This is an unequivocal declaration of Peter that he regarded the writings of Paul as a part of the holy Scriptures, and of course that he considered him as inspired. The word "Scriptures," as used by a Jew, had a technical signification--meaning the inspired writings, and was the common word which was applied to the sacred writings of the Old Testament. As Peter uses this language, it implies that he regarded the writings of Paul as on a level with the Old Testament; and as far as the testimony of one apostle can go to confirm the claim of another to inspiration, it proves that the writings of Paul are entitled to a place in the sacred canon. It should be remarked, also, that Peter evidently speaks here of the common estimate in which the writings of Paul were held. He addresses those to whom he wrote, not in such a way as to declare to them that the writings of Paul were to be regarded as a part of the inspired volume, but as if this were already known, and were an admitted point.

Unto their own destruction. By embracing false doctrines. Error destroys the soul; and it is very possible for a man so to read the Bible as only to confirm himself in error. He may find passages which, by a perverted interpretation, shall seem to sustain his own views; and, instead of embracing the truth, may live always under delusion, and perish at last. It is not to be inferred that every man who reads the Bible, or even every one who undertakes to be its public expounder, will certainly be saved.

17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

Seeing that ye know these things before. Being aware of this danger, and knowing that such results may follow. Men should read the Bible with the feeling that it is possible that they may fall into error, and be deceived at last. This apprehension will do much to make them diligent, and candid, and prayerful, in studying the word of God. With the error of the wicked. Wicked men. Such as he had referred to in chapter 2, who became public teachers of religion. Fall from your own stedfastness. Your firm adherence to the truth. The particular danger here referred to is not that of failing from grace, or from true religion, but from the firm and settled principles of religious truth into error.

18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

But grow in grace. Comp. Col 1:10. Religion in general is often represented as grace, since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favour; and to "grow in grace" is to increase in that which constitutes true religion. Religion is as susceptible of cultivation and of growth as any other virtue of the soul. It is feeble in its beginnings, like the grain of mustard seed, or like the germ or blade of the plant, and it increases as it is cultivated. There is no piety in the world which is not the result of cultivation, and which cannot be measured by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich, who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess.

And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jn 17:3. Comp. Col 1:10. To know the Lord Jesus Christ--to possess just views of his person, character, and work---is the sum and essence of the Christian religion; and with this injunction, therefore, the apostle appropriately closes this epistle. He who has a saving knowledge of Christ, has in fact all that is essential to his welfare in the life that is, and in that which is to come; he who has not this knowledge, though he may be distinguished in the learning of the schools, and may be

profoundly skilled in the sciences, has in reality no knowledge that will avail him in the great matters pertaining to his eternal welfare. To him be glory, etc. Comp. Rom 16:27; 2Ti 4:18. With the desire that honour and glory should be rendered to the Redeemer, all the aspirations of true Christians appropriately close. There is no wish more deeply cherished in their hearts than this; there is nothing that will enter more into their worship in heaven; Compare Rev 1:5,6, 5:12,13. But grow in grace. Comp. Col 1:10. Religion in general is often represented as grace, since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favour; and to "grow in grace" is to increase in that which constitutes true religion. Religion is as susceptible of cultivation and of growth as any other virtue of the soul. It is feeble in its beginnings, like the grain of mustard seed, or like the germ or blade of the plant, and it increases as it is cultivated. There is no piety in the world which is not the result of cultivation, and which cannot be measured by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich, who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess.

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The First Epistle of John
[1 John]

1 John-1

The Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

That which was from the beginning. There can be no doubt that the reference here is to the Lord Jesus Christ, or the "Word" that was made flesh. Jn 1:1. This is such language as John would use respecting him, and indeed the phrase "the beginning," as applicable to the Lord Jesus, is peculiar to John in the writings of the New Testament: and the language here may be regarded as one proof that this epistle was written by him, for it is just such an expression as he would use, but not such as one would be likely to adopt who should attempt to palm off his own writings as those of John. One who should have attempted that would have been likely to introduce the name John in the beginning of the epistle, or in some way to have claimed his authority. The apostle, in speaking of "that which was from the beginning," uses a word in the neuter gender instead of the masculine, (o.) It is not to be supposed, I think, that he meant to apply this term directly to the Son of God, for if he had he would have used the masculine pronoun; but though he had the Son of God in view, and meant to make a strong affirmation respecting him, yet the particular thing here referred to was whatever there was respecting that incarnate Saviour that furnished testimony to any of the senses, or that pertained to his character and doctrine, he had borne witness to. He was looking rather at the evidence that he was incarnate; the proofs that he was manifested; and he says that those proofs had been subjected to the trial of the senses, and he had borne witness to them, and now did it again. This is what is referred to, it seems to me, by the phrase "that which," (o.) The sense may be this: "Whatever there was respecting the Word of life, or him who is the living Word, the incarnate Son of God, from the very beginning, from the time when he was first manifested in the flesh; whatever there was respecting his exalted nature, his dignity, his character, that could be subjected to the testimony of the senses, to be

the object of sight, or hearing, or touch, that I was permitted to see, and that I declare to you respecting him." John claims to be a competent witness in reference to everything which occurred as a manifestation of what the Son of God was. If this be the correct interpretation, then the phrase "from the beginning" (απαρχης) does not here refer to his eternity, or his being in the beginning of all things, as the phrase "in the beginning" (εναρχη) does in Jn 1:1; but rather means from the very commencement of his manifestation as the Son of God, the very first indications on earth of what he was as the Messiah. When the writer says (@1Jo 1:3) that he "declares" this to them, it seems to me that he has not reference merely to what he would say in this epistle, for he does not go extensively into it here, but that he supposes that they had his gospel in their possession, and that he also means to refer to that, or presumes that they were familiar with the testimony which he had borne in that gospel respecting the evidence that the "Word became flesh." Many have indeed supposed that this epistle accompanied the gospel when it was published, and was either a part of it that became subsequently detached from it, or was a letter that accompanied it. See Hug. Intro. P. II. & 68. There is, it seems to me, no certain evidence of that; but no one can doubt that he supposed that those to whom he wrote had access to that gospel, and that he refers here to the testimony which he had borne in that respecting the incarnate Word.

Which we have heard. John was with the Saviour through the whole of his ministry, and he has recorded more that the Saviour said than either of the other evangelists. It is on what he said of himself that he grounds much of the evidence that he was the Son of God.

Which we have seen with our eyes. That is, pertaining to his person, and to what he did. "I have seen him; seen what he was as a man; how he appeared on earth; and I have seen whatever there was in his works to indicate his character and origin." John professes here to have seen enough in this respect as to furnish evidence that he was the Son of God. It is not hearsay on which he relies, but he had the testimony of his own eyes in the case. 2Pet 1:16.

Which we have looked upon. The word here used seems designed to be more emphatic or intensive than the one before occurring. He had just said that he had "seen him with his eyes," but he evidently designs

to include an idea in this word which would imply something more than mere beholding or seeing. The additional idea which is couched in this word seems to be that of desire or pleasure; that is, that he had looked on him with desire, or satisfaction, or with the pleasure with which one beholds a beloved object. Comp. Mt 11:7, Lk 7:24, Jn 1:14. See Rob. Lex. There was an intense and earnest gaze, as when we behold one whom we have desired to see, or when one goes out purposely to look on an object. The evidences of the incarnation of the Son of God had been subjected to such all intense and earnest gaze.

And our hands have handled. That is, the evidence that he was a man was subjected to the sense of touch. It was not merely that he had been seen by the eye, for then it might be pretended that this was a mere appearance assumed without reality; or that what occurred might have been a mere optical illusion; but the evidence that he appeared in the flesh was subjected to more senses than one; to the fact that his voice was heard; that he was seen with the eyes; that the most intense scrutiny had been employed; and, lastly, that he had been actually touched and handled, showing that it could not have been a mere appearance, an assumed form, but that it was a reality. This kind of proof that the Son of God had appeared in the flesh, or that he was truly and properly a man, is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament. Lkke 24:39: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Comp. Jn 20:25-27. There is evident allusion here to the opinion which early prevailed, which was held by the Docetes, that the Son of God did not truly and really become a man, but that there was only an appearance assumed, or that he seemed to be a man. It was evidently with reference to this opinion, which began early to prevail, that the apostle dwells on this point, and repeats the idea so much, and shows by a reference to all the senses which could take any cognizance in the case, that he was truly and properly a man. The amount of it is, that we have the same evidence that he was properly a man which we can have in the case of any other human being; the evidence on which we constantly act, and in which we cannot believe that our senses deceive us.

Of the Word of life. Respecting, or pertaining to, the Word of life. "That is, whatever there was pertaining to the Word of life, which was manifested from the beginning in his speech and actions, of which the

senses could take cognizance, and which would furnish the evidence that he was truly incarnate, that we have declared unto you." The phrase "the Word of life," means the Word in which life resided, or which was the source and fountain of life. Jn 1:1, Jn 1:3. The reference is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 (for the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

For the life was manifested. Was made manifest or visible unto us. He who was the life was made known to men by the incarnation. He appeared among men so that they could see him and hear him. Though originally with God, and dwelling with him, (Jn 1:1,2,) yet he came forth and appeared among men. Rom 1:3, 1Timm 3:16. He is the great source of all life, and he appeared on the earth, and we had an opportunity of seeing and knowing what he was.

And we have seen it. This repetition, or turning over the thought, is designed to express the idea with emphasis, and is much in the manner of John. See Jn 1:1-3. He is particularly desirous of impressing on them the thought that he had been a personal witness of what the Saviour was, having had every opportunity of knowing it from long and familiar relationship with him.

And bear witness. We testify in regard to it. John was satisfied that his own character was known to be such that credit would be given to what he said. He felt that he was known to be a man of truth, and hence he never doubts that faith would be put in all his statements. See Jn 19:35, 21:24, Rev 1:2, 3Jn 1:12.

And shew unto you that eternal life. That is, we declare unto you what that life was--what was the nature and rank of him who was the life, and how he appeared when on earth, he here attributes eternity to the Son of God--implying that he had always been with the Father.

Which was with the Father. Always before the manifestation on the earth. See Jn 1:1: "The word was with God." This passage demonstrates the pre-existence of the Son of God, and proves that he was eternal. Before he was manifested on earth he had an existence

to which the word life could be applied, and that was eternal. He is the Author of eternal life to us.

And was manifested unto us. In the flesh; as a man. He who was the life appeared unto men. The idea of John evidently is, (1.) that the Being here referred to was for ever with God; (2.) that it was proper before the incarnation that the word life should be given to him as descriptive of his nature; (3.) that there was a manifestation of him who was thus called life, on earth; that he appeared among men; that he had a real existence here, and not a merely assumed appearance; and (4.) that the true characteristics of this incarnate Being could be borne testimony to by those who had seen him, and who had been long with him.

3 that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may
have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and
with his Son Jesus Christ.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. We announce it, or make it known unto you--referring either to what he purposes to say in this epistle, or more probably embracing all that he had written respecting him, and supposing that his gospel was in their hands. He means to call their attention to all the testimony which he had borne on the subject, in order to counteract the errors which began to prevail.

That ye may have fellowship with us. With us the apostles; with us who actually saw him, and conversed with him. That is, he wished that they might have the same belief, and the same hope, and the same joy which he himself had, arising from the fact that the Son of God had become incarnate, and had appeared among men. To "have fellowship," means to have anything in common with others; to partake of it; to share it with them, Acts 2:42; and the idea here is, that the apostle wished that they might share with him all the peace and happiness which resulted from the fact that the Son of God had appeared in human form in behalf of men. The object of the apostle in what he wrote was, that they might have the same views of the Saviour which he had, and partake of the same hope and joy. This is the true notion of fellowship in religion.

And truly our fellowship is with the Father. With God the Father. That is, there was something in common with us and God; something of

which we and God partook together, or which they shared. This cannot, of course, mean that our nature was the same as that of God, or that in all things we shared with God, or that in anything we were equal with God; but it means that we partook, in some respects, of the feelings, the views, the aims, the joys which God has. There was a union in feeling, and affection, and desire, and plan, and this was to us a source of joy. We had an attachment to the same things, loved the same truth, desired the same objects, and were engaged in the same work; and the consciousness of this, and the joy which attended it, was what was meant by fellowship. 1Cor 10:16; 2Cor 12:14. The fellowship which Christians have with God relates to the following points:

(1.) Attachment to the same truths, and the same objects; love for the same principles, and the same beings.

(2.) The same kind of happiness, though not in the same degree. The happiness of God is found in holiness, truth, purity, justice, mercy, benevolence. The happiness of the Christian is of the same kind that God has; the same kind that angels have; the same kind that he will himself have in heaven--for the joy of heaven is only that which the Christian has now, expanded to the utmost capacity of the soul, and freed from all that now interferes with it, and prolonged to eternity.

(3.) Employment, or co-operation with God. There is a sphere in which God works alone, and in which we can have no co-operation, no fellowship with him. In the work of creation; in upholding all things; in the government of the universe; in the transmission of light from world to world; in the return of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, the storms, the tides, the flight of the comet, we can have no joint agency, no co-operation with him. There God works alone. But there is also a large sphere in which he admits us graciously to a co-operation with him, and in which, unless we work, his agency will not be put forth. This is seen when the farmer sows his grain; when the surgeon binds up a wound; when we take the medicine which God has appointed as a means of restoration to health. So in the moral world. In our efforts to save our own souls and the souls of others, God graciously works with us; and unless we work, the object is not accomplished. This co-operation is referred to in such passages as these: "We are labourers together (συνεργοι) with God," 1Cor 3:9.

"The Lord working with them," Mk 16:20. "We then as workers together with him," 2Cor 6:1. "That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth," 3Jn 1:8. In all such cases, while the efficiency is of God--alike in exciting us to effort, and in crowning the effort with success--it is still true that if our efforts were not put forth, the work would not be done. In this department God would not work by himself alone; he would not secure the result by miracle.

(4.) We have fellowship with God by direct communion with him, in prayer, in meditation, and in the ordinances of religion. Of this all true Christians are sensible, and this constitutes no small part of their peculiar joy. The nature of this, and the happiness resulting from it, is much of the same nature as the communion of friend with friend--of one mind with another kindred mind--that to which we owe no small part of our happiness in this world.

(5.) The Christian will have fellowship with his God and Saviour in the triumphs of the latter day, when the scenes of the judgment shall occur, and when the Redeemer shall appear, that he may be admired and adored by assembled worlds. 2Thes 1:10. See also Mt 19:28; Rev 3:21.

And with his Son Jesus Christ. That is, in like manner there is much which we have in common with the Saviour--in character, in feeling, in desire, in spirit, in plan. There is a union with him in these things--and the consciousness of this gives peace and joy.

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

And these things write we unto you. These things respecting him who was manifested in the flesh, and respecting the results which' flow from that.

That your joy may be full. This is almost the same language which the Saviour used when addressing his disciples as he was about to leave them, (Jn 15:11;) and there can be little doubt that John had that declaration in remembrance when he uttered this remark. Jn 15:11. The sense here is, that full and clear views of the Lord Jesus, and the fellowship with him and with each other, which would follow from that, would be a source of happiness. Their joy would be complete if they had that; for their real happiness was to be found in their Saviour.

The best editions of the Greek Testament now read "your joy," instead of the common reading "our joy."

God Is Light

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

This then is the message which we have heard of him. This is the substance of the announcement (επαγγελια) which we have received of him, or which he made to us. The message here refers to what he communicated as the sum of the revelation which he made to man. The phrase "of him" (απαυτου) does not mean respecting him, or about him, but from him; that is, this is what we received from his preaching; from all that he said. The peculiarity, the substance of all that he said, may be summed up in the declaration that God is light, and in the consequences which follow from this doctrine. He came as the messenger of Him who is light; he came to inculcate and defend the truths which flow from that central doctrine, in regard to sin, to the danger and duty of man, to the way of recovery, and to the rules by which men ought to live.

That God is light. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness--as darkness is of the opposite. John here says that "God is light"-- φως--not the light, or a light, but light itself; that is, he is himself all light, and is the source and fountain of light in all worlds, He is perfectly pure, without any admixture of sin. He has all knowledge, with no admixture of ignorance on any subject. He is infinitely happy, with nothing to make him miserable. He is infinitely true, never stating or countenancing error; he is blessed in all his ways, never knowing the darkness of disappointment and adversity. Jas 1:17; Jn 1:4, Jn 1:5; 1Timm 6:16. And in him is no darkness at all. This language is much in the manner of John, not only affirming that a thing is so, but guarding it so that no mistake could possibly be made as to what he meant. Comp. Jn 1:1-3. The expression here is designed to affirm that God is absolutely perfect; that there is nothing in him which is in any way imperfect, or which would dim or mar the pure splendour of his character, not even as much as the smallest spot would on the sun. The language is

probably designed to guard the mind from an error to which it is prone, that of charging God with being the Author of the sin and misery which exist on the earth; and the apostle seems to design to teach that whatever was the source of sin and misery, it was not in any sense to be charged on God. This doctrine that God is a pure light, John lays down as the substance of all that he had to teach; of all that he had learned from him who was made flesh. It is, in fact, the fountain of all just views of truth on the subject of religion, and all proper views of religion take their origin from this.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

If we say that we have fellowship with him. If we reckon ourselves among his friends, or, in other words, if we profess to be like him: for a profession of religion involves the idea of having fellowship with God, 1Jn 1:3, and he who professes that should be like him.

And walk in darkness. Live in sin and error. To "walk in darkness" now commonly denotes to be in doubt about our religious state, in contradistinction from living in the enjoyment of religion. That is not, however, probably the whole idea here. The leading thought is, that if we live in sin, it is a proof that our profession of religion is false. Desirable as it is to have the comforts of religion, yet it is not always true that they who do not are not true Christians, nor is it true by any means that they intend to deceive the world.

We lie. We are false professors; we are deceived if we think that we can have fellowship with God, and yet live in the practice of sin. As God is pure, so must we be, if we would be his friends. This does not mean necessarily that they meant to deceive, but that there was an irreconcilable contradiction between a life of sin and fellowship with God.

And do not the truth. Do not act truly. The profession is a false one. Compare Jn 3:22. To do the truth is to act in accordance with truth; and the expression here means that such an one could not be a Christian. And yet how many there are who are living in known sin who profess to be Christians! How many whose minds are dark on the whole subject of religion, who have never known anything of the real peace and joy which it imparts, who nevertheless entertain the belief that they are the

friends of God, and are going to heaven! They trust in a name, in forms, in conformity to external rites, and have never known anything of the internal peace and purity which religion imparts, and in fact have never had any true fellowship with that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Religion is light; religion is peace, purity, joy; and though there are cases where for a time a true Christian may be left to darkness, and have no spiritual joy, and be in doubt about his salvation, yet still it is a great truth, that unless we know by personal experience what it is to walk habitually in the light, to have the comforts of religion, and to experience in our own souls the influences which make the heart pure, and which bring us into conformity to the God who is light, we can have no true religion. All else is but a name, which will not avail us on the final day.

7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

But if we walk in the light. 1Jn 1:5. Walking in the light may include the three following things:

(1.) Leading lives of holiness and purity; that is, the Christian must be characteristically a holy man, a light in the world, by his example.

(2.) Walking in the truth; that is, embracing the truth in opposition to all error of heathenism and infidelity, and having clear, spiritual views of truth, such as the unrenewed never have. See 2Cor 4:6, 1Cor 2:9-15; Eph 1:18.

(3.) Enjoying the comforts of religion; that is, having the joy which religion is fitted to impart, and which it does impart to its true friends, Ps 94:19, Isa 57:8, 2Cor 1:3, 13:11. Jn 12:35.

As he is in the light. In the same kind of light that he has. The measure of light which we may have is not the same in degree, but it is of the same kind. The true Christian in his character and feelings resembles God.

We have fellowship one with another. As we all partake of his feelings and views, we shall resemble each other. Loving the same God, embracing the same views of religion, and living for the same ends, we

shall of course have much that is common to us all, and thus shall have fellowship with each other.

And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. See the sentiment here expressed fully explained Heb 9:11. When it is said that his blood cleanses us from all sin, the expression must mean one of two things--either that it is through that blood that all past sin is forgiven, or that that blood will ultimately purify us from all transgression, and make us perfectly holy. The general meaning is plain, that in regard to any and every sin of which we may be conscious, there is efficacy in that blood to remove it, and to make us wholly pure. There is no stain made by sin so deep that the blood of Christ cannot take it entirely away from the soul. The connexion here, or the reason why this is introduced here, seems to be this: The apostle is stating the substance of the message which he had received, 1Jo 1:5. The first or leading part of it was, that God is light, and in him is no darkness, and that his religion requires that all his friends should resemble him by their walking in the light. Another, and a material part of the same message was, that provision was made in his religion for cleansing the soul from sin, and making it like God. No system of religion intended for man could be adapted to his condition which did not contain this provision, and this did contain it in the most full and ample manner. Of course, however, it is meant that that blood cleanses from all sin only on the conditions on which its efficacy can be made available to man--by repentance for the past, and by a cordial reception of the Saviour through faith.

Sin, Its Reality and Remedy

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say that we have no sin. It is not improbable that the apostle here makes allusion to some error which was then beginning to prevail in the church. Some have supposed that the allusion is to the sect of the Nicolaitanes, and to the views which they maintained, particularly that nothing was forbidden to the children of God under the gospel, and that in the freedom conferred on Christians they were at liberty to do what they pleased, Rev 2:6,15. It is not certain, however, that the allusion is to them, and it is not necessary to suppose that there is reference to any particular sect that existed at that time. The object of the apostle is to

show that it is implied in the very nature of the gospel that we are sinners, and that if, on any pretence, we denied that fact, we utterly deceived ourselves. In all ages there have been those who have attempted, on some pretence, to justify their conduct; who have felt that they did not need a Saviour; who have maintained that they had a right to do what they pleased; or who, on pretence of being perfectly sanctified, have held that they live without the commission of sin. To meet these, and all similar cases, the apostle affirms that it is a great elementary truth, which on no pretence is to be denied, that we are all sinners. We are at all times, and in all circumstances, to admit the painful and humiliating truth that we are transgressors of the law of God, and that we need, even in our best services, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. The fair interpretation of the declaration here will apply not only to those who maintain that they have not been guilty of sin in the past, but also to those who profess to have become perfectly sanctified, and to live without sin. In any and every way, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Compare Jas 3:2. We deceive ourselves. We have wrong views about our character. This does not mean that the self-deception is willful, but that it in fact exists. No man knows himself who supposes that in all respects he is perfectly pure.

And the truth is not in us. On this subject. A man who should maintain that he had never committed sin, could have no just views of the truth in regard to himself, and would show that he was in utter error. In like manner, according to the obvious interpretation of this passage, he who maintains that he is wholly sanctified, and lives without any sin, shows that he is deceived in regard to himself, and that the truth, in this respect, is not in him. He may hold the truth on other subjects, but he does not on this. The very nature of the Christian religion supposes that we feel ourselves to be sinners, and that we should be ever ready to acknowledge it. A man who claims that he is absolutely perfect, that he is holy as God is holy, must know little of his own heart. Who, after all his reasoning on the subject, would dare to go out under the open heaven, at midnight, and lift up his hands and his eyes towards the stars, and say that he had no sin to confess--that he was as pure as the God that made those stars?

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins. Pardon, in the Scriptures, always supposes that there is confession, and there is no promise that it will be imparted unless a full acknowledgment has been made. Compare Ps 51 Ps 52; Lk 15:18, 7:41, Prov 28:13.

He is faithful. To his promises. He will do what he has assured us he will do in remitting them.

and just to forgive us our sins. The word just here cannot be used in a strict and proper sense, since the forgiveness of sins is never an act of justice, but is an act of mercy. If it were an act of justice it could be demanded or enforced, and that is the same as to say that it is not forgiveness, for in that case there could have been no sin to be pardoned. But the word just is often used in a larger sense, as denoting upright, equitable, acting properly in the circumstances of the case, etc. Comp. Mt 1:19. Here the word may be used in one of the following senses:

(1.) Either as referring to his general excellence of character, or his disposition to do what is proper; that is, he is one who will act in every way as becomes God; or,

(2,) that he will be just in the sense that he will be true to his promises; or that, since he has promised to pardon sinners, he will be found faithfully to adhere to those engagements; or perhaps,

(3,) that he will be just to his Son in the covenant of redemption, since, now that an atonement has been made by him, and a way has been opened through his sufferings by which God can consistently pardon, and with a view and an understanding that he might and would pardon, it would be an act of injustice to him if he did not pardon those who believe on him.

Viewed in either aspect, we may have the fullest assurance that God is ready to pardon us if we exercise true repentance and faith. No one can come to God without finding him ready to do all that is appropriate for a God to do in pardoning transgressors; no one who will not, in fact, receive forgiveness if he repents, and believes, and makes confession; no one who will not find that God is just to his Son in the covenant of

redemption, in pardoning and saving all who put their trust in the merits of his sacrifice.

And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. By forgiving all that is past, treating us as if we were righteous, and ultimately by removing all the stains of guilt from the soul.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

If we say that we have not sinned. In times that are past. Some perhaps might be disposed to say this; and as the apostle is careful to guard every point, he here states that if a man should take the ground that his past life had been wholly upright, it would prove that he had no true religion. The statement here respecting the past seems to prove that when, in 1Jn 1:8, he refers to the present--"if we say we have no sin "--he meant to say that if a man should claim to be perfect, or to be wholly sanctified, it would demonstrate that he deceived himself; and the two statements go to prove that neither in reference to the past nor the present can any one lay claim to perfection.

We make Him a liar. Because he has everywhere affirmed the depravity of all the race. Compare Barnes Notes on Romans chapters 1-3. On no point have his declarations been more positive and uniform than on the fact of the universal sinfulness of man. Comp. Gen 6:11,12, Job 14:4, 15:16; Ps 14:1,2,3, 51:5, 58:3, Rom 3:9-20, Gal 3:21. Isa 6:5, 29:13, 59:1-8, 12-15. Jer 9:1-9. Mic 6:12

And his word is not in us. His truth; that is, we have no true religion. The whole system of Christianity is based on the fact that man is a fallen being, and needs a Saviour; and unless a man admits that, of course he cannot be a Christian.

1 John-2

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

My little children. τεκνιαμου. This is such language as an aged apostle would be likely to use when addressing a church, and its use in this

epistle may be regarded as one evidence that John had reached an advanced period of life when he wrote the epistle.

These things write I unto you. To wit, the things stated in chapter one. That ye sin not. To keep you from sin, or to induce you to lead a holy life.

And if any man sin. As all are liable, with hearts as corrupt as ours, and amidst the temptations of a world like this, to do. This, of course, does not imply that it is proper or right to sin, or that Christians should have no concern about it; but the meaning is, that all are liable to sin, and when we are conscious of sin the mind should not yield to despondency and despair. It might be supposed, perhaps, that if one sinned after baptism, or after being converted, there could be no forgiveness. The apostle designs to guard against any such supposition, and to show that the atonement made by the Redeemer had respect to all kinds of sin, and that under the deepest consciousness of guilt and of personal unworthiness, we may feel that we have an advocate on high.

We have an advocate with the Father. God only can forgive sin; and though we have no claim on him, yet there is one with him who can plead our cause, and on whom we can rely to manage our interests there. The word rendered advocate (παρακλητος or--paraclete) is elsewhere applied to the Holy Spirit, and is in every other place where it occurs in the New Testament rendered comforter, Jn 14:16,26; Jn 15:26, 16:7. On the meaning of the word, Jnn 14:16. As used with reference to the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:16, et al.) it is employed in the more general sense of helper, or aid; and the particular manner in which the Holy Spirit aids us may be seen stated in Jn 14:16. As usual here with reference to the Lord Jesus, it is employed in the more limited sense of the word advocate, as the word is frequently used in the Greek writers to denote an advocate in court; that is, one whom we call to our aid; or to stand by us, to defend our suit. Where it is applied to the Lord Jesus, the language is evidently figurative, since there can be no literal pleading for us in heaven; but it is expressive of the great truth that he has undertaken our cause with God, and that he performs for us all that we expect of an advocate and counsellor. It is not to be supposed, however, that he manages our cause in the same way, or on the same principles on which an advocate in a human tribunal does.

An advocate in court is employed to defend his client. He does not begin by admitting his guilt, or in any way basing his plea on the conceded fact that he is guilty; his proper business is to show that he is not guilty, or, if he be proved to be so, to see that no injustice shall be done him. The proper business of an advocate in a human court, therefore, embraces two things:

(1.) To show that his client is not guilty in the form and manner charged on him. This he may do in one of two ways, either

(a.) by showing that he did not do the act charged on him, as when he is charged with murder, and can prove an alibi, or show that he was not present at the time the murder was committed; or

(b.) by proving that he had a right to do the deed--as, if he is charged with murder, he may admit the fact of the killing, but may show that it was in self-defence.

(2.) In case his client is convicted, his office is to see that no injustice is done to him in the sentence; to stand by him still; to avail himself of all that the law allows in his favour, or to state any circumstance of age, or sex, or former service, or bodily health, which would in any way mitigate the sentence.

The advocacy of the Lord Jesus in our behalf, however, is wholly different from this, though the same general object is pursued and sought, the good of those for whom he becomes an advocate. The nature of his advocacy may be stated in the following particulars:

(1.) He admits the guilt of those for whom he becomes the advocate, to the full extent charged on them by the law of God, and by their own consciences. He does not attempt to hide or conceal it. He makes no apology for it. He neither attempts to deny the fact, nor to show that they had a right to do as they have done. He could not do this, for it would not be true; and any plea before the throne of God which should be based on a denial of our guilt would be fatal to our cause.

(2.) As our advocate, he undertakes to be security that no wrong shall be done to the universe if we are not punished as we deserve; that is, if we are pardoned, and treated as if we had not sinned. This he does

by pleading what he has done in behalf of men; that is, by the plea that his sufferings and death in behalf of sinners have done as much to honour the law, and to maintain the truth and justice of God, and to prevent the extension of apostasy, as if the offenders themselves had suffered the full penalty of the law. If sinners are punished in hell, there will be some object to be accomplished by it; and the simple account of the atonement by Christ is, that his death will secure all the good results to the universe which would be secured by the punishment of the offender himself. It has done as much to maintain the honour of the law, and to impress the universe with the truth that sin cannot be committed with impunity. If all the good results can be secured by substituted sufferings which there would be by the punishment of the offender himself, then it is clear that the guilty may be acquitted and saved. Why should they not be? The Saviour, as our advocate, undertakes to be security that this shall be.

(3.) As our advocate, he becomes a surety for our good behaviour; gives a pledge to justice that we will obey the laws of God, and that he will keep us in the paths of obedience and truth; that, if pardoned, we will not continue to rebel. This pledge or surety can be given in no human court of justice. No man, advocate or friend, can give security when one is pardoned who has been convicted of stealing a horse, that he will not steal a horse again; when one who has been guilty of murder is pardoned, that he will never be guilty of it again; when one who has been guilty of forgery is pardoned, that he will not be guilty of it again. If he could do this, the subject of pardon would be attended with much fewer difficulties than it is now. But the Lord Jesus becomes such a pledge or surety for us, (Heb 7:22,) and hence he becomes such an advocate with the Father as we need.

Jesus Christ the righteous. One who is eminently righteous himself, and who possesses the means of rendering others righteous. It is an appropriate feeling when we come before God in his name, that we come pleading the merits of one who is eminently righteous, and on account of whose righteousness we may be justified and saved.

2 and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

And he is the propitiation for our sins. The word rendered propitiation (ιλασμος) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1Jn

4:10 of this epistle; though words of the same derivation, and having the same essential meaning, frequently, occur. The corresponding word ιλαστηριον (hilasterion) occurs in Rom 3:25, rendered propitiation--"whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and in Heb 9:5, rendered mercy-seat--"shadowing the mercy-seat." The verb ιλασκομαι (hilaskomai) occurs also in Lk 18:3--"God be merciful to me a sinner;" and Heb 2:17--"to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." For the idea expressed by these words, Rom 3:25. The proper meaning of the word is that of reconciling, appeasing, turning away anger, rendering propitious or favourable. The idea is, that there is anger or wrath, or that something has been done to offend, and that it is needful to turn away that wrath, or to appease. This may be done by a sacrifice, by songs, by services rendered, or by bloody offerings. So the word is often used in Homer.--Passow. We have similar words in common use, as when we say of one that he has been offended, and that something must be done to appease him, or to turn away his wrath. This is commonly done with us by making restitution; or by an acknowledgment; or by yielding the point in controversy; or by an expression of regret; or by different conduct in time to come. But this idea must not be applied too literally to God; nor should it be explained away. The essential thoughts in regard to him, as implied in this word, are,

(1,) that his will has been disregarded, and his law violated, and that he has reason to be offended with us;

(2,) that in that condition he cannot, consistently with his perfections, and the good of the universe, treat us as if we had not done it;

(3,) that it is proper that, in some way, he should show his displeasure at our conduct, either by punishing us, or by something that shall answer the same purpose; and,

(4,) that the means of propitiation come in here, and accomplish this end, and make it proper that he should treat us as if we had not sinned; that is, he is reconciled, or appeased, and his anger is turned away. This is done, it is supposed, by, the death of the Lord Jesus, accomplishing, in most important respects, what would be accomplished by the punishment of the offender himself. In regard to

this, in order to a proper understanding of what is accomplished, it is necessary to observe two things--what is not done, and what is.

I. There are certain things which do not enter into the idea of propitiation. They are such as these:

(a.) That it does not change the fact that the wrong was done. That is a fact which cannot be denied, and he who undertakes to make a propitiation for sin does not deny it.

(b.) It does not change God; it does not make him a different being from what he was before; it does not buy him over to a willingness to show mercy; it does not change an inexorable being to one who is compassionate and kind.

(c.) The offering that is made to secure reconciliation does not necessarily produce reconciliation in fact. It prepares the way for it on the part of God, but whether they for whom it is made will be disposed to accept it is another question. When two men are alienated from each other, you may go to B and say to him that all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of A are removed, and that he is disposed to be at peace, but whether B will be willing to be at peace is quite another matter. The mere fact that his adversary is disposed to be at peace, determines nothing in regard to his disposition in the matter. So in regard to the controversy between man and God. It may be true that all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God are taken away, and still it may be quite a separate question whether man will be willing to lay aside his opposition, and embrace the terms of mercy. In itself considered, one does not necessarily determine the other, or throw any light on it.

II The amount, then, in regard to the propitiation made for sin is, that it removes all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God; it does whatever is necessary to be done to maintain the honour of his law, his justice, and his truth; it makes it consistent for him to offer pardon--that is, it removes whatever there was that made it necessary to inflict punishment, and thus, so far as the word can be applied to God, it appeases him, or turns away his anger, or renders him propitious. This it does, not in respect to producing any change in God, but in respect to the fact that it removes whatever there was in the nature of the case

that prevented the free and full offer of pardon. The idea of the apostle in the passage before us is, that when we sin we may be assured that this has been done, and that pardon may now be freely extended to us.

And not for our's only. Not only for the sins of us who are Christians, for the apostle was writing to such. The idea which he intends to convey seems to be, that when we come before God we should take the most liberal and large views of the atonement; we should feel that the most ample provision has been made for our pardon, and that in no respect is there any limit as to the sufficiency of that work to remove all sin. It is sufficient for us; sufficient for all the world.

But also for the sins of the whole world. The phrase "the sins of" is not in the original, but is not improperly supplied, for the connexion demands it. This is one of the expressions occurring in the New Testament which demonstrate that the atonement was made for all men, and which cannot be reconciled with any other opinion, if he had died only for a part of the race, this language could not have been used. The phrase, "the whole world," is one which naturally embraces all men; is such as would be used if it be supposed that the apostle meant to teach that Christ died for all men; and is such as cannot be explained on any other supposition. If he died only for the elect, it is not true that he is the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world" in any proper sense, nor would it be possible then to assign a sense in which it could be true. This passage, interpreted in its plain and obvious meaning, teaches the following things:

(1.) That the atonement in its own nature is adapted to all men, or that it is as much fitted to one individual, or One class, as another;

(2,) that it is sufficient in merit for all; that is, that if any more should be saved than actually will be, there would be no need of any additional suffering in order to save them;

(3,) that it has no special adaptedness to one person or class more than another; that is, that in its own nature it did not render the salvation of one more easy than that of another. It so magnified the law, so honoured God, so fully expressed the Divine sense of the evil of sin in respect to all men, that the offer of salvation might be made as freely to one as to another, and that any and all might take shelter under it

and be safe. Whether, however, God might not, for wise reasons, resolve that its benefits should be applied to a part only, is another question, and one which does not affect the inquiry about the intrinsic nature of the atonement. On the evidence that the atonement was made for all, 2Cor 5:14, and Heb 2:9.

Tests of True Knowledge

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

He that saith, I know him, He who professes to be acquainted with the Saviour, or who professes to be a Christian. And keepeth not his commandments. What he has appointed to be observed by his people; that is, he who does not obey him. Is a liar. Makes a false profession; professes to have that which he really has not. Such a profession is a falsehood, because there can be no true religion where one does not obey the law of God.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

But whoso keepeth his word. That is, what he has spoken or commanded, The term word here will include all that he has made known to us as his will in regard to our conduct.

In him verily is the love of God perfected. He professes to have the love of God in his heart, and that love receives its completion or filling up by obedience to the will of God. That obedience is the proper carrying out, or the exponent of the love which exists in the heart. Love to the Saviour would be defective without that, for it is never complete without obedience. If this be the true interpretation, then the passage does not make any affirmation about sinless perfection, but it only affirms that if true love exists in the heart, it will be carried out in the life; or that love and obedience are parts of the same thing; that one will be manifested by the other; and that where obedience exists, it is the completion or perfecting of love. Besides, the apostle does not say that either the love or the obedience would be in themselves absolutely perfect; but he says that one cannot fully develope itself without the other.

Hereby know we that we are in him. That is, by having in fact such love as shall insure obedience. To be in him, is to be united to him; to be his friends. Jn 6:56; Rom 13:14.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

He that saith, he abideth in him. Gr., remains in him; that is, abides or remains in the belief of his doctrines, and in the comfort and practice of religion. The expression is one of those which refer to the intimate union between Christ and his people. A great variety of phrase is employed to denote that. For the meaning of this word in John, Jn 3:6.

Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. Ought to live and act as he did. If he is one with him, or professes to be united to him, he ought to imitate him in all things. Comp. Jn 13:15. 1Jn 1:6.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you. That is, what I am now enjoining is not new. It is the same doctrine which you have always heard. There has been much difference of opinion as to what is referred to by the word commandment, whether it is the injunction in the previous verse to live as Christ lived, or whether it is what he refers to in the following verses, the duty of brotherly love. Perhaps neither of these is exactly the idea of the apostle, but he may mean in this verse to put in a general disclaimer against the charge that what he enjoined was new. In respect to all that he taught, the views of truth which he held, the duties which he enjoined, the course of life which he would prescribe as proper for a Christian to live, he meant to say that it was not at all new; it was nothing which he had originated himself, but it was in fact the same system of doctrines which they had always received since they became Christians. He might have been induced to say this because he apprehended that some of those whom he had in his eye, and whose doctrines he meant to oppose, might say that this was all new; that it was not the nature of religion as it had been commonly understood, and as it was laid down by the Saviour. In a somewhat different sense, indeed, he admits 1Jn 2:8 that there was a "new" commandment which it was proper to enjoin--for he did not forget that the Saviour himself called that "new;" and though that commandment had also been all along inculcated

under the gospel, yet there was a sense in which it was proper to call that new, for it had been so called by the Saviour. But in respect to all the doctrines which he maintained, and in respect to all the duties which he enjoined, he said that they were not new in the sense that he had originated them, or that they had not been enjoined from the beginning. Perhaps, also, the apostle here may have some allusion to false teachers who were in fact scattering new doctrines among the people, things before unheard of, and attractive by their novelty; and he may mean to say that he made no pretensions to any such novelty, but was content to repeat the old and familiar truths which they had always received. Thus, if he was charged with breaching new opinions, he denies it fully; if they were advancing new opinions, and were even "making capital" out of them, he says that he attempted no such thing, but was content with the old and established opinions which they had always received.

But an old commandment. Old, in the sense that it has always been inculcated; that religion has always enjoined it.

Which ye had from the beginning. Which you have always received ever since you heard anything about the gospel. It was preached when the gospel was first preached; it has always been promulgated when that has been promulgated; it is what you first heard when you were made acquainted with the gospel. Compare 1Jn 1:1.

The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Is the doctrine; or is what was enjoined. John is often in the habit of putting a truth in a new form or aspect in order to make it emphatic, and to prevent the possibility of misapprehension. See Jn 1:1,2 The sense here is, "All that I am saying to you is in fact an old commandment, or one which you have always had. There is nothing new in what I am enjoining on you."

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

Again, a new commandment I write unto you. "And yet, that which I write to you, and particularly enjoin on you, deserves in another sense to be called a new commandment, though it has been also inculcated from the beginning, for it was called new by the Saviour himself." Or the meaning may be, "In addition to the general precepts which I have referred to, I do now call your attention to the new commandment of

the Saviour, that which he himself called new." There can be no doubt here that John refers to the commandment to "love one another," (1Jn 2:9-11,) and that it is here called new, not in the sense that John inculcated it as a novel doctrine, but in the sense that the Saviour called it such. For the reasons why it was so called by him, Jn 13:34.

Which thing is true in him. In the Lord Jesus. That is, which commandment or law of love was illustrated in him, or was manifested by him in his relationship with his disciples. That which was most prominent in him was this very love which he enjoined on all his followers.

And in you. Among you. That is, you have manifested it in your relationship with each other. It is not new in the sense that you have never heard of it, and have never evinced it, but in the sense only that he called it new.

Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. The ancient systems of error, under which men hated each other, have passed away, and you are brought into the light of the true religion. Once you were in darkness, like others; now the light of the pure gospel shines around you, and that requires, as its distinguishing characteristic, love. Religion is often represented as light; and Christ spoke of himself, and was spoken of, as the light of the world. Jn 1:4; Jn 1:5. Comp. Jn 8:12; Jn 12:35,36,46, Isa 9:2.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

He that saith he is in the light. That he has true religion, or is a Christian. See 1Jn 1:7.

And hateth his brother. The word brother seems here to refer to those who professed the same religion. The word is indeed sometimes used in a larger sense, but the reference here appears to be to that which is properly brotherly love among Christians. Comp. Lucke, in loc.

Is in darkness even unto now. That is, he cannot have true religion unless he has love to the brethren. The command to love one another was one of the most solemn and earnest which Christ ever enjoined, (Jn 15:17;) he made it the peculiar badge of discipleship, or that by

which his followers were to be everywhere known, (Jn 13:35;) and it is, therefore, impossible to have any true religion without love to those who are sincerely and truly his followers. If a man has not that, he is in deep darkness, whatever else he may have, on the whole subject of religion. Comp. 1Thes 4:9.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light. Has true religion, and enjoys it.

And there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Marg., scandal. Greek, "and there is no stumbling" [or scandal--σκανδαλον--in him.] The word here used, means anything against which one strikes or stumbles; and then a stumbling-block, an impediment, or anything which occasions a fall. Then it is used in a moral or spiritual sense, as denoting that which is the occasion of falling into sin. Mt 5:29 and Rom 14:13. Here it refers to an individual in respect to his treatment of others, and means that there is nothing, so far as he is concerned, to lead him into sin.--Rob. Lex. If he has love to the brethren, he has true religion; and there is, so far as the influence of this shall extend, nothing that will be the occasion of his falling into sin in his conduct towards them, for "love worketh no ill to his neighbour," Rom 13:10. His course will be just, and upright, and benevolent. He will have no envy towards them in their prosperity, and will not be disposed to detract from their reputation in adversity; he will have no feelings of exultation when they fall, and will not be disposed to take advantage of their misfortunes; and, loving them as brethren, he will be in no respect under temptation to do them wrong. In the bosom of one who loves his brother, the baleful passions of envy, malice, hatred, and uncharitableness, can have no place. At the same time, this love of the brethren would have an important effect on his whole Christian life and walk, for there are few things that will have more influence on a man's character in keeping him from doing wrong, than the love of the good and the pure. He who truly loves good men, will not be likely in any respect to go astray from the paths of virtue.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

But he that hateth his brother. The word here used would, in this connexion, include both the mere absence of love, and positive hatred. It is designed to include the whole of that state of mind where there is not love for the brethren.

Is in darkness. 1Jn 2:9.

And walketh in darkness. He is like one who walks in the dark, and who sees no object distinctly. Jn 12:35. And knoweth not whither he goeth. Like one in the dark. He wanders about not knowing what direction he shall take, or where the course which he is on will lead. The general meaning is, that he is ignorant of the whole nature of religion; or, in other words, love to the brethren is a central virtue in religion, and when a man has not that, his mind is entirely clouded on the whole subject, and he shows that he knows nothing of its nature. There is no virtue that is designed to be made more prominent in Christianity; and there is none that will throw its influence farther over a man's life.

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.

By the term "little children" here, he means children literally, seems to me to be clear,

(1.) because this is the usual meaning of the word, and should be understood to be the meaning here, unless there is something in the connexion to show that it is used in a metaphorical sense;

(2.) because it seems necessary to understand the other expressions, "young men," and "fathers," in a literal sense, as denoting those more advanced in life;

(3.) because this would be quite in character for the apostle John. He had recorded, and would doubtless remember the solemn injunction of the Saviour to Peter, (Jn 21:15,) to "feed his lambs," and the aged apostle could not but feel that what was worthy of so solemn an injunction from the Lord, was worthy of his attention and care as an apostle; and

(4.) because in that case, each class, fathers, young men, and children, would be twice addressed in these two verses; whereas if we understood this of Christians in general, then fathers and young men would be twice addressed, and children but once. If this be so, it may be remarked,

(1.) that there were probably quite young children in the church in the time of the apostle John, for the word would naturally convey that idea.

(2.) The exact age cannot he indeed determined, but two things are clear:

(a.) one is, that they were undoubtedly under twenty years of age, since they were younger than the "young men"--νεανισκοι a word usually applied to those who were in the vigour of life, from about the period of twenty up to forty years, (1Jn 2:13,) and this word would embrace all who were younger than that class; and

(b.) the other is, that the word itself would convey the idea that they were in quite early life, as the word children--a fair translation of it --does now with us. It is not possible to determine, from the use of this word, precisely of what age the class here referred to was, but the word would imply that they were in quite early life. No rule is laid down in the New Testament as to the age in which children may be admitted to the communion. The whole subject is left to the wise discretion of the church, and is safely left there. Cases must vary so much that no rule could be laid down; and little or no evil has arisen from leaving the point undetermined in the Scriptures. It may be doubted, however, whether tile church has not been rather in danger of erring by having it deferred too late, than by admitting children too early.

(3.) Such children, if worthy the attention of an aged apostle, should receive the particular notice of pastors now. Jn 21:15. There are reasons in all cases now, as there were then, why this part of a congregation should receive the special attention of a minister of religion. The hopes of a church are in them. Their minds are susceptible to impression. The character of the piety in the next age will depend on their views of religion. All that there is of value in the church and the world will soon pass into their hands. The houses,

farms, factories; the pulpits, and the chairs of professors in colleges; the seats of senators and the benches of judges; the great offices of state, and all the offices in the church; the interests of learning, and of benevolence and liberty, are all soon to be under their control. Everything valuable in this world will soon depend on their conduct and character; and who, therefore, can over-estimate the importance of training them up in just views of religion. As John wrote to this class, should not pastors preach to them?

Because--οτι. This particle may be rendered for, or because; and the meaning may be either that the fact that their sins were forgiven was a reason for writing to them, since it would be proper, on that ground, to exhort them to a holy life; or that he wrote to them because it was a privilege to address them as those who were forgiven, for he felt that, in speaking to them, he could address them as such. It seems to me that it is to be taken as a causal particle, and that the apostle, in the various specifications which he makes, designs to assign particular reasons why he wrote to each class, enjoining on them the duties of a holy life. Comp. 1Jn 2:21. Your sins are forgiven you. That is, this is a reason why he wrote to them, and enjoined these things on them. The meaning seems to be, that the fact that our past sins are blotted out furnishes a strong reason why we should be holy. That reason is founded on the goodness of God in doing it, and on the obligation under which we are brought by the fact that God has had mercy on us. This is a consideration which children will feel as well as others; for there is nothing which will tend more to make a child obedient hereafter, than the fact that a parent freely forgives the past.

For his name's sake. On account of the name of Christ; that is, in virtue of what he has done for us. In 1Jn 2:13, he states another reason why he wrote to this same class--"because they had known the Father."

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

I write unto you, fathers. As there were special reasons for writing to children, so there were also for writing to those who were more mature in life. The class here addressed would embrace all those who were in

advance of the νεανισκοι, or young men, and would properly include those who were at the head of families.

Because ye have known him that is from the beginning. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Jn 1:1 The argument is, that they had been long acquainted with the principles of his religion, and understood well its doctrines and duties. It cannot be certainly inferred from this that they had had a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus; yet that this might have been is not impossible, for John had himself personally known him, and there may have been some among those to whom he wrote who had also seen and known him. If this were so, it would give additional impressiveness to the reason assigned here for writing to them, and for reminding them of the principles of that religion which they had learned froth his own lips and example. But perhaps all that is necessarily implied in this passage is, that they had had long opportunity of becoming acquainted with the religion of the Son of God, and that having understood that thoroughly, it was proper to address them as aged and established Christians, and to call on them to maintain the true doctrines of the gospel, against the specious but dangerous errors which then prevailed.

I write unto you, young men. νεανισκοι. This word would properly embrace those who were in the rigour of life, midway between children and old men. It is uniformly rendered young men in the New Testament: Mt 19:20,22, Mk 14:61, 16:6, Lk 7:14, Acts 2:17, 5:10; and in the passages before us. It does not elsewhere occur. It is commonly understood as embracing those in the prime and rigour of manhood up to the period of about forty years.--Robinson.

Because ye have overcome the wicked one. That is, because you have rigour, (see the next verse,)and that rigour you have shown by overcoming the assaults of the wicked one--the devil. You have triumphed over the passions which prevail in early life; you have combatted the allurements of vice, ambition, covetousness, and sensuality; and you have shown that there is a strength of character and of piety on which reliance can be placed in promoting religion. It is proper, therefore, to exhort you not to disgrace the victory which you have already gained, but to employ your vigour of character in maintaining the cause of the Saviour. The thing to which John appeals here is the energy of those at this period of life, and it is proper at all

times to make this the ground of appeal in addressing a church, It is right to call on those who are in the prime of life, and who are endowed with energy of character, to employ their talents in the service of the Lord Jesus, and to stand up as the open advocates of truth. Thus the apostle calls on the three great classes into which a community or a church may be considered as divided: youth, be; cause their sins were already forgiven, and, though young, they had actually entered on a career of virtue and religion, a career which by all means they ought to be exhorted to pursue; fathers, or aged men, because they had had long experience in religion, and had a thorough acquaintance with the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and they might be expected to stand steadfastly as examples to others; and young men, those who were in the rigour and prime of life, because they had shown that they had power to resist evil, and were endowed with strength, and it was proper to call on them to exert their rigour in the sacred cause of religion.

I write unto you, "little children" Because ye have known the Father. In 1Jn 2:12, the reason assigned for writing to this class is, that their sins were forgiven, The reason assigned here is, that in early life they had become acquainted with God as a Father. He desires that they would show themselves dutiful and faithful children in this relation which they sustained to him. Even children may learn to regard God as their Father, and may have towards him all the affectionate interest which grows out of this relation.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

I have written unto you, fathers, because, etc. The reason assigned here for writing to fathers is the same which is given in the previous verse. It would seem that, in respect to them, the apostle regarded this as a sufficient reason for writing to them, and only meant to enforce it by repeating it. The fact that they had through many years been acquainted with the doctrines and duties of the true religion, seemed to him a sufficient reason for writing to them, and for exhorting them to a steadfast adherence to those principles and duties.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, etc. The two additional circumstances which he here mentions as reasons for

writing to young men are, that they are strong, and that the word of God abides in them. The first of these reasons is, that they were strong; that is, that they were qualified for active and useful service in the cause of the Redeemer. Children were yet too young and feeble to appeal to them by this motive, and the powers of the aged were exhausted; but those who were in the rigour of life might be called upon for active service in the cause of the Lord Jesus. The same appeal may be made now to the same class; and the fact that they are thus vigorous is a proper ground of exhortation, for the church needs their active services, and they are bound to devote their powers to the cause of truth. The other additional ground of appeal is, that the word of God abode in them; that is, that those of this class to whom he wrote had showed, perhaps in time of temptation, that they adhered firmly to the principles of religion. They had not flinched from an open defence of the truths of religion when assailed; they had not been seduced by the plausible arts of the advocates of error, but they had had strength to overcome the wicked one. The reason here for appealing to this class is, that in fact they had showed that they could be relied on, and it was proper to depend on them to advocate the great principles of Christianity.

15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Love not the world. The term world seems to be used in the Scriptures in three senses;

(1,) As denoting the physical universe; the world as it appears to the eye; the world considered as the work of God, as a material creation.

(2.) The world as applied to the people that reside in it--" the world of mankind."

(3.) As the dwellers on the earth are by nature without religion, and act under a set of maxims, aims, and principles that have reference only to this life, the term comes to be used with reference to that community; that is, to the objects which they peculiarly seek, and the principles by which they are actuated, Considered with reference to the first sense of the word, it is not improper to love the world as the work of God, and as illustrating his perfections; for we may suppose that God loves his own works, and it is not wrong that we should find

pleasure in their contemplation. Considered with reference to the second sense of the word, it is not wrong to love the people of the world with a love of benevolence, and to have attachment to our kindred and friends who constitute a part of it, though they are not Christians. It is only with reference to the word as used in the third sense that the command here can be understood to be applicable, or that the love of the world is forbidden; with reference to the objects sought, the maxims that prevail, the principles that reign in that community that lives for this world as contradistinguished from the world to come. The meaning is, that we are not to fix our affections on worldly objects--on what the world can furnish--as our portion, with the spirit with which they do who live only for this world, regardless of the life to come. We are not to make this world the object of our chief affection; we are not to be influenced by the maxims and feelings which prevail among those who do. Comp. Rom 12:2, and Jas 4:4. See also Mt 16:26, Lk 9:25, 1Cor 1:20, 3:19, Gal 4:3, Col 2:8.

Neither the things that are in the world. Referred to in the next verse as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." This explanation shows what John meant by "the things that are in the world." He does not say that we are in no sense to love anything that is in the material world; that we are to feel no interest in flowers, and streams, and forests, and fountains; that we are to have no admiration for what God has done as the Creator of all things; that we are to cherish no love for any of the inhabitants of the world, our friends and kindred; or that we are to pursue none of the objects of this life in making provision for our families; but that we are not to love the things which are sought merely to pamper the appetite, to please the eye, or to promote pride in living. These are the objects sought by the people of the world; these are not the objects to be sought by the Christian.

If any man love the world, etc. If, in this sense, a man loves the world, it shows that he has no true religion; that is, if characteristically he loves the world as his portion, and lives for that; if it is the ruling principle of his life to gain and enjoy that, it shows that his heart has never been renewed, and that he has no part with the children of God. Jas 4:4; Mt 6:24.

For all that is in the world. That is, all that really constitutes the world, or that enters into the aims and purposes of those who live for this life.

All that that community lives for may be comprised under the following things.

The lust of the flesh. The word lust is used here in the general sense of desire, or that which is the object of desire--not in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used to denote libidinous passion. Jas 1:14. The phrase, "the lust of the flesh," here denotes that which pampers the appetites, or all that is connected with the indulgence of the mere animal propensities. A large part of the world lives for little more than this. This is the lowest form of worldly indulgence; those which are immediately specified being of a higher order, though still merely worldly.

And the lust of the eyes. That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly raiment, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to the gay vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life. It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty--for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life,--when it is sought without any connexion with religion or reference to the world to come.

And the pride of life. The word here used means, properly, ostentation or boasting, and then arrogance or pride.--Robinson. It refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride, or that is an index of pride, such as the ostentatious display of dress, equipage, furniture, etc.

Is not of the Father. Does not proceed from God, or meet with his approbation. It is not of the nature of true religion to seek these things, nor can their pursuit be reconciled with the existence of real piety in the heart. The sincere Christian has nobler ends; and he who has not any higher ends, and whose conduct and feelings can all be accounted for by a desire for these things, cannot be a true Christian.

But is of the world. Is originated solely by the objects and purposes of this life, where religion and the life to come are excluded.

16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

And the world passeth away. Everything properly constituting this world where religion is excluded. The reference here does not seem to be so much to the material world, as to the scenes of show and vanity which make up the world. These things are passing away like the shifting scenes of the stage. 1Cor 7:31.

And the lust thereof. All that is here so much the object of desire. These things are like a pageant, which only amuses the eve for a moment, and then disappears for ever.

But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. This cannot mean that he will never die; but it means that he has built his happiness on a basis which is secure, and which can never pass away. Mt 7:24; seq.

The Antichrist

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

It is the last time. The closing period or dispensation; that dispensation in which the affairs of the world are ultimately to be wound up. The apostle does not, however, say that the end of the world would soon occur, nor does he intimate how long this dispensation would be. That period might continue through many ages or centuries, and still be the last dispensation, or that in which the affairs of the world would be finally closed. Isa 2:2; Acts 2:17; Heb 1:2. Some have supposed that the "last time" here refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish economy; but the more natural interpretation is to refer it to the last dispensation of the world, and to suppose that the apostle meant to say that there were clear evidences that that period had arrived.

And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come. The word antichrist occurs in the New Testament only in these epistles of John, 1Jn 2:18,22, 4:3, 2Jn 1:7. The proper meaning of anti (αντι) in composition is,

(1.) over against, as αντιταττειν;

(2.) contrary to, as αντιλεγειν;

(3.) reciprocity, as ανταποδιδωμι;

(4.) substitution, as αντιβασιλευς, in the place of the king, or ανθυπατος--proconsul. The word antichrist, therefore, might denote any one who either was or claimed to be in the place of Christ, or one who, for any cause, was in opposition to him. The word, further, would apply to one opposed to him, on whatever ground the opposition might be; whether it were open and avowed, or whether it were only in fact, as resulting from certain claims which were adverse to his, or which were inconsistent with his.

A vice-functionary, or an opposing functionary, would be the idea which the word would naturally suggest. If the word stood alone, and there were nothing said further to explain its meaning, we should think, when the word antichrist was used, either of one who claimed to be the Christ, and who thus was a rival; or of one who stood in opposition to him on some other ground. That which constituted the characteristics of antichrist, according to John, who, only has used the word, he has himself stated. 1Jn 2:22, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." 1Jn 4:3, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist." 2Jn 1:7, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." From this it is clear, that John understood by the word all those that denied that Jesus is the Messiah, or that the Messiah has come in the flesh. If they held that Jesus was a deceiver, and that he was not the Christ, or if they maintained that, though Christ had come, he had not come in the flesh, that is, with a proper human nature, this showed that such persons had the spirit of antichrist. They strayed themselves against him, and held doctrines which were in fact

in entire opposition to the Son of God. It would appear then that John does not use the word in the sense which it would bear as denoting one who set up a rival claim, or who came in the place of Christ, but in the sense of those who were opposed to him by denying essential doctrines in regard to his person and advent. It is not certainly known to what persons he refers, but it would seem not improbable to Jewish adversaries, (see Suicer's Thesaurus. voc.,) or to some forms of the Gnostic belief. 1Jn 4:2 The doctrine respecting antichrist, as stated in the New Testament, may be summed up in the following particulars:

(1.) That there would be those, perhaps in considerable numbers, who would openly claim to be the Christ, or the true Messiah, Mt 24:5,24.

(2.) That there would be a spirit, which would manifest itself early in the church, that would strongly tend to some great apostasy under some one head or leader, or to a concentration on an individual, or a succession of individuals, who would have eminently the spirit of antichrist, though for a time the developement of that spirit would be hindered or restrained, 2Thes 2:1, seq.

(3.) That this would be ultimately concentrated on a single leader --"the man of sin"--and embodied under some great apostasy, at the head of which would be that "man of sin," 2Thes 2:3,4,8,9,10. It is to this that Paul particularly refers, or this is the view which he took of this apostasy, and it is this which he particularly describes.

(4.) That, in the mean time, and before the elements of the great apostasy should be concentrated and embodied, there might not be a few who would partake of the same general spirit, and who would be equally opposed to Christ in their doctrines and aims; that is, who would embody in themselves the essential spirit of antichrist, and by whose appearing it might be known that the last dispensation had come. It is to these that John refers, and these he found in his own age. Paul fixed the eye on future times, when the spirit of antichrist should be embodied under a distinct and mighty organization; John on his own time, and found then essentially what it had been predicted would occur in the church. He here says that they had been taught to expect that antichrist would come under the last dispensation; and it is implied that it could be ascertained that it was the last time, from the fact that the predicted opposer of Christ had come. The reference is probably

to the language of the Saviour, that before the end should be, and as a sign that it was coming, many would arise claiming to be Christ, and, of course, practically denying that he was the Christ. Mt 24:5, "Many shall come m my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Verse 24, "And there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets; and they shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." This prediction it is probable the apostles had referred to wherever they had preached, so that there was a general expectation that one or more persons would appear claiming to be the Christ, or maintaining such opinions as to be inconsistent with the true doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah. Such persons, John says, had then in fact appeared, by which it could be known that they were living under the closing dispensation of the world referred to by the Saviour. 2Thes 2:2, seq.

Even now are there many antichrists. There are many who have the characteristics which it was predicted that antichrist would have; that is, as explained above, there are many who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, or who deny that he has come in the flesh. If they maintained that Jesus was an impostor and not the true Messiah, or if, though they admitted that the Messiah had come, they affirmed, as the Docetae did, (1Jn 4:2,) that he had come in appearance only, and not really come in the flesh, this was the spirit of antichrist. John says that there were many such persons in fact in his time. It would seem from this that John did not refer to a single individual, or to a succession of individuals who should come previous to the winding up of the affairs of the world, as Paul did, (2Thes 2:2, seq.,) but that he understood that there might be many at the same time who would evince the spirit of antichrist. Both he and Paul, however, refer to the expectation that before the coming of the Saviour to Judge the world there would be prominent adversaries of the Christian religion, and that the end would not come until such adversaries appeared. Paul goes more into detail, and describes the characteristics of the great apostasy more at length, (2Thes 2:2, seq.; 1Timm 4:1, seq.; 2Ti 3:1, seq.;) John says, not that the appearing of these persons indicated that the end of the world was near, but that they had such characteristics as to show that they were living in the last dispensation. Paul so describes them as to show that the end of the world was not to be immediately expected, (2Thes 2:1, seq.;) John, without referring to that point, says that there were enough

of that character then to prove that the last dispensation had come, though he does not say how long it would continue.

Whereby we know it is the last time. They have the characteristics which it was predicted many would have before the end of the world should come. The evidence that it was "the last time," or the closing dispensation of the world, derived from the appearing of these persons, consists simply in the fact that it was predicted that such persons would appear under the Christian, or the last dispensation, Mt 24:5, Mt 24:24-27. Their appearance was to precede the coming of the Saviour, though it is not said how long it would precede that; but at any time the appearing of such persons would be an evidence that it was the closing dispensation of the world, for the Saviour, in his predictions respecting them, had said that they would appear before he should return to judgment. It cannot now be determined precisely to what classes of persons there is reference here, because we know too little of the religious state of the times to which the apostle refers. No one can prove, however, that there were not persons at that time who so fully corresponded to the predictions of the Saviour as to be a complete fulfilment of what he said, and to demonstrate that the last age had truly come. It would seem probable that there may have been reference to some Jewish adversaries, who denied that Jesus was the Messiah, (Rob. Lex.,) or to some persons who had already broached the doctrine of the Docetae, that thought Jesus was the Messiah, yet that he was a man in appearance only, and had not really come in the flesh. Classes of persons of each description abounded in the early ages of the church.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

They went out from us. From the church. That is, they had once been professors of the religion of the Saviour, though their apostasy showed that they never had any true piety. John refers to the fact that they had once been in the church, perhaps to remind those to whom he wrote that they knew them well, and could readily appreciate their character. It was a humiliating statement that those who showed themselves to be so utterly opposed to religion had once been members of the Christian church; but this is a statement which we are often compelled to make.

But they were not of us. That is, they did not really belong to us, or were not true Christians. Mt 7:23. This passage proves that these persons, whatever their pretensions and professions may have been, were never sincere Christians. The same remark may be made of all who apostatize from the faith, and become teachers of error. They never were truly converted; never belonged really to the spiritual church of Christ.

For if they had been of us. If they had been sincere and true Christians.

They would no doubt have continued with us. The words "no doubt" are supplied by our translators, but the affirmation is equally strong without them: "they would have remained with us." This affirms, without any ambiguity or qualification, that if they had been true Christians they would have remained in the church;, that is, they would not have apostatized. There could not be a more positive affirmation than that which is implied here, that those who are true Christians will continue to be such; or that the saints will not fall away from grace. John affirms it of these persons, that if they had been true Christians they would never have departed from the church, he makes the declaration so general that it may be regarded as a universal truth, that if any are truly "of us," that is, if they are true Christians, they will continue in the-church, or will never fall away. The statement is so made also as to teach that if any do fall away from the church, the fact is full proof that they never had any religion, for if they had had they would have remained steadfast in the church. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. It was suffered or permitted in the providence of God that this should occur, in order that it might be seen and known that they were not true Christians, or in order that their real character might be developed. It was desirable that this should be done,

(a.) in order that the church might be purified from their influence--comp. Jn 15:2;

(b.) in order that it might not be responsible for their conduct, or reproached on account of it;

(c.) in order that their real character might be developed, and they might themselves see that they were not true Christians;

(d.) in order that, being seen and known as apostates, their opinions and conduct might have less influence than if they were connected with the church;

(e.) in order that they might themselves understand their own true character, and no longer live under the delusive opinion that they were Christians and were safe, but that, seeing themselves in their true light, they might be brought to repentance. For there is only a most slender prospect that any who are deceived in the church will ever be brought to true repentance there; and slight as is the hope that one who apostatizes will be, such an event is much more probable than it would be if he remained in the church. Men are more likely to be converted when their character is known and understood, than they are when playing a game of deception, or are themselves deceived. What is here affirmed of these persons often occurs now; and those who have no true religion are often suffered to apostatize from their profession for the same purposes. It is better that they should cease to have any connexion with the church than that they should remain in it; and God often suffers them to fall away even from the profession of religion, in order that they may not do injury as professing Christians. This very important passage, then, teaches the following things:

(1.) That when men apostatize from the profession of religion, and embrace fatal error, or live in sin, it proves that they never had any true piety.

(2.) The fact that such persons fall away cannot be adduced to prove that Christians ever fall from grace, for it demonstrates nothing on that point, but proves only that these persons never had any real piety. They may have had much that seemed to be religion; they may have been zealous, and apparently devoted to God, and may even have had much comfort and peace in what they took to be piety; they may have been eminently "gifted" in prayer, or may have even been successful preachers of the gospel, but all this does not prove that they ever had any piety, nor does the fact that such persons apostatize from their profession throw any light on a question quite foreign to this--whether true Christians ever fall from grace. Comp. Mt 7:22,23.

(3.) The passage before us proves that if any are true Christians they will remain in the church, or will certainly persevere and be saved. They may indeed backslide grievously; they may wander far away, and pain the hearts of their brethren, and give occasion to the enemies of religion to speak reproachfully; but the apostle says, "if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."

(4.) One of the best evidences of true piety is found in the fact of continuing with the church. I do not mean nominally and formally, but really and spiritually, having the heart with the church; loving its peace and promoting its welfare; identifying ourselves with real Christians, and showing that we are ready to co-operate with those who love the Lord Jesus and his cause.

(5.) The main reason why professing Christians are suffered to apostatize is to show that they had no true religion. It is desirable that they should see it themselves; desirable that others should see it also. It is better that it should be known that they had no true religion than that they should remain in the church to be a burden on its movements, and a reproach to the cause. By being allowed thus to separate themselves from the Church, they may be brought to remember their violated vows, and the church will be free from the reproach of having those in its bosom who are a dishonour to the Christian name. We are not to wonder, then, if persons apostatize who have been professors of true religion; and we are not to suppose that the greatest injury is done to the cause when they do it. A greater injury by far is done when such persons remain in the church.

20 But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

But ye have an unction from the Holy One. The apostle in this verse evidently intends to say that he had no apprehension in regard to those to whom he wrote that they would thus apostatize, and bring dishonour on their religion. They had been so anointed by the Holy Spirit that they understood the true nature of religion, and it might be confidently expected that they would persevere, The word unction or anointing (χρισμα) means, properly, "something rubbed in or ointed;" oil for anointing, ointment; then it means an anointing. The allusion is to the anointing of kings and priests, or their inauguration or coronation, (1Sam 10:1, 16:13, Ex 28:41, 40:15; compare Mt 1:1;) and the idea

seems to have been that the oil thus used was emblematic of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit as qualifying them for the discharge of the duties of their office. Christians, in the New Testament, are described as "kings and priests," (Rev 1:6, 5:10,) and as a "royal priesthood," 1Pet 2:5, 1Pet 2:9;) and hence they are represented as anointed, or as endowed with those graces of the Spirit, of which anointing was the emblem. The phrase "the Holy One" refers here, doubtless, to the Holy Spirit, that Spirit whose influences are imparted to the people of God, to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort them in their trials. The particular reference here is to the influences of that Spirit as giving them clear and just views of the nature of religion, and thus securing them from error and apostasy.

And ye know all things. That is, all things which it is essential that you should know on the subject of religion. Jn 17:13; 1Cor 2:15. The meaning cannot be that they knew all things pertaining to history, to science, to literature, and to the arts; but that, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, they had been made so thoroughly acquainted with the truths and duties of the Christian religion, that they might be regarded as safe from the danger of fatal error. The same may be said of all true Christians now, that they are so taught by the Spirit of God, that they have a practical acquaintance with what religion is, and with what it requires, and are secure from falling into fatal error. In regard to the general meaning of this verse, then, it may be observed:

I. That it does not mean any one of the following things:

(1.) That Christians are literally instructed by the Holy Spirit in all things, or that they literally understand all subjects. The teaching, whatever it may be, refers only to religion.

(2.) It is not meant that any new faculties of mind are conferred on them, or any increased intellectual endowments, by their religion. It is not a fact that Christians, as such, are superior in mental endowments to others; not that by their religion they have any mental traits which they had not before their conversion. Paul, Peter, and John had essentially the same mental characteristics after their conversion which they had before; and the same is true of all Christians.

(3.) It is not meant that any new truth is revealed to the mind by the Holy Spirit. All the truth that is brought before the mind of the Christian is to be found in the word of God, and revelation, as such, was completed when the Bible was finished.

(4.) It is not meant that anything is perceived by Christians which they had not the natural faculty for perceiving before their conversion, or which other men have not also the natural faculty for perceiving. The difficulty with men is not a defect of natural faculties, it is in the blindness of the heart.

II The statement here made by John does imply, it is supposed, the following things:

(1.) That the minds of Christians are so enlightened that they have a new perception of the truth. They see it in a light in which they did not before. They see it as truth. They see its beauty, its force, its adaptedness to their condition and wants. They understand the subject of religion better than they once did, and better than others do. What was once dark appears now plain; what once had no beauty to their minds now appears beautiful; what was once repellent is now attractive.

(2.) They see this to be true; that is, they see it in such a light that they cannot doubt that it is true. They have such views of the doctrines of religion, that they have no doubt that they are true, and are willing on the belief of their truth to lay down their lives, and stake their eternal interests.

(3.) Their knowledge of truth is enlarged. They become acquainted with more truths than they would have known if they had not been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Their range of thought is greater; their vision more extended, as well as more clear.

III. The evidence that this is so is found in the following things:

(1.) The express statements of Scripture. See 1Cor 2:14,15, and the Notes on that passage. 1Cor 2:14, 1Cor 2:15, Compare Jn 16:13,14.

(2.) It is a matter of fact that it is so.

(a.) Men by nature do not perceive any beauty in the truths of religion. They are distasteful to them, or they are repulsive and offensive. "The doctrine of the cross is to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness." They may see indeed the force of an argument, but they do not see the beauty of the way of salvation.

(b.) When they are converted they do. These things appear to them to be changed, and they see them in a new light, and perceive a beauty in them which they never did before.

(c.) There is often a surprising developement of religious knowledge when persons are converted. They seem to understand the way of salvation, and the whole subject of religion, in a manner and to an extent which cannot be accounted for, except on the supposition of a teaching from above.

(d.) This is manifest also in the knowledge which persons otherwise ignorant exhibit on the subject of religion. With few advantages for education, and with no remarkable talents, they show an acquaintance with the truth, a knowledge of religion, an ability to defend the doctrines of Christianity, and to instruct others in the way of salvation, which could have been derived only from some source superior to themselves. Comp. Jn 7:15, Acts 4:13.

(e.) The same thing is shown by their adherence to truth in the midst of persecution, and simply because they perceive that for which they die to be the truth. And is there anything incredible in this? May not the mind see what truth is? How do we judge of an axiom in mathematics, or of a proposition that is demonstrated, but by the fact that the mind perceives it to be true, and cannot doubt it? And may it not be so in regard to religious truth--especially when that truth is seen to accord with what we know of ourselves, our lost condition as sinners, and our need of a Saviour, and when we see that the truths revealed in the Scriptures are exactly adapted to our wants?

21 I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth. You are not to regard my writing to you in this earnest manner as any evidence that

I do not suppose you to be acquainted with religion and it duties. Some, perhaps, might have been disposed to put this construction on what he had said, but he assures them that that was not the reason why he had thus addressed them. The very fact that they did understand the subject of religion, he says, was rather the reason why he wrote to them.

But because ye know it. This was the ground of his hope that his appeal would be effectual. If they had never known what religion was, if they were ignorant of its nature and its claims, he would have had much less hope of being able to guard them against error, and of securing their steady walk in the path of piety. We may always make a strong and confident appeal to those who really understand what the nature of religion is, and what are the evidences of its truth.

And that no lie is of the truth. No form of error, however plausible it may appear, however ingeniously it may be defended, and however much it may seem to be favourable to human virtue and happiness, can be founded in truth. What the apostle says here has somewhat the aspect of a truism, but it contains a real truth of vital importance, and one which should have great influence in determining our minds in regard to any proposed opinion or doctrine. Error often appears plausible. It seems to be adapted to relieve the mind of many difficulties which perplex and embarass it on the subject of religion. It seems to be adapted to promote religion. It seems to make those who embrace it happy, and for a time they apparently enjoy religion. But John says that however plausible all this may be, however much it may seem to prove that the doctrines thus embraced are of God, it is a great and vital maxim that no error can have its foundation in truth, and, of course, that it must be worthless. The grand question is, what is truth; and when that is determined, we can easily settle the inquiries which come up about the various doctrines that are abroad in the world. Mere plausible appearances, or temporary good results that may grow out of a doctrine, do not prove that it is based on truth; for whatever those results may be, it is impossible that any error, however plausible, should have its origin in the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

Who is a liar. That is, who is false; who maintains an erroneous doctrine; who is an impostor, if he is not? The object of the apostle is to specify one of the prevailing forms of error, and to show that, however plausible the arguments might be by which it was defended, it was impossible that it should be true. Their own knowledge of the nature of religion must convince them at once that this opinion was false.

That denieth that Jesus is the Christ. It would seem that the apostle referred to a class who admitted that Jesus lived, but who denied that he was the true Messiah. On what grounds they did this is unknown; but to maintain this was, of course, the same as to maintain that he was an impostor. The ground taken may have been that he had not the characteristics ascribed to the Messiah in the prophets; or that he did not furnish evidence that he was sent from God; or that he was an enthusiast. Or perhaps some peculiar form of error may be referred to, like that which is said to have been held by Corinthus, who in his doctrine separated Jesus from Christ, maintaining them to be two distinct persons.--Doddridge.

He is antichrist. 1Jn 2:18. He has all the characteristics and attributes of antichrist; or, a doctrine which practically involves the denial of both the Father and the Son, must be that of antichrist.

That denieth the Father and the Son. That denies the peculiar truths pertaining to God the Father, and to the Son of God. The charge here is not that they entertained incorrect views of God as such--as almighty, eternal, most wise, and good; but that they denied the doctrines which religion taught respecting God as Father and Son. Their opinions tended to a denial of what was revealed respecting God as a Father --not in the general sense of being the Father of the universe, but in the particular sense of his relation to the Son. It cannot be supposed that they denied the existence and perfections of God as such, nor that they denied that God is a Father in the relation which he sustains to the universe; but the meaning must be that what they held went to a practical denial of that which is peculiar to the true God, considered as sustaining the relation of a Father to his Son Jesus Christ. Correct views of the Father could not be held without correct views of the Son; correct views of the Son could not be held without correct views of the Father. The doctrines respecting the Father and

the Son were so connected that one could not be held without holding the other, and one could not be denied without denying the other. Mt 11:27; Jn 5:23. No man can have just views of God the Father who has not right apprehensions of the Son. As a matter of fact in the world, men have right apprehensions of God only when they have correct views of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.*

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. That is, has no just views of the Father, and has no evidence of his friendship. It is only by the Son of God that the Father is made known to men, (Mt 11:27, Heb 1:2,3,) and it is only through him that we can become reconciled to God, and obtain evidence of his favour, Jn 5:23.

But he that acknowledges the Son, hath the Father also. This passage, in the common version of the New Testament, is printed in Italics, as if it were not in the original, but was supplied by the translators. It is true that it is not found in all the MSS. and versions; but it is found in a large number of Mss., and in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the AEthiopic, the Coptic, the Armenian, and the Arabic versions, and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn. It is probable, therefore, that it should be regarded as a genuine portion of the sacred text. It is much in the style of John, and though not necessary to complete the sense, yet it well suits the connexion. As it was true that if one denied the Son of God he could have no pretensions to any proper acquaintance with the Father, so it seemed to follow that if any one had any proper knowledge of the Son of God, and made a suitable confession of him, he had evidence that he was acquainted with the Father. Compare Jn 17:3; Rom 10:9. Though, therefore, this passage was wanting in many of the Mss. consulted by the translators of the Bible, and though in printing it in the manner in which they have they showed the great caution with which they acted in admitting anything doubtful into their translation, yet the passage should be restored to the text, and be regarded as a genuine portion of the word of God. The great truth can never be too clearly stated, or too often inculcated, that it is only by a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that we can have any true acquaintance with God, and that all who have just views of the Saviour are in fact acquainted with the true God, and are heirs of eternal life.

24 Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

Let that therefore abide in you. Adhere steadfastly to it; let the truth obtain a permanent lodgement in the soul. In view of its great importance, and its influence on your happiness here and hereafter, let it never depart from you.

Which ye have heard from the beginning. That is, the same doctrines which you have always been taught respecting the Son of God and the way of salvation. 1Jn 2:7.

Ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. Truly united to the Son and to the Father; or having evidence of the favour and friendship of the Son and the Father.

25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even* eternal life.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. This is evidently added to encourage them in adhering to the truths which they had embraced respecting the Son of God. In maintaining these truths they had the promise of eternal life; in departing from them they had none, for the promise of heaven in our world is made only to those who embrace one class of doctrines or opinions. No one can show that any promise of heaven is made to the mere possessor of beauty, or wealth, or talent; to the accomplished or the gay; to those who are distinguished for science, or skill in the arts; to rank, or birth, or blood; to courage or strength, whatever expectation of heaven any one may entertain on account of any of these things, must be traced to something else than a promise, for there is none in the Bible to that effect. The promise of heaven to men is limited to those who repent of their sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who lead a holy life; and if any one will base his hope of heaven on a promise, it must be limited to these things. And yet what well-founded hope of heaven can there be, except that which is based on a promise? How does any one know that he can be saved, unless he has some assurance from God that it may and shall be so? Is not heaven his home? How does any one know that he may dwell there, without some assurance from him that he may? Is not the crown of life his gift? How can any one know that he will possess it, unless he has some promise from him? However men may reason, or conjecture, or hope, the only promise of

eternal life is found in the Bible; and the fact that we have such a promise should surely be a sufficient inducement to us to hold fast the truth. On the promise of life in the gospel, see Jn 17:2, Rom 2:6,7, Mk 16:16, Mt 25:46.

26 These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. Respecting their character, and in order to guard you against their arts. The word seduce means to lead astray; and it here refers to those who would seduce them from the truth, or lead them into dangerous error. The apostle does not mean that they had actually seduced them, for he states in the following verse that they were yet safe; but he refers to the fact that there was danger that they might be led into error.

27 But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

But the anointing which ye have received of him. 1Jn 2:20.

Abideth in you. The meaning is, that the influence on your heart and life, which results from the fact that you are anointed of God, permanently abides with you, and will keep you from dangerous error. The apostle evidently meant to say that he felt assured that they would not be seduced from the truth, and that his confidence in regard to this was placed in the fact that they had been truly anointed unto God as kings and priests. Thus understood, what he here says is equivalent to the expression of a firm conviction that those who are true Christians will not fall away. Comp, 1Jn 2:19, 1Jn 2:20.

And ye need not that any man teach you. That is, what are the things essential to true religion. 1Jn 2:20.

But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things. This cannot mean that the mere act of anointing, if that had been performed in their case, would teach them; but it refers to what John includes in what he calls the anointing--that is, in the solemn consecrating to the duties of religion under the influences of the Holy Spirit.

And is truth, and is no lie. Leads to truth, and not to error. No man was ever led into error by those influences which result from the fact that he has been consecrated to the service of God.

Ye shall abide in him. Marg., "or it." The Greek will bear either construction. The connexion, however, seems to demand that it should be understood as referring to him--that is, to the Saviour.

The Children of God and Righteousness

28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall
appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his
coming.

And now, little children. 1Jn 2:1. Abide in him; that, when he shall appear. In the end of the world, to receive his people to himself. Jn 14:2,3. We may have confidence. Greek, boldness--παρρησιαν. This word is commonly used to denote openness, plainness, or boldness in speaking, Mk 8:32, Jn 7:4,13,26, Acts 2:29, 4:13,29, 2Cor 3:12, 7:4. Here it means the kind of boldness, or calm assurance, which arises from evidence of piety, and of preparation for heaven. It means that they would not be overwhelmed and confounded at the coming of the Saviour, by its being then found that all their hopes were fallacious.

And not be ashamed before him at his coming. By having all our hopes taken away; by being held up to the universe as guilty and condemned. We feel ashamed when our hopes are disappointed; when it is shown that we have a character different from what we professed to have; when our pretensions to goodness are stripped off, and the heart is made bare. Many will thus be ashamed in the last day, (Mt 7:21-23;) but it is one of the promises made to those who truly believe on the Saviour, that they shall never be ashamed or confounded. 1Pet 2:6, Comp. Isa 45:17, Rom 5:5, 1Pet 4:16, Mk 8:38.

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth
righteousness is born of him.

If ye know that he is righteous. This is not said as if there could be any doubt on the subject, but merely to call their attention to it as a well-known truth, and to state what followed from it. Every one who has any true acquaintance with God, must have the fullest conviction that he is a righteous Being. But, if this be so, John says, then it must follow

that only those who are truly righteous can regard themselves as begotten of him.

Ye know. Marg., know ye. The Greek will bear either construction, and either would make good sense. Assuming that God is righteous, it would be proper to state, as in the text, that it followed from this that they must know that only those who are righteous can be regarded as begotten of him; or, assuming this to be true, it was proper to exhort them to be righteous, as in the margin. Whichever interpretation is adopted, the great truth is taught, that only those who are truly righteous can regard themselves as the children of God.

That every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Or rather, is begotten of him; is truly a child of God. This truth is everywhere taught in the Bible, and is worthy of being often repeated. No one who is not, in the proper sense of the term, a righteous man, can have any well-founded pretensions to being regarded as a child of God. If this be so, then it is not difficult to determine whether we are the children of God.

(1.) If we are unjust, false, dishonest, we cannot be his children.

(2.) If we are indulging in any known sin, we cannot be.

(3.) If we are not truly righteous, all visions and raptures, all zeal and ardour, though in the cause of religion, all that we may pride ourselves on in being fervent in prayer, or eloquent in preaching, is vain.

(4.) If we are righteous, in the true and proper sense, doing that which is right toward God and toward men, to ourselves, to our families, to our neighbours, to the world at large, to the Saviour who died for us, then we are true Christians; and then, no matter how soon he may appear, or how solemn and overwhelming the scenes that shall close the world, we shall not be ashamed or confounded, for we shall hail him as our Saviour, and rejoice that the time has come that we may go and dwell with him for ever.

1 John-3

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Behold, what manner of love. What love, in kind and in degree. In kind the most tender and the most ennobling, in adopting us into his family, and in permitting us to address him as our Father; in degree the most exalted, since there is no higher love that can be shown than in adopting a poor and friendless orphan, and giving him a parent and a home. Even God could bestow upon us no more valuable token of affection than that we should be adopted into his family, and permitted to regard him as our Father. When we remember how insignificant we are as creatures, and how ungrateful, rebellious, and vile we have been as sinners, we may well be amazed at the love which would adopt us into the holy family of God, so that we may be regarded and treated as the children of the Most High. A prince could manifest no higher love for a wandering, ragged, vicious orphan boy, found in the streets, than by adopting him into his own family, and admitting him to the same privileges and honours as his own sons; and yet this would be a trifle compared with the honour which God has bestowed on us.

The Father hath bestowed upon us. God, regarded as a Father, or as at the head of the universe considered as one family. That we should be called the sons of God. That is, that we should be the sons of God -- the word called being often used in the sense of to be. On the nature and privileges of adoption, Rom 8:15, seq., and 2Cor 6:18, and practical remarks on that chapter, 1Cor 6:19, 1Cor 6:20.

Therefore the world knoweth us not. Does not understand our principles; the reasons of our conduct; the sources of our comforts and joys. The people of the world regard us as fanatics or enthusiasts; as foolish in abandoning the pleasures and pursuits which they engage in; as renouncing certain happiness for that which is uncertain; as cherishing false and delusive hopes in regard to the future, and as practising needless austerities, with nothing to compensate for the pleasures which are abandoned. There is nothing which the gay, the ambitious, and the selfish less understand than they do the elements

which go into the Christian's character, and the nature and source of the Christian's joys.

Because it knew him not. Did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the world had no right views of the real character of the Lord Jesus when he was on the earth. They mistook him for an enthusiast or an impostor; and it is no wonder that, having wholly mistaken his character, they should mistake ours. On the fact that the world did not know him, 1Cor 2:8, Acts 3:17. Comp. Jn 17:25. On the fact that Christians may be expected to be regarded and treated as their Saviour was, Jn 15:18, Jn 15:19; Jn 15:20. Comp. Mt 10:24,25.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God. We now in fact sustain this rank and dignity, and on that we may reflect with pleasure and gratitude. It is in itself an exalted honour, and may be contemplated as such, whatever may be true in regard to what is to come. In the dignity and the privileges which we now enjoy, we may find a grateful subject of reflection, and a cause of thankfulness, even if we should look to nothing beyond, or when we contemplate the fact by itself.

And it doth not yet appear what we shall be. It is not fully revealed what we shall be hereafter; what will be the full result of being regarded as the children of God. There are, indeed, certain things which may be inferred as following from this. There is enough to animate us with hope, and to sustain us in the trials of life. There is one thing which is clear, that we shall be like the Son of God; but what is fully involved in this is not made known. Perhaps

(1.) it could not be so revealed that we could understand it, for that state may be so unlike the present that no words would fully convey the conception to our minds. Perhaps

(2.) it may be necessary to our condition here, as on probation, that no more light should be furnished in regard to the future than to stimulate us to make efforts to reach a world where all is light. For an illustration of the sentiment expressed here by the apostle, 2Pet 1:4.

But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him. It is revealed to us that we shall be made like Christ; that is, in the bodies with which we shall be raised up, in character, in happiness, in glory. Php 3:21; 2Cor 3:18. This is enough to satisfy the Christian in his prospects for the future world. To be like Christ is the object of his supreme aim. For that he lives, and all his aspirations in regard to the coming world may be summed up in this--that he wishes to be like the glorified Son of God, and to share his honours and his joys. Php 3:10.

For we shall see him as he is. It is clearly implied here that there will be an influence in beholding the Saviour as he is, which will tend to make us like him, or to transform us into his likeness. See the nature of this influence explained 2Cor 3:18.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

And every man that hath this hope in him. This hope of seeing the Saviour, and of being made like him; that is, every true Christian. On the nature and influence of hope, Rom 8:24, Rom 8:25.

Purifieth himself. Makes himself holy. That is, under the influence of this hope of being like the Saviour, he puts forth those efforts in struggling against sin, and in overcoming his evil propensities, which are necessary to make him pure. The apostle would not deny that for the success of these efforts we are dependent on Divine aid; but he brings into view, as is often done in the sacred writings, the agency of man himself as essentially connected with success. Comp. Php 2:12. The particular thought here is, that the hope of being like Christ, and of being permitted to dwell with him, will lead a man to earnest efforts to become holy, and will be actually followed by such a result.

Even as he is pure. The same kind of purity here, the same degree hereafter. That is, the tendency of such a hope is to make him holy now, though he may be imperfect; the effect will be to make him perfectly holy in the world to come. It cannot be shown from this passage that the apostle meant to teach that any one actually becomes as pure in the present life as the Saviour is, that is, becomes perfectly holy; for all that is fairly implied in it is, that those who have this hope in them aim at the same purity, and will ultimately obtain it. But the apostle does not say that it is attained in this world. If the passage did

teach this, it would teach it respecting every one who has this hope, and then the doctrine would be that no one can be a Christian who does not become absolutely perfect on earth; that is, not that some Christians may become perfect here, but that all actually do. But none, it is presumed, will hold this to be a true doctrine. A true Christian does not, indeed, habitually and wilfully sin; but no one can pretend that all Christians attain to a state of sinless perfection on earth, or are, in fact, as pure as the Saviour was. But unless the passage proves that every Christian becomes absolutely perfect in the present life, it does not prove that in fact any do. It proves

(1.) that the tendency, or the fair influence of this hope, is to make the Christian pure;

(2.) that all who cherish it will, in fact, aim to become as holy as the Saviour was; and

(3.) that this object will, at some future period, be accomplished. There is a world where all who are redeemed shall be perfectly holy.

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. The law of God given to man as a rule of life. The object of the apostle here is to excite them to holiness, and to deter them from committing sin, perhaps in view of the fact stated in 1Jn 3:3, that every one who has the hope of heaven will aim to be holy like the Saviour. To confirm this, he shows them that, as a matter of fact, those who are born of God do lead lives of obedience, (1Jn 3:5-10;) and this he introduces by showing what is the nature of sin, in the verse before us. The considerations by which he would deter them from indulging in sin are the following:

(a.) all sin is a violation of the law of God, 1Jn 3:4;

(b.) the very object of the coming of Christ was to deliver men from sin, 1Jn 3:5;

(c.) these who are true Christians do not habitually sin, 1Jn 3:6;

(d.) those who sin cannot be true Christians, but are of the devil, 1Jn 3:8; and

(e.) he who is born of God has a germ or principle of true piety in him, and cannot sin, 1Jn 3:9. It seems evident that the apostle is here combating an opinion which then existed that men might sin, and yet be true Christians, (1Jn 3:7;) and he apprehended that there was danger that this opinion would become prevalent. On what ground this opinion was held is unknown. Perhaps it was held that all that was necessary to constitute religion was to embrace the doctrines of Christianity, or to be orthodox in the faith; perhaps that it was not expected that men would become holy in this life, and therefore they might indulge in acts of sin; perhaps that Christ came to modify and relax the law, and that the freedom which he procured for them was freedom to indulge in whatever men chose; perhaps that, since Christians were heirs of all things, they had a right to enjoy all things; perhaps that the passions of men were so strong that they could not be restrained, and that therefore it was not wrong to give indulgence to the propensities with which our Creator has formed us. All these opinions have been held under various forms of Antinomianism, and it is not at all improbable that some or all of them prevailed in the time of John. The argument which he urges would be applicable to any of them. The consideration which he here states is, that all sin is a transgression of law, and that he who commits it, under whatever pretence, is to be held as a transgressor of the law. The literal rendering of this passage is, "He who doeth sin (αμαρτιαν) doeth also transgression"--ανομιαν. Sin is the generic term embracing all that would be wrong. The word transgression (ανομια) is a specific term, showing where the wrong lay, to wit, in violating the law.

For sin is the transgression of the law. That is, all sin involves this as a consequence that it is a violation of the law. The object of the apostle is not so much to define sin, as to deter from its commission by stating what is its essential nature--though he has in fact given the best definition of it that could be given. The essential idea is, that God has given a law to men to regulate their conduct, and that whatever is a departure from that law in any way is held to be sin. The law measures our duty, and measures therefore the degree of guilt when it is not obeyed. The law determines what is right in all cases, and, of course, what is wrong when it is not complied with. The law is the expression

of what is the will of God as to what we shall do; and when that is not done, there is sin. The law determines what we shall love or not love; when our passions and appetites shall be bounded and restrained, and to what extent they may be indulged; what shall be our motives and aims in living; how we shall act toward God and toward men; and whenever, in any of these respects, its requirements are not complied with, there is sin. This will include everything in relation to which the law is given, and will embrace what we omit to do when the law has commanded a thing to be done, as well as a positive act of transgression where the law has forbidden a thing. This idea is properly found in the original word rendered transgression of the law--ανομια. This word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Mt 7:23, 13:41, 23:28, 24:12, Rom 4:7, 6:19, 2Thes 2:7, Tit 2:14, Heb 1:9; Heb 8:12, 10:17, in all which places it is rendered iniquity and iniquities; in 2Cor 6:14, where it is rendered unrighteousness; and in the verse before us twice. It properly means lawlessness, in the sense that the requirements of the law are not conformed to, or complied with; that is, either by not obeying it, or by positively violating it. When a parent commands a child to do a thing, and he does not do it, he is as really guilty of violating the law as when he does a thing which is positively forbidden. This important verse, therefore, may be considered in two aspects--as a definition of the nature of sin, and as an argument against indulgence in it, or against committing it.

I. As a definition of the nature of sin. It teaches

(a.) that there is a rule of law by which the conduct of mankind is to be regulated and governed, and to which it is to be conformed.

(b.) That there is sin in all cases where that law is not complied with; and that all who do not comply with it are guilty before God.

(c.) That the particular thing which determines the guilt of sin, and which measures it, is that it is a departure from law, and consequently that there is no sin where there m no departure from law. The essential thing is, that the law has not been respected and obeyed, and sin derives its character and aggravation from that fact. No one can reasonably doubt as to the accuracy of this definition of sin. It is founded on the fact

(a.) that God has an absolute right to prescribe what we may and may not do;

(b.) that it is to be presumed that what he prescribes will be in accordance with what is right; and

(c.)that nothing else in fact constitutes sin. Sin can consist in nothing else. It does not consist of a particular height of stature, or a particular complexion; of a feeble intellect, or an intellect made feeble, as the result of any former apostasy; of any constitutional propensity, or any disposition founded in our nature as creatures. For none of these things do our consciences condemn us; and however we may lament them, we have no consciousness of wrong.

II. As an argument against the commission of sin. This argument may be considered as consisting of two things--the wrong that is done by the violation of law, and the exposure to the penalty.

(1.) The wrong itself. This wrong, as an argument to deter from sin, arises mainly from two things:

(a.) because sin is a violation of the will of God, and it is in itself wrong to disregard that will; and

(b.) because it is to be presumed that when God has given law there is a good reason why he has done it.

(2.) The fact that the law has a penalty is an argument for not violating the law. All law has a penalty; that is, there is some suffering, disadvantage, forfeit of privileges, etc., which the violation of law draws in its train, and which is to be regarded as an expression of the sense which the lawgiver entertains of the value of his law, and of the evil of disobeying it. Many of these penalties of the violation of the Divine law are seen in this life, and all will be certain to occur sooner or later, in this world or in the world to come. With such views of the law and of sin--of his obligations, and of the evils of disobedience--a Christian should not, and will not, deliberately and habitually violate the law of God. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. The law of God given to man as a rule of life. The object of the apostle

here is to excite them to holiness, and to deter them from committing sin, perhaps in view of the fact stated in 1Jn 3:3, that every one who has the hope of heaven will aim to be holy like the Saviour. To confirm this, he shows them that, as a matter of fact, those who are born of God do lead lives of obedience, (1Jn 3:5-10;) and this he introduces by showing what is the nature of sin, in the verse before us. The considerations by which he would deter them from indulging in sin are the following:

(a.) all sin is a violation of the law of God, 1Jn 3:4;

(b.) the very object of the coming of Christ was to deliver men from sin, 1Jn 3:5;

(c.) these who are true Christians do not habitually sin, 1Jn 3:6;

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5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

And ye know that he was manifested. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God. "You know that he became incarnate, or appeared among men, for the very purpose of putting an end to sin," Mt 1:21. Comp. 1Timm 3:16. This is the second argument in this paragraph, (1Jn 3:4-10,) by which the apostle would deter us from sin. The argument is a clear one, and is perhaps the strongest that can be made to bear on the mind of a true Christian--that the Lord Jesus saw sin to be so great an evil, that he came into our world, and gave himself to the bitter sorrows of death on the cross, to redeem us from it.

To take away our sins. The essential argument here is, that the whole work of Christ was designed to deliver us from the dominion of sin, not to furnish us the means of indulgence in it; and that, therefore, we should be deterred from it by all that Christ has done and suffered for us. He perverts the whole design of the coming of the Saviour who supposes that his work was in any degree designed to procure for his followers the indulgences of sin, or who so interprets the methods of his grace as to suppose that it is now lawful for him to indulge his guilty passions. The argument essentially is this:

(1.) That we profess to be the followers of Christ, and should carry out his ends and views in coming into the world;

(2.) that the great and leading purpose of his coming was to set us free from the bondage of transgression;

(3.) that in doing this he gave himself up to a life of poverty, and shame, and sorrow, and to a most bitter death on the cross; and,

(4.) that we should not indulge in that from which he came to deliver us, and which cost him so much toil and such a death. How could we indulge in that which has brought heavy calamity on the head of a father, or which has pierced a sister's heart with many sorrows? Still more, how can we be so ungrateful and hardhearted as to indulge in that which crushed our Redeemer in death?

And in him is no sin. An additional consideration to show that we should be holy. As he was perfectly pure and spotless, so should all his followers aim to be; and none can truly pretend to be his who do not desire and design to become like him. On the personal holiness of the Lord Jesus, Heb 7:26, 1Pet 2:23.

6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Whosoever abideth in him. See 1Jn 2:6. The word here employed (μενων) properly means to remain, to continue, to abide. It is used of persons remaining or dwelling in a place, in the sense of abiding there permanently, or lodging there, and this is the common meaning of the word, Mt 10:11, 26:38, Mk 6:10, Lk 1:56, et saepe. In the writings of John, however, it is quite a favourite word to denote the relation which one sustains to another, in the sense of being united to him, or remaining with him in affection and love; being with him in heart and mind and will, as one makes his home in a dwelling. The sense seems to be that we have some sort of relation to him similar to that which we have to our home; that is, some fixed and permanent attachment to him. We live in him; we remain steadfast in our attachment to him, as we do to our own home. For the use of the word in John, in whose writings it so frequently occurs, see Jn 5:38, 6:56, 14:10,17, 15:4-7, Jn 15:9, 1Jn 2:6,10,14,17,27,28, 3:6,24, 4:12,13,15,16. In the passage before us, as in his writings generally, it refers to one who lives the life of a Christian, as if he were always with Christ, and abode with him. It refers to the Christian considered as adhering steadfastly to the

Saviour, and not as following him with transitory feelings, emotions, and raptures. It does not of itself necessarily mean that he will always do this; that is, it does not prove the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but it refers to the adherence to the Saviour as a continuous state of mind, or as having permanency; meaning that there is a life of continued faith in him. It is of a person thus attached to the Saviour that the apostle makes the important declaration in the passage before us, that he does not sin. This is the third argument to show that the child of God should be pure; and the substance of the argument is, that as a matter of fact the child of God is not a sinner.

Sinneth not. There has been much difference of opinion in regard to this expression, and the similar declaration in 1Jn 3:9. Not a few have maintained that it teaches the "doctrine of perfection," or that Christians may live entirely without sin; and some have held that the apostle meant to teach that this is always the characteristic of the true Christian. Against the interpretation, however, which supposes that it teaches that the Christian is absolutely perfect, and lives wholly without sin, there are three insuperable objections:

(1.) If it teaches that doctrine at all, it teaches that all Christians are perfect; "whosoever abideth in him," "whosoever is born of God," "he cannot sin," 1Jn 3:9.

(2.) This is not true, and cannot be held to be true by those who have any just views of what the children of God have been and are. Who can maintain that Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob; that Moses, David, or Job; that Peter, John, or Paul, were absolutely perfect, and were never, after their regeneration, guilty of an act of sin? Certainly they never affirmed it of themselves, nor does the sacred record attribute to them any such perfection. And who can affirm this of all who give evidence of true piety in the world? Who can of themselves? Are we to come to the painful conclusion that all who are not absolutely perfect in thought, word, and deed, are destitute of any religion, and are to be set down as hypocrites or self-deceivers? And yet, unless this passage proves that all who have been born again are absolutely perfect, it will not prove it of any one, for the affirmation is not made of a part, or of what any favoured individual may be, but of what every one is in fact who is born of God.

(3.) This interpretation is not necessary to a fair exposition of the passage. The language used is such as would be employed by any writer if he designed to say of one that he is not characteristically a sinner; that he is a good man; that he does not commit habitual and wilful transgression. Such language is common throughout the Bible, when it is said of one man that he is a saint, and of another that he is a sinner; of one that he is righteous, and of another that he is wicked; of one that he obeys the law of God, and of another that he does not. John expresses it strongly, but he affirms no more in fact than is affirmed elsewhere. The passage teaches, indeed, most important truths in regard to the true Christian; and the fair and proper meaning may be summed up in the following particulars:

(a.) He who is born again does not sin habitually, or is not habitually a sinner. If he does wrong, it is when he is overtaken by temptation, and the act is against the habitual inclination and purpose of his soul. If a man sins habitually, it proves that he has never been renewed.

(b.) That he who is born again does not do wrong deliberately and of design. He means to do right. He is not wilfully and deliberately a sinner. If a man deliberately and intentionally does wrong, he shows that he is not actuated by the spirit of religion. It is true that when one does wrong, or commits sin, there is a momentary assent of the will; but it is under the influence of passion, or excitement, or temptation, or provocation, and not as the result of a deliberate plan or purpose of the soul. A man who deliberately and intentionally does a wrong thing, shows that he is not a true Christian; and if this were all that is understood by perfection, then there would be many who are perfect, for there are many, very many Christians, who cannot recollect an instance for many years in which they have intentionally and deliberately done a wrong thing. Yet these very Christians see much corruption in their own hearts over which to mourn, and against which they earnestly strive; in comparing themselves with the perfect law of God, and with the perfect example of the Saviour, they see much in which they come short.

(c) He who is born again will not sin finally, or will not fall away. "His seed remaineth in him," 1Jn 3:9. 1Jn 3:9 on that verse. There is a principle of grace by which he will ultimately be restrained and recovered. This, it seems to me, is fairly implied in the language used

by John; for if a man might be a Christian, and yet wholly fall away and perish, how could it be said with any truth that such a man "sinneth not;" how that "he doth not commit sin;" how that "his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin?" Just the contrary would be true if this were so.

Whosoever sinneth. That is, as explained above, habitually, deliberately, characteristically, and finally.--Doddridge. "Who habitually and avowedly sinneth."

Hath not seen him, nor known him. Has had no just views of the Saviour, or of the nature of true religion. In other words, cannot be a true Christian.

That is, "Whoever lives in sin, and goes on in a course and trade of sinning, is the servant and slave of sin; and although his reason condemns him, his conscience boggles at it, and his will is something averse to it, yet if he yields his members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, he is the servant of sin; and whatever his pretence may be, he has no right knowledge of Christ, nor any true faith in him; for whosoever abideth in him thus, sinneth not."
Learn hence, That the sincere Christian, so far as he is in Christ, and by faith united to him, and is taught and ruled by him, sinneth not; that is, he makes it his constant care and continual endeavour to shun and avoid all sin.
2. That such persons as go on in a course of sin, let their pretences to Christianity be what they will, they never had any experimental knowledge of Christ, no fellowship or communion with him; nor can ever hope to be happy in the fruition and enjoyment of him: Whosever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Let no man deceive you. That is, in the matter under consideration; to wit, by persuading you that a man may live in sinful practices, and yet be a true child of God. From this it is clear that the apostle supposed there were some who would attempt to do this, and it was to counteract their arts that he made these positive statements in regard to the nature of true religion.

He that doeth righteousness is righteous. This is laid down as a great and undeniable principle in religion--a maxim which none could dispute, and as important as it is plain. And it is worthy of all the emphasis which the apostle lays on it. The man who does righteousness, or leads an upright life, is a righteous man, and no other one is. No matter how any one may claim that he is justified by faith; no matter how he may conform to the external duties and rites of religion; no matter how zealous he may be for orthodoxy, or for the order of the church; no matter what visions and raptures he may have, or of what peace and joy in his soul he may boast; no matter how little he may fear death, oil hope for heaven--unless he is in fact a righteous man, in the proper sense of the term, he cannot be a child of God. Compare Mt 7:16-23. If he is, in the proper sense of the word, a man who keeps the law of God, and leads a holy life, he is righteous, for that is religion. Such a man, however, will always feel that his claim to be regarded as a righteous man is not to be traced to what he is in himself, but to what he owes to the grace of God.

Even as he is righteous. 1Jn 3:3. Not necessarily in this world to the same degree, but with the same kind of righteousness. Hereafter he will become wholly free from all sin, like his God and Saviour, 1Jn 3:2. Let no man deceive you. That is, in the matter under consideration; to wit, by persuading you that a man may live in sinful practices, and yet be a true child of God. From this it is clear that the apostle supposed there were some who would attempt to do this, and it was to counteract their arts that he made these positive statements in regard to the nature of true religion.

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8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

He that committeth sin. Habitually, wilfully, characteristically.

Is of the devil. This cannot mean that no one who commits any sin, or who is not absolutely perfect, can be a Christian, for this would cut off the great mass, even according to the belief of those who hold that the Christian may be perfectly holy, from all claim to the Christian character. But what the apostle here says is true in two senses:

(1.) That all who commit sin, even true believers, so far as they are imperfect, in this respect resemble Satan, and are under his influence, since sin, just so far as it exists at all, makes us resemble him.

(2.) All who habitually and characteristically sin are of the devil. This latter was evidently the principal idea in the mind of the apostle. His object here is to show that those who sinned, in the sense in which it would seem some maintained that the children of God might sin, could have no real evidence of piety, but really belonged to Satan.

For the devil sinneth from the beginning. The beginning of the world; or from the first account we have of him. It does not mean that he sinned from the beginning of his existence, for he was made holy like the other angels. Jude 1:6. The meaning is, that he introduced sin into the universe, and that he has continued to practise it ever since. The word sinneth here implies continued and habitual sin. He did not commit one act of sin and then reform; but he has continued, and still continues, his course of sin. This may confirm what has been already

said about the kind of sin that John refers to. He speaks of sinning habitually, continuously, wilfully; and any one who does this shows that he is under the influence of him whose characteristic it has been and is to sin. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested. Became incarnate, and appeared among men, 1Jn 3:5. Comp. 1Timm 3:16.

That he might destroy the works of the devil. All his plans of wickedness, and his control over the hearts of men. Compare Notes on Mk 1:24; Heb 2:14. The argument here is, that as the Son of God came to destroy all the works of the devil, he cannot be his true follower who lives in sin.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. This passage must either mean that they who are born of God, that is, who are true Christians, do not sin habitually and characteristically, or that every one who is a true Christian is absolutely perfect, and never commits any sin. If it can be used as referring to the doctrine of absolute perfection at all, it proves, not that Christians may be perfect, or that a portion of them are, but that all are. But who can maintain this? Who can believe that John meant to affirm this? Nothing can be clearer than that the passage has not this meaning, and that John did not teach a doctrine so contrary to the current strain of the Scriptures, and to fact; and if he did not teach this, then in this whole passage he refers to those who are habitually and characteristically righteous. For his seed remaineth in him. There is much obscurity in this expression, though the general sense is clear, which is, that there is something abiding in the heart of the true Christian which the apostle here calls seed, which will prevent his sinning. The word "his" in this phrase, "his seed," may refer either to the individual himself--in the sense that this can now be properly called his, inasmuch as it is a part of himself, or a principle abiding in him; or it may refer to God--in the sense that what is here called "seed" is his, that is, he has implanted it, or it is a germ of Divine origin. Robinson (Lex.) understands it in the latter sense, and so also do Macknight, Doddridge, Lucke, and others, and this is probably the true interpretation. The word seed (σπερμα) means properly seed sown, as of grain, plants, trees; then anything that resembles it, anything which germinates, or which springs up, or is produced. It is applied in the New Testament to the word of God, or the gospel, as

that which produces effects in the heart and life similar to what seed that is sown does. Comp. Mt 13:26,37,38. Augustin, Clemens, (Alex.,) Grotius, Rosenmuller, Benson, and Bloomfield, suppose that this is the signification of the word here. The proper idea, according to this, is that the seed referred to is truth, which God has implanted or sown in the heart, from which it may be expected that the fruits of righteousness will grow. But that which abides in the heart of a Christian is not the naked word of God; the mere gospel, or mere truth; it is rather that word as made vital and efficacious by the influences of his Spirit; the germ of the Divine life; the principles of true piety in the soul, Comp. the words of Virgil.--Igneus est illi vigor et cosiestis origo semini. The exact idea here, as it seems to me, is not that the "seed" refers to the word of God, as Augustin and others suppose, or to the Spirit of God, but to the germ of piety which has been produced in the heart by the word and Spirit of God, and which may be regarded as having been implanted there by God himself, and which may be expected to produce holiness in the life, There is, probably, as Lucke supposes, an allusion in the word to the fact that we are begotten (ογεγεννημενος) of God. The word remaineth μενει, compare 1Jn 3:6--is a favourite expression of John. The expression here used by John, thus explained, would seem to imply two things:

(1.) that the germ or seed of religion implanted in the soul abides there as a constant, vital principle, so that he who is born of God cannot become habitually a sinner; and,

(2.) that it will so continue to live there that he will not fall away and perish. The idea is clearly that the germ or principle of piety so permanently abides in the soul, that he who is renewed never can become again characteristically a sinner.

And he cannot sin. Not merely he will not, but he cannot; that is, in the sense referred to. This cannot mean that one who is renewed has not physical ability to do wrong, for every moral agent has; nor can it mean that no one who is a true Christian never does, in fact, do wrong in thought, word, or deed, for no one could seriously maintain that: but it must mean that there is somehow a certainty as absolute as if it were physically impossible, that those who are born of God will not be characteristically and habitually sinners; that they will not sin in such

a sense as to lose all true religion and be numbered with transgressors; that they will not fall away and perish. Unless this passage teaches that no one who is renewed ever can sin in any sense; or that every one who becomes a Christian is, and must be, absolutely and always perfect, no words could more clearly prove that true Christians will never fall from grace and perish. How can what the apostle here says be true, if a real Christian can fall away and become again a sinner?

Because he is born of God. Or begotten of God. God has given him, by the new birth, real, spiritual life, and that life can never become extinct.

10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

In this the children of God are manifest, etc. That is, this furnishes a test of their true character. The test is found in doing righteousness, and in the love of the brethren. The former he had illustrated; the latter he now proceeds to illustrate. The general idea is, that if a man is not truly a righteous man, and does not love the brethren, he cannot be a child of God. Perhaps by the phrase "in this," using a pronoun in the singular number, he means to intimate that an important part of righteousness consists in brotherly love.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God. In 1Jn 3:7, he had said that "he that doeth righteousness is of God." If that is true, then what he here affirms must be true also, that a man who does not righteousness is not of God. The general idea is the same, that no one can be a true Christian who is not in fact a righteous man.

Neither he that loveth not his brother. The illustration of this point continues to 1Jn 3:18. The general sense is, that brotherly love is essential to the Christian character, and that he who does not possess it cannot be a Christian. On the nature and importance of brotherly love as an evidence of piety, Jn 13:34, Jn 13:35.

Love One Another

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

For this is the message. Marg., commandment. In the received text, this is αγγελια--a message brought; in several Mss., and in later editions, it is επαγγελια--annunciation, announcement; an order given, or a commandment, Acts 23:21. It is not very material which reading is followed. The word command or rule would express the sense with sufficient clearness. The reference is to the law given by the Savour as a permanent direction to his disciples. That ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one anther. Jn 13:34, Jn 13:35; 1Jn 2:7.

12 Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Not as Cain. Not manifesting the spirit which Cain did. His was a most remarkable and striking instance of a want of love to a brother, and the case was well adapted to illustrate the propriety of the duty which the apostle is enjoining. See Gen 4:4-8.

Who was of that wicked one. Of the devil; that is, he was under his influence, and acted from his instigation.

And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. He acted under the influence of envy. He was dissatisfied that his own offering was not accepted, and that his brother's was. The apostle seems desirous to guard those to whom he wrote against the indulgence of any feelings that were the opposite of love; from anything like envy toward more highly favoured brethren, by showing to what this would lead if fairly acted out, as in the case of Cain. A large part of the crimes of the earth have been caused, as in the murder of Abel, by the want of brotherly love. Nothing but love would be necessary to put an end to the crimes, and consequently to a large part of the misery, of the world.

13 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

Marvel not. Do not think it so unusual, or so little to be expected, as to excite astonishment.

If the world hate you. The emphasis here is to be placed on the word you. The apostle had just adverted to the fact that Cain hated Abel, his brother, without cause, and he says that they were not to deem it strange if the world hated them in like manner. The Saviour (Jn 15:17,18) introduced these subjects in the same connexion. In

enjoining the duty of brotherly love on his disciples, he adverts to the fact that they must expect to be hated by the world, and tells them to remember that the world hated him before it hated them. The object of all this was to show more clearly the necessity of strong and tender mutual affection among Christians, since they could hope for none from the world. Jn 15:18,19.

14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.

1. Our apostle's description of a carnal unregenerate state; it is a state of spiritual death.

2. Of a Christian's renewed state by the Spirit of Christ, it is a state of spiritual life; we are passed from death to life.

3. Here is the mark and token by which this translation from death to life may be known, namely, by love; for love being the great work of God's renewing spirit on the soul, it is by the production of that, we come to the knowledge that we are changed from a Cainish corrupt state of death, into a state of holy life: Whatever grace men pretend unto, if they want this grace of love, they are yet dead in sin.

4. The characteristical note of that love which will be an indubitable evidence of this our translation from death to life, it must be a love of the brethren; that is, of all Christians, as such; particularly it must be an extensive and universal love, that reaches all the children of God, all good men, of what judgment and opinion soever, otherwise it is the love of a party only, and a love for opinion sake, not for grace-sake, We give thanks since we heard of your love to all saints: Col 1:4 that is, to all of what nation and kingdom soever, of what estate and condition soever, of what judgment and opinion soever, though differing from you in some lesser things.

It must also be an holy love that will evidence our Christianity; though all men must be loved as men, yet the brethren must be loved for the likeness of God in them, we must love God's holiness in holy persons: it is one thing to love the brethren, and another to love them as brethren, and because they are brethren; a gracious person may be loved only for carnal respects, and sinister ends; again, it must be

active and operative, a costly and expensive love; that cheap love of some men, which will wish a poor Christian well, but will be at no pains, no cost, or expence, to help and succour him, because they love their money better than they do their brother, is the hypocrite's love, not the saint's. If a brother or a sister be naked, and we say unto him, Be thou clothed, &c. Jas 2:15 this is a cold sort of love, which will profit neither our brother nor ourselves.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. He remains dead in sins; that is, he has never been converted. 1Jn 3:6. As love to the Christian brotherhood is essential to true piety, it follows that he who has not that remains unconverted, or is in a state of spiritual death. He is by nature dead in sin, and unless he has evidence that he is brought out of that state, he remains or abides in it.

From the whole learn, That the love of grace in another, is a good evidence of the life of grace in ourselves; unfeigned love to the children of God as such, is an undoubted evidence of our regeneration and adoption; We know that we are passed from, &c. The Saviour meant that his followers should be known by this badge of discipleship all over the world, Jn 13:34,35. John says, in carrying out the sentiment, that Christians, by this test, may know among themselves whether they have any true religion.

15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, etc. That is, he has the spirit of a murderer; he has that which, if it were acted out, would lead him to commit murder, as it did Cain. The private malice, the secret grudge, the envy which is cherished in the heart, is murderous in its tendency, and were it not for the outward restraints of human laws, and the dread of punishment, it would often lead to the act of murder. The apostle does not say that he who hates his brother, though he does not in fact commit murder, is guilty to the same degree as if he had actually done it; but he evidently means to say that the spirit which would lead to murder is there, and that God will hold him responsible for it. Nothing is wanting but the removal of outward restraints to lead to the commission of the open deed, and God judges men as he sees them to be in their hearts. What a fearful declaration, then, is this! How many real murderers there are on the earth besides those who are

detected and punished, and besides those open violators of the laws of God and man who go at large! And who is there that should not feel humbled and penitent in view of his own heart, and grateful for that sovereign mercy which has restrained him from open acts of guilt?--for who is there who has not at some period of his life, and perhaps often, indulged in feelings of hatred, and envy, and malice towards others, which, if acted out, would have led to the commission of the awful crime of taking human life? Any man may well shudder at tile remembrance of the secret sins of his own heart, and at the thought of what he would have been but for the restraining grace of God. And how wonderful is that grace which, in the case of the true Christian, not only restrains and checks, but which effectually subdues all these feelings, and implants in their place the principles of love!

16 Hereby perceive we the love *of God,* because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

Hereby perceive we the love of God. The words "of God" are not in the original, and should not have been introduced into the translation, though they are found in the Latin Vulgate, and in the Genevan versions, and in one manuscript. They would naturally convey the idea that God laid down his life for us; or that God himself, in his Divine nature, suffered. But this idea is not expressed in this passage as it is in the original, and of course no argument can be derived from it either to prove that Christ is God, or that the Divine nature is capable of suffering. The original is much more expressive and emphatic than it is with this addition: "By this we know love;" that is, we know what true love is; we see a most affecting and striking illustration of its nature. Love itself--its real nature, its power, its sacrifices, its influences--was seen in its highest form, when the Son of God gave himself to die on a cross. For an illustration of the sentiment, Jn 3:16, and Jn 15:3.

Because he laid down his life for us. There can be no doubt that the Saviour is here referred to, though his name is not mentioned particularly. There are several instances in the New Testament where he is mentioned under the general appellation "he," as one who was well known, and about whom the writers were accustomed to speak.

And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. For the good of our fellow-Christians, if it be necessary. That is, circumstances may

occur where it would be proper to do it, and we ought always to be ready to do it. The spirit which led the Saviour to sacrifice his life for the good of the church, should lead us to do the same thing for our brethren if circumstances should require it. That this is a correct principle no one can doubt; for

(1.) the Saviour did it, and we are bound to imitate his example, and to possess his spirit;

(2.) the prophets, apostles, and martyrs did it, laying down their lives in the cause of truth, and for the good of the church and the world; and

(3.) it has always been held that it is right and proper, in certain circumstances, for a man to lay down his life for the good of others. So we speak of the patriot who sacrifices his life for the good of his country; so we feel in the case of a shipwreck, that it may be the duty of a captain to sacrifice his life for the good of his passengers and crew; so in case of a pestilential disease, a physician should not regard his own life, if he may save others; and so we always hold the man up to honour who is willing to jeopard his own life on noble principles of self-denial for the good of his fellow-men. In what cases this should occur the apostle does not state; but the general principle would seem to be, that it is to be done when a greater good would result from our self-sacrifice than from carefully guarding our own lives. Thus, in the case of a patriot, his death, in the circumstances, might be of greater value to his country than his life would be; or, his exposing himself to death would be a greater service to his country, than if that should not be done. Thus the Saviour laid down his life for the good of mankind; thus the apostles exposed their lives to constant peril in extending the principles of religion; and thus the martyrs surrendered their lives in the cause of the church and of truth. In like manner we ought to be ready to hazard our lives, and even to lay them down, if in that way we may promote the cause of truth, and the salvation of sinners, or serve our Christian brethren. In what way this injunction was understood by the primitive Christians, may be perceived from what the world is reported to have said of them, "Behold, how they love one another; they are ready to die for one another."--Tertull. Apol. c. 39. So Eusebius (Eccl. His. vii. 22) says of Christians that "in a time of plague they visited one another, and not only hazarded their lives, but actually lost them in their zeal to preserve the lives of others." We are

not indeed to throw away our lives; we are not to expose them in a rash, reckless, imprudent manner; but when, in the discharge of duty, we are placed in a situation where life is exposed to danger, we are not to shrink from the duty, or to run away from it. Perhaps the following would embrace the principal instances of the duty here enjoined by the apostle:

(1.) We ought to have such love for the church that we should be willing to die for it, as a patriot is willing to die for his country.

(2.) We ought to have such love for Christians as to be willing to jeopard our lives to aid them--as in case of a pestilence or plague, or when they are in danger by fire, or flood, or foes.

(3.) We ought to have such love for the truth as to be willing to sacrifice our lives rather than deny it.

(4.) We ought to have such love for the cause of our Master as to be willing to cross oceans, and snows, and sands; to visit distant and barbarous regions, though at imminent risk of our lives, and though with the prospect that we shall never see our country again.

(5.) We ought to have such love for the church that we shall engage heartily and constantly in services of labour and self-sacrifice on its account, until, our work being done, exhausted nature shall sink to rest in the grave. In one word, we should regard ourselves as devoted to the service of the Redeemer, living or dying to be found engaged in his cause. If a case should actually occur where the question would arise whether a man would abandon his Christian brother or die, he ought not to hesitate; in all cases he should regard his life as consecrated to the cause of Sion and its friends. Once, in the times of primitive piety, there was much of this spirit in the world; how little, it is to be feared, does it prevail now!

17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

But whoso hath this world's good. Has property--called "this world's good," or a good pertaining to this world, because it is of value to us only as it meets our wants this side of the grave; and perhaps also

because it is sought supremely by the men of the world. The general meaning of this verse, in connexion with the previous verse, is, that if we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for others, we ought to be willing to make those comparatively smaller sacrifices which are necessary to relieve them in their distresses; and that if we are unwilling to do this, we can have no evidence that the love of God dwells in us.

And seeth his brother have need. Need of food, of raiment, of shelter; or sick, and poor, and unable to provide for his own wants and those of his family.

And shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him. The bowels, or upper viscera, embracing the heart, and the region of the chest generally, are in the Scriptures represented as the seat of mercy, piety, compassion, because when the mind feels compassion it is that part which is affected. Comp. Isa 16:11.

How dwelleth the love of God in him? How can a man love God who does not love those who bear his image? 1Jn 4:20. On the general sentiment here, Jas 2:14,seq. The meaning is plain, that we cannot have evidence of piety unless we are ready to do good to others, especially to our Christian brethren. Mt 25:45; Gall 6:10.

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue. By mere profession; by merely saying that we love each other. See 1Pet 1:22.

But in deed and in truth. In such acts as shall show that our professed love is sincere and real. Let us do the deed of love, whether anything is said about it or not. Mt 6:3.

19 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

And hereby. Gr., by this; that is, by the fact that we have true love to others, and that we manifest it by a readiness to make sacrifices to do them good.

We know that we are of the truth. That we are not deceived in what we profess to be; that is that we are true Christians. To be of the truth stands opposed to cherishing false and delusive hopes.

And shall assure our hearts before him. Before God, or before the Saviour. In the margin, as in the Greek, the word rendered shall assure, is persuade. The Greek word is used as meaning to persuade, e.g., to the reception and belief of truth; then to persuade any one who has unkind or prejudiced feelings towards us, or to bring over to kind feelings, to conciliate, and thus to pacify or quiet. The meaning here seems to be, that we shall in this way allay the doubts and trouble of our minds, and produce a state of quiet and peace, to wit, by the evidence that we are of the truth. Our consciences are often restless and troubled in view of past guilt; but, in thus furnishing the evidence of true piety by love to others, we shall pacify an accusing mind, and conciliate our own hearts, and persuade or convince ourselves that we are truly the children of God. See Rob. Lex. sub voce πειθω, I. b. In other words, though a man's heart may condemn him as guilty, and though he knows that God sees and condemns the sins of his past life, yet the agitations and alarms of his mind may be calmed down and soothed by evidence that he is a child of God, and that he will not be finally condemned. A true Christian does not attempt to conceal the fact that there is much for which his own heart and conscience might justly accuse him; but he finds, notwithstanding all this, evidence that he is a child of God, and he is persuaded that all will be well.

For if our heart condemn us. We cannot hope for peace from any expectation that our own hearts will never accuse us, or that we ourselves can approve of all that we have done. The reference here is not so much to our past lives, as to our present conduct and deportment. The object is to induce Christians so to live that their hearts will not condemn them for any secret sins, while the outward deportment may be unsullied. The general sentiment is, that if they should so live that their own hearts would condemn them for preSent insincerity and hypocrisy, they could have no hope of peace, for God knows all that is in the heart. In view of the past--when the heart accuses us of what we have done--we may find peace by such evidences of piety as shall allay the troubles of an agitated soul, (1Jn 3:9,) but we cannot have such peace if our hearts condemn us for the indulgence of secret sins, now that we profess to be Christians. If our hearts condemn us for present

insincerity, and for secret sins, we can never "persuade" or soothe them by any external act of piety. In view of the consciousness of past guilt, we may find peace; we can find none if there is a present purpose to indulge in sin.

God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. We cannot hope to find peace by hiding anything from his view, or by any supposition that he is not acquainted with the sins for which our consciences trouble us. He knows all the sins of which we are conscious, and sees all their guilt and aggravation as clearly as we do. He knows more than this. He knows all the sins which we have forgotten; all those acts which we endeavour to persuade ourselves are not sinful, but which are evil in his sight; and all those aggravations attending our sins which it is impossible for us fully and distinctly to conceive, He is more disposed to condemn sin than we are; he looks on it with less allowance than we do. We cannot hope, then, for a calm mind in any supposition that God does not see our sins as clearly as we do, or in any hope that he will look on them with more favour and indulgence. Peace cannot be found in the indulgence of sin in the hope that God will not perceive or regard it, for we can sooner deceive ourselves than we can him; and while therefore, (1Jn 3:19,) in reference to the past, we can only "persuade" our hearts, or soothe their agitated feelings by evidence that we are of the truth now, and that our sins are forgiven; in reference to the present and the future, the heart can be kept calm only by such a course of life that our own hearts and our God shall approve the manner in which we live.

20 For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not. If we so live as to have an approving conscience--that is, if we indulge in no secret sin; if we discharge faithfully every known duty; if we submit without murmuring to all the allotments of Divine Providence.

Then have we confidence toward God. Comp. 1Jn 3:19; 1Jn 2:28; Acts 24:16. The apostle evidently does not mean that we have confidence towards God on the ground of what we do, as if it were meritorious, or as if it constituted a claim to his favour; but that we may so live as to have evidence of personal piety, and that we may look forward with a confident hope that we shall be accepted of him in the great day. The

word here rendered confidence--παρρησιαν--means properly boldness; usually boldness or openness in speaking our sentiments. 1Jn 2:28. The confidence or boldness which we have towards our Maker is founded solely on the evidence that he will graciously accept us as pardoned sinners; not in the belief that we deserve his favor.

The two results of our being able to "assure our hearts before Him" (1Jo 3:19), and of "our heart condemning us not" (of insincerity as to the truth in general, and as to LOVE in particular) are,

(1) confidence toward God;

(2) a sure answer to our prayers. John does not mean that all whose hearts do not condemn them, are therefore safe before God; for some have their conscience seared, others are ignorant of the truth, and it is not only sincerity, but sincerity in the truth which can save men. Christians are those meant here: knowing Christ's precepts and testing themselves by them.

21 Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him. If we are truly his children, and ask in a proper manner. Mt 7:7. Comp. Mk 11:24, Lk 11:9, 18:1-10, Jn 14:13, 15:7, 1Jn 5:14. The declaration here made must be understood with these limitations:

(1.) that we ask in a proper manner, Jas 4:3; and,

(2,) that the thing asked shall be such as will be consistent for God to give; that is, such as he shall see to be best for us, 1Jn 5:14. 1Jn 5:14.

Because we keep his commandments. Not that this is the meritorious ground of our being heard, but that it furnishes evidence that we are his children, and he hears his children as such.

And do those things that are pleasing in his sight. As a parent is disposed to bestow favours on obedient, affectionate, and dutiful children, so God is on those who please him by their obedience and submission to his will. We can have no hope that he will hear us unless we do so live as to please him.

22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

And this is his commandment. His commandment, by way of eminence; the leading, principal thing which he enjoins on us; the commandment which lies at the foundation of all true obedience.

That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. Mk 16:16. Comp. Jn 16:1, Acts 16:31.

And love one another, etc. This follows from the other, and hence they are mentioned as together constituting his commandment. Jn 13:36.

24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

And he that keepeth his commandments, etc. Jn 14:23.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us. That is, this is another certain evidence that we are true Christians. The Saviour had promised (Jn 14:23) that he would come and take up his abode with his which people. John says that we have proof that he does this by the Spirit he has given us. That is, the Holy Spirit is imparted to his people to enlighten their minds; to elevate their affections; to sustain them in times of trial; to quicken them in the performance of duty; and to imbue them with the temper and spirit of the Lord Jesus. When these effects exist, we may be certain that the Spirit of God is with us; for these are the "fruits" of that Spirit, or these are the effects which he produces in the lives of men. Comp. Gal 5:22, Gal 5:23. On the evidence of piety here referred to, Rom 8:9, Rom 8:14, Rom 8:16. No man can be a true Christian in whom that Spirit does not constantly dwell, or to whom he is not "given." And yet no one can determine that the Spirit dwells in him, except by the effects produced in his heart and life. In the following chapter, the apostle pursues the subject suggested here, and shows that we should examine ourselves closely, to see whether the "Spirit" to which we trust, as furnishing evidence of piety, is truly the Spirit of God, or is a spirit of delusion.

1 John-4

The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Antichrist

1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of
God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

Beloved, believe not every spirit. Do not confide implicitly in every one who professes to be under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Comp. Mt 24:4,5. The true and the false teachers of religion alike claimed to be under the influence of the Spirit of God, and it was of importance that all such pretensions should be examined. It was not to be admitted because any one claimed to have been sent from God that therefore he was sent. Every such claim should be subjected to the proper proof before it was conceded. All pretensions to Divine inspiration, or to being authorized teachers of religion, were to be examined by the proper tests, because there were many false and delusive teachers who set up such claims in the world.

But try the spirits whether they are of God. There were those in the early Christian church who had the gift of "discerning Spirits," (1Cor 12:10,) but it is not certain that the apostle refers here to any such supernatural power. It is more probable, as he addresses this command to Christians in general, that he refers to the ability of doing this by a comparison of the doctrines which they professed to hold with what was revealed, and by the fruits of their doctrines in their lives. If they taught what God had taught in his word, and if their lives corresponded with his requirements, and if their doctrines agreed with what had been inculcated by those who were admitted to be true apostles, (1Jn 4:6,) they were to receive them as what they professed to be. If not, they were to reject them, and hold them to be impostors. It may be remarked, that it is just as proper and as important now to examine the claims of all who profess to be teachers of religion, as it was then. In a matter so momentous as religion, and where there is so much at stake, it is important that all pretensions of this kind should be subjected to a rigid examination. No man should be received as a religious teacher without the clearest evidence that he has come in accordance with the will of God, nor unless he inculcates the very truth which God has revealed. Isa 8:20, and Acts 17:11.

Because many false prophets are gone out into the world. The word prophet is often used in the New Testament to denote religious instructors or preachers. Rom 12:6. Compare 2Pet 2:1. Such false teachers evidently abounded in the times here referred to. 1Jn 2:18. The meaning is, that many had gone out into the world pretending to be true teachers of religion, but who inculcated most dangerous doctrines; and it was their duty to be on their guard against them, for they had the very spirit of antichrist, 1Jn 4:3.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that
Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

Hereby. Gr., "By this ;" that is, by the test which is immediately specified. Know ye the Spirit of God. You may discern who are actuated by the Spirit of God. Every spirit. Every one professing to be under the influence of the Spirit of God. The apostle uses the word spirit here with reference to the person who made the claim, on the supposition that every one professing to be a religious teacher was animated by some spirit or foreign influence, good or bad. If the Spirit of God influenced them, they would confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh; if some other spirit, the spirit of error and deceit, they would deny this.

That confesseth. That is, that makes a proper acknowledgment of this; that inculcates this doctrine, and that gives it a due place and prominence in his instructions. It cannot be supposed that a mere statement of this in words would show that they were of God in the sense that they were true Christians; but the sense is, that if this constituted one of the doctrines which they held and taught, it would show that they were advocates of truth, and not apostles of error. If they did not do this, (1Jn 4:3,) it would be decisive in regard to their character and claims.

That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Benson and some others propose to render this, "That Jesus, who came in the flesh, is the Christ." But this is liable to serious objections.

(1.) It is not the obvious interpretation.

(2.) It is unusual to say that "Jesus had come in the flesh," though the expression "the Son of God has come in the flesh," or "God was manifested in the flesh," would be in accordance with the usage of the New Testament.

(3.) This would not, probably, meet the real point in the case. The thing denied does not appear to have been that Jesus was the Messiah, for their pretending to be Christian teachers at all implied that they admitted this; but that the Son of God was really a man, or that he actually assumed human nature in permanent union with the Divine. The point of the remark made by the apostle is, that the acknowledgment was to be that Christ assumed human nature; that he was really a man as he appeared to be; or that there was a real incarnation, in opposition to the opinion that he came in appearance only, or that he merely seemed to be a man, and to suffer and die. That this opinion was held by many, see the Intro. & III. 2. It is quite probable that the apostle here refers to such sentiments as those which were held by the Docetae; and that he meant to teach that it was indispensable to proper evidence that any one came from God, that he should maintain that Jesus was truly a man, or that there was a real incarnation of the Son of God. John always regarded this as a very important point, and often refers to it, Jn 19:34,35, 20:25-27 1Jo 5:6. It is as important to be held now as it was then, for the fact that there was a real incarnation is essential to all just views of the atonement. If he was not truly a man, if he did not literally shed his blood on the cross, of course all that was done was in appearance only, and the whole system of redemption as revealed was merely a splendid illusion. There is little danger that this opinion will be held now, for those who depart from the doctrine laid down in the New Testament in regard to the person and work of Christ, are more disposed to embrace the opinion that he was a mere man; but still it is important that the truth that he was truly incarnate should be held up constantly before the mind, for in no other way can we obtain just views of the atonement. Is of God. This does not necessarily mean that every one who confessed this was personally a true Christian, for it is clear that a doctrine might be acknowledged to be true, and yet that the heart might not be changed; nor does it mean that the acknowledgment of this truth was all which it was essential to be believed in order that one might, be recognised as a Christian; but it means that it was essential that this truth should be admitted by every one who truly came from God. They who taught this

held a truth which he had revealed, and which was essential to be held; and they thus showed that they did not belong to those to whom the name "antichrist" could be properly given. Still, whether they held this doctrine in such a sense, and in such connexion with other doctrines, as to show that they were sincere Christians, was quite another question, for it is plain that a man may hold and teach the true doctrines of religion, and yet have no evidence that he is a child of God.

3 and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh
is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard
that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

And every spirit that confesseth not, etc. That is, this doctrine is essential to the Christian system; and he who does not hold it cannot be regarded either as a Christian, or recognised as a Christian teacher, if he was not a man, then all that occurred in his life, in Gethsemane, and on the cross, was in appearance only, and was assumed only to delude the senses. There were no real sufferings; there was no shedding of blood; there was no death on the cross; and, of course, there was no atonement. A mere show, an appearance assumed, a vision, could not make atonement for sin; and a denial, therefore, of the doctrine that the Son of God had come in the flesh, was in fact a denial of the doctrine of expiation for sin. The Latin Vulgate here reads qui solvit Jesure, "who dissolves or divides Jesus;" and Socrates (H. E. vii. 32) says that in the old copies of the New Testament it is written ολιειτονιησουν, "who dissolves or divides Jesus;" that is, who separates his true nature or person, or who supposes that there were two Christs, one in appearance, and one in reality. This reading was early found in some Mss., and is referred to by many of the Fathers, (see Wetstein,) but it has no real authority, and was evidently introduced, perhaps at first from a marginal note, to oppose the prevailing errors of the times. The common reading, "who confesseth not," is found in all the Gr. Mss., in the Syriac versions, in the Arabic; and, as Lucke says, the other reading is manifestly of Latin origin. The common reading in the text is that which is sustained by authority, and is entirely in accordance with the manner of John.

And this is that spirit of anti-christ. This is one of the things which characterize antichrist. John here refers not to an individual who should be known as antichrist, but to a class of persons, This does not, however, forbid the idea that there might be some one individual, or a

succession of persons in the church, to whom the name might be applied by way of eminence. 1Jn 2:18. Comp. 2Thes 2:3, seq.

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

Ye are of God. You are of his family; you have embraced his truth, and imbibed his Spirit.

Little children. 2Jn 2:1.

And have overcome them. Have triumphed over their arts and temptations; their endeavours to draw you into error and sin. The word "them" in this place seems to refer to the False prophets or teachers who collectively constituted antichrist. The meaning is, that they had frustrated or thwarted all their attempts to turn them away from the truth. Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. God, who dwells in your hearts, and by whose strength and grace alone you have been enabled to achieve this victory, is more mighty, than Satan, who rules in the hearts of the people of this world, and whose seductive arts are seen in the efforts of these false teachers. The apostle meant to say that it was by no power of their own that they achieved this victory, but it was to be traced solely to the fact that God dwelt among them, and had preserved them by his grace. What was true then is true now. He who dwells in the hearts of Christians by his Spirit, is infinitely, more mighty than Satan, "the ruler of the darkness of this world; and victory, therefore, over all his arts and temptations may be sure. In his conflicts with sin, temptation, and error, the Christian should never despair, for his God will insure him the victory.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

They are of the world. This was one of the marks by which those who had the spirit of antichrist might be known. They belonged not to the church of God, but to the world. They had its spirit; they acted on its principles; they lived for it. Comp. 2Jn 2:15.

Therefore speak they of the world. Compare Jn 3:21. This may mean either that their conversation pertained to the things of this world, or that they were wholly influenced by the love of the world, and not by the Spirit of God, in the doctrines which they taught. The general sense is, that they had no higher ends and aims than they have who are

influenced only by worldly plans and expectations. It is not difficult to distinguish, even among professed Christians and Christian teachers, those who are heavenly in their conversation from those who are influenced solely by the spirit of the world. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the general turn of a man's conversation will show what "spirit is within him."

And the world heareth them. The people of the world--the gay, the rich, the proud, the ambitious, the sensual--receive their instructions, and recognise them as teachers and guides, for their views accord with their own. Jn 15:19. A professedly religious teacher may always determine much about himself by knowing what class of people are pleased with him. A professed Christian of any station in life may determine much about his evidences of piety, by asking himself what kind of persons desire his friendship, and wish him for a companion.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

We are of God. John here, doubtless, refers to himself, and to those who taught the same doctrines which he did. He takes it for granted that those to whom he wrote would admit this, and argues from it as an indisputable truth, he had given them such evidence of this, as to establish his character and claims beyond a doubt; and he often refers to the fact that he was what he claimed to be, as a point which was so well established that no one would call it in question. See Jn 19:35, 21:24, 3Jn 1:12. Paul, also, not unfrequently refers to the same thing respecting himself; to the fact--a fact which no one would presume to call in question, and which might be regarded as the basis of an argument--that he and his fellow-apostles were what they claimed to be. See 1Cor 15:14,15, 1Thes 2:1-11. Might not, and ought not, all Christians, and all Christian ministers, so to live that the same thing might be assumed in regard to them in their intercourse with their fellow- men; that their characters for integrity and purity might be so clear that no one would be disposed to call them in question? There are such men in the church and in the ministry now; why might not all be such?

He that knoweth God, heareth us. Every one that has a true acquaintance with the character of God will receive our doctrine. John might assume this, for it was not doubted, he presumed, that he was

an apostle and a good man; and if this were admitted, it would follow that those who feared and loved God would receive what he taught.

Hereby. By this; to wit, by the manner in which they receive the doctrines which we have taught. Know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. We can distinguish those who embrace the truth from those who do not. Whatever pretensions they might set up for piety, it was clear that if they did not embrace the doctrines taught by the true apostles of God, they could not be regarded as his friends; that is, as true Christians. It may be added that the same test is applicable now. They who do not receive the plain doctrines laid down in the word of God, whatever pretensions they may make to piety, or whatever zeal they may envice in the cause which they have espoused, can have no well-founded claims to the name Christian. One of the clearest evidences of true piety is a readiness to receive all that God has taught. Comp. Mt 18:1-3, Mk 10:15 Jas 1:19-21.

God Is Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

The subject is one on which John dwells more than on any other--that of love. His own character peculiarly inclined him to the exercise of love; and the remarkable affection which the Lord Jesus had shown for him, seems to have had the effect to give this grace a peculiar prominence in his views of what constituted true religion. Compare Jn 13:23. On the duty here enjoined, Jn 13:34, Jn 13:36, and 1Jn 3:11, 1Jn 3:23.

For love is of God.

(1.) All true love has its origin in God.

(2.) Real love shows that we have his Spirit, and that we belong to him.

(3.) It assimilates us to God, or makes us more and more like him. What is here said by the apostle is based on the truth of what he elsewhere affirms, (1Jn 3:8), that God is love. Hatred, envy, wrath,

malice, all have their source in something else than God. He neither originates them, commends them, nor approves them.

And every one that loveth, is born of God. Is a regenerated man. That is, every one who has true love to Christians as such, or true brotherly love, is a true Christian. This cannot mean that every one that loves his wife and children, his classmate, his partner in business, or his friend--his house, or his farms, or his horses, or his hounds, is a child of God; it must be understood as referring to the point under discussion. A man may have a great deal of natural affection towards his kindred; a great deal of benevolence in his character towards the poor and needy, and still he may have none of the love to which John refers. He may have no real love to God, to the Saviour, or to the children of God as such; and it would be absurd for such a one to argue because he loves his wife and children that therefore he loves God, or is born again.

8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.

He that loveth not, knoweth not God. Has no true acquaintance with God; has no just views of him, and no right feelings towards him. The reason for this is implied in what is immediately stated, that "God is love," and of course if they have no love reigning in their hearts they cannot pretend to be like him.

For God is love. He is not merely benevolent, he is benevolence itself. Compare 2Cor 13:11. Never was a more important declaration made than this; never was more meaning crowded into a few words than in this short sentence--God is love. In the darkness of this world of sin--in all the sorrows that come now upon the race, and that will come upon the wicked hereafter--we have the assurance that a God of infinite benevolence rules over all; and though we may not be able to reconcile all that occurs with this declaration, or see how the things which he has permitted to take place are consistent with it, yet in the exercise of faith on his own declarations we may find consolation in believing that it is so, and may look forward to a period when all his universe shall see it to be so. In the midst of all that occurs on the earth of sadness, sin, and sorrow, there are abundant evidences that God is love. In the original structure of things before sin entered, when all was pronounced "good;" in the things designed to promote happiness, where the only thing contemplated is happiness, and where it would

have been as easy to have caused pain; in the preservation of a guilty race, and in granting that race the opportunity of another trial; in the ceaseless provision which God is making in his providence for the wants of unnumbered millions of his creatures; in the arrangements made to alleviate sorrow, and to put an end to it; in the gift of a Saviour more than all, and in the offer of eternal life on terms simple and easy to be complied with--in all these things, which are the mere expressions of love, not one of which would have been found under the government of a malignant being, we see illustrations of the sublime and glorious sentiment before us, that "God is love." Even in this world of confusion, disorder, and darkness, we have evidence sufficient to prove that he is benevolent, but the full glory and meaning of that truth will be seen only in heaven. Meantime let us hold on to the truth that he is love. Let us believe that he sincerely desires our good, and that what seems dark to us may be designed for our welfare; and amidst all the sorrows and disappointments of the present life, let us feel that our interests and our destiny are in the hands of the God of love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live hrough him.

In this was manifested the love of God. That is, in an eminent manner, or this was a most signal proof of it. The apostle does not mean to say that it has been manifested in no other way, but that this was so prominent an instance of his love, that all the other manifestations of it seemed absorbed and lost in this.

Because that God sent his only begotten Son, etc. Jn 3:16.

That we might live through him. He died that we might have eternal life through the merits of his sacrifice. The measure of that love, then, which was manifested in the gift of a Saviour, is to be found,

(1.) in the worth of the soul;

(2.) in its exposure to eternal death;

(3.) in the greatness of the gift;

(4.) in the greatness of his sorrows for us; and,

(5.) in the immortal blessedness and joy to which he will raise us. Who can estimate all this? All these things will magnify themselves as we draw near to eternity; and in that eternity to which we go, whether saved or lost, we shall have an ever-expanding view of the wonderful love of God.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

Herein is love. In this great gift is the highest expression of love, as if it had done all that it can do.

Not that we loved God. Not that we were in such a state that we might suppose he would make such a sacrifice for us, but just the opposite. If we had loved and obeyed him, we might have had reason to believe that he would be willing to show his love to us in a corresponding manner. But we were alienated from him. We had even no desire for his friendship and favour. In this state he showed the greatness of his love for us by giving his Son to die for his enemies. Rom 5:7, Rom 5:8.

But that he loved us. Not that he approved our character, but that he desired our welfare. He loved us not with the love of complacency, but with the love of benevolence.

And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. On the meaning of the word propitiation, see Rom 3:25. Comp. 1Jn 2:2.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

(1.) Because he is so much exalted above us, and if he has loved those who were so inferior and so unworthy, we ought to love those who are on a level with us;

(2.) because it is only in this way that we can show that we have his Spirit; and,

(3.) because it is the nature of love to seek the happiness of all. There are much stronger reasons why we should love one another than there

were why God should love us; and unless we do this, we can have no evidence that we are his children.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

No man hath seen God at any time. Jn 1:18, where the same declaration occurs. The statement seems to be made here in order to introduce a remark to show in what way we may know that we have any true knowledge of God. The idea is, "He has never indeed been seen by mortal eyes. We are not then, to expect to become acquainted with what he is in that way. But there is a method by which we may be assured that we have a true knowledge of him, and that is, by evidence that we love another, and by the presence of his Spirit in our hearts. We cannot become acquainted with him by sight, but we may by love." If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. Though we cannot see him, yet there is a way by which we may be assured that he is near us, and that he even dwells in us. That way is by the exercise of love. Comp. Jn 14:23, Jn 14:24.

And his love is perfected in us. Is carried out to completion. That is, our love for each other is the proper exponent of love to him reigning in our hearts. The idea here is not that we are absolutely perfect, or even that our love is perfect, whatever may be true on those points, but that this love to others is the proper carrying out of our love towards him; that is, without this our love to him would not have accomplished what it was adapted and designed to do. Unless it produced this effect, it would be defective or incomplete. Compare 1Jn 4:17. The general sense is this: "We claim to have the love of God in our hearts, or that we are influenced and controlled by love. But however high and exalted that may seem to be as exercised toward God, it would be defective; it would not exert a fair influence over us, unless it led us to love our Christian brethren. It would be like the love which we might profess to have for a father, if it did not lead us to love our brothers and sisters. True love will diffuse itself over all who come within its range, and will thus become complete and entire." This the it passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to demonstrate doctrine of sinless perfection, or to prove that Christians are ever absolutely perfect in this life. It proves only that love to God is not complete, or fully developed, unless it leads those who profess to have to love each other.

Job 1:1. On the meaning of the Greek word here used, (τελειοω,) Php 3:12. Heb 2:10.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

Hereby know we that we dwell in him. Here is another, or an additional evidence of it.

Because he hath given us of his Spirit. He has imparted the influences of that Spirit to our souls, producing "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," etc., Gal 5:22,23. It was one of the promises which the Lord Jesus made to his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them after he should be withdrawn from them, (Jn 14:16,17,26, Jn 15:26, 16:7;) and one of the clearest evidences which we can have that we are the children of God, is derived from the influences of that Spirit on our hearts. See this sentiment illustrated in the Rom 8:16.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world.

And do testify. 1Jn 1:3. That is, we who are apostles bear witness to yo this great truth, that God has sent his Son to be a Saviour. Comp. Jn 20 The reason why this is referred to here is not quite apparent, but the trai thought in this passage would seem to be this: The writer is discoursin the love of God, and of its manifestation in the gift of the Saviour, an the proper influence which it should have on us. Struck with the great and importance of the subject, his mind adverts to the evidence on w what he was saying rested--the evidence that the Father had really manifested his love. That evidence he repeats, that he had actually seen who had been sent, and had the clearest demonstration that what he dee so important had really occurred.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God. In the true sense, and from the heart. This will always prove that a man is a Christian. But the passage cannot mean that if he merely says so in words, or if he does it insincerely, or without any proper sense of the truth, it will prove that he is a Christian. On the meaning of the sentiment here expressed, 1Jn 4:2. Comp. Rom 10:10.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

And we have known and believed, etc. We all have assurance that God has loved us, and the fullest belief in the great fact of redemption by which he has manifested his love to us. God is love. 1Jn 4:8. It is not uncommon for John to repeat an important truth. He delights to dwell on such a truth as that which is here expressed; and who should not? What truth is there on which the mind can dwell with more pleasure; what is there that is better fitted to win the heart to holiness; what that will do more to sustain the soul in the sorrows and trials of this life? In our trials; in the darkness which is around us; in the perplexities which meet and embarrass us in regard to the Divine administration; in all that seems to us incomprehensible in this world, and in the prospect of the next, let us learn to repeat this declaration of the favoured disciple, "God is love." What trials may we not bear, if we feel assured of that! What dark cloud that seems to hang over our way, and to involve all things in gloom, will not be bright, if from the depths of our souls we can always say, "God is love!"

And he that dwelleth in love, etc. Religion is all love. God is love; he has loved us; we are to love him; we are to love one another; we are to love the whole world. Heaven is filled with love, and there is nothing else there. The earth is filled with love just as far as religion prevails, and would be entirely if it should prevail everywhere. Love would remove all the corrupt passions, the crimes, the jealousies, the wars on the earth, and would diffuse around the globe the bliss of heaven. If a man, therefore, is actuated by this, he has the spirit of the heavenly world reigning in his soul, and lives in an atmosphere of love.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

Herein is our love made perfect. Marg., love with us. The margin accords with the Greek--μεθημων. The meaning is, "the love that is within us, or in us, is made perfect." The expression is unusual; but the general idea is, that love is rendered complete or entire in the manner in which the apostle specifies. In this way love becomes what it should be, and will prepare us to appear with confidence before the judgment-seat. Comp. 1Jn 4:12.

That we may have boldness in the day of judgment. By the influence of love in delivering us from the fear of the wrath to come, 1Jn 4:18.

The idea is, that he who has true love to God will have nothing to fear in the day of judgment, and may even approach the awful tribunal where he is to receive the sentence which shall determine his everlasting destiny without alarm.

Because as he is, so are we in this world. That is, we have the same traits of character which the Saviour had, and, resembling him, we need not be alarmed at the prospect of meeting him.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear
hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.
19 We love him, because he first loved us.

There is no fear in love. Love is not an affection which produces fear. In the love which ,we have for a parent, a child, a friend, there is no fear. If a man had perfect love to God, he would have no fear of anything--for what would he have to dread? He would have no fear of death, for he would have nothing to dread beyond the grave. It is guilt that makes men fear what is to come; but he whose sins are pardoned, and whose heart is filled with the love of God, has nothing to dread in this world or the world to come. The angels in heaven, who have always loved God and one another, have no fear, for they have nothing to dread in the future; the redeemed in heaven, rescued from all danger, and filled with the love of God, have nothing to dread; and as far as that same loves operates on earth, it delivers the soul now from all apprehension of what is to come.

But perfect love casteth out fear. That is, love that is complete, or that is allowed to exert its proper influence on the soul. As far as it exists, its tendency is to deliver the mind from alarms. If it should exist in any soul in an absolutely perfect state, that soul would be entirely free from all dread in regard to the future.

Because fear hath torment. It is a painful and distressing emotion. Thus men suffer from the fear of poverty, of losses, of bereavement, of sickness, of death, and of future woe. From all these distressing apprehensions, that love of God which furnishes an evidence of true piety delivers us.

He that feareth, is not made perfect in love. He about whose mind there lingers the apprehension of future wrath, shows that love in his soul

has not accomplished its full work. Perhaps it never will on any soul until we reach the heavenly world, though there are many minds so full of love to God, as to be prevailingly delivered from fear.

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

We love him, because he first loved us. This passage is susceptible of two explanations; either

(1.) that the fact that he first loved us is the ground or reason why we love him, or

(2.) that as a matter of fact we have been brought to love him in consequence of the love which he has manifested towards us, though the real ground of our love may be the excellency of his own character. If the former be the meaning, and if that were the only ground of love, then it would be mere selfishness, (comp. Mt 5:46,47;) and it cannot be believed that John meant to teach that that is the only reason of our love to God. It is true, indeed, that that is a proper ground of love, or that we are bound to love God in proportion to the benefits which we have received from his hand; but still genuine love to God is something which cannot be explained by the mere fact that we have received favours from him. The true, the original ground of love to God, is the excellence of his own character, apart from the question whether we are to be benefited or not. There is that in the Divine nature which a holy being will love, apart from the benefits which he is to receive, and from any thought even of his own destiny. It seems to me, therefore, that John must have meant here, in accordance with the second interpretation suggested above, that the fact that we love God is to be traced to the means which he has used to bring us to himself, but without saying that this is the sole or even the main reason why we love him. It was his love manifested to us by sending his Son to redeem us which will explain the fact that we now love him; but still the real ground or reason why we love him is the infinite excellence of his own character. It should be added here, that many suppose that the Greek words rendered "we love" (ημειςαγαπωμεν) are not in the indicative, but in the subjunctive; and that this is an exhortation--"let us love him, because he first loved us;" So the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate read it; and so it is understood by Benson, Grotius, and Bloomfield.

The main idea would not be essentially different; and it is a proper ground of exhortation to love God because he has loved us, though the highest ground is, because his character is infinitely worthy of love.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother. His Christian brother; or, in a larger sense, any man. The sense is, that no man, whatever may be his professions and pretensions, can have any true love to God, unless he love his brethren.

He is a liar. Comp. 1Jn 1:6. It is not necessary, in order to a proper interpretation of this passage, to suppose that he intentionally deceives. The sense is, that this must be a false profession. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, etc. It is more reasonable to expect that we should love one whom we have seen and known personally, than that we should love one whom we have not seen. The apostle is arguing from human nature as it is, and every one feels that we are more likely to love one with whom we are familiar than one who is a stranger. If a professed Christian, therefore, does not love one who bears the Divine image, whom he sees and knows, how can he love that God whose image he bears, whom he has not seen? Comp. 1Jn 3:17.

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

And this commandment have we from him. That is, the command to love a brother is as obligatory as that to love God. If one is obeyed, the other ought to be also; if a man feels that one is binding on him, he should feel that the other is also; and he can never have evidence that he is a true Christian, unless he manifests love to his brethren as well as love to God.

1 John-5

Faith Is the Victory over the World

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ. Is the Messiah; the anointed of God. On the meaning of the word Christ, Mt 1:1. Of course it is meant here that the proposition, that "Jesus is the Christ," should

be believed or received in the true and proper sense, in order to furnish evidence that any one is born of God. Comp. 1Jn 4:3. It cannot be supposed that a mere intellectual acknowledgment of the proposition that Jesus is the Messiah is all that is meant, for that is not the proper meaning of the word believe in the Scriptures. That word, in its just sense, implies that the truth which is believed should make its fair and legitimate impression on the mind, or that we should feel and act as if it were true. Mk 16:16. If, in the proper sense of the phrase, a man does believe that Jesus is the Christ, receiving him as he is revealed as the Anointed of God, and a Saviour, it is undoubtedly true that that constitutes him a Christian, for that is what is required of a man in order that he may be saved. Acts 8:37. Is born of God. Or rather, "is begotten of God." Jn 3:3. And every one that loveth him that begat. That loves that God who has thus begotten those whom he has received as his children, and to whom he sustains the endearing relation of Father. Loveth him also that is begotten of him. That is, he will love all the true children of God; all Christians. 1Jn 4:20. The general idea is, that as all Christians are the children of the same Father; as they constitute one family; as they all bear the same image; as they share his favour alike; as they are under the same obligation of gratitude to him, and are bound to promote the same common cause, and are to dwell together in the same home for ever, they should therefore love one another. As all the children in a family love their common father, so it should be in the great family of which God is the Head.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

By this we know that we love the children of God, etc. This is repeating the same truth in another form. "As it is universally true that if we love him who has begotten us, we shall also love his children, or our Christian brethren, so it is true also that if we love his children it will follow that we love him." In other places, the apostle says that we may know that we love God if we love those who bear his image, 1Jn 3:14. He here says, that there is another way of determining what we are. We may have undoubted evidence that we love God, and from that, as the basis of an argument, we may infer that we have true love to his children. Of the fact that we may have evidence that we love God, apart from that which we derive from our love to his children, there can be no doubt. We may be conscious of it; we may find

pleasure in meditating on his perfections; we may feel sure that we are moved to obey him by true attachment to him, as a child may in reference to a father. But, it may be asked, how can it be inferred from this that we truly love his children? Is it not more easy to ascertain this of itself than it ia to determine whether we love God? Comp. 1Jn 4:20. To this it may be answered, that we may love Christians from many motives: we may love them as personal friends; we may love them because they belong to our church, or sect, or party; we may love them because they are naturally amiable: but the apostle says here, that when we are conscious that an attachment does exist towards Christians, we may ascertain that it is genuine, or that it does not proceed from any improper motive, by the fact that we love God. We shall then love him as his children, whatever other grounds of affection there may be towards them.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. This constitutes true love; this furnishes the evidence of it. And his commandments are not grievous. Greek, heavy--βαρειαι; that is, difficult to be borne as a burden. See Mt 11:30. The meaning is, that his laws are not unreasonable; the duties which he requires are not beyond our ability; his government is not oppressive. It is easy to obey God when the heart is right; and those who endeavour in sincerity to keep his commandments do not complain that they are hard. All complaints of this kind come from those who are not disposed to keep his commandments. They, indeed, object that his laws are unreasonable; that they impose improper restraints; that they are not easily complied with; and that the Divine government is one of severity and injustice. But no such complaints come from true Christians. They find his service easier than the service of sin, and the laws of God more mild and easy to be complied with than were those of fashion and honour, which they once endeavoured to obey. The service of God is freedom; the service of the world is bondage. No man ever yet heard a true Christian say that the laws of God, requiring him to lead a holy life, were stern and "grievous." But who has not felt this in regard to the inexorable laws of sin? What votary of the world would not say this if he spoke his real sentiments? Comp. Notes, Jn 8:32.

4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. The world, in its maxims, and precepts, and customs, does not rule him, but he is a freeman. The idea is, that there is a conflict between religion and the world, and that in the heart of every true Christian religion secures the victory, or triumphs. In Jn 16:33, the Saviour says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Jn 6:33. He obtained a complete triumph over him "who rules the darkness of the world," and laid the foundation for a victory by his people over all vice, error, and sin. John makes this affirmation of all who are born of God. "Whatsoever," or, as the Greek is, "Everything which is begotten of God," (παντογεγενημενον;) meaning to affirm, undoubtedly, that in every instance where one is truly regenerated, there is this victory over the world. Jas 4:4; 1Jn 2:15, 1Jn 2:16. It is one of the settled maxims of religion, that every man who is a true Christian gains a victory over the world; and consequently a maxim as settled, that where the spirit of the world reigns supremely in the heart there is no true religion. But, if this be a true principle, how many professed Christians are there who are strangers to all claims of piety--for how many are there who are wholly governed by the spirit of this world!

And this is the victory. This is the source or means of the victory which is thus achieved. Even our faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 1Jn 5:5. He overcame the world, Jn 16:33, and it is by that faith which makes us one with him, and that imbues us with his Spirit, that we are able to do it also.

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Who is he, etc. Where is there one who can pretend to have obtained a victory over the world, except he who believes in the Saviour? All else are worldly, and are governed by worldly aims and principles. It is true that a man may gain a victory over one worldly passion; he may subdue some one evil propensity; he may abandon the gay circle, may break away from habits of profaneness, may leave the company of the unprincipled and polluted; but still, unless he has faith in the Son of God, the spirit of the world will reign supreme in his soul in some form. The appeal which John so confidently made in his time may be as confidently made now. We may ask, as he did, where is there one who

shows that he has obtained a complete victory over the world, except the true Christian? Where is there one whose end and aim is not the present life? Where is there one who shows that all his purposes in regard to this world are made subordinate to the world to come? There are those now, as there were then, who break away from one form of sin, and from one circle of sinful companions; there are those who change the ardent passions of youth for the soberness of middle or advanced life; there are those who see the folly of profaneness, and of gaiety, and intemperance; there are those who are disappointed in some scheme of ambition, and who withdraw from political conflicts; there are those who are satiated with pageantry, and who, oppressed with the cares of state, as Diocletian and Charles V. were, retire from public life; and there are those whose hearts are crushed and broken by losses, and by the death, or what is worse than death, by the ingratitude of their children, and who cease to cherish the fond hope that their family will be honoured, and their name perpetuated in those whom they tenderly loved--but still there is no victory over the world. Their deep dejection, their sadness, their brokenness of spirit, their lamentations, and their want of cheerfulness, all show that the spirit of the world still reigns in their hearts. If the calamities which have come upon them could be withdrawn; if the days of prosperity could be restored, they would show as much of the spirit of the world as ever they did, and would pursue its follies and its vanities as greedily as they had done before. Not many years or months elapse before the worldly mother who has followed one daughter to the grave, will introduce another into the gay world with all the brilliancy which fashion prescribes; not long will a worldly father mourn over the death of a son before, in the whirl of business and the exciting scenes of ambition, he will show that his heart is as much wedded to the world as it ever was. If such sorrows and disappointments conduct to the Saviour, as they sometimes do; if they lead the troubled mind to seek peace in his blood, and support in the hope of heaven, then a real victory is obtained over the world; and then, when the hand of affliction is withdrawn, it is seen that there has been a work of grace in the soul that has effectually changed all its feelings, and secured a triumph that shall be eternal.

The Witness concerning the Son

6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

This is he. This Son of God referred to in the previous verse. The object of the apostle in this verse, in connexion with 1Jn 5:8, is to state the nature of the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. He refers to three well-known things on which he probably had insisted much in his preaching--the water, and the blood, and the Spirit. These, he says, furnished evidence on the very point which he was illustrating, by showing that that Jesus on whom they believed was the Son of God. "This," says he, "is the same one, the very person, to whom the well-known, and important testimony is borne; to him, and him alone, this undisputed things appertain, and not to any other who should claim to be the Messiah; and they all agree on the same one point," 1Jn 5:8.

That came. οελθων. This does not mean that when he came into the world he was accompanied in some way by water and blood; but the idea is, that the water and the blood were clearly manifest during his appearing on earth, or that they were remarkable testimonials in some way to his character and work. An ambassador might be said to come with credentials; a warrior might be said to come with the spoils of victory; a prince might be said to come with the insignia of royalty; a prophet comes with signs and wonders; and the Lord Jesus might also be said to have come with power to raise the dead, and to heal disease, and to cast out devils; but John here fixes the attention on a fact so impressive and remarkable in his view as to be worthy of special remark, that he came by water and blood.

By water. There have been many opinions in regard to the meaning of this phrase. See Pool's Synopsis. Compare also Lucke, in loc. A mere reference to some of these opinions may aid in ascertaining the true interpretation.

(1.) Clement of Alexandria supposes that by water regeneration and faith were denoted, and by blood the public acknowledgment of that.

(2.) Some, and among them Wetstein, have held that the words are used to denote the fact that the Lord Jesus was truly a man, in contradistinction from the doctrine of the Docetae; and that the apostle means to say that he had all the properties of a human being--a spirit or soul, blood, and the watery humours of the body.

(3.) Grotius supposes that by his coming "by water," there is reference to his pure life, as water is the emblem of purity; and he refers to Eze 36:25, Isa 1:16, Jer 4:14. As a sign of that purity, he says that John baptized him, Jn 1:28. A sufficient objection to this view is, that as in the corresponding word blood there is undoubted reference to blood literally, it cannot be supposed that the word water in the same connexion would be used figuratively. Moreover, as Lucke (p. 287) has remarked, water, though a symbol of purity, is never used to denote purity itself, and therefore cannot here refer to the pure life of Jesus.

(4.) Many expositors suppose that the reference is to the baptism of Jesus, and that by his "coming by water and blood," as by the latter there is undoubted reference to his death, so by the former there is reference to his baptism, or to his entrance on his public work. Of this opinion were Tertullian, Ecumenius, Theophylact, among the fathers, and Capellus, lieumann, Stroth, Lange, Ziegler, A. Clarke, Bengel, Rosenmuller, Macknight, and others, among the moderns. A leading argument for this opinion, as alleged, has been that it was then that the Spirit bare witness to him, (Mt 3:16,) and that this is what John here refers to when he says, "It is the Spirit that beareth witness," etc. To this view, Lucke urges substantially the following objections:

(a.) That if it refers to baptism, the phrase would much more appropriately express the fact that Jesus came baptizing others, if that were so, than that he was baptized himself. The phrase would be strictly applicable to John the Baptist, who came baptizing, and whose ministry was distinguished for that, (Mt 3:1;) and if Jesus had baptized in the same manner, or if this had been a prominent characteristic of his ministry, it would be applicable to him. Comp. Jn 4:2. But if it means that he was baptized, and that he came in that way "by water," it was equally true of all the apostles who were baptized, and of all others, and there was nothing so remarkable in the fact that he was baptized as to justify the prominence given to the phrase in this place.

(b.) If reference be had here, as is supposed in this view of the passage, to the "witness" that was borne to the Lord Jesus on the occasion of his baptism, then the reference should have been not to the "water" as the witness, but to the "voice that came from heaven," (Mt 3:17,) for it was that which was the witness in the case. Though this occurred at the time of the baptism, yet it was quite an independent thing, and was important enough to have been referred to. See Lucke, Com. in loc. These objections, however, are not insuperable. Though Jesus did not come baptizing others himself, (Jn 4:2,) and though the phrase would have expressed that if he had, yet, as Christian baptism began with him; as this was the first act in his entrance on public life; as it was by this that he was set apart to his work; and as he designed that this should be always the initiatory rite of his religion, there was no impropriety in saying that his "coming," or his advent in this world, was at the beginning characterized by water, and at the close by blood. Moreover, though the "witness" at his baptism was really borne by a voice from heaven, yet his baptism was the prominent thing; and if we take the baptism to denote all that in fact occurred when he was baptized, all the objections made by Lucke here vanish.

(5.) Some, by the "water" here, have understood the ordinance of baptism as it is appointed by the Saviour to be administered to his people, meaning that the ordinance was instituted by him. So Beza, Calvin, Piscator, Calovius, Wolf, Beausobre, Knapp, Lucke, and others understand it. According to this the meaning would be, that he appointed baptism by water as a symbol of the cleansing of the heart, and shed his blood to effect the ransom of man, and that thus it might be said that he "came by water and blood;" to wit, by these two things as effecting the salvation of men. But it seems improbable that the apostle should have grouped these things together in this way. For

(a.) the "blood" is that which he shed; which pertained to him personally; which he poured out for the redemption of man; and it is clear that, whatever is meant by the phrase "he came," his coming by "water" is to be understood in some sense similar to his coming by "blood;" and it seems incredible that the apostle should have joined a mere ordinance of religion in this way with the shedding of his blood, and placed them in this manner on an equality.

(b.) It cannot be supposed that John meant to attach so much importance to baptism as would be implied by this. The shedding of his blood was essential to the redemption of men; can it be supposed that the apostle meant to teach that baptism by water is equally necessary?

(c.) If this be understood of baptism, there is no natural connexion between that and the "blood" referred to; nothing by which the one would suggest the other; no reason why they should be united. If he had said that he "came" by the appointment of two ordinances for the edification of the church, "baptism and the supper," however singular such a statement might be in some respects, yet there would be a connexion, a reason why they should be suggested together. But why should baptism and the blood shed by the Saviour on the cross be grouped together as designating the principal things which characterized his coming into the world?

(6.) There remains, then, but one other interpretation; to wit, that he refers to the "water and the blood" which flowed from the side of the Saviour when he was pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier. John had himself laid great stress on this occurrence, and on the fact that he had himself witnessed it, Jn 19:34, (Jn 19:35;) and as, in these epistles, he is accustomed to allude to more full statements made in his gospel, it would seem most natural to refer the phrase to that event as furnishing a clear and undoubted proof of the death of the Saviour. This would be the obvious interpretation, and would be entirely clear, if John did not immediately speak of the "water" and the "blood" as separate witnesses, each as bearing witness to an important point, as separate as the "Spirit" and the "water," or the "Spirit" and the "blood ;" whereas, if he refers to the mingled water and blood flowing from his side, they both witness only the same fact, to wit, his death. There was no special significance in the water, no distinct testifying to anything different from the flowing of the blood; but together they bore witness to the one fact that he actually died. But here he seems to suppose that there is some special significance in each. "Not by water only, but by water and blood." "There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." These considerations seem to me to make it probable, on the whole, that the fourth opinion, above referred to, and that which has been commonly held in the Christian church, is correct, and that by the

"water" the baptism of the Saviour is intended; his baptism as an emblem of his own purity; as significant of the nature of his religion; as a rite which was to be observed in his church at all times. That furnished an important attestation to the fact that he was the Messiah, (comp. Mt 3:15,) for it was by that that he entered on his public work, and it was then that a remarkable testimony was borne to his being the Son of God. He himself "came" thus by water as an emblem of purity; and the water used in his church in all ages in baptism, together with the "blood" and the "Spirit," bears public testimony to the pure nature of his religion. It is possible that the mention of the "water" in his baptism suggested to John also the water which flowed from the side of the Saviour at his death, intermingled with blood; and that though the primary thought, in his mind was the fact that Jesus was baptized, and that an important attestation was then given to his Messiahship, yet he may have instantly adverted to the fact that water performed so important a part, and was so important a symbol through all his work; water at his introduction to his work as an ordinance in his church, as symbolical of the nature of his religion, and even at his death, as a public attestation, in connexion with flowing blood, to the fact that he truly died, in reality, and not, as the Docetae pretended, in appearance only, thus completing the work of the Messiah, and making an atonement for the sins of the world. Comp. Jn 19:34, Jn 19:35.

And blood, referring, doubtless, to the shedding of his blood on the cross. He "came" by that; that is, he was manifested by that to men, or that was one of the forms in which he appeared to men, or by which his coming into the world was characterized. The apostle means to say that the blood shed at his death furnished an important evidence or "witness" of what he was. In what way this was done, 1Jn 5:8. Not by water only, but by water and blood. John the Baptist came "by water only;" that is, he came to baptize the people, and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was distinguished from him in the fact that his ministry was characterized by the shedding of blood, or the shedding of his blood constituted one of the peculiarities of his work. And it is this Spirit. Evidently the Holy Spirit. That beareth witness. That is, he is the great witness in the matter, confirming all others. He bears witness to the soul that Jesus came "by water and blood," for that would not be received by us without his agency. In what way he does this, 1Jn 5:8.

Because the Spirit is truth. Is so eminently true that he may be called truth itself, as God is so eminently benevolent that he may be called love itself. 1Jn 4:8.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, etc. There are three that witness, or that bear witness--the same Greek word which, in 1Jn 5:8, is rendered bear witness --μαρτυρουντες. There is no passage of the New Testament which has given rise to so much discussion in regard to its genuineness as this. The supposed importance of the verse in its bearing on the doctrine of the Trinity has contributed to this, and has given to the discussion a degree of consequence which has pertained to the examination of the genuineness of no other passage of the New: Testament. On the one hand, the clear testimony which it seems to bear to the doctrine of the Trinity, has made that portion of the Christian church which holds the doctrine reluctant in the highest degree to abandon it; and on the other hand, the same clearness of the testimony to that doctrine, has made those who deny it not less reluctant to admit the genuineness of the passage. It is not consistent with the design of these Notes to go into a full investigation of a question of this sort. And all that can be done is to state, in a brief way, the results which have been reached, in an examination of the question. Those who are disposed to pursue the investigation further, can find all that is to be said in the works referred to at the bottom of the page.* The portion of the passage, in 1Jn 5:7,8, whose genuineness is disputed, is included in brackets in the following quotation, as it stands in the common editions of the New Testament: "For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." If the disputed passage, therefore, be omitted as spurious, the whole passage will read, "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." The reasons which seem to me to prove that the passage included in brackets is spurious, and should not be regarded as a part of the inspired writings, are briefly the following:

I. It is wanting in all the earlier Greek manuscripts, for it is found in no Greek Ms. written before the sixteenth century. Indeed, it is found

in only two Greek manuscripts of any age--one the Codex Montfortianus, or Britannicus, written in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the other the Codex Ravianus, which is a mere transcript of the text, taken partly from the third edition of Stephen's New Testament, and partly from the Complutensian Polyglott. But it is incredible that a genuine passage of the New Testament should be wanting in all the early Greek manuscripts.

It is wanting in the earliest versions, and, indeed, in a large part of the versions of the New Testament which have been made in all former times. It is wanting in both the Syriac versions--one of which was made probably in the first century; in the Coptic, Armenian, Sclavonic, Ehiopic, and Arabic.

III. It is never quoted by the Greek fathers in their controversies on the doctrine of the Trinity--a passage which would be so much in point, and which could not have failed to be quoted if it were genuine; and it is not referred to by the Latin fathers until the time of Vigilius, at the end of the fifth century. If the passage were believed to be genuine--nay, if it were known at all to be in existence, and to have any probability in its favour--it is incredible that in all the controversies which occurred in regard to the Divine nature, and in all the efforts to define the doctrine of the Trinity, this passage should never have been referred to. But it never was; for it must be plain to any one who examines the subject with an unbiased mind, that the passages which are relied on to prove that it was quoted by Athanasius, Cyprian, Augustin, etc., (Wetstein, II., p. 725,) are not taken from this place, and are not such as they would have made if they had been acquainted with this passage, and had designed to quote it.

IV. The argument against the passage from the external proof is confirmed by internal evidence, which makes it morally certain that it cannot be genuine.

(a.) The connexion does not demand it. It does not contribute to advance what the apostle is saying, but breaks the thread of his argument entirely. He is speaking of certain things which bear "witness" to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah; certain things were well known to those to whom he was writing--the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. How does it contribute to strengthen the force of this to say

that in heaven there are "three that bear witness"--three not before referred to, and having no connexion with the matter under consideration?

(b.) The language is not such as John would use. He does, indeed, elsewhere use the term Logos, or Word, ολογος Jn 1:1,14 1Jn 1:1, but it is never in this form, "The Father, and the Word;" that is, the terms "Father" and "Word" are never used by him, or by any of the other sacred writers, as correlative. The word Son--ουιος--is the term which is correlative to the Father in every other place as used by John, as well as by the other sacred writers. See 1Jn 1:3, 2:22-24, 4:14, 1Jn 3:9; and the Gospel of John, passim. Besides, the correlative of the term Logos, or Word, with John, is not Father, but God. See Jn 1:1. Comp. Rev 19:13.

(c) Without this passage, the sense of the argument is clear and appropriate. There are three, says John, which bear witness that Jesus is the Messiah. These are referred to in 1Jn 5:6; and in immediate connexion with this, in the argument, (1Jn 5:8,) it is affirmed that their testimony goes to one point, and is harmonious. To say that there are other witnesses elsewhere, to say that they are one, contributes nothing to illustrate the nature of the testimony of these three--the water, and the blood, and the Spirit; and the internal sense of the passage, therefore, furnishes as little evidence of its genuineness as the external proof. It is easy to imagine how the passage found a place in the New Testament. It was at first written, perhaps, in the margin of some Latin manuscript, as expressing the belief of the writer of what was true in heaven, as well as on earth, and with no more intention to deceive than we have when we make a marginal note in a book. Some transcriber copied it into the body of the text, perhaps with a sincere belief that it was a genuine passage, omitted by accident; and then it became too important a passage in the argument for the Trinity, ever to be displaced but by the most clear critical evidence. It was rendered into Greek, and inserted in one Greek manuscript of the 16th century, while it was wanting in all the earlier manuscripts.

VI. The passage is now omitted in the best editions of the Greek Testament, and regarded as spurious by the ablest critics. See Griesbach and Hahn. On the whole, therefore, the evidence seems to me to be clear that this passage is not a genuine portion of the inspired

writings, and should not be appealed to in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. One or two remarks may be made, in addition, in regard to its use.

(1.) Even on the supposition that it is genuine, as Bengel believed it was, and as he believed that some Greek manuscript would yet be found which would contain it **; yet it is not wise to adduce it as a proof-text. It would be much easier to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from other texts, than to demonstrate the genuineness of this.

(2.) It is not necessary as a proof-text. The doctrine which it contains can be abundantly established from other parts of the New Testament, by passages about which there can be no doubt.

(3.) The removal of this text does nothing to weaken the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity, or to modify that doctrine. As it was never used to shape the early belief of the Christian world on the subject, so its rejection, and its removal from the New Testament, will do nothing to modify that doctrine. The doctrine was embraced, and held, and successfully defended without it, and it can and will be so still.

* Mill. New Test., pp. 379-386; Wetstein, II. 721--727; Father Simon, Crit. Hist. New Test.; Michaelis, Intro. New Test. iv. 412, seq.; Semler, Histor. und Krit. Sammlungen uber die sogenannten Beweistellen der Dogmatik. Erstes Stuck uber, 1 John v. 7; Griesbach, Diatribe in locum, I John v. 7, 8, second edit., New Test., vol. II., appendix 1; and Lucke's Commentary in loc.

** Et tamen etiam atque etiam sperare licet si non autographurn Joanneurn, at alios vetustissimos codices Graecos, qui hanc periocham habeant in occultis providentiae divine forulis adhuc latentes auo tempore productum iri.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

And there are three that bear witness in earth. This is a part of the text, which, if the reasoning above is correct, is to be omitted. The genuine passage reads, (1Jn 5:7,) "For there are three that bear record, [or witness--μαρτυρουντες,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." There is no reference to the fact that it is done "in earth." The phrase

was introduced to correspond with what was said in the interpolated passage, that there are three that bear record "in heaven."

The Spirit. Evidently the Holy Spirit. The assertion here is, that that Spirit bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, 1Jn 5:5. The testimony of the Holy Ghost to this fact is contained in the following things:

(1.) He did it at the baptism of Jesus. Mt 3:16, Mt 3:17.

(2.) Christ was eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit; as it was predicted that the Messiah would be, and as it was appropriate he should be, Isa 11:2, 61:1. Compare Lk 4:18; Jn 3:34.

(3.) The Holy Spirit bore witness to his Messiahship, after his ascension, by descending, according to his promise, on his apostles, and by accompanying the message which they delivered with saving power to thousands in Jerusalem, Acts 2.

(4.) He still bears the same testimony on every revival of religion, and in the conversion of every individual who becomes a Christian, convincing them that Jesus is the Son of God. Comp. Jn 16:14,15.

(5.) He does it in the hearts of all true Christians, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1Cor 12:3. 1Cor 2:3. The Spirit of God has thus always borne witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, and he will continue to do it to the end of time, convincing yet countless millions that he was sent from God to redeem and save lost men.

And the water. 1Jn 5:6. That is, the baptism of Jesus, and the scenes which occurred when he was baptized, furnished evidence that he was the Messiah. This was done in these ways:

(1.) It was proper that the Messiah should be baptized when he entered on his work, and perhaps it was expected; and the fact that he was baptized showed that he had in fact entered on his work as Redeemer. Mt 3:15.

(2.) An undoubted attestation was then furnished to the fact that he was "the Son of God," by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and by the voice that addressed him from heaven, Mt 3:16,17.

(3.) His baptism with water was an emblem of the purity of his own character, and of the nature of his religion.

(4.) Perhaps it may be implied here, also, that water used in baptism now bears witness to the same thing,

(a.) as it is the ordinance appointed by the Saviour;

(b.) as it keeps up his religion in the world;

(c.) as it is a public symbol of the purity of his religion;

(d.) and as, in every case where it is administered, it is connected with the public expression of a belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

And the blood. There is undoubted allusion here to the blood shed on the cross; and the meaning is, that that blood bore witness also to the fact that he was the Son of God. This it did in the following respects:

(1.) The shedding of the blood showed that he was truly dead--that his work was complete--that he died in reality, and not in appearance only. Jn 19:34, Jn 19:36.

(2.) The remarkable circumstances that attended the shedding of this blood--the darkened sun, the earthquake, the rending of the veil of the temple --showed in a manner that convinced even the Roman centurion that he was the Son of God. Mt 27:54.

(3.) The fact that an atonement was thus made for sin was an important "witness" for the Saviour, showing that he had done that which the Son of God only could do, by disclosing a way by which the sinner may be pardoned, and the polluted soul be made pure.

(4.) Perhaps, also, there may be here an allusion to the Lord's Supper, as designed to set forth the shedding of this blood; and the apostle may mean to have it implied that the representation of the shedding of the

blood in this ordinance is intended to keep up the conviction that Jesus is the Son of God. If so, then the general sense is, that that blood--however set before the eyes and the hearts of men--on the cross, or by the representation of its shedding in the Lord's Supper--is a witness in the world to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, and to the nature of his religion. 1Cor 11:26.

And these three agree in one; ειςτοενεισι. They agree in one thing; they bear on one and the same point, to wit, the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. All are appointed by God as witnesses of this fact; and all harmonize in the testimony which is borne. The apostle does not say that there are no other witnesses to the same thing; nor does he even say that these are the most important or decisive which have been furnished; but he says that these are important witnesses, and are entirely harmonious in their testimony.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

If we receive the witness of men. As we are accustomed to do, and as w do in courts of justice, and in the ordinary daily transactions of life. V constantly acting on the belief that what others say is true; that wh members of our families, and our neighbours say is true; that what is re by travellers is true; that what we read in books, and what is sworn to in of justice, is true. We could not get along a single day if we did not act belief; nor are we accustomed to call it in question, unless we have rea suspect that it is false. The mind is so made that it must credit the test borne by others; and if this should cease even for a single day, the aff the world would come to a pause.

The witness of God is greater. Is more worthy of belief; as God is more true, and wise, and good than men. Men may be deceived, and may undesignedly bear witness to that when is not true--God never can be; men may, for sinister and base purposes, intend to deceive--God never can; men may act from partial observation, from rumours unworthy of credence--God never can; men may desire to excite admiration by the marvellous--God never can; men have deceived--God never has; and though, from these causes, there are many instances where we are not certain that the testimony borne by men is true, yet we are always certain that that which is borne by God is not false. The only question on which the mind ever hesitates is, whether we actually have his

testimony, or certainly know what he bears witness to; when that is ascertained, the human mind is so made that it cannot believe that God would deliberately deceive a world. Heb 6:18. Comp. Tit 1:2.

For this is the witness of God, etc. The testimony above referred to--that borne by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. Who that saw his baptism, and heard the voice from heaven, (Mt 3:16,17,) could doubt that he was the Son of God? Who that saw his death on the cross, and that witnessed the amazing scenes which occurred there, could fail to join with the Roman centurion in saying that this was the Son of God? Who that has felt the influences of the Eternal Spirit on his heart, ever doubted that Jesus was the Son of God? Comp. 1Cor 12:3. Any one of these is sufficient to convince the soul of this; all combined bear on the same point, and confirm it from age to age.

10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. The evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. Rom 8:16. This cannot refer to any distinct and immediate revelation of that fact, that Jesus is the Christ, to the soul of the individual, and is not to be understood as independent of the external evidence of that truth, or as superseding the necessity of that evidence; but the "witness" here referred to is the fruit of all the evidence, external and internal, on the heart, producing this result; that is, there is the deepest conviction of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. There is the evidence derived from the fact that the soul has found peace by believing on him; from the fact that the troubles and anxieties of the mind on account of sin have been removed by faith in Christ; from the new views of God and heaven which have resulted from faith in the Lord Jesus; from the effect of this in disarming death of its terrors; and from the whole influence of the gospel on the intellect and the affections--on the heart and the life, These things constitute a mass of evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, whose force the believer cannot resist, and make the sincere Christian ready to sacrifice anything rather than his religion; ready to go to the stake rather than to renounce his Saviour. 1Pet 3:15.

He that believeth not God hath made him a liar. 1Jn 1:10. Because he believeth not the record, etc. The idea is, that in various ways--at his

baptism, at his death, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, by the miracles of Jesus, etc.-- God had become a witness that the Lord Jesus was sent by him as a Saviour, and that to doubt or deny this partook of the same character as doubting or denying any other testimony; that is, it was practically charging him who bore the testimony with falsehood.

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

And this is the record. This is the sum, or the amount of the testimony (μαρτυρια) which God has given respecting him.

That God hath given to us eternal life. Has provided, through the Saviour, the means of obtaining eternal life. Jn 5:24; Jn 17:2, Jn 17:3.

And this life is in his Son. Is treasured up in him, or is to be obtained through him. Jn 1:4; Jn 1:25; Jn 14:6; Col 3:3.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

He that hath the Son, hath life. Jn 5:24. John evidently designs to refer to that passage in the verse before us, and to state a principle laid down by the Saviour himself. This is the sense of all the important testimony that had ever been borne by God on the subject of salvation, that he who believes in the Lord Jesus already has the elements of eternal life in his soul, and will certainly obtain salvation. Comp. Jn 17:3.

And he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. He that does not believe on him will not attain to eternal life. Jn 3:36; Mk 16:16.

The Knowledge of Eternal Life

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

These things have I written unto you. The things in this epistle respecting the testimony borne to the Lord Jesus.

That believe on the name of the Son of God. To believe on his name, is to believe on himself--the word name often being used to denote the person. Mt 28:19.

That ye may know that ye have eternal life. That you may see the evidence that eternal life has been provided, and that you may be able, by self-examination, to determine whether you possess it. Jn 20:31.

And that ye may believe, etc. That you may continue to believe, or may persevere in believing. He was assured that they actually did believe on him then; but he was desirous of so setting before them the nature of religion, that they would continue to exercise faith in him. It is often one of the most important duties of ministers of the gospel, to present to real Christians such views of the nature, the claims, the evidences, and the hopes of religion, as shall be adapted to secure their perseverance in the faith. In the human heart, even when converted, there is such a proneness to unbelief; the religious affections so easily become cold; there are so many cares pertaining to the world that are fitted to distract the mind; there are so many allurements of sin to draw the affections away from the Saviour; that there is need of being constantly reminded of the nature of religion, in order that the heart may not be wholly estranged from the Saviour. No small part of preaching, therefore, must consist of the re-statement of arguments with which the mind has been before fully convinced; of motives whose force has been once felt and acknowledged; and of the grounds of hope and peace and joy which have already, on former occasions, diffused comfort through the soul. It is not less important to keep the soul, than it is to convert it; to save it from coldness, and deadness, and formality, than it was to impart to it the elements of spiritual life at first. It may be as important to trim a vine, if one would have grapes, as it is to set it out; to keep a garden from being overrun with weeds in the summer, as it was to plant it in the spring.

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

And this is the confidence that we have in him. Marg., concerning. Greek, "towards him," or in respect to him--προςαυτον. The confidence referred to here is that which relates to the answer to prayer. The apostle does not say that this is the only thing in respect to which there is to be confidence in him, but that it is one which is worthy of special consideration. The sense is, that one of the effects of believing on the Lord Jesus (1Jn 5:13) is, that we have the assurance

that our prayers will be answered. On the word confidence, 1Jn 3:21; 1Jn 4:17.

That, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. This is the proper and the necessary limitation in all prayer. God has not promised to grant anything that shall be contrary to his will, and it could not be right that he should do it. We ought not to wish to receive anything that should be contrary to what he judges to be best. No man could hope for good who should esteem his own wishes to be a better guide than the will of God; and it is one of the most desirable of all arrangements that the promise of any blessing to be obtained by prayer should be limited and bounded by the will of God. The limitation here, "according to his will," probably implies the following things:

(1.) In accordance with what he has declared that he is willing to grant. Here the range is large, for there are many things which we know to be in accordance with his will, if they are sought in a proper manner as the forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of the soul, (1Thes 4:3,) comfort in trial, the needful supply of our wants, grace that we may do our duty, wisdom to direct and guide us, (Jas 1:5,) deliverance from the evils which beset us, the influences of his Spirit to promote the cause of religion in the world, and our final salvation. Here is a range of subjects of petition that may gratify the largest wishes of prayer.

(2.) The expression, "according to his will," must limit the answer to prayer to what he sees to be best for us. Of that we are not always good judges. We never perceive it as clearly as our Maker does, and in many things we might be wholly mistaken. Certainly we ought not to desire to be permitted to ask anything which God would judge not to be for our good.

(3.) The expression must limit the petition to what it will be consistent for God to bestow upon us. We cannot expect that he will work a miracle in answer to our prayers; we cannot ask him to bestow blessings in violation of any of the laws which he has ordained, or in any other way than that which he has appointed. It is better that the particular blessing should be withheld from us, than that the laws which he has appointed should be disregarded. It is better that an idle man should not have a harvest, though he should pray for it, than that God should violate the laws by which he has determined to bestow

such favours as a reward of industry, and work a special miracle in answer to a lazy man's prayers.

(4.) The expression, "according to his will," must limit the promise to what will be for the good of the whole. God presides over the universe; and though in him there is an infinite fulness, and he regards the wants of every individual throughout his immense empire, yet the interests of the whole, as well as of the individual, are to be consulted and regarded. In a family, it is conceivable that a child might ask for some favour whose bestowment would interfere materially with the rights of others, or be inconsistent with the good of the whole, and in such a case a just father would of course withhold it. With these necessary limitation the range of the promise in prayer is ample; and, with these limitations, it is true beyond a question that he does hear and answer prayer.

15 and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

And if we know that he hear us. That is, if we are assured of this as a true doctrine, then, even though we may not see immediately that the prayer is answered, we may have the utmost confidence that it is not disregarded, and that it will be answered in the way best adapted to promote our good. The specific thing that we may not indeed be granted, (comp. Lk 22:42, 2Cor 12:8,9,) but the prayer with not be disregarded, and the thing which is most for our good wilt be bestowed upon us. The argument here is derived from the faithfulness of God; from the assurance which we that when he has promised to hear us, there will be, sooner or later a real answer to the prayer.

We know that we have the petitions. That is, evidently, we know that we shall have them, or that the prayer will be answered. It cannot mean that we already have the precise thing for which we prayed, or that will be a real answer to the prayer, for

(a.) the prayer may relate to something future, as protection on a journey, or a harvest, or restoration to health, or the safe return of a son from a voyage at sea, or the salvation of our souls--all of which are future, and which cannot be expected to be granted at once; and

(b.) the answer to prayer is sometimes delayed, though ultimately granted. There may be reasons why the answer should be deferred, and the promise is not that it shall be immediate. The delay may arise from such causes as these:

(1.) To try our faith, and see whether the blessing is earnestly desired.

(2.) Perhaps it could not be at once answered without a miracle.

(3.) It might not be consistent with the Divine arrangements respecting others to grant it to us at once.

4.) Our own condition may not be such that it would be best to answer it at once. We may need further trial, further chastisement, before the affliction, for example, shall be removed; and the answer to the prayer may be delayed for months or years. Yet, in the meantime, we may have the firmest assurance that the prayer is heard, and that it will be answered in the way and at the period when God shall see it to-be best.

16 If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

If a man see his brother sin a sin, etc. From the general assurance that God hears prayer, the apostle turns to a particular case in which it may be benevolently and effectually employed, in rescuing a brother from death. There has been great diversity of opinion in, regard to the meaning of this passage, and the views of expositors of the New Testament are by no means settled as to its true sense. It does not comport with the design of these Notes to examine the opinions which have been held in detail. A bare reference, however, to some of them will show the difficulty of determining with certainty what the passage means, and the impropriety of any very great confidence in one's own judgment in the case. Among these opinions are the following. Some have supposed that the sin against the Holy Ghost is intended; some that the phrase denotes any great and enormous sin, as murder, idolatry, adultery; some that it denotes some sin that was punishable by death by the laws of Moses; some that it denotes a sin that subjected the offender to excommunication from the synagogue or the church; some that it refers to sins which brought fatal disease upon the offender, as in the case of those who abused the Lord's Supper at

Corinth, (1Cor 11:30;) some that it refers to crimes committed against the laws, for which the offender was sentenced to death, meaning that when the charge alleged was false, and the condemnation unjust, they ought to pray for the one who was condemned to death, and that he would be spared; but that when the offence was one which had been really committed, and the offender deserved to die, they ought not to pray for him, or, in other words, that by "the sin unto death," offences against the civil law are referred to, which the magistrate had no power to pardon, and the punishment of which he could not commute; and by the "sin not unto death," offences are referred to which might be pardoned, and when the punishment might be commuted; some that it refers to sins before and after baptism, the former of which might be pardoned, but the latter of which might not be; and some, and perhaps this is the common opinion among the Roman Catholics, that it refers to sins that might or might not be pardoned after death, thus referring to the doctrine of purgatory. These various opinions may be seen stated more at length in Rosenmuller, Lucke, Pool, (Synopsis,) and Clarke, in loc. To go into an examination of all these opinions would require a volume by itself, and all that can be done here is to furnish what seems to me to be the fair exposition of the passage. The word brother may refer either to a member of the church, whether of the particular church to which one was attached or to another, or it may be used in the larger sense which is common as denoting a fellow-man, a member of the great family of mankind. There is nothing in the word which necessarily limits it to one in the church; there is nothing in the connexion, or in the reason assigned, why what is said should be limited to such an one. The duty here enjoined would be the same whether the person referred to was in the church or not; for it is our duty to pray for those who sin, and to seek the salvation of those whom we see to be going astray, and to be in danger of ruin, wherever they are, or whoever they may be. At the same time, the correct interpretation of the passage does not depend on determining whether the word brother refers to one who is a professed Christian or not.

A sin which is not unto death. The great question in the interpretation of the whole passage is, what is meant by the "sin unto death." The Greek (αμαρτιαπροςθανατον) would mean properly a in which tends to death; which would terminate in death; of which death was the penalty, or would be the result, unless it were arrested a sin which, if it had its own course, would terminate thus, am we should speak of a

disease "unto death." Comp. Jn 11:4. The word death is used in three significations in the New Testament, and as employed here might, so far as the word is concerned, be applied in any one of those senses. It is used to denote

(a.) literally the death of the body;

(b.) spiritual death, or death "in trespasses and sin," Eph 2:1;

(c.) the "second death," death in the world of woe and despair. If the sin here mentioned refers to temporal death, it means such a sin that temporal death, must inevitably follow, either by the disease which it has produced, or by a judicial sentence where there was no hope of pardon or of a commutation of the punishment; if it refers to death in the future world, the "second death", then it means such a sin as is unpardonable. That this last is the reference here seems to me to be probable, if not clear, from the following considerations:

(1.) There is such a sin referred to in the New Testament, a sin for which there is forgiveness "neither in this life nor the life to come." Mt 12:31,32. Comp. Mk 3:29. If there is such a sin, there is no impropriety in supposing that John would refer to it here.

(2.) This is the obvious interpretation. It is that which would occur to the mass of the readers of the New Testament, and which it is presumed they do adopt; and this in general, is one of the best means of ascertaining the sons of a passage in the Bible.

(3.) The other significations attached to the word death, would be quite inappropriate here.

(a.) It cannot mean "unto spiritual death," that is, to a continuance in sin, for how could that be known? and if such a case occurred, why would it be improper to pray for it? Besides, the phrase "a sin unto spiritual death," or "unto continuance in sin," is one that is unmeaning.

(b.) It cannot be shown to refer to a disease that should be unto death, miraculously inflicted on account of sin, because, if such cases occurred, they were very rare, and even if a disease came upon a man miraculously in consequence of sin, it could not be certainly known

whether it was, or was not, unto death. All who were visited in this way did not certainly die. Comp. 1Cor 5:4,5, with 2Cor 2:6,7. See also 1Cor 11:30.

(c.) It cannot be shown that it refers to the case of those who were condemned by the civil magistrate to death, and for whom there was no hope of reprieve or pardon, for it is not certain that there were such cases; and if there were, and the person condemned were innocent, there was every reason to pray that God would interpose and save them, even when there was no hope from man; and if they were guilty, and deserved to die, there was no reason why they should not pray that the sin might be forgiven, and that they might be prepared to die, unless it were a case where the sin was unpardonable. It seems probable, therefore, to me, that the reference here is to the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that John means here to illustrate the duty and the power of prayer, by showing that for any sin short of that, however aggravated, it was their duty to pray that a brother might be forgiven. Though it might not be easy to determine what was the unpardonable sin, and John does not say that those to whom he wrote could determine that with certainty, yet there were many sins which were manifestly not of that aggravated character, and for those sins it was proper to pray. There was clearly but one sin that was unpardonable--" there is a sin unto death;" there might be many which were not of this description, and in relation to them there was ample scope for the exercise of the prayer of faith. The same thing is true now. It is not easy to define the unpardonable sin, and it is impossible far us to determine in any case with absolute certainty that a man has committed it. But there are multitudes of sins which men commit, which on no proper interpretation of the passages respecting the sin which "hath never forgiveness," can come under the description of that sin, and for which it is proper, therefore, to pray that they may be pardoned. We know of cases enough where sin may be forgiven; and, without allowing the mind to be disturbed about the question respecting the unpardonable sin, it is our duty to bear such cases on our hearts before God, and to plead with him that our erring brethren may be saved.

He shall ask. That is, he shall pray that the offender may be brought to true repentance, and may be saved.

And he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. That is, God shall give life, and he shall be saved from the eternal death to which he was exposed. This, it is said, would be given to "him" who offers the prayer; that is, his prayer would be the means of saving the offending brother. What a motive is this to prayer! How faithful and constant should we be in pleading for our fellow-sinners, that we may be instrumental in saving their souls! What joy will await those in heaven who shall see there many who were rescued from ruin in answer to their prayers! Comp. Jas 5:15, Jas 5:19.

There is a sin unto death. A sin which is of such a character that it throws the offender beyond the reach of mercy, and which is not to be pardoned. See Mk 3:28,29. The apostle does not here say what that sin is; nor how they might know what it is; nor even that in any case they could determine that it had been committed. He merely says that there is such a sin, and that he, does not design that his remark about the efficacy of prayer should be understood as extending to that.

I do not say that he shall pray for it. "I do not intend that my remark shall be extended to all sin, or mean to affirm that all possible forms of guilt are the proper subjects of prayer, for I am aware that there is one sin which is an exception, and my remark is not to be applied to that." He does not say that this sin was of common occurrence: or that they could know when it had been committed; or even that a case could ever occur in which they could determine that; he merely says that in respect to that sin he did not say that prayer should be offered. It is indeed implied in a most delicate way that it would not be proper to pray for the forgiveness of such a sin, but he does not say that a case would ever happen in which they would know certainly that the sin had been committed. There were instances in the times of the prophets in which the sin of the people became so universal and so aggravated, that they were forbidden to pray for them. Isa 14:11, "Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good;" Isa 15:1, "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." Comp. Isa 1:15. But these were cases in which the prophets were directly instructed by God not to pray for a people. We have no such instruction; and it may be said now with truth, that as we can never be certain respecting any one that he has committed the unpardonable sin, there is no one for whom we may not

with propriety pray. There may be those who are so far gone in sin that there may seem to be little, or almost no ground of hope. They may have cast off all the restraints of religion, of morality, of decency; they may disregard all the counsels of parents and friends; they may be sceptical, sensual, profane; they may be the companions of infidels and of mockers; they may have forsaken the sanctuary, and learned to despise the sabbath; they may have been professors of religion, and now may have renounced the faith of the gospel altogether, but still, while there is life it is our duty to pray for them, "if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2Ti 2:26. "All things are possible with God;" and he has reclaimed offenders more hardened, probably, than any that we have known, and has demonstrated that there is no form of depravity which he has not the power to subdue. Let us remember the cases of Manasseh, of Saul of Tarsus, of Augustine, of Bunyan, of Newton, of tens of thousands who have been reclaimed from the vilest forms of iniquity, and then let us never despair of the conversion of any, in answer to prayer, who may have gone astray, as long as they are in this world of probation and of hope. Let no parent despair who has an abandoned son; let no wife cease to pray who has a dissipated husband. How many a prodigal son has come back to fill with happiness an aged parent's heart! How many a dissipated husband has been reformed to give joy again to the wife of his youth, and to make a paradise again of his miserable home!

17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

All unrighteousness is sin, etc. This seems to be thrown in to guard what he had just said, and there is one great and enormous sin, a sin which could not be forgiven. But he says also that there are many other forms and degrees of sin, sin for which prayer may be made. Everything, he says, which is unrighteous --αδικια-- everything which does not conform to the holy law of God, and which is not right in the view of that law, is to be regarded as sin; but we are not to suppose that all sin of that kind is of such a character that it cannot possibly be forgiven. There are many who commit sin who we may hope will be recovered, and for them it is proper to pray. Deeply affected as we may be in view of the fact that there is a sin which can never be pardoned, and much as we may pity one who has been guilty of such a sin, yet we should not hastily conclude in any case that it has been committed, and should bear constantly in mind that while there is one such sin,

there are multitudes that may be pardoned, and that for them it is our duty unceasingly to pray.

18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not. Is not habitually and characteristically a sinner; does not ultimately and finally sin and perish; cannot, therefore, commit the unpardonable sin, Though he may fall into sin, and grieve his brethren, yet we are never to cease to pray for a true Christian; we are never to feel that he has committed the sin which has never forgiveness, and that he has thrown himself beyond the reach of our prayers. This passage, in its connexion, is a full proof that a true Christian will never commit the unpardonable sin, and, therefore, is a proof that he will never fall from grace. Comp. Heb 6:4, seq. Heb 10:26. On the meaning of the assertion here made, that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not," 1Jn 3:6, seq.

Keepeth himself. It is not said that he does it by his own strength, but he will put forth his best efforts to keep himself from sin, and by Divine assistance he will be able to accomplish it. Comp. 1Jn 3:3; Jude 1:21.

And that wicked one toucheth him not. The great enemy of all good is repelled in his assaults, and he is kept from falling into his snares.

The word toucheth (απτεται) is used here in the sense of harm or injure.

19 *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

nd we know that we are of God. We who are Christians. The apostle supposed that true Christians might have so clear evidence on that subject as to leave no doubt on their own minds that they were the children of God. Comp. 1Jn 3:14, 2Ti 1:12.

And the whole world. The term world here evidently means not the material world, but the people that dwell on the earth, including all idolaters, and all sinners of every grade and kind.

Lieth in wickedness. "In the wicked one," or under the power of the wicked one--εντωπονηρω. It is true that the word πονηρω may be used

here in the neuter gender, as our translators have rendered it, meaning "in that which is evil," or in "wickedness;" but it may be in the masculine gender, meaning "the wicked one;" and then the sense would be that the whole world is under his control or dominion. That this is the meaning of the apostle seems to be clear, because

(1.) the corresponding phrase, (1Jn 5:20,) εντωαληθινω, "in him that is true," is evidently to be construed in the masculine, referring to God the Saviour, and meaning "him that is true," and not that we are "in truth."

(2.) It makes better sense to say that the world lies under the control of the wicked one, than to say that it lies "in wickedness."

(3.) This accords better with the other representations in the Bible, and the usage of the word elsewhere. Comp. 1Jn 2:13, "Ye have overcome the wicked one;" 1Jn 5:14," ye have overcome the wicked one;" 1Jn 3:12, "who was of that wicked one." 2Cor 4:4, on the expression "the god of this world;" Jn 12:31, where he is called "the prince of world; and Eph 2:2, where he is called "the prince of the power of the air." In all these passages it is supposed that Satan has control over the world, especially the heathen world. Comp. Eph 6:12, 1Cor 10:20. In regard to the fact that the heathen world was pervaded by wickedness, Rom 1:21, seq.

(4.) It may be added, that this interpretation is adopted by the most eminent critics and commentators. It is that of Calvin, Beza, Benson, Blacknight, Bloomfield, Piscator, Lucke, etc. The word lieth here (κειται) means, properly, to lie; to be laid; to recline; to be situated, etc. It seems here to refer to the passive and torpid state of a wicked world under the dominion of the prince of evil, as acquiescing in his reign; making no resistance; not even struggling to be free. It lies thus as a beast that is subdued, a body that is dead, or anything that is wholly passive, quiet, and inert. There is no energy; no effort to throw off the reign; no resistance; no struggling. The dominion is complete, and body and soul, individuals and nations, are entirely subject to his will. This striking expression will not unaptly, now describe the condition of the heathen world, or of sinners in general. There would seem to be no government under which men are so little restive, and

against which they have so little disposition to rebel, as that of Satan. Comp. 2Ti 2:26.

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

As if the apostle had said, "We Christians are better taught by our religion, to acknowledge and worship the only true God by his Son Jesus Christ our only Mediator, and therefore exhort you to keep from idols;" intimating hereby, that the worshipping of any other besides this only true God, and by any other mediator, besides Jesus Christ, is idolatry, or the words may be sensed thus: "We are sure that the Son of God is come, and that Christ is he, who by his dcotrine and spirit hath enlightened us to know the true and living God, whilst the greatest part of the world worship false Gods, yea, adore the devil himself."

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Little children. This is a favourite mode of address with John, (1Jn 2:1,) and it was proper to use it in giving his parting counsel; embracing, in fact, all that he had to say--that they should keep themselves from idols, and suffer nothing to alienate their affections from the true God. His great object had been to lead them to the knowledge and love of God, and all his counsels would be practically followed, if, amidst the temptations of idolatry, and the allurements of sin, nothing were allowed to estrange their hearts from him.

Keep yourselves from idols. From worshipping them; from all that would imply communion with them or their devotees. Compare 1Cor 10:14. The word rendered idols here (ειδωλων) means, properly, an image, spectre, shade--as of the dead; then any image or figure which would represent anything, particularly anything invisible; and hence anything designed to represent God, and that was set up with a view to be acknowledged as representing him, or to bring him, or his perfections, more vividly before the mind. The word is applicable to idol-gods--heathen deities, 1Cor 8:4,7, 10:19, Rom 2:22, 2Cor 6:16, 1Thes 1:9; but it would, also, be applicable to any image designed to represent the true God, and through or by which the true God was to be adored. The essential things in the word seem to be,

(a.) an image or representation of the Deity, and

(b.) the making of that an object of adoration instead of the true God. Since one of these things would be likely to lead to the other, both are forbidden in the prohibitions of idolatry, Ex 20:4,5. This would forbid all attempts to represent God by paintings or statuary; all idol-worship, or worship of heathen gods; all images and pictures that would be substituted in the place of God as objects of devotion, or that might transfer the homage from God to the image; and all giving of those affections to other beings or objects which are due to God. Why the apostle closed this epistle with this injunction he has not stated, and it may not be easy to determine. It may have been for such reasons as these:

(1.) Those to whom he wrote were surrounded by idolaters, and there was danger that they might fall into the prevailing sin, or in some way so act as to be understood to lend their sanction to idolatry.

(2.) In a world full of alluring objects, there was danger then, as there is at all times, that the affections should be fixed on other objects than the supreme God, and that what is due to him should be withheld. It may be added, in the conclusion of the exposition of this epistle, that the same caution is as needfull for us as it was for those to whom John wrote. We are not in danger, indeed, of bowing down to idols, or of engaging in the grossest forms of idol-worship. But we may be in no less danger than they to whom John wrote were, of substituting other things in our affections in the place of the true God, and of devoting to them the time and the affection which are due to him. Our children it is possible to love with such an attachment as shall effectually exclude the true God from the heart. The world --its wealth, and pleasures, and honours--we may love with a degree of attachment such as even an idolater would hardly show to his idol-gods; and all the time which he would take in performing his devotions in an idol-temple, we may devote with equal fervour to the service of the world. There is practical idolatry all over the world; in nominally Christian lands as well as among the heathen; in families that acknowledge no God but wealth and fashion; in the hearts of multitudes of individuals who would scorn the thought of worshipping at a pagan altar; and it is even to be found in the heart of many a one who professes to be

acquainted with the true God, and to be an heir of heaven. God should have the supreme place in our affections. The love of everything else should be held in strict subordination to the love of him. He should reign in our hearts; be acknowledged in our closets, our families, and in the place of public worship; be submitted to at all times as having a right to command and control us; be obeyed in all the expressions of his will, by his word, by his providence, and by his Spirit; be so loved that we shall be willing to part without a murmur with the dearest object of affection when he takes it from us; and so that, with joy and triumph, we shall welcome his messenger, the angel of death, when he shall come to summon us into his presence. To all who may read these illustrations of the epistle of the "beloved disciple," may God grant this inestimable blessing and honour. AMEN.

The Second Epistle of John

[2 John]

2 John-1

Salutation

1 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth;
and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;
2 for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

Whom I love in the truth. 1Jn 3:18. The meaning here is, that he truly or sincerely loved them. The introduction of the article the here, which is not in the original, (εναληθεια), somewhat obscures the sense, as if the meaning were that he loved them so far as they embraced the truth. The meaning however is, that he was sincerely attached to them. The word "whom" here, ους, embraces both the mother and her children, though the pronoun is in the masculine gender, in accordance with the usage of the Greek language. No mention is made of her husband, and it may thence be inferred that she was a widow. Had he been living, though he might not have been a Christian, it is to be presumed that some allusion would have been made to him as well as to the children,

especially as there is reason to believe that only a part of her children were pious. 2Jn 1:4.

And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth. That is, all those Christians who had had an opportunity of knowing them, were sincerely attached to them. It would seem, from a subsequent part of the epistle, (2Jn 1:10,) that this female was of a hospitable character, and was accustomed to entertain at her house the professed friends of religion, especially religious teachers, and it is probable that she was the more extensively known from this fact. The commendation of the apostle here shows that it is possible that a family shall be extensively known as one of order, peace, and religion, so that all who know it or hear of it shall regard it with interest, respect, and love.

For the truth's sake. They love this family because they love the truth, and see it so cordially embraced and so happily exemplified. They who love the gospel itself will rejoice in all the effects which it produces in society, on individuals, families, neighbourhoods, and their hearts will be drawn with warm affection to the places where its influence is most fully seen.

Which dwelleth in us. In us who are Christians; that is, the truths of the gospel which we have embraced. Truth may be said to have taken up a permanent abode in the hearts of all who love religion.

And shall be with us for ever. Its abode with us is not for a night or a day; not for a month or a year; not for the few years that make up mortal life; it is not a passing stranger that finds a lodging like the weary traveller for a night, and inthe morning is gone to be seen no more; it has come to us to make our hearts its permanent home, and it is to be with us in all worlds, and while ceaseless ages shall roll away.

3 Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Grace be unto you. etc, Rom 1:7. This salutation does not differ from those commonly employed by the sacred writers, except in the emphasis which is placed on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the Son of the Father." This is much in the style of John, in all of whose writings he dwells much on the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Son of

God, and on the importance of reconising that fact in order to the possession of true religion. Comp. 1Jn 2:22,23; 4:15; 5:1,2,10-12, 20.

In truth and love. This phrase is not to be connected with the expression "the Son of the Father." as if it meant that he was my Son "in truth and love," but is rather to be connected with the "grace, mercy, and peace," referred to, as a prayer that they might be manifested to this family in promoting truth and love.

Abide in the Doctrine of Christ

4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

I rejoiced greatly that I found, etc. That I learned this fact respecting some of thy children. The apostle does not say how he had learned this. It may have been that he had become personally acquainted with them when they were away from their home, or that he had learned it from others. The word used (ευρηκα) would apply to either method. Grotius supposed that some of the sons had come on business to Ephesus, and that John had become acquainted with them there. Of thy children walking in truth. That is, true Christians; living in accordance with the truth, for this constitutes the essence of religion. The expression used here, "of thy children," (εκτωντεκνων,) means some of thy children; implying that he knew of a part of them who were true Christians. This is clear from the Greek construction, because

(a.) if he had meant to say that he had found them all to be of this description, the sentiment would have been directly expressed, "thy children;" but as it is, some word is necessary to be understood to complete the sense; and

(b.) the same thing is demanded by the fact that the participle used (walking--περιπατουντας) is in the accusative case. If he had referred to them all, the participle would have been in the genitive, agreeing with the word children, (τωνπεριπατουντων.)--Lucke. Whether the apostle means to say that only a part of them had in fact embraced the gospel, or that he had only known that a part of them had done it, though the others might have done it without his knowledge, is not

quite clear, though the former supposition appears to be the correct one, for if they had all become Christians it is to be presumed that he would have been informed of it. The probability seems to be that a part of her children only were truly pious, though there is no evidence that the others were otherwise than correct in their moral conduct. If there had been improper conduct in any of her other children, John was too courteous, and too delicate in his feelings, to allude to so disagreeable a circumstance. But "if that pious lady," to use the language of Benson, "had some wicked children, her lot was not peculiar. Her consolation was that she had some who were truly good. John commended those who were good, in order to excite them in the most agreeable manner to persevere."

As we have received a commandment from the Father. That is, as he has commanded us to live; in accordance with the truth which he has revealed. The Father, in the Scripture, is everywhere represented as the source of law.

5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

Not as though I wrote a new commanament unto thee. John presumed that the command to love one another was understood as far as the gospel was known; and he might well presume it, for true Christianity never prevails anywhere without prompting to the observance of this law. 1Thes 4:9.

But that which we had from the beginning. From the time when the gospel was first made known to us. 1Jn 2:7; 1Jn 2:11.

That we love one another. That is, that there be among the disciples of Christ mutual love; or that in all circumstances and relations they should love one another, Jn 15:12,17. This general command, addressed to all the disciples of the Saviour, John doubtless means to say was as applicable to him and to the pious female to whom he wrote as to any others, and ought to be exercised by them towards all true Christians; and he exhorts her, as he did all Christians, to exercise it. It was a command on which, in his old age, he loved to dwdl; and he had little more to say to her than this to exhort her to obey this injunction of the Saviour.

6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

For. οτι. This word for is not here to be regarded as connected with the previous verse, and as giving a reason why there should be the exercise of mutual love, but is rather to be under- stood as connected with the following verse, (2Jn 1:8,) and as giving a reason for the caution there expressed: "Because it is a truth that many deceivers have appeared, or since it has occurred that many such are abroad, look to yourselves lest you be betrayed and ruined." The fact that there were many such deceivers was a good reason for being constantly on their guard, lest they should be so far drawn away as not to receive a full reward.

Many deceivers are entered into the world. Are abroad in the world, or have appeared among men. Several Mss. read here, "have gone out into the world," εξηλθον, instead of "have entered into εισηλθον. The common reading is the correct one, and the other was originated, probably, from the unusual form of the expression, "have come into the world," as if they had come from another abode. That, however, is not necessarily implied, the language being such as would be properly used to denote the idea that there were such deceivers in the world.

Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. Who maintain that he assumed the appearance only of a man, and was not really incarnate. 1Jn 1:2, 1Jn 1:3.

This is a deceiver. Every one who maintains this is to be regarded as a deceiver. And an antichrist. 1Jn 2:18; 1Jn 4:3.

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Look to yourselves. This seems to be addressed to the lady to whom he wrote, and to her children. The idea is, that they should be particularly on their guard, and that their first care should be to secure their own hearts, so that they should not be exposed to the dangerous attacks of error. When error abounds in the world, our first duty is not to attack it and make war upon it; it is to look to the citadel of our own souls, and see that all is well guardeed there. When an enemy invades a land, the

first thing will not be to go out against him, regardless of our own strength, or of the security of our own fortresses, but it will be to see that our forts are well manned, and that we are secure there from his assaults. If that is so, we may then go forth with confidence to meet him on the open field. In relation to an error that is in the world, the first thing for a Christian to do is to take care of his own heart.

That we lose not those things which we have wrought. Marg., "Or, gained", Some copies read, which ye have gained, but that ye. The reading here referred to in the margin is found in several Mss. and also in the Vulgate, Syriac, and AEthiopic versions. It is not, however, adopted in the late critical editions of the New Testament, and the common reading is probably genuine. The sense is not materially varied, and the common reading is not unnatural. John was exhorting the family to whom this epistle was written to take good heed to themselves while so many artful errorists were around them, lest they should be drawn away from the truth, and lose a part of the full reward which they might hope to receive in heaven. In doing this, nothing was more natural than that he, as a Christian friend, should group himself with them, and speak of himself as having the same need of caution, and express the feeling that he ought to strive also to obtain the full reward, thus showing that he was not disposed to address an exhortation to them which he was not willing to regard as applicable to himself. The truth which is taught here is one of interest to all Christians--that it is possible for even genuine Christians, by suffering themselves to be led into error, or by failure in duty, to lose a part of the reward which they might have obtained. The crown which they will wear in heaven will be less bright than that which they might have worn, and the throne which they will occupy will be less elevated. The rewards of heaven will be in accordance with the services rendered to the Redeemer; and it would not be right that they who turn aside, or falter in their course, should have the same exalted honours which they might have received if they had devoted themselves to God with ever-increasing fidelity. It is painful to think how many there are who begin the Christian career with burning zeal, as if they would strike for the highest rewards in heaven, but who soon waver in their course, and fall into some paralysing error, until at last they receive, perhaps, not half the reward which they might have obtained.

But that we receive a full reward. Such as will be granted to a life uniformly consistent and faithful; all that God has to bestow on his people when most faithful and true. But who can estimate the "full reward" of heaven, the unspeakable glory of those who make it the grand business of their lives to obtain all they can of its bliss? And who is there that does not feel that he ought to strive for a crown in which not one gem shall be wanting that might have sparkled there for ever?

9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. In the doctrine which Christ taught, or the true doctrine respecting him. The language is somewhat ambiguous, like the phrase "the love of Christ," which may mean either his love to us, or our love to him. Comp. Jn 15:9. It is difficult to determine here which is the true sense--whether it means the doctrine or precepts which he taught, or the true doctrine respecting him. Macknight understands by it the doctrine taught by Christ and his apostles. It would seem most probable that this is the sense of the passage, but then it would include, of course, all that Christ taught respecting himself, as well as his other instructions. The essential idea is, that the truth must be held respecting the precepts, the character, and the work of the Saviour. Probably the immediate allusion here is to those to whom John so frequently referred as "antichrist," who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh, 2Jn 1:7. At the same time, however, he makes the remark general, that if any one did not hold the true doctrine respecting the Saviour, he had no real knowledge of God. See Jn 1:18, 5:23, 15:23, 17:3 1Jn 2:23.

Hath not God. Has no true knowledge of God. The truth taught here is, that it is essential to piety to hold the true doctrine respecting Christ.

He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ. In the true doctrine respecting Christ, or in the doctrine which he taught.

He hath both the Father and the Son. There is such an intimate union between the Father and the Son, that he who has just views of the one has also of the other. Comp. Jn 14:7, Jn 4:9; Jn 14:10, Jn 14:11, and 1Jn 2:23.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God-speed:

If there come any unto you. Any professed teacher of religion. There can be no doubt that she to whom this epistle was written was accustomed to entertain such teachers.

And bring not this doctrine. This doctrine which Christ taught, or the true doctrine respecting him and his religion.

Receive him not into your house. This cannot mean that no acts of kindness, in any circumstances, were to be shown to such persons; but that there was to be nothing done which could be fairly construed as encouraging or contenancing them as religious teachers. The true rule would seem to be, in regard to such persons, that, so far as we have intercourse with them as neighbours, or strangers, we are to be honest, true, kind, and just, but we are to do nothing that will contenance them as religious teachers. We are not to attend on their instruction, Prov 19:27; we are not to receive them into our houses, or to entertain them as religious teachers; we are not to commend them to others, or to give them any reason to use our names or influence in propagating error. It would not be difficult to practise this rule, and yet to show to others all the kindness, and all the attention in circumstances of want, which religion demands. A man who is truly consistent is never suspected of countenancing error, even when he is distinguished for liberality, and is ready, like the good Samaritan, to pur in oil and wine in the wounds of any waylaid traveller. The command not to "receive such an one into the house," in such circumstances as those referred to by John, would be probably understood literally, as he doubltless designed that it should be. To do that, to meet such persons with a friendly greeting, would be construed as countenancing their doctrine, and as commending them to others, and hence it was forbidden that they should be entertained as such. This treatment would not be demanded where no such interpretation could be put on receiving a friend or relative who held different and even erroneous views, or in showing kindness to a stranger who differed from us, but it would apply to the receiving and entertaining a professed teacher of religion, as such; and the rule is as applicable now as it was then.

Neither bid him God speed. καιχαιρειναυτωμηλεγετε. "And do not say to him, hail, or joy." Do not wish him joy; do not hail, or salute him. The word used expresses the common form of salutation, as when we wish one health, success, prosperity, Mt 26:49, Acts 15:23, 23:26 Jas 1:1. It would be understood as expressing a wish for success in the enterprise in which they were embarked; and though we should love all men, and desire their welfare, and sincerely seek their happiness, yet we can properly wish no one success in a career of sin and error.

11 for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

For he that biddeth him, God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds. Shows that he countenances and approves of the doctrine which is taught. Comp. 1Timm 5:22.

Final Greetings

12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

Having many things to write unto you. That I would wish to say. This language is such as would be used by one who was hurried, or who was in feeble health, or who hoped soon to see the person written to. In such a case only the points would be selected which were of most immediate and pressing importance, and the remainder would be reserved for a more free personal interview.

I would not write with paper. The word paper here conveys an idea which is not strictly correct. Paper, as that term is now understood, was not invented until long after this period. The material designated by the word used by John (χαρτης) was the Egyptian papyrus, and the particular thing denoted was a leaf made out of that plant. The sheets were made from membranes of the plant closely pressed together. This plant was found also in Syria and Babylon, but it was produced in greater abundance in Egypt, and that was the plant which was commonly used. It was so comparatively cheap, that it in a great measure superseded the earlier materials for writing--plates of lead, or stone, or the skins of animals. It is probable that the books of the New Testament were written on this species of paper. Comp. Hug, Intro. chap. iii., 11.

And ink. The ink which was commonly employed in writing was made of soot and water, with a mixture of some species of gum to give it consistency and durability.--Lucke. The instrument or pen was made of a reed.

But I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face. Marg., as in Greek, mouth to mouth. The phrase is a common one, to denote conversation with any one, especially free and confidential conversation. Comp. Nu 12:8, Jer 32:4.

That our joy may be full. Marg., your. The marginal reading has arisen from a variation in the Greek copies. The word our is best sustained, and accords best with the connexion. John would be likely to express the hope that he would find pleasure from such an interview. 1Jn 1:4. Compare Rom 1:11,12.

The Third Epistle of John

[3 John]

3 John-1

Salutation

1 The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

Unto the well-beloved Gaius. Three persons of this name are elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament--Gaius, whom Paul in Rom 16:23 calls "his host," and whom he says (1Cor 1:15) he baptized, residing at Corinth, (Rom 16:23;) Gaius of Macedonia, one of Paul's companions in travel, who was arrested by an excited mob at Ephesus, (Acts 19:29;)and Gaius of Derbe, who went with Paul and Timothy into Asia, Acts 20:4. Whether either of these persons is referred to here, cannot with certainty be determined. If it were any of them, it was probably the last-mentioned--Gaius of Derbe. There is no objection to the supposition that he was the one, unless it be from the fact that this epistle was probably written many years after the transaction mentioned in Acts 20:4, and the probability that Gaius might not have lived so

long. The name was not an uncommon one, and it cannot be determined now who he was, or where he lived. Whether he had any office in the church is unknown, but he seems to have been a man of wealth and influence. The word translated "well-beloved," means simply beloved. It shows that he was a personal friend of the writer of this epistle.

2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Beloved, I wish above all things. Marg., pray. The word used here commonly means in the New Testament to pray; but it is also employed to express a strong and earnest desire for anything, Acts 27:29, Rom 9:3, 2Cor 13:9. This is probably all that is implied here. The phrase rendered "above all things"--περιπαντων --would be more correctly rendered here "concerning, or in respect to all things ;" and the idea is, that John wished earnestly that in all respects he might have the same kind of prosperity which his soul had. The common translation "above all things" would seem to mean that John valued health and outward prosperity more than he did anything else; that he wished that more than his usefulness or salvation. This cannot be the meaning, and is not demanded by the proper interpretation of the original. See this shown by Locke, in loc. The sense is, "In every respect, I wish that it may go as well with you as it does with your soul; that in your worldly prosperity, your comfort, and your bodily health, you may be as prosperous as you are in your religion." This is the reverse of the wish which we are commonly constrained to express for our friends; for such is usually the comparative want of prosperity and advancement in their spiritual interests, that it is an expression of benevolence to desire that they might prosper in that respect as much as they do in others.

That thou mayest prosper, ευοδουσθαι. This word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Rom 1:10, rendered have a prosperous journey; 1Cor 16:2, rendered hath prospered; and in the passage before us. It means, properly, to lead in a good way; to prosper one's journey; and then to make prosperous; to give success to; to be prospered. It would apply here to any plan or purpose entertained. It would include success in business, happiness in domestic relations, or prosperity in any of the engagements and transactions in which a Christian might lawfully engage. It shows that it is right to wish that our friends may have success in the works of their hands and their plans of life.

And be in health. To enjoy bodily health. It is not necessary to suppose, in order to a correct interpretation of this, that Gaius was at that time suffering from bodily indisposition, though perhaps it is most natural to suppose that, as John makes the wish for his health so prominent. But it is common, in all circumstances, to wish for the health and prosperity of our friends; and it is as proper as it is common, if we do not give that a degree of prominence above the welfare of the soul.

Even as thy soul prospereth. John had learned, it would seem, from the "brethren" who had come to him, (3Jn 1:3,) that Gaius was living as became a Christian; that he was advancing in the knowledge of the truth, and was exemplary in the duties of the Christian life; and he prays that in all other respects he might be prospered as much as he was in that. It is not very common that a man is more prospered in his spiritual interests than he is in his other interests, or that we can, in our wishes for the welfare of our friends, make the prosperity of the soul, and the practice and enjoyment of religion, the standard of our wishes in regard to other things. It argues a high state of piety when we can, as the expression of our highest desire for the welfare of our friends, express the hope that they may be in all respects as much prospered as they are in their spiritual concerns.

3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came. Who these were is not certainly known. They may have been members of the same church with Gaius, who, for some reason, had visited the writer of this epistle; or they may have been the "brethren" who had gone from him with a letter of commendation to the church, (1Jn 1:9,) and had been rejected by the church through the influence of Diotrephes, and who, after having been hospitably entertained by Gaius, had again returned to the writer of this epistle. In that case, they would of course bear honourable testimony to the kindness which they had received from Gaius, and to his Christian character.

And testified of the truth that is in thee. That you adhere steadfastly to the truth, notwithstanding the fact that errors abound, and that there are many false teachers in the world.

Even as thou walkest in the truth. Livest in accordance with the truth. The writer had made the same remark of the children of Cyria, to whom the second epistle was directed. 2Jn 1:4.

4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. That they adhere steadfastly to the truth, and that they live in accordance with it. This is such language as would be used by an aged apostle when speaking of those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and who looked up to him as a father; and we may, therefore, infer that Gaius had been converted under the ministry of John, and that he was probably a much younger man than he was. John, the aged apostle, says that he had no higher happiness than to learn, respecting those who regarded him as their spiritual father, that they were steadfast in their adherence to the doctrines of religion. The same thing may be said now

(a.) of all the ministers of the gospel, that their highest comfort is found in the fact that those to whom they minister, whether still under their care or removed from them, persevere in a steadfast attachment to the true doctrines of religion, and live accordingly; and

(b.) of all Christian parents respecting their own children. The highest joy that a Christian parent can have is to know that his children, whether at home or abroad, adhere to the truths of religion, and live in accordance with the requirements of the gospel of Christ. If a child wished to confer the highest possible happiness on his parents when with them, it would be by becoming a decided Christian; if, when abroad, in foreign lands or his own, he wished to convey intelligence to them that would most thrill their hearts with joy, it would be to announce to them that he had given his heart to God. There is no joy in a family like that when children are converted; there is no news that comes from abroad that diffuses so much happiness through the domestic circle as the intelligence that a child is truly converted to the Saylout. There is nothing that would give more peace to the dying pillow of the Christian parent, than to be able to leave the world with the assurance that his children would always walk in truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. That they adhere steadfastly to the truth, and that they live in accordance with it. This is such language as would be used by an aged apostle when speaking of those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and who looked

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Gaius' Hospitality Commended

5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

Beloved, thou doest faithfully. In the previous verses the writer had commended Gaius for his attachment to truth, and his general correctness in his Christian life. He now speaks more particularly of his acts of generous hospitality, and says that he had fully, in that respect, done his duty as a Christian.

Whatsoever thou doest. In all your intercourse with them, and in all your conduct towards them. The particular thing which led to this remark was his hospitality; but the testimony respecting his general conduct had been such as to justify this commendation.

To the brethren. Probably to Christians who were well known to him--perhaps referring to Christians in his own church.

And to strangers. Such as had gone to the church of which he was a member with a letter of commendation from John. Rom 12:13, and Heb 13:2.

6 which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church. It would seem that they had returned to John, and borne honourab1e testimony to the love manifested to them by Gaius. Before what church they had borne this testimony is unknown. Perhaps it was the church in Ephesus.

Whom if thou bring forward on their journey, ουςπροπεμψας. "Whom bringing forward, or having brought forward." The word refers to aid rendered them in their journey, in facilitating their travels, either by personally accompanying them, by furnishing them the means of prosecuting their journey, or by hospitably entertaining them. Probably Gains aided them in every way in which it was practicable. It has been made a question whether this refers to the fact that he had thus aided them in some visit which they had made to the church where Gaius was, or to a visit which they purposed to make. The Greek would seem to favour the latter construction, and yet it would appear from the epistle, that the "brethren and strangers" actually had been with him; that they had been rejected by the church through the influence of Diotrephes, and had been thrown upon the hospitality of Gaius, and that they had returned, and had borne honourable testimony to his hospitality. These views can be reconciled by supposing, as Loicke does, that having been once on their travels, and having shared the hospitality of Gaius, they were purposing to visit that region again, and that John, praising him for his former hospitality, commends them again to him, stating the reason (3Jn 1:9,10) why he did not, in accordance with the usual custom, recommend them to the care of the church. They had now gone out (3Jn 1:7) on the same errand on which they had formerly gone, and they had now equal claims to the hospitality of the friends of religion.

After a godly sort. Margin, as in Greek, worthy of God. The meaning is, As becomes those who serve God; or as becomes those who are professors of his religion.

Thou shalt do well. You will do that which religion requires in these circumstances.

7 because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

Because that for his name's sake. The word "his" here refers to God; and the idea is, that they had undertaken this journey not on their own account, but in the cause of religion.

They went forth. Or, they have gone forth--εξηλθον-- referring to the journey which they had then undertaken; not to the former one.

Taking nothing of the Gentiles. The term Gentile embraced all who were not Jews, and it is evident that these persons went forth particularly to labour among the heathen. When they went, they resolved, it seems, to receive no part of their support from them, but to depend on the aid of their Christian brethren, and hence they were at first commended to the church of which Gains and Diotrephes were members, and on this second excursion were commended particularly to Gains.

Why they resolved to take nothing of the Gentiles is not stated, but it was doubtless from prudential considerations, lest it should hinder their success among them, and expose them to the charge of being actuated by a mercenary spirit. There were circumstances in the early propagation of Christianity which made it proper, in order to avoid this reproach, to preach the gospel "without charge," though the doctrine is everywhere laid down in the Bible that it is the duty of those to whom it is preached to contribute to its maintenance, and that it is the right of those who preach to expect and receive a support. On this subject, 1Cor 9:15, 1Cor 9:18.

8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow helpers to the truth.

We therefore ought to receive such. All of us ought hospitably to entertain and aid such persons. The work in which they are engaged is one of pure benevolence. They have no selfish aims and ends in it. They do not even look for the supplies of their wants among the people to whom they go to minister; and we ought, therefore, to aid them in their work, and to contribute to their support. The apostle doubtless meant to urge this duty particularly on Gaius; but in order to show that he recognised tile obligation himself, he uses the term "we," and speaks of it as a duty binding on all Christians.

That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth. All Christians cannot go forth to preach the gospel, but all may contribute something to the support of those who do; and in this case they would have a joint participation in the work of spreading the truth. The same reasoning which was applicable to that case, is also applicable now in regard to the duty of supporting those who go forth to preach the gospel to the destitute.

The Opposition of Diotrephes

9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

I wrote unto the church. That is, on the former occasion when they went forth. At that time, John naturally commended them to the kind attentions of the church, not doubting but that aid would be rendered them in prosecuting their benevolent work among the Gentiles. The epistle which was written on that occasion is now lost, and its contents cannot now be ascertained. It was, probably, however, a letter of mere commendation, perhaps stating the object which these brethren had in view, and soliciting the aid of the church. The Latin Vulgate renders this, scripsissem forsian ecclesia, "I would have written, perhaps, to the church, but Diotrephes," etc. Macknight also renders this, "I would have written," supposing the sense to be, that John would have commended them to the whole church rather than to a private member, if he had not been aware of the influence and opposition of Diotrephes. The Syriac version also adopts the same rendering. Several manuscripts also, of later date, introduced a particle, (εν,) by which the same rendering would be demanded in the Greek, though that reading is not sustained by good authority. Against this mode of rendering the passage, the reasons seem to me to be clear.

(1.) As already remarked, the reading in the Greek which would require it is not sustained by good authority.

(2.) The fair and obvious interpretation of the Greek word used by the apostle, (εγραψα,) without that particle, is, I wrote --implying that it had been already done.

(3.) It is more probable that John had written to the church on some former occasion, and that his recommendation had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, than that he would be deterred by the apprehension that his recommendation would be rejected. It seems to me, therefore, that the fair interpretation of this passages is, that these brethren had gone forth on some former occasion, commended by John to the church, and had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, and that now he commends them to Gaius, by whom they

had been formerly entertained, and asks him to renew his hospitality to them.

But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminenee among them, reeeiveth us not. Does not admit our authority, or would not comply with any such recommendation. The idea is, that he rejected his interference in the matter, and was not disposed to acknowledge him in any way. Of Diotrephes, nothing more is known than is here specified. Compare the analysis of the epistle. Whether he were an officer in the church--a pastor, a ruling elder, a deacon, a vestryman, a warden, or a private individual--we have no means of ascertaining. The presumption, from the phrase "who loveth to have the pre-eminence," would rather seem to be that he was an aspiring man, arrogating rights which he had not, and assuming authority to which he was not entitled by virtue of any office. Still he might have held an office, and might have arrogated authority, as many have done, beyond what properly belonged to it. The single word rendered "who loveth to have the pre-eminence," (φιλοπρωτευων,) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means simply, who loves to be first--meaning that he loved to be at the head of all things, to rule, to lord it over others. It is clearly supposed here, that the church would have complied with the request of the writer if it had not been for this man. What were the alleged grounds for the course which he constrained the church to take, we are not informed; the real ground, the apostle says, was his desire to rule. There may have been at the bottom of it some secret dislike of John, or some private grudge; but the alleged ground may have been, that the church was independent, and that it should reject all foreign interference; or that the church was unable to support those men; or that the work in which they were engaged was one of doubtful propriety. Whatever was the cause, the case furnishes an illustration of the bad influence of one ambitious and arrogant man in a church. It is often in the power of one such man to bring a whole church under his control, and effectually to embarrass all its movements, and to prevent all the good which it would otherwise accomplish. When it is said, "but Diotrephes receiveth us not," the reference is doubtless to John, and the meaning is, either that he did not acknowledge him as an apostle, or that he did not recognise his right to interfere in the affairs of the church, or that he did not regard his recommendation of these brethren. The first of these suppositions is hardly probable; but, though he may have admitted that he was an

apostle, there were perhaps some reasons operating in this particular case why he prevailed on the church to reject those who had been thus commended to their hospitality.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

Wherefore, if I come. He was evidently expecting soon to make a visit to Gaius, and to the church, 3Jn 1:14.

I will remember his deeds which he doeth. That is, he would punish his arrogance and presumption; would take measures that he should be dealt with in a proper manner. There is no evidence whatever that this is said in a vindictive or revengeful spirit, or that the writer spoke of it merely as a personal matter. From anything that can be shown to the contrary, if it had been a private and personal affair merely, the matter might have been dropped, and never referred to again. But what had been done was public. It pertained to the authority of the apostle, the duty of the church, and the character of the brethren who had been commended to them. If the letter was written, as is supposed by the aged John, and his authority had been utterly rejected by the influence of this one man, then it was proper that that authority should be asserted. If it was the duty of the church to have received these men, who had been thus recommended to them, and it had been prevented from doing what it would otherwise have done, by the influence of one man, then it was proper that the influence of that man should be restrained, and that the church should see that he was not to control it. If the feelings and the character of these brethren had been injured by being rudely thrust out of the church, and held up as unworthy of public confidence, then it was proper that their character should be vindicated, and that the author of the wrong should be dealt with in a suitable manner. No one can show that this was not all that the apostle proposed to do, or that any feelings of private vindictiveness entered into his purpose to "remember" what Diotrephes had done; and the existence of any such feelings should not be charged on the apostle without proof. There is no more reason to suppose this in his case than there was in the case of Paul, in administering discipline in the church of Corinth, (1Cor 5:3-5,) or than there is in any instance of administering discipline now.

Prating against us. The word prate, (φλυαρεω,) occurring nowhere else in the New Testament, means to" overflow with talk," (Gr. φλυω, Lat. fluo, flow;) to talk much without weight, or to little purpose; to be loquacious; to trifle; or, to use an expression common among us, and which accords well with the Greek, to run on in talk, without connexion or sense. The word does not properly imply that there was malignity or ill-feeling in what was said, but that the talk was of an idle, foolish, and unprofitable character. As John here, however, specifies that there was a bad spirit in the manner in which Diotrephes expressed himself, the real thing which is implied in the use of the word here is, that there were much talk of that kind; that he was addicted to this habit of running on against the apostle; and that he was thus constantly undermining his influence, and injuring his character.

With malicious words. Gr., "evil words;" words that were fitted to do injury.

And not content therewith. Not satisfied with venting his private feelings in talk. Some persons seem to be satisfied with merely talking against others, and take no other measures to injure them; but Diotrephes was not. He himself rejected the brethren, and persuaded the church to do the same thing. Bad as evil talking is, and troublesome as a man may be who is always "prating" about matters that do not go according to his mind, yet it would be comparatively well if things always ended with that, and if the loquacious and the dissatisfied never took measures openly to wrong others.

Neither doth he himself receive the brethren. Does not himself treat them as Christian brethren, or with the hospitality which is due to them. He had not done it on the former visit, and John evidently supposed that the same thing would occur again.

And forbiddeth them that would. From this it is clear that there were those in the church who were disposed to receive them in a proper manner; and from anything that appears, the church, as such, would have been inclined to do it, if it had not been for the influence of this one man.

And casteth them out of the church. Comp. Lk 6:22. It has been made a question whether the reference here is to the members of the church who were disposed to receive these brethren, or to the brethren themselves. Locke, Macknight, and some others, suppose that it refers to those in the church who were willing to receive them, and whom Diotrephes had excommunicated on that account. Heumann, Carpzoviius, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others, suppose that it refers to these strangers, and that the meaning is, that Diotrephes would not receive them into the society of Christians, and thus compelled them to go to another place. That this latter is the correct interpretation seems to me to be evident, for it was of the treatment which they had received that the apostle was speaking.

The Good Report concerning Demetrius

11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. There can be no doubt that in this exhortation the writer had Diotrephes particularly in his eye, and that he means to exhort Gaius not to imitate his example. He was a man of influence in the church, and though Gaius had shown that he was disposed to act in an independent manner, yet it was not improper to exhort him not to be influenced by the example of any one who did wrong. John wished to excite him to acts of liberal and generous hospitality.

He that doeth good is of God. He shows that he resembles God, for God continually does good. See the sentiment explained 1Jn 3:7.

He that doeth evil hath not seen God. 1Jn 1:8 3Jn 1:9. 3Jn 1:10

12 Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Demetrius hath good report of all men. Little is known of Demetrius. Locke supposes that he resided near the place where the author of this epistle lived, and was connected with the church there, and was probably the bearer of this epistle. It is impossible to determine with

certainty on this point, but there is one circumstance which seems to make it probable that he was a member of the same church with Gaius, and had united with him in showing Christian hospitality to these strangers. It is the use of the phrase "hath good report of all," implying that some testimony was borne to his character beyond what the writer personally knew. It is possible, indeed, that the writer would have used this term respecting him if he lived in the same place with himself, as expressing the fact that he bore a good character, but it is a phrase which would be more appropriately used if we suppose that he was a member of the same church with Gaius, and that John means to say that an honourable testimony was borne of his character by all those brethren, and by all others as far as he knew.

And of the truth itself. Not only by men, who might possibly be deceived in the estimate of character, but by fact. It was not merely a reputation founded on what appeared in his conduct, but in truth and reality. His deportment, his life, his deeds of benevolence, all concurred with the testimony which was borne by men to the excellency of his character. There is, perhaps, particular reference here to his kind and hospitable treatment of those brethren.

Yea, and we also bear record. John himself had personally known him. He had evidently visited the place where he resided on some former occasion, and could now add his own testimony, which no one would call in question, to his excellent character.

And ye know that our record is true. This is in the manner of John, who always spoke of himself as having such a character for truth that no one who knew him would call it in question. Every Christian should have such a character; every man might if he would. Compare Jn 19:35, 21:24.

Final Greetings

13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto
thee:
14 but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.
Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

The Epistle of Jude
[Jude]

Jude-1
Salutation

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,
To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in
Jesus Christ, *and* called:
2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

Judgment on False Teachers

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common
salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye
should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto
the saints.

To write unto you of the common salvation. The salvation common to Jews and Gentiles, and to all who bore the Christian name. The meaning is, that he did not think of writing on any subject pertaining to a particular class or party, but on some subject in which all who were Christians had a common interest. There are great matters of religion held in common by all Christians, and it is important for religious teachers to address their fellow Christians on those common topics. After all, they are more important than the things which we may hold as peculiar to our own party or sect, and should be more frequently dwelt upon.

That ye should earnestly contend. Comp. Gal 2:5. The word here rendered earnestly contend--επαγωνιζεσθαι--is one of those words used by the sacred writers which have allusion to the Grecian games. 1Cor 9:24, seq. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means to contend upon--i. e. for or about anything; and would be applicable to the earnest effort put forth in those games to obtain the prize. The reference here, of course, is only to contention by argument, by reasoning, by holding fast the principles of religion, and maintaining them against all opposers. It would not justify

"contention" by arms, by violence, or by persecution; for (a.) that is contrary to the spirit of true religion, and to the requirements of the gospel elsewhere revealed; (b.) it is not demanded by the proper meaning of the word, all that that fairly implies being the effort to maintain truth by argument and by a steady life; (c.) it is not the most effectual way to keep up truth in the world to attempt to do it by force and arms.

Once delivered unto the saints. The word here used (απαξ) may mean either once for all, in the sense that it was then complete, and would not be repeated; or formerly to wit, by the author of the system. Doddridge, Estius, and Beza, understand it in the former way; Macknight and others in the latter; Benson improperly supposes that it means fully or perfectly. Perhaps the more usual sense of the word would be, that it was done once in the sense that it is not to be done again, and therefore in the sense that it was then complete, and that nothing was to be added to it. There is indeed the idea that it was formerly done, but with this additional thought, that it was then complete. Compare, for this use of the Greek word rendered once, Heb 9:26-28, 10:2, 1Pet 3:18. The delivering of this faith to the saints here referred to is evidently that made by revelation, or the system of truth which God has made known in his word. Everything which He has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system is of value, to mankind. By a careful study of the Bible we are to ascertain what that system is, and then in all places, at all times, in all circumstances, and at every sacrifice, we are to maintain it.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

For there are certain men crept in unawares. The apostle now gives a reason for thus defending the truth, to wit, that there were artful and wicked men who had crept into the church, pretending to be religious teachers, but whose doctrines tended to sap the very foundations of truth. The apostle Peter, describing these same persons, says, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." 2Pet 2:1. Substantially the same idea is expressed here by saying that they "had crept in unawares;" that is, they had come in by stealth; they had not come by

a bold and open avowal of their real sentiments. They professed to teach the Christian religion, when in fact they denied some of its fundamental doctrines; they professed to be holy, when in fact they were living most scan- dalous lives. In all ages there have been men who were willing to do this for base purposes.

Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. He tells us they were men fore-ordained to condemnation; mark, not fore-ordained to seduction to sin, but to condemnation for sin; the word rendered fore-ordained, signifies before written, or before prophesied of, by Enoch and others, that they would by their great sins and impieties fall into that condemnation which God hath ordained as a just reward to their transgressions; God never ordaineth or decreeth any man's sin, but he decreeth and foretelleth their condemnation for sin. That is, to the condemnation (κριμα) which he proceeds to specify. The statements in the subsequent part of the epistle show that by the word used here he refers to the wrath that shall come upon the ungodly in the future world. See Jude 1:5-7,15. The meaning clearly is, that the punishment which befell the unbelieving Israelites, (Jude 1:5;) the rebel angels, (Jude 1:6;) the inhabitants of Sodom, (Jude 1:7;) and of which Enoch prophesied, (Jude 1:15,) awaited those persons. The phrase of old--παλαι--means long ago, implying that a considerable time had elapsed, though without determining how much. It is used in the New Testament only in the following places: Mt 11:21, "they would have repented long ago;" Mk 15:44, "whether he had been any while dead;" Lk 10:13, they had a great while ago repented; Heb 1:1, "spake in time past unto the fathers;" 2Pet 1:9, "purged from his old sins;" and in the passage before us. So far as this word is concerned, the reference here may have been to any former remote period, whether in the time of the prophets, of Enoch, or in eternity. It does not necessarily imply that it was eternal, though it "might apply to that, if the thing referred to was, from other sources, certainly known to have been from eternity. It may be doubted, however, whether, if the thing referred to had occurred from eternity, this would have been the word used to express it, (comp. Eph 1:4;) and it is certain that it cannot be proved from the use of this word (παλαι) that the "ordination to condemnation" was eternal. Whatever may be referred to by that "ordaining to condemnation," this word will not prove that it was an eternal ordination. All that is fairly implied in it will be met by the supposition that it occurred in any remote period, say in the time of

the prophets. The word here rendered "before ordained": προγεγραμμενοι, from προγραφω--occurs in the New Testament only here and in the following places: Rom 15:4, twice, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" Gal 3:1, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth;" and Eph 3:3, "As I wrote afore in few words." Gal 3:1. In these places there is evidently no idea implied of ordaining, or preordaining, in the sense in which those words are now commonly understood. To that word there is usually attached the idea of designating or appointing as by an arbitrary decree; but no such meaning enters into the word here used. The Greek word properly means, to write before; then to have written before; and then, with reference to time future, to post up beforehand in writing; to announce by posting up on a written tablet, as of some ordinance, law, or requirement; as descriptive of what will be, or what should be. Comp. Rob. Lexicon. Burder (in Rosenmuller's Morgenland, in loc.) remarks that "the names of those who were to be tried were usually posted up in a public place, as was also their sentence after their condemnation, and that this was denoted by the same Greek word which the apostle uses here. Eisner," says he, "remarks that the Greek authors use the word as applicable to those who, among the Romans, were said to be proscribed; that is, those whose names were posted up in a public place, whereby they were appointed to death, and in reference to whom a reward was offered to any one who would kill them." The idea here clearly is that of some such designation beforehand as would occur if the persons had been publicly posted as appointed to death. Their names, indeed, were not mentioned, but there was such a description of them, or of their character, that it was clear who were meant. In regard to the question what the apostle means by such a designation or appointment beforehand, it is clear that he does not refer in this place to any arbitrary or eternal decree, but to such a designation as was made by the facts to which he immediately refers- that is, to the Divine prediction that there would be such persons, (Jude 1:14,15,18;) and to the consideration that in the case of the unbelieving Israelites, the rebel angels, and the inhabitants of Sodom, there was as clear a proof that such persons would be punished as if their names had been posted up. All these instances bore on just such cases as these, and in these facts they might read their sentence as clearly as if their names had been written on the face of the sky. This interpretation seems to me to embrace all that the words fairly

imply, and all that the exigence of the case demands; and if this be correct, then two things follow:

(1.) that this passage should not be adduced to prove that God has from all eternity, by an arbitrary decree, ordained a certain portion of the race to destruction, what-ever may be true on that point; and,

(2.) that all abandoned sinners now may see, in the facts which have occurred in the treatment of the wicked in past times, just as certain evidence of their destruction, if they do not repent, as if their names were written in letters of light, and if it were announced to the universe that they would be damned.

Ungodly men. Men without piety or true religion, whatever may be their pretensions.

Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. Abusing the doctrines of grace so as to give indulgence to corrupt and carnal propensities. That is, probably, they gave this form to their teaching, as Antinomians have often done, that by the gospel they were released from the obligations of the law, and might give indulgence to their sinful passions in order that grace might abound. Antinomianism began early in the world, and has always had a wide prevalence. The liability of the doctrines of grace to be thus abused was foreseen by Paul, and against such abuse he earnestly sought to guard the Christians of his time, Rom 6:1, seq.

And denying the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. 2Pet 2:1. That is, the doctrines which they held were in fact a denial of the only true God, and of the Redeemer of men. It cannot be supposed that they openly and formally did this, for then they could have made no pretensions to the name Christian, or even to religion of any kind; but the meaning must be, that in fact the doctrines which they held amounted to a denial of the true God, and of the Saviour in his proper nature and work. Some have proposed to read this, "denying the only Lord God, even (και) our Lord Jesus Christ;" but the Greek does not

demand this construetion even if it would admit it, and it is most in accordance with Scripture usage to retain the common translation. It may be added, also, that the common translation expresses all that the exigence of the passage requires. Their doctrines and practice tended as really to the denial of the true God as they did to the denial of the Lord Jesus. Peter in his second epistle, (2Pet 2:1,) has adverted only to one aspect of their doetrine--that it denied the Saviour; Jude adds, if the common reading be correct, that it tended also to a denial of the true God. The word God (θεον) is wanting in many manuscripts, and in the Vulgate and Coptic versions, and Mill, Hammond, and Bengel suppose it should be omitted. It is also wanting in the editions of Tittman, Griesbach, and Rahn. The amount of authority seems to be against it. The word rendered Lord, in the phrase "Lord God," is δεσποτης, despotes, and means here Sovereign, or Ruler, but it is a word which may be appropriately applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same word which is used in the parallel passage in 2Pet 2:1. See it explained 2Pet 2:1. If the word "God" is to be omitted in this place, the passage would be wholly applicable, beyond question, to the Lord Jesus, and would mean, "denying our only Sovereign and Lord, Jesus Christ." It is perhaps impossible now to determine with certainty the true reading of the text; nor is it very material. Whichever of the readings is correct; whether the word (θεον) God is to be retained or not, the sentiment expressed would be true, that their doctrines amounted to a practical denial of the only true God; and equally so that they were a denial of the only Sovereign and Lord of the true Christian.

The occasion the apostle had to write to this purport. As evil manners give rise to good laws, so dangerous errors often give just occasion to the proper defence of important truths. Here observe,

1. Ungodly men are the great enemies of the faith of Christ and the peace of the church. Those who deny or corrupt the one, and disturb the other, are here expressly styled ungodly men. We might have truth with peace (a most desirable thing) were there none (ministers or private Christians) in our particular churches and congregations but truly godly men--a blessing scarcely to be looked or hoped for on this side heaven. Ungodly men raise scruples, merely to advance and promote their own selfish, ambitious, and covetous ends. This has been the plague of the church in all past ages, and I am afraid no age is, or will be, wholly free from such men and such practices as long as

time shall last. Observe, Nothing cuts us off from the church but that which cuts us off from Christ; namely, reigning infidelity and ungodliness. We must abhor the thought of branding particular parties or persons with this character, especially of doing it without the least proof, or, as it too often happens, the least shadow of it. Those are ungodly men who live without God in the world, who have no regard to God and conscience. Those are to be dreaded and consequently to be avoided, not only who are wicked by sins of commission, but also who are ungodly by sins of omission, who, for example, restrain prayer before God, who dare not reprove a rich man, when it is the duty of their place so to do, for fear of losing his favour and the advantage they promise themselves therefrom, who do the work of the Lord negligently, &c.

2. Those are the worst of ungodly men who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, who take encouragement to sin more boldly because the grace of God has abounded, and still abounds, so wonderfully, who are hardened in their impieties by the extent and fulness of gospel grace, the design of which is to reduce men from sin, and bring them unto God. Thus therefore to wax wanton under so great grace, and turn it into an occasion of working all uncleanness with greediness, and hardening ourselves in such a course by that very grace which is the last and most forcible means to reclaim us from it, is to render ourselves the vilest, the worst, and most hopeless of sinners.

3. Those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness do in effect deny the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, they deny both natural and revealed religion. They strike at the foundation of natural religion, for they deny the only Lord God; and they overturn all the frame of revealed religion, for they deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Now his great design in establishing revealed religion in the world was to bring us unto God. To deny revealed religion is virtually to overturn natural religion, for they stand or fall together, and they mutually yield light and force to each other. Would to God our modern deists, who live in the midst of gospel light, would seriously consider this, and cautiously, diligently, and impartially examine what it is that hinders their receiving the gospel, while they profess themselves fully persuaded of all the principles and duties of natural religion! Never to tallies answered more exactly to each other than these do, so that it seems absurd to receive the one and reject the other. One would think

it were the fairer way to receive both or reject both; though perhaps the more plausible method, especially in this age, is to act the part they do.

4. Those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness are ordained unto condemnation. They sin against the last, the greatest, and most perfect remedy; and so are without excuse. Those who thus sin must needs die of their wounds, of their disease, are of old ordained to this condemnation, whatever that expression means. But what if our translators had thought fit to have rendered the words palai progegrammenoi--of old fore-written of, as persons who would through their own sin and folly become the proper subjects of this condemnation, where had the harm been? Plain Christians had not been troubled with dark, doubtful, and perplexing thoughts about reprobation, which the strongest heads cannot enter far into, can indeed bear but little of, without much loss and damage. Is it not enough that early notice was given by inspired writers that such seducers and wicked men should arise in later times, and that every one, being fore-warned of, should be fore-armed against them? 5. We ought to contend earnestly for the faith, in opposition to those who would corrupt or deprave it, such as have crept in unawares: a wretched character, to be sure, but often very ill applied by weak and ignorant people, and even by those who themselves creep in unawares, who think their ipse dixit should stand for a law to all their followers and admirers. Surely faithful humble ministers are helpers of their people's joy, peace, and comfort; not lords of their faith! Whoever may attempt to corrupt the faith, we ought to contend earnestly against them. The more busy and crafty the instruments and agents of Satan are, to rob us of the truth, the more solicitous should we be to hold it fast, always provided we be very sure that we fasten no wrong or injurious characters on persons, parties, or sentiments.

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

The next example set before them, is that of the apostate angels, who for their rebellion against God were thrown down from heaven, and

are reserved as so many prisoners in chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day, when their condition will be more miserable than now it is. Now, if God did not spare apostatizing angels, surely he will not spare apostatizing seducers.

Note here, 1. The sin of the angels; they left their first state, namely, their state of holiness.

2. Their punishment; they left their own habitation, they departed from that place of happiness and glory which before they enjoyed; when they changed their nature, they changed their place: the presence of an holy God, is no place for unholy persons.
Note, 3. That the angels are kept in chains, and those chains are everlasting; the chain of God's eternal decree holds them; the chain of their own guilt holds them; the chain of utter despair eternally holds them.
Note, 4. That the day of judgment will be a great day, and at that day the punishment of fallen angels will be far greater than now it is; when heaven's joys are full, then hell's torments will be full, and not before.

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Another example of God's severity against sin and sinners, is Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboim, who having themselves up to the lusts of uncleanness, were in an extraordinary manner destroyed by fire from heaven, which was a forerunner of that eternal fire of hell, which they are to suffer to all eternity, and so may and ought to be a terrifying example and timely warning to all persons, that they fall not into the like sins.
Learn, 1. That the sin of uncleanness doth exceedingly displease and provoke God to punish above other sins, because it defiles both soul and body; it makes a sty of a temple: and because it is a sin usually accompanied with final impenitency, "none that go into her return:" that is, very few. Whoredom is a deep ditch, the abhorred of God do fall into it.
Learn, 2. That the sin of uncleanness is remarkably followed with vengeanace, even with eternal vengeance: God returns flames for flames, and revenges the fire of lust with the fire of hell.

8 Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Verse 8. Likewise also. In the same way do these persons defile the flesh, or resemble the inhabitants of Sodom; that is, they practise the same kind of vices. What the apostle says is, that their character resembled that of the inhabitants of Sodom; the example which he adduces of the punishment which was brought on those sinners, leaves it to be clearly inferred that the persons of whom he was speaking would be punished in a similar manner. These filthy dreamers. The word filthy has been supplied by our translators, but there is no good reason why it should have been introduced. The Greek word (ενυπνιαζω) means to dream; and is applied to these persons as holding doctrines and opinions which sustained the same relation to truth which dreams do to good sense. Their doctrines were the fruits of mere imagination, foolish vagaries and fancies. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Acts 2:17, where it is applied to visions in dreams.

Here observe, 1. That the doctrines which seducers bring, are not the truths of Christ, but their own dreams. Dreams they are in point of opinion, and dreams they will be found in point of expectation; they promise much, but perform nothing.

2. That dreams of error, or heretical principles, do dispose towards filthy and unclean practices. Filthy dreamers defile the flesh. Avoid error in judgment, if you would escape filthiness in conversation.

3. That lust loves not restraint, libertines despise dominion, sensuality makes men unruly; such are sons of Belail, they cast off the yoke.

4. That such as despise government speak evil of governors: dignities lie open to the lash of the tongue; neither power nor innocency can protect from calumny and imputations, from slander and false accusation: These filthy dreamers despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Yet Michael the archangel, etc. This verse has given more perplexity to expositors than any other part of the epistle; and in fact the difficulties

in regard to it have been so great that some have been led to regard the epistle as spurious. The difficulty has arisen from these two circumstances:

(1.) Ignorance of the origin of what is said here of Michael the archangel, nothing of this kind being found in the Old Testament; and

(2.) the improbability of the story itself, which looks like a mere Jewish fable. Peter in his second epistle, chap. 2Pet 2:11, made a general reference to angels as not bringing railing accusations against others before the Lord; but Jude refers to a particular case--the case of Michael when contending about the body of Moses. The methods proposed of reconciling the passage with the proper ideas of inspiration have been various, though perhaps no one of them relieves it of all difficulty. It would be inconsistent with the design of these Notes to go into an extended examination of this passage. Those who wish to see a full investigation of it may consult Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament, vol, iv. pp. 378--393; Lardner, vol. vi. p. 312, seq.; Hug, Intro. & 183; Benson, in loc.; Rosenmuller's Morgenland, iii. pp. 196, 197; and Wetstein, in loc. The principal methods of relieving the difficulty have been the following: I. Some have supposed that the reference is to the passage in Zechariah, Zech 3:1, seq. "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan," etc. The opinion that Jude refers to this passage was held by Lardner. But the objections to this are very obvious:

(1.) There is no similarity between the two, except the expression, "the Lord rebuke thee."

(2.) The name Michael does not occur at all in the passage in Zechariah.

(3.) There is no mention made of the "body of Moses" there, and no allusion to it whatever.

(4.) There is no intimation that there was any such contention about his body. There is a mere mention that Satan resisted the angel of the Lord, as seen in the vision, but no intimation that the controversy had any reference to Moses in any way.

(5.) The reason of the resistance which Satan offered to the angel in the vision as seen by Zechariah is stated. It was in regard to the consecration of Joshua to the office of high priest implying a return of prosperity to Jerusalem, and the restoration of the worship of God there in its purity, see Zech 3:2. To this Satan was of course opposed, and the vision represents him as resisting the angel in his purpose thus to set him apart to that office. These reasons seem to me to make it clear that Jude did not refer to the passage in Zechariah, nor is there any other place in the Old Testament to which it can be supposed he had reference.

II. Hug supposes that the reference here, as well as that in Jude 1:14, to the prophecy of Enoch, is derived from some apocryphal books existing in the time of Jude; and that though those books contained mere fables, the apostle appealed to them, not as conceding what was said to be true, but in order to refute and rebuke those against whom he wrote, out of books which they admitted to be of authority. Intro. & 183. Arguments and confutations, he says, drawn from the sacred Scriptures, would have been of no avail in reasoning with them, for these they evaded, (2Pet 3:16,) and there were no surer means of influencing them than those writings which they themselves valued as the sources of their peculiar views. According to this, the apostle did not mean to vouch for the truth of the story, but merely to make use of it in argument. The objection to this is, that the apostle does in fact seem to refer to the contest between Michael and the devil as true. He speaks of it in the same way in which he would have done if he had spoken of the death of Moses, or of his smiting the rock, or of his leading the children of Israel across the Red Sea, or of any other fact in history. If he regarded it as a mere fable, though it would have been honest and consistent with all proper views of inspiration for him to have said to those against whom he argued, that on their own principles such and such things were true, yet it would not be honest to speak of it as a fact which he admitted to be true. Besides, it should be remembered that he is not arguing with them, in which case it might be admissible to reason in this way, but was making statements to others about them, and showing that they manifested a spirit entirely different from that which the angels evinced even when contending in a just cause against the prince of all evil.

III. It has been supposed that the apostle quotes an apocryphal book existing in his time, containing this account, and that he means to admit that the account is true. Origen mentions such a book, called "the Assumption of Moses," (αναληψιςτουμωσεως,) as extant in his time, containing this very account of the contest between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses. That was a Jewish Greek book, and Origen supposed that this was the source of the account here. That book is now lost. There is still extant a book in Hebrew, called --"the Death of Moses," which some have supposed to be the book referred to by Origen. That books contains many fabulous stories about the death of Moses, and is evidently the work of some Jew drawing wholly upon his imagination. An account of it may be seen in Michaelis, Intro. iv. p. 381, seq. There is no reason to suppose that this is the same book referred to by Origen under the name of "the Assumption of Moses;" and there is a moral certainty that an inspired writer could not have quoted it as of authority. Further, there can be no reasonable doubt that such a book as Origen refers to, under the title of" the Assumption of Moses," was extant in his time, but that does not prove by any means that it was extant in the time of Jude, or that he quoted it. There is, indeed, no positive proof that it was not extant in the time of Jude, but there is none that it was, and all the facts in the case will be met by the supposition that it was written afterwards, and that the tradition on the subject here referred to by Jude was incorporated into it.

IV. The remaining supposition is, that Jude here refers to a prevalent tradition among the Jews, and that he has adopted it as containing an important truth, and one which bore on the subject under discussion. In support of this, it may be observed,

(a.) that it is well known that there were many traditions of this nature among the Jews. Mt 15:2.

(b.) That though many of these traditions were puerile and false, yet there is no reason to doubt that some of them might have been founded in truth.

(c.) That an inspired writer might select those which were true, for the illustration of his subject, with as much propriety as he might select what was written; since if what was thus handed down by tradition was

true, it was as proper to use it as to use a fact made known in any other way.

(d.) That in fact such traditions were adopted by the inspired writers when they would serve to illustrate a subject which they were discussing. Thus Paul refers to the tradition about Jannes and Jambres as true history. 2Ti 3:8.

(e.) If, therefore, what is here said was true, there was no impropriety in its being referred to by Jude as an illustration of his subject. The only material question then is, whether it is true. And who can prove that it is not? What evidence is there that it is not? How is it possible to demonstrate that it is not? There are many allusions in the Bible to angels; there is express mention of such an angel as Michael, (Dan 12:1;) there is frequent mention of the devil; and there are numerous affirmations that both bad and good angels are employed in important transactions on the earth. Who can prove that such spirits never meet, never come in conflict, never encounter each other in executing their purposes? Good men meet bad men, and why is it any more absurd to suppose that good angels may encounter bad ones? It should be remembered, further, that there is no need of supposing that the subject of the dispute was about burying the body of Moses; or that Michael sought to bury it, and the devil endeavoured to prevent it--the one in order that it might not be worshipped by the Israelites, and the other that it might be. This indeed became incorporated into the tradition in the apocryphal books which were afterwards written; but Jude says not one word of this, and is in no way responsible for it. All that he says is, that there was a contention or dispute (διακρινομενοςδιελεγετο) respecting his body. But when it was, or what was the occasion, or how it was conducted, he does not state, and we have no right to ascribe to him sentiments which he has not expressed. If ever such a controversy of any kind existed respecting that body, it is all that Jude affirms, and is all for which he should be held responsible. The sum of the matter, then, it seems to me is, that Jude has, as Paul did on another occasion, adopted a tradition which was prevalent in his time; that there is nothing necessarily absurd or impossible in the fact affirmed by the tradition, and that no one can possibly demonstrate that it is not true.

The archangel. The word archangel occurs only in one other place in the Scriptures. 1Thes 4:16. It means ruling or chief angel--the chief

among the hosts of heaven. It is nowhere else applied to Michael, though his name is several times mentioned, Dan 10:13,21, 12:1, Rev 12:7.

When contending. This word (διακρινομενος) refers here to a contention or strife with words--a disputation. Nothing farther is necessarily implied, for it is so used in this sense in the New Testament, Acts 11:2,12 (Greek.)

He disputed. διελεγετο. This word also would denote merely a controversy or contention of words, Mk 9:34, Acts 17:2,17, 18:4,19; Acts 24:12.

About the body of Moses. The nature of this controversy is wholly unknown, and conjecture is useless. It is not said, however, that there was a strife which should get the body, or a contention about burying it, or any physical contention about it whatever. That there may have been, no one indeed can disprove; but all that the apostle says would be met by a supposition that there was any debate of any kind respecting that body, in which Michael, though provoked by the opposition of the worst being in the universe, still restrained himself from any outbreaking of passion, and used only the language of mild but firm rebuke. Durst not. ουκετολμησε "Did not dare." It is not said that he did not dare to do it because he feared Satan; but all that the word implies is met by supposing that he did not dare to do it because he feared the Lord, or because in any circumstances it would be wrong. A railing accusation. The Greek word is blasphemy. The meaning is, he did not indulge in the language of mere reproach; and it is implied here that such language would be wrong anywhere. If it would be right to bring a railing accusation against any one, it would be against the devil.

But said, The Lord rebuke thee. The word here used (επιτιμαω) means, properly, to put honour upon; and then to adjudge or confirm. Then it came to be used in the sense of commanding or restraining--as, e.g., the winds and waves, Mt 8:26, Mk 4:39. Then it is used in the sense of admonishing strongly; of enjoining upon one, with the idea of censure, Mt 18:18, Mk 1:25 Lk 23:35,41. This is the idea here--the expression of a wish that the Lord would take the matter of the dispute to himself, and that he would properly restrain and control Satan, with the implied idea that his conduct was wrong. The language is the same as that

recorded in Zech 3:2, as used by "the angel" respecting Satan. But, as before observed, there is no reason to suppose that the apostle referred to that. The fact, however, that the angel is said to have used the language on that occasion may be allowed to give confirmation to what is said here, since it shows that it is the language which angelic beings naturally employ.

Our apostle in the preceding verse having charged seducers with contemptuous speaking against governors and government, in this verse he aggravates the impudence and impiety of it, by the carriage of Michael the archangel towards the devil.
The argument is taken from the greater to the less, and lies thus: if Michael, an archangel, so excellent in nature, so high in office, contending with Satan, an impure spirit, yet used great modesty, without the least indecency of expression towards him; who and what are those that despise dominions, and dare speak evil of dignities?"
Hence observe, That it is our duty to learn the angelic lesson; namely, not to give railing or reviling language to the worst adversary in the best cause, because it proceeds from pride or passion, and because so contrary to the temper and design of Christianity; much more is it our duty to watch against the sins of the tongue, with respect to our governors and superiors, remembering it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

But these speak evil of those things which they know not. These false and corrupt teachers employ reproachful language of those things which lie wholly beyond the reach of their vision. 2Pet 2:12. But what they know naturally. As mere men; as animals; that is, in things pertaining to their physical nature, or in which they are on a level with the brute creation. The reference is to the natural instincts, the impulses of appetite, and passion, and sensual pleasure. The idea of the apostle seems to be, that their knowledge was confined to those things. They did not rise above them to the intelligent contemplation of those higher things, against which they used only the language of reproach. There are multitudes of such men in the world. Towards high and holy objects they use only the language of reproach. They do not understand them, but they can rail at them. Their knowledge is

confined to the subjects of sensual indulgence, and all their intelligence in that respect is employed only to corrupt and destroy themselves. As brute beasts. Animals without intelligence. 2Pet 2:12. In those things they corrupt themselves. They live only for sensual indulgence, and sink deeper and deeper in sensual gratifications.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

For they have gone in the way of Cain. Gen 4:5-12. That is, they have evinced disobedience and rebellion as he did; they have shown that they are proud, corrupt, and wicked. The apostle does not specify the points in which they had imitated the example of Cain, but it was probably in such things as these--pride, haughtiness, the hatred of religion, restlessness under the restraints of virtue, envy that others were more favoured, and a spirit of hatred of the brethren (comp. 1Jn 3:15) which would lead to murder.

And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward. The word rendered ran greedily--εξεχυθησαν, from εκχεω--means to pour out; and then, when spoken of persons, that they are poured out, or that they rush tumultuously on an object, that is, that they give themselves up to anything. The idea here is, that all restraint was relaxed, and that they rushed on tumultuously to any course of life that promised gain. 2Pet 2:15.

In the gainsaying of Core. Of Korah, Nu 16:1-30. The word gainsaying here means properly contradiction, or speaking against; then controversy, question, strife; then contumely, reproach, or rebellion. The idea here seems to be, that they were guilty of insubordination; of possessing a restless and dissatisfied spirit; of a desire to rule, etc

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

In Jude 1:11 the apostle represents them as followers of Cain, and in Jude 1:12,13, as atheistical and profane people, who thought little, and perhaps believed not much, of God or a future world--as greedy and covetous, who, so they could but gain present worldly advantages, cared not what came next--rebels against God and man, who, like

Core, ran into attempts in which they must assuredly perish, as he did. Of such the apostle further says,

(1.) These are spots in your feasts of charity--the agapai or love-feasts, so much spoken of by the ancients. They happened, by whatever means or mischance, to be admitted among them, but were spots in them, defiled and defiling. Observe, It is a great reproach, though unjust and accidental, to religion, when those who profess it, and join in the most solemn institution of it, are in heart and life unsuitable and even contrary to it: These are spots. Yet how common in all Christian societies here on earth, the very best not excepted, are such blemishes! The more is the pity. The Lord remedy it in his due time and way, not in men's blind and rigorous way of plucking up the wheat with the tares. But in the heaven we are waiting, hoping, and preparing for, there is none of this mad work, there are none of these disorderly doings.

(2.) When they feast with you, they feed themselves without fear. Arrant gluttons, no doubt, there were; such as minded only the gratifying of their appetites with the daintiness and abundance of their fare; they had no regard to Solomon's caution, Pr 23:2. Note, In common eating and drinking a holy fear is necessary, much more in feasting, though we may sometimes be more easily and insensibly overcome at a common meal than at a feast; for, in the case supposed, we are less upon our guard, and sometimes, at least to some persons, the plenty of a feast is its own antidote, as to others it may prove a dangerous snare.

(3.) Clouds they are without water, which promise rain in time of drought, but perform nothing of what they promise. Such is the case of formal professors, who at first setting out promise much, like early-blossoming trees in a forward spring, but in conclusion bring forth little or no fruit.--Carried about of winds, light and empty, easily driven about this way or that, as the wind happens to set; such are empty, ungrounded professors, and easy prey to every seducer. It is amazing to hear many talk so confidently of so many things of which they know little or nothing, and yet have not the wisdom and humility to discern and be sensible how little they know. How happy would our world be if men either knew more or practically knew how little they know.

(4.) Trees whose fruit withereth, &c. Trees they are, for they are planted in the Lord's vineyard, yet fruitless ones. Observe, Those whose fruit withereth may be justly said to be without fruit. As good never a whit as never the better. It is a sad thing when men seem to begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh, which is almost as common a case as it is an awful one. The text speaks of such as were twice dead. One would think to be once dead were enough; we none of us, till grace renew us to a higher degree than ordinary, love to think of dying once, though this is appointed for us all. What then is the meaning of this being twice dead? They had been once dead in their natural, fallen, lapsed state; but they seemed to recover, and, as a man in a swoon, to be brought to life again, when they took upon them the profession of the Christian religion. But now they are dead again by the evident proofs they have given of their hypocrisy: whatever they seemed, they had nothing truly vital in them.--Plucked up by the roots, as we commonly serve dead trees, from which we expect no more fruit. They are dead, dead, dead; why cumber they the ground? Away with them to the fire.

(5.) Raging waves of the sea, boisterous, noisy, and clamorous; full of talk and turbulency, but with little (if any) sense or meaning: Foaming out their own shame, creating much uneasiness to men of better sense and calmer tempers, which yet will in the end turn to their own greater shame and just reproach. The psalmist's prayer ought always to be that of every honest and good man, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me (Ps 25:21), and, if it will not, let me be unpreserved." If honesty signify little now, knavery will signify much less, and that in a very little while. Raging waves are a terror to sailing passengers; but, when they have got to port, the waves are forgotten as if no longer in being: their noise and terror are for ever ended.

(6.) Wandering stars, planets that are erratic in their motions, keep not that steady regular course which the fixed ones do, but shift their stations, that one has sometimes much ado to know where to find them. This allusion carries in it a very lively emblem of false teachers, who are sometimes here and sometimes there, so that one knows not where nor how to fix them. In the main things, at least, one would think something should be fixed and steady; and this might be without infallibility, or any pretensions to it in us poor mortals. In religion and

politics, the great subjects of present debate, surely there are certain stamina in which wise and good, honest and disinterested, men might agree, without throwing the populace into the utmost anguish and distress of mind, or blowing up their passions into rage and fury, without letting them know what they say or whereof they affirm.

These are spots. 2Pet 2:13. The word used by Peter, however, is not exactly the same as that used here. Peter uses the word σπιλοι--spiloi; Jude, σπιλαδες--spilades. The word used by Jude means, properly, a rock by or in the sea; a cliff, etc. It may either be a rock by the sea, against which vessels may be wrecked, or a hidden rock in the sea, on which they may be stranded at an unexpected moment. See Hesychius and Pollux, as quoted by Wetstein, in loc. The idea here seems to be, not that they were spots and blemishes in their sacred feasts, but that they were like hidden rocks to the mariner. As those rocks were the cause of shipwreck, so these false teachers caused others to make shipwreck of their faith. They were as dangerous in the church as hidden rocks are in the ocean.

In your feasts of charity. Your feasts of love. The reference is probably to the Lord's Supper, called a feast or festival of love, because

(1.) it revealed the love of Christ to the world;

(2.) because it was the means of strengthening the mutual love of the disciples: a festival which love originated, and where love reigned. It has been supposed by many, that the reference here is to festivals which were subsequently called Agapae, and which are now known as love-feasts--meaning a festival immediately preceding the celebration of the Lord's Supper. But there are strong objections to the supposition that there is reference here to such a festival.

(1.) There is no evidence, unless it be found in this passage, that such celebrations had the sanction of the apostles. They are nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, or alluded to, unless it is in 1Cor 11:17-34, an instance which is mentioned only to reprove it, and to show that such appendages to the Lord's Supper were wholly unauthorized by the original institution, and were liable to gross abuse.

(2.) The supposition that they existed, and that they are referred to here, is not necessary in order to a proper explanation of this passage. All that it fairly means will be met by the supposition that the reference is to the Lord's Supper. That was in every sense a festival of love or charity. The words will appropriately apply to that, and there is no necessity of supposing anything else in order to meet their full signification.

(3.) There can be no doubt that such a custom early existed in the Christian church, and extensively prevailed; but it can readily be accounted for without supposing that it had the sanction of the apostles, or that it existed in their time.

(a.) Festivals prevailed among the Jews, and it would not be unnatural to introduce them into the Christian church.

(b.) The custom prevailed among the heathen of having a "feast upon a sacrifice," or in connexion with a sacrifice; and as the Lord's Supper commemorated the great sacrifice for sin, it was not unnatural, in imitation of the heathen, to append a feast or festival to that ordinance, either before or after its celebration.

(c.) This very passage in Jude, with perhaps some others in the New Testament, (comp. 1Cor 11:26, Acts 2:46, 6:2,) might be so construed as to seem to lend countenance to the custom. For these reasons it seems clear to me that the passage before us does not refer to love-feasts; and, therefore, that they are not authorized in the New Testament. See, however, Coleman's Antiquities of the Christian church, chap. xvi., & 13.

When they feast with you. Showing that they were professors of religion. 2Pet 2:13.

Feeding themselves without fear. That is, without any proper reverence or respect for the ordinance; attending on the Lord's Supper as if it were an ordinary feast, and making it an occasion of riot and gluttony. See 1Cor 11:20-22. Clouds they are, etc. 2Pet 2:17. Comp. Eph 4:14.

Trees whose fruit withereth. The idea here is substantially the same as that expressed by Peter, when he says that they were "wells without water;" and by him and Jude, when they say that they are like clouds driven about by the winds, that shed down no refreshing rain upon the earth. Such wells and clouds only disappoint expectations. So a tree that should promise fruit, but whose fruit should always wither, would be useless. The word rendered withereth (φθινοπωρινα) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, autumnal; and the expression here denotes trees of autumn; that is, trees stripped of leaves and verdure; trees on which there is no fruit.--Robinson's Lex. The sense, in the use of this word, therefore, is not exactly that which is expressed in our translation, that the fruit has withered, but rather that they are like the trees of autumn, which are stripped and bare. So the Vulgate, arbores autumnales. The idea of their being without fruit is expressed in the next word. The image which seems to have been before the mind of Jude in this expression, is that of the naked trees of autumn as contrasted with the bloom of spring and the dense foliage of summer.

Without fruit. That is, they produce no fruit. Either they are wholly barren, like the barren fig-tree, or the fruit which was set never ripens, but falls off. They are, therefore, useless as religious instructors--as much so as a tree is which produces no fruit.

Twice dead. That is, either meaning that they are seen to be dead in two successive seasons, showing that there is no hope that they will revive and be valuable; or, using the word twice to denote emphasis, meaning that they are absolutely or altogether dead. Perhaps the idea is, that successive summers and winters have passed over them, and that no signs of life appear.

Plucked up by the roots. The wind blows them down, or they are removed by the husbandman as only cumbering the ground. They are not cut down--leaving a stump that might sprout again--but they are extirpated root and branch; that is, they are wholly worthless. There is a regular ascent in this climax, first, the apostle sees a tree apparently of autumn, stripped and leafless; then he sees it to be a tree that bears no fruit; then he sees it to be a tree over which successive winters and summers pass and no signs of life appear; then as wholly extirpated. So he says it is with these men. They produce no fruits of holiness;

months and years show that there is no vitality in them; they are fit only to be extirpated and cast away. Alas! how many professors of religion are there, and how many religious teachers, who answer to this description!

13 raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars,
to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Raging waves of the sea. Comp. 2Pet 2:18. They are like the wild and restless waves of the ocean. The image here seems to be, that they were noisy and bold in their professions, and were as wild and ungovernable in their passions as the billows of the sea. Foaming out their own shame. The waves are lashed into foam, and break and dash on the shore. They seem to produce nothing but foam, and to proclaim their own shame, that after all their wild roaring and agitation they should effect no more. So with these noisy and vaunting teachers. What they impart is as unsubstantial and valueless as the foam of the ocean waves, and the result is in fact a proclamation of their own shame, Men with so loud professions should produce much more. Wandering stars. The word rendered wandering (πλανηται) is that from which we have derived the word planet. It properly means one who wanders about; a wanderer; and was given by the ancients to planets because they seemed to wander about the heavens, now forward and now backward among the other stars, without any fixed law.--Pliny, Nat. Hist. ii. 6. Cicero, however, who saw that they were governed by certain established laws, says that the name seemed to be given to them without reason.--De Nat. Deo. ii. 20. So far as the words used are concerned, the reference may be either to the planets, properly so called, or to comets, or to ignes fatui, or meteors. The proper idea is that of stars that have no regular motions, or that do not move in fixed and regular orbits. The laws of the planetary motions were not then understood, and their movements seemed to be irregular and capricious; and hence, if the reference is to them, they might be regarded as not an unapt illustration of these teachers. The sense seems to be, that the aid which we derive from the stars, as in navigation, is in the fact that they are regular in their places and movements, and thus the mariner can determine his position. If they had no regular places and movements, they would be useless to the seaman. So with false religious teachers. No dependence can be placed on them. It is not uncommon to compare a religious teacher to a star, Rev 1:16, 2:1. Comp. Rev 22:16. To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for

ever. Not to the stars, but to the teachers. The language here is the same as in 2Pet 2:17. 2Pet 2:17

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

And to convince all. The word convince we now use commonly somewhat limited sense, as meaning to satisfy a man's own mind eithe the truth of some proposition, or of the fact that he has done wrong, as b in this latter sense synonymous with the word convict. This convictio commonly produced by argument or truth, and is not necessarily follo by any sentence of disapprobation, or by any judicial condemnation. this is clearly not the sense in which the word is used here. The purpos the coming of the Lord will not be to convince men in that sense, thou is undoubtedly true that the wicked will see that their lives have b wrong; but it will be to pronounce a sentence on them as the result o evidence of their guilt. The Greek word which is here used occurs now else in the New Testament.

Of all their ungodly deeds, etc. Of their wicked actions and words. This is the common doctrine of the Bible, that all the wicked actions and words of men will be called into judgment. In regard to this passage, thus quoted from an ancient prophecy, we may remark,

(1.) that the style bears the marks of its being a quotation, or of its being preserved by Jude in the language in which it had been handed down by tradition. It is not the style of Jude. It is not so terse, pointed, energetic.

(2.) It has every probable mark of its having been actually delivered by Enoch. The age in which he lived was corrupt. The world was ripening for the deluge. He was himself a good man, and, as would seem perhaps, almost the only good man of his generation. Nothing would be more natural than that he should be reproached by hard words and speeches, and nothing more natural than that he should have pointed the men of his own age to the future judgment.

(3.) The doctrine of the final judgment, if this was uttered by Enoch, was an early doctrine in the world. It was held even in the first generations of the race. It was one of those great truths early communicated to man to restrain him from sin, and to lead him to

prepare for the great events which are to occur on the earth. The same doctrine has been transmitted from age to age, and is now one of the most important and the most affecting that refers to the final destiny of men.

That the doctrine of the day of judgment is very ancient, foretold by the prophets from the beginning. Man was made an accountable creature, capable of rendering an account of his actions and the sentence of death, denounced in paradise against him for his sin, did necessarily imply it; the drowning of the world, and burning of Sodom, were both types and forerunners of it: though there are Atheists upon earth that do not believe a future judgment to come, there are none in hell: feeling and experience must teach some men that which the Spirit, scripture, reason, and conscience, could never learn them. Enoch prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh.

The work of Christ at the day of judgment, namely, to convince and judge. Conscience shall then have an exact view of all that sinners did and said: sin will find them out, and testify against them at Christ's tribunal; and whom conscience has convinced, Christ will condemn, and whom he has condemned, he will execute.

That not only the deeds of ungodly men, but their words, especially their hard speeches against God and his children, shall be brought into judgment. A wicked tongue is a rugged tongue; it speaks words sharper than swords: pray we for wisdom to make as good an use of the reproaching tongue of an enemy, as of the reproving tongue of a friend; that the sword of the tongue may let out the corruption that is in our hearts, and do us good against the will, and contrary to the intention, of our enemy.

15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words,* having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

These are murmurers. The word here used does not elsewhere occur, though the word murmur is frequent, Mt 20:11, Lk 5:30; Jn

6:41,43,61, 8:32, 1Cor 10:10. Comp. Jn 7:12, Acts 6:1, Php 2:14; 1Pet 4:9. The sense is that of repining or complaining under the allotments of Providence, or finding fault with God's plans, and purposes, and doings. Complainers. Literally, finding fault with one's own lot (μεμψιμοιροι.) The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament; the thing often occurs in this world. Nothing is more common than for men to complain of their lot; to think that it is hard; to com- pare theirs with that of others, and to blame God for not having made their circumstances different. The poor complain that they are not rich like others; the sick that they are not well; the enslaved that they are not free; the bereaved that they are deprived of friends; the ugly that they are not beautiful; those in humble life that their lot was not east among the great and the gay. The virtue that is opposed to this is contentment--a virtue of inestimable value. Php 4:11. Walking after their own lusts. Giving unlimited indulgence to their appetites and passions. 2Pet 3:3. And their mouth speaketh great swelling words. 2Pet 2:18. Having men's persons in admiration. Showing great respect to certain persons, particularly the rich and the great. The idea is, that they were not just in the esteem which they had for others, or that they did not appreciate them according to their real worth, but paid special attention to one class in order to promote their selfish ends. Because of advantage. Because they hoped to derive some benefit to themselves.

It has been the constant course of heretics to speak high, and talk big, like mountebanks, hoping thereby to set off and put off the better their counterfeited and false wares; he is no wise man, whom great swelling words will seduce from the ways of wisdom. Not the words of the speaker, but the weight of what is spoken, is to be minded; yet though they talked these swelling words to their inferiors, at the same time they could flatteringly admire the passions and actions of others, from whom they expected any benefit or advantage: having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

Now from the whole of this large character, which St. Jude here gives of these heretical seducers and false teachers, we learn that miserable and most deplorable is the condition of the misled followers of seducing teachers; the seducer follows his lust, and the follower is led by the seducer. Here the blind leads the blind; God pity them both; When teachers offer themselves to us, we should consider who leads them who are so officious to lead us, and follow them only as they

follow Christ; no wise man will set his watch by the clock, but by the sun.

Warnings and Exhortations

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the
apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;
18 how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who
should walk after their own ungodly lusts.
19 These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the
Spirit.
20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying
in the Holy Ghost,

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith. Comp. Jude 1:3. On the word building, 1Cor 3:9, seq. Eph 2:20. It is said here that they were to "build up themselves;" that is, they were to act as moral and responsible agents in this, or were to put forth their own proper exertions to do it. Dependent as we are, and as all persons with correct views will feel themselves to be, yet it is proper to endeavour to do the work of religion as if we had ample power of ourselves. Php 2:12. The phrase "most holy faith" here refers to the system of religion which was founded on faith; and the meaning is, that they should seek to establish themselves most firmly in the belief of the doctrines, and in the practice of the duties of that system of religion.

Our aostle having, in the former part of this chapter, warned the Christians of the danger of seducers, he closes his epistle with directions and advice how they may be preserved from seduction, and what means they should use for their perseverance and establishment in the doctrine of Christ.
First, he directs them to build up themselves in their most holy faith; that is, in the doctrine of faith contained in the gospel.

Where note, 1. The faith of Christians is a most holy faith; holy in its principles, holy in its pattern, holy in its encouragements and rewards.

2. That it is the duty, and ought to be the endeavour, of every Christian to build up himself, and others also, in the faith of the gospel; the best way for Christians not to be losers of what they have, is to be labourers for what they want; progress in Christianity is the best means to preserve us from apostasy.

Secondly, He exhorts to prayer, Praying in the Holy Ghost; that is, with holy reverence, with humble confidence, with fervent importunity, with those holy affections and desires which the Spirit of God exciteth in us; the concurrence of the Holy Spirit is necessary both to assistance and acceptance in prayer; it enables us to pray in faith and love, with sincerity and importunity; without the Spirit there is no acceptable praying, and without prayer vain is the pretence to the Spirit. Breathing is the first evidence of life: St. Paul was no sooner converted, but behold he prayed.

Thirdly, He directs that they keep themselves in the love of God; no such way to keep ourselves from error, as to preserve ourselves in that love which God bears to us, and in that love we bear to him; take we care that there is no intermission in the acts of love, and no remission of the degrees of love, but that we be rooted and grounded in love, and then we are proof against seducers and false teachers.

Fourthly, he directs them to look up to heaven, if they would be steady and steadfast in the faith here on earth, Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Here observe, That heaven, or eternal life, is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mercy it is called, because bestowed on the miserable, that could never merit or deserve it, and because it is the effect and fruit of free and special mercy, and because bestowed on the vessels of mercy, and because it is the perfection and consummation of all mercy; and it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he purchased it, he prepared it, he exhibits and gives it.

Observe farther, That Christians are to look for eternal life, as the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to believe it, to meditate upon it, to have ardent desires after it, and patiently to wait for it: Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. Still adverting to their own agency. On the duty here enjoined, Jn 15:9, The phrase "the love of God" may mean either God's love to us, or our love to him. The latter appears, however, to be the sense here, because it is not a subject which could be enjoined, that we should keep up God's love to us. That is a point over which we can have no control, except so far as it may be the result of our obedience; but we may be commanded to love him, and to keep ourselves in that love. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Particularly when he shall come to receive his people to himself. Tit 2:13; 2Pet 3:12; 2Ti 4:8.

He directs them how to behave towards erring brethren: And of some have compassion, &c., Jude 1:22,23. Observe,

(1.) We ought to do all we can to rescue others out of the snares of the devil, that they may be saved from (or recovered, when entangled therein, out of) dangerous errors, or pernicious practices. We are not only (under God) our own keepers, but every man ought to be, as much as in him lies, his brother's keeper; none but a wicked Cain will contradict this, Ge 4:9. We must watch over one another, must faithfully, yet prudently, reprove each other, and set a good example to all about us.

(2.) This must be done with compassion, making a difference. How is that? We must distinguish between the weak and the wilful.

[1.] Of some we must have compassion, treat them with all tenderness, restore them in the spirit of meekness, not be needlessly harsh and severe in our censures of them and their actions, nor proud and haughty in our conduct towards them; not implacable, nor averse to reconciliation with them, or admitting them to the friendship they formerly had with us, when they give evident or even strongly hopeful tokens of a sincere repentance: if God has forgiven them, why should

not we? We infinitely more need his forgiveness than they do, or can do, ours, though perhaps neither they nor we are justly or sufficiently sensible of this.

[2.] Others save with fear, urging upon them the terrors of the Lord; "Endeavour to frighten them out of their sins; preach hell and damnation to them." But what if prudence and caution in administering even the most just and severe reproofs be what are primarily and chiefly here intimated--(I do but offer it for consideration); as if he had said, "Fear lest you frustrate your own good intentions and honest designs by rash and imprudent management, that you do not harden, instead of reclaiming, even where greater degrees of severity are requisite than in the immediately foregoing instance." We are often apt to over-do, when we are sure we mean honestly, and think we are right in the main; yet the very worst are not needlessly, nor rashly, nor to extremity, to be provoked, lest they be thereby further hardened through our default.--"Hating even the garment spotted with the flesh, that is, keeping yourselves at the utmost distance from what is or appears evil, and designing and endeavouring that others may do so too. Avoid all that leads to sin or that looks like sin," 1Th 5:22.

22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:

This cannot be intended to teach that they were not to have compassion for all men, or to regard the salvation of all with solicitude, but that they were to have special and peculiar compassion for a certain class of persons, or were to approach them with feelings appropriate to their condition. The idea is, that the peculiar feeling to be manifested towards a certain class of persons in seeking their salvation was tender affection and kindness. They were to approach them in the gentlest manner, appealing to them by such words as love would prompt. Others were to be approached in a different manner, indicated by the phrase, "save with fear," The class here referred to, to whom pity (ελεειτε) was to be shown, and in whose conversion and salvation tender compassion was to be employed, appear to have been the timid, the gentle, the unwary; those who had not yet fallen into dangerous errors, but who might be exposed to them; those, for there are such, who would be more likely to be influenced by kind words and a gentle manner than by denunciation. The direction then amounts to this, that while we are to seek to save all, we are to adapt ourselves wisely to

the character and circumstances of those whom we seek to save. 1Cor 9:19, seq.

Making a distinction between them, not in regard to your desires for their salvation, or your efforts to save them, but to the manner in which it is done. To be able to do this is one of the highest qualifications to be sought by one who endeavours to save souls, and is indispensable for a good minister of the gospel. The young, the tender, the delicate, the refined, need a different kind of treatment from the rough, the uncultivated, the hardened. This wisdom was shown by the Saviour in all his preaching; it was eminent in the preaching of Paul.

23 and others save with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

And others. Another class; those who were of such a character, or in such circumstances, that a more bold, earnest, and determined manner would be better adapted to them. Save with fear. That is, by appeals adapted to produce fear. The idea seems to be that the arguments on which they relied were to be drawn from the dangers of the persons referred to, or from the dread of future wrath. It is undoubtedly true, that while there is a class of persons who can be won to embrace religion by mild and gentle persuasion, there is another class who can be aroused only by the terrors of the law. Every method is to be employed, in its proper place, that we "by all means may save some." Pulling them out of the fire. As you would snatch persons out of the fire; or as you would seize on a person that was walking into a volcano. Then, a man would not use the mild and gentle language of persuasion, but by word and gesture show that he was deeply in earnest. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. The allusion here is not quite certain, though the idea which the apostle meant to convey is not difficult to be understood. By "the garment spotted by the flesh" there may be an allusion to a garment worn by one who had the plague, or some offensive disease which might be communicated to others by touching even the clothing which they had worn. Or there may be an allusion to the ceremonial law of Moses, by which all those who came in contact with dead bodies were regarded as unclean, Lev 21:11, Nu 6:6, 9:6, 19:11. Or there may be an allusion to the case mentioned in Lev 15:4,10,17; or perhaps to a case of leprosy. In all such instances, there would be the idea that the thing referred to by which the garment had been spotted was polluting, contagious, or loathsome, and that it

was proper not even to touch such a garment, or to come in contact with it in any way. To something of this kind the apostle compares the sins of the persons here referred to. While the utmost effort was to be made to save them, they were in no way to partake of their sins; their conduct was to be regarded as loathsome and contagious; and those who attempted to save them were to take every precaution to preserve their own purity. There is much wisdom in this counsel. While we endeavour to save the sinner, we cannot too deeply loathe his sins; and in approaching some classes of sinners there is need of as much care to avoid being defiled by them, as there would be to escape the plague if we had any transaction with one who had it. Not a few have been deeply corrupted in their attempts to reform the polluted. There never could be, for example, too much circumspection and prayer for personal safety from pollution, in attempting to reform licentious and abandoned females.

Concluding Doxology

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to
present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,
25 to the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and
power, both now and ever. Amen.

Dominion and power, etc. See Mt 6:13. It is common in the Scriptures to ascribe power, dominion, and glory to God, expressing the feeling that all that is great and good belongs to him, and the desire of the heart that he may reign in heaven and on earth. Comp. Rev 4:11; Rev 19:1. With the expression of such a desire it was not inappropriate that this epistle should be closed--and it is not inappropriate that this volume should be closed with the utterance of the same wish. In all our affections and aspirations, may God be supreme; in all the sin and woe which prevail here below, may we look forward with strong desire to the time when his dominion shall be set up over all the earth; in all our own sins and sorrows, be it ours to look onward to the time when in a purer and happier world his reign may be set up over our own souls, and when we may cast every crown at his feet and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.--Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God," Rev 4:11, 19:1.

The Revelation Of St. John

The Divine [Revelation]

Revelation-1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is evidently a title or caption of the whole book, and is designed to comprise the substance of the whole; for all that the book contains would be embraced in the general declaration that it is a Revelation of Jesus Christ. The word rendered Revelation --αποκαλυπτω, whence we have derived our word Apocalypse --means properly an uncovering; that is, nakedness --from αποκαλυπτω--to uncover. It would apply to anything which had been covered up so as to be hidden from the view--as by a veil; by darkness; in an ark or chest--and then made manifest by removing the covering. It comes then to be used in the sense of disclosing or revealing by removing the veil of darkness or ignorance. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." It may be applied to the disclosing or manifesting of anything which was before obscure or unknown. This may be done:

(a) by instruction in regard to that which was before obscure--that is, by statements of what was unknown before the statements were made; as in Lk 2:32, where it is said that Christ would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles"--φωςειςαποκαλυψινεθνων--or when it is applied to the Divine mysteries, purposes, or doctrines, before

obscure or unknown, but made clear by light revealed in the gospel, Rom 16:25, 1Cor 2:10, 14:6, Eph 3:5

(b) By the event itself; as the manifestation of the wrath of God at the day of judgment will disclose the true nature of his wrath. "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom 2:5 "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation (Gr., revelation) of the sons of God," Rom 8:19; that is, till it shall be manifest by the event what they who are the children of God are to be. In this sense the word is frequently applied to the second advent or appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, as disclosing him in his glory, or showing what he truly is: 2Thes 1:7, "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed"--εντηαποκαλυψει --in the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1Cor 1:7, "Waiting for the coming" (the revelation--τηναποκαλυψιν) of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1Pet 1:7, "At the appearing" (Gr., revelation) "of Jesus Christ." See also 1Pet 4:13, "When his glory shall be revealed."

(c) It is used in the sense of making known what is to come--whether by words, signs, or symbols--as if a veil were lifted from that which is hidden from human vision, or which is covered by the darkness of the unknown future. This is called a revelation, because the knowledge of the event is in fact made known to the world by Him who alone can see it, and in such a manner as he pleases to employ, though many of the terms or the symbols may be, from the necessity of the case, obscure; and though their full meaning may be disclosed only by the event. It is in this sense, evidently, that the word is used here; and in this sense that it is more commonly employed when we speak of a revelation. In Amos 3:7: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants." So Job 33:16, "Then he openeth (marg., revealeth or uncovereth, the ears of men;" that is, in a dream, he discloses to their ears his truth before concealed or unknown.) Compare Dan 2:22,28-29, 10:1 De 29:29; These ideas

enter into the word as used in the passage before us. The idea is that of a disclosure of an extraordinary character, beyond the mere ability of man, by a special communication from heaven. This is manifest, not only from the usual meaning of this word, but by the word prophecy, in Rev 1:3, and by all the arrangements by which these things, were made known. The ideas which would be naturally conveyed by the use of this word in this connexion are two:

(1) that there was something which was before hidden, obscure, or unknown, and

(2) that this was so disclosed by these communications as to be seen or known.

The things hidden or unknown were those which pertained to the future; the method of disclosing them was mainly by symbols. In the Greek, in this passage, the article is wanting--αποκαλυψις--a Revelation, not η, the Revelation. This is omitted because it is the title of a book, and because the use of the article might imply that this was the only revelation, excluding other books claiming to be a revelation; or it might imply some previous mention of the book, or knowledge of it in the reader. The simple meaning is, that this was "a Revelation;" it was only a part of the Revelation which God has given to mankind. The phrase, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," might, so far as the construction of the language is concerned, refer either to Christ as the subject or object . It might either mean that Christ is the object revealed in this book, and that its great purpose is to make him known--and so the phrase is understood in the commentary called Hyponoia, (New York, 1844;) or it may mean that this is a revelation which Christ makes to mankind--that is, it is his in the sense that he communicates it to the world. That this latter is the meaning here is clear,

(1) because it is expressly said in this verse that it was a revelation which God gave to him;

(2) because it is said that it pertains to things which must shortly come to pass; and

(3) because, in fact, the revelation is a disclosure of events which were to happen, and not of the person or work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which God gave unto him. Which God imparted or communicated to Jesus Christ. This is in accordance with the representations everywhere made in the Scriptures, that God is the original fountain of truth and knowledge, and that, whatever was the original dignity of the Son of God, there was a mediatorial dependence on the Father. See Jn 5:19-20: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him (δεικνυσιναυτω) all things that himself doeth." Jn 7:16 "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." Jn 8:28: "As my Father hath taught me, (εδιδαξεμε) I speak these things." Jn 12:49: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." See also Jn 14:10, 17:7-8, Mt 11:27, Mk 13:32. The same mediatorial dependence the apostle teaches us still subsists in heaven in his glorified state, and will continue until he has subdued all things, (1Cor 15:24-28;) and hence, even in that state, he is represented as receiving the Revelation from the Father to communicate it to men.

To show unto his servants. That is, to his people; to Christians, often represented as the servants of God or of Christ, 1Pet 2:16, Rev 2:20, 7:3, 19:2, 22:3. It is true that the word is sometimes applied by way of eminence to the prophets, (1Chr 6:49, Dan 6:20) and to the apostles, Rom 1:1, Gal 1:10, Php 1:1 Tit 1:1, Jas 1:1 but it is also applied to the mass of Christians, and there is no reason why it should not be so understood here. The book was sent to the

churches of Asia, and was clearly designed for general use; and the contents of the book were evidently intended for the churches of the Redeemer in all ages and lands. Compare Rev 1:3. The word rendered to show--δειξαι--commonly denotes to point out; to cause to see; to present to the sight; and is a word eminently appropriate here, as what was to be revealed was, in general, to be presented to the sight by sensible tokens or symbols.

Things which must shortly come to pass. Not all the things that will occur, but such as it was deemed of importance for his people to be made acquainted with. Nor is it certainly implied that all the things that are communicated would shortly come to pass, or would soon occur. Some of them might perhaps lie in the distant future, and still it might be true that there were those which were revealed in connexion with them, which soon would occur. The word rendered "things "--α--is a pronoun, and might be rendered what: "he showed to his servants what things were about to occur;" not implying that he showed all the things that would happen, but such as he judged to be needful that his people should know. The word would naturally embrace those things which, in the circumstances, were most desirable to be known. The phrase rendered "must come to pass"--δειγενεσθαι--would imply more than mere futurity. The word used (δει) means it needs, there is need of, and implies that there is some kind of necessity that the event should occur. That necessity may either arise from the felt want of anything, as where it is absent or wanting, Xen. Cyr. 4, 10, ib. 7, 5, 9; or from the nature of the case, or from a sense of duty--as Mt 16:21, "Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go (δειαπελθειν) to Jerusalem," Compare Mt 26:35, Mk 14:31 Lk 2:49 or the necessity may exist, because a thing is right and just, meaning that it ought to be done--as Lk 13:14, "There are six days in which men ought to work"--δειεργαζεσθαι; Lk 13:16, "And ought not this woman (ουκεδει) whom Satan hath bound, etc., be loosed from this bond;" compare Mk 13:14 Jn 4:20, Acts 5:11,29, 2Ti 2:6, Mt 18:33, 25:27 or the necessity may be that it is conformable to the Divine arrangement, or is made necessary by

Divine appointment-- as in Jn 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must (δει) the Son of man be lifted up;" Jn 20:9, "For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must (δει) rise again from the dead." Compare Acts 4:12, 14:22 et al . In the passage before us, it is implied that there was some necessity that the things referred to should occur. They were not the result of chance; they were not fortuitous. It is not, however, stated what was the ground of the necessity--whether because there was a want of something to complete a great arrangement; or because it was right and proper in existing circumstances; or because such was the Divine appointment.

They were events which, on some account, must certainly occur, and which therefore it was important should be made known. The real ground of the necessity probably was founded in the design of God in redemption. He intended to carry out his great plans in reference to his church, and the things revealed here must necessarily occur in the completion of that design. The phrase rendered shortly-- ενταχει --is one whose meaning has been much controverted, and on which much has been made to depend in the interpretation of the whole book. The question has been whether the phrase necessarily implies that the events referred to were soon to occur, or whether it may have such an extent of meaning as to admit the supposition that the events referred to, though beginning soon, would embrace in their development far distant years, and would reach the end of all things. Those who maintain (as Professor Stuart) that the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the portion in chapters 4-11, has special reference to Jerusalem and Judaea, and the portion in chapters 12-19, to persecuting and heathen Rome, maintain the former opinion; those who suppose that chapters 4-11, refers to the irruption of Northern barbarians in the Roman empire, and chapter 12 seq. to the rise and the persecutions of the Papal power, embrace the latter opinion. All that is proper in this place is, without reference to any theory of interpretation, to inquire into the proper meaning of the language; or to ascertain what idea it would naturally convey.

(a) The phrase properly and literally means, with quickness, swiftness, speed; that is, speedily, quickly, shortly .--Rob. Lex.; Stuart in loc. It is the same in meaning as ταχεως. Compare 1Cor 4:19, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." Lk 14:21, "Go out quickly into the streets." Lk 16:6, "Sit down quickly, and write fifty." Jn 11:31, "She rose up hastily (ταχεως) and went out." Gal 1:6, "That ye are so soon removed (ταχεως) from him that called you." 1Timm 5:22, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." See also Php 2:19,24, 2Thes 2:2, 2Ti 4:9. The phrase used here --ενταχει-- occurs in Lk 18:8, "he will avenge them speedily," (literally with speed;) Acts 12:7, "arise up quickly;" Acts 22:18, "get thee quickly out of Jerusalem;" Acts 25:4, "would depart shortly;" Rom 16:20, "bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" and Rev 1:1, 22:6. The essential idea is, that the thing which is spoken of was soon to occur, or it was not a remote and distant event. There is the notion of rapidity, of haste, of suddenness. It is such a phrase as is used when the thing is on the point of happening, and could not be applied to an event which was in the remote future, considered as an independent event standing by itself. The same idea is expressed, in regard to the same thing, in Rev 1:3: "the time is at hand" --ογαρκαιροςεγγυς; that is, it is near; it is soon to occur. Yet

(b) it is not necessary to suppose that the meaning is that all that there is in the book was soon to happen. It may mean that the series of events which were to follow on in their proper order was soon to commence, though it might be that the sequel would be remote. The first in the series of events was soon to begin, and the others would follow on in their train, though a portion of them, in the regular order, might be in a remote futurity. If we suppose that there was such an order; that a series of transactions was about to commence involving a long train of momentous developments, and that the beginning of this was to occur soon, the language used by John would be that which would be naturally employed to express it. Thus, in case of a revolution in a government, when a

reigning prince should be driven from his kingdom, to be succeeded by a new dynasty which would long occupy the throne, and involving as the consequence of the revolution important events extending far into the future, we would naturally say that these things were shortly to occur, or that the time was near. It is customary to speak of a succession of events or periods as near, however vast or interminable the series may be, when the commencement is at hand. Thus we say, that the great events of the eternal world are near; that is, the beginning of them is soon to occur. So Christians now speak often of the millennium as near, or as about to occur, though it is the belief of many that it will be protracted for many ages.

(c) That this is the true idea here is clear, whatever general view of interpretation in regard to the book is adopted. Even Professor Stuart, who contends that the greater portion of the book refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the persecutions of heathen Rome, admits that "the closing part of the Revelation relates beyond all doubt to a distant period, and some of it to a future eternity," (II p 5;) and if this be so then there is no impropriety in supposing that a part of the series of predictions preceding this may lie also in a somewhat remote futurity. The true idea seems to be that the writer contemplated a series of events that were to occur; and that this series was about to commence. How far into the future it was to extend is to be learned by the proper interpretation of all the parts of the series.

And signified it. εσημανεν. He indicated it by signs and symbols. The word occurs in the New Testament only in Jn 12:33 Jn 18:32, 21:19, Acts 11:28, 25:27 and in the passage before us, in all which places it rendered signify, signifying or signified. It properly refers to some sign, signal, or token by which anything is made known, (compare Mt 26:28, Rom 4:11, Gen 9:12-13, 17:11 Lk 2:12, 2Cor 12:12, 1Cor 14:22) and is a word most happily chosen to denote the manner in which the events referred to were to by communicated to John--for nearly the whole book is made up of

signs and symbols. If it be asked what was signified to John, it may be replied that either the word "it" may be understood, as in our translation, to refer to the Apocalypse or Revelation, or what he saw--οσαειδε-- as Professor Stuart supposes; or it may be absolute, without any object following, as Professor Robinson (Lex.) supposes. The general sense is that, sending by his angel, he made to John a communication by expressive signs or symbols.

By his angel. That is, an angel was employed to cause these scenic representations to pass before the mind of the apostle. The communication was not made directly to him but was through the medium of a heavenly messenger employed for this purpose. Thus in Rev 22:6, it is said, "And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." Compare Rev 22:8-9.

There is frequent allusion in the Scriptures to the fact that angels have been employed as agents in making known the Divine will, or in the revelations which have been made to men. Thus in Acts 7:53, it is said, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels." Heb 2:2, "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast," etc. Gal 3:19, "And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

There is almost no further reference to the agency of the angel employed for this service, in the book, and there is no distinct specifications of what he did, or of his great agency in the case. John is everywhere represented as seeing the symbols himself, and it would seem that the agency of the angel was, either to cause those symbols to pass before the apostle, or to convey their meaning to his mind. How far John himself understood the meaning of these symbols we have not the means of knowing with certainty. The most probable supposition is, that the angel was employed to cause these vision or symbols to pass before his mind, rather than to interpret them. If an interpretation had been given, it is inconceivable that it should not have been recorded, and there is

no more probability that their meaning should have been disclosed to John himself for his private use, than that it should have been disclosed and recorded for the use of others. It would seem probable, therefore, that John had only that view of the meaning of what he saw which any one else might obtain from the record of the visions. Compare 1Pet 1:10-12.

2 who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Who bare record of the word of God. Who bore witness to, or testified of (εμαρτυρησε) the word of God. He regarded himself merely as a witness of what he had seen, and claimed only to make a fair and faithful record of it. Jn 21:24: "This is the disciple which testifieth (ομαρτυρων) of these things, and wrote these things." Jn 19:35: "And he that saw it bare record"--μεμαρτυρηκε. Compare also the following places, where the apostle uses the same word of himself: 1Jn 1:2, 4:14. The expression here, "the word of God," is one the meaning of which has been much controverted, and is important in its bearing on the question who was the author of the book of Revelation. The main inquiry is, whether the writer refers to the "testimony" which he bears in this book respecting the "word of God;" or whether he refers to some testimony on that subject in some other book with which those to whom he wrote were so familiar that they would at once recognize him as the author; or whether he refers to the fact that he had borne his testimony to the great truths of religion, and especially respecting Jesus Christ, as a preacher who was well known, and who would be characterized by this expression. The phrase "the word of God"--τονλογοντουθεου,--occurs frequently in the New Testament, (compare Jn 10:35, Acts 4:31, 6:2,7, 11:1, 12:24) and may either mean the word or doctrine respecting God --that which teaches what God is--or that which he speaks or teaches. It is more commonly used in the latter sense, compare the passages referred to above, and especially refers to what God speaks or commands in the gospel. The fair meaning of this expression would be, that John had borne faithful witness to, or testimony of, the truth which God had spoken to man in the gospel of Christ. So far as the language here used is concerned, this might apply either to a

written or an oral testimony; either to a treatise like that of his gospel, to his preaching, or to the record which he was then making. Vitringa and others suppose that the reference here is to the gospel which he had published, and which now bears his name; Lucke and others, to the revelation made to him in Patmos, the record of which he now makes in this book; Professor Stuart and others, to the fact that he was a teacher or preacher of the gospel, and that (compare Rev 1:9) the allusion is to the testimony which he had borne to the gospel, and for which he was an exile in Patmos. Is it not possible that these conflicting opinions may be to some extent harmonized, by supposing that in the use of the aorist tense--εμαρτυρησε--the writer meant to refer to a characteristic of himself, to wit, that he was a faithful witness of the word of God and of Jesus Christ, whenever and however made known to him ? With an eye, perhaps, to the record which he was about to make in this book, and intending to include that, may he not also refer to what had been and was his well-known character as a witness of what God communicated to him? He had always borne this testimony. He always regarded himself as such a witness. He had been an eye-witness of what had occurred in the life and at the death of the Saviour, (2Pet 1:17-18) and had, in all his writings and public administrations, borne witness to what he had seen and heard; for that, (Rev 1:9)he had been banished to Patmos; and he was now about to carry out the same characteristic of himself by bearing witness to what he saw in these new revelations. This would be much in the manner of John, who often refers to this characteristic of himself, (compare Jn 19:35, 21:24, 1Jn 1:2) as well as harmonize the different opinions. The meaning then of the expression "who bare record of the word of God," as I understand it, is, that it was a characteristic of the writer to bear simple but faithful testimony to the truth which God communicated to men in the gospel. If this be the correct interpretation, it may be remarked

(a) that this is such language as John the apostle would be likely to use, and yet

(b) that it is not such language as an author would he likely to adopt if there was an attempt to forge a book in his name.

The artifice would be too refined to occur probably to any one, for although perfectly natural for John, it would not be so natural for a forger of a book to select this circumstance and weave it thus unostentatiously into his narrative.

And of the testimony of Jesus Christ. That is, in accordance with the interpretation above, of the testimony which Jesus Christ bore for the truth; not of a testimony respecting Jesus Christ. The idea is, that Jesus Christ was himself a witness to the truth, and that the writer of this book was a witness merely of the testimony which Christ had borne. Whether the testimony of Jesus Christ was borne in his preaching when in the flesh, or whether made known to the writer by him at any subsequent period, it was his office to make a faithful record of that testimony. As he had always before done that, so he was about to do it now in the new revelation made to him in Patmos, which he regarded as a new testimony of Jesus Christ to the truth, Rev 1:1. It is remarkable that, in confirmation of this view, John so often describes the Lord Jesus as a witness, or represents him as having come to bear his faithful testimony to the truth. Thus in Rev 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful and true witness." Jn 8:18: "I am one that bear witness--ομαρτυρων--of myself." Jn 18:37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness--ιναμαρτυρησω--to the truth." Rev 3:14: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness"-- ομαρτυςοπιστοςκτλ. Of this testimony which the Lord Jesus came to bring to man respecting eternal realities, the writer of this book says that he regarded himself as a witness. To the office of bearing such testimony he had been dedicated; that testimony he was now to bear, as he had always done.

And of all things that he saw . οσατεειδε. This is the common reading in the Greek, and according to this reading it would

properly mean, "and whatsoever he saw;" that is, it would imply that he bore witness to "the word of God," and to "the testimony of Jesus Christ," and to "whatever he saw"--meaning that the things which he saw, and to which he refers, were things additional to those to which he had referred by "the word of God," and the "testimony of Christ." From this it has been supposed that in the former part of the verse he refers to some testimony which he had formerly borne, as in his gospel or in his preaching, and that here he refers to what he "saw" in the visions of the Revelation as something additional to the former. But it should be remembered that the word rendered and--τε--is wanting in a large number of manuscripts, (see Wetstein,) and that it is now omitted in the best editions of the Greek Testament--as by Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn. The evidence is clear that it should be omitted; and if so omitted, the reference is to whatever he had at any time borne his testimony to, and not particularly to what passed before him in the visions of this book. It is a general affirmation that he had always borne a faithful testimony to whatever he had seen respecting the word of God and the testimony of Christ. The correct rendering of the whole passage then would be, "And sending by his angel, he signifies it to his servant John, who bare record of" [i.e. whose character and office it was to bear his testimony to] "the word of God," [the message which God has sent to me,] "and the testimony of Jesus Christ," [the testimony which Christ bore to the truth,] "whatsoever he saw." He concealed nothing; he held nothing back; he made it known precisely as it was seen by him. Thus interpreted, the passage refers to what was a general characteristic of the writer, and is designed to embrace all that was made known to him, and to affirm that he was a faithful witness to it. There were doubtless special reasons why John was employed as the medium through which this communication was to be made to the church and the world. Among these reasons may have been the following:

(a) That he was the "beloved disciple."

(b) That he was the only surviving apostle.

(c) That his character, was such that his statements would be readily received. Compare Jn 19:35, 21:24, 3Jn 1:12.

(d) It may be that his mind was better fitted to be the medium of these communications than that of any other of the apostles--even if they had been then alive. There is almost no one whose mental characteristics are less correctly understood than those of the apostle John. Among the most gentle and amiable of men--with a heart so fitted for love as to be known as "the beloved disciple"--he yet had mental characteristics which made it proper that he should be called "a son of thunder," (Mk 3:17) a mind fitted to preserve and record the profound thoughts in his gospel; a mind of high poetic order, fitted for the magnificent conceptions in this book.

3 Blessed *is* he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.

Blessed is he that readeth. That is, it is to be regarded as a privilege attended with many blessings, to be permitted to mark the disclosures to be made in this book; the important revelations respecting future times. Professor Stuart supposes that this refers to a public reading, and that the phrase "those who hear the words of this prophecy" refers to those who listened to the public reader, and that both the reader and hearer should regard themselves as highly favoured. It is, however, more in accordance with the usual meaning of the word rendered "read," to suppose that it refers to the act of one's reading for himself; to learn by reading. So Robinson (Lex.) understands it. The Greek word, indeed, would bear the other interpretation, (see Lk 4:16, Acts 13:27, 15:21, 2Cor 3:15) but as this book was sent abroad to be read by Christians, and not merely to be in the hands of the ministers of religion to be read by them to others, it is more natural to interpret the word in the usual sense.

And hear the words of this prophecy. As they shall be declared or repeated by others; or perhaps the word hear is used in a sense that is not uncommon, that of giving attention to; taking heed to. The general sense is, that they were to be regarded as highly favoured who became acquainted in any way with what is here communicated. The writer does not say that they were blessed who understood it, or that they who read or heard it would fully understand it; but it is clearly implied, that there would be so far an understanding of its meaning as to make it a felicitous condition to have been made acquainted with it. An author could not be supposed to say that one should regard his condition as a favoured one who merely heard words that he could not understand, or who had placed before him magnificent symbols that had to him no meaning. The word prophecy is used here in its more strict sense as denoting the disclosure of future events--a large portion of the book being of this nature. It is here synonymous with Revelation in Rev 1:1.

And keep those things which are written therein. Keep in mind those things which relate to the future; and obey those things which are required as truth and duty. The blessing which results from having in possession the revealed truth of God is not merely in reading it, or in hearing it: it results from the fact that the truth is properly regarded, and exerts a suitable influence over our lives. Compare Ps 19:11: "And in keeping of them there is great reward."

For the time is at hand. See Rev 1:1 The word here used--εγγυς--has the same signification substantially as the word "shortly" in Rev 1:1 It would apply to any event whose beginning was soon to occur, though the end might be remote, for the series of events might stretch far into the future. It cannot be doubted, however, that the writer meant to press upon them the importance of attending to these things, from the fact that either entirely or in part these things were soon to happen. It may be inferred from this verse, that it is possible so to understand this book, as that it may convey useful instruction. This is the only book in the Bible of

which a special blessing is pronounced on him who reads it; but assuredly a blessing would not be pronounced on the perusal of a book which is entirely unintelligible. While, therefore, there may be many obscurities in this book, it is also to be assumed that it may be so far understood as to be useful to Christians, in supporting their faith, and giving them elevated views of the final triumph of religion, and of the glory of the world to come. Anything is a blessing which enables us with well-founded hope and joy to look forward to the heavenly world.

Greetings to the Seven Churches

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia:
Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

John to the seven churches which are in Asia. The word Asia is used in quite different senses, by different writers. It is used

(1) as referring to the whole eastern continent now known by that name;

(2) Either Asia, or Asia Minor;

(3) that part of Asia which Attlus III., king of Pergamos, gave to the Romans, viz., Mysia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Lydia, Carla, Pisidia, and the southern coast--that is, all in the western, south-western, and southern parts of Asia Minor; and

(4) in the New Testament, usually, the south-western part of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital. Acts 2:9. The word Asia is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it occurs often in the books of Maccabees, and in the New Testament. In the New Testament it is not used in the large sense in which it is now as applied to the whole continent, but in its largest signification it would include only Asia Minor. It is also used, especially by Luke;

as denoting the country that was called Ionia, or that which embraced the provinces of Carla and Lydia. Of this region Ephesus was the principal city, and it was in this region that the "seven churches" were situated. Whether there were more than seven churches in this region is not intimated by the writer of this book, and on that point we have no certain knowledge. It is evident that these seven were the principal churches, even if there were more, and that there was some reason why they should be particularly addressed. There is mention of some other churches in the neighbourhood of these. Colosse was near to Laodicea; and from Col 4:13, it would seem not improbable that there was a church also at Hierapolis. But there may have been nothing in their circumstances that demanded particular instruction or admonition, and they may have been on that account omitted. There is also some reason to suppose, that, though there had been other churches in that vicinity besides the seven mentioned by John, they had become extinct at the time when he wrote the book of Revelation. It appears from Tacitus, (Annal. xiv. 27; compare also Pliny, N.H. v. 29,) that in the time of Nero, A. D, 61, the city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, in which earthquake, according to Eusebius, the adjacent cities of Colosse and Hierapolis were involved. Laodicea was, indeed, immediately rebuilt, but there is no evidence of the re-establishment of the church there before the time when John wrote this book. The earliest mention we have of a church there, after the one referred to in the New Testament by Paul, (Col 2:1, 4:13,15-16) is in the time of Trajan, when Papias was bishop there, sometime between A.D. 98 and 117. It would appear, then, to be not improbable that at the time when the Apocalypse was written, there were in fact but seven churches in the vicinity. Professor Stuart (i. 219) supposes that "seven, and only so many, may have been named, because the sevenfold divisions and groups of various objects constitute a conspicuous feature in the Apocalypse throughout." But this reason seems too artificial; and it can hardly be supposed that it would influence the mind of John, in the specification by name of the churches to which the book was sent. If no names had been mentioned, and if the statement had occurred in glowing poetic description, it is not

inconceivable that the number seven might have been selected for some such purpose.

Grace be unto you and peace. The usual form of salutation in addressing a church. See Barnes Notes on Rom 1:7.

From him which is, and which was, and which is to come. From him who is everlasting--embracing all duration, past, present, and to come. No expression could more strikingly denote eternity than this. He now exists; he has existed in the past; he will exist in the future. There is an evident allusion here to the name JEHOVAH, the name by which the true God is appropriately designated in the Scriptures. That name-- from to be, to exist--seems to have been adopted because it denotes existence, or being,and as denoting simply one who exists; and has reference merely to the fact of existence. The word has no variation of form, and has no reference to time, and would embrace all time: that is, it is as true at one time as another that he exists. Such a word would not be inappropriately paraphrased by the phrase "who is, and who was, and who is to come," or who is to be; and there can be no doubt that John referred to him here as being himself the eternal and uncreated existence, and as the great and original fountain of all being. They who desire to find a full discussion in regard to the origin of the name JEHOVAH, may consult an article by Professor Tholuck, in the Biblical Repository, vol. iv. pp. 89--108. It is remarkable that there are some passages in heathen inscriptions and writings which bear a very strong resemblance to the language here used by John respecting God. Thus Plutarch, (De Is. et Osir. p. 354,) speaking of a temple of Isis, at Sais, in Egypt, says, "It bore this inscription 'I am all that was, and is, and shall be, and my vail no mortal can remove'"-- εγωειμιπαντογεγονοςκαιονκαιεσομενονκαιτονεμον πεπλονουδειςτωθνητοςανεκαλυψεν. So Orpheus, (in Auctor. Lib. de Mundo,) "Jupiter is the head, Jupiter is the middle, and all things are made by Jupiter." So in Pausanias, (Phocic. 12,) "Jupiter was; Jupiter is; Jupiter shall be." The reference in the phrase before us is to God as such, or to God considered as the Father.

And from the seven spirits which are before his throne. After all that has been written on this very difficult expression, it is still impossible to determine with certainty its meaning. The principal opinions which have been held in regard to it are the following:

I. That it refers to God, as such. This opinion is held by Eichhorn, and is favoured by Ewald. No arguments derived from any parallel passages are urged for this opinion, nor can any such be found, where God is himself spoken of under the representation of a sevenfold Spirit. But the objections to this view are so obvious as to be insuperable.

(1.) If it refers to God as such, then it would be mere tautology, for the writer had just referred to him in the phrase "from him who was," etc.

(2.) It is difficult to perceive in what sense "seven spirits" could be ascribed to God, or how he could be described as a being of "Seven Spirits." At least, if he could be spoken of as such, there would be no objection to applying the phrase to the Holy Spirit.

(3.) How could it be said of God himself that he was "before the throne?" He is everywhere represented as sitting on the throne, not as before it. It is easy to conceive of angels as standing before the throne; and of the Holy Spirit it is more easy to conceive as being represented thus as ready to go forth and convey a heavenly influence from that throne, but it is impossible to conceive in what sense this could be applied to God as such.

II The opinion held by Grotius and by John Henry Heinrichs that it refers to "the multiform providence of God," or to God considered as operating in seven or many different ways. In support of this, Grotius appeals to Rev 5:12, 7:12. But this opinion is so far-fetched, and it is so destitute of support, as to have found,

it is believed, no other advocates, and to need no further notice. It cannot be supposed that John meant to personify the attributes of the Deity, and then to unite them with God himself, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to represent them as real subsistences from which important blessings descend to men. It is clear that as by the phrase "who is, and who was, and who is to come," and by "Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness," he refers to real subsistences, so he must here. Besides, if the attributes of God, or the modes of Divine operation, are denoted, why is the number seven chosen? And why are they represented as standing before the throne?

III. A third opinion is, that the reference is to seven attending and ministering presence-angels; angels represented as standing before the throne of God, or in his presence. This opinion was adopted among the ancients by Clemens of Alexandria; Andreas of Cesarea, and others; among the moderns by Beza, Drusius, Hammond, Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Clarke, Professor Stuart, and others. This opinion, however, has been held in somewhat different forms; some maintaining that the seven angels are referred to because it was a received opinion among the Hebrews that there were seven angels standing in the presence of God, as seven princes stood in the Persian court before the king; others, that the angels of the seven churches are particularly referred to, represented now as standing in the presence of God; others, that seven angels, represented as the principal angels employed in the government of the world, are referred to; and others, that seven archangels are particularly designated. Compare Poole, Synop. in loc. The arguments which are relied on by those who suppose that seven angels are here referred to are briefly these:

(1.) The nature of the expression here used. The expression, it is said, is such as would naturally denote beings who were before his throne--beings who were different from him who was on the throne-- and beings more than one in number. That it could not refer to one on the throne, but must mean those distinct and separate from one on the throne, is argued from the use of the

phrases "before the throne," and "before God,"in Rev 4:5, 7:9,15, 8:2, 11:4,16, 12:10, 14:3, 20:12: in all which places the representation denotes those who were in the presence of God, and standing before him.

(2.) It is argued from other passages in the book of Revelation which, it is said, (Professor Stuart,) go directly to confirm this opinion. Thus in Rev 8:2: "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God." So Rev 4:5: the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, are said to be "the seven Spirits of God." In these passages, it is alleged that the article "the" designates the well-known angels; or those which had been before specified, and that this is the first mention of any such angels after the designation in the passage before us.

(3.) It is said that this is in accordance with what was usual among the Hebrews, who were accustomed to speak of seven presence-angels, or angels standing in the presence of Jehovah. Thus in the book of Tobit, (xii. 15,) Raphael is introduced as using this language, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." The apocryphal book of Enoch (chapter 20) gives the names of the seven angels who watch; that is, of the watchers (compare Barnes Notes on Dan 4:13,17)who stand in the presence of God waiting for the Divine commands, or who watch over the affairs of men. So in the Zendavesta of Zoroaster, seven amshaspends, or archangels, are mentioned. See Professor Stuart, in loc.

To these views, however, there are objections of great weight, if they are not in fact quite insuperable. They are such as the following:

(1.) That the same rank should be given to them as to God, as the source of blessings. According to the view which represents this expression as referring to angels, they are placed on the same level,

so far as the matter before us is concerned with "him who was, and is, and is to come," and with the Lord Jesus Christ--a doctrine which does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures, and which we cannot suppose the writer designed to teach.

(2.) That blessings should be invoked from angels--as if they could impart "grace and peace." It is evident that, whoever is referred to here by the phrase "the seven spirits," he is placed on the same level with the others mentioned as the source of "grace and peace." But it cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would invoke that grace and peace from any but a Divine being.

(3.) That as two persons of the Trinity are here mentioned, it is to be presumed that the third would not be omitted; or to put this argument in a stronger form. it cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would mention two of the persons of the Trinity in this connexion, and then not only not mention the third, but refer to angels--to creatures--as bestowing that which would be appropriately sought from the Holy Spirit. The incongruity would be not merely in omitting all reference to tile Spirit--which might indeed occur, as it often does in the Scriptures--but in putting in the place which that Spirit would naturally occupy an allusion to angels as conferring blessings.

(4.) If this refer to angels, it is impossible to avoid the inference that angel-worship, or invocation of angels, is proper. To all intents and purposes, this is an act of worship; for it is an act of solemn invocation. It is an acknowledgment of the "seven spirits," as the source of "grace and peace." It would be impossible to resist this impression on the popular mind; it would not be possible to meet it if urged as an argument in favour of the propriety of angel-invocation, or angel-worship. And yet, if there is anything clear in the Scriptures, it is that God alone is to be worshipped. For these reasons, it seems to me that this interpretation cannot be well founded.

IV. There remains a fourth opinion, that it refers to the Holy Spirit, and in favour of that opinion it may be urged,

(1.) that it is most natural to suppose that the Holy Spirit would be invoked on such an occasion, in connexion with him "who was, and is, and is to come," and with "Jesus Christ." If two of the persons of the Trinity were addressed on such an occasion, it would be properly supposed that the Holy Spirit would not be omitted, as one of the persons from whom the blessing was to descend. Compare 2Cor 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."

(2.) It would be unnatural and improper, in such an invocation, to unite angels with God as imparting blessings, or as participating with God and with Christ, in communicating blessings to man. An invocation to God to send his angels, or to impart grace and favour through angelic help, would be in entire accordance with the usage in Scripture, but it is not in accordance with such usage to invoke such blessings from angels.

(3.) It cannot be denied that an invocation of grace from "him who is, and was, and is to come," is of the nature of worship. The address to him is as God, and the attitude of the mind in such an address is that of one who is engaged in an act of devotion. The effect of uniting any other being with him in such a case, would be to lead to the worship of one thus associated with him. In regard to the Lord Jesus, "the faithful and true witness," it is from such expressions as these that we are led to the belief that he is Divine, and that it is proper to worship him as such. The same effect must be produced in reference to what is here called "the seven spirits before the throne." We cannot well resist the impression that some one with Divine attributes is intended; or, if it refer to angels, we cannot easily show that it is not proper to render Divine worship to them. If they were thus invoked by an apostle, can it be improper to worship them now?

(4.) The word used here is not angels, but spirits; and though it is true that angels are spirits, and that the word spirit is applied to them, (Heb 1:7) yet it is also true that is not a word which would be understood to refer to them without designating that angels were meant. If angels had been intended here, that word would naturally have been used, as is the case elsewhere in this book. (5.) In Rev 4:5, where there is a reference to "the seven lamps before the throne," it is said of them that they "are," that is, they represent "the seven spirits of God." This passage may be understood as referring to the same thing as that before us, but it cannot be well understood of angels, for

(a.) if it did, it would have been natural to use that language for the reason above mentioned;

(b.) the angels are nowhere called "the spirits of God," nor would such language be proper. The phrase "Spirit of God" naturally implies divinity, and could not be applied to a creature. For these reasons, it seems to me that the interpretation which applies the phrase to the Holy Spirit is to be preferred; and though that interpretation is not free from difficulties, yet there are fewer difficulties in that than in either of the others proposed. Though it may not be possible wholly to remove the difficulties involved in that interpretation, yet perhaps something may be done to diminish their force.

(1.) First, as to the reason why the number seven should be applied to the Holy Spirit.

(a.) There would be as much propriety certainly in applying it to the Holy Spirit as to God as such. And yet Grotius, Eichhorn, Ewald, and others saw no difficulty in such an application considered as representing a sevenfold mode of operation of God, or a manifold Divine agency.

(b.) The word seven often denotes a full or complete number, and may be used to denote that which is full, complete, or manifold; and might thus be used in reference to an all-perfect Spirit, or to a spirit which was manifold in its operations.

(c.) The number seven is evidently a favourite number in the book of Revelation, and it might be used by the author in places, and in a sense, such as it would not be likely to be used by another writer. Thus there are seven epistles to the seven churches; there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials of the wrath of God, seven last plagues; there are seven lamps, and seven Spirits of God; the Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. In Rev 1:16, seven stars are mentioned; in Rev 5:12, seven attributes of God; Rev 12:3, the dragon has seven heads; Rev 13:1, the beast has seven heads.

(d.) The number seven, therefore, may have been given to the Holy Spirit with reference to the diversity or the fulness of his operations on the souls of men, and to his manifold agency on the affairs of the world, as further developed in this book.

(2.) As to his being represented as "before the throne," this may be intended to designate the fact that the Divine Spirit was, as it were, prepared to go forth, or to be sent forth, in accordance with a common representation in the Scriptures, to accomplish important purposes on human affairs. The posture does not necessarily imply inferiority of nature, any more than the language does respecting the Son of God, when he is represented as being sent into the world to execute an important commission from the Father.

5 and from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first- begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.
Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness. Rev 1:2. He is faithful in the sense that he is one on whose testimony there may be entire reliance, or who is entirely worthy to be believed. From him "grace and peace" are appropriately sought, as one who bears such a testimony, and as the first-begotten from the dead, and as

reigning over the kings of the earth. Thus grace and peace are invoked from the infinite God in all his relations and operations :--as the Father, the Source of all existence; as the Sacred Spirit, going forth in manifold operations upon the hearts of men; and as the Son of God, the one appointed to bear faithful testimony to the truth respecting God and future events.

And the first-begotten of the dead. The same Greek expression--πρωτοτοκος--occurs in Col 1:18. Col 1:18. Compare Barnes on "1Co 15:20".

And the prince of the kings of the earth. Who has over all the kings of the earth the pre-eminence which kings have over their subjects. He is the Ruler of rulers; King of kings. In Rev 17:14, 19:16 the same thought is expressed by saying that he is the "King of kings." No language could more sublimely denote his exalted character, or his supremacy. Kings and princes sway a sceptre over the millions of the earth, and the exaltation of the Saviour is here expressed by supposing that all those kings and princes constitute a community over which he is the head. The exaltation of the Redeemer is elsewhere expressed in different language, but the idea is one that everywhere prevails in regard to him in the Scriptures. Compare Mt 28:18, 11:27, Jn 17:2, Eph 1:20-22, Php 2:9-11, Col 1:15-18 The word prince --οαρχων--means properly ruler, leader, the first in rank. We often apply the word prince to an heir to a throne who is not invested with absolute sovereignty. The word here, however, denotes that he actually exercises dominion over the rulers of the earth. As this is an authority which is claimed by God, compare Isa 10:5 seq. Isa 45:1 seq. Ps 47:2, 99:1, 103:19 Dan 4:34 and which can only appertain to God, it is clear that in ascribing this to the Lord Jesus it is implied that he is possessed of Divine attributes. As much of the revelations of this book pertained to the assertion of power over the princes and rulers of this world, there was a propriety that, in the commencement, it should be asserted that he who was to exert that power was

invested with the prerogative of a ruler of the nations, and that he had this right of control.

Unto him that loved us. This refers undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus, whose love for men was so strong that nothing more was necessary to characterize him than to speak of him as the one "who loved us." It is manifest that the division in the verses should have been made here, for this commences a new subject, not having any special connexion with that which precedes. In Rev 1:4, and the first part of this verse, the writer had invoked grace from the Father, the Spirit, and the Saviour. In the latter clause of the verse there commences an ascription of praise to the Redeemer; an ascription to him particularly, because the whole book is regarded as a revelation from him, (Rev 1:1) because he was the one who especially appeared to John in the visions of Patmos; and because he was to be the great agent in carrying into execution the purposes revealed in this book.

And washed us from our sins in his own blood. He has removed the pollution of sin from our souls by his blood; that is, his blood has been applied to cleanse us from sin. Blood can be represented as having a cleansing power only as it makes an expiation for sin, for considered literally its effect would be the reverse. The language is such as would be used only on the supposition that he had made an atonement, and that it was by the atonement that we are cleansed; for in what sense could it be said of a martyr that he "had washed us from our sins in his blood?" How could this language be used of Paul or Polycarp; of Ridley or Cranmer? The doctrine that the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, or purifies us, is one that is common in the Scriptures. Compare 1Jn 1:7, Heb 9:14. The specific idea of washing, however--representing that blood as washing sin away-- is one which does not elsewhere occur. It is evidently used in the sense of cleansing or purifying, as we do this by washing, and, as the blood of Christ accomplishes in respect to our souls, what washing with water does in respect to the body.

6 and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be*
glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

And hath made us kings and priests unto God. In 1Pet 2:9 the same idea is expressed by saying of Christians that they are "a royal priesthood." 1Pet 2:9. The quotation in both places is from Ex 19:6: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." This idea is expressed here by saying that Christ had made us in fact kings and priests; that is, Christians are exalted to the dignity, and are invested with the office, implied in these words. The word kings, as applied to them, refers to the exalted rank and dignity which they will have; to the fact that they, in common with their Saviour, will reign triumphant over all enemies; and that, having gained a victory over sin and death and hell, they may be represented as reigning together. The word priests refers to the fact that they are engaged in the holy service of God, or that they offer to him acceptable worship. 1Pet 2:5.

And his Father. Even his Father; that is, the Saviour has redeemed them, and elevated them to this exalted rank, in order that they may thus be engaged in the service of his Father.

To him be glory. To the Redeemer; for so the construction (Rev 1:5) demands. The word "glory" here means praise, or honour, implying a wish that all honour should be shown him.

And dominion. This word means literally strength--κρατος; but it here means the strength, power, or authority which is exercised over others, and the expression is equivalent to a wish that he may reign.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they
also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because
of him. Even so, Amen.

Behold, he cometh with clouds. That is, the Lord Jesus when he returns will come accompanied with clouds. This is in accordance with the uniform representation respecting the return of the Saviour. Mt 24:30. Compare Mt 26:64, Mk 13:26 Mk 14:62, Acts

1:9,11. Clouds are appropriate symbols of majesty, and God is often represented as appearing in that manner. See Ex 19:18 Ps 18:11, Isa 19:1.

The design of introducing this representation of the Saviour, and of the manner in which he would appear, seems to be to impress the mind with a sense of the majesty and glory of that being from whom John received his revelations. His rank, his character, his glory were such as to demand respect; all should reverence him, and all should feel that his communications about the future were important to them, for they must soon appear before him.

And every eye shall see him. He will be made visible in his glory to all that dwell upon the earth; to all the children of men. Every one, therefore, has an interest in what he says; every one has this in certain prospect, that he shall see the Son of God coming as a Judge.

And they also which pierced him. When he died; that is, they who pierced his hands, his feet, and his side. There is probably an allusion here to Zech 12:10: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." The language here is so general that it may refer to any act of looking upon the pierced Saviour, and might be applied to those who would see him on the cross and to their compunctions visiting then; or to their subsequent reflections, as they might look by faith on him whom they had crucified; or to the feeling of any sinners who should reflect that their sins had been the cause of the death of the Lord Jesus; or it might be applied, as it is here, more specifically to the feelings which his murderers will have when they shall see him coming in his glory. All sinners who have pierced his heart by their crimes will then behold him, and will mourn over their treatment of him; they, in a special manner, who imbrued their hands in his blood will then remember their crime, and be overwhelmed with alarm. The design of what is here said seems to be, to show that the coming of the Saviour will be an event of great interest to all

mankind. None can be indifferent to it, for all will see him. His friends will hail his advent, (compare Rev 22:20) but all who were engaged in putting him to death, and all who in any manner have pierced his heart by sin and ingratitude, unless they shall have repented, will have occasion of bitter lamentation when he shall come. There are none who have a more fearful doom to anticipate than the murderers of the Son of God, including those who actually put him to death, and those who would have engaged in such an act had they been present, and those who, by their conduct, have done all they could to pierce and wound him by their ingratitude.

And all kindreds of the earth. Gr., "All the tribes--φυλαι--of the earth." This language is the same which the Saviour uses in Mt 24:30. Mt 24:30. The word tribes is that which is commonly applied to the twelve tribes of Israel, and thus used, it would describe the inhabitants of the holy land; but it may be used to denote nations and people in general, as descended from a common ancestor, and the connexion requires that it should be understood in this sense here, since it is said that "every eve shall see him;" that is, all that dwell on the face of the earth.

Shall wail because of him. On account of him; on account of their treatment of him. The word rendered wail--κοπτω--means properly to beat, to cut; then to beat or cut one's self in the breast as an expression of sorrow; and then to lament, to cry aloud in intense grief. The coming of the Saviour will be an occasion of this,

(a) because it will be an event which will call the sins of men to remembrance, and

(b) because they will be overwhelmed with the apprehension of the wrath to come. Nothing would fill the earth with greater consternation than the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven; nothing could produce so deep and universal alarm. This fact, which no one can doubt, is proof that men feel that they are

guilty, since, if they were innocent, they would have nothing to dread by his appearing. It is also a proof that they believe in the doctrine of future punishment, since, if they do not, there is no reason why they should be alarmed at his coming. Surely men would not dread his appearing if they really believed that all will be saved. Who dreads the coming of a benefactor to bestow favours on him? Who dreads the appearing of a jailer to deliver him from prison; of a physician to raise him up from a bed of pain; of a deliverer to knock off the fetters of slavery? And how can it be that men should be alarmed at the coming of the Saviour unless their consciences tell them that they have much to fear in the future? The presence of the Redeemer in the clouds of heaven would destroy all the hopes of those who believe in the doctrine of universal salvation--as the approach of death now often does. Men believe that there is much to be dreaded in the future world, or they would not fear the coming of Him who shall wind up the affairs of the human race.

Even so, Amen--ναιαμην. "A double expression of so be it, assuredly, certainly, one in Greek and the other in Hebrew."--Professor Stuart. Compare Rom 8:16, "Abba, Father"--αββαοπατηρ. The idea which John seems to intend to convey is, that the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the consequences which he says will follow, are events which are altogether certain. This is not the expression of a wish that it may be so, as our common translation would seem to imply, but a strong affirmation that it will be so. In some passages, however, the word (ναι) expresses assent to what is said, implying approbation of it as true, or as desirable. Mt 11:26, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Lk 10:21. So in Rev 16:7, "Even so, (ναι) Lord God Almighty." So in Rev 22:20, "Even so, (ναι) come, Lord Jesus." The word Amen here seems to determine the meaning of the phrase, and to make it the affirmation of a certainty, rather than the expression of a wish.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

I am Alpha and Omega. These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, and denote properly the first and the last. So in Rev 22:13, when the two expressions are united, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." So in Rev 1:17, the speaker says of himself, "I am the first and the last." Among the Jewish Rabbins, it was common to use the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet to denote the whole of anything, from beginning to end. Thus it is said, "Adam transgressed the whole law from to "--from Aleph to Tav. "Abraham kept the whole law from to ." The language here is that which would properly denote eternity in the being to whom it is applied, and could be used in reference to no one but the true God. It means that he is the beginning and the end of all things; that he was at the commencement, and will be at the close; and it is thus equivalent to saying that he has always existed, and that he will always exist. Compare Isa 41:4, "I the Lord, the first, and with the last;'-- Isa 44:6, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God;"--Isa 48:12, "I am he; I am the first, I also am the last." There can be no doubt that the language here would be naturally understood as implying divinity, and it could be properly applied to no one but the true God. The obvious interpretation here would be to apply this to the Lord Jesus; for

(a) it is he who is spoken of in the verses preceding, and

(b) there can be no doubt that the same language is applied to him in Rev 1:11. As there is, however, a difference of reading in this place in the Greek text, and as it cannot be absolutely certain that the writer meant to refer to the Lord Jesus specifically here, this cannot be adduced with propriety as a proof-text to demonstrate his divinity. Many MSS., instead of "Lord," κυριος, read "God," θεος; and this reading is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and is now regarded as the correct reading. There is no real incongruity in supposing, also, that the writer here meant to refer to God as such, since the introduction of a reference to him would not be inappropriate to his manifest design. Besides, a portion of

the language here used, "which is, and was, and is to come," is that which would more naturally suggest a reference to God as such, than to the Lord Jesus Christ. See Rev 1:4. The object for which this passage referring to the "first and the last--to him who was, and is, and is to come," is introduced here evidently is, to show that as he was clothed with omnipotence, and would continue to exist through all ages to come as he had existed in all ages past, there could be no doubt about his ability to execute all which it is said he would execute.

Saith the Lord. Or, saith God, according to what is now regarded as the correct reading.

Which is, and which was, etc. Rev 1:4.

The Almighty. An appellation often applied to God, meaning that he has all power, and used here to denote that he is able to accomplish what is disclosed in this book.

A Vision of the Son of Man

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I John, who also am your brother. Your Christian brother; who am a fellow-Christian with you. The reference here is doubtless to the members of the seven churches in Asia, to whom the epistles in the following chapters were addressed, and to whom the whole book seems to have been sent. In the previous verse, the writer had closed the salutation, and he here commences a description of the Circumstances under which the vision appeared to him. He was in a lonely island, to which he had been banished on account of his attachment to religion; he was in a state of high spiritual enjoyment on the day devoted to the sacred remembrance of the Redeemer; he suddenly heard a voice behind him, and turning saw the Son of

man himself in glorious form in the midst of seven golden lamps, and fell at his feet as dead.

And companion in tribulation. Your partner in affliction. That is, he and they were suffering substantially the same kind of trials on account of their religion. It is evident from this, that some form of persecution was then raging in which they were also sufferers, though in their case it did not lead to banishment. The leader, the apostle, the aged and influential preacher, was banished; but there were many other forms of trial which they might be called to endure who remained at home. What they were we have not the means of knowing with certainty.

And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. The meaning of this passage is, that he, and those whom he addressed, were not only companions in affliction, but were fellow partners in the kingdom of the Redeemer--that is, they shared the honour and the privileges pertaining to that kingdom; and that they were fellow-partners in the patience of Jesus Christ--that is, in enduring with patience whatever might follow from their being his friends and followers. The general idea is, that alike in privileges and sufferings they were united. They shared alike in the results of their attachment to the Saviour.

Was in the isle that is called Patmos. Patmos is one of the cluster of islands in the Aegean Sea, anciently called the Sporades. It lies between the island of Icaria and the promontory of Miletus. It is merely mentioned by the ancient geographers, Plin. His. Nat. 4, 23; Strabo, 10, 488. It is now called Patino, or Patmosa. It is some six or eight miles in length, and not more than a mile in breadth, being about fifteen miles in circumference. It has neither trees nor rivers; nor has it any land for cultivation, except some little nooks among the ledges of rocks. On approaching the island, the coast is high, and consists of a succession of capes, which form so many ports, some of which are excellent. The only one in use, however, is a deep bay, sheltered by high mountains on every side but one,

where it is protected by a projecting cape. The town attached to this port is situated upon a high rocky mountain, rising immediately from the sea, and this with the Scala below upon the shore, consisting of some ships and houses, forms the only inhabited site of the island. Though Patmos is deficient in trees, it abounds in flowery plants and shrubs. Walnuts and other fruit trees are raised in the orchards, and the wine of Patmos is the strongest and the best favoured in the Greek islands. Maize and barley are cultivated, but not in a quantity sufficient for the use of the inhabitants, and for a supply of their own vessels, and others which often put into their good harbour for provisions. The inhabitants now do not exceed four or five thousand, many of whom are emigrants from the neighbouring continent. About half-way up the mountain, there is shown a natural grotto in a rock, where John is said to have seen his visions, and to have written this book. Near this is a small church, connected with which is a school or college, where the Greek language is taught; and on the top of the hill, and in the centre of the island, is a monastery, which from its situation has a very majestic appearance. --Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature. It is commonly supposed that John was banished to this island by Domitian, about A.D. 94. No place could have been selected for banishment which would accord better with such a design than this. Lonely, desolate, barren, uninhabited, seldom visited, it had all the requisites which could be desired for a place of punishment, and banishment to that place would accomplish all that a persecutor could wish in silencing an apostle, without putting him to death. It was no uncommon thing in ancient times to banish men from their country; either sending them forth at large, or specifying some particular place to which they were to go. The whole narrative leads us to suppose that this place was designated as that to which John was to be sent. Banishment to an island was a common mode of punishment; and there was a distinction made by this act in favour of those who were thus banished. The more base, low, and vile of criminals were commonly condemned to work in the mines; the more decent and respectable were banished to some lonely island. See the authorities quoted in Wetstein, in loc. For the word of God. On

account of the word of God; that is, for holding and preaching the gospel. Rev 1:2. It cannot mean that he was sent there with a view to his preaching the word of God; for it is inconceivable that he should have been sent from Ephesus to preach in such a little, lonely, desolate place, where indeed there is no evidence that there were any inhabitants; nor can it mean that he was sent there by the Spirit of God to receive and record this revelation, for it is clear that the revelation could have been made elsewhere, and such a place afforded no peculiar advantages for this. The fair interpretation is, in accordance with all the testimony of antiquity, that he was sent there in a time of persecution as a punishment for preaching the gospel.

And for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rev 1:2, He did not go there to bear testimony to Jesus Christ on that island, either by preaching or recording the visions in this book, but he went because he had preached the doctrines which testified of Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

I was in the Spirit. This cannot refer to his own spirit--for such an expression would be unintelligible. The language then must refer to some unusual state, or to some influence that had been brought to bear upon him from without, that was appropriate to such a day. The word Spirit may refer either to the Holy Spirit, or to some state of mind such as the Holy Spirit produces--a spirit of elevated devotion; a state of high and uncommon religious enjoyment. It is clear that John does not mean here to say that he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit in such a sense as that he was inspired, for the command to make a record, as well as the visions, came subsequently to the time referred to. The fair meaning of the passage is, that he was at that time favoured in a large measure with the influences of the Holy Spirit--the spirit of true devotion; that he had a high state of religious enjoyment, and was in a condition not inappropriate to the remarkable communications which were made to him on that day. The state of mind in which he was at the time here referred to, is not such

as the prophets are often represented to have been in when under the prophetic inspiration, compare Eze 1:1, 8:3 Eze 40:2, Jer 24:1 and which was often accompanied with an entire prostration of bodily strength, compare Nu 24:4, Eze 1:28, Dan 10:8-10 1Sam 19:24, Rev 1:17 but such as any Christian may experience when in a high state of religious enjoyment. He was not yet under the prophetic ecstacy, (compare Acts 10:10, 11:5, 22:17) but was, though in a lonely and barren island, and far away from the privileges of the sanctuary, permitted to enjoy in a high degree the consolations of religion: an illustration of the great truth that God can meet his people anywhere; that, when in solitude and in circumstances of outward affliction, when persecuted and cast out, when deprived of the public means of grace and the society of religious friends, he can meet them with the abundant consolations of his grace, and pour joy and peace into their souls. This state was not inappropriate to the revelations which were about to be made to John, but this itself was not that state. It was a state which seems to have resulted from the fact, that on that desert island he devoted the day to the worship of God, and by honouring the day dedicated to the memory of the risen Saviour, found, what all will find, that it was attended with rich spiritual influences on his soul.

On the Lord's day. The word here rendered Lord's--κυριακη--occurs only in this place and in 1Cor 11:20, where it is applied to the Lord's Supper. It properly means pertaining to the Lord; and, so far as this word is concerned, it might mean a day pertaining to the Lord, in any sense, or for any reason--either because he claimed it as his own and had set it apart for his own service; or because it was designed to commemorate some important event pertaining to him; or because it was observed in honour of him. It is clear

(1) that this refers to some day which was distinguished from all other days of the week, and which would be sufficiently designated by the use of this term.

(2.) That it was a day which was for some reason regarded as peculiarly a day of the Lord, or peculiarly devoted to him.

(3.) It would further appear that this was a day particularly devoted to the Lord Jesus, for

(a) that is the natural meaning of the word Lord as used in the New Testament, (compare Barnes on "Ac 1:24") and

(b) if the Jewish Sabbath were intended to be designated, the word Sabbath would have been used. The term was used generally by the early Christians to denote the first day of the week. It occurs twice in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, (about A.D. 101,) who calls the Lord's day "the queen and prince of all days." Chrysostom (on Psalms 119) says, "It was called the Lord's day because the Lord rose from the dead on that day." Later fathers make a marked distinction between the Sabbath and the Lord's day; meaning by the former, the Jewish Sabbath, or the seventh day of the week, and by the latter, the first day of the week kept holy by Christians. So Theodoret, (Fab. Haeret. ii. 1,) speaking of the Ebionites, says, "They keep the Sabbath according to the Jewish law, and sanctify the Lord's day in like manner as we do."--Professor Stuart. The strong probability is, that the name was given to this day in honour of the Lord Jesus, and because he rose on that day from the dead. No one can doubt that it was an appellation given to the first day of the week, and the passage therefore proves

(1) that that day was thus early distinguished in some peculiar manner, so that the mere mention of it would be sufficient to identify it in the minds of those to whom the apostle wrote;

(2) that it was in some sense regarded as devoted to the Lord Jesus, or was designed in some way to commemorate what he had done; and

(3) that if this book were written by the apostle John, the observance of that day has the apostolic sanction. He had manifestly, in accordance with a prevailing custom, set apart this day in honour of the Lord Jesus. Though alone, he was engaged on that day in acts of devotion. Though far away from the sanctuary, he enjoyed what all Christians hope to enjoy on such a day of rest, and what not a few do in fact enjoy in its observance. We may remark in view of this statement,

(a) that when away from the sanctuary, and deprived of its privileges, we should nevertheless not fail to observe the Christian Sabbath. If on a bed of sickness; if in a land of strangers; if on the deep; if in a foreign clime; if on a lonely island as John was, where we have none of the advantages of public worship, we should yet honour the Sabbath. We Should worship God alone if we have none to unite with us; we should show to those around us, if we are with strangers, by our dress and our conversation, by a serious and devout manner, by abstinence from labour, and by a resting from travel, that we devoutly regard this day as set apart for God.

(b) We may expect, in such circumstances, and with such a devout observance of the day, that God will meet with us and bless us. It was on a lonely island, far away from the sanctuary and from the society of Christian friends, that the Saviour met "the beloved disciple," and we may trust it will be so with us. For on such a desert island; in a lonely forest; on the deep, or amid strangers in a foreign land, he can as easily meet us as in the sanctuary where we have been accustomed to worship, and when surrounded by all the privileges of a Christian land. No man--at home or abroad; among friends or strangers; enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, or deprived of those privileges--ever kept the Christian

Sabbath in a devout manner without profit to his own soul; and when deprived of the privileges of public worship, the visitations of the Saviour to the soul may be more than a compensation for all our privations. Who would not be willing to be banished to a lonely island like Patmos, if he might enjoy such a glorious vision of the Redeemer as John was favoured with there?

And heard behind me a great voice. A loud voice. This was of course sudden, and took him by surprise.

As of a trumpet. Loud as a trumpet. This is evidently the only point in the comparison. It does not mean that the tones of the voice resembled a trumpet, but only that it was clear, loud, and distinct like a trumpet. A trumpet is a well-known wind instrument distinguished for the clearness of its sounds, and was used for calling assemblies together, for marshalling hosts for battle, etc. The Hebrew word employed commonly to denote a trumpet-- shophar--means bright and clear, and is supposed to have been given to the instrument on account of its clear and shrill sound, as we now give the name "clarion" to a certain wind instrument. The Hebrew trumpet is often referred to as employed, on account of its clearness, to summon people together, Ex 19:13, Nu 10:10, Jud 7:18, 1Sam 13:3, 2Sam 15:10.

11 saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

And, What thou seest. The voice, in addition to the declaration "I am Alpha and Omegas" gave this direction that he should record what he saw. The phrase "what thou seest" refers to what would pass before him in vision; what he there saw, and what he would see in the extraordinary manifestations which were to be made to him.

Write in a book. Make a fair record of it all--evidently meaning that he should describe things as they occurred, and implying that

the vision would be held so long before the eye of his mind that he would be able to transfer it to the "book." The fair and obvious interpretation of this is, that he was to make the record in the island of Patmos, and then send it to the churches. Though Patmos was a lonely and barren place, and though probably there were few or no inhabitants there, yet there is no improbability in supposing that John could have found writing materials there, nor even that he may have been permitted to take such materials with him. He seems to have been banished for preaching, not for writing; and there is no evidence that the materials for writing would be withheld from him. John Bunyan in Bedford jail found materials for writing the Pilgrim's Progress; and there is no evidence that the apostle John was denied the means of recording his thoughts when in the island of Patmos. The word book here--βιβλιον--would more properly mean a roll or scroll, that being the form in which books were anciently made. Lk 4:17.

And send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. The churches which are immediately designated, not implying that there were no other churches in Asia, but that there were particular reasons for sending it to these. He was to send all that he should "see;" to wit, all that is recorded in this volume or book of "Revelation." Part of this (chapters 2-3) would appertain particularly to them; the remainder (chapters 4-22) would appertain to them no more than to others, but still they would have the common interest in it which all the church would have, and, in their circumstances of trial, there might be important reasons why they should see the assurance that the church would ultimately triumph over all its enemies. They were to derive from it themselves the consolation which it was fitted to impart in time of trial, and to transmit it to future times for the welfare of the church at large.

Unto Ephesus. Perhaps mentioned first as being the capital of that portion of Asia Minor; the most important city of the seven; the place where John had preached, and whence he had been banished.

For a particular description of these seven churches, see Barnes Notes on the epistles addressed to them in chapters 2-3.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. He naturally turned round to see who it was that spake to him in this solitary and desolate place, where he thought himself to be alone. To see the voice here means to see the person who spake.

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. These were the first things that met his eye. This must have been in vision, of course; and the meaning is, that there seemed to be there seven such lamps or candelabras. The word rendered candlesticks --λυχνια--means properly a light-stand; lamp-stand;--something to bear up a light. It would be applied to anything that was used for this purpose; and nothing is intimated, in the use of the word, in regard to the form or dimensions of the light-bearers. Lamps were more commonly used at that time than candles, and it is rather to be supposed that these were designed to be lamp-bearers, or lamp-sustainers, than candlesticks. They were seven in number; not one branching into seven, but seven standing apart, and so far from each other that he who appeared to John could stand among them. The lamp-bearers evidently sustained each a light, and these gave a peculiar brilliancy to the scene. It is not improbable that, as they were designed to represent the seven churches of Asia, they were arranged in an order resembling these churches. The scene is not laid in the temple, as many suppose, for there is nothing that resembles the arrangements in the temple except the mere fact of the lights. The scene as yet is in Patmos, and there is no evidence that John did not regard himself as there, or that he fancied for a moment that he was translated to the temple in Jerusalem. There can be no doubt as to the design of this representation, for it is expressly declared (Rev 1:20) that the seven lamp-bearers were intended to represent the seven churches. Light is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of true religion; Christians are represented as "the light of the world," (Mt 5:14) compare (Php

2:15, Jn 8:12) and a Christian church may be represented as a light standing in the midst of surrounding darkness.

13 and in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks. Standing among them, so as to be encircled within them. This shows that the representation could not have been like that of the vision of Zechariah, (Zech 4:2) where the prophet sees "a candlestick all of gold with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon." In the vision as it appeared to John, there was not one lamp-bearer with seven lamps or branches, but there were seven lamp-bearers so arranged that one in the likeness of the Son of man could stand in the midst of them.

One like unto the Son of man. This was evidently the Lord Jesus Christ himself, elsewhere so often called "the Son of man." That it was the Saviour himself is apparent from Rev 1:18. The expression rendered "like unto the Son of man," should have been "like unto a son of man;" that is, like a man--a human being, or in a human form. The reasons for so interpreting it are

(a) that the Greek is without the article; and

(b) that, as it is rendered in our version, it seems to make the writer say that he was like himself--since the expression "the Son of man" is in the New Testament but another name for the Lord Jesus. The phrase is often applied to him in the New Testament, and always, except in three instances, (Acts 7:56, Rev 1:13, 14:14) by the Saviour himself, evidently to denote his warm interest in man, or his relationship to man; to signify that he was a man, and wished to designate himself eminently as such. Mt 8:20. In the use of this phrase in the New Testament, there is probably an allusion to Dan 7:13. The idea would seem to be, that he whom he saw resembled "the Son of man"--the Lord Jesus as he had seen him in the days of his flesh--though it would appear that he did not know that it

was he until he was informed of it, Rev 1:18. Indeed, the costume in which he appeared was so unlike that in which John had been accustomed to see the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, that it cannot be well supposed that he would at once recognise him as the same.

Clothed with a garment down to the foot. A robe reaching down to the feet, or to the ankles, yet so as to leave the feet themselves visible. The allusion here, doubtless, is to a long, loose, flowing robe, such as was worn by kings. Compare Barnes Notes on Isa 6:1.

And girt about the paps. About the breast. It was common, and is still in the East, to wear a girdle to confine the robe, as well as to form a beautiful ornament. This was commonly worn about the middle of the person, or "the loins;" but it would seem also that it was sometimes worn around the breast. Mt 5:38-41.

With a golden girdle. Either wholly made of gold, or more probably richly ornamented with gold. This would naturally suggest the idea of one of rank--probably one of princely rank. The raiment here assumed was not that of a priest, but that of a king. It was very far from being that in which the Redeemer appeared when he dwelt upon the earth, and was rather designed to denote his royal state as he is exalted in heaven. He is not indeed represented with a crown and sceptre here, and perhaps the leading idea is that of one of exalted rank; of unusual dignity; of one fitted to inspire awe and respect. In other circumstances, in this book, this same Redeemer is represented as wearing a crown, and going forth to conquest. See Rev 19:12-16. Here the representation seems to have been designed to impress the mind with a sense of the greatness and glory of the personage who thus suddenly made his appearance.

14 His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow. Exceedingly or perfectly white--the first suggestion to the mind of the apostle being that of wool, and then the thought occurring of its extreme whiteness resembling snow--the purest white of which the mind conceives. The comparison with wool and snow to denote anything peculiarly white is not uncommon. See Isa 1:18. Professor Stuart supposes that this means, not that his hairs were literally white, as if with age, which he says would be incongruous to one just risen from the dead, clothed with immortal youth and rigour, but that it means radiant, bright, resplendent--similar to what occurred on the transfiguration of the Saviour, Mt 17:2. But to this it may be replied

(a) that this would not accord well with that with which his hair is compared--snow and wool, particularly the latter.

(b) The usual meaning of the word is more obvious here, and not at all inappropriate. The representation was fitted to signify majesty and authority; and this would be best accomplished by the image of one who was venerable in years. Thus in the vision that appeared to Daniel, (Dan 7:9) it is said of him who is there called the "Ancient of Days," that his "garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool." It is not improbable that John had that representation in his eye, and that therefore he would be impressed with the conviction that this was a manifestation of a Divine person. We are not necessarily to suppose that this is the form in which the Saviour always appears now in heaven, any more than we are to suppose that God appears always in the form in which he was manifested to Isaiah, (Isa 6:1) to Daniel, (Dan 7:9) or to Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu in the mount, Ex 24:10-11. The representation is, that this form was assumed for the purpose of impressing the mind of the apostle with a sense of his majesty and glory.

And his eyes were as a flame of fire. Bright, sharp, penetrating; as if everything was light before them, or they would penetrate into

the thoughts of men. Such a representation is not uncommon. We speak of a lightning glance, a fiery look, etc. In Dan 10:6, it is said of the man who appeared to the prophet on the banks of the river Hiddekel, that his eyes were "as lamps of fire." Numerous instances of this comparison from the Greek and Latin classics may be seen in Wetstein, in loc.

15 and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

And his feet like unto fine brass. Compare Dan 10:6, "And his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass." See also Eze 1:7, "And they" [the feet of the living creatures] "sparkled like the colour of burnished brass." The word here used--χαλκολιβανω--occurs in the New Testament only here and in Rev 2:18. It is not found in the Septuagint. The word properly means white brass, (probably compounded of χαλκος, brass, and λιβανος, whiteness, from the to be white.) Others regard it as from χαλκος, brass, and λιπαρον, clear. The metal referred to was undoubtedly a species of brass distinguished for its clearness or whiteness. Brass is a compound metal, composed of copper and zinc. The colour varies much according to the different proportions of the various ingredients. The Vulgate here renders the word aurichalcum, a mixture of gold and of brass--perhaps the same as the ηλεκτρον--the electrum of the ancients, composed of gold and of silver, usually in the proportion of four parts gold and one part silver, and distinguished for its brilliancy. See Robinson, Lex., and Wetstein, in loc. The kind of metal here referred to, however, would seem to be some compound of brass--of a whitish and brilliant colour. The exact proportion of the ingredients in the metal here referred to cannot now be determined.

As if they burned in a furnace. That is, his feet were so bright that they seemed to be like a beautiful metal glowing intensely in the midst of a furnace. Any one who has looked upon the dazzling and almost insupportable brilliancy of metal in a furnace, can form an idea of the image here presented.

And his voice as the sound of many waters. As the roar of the ocean, or of a cataract. Nothing could be a more sublime description of majesty and authority than to compare the voice of a speaker with the roar of the ocean. This comparison often occurs in the Scriptures. See Eze 43:2, "And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory." So Rev 14:2, 19:6. Compare Eze 1:24 Dan 10:6.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

And he had in his right hand seven stars. Emblematic of the angels of the seven churches. How he held them is not said. It may be that they seemed to rest on his open palm; or it may be that he seemed to hold them as if they were arranged in a certain order, and with some sort of attachment, so that they could be grasped. It is not improbable that, as in the case of the seven lamp-bearers, (Rev 1:13) they were so arranged as to represent the relative position of the seven churches.

And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. On the form of the ancient two-edged sword, Eph 6:17. The two edges were designed to cut both ways; and such a sword is a striking emblem of the penetrating power of truth, or of words that proceed from the mouth; and this is designed undoubtedly to be the representation here-that there was some symbol which showed that his words, or his truth, had the power of cutting deep, or penetrating the soul. So in Isa 49:2 it is said of the same personage, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." Isa 49:2. So in Heb 4:12,

The only difficulty here is in regard to the apparently incongruous representation of a sword seeming to proceed from the mouth; but it is not, perhaps, necessary to suppose that John means to say that he saw such an image. He heard him speak; he felt the penetrating power of his words; and they were as if a sharp sword proceeded

from his mouth. They penetrated deep into the soul, and as he looked on him it seemed as if a sword came from his mouth. Perhaps it is not necessary to suppose that there was even any visible representation of this--either of a sword or of the breath proceeding from his mouth appearing to take this form, as Professor Stuart supposes. It may be wholly a figurative representation, as Henrichs and Ewald suppose. Though there were visible and impressive symbols of his majesty and glory presented to the eyes, it is not necessary to suppose that there were visible symbols of his words.

And his countenance. His face. There had been before particular descriptions of some parts of his face--as of his eyes--but this is a representation of his whole aspect; of the general splendour and brightness of his countenance.

Was as the sun shineth in his strength. In his full splendour when unobscured by clouds; where his rays are in no way intercepted. Compare Jud 5:31: "But let them that love him [the Lord] be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." 2Sam 23:4, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds." Ps 19:5, "Which [the sun] is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." There could be no more striking description of the majesty and glory of the countenance than to compare it with the overpowering splendour of the sun.--This closes the description of the personage that appeared to John. The design was evidently to impress him with a sense of his majesty and glory, and to prepare the way for the authoritative nature of the communications which he was to make. It is obvious that this appearance must have been assumed. The representation is not that of the Redeemer as he rose from the dead--a middle-aged man; nor is it clear that it was the same as on the mount of transfiguration--where, for anything that appears, he retained his usual aspect and form though temporarily invested with extraordinary brilliancy; nor is it the form in which we may suppose he ascended to heaven--for there is no evidence

that he was thus transformed when he ascended; nor is it that of a priest --for all the peculiar habiliments of a Jewish priest are wanting in this description. The appearance assumed is, evidently, in accordance with various representations of God as he appeared to Ezekiel, to Isaiah, and to Daniel--that which was a suitable manifestation of a Divine being--of one clothed in the majesty and power of God. We are not to infer from this, that this is in fact the appearance of the Redeemer now in heaven, or that this is the form in which he will appear when he comes to judge the world. Of his appearance in heaven we have no knowledge; of the aspect which he will assume when he comes to judge men we have no certain information. We are necessarily quite as ignorant of this as we are of what will be our own form and appearance after the resurrection from the dead.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. As if I were dead; deprived of sense and consciousness. He was overwhelmed with the suddenness of the vision; he saw that this was a Divine being; but he did not as yet know that it was the Saviour. It is not probable that in this vision he would immediately recognise any of the familiar features of the Lord Jesus as he had been accustomed to see him some sixty years before; and if he did, the effect would have been quite as overpowering as is here described. But the subsequent revelations of this Divine personage would rather seem to imply that John did not at once recognise him as the Lord Jesus. The effect here described is one that often occurred to those who had a vision of God. See Dan 8:18, "Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright." Dan 8:27, "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business." Compare Ex 33:20, Isa 6:5, Eze 1:28, 43:3, Dan 10:7-9,17.

And he laid his right hand upon me. For the purpose of raising him up. Compare Dan 8:18, "He touched me, and set me upright." We usually stretch out the right hand to raise up one who is fallen.

Saying unto me, Fear not. Compare Mt 14:27, "It is I; be not afraid." The fact that it was the Saviour, though he appeared in this form of overpowering majesty, was a reason why John should not be afraid. Why that was a reason, he immediately adds--that he was the first and the last; that though he had been dead he was now alive, and would continue ever to live, and that he had the keys of hell and of death. It is evident that John was overpowered with that awful emotion which the human mind must feel at the evidence of the presence of God. Thus men feel when God seems to come near them by the impressive symbols of his majesty--as in the thunder, the earthquake, and the tempest. Compare Heb 12:21, Lk 9:34. Yet, amidst the most awful manifestations of Divine power, the simple assurance that our Redeemer is near us is enough to allay our fears, and diffuse calmness through the soul.

I am the first and the last. Rev 1:8. This is stated to be one of the reasons why he should not fear--that he was eternal: "I always live--have lived through all the past, and will live through all which is to come--and therefore I can accomplish all my promises, and execute all my purposes."

18 *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

I am he that liveth, and was dead. I was indeed once dead, but now I live, and shall continue to live for ever. This would at once identify him who thus appeared as the Lord Jesus Christ, for to no one else could this apply. He had been put to death; but he had risen from the grave. This also is given as a reason why John should not fear; and nothing would allay his fears more than this. He now saw that he was in the presence of that Saviour whom more than half a century before he had so tenderly loved when in the flesh, and whom, though now long absent, he had faithfully served, and for whose cause he was now in this lonely island. His

faith in his resurrection had not been a delusion; he saw the very Redeemer before him who had once been laid in the tomb.

Behold, I am alive for evermore. I am to live for ever. Death is no more to cut me down, and I am never again to slumber in the grave. As he was always to live, he could accomplish all his promises, and fulfil all his purposes. The Saviour is never to die again. He can, therefore, always sustain us in our troubles; he can be with us in our death. Whoever of our friends die, he will not die; when we die, he will still be on the throne.

Amen. A word here of strong affirmation--as if he had said, it is truly, or certainly so. Rev 1:7. This expression is one that the Saviour often used when he wished to give emphasis, or to express anything strongly. Compare Jn 3:3, 5:25.

And have the keys of hell and of death. The word rendered hell--αδης, hades--refers properly to the under world; the abode of departed spirits; the region of the dead. This was represented as dull and gloomy; as enclosed with walls; as entered through gates which were fastened with bolts and bars. For a description of the views which prevailed among the ancients on this subject, Lk 16:23, Job 10:21, Job 10:22. To hold the key of this, was to hold the power over the invisible world. It was the more appropriate that the Saviour should represent himself as having this authority, as he had himself been raised from the dead by his own power, (compare Jn 10:18) thus showing that the dominion over this dark world was entrusted to him.

And of death. A personification. Death reigns in that world. But to his wide-extended realms the Saviour holds the key, and can have access to his empire when he pleases, releasing all whom he chooses, and confining there still such as he shall please. It is probably in part from such hints as these that Milton drew his sublime description of the gates of hell in the Paradise Lost. As Christ always lives; as he always retains this power over the

regions of the dead, and the whole world of spirits, it may be further remarked that we have nothing to dread if we put our trust in him. We need not fear to enter a world which he has entered and from which he has emerged, achieving a glorious triumph; we need not fear what the dread king that reigns there can do to us, for his power extends not beyond the permission of the Saviour, and in his own time that Saviour will call us forth to life to die no more.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Write the things which thou hast seen. An account of the vision which thou hast had, Rev 1:10-18.

And the things which are. Give an account of those things which thou hast seen as designed to represent the condition of the seven churches. He had seen not only the Saviour, but he had seen seven lamp-stands, and seven stars in the hand of the Saviour, and he is now commanded to record the meaning of these symbols as referring to things then actually existing in the seven churches. This interpretation is demanded by Rev 1:20.

And the things which shall be hereafter. The Greek phrase rendered hereafter--μεταταυτα--means "after these things;" that is, he was to make a correct representation of the things which then were, and then to record what would occur "after these things:" to wit, of the images, symbols, and truths, which would be disclosed to him after what he had already seen. The expression refers to future times. He does not say for how long a time; but the revelations which were to be made referred to events which were to occur beyond those which were then taking place. Nothing can be argued from the use of this language in regard to the length of time embraced in the revelation--whether it extended only for a few years, or whether it embraced all coming time. The more natural interpretation, however, would seem to be, that it would stretch far into future years, and that it was designed to give at least an outline of what would be the character of the future in general.

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20 the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The mystery of the seven stars. On the word mystery, Eph 1:9. The word means, properly, that which is hidden, obscure, unknown--until it is disclosed by one having the ability to do it, or by the course of events. When disclosed it may be as clear, and as capable of comprehension, as any other truth. The meaning here, as applied to the seven stars, is, that they were symbols, and that their

meaning as symbols, without a suitable explanation, would remain hidden or unknown. They were designed to represent important truths, and John was directed to write down what they were intended in the circumstances to signify, and to send the explanation to the churches. It is evidently implied that the meaning of these symbols would be beyond the ordinary powers of the human mind to arrive at with certainty, and hence John was directed to explain the symbol. The general and obvious truths which they would serve to convey would be that the ministers of the churches, and the churches themselves, were designed to be lights in the world, and should burn clearly and steadily. Much important truth would be couched under these symbols, indeed, if nothing had been added in regard to their signification as employed here by the Saviour; but there were particular truths of great importance in reference to each of these "stars" and "lamp-bearers," which John was more fully to explain.

Which thou sawest in my right hand. Gr., "upon my right hand"--επιτηςδεξιαςμου: giving some support to the opinion that the stars, as they were seen, appeared to be placed on his hand--that is, on the palm of his hand as he stretched it out. The expression in Rev 1:16 is, that they were "in (εν) his right hand;" but the language here used is not decisive as to the position of the stars. They may have been held in some way by the hand, or represented as scattered on the open hand.

The angels of the seven churches. Gr., "Angels of the seven churches:" the article being wanting. This does not refer to them as a collective or associated body, for the addresses are made to them as individuals-- an epistle being directed to "the angel" of each particular church, Rev 2:1,12, etc. The evident meaning, however, is, that what was recorded should be directed to them not as pertaining to them exclusively as individuals, but as presiding over, or representing the churches, for what is recorded pertains to the churches, and was evidently designed to be laid before them. It was for the churches, but was committed to the "angel" as

representing the church, and to be communicated to the church under his care. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word angels here. By the advocates of episcopacy, it has been argued that the use of this term proves that there was a presiding bishop over a circle or group of churches in Ephesus, in Smyrna, etc., since it is said that it cannot be supposed that there was but a single church in a city so large as Ephesus, or in the other cities mentioned. A full examination of this argument may be seen in my work on the "Apostolic Church," [pp. 191-199, London ed.] The word angel properly means a messenger, and is thus applied to celestial beings as messengers sent forth from God to convey or to do his will. This being the common meaning of the word, it may be employed to denote any one who is a messenger, and hence, with propriety, any one who is employed to communicate the will of another; to transact his business, or, more remotely, to act in his place--to be a representative. In order to ascertain the meaning of the word as used in this place, and in reference to these churches, it may be remarked,

(1.) that it cannot mean literally an angel, as referring to a heavenly being, for no one can suppose that such a being presided over these churches.

(2.) It cannot be shown to mean, as Lord (in loc.) supposes, messengers that the churches had sent to John, and that these letters were given to them to be returned by them to the churches, for

(a) there is no evidence that any such messengers had been sent to John;

(b) there is no probability that while he was a banished exile in Patmos such a thing would be permitted;

(c) the message was not sent by them, it was sent to them--"Unto the angel of the church in Ephesus write," etc.

(3.) It cannot be proved that the reference is to a prelatical bishop presiding over a group or circle of churches, called a diocese, for

(a) there is nothing in the word angel, as used in this connexion, which would be peculiarly applicable to such a personage--it belong as applicable to a pastor of a single church as to a bishop of many churches.

(b) There is no evidence that there were any such groups of churches then as constitute an episcopal diocese.

(c) The use of the word "church" in the singular, as applied to Ephesus, Smyrna, etc., rather implies that there was but a single church in each of those cities. Compare Rev 2:1,8,12,18; see also similar language in regard to the church in Corinth, 1Cor 1:2; in Antioch, Acts 13:1; at Laodicea, Col 4:16; and at Ephesus, Acts 20:28.

(d) There is no evidence, as Episcopalians must suppose, that a successor to John had been appointed at Ephesus, if, as they suppose, he was "bishop" of Ephesus; and there is no probability that they would so soon after his banishment show him such a want of respect as to regard the see as vacant, and appoint a successor.

(e) There is no improbability in supposing that there was a single church in each of these cities--as at Antioch, Corinth, Rome.

(f) If John was a prelatical "bishop," it is probable that he was "bishop" of the whole group of churches embracing the seven: yet here, if the word "angel" means "bishop," we have no less than seven such bishops immediately appointed to succeed him. And

(g) the supposition that this refers to prelatical bishops is so forced and unnatural that many Episcopalians are compelled to abandon it. Thus Stillingfleet, than whom an abler man, or one whose praise

is higher in episcopal churches, as an advocate of prelacy, is not to be found, says of these angels: "If many things in the epistles be directed to the angels, but yet so as to concern the whole body, then, of necessity, the angel must be taken as a representative of the whole body; and then why may not the angel be taken by way of representation of the body itself, either of the whole church, or, which is far more probable, of the concessors, or order of presbyters in this church?"

(4.) If the word does not mean literally an angel; if it does not refer to messengers sent to John in Patmos by the churches; and if it does not refer to a prelatical bishop, then it follows that it must refer to some one who presided over the church as its pastor, and through whom a message might be properly sent to the church. Thus understood, the pastor or "angel" would be regarded as the representative of the church; that is, as delegated by the church to manage its affairs, and as the authorized person to whom communications should be made in matters pertaining to it-- as pastors are now. A few considerations will further confirm this interpretation, and throw additional light on the meaning of the word.

(a) The word angel is employed in the Old Testament to denote a prophet; that is, a minister of religion as sent by God to communicate his will. Thus in Haggai (Hag 1:13) it is said, "Then spoke Haggai, the Lord's messenger, [Heb. angel, --Septuagint αγγελοςκυριου] in the Lord's message unto the people," etc.

(b) It is applied to a priest, as one sent by God to execute the functions of that office, or to act in the name of the Lord. Mal 2:7, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts"----that is, "angel of the Lord of hosts."

(c) The name prophet is often given in the New Testament to the ministers of religion, as being appointed by God to proclaim or

communicate his will to his people, and as occupying a place resembling, in some respects, that of the prophets in the Old Testament.

(d) There was no reason why the word might not be thus employed to designate a pastor of a Christian church, as well as to designate a prophet or a priest under the Old Testament dispensation.

(e) The supposition that a pastor of a church is intended will meet all the circumstances of the case: for,

(1) it is an appropriate appellation;

(2) there is no reason to suppose that there was more than one church in each of the cities referred to;

(3) it is a term which would designate the respect in which the office was held;

(4) it would impress upon those to whom it was applied a solemn sense of their responsibility. Further, it would be more appropriately applied to a pastor of a single church than to a prelatical bishop; to the tender, intimate, and endearing relation sustained by a pastor to his people, to the blending of sympathy, interest, and affection, where he is with them continually, meets them frequently in the sanctuary, administers to them the bread of life, goes into their abodes when they are afflicted, and attends their kindred to the grave, than to the union subsisting between the people of an extended diocese and a prelate--the formal, unfrequent, and, in many instances, stately and pompous visitations of a diocesan bishop--to the unsympathising relation between him and a people scattered in many churches, who are visited at distant intervals by one claiming a "superiority in ministerial rights and powers," and who must be a stranger to the ten thousand ties of endearment which bind the hearts of a pastor

and people together. The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the "angel of the church" was the pastor, or the presiding presbyter in the church; the minister who had the pastoral charge of it, and who was therefore a proper representative of it. He was a man who, in some respects, performed the functions which the angels of God do; that is, who was appointed to execute his will, to communicate his message, and to convey important intimations of his purposes to his people. To no one could the communications in this book, intended for the churches, be more properly entrusted than to such an one; for to no one now would a communication be more properly entrusted than to a pastor.

Revelation-2

The Message to Ephesus

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

Unto the angel. The minister; the presiding presbyter; the bishop--in the primitive sense of the word bishop--denoting one who had the spiritual charge of a congregation. Rev 1:20.

Of the church. Not of the churches of Ephesus, but of the one church of that city. There is no evidence that the word is used in a collective sense to denote a group of churches, like a diocese; nor is there any evidence that there was such a group of churches in Ephesus, or that there was more than one church in that city. It is probable that all who were Christians there were regarded as members of one church--though for convenience they may have met for worship in different places. Thus there was one church in Corinth, (1Cor 1:1) one church in Thessalonica, (1Thes 1:1,) etc.

Of Ephesus. On the situation of Ephesus, Acts 18:19, and the Introduction to the Notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians. It was the capital of Ionia; was one of the twelve Ionian cities of Asia Minor in the Mythic times, and was said to have been founded by the Amazons. It was situated on the river Cayster, not far from the Icarian Sea, between Smyrna and Miletus. It was one of the most considerable cities of Asia Minor, and while, about the epoch when Christianity was introduced, other cities declined, Ephesus rose more and more. It owed its prosperity, in part, to the favour of its governors, for Lysimachus named the city Arsinbe, in honour of his second wife, and Attalus Philadelphus furnished it with splendid wharves and docks. Under the Romans it was the capital not only of Ionia, but of the entire province of Asia, and bore the honourable title of the first and greatest metropolis of Asia. John is supposed to have resided in this city, and to have preached the gospel there for many years; and on this account perhaps it was, as well as on account of the relative importance of the city, that the first epistle of the seven was addressed to that church. On the present condition of the ruins of Ephesus, Rev 2:5. We have no means whatever of ascertaining the size of the church when John wrote the book of Revelation. From the fact, however, that Paul, as is supposed, (see Introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians,) laboured there for about three years; that there was a body of "elders" who presided over the church there, (Acts 20:1) and that the apostle John seems to have spent a considerable part of his life there in preaching the gospel, it may be presumed that there was a large and flourishing church in that city. The epistle before us shows also that it was characterized by distinguished piety.

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand. Rev 1:16. The object here seems to be to turn the attention of the church in Ephesus to some attribute of the Saviour which deserved their special regard, or which constituted a special reason for attending to what he said. To do this, the attention is directed in this case to the fact that he held the seven stars--emblematic of the ministers of the churches--in his hand, and that he walked in the

midst of the lamp-bearers--representing the churches themselves, intimating that they were dependent on him; that he had power to continue or remove the ministry, and that it was by his presence only that those lamp-bearers would continue to give light. The absolute control over the ministry, and the fact that he walked amidst the churches, and that his presence was necessary to their perpetuity and their welfare, seem to be the principal ideas implied in this representation. These truths he would impress on their minds in order that they might feel how easy it would be for him to punish any disobedience, and in order that they might do what was necessary to secure his continual presence among them. These views seem to be sanctioned by the character of the punishment threatened, (Rev 2:5,) "that he would remove the candlestick representing their church out of its place." Rev 2:5.

Who walketh in the midst, etc. In chapter Rev 1:13, he is represented simply as being seen amidst the golden candlesticks, Rev 1:13. Here there is the additional idea of his "walking" in the midst of them, implying perhaps constant and vigilant supervision. He went from one to another, as one who inspects and surveys what is under his care; perhaps also with the idea that he went among them as a friend to bless them.

2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

I know thy works. The common formula with which all the epistles to the seven churches are introduced. It is designed to impress upon them deeply the conviction that he was intimately acquainted with all that they did, good and bad, and that therefore he was abundantly qualified to dispense rewards or administer punishments according to truth and justice. It may be observed, that as many of the things referred to in these epistles were things pertaining to the heart--the feelings, the state of the mind--it is implied that he who speaks here has an intimate acquaintance with the heart of man --a prerogative which is always attributed to the Saviour. See Jn 2:25. But no one can do this who is not Divine;

and this declaration, therefore, furnishes a strong proof of the divinity of Christ. See Ps 7:9, Jer 11:20, 17:10, 1Sam 16:7, 1Kgs 8:39.

And thy labour. The word here used--κοπος--means properly a beating, hence wailing, grief, with beating the breast; and then it means excessive labour or toil adapted to produce grief or sadness, and is commonly employed in the New Testament in the latter sense. It is used in the sense of trouble in Mt 26:10--"Why trouble ye [literally, why give ye trouble to] the woman?" (compare also Mk 14:6, Lk 11:7, 18:5, Gal 6:17) and in the sense of labour, or wearisome toil, in Jn 4:38, 1Cor 3:8, 15:58, 2Cor 6:5 2Cor 10:15, 2Cor 11:23,27 et al. The connexion here would admit of either sense. It is commonly understood, as in our translation, in the sense of labour, though it would seem that the other signification-- that of trouble--would not be inappropriate. If it means labour, it refers to their faithful service in his cause, and especially in opposing error. It seems to me, however, that the word trouble would better suit the connexion.

And thy patience. Under these trials; to wit, in relation to the efforts which had been made by the advocates of error to corrupt them, and to turn them away from the truth. They had patiently borne the opposition made to the truth; they had manifested a spirit of firm endurance amidst many arts of those opposed to them to draw them off from simple faith in Christ.

And how thou canst not bear them which are evil. Canst not endure or tolerate them. Compare Barnes on "2Jo 1:10,11". That is, they had no sympathy with their doctrines or their practices; they were utterly opposed to them. They had lent them no countenance, but had in every way shown that they had no fellowship with them. The evil persons here referred to were doubtless those mentioned in this verse as claiming that "they were apostles," and those mentioned in Rev 2:6 as the Nicolaitanes.

And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles. Thou hast thoroughly examined their claims. It is not said in what way they had done this, but it was probably by considering attentively and candidly the evidence on which they relied, whatever that may have been. Nor is it certainly known who these persons were, or on what grounds they advanced their pretensions to the apostolic office. It cannot be supposed that they claimed to have been of the number of apostles selected by the Saviour, for that would have been too absurd; and the only solution would seem to be that they claimed either

(1) that they had been called to that office after the Saviour ascended, as Paul was; or

(2) that they claimed the honour due to this name or office in virtue of some election to it; or

(3) that they claimed to be the successors of the apostles, and to possess and transmit their authority.

If the first of these, it would seem that the only ground of claim would be that they had been called in some miraculous way to the rank of apostles, and, of course, an examination of their claims would be an examination of the alleged miraculous call, and of the evidence on which they would rely that they had such a call. If the second, then the claim must have been founded on some such plea as that the apostolic office was designed to be elective, as in the case of Matthias, (Acts 1:23-26,) and that they maintained that this arrangement was to be continued in the church; and then an examination of their claims would involve an investigation of the question whether it was contemplated that the apostolic office was designed to be perpetuated in that manner, or whether the election of Matthias was only a temporary arrangement, designed to answer a particular purpose. If the third, then the claim must have been founded on the plea that the apostolic office was designed to be perpetuated by a regular succession, and that they, by ordination,

were in a line of that succession; and then the examination and refutation of the claim must have consisted in showing, from the nature of the office, and the necessary qualifications for the office of apostle, that it was designed to be temporary, and that there could be properly no successors of the apostles as such. On either of these suppositions such a line of argument would be fatal to all claims to any succession in the apostolic office now. If each of these points should fail, of course their claims to the rank of apostles would cease--just as all claims to the dignity and rank of the apostles must fail now. The passage becomes thus a strong argument against the claims of any persons to be "apostles," or to be the "successors" of the apostles in the peculiarity of their office.

And are not. There were never any apostles of Jesus Christ but the original twelve whom he chose; Matthias, who was chosen in the place of Judas, (Acts 1:26;) and Paul, who was specially called to the office by the Saviour after his resurrection. On this point, see my work on the "Apostolic Church," [pp. 49-57, London ed.]

And hast found them liars. Hast discovered their pretensions to be unfounded and false. In 2Cor 11:13, "false apostles" are mentioned; and in an office of so much honour as this, it is probable that there would be not a few claimants to it in the world. To set up a claim to what they knew they were not entitled to would be a falsehood; and as this seems to have been the character of these men, the Saviour in the passage before us does not hesitate to designate them by an appropriate term, and to call them liars. The point here commended in the Ephesian church is, that they had sought to have a pure ministry--a ministry whose claims were well founded. They had felt the importance of this; had carefully examined the claims of pretenders; and had refused to recognise those who could not show in a proper manner that they had been designated to their work by the Lord Jesus. The same zeal in the same cause would be commended by the Saviour now.

3 and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

And hast borne. Hast borne up under trials; or hast borne with, the evils with which you have been assailed. That is, you have not given way to murmuring or complaints in trial; you have not abandoned the principles of truth and yielded to the prevalence of error.

And hast patience. That is, in this connexion, hast shown that thou canst bear up under these things with patience. This is a repetition of what is said in Rev 2:2, but in a somewhat different connexion. There it rather refers to the trouble which they had experienced on account of the pretensions of false apostles, and the patient, persevering, and enduring spirit which they had shown in that form of trial; here the expression is more general, denoting a patient spirit in regard to all forms of trial.

And for my name's sake hast laboured. On account of me, and in my cause. That is, the labour here referred to, whatever it was, was to advance the cause of the Redeemer. In the word rendered "hast laboured" --εκοπιασας--there is a reference to the word used in the previous verse-- "thy labour"--κοπονσου; and the design is to show that the "labour," or trouble there referred to, was on account of him.

And hast not fainted. Hast not become exhausted, or wearied out, so as to give over. The word here used (καμνω) occurs in only three places in the New Testament: Heb 12:3, "Lest ye be wearied, and faint; Jas 5:15, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick;" and in the passage before us. It means properly to become weary and faint from toil, etc.; and the idea here is, that they had not become so wearied out as to give over from exhaustion. The sense of the whole passage is thus rendered by Professor Stuart: "Thou canst not bear with false teachers, but thou canst bear with troubles and perplexities on account of me; thou hast undergone wearisome toil, but thou art not wearied out thereby." The state of mind,

considered as the state of mind appropriate to a Christian, here represented, is, that we should not tolerate error and sin, but that we should bear up under the trials which they may incidentally occasion us; that we should have such a repugnance to evil that we cannot endure it, as evil, but that we should have such love to the Saviour and his cause as to be willing to bear anything, even in relation to that, or springing from that, that we may be called to suffer in that cause; that while we may be weary in his work--for our bodily strength may become exhausted (compare Mt 26:41) --we should not be weary of it; and that though we may have many perplexities, and may meet with much opposition, yet we should not relax our zeal, but should persevere with an ardour that never faints, until our Saviour calls us to our reward.

4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee. Notwithstanding this general commendation, there are things which I cannot approve.

Because thou hast left thy first love. Thou hast remitted-- αφηκας--or let down thy early love; that is, it is less glowing and ardent than it was at first. The love here referred to is evidently love to the Saviour; and the idea is, that, as a church, they had less of this than formerly characterized them. In this respect they were in a state of declension; and though they still maintained the doctrines of his religion, and opposed the advocates of error, they showed less ardour of affection towards him directly than they had formerly done. In regard to this, we may remark,

(1.) that what is here stated of the church at Ephesus is not uncommon.

(a) Individual Christians often lose much of their first love. It is true, indeed, that there is often an appearance of this which does not exist in reality. Not a little of the ardour of young converts is often nothing more than the excitement of animal feeling, which will soon die away of course, though their real love may not be

diminished, or may be constantly growing stronger. When a son returns home after a long absence, and meets his parents and brothers and sisters, there is a glow, a warmth of feeling, a joyousness of emotion, which cannot be expected to continue always, and which he may never be able to recall again, though he may be ever growing in real attachment to his friends and to his home.

(b) Churches remit the ardour of their first love. They are often formed under the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit when many are converted, and are warm-hearted and zealous young converts. Or they are formed from other churches that have become cold and dead, from which the new organization, embodying the life of the church, was constrained to separate. Or they are formed under the influence of some strong and mighty truth that has taken possession of the mind, and that gives a peculiar character to the church at first. Or they are formed with a distinct reference to promoting some one great object in the cause of the Redeemer. So the early Christian churches were formed. So the church in Germany, France, Switzerland, and England, came out from the Roman communion under the influence of the doctrine of justification by faith. So the Nestorians in former ages, and the Moravians in modern times, were characterized by warm zeal in the cause of missions. So the Puritans came out from the established church of England at one time, and the Methodists at another, warmed with a holier love to the cause of evangelical religion than existed in the body from which they separated. So many a church is formed now amidst the exciting scenes of a revival of religion, and in the early days of its history puts to shame the older and the slumbering churches around them. But it need scarcely be said that this early zeal may die away, and that the church, once so full of life and love, may become as cold as those that went before it, or as those from which it separated, and that there may be a necessity for the formation of new organizations that shall be fired with ardour and zeal. One has only to look at Germany, at Switzerland, at various portions of the reformed

churches elsewhere; at the Nestorinns, whose zeal for missions long since departed, or even at the Moravians, among whom it has so much declined; at various portions of the Puritan churches; and at many an individual church formed under the warm and exciting feelings of a revival of religion, to see that what occurred at Ephesus may occur elsewhere.

(2.) The same thing that occurred there may be expected to follow in all similar cases. The Saviour governs the church always on essentially the same principles; and it is no uncommon thing that when a church has lost the ardour of its first love, it is suffered more and more to decline, until "the candlestick is removed"--until either the church becomes wholly extinct, or until vital piety is wholly gone, and all that remains is the religion of forms.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen. The eminence which you once occupied. Call to remembrance the state in which you once were. The duty here enjoined is, when religion has declined in our hearts, or in the church, to call to distinct recollection the former state--the ardour, the zeal, the warmth of love which once characterized us. The reason for this is, that such a recalling of the former state will be likely to produce a happy influence on the heart. Nothing is better adapted to affect a backsliding Christian, or a backsliding church, than to call to distinct recollection the former condition--the happier days of piety. The joy then experienced; the good done; the honour reflected on the cause of religion; the peace of mind of that period, will contrast strongly with the present, and nothing will be better fitted to recall an erring church or an erring individual from their wanderings than such a reminiscence of the past. The advantages of thus "remembering" their former condition would be many--for some of the most valuable impressions which are made on the mind, and some of the most important lessons learned, are from

the recollections of a former state. Among those advantages, in this case, would be such as the following:

(a) It would show how much they might have enjoyed if they had continued as they began--how much more real happiness they would have had than they actually have enjoyed.

(b) How much good they might have done, if they had only persevered in the zeal with which they commenced the Christian life. How much more good might most Christians do than they actually accomplish, if they would barely, even without increasing it, continue with the degree of zeal with which they begin their course.

(c) How much greater attainments they might have made in the Divine life, and in the knowledge of religion, than they have made: that is, how much more elevated and enlarged might have been their views of religion, and their knowledge of the word of God. And

(d) such a recollection of their past state, as contrasted with what they now are, would exert a powerful influence in producing true repentance--for there is nothing better adapted to do this than a just view of what we might have been, as compared with what we now are. If a man has become cold towards his wife, nothing is better fitted to reclaim him than to recall to his recollection the time when he led her to the altar; the solemn vow then made; and the rapture of his heart when he pressed her to his bosom and called her his own.

And repent. The word here used means to change one's mind and purposes, and, along with that, the conduct or demeanour. The duty of repentance here urged would extend to all the points in which they had erred.

And do the first works. The works which Were done when the church was first established. That is, manifest the zeal and love which were formerly evinced in opposing error, and in doing good. This is the true counsel to be given to those who have backslidden, and have "left their first love," now. Often such persons, sensible that they have erred, and that they have not the enjoyment in religion which they once had, profess to be willing and desirous to return, but they know not how to do it--how to revive their ardour--how to rekindle in their bosom the flame of extinguished love. They suppose it must be by silent meditation, or by some supernatural influence, and they wait for some visitation from above to call them back, and to restore to them their former joy. The counsel of the Saviour to all such, however, is to do their first works. It is to engage at once in doing what they did in the first and best days of their piety--the days of their: espousals (Jer 2:2) to God. Let them read the Bible as they did then; let them pray as they did then; let them go forth in the duties of active benevolence as they did then; let them engage in teaching a Sabbath school as they did then; let them relieve the distressed, instruct the ignorant, raise up the fallen, as they did then; let them open their heart, their purse, and their hand to bless a dying world. As it was in this way that they manifested their love then, so this would be better fitted than all other things to rekindle the flame of love when it is almost extinguished. The weapon that is used keeps bright; that which has become rusty will become bright again if it is used.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly. On the word rendered quickly-- ταχει--Rev 1:1 The meaning is, that he would come as a Judge, at no distant period, to inflict punishment in the manner specified--by removing the candlestick out of its place. He does not say in what way it would be done--whether by some sudden judgment, by a direct act of power, or by a gradual process that would certainly lead to that result.

And will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. On the meaning of the word candlestick, Rev 1:12. The

meaning is, that the church gave light in Ephesus; and that what he would do in regard to that place would be like removing a lamp, and leaving a place in darkness. The expression is equivalent to saying that the church there would cease to exist. The proper idea of the passage is, that the church would be wholly extinct, and it is observable that this is a judgment more distinctly disclosed in reference to this church than to any other of the seven churches. There is not the least evidence that the church at Ephesus did repent, and the threatening has been most signally fulfilled. Long since the church has become utterly extinct, and for ages there was not a single professing Christian there. Every memorial of there having been a church there has departed, and there are nowhere, not even in Nineveh, Babylon, or Tyre, more affecting demonstrations of the fulfilment of ancient prophecy than in the present state of the ruins of Ephesus. A remark of Mr. Gibbon (Dec. and Fall, iv. 260) will show with what exactness the prediction in regard to this church has been accomplished. He is speaking of the conquests of the Turks. "In the loss of Ephesus, the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelations; the desolation is complete; and the Temple of Diana, or the Church of Mercy, will equally elude the search of the curious traveller." Thus the city, with the splendid Temple of Diana, and the church that existed there in the time of John, has disappeared, and nothing remains but unsightly ruins. These ruins lie about ten days' journey from Smyrna, and consist of shattered walls, and remains of columns and temples. The soil on which a large part of the city is supposed to have stood, naturally rich, is covered with a rank, burnt up vegetation, and is everywhere deserted and solitary, though bordered by picturesque mountains. A few corn-fields are scattered along the site of the ancient city. Towards the sea extends the ancient port, a pestilential marsh. Along the slope of the mountain, and over the plain, are scattered fragments of masonry and detached ruins, but nothing can now be fixed on as the great Temple of Diana. There are ruins of a theatre; there is a circus, or stadium, nearly entire; there are fragments of temples and palaces scattered around; but there is nothing that marks the site of a church in the time of John; there is

nothing to indicate even that such a church then existed there. About a mile and a half from the principal ruins of Ephesus, there is indeed now a small village called Asalook--a Turkish word, which is associated with the same idea as Ephesus, meaning, The City of the Moon. A church, dedicated to John, is supposed to have stood near, if not on the site of, the present Mosque. Dr. Chandler (p. 150, 4to) gives us a striking description of Ephesus as he found it in 1764: "Its population consisted of a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility, the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness. Some reside in the substructure of the glorious edifices which they raised; some beneath the vaults of the stadium, and the crowded scenes of these diversions; and some in the abrupt precipice, in the sepulchres which received their ashes. Its streets are obscured and overgrown. A herd of goats was driven to it for shelter from the sun at noon, and a noisy flight of crows from the quarries seemed to insult its silence. We heard the partridge call in the area of the theatre and of the stadium ....Its fate is that of the entire country--a garden has become a desert. Busy centres of civilization, spots where the refinements and delights of the age were collected, are now a prey to silence, destruction, and death. Consecrated first of all to the purposes of idolatry, Ephesus next had Christian temples almost rivalling the Pagan in splendour, wherein the image of the great Diana lay prostrate before the cross; after the lapse of some centuries, Jesus gives way to Mohammed, and the crescent glittered on the dome of the recently Christian church. A few more scores of years, and Ephesus has neither temple, cross, crescent, nor city, but is desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness." See the article Ephesus in Kitto's Cyclo., and the authorities there referred to. What is affirmed here of Ephesus has often been illustrated in the history of the world, that when a church has declined in piety and love, and has been called by faithful ministers to repent, and has not done it, it has been abandoned more and more until the last appearance of truth and piety has departed, and it has been given up to error and to ruin. And the same principle is as applicable to individuals--for they have as much reason to dread the frowns of the Saviour as churches

have. If they who have "left their first love" will not repent at the call of the Saviour, they have every reason to apprehend some fearful judgment--some awful visitation of his Providence that shall overwhelm them in sorrow, as a proof of his displeasure. Even though they should finally be saved, their days may be without comfort, and perhaps their last moments without a ray of conscious hope. The engraving on the previous page, representing the present situation of Ephesus, will bring before the eye a striking illustration of the fulfilment of this prophecy that the candlestick of Ephesus would be removed from its place.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

But this thou hast. This thou hast that I approve of, or that I can commend.

That thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. Gr., works---ταεργα. The word Nicolaitanes occurs only in this place, and in Rev 2:15. From the reference in the latter place, it is clear that the doctrines which they held prevailed at Pergamos as well as at Ephesus; but from neither place can anything now be inferred in regard to the nature of their doctrines or their practices, unless it be supposed that they held the same doctrine that was taught by Balaam. Rev 2:15. From the two passages, compared with each other, it would seem that they were alike corrupt in doctrine and in practice, for in the passage before us their deeds are mentioned, and in Rev 2:15 their doctrine. Various conjectures, however, have been formed respecting this class of people, and the reasons why the name was given to them.

I. In regard to the origin of the name, there have been three opinions:

(1.) That mentioned by Irenoeus, and by some of the other fathers, that the name was derived from Nicolas, one of the deacons ordained at Antioch, Acts 6:5. Of those who have held this opinion, some have supposed that it was given to them because he became

apostate and was the founder of the sect, and others because they assumed his name in order to give the greater credit to their doctrine. But neither of these suppositions rests on any certain evidence, and both are destitute of probability. There is no proof whatever that Nicolas the deacon ever apostatized from the faith and became the founder of a sect; and if a name had been assumed in order to give credit to a sect and extend its influence, it is much more probable that the name of an apostle would have been chosen, or of some other prominent man, than the name of an obscure deacon of Antioch.

(2.) Vitringa, and most commentators since his time, have supposed that the name Nicolaitanes was intended to be symbolical, and was not designed to designate any sect of people, but to denote those who resembled Balaam, and that this word is used in the same manner as the word Jezebel in Rev 2:20, which is supposed to be symbolical there. Vitringa supposes that the word is derived from νικος, victory, and λαος, people, and that thus it corresponds with the name Balaam, as meaning either lord of the people, or he destroyed the people; and that, as the same effect was produced by their doctrines a by those of Balaam, that the people were led to commit fornication and to join in idolatrous worship, they might be called Balaamites or Nicolaitanes--that is, corrupters of the people. But to this it may be replied,

(a) that it is far-fetched, and is adopted only to remove a difficulty;

(b) that there is every reason to suppose that the word here used refers to a class of people who bore that name, and who were well known in the two churches specified;

(c) that, in Rev 2:15, they are expressly distinguished from those who held the doctrine of Balaam, Rev 2:14--"So hast thou also (και) those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes."

(3.) It has been supposed that some person now unknown, probably of the name Nicolas, or Nicolaus, was their leader, and laid the foundation of the sect. This is by far the most probable opinion, and to this there can be no objection. It is in accordance with what usually occurs in regard to sects, orthodox or heretical, that they derive their origin from some person whose name they continue to bear; and as there is no evidence that this sect prevailed extensively, or was indeed known beyond the limits of these churches, and as it soon disappeared, it is easily accounted for that the character and history of the founder were so soon forgotten.

II. In regard to the opinions which they held, there is as little certainty. Irenaeus (Adv. Haeres. i. 26) says that their characteristic tenets were the lawfulness of promiscuous intercourse with women, and of eating things offered to idols. Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. iii. 29) states substantially the same thing, and refers to a tradition respecting Nicolaus, that he had a beautiful wife, and was jealous of her, and being reproached with this, renounced all intercourse with her, and made use of an expression which was misunderstood, as implying that illicit pleasure was proper. Tertullian speaks of the Nicolaitanes as a branch of the Gnostic family, and as, in his time, extinct. Mosheim (De Rebus Christian. Ante Con. 69) says that "the questions about the Nicolaitanes have difficulties which cannot be solved." Neander (History of the Christian Religion, as translated by Torrey, i. pp. 452, 453) numbers them with Antinomians; though he expresses some doubt whether the actual existence of such a sect can be proved, and rather inclines to an opinion noticed above, that the name is symbolical, and that it is used in a mystical sense, according to the usual style of the book of Revelation, to denote corrupters or seducers of the people, like Balaam. He supposes that the passage relates simply to a class of persons who were in the practice of seducing Christians to participate in the sacrificial feasts of the heathens, and in the excesses which attended them--just as the Jews were led astray of old by the Moabites, Numbers 25. What was the origin of the name, however, Neander does not

profess to be able to determine, but suggests that it was the custom of such sects to attach themselves to some celebrated name of antiquity, in the choice of which they were often determined by circumstances quite accidental. He supposes also that the sect may have possessed a life of Nicolas of Antioch, drawn up by themselves or others from fabulous accounts and traditions, in which what had been imputed to Nicolas was embodied. Everything, however, in regard to the origin of this sect, and the reason of the name given to it, and the opinions which they held, is involved in great obscurity, and there is no hope of throwing light on the subject. It is generally agreed, among the writers of antiquity who have mentioned them, that they were distinguished for holding opinions which countenanced gross social indulgences. This is all that is really necessary to be known in regard to the passage before us, for this will explain the strong language of aversion and condemnation used by the Saviour respecting the sect in the epistles to the churches of Ephesus and Pergamos.

Which I also hate. If the view above taken of the opinions and practices of this people is correct, the reasons why he hated them are obvious. Nothing can be more opposed to the personal character of the Saviour, or to his religion, than such doctrines and deeds.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

He that hath an ear, let him hear, etc. This expression occurs at the close of each of the epistles addressed to the seven churches, and is substantially a mode of address often employed by the Saviour in his personal ministry, and quite characteristic of him. See Mt 11:15 Mk 4:23, 7:16. It is a form of expression designed to arrest the attention, and to denote that what was said was of special importance.

What the Spirit saith unto the churches. Evidently what the Holy Spirit says--for he is regarded in the Scriptures as the Source of inspiration, and as appointed to disclose truth to man. The "Spirit" may be regarded either as speaking through the Saviour, (compare Jn 3:34;) or as imparted to John, through whom he addressed the churches. In either case it is the same Spirit of inspiration, and in either case there would be a claim that his voice should be heard. The language here used is of a general character" He that hath an ear;" that is, what was spoken was worthy of the attention not only of the members of these churches, but of all others. The truths were of so general a character as to deserve the attention of mankind at large.

To him that overcometh. Gr., "To him that gains the victory, or is a conqueror"--τωνικωντι. This may refer to any victory of a moral character, and the expression used would be applicable to one who should triumph in any of these respects:--

(a) over his own easily-besetting sins;

(b) over the world and its temptations;

(c) over prevalent error;

(d) over the ills and trials of life, so as, in all these respects, to show that his Christian principles are firm and unshaken. Life, and the Christian life especially, may be regarded as a warfare. Thousands fall in the conflict with evil; but they who maintain a steady warfare, and who achieve a victory, shall be received as conquerors in the end.

Will I give to eat of the tree of life. As the reward of his victory. The meaning is, that he would admit him to heaven, represented as paradise, and permit him to enjoy its pleasures--represented by being permitted to partake of its fruits. The phrase "of the tree of

life" refers undoubtedly to the language used respecting the Garden of Eden, Gen 2:9, 3:22--where the "tree of life" is spoken of as that which was adapted to make the life of man perpetual. Of the nature of that tree nothing is known, though it would seem probable that, like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was a mere emblem of life--or a tree that was set before man in connexion with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that his destiny turned on the question whether he partook of the one or the other. That God should make the question of life or death depend on that, is no more absurd or improbable than that he should make it depend on what man does now--it being a matter of fact that life and death, happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, are often made to depend on things quite as arbitrary apparently, and quite as unimportant, as an act of obedience or disobedience in partaking of the fruit of a designated tree. Does it not appear probable that in Eden there were two trees designated to be of an emblematic character, of life and death, and that as man partook of the one or the other he would live or die? Of all the others he might freely partake without their affecting his condition; of one of these--the tree of life--he might have partaken before the fall, and lived for ever. One was forbidden on pain of death. When the law forbidding that was violated, it was still possible that he might partake of the other--but, since the sentence of death had been passed upon him, that would not now be proper, and he was driven from the garden, and the way was guarded by the flaming sword of the Cherubim. The reference in the passage before us is to the celestial paradise--to heaven--spoken of under the beautiful image of a garden; meaning that the condition of man, in regard to life, will still be the same as if he had partaken of the tree of life in Eden. Compare Rev 22:2.

Which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Heaven, represented as paradise. To be permitted to eat of that tree, that is, of the fruit of that tree, is but another expression implying the promise of eternal life, and of being happy for ever. The word paradise is of Oriental derivation, and is found in several of the Eastern

languages. In the Sanscrit the word paradesha and paradisha is used to denote a land elevated and cultivated; in the Armenian the word pardes denotes a garden around the house planted with grass, herbs, trees for use and ornament; and in the Hebrew form , and Greek παραδεισος, it is applied to the pleasure gardens and parks, with wild animals, around the country residences of the Persian monarchs and princes, Neh 2:8. Compare Eccl 2:5, Song 4:13; Xen. Cyro. i. 3, 14.--Rob. Lex. Here it is used to denote heaven--a world compared in beauty with a richly cultivated park or garden. Compare 2Cor 12:4. The meaning of the Saviour is, that he would receive him that overcame to a world of happiness; that he would permit him to taste of the fruit that grows there imparting immortal life, and to rest in an abode fitted up in a manner that would contribute in every way to enjoyment. Man, when he fell, was not permitted to reach forth his hand and pluck of the fruit of the tree of life in the first Eden, as he might have done if he had not fallen; but he is now permitted to reach forth his hand and partake of the tree of life in the paradise above. He is thus restored to what he might have been if he had not transgressed by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and in the Paradise Regained, the blessings of the Paradise Lost will be more than recovered--for man may now live for ever in a far higher and more blessed state than his would have been in Eden.

The Message to Smyrna

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.

Which was dead, and is alive. Rev 1:18. The idea is, that he is a living Saviour; and there was a propriety in referring to that fact here from the nature of the promise which he was about to make to the church at Smyrna: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death," Rev 2:11. As he had himself triumphed over death in all its forms, and was now alive for ever, it was appropriate that he should promise to his true friends the same protection from the second death. He who was wholly beyond the reach of death

could give the assurance that they who put their trust in him should come off victorious.

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

And tribulation. This word is of a general signification, and probably includes all that they suffered in any form, whether from persecution, poverty, or the blasphemy of opposers.

And poverty. It would seem that this church, at that time, was eminently poor, for this is not specified in regard to any one of the others. No reason is suggested why they were particularly poor. It was not, indeed, an uncommon characteristic of early Christians, (compare 1Cor 1:26-28,) but there might have been some special reasons why that church was eminently so. It is, however, the only church of the seven which has survived, and perhaps in the end its poverty was no disadvantage.

But thou art rich. Not in this world's goods, but in a more important respect--in the grace and favour of God. These things are not unfrequently united. Poverty is no hindrance to the favour of God, and there are some things in it favourable to the promotion of a right spirit towards God which are not found where there is abundant wealth. The Saviour was eminently poor, and not a few of his most devoted and useful followers have had as little of this world's goods as he had. The poor should always be cheerful and happy, if they can hear their Saviour saying unto them, "I know thy poverty--but thou art rich." However keen the feeling arising from the reflection "I am a poor man," the edge of the sorrow is taken off if the mind can be turned to a brighter image--"but thou art rich."

And I know the blasphemy. The reproaches; the harsh and bitter revilings. On the word blasphemy, Mt 9:3, 26:65. The word here does not seem to refer to blasphemy against God, but to bitter

reproaches against themselves. The reason of these reproaches is not stated, but it was doubtless on account of their religion.

Of them which say they are Jews. Who profess to be Jews. The idea seems to be, that though they were of Jewish extraction, and professed to be Jews, they were not true Jews; they indulged in a bitterness of reproach, and a severity of language, which showed that they had not the spirit of the Jewish religion; they had nothing which became those who were under the guidance of the spirit of their own Scriptures. That would have inculcated and fostered a milder temper; and the meaning here is, that although they were of Jewish origin, they were not worthy of the name. That spirit of bitter opposition was indeed often manifested in their treatment of Christians, as it had been of the Saviour, but still it was foreign to the true nature of their religion. There were Jews in all parts of Asia Minor, and the apostles often encountered them in their journeyings, but it would seem that there was something which had particularly embittered those of Smyrna against Christianity. What this was is now unknown. It may throw some light on the passage, however, to remark, that at a somewhat later period--in the time of the martyrdom of Polycarp--the Jews of Smyrna were among the most bitter of the enemies of Christians, and among the most violent in demanding the death of Polycarp. Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. iv. 15) says, that when Polycarp was apprehended, and brought before the proconsul at Smyrna, the Jews were the most furious of all in demanding his condemnation. When the mob, after his condemnation to death, set about gathering fuel to burn him, "the Jews," says he, "being especially zealous, as was their custom--μαλιστα προθυμωςωςεθοςαυτοις--ran to procure fuel." And when, as the burning failed, the martyr was transfixed with weapons, the Jews urged and besought the magistrate that his body might not be given up to Christians. Possibly at the time when this epistle was directed to be sent to Smyrna, there were Jews there who manifested the same spirit which those of their countrymen did afterwards, who urged on the death of Polycarp.

But are the synagogue of Satan. Deserve rather to be called the synagogue of Satan. The synagogue was a Jewish place of worship, (compare Mt 4:23,) but the word originally denoted the assembly or congregation. The meaning here is plain, that though they worshipped in a synagogue, and professed to be the worshippers of God, yet they were not worthy of the name, and deserved rather to be regarded as in the service of Satan. Satan is the word that is properly applied to the great evil spirit, elsewhere called the devil. Lk 22:3; Job 1:6.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. He did not promise them exemption from suffering. He saw that they were about to suffer, and he specifies the manner in which their affliction would occur. But he entreats and commands them not to be afraid. They were to look to the "crown of life," and to be comforted with the assurance that if they were faithful unto death, that would be theirs. We need not dread suffering if we can hear the voice of the Redeemer encouraging us, and if he assures us that in a little while we shall have the crown of life.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison. Or, shall cause some of you to be cast into prison. He had just said that their persecutors were of the "synagogue of Satan." He here represents Satan, or the devil--another name of the same being--as about to throw them into prison. This would be done undoubtedly by the hands of men, but still Satan was the prime mover, or the instigator in doing it. It was common to cast those who were persecuted into prison. See Acts 12:3-4, 16:23. It is not said on what pretence, or by what authority, this would be done; but, as John had been banished to Patmos from Ephesus, it is probable that this persecution was raging in the adjacent places, and there is no improbability in supposing that many might be thrown into prison.

That ye may be tried. That the reality of your faith may be subjected to a test to show whether it is genuine. The design in the case is that of the Saviour, though Satan is allowed to do it. It was common in the early periods of the church to suffer religion to be subjected to trial amidst persecutions, in order to show that it was of heavenly origin, and to demonstrate its value in view of the world. This is, indeed, one of the designs of trial at all times, but this seemed eminently desirable when a new system of religion was about to be given to mankind. Compare Barnes on "1Pe 1:6-7".

And ye shall have tribulation ten days. A short time; a brief period; a few days. It is possible, indeed, that this might have meant literally ten days, but it is much more in accordance with the general character of this book, in regard to numbers, to suppose that the word ten here is used to denote a few. Compare Gen 24:55, 1Sam 25:38, Dan 1:12,14. We are wholly ignorant how long the trial actually lasted; but the assurance was that it would not be long, and they were to allow this thought to cheer and sustain them in their sorrows. Why should not the same thought encourage us now? Affliction in this life, however severe, can be but brief; and in the hope that it will soon end, why should we not bear it without murmuring or repining?

Be thou faithful unto death. Implying, perhaps, that though, in regard to the church, the affliction would be brief, yet that it might be fatal to some of them, and they who were thus about to die should remain faithful to their Saviour until the hour of death. In relation to all, whether they were to suffer a violent death or not, the same injunction and the same promise was applicable. It is true of every one who is a Christian, in whatever manner he is to die, that if he is faithful unto death, a crown of life awaits him. Compare 2Ti 4:8.

And I will give thee a crown of life. Jas 1:12. Compare 1Pet 5:4, 1Cor 9:24-27. The promise here is somewhat different from that

which was made to the faithful in Ephesus, (Rev 2:7,) but the same thing substantially is promised theme happiness hereafter, or an admission into heaven. In the former case it is the peaceful image of those admitted into the scenes of paradise; here it is the triumph of the crowned martyr.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

He that overcometh. Rev 2:7. The particular promise here is made to him that should "overcome;" that is, that would gain the victory in the persecutions which were to come upon them. The reference is to him who would show the sustaining power of religion in times of persecution; who would not yield his principles when opposed and persecuted; who would be triumphant when so many efforts were made to induce him to apostatize and abandon the cause.

Shall not be hurt of the second death. By a second death. That is, he will have nothing to fear in the future world. The punishment of hell is often called death, not in the sense that the soul will cease to exist, but

(a) because death is the most fearful thing of which we have any knowledge, and

(b) because there is a striking similarity, in many respects, between death and future punishment. Death cuts off from life--and so the second death cuts off from eternal life; death puts an end to all our hopes here, and the second death to all our hopes for ever; death is attended with terrors and alarms--the faint and feeble emblem of the terrors and alarms in the world of woe. The phrase, "the second death," is three times used elsewhere by John in this book, (Rev 20:6,14, 21:8) but does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The words death and to die, however, are frequently used to denote the future punishment of the wicked.

The promise here made would be all that was necessary to sustain them in their trials. Nothing more is requisite to make the burdens

of life tolerable than an assurance that, when we reach the end of our earthly journey, we have arrived at the close of suffering, and that beyond the grave there is no power that can harm us. Religion, indeed, does not promise to its friends exemption from death in one form. To none of the race has such a promise ever been made, and to but two has the favour been granted to pass to heaven without tasting death. It could have been granted to all the redeemed, but there were good reasons why it should not be; that is, why it would be better that even they who are to dwell in heaven should return to the dust, and sleep in the tomb, than that they should be removed by perpetual miracle, translating them to heaven. Religion, therefore, does not come to us with any promise that we shall not die. But it comes with the assurance that we shall be sustained in the dying hour; that the Redeemer will accompany us through the dark valley; that death to us will be a calm and quiet slumber, in the hope of awaking in the morning of the resurrection; that we shall be raised up again with bodies incorruptible and undecaying; and that beyond the grave we shall never fear death in any form. What more is needful to enable us to bear with patience the trials of this life, and to look upon death when it does come, disarmed as it is of its sting, (1Cor 15:55-57) with calmness and peace?

The Message to Pergamos

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.

These things saith he which hath the sharp sword etc. Rev 1:16. Compare Heb 4:12, Eccl 12:11, Isa 49:2. Professor Stuart suggests that when the Saviour, as represented in the vision, "uttered words, as they proceeded from his mouth, the halitus which accompanied them assumed, in the view of John, the form of an igneous two-edged sword." It is more probable, however, that the words which proceeded from his mouth did not assume anything like a form or substance, but John means to represent them as if they were a sharp sword. His words cut and penetrate deep, and it was easy to picture him as having a sword proceeding from his mouth; that is, his

words were as piercing as a sharp sword. As he was about to reprove the church at Pergamos, there was a propriety in referring to this power of the Saviour. Reproof cuts deep; and this is the idea represented here.

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is:* and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

And where thou dwellest. That is, I know all the temptations to which you are exposed; all the allurements to sin by which you are surrounded; all the apologies which might be made for what has occurred arising from those circumstances; and all that could be said in commendation of you for having been as faithful as you have been. The sense of the passage is, that it does much to enable us to judge of character to know where men live. It is much more easy to be virtuous and pious in some circumstances than in others; and in order to determine how much credit is due to a man for his virtues, it is necessary to understand how much he has been called to resist, how many temptations he has encountered, what easily-besetting sins he may have, or what allurements may have been presented to his mind to draw him from the path of virtue and religion. In like manner, in order to judge correctly of those who have embraced error, or have been led into sin, it is necessary to understand what there may have been in their circumstances that gave to error what was plausible, and to sin what was attractive; what there was in their situation in life that exposed them to these influences, and what arguments may have been employed by the learned, the talented, and the plausible advocates of error, to lead them astray. We often judge harshly where the Saviour would be far less severe in his judgments; we often commend much where in fact there has been little to commend. It is possible to conceive that in the strugglings against evil of those who have ultimately fallen, there may be more to commend than in cases where the path of virtue has been pursued as the mere result of circumstances, and where there never has been a conflict with temptation. The adjudications of the great day will do much to reverse the judgments of mankind.

Even where Satan's seat is. A place of peculiar wickedness, as if Satan dwelt there. Satan is, as it were, enthroned there. The influence of Satan in producing persecution is that which is particularly alluded to, as is apparent from the reference which is immediately made to the case of Antipas, the "faithful martyr."

And thou holdest fast my name. They had professed the name of Christ; that is, they had professed to be his followers, and they had steadfastly adhered to him and his cause in all the opposition made to him. The name Christian, given in honour of Christ, and indicating that they were his disciples, they had not been ashamed of or denied. It was this name that subjected the early Christians to reproach. See 1Pet 4:14.

And hast not denied my faith. That is, hast not denied my religion. The great essential element in the Christian religion is faith, and this, since it is so important, is often put for the whole of religion.

Even in those days wherein Antipus was my faithful martyr. Of Antipas we know nothing more than is here stated. "In the Acta Sanctorum (ii. pp. 3, 4) is a martyrology of Antipas from a Greek MS.; but it is full of fable and fiction, which a later age had added to the original story."--Professor Stuart, in loc.

Who was slain among you. It would seem from this, that, though the persecution had raged there, but one person had been put to death, It would appear also that the persecution was of a local character, since Pergamos is described as "Satan's seat;" and the death of Antipus is mentioned in immediate connexion with that fact. All the circumstances referred to would lead us to suppose that this was a popular outbreak, and not a persecution carried on under the authority of government, and that Antipas was put to death in a popular excitement. So Stephen (Actsts 7) was put to death, and so Paul at Lystra was stoned until it was supposed he was dead, Acts 14:19.

Where Satan dwelleth. The repetition of this idea--very much in the manner of John--showed how intensely the mind was fixed on the thought, and how much alive the feelings were to the malice of Satan as exhibited at Pergamos.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

But I have a few things against thee. As against the church at Ephesus, Rev 2:4. The charge against this church, however, is somewhat different from that against the church at Ephesus. The charge there was, that they had "left their first love;" but it is spoken in commendation of them that they "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes," Rev 2:6. Here the charge is, that they tolerated that sect among them, and that they had among them also those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Their general Course had been such that the Saviour could approve it; he did not approve, however, of their tolerating those who held to pernicious practical error--error that tended to sap the very foundation of morals.

Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Baalam. It is not necessary to suppose that they professedly held to the same opinion as Balaam, or openly taught the same doctrines. The meaning is, that they taught substantially the same doctrine which Balaam did, and deserved to be classed with him. What that doctrine was is stated in the subsequent part of the verse.

Who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel. The word stumbling-block properly means anything over which one falls or stumbles, and then anything over which any one may or fall into sin, which becomes the occasion of one's falling into sin. The meaning here is, that it was through the instructions of Balaam that Balak learned the way by which the Israelites might be led into sin, and might thus bring upon themselves the Divine malediction. The main circumstances in the case were these:

(1.)-Balak, king of Moab, when the children of Israel approached his borders, felt that he could not contend successfully against so great a host, for his people were dispirited and disheartened at their numbers, Nu 22:3-4.

(2.) In these circumstances he resolved to send for one who had a might distinguished reputation as a prophet, that he "curse" that people, or might utter a malediction over them, in order at the same time to ensure their destruction, and to inspirit his own people in making war on them: in accordance with a prevalent opinion of ancient times, that prophets had the power of blighting anything by their curse. Job 3:8. For this purpose, he sent messengers to Balaam to invite him to come and perform this service, Nu 22:5-6.

(3.) Balaam professed to be a prophet of the Lord, and it was obviously proper that he should inquire of the Lord whether he should comply with this request. He did so, and was positively forbidden to go, Nu 22:12.

(4.) When the answer of Balaam was reported to Balak, he supposed that he might be prevailed to come by the offer of rewards, and he sent more distinguished messengers, with an offer of ample honour if he would come, Nu 22:15-17.

(5.) Balaam was evidently strongly inclined to go, but, in accordance with his character as a prophet, he said that if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold he could do no more, and say no more, than the Lord permitted, and he proposed again to consult the Lord, to see if he could obtain permission to go with the messengers of Balak. He obtained permission, but with the express injunction that he was only to utter what God should say; and when he came to Balak, notwithstanding his own manifest desire to comply with the wish of Balak, and notwithstanding all the offers which Balak made to him to induce him to do the

contrary, he only continued to bless the Hebrew people, until, in disgust and indignation, Balak sent him away again to his own land, Numbers chapters 22-23 and Nu 24:10 seq.

(6.) Balaam returned to his own house, but evidently with a desire still to gratify Balak. Being forbidden to curse the people of Israel; having been overruled in all his purposes to do it; having been, contrary to his own desires, constrained to bless them when he was himself more than willing to curse them; and having still a desire to comply with the wishes of the king of Moab, he cast about for some way in which the object might yet be accomplished--that is, in which the curse of God might in fact rest upon the Hebrew people, and they might become exposed to the Divine displeasure. To do this, no way occurred so plausible, and that had such probability of success, as to lead them into idolatry, and into the sinful and corrupt practices connected with idolatry. It was, therefore, resolved to make use of the charms of the females of Moab, that through their influence the Hebrews might be drawn into licentiousness. This was done. The abominations of idolatry spread through the camp of Israel; licentiousness everywhere prevailed, and God sent a plague upon them to punish them, Nu 25:1. That also this was planned and instigated by Balaam is apparent from Nu 31:16: "Behold these [women] caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord, in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." The attitude of Balaam's mind in the matter was this:

I. He had a strong desire to do that which he knew was wrong, and which was forbidden expressly by God.

II. He was restrained by internal checks and remonstrances, and prevented from doing what he wished to do.

III. He cast about for some way in which he might do it, notwithstanding these internal checks and remonstrances, and

finally accomplished the same thing in fact, though in form different from that which he had first prepared. This is not an unfair description of what often occurs in the plans and purposes of a wicked man. The meaning in the passage before us is, that in the church at Pergamos there were those who taught, substantially, the same thing that Balaam did; that is, the tendency of whose teaching was to lead men into idolatry, and the ordinary accompaniment of idolatry--licentiousness.

To eat things sacrificed unto idols. Balaam taught the Hebrews to do this--perhaps in some way securing their attendance on the riotous and gluttonous feasts of idolatry celebrated among the people among whom they sojourned. Such feasts were commonly held in idol temples, and they usually led to scenes of dissipation and corruption. By plausibly teaching that there could be no harm in eating what had been offered in sacrifice--since an idol was nothing, and the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice was the same as if slaughtered for some other purpose--it would seem that these teachers at Pergamos had induced professing Christians to attend on those feasts--thus lending their countenance to idolatry, and exposing themselves to all the corruption and licentiousness that commonly attended such celebrations. See the banefulness of thus eating the meat offered in sacrifice to idols. 1Cor 8:1.

And to commit fornication. Balaam taught this; and that was the tendency of the doctrines inculcated at Pergamos. On what pretence this was done is not said; but it is clear that the church had regarded this in a lenient manner. So accustomed had the heathen world been to this vice, that many who had been converted from idolatry might be disposed to look on it with less severity than we do now, and there was a necessity of incessant watchfulness lest the members of the church should fall into it. Acts 15:20.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

So hast thou also them, etc. That is, there are those among you who hold those doctrines. The meaning here may be, either that, in addition to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, they had also another class who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes; or that the Nicolaitanes held the same doctrine, and taught the same thing as Balaam. If but one class is referred to, and it is meant that the Nicolaitanes held the doctrines of Balaam, then we know what constituted their teaching; if two classes of false teachers are referred to, then we have no means of knowing what was the peculiarity of the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. The more natural and obvious construction, it seems to me, is to suppose that the speaker means to say that the Nicolaitanes taught the same things which Balaam did--to wit, that they led the people into corrupt and licentious practices. This interpretation seems to be demanded by the proper use of the word so"--ουτως--meaning, in this manner, on this wise, thus; and usually referring to what pr cedes. If this be the correct interpretation, then we have, in fact, a description of what the Nicolaitanes held, agreeing with all the accounts given of them by the ancient fathers. Rev 2:6. If this is so, also, then it is clear that the same kind of doctrines was held at Smyrna, at Pergamos, and at Thyatira, (Rev 2:20) though mentioned in somewhat different forms. It is not quite certain, however, that this is the correct interpretation, or that the writer does not mean to say that in addition to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, they had also another class of errorists who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.

Which thing I hate. So the common Greek text-- ομισω. But the best supported reading, and the one adapted by Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn, is ομοιως--in, like manner; that is, "as Balak retained a false prophet who misled the Hebrews, so thou retainest those who teach things like to those which Balaam taught."

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly. On the word quickly, Rev 1:1 The meaning here is, that he would come against them in judgment, or to punish them.

And will fight against them. Against the Nicolaitanes. He would come against the church for tolerating them, but his opposition would be principally directed against the Nicolaitanes themselves. The church would excite his displeasure by retaining them in its bosom, but it was in its power to save them from destruction. If the church would repent, or if it would separate itself from the evil, then the Saviour would not come against them. If this were not done, they would feel the vengeance of his sword, and be subjected to punishment. The church always suffers when it has offenders in its bosom; it has the power of saving them if it will repent of its own unfaithfulness, and will strive for their conversion.

With the sword of my mouth. Rev 1:16, 2:12. That is, he would give the order, and they would be cut as if by a sword. Precisely in what way it would be done he does not say; but it might be by persecution, or by heavy judgments. To see the force of this, we are to remember the power which Christ has to punish the wicked by a word of his mouth. By a word in the last day he will turn all the wicked into hell.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

Will I give to eat of the hidden manna. The true spiritual food; the food that nourishes the soul. The idea is, that the souls of those who "overcame," or who gained the victory in their conflict with sin, and in the persecutions and trials of the world, would be permitted to partake of that spiritual food which is laid up for the people of God, and by which they will be nourished for ever. The Hebrews were supported by manna in the desert, (Ex 16:16-35) a pot of that manna was laid up in the most holy place to be preserved as a memorial, (Ex 16:32-34) it is called "angel's food,"

(Ps 78:25) and "corn of heaven," (Ps 78:24) and it would seem to have been emblematical of that spiritual food by which the people of God are to be fed from heaven, in their journey through this world. By the word "hidden," there would seem to be an allusion to that which was laid up in the pot before the ark of the testimony, and the blessing which is promised here is that they would be nourished as if they were sustained by that manna thus laid up before the ark: by food from the immediate presence of God. The language thus explained would mean that they who overcome will be nourished through this life as if by that "hidden manna;" that is, that they will be supplied all along through the "wilderness of this world" by that food from the immediate presence of God which their souls require. As the parallel places in the epistles to the churches, however, refer rather to the heavenly world, and to the rewards which they who are victors shall have there, it seems probable that this has immediate reference to that world also, and that the meaning is, that, as the most holy place was a type of heaven, they will be admitted into the immediate presence of God, and nourished for ever by the food of heaven--that which the angels have; that which the soul will need to sustain it there. Even in this world their souls may be nourished with this "hidden manna;" in heaven it will be their constant food for ever.

And will give him a white stone. There has been a great variety of opinion in regard to the meaning of this expression, and almost no two expositors agree. Illustrations of its meaning have been sought from Grecian, Hebrew, and Roman customs, but none of these have removed all difficulty from the expression. The general sense of the language seems plain, even though the allusion on which it is founded is obscure or even unknown. It is, that the Saviour would give him who overcame, a token of his favour which would have some word or name inscribed on it, and which would be of use to him alone, or intelligible to him only: that is, some secret token which would make him sure of the favour of his Redeemer, and which would be unknown to other men. The idea here would find a correspondence in the evidences of his favour granted to the

soul of the Christian himself; in the pledge of heaven thus made to him, and which he would understand, but which no one else would understand. The things, then, which we are to look for in the explanation of the emblem are two--that which would thus be a token of his favour, and that which would explain the fact that it would be intelligible to no one else. The question is, whether there is any known thing pertaining to ancient customs which would convey these ideas. The word rendered stone--ψηφον--means properly a small stone, as worn smooth by water--a gravel-stone, a pebble; then any polished stone, the stone of a gem, or ring.- Rob. Lex. Such a stone was used among the Greeks for various purposes, and the word came to have a signification corresponding to these uses. The following uses are enumerated by Dr. Robinson, Lex.: the stones or counters for reckoning; dice, lots, used in a kind of magic; a vote, spoken of the black and white stones or pebbles anciently used in voting--that is, the white for approval, and the black for condemning. In regard to the use of the word here, some have supposed that the reference is to a custom of the Roman emperors, who, in the games and spectacles which they gave to the people in imitation of the Greeks, are said to have thrown among the populace dice or tokens inscribed with the words, "Frumentum, vestes," etc.; that is, "corn, clothing," etc.; and whosoever obtained one of these received from the emperor whatever was marked upon it. Others suppose that allusion is made to the mode of casting lots, in which sometimes dice or tokens were used with names inscribed on them, and the lot fell to him whose name first came out. The "white stone" was a symbol of good-fortune and prosperity; and it is a remarkable circumstance that, among the Greeks, persons of distinguished virtue were said to receive a ψηφον-- stone --from the gods, i.e. as an approving testimonial of their virtue. See Robinson's Lex., and the authorities there referred to; Wetstein, N. T., in loc., and Stuart, in loc. Professor Stuart supposes that the allusion is to the fact that Christians are said to be kings and priests to God, and that as the Jewish high priest had a mitre or turban, on the front of which was a plate of gold inscribed "Holiness to the Lord," so they who were kings and priests under the Christian dispensation would have that by which they would be known, but

that, instead of a plate of gold, they would have a pellucid stone, on which the name of the Saviour would be engraved as a token of his favour. It is possible, in regard to the explanation of this phrase, that there has been too much effort to find all the circumstances alluded to in some ancient custom. Some well-understood fact or custom may have suggested the general thought, and then the filling up may have been applicable to this case alone. It is quite clear, I think, that none of the customs to which it has been supposed there is reference correspond fully with what is stated here, and that though there may have been a general allusion of that kind, yet something of the particularity in the circumstances maybe regarded as peculiar to this alone. In accordance with this view, perhaps the following points will embody all that need be said:

(1.) A white stone was regarded as a token of favour, prosperity, or success everywhere--whether considered as a vote, or as given to a victor, etc. As such, it would denote that the Christian to whom it is said to be given would meet with the favour of the Redeemer, and would have a token of his approval.

(2.) The name written on this stone would be designed also as a token or pledge of his favour--as a name engraved on a signet or seal would be a pledge to him who received it of friendship. It would be not merely a white stone--emblematic of favour and approval--but would be so marked as to indicate its origin, with the name of the giver on it. This would appropriately denote, when explained, that the victor Christian would receive a token of the Redeemer's favour, as if his name were engraven on a stone, and given to him as a pledge of his friendship; that is, that he would be as certain of his favour as if he had such a stone. In other words, the victor would be assured from the Redeemer, who distributes rewards, that his welfare would be secure.

(3.) This would be to him as if he should receive a stone so marked that its letters were invisible to all others, but apparent to him who

received it. It is not needful to suppose that in the Olympic games, or in the prizes distributed by Roman emperors, or in any other custom, such a case had actually occurred, but it is conceivable that a name might be so engraved--with characters so small, or in letters so unknown to all others, or with marks so unintelligible to others--that no other one into whose hands it might fall would understand it. The meaning then probably is, that to the true Christian--the victor over sin--there is given some pledge of the Divine favour which has to him all the effect of assurance, and which others do not perceive or understand. This consists of favours shown directly to the soul--the evidence of pardoned sin; joy in the Holy Ghost; peace with God; clear views of the Saviour; the possession of a spirit which is properly that of Christ, and which is the gift of God to the soul. The true Christian understands this; the world perceives it not. The Christian receives it as a pledge of the Divine favour, and as an evidence that he will be saved; to the world, that on which he relies seems to be enthusiasm, fanaticism, or delusion. The Christian bears it about with him as he would a precious stone given to him by his Redeemer, and on which the name of his Redeemer is engraved, as a pledge that he is accepted of God, and that the rewards of heaven shall be his; the world does not understand it, or attaches no value to it.

And in the stone a new name written. A name indicating a new relation, new hopes and triumphs. Probably the name here referred to is the name of the Redeemer, or the name Christian, or some such appellation. It would be some name which he would understand and appreciate, and which would be a pledge of acceptance. Which no man knoweth, etc. That is, no one would understand its import, as no one but the Christian estimates the value of that on which he relies as the pledge of his Redeemer's love.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass.

These things saith the Son of God. This is the first time, in these epistles, that the name of the speaker is referred to. In each other instance, there is merely some attribute of the Saviour mentioned. Perhaps the severity of the rebuke contemplated here made it proper that there should be a more impressive reference to the authority of the speaker; and hence he is introduced as the "Son of God." It is not a reference to him as the "Son of man"--the common appellation which he gave to himself when on earth--for that might have suggested his humanity only, and would not have conveyed the same impression in regard to his authority; but it is to himself as sustaining the rank, and having the authority of the Son of God--one who, therefore, has a right to speak, and a right to demand that what he says shall be heard.

Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire. Rev 1:14. Before the glance of his eye all is light, and nothing can be concealed from his view. Nothing would be better fitted to inspire awe then, as nothing should be now, than such a reference to the Son of God as being able to penetrate the secret recesses of the heart.

And his feet are like fine brass. Rev 1:15. Perhaps indicative of majesty and glory as he walked in the midst of the churches.

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

And charity. Love: love to God, and love to man. There is no reason for restricting this word here to the comparatively narrow sense which it now bears. 1Cor 13:1

And service. Gr., ministry--διακονιαν. The word would seem to include all the service which the church had rendered in the cause of religion; all which was the proper fruit of love, or which would be a carrying out of the principles of love to God and man.

And faith. Or, fidelity in the cause of the Redeemer. The word here would include not only trust in Christ for salvation, but that which is the proper result of such trust--fidelity in his service.

And thy patience. Patient endurance of the sorrows of life--of all that God brought upon them in any way, to test the reality of their religion.

And thy works. Thy works as the fruit of the virtues just mentioned. The word is repeated here, from the first part of the verse, perhaps, to specify more particularly that their works had been recently more numerous and praiseworthy even than they had formerly been. In the beginning of the verse, as in the commencement of each of the epistles, the word is used, in the most general sense, to denote all that they had done; meaning that he had so thorough an acquaintance with them in all respects, that he could judge of their character. In the latter part of the verse, the word seems to be used in a more specific sense, as referring to good works, and with a view to say that they had latterly abounded in these more than they had formerly.

And the last to be more than the first. Those which had been recently performed were more numerous, and more commendable, than those which had been rendered formerly. That is, they were making progress; they had been acting more and more in accordance with the nature and claims of the Christian profession. This is a most honourable commendation, and one which every Christian, and every church, should seek. Religion in the soul, and in a community, is designed to be progressive; and, while we should seek to live in such a manner always that we may have the commendation of the Saviour, we should regard it as a thing to be greatly desired that we may be approved as making advances in knowledge and holiness; that as we grow in years we may grow alike in the disposition to do good, and in the ability to do it; that as we gain in experience, we may also gain in a readiness to apply the results of our experience in promoting the cause of religion, lie

would deserve little commendation in religion who should be merely stationary; he alone properly developes the nature of true piety, and shows that it has set up its reign in the soul, who is constantly making advances.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel. Thou dost tolerate, or countenance her. Rev 2:14. Who the individual here referred to by the name Jezebel was, is not known. It is by no means probable that this was her real name, but seems to have been given to her as expressive of her character and influence. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab; a woman of vast influence over her husband--an influence which was uniformly exerted for evil. She was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon, and lived about 918 years before Christ. She was an idolater, and induced her weak husband not only to connive at her introducing the worship of her native idols, but to become an idolater himself, and to use all the means in his power to establish the worship of idols instead of the worship of the true God. She was highly gifted, persuasive, and artful; was resolute in the accomplishment of her purposes; ambitious of extending and perpetuating her power, and unscrupulous in the means which she employed to execute her designs. See 1Kgs 16:31. The kind of character, therefore, which would be designated by the term as used here, would be that of a woman who was artful and persuasive in her manner; who was capable of exerting a wide influence over others; who had talents of a high order; who was a thorough advocate of error; who was unscrupulous in the means which she employed for accomplishing her ends, and the tendency of whose influence was to lead the people into the abominable practices of idolatry. The opinions which she held, and the practices into which she led others, appear to have been the same which are referred to in Rev 2:6, and Rev 2:14-15. The difference was, that the teacher in this case was a woman--a circumstance which by no means lessened the enormity of the offence; for,

besides the fact that it was contrary to the whole genius of Christianity that a woman should be a public teacher, there was a special incongruity that she should be an advocate of such abominable opinions and practices. Every sentiment of our nature makes us feel that it is right to expect that if a woman teaches at all in a public manner, she should inculcate only that which is true and holy--she should be an advocate of a pure life. We are shocked; we feel that there is a violation of every principle of our nature, and an insult done to our common humanity, if it is otherwise. We have in a manner become accustomed to the fact that man should be a teacher of pollution and error, so that we do not shrink from it with horror; we never can be reconciled to the fact that a woman should.

Which calleth herself a prophetess. Many persons set up the claim to be prophets in the times when the gospel was first preached, and it is not improbable that many females would lay claim to such a character, after the example of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, etc.

To teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication. Compare Rev 2:14 Whether she herself practised what she taught is not expressly affirmed, but seems to be implied in Rev 2:22. It is not often that persons teach these doctrines without practising what they teach; and the fact that they desire and design to live in this manner will commonly account for the fact that they inculcate such views.

And to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Rev 2:14 The custom of attending on the festivals of idols led commonly to licentiousness, and they who were gross and sensual in their lives were fit subjects to be persuaded to attend on idol feasts--for nowhere else would they find more unlimited toleration for the indulgence of their passions.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication. Probably after some direct and solemn warning of the evil of her course. The error

and sin had been of long standing, but he now resolved to bear with it no longer. It is true of almost every great sinner, that sufficient time is given for repentance, and that vengeance is delayed after crime is committed. But it cannot always be deferred, for the period must arrive when no reason shall exist for longer delay, and when punishment must come upon the offender.

And she repented not. As she did not do it; as she showed no disposition to abandon her course; as all plea of having had no time to repent would now be taken away, it was proper that he should rise in his anger and cut her down.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed. Not into a bed of ease, but a bed of pain. There is evidently a purpose to contrast this with her former condition. The harlot's bed and a sick bed are thus brought together, as they are often, in fact, in the dispensations of Providence and the righteous judgment of God. One cannot be indulged without leading on, sooner or later, to the horrid sufferings of the other: and how soon no one knows.

And them that commit adultery with her. Those who are seduced by her doctrines into this sin; either they who commit it with her literally, or who are led into the same kind of life.

Into great tribulation. Great suffering; disease of body or tortures of the soul. How often--how almost uniformly is this the case with those who thus live! Sooner or later, sorrow always comes upon the licentious; and God has evinced by some of his severest judgments, in forms of frightful disease, his displeasure at the violation of the laws of purity. There is no sin that produces a more withering and desicating effect upon the soul than that which is here referred to; none which is more certain to be followed with sorrow.

Except they repent of their deeds. It is only by repentance that we can avoid the consequences of sin. The word repent here evidently includes both sorrow for the past, and abandonment of the evil course of life.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

And I will kill her children with death. A strong Hebraistic mode of expression, meaning that he would certainly destroy It them. has been made a question whether the word children here is to be taken literally or figuratively. The word itself would admit of either interpretation; and there is nothing in the connexion by which its meaning here can be determined. If it is to be taken literally, it is in accordance with what is often threatened in the Scriptures, that children shall be visited with calamity for the sins of parents, and with what often occurs in fact that they do thus suffer. For, it is no uncommon thing that whole families are made desolate on account of the sin and folly of the parent. Rom 5:19. If it is to be taken figuratively, then it refers to those who had imbibed her doctrines, and who, of course, would suffer in the punishment which would follow from the propagation of such doctrines. The reference in the word death here would seem to be to some heavy judgment, by plague, famine, or sword, by which they would be cut off. And all the churches shall know, etc. That is, the design of this judgment will be so apparent, that it will convince all that I know what is in the hearts of men, even the secret acts of wickedness that are concealed from human view.

I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts. This is clearly a claim to omniscience; and as it is the Lord Jesus who speaks in all these epistles, it is a full proof that he claims this for himself. There is nothing which more clearly appertains to God than the power of searching the heart, and nothing that is more constantly claimed by him as his peculiar prerogative, 1Chr 28:19, Ps 7:9, 11:4, 44:21 Ps 139:2, Prov 15:3, Jer 11:20, 17:10, 20:12, 32:19, Heb 4:13. The word reins--νεφρους--means, literally, the kidney,

and is commonly used in the plural to denote the kidneys, or the loins. In the Scriptures, it is used to denote the inmost mind, the secrets of the soul; probably because the parts referred to by the word are as hidden as any other part of the frame, and would seem to be the repository of the more secret affections of the mind. It is not to be supposed that it is taught in the Scriptures that the reins are the real seat of any of the affections or passions; but there is no more impropriety in using the term in a popular signification than there is in using the word heart, which all continue to use, to denote the seat of love.

And I will give unto every one of you according to your works. To every one of you; not only to those who have embraced these opinions, but to all the church. This is the uniform rule laid down in the Bible by which God will judge men.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira. The word "and"--και--is omitted in many MSS. and versions, and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn, and the connexion demands that it should be omitted. As it stands in the received text, it would seem that what he here says was addressed to those who had received that doctrine, and to all others as well as to them; whereas the declaration here made pertains manifestly to those who had not received the doctrine. With that particle omitted, the passage will read, as rendered by Professor Stuart, "But I say unto you, the remainder in Thyatira, so many as hold not this doctrine," etc. That is, he addresses now all the members of the church who were not involved in the charges already made. He does not say how large a portion of the church had escaped the contaminating influence of those opinions, but to that portion, whether great or small, he addresses only words of exhortation and comfort.

As many as have not this doctrine. To all who have not embraced it, or been contaminated with it. It may be presumed that there was a considerable portion of the church which had not.

And which have not known the depths of Satan. The deep art and designs of Satan. Deep things are those which are hidden from view--as of things which are far under-ground; and hence the word is used to denote mysteries, or profound designs and purposes. The allusion here is not to any trials or sufferings that Satan might bring upon any one, or to any temptations of which he might be the author, but to his profound art in inculcating error and leading men astray. There are doctrines of error, and arguments for sin, to originate which seems to lie beyond the power of men, and which would appear almost to have exhausted the talent of Satan himself. They evince such a profound knowledge of man; of the Divine government; of the course of events on earth; and of what our race needs; and they are defended with so much eloquence, skill, learning, and subtilty of argumentation, that they appear to lie beyond the compass of the human powers.

As they speak. This cannot mean that the defenders of these errors themselves called their doctrines "the depths of Satan," for no teachers would choose so to designate their opinions; but it must mean, either that they who were opposed to those errors characterized them as "the depths of Satan," or that they who opposed them said that they had not known "the depths of Satan." Professor Stuart understands it in the latter sense. A somewhat more natural interpretation, it seems to me, however, is to refer it to what the opposers of these heretics said of these errors. They called them "the depths of Satan," and they professed not to have known anything of them. The meaning perhaps would be expressed by the familiar words, "as they say," or "as they call them," in the following manner: "As many as have not known the depths of Satan, as they say," or, "to use their own language."

Doddridge paraphrases it, "as they proverbially speak." Tyndale encloses it in a parenthesis.

I will put upon you none other burden. That is, no other than that which you now experience from having these persons with you, and that which must attend the effort to purify the church. He had not approved their conduct for suffering these persons to remain in the church, and he threatens to punish all those who had become contaminated with these pernicious doctrines. He evidently designed to say that there was some token of his displeasure proper in the case, but he was not disposed to bring upon them any other expression of his displeasure than that which grew naturally and necessarily out of the fact that they had been tolerated among them, and those troubles and toils which must attend the effort to deliver the church from these errors. Under any circumstances the church must suffer. It would suffer in reputation. It would suffer in respect to its internal tranquillity. Perhaps, also, there were those who were implicated in these errors, and who would be implicated in the punishment, who had friends and kindred in the church; and the judgments which were to come upon the advocates of these errors must, therefore, come in a measure upon the church. A kind Saviour says, that he would bring upon them no other, and no weightier burden, than must arise from his purpose to inflict appropriate vengeance on the guilty themselves. The trouble which would grow out of that would be a sufficient expression of his displeasure. This is, in fact, often now all that is necessary as a punishment on a church for harbouring the advocates of error and of sin. The church has trouble enough ultimately in getting rid of them; and the injury which such persons do to its piety, peace, and reputation, and the disorders of which they are the cause, constitute a sufficient punishment for having tolerated them in its bosom. Often the most severe punishment that God can bring upon men is to "lay upon them no other burden" than to leave them to the inevitable consequences of their own folly, or to the trouble and vexation

incident to the effort to free themselves from what they had for a long time tolerated or practised.

25 But that which ye have *already*, hold fast till I come.

But that which ye have, etc. All that there is of truth and purity remaining among you, retain faithfully. See Rev 3:11.

Till I come. To receive you to myself, Jn 14:3.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. There is an allusion here to Ps 2:9: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There is a slight change in the passage, "he shall rule," instead of "thou shalt break," in order to adapt the language to the purpose of the speaker here. The allusion in the Psalm is to the Messiah as reigning triumphant over the nations, or subduing them under him, and the idea here, as in the previous verse, is, that his redeemed people will be associated with him in this dominion. To rule with a sceptre of iron, is not to rule with a harsh and tyrannical sway, but with power that is firm and invincible. It denotes a government of strength, or one that cannot be successfully opposed; one in which the subjects are effectually subdued.

As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers. The image here is that of the vessel of a potter--a fragile vessel of clay --struck with a rod of iron, and broken into fragments. That is, as applied to the nations, there would be no power to oppose his rule; the enemies of his government would be destroyed. Instead of remaining firm and compacted together, they would be broken like the clay vessel of a potter when struck with a rod of iron. The speaker does not intimate when this would be; but all that is said here would be applicable to that time when the Son of God will come to judge the world, and when his saints will be associated

with him in his triumphs. As, in respect to all the others of the seven epistles to the churches, the rewards promised refer to heaven, and to the happy state of that blessed world, it would seem also that this should have a similar reference, for there is no reason why "to him that overcame" in Thyatira a temporal reward and triumph should be promised more than in the cases of the others. If so, then this passage should not be adduced as having any reference to an imaginary personal reign of the Saviour and of the saints on the earth.

Even as I received of my Father. As he has appointed me, Ps 2:6-9.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

And I will give him the morning star. The "morning star" is that bright planet--Venus--which at some seasons of the year appears so beautifully in the east, leading on the morning--the harbinger of the day. It is one of the most beautiful objects in nature, and is susceptible of a great variety of uses for illustration. It appears as the darkness passes away; it is an indication that the morning comes; it is intermingled with the first rays of the light of the sun; it seems to be a herald to announce the coming of that glorious luminary; it is a pledge of the faithfulness of God. In which of these senses, if any, it is referred to here, is not stated; nor is it said what is used implied by its being given to him that overcomes. It would seem to be here to denote a bright and brilliant ornament; something with which he who "overcame" would be adorned, resembling the bright star of the morning. It is observable that it is not said that he would make him like the morning star, as in Dan 12:3; nor that he would be compared with the morning star, like the king of Babylon, Isa 14:12; nor that he would resemble a star which Balaam says he saw in the distant future, Nu 24:17. The idea seems to be, that the Saviour would give him something that would resemble that morning planet in beauty and splendour--perhaps meaning that it would be placed

as a gem in his diadem, and would sparkle on his brow--bearing some such relation to him who is called "the Sun of Righteousness," as the morning star does to the glorious sun on his rising. If so, the meaning would be, that he would receive a beautiful ornament, bearing a near relation to the Redeemer himself as a bright sun--a pledge that the darkness was past--but one whose beams would melt away into the superior light of the Redeemer himself, as the beams of the morning star are lost in the superior glory of the sun.

Revelation-3

The Message to Sardis

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.
I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God. Rev 1:4. If the phrase, "the seven spirits of God," as there supposed, refers to the Holy Spirit, there is great propriety in saying of the Saviour, that he has that Spirit, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is represented as sent forth by him into the world, Jn 15:26-27, 16:7,13-14. It was one of the highest characteristics that could be given of the Saviour to say, that the Holy Ghost was his to send forth into the world, and that that great Agent, on whose gracious influences all were dependent for the possession of true religion, could be given or withheld by him at his pleasure.

And the seven stars. Rev 1:16. These represented the angels of the seven churches, (Rev 1:20) and the idea which the Saviour would seem to intend to convey here is, that he had entire control over the ministers of the churches, and could keep or remove them at pleasure.

That thou hast a name that thou livest. Thou dost profess attachment to me and my cause. The word life is a word that is

commonly employed, in the New Testament, to denote religion, in contradistinction from the natural state of man, which is described as death in sin. By the profession of religion, they expressed the purpose to live unto God, and for another world; they professed to have true, spiritual life.

And art dead. That is, spiritually. This is equivalent to saying that their profession was merely in name; and yet this must be understood comparatively, for there were some even in Sardis who truly lived unto God, Rev 3:4. The meaning is, that, in general, the profession of religion among them was a mere name. The Saviour does not, as in the case of the churches of Ephesus and Thyatira, specify any prevailing form of error or false doctrine; but it would seem that here it was a simple want of religion.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Be watchful. Be wakeful; be attentive and earnest--in contradistinction from the drowsy condition of the church.

Strengthen the things which remain. The true piety that still lives and lingers among you. Whatever there was of religion among them, it was of importance to strengthen it, that the love of the Saviour might not become wholly extinct. An important duty in a low and languishing state of religion is, to "strengthen the things that still survive." It is to cultivate all the graces which do exist; to nourish all the love of truth which may linger in the church; and to confirm, by warm exhortation, and by a reference to the gracious promises of God's word, the few who may be endeavouring to do their duty, and who, amidst many discouragements, are aiming to be faithful to the Saviour. In the lowest state of religion in a church there may be a few, perhaps quite obscure and of humble rank, who are mourning over the desolations of Zion, and who are sighing for better times. All such it is the duty of the ministers of religion to comfort and encourage; for it is in their hearts that piety may be kept alive in the church--it is through them that it may be

hoped religion may yet be revived. In the apparent hopelessness of doing much good to others, good may always be done to the cause itself by preserving and strengthening what there may be of life among those few, amidst the general desolation and death. It is much to preserve life in grain sown in a field through the long and dreary winter, when all seems to be dead--for it will burst forth, with new life and beauty, in the spring. When the body is prostrate with disease, and life just lingers, and death seems to be coming on, it is much to preserve the little strength that remains; much to keep the healthful parts from being invaded, that there may be strength yet to recover.

That are ready to die. That seem just ready to become extinct. So sometimes, in a plant, there seems to be but the least conceivable life remaining, and it appears that it must die. So, when we are sick, there seems to be but the feeblest glimmering of life, and it is apparently just ready to go out. So, when a fire dies away, there seems but a spark remaining, and it is just ready to become extinct. And thus, in religion in the soul--religion in a church--religion in a community--it often seems as if it were just about to go out for ever.

For I have not found thy works perfect before God. I have not found them complete or full. They come short of that which is required. Of what church, of what individual Christian, is not this true? Whom might not the Saviour approach with the same language? It was true, however, in a marked and eminent sense, of the church at Sardis.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Remember therefore how thou hast received. This may refer either to some peculiarity in the manner in which the gospel was conveyed to them--as, by the labours of the apostles, and by the remarkable effusions of the Holy Spirit; or to the ardour and love with which they embraced it; or to the greatness of the favours and

privileges conferred on them; or to their own understanding of what the gospel required, when they were converted. It is not possible to determine in which sense the language is used; but the general idea is plain, that there was something marked and unusual in the way in which they had been led to embrace the gospel, and that it was highly proper in these circumstances to look back to the days when they gave themselves to Christ. It is always well for Christians to call to remembrance the "day of their espousals," and their views and feelings when they gave their hearts to the Saviour, and to compare those views with their present condition, especially if their conversion was marked by anything unusual.

And heard. How thou didst hear the gospel in former times; that is, with what earnestness and attention thou didst embrace it. This would rather seem to imply that the reference in the whole passage is to the fact that they embraced the gospel with great ardour and zeal.

And hold fast.

(1.) Hold fast the truths which thou didst then receive;

(2.) hold fast what remains of true religion among you.

And repent. Repent in regard to all that in which you have departed from your views and feelings when you embraced the gospel.

If therefore thou shalt not watch. The speaker evidently supposed that it was possible that they would not regard the warning; that they would presume that they would be safe if they refused to give heed to it, or that by mere inattention and indifference they might suffer the warning to pass by unheeded. Similar results have been so common in the world as to make such a supposition not improbable, and to make proper, in other cases as well as that, the solemn threatening that he would come suddenly upon them.

I will come on thee as a thief. In a sudden and unexpected manner. 1Thes 5:2.

And ye shall not know what hour I will come upon thee. You shall not know beforehand; you shall have no warning of my immediate approach. This is often the way in which God comes to men in his heavy judgments. Long beforehand, he admonishes us, indeed, of what must be the consequences of a course of sin, and warns us to turn from it; but when sinners refuse to attend to his warning, and still walk in the way of evil, he comes suddenly, and cuts them down. Every man who is warned of the evil of his course, and who refuses or neglects to repent, has reason to believe that God will come suddenly in his wrath, and call him to his bar, Prov 29:1. No such man call presume on impunity; no one who is warned of his guilt and danger can feel that he is for one moment safe. No one can have any basis of calculation that he will be spared; no one can flatter himself with any probable anticipation that he will have time to repent when God comes to take him away. Benevolence has done its appropriate work in warning him;--how can the Great Judge of all be to blame, if he comes then, and suddenly cuts the sinner off?

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis. The word names here is equivalent to persons; and the idea is, that even in a place so depraved, and where religion had so much declined, there were a few persons who had kept themselves free from the general contamination. In most cases, when error and sin prevail, there may be found a few who are worthy of the Divine commendation; a few who show that true religion may exist even when the mass are evil. Rom 11:4.

Which have not defiled their garments. Jude 1:23. The meaning is, that they had not defiled themselves by coming in contact with the profane and the polluted; or, in other words, they had kept

themselves free from the prevailing corruption. They were like persons clothed in white walking in the midst of the defiled, yet keeping their raiment from being soiled.

And they shall walk with me in white. White is the emblem of innocence, and is hence appropriately represented as the colour of the raiment of the heavenly inhabitants. The persons here referred to had kept their garments uncontaminated on the earth, and as an appropriate reward it is said that they would appear in white raiment in heaven. Compare Rev 7:9, 19:8.

For they are worthy. They have shown themselves worthy to be regarded as followers of the Lamb; or, they have a character that is fitted for heaven. The declaration is not that they have any claim to heaven on the ground of their own merit, or that it will be in virtue of their own works that they will be received there; but that there is a fitness or propriety that they should thus appear in heaven. We are all personally unworthy to be admitted to heaven, but we may evince such a character as to show that, according to the arrangements of grace, it is fit and proper that we should be received there. We have the character to which God has promised eternal life.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

The same shall be clothed in white raiment. Whosoever he may be that shall overcome sin and the temptations of this world, shall be admitted to this glorious reward. The promise is made not only to those in Sardis who should be victorious, but to all in every age and every land. The hope that is thus held out before us, is that of appearing with the Redeemer in his kingdom, clad in robes expressive of holiness and joy.

blot out . . . name out of . . . book of life—of the heavenly city. A register was kept in ancient cities of their citizens: the names of the dead were of course erased. So those who have a name that they

live and are dead (Re 3:1), are blotted out of God's roll of the heavenly citizens and heirs of eternal life; not that in God's electing decree they ever were in His book of life. But, according to human conceptions, those who had a high name for piety would be supposed to be in it, and were, in respect to privileges, actually among those in the way of salvation; but these privileges, and the fact that they once might have been saved, shall be of no avail to them. As to the book of life, compare Re 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28; Da 12:1. In the sense of the "call," many are enrolled among the called to salvation, who shall not be found among the chosen at last. The pale of salvation is wider than that of election. Election is fixed. Salvation is open to all and is pending (humanly speaking) in the case of those mentioned here. But Re 20:15; 21:27, exhibit the book of the elect alone in the narrower sense, after the erasure of the others.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment. This is the usual promise to him who overcomes; he shall wear the white raiment of the redeemed; though the names of those who are spiritually dead shall be blotted out of the book of life his name shall not be; and he will be confessed before the Father, that is, acknowledged.

And I will not blot his name out of the book of life - Like that of the angel of the church at Sardis: but he shall live for ever. I will confess his name - As one of my faithful servants and soldiers.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Message to Philadelphia

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

These things saith he that is holy. This refers undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus. The appellation holy, or the holy one, is one that befits

him, and is not unfrequently given to him in the New Testament Lk 1:35, Acts 2:27, 3:14. It is not only an appellation appropriate the Saviour, but well adapted to be employed when he is addressing the churches. Our impression of what is said to us will often depend much on our idea of the character of him who addresses us, and solemnity and thoughtfulness always become us when we are addressed by a holy Redeemer. He that is true. Another characteristic of the Saviour well fitted to be referred to when he addresses men. It is a characteristic often ascribed to him in the New Testament, (Jn 1:9,14,17, 8:40,45, 14:6, 18:37, 1Jn 5:20) and one which is eminently adapted to impress the mind with solemn thought in view of the fact that he is to pronounce on our character, and to determine our destiny.

He that hath the key of David. This expression is manifestly taken from Isa 22:22, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." As used by Isaiah, the phrase is applied to Eliskim; and it is not to be inferred because the language here is applied to the Lord Jesus that originally it had any such reference. "The application of the same terms," says Professor Alexander on Isa 22:22, "to Peter, (Mt 16:19) and to Christ himself, (Rev 3:7) does not prove that they here refer to either, or that Eliakim was a type of Christ, but merely that the same words admit of different applications." The language is that which properly denotes authority or control--as when one has the key of a house, and has unlimited access to it; and the meaning here is, that as David is represented as the king of Israel residing in a palace, so he who had the key to that palace had legal authority.

He that openeth, and no man shutteth, etc. He has free and unrestrained access to the house; the power of admitting any one, or of excluding any one. Applied here to the Saviour, as king in Zion, this means that in his kingdom he has the absolute control in regard to the admission or exclusion of any one. He can prescribe the terms; he can invite whom he chooses; he can exclude those whom he judges should not be admitted. A reference to this

absolute control was every way proper when he was addressing a church, and is every way proper for us to reflect on when we think of the subject of our personal salvation.

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Behold, I have set before thee an open door. Referring to his authority as stated in Rev 3:7. The "open door" here evidently refers to the enjoyment of some privilege or honour; and, so far as the language is concerned, it may refer to any one of the following things: either;

(1) the ability to do good--represented as the "opening of the door." Compare Acts 14:27, 1Cor 16:9, 2Cor 2:12, Col 4:3.

(2.) The privilege of access to the heavenly palace; that is, that they had an abundant opportunity of securing their salvation, the door being never closed against them by day or by night. Compare Rev 21:25 Or

(3) it may mean that they had before them an open way of egress from danger and persecution. This latter Professor Stuart supposes to be the true meaning; and argues this because it is immediately specified that those Jewish persecutors would be made to humble themselves, and that the church would but lightly experience the troubles which were coming upon the world around them. But the more natural interpretation of the phrase "an open door," is that it refers to access to a thing rather than egress from a thing; that we may come to that which we desire to approach, rather than escape from that which we dread. There is no objection, it seems to me, to the supposition that the language may be used here in the largest sense--as denoting that, in regard to the church at Philadelphia, there was no restraint. He had given them the most unlimited privileges. The temple of salvation was thrown open to them; the celestial city was accessible; the whole world was before them as a field of usefulness, and anywhere, and everywhere, they might

do good, and at all times they might have access to the kingdom of God.

And no man can shut it. No one has the power of preventing this, for he who has control over all things concedes these privileges to you.

For thou hast a little strength. This would imply that they had not great vigour, but still that, notwithstanding there were so many obstacles to their doing good, and so many temptations to evil, there still remained with them some degree of energy. They were not wholly dead; and, as long as that was the case, the door was still open for them to do good. The words "little strength" may refer either to the smallness of the number--meaning that they were few; or it may refer to the spiritual life and energy of the church--meaning that, though feeble, their vital energy was not wholly gone. The more natural interpretation seems to be to refer it to the latter; and the sense is, that although they had not the highest degree of energy, or had not all that the Saviour desired they should have, they were not wholly dead. The Saviour saw among them the evidences of spiritual life; and in view of that he says he had set before them an open door, and there was abundant opportunity to employ all the energy and zeal which they had. It may be remarked that the same thing is true now; that wherever there is any vitality in a church the Saviour will furnish ample opportunity that it may be employed in his service.

And hast not denied my name. When Christians were brought before heathen magistrates in times of persecution, they were required to renounce the name of Christ, and to disown him in a public manner. It is possible that, amidst the persecutions that raged in the early times, the members of the church at Philadelphia had been summoned to such a trial, and they had stood the trial firmly. It would seem from the following verse, that the efforts which had been made to induce them to renounce the name of Christ had been made by those who professed to be Jews, though

they evinced the spirit of Satan. If so, then the attempt was probably to convince them that Jesus was not the Christ. This attempt would be made in all places where there were Jews.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Behold, I will make. Greek, "I give"--διδωμι; that is, I will arrange matters so that this shall occur. The word implies that he had power to do this, and consequently proves that he has power over the heart of man, and can secure such a result as he chooses.

Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews. Who profess to be Jews, but are really of the synagogue of Satan. Rev 2:9. The meaning is, that, though they were of Jewish extraction, and boasted much of being Jews, yet they were really under the influence of Satan, and their assemblages deserved to be called his "synagogue."

And are not, but do lie. It is a false profession altogether. 1Jn 1:6.

Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet. The word rendered worship here, means properly to fall prostrate; and then to do homage, or to worship in the proper sense, as this was commonly done by failing prostrate. Mt 2:2. So far as the word is concerned, it may refer either to spiritual homage, that is, the worship of God; or it may mean respect as shown to superiors. If it is used here in the sense of Divine worship properly so called, it means that they would be constrained to come and worship "before them," or in their very presence; if it is used in the more general signification, it means that they would be constrained to show them honour and respect. The latter is the probable meaning; that is, that they would be constrained to acknowledge that they were the children of God, or that God regarded them with his favour. It does not mean necessarily that they would themselves be converted to Christ, but that, as they had been accustomed to revile and oppose those who were true Christians, they would be

constrained to come and render them the respect due to those who were sincerely endeavouring to serve their Maker. The truth taught here is, that it is in the power of the Lord Jesus so to turn the hearts of all the enemies of religion that they shall be brought to show respect to it; so to incline the minds of all people that they shall honour the church, or be at least outwardly its friends. Such homage the world shall yet be constrained to pay to it.

And to know that I have loved thee. This explains what he had just said, and shows that he means that the enemies of his church will yet be constrained to acknowledge that it enjoys the smiles of God, and that instead of being persecuted and reviled, it should be respected and loved.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience. My word commanding or enjoining patience; that is, thou hast manifested the patience which I require. They had shown this in the trials which they had experienced; he promises now, that in return he will keep them in the future trials that shall come upon the world. One of the highest rewards of patience in one trial is the grace that God gives us to bear another. The fact that we have been patient and submissive may be regarded as proof that he will give us grace that we may be patient and submissive in the trials that are to come. God does not leave those who have shown that they will not leave him.

I also will keep thee. That is, I will so keep you that you shall not sink under the trials which will prove a severe temptation to many. This does not mean that they would be actually kept from calamity of all kinds, but that they would be kept from the temptation of apostasy in calamity. He would give them grace to bear up under trials with a Christian spirit, and in such a manner that their salvation should not be endangered.

From the hour of temptation. The season; the time; the period of temptation. You shall be so kept that that which will prove to be a time of temptation to so many shall not endanger your salvation. Though others fall, you shall not; though you may be afflicted with others, yet you shall have grace to sustain you.

Which shall come upon all the world. The phrase here used--"all the world"--may either denote the whole world; or the whole Roman empire; or a large district of country; or the land of Judaea. Lk 2:1. Here, perhaps, all that is implied is, that the trial would be very extensive or general-- so much so as to embrace the world, as the word was understood by those to whom the epistle was addressed. It need not be supposed that the whole world literally was included in it, or even all the Roman empire, but what was the world to them--the region which they would embrace in that term. If there were some far-spreading calamity in the country where they resided, it would probably be all that would be fairly embraced in the meaning of the word. It is not known to what trial the speaker refers. It may have been some form of persecution, or it may have been some calamity by disease, earthquake, or famine that was to occur. Tacitus (see Wetstein, in loc.) mentions an earthquake that sank twelve cities in Asia Minor in one night, by which, among others, Philadelphia was deeply affected; and it is possible that there may have been reference here to that overwhelming calamity. But nothing can be determined with certainty in regard to this.

To try them that dwell upon the earth. To test their character. It would rather seem from this that the affliction was some form of persecution as adapted to test the fidelity of those who were affected by it. The persecutions in the Roman empire would furnish abundant occasions for such a trial.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Behold, I come quickly. That is, in the trials referred to. Rev 1:1, Revv 1:11, Rev 1:16. Hold that fast which thou hast. That is,

whatever of truth and piety you now possess. Rev 3:3. That no man take thy crown. The crown of life appointed for all who are true believers. 2Ti 4:8. The truth which is taught here is, that by negligence or unfaithfulness in duty we may be deprived of the glory which we might have obtained if we had been faithful to our God and Saviour. We need to be on our constant guard, that, in a world of temptation, where the enemies of truth abound, we may not be robbed of the crown that we might have worn for ever. 2Jn 8.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name.

Barnes:

Will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. The promised reward of faithfulness here is, that he who was victorious would be honoured as if he were a pillar or column in the temple of God. Such a pillar or column was partly for ornament, and partly for support; and the idea here is, that in that temple he would contribute to its beauty and the justness of its proportions, and would at the same time be honoured as if he were a pillar which was necessary for the support of the temple. It is not uncommon in the New Testament to represent the church as a temple, and Christians as parts of it. See 1Cor 3:16-17, 6:19, 2Cor 6:16, 1Pet 2:5.

And he shall go no more out. He shall be permanent as a part of that spiritual temple. The idea of "going out" does not properly belong to a pillar; but the speaker here has in his mind the man, though represented as a column. The description of some parts would be applicable more directly to a pillar; in others more properly to a man. Compare Jn 6:37, 10:28-29, 1Jn 2:19, for an illustration of the sentiment here. The main truth here is, that if we reach heaven, our happiness will be secure for ever. We shall have the most absolute certainty that the welfare of the soul will no more

be periled; that we shall never be in danger of falling into temptation; that no artful foe shall ever have power to alienate our affections from God; that we shall never die. Though we may change our place, and may roam from world to world till we shall have surveyed all the wonders of creation, yet we shall never "go out of the temple of God." Jn 14:2. When we reach the heavenly world, our conflicts will be over, our doubts at an end. As soon as we cross the threshold, we shall be greeted with the assurance, "he shall go no more out for ever." That is to be our eternal abode, and whatever of joy or felicity or glory that bright world can furnish, is to be ours. Happy moment, when, emerging from a world of danger and of doubt, the soul shall settle down into the calmness and peace of that state where there is the assurance of God himself that world of bliss is to be its eternal abode!

And I will write upon him the name of my God. Considered as a pillar or column in the temple. The name of God would be conspicuously recorded on it to show that he belonged to God. The allusion is to a public edifice on the columns of which the names of distinguished and honoured persons were recorded; that is, where there was a public testimonial of the respect in which one whose name was thus recorded was held. The honour thus conferred on him "who should overcome" would be as great as if the name of that God whom he served, and whose favour and friendship he enjoyed, were inscribed on him in some conspicuous manner. The meaning is, that he would be known and recognised as belonging to God; the God of the Redeemer himself-- indicated by the phrase "the name of my God."

And the name of the city of my God. That is, indicating that he belongs to that city, or that the New Jerusalem is the city of his habitation. The idea would seem to be, that in this world, and in all worlds wherever he goes and wherever he abides, he will be recognised as belonging to that holy city; as enjoying the rights and immunities of such a citizen.

Which is New Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where the temple was reared, and where the worship of God was celebrated. It thus came to be synonymous with the church--the dwelling-place of God on earth.

Which cometh down out of heaven from my God. Rev 21:2 Of course, this must be a figurative representation, but the idea is plain. It is,

(1.) that the church is, in accordance with settled Scripture language, represented as a city--the abode of God on earth.

(2.) That this, instead of being built here, or having an earthly origin, has its origin in heaven. It is as if it had been constructed there, and then sent down to earth ready formed. The type, the form, the whole structure is heavenly. It is a departure from all proper laws of interpretation to explain this literally, as if a city should be actually let down from heaven; and equally so to infer from this passage, and the others of similar import in this book, that a city will be literally reared for the residence of the saints. If the passage proves anything on either of these points, it is, that a great and splendid city, such as that described in chapter 21, will literally come down from heaven. But who can believe that? Such an interpretation, however, is by no means necessary. The comparison of the church with a beautiful city, and the fact that it has its origin in heaven, is all that is fairly implied in the passage.

And I will write upon him my new name. Rev 2:17. The reward, therefore, promised here is, that he who by persevering fidelity showed that he was a real friend of the Saviour, would be honoured with a permanent abode in the holy city of his habitation. In the church redeemed and triumphant he would have a perpetual dwelling; and wherever he should be, there would be given him sure pledges that he belonged to him, and was recognised as a citizen of the heavenly world. To no higher honour could any man

aspire; and yet that is an honour to which the most humble and lowly may attain by faith in the Son of God.

PNT:

A pillar. A term implying strength, permanence and honor. In the temple of my God. Not in any material temple, but in the church, either on earth or in heaven. The latter is here meant. The New Jerusalem has no temple in it because it is all temple. He shall go no more out. Always dwell there. I will write upon him the name of my God. When one enters the church, the spiritual temple below, three names are recorded in his baptismal formula. When he enters the kingdom above, three names are again written upon him; the name of God, of the heavenly city, and Christ's heavenly name.

VWS:

Pillar [στυλον] . The word occurs, Gal 2:9; 1Ti 3:15; Rev 10:1. The reference here is not to any prominence in the earthly church, as Gal 2:9, but to blessedness in the future state. The exact meaning is doubtful. Some explain, he shall have a fixed and important place in the glorified church. Compare Mt 19:28. Others emphasize the idea of stability, and find a possible local reference to the frequent earthquakes from which Philadelphia had suffered, and which had shaken its temples. Strabo says : "And Philadelphia has not even its walls unimpaired, but daily they are shaken in some way, and gaps are made in them. But the inhabitants continue to occupy the land notwithstanding their sufferings, and to build new houses." Others again emphasize the idea of beauty. Compare 1Pe 2:5, where the saints are described living stones.

Temple [ναω] . See on Mt 4:5.

Upon him. The conqueror, not the pillar. Compare chapter Rev 7:3; Rev 9:4; Rev 14:1; Rev 22:4. Probably with reference to the golden plate inscribed with the name of Jehovah, and worn by the High - Priest upon his forehead (Exo 28:36, 38). See on chapter Rev 2:17.

New Jerusalem. See Eze 48:35. The believer whose brow is adorned with this name has the freedom of the heavenly city. Even on earth his commonwealth is in heaven (Phi 3:20). "Still, his citizenship was latent : he was one of God 's hidden ones; but now he is openly avouched, and has a right to enter in by the gates to the city" (Trench). The city is called by John, the great and holy (Chapter Rev 21:10); by Matthew, the holy city (iv. 5); by Paul, Jerusalem which is above (Gal 4:6); by the writer to the Hebrews, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). Plato calls his ideal city Callipolis, the fair city (" Republic, " 7, 527), and the name Ouranopolis, heavenly city, was applied to Rome and Byzantium. For new [καινης] , see on Mt 26:29. The new Jerusalem is not a city freshly built [νεα] , but is new [καινη] in contrast with the old, outworn, sinful city. In the Gospel John habitually uses the Greek and civil form of the name, JIerosoluma; in Revelation, the Hebrew and more holy appellation, Jierousalhm. 78

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The Message to Laodicea

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

These things saith the Amen. Referring, as is the case in every epistle, to some attribute of the speaker adapted to impress their minds, or to give peculiar force to what he was about to say to that particular church. Laodicea was characterized by lukewarmness, and the reference to the fact that he who was about to address them was the "Amen"--that is, was characterized by the simple

earnestness and sincerity denoted by that word--was eminently fitted to make an impression on the minds of such a people. The word Amen means true, certain, faithful; and, as used here, it means that he to whom it is applied is eminently true and faithful. What he affirms is true; what he promises or threatens is certain. Himself characterized by sincerity and truth, (2Cor 1:20) he can look with approbation only on the same thing in others: and hence he looks with displeasure on the lukewarmness which, from its very nature, always approximates insincerity. This was an attribute, therefore, every way appropriate to be referred to in addressing a lukewarm church.

The faithful and true witness. This is presenting the idea implied in the word Amen in a more complete form, but substantially the same thing is referred to. He is a witness for God and his truth, and he can approve of nothing which the God of truth would not approve. Rev 1:5.

The beginning of the creation of God. This expression is a very important one in regard to the rank and dignity of the Saviour, and, like all similar expressions respecting him, its meaning has been much controverted. Col 1:15. The phrase here used is susceptible, properly, of only one of the following significations, viz.: either

(a) that he was the beginning of the creation in the sense that he caused the universe to begin to exist--that is, that he was the author of all things; or

(b) that he was the first created being; or

(c) that he holds the primacy over all, and is at the head of the universe. It is not necessary to examine any other proposed interpretations, for the only other senses supposed to be conveyed by the words, that he is the beginning of the creation in the sense that he rose from the dead as the first-fruits of them that sleep, or that he is the head of the spiritual creation of God, are so foreign

to the natural meaning of the words as to need no special refutation. As to the three significations suggested above, it may be observed, that the first one--that he is the author of the creation, and in that sense the beginning, though expressing a scriptural doctrine, (Jn 1:3, Eph 3:9, Col 1:16)--is not in accordance with the proper meaning of the word here used--αρχη. The word properly refers to the commencement of a thing, not its authorship, and denotes properly primacy in time, and primacy in rank, but not primacy in the sense of causing anything to exist. The two ideas which run through the word as it is used in the New Testament are those just suggested. For the former--primacy in regard to time--that is properly the commencement of a thing, see the following passages where the word occurs: Mt 19:4,8, 24:8,21, Mk 1:1, 10:6, 13:8,19, Lk 1:2, Jn 1:1-2 Jn 2:11, 6:64, 8:25,44, 15:27, 16:4, Acts 11:15, 1Jn 1:1, 2:7,13-14,24 1Jn 3:8,11, 2Jn 5-6. For the latter signification, primacy of rank, or authority, see the following places: Lk 12:11, 20:20, Rom 8:38 1Cor 15:24, Eph 1:21, 3:10, Eph 6:12, Col 1:16,18, 2:10,15, Tit 3:1 The word is not, therefore, found in the sense of authorship, as denoting that one is the beginning of anything in the sense that he caused it to have an existence. As to the second of the significations suggested, that it means that he was the first created being, it may be observed

(a) that this is not a necessary signification of the phrase, since no one can show that this is the only proper meaning which could be given to the words, and therefore the phrase cannot be adduced to prove that he is himself a created being. If it were demonstrated from other sources that Christ was, in fact, a created being, and the first that God had made, it cannot be denied that this language would appropriately express that fact. But it cannot be made out from the mere use of the language here; and as the language is susceptible of other interpretations, it cannot be employed to prove that Christ is a created being.

(b) Such an interpretation would be at variance with all those passages which speak of him as uncreated and eternal; which

ascribe Divine attributes to him; which speak of him as himself the Creator of all things. Compare Jn 1:1-3, Col 1:16, Heb 1:2,6,8,10-12. The third signification, therefore, remains, that he is "the beginning of the creation of God," in the sense that he is the head or prince of the creation; that is, that he presides over it so far as the purposes of redemption are to be accomplished, and so far as is necessary for those purposes. This is

(1) in accordance with the meaning of the word, Lk 12:11, 20:20, et al, ut supra; and

(2) in accordance with the uniform statements respecting the Redeemer, that "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth," (Mt 28:18) that God has "given him power over all flesh," (Jn 17:2) that all things are "put under his feet," (Heb 2:8, 1Cor 15:27) that he is exalted over all things, Eph 1:20-22. Having this rank, it was proper that he should speak with authority to the church at Laodicea.

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

That thou art neither cold nor hot. The word cold here would seem to denote the state where there was no pretension to religion; where everything was utterly lifeless and dead. The language is obviously figurative, but it is such as is often employed, when we speak of one as being cold towards another, as having a cold or icy heart, etc. The word hot would denote, of course, the opposite-- warm and zealous in their love and service. The very words that we are constrained to use when speaking on this subject--such words as ardent, (i.e. hot, or burning;) fervid, (i.e. very hot, burning, boiling)--show how necessary it is to use such words, and how common it is. The state indicated here, therefore, would be that in which there was a profession of religion, but no warm-hearted piety; in which there was not, on the one hand, open and honest opposition to him, and, on the other, such warm-hearted and honest love as he had a right to look for among his professed friends; in which there was a profession of that religion which ought to warm

the heart with love, and fill the soul with zeal in the cause of the Redeemer; but where the only result, in fact, was deadness and indifference to him and his cause. Among those who made no profession, he had reason to expect nothing but coldness; among those who made a profession, he had a right to expect the glow of a warm affection, but he found nothing but indifference.

I would thou wert cold or hot. That is, I would prefer either of those states to that which now exists. Anything better than this condition, where love is professed, but where it does not exist; where vows have been assumed which are not fulfilled. Why he would prefer that they should be "hot" is clear enough; but why would he prefer a state of utter coldness--a state where there was no profession of real love? To this question the following answers may be given:

(1.) Such a state of open and professed coldness or indifference is more honest. There is no disguise; no concealment; no pretence. We know where one in this state "may be found;" we know with whom we are dealing; we know what to expect. Sad as the state is, it is at least honest; and we are so made that we all prefer such a character to one where professions are made which are never to be realised--to a state of insincerity and hypocrisy.

(2.) Such a state is more honourable. It is a more elevated condition of mind, and marks a higher character. Of a man who is false to his engagements, who makes professions and promises never to be realized, we can make nothing. There is essential meanness in such a character, and there is nothing in it which we can respect. But in the character of the man who is openly and avowedly opposed to anything; who takes his stand, and is earnest and zealous in his course, though it be wrong, there are traits which may be, under a better direction, elements of true greatness and magnanimity. In the character of Saul of Tarsus, there were always the elements of true greatness; in that of Judas Iscariot, there were never. The one was capable of becoming one of the noblest men that has ever lived on the earth; the other, even under the personal teaching of the

Redeemer for years, was nothing but a traitor--a man of essential meanness.

(3.) There is more hope of conversion and salvation in such a ease. There could always have been a ground of hope that Saul would be converted and saved, even when "breathing out threatening and slaughter;" of Judas, when numbered among the professed disciples of the Saviour, there was no hope. The most hopeless of all persons, in regard to salvation, are those who are members of the church without any true religion; who have made a profession without any evidence of personal piety; who are content with a name to live. This is so, because

(a) the essential character of any one who will allow himself to do this is eminently unfavourable to true religion. There is a lack of that thorough honesty and sincerity which is so necessary for true conversion to God. He who is content to profess to be what he really is not, is not a man on whom the truths of Christianity are likely to make an impression.

(b) Such a man never applies the truth to himself. Truth that is addressed to impenitent sinners he does not apply to himself, of course; for he does not rank himself in that class of persons. Truth addressed to hypocrites he will not apply to himself; for no one, however insincere and hollow he may be, chooses to act on the presumption that he is himself a hypocrite, or so as to leave others to suppose that he regards himself as such. The means of grace adapted to save a sinner, as such, he will not use; for he is in the church, and chooses to regard himself as safe. Efforts made to reclaim him he will resist; for he will regard it as proof of a meddlesome spirit, and an uncharitable judging in others, if they consider him to be anything different from what he professes to be. What right have they to go back of his profession, and assume that he is insincere? As a consequence, there are probably fewer persons by far converted of those who come into the church without any religion, than of any other class of persons of similar

number; and the most hopeless of all conditions, in respect to conversion and salvation, is when one enters the church deceived.

(c) It may be presumed that, for these reasons, God himself will make less direct effort to convert and save such persons. As there are fewer appeals that can be brought to bear on them; as there is less in their character that is noble and that can be depended on in promoting the salvation of a soul; and as there is special guilt in hypocrisy, it may be presumed that God will more frequently leave such persons to their chosen course, than he will those who make no professions of religion. Compare Ps 109:17,18, Jer 7:16, 11:14:11 Isa 1:15, Hos 4:17.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

So then because thou art lukewarm-I will spue thee out of my mouth. Referring, perhaps, to the well-known fact that tepid water tends to produce sickness at the stomach, and an inclination to vomit. The image is intensely strong, and denotes deep disgust and loathing at the indifference which prevailed in the church at Laodicea. The idea is, that they would be utterly rejected and cast off as a church: a threatening of which there has been an abundant fulfilment in subsequent times. It may be remarked, also, that what was threatened to that church may be expected to occur to all churches, if they are in the same condition; and that all professing Christians, and Christian churches, that are lukewarm, have special reason to dread the indignation of the Saviour.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Because thou sayest, I am rich. So far as the language here is concerned, this may refer either to riches literally, or to and spiritual riches; that is, to a boast of having religion enough. Professor Stuart supposes that it refers to the former, and so do Wetstein, Vitringa, others. Doddridge, Rosenmuller, and others, understand it in the latter sense. There is no doubt that there was much wealth in Laodicea, and that, as a people, they prided

themselves on their riches. See the authorities in Wetstein, on Col 2:1, and Vitringa, p. 160. It is not easy to determine which is the true sense; but may it not have been that there was an allusion to both, and that, in every respect, they boasted that they had enough? May it not have been so much the characteristic of that people to boast of their wealth, that they carried the spirit into everything, and manifested it even in regard to religion? Is it not true that they who have much of this world's goods, when they make a profession of religion, are very apt to suppose that they are well off in everything, and to feel self-complacent and happy? And is not the possession of much wealth by an individual Christian, or a Christian church, likely to produce just the lukewarmness which it is said existed in the church at Laodicea? If we thus understand it, there will be an accordance with the well-known fact that Laodicea was distinguished for its riches, and, at the same time, with another fact, so common as to be almost universal, that the possession of great wealth tends to make a professed Christian self-complacent and satisfied in every respect; to make him feel that, although he may not have much religion, yet he is on the whole well off; and to produce, in religion, a state of just such lukewarmness as the Saviour here says was loathsome and odious. And increased with goods. πεπλουκηταα--"I am enriched." This is only a more emphatic and intensive way of saying the same thing. It has no reference to the kind of riches referred to, but merely denotes the confident manner in which they affirmed that they were rich.

And have need of nothing. Still an emphatic and intensive way of saying that they were rich. In all respects, their wants were satisfied; they had enough of everything. They felt, therefore, no stimulus to effort; they sat down in contentment, self-complacency, and indifference. It is almost unavoidable that those who are rich in this world's goods should feel that they have need of nothing. There is no more common illusion among men than the feeling that if one has wealth, he has everything; that there is no want of his nature which cannot be satisfied with that; and that he may now sit down in contentment and ease. Hence the almost

universal desire to be rich; hence the common feeling among those who are rich that there is no occasion for solicitude or care for anything else. Compare Lk 12:19.

And knowest not. There is no just impression in regard to the real poverty and wretchedness of your condition.

That thou art wretched. The word wretched we now use to denote the actual consciousness of being miserable, as applicable to one who is sunk into deep distress or affliction. The word here, however, refers rather to the condition itself than to the consciousness of that condition, for it is said that they did not know it. Their state was, in fact, a miserable state, and was fitted to produce actual distress if they had any just sense of it, though they thought that it was otherwise.

And miserable. This word has, with us now, a similar signification; but the term here used--ελεεινος--rather means a pitiable state than one actually felt to be so. The meaning is, that their condition was one that was fitted to excite pity or compassion; not that they were actually miserable. 1Cor 15:19.

And poor. Notwithstanding all their boast of having enough. They really had not that which was necessary to meet the actual wants of their nature, and, therefore, they were poor. Their worldly property could not meet the wants of their souls; and, with all their pretensions to piety, they had not religion enough to meet the necessities of their nature when calamities should come, or when death should approach; and they were, therefore, in the strictest sense of the term, poor.

And blind. That is, in a spiritual respect. They did not see the reality of their condition; they had no just views of themselves, of the character of God, of the way of salvation. This seems to be said in connexion with the boast which they made in their own minds--that they had everything; that they wanted nothing. One of the

great blessings of life is clearness of vision, and their boast that they had everything must have included that; but the speaker here says that they lacked that indispensable thing to completeness of character and to full enjoyment. With all their boasting, they were actually blind,--and how could one who was in that state say that he "had need of nothing?"

And naked. Of course, spiritually. Salvation is often represented as a garment, (Mt 22:11-12, Rev 6:11, 7:9,13-14) and the declaration here is equivalent to saying that they had no religion. They had nothing to cover the nakedness of the soul, and in respect to the real wants of their nature they were like one who had no clothing in reference to cold, and heat, and storms, and to the shame of nakedness. How could such an one be regarded as rich? We may learn from this instructive verse,

(1.) that men may think themselves to be rich, and yet, in fact, be miserably poor. They may have the wealth of this world in abundance, and yet have nothing that really will meet their wants in disappointment, bereavement, sickness, death; the wants of the never-dying soul; their wants in eternity. What had the "rich fool," as he is commonly termed, in the parable, when he came to die? Lk 12:16, seq. What had "Dives," as he is commonly termed, to meet the wants of his nature when he went down to hell? Lk 16:19, seq.

(2.) Men may have much property, and think that they have all they want, and yet be wretched. In the sense that their condition is a wretched condition, this is always true; and in the sense that they are consciously wretched, this may be and often is true also.

(3.) Men may have great property, and yet be miserable. This is true in the sense that their condition is a pitiable one, and in the sense that they are actually unhappy. There is no more pitiable condition than that where one has great property, and is self-complacent and proud, and who has nevertheless no God, no

Saviour, no hope of heaven, and who perhaps that very day may "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments;" and, it need not be added, that there is no greater actual misery in this world than that which sometimes finds its way into the palaces of the rich. He greatly errs who thinks that misery is confined to the cottages of the poor.

(4.) Men may be rich, and think they have all that they want, and yet be blind to their condition. They really have no distinct vision of anything. They have no just views of God, of themselves, of their duty, of this world, or of the next. In most important respects, they are in a worse condition than the inmates of an asylum for the blind, for they may have clear views of God and of heaven. Mental darkness is a greater calamity than the loss of natural vision; and there is many an one who is surrounded by all that affluence can give, who never yet had one correct view of his own character, of his God, or of the reality of his condition, and whose condition might have been far better if he had actually been born blind.

(5.) There may be gorgeous robes of adorning, and yet real nakedness. With all the decorations that wealth can impart, there may be a nakedness of the soul as real as that of the body would be if, without a rag to cover it, it were exposed to cold, and storm, and shame. The soul, destitute of the robes of salvation, is in a worse condition than the body without raiment: for, how can it bear the storms of wrath that shall beat upon it for ever, and the shame of its exposure in the last dread day?

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

And that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. We clothe the body as well for decency as for protection against cold, and storm, and heat. The soul is to be clothed that the "shame" of its sinfulness may not be exhibited, and that it may not be offensive and repellent in the sight.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. Pure gold; such as has been subjected to the action of heat to purify it from dross. 1Pet 1:7. Gold here is emblematic of religion--as being the most precious of the metals, and the most valued by men. They professed to be rich, but were not; and he counsels them to obtain from him that which would make them truly rich.

That thou mayest be rich. In the true and proper sense of the word. With true religion; with the favour and friendship of the Redeemer, they would have all that they really needed, and would never be in want.

And white raiment. The emblem of purity and salvation. Rev 3:4. This is said in reference to the fact (Rev 3:17) that they were then naked.

That thou mayest be clothed. With the garments of salvation. This refers, also, to true religion, meaning that that which the Redeemer furnishes will answer the same purpose in respect to the soul which clothing does in reference to the body. Of course, it cannot be understood literally, nor should the language be pressed too closely, as if there was too strict a resemblance.

And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve. In allusion to the fact that they were blind, Rev 3:17. The word eye-salve-- κολλουριον-- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is a diminutive from κολλυρα--collyra--a coarse bread or cake, and means properly a small cake or cracknel. It is applied to eye-salve as resembling such a cake, and refers to a medicament prepared for sore or weak eyes. It was compounded of various substances supposed to have a healing quality. See Wetstein, in loc. The reference here is to a spiritual healing--meaning that, in respect to their spiritual vision, what he would furnish would produce the same effect as the collyrium or eye-salve would in diseased eyes. The idea is, that the grace of the gospel enables men who were before blind to see

clearly the character of God, the beauty of the way of salvation, the loveliness of the person and work of Christ, etc. Eph 1:18.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Of course, only on the supposition that they deserve it. The meaning is, that it is a proof of love on his part, if his professed friends go astray, to recall them by admonitions and by trials. So a father calls back his children who are disobedient; and there is no higher proof of his love than when, with great pain to himself, he administers such chastisement as shall save his child. See the sentiment here expressed fully explained. Heb 12:6, seq. The language is taken from Prov 3:12 Be zealous therefore, and repent. Be earnest, strenuous, ardent in your purpose to exercise true repentance, and to turn from the error of your ways. Lose no time; spare no labour, that you may obtain such a state of mind that it shall not be necessary to bring upon you the severe discipline which always comes on those who continue lukewarm in religion. The truth taught here is, that when the professed followers of Christ have become lukewarm in his service, they should lose no time in returning to him, and seeking his favour again. As sure as he has any true love for them, if this is not done, he will bring upon them some heavy calamity, alike to rebuke them for their errors, and to recover them to himself.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. Intimating that, though they had erred, the way of repentance and hope was not closed against them. He was still willing to be gracious, though their conduct had been such as to be loathsome, Rev 3:16. To see the real force of this language, we must remember how disgusting and offensive their conduct had been to him. And yet he was willing, notwithstanding this, to receive them to his favour; nay more, he

stood and pleaded with them that he might be received with the hospitality that would be shown to a friend or stranger. The language here is so plain that it scarcely needs explanation. It is taken from an act when we approach a dwelling, and, by a well-understood sign--knocking--announce our presence, and ask for admission. The act of knocking implies two things:

(a) that we desire admittance; and

(b) that we recognise the right of him who dwells in the house to open the door to us or not, as he shall please. We would not obtrude upon him; we would not force his door; and if, after we are sure that we are heard, we are not admitted, we turn quietly away. Both of these things are implied here by the language used by the Saviour when he approaches man as represented under the image of knocking at the door: that he desires to be admitted to our friendship; and that he recognises our freedom in the matter. He does not obtrude himself upon us, nor does he employ force to find admission to the heart. If admitted, he comes and dwells with us; if rejected, he turns quietly away--perhaps to return and knock again, perhaps never to come back. The language here used, also, may be understood as applicable to all persons, and to all the methods by which the Saviour seeks to come into the heart of a sinner. It would properly refer to anything which would announce his presence:--his word; his Spirit; the solemn events of his Providence; the invitations of his gospel. In these and in other methods he comes to man; and the manner in which these invitations ought to be estimated would be seen by supposing that he came to us personally and solicited our friendship, and proposed to be our Redeemer. It may be added here, that this expression proves that the attempt at reconciliation begins with the Saviour. It is not that the sinner goes out to meet him, or to seek for him; it is that the Saviour presents himself at the door of the heart as if he were desirous to enjoy the friendship of man. This is in accordance with the uniform language of the New Testament, that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son;" that "Christ

came to seek and to save the lost;" that the Saviour says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," etc. Salvation, in the Scriptures, is never represented as originated by man.

If any man hear my voice. Perhaps referring to a custom then prevailing, that he who knocked spake, in order to let it be known who it was. This might be demanded in the night, (Lk 11:5) or when there was apprehension of danger, and it may have been the custom when John wrote. The language here, in accordance with the uniform usage in the Scriptures, (compare Isa 55:1, Jn 7:37, Rev 22:17) is universal, and proves that the invitations of the gospel are made, and are to be made, not to a part only, but fully and freely to all men; for, although this originally had reference to the members of the church in Laodicea, yet the language chosen seems to have been of design so universal (εαντις) as to be applicable to every human being; and any one, of any age and in any land, would be authorized to apply this to himself, and, under the protection of this invitation to come to the Saviour, and to plead this promise as one that fairly included himself. It may be observed farther, that this also recognises the freedom of man. It is submitted to him whether he will hear the voice of the Redeemer or not; and whether he will open the door and admit him or not. He speaks loud enough, and distinctly enough, to be heard, but he does not force the door if it is not voluntarily opened.

And open the door. As one would when a stranger or friend stood and knocked. The meaning here is simply, if any one will admit me; that is, receive me as a friend. The act of receiving him is as voluntary on our part as it is when we rise and open the door to one who knocks. It may be added,

(1.) that this is an easy thing. Nothing is more easy than to open the door when one knocks; and so everywhere in the Scriptures it is represented as an easy thing, if the heart is willing, to secure the salvation of the soul.

(2.) This is a reasonable thing. We invite him who knocks at the door to come in. We always assume, unless there is reason to suspect the contrary, that he applies for peaceful and friendly purposes. We deem it the height of rudeness to let one stand and knock long; or to let him go away with no friendly invitation to enter our dwelling. Yet how differently does the sinner treat the Saviour! How long does he suffer him to knock at the door of his heart, with no invitation to enter--no act of common civility such as that with which he would greet even a stranger! And with how much coolness and indifference does he see him turn away--perhaps to come back no more, and with no desire that he ever should return!

I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. This is an image denoting intimacy and friendship. Supper, with the ancients, was the principal social meal; and the idea here is, that between the Saviour and those who would receive him, there would be the intimacy which subsists between those who sit down to a friendly meal together. In all countries and times, to eat together, to break bread together, has been the symbol of friendship, and this the Saviour promises here. The truths, then, which are taught in this verse, are

(1) that the invitation of the gospel is made to all--"if any man hear my voice;"

(2) that the movement towards reconciliation and friendship is originated by the Saviour--"behold, I stand at the door and knock;"

(3) that there is a recognition of our own free agency in religion--"if any man will hear my voice, and open the door;"

(4) the ease of the terms of salvation, represented by "hearing his voice," and "opening the door;" and

(5) the blessedness of thus admitting him, arising from his friendship--"I will sup with him, and he with me." What friend can man have who would confer so many benefits on him as the Lord Jesus Christ? Who is there that he should so gladly welcome to his bosom?

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Will I grant to sit with me in my throne. That is, they will share his honours and his triumphs. Rev 2:26-27; Rom 8:17.

Even as I also overcame. As I gained a victory over the world, and over the power of the tempter. As the reward of this, he is exalted to the throne of the universe, (Php 2:6-11) and in these honours, achieved by their great and glorious Head, all the redeemed will share.

And am set down with my Father in his throne. Php 2:6-11. That is, he has dominion over the universe. All things are put under his feet, and, in the strictest unison and with perfect harmony, he is united with the Father in administering the affairs of all worlds. The dominion of the Father is that of the Son--that of the Son is that of the Father; for they are one. Jn 5:19, Eph 1:20, seq, 1Cor 15:24,seq.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation-4

The Heavenly Worship

1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door *was* opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard *was* as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in
heaven, and *one* sat on the throne.
3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and
there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an
emerald.
4 And round about the throne *were* four and twenty seats: and upon the
seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and
they had on their heads crowns of gold.
5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices:
and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are
the seven Spirits of God.
6 And before the throne *there was* a sea of glass like unto crystal.
And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, *were*
four beasts full of eyes before and behind.
7 And the first beast *was* like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and
the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast *was* like a flying
eagle.
8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him;* and *they were*
full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy,
holy, Lord God Almighty,
which was, and is, and is to come.
9 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat
on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,
10 the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne,
and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns
before the throne, saying,
11 Thou art worthy, O Lord,
to receive glory and honor and power:
for thou hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation-5

The Unopened Book and the Lamb

1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book
written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy
to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able
to open the book, neither to look thereon.
4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to
read the book, neither to look thereon.
5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the
tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and
to loose the seven seals thereof.
6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts,
and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having
seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent
forth into all the earth.
7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat
upon the throne.
8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty
elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and
golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.
9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and
to open the seals thereof:
for thou wast slain,
and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood
out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
10 and hast made us unto our God kings and priests:
and we shall reign on the earth.
11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the
throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten
thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
12 saying with a loud voice,
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and
wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.
13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the
earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard
I saying,
Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth
upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Revelation-6

The Seals

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.
2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.
4 And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine.
7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.
9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
10 and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said
unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow
servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as
they *were*, should be fulfilled.
12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great
earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon
became as blood;
13 and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her
untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and
every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the
chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free
man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
16 and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the
face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
17 for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Revelation-7

The 144,000 Sealed

1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of
the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not
blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the
living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it
was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
3 saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have
sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: *and there were*
sealed a hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand of all the tribes of the
children of Israel.
5 Of the tribe of Judah *were* sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Reuben *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad
were sealed twelve thousand.
6 Of the tribe of Asher *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Naphtali *were* sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of
Manasseh *were* sealed twelve thousand.
7 Of the tribe of Simeon *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Levi *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Issachar *were* sealed twelve thousand.
8 Of the tribe of Zebulun *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Joseph *were* sealed twelve thousand.
Of the tribe of Benjamin *were* sealed twelve thousand.

The White-robed Multitude

9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could
number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood
before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and
palms in their hands;
10 and cried with a loud voice, saying,
Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the
Lamb.
11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders
and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and
worshipped God,
12 saying,
Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor,
and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.
13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which
are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are
they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes,
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and
night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell
among them.
16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the
sun light on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation-8

The Seventh Seal

1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer *it* with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
4 And the smoke of the incense, *which came* with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.
5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast *it* into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

The Trumpets

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.
8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;
9 and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.
10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.
12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.
13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Revelation-9

1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.
2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.
3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.
5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.
6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.
7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads *were* as it were crowns like gold, and their faces *were* as the faces of men.
8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as *the teeth* of lions.
9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings *was* as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their
tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.
11 And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit,
whose name in the Hebrew tongue *is* Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue
hath *his* name Apollyon.
12 One woe is past; *and*, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.
13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of
the golden altar which is before God,
14 saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels
which are bound in the great river Euphrates.
15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and
a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.
16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred
thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.
17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them,
having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads
of the horses *were* as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued
fire and smoke and brimstone.
18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the
smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails *were*
like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.
20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet
repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship
devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood;
which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:
21 neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of
their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Revelation-10

The Angel and the Little Book

1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with
a cloud: and a rainbow *was* upon his head, and his face *was* as it were the
sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

2 and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon
the sea, and *his* left *foot* on the earth,
3 and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roareth: and when he had
cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to
write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those
things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.
5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted
up his hand to heaven,
6 and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven,
and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that
therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that
there should be time no longer:
7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to
sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his
servants the prophets.
8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said,
Go *and* take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which
standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.
9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book.
And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly
bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.
10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it
was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it,
my belly was bitter.
11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples,
and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Revelation-11

The Two Witnesses

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood,
saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them
that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not;
for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under
foot forty *and* two months.
3 And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a
thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before
the God of the earth.
5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and
devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in
this manner be killed.
6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their
prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to
smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.
7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that
ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and
shall overcome them, and kill them.
8 And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which
spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was
crucified.
9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see
their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead
bodies to be put in graves.
10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make
merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets
tormented them that dwelt on the earth.
11 And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into
them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which
saw them.
12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up
hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies
beheld them.
13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of
the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand:
and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
14 The second woe is past; *and*, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

The Seventh Trumpet

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying,
The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
17 saying,
We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.
19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelation-12

The Woman and the Dragon

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
2 and she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which

was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations
with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and *to* his
throne.
6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared
of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and*
threescore days.
7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against
the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
8 and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the
Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out
into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven,
Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and
the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down,
which accused them before our God day and night.
11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of
their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.
12 Therefore rejoice, *ye* heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the
inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto
you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short
time.
13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted
the woman which brought forth the man *child*.
14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might
fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a
time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.
15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman,
that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.
16 And the earth helped the woman; and the earth opened her mouth, and
swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.
17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war
with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God,
and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation-13

The Two Beasts

1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the
sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns,
and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.
2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as
the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon
gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.
3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly
wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.
4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and
they worshipped the beast, saying, Who *is* like unto the beast? who is able
to make war with him?
5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and
blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty *and* two
months.
6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his
name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to
overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and
tongues, and nations.
8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are
not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of
the world.
9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.
10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth
with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and
the faith of the saints.
11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two
horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.
12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and
causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first
beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from
heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
14 and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by *the means of* those
miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to
them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the
beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.
15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the
image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would
not worship the image of the beast should be killed.
16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,
to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
17 and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the
name of the beast, or the number of his name.
18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of
the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred
threescore *and* six.

Revelation-14

The Song of the 144,000

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a
hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his Father's name written in
their foreheads.
2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as
the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping
with their harps:
3 and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the
four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the
hundred *and* forty *and* four thousand, which were redeemed from the
earth.
4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are
virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.
These were redeemed from among men, *being* the firstfruits unto God
and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault
before the throne of God.

The Messages of the Three Angels

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the
everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to
every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
7 saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour
of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and
earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.
8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen,
that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the
wrath of her fornication.
9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man
worship the beast and his image, and receive *his* mark in his forehead, or
in his hand,
10 the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured
out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be
tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels,
and in the presence of the Lamb:
11 and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and
they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image,
and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.
12 Here is the patience of the saints: here *are* they that keep the
commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the
dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that
they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

The Harvest of the Earth

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like
unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his
hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to
him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is
come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the
earth was reaped.
17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also
having a sharp sickle.
18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire;
and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying,
Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the
earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.
19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine
of the earth, and cast *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of
the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand
and six hundred furlongs.

Revelation-15

The Angels with the Last Plagues

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels
having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had
gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his
mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass,
having the harps of God.
3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of
the Lamb, saying,
Great and marvelous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty;
just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.
4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?
For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee;
for thy judgments are made manifest.
5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the
testimony in heaven was opened:

6 and the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues,
clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with
golden girdles.
7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden
vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.
8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from
his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven
plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Revelation-16

The Vials of Wrath

1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels,
Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the
earth.
2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there
fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of
the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image.
3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as
the blood of a dead *man:* and every living soul died in the sea.
4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of
waters; and they became blood.
5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord,
which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.
6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast
given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God
Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.
8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was
given unto him to scorch men with fire.
9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of
God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to
give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and
his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for
pain,
11 and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their
sores, and repented not of their deeds.
12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates;
and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east
might be prepared.
13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the
dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the
false prophet.
14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto
the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the
battle of that great day of God Almighty.
15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his
garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew
tongue Armageddon.
17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a
great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is
done.
18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a
great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so
mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.
19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the
nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to
give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the
weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of
the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Revelation-17

The Judgment of the Great Harlot

1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and
talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the
judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many
waters;
2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the
inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine
of her fornication.
3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman
sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven
heads and ten horns.
4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked
with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in
her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:
5 and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, babylon
the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.
6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with
the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.
And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.
7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee
the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath
the seven heads and ten horns.
8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the
bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth
shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from
the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and
is not, and yet is.
9 And here *is* the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven
mountains, on which the woman sitteth.
10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, *and* the other is
not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.
11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the
seven, and goeth into perdition.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have
received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with
the beast.
13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the
beast.
14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome
them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with
him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.
15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore
sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate
the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her
flesh, and burn her with fire.
17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give
their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.
18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth
over the kings of the earth.

Revelation-18

The Fall of Babylon

1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven,
having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.
2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is
fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of
every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.
3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication,
and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the
merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her
delicacies.
4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my
people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her
plagues.
5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her
iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double
according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her
double.
7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so
much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a
queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.
8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and
famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong *is* the Lord
God who judgeth her.
9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived
deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they
shall see the smoke of her burning,
10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great
city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.
11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her;
for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:
12 the merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls,
and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood,
and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious
wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,
13 and cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine,
and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses,
and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.
14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all
things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou
shalt find them no more at all.
15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall
stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,
16 and saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and
purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and
pearls!
17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every
shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as
trade by sea, stood afar off,
18 and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What
city is like unto this great city!

19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing,
saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had
ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made
desolate.
20 Rejoice over her, *thou* heaven, and *ye* holy apostles and prophets;
for God hath avenged you on her.
21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast *it*
into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be
thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.
22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters,
shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever
craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone
shall be heard no more at all in thee;
23 and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice
of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee:
for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries
were all nations deceived.
24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all
that were slain upon the earth.

Revelation-19

The Multitude in Heaven Praises God

1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven,
saying,
Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our
God:
2 for true and righteous *are* his judgments; for he hath judged the great
whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath
avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.
3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.
4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and
worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.
5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his
servants,
and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.
7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.
10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See *thou do it* not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The Rider on the White Horse

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.
12 His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.
14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.
15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.
16 And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.
17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18 that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the
flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit
on them, and the flesh of all *men*, *both* free and bond, both small and
great.
19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered
together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his
army.
20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought
miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the
mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both
were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.
21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the
horse, which *sword* proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were
filled with their flesh.

Revelation-20

The Thousand Years

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the
bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the
Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
3 and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal
upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand
years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little
season.
4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given
unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the
witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not
worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received
his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and
reigned with Christ a thousand years.
5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were
finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
8 and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.
9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The Judgment at the Great White Throne

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation-21

The New Heaven and the New Earth

1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from
God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle
of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his
people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.
4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall
be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any
more pain: for the former things are passed away.
5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.
And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.
6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning
and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the
water of life freely.
7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and
he shall be my son.
8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers,
and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have
their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is
the second death.

The New Jerusalem

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven
vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come
hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.
10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and
showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven
from God,
11 having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most
precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
12 and had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates
twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the
twelve tribes of the children of Israel:
13 on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three
gates; and on the west three gates.
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names
of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and
the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth:
and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The
length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.
17 And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred *and* forty *and* four cubits,
according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.
18 And the building of the wall of it was *of* jasper: and the city *was* pure
gold, like unto clear glass.
19 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all
manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second,
sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the
eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the
eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.
21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one
pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent
glass.
22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the
Lamb are the temple of it.
23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it:
for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof.
24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of
it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.
25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no
night there.
26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.
27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither
whatsoever worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are
written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation-22

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,
proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.
2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there*
the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit

every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the
nations.
3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the
Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
4 and they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.
5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither
light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall
reign for ever and ever.

Jesus to Come Soon

6 And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord
God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the
things which must shortly be done.
7 Behold, I come quickly.
Blessed *is* he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
8 And I John saw these things, and heard *them.* And when I had heard and
seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed
me these things.
9 Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellow servant,
and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings
of this book: worship God.
10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book:
for the time is at hand.
11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him
be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he
that is holy, let him be holy still.
12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every
man according as his work shall be.
13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the
last.
14 Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right
to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
15 For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers,
and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the
churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and
morning star.
17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say,
Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him
take the water of life freely.
18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of
this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto
him the plagues that are written in this book:
19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this
prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of
the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.
20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen.
Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.